

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

There are some unique things in the world that are not proven to be true, but the legends keep them alive. Such is the case of the *Philosopher's Stone*.

A Tale of Wonders, Vol. II

The legend of the *philosopher's stone* and its immense power eludes even the most powerful mages. Some apprentices get obsessed with the study, research, and life-long hunt for this elusive rock. But they never succeeded. They all perished trying and never got their hands on the stone that could bestow eternal life, erase their problems, or grant their every wish. But perhaps it was not all in vain.

THE GRAND SEARCH

EACH TIME ANOTHER person withers away seeking the *philosopher's stone* their whole lives, it does not all go to waste. The overall research, lore, and known facts about the stone's location increase. The rumors grow. Thus, the next crazy explorer, mad mage, or stubborn scholar that wishes to find the fabled artifact builds upon previous knowledge. There are journals, notes, and ancient scrolls laden with clues. And today, these hints and glimpses of the stone's whereabouts have reached the people in Heartstone. The kind of news needed to kindle a spark of heroism, or stupid ambition, in the hearts of a farmer, an innkeeper, or even a stable boy.

REASONS TO LEAVE HOME

Ambition. A group of villagers gathers. They all heard the rumors of a strange place in the woods where a rock that grants wishes is kept. The thing is serious; cloaked figures and armored travelers talk about this too. If the villagers want to be part of this, find some treasure, or even be the ones that find the stone, they must move fast. They want to change their lives. Be rich, live in a castle, and have servants. Make their wishes come true...

A Pure Heart. Three priests or Ord gather a group of villagers. They say the *philosopher's stone* has never been found. It comes in the shape of a fable. A myth to reveal ambitious hearts. They claim the stone shall never show itself to the wrong individual. One must not want the stone for selfish purposes. Only those that abandon their wish to possess it shall be able to hold it. The priests ask the group to act as guardians, to protect the *philosopher's stone* from the wrong hands. They offer 4 gp each. Their job is to explore the ruins and confirm the stone is there, protect it, and inform the priests.

Level 0 Gauntlet

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent *light* spells; the rest are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

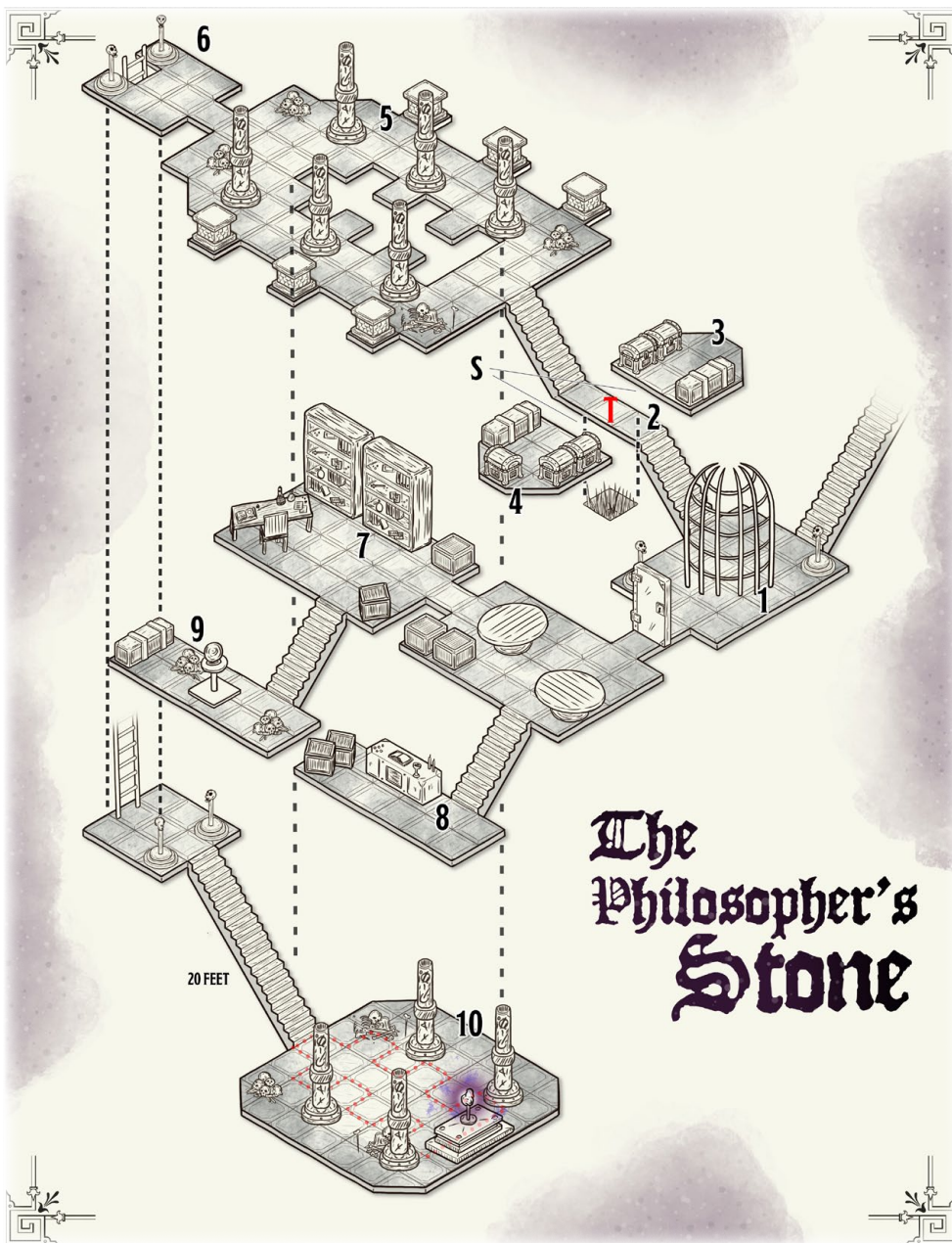
► **Aura of Wonders.** The power of the magical stone makes strange things happen within the dungeon. Each time the characters enter a new area, roll 1d6.

