

# NEOEXODUS

ADVENTURES

## THE SILVERED SKULL



Nestled high in the Grit Mountains, the village of Oldenhaffen is known far and wide for the quality of its wool. The town elders have sent for urgent help from their absent lord, who unable to respond, needs trustworthy adventurers to investigate. Ever since a local shepherd brought back a silvered cavian skull, things have become... distressing. Townsfolk who touched the skull are now dazed and babbling incoherently, and the villagers are worried this is a sign of an incipient curse about to grow worse.

A psionic NeoExodus adventure for 3rd-level characters.

## BACKGROUND

After the fall of the Empire of the First Ones, Exodus saw centuries of chaos as warlords fought to establish supremacy. Finally, about eighteen centuries ago, a new power rose in the land that would later be the site of the Caneus Empire.

That power was the Cavian Empire, ruled by the supreme Hive Mind. Guided by a common goal and a collective mind, the cavians and their allies – which now included a large number of humans – established an empire where the power of the mind was to rule all others.

The Cavian Empire, however, was rather inflexible in its rule. The rival great power of that era, the mighty Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon, perceiving this weakness, launched a war that completely destroyed the Cavian Empire. This proved to be a pyrrhic triumph, for the Sorcerer-Kings' empire was likewise made vulnerable, and eventually fell to the invading Arman.

Today, many scholars and artisans speculate about the Cavian Empire and the marvels of the mind they created, wondering "what if?" This neo-Cavian aesthetic and intellectual fashion has led to a growing interest in all things relating to the lost empire. Artifacts, maps and new information about the fallen empire fetch a high price in Nyssa, with Empress Cassandra herself quite interested in the relics. Many expeditions and archeological digs have received generous imperial funding.

## THE CANEUS EMPIRE

The Caneus Empire is one of the oldest nations on Exodus. It is a feudal empire where mighty lords bow down to a hereditary emperor. The current empress is Empress Cassandra Eland.

Nobles in the empire seek glory and prestige for themselves and their families above all else. They ride chargers, and stride imperiously in the center of the street. They expect – and usually obtain – deference from all those of lower station.

Most commoners defer to their lords for anything beyond their work and private lives. Outsiders often find them apathetic and reluctant to interact with travellers.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two weeks before the start of the adventure, two shepherds, Adler and Karl, took refuge in a cave to hide from a storm. They slept through the night. As they herded their mountain goats out in the morning, Adler found a secret door in the back of the cave.

After searching for the opening mechanism, Adler finally opened the door and went inside. Within was a Cavian laboratory filled with antique alchemical residue and the remnants of ancient experiment. Adler was not particularly interested in these; he wanted things he could sell. Calling in Karl, the two rummaged through the lab looking for valuables. Adler found a silver-covered cavian skull while Karl took a ring for his beloved fiancée, Agata.

The skull's only power is to absorb magical energy focused on it and disperse it harmlessly by emitting light (see New Items for full description of the silvered skull). At first, everyone thought it a nice curio and Adler made some money showing it to people. Crowds gathered. Someone speculated touching it might impart good luck.

Then the local people began to suffer from intense headaches. Many, mostly female, townsfolk began acting strangely: some simply froze in place, doing little more than breathing while others began speaking in tongues no one could understand, recovering afterwards with only a vague notion of what had transpired. The villagers assumed the silvered skull had unexpected powers. Whispers turned to rumor of a curse on the skull. Finally, one day, the local priest threw himself off a cliff. From that point, the silvered skull was sealed within Adler's house and the house avoided. Adler was forced to stay in his house, being seen as tainted by association.

The stewards sent to the local lord for help.

Sequestering Adler and the skull has had no effect and the strange happenings now only happen more and more frequently.

## THE TRUTH

The culprit is not the skull, but the ring that Karl gave to Agata. Within the ring was a cavian-created psionic entity whose goal is to destroy the Sorcerer-kings. The mind within the ring overwhelmed the girl and she became little more than a puppet of its malevolence.

The strange tongue spoken in the village by some of the afflicted is Sorcerous – the language of the Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon. The consciousness within the ring assumed the only person in town who understood the language worked for the Sorcerer-Kings – the town priest – and got rid of him by forcing him to throw himself off a cliff. These are results of the ring's psionic mental disruption and mind control powers. Confused by the presence of so many humans, the ring has acted in a disjointed and paranoid manner to protect itself, taking the many women Agata comes into contact with – the menfolk being more distant

in the fields – as potential foes. Some were also affected to cover up the murder of the village priest. Since the skull was for a long time the object of much local curiosity, the mind controlling Agata through the ring frequented these crowds to gather information, and to monitor the reactions of these strangers to the skull.

On the morning the PCs arrive, Agata, controlled by the dreadmind ring, headed back to the caverns to conduct further research.

Hence the effects of the mental disruption have faded, as she is absent.

## TIMEFRAME

This adventure is set in the summer of 92 AU. The Caneus Empire is about to launch a crusade against the Janus Horde.

## THE JANUS HORDE

The Janus Horde was formed after the major empires refused the people of its region entry into the unified government of the Imperial Alliance. In short, they decided that “since civilization turned its back on us, we’ll turn our back on it”. They burned their towns and adopted a nomadic lifestyle aimed at destroying all settled urban life and returning to a barbaric lifestyle. The Janus Horde raids, plunders and destroys anything within reach of their borders.

The crusade organized by the Caneus Empire is but the most recent attempt by the major empires to destroy the Horde.

## INTRODUCTION

### READ ALOUD.

The proud city of Macawi in the Caneus Empire is surrounded by no less than three expansive castles linked together by a tall wall enclosing the city. This impressive defensive work has kept the city and its citizen safe for centuries.

The city is filled with knights and their entourages. The parks, greens and every open space are filled with tents and lean-tos.

The Caneus Empire is about to launch a huge offensive, a crusade against the Janus Horde.

You find yourself in a seedy inn called the Goose and Hound. Smoke chokes the air and the stench of cheap tobacco blankets everything.

