

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 7

8 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
ROLL20 MAPS



THE BEST ADVENTURES FOR THE BEST GMS

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About this Magazine

Dungeon Vault Magazine is all about providing interesting ideas and lore to DMs and storytellers. Within this issue, you will find varied adventure ideas.

These short modules do not stick to a unified template of sections. Instead, they are organically created and follow their own pace. The types of modules you can expect are city/town settings, regional settings, dungeons, outdoor locations, encounter maps, and one-page adventures.

The modules are written with 5th ed. OGL in mind but rules are often left to a minimum. Most adventures are appropriate for low to mid-level (Levels 1 to 10) adventuring parties. We include a note at the beginning of each adventure with a ballpark estimation of party level and playing time.

As the DM, you are free to change or modify any or all the information found here. NPC names and settlement names are the first you should consider changing to accommodate any homebrew-world lore. All material in this release is intended personal use.

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The book said I'd be able to see spiders up close! I never thought this would happen!

Arthimesh

AN ARACHNID MISTAKE



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

BACKGROUND LORE



Knowledge is not easy to acquire. Those courageous enough to expand their mental horizons must prepare to endure the unknown. It requires true determination to understand that despite the latent uncertainty that magic research bears, enlightenment comes first. Breaking the rules becomes an everyday event for truth seekers.

Such is the life of Arthimesh Stolski, scientist, researcher, and mage; in that order. It was until the age of 40 that Arthimesh chose to study the arcane arts. Before that, the determined researcher spent decades traveling the world. He studied several cultures and races. He learned different kinds of medicine practices, applying natural and magical approaches. He has witnessed many things that are usually only read about in books.

The Stolskis's are a not-so-distant relative of the crown. Young Arthimesh always had the gold incentives to fund his little tours between countries. When his parents passed away, he repurposed the family crypts under their home. He desecrated his family's history to preserve the world's. With a clear objective of creating a sanctuary for knowledge, he forwent his bloodline in the name of science and research.

He moved everything he had gathered through his years as a researcher in the crypts and organized it in sections. He bought new doors and locks to create chambers. He refurnished some of the rooms and he even categorized the libraries by areas. The real work of a perfectionist.

Some years after that, Arthimesh's repository blooms in radiance. Young minds looking to expand their perspectives of the world joined Arthimesh in his quest to make his repository the grandest haven for knowledge. They

help their mentor keep the place in order and in good shape.

However, Arthimesh's magic mastery is far from decent. It isn't uncommon for his followers to see him fail miserably when attempting a magic trick. He achieves what he wants eventually, the teleporting circle in his repository is a clear indication of it. But one day, while he observed the reaction of different kinds of spiders to magic spells, he committed a grave mistake. He misread the arcane runic description of an enlarging spell, and thinking he would be able to enlarge the details his eyes could see, he performed a ritual that affected all the spiders in the room. Enormous insect eyes surrounded Arthimesh as he found himself paralyzed in awe.

Arthimesh was lucky to escape unscathed. He ran to the exit as fast as he could. Two of the acolytes couldn't make it and became arachnid dinner. The rest reached their mentor at the exit and they closed the door behind them. It has been almost a day and the city hasn't answered their plea for help.

NPCs

ARTHIMESH STOLSKI

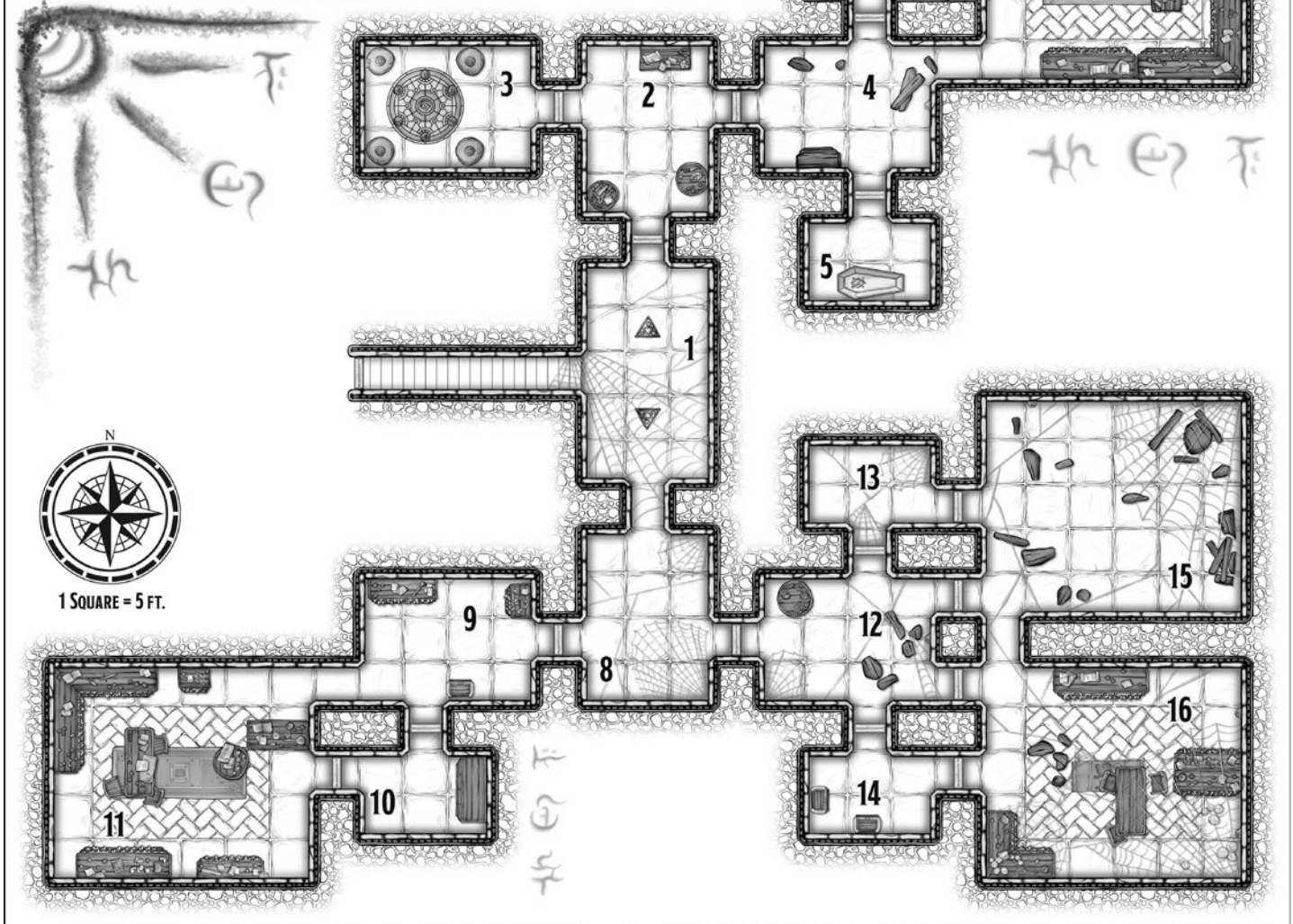
Chaotic neutral human (age 53)

It is remarkable to see that Arthimesh has no bald spots at his age. He preserves the body of a thirty-year-old. He wears comfortable tunics and leather shoes. He has a piercing stare and his eyes convey wisdom and experience.

Personality Trait. "If my word exchange with someone doesn't affect me or the repository, I don't take it seriously."

Ideal. "My repository shall become a pinnacle of knowledge."

ARTHIMESH'S REPOSITORY

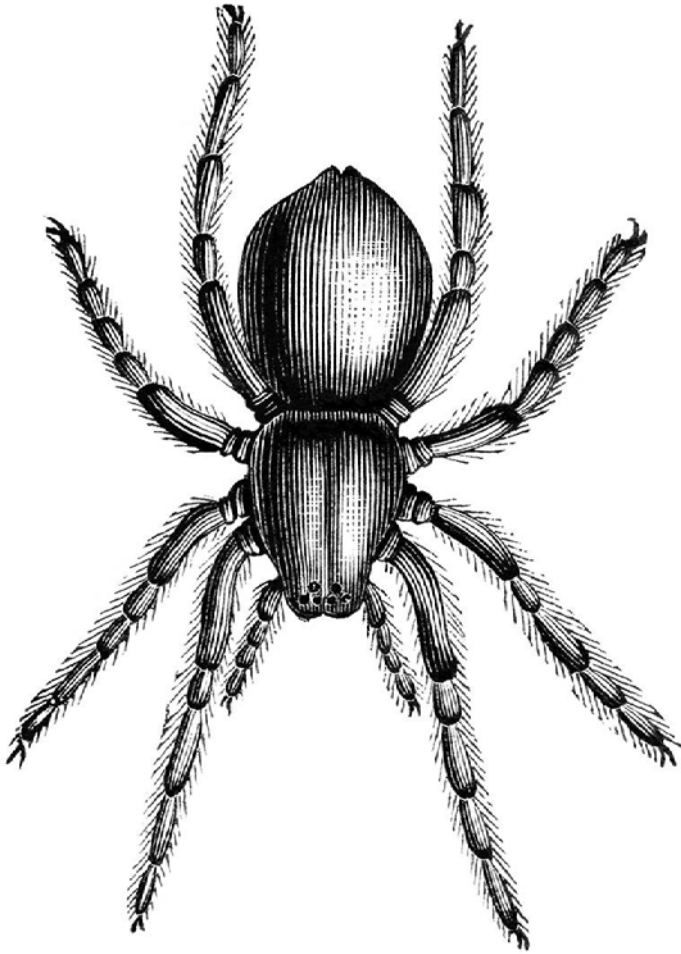


Bond. “My life is here, at my repository.”

Flaw. “Knowledge is more important than people.”

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- The heroes arrive in the city looking for Arthimesh's repository. They were told that its libraries contain the knowledge of ages. They learn the repository is in trouble the moment they ask around.
- The adventurers hear a rumor about two corpses that were exhumed. They belonged to an old mage and a renowned historian. Their tombs were desecrated and their bodies were stolen. Further investigation reveals a couple of citizens are suspicious of the gatherings at Stolski's residence. They believe they might have something to do with the missing corpses.
- A teleporting spell goes wrong and the party appears inside Arthimesh's repository (area 3). They have no clue where they are and the teleporting circle stops working after their mishap. They must figure a way out of their dilemma and meet Arthimesh.
- The leader of the guard has summoned the heroes to hire them for a particular job. He tells them about Arthimesh's repository and his plea for help. But he also explains that the church believes the old man performs dark rituals with his young acolytes, so the guard doesn't want to get involved and lose their stand with the commonfolk. He is certain Arthimesh has the means to pay for their abilities.
- The major knows about the heroes' presence and reputation. He summons them and explains he requires their abilities. He offers 100 gold pieces for the job. He suspects Arthimesh's repository is a place of satanic worship and forbidden rituals. He needs the adventurers to go, introduce themselves and search the place on behalf of the crown. If illegal activities are, in fact, being performed, the instruction is to apprehend Arthimesh and bring him to justice.



These hooks bring the heroes to Arthimesh doorstep. The old researcher is willing to pay 400 gold pieces to get rid of the nasty vermin infesting his repository. He dismisses any other topic or situation they wish to discuss with him and begs for understanding. He promises he can talk about whatever they want once his repository is safe and free of giant insects.

Note. In the case of the third adventure hook, if the characters dealt with all the spiders before meeting Arthimesh, when they step outside the repository, the researcher is accompanied by the hired muscle mentioned in the development section (see below).

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 16 correspond to the underground crypt in Stolski's residence.

Terrain. Stolski's family crypt's stone blocks flooring is in good shape. The libraries' floor was renewed less than two decades ago. All rooms infested by the spiders have webs (see below).

Doors. All doors and locks are regular quality and they are open unless stated otherwise.

Light. Every room in the repository has purple light sconces that illuminate the rooms at all times. The spiders have wrecked these devices in most of the rooms they are in. Those rooms are in complete darkness.

Spiderwebs. Rooms with webs in them are considered difficult terrain. This has no relation with the web ability of giant spiders, which must be ruled independently.

Smells and Sounds. The place has a permanent smell of leather and paper. The infestation of spiders creates a perturbing hissing sound that can be heard from adjacent rooms.

1. ENTRYWAY

The narrow stairs lead to a lobby. Two pyramid-shaped pedestals serve as decoration. Thick, sticky spiderweb strands travel from opposite side of the walls. Two **giant spiders** wait in the shadows. A passive Perception score of 17 or higher reveals the presence of the spiders when coming in. The door to area 2 is locked.

2. FOYER

A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock to enter this room with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check. Two small wooden tables feature some fruit and a knife, and a dagger with a cleaver. A desk by the north wall bears a couple of letters and some unfinished works on parchment. The room shows no sign of arachnids.

3. TELEPORTING CIRCLE

Four stone pillars stand around the magical runes inside red inscribed circles. The magic circle needs conjuration magic to bring people in or take them out.

4. ANTECHAMBER

This room is almost empty but for the lonely bookshelf. There are almost no books and nothing of interest in it. There are pieces of wood on the floor that don't appear to belong to any piece of furniture. A successful DC 14 Intelligence check infers someone was holding or transporting this and dropped it when the instruction to flee was heard. This information is not available if the adventurers arrived via the teleportation circle since they lack the necessary information to infer it.

5 AND 6. SARCOPHAGI

Both rooms contain a single white stone sarcophagus each. A *detect magic* spell reveals necromantic magic on them. The magic preserves the bodies so they don't decay further, and it eliminates their rotten smell. A passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals each sarcophagus has a small booklet. The notes in them describe quick thoughts and ideas. They have dates and the lengths of conversations had.

7. HISTORY ARCHIVES

Several bookshelves placed against the walls surround a pair of wooden tables. They contain a large amount of books and scrolls of historical content. There are whole treatises about various historical events and the role of several key individuals in them. The carpet with the depiction of the continent shines brightly under the magic purple light. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investiga-

tion) check reveals the official logs for the conversations with the people in the sarcophagi. The logs reveal that the two corpses were exhumed illegally some fortnights ago. Arthimesh is obsessed with knowing more and literally grave robbed both corpses. He performed the spell *Speak with the Dead* many times during the past few weeks.

8. SOUTH FOYER

This room has no furniture. It serves as the intersection joining both science and arcane libraries. Arthimesh likes this room to be empty. He says it allows him to think and feel the relation between both worlds, the scientific and the magical one. The door to area 9 is locked. There are and four **giant wolf spiders** in this room.

9. SCIENCE VESTIBULE

A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock to enter this room with a successful DC 13 Dexterity



check. There are so many science documents and papers that this room is like a B-section of the actual library (area 11). Two wooden bookshelves contain all there is to know about botanic and fauna. There are pictures of animals and plants from other continents and ages. The wooden chest contains old books and works on other scientific fields. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals a secret compartment in the chest. The door to area 10 is locked.

Treasure. There are two lapis lazulis and a small leather pouch with gold. All this has a collective value of 125 gold pieces. The chest also contains an unlit purple crystal like the ones lighting the repository. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it is necessary to decide on a magical word. A character can spend an action to imprint a new word that causes the crystal to shine as if the spell *light* were cast on it. The user can repeat the word to turn the crystal on and off at will by spending an action.

10. LOCKED SHELVES

A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock of any of the doors to enter this room with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check. A single bookshelf rests at the end of this room. Arthimesh has the only key to this room. He keeps documents about prototypes and devices that some consider darker and worse than necromancy.

Taking enough time to read them (2 hours), a successful DC 17 Intelligence check allows a character to grasp some of the general ideas of the hidden papers. With his quick and elegant handwriting, Arthimesh described a way of using lightning as a source of energy. Another book mentioned the possibility of horseless carriages. Ones that would move using an internal engine, fueled by steam and vapor.

11. SCIENCE LIBRARY

An impeccable room with various bookshelves and two wooden desks contain information about sciences and scientific disciplines. There are whole books and studies about astronomy, astrology, physics, chemistry and many other fields. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals Arthimesh's notes on the desk. He recently wrote a brief essay where he describes the possibility of creating a carriage that would not need horses to be pulled. Another note is a reminder for himself where he emphasizes the importance of locking both doors of the room.

12. MEDITATION CHAMBER

This area served as a refuge from books and noise. Shattered chairs lay scattered around the floor. A round wooden table that the spiders haven't yet wrecked has two golden hypnotizing pendulums and three dozen gold chips. Two **giant spiders** wait in the shadows and attack anyone who enters the room. A passive Perception score of 17 or higher reveals the presence of the spiders when coming in.

