

# CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

SIDE TREK: WHAT COMES BEFORE THE FIRST



**PATHFINDER**  
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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# CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

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## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

At the dawn of Exodus's recorded history, the humanoid races toiled under the yoke of powerful beings known as the First Ones. It was not until two thousand years ago that they were finally overthrown with the aid of the godlike entity known as the Kaga, and the races had freedom.

Little is known about the First Ones for certain: all modern history begins with the creation of the Kaga and the freedom of man. Even today, scholars debate details as important as whether the First Ones were a single race or many—and even if they were mortal.

While the Kaga knows the truth, and keeps it to itself, relics of this bygone age of slavery and rebellion do still exist, mostly in the tombs of those creatures interred during that era. Archeologists and scholars find new details and raise new questions with nearly every discovery.

The recent discovery that the oldest Nexus Gateways are over ten thousand years old has raised a great many questions: if they are that old—who created them? Was it the First Ones, or something else?

With the arrival of the vespans on Exodus, that question is one whose answer is soon to rear its head: the Nexus Gateways were founded here on Exodus by another culture entirely, the Gatekeepers, whose servants have once again begun to appear across Exodus.

Who and what the Gatekeepers are is as much a question as the identities of the First Ones, a question that only the dead can answer. But fortunately, the dead are plentiful if you know where to look.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Large-Biter asks the PCs to revisit the Corpselands and raid one of the many tombs that dot the hillside. Specifically, he hopes the PCs will uncover a clue as to the true origins of the vespans and the Gatekeepers—and perhaps the First Ones in the process.

The entrance to this particular tomb is larger than most of the tombstones, and Large-Biter assures the party that, according to his magic, the tomb is about three thousand years old: old enough to be from the height of the Reign of the First Ones.





Finding the tomb is easy, but getting inside proves harrowing: wicked traps bar the party's access at every turn, and not a single door or surface is left unlocked.

Finally, the party reaches the inner sanctum of the tomb—but before they can explore it in detail, its owner rises as an undead terror to keep them at bay!

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

This sidequest begins, as all the sidequests in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Campaign Serial do, with Large-Biter approaching the party, hoping to use their skills to further both his and their goals at once. He brings the party an ancient history book, *The Origin of the Kaga*, and explains it.

*"This is the oldest story written on Exodus. It speaks of the oldest creature, the Kaga. The specifics of the story are not what I am concerned with at this moment—I shall leave the book with you if you are curious—but rather, the timeframe. It was just over two thousand years ago that the Kaga won our freedom, from a race known now as the First Ones."*

*He puts the book down and holds out to you a tattered scrap of parchment, on which a humanoid figure has been drawn. The figure is tall and thin, with dark skin and no hair, and lines are drawn along his skin in an intricate pattern.*

*"This, as far as we know, is what the First Ones looked like," Large-Biter tells you. "Though, others suspect this is only what the First Ones have been reduced to. Or, possibly, the figures are mere pretenders. I wish our cultural memory had not been burned away so well, but it is the distant past—we can only hope to recover it."*

*"Which is why I am here. We believe the First Ones are, as you might suspect, the first on Exodus. But some spells tell us the Nexus Gateways, the ones over which the vespans have such control, they are far older than the First Ones. Perhaps they are related. Perhaps, by exploring one, we can discover the truth of the other."*

Large-Biter will continue, explaining that the Corpselands—the hills the party passed through between the Grit Mountains and here—are home to tens of thousands of tombs and graves. He has a lead on one that is claimed to date back to the Reign of the First Ones—before the wars.

He will provide the PCs with a detailed map of the area, covered in unrelated notes and scribbles, and point out one in particular as the "ancient tomb."

## THE STATE OF TERYTH

During this adventure, Teryth is relaxed and calm, with everyone going about business as usual. Rumors are spreading that someone mistook the owner of the Bookmark, Alyssa Eland, for Empress Cassandra of the Caneus Empire, which prompt a laughing fit from most locals.

