# SEE TO THROUGH

# AN ADVENTURE MODULE FROM THE GM'S SECRET STASH

**Quickphix Presents** 

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A 6 - 8 Hour Adventure for 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Level Characters

# **CREDITS:**

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"She put them all over the house. Pure silver – reflecting her every movement without preconceptions. Their surfaces must have swallowed her up, like the four-cornered eyes of a giant God. Yet, she kept on refining them, polishing them, lighting them. In the end, what was she hoping to see?" – Marten Hoyt

# Summary

Perched on a cliff outside the fishing village of Dorma stands an old villa. It was once inhabited by Katja Arga, the widow of an infamous mercenary and pirate. The locals had always done their best to avoid the villa - even after Katja's husband died. This wasn't just out of fear of Katja's alleged violent nature and short temper. During the day, otherworldly lights could be seen flickering through the dirty windows of the villa and at night, piercing sounds could be heard coming from below the house. Some nights, the shrieks would get so loud, the townsfolk were awoken from their slumber. When carefully asked about these strange phenomena, the unapproachable Katja just told the locals to mind their own business. Dorma did as it was told and started treating Katja as a cursed outsider. Still, their shock was great as one night, the sounds suddenly stopped. The villagers braced themselves for catastrophe - but nothing happened. No one saw Katja ever again. Yet, the lights could still be seen throughout the day – glinting invitingly at anyone walking past. The citizens of Dorma briefly debated, if they should burn down this clearly haunted house, but soon got used to seeing it on the horizon. Years passed like this and some started to forget what they were even afraid of. They were reminded three nights ago, as the sounds returned to the house and smoke could be seen rising from the long-cold chimney. Could it be, that Katja has returned?

In this 6-8-hour adventure, a party of  $15^{\text{th}}$  to  $16^{\text{th}}$  level characters are hired to investigate the old villa and to put an end to the hauntings. But what they find in the house isn't what they expected. Katja clearly had been working on an important project all these years – a project just waiting for someone to "See it through".

# Premise – Frightened Dorma

As the players are trying to pass through Dorma, they are stopped by an especially nervous guard called Eldric Faras – announcing he'd have to do a quick body search. He's checking them for the insignia of the old Arga pirate band, because the rumour has spread, that with the return of Katja's ghost, the pirates will assemble once more in Dorma. Seeing the player's equipment, he'll ask them if they'd be interested in investigating the happenings at the villa Arga for them. The way he phrased it the offer sounded more like a plea. The party can learn the following things from Eldric:

- The history of Villa Arga and Katja it has been about 11 years since she disappeared. She was 67 years old back then. Her husband and his men went missing 12 years before that.
- The noises coming from the villa started without any warning three nights ago. Since then, smoke could also be seen rising from the chimneys (true).
- Nobody has seen anybody enter or leave the villa. However, almost nobody dared to approach the villa to get a better look either (true).
- The villagers convinced the captain of the guard, Manfred Callas, to investigate the villa. He returned screaming and ranting on about the souls of the dead rising from their graves (true)
- Since then, multiple witnesses have seen the ghosts of pirates walking around the villa (false although in their fright, the villagers did report such sightings).

#### In your Campaign:

This adventure yields a high risk of getting the entire party killed. The final encounter pits the players directly against a foe equal to their strength – should they fail to work together, they will be defeated.

 Dorma is willing to pay almost any price to get rid of the evil lurking within the villa (true – but they clearly do not have much. Eldric will promise the party more then the town can possibly hope to pay. DC 16 insight check to see the lie behind his offer.)

Eldric offers the party a free stay at the local inn - saying they should hear the sounds for themselves before they decide on anything.

#### Witness Report

If the players decide to try and talk to the captain of the guard, they'll be stopped by his furious wife. She's angry with the townsfolk, for forcing her husband to investigate the clearly haunted villa. She'll try to turn the players away. If they manage to get past her, they will meet the bedridden Manfred Callas. Questioning him won't yield many new insights. He only walked up to the villa and as soon as he touched the gate, he found himself in the presence of, as he describes it, "a glowing demon". It told him to never return and chased him off by summoning skeletal pirates from below the earth.