Treasure. The trinkets on the table have a collective value of 45 gold pieces.

13. STORAGE

The place is filled with useless, broken furniture. Right now, a nest of wolf spiders took over it. Two **giant wolf spiders** attack anyone that opens any of the doors to the room.

14. TREASURE ROOM

A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock of any of the doors to enter this room with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check. The spiders could not open any of the doors to this room. Arthimesh keeps this room, as well as the hidden bookshelf (area 10), locked at all times. He is the only one with a key to enter. When he fled and ran to the entrance the moment of the incident, he knew the room would be safe.

Treasure. The chests contain expensive silverware, golden chalices, golden jewelry, and precious stones. All this has a collective value of 450 gold pieces. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals both chests have a hidden compartment below. Inside, there are three *potions of healing*, a *spell scroll* of *enlarge/reduce*, an *ioun stone (sustenance)*, and a *ring of protection*.

15. TRAINING CHAMBER

Arthimesh and his acolytes use this room to practice their spells. They do so mostly because it always goes wrong the first times a spell is cast, and not because of the destructive powers of evocation magic. The place was already torn to pieces before the arachnid invasion, but now it is full of webs too. Four **giant spider** and two **giant wolf spider** attack anyone on sight.

16. ARCANE REPOSITORY

This is the room where it all began. Arthimesh's failure caused the spiders to grow to tremendous sizes and become hostile. The room's shelves are full of webs and spider eggs now. The two acolytes that couldn't make it were torn to pieces and put in hard white cocoons. The books and documents in this room are all arcane studies. Books about the planes, the different schools of magic, several approaches on how to learn magic, and many other topics are stored in here.

The poor spiders were subject to other spells before increasing in size. Arthimesh was studying their reaction to different harmless spells before his mistake. When the spiders grew and were locked inside here, the only thing they could eat was paper. And so, they have eaten entire magic spellbooks and scrolls. Some of them mutated. The essence of magic accumulated in their bodies evolved and took over most of their being, transforming them. Two **phase spiders**, one **giant spider** and three **giant wolf spiders** are in the room.

DEVELOPMENT

Arthimesh knows the mercenaries he hired are only doing this for the gold. He is aware that his most desired belongings might be stolen. Plus, he doesn't trust them. The old researcher is a man of his word and he intends to pay the agreed upon amount. He hired some local muscle for he is precautious and wants to protect what is his.

If the adventurers did their job well, he enters to verify everything is in order and proceeds to pay them. If Arthimesh discovers that the adventurers stole stuff from his repository, he confronts them and demands that they return what doesn't belong to them. In case things get nasty, he hired four **thugs**, four **acolytes**, and six **commoners** shall the need to defend himself or the repository arise.

It has no owner but the secrets within
are kept for eternity. A true vault!

Impressed Magician

YELLOWING ANGEL VAULT



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

ENCOUNTER INFORMATION

This TTRPG module describes an interesting underground location that you can implement into an ongoing campaign. It is an ancient underground vault filled with challenges and traps to protect its contents. Because of its nature, anyone can use the vault to store things inside once a person reaches the vault room (area 9). But anyone trying to access the room must first go through the different challenges, even if the person accessed the vault previously.

The complex is designed to stall and confuse visitors. A large clock on the floor of the first room controls how and when doors are opened at certain times of the day. To reach the vault (area 9), visitors must visit a series of rooms and activate runes on them to open the door to the next area. The situation appears to require the activation of all three runes (areas 5, 6, and 10) but opening the vault door requires the visitor to activate the two blood pedestals (areas 8 and 11).

As the DM, you can drop this interesting location any time the adventurers explore underground locations, the Underdark, or a dwarven city or ruin. Of course, if the campaign requires for a piece of secret lore, a magic item, or a plot-related object to be heavily guarded, this vault is a great place to hide said object from prying eyes. After the many dangers in the Yellowing Angel Vault, the adventurers come out victorious with an important campaign item or valuable information.

THE VAULT

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 12 correspond to the Yellowing Angel Vault map.

AREA DESCRIPTION

Terrain. The angel vault complex features stone-tiles flooring. The stone slabs sustain considerable erosion damage. A DC 14 Intelligence check reveals that some of it is water erosion. This means that the place was flooded for a time in the past.

Doors. The vault features three-foot-thick reinforced stone doors. The grey slabs of stone part in the middle and slide outward when they open. Each of the doors opens when a specific set of conditions is met. All doors are closed when the adventurers first visit the dungeon. A *detect magic* spell reveals an abjuration aura on the doors' surfaces. The doors are immune to spells such as *knock* or *dispel magic* of level 5 or lower.

Light. Some areas in the complex have torches on sconces that provide bright light. All other areas are in complete darkness. The torches are enchanted with permanent *continual flame* spells. A character can try to carefully remove one of the torches and retain its properties with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a fail, the torch becomes a non-magical item.

The Angel Clock. The large clock in area 1 is a complicated clockwork device that controls the opening and closing of the different doors in the area. A *detect magic* spell detects a strong abjuration aura that surrounds the device. If a creature damages, alters, or attempts to manipulate the clock in any way, the clock resets and all damage or changes made to it disappear in a magical repairing process that lasts 1d6 hours. Due to this, the clock is impervious to damage and erosion from the pas-

sage of time. It cannot be altered or manipulated with anything short of a *wish* spell.

Sounds. Clicking, whirring, and the sound of gears turning are audible in all areas of the underground vault. The angel clock never stops and its sound can be detected as far away as 100 feet from it.

1. Clock Room

The adventurers may arrive at this location from area 2 or area 4. When the adventurers first visit the Yellowing Angel Clock, all of the stone doors are closed. The clock moves slowly and marks the time accurately. Exploring the room reveals that none of the doors can be opened by using thieves' tools or force. A successful DC 15 Intelligence check infers that the clockwork machinery under the angel clock must in some way control the opening of the doors. Perhaps waiting is the solution.

The doors in the room open when a set of conditions is met. Only one door is open at any given time (see below). There are two possible conditions, the first one is the time on the angel clock, and the second condition is whether the runes of awakening (see below) have been activated. These are the conditions necessary for each door:

Northwest Door. Angel clock must read 11 o'clock. The door stays open for 1 hour.

Northeast Door. Angel clock must read 1 o'clock. The door stays open for 1 hour.

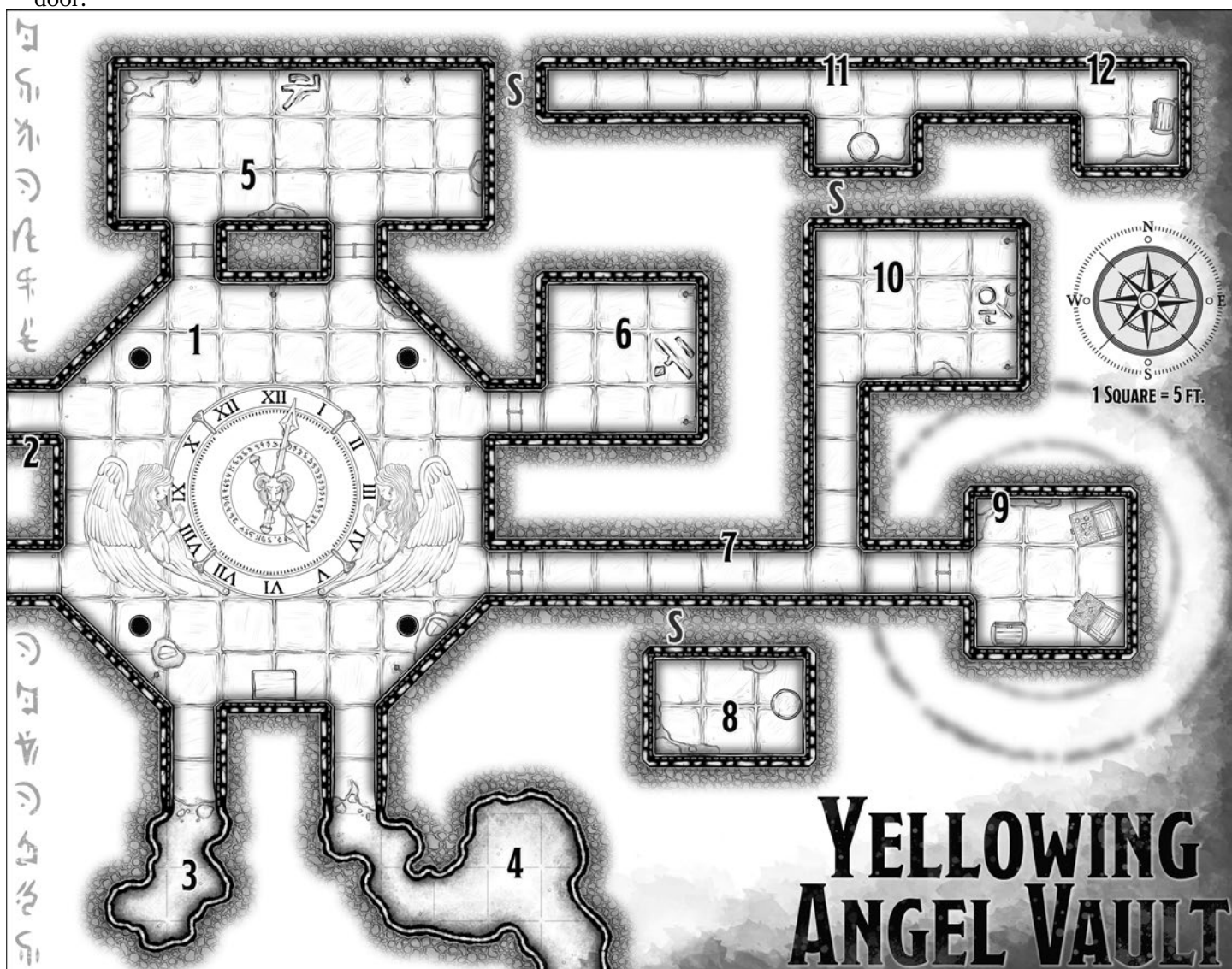
Area 6 Door. Angel clock must read 3 o'clock and the first rune of awakening must be activated. The door stays open for 1 hour.

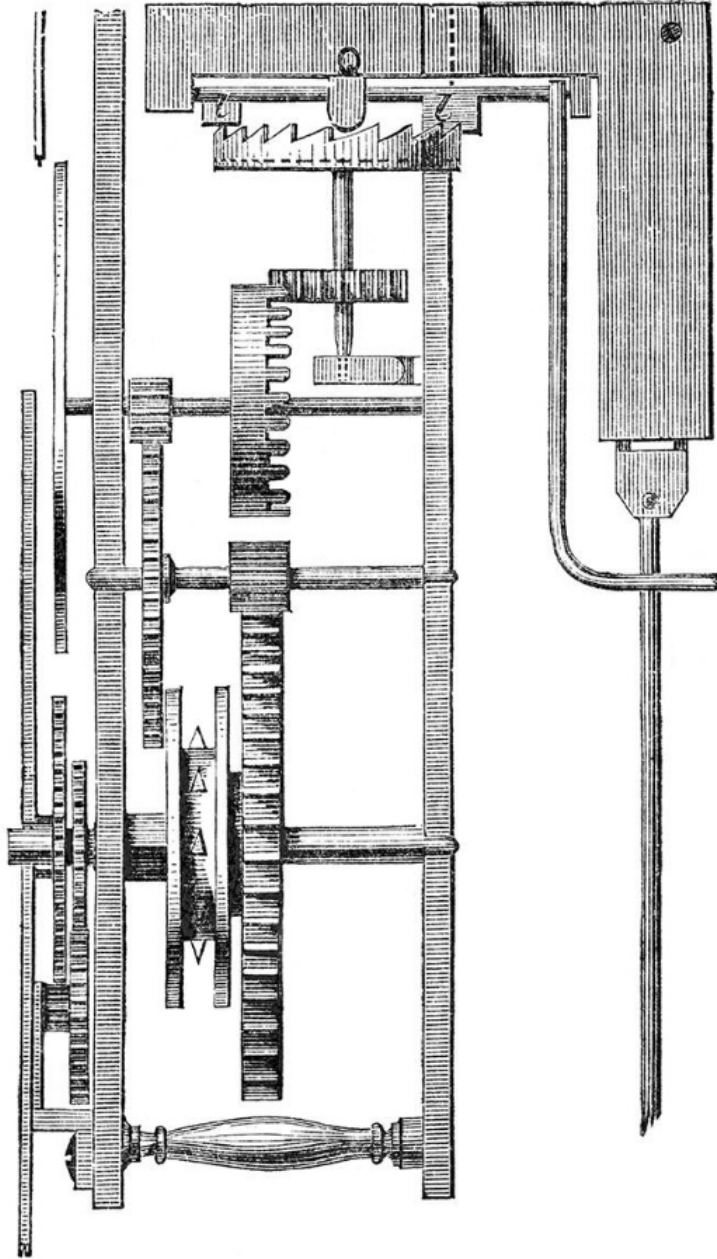
Area 7 Door. Angel clock must read 6 o'clock and the first and second runes of awakening must be activated. The door stays open for 1 hour.

The adventurers may find the need to wait for a certain time to come. This is a good opportunity to rest.

2. ALTERNATE ENTRANCES

The Yellowing Angel Clock complex is connected to many underground structures in what appears to have been an old dwarven gallery. The adventurers may stumble upon the clock room by coincidence when walking from these locations. The areas west of the angel clock are not relevant to this adventure. Whatever is out there is left to the DM's discretion.





3. CAVED-IN CAVERN

The short hallway ends up in a dead-end. A pair of columns collapsed and brought down large sections of the ceiling with them. Digging through the blockade to find out what is on the other side takes 2d6 days of hard labor.

A lone **xorn** hides buried on the wall of debris. The smell of jewels and gold attracts it but the magic of the angel vault prevents him from digging further than the angel clock. When adventurers show up, it begs for earth crystals or precious metals in Terran. If no creature understands its call, the xorn emerges from the rocky walls and tries to take the reward by force. If the adventurers gift the xorn at least 50 gp of precious stones or coins, it becomes friendly to them. If the adventurers find a way to communicate with the xorn, it can reveal the location of the hidden chamber to the west of the clock room (area 8). The xorn cannot enter it by burrowing.

4. TUNNEL NETWORK ENTRANCE

The Yellowing Angel Clock complex is connected to an underground network of interconnected tunnels and caverns. The adventurers may stumble upon the angel clock when exploring the Underdark, a mine, or a similar underground venue. The tunnel network south of the angel clock is not relevant to this adventure. Whatever is out there is left to the DM's discretion.

5. FIRST RUNE OF AWAKENING

The room appears to be empty except for a bas-relief rune next to the north wall and several sets of incomplete skeletons scattered across the room. Nothing happens in this room until the entrance door closes after 1 hour. When it closes, the rune on the floor shines and two **invisible stalkers** materialize in the room adjacent to the rune. The invisible stalkers attack any creature in the room until the exit door opens in 1 hour, when they disappear.

A character can spend a level 1 spell slot to empower the rune. When the rune is activated, it shines with a greenish light. After this, the door to area 6 opens when the angel clock reads 3 o'clock.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the outline of a movable section of the east wall. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that pulling the east scone causes the wall to slide sideways and reveal a hidden path to area 11.

6. SECOND RUNE OF AWAKENING

The room appears to be empty except for a bas-relief rune next to the east wall. The lack of bones make it appear like the few visitors at the vault did not manage to survive the invisible creatures from area 5. Nothing happens in this room until the door closes after 1 hour. After that, a section of the ceiling moves out of view and countless insects start pouring down at a worrying speed. The insects pile up to waist height in the small room and attack any creature in the room. The absurd amount of insects is equivalent to 5 **swarms of insects**. The swarms have advantage on their attacks because of the proximity to their prey in the reduced space of the room. The swarms attack any creature in the room until the door reopens in 1 hour, when they disappear.

A character can spend a level 1 spell slot to empower the second rune. When the rune is activated, it shines with a greenish light. After this, the door to area 7 opens when the angel clock reads 6 o'clock.

7. TRAPPED HALLWAY

This hallway leads to the third rune of awakening and the angel vault. A dangerous trap on the hallway's floor may become a serious setback.

Falling Spikes Trap. Stepping on the pressure-sensitive stone plate in the mid-section of the hallway triggers the trap. A passive Perception score of 18 or higher reveals the irregular outline of the trigger plate but not how to bypass it. If a creature steps on the plate, the ceiling

collapses and a twenty-five pointy spikes arranged on a heavy stone slab drops down. The creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 19 (6d6) piercing damage.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the outline of a movable section of the south wall. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that pushing a trigger-brick causes the wall to slide sideways and reveal a hidden path to area 8.

