

# DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 19

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9 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES  
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS  
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS



THE BEST CONTENT FOR THE BEST GMs



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# TRIAL OF DRAGONS

Level 8

'Tis an artifact of great sentimental value. Get it for me. Your reward shall be no problem.

Hiz'ta Shilsesa

## BACKGROUND LORE

**TREASURE-SEEKERS AND BOUNTY** hunters spend their whole lives listening to gossip and rumors around the world. That is how most adventures start. This faint tittle-tattle ignites a spark of curiosity in the hearts of heroes. They grab their gear and follow these verbal trails to find the truth. There are no guarantees. Only the most courageous (or most foolish) get the reward.

## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

**A STRONG RUMOR** hit the ears of the people in Rocky Hills Village a few weeks ago. Since then, the ancient mausoleum that some explorers found has been in everyone's mouth at every social gathering. Talks of an ancient rich civilization, a group of snakefolk pilgrims, and even the remains of an evil cult are common. However, all versions have something in common. A chamber with treasure guarded by dragons or something of the like.

Everyone wants a piece of the treasure but very few have the guts to enter the place; the explorers who found it claim they heard screams and grunts beyond the antechamber. They did not dare delve any further. A couple of adventuring parties left with lots of confidence some days after the discovery. None of them ever came back.

## THE TRUTH

**THE MAUSOLEUM BELONGED** to an ancient civilization of snakefolk. They venerated dragons. Ruby-encrusted, golden dragon statues loom over the most important chamber in the underground complex. For reasons unknown, the snakefolk left these lands and left their mausoleum hidden. Eventually, the passage of time and rock slides allowed for the explorers to find the entrance.

## THE GOLDEN DRAGONS

**THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER** with the dragon statues is Oszu Shilsesa and Thatshu S'vany's resting place. They were two important snakefolk magicians who met the end of their days before their kin left these lands. Their reputation made them worthy of being interred surrounded by five golden dragon guardians. Before their deaths, however, they made sure that no treasure-seekers would ever trespass their security measures and put their unworthy hands on their hard-earned treasure.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

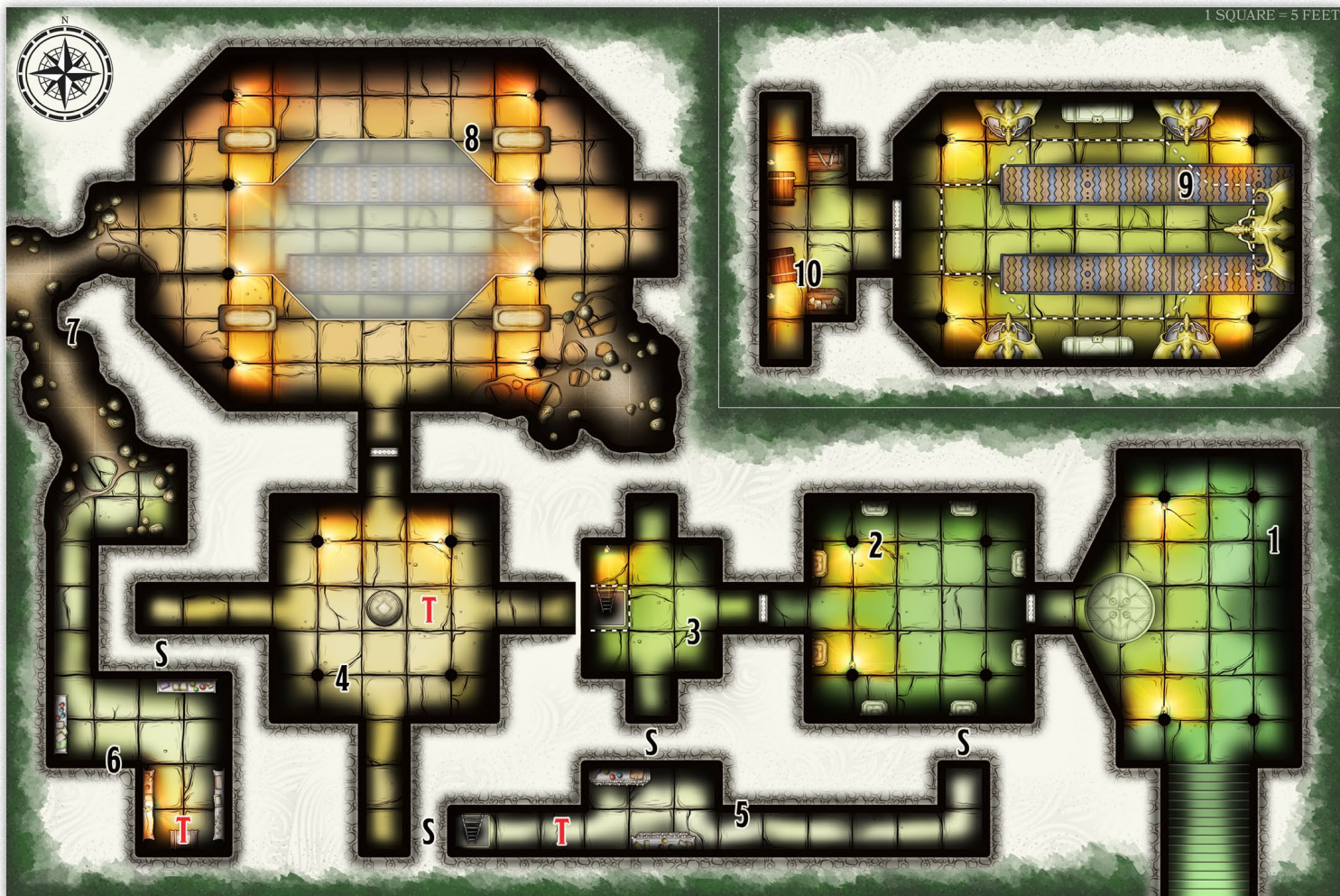
**THE CHARACTERS HEAR** rumors about the place the explorers found when they arrive at Rocky Hills Village. After the characters listen to all the crazy stories about the newly-found place, a woman named Hiz'ta Shilsesa contacts them. She's a snakefolk who claims to be a distant descendant of the people who built the mausoleum. No one in town believes her, though. She offers 3,500 gp if they can retrieve an object called the *Dragon Tear*. The characters are free to believe the woman and work for her or go search the place by themselves.

## FEATURES OF THE MAUSOLEUM

The following features correspond to all the areas of the ancient snakefolk mausoleum; areas 1 through 10.

**Light.** Except for areas 5 and 7, all other rooms feature magical sconces. Their *continual flame* spells fade out in 1 minute if they are removed from their places.

**Secret Passageways.** The mausoleum has several hidden corridors which can be revealed by pushing bricks on the walls or activating levers (DC 17 Investigation).



## 1. ENTRANCE

After a 200-foot-deep flight of stairs, a 2-inch, rune-engraved, stone disk lies before a door.

The characters must travel a couple of days through the mountains to reach the opening the explorers described.

**Draconic Runes.** The stone disk's inscription reads: "Oszu and Thatshu welcome you to the Dragonscale Snakefolk Mausoleum. Only those who share our blood can bathe in the Trail of Dragon's glory. Enter, my brethren, prove yourselves worthy! Nevertheless, if pillaging hides among your vile intentions, leave at once. Merciless draconic fury shall deal with wretched intruders."

## 2. THE EIGHT GUARDIANS

Eight ornate sarcophagi rest against the walls of this chamber with four rune-inscribed columns.

Oszu and Thatshu's magic turned their comrades buried here into eternal guardians. Two **wights** and six **ghasts** with snakefolk features fight until slain.

**Treasure.** The sarcophagi contain a total of 769 gp worth of small silverware, piles of coins, and jewelry.

## 3. THE DESCENT

This small room features alcoves to the north and south. A 3-foot-wide orifice leads to an iron hand-ladder that descends to a lower level.

The paintings of dragons that adorn the walls of this room are washed out and faded by the passage of time. The two alcoves feature top-to-bottom artwork pieces. The one in the south hides a secret passage behind it.

## 4. UNDERGROUND HALL

A stone disk rests by the center of this area. It glows faintly. An ominous aura of uneasiness fills the air.

The ladders in areas 3 and 5 descend 50 feet into this place. The moment a living creature sets foot in this area, the spirits of the guardians are summoned. Two **invisible stalkers** attack the characters by surprise. They mean for the characters to trigger the trap. They chase the intruders if they leave and fight until slain.

**Trap.** When a character steps on the pressure-sensitive tile, a *lightning bolt* spell is shot from the end of the west corridor to the east ladder to area 3, hitting everything in its path. The trap resets after 1 minute.

## 5. HIDDEN CORRIDOR

Two stone bookshelves packed to the brim with papers stand by the walls. A 3-foot-wide orifice leads to a hand-ladder at the end of this corridor.

The pressure-sensitive tile 10 feet east of the ladder triggers a three-axe device attached to the ceiling which swings all blades. Any creature standing there takes 3d12 slashing damage (DC 16 Dexterity / half).

**Treasure.** The books and scrolls on these shelves are not organized and in disarray but a decent search made by a good librarian or an avid reader turns up some valuable documents (DC 17 Investigation). There are five random level 2 and 3 wizard *spell scrolls*.

## 6. SECRET STUDIO

A *detect magic* spell reveals an ancient arcane aura that protects this area from the passage of time. A curious character learns valuable information by searching the room (DC 17 Investigation). There is a map of the mausoleum and an explanation of the Chamber of Dragons. Oszu Shilsesa and Thatshu S'vany are mentioned too.

**Fake Chest.** Explosive runes protect the contents of this chest. The explosion deals 6d6 fire damage to all creatures in a 30 feet radius (DC 16 Dexterity / half). There are 300 pp and three *potions of greater healing*.

## 7. CAVES AND TUNNELS

Rocks and debris from recent cave-ins created these tunnels. Footprints of multi-legged creatures are discernible on the dusty, packed, soil ground.

An experienced ranger notices the marks on the floor belong to **rust monsters** (DC 15 Nature). If the characters delve into these tunnels, they meet a pack of six. The beasts shun the mausoleum because of the light and the undead. They do not chase the characters inside.

## 8. GREAT HALL

This hall contains four sarcophagi that rest by the corners of a strangely-shaped opening. The mausoleum's deepest chamber lies 50 feet below.

This chamber has been subject to seismic activity but most of it remains strong and stable. When a living creature enters this area, the lids of all sarcophagi open.

**Last Guardians.** Four scaled **wights** protect this area. The undead warriors do their best to stop the intruders. They chase the characters if they flee and fight until slain.

**Treasure.** The characters find a total of 2,316 gp and a *+1 silver dagger* within the sarcophagi.

## 9. CHAMBER OF DRAGONS

Four golden dragons on stone pedestals stand by the north and south of this chamber. A larger, more imposing draconid statue lies by the east wall.

The characters must face Oszu and Thatshu's spirits (**wraiths**) and pass the Trial of Dragons if they want the treasure. The four dragon statues (**gargoyles**) and the larger one (**shield guardian**) come to life and attack the characters until slain. The spirits of the mages do not interfere if a snakefolk is among the characters' party.

## 10. TREASURE CHAMBER

The chests contain 500 pp, 10,256 gp, a *+1 longsword*, five random level 4 and 5 wizard *spell scrolls*, and the *Dragon Tear*. An arcane spellcaster knows it can be used to create golems like the dragon statues (DC 20 Arcana).

## DEVELOPMENT

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

## FRIEND OR FOE?

**IF THE CHARACTERS** agree to deliver the *Dragon Tear* to Hiz'ta Shelsisa, she pays the agreed-upon amount and lets them keep the rest of the treasure. She refuses to say what the gem is for. If the characters keep the artifact, the woman shall move heaven and earth to haunt them and retrieve what is hers by right. The life of an adventurer is hard. Every choice carries a hidden risk...



# MAUSOLEUM OF REGRETS

Level 2

Those rich nobles have the most to hide. The skeletons in their closets eventually emerge...

Nobility Historian

## BACKGROUND LORE

**THE WOES OF** life come and go to everyone regardless of their social standing or wealth. People grow accustomed to their base level of wellbeing and judge their misfortunes based on that. Noble families struggle to maintain their position and their goods. They fight tooth and nail to climb the social ladder of the aristocracy. When they fail to do so, the feelings of remorse, regret, and suffering put a heavy burden on their shoulders. A weight so stern it transcends the boundaries of life and death.

## THE STRUGGLE OF GENERATIONS

**TWO CENTURIES AGO**, the Varadder family enjoyed a position of grandiose wealth and reputation. A few family members even married into the royal family, something that enhanced everyone's renown for a while.

This period was the highlight of social standing for the Varadder family. They possessed important properties and lands in the kingdom. They were invited to royal weddings and events. Alas, the generational success caused them to become comfortable, greedy, and too full of themselves. They became spiteful, envious folks and those around them noticed the change. They fell from the grace of the rest of the nobles and saw their wealth dwindle over generations. A hundred years later, the Varadders were barely able to maintain their lifestyle. In the present day, the Varadders are little more than bitter business owners; their noble status and titles were stripped from them forty years ago. They still maintain the family mausoleum in what was once their estate. A family member from four generations ago paid a wizard to craft a magic circle there. The magic circle would condense the energy of their lost loved ones to protect the mausoleum but it has caused unforeseen consequences.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**UNDEAD ABOMINATIONS EMERGE** from the ancient Varadder mausoleum and attack the townsfolk. Numerous volunteers of the city watch have lost their lives trying to contain the dead. The authorities now offer a reward of 500 gp to mercenaries and adventurers willing to risk their lives to earn wealth and glory.

## FEATURES OF THE MAUSOLEUM

The following features correspond to the ancient Varadder mausoleum; areas 1 through 9.

**Secret Doors.** Pushing cleverly-hidden brick-buttons causes sections of the wall to slide inward and reveal narrow, dark passages (DC 15 Investigation).

**Light.** Most areas feature sconces with *continual flame* spells. They fizzle out after 1 minute if removed.

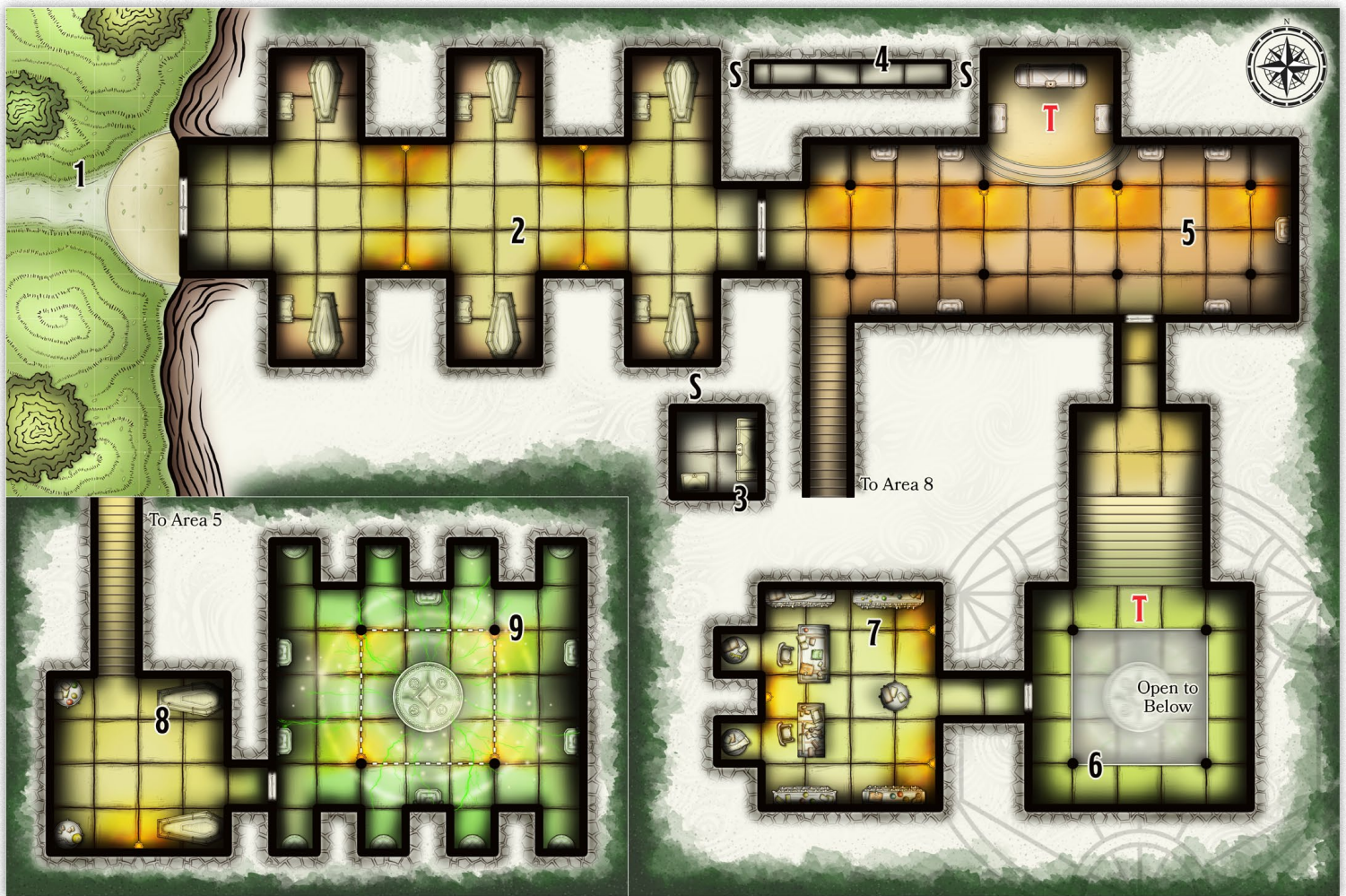
**Stench.** The nauseating stench of the undead causes weak stomachs to turn (DC 12 Constitution). those affected puke and become poisoned for 1 hour.

**Necromancy Aura.** The magic circle in area 9 is responsible for the reanimated undead. A *detect magic* spell perceives its energy from a distance of 300 feet.

### 1. MAUSOLEUM GROUNDS

A stained, copper family sigil stands proud over a set of slightly open double stone doors. Rolling hills surround the mausoleum in the formerly rich land.

