

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

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Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits	2	The Forgotten Saint	28
		<i>Level 2 Adventure</i>	
Table of Contents	3	New Monsters	44
		<i>Amazing New Statblocks</i>	
Introduction.	4	Cracking the Vault	46
		<i>One-Page Dungeon</i>	
Tainted Water	6	The Pharaoh's Vault	47
<i>Level 1 Adventure</i>		<i>Level 1 Adventure</i>	
Burial of Blossoms	23	Licensing	61
<i>Brochure Adventure</i>		Thank You	62
Campsite Tales	25		
<i>Quirky NPCs</i>			



INTRODUCTION

PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important task. The GM is the table's narrator and organizer for a good game. You must take care of the narrative and adjudicate the party's actions. You transform these words into a living thing.

Here are a few guidelines to help you make this happen:

You have the Power. You make the decisions about the adventure progress and how the group interacts with NPCs, creatures, and the setting's elements. You are encouraged to improvise and change things. We encourage 'Rule 0': the GM is the **sole authority**; the rules can be adjusted or disregarded by the GM to favor the story.

Give Them a Good Challenge. A good challenge does not necessarily mean lots of battles. Try to give the group what they crave the most. A role-playing situation like a tough negotiation, an interrogation, or calling a favor may be as intense as a full-blown battle.

Do not Stall. Feel free to provide hints, clues, or a helping NPC to get back on track. Hints and clues may present themselves as 'ideas' or 'thoughts' the characters have. An alternative method is to introduce an NPC who will provide a veiled suggestion to the characters directly and serve as the 'GM's voice' from inside the story.

CREATING AN ADVENTURING PARTY

There are no alignment requirements for this adventure. A matter of taste, we also recommend doing away with darkvision. If you play with a new batch of PCs, ask the players why their character are together and acting as a team. This will help the game go smoother and it will give them a few cues on how to interact with each other.

ABOUT LINEARITY AND PLAYER AGENCY

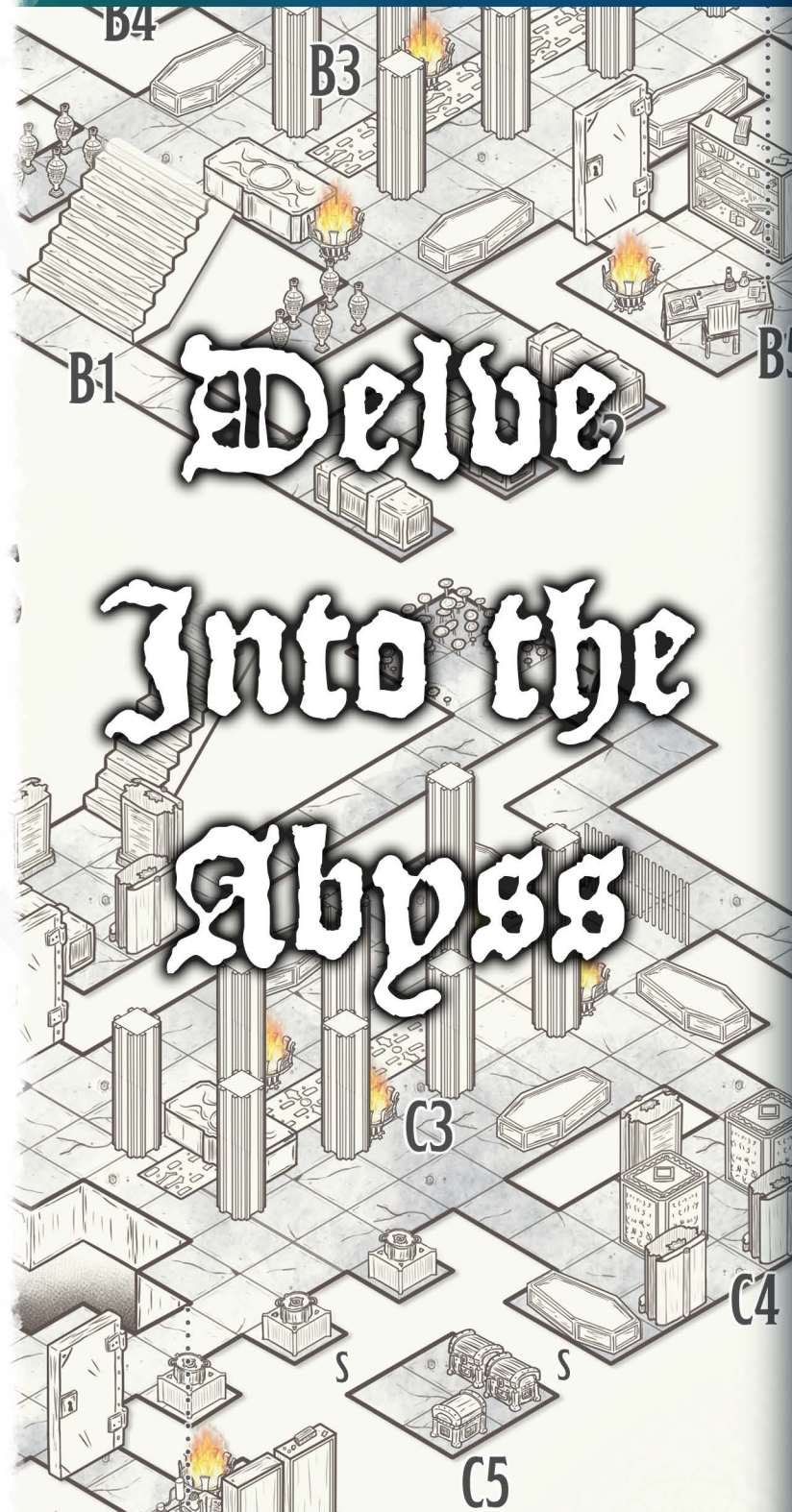
The options in this adventure are not exhaustive but there is a limited amount of information or options a module can include. This adventure, as written, is somewhat linear but the intention is not to constrain players' creativity and options. We have included what we believe are the most likely courses of action in the adventure.

ABOUT NOTATION

Some events or things described in this document express their odds of happening in this format: "1-in-6", "2-in-6" and so on. This means that the GM rolls a d6. Rolling the first number or less means success.

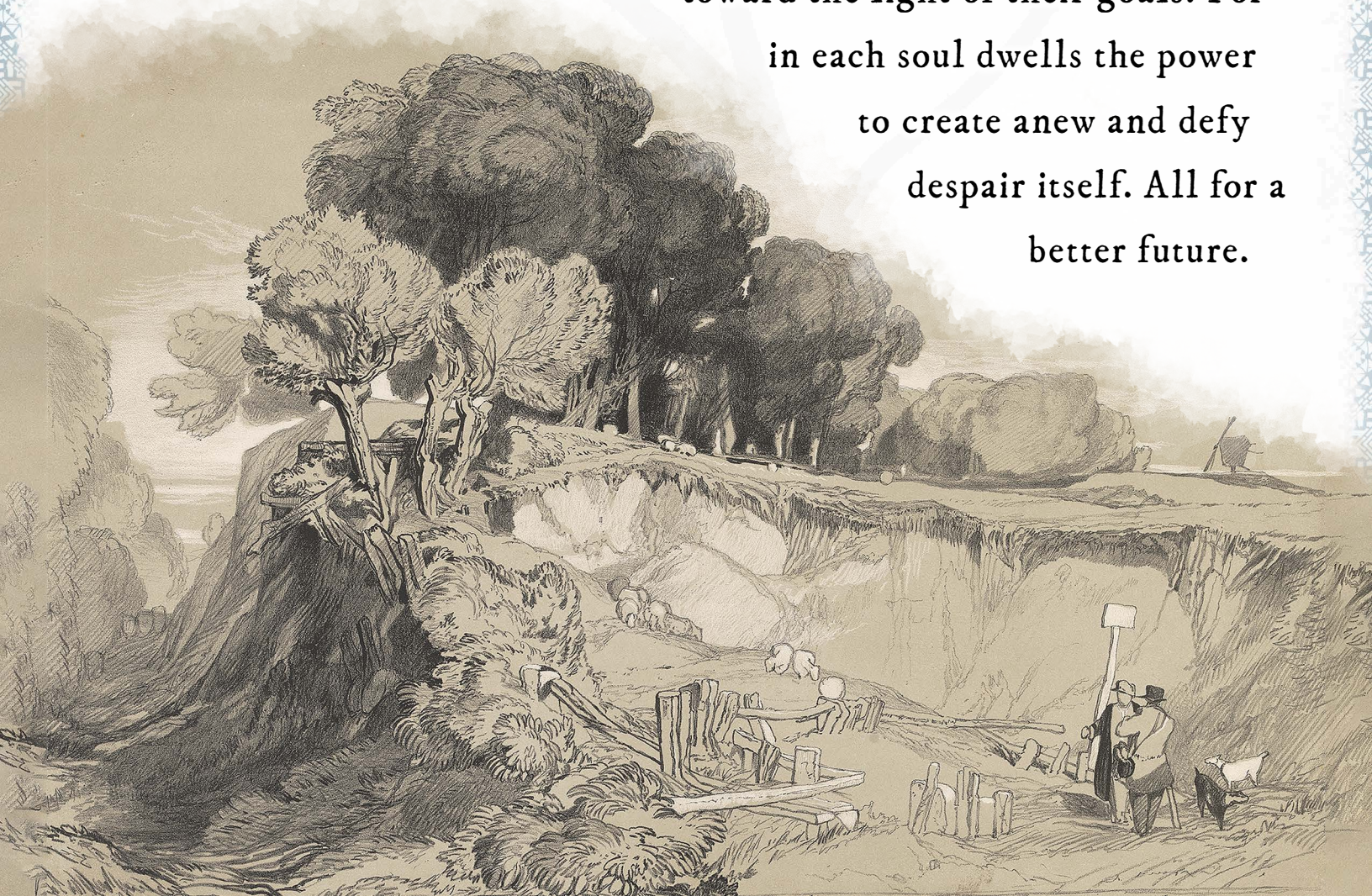
There is a 2-in-6 chance of finding the hidden door.

This means that a player or the GM rolls a 1d6, on a result of 2 or lower, the hidden door is found.

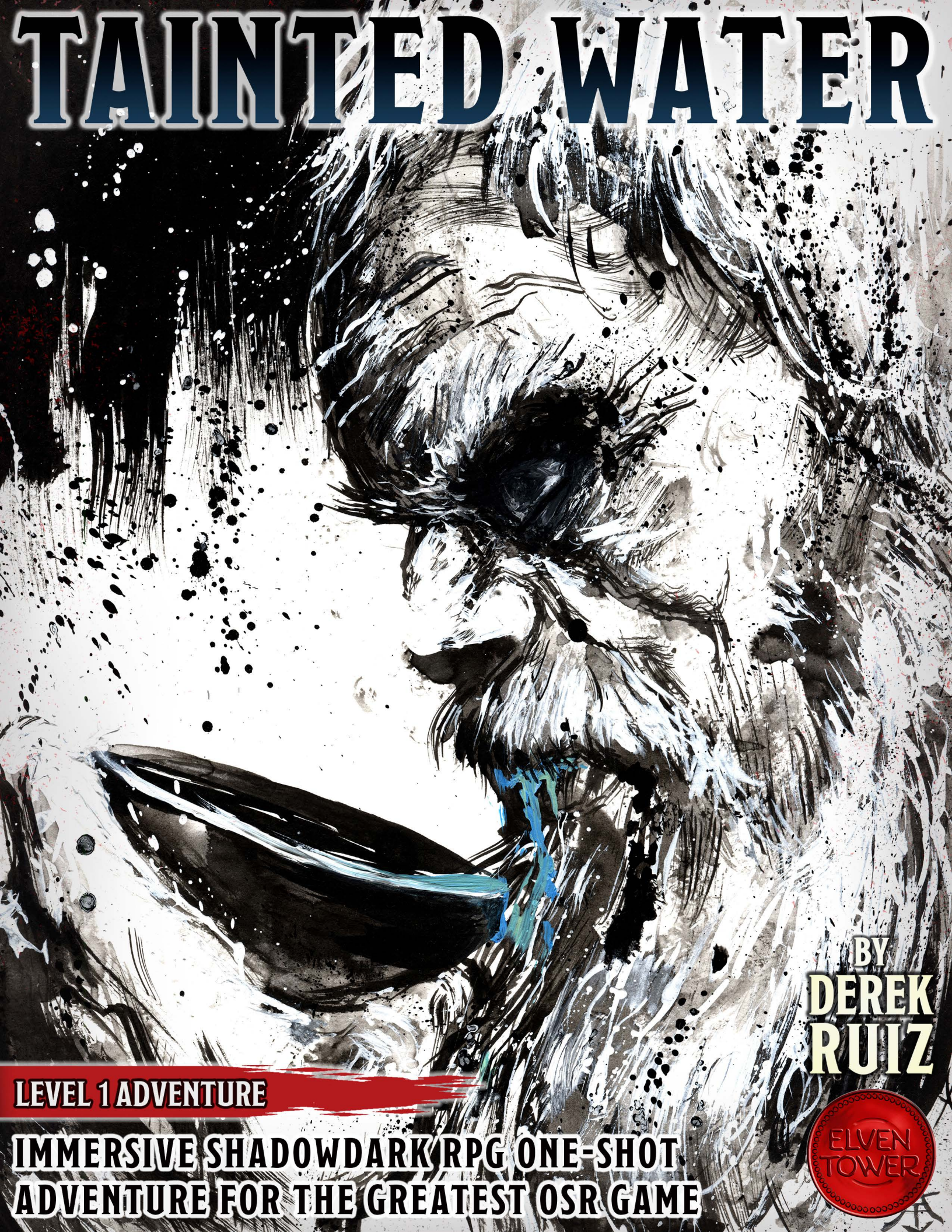


The Will of Men

Within the ashes of ruin, where darkness claims its dominion, the will of mankind ignites like a spark against the void. Though kingdoms crumble and the earth weeps with despair, humanity's strength lies in its unyielding resolve to rise. Through shattered dreams and broken halls, they rebuild—brick by brick, hope by hope. Heroes emerge not from gilded thrones but from the determination of those who refuse defeat. It is the fire of their hearts, the iron of their will, that reshapes the world. Against all odds, the brave strive, proving that even when all seems lost, mankind endures—undaunted, relentless, and ever-reaching toward the light of their goals. For in each soul dwells the power to create anew and defy despair itself. All for a better future.



TAINTED WATER



BY
**DEREK
RUIZ**



LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

**IMMERSIVE SHADOWDARK RPG ONE-SHOT
ADVENTURE FOR THE GREATEST OSR GAME**

ADVENTURE PRIMER



ong ago, a cadre of vile mages, their crimes etched in dark history, was condemned not to death but to eternal containment. Deep beneath the earth, a hidden tomb was carved—a prison of black stone and ancient curses, meant to hold the twisted magic of those whose sorcery had strayed too far. At the heart of this forgotten sepulcher lies a sinister pond of obsidian sludge, a pool into which the darkness of the mages' souls was drawn and bound. Over the centuries, the pond drank in the hatred, malice, and vile sorcery of its captives, growing darker and thicker with every cursed soul laid to rest in the tomb. As the years crept on, the enchantments weakened and the goo found ways to seep through cracks and hidden pathways.

Above this prison is Vadalia Farm. It is a 1-hour ride from Drake's Pass, the nearest town. Wade Vadalia, his sons, Carl and Eagon, and his daughter, Marianne, live here. But recent weeks saw unsettling changes; an unsettling aura, withering crops, livestock falling sick, and water from the well turning oil-like, and bitter.

THE CREEPING DEATH

ONE FATEFUL NIGHT, the sinister ooze, at last, breached the farmstead's well, releasing itself upon the Vadalia household in the form of oozing, writhing abominations born of malice and malevolent sorcery. The cellar of their modest farmhouse became a chamber of horror as the ooze-born beings slithered forth, attacking with a hunger forged in centuries of dark imprisonment. The Vadalia family fought desperately, but their efforts were in vain. Only Marianne managed to flee, riding hard through the night, her heart pounding with unfiltered terror.

She now seeks help in Drake's Pass, the nearest village, hoping she will meet heroes who can rid her home of this evil, restore peace to her family's land, and seal the dark magic that festers below before it spreads any further. The brave woman is willing to wield whatever weapon at hand to attempt to save her family.

INHUMANE PUNISHMENT

Before being entombed, the condemned mages endured a harrowing rite of purification, designed to scour the darkness from their souls. They were shackled to an iron rack set within a chamber of jagged stones, its walls lined with arcane symbols of torment. Chains inscribed with binding runes held their limbs, preventing any arcane gestures or spellcasting. Once bound, they were subjected to a series of physical agonies—a relentless sequence of pain meant to break their twisted spirits.

Each mage was exposed to elemental torments: searing heat that blistered flesh, frost that numbed bones, and lashes from *enchanted* whips that left no mark but seared the soul. Between each agony, priests of the Cleansing Order recited incantations of spiritual 'purging', chanting to extract fragments of darkness. Only when their cries faded to hollow whispers were they released—stripped, broken, and emptied of will—and cast into the depths of their dark tomb, where the black pond awaited to consume what evil lingered.

HOOK - SAVING THE FARM

MARIANNE ARRIVES ON horseback with dire news at dusk. She rushes to the Drake's Resolve tavern to inform the locals that her farm was attacked by strange, shapeless monsters that emerged from the well (see **The Farmer's Plea**). Sarkon, the innkeeper, Rickon Humbert, and many peasants are taken aback by this news. The characters are here, enjoying dinner and drink.

The townsfolk, in dismay and cowardice, ponder whether they should rush to aid Marianne or just send a letter west to inform the capital authorities and await reinforcements. Alas, it might take a week for anyone to come, if they come at all. Or so Sarkon claims. In this moment of turmoil, both Marianna and Rickon make a persuading call for valiant people and travelers to join them on this quest (see **The Farmers' Plea**).

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	Rickon, the best swordsman in Drake's Pass, courts Marianne. Legend has it that he is soon to propose marriage to her.
2	The Vadalias are hard workers whose wheat farm feeds half the region. Wade Vadalia is a successful, efficient farmer.
3	For decades it has been said that there was once a temple where the Vadalia's estate is. Almost no one knows that this temple fostered a group known as the Cleansing Order, a cabal of priests whose job was to hunt and get rid of evil mages and sorcerers.
4	Many recall that Wade Vadalia spoke of a strange earthquake on his farm a few months back. He said that his cellar's wall collapsed partially, revealing behind it a slithering, natural cavern. Wade did not explore the cave and just repaired his wall.
5	People say last season's wheat harvest was less plentiful. Some of it was spoiled, darkened by an oil-like, bitter film.
6	Locals in Drake Pass tavern recall Carl Vadalia complaining that their well's water had become repugnant and soiled.

THE FARMER'S PLEA

AS THE TOWNSFOLK gather around Marianne, her tear-streaked face and desperate words stir a restlessness in their hearts. She begs those present to accompany her to the farm to save her family. The Vadalias' problem presents an opportunity to those yearning for something greater. Rickon Humbert, a local lad with fire in his eyes, stands tall and calls for those brave enough to follow him into the unknown. This is not a task for the faint of heart; the monsters described are unlike anything the townsfolk have seen. This is the characters' first opportunity to leave behind their lives of labor, rise among their peers, and prove to others what they are truly capable of.

RICKON HUMBERT

Human guard

He is a young, strong lad who forms part of the town's voluntary watch. Rickon has trained with sword and spear for years and is regarded as the best fighter in Drake's Pass. He enjoys Marianne's lute-playing visits in the tavern and has developed a romantic interest in her. As part of his duties, Rickon escorts shipments from Vadalia's Farm to nearby towns. Thus, he is good friends with Marianne's father, Wade Vadalia. Rickon is eager to help the Vadalia with their current predicament.

Manner. Respect, titles, and accomplishments... I must earn them. I want nothing to do with free things.

Ambition. I'll be a knight one day. My actions shall bring my family and bloodline out of peasantry.

ALLIES IN DRAKE'S PASS

THE CHARACTERS ARE not alone in this adventure. Rickon and Marianne accompany the party from the beginning. Apart from them, the characters have some time to visit other areas in Drake's Pass and convince others to join them. The retired adventurer Emlyn is a great choice (area A3). In addition, many who prefer to wait have gathered at Jaggel's House (area A5). But the characters can still convince a few of them to join them on their fated journey to Vadalia's Farm.

Sarkon, the eldest in town, remains conservative about the plan. He warns the characters against such braze actions. He believes in a calm life of peasant's work.



MARIANNE VADALIA

Human peasant

She is a hard-working woman who spends her days in the fields and caring for the family's cattle. In her free time, Marianne likes to play the lute and sing folk tunes in the nearby tavern in Drake's Pass. Her life suddenly became a nightmare after the well's tainted water bubbled up. She witnessed her brother Carl's murder by a strange ooze-like monster. Her father Wade, to protect her, ordered her to ride to Drake's Pass to seek help before grabbing a shovel and climbing down to the cellar.

Manner. I won't let life make me a coward. I'll do whatever is necessary to survive and take care of my family.