### THE KAGA

The Kaga is a godlike entity, created from the combined minds and souls of the most brilliant and powerful sages and scientists among the slaves of the First Ones. This near omnipotent entity proved to shift the balance in the war against the First Ones, and in a series of world-shaping battles, the Kaga almost single-handedly overthrew the oppressor of all the mortal races of Exodus.

Or so the few records remaining say. The Kaga has remained suspiciously silent in sharing details of the time before it liberated the mortal races. An age of great plenty followed its creation, and despite the many nations vowing to worship it as a god and king, it refused.

For generations it removed itself entirely from history, and only recently has it begun to reappear. Some "priests" follow the Kaga as a god, though it isn't truly divine or even capable of granting spells in the same way gods do. Clerics who choose to follow the Kaga must take the Cleric of the Kaga archetype (NeoExodus: A House Divided).

### CORPSELANDS ENCOUNTERS

The Corpselands are a dangerous place, as the party should recall from their passage through during To Save a Soul. During this trip, however, by default there are no dangers on the road, dead or otherwise.

If the party enjoys lots of combat, though, now is a perfect time to add one or even several encounters. Four zombies (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary) or a single shadow (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary) would be an appropriate challenge at this point; for parties that enjoy more of a challenge, use four zombies guided by a shadow.

Alyssa's laughter about the situation is forced, as any PC who succeeds on a **DC 15 Sense Motive** check can tell. For while she is not the Empress, neither is she unrelated. She is Empress Cassandra's first cousin, and seventh in line for the throne. She wants nothing to do with the royal life, and living in Teryth was as secluded as she could get while still maintaining a comfortable life.

Little does she know, despite her efforts to avoid detection, that one of her close friends is secretly a royal spy, ensuring she doesn't get into any trouble—just in case.

## THE ANCIENT TOMB

The journey to the tomb proves to be as uneventful as the party's first journey past was exciting. The party's directions instruct them to follow the road into the Corpselands for just under a day, turn due west at an obelisk covered in spiral patterns, then press into the hills for under a mile.

While nothing approaches the party, characters making a **DC 15 Perception** check will notice the group is being tailed very carefully by shadowy figures and a single shining one, all watching from the horizon. Any attempt to interact with these figures makes them disappear for several minutes before they again appear on the horizon.

## ARRIVING AT THE TOMB

The ancient tomb marked on Large-Biter's map is surrounded by an irregular field of stake-like gravestones. All the markers are engraved with the ancient and forgotten language used by the slaves of the First Ones—Sobeka. Characters not native to Exodus will have no chance to translate this rarely written tongue, but those with access to *comprehend languages* or similar magic will be able to read that each one contains a name, followed by the inscription: Faithful to Oten even in death.

The tomb itself is fifteen feet square and twenty feet tall. The sides and back are unadorned stone, but the front depicts a strange, twisting cityscape of a now long-dead city.

The door to the tomb is sealed, but held shut only by the sheer weight of the doors. Oten's family used slaves to open and close the doors, and opening even one requires a **DC 22 Strength** check. Beyond, a stairwell descends into the darkness. The door can also be smashed open (hardness 5, 150 hp), but it has no lock or bar so it cannot be picked or opened easily by magic.

## TOMB FEATURES

Oten's tomb is ancient but very solidly constructed, and despite being nearly three thousand years old, it suffers no real structural damage beyond the occasional uneven floor tile. The whole tomb is in total darkness, and all the walls are engraved stone with nothing behind but packed earth. The ceilings are just above ten feet high, supported by arches incorporated, often invisibly, into the engravings on the walls.

While characters with darkvision can't normally see colors in the dark (and thus cannot read), this tomb was designed for creatures using darkvision: all writing and wall colorings are duplicated in *dark ink*, making them distinguishable to those with darkvision, even without a light source.

### DARK INK

**Aura** faint illusion; **CL** 1st

**Slot** —; **Price** 100 gp; **Weight** —

### DESCRIPTION

This small glass vial is filled with a clear liquid that is slightly warm to the touch. This ink is invisible to those with normal sight, but to those with darkvision it appears to faintly glow in any one of myriad colors. A single vial is enough to write one page of text.