#### **Screeches in the Dark**

The party gets to spend the night in the dusty inn near Dorma's town square. In the middle of the night they are awoken by a loud screech coming from the villa. The innkeeper says the sounds will continue for a while and then die down after a few minutes. He recommends the players to stay away from the villa at night and offers them some strong spirits to put them to sleep.

# **Investigating Villa Arga**

Whether the party leaves at night or the next morning, the innkeeper will provide them with some simple provisions. The villa is about half an hour away from Dorma. The cobblestone path leading up to the cliff clearly hasn't been used in decades. It is almost impossible to discern it amongst the thorny bushes growing

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out of the cracks between the stones. However, a trained eye (DC 18 perception check) might see the tracks of someone who's just recently walked up this path.

## Army at the Gate

The villa's gate is closed. Upon touching the fence or the gate, magical darkness will envelop the party. It was triggered because the players activated a Glyph of Warding by coming here. A loud voice will start talking menacingly in Abyssal – it sounds like it is casting a spell. Should any of the players understand the voice, it is saying:

"Get lost you country bumpkins. Can't even do a morning's worth of investigation without you snooping around here. I think I need to produce some more special effects for you if my scary voice doesn't frighten you enough."

After about 10 seconds, a cold wind will start to blow from the direction of the house and the smell of rotting flesh will waft through the air. Another then seconds later, glowing eyes start to appear in the dark and outlines of pirate skeletons emerge all around the players.

#### Charades

This magical fright-show is being put on by Marten Hoyt, a gnomish cleric investigating the villa. He'll stop casting his illusions, if the players talk back in abyssal, try to dispel the magic or discover Marten, hiding behind the fence surrounding the villa. Should the players confront him, he'll try to deescalate the situation by claiming, he was protecting the villagers by them away from the villa. To explain himself, he'll reveal the following things to the party:

 Marten is a wandering scholar, who came across a captain's chest full of letters in an auction. A woman named Katja Agra wrote them to her husband. They contain detailed descriptions of her unearthing a strange artefact and experimenting with it. What exactly she was hoping to achieve remains vague – but her descriptions point towards a kind of magic, which nobody has ever heard of.

- The house filled with weird, wall-high mirrors made from polished silver. From what Marten can tell, they are also completely indestructible.
- Marten found some erratic scribbles on an experiment involving the "Light of Days" and the mirrors.
- Katja repeatedly hints at another person in the house, giving her instructions from "the other side".
- Something dangerous is lurking in the house. Marten has been attacked twice by an unseen assailant. To prevent others from getting hurt, he has cast these glyphs around the villa to keep the villagers away.
- A room in the villa is filled to the brim with clean bones from animals of all sort.
- At night, the mirrors in the house turn dark and a horrible screeching sound can be heard from them whenever Marten passes by them.

After talking for a while, Marten decides to trust the party. His only goal in this matter is to find out what Katja has unearthed and what it does. He's not interested in riches or fame.

#### Marten Hoyt (Male Gnome)

A boisterous, fast little Gnome with a sharp tongue. He knows, that he's more knowledgeable than most people around him and he likes to show it. While he isn't nearly as charming as he thinks he is, his helpfulness does take the edge off his annoying personality a bit.

#### Ability Scores

AC: 17 / HP: 99 / Speed 25 /

STR: 13 (+1) / DEX: 12 (+1) / CON: 12 (+1)

INT: 15 (+2) / WIS: 20 (+5) / CHA: 10 (+0)

#### <u>Traits</u>

Knowledge of the Ages: Marten is knowledgeable in most languages and subjects. As an action, Marten can

choose one skill or tool. For 10 minutes, he has proficiency with the chosen skill or tool.

**Spellcaster.** Marten is a 16<sup>th</sup> level cleric. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom, his spell attack is +10, his spell save DC is 18. He can cast the following spells through his divine focus:

- At will: Sacred Flame, Minor Illusion, Thaumaturgy
- Level 1 (4): Detect Magic, Identify, Inflict Wounds
- Level 2 (3): Enhance Ability, Silence, Suggestion, Darkness
- Level 3 (3): Dispel Magic, Glyph of Warding, Major Image
- Level 4 (3): Confusion
- Level 5 (2): Planar Binding
- Level 6 (1): Harm
- Level 7 (1): Symbol
- Level 8 (1): Antimagic Field

#### <u>Actions</u>

**Staff** (+6 to hit), melee attack, reach 5ft., one target. 1d6+3 damage.

Turn Undead: Kill CR 3 undead.