In the fog inside, you and a few other adventurers are huddled in a booth discussing where to seek your fortune next. All your contacts have come up empty. You only managed to get unappealing offers from nobles to join their retinue. The Canean nobles seek all

the glory – and possible rewards – for themselves and their retinue.

This is a good time for the PCs to introduce themselves to each other before proceeding to the next encounter.

## 1: THE DOOR OPENS

### READ ALOUD.

The door opens, allowing fresh air to cut down the smoke. A loud voice puts an end to every conversation.

“Sir Otto von Korrien und Oldenhaffen requests the assistance of a group of law-abiding adventurers seeking to perform a righteous quest,” a herald calls through the smoke. Coughing, he adds: “I will be outside to speak with any petitioner.”

The sound of the door closing reaches you and conversations resume.

Allow the PCs to discuss the offer among themselves, if they so desire. No one else in the tavern take the herald up on his offer.

## SIR OTTO VON KORRIEN

When the PCs head out, they find the herald pacing near the door. His face lights up when he spots the PCs and he approaches them quickly. Asking them if they are willing to work for Sir Otto. Assuming the PCs agree, read aloud.

“Thank the Sanguine Lord! My name is Stevan, herald to Sir Otto von Oldenhaffen. If you’ll follow me, I’ll take you to him now.”

Stevan motions for you to follow as he hurries down the street towards a tailor shop. Passing through the store, he climbs a narrow staircase in the back that opens on a cramped room.

Bowing before a man dressed in a simple leather armor. “Sir, these mercenaries are willing to work for you...”

Turning to you, he says. “Here is milord Sir Otto.”

Sir Otto, Stevan and two recently arrived farmers wanting to join the crusade share this cramped room. As everyone squeezes inside, Sir Otto explains the following to the PCs.

- His domain is the village of Oldenhaffen in the Grit Mountains. He lives a simple but content life.
- Earlier today, he received a letter from his steward, Jahn, reporting a number of strange happenings. The two farmers brought the letter. The letter is vague – Sir Otto is willing to show it to the PCs if they ask. In short, it states that many women and a few men and children have been struck dumb as if at random and



stand around dazedly doing nothing. They recover, and others then are afflicted.

- His steward is convinced that some curse has fallen on the village because of Sir Otto's absence. He implores Sir Otto to return with all haste to break the curse.
- Although he would love nothing better than to return home and help his people, he is honor-bound to take part in the crusade.
- If the PCs are willing to travel to Oldenhaffen and investigate what is happening, he promises to pay for the PCs' expenses and the service of his priest. He also offers a small stipend of 100 Knights each (1 Knight = 10 cp coin) and a portion of the revenue his men gather from the wool harvest.

Once the PCs agree to help him, he thanks them and offers his eternal gratitude if they can lift the curse. He gives them a sealed writ letting his steward know the PCs are sent at his request.

### KNOWLEDGE

If the PCs ask locals in Macawi, replace the appropriate Knowledge skill by a gather information (Diplomacy) check.

### KNOWLEDGE (GEOGRAPHY OR LOCAL)

**DC 15** Oldenhaffen is known for its quality wool.

**DC 20** Oldenhaffen is a small village perched high in the Grit Mountains on the road between Macawi and Aremhyk.

### KNOWLEDGE (NOBILITY)

**DC 15** the von Korrien is an old family who has been ennobled since time immemorial.

**DC 18** the von Korriens have fallen on hard time since Unification.

**DC 20** the (then) Emperor ordered the family to give many of their holdings to the Imperial Alliance.

**DC 25** the family strongly supports the crusade against the Janus Horde as a mean to conquer new lands and bring new glory to the family name.

## 2: TO OLDENHAFFEN

The twenty miles between Macawi and Oldenhaffen takes the PCs about two days of travel to traverse. The terrain is mountainous and the road well kept. The days are cool and the night outright cold.

On the first day, the PCs encounter many peasants heading to Macawi to join their lords in the Crusade. They are in good spirits and looking forward to destroying the barbarians in the name of their lords.

They also meet many merchants heading to Macawi to make a fortune.

### ON THE ROAD (CRS)

In the morning of the second day, the PCs encounter a pair of ogres on the road. The ogres are threatening two young farmers. The farmers have an ox-drawn cart filled with

cabbages, which the ogres want, possibly supplemented with the farmers themselves.

The farmers (Ekel and Haans, Nasian males, LN Commoner 1) hide and try to stay away from the ogres if the PCs intervene.

The terrain is rocky ground with tall pine trees on both sides of the road.

### OGRE (2)

CR 3

hp 30, see *Pathfinder SRD*

### TACTICS

**Morale:** The ogres flee if brought to less than 5 hit points.

## AFTERMATH

The two farmers are brothers from Oldenhaffen. They are heading to Macawi to sell their produce to the crusaders. They plan to use the money to buy weapons and armor then join Sir Otto against the barbarians. They have more willingness than martial ability. They are happy to leave and avoid the curse.

They can give the PCs an overview of the situation in Oldenhaffen; refer to the Adventure Background.

## 3: OLDENHAFFEN

### READ ALOUD.

From the main road leading to Koryth, the sign that points to Oldenhaffen is old and the name barely readable. The path is little more than a mountain trail with breathtaking scenery. It is not long before your destination comes into view.

The village of Oldenhaffen sits on a plateau surrounded by rocky grass fields. The hamlet of white-painted wooden homes with thatched roofs is peaceful and quiet from a distance. Only the spire of the church of the Sanguine Covenant rises a little above the homes. A veritable army of white-wool sheep surrounds the village under the watchful eye of their shepherds.

## VILLAGE ENCOUNTERS

From here, there are a number of small roleplaying encounters as the PCs try to discover what is happening.

Use the NPCs presented below to color the PCs' investigation. The villagers are highly superstitious and the information the PCs get should be filled with ideas about curses and demons.

The PCs will discover the following:

- The overall story found in the adventure background (but not "the truth").

## THE CAVIAN HIVE MIND

Cavians are a race of psionic rat men that used to control the area now controlled by the Caneus Empire. The cavians rose to power because of their common "overmind" known as the Cavian Hive Mind. Following the defeat of the Cavian Empire, the Hive Mind and every Cavian disappeared for fifteen centuries only to reappear some sixty years ago. Cavians are now found nearly everywhere on Exodus where they settled in urban areas. The Hive Mind's goals are unclear.