### CREATION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *minor image*; **Cost** 50 gp

## A1. THE STAIRWELL

Like most First One tombs, Oten's tomb represents the journey into the afterlife the First Ones believed they would have. The stairwell leading down has four landings, each separated by fifteen feet of vertical space—putting the bulk of the tomb fifty feet underground—and each representing a different part of the transition.

## A1A. FIRST LANDING

*Four mannequins stand upon the landing, down a short flight of steps. Though they are faceless, you can tell they are not facsimiles of humans—they are too tall and thin. Small shelves sit directly behind each. The walls of this chamber are adorned with depictions of the recent dead, their belongings stripped and carefully piled beside them.*

The first landing represents dying and separating oneself from one's worldly possessions and body. Visitors to the tomb were expected to remove their own possessions, and a PC making a **DC 10 Knowledge (religion)** check can surmise as much from the illustrations.

While this expectation is strongly implied, the PCs are not required to leave anything here: the tradition is purely symbolic.

## A1B. THE SECOND LANDING

*The second landing, the same size as the first, is decorated with a thousand images of doors of all shapes and sizes.*

A PC making a **DC 15 Perception** check will notice a dozen small copper drains in the floor and an equal number of stone spouts in the ceiling. When at least one Medium or two Small creatures enter the room, cold water will shower down from above. Normally this water would drain away harmlessly, but the system has corroded over the years. It will continue showering and filling the room—and the tomb—unless a PC makes a **DC 25 Disable Device** check to either fix the drains or stop the flow of water.

After 3 rounds, the water draining into the tomb will be obvious. After one minute, if the door to A2 has not been opened, A2 becomes difficult terrain. After ten minutes, A2, A3, A4, and A5 are all filled with four inches of water, making it difficult terrain. After an hour, the water in A2 through A5 is three feet high, requiring Small characters to swim. After two hours, the water has filled high enough that even Medium characters must swim. At this point, the reservoir has entirely drained into the tomb, which won't empty for at least three days without the aid of magic.

## A1C. THIRD LANDING

*This landing features a pair of statues—one of a tall, handsome humanoid man draped in a simple robe, and one of a skeleton—mounted in opposite corners of the room, reaching out to one another.*

This room represents the dead soul meeting its judge or guide. Other than the statues, this room is empty.

## A2. FOURTH LANDING

*The fourth landing depicts a man and a skeleton holding hands and stepping through a huge archway, depicted on a large set of metal doors.*

This final landing represents the soul and its guide approaching judgment itself. This door is locked, and only Oten's family once had a key. The PCs must pick the lock (DC 25 Disable Device) or break down the door (hardness 10, 50 hp).

Opening the door without the key sets off its shocking door trap. If this room is filled with water (as detailed in A1b), it targets all creatures in the room instead of just the one opening the door.

### SHOCKING DOOR TRAP CR 2 — 600 XP

**Type** magic; **Perception** DC 26; **Disable Device** DC 26

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** open door; **Reset** automatic (1 day)

**Effect** spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 2d6 electricity damage, DC 11 Fortitude save for half)

## A3. WEIGHT OF BALANCE

Immediately inside the chamber is a magical field that, when crossed without holding the same missing key required to open the door in A2, causes an iron portcullis to slam shut across the doorway. Forcing the portcullis open requires a **DC 22 Strength** check, though a **DC 25 Spellcraft** or **Disable Device** check will trick the system trigger into releasing the lock, reducing the Strength check to open the portcullis to DC 12.

### FANGED PORTCULLIS TRAP CR 3

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 31; **Disable Device** DC 21

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** manual

**Effect** Atk +20 melee (2d6+2/×4)

*An audience of perhaps a hundred faceless humanoids is carved into the walls of this room, all leering at a single statue in the center of the far wall: that of a tall, lean humanoid man with pointed ears and no hair. His hands open in front of him, as though he should be holding something. To both the left and the right, arches open into larger chambers beyond.*

This central chamber is considered to be Oten's judgment chamber, where he is judged by a panel of all the gods and mortals whose lives he influenced while he was alive.

