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GM'S MISCELLANY: DUNGEON BACKDROPS



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GM'S MISCELLANY: DUNGEON BACKDROPS I

You are a GM, but you are busy. You want to write your own modules, but you just don't have the time. And you don't want to use commercial modules. You want to make your campaign your own. That's where the Dungeon Backdrop line comes in! Each Dungeon Backdrop presents a fully fleshed out and lovingly detailed self-contained dungeon ready for you to use as you see fit. Stock the dungeon with your own monsters (and—perhaps—their treasure), decide their back story and you are good to go.

Every Dungeon Backdrop is carefully designed to be easily inserted into almost any fantasy campaign. Dungeon Backdrops: we describe the dungeon, you add the monsters (and the treasure).

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USING A DUNGEON BACKDROP

Tweak and modify this dungeon to make it your own. The parts of this supplement describing the actual dungeon itself feature extensive space for you to make notes—adding treasure, opponents and so on.

- **Location Descriptions:** The various location descriptions provided herein only describe the basic appearance of the dungeon's rooms, chambers and corridors. They do not include descriptions of any monsters lurking therein. Remember when describing the dungeon to your players the snarling orcs (or whatever) are probably more noticeable than the room's features. Also remember, creatures in the dungeon will modify their home to better suit their needs. For example, the aforementioned orcs may have set up a rough camp—mention these changes when describing the area.
- **Treasure:** The text only presents the details of minor treasures the PCs could discover in the course of their adventure. Most is of little value, but serves to underline the flavour of the dungeon. Remember to add level-appropriate treasure when designing the dungeon.



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Welcome to Raging Swan Press's first GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Backdrop compilation!

The germ of the idea for the Dungeon Backdrop line was born in a conversation I had with a chum several years ago. He's a fellow GM—and an inveterate tinkerer—and he commented on the fact that he never ran a published adventure as written; often he'd do a wholesale re-write so that it better suited his campaign. Sometimes, he basically only used the map. Of course, that's fair enough—I've been "guilty" of the same practise myself on many occasions—but it got me thinking.

Assuming he wasn't an outlier (and I don't think he is) it stood to reason other GMs also don't want or need a fully detailed module—they just want a locale in which to set their own adventures.

Thus was born the Dungeon Backdrop line.

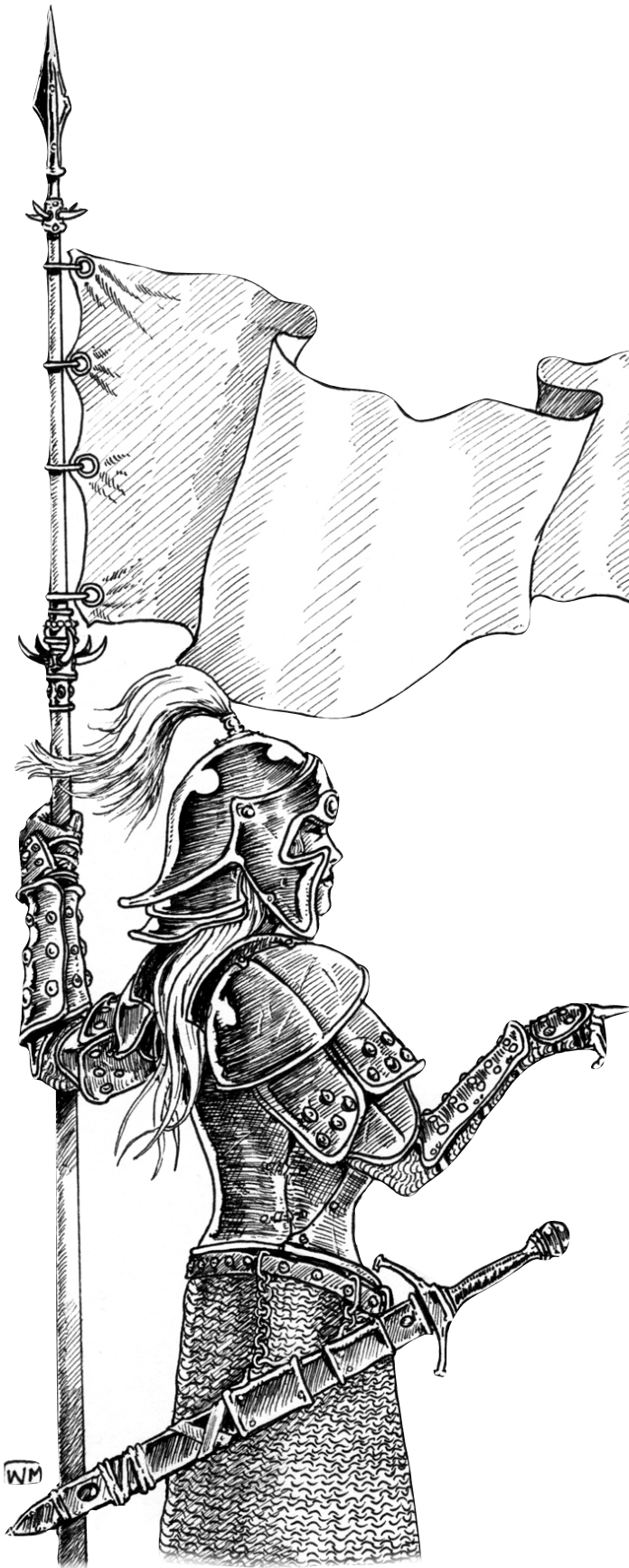

Since we started publishing Dungeon Backdrops I've already used the Crumbled Tower in my Adventures in Shadow campaign—and the characters are on the way to Delthur's Folly and Deszraul's Hold in the near future. (Although they really don't want to go to Deszraul's Hold as at least one of them suffers from an extreme form of medusaphobia.)

As a GM, I love the freedom a Dungeon Backdrop gives me. I don't have to bother drawing the map or thinking about the place's features—all I have to do is stuff it full of monsters and treasure! That cuts down on my prep time and lets me be more creative in the wider campaign. For me, that's a double bonus!

In any event I ramble; I hope you enjoy the Dungeon Backdrop line as much as I do, and that you can find a place for one or more of the dungeons in your campaign.

Finally, if you've enjoyed this book, please consider joining Raging Swan Press on Patreon. Not only will you get our books before they go on general release you'll also get them at a discount. (And you'll be helping us pay our freelancers a decent rate of pay!) We also have a lively Discord server exclusively for the use of our patrons—come and join the chat! You can learn more—and sign up—at patreon.com/ragingswanpress.

Good luck with your game,



THE CRUMBLED TOWER

Hidden in the wild uplands beyond the Selka River, the sinkhole-mine of Delthur's Folly is a byword among the locals for a fool's errand doomed to fail. The only survivor of the fated expedition—driven mad by his ordeal and raving of “the water's sibilant whispers”—died shortly after staggering into Dunstone a year or more after Delthur and his miners disappeared into the wilderness. And yet, every year adventurers cross the Selka in search of the mine—gold and silver are said to lie within. Some return empty-handed and some do not return at all. Local legend has it that something terrible dwells in the mine.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

A thousand years ago, a race of primitive humans dwelt amid the hills and woods of what would become Ashlar. They fought against the orcs infesting the hills and lived a simple existence in harmony with their surrounds. Their heroes, chieftains and shaman were much venerated and their burial rites were far more elaborate than those of the common folk. Worthies were interred in hidden, sealed underground tombs wherein their enemies could not disturb their eternal slumber. The old tunnels below the Crumbling Tower are one such tomb. Sealed for centuries, the tomb has remained undiscovered.

As fate would have it, the wizard Aleksandra Ihalempi chose to build her home above the tomb. Deep in the forests, the location was peaceful and provided her with the solitude and peace she craved to conduct her mystical researches without interruption.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are pushed for time, and want more tools and tables to help design and populate the Crumbled Tower and it surrounds, the following resources may be of use:

- 20 Things #3: Wizard’s Tower
- 20 Things #27: Ruined Castle
- 20 Things #35: Bandits & Brigands
- Monstrous Lair #15: Bandit Camp

Dwelling in the tower for two decades with a few choice henchfolk Aleksandra never discovered the tomb cut into the rock below her home.

Eventually, 50 years ago, Aleksandra’s adventurous past caught up with her. One night, cultists assailed her tower, slew her servants and spirited Aleksandra away for ritual sacrifice to their dark god’s glory. Damaged in the battle, her tower slowly crumbled into decay and decrepitude.

Since Aleksandra’s death, the tower has been sporadically fought over by disparate groups; sometimes bandits camp in the tower while other times adventurers come to poke around the ruin in hopes of finding overlooked treasures.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can merely stumble on the Crumbled Tower by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of these hooks to lure the PCs to the tower.

- **An Old Book:** The party comes into possession of one of Aleksandra’s old spellbooks or journals. In it, the wizard mentions her home and her ongoing studies. The book also hints at a magical treasure hidden in the tower against a time of great need. (Depending on the party’s level, the treasure could already have been discovered and carried away or could yet lurk in the tower awaiting a new owner. Any treasure hidden in the tower is likely concealed in the secret niche below the fireplace in area 6.)
- **Thunder & Lightning:** The PCs are in the wilderlands—perhaps on the way to their next adventure or returning to civilisation after their most recent foray. A thunderstorm assails the woods through which they travel and—in search of shelter—they stumbled onto the Crumbling Tower. Perhaps fate led them to the tower or, if the tower is occupied, the party’s scout spots the flicker of a campfire coming from the tower’s ruined upper levels and they decide to investigate.
- **Old Stonework:** The party are in a village near to the Crumbled Tower when one of the PCs note some odd, out-of-place stonework set into the village inn’s walls. The ostler explains that when his father built the inn he used stonework from an old tower hidden deep in the nearby woods. Intrigued, the party decide to seek out the tower.
- **Battling the Cult:** The PCs are locked in an ongoing battle with the same cult that wrought Aleksandra’s doom so long ago. Learning of her ancient battles against the evildoers, the PCs discover hints she owned a powerful, unique magic item that served her well in her struggles. The item is not mentioned in any other texts and it is possible it might yet lie in the ruined Crumbled Tower.
- **Related:** One of the PCs discover they are distantly related to Aleksandra Ihalempi. Learning of the wizard and her tower, the party decide to investigate. (Perhaps the PC might think of claiming the tower; if so, refer to “The PCs Repair the Tower” in the adventure’s Conclusion for more information.)

THE TOWER'S SURROUNDS

The Crumbling Tower stands amid a stand of centuries-old trees. The stand could be part of a larger wood or forest as the GM desires or could be nothing more than an isolated copse.

Although part of the tower has collapsed, the surrounding ground is curiously free of rubble. Depending on the campaign's setup this could be for one of several reasons depending on the PCs' levels and the preponderance of magic in the campaign:

- **Harvested Stone:** Locals took the fallen stones to use in their own building projects.
- **Powerful Magic:** When the cultists came for Aleksandra, they used powerful magics to disintegrate or pull apart the tower. Perhaps part of the tower was hurled into the Abyss during the battle. If so, divination spells may detect an abyssal taint in the locality around the ruin.

If the PCs search the area, they spot a partially buried boulder surrounded by brambles and weeds. This is the Capstone (area U1) warding the Old Tunnels below the Crumbled Tower. The PCs may, or may not, realise the boulder is more than it seems.