Many cavians no longer belong to the Hive Mind. These are known as 'severed' or 'independent'.

- The curse manifested itself when a lot of people are around: the well, the washing creek, etc. Many early episodes happened near the skull.
- The villagers who acted abnormally are all back to normal and have not shown any symptoms or illness today.
- A young woman (Agata) is missing today. Since she is a herbalist, they believe she will return in the evening, and no one is especially worried.
- Adler and his cursed skull are locked in his home. No one will go anywhere near either, fearing that the curse might affect them.
- Only Adler and Karl know where the cave is located.
- Everyone wishes Sir Otto would return to "take care of things".

## JAHN THE STEWARD

(LN male human warrior 4, mid-sixties) The steward is the eldest man in town. He fought for the Empire in his youth. He lost his right hand and now suffers from cataracts.

He is profoundly prejudiced against any PCs from the Confederacy, the Empire's foe in his fighting days.

Jahn refuses to leave the limits of the village. Not because he is afraid, but instead because his duty demands he stays here.

## SISTER FRITZI

(N female human cleric (Perum) 1/ witch 1, early 20s) Sister Fritzi is the local priestess. She has enough healing ability to keep her people healthy. Though not holding much personal stock in the strict religious tenets of the faith, she is confused by the events, and feels guilty that she has been useless in preventing them.

It was she who cast spells to identify the skull and its abilities. She also looked at what Karl brought and identified the silvered skull and the amulet of protection +1. Nothing else they took was magical.

## ADLER

(LN male p'tan warrior 1, early 20s) Adler is sequestered in his house, a single-room cottage east of town. He is kept under guard by Jahn's grandson, also named Jahn. Seeing Adler requires the steward's approval (the PCs must simply ask).

Adler is willing to give the silvered skull to the PCs if they promise to lift the curse. Adler agrees to take the PCs to the cave, but under no circumstances does he re-enter.

## KARL

(N male human warrior 2, late teens) Karl is away for most of the day, looking for Agata. He returns at dusk in a near panic. Everyone tells him that she will return shortly.

Karl says that he brought back an amulet and a ring for his girlfriend, Agata. Sister Fritz identified the amulet as an amulet of natural armor +1. The ring was not magical so she did not spend any time on it.

Karl can lead the PCs to the cave, but under no circumstances does he enter, either.

# 4: THE CAVERN

With Karl or following Adler's directions, the PCs can walk the three miles to the cavern.

Except where specified, the complex is not lit. The ceilings in the rooms are 10 feet high but only 5 feet high in the corridors. The floor and walls are natural unworked stone.

## AREA 1: THE ENTRANCE

Finding the entrance without direction is impossible. With directions or Karl, it requires a DC15 Survival check or a DC25 Perception check. There is a psionic effect that makes it hard to locate.

Choked with small stone debris, the entrance to this cavern is difficult to see. However, once located, you cannot help but wonder how you could not see it before. The cave is dark and quiet.

A DC 15 Survival check to find tracks by the entrance reveals the passage of many sheep, a few humans (Adler, Karl and Agata) and two vaguely canine sets of tracks (the razorfiends).

## AREA 2: STORAGE (CR5)

### READ ALOUD.

This room is filled with boxes, bags and small crates. From the general mess, it is obvious that someone – or something – came here and ransacked the place. Glass containers, pottery and the occasional metallic container can be seen among the dust and dangling webs.

The two shepherds ransacked this room looking for anything of value, but missed much. After the shepherds left, two razorfiends came looking for cavians. So far, they have contented themselves with eating whatever they found and making a mess of the place.

## RAZORFIENDS

Razorfiends vaguely resemble a dog. At first glance they seem to have fur, but in fact they are covered with hardened quills. Razorfiends live in caves and in underground complexes such as crypts and sewers. They are not particularly intelligent and frequently serve as watchdogs or minions for more powerful – or intelligent – creatures.

Razorfiends particularly enjoy rat and cavian flesh and hunt them whenever they can. Razorfiends have vestigial psionic abilities that allow them to find and locate their prey.

### RAZORFIEND

**CR 3**

NE Small Aberration

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60ft., lifesense 60ft.; Perception +1

### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 22 (4d8+4)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Resist acid 10;

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.; climb 20ft.

**Melee** 4 slams +5 (1d3)

**Space** 5ft.; **Reach** 5ft.

### TACTICS

**During Combat:** The razorfiends go for cavian and psionic characters first

**Morale:** The razorfiends fight to the death.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

**Feats** Blind Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Survival +8

**SQ** lifesense, swarming

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Lifesense (Su)** A razorfiend notices and locates living creatures within 60 feet, just as if it possessed the blindsight ability.

**Swarming (Ex)** Razorfiends dwell and fight in cramped quarters every day of their lives, and as such are quite adept at swarming foes. Up to two razorfiends can share the same square at the same time. If two razorfiends in the same square attack the same foe, they are considered to be flanking that foe as if they were in two opposite squares.

## AFTERMATH

The PCs can find (DC 15 Perception check), buried in the debris, three vials of acid, a power stone with crystal shard and hammer, and enough equipment to form a small alchemical laboratory (+2 to Craft (alchemy) checks). The other supplies in the room are now inert and unusable. The equipment could be sold for 150 gp.

The way to Area 4 is filled with rubble. A small, narrow passage has been excavated through the loose rock. The passage is narrow and any Medium-sized creature must make a DC 15 Escape Artist check to squeeze through. Tracking reveals that a small female human has squeezed through the passage.

Clearing the passage is time consuming but not difficult. Each passage takes one hour to clear, less if the PCs have useful tools (such as spades or a pick).

## AREA 3: MEDITATION ROOM (CR5)

### READ ALOUD.

This room's focal point is a stone altar with a large piece of amethyst floating a few inches over it. The crystal emits a dull yellow light that fills the room in a calm and peaceful glow.