Visiting supplicants would leave gifts here, or place tokens in one of the adjoining chambers, to represent how they felt they influenced his life.

A PC who makes a DC 10 Perception check will detect that behind the statue of Oten there appears to be an open space. A PC who passes the check by 10 or more will realize that the statue is part of a mechanism, but not a doorway.

The mechanism is both mechanical and magical. It requires the *hand of the mistress* and the *hand of the wife* to be placed in Oten's hands, which will cause the secret passage in A5 to open. Alternately, it can be activated by one or more PCs succeeding on a DC 20 Disable Device check and a DC 20 Spellcraft check within one minute of one another.

## A4. WEIGHT OF THE SOUL

*A wide ledge runs along the edge of this room, covered in dried flowers, pages, and other small mementos. The walls are painted with mazelike images, cityscapes, and monuments in the midst of construction.*

This room was for those who felt Oten left a mark on their soul, those whose lives would be touched for generations. The tokens here were mostly placed by those whom Oten worked for—he designed and built cities in his life, all on the backs of his slaves and the slaves of his clients. Also represented here are his family, whose faded portraits are still vaguely discernible along the ledge: twelve portraits, one being larger than the others, depicting twelve pointed-eared humanoids with jet-black skin and no hair.

Most of the tokens—which include flowers, papers, and food—have long since dried or crumbled to uselessness. However, small ivory and silver trinkets worth a total of 218 gp are scattered around the room, as well as the *hand of the wife*, which lies in front of the largest portrait.

### HAND OF THE WIFE

**Aura** faint illusion; **CL** 1st

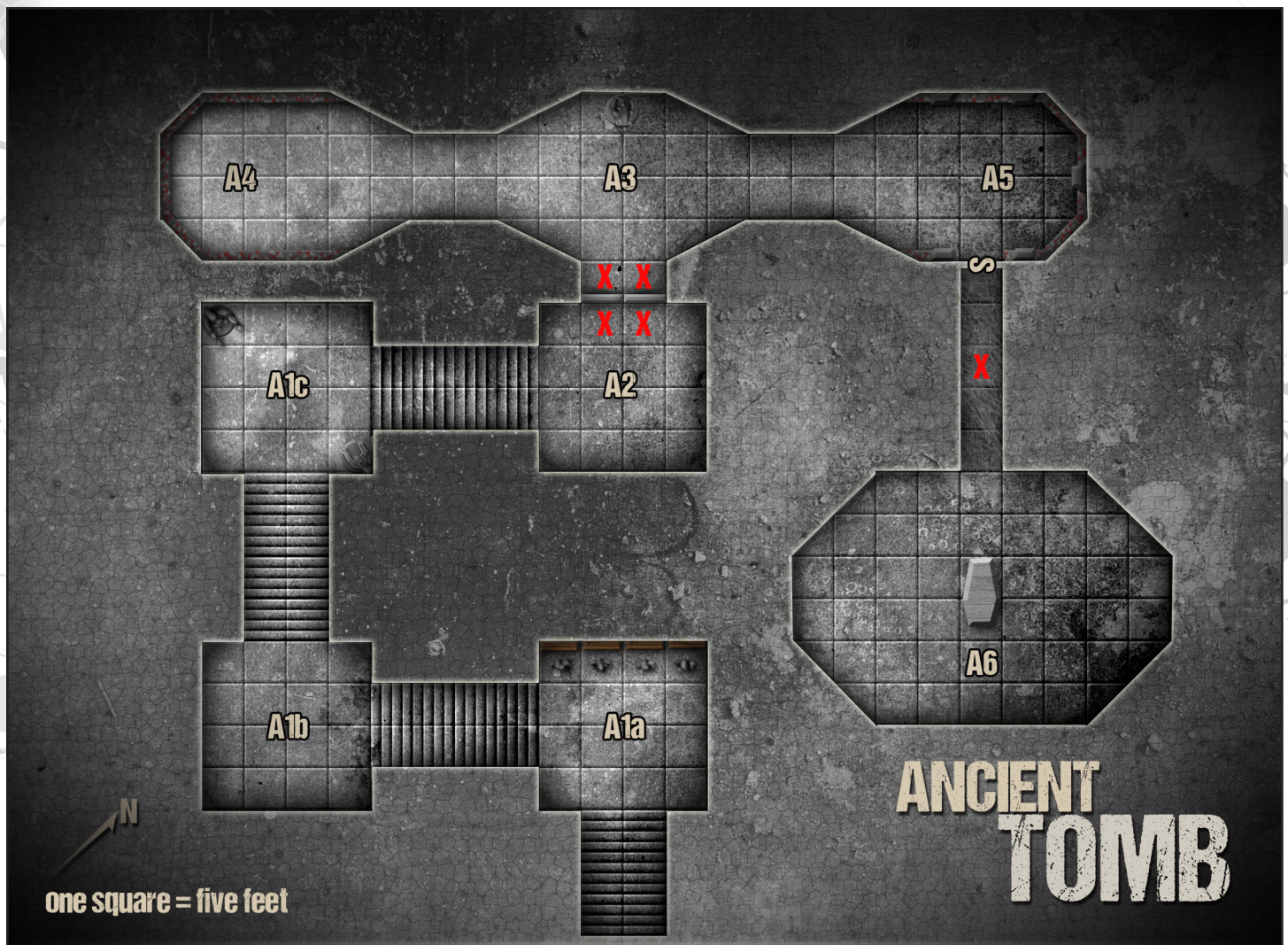
**Slot** —; **Price** 500 gp; **Weight** —

