

**3RD LEVEL**



# **LOST ALTAR OF QORTAR**

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**FIFTH EDITION COMPATIBLE**

A mysterious trinket guides the adventurers to a lost temple and the evils that lurk within.

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## CREDITS

This adventure was a collaborative effort brought to you by these awesome folks:

**Producers:** The DMDave Team

**Story and Mechanics:** [DMDave](#)

**Proofing:** Benjamin "Sarge" Gilyot

**Cover Illustrator:** Shutterstock

**Cartography:** [Tim Hartin](#)

**Interior Illustrations:** [Paper Forge](#), [Daniel Comerci](#), and Shutterstock

**Additional Support:** The DMDave Team

**Special Thanks:** A big thanks to our friends at *Wizards of the Coast* for making the coolest game in the world and allowing creators like ourselves to borrow your open license.

# HOW TO RUN THIS ADVENTURE

To properly run this adventure, you need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their character first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

The core 5e monster book contains stat blocks for most of the creatures found in this adventure. The adventure also references four new monsters which are detailed at the end of this adventure, in the Appendix.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block in the core monster book. If a stat block appears in the Appendix, the adventure tells you so.

Spells and equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core rulebook. Magic items are described in the core GM's guide unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this adventure:

hp	hit points	LG	Lawful good
AC	Armor Class	CG	Chaotic good
DC	Difficulty Class	NG	Neutral good
XP	experience points	LN	Lawful neutral
pp	platinum piece(s)	N	Neutral
gp	gold piece(s)	CN	Chaotic neutral
ep	electrum piece(s)	LE	Lawful evil
sp	silver piece(s)	NE	Chaotic evil
cp	copper piece(s)	NE	Neutral evil

NPC nonplayer character

## VIRTUAL TABLE-TOP ASSETS

You can get virtual tabletop (VTT) assets for this adventure by referencing the original Patreon post that contains this document. The post includes high-resolution maps for you to upload. It also directs you to a number of valuable free miniatures—both print and VTT-friendly—available on [Paper Forge's Patreon](#).



# INTRODUCTION

Two centuries ago, a religious group known as The Hand of Qortar fled their temples in The Summer Land and retreated to the Basilisk's Spine Mountains. Actively pursued by Pressonian Abjurers, the persecuted Qortarians constructed a new temple devoted to their maligned demigod. Led by their high priest, Gozas the Six-Fingered, the Hand toiled for over century in their covert lair until a mysterious plague pushed them from their homes. Four generations later, no one remembers the lost altar's true location.

In the years since their exodus the lost altar has become home to all manner of horrendous creatures. Fortunately, the secret entrance through which the Qortarians escaped has since been buried in a landslide.

Recently, a strange trinket appeared in a market: a severed, mummified hand with six fingers rumored to be the left hand of Gozas the Six-Fingered. The strange, milky-eyed vendor claims that if left alone at sunrise, it points in the direction of the Lost Altar of Qortar and the treasures hidden within.

## OVERVIEW

The Lost Altar of Qortar is set in the delve and hidden temple which bears its name. The adventure is optimized for a party of **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters who fully explore the Lost Altar will likely advance to the 4th level by the adventure's conclusion. The adventure is divided into **two parts**, each part taking approximately **five to six hours to play**. The adventure begins with an adventure hook, which can be one of the ones detailed on this page or one of your own inventions.

- **Chapter 1. Den of the Cruel Fish.** A gang of gnolls has taken up residence in the cavern that hides an entrance to the Lost Altar of Qortar. The characters must fight their way through the gnolls and a fissure that leads them through the rear of the temple. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Chapter 2. The Lost Altar of Qortar.** The characters enter the Lost Altar and battle against the horrors that lie within. This is **Story Objective B**.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Although this adventure names locations and important people in the DMDave Omeria campaign setting, you can easily place the Lost Altar and its delve into any campaign world of your choosing. A remote mountainous or hilly

location works best for placement of the eponymous lost altar, although it could just as easily be hidden in a jungle, desert, or even frozen environment with very little edits required.

Once you know the lost altar's location, pick one of the options below to explain how the party came to learn about the lost altar, or invent one that works well with your current campaign and characters.

### THE HAND OF GOZAS

As mentioned in the background, the characters come into possession of a withered, six-fingered hand. Each day at sunrise, the hand, if left alone, points in the general direction of the Lost Altar of Qortar. The vendor who gifted the hand to the characters swears that the hand points to its own corpse. Legend has it that Gozas, a high priest, was buried with all of his worldly possessions.

After two weeks of following the hand's directions, the characters arrive at the delve entrance to the lost altar and the den of the Cruel Fish gnoll clan.

### MEMORIES OF A DYING MAN

Javar Palelight just died at the age of 105-years old. Before passing, he told his niece Edra of the strange place he was born—a lost temple dedicated to the forgotten demigod, Qortar. Javar gave her directions to the old tunnels through which he and his family escaped after a plague killed nearly all of his people.

Edra hires the characters and gives them the directions to the old tunnel. Although the characters won't find the tunnel itself, they discover a gnoll-infested delve that functions as a rear entrance to the lost altar and its temple. Edra pays each character 20 gp for anything they learn about the Lost Altar and an additional 100 gp if they can bring back a map.

### CLEAR OUT THE GNOLLS

The Cruel Fish gnoll tribe has been a thorn in the side of the villages in the region. The elders from three villages recently met and pooled their resources together to hire a band of adventurers to clear out the gnolls den. The three villagers offer a bounty of 25 gp per gnoll—dead or alive. If the characters accept, the villagers point the characters in the direction by which the gnolls arrive.

"Just follow White Swallow Creek 30 miles upstream. That's where you'll find those things' den."





## CHAPTER 1. DEN OF THE CRUEL FISH

*Estimated Duration:* 5-6 hours

The Cruel Fish gnolls are a vile and loathsome tribe of pseudo-demonic humanoids that inhabit a large cave system 30 miles north of the nearest human settlement. Not only do the gnolls regularly target the region's villages for raids, but the presence of the gnolls makes it impossible to pass through the foothills, thus, hampering trade.

Secretly, the gnolls are guided by a group of eight cultists of Yrena. These cultists spread the message of their Goddess of Destruction by sowing chaos and death wherever they can. Naturally, the gnolls have been a valuable tool in their crusade.

No matter how the characters learned of the location of the Lost Altar of Qortar, a clash with the gnolls is inevitable.

### ARRIVAL AT THE DEN

It will take the characters three days on foot to reach the gnolls' den. Hardly one to cover their tracks, the gnolls leave

#### THE STINK OF FISH

The Cruel Fish gnolls picked up their name thanks to their effluvious nature. All of the gnolls featured in this adventure gain the following trait:

**Stench.** Any non-gnoll creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of a Cruel Fish gnoll must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the all Cruel Fish gnolls' Stench for 24 hours.

signs of their passing everywhere. Each day that the characters travel toward the Lost Altar, roll a d20. On a result of 16-20, the characters encounter a Cruel Fish war party. The war party consists of 2d4 **gnolls** with 1d8 **hyenas**. Fanatical, the gnolls fight to the death.

### WHITE SWALLOW CREEK

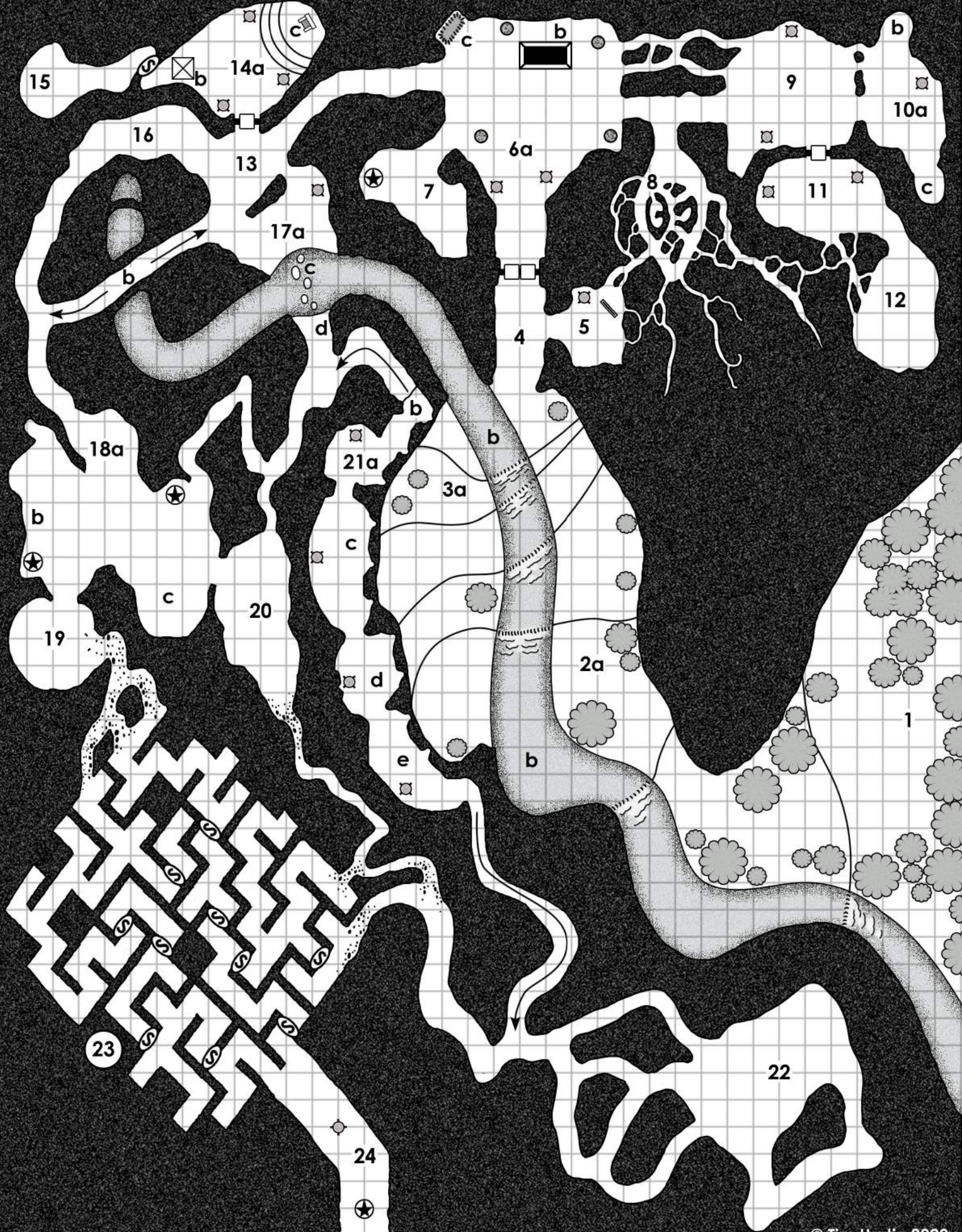
White Swallow Creek cuts through the rugged terrain of the Basilisk Spine's foothills. The creek's source is the nameless hill where the gnolls make their den and where the Qortarians once hid their now-lost altar. The creek's wide, rocky banks offer a clear path on which the characters can travel.

### COMING DOWN THE CHIMNEY

Attacking the front of the gnolls' den is a dangerous affair. Despite being chaotic evil creatures, their war chief Ozhun has trained them in the art of war. Even if the characters attempt a frontal assault, likely they will need to flee and come up with a new plan.

If the characters spend an hour searching the area around and above the den, they can make a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, they discover on the hill above the den. The chimney descends 40-feet down to the location marked c in area 6. Climbing down the chimney without a rope requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Even then, it's a 15-foot drop to the floor below, requiring another DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the player's choice) to land without taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall.







## GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, the Cruel Fish's den has the following features.

### CEILING, FLOORS, AND WALL

The den's ceilings, floors, and walls are all made of natural stone packed with loose soil. Roots from the trees on the hillside above frequently break through the rock and hang from the ceilings 10- to 20-foot high ceilings. In many places, the floors are slick with moisture.

