

THROUGH THE LAYERS OF HELL

Not a dungeon with a beginning or end. 'Tis a never-ending maze of caverns, tunnels, and a few empty chambers. A way out? Maybe in another layer...

Fragment of The Hell Chronicles - Tome III

The realm of devils is no place for mortals. The dwellers of the several layers of hell do not forgive any trespassers. Despite it being a suicide mission to come to the place of immortal monsters; it is usually the other way around. Devils spend their lives looking for ways to interfere or mess with the Material Plane. The most powerful devils can create doors between worlds and walk among humans, assuming the size and shape of an amicable humanoid.

DEVILISH CRIMES

IT NEVER ENDS well when devils cross the door-gate and invade the Material Plane. It does not matter who wins. Murders, bloodshed, and horrible magical battles that scar the land are sure to come if a devil finds its way into the world of men. And when the opportunity arises, devils may work together to deal a devastating blow to their enemies. For instance, kidnapping a king.

ADVENTURE SCOPE

THIS IS A mid-tier adventure that requires the characters to travel to the plane of devils, the Layers of Hell, to save the king. The heroes have a decent standing with the authorities of the realm and are considered trusted advisors and great warriors of the kingdom. Otherwise, they would not be summoned for this crucial quest.

The heroes are in Harrowem, the capital. Sylja, the court wizard, summoned the party to task them with saving His Majesty, King Owen IV. Sylja opens a portal to the Layers of Hell when the heroes are ready. The GM should change any of these names to fit their campaign.

RUMORS

d4 Details

- 1 A crazy rumor that a superior race disguised as normal people control the city is surprisingly popular these days.
- 2 People have had nightmares since the king was kidnapped. This horrible thing occurred five nights ago.
- 3 On their way to see Sylja, the characters hear people claim that the king's most loyal advisor is a traitor. The gossipers do not specify who this person is, though.
- 4 The heroes have heard that Harrowem is not what it was some years ago. Some people are glad to see the king gone and expect someone better to take his place.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Rescue. The characters must travel to the Layers of Hell. Sylja perceived the king's heartbeat with a powerful spell; This allows her to create a gate that shall take the heroes close to His Majesty (100 gp, 8 XP).

Level 6 Adventure

► **Danger.** Deadly. Check for a random event every **crawling round** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Hell is dark and dangerous. All areas the characters visit are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Dark Beacons.** Besides the lack of light sources, this hellish place moorland is filled with dark beacons (see map). Torches, lamps, or any other light sources are sucked by these braziers of dark ether. Once per day, each beacon can dispel one light source within 30 feet.