#### DESCRIPTION

This mummified hand is slender and distinctly feminine. A character who has attuned herself to the *hand of the wife* over 24 hours can give the hand to another character. As a standard action, the holder can activate the hand to transform his appearance into that of the attuner, as though he had used *disguise self*, with an additional +10 circumstance bonus to appear as the attuner. This change lasts 24 hours or until dismissed by the attuning character or activating creature, after which point the hand must be re-attuned before it can be activated again. If the character attuning it is the same as the most recently attuned creature, the process requires only one hour instead of the normal 24.

Creatures other than the one chosen by the attuned can activate the hand, but doing so requires a successful DC 17 Spellcraft check.





## CREATION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*; **Cost** 250

## A5. WEIGHT OF THE BODY

A wide ledge runs along the edge of this room, covered in dishes, dried flowers, and tiny mushrooms. At regular spaces around the room, five mummified corpses are held in simple coffins propped against the walls.

This room is for those who felt Oten left a mark on their bodies, whose lives were touched in a memorable but not life-changing way.

Most of the tokens have aged to dust, but the five mummies and five portraits of dark-skinned, hairless women remain intact. These corpses were gifts from Oten's mistresses and friends, bodies of slaves whose souls were intended to serve his in the next life.

The second mummy on the left was a gift of Oten's favored mistress. It conceals the doorway to area A6 and holds the *hand of the mistress*. A PC making a DC 26 Perception check can detect the passage before it opens, and a PC making a DC 28 Disable Device check can open it.

## HAND OF THE MISTRESS

**Aura** faint illusion; **CL** 1st  
**Slot** —; **Price** 1,500; **Weight** —

## DESCRIPTION

This small, delicate hand wears a dozen small rings and is in immaculate condition despite its desiccation. By holding the *hand of the mistress* in one's own, the bearer may increase the attitude shift of a creature affected by the bearer's Diplomacy checks by one step.

## CREATION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *charm person*; **Cost** 750 gp

## A6. THE ETERNAL REST

The passage leading into this room is dark, dusty, and filled with cobwebs. Fifteen feet down, a pressure plate causes the ceiling to collapse, though it was poorly designed and only causes a partial cave-in rather than a complete one. If the trap is triggered, the entire hallway becomes difficult terrain.

