

THE DM TOOL CHEST

TOMB OF THE ANCIENTS



DISCOVER THE TRUTH BEHIND A FAULTY SUMMONING SPELL
AND A TOMB THAT FEELS EERILY FAMILIAR



TOMB OF THE ANCIENTS

Tomb of the Ancients is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 6th to 8th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 7**. A summons spell gone awry pulls the adventurers through space and time. They find themselves magically compelled to assist a wise-cracking young mage in her quest to retrieve a magic item from an ancient tomb. All is not what it appears to be, and they learn a shocking truth about where they truly found themselves. This adventure takes place in the Freelands campaign setting but fits any existing campaign with only a few modifications and name changes.

GM's Note: This story relies on the concept of magical compulsion, and this may be a subject that makes some players uncomfortable. It is recommended that you consult with your players on topics such as these before presenting them to ensure the best playing experience for everyone at your table.

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is structured differently from the typical and requires some extra effort to prepare before playing. You will need to read through the entire adventure at least once to determine additional information about the characters you will need to get the most out of the story. Throughout the adventure text, you will find numbered GM prompts (six in total) for you to place specific information about the characters into the story to use as hints to the central plot twist revealed at the

conclusion. We recommend that you take your time in choosing the best responses to these prompts to give away as little as possible. Each prompt will have suggestions for what information you can place there, but the ultimate choice is up to you. You can also choose to add or remove hints as you see fit.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters are the victims of a summoning spell gone awry and find themselves in the middle of a strange dungeon and under the magical influence of the young mage who summoned them. The characters must help her explore an ancient tomb before the time limit on the spell ends. They must battle through the undead and construct guardians and solve the puzzles and traps protecting the ancient crypts. Before they return whence they came, the characters learn they were summoned to the future and stand in their very own tomb.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins hundreds of years in the characters' future when the young mage Adeline (see sidebar) enters an ancient tomb searching for a particular item. She finds herself quickly overwhelmed by the creatures within and uses a spell to summon allies to assist her. The summons can happen at any point in time during the characters' adventures. The party could be simply traveling down a road or even in the middle of combat when the spell summons them.

GM Prompt #1: Choose a character that Adeline is descended from; this will determine her last name, racial heritage, and physical description. You can make her biracial for an additional twist, with one half being that of the character.

HOW THE SPELL WORKS

While under the effects of the summon spell, the characters are in complete control of their actions but cannot intentionally take an action they know can harm Adeline. While they take their own initiative and actions during combat, Adeline can spend an action to give a specific verbal command to them that they must obey. The spell lasts for 2 hours or until Adeline chooses to end it willingly. If a character dies before either happens, their body simply vanishes, reappearing intact with the other characters back in their correct timeline at the exact moment they left once the spell ends. The time limit should create a sense of urgency for the characters to complete the quest before the spell ends.

TOMB OF THE ANCIENTS

The tomb of the ancients was built as a monument to the characters' party after their deaths and to protect their remains. Hidden from the rest of the world, it fell into disrepair over the years and is slowly crumbling away. For centuries, traps, spells, undead protectors, and construct guardians have kept the tomb safe from intruders. Faded inscriptions, murals, and broken statues hint at events and victories the characters have already experienced and will encounter eventually.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the tomb of the ancients unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The tomb is built from 2-foot-thick hewn granite blocks that have begun to crumble over time. Ceilings are 20 feet high in the chambers and 10 feet tall in the connecting hallways. The walls are decorated with faded murals of past battles and acts of heroism that can barely be made out. Thick layers of dust cover almost every surface.

Doors. Doors in the tomb are stone blocks engraved with runes, and they are all magically sealed. They only open for Adeline or the character she is descended from (see "Adeline" sidebar). After pricking her finger with a dagger tip and touching it to the runes, they flash with magical light as the door slides down into the floor.

Lights. The tomb is well lit by stone wall sconces enchanted with *continual flame* spells.

ADELINE

Adeline is a **mage** and the direct blood descendant many centuries down from one of the characters. She is a driven wizard with a razor-sharp wit and even sharper tongue, often using both to maximum effect. The acerbic mage enjoys mocking others whom she sees as intellectually inferior for their failures. After years of searching for the hidden location, she finally discovered the ancient tomb where her ancestor and their heroic companions were buried.