A merchant lord owns a lavish manor 5 minutes to the north where he resides during the summer. The eroded sigil over the gate depicts a watchtower with the moon behind it: The Varadder family sigil (DC 16 History).



## 2. ANTECHAMBER OF STEWARDS

Engraved, lavish sarcophagi lie in dark alcoves north and south of the main hall. Some of the lids stand beside them; they were recently removed.

The remains of six great stewards of the Varadder family are kept in this chamber. They were placed here as a sign of appreciation for their life-long work. All of them served the Varadder family two hundred years ago when they were still important among the noble classes. The corpses of city watch volunteers litter the dusty floor.

The reanimated bodies of four stewards (**zombies**) emerge from their stone enclosures and attack trespassers as soon as they arrive. They show no mercy.

**Treasure.** The stone chests contain 120 gp, 200 sp, and a collection of ivory figurines (140 gp).

## 3. HIDDEN VAULT

The vault's location near the entrance is meant to throw off tomb-robbers. Such thieves would look for valuables deeper into the underground and find nothing of value.

**Treasure.** The stone coffers contain 420 gp, 800 sp, a *spell scroll of speak with dead*, and a *+1 dagger*.

## 4. NARROW PASSAGE

The doors to area 5 featured a trap that sprung when opened. The trap malfunctioned decades ago and no longer works. This hallway was the Varadder's means to avoid it, though. Using this secret way allows the characters to reach area 5 and avoid the ambush there. They may even surprise the undead minions in their tracks.

## 5. CHAMBER OF THE COMMONS

Rows of carved, stone pillars and lavish, standing sarcophagi stand proud in the great hall. A large, rune-carved enclosure stands on a raised alcove.

The walls of this chamber feature countless stone drawers on the walls that contain the ashes and bodily remains of a great number of Varadder family members.

Four **skeletons** and two **shadows** hide behind pillars to ambush trespassers (DC 14 Perception). They reform after 6 hours unless the circle in area 9 is destroyed.

**Swinging Axe Trap.** Stepping on the plate (see map) causes a great axe to swing by. Creatures under it take 3d6 slashing damage (DC 14 Dexterity / half).

**Treasure.** The carved enclosure contains a *wand of detect magic* and a pouch with *dust of disappearance*.



## 6. THE GRAND GALLERY

A 15-by-15 feet opening on the ground leads to an opulent chamber 30 feet below. The stone circle below glows green and produces a flow of sparks.

The walls of this chamber are decorated with washed-out fresco paintings of the great Varadder patriarchs. Most of the paintings date back to the good old days of the forgotten family. They depict the men as valorous, strong, and powerful figures in their communities.

## 7. VARADDER FAMILY ARCHIVE

Countless parchments, tomes, and papers lie scattered across desks and bookshelves. Strangely enough, all of it looks clean and recently used.

The family archive is protected from the passage of time by an abjuration spell. An arcane spellcaster perceives the incantation with a *detect magic* spell. The room contains an accurate account of all family members, their deeds in life, and their remains' location in the tomb.

**Curiosity Curse.** Those who delve into the Varadder archive are cursed with nearsightedness (15 feet). The pardon of a living Varadder lifts the foul curse.

**Family Lore.** Studying the papers for 1 hour reveals the names and residences of living members of the family in the nearby city. The last person to be interred in the mausoleum died seven years ago, Ingvild Varadder.

**Treasure.** One of the bookshelves contains a spellbook with six random level 1 and 2 wizard spells.

## 8. LOWER LANDING

The flight of stairs leads up 30 feet to area 5. A careful tracker identifies the uneven footsteps of undead minions coming from the door to area 9 (DC 12 Survival).

Two **zombies** emerge from the twin sarcophagi. They attempt to stop the characters from reaching area 9.

## 9. MAUSOLEUM OF REGRETS

The stench of death is the most intense here. Strands of necromancy ether flow from the glowing rune circle and into the standing enclosures.

The remains of the fourteen patriarchs of the Varadder family lie in this chamber. The failure of the Varadder bloodline falls open their shoulders. It was their deeds that brought the Varadder downfall. The magic circle empowers their regret and spite and causes them to return from the dead in a mindless form, incapable of correcting their mistakes or fixing the family's future.

Two mindless **ghouls** and four **zombies** exit the standing sarcophagi and attack the newcomers. The undead reform after six hours unless the circle is destroyed.

**Circle of Necromancy.** The runic relic's incantation is flawed (DC 16 Arcana). It is not meant to protect the burial place but to enhance negative sentiments of the dead with necromancy. It is noteworthy that the current calamity did not occur any sooner. Destroying the circle with shovels or pickaxes ends its effects immediately.

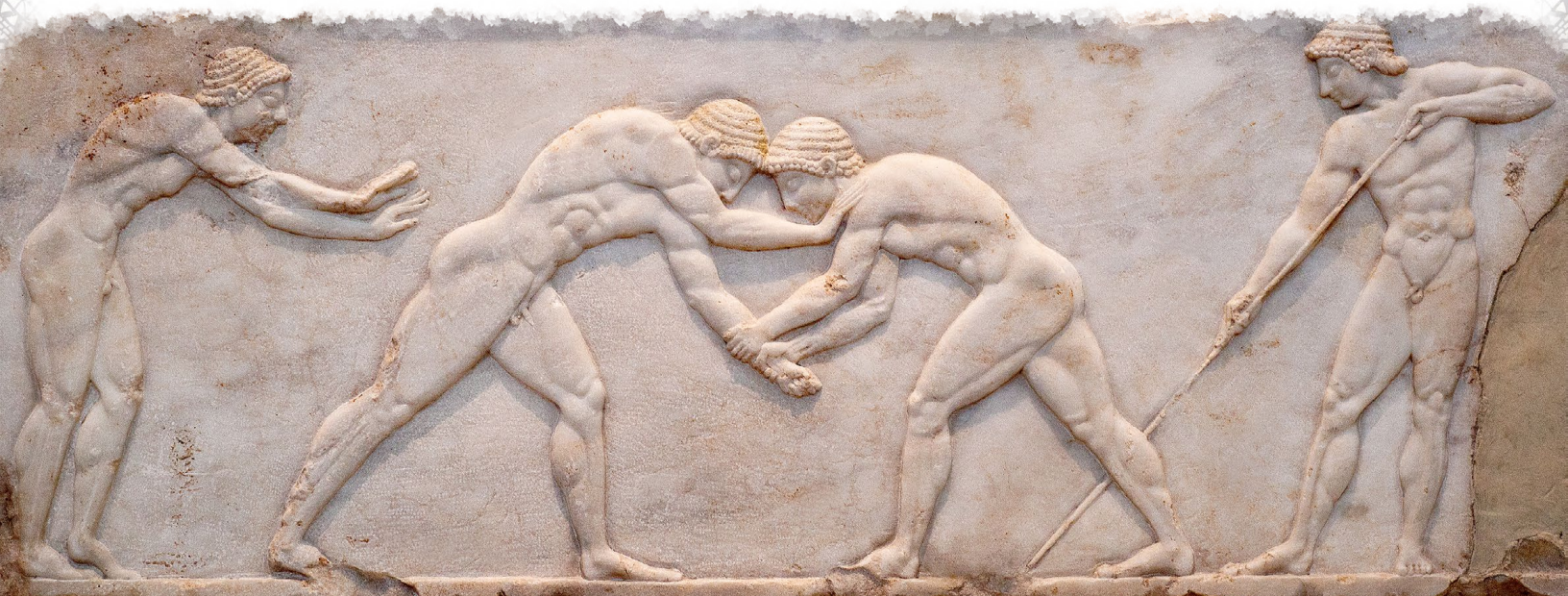
## DEVELOPMENT

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

## PEACE RESTORED

**DESTROYING THE NECROMANCY** circle in area 9 stops the undead incursions at once. All remaining undead in the mausoleum turn to dust and disappear.

When the characters return to the settlement, they are greeted with applause and joy. Damsels throw flowers and thank them for their efforts. The authorities pay the 500 gp reward. The living Varadders find out about the characters. If they pillaged their mausoleum, they shall take revenge upon the disrespectful adventurers.



# FINDING VOICES

A roleplaying GM supplement by Alex Rinehart

*“So do you sit around and make funny voices?”*

**CHARACTERIZING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCs:** bartenders, merchants, guards, mayors, and more) is one of the trickiest aspects of running a role-playing game. It’s also one of the steps game masters can take to elevate their games to truly remarkable heights.

**It is all about the entrance.** First impressions are the most important part of establishing any character. Put all your effort into the first few sentences, the first grimaces you make, and let the weight of that impression carry the rest of your performance. While you can let up a bit after the entrance, long-term consistency is key. Whenever you bring a character back, they must act in the same manner and fashion, or the great results of your first impression will be replaced with mere confusion.

**Remember that an NPC is more than just a voice.** They’re a collection of mannerisms, diction, and style. Before you attempt to modulate your voice, there are other smaller things you can do to create NPCs that are uniquely different from you, and much likely everyone else. So what does that first impression look like?

**Adjust your posture.** Sit up in your chair, slouch forward, or perch like a gargoyle on a barstool. These will adjust your voice and mannerisms in unconscious ways, and if your players can see you, it will cement that difference in their minds. Hold your chin high for the noble, or tuck it into your neck for a guard or beggar. Small changes tend to have noticeable effects. Try varied things!

**Think about the words you use.** Do you use simple words, or complex ones? Do you pronounce them all the same? Do you make interesting pauses? How does the age of your speaker change their vocabulary?



## POWERFUL PRESENCES

**IF YOU NEED** to sound like a powerful character, practice the power pose: arms akimbo, fists balled, legs spread. Take up space and command the room! You ARE your presence. Speak slowly and pause between words. Choose them carefully, every word a poignant dagger. Powerful characters are never afraid to interrupt others. Make constant eye contact, throwing in a glare or two. Attempt to omit your ‘um’s and ‘ah’s; a tactical pause instead shall do wonders. Speak loudly and project: this is your space, the players your audience. It’s FUN to be powerful, let that show! With a gleam in your eye and a boom in your voice, your kings and villains can command an entire room. Again, the options are endless.

## FEEBLE INDIVIDUALS

For a meeker character, however, look down, avoid eye contact. In contrast to charismatic individuals, speak quickly, lean into your ‘um’s and ‘ah’s. Take up as little space as possible. Speak quietly and don’t be afraid to ramble on or even lose your train of thought. Remember that you are intruding on the time and space of others.



## DO IT YOURSELF

**ONE OF THE** demos I run most often is a superhero mission about vanquishing Lord Predictable. He's an ineffectual pushover of a villain, and every session ends the same way: with a villain monologue. Specifically, an endless, rambling monologue that the players interrupt. I never invite them to interrupt, but I make it clear that that's the way out. He talks without saying anything, and without commanding the room. It's a small voice, higher than my natural, in never-ending babble. And so, inevitably, someone interrupts him or even punches him. That's the power and objective of this strategy: you can communicate genre (in this case comedy) the same way that a director can set the tone of a scene with different lighting and camera angles. And all with non-verbals cues! Remember, nonverbal cues (things like tone and body language) account for more than 50% of all communication.

Mastering your mannerisms can take you to new role-playing levels, but voices are also an important factor. One of the traps you can fall into is creating an NPC that you can't reproduce reliably. Nothing breaks immersion faster. Even a weakly characterized NPC that you can reliably reproduce is better than the strongest NPC that changes whenever they return to a scene.

If you shift your vowels or speak out of a different part of your mouth, write that down next to the NPC's name. But there are other short-hands you can take, both in your voices and in your note-taking: there are voices you can already do, regardless of who you are. You've got an old man voice even if you don't know it, I'm sure of it. *"Oh, can you help and old man out, sonny? Back in my day..."* That's a voice you can do consistently, and it communicates a bounty of information about your character.

But "an old man" isn't the only voice you can do! Imagine your math teacher from when you were young, or an actor in a specific film. Impersonate Han Solo: even if you do a bad job, that just means no one will be able to identify what you're emulating. But if you do it consistently, it just seems like your own take on a character.

## CONCLUSION

**FINALLY, THERE IS** the most valuable trick you can learn for quickly impersonating characters: associate them with an animal, and pretend you're reading a children's book or a fable. Lean into it and show off your most boisterous lion or a plucky frog. It will be full of a vigor that is all your own doing. Most of all, it will be consistent!

Above all else, **practice!** Practice in the shower or looking at yourself in a mirror. Watch the shape of your mouth and listen to how you sound. Record yourself and compare the difference. Take these tips, finding your inner animals and varying the way you sit and the space you occupy, and before long your NPCs will be just as strong as the rest of your storytelling techniques.



## EDITOR'S NOTES

**I ENJOYED READING** this great article about finding how to create your very own character voices. I must admit most of the NPCs I use in my campaigns share the same voice, even the women!

I am eager to practice and implement some of these great tips in my daily routine. Making unique NPCs with particular characteristics does improve the general immersion of the players.

I would like to add my two cents to make the experience of making voices even better. In addition to remembering all possible quirks and details about an NPC, never forget to show the players the portrait of the person they are speaking to. This can be on a phone, a monitor, or even a cork board with pinned images. You can also ask your players for help and ideas on how to improve.



# THE HARGEN WINERY

Level 4

We are at a loss here, lad. I have no men left  
and half the town turned to useless ducks!

Captain of the City Watch

## BACKGROUND LORE

**PEOPLE'S TRUST** IN supply lines and the availability of common-use goods has often proven to be the downfall of towns and settlements when their citizens grow careless. Poisoning a well or a grain silo can cause numerous deaths and setbacks for a town that depends on dwindling resources. This is the story of a disgruntled man and how he uses magic and wines to create havoc in an otherwise normal and hard-working settlement.

## THE MEDIOCRE WINE

**THE ONLY LOCAL** vineyard and winery in the region is located a few miles from the town gates. The Hargen Winery produces sweet ale and barrels of wine. They supply these goods to several towns in the area. Most people in the area know that the ale is fine. But many folks make their own so it is not such a novelty. The wine, on the other hand, is mediocre at best. Joseph Hargen has worked for decades to improve the taste of the Hargen Vintage but he has proven to be a poor craftsman. People drink it since they are the only local suppliers but they always make snarly remarks about how it is more bitter and sour than other imported wines from faraway places. Joseph Hargen smiles and swallows his pride when he hears such criticism. Hate and spite grow within him.

## THE PETTY REVENGE

**AN OBSCURE FIGURE** appeared in the winery a few weeks ago and offered Joseph a chance of revenge. The alchemist and mage, Darathos, claimed he could put a concoction in the wine and make all who drank it turn into harmless ducks. Joseph thought it was an act of fitting revenge. He allowed the man to settle in the winery's basement and poison a shipment of wine barrels.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**NUMEROUS TOWNSFOLK** HAVE turned into ducks. It all happened last week after Hargen Winery sent a new product named The Golden Vintage. All rushed to drink it to see if Joseph had finally improved his mediocre wine. After drinking it, they were polymorphed into ducks. The captain of the city guard lost most of his men after they drank it. He offers 400 gp to adventurers willing to explore the winery and find out how to reverse this.

## FEATURES OF THE WINERY

The following features correspond to the Hargen Winery and its dungeon map; areas 1 through 9.

**Secret Doors.** Pulling cleverly-hidden wooden-buttons causes sections of the wall to slide sideways and reveal narrow, dark passages (DC 15 Investigation).

**Light.** Some chambers feature sconces with common oil lamps. They last for 6 hours before needing a refill.

**Smell.** The fragrance of grapes and wine mixes with a strange odor of rotten meat and decay. The stench comes from the poisoned fermenting vats in area 6.

**Arcane Aura.** The incantation circle in area 8 produces a strong transmutation area that can be perceived up to a distance of 60 feet with a *detect magic* spell.

### 1. WINERY GROUNDS

A one-story building on a hill is surrounded by rows of grapevines, and a packed, hooded horse-cart.

The characters walk a few miles to reach Hargen Winery. A few people tend to the grapevine plantation north of the house and two horses by the loading bay.

## 2. VINEYARD

Seven rows of quality grapevines grow on a well-kept plantation. Four scarecrows oversee the yard.

Someone knowledgeable with fermented beverages knows these are good grapes (DC 16 Intelligence). Great wine can be made with them. The four people tending to the vineyard hand-wave at the characters. An insightful person discerns that their attire is not appropriate for farming; they only pretend to work (DC 16 Insight). These are Darathos's cult-like followers who moved near the winery soon after he did. If the characters intend to enter the building or doubt their intentions, the **cult fanatic** and three **cultists** attack. They do not fight to the death; they flee in different directions if things go south.

## 3. LIVING AREA

The chamber contains a dining table, a wardrobe, and two rocking chairs by the hearth. A painting on the wall depicts a handsome, bearded man.

On the table, there is a wine bottle with a golden label. A person who drinks the poisoned Golden Vintage wine turns into a harmless duck (DC 12 Constitution).