Ambition. I'll avenge my brother and save the rest of my family. I have to find the culprit of this evil.



Adventurers Wanted

Brave souls sought to aid in a dire crisis at Vadalia's Farm, where strange, shapeless abominations have attacked and slain villagers. A militia gathers now at the Drake's Resolve tavern to journey forth and cleanse the farmstead of its unspeakable horrors. Swift action is needed, for reinforcements from the capital are far off. Those of strong sword, swift spell, or hearty courage—join us. Etch your name into local legend. All willing hands welcome.



DRAKE'S PASS

"If you know what's good for you, you'll abandon this foolish idea of helping the Vadalias. Some things are for knights and priests to take care of..."

Sarkon, Innkeeper



Drake's Pass is a quaint yet proud village nestled amid gently sloping hills, surrounded by patchwork farmland tended by generations of hardy folk. Located along the main road to the western capital, it serves as a popular rest stop for merchants, travelers, and adventurers on their way to the bustling city beyond. Despite its modest size, Drake's Pass is known for its rich lore, as the village was named in honor of Sir Bramwell Drake, a famed war hero who journeyed through these lands centuries ago on his march to a decisive victory against the eastern warlords. According to legend, Sir Bramwell stopped at this very spot to rally his troops, swearing to return victorious or perish in battle. His victory, marked by honor and valor, became a tale of inspiration for the people of the region, and his legacy has been cherished here ever since.

In the village center, a weathered stone well is engraved with a relief of Sir Bramwell looking east. Each year, villagers celebrate *Drake's Triumph*, a festival honoring the hero's legacy. On this day, farmers bring their finest harvests, local artisans display crafted wares, and bards sing of Sir Bramwell's legendary deeds. Drake's Pass has since grown into a close-knit community of farmers, tradesmen, and craftsmen who look out for one another, bound by a shared pride in their village's history.

This festival is in five days, already some decorations and wagons of supplies give the small settlement an air of preparation. Alas, this year's celebration of *Drake's Triumph* shall be soiled by the tragedy in Vadalia's Farm.

STARTING IN DRAKE'S PASS

The level-1 characters begin their adventuring career here. They have already taken a few odd jobs and may even have started to create a reputation for adventurers. But this is their first real trial. It is recommended that two or more characters are originally from Drake's Pass. Their connection with the locals, with the region, and with the Vadalias are a good motivator to get involved. They can be good friends with Carl, Eagon, or Wade Vadalia. One can be interested in Marianne's attention, thus being Rickon's competitor. Or a character could be affiliated with a different farm and hence interested that whatever befell the Vadalias does not affect his estate.

Town Features

► **Vigilance.** Due to the recent news, the villagers keep watchful eyes on visitors, with gossip and news quickly spreading through town. Travelers who appear armed or suspicious are quietly observed by the locals. This jumpy demeanor causes arguments to become more agitated.

► **Community Defense.** In times of trouble, the villagers rally to form a militia, bringing pitchforks, old swords, and makeshift shields. They have a 3-in-6 chance to repel small threats without calling for external aid. Seasoned veterans like Emlyn, the Blacksmith, lead the defense.

► **Festival of the Triumph.** Every spring, the *Drake's Triumph* festival draws locals and travelers alike. Merchants, musicians, and storytellers fill the square. The festival lasts three days and boosts the town's morale.

► **Tales of Honor.** Each evening, bards share poems of Sir Bramwell's exploits in the tavern. Locals who know the poetry and chant it alongside the performing bard gain an additional **luck token** (DC 12 INT check).

A1. DRAKE'S RESOLVE - TAVERN

The humble tavern boasts creaking wooden beams, dimly lit by flickering lanterns. A modest platform—barely raised—hosts traveling minstrels and storytellers. Rustic tables circle the stage, local patrons and traveling merchants awaiting the evening's tale.

An old man named Sarkon owns this place. He is known by travelers and city officials as the de facto ruler of Drake's Pass, a thorp so small it falls under no one's jurisdiction. The locals admire and respect Sarkon. The innkeeper leases two rooms in the second story, if the characters are not locals, this is their temporary home.

The Adventure Begins. A calm evening is interrupted by the arrival of the traumatized Marianne (see **The Farmer's Plea**). The characters are present here, relaxing from their daily chores or a previous job.

Impromptu Militia. Two **peasants**, Marianne (**peasant**), and Rickon (**soldier**) get ready to set out with the characters. The party may recruit more allies in Drake's Pass (see other areas). This militia of pitchfork-wielding peasants is not an army. But they are the bravest in town and willing to risk their lives for their neighbors'.



A2. FARMER HOME

Characters that are from Drake's Pass live here. They do not own the house. Emlyn, the Blacksmith, is their landlord. The characters can either pay a monthly rent or work in Emlyn's fields near Drake's Pass. If no character is from Drake's Pass, then a family of farmers lives here.

A3. EMLYN'S HOUSE

A larger-than-normal chimney exhaust marks the blacksmith's home. Crude armor pieces, horseshoes, and blunt blades hang from the roof's gutter.

The old blacksmith (**thug**), a friend of the Vadalias, worries that age has caught up with him. He plans to remain in Drake's Pass. If the characters pay Emlyn a visit they can attempt to convince him to join their perilous expedition into Vadalia's Farm. If presented and persuaded with a reasonable argument, Emlyn grabs his forge hammer and joins the party (DC 9 CHA check).

A4. THE WELL

In the village center stands a timeworn stone well, its edges smooth from countless hands. A relief of Sir Bramwell, noble and ever vigilant, gazes eastward.

A crude, wooden scaffolding for flower garlands is half built around the stone construction. The decorations should be ready for *Drake's Triumph* in a few days.

► **The Water.** If a character samples the water, it already has a bitter aftertaste; the tomb's noxious goo shall pollute it soon. A *detect magic* spell reveals a very faint aura of necromancy, and the caster experiences a vision of undead abominations crawling from their tombs.

A5. JAGGEL'S HOUSE

Jaggel is an old farmer with a large family. Several generations and extended members of Jaggel's family live in this house that has been progressively enlarged as time goes on. Townsfolk not in Drake's Resolve (area A1) gather here. Most have already made up their mind to stay in Drake's Pass and leave the Vadalias to their fate.

► **Conscription.** If the characters wish to enlist more allies, they must address a difficult crowd here; most are, at heart, cowards. Still, there is a chance to elicit a spirit of bravery from some of them. A character must speak to the peasants and convince them to join their ranks and aid Marianne (DC 12 CHA check, +2 bonus if Rickon is present and helps). On a success, three **peasants** heed the characters' words and join the party.

WHAT LIES BEYOND

Unbeknown to Marianne, cursed abominations followed her from Vadalia's Farm. The slow creatures take a long time to reach Drake's Pass as they are slow and clumsy.

When the characters are ready to set out toward the infected farm, a strange howl from the dark of night freezes the hearts of peasants like a cold wind. Two **tainted oozes** emerge from the darkness of the main road east. Marianne screams in terror and confirms these are the monsters that killed her sibling, Carl.

The party and other townsfolk fight these spawns of evil. The tainted oozes become puddles of goo when destroyed. With proof of the danger to Drake's Pass, two more **peasants** decide to join the characters.

MASSACRE IN THE FARM

"They won't get away with it... Even if it costs me my life, I shall bring whatever force did this to its knees. They should have not messed with our family"

Marianne Vadalia

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	Two low-life brigands (thugs) arrive at Vadalia's Farm intending to rob the farmhouse of any valuables. If discovered, they may flee if outnumbered (Morale). If they stay, they become aggressive unless offered at least 5 gp per person to join the party.
2	Three pieces of animated furniture (a chair, a cupboard, and a broom) move toward the heroes and their friends to attack.
3	A spider swarm , bolstered by the arcane energies from the tomb, emerges from nearby cracks and attacks the party.
4	A shadow emerges from below to drain someone's life-force. If Marianne or Emlyn are present, they cry in horror as they recognize Wade Vadalia's facial features and voice. Alas, the undead monster cannot be reasoned with.
5	A merchant (peasant) arrives at Vadalia's Farm knowing nothing of the massacre. He sells ordinary, commonplace items.
6	The earth quakes as a pulsing wave is felt from below; it drops people prone (DC 12 STR check). Marianne recalls, that months ago, a phenomenon like that damaged the cellar wall, revealing a network of caves. Her father fixed the wall promptly after.
7	After hearing the terrible news, two peasants , friends of the Vadalias, come from a nearby farm and join the party.
8	A tainted ooze emerges from the well or the broken cellar wall (area B13) and seeks the nearest person to attack.



REACHING THE FARM

THE CHARACTERS AND their brave companions set out to the east, toward Vadalia's Farm. On the way, they encounter a gruesome scene: an overturned produce cart and the mangled remains of two farmers from a nearby plantation. The cart and corpses are drenched with a slowly-drying dark goo. A tracker with keen senses may examine the scene. They determine that the malformed ooze creatures that followed Marianne from the farm to Drake's Pass must have done this (DC 9 WIS).

The well-trodden road takes a turn to the north, between wheat plantations. The road then turns west toward Vadalia's Farm. The whole journey is a 1-hour walk.

THE PEASANTS

Many NPC characters, mostly **peasants**, may be present when the party arrives at Vadalia's Farm. They recognize the characters' leadership and skill. They obey commands within their abilities and do their best to aid the party. However, after taking damage or if ordered to do something dangerous, the peasants may balk at this command (**Morale**). They roll with disadvantage if they suspect the characters treat them as cannon fodder. As long as the characters take the lead, the peasants are more at ease and more easily do their best to help.

Level 1 Location

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a Random Event every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Areas B2, B3, and B13 are in darkness. Denizens from the dark tomb below are **dark-adapted**.

► **Stench.** Detectable from as far as 500 feet from the farm, the stench of death and putrid decay envelops the area. Within 50 feet of the well, the smell is strong enough to cause a bout of retching (DC 9 CON).

► **Sudden Massacre.** Marianne fled the farm only hours ago. Most things in the farmhouse are as they were. There is food on the table, abandoned drinks on cupboards, and the fireplaces and braziers are still lit.

B1. THE ROAD TO DRAKE'S PASS

At first glance, the farm appears to hold no mystery. Alas, a repugnant stench threatens to overwhelm the senses as the distance closes. From afar, bloody tracks can be seen on the house's porch stairs.

If Marianne is present, she remarks that the smell was barely noticeable when she left hours ago. She is desperate to explore the farm, fearing the worst for her father, Wade, and her other brother, Eagon. Marianne Vadalia recommends exploring the cellar (area B11) first; she last saw her father climbing down the stairs to the underground chambers, wielding a shovel.



B2. OUTHOUSE

The small outhouse contains a commonplace latrine. Its malodorous stench is barely perceivable over the noxious reek of the well. The latrine lacks plumbing and is not connected to the caverns and tomb below. However, a **tainted ooze** hides in the latrine. If examined, the monster emerges forcefully in a surprise attack.

B3. BARN

Two milk cows retch and cough in the darkness. Their legs tremble as a terrible weakness creeps into their bodies. The poor animals are severely sick.

Hours of exposure to the well's noxious smell have debilitated the poor cows. They are tied to fixtures on the wall and too weak to try to break free. They are harmless.

► **Healing.** The spells *cure wounds* and *protection from evil* heal the cows from their ailment. Otherwise, they can be untied and led away from the farm. It takes longer but the two cows fully recover after two weeks.

THE STENCH

Astute characters become aware that whatever befell Vadalía's Farm is something that must be dealt with fast (DC 9 INT check). Overexposure to the dark goo's vapors is lethal after only a few hours. In this adventure, it is unlikely that the characters stay that long in the dungeon but it prevents them from resting underground.

B4. THE WELL

A stone well oozes a foul, black sludge, its acrid stench suffocating. The tainted soil surrounding it writhes with unnatural decay, sickening the weeds.

► **The Goo.** A spellcaster that examines the disgusting sludge determines it is not directly harmful to touch it, but its stench shall, over time, cause a debilitating weakness, like that of the cows in area B3 (DC 12 INT). A *detect magic* spell also reveals this is common water imbued with an aura of necromancy, deeply tainting it.

► **Climbing Down.** Brave characters can use a rope to descend, through the well, to area C1 (DC 9 STR). Those who do are unharmed but end up completely drenched in the sludge. Failure by 5 or more causes the person to fall head-first into the sludge below and swallow some of it. The goo causes a poisonous burn (1d8).

B5. THE PORCH AND CELLAR DOORS

► **The Blood.** A bloody trail leads from the house's door, down the porch stairs, and north toward the well (area B4). It was left by the tainted ooze that murdered Carl in area B6. The blood is Carl's. It was left by the blood-drenched ooze after it pounded the young lad to death.

► **The Doors.** The double doors lead to area B11, the cellar. There is an iron lock with its key still attached to it lying on the ground next to the doors; it was left by Wade Vadalía before going down there. If Marianne is present, the poor woman starts to hyperventilate in anticipation.

B6. LIVING ROOM

The living room reeks of decay. Dried blood stains around a shattered corpse, its bones pulverized. Furniture is overturned, crimson splatter staining walls.

Carl's corpse lies on the floor. A tainted ooze pounded him to death. A goo-stained kitchen knife lies next to the body; Carl's vain attempt at hurting the monster. Marianne sobs silently gazing at her brother's body. If Emlyn is present, he curses loudly and says: "*I vow to kill whoever is responsible for this unjust act of cowardice.*"

► **The Body.** Examining the corpse reveals that the wounds are similar to those found on the farmers' bodies on the road to the farm, corroborating Marianne's account (DC 9 INT). In addition, the corpse presents a state of accelerated decay, as if it had laid there for days.

► **Wild Magic.** The magical aura from the dark tomb has been imbibed by common items. Two pieces of **animated furniture** (chairs) start moving and attack.

B7. KITCHEN AND LARDER

There are no signs of violence in this room. Food items lie on the cutting surfaces as if in the middle of cooking dinner. All food on the surfaces, stove, and crates is rotten and malodorous. Marianne says it was fresh hours ago when she was here, right before the attack occurred.

B8. SECOND STORY LANDING

A decaying body lies on an embroidered rug. The poor man's head was bashed into a couch's armrest. The rest of the room is eerily in silent peace.

Eagon's corpse lies on the red rug. A tainted ooze killed him minutes after Marianne fled the farm. Eagon perished instantly from the grievous head wound. The rest of his body is intact, except for the accelerated decay.

Marianne and Emlyn scream in terror after discovering this harrowing scene. They are shaken to their cores.

► **From Beyond.** Due to the body's almost intact state, a necromancy aura surrounds it, the *detect magic* spell reveals how this area grows stronger. One **crawling round** after the body is discovered, it rises as a **zombie**.

B9. CARL, EAGON, AND WADE'S ROOM

A double bunk bed, a single bed, a wardrobe, and a night table furnish this room. There are no signs of struggle or decay in this room. A leather bag with 40 gp (1 XP) is hidden in the wardrobe's drawers. If Marianne catches a character stealing it, she curses them for their greed. The beleaguered woman demands the money back.

B10. MARIANNE'S ROOM

The room contains a single bed and a wardrobe. Within it are several working robes and an extra pair of boots. There is nothing of value left in this room.

B11. THE CELLAR

The body of Wade Vadalía lies on the floor. He was mauled to death by a tainted ooze like his son, Carl. A tendril of dark goo slowly crawls on the floor toward the mangled corpse. Marianne collapses to the floor at the sight, sobs uncontrollably, and wails. It takes 1 **crawling round** for her to calm down after witnessing this.

► **A Daughter's Resolve.** If Marianne has seen the three bodies at the farm, she becomes resolute on avenging her family. After this, Marianne has advantage on all checks and becomes reckless (see **Epigraph**).

► **The Body.** If the body remains in place for 1 **crawling round**, the goo reaches it and envelops it in a moment. Wade Vadalía's body rises as a goo-drenched **zombie** (Its Relentless feature uses a DC 12 CON check).

B12. STORAGE ROOMS

These rooms contain barrels of fermented wheat and wine, and crates with seed-crop grain for the next season. These items can be sold for 30 gp (1 XP).

B13. THE BROKEN WALL

The half-collapsed wall of this room connects to a natural tunnel. This wall was repaired by Wade Vadalía a few months ago. This cavern connects to area C1.



Punishment of Wile Mages



Before their final entombment, the foul mages were fettered to iron racks within shadowed halls of stone, their limbs bound by chains inscribed with ancient runes to smother all sorcery. Merciless clerics stood in grim assembly, intoning sacred verse to scour darkness

from these wretched souls. The

condemned endured torments

of blazing flame and bitter

frost, each scourge devised

to break their spirits. As

their screams waned to

empty murmurs, their

wills shattered and souls

laid bare, they were cast

into the shadowed depths

of their eternal tomb and

prison. Therein a murky

pool of ineffable goo

awaited to imbibe their

wickedness into oblivion.



THE DARK TOMB

“This place is truly cursed by the gods. For how long has this wretched place been beneath the wheat farm? What a harrowing legacy these priests left...”

Rickon Humbert

Beneath the withered fields of Vadalia's Farm lies a forgotten tomb steeped in ancient malevolence. Its narrow entrance, hidden within the collapsed cellar, descends into cold stone tunnels that reek of decay and stagnant air. Jagged walls, carved by hands long dead, are etched with crumbling runes and dark glyphs that whisper of a bygone age of cruelty. It is here that the Cleansing Order once practiced their torturous methods on vile mages.

At the heart of the tomb lies its dread secret: a vast, sunken chamber where the air is heavy with unearthly energy. Therein, a black pond, thick as oil, shimmers with sinister purpose, its surface reflecting no light. The very ground seems to pulse faintly, as though alive with an ancient, hateful rhythm. The eerie stillness is broken only by the faint, wet sounds of the shifting ooze.

Level 1 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Area C14 has magically lit braziers, the rest are in darkness. Denizens of the dungeon are **dark-adapted**.

► **Stench.** Areas with puddles or streams of dark goo have a stench too strong to withstand (DC 12 CON). On a success, the person is immune to it for 24 hours. On a fail, there is a 1-in-6 chance that those affected spend their turn retching uncontrollably even in combat.

C1. TAINTED WELL

A shadowy cavern echoes with distant drips. A viscous pond of inky sludge ripples faintly. Pale light pours from the well opening above. It casts eerie glimmers and shadows across slick stone walls.

The party reaches this area from the cellar (area B13) or by climbing down the well (area B4). If present, Marianne (**peasant**), Emlyn (**thug**), and Rickon (**soldier**) are resolute in exploring the caverns. Other peasants in the party roll for **Morale** if more than half the party becomes affected by the hideous stench. Those who fail flee in fear, disregarding any commands to remain here.

► **The Dark Goo.** Keen observers notice that while it appears almost stagnant and inert, the goo flows from the south and toward the cellar (DC 9 WIS check).

C2. THE TORTURE ROOM

A stream of thick sludge crosses a large chamber that once was part of an underground construction. A faded mural on the wall portrays a hooded man bound to a wooden rack. Terrible wounds mark his body.

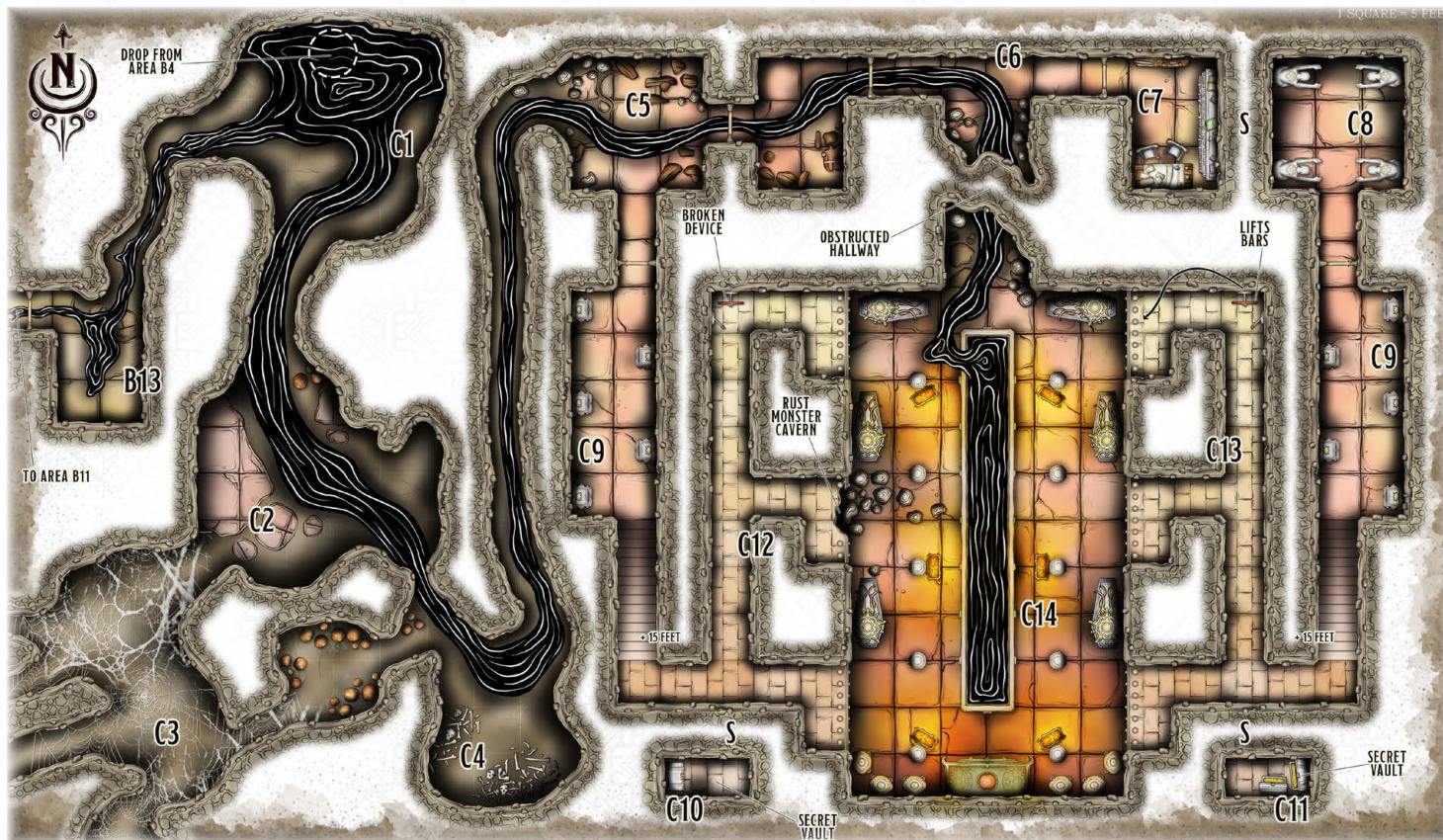
This chamber was, long ago, the torture chamber used by the clerics of the Cleansing Order. Here, captured mages were subjected to the harrowing tribulations of torture and spells, before being thrown into the tomb.