If the PCs decide to search the surrounding area, use the list below to add detail and flavour to the proceedings:

1. Many birds roost upon the upper levels of the Crumbled Tower and in the surrounding trees.
2. The bleached bones of a human—his skull is partially melted—lies among the weeds and long grass, surrounded by the rotting remains of his equipment.
3. The remains of several campsites dot the area around the tower. Rubbish, old latrine pits and cold campfires all bare mute testimony to previous visits to the site.
4. A chunk of masonry, hidden in a thicket of brambles, bears carved esoteric runes of undoubted magical origin. A magic-user or illusionist rolling equal or under their Intelligence with 4d6 realises the carvings to be part of a magical ward. (Perceptive PCs may consider the possibility of more magical traps lurking in the tower).
5. A gnarled old oak tree stands forty feet or so away from the tower. The part of the tree's trunk facing the tower is blackened and scorched as if it had been struck by lightning.
6. A narrow, steep-sided dell through which flows a stream passes close to the tower; this is a good way of getting close to the ruin without being observed by anyone—or anything—lurking within.

THE TOWER IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dungeon Backdrop: The Crumbled Tower is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your PCs to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make the Crumbled Tower your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar and the Gloamhold megadungeon or the Lonely Coast. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the adventure comprise:

- **Small Tower:** Built by a wizard long ago, this small tower was a place for her to live with her retainers and apprentices.
- **Small Dungeon Crypt:** The small crypt below the tower predates the ruins. It has remained undisturbed ever since it was built by the area's ancient human inhabitants.
- **Located Anywhere:** The tower can be located almost anywhere—in the hills, low down on a mountain's flank or deep in a forest or wood.
- **Aleksandra Ihalempi:** Aleksandra was a powerful wizard who achieved some level of fame for her battles against evil cults and her research into various esoteric matters. Beyond that, I have deliberately left her details vague so you can make her your own.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

If the PCs think to learn more about the Crumbled Tower, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns:

1. Hidden deep in the woods the old wizard's tower is a favourite lair for bandits, raiders and other ne'er-do-wells.
2. The tower was built by the wizard Aleksandra Ihalempi as a quiet place to conduct her esoteric research. When she disappeared, the place fell into ruin. Some say her ghost still haunts the ruins.
3. The woods surrounding the ruin are haunted by the ghosts of those who once dwelled in the tower. Thus, all right-minded people avoid the place. The few people who live in the locality are strange, insular folk rumoured to belong to certain strange, "unorthodox" religions.
4. Sometimes at night, travellers report flickering lights high up in the tower. These could be travellers' campfires or something altogether more sinister and malign.
5. Avaricious bandits often lurk in the area around the tower and sometimes use the place as a base from which to raid nearby settlements and to fall upon travellers passing through the locality.
6. Humans have long lived in the hills and woodlands of the surrounding area. Their ancient ruins—stone circles, subterranean tombs and the like—dot the surrounds.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The Crumbled Tower is a small, self-contained adventure location. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design of the tower and its inhabitants. The tower comprises two distinct areas: the above ground ruins and the secret tunnels under the tower.

GENERIC TOWER FEATURES

An aura of decrepitude and decay hangs over the Crumbled Tower. Locations in the tower share several generic features:

Illumination: It is dark on the tower's ground floor. Light levels in the upper levels are dependent on the time of day.

Outer Walls: The tower's outer walls are five-foot thick and comprise rough field stone. Age has not been kind to the tower and in places the walls have fallen away exposing the interior. Characters can climb damaged portions of the wall with a +10% chance of success due to the wall's poor condition.

Arrow Slits: The tower's arrow slits are too narrow to squeeze through (unless a character rolls on or under their Dexterity score with 5d6) but do admit slivers of light into the tower's interior.

Inner Walls: The tower's inner walls are of cut and dressed stone.

Ground Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded, although in squares indicated on the map light rubble creates areas of difficult terrain.

Upper Floors: Creaking wooden boards comprise the tower's upper floors. Moving silently across the floor is difficult; such attempts suffer a -10% chance to succeed. The ceilings are roughly 12-foot high.

Wooden Doors: The tower's wooden doors are in a bad state of repair. They open into the room they ward. Unless noted, doors are plain and unadorned.

Spiral Staircases: Narrow, cramped and built for defence, the spiral staircase provides cover for combatants fighting foes lower down the stairs. Squares containing a spiral staircase count as difficult terrain.

Birds' Nests: Many birds nest upon the Crumbled Tower's ruins. Bird excrement streaks the tower's outer walls (and some of the walls and floors inside).

GENERIC OLD TUNNELS FEATURES

The Old Tunnels are of worked stone, hacked from the ground centuries ago. They have several generic features:

Illumination: It is dark in the tunnels below the tower.

Ceiling: The ceiling is about 10-foot high. In most places it is plain and unadorned. Perceptive PCs spot the occasional signs of tool marks on the ceiling.

Floor: Of smooth stone, the floor is flat, unimpeded and thick with dust.

Walls: The dungeon walls are of plain worked, natural stone; characters have the normal chance of climbing these walls.

DUNGEON DRESSING

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

THE TOWER

1. Splinters of mouldy, broken-up furniture litter the floor.
2. Bird droppings and leaves cover parts of the floor.
3. Faded scraps of fabric hanging from a tapestry rod flutter gently in the breeze.
4. Faint muddy footprints lead across the floor. (Skilled trackers may be able to learn more about what lurks in the tower.)
5. Cobwebs gently undulate in the breeze.
6. Dust and grit sift down from the floorboards above.

THE TUNNELS

1. Cold water oozes down the wall to pool on the floor.
2. Scratches on the wall depict crude figures locked in battle.
3. Here, the air is particularly heavy and turgid.
4. Dust and rubble covers part of the floor.
5. Desiccated cockroach carcasses decorate the floor.
6. Faint patterns in the dust hint at insects dwelling nearby.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

THE TOWER

1. A dusty, empty steel potion vial lies on the floor. A character searching the area carefully finds the vial's stopper nearby.
2. Scratches on the wall read, "Beware the lurker above."
3. A dusty bottle lies on its side under a mass of leaves and other rubbish. The bottle holds a few mouthfuls of brandy.
4. A golden ring with a setting fashioned into the shape of a blooming flower lies amid the grime. A red transparent stone (a jasper) fills the setting.

THE TUNNELS

1. A hidden storage niche conceals a rotting bundle of herbs.
2. A character searching the area spots graven, dust-filled symbols on the floor. Carved in the ancient language of dragons the symbols mean "danger", "rest" and "curse".
3. Worked into the shape of a perched eagle, this lump of stone fills a small storage niche high up on one wall.
4. A forgotten bronze bracer wrought into shapes reminiscent of swirling smoke lies on the floor.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The Crumbled Tower comprises the following locations:

- 1 Vestibule:** Wind-blown detritus covers the vestibule's floor.
- 2 Guardroom & Barracks:** Travellers sometimes camp here.
- 3 Kitchen & Store:** Although the tower's twin chimneys have long since collapsed travellers sometimes light fires in this chamber's twin fireplaces.
- 4 Great Hall:** A large table and benches yet stand here—they are too big to fit down the stairs.
- 5 The Solar:** This chamber was Aleksandra's private domain.
- 6 Study & Roof:** Seeking peace from even her own henchmen, Aleksandra worked in her lofty study.

The Old Tunnels have lain undisturbed for centuries.

U1 The Capstone: This old, weathered capstone wards the Old Tunnels running below the Crumbled Tower.

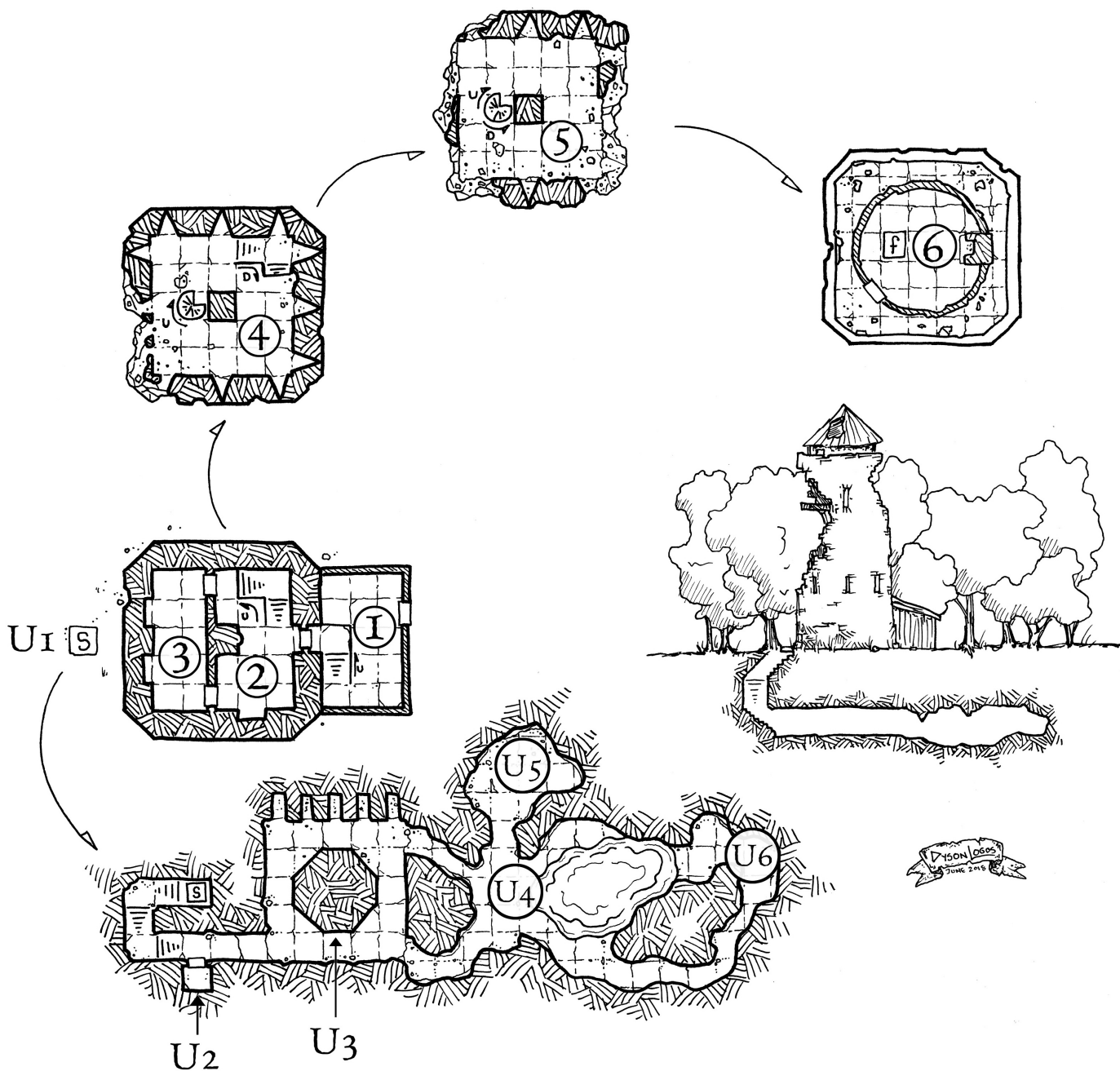
U2 Trapped Door: The old ones constructed this door as a deadly lure for tomb robbers searching for hidden treasure.