## 4. JOSEPH HARGEN'S ROOM

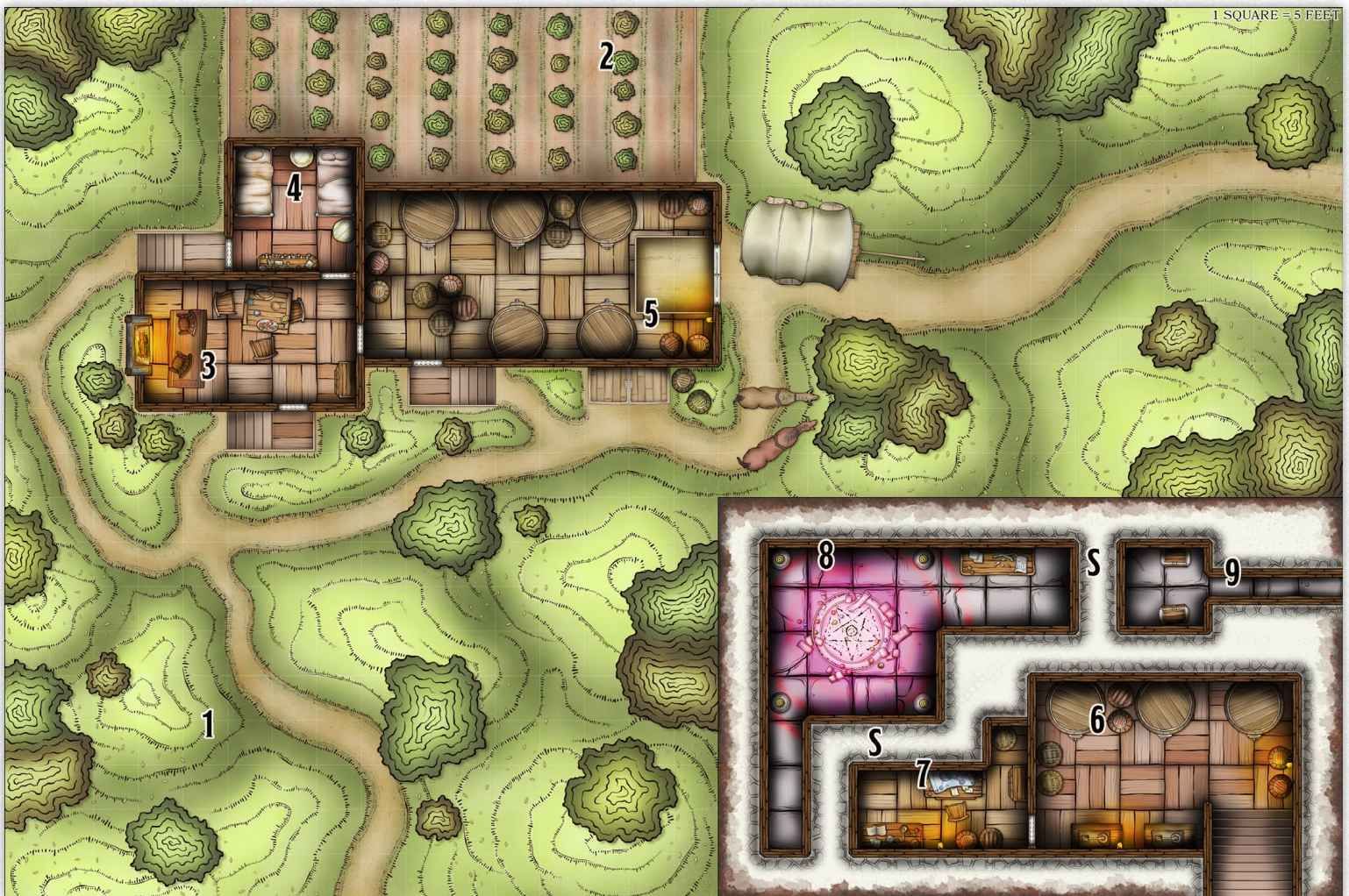
The sparse room contains two beds, empty night-tables, and a wooden bookshelf packed to the brim with novels, books, tomes, and technical scrolls.

One of the beds shows signs of recent use. The other one belonged to Joseph's wife. Dana divorced him over personal differences years ago. Most of the documents on the bookshelf are about wines and the preparation of all kinds of fermented beverages and spirits. Some documents were written by Joseph himself and depict all the recipes he has tried over the years to improve his wine.

## 5. FERMENTATION ROOM

Five large fermentation vats hug the walls of this room. The loading bay by the east wall is closed.

The wine in the vats is not poisoned, only of below-average quality. A group of four **cultists** sorts out the barrels of poisoned wine to ready a shipment to a new town. They have strict orders to prevent anyone from tampering with the wine or to interrupting their activities. Should the cultist lose the battle, they escape through the loading bay and ride east on the horses by the cart.





## 6. THE GOLDEN VINTAGE

The stench of rot and decay originates in this damp room. Three secret fermentation vats are here. Noxious, red-tinted fumes come from their tops.

The cellar doors near the loading bay descend 10 feet to this chamber. Joseph Hargen (**commoner**), Darathos (**mage**), and four **cultists** are here. Darathos orders his goons to attack the characters as soon as they arrive. He has no intention of letting them escape with their lives.

Old Hargen, despite his age and bad physique, desperately fights; he has too much to lose. He cannot let anyone know he poisoned the Golden Vintage on purpose.

**The Golden Vintage.** The room contains two and a half vats, six barrels, and several dozen bottles of poisoned wine. Enough to wreak havoc on several small towns. A person who drinks the poisoned Golden Vintage wine turns into a duck (DC 12 Constitution). The spells *purify food and drink* or *remove curse* negate the foul effects of the wine but those already converted into ducks require a different solution (see area 8).

## 7. THE WINERY'S ARCHIVE

The locked door leads to a small office with a desk covered in scattered papers and a bottling machine.

The room contains all kinds of accounting documents, tax receipts, and lists of shipments and sales.

**Joseph's Diary.** A leather-bound tome on the desk is Joseph's Diary. It reveals the hate Joseph felt after enduring people's bitter criticism over the years and how he could not handle his failure as a craftsman.

## 8. DARATHOS'S LABORATORY

An intricate incantation circle dominates the room. Four pylons surround the glowing runes in its center. Pieces of parchments float in the air over it.

A small alchemy laboratory lies by the northeast alcove. Darathos used the incantation circle combined with alchemy techniques to craft the foul duck-turning poison. Alas, the recipe for this concoction is not here. The mage shall not part with this foul secret that easily.

**The Cure.** A spellcaster that studies the parchments and the runes concludes that bringing those affected by the poison to the magic circle shall lift the curse and return them to their former selves with little to no setbacks.

## 9. SECRET EXIT

The chests in the small chamber contain traveling equipment and dried rations for a 2-week trip. The eastbound tunnel reaches the surface after 200 feet. Darathos does not accept death nor imprisonment. He uses his magic and this tunnel to escape if the battle seems lost.

## DEVELOPMENT

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds. After defeating Darathos and his goons, the characters discover a way to cure all the affected townsfolk in area 8. The captain of the city watch gladly pays the 400 gp reward after he sees that people return to normal in a matter of seconds.

If Joseph survives, he is judged and imprisoned. The winery is granted a neighbor family who owns farms and cattle. The wine quality does improve after a few months.

# THE WOMAN AND THE CRONE

Level 7

Please, Sylvana is important to many of us. She must be in danger deep in the woods!

Old Villager

## BACKGROUND LORE

**CLEVER DEMONS CAN** turn into beautiful people; all they encounter are deceived by their appearance. Mighty, adult dragons can polymorph into smaller creatures. One cannot know with certainty if a toad at the city castle is secretly a person. We cannot believe all we see.

## A CLUELESS HEART

**THIS IS THE** story of Sylvana Greenheart, a fool, and naive elf. Her love for nature observation and simple things always put her below her parents' combat-oriented expectations. Younger elves were closer to becoming sword-dancers than her. This saddened her because she didn't want to be a disappointment in her bloodline but, at the same time, she would not betray who she was.

Sylvana left her clan, who expected nothing of her but war. She started a life in the woods, free of family and clan duties. She was successful in the first months. She applied all her knowledge and realized she was more capable than she thought. But she was lonely. Deep in her heart, she wished she could fight like her brethren.

## THE BLOOD PACT

**THE EARS OF** an eaves-dropping witch heard the laments of Sylvana's weak mind. The crone approached and offered a promising solution. She vowed to give her the abilities she craved in exchange for signing a contract with a drop of her blood. Sylvana, the fool, pictured herself beating her cousins in a friendly competition and signed without reading. The witch lied. The pact fused their minds and bodies. However, even if Sylvana was fool enough to sign, her strong will partially protect her from the witch's magic. This resulted in two minds sharing, yet fighting for the control of the same body.

## HIGHER PURPOSES

**IN THE DAY**, when the witch assumes Sylvana's shape, the elf woman fights and struggles from within her body with no success so far. The witch introduced herself as a new remedy-seller in the area and approaches villages to sell her goods. The crone places charming enchantments in everything she offers. People who use her unguents or medicines are magically compelled to enter the forest at midnight. They are easy prey for the crone, who has harvested bodies this way for weeks. Her objective is to summon a demon from the Abyss. It is so mighty that it requires numerous sacrifices...

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**MORE AND MORE** people go missing each night at Gremilton. A strange force draws them to the depths of the forest. Strong, flesh abominations fight whoever tries to stop the people who cross the woods' edge. Gremilton's villagers are helpless. The city authorities offer 2,500 gp to a group of heroes willing to delve into the forest's depths and solve the problem at its root.

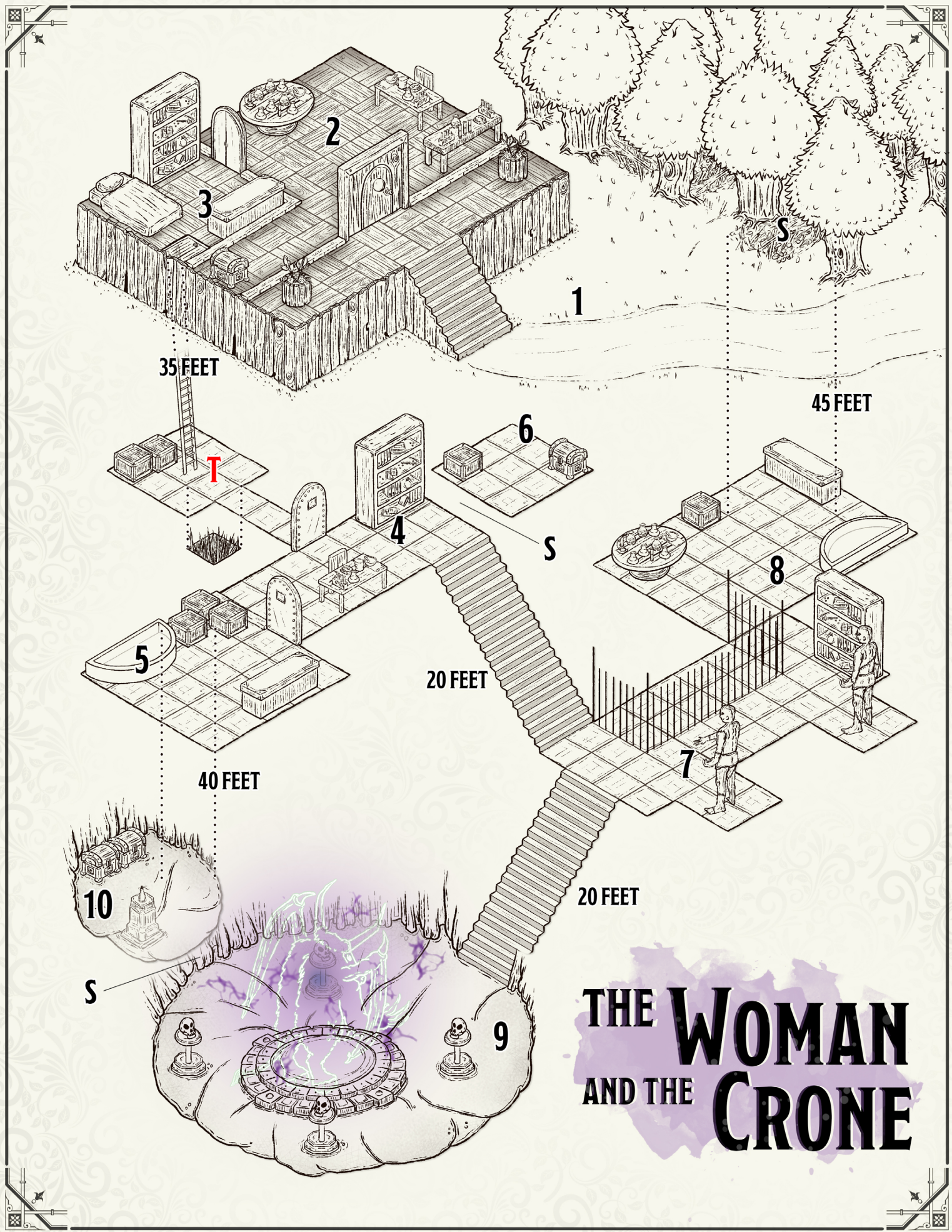
## FEATURES OF THE CRONE'S LAIR

The following features correspond to the crone's cabin and its underground dungeon, areas 1 to 10.

**Light.** All underground areas feature sconces with *continual flame* spells. The magic fades out if removed.

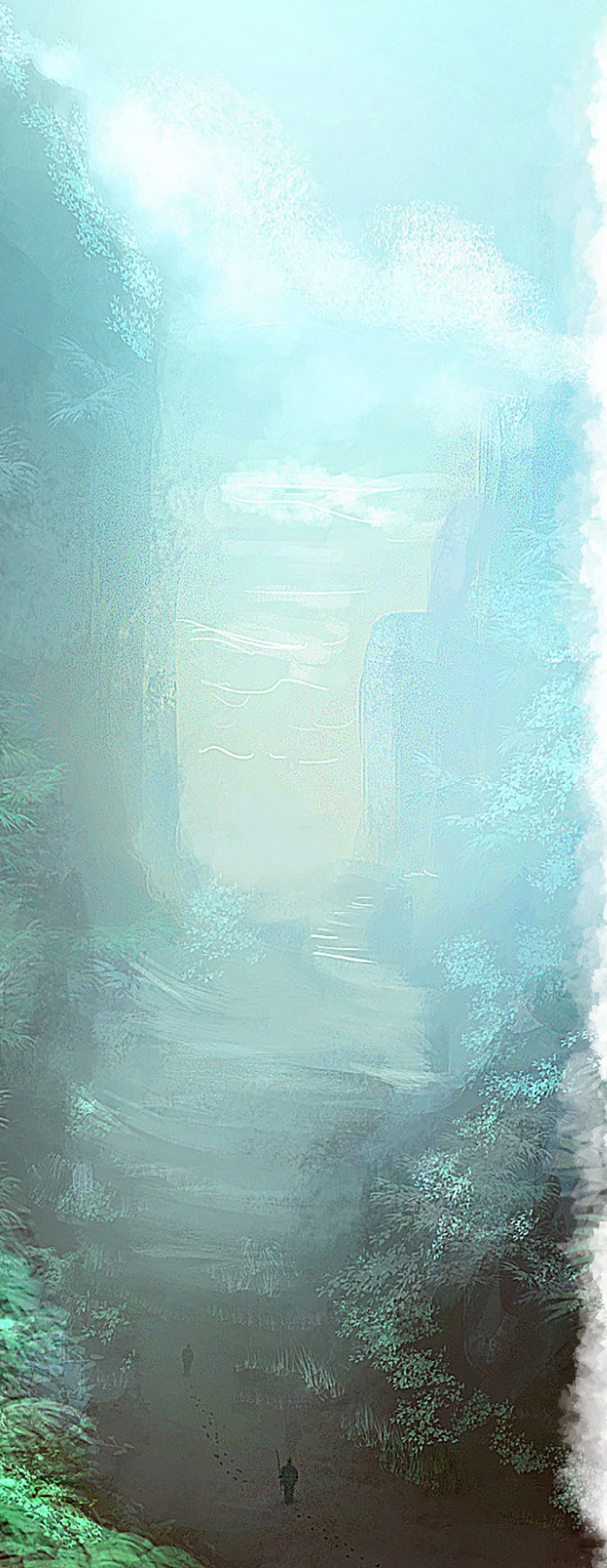
**Steel Doors.** The two reinforced doors can be bypassed with the fine tools (DC 18 Thieves Tools).

**Magical Auras.** A *detect magic* spell reveals traces of necromancy in most of the things in the cabin. The magical aura in area 9 can be perceived from as far as 300 feet.



# THE WOMAN AND THE CRONE





## 1. ROAD TO THE CABIN

The characters travel through the forest for eight hours. It is not hard to follow Gremilton villagers' instructions and reach the cabin in the deep woods.

If the characters approach the cabin, Sylvana (**night hag**) greets them from the inside: *"Hello! One second please"*. The woman treats visitors as customers. She denies any accusations or talks of witches; she claims to know nothing of the missing people if asked. A *detect evil and good* spell reveals the truth, though. If threatened, the witch repositions with *Etherealness*. Sylvana manages to scream *"Help me!"* during this exchange.

**Hidden Access.** An entrance to the dungeon is hidden by leaves and twigs (DC 18 Investigation). The witch's flesh golems help her climb with their large limbs.

## 2. CABIN'S INTERIOR

Hundreds of ingredients rest in flasks, boxes, and other containers. A strong smell of flowers and herbal scents permeates the wooden cabin.

The cabin's interior looks like a commonplace herbalist's shop. There are all kinds of herbs and ingredients.

**Trap.** The chest shoots poison darts when opened. Targets take 4d6 poison damage and are poisoned for one hour (DC 16 Constitution). It contains nothing of value.

## 3. MAIN BEDROOM

The room contains a single bed with a wooden shelf and a container. The trapdoor by the bed descends 35 feet.

**Treasure.** If the characters search the room, they find two *potions of healing* and a level 1 wizard *spell scroll*.

## 4. ANTECHAMBER

A table and wooden shelf are filled with rare, alchemy components for necromancy and witchcraft.

**Spikes.** Creatures that step on the pressure-sensitive plate fall 10 feet and get impaled in the spiked pit. They take 6d6 piercing damage (DC 15 Dexterity / half).

## 5. THE ROOM OF A WITCH

The stone font with clear, fresh water by the wall is surrounded by sturdy, wooden crates.

If the characters search this area, they find the opening underneath the crates (DC 16 Investigation). The 40-foot-descent leads to a secret cave (area 10).

**Font.** The witch poisoned the water with witchcraft. A *detect magic* spell reveals healing properties but drinkers are poisoned for 1 hour (DC 16 Constitution).

## 6. SECRET VAULT

The characters must find the pushable brick by the shelf in area 4 to find this place (DC 17 Investigation).

**Treasure.** The wooden chest and crate contain 2,500 gp worth of silverware and small precious stones. There are three *potions of greater healing* and a *+1 dagger*.

## 7. GUARDIANS OF THE CELL

Two massive, malformed humanoids of stitched flesh stand with their fist closed as if waiting for instructions. People within the cell weep before them.

The characters find the witch here if they enter the dungeon from area 1. If they confront her in area 1, she flees here to fight alongside her automaton guardians. The witch (**night hag**) and two **flesh golems** prevent the characters from reaching the stairs that descend area 9. The witch retreats to the ritual chamber (area 9) to use her last resort if she is unable to stop the characters here.

