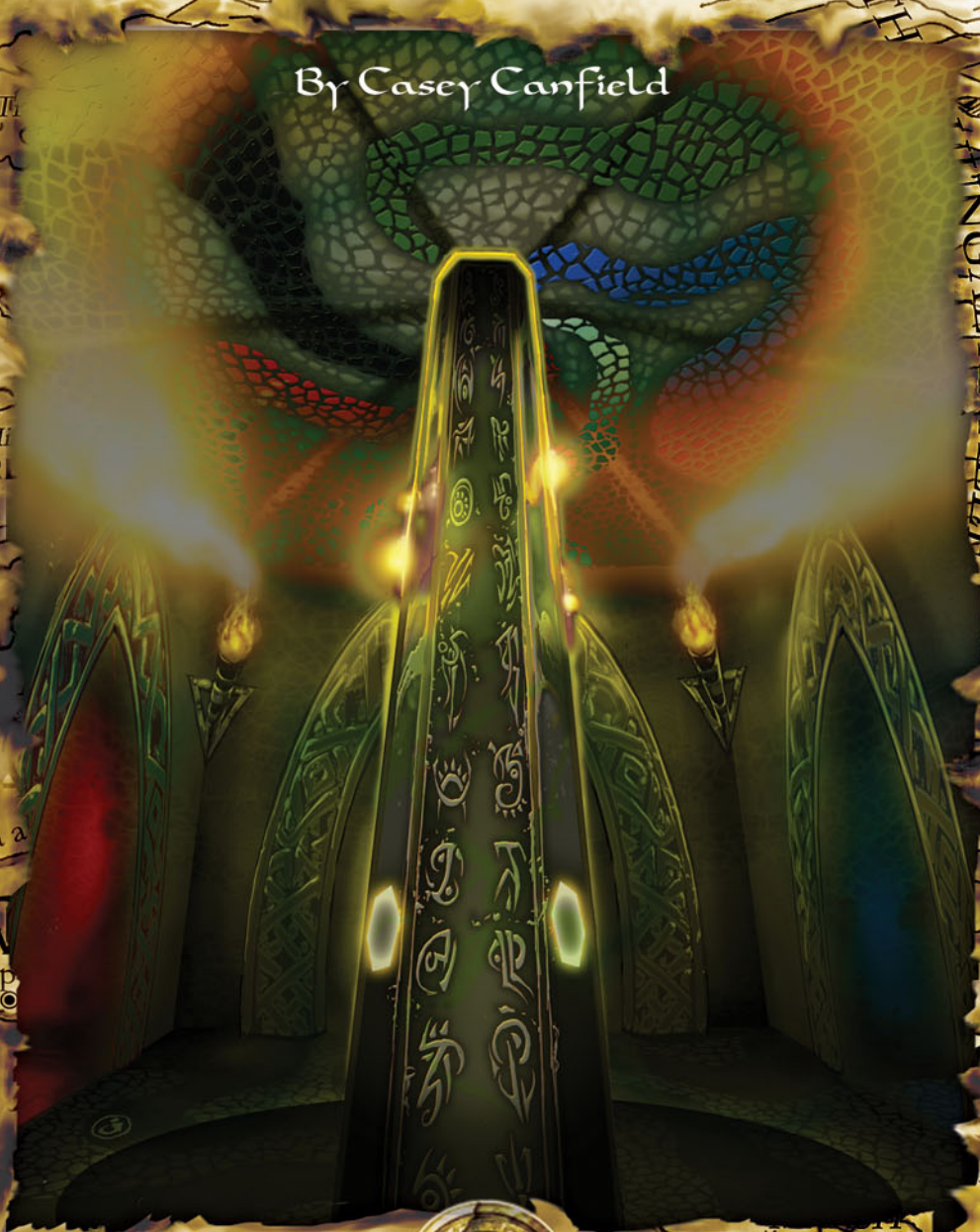




# CASTLES & CRUSADES<sup>®</sup>

## Fingers of the Forsaken Hand

By Casey Canfield



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# Fingers of the forsaken Hand

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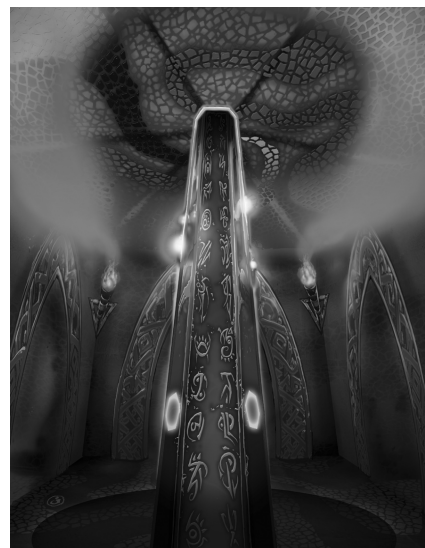


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This module is designed for characters of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> level with a challenge level of 7-8.



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# The Legend of the Forsaken

In an age long past, a philosophy of war was birthed amid conflict, honed in battle, and steeped in magic by a monastic sect, of a name lost to time. From generals of renowned fighting prowess, to the most wizened magi, and even those who were shapers of nature itself, all members of the sect put their accumulated knowledge toward one goal – an eternal peace.

After years of failure and disappointment, the leaders of the sect began to experience mysterious dreams. The dreams revealed a mountain in a remote area, curved like a vicious blade, far from known civilization. The dreams hinted at primeval struggle at the base of the mountain. All of the cult members interpreted this to be the “birthplace” of war, and assumed that a revelation was at hand, perhaps as a gift from the gods after decades of struggle and sacrifice.

The crusaders for peace sought and entered the mountain, making their home within. Whether they found their answer is uncertain, for no soul emerged to tell the tale, and the sect faded into oblivion’s embrace.

At the end of a long range of rounded, weathered mountains, and surrounded by treacherous terrain, the mountain remains tall and defiant. It rears its curved peak above the surrounding landscape, perpetually swept by swirling winds and snow.

Rumors have ever lingered around the mountain now known as the Sickle. The legends say that the forsaken sect still dwells in darkness, within the rock. It is said that ancient treasures are ripe for the picking, if one is brave and clever enough to find the entrance and venture within.

Unfortunately, those who venture forth to reap the harvest often perish, and if they do return, often it is empty handed, and in the throes of madness.

If you intend to adventure as a player through the Fingers of the Forsaken Hand, read no further! The information contained within will ruin the challenge and intrigue for you and your fellow players. Let the Castle Keeper hold these secrets to reveal them in the proper time, in the proper way.

If you are a Castle Keeper, then read on!

The Fingers of the Forsaken Hand is a Castles & Crusades adventure designed for six to eight characters of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> level. However, even a large party of well-equipped high-level adventurers will have difficulty traversing the Fingers unless they are roleplayed by skilled players that work well as a team.

# For the Castle Keeper

The adventure plays in four sections.

The Village of Brionne is a small village nestled among steep hills at the foot of the Sickle. This section describes a few areas of the town, as well as several NPCs that the party will likely encounter. It does not present an exhaustive account of everything or everyone in Brionne! It is expected that the Castle Keeper will flesh out the town with material appropriate to the campaign. The party will probably spend a fair amount of time in Brionne, so it is important that the town feel robust.

The Foothills section is the adventurers’ next step toward the Fingers. Again, only the most important details of the area are presented. The Castle Keeper can decide whether to add more detail to make this portion of the adventure last longer, or whether to keep the details sparse, to hasten the entry into the Fingers. The Foothills section should be read carefully, as the encounters can change sequences, depending on player actions and the discretion of the Castle Keeper.

The Fingers and Sanctum sections are the meat of the adventure. Included are the details of the dungeon areas that the party must conquer, and the Sanctum of the sect, which is revealed to the party upon successful completion of the Fingers.

The Fingers of the Forsaken Hand can be used in a variety of campaign situations. With little effort, a Castle Keeper can seed legends and rumors of the great treasure sealed underneath the Sickle, and blend the adventure into any campaign setting.

The Castle Keeper should, as always, feel empowered to change this adventure to best suit his or her individual campaign.

## The Frontier Town of Brionne

(see Area & Town Map on Page 24)

Brionne is a very small alpine village, nestled in a narrow valley among rolling and occasionally rocky foothills. The Eth River carves its way down through the mountain range near the Sickle, forming an impressive series of ravines and canyons known as the Great Cut, and flows down into Brionne. The river bisects the town, and there is one bridge spanning the flow, constructed of quarried granite. The surrounding countryside is a beautiful spectacle, even in town. The hills are sharply sloped, but the grass grows vividly green - enough, even among the rocks, to nearly hurt the eyes. The architecture is simple and quaint, and seems to harmonize with the wilderness around the village.

The total population of Brionne and the surrounding area is about 250 people. Brionne is agrarian. Farmers raise hardy sheep and cattle on the surrounding rocky hillsides. There is a robust trade in wool goods from Brionne to larger towns, but Brionne is largely self-sufficient.



“Adventurers” in Brionne are usually just guards for caravans of wool and salted lamb as they pass between towns. Rangers are commonly found in Brionne. As a town on the outskirts of explored lands, Brionne is a waystation for rangers that observe or eliminate threatening humanoid monsters in the wilderlands. They are widely respected in Brionne, but given a wide berth by most of the townsfolk, as they tend to be rough around the edges.

There are several areas of note in Brionne. The following descriptions correspond to the numbered areas on the map of the town.

**Area 1: The Snake in the Boot** This inn offers simple lodging and decent, if crude, food and drink. The proprietor is a ranger, known now as Uncle Seeck. The “Snake”, as it is known locally, is popular among the farmers and laborers in and around Brionne, and the house does a strong business in the evenings.

The Snake in the Boot is a two-story establishment of hardwood and granite. It is well maintained, as a whole. The lower floor consists of a large common area with seating enough for three dozen. The common area has a long bar made of rough hewn lumber, worn smooth in places by the leanings of arms and elbows over many years’ time. Behind the bar rests three large oaken kegs, tapped and ready to pour a weak ale. Opposite the bar is a huge fireplace, logs stacked at the ready adjacent to it. A stairway on the left side of the common room leads upward to the second floor. The entire common room smells of wood smoke, lamp oil, and stale beer. In the back of the bar are two doors that lead into the kitchen, and one door leads from the left side of the kitchen into Uncle Seeck’s sleeping quarters. From the right side of the kitchen,

a wide stairway descends into the basement, where foodstuffs and ale are stored.

There are eight small rooms for rent on the second floor of the establishment. Each contains a lumpy bed with a table beside. The beds and tables are made of roughly cut pieces of lumber. There is a window in each room, small and drafty. The rooms are clean and vermin free, despite their roughness. None of these rooms are occupied unless the Castle Keeper wishes otherwise.

In the rear of the establishment is a stable that can house a dozen horses. Next to the stable, around the corner near the riverbank, is a large outhouse with two doors.

Uncle Seeck isn’t even sociable for the sake of his business. He offers the only cheap lodging and drink in Brionne, and relishes his position of advantage. Seeck is an opportunist, and he will overcharge those that he thinks can and will pay. His gruff demeanor is not preventing him from making a living, so he has seen no need to change.

However, he prides himself on his product. Complimenting his establishment, his food, or his ale is a sure way to get Seeck to relax his usual surliness. A “tip” of several gold will improve his demeanor. Seeck is not a thief, but if there’s gold to be had, he’ll want it spent with him.

Seeck is in his fifties, and walks with a slight limp. Seeck will tell a small tale of his exploits to any who patronize and flatter him. As a young man, he forgot to check his boots after camping one night, and was bitten by a snake that crawled inside. The poisoning was cured in short order, but his leg has never been the same. When it came time to name the inn, “Snake in the Boot” seemed like a catchy name that also serves as a reminder to anyone passing through to keep aware and stay careful.

If adventurers have spent money with him, Uncle Seeck has information about the Sickle. If asked about the mountain, he will shake his head in disdain. He’ll eventually explain, in a hushed tone, that the last party to ascend the Sickle in search of “legendary loot” came back in pieces. Only two survived, and they babbled incoherently, dragging the remains of their companions back with them in large burlap sacks. At that, Seeck’s eyes will look haunted. He will say no more on the subject other than to refer the character to the local constable.

*Uncle Seeck (He is a neutral good, level 6 human ranger whose vital stats are HP 39, AC 12 or 16 with +1 chainmail. His primary attributes are strength, wisdom and constitution. His attributes are strength 13, intelligence 14, wisdom 14, dexterity 10, constitution 16, charisma 8. The equipment he typically uses is +1 longsword, shortbow with 1 dozen arrows, +1 chainmail, 2 potions of healing, 1 potion of levitation.)*

All his equipment is stored in a large, locked chest in Seeck’s bedroom (Door, CL 7, Chest, CL 8). Seeck is likely to have a great deal of treasure hidden here, equivalent to about one thousand gold pieces.



**Area 2: Constabulary** Brionne has a local authority, Bilden Plandish, who acts as a mayor and sheriff of sorts. As a frontier community, there is no real government structure in Brionne, so Plandish acts with the blessing of the townsfolk. He is a jocular fellow, capable with sword and pen alike. He hails from a larger city, and finds the frontier life quaint and peaceful.

Plandish commands the town militia, which consists of able-bodied men and women that have some training in the use of weapons and armor. The militia is called to action through the striking of a huge gong, suspended on a high platform in the center of town, near the stone bridge. The detailing of the militia has been left to the Castle Keeper, if needed.

Plandish is used to rugged, aggressive personalities passing through town. Through his even-handed treatment of passing travelers, and his devotion to the safety of the citizens of Brionne, he has developed respect among rangers and townsfolk alike.

Plandish is always happy to meet newcomers to Brionne, both as a neighborly gesture and to “feel out” their motives. He is on good terms with Uncle Seeck, so he will often invite new arrivals to the Snake in the Boot. He will buy newcomers a round of ales and engage them in conversation. Seeck will observe carefully. At some point after the meeting has ended, Plandish and Seeck will exchange their impressions about the newcomers.

The characters may ask Plandish for information about legends of a treasure beneath the Sickles. His response to this will depend on his first impressions of the entire party, not just the speaking members. If Plandish thinks the party is of questionable character, then he will simply suggest that the entrance to the Sickles is somewhere in the nearby foothills.