U3 The Catacombs: Here lie the ancient heroes' warrior bodyguard, ready to protect and serve them in the afterlife.

U4 Ceremonial Pool of the Old Ones: The old ones cast offerings into this pool in hopes the local nature spirit would watch over and protect the tomb.

U5 Tome of the Fallen: Herein rests a hero of old.

U6 Hero's Rest: Herein rests a hero of old.



THE CRUMBLING TOWER

GM NOTES

Over the years, many travellers have used the Crumbled Tower as a temporary base; the remains of campfires and the rubbish of their stays is scattered about.

1: VESTIBULE

Built to protect the tower's outer doors this small outbuilding is not as sturdy as the rest of the structure.

Outer Door: Weatherbeaten and rotten, this door is in a terrible state of repair.

Sticks, leaves and other wind-blown rubbish cover the floor of this small vestibule. A short flight of stone stairs leads upwards to an iron-bound oaken door.

Stairs: A short flight of stone stairs leads up to the tower's inner door. The stairs count as difficult terrain and have no handrail.

Iron-Banded Oak Door: This door provides access to the tower's interior. It opens into area 2. The door has a bolt that can be shot from the inside.

Animal Tracks: A character searching the area finds the tracks of small animals—foxes, badgers and the like—in this area. Druids and rangers automatically spot the tracks.

2: GUARDROOM & BARRACKS

Travellers sometimes camp in the old guardroom. Most of the furniture that once stood was broken up for firewood long ago.

An old wooden table stands against one wall of this dingy room. Rubbish—food wrappings and bits of clothing and the like—cover the floor.

Illumination: There is no natural light here.

Graffiti: Previous explorers and travellers have scratched messages and so on onto the walls. Examining the walls reveals many names and dates along with the message, "Floors above unsafe" carved in Common into the wall by the stairs.

3: KITCHEN & STORE

Although the tower's twin chimneys have long since collapsed travellers sometimes light fires in this chamber's twin fireplaces. The room's wooden furniture has all been broken up over the years for firewood.

Two large fireplaces pierce this chamber's west wall.

Illumination: There is no natural light here.

Twin Fireplaces: Two fireplaces pierce the west wall. Ash, charred wood and the like choke both fireplaces. Now, they hold the remains of melted candles, rubbish and the like

Stone Shelves: Carved into the chamber's walls these shelves once held foodstuffs and the like.

Evidence of Old Camps: A small pile of dry firewood and kindling fills one corner of the room, while the floor opposite the fireplaces has been cleared of all rubbish and detritus.

If someone has recently camped here, the smell of burnt wood and sweat yet linger in the air.

4: GREAT HALL

The Great Hall was the heart of the tower, here Aleksandra entertained her rare visitors and dined with her henchfolk.

The wall in the room's south west corner have collapsed letting light into the room. Two large tables and several benches are piled in the opposite corner. Three thin tapestries hang from the walls.

Support Pillar: A stout stone pillar runs up through the middle of this chamber, through the ceiling and into the room above.

Furniture: Two large tables and several benches yet stand here—they are too big to fit down the stairs.

Mouldy Tapestries: The three mouldy tapestries, depict woodland scenes and the like.

Tapestry rods hang between many of the other arrow slits.

5: THE SOLAR

This chamber was Aleksandra's private domain.

The walls of this chamber are heavily damaged. A rotting bed blocks one gap in the east wall.

Wooden Trapdoor: Set at the top of the spiral staircase this heavy wooden trapdoor is in good condition. It opens upwards into the room above.

6: STUDY & ROOF

Seeking peace from even her own henchmen, Aleksandra worked in her lofty study.

This gloomy chamber features a large fireplace and shelves built into its circular walls

Fireplace: Soot-blackened, but intact, this large fireplace was once the chamber's focal point. A large bird's nest now blocks the chimney—anyone lighting a fire here soon find the room full of smoke. A secret niche pierces the floor of the fireplace.

- **Secret Niche:** Perceptive characters spot a faint rectangular outline in the soot and ash filling the fireplace. Clearing away the fire's leavings reveals a shallow hidden niche.

Bookshelves: Cut in the chamber's walls up to a height of around five feet these shelves once held many books and other esoteric items. Now, dust and ruin is all that remains.

- **Lost Scroll Case:** Forgotten on a high shelf lies a cured leather scroll case; characters searching the shelves automatically find the case.

Iron-Banded Door: This door provides access to the tower's crumbling walkway. It has an iron bolt that can be shot from the inside.

Crumbling Walkway: A three-foot high parapet edges the tower's uppermost floor. It provides cover from attacks originating from below.

GM NOTES

Any remaining magical traps in the tower likely lie in areas 5 and 6—these areas have not been as explored and picked over as much as the lower levels.

THE OLD TUNNELS

GM NOTES

If the old folk who carved out the tunnels set a trap to ward the complex, area U1 is a good place to put it.

The door in U2 is also a good place for a trap. If you decide the door is not trapped, simply rule the trap's mechanism has succumbed to time's remorseless onslaught.

The Old Tunnels predate the tower above. Portions of the crypt are worked while the complex's furthest reaches are of natural origin. The descriptions below assume the tomb has lain undisturbed since it was sealed. If the tomb's inhabitants are active (or it has already been found by other adventurers) remember to modify the descriptive text to reflect this.

U1: THE CAPSTONE

This old, weathered capstone wards the Old Tunnels running below the Crumbled Tower.

A profusion of weeds and brambles grow around the top of this large weathered boulder.

Characters seeing the capstone as they explore the tower's environs might realise something is not quite right with the stone.

Capstone: A character making a find secret door check realises the capstone is not a boulder, but is a slab of stone only about one-foot thick set into the ground to appear that way. The capstone can be levered up and out of the way by characters with a combined Strength score of 35.

Stairs: Three short sets of stairs lead down into the tunnels below the Crumbling Tower. The stairs count as difficult terrain.

Turgid Air: The air in the tunnels initially smells musty. After the tomb has been ventilated for a few hours, the smell dissipates.

Dust: Thick, trackless dust covers the floor; this suggests the tomb has lain undisturbed since it was sealed.

U2: TRAPPED DOOR

The old ones constructed this door as a deadly lure for tomb robbers searching for hidden treasure.

A stone door pierces the wall to your right. Ahead, the corridor continues for about 15 feet before opening into a larger area.

The niche beyond the door is empty.

Trapped Stone Door: This stone door holds up its lintel. The trap is designed so that if the door is opened, the lintel begins to fail. This results in a cave-in which blocks the tunnel leading into the tomb.

U3: THE CATACOMBS

Here lie the ancient heroes' warrior bodyguard, ready to protect and serve them in the afterlife.

Five burial niches pierce the north wall. Detailed wall carvings—showing signs of battle and heroic victory—decorate the area's other walls.

Wall Carvings: Finely detailed wall carvings show scenes of battle—humans fighting and killing orcs. Many of the scenes feature a hero, wielding an axe, blasting his enemies with magic and so on.

Burial Niches: Each niche holds a human skeleton clad in archaic scale mail armour armed with a spear.

U4: CEREMONIAL POOL OF THE OLD ONES

The old ones cast offerings into this pool in hopes the local nature spirit would watch over and protect the tomb.

A pool of pure water dominates this large natural cavern.

Ceremonial Pool: Fed by small fissures in the rock, this pool of fresh water is eight-foot deep at its deepest point. The water is pure, clear and safe to drink.

A character looking into the pool spots several irregular shapes—remains of objects cast into the water—at the bottom of the pool. A character subsequently searching the pool finds something valuable. Roll once on the list below; each item can be found only once.

1. This silver torc is wrought to resemble a two-headed snake.
2. Covered in verdigris and rust this bronze armband is worthless; the three small transparent dark green stones embedded in the rusting metal, however, are bloodstones.
3. A broken clay vase holds several chunk of gold ore.
4. Crafted from a strange kind of light-weight black stone this small idol represents some kind of hideous frog-like creature.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

U5: TOMB OF THE FALLEN

Herein rests a hero of old.

Resting on a low plinth of piled stone, lies a skeletal figure wearing armour of ancient artifice.

Skeletal Figure: This skeleton, an ancient warrior hero, wears fine scale mail. A small metal shield rests at his feet; a spear and battleaxe lie on the bier next to him.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

U6: HERO'S REST

Herein rests a hero of old.

Resting on a low plinth of piled stone, lies a skeletal figure clad in rotting fragments of clothes of undoubtably ancient cut

Skeletal Figure: This hero was a powerful wizard. Sadly, most of his equipment has mouldered away. About his waist a leather belt holds four mouldering leather pouches full of unidentifiable fragments or rotting things and dust. (These were the wizard's spell component pouches). However, a bronze amulet forged in the shape of hawk lies on his breast and a plain bronze torc rests on his bony forehead.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

GM NOTES

The likely inhabitants of the tomb are, of course, undead. However, the nature of the undead is up to you. Low-level PCs may face nothing more terrifying than skeletons, while more powerful PCs will have to deal with greater undead.

A strange watery creature—perhaps a crystal ooze or the like—could dwell in the ceremonial pool. If you decide this is the case, insert a small, flooded, tunnel into the pool through which the creature reached this area.

Once the PCs have explored the Crumbled Tower and the Old Tunnels below, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end. Either the PCs can decide to make further use of the tower or other interested parties might take an interest in the group and their adventures.

The PCs Use the Tower as a Temporary Base:

If the PCs have not yet finished exploring the surrounding area, they could use the tower as a secure base from which to do so. While it is in a poor state of repair, it is a safer place to camp than most other locales in the vicinity.

Garrisoning it with a small force of men-at-arms or the like guarantees they'll be able to control the place—at least for a short while; the local lord may become irked if adventurers are claiming parts of his land and demand they leave.

The PCs Repair the Tower: Wealthy or high-level characters may see a great opportunity in the Crumbled Tower. While the ramshackle structure is in desperate need of repair, restoring it would be cheaper than building a new tower.

