

JOHAN NOHR OF STOCKHOLM KARTELL PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE UNSEEN WALKERS OF THE OPTIC EXPERIMENT

A dungeon crawl for use with LAMENTATIONS OF THE FLAME PRINCESS

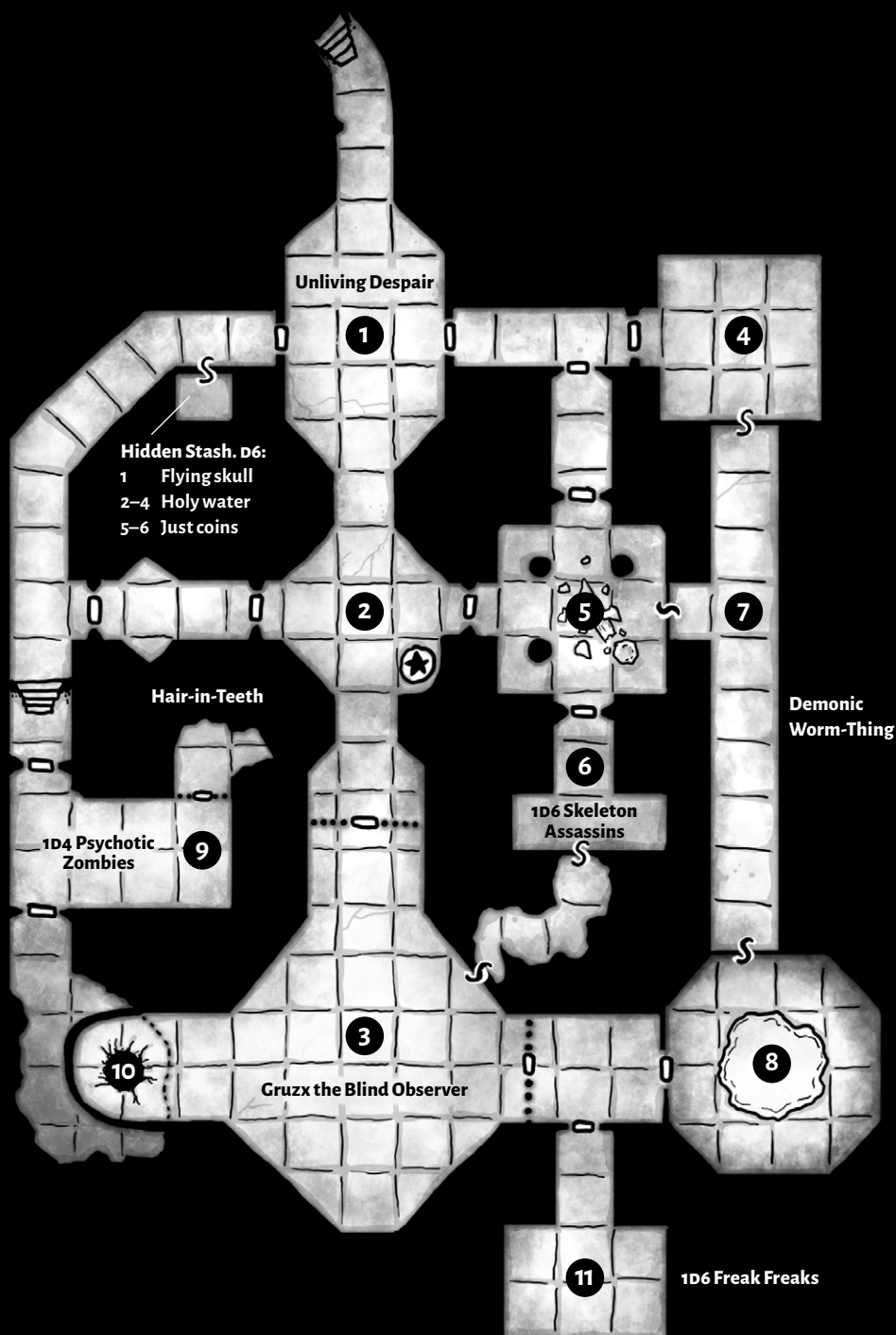
— and similar old school roleplaying games —

The Unseen Vaults of the Optic Experiment

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Playtested with level 3 characters
at *Gothcon 2018*. One Cleric died.



The Vaults

One square is 5×5 feet.

1. Unliving Despair

Page 6

Undead emotion in spectral form.
Tries to scare off intruders.

Creatures Unliving Despair

7. Secret Corridor

Page 11

Webbed corridor, demon murder-worm.

Creatures Demonic Worm-Thing

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 4, 5 and 8**

2. Force Trap Statue

Page 6

Red marble statue. Magnetic barrier.

Creatures None

8. Unholy Pool

Page 11

Corrupted water, Freak Freaks' resting place.

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 7**

3. Gruzz, the Blind Observer

Page 9

Chained, frenzied monster behind bars.

Creatures Gruzz the Ever Watching

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 6**

9. The Forgotten Prisoner

Page 12

Prison cell guarded by crazy zombies.