# **Exploring Katja's Experiments**

After showing the players a way to step around his glyphs, Marten guides the party around the house (see Appendix I). He's clearly been selectively dusting off the place, which somehow only worsened the overall impression of the villa. The roof has been leaking through at several places and some rooms have created their own moss-based ecosystems. Only the mirrors are in pristine condition; their weird, polished surfaces reflecting the light from the dingy windows like a rippling pond.

#### **The Closed Cellar Door**

After Marten has shown the party around, he invites them around the fireplace in the surprisingly cosy parlour. He then explains, why he has been here for so long. While he has made some progress in deciphering Katja's journals, he is no step closer to finding the original artefact, which originally sent Katja down this weird rabbit-hole of experiments. The reason for this is easy to understand but hard to explain: he can't open the cellar door. Marten has tried breaking it, burning it, dissolving it – yet nothing has worked so far. It was also here, that he was savagely attacked by a shadowy figure which seemed to appear out of nowhere. He suspects, the sealing of the door has something to do with the mirror hanging opposite it. This mirror and the one in the guest suite are the only ones with no good lightsource throughout the day. Lighting them with magic or a lantern doesn't produce a clear reflection – it looks more like shining a lantern on a dirty pool of water. Marten does note, that Katja wrote in one of her letters, that the mirrors need to "breathe in the light of day".

#### The Way Downwards

The door to the cellar doesn't open, because a formless shadow in the mirror is holding the door shut. However, the only way to see this in the darkened mirror, is to get natural sunlight streaming into it. The best way to do this, is to wait until the late afternoon, when the red light of the setting sun will stream through the kitchen window and door, reflecting off the mirror in the kitchen and onto the one in the storage room. Other solutions could involve using normal mirrors or partially destroying the house. Although, Marten will warn the players that doing so might move the other mirrors, making progress impossible. After successfully redirecting the light, the players will notice the shadowy beast guarding the cellar door in the reflection.

#### **Mirror Beast**

The wavering, shadowy mass shambles over to the party's reflections. At times, it almost looks like the silhouette of an old woman. Without warning, it will attack the players closest to the cellar door.

#### Ability Scores

AC: 17 / HP: 187 / Speed 30 / Challenge Rating: 1 STR: 17 (+3) / DEX: 12 (+1) / CON: 17 (+3) INT: 8 (-1) / WIS: 10 (+0) / CHA: 8 (-1)

#### <u>Traits</u>

**Bound to the Mirror:** Usually, the Mirror Beast is invisible. It appears as a giant, almost formless woman if its reflection can be seen in a mirror or on another surface. It will not leave the storage room.

**Mindless Reflection:** When an attack that causes psychic damage is directed against the Beast, the attack rebounds against the attacker. Resolve the attack as if the attacker were the original target and using the Beast's ability modifiers and proficiency bonus rather than the original attacker's.

Resistances: bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Immunities: fire, radiant, lightning

#### <u>Actions</u>

**Mulitattack.** The shadow beast can cast a spell (if available) and use a melee attack or use two melee attacks.

**Shadow Pierce.** Melee Weapon Attack. +12 to hit, reach 10 ft.,one target. Hit: 20 (2d12 + 7) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) necrotic damage.

Life Leech (Recover 5-6). Ranged Spell Attack: +15 to hit, range 60 ft., one target in line of sight. Hit: 32 (5d12) necrotic damage, and the target must make a successful DC 20 Constitution saving throw or get a random body part turned into gaseous, shadow form which can't be used. An affected creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns; on a success, the effect ends on that creature, but on a failure, the creature takes another 32 (5d12) necrotic damage and the its body part remains gaseous. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this necrotic damage is permanently disintegrated and can be restored only by a wish or comparable magic that doesn't require some portion of a corpse to work. If the Mirror Beast dies, all the gaseous body parts are restored, but no damage is healed. **Shadow Press.** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d20 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

#### How to run this encounter

The Mirror Beast only exists within the Reflection of the Mirror opposite to the cellar door. The only way to attack it, is to get a player's reflection to attack it. This means, if one or several players are blocking the view in the mirror, the Mirror Beast can't be seen. The Beast can also get partial cover, if its form is obstructed by the reflection of a player in the foreground. These restrictions do not count for the Beast itself – which can freely attack anything in the storage room.