**Prisoners.** The eight people trapped in the cell are too afraid and terrorized to speak, fight, or help in any way.

## 8. UNDERGROUND ACCESS

The guardians help the witch climb the 45-foot-deep hole. The crates and table here hold black magic and necromancy components. They are worth 500 gp.

**Water.** Use the description for the font in area 5.

## 9. RITUAL CHAMBER

Skulls on plinths surround a stone magic circle. The fabric of reality fights to maintain substance. The horns, wings, and face of a demon coalesce...

The witch needs a few more souls to summon the demon. She makes her last stand here and summons four **shadows** to help her protect the portal. Again, the witch won't risk her life if things go sour (see **Development**).

**The Demon's Will.** The evil entity is aware of its surroundings and wishes the witch's success, so it helps. Each round, the demon can cast *dispel magic* at a target of its choice or: *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage.

## 10. SECRET CAVE

Removing some rocks and rubble from a section of the walls of the cave reveals this place (DC 18 Investigation).

**Treasure.** A stone pedestal holds a single vial of *oil of etherealness*, the wooden chests contain 4,500 gp, a *portable hole*, a *wand of web*, and a *crystal ball*.

## DEVELOPMENT

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

### THE DEMON IS RELEASED

**IF THE WITCH** is defeated, she assumes Sylvana's shape and begs for mercy. The real Sylvana cuts her off mid-sentence and manages to say "*Don't believe her!*" but the witch silences her. The crone wants to make the characters doubt and lay down their weapons. If she succeeds and catches them off-guard, she cuts her own throat and surrenders her life to the demon; anything to see the heroes die. Free of its planar bindings, a **glabrezu** emerges. The characters may fight or escape. The witch is gone but so is Sylvana. Gremilton has a bigger problem now...

### THE WITCH IS DEFEATED

**THE CHARACTERS DO** not buy the witch's lies. A *remove curse* spell draws the witch out of the elf woman's body and cures her. Gremilton and all neighboring towns are saved. The characters earn their reward and become friends with Sylvana's clan even if she does not return.



# RADEEN'S REWARDING RATIONS

*A supplement of enchanted supplies by AJ Freyley*

**ON THE EDGE** of a sprawling marketplace, or nestled in the corner of a bustling tavern, travelers are enticed by the rich smells of an otherwise unadorned food stall. This is not a regular stall, though. Each piece of bread or roasted roasted veg holds magical properties.

The dark-haired dwarf who runs this stall, Radeen Copperborn (he/they), has their braided beard tucked into an apron that has seen several years of use. His burn-scarred hands meticulously rearrange small plates of toothpick-skewered meats, cheeses, and berries on the counter. To the rear sits a halfling bodyguard, Kassie Swiftsteel (she/her); her hand draped over the hilt of her sword, and her legs, one of which is fashioned out of ash wood from the knee down, resting on a small crate.

If approached, Kassie becomes noticeably watchful as Radeen, her boss, recites his memorized spiel. They tell the tale of his journeys across the world searching for all the finest recipes, offering small tasters of the exotic flavors that they have gathered over the years.

Radeen's ration packs are uncommon wondrous items that sell for 50 gp each. The rations are magically preserved in sealed ramekins and mason jars. Each type of ration pack is detailed below, with its benefits and drawbacks shown in the accompanying table. Radeen also stocks *Copperborn's Special Brew*, sold for 300 gp.

**Properties.** A creature can consume a ration as part of a short rest. They gain the listed benefits of that ration pack for 12 hours or until they take damage. The listed drawback lasts until they complete a long rest. Nothing can alleviate the drawback while it lasts.

## COPPERBORN'S SPECIAL BREW

*Wondrous Item, Rare*

This hearty ale is Radeen's recipe. They used it many a time on their travels to discover the finest foods in the land. It fills those who drink it with certainty and purpose that drives them to follow their dreams, though at the cost of their awareness and fine motor control.

A creature must take an action to drink a whole bottle of the brew to earn its benefits. They magically learn the most direct physical route to a destination or objective of their choice. This effect lasts for 8 hours. Additionally, they have disadvantage on Dexterity and Wisdom checks and saving throws until they complete a long rest.

## CHARMING CANAPÉS

These bruschetta canapés of tomato, orange, and mint are served at high-society gatherings where the hosts wish for jovial conversation to flow. Perfect when confrontations need to be brief and lack bloodshed.

## ELVEN WAYBREAD

This bland and tough bread is carried by elves on the long pilgrimages they make from their homelands. It allows them to traverse great distances at speed without the risk of exhaustion but also causes their minds to wander and lose focus on the here and now.

## GLOOM 'SHROOMS

This spicy curry with crispy fried mushrooms originated with citizens of the subterranean world who wished to do business with surface dwellers. It allows those not accustomed to the dark to see clearly and to better avoid the monstrosities that lurk in underground caverns.

## SCHOLAR'S SNACKS

These collections of sweet and savory pastry tartlets make popular grazing for archivists and arcanists alike. They bestow a great amount of focus, allowing researchers to plumb the depths of their knowledge at the cost of paying little attention to the world around them.

## ROGUE'S WOE

This thick stew, made with a dark roux and served with rice and shellfish, is a favorite of sailors of questionable means. Before exploring an ancient tomb or sunken ship, crews polish off a pot of Rogue's Woe to slow their eager steps and keep their eyes keen for traps.

## ROUGH 'N' TUMBLE PIE

This mutton pie housed in a thick pastry case is eaten by dwarven messengers when they traverse the dangerous mountain passes between their hidden cities; wasted on cross-country, but very dangerous over short distances.

## VIGOR BLEND

This blend of root vegetables and tubers has a dull earthy flavor and looks almost as bad as it tastes. Those who imbibe it experience an incredible surge of energy but their senses increase to paranoid levels. They may appear skittish or jumpy to those they encounter.

Ration Pack	Benefits	Drawbacks
Charming Canapés	Advantage on Charisma checks made to influence creatures.	Disadvantage on all attack rolls.
Elven Waybread	No penalty to passive Wisdom (Perception) while traveling at a fast pace. Advantage on Constitution saving throws.	Disadvantage on Dexterity checks.
Gloom ‘Shrooms	60 feet of Darkvision. Advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.	Disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks while in bright light.
Scholar’s Snacks	Advantage on Intelligence checks made to recall or research information.	Disadvantage on Wisdom checks and saving throws.
Rogue’s Woe	Advantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks. Advantage on saving throws made to avoid traps.	Walking speed reduced by 10 feet. The creature cannot take the Dash action.
Rough ‘n’ Tumble Pie	Advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks. Advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.	Disadvantage on Constitution saving throws. Gain one level of exhaustion when benefits end.
Vigor Blend	Walking speed increased by 10 feet. Advantage on initiative checks.	Disadvantage on Charisma checks. 5% chance of attacking a random creature each round after rolling initiative.

## RADEEN’S DEALINGS

**RADEEN AND KASSIE** have traveled together for many years. Their varied types of rations are a result of their experiences throughout the world. During their most recent travels, however, they ran afoul of a particularly gluttonous hag named Annie Shacklebag. The witch managed to capture Kassie. In a bargain for her life, Radeen agreed to spread Annie’s influence across the lands. He now adds a secret ingredient to each ration pack. It is hidden beneath layers of magical herbs and spices, but noticeable to certain powerful spellcasters.

**Annie’s Ingredient.** When a creature consumes a ration pack, their name and a brief physical description appear in the hag’s cookbook. Using the book as a focus, Annie can use *scrying* on the creature, with no chance of failure. Perhaps Annie has a taste for elven blood, or she wants the meaty meal of an adventurer with a high Constitution score. When a creature takes her fancy, she uses her book to cast *dream*, attempting to subconsciously influence it into seeking out her lair with false promises catered to the creature’s deepest desires. Annie has used this trick many a time to fill her cooking pot.

If the characters detect traces of hag magic in their rations and question Radeen, his guilt gets the better of him. The dwarf confesses to their duplicity and pleads with the party, offering them a free ration pack each if they are willing to hunt down his foul patron.



# THE PAIN OF A BROKEN HEART

Level 7

We must do something, more and more people have turned out with their hearts ripped out!

Commander of the City Watch

## BACKGROUND LORE

**HISTORY IS MARKED** by wars, conquest, death, and much blood. However, only historians know the deeper details of these events. Many of them were the consequence of love. The passing of a loved one is capable of turning the purest of hearts dark. Nevertheless, unrequited love can be as harmful. And one of the most common and effective ingredients for hatred is treason.

The last straw of this is magic. Artifacts, cursed items, philters with liquids that affect one's mind: love potions. The arcane arts have gone too far in the development of these trinkets. Philosophers insist that the sentiment of love cannot be replicated by artificial means, though.

## A CURSED WOMAN

**MADLINE LUNA'S LIFE** is an example of what love can cause. As mesmerizing as she was, she lived a life a luxury at the expense of the many men and women that loved her. She cynically betrayed a paramour in front of another just because Madeline did what she desired.

One day though, she messed with a sorceress' husband. Madeline believed the woman was harmless like her husband kept saying. But she was wrong. The sorceress cursed them both. Madeline woke the next day in the body of a fiend. She had scaly skin, claws, pointy teeth, and feathery wings. She grabbed some things and a large cloak to cover herself and left the town forever.

She was a succubus now but it took her weeks to understand what she was. Thus, she could not revert to human form for a while. When she was able to, she understood another her curse better: She desired someone's company and love. But deep inside, she knew the fiend within her would be the demise of her lovers' lives.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

*Pain of a Broken Heart* begins with one or a combination of the following adventure hook suggestions:

### A SERIES OF MURDERS

**THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE** at a city they know well and learn horrible news. Over a dozen men and women have been murdered in the past month. All corpses bore the same assassination method. Their hearts ripped out and their blood sucked up to the last drop. The commander of the city watch offers 3,000 gp to a group of capable adventurers to investigate and find the culprit.

### LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

**WHEN THE CHARACTERS** arrive in the city they witness a curious event: A beautiful woman and her husband walk in a crowded street. All of a sudden, a man kneels by the couple and swears loyalty and love to the woman. The husband, with no show of jealousy, welcomes the man into their relationship and the three leave together. A couple of days later the characters learn that the man they saw disappeared and has not been seen again.

### WHAT WE DO FOR LOVE

**THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE** at the city and they learn that their long-time friend Thomas Gartney is soon-to-be-married. The bride is a mesmerizing woman named Madeline Luna. The wedding is scheduled to happen within a fortnight. Something is amiss, though. People with their hearts ripped out of their bodies turn out every two days in town. But Thomas and his wife-to-be seem to be undisturbed by the fact. Madeline in particular says those are unimportant matters that shall not deviate their minds from their holy union. Thomas just smiles...

# THE HEART-SHAPED DUNGEON

Please, understand! We did this for love, it was the only way! Don't make me fight you!

Thomas Gartney

## DUNGEON LORE

**MADELINE HAS BEEN** cursed for decades now. She has roamed hundreds of villages, towns, and cities. Regardless of the time, the place, or how much she tries, the outcome is always the same. People fall in love with her and she believes there is a spark of hope. The morning after, her mouth is bloody and her lover's body lies on the floor. Their heart is gone. She grows tired of this...

## TRUE LOVE

**THOMAS GARTNEY MET** Madeline a couple of months ago. She wasn't planning to stay in the city for long. But unlike the people she met before, Thomas was not afraid of her, even after learning the truth. It took some convincing but the man persuaded her into believing there was a way to save their love and release her from the curse. Since then, helped by Thomas, Madeline has used all her resources to develop a cure. Meanwhile, Madeline still seduces other people to eat their hearts. This appeases her desire to kill, allowing Thomas to live.

They found an old, abandoned, underground mausoleum deep inside the woods by the city. The tribal men that built it left these lands long ago. Their dead rest here. Madeline's magical rituals performed inside the place to create a vial of antidote made the walls of the mausoleum shift and change. The former square-shaped dungeon structure resembles now a heart.

**Involvement.** Regardless of the reason that brings the characters to the city (see **Adventure Hooks**), Madeline and Thomas are responsible for the deaths of over a dozen people in the city. The characters' research points them toward Thomas and Madeline, then leads them to the mausoleum in the woods. This is where the couple hides when they realize someone might be on to them.

## FEATURES OF THE HEART DUNGEON

The following features correspond to Madeline's lair, the heart-shaped dungeon; areas 1 through 16.

**Light.** Most areas of the dungeon feature sconces with *continual flame* spells. Their magic fades if removed.

**Smells and Sounds.** The magic from Madeline's rituals has risen the dead. Their grunts and growls can be heard throughout the dungeon. All areas smell of spring flowers due to the magic contained in area 16.

**Secret Doors.** Curious characters find buttons and levers to reveal hidden passageways (DC 17 Investigation).

**Arcane Energy.** The *elixir of love* holds great power. A *detect magic* spell can perceive the arcane energy coming from area 16 from a distance of up to 300 feet.



## 1. MADELINE'S GUARDIANS

Five sarcophagi hug the walls of this irregularly-shaped chamber. Decrepit, sharp-clawed hands remove the heavy lids. The dead growl ferociously.

The five **ghasts** in the chamber react to any living creature entering the dungeon. Madeline's magic charms those interred in the mausoleum even after their deaths. They protect Madeline and fight intruders until slain.

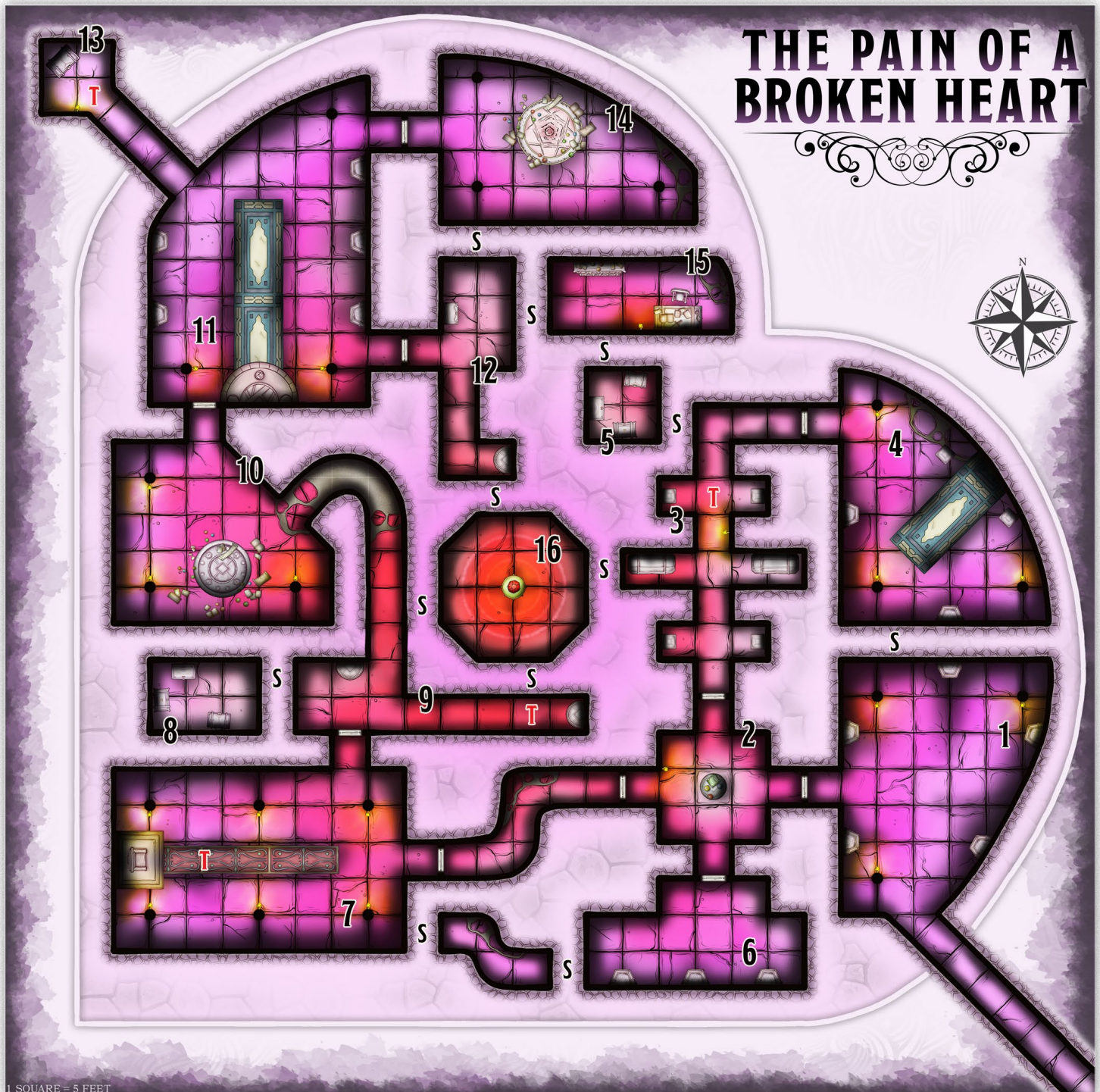
**Treasure.** There are 340 gp worth of small pieces of silverware, gems, and other trinkets in the sarcophagi.

## 2. ANTECHAMBER

A leather-bound tome and some scribbled papers lie on a rune-carved, stone table's surface.

The grunts of undead fiends come from the north and south exits. They do not enter the chamber on their own.

**Lore.** The characters can spend 10 minutes reading the log on the table. Madeline keeps a record of her attacks. The booklet has a list of the people she killed with exact dates (written in Infernal). This does not reveal her past. It only includes murders up to eight years ago.