Creatures 1D4 Psychotic Zombies

Hair-In-Teeth*

4. Vampire Ashes Storage

Page 10

Evil room full of barrels.

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 7**

10. Aberration Shit Pit

Page 14

Weird, toxic cesspit. Can be climbed.

Secrets Hidden treasure

5. That One Pillar

Page 10

Broken pillar and doors.

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 7**

11. Most Sacred Chamber of the Observer Observers

Page 15

Electric viewing-portal to **ROOM 3**.

Creatures 1D6 Freak Freaks

6. Skeleton Assassins

Page 10

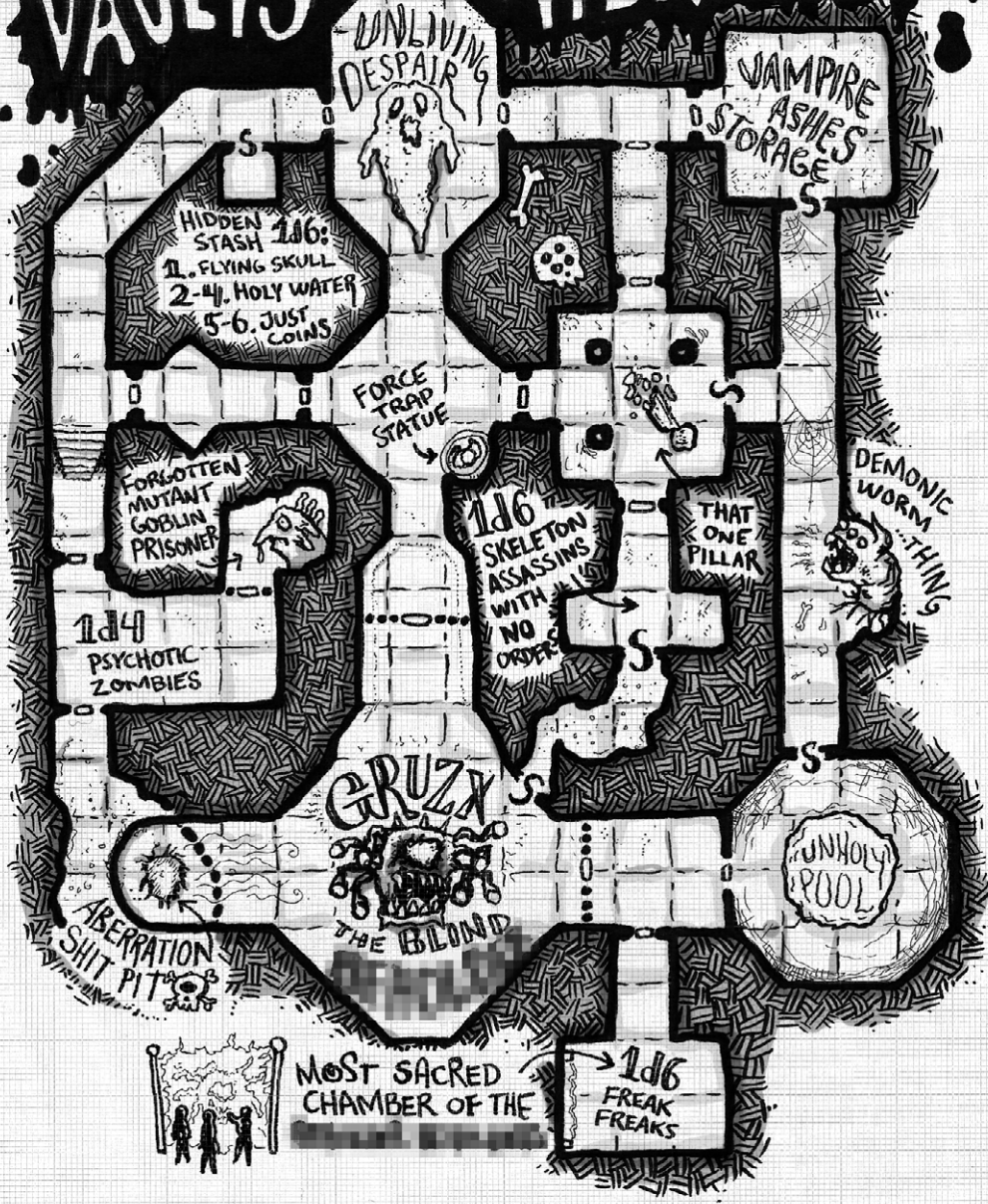
Inactive undead soldiers. Silence.

Creatures 1D6 Skeleton assassins

Secrets Passage to **ROOM 3**

*And possibly the Spectre of Zaahr van Hxoh

THE UNSEEN VAULTS OF THE OPTIC EXPERIMENT



What's the deal?