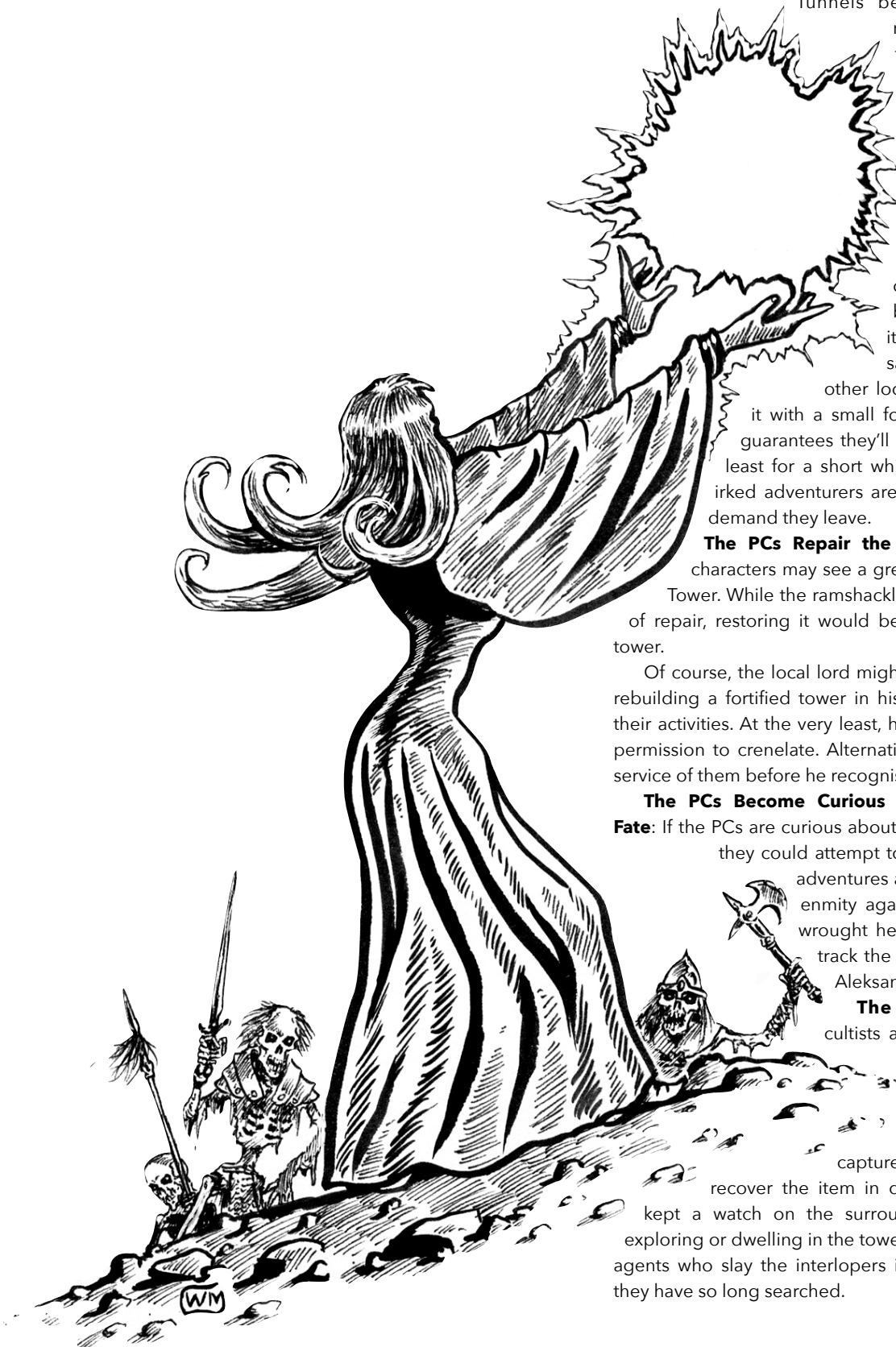
Of course, the local lord might not take kindly to adventurers rebuilding a fortified tower in his lands and he might object to their activities. At the very least, he will require them to purchase permission to crenelate. Alternatively, he might command some service of them before he recognises their claim on the tower.

The PCs Become Curious about Aleksandra Ihalempi's Fate:

If the PCs are curious about the fate of the tower's mistress, they could attempt to learn more about the wizard's adventures and the like. If they discover her enmity against the cultists who eventually wrought her doom, they might attempt to track the cult down to wreak revenge for Aleksandra's death.

The Cultists Strike:

When the cultists attacked the tower so long ago they had two goals—to capture Aleksandra and to recover a certain item in her possession. While they captured the wizard, they failed to recover the item in question and their agents have kept a watch on the surrounding area ever since. Those exploring or dwelling in the tower are often "visited" by the cult's agents who slay the interlopers in search of the item for which they have so long searched.



DELTHUR'S FOLLY

Hidden in the wild uplands beyond the Selka River, the sinkhole-mine of Delthur's Folly is a byword among the locals for a fool's errand doomed to fail. The only survivor of the fated expedition—driven mad by his ordeal and raving of “the water's sibilant whispers”—died shortly after staggering into Dunstone a year or more after Delthur and his miners disappeared into the wilderness. And yet, every year adventurers cross the Selka in search of the mine—gold and silver are said to lie within. Some return empty-handed and some do not return at all. Local legend has it that something terrible dwells in the mine.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

Fifty years ago or so, the dwarven miner Delthur Madann came to the borderland town of Dunstone. To the north, beyond the safety of Dunstone's wall and the Selka River, lay the jagged peaks and deep valleys of the Mottled Spire. The dwarf—a scion of now fallen Vongyth—sought precious metals he could use to hire and equip mercenaries to aid his folk in taking back their ancestral home from its new draconic overlords.

When Delthur declared he was to travel north into the Mottled Spire in search of treasure he was widely derided as mad—the Mottled Spire was an inhospitable place full of danger and hardship. Stubbornly he went anyway, and disappeared into the wilderness for over a year.

He returned with wild tales of a deep sinkhole, a dark and cold lake and a hidden mine. To prove the veracity of his tale, Delthur brought back fist-sized nuggets of gold and silver! He would tell no one where his mine was, but recruited a small band of hardy miners before disappearing back into the wilderlands.

That was the last anyone in Dunstone saw of Delthur Madann or his band for over a year. Eventually, one of the miners staggered back into town. Badly injured, raving and half-mad the lone survivor of Delthur's expedition spoke of marauding orcs, Delthur's descent into madness and the "water's sibilant whispers".

The miner died shortly thereafter without revealing the mine's exact location or any other news of the expedition. Delthur—and the rest of the miners—were assumed dead and the expedition consigned to history. Among locals, the entire affair became known as "Delthur's Folly".

Occasionally, adventuring bands would set forth from Dunstone with the stated intent of finding Delthur's lost mine, but none who returned ever reported success. Now locally, the phrase "Delthur's Folly" has become synonymous with obviously doomed, badly-thought out plans and expeditions. In Dunstone, a "Scion of Delthur" is one marked for an early, foolish death in the lands beyond the Selka River. Many adventurers have thus been named over the long years since Delthur's disappearance.

CREIGHTON'S DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

I thought it might be fun to tell you—in broad strokes—how I would populate Delthur's Folly.

One of the key considerations—for me—of stocking the dungeon is deciding why (and/or how) Delthur went mad. Of course, he could just be a typical treasure-crazed dwarf, but another solution, I think, gives more flexibility in stocking the dungeon.

Clearly, the solution to this is an aquatic gibbering moulder lurking in the depths of the Tenebrous Lake. Slithering forth from an unknown deep place, the moulder—driven by some nameless compulsion—comes to the surface of the lake each night to gibber at the stars and the moon. Its gibbering convinced Delthur and his miners the lake was haunted and slowly drove them all mad. Some miners jumped to their deaths into the lake while others wandered off or slew their friends.

This turn of events provides some decent "GM wiggle room." Depending on your PCs' levels, the lake could be haunted by the mad ghosts of those who drowned within, insane miners could still lurk in the mine's deepest delving or orcs could have claimed the upper levels convinced now that a mad oracle or some such lurks in the lake. Being orcs, of course, they cast living sacrifices into the lake to gain the oracle's wisdom. Alternatively, the PCs could encounter the remains of an adventuring party trapped in the mines by orcs holding the upper levels against them. The adventurers—of course—have been driven partially mad by the moulder's gibbering and do not recognise the PCs as rescuers—a moral quandary ensues; should the PCs defend themselves against these adventurers with lethal force or subdue them so that they might get the care they need to recover from the insanity clouding their minds?

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Adventurers are drawn to rumours of unclaimed wealth like flies to offal. Of course, there could be many reasons why the PCs decide to explore Delthur's Folly. Use one of the hooks below, or design your own:

- **Delthur's Wealth:** The PCs hear of Delthur's (apparent) great wealth and have also learnt Delthur never brought his treasures back to Dunstone. Shortly thereafter a merchant of dubious morals, Pekka Outila (CN male human thief 2) offers to sell them a map (for only 10 gp) purporting to show the location of Delthur's lost mine. The map is a fake, but ironically actually shows the mine's true location. If the PCs succeed in finding the mine and surviving the terrors therein, Pekka approaches them again with another map—this one just as fake as the last. An opportunist, he massively increases the price of this map and then promptly disappears.
- **Missing Adventurers:** The PCs are not the first to hear of Delthur and his alleged wealth. A few weeks ago, another adventuring party, the Fearless Wanderers, went in search of his mine and disappeared. One of the party was a local and his parents, Onni and Elina Rintala, are desperate for news of their boy, Ossi. Luckily, he told his parents roughly where they were

DELTHUR'S FOLLY IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Delthur's Folly is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your PCs to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make Delthur's Folly your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar (specifically the town of Dunstone) and the Gloamhold megadungeon. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of Delthur's Folly comprise:

- **A Borderland Town:** Dunstone is a borderland town. Adventurers often congregate here before setting off into the wilderness in search of gold and glory.
- **A Range of Wild Hills or Mountains:** The Mottled Spire is a range of monster-infested hills to the north of Dunstone. Scattered tribes of orc savages roam the hills, but they can be easily substituted for virtually any evil humanoid race.
- **A Mad Miner:** Delthur was a dwarf intent on gaining great wealth so he could lead his kin back to their fallen hold. Realistically, Delthur could be of any race and have virtually any motivation for the accumulation of wealth. His identity and motivations have virtually no impact on the adventure.

going. They offer the PCs their meagre savings to investigate. (Depending on your design, the Fearless Wanderers could—or could not—have found Delthur's Folly).

- **Stumbling Across the Folly:** Adventurers exploring the wilds to the north of Dunstone could stumble upon the sinkhole and explore it. Perhaps they are fleeing from, or hunting, orcs at the time. In this instance the campaign could feature an interesting role reversal as the PCs battle to defend the sinkhole and the mine from the orcs trying to slay them.

THE WILDERLANDS

Delthur's Folly lies in a rugged section of hills three day's hard travelling north of Dunstone. Once the party cross the Selka River and head north the going becomes difficult and slow. There are few trails, and no roads. Orcs roam the hills and there are no reliable, current maps of the interior to guide their journey.

The GM can easily design a few level-appropriate random encounters to add excitement to the PCs' search for Delthur's Folly; alternatively, the GM can simply gloss over the journey and start the adventure at the head of the Crumbling Stair (location 1) after describing in broad strokes the party's search of the surrounding wilderlands.

Alternate Setting: With a little bit of work, Delthur's Folly could be set wholly underground. Substitute the orcs for troglodytes—or another subterranean race of your choosing—and place the sinkhole around which the mine lies in a large, remote cavern. Almost any largish borderland settlement can substitute for Dunstone.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

If the PCs think to learn more about the dungeon, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design.

1. Delthur never escaped his folly. Some say, the orcs got him while others say his delving disturbed something that drove him mad!
2. Before his expedition ended in failure, Delthur had mined a great quantity of glimmering silver from his mine. If the orcs didn't find it, it might still be there—waiting for someone to claim it!
3. Delthur dug his mine into the sides of a huge sinkhole; a lake fills the bottom of the sinkhole; something horrible lives in the lake.
4. Delthur's mine lies around a lake; the orcs of the hills hold the lake sacred and hurl sacrifices into its depths. Much treasure might lie under its murky waters.
5. Madness and death have been the fate of any searching for Delthur's Folly. Several expeditions have disappeared without trace.
6. Delthur yet lives! He is mad, and slays any who disturb him in his subterranean home.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Delthur's Folly comprises three distinct small subterranean complexes along with various "outside" locations. Outside locations are numbered 1 - 5. Each of the small complexes has its own key:

- **The Watchers:** Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter A.
- **Mine-Home:** Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter B.
- **The Delvings:** Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter C.