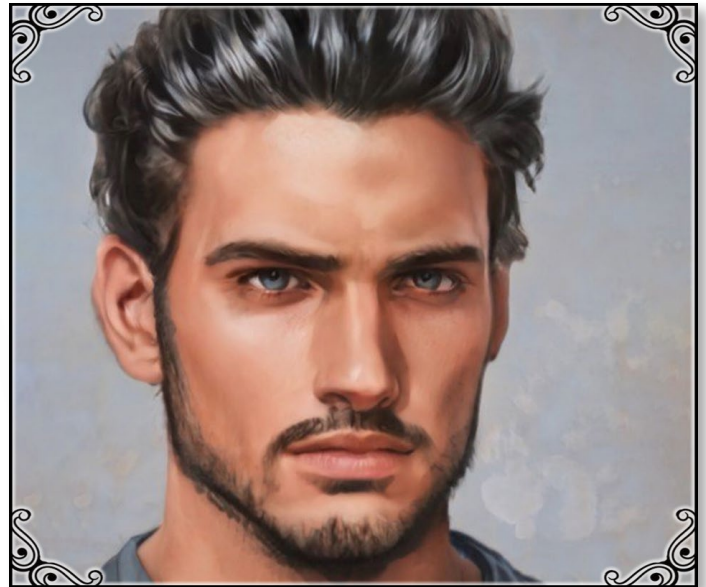
## THOMAS GARTNEY

*Human (age 29)*

Thomas was an honest, kindhearted man. His good looks earn him the ladies' attention with ease. He never had to beg or make efforts to obtain love. It all changed with Madeline, though. She is the first woman that makes him feel like a child. He fell in love with her at once. He decided that if others had to die for him to be with Madeline, it was a price he was willing to pay. Deep inside, he knows that what he is doing is selfish. His desire to be Madeline's husband has caused the deaths of many.

**Manner.** Thomas is madly in love with Madeline. He repeatedly says she is the reason for everything he does.

**Ambition.** Thomas believes Madeline's potion will work. He shall do everything in his hands to help her.



## MADELINE LUNA

*Succubus Fiend (age 53)*

Madeline believes she is still a human despite everything she has done. She confirmed this when she met Thomas. She felt captivated by his honest love and ended up convincing herself they could make it work. However, she is aware that too much damage has been done. Plus, she has stayed in the same place for too long and cannot hide forever. Murdering others disgusts her and she would stop if she could. She wishes she had more time. Nevertheless, she shall defend her love with her life.

**Manner.** Madeline speaks and moves with the grace of a royal woman. Her every gesture shows this.

**Ambition.** The completion of the *elixir of love* and escaping the city with Thomas is her only goal.



### 3. CORRIDOR OF DEATH

The 40-foot-long corridor features three symmetrical alcoves on each side. Two sarcophagi and four funerary plinths await in the dark, damp recesses.

The caskets are engraved with eroded runes from a long-lost tribe (DC 12 History) The undead respond to Madeline's magic and attack trespassers. Two **shadows** and four **skeletons** chase the characters until slain.

**Trap.** A ceiling slit opens and two scythes swing by, dealing 4d8 slashing damage to creatures that cross the marked square on the map (DC 18 Dexterity / half).

**Treasure.** The caskets have 829 gp worth of fine fabrics and jewelry. A +1 dagger lies on a sarcophagus.

### 4. MEDITATION CHAMBER

A patterned, beautiful carpet strangely fuses with the wall of the deformed chamber as if by magic.

Madeline's magic rituals have modified the shape of the mausoleum. This room in particular changed so much that it makes no structural sense. Two standing caskets remain intact, though. Unlike the rest, the enclosures are empty. There is no trace of the undead.

**A Clue.** If the characters search the place, they find the fragment of a letter hidden under the rug (DC 16 Investigation). It reads: "...*xir of love is almost done, my love. The monster in me shall be gone forever! It will cease to exist! Soon we will be unimpeded and together...*"



## 5. SECRET VAULT

This place features two different secret passageways. However, the one connected to area 15 can only be opened from within the vault. Madeline stored valuables in the three stone coffer in this secret vault.

**Treasure.** The coffers contain 500 gp, five random level 1 or 2 wizard *spell scrolls*, and four *potions of healing*.

## 6. SOUTH RESTING CHAMBER

Three identical stone sarcophagi hug the south wall of this room. Undead in leather armor and horned helmets shout “*For Madeline, our fair lady!*”

The men buried here were elite warriors of their tribe in life. Three **wights** chase the characters until slain.

## 7. MADELINE’S SEAT

Two rows of columns flank an exquisite red and green velvet rug. A stone-carved throne rests on a three-level dais by the west end of the chamber.

When the characters reach this area, they see Madeline sitting on the throne. She wears a beautiful silk dress.

**The Deal.** When Madeline (**succubus mage**) sees the characters, she warns them that Thomas and her will do what it takes to see their love flourish. She claims her curse forces her to kill, that she is a victim too. If the characters insist on fighting, she proposes a deal. She mentions the *elixir of love* and the possibility of ending her curse. She asks the characters for their help so Thomas and she can finally be together without any fear. The characters are free to believe the woman or not. Madeline and Thomas are prepared for the worse and confront them if needed (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

**Trap.** If a creature stands on the pressure-plate by the throne, poison darts shoot from holes on the walls. They are poisoned for 1 hour (DC 16 Constitution).

## 8. SECRET TREASURE CHAMBER

Not even Madeline knows of the existence of this chamber. Her magic has changed the place so much that not even she knows it by heart. The treasure here belonged to an ancient tribe, the builders of this place.

**Treasure.** A collection of ancient silver and bronze coins along with a bunch of hand-crafted tools are kept here. The lot is worth 1,200 gp to a collector or historian.

## 9. SIDE CORRIDOR

This strangely shaped room features two stone disks engraved with patterns and runes. One of them at the end of a 25-foot-long corridor.

The runes carved on the twisting walls are elongated and distorted. They can no longer be read, even with magic.

**Trap.** The disk at the corridor’s end goes up an inch and releases poison gas, creatures in a 15-foot straight line are poisoned for 1 hour (DC 16 Constitution).

## 10. RESEARCH CHAMBER

A two-inch-tall, stone, magic circle by the south wall is littered with scraps of papers and scrolls. Spent magical implements lie scattered all around.

This is one of the areas that Madeline employs to perform rituals to expand her knowledge and find a way to perfect the *elixir of love*. She left this place a mess once she obtained what she looked for from her magic.

**Lore.** If the characters spend 10 minutes searching the place, they find important fragments of Madeline’s scrolls and notes. The rituals she performed here seem to delve into the arts of curse-breaking. The use of unwilling sacrifices is mentioned as an ingredient.

**Magic Circle.** If a spellcaster concentrates for 10 minutes on the circle, they recover 1 level-one spell slot.





## 11. MAUSOLEUM'S MAIN CHAMBER

Five sarcophagi flank a half-moon-shaped shrine engraved with intricate patterns. A beautiful blue carpet matches the washed-out wall decorations.

This place used to be a temple to the tribal men that built the mausoleum. They held heathen ceremonies here. The divine aura of this place protects the ancient corpses in the sarcophagi from Madeline's foul magic.

**Lore.** A well-versed historian recognizes the deity depicted in the stone shrine. It represents an obscure entity known as the Philosopher's Moon (DC 16 History). A god mostly followed by tribes and forest communities.

## 12. SIDE CHAMBER

The chamber was once part of a larger chamber. The dungeon's changes left it out and without a purpose.

**Treasure.** An observant character finds a secret compartment inside the chest (DC 17 Investigation). A small box with four *potions of greater healing* hides here.

## 13. FAKE TREASURE

An ornamented stone chest rests by the end of the corridor. The walls depict carved images of strong tribal warriors vanquishing lizardfolk enemies.

This room's shape and the location of this chest are a consequence of the changes the dungeon has suffered. Since the chest looks tempting enough at the end of the corridor, Madeline thought it was a good spot for a trap.

**Trap.** Creatures that stand next to the chest trigger a *glyph of warding* trap. A *lightning bolt* spell is cast from the chest's lid. Every creature in a 30-foot straight line takes 8d6 lightning damage (DC 16 Dexterity / half).

## 14. ARCANES MAGIC CIRCLE

A three-inch-tall, marble, magic circle is half-covered with papers and complex scrolls. Traces of recent rituals can be felt in the form of vibrations.

Madeline made use of the more powerful magic circle in this chamber to master her *elixir of love* design. She succeeded, but she left the place a mess after finishing.

**Lore.** If the characters spend 10 minutes searching this place, they find important fragments of Madeline's scrolls and notes. The information that can be salvaged from here is that the *elixir of love* requires the blood and hearts of twelve mortals to reach its maximum potential.

## 15. MADELINE'S SECRET STUDIO

This office contains a desk and a bookshelf. The place is clean. The documents are well-organized.

Madeline's research and its details can be found in her diary, lying on the desk. Spending 10 minutes browsing Madeline's diary, the characters learn about the curse and her background. The last entries have a description of her feelings for Thomas, an *elixir of love*'s explanation (see below), and a page on their hopes to succeed.

## 16. ELIXIR OF LOVE

A pedestal by the center of the room holds a dodecahedron-shaped crystal. Inside it, a small vial with a pink, violet liquid floats and glows faintly.

Thomas hides here as last-resort protection. The characters may reach this area by themselves or accompanied by Madeline. It depends on the decision they take when they meet her in area 7 (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

## ELIXIR OF LOVE

*Legendary item, consumable*

This potion holds great power but its creation requires high-level necromancy knowledge and the lives of 12 people. The liquid within the small vial glows with a faint pinkish hue. Any creature who drinks the *elixir of love* can cast a *wish* spell under three conditions: The drinker must be the target of the spell's description, the effects of the spell cannot tamper with another plane of existence, and the user must have an Intelligence score of 14 or higher. Users who do not meet all three conditions are turned into an **arcane abomination** permanently.

## THE CONFRONTATION

If the characters attack Madeline in area 7, she casts *invisibility*, *misty step*, or uses her Etherealness ability to escape and meet with Thomas in area 16. In case the characters decide to help her, she takes them there.

## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

## A "HAPPY" ENDING

**THE CHARACTERS HELP** Thomas and Madeline finish the *elixir of love* and it works! Madeline is free of her curse and becomes human again. The couple leaves the city forever and is never seen again. The city's authorities cannot help but think the characters let the culprit escape. They summon the characters for interrogation...

## LOVE THAT KILLS

**THE CHARACTERS DECIDE** to fight Madeline (**succubus mage**) and Thomas (**knight**). During combat, they flee to area 16. Thomas grabs the *elixir of love* and threatens to drink it, claiming he will become a monster. Madeline cries and begs him not to. If the characters refuse to lay down their weapons, Thomas drinks the potion in a last attempt to protect Madeline and becomes an **arcane abomination**. Full of rage, the succubus fights along with her former lover until they are both slain.

## GREEDY HEARTS

**THE CHARACTERS CONSIDER** the *elixir of love* is too powerful to waste on Madeline and her crazy lover. If they find a way to neutralize Thomas before he drinks the potion and defeat both of them in battle, they may keep the *elixir of love*. The consequences of using such an evil artifact, or the possibilities of what they can achieve with such power are certainly an adventure for another day...

## MADLINE LUNA, SUCCUBUS MAGE

*Medium fiend (shapechanger), neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**HP** 85 (16d8 + 16)

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

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)

**Skills** Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7

**Damage Resistances** Cold, fire, lightning, poison;

bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

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

**Languages** Infernal, Common, Infernal, Telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Fiendish Powers.** Madeline has access to the following succubus traits and actions **Telepathic Bond**, **Shapechanger**, **Charm**, **Draining Kiss**, and **Etherealness**.

**Spellcasting.** Madeline is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Int (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step*, *invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *lightning bolt*, *gaseous form*

### Actions

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

## ARCANE ABOMINATION

*Large abomination, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**HP** 118 (12d10 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	7 (-2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

**Skills** Athletics +8, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** –

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The abomination makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 6 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

**Arcane Discharge.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (6d6) necrotic damage.

# Lair of the Mind Eater



Deserts are some of the most dangerous places for travelers and adventurers. The weather is not the only hazard they must overcome; indigenous wildlife hides under the very sand. The case of the hard-to-reach Coppersand Desert is no different. The desert owes its name to the extremely hot temperatures that manage to melt and fuse the dunes.

Life has not been the same at Coppersand Desert for a few months now. The people from the few villages near the desert have witnessed strange lights coming from the dunes' depths but do not know much further. It is said that an ancient pyramid marks the center of Coppersand Desert but these rumors have not been confirmed. It is too dangerous and expensive to travel there only to verify a myth. No one has embarked on that journey out of mortal fear.

Since the day the multi-colored lights appeared during the cold nights, the people in Coppersand Desert have found it difficult to sleep. They ignore what happens at the pyramid, though. A mind-eater named Sylax broke free of its arcane prison. It was dormant for centuries after the ancient desert-dweller mages trapped it here. Sylax has finally ended its punishment and is hungry. With powerful magic, it has used the pyramid and the obelisks to haunt people's dreams. In the past few days, some unfortunate victims woke up with bruises and deep orifices in their skulls, their brain matter gone. The leaders at Coppersand Desert settlements have sent letters to call for external help.

## Area Descriptions

1. The journey throughout Coppersand Desert is hard and challenging. Desert worms, warrior tribes, and even the occasional, yet territorial blue dragon may pose a threat to any traveler who wishes to reach the desert depths.

2. The pyramid's entrance is 15 feet above the ground. The antechamber is a safe refuge from the inclement heat. The pond of water looks refreshing and tempting to newcomers but it poisons creatures who drink from it.

3. This corridor has two alcoves with stone plinths at each end. If the characters search the documents and papers on them, they learn the story of this place. They learn that it is a prison meant to keep a powerful entity.

4. The two **prison guardians** follow Sylax's commands now. They attack intruders until slain. Cave-ins and sand slides destroyed the eastern corridor.

5. Four **invisible guardians** placed by Sylax are here. Their objective is to keep intruders away from area 8. The two south alcoves hide some treasure.

6. The two **prison guardians** here attack trespassers. Searching this area reveals a control panel that deactivates the closing-walls trap in area 7.

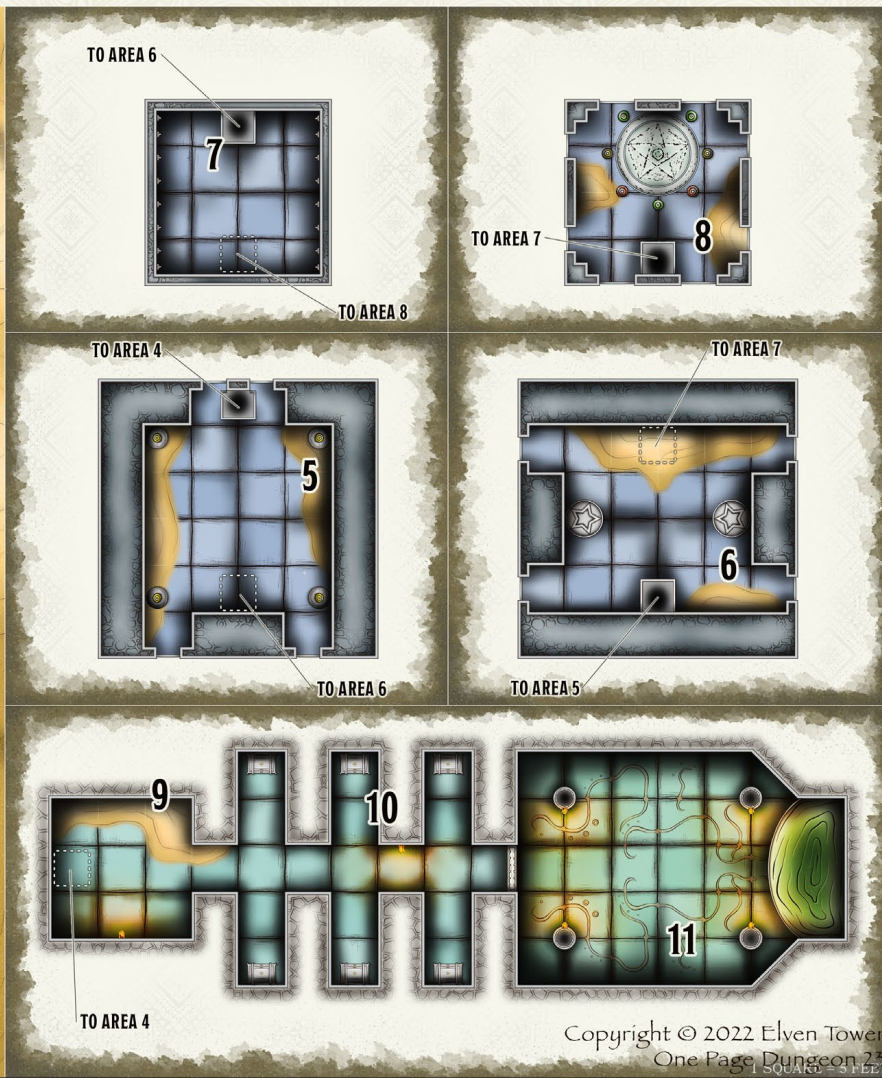
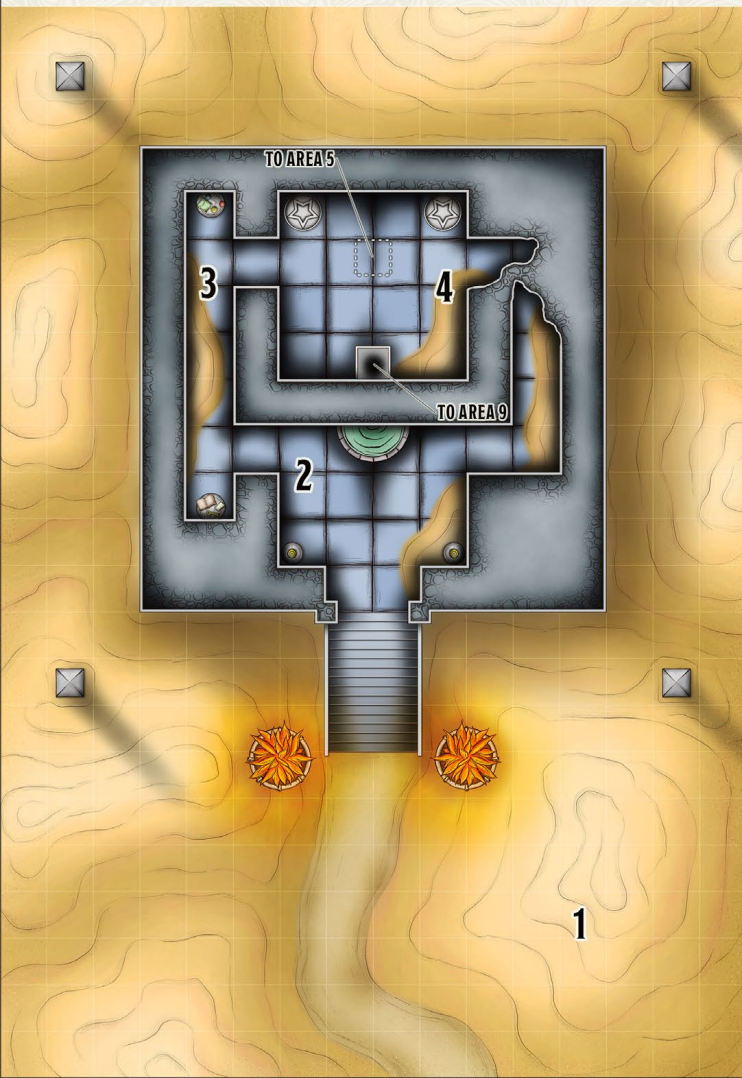
7. When the characters reach this area, the shafts to return to areas 6 and 8 close shut. The chamber walls move inward and crush the characters in 30 seconds. The characters must find the panel with the controls to disarm the trap or find a way to unlock the exits.