8. HIDDEN BLOOD PEDESTAL

The room contains one of the two blood pedestals that can open the vault door (area 9). A circle of draconic runes encircles the base of the pedestal and indicate the way to use it. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that a person must cut their palm with a blade and drop blood on the pedestal to activate it. Once the two pedestals in the vault complex are activated, the door to area 9 opens.

9. CLOCK VAULT

It is necessary to activate the two blood pedestals for this door to open. Otherwise, it triggers the vault door trap (see below).

The room contains three wooden chests packed with gold pieces and other valuable objects. After the adventurers leave this room and return to the clock room (area 1), all doors close again, the traps reset, and the runes of awakening deactivate. The Yellowing Angel Vault resets and it won't let anyone inside for at least a month. After this period, visitors can attempt to access the vault again.

Vault Door Trap. If the three runes of awakening are activated and a person touches the door without activating the two blood pedestals, the vault door hums and vibrates before ejecting a 50-foot-long lightning ray that affects every creature in its path. Any creature in the hallway must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 19 (6d6) lightning damage.

Treasure. The wooden chests contain gold and silver pieces, a considerable collection of fine silk items, two mithril candleholders, several silver bracelets, a complete set of fine porcelain plates, and a key holder with two bronze keys. The collective value of this hoard is 486 gp. The purpose of the two bronze keys is left to the DM's discretion.

10. THIRD RUNE OF AWAKENING

The third rune of awakening is not protected by any creature or challenge. A character may activate the rune in the same fashion as the other two. The room was left unguarded on purpose to create a sensation of false safety and overconfidence. After activating the three runes, visitors might feel inclined to visit the vault door and activate the deadly trap in it (see area 9).

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the outline of a movable section of the north wall. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation)

check reveals that pushing a trigger-brick causes the wall to slide sideways and reveal a hidden path to area 11.

11. BLOOD PEDESTAL

The alcove in the secret area contains one of the two blood pedestals that can open the vault door (area 9). The blood pedestal functions in the same way as the one in area 8. Once the two pedestals in the vault complex are activated, the door to area 9 opens.

Secret Door. There is a small lever on the south wall of the alcove that, when pulled, causes the wall to slide sideways and reveal a hidden path to area 10.

12. TRAPPED CHEST

The end of the hallway has a single wooden chest next to the east wall. It is a kind of fake treasure trap. The chest is protected with exploding runes that trigger when the chest lid is opened. A passive Perception score of 18 or higher reveals the presence of the runes.

Exploding Runes Trap. If a person opens the lid, every creature in a 10-foot-radius must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity check throw or take 13 (4d6) fire damage. A character using thieves' tools can rig the chest to open it without activating the runes. On the other hand, a *dispel magic* spell disables the runes for 1 hour. If the chest explodes, all of its contents are lost.

Treasure. The chest contains a leather sack with three *potions of healing* and three 10 gp bank notes that can be exchanged in a large metropolis.

EASTER EGG

The design of the clock in area 1 was inspired by a similar clock room in the Castlevania, Symphony of the Night videogame. In the game, the clock room is also a time-based puzzle that allows the character to access secret parts of the castle. Besides, wearing two magical rings when visiting the clock causes the floor to open and reveal the path forward to the second part of the game.

I'd like you to teach these pricks a lesson. I'm sick and tired of seeing their faces around...

ROMELU'S NASTY ACQUAINTANCES

Romelu



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

BACKGROUND LORE



dwarves are known for their innate ability to shape rock and precious stones. This is not just a stereotype, their cities and monuments are proof of it. But this race of stout, brawny individuals has another remarkable characteristic: their love for ale. And this is no stereotype either, dwarves know their ales.

Romelu is one of those dwarves who prefers the pleasures and tastes of alcoholic beverages to those of minerals and rocks. He left his hometown to fulfill his lifelong dream of setting up an inn/tavern in a big city. He took this decision in a rush and without thinking it through. He didn't have any gold or contacts to start. He moved to a large metropolis, a place where he could blend in, and where he could serve all kinds of people. He thought it would be easier to find a job there, and it was.

It took a bit less than a decade for the sixty-year-old dwarf to inaugurate Romelu's Inn. Years of scrubbing floors and working as a bodyguard helped him make ends meet, but participating in some well-paid criminal stunts made it possible. It is not the best tavern, but it is enough. And it is not located in the best neighborhood either, but it is not the worst. Romelu is satisfied and content of having achieved what he dreamed of many decades ago.

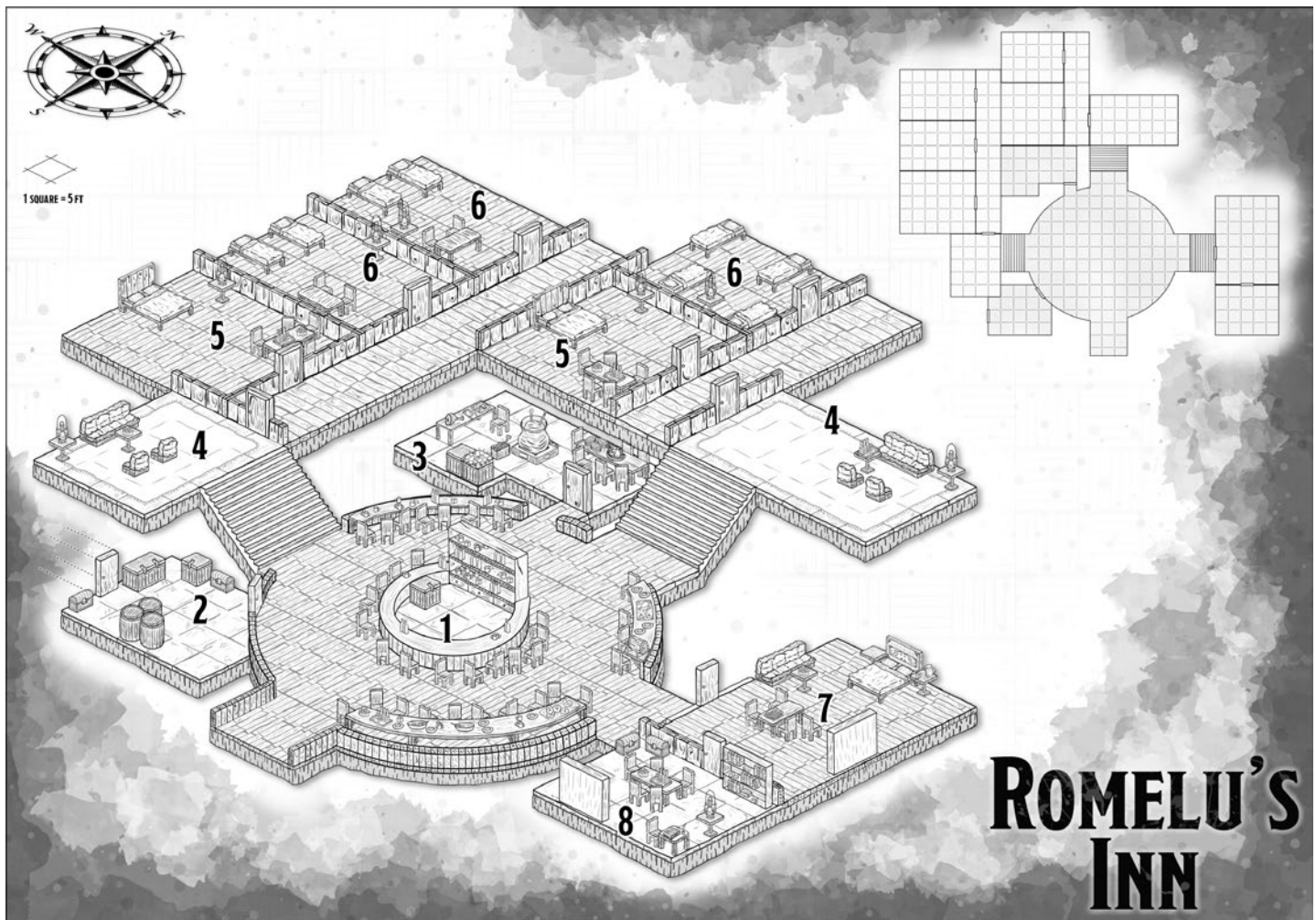
Fifteen years later, Romelu is more than well-known in the community. Almost every citizen knows about Romelu's Inn and its circular bar; many of those have had a drink there too. The tavern is also an inn and it has plenty of beds. Many adventurers come to the city frequently and Romelu's is their preferred venue to stay.

However, life is not always bright for the dwarf, his criminal past deeds often find a way to resurface in one form or another.

The Bloody Fist is the name of a criminal faction with which Romelu worked years ago. He regrets doing so, but he never denies the blood money he got from those couple of heists built the very floor he sleeps in. Since he left and stopped working for them, they held a grudge against the dwarf. The Bloody Fist is not the most powerful crime factions, and they have better things to do than to pester Romelu. But now and then, for a while, they can spare a few men and make the tavern owner's life miserable.

It is now that time of the year. About ten members of The Bloody Fist congregated and took over two of the inn's rooms. They have stayed for almost a week now. Every time Romelu approaches them or confronts them about paying their tab they reply with threats, insults, and intimidating behavior. The thugs claim they can blackmail him and tell the city guard the truth about his past and how he acquired the gold for his tavern. Romelu is so afraid to lose his tavern so he believes them. In past occasions, Romelu has opted to withstand their presence. Sooner or later, they leave due to their crime duties. The problem is the economical blow and consequences of their uncomfortable stay.

Now, he yearns for the arrival of skilled adventurers that would like to kick some butts. He offers 10 gold pieces each, plus an all-inclusive three-day stay. He asks them not to wreck the furniture. He also wishes for no bloodshed. A good bar fight can be good publicity, but a murder scene would be worse than tolerating the Bloody Fist's presence.



NPCs

ROMELU

Chaotic Neutral dwarf (age 86)

Romelu doesn't look like the stereotypical dwarf with a prominent, overpopulated beard. He has a nice, trimmed mustache and cheek lines, and to contrast it, a two-foot-long braided goatee. He has half a dozen earrings in different parts of each ear and his vest always shows a solid pair of hairy pectorals. He is usually at the bar.

Personality Trait. "If you ain't having a good time at my place, you need more ale."

Ideal. "The ends justify the means."

Bond. "I must see for the future of my tavern, always."

Flaw. "It is not uncommon for me to drink too much."

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 8 correspond to Romelu's Inn.

Terrain. The irregular level of the ground in the vicinity forced people to build on top of other structures and up the slope of hills. Romelu's Inn bar is at ground level while Romelu's bedroom and both sections of guest rooms are 10 feet above. Most of the inn features wooden flooring. Areas 2, 3, and 8 have square stone tiles.

Doors. All doors are made of pine wood. They all have regular quality locks. A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock of any locked door with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check.

Light. There are several tables with oil lamps in various rooms of the inn. The bar and other few places are illuminated by torches on sconces (not shown in the illustration).

Sounds. Romelu's Inn is always busy. It is common to see people chattering and gossiping at all times. When bards perform at the inn, Romelu's yelling and servers' voices accompany their music.

1. MAIN HALL

The bar at Romelu's Inn is very appealing. A circular counter that ends in a three-story set of shelves dominates the room. An army of wooden chairs surrounds it. Three long tables placed against the walls allow more guests to be served in the main hall.

Allan. He serves the adventurers and he is not happy with the current situation. He believes Romelu doesn't have the guts to get rid of those freeloaders. If it were his call, he would hire some mercenaries to erase them from the map.

Sven. He is the main cook. His post requires him to sometimes make rounds at the main hall. He approaches



the adventurers to bring them food. If interacted with, he confesses he wants to participate too. He claims he knows how to defend himself and wishes to fight The Bloody Fist with them but Romelu won't let him. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Sven bluffs when saying he knows how to fight. He just wants to play the hero. Sven has the stats of a commoner.

Val. She is a server. She likes the company of The Blood Fist men; they are her friends. Plus, Trent, the leader, is her boyfriend. Although they are rude and sick, it doesn't bother her, she can be as rude as them. She approaches the adventurers before they make their move. She pretends to be worried about them and asks what they plan to do. She inquires about what kind of weapons they have and if they know how to cast spells. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals she is not asking these questions because she is worried. She is trying to get as much information as possible to tell it to The Bloody Fist. She believes that they could stay if the heroes fail, and revealing their plans might be useful to turn the tides.

2. STORAGE ROOM

Romelu and Sven have the only keys for this room. There are wooden barrels and crates with supplies and stored foods. A large chest keeps tools, aprons, uniforms, and lots of empty bottles. The two smaller chests

contain special spices and salts for seasoning foods, back-up silverware and knives, and a few leather pouches with gold coins.

Treasure. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals the presence of the pouches with coin and the silverware. It all has a collective value of 45 gold pieces.

3. KITCHEN

A massive pot to cook broths and stews burns at the center of the kitchen. Sven has to climb three steps to reach the wooden oar and stir the mix. The staff throws pieces of coal under the pot to feed the flames. The kitchen also features a couple of tables to organize servings and allow the staff to eat.

4. LOBBY

Only guests are allowed in both lobbies. They have a large sofa and two smaller ones. A coffee table with treats or wine accompanies each set. People staying at the inn can make use of these areas and drink away from the noise of the main hall. The Bloody Fist doesn't allow anybody to get close to the northern lobby. One **bandit** and one **thug** drink on the sofas.

5. COUPLE BEDROOMS

Romelu's Inn has two bedrooms thought for couples. Both have a twin sized bed and they have a small table with five chairs in case the guests wish for a more private place to drink and talk. The Bloody Fist took possession of the room in the north. Two **thugs** play cards on the table while two **bandits** drink ale on the bed.

6. TRAVELER ROOMS

There are three rooms with two or more individual beds. The individual room at the north has more beds in it, and it is one of the rooms The Bloody Fist took. Trent (**bandit leader**), two **thugs**, and two **bandits** tell jokes and drink together while two of them arm-wrestle on the lamp table. In the second round of conflict, Val enters the fray and tries to defend her boyfriend with a frying pan. She has the stats of a **commoner**.

7. ROMELU'S QUARTERS

The dwarf invested some gold to make his room fancier. His bed features a hand-carved headboard and he sleeps under soft, delicate, silken sheets. He loves chess, and he sometimes has all-night-long game sessions with skilled customers. Romelu has the only key to his room, which is always locked.

8. ROMELU'S STUDIO

Some VIP customers have earned Romelu's trust and have entered his beloved studio. This calm place is where he writes his diary, keeps the administrative papers of his business, and stores his most precious belongings. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals information in Romelu's diary and about the tavern: Romelu regrets having links with a

criminal faction. He wishes it could have been different. And right now, he is more and more worried about The Bloody Fists forced visits. He believes he cannot continue withstanding their presence anymore and he fears bankruptcy.

Treasure. A character using thieves' tools can open both chests with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. The chests have bags of gold pieces, six gold and silver pieces of jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets, and rings. All this has a collective value of 200 gold pieces. Additionally, there is a bottle of wine from a faraway vineyard, so old and so aged that it is worth 100 gold pieces alone.

DEVELOPMENT

If the adventurers accepted Sven's help and he dies in battle, Romelu blames it on them. He believes they should have had the eyes to see the lad cannot harm a fly. He pays them and asks them to leave.

If the adventurers were able to get rid of The Bloody Fist without turning his tavern into a bloody murder scene, he thanks them and allows them to stay for three days for free.

If the adventurers made a gory mess and spilled guts and blood all over his tavern, he yells the adventurers to get the hell out. He refuses to pay for a job not done as he didn't ask for corpses on his floor. Plus, he is the one who has to explain what happened to the guard and beg the gods the city allows him to stay open, and The Bloody Fist doesn't seek revenge.

If the adventurers realized Val's intentions since the beginning and made Romelu aware of this, he fires her.

They say he has scaly skin, yellow elongated eyes, and a large mouth with sharp teeth. All fear him in the underworld.

Fearful Minstrel

JAR'KUNNI'S HIDEOUT



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

BACKGROUND LORE

The captain of the city watch, Lord Arennis, is worried and overflowed with work due to the recent rampage of robberies, assaults, and public unrest. There are new players in town. Word on the streets about a new kingpin spreads in the low-class neighborhoods. A despicable, cruel, and merciless underworld leader known as Jar'Kunni is the scapegoat, claims the state. They have spent all kinds of resources to bring the kingpin to justice.