## **Silver Heart of the Cliff**

After killing the Mirror Beast, Marten will try to open the cellar door – which swings open without any problems. Marten explains, that Katja most likely installed the Beast as a means of defending the artefact in the cellar. Below, a set of crooked stairs lead down into a clammy cellar. The cellar consists of a single room, with a huge silver mirror taking up almost the entire western wall. Unlike the mirrors upstairs, this one looks like it was carved out of the cliff itself – as if it had always been there. In front of it stands a small pillar with a bottle on top and one of Katja's smaller mirrors. The small mirror is darkened, while the big mirror seems to exude a light of its own.

#### **Captured Light**

In the corner of the cellar lies a small stack of books. Marten will immediately start rummaging through them. After a while, he comes across an entry which he deems interesting enough to read aloud to the party:

"The magic she has shown me is unlike anything I could've imagined. She knows how to capture the sun in a flask, locate people with a mirror and amplify my own magic beyond mortal limits. As long as I bring her the light from above – she'll serve me well."

When looking into the mirror, the players will notice, that the only the mirror image of the flask on the pillar is giving off a dim light. Its real-life counterpart looks like a normal flask made of glass. While the players try to figure out, that they need to capture the sunlight in the flask by holding it up to the sun, Marten will continue reading through Katja's journal.

#### **Opening the Passage**

The flask only needs to be held towards the sun for a few minutes in order to start glowing brightly. If placed on the pillar in front of the mirror, glowing writing will appear in the air above the flask's reflection. Even though it is mirrored infernal script, Marten can decipher it.

> Of the twin realms once split in twain Only one is tied to a chain Enslaved through the other's light Trapped in perpetual night Aches the forsaken Silver Plane

After reading the poem, Marten turns to the party, as if to ask their opinion. However, his mirror image still stands at the pillar – smiling. With a swift motion, it grabs the mirrored flask. At first, nothing happens – then a bright light flashes from the large mirror. A second before the entire house is bathed in a white and painful light, the endlessly reflected image between the two mirrors almost looked like a passageway.

## **The Silver Plane**

It takes the party a while to orientate themselves after the white light has subsided. The first thing they'll notice, is that each object in the room seems to have switched places. Upon closer inspection, the party realizes that the entire house has been mirrored (see Appendix II). However, the outside world only seems to exist as far as the mirrors has reflected it. A featureless Silver Plane stretches as far as the eye can see. Trying to move through this featureless world for a prolonged period of time physically hurts, as the players start to lose their shape the farther they move from the house. Any magic transcending planes curiously fizzles out the moment it is cast. The house itself also looks peculiar – objects and features are blurrier the farther they are from a mirror. However, the players and Marten themselves show no reflection in any of the silver mirrors. The reason for this becomes obvious, as the players catch a glimpse of another Marten entering one of the rooms at the far end of a corridor.

#### **The Mirrored**

These mirrored beings are identical to the players in every way – except that they are fully rested (to play them, the GM could just copy their players' character sheets). They have been given sentience through the big mirror, yet they are still unable to move away from the villa as long as their counterparts still exist. They share the common goal of freeing themselves from this tether by killing their counterparts. They won't be reasoned with. Roll for initiative.

#### **Actions**

Apart from having access to all the same abilities, spells and weapon attacks as their counterparts, the Mirrored are able to take the following additional actions:

**Mirrorwalk.** The Mirrored can walk through the (nondarkened) silver mirrors all over the house. While on the "other side", they can't attack or cast a spell on the players and vice versa. They can move through the villa on the "other side" and emerge from any non-darkened mirror.

**Memory Exploitation.** The Mirrored have access to all the memories of their counterparts. However, while they know of the events, they don't share the sentiments attached to them, as they view them as not being their own.