## FALLING DEBRIS TRAP

**CR 3**

**Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 18

## EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** none

**Effect** Collapsing hallway (3d6 damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in hallway)

*At first, this expansive room appears to be nearly empty: its only ornaments are the elaborate wall art and a lonely sarcophagus. The longer you look, the more something else comes into view: an elaborate feast, beautiful women, and a trove of riches, barely visible beneath it all.*

This chamber is Oten's final resting place. While materially it is bare, in the Ethereal Plane it is a richly adorned feast hall for the souls of the dead, a final gift for Oten on his journey to the afterlife.

While the feast was intended for Oten alone, the malevolence of the Corpselands has tainted it—and Oten's corpse. When the PCs enter the room, the spectral revelers will begin screaming obscenities at them before being drawn in a swirling vortex into Oten's sarcophagus. A few rounds later, Oten's corpse will rise, reanimated, as a mummy.

## OTEN'S MUMMY CR 5 — 1,600 XP

Mummy (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

LE Medium undead

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

**Aura** despair (30 ft., paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, Will DC 16 negates)

## DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+10 natural)

**hp** 60 (8d8+24)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

**DR** 5/—; **Immune** undead traits

**Weakness** vulnerable to fire

## OFFENSE

**Spd** 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +14 (1d8+10 plus mummy rot)

## TACTICS

**During Combat** Oten's mummy seeks to inflict its plague on as many PCs as possible.

**Morale** Oten's mummy fights until it is destroyed.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 24, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Power Attack, Toughness, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (slam)

**Skills** Perception +16, Stealth +11

**Languages** Exodite

**Gear** golden mask worth 1,000 gp, golden whip worth 500 gp

**Development:** When Oten's mummy is defeated, the spectral revelers inhabiting it will burst forth in an angry torrent, tearing Oten's remains apart but otherwise staying entirely unable to influence the world of the living. After several minutes of being a distracting nuisance, they will depart, allowing the PCs to search and explore the room.

The walls of the room show the most important events of Oten's life. These are largely decadent feasts, as Oten was a notably vain man, but also including the founding of several monuments, and one scene in particular should catch the PCs' attention.

In it, Oten is building a large archway opposite a towering brown-skinned human. They are each surrounded by a number of smaller figures—Oten by humans, and the giant by insectoid creatures that might be sasori but look more like vespan.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Though the physical relics the PCs can bring back from the tomb are interesting, Large-Biter is exceptionally interested in the wall murals and will request that the PCs explain them in exacting detail.

He will proceed to theorize about the purposes of each room, but he'll stop when the PCs mention the gateway illustrated in the final room, pointing out that it clearly sounds like a Nexus Gateway. It also provides him with a subtly reassuring piece of information: the Gatekeepers are not the First Ones, though they both existed on Exodus at the same time.

Large-Biter will gladly help the PCs fence their findings, which isn't particularly difficult in the trade town, and will even offer to buy some of the smaller relics himself.

The next adventure is up to the GM—the PCs can try one of the other sidequests for this Campaign Serial: *A Chill Wind, Not of the Same Mind, In his Bad Books, To Not Serve Man, or Speaking the Same Language*. If the party is already level 4, or if they're eager to move on, the GM should proceed to the Omega Adventure: *Dawn of a Thousand Wars*.