RANDOM EVENTS

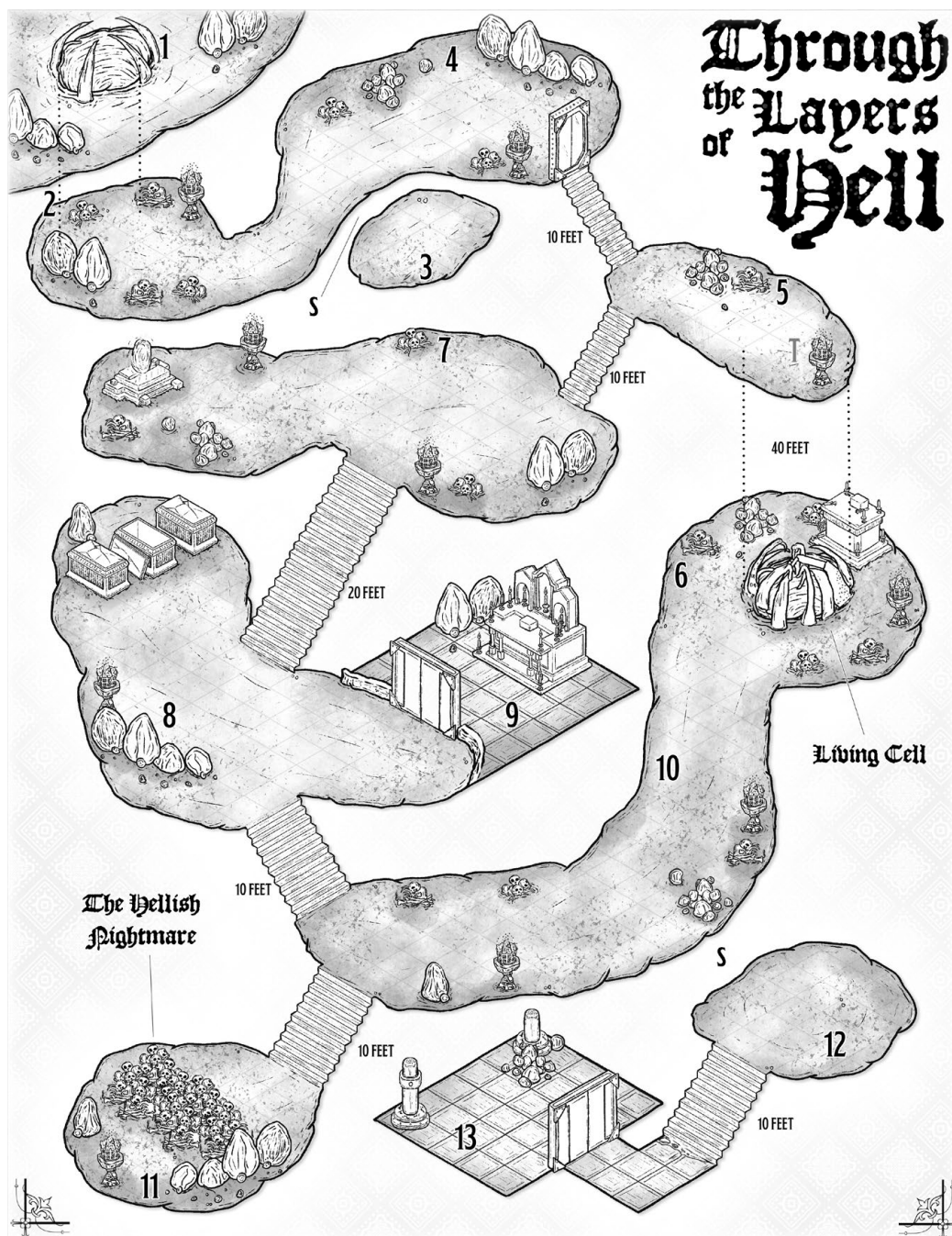
d8 Details

- 1 An **imp** appears and offers the characters a mighty boon in exchange for their soul. If a character agrees, they gain two levels. Their soul belongs now to an archdevil and the contract was signed in hell. They may never leave.
- 2 A devilish leech (**giant leech**) drops from the ceiling and attaches to the character wearing the least armor.
- 3 A sudden earthquake makes rocks and debris fall on the characters. They take 2d6 damage (DC 15 DEX check).
- 4 1d20 **skeletons** rise around the characters and attack!
- 5 A **gibbering moulder** approaches from the depths. The stench of blood or the noise has brought it to this place.
- 6 The screams of a man echo through hell. Cruel visions of an agonizing man flashes into the characters' minds.
- 7 The very fabrics of the world tear apart and a **nightmare** appears. It tramples at the heroes with flaming hooves.
- 8 The characters must face fire itself. A **greater fire elemental** follows their tracks and fights until slain.

1. ACCESS TO THE LAYERS (ENTRANCE)

Sylja is the last thing the characters see before crossing the portal. A thousand colors dance around while they traverse the planes. They land safely here.

► **Sylja's Device.** She gives the heroes a small compass that points to the king's heartbeat. Before the gate of teeth, the trinket points downward (see map).



Through the Layers of Hell

3. HIDDEN AREA

Some valuables have been lost in this small cavern for ages. The characters find 178 gp worth of coinage from a bygone era (DC 13 INT), a ruby (200 gp), a dragon-bone ink-pot and quill, and a stained glass beetle.

4. DEVILISH THOUGHTS

When the characters try to open the door to area 5, they are struck by thoughts of madness. Their minds are assailed by hell itself (DC 14 WIS check). On a fail, the victim becomes hostile toward all living creatures around them for 1d4 rounds. They may repeat the save at the end of each of their turns.

5. DESCENDING

The journey through hell continues. Sylja's device still points downward, the heroes must descend even further. If the characters decide to explore this area, they may spot the pitfall trap (DC 15 WIS check).

► **Pitfall Trap.** Victims take 6d6 damage and remain restrained and trapped within the monster cell (see below).

6. MONSTER CELL

The person trapped within the cell can try to free themselves. However, they have disadvantage on all checks and attacks.

The Cell. With enough time, this living beast will eat any victim. For each round spent within, the victim must succeed on a DC 12 STR check or be swallowed whole by the beast and die. Increase this check's difficulty by 1 each time they pass. The victim breaks free when they succeed. The cell has AC13 and 30 hit points.

7. LOWER LAYER

The characters find two **wights** and eight **skeletons** here. The undead attack the characters on sight.