**Life Leech.** The Mirrored seek to rip the original connection their counterparts have to their home plane from them. Players killed by the actions of a Mirrored turn into a shadow of themselves – a Mirror Beast (see

above). This condition can only be reversed, if the Mirrored of the player in question is killed and the player can be resurrected.

#### <u>Items</u>

They possess the same items as the players and while in the Silver Plane, these items can also be taken from them. However, upon being killed, these mirrored possessions vanish – no matter who holds them at the time.

#### **Tactics**

The Mirrored exhibit all the quirks but none of the moral inhibitions of their counterparts. Hence, they will copy their fighting style perfectly (e.g. overly aggressive, favouring some weapons over others, always targeting the strongest threat first, etc.) but they will fight without hesitation or mercy. They will also seek to exploit their Mirrorwalk ability to get the drop on the players or get themselves to safety. While they will gang up on players – they don't see any need for closer collaboration, as they lack the compassion of their counterparts. Marten's Mirrored will cast Antimagic Field and will try to soak up as much magical fire from the players as possible.

#### **Darkness Falls**

The initial fight with the Mirrored only lasts for 3 or 4 rounds (GM's discretion how much they want to weaken the players). During which the players will notice their surroundings becoming ever darker. In the final round, they'll find themselves completely immersed in darkness. In the "other side" of the mirror, the sun has set on villa Arga and the connection between the two planes has been momentarily severed. All the silver mirrors show only billowing darkness. Trying to clean, destroy or illuminate the darkened mirrors will only produce a deafening shriek. The same thing happens if the players try to move through the mirrors.

However – the villa's mirror image is still there (see Appendix II). Lighting a torch or casting a spell will reveal, that the players are completely alone.

#### Home on your own

After collecting themselves from the shock of the first wave of attacks, Marten tries to assemble the party in the Foyer. He reasons, that they'll have about 7 hours before sunrise – which will probably allow the Mirrored to attack them again. Hence, the players have this time at their disposal to prepare for an attack. Marten suggest building traps or coming up with strategies to exploit the Mirroreds' weaknesses. After all, who better to exploit one's weaknesses than one's friends. Marten can do the following things to help the players:

- Spend roughly 40 Minutes to create a thick alchemical coating able to black out one of the mirrors, making it impossible for the Mirrored to use it as a passageway
- Spend 2h hours to create a poison coating for a weapon. It lasts for 4 successful piercing or slashing attacks. The target creature must pass a DC 16 CON saving throw, causing 7d6 damage on a failed save and half as much on successful save.
- Spend 2h to create a fume bomb. Once detonated, it creates a 15ft. smoke cloud which lasts for 2 turns. Each creature beginning its turn within the cloud or moving into it must succeed in a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1h. The poisoned creature is blinded.
- He can spend all his spell slots creating Glyphs of Warding. Because of his intimate knowledge of this spell, he can spend only 30 minutes casting one and can use the players, to imbue one of their spells within the Glyph.
- He can lend the players a hand in almost any preparation or construction task, due to him being proficient in almost any tool.

Additionally, the players can use whatever they can find in the rooms to construct traps or prepare other nasty surprises for when their Mirrored return. The following are just some suggestions of objects and actions the party could take:

- There are two small casks of oil, a lot of candles and some wicks in the kitchen. They could be used to create a fire or slipping trap.
- In the storage room, there's plenty of firewood, rope and some construction tools such as hammers, saws and chisels.
- A lot of the floorboards in the first floor aren't all that stable anymore. Together with the omnipresent rugs, some simple falling traps could be created.
- The improvised lab of Marten contains a variety of alchemical agents. Maybe the players have an idea for a recipe of their own.
- The parlour and the study feature quite a large collection of old sets of armour, weapons and other oddities. There's surely enough to improvise a trap or two.

#### One Final Push

As predicted, the Mirrored return with the light of day. The following things can be done to make the encounter memorable:

- Marten will have suggested, that his Mirrored would try to kill him first, as he considers himself the biggest threat. This probably has also caused some speculation amongst the players, about who among them they'd attack first. If the GM thinks their reasoning is plausible, their Mirrored should therefore definitely act this way.
- The mirrored are more selfish versions of the players. While they have no choice but to collaborate to kill their counterparts, they won't make any personal sacrifice to protect each other. To underline this difference, the GM might award inspiration to any player committing a great act of self-sacrifice for his companions.
- The players will have set up some traps that are more elaborate than others. Unless they are completely illogical, the GM should have them sprung as the players intended – but not necessarily when they intended. Having to wait for the pay-off will make it all the sweeter.