OUTSIDE

A path spirals down around the edge of the sinkhole to the mine workings far below.

- 1 The Crumbling Stair:** The Crumbling Stair enables relatively easy access to Delthur's Folly.
- 2 Way of the Shadows:** Here, the stairs plunge into deep shadow as they pass under a series of rocky overhangs.
- 3 The Span:** A slender bridge spans the western portion of the Tenebrous Lake. It is entirely without guardrails.
- 4 Workers' Way:** A narrow ledge cut into the sinkhole's flank enables access to the far reaches of Delthur's delvings.
- 5 The Tenebrous Lake:** The Tenebrous Lake fills the lower portion of the sinkhole. The remains of the orcs' sacrifices litter the bottom, and something terrible lives among the bones.

THE WATCHERS

Delthur always set a watch here to keep his workings safe from marauding orcs...and worse.

- A1 Guard Chamber:** This natural cavern served as a guard room in Delthur's day. A secret door enables access to the Mine-Home.
- A2 The Armoury:** This chamber served as a general-purpose storage area. Mining equipment, rotting food stuffs and rusting weapons abound.

MINE-HOME

Here dwelt the miners safe behind a series of pit traps of fiendish ingenuity.

- B1 Trapped Corridor:** Warded by stout double doors, this area was heavily trapped for the miners' protection.
- B2 The Privy:** This stinking chamber served as the miners' privy.
- B3 Kitchen:** Here the miners cooked their food. A secret door provides access to a hidden room wherein they stored their supplies.

DUNGEON DRESSING

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

- Cracks radiate from a gouge in the floor or wall that looks like a weapon strike. Nearby, a rusting warhammer, missing half its haft, lies on the floor.
- A jumble of bones lies about the floor. The bones obviously once "belonged" to a humanoid, but the skull and both legs are missing.
- Gently undulating spiderwebs festoon the ceiling.
- A small pile of rubble and grit has been pushed to the side to clear a section of floor for no obvious purpose.
- The bones of a small creature—probably a rat—lie splayed across the floor. Investigations reveal the rat's back is shattered.
- The shredded remains of a backpack hang from a rocky protrusion. It holds a single torch and a rotten cloak.
- A faint breeze, coming from the direction of the nearest entrance, plays over the party.
- Water oozes through the ceiling and drips onto the floor into a small puddle.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

- Graffiti etched into the wall reads, "Ware the lake and its whispering lord".
- Scuffs in the dust and grime suggest a small group of man-sized individuals passed this way.
- Etched into the wall 48 short vertical marks could be a makeshift calendar or nothing more than a miner's bored scratchings.
- Lost in the dust, a small silver locket (worth 10 gp) hanging from a shred of leather cord holds a faded picture of a handsome woman cradling a baby.
- The initials G.H are scratched in small letters into the wall. A date—48 years past—is scratched next to them.
- Graffiti—"Delthur is mad" and "The voices in my head"—is etched into the same wall.
- A small tower of perfectly balanced stones stands in the corner of the area. The tower seems to have no purpose.
- A small niche in the floor—hidden under a flat stone—holds 13 gold coins and a single transparent green stone (an onyx worth 50 gp).

B4 Chamber of Slumber: A communal bunk room for the miners.

B5 The Hidden Store: Never discovered by intruders or explorers, this hidden room was both storeroom and hiding place.

THE DELVINGS

The lowest level of Dlethur's Folly comprises mine workings and the mad miner's personal chambers along with his strongroom.

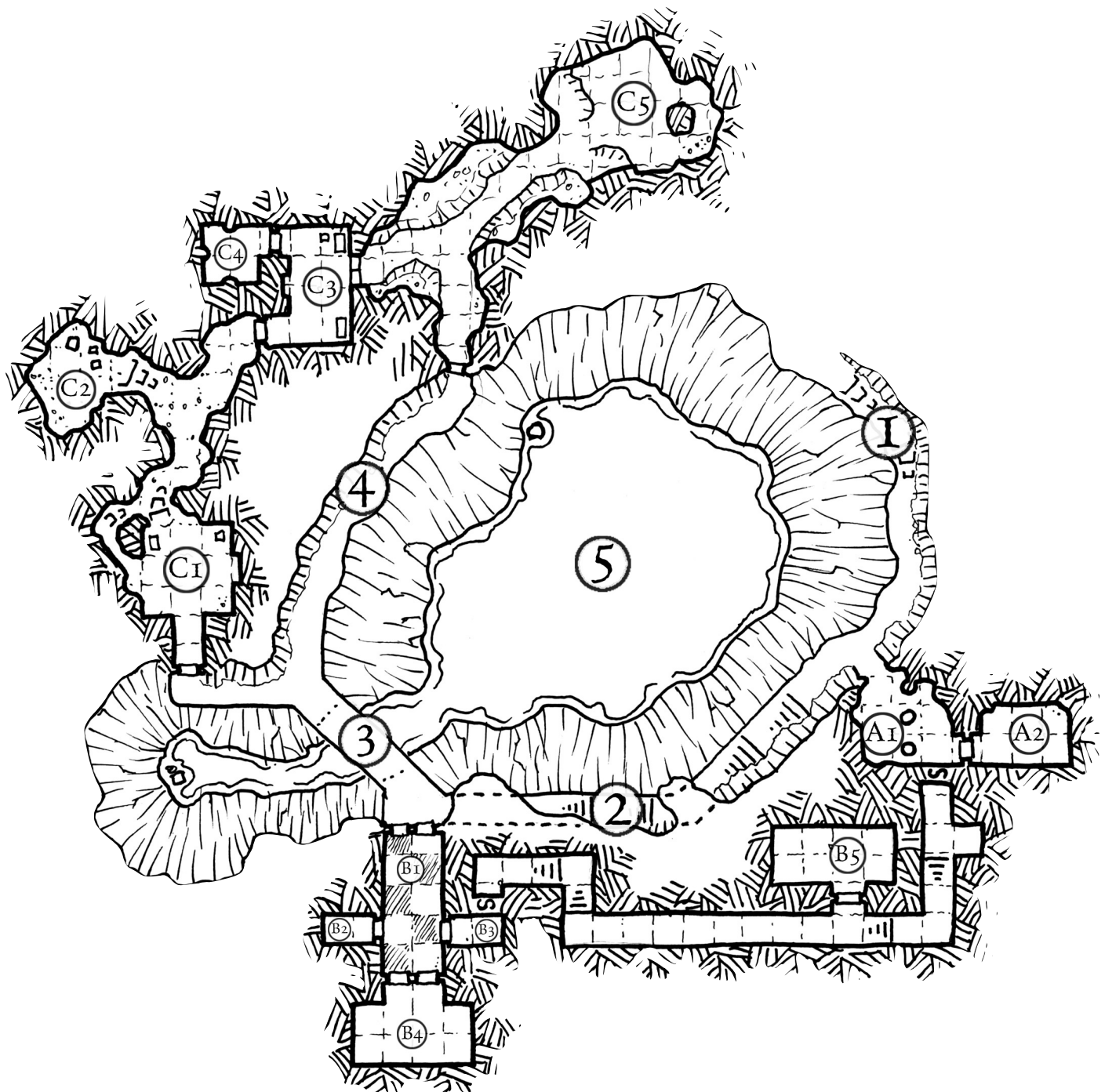
C1 Workroom: The miners stored their tools and other accoutrements necessary for mine work, here.

C2 Abandoned Mine Workings: This small chamber is played out.

C3 Lair of the Mad One: Here dwelt Delthur in the heart of his workings.

C4 The Treasury: Delthur kept his treasures in this strongroom, warded by a cunningly trapped portal.

C5 The Deepest Workings: This is the deepest section of Delthur's Folly.



OUTSIDE

Five areas comprise the outside portion of Delthur's Folly. These areas share some generic features:

Narrow Pathway: A five-foot wide pathway spirals around and down the sinkhole's flanks. One side of the path comprises the sinkhole's stony flank; the other is nothing more than a steep slope running down to the Tenebrous Lake's dark waters.

Crumbling, Worn Steps: Eroded by the weather and tramp of many heavily laden miners, and the occasional explorer or raider, these steps are dangerous to traverse at speed.

Sinkhole's Flanks: The sinkhole's steep slopes are climbable with care. The sinkhole is roughly 100-foot deep. Individual entries below note how far a character falling from that location would tumble before landing in the Tenebrous Lake. Also refer to the "Falling into the Lake" sinkhole for details of how to handle falling characters.

1: THE CRUMBLING STAIR

Eroded by rain, and the tramp of many feet, the Crumbling Stair is still the safest way to access Delthur's Folly.

A narrow flight of crumbling, worn stairs spirals down the side of this large and gloomy steep-sided sinkhole. In the gloom, perhaps 100 feet below, lie the dark, still waters of a lake of fell aspect.

The Crumbling Stair: The stairs are part worked and part natural.

The Lake Below: At the mouth of the stairs, the waters of the Tenebrous Lake are about 100 feet below.

2: WAY OF THE SHADOWS

Two flights of carven steps pass under a series of overhangs protruding from the sinkhole's wall.

Another set of stairs, cut into the side of the sinkhole, lead under two rocky overhangs. Deep shadows cluster under these outthrust slabs of rock. Beyond the overhang lies a span of stone bridging a small channel flowing away from the lake to the south west.

The Overhangs: Chisel marks and suchlike mar the underside of the overhangs. Each stands about seven feet above the ledge passing beneath.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Way of the Shadows.

3: THE SPAN

Here a slender bridge of carven stone crosses the western part of the Tenebrous Lake (location 5). This was a defensive point designed by Delthur to protect his workings.

This slender span of carven stone arches over the waters of a channel feeding into the main lake. The span is entirely without railings of any sort.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Span.

The Span: The span is about five-foot wide, but essentially flat. It is of natural, but skilfully worked, stone. A perceptive PC spots the marks of tools upon its surface.

4: WORKERS' WAY

This narrow ledge links the various entrances of the lowest level.

Running along the north-western side of the sinkhole this narrow ledge ends in two doors—one to the north and one to the west. Both doors appear firmly shut.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Workers' Way.

Mine Doors: These stout oak doors are shut and have resisted the elements well. Deep scratches and dents mar the outer surfaces of both doors. The doors open into the workings beyond.

5: THE TENEBROUS LAKE

Comprising the entirety of the bottom of the sinkhole, the Tenebrous Lake is deep and cold. The sun's rays only caress these cold, dark waters during the hour either side of midday. Similarly, dusk falls several hours earlier and dawn breaks several hours later than normal over the lake's black waters.

Far below, in the gloom, lie still, black waters of unknown depth. To the south west, a narrow, steep-sided channel passes under a slender bridge of carved stone.

The Tenebrous Lake: The Waters of the Tenebrous Lake are calm, but chill. Fed by some underground source of unknown location, they rarely feel the sun's warming rays. The lake is 40-foot deep. Swimmers discover visibility is essentially zero at depths below 10 feet.

Occasionally something disturbs the lake's normally calm waters. Perceptive PCs spot odd ripples on the lake's surface suggestive of something large moving beneath.

FALLING INTO THE LAKE

As a result of inattention or enemy action, a PC might fall into the Tenebrous Lake. Such a fall may prove fatal, but lucky explorers can arrest their fall before they hit the water by grabbing onto a rocky protuberance, landing on a narrow ledge and so on.