### DOORS

At a few locations, the Cruel Fish have erected crude, timber doors operated on hung on rusted steel hinges. The doors are custom built to fit whatever "frame" they are set into. Some are no more than 6-feet high, while others (like the large double doors leading to area 6) are 15-feet-high. The gnolls can bar the doors from the inside using whatever spare timber they have on hand. A barred door requires a successful DC 16 Strength to break open. These timber doors have AC 15, 25 hp (or 50 hp for double doors), vulnerability to fire, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

### LIGHTS

Within the gnoll's den, the cultists of Yrena lit multiple large, steel braziers which cast bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. The locations of the braziers are visible on the map of the Cruel Fish's Den on page 5. Otherwise, the den is devoid of light, natural or otherwise. The boxed text in these areas assume the characters have darkvision or their own sources of light.

## KEYED LOCATIONS

The locations described below are keyed to the map of the Cruel Fish's Den on page 5.

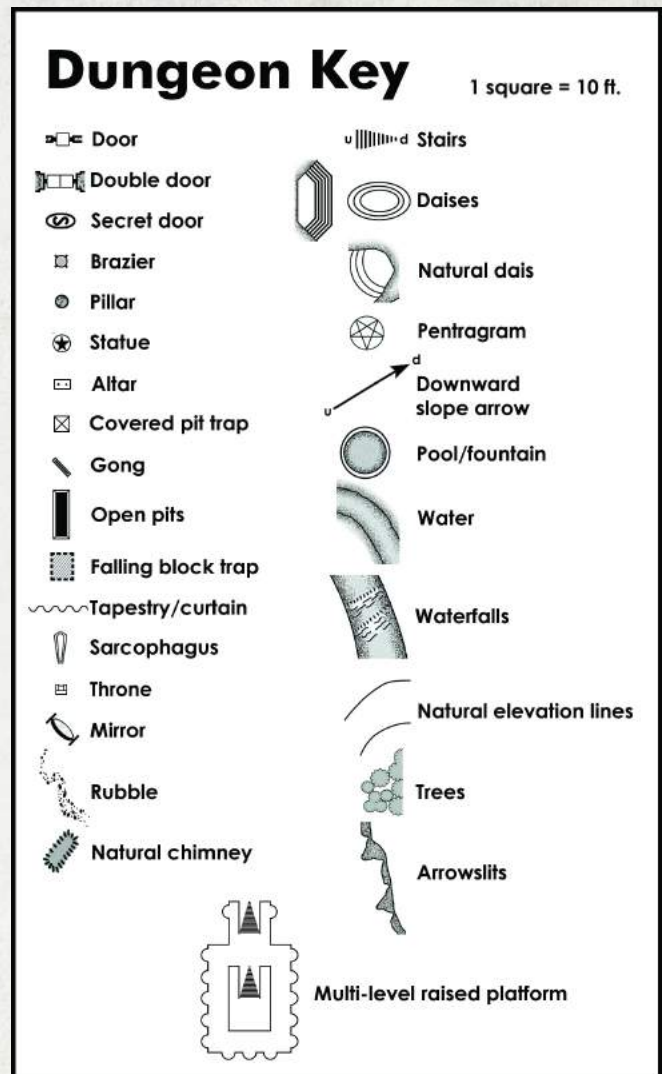
### 1 - TREE LINE

Once the party is within 100 feet of the den, read the following:

The trees finally part, revealing the creek's source, a set of falls whose waters escape the mouth of a cave 60-feet up the hillside. Titanic cliffs of sheer rock flank either side of the waterfall, creating a steep valley that leads to the cavern.

All around you, bestial footprints besmirch the mud and soil of the creek's banks. These tracks lead directly into the narrow valley. Although you can't see where they end from where you stand, you'd guess they terminate somewhere above in the cavern.

**The Climb.** At regular intervals along the climb from area 1 through areas 2 and 3 to area 4 there are 10-foot rises in



the terrain (marked on the map). Climbing over one of the rises doesn't require an ability check, but does cost 20-feet of movement to climb up or down it. A creature can jump down from one elevation without getting hurt by making a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the creature's choice). Otherwise, jumping from elevation to the other deals 3 (1d6) falling damage to the creature.

### 2 - WATCH POINT

As you climb up the narrow canyon pass leading up the hill, you notice small points of light from behind the walls of the west cliff face—almost like there are lit fires behind the wall.

The Cruel Fish keep a lone **gnoll** guard posted near the trees in area 2a. If the gnoll spots trouble, it rushes back up the hill hooting to alert the others. It then sounds the gong in area 5 (see "Battle Stations").

**Arrow Slits.** The west canyon wall is pocked with multiple arrow slits which any gnolls stationed in areas 21a-e can use to attack the characters. Noticing the arrow slits for what they are requires a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check.

## GNOLL AND CULTIST ROSTER

A complete list of all the gnolls and cultists that appear in the Cruel Fish den appear below.

Area	Occupants at Start	Notes
2	1 gnoll	If the gnoll here sees the characters approach, it flees up the canyon to area 5 to sound the gong.
4	2 gnolls, 2 hyenas	If the alarm sounds or these gnolls see the characters approaching, they retreat to area 6 and bar the timber gate.
6	3 gnolls	If the gnoll guards outside sound the alarm, the two gnolls here are joined by two more gnolls and Blub the ogre.
9	2 gnolls, 2 cultists	When the alarm sounds, the gnolls here retrieve Blub from his domain then head for area 6. The cultists retreat to area 10.
10	3 cultists	If the cultists in area 9 are alerted to the presence of the characters, they join the cultists in this area.
12	2 ogres, 2 ogre children (commoners)	One of the ogres, Blub, rushes to area 6 when the alarm sounds.
13	2 cultists	If the alarm sounds, four gnolls and the gnoll war chief Otzhun are here with the cultists. The group uses the nearby tunnels to ambush the intruders.
14	1 cult fanatic, 2 gnolls	The leader of the cultists of Yrena, Chaol, waits here with his two gnoll bodyguards.
15	1 gnoll	The gnoll here is alone and without its armor.
18	1 gnoll war chief, 4 gnolls	If the alarm is raised, these gnolls rush to area 13 to ambush the intruders.
21	2 gnolls	The two gnolls from the timber gate rush to this area and join the other two gnolls. If the fight turns against their favor, the gnolls here flee to area 23.

Gnolls using the slits in area 21 are trained well enough to take full cover after firing arrows through the slits at creatures in areas 2-4. Even while firing, the arrow slits provide the gnolls three-quarters cover, granting a +5 bonus to the gnolls' AC and Dexterity saving throws.

The arrow slits are placed 60-feet above the canyon. Because of the vantage, if the characters press their bodies against the western cliff face in area 3a and move along the wall, the gnolls in area 21 can't see them.

**The Falls.** White Swallow Creek falls cascades through the narrow pass to the forest below. Any creature that ends its turn in the water must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw check or be knocked prone. A prone creature that starts its turn in the water must make a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be pushed 30 feet down the falls toward area 1. If this pushes a creature over falls, the creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall. On its turn, a creature can make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to stand in the water, using half its movement in order to do so. If the creature is tethered to another creature or a stable object that can support its weight, the creature does not need to make a Strength saving throw at the end or beginning of its turn.

### 3 - THE GAUNTLET

If the characters don't move carefully through this area, there is a chance that the gnolls stationed in area 21 notice them. The party must make a group Stealth check contested by the gnolls' passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10. If the check fails, the gnolls see them and open fire through the arrow slits as described in area 2.

### 4 - THE TIMBER GATE

When the characters reach the rise, read the following:

Finally, the tiered canyon levels off and you can once again stand on solid ground. Just beyond where the falls vanish toward their source within the hills, roughly 50 feet down a rocky cavern you see a fifteen-foot-high crude timber gate. Just before, a cavern branches to the east, its outline illuminated by dim fire light within.

Unless the alarm was sounded, two gnolls stand guard here with two hyenas, and the gate remains unbarred. Otherwise, the gnolls enter the fortress and bar the timber doors (see General Features).

### 5 - THE GONG

This cavern is roughly 30-feet by 20-feet with 10-foot high ceilings. Judging by the shape, you'd guess that it wasn't naturally formed, but hewn to its shape. A massive, six-foot-tall bronze gong stands in the northeast corner, the fire from a nearby iron brazier reflecting off its well-worn surface.

The gong is the gnolls' first line of defense against intruders. Gnolls who use the gong to sound the alarm flee into the crawl space hidden behind it.



## BATTLE STATIONS

The gnolls are prepared for intruders. The gnolls follow the sequence of activity described below to the best of their ability unless prevented or interrupted by the characters.

**Round 1.** After sounding the alarm, the gnoll in area 1 flees through the centipede caverns to area 9 to join the cultists. Meanwhile, the two gnolls in area 4 rush into area 6 and bar the timber gate.

**Round 2.** The gnolls in area 9 alert Blub then move to area 6. The gnolls from area 4 run to join the gnolls in area 21.

**Round 3.** Blub joins the gnolls in area 6 while the cultists in area 9 join the cultists in area 10. Othun hears of the intrusion and prepares the gnolls in area 18. At the same time, Chaol starts his own preparations.

**Round 4.** Othun and the gnolls in area 18 rush to area 16.

**Round 5.** Othun arrives at in 16 the same time the two gnolls from area 4 reach area 21.

**Crawl Space.** A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) checks notices a narrow crawl space in the floor behind the gong. If the gnolls are expecting intruders, the giant centipedes that infest the burrows have already been stirred and will attack (see area 8).

## 6 - COMMON AREA

This huge cavern has 15-foot high ceilings and 70-feet in both directions. Three huge timbers made of the cross sections of trees have been placed at random intervals to support the hill overhead. A pair of braziers illuminate the south end of the room, but the northern end is obscured with shadows. Multiple paths branch off from this chamber: two to the east, three to the west, and one to the south blocked by a timber gate.

At least three **gnolls** stand guard in the center of this area. Two more gnolls and the ogre Blub might also be here if one of the gnolls sounded the gong in area 5.

**Prisoner Pit.** At the location “b” marked on the map, the gnolls keep a 10-foot-deep pit measuring 20-feet-wide and 10-feet-long. The gnolls cover the pit with a timber fence staked to the ground. There the gnolls keep six human **commoners**, prisoners from recent raids. The gnolls keep the prisoners to give to their cultist leaders to sacrifice or to eat—usually the latter. One or more characters with combined Strength scores of 15 can move the pit’s lid to set the prisoners free. All of the prisoners have one level of exhaustion from starvation and dehydration.

**Natural Chimney.** At the location marked “c” on the map, there is a natural chimney in the ceiling. The ceiling cuts through 40-feet of rock and terminates in the forested hill above the den. Details on finding and entering this area

through the chimney are detailed in the “Coming Down the Chimney” section on page 4.

## 7 - STATUE

This muddy cavern is littered with gnawed-upon carcasses and litter. Barely visible under the filth, you think you can see what-looks-like a 6-foot-tall statue shaped like a humanoid. It faces east.

The gnolls use this area to eat the prisoners who’ve died during their internment or who’ve been deemed “weak” by the cultists.

**Statue.** A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that the statue is of a Qortarian priest. Qortar was a lesser known deity of shadow (or light, depending on the text). If the characters are specifically looking for the Lost Altar of Qortar, this may be their first hint that it is somewhere nearby. A quick inspection of the statue reveals that the statue’s base seems to be missing a 4-inch by 4-inch square section, seemingly chiseled away. The square section was cut away by Chaol. He hides it in a secret compartment in his throne (see area 14) along with two more just like it (see area 18).

## 8 - GIANT CENTIPEDE HOLES

This narrow series of passages serves two purposes. First, gnolls who sound the gong in area 5 can use the crawl space there to escape to the inside of the den. And second, it is home to a nest of six **giant centipedes**. The gnolls’ smell deters the centipedes from attacking them, but the centipedes have no such prejudices against any other creatures entering their lair. The centipedes use the network of small tunnels to attack from all directions.





## 9 - LARGE CAVERN

The ceilings in this natural cavern are 20-feet high, lit by two large iron braziers positioned at the north and south sides of the chamber. Multiple tunnels lead out of the cavern, to the east, west, and south. However, the tunnel to the south is blocked by a large door made of crude timbers.