► **Remains.** Scattered across the floor are tiny pieces of pliers, nails, and other metal items that can be inferred to have been parts of torture tools (DC 12 INT check).

► **The Mural.** Barely legible runes on the mural tell the tale of the Cleansing Order in Draconic and claim the cleric's order was just and necessary. Alas, the inhumane treatment they gave their prisoners is morally gray. Historians reading the runes know the Cleansing Order was disbanded hundreds of years ago (DC 15 INT).

► **Ambush.** If the characters examine the mural, two **tainted oozes** in the dark goo get ready to attack them. The monsters attempt an ambush (DC 12 WIS to spot).





C3. SPIDER COLONIES

These natural walls are the home of hundreds of spiders. The characters can avoid this area but moving from area C2 to area C4 requires them to jump into the dark stream. A **spider swarm** and a **giant spider** inhabit this chamber. This is a deadly encounter if the party stays to fight. However, the spiders do not pursue the characters into the adjacent areas if they choose to flee.

C4. THE LAIR

Gnawed bones lie scattered on the floor of this, otherwise unremarkable, dark cavern. The zig-zagging tracks on the floor reveal this was once the lair of an underground, flesh-eating, insect monster (DC 12 WIS). A necromantic aura coalesces on the bones. If they are disturbed in any way, the bones rattle and take the form of an angered **skeleton**. A *detect magic* spell reveals this fact, warning the party of a possible reanimation.

C5. BROKEN PRAYER ROOM

The cavern and stream of obscure sludge break into the remains of an underground chamber of prayer.

Statues. The shattered remains of statues lie scattered across the floor. If a character spends 1 **crawling round** observing and moving the pieces, they discover that four stone statues were once here. They once looked like men praying; kneeling and with their hands spread.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** A *ring of invisibility* lies on the floor along the scattered rubble (DC 15 WIS to spot).

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Dark sludge creeps closer and rises in a crude mockery of a man. It speaks to the characters in Draconic. The ephemeral being promises untold power and riches if only the characters can help it escape the Cleansing Order clerics. It collapses into sludge shortly after.
2	A rust monster from area C14 does not dare enter the chamber. If offered 2 pounds of any metal, it can be befriended. It helps and defends the characters. After clearing area C14 of evil, the rust monster joins its kin there. If this happens, the other insectoids remain neutral.
3	Two tainted oozes emerge from the sludge to attack. They portray the likeness of Wade and Eagon Vadalía. If Marianne is present, she is unfazed by their appearance and charges into battle to destroy them.
4	The floor and ceiling tremble as another earthquake occurs. The streams of dark goo move fast during this event, pulling creatures in contact with them toward area C1. Debris falls from the ceiling on a random person. They take 1d6 damage (DC 12 DEX check).
5	A pain-stricken howl can be heard coming from area C14, it is the doomed abomination , the greatest of mages captured by the Cleansing Order. In Draconic, it utters the terrible torture he sustained when in captivity. The being then swears to spread his pain and doom to all living creatures, so that all suffer like they did.
6	Dark sludge creeps closer and rises in a crude mockery of two priests and a man bound to a rack. They speak in Draconic. Over 1 crawling round , they reenact an interrogation with pauses to torture the hapless man. The vile mage summarily denies all accusations and claims to be innocent. It cannot be known who speaks the truth.

C6. OBSTRUCTED HALLWAY

The hallways collapsed a long time ago, passage is obstructed. The bubbling stream of dark goo filters through the debris and rocks from the south. If the characters have shovels, pickaxes, or similar tools, they can spend 1 hour digging through the obstruction to reach area C14. This physical feat is noisy (see **Dungeon Features**).

C7. THE ARCHIVE

The tomes and scrolls in the bookcase and on the desk are perfectly preserved. A *detect magic* spell reveals an abjuration aura that protects them from exposure.

► **Lore.** Inspecting the documents for 1 **crawling round** reveals the lore of the Cleansing Order and the purpose of this dungeon as a prison. A spellcaster infers that the binding enchantments for the mages' eternal cells could not stand forever without being recast. Those spells must have failed in recent times (DC 12 INT check). In addition, there is a log with the names of all mages that were tortured and interred here, a total of three hundred.

► **True Name.** A character that inspects the log of prisoners finds the true name of the doomed abomination in area C14. He went by the name of Arcturus Filgrand. If addressed as such in battle, its former name distracts the creature, granting advantage to the attacker. This benefit can be used a total of three times.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The bookcase contains six Priest *spell scrolls*: *holy weapon*, *turn undead*, *augury*, *bless*, *smite*, and *zone of truth*.

C8. ROOM OF PRAYER

A secret passage connects this room with area C7 (DC 12 WIS to spot). It contains four praying statues marked with the sigil of the Cleansing Order.

C9. UNHALLOWED CRYPT

Five standing sarcophagi line the walls of these chambers. The Draconic runes on the lids tell the story of a man who sought infinite knowledge through a dangerous spell that would grant him lichdom. Apart from being tortured, these mages had their eyes and tongues removed as punishment. If any of the stone lids are opened, all of them open and five **eye-less spawns** emerge to attack (**zombies** with a -1 attack bonus and half HP).

C10. EAST VAULT

A secret passage in the south section of area C12 leads to this hidden vault (DC 12 WIS to spot a secret button). It contains a locked stone chest (DC 9 DEX to open).

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The chest contains 350 gp, 1,490 sp, 7,600 cp, two *potions of healing*, and a +1 *spear*.

C11. WEST VAULT

A secret passage in the south section of area C13 leads to this hidden vault (DC 12 WIS to spot a secret button). It contains two open, stone treasure chests.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The chests contain 50 gp, 300 sp, one *potion of healing*, a +1 *dagger*, and four high-level Priest *spell scrolls*: *flame strike*, *pillar of salt*, *dominion*, and, with gold-colored parchment, *prophecy*.

C12. EAST GALLERY

A flight of stairs climbs 15 feet and leads to a hallway that splits into three balconies that overlook area C14. The north and south balconies feature 1-foot-thick, stone bars that impede passage. The central balcony was damaged during an earthquake; the lack of bars allows characters to jump down to area C14. From the balconies, the characters can see that the east side of area C14 features an identical set of balconies but they are intact.

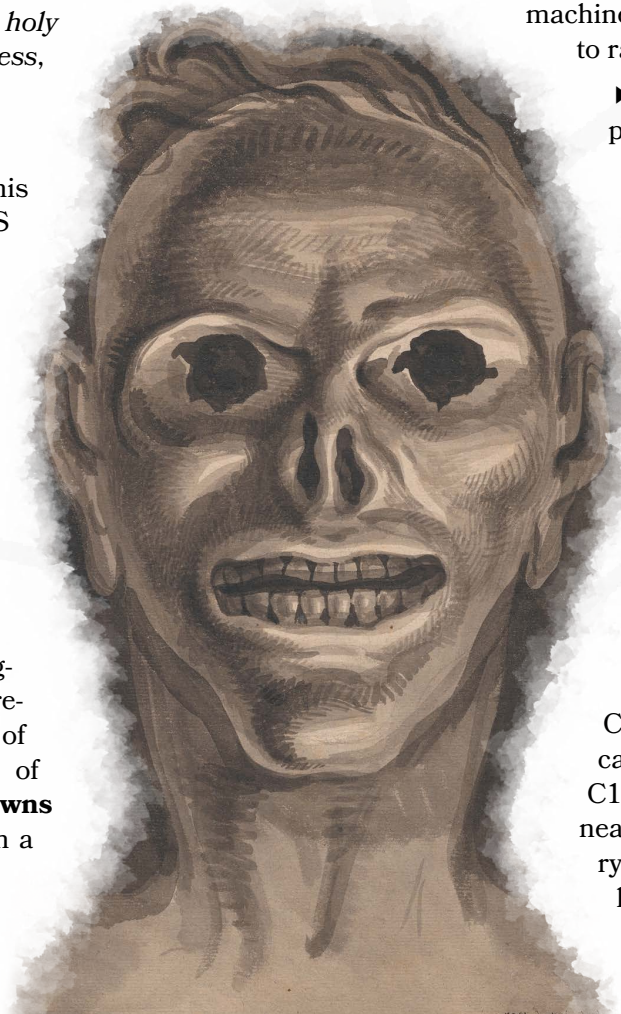
► **The Device.** A wheel and a lever by the north balcony do not function. A character who inspects the machinery behind learns that it was used to raise the stone bars (DC 12 INT).

► **Murals.** Images on the walls portray the Cleansing Order priests overseeing their comrades dipping the tortured mages in the sludge pool from the barred balconies. Some were left in the dark goo, others were burnt alive and their ashes placed in urns.

C13. WEST GALLERY

This section is similar to area C12 but the balconies are intact and the wheel and lever by the north side still work.

When operated, the stone bars on the eastern balconies rise to the ceiling. The characters can then climb down into area C14. From this side, the characters can see the broken balcony in area C12 and an opening on the wall beneath it. The movement of large, scurrying insects can be seen there. The hole is a rust monster's lair.



C14. THE TAINTED WATER

A vast gallery looms with a vaulted ceiling shrouded in shadows. Barred balconies overlook a sinuous pond of bubbling, tarry sludge. Fetid fumes rise, twisting in the dim torchlight's flickering glow. From the goo rises a humanoid figure that howls in anger.

When the characters enter this room, the darkest of mag- es captured by the cleansing order rises from the bub- bling muck. Its soul is twisted by evil, pain, and a deep desire for revenge. The **doomed abomination** is a formi- dable opponent. On the 3rd round of battle, two **tainted oozes** rise from the black sludge and join the gruesome confrontation. The doomed abomination takes half dam- age from common weapons; using offensive spells and the magical weapons in areas C10 and C11 are crucial for this fight. Defeating the doomed abomination marks the end of this quest (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

► **Revenge.** If Marianna and Emlyn are present, they fight tooth and nail, recognizing the doomed abomina- tion as the source of the pain they have suffered. Their brave resolve grants them both 4 temporary Hit Points. Still, this confrontation may be the end of their lives.

► **Sarcophagi.** Six priests of the Cleansing Order were interred here after their deaths to serve as eternal guard- ians of the black pond. But inside the enclosures, only fine black dust remains. Their bodies were consumed by the seeping evil from the black pond of tainted water.

► **The Rust Monsters.** The roaming **rust monster** par- ticipates in this fight (see **Random Event 2**). There are two more in the lair but it takes them 1 week to emerge out of fear of the dark goo. They are neutral to the par- ty if the befriended rust monster survives the adventure.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

THE GREAT CLEANSE

Defeating the doomed abomination causes the black goo to be purified and become clear, fresh water. The evil aura in the dungeon fades and all undead creatures are destroyed. The party of characters and brave peasants saved the day and prevented the spread of a terrible enti- ty that might have grown more powerful if left alone.

THE PEASANTS

If Marianne survives the adventure, she sells the farm and decides to leave the region to explore the world. A spark of curiosity and adventure now burns in her heart. If allowed, she joins the characters in their quests. If Rickon survives the adventure, he proposes to Marianne on the last day of the *Drake's Triumph* festival. She re- fuses him and promptly abandons the region; Rickon is unwilling to abandon his family and friends in Drake's Pass. If Emlyn survives the adventure, he goes back into retirement, happy to be just a blacksmith and a landlord.

DRAKE'S TRIUMPH

The festival a few days later is stained by the deaths of the Vadalia and any other townsfolk that may have per- ished during the exploration of the dark tomb. A fune- rary pyre is erected by the stone well in Drake's Pass to burn the remains of all the recent dead. The characters and companions are celebrated as heroes. This is only the beginning of the characters' exciting sellsword ca- reers. But those are adventures for another day...



STATBLOCKS

Animated Furniture

Wooden and metal fixtures in a piece of furniture shift and move to give the object a semblance of life. For reasons that cannot be known, it attacks!

AC: 13

HP: 5 LV1

ATK: slam +2 (1d6)

MV: Near

S:+2 D:+0 C:+0 I:-4 W:-2 Ch:-4

Splinter Burst. When it drops to 0 Hit Points, creatures within near take 1d4 (DC 12 DEX).

Tainted Ooze

A grotesque, bubbling, melting mound of flesh-like tissue with a crude imitation of a humanoid visage. It emerges from the tainted muck that covers the floor.

AC: 10

HP: 8 LV2

ATK: rend +2 (1d4)

MV: Near (climb)

S:+1 D:+0 C:+0 I:-4 W:-3 Ch:-4

Ooze. The tainted ooze takes half damage from slashing or piercing weapons.



Doomed Abomination

Shrouded in malignancy and dark ether, the body of a forgotten man has risen from his grave to haunt the living. He feels nothing but pain and unfiltered rage.

AC: 14 (chainmail)

HP: 16 LV₃

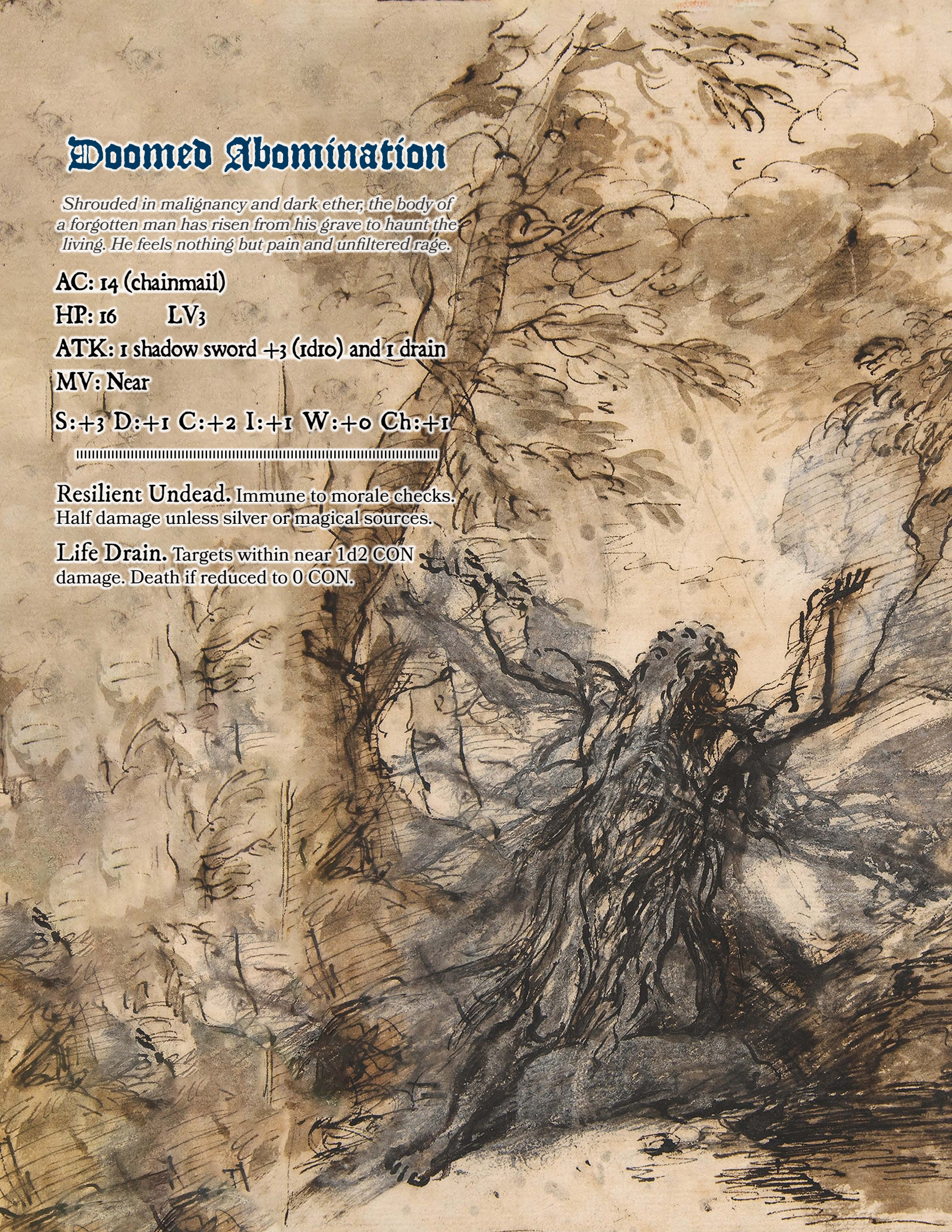
ATK: 1 shadow sword +3 (1d10) and 1 drain

MV: Near

S:+3 D:+1 C:+2 I:+1 W:+0 Ch:+1

Resilient Undead. Immune to morale checks. Half damage unless silver or magical sources.

Life Drain. Targets within near 1d2 CON damage. Death if reduced to 0 CON.



Gourmet Dungeon

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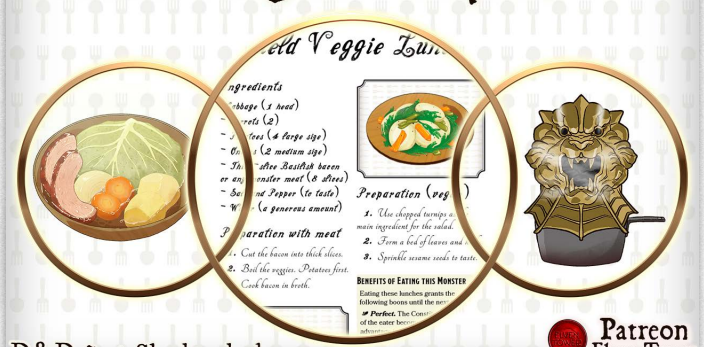
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Burial of Blossoms



Deep beneath the forested slopes of the Verdant Glade lies a place of solemn beauty and bitter regret: the Sepulcher of Eternal Bloom. Carved into the stone of the hillside, this burial ground was once the sacred resting place of the Moonlit Order, an enigmatic sect of druids who revered the delicate balance between life and death. Their rites were shrouded in mystery, but they were known for weaving magic into blossoms that grew only in the shadow of the tomb's obscure tunnels.

Eons ago, a calamitous Fey Wild entity attacked the druids, taking over their bodies and transforming them into flowery abominations. Their leader, an arch-druid, used his body as a vessel to contain the otherworldly monster. Ancient clerics helped contain the misshapen druids in the order's tomb. Centuries after their demise, the burial ground fell into disrepair. The once-vivid blossoms grew wild and twisted. Shadows now flit among the petals, and those few who dare approach speak of faint whispers carried on the wind.

Legends speak of a great power hidden within the sepulcher, tied to the druids' final rites. But others warn that the forest, and the sepulcher beneath it, are cursed. The ground trembles faintly near the entrance, and a bitter-sweet aroma, both inviting and foreboding, fills the air. Legend has it that the last druids were interred in the underground sepulcher. Their spirits, anxious and unresting, yearn for a new chance to continue the rites meant to seek the fine balance between life and death.