In an old tomb of a noble family, a group of weird inter-planar appearance-mirroring entities known as **Freak Freaks** (or just one, depending on how you roll) have established an arcane laboratory dedicated to finding the key to true vision. They conduct more or less ethically questionable experiments, including human and demihuman sacrifice, vampire burning, demonic bargains and harvesting of monstrous organs. They have also captured and chained a blinded observer villain. They are nowhere near their goal and are getting frustrated – and more extreme in their methods. Enter the PCs, hungry for treasure and thirsty for blood.

What's the hook?

1. People in the local area are complaining about blurry vision. Things worsen the closer you get to the dungeon. Black magic and sorcery! It must be stopped.
2. The great monstrosity **Gruzzx the Ever Watching** has vanished, and now other foul beings seek to fill the void his disappearance has created. This is bad news.
3. *"Strange sounds, wails and howls seem to come from that cursed place. Best investigate it."*
4. The old noble family tomb has been unhallowed, something has disturbed the dead. Remove the curse and clean up the place.

The Vaults

The Vaults used to be the tombs of an old noble family, long since forgotten and now in the hands of by the Freak Freaks. A couple of weeks ago, the goblins of The Throatstab Clan went to see who dared disturb the ancient dead. Few came back, and those who did now cry of twisted undead beings and staring, blind eyes in the deep.

The Vaults are all engulfed in darkness, the only exceptions being the sickly glowing pool in **ROOM 8**, and the sparkling and crackling surveillance portal in **ROOM 11**.

BLURRY VISION

Because of the Sight Stealing Magicks of the Freak Freaks, every living creature in the Vaults has its vision blurred and muddled, like watching through a greasy lens. There is no mechanical effect to this (because that would be boring), but visual descriptions of the rooms should get vaguer and more unclear the closer the PCs get to the observer. Together with the lack of lighting in the Vaults, this forces the PCs to rely more on their other senses. This effect is in place for as long as Gruzzx lives, or until his vision is restored by any means.

← The original map doodle that started this whole thing, drawn without planning or sketching, a late night of inspiration, alcohol and doom metal.

1. Unliving Despair

Dust and dry air. Low-reliefs of dead nobles. Terrified faces. They weren't carved like this.

When the Freak Freaks turned the old tomb into their laboratory, the dead spirits were enraged and confused. All their frustration and despair merged to form a shapeless, ghastly being – an emotion brought to unlife: Despair in ghostly form. It wails and complains loudly of the intrusion and corruption of the tomb, and will initially try to scare off any intruder it encounters.



UNLIVING DESPAIR.

2 Hit Dice, Armor like Chain (but is immune to physical harm except from magic weapons). Never flees. Floats in the air at the speed of a hurried, but walking human.

- › **Piercing shriek:** D6 damage to one creature (ignores armor).
- › **Ghastly wail** (SAVE AGAINST PARALYSIS): Everyone that fails becomes cursed for D4 rounds, begins to bleed profusely from their eyes and ears and must take 1 damage per round to act.

DEVELOPMENT: Can be persuaded to aid the disruption of the experiments. If so, it can prove a powerful, albeit weird, ally of the PCs.

👁 **SECRET DOOR IN THE CORRIDOR:** *Push one of the many stones in the northern wall, followed by pressing another stone only a meter away. An audible Click! is heard. You can now push the secret door on the southern wall – a heavy, cumbersome slab of stone – to uncover a small treasure stash hidden ages ago.*