If the alarm hasn't been sounded yet, two **gnolls** and two **cultists** are in this area. One of the cultists fights alongside the gnolls while the second goes to retrieve the ogre Blub from his chambers in area 11. Blub arrives in one round after being alerted.

If the alarm has been sounded, the two gnolls and Blub join the other gnolls in area 6. Meanwhile, the two cultists retreat to area 10 to join the other three cultists found there.

## 10 - CULTISTS' BARRACKS

This odd shaped chamber is approximately 70-feet wide and illuminated by a single iron brazier. There are seven filthy cots on the cold, hard floor. On any hard surface available, the figure-8 has been painted dozens—if not hundreds—of times. Judging by their deep crimson color, you'd guess the figures were drawn in blood.

If the characters have managed to get this far without being noticed, there are only three **cultists** here. Otherwise, there are five, the original three here plus the two from area 9. The cultists are fanatical and fight to the death.

**Hidden Loot Holes.** Gnolls have no interest in coins or other treasures. Thus, any jewelry or valuables the gnolls return with from their raids are confiscated by the cultists. The cultists then hide the valuables in two natural holes at the northernmost and southernmost parts of the cave (marked "b" and "c" on the map, respectively). They cover the holes with canvas sheets that, in the low light, look just like the natural walls and floors of the cavern. Recognizing the canvas sheet for what actually it is requires a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.

**Treasure.** The hole marked "b" contains 55 sp and 30 gp. Plus, it has assorted jewelry (wedding rings, bracelets, necklaces) worth a total of 25 gp. The hole marked "c" contains 40 sp and 45 gp. It also contains assorted jewelry worth 20 gp and 3 *potions of healing*.

## 11 - BLUB'S LIVING AREA

Like the rest of this cavern so far, this room reeks. However, it's a different smell than that awful fishy smell that pervades the rest of the cavern. Instead, this 60-foot-wide cavern smells heavily of body odor and filth. Two iron braziers by the timber door shed light on the various pieces of primitive furniture such as a large table surrounded by four chairs and a bench made of a large log and furs.

This chamber is Blub and his family's "living area." In addition to the furniture, Blub's pet **black bear** Grrr sleeps in this area. Blub's trained Grrr to be an "attack dog", thus, the bear attacks any creature that enters the room that it doesn't recognize—namely the characters.

If Blub is still here and not elsewhere in the den, he, his wife, and two children can be heard chatting in area 11. If Grrr attacks, Blub and his family take notice and prepare for the characters to come to area 11.

## 12 - BLUB'S SLEEPING CHAMBERS

This dark 40-foot-by-30 cavern looks like a sleeping area. There is one large pile of animal furs against the south wall with two smaller piles against the western wall.

Unless the characters already confronted Blub, he is here with his wife Yulp and their two children. Blub and Yulp are both **ogres**. Use the **commoner** stat block for the two children, except their type is giant instead of humanoid.

Blub attacks to defend his family, giving no quarter. Yulp stays behind to protect the children until she sees Blub go down, then jumps in to help him. The children are frightened but will fight if pressed.

**Treasure.** Both Blub and Yulp are obsessive collectors of shiny things. Searching the furs of their beds reveals a total of 15 gp, 35 sp, and 125 cp. There is also loose jewelry worth a total of 10 gp and 2 *potions of healing*.

## 13 - STRIKE POINT

If the gnolls and cultists are alerted to the characters' presence and the characters have already cut a path through many of their comrades, four gnolls and two cultists gather here and wait to ambush the characters, hiding behind the natural stone pillar dividing this area and area 13. Joining the gnolls is their war chief Otzhun. Otherwise, this location is empty.

The cultists use the passages to draw the characters deeper into the dark passages while the gnolls keep their distance and fire at the characters with their longbows from the shadows.

If Chaol is expecting the characters, he has barred the timber door leading to area 14.

## 14 - CHAOL'S THRONE ROOM

This room is roughly 30-feet wide in both directions with 10-foot high ceilings. A natural dais at the east side of the room hosts a jagged-looking throne carved from the same stone as the floors and ceiling—in fact, it looks like it might be all one piece, possibly carved from a natural rock formation.

This is Chaol's throne room. Chaol, a **cult fanatic**, is guarded by two **gnolls**. If Chaol knows the characters are coming, he will have already cast *spiritual weapon*. Chaol sends the gnolls and his *spiritual weapon* after the characters while targeting the toughest looking one in the party with *command* or *hold person*. Like the other cultists,



Chaol does not fear death and will fight 'til the blood end.

**Dagger of Light.** Chaol wields *Va'Qortrone* which he stole from the Path of the Unwavering Convert (area 24). See the Appendix for details.

**Throne.** A character who examines Chaol's throne and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a secret compartment. Inside the compartment, they discover three 4-inch by 4-inch stone tablets. The tablet has an image of a maze carved onto it. Chaol removed the stone tablet from the statues of Qortar in areas 7 and 18. He's pieced together that they are somehow related to the maze in area 24, but still isn't entirely certain what they mean. The maze tablets are included in the Player Handouts section of the Appendix.

**Pit Trap.** A canvas tarp conceals a 10-foot-square pit trap at the western end of the room (marked "b" on the map). A character who examines the pit notices it with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Any creature that steps onto the tarp tumbles 10-feet down into a pit, taking 3 (1d6) damage from the fall. The pit is home to four **swarms of centipedes** that viciously attack anything that enters their domain. Among the centipedes are the flesh-stripped bones of the prisoners Chaol and his gnolls tossed into the pit as a sacrifice to Yrena the Goddess of Destruction.

**Secret Door.** Another canvas tarp conceals the secret door that leads to area 15. This tarp is easier to spot, requiring only a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice.

## 15 - CHAOL'S HIDDEN CHAMBERS

This 40-foot-long and 20-foot-wide cavern has been decorated to look like living quarters. There is a wardrobe, a desk, and even a small table with two chairs. A bed made from a pile of furs rests against the western wall. On the floor just before the bed is a large figure-8 drawn in—what seems to be —blood.



This is Chaol's private chambers. Unless the characters were stealthily entering this area, a **gnoll** waits hiding behind the wardrobe. The gnoll is wearing no armor (AC 11) and is armed with a short sword (1d6 + 1 piercing damage on a hit) instead of a spear and longbow.

**Treasure.** Chaol's wardrobe holds two finely woven robes, both worth 1 gp each. He also keeps three pairs of boots, all mundane, but worth 5 sp per pair. Under the desk, Chaol keeps a small locked chest with 20 gp and a *potion of healing*. The chest's lock can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Smashing it on a hard surface works, too. Hidden in the furs of Chaol's bed is a hairbrush with a silver handle worth 10 gp.

## 16 - WINDING PASSAGE

So long as they have time to prepare for the characters' arrival, the gnolls from area 13 use this dark tunnel to ambush characters, taking advantage of any creatures who can't see in the dark as well as they can.

## 17 - FALLS CROSSING

This 25-foot-wide cavern is cut in half by a 20-foot-wide stream of rushing water that flows from out of a hole in the wall to the west then continues east, vanishing into the opposite wall. A path of slick-looking stepping stones seems to be the only way across.

**Descending Path.** The narrow passage that connects area 13 to 16 (marked "b" on the map) rapidly descends 30 feet down, toward the center of the passage, then back up 30-feet. Although running down the slope imposes no penalty, the climb back up is treated as difficult terrain for any creature with a Strength score less than 13.

**Slick Stones.** The stepping stones (marked "c" on the map) spanning the stream are slick. A creature moving across the stones must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone into the water. A prone creature that starts its turn in the water is pushed 30 feet down the stream toward area 3b and continues until they reach area 1. If this pushes a creature over falls, the creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall. On its turn, a creature can make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to stand in the water, using half its movement in order to do so. If the creature is tethered to another creature or a stable object that can support its weight, the creature does not need to make a Strength saving throw at the end or beginning of its turn.

A creature can cautiously cross the stones to avoid making a Dexterity saving throw. Doing so requires the creature to voluntarily treat the stones as difficult terrain.

## 18 - GNOLL PIT

Bloody bones and rubbish litter the ground of this huge, oddly-shaped cavern. And the horrible fish smell is at its strongest here.



This is the gnolls' "barracks." There are six **hyenas** here. Well-trained and hungry, the hyenas attack without hesitation. If the characters made it this far without sounding the alarm, they find four **gnolls** here along with the **gnoll war chief** Otzhun, as well.

**Otzhun's Bed.** The gnolls' war chief sleeps on a pile of putrid furs against the western wall (marked "b" on the map). Because his fellow gnolls are constantly trying to steal from him, Otzhun keeps a hunting trap hidden in the furs. If a character searches the bed using one of their hands or feet, they must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage. The character is then restrained by the trap and can't move more than 5 feet away from the bed. A creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 1 piercing damage to the trapped creature.

Otzhun stores 2 *potions of healing* and a +1 *battle axe* in his bed furs.

**Statues.** Two more statues of the demigod Qortar are in this area. The gnolls vandalized both statues, rendering them unrecognizable. Similar to the statue in area 7, the statues have 4-inch by 4-inch square portions of their bases missing, revealed with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. One statue faces west and the other faces east. Along with the one from area 7's statue, Chaol stores the missing sections in the secret compartment in his throne (see area 14).

**Weapons Pile.** The gnolls keep the weapons they collect from dead adventurers, hunters, and other humanoids they kill in a large pile on the floor (marked "c" on the map). While many of the weapons are unusable, there are two long swords, a short sword, a maul, and a shortbow of passable quality.

## 19 - EXCAVATION

This round chamber is roughly 40-feet in diameter with low ceilings. There is 5-foot-wide hole in the eastern wall with rubble strewn around it. Pickaxes rest against the wall near the hole.

The gnolls, under Chaol's orders, dug through the wall here in order to find the maze depicted on the tablets Chaol removed from the statues in areas 7 and 18.

There is nothing else of value in this area.

## 20 - STIRGE CAVERN

The ceilings in this cavern are 20-feet high. A nest of ten **stirges** occupies the ceiling. If the characters enter the area without being quiet, the stirges wake and attack. The stirges are also drawn by the smell of blood within 60-feet of them, so if a battle occurs in area 18, the stirges join the fray, attacking indiscriminately.

**Narrow Tunnel.** At Chaol's behest, the gnolls dug a tunnel in the southeast wall that connects with the maze in area 24. The tunnel is very narrow. Medium sized creatures wearing heavy armor who try to pass through the tunnel must spend 2 feet of movement for every 1 foot they move. Plus, they have disadvantage on attack rolls while in the passage. Large or

larger creatures cannot fit in the tunnel.

## 21 - GNOLL DEFENSES

Along the eastern wall of this narrow but long chamber, vertical slots, no more than a foot in width and 3 feet in height give you a view of the world outside the cavern. If you didn't know any better, you'd guess they were natural arrow slits.

Braziers placed at regular intervals along the passageway completely illuminates the area.

If the gnolls aren't on alert, there are only two gnolls here stationed at locations "a" and "e" on the map. Otherwise, there are four gnolls who fire from all four positions (a, c, d, and e) at any intruders who try to climb up the canyon (areas 1-4). The gnolls try to keep their distance, using their bows instead of their spears. If they feel that the fight is turning away from their favor, they retreat down the slide (see below) to fight in area 22, where they can use the dark and the gricks there to their advantage.

**Elevation Change.** The area's north landing (marked "b" on the map) is 10 feet higher than the connecting tunnel. The gnolls have erected a rope ladder that they can withdraw if they hear the characters coming. Climbing the rise without the ladder requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check and costs 10-feet of movement.

**South Slide.** The southern tunnel has a steep 20-foot dip in elevation that starts at the south wall of this area and ends at the northwestern edge of area 22. A creature that ends their turn in the tunnel must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. A prone creature that starts its turn in the tunnel slides 30 feet down the tunnel toward area 22, landing near the tip of the arrow marked on the map.

## 22 - GRICK CAVE

If the gnolls from area 21 retreat here, they first wait at the base of the slide (see area 21) to surprise the characters who come barreling down the tunnel. They then retreat into the main cavern to the south and use the natural stone columns to surprise the characters.