Anyone entering this room must make a Will save or become dazed for one minute. While the PC is dazed, his mind is flooded with cavian voices droning without cease. Though not painful, it is extremely unnerving.

The DC depends on the PC's own ability (choose the lowest DC that applies). Once a PC makes the save, he does not have to make the save again for 24 hours.

PC	Will DC
Is part of the Cavian Hive Mind	10
Has a manifester level	13
Has the Wild Talent feat	14
Has the Natural Psionic racial trait	14
Can cast arcane spells	15
Is an independent cavian	19
None of the above	18

If a PC is disturbed – by being actively shaken or taking damage – he gets a re-roll on his save with a +4 bonus.

The crystal has a hardness of 7 and 50 hit points.

The crystal and the altar are trapped. Anyone not linked to the Cavian Hive Mind that touches the altar or the crystal triggers the trap.

## SUMMON MONSTER IV TRAP

CR 5

Type psionic; Perception DC 29; Disable Device DC 29

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** proximity (alarm); **Reset** after 24 hours

**Effect** spell effect (*summon monster IV*, summon an ice mephit, see Pathfinder SRD)

## AFTERMATH

The crystal becomes inert if moved from its current location. However, it can be sold for 300 gp to the cavian communities. If the crystal is broken, it shatters into small shards worth a total of 5 gp to a jeweler.

## AREA 4: LABORATORY (CR5)

### READ ALOUD.

In the center of the room, on a crumbling pedestal stands a glowing cavian statue carved of amber. From the statue, a soothing, golden light illuminates what long ago was a laboratory. Long tables are covered with vials, beakers, and cobwebs heavy with dust form a shroud that blankets everything.

Humanoid, shoed, footprints crisscross the room and signs of the room being carefully searched are everywhere.

The air smells stale and musty.

Although the statue draws the eye, the danger lays in the pedestal beneath. The caviens created a deranged trepanner to protect their laboratory within. Over the centuries, it has become weaker and less cunning and is not as effective as it once was, but it is still a dangerous opponent.

## FAULTY DERANGED TREPANNER

CR 5

CN Small construct (psionic)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +2

### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +1 size)

**hp** 55 (7d10+17)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** -1

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits; **SR** 16; **PR** 16

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 4 claws +12 (1d4+3 plus grab or psychic drain)

**Space** 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** grab, trepanning

**Psi-Like Abilities** (ML 7th; concentration +8)

**At will** – empathic transfer

**3/day** – psychic drain (DC 15) (may manifest as swift action upon successful melee strike)

**1/day** – *dimension slide, dispel psionics, energy push* (4d6, DC 15\*), *specified energy adaptation* (may manifest as immediate action\*)

The save DCs are Intelligence-based.

*\*Includes augmentation for the trepanner's manifester level.*

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The trepanner stands motionless until it is discovered or the PCs attempt to touch the statue or the crystal.

**During Combat** The trepanner attacks anyone who casts spells above all others. It ignores any cavian unless attacked first.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** -, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +9 (+13 grapple); **CMD** 23

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Skill Focus (Heal), Toughness, Weapon Focus (arm)

**Skills** Heal +17, Perception +2, Stealth +14; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Heal, +2 Stealth

**Languages** Cavian (cannot speak)

**SQ** aid overchannel, freeze

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Aid Overchannel (Su)** A creature in physical contact with a deranged trepanner can divert one-third of the damage caused by use of the Overchannel feat (rounded up) to the trepanner, which the trepanner cannot avoid by any means. A creature can only benefit from one trepanner's aid overchannel ability at a time, and this ability functions up to three times per day.

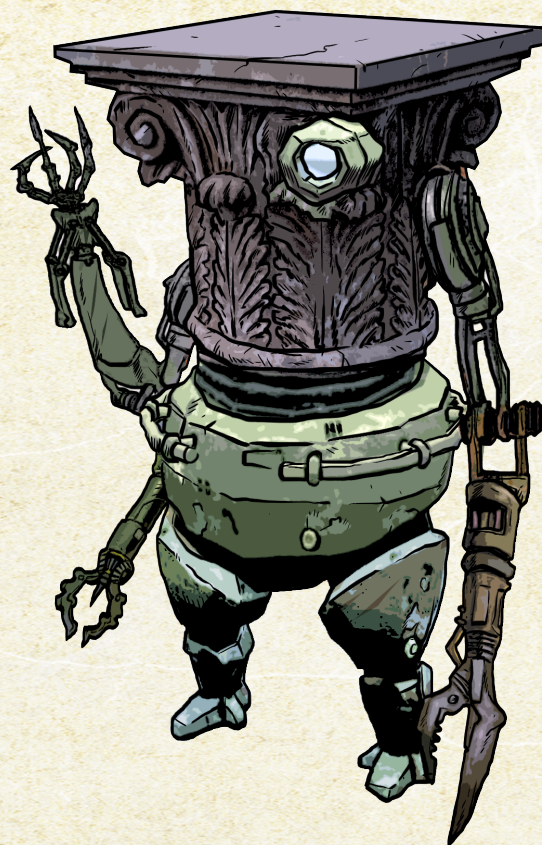
**Freeze (Ex)** A deranged trepanner can hold itself so still it appears to be a column between 5 to 10 feet in height. Spotting a frozen deranged trepanner requires a DC 34 Perception check.

**Grab (Ex)** A deranged trepanner can use its grab attack against a foe of up to Medium size.

**Trepanning (Ex)** If a deranged trepanner successfully pins an opponent that has a skull, it may immediately attempt to bore a hole in the opponent's skull by making an attack roll, taking into account the target's AC penalties for being pinned. If successful, the target suffers 4d6 damage, loses 3d6 power points, and takes 1d6 points of Intelligence damage.

### AFTERMATH

The room is filled with alchemical equipment that could be of use to an alchemist or a machinesmith (See Classes of NeoExodus: Machinesmith) worth 150 gp. There are also a number of blueprints for the creation of constructs. These plans could sell in a large town for about 300 gp.



## AREA 5: THE BEDROOM (CR 5)

### READ ALOUD.

The walls of this room are covered with small amethyst crystals bathing the room in soft purple light. A paper-covered desk stands at the back of the room.