The gossip about Jar'Kunni goes from mild to insane depending on whom you ask. Some say he is just a cruel top dog with a knack for inspiring others. Others say he is so far removed from humanity due to his crimes and evil deeds that his skin became scaly and green, his eyes yellow and elongated, and his teeth pointy and sharp. A description worthy of a demon among men. It pains Lord Arennis to admit that some of these stories were started by his men. Many times small groups of city guards have been ambushed by Jar'Kunni and his lackeys in an attempt to scare the guards off or kill them outright. The few that have managed to escape alive from these guerilla ambushes come back with such tales of a lizard/dragon/demon overlord.

Lord Arennis has not had the opportunity to confront the crime lord yet. But he plans on pursuing this matter personally from now on. The population grows restless with each passing day, and the city watch loses its standing with the townsfolk. Besides, Lord Arennis finds it particularly difficult to conscript new guards with so many of them dying nowadays. A guard's salary isn't much to lust for anyway.

Jar'Kunni and his motley crew of criminals and wrongdoers move fast and about the city in small groups. They

are a mobile organization with no face and no name. They pillage, break into houses, rob establishments, and bounce stolen objects from petty criminals too. They focus on material goods and how to sell or resell them. If Jar'Kunni had it his way, there would be no casualties or blood on their hands. It is all about taking stuff and then finding someone willing to pay a good price for it. But, such is the life in the city, people want to defend their belongings and they don't take it kindly to be stripped from their wealth. Unfortunately, Jar'Kunni is not a merciful person. He cares not for people, especially the wealthy citizens who believe that everybody else is beneath them.

NPCs

LORD ARENNIS

Lawful neutral human

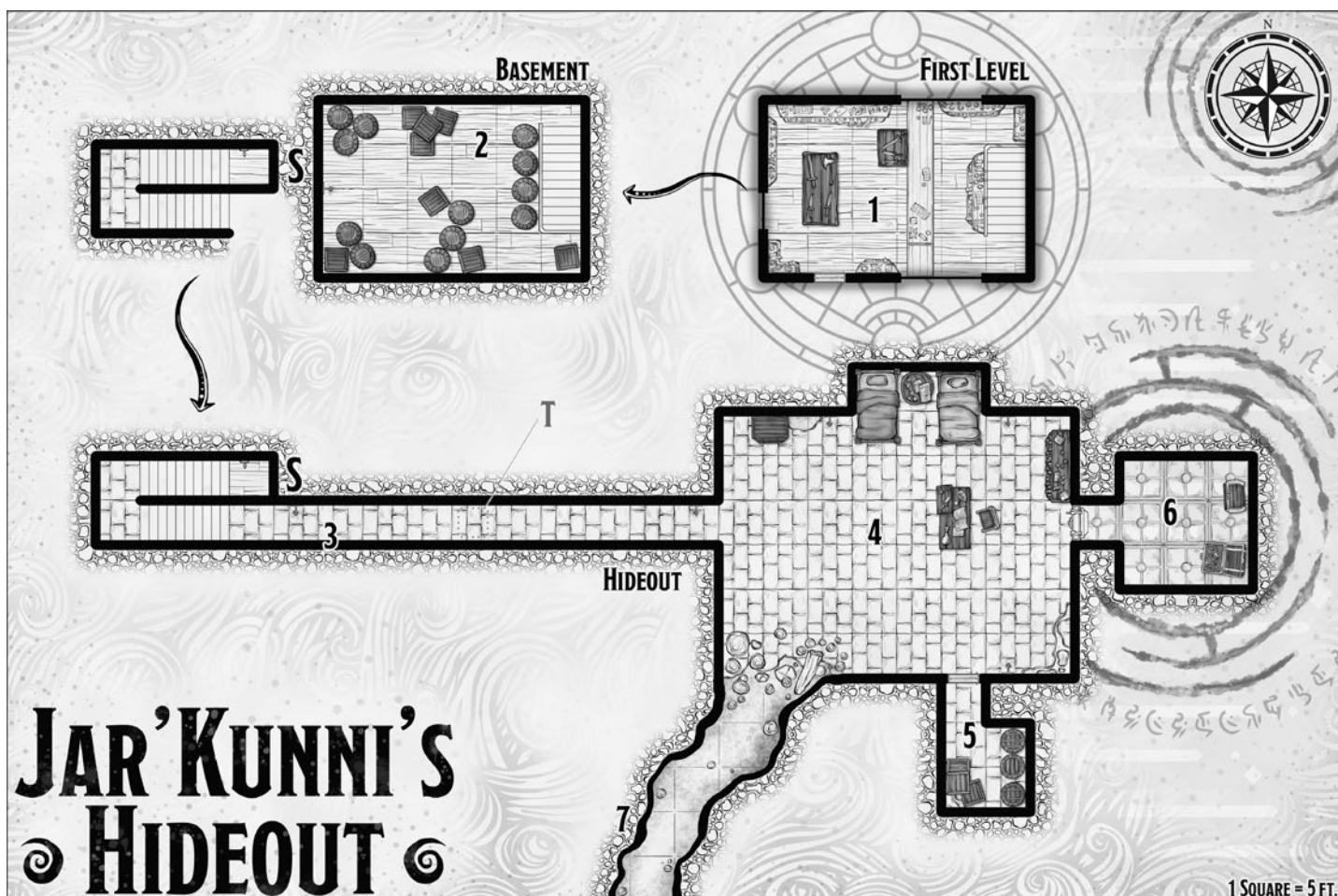
Lord Fallaster Arennis is a middle-aged war veteran who climbed his way up the hierarchy of the city guard and became a captain. He wears a breastplate that brandishes the city seal at all times, but even the metal plates of the armor can't hide his ever-growing belly. Despite his physical condition, Lord Arennis (**knight**) is still a fearsome opponent in battle. He spars with recruits and soldiers often at the barracks and only a handful of veterans can best him.

Personality. "I don't speak much because I learn about others when I let them speak their minds".

Ideal. "If all people worked and contributed their fair share. Our world would not need heroes".

Bond. "I am bound by my duty to the city and its wellbeing".

Flaw. "I often get distracted by food, more than I care to admit".



JAR'KUNNI

Chaotic evil lizardfolk

Jar'Kunni came to the city a few years ago on a ship and started as a dock worker, the only job he could get. People feared him because of his lizard-like appearance. Some said he was a kind of dragonkind individual. People fear what they don't understand, and Jar'Kunni was ready to take advantage of that fear. He found out that he could intimidate his way in and out of almost any kind of situation. As far as he knew, he was the only lizardfolk in the city. He started wearing hooded cloaks to create an aura of mystery around his persona and got together with some petty criminals in the area. At first, they went for easy targets and small jobs, but over the course of months, their organization and confidence grew so much that the city guard is now a little more than a nuisance. Jar'Kunni's reptilian heritage and customs place little worth on people's lives. His lackeys fear him and obey his commands without question because the lizardfolk overlord is known to have rage fits that often end with blood-drenched floors at the hideout.

Personality. "I shall hoard the gold we get from sales. Just like a dragon would. The lives of those who oppose me are worthless".

Ideal. "People should fear me enough not to stand in my way. They don't have to die if they just let us work".

Bond. "One day I will return to the motherland as a leader".

Flaw. "I am prone to overconfidence and rage when things don't go my way".

ADVENTURE HOOK

Captain Arennis is sick and tired of the current situation. He has managed to convince a local noble to contribute with a reward in gold to hire sellswords or adventurers because the city guards have shown to be useless in this matter. When such a group of valiant warriors shows up at the city, Lord Arennis summons them and offers them the job: they must find Jar'Kunni the evil crime lord and bring him to justice. The Captain would rather get Jar'Kunni alive, so he can proceed with a public execution. But he doesn't mind if the adventurers bring his corpse. He is a man of arms so he understands that the heat of the moment can sometimes force one's hand.

He is content as long as the crime waves stop altogether and the city returns to its former state of peace.

The Lead. Captain Arennis has one clue about Jar'Kunni's whereabouts. His officers noted a concentration of the gang members in Garret Street. There is nothing of notice in that street as far as the captain knows. It is a low-class residential neighborhood and the only establishment there is a general store owned by a woman.

JAR'KUNNI'S LAIR

The lizardfolk criminal employs about forty people in some form or another. Most of them are muscle and infiltrators, but others are spies, bouncers, informants, and merchants. Jar'Kunni has a lair in the city. His lair is hidden behind a secret door in a store's basement. This is where Jar'Kunni and his bodyguard live. The rest of his gang live in other places in the city but come here often to deal with Jar'Kunni.

The establishment is a general store that Jar'Kunni owns. It is not a front. The store operates normally and turns a profit. The storekeeper is a woman named Diranna. She is aware of the criminal operations and the lair in the basement. Diranna disagrees with Jar'Kunni but she is unable to oppose them because the cruel crime lord threatened to kill her family if she does not comply and keep her act as the "nice store owner".

AREA DESCRIPTION

Floor. The store and the basement have store plank flooring. The wood is moldy and crunches when stepped on. The lair features stone tile flooring. Areas partially occupied by a piece of furniture are considered difficult terrain.

Doors. All doors in the complex are made of pine wood. The doors bear a medium-quality bas-relief of the city flag. They used to be painted but someone removed the color from the flags a while ago. A character using thieves' tools can bypass a locked door with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check. The only exception is the vault door (see area 6).

Tracks. Jar'Kunni's distinctive reptilian feet have left tracks on the floor outside the store and on the moldy wooden planks of the storefront and basement. A char-

acter can detect such footprints with a successful DC 15 Survival check when close to the general store or inside.

1. STOREFRONT

The walls are packed with shelves and showcases with plenty of everyday use items. The store sells food items, household stuff, farming implements, fertilizer, and a limited selection of traveling gear and weapons. The store owner is a woman named Diranna. She is kind, amicable, and loves to converse with travelers and merchants. She offers fair prices for the location and is a good merchant overall.

The adventurers will undoubtedly come asking questions here and might see Jar'Kunni's footprints outside and inside the shop. When questioned, Diranna drops her friendly façade and denies all involvement in the affair. She tries to convince the characters to leave if their only intention is to come and discomfort her and the other customers. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that she is nervous and hides something. Perhaps she is acting under duress. Diranna never admits to anything but does not oppose the characters if they wish to search the place.

2. BASEMENT STORAGE

Large wooden crates and barrels line the walls of this otherwise uninteresting storage space. There appears to be an overstock of items of the same kind that Diranna sells. A single torch on a sconce lights the room. There are no crates or storage of any kind directly under the sconce.

Three gang members (**bandits**) stand guard next to the sconce. They ask any unwanted visitors to leave at once or else. If confronted, they fight back.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher or a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a fake wall section that slides inward when a sconce is pulled. The hidden passage leads to a set of descending stairs to area 3.

3. TRAPPED HALLWAY

A large 50-foot-long hallway leads to a single door on the far side. There is nothing of value in the hallway. A trap in the middle section of the hallway may help deter unwanted visitors (see below).

Secret Door. A lever on the wall at the top of the stairs opens the hidden passage to area 2.

Swinging Axes Trap. The trap is triggered when a character steps on the pressure-sensitive plate on the floor (see map). When a person steps on the plate, two large axes swing down from the ceiling and cut the person stepping on the plate. The character must roll a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 13 (4d6) slashing damage. The trap must be reset manually. A successful Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the presence of the trigger plate.



4. JAR'KUNNI'S HIDEOUT

A large chamber with sparse furniture is the lizardfolk's hideout. A reinforced steel door stands out at the far end of the room (see area 6). Part of a wall collapsed to reveal a natural tunnel that branches out of the lair (see area 7).

Jar'Kunni (**lizardfolk king**) is in the room with his bodyguard (**bandit captain**), two **bandits**, and a bouncer (**commoner**). They grab their weapons and fight back as soon as the characters enter the room. If things go badly, Jar'Kunni attempts to flee through the tunnel (area 7) and hide in the sewers.

Treasure. A leather pouch on the desk contains 15 gp. Jar'Kunni wears a gold bracelet with embedded rubies that is worth 34 gp.

5. LARDER

This is a small chamber with wooden crates and barrels with food, water, and ale. If needed, Jar'Kunni can lay low and stay in the lair for months without needing to go out for food. It is enough for one person to survive over four months.

Treasure. There are 10 travel rations in the larder and 1 *potion of healing*.

6. THE VAULT

The vault door is sized like a regular door but it is made of reinforced steel and features a high-quality combination lock system. A character using thieves' tools can bypass the vault door with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Alternate methods include dealing 25 acid damage to the locking mechanism to disable it or forcing Jar'Kunni to disclose the combination code with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check (if Jar'Kunni is arrested).

There are two unlocked wooden chests inside the vault full to the brim with valuable objects of illicit origin.

Treasure. The two wooden chests contain an assortment of gold and silver pieces, fine silverware, platinum bracelets, two gold candleholders, one ornate wooden box, powdered diamond dust, and a large number of fine silk items. The whole hoard has a collective value of 190 gp. These valuables belong to the cityfolk. Some of them come forward two days after the raid and claim 130 gp worth of it.

The characters should surrender all treasure from the vault to Lord Arennis for management. After two days, the characters can keep the rest (60 gp) unless they want to double-cross Lord Arennis.

7. EMERGENCY EXIT

This tunnel continues in the same direction for half a mile and then connects to the city's sewers system. There is nothing of value along the tunnel.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters bring Jar'Kunni alive, Lord Arennis arrests him and puts him in jail for the night. The lizardfolk is given a swift trial and is sentenced to death the day after. The execution occurs early in the morning of the second day after his arrest. Jar'Kunni is beheaded in the main square in front of an enraged mob of angry people. If any other criminal from Jar'Kunni's gang survived, they receive the same sentence.

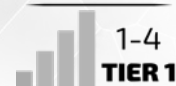
If Jar'Kunni dies during the fight, the captain thanks the adventurers. Jar'Kunni's head is put on a spike and publicly shown in the main square for two weeks to make an example.

Either way, the wave of crimes and the public unrest decrease and the city goes back to normal. Captain Arennis pays the characters 10 gp each for their valuable service to the city. He also assures them that any material good retrieved from Jar'Kunni's vault which is not claimed by someone in the city belongs to them now.

If you're looking for a nice place to stay while in town, look no further. The Squirming Medusa is an outstanding location!

Paid Minstrel Advertiser

THE SQUIRMING MEDUSA



BACKGROUND LORE

The Squirming Medusa is a medium-sized two-story tavern located near the center of a large town. It is not the only establishment of its kind around but it is, by far, the most welcoming location for travelers and drinkers alike. It is large, spacious, warm, and the service is good. The tavern owner is a middle-aged man named Garjeen. Garjeen inherited the tavern from his father, as he did from his father before him. All in all, the Squirming Medusa has been in the family for three generations. Garjeen knows the business well, he started working in it when he was a little boy. He used to scrub floors, clean the rooms, and sometimes, help the cooks.

For the past fifty years, the secret for the Squirming Medusa's success is a special drink they call "medusae blood". The exact recipe is a concoction only Garjeen knows. The cooks know a partial recipe but Garjeen always finishes the process alone to ensure that the secret is safe. Medusae blood is a spiced wine drink that is served hot. The spice-rich smell of the beverage is famous regionally and the common hall smells of it from all the constant servings throughout the day. New customers always make comments about the thick perceptible smell when they visit the Squirming Medusa for the first time. When they drink their first pint of medusae blood and see where the smell came from they understand why the building is infused with it.

The second level of the tavern does not occupy the whole extension of the building. It stops middle way along the common hall and becomes a large balcony that overlooks some of the tables and the library. There are a few couches and side tables on the balcony but this area is reserved for clients paying for rooms. There

are three rooms on the second level but, currently; only one of them is available for rent. Garjeen and his eldest son, Curjee, sleep in the southernmost room. The middle room (area 6) is Don Ardinno's.

Don Ardinno is a client but his prolonged stay at the Squirming Medusa makes him an oddity in the inn. He is a middle-aged balding man who is very important for the local criminal syndicate. He helps manage, organize, and operate local substance distribution networks. They deal with a water-soluble powder that causes a sensation of an adrenaline rush when drunk. It is highly addictive as well. The substance always moves in small quantities but only a pinch of it is necessary to bring an adult into a temporary comatose state of bliss and hyperactivity. It sells well on the streets and puts lots of money in the crime lord's pockets.