Adventure Hooks

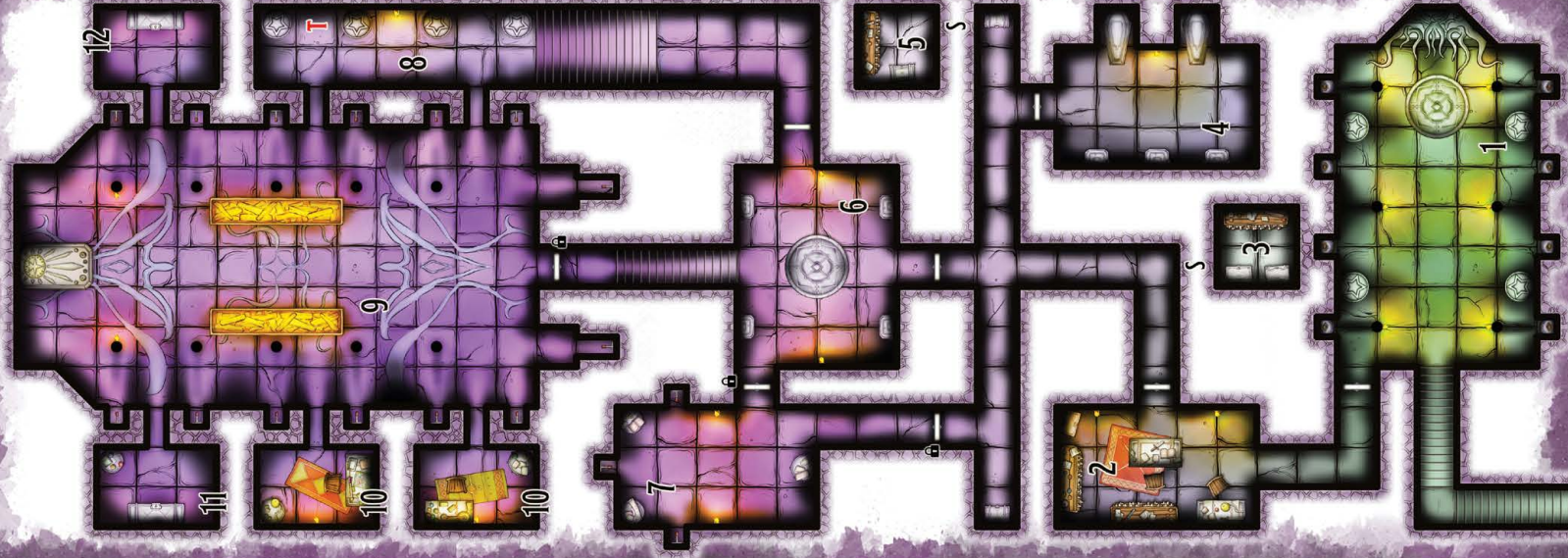
► **The Herbalist.** Jacken, a renowned herbalist seeking rare blooms to cure a noble's illness, has vanished near the Sepulcher of Eternal Bloom. His apprentice, Anna, begs you to find him. She offers to accompany the characters to the strange burial site in the forest.

► **The Blooming Curse.** The nearest village suffers from a strange affliction: flowers sprout painfully from the townsfolk's skin, whispering the names of the dead. An elder claims the cure lies in an ancient rite performed in the sepulcher. Alas, the tomb is said to be overrun with haunting shadows of the bygone past and the twisted remains of long-lost druids.

Random Events

Roll 1d8 for a random event inside the dungeon every 20 minutes and after loud noises.

1. A **druid specter** wreathed in thorny vines attacks. In its undead craze, it seeks vengeance for the characters' desecration.
2. Twisting roots lash out, attempting to cruelly entangle and crush intruders.
3. A flower releases hallucinogenic pollen, causing illusions of the PCs' worst fears.
4. A **petal-covered skeleton** poses riddles and demands answers to pass unscathed.
5. Stepping on loose tiles causes a collapse into a pit of poisonous blossoms below.
6. A despair-corrupted, **feral dryad** fights to drive intruders from her sacred grounds.
7. An ancient druid's **spirit** shares stories of the Moonlit Order in exchange for offerings. He prefers opal and onyx stones.
8. Jinnolli, an eccentric scholar, sketches the flora, oblivious to the sepulcher's dangers. He is a friend of Jacken, the missing herbalist, but has not seen him in months.



1. Entrance Chapel

A 2-hour ride through the Verdant Glade forest brings the characters to the dungeon's entrance. A twisting set of stairs leads to this chapel. Statues of flower-covered knights flank a strange effigy in the form of soil-seeking roots. The walls are etched with carvings of blossoms and ancient, forest druids.

2. Archive of Blossoms

From the documents stored in this chamber, it can be surmised that a clerical order took care of interring the last druids and keeping their wealth of knowledge guarded from thieves.

► **Lore.** A moth-eaten book reveals that the druids were assaulted by a nameless entity from the fey realm. It malformed their bodies and bent their hapless minds out of shape. In an ultimate sacrifice, the druids used their bodies as vessels to contain this monster.

3. Fake Vault

This is a trap for fool tomb-robbers. The button to open this hidden chamber is easy to find, almost too easy. Opening any of the empty chests triggers a fiery, arcane explosion.

4. Tomb of Druids

Three standing sarcophagi and two caskets contain the bodily remains of five druids. The enclosures are adorned with bas-reliefs of flowers and their forlorn family sigils.

► **Guardians.** Five petal-covered skeletons emerge from the stone enclosures to attack.

5. Hidden Vault

An observant individual finds the hidden lever that reveals the presence of this hidden room.

► **Treasure.** The chest contains 400 gp, two *potions of healing*, and a +1 *dagger*. The book case contains four random *spell scrolls*.

6. Circle of Traveling

Four standing sarcophagi surround a circle that can be used with teleportation spells. If the enclosures are opened, a petal-covered skeleton emerges from each of them to attack.

7. The Missing Levers

Only a master locksmith can bypass the locks on this chamber's doors. Three levers, necessary for the complete sequence of the *Containment Ritual* (see area 9) are here.

8. Hall of Warriors

Four intricately-carved statues of brave warriors adorn this room. Between the northernmost two (see map), there is a pressure plate that triggers a deadly swinging-axe trap.

9. Main Sepulcher

The arch-druid is buried in the large sarcophagus. It is connected to clockwork machinery in the floor and walls of this chamber.

► **The Ritual.** The *Containment Ritual* described in area 10 explains the order and sequence to operate the levers here and in area 7 to open the sarcophagus. When it happens, the **druidic abomination** emerges from within. It contains the essence of the fey entity that caused the demise of the Moonlit Order. Only by defeating this monster can the curse that assails the townsfolk in the area be lifted.

10. Library of Rituals

Complex tomes and scrolls are scattered across these two chambers. They describe the *Containment Ritual*, a step-by-step procedure for operating levers in areas 7 and 9 to open the sarcophagus of the long-dead arch-druid.

► **The Arcane.** Spellcasters that review these documents learn that the sarcophagus in area 9 contains the malformed arch-druid but does not keep its rotting influence that curses the nearby village from spreading.

► **The Scholar.** Jacken, the herbalist, is here. He can partly decode the ritual and help the characters piece together the rest of it.

11. West Vault

This chamber contains a large stone coffer decorated with silver and quartz inlays.

► **Treasure.** The chest contains 200 gp, one *potion of healing*, and a random *spell scroll*.

12. East Vault

This chamber contains a locked stone coffer. It can be breached with fine locksmith tools.

► **Treasure.** The chest contains 350 gp, 1,200 sp, and a *genie lamp* of tarnished silver.



Druidic Abomination



CAMPSITE TALES

When brave adventurers travel untamed roads in search of danger, treasure, and glory, the long stretches between destinations offer a rare opportunity for reflection. Each night, as the camp is made beneath the stars, the party sets aside their blades and spellbooks, stepping away from the chaos of battle. These quiet moments shift the focus from feats of might and magic to the intricate tales and personalities that define the members of the group.

The crackle of the campfire becomes a stage for stories; of triumphs and regrets, dreams yet to be fulfilled, or wounds that never quite healed. Bonds are forged or tested as secrets unfold and tensions simmer, the flickering flames illuminating more than the weary faces of companions. Such interludes deepen not only the players' connection to their characters but also the group's dynamic, as adventurers become not just a team but a mosaic of shared histories, aspirations, and vulnerabilities. A tapestry of rich, engaging, and growing stories...



HOW TO USE?

Choose a frequency for the Campsite Tales section. It can occur once per journey. Or it can be more frequent for longer travel phases. During Campsite Tales, a random player chooses a topic to craft a story about their character's past. Alternatively, they can roll 1d20 on the **Tales from the Past** table. The aim is to build on the character's persona. They must roll 2d6. On a result of 7 or lower, a complication is added to their story. The GM decides how this complication is presented. Or they may roll on the **The Plot Thickens...** table instead.

TALES FROM THE PAST

d20	Details
1	Childhood Memories - Recollections of home, family, or mentors that shaped their early life.
2	First Battle - A vivid account of their initiation into combat training or about their first kill.
3	Hometown Legends - Folktales or myths from childhood.
4	Lost Loved Ones - Reflections on those left behind or lost to time. Maybe from their hometown.
5	Fears - A confession of what keeps them awake at night.
6	Personal Goals - Dreams of riches, revenge, redemption, or renown. Especially those not tied to the campaign.
7	Rivalries - Stories of enemies they are determined to surpass or defeat. A new NPC for the campaign...
8	Embarrassing Moments - Humorous anecdotes from their past. It can be from their training days.
9	Favorite Meal - A cherished dish and its personal meaning to the adventurer as it elicits a long-lost memory.
10	Cultural Traditions - Unique rituals or customs from their homeland. Can be religious or cultural.
11	Family Heirlooms - Tales of trinkets or weapons passed through generations and their desire to inherit them.
12	Unfinished Business - Tasks left unresolved before setting out on their journey. How can it be dealt with now?
13	First Love - A bittersweet or fond memory of romance.
14	Religious Beliefs - Thoughts on gods, fate, and divine intervention. Do the gods care what happens here?
15	Greatest Triumph - A proud moment of skill or cunning.
16	Darkest Secret - A hidden truth they have never shared.
17	Strange Dreams - Cryptic visions or recurring nightmares. Are they related to their current affairs?
18	Role Models - Figures they admire or wish to emulate.
19	Travel Stories - Strange and wondrous places they have visited before. What is significant about them?
20	Regrets - Actions they wish they could take back or amend. Maybe there is a way now to fix the damage...

COMPLICATIONS

Campsite Tales are meant to be a constructive exercise to help the GM and characters craft engaging stories for the campaign. Complications allow the GM to spice up the stories told by the characters. Any story can become an adventure hook, a source of trouble, or a door that leads to a new conflict. The world is always changing and it reacts to the characters' choices. Complications can also bring the characters and their NPC companions together as many options in **The Plot Thickens...** table link the storyteller with other characters.

Conversely, if it is an NPC companion whose turn it is to tell a story, the rules can be reversed. As the GM tells the story, if a Complication arises, the players can then help craft this plot twist or use the **The Plot Thickens...** table to change the nature and effect of the tale.

Play Example. At night, by the fire, a random character (cleric) is chosen for the Campsite Tale. The Player rolls a 10 on the **Tales from the Past** table. The character speaks about a strange custom from their home town that involves hunting a deer during the second full moon in the summer. Whoever does it first is anointed for priesthood, which is how he became a cleric. With a roll of 5 for a **Complication**. The GM rolls a 4 on the **The Plot Thickens...** table. It reminds others that this clerical practice limits hunting during the season; causing hunger and untimely deaths among the poorest and the dispossessed...

THE PLOT THICKENS...

d12

Details

- 1 **Ominous Omens** - Fellow characters catch on strange signs and symbols that alter the meaning of the tale. Perhaps it is time to find a sage or a soothsayer...
- 2 **Conflicting Accounts** - Another party member recalls the event differently, leading to tension.
- 3 **Forgotten Details** - The speaker struggles to recall critical parts, raising suspicion of being lying.
- 4 **Unwelcome Memory** - The story reminds someone of a personal trauma or betrayal difficult to overcome. If it is an NPC they may begrudge the storyteller for this.
- 5 **Cursed Object** - An heirloom or trinket, part of the story and owned by the storyteller, suddenly exhibits eerie behavior during the tale. Was it always magical?
- 6 **A New Enemy** - The GM chooses an NPC from the tale to come back to the PC's life as a new enemy or threat.
- 7 **Supernatural Reaction** - A deity, spirit, or magical force responds to the tale being told. Somehow, the tale is connected with a supernatural event far away.
- 8 **Unexpected Connection** - A party member realizes someone shares a hidden tie with a campaign enemy.
- 9 **A New Ally** - The GM chooses an NPC from the tale to come back to the PC's life as an ally in peril.
- 10 **Anachronistic Detail** - A described event does not align with known history, creating intrigue and confusion. Could the memory have been altered by magic?
- 11 **Misinterpreted Intent** - The tale's meaning is taken the wrong way, causing offense or confusion. NPCs may draw wrong conclusions from the tale's significance.
- 12 **Repressed Memory** - The story triggers a forgotten or buried memory in the speaker or their audience. The memory is significant to the current campaign but reveals something crucial that no one expected.



The Adventure Begins

As the adventurer gazes into the vast horizon, their heart swells with a mix of pride and wonder. The sting of battle lingers in their muscles, yet it fuels an unshakable resolve. The world feels wider now, its mysteries calling louder than ever. They have faced the unknown and endured, their fears tempered into courage. With each step forward, the adventurer is no longer the same. Now, they are a seeker of destiny, ready for what lies ahead.



THE FORGOTTEN SAINT



BY
**DEREK
RUIZ**



LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

**IMMERSIVE SHADOWDARK RPG ONE-SHOT
ADVENTURE FOR THE GREATEST OSR GAME**

ADVENTURE PRIMER



ong ago, the Drethains were a powerful noble family ruling over the mist-shrouded vale of Kaldrith. Though their lands were prosperous, the family harbored a secret: a prophecy foretold their inevitable downfall, claiming that their bloodline would end in ruin. Fearful of their fate, they sought every means to defy destiny, pouring their wealth into fortifications, alliances, and dark experiments.

THE REGRETTABLE PACT

THE HEAD OF the family, Lord Barynd Drethain, grew increasingly desperate. He turned to forbidden knowledge, consulting the ancient texts of the Bleeding Oracle, a disembodied entity said to grant forbidden truths. The oracle revealed a ritual to summon Ateris, the Veilbinder, a forgotten saint of despair and inevitability, who promised a way to preserve the family's legacy forever.

The pact was simple but cruel. Ateris would shield the Drethains from the ravages of time, ensuring that their memories and influence would never fade. In return, they were to consecrate a portion of their estate as a mausoleum—a place where Ateris, the forgotten saint, could tether lost and broken souls to feed its otherworldly power.

Initially, it worked. The Drethains prospered beyond their wildest dreams, and even as they aged and passed on, their memories and deeds remained inexplicably vivid in the hearts of their people. But the bargain held a hidden truth: upon death, each Drethain's spirit became bound to the mausoleum, twisted by the despair they sought to escape. Their personalities fractured, transforming them into undead echoes of their worst failures.

As the generations passed, the family's corruption deepened. Most heirs delved into darker magics to try to break the curse. The rest gave in to madness. The Drethain line ended with a jaded, lonely, childless heir who lived his last days in the common town of Eldengrave. Will the Drethains be forgotten now they are all gone?

A THREAT TO OTHERS

THE PACT'S REACH did not stop with the end of the Drethains. Over time, the mausoleum began to draw in the souls of others—commoners, travelers, even animals—ensnaring them in the forgotten saint's web of sorrow. The Drethains' souls are Ateris's stalwarts and bannermen. Their corruption turns other souls restless and violent. Besides the undead attacking living creatures nearby, the Drethain's curse is starting to spread forth.

ADVENTURE HOOK

THE ADVENTURERS JUST finished a mission and rest in a small town, Eldengrave. During their stay, a strange affliction starts affecting the place. People wake in the morning pale, listless, and deeply despondent, unable to recall dreams but filled with an overwhelming sense of failure. Crops are left untended, and families are abandoning their homes in despair. The town elder, Old Jones, believes this affliction stems from the Drethain's Mausoleum, which lies a day's journey from the village.

Old Jones comes to this conclusion because of the recent attacks on coming merchants and travelers, plus the fact that the last known heir of the Drethains passed away a few weeks ago. The elder begs the heroes to enter the mausoleum and find a way to appease the spirits or break the curse. The elder offers a family heirloom, a magical amulet said to ward off despair, as payment.

URN OF THE DESOLATE

This artifact was born from the pact. An ornate urn with gold and silver inlays, infused with the essence of Ateris. Those who grab it see their greatest failures and most hopeless moments. Their souls are vulnerable to being consumed by despair. Destroying the urn could end the curse, but doing so risks summoning the forgotten saint.

RUMORS

d6

Details

- 1 Locals whisper that anyone who enters the mausoleum is never the same, it makes you believe you are nothing but a failure.
- 2 Old folks in Eldengrave swear they have seen a cloaked figure roaming near the mausoleum at night. They say it holds a massive scythe and an ominous lantern. They claim it is the forgotten saint, with its birdlike face, who has come to claim more victims.
- 3 Farmers report hearing whispers in the wind and feeling unseen eyes on them when they pass close to the mausoleum.
- 4 Eldengrave's afflicted villagers are said to share the same dream of a shattered mirror and a voice that whispers their deepest failures, leaving them hopeless. The heroes learn this if they spend some time speaking to different villagers before leaving.
- 5 Treasure hunters say the mausoleum holds a secret vault where the Drethains stored priceless artifacts and heirlooms.
- 6 Some people believe the forgotten saint is a punishment of the gods. They say Eldengrave must welcome its arrival, not fear it.

THALO REEVE

Human commoner

Thalo Reeve is a grizzled old grave keeper who has tended the Drethain Mausoleum's outer grounds for decades, ever since losing his family to the spirits' predations. Driven by bitterness and duty, Thalo has spent his life documenting the hauntings and piecing together fragments of the Drethains' cursed history. He knows the mausoleum's layout better than anyone. Thalo is motivated by a burning desire to see the curse lifted before his death, for he fears his soul is forfeit as well.

Manner. I enjoy the sound of blunt sentences. I always hide my fears and insecurities with sarcasm.

Ambition. I long to lay the spirits of the mausoleum—and my guilt—to rest before my life comes to an end.



FENNICK COLLIS

Human, mage apprentice

Fennick is a retired historian and occultist who once studied ancient pacts and curses. Decades ago, Fennick was hired by a Drethain noble to research the family's legacy, and he learned of the deal with the forgotten saint, A'teris. His investigation and curiosity angered the spirits within the mausoleum, and he barely escaped with his life, leaving behind his research. He wishes to join the heroes, determined to recover his lost research and finally face the horrors he once fled from.

Manner. I get animated and talkative when the subject of the conversation is obscure or about dark lore.

Ambition. I must reclaim my research. Perhaps, I can still publish a record-breaking book about the Drethains.



A'TERIS'S CURSE

AS THE HEROES venture closer to the mausoleum, A'teris's curse begins to weave its tendrils around their minds (DC 9 WIS). Repeat this check when they arrive in area B1, and once more when they locate the urns in area C3. On a fail, roll 1d6 to see how they are affected.

1. Haunting Whispers. The heroes hear faint, disembodied voices murmuring their worst fears and failures, sowing self-doubt. Their next check or attack is made with disadvantage. No healing or rest can prevent this.

2. Despairing Visions. The cursed influence conjures vivid illusions of the heroes' past mistakes. These are so vivid they hurt their minds (1d4 damage).

3. Crippling Apathy. The curse saps the hero's willpower causing moments of lethargy or hopelessness. Unmotivated to press on, they think: "What's the point?" During their next combat, they lose 1 turn.

4. Spiritual Weakness. The person affected is plagued by visions of ominous urns and lost causes. They regain half the Hit Points from any next healing source.

5. Echoes of Failure. Fearing to disappoint others, the person affected shall magically refuse to do the next task asked of them (such as a thief picking a lock, or a fighter kicking off a door). They would rather have someone else do it. If forced to do the task, the check fails.

6. A'teris's Luck. The PC glows like a torch (1 hour).

Adventurers Needed

Hear me, brave souls! Darkness festers in the Mausoleum of Broken Hopes, spreading its curse to our people—our families! I've seen too many succumb to this hopelessness. We need heroes—bold, strong, and true—to venture into that accursed place, uncover its secrets, and banish the curse once and for all! Our coffers may not be full, but the gratitude of Eldengrave and a chance to save lives are yours for the taking.

Will you heed this call?

MAUSOLEUM OF BROKEN HOPES

“Within these walls, hope is crushed by the weight of failure and the chains of the past. Know that once you enter, pure despair shall be your guide”

Dungeon Inscription

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	Thalo stops abruptly, staring at an urn of ashes with trembling hands. The urns in the mausoleum show the names of the people that rest in them. He mutters, “ <i>This name wasn’t here yesterday</i> ,” before urging the heroes to hurry.
2	A pair of hopeless ghouls , pale and gaunt with hollow eyes, slink from the shadows and attack the intruders.
3	A filthy figure wrapped in decayed finery lumbers from a hidden alcove. The mummified Drethain radiates an aura of hopelessness, sapping nearby heroes’ will to live. A second mummified Drethain joins in the second round of combat.
4	A dim lantern swings from the ceiling, illuminating ghostly figures reenacting a tragic scene from the Drethain family’s history. Thalo recognizes the event and insists on moving quickly. Staying to see the scene summons two angry shadows .
5	The <i>Urn of the Desolate</i> expels a potent wave of despair (DC 9 WIS). Failing affects one’s resolve (see A’teris’s Curse).
6	The heroes disturb a swarm of spiders . The insects attack them but flee and hide if they are reduced to half their Hit Points.
7	A gust of cold wind extinguishes braziers, torches, and lamps. The dungeon braziers magically reignite after 1 minute.
8	Two hopeless ghouls and a mummified Drethain stumble upon the heroes. The undead attack the intruders until destroyed.