Secretly, he has reports of a small tribe of ogres in the Great Cut. (The “ogres” are actually a mix of hill giants and ogres. See “Ascent Into the Foothills” for details.) To Plandish, the group is a potential threat to Brionne, so his motive is simple: either the adventurers will deal with the ogres, or the ogres will deal with the adventurers. Either way, a potential threat is eliminated.

If Plandish thinks the motivations of the party are friendly, he will invite the PCs to dinner at his house. During dinner conversation, he will describe several of the tales he’s heard from various sources over the years of his tenure in the town.

- Several centuries ago, there was a cult of warriors and nature priests that apparently made the mountain their home. They carved tunnels deep into the rock. They became reclusive and were never heard from again.

- Occasionally some adventuring party gets wind of the existence of the cult and tries to find the catacombs. One group managed to find the entrance about fifteen years ago. Only two came out alive. Those two were completely mad, and killed themselves soon after their return to Brionne. The others met grisly fates.

- It is said that there is a reclusive man dwelling in the foothills. No one Plandish knows has met this person, but several shepherds have spotted him chasing wolves away from the flocks.

- A band of humanoids has raided in the nearby hills on two occasions. The first raid was against a shepherd, who was brutally killed. The second raid was against another farmstead nearby. All of the people there were slaughtered and the buildings were razed. All of the livestock was missing. Footprints left at both scenes were large and humanoid, of varying sizes.

If the party makes it clear that they intend to enter the Sickles, he will ask them to instead enter service to his town. It is obvious that despite the efforts of the rangers in the area, humanoid bands have designs on the surrounding lands, and it would be a waste to lose hardy adventurers to the peril of the lost cult’s catacombs.

Regardless of the characters’ eventual decision, Plandish will ask them to refrain from mentioning the legends to any of the youth in town, so as not to tempt the young and brash to risk what is clearly a very dangerous exploration.

*Bilden Plandish, Constable (He is a lawful good, level 7, human fighter whose vital stats are HP 51, AC 21. His primary attributes are strength, intelligence and charisma. His attributes are strength 16, intelligence 15, wisdom 13, dexterity 11, constitution 13, charisma 16. The equipment he typically uses is +2 halberd, +1 shortsword, +2 plate mail, +1 large shield, longbow with one dozen normal arrows and 5 +1 arrows, one potion of extra healing.)*

Plandish should have a significant amount of treasure stashed away safely in his constabulary. The amount should be equivalent to several hundred gold pieces. The constabulary building (attached to his home) is locked with a padlock of Level 8 when he is not present, and is barred from within at night. His chest has a Level 10 lock set into the lid.

**Area 3: Haviland’s Post** This informal mercantile exchange handles all of the local commerce: grains, furs, feed, seed for crops, some livery and livestock, and occasionally small items of weaponry, armor, and ammunition.

Weapons and armors are common pieces of average quality. They sell for 200% of market value due to Brionne’s remote location, relative lack of demand, and lack of a local weapon smith. Average quality mounts and pack animals are available at 150% of market value. Adventuring equipment like rope, oil, lanterns, and rations are available to rangers at 90% of market value, and to others at 110% of market value. There are no exotic specialty items. Used equipment is purchased at a maximum of 50% of market value, depending on condition and current stock.

Haviland is in his early twenties. He has a friendly look about him. He seems naive at times, but behind his cheerful demeanor lurks the mind of an astute businessman. Haviland is running the family business for his father, who has recently taken ill.

Haviland has two assistants working for him. Markus and Jot have known Haviland since they were all young children. Jot, who is an infamous troublemaker in Brionne, has been lifting coin from the till, despite being paid very well. Neither Haviland nor Markus have noticed, yet.

Markus and Jot busy themselves handling routine customer concerns while Haviland deals with the disposition of shipments and inventory. Caravans typically bring stock on a weekly basis, taking many locally produced trade items away for sale. For arranging all of this, Haviland receives a small percentage of the profit.

Haviland himself is not likely to spend time bandying words with newcomers to Brionne. Unless potential customers are forthright in their intent to make expensive purchases, he will politely greet them, welcome them to Brionne, and refer them to Markus or Jot for aid. If inquiring characters ask Haviland about legends concerning the Sickie, he will simply say that he does not have time for mythology, and that there are plenty of others in town that would likely have a tale or three if softened up with a mug of ale.

Markus and Jot finish work at sundown, and can often be found in the Snake in the Boot through the evening. They will not spend time discussing the subject during working hours, but they will be sure to suggest that strangers asking around about the Sickie buy them a drink later on that evening.

Jot will often be found gambling (with his pilfered coin) in the Snake in the Boot, but Markus spends his time chasing one of the serving girls, Mirae, who is annoyed and ignores him.

Markus and Jot are impetuous, and have interest in seeking the entrance to the Sickie. They have entered the foothills to the east on two occasions, but fled both times – the first due to a near discovery by two ogres near the Great Cut, and the second after being scared by a strange man that “seemed to come out of nowhere.” They will offer their services to the party, for load bearing, path finding, and some auxiliary combat. In exchange, they will ask for protection from larger threats and a small cut of treasure.

If their offers of assistance are refused, Markus and/or Jot may, at the Castle Keep’s discretion, follow the characters into the foothills, hoping to force the issue in the hopes of gaining some treasure. Jot, in particular, may decide to follow and wait for the characters that survive their ordeal to emerge from the Sickie, so that he can rob them while they are weakened.

*Haviland, Merchant (He is a lawful good human whose vital stats are HP 4, AC 10. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution His attributes are strength 13, intelligence 15, wisdom 12, dexterity 12, constitution 10, charisma 15.)*

*Markus, Clerk (His is neutral good human whose vital stats are HP 5, AC 10. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution. His attributes are strength 15, intelligence 10, wisdom 9, dexterity 11, constitution 14, charisma 13.)*

*Jot, Clerk (He is a neutral, 2 level human rogue whose vital stats are HP 7, AC 12. His primary attributes are intelligence, dexterity and charisma. His attributes are strength 10, intelligence 14, wisdom 12, dexterity 17, constitution 12, charisma 15.)*

## Other Locations in Brionne

While there is not a weapon smith, there is a blacksmith that sees to the needs of the local farmers. A small mill supplies an attached bakery with flour. A cheese shoppe sells excellent bovine and goat cheeses. The local butcher deals mainly in goat or lamb, but has beef available from time to time. Other potential services available in Brionne might include a carpenter, a bowyer and fletcher, a wainwright, a cobbler, and other crafters that might find a comfortable niche in a small town. Locals can often be spotted fishing in the Eth, on the shores and off the bridge. Farmers bring extra crops to market each day, as well.

## Ascent into the Foothills

The hills sharply gain altitude to the east of Brionne, immediately after leaving the village. The journey east involves picking a trail over wooded, rocky hills. Eventually, the leafy trees fade in favor of huge groves of hardy pines and spruce growing among the rocks. The forest floor is a mossy cushion in the lower foothills, but grows more coarsely at higher altitudes. Game is plentiful in this area.

### Random Encounter Table

Roll 1d6 every 12 hours, Result of 1 = Encounter. Each encounter should only occur once.

D20 Roll	Encounter	Number Appearing
1-3	Dire Wolves	4-8
4-6	Herd of Elk	6-10
7-9	Stag	1
9-11	Brown Bear	1
12-14	Ogres	2
15-17	Bugbears	6-10
18-20	Hill Giant	1

## The Great Cut

The most obvious method of entering the foothills is to follow the Eth River eastward out of Brionne, up through the Great Cut. This is the most direct method to the Arch – the natural stone bridge that leads from a barren cliff face into the Sickie - but the route is as treacherous as it is direct. There are stretches of whitewater that will sweep the careless away to drown or be crushed. Often, there is no “shore” to speak of, and when there is, the rocks are usually slippery and covered with moss. There are waterfalls to negotiate. Progress will be slow and extremely hazardous for parties that don’t take appropriate precautions. Castle Keepers should assign appropriate saving throws on a reasonably regular basis – at minimum, a Dex save once every hour (CL 1 if characters are reasonably careful) to avoid slippage and possible injury.

The route should alternate terrain types appropriately – spots of calm water, followed by rapids, followed by waterfalls, and repeated as necessary. The Castle Keeper should intermittently allow an easy path, but should occasionally force parties to use their wits and resources. For example, a series of rapids might wash right up against the canyon walls, offering no path around. Characters will need to discover a method of traversing the rapids safely. In some



cases, this might involve scaling the walls of the Cut, using spells or magic items, or backtracking to look for safer passage.

Climbing waterfalls should be extremely dangerous and the Castle Keeper should not hesitate to make a ruinous mess out of any character that attempts the task without suitable and extensive preparations.

The Great Cut is also the home to a band of humanoids that has established a camp at the top of one of the larger waterfalls. See Encounter 2 for more details.

After the resolution of Encounter 2, the group will meet Driskar in Encounter 3. After that, the group will reach Encounter 4 after a day's travel.

## North of the Cut

There are several game trails of inconsistent clarity that wind their way up into the hills. This is a safer method of travel, but the game trails do not follow the rim of the Great Cut. They occasionally intersect it, and perhaps follow it for short distances, but they veer away, usually to take the path of least resistance over the rough terrain. As such, the route is not much quicker than the route through the Cut.

Parties following game trails will be unable to see the area of Encounter 1, and will not gain the benefit of its warning. The Castle Keeper should proceed directly to Encounter 2 after one or two days travel. If the party manages to bypass Encounter 2, they will not experience Encounter 3. If they do encounter Driskar, then he will warn them to cross the Cut immediately to prevent trouble later on. If this happens, the characters are traveling south of the Cut for the purposes of Encounter 4. Proceed to Encounter 4 after a day of travel.

## South of the Cut

Characters that take game trails to the south of the Cut face the same navigational issues. They will also miss Encounter 1. Encounter 3 will occur before Encounter 2, as Driskar attempts a bargain. They may still consciously avoid Encounter 2, as they will have the opportunity to observe and bypass the encampment from higher ground.

Encounter 4 is much easier if the party traveled south of the Cut, and is easier still if they have Driskar's aid. One day's travel will reach Encounter 4 after Encounter 2 is concluded or bypassed.

## Encounters

**Encounter 1: The Carcasses** An ominous spot of calm water lies in the Great Cut, about a day from Brionne. The area is on a level portion of the Cut, but is enclosed by sheer cliff walls of approximately 120 feet in height on either side. Adventurers must climb a cascading waterfall of several hundred feet in height to reach this point.

The area is about fifty yards downstream from another waterfall - a relatively small 40 foot falls. The river is very calm and deep for

about 175 feet, before plunging downward again over the granite. The pool of water is about 60 feet across at its widest. It is about 20 feet deep in the center. There are shale ledges on either side of the river that range from 6 to 8 feet wide. The ledges drop sharply into the water, to an immediate depth of 8 to 10 feet.

Floating in the water, wedged up against some of the rock on the right side, is what is left of a sheep carcass. It is obvious that it was skinned, cooked, and eaten. There is a school of small fish in the pool that is feeding upon the remains. Closer to the waterfall, about 30 yards further upstream, are three other corpses: another sheep, a deer, and a bear. The bear, in particular, must have been massive. All have been skinned and cooked.

Finally, at the base of the waterfall are four other animal carcasses. A ranger or druid who enters the water can determine that these are another, smaller bear carcass, several deer and sheep, and plenty of smaller bones from rabbit or other small game. If the character dives underwater to continue the search, he or she sees a skeleton of a human or half-elf, picked clean, having been violently wedged into a crevasse between several boulders.

A character needs to succeed at a strength check (CL 6) to approach the body due to the turbulence and current at the base of the waterfall. Another (CL 7) should be required to return safely. If the character does not divest encumbrance, then the difficulties should be CL 3 (as the character sinks easier) and CL 12, respectively. If a rope is used, then the return journey is CL 5, as the cord will help the character fight the current.

The skeleton shows signs of horrific treatment. The skull is crushed on one side. Bones are gnawed upon and splintered. The skeleton still wears some equipment, including a leather belt with several pouches and a pair of rotting boots. In one of the pouches is a small watertight cylinder, sealed with wax. In the cylinder is a bit of parchment containing a note, written in the common tongue:

"Thad - I need your help. There are Ogres in the Cut near the Arch. Come as soon as you can. - Driskar."

Thad was an unfortunate ranger on his way to help Driskar, his comrade, investigate and possibly eliminate the humanoid group. He was discovered and killed before he could reach the other ranger. In one of Thad's boots, wedged between two of his toe bones, is a small ruby worth about 100 gp. There is nothing else of interest on the body or in the area.

**Encounter 2: The Encampment** On a large wooded knoll northwest of a scenic waterfall, a group of hill giants and ogres has created a large encampment. There are a total of three giants and three ogres present here.

The humanoids have felled ancient pines, stacking them as a makeshift barrier in a circle of about 120 feet in diameter around the camp. The wall of trees is about 8 feet high. There are two gaps in the wall, facing roughly northwest (away from the waterfall) and southeast (toward the waterfall). The gaps are about 7 feet wide; enough for a single hill giant or ogre to pass through.

Behind the wall, on all sides, the giants and ogres have stacked boulders for throwing. The giants have a supply that will last them at least ten combat rounds. Furs and leaves have been arranged around the camp as bedding. The ogres sleep near the two gaps in the wall. The giants' bedding lies in a circle around a huge fire pit dug in the center of the camp, on the hill's peak. The fire pit is about 5 feet deep and 15 feet in diameter. Various combustible items are stacked nearby, including dead tree trunks, molding furs, and piles of dry leaves.

This group is responsible for the death of the ranger Thad, and they are quite familiar with the general operations of his ilk. This is one of their reasons for coming to the Great Cut – they weren't aware of ranger activity in the area, and they thought this would be a safe place to hunt and raid. While they have not yet encroached upon Brionne itself, they are aware of the town's existence and have raided twice upon outlying areas. They are getting bolder and are planning a raid on another farmstead.