Don Ardinno often came to the Squirming Medusa as a regular client. One day, he needed a place to stay and lay low after a few of his sellers were busted by the city watch. He did not care for them, and they would surely end up at the gallows but Don Ardinno was not ready to share their fate. He came to the Squirming Medusa and rented a room for a month. Garjeen was delighted to secure the payment for a whole month of rent but later found out that it might have not been such a good idea.

Don Ardinno kept repaying for the room and he became a permanent guest in the Squirming Medusa. Garjeen would never mind that as long as he kept paying for his stay. But the guest overreached and decided to make the Squirming Medusa his base of operations. Now thugs, mercenaries, and hitmen come and go to visit the mobster and make illicit deals, substance purchases, and other unsavory courses of action. Garjeen sympathized with Don Ardinno, and he sure did not want to lose him as a client, but the illicit operation had to stop inside his establishment. Garjeen decided to go and talk to the



mobster to demand that he looks for another place to do business. Garjeen was stopped on the tavern balcony (area 4) by Don Ardinno's men. The thugs did not allow Garjeen to see their master and sent him away. They told Garjeen that he was not to be seen in the second level unless it were his time to go to sleep. They also reminded him that the room was paid for and they would keep on paying for it. He only had to name a price.

THE HOOK

Garjeen knows that the situation is beyond his hands now. The thugs do not interfere with his activities, nor do they bother the clients but the growing incidents of exchanges and reunions worry Garjeen. He worries that a detachment of the city guard finds a credible reason to raid his place. While the raid could end up with Don Ardinno behind bars, the city watch might also single out Garjeen as an accomplice. So, Garjeen has resolved to do this himself. He plans to hire a group of strong-looking adventurers to give Don Ardinno a two-days eviction notice. He would ask them to stay until the man abandons the room and goes his way. Surely 10 gp per person is enough reward for such a service.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The inn features wooden flooring in the main and second level and stone tile flooring in the basement. The wooden flooring is waxed often but corners have seen better days and need prompt replacement. The stone tile flooring in the basement bears water erosion damage that gives it an air of a place more ancient than it is. Spaces occupied by a piece of furniture are considered difficult terrain.

Doors. The pinewood doors in the tavern have medium quality locks and average quality engraving of a medusa head on them. Two ruby-like stones pretend to be the medusa's eyes in each of the doors. Closer inspection reveals that the stones are cheap tainted glass but it is not odd whenever a client steals one believing it is worth something. A character with thieves' tools can bypass any of the locks with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check.

Light. Most areas of the inn/tavern have torches on sconces. There is a large fireplace in the common hall (see map). These sources provide bright light. The inn staff tries to change the torches often to keep the place warm and well illuminated.

Smells and Sounds. The sound of chattering, laughs, and the frequent minstrel or bard in the common hall singing songs or telling stories are common in the Squirring Medusa. The smell of the "medusae blood", a beverage of hot spiced wine, is prevalent all around since they serve it every day.

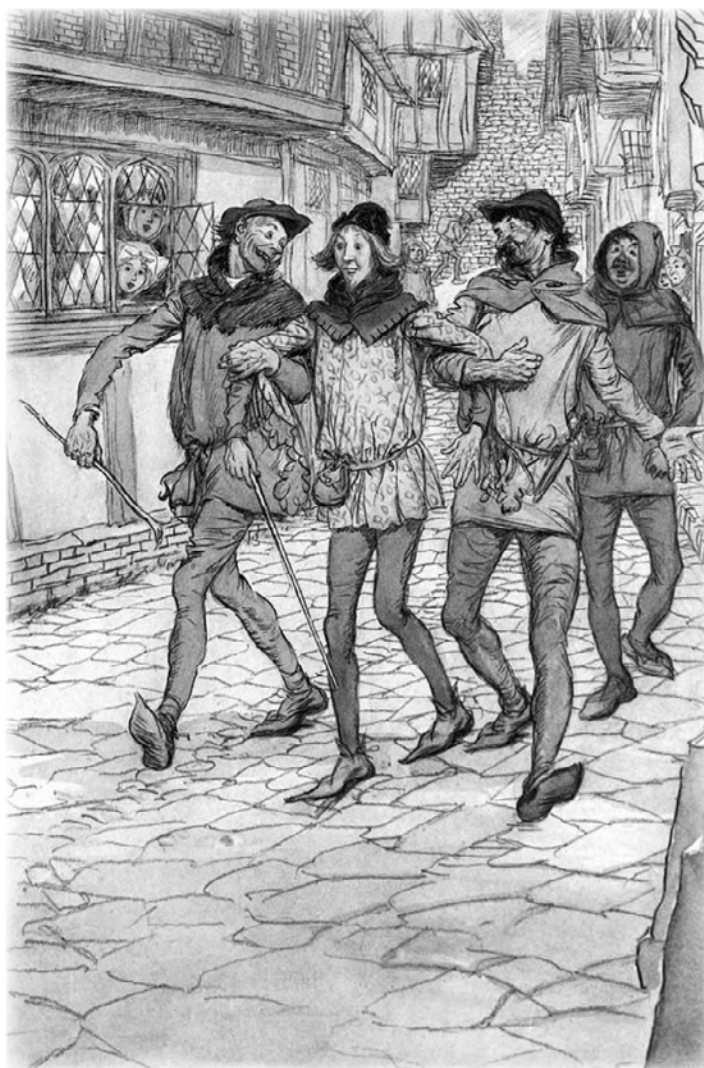
1. COMMON HALL

A large portion of the Squirring Medusa's first level is the common hall. A grand salon with a bar, dining tables, a small library, a game table, and an ornate fireplace with a golden statue on top. The room has a warm feeling to it and people often feel at ease as soon as they cross the tavern's threshold.

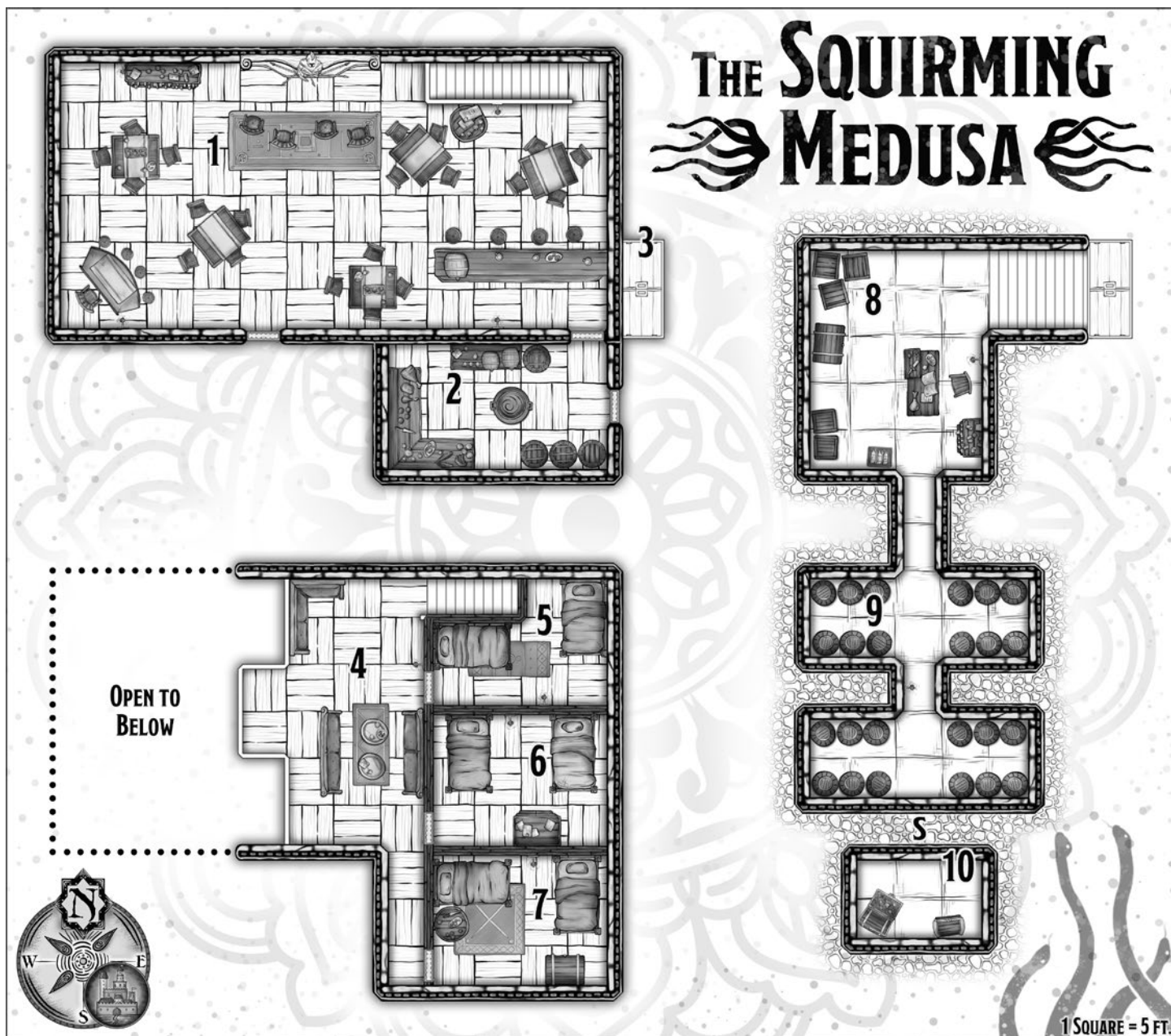
The bookcase is packed with old books and tomes. The collection has varied works of classic literature authors. The books are in poor condition after so many people have gone through them.

There is a 30% chance that Don Ardinno is in the game table surrounded by his thugs. He never talks about business in the common hall. He prefers to make an appointment to receive visitors in his room (area 6) at a later date.

Four of Don Ardinno's mobsters (**bandits**) lounge in the common hall at any given time. They usually play chance



THE SQUIRMING MEDUSA



games or just pass the time telling stories while drinking medusae blood. If they hear trouble upstairs, they go to area 4 as soon as possible to help Don Ardinno. If a careless individual declares their animosity against their boss, they attempt to bring them outside and beat them in a back alley to teach them not to mess with Don Ardinno.

2. KITCHEN

The kitchen is running and working throughout the day. The cook, Sandra, is often overwhelmed with the volume of work and the orders they must serve when the tavern is packed with patrons. She has three cooks to help her but the real limitation is the size of the room. There is little hope for an enlargement of the kitchen so they have to make ends meet with what they have. The kitchen has a door that leads to the alley behind the tavern.

3. BASEMENT ACCESS

A double door trapdoor with a heavy-looking padlock is the only access to the basement. The entrance is located next to the kitchen entrance, in the back alley. A character using thieves' tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check.

4. BALCONY

The balcony overlooks a few tables, the library, and the game table. Two large couches flank two side tables next to the room's doors. Don Ardinno's three bodyguards (two **thugs** and one **bandit**) sit on the couches and pass the time playing dice games and drinking medusae blood. They do not let anyone into area 6 unless Don Ardinno has already told them he is expecting a visitor.

5. GUESTS' ROOM

This is the only room available to rent. If the adventurers stay at the Squirring Medusa, Garjeen gives them a key to this room and warns them not to mess with the bodyguards outside of Don Ardinno's room unless they're looking for trouble. After a few days of stay, Garjeen tells the adventurers about his problem and offers them a reward to help him (See 'The Hook' above).

6. DON ARDINNO'S ROOM

The old crime lord did not intend to stay at the Squirring Medusa for so long but his men keep telling him that it is dangerous outside and that their control over this area of town and the establishment itself is the best course of action for the moment. Still, Don Ardinno does not intend to stay for more than a month more in this location. He is sick of the medusae blood smell and the average food that Sandra cooks every day.

When Don Ardinno (**noble**) receives the eviction notice, he does not take it lightly. He complies at first and says that he will leave in two days as instructed, but when the time comes, he'll be waiting with reinforcements. If this happens, four extra **bandits** show up to support Don Ardinno's claim over the room.

7. OWNER'S ROOM

Garjeen and his son sleep here. The wooden chest contains their few clothes and accessories. There is nothing of value here as they keep their profits and important stuff in the secret room (area 10).

8. BASEMENT LANDING

The room appears to be a mixture of storage space and an improvised office. The wooden crates contain stored food and some maintenance material for the tavern. The desk is littered with papers, receipts, invoices, and other business paperwork in disarray. Curjee works the books here but his efficacy leaves much to be desired. Garjeen allows this because he has no idea how to keep the books updated and precise as his son does, nor that he does a great job either.

Treasure. There are three bank notes worth 10 gp each when exchanged. A character would have to travel to the city and visit the bank, pretend to be Curjee and make a successful DC 14 Charisma (persuasion) check to cash the notes.

9. WINE CELLAR

Garjeen and Curjee brew their wine here. The secret ingredient for the medusae blood is added down here when they open a barrel for the first time. Then, it is taken to the kitchen where the cooks add some other spices and heat the concoction. A paper label glued to each barrel says when it was first added to the cellar. Each of the barrels is aged for at least three years before opening.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals that some of the south wall bricks are colored differently. They were removed and replaced at a later

time. Pulling the torch sconce activates a mechanism that makes a section of the south wall slide outward to reveal a secret path to area 10.

Treasure. Each of the barrels is worth 3 gp but no one in town would buy them knowing their origin.

10. SECRET ROOM

The secret room is 15 by 10 feet and has no light sources or furniture other than two wooden chests. One of the chests is locked. A character using thieves' tools can pick the chest lock with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check.

Treasure. The unlocked chest contains a leather bag with 250 sp and a smaller purse with 50 gp unless Garjeen already paid the adventurers. A set of fine silverware in an ornate wooden box is worth 20 gp. The locked chest contains 40 small leather pouches with a mix of spices in them. This is the secret ingredient to the medusae blood. The whole package can be sold for 5 gp at a local market as a spice mix. No merchant gives credibility to the claim that this is the special ingredient of the popular drink.

By the lords! 'Tis like these people want
to protect what's theirs even in death.
Preposterous...

Samuel Sterling, explorer

MONDRAGON'S LAST RESORT



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

BACKGROUND LORE

Heritage and ancestry are both valued and cherished by royal families. History and legacy are what the oldest members of noble bloodlines seek to protect. After all, a singular individual cannot ever overshadow the accomplishments of their whole family tree that goes back for generations. Another example of this protective sentiment is the royal crypts under most castles. Blue-bloods bury their dead together, with those who share their last name. It is a tradition in some cultures to entomb them with their most beloved belongings. They do so because they are different from others, and even in death, aristocrats shouldn't mingle with peasants and commoners and should retain their status and wealth in the afterworld.

In the city of Dragonia, Mondragon's family is not exempt from this royal behavior. Under their castle, a dozen sarcophagi and a columbarium with Mondragon family members rest in the crypt. They take care of their own, and they see that their family name is not stained by dishonor or shame. However, the subsequent turn of events showed that pride and ire often eclipse shame and dishonor.

Dragonica was raided by a massive army of orcs. They came out of nowhere. They were prepared to take the city that day or die trying. The assault was so swift and so sudden that the city couldn't hold. The orcs unleashed their rage on everyone and everything. They set everything on fire and in a matter of minutes the whole city turned into a burning hell. The four remaining Mondragon family members made their last stand in the family crypts but the orcs would find them eventually. The cornered aristocrats resorted to the one thing they hoped they would never do.

After writing a last entry in the family journal (see area 8) explaining what happened, they all said the incantation to activate a magical glyph on the floor (see area 2) that affects the whole crypt and has many effects. Necromantic magic called upon the departed family members, giving them the force to fight again, and those who said the magic words to activate the glyph would also obtain an immortal life as an incorporeal guardian of the place. The ritual also created a magical barrier at the beginning of the stairs. The orcs couldn't do anything to enter and left it alone. They stayed in the city ruins and claimed it theirs.

All Mondragon family members accepted and agreed to these terms when they reached adulthood. All of them learned the incantation to activate the glyph. They understood that if the circumstances required it, their transcendence in history was the priority, not their mortal lives. But at least this way, the Mondragon would impede anyone from entering this one place and it would still be protected. And they succeeded. Their history would still live on and their last name shall be remembered. Even in a thousand years, history books shall describe how the Mondragon family did the unthinkable just to have a chance to subsist in the records of libraries and history lessons. And they did right. Otherwise, the orcs would have killed them and destroyed and burned everything in the crypts, just like they did with the rest of city.