A young nasian woman with mousy hair tied in a bun, her face covered in grime and her dress torn and caked with mud stands defiantly next to a pile of old, musty rags forming a bed of sorts.

Her mouth initially emits only the occasional squeak. Then, after a moment, she says in a high-pitched, droning voice, with the monotone pattern common to cavians:

"Have you come to report the destruction of the Sorcerer-Kings and the victory of our armies? Or... are you here to die?"

The young woman is Agata, under the control of the dreadmind ring.

A DC 15 Knowledge (history) check reveals that the Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon were conquered over nine centuries ago by the Arman.

Convincing the entity within the ring of this fact and that the Sorcerer-Kings no longer exists requires a DC 25 Diplomacy check. The following modifiers apply.

PC	DC
Cavian PC*	+5
PC has a manifester level*	+2
PC has the Wild Talent feat*	+1
PC has the Natural Psionic racial trait*	+1
PC from the Caneus Empire (Nas)	+2
Offering to be mind-probed/controlled	+5
PCs show deference to ring/Agata	+5
Non-human from the Arman Protectorate	-1
Human from the Arman Protectorate	-2

The PCs get one chance to convince the ring. If they fail to convince the ring, the ring assumes they wish to destroy it and uses its summoning ability to defend itself with 2 thought eaters.

On Exodus, thought eaters were most commonly found as servants of the cavians in the heyday of their Empire. Today, they are found in and around Cavian ruins in the Caneus Empire and southern Koryth.

## AGATA

CR1/2

Female human commoner 2  
N Medium humanoid (human)  
**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +4

## DEFENSE

**AC** 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 natural)  
**hp** 10 (2d6+3)  
**Fort** +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.  
**Melee** rolling pin +1 (1d6)

## TACTICS

**During Combat:** Agata stands threateningly, but has little combat abilities.

**Morale:** The dreadmind ring has no fear of death so it forces Agata to fight to the death.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 13  
**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12  
**Feats** Great Fortitude, Toughness, Weapon Proficiency (club)  
**Skills** Craft (seamstress) +5, Heal +1, Perception +4, Profession (herbalist) +4,  
**Languages** Common, Nasian  
Other gear amulet of natural armor +1, dreadmind ring, rolling pin (counts as club), healing herbs

## THOUGHT EATERS (2)

CR 2

N small aberration (psionic)  
**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60ft.; Perception +7



## DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 13 (3d8)

**Fort** +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

**Defensive Abilities** ethereal jaunt

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** touch +4 (eat thoughts)

**Psi-like Abilities (ML 3rd; concentration +7)**

**3/day** – *thought shield*

**At will** – *detect psionics, distract (DC13), precognition, telepathic lash (DC13\*)*

\*Includes augmentation for the thought eater's manifester level.

## TACTICS

**During Combat:** thought eaters attack psionic characters first. If no PC possesses psionic power, then they attack targets at random. They hide in the ethereal plane, then ethereal jaunt to attack a target. If they fail to hit someone, they remain on the material plane and move to a different target.

**Morale:** The thought eaters fight to the death or until each has syphoned a total of 24 power points from the party.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 11, **Int** 7, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Alertness, Improved Initiative

**Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +14

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Eat Thoughts (Su)** A thought eater can drain psionic power points with a successful melee touch attack. Each touch drains 6 power points from the opponent (or fewer, if the opponent has fewer than 6 points remaining). Against a non-psionic creature or a psionic creature that currently has no power points, this touch attack instead deals 1 point of Intelligence damage.

**Ethereal Jaunt (Su)** A thought eater can shift from the Ethereal Plane to the Material Plane as a move action, and then shift back again as a free action. The ability is otherwise identical to the psionic ethereal jaunt power or spell.

**Psionic Abilities** The DC of a thought-eater's psionic abilities are Charisma-based.

## AFTERMATH

Whether Agata survives the encounter is significant to the remainder of the adventure.

If knocked unconscious, she regains control of herself, saying that a cavian mind was controlling her. She assumes the silvered skull is responsible. The dreadmind ring

quickly reasserts control after she returns to consciousness, however, and has Agata discover what the PCs know of the Cavian Empire, the Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon and history.

If Agata is killed, the ring hides its abilities behind her magic aura ability. Unless the PCs use an identify spell, they cannot pierce through the glamour.

The papers on the desk are written in Cavian. They are letters asking for troop readiness, the location of generals and the disposition of Sorcerer-King armies as the human invaders closed in on the Hive Mind. They are worthless, as they impart no significant historical data.

## TROUBLESHOOTING: PUTTING ON THE RING

If a PC decide to put on the dreadmind ring, the ring remains dormant until the PC meets with a cavian belonging to the Hive Mind (such as Lady Solze in Part 5). At that point, the dreadmind ring uses its mind control ability to attempt to force the PCs to turn it over, if they do not do so willingly.

## AREA 6: THE WELL

### READ ALOUD.

The air in this room is much cooler than the other rooms. From the far side of the room, water trickles into a pool upon which small insects flick like skaters.

A small pail and a silver basin rest by the pool, having been cleaned and used recently.

A DC 13 Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) reveals the insects are cave skaters, harmless creatures found in caves.

The springs flowing into the pool are cold and refreshing. The water drains into an underground system through small openings.

A DC 15 Appraise or Knowledge (history) identifies the pail and basin as items commonly used by the ancient cavians to cleanse and purify themselves. The items have no religious meaning but would still fetch around 200 gp. Agata used the pail and basin to drink.

The PCs may return to Oldenhaffen without incident.

## 5: BACK IN TOWN

### READ ALOUD.

As you enter Oldenhaffen, you see two ox-drawn wagons are stopped before Jahn's house. Four human guards stand around keeping watch as a trio of cavians exits the steward's home. Jahn follows them, a big smile on his face.

As Jahn sees you he waves you to come closer with a big smile on his face. Approaching, the steward calls to you.

"Blessed by this day! These cavians have come here to lift the curse. This whole nightmare is finally over! Hand them the silvered skull and anything you found in your investigation."