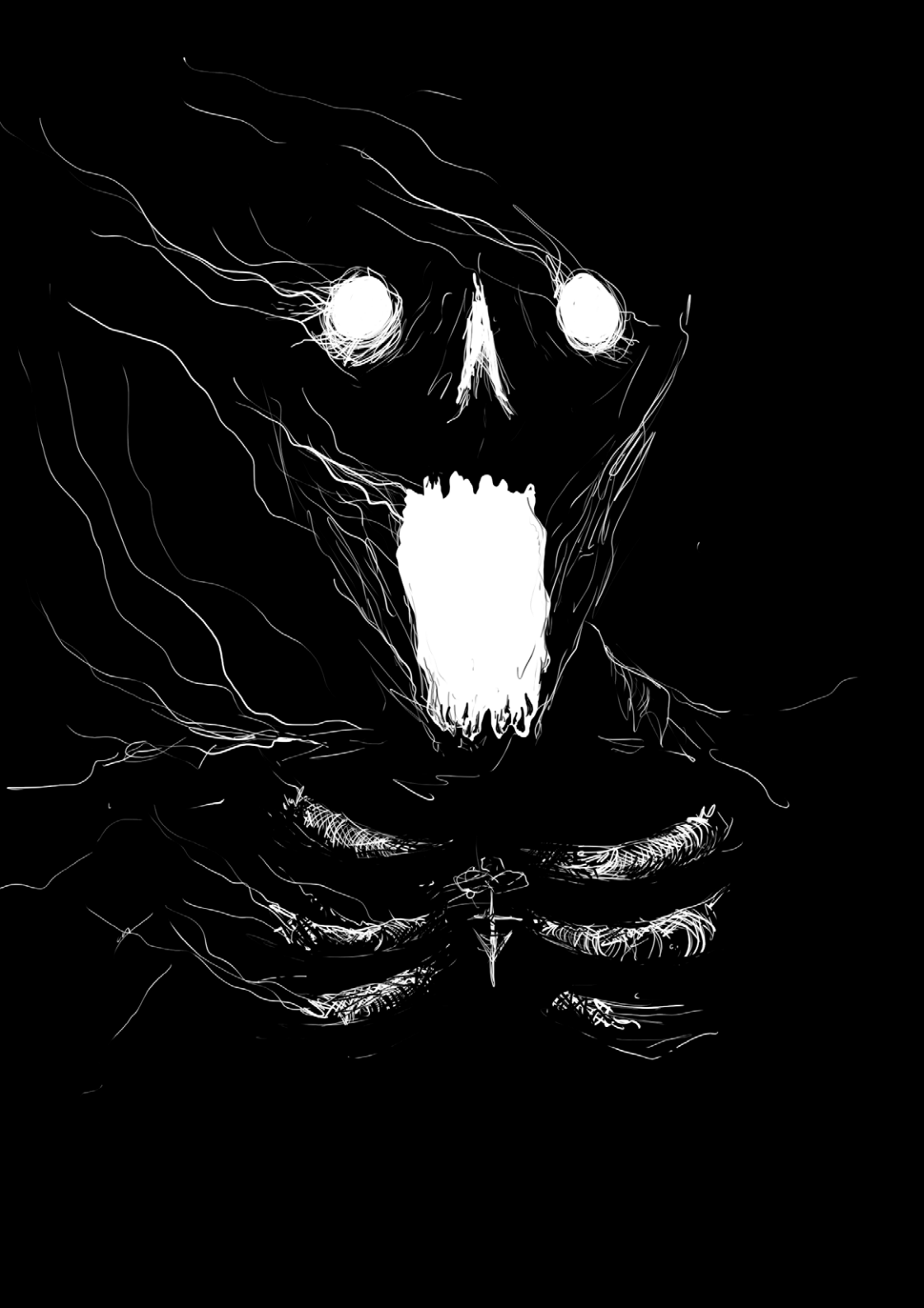
WHAT'S THE FLYING SKULL IN THE HIDDEN STASH?

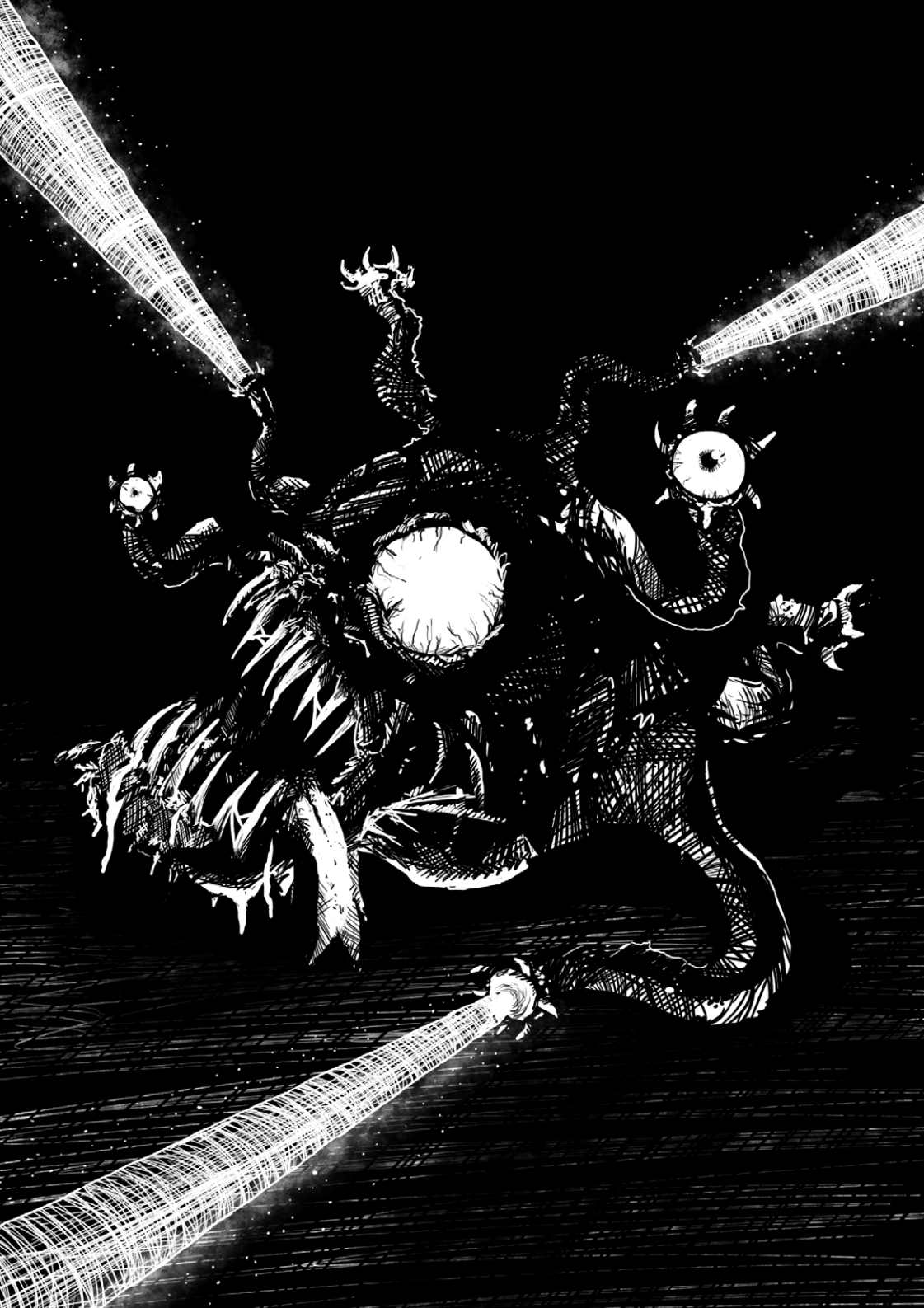
This is the preserved skull of **Ik the Strangler**, a vicious murderer who had a long rivalry with the noble family whose tombs this dungeon used to be. They finally got to him, had him executed and then, as a final act of rubbing it in, had his skull cursed and buried in their tomb. He reanimated and is now a slowly hovering skull capable of speech and nursing a deep hatred to every living thing. Especially since he has to obey their every word. He is good at scouting, but is a notorious liar.