REACHING THE DUNGEON

THE CHARACTERS LEAVE Eldengrave and march toward the Mausoleum of Broken Hopes. During their journey, the spreading curse of the Drethains makes its first attempt to corrupt their minds (see **A’teris’s Curse**).

► **Fennick Collis**. Before the heroes leave town, the retired historian (**apprentice**) approaches. He claims his research holds great value. He thought it was lost forever but he regained a bit of composure when he overheard Old Jones telling the heroes how to get to the mausoleum. He knows a little magic, and he promises to credit the heroes if he manages to publish his book.

It is not hard to follow Old Jones’s instructions (DC 9 WIS) but failing to do so causes the heroes to stumble upon a pair of wild **boars** and their piglets. The sow is startled and afraid for its young ones. The beasts become neutral if the heroes offer them food or oats.

► **Thalo Reeve**. The heroes meet the old grave keeper (**peasant**) on the outskirts of the dungeon. He explains who he is and the work of his life. He believes the Drethains and their mausoleum are the root of all evil. He admits he cannot defend himself, but he begs the heroes to let him tag along. Thalo trusts his skills to navigate the place. If the heroes accept his company, all checks to open doors, search areas, and find secret doors within the mausoleum are made with advantage.

Level 2 Dungeon

► **Danger**. Unsafe. Check for a Random Event every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light**. The braziers in the dungeon are infused with permanent *light* spells. The rest of the dungeon is dark. Denizens of the dungeon are **dark-adapted**.

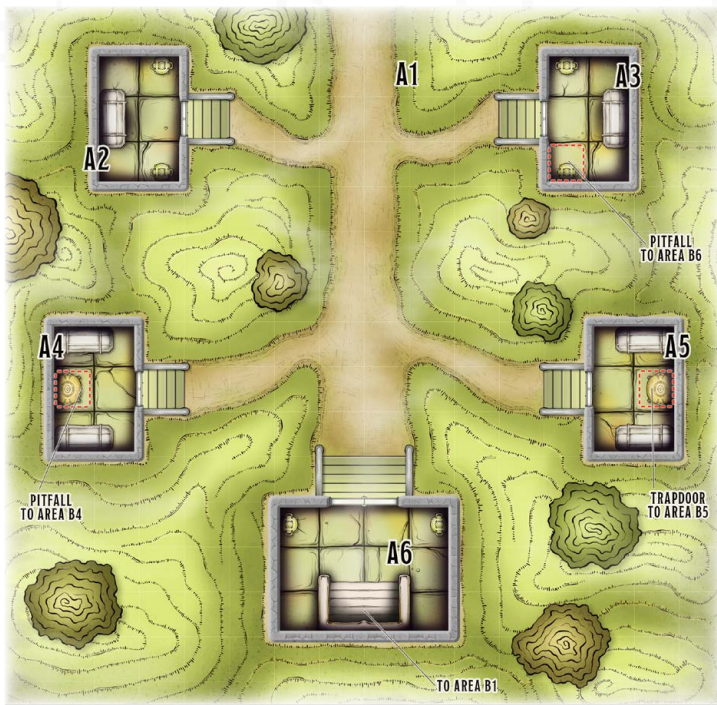
NPCs in the Dungeon

► **Thalo**. Whenever the party encounters one or more **mummified Drethains**, there is a 1-in-6 chance the undead recognize Thalo among them. If this occurs, the monsters point at the poor grave keeper and attack him first. This confirms Thalo’s suspicions about his soul being forfeited too. At the same time, such an event increases his resolve and bravery to see this through.

► **Fennick**. Despite his age, Fennick may be an incredible asset in the dungeon. His *beguile* spell can turn encounters of one or two enemies into mundane tasks.

A’TERIS IN THE DUNGEON

Within the dungeon, the forgotten saint can speak to the heroes at all times. It shares premonitions of their failures and aims to diminish their spirits and demotivate them. This is why the heroes must repeat their check to resist the forgotten saint’s curse in two different areas of the dungeon (see **A’teris’s Curse**).



SURFACE

► **Traps.** If the heroes ignore Thalo, or if he is not part of their group, they must investigate and search each chapel individually. If they fail to notice the pressure plates in areas A3 and A4 (DC 9 WIS), they may fall, take 2d6 damage, and end up locked up in areas B4 or B6.

A1. MAUSOLEUM GROUNDS

The mausoleum grounds are cloaked in perpetual mist, with five ominous, ivy-choked buildings looming like silent sentinels. The central chapel holds the only direct access to the dungeon levels beneath.

The heroes reach the mausoleum after following Old Jones's instructions and walking for a few hours (see **Reaching the Dungeon**). If Thalo is present, he suggests using the ladder in area A5 to descend (see map).

A2. TRENT DRETHAIN'S TOMB

Silver plates on the walls describe the deeds and achievements of the person interred herein.

The characters can spend 1 **crawling round** to learn a little about each of the Drethains. Trent was a successful trader of exotic goods, pelts, and luxury ingredients. One day, he decided no one deserved his wondrous items, and he stopped selling them. He preferred to amass it all. He died an accumulator, surrounded by piles of stuff. But no one ever forgot the great salesman he once was.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** There are luxury robes (25 gp), a gold ring (10 gp), and 24 gp in the enclosure. A **mummified Drethain** comes out of the sarcophagus if disturbed.

A3. ALMA DRETHAIN'S TOMB

Alma's discoveries of new animal species and breakthroughs in beast biology allowed her to write dozens of books, tomes, and treaties on them. She lived in the capital and taught at the best university. One day, though, she stopped all her professional activity, saying life was pointless, and her progress meaningless. All remember her, but some say she was a beggar in her final days.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** This sarcophagus contains luxury robes (25 gp), a pearl necklace (35 gp), a silvered dagger (15 gp), 8 pg in a pouch, and a **mummified Drethain**.

A4. OTTO DRETHAIN'S TOMB

An incredible swordsman who quickly climbed through the ranks of the military and became a war hero. Statues of Otto Drethain are scattered throughout the reign.

After the war, the absence of violence or military activity brought the worst out of Otto. He would look for trouble, show off, and let hubris guide his thoughts. Both he and his squire were poisoned during the night after he messed with the wrong people. His swordsmanship has never been put into doubt though, even to this day.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** A +1 *longsword* and a full set of plate armor (130 gp) are the rewards for the brave ones who defeat Otto in the thankless afterlife (**wight**).

A5. GABRIELLE DRETHAIN'S TOMB

Gabrielle was a beloved member of the Drethain family, known for her compassionate heart and efforts to uplift the suffering during a devastating famine. Unlike her kin, she rejected the family's dark practices, dedicating her life to charity and building a chapel as a sanctuary for the lost. Many remember her as '*Gabrielle the Radiant*', a beacon of kindness in a bloodline otherwise tainted by selfishness and despair. A secret ladder descends to the lower level of the dungeon (DC 12 WIS to locate).

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The heroes may take one *potion of healing* and two flasks of holy water without trouble.

A6. FIRST LEVEL ENTRANCE

The heroes descend 30 feet on these stairs and reach the First Level of the dungeon (area B1, see map).

THE DRETHAINS

The Drethains interred in the lower levels are the ones who delved into dark arts and the occult. They thought they knew better than Lord Barynd but they only made matters worse for them or the entire family. In the end, all their efforts were in vain; their souls were bound to the mausoleum due to the original pact. Only the destruction of the *Urn of the Desolate* can change that.

FIRST LEVEL

B1. FIRST LEVEL LANDING

Remember to roll again to see how the forgotten saint's words affect the heroes (see *Ateris's Curse*).

B2. HOPELESS ALCOVES

The dark, stretch corridors are long, narrow passages. Along the walls, deep alcoves house ancient sarcophagi, each carved with sorrowful visages and adorned with faded inscriptions of laments.

The east and west versions of these two corridors are identical and contain the same (see map).

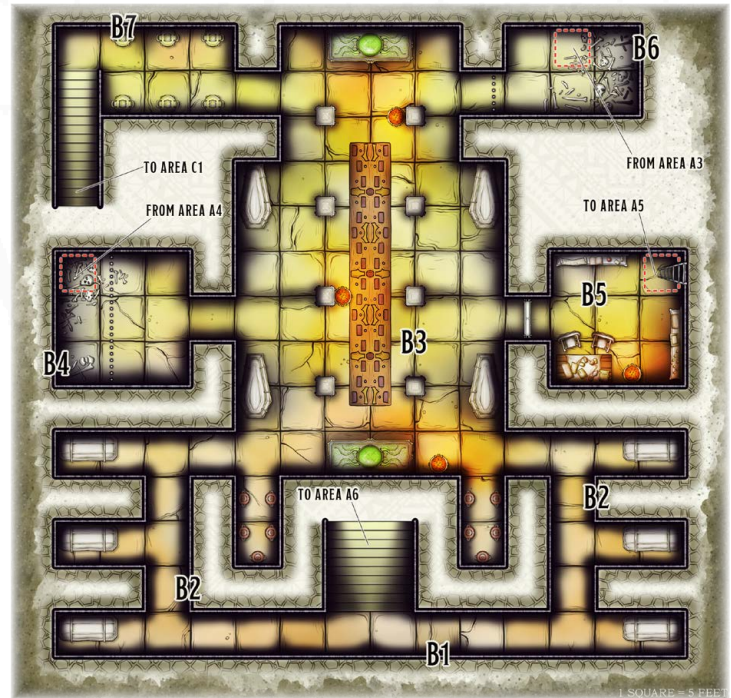
A **zombie** hides in each. These undead come out of their enclosures as soon as the heroes approach.

► **Treasure (0 XP).** Nothing wondrous within. Common items such as hammers, spoons, copper pans, and are scattered throughout the three sarcophagi.

B3. UPPER NAVE

Eight stone pillars traverse through the center of the room. Six sarcophagi hug the walls, glowing faintly between the dancing shadows cast by the fire.

This vast chamber holds more bound, angered souls. Two **mummified Drethains** come out of the lavish sarcophagi while four **hopeless ghouls** leave their unmarked, resting places as well. This is a deadly encounter but the characters are aware of the enemies in the area before they enter because of the grunts and sounds the undead make when coming out of their enclosures.



► **Fennick.** If present, the historian suggests they retreat to the narrow corridors where they can face the enemies one by one. He uses the *beguile* spell to make the task easier. But he needs someone to strike them down.

► **Thalo.** If the grave keeper convinces the heroes to enter the dungeon from area B5, the heroes can try the same strategy to fight. They can even use the door to their advantage and keep the enemies at bay.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** An obsidian statuette of a god (15 gp), a fine set of ivory game pieces (25 gp), a fragment of a sapphire (30 gp), and two lustrous pearls (40 gp each).



B4. WEST CELL

The original construction of the mausoleum did not have cells in its design. However, the Drethain that lost their minds the most modified the rooms. Motivated by their desire to break the curse, they did the unthinkable and captured innocents to perform dark rituals or offer them to Ateris as sacrifices. In the end, both the prisoners and their captors became trapped souls in the dungeon.

► **Bars.** A strong enough hero can bend the bars to either break in or escape (DC 12 STR).

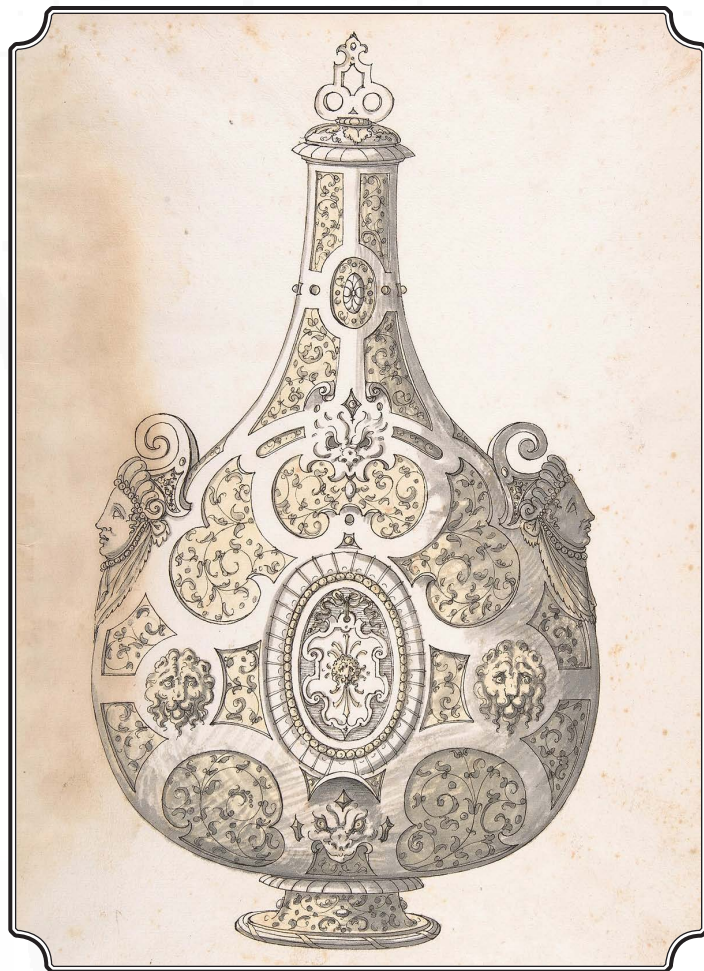
► **Thalo.** The grave keeper has the key to this cell.

► **Treasure (0 XP).** The heroes can spend 1 **crawling round** searching the bones to find an emerald (60 gp). A **skeleton** rises, angered that someone would take the only thing his poor soul kept after perishing here.

B5. THALO'S OFFICE

The grave keeper keeps records of his work and the Drethains that are interred in the mausoleum. A 30-foot-long ladder takes to Gabrielle Dethrain's Tomb (area A5).

► **Lore.** The heroes may search the area for 1 **crawling round** to find a map of the mausoleum (does not include the secret vault, area C5). Thalo hands it over, if present.



B6. EAST CELL

Another cell that was not meant to be. It is twice as large as the one in area B4, and it has triple the bones. The grave keeper has the key as well. Use the same mechanics to bend the iron bars described in area B4.

From area B3, the heroes can see leather bags, the glint of steel between the bones, and nondescript objects.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** A serrated greatsword (12 gp), a silver ring with a miniature emerald (40 gp), a bag with a green crystal statuette of Memnon (50 gp), and a leather bandoleer with 10 blue bottles (3 gp each).

B7. ANTECHAMBER AND STAIRS

This is the only path to the lower levels of the dungeon. The heroes cannot reach this area without first confronting the undead enemies described in area B3.

► **Thalo.** The grave keeper has no trouble with the treasure taken from the sarcophagi. But he believes ashes should stay where they are, along with the urns. He leaves the place upset if the heroes do not comply.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** There are six golden urns filled with ashes leaning against the walls. Each of them is worth 25 gp but they are difficult to transport. If the characters move the urns, they summon the anger of two **shadows**.



The Forgotten Saint



“It once was a radiant figure, but its fall was as profound as its former glory. Twisted by its pact with despair, it became a harbinger of hopelessness, feeding on regret and failure.

Legends speak of entire kingdoms undone by its whispered words. A'teris seeks not to conquer but to unravel, its ambitions bound to the annihilation of hope itself. Even in defeat, its dark essence lingers, a shadow in the hearts of those who dare to defy it, waiting patiently for the world to falter once more.”



SECOND LEVEL

URN OF THE DESOLATE

There are five copies of the artifact on stone pedestals in area C3 (see map). The GM decides which is the real one at random. When the heroes reach area C1, Ateris sends an overconfident warning: “Will you risk losing your minds and becoming one of my thralls for a chance to destroy my precious urn? By all means, risk it all! Hopelessness shall be your only friend and guide.”

C1. SECOND LEVEL LANDING

Three standing sarcophagi show detailed descriptions of members of the Drethain family and their deeds in life. Despite their souls being forever trapped in the dungeon, some brave Drethains have so far fought their curse and maintained their sanity even in the afterlife.

► **Ghosts.** The heroes meet the ghosts of Dorothy, Vance, and Silvio Drethain here. These errand spirits are neutral to the heroes. They beg for the heroes’ help to bring an end to the curse that afflicts their family.

C2. BIOLUMINESCENT FUNGI

A rare kind of luminous fungi found its way into these two areas of the dungeon. A skillful ranger should know how to smash them into a glowing mix that can be used as a light source (DC 12 WIS). A successful check grants the heroes enough mashed ‘rooms for four torches.

► **Bars.** Just like with the cells, Thalo has the key for these. Otherwise the bars must be bent to gain access to area C3 and the rest of the dungeon (DC 12 STR).

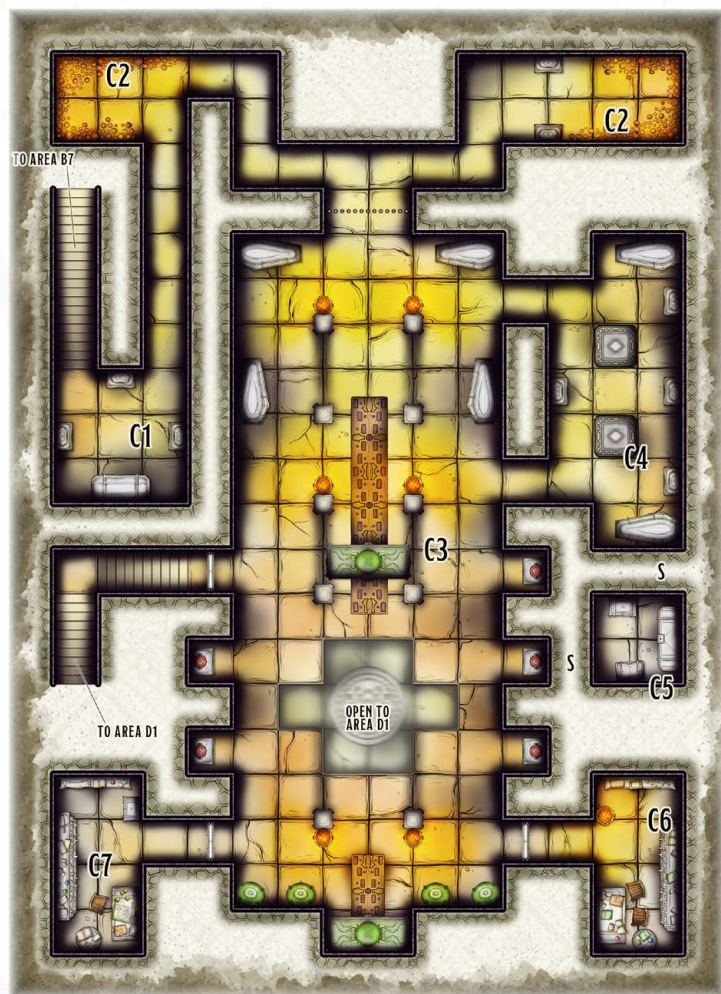
► **Ghosts.** The twins Julius and Hilius Drethain await on the eastern side of area C2 (see map). They are distant cousins of Otto Drethain. They were both good soldiers in life. Even in their incorporeal form, they wish to help. The curse binds them and prevents them from hurting Ateris, but the twins can try to contain the other Drethains. Use the **soldier** statblock. Physically, however, the undead twins are incorporeal, floating ghosts.

C3. LOWER NAVE

Similar to its counterpart above, but larger. Two **hopeless ghouls** and one **mummified Drethain** emerge from the sarcophagi and attack the intruders.

► **Fennick.** Just like before, the historian believes the heroes can use the iron bars to their advantage to maintain control in a fight, even more so if they have the key.

► **Fall.** An opening near the south end of the chamber opens to area D1 (see map). Anyone who falls takes 2d6 damage and lands at the rune-carved circle below.



LOCATING THE URN

The heroes must interact with the urns to see which contains the essence of Ateris. A *detect magic* spell perceives the same aura coming from each of the five urns in the alcoves. The real urn is revealed with a simple touch. They must interact with each urn and either resist the curse or suffer the consequences of it (See **Ateris’s Curse**). Once it is found, the **forgotten saint** appears in the blink of an eye, and fights along one **mummified Drethain** and two **hopeless ghouls**. However, when reduced to half its Hit Points, the forgotten saint descends to area D1 using the opening.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** A polished shield (12 gp), a bracelet with gold inscriptions (40 gp), a small box with five tiny lapis lazuli (50 gp), and three longswords (8 gp each).