In the event of an assault on the camp, one giant will attempt to reach a large horn near the fire pit to alert his nearby comrades. The horn is dangling from the stump of a branch on a stripped tree trunk that has been driven into the ground as a pole. The other giants will spread out to the perimeter of the camp, grabbing rocks for throwing, while the ogres take up huge spears and defend the gaps in the barricade. If the camp perimeter is breached, the giants will abandon the rocks in favor of clubs.

If the battle goes poorly for the giants, survivors will attempt to flee through the rocky hills, toward the north. They can move at a rapid pace through the heavy forest, as they know the pathways well.

Buried in the camp, near the largest "bed" (that of the chieftain), is the small clan's treasure hoard. It is a large heavy wooden box shod in brass, about 6 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 3 feet deep. Loose dirt reveals the location of the trove for observant characters.

*Treasure: (The box contains 2401 copper pieces, 520 silver pieces, and 336 gold pieces. There are two peridots of 200 gp value, each. There is also a potion: spider climbing. Finally, there is a hammer of exceptional craftsmanship. Detailed in lapis, the brightly polished steel-hafted hammer is a +1 warhammer, +3 vs. undead.)*

The hammer belonged to Thad, the unfortunate ranger.

*Grulund (He is the hill giant's chieftain. His vital stats are HD 10d10, HP 90, AC 20. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a club for 2d8+6 points of damage or by hurling rocks for 3d6+6 points of damage.)*

*2 Hill Giants (Their vital stats are HD 9, HP 68, 80, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a club for 2d8 points of damage or by hurling rocks for 2d8 points of damage.)*

*3 Ogres (Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 32, 36, 36, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a club for 1d12 points of damage or by hurling rocks for 2d6 points of damage.)*

**Encounter 3: The Meeting** Driskar Averendun is a ranger who has lived in the foothills around Brionne for some time. He is solitary, a gruff but kindly sort who has chosen the reclusive life of a ranger. His shack is nestled in a rocky gulch, situated on a small stream feeding into the southern side of the Great Cut. He lives at a higher elevation than the small band of hill giants, about three-fourths of a mile southeast from that location. Driskar is the mysterious man who occasionally scares teenagers of Brionne out of the foothills, and is occasionally spotted chasing wolves away from herds.

Driskar's main goal is to thwart the giants. He is trying to anticipate their movements in order to warn nearby farmers or shepherds of an impending raid. He is angered that he has been unable to prevent past raids, but he has learned much, and he thinks he can warn the next potential victims if he remains vigilant.

The party's entry into the foothills might not go unnoticed by Driskar, and if he discovers their presence, he will not let them continue to higher elevations without confronting them. The timing of the meeting will depend on the route the party has taken.

**Great Cut:** Driskar will spot them just before they reach the giant encampment. He will risk a rendezvous with the party to seek an alliance to destroy the giants.

**North of the Cut:** If the party fights the giants, either at the encampment or further into the forest, Driskar will hear and will come investigate. If the party avoids the fight, then Driskar will not discover them.

**South of the Cut:** Driskar will intercept the party well before it arrives at the encampment. He will offer them aid in exchange for the elimination of the giants.

**Castle Keeper's Note:** If the party is large and powerful, Driskar should not participate in any combat with the giants. He will state that his presence is too valuable in these hills to risk himself as anything but a reserve, if the fight goes poorly. He should meet with the party afterwards. If the group is small, they may need Driskar's help during that fight.

Driskar knows how to get to the Arch – the natural bridge leading to the entrance into the Sickel. He explored it once, and can offer the following information to the characters if he is aided against the giants:

"My entrance to the Sickel was a necessity. I was stranded high upon the rocks near the Arch. I knew a storm was brewing, and sought shelter in the cave across the Arch. The tunnel led several hundred paces into the rock. The passage sloped. I felt as if the weight of the mountain were choking me. At the end of the passage was a strange, multicolored room. The walls, floor, and ceiling were all tiled in a mosaic. In the center was a strange obelisk, with cryptic writing I was unable to decipher. There were passages leading away from that room, in five directions, all blocked by bars. I did not enter the room, nor did I linger long. Filled with a sense of dread, I left quickly, weathering the storm near the tunnel entrance, and I have not returned."



Regardless of when he meets the party, if Driskar is satisfied they are of good intent, he will direct them toward the path leading to the Arch. (See Encounter 4.) If they help him with the giants, he will guide them there and help them ascend, as the path is quite dangerous in light of the high winds in the area. If they are traveling north of the Cut when they meet him, he will recommend that they travel on the southern side for easier passage. If they produce Thad's hammer, Driskar will thank them somberly and will offer them two potions of extra healing in exchange.

*Driskar Averendun (He is a neutral good 9th level, human ranger. His vital stats are HP 82, AC 20 with shield. He has 1 attack at +8 base, damage as weapon. His primary attributes are strength, wisdom and dexterity. His attributes are strength 17, intelligence 13, wisdom 15, dexterity 13, constitution 15 and charisma 9. He typically carries a +3 bastard sword, +2 shortbow, +2 studded leather, +1 small shield, +2 ring of protection, 25 +1 arrows, boots of striding and springing, three potions of healing, two potions of extra healing, one potion of invisibility.)*

**Encounter 4: Traversal and Ascent** This encounter has two parts, depending on the route taken by the party.

North of the Cut: Part A and Part B.

All other routes: Part B only.

**Part A:** This part of the encounter occurs when characters on the north side of the Great Cut realize that they must cross over the chasm to reach the only path up to the Arch. The constant sound of fierce wind and tumultuous water roars a greeting as they emerge from the sparse vegetation to absorb the sight before them. The waters of the Eth blast through the Great Cut 400 feet below them. The other side of the chasm, about 200 feet away, seems practically impossible to reach.

The party has few choices. The best choice available is to turn back and seek a safer crossing. Another alternative would be to use magic such as fly spells to ferry the party across. The danger in this approach is the winds, which gust to gale force occasionally. If a character using a fly or air walk spell attempts to cross, the Castle Keeper should roll 1d8. The character must succeed at a strength save, with the CL equal to the results of the roll. Success means that the character is able to move normally. Failure means that the character is moved in the direction of the wind (usually west) by ten feet per Level of Challenge. The Castle Keeper should keep strict notes about spell durations, as characters that are careless or are unable to defeat the winds may plunge to their deaths.

**Part B:** A narrow path is etched into the thin dirt and rock, trodden into the earth by the passage of mountain goats. The path climbs sharply along the southern lip of the Great Cut. The path is completely exposed to the wind. While there are plenty of handholds available, the cold temperatures, wind, and dust make it difficult to ascend.

An observant character will notice that someone has driven climbing pitons into the rock along the path. If Driskar has agreed to help the party, he will give them instruction on the use of the

pitons and in climbing techniques. He will offer additional rope to the characters if they do not have a large supply.

The total ascent of the path is 500 feet. Characters climbing without the aid of the pitons must make a dexterity save (CL 8) every 100 feet. Failure means the character has lost his grip, and a second dexterity save (CL 8) must succeed in order to avoid plummeting down the mountain to his death. If the second save succeeds, the character survives, but suffers a fall of 10 feet to 60 feet, and suffers 1d6 damage for each 10 feet fallen. Note that characters using the pitons incorrectly must make the saves as above, against CL 4.

Any ranger can guide other characters in the use of the pitons with a successful intelligence save (CL 4). The ranger may make only one attempt. Characters guided in this way need only make one dexterity save (CL 4) during the ascent. Failure indicates a partial slip. A partial slip indicates a 10 feet to 20 feet fall, and the character suffers 1d4 hit points of damage for each 10 feet fallen.

Rogues, rangers, and barbarians may make climb checks (CL 1) instead of dexterity saves, if they wish. They are always treated as if they have had instruction in the use of the pitons, even if they do not use them. If they use the pitons, they double their level for the purposes of the check.

Characters guided by Driskar do not need to make dexterity saves. His guidance is flawless, as he has made this ascent several times before.



After the ascent, the party finally reaches the Arch, a narrow bridge of white, wind-smoothed stone that leaps across the gorge of the Great Cut. At its thinnest point in the middle of the span, the arch is only 3 feet wide. It is strong enough to support the weight of any and all characters. The largest danger here is the wind. If the party doesn't take adequate precautions (tying themselves together with rope, anchoring to points along the way, moving slowly, even crawling across), any careless characters are required to make one dexterity save (CL 10) to avoid being swept off the bridge by the winds.

Driskar will not accompany the party across the Arch or into the dungeons themselves under any circumstances.

## The Fingers of the Forsaken Hand

When the sect arrived at the Sickle, they set about the task of making their home within the mountain. A complex was tunneled deep into the rock. Their dreams told of five disciplines of the art of warfare. Training in the five disciplines began immediately, in specially constructed testing chambers meant to reinforce knowledge of each area.

However, they were deceived. No battle between the gods took place in the shadow of the Sickle. The dreams, and the disciplines of war, were of an influence rooted in evil, from a malice imprisoned in the mountain for eons.

The sect had tunneled deep into the mountain in search of what they felt was their ultimate truth, buried within it, crying to them like a beacon. At last they reached the chamber of a hideous demon, and freed the beast. Bathed in power, the demon began the destruction of its liberators.

However, the study of the disciplines allowed the sect's leaders, now in full awareness of their own corruption and foolishness, to combat the demon long enough to entrap it in the mountain once more. The task, however, bore a price. The testing chambers for the novitiates of the cult came to hold the five-fold keys to the prison of the demon, and the leaders were transformed to forever act as guardians of each key. The novitiates took the forms of lesser guardians, doomed to walk their proving grounds forever.

Should a party of adventurers restore the gemstone keys and unlock the prison, they will have proven their capability to master the variances of warfare...but will they have the mettle to defeat the evil completely? Should they do so, the accumulated knowledge and wealth of the sect will be theirs!

**Notes:** Once the Sickle is entered, magical energies prevent the use of teleport, dimension door, passwall, or move earth spells. Additionally, teleport cannot be used to enter the complex from a distance. This is a lingering protective effect helping to seal the demon within its prison. Additionally, spells such as mage hand or telekinesis will not remove a gemstone key from the pedestal it rests upon.

## The Entrance

### Room 1: The Arch and the Sickle

*Ahead looms the entrance to the Sickle's dungeons. It is a plainly worked tunnel opening, undecorated but of solid craftsmanship. The tunnel is about 20 feet wide and 20 feet high, and slopes downward into the darkness of the mountain. The opening is strewn with crumbled rock and debris that has weathered off the mountainside.*

A nest built inside the tunnel opening is the home of a mated pair of giant golden eagles. The eagles have no young, but they jealously guard this secure location from all threats. The female is in the nest when the party approaches. She will attack by flying out of the tunnel at the first character to approach. Note that the eagle may gain surprise. If surprised, the character attacked must succeed at a dexterity save (CL 2) or lose balance. Characters who have not taken safety precautions may fall off the Arch during the scuffle. Her cries will attract her mate, who is hunting nearby. He will join the fray five rounds later. Neither eagle will fight to the death. If wounded, they will retreat to another location while still able to fly.

2 Giant Golden Eagles (Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 35,25, AC 16. They attack with two talons for 1d8 points of damage or a beak for 2d6 points of damage.)

### Room 2: Obelisk

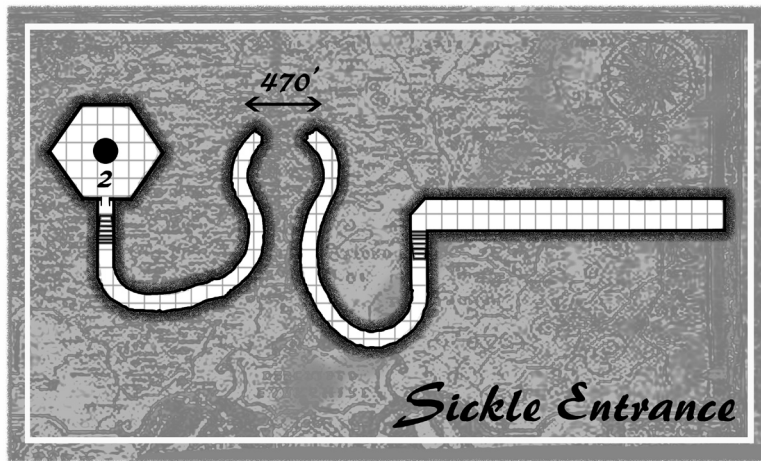
*The worked tunnel slopes gently downward into the Sickle. After 200 feet, the passage narrows to 10 feet, and after descending a sharp staircase, is clear of rubble. A thick layer of dust rests on the floor. Footfalls are muffled, but voices echo clearly in this tunnel. The tunnel gradually grows steeper as it winds and curves its way down into the mountain, eventually sloping downward at 30 degrees or more at times. After approximately 900 feet, the tunnel comes to a stairway of ten small steps, leading down through an archway into a chamber beyond.*

*Upon entering the room, six torches, hanging on wall sconces about the place, light automatically, bathing the room in a flickering, warm light. The room smells faintly of incense. This room is hexagonal. It is roughly 70 feet across from point to point. The passage enters the room in the middle of one of the sides. The ceiling of the room is about 15 feet high.*

*The room is finished in polished stone, and is spotless, free of dust and debris of any kind. The floor, walls, and ceiling are a mosaic of shining tiles that reflect the torchlight, colored black, red, white, blue, and green. There are five passages leading away from the room, one on the walls to the immediate right and left, one on each of the walls to the forward right and left, and one on the wall directly ahead. Each passage is sealed by an ornate gold portcullis, and bears a distinct color.*

As the mosaic in the main room approaches each passage, the pattern gradually begins to be dominated by the color of that passage. Counterclockwise from the entrance, the passages are colored as follows: black, red, white, blue, green.





*In the center of the room is an obelisk of stone shaped like a hexagonal cylinder of sorts. It is about 10 feet in diameter. It reaches upwards from the floor to just below the ceiling. Each side faces one of the portcullises, and is tiled predominantly in the color of the corridor it faces.*

The obelisk is actually an elaborate magical lock. Each face of the column has a fist-sized impression in it that resembles a large faceted gem. The exception to this is the impression on the black side, which is oval, and not faceted. Any character that examines more than one side, including the black side, will notice the discrepancy.