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|---|--|
| 1 | One of the characters at random becomes stronger. They have STR 20 for 1 hour. They feel incredible. (Repeatable, change the stat to DEX, CON, and so on). |
| 2 | Gold coins start pouring out of a hole in the wall! It takes a minute to gather 117 gp from the ground. This triggers a Random Event (see below). This event is repeatable. |
| 3 | The magical stone senses fear in the villagers. Sir Hills (knight) arrives and says he was sent to protect them. He is sincere; he gives his life for any of the villagers if the situation arises. However, if he is asked about his origins or pressed to tell them who sent him, he stares at the void for several seconds before vanishing in thin air. |
| 4 | A sword appears in the hands of one of the characters. The +1 <i>longsword</i> glows blue in the dark. The blade becomes dust if it leaves the dungeon (repeatable). |
| 5 | A +2 <i>chainmail</i> appears on one of the characters. It becomes dust if it leaves the dungeon (repeatable). |
| 6 | A character learns how to cast a spell. Roll 1d12 to determine which Tier 1 Wizard spell they know. They can cast it two times before they forget. This event is repeatable. |

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

RANDOM EVENTS

- | d6 | Details |
|----|---|
| 1 | Four peasants carrying torches and improvised weapons approach. They also came looking for the fabled stone. They are wary of other spelunkers (Reaction check). |
| 2 | A fine thread lies ahead. If tripped, a boulder falls, dealing 1d8 damage to a random character (DC 11 DEX). |
| 3 | A strong wind current blows through the dungeon, snuffing out fires and any uncovered light sources. |
| 4 | A glowing rune on the wall stands out. If touched, magic creates an exact copy of the person. The doppelganger is scared and believes to be the original (Reaction check). The copy vanishes when they leave the dungeon. |
| 5 | A lonely explorer (thug) followed the expedition underground. He may join the peasant party (Reaction check). |
| 6 | Two automated floor hatches open. A skeleton climbs from each of them. The undead guardians attack! |



3. FAKE VAULT

Both vaults look identical but this one is a trap. The chests and containers are illusory. When they are interacted with, the room bursts into flames and everyone inside takes 1d8 damage. There is little time to escape the flames (DC 9 DEX).

4. TREASURE VAULT

This vault has no defense mechanisms or traps. The characters find three chests and one coffer.

► **Treasure.** Characters find a couple of leather bags that contain 186 gp, 3,752 sp, and 1,963 cp. There is a dagger, a 60-foot-long hempen rope, a lantern, three empty flasks, two sacks, and a rusty shield.

5. MAIN HALL

A large chamber with funerary plinths on each of the six small alcoves. Six columns flank an irregularly-shaped opening in the floor. When the characters approach the far end of the chamber (area 6), one **shadow** coalesces and attacks.