When the characters enter the main cavern, read the following:

This large, dark natural cavern has concave floors which slope towards its center.

Joining the gnolls are two **gricks**. Their Stone Camouflage trait gives them advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks they make in this area. Like the other non-gnolls in the den, the gricks avoid the gnolls because of their atrocious smell.

## 23 - PATH OF THE UNWAVERING CONVERT

This maze was once used as a test for young Qortorians who wished to ascend into the temple's priesthood. Originally, a convert entered the maze from area 24. The convert had exactly 20 minutes to locate a facsimile of the *Scroll of*



*Qortar* (see page 24 for details). If the convert failed, the shadows that haunted the maze would attack and kill the convert.

When the apostatic Qortarians abandoned their temple, they stored Gozas' dagger, *Va'Qortrone* at the far, northern end of the maze.

There are three paths into the maze: its original entrance in area 24, then the two tunnels that Chaol's minions excavated in areas 19 and 20. Likely, the characters will first enter the maze through areas 19 and 20. When they do, read the following description:

This area looks unlike anything you've seen in this series of caverns so far. Gone are the natural caverns and hewn stone walls. Instead, walls made of dressed stone line the walls of this 5-foot-wide corridor. The floors are covered in laid stone tile. The ceilings here are exactly 10-feet high with thick, timber braces holding the earth above.

A character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check to identify the stone work recognizes that the architecture is of human design, likely 200-years old. Dwarves can use their Stonecunning feature when making this check.

**Secret Doors.** The secret doors throughout the maze (marked "S") are completely invisible to creatures with darkvision, appearing as solid walls. Furthermore, they will not open in the presence of any light with the exception of the light cast by *Va'Qortrone*.

**Shadows.** The moment the characters or any other creature sets foot into the maze, set a secret timer for 20 minutes. At the end of the 20 minutes, a number of **shadows** equal to the number of living creatures currently inside the maze magically appear and attack. The shadows know exactly where all living creatures are in the maze at any given time and cannot be surprised.

If the characters destroy a shadow while they are still inside the maze, a new **shadow** takes the destroyed shadow's place on the shadows' next initiative count. This continues until the shadows are driven off with the light cast by *Va'Qortrone* or all of the creatures are killed and turned into shadows.

In addition to their Sunlight Weakness, if one of the maze's shadows ends its turn in an area illuminated by a source of magical light such as the light created by the *light* spell or *Va'Qortrone*, the shadow takes 3 (1d6) radiant damage.

The shadows will not leave the maze. However, if a creature escapes the maze and returns within the same 24 hour period, the shadows immediately attack again, ignoring the 20 minute waiting period.

## 24 - MAZE ENTRANCE

When the characters first enter this area from area 23, read the following.

You enter a huge 20-foot-wide hallway with 15-foot high ceilings that stretches 40-feet in front of you then makes a

45-degree turn to the south, vanishing into darkness. Judging by the dust and cobwebs, this place has been abandoned a long time.

The brick walls at either side of you are covered in glyphs depicting priests holding orbs of glowing light above their heads. At their feet, amorphous creatures—like shadows—cower before the light.

This was once the true entrance to the Path of the Unwavering Convert (area 23). The southern end of the tunnel connects to area 1 on the map of The Lost Altar of Qortar.

**Brazier.** The large brazier in the center of the path is unlit. Unlit torches are stored in its base. The Qortorian priests who escorted the converts to the edge of the maze allowed them to enter holding a lit torch. Converts who knew better quickly extinguished their torches just inside the Maze (where areas 23 and 24 connect). Those who didn't recognize quickly realize the futility in carrying a torch were quickly destroyed by the shadows.

**Statue.** An intact statue of a Qortarian priest stands in the center of this pathway, facing south. If the characters discovered the other three statues, it's obvious that this statue is identical to the others. At the statue's base is the fourth and final tablet that completes the map of the temple (see the Appendix). Chaol, lacking this fourth piece, didn't realize that it showed how to enter the temple from the maze.

**Creatures.** Two **giant spiders** live in this tunnel, hiding in the webs on the ceiling. The spiders wait for creatures to pass by the brazier, then descend and attack.







## CHAPTER 2. THE LOST ALTAR OF QORTAR

Unseen by humanoid eyes for almost two centuries, the Lost Altar of Qortar has been overrun by the dark forces which the Qortarians' magic once kept at bay. All of the traps that were designed to keep intruders away remain in place and fully operational. Additionally, hostile and dangerous creatures from the Low have entered the altar and now call the death trap their home. Careless characters who charge headfirst into the temple will soon find themselves joining the ranks of the shadowy undead that haunt its dark halls.

### GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, the Lost Altar of Qortar has the following features.

#### CEILINGS, FLOORS, AND WALLS

The Qortarians shaped the temple's rooms from the natural cavern that once stood in the eponymous lost altar's place (area 23). They lined the hewn walls with stone blocks carved from the excavated rocks and crafted 5-foot by 5-foot square tiles to pave the floors. Timber imported from the forest outside the temple braces the 15-foot high ceilings found in both the temple's passages and chambers. Nearly every inch of the temple's surfaces are covered in glyphs depicting the history of the Qortarians. A religious historian could spend ten years in the temple and still not see all of the art there is to be found within.

#### DOORS

All of the temple's doors are 6-inch-thick, steel-reinforced stone tablets measuring 10-feet tall and 8-feet wide.

These doors rotate on a central pivoting hinge set into the floor and top frame. Each door possesses a manually-operated bolt locking mechanism built into both sides of the door. If one of the doors is locked, it can only be broken open with a successful DC 23 Strength (Athletics) check. A single stone door has AC 17, 50 hp (damage threshold 10), and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

#### LIGHT

There is no light in the temple, natural or otherwise. The boxed text descriptions assume that the characters have darkvision or their own sources of light.

However, there are unlit torches hung in sconces throughout the complex, some of which are still usable.

The temple's evil nature has an unusual effect on nonmagical light. The light from torches, lanterns, and other nonmagical sources shed only half the normal amount of bright and dim light. Additionally, treat all magical *darkness* spells and effects as if they were cast one level higher (minimum of 3rd-level) for the purpose of overcoming or dispelling the effect.

#### DESECRATION

Since the Qortarians' evacuation two centuries ago, the temple has become an epicenter for evil. The entire complex counts as desecrated ground, detectable with a detect evil and good anywhere within the temple. Undead in the temple have advantage on all saving throws. A vial of holy water purifies a 10-foot square area of desecrated ground when sprinkled on it, and a *hallow* spell purifies desecrated ground within its area.







## SOUNDS

A chill wind sweeps through the ancient temple, carrying the faint cries of disembodied voices. Whenever a character is 30-feet or more away from the party, the sounds become louder, almost as if they were just behind them. Of course, when the character turns to look, there's nothing there.

## WANDERING XORN

While the characters travel through the western end of the complex they will frequently find strange tracks made by a creature with three feet. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the creature is likely a **xorn**.

Some years back, the hungry xorn slipped into the temple through the fissures in the wall in area 7. Since then, it's wandered around the temple looking for valuables to consume. And so far, it's been relatively successful in its endeavor. Only in heavily protected locations have the temple's valuables avoided consumption from the pesky elemental.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Dark, ravenous creatures lurk within the walls of the Lost Altar of Qortar. Every ten minutes that the characters spend in the temple, roll a d20. On a result of 20, a random encounter occurs. Choose an appropriate encounter or roll on the Lost Altar Random Encounters table below to determine the nature of the encounter.

### LOST ALTAR RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

#### d8 Encounter

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | 1 black pudding                        |
| 2 | 1d6 dust mephits                       |
| 3 | 2 fadraxes                             |
| 4 | 1d4 giant spiders                      |
| 5 | 1d4 + 1 shadows                        |
| 6 | 1d4 specters                           |
| 7 | 2d6 stirges                            |
| 8 | The wandering <b>xorn</b> (see above). |

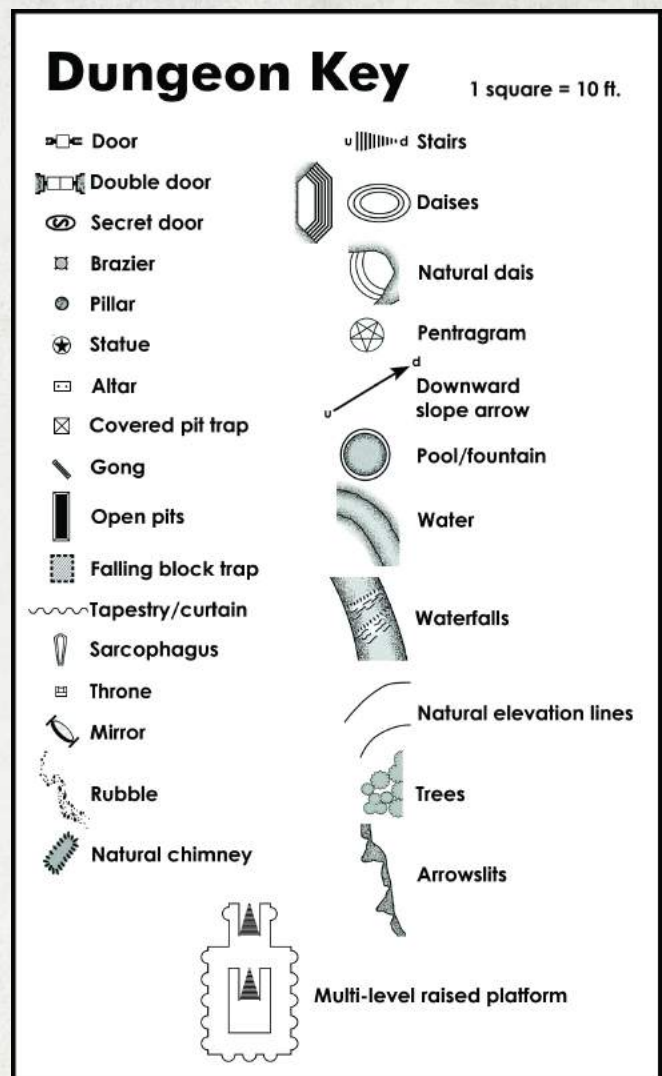
## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Lost Temple of Qortar on page 14.

### 1 - AMBULATORY

This north end of this area connects to the Maze Entrance in Den of the Cruel Fish. When the characters reach the area marked "b" on the map, read the following:

The hallway hits a bend that turns right before turning left again, continuing in the same direction you were walking. Interestingly, the narrow 10-foot section of hallway that you have to cross is one of the few sections of this structure that lacks glyphs.



It should be obvious to the characters that there is something unusual about this section of the hallway.

If the characters search the area, a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals two hints:

1. The ceiling in the archway at the location marked "b" appears to be loose.
2. The glyphs of the priests holding orbs of light common throughout the temple change just before the archway. The orbs are missing and they are covering their eyes.

**Trap.** The ceiling of the archway hides a huge stone block trap. If a creature passes through the hallway holding a light source, the 80 ton stone block drops. Any creature standing in the hallway when the block drops must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.

On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the block. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw.

On a failed save, the block lands on the creature and the creature takes 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage and is pinned. The pinned creature is restrained and takes 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns.

A pinned creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 25 Strength check. On a success, the creature



escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the block.

A creature within 5 feet of the block can take an action to lift the block enough to allow the creature to escape. Doing so requires a successful DC 25 Strength check. To continue lifting the block, the creature must use its action on subsequent turns to make another DC 25 Strength check. If the creature fails its check or doesn't use its action to continue lifting the block, it drops the block.

Once the block drops it remains in place until removed or destroyed.

A character can disable the trap by disabling the mechanism that releases the block. Doing so requires a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. This check be made standing away from the block. If the check fails by 5 or more, the block releases.

## 2 - SERPENTINE CORRIDOR

This passage is 5-feet wide with 5-foot high ceilings. The air here feels dry. There is a sharp, acrid smell that tickles your nose.