Falling Characters: A falling character making a saving throw vs. breath weapons manages to catch itself after falling 1d6x10 feet. Alternatively, could manage to land on a narrow ledge.

Climbing Up or Down: Characters scaling the sinkhole's sides can move up to one-quarter their speed on the steeply-sloped flanks.

THE WATCHERS

Delthur always set a watch here to keep his workings safe from marauding orcs...and worse. The locations here share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling is about ten-foot high.

Walls & Floor: The walls and floors are of worked, smoothed stone, unless otherwise indicated by the map.

A1: GUARD CHAMBER

This natural cavern served as a guard room in Delthur's day. A secret door enables access to the Mine-Home.

Two roughly hewn circular pillars hold aloft the roof of this low, irregularly-shaped chamber. Beyond the pillars, a stout wooden door pierces the end wall.

PCs searching the room may find some items or features of interest:

- Dents and scratches mar the pillars; they could be marks left by weapon strikes.
- A broken, rusty padlock lies in the dust near the far door.
- A secret door pierces the south wall. It is opened by pushing in a small rocky protrusion at the base of the wall. The door opens into the corridor beyond and can be barred with a heavy stone bar which lies in the corridor.

A2: THE ARMOURY

This chamber served as a general-purpose storage area. Mining equipment, sacks of ore and rusting weapons lie within.

Stout Wooden Door: Of stout oaken boards this door has a large ring handle.

A dusty weapon racks lines this small chamber's end wall. Dusty sacks seemingly full of rock and the like are stacked along the chamber's other walls.

PCs searching the room may find some items or features of interest:

- A dusty leather pouch is wedged between the weapon rack and the wall, low down by the floor. It holds 12 gp and a scrap of dirty parchment. Most of the writing (which is in Dwarven) upon it is illegible. Two words: "Delthur" and "mad" stand out amid the grime.
- Graffiti, in Dwarven, carved into the back of the door reads, "Why must the black waters whisper so?"

Sacks: Here the miners stored some of the minerals they hacked from the workings below. The sacks count as difficult terrain.

Weapon Rack: One broken and two rusty spears stand in the rack. A dusty leather jerkin and a small steel shield hang from the end of the rack.

GM NOTES

Consider the miners' ultimate fate. Were they slain by orcs or driven mad by what lurks in the Tenebrous Lake? Has their fate left its mark on the mine? Do their skeletons lie about the workings or—mysteriously—is there no sign of their doom?

GM NOTES

What lies in the pits? They could be empty or they could hold the remains of intruders who died fighting the miners. Alternatively, one of the pits could link to deeper tunnels through a narrow crawlway.

Here dwelt the miners safe behind a set of pit traps of fiendish ingenuity. The locations in Mine Home share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling is about ten-foot high.

Walls & Floor: The walls and floors are of worked stone.

B1: TRAPPED CORRIDOR

Stout double doors ward this extensively trapped corridor. The pit traps herein remains active, and yet lurk to catch the wary.

Double Doors: Stout iron banded oak double doors protect Mine Home. About three-foot above the floor four shuttered peep holes—big enough for a spear to be thrust through—pierce the doors. The doors open inwards.

Beyond the double doors lies a wide hall roughly 25-foot long. Another set of double doors pierce the end wall while smaller doors pierce the other two walls. The door to the east is slightly ajar while the other is shut.

Door Bar and Hidden Switch: A long wooden bar stands against the wall behind the east door.

PCs searching the corridor discover a small switch low down on the floor in the north-eastern corner. Pushing this switch activates, or deactivates the pit traps in the corridor. The trap is currently armed.

B2: THE PRIVY

This stinking chamber served as the miners' privy.

Stuck Wooden Door: Warped and swollen into its frame, this wood door is difficult to open.

A horrible stench lingers in this small chamber. Several cast iron chamberpots stand under a crude wooden bench set against the far wall.

There is nothing here of interest to the PCs, except graffiti. However, if the PCs search the area consider rolling on the Dungeon Dressing or Things to Find tables presented under "Notable Location at a Glance".

Graffiti: Several miners carved their names—Aaro, Riku, Teijo and Veli among others—or initials and short messages into the wooden bench and nearby wall. PCs adjacent to the bench can read the graffiti.

B3: KITCHEN

Here the miners cooked their food. A secret door provides access to a hidden room wherein they stored their supplies.

Wooden Door: Standing slightly ajar, this door is easy to open.

Blackened with soot and riven with a large natural chimney this chamber's ceiling betrays the room's once-purpose—that of a kitchen. A scattering of broken cooking equipment—skillets, a cauldron and so on—lie about the floor.

PCs making a careful search of the room may find a carefully concealed secret door:

- A secret door pierces the north wall. It is opened by pushing a small rocky protrusion at the wall's base. The door opens into the corridor beyond and can be barred with a heavy stone bar which lies in the corridor.

B4: CHAMBER OF SLUMBER

A communal bunk room for the miners.

Double Doors: Stout double doors of oak banded with iron protect the miners' dormitory. About three-foot above the floor four shuttered peep holes—big enough for a spear to be thrust through—pierce the doors. The doors open inwards.

Five sets of bunkbeds stand about the walls of this dusty chamber. Two small chests nestle under the bottom bunk of each set.

Lever: A lever juts from the wall behind the western door. Like the switch in B1, the lever controls the pits in the trapped corridor. When the traps are activated, the lever is in the up position.

Bunks: Mouldering sheets and blankets cover the bunkbeds. The chests under the bottom bunks contain personal items—rotting clothes, spare pairs of boots and other knick knacks. PCs searching the chests may find some items of interest, though. A PC carefully searching a chest finds something of interest:

1. A fine, stout leather belt worth 2 gp.
2. A silver tinderbox decorated with etchings of a fire breathing dragon worth 5 gp.
3. A small golden ring with the name Helmi Markku inscribed inside the band. The ring is hidden in a sock and worth 5 gp.
4. Nineteen silver coins wrapped up in a long twist of paper. The paper bears a crude, but accurate, map of the surrounds.
5. A lump of stone shot through with veins of silver and gold. The stone weighs 15 lbs., but the ore inside is only worth 3 gp.
6. An empty magically hardened crystal potion vial worth 10 gp.

Each item can be found only once.

B5: THE HIDDEN STORE

Never discovered by intruders or explorers alike, this hidden room was both storeroom and hiding place. Thick dust covers the floor of the passageway behind the secret door.

Wooden Door: Unlocked, but shut, this wooden door wards the miners' storeroom.

Boxes, barrels and chests fill this small chamber. A small area in front of the door is the only clear bit of floor in the whole room.

Boxes & Barrels: The boxes hold rotting provisions and the barrels are empty—whatever was inside now long gone.

Chests: One small chest holds a large bag of salt (worth 5 gp) while the others hold cooking equipment and suchlike.

GM NOTES

Remember, if you place monsters in location B4, the creatures probably know of the pit trap in B1. They'll likely use it to defend their lair.

GM NOTES

If the Delvings are occupied, remember the inhabitants likely have to pass Mine Home and the Watchers (and their inhabitants) to access their home.

If you decide the mine is linked to deeper caverns this is one of the places it makes sense to have such a connection.

The lowest level of Delthur's Folly comprises mine workings and the mad dwarf's personal chambers. The areas in the Delvings share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling varies in height between six and 16-foot high. In places it is worked, while in others stalactites hang from the ceiling.

Walls: As indicated on the map, the stonework here is rougher. Only areas C1, C3 and C4 have worked stone walls. The others are rough and unworked—the result of hasty mining.

Floor: In most places, the floor is generally flat—the miners having cleared away most obvious impediments to their work.

C1: WORKROOM

The miners stored their tools and other gear necessary for mine work, here.

Picks and shovels as well as empty boxes, barrels and sacks stand against the walls of this rough hewn chamber. Dust and grit cover the floor. A large wooden bin—filled with torches—fills an alcove in the east wall.

Rough Hewn Steps: Steps roughly cut into the floor link this chamber to the mine workings below.

Storage Bin: This bin holds well over 100 dusty torches.

Mining Equipment: Most of the picks, shovels and crowbars are rusting and break if subjected to sustained use.

C2: ABANDONED MINE WORKINGS

This small chamber is all but played out.

Rough hewn steps lead up to this small chamber. Marks on the walls, floor and ceiling show the miners' work. Here and there, glimmers of gold and silver emerge from the rock. Three barrels stand about the room.

There is nothing here of obvious interest to the PCs. However, if the PCs search the area consider rolling on the Dungeon Dressing or Things to Find tables presented under "Notable Location at a Glance".

Rough Hewn Steps: Steps roughly cut into the floor link this chamber to the rest of the workings.

Barrels: The miners used stout barrels to carry away their rubble before casting it into the lake below. Several barrels, two half-full with rubble, remain in this chamber.

Tools: A handful of rusting picks and shovels lie discarded about the chamber.

Ore: A smattering of gold and silver remain to be mined from this chamber.

C3: LAIR OF THE MAD ONE

Here dwelt Delthur in the heart of his workings.

Outfitted with a stout desk and wide bed, this living chamber was obviously once home to someone important. An iron door fills a niche in the northwestern corner.

Desk: Several stout ledgers lie on the desk. Here Delthur kept extensive records regarding the mine's output, wages paid to individual miners, made diary entries and so on. PCs perusing the books notice a general decline in penmanship and vocabulary in later entries. This is an excellent place to plant clues as to Delthur's fate and so on.

Bed: Now mouldering, Delthur's bed was once a comfy affair. A PC searching the bed discovers a plain, wickedly sharp dagger under one pillow.

C4: THE TREASURY

Delthur kept his treasures in this strongroom, warded by a cunningly trapped portal. When madness finally consumed Delthur, he locked himself into his strongroom so that none might steal his treasures.

Iron Door: This plain iron door is locked and its hinges are nested into the walls to prevent easy tampering. The door opens into the strongroom.

A small chamber lies beyond the locked iron door. Stacked chests and sacks stand haphazardly around the room. A skeleton leans against one particularly large chest, a pickaxe across its legs.

Pay Chest: Herein Delthur kept his miner's pay.

Skeleton: This is Delthur—finally consumed by madness he starved to death among his treasures.

Chests and Sacks: The chests and sacks here hold the mined ore Delthur coveted so much. All are heavy; to take more than a sack or two from the mine will be a major undertaking for the PCs (probably involving several wagons or a magical method of carrying a great weight of ore and rock).

C5: THE DEEPEST WORKINGS

This long, slender cavern is the deepest section of Delthur's Folly.

Doors: Double doors ward Delthur's personal chambers while a tightly fitting door leads to the outside.

Deep pits flank the slender walkway snaking through this section of the mine.

Pits: Each about ten-foot deep, these pits have clearly been excavated by the miners. The glimmer of gold and silver is obvious in their sides and floor.

Raised Section: A stone slope leads upwards to the east. Here the ceiling is barely six-foot high.