"Oh, don't worry! They will pay you handsomely for anything they take." Turning to a tall female, he adds. "Is that right, lady Solza?"

The cavian woman nods, her face retaining the stone cold expression so common among her people.

Jahn expects the PCs to turn over any item they find. Lady Solza offers fair market price for the items. She looks at everything with passing interest.

## THE DREAMIND RING

When the PCs show lady Solza the dreadmind ring, read aloud.

Lady Solza's dark eyes grow wide. In the high-pitched, droning voice common to cavians, she exclaims, an excited squeak entering her inflections. "Yes! That is it. You will be greatly rewarded. There is great historical value to be had by studying that ring."

"You have my thanks. Many, many times over."

Allow the PCs a chance to react and decide what to do next. Her initial offer is 3,000 gp for the ring.

If the PCs ask her the importance of the ring, she says that she is a researcher in all things dating back to the Cavian Empire. She claims an ancient master made the ring. She insists once the ring and the silvered skull are back into the cavian hands (she does not consider independent cavians as "true cavians"), the curse will be lifted.

## TURNING OVER THE RING

If they agree to give her the ring, they earn her friendship. Read aloud.

Once lady Solza takes the ring, she puts it on and closes her eyes for a moment. "Yes! That's it!"

Turning to Jahn, she says. "I feel the curse has been lifted. This ring... it needed to be returned to its rightful owners. Your village's curse is lifted." Morale in the village immediately lifts. As the villagers begin dancing and singing with joy.

Lady Solza orders her caravan to leave immediately. The villagers do not seem to mind that a cursed item leaves their midst.

Proceed to the conclusion.

## REFUSING TO TURN OVER THE RING

If the PCs refuse to turn over the ring, she gets agitated and demands it be turned over to her immediately. She increases her monetary offer to 6,000 gp.

In the end, the decision is the PCs'. Any non-cavian PC who wears the ring must begin making a Will save every round, as the ring wants to go with lady Solza.

## FORCED TO GIVE IT UP

If the PCs are forced to give up the dreadmind ring, lady Solza pays them whatever her last offer was.

## TROUBLESHOOTING: ATTACKING LADY SOLZA

Attacking Lady Solza or any member of her entourage results in her fleeing to the safety of the wagons.

### LADY SOLZA

CR8

LN Cavian psion (psychoporter) 9  
**AC** 13; touch 13, flat footed 10 (+3 Dex)  
**hp** 47

### TACTICS

**During combat:** Lady Solza uses her inconstant position class ability to have the first attack that hits her get a 50% mischance as an immediate action.

**Morale:** Lady Solza withdraws and uses nomad's step to teleport into her wagons.

### LADY SOLZA'S ASSISTANTS (2)

CR3

LN Cavian psion (telepath) 4  
**AC** 12; touch 12, flat footed 10 (+2 Dex)  
**hp** 22

### TACTICS

**During Combat:** The assistants move to cover Lady Solza's escape with their bodies but do not make any attacks on the PCs.

**Morale:** The assistants fight to the death.

### HIGH GUARD RECRUIT

CR 4

Male human (Nasian) fighter 5  
LN Medium humanoid  
**Init** +5; **Senses** Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+ 9 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield)  
**hp** 42 (5d10+15)  
**Fort** +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5; +1 vs. fear  
**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.  
**Melee** mwk longsword +11 (1d8+5/19-20) or mwk shortspear +10 (1d6+4/x3)  
**Ranged** javelin +6 (1d6+4) or shortspear +6 (1d6+4)

---

**TACTICS**

---

**During combat:** Lady Solza uses inconstant position to have the first attack that hits her get a 50% mischance as an immediate action.

**Morale:** The High Guards fight to the death or until the PCs cease to threaten Lady Solza and her entourage. If the PCs take down Lady Solza, the high guards fight to the death, taking one extra shot at any PC going down.

---

**STATISTICS**

---

**Str** 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +9 (+11 bull rush); **CMD** 20 (22 vs. bull rush)

**Feats** Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus

**Skills** Intimidate +5, Perception +8, Ride -1, Sense Motive +7

**Languages** Common, Nasian

**SQ** armor training 1, weapon training (heavy blades +1)

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), tanglefoot bag, thunderstones (2); **Other Gear** full plate, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork longsword, masterwork shortspear, 6 javelins

**CONCLUSION****THE PCS KEEP THE RING**

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**READ ALOUD.**

---

Faced with your refusal to sell the ring she so clearly desires, she orders her caravan to leave at once. She tells the villagers that you are unreasonable and that she refuses to lift the curse.

She orders her people to leave immediately.

Jahn pays the PCs the money they are due, but does so without enthusiasm. He tells them politely that their work is complete and that they should leave before nightfall.

You have made few friends in Oldenhaffen with your refusal to sell the ring. In spite of your assurances, few trust that you really have solved the curse that hung over their village.

As the village disappears from view, Adler and Karl sit on a rock overlooking the road. "Finally! There you are!"

The two men approach you with smiles. Karl speaks first. "Listen, we know the others do not feel gratitude, but we know what was in that cave. And to be honest, I would much rather the cavians not find it."

Adler adds. "We have little we can give you, but we can only encourage you to throw those things into a canyon or into a cave. Make them disappear forever. I don't care what Sister Fritzi says... these things are

indeed cursed!"

The two men wave you goodbye and return to their flock.

Find out what the PCs intend do with the ring. The most anyone is willing to pay for it is 1,200 gp, far below its expected market price. The PCs' contacts report being harassed by cavians, and cavian spies and agents seem to tail the party as they travel with the item. Anyone who buys the ring soon reports that it was stolen in the night.

If the PCs elect not to sell it, and do not discard it as the shepherds recommend, a high-level psionic cavian using cloud mind (DC Will 28) steals the dreadmind ring a few days later, leaving the PCs with a non-magical duplicate; if somehow the character carrying the ring can resist this effect a second attempt follows two days later after, along with continued harassment and spying. The dreadmind ring wants to return to cavian hands, and its original owners also wish it with the full focus of their communal mind as well

**THE PCS SOLD THE RING TO LADY SOLZA**

---

**READ ALOUD.**

---

Jahn pays you the money Sir Otto promised with a smile. He insists that you stay in town to partake of the feast held in your honor.