C4. BURIAL CHAMBER

Thalo recognizes the names of Alec and Bristen Drethain from the sarcophagi here. According to him, they were beloved members of the church. Perhaps that has maintained the Drethain interred here protected from Ateris’s corruption. A secret passage is hidden behind the sarcophagus at the far end of the area (see map).

C5. SECRET VAULT

The heroes may only find this place if they notice the secret passages hidden in areas C3 or C4 (DC 12 WIS to spot). The characters find the following items:

► **Treasure (4 XP).** A suit of chainmail (60 gp), a gold monkey idol with a ruby in its teeth (60 gp), a *potion of invisibility* (80 gp), three silver-tipped javelins (4 gp each), six black candles traced with gold runes (10 gp each), a mithral shield inlaid with small, blue pearls (80 gp), and two random Wizard Tier-1 *spell scrolls* (160 gp), and several leather bags with a total of 1,768 gp.

C6. EAST ARCHIVE

This chamber contains a plethora of information about the Drethain family, their lands, their businesses, and the mausoleum. The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** to learn the following facts:

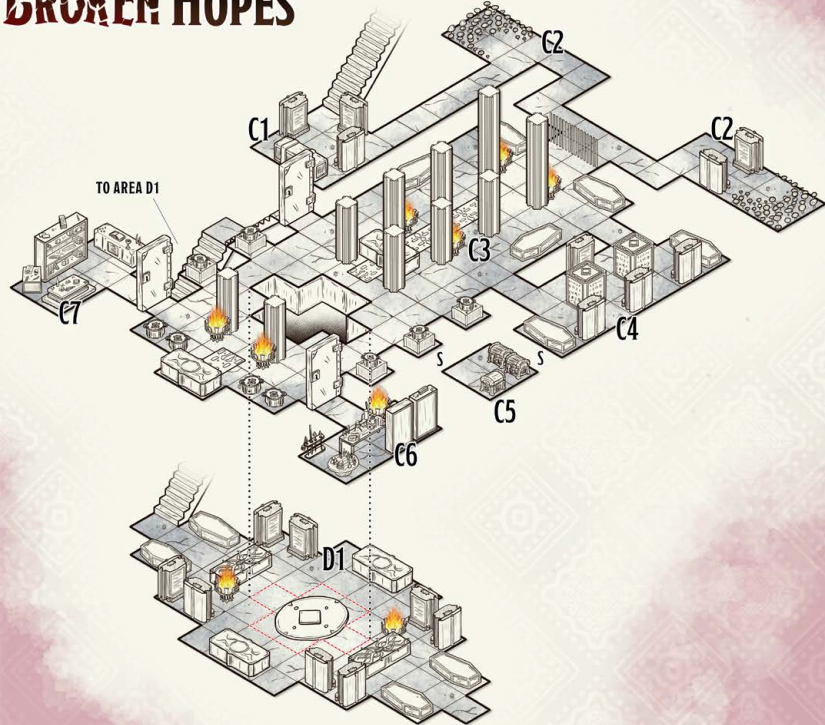
1. The last of the Drethains died a few weeks ago. His ashes were added to one of the funerary urns in area B7. Thalo can confirm this information if he is present.
2. The lowest level of the mausoleum is a sacred funerary chamber. Sixteen of the Drethain gained their resting place there.
3. Lord Barynd Drethain is registered as the one who cursed their family. It all started when he consulted the Bleeding Oracle and summoned the Veilbinder Ateris, the forgotten saint. Their pact doomed them all.

C7. WEST ARCHIVE

This chamber is identical to area C6. Another repository of knowledge with a desk and a shelf filled with as much information about the Drethains. And just like with its eastern counterpart, the heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** to learn these additional facts about the now-gone family:

4. The heroes learn about many of the exploits and great deeds of the Drethains in life. The texts talk about a secret vault built within the mausoleum; they learn the location of the vault (area C5).
5. The Drethain left some of their possessions to colleagues, close friends, and loved ones. But the heroes discover that a small state on the outskirts of the capital remains in a legal loophole. The owners are gone but the Drethain lawyers still live. No one can access the property as there is no heir.

MAUSOLEUM OF BROKEN HOPES



DESTROYING THE URN

If the forgotten saint is defeated or driven to area D1, the heroes may attempt to destroy the *Urn of the Desolate* (AC 8, 10 Hit Points). The urn explodes when destroyed and creatures near it take 1d6 damage. Ateris's curse is lifted; this allows the people in Eldengrave to go back to normal. But this does not fix the Drethain's situation. The heroes must finish what they started and put an end to the forgotten saint. Otherwise, it shall hunt them until it has its revenge (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

THIRD LEVEL

THE THIRD AND lowest level of the dungeon is 20 feet below area C3. If the heroes did not defeat the forgotten saint in area C3, they must descend to this area and have their final confrontation against this evil entity.

Area D1 can be reached by descending stairs to the west of area C3 (see map). It is the only walkable path. However, the characters can also opt to jump from the large opening in the same area (DC 12 STR, on a fail they take 1d6 damage. Or 2d6 if they fail by 5 or more).

► **Fennick.** The clever historian suggests that an archer should stay above to provide cover. And again, he signals the 'L' shaped stairs as a great spot to hold the line.

THE URN IS DESTROYED

The forgotten saint uses the *Urn of the Desolate* to gather souls. Little by little, it siphons the life force of all the souls trapped in the dungeon, Drethain or not. While the urn exists, the forgotten saint is invincible and shall be reborn within the mausoleum after a few days. But when the urn is destroyed, the forgotten saint makes all checks and attacks with disadvantage, and it becomes possible to destroy it. Being an otherworldly, immortal entity, the heroes can only aspire to send it to its home plane. Leaving the mausoleum after destroying the urn only fixes half the problem (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

D1. DEEP BURIAL CHAMBER

The last and final chamber is vast and foreboding. Eight sarcophagi, some ornate and gilded, lie in a solemn formation around a raised stone circle etched with runic symbols. Against the walls, eight stone enclosures lean ominously, their engraved lids slightly ajar, as if awaiting an inevitable rude awakening.

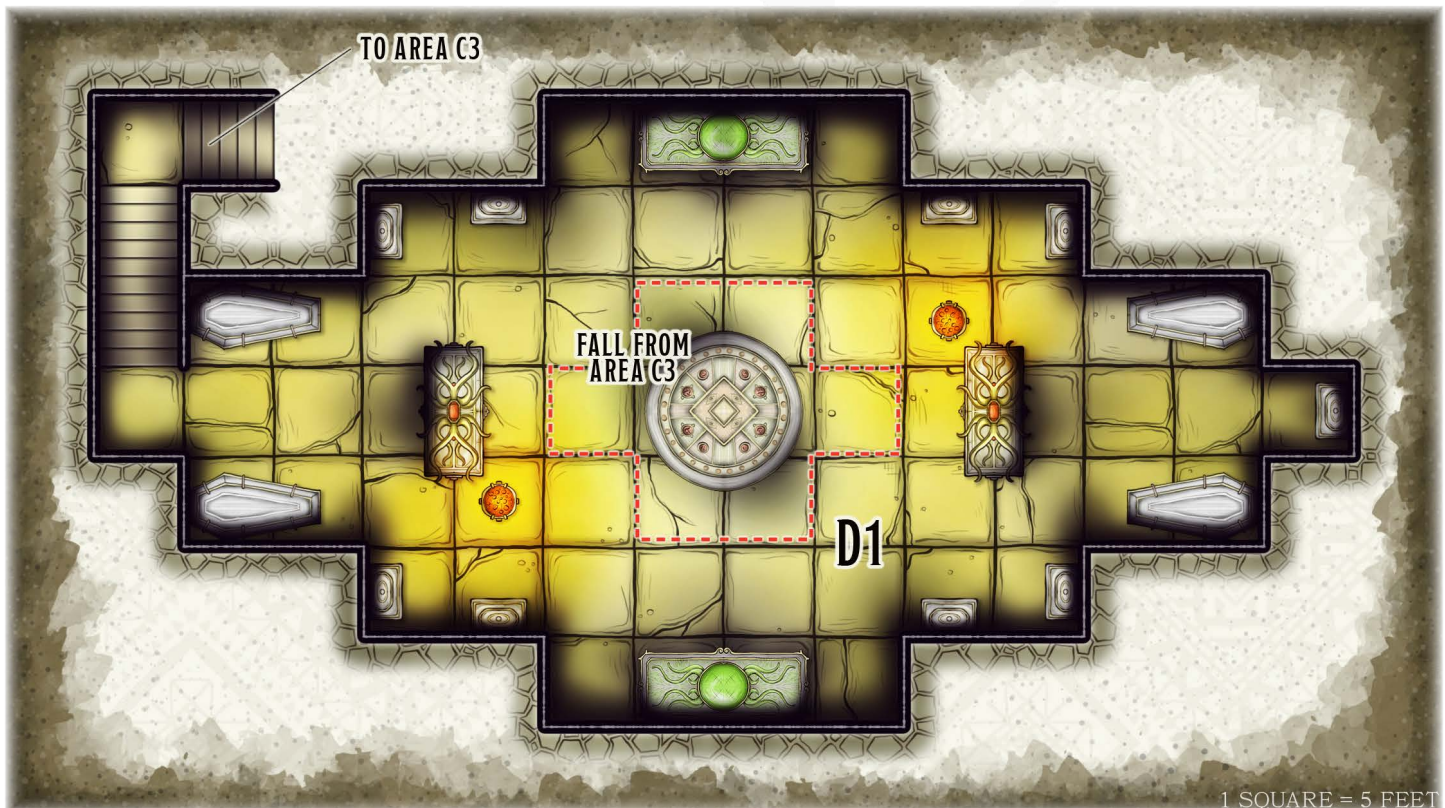
The forgotten saint's goal is to gather enough souls to spread his curse more and more. Eventually, he would obtain enough arcane power to summon its physical form to this plane, the consequences of this would be cataclysmic. Without realizing it, the heroes' actions could not only save the Drethains, but also the world.

► **Enemies.** The heroes must confront the **forgotten saint**, two **hopeless ghouls**, and three **mummified Drethains**. Ateris, if weakened by the urn's destruction and with his goal threatened, fights until the end.

► **Allies.** If everyone has survived so far, the heroes are followed by Thalo (**peasant**), Fennick (**apprentice**), and the ghosts of Julius and Hilius Drethain (**soldiers**).

► **Light in the Dark.** The gods smile upon the heroes. Their quest to defeat the forgotten saint aligns with their cosmic goals. A **seraph** appears in the second round of combat. Its arrival grants all the heroes a **luck token**.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** A green scarab encased in amber (75 gp), a suit of blackened-steel plate mail (130 gp), a *ring of feather falling* (250 gp), a lantern made of intricate stained glass (80 gp), and bags with 783 gp.



ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

THE END OF THE CURSE

With the *Urn of the Desolate* shattered and the spectral form of Ateris vanquished, the heavy veil of despair lifts from Eldengrave. The air feels lighter, and the anguished wails of the trapped souls from the mausoleum fall silent for the first time in centuries. The villagers, their hope restored, celebrate the heroes as saviors, showering them with gratitude and well-earned riches.

Old Jones pays them 1,500 gold (3 XP). A grand feast is held in their honor, where laughter and music replace the once-muted tones of the town. The wretched hex is broken, and the heroes depart as legends, leaving behind a land free from the shadow of the cursed Drethains.

If Thalo still lives, he is so grateful to the heroes that he gives them a family relic; a *kytherian cog*. It means a lot to him, but now his mind and soul are at peace: “*I won’t need it anymore, we’re free,*” he says blissfully.

THE DRETHAINS

With the curse lifted, the grateful spirits of the Drethains, their forms luminous and free of despair, bestow upon the heroes the right to inherit their small estate in the capital (see area C7)—a quaint but elegant manor adorned with ivy-clad walls and stained-glass windows depicting moments of Drethain glory. The estate includes a study brimming with ancient texts, a modest armory, and a sprawling garden ideal for quiet reflection or gatherings. The heroes can use the estate as a base of operations, a place to rest, plan, or even host allies and dignitaries. Their reputation as reliable mercenaries or business associates increases considerably. Its history, now redeemed, ensures it becomes a hub of intrigue and opportunity in the heart of the capital and beyond.

THE FORGOTTEN SAINT LIVES

With the *Urn of the Desolate* destroyed, the oppressive curse on Eldengrave lifts and the innocent people in town can go back to normal. But the Drethain remain bound to the mausoleum. The heroes, believing their mission complete, are hailed as saviors and celebrated by the grateful townsfolk (see rewards above).

But Thalo is not satisfied. The grave keeper says the job is incomplete and that the poor Drethains are still trapped, and he believes his soul is forfeited as well. He is right; deep within the mausoleum, the forgotten saint Ateris stirs, its essence unbound, waiting for the day it can rise again. For now, the land knows peace, but it shall exact its revenge when the heroes least expect it. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



STATBLOCKS

Hopeless Ghoul

A punished soul, a beaten mind. Hopelessness is the only thing they feel. Violence their only means to rest.

AC: 10

HP: 7 LV1

ATK: 2 claw +2 (1d4)

MV: Near

S:+2 D:+0 C:+1 I:-2 W:+0 Ch:-2

.....

Undead. Immune to morale checks.

Hopeless Gaze. 1/day. One target near, DC 9 WIS or they make their next check with disadvantage. This penalty does not stack.



Mummified Drethain

One of the forfeited, chastised souls of the now gone bloodline. The Drethains are prisoners, forced to act as stalwarts, agents of the forgotten saint, Ateris.

AC: 12

HP: 10 LV2

ATK: 1 mind numbing touch +2

MV: Near

S:-1 D:+2 C:+1 I:-1 W:-1 Ch:-2

.....

Undead. Immune to morale checks.

Mind Numbing Touch. 1d3 WIS damage. Death if reduced to 0 WIS.

Thick Blood

“By the power bestowed in me by our all-mighty patron, the Pale God, I shall punish your transgression. Surrender, and I shall grant you a swift death.”

Featured Product

Thick Blood
The Gnom Ascension
LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
IMMERSIVE ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR D&D 5E AND SHADOWDARK RPG
BY DEREK RUIZ
ELVEN TOWER

Adventurers Sneeded
It's been enough! The city of Lysander's Reach calls for valiant heroes!
The evil gnom cultists that have hurt our people and kidnapped our loved ones hide in the Temple of the Pale God. We shall not tolerate their robberies, the burning of our homes, nor their merciless raids.
All gnolls must be dealt with and removed from this world. We cannot allow their corruption to spread any further. Approach Constable Kent for details about the reward.

VTT MAPS INCLUDED

In Thick Blood, the heroes must face a blood-thirsty group of cultist gnolls. The people of Oaken Valley are being kidnapped and abducted from their very homes to be used as fuel for the cult's incantations. The evil gnolls venerate the ancient Pale Blood god, an obscure and elusive deity. Their blood rituals have not only become a threat to the small towns; they affect Lysander's Reach, the capital. The authorities need to deal with these abominate gnolls at once.

This is an adventure that requires the heroes to gather their strength, call all their allies, and delve into the lair of evil gnolls. They must spear through the cult's ranks and maintain their morale against their blood magic. If they succeed, they will not only save the lives of many, but the allies made along the way might become their new friends and companions for adventures to come!

Thick Blood
The Gnom Ascension
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LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
IMMERSIVE ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR D&D 5E AND SHADOWDARK RPG
ELVEN TOWER

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NEW MONSTERS

► **Dark Faun.** These satyrs have succumbed to a sinister curse woven by an evil hag. Their once-golden hearts now beat with malice, twisted by shadowy whispers. Twining vines of blackthorn sprout from their hooves. Their panpipes sing haunting laments that enslave the weak-willed. Dark fauns roam moonlit forests, looking for prey, luring lost souls into an eternal dance of despair.

► **Cherub.** They are lesser angels of radiant grace. They serve as humble messengers of the divine, bearing light and wisdom to mortals. Their youthful visage masks ancient knowledge, and their feathered wings shimmer with soft hues of dawn. Though lacking the might of seraphs, cherubs endure the mortal realm longer, weaving subtle miracles into the fabric of life. They wander unseen, disguised as mere mortals, and hide their wings.

► **Dust Spirit.** These ephemeral elementals are born of arid wastelands and forgotten ruins. Their humanoid forms shift and scatter, composed of swirling sands and motes of grit. Elusive and silent, they drift on desert winds, guarding secrets buried beneath the dunes. To cross their path is to court the wrath of a storm, for they abhor the disturbance of their timeless vigil.

Dark Faun

A twisted satyr wreathed in shadow and thorn, it lures the unwary with mournful, sad melodies.

AC: 13

HP: 20 LV4

ATK: 1 headbutt +0 (1d6) or 1 pipes

MV: Near

S:+0 D:+2 C:+1 I:+1 W:+3 Ch:+3

.....

Pipes. All creatures that can hear the faun DC 13 CHA or become friendly for 1 day.

Dance. The dark faun can make its friends dance indefinitely. It enjoys seeing mortals collapse when their bodies cannot hold any longer.

USING THE MONSTERS

1. Include the **dark faun** as the guardian of a glade where a powerful relic resides. Its presence can serve as both an environmental hazard and a tragic moral dilemma if the curse can be undone.
2. **Cherubs** make excellent allies or guides in holy sites or when the party must interact with divine forces. Introduce one as a humble messenger that could become the heroes' ally if they are worthy.
3. Use **dust spirits** in arid deserts, crumbling ruins, or battlegrounds where the sands hide ancient lore or treasure. They can serve as environmental challenges, obstacles in a puzzle, and stirring to life when sacred grounds are disturbed.





Cherub

A radiant being with dawn-kissed wings, it walks unseen among mortals, weaving quiet miracles.

AC: 12 (leather)

HP: 9 **LV** 2

ATK: 1 staff +2 (1d6)

MV: Near (fly)

S:+2 **D:**+1 **C:**+1 **I:**+1 **W:**+2 **Ch:**+2

Mend. 3/day. The cherub repairs a simple object, weapon, or item.

Cure. 3/day. One target regains 1 Hit Point.

Grant Wings. 1/day. One target can fly up to 60 feet for 1 round.

Dust Spirit

A shifting humanoid form of swirling sands, it guards ruins and whispers the secrets of the desert.

AC: 13

HP: 21 **LV** 4

ATK: 2 pummel + 4 (1d6)

MV: Near (fly)

S:+1 **D:**+3 **C:**+2 **I:**+2 **W:**+1 **Ch:**+0

Dune. While not moving, the dust spirit can blend with the sand and remain invisible.

Ambush. The dust spirit deals 2d6 extra damage to any target it attacks by surprise.

Vulnerability. The dust spirit is restrained for 1 round when doused with water.



CRACKING THE VAULT

THE MAIN VAULT

The vault is a trove of arcane wealth. It contains ornate treasure chests with 1,500 gp and a set of *magic dice*. The tall bookcase overflows with ancient tomes and scrolls. There are ten random wizard *spell scrolls*.

The central rune-carved stone coffer radiates a powerful magical aura. It contains the mage's most prized possession: the *Soul Prism*. It is a radiant gem of swirling light, encased in an intricate stand of silver and gold. Its mysterious powers only the ancient mage knew. Whoever claims it must study it for years to master the gem's power.

Deep within the mysteries of the arcane lies a forgotten vault, sealed in the folds of a hidden demiplane. It was crafted by the reclusive mage Altherion—a master of planar magic and mind-bending charms—this vault is an arrangement of trap-filled chambers, arcane guardians, forgotten knowledge, and untold treasures. The vault can be accessed by descending a magical trapdoor in the ruins of the late mage's manor. It is known to a select few: rival wizards, daring scholars, and opportunistic thieves. Rumors speak of treasures unmatched—enchanted relics, forbidden tomes, and the mage's fabled *Soul Prism*, a gem said to hold immense power. But all thieves should beware, for the vault's defenses are as cunning as their creator, and the echoes of Altherion's presence linger still. To enter this well-guarded vault is to tempt fate; to survive is to defy it.

ENTRANCE HALL

The entrance hall is a square chamber of polished stone, its walls shimmering with magical glyphs. Two silver braziers cast a cold light. In the center, a teleportation circle is inlaid with intricate runes. Above, an iron ladder ascends to the trapdoor leading back to the ruins above. The trapdoor can be locked from within. In the adjacent chamber to the south, two clockwork devices activate when a living creature crosses the threshold of this room. The automated crossbows shoot flaming bolts every few seconds and adjust their aim to follow moving targets.