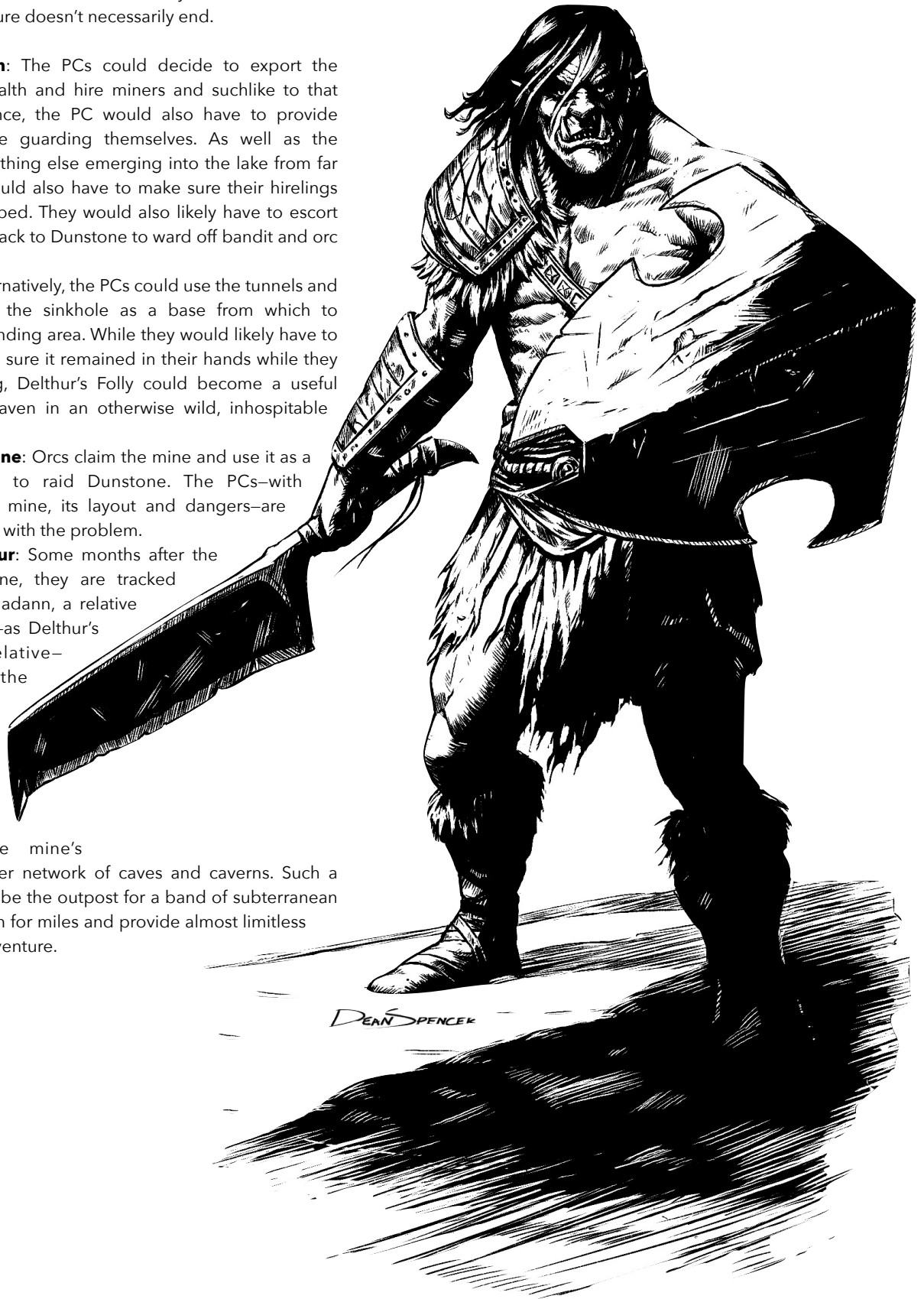
GM NOTES

Delthur could be nothing more than a skeleton, or he could be an intelligent undead of sorts. He is also a handy means of giving the PCs a glimpse at the mine's backstory—particularly if his ghost must be laid to rest in some specific fashion.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs have cleared Delthur's Folly of its monstrous inhabitants, the adventure doesn't necessarily end.

- **Mining Operation:** The PCs could decide to export the mine's mineral wealth and hire miners and suchlike to that end. In this instance, the PC would also have to provide guards, or do the guarding themselves. As well as the possibility of something else emerging into the lake from far below, the PCs would also have to make sure their hirelings are fed and equipped. They would also likely have to escort shipments of ore back to Dunstone to ward off bandit and orc attacks.
- **A Secret Lair:** Alternatively, the PCs could use the tunnels and chambers around the sinkhole as a base from which to explore the surrounding area. While they would likely have to garrison it to make sure it remained in their hands while they were off exploring, Delthur's Folly could become a useful resource—a safe haven in an otherwise wild, inhospitable place.
- **Orcs Claim the Mine:** Orcs claim the mine and use it as a base from which to raid Dunstone. The PCs—with experience of the mine, its layout and dangers—are summoned to deal with the problem.
- **Relative of Delthur:** Some months after the PCs clear the mine, they are tracked down by Falgar Madann, a relative of Delthur. Falgar—as Delthur's closest living relative—wants to claim the mine as his own and asks for the PCs' help.
- **Deeper Tunnels:** If the GM desires, it is easy to include a link in the mine's bowels to a deeper network of caves and caverns. Such a cave system could be the outpost for a band of subterranean miners or could run for miles and provide almost limitless possibilities for adventure.



DESZRAUL'S HOLD

Hidden deep in the hills, Deszraul's Hold has a sinister reputation. The medusa Dezraul claims the caves and evidence of her fell powers—a bewildering array of uncannily lifelike stone statues—stand about her gloomy domain. All that remains of adventurers daring to face the cave's snake-headed mistress, the statues are a salutary warning on the dangers of facing a medusa in her lair. But does Deszraul still lair within? Has a band of savage, merciless bandits fallen under her sway? Only you can decide.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

The wooded forests and hills to Languard’s east have long been a haven for bandits, brigands and other outlaws. The forest’s wild reaches have long stymied the duke’s attempts to winkle out the lawless folk dwelling beneath their boughs.

A score of years ago, the medusa Deszraul Valos fled into the hills. Coming from the far east, she was fleeing the wrath of an adventuring party—the Crusaders of the Burning Light—intent on slaying her. She found a small, hidden cave network and made it her own. The caves once housed a family of dwarves prospecting in the region and it suited her to dwell therein. Inevitably, word of a terrible creature dwelling in the hills trickled down into the civilised lands to the west. Many adventurers have subsequently tried to make their names by slaying the cave’s snake-headed mistress, and over a dozen have since fallen prey to Deszraul’s stony gaze.

ADDITIONAL GM RESOURCES

20 Things #35: Bandits & Brigands presents additional resources to bring to life the bandit gangs in your campaign. Use the material therein to add depth and flavour to any bandits lairing in the caves. Alternatively, *Monstrous Lair #12: Medusa Lair* provides seven handy tables to add more detail to Deszraul and her lair.

OPTION 1: DESZRAUL LIVES!

While Deszraul has been attacked by several adventuring bands over the years, none have managed to overcome the medusa. The remains of these adventuring bands litter the cave’s outer reaches. A survivor of one such ill-fated group, Auni Helliikki (NG female human fighter 3), recently staggered into Languard and gasped out her story over a half-dozen of ales. Thus, do the caves comes to the party’s attention.

OPTION 2: DESZRAUL HAS MINIONS

Deszraul yet dwells in the caves, but a few months ago a gang of bandits staggered into the caves after being driven away from a merchant caravan by an adventuring party travelling with the traders. Deszraul saved the bandits from the adventurers’ depredations and they have since thrown in their lot with the medusa. For her part, Deszraul likes having minions; they bring her treasures and she rarely has to leave the caves. For Deszraul, life is good. The emboldened bandits have begun more frequent raiding and have come to the attention of the local authorities who are casting around for a suitable group of adventurers to stamp them out.

OPTION 3: DESZRAUL’S DEAD

Deszraul is dead, slain by adventurers. Her lair has been fought over and claimed by many groups since then. (This background gives the GM the most flexibility in stocking the caves as desired).

THE CAVES IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Deszraul’s Hold is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your PCs to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make the place your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar and the Gloamhold megadungeon. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the complex comprise:

- A small, self-contained cave system comprising a mix of natural caverns and worked passageways.
- Many life-like statues scattered throughout the place.

Because the cave complex is essentially self-contained it could be placed anywhere in almost any campaign setting. It could even appear as an “add-on” or sub-level in a larger dungeon.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can merely stumble on Deszraul's Hold by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the PCs into the caves.

- **Bandit Attack:** The PCs are on the road travelling to their next adventure when they are attacked by bandits. They drive off the attackers, who leave an obvious trail to follow. Alternatively, if the PCs take a prisoner, the captured bandit offers to sell out his companions for his freedom.
- **Bandit Attack Aftermath:** The PCs are on the road when they encounter the aftermath of one of the bandits' ambushes. A cart lies on its side by a dead horse. Three arrows sprout from the horse's chest and the cart has been comprehensively looted. As the PCs search, one of them hears a low moaning. Investigation reveals a badly wounded mercenary—Aake Neuvo (LN male human fighter 2—with an arrow in his thigh. He relates details of the bandit attack and begs the PCs to help rescue the merchant (Ilta Lempo [NG middle-aged female human]) and her daughter (Charlotta [NG female human]). Perceptive PCs quickly realise Take has fallen in love

with Charlotta. Searching the area, the PCs discover the bandits' tracks.

- **Missing Adventurers:** The PCs are relaxing in a tavern or inn in the locality when they overhear two regulars gossiping about a band of adventurers who came through this way a few weeks ago. The adventurers planned to explore a specific area of nearby forest or hills. If asked about the adventurers and their plans, the locals warn the PCs a ferocious creature is reputed to dwell in the area in which the other adventurers disappeared. It is said, the creature can turn its prey to stone and most of the locals believe this is the fate that has befallen the disappeared adventurers.

THE LOCALITY

The dungeon complex stands in an area of rugged, forested hills near a well traveled road used by merchants, traders and the like. Game and forester trails criss-cross the region. A character skilled at tracking can discover a relatively well-trod path snaking away from the road and up into the hills.

The trail meanders through the undergrowth for several miles before entering a narrow, steep-sided valley. Trees hang far out of the valley's flanks plunging much of the valley floor into shadow. Eventually, the trail leads to the mouth of a cave. When the PCs reach this point, proceed to area 1.

CREIGHTON'S DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

Given the main feature of this small complex, when stocking the dungeon, you've essentially got three choices about how to deal with the cave's stone statues (and who, or what, made them).

1. You can use the various statues standing therein as the victims of a medusa, basilisk, cockatrice or other creature with the ability to turn its prey to stone.
2. You could decide such a creature once dwelled in the complex but that it has been slain or driven off. The current dungeon inhabitants—perhaps a band of goblins, bandits or the like—use the statues as a deterrence, trusting in the obvious presence of a medusa or the like to scare away most intruders.
3. You could combine 1 and 2 and decide a medusa leads a band of humanoids and the cave is their lair.

Whatever option you chose, the presence of so many highly detailed statues is sure to make even the most confident player somewhat cautious—no one likes to be turned to stone after all. (Which reminds me, I dedicate this Dungeon Backdrop to Tim Ayres; if anyone can fail a save against petrification, it's Tim!)