8. The characters find traces of Sylax's rituals. If they spend 10 minutes to cleanse the magic circle, they hinder Sylax's plans as some of the reanimated enemies in the underground levels do not come to Sylax's aid. They also learn that this chamber has the instructions to imprison Sylax once more. The mind-eater must be weakened or unconscious for this to work, though.

9. Powerful, dark, arcane energies come from beyond the east alcoves.

10. Six **undead warriors** emerge from their caskets and attack without mercy. The guardians stay dormant if the circle in area 8 is cleansed.

11. Sylax performs a ritual when the characters arrive. The **mind-eater** and two **prison guardians** fight together. A **water elemental** emerges from the large pond unless the circle in area 8 is cleansed. Killing Sylax does not truly solve the problem. Unless the imprisonment ritual is performed again, the powerful mind-eater shall find its way back to life. It shall remember the characters' faces and haunt their dreams when they least expect it...



# ONE LAST JOB

*Heists that feel more like heists and less like logic puzzles*

*by Dana Floberg*

Heists are great for tabletop adventures. They are a backbone for presenting opportunities for stealthy plots, charming role-play, and creative teamwork. But they also present unique challenges. It's easy for players to get lost in the sauce of planning a heist, or for elaborate plans to fall apart on the first bad roll of the dice. However, all outcomes are welcome.

To bring the thrill of the heist to our role-playing game, we can take inspiration from game systems designed for capers, such as *Forged In the Dark*, as well as narrative tropes from classic heist films.

## CASING THE JOINT

**PREPARATION IS A** primordial part of a heist. In the movie *Ocean's Eleven*, for instance, the heist doesn't even begin until more than halfway through the film. But planning can be a notoriously dull part of TTRPGs, something players often spend hours discussing in circles or else skip entirely. There are ways to counter this.

When giving your players a heist quest, start by laying out any basic information they might already know about the job. Divide it into simple categories – *objective, location, main entry points, and known security measures*. It is especially helpful to include these in a separate hand-out for players to reference. If the players are being recruited for the heist, this document may represent what the recruiting NPC has discovered so far, or the results of the PCs' initial surveillance. Written evidence is key.

Nevertheless, make sure there are gaps in the information you share – For instance, the basic brief may describe the front door to the bank, but not the secret entrance for the king. Or they might learn the exact time the guards switch turns, but not that they all carry firearms. The players must know their information **is** incomplete or partially incorrect. The objective is to motivate them to investigate even further. You can use this opportunity to tease future surprises or plant red herrings.

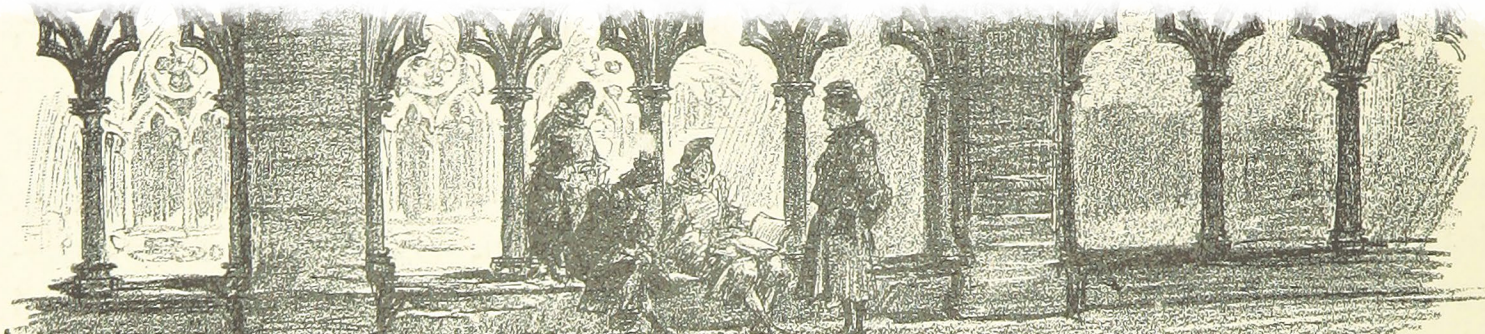
## CUTSCENES

**WHEN IT IS** time to start planning, give each player a chance to frame two cut-scenes for their PC to observe buildings, charm security guards, gather intelligence, assemble false identities, or make any other preparations before the heist begins. The PCs may join each other's cut-scenes if they wish, but make it clear that whoever is framing the cut-scene has the final say of any matter.

Run the cut-scene as you would any other part of play, rolling dice and using moves as appropriate. Try thinking of these cut-scenes the way you would a montage in a heist movie – start the scene at the most interesting point, once the PCs are already holed up for the stakeout or breaking into the Head Curator's office.

Encouraging players to frame scenes instead of having discussions makes this phase feel more vivid, dynamic, and cinematic. Taking turns framing cut-scenes ensures everyone at the table has the chance to shine in the spotlight, while also cutting down on the “too many cooks” problem of everyone debating their next steps at once.

If your table is large, you may decide to limit each player to a single cut-scene or expand it to three for smaller groups. The important thing is to have a defined limit, which acts as a deadline or a ticking clock – only three scenes left, now two, now one, and right into action!





## COMPLICATION TABLES

**MANY TABLETOP GAMES** tell stories with successes and failures – you successfully fooled the shopkeeper, or you failed to detect a certain trap. But with heists, failures can be final. Once you're caught, the heist is over, and you transition to combat or escape mechanics. That is why most heist narratives do **NOT** focus on successes and failures, but instead, on twists and close calls – a new enemy arrives, a janitor stays late on their shift, a secret alarm bars the crew's path, etc. Try to save the heist.

Bringing those ideas to your table keeps the heist moving and punches up the suspense. Consider preparing *Complication Tables*, and rolling or choosing an interesting consequence from it when your players fail a roll, instead of a traditional failure that ends up with combat.

When the party's rogue fails at a lock-picking check, consider having the lock pop open – but the doorway leads to an unexpected room, or the lock announces itself as a sentient creature, or the rogue hears an aircraft landing overhead as a new threat arrives on the scene.

This is not to say that heists must be successful to be fun. Repeated failures may reasonably lead to the heist dissolving into chaos or capture. The goal of swapping failures for complications is not to guarantee success, but to give players more chances to fail forward and escape by the skin of their teeth – instead of getting nabbed and abandoning the heist at the first failed stealth check. You decide what failure is the final straw.

Be sure to discuss the shift in tone with your players beforehand, as players who are used to traditional failure mechanics may feel unfairly penalized by the introduction of unexpected complications because of their failures. The idea is to make the heist more dynamic, fun, and for every player to have a unique moment.

## FLASHBACKS

**FLASHBACKS ARE ESSENTIAL** for creating tension in heists. The heroes face an unexpected challenge, the audience holds their breath, but then comes a twist! Unbeknownst to us, the hero has come prepared and ready with exactly the right tool to escape this sticky scenario.

Systems like *Blades in the Dark* show us flashbacks can be invaluable in tabletop games. When you transition from planning to running the heist, offer players the opportunity to call for a flashback at any point during the heist. To do so, the player stops play and narrates a flashback wherein their PC forged documents, spiked the matron's tea with sleeping magic, or hacked looped footage into the security feed. Flashbacks should be quick, but still may require a roll or move to determine success.

Importantly, a flashback cannot undo something that has already been done or happened. Instead, think of it as an opportunity for the player to reveal a secret cutscene that was skipped during the preparation phase.

Consider giving each player one "free" flashback. After that, each additional flashback should come with an escalating cost: penalties to future rolls, levels of exhaustion, or additional rolls on the *Complications Tables* are good options. Feel free to read *Blades in the Dark's* rules and mechanics about flashbacks. The rules there do not directly apply to D&D because they have a distinct Stress mechanic that does not exist in D&D, but the general gist of the rules can be replicated. The important thing is that a flashback, if used, must not come for free.

To build a great tabletop heist, it is important to understand what makes heists compelling as a genre. Adapting mechanics for unexpected twists, near misses, and surprising victories will bring the thrill of the caper to the table. The show must go on, for as long as it can.

# AVATAR OF WOE

Level 8

Beware of the arcane, planar reflections of otherworldly entities. They do not serve you.

Old Mage Adage

## BACKGROUND LORE

**SCHOLARS AND MAGES** spend their lifetimes exploring the deep secrets of the multiverse. From the nature of other planes of existence to the indigenous inhabitants of those far worlds. Communication and travel across the planes are reserved for the most powerful wizards and artifacts, however. Few individuals can attest to even witnessing those other worlds. Powerful extraplanar entities have a foothold in the Material Plane in the form of portals and avatars. The latter are pseudo-sentient representations of their alien selves. Mages are taught to be careful in the presence of such arcane depictions.

## THE AVATAR OF WOE

**THREE CENTURIES AGO**, a mage and explorer unearthed an old temple-like structure in the depths of a large mountain range. He followed a faint arcane trail to the interred temple. What he found there defied logic and the known rules of the fabric space. He found the avatar of an extraplanar entity that existed in both planes simultaneously. The structure around it was built by an ancient civilization as a way to honor and worship the ephemeral representation of what they thought a god.

The obscure figure reacts faintly to visitors but cannot communicate in any meaningful way. Despite that, the avatar has the power to grant a wish to whoever makes the pilgrimage to its halls. Many adventurers and mages have come here to wish for all kinds of things to the faceless, floating, avatar. The promise of wealth and power is enough to persuade even the most skeptical. However, there is a catch that most know. Each time a wish is granted, the petitioner must word it with the utmost precision. The Avatar of Woe owes its name to the countless requests gone wrong and their dire consequences.

## WISHES GONE WRONG

**SINCE ITS DISCOVERY**, the Avatar of Woe has granted over three dozen wishes. Few of these were worded well enough for the desired outcome to happen. The temple where the ethereal entity is located has been affected by some of those previous wishes in the form of traps and guardians. These were added by selfish individuals that desired to keep the avatar's power away from others.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**THE ADVENTURERS LEARN** of the Avatar of Woe and its ability to grant wishes from gossip and oral tradition in the places they visit. They may come on their own for selfish reasons or as a way to advance in a larger quest or campaign. Like acquiring a powerful weapon, traveling somewhere, or getting a crucial piece of information.

## FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE

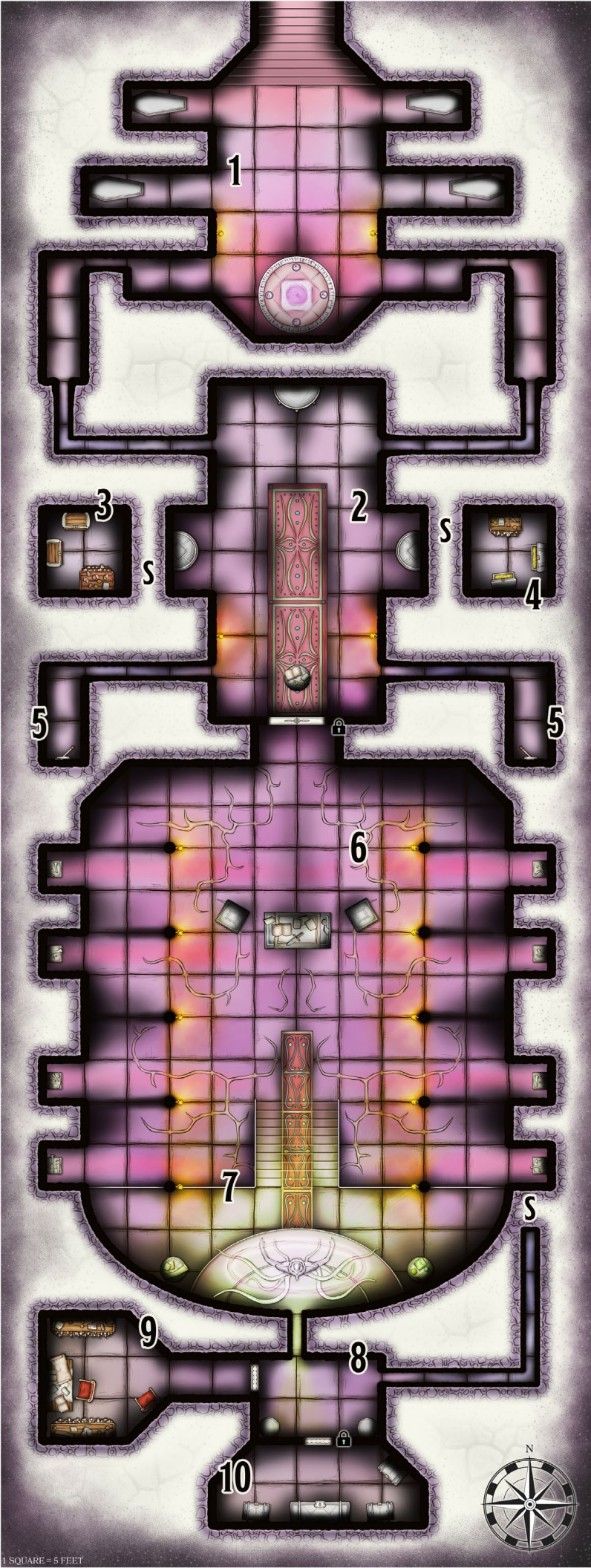
The following features correspond to the Avatar of Woe's temple in the Material Plane, areas 1 to 10.

**Light.** Some areas feature magical sconces with *continual flame* spells. The magic fizzles out if removed.

**Secret Doors.** Pulling cleverly-hidden brick-buttons causes sections of the walls to slide inward and reveal narrow passages to other areas (DC 15 Investigation).

**Locked Doors.** Marked with a lock icon, two doors feature high-end locking systems (DC 20 Thieves' Tools). The gate in area 2 can be opened by pulling the levers in both areas 5 too. The key to area 10 is lost, however.

**Magical Auras.** A *detect magic* spell reveals the arcane footprint of the avatar in area 7. This strong magical aura can be perceived from as far as 300 feet.



## 1. ANTECHAMBER OF GUARDIANS

Four stone sarcophagi in alcoves flank an intricate magic circle by the far end of the antechamber.

A self-serving mage wished to add this chamber a century ago to keep the avatar protected from would-be explorers. He wanted to keep the avatar for himself. Alas, his consciousness was split into four parts and placed in the four golems in the stone enclosures so that he could be in the avatar's presence and service for eternity.

**Merciless Guardians.** The sarcophagi contain four **clay golems**. Each golem has a third of its normal hit points. The golems fight fiercely and show no mercy. If destroyed, they reform after the next full moon.

**Runes.** The runes in the magic circle can be used with a *circle of teleportation* spell. A mage knows that teleporting into the temple using this circle costs each teleported creature 5 years of their lifetime (DC 18 Arcana).

## 2. THE LOCKED THRESHOLD

The steel doors by the far wall are decorated with convoluted engravings of strange landscapes.

A person once wished for deadly traps and eternal guardians to keep the avatar's hall safe. He was killed by the undying guardians when he attempted to leave.

**Ephemeral Guardians.** Six **shadows** and two **wraiths** emerge from the walls and rob any trespassers' life force. If destroyed, they reform after the next full moon.

## 3. WEST VAULT

A man wished for a secure vault to keep his valuables safe and got trapped with his treasure for eternity.

**Treasure.** The room contains the man's remains, 3,500 gp, 7,000 sp, a *+1 longsword*, and a *horn of blasting*.

## 4. EAST VAULT

A scholar wished for his belongings to be kept in a vault. The avatar considered his body to be a possession and everything was turned into raw materials and stored.

**Treasure.** The room contains 2,400 gp and numerous flasks of raw ingredients. Enough to constitute a body.

## 5. THE CLOCKWORK LEVERS

Pulling both levers opens the gate to area 6. However, pulling each lever causes the narrow hallway next to it to close shut, trapping the operator within. The chamber then fills with water for 1 hour before resetting, potentially drowning anyone within. A person with the right tools and implements can disarm the device to re-open the way back to area 2 (DC 18 Thieves' Tools).



## 6. THE GREAT HALL OF WOE

A glowing, 15-foot-tall sculpture of a faceless humanoid with eight tentacles floats by the far end of the hall. Its eyeless gaze causes deep discomfort and commands the attention of all creatures.

Eight funerary plinths in alcoves to the east and west bear the bodily remains of those who built this hall thousands of years ago. They considered themselves the progeny and most loyal followers of the ethereal avatar.

**Surrogate Progeny.** Six **wights** reform from the ancient remains and challenge any trespasser to a fight to the death. The undead are sentient and allow anyone to step back and abandon the temple forever. No one can make a petition to the avatar before dealing with them. If destroyed, they reform after the next full moon.

## 7. THE AVATAR OF WOE

The strange entity is immune to all damage and magic from the Material Plane. Creatures coming within 5 feet of the quasi-living, floating statue take 10d6 radiant damage per round. A creature can make a wish to the Avatar of Woe once per year (see **Development**). To request a wish, the petitioner must stand behind the stone table in area 6 and word their wish. They only have one shot at precisely stating whatever it is they desire. The Avatar of Woe acknowledges a wish with a faint, respectful nod.