Hellish Portal. Each minute, a **skeleton** emerges from this door. There are 2-in-6 chances that a **wight** comes out instead. A *dispel magic* spell disables the summoning gate for 24 hours. The portal is superior magic that cannot be destroyed by means available to mortals.

2. LANDING

Descending through the gate of teeth deals 2d6 damage (DC 14 DEX check). The soil is littered with gnawed bones. Carcasses, skulls, and cruel derisions to life scattered around the filthy soil. The heroes meet the first of King Owen IV's kidnappers and guardians here.

► **Dorogzogon.** A **barbed devil** waits for the party to descend before approaching. Dorogzogon states its name, it stands in the characters' way and mocks their mortal souls and current predicament. When combat starts, two **imps** appear to help their devil comrade.

► **Hidden Area.** The characters find this area if they spot the weak spot on the wall (DC 13 WIS). It takes one **crawling round** to remove the rocks to form a path.

8. SARCOPHAGI OF SOULS

The characters hear cries for help while descending the stairs to this area. They come from the sarcophagi at the end of this chamber. When the characters approach, they can almost feel the pain and agony of thousands of souls. If the characters touch the sarcophagi or defile the dead in some way, three **wraiths** materialize and attack them.

► **A Good Deed.** A religious character may pray and help these lost souls. They must spend 1 **crawling round** communing with the spirits to find a way out of hell for them. Doing this earns the characters a **luck token**.

9. DEVILISH SHRINE

The gate to this area is a blood passage. This is a horrible contraption of a door that exists in hell. To open it, a living creature must make a blood sacrifice. If they agree to lose 1/2 of their total hit points, they may enter. It is a magical door and only those who give blood may pass.

► **The Shrine.** An altar to venerate devils, the rulers of hell. Standing before it grants visions of devils cutting off their fingers or entire limbs. The ultimate offering to their gods of chaos. The characters are free to make a gift of this nature and receive a devil's favor. If they sign this blood contract, they become allies of hell. They become more powerful than ever, but may never leave.

10. DESCENDING THROUGH HELL

The monster cell (area 6) rests at the end of this large cavern. Lost souls fly about 20 feet above. They utter nonsensical gibberish or repeat themselves over and over. The spirits are harmless and do not attack.

► **Zernuth.** A **horned devil** is the characters' next opponent. Zernuth introduces itself, it wants the heroes to know the name of the one who ended their lives. Two **barbed devils** appear to help their foul master.

11. MOUNTAIN OF NIGHTMARES

The characters stand before a being from another reality. An awakened, giant mound of skulls and bones starts advancing and covering as much ground as it can. The monster tries to push the heroes into the cell (area 6).

HELLISH NIGHTMARE

A relentless, mindless giant pile of skulls and bones that swallows everything in its path.

AC 12 **HP** 18, **ATK** 2 slams +3 (1d8 + engulf), **MV** near (climb), **S** +2, **D** -1, **C** +1, **I** -3, **W** +1, **Ch** -3, **AL** C, **LV** 2

Undead. Immune to morale checks.

Engulf. If it hits with both slam attacks (DC 14 DEX) or engulfed. Victims take 2d8 damage each round and have disadvantage on all checks and attacks. The nightmare can have two creatures engulfed at a time.

12. THE TRAPPED KING

Sylja's device points the characters to this secret area. They must spend 1 **crawling round** removing rocks and debris to reveal the tunnel to area 12. A blood gate (see area 9) stands between the characters and the king.

► **Plot Twist.** His Majesty, King Owen IV, is tied up. He is in horrible shape but has no lethal injuries. The characters are almost ready to go when the king says:

No! Did she send you? She planned all this from the beginning. And the only ones who could challenge her are you. You were hired to die, not to save me! Sylja is a devil, that woman is THE devil incarnate.

Sylja appears behind the heroes, showing her real self (**cubi devil**), and confirms everything. Her plan was for the heroes to perish in hell. She thought they would die faster. Four **imps** fight with her in battle. However, this adventure may have a different end (see **Conclusion**).

CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure. And now they must face the consequences of their deeds.

► **Heroes.** The king is saved and Harrowem returns to normal. With Sylja gone, all devils disguised in the city leave. Half the court is nowhere to be found. The characters cut the snake's head and avoided a calamity.

► **Hell's Allies.** If the heroes accept an imp's deal (**Events**) or make an offering (area 9), Sylja claims they have shown their true selves. She orders them to kill the king to officially sign their allegiance. If they agree, the heroes become hell's agents. The implications of this are massive. The GM is free to deal with this as they see fit.