The orcs left the land a couple of years after due to internal conflicts among their clans. A hundred years after, the land has a new ruler. After a few military confrontations and some diplomatic agreements, the Havertz are the ones in power now. The capital, where King Havertz lives, is not far from Dragonica, the 'ruined city', as they now call it. King Havertz knows about this abandoned and ruined territory. He means to rebuild it and start a new settlement but he never finds the time or resources to do so.

Samuel Sterling, a renowned explorer, is looking forward to the restoration of the city. He wants to head the project and he is sure his reputation shall precede him when they make the teams. However, it has been a year already and the project to restore the city is, as today, still pending. It is said that the remains of Dragonia are haunted by spirits and evil forces. Some say this is why King Havertz doesn't want to proceed with the reconstruction. Others say it is simply too costly, and there are more important matters to invest gold on. Whatever it was, Samuel didn't want to wait anymore and went to the site alone, regardless of the rumors.

The ruins are a ghastly cemetery. No one lives there. He approached the crypt and ran into the magical barrier. He examined it and tried to cross it somehow without any success. Just when he was about to leave, one of the Mondragon spirits charged toward the barrier to attack Samuel. The blow was in vain thanks to the invisible force dividing both rooms, but it was enough to scare the explorer. He got on his horse and did not look back. On the way back, he thought that with this intelligence, he could make a case with the King. He requested an audience with the King and his advisor as soon as he returned.

His request was granted a month later and, once there, Samuel explained that he was more than certain that Dragonia has a royal crypt under the ruins of the castle and that there are many valuables in there. He said that he doesn't need an army nor to bother any of the members of the guard. He just needs funds to hire some muscle to fight the guardians of the crypt. The gold spent on the sellswords would be more than tripled with the stash at the crypt. He closed his argument saying that since Dragonia was inside King Havertz territory, the treasure belonged to His Majesty. He would only ask for a commission on the bounty.

Samuel's argument was so convincing that the King's advisor prompted His Majesty to accept. Samuel was authorized to offer 75 gold pieces to each of the adventur-

ers he hires. There was only one condition. They are to leave on two carriages. The purpose is to carry all valuables back and to be escorted. A team of five disguised king's guards shall accompany Samuel and the hired sellswords. They identify themselves as simple cohorts, historians, and the like. This is in case the adventurers think about getting away with any of the treasures found in the crypt and resist arrest. Everything in the crypts shall be reported and brought back to the castle.

NPCs

SAMUEL STERLING

Chaotic neutral human (age 39)

Samuel looks a bit younger than he is. He is swift and slim. He wears a green vest and thick spectacles. He also carries a large leather bag with lots of tools and trinkets for cartography, exploration, and camping.

Personality Trait. "Treat every day as a new adventure."

Ideal. "Opportunities are there; you just have to take them!"

Bond. "This job shall increase my reputation in such a way that I will be part of the king's court."

Flaw. "Personal hygiene is not one of my strong points."

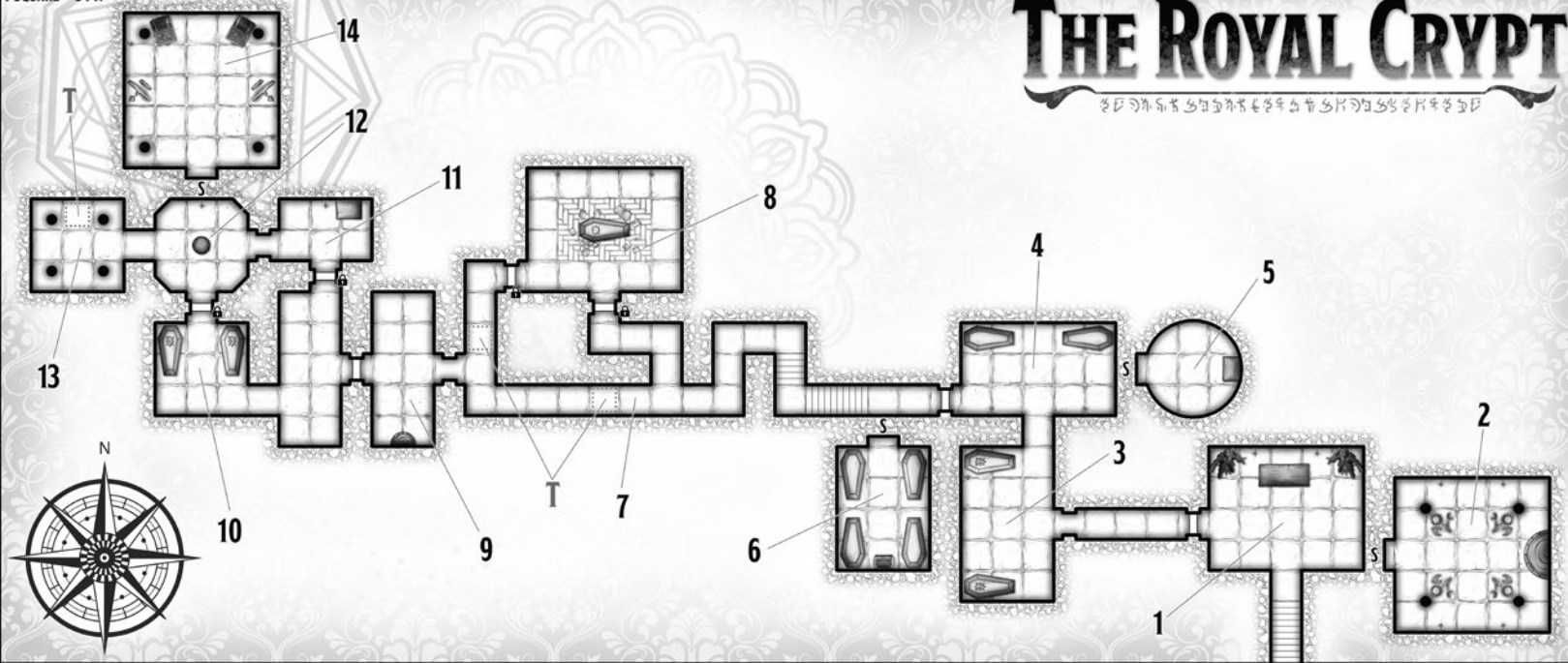
AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 14 correspond to the underground crypt in Dragonia.

Terrain. The stone tiles of the crypt are in good condition. Only the corners of the rooms show little signs of wear.

Doors. All doors are slabs of stone on steel rails that slide sideways. There are handles carved in the stone to facilitate their sliding. Doors marked with a padlock icon (see map) are locked. A successful DC 19 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to force the mechanism and open any of the doors. A character using thieves'

1 SQUARE = 5 FT.



tools can unlock any of the doors with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check.

Light. Sconces with magical fire illuminate most of the crypt chambers. The continual flame magic on the sconces fades away after 5 minutes if the sconce is removed.

Smells and Sounds. Since the activation of the glyph, the undead came out of their tombs and filled the place with their stench. Their grunts and growls also echo in the long underground complex.

Sarcophagi. All the sarcophagi have decorations. The border of the lids, the emblems on their surfaces, and other aesthetic details can be removed. They are well-conserved, fine strips of gold and silver. The sigils on top of some of the sarcophagi are also a representation of that individual's reputation in life. The sigils can be removed as well. Mondragon family found peace and pleasure in such crafts. The collective value of all sarcophagi precious metals and stones is 250 gold pieces.

Invisible Wall. There is a magical barrier blocking the way to the stairs (area 1). The wall is one inch thick. It is similar to a *wall of force* spell, but not as powerful. The wall in the crypt doesn't extend into the Ethereal Plane. Additionally, a *dispel magic* spell can deactivate the barrier as well for 1 hour.

Alternative Entrance. In case the adventurers don't have the means to dispel the invisible barrier, a passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals a section of the side walls of the stairs that looks weak. A group of four or five people can work for six hours to remove enough boulders and blocks of stone to clear a path. Any creature who participated actively in removing rocks must make a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw or acquire one level of exhaustion. This does not affect the invisible barrier and it stays in place.

1. ENTRANCE LANDING

After a 30-feet-long flight of stairs, there is a room with two identical, mirrored statues with a large pedestal between them. An otherworldly scream of a woman pierces the ears of those who enter as a welcoming salutation. One **ghost**, one **shadow**, and two **spirits** emerge from the ceiling, floor, and walls to meet the intruders.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals that one of the stone blocks on the east wall has a spot to place a hand and pull. This causes a whole section of the wall to move sideways and reveal a secret path to area 2.

2. RITUAL CHAMBER

Four pillars are aligned with four magical runes on the floor. This is the place where the last Mondragon pronounced the incantation that set their fates. There is a fountain by the eastern wall of the room. The water used to be holy and have healing properties, but the undead have desecrated it. A *detect magic* spells reveals a faint evocation magic aura. Any creature that drinks from the fountain must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for one hour.

3. COPPER SARCOPHAGI

The Mondragon family divided their sarcophagi into sections with the names of stones and metals. The hierarchy is based on the importance of that particular person and their position in the family. The two sarcophagi in this chamber have a copper emblem on them. Two **ghouls** attack anyone when they open the door to get here.

4. FLINT SARCOPHAGI

The sarcophagi here have a gray tint and their covers are decorated with flint. Members of the Mondragon family buried here were not very important, or never did something remarkable. The walls of this room bear a columbarium on them: about twenty niches with stone lids contain small ornate copper urns with the ashes of other Mondragon relatives. There are two **ghouls** ready to devour any living thing hiding inside the sarcophagi. They emerge from their boxes and join the fight when they hear noise in area 3.

Secret Door. A character with a passive Perception score of 15 or higher notices a difference in the eastern sconce in the room. Pulling the sconce causes a whole section of the wall to move sideways and reveal a secret path to area 5.

5. SECRET SHRINE

This circular chamber is empty but for the small stone pedestal in it. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the top part of the pedestal is, in fact, a lid. A successful DC 14 Strength check allows a character to lift it and put it aside.

Treasure. Inside the stone chest, there is a leather bag with 100 gold pieces. A nice, varnished, wooden box with one ivory chess set inside worth 125 gold pieces. And a small container with 2 *potions of healing*.

6. STONE SARCOPHAGI

This section of the crypt is kept hidden for a purpose. The people buried here are members of the Mondragon family that shamed them in some way, or that had an embarrassing death. The niches on the walls don't have ornate copper vessels like the ones in area 4. The ashes here rest in ugly clay urns. The sarcophagi here have nothing special, they are made of stone. Another sign of disdain from the rest of the family is that the ritual from area 2 didn't affect this room. Unremarkable, decayed corpses fill the sarcophagi here.

There is a chest south of the room. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the chest is a trap. A character using thieves' tools can deactivate the trap with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check.

Treasure. Inside the chest, there are only old clothes, rags, and worthless tools and kitchenware. This was another way to express their scorn toward these shameful members of the family. They were buried with nothing to carry to the afterlife.



7. TRAPPED HALLWAY

There are two pressure-sensitive plates in this long hallway (see map). A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals their presence. A character using thieves' tools can disable either plate with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

The southernmost pressure-sensitive plate triggers a crossbow bolts trap. 10 bolts shoot from opposite walls. Any creature that steps on the plate must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (4d6) piercing damage.

The second one is a 10-foot-deep pitfall trap. Any creature that steps on the pressure-sensitive plate must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. To step out of the pit a character must succeed on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

Secret Door. 10 feet west of area 4, a passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals a loose stone brick on the wall. Pressing such brick slides a whole section of the wall and reveals a secret location (area 6).

8. GOLD SARCOPHAGUS

Both entrances to this chamber are locked. This is the most important chamber in the crypt. The Mondragon founder of the city that once stood in this part of the land is buried here. The sarcophagus is placed in the middle of the room while books, jewels, and notes are scattered all around it on the floor. A **mummy** and two **shadows** defend this resting place the moment someone enters.

Treasure. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the book on the floor is, in fact, the *Mondragon's Journal*. It describes important aspects of what happened during their reign. The book also explains why the sarcophagi are decorated differently, and who are the individuals buried in each of the tombs. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check when reading the journal reveals the command word for area 14 is 'Pickle'.

The last entry describes the events of their last day alive. The book is worth 30 gp when sold to an antiquarian or to an important library.

9. HOLY FOUNTAIN

This holy fountain is similar to the one in area 2. It lost its beneficial magical properties due to the presence of the undead. A *detect magic* spells reveals a faint evocation magic aura. Any creature that drinks from the fountain must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for one hour.

10. SILVER SARCOPHAGI

Fine strips of silver decorate the lids of these sarcophagi. Two **ghouls** wait inside their boxes as if sleeping. If any of the sarcophagi lids is moved, both undead emerge and attack.

11. FOYER

This room is empty but for a small stone crate. It contains embalming and other materials needed for preserving bodies and eliminating bad smells. There is nothing of value in it.

12. PRAYING CHAMBER

The journal found in area 8 describes how the Mondragon family gathered here and performed a burial ceremony every time a member of their family died. They buried the deceased in their rightful place in the crypt and prayed here, standing in a circle around the spheroid altar in the center.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the north wall has the shape of a door on it. Pressing the central sphere downward causes the whole section of the wall to move sideways and reveal a secret path to area 14.

13. FAKE VAULT

Although this chamber is full of valuable treasure, this is a fake vault. The walls in this chamber are decorated with precious metals and stones. The columns in the room are inlaid with rubies and sapphires. And the north wall has a large gold engraving on it. It depicts Mondragon's family crest.

The stone tile in front of the golden engraving has a trap. This room is meant to deceive possible invaders and keep the real vault intact from foreign hands. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the presence of the pressure-sensitive plate (see map). A character using thieves' tools can disarm the trap with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check. The trap activates a pendulum that swings a blade from one column to the other. Any creature on the marked area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (4d6) slashing damage.

Treasure. Taking the time to remove the precious stones from the columns and the other decorations on the walls results on a bounty with a collective value of 225 gold pieces. The gold engraving is worth 200 gold pieces, although removing it requires tools and much time.

14. VAULT

This square chamber is the real vault. There are two runes on the floor that are activated when someone enters without saying the command word. An **earth elemental** comes forth to fight and defend its former master's treasure. Two chests are brimming with treasure next to the north wall.

Treasure. Countless gold pieces, jewels, precious stones, and silverware shine under the sconces' light. Crowns with jewels, bracelets, necklaces, rings, etc. The chests had all kinds of accessories that aristocrats wear. The collective value of this hoard is 12,000 gold pieces.

DEVELOPMENT

Samuel and his men wait outside and enter once the adventurers tell them it is safe to go in. They inspect the place and make sure the royal treasures and belongings are still in place. Deceiving Samuel and the others requires a successful DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check.

If the adventurers are found guilty of lying or keeping part of the treasure, Samuel warns them he is instructed to arrest them if needed and suggests a different course of action. If a confrontation is the only outcome of the negotiations, Samuel quickly gets on his horse to return to the city and inform the King while the five men stop and arrest the adventurers. The king's men are a **gladiator**, two **veterans**, and two **acolytes**.

In case the adventurers defeat them and get away with the treasure, the Havertz do not take it lightly. "Wanted" posters appear in the capital and neighbor cities and towns within a fortnight. The king instructs Samuel and his men to post an assassination bounty on the adventurers' heads.

DM Note. This combat in particular can result lethal after the characters' progression in the dungeon. The king's men do not strike lethal blows when the adventurers drop to 0 hit points. Instead, they knock them out unconscious and arrest them. The adventurers wake up in a cell, deprived of all their belongings.

No, no. No one goes to that place anymore. It brings bad omens, and it always gives me the creeps.

Concerned citizen

THE ENDLESS MASS



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

BACKGROUND LORE



Be careful what you wish for. Or so the saying goes. Sometimes, dreams-come-true are not exactly what we expected. Abbot Miheh is an example of this. He was presented with an opportunity to change his stars and he didn't hesitate to take it. The problem was that he didn't stop to think about whom he was dealing with, or what were the conditions for accepting said help.

Abbot Miheh has been a part of the religious community all his life. He was born in the city, and religious authorities know him since he was a young boy and an acolyte. Miheh was always dutiful and responsible for church duties. He didn't find many obstacles to become an important member of the divine community. Miheh grew up and most of the religious folk in the city saw him become who he is today.