Whole lambs are put on the spit and kegs of ale and mead are opened and shared. You have made lasting friends in Oldenhaffen. The feast lasts well into the night as the villagers celebrate.

**EPILOGUE**

When the PCs leave Oldenhaffen, read aloud, as an epilogue.

The scene is a small, dimly lit cavern deep in the Caneus Empire. Three cavians are seated in a semi-circle, obviously meditating.

A door opens and Lady Solza enters. Standing before the eldest, she presents the dreadmind ring on her finger. The other three gasp in awe.

Lady Solza says. "Yes, what was long-lost is ours once more! The Hive Mind as it was before the world fell to mankind has re-emerged. Finally, our grand design may be reactivated." The other cavians smile and chitter.

"The dreadmind ring has returned to its people. A new hegemony will soon rise upon Exodus."

---

**THE END**

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## NEW RULE ITEMS

### DREAMIND RING

The dreadmind ring was created by Cavian arcanists in the dying days of the War of Mind and Magic. It holds a fragment of the Cavian Hive Mind, safe from the magic-using humans. The ancient cavians used the best jewelers and crystal workers of their empire to forge it.

In this adventure, the dreadmind ring's sentience is confused because it does not yet understand that the Sorcerer-Kings are no more and that the Cavian Empire has fallen. Agata's lack of knowledge about the Cavian Empire and the Sorcerer-Kings is greatly disturbing to the dreadmind ring.

#### DREAMIND RING

**AURA** see text; **CL** 12th

**SLOT** ring; **PRICE** 85,400 gp; (appears 4,000 gp) **Weight** -

#### DESCRIPTION

The *dreadmind ring* is exquisitely made of silver and platinum, holding a central shard of crystal cut to resemble a gemstone. A fragment of the Hive Mind is then placed within, giving it both sentience and power.

The *dreadmind rings* hates to be examined magically and always obscures its power through a psionic version of the magic aura spell. Because of that ability, the ring can never be identified without the use of an identify spell.

**AL** Lawful Neutral; **Int** 18; **Wis** 10; **Cha** 10; **Ego** 16  
**Languages** Cavian, Common, Sorcerous, Telepathy

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**At-will** – magic aura (self only), mental disruption (DC 16)

**3/day** – mind control (DC 18)

**1/day** – disintegration (DC 20, +6 ranged touch, special purpose), summon (3 thought eaters)

**Special Purpose** Destroy the Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon and their followers.

**Skills** Knowledge (history) +14

#### CONSTRUCTION

**REQUIREMENTS** Forge Ring, *disintegration*, *magic aura*, *mental disruption*, *mind control*, *schism*, must be able to contact the Cavian Hive Mind; **COST** 42,700 gp



### SILVERED SKULL

The silvered skull was a magical attempt by the cavians to create an item that would absorb and dispel any magic cast upon it. Their goal was to stop and deflect the magical energies to protect their generals and top officers while on the battlefield.

The process worked, but the item had to have spells directly cast upon it, it provided no protection from spells cast against the wielder, only the skull itself.

#### SILVERED SKULL

**Aura** faint abjuration; **CL** 5th

**Slot** -; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 10 lbs.

#### DESCRIPTION

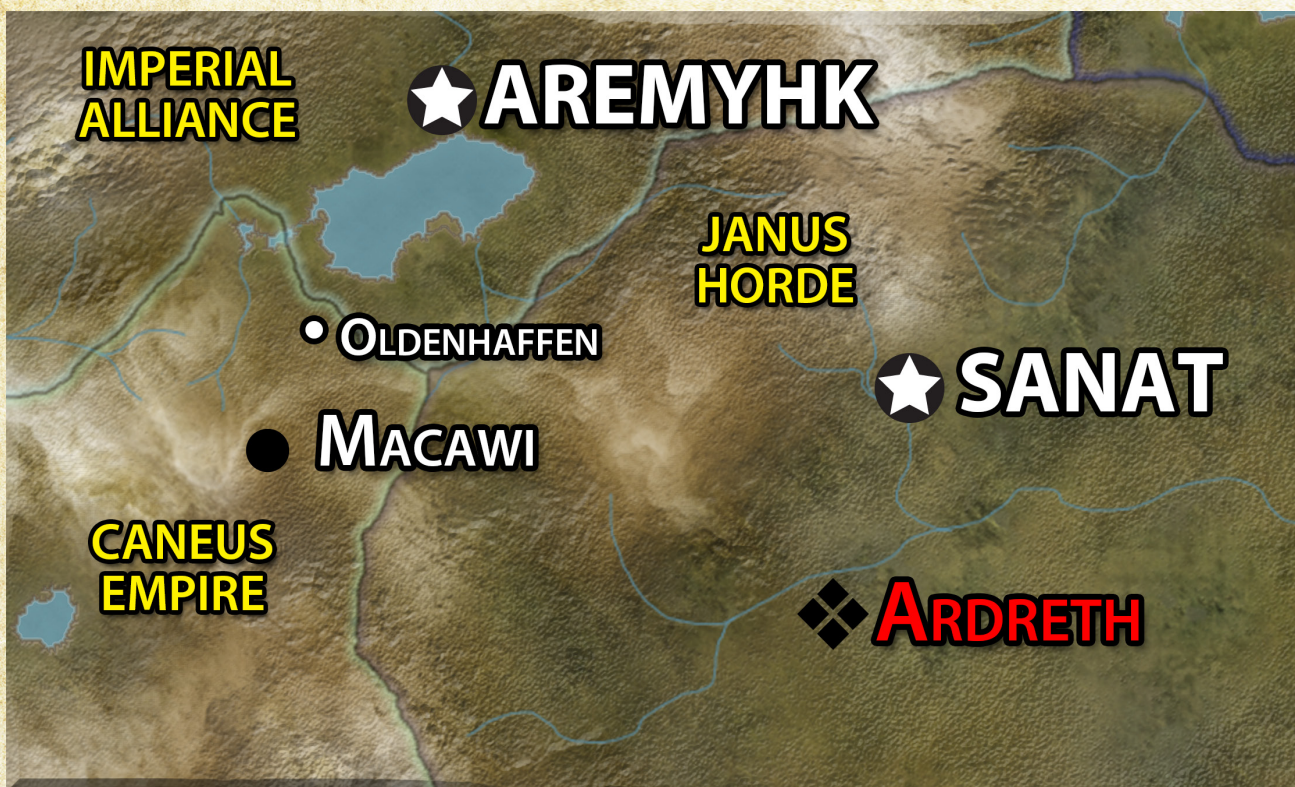
This cavian skull is entirely covered with silver. The creation process prevents the skull from being animated as an undead.