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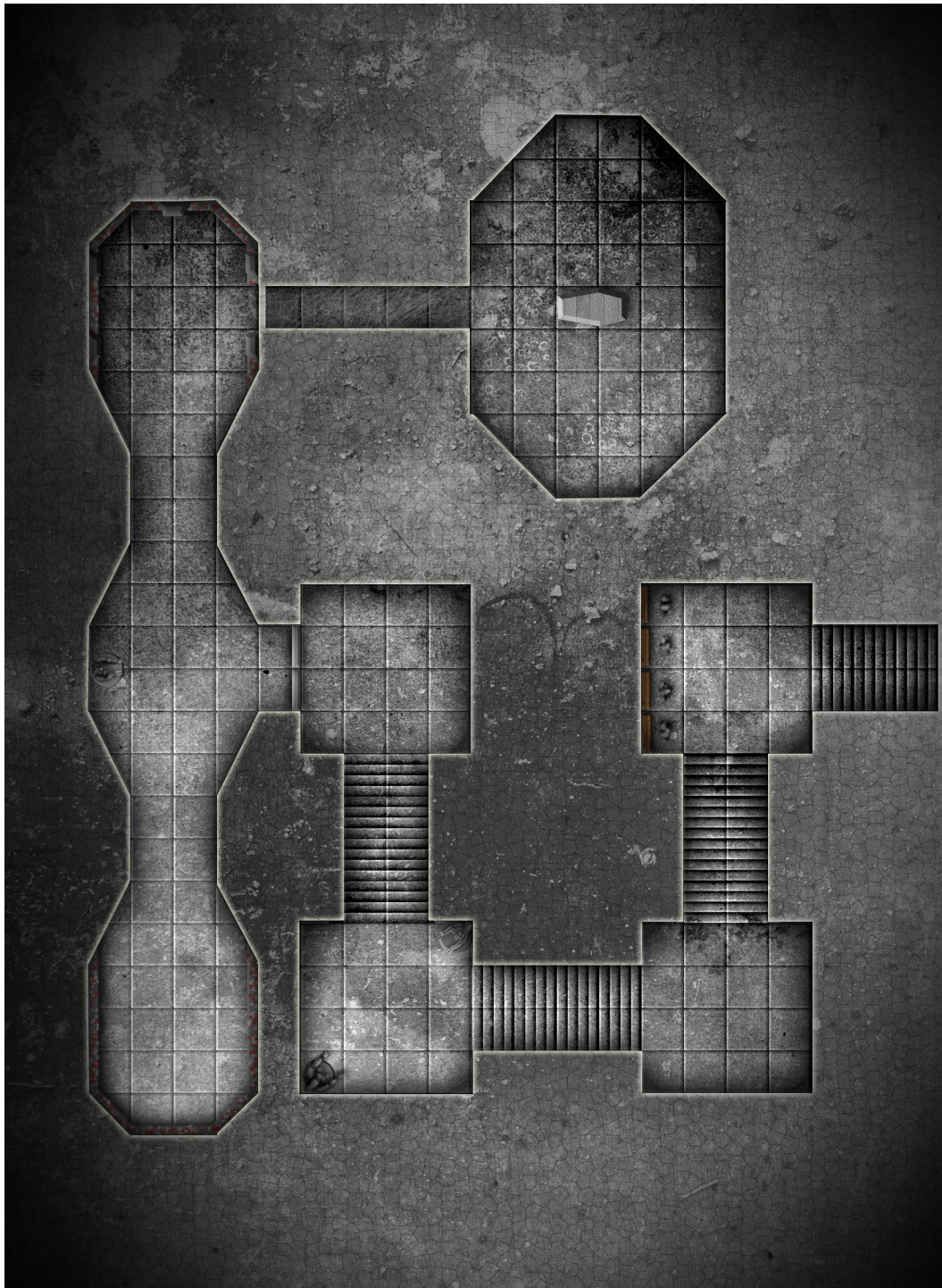
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# CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

## CAMPAIGN SERIAL SIDE TREK: WHAT COMES BEFORE THE FIRST

On a strange world, the party is confronted with a conundrum: who exactly are they fighting? The insect-like vespans always refer to “the Gatekeepers,” but no record of them exists on Exodus, except perhaps their gateways.

The problem stems from Exodus’s remarkably short recorded history: only two thousand years ago, all of Exodus was enslaved by the First Ones, and only the godlike Kaga knows the truth of what Exodus was like during that time. Everyone else who lived then is dead—but that doesn’t mean they haven’t left behind clues.

This adventure is a sidequest in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Campaign Serial, and includes:

- Details on the First Ones, including some of their perceptions of life and what comes after
- Three new magic items: dark ink, the hand of the mistress, and the hand of the wife