However, Abbot Miheh had the misfortune of running into a demonic presence. While leafing through various ancient tomes at the library, he came across a small book strapped in black leather bindings. The abbot was going over a section in the library where they keep magic tomes and some other forbidden papers. He had the authorization to through all these thanks to his reputation with the clergy. He was curious about some religious debates and discussions about the faith. He thought he could find some answers here. The book seemed to be empty; its pages were all white. But just when Miheh was about to shut it close, a series of delicate and sophisticated words and letters appeared on the book's pages, forming words. The dark presence in the book was a demon named Thar'idan, who was cursed and bound to live inside the book for the rest of eternity. It felt the abbot's soul and could almost read his

mind as if it were an open book. The demon noticed the human had a weak heart and an even weaker mind.

Miheh thought he had found a miraculous diary, a booklet sent from the gods for him. The words in the book were replies for anything Miheh said or thought. The book answered in the same fashion every time the abbot spoke to it. At first, the demon made Miheh believe the book had sacred properties, and that it should be kept a secret, lest it would have to disappear. It was easy for the demon to manipulate such a naïve and gentle soul.

Day by day, Miheh became more and more obsessed with the book. He spoke to it all the time, asking for its take on matters. After several months of dependence, the abbot started losing the ability to make decisions for himself and would seek the book's opinion for anything. It was then when Thar'idan put his plan into practice. The demon needed to feed on mortals' sorrow and fear. Accumulating enough of these emotions would grant him the possibility to free himself from the book.

Thar'idan offered Miheh the time and power to become the most respected religious authority in the city, and then the world. The demon promised the abbot the ability to perform infinite masses and religious ceremonies. Through the fine ink that appeared on the pages, the demon assured Miheh he would charm the faithful and that his followers would never leave the church. His delusion got worse day by day; the abbot could not see this was all a surreal fantasy. Miheh replied saying that he would love to have such powers, and he also said that he knew of a place where they could make all this come true. An old temple underground where a cult was arrested red-handed some months past. After describing the place to Thar'idan, the demon even dared say that doing all this and restoring the place would be a nice way to hallow that temple again and erase the evil memories

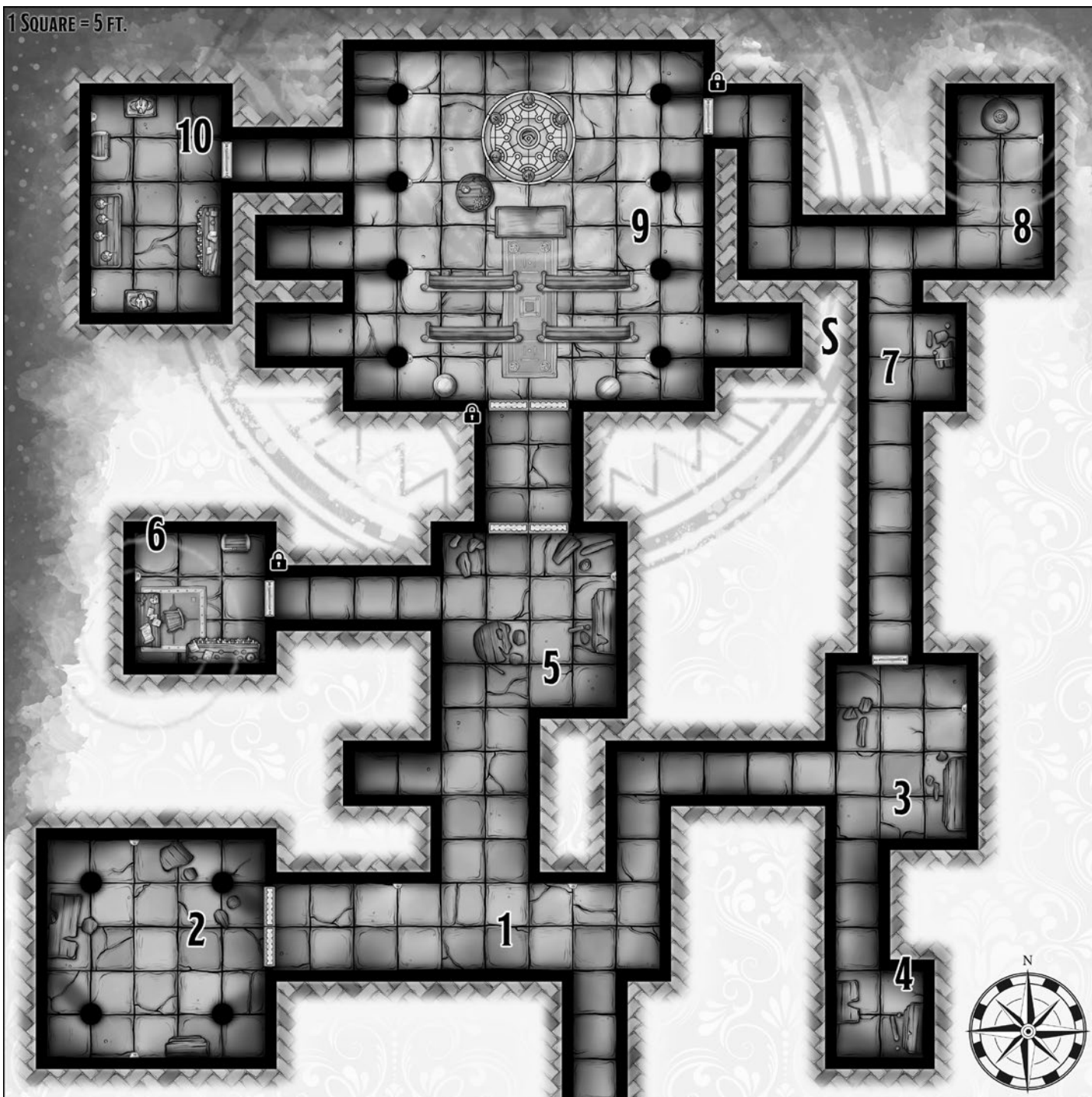
from it. Of course, the demon only said this to motivate Mihen even further.

Mihen fell for it. His innocence prevented him from reading between the lines or perhaps, to grasp the literal meaning of what he desired. Be careful what you wish for. Or so the saying goes. At first, Mihen had to spend some time to adapt the place and refurbish it. Mihen consulted the demon for everything and basically, he just did as the demon asked.

It took about a month for Mihen to readapt the temple. By that time, there was almost no trace of his former self. The demon controlled everything he did through the book. The more Mihen communicated with Thar'idan, the more charmed he was. People stopped hearing

about Mihen. The popular abbot who whose appearance was common in certain circles became a gossip.

A fortnight after the restoration, Mihen began the preparations for his endless mass. He went with half a dozen people he knew well and asked them to follow him. They were so surprised and glad to see him that they accepted without any suspicions. They hesitated a little when they approached the abandoned temple underground but Mihen was kind and convincing. When they entered, Mihen's followers calmed down because they saw what the abbot had done to the place. And they were charmed by the magnificence and magical aura in the ceremonial chamber. The abbot had them sit and he proceeded to perform the endless mass.



Thar'idan asked Mihen to draw a magic circle on the floor. This set of runes activates a demonic ritual to slow the passage of time in an area. When Mihen commenced the religious ceremony, the ritual started as well. Time slowed a hundred times compared to the exterior of the ceremonial chamber. And thus, the endless mass began. The magic circle has a secondary function. It enchants those in the area with a horrible kind of immortality. The people attending the mass cannot leave the place. Their mouths are bound to pray for the rest of eternity, and they shall keep their seats forever.

It took little time for the poor people to realize their situation. After praying for an hour or so, they realized they could not move or leave their seats. The abbot couldn't stop preaching. And the worst part was that even if they were aware of this, they could not scream for help, nor fight it. They were trapped in this monotonous living nightmare. Thar'idan basked in the humans' fear and felt its forces come back little by little. Its plan had worked perfectly. It would take much time but as long as the mass continued, he would gather more strength until one day he could free himself.

The news in the city was that some people went missing, and no one heard from Abbot Mihen again. The city watch never found any leads or information regarding the missing priest, and some months after the incident, they forgot about it. One-hundred years have passed, and abbot Mihen still performs a never-ending mass to his faithful followers. For the abbot and the attendees, only a year has come and gone. But that time is more than enough for their bodies to decay. Their mortal lives parted from this world to welcome an immortal existence as a spawn of the dark. But even in death, their decomposed bodies still go on with the mass. Be careful what you wish for...

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The adventurers come across this abandoned temple when exploring the city. They do not know much about it. They only heard a tip about the place. They say that it is haunted. Just before entering, they hear a voice in their heads that says: "Approach, I'm about to break from a lifetime prison, you shall be my first meal...". This is Thar'idan taunting the adventurers to come to find it.

The Duke in the city needs to refurbish an abandoned temple for political purposes. He sent some men already to assess the cost of remodeling it but it was not possible. The temple has several locations well locked, and weird, frightening sounds can be heard from outside the rooms. The Duke orders his men to hire a group of sellswords or mercenaries to get rid of the possible threat immediately. The Duke offers 75 gold to each participant.

An old wizard researcher meets the adventurers at the tavern. He explains that he detected a strong aura of transmutation magic coming from an abandoned temple. He wants to go verify what is causing such power but he doesn't want to go alone. He offers 15 gold to each and the possibility to keep anything they find.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 10 correspond to the underground temple in the city.

Location. The temple underground can be accessed through a tunnel under a trapdoor at the end of a cul-de-sac in a poor neighborhood in town. The place is believed to have been a sort of ancient crypt.

Terrain. The floor tiles in the temple are old. All the rooms show cracks and loose tiles on walls and floors.

Doors. The doors are considerably newer than the rest of the building. The oak doors have high-quality locks. Doors marked with a padlock icon (see map) can be opened with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check made by a character using thieves' tools.



Light. The rooms and halls in the temple are lit by magical fire on crystal sconces. If the crystal sconce is broken or removed, the fire loses its magical properties and dies out.

Smells and Sounds. Unlocked areas are silent and humid. The smell of rot and putrefaction trespasses the wooden doors and can be perceived from area 5. Grunts and mumbles of the undead praying and continuing with the mass can also be heard.

Traps. Thar'idan took good care to protect the mass from undesired interruptions. He ordered Mihen to lock all doors with high-quality locks. Plus, all doors with a padlock (see map) have a trap. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the presence of any of the traps. A character using thieves' tools can disarm any of the traps with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

1. ENTRYWAY

The first chambers in the temple are not locked. The main door is open. This has caused many burglars and bums to enter and see what they can salvage through the years. The available areas have been sacked many times. From the entrance, an empty hallway breaks into three different directions. From this part of the temple, only a faint humming can be heard coming from the north.

2. FOYER

The good condition of the double door gives a noticeable contrast to the mess in the room. Remnants and pieces of wood are all there is from the former chairs and tables that once were here. Four pillars that also show signs of wear and tear cast lonely shadows on the wrecked furniture.

3. DINING ROOM

This area was used to relax and eat or drink tea while reading something. Chunks of wood and planks are scattered all over the floor. An unlocked door to the north leads to a long hallway (area 7).

4. STORAGE

There is nothing of value here. Mihen used this area of the temple as a storage room. Now there is nothing but old and moldy remains of wood.

5. LIBRARY

The remains of a bookshelf and other wooden furniture lay scattered on the ground of this chamber. To the west, a 20-foot-long corridor leads to a locked door. To the north, unlocked, is the first of the two double doors that take to area 9. A character using *detect magic* can perceive an aura of transmutation magic coming from the ceremonial chamber (area 9).

6. ABBOT'S STUDIO

This door is locked and trapped. Fire jets burn all those who try to open it. Touching the doorknob activates the trap. If the trap wasn't deactivated, any creature standing

at least 15 feet from the door must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire bursts to the exterior of the room and doesn't damage any of the room's contents. The door, however, remains locked. The fire jets replenish their oil in an hour.

A large bookshelf and a desk feature countless documents and papers. A green carpet under the desk decorates the place. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the presence of a small book with a black leather cover. It is placed on the table, under a couple of scrolls and papers. If opened, Thar'idan uses the pages of the book to chat with whoever finds it. The demon attempts to convince the adventurers to enter the Ceremonial Chamber (area 9) and take the book with them. Any creature interacting with the book must make a successful DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become the target of a *suggestion* spell. On a failed save, the creature takes the book, moves toward area 9, and tries to open the doors, activating the trap in the process. If no one finds the book or falls for the demon's deception, Thar'idan's anger manifests in a **wraith**. The evil spirit attacks all living things around.

Treasure. The chest contains a couple of leather pouches with gold. Fine fabrics and tunics are folded and stored in a nice leather bag. The smell of expensive spices and herbs can be felt when a small wooden box is opened. All this has a collective value of 158 gold pieces.

7. CORRIDOR

This large hallway is used to enter the Ceremonial Chamber (area 9) from the side. It formerly had a small wooden table with a mirror on the eastern wall but they were wrecked or stolen.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals a loose brick on the west wall. Pressing the brick activates a sliding mechanism that causes a section of the wall to move sideways and reveal a secret path to area 9. The abbot used this as the entrance before commencing the endless ceremony.

8. SHRINE

Thar'idan asked Mihen to build this shrine before starting the endless mass. The demon thought this would be another good measure to keep intruders at bay. The stone pedestal holds an old relic on top. A character using *detect magic* can perceive an aura of illusion magic coming from the shrine. Any creature at least 20 feet from the shrine must make a successful DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for one minute. The creature must use its movement to get as far as possible from the shrine. At the end of its turn, the creature can make a saving throw; on a success, the effect ends for that creature. This saving throw is made with disadvantage if the creature is still inside the temple. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the shrine's effect for the next 24 hours.

9. CEREMONIAL CHAMBER

The south entrance of this area is trapped. Poisoned darts fly from east and west of the walls. The trap is triggered when the double door is manipulated either to open it or to pick the lock. If the trap wasn't deactivated, any creature standing between both sets of double doors south of area 9 must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 1 (1d3-1) piercing damage and be poisoned for one hour.

The eastern door is trapped as well. A hot metal plate on the door bursts outwards and hits whoever is in front of it. If the trapped wasn't deactivated, any creature that touches the door must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 19 (6d6) bludgeoning and fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. An hour after the activation of the trap, it resets as a new metal plate materializes on the surface of the door.

Rows of pillars with magic fire sconces flank the chamber. This creates an effect that keeps the center of the room bright, while both sides opposite to the sconces are kept in dim light. A strong aura of transmutation magic fills the room. Time passes a hundred times slower inside this chamber. Abbot Mihen stands by the tabernacle. Six individuals sit and listen patiently.

Although their bodies continue with their ceremony as if nothing happened, their faces show twisted grimaces of fear and pain. Their decomposed, maggoty bodies only react until they are spoken to or interacted with and the mass is interrupted. When the mass stops, the abbot and the attendees give a strong sigh, as if relieved, only to be muted by an ear-piercing shriek of agony and pain. After their tantrum, the abbot (**ghast**) and the attendees (**ghouls**) attack with claws and fangs.

The moment the abbot and the rest of the people finally die, Thar'idan obtains the final piece of strength that he needed. The tormented souls of the people suffered for a long time, feeding the demon's soul. Dying as a vestige of the humans they once were marked the pinnacle of their suffering. This helped Thar'idan break from its book prison. The **shadow demon** emerges from the pages of the book and unleashes its fury on the adventurers.

DM Note. When the demon dies, the transmutation magic in the circle stops functioning, and the passing of time inside the temple returns to normal. If the adventurers confronted the abbot and the demon inside this chamber, when they come out, a whole day has passed. The time spent inside the room is multiplied by a hundred.

10. ABBOT'S OFFICE

The room looks neat and organized. Two identical busts decorate the north and south walls. There is a large bookshelf packed with documents and scrolls. A wooden chest lays beside a large table. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the abbot's diary in one of the shelves. The book's entries are dated, and they describe the day the abbot found the book, a hundred years ago. The abbot describes the book as holy,

and he feels blessed for having found it. The last entry of the diary has different handwriting though, and it reads: "Everything is ready now, once I start with the mass, it will only be a matter of time for my return... Good thing, time is the only thing I have".

Treasure. The chest contains two rubies, one sapphire, and a set of decorative quartz pieces. There are two *potions of healing*, and superior quality church implements such as a golden chalice, or a silver candle holder. All this has a collective value of 236 gold pieces.

I don't care what's causing it. Just fix it, no more missing people!

Fenmar, village mayor



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

A SONG FROM THE WINDY MOUNTAIN

BACKGROUND LORE



Heroes and adventurers often look for jobs and bounties in guilds and large cities. Tales about dragons and epic monsters are not common in small settlements. However, villages and hamlets are also sometimes in dire need of heroes. The threat might not be as challenging as a lair of evil illithids, but the common folk are no match for the beasts and monsters of the wild. Bumli is one of those small villages that requires the particular set of skills that adventurers have.