The depressions in each side of the obelisk are “keyholes” of a sort. Each depression has a corresponding gemstone “key.” At the end of each colored corridor, a warren of rooms filled with traps, tricks, guardians, and environmental challenges protects each key. When an individual key is recovered, and placed into the obelisk, it begins to glow softly. When all five are restored, the portcullises lower, and the obelisk opens upward to reveal a spiral staircase leading downward, deeper into the mountain. The staircase leads to the Sanctum.

An inscription in an ancient language, incomprehensible by anyone without magical means, is carved into the side of the obelisk facing the entrance.

Gemstones five domains of war  
At each fingertip should they rest evermore  
When the digits return to the palm as before  
Fate will have opened the descending door.  
The hand has been forsaken by the Forsaken  
                                themselves.

Leave the fist unclenched.

After the last word is read, either silently or aloud, the five portcullises raise, and the inscription fades from the obelisk. The characters are then free to explore the fingers. The golden portcullises will not raise until the inscription is read, either aloud or silently. The portcullises are impervious to physical damage and spell effects.

Any non-living object or creature that is left in the obelisk chamber for longer than 24 hours is absorbed into the rock of the mountain, and is irretrievable. This causes the obelisk room to be eerily clean, even as adventurers had come here to die in the past. Should any of the gemstone keys be left on the floor of the obelisk chamber, they will also be reabsorbed, but they will reappear at their original locations at the end of each finger.

## Black Finger

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this entire area consist of solid pieces of roughly hewn obsidian. There are no light sources; instead, a supernaturally thick and palpable darkness limits the effectiveness of sight. All forms of exceptional vision and light sources provide one fourth of their normal range or illumination. Light sources reflect off the obsidian in a disorienting and ominous manner. The air is musty and stale, a smell of dried putrefaction. The air is still. The temperature is cool, like a root cellar. Most of the area is alarmingly clear of dust and debris. The obsidian causes footfalls and spoken conversation to echo, but there is no other ambient noise.

All of the occupants of this area have the ability to detect the presence of living prey in the darkness.

## Room 1: Hall of Angles

*With a deep breath, you swing open the heavy obsidian door, pushing it into the space beyond. Your initial impression of the place is of oppressive blackness, a hungry darkness that yearns to devour your light sources and your lives. Before you can react to the ominous blackness, a stomach-churning smell hits your nostrils, twisting your gut with the odor of stale rot. The room beyond is large; this you know from the sound of your footfalls.*

Upon entering this inky-black hall, characters may not realize its true size or nature. There are numerous floor-to-ceiling partitions in this room that serve several purposes. They are to confuse the size of the room, obscure approaching creatures from the party, and to funnel the characters toward an opening in the south wall of this room.

There are 8 ghosts lurking within the inky blackness of this chamber. They are cunning and will use the partitions in the room to their advantage. They are aware of their stench and will remain away from the party, moving silently, until they are ready to strike. A rogue that actively makes the attempt can make a Hear Noise check (CL 5) in order to hear soft footfalls in the darkness. To make matters worse, one of the ghosts is affected by a *permanent improved invisibility* spell.

Only three ghaists, including the one that is invisible, will attack at a time. The remainder will hide behind partitions near one of the attacking ghaists or maneuver out of sight for better positioning. This should require clerics to make several turning attempts to get them all, as line-of-sight is required. The attackers will avoid obvious fighters, instead concentrating attacks on unarmored targets, or those at the rear of the party. If directly confronted with a fighter, they will back away into the darkness and circle for another strike.

Should the ghosts suffer four losses, or if a cleric turns them, they retreat into the corners of the room. They renew attacks when the party returns through this area to go back to the obelisk.

8 Ghosts (Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 25 each, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d4 points of damage or bite for 1d8. Their special abilities include paralysis, stench and ghoul fever.)

**Room 1b: Pit** This alcove contains an open pit that is 100 feet deep. The pit is difficult to spot in the oppressive blackness without enhanced vision, like that of a dwarf. Any character falling into this pit suffers 10d6 points of damage and a broken limb (at the Castle Keeper's discretion).

### Room 2: Antechamber of Bones

*This passage is carpeted in bone and leads to a larger room beyond. There are many thousands of bones, likely from a large variety of formerly living creatures.*

This short passage is thickly littered with bones, cloth remnants, dust, and other debris. The crunching of bone under each footfall seems unnaturally loud in this very quiet area. There are several large piles of bones in this passage. Some are humanoid; some are more exotic. A mummy lies under one of the piles. The mummy will not animate to attack unless disturbed or fighting occurs in area 3. Under another pile are two dry, crumbling arms, still wearing a pair of fine quality bracers. However, if a character fails to take precautions before removing the bracers (i.e. gloves and a facial cover), the character must make a constitution save (CL 6) or contract mummy rot.

Mummy (Its vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 42, AC 20. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with one slam attack for 1d12 points of damage each. Anyone struck by a mummy must make a successful constitution save or suffer mummy rot and be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. It also has the ability to cause despair.)

### Room 3: Burial Chamber

*This nondescript room contains a granite sarcophagus engraved in bas-relief. The carvings depict ancient scenes of combat between titanic figures, struggling on a mountainside. The vault rests in the center of the chamber with the lid askew. The floor here is thick with bones and bone dust. It is a layer that grinds loudly under boot heels.*

A wraith will accost the first character to enter the room. Soon after hostilities begin, the mummy from area 2 will attack the party from the rear, if the creature was not already eliminated.

In the base of the sarcophagus is a secret panel that cannot be discovered unless a character searches specifically in that area. Immediately behind the panel is a platinum and sapphire necklace worth 4200 gp. In the back of the compartment is a suit of amazing full plate. Unless characters specifically look into the depths of the compartment with a light source, or prod with an instrument of some length, they may not notice the armor. This is the Shell of Amleto. It is a suit of cursed full plate -5. However, the armor gives the wearer the ability to turn undead as a cleric of half his or her level, rounded up. For example, a 9<sup>th</sup> level fighter donning the armor could turn undead as a 5<sup>th</sup> level cleric. If a cleric dons the armor, the cleric turns undead as if two levels higher. Remove curse allows a character to remove the armor.

Wraith (His vital stats are HD 5, HP 34, AC 15. His primary attributes are mental. They attack with an incorporeal touch that causes 1d6 points of damage and possibly energy drain.)

### Room 4: Pit Room

*Footfalls and whispers echo loudly here; this is likely another large chamber. The floor here is spotless, free of dust, bone, and debris.*

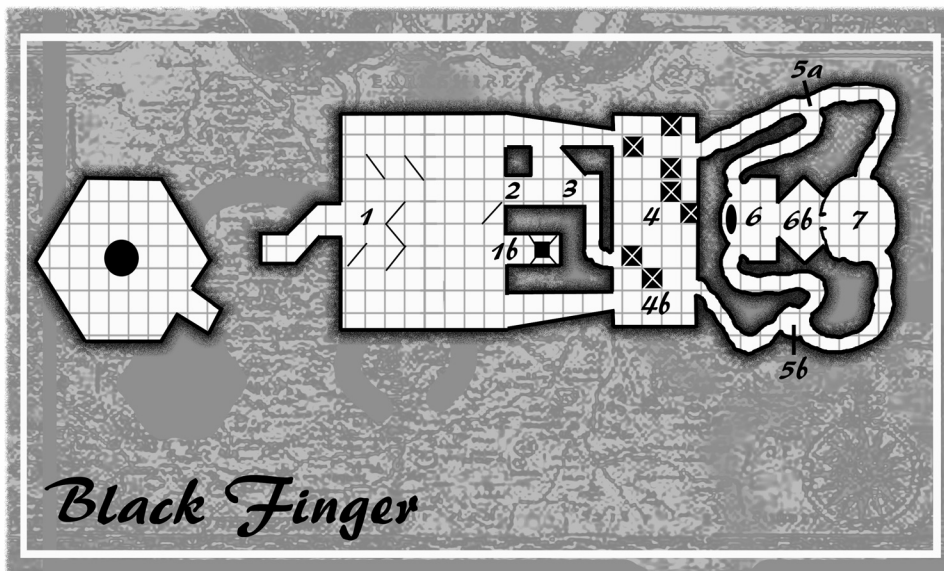
This large room is devoid of creatures, but teeming with pits. There are seven covered pits in this room. They blend seamlessly with the surroundings, requiring a find traps check (CL 10) by a rogue or a dwarf to spot them. However, any sort of pressure will trigger the pit, so prodding with a weapon or pole will also reveal them. Each pit is 40 feet deep (4d6 HP damage). In the bottom of each pit are two ghouls, who attack immediately, gaining a surprise round.

In the bottom of the second pit from the right (a) is a gold ring with an inset topaz worth 250 gp.

2 Ghouls (Their vital stats are HD 2, HP 14, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d3 points of damage each, all with a chance for paralysis.)

**Room 4B: False Door** This door is false, meant to lure the unwary across the path of several pits to reach it.

**Room 5A: North Entry to the Chamber of the Key** This curved corridor is deceptive, twisting what meager light that is projected against its walls into strange





distortions of the space. Protecting this corridor is a pair of shadow mastiffs. The creatures will blend with the walls and shadows, allowing them 3/4 concealment for combat purposes. They harass and damage the party until destroyed.

2 Shadow Mastiffs (*Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 30, 27, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with one bite for 2d4 points of damage. They can also attack with by baying. Anyone within 300 feet must succeed at a wisdom save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds.*)

**Room 5b: South Entry to the Chamber of the Key** This curving passage plays tricks with light cast upon it, making the walls seem to distort awkwardly in places. The passage opens into a small circular chamber. An obsidian stone golem lies dormant here. The golem has natural camouflage, which causes all attacks against it to suffer a -2 penalty. There is a chance that a character more than 10 feet away from the golem will not see it (wisdom CL 6). Characters who notice the golem while more than 10 feet away are not surprised when it acts. It does not act until a character moves within 10 feet of it. Characters who do not notice the golem but move within 10 feet see it as soon as they do so, but the golem acts with a full round of surprise. The golem will use its slow ability first. As long as it is not attacked, it will continue to use the slow ability every round on additional members of the party. When all party members have been slowed, the golem will back up against the wall, allowing them to pass unharmed.

Obsidian (Stone) Golem (*Its vital stats are HD 12d8, HP 95, AC: 26. Its primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a slam attack for 3d8 points of damage. Its special abilities include slow and immunity to magic.*)

### Room 6: Chamber of the Key

*This room is constructed of obsidian, like all others, but contains some luxurious furnishings. There is a finely crafted wooden desk within, with a nicely padded chair. The chamber is dimly lit from an unknown source. There is a dais carved from dark grey granite in the eastern half of the room. The dais passes through an archway into a chamber beyond.*

*A figure sits at the desk, encased in malignant looking plate mail, twisted and bent by unknown forces. Its head is covered by an ornate great helm. The figure does not move or otherwise react to your arrival.*

Sitting at the desk is the Guardian of the Key, a powerful warrior and mystic transformed into a bodak of unusual power. He will be aware of the party's approach through either entry corridor.

The bodak will be sitting at the desk, unmoving, when the party enters. He is wearing twisted and blackened plate mail armor and a helmet. He will remain still until a character touches one of the gems in chamber 6b. At that time, he will stand, remove his helmet, and begin to use his death gaze and attack with his sword. During the fight, he will speak occasionally, uttering a loathsome and cryptic phrase or two that the characters "know not what they do" and "must not open it."

If the fight goes badly for him, the bodak will retreat down the corridor 5a, abandoning the pedestal and gem. He will hide in the "V" shape in the northwest side of area 1, near the door, silently awaiting the approach of the party wishing to leave. He will attack them from the rear as they exit.

The desk has one drawer. It is locked (CL 12) and trapped.

Trap (*There is a small blade, CL 10 to find and disarm, that is poisoned: CL 8, 2-20 damage, onset two rounds. Inside is a scroll containing the following spells: polymorph other, cloudkill, and solid fog.*)

Bodak (*His vital stats are HD 13d8, HP 108, AC 23. His primary attributes are mental and physical. He attacks with a sword at +15 for 2d6 +2 points of damage, or 1 Slam at +13 1d10 points of damage. He also has a death gaze attack.*)

### Room 6b: Pedestal Chamber

*This room is small and hexagonal and contains only a rough black pedestal in the center of the room. On the pedestal are three oval black gems. Two are carved in intricate faceted patterns, and one is smooth.*

One of the gems is an unfaceted onyx. One is a sapphire so blue as to appear black in the dim light, and is faceted. One is carved obsidian, shaped to appear like a faceted gem. Only one gem can be removed from the pedestal at a time. When one is removed, the other two adhere to the pedestal's surface. If a gem is removed and replaced, another gem can be removed. The only way to remove more than one gem from the pedestal would be a wish spell. Thus, it would require two wish spells to take all three gems.

The unfaceted onyx is the gem that will fit into the obelisk.

### Room 7: Chamber of Emptiness

*This room forms a perfect oval. Its walls, floor, and ceiling are perfectly smooth - a contrast to the rest of the walls in this area. A smooth stone door rests on one side of the oval, in the center of the wall.*

This room, with its rounded edges and smooth walls, is an echo chamber of magical construction. Spoken words resonate with nearly perfect clarity. At first, characters will notice that this effect reproduces only their own voices, but gradually, other voices will join theirs, speaking in innumerable languages, tones, and pitches. The voices will grow in number and volume into a maddening cacophony that threatens to deafen those in the room. Twelve rounds after the first word is spoken here, skill usage and spell casting are impossible in this chamber due to the noise level. Silence spells have no effect in this area.

The door in the western wall leads to the pedestal chamber (6b). Only one with a clear mind, free of distraction, can slide open the door.

The door is easy to spot, but resists attempts, even magical, to open it. A character that declares an intent to concentrate on blocking out the noise while touching the door should make a wisdom save (CL 8). If the saving throw succeeds, the door will open, and the pedestal room may be entered. The bodak (area 6) will not attack

the opener of the door, but will attack any others who enter the pedestal chamber.