This serpentine corridor frequently switchbacks until it ends at the doors leading to areas 3, 4, and 6. The secret door through the wall can be found with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. It functions exactly like the other doors of the temple, pivoting on a central hinge.

**Trap.** 10 feet from the secret door at the southwesternmost switchback is a 10-foot-by-10-foot pit concealed by a *programmed illusion* spell. Just before reaching this section of the hallway, read:

That awful caustic smell is so strong here that you almost have to cover your nose to proceed. Your eyes start to water.

Physical interaction with the floor reveals it to be an illusion; objects (and people) can pass right through it. A character notices that the floor is an illusion with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. *Dispel magic* cast against a 6th-level spell permanently removes the illusion.

A creature who steps in the area of the trap falls 20-feet down into a pit of acid, taking 10 (3d6) acid damage as a result. Until the creature climbs out of the pit, it takes 10 (3d6) acid at the start of each of its turns. Fortunately, the acid has worn various handholds into the walls surrounding the pool. Climbing the wall does not require a check.

## 3 - LIBRARY

This impressive room stretches roughly fifty feet in front of you. The walls along the northern and western sides of the rooms are scalloped and fitted with semi-circular bookshelves cluttered with what looks like thousands of ancient tomes.

At the center of the room are three eight-foot long tables, each with six chairs.

Thick dust blankets everything.

The books cover numerous topics, focusing mostly on history, religion, and nature. Most are woefully outdated, many written during the 8th century or earlier. If the characters find a way to remove the books from the library, the books are worth a total of 1,000 gp to the right buyer. The entire collection weighs 12,000 pounds and takes up roughly 375 cubic feet of space.

**Creatures.** Stuffed onto one of the shelves at the far west end of the room is a skull with gems fitted into its eye sockets and mouth. The skull is noticeable when a character walks within 20 feet of it, but it can be spotted from further away with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Wedged in between a collection of books detailing the necromantic arts, you see a human skull dressed with large gems in both its eye sockets as well as its mouth. Maybe it's just your mind playing tricks on you—but you could swear that it's looking right at you.

The skull is a **gem skull** and it attacks whenever one of the characters comes within 5 feet of it. The gem skull's stats are included in the Appendix.

**Treasure.** The skull has a total 8 gems, each one worth 50 gp.

## 3 - HIGH PRIEST CHAMBERS

This area was once a bed chamber. A small bed rests against the north wall with a simple, iron-banded wooden chest at the foot. Against the western wall, there is a 6-foot tall wardrobe next to a dust-riddled desk. The floor is covered by a large, faded purple rug.

This was once Gozas' chambers. After his death, his servants left the room untouched.

**Secret Door.** The wardrobe masks the presence of a secret door. Any character who steps into the wardrobe and shuts the door behind them will hear a "click." Then, the wall behind them slides open revealing area 4. Detecting the presence and functionality of the secret door requires a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. A character can rig the secret door to open without closing the wardrobe door by making a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' or tinker's tools.

**Treasure.** In addition to the secret door it hides, the wardrobe holds three purple robes trimmed with gold, each worth 5 gp. The chest is unlocked and contains old, moth-eaten blankets. However, the chest has a secret compartment found with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. There is a jeweled dagger scabbard worth 10 gp at the bottom of the compartment. *Va'Qortrone* fits perfectly into



the scabbard.

## 5 - PRAYER CELL

This austere room lacks furniture. There is only a large, moth-eaten rug at its center.

This was Gozas' prayer room. There is nothing of value in the room. However, a character who searches the southwestern corner discovers the presence of a secret door with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. It opens with a push.

## 6 - VAULT

The door to the vault that leads to area 2 is locked from the inside. The locks holding the door in place are easily removed from this side of the door. A character on the opposite side of the door can use its action to break down the door with a successful DC 23 Strength check.

This huge 35-foot by 45-foot chamber looks like it was once a museum. The walls are lined with old, faded tapestries. While the shelves lining the walls are empty, a few at the eastern end of the room are covered in dusty gold and center relics. The center of the room hosts five display stands, only half of which hold relics. Standing at either end of each display stand are ten featureless statues, all wearing purple robes and holding rods made of gold against their chests.

This was Gozas' strong room. It contains artifacts and relics important to the Qortorians. Only Gozas had access to this area and kept the door leading to area 2 locked.

**Creatures.** If the characters touch anything in the room, the ten statues come to life and attack. Each animated statue uses the **animated armor** stat block except that an animated statue has AC 17, 48 hp, and loses its Multiattack action, which makes it CR 1/2 (100 XP).

Only Gozas could touch the items in this area without awakening the guardians. However, a creature holding the hand of Gozas (from the adventure hooks) can remove the items from this room without facing retribution from the vault's guardians. The guardians fight until the characters are dead or they leave the vault; they won't pursue.

**Xorn Tracks.** The xorn discovered this area early in its expedition. Once it touched one of the relics and started eating the gems, the statues animated and attacked it. Although it resisted most of the attacks and continued to gobble half the relics showcased here, the statues eventually drove off the elemental.

**Treasure.** Although the xorn ate most of the treasure that once crowded this room, there are still 153 relics in the chamber, each one with an average value of 10 gp. If necessary, use the art object tables in Chapter 7 of the DMG to determine the details of each object. The relics have a combined weight of 600 lbs all together and take up 20 cubic feet of space.

## 7 - SECRET CORRIDOR

When the characters first open one the secret door leading into this area, two swarms of spiders crawl out and attack.

Once the characters can proceed, read the following:

This narrow, featureless corridor stretches for 50 feet north-south. At the south end of the corridor, the dressed stones have collapsed revealing a natural fissure in the earth.

The reverse side of the secret door that leads to area 5 is noticeable from this side. However, the secret door that leads to area 6 requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice it, then a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find the hidden latch that opens the door.

**Xorn Tracks.** The xorn spends most of its time at this end of the complex and uses this secret corridor to move between the temple's secret chambers—which aren't so secret to it and its ability to sniff out treasure. If the characters can't find the secret door that leads to area 6, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the xorn's tracks go into and out of the wall at the secret door.

On the other side of the fissure, the xorn's tracks hint at the presence of the secret door that leads to area 8, as well.

**Fissure.** A narrow fissure connects the northern and southern ends of the secret corridor. The wandering xorn uses this fissure to return to the earth surrounding the underground temple whenever it grows bored of the temple's "cuisine" and wants to find a different food source. Inevitably, the hungry bugger always returns to the temple. The fissure is extraordinarily narrow. Any Medium sized creature that tries to pass through the fissure must spend 4 feet of movement for every 1 foot that they move. Plus, there is not enough space to swing any weapon that lacks the Light property, and even attacks made with weapons that have the Light property are made at disadvantage.

**Creatures.** Near the center of the fissure, a **swarm of centipedes** gathers in the walls and ceiling. They aggressively attack any creature that moves through the fissure.

## 8 - CATACOMBS

This large, macabre chamber's walls are covered in literally hundreds of humanoid skulls set into small cubbies in the wall. There are three, ornately carved stone tables at the center of the room. Each table displays the mummified remains of a person.

The skulls are the skulls of the disciples of Qortar from both before and after the construction of the temple. The three bodies on the slabs are the remains of three important Qortarian priests, all of whom died as a result of the temple's desecration.

If the characters haven't already confronted the **xorn**, they discover the creature in this area.



Across the room, you see a strange, cylindrical creature with three legs and three arms. The surface of its flesh looks like gray cobblestones. The thing lacks a head. Instead, there is a large maw filled with sharp, chalky teeth. A single eye at the center of its warty body blinks at you. Then, from its shoulder-mouth, it grunts at you in a strange, rocky language.

The language is Terran. The xorn is asking for the characters to give it gems or gold. Not immediately aggressive, the xorn approaches the characters with outstretched paws, hoping that they relinquish any gems or valuables that it can smell on them.

Somewhat reasonable, the xorn can be bargained with. In exchange for gems, gold, or other edibles, it will reveal what it knows of the temple including many of its secret doors and traps. So far the xorn has only traveled as far as areas 4-8. See the “What the Xorn Knows” sidebar for the information the xorn is willing to share in exchange for a snack.

The xorn won't travel beyond areas 4-8, fearing the horrors that populate the majority of the ancient temple.

If the characters refuse to feed the xorn treasure or mistreat it, it grunts and waddles away. It's hungry, but not hungry enough to pick a fight it doesn't think it can win.

**Secret Doors.** There are three secret doors leading into and out of this area. The presence of all three doors are well hidden, requiring successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) checks to notice any door the characters have not yet been through.

**Trap.** The door that leads to area 9 is trapped. If a character tries to open the door without speaking the phrase “Qortar, reveal to me your path through the shadow” the character must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character is afflicted with a curse. While cursed, the character can't regain hit points except through magical means and they gain vulnerability to necrotic damage. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

A character can detect the presence of the trap with a *detect evil and good* spell. A *dispel magic* spell completely removes the trap.

## 9 - ROOM OF SHADOWS

Characters of good alignment feel the hairs on the backs of their necks stand up when they first come within 5 feet of this area.

This entire area is bathed in magical darkness. Unless the characters have a way of seeing through the darkness, read the following when the open the door:

As the hidden door creaks open, a chill air rushes past you. Beyond this door you see only impenetrable darkness.

After a few seconds, you think you can hear whispers in the dark—begging you to join them.

Hidden in the darkness is a malicious apparition named Kaige. Kaige was once a priest of Qortar, but was consumed by the darkness that desecrated the temple. Eventually bested in combat by Gozas, Kaige returned as the angry undead creature he is now. Although Gozas was unable to destroy Kaige, he did manage to store his former colleague in this area which now acts as his prison. The walls are lined with silver.

Kaige is a **wraith**. The magical *darkness* in this area does not hinder Kaige's darkvision.

There is nothing else of interest in this area.

## 10 - GOZAS' TOMB

This colossal, gem-shaped room has 25-foot high ceilings and walls decorated with frescoes of a priest dressed in ornate livery performing various deeds. At the far side of the room, a dais preceded by a short flight of steps hosts a large, stone sarcophagus. A single beam of light descends from the ceiling, illuminating the surface of the sarcophagus.

Before the Qortoraian fled the temple, they laid their high-priest, Gozas, to rest in this tomb which he constructed for himself while he was still alive. His disciples severed his left hand and carried it with them in the hopes that it would someday lead them all back to the light of this once-great temple where they could defeat the darkness once and for all.





**Secret Doors.** There are two secret doors leading out of this area.

The door that leads to area 8 is only noticeable with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check then a DC 10 Intelligence (investigation) check to find the hidden latch that opens the door.

The door that leads to area 11 is noticeable from this side. However, it is sealed. The door can be broken open with a successful DC 18 Strength check.

**Trap.** Gozas' tomb is protected by divine light. If a character comes within 15 feet of the sarcophagus, the light changes its angle, targeting the character. The first time this occurs and whenever the character ends their turn in this chamber, they must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. The character takes 7 (2d6) radiant damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one. Even if another character triggers the trap, the light continues to target the first character until that character dies or ends their turn outside of this area. The light then turns to the next intruder and so on until all intruders are dead or gone, at which point it returns to its default position over Gozas' sarcophagus.

The light is of divine origin and cannot be dispelled except by a *wish* spell.

**Sarcophagus.** The lid to Gozas' sarcophagus is heavy, requiring one or more characters with combined Strength scores of 25 to lift. Once the characters look inside, read the following:

You remove the lid to the coffin. Inside, you find a mummified humanoid, likely dead for a century or longer. The mummy's arms are crossed over its chest. Its left hand is missing.

If the characters have the hand of Gozas, they can place the hand onto the mummy's stump. If they do, not only does it fit, but the blackened flesh around its wrist and stump reconnect.

You watch as the hand reconnects itself to the mummy's wrist. Then, the mummy suddenly sits up in its coffin.

So long as the characters don't do anything to it, Gozas' **mummy** exits the sarcophagus and walks toward the southeastern wall. Without pausing, it starts to pound its fists against the wall. After one round, the wall collapses, revealing a secret door (as described above) into area 11. From there, the mummy passes the mirrors and descends the long flight of steps that leads to area 23.