2. Force Trap Statue

Crimson red marble statue of naked, muscular man. Angry stare. Eyes follow you.

The Freak Freaks installed this magical trap as a security measure to ensure that no one disturbs their work. The statue pushes living creatures away, like two magnetic poles refracting each other. It is physically impossible for anyone, no matter how strong, to push themselves beyond the statue. Objects can be thrown past the trap, and undead beings are not hindered. Living things however, cannot enter the Observer's chamber without dealing with the statue. If it is destroyed, it will implode and collapse the room onto itself. Anyone in the room when this happens must SAVE AGAINST PARALYSIS to avoid getting crushed to death. The trap can be deactivated by dispelling magic or, with some effort, moving the statue into another room.





3. Gruzx, the Blind Observer

Cold metal, dust and sound of chains, stench of a sweaty fat man. Mad howls.

Gruzx the Ever Watching, previously a major villain of the lands, is now reduced to a sad, insane shadow of his former self. Behind massive iron bars he lies chained and alone in the dirt and urine that covers the floor. The Freak Freaks have blinded him, stolen his magical vision, and watch him constantly through scrying spells. The locks to his room are hard to breach, and Gruzx himself is unstable and can burst into fits of rage unprovoked. His eye rays still function, but he no longer has control over them. If the PCs enter the room, they will also be discovered by the Freak Freaks who will try to stop them.

SECRET DOOR: *High up on one of the walls, just beneath the ceiling, is a fake piece of wall – it's actually a sheet of thick paper painted to look like stone. Crafty!*



GRUZX. BLIND OBSERVER

10 Hit Dice, 30 HP. Thick chitin armor like Plate. Can no longer fly, but rolls on the ground at the speed of a frenzied walrus.

› **1 bite:** D6 damage.

› **3 random rays** each round, at random targets.

SAVE AGAINST MAGIC to avoid effect.

DEVELOPMENT: If freed, will roll around and destroy everything it can. Will hunt down the Freak Freaks and slay them, then try to regain his vision and return home. Can reward the PCs for helping him with this. But would you trust a megalomaniac super-villain?

GRUZX'S EYE RAYS (D6):

1. DEATH RAY

Damage: One D8 per victim level.

Anyone killed by this ray is reduced to a pile of fine ash and a bleached skull.

2. CONFUSION RAY

For D4 rounds, roll a D6 at the start of each round to see what the victim does:

- 1: Attack nearest creature.
- 2: Run screaming in a random direction.
- 3: Remove their clothes, then eat them.
- 4: Drop and roll around as if on fire.
- 5: Stand still and stare, do nothing.
- 6: Run towards Gruzx to get a nice, warm hug.

3. SHRINKING RAY

Victim is reduced to half size. Any equipment carried, however, is not.

4. GROWING RAY

Victim doubles in size. Equipment and worn items stay the same size. Plate armor could possibly be a problem.

5. KINETIC RAY

Pushes victim to the end of the ray, probably in another room or just pinned against the wall. Deals 1 damage per 10 feet travelled this way.

6. MUTATION RAY

Victim is mutated. Don't have a favourite mutation chart? Just say it's a:

6. BLINKING RAY

Victim begins to blink back and forth between this world and the shadow world. Will do this for 2D6 rounds. 50% chance that the PC begins his/her next round in the shadow realm, where he/she cannot deal or receive physical damage. Interaction with the physical world is impossible, but it's easier to bump into ghosts. So that's something.