### Red Finger

The halls in this area are made of a mixture of volcanic obsidian and pink feldspar, marbled in a pattern occasionally resembling flame. The floors, walls, and ceiling are so hot to the touch that unprotected skin that contacts one of these surfaces suffers 1d2 HP damage per round. Skin protected by metal takes no damage for 1 round, but suffers 1d2 HP damage per round afterwards. Skin protected by cloth takes no damage for 2 rounds, but suffers 1d2 HP damage per round afterwards. Boot soles are thick enough to prevent damage, as are heavy leather gloves. It is important for the Castle Keeper to remember this contact damage if and when a character falls unconscious.

The air is hot and acrid, and difficult to breathe. The smell is a mixture of cinnamon and sulfur. There is a slight breeze, caused by currents from the heated air. There are thin deposits of ash scattered about on the corridor floor. The ceilings are all 15 feet high unless otherwise noted.

The halls are lit. The light quality is similar to a flickering torch, but from an unknown, ambient source.

Cold spells are reduced in capability as if the caster level were 2 lower. If this is not applicable, then reduce the damage dealt by the cold by 1d6 and the duration by 2 rounds. Instantaneous cold effects work normally.

### Room 1A: Demon's Doorway

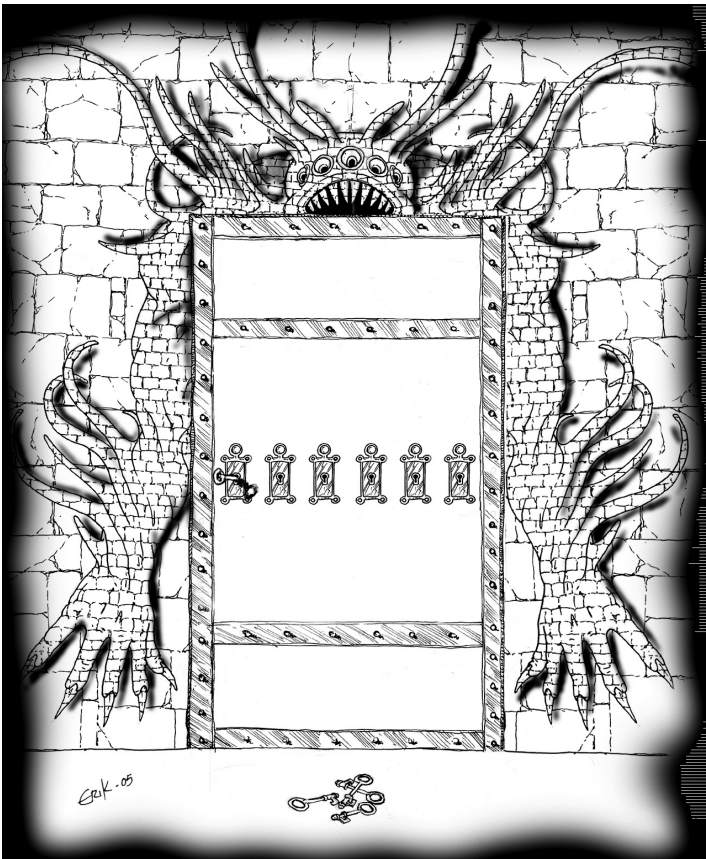
*You approach a closed, reinforced iron door with faint spots of rust upon it. A large, ornate demonic figure is carved into the wall surrounding it. The figure's stone head protrudes menacingly from just above the door. The thing's mouth is open, its five hideously carved eyes leering at all who approach the portal.*

*There are six keyholes in the door, spaced evenly from left to right. The keyholes are not labeled, and they are all the same shape and size. The leftmost keyhole has a red-colored key in it. On the floor near the door is a jumble of four keys. The keys are all the same size and shape, but each has a different color: black, white, blue, and green.*

All five keys will fit and turn freely in all six keyholes. When a key is turned, there is no sound. Inserting any key into any keyhole locks the door. Since the red key is already in a keyhole, the door is locked when the party approaches. Any character that attempts to open the door when it is locked will trigger a blast of energy from the carved demon's maw. The type of energy depends on the key inserted to the left of all others. Each effect reaches outward from the demon head in a cone 30 feet long.

#### Trap Effects By Key Color

Red	Flame	Dex (CL 8)	2d10, save for half
Black	Negative Energy	Con (CL 10)	drain 1 level
White	Frost	Dex (CL 8)	2d10, save for half
Blue	Lightning	Dex (CL 8)	2d10, save for half
Green	Poison Gas	Con (CL 10)	as the spell poison



Effects can be triggered multiple times. The door can be opened safely when there are no keys in any of the keyholes.

These keys also provide a protective effect versus the eye rays of the facet demon in the Sanctum.

The keys radiate powerful magic, but cannot be identified. More powerful magic must be used to determine their true nature. See the Sanctum for more details.

### Room 1: Rock Worm Burrows

*The ground is coated in a thin layer of ash. The area is strewn with heaps of brick and rock. This room looks scorched, etched, and scarred by flame and raw heat. Circular tunnels from several inches to a foot in width emerge from the floor, walls, and ceiling of this area. At minimum, there are dozens of openings, and all look as if they had been melted into the rock.*

Three tavis lair here, forever searing new tunnels into the rock. They are former sect members, mindless now, but compelled to defend this area. One will drop upon an unsuspecting character from the ceiling while another rises from an opening in the floor to attack. The third will arrive two rounds after the fight commences. They will fight to the death.

3 Tavis Worms (Their vital stats are HD 3, HP 20 each, AC 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a vicious bite for 1d8 points of damage. They are able to put off a tremendous amount of heat and anyone who comes into contact with their skin suffers a further 1d6, half on successful constitution save, points of damage per round. Their heat can also melt non-magical metals on contact.)



## Room 2: Mephit Lair

*This red brick room both feels and appears like the inside of an oven, save for the rough spires of granite rising up from the floor. The spires appear to contain small tunnels within them.*

The spires are lairs for the three mephits that reside here. This room is extremely warm. Normal contact damage is doubled in this chamber.

The mephits are extremely elusive and clever in combat, using all of their abilities to maximum advantage. If the fight goes poorly for them, the mephits will fly down the winding passageway toward area 4, alerting the efreet inhabitant. Fire mephits can use the heat of the walls, floor, or an open flame to heal themselves at a rate of one HP per round.

One of the fire mephits is wearing a *Ring of Cold Resistance*.

2 Fire Mephits (Their vital stats are HD 3, HP 15, 16, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d3 points of damage each and a breath weapon for 1d8 points of fire damage, save for half. They can also summon other mephits. They can also attempt (10% chance) to summon other mephits of the same type instead of attacking.)

Magma Mephit (His vital stats are HD 3, HP 15, 16, AC 16. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with two claws for 1d3+8 points of damage each and a breath weapon for 1d8 points of fire damage, save for half. He can also summon other mephits. He can also attempt (10% chance) to summon other mephits of the same type instead of attacking.)

## Room 3a: Salamander Guard Quarters

*This room contains only an enormous stone brazier, brimming with unnaturally twisting flames. A serpentine figure bathes within.*

One salamander guard is relaxing in the brazier. It will use its spear to keep the party at bay while strategically withdrawing to the western passageway to call for aid. In two rounds, support will arrive from area 3b (noble). Two rounds after that, additional

aid will arrive from area 3d (guard). The noble will attack from a distance with his pike, and the others will attempt to draw melee fighters into the reach of the noble's pike and their flaming auras.

Salamander (His vital stats are HD 7, HP 32, AC 18. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks using a spear for 1d6+1 points of damage, +1d6 fire damage, or a tail slap for 1d6+points of damage +1d6 points of fire damage. He can constrict prey as well as radiate heat.)

## Room 3b : Noble's Quarters

*This tear-shaped room is nondescript, save for the large pool of molten lava that straddles the center of the area.*

If the alarm is not raised from area 3a or area 3d, a noble salamander can be found here, basking in the lava.

Noble Salamander (His vital stats are HD 9, HP 55, AC 19. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks using a pike for 1d8+6 points of damage, +1d6 fire damage, or a tail slap for 1d6+points of damage +1d6 points of fire damage. He can constrict prey as well as radiate heat. The noble possesses and wields a +2 pike.)

## Room 3c: Salamander Larvae Pits

*On either side of the corridor are two large fire pits. Peering into the fire, you can see small, snake-like forms within each pit.*

These pits are being used to incubate 4 salamander larvae. The larvae are very young and do not fight. Combat within 10 feet of this area will enrage the salamanders, who will receive an additional +1 to hit until they are killed.

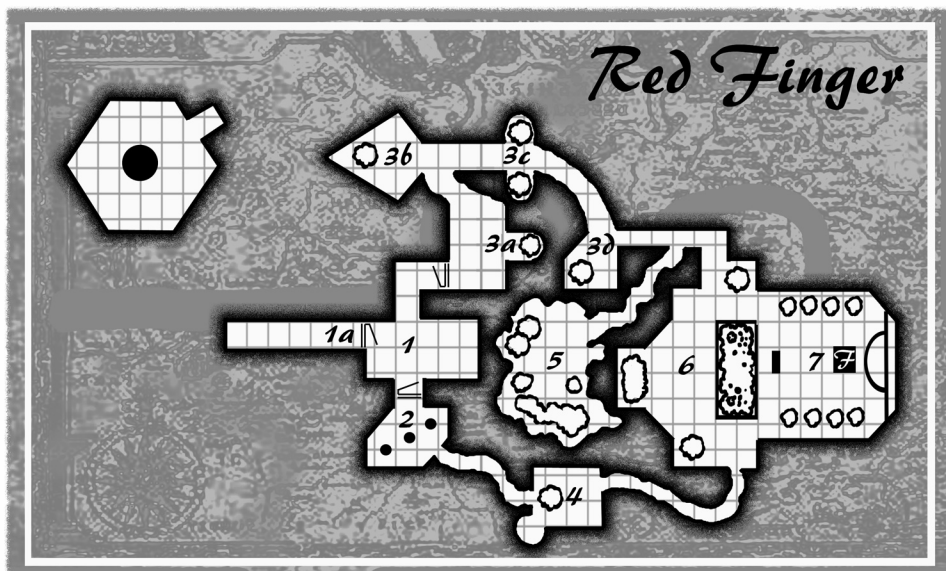
**Room 3d: Salamander Guard Quarters** The description of this area is for all purposes identical to that of area 3a; however, when the salamander raises the alarm, it withdraws into the northwestern corridor.

Salamander (See Room 3a.)

## Room 4: Efreeti Lair

*This circular chamber is richly arrayed with non-flammable furniture, rugs, and tapestries. It has a tall domed ceiling peaking at 25 feet. Four columns of stout construction are spaced evenly around the perimeter of the room. These columns hold up two arches, which cross each other in the center of the*

An efreet, Falad ibn Sultul, was trapped here when the proving grounds became a prison. He was originally part of the novitiate's test and worked in cooperation with the sect leaders. Since the transformation, he has not been able to leave. He has made himself comfortable, but he wishes to return to his home plane. An intense orange flame burns within a large brass brazier in the center of the room. The brazier is 5 feet in diameter, and generates a staggering amount of heat.



This fire is what traps Falad to this plane. He is unable to extinguish it himself. If the party can extinguish it for him (a create water of 40 gallons or more, or similar magical means), he will be freed to return to his home plane. As a reward, he will offer information on the creatures inhabiting the rest of this area. However, he will not linger, and will answer no more than three questions.

Falad has a reluctant partnership with the mephitis colony in area 2. If the mephitis warn him of approaching danger, he will increase to 20 feet in height, cast a permanent image of a human sultan, and finally, he will turn himself invisible. The strategy is to entice any intruders to talk to the sultan figure while Falad stands astride the western door. Then, once all intruders have entered, he will cast his wall of fire across the eastern door, which will remove the invisibility. He will block the western door. The next round he will cast pyrotechnics to blind the party, and he will inquire into their identities and intentions. If the party is diplomatic, and apologize for their intrusion and attacks on the mephitis, he will accept their apologies in return for extinguishing the brazier.

If they attack him, he will fight ferociously. Any surviving mephitis will heal in the wall of fire, and will use their breath weapons on the party. If a cleric reveals his or her nature, Falad will keep that character alive, if possible, so that he can force him or her to extinguish the brazier.

If the characters were cooperative, and extinguish the brazier, then Falad will warn them with the following sentence, before he leaves: "This place is a proving ground, a testing tool, and a trial by ordeal. Learn its lessons."

*Efreet (His vital stats are HD 10, HP 94, AC 18. His primary attributes are mental and physical. He attacks with a slam for 2d8 points of damage, + 1d8 points of fire damage. His special abilities include: change size, heat, spell-like abilities.)*

**Room 4A: Closet** This room is the depository for the prior victims of the efreet. There are several charred human skeletons and some salamander remains scattered about. Rooting through the bodies uncovers an intact *wand of cure light wounds* with 12 charges.

### Room 5: Magmin Sauna

*This natural, cavernous room is dominated by magma. A stream of magma flows in through a rift in the eastern portion of the chamber and leaves through another crevasse in the western portion. Two pools of liquid stone rest on either side of the stream. A small stone bridge, barely enough to balance on, arches over the flow of molten rock.*

Ten magmins are enjoying themselves, bathing in the stream and in the larger pool. A large quantity of ash is heaped in piles upon the small stone bridge and on the shores of the magma stream. It is what remains of adventurers who dared to accost the magmins.

If the magmins notice adventurers, two will become curious and will playfully approach. Of course, just their proximity is damaging. If the party attacks, the magmins will swarm each intruder with all of their strength before moving onto the next.

If the fight goes poorly for the magmins, they will retreat into the larger lava pool, where they cannot be harmed.

10 Magmins (*Their vital stats are HD 2, HP 9 each, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a burning touch for 1d8 points of damage, + 2d8 points of fire. Their special abilities include the ability to ignite combustible materials by touch, and a damaging fire aura that inflicts 1d6 points of fire damage to any creature within 10 feet.*)

### Room 6: Antechamber of the Key

*A very large chamber, this room brims with fire and flame from all directions. In each corner of the roughly triangular room rests a large brazier of blazing coals, each pulsing with light like beating hearts. In the approximate center of the room is a large pit filled with open flame. The heat in this room is unearthly, and the fumes disgusting and noxious.*

Any character entering the room without appropriate protection will take 1 HP of damage per turn from exposure to the heat. Contact with the walls or floor with bare skin causes four times the normal amount of damage (1d8). Characters lingering in this room for longer than five rounds begin to suffer effects from the fumes:

Effects from Fumes	
Time Elapsed	Cumulative Effect
Round 1-4	No effect.
Round 5-9	Constitution save (CL 4) each round or -1 to hit and AC.
Round 10+	Constitution save (CL 8) each round or -1 to hit and AC, 1d8 damage per round.