► **Hole.** The 140-foot-deep chasm leads down to area 10. The walls are sanded and smoothed down. Whoever falls through the opening has a gruesome death. In combat, the enemies attempt to push intruders toward the edge to make them fall.

1. LANDING

The characters find the ruins in the woods without trouble. Many came before them and it is easy to follow their tracks. However, no footprints return to town...

They descend a long stairway and into the dungeon. A large cell holds an **invisible stalker**. The monster is magically bound to the cage and cannot leave. Strange sounds can be heard coming from inside the seemingly empty cage. If any of the characters sticks their hand or head inside, the stalker attacks without mercy.

2. CORRIDOR

This pathway features two secret chambers, one on each side (DC 11 WIS to notice). Pushing a brick reveals both vaults. But the pressure-sensitive plate in the middle is better concealed (DC 13 WIS). Creatures that step on it fall 15 feet and die impaled at the spiked pit below.

6. SECRET LADDER

Magic conceals the opening on the floor and the ladder. From the threshold, the characters do not see the ladder by the far end of the room. To see the ladder, a character must stand exactly before and between the two pedestals with skulls. Then, they can descend to area 10.

7. STUDIO

The characters ignore who built this place but they may learn a little of its origins. If they spend 1 **crawling round** reading the books here, they learn that a man named Artorius used to look for the *philosopher's stone* but failed. This was his hideout. The documents seem to imply the stone is not here. However, something in the dungeon is certainly causing strange, magical things to occur. The documents do not say what it could be, though. It seems that Artorius experienced no strange phenomena here.

ARTORIUS'S RESEARCH

ONE OF THE last researchers. Artorius did not find the real *philosopher's stone* but he used his life work to create a less powerful copy of it. The characters may learn who Artorius was by reading the documents in area 7 but there is nothing written about his invention. If the characters reach area 10, there is nothing that stops them from thinking they have found the real thing.

The truth is that Artorius created this copy to cause other explorers and hunters to get lost for a while or even perish on the way. He did this to have fewer competitors and be the one who finds the real *philosopher's stone*.

8. ALTAR

There are wooden boxes, crates, and other containers with old fabrics, torn clothes, broken utensils, small tools, and other mundane materials. However, if the characters spend 1 **crawling round** filtering the useless stuff, they find some valuable items: a crowbar, five torches, flint, a bag of caltrops, a mirror, and a pole.

► **Holy Meditation.** The characters may recognize the religious implements on the altar and see Ord's trinkets (DC 11 INT). If any of the characters spends 1 **crawling round** praying or meditating, they earn a **luck token**.

9. CRYSTAL BALL

The container in this room has a false bottom (DC 12 WIS). The characters find a *potion of healing* below. A person must spend 1 **crawling round** meditating with the crystal ball to see something. If they do, they see a man placing a glowing stone on a stone plinth, turn around, and leave. The ball shows nothing else.

10. THE STONE

The bottom of the dungeon feels cold. An aura of uneasiness invades the minds of those that come.

The far end of the room features a rune-inscribed plinth holding an otherworldly glimmering gemstone.

The gazes of skulls on the ground seem to stare and follow the creatures that move within this chamber.

The characters reach the bottom of the dungeon. They can feel the power of the stone before them caressing their skin. But just before they can approach or do anything, the scattered bones move, and three **skeletons** form. They fight the intruders until slain.

► **The Stone.** The magic of this forgery is enough to fool the greedy. The characters may fight among themselves to be the first to grab the stone. On the other hand, their job could be to protect it (see **Reasons to Leave Home**). Either way, they are up for a surprise. The stone is just an imitation. And, Artorius saved the best for last. See **Development** for details about these two outcomes.

DEVELOPMENT

► **The Magic.** Artorius's powerful artifact only works inside the dungeon. But even if the characters are pure of heart, leaving the dungeon erases all magic effects or things created with the forged *philosopher's stone*.

Blind Ambition. A character grabs the stone. The rock turns dark and stops glowing. Its magic shuts off and it becomes a piece of black coal until someone with a pure heart grabs it. This is unlikely; the peasants came under the pretense of finding treasure and changing their lives.

Protectors. The characters inform the priests before messing with the stone. However, the priests were impostors! The three **bandits** accuse the peasants of trickery when the stone becomes coal. A pure-hearted person may be revealed if characters fight to protect the stone.

A Pure Heart. One or more of the characters wanted to protect the stone from the robbers and therefore may use it. Alas, it only works within the dungeon. If this is an imitation, where could the real one be? Finding the true *philosopher's stone* is an adventure for another day.