At first, she views the party as summoned creatures, ordering them to do what she wants. However, she quickly realizes they perform better when not individually directed by her and only uses her compulsion on them when she feels it is needed (see How the Spell Works). Adeline is unaware at first that she has summoned her ancestor and the same group of heroes that lie in the tomb she is delving. She does not care for small talk nor feels the need to give the characters any information pertaining to her current task. The bright young mage quickly realizes that the party is from the past but does not disclose this information and delights in their confusion.

Climate. The air in the tomb is humid and carries a faint smell of the sea. Characters with an exceptional sense of smell can determine the tomb is somewhere near an ocean.

Forbiddance. The tomb is under the effects of a permanent *forbiddance* spell set against fiends, which blocks characters' teleportation and planar travel.

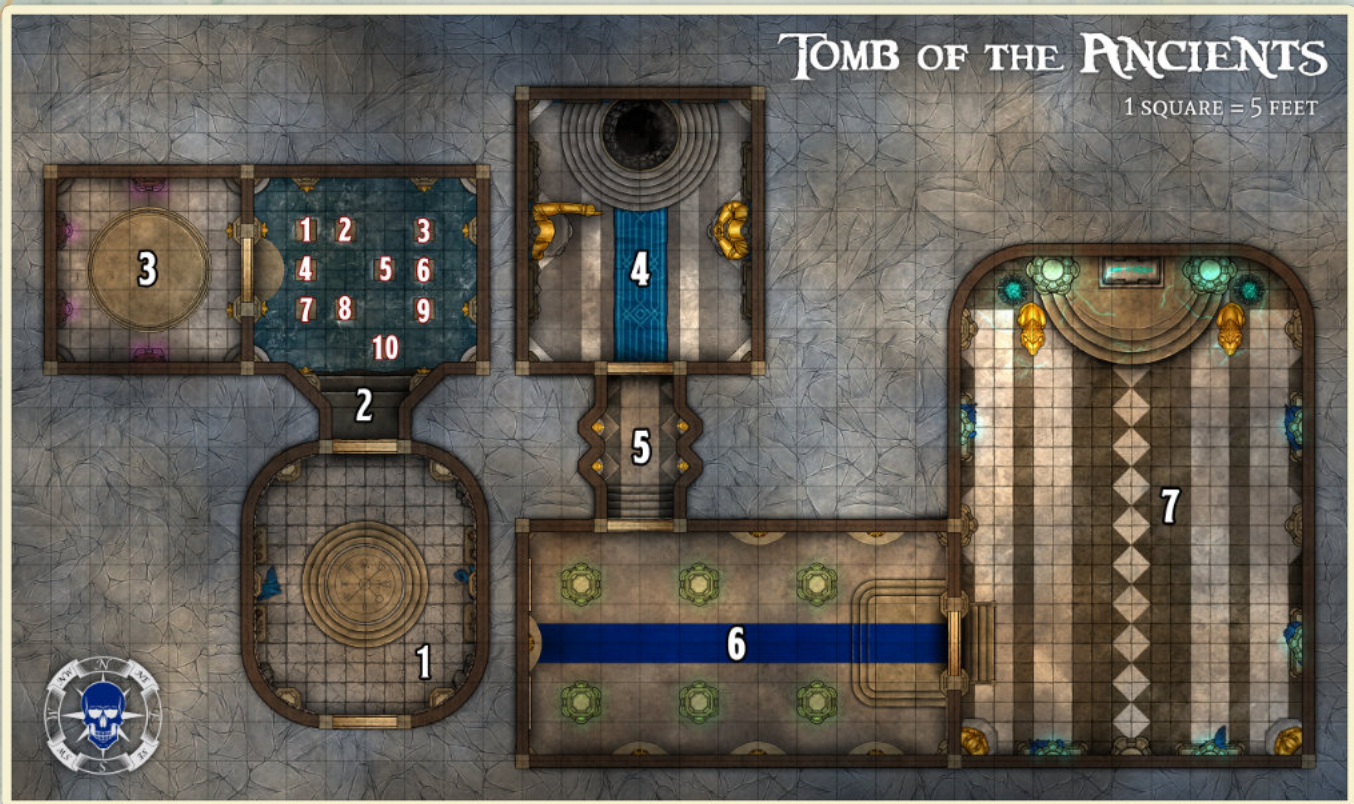
KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the tomb of the ancients on page 4.