All of the elementals will immediately attack the first person to enter the room. They will continue to attack successive opponents in this manner, but will not pursue opponents out of the chamber.

3 Fire Elementals (*Their vital stats are HD 8, HP 48, 60, 53, AC 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d8 points of damage, + 1d8 points of fire damage. Their special abilities include: Burn.*)

### Room 7: Chamber of the Key

*This room, constructed of huge chunks of basalt and granite, stretches back from the large set of double doors. Ahead, on a raised platform, rests the quarry – a single fist-sized ruby atop a dark pedestal. However, that platform seems infinitely far away, because in order to ascend one of the stairways to reach it, one must first bypass the enormous, hissing, blood-red hydra in the center of the room.*

This large room shaped from volcanic rock is the resting place of the Ruby Key. It is on a pedestal of granite atop a platform on the northeastern side of the chamber, accessible by two staircases carved from the stone. The platform is 8 feet high. The ceiling is 25 feet high.

Immediately upon entering this chamber the party is faced with the guardian, a ten-headed pyrohydra.

The hydra will aim its attacks at the most annoying or obvious targets. If a character makes it to the platform, all breath weapons available that round will be aimed at that character. If the gem is taken, the hydra will remain focused on the carrier whenever



possible. The hydra will pursue the party into area 6 if the gem is carried there, but cannot fit through the tunnels beyond.

If a character tries to slip past the hydra invisibly, it will attempt to pinpoint the location of the intruder using its sense of smell. (Mind, CL 4) It will flood that location with fire from the heads that breathe that round.

If a character makes it to the platform and snatches the ruby without first checking for traps (CL 6), a power word stun effect engulfs the character touching the ruby. The next round, a flame strike hits the character for 15d6 damage, with no saving throw. This effect continues every round until the ruby is replaced upon the pedestal.

The trap can be disarmed (CL 10) by disconnecting a pressure plate beneath the ruby. Failure does not trigger the trap, and the task can be attempted multiple times.

Should the party kill the hydra, there is a panel in the floor beneath its body. Inside a chamber, underneath the panel, are 2332 sp, 6510 gp, 400 pp, 4 rubies worth 1000 gp each, a shirt of chainmail +3 of fire resistance, a quiver of 10 *flaming arrows* +1, and a *Rod of resurrection* (1 charge).

*Ten-Headed Pyrohydra (His vital stats are HD 15, HP 144, AC: 18. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with 10 bite attacks for 1d10 points of damage per bite. His special attacks include: scent, breath weapon.)*

### Blue Finger

The halls here are made of a white marble stone with bands of blue quartz. The walls are cool but not cold. The air is fresh, and sweet, with the occasional scent of ozone. Characters wearing metal armor will feel waves of static wash over them from time to time. Those characters without helmets will notice their hair standing on end after a while. The halls are lit from an unknown source, but dimly, and the light has a gray-green tint.

There is an ambient noise here, a mixed sound of thunder and drenching rainfall. The sounds intertwine so well as to occasionally be inseparable. The noise level is loud enough to mask footsteps, but it is also loud enough to seriously impede quiet, coherent conversation. There is a 10% chance that verbal spell components may be mispronounced, causing spells to fail.

Hear Noise checks should use CL 8.  
Move Silently checks should use CL 2.

### Room 1: Octagonal River

*This octagonal room is filled with clear, flowing water. The water is about 4 feet deep, and does not flow out of the room when the door is pulled open. The room has no visible exits.*

The water is an illusion. It “flows” in a noticeable current, from southwest to northeast. It does not collide with the wall to circle back around the perimeter of the room. The current stops at the wall instead. Close observation may note that the water seems to flow through the wall. Indeed, that wall is illusionary as well. The

party should eventually surmise that the water escapes through the wall somehow and walk through the illusion.

In this case, knowing the illusion’s true nature does not dispel it. The illusion will feel wet to the touch and sounds like softly flowing water.

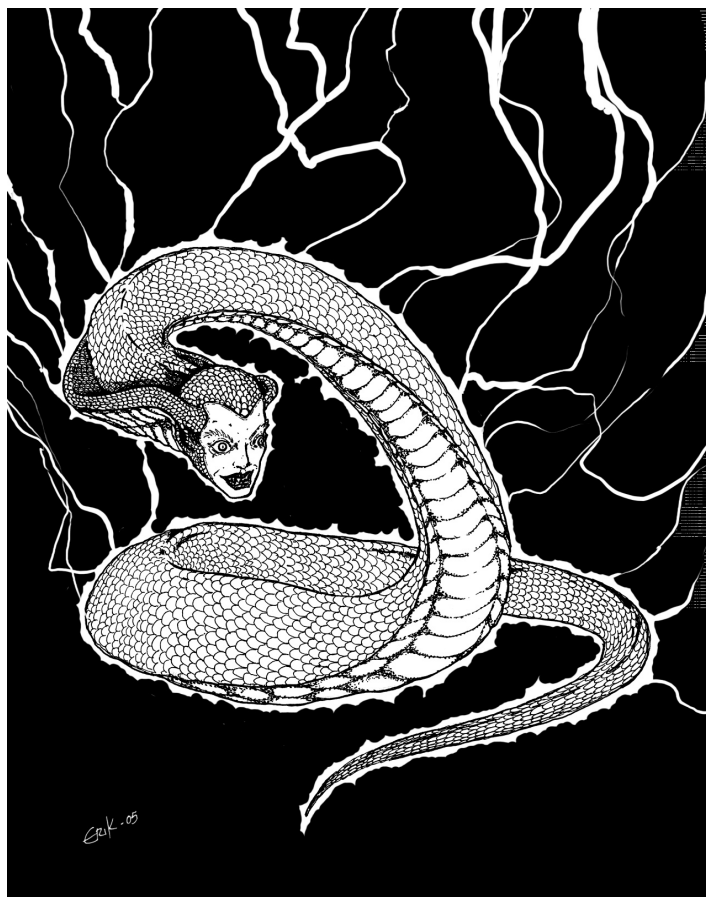
### Room 2: Stepping Columns

*This large room is dominated by a large grotto of violent water. In the grotto, a series of stone columns with flat tops loom above the roiling surface. The room is lit as if by dim torchlight, and the water is too dark and rough to see into. Winds slice through this chamber with great force.*

This large room is dominated by a large grotto of violent water. In the grotto, a series of stone columns with flat tops loom above the roiling surface. The room is lit as if by dim torchlight, and the water is too dark and rough to see into. Winds slice through this chamber with great force.

The party enters the room on a ledge that stands about 40 feet above the water’s surface. The winds in this area gust to 30 mph. The tops of the columns are 60 feet above the water’s surface. Another ledge with an opening in it is about 110 feet away. This is the destination.

The destination opening is marked by a 10 feet tall archway that stretches above the entry into the rough tunnel beyond. It is entirely constructed of smoothly worked pieces of ivory. The passage beyond the archway cannot be entered without passing under the arch, as the arch is larger than the passage itself. There



is no space between it and the rock wall to squeeze around. The ivory archway is trapped by a Glyph of Warding. This is a special glyph that is triggered to deactivate if one character visits eight columns in the room, assembles the vestments found there into one ensemble, and enters the archway before anyone else. The vestments must be visible and cannot be covered by any other article of clothing or by armor.

The vestments will fit an average-sized, unarmored human. The pieces of the ensemble are as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Pillar: Hood-Black.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar: Sash-Red.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Pillar: Tunic-Black.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Sandals-Red.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Belt-Red.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Mantle-Blue
- 7<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Tabard-Green
- 8<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Cloak-White.

If a character enters the archway wearing part or none of the vestment pieces, the Glyph is triggered (lightning, 10d8 damage, dexterity save (CL 10) for half). The Glyph is permanent, and will trigger each time a character attempts to enter without being preceded by a character wearing the vestments. A character wearing the garb need pass through but once to permanently deactivate the Glyph, so it is not necessary for the character to escort each party member through the arch.

The water itself is inhabited. It is 40 feet deep, and contains a water elemental that will attack any that enter the water. If the elemental feels threatened, it will create a vortex and attempt to catch characters within it.

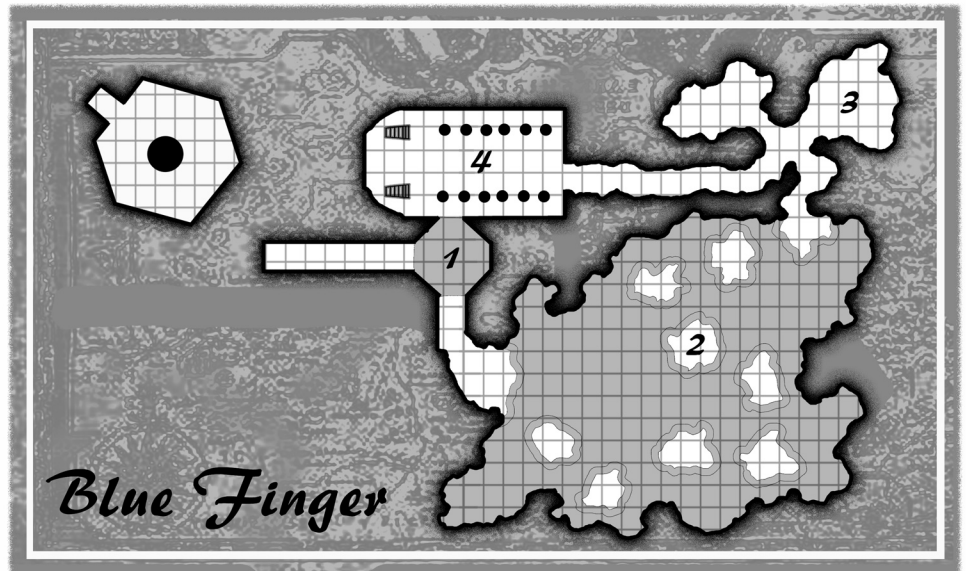
In the bottom of a pool is a skeleton. On one finger is a ring of water breathing, and in the other hand is a decanter of endless water. It is open. The stopper can be found nearby. The decanter is the source of the roiling water in this room. Its command words are amnoth (stream) renoth (fountain) and quarnoth (geyser).

*Water Elemental (Its vital stats are HD 8, HP 40, AC 19. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam for 4d6 points of damage. Its special abilities include: Water Mastery, Drench, Vortex.)*

### Room 3: Spacious Caverns

The bronchial caverns spreading off the main passage drip with warm moisture and reek of mildew. The striated stalagmites thrust upward beside the narrow track leading into each chamber. Above them, their cousins drip water down upon their heads, heavily saturated with minerals.

This large cavernous suite of rooms is the lair of a behir. It immediately breathes lightning at the first character that enters its lair. It will then attack viciously and to the best of its abilities,



including swallowing whole. In the behir's gullet are 42 pp, a tourmaline worth 50 gp and a sapphire worth 600 gp.

*Behir (Their vital stats are HD 9, HP 62, AC 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a single bite attacker for 2d4 points of damage. Their special abilities include: breath weapon, constrict, rake, swallow whole.)*

### Room 4: Chamber of the Key

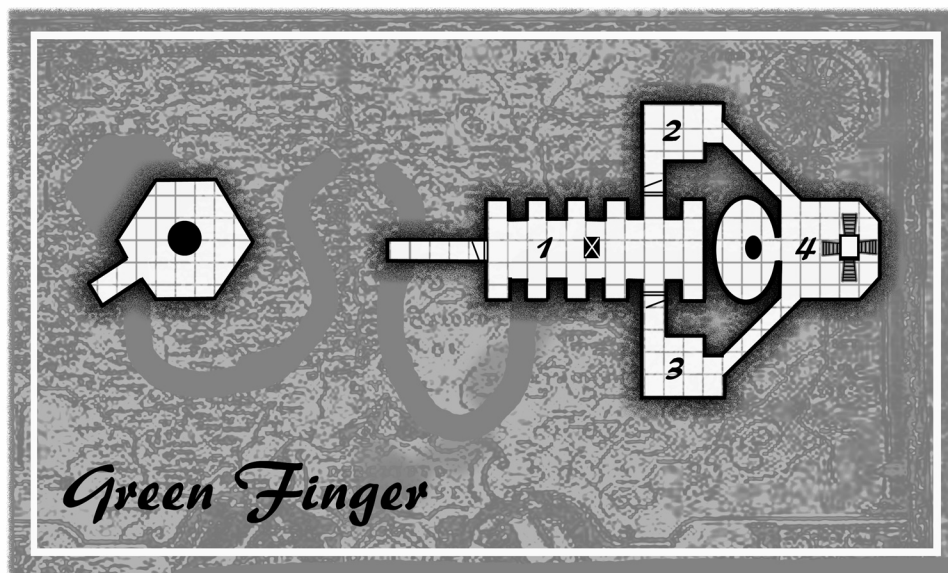
This extravagantly chiseled room is bordered with columns and scrollwork. At the far wall, two stairways flanking either side of the room lead downward into a 10' deep depression in the floor. In the center of this depression is a 9' stone pedestal. Resting atop of the stone pedestal is a large sapphire, glimmering brightly, even in dim light. The sapphire is barely visible from the furthest edge of the room.

Coiled in the depression, crouched out of sight to any entering the room, is a lightning naga. It will hear the party enter, and will wait to attack until one or more characters begin to descend the stairways. She is intelligent, but will not converse. She will speak occasionally to lisp vague warnings and pronouncements of doom. For example, she may repeat the phrases, "Leave the fist unclenched," and "You will have dire responsibility." She will not negotiate, but will press the fight until she is killed. Upon her death, a secret door in the northeast wall will unlock. It will remain hidden, but will be useable, if found.

In a secret compartment in the pedestal is contained a scarab: golembane (any golem) and a bead of force.