4. Vampire Ashes Storage

Aching head, migraine. Barrels, dust. Cough.

In order to steal a observers magic vision, hundreds of vampires must be burnt to ashes. The ashes is used as part of the experiment. Stored in this dry chamber are barrels of the stuff. Twenty barrels, filled to the brim with fine, gray dust. The room reeks of evil and curses. Anyone lingering here will suffer from headaches and nausea.

SECRET DOOR: *A classic. Push one stone and hear the rumbling noise of the secret door from ROOM 5 to ROOM 7 opening up.*

5. That One Pillar

Crumbled stone. Exquisite columns. Ruin.

All chamber with four pillars, of which one has fallen down and lies in ruin in the middle. Nothing of value here.

SECRET DOOR: *Hidden beneath a layer of dust in the broken pillar is a lid. Underneath that, a button. If pressed, a rumbling noise is heard and the secret door in ROOM 4 is opened.*

6. Skeleton Assassins

Silence. Skeletal figures. Jagged blades.

A dark and silent room in which the Freak Freaks store **skeleton assassins** until needed. Skeletal combatants wielding scimitars, posing like an enemy is approaching, but unmoving. Will remain still until anything tries to damage them. Then, they will all activate and attack. A skilled necromancer might be able to give them new orders, but they will require proof that their current masters are either slain or have agreed upon losing custody of them.

SECRET DOOR: *Easily overlooked, one of the stone slabs in the ceiling near the southern wall can be moved to the side, supported by a metal frame. Behind it, a tunnel.*



1D6 SKELETON ASSASSINS

1 Hit Die, 5 Hit Points. Armor like Leather. Immune to piercing damage (except for crits). Bludgeoning does double damage. Movement like a healthy human. Never flees. If sneaking, can only be spotted 1 in 20.

› **Scimitar:** D6 damage.

DEVELOPMENT: Can be "hacked" with skillful necromantic magic, if they are convinced that the Freak Freaks are either dead or done with them.

7. Secret Corridor

Cobwebs. Sounds of insects. Sulfuric smell.
A voice? Probably just the wind.

A hidden corridor, like a dry culvert, low ceiling and filled with dust and spider webs. This hallway is seldom used, even by the Freak Freaks, ever since the **Demonic worm-thing** made it its lair.

SECRET DOORS: *All secret doors are easily spotted and opened from this corridor.*



DEMONIC WORM-THING

4 Hit Dice, Armor like Chain. Moves like an eel downriver. Low morale. Tends to escape as soon as it is wounded, only to return later through the walls of any room the PCs occupy, preferably in the middle of another encounter.

› **Bite:** D8 damage (plus poison: SAVE or fall into a murderous frenzy and attack the closest creature – the same creature – for D3 rounds).

› **Bad Breath:** Can spew a cloud of infernal gut fumes onto up to two nearby creatures: SAVE AGAINST POISON or become incapacitated for the next round, as you cough up a reeking black sludge of crushed insects and toenails.

DEVELOPMENT: Can become a returning nemesis, and will hunt the PCs outside the dungeon.

8. Unholy Pool

Cancerous light in the darkness.
A pool of dead water. Steep sloping pit.

Anyone entering this room will feel uneasy as the light is dirty and unclean. It irritates the eyes, makes the skin itch, and blackens clothes as if they were dipped in ink. This is the unhallowed pool where the masters of the vaults go to rest and restore their strength. The floor is a slope down to the glowing water, and climbing up can be difficult if the PCs are carrying heavy equipment.

Drinking the water is not recommended. It will quench the thirst and sate the hunger for a full week, but will curse the drinker with an impossibly strong hatred to everyone except the creatures currently in the room. It will last until magically removed.

SECRET DOOR: *One of the many tall stone blocks covering the walls is loose, and can be moved or tipped to uncover a passage into ROOM 7.*

BLURRY VISION

Don't forget to describe the dungeon's visual appearance in vague terms and more rely on the other senses. Especially this close to the blind observer. Focus on smell, sounds, and the general feeling of the rooms. Shapes can be discerned, only not at a distance. It's like going without glasses when you really need them.

9. The Forgotten Prisoner

Sobbing. Moaning. Stench of blood and gore.
Feet dragging. Something is terribly wrong.

This is **Hair-in-Teeth**, the only survivor of the Throatstab Clan's attack on the vaults a few weeks ago. Her fellow goblins were all either killed or managed to escape, but Hair-in-Teeth was captured, put behind bars, experimented on, mutated, discarded and then utterly forgotten.

The Freak Freaks imbued her with the soul of an old, mad vampire as part of a failed experiment, and that ancient undead soul takes over during stressful moments. It also causes madness to nearby undead, making them just as confused and unstable as Hair-in-Teeth. This is unknown to the Freak Freaks, who placed a handful of zombies on guard here. The zombies are no longer loyal to them, and will attack any creature on sight.



HAIR-IN-TEETH.