Bumli is a small village situated nearby the Windy Mountains. This small community is led by Mayor Fenmar Mest. He has been in charge of town for almost a decade and people are pleased with his presence and with what's been done in the village during his period. Fenmar coordinates the village's growing and slow expansion. He wishes for healthy, controlled growth, rather than a reckless, unmeasurable enlargement.

The village's economy depends on farming and agriculture. Most villagers work the land from dawn to sunset, while others are hunter/gatherers. The forest by the skirts of the Windy Mountains thrives with game and resources. The woods are not far from the village. The road to the forest is flanked by all kinds of flora. Gatherers eat some of the fruit and berries on their way back to the village. They throw away the seeds and rinds by the road so they grow during the year. It has worked and baby bushes and trees are sprouting.

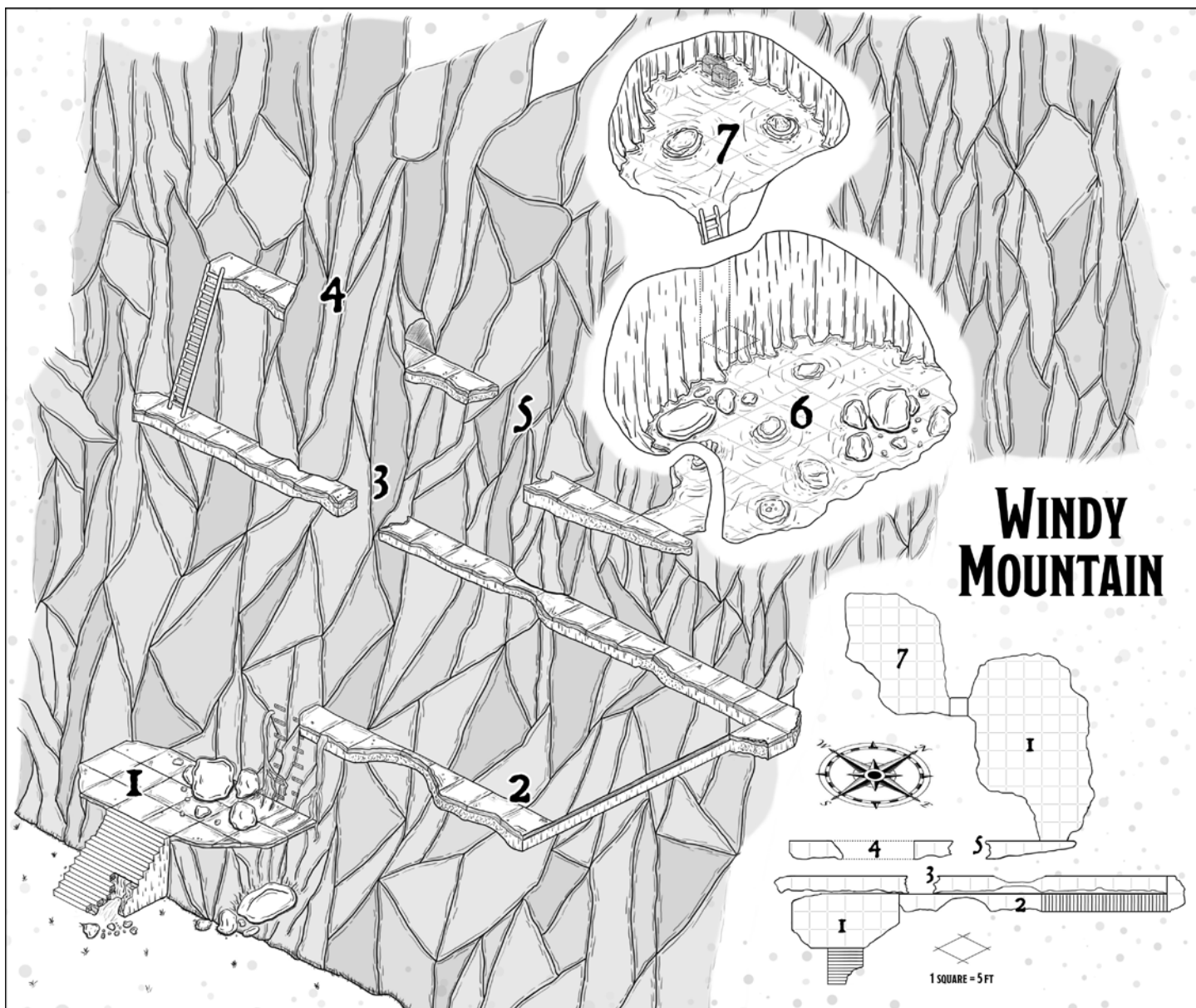
About a month ago, one of the gatherers, Gwen, didn't come back home. Her family and other volunteers stayed the whole night looking for her but failed. Five days after that incident, a group of three gatherers, Sven and his two younger siblings, Bran and Katalina,

went missing too. The youngest, the girl, had just turned sixteen the week before. Fenmar rallied the few men that act as guards in the village and two scores of volunteers to organize search parties within the forest boundaries and the skirts of the mountains. The operation was an utter failure. Two more people, Klint and his drinking buddy Ragnor, the dwarf, disappeared the day of the search.

And sadly, the number of missing people only grew. Eight days later, Anne, the seamstress, couldn't find her daughter Gina. She panicked and, drowned in distress, went looking for her. Gina was fine. She just wanted to be the focus of attention so she thought that hiding was a good idea to make people worry about her. The girl's mother got lost too and now Gina is inconsolable. And a week after that, Tom, Bernard, Dickens, and Watasha, who secretly went out looking for their missing friends, never came back either. Only Watasha returned. Her body shows gash wounds and several fine cuts. She is shocked and rests at the infirmary at the time. This took the number of missing people to ten.

The moment Fenmar saw Watasha, he sent a letter to the closest city. He informed the crown that he would use funds to deal with this matter and expects a reimbursement from the crown after the matter is settled. The number of missing people is alarming considering the size of Bumli. Watasha's return was just six days ago. Fenmar ordered the whole village to stop going out and asked everyone to stay put. He fears more people might go missing if normal activities are resumed. The mayor has the gold to pay a group of adventurers, he just hopes such heroes are available and present in Bumli to deal with this situation.

When Fenmar gets a hold of a group of strong looking individuals in one of the local inns or taverns, he offers 15 gold pieces each. He specifies the job is to stop people



from disappearing. Be it a monster, a witch, or a magical portal, Fenmar pays for this situation to stop. He says he doesn't know much about the rumors or what the villagers are saying. He suggests to go talk to them, especially with Watasha, provided she feels well enough to chat.

If the adventurers question the villagers about the situation the obtain the following information:

There are rumors about witches in the forest. People say these witches change their appearance to look beautiful. Some villagers believe this is the explanation for the missing people.

Other villagers talk of demons. They describe demons that assume the form of angels to make you trust them. They take your hand to lead the way and, when you realize it, it's too late.

A few people though, mention they heard women's voices coming from the mountains. A sort of melody, a song.

If the adventurers visit Watasha at the infirmary, they can try to talk to her. She is still in shock and traumatized by what she witnessed. A character must succeed

on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Watasha to describe what she saw. Watasha can be soothed with a *calm emotions* spell too. If she is persuaded to talk, she does so with a weak, trembling voice. She tells the adventurers the following:

She approached the mountain with Tom, Bernard, and Dickens. They wanted to find Klint, their friend. They had heard another villager mention women's voices coming from the Windy Mountains so they reckoned it was the way to go. When they got closer, they could hear a beautiful voice coming from the mountain. The singing hypnotized them. She recalls how they all started to move towards the mountain to climb it. She doesn't know why but they wanted to, they needed to get to the source of the melody. It was when they were midway up when her friend Tom fell. He just kept walking forward and fell down a chasm where the stone flooring was missing (see area 3) and died. When that happened, Bernard, Dickens, and her woke up from their stupor.

Tom had just fallen to his death and his bent corpse lay motionless 60 feet below. They were in the middle of a 5 feet corridor on the side of a mountain. And above, winged witches shrieked while approaching them with their sharp talons. She fled and ran down the stairs while covering her head. She recalls how Bernard and Dickens covered her way out. That makes her feel guilty. After this, Watasha starts sobbing and it is not possible to draw another word from her regarding this topic.

NPCs

MAYOR FENMAR MEST

Neutral good human (age 46)

Fenmar doesn't wear fancy clothes. If he didn't mention it, one would think he is another farmer. He likes to work the land as well and he is in good shape. He is straightforward. He cares for the community but his indifference to details and direct involvement hinder his intentions to protect Bulmi and make it prosper.

Personality Trait. "Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today."

Ideal. "If everybody thought like me, the world would be a better place."

Bond. "Bumli is my life, I must protect it and see for its future."

Flaw. "I don't care much about details, the less I meddle in complicated affairs, the better."

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 7 correspond to the Windy Mountains map.

Story. The Windy Mountains are a huge rocky formation. An ancient temple was once often visited at the top. The only way to access this temple was by climbing the mountain. A group of monks built stone pathways and stairs on the side of the mountain long ago. Centuries have passed and the monks no longer inhabit these lands. However, the ruins of the temple and their old pathways remain.

Terrain. The stone tile flooring of the pathways shows significant natural erosion damage. Several sections of the pathways are cracked or incomplete. Stone tiles sections that are not complete are considered difficult terrain. The caves' floor is hard dirt and ground.

Smells and Sounds. The beautiful song of the harpies can be heard 300 feet away from the mountain. While charmed, the harpies' voice is mesmerizing and tantalizing. Characters immune to the harpies' song hear shrieks and wails. The harpies' lair is laid with offal. The smell of rot is strong enough for eyes to water.

HARPIES' TACTICS.

There are six harpies in the cave. The harpies try to lure their victims with their singing. When potential prey are climbing the mountain, they attack. They dive and attempt to push their victims off the pathways to watch them fall and crack their skulls. The 6 harpies in area 6 wait for their song to do its job. If the luring song doesn't work, they throw rocks and skulls to incite and enrage intruders. When the adventurers are midway up (areas 3, 4, and 5) the harpies come out of the cave and attempt to make the adventurers trip and fall to their deaths.

1. MOUNTAIN BASE

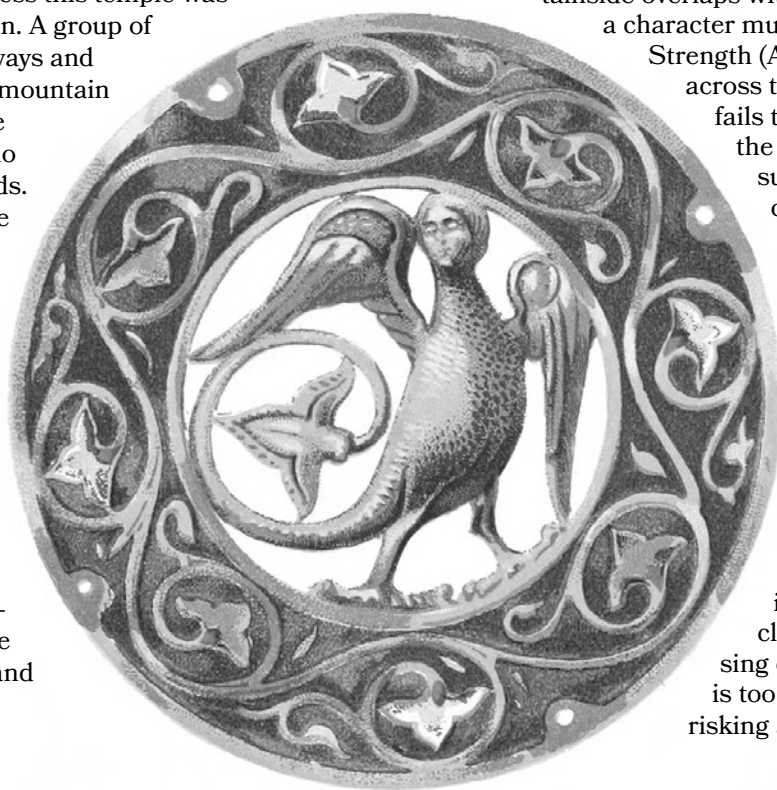
The base of the mountain has a small platform. The steps are partially destroyed but are still climbable. Large rocks and boulders mark the place where another sets of stairs stood before. A passive Perception score of 13 or higher reveals there are some cracks on the mountainside to climb to a pathway 20 feet above.

2. STAIRS

There are dry blood marks on the stone tiles along the way. Thick, brown feathers have accumulated in cracks on the floor and the mountain wall. The stairs ascend 25 feet before doubling back to another pathway.

3. INCOMPLETE PATHWAY

This long pathway is 100 feet long. There are two hazards. First, characters must squeeze where the mountainside overlaps with the stone tile. Second, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to jump across the gap. A character who fails this check can grab onto the edge of the pathway with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check to avoid falling. Failing either check by 5 or more results in falling. A character that falls from this height goes down 60 feet. The fall deals 19 (6d6) bludgeoning damage. The pathway ends with a wooden hand ladder that goes up 25 feet. The harpies stole this ladder and placed it here. Its purpose is to allow intruders to get close to the top. The harpies sing or attack once the victim is too high to escape without risking a deadly fall.



4. TUNNEL

The 20-foot-long tunnel goes through a hollowed out section of the mountainside. After the tunnel, the pathway ends abruptly.

5. MISSING STAIRS

It appears that a complete set of stairs has collapsed from the mountainside, leaving a gap in between pathway sections. Jumping down and across the gap requires a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. A character who fails this check can grab onto the edge of the pathway with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check to avoid falling. Failing either check by 5 or more results in falling. A character that falls from this height goes down 85 feet. The fall deals 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage.

6. CAVE

There are several human carcasses and corpses scattered around this humid cave. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the partial corpses of the ten missing people are here, among with other humanoid creatures. Large rocks and boulders crowd the room.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals a pile of rubble blocks a secret passage leading to area 7.

7. SECRET CAVE

The harpies kept their treasures and loot in this cave. They managed to snatch chests from travelers on the road. The chests are not locked but their contents are not the usual valuables people keep.

Treasure. The chests contain the following: leather pouches with silver and copper pieces, a set of small wooden figurines, bloody cloths and napkins, two jars with ears and eyes in a yellowish solution, locks of hair glued together with an oozy white paste, and a couple of silverware pieces. The collective value of this treasure is 3 gold pieces.

DEVELOPMENT

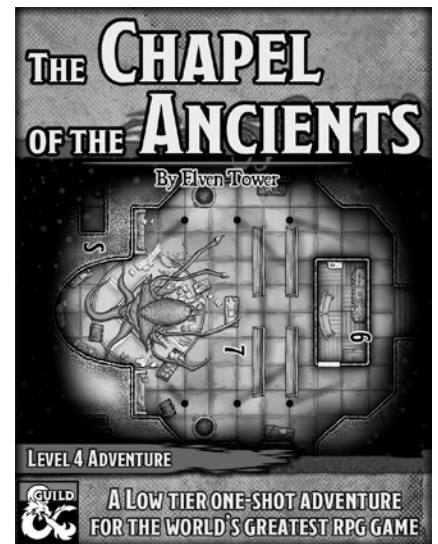
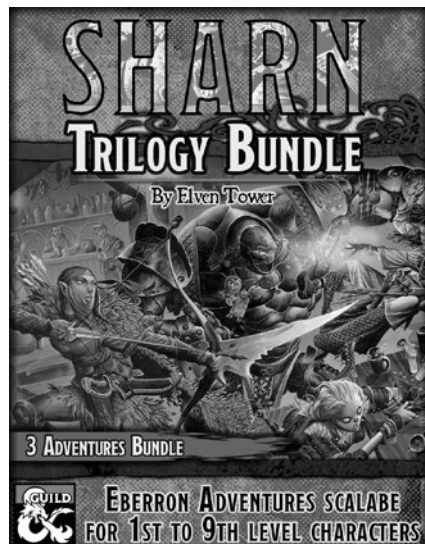
Fenmar thanks the adventurers for their job when they return and pays them the agreed-upon amount. The village asks them to stay for a small feast in their honor. It is a small celebration since many people are sad and still mourn their dead.

If the adventurers bring the corpses and remains of the missing people to the village, the village folk decide to gather some gold as a reward and a token of their appreciation. They give the party 35 gold pieces and thank the gods for having mercy on their relatives' souls. Now they can be properly buried and their souls shall find peace.

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