1. ENTRY HALL

When you are ready to summon the characters, they appear in the center of this room. Read aloud the following to kick off the adventure:

The world around you starts to shake as your vision blurs, and a flash of light suddenly blinds you. You feel pressure around your entire body as the ground disappears beneath your feet, and you feel yourself being pulled as if a giant hand had thrown you. In an instant, your vision is restored, but you're no longer where you once were! You find yourself standing on a round platform in a large chamber with crumbling stone walls covered in faded murals. Stone shelves hold cracked ancient pottery and a thick layer of dust and grime covers every surface. A woman wearing blue robes stitched with arcane symbols and holding a staff stands to the side of your party with a shocked expression on her face. In a flash, it's replaced



with a stern glare as she yells, “Defend me!” and raises her staff to point towards four statues of warriors with lion heads and claws. You find yourself instantly responding to her command and ready yourself for battle!

Encounter: Summoned to Battle. Four **stone lion warriors** (they use the **gargoyle** stat block) surround the platform. Adeline uses the **mage** stat block but only uses her spells for personal defense, preferring to save her spell slots and let the characters engage in battle.

GM Prompt #2: The faded murals covering the walls depict heroic battles between a band of heroes and various monsters. If a character looks closer at the murals, describe three scenes to them that include two monsters they have never faced and one they have defeated in the past.

INTRODUCTIONS

Adeline is focused on completing her quest of retrieving her ancestor’s heirloom from their tomb. At this point in the adventure, she uses her compulsion to move the party to area 2 if she feels a conversation is taking too long. She is adamant in refusing to divulge their location or any other identifying information that might hint that this is the future but is willing to share the following information with the characters:

- This tomb holds the remains of an ancient band of heroes, and she seeks an item from one of them.
- She believes many traps and guardians in the tomb.

- The spell she cast should have summoned creatures to aid her, and she doesn't know why it summoned the characters instead.
- The spell has a time limit, and she does not wish to chit-chat while it counts down.

2. CURSED WATERS

A short flight of steps leads down into a chamber filled with three feet of crystal clear water. Ten stone cubes impossibly float on the surface, each one three feet wide. A stone platform sits on the western wall holding a stone door covered in carved runes.

Encounter: Spectral Guardians. The moment a creature steps onto one of the stone cubes, four **specters** appear from beneath the floor. These specters are the spirits of the characters' ancient companions buried with them in the tomb, defending them even in death. Each specter’s alignment is chaotic good, and they view the characters as intruders. As long as at least one living creature is standing on a stone pillar, one randomly descends into the water, dropping whoever is standing on it into the water. On initiative count 1 (losing ties), roll a d10 to determine which pillar moves into the water as per the numbers on the provided map. A living creature that touches the water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. This effect can only be removed by a *greater restoration* spell or a long rest. The cursed water loses its properties if removed from this room.

GM Prompt #3: The ghostly visage of the specters can appear as anyone. You could make one of them a companion that a character finds vaguely familiar if they succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

3. WELL ROOM

A large stone platform sits in the center of this otherwise empty chamber. In the twenty-foot-high ceiling directly above the platform is a 10 foot wide circular shaft leading upwards. Rough dark stones line the interior of the shaft, and a faint light can be seen at the top, fifty feet up.

A permanent *antimagic field* spell sits halfway up the 50-foot-high shaft leading to area 4. Characters relying on spells or magic items to ascend the shaft will find themselves risking a fall to the hidden pit below. The glowing stones can be taken from their fittings by a character proficient with jewelers' tools who spends 10 minutes prying them loose. There are ten in total and are permanently enchanted to cast a dim violet light for 5 feet. They are worth 25 gp to a collector. Adeline is patient enough to let characters take at least one, but there is a 50% chance that she compels the characters to move onwards for each consecutive stone.

Trap: Illusory Pit. The floor in the center of the platform is an illusion created by a permanent *minor illusion* spell (spell save DC 17) that covers a 10-foot-deep pit with iron spikes at the bottom. Creatures falling into the pit take 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet fallen and 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes.

4. BLADE OF WEAKNESS

The shaft exits into a chamber dominated by two giant golden statues on the eastern and western walls. The western statue of a hooded mage points across the room to the opposite statue of an armored rogue holding a sword in its hands. The sword is not part of the statue and appears as if it can be removed. A dusty carpet leads from the well to a closed stone door to the south.

Statues. The statue of the rogue bears a passing resemblance to one of the characters in the party. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher or who succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notice this resemblance.

GM Prompt #4: The statue's resemblance to one of the characters should be seen as if it was an older relative such as a father or uncle. It should not be apparent right away that the statue is, in fact, a representation of the character when they are older.