Cursed, mutated goblin. 1 Hit Die. Unarmored Armor. Runs at the speed of a quick child. Cowardly. When dead, unleashes the spectre of ZaaHR van Hhox, Lord of Venomblade Keep.

► **Bites, claws and kicks** for D4 damage.

DEVELOPMENT: Her split personality will become more and more evident as time goes, and as ZaaHR van Hhox tries to take full control.

THE SPECTRE OF ZAAHR VAN HHOX.

3 Hit Dice. 20 HP. Armor like Leather, but is immune to physical harm, critical hits with stabbing weapons the only exception. Weakened by holy symbols (has disadvantage on everything while the symbol is shown). Moves as a normal human.

► **Withering touch:** (+3 attack against AC, D6 damage and that much minus on any rolls the victim makes until fully healed). Any creature slain by ZaaHR van Hhox is raised the next round as a zombie (stats as below, except the part with the missed slam attack, as it'll be a normal, sensible zombie).

DEVELOPMENT: If released, will try to slay any creature in his path before returning to Venomblade Keep where he will regain his strength before he tries to take Gruzxs place as the villain of the land. Should he discover that the Freak Freaks stores his ashes in **ROOM 4**, his goal will be to use these ashes to return to physical form in some way. He's not sure how, though.

ID4 PSYCHOTIC ZOMBIES.

1 Hit Die. 30 HP. Every time a zombie is reduced to zero HP, it gains ID10–3 HP (remains dead if still at 0), even if decapitated or destroyed by fire. Armor slightly worse than an unarmored human. Moves with a limp.

► **Slam attack:** D4 damage. Any miss means that the zombie headbutts the wall, taking D4 damage. They're psychotic, remember.

DEVELOPMENT: Could possibly kill themselves, which is ok. Or they might never truly die, which is even better.



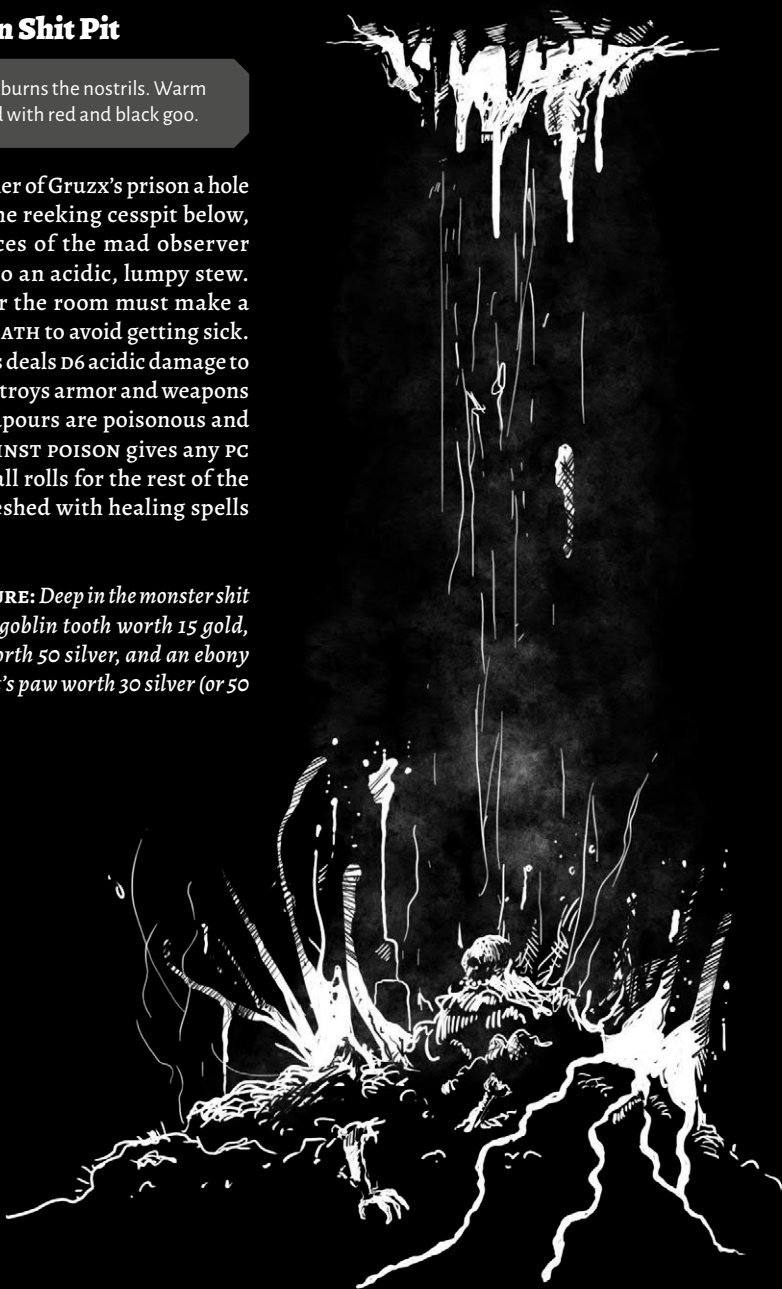
10. Aberration Shit Pit

Horrid stench that burns the nostrils. Warm air. Walls plastered with red and black goo.