*Lightning Naga (Her vital stats include HD 12, HP 99, AC 20. Her primary attributes are physical. She attacks with a slam for 1d4 points of damage + 1d8 points of electrical damage, or tail whip for 1d3 points of damage + 1d8 points of electrical damage. Her special abilities include: project lightning, electrical field, constrict. For more information see Appendix A.)*





### Green Finger

The halls are made of a marbled aventurine, shot through with bands of brown and gray stone. They are covered in ivy and moss, so much that the stone is nearly fully concealed. Light zephyrs carry the stench of a bog at times, but bring the pleasant scent of a mossy forest at others. The air is comfortably warm, but humid. The plant growth vacillates in the breeze - this creates the only ambient noise. The area is lit, from an unknown source. The quality is daylight, as if filtered through a forest canopy.

The floor, too, has moss and plant life upon it. There are occasional shallow pits in the floor that will be hard to spot due to the abundance of creepers and other life. The stonework in the floor is more uneven than in other areas, holding small pools of water and allowing plants to gain root. Close examination of the floor will also reveal clumps of plant life closely gathered around humanoid skeletons, forming filled-out, vaguely human shapes.

Some of the plant life exudes infectious spores. These are innocuous looking plants called possessor ferns. The musty smell is the first indicator of the spore problem, but breathing the spores produces no symptoms until five turns after the entire party enters the area. The afflicted will experience eye-watering, and any activity requiring hand-eye coordination suffers a -2 penalty. Five turns after that, characters will start to sneeze. Sneezing characters alert nearby creatures, and fight at -2 to all attack rolls. Sneezing also interferes with spell casting 50% of the time. Ten turns later, characters will be afflicted with nausea, as the spores take root in their bodies. They will suffer an additional -2 to attack rolls. Finally, ten turns after this, affected characters will die, overwhelmed by the rooting plant life. Any character slain in this manner will rise in 24 hours as a shambling mound.

To prevent the onset of this disease, characters can take several steps. First, any time before the onset of the third phase, the characters can rinse off their faces with clean water, and use cloth scarves to block inhalation of the spores. Second, *cure disease* will work at any stage of the infection, but a character can become re-infected. If a dead character has *cure disease* cast upon him, then the character will not rise as a shambling mound, but will remain

slain. Third, drinking alcohol will delay the onset of the disease, as long as a character remains intoxicated.

Rangers and druids can recognize this disease and suggest treatments. A successful survival check (CL 6) or nature lore check (CL 2) recognizes the spore's symptoms as that of a possessor fern, and offers the character one of the above suggestions on how to counteract the effects.

Wounds must be covered or healed within 5 rounds of their occurrence or else the spores will invade and infect, just as if the victim had inhaled them.

Creatures here are immune to the spore threat, either through anatomy or through

magic, but intelligent creatures know of the effect of the spores and will attempt to delay characters until the disease has taken them. The ferns grow throughout the entire area, and even if systematically destroyed, they will release enough spore material in the process to keep the danger constant.

### Room 1: Mound Chamber

There are heaps of plant life in this area, notably in twelve alcoves that are set into the northwest and southeast walls of the space. Vines and creepers slither up the walls, flowers and other plants thrive alongside moss on the floor, and the feeling is of an ancient shrine in a dense wooded glade with very old growth. In the center of the room is a stone basin. It has some disgusting water in it, brown with particulates suspended within it, and supporting a rather pungent colony of scum.

If this water is changed in favor of cleaner water, or if the water is purified, then the six shambling mounds in the rear-most alcoves will not attack the party. Instead, they will move into the room and circle the basin. They will defend themselves if attacked.

If any character enters the room and passes the basin without exchanging or purifying the water, the mounds will attack. They will use their tentacles to grab characters first, so that they don't have to leave their alcoves. However, they will eventually leave the alcoves to pursue prey.

The shambling mounds are covered with sprouting possessor ferns.

Shambling Mound #1 - this is a former adventurer who fell victim to the spores. Deep within the body mass is a *ring of friend shield*. It is a matched pair with another ring found on Mound #3.

Shambling Mound #3 - this former adventurer also has a *ring of friend shield* within its body mass.

An *ioun stone*, the deep red sphere (+1 to dexterity) can be found beneath the water basin.

6 Shambling Mounds (Their vital stats are HD 8, HP 50, 44, 44, 32, 32, 30, AC 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two slams for 2d8 points of damage each. Their special ability includes: constrict.)

The rings of friend shield, when worn and commanded, will allow one wearer to absorb physical damage inflicted on the other wearer, within certain limits. The damage absorbed cannot exceed 5 hp per injury, and cannot exceed a total of 50 hp. The rings are a matched set, and use of the bard's lore ability, or other divination magic, should disclose this fact.

### Room 2: A Deadly Vintage

*This room is carpeted with the rich soil, moss, and creepers that are extant in this entire area. Three large grapevines have grown upwards along the walls and across the ceiling, dangling their ripening fruit beneath. The path to the passage beyond is clear otherwise.*

The grapevines are actually assassin vines. They will wait until as many characters as possible are within reach of their tentacles to begin attacking and constricting their prey.

A ranger or druid inspecting the fruit from a distance can make a survival check (CL 6) or a nature lore check (CL 2) to discover that the bunches of fruit are not grapes. An additional check at CL 8 reveals the nature of the plant itself. Any ranger or druid character that approaches to within two feet of a bunch of fruit instantly recognizes this fact, but may become a victim of the plant.

3 Assassin Vines (Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 40 each, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They have 8 vine attacks, each dealing 1d4 points of damage. Their special abilities include: constrict and entangle.)

### Room 3: Lord of Tendrils, Prince of Vines

*This room is suffocated with plant life. The air smells thick with a musty odor of thick forest loam. Vines hang from the ceiling in serpentine bunches, obscuring the view across the chamber. The natural forest lighting is dimmer here.*

Camouflaged in a location near the room's egress is a tendriculos, inconspicuously blending in to the surrounding vegetation. The huge plant attacks the first character to come within the reach of its tendrils, and may gain surprise. It will fight ravenously until slain.

Under a crushed skull in the opposite corner from the tendriculos is a +2 silver dagger.

Tendriculos (Their vital stats are HD 9, HP 72, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two tendrils that each deal 1d8+4 points of damage, or bite for 2d6+4 points of damage. Their special abilities include: paralysis, swallow whole, regeneration. On a successful hit by a tendril, the victim must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4 turns. On a hit of natural 20 with a bite attack, a tendriculos can make a strength check to determine if the victim is swallowed whole. It also regenerates 3 HP per round unless fire or acid is used.)

### Room 4: Chamber of the Key

This chamber is less overgrown than the previous three. The area has a pastoral feel, like a well-groomed park or city square. The grass is neatly trimmed, ivy grows on trellises, thick and full. Wildflowers bloom in manicured patches throughout the chamber. The ceiling is tall, at least hundreds of feet high here, and a light filters down from above, bright enough to cast the precise height of the room into doubt, and beaming as a spring sunlight upon the scene.

In the southwest, four staircases surround and lead to the top of a raised platform. Vines and creepers grow heavily on the grey stone of the platform, but have been trimmed back from each staircase. On one of the staircases and at the base of the platform are several ancient and crumbling statues. Two appear to be adventurers approaching the platform. They wear looks of caution. One statue is poised on the steps with a look of surprise on its visage. The fourth statue is peculiar. It depicts a man walking away from the nearest staircase with a confident and gleeful look on his face. All statues have ivy growing upon them, and appear to have been in place for some time. All are pitted, and are missing an arm, or nose, or other protrusion.

The gemstone key would ordinarily rest in a small depression in the floor on top of the platform. However, it rests encased in stone, in the pack of the confident adventurer.

The two medusae in this room are hiding: One is hiding at the rear of the platform, one is hiding in the diamond chamber in the northeast. They will wait until the full party enters before acting, preferably as one or more characters climb the steps to the platform. They will reveal themselves one at a time, at the most advantageous moment, so that the characters will meet their gazes. They will avoid melee, but will circle the room, hiding when possible, and occasionally each will fire a pair of poisoned arrows (CL 6, 1d10 per round starting when hit, for 4 rounds).

Should any of the statues be restored to flesh, they die instantly, save for one. His name is Kabolt, and he is a bard, which is evidenced by his harp. However, his body is ruined after such a long period as a statue. He dies a short time after being restored, and he will only be able to mention, if asked, that he carries the green gem in his backpack.

2 Medusae (Their vital stats are HD 6, HP 42 each, AC 15. Their primary attribute is physical. They attack using a shortbow for 1d6 points of damage. The Medusae can fire two shots per round and they wield magical +1 shortbows. Each arrow is coated in poison. They also use daggers for 1d4 points of damage + poison. Their heads are crowned with poisonous snakes. Their special abilities include: petrifying gaze and poison. The poison coating the arrows does 2d10, half on a successful save.)

### White Finger

The stonework in this area is of white marble with veins of black and grey. The floor is covered in a thick blanket of snow and ice, and the air is numbingly cold. Characters with exposed skin will begin to take 1d4 hp damage from exposure for every turn they spend in the white corridors. If a character takes over 15 hp



damage from exposure, the character is slowed as the spell. Spell casters must make constitution saves at CL 3 to prevent shivering while casting any spell. Failure indicates the spell is ruined, and lost. Appropriate clothing (a simple cloak will not suffice) or magical protection from cold will negate the danger from exposure. During searches, it is imperative that characters continue to risk overexposure. The Castle Keeper should keep an accurate note of the passage of time in this area.

The air creates a humming and whistling sound as it whips through the halls, drifting snow and obscuring visibility. Light sources dependent on flame will not stay lit unless carefully shielded (in a hooded or bullseye lantern, for example). Line-of-sight is limited to 20 feet in any direction. The tunnels are lit, very dimly, as if bathed in twilight.

There are patches of ice beneath the thinner layers of snow. Characters stepping on a patch of ice must make dexterity saves (CL 0) or fall. Should they fall, they take 0-2 points of damage. Fragile items may be endangered if the character possessing them slips and falls. Areas marked "s" on the map indicate slipping traps.

There are other patches of ice that cover pits that contain ice spikes. These are marked with pit symbols on the map. The pits are 20 feet deep, causing 2d6 points of damage, and the ice spikes will cause 1d6 damage, for a total of 3d6 damage per fall. The pit walls are completely made of ice, making climbing difficult. The Castle Keeper should set the climbing CL according to the equipment and techniques used by the character attempting the climb. Under no circumstances should the CL be less than 4, and should usually range from 8 to 10.

The wind allows a +3 bonus to move silently rolls, but a -3 penalty to hear noise checks. Missile weapon attack rolls suffer a -3 penalty due to the wind.

Cloud spells such as *gaseous form*, *stinking cloud*, or *cloudkill* will not work in this area, as they are immediately dispersed. A character assuming gaseous form is instantly destroyed. Persistent flame spells are reduced in capability as if the caster level were 2 lower.

If this is not applicable, then reduce the damage dealt by the flame by 1d6 and the duration by 2 rounds. Instantaneous flame effects work normally.

### Room 1: Frost Entrance

*This simple, square room is empty, save for drifting snow layering across the floor. A door is visible on the far side of the chamber.*

The snow-covered floor is actually a thin layer of ice. The entire room is one large pit, 40 feet deep, and lined with very hard shards of ice that serve as spikes. The first character to enter this area will break a 10 feet x 10 feet section of ice and fall to the spikes below, suffering 4d6 for the fall and 3d6 damage from the spikes. A successful dexterity save (CL 10) halves the spike damage.

The pit trap is even more insidious. Walls of ice run across the floor of the chamber and support the ice above. There are two walls that run north and south and two that run east and west. These walls divide the room into nine 10 foot square pits.

The walls of ice are thin, about 9 inches or so, and can be easily broken through with a hard weapon. Breaking through a wall takes one turn. The walls are also reasonably clear, so that a clever character can attempt to peer through them. Any that do so can automatically see that there is no stone behind the ice walls of the pit, and that there is space beyond. Characters can choose to tunnel across the pits to the other side of the chamber, then find a way to climb out.

Alternately, characters can attempt to walk on the tops of the ice walls. Each will need to succeed at 3 dexterity saves (CL 10) to avoid tumbling into a pit. The Castle Keeper may decrease the CL for ingenious techniques or precautions.

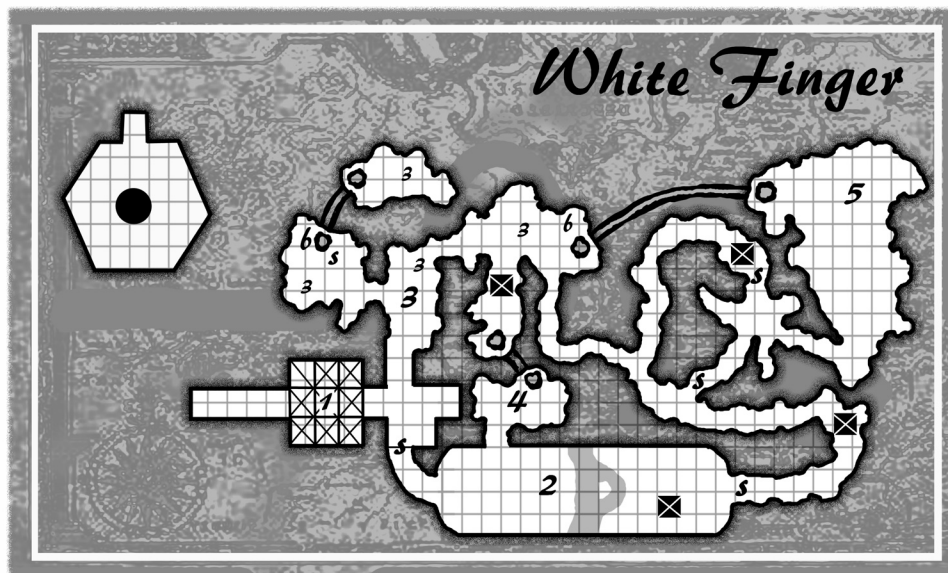
### Room 2: Wolf Hunting Grounds

*The light quality here is dimmer than usual, nearing total darkness. The area is deceptively large due to the visual conditions. Drifting snow piles on either side of a slow flowing creek, a layer of slush built up along the sides. Small pine trees dot the room, which contains a slightly rolling landscape and a very high ceiling.*

Five winter wolves are concealed in the snow, lying in wait for prey. They are on the edges of the chamber, waiting for a group to cross into the middle near the small icy stream. When a group reaches the stream, the wolves will spring forth and use their breath weapons, attacking voraciously.