Cursed Sword. The sword in the statue's hands is a cursed object. A creature that touches the sword must make a saving throw against their highest ability score with a DC of 17, with a failure resulting in that ability being reduced to half (round up) for the next 24 hours. This effect can be removed with a *remove curse* spell or a *greater restoration* spell.

5. LION PUZZLE

When the characters enter the hallway, read aloud the following:

This short hallway ends with a flight of stairs leading to an engraved stone door blocked by a wall of multi-colored shimmering light. Niches on either side of the hallway hold golden statues of lions with a colored gemstone inset in one eye socket.

An invisible *wall of force* spell blocks the door to area 6, covered by an illusion of flowing colors linked to the gemstones in the lion statues. The puzzle can be solved as follows:

- Each lion has a single colored gemstone in one eye socket starting from the northwestern statue on the provided map and working clockwise: red, green, blue, and yellow.
- Pressing a gemstone causes that color to disappear from the swirling illusion, and pushing all four simultaneously removes the illusion and the wall of force completely.
- Pressing all four does not cause the lions to inflict damage. Otherwise, if a creature pushes a single gemstone, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) damage of the following type that bursts from the statue's mouth: red is fire, green is acid, blue is cold, and yellow is lightning.



6. GUARDIAN CHAMBER

Glowing stones embedded in ornate pillars fill this long chamber with an emerald light. The arched ceiling is covered in a fresco of a cloudy sky filled with dragons in flight. A stone platform sits against the eastern wall holding a stone door and a massive humanoid construct covered in armor. Sitting lotus style at the construct's feet is a young bald boy that slightly resembles an elf. He is wearing a bright green tunic and appears to be meditating. As you enter the room, the boy's eyes snap open to emit a green light that arcs up into the metal giant.

Encounter: Emerald Guardian. The boy uses the **priest** stat block, except his type is *fey*. He does not speak, and his only purpose is to defend this area from intrusion along with the **shield guardian** that he has control of through the medallion in his possession. The shield guardian has a *counterspell* spell stored using its spell storing ability to counter area of effect spells such as a *fireball* spell. Once defeated, the boy's body disappears in a shower of glittering light, and the shield guardian falls apart with its components rapidly rusting until it turns into a pile of rust.

7. HERO'S TOMB

The walls of this ornate chamber are covered in bright murals and hold carved pillars that rise to meet in the center of the fifty-foot-high arched ceiling. A dragon's skeleton held together with wire hangs from the arches, its wings held open as if in flight, and its skull roars silently into space.

A large platform at the northern wall is flanked by large lion statues and braziers holding crackling magical flames. Stone steps lead up to a silver tomb etched with glowing runes that crackle with magical blue energy that sparks higher as stones in the arches begin to glow with the same light. Suddenly a booming voice roars out, saying, "Welcome intruders... to your doom!" as the silvery-blue energy begins to form into the shape of a ghostly silver dragon perched on the platform.

Mistoth is the spiritual dragon guardian of the tomb, and it is her bones adorning the ceiling. While she views the characters as intruders, a lawful good character that succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check may engage her in conversation in an attempt to convince her to let them take the item from the tomb. In order to do so, the characters must prove their worthiness by each one telling a tale of a heroic and good deed and succeeding on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Characters with evil alignments make this check with disadvantage. Mistoth finds them worthy and retreats to her slumber if no more than one character fails their check. Otherwise, she engages in combat to defend the tomb.

Encounter: Guardian of Good. Mistoth uses the **young silver dragon** stat block with the following changes:

- Her creature Type is Undead.
- She is resistant to piercing, bludgeoning, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks.
- She is immune to cold, poison, and necrotic damage.
- She is immune to the charmed, frightened, and poisoned conditions.
- She does not have a fly speed and instead can instantly teleport to an unoccupied space she can see up to her movement speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

CONCLUSION

Once Mistoth is appeased or defeated, Adeline heads to the silver tomb on the platform to retrieve the item that was the goal of her mission. She does not allow the characters to plunder this tomb and uses her compulsion to force them away if they make any move to do so.

GM's Prompt #5: The item that Adeline pulls from the tomb should be instantly recognized by one of the characters, preferably one that is currently in their possession. This item can be either magic or mundane but should be significant to that character and is instantly recognizable. This is the final revelation that the characters stand in their own tomb.

If the characters attempt to press Adeline for more information, she smiles wryly and tells them, "That would spoil all the fun you're going to have, now wouldn't it?" before looking directly at the character who is her ancestor and giving them a grin and wink. Adeline dismisses the summons spell that brought them here, sending them back to the exact place and point in time that they left.

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