 The GM can utilize synergies between the Mirrored to show the players an aspect of teamwork they maybe haven't thought about before (e.g. the party's wizard never using "hold person" so the barbarian can get a swing in with the great axe). The GM should especially try thinking of team-ups the players rarely do – e.g. maybe they haven't realized how well the Monk and the Druid could work together?

# The Collapse

With the last of the Mirrored killed, the Silver Plane is no longer able to maintain its connection to the villa Arga. With a deafening thunderclap, the mirrors all over the house violently crack. Immediately, colour and light start pouring out of the Silver Plane, like water rushing from a broken bottle. The world before the players' eyes is being stretched into nothingness. After an agonizing second of staring into emptiness, the players find themselves back in the villa Arga. Katja's mirrors have shattered into a million small pieces, each reflecting the warm morning sun.

Without saying a word, Marten immediately runs down to the cellar to check on the "original" mirror. It is still there, its surface foggy and dark. On the floor lie the remains of the flask of light. Standing in front of the mirror, one can almost make out the silhouettes of several people, huddled around dying embers held within a small flask.

## **Rewards**

As far as Marten is concerned, this experience has been a resounding success. He has learned of a hitherto undiscovered plane of existence and encountered an alien intelligence equal to his own. However, he also knows he wouldn't have survived this ordeal if it weren't for the players. While he cannot offer much of a physical reward, he is a wellspring of knowledge. So, he offers the players to instruct them on anything they might want to learn. Maybe he can even point them towards something they have been searching for?

Additionally, the players may want to tell the terrified citizens of Dorma that the haunting of Villa Arga has been dealt with (although they probably shouldn't enter the cellar). As a reward, they'll pitch together to pay the party a moderate sum of gold.

# What's next?

The Silver Heart below the cliff of Dorma may have been stilled, but it could not be destroyed. Why did Katja's Mirrored instruct her to create additional mirrors all over the house? Where did the original mirror come from? What other secrets does the Silver Plane hide? With Marten at their side, the players may yet find an answer to all of these questions.

#### Appendix I – Villa Arga Map, Ground Floor



#### **Ground Floor - contents**

• **Kitchen:** Two casks of oil, candles wicks and a stove. Some buckets and empty barrels

• **Storage:** Some firewood, construction tools and some rope.

• Patio: Some hand-made desk chairs, a bird bath and a heavy stone table

• **Dining Room:** Some decorative weapons, a pirate flag and a large oak table.

• Bath: a large tub and some torn clothes

• **Parlour:** A fireplace, some moldy chairs, sets of armour and decorative weapons.

• **Library:** A desk, some writing utensils, decorative amors and weapons and a lot of books on navigation.

• **Study:** Chests filled with old clothes and a pirate's weaponry.

• Guest Room & Suite: Beds and a lot of mossy wood.



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#### **First Floor - contents**

• Attic: There's not much left of the attic. Most of the boards are rotten through, revealing the holes in the roof above.

• **Maid Bedroom:** Contains the cleaned bones of several small mammals, mostly cats and dogs. Marten thinks, Katja used them for experiments.

• **Master Bedroom:** The best kept room, with a beatiful carpet and a large bed. A closet containing noble clothes.

• **Child Bedroom:** Mostly empty, the floorboards creak alarmingly while walking over them.

• **Bedroom 1:** The floor is almost rotten through stepping carelessly might collapse the entire thing.

• **Bedroom 2:** Was apparently used as another storage room. Contains a lot of glassware, cutlery and ornaments.

• Makeshift Laboratory: Marten has set up a small chemistry lab up here (probably because it is well ventilated through a hole in the roof). He tried to create a polishing agent for the mirrors here, without much success.



# Cellar

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Contains piles of Katja's notebooks, a large mirror which looks like it was carved out of the cliff, a small stone pillar and one of the mirrors Katja created.

# Appendix II Villa Arga Map – Mirrored

#### **Ground Floor Mirrored**



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#### **First Floor Mirrored**