A ranger may ask to make a tracking roll (CL 5). Success will reveal the prints of a small pack of large wolves. The ranger should discover that there are at least 4 wolves in the pack.

3 Male Winter Wolves (Their vital stats are HD 6, HP 32, 28, 24, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d10 points of damage +



1d4 points of cold damage. Their special abilities include: breath weapon and freezing bite.)

2 Female Winter Wolves (Their vital stats are HD 6, HP 32, 28, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d10 points of damage + 1d4 points of cold damage. Their special abilities include: breath weapon and freezing bite.)

### Room 3: Remorhaz Lairs

The walls and ceilings of this area are rounded and glasslike, giving the passages and rooms the feeling of an ice cavern. The ice appears to have been melted and refrozen several times into a hardened glaze.

Any search on the floor reveals that there is no stone under the snow and ice. To the characters, the snow appears to continue to an unknown depth. The packed snow is actually 30 feet deep throughout these halls.

There are four remorhaz in this area - two adults, and four recently hatched young. An adult remorhaz is burrowed beneath the snow, waiting for prey, in each area marked (b).

The remorhaz will erupt through the ice at the first character that comes within 10 feet.

The young remain in areas marked (a), one to each area. They are too young to burrow, but sit in depressions in the snow and ice that their developing heat has caused. They will attack characters, as they are hungry.

A frozen, half-eaten halfling protrudes very slightly from the ice in the melted cavern leading between areas 3 and 4. Managing to survive the intense heat in the halfling's pouch is a *figurine of wondrous power* - silver raven.

2 Adult Remorhaz (Their vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 50, 42, AC 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 6d6 points of damage. Their special abilities include: swallow whole and heat.)

4 Juvenile Remorhaz (Their vital stats are HD 3, HP 10, 10, 9, 9, AC 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 2d6 points of damage.)

### Room 4: Remorhaz Egg Chamber

This smaller chamber is strangled with oft-refrozen ice in formations so thick that movement across the place is impossible without breaking thick columns and protrusions.

Retrieving the eggs will require 48 hours and very delicate work. However, if the eggs are retrieved, they can be sold for 3000 gp or more, to the right buyer.

Sealed in ice in this chamber are three remorhaz eggs. They pulse with a soft light through the layers of rime. This room is reasonably safe from the adult remorhaz, as they rarely enter this place once eggs are laid.

### Room 5: Chamber of the Key

This large cavern is incredibly cold. Huge icicles hang from the vaults of the cavern ceiling, like frozen viper's fangs. They appear very dangerous and unstable. Through the dim twilight, some rock formations can be seen, exposed and encased, glittering when exposed to any bright light source.

The floor in this room is not of snow-covered stone, but of packed snow and ice 60 feet deep.

Frozen in ice on the eastern wall, in the lower portion of the cavern, is a small alcove that is difficult to see. An explicit search in this area is required in order to find the alcove. In the alcove is a pedestal with a large faceted gem – the diamond key.

A frost worm lairs within. It knows as soon as anything enters this chamber. If it detects several creatures, it will lay in wait for the best moment to ambush. If only one character crosses the cavern floor, the worm will attack at that time, thinking the character is alone. The worm will begin combat by trilling. If the characters suspect something is buried, initiative should be determined at this time. Otherwise, they still will be unaware of the location of the creature due to the echo through the chamber, and the creature's first attack will be a surprise. The creature will surface in an eruption of snow the next round following the trilling, and will use its breath weapon on the largest group of characters. If the party is scattered, it will breathe at the character closest to the location of the key. The creature shatters in an explosive fashion when it expires, doing damage to all nearby.

The mangled remains of a party of adventurers are buried in snow and ice next to one of the rock formations. The corpses are not visible without a lengthy search of the area, and they will take hours to extract by conventional means.

Treasure (There is a suit of gnome-sized +4 half plate, a +1 shortsword of disruption named Anger, 570 gp, 2 +2 daggers, a wand of magic missiles (10 charges), a wand of haste (6 charges), and a helm of agility.)

Frost Worm (Its vital stats are HD 14d8, HP 68, AC 18. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 2d8+8 points of damage. Its special abilities include: trill, cold, breath weapon, shatter.)

### Room 6: The Sanctum

After the five gemstones are inserted into the obelisk in the "palm" of the hand, nothing happens at first. Slowly, almost delicately, the gems become completely translucent and disappear, and small motes of white light begin to shower the obelisk. The floor begins to vibrate, accompanied by a rumbling, grating sound. The noise begins softly, growing to a crescendo as the obelisk rises into the ceiling of the chamber, revealing a dark spiral staircase that was, until now, sealed beneath it.

The staircase leads downwards into a gloom, the passage delving into the mountain's roots for an unknown depth. The climb downward is not easy: the staircase crumbles in areas, and the darkness competes with the narrow walls for the honor of being more oppressive.



*When the staircase finally ends, several thousand feet below, you notice that you have alighted upon an ornate stone floor, tiled in broad alabaster, and covered with the debris and dust of eons.*

If detected, the walls, floor, and ceiling of this entire area radiate powerful, but fading, magic.

A central passage reaches away from the landing. Each side of the 30 feet corridor contains numerous side passages and rooms, containing the sleeping, studying, and dining areas for several hundred members of the Sect. Crumbling skeletons litter the hallways, often torn apart and scattered. Furniture lies broken about the place, splintered as if each piece collided with some unstoppable force. While the minute details and maps of these residential areas are not detailed in this product, the Castle Keeper should feel free to develop them. To extend the adventure, the characters might fight more former sect members transformed into fantastic guardians, or may discover new facts about the sect and the opponent they will face at the conclusion of their explorations.

The central corridor stretches off into the distance, ending in what appears to be a cave-in. Massive blocks of granite lay packed into the full width of the corridor, sealed with dust and gravel. Several skeletons are visible, protruding from beneath the tons of stone.

The party may use a variety of means to clear the hallway, including magical spells or tools. If they do so, the corridor continues:

*The alabaster beyond has been blackened with soot, cracked and damaged by impacts of rock and magic. The area smells of brimstone. The charred skeletons of what appear to be sect members lay askew. The corridor ends at two sets of double doors in a widened part of the hallway. Both sets of doors are ajar. There is a reddish glow coming from the chamber beyond.*

*The room beyond has the look of a large auditorium. Benches and tables lay in ruin, mere piles of kindling. Each set of double doors leads to an aisle that flanks the audience chamber, leading down a slope to a slightly raised area. Each aisle is littered with treasure of all types – though coin and jewelry all appear slightly melted.*

Sitting in an enormous stone chair on the raised speaking platform is Aepholus, a facet demon. (New Monster, see appendix A).

The demon rests quietly, observing any entry into the chamber. The demon is very interested in those that have freed him. His motivations are domination and destruction, and he knows that any party that has reached this point has the potential to destroy him. As such, he will entertain negotiations or discussions from the party for a brief time without attacking. He has no interest in any deals - just in causing the party to be complacent before he attacks.

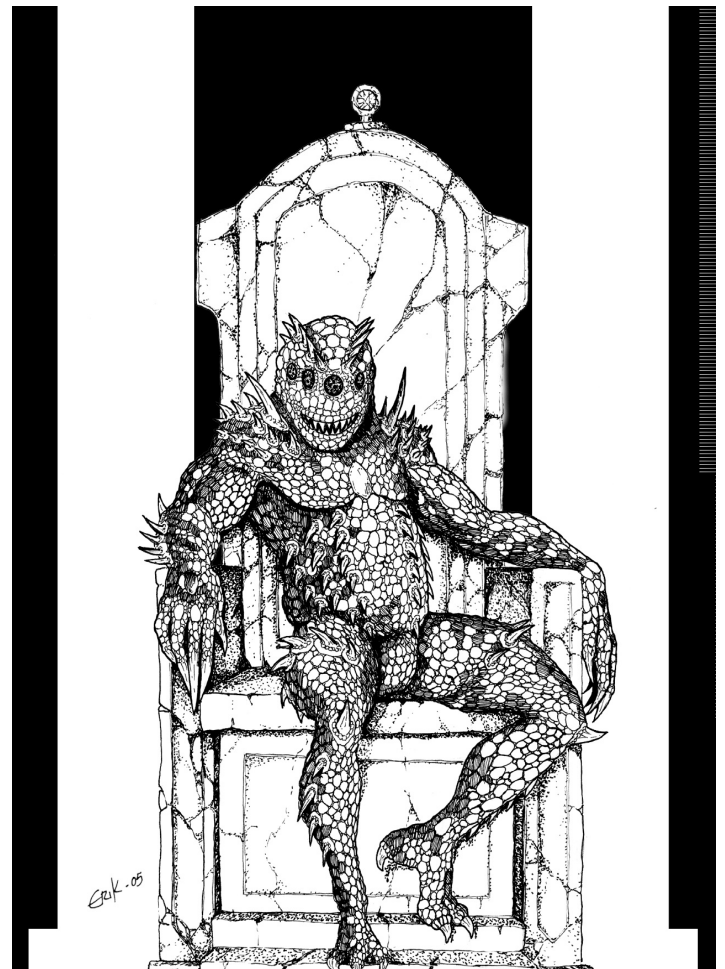
If it becomes apparent at any time that the party intends to destroy him, then he will attack to the fullest extent, using all of his eye rays when appropriate. Though most of his abilities are restored, Aepholus is still permanently dimensional anchor-ed to this plane. As such, *dismissal* spells will not work on him.

Members of the party may possess any or all of a group of five keys found in area 1A of the Red Finger. These keys are magical, and each acts as a protective device. Any character possessing the key of a particular color is immune to the eye ray that corresponds to that color, for one time only. There is no limit to the number of keys that can be possessed by an individual character. When defending against an eye ray, each key will crumble to dust as it exerts its protection.

The room contains the following pieces of treasure (1510 pp, 3410 gp, 6,010 sp, 10,992 cp, 33x50 gp gems, 10x200 gp gems, twelve pieces of jewelry averaging 500 gp each, +2 shield of fire resistance, potions of water breathing and gaseous form, scroll of cone of cold, +2 longbow, +1 glaive, +3 scale mail, and the following books: a tome of clear thought, manual of bodily health, manual of gainful exercise, manual of quickness of action, tome of understanding, tome of leadership and influence, and blessed book.)

Aepholus has identified the magical treasures in this room, and will use them if advantageous in a given circumstance.

Facet Demon (His vital stats are HD 12d8, HP 102, AC 24. His primary attributes are physical and mental. He attacks with 2 claws for 1d12+6 points of damage. Their special abilities include: eye rays, construct, regeneration 5.)



## Appendix: New Monsters

### DEMON, FACET

NO. ENCOUNTERED:

SIZE: Large

HD: 12d10

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 23

ATTACKS: 2 Weapon (by weapon +12) or 2 Claw (1d12+6)

SPECIAL: Eye Rays, Construct, Regeneration 5

SAVES: M, P

INT: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: None

XP: 6100+12

The facet demon is a particularly rare form of promoted retriever demon. If a retriever shows unflagging service over a long period of time, it may be promoted to the status of a facet demon. Facet demons control retrievers - they assign tasks and generally keep the lesser demons in check. Rarely, a facet demon will be assigned to a special task by a demon prince, which may bring the infernal creature to a material plane.

The demon takes the form of a large 12 feet tall black and green humanoid, strong of build, with spines and scales undulating in patterns across its body. The grotesque head is also vaguely human, with an array of five faceted glowing eyes sprouting from a large forehead. The facet demon may fight with two weapons, drawing no penalty for dual-wielding. Some prefer to use their claws, attacking twice per round and dealing 1d12+6 hp of damage per strike.

A facet demon's eyes can produce five different magical rays with a range of 100 feet. Each round, it can fire one ray, but an individual ray is usable only once every 5 rounds. It can only fire the death ray once per combat. It cannot fire rays in the same round that it makes physical attacks.

Each effect follows the rules for a ray.

The five eye effects are:

**Fire:** Deals 12d6 fire damage to the target and to all those within 5 feet (dexterity saves for half).

**Cold:** Deals 12d6 cold damage to the target (dexterity save for half)

**Electricity:** Deals 12d6 electricity damage to the target. (dexterity save for half)

**Petrification:** The target must succeed at a wisdom save or turn to stone.

**Death:** The target must succeed at a charisma save or die instantly.

When ordered to find an item or being, a facet demon does so unerringly, as though guided by uncanny supernatural accuracy.

Facet demons regenerate 5 hp of damage per round once injured. Damage inflicted by fire or acid is not regenerated.

Facet demons are constructed, like retrievers, and are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, subdual damage, ability damage, or energy drain.

### LIGHTNING NAGA

NO. ENCOUNTERED:

SIZE: Large

HD: 12d10

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 20

ATTACKS: Shocking Slam(1d4+1d8 electrical) or Tail Whip (1d3+1d8 electrical)

SPECIAL: Project Lightning, Electrical Field, Constrict

SAVES: P

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Abberation

TREASURE: 8

XP: 3150+12

The lightning naga resembles her kin, with the face of a coldly beautiful woman perched on the body of a huge snake. The facial skin of a lightning naga has a blue tint, and her eyes are of gold, matching her hair. Her scales are iridescent blue and green, and her underbelly is light yellow.

The lightning naga generates a constant electrical field. Those engaged in melee with a lightning naga must succeed at a Dex save every round or suffer 1d6 points of electrical damage. Three times per day, a lightning naga can project a lightning bolt as a wizard of the 8<sup>th</sup> level of ability. Lightning nagas are immune to electrical energy.

If a tail slap succeeds, a lightning naga can immediately attempt a second attack. If successful, the attack does no damage, but the victim is constricted in her coils, cannot attack, and is subject to 1d4 crushing and 1d8 electrical damage per round until freed.