If the characters follow Gozas' mummy without disturbing it, the mummy enters area 23, climbs the steps to the top of the altar, and places his six-fingered hand onto the *Scroll of Qortar*. Bright light then shines under the mummy's six-fingered hand. After one round, the *Scroll* bursts into radiant flames, consuming both it and the mummy. After a few seconds, both the *Scroll* and the mummy vanish and the temple's curse ends.

If attacked, Gozas fights back only long enough to break free of the characters and continue on its mission. If the characters destroy Gozas' mummy or stop it from reaching the altar, they must find another way to destroy the *Scroll*.

## 11 - TWO MIRRORS

This long corridor stretches for nearly 100-feet. There is a grand staircase with tall, stone steps carved straight from the hard earth at its center.

If the characters climb to the northwestern end of the staircase, read the following:

Two 8-foot tall oval-shaped mirrors set into adjustable wooden frames are positioned at either side of this semi-circular room, both facing each other. The wall to the northwest seems to end in a dead end. At the center of that wall is a depiction of a creature with one head but two faces, both sharing a common eye. The left half of its face is black. The right half is white. Its three eyes seem to stare at you.

If a character stands between the two mirrors and looks toward the wall, they may notice something strange out of the corner of their eye. If the character is of good alignment, they can see their reflection in the right mirror, but their reflection is absent from the left mirror. And if the character is of evil alignment, they notice the same effect, but vice versa. A character of neutral ethical alignment does not see their reflection on either mirrors' surface, nor does any character holding the hand of Gozas.

What happens next depends on the character. If the character turns to face the mirror that lacks their reflection and touches the mirror's surface, the secret door leading to area 10 opens. However, if the character turns to face the mirror with their reflection, the character must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. And if the character fails their saving throw by 5 or more, the character ages 1d4 x 10 years. While the character is frightened, it must use all of its movement to move as far away as possible from the mirrors by the most direct route possible. The frightened character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on his or herself on a success. The aging effect can be reversed with a *greater restoration* spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.

Discovering the presence of the secret door requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) reveals the steps needed to open the door, as described above.

## 12 - MEN'S BARRACKS

Eleven two-tier bunks fill the room. There are two footlockers at the foot of each bunk.



Despite the dust and dry-rot, the room is remarkably well-kept.

An L-shaped path cuts through the room connecting the large stone door to the north to the one at the west.

Beyond dry-rotted blankets and faded purple clothing stowed in the foot chests, there is nothing else of value in this room.

### 13 - MEN'S PRAYER CELL

This austere room lacks furniture of any kind. The only objects of note are a number of old, dry-rotted pillows evenly spaced on the floor.

You also notice that there are no sconces on the wall.

This was the Qortarians men's prayer cells where they sat in the dark and gave their thanks to Qortar.

**Creatures.** There are four malevolent **shadows** that lurk in the cell. They first attack any character holding a torch or light source with an intent to disarm and extinguish. Then, they turn their attention to any character that can see them.

### 14 - WOMEN'S BARRACKS

Eleven two-tier bunks fill the room. There are two footlockers at the foot of each bunk.

Despite the dust and dry-rot, the room is remarkably well-kept.

An L-shaped path cuts through the room connecting the large stone door to the south to the one at the east.

Beyond dry-rotted blankets and faded purple clothing stowed in the foot chests, there is nothing else of value in this room.

When the characters approach the door leading to area 15 for the first time, they notice that the door is slightly ajar. Read the following:

As you approach the door, you hear faint whispering coming from the room ahead of you. It sounds like a woman praying.

**Creature.** Three **specters** haunt this room. Driven by rage, they ruthlessly attack the nearest creature that they can find. The fighting doesn't disturb the ghost Nelna's prayers in area 16, who continues her calls for blessing despite the commotion.

### 15 - WOMEN'S PRAYER CELL

This austere room lacks furniture of any kind. The only objects of note are a number of old, dry-rotted pillows evenly spaced on the floor.

You also notice that there are no sconces on the wall.

This was the Qortarians women's prayer cells where they sat in the dark and gave their thanks to Qortar.

**Creature.** A **ghost** named Nelna continues to pray at one of the old prayer pillows. Nelna holds her hands in the air and begs Qortar over and over again to deliver her and her children from the evil of the lost altar. When Qortar doesn't answer, she weeps. She then starts all over again, stuck in a permanent loop.

If she is disrupted by the characters, she asks them, "Please, let me finish speaking with Qortar" and continues. If the characters continue to press her, she tries scaring them away with her Horrifying Visage. And if that fails, she attacks with her Withering Touch, demanding that they leave her alone. Nelna is uncooperative and will not help the characters or share information about the temple.

### 16 - GREAT HALL

All three of the entrances leading to this area are sealed from the outside, their bolts firmly in place. Breaking one of the doors open from the inside requires a DC 23 Strength check. When the characters approach one of the doors, read the following:

A line of fine silver dust stretches from one side of the door's archway to the other. A phrase has been painted over the door in the Common tongue: "Gozas, let your light protect us."

A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check (character's choice) recognizes that the silver dust is being used to keep something from leaving the room beyond the line of silver dust, likely something incorporeal and evil.





The silver dust can be swept up and stored. The dust of a single door is worth 5 gp. If the line of dust is broken at any of the doors, the wraiths and specters inside area 16 can (and will) escape.

When the characters first see area 16, read the following:

This large hall hosts tall ceilings that soar 25 feet overhead, held aloft by four broad columns at either one of the four corners of the room. Two rows of benches face the far wall which depicts carvings of a creature with two faces, both faces sharing a common center eye. One of its faces is painted white while the other is painted black.

Two pillows rest on the ground just in front of the bas relief.

And then once the characters officially cross the line of silver dust, read:

Suddenly the air grows chilly. You can see your own breath turn to fog as it leaves your body. Two slightly translucent glowing forms appear at the far end of the room, sitting on the pillows below the bas relief. Their hands are held above their heads and their eyes are closed.

The first is dressed in flowing black robes. The second in white. Their positions mirror the sides of the bas relief creature's face.

The two glowing figures whisper quiet prayers to themselves.

After a few seconds of prayer, the two **wraiths** turn their gaze to the characters.

Their eyes are hollow. Empty sockets stare at you.

One lifts an illusory finger and points at you. "Look, my friends," the creature croaks. "More have come to join our congregation."

Suddenly the entire room fills with whispers, the sound rising to a horrific cacophony. Eight more spectral figures appear on the benches all around you, each one emitting soft, purple light. They too have eyeless sockets. They lift from their benches, hovering a foot from the floor. They begin to drift toward you.

The two wraiths remain on their pillows while the eight **specters** attack. The wraiths and specters won't cross the line of silver dust unless the line is broken. Furthermore, the protection ritual stops the wraiths and specters from phasing through the walls.

If the characters made the mistake of breaking the line, the light from *Va'Qotrone* will keep the undead back. Additionally, the specters and wraiths will not come within 10 feet of any creature that brandishes the severed hand of Gozas.

**Damn It, Xorny.** If the xorn is traveling with the party, it doesn't understand the purpose of the silver dust and begins eating it. This, of course, could make for a poor situation for everyone involved.

**Treasure.** If a character searches the bas relief, on a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) they discover a secret compartment. The compartment is locked and the key is long gone. However, it can be picked with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Within the compartment is a white stone—*silingfashi shi* (see the Appendix)—and a 3-foot length of golden chain.

The gold chain radiates strong abjuration magic. It is the chain that keeps the Usteusian Punisher Lukos imprisoned in area 19.

## 17 - CHILDREN'S AREA

This large chamber has small, neatly made beds, wooden cribs, and wicker bassinets. There is a large slab of black slate set into a wooden frame hung against the eastern wall with the letters of the Common alphabet scrawled across it in chalk.

A large purple rug at the north end of the room is littered with small trinkets made of wood—children's toys.

There is nothing of value in the room. However, if the characters stay long enough, one or two of them might hear the sounds of children laughing from behind. When they turn to find the source, there's nothing there.

The door leading to area 16 is barred (see area 16 for details).

## 18 - STORAGE ROOM

If the characters try to enter this room from area 16, they will have to break the door down as it is barred from this side with a line of silver dust on the floor stretching from one edge of the frame to the other. See area 16 for details.

Stacks of dusty crates, barrels, and other boxes crowd this old storage room.

The food in the crates are long rotted away. Objects made of fabric have been eaten by insects. Only the metal items such as ingots, nails, and other building supplies remain in usable condition. In all, there is 400 lb of these building supplies. They are worth a total of 30 gp.

**Secret Doors.** There are two secret doors in this area.

The secret door in the western wall can be detected (from either side) with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. Finding the latch that moves the wall requires a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The secret door in the eastern wall is a little harder to locate, requiring a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to locate. A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a fake stone in the wall. When removed, there are two key holes. The keys are lost to history. A character can make a DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick the lock. Doing so may set off a trap (see below).



**Trap.** If a character attempts to pick the locks to the secret door that leads to area 19 and fails the check, they trigger a trap. Poison gas pours out of both keyholes. Each creature within 10 feet of the door must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature takes 14 (4d6) poison damage and is poisoned. While poisoned, the creature is blinded. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. Noticing the trap requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check made on the door. The trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Failing the check to disarm the trap by 5 or more triggers the trap. Once triggered, the trap no longer functions.

## 19 - LUKOS

When the characters first enter this area from area 18, read the following.

The secret door opens. Immediately, bright light spills out from the chamber in front of you. The smell of burning leather is strong. You hear what sounds like the fluttering of insect wings.

"Finally," croaks a voice from within. "You have to come to free Lukos."

This room is a 100-foot-diameter semicircle. Its 15-foot ceiling is propped up by thick stone columns at regular intervals. The walls lack the same art found throughout the rest of the temple.

At the center of the room, roughly 40-feet from where you stand, a pentagram has been drawn onto the floor. At the pentagram's center sits a strange looking creature. Superficially, it resembles a 12-foot-tall skeleton wearing plate armor. A pair of withered-looking butterfly wings stretch from its back. Its skull rests atop a three-foot long neck. The thing has no eyes—just bandages where its eyes should be. Regardless, it focuses its attention on you.

Both of its hands are bound and spread outward, golden chains holding it in place.

"Lukos smelled you the moment you entered the temple. Lukos knows you are not them, the ones who captured Lukos. Free Lukos, and the Grand One will not judge you so harshly when your time comes.

Lukos is an **Usteusian Punisher** (see the Appendix for his stats), a frightening-looking celestial who serves Usteus, the God of Judgment. Over a hundred years ago, Gozas and his three bishops conjured Lukos and bound him in this chamber. They sought to weaponize Lukos against the Pressonians. Lukas refused, so they left the celestial in the room by itself, hoping that it would change its mind. Lukos, an immortal, did not fear his internment. After all, what is a hundred years compared to a lifespan of millions?

**What Does Lukos Want?** Lukos wants to be freed and will do what he can to convince the characters to free him. He won't lie, nor can he. Regardless, he realizes that the characters are not his enemies. Still, Lukos does not tolerate chaos. Characters who act recklessly before Lukos may draw his wrath.

**What Does Lukos Know?** Lukos' incredible sense of smell gave him a clear view of the entire temple throughout its 200-year history. He knows all of its secrets and can detect all of the living creatures within. He also senses the undead that thrive in the temple.

Although he is not entirely certain what drove The Hand of Qortar from their temple a century ago, he suspects that may have been divine punishment for dabbling in dark conjuration.

"The one, Gozas, yes. Lukos' enemy. Gozas sought The Path through The Shadow. He forced his underlings to connect to the one he named Qortar. But Qortar lies. Qortar is a fiend. A horror who lives in a tower of damnation. Qortar' true name cannot be spoken, but Qortar knows many aliases. Qortar. Zalfaux. The Render. Desperon.

"One by one they were corrupted. Turned into beings of hate and evil."

**How to Free Lukos.** Lukos can only be freed if links from the magical gold chain from area 16 are broken. The chain has AC 21, 20 hp, immunity to poison and psychic damage, as well as immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage made by nonmagical attacks. He can also be freed if a *dispel magic* spell targeting a 9th-level spell is cast on Lukos or the chain. If the characters are unable to free Lukos, Lukos will not judge them harshly. But if they fail to free Lukos because they don't wish to and lie to him about their reasons, Lukos promises that their deception will inevitably catch up to them.