## 8. THE BACKROOM

The backroom can be reached from the secret passage or by a narrow way behind the avatar. However, anyone crossing it takes radiant damage from the avatar.

## 9. THE BUILDERS' LIBRARY

A *detect magic* spell reveals an abjuration aura that protects this chamber from the passage of time. The archive contains literature and journals of the ancient civilization that first interacted with the Avatar of Woe. Spending 1 hour reviewing the documents reveals that they were a mix of elves and humans. The ancients revered the avatar and formed a religion around its worship.

There are accurate accounts of people who wished for all kinds of things. They had their words twisted out of their original meaning. These people knew that the Avatar of Woe had to be treated with respect. They believed one should think carefully before putting their trust and their livelihood in the avatar's hands. Many perished or saw their lives ruined by their greed and overconfidence.

## 10. THE AVATAR'S HOLD

The temple visitors didn't dare touch the treasure here. They wrongly believed the Avatar of Woe would retaliate.

**Treasure.** The chests contain 12,000 sp, a collection of silverware (3,000 gp), a *+1 spear*, and a *portable hole*.

## DEVELOPMENT

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds. Each character and NPC present is free to ask the Avatar of Woe for something. It works like a *wish* spell but the avatar is bound to twist their words to the worst interpretation. All wishes come with a terrible drawback but the players can ameliorate the outcome by carefully wording their desires. A badly-worded wish to the Avatar of Woe may well cause the end of someone's adventuring career.



# CRYPT BELOW THE TREE

Level 5

They went mad and restless! We ignore what corrupted them but they must be dealt with!

Tribe Leader

## BACKGROUND LORE

**THE NUMEROUS CULTURES** and communities in the world are different from each other because of their traditions. Millenarian customs acquire more strength, sentimental meaning, and philosophical depth with every generation. Some people are extremely proud of their traditions; they devote their lives to the preservation of a certain custom or practice. Alas, this is not always the case. When people stop caring, they tend to forget rituals or rites that once were crucial to their culture.

## THE TREE-BARK TRIBE

**DEEP IN THE** woods beyond the Western Plains lives a large community of druids. Their tribe does not judge the heritage of those who wish to join them. There are humans, elves, gnomes, and even a few halflings and half-orcs in their numbers. A three-hundred-year-old village that barely subsists thanks to the druids' long lifespans.

However, they understand death is part of life. Some of them have perished from natural causes. Others died while on duty, fighting to save a forest from evil hags, or protecting a farmers' hamlet from werewolves. The Tree-Bark Tribe buries their dead in a crypt beneath a magical tree with an elder's face, found within their forest. Tradition has dictated this custom for centuries.

## A NEW ERA

**IT HAS BEEN** ten years since Wise Leaf, the former leader of the druids, left this world. His successor, Soothing Blossom, is a strong-willed half-elf with a different worldview. Her position is not questioned but her revolutionary ideas and Wise Leaf's old-fashioned methods are too contradictory to ignore. Ten years under Soothing Blossom's guidance have changed the Tree-Bark Tribe.

## A BROKEN TRADITION

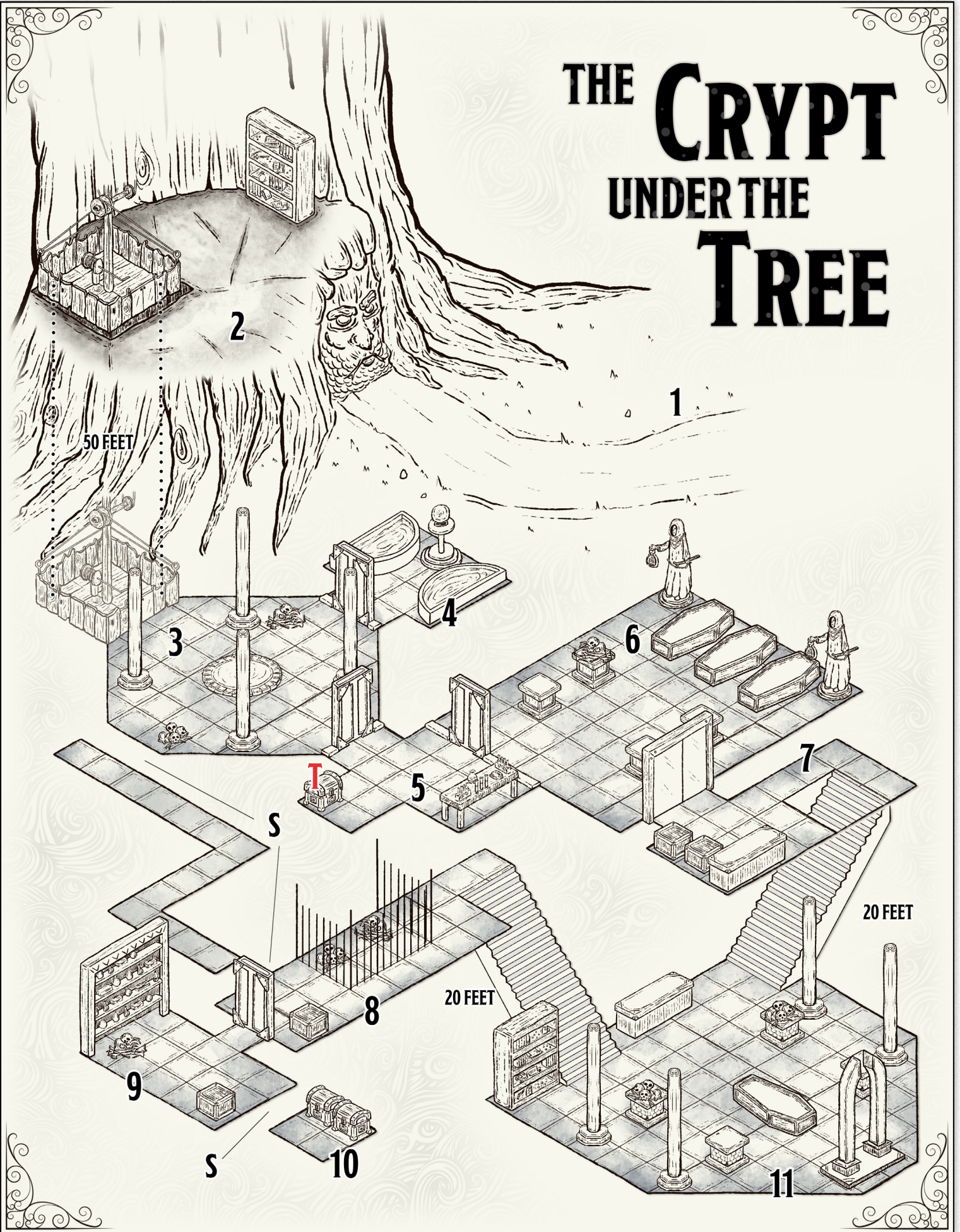
**THERE HAVE NOT** been many burial ceremonies in the 300 years of history of the Tree-Bark tribe. All their dead rest in the same place. But for the past ten years, Soothing Blossom dictated that they would not continue the old-fashioned ritual of interring the dead in the crypt.

Her decade as the leader has had two deaths. Both of their comrades were put on a boat, accompanied by their belongings with hay and twigs bathed in oil and tree sap. The new ritual consisted in sending them adrift on the river and shooting a burning arrow at the rafts. Their incinerated bodies became ashes and fused with the soil again, waiting to be reborn. No one questions Soothing Blossom's methods but many harbor doubts. Most other things she does bolster the tribe's position, power, wealth, and numbers. She simply does things differently from Wise Leaf. But some things should better stay as they were. She ignored how powerful traditions can be.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**WISE LEAF AND** many other traditional druids interred in the crypt came back from the dead. Somehow, Wise Leaf learned that Soothing Blossom broke their tradition. He waits for and demands the bodies of the two fallen comrades. The dead attack the Tree-Bark Tribe each night. They reform even after destroyed. Soothing Blossom and the druids defend themselves the best they can but the attacks become more powerful each time they occur. Two druid scouts noticed the dead emerge from the sacred crypt beneath the tree. Their anger and rage blind them, causing them to attack their former druid friends each night. Soothing Blossom sends hundreds of *animal messengers* to reach the eyes of warriors or friends of the woods who can help them.

# THE CRYPT UNDER THE TREE



# FEATURES OF THE CRYPT

The following features correspond to the tree with a face and the underground crypt below it, areas 1 to 11.

**Light.** All areas of the crypt feature sconces with *continual flame* spells. If removed, the magic fades.

**Smells and Sounds.** A magical sweet smell of lavender and cinnamon permeates the crypt. The druids placed these incantations a long time ago. However, the grunts and angry growls of the dead can be heard too.

## 1. THE TREE WITH A FACE

The thick woods recede and give way to a grassy clearing. At its center, a massive tree with a face observes the world around it from its eyes of bark.

The characters must traverse the depths of the forest to reach this area. The Tree-Bark Tribe does not come. Soothing Blossom explains it is not in their customs to come here anymore. They wish to respect the dead.

The druid leader lies (DC 18 Insight). Deep inside, she is afraid of what she has done. She does not dare look at their comrades or Wise Leaf's undead manifestations.

**Entrance.** The magical tree opens its mouth to form a door whenever the characters approach to let them in. This is Wise Leaf's doing. He wants them to delve inside.

## 2. THE WOODEN ELEVATOR

The hollow interior of the tree features a few pieces of wooden furniture and a wooden elevator.

The elevator supports up to 5 Medium creatures. The pulley-powered device descends 50 feet underground.

**Wise Leaf.** The former leader of the druid warns the characters during their descent. A spectral voice says: *"We are the ones who were wronged. Leave now, or feel the rage of the real members of the Tree-Bark Druids!"*

## 3. RITUAL CHAMBER

When the characters reach this area, three **shadows** and three **specters** come out of the dark and attack them.

**Secret Corridor.** There is a pushable brick by the west wall. This passage takes to area 8 (DC 17 Investigation).

## 4. CHAMBER OF TRUTH

The liquid in the ponds used to be holy water. The dead's anger and hatred turned it black and smelly. If the characters interact with the crystal ball, Wise Leaf (**wraith mage**) can see them and can target one or many of them with an attack or a spell each round. A *dispel magic* spell rends the crystal ball inert and useless.

## 5. ANTECHAMBER

Mundane tools and objects lie on a table by the south wall. A fake chest rests on a small alcove to the west.

**Trap.** The chest shoots poison darts at anyone that touches it. The darts cause 1d4 poison damage and the victim is poisoned for 1 hour (DC 16 Constitution).

## 6. BURIAL CHAMBER

Two statues holding lamps accompany three sarcophagi and four plinths. The remains of former Tree-Bark druids reform to protect this place.

The characters encounter three **wights** and four **skeletons** in this chamber. The dead fight until slain.

## 7. VESTIBULE

The crates and the stone container here have linens, old clothes, ceremonial robes, and mundane objects.

## 8. HOLDING CELL

Some druids in the past asked Wise Leaf about the purpose of this cell. He just said it was for tomb-robbers. But he also said the iron bars had another use for him. He never said anything to raise more suspicions, though.

**Trap.** If a character falls from area 5, they can use sheer force to bend the bars (DC 20 Strength) and escape. Otherwise, the key to open the cell is in area 10.

## 9. CHAMBER OF REST

Dozens of wooden containers, leather bags, and stone boxes adorn the walls of this columbarium.

The spirits in this area remain calm if the characters keep their hands to themselves. Four **shadows** and six **specters** emerge if they lay but a finger on their ashes.

A secret button slides a section of the wall (DC 17 Investigation). The revealed passage leads to area 10.

**Treasure.** If the characters defeat all the undead in this area, they can freely pillage the place. There are 2,500 gp worth of small pieces of jewelry and some random coinage. If they search even further, they find a *wand of web* buried under the ashes (DC 19 Investigation).

## 10. SECRET VAULT

The location of this vault was only known by Wise Leaf and now Soothing Blossom. But she does not want anything to do with their ancient traditions anymore. She forwent everything kept in here to forge a new era.

**Treasure.** The chests contain 3,000 gp worth of coins and small gems. There is a *+2 studded leather armor*, and ten, level 1 to 3, random druid *spell scrolls*.

## 11. WISE LEAF'S RESTING PLACE

Wise Leaf's sarcophagus rests before an arch-shaped stone altar. Four niches columns form a symmetrical pattern across the domed chamber.

Due to their long lifespans, Wise Leaf was the first tribe leader of the Tree-Bark druids to be interred in the crypt. Thus, the ornate place of honor he holds.

**Wise Leaf.** The spirit of the former druid leader welcomes the characters. Six undead druids coalesce (**shadows**) from the dark corners at the same time Wise Leaf (**wraith mage**) starts to speak. The spectral voice says:

*"I must apologize. Our hateful minds were not ready for life after death. We have not treated you as welcomed visitors. But hear me out, strong warriors, for you have been deceived. 'Tis I, Wise Leaf, who was the leader of the Tree Bark Druids in life. Soothing Blossom aims to destroy the history we built for hundreds of years. Change our ways. We cannot find eternal rest knowing that our fallen comrades are subject to pagan funerary rituals. Help us stop her and save our traditions, strangers!"*

**Treasure.** Wise Leaf's sarcophagus contains a *staff of the woodlands*, a *+1 scimitar*, a set of three *immovable rods*, and a *ring of the ram*. The characters can take the magic items stored here if they stay loyal to Soothing Blossom and defeat the undead here (see **Development**).

## DEVELOPMENT

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

### OLD WAYS MUST DIE

**THE CHARACTERS BELIEVE** Wise Leaf did wrong by approaching his problems with violence. They stay loyal to Soothing Blossom and fulfill the job they were hired to do in the first place. The characters defeat Wise Leaf and the rest of the undead. Once outside, Soothing Blossom and the rest of the druids shut the tree-tomb forever. She allows the characters to keep everything they found inside. The Tree-Bark Druids' new era shall continue.

### TRADITION PREVAILS!

**DESPITE BEING WELCOMED** with violence and anger. The characters side with Wise Leaf and the offended dead druids after they hear what they have to say. The characters believe that Soothing Blossom is destroying a valuable custom. Wise Leaf tells the characters they can keep the relics in the crypt as long as they confront Soothing Blossom and convince her to change her ways, even by force. If the characters comply, the druid leader resists and fights back (the nature of this encounter is up to the GM's discretion). If beaten in combat, she surrenders. The old ways shall be kept. Alas, she does not hide her anger at the characters' sordid betrayal. Soothing Blossom shall not forget their intrusion...



# STEALING IS NOT ALWAYS BAD

*“Borrowing” rules from other systems by Vladimir “El Vlado” Rodríguez*

Being the OG of all pen & paper RPG-dome is cool and all, but that doesn't mean Game Masters can't look elsewhere for inspiration or even rules. The following are a couple of examples of how to borrow and adapt rules to include in D&D.

## 1. APPEARANCE, STYLE, LUCK

*(Borrowed from Anima: Beyond Fantasy)*

A Spanish system focusing on an Anime-esque aesthetic and power level, Anima has some interesting rules that could work for D&D. Take **Appearance** for example. Their character creation includes attributes, albeit different ones from those of D&D. However, they have an extra one, **Appearance**, rolled separately from the base ones. Why? Because while many players would like to have a character that looks good, we don't need another dump stat. So, for D&D, we can include **Appearance** as a separate ability score, one that can be rolled or assigned by the players, as the Game Master decides. One can even make races more different by assigning specific ways to roll it (or choose it). For example:

**Elves:**  $10+2d4$  (12-18 range, 15 average)

**Humans:**  $6+2d6$  (8-18 range, 13 average)

**Orcs:**  $3d6$  (3-18 range, 10 average)

OK, so now we have an ability score. What can we do with it? Like other attributes, the Game Master may decide to substitute a skill modifier with that of **Appearance**. A Perform check where the dancers are given little time to show their steps might use **Appearance**, as would a check for background performers who have to look good and little else. Another use could be a Persuasion check where one's looks bring the attention of a guard. Remember creativity is a crucial part of adapting.

A skill borrowed from Anima is **Style**, which is based on **Appearance**. It might be used by players to just look cool (like getting an intimidating scar after receiving a critical hit, or impressing bystanders with a show of martial might); this skill can be a freebie for PCs, fomenting showmanship in every session. Make it a rule of thumb!

Another non-standard ability score is **Luck**. This one, unlike **Appearance**, has a more tangible effect on characters. (**Luck** works like other ability scores and is increased by leveling up. Its use is similar to the Lucky feat, so consider removing this feat from your game if you are implementing **Luck** mechanics. Or find a creative way to make the two work together). For every  $+1$  the **Luck** score gives to a PC, they gain one Luck point that can be used as described under the Lucky feat. A PC could also use a Luck point to cancel disadvantage on a roll or remove advantage on the foe's roll. The GM is encouraged to describe the lucky situations (a warrior hits a branch or the wall, impeding the attack, etc.). And, in the case of an Unlucky character (one with a Luck penalty by having a score of 8 or less), the GM can either choose when the Unlucky point is used, giving automatic disadvantage to any roll made by the player; it can be on recurrent situations, like all Initiative checks or similar rolls.

Other possible non-standard ability scores are **Honor**, **Fame**, and **Infamy**, which could start low and increase depending on the characters' exploits and experience.



## 2. STUNT DIE

*(Borrowed from Dragon Fist RPG)*

Dragon Fist was an anomaly. Originally released between the dusk of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and the dawn of 3<sup>rd</sup> as a series of free PDFs on the TSR website, the “Kung Fu D&D” included many rules that were ahead of their time; they kind of ended on 5<sup>th</sup> edition! Dragon Fist did not use THAC0, nor did it use BAB from the editions mentioned. Instead, each class had a combat bonus (ranging from +0 for wizards to +2 for warriors), and if the player chose to perform a **Might Stunt** (see below), he could add his **Might Stunt Die** to the attack and damage rolls, making it a very dynamic add-on to AD&D combat.