Jn this vile corner of Gruzx's prison a hole opens up to the reeking cesspit below, where the feces of the mad observer boils together into an acidic, lumpy stew. Anyone even near the room must make a **SAVE AGAINST BREATH** to avoid getting sick.

The excrements deals D6 acidic damage to the touch, and destroys armor and weapons in seconds. The vapours are poisonous and a failed **SAVE AGAINST POISON** gives any PC disadvantage on all rolls for the rest of the day, or until refreshed with healing spells or smelling salts.

🔍 **HIDDEN TREASURE:** Deep in the monster shit is hidden a golden goblin tooth worth 15 gold, a silver necklace worth 50 silver, and an ebony claw the size of a cat's paw worth 30 silver (or 50 to a collector).



11. Most Sacred Chamber of the Observer Observers

Static noise. Erratic electric light.
Hypnotic patterns. Hospital smell.

This is the laboratory and experimental chamber where the Freak Freaks work to discover the secret of truesight. It is a well stocked alchemical laboratory, with many eldritch items and instruments strange and alien to laymen and professionals alike. The laboratory is worth 1 000 silver.

Intelligent creatures perceive The Freak Freaks as copies of themselves (including, but not limited to appearance, smell, voice and mannerisms), but they are invisible to animals and soulless creatures.

They are psionic beings from a far-away plane of existence, whose mute emperor has gone missing (turned invisible, and no-one knows where he is), and they are dedicated in their search for truesight. They are annoyed by any disturbance, but if the PCs could aid them in their experiments, they will allow them to help. If not – they won't hesitate to deploy deadly force to secure their operation.

THE VIEWING ARCH

Through a portal-like structure in this chamber they watch Gruzx as he is tormented by their vision-siphoning technology. The archway crackles and buzzes, a vague observer silhouette is showing in the lightning. Anyone touching the archway must **SAVE AGAINST MAGICAL DEVICES** or be transported to **ROOM 3**. And go permanently blind.



1D6 FREAK FREAKS

– INTERPLANAR PSYCHO-MIMICS

3 Hit Dice. Thick, rubber-like skin gives Armor like leather. Moves like human. Will rather retreat than die but will never surrender.

› **Two claw attacks:** D6 damage each. If both hit, the Freak Freak can steal vitality from the victim, healing itself for double the damage caused by the two claw attacks.

› **Plasmic mind-bomb:** One of them carries a plasmic mind-bomb which can be activated and thrown as an attack. The mind-bomb detonates with a loud electric noise and any creature within 10 feet of the device must **SAVE AGAINST MAGICAL DEVICES** or have their mind wiped. A mind-wiped creature loses all experience points and levels, essentially becoming a level 1 character, and forgets every spells memorized. All this is returned to the PC if he/she spends some time resting submerged in the unholy pool in **ROOM 8**. The Freak Freaks know this.

DEVELOPMENT: If the PCs help them gain truesight, or find their emperor, they will be thankful and might reward them with strange and esoteric treasures from beyond the astral planes. This could lead to further interplanar adventures, with the Freak Freaks (who prefer to be called something less derogatory) as allies or benefactors. But most likely, they will try to kill the PCs for intruding.

Tips and ideas

- › **Let the Unliving Despair help:** There is really no way that the PCs will just stumble upon the hidden stash located in the early part of the dungeon. If they come to some sort of agreement with the Unliving Despair, maybe have it tell them about the stash, thinking there might be something there that could help them?
- › **Shouldn't this be a tomb?** If you want, place some crosses (or whatever holy symbols your game world uses), some gargoyles, statues and maybe a sarcophagus or two down in the vaults. Maybe the skeleton assassins are clad in funeral masks and golden ornaments?
- › **Let's torture Gruzx!** In the playtests, I placed a couple of levers and buttons next to the Freak Freaks' viewing portal, where they (or really as it turned out – the PCs) could control tasers, electrodes and other devices aimed at – or implanted in – the chained observer. Maybe one way to stop this whole thing is to mash all the buttons at once and cause so much stress to poor old Gruzx that he explodes in a fleshy, gooey bang?
- › **Add more people:** No extra-planar mutant freaks' dungeon-based experiments are safe with meddling adventurers snooping around – and the more the merrier! To spice things up, add an extra adventuring party or two in the mix.
- › **My friend van Hhox:** Should the PCs help Hair-in-Teeth/Zahr van Hhox, the undead lord could show them his gratitude, but exactly in what form is unclear. Ghoul-infested real estate, vampiric noble titles, cursed gold or a wine cellar full of delicious blood are just some ideas.



Should you play this adventure, or if you want to talk about prepping it, please let me know! You'll find me on [GOOGLE PLUS](#): *Johan Nohr*.