Once Lukos is freed, he teleports back to The Other, his home.

## 20 - CAFETERIA

This large room is split into two distinct sections. The first section holds three 30-foot long wooden tables flanked by multiple stone benches. The second section is a small kitchen area with a fire burning stove, bin for washing dishes, and multiple crates and barrels.

A large faded purple curtain hangs from the southwall, stretching across the entire room.

Thick layers of dust tell you that this area probably hasn't had a living person in here for decades.

This was once the temple's cafeteria where Gozas and the bishops cooked for the other members of The Hand.



The barrels and crates once held vegetables, long since decayed. All of the plateware and flatware are made of wood carved from timber gathered outside the original entrance.

There is nothing else of value here.

**Secret Doors.** There are two secret doors into and out of this area. The secret door in the eastern wall is described in area 19. The second secret door is in the southern wall hidden behind the curtain. If a character searches behind the curtain and succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, they find the old door. However, it's been sealed on the other side. Breaking the door down requires a DC 19 Strength check.

## 21 - TEMPLE ENTRANCE

If the characters first enter this area from area 20, read the following:

This chamber is 40-feet-by-40-feet with 15-foot high ceilings. The tile floors in this chamber are covered in a thick, putrid-smelling white substance which collects in small piles all around.

There are two exits. The southwest exit connects to a long, narrow corner that disappears into the darkness. Just to the west of that exit in the south wall a staircase descends for sixty feet then cuts northeast.

Painted on the eastern wall in the Common tongue are the words, "Qortar decieves."

A century ago, this was the method by which the apostatic Qortarians entered their temple from the outside world. Following the path to the southeast eventually leads the characters to the secret exit in the terrain that was covered by the landslide, roughly 300-feet from this area. Clearing the landslide takes one or more characters with a Strength score of 12 or higher 10 actions to clear away enough rocks to escape the tunnel.

**Creatures.** Unless the characters are careful, they will disturb the eight **stirges** sleeping upside down on the ceiling in the part of this chamber. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes that the presence of stirges means that they must be close to the surface.

**Sealed Doors.** The doors marked "S" on the map leading to area 20 and 23 were both sealed when the Qortarians evacuated the temple. One or more characters using masonry tools, crow bars, shovels, pickaxes, etc. can spend 10 actions breaking the material away in front of one of the doors.

When the door leading to area 23 is broken open, read the following:

A chill slides from the base of your skull to the bottom of your spine. The hairs on your arm stand straight up. You exhale—your breath turns to fog, almost as if the room's temperature suddenly dropped.

## 22 - CISTERNS

When the characters enter this area from the ambulatory, read the following:

The moment you enter this room, the smell of mold fills your nose. Directly across from you, a statue depicting a priest holding up a ball of light stands in the center of a scalloped alcove. The room stretches 50-foot north and 50-feet south from where you stand. At either end are two large pools placed at the center of rotundas. The southern well is surrounded by small benches with ceramic pitches.

Thick, black mold gathers around the northernmost pool covering the lip of the well, the wall, and the old, rotten towels that once surrounded it. Within the mold, you see what-looks-like hunks of glittering gold.

Both of these pools are fed by underwater springs. The bishops would regularly bless the waters, to keep them pure. Since their absence, fool's mold has entered the complex through the streams and now grows all over the walls by the northern pool.

The water in the southern pool is still clean and potable. Both pools are two-and-a-half-feet deep.

**Fool's Mold.** Fool's mold grows primarily underground. Overall, it resembles stinking, black mold, but its spores have the appearance of gold. Any creature that observes the gold and succeeds on a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes that the gold isn't real. If touched, the mold ejects a cloud of spores that fills a 10-foot cube originating from the mold. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and is poisoned. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.

Sunlight or any amount of fire damage instantly destroys one patch of fool's mold.

## 23 - THE LOST ALTAR OF QORTAR

When the characters first enter the Lost Altar, read the following:

This immense room boasts 50-foot high arched cathedral ceilings. You cannot even grasp the exact dimensions of the room as its full length vanishes beyond your field of vision in all directions.

Somewhere toward—what you can only guess is—the center of the complex a lone ray of light descends from the ceiling landing on top of a platform some thirty to forty feet above the floor.

**Portals to The Other.** The open pits marked "b" and "c" on the map are actually portals that act as doorways to The



Other, a dimension of endless shadow. Recognizing the portals for what they are requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If a character makes the poor choice of jumping into a portal, he or she ends up somewhere in the Shores of Despair. See the DMDave adventure *Hand of the Eight Chapter 8: The Shores of Shadow* for details.

**Platforms.** Once the characters are within view of the first tiered platform (marked “d” on the map), read the following:

A platform rises 15 feet from the floor. The entirety of its base is wrapped in images of priests holding orbs of light over their head as shadow creatures cower below them. You are now closer to the beam of light, which seems to fall on a point at the top of a second raised tier beyond this first. Although it is hard to make out exactly what the light illuminates, it seems to be an altar of some sort.

And as they reach the final platform (marked “e” on the map), read:

A tall flight of steps ascends an additional 15 feet from the first platform. This second platform is flanked by four unusual statues, each one depicting a creature with four arms and four legs. Where the creature’s heads should be, each statue has an unusual shape at the top of its “shoulders.” The northeastern statue has two thin tentacles that curl around each other, the ends of which ending in two “balls”. The northwestern statue has an insectoid head with a single multi-faceted eye at its center. The southeastern statue’s “head” looks as if it has melted. Only a double-lidded eye is recognizable at its center. Finally, the southwestern statue’s “head” is a perfect torus atop a slender “neck.”

Between these four eerie statues is a dais rising 5-feet off the platform. And at the center of the dais stands a stone altar. The altar is bookended by two partially melted candles at either end, both set into giant, blackened skulls.

At the center of the altar rests an unfurled scroll covered in fine, golden ink. The light from above shines directly onto the scroll. The center of the scroll is damaged, as if someone or something had once stabbed it.

The four statues represent dulons, specifically the infamous Four Generals of Presson’s Enclave and The Summer Land. The Qortarians believed that the Four Generals weren’t gods, but were, in fact, creatures from another realm of existence. This ideology is what led to their expulsion from their temples two centuries ago.

**Scroll of Qortar.** Upon the altar rests the *Scroll of Qortar*, supposedly gifted to Gozas and the Qortarians by Qortar himself. Qortar told Gozas that if the ritual written on the *Scroll* was performed correctly, a gate to The Narrow Path would open, granting the Qortarians unlimited knowledge of the Cosmos and all of creation. Gozas and his bishops

theorized that if they could achieve this knowledge, they could deliver the knowledge to the world and create lasting peace throughout Omeria.

Unfortunately, Gozas and his disciples were deceived. The *Scroll of Qortar* did not open The Narrow Path. Instead, it opened a tunnel directly to The Shores of Despair within The Other, a realm of endless shadow. Once opened, wicked creatures made of pure shadow spilled into The Real. Quickly, the Qortarians sealed the chamber to prevent the shadows from escaping. And for a time, the solution worked. The shadows could not escape. Still, their evil started to seep from the chamber and tainted the minds of the Qortarians, including Gozas’ trusted bishops and many of the disciples. Gozas knew that sealing the shadow creatures inside the temple would never be enough.

So Gozas made a plan. He and his three bishops would reenter the temple and destroy the *Scroll*, effectively cutting off the path to the shadow realm.

With the assistance of five of his bravest disciples, Gozas stormed the temple. Immediately, the hungry shadows attacked them from all sides. One by one Gozas’ disciples perished as they tried to reach the altar. Gozas finally reached the altar and cast a spell of protection upon his dagger, *Va’Qortrone*. Gozas then drove the dagger into the *Scroll*. A beam of pure, radiant light erupted from the ceiling of the temple and onto the *Scroll* exactly where the dagger struck. Instantly, all of the shadows in the area were destroyed. And no further shadows dared come through their portals—not so long as the light of Gozas continued to shine over the *Scroll of Qortar*.

Gozas was never the same. Attacking the *Scroll* destroyed his left hand. Additionally, the residual radiant energy from the light made him permanently sick. Three months after the raid on the temple, Gozas died. The apostatic Qortarians interred Gozas in a sarcophagus at the western side of the temple. The new leader of the Qortarians, Velon, removed the high priest’s hand and placed it into a linen shroud. Velon hid Gozas’ dagger within the Path of the Unwavering Convert. Finally, Velon and the Qortarians sealed the temple and fled. To ensure no one ever discovered the temple again, Velon and the disciples of Gozas buried the entrance to the temple under a landslide.

**Light of Gozas.** The light that pours from the ceiling casts bright light in a 10-foot radius all around it and dim light for another 10 feet. Treat the beam as sunlight for the purpose of imposing disadvantage or radiant damage to creatures affected by sunlight such as drow, shadows, and vampires.

**Touching the Scroll.** If the characters remove the *Scroll of Qortar* from its position under the beam of light, Gozas’ protection ritual is disrupted. Read:

There comes a low moan from behind you, somewhere to the north. Somewhere in the dark. As you listen, the moan grows louder. You can’t see where the sounds come from, but you know it’s coming closer.

Whatever is creating this sound—this horrible sound—cannot possibly be human.



**Shadows** start to pour from the pits marked “a” and “b” at the north end of the room. The first round after the characters remove the *Scroll*, there are only a handful. But more and more flood out each round filling the entire area. Ravenous, the shadows head directly for the characters. They won't climb onto the altar's platform (location “e”) so long as the light from the ceiling remains. By round 5, the characters are completely surrounded. The shadows will not enter the area of bright or dim light created by the beam of light.

### SHADOW ATTACK

Once the *Scroll* is removed from its place on the altar, the shadows are free to escape The Other. The characters must find a way to escape or suffer doom at the hands of the ravenous undead.

**Movement.** If a character moves away from the area of bright and dim light created by the light of Gozas and into the horde of shadows or ends their turn within the horde, they must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and their Strength score is reduced by 2d6. The character dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 minutes later.

**Light.** These shadows dread light much more than typical shadows. The shadows immediately move away from any source of magical light, such as the light created by the light cantrip or *Va'Qortrone*.

**Replacing or Destroying the *Scroll of Qortar*.** Replacing the *Scroll* is not enough to reestablish Gozas' original ritual. The *Scroll* must be destroyed.

To destroy the *Scroll*, a character must place the *Scroll* back into the light of Gozas. A character can then use an action to make a ranged attack or melee attack, or to cast a spell, targeting the *Scroll*. Assume that any attack rolls hit but are not critical hits, and disregard any effect of the attack or spell for this purpose other than the damage it deals. The *Scroll* is immune to necrotic, poison and psychic damage, as well as bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage made by nonmagical attacks. And the *Scroll* is vulnerable to radiant damage.

If the total damage from all the attacks or spells used on the character's turn is 20 or higher, the *Scroll* is destroyed. When the *Scroll* is destroyed, it sends a blast of bright light across the entire chamber, decimating all of the shadows within. The portals to The Other are sealed once and for all.

## WRAP-UP: THE END OF QORTAR

The end of the adventure should play out one of two ways.

If the characters destroy the *Scroll of Qortar*—by either allowing the mummy of Gozas to finish what he started in life

or by destroying it themselves—the portals to The Other within the temple seal shut. Qortar—or whatever his true name is—must find another way to bring his undead forces into The Real.

If the characters remove the *Scroll of Qortar* and unleash the undead without destroying the *Scroll* and manage to escape, then Qortar's undead forces can escape the Lost Altar. The shadows lurk in the forest and mountains of the surrounding area. They kill all living creatures they come into contact with, adding more to their numbers. Eventually, more heroes will have together and fight the shadows or risk the world collapsing into The Other.

Of course, it's possible that the characters never find the *Scroll of Qortar*. Probably better that way.