Any spell – not psionic power – cast on the skull is converted to a light spell lasting for 1 minute per caster level. The effect creates an evocation [light] that is the equivalent to a spell of the same level. Thus a haste spell cast by a 5th level wizard would create light for 5 minutes as a 3rd-level light spell.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**REQUIREMENTS** Craft Wondrous Item, *daylight*, *dispel magic*; **COST** 3,000gp

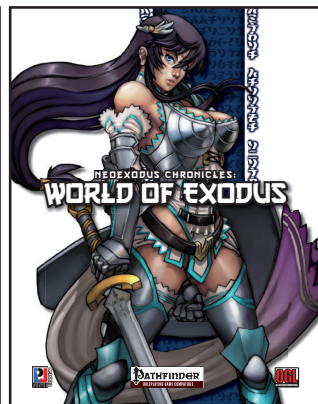
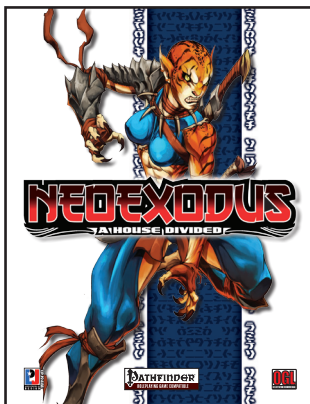
## MAP 1: AREA



# NEOEXODUS

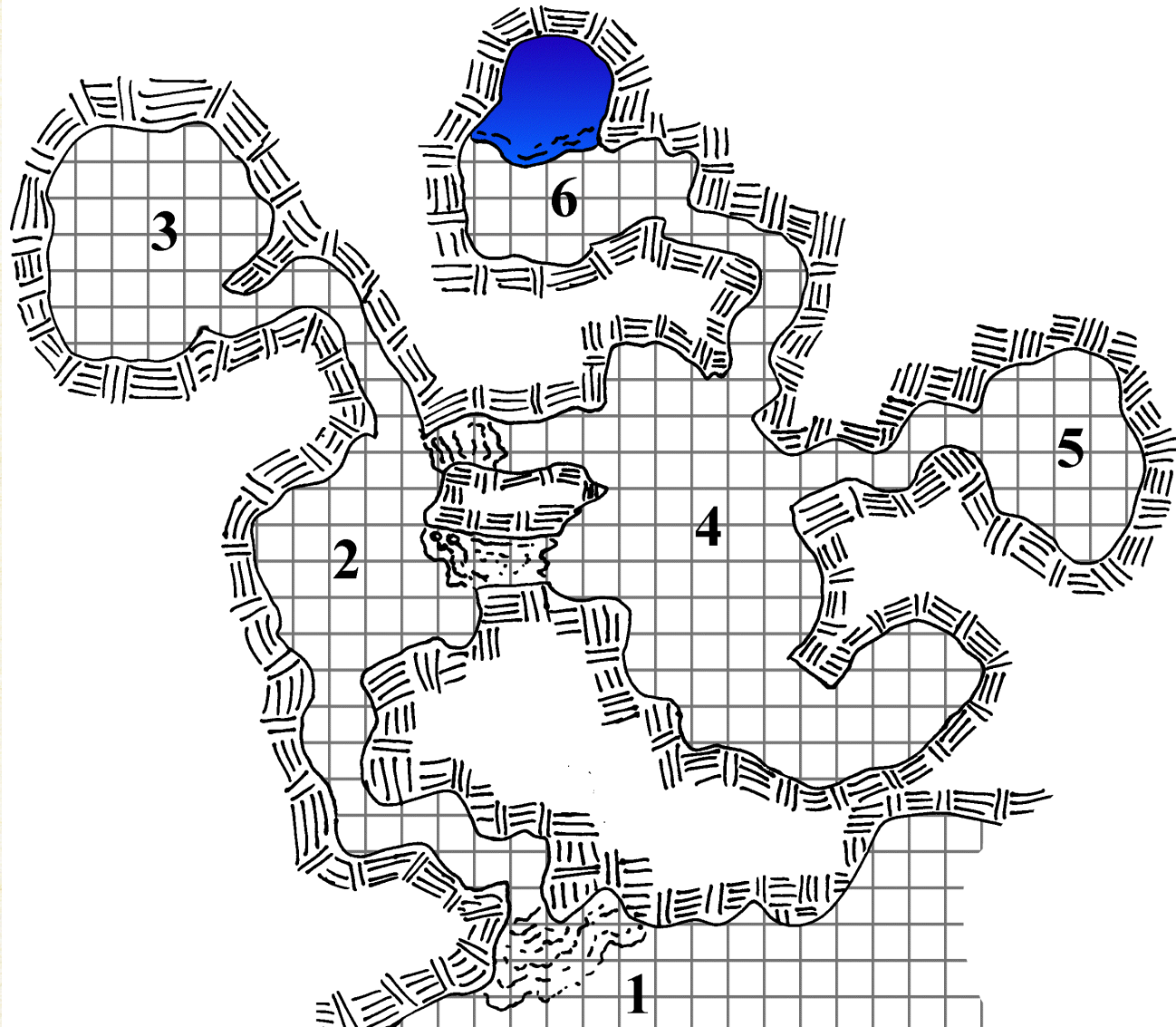
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THE WORLD OF EXODUS NEEDS HEROES...

# MAP 1: AREA A



NEDEXODUS LEGACIES:  
THE SILVERED SKULL

15

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