HALL OF GUARDIANS

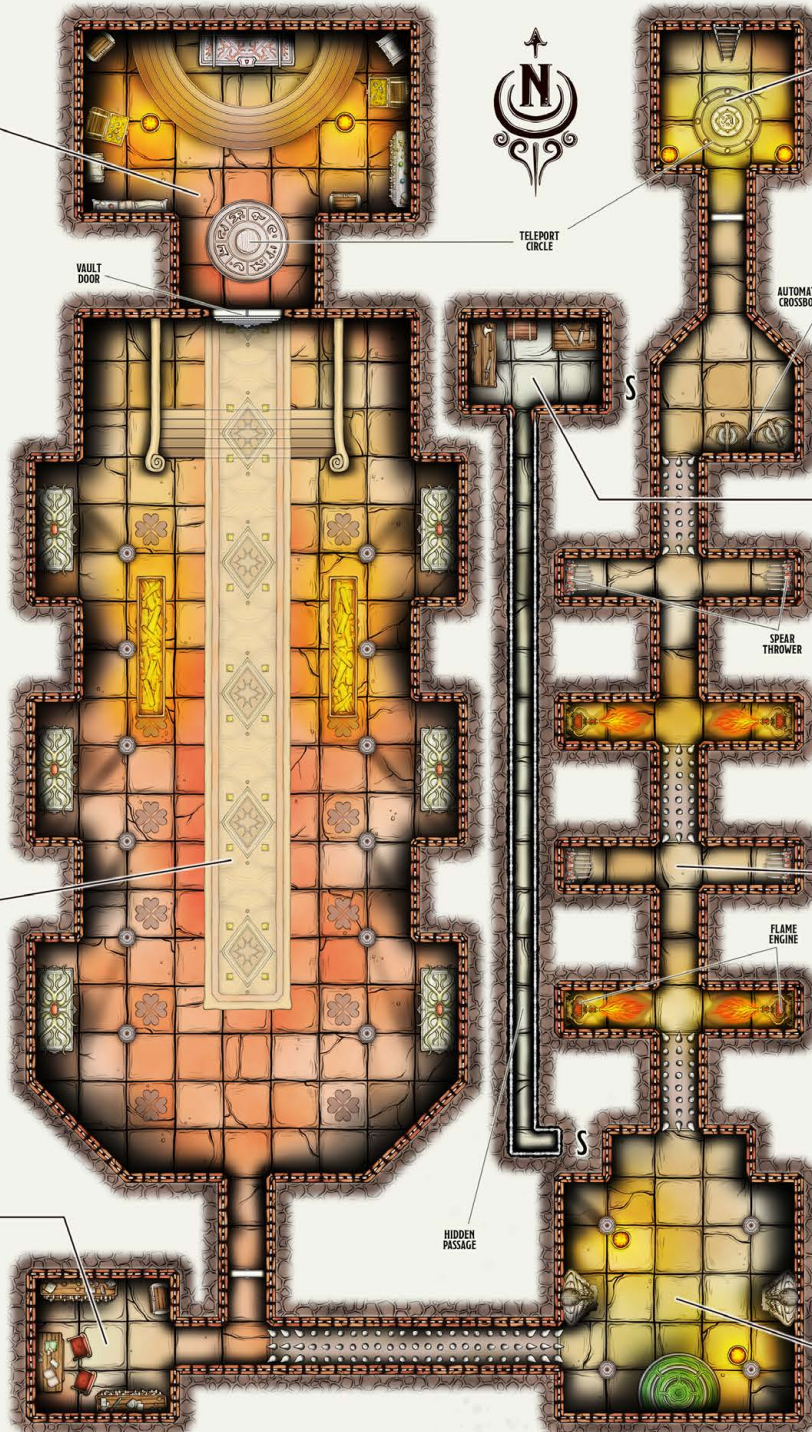
The great hall stretches far toward the main vault door. The chamber is lined with six ornate sarcophagi, each carved with intricate designs of flowing, gilded curves. These silent sentinels lie dormant but radiate a foreboding presence. The skeletal guardians emerge from their enclosures to defend the vault from those without Altherion's sigil.

The vaulted ceiling is a masterpiece of frescoes that depict Altherion immersed in arcane studies: conjuring flames, binding spirits, and writing.

The massive vault door is a masterpiece of craftsmanship. Its surface is a labyrinth of spinning tumblers, enchanted locks, and runic glyphs—a challenge only the most skilled locksmiths dare attempt. Every step forward feels watched, as though the mage's spirit observes all that dare open it.

THE STUDY

A 30-foot-long spiked pit separates this place from the previous chamber. The room contains a grand collection of literary works, poetry books, and music sheets. Altherion was a lover of the arts and built this archive of rare pieces and titles. The whole collection, if removed from this dungeon, can be sold to a university for up to 2,000 gold pieces.



THE HIDDEN PASSAGE

Only the most observant characters find the secret button to access this chamber. It contains an assortment of dull blades, a set of chainmail armor, and a *potion of healing*. The long tunnel to the south can be used to bypass the Trial of Pain. It was used by Altherion to access his vault faster.

TRIAL OF PAIN

This long hallway is a veritable threat to would-be robbers. Three 20-foot-deep spiker pits must be crossed to reach the next chamber. Alas, between each pit there are eldritch engines that spit fire jets hot enough to melt iron and spear-throwing apparatuses that target living creatures that stand in between them. This area can only be bypassed through the *Hidden Passage*, if found.

FAKE RESPITE

This chamber is dominated by a weathered stone fountain trickling with crystal-clear water. Two imposing *crow-faced statues*, their eyes unyielding, stand guard on either side. The air feels charged with tension. Upon disturbing the fountain's waters, the statues animate, their stony forms grinding as they mercilessly attack the intruders.

THE PHARAOH'S VAULT



BY
**DEREK
RUIZ**

LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

**IMMERSIVE SHADOWDARK RPG ONE-SHOT
ADVENTURE FOR THE GREATEST OSR GAME**



ADVENTURE PRIMER



ong ago, when the region was an arid and unyielding desert, it was ruled by the great Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX, the final sovereign of a forgotten dynasty. His empire was one of gold and grandeur, its glories echoing through the arid expanse like whispers of eternity. Ankheteoph was a warrior-king, renowned for wielding the fabled *Blade of Aeons*, a weapon said to command the sands themselves and cleave through the threads of fate. But even the greatest monarchs cannot escape death the promise of ceremonial death to the sun god. Ankheteoph, like his ancestors, was entombed with his treasures in a magnificent ziggurat. Over centuries, his empire collapsed. Ankheteoph himself inherited a realm doomed to perish. Soon after Ankheteoph's death, their dynastic heritage was swallowed by shifting dunes and the march of time, and his resting place vanished into legend.

Now, the world has changed. Where once scorched sands stretched endlessly, there is now an emerald canopy, a thriving forest nurtured by rivers and rains. Nevertheless, the past can never be buried. Mere days ago, a towering ziggurat emerged without warning in the heart of the woodlands, its sand-colored upper terrace catching the sun's light. Scholars and soothsayers alike are baffled, for the structure is untouched by time, its carvings sharp and vivid, as though it had only just been built.

ETERNAL UNLIFE

ANKHETEOPH IX MET his demise not at the end of natural life, but at the appointed age of 35, as decreed by the sacred scripts of his dynasty. According to ancient law, all pharaohs were destined to serve the sun god for precisely 35 years. Upon reaching this milestone, they were ceremonially embalmed while still living, their mortal forms preserved and transformed into undying vessels. This rite, a blend of devotion and dread, ensured their eternal servitude as divine intermediaries, guardians of their people in death, forever bound to the will of the sun god.

UNTOLD TREASURE

ANCIENT TEXTS SPEAK of the *Blade of Aeons* and the unimaginable wealth hidden within the pharaoh's vault, yet they also tell of dire warnings—of curses woven into stone, and guardians forged from magic and steel. Adventurers who have ventured close report strange phenomena: whispers on the wind, the unearthly glow of runes, and the sensation of being watched by unseen eyes. Many are drawn to the ziggurat by a mix of curiosity, ambition, and fear. It is a rare opportunity for people nearby to be the first to delve into the depths of the pharaoh's burial site. If they are brave enough to do so.

THE JADED RESEARCHERS

IN THE QUIET town of Arborhollow, nestled at the edge of Willow Forest, two renowned scholars have become the focus of local intrigue. Professor Hadrin Vey, a reserved yet brilliant historian, and Lyra Telvane, an ambitious archaeologist with a flair for uncovering lost artifacts, have spent years delving into myths of ancient civilizations. The sudden appearance of the ziggurat has ignited their fervor. They believe it to be the legendary tomb of the forgotten Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX.

Hadrin is cautious, driven more by scholarly curiosity than material greed. He warns of curses and magical defenses that might linger in the tomb. Lyra, however, is fearless and pragmatic, her eyes gleaming with dreams of untold treasures and the fame that would follow such a monumental find. A mage apprentice named Orlack Setiva works with them; he is interested in studying the *Blade of Aeons*, a true marvel of the ancient era. The team seeks brave adventurers or mercenaries to escort them into the depths of the ziggurat. They offer 500 gold pieces and a promise of shared glory and wealth. It is the characters' responsibility, as their first of many adventures in their hopefully long careers, that their lives are not forfeit to the reawakened pharaoh's wrath.

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	At night, ghostly lights flicker atop the ziggurat's top terrace, as if summoning something from the heavens.
2	Anyone who enters the ziggurat is never seen again. People claim an old legend dictates so, and that this has occurred before.
3	Soothsayers claim the ziggurat is the dwelling of a forgotten god, demanding offerings to spare Arborhollow from doom.
4	Some hunters and explorers say the air around the strange monument feels warmer and drier, even on the coldest days.
5	A forest dweller in Arborhollow claims that wild animals avoid the strange ziggurat. Birds refuse to perch near it. The sounds of insects cannot be heard near it either. An otherworldly aura from within the stone edifice keeps common animals at bay.
6	A forest elf in Arborhollow claims that despite its apparent antiquity, the forest ziggurat appears to be untouched by the passage of time. There are lit braziers on its pristine stone surfaces. The runes etched on its stones are still clear and legible.

PROFESSOR HADRIN VEY

Human scholar/historian

Professor Hadrin Vey is a meticulous historian in his early 30s, known for his quiet demeanor and shrewd mind. Born to a family of scribes, he is passionate about ancient lore and has dedicated his life to uncovering lost knowledge. Hadrin is a cautious, skeptical man. Yet, he is fascinated by the truths hidden beneath myth. His ambition lies not in riches but in preserving history, believing that understanding the past is vital to shaping the future. Hadrin is the voice of reason in perilous situations.

Manner. Our expedition's safety is paramount. I want all people involved to return to town safe and sound.

Ambition. The secrets of the past... I shall uncover them and properly document them for posterity.



LYRA TELVANE

Human archaeologist

Lyra Telvane is a spirited archaeologist in her late 30s, driven by a thirst for knowledge. She grew up hearing tales of lost cities and priceless relics, sparking her life-long obsession with uncovering these invaluable riches. Bold and pragmatic, Lyra is as adept at navigating treacherous ruins as she is at persuading others to join her ventures. Unlike cautious Hadrin, she thrives on risk, seeing danger as a necessary path to greatness. Her ultimate ambition is to cement her name in history.

Manner. Progress requires risk. We won't find what we seek unless we are willing to put our hands in the fire.

Ambition. Gold is not the goal, the treasure... The real reward will be our names written in the history books.



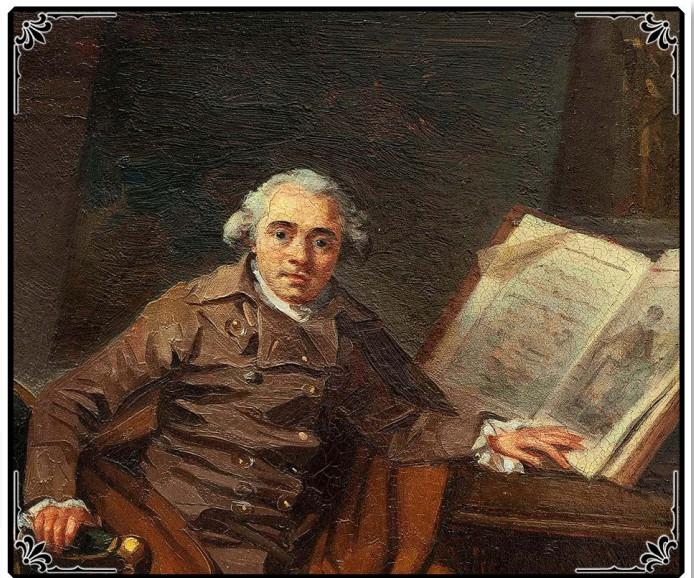
ORLOCK SETIVA

Human mage

Orlack Setiva is an ambitious mage apprentice in his mid-40s, captivated by the mysteries of the arcane. At a young age, his innate talent earned him a place at an arcane academy, but his true passion lies beyond books; in uncovering lost magical relics. Impulsive and eager to prove himself, Orlack clashes with Hadrin's caution, though Lyra values his resourcefulness. He is fascinated by the *Blade of Aeons*, believing the sword holds secrets that could elevate his magical prowess.

Manner. Surely I can fix this with a spell. I know I have it written out somewhere... If only I could recall where...

Ambition. My skills have reached a plateau. I must find that fabled blade to find the way forward in my studies.



Adventurers Wanted

Professor Hadrin Vey seeks brave souls to explore a newly unearthed ziggurat deep within Willow Forest. Ancient mysteries and untold treasures await, but danger is certain. Knowledge, glory, and 500 gold pieces are promised to those who escort this historic expedition. Only the courageous and skilled need apply. Meet us at the Arborhollow Inn to join this legendary quest and history!

Archaeologist Lyra Telvane



THE FOREST ZIGGURAT

"Don't touch anything, lest you want to lose a hand or a foot. We must document everything carefully as we explore this marvel from the past..."

Professor Hadrin Vey

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A pack of deer wanders near the ziggurat with curiosity. But they suddenly bolt, their eyes wide with unexplainable terror.
2	Unnatural mist creeps through the forest at twilight, swirling thicker around the ziggurat's base. Visibility is halved.
3	A shimmering, golden light briefly emanates from the ziggurat's top terrace before fading into the clouded sky.
4	The sun is covered, like an eclipse, shrouding the forest in unnatural darkness and cold. The sound of flapping wings comes from the edifice's top terrace. Two sand bats emerge from the opening on the terrace to hunt. The attack at once.
5	A merchant (peasant) arrives at the ziggurat knowing nothing of it. He sells ordinary, commonplace items.
6	The earth quakes as a pulsing wave is felt from below; it may drop people prone (DC 12 STR check). The <i>detect magic</i> spell reveals a faint aura of necromancy coming from below. It foreshadows the horrible guardians in the dungeon beneath.



REACHING THE ZIGGURAT

THE CHARACTERS MEET Professor Hadrin, his close associate Lyra Telvane, and Orlock Setiva in a small tavern in the town of Arborhollow. Many in town speak of the strange pyramid in Willow Forest but few dare come close to it out of fear and superstitions. After making a deal with the characters, Professor Hadrin bids everyone a good evening and retires to sleep. They shall embark on this quest the next day, at the break of dawn.

The party leaves Arborhollow through the north road that passes through Willow Forest on its way to the far-away capital. After 3 hours of uneventful walking, the expedition party turns east on a barely trodden game trail. A territorial **moose** inhabits this part of the forest. The party encounters the dangerous moose unless someone carefully tracks its prints and droppings to avoid its natural paths (DC 12 WIS). Fortunately, the ziggurat's aura gives the moose disadvantage on **Morale** checks.

NPC COMPANIONS

Three non-player characters (NPCs) accompany the party in this introductory adventure. Many others can be encountered throughout this adventure. Professor Hadrin Vey (**peasant**), his associate and friend, explorer Lyra Telvane (**bandit**), and the spellcaster Orlock Setiva (**apprentice**) are friendly to the characters and work alongside them to clear the ziggurat dungeon.

Level 1 Location

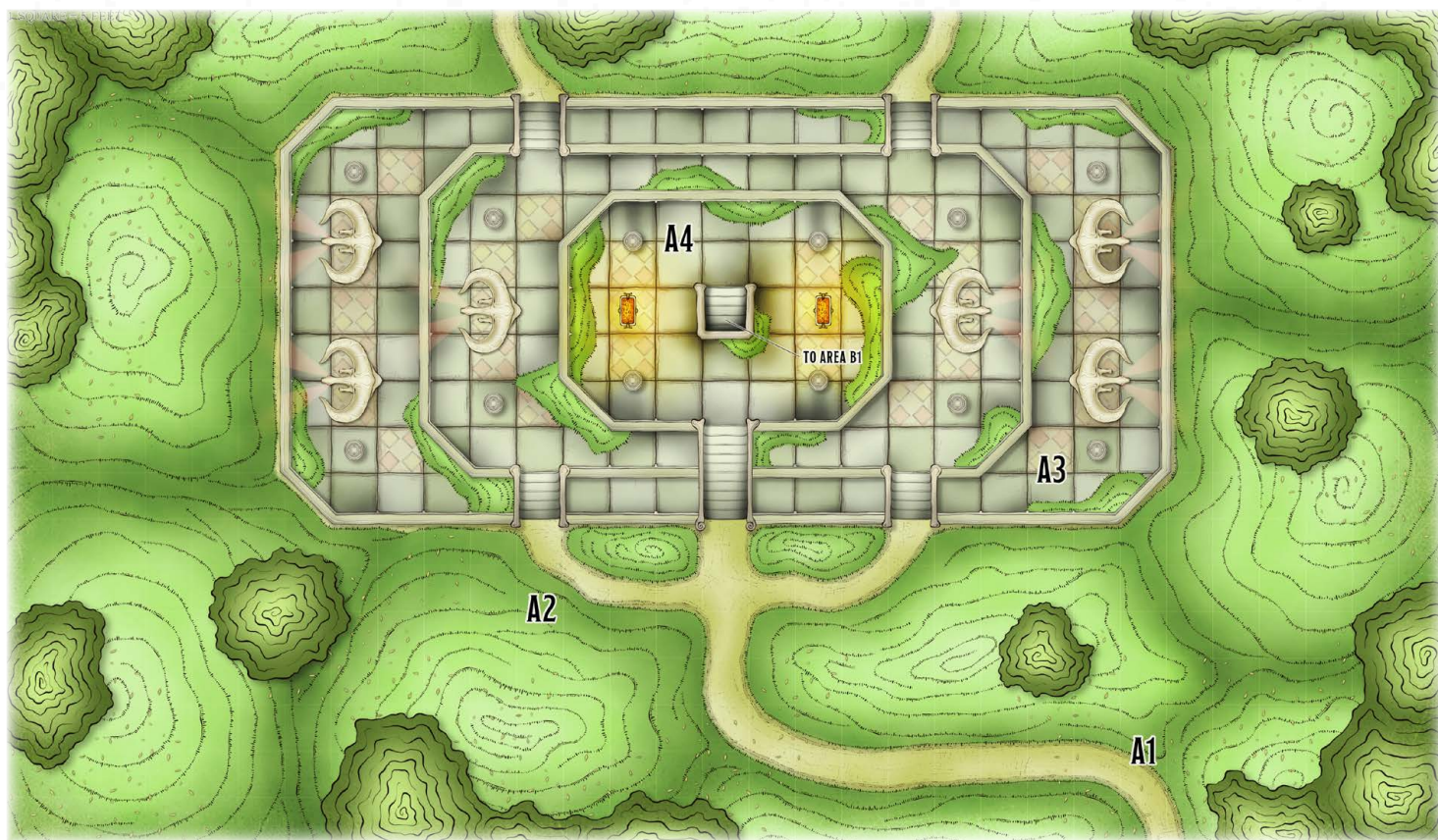
► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** The ziggurat is located in a forest clearing with plenty of natural light. At night, the only sources of light are the two magical braziers on the top terrace.

► **Unnerving Aura.** Living creatures are invaded by a feeling of dread and anxiety from as far as 200 feet from the ziggurat. For wild animals, this causes them to balk at the sight of the monument and flee in a panic. Humanoids can withstand this effect more effectively. When things become difficult, they have a -2 penalty on **Morale** checks. For storytelling purposes, Prof. Hadrin, Lyra, and the characters are resolute enough to ignore this.

► **Magic Disturbance.** The six bird-like effigies on the ziggurat's terraces have glimmering eyes. Magic effects within 10 feet of their gazes take on strange properties. When a spell is cast within the cones of their sight (see map), roll a 1d6 to determine the outcome of that spell:

1. The spell backfires and disintegrates a random piece of gear worn by a party member.
2. A random spell is cast instead (same tier).
3. One of the spell's effects is doubled.
4. The spell is cast without interference.
5. The spell fails; all light sources are extinguished.
6. A different target is chosen at random.



A1. FOREST TRAIL

After an hour of walking past the moose's territory, the trail leads to the wide clearing where the ziggurat stands.

► **Tracks.** Many people have come to the ziggurat in the previous days. Footprints in the area lead to an abandoned campfire a dozen steps from the trail (DC 12 WIS). Many footprints lead to the towering ziggurat.

A2. THE ANCIENT ZIGGURAT

A moss-covered, three-terrace ziggurat stands ahead, its ancient stone untouched by time. Two fiery braziers atop cast flickering orange light, illuminating intricately-carved glyphs etched on the stone surfaces.

► **The Stone.** Under a layer of moss and dust, the stone of the monument is pristine as if built in the last decade. Whatever magic envelops this construction has protected it from the ravages of time (DC 9 INT check).

Railings. Each of the stairs' railings bears geometrical carvings without apparent meaning. A scholar knows that these carvings are meant to cast a particular shadow during the solstices (DC 15 INT). These railings cast a shadow of the profile of Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX.