### THE GNOLLS

If enough of The Cruel Fish gnolls survived, they regroup and recruit more creatures into their ranks. The characters' attack was seen only as a temporary setback. After a few weeks, their raids continue, this time, under the leadership of a new gnoll war chief, far more deadly and devious than either one of their predecessors.

### EXPERIENCE

Destroying the *Scroll of Qortar* and surviving the horde of shadows should warrant the characters a total of 3,000 XP for their efforts, or whatever other milestone you feel is appropriate. Award an additional 200 XP per character if they manage to stop the Cruel Fish and both of its leaders, the cultist Chaol and the gnoll war chief Otzhun.

### TREASURE

In addition to treasure mentioned throughout the adventure, the characters might exit the Lost Altar of Qortar with one or more of the important artifacts. If they can find buyers for the objects, they have the following values:

- *Va'Qortrone* is worth 300 gp.
- *The Scroll of Qortar* is worth 5,000 gp to anyone who understands its purpose. However, possessing such a dangerous item is certain to draw attention from multiple religious scholars—good, evil, and everything in between—across Omeria.
- The golden chain used to bind Lukos is worth 5,500 gp. Usteusian priests might recognize its purpose and challenge the characters where they found the object. If the priests learn that the characters could have freed Lukos but didn't, the characters might find themselves in trouble with yet another cult.
- The six-fingered hand of Gozas, while unusual, is thought of as nothing more than an unusual trinket. The characters might earn a few gold pieces from an interested hag, occult bookshop owner, or museum curator. Ω



# APPENDIX

## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items appear in this adventure.

### SILINFASHI SHI

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

The white gem known as silinfashi shi, or "necromancer stone" is predominantly found on the ashen covered slopes of the volcanic Xenem Dynasty. They are the Jaduee-Patr gems of necromancy.

While attuned to a 2-inch diameter piece of silinfashi shi you gain immunity to necrotic damage and you no longer require food, drink, or sleep. In addition, you become invisible to all undead creatures of CR 2 or lower. You can choose to reveal yourself to any number of undead of your choice without using an action.

### VA'QORTRONE

*Weapon (dagger), rare (requires attunement)*

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

You can use a bonus action to speak this magic dagger's command word, causing bright light to shed from the blade in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. While the dagger is glowing, it deals an extra 2d6 radiant damage to any target it hits. The light lasts until you use a bonus action to speak the command word again or until you drop or sheathe the dagger.

## NEW MONSTERS

The monsters listed below appear in this adventure.

### FADRAX

Sometimes referred to as "Lesser Wraiths", fadraxes are the life drained remains of celestials who have been pulled into the Other, particularly devas and planetars. They appear as hollow, formless creatures made of white smoke. Their faces give little to no hint at the creature they once were. Where their wings once emerged from their backs only burning white fire remains.

**Undead Nature.** The fadrax does not require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### GEM SKULL

A favored guardian of archmages, gem skulls are human skulls decorated with gems and precious metals. Intelligent and insightful, some archmages even use the skulls as companions and assistants in their laboratories and libraries.

**Constructed Nature.** The gem skull does not require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### GNOLL WAR CHIEF

Gnoll war chiefs are bigger, meaner, and much more intelligent than their inferior counterparts. For these horrors,

there is no limit to their depravity. And so long as the food doesn't run out, the gnolls who follow the war chiefs continue to do so with unbridled enthusiasm.

### USTEUSIAN PUNISHER

Usteusian punishers are hardly what one imagines when one hears the term "angel" or "celestial." Nonetheless, these servants of the two-faced god of judgement Usteus act as the the accusers and punishers of the damned. Punishers are ten-foot tall from foot to shoulder with four-foot-long extendable necks terminating in an eyeless skull. The punishers wield gargantuan hammers, the Mauls of the Guilty, which they use to crush those who oppose justice.

**Immortal Nature.** The punisher does not require food, drink, or sleep.

### GNOLL WAR CHIEF

*Medium humanoid (gnoll), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (chain shirt, shield)

**Hit Points** 78 (12d8 + 24)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Wis +3

**Skills** Intimidation +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Gnoll

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Rampage.** When the gnoll reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the gnoll can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The gnoll makes three attacks, either with its battleaxe or its longbow.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

**Battleaxe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage when wielded with two hands.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.



## FADRAX

Medium undead, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8 + 8)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Beste

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** The fadrax can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

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

**Whispers in the Dark.** The fadrax constantly whispers to itself. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the fadrax and can hear the fadrax must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature can't take reactions and its movement is reduced by half until the start of its next turn.

### Actions

**Life Drain. Melee Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 12 (2d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Consume Fadrax (1/Day).** The fadrax targets another fadrax within 10 feet of it that has half of its hit points remaining or less. The target is destroyed and the fadrax gains temporary hit points equal to half of the target's remaining hit points. Until the fadrax loses these temporary hit points, it gains the following benefits: it gains advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks and it gains the Multiattack action, which it can use to make two Life Drain attacks.

## GEM SKULL

Tiny construct, neutral

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 27 (6d4 + 12)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +5

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics).** The gem skull can innately cast *mage hand*, requiring no components to do so. Its innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). The hand is invisible.

**Magic Resistance.** The gem skull has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Eerie Resemblance.** The gem skull resembles a greater lich. A creature that can see the gem skull can discern its true nature with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The gem skull makes two psychic blast attacks.

**Psychic Blast. Ranged Spell Attack:** +5 to hit, range 100 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 21 (4d8 + 3) psychic damage and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or become stunned until the end of its next turn.

**Scream (Recharge 5-6).** The gem skull emits an earsplitting howl. Each creature within 60 feet of the gem skull that can hear it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 7 (2d6) thunder damage and is deafened for 1 minute on a failed saving throw, or takes half as much damage and isn't deafened on a successful one. A deafened creature can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success.



## USTEUSIAN PUNISHER

Large celestial, lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 175 (13d10 + 104)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	13 (+1)	26 (+8)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Con +13, Wis +10, Cha +10

**Skills** Perception +15

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

**Senses** blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 25

**Languages** all, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Angelic Weapons.** The punisher's weapon attacks are magical. When the punisher hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 radiant damage (included in the attack).

**Divine Awareness.** The punisher knows if it hears a lie.

**Foe of Chaos.** The punisher has advantage on attack rolls made against creatures of chaotic alignment.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The punisher's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). The punisher can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect evil and good*

3/day each: *command*, *hold monster*

1/day each: *commune*, *locate creature*, *telekinesis*

**Keen Smell.** The punisher has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Magic Resistance.** The punisher has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### Actions

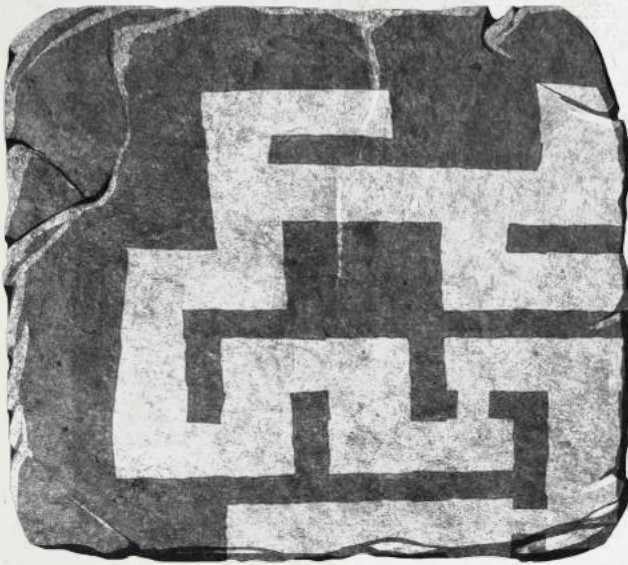
**Multiattack.** The punisher makes two melee attacks.

**Maul. Melee Weapon Attack:** +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage. After the punisher hits a creature with this attack, it can use its bonus action to force the creature to make a DC 20 Strength saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature is knocked back 10 feet and falls prone.

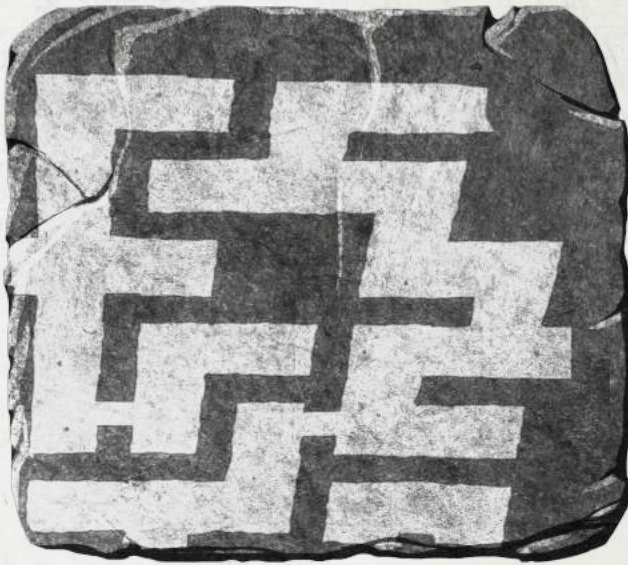
**Bandages of Usteus (1/Day).** The punisher conjures magical bandages that appear out of thin air then wrap themselves around a creature that the punisher can sense within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target is restrained by the bandages. While restrained, the creature can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) at the start of each of the punisher's turns. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. If the bandages reduce the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies and a mummy rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later. The bandages can be cut away (AC 10; 5 hit points; immunity to poison and psychic damage; resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons). The bandages can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 18 Strength check against them.



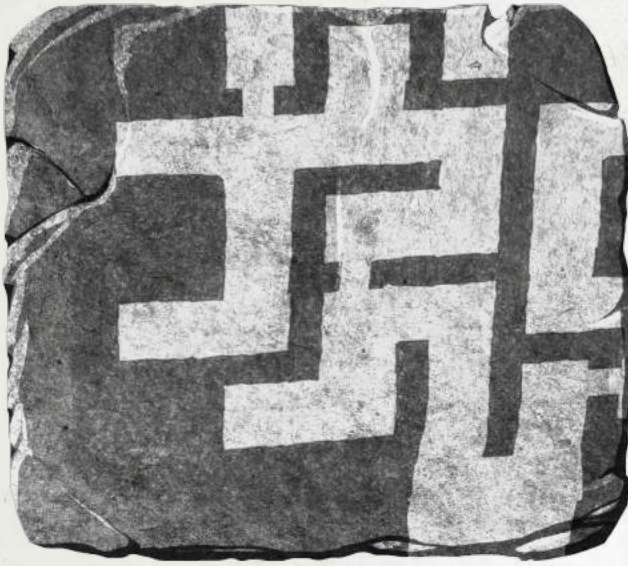
# PLAYER HANDOUTS



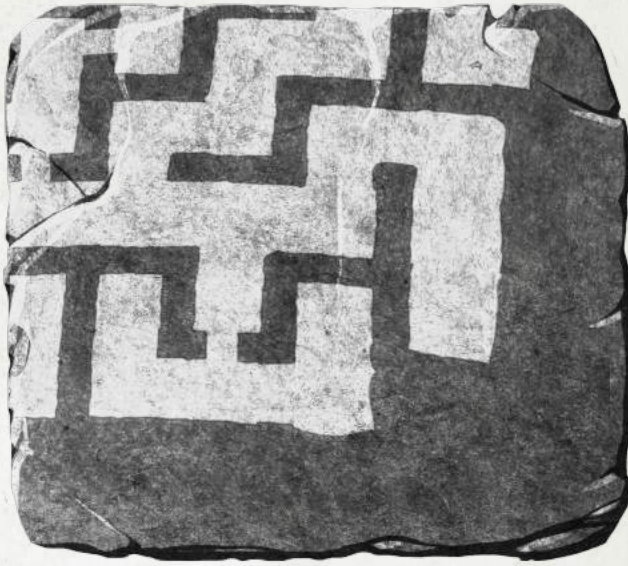
Piece A (Cruel Fish Den, Area 14)



Piece B (Cruel Fish Den, Area 14)



Piece C (Cruel Fish Den, Area 24)



Piece D (Cruel Fish Den, Area 14)



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