In 5<sup>th</sup> edition, each character has a **Proficiency Bonus**, and there is an optional rule to change that static bonus into a “**Proficiency Die**”. This optional rule works very similar to Dragon Fist’s **Stunt Die**. A way to include it in D&D is to give specific “**Stunts**” to each character, limiting it to one type per character. Once per long rest, during a PC’s turn, the player can decide that the character devotes completely to a task, adding the **Proficiency Die** on top of the **Proficiency Bonus**, but forfeiting the **Proficiency Bonus** for anything else (be it Saving Throws, Skill checks, etc.). This way, a PC can have an all-or-nothing moment or secure an action via an expendable resource. However, to limit the type of stunts a PC can make, it is recommended that each PC has access to only 1 or 2; a good option is to give access to 2 **Stunts**, tied to the same scores that get a saving throw proficiency for each class. Once again, it is up to you how to best adjust this rule to your setting and mechanics. Here are the 6 types of **Stunts** and the effects they have:

Score	Stunt	Effects
<b>Strength</b>	Might	<i>Bonus to 1 attack roll and its damage, Strength feats like breaking a door or bursting out of restraints.</i>
<b>Dexterity</b>	Agility	<i>Bonus to attacks that use Dexterity, AC, Initiative during one round of combat, running over people’s heads.</i>
<b>Constitution</b>	Fortitude	<i>Bonus HP for the round, walking through fire, resisting pain.</i>
<b>Intelligence</b>	Savvy	<i>Any single roll (but only one) for the round, solving puzzles, deciphering codes.</i>
<b>Wisdom</b>	Insight	<i>Initiative for one combat, resisting temptation, any single saving throw.</i>
<b>Charisma</b>	Charm	<i>Fast-talking, verbal trickery, drawing the crowds.</i>

## 3. MOMENTUM AND THREAT

*(Borrowed from Dune RPG)*

A new RPG based on one of the hottest sci-fi franchises right now is Dune. It includes some rules that can help and hinder the PCs interestingly and dynamically. When a character over-succeeds on a task, they get an expendable resource called **Momentum**, which can make other tasks easier. However, using **Momentum** generates **Threat**, an expendable resource for the Game Master to make things more interesting in an adventure. In D&D, a character that rolls a natural 20 could generate 1 point of Momentum, with a maximum of points stored equal to their proficiency bonus. Later, the player can use **Momentum** to get advantage to any roll and generate a point of **Threat** for a communal pool for the party. A Game Master can use the generated **Threat** by saying something like “I’m expending 1 **Threat** point to bring reinforcements to the guards” or “I’m spending one **Threat** point to bring an enemy from one of your backstories to the adventure”. This type of give-and-take makes adventures more exciting and gives them a kind of dangerous-karma feeling. This is a great resource!

If the players are really into it, the Game Master can rule that any roll that surpasses the target number by 10 or more generates **Momentum**, or that players can give their **Momentum** to their peers if they feel like it. Be sure to set a limit so the game stays coherent.

These three examples are not the only things you can “steal” from other systems. These and many other rules abound from other RPGs can really enhance and modify your D&D experience, so try them and experiment as much as you can. Your players’ opinions will always help!

# THE TEMPLE OF REBIRTH

Level 5

The body is just a vessel to contain the soul.  
A soul can be replaced and moved with ease...

Ancient Draconic Scroll

## BACKGROUND LORE

**HUMANS ARE RESILIENT** creatures ready to fight and endure all kinds of situations, but the one fight they know for sure they shall never win is the battle against death. No one can avoid dying. Some live longer, some perish sooner. But the steady and inevitable approach of one's demise is what gives life meaning. Or so the wise say...

However, there is a place in the Material Realm built by an ancient draconic race that defies the grasp of death's embrace. Death cannot be truly stopped but the artifact that dragons built manages to delay the ineluctable fate. In their ancient language, the dragons called it the Altar of Rebirth. It is an arcane device capable of restoring the decaying body and replacing the soul within. However, as all magical things are wont to do, there is a steep price to pay for a little more time among the living.

## A PACT OF BORROWED LIFE

**THE INTELLECTUAL AUTHOR** of the Temple of Rebirth was a silver dragon named Draazigatz. He envisioned a world in which beings with unfinished business could have a second chance at achieving their goals. To make the magic power in the Altar of Rebirth self-sustaining, he crafted a magical pact that bound all those revived in the temple to inescapable service. First as guardians, and then as an energy source that powers the Altar of Rebirth. Draazigatz perished and was revived in the altar he created. After his revival, the dragon dedicated his life to perfecting the arcane device so that it would withstand the passage of time and become eternal.

After his second death centuries later, Draazigatz became a fearsome guardian in the temple until his very life energy was used to power the altar and continue the cycle of self-preservation for others in need.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

**THE COUNT'S SON**, Gilbert d'Acalli, perished two weeks ago in a violent altercation with a petty criminal. The family mourns bitterly but the count himself summons the characters for a mission of extreme secrecy.

The count explains that his son had already passed away six years ago due to illness. After his first death, the court mage suggested bringing the corpse to an occult, temple in the countryside. With the mage's aid, Gilbert was brought back to life. He spent 6 years fighting injustice and defending the weak and dispossessed. Now his soul is trapped in the temple. The count offers a reward of 2,000 gp to explore the temple and free Gilbert's soul.

## FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE

The following features correspond to the Temple of Rebirth dungeon map, areas 1 to 11.

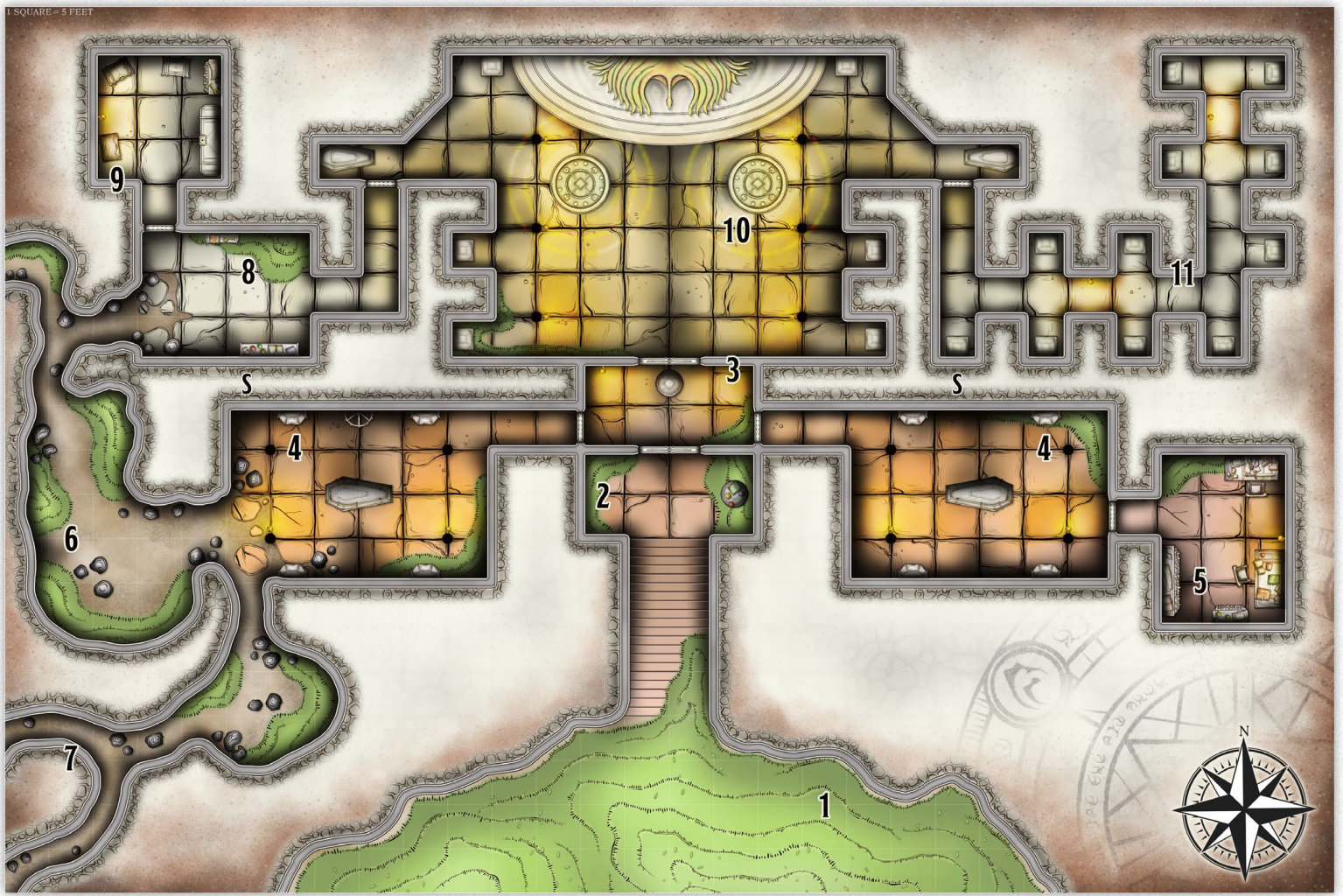
**Light.** Some underground areas feature sconces with *continual flame* spells. The magic fades out if removed. All light present turns blue when area 10 is activated.

**Doors.** All thresholds are locked (DC 16 Thieves Tools). They magically reset every 24 hours. Destroyed or forced doors are restored magically at dawn.

**Magical Auras.** A *detect magic* spell reveals traces of conjuration magic coming from area 10.

**Pact of Rebirth.** Those brought back to life in the Altar of Rebirth (area 10) must state a clear purpose for their borrowed time. Once their purpose is fulfilled or after they utterly fail and die again, their souls are bound to the Temple of Rebirth. This binding contract causes them to become eternal undead guardians charged with the protection of the draconic temple.





## 1. TEMPLE SURROUNDINGS

The Temple of Rebirth is located a four-day ride from d'Acalli County, in a region of the country where rolling hills and sparsely forested areas abound.

Those who live in nearby communities know the temple's location and considered it unhallowed ground. The characters hear cautionary tales about not approaching the entrance. Many an explorer has lost their lives prying too close to the shunned Temple of Rebirth.

**Wandering Guards.** There is a 3-in-6 chance that the characters are spotted by a patrol of four **skeletons** and three **zombies** protecting the temple grounds.

## 2. ENTRANCE

A flight of stone stairs leads down to the temple's entrance. The doors are carved with the opulent image of a flying bird covered in flames and sparks.

The locked doors open once a day to allow the undead guards to come in and out. If the characters stake out the entrance, this occurs in 2d6 hours. Getting in this way also allows momentary access to both areas 4 while the doors are open. The bird in flames depicted in the double doors is a phoenix (DC 14 History or Arcana).

## 3. ANTECHAMBER

The characters can open the doors to area 10 by standing on the engraved circle next to them (see below). The doors to the east and west feature convoluted engravings of a great dragon flying across the sky.

**Payment with Blood.** The north door to area 10 opens when a creature stands on the 1-foot tall circle by the threshold. The creature bleeds and drops to half their hit points to produce the energy needed to open the gate.

## 4. CRYPT OF GUARDIANS

Four standing sarcophagi surround an ornate, stone, enclosure in the middle of the chamber. A low-pitched hum comes from beneath the floor.

Those bound by the Pact of Rebirth first come to these chambers to begin their eternal service to the shrine. The undead are sentient and understand their predicament but can do nothing about it. They are bound to the pact they underwent after being revived in area 10.

**The Temple Guardians.** Two **ghasts**, two **ghouls**, and one **wight** emerge from their enclosures and fight trespassers unless they come to use the altar in area 10. In that case, the undead show them the way to the altar.

## 5. THE DRACONIAN ARCHIVE

The warm room contains two working desks and a bookshelf packed to the brim with documents.

During his life extension, the dragon Draazigatz used his polymorphic ability to become human-sized and work on the archive. He created two *invisible servants* that work tirelessly here. The servants record the names and physical descriptions of all that are brought for revival. The archive contains 846 entries that date back thousands of years. The servants reform after 24 hours if destroyed. They exist for as long as the altar is operational.

**Treasure.** The stone bookshelf contains 1,500 gp worth of silver figurines and trinkets. There are three *potions of healing* and one *potion of resistance*.

## 6. CAVE OF TROGLODYTES

A tribe of nomad denizens of the Underworld dug their way into the Temple of Rebirth a few months ago. A few of their explorers delved into the temple but were driven off by the undead guardians. They settled down half a mile from the temple in a large network of cave tunnels.

**Reptilian Spelunkers.** When the characters explore the natural caverns, there is a 3-in-6 chance they run into a band of eight aggressive **trogloodyte** scavengers.

## 7. NARROW TUNNELS

The convoluted tunnel network reaches the troglodyte community before slanting downward to the hidden Underworld. The characters can access the abyss here.

## 8. RUINED CHAMBER

A hunching, lone ghoul sits in a corner. Its leg is chained to a stone shelf. The partially collapsed chamber contains little else of value or interest.

Gilbert d'Acalli (**ghoul**) chained himself to the shelf to avoid attacking others when they visit the temple. Against his will, he tries to break free of the chain to attack the characters when they arrive but has no success.

Gilbert explains that a strong magical bond shall keep him here in service to the altar until there comes a time when his life force shall power the device itself. He is not happy with this outcome but he was aware of it when he was revived. The man is resigned to his grim fate.

## 9. GREAT VAULT OF DRAAZIGATZ

The great vault remains closed to this day despite numerous robbing attempts (DC 20 Thieves' Tools).

**Treasure.** The chests contain 2,500 gp and 7,420 sp. There is one *potion of healing* and a *+1 shield*.

## 10. ALTAR OF REBIRTH

The golden effigy of a great phoenix on a raised dais dominates the far end of the domed hall. Two ornate magic circles glow before the flaming effigy.

Placing the corpse of a creature on one of the circles activates the altar. The creature's soul is aware of the binding contract and must choose a purpose to dedicate its second life to. They have the freedom to refuse and remain dead. Upon accepting, the corpse vanishes and the creature reappears alive in the second magic circle.

**Altar Guardians.** Two **wraiths** and four **skeletons** protect the altar and attack trespassers unless they have come to use the altar and revive a creature.

## 11. TEMPORARY COLUMBARIUM

As the undead in the Crypts of Guardians grow weary and weak, their remains are magically moved to this burial place. This is the last step of their existence. When the altar is used, it uses the life energy of all stored here to bring life and create the binding Pact of Revival.

## DEVELOPMENT

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds. Gilbert d'Acalli is subject to the Pact of Revival and cannot be helped without destroying the altar itself. Such action causes all undead in the temple to be released from service. Their souls may rest in peace instead of being spent by the altar. Of course, the characters may find this course of action against their interest. Alas, they may one day need to use the Altar of Rebirth to revive one of their own.

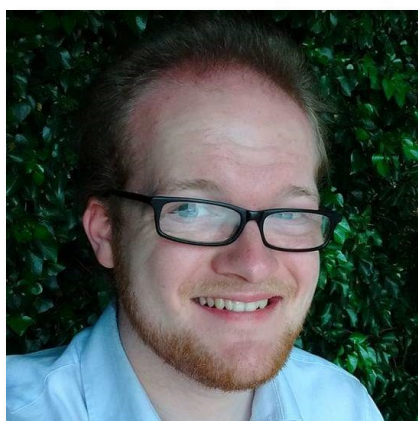




## ALEX RINEHART

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Alex Rinehart (he/him) runs monthly one-shots of various indie games for friends and strangers alike. For the past 2 years, this has been in his discord server, [The Hartland](#). If you'd like to try a new game, stop on by! When he's not running games, Alex is usually playtesting his own, or writing adventures for the systems he loves. Last year he released [Gratitude: A Horror Game](#), over a dozen classes and hunts for the Slayers RPG, and launched a Kickstarter for *Cyberrats*, an upcoming game about cybernetic rats trying to save the world from an alien invasion. You can find Alex on [Twitter](#), or his previously published games and adventures on [Itch](#)



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AJ Freyley (he/him) is a UK-based editor, writer, and Dungeon Master. After writing his first adventure with the Storytelling Collective [A Goblin Did It! - How the Random Encounter Table Was Born](#), he landed the role of editor for the [Uncaged: Goddesses](#) anthology. When he's not distracted with his day job as an engineer, he can be found planning or running D&D, following the latest MtG card previews, or trying to convince his friends to play more *Root*.

You can find more of his mechanically quirky monsters and magic items on [Twitter](#) and in [Trove Zine](#), Nottingham's newest TTRPG zine.

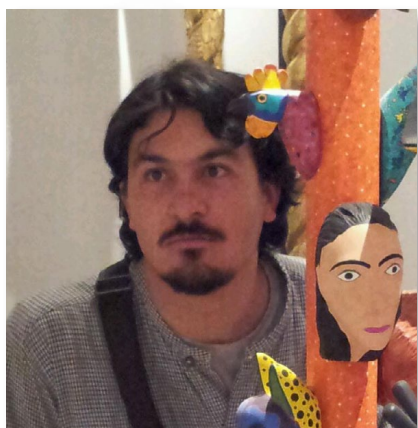


## DANA FLOBERG

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Find them on [Twitter](#) or check out their [Website](#) for more storytelling shenanigans.



## VLADIMIR "EL VLADO" RODRIGUEZ

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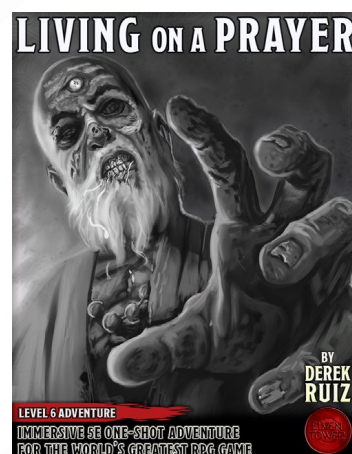
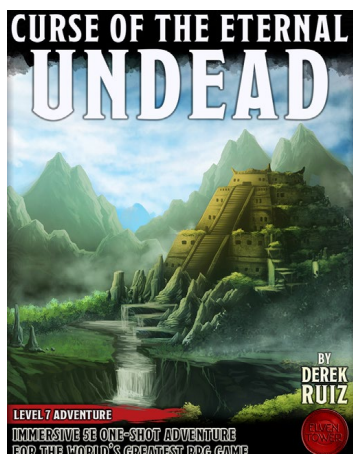
Vladimir "El Vlado" Rodriguez. Full-time teacher and lifetime nerd. Obscure RPG systems connoisseur, MtG player, SNES fan-boy, Fighting games aficionado, and fantasy-fiction reader.

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