The Rider. When the characters step on the ziggurat, the sound of a galloping horse comes from beneath. A spectral steed emerges from the forest soil. The **grim rider**, an ethereal representation of the pharaoh has come to meet them. The merciless rider charges at the nearest character. The grim rider fights until destroyed.

A3. LOWER TERRACES

On each side of the ziggurat, three statues portray a strange being, half humanoid and half bird.

► **The Effigies.** A historian identifies these statues as portrayals of an ancient deity called Duregal; the guardian of the afterlife. Hadrin is aware of this fact too and shares his knowledge. He infers this marks the ziggurat as a burial site, confirming his suspicions. A *detect magic* spell reveals the abjuration aura under the statues' gazes. The characters can safely see the effects of these statues here (see **Magic Disturbance** above).

A4. THE TOP TERRACE

Between two magic braziers (*light*) lies the only entrance to the dungeon beneath the ziggurat: a 30-foot-deep, descending, stone stairway that leads to area B1. Several sacks and backpacks are strewn beside the entrance, guarded by two kneeling, sword-wielding, hooded men.

► **The Guards.** The two men introduce themselves as Garlen and Jayden (**guards**). They were hired by an adventuring party led by the famous thief Varl, the Wretched. Garlen and Jayden, talkative but cautious, claim Varl hired them to guard their traveling equipment while they explored and robbed the tomb. The two guards allow the characters to enter the dungeon and do not want to fight. They plan to honor Varl's contract but if the party later informs them that Varl perished in the dungeon (see area B7), the pair are open to joining the characters on their quest. They charge 1 gold coin per day of employment.

The Blade of Aeons



The Blade of Aeons is a masterwork of ancient craftsmanship, its long, sharp blade shimmering like liquid gold, etched with shifting runes that pulse faintly with an inner light. The hilt is wrapped in a black, leather-like material, warm to the touch, and capped with a pommel carved into the sun's likeness. This legendary weapon holds uncanny powers, bending time itself in subtle ways; its wielder moves with preternatural speed. Their strikes seem to defy fate, always finding their mark. Whispers claim the blade can stop time itself. Thus, sealing the wielder's victory or dooming all around them.



THE FORLORN TOMB

“I have a good feeling about this. We shall change our stars delving into this place. Just don’t stand back doing nothing while history is written. Let’s go!”

Explorer Lyra Telvane

The dungeon under the ziggurat is the burial place of Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX. Due to the weakening of his arcane bounds and the strength of his mental force, the pharaoh, or what is left of him, has returned from beyond the veil. The undead abomination that once was the pharaoh is still physically contained in area B4 it emerges if his sarcophagus is pried open or when the doors to the vault are breached. This is the characters’ ultimate challenge.

FACTIONS IN THE DUNGEON

► **Varl’s Party.** The famous thief and his companions delved into the dungeon 1 day before the characters. Alas, most of them have met a grim end.

► **The Witch.** A woman (**weald hag**) who lives in Willow Forest came to the ziggurat to find a fabled, magic horn (see area B1).

► **Bandits.** A trio of low-lives enters the dungeon after the characters. The bandits catch up with the party when the characters visit area B4 for the first time.

Level 1 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have magically lit braziers, the rest are in darkness. Denizens of the dungeon are **dark-adapted**.

► **Guardians.** Destroyed dungeon denizens reform at dawn. This effect stops when the pharaoh, in area B4, is destroyed.

► **Magic Disturbance.** Many areas have effigies of Duregal, Deity of the Afterlife. The statues function in the same manner as those in area A3.

B1. ENTRANCE HALL

Four effigies of a forgotten deity oversee this chamber. Their gazes fall on a white-eyed, seemingly-blind woman with a tattered dress and a wooden staff.

The witch is a **weald hag** in disguise. She is neutral to visitors as she is interested in the *Horn of Bliss* in B11. However, ancient protective charms in the pharaoh’s tomb prevent her from going deeper into the dungeon.

► **Blessing.** The witch offers a deal to the characters, a magical blessing for their journey. Whoever accepts has a +1 bonus to AC for as long as they stay in the dungeon. The Magic Disturbance from the statues does not affect the disguised hag. The witch asks for the *Horn of Bliss* in return for this blessing. She expects the characters to deliver.

► **The Thieves.** If asked about Varl, the witch claims that half of them accepted her gift (true). Varl himself did not accept it.

B2. TOMB OF PRIESTS

Under the gaze of a single statue of Dorugal, four standing sarcophagi with serpent-shaped lids await.

East Room. The corpses of two adventurers from Varl’s party and three destroyed zombies lie on the floor.

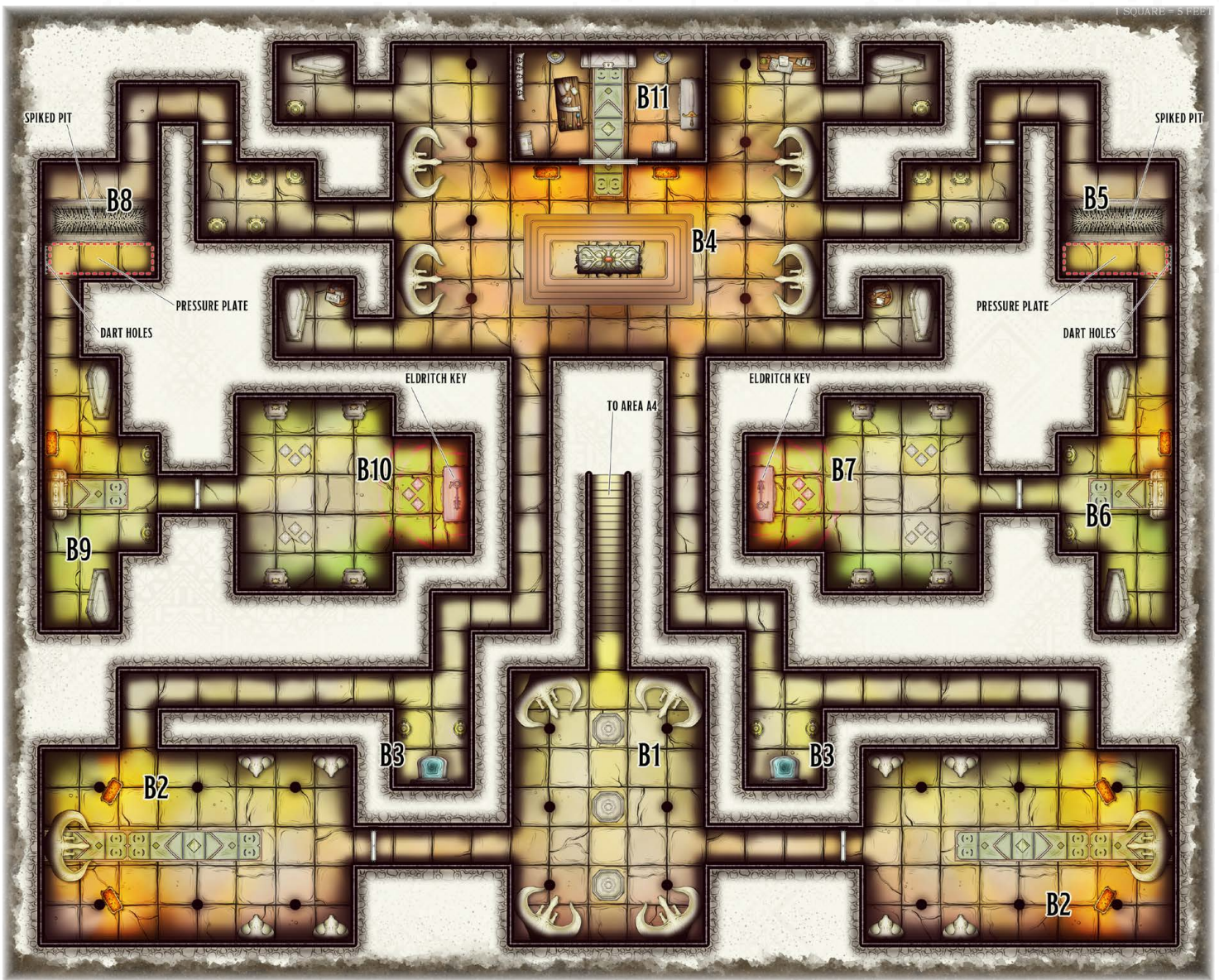
West Room. When the characters come within 15 feet of Dorugal’s statue, the stone enclosures open; four **zombies** emerge from within. The undead monsters wear pristine, clerical robes that bear the family sigil of the late Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX.

B3. CHAMBER OF MEDITATION

Both chambers contain two vases and a stoup of clear water. Heroes that meditate in here for 1 **crawling round** gain one extra **luck token**.



The Witch



RANDOM EVENTS

d6

Details

- 1 A pressure plate triggers the release of a **scarab swarm** (DC 12 WIS to spot). The scarabs' carapaces are etched in the unnerving likeness of a shrieking visage.
- 2 The **grim rider** reappears in a hallway or large chamber. It raises its curved spear and levels it at the characters to challenge them. The rider charges immediately after.
- 3 The floor collapses beneath a random character, revealing a spiked pit filled with ancient bones (DC 12 DEX to evade it). Whoever falls takes 1d8 damage. Conversely, a pouch with 30 gp can be found in the pit (1 XP).
- 4 Poisoned darts are shot from the walls when an incorrectly translated rune is read aloud by a random character (DC 12 DEX to evade). The darts deal 1d4 damage to all creatures in the area and cause an acute headache.
- 5 The air grows icy and ethereal chains bind the party. The chains pull with unearthly force and momentarily bind the characters to the walls. The ephemeral chains drain 1d4 strength before vanishing into mist (DC 9 CON).
- 6 Two **sand bats** drop from the dark ceiling and attack. As they loom closer, whispers in Primordial become barely audible; verses that exalt the deeds of past pharaohs.

B4. THE GRAND TOMB

The ornate sarcophagus of Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX rests on a 5-foot-tall dais. Four bird-faced effigies with a scarlet glimmering in their deep eyes surround it.

► **The Sarcophagus.** While awakened and conscious, **The Pharaoh** is trapped in the enclosure. It is freed if the party forces the lid open (DC 15 STR). Opening the vault also causes the lid to open, freeing the pharaoh. Two **sand bats** aid the pharaoh in this fight. If carried in one piece (2,000 lb.), the lid is worth 150 gp (2 XP).

► **The Vault.** The doors feature an adamantine, clockwork machinery that cannot be manipulated. It features two key slots. Using the two keys from areas B7 and B10 simultaneously causes the door to B11 to open.

► **The Bandits.** Three criminals (**thugs**) come here while the characters explore the chamber. Their leader, Hazmo, is moved by greed alone. Hazmo is willing to strike a temporary truce with the party. He covets the ornate sarcophagus lid for its gemstone.

B5. EAST TRAP ROOM

The room is divided by a 15-foot-deep opening. Sharp, rusty spikes and bones lie at the bottom.

► **The Pit.** Jumping across the spiked pit requires a DC 9 STR check. On a fail, the person makes it to the other side but hangs from the edge. Failure by 5 or more causes the person to fall and take 1d10 damage.

► **The Darts.** The opposite side (south) features a 15-foot-wide pressure plate (DC 12 WIS to spot). When creatures jump over from the north, it is triggered. Sharp darts fly from the wall and deal 1d6 damage to anyone in their path (DC 9 DEX). The trap resets after 1 **crawling round**. If the plate is spotted, a character can attempt to jump onto the very edge and then jump again over the plate. Alternatively, the characters may attempt to jump over the pit and the plate altogether (DC 12 STR).

► **Lyra Telvane.** The daring explorer initially fails to see the pressure plate and offers to be the first to jump over the gap. Lyra's fate after this feat is uncertain.

B6. THE LAST ADVENTURER

A wounded woman named Myranna (**thug**) kneels by the central sarcophagus and weeps while trying to mend a hideous bite wound on her thigh. She is glad to see the characters and begs for help in tending to her wounds. Myranna explains that she is Varl's cousin. Unfortunately, they lost two members in area B2, and the rest of their party in the adjacent room (area B7). She gives a general description of the undead monsters they found in there. Myranna recommends enlisting Garlen and Jayden (**guards**) who should be waiting in area A4.

B7. THE EAST KEY

On a stone dais rests a shifting, clockwork key. It is fashioned from a gleaming, quasi-solid metal.

The chamber contains four open sarcophagi. The corpses of Varl and two of his companions, half-eaten, lie on the floor. Two destroyed zombies lie among them while two **zombies** continue to gorge on their flesh. Unaware while feeding, the characters can ambush them. During the battle, Varl's corpse rises as a zombie too.

► **The Key.** This is one of the keys necessary to open the doors to area B11. The other key is in area B10.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** A hidden compartment on the dais contains four rubies. Each can be sold for 30 gp.

B8. WEST TRAP ROOM

This is a mirrored version of area B5 with the only difference of an explorer's corpse impaled on the spikes.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The corpse carries a pouch with 45 gp and one *potion of healing* (DC 12 STR to climb).

B9. TALE OF THE LAST PHARAOH

Intricate carvings on the walls and hieroglyphs attempt to communicate a message from the distant past. Professor Hadrin and Lyra Telvane are interested in these and pretend to spend some time transcribing them. It takes them 2 **crawling rounds** to be satisfied with their notes.

► **Lore.** If the characters aid the scholars in their investigation they may uncover crucial information. After notes are taken, the participants know the story of Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX and of the excruciating embalming method that he and his ancestors were subjected to. It is also revealed to spellcasters that the spirits of those rulers of yore are contained forever in their caskets (DC 9 INT). Lastly, there is a fresco painting of a mounted knight, akin to the grim rider encountered in area A2. This is a portrayal of the late pharaoh in his youth. The carvings claim he was an excellent rider who mastered the art of archery and spear-wielding on horseback.

B10. THE WEST KEY

The chamber contains four standing sarcophagi. When a living being comes within 10 feet of the key, the enclosures open. Four **zombies** emerge from within. If Myranna is here, she has advantage on all checks as this feels like an opportunity to correct what happened in area B7.

► **The Key.** This is one of the keys necessary to open the doors to area B11. The other key is in area B7.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** A hidden compartment on the dais contains six amethysts. Each can be sold for 20 gp.



The Grim Rider

B11. THE PHARAOH'S VAULT

The chamber contains three stone coffers, a stone dais, two gilded vases on plinths, a wooden desk littered with scrolls, and a stone shelf with five rune-carved craniums.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** Collectively, the chests contain 400 gp, 950 sp, two *potions of healing*, a *+1 shortsword*, and the *Horn of Bliss*. On the desk, there are four random, Tier-1 Priest *spell scrolls*. The gilded vases contain ashes and can be sold for 10 gp each. The carved craniums can be sold to trinket collectors for 20 gp. Finally, the fabled *Sword of Aeons* rests on the stone dais.

THE SWORD OF AEONS

When found, the sword is large enough for a giant to wield; it resizes to match whoever grabs it. This is a *+1 longsword*. Its magical bonus comes from its power to bend time to its wielder's favor. They move faster and with heightened precision. The blade has the power to stop time but this feat of the arcane must first be unlocked by the wielder. Through years of study and training, the user can aspire to master its powers.

THE HORN OF BLISS

A minotaur's horn, carved and embedded with precious stones, is a sight to behold. When it is blown, it induces a state of euphoria and abandonment of the self on living creatures within 30 feet, except the user (DC 12 CHA check). Those affected traverse oneiric vistas and strange dreams for 1d3 hours. Taking damage or a person forcefully shaking them wakes them from this dream. The *Horn of Bliss* can be used once per day.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

THE END OF THE PHARAOH

The characters overcome the tomb's challenges and defeat the reanimated Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX. In its death throes, the pharaoh's unbearable emotions of hatred and despair recede to reveal a still-human core. All other undead abominations in the dungeon are destroyed when this occurs. Pharaoh Ankheteoph's appearance momentarily resembles that of a young adult. He smiles with an expression of relief before vanishing forever into the afterlife. His soul is finally free to roam the cosmos.

THE EXPEDITION PARTY

The characters return to Arborhollow and become folk heroes. The tales of their deeds and the treasures unearthed under the accursed ziggurat become the source of rhymes and songs for local minstrels. Professor Hadrin rises to prominence among scholars and is offered a prestigious position in the capital's library. In time, he becomes a great ally and even a future patron for the adventuring party. Lyra Telvane's desire for adventure is heightened if she survives the adventure. Still not renowned enough for her taste, Lyra offers to join the characters' group. Despite her rashness and unpredictability, Lyra Telvane is a valuable asset for any party.

THE COVETOUS MAGE

Orlack Setiva wishes to keep the *Sword of Aeons* as his share of the treasure. If allowed to keep it, he bids farewell to the party on good terms and leaves Arborhollow. Otherwise, he threatens to use his spells against the party but chooses not to because he is outnumbered. Humiliated and with his pride hurt, Orlack vows to take revenge and leaves Arborhollow soon after. Orlack sets on a path to become more powerful and influential so that one day he can return and take what he believes belongs to him. Orlack shall be encountered later on.

THE WITCH

The strange woman is absent when the party leaves the ziggurat. She comes to those who accepted her blessing three days later and asks them to hand over the *Horn of Bliss*. If they comply, the witch vows respectfully and disappears, never to be seen again. If the blessed characters refuse, the witch reveals her true, fey-like hag nature. With a slithering hand gesture, she casts a *polymorph* spell to turn those who accepted her blessing into toads. While the characters recover their normal form, the hag attempts to steal the horn. After such an affront, the characters may desire to exact their revenge on this hag. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



Dread of the God

For millennia, Pharaoh Ankheteoph IX endured an unending nightmare, his consciousness bound within the arcane seals of his tomb. Trapped in silent, suffocating darkness, his once-sharp thoughts were frayed and unraveled with time. He felt the crushing weight of ages, his cries unheard, his muted rage impotent. Every moment a torment; his mind clawing at the confines of his magical prison. Madness crept in like a tide, twisting his once-noble soul into a shadow of despair. Now, in freedom, his dire wrath is everlasting and merciless.



STATBLOCKS

Sand Bat

A flying hunter of semi-translucent, leathery wings. Its red eyes glimmer with a thirst for fresh blood.

AC: 12

HP: 7 LV2

ATK: 1 bite +2 (1d4) or sand throw

MV: Near (fly)

S:-1 D:+2 C:+0 I:-3 W:+1 Ch:-3

.....

Sand Blast. Batting its wings, the bat throws sand at the eyes of a target near (DC 9 DEX). Failure means they are blind for 1d3 rounds.



Grim Rider

A hooded skeleton riding a ghostly steed approaches while leveling a sharp spear with grim intent.

AC: 13 (chainmail)

HP: 11 LV2

ATK: 1 spear +2 (1d6 + 1)

MV: Double Near

S:+1 D:+0 C:+2 I:-2 W:+0 Ch:-1

.....

Mounted. The grim rider moves faster and has a +1 bonus to attacks and damage (included).



THE UNDYING SON OF A GOD

The pharaoh, contrary to common beliefs of his time, is not the true offspring of a god. Like his ancestors before him, he has been subjected to a harrowing embalming process that traps his soul within the bodily confines of his earthly remains. Most stay in this state for eternity. But a few pharaohs manage to break the shackles of their eternal prison only to find themselves trapped in a baleful mockery of their former glorious bodies.

The Pharaoh

A hooded skeleton looms closer. Its mismatched stare with eyes of onyx and jasper causes an inescapable feeling of dread and fear of abandonment.

AC: 11

HP: 6 **LV:** 3

ATK: 1 dagger +1 (1d4) and 1 spell +3

MV: Near

S: +1 **D:** +1 **C:** +1 **I:** +3 **W:** +0 **Ch:** +1

.....
Arcane Armor (INT Spell). Self. DC 12.
AC 16 for 2d4 rounds.

Onyx Eye Aura (INT Spell). DC 12. Targets within near DC 12 DEX or 1d4 damage.

Jasper Eye Ray (INT Spell). DC 11. 1d8 damage to one target within far.



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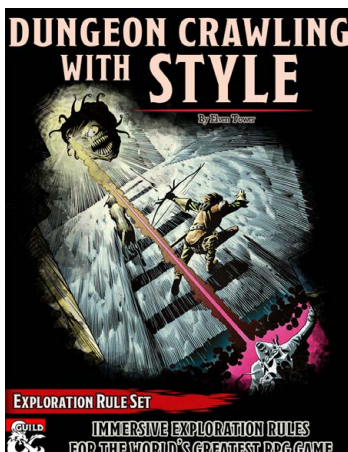
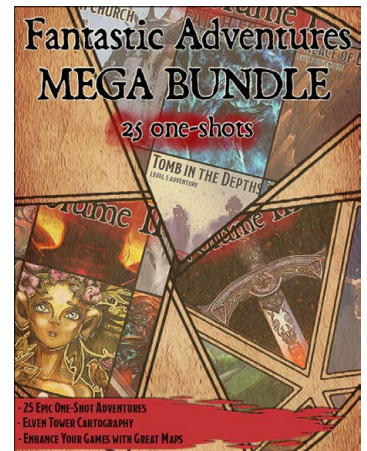
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