As an aside, in my *Adventures in Shadow* campaign, I went with option #2 as the PCs were low-level—a mixture of 1st- and 2nd-level PCs, and although the party was large (numbering seven adventurers) there was no way they could have dealt with a medusa. I did, however, play up the statues for all they were worth and had the bandits pretend their leader was a medusa to try to get rid of the PCs.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

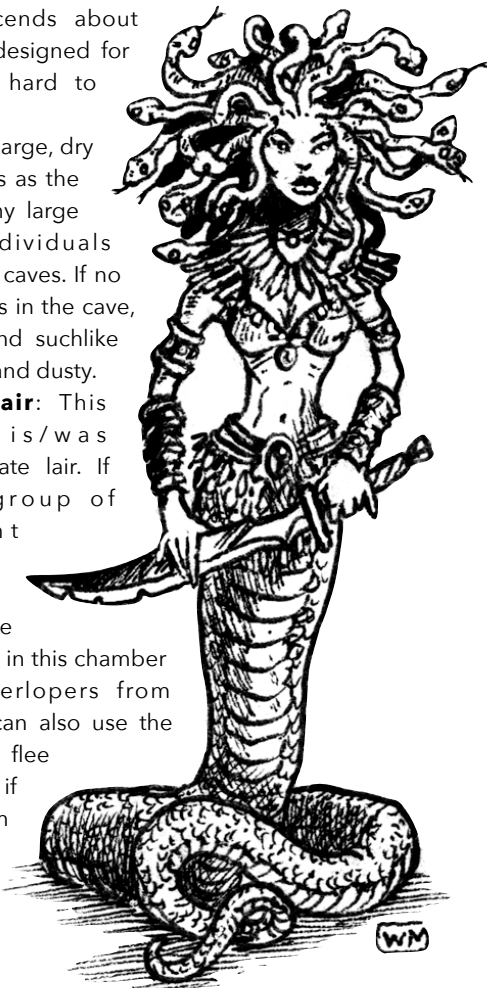
If the PCs think to learn more about the dungeon, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design.

1. A small cave complex hides a terrible creature—which has the ability to turn its foes into stone statues! Many people have entered the cave over the years, and none have emerged alive. Only fools dare enter the caves!
2. A terrible monster with the ability to turn its victims to stone once lived in the caves but it is long dead. The statues of its victims yet remain, however.
3. Bandits—Venla's Crew—have been seen in the area in recent months. The gang prey on travelling merchants and the like and have had some success. The local lord grows weary of their depredations and seeks someone to rid him of the detestable bandits.
4. It's not bandits preying on travellers and the like, but fey creatures made angry by the logging and hunting carried out in the forest's fringes.
5. The local lord has offered a reward of 100 gp to the group or person who can bring to justice whatever or whoever is responsible for the recent attacks on lawful travellers.
6. Bandits certainly have been active in the local area recently, but a few weeks ago their attacks abruptly ceased. No-one has claimed responsibility for killing or driving them away and speculation is rampant among the peasantry as to who or what is responsible.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Much of the cave system's features depends on what or who dwells within. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design.

1. **Main Entrance:** Two life-like statues watch over the cave complex's main entrance, from a raised escarpment. These statues are the PCs' first concrete clues that something terrible lurks in the caves.
2. **Cramped Steps:** This secondary entrance to the caves is clear of suspiciously detailed statues.
3. **Cave of Statues:** This large cave comprises the bulk of the outer caverns. Over a dozen life-like statues—adventurers who once challenged Deszraul—are scattered about the area.
4. **Cavern of the Two:** Here stand two statues—these unfortunate adventurers were the two who made it furthest into Deszraul's lair. Their progress availed them naught.
5. **Unfinished Chamber:** The dwarves who built the complex's inner chambers did not finish this large room before departing for a new home.
6. **Sloped Passageway:** This slightly sloped, low-ceiling passageway leads up to a set of curving steps. This passageway runs under parts of area 4.
7. **Short Staircase:** This curved staircase descends about five feet. It is designed for defence, and hard to fight on.
8. **Barracks:** This large, dry chamber serves as the barracks for any large group of individuals dwelling in the caves. If no such group lairs in the cave, the bedrolls and suchlike are old, musty and dusty.
9. **Deszraul's Lair:** This chamber is/was Deszraul's private lair. If she, or a group of intelligent creatures claims the caves, they use the secret door in this chamber to attack interlopers from behind. They can also use the secret door to flee their enemies if the PCs seem too mighty.



DUNGEON DRESSING

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Water oozes down the wall to form a small puddle.
2. Rubble has been pushed to the side against the wall.
3. A burnt-out torch stub lies on the floor against one wall. A smear of soot on the nearby wall and floor show where the torched smouldered for a while after being discarded.
4. Deep scrape marks on the floor show where something heavy was dragged toward the exit.
5. The remains of a small campfire fill a hollow in the ground. A small pile of dry firewood lies nearby.
6. Several spots of dried blood decorate the floor.
7. Water drips from the ceiling, turning the ground to sticky, wet mud. Several easily detected footprints in the mud provide a clue to what might lie deeper into the caves.
8. A faint smell—sweat and animal musk—hangs in the air.
9. Scratches on the floor show where someone or something tried—and failed—to dig into the stone.
10. Clumps of mottled green and brown lichen cling to the wall and ceiling. Several small bats hang from the ceiling.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. The broken-off tip of a stone finger lies on the floor.
2. Wisps of dusty cobwebs obscure part of the ceiling. Careful investigation reveals a small stone spider attached to the ceiling at the centre of the webs.
3. A grime-covered gold coin lies on the floor; only perceptive PCs—or those searching the area—spot the coin.
4. Graffiti daubed in chalk on one wall reads, "Despair for Deszraul dwells here."
5. The tracks of several booted footsteps lead further into the caves. A skill tracker can spot at least six individuals. The track's age depends on what dwells in the caves.
6. Graffiti, neatly chiselled into the wall in Dwarven reads, "Dolrak Thorhig" along with a date eighty years past.
7. A loose stone hides a small hollow in the floor. A rotting pouch containing 12 gp and 19 sp fills the niche.
8. A ripped sack lies on the ground. It holds nothing but a few mouldering heads of wheat.
9. A (dried) bloody handprint decorates the wall. The blood is smeared as if whoever left it was steadying themselves.
10. Broken and rusty, a bear trap languishes on the floor.

GENERIC CAVERN FEATURES

The outer reaches of this small complex are of natural stone. They have several generic features:

Illumination: Beyond areas 1 and 2, it is dark in the caves unless otherwise noted. Dim light fills areas 1 and 2 within 30-foot of the cavern entrance.

Rough Hewn Steps: Flights of rough hewn steps count as difficult terrain. The steps are hacked out of the floor's natural gradient.

Floor: The cave floor is of stone covered with gravel and (mostly dried) mud. In a few places, where water oozes down the walls or drips from the ceiling, the mud is wet and glistens in the party's lights.

Walls: The cave walls in the cave are rough and natural.

Ceiling: The ceiling is about 20-foot high throughout the caves. Above escarpments it is corresponding lower. For example, above a ten-foot high escarpment the ceiling is only ten-foot high.

Stone Statues: Many stone statues stand about areas 1-4. These statues are incredibly detailed. Note, if the statues are petrified adventurers and the like, destroying or damaging them will likely "kill" the petrified individual. Refer to individual statue descriptions for more details.

GENERIC DUNGEON FEATURES

The deeper parts of this small complex are of worked stone. They have several shared features:

Dwarven Artifice: A dwarf, or other character skilled in architecture or mining, recognises the artifice of the inner caves as being of dwarven origin.

Illumination: Unless otherwise noted, it is dark in the dungeon portion of the complex.

Ceiling: The ceiling is about 10-foot high. In most places it is plain and unadorned. Perceptive PCs spot the occasional signs of tool marks on the ceiling.

Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded.

Walls: The dungeon walls are of unadorned worked, natural stone.

Wooden Doors: The complex's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.



THE CAVES

GM NOTES

Depending on what dwells in the cave, the PCs will likely find tracks in areas 1 and 2. They may also see light emanating from area 4.

1: MAIN ENTRANCE

Two life-like stone statues stand on the escarpment overlooking the cave entrance.

A narrow set of rough hewn steps, overshadowed by a stone escarpment, leads down into the cave. Two life-like statues—one an elven man, the other a human woman—stand atop the ledge.

Escarpment: The stone escarpment is ten-foot high; its flank are easy to climb and can be scaled with a +10% chance to the character's climb check.

Stone Statues: Two stone statues stand atop the escarpment:

- **Northern Statue:** This elven man wears fine robes adorned with mystic symbols around the hems. He is holding a stone scroll and was caught in the act of reading from it.
- **Southern Statue:** This human woman wears stone chainmail and carries a mace in her left hand. Her right arm is extended and her hand points into the cave beyond.

2: CRAMPED STAIRS

These narrow natural stairs provides a shortcut into the caves.

A narrow set of stairs leads downward into a large cave.

3: CAVE OF STATUES

Life-like stone statues stand about this large, natural cavern.

At least a half-dozen incredibly life-like statues stand about this large, natural cavern. To the north east a crumbling stone escarpment rises about ten feet high and hosts two more statues.

Eastern Escarpment: Two statues stand atop the ten-foot high escarpment in the north-western part of the cave. Characters scrambling up (or down) the escarpment get a +10% bonus to their climb check.

- **Eastern Statue:** A half-elf woman clad in leather armour points a bow down into the main part of the chamber. A look of anger mixed with fear is fixed on her face.
- **Western Statue:** A halfling man wearing studded leather armour and holding two daggers is frozen in the act of creeping toward the wall. His eyes are narrowed in concentration and his demeanour and pose is that of a hunter.

Secret Door: A secret door pierces the eastern wall. It is nothing more than a cleverly counterweighted slab of stone—simply pushing on it causes it to spin about an iron pole set into its centre line.

Stone Statues: A dozen or so stone statues stand about the main part of the cavern; all are highly detailed and life-like. Some of the statues are smashed and broken; others remain whole. Use the following table to generate the details of the statues the PCs investigate:

D12 STATUE

1	A goblin crouches on the floor. It has its hands over its eyes, but clearly it could not resist seeing its doom approach. Observant PCs note the unfortunate was petrified because it was peeking between its fingers.
2	This large, muscular human warrior has been petrified in the act of charging. His axe is held high over his head and his face is twisted into a terrible snarl. As the warrior was petrified while running forward, the statue is finely balanced; anyone moving passed it has a good chance of knocking it over and smashing it.
3	Smashed rubble surrounds this statue which is missing from the waist up. The figure seems to have been a human or elf based on his legs and waist and was wearing fine flowing robes.
4	A snarling wolf stands in the centre of the area, hackles raised and teeth barred. Slightly behind the wolf, and to one side, stands a female half-elf dressed in leather armour. The half-elf is pointing deeper into the cave.
5	This headless statue of a muscular warrior wields a huge falchion. The man's legs are set wide and the falchion is pulled back as if he were ready to strike.
6	The statue of a halfling, a stone dagger clenched between its teeth, lies on the floor, practically filling a deep niche in the floor. The halfling is snarling. Cold, muddy water fills the remainder of the niche.
7	A stone warrior holds his shield up in front of his eyes and his short sword down low ready to murderously rip the weapon up into his opponent's belly.
8	This heavily overburdened human woman wears an oversized backpack and holds a lantern outstretched in front of her. A look of horror mars her otherwise attractive features.
9	This small rat was petrified in the act of looking around the stony legs of another statue.
10	Bones surround this statue of an adventurer caught as he looked back over his shoulder. From the stance of the statue—and the skull and spinal cord still draped about it—it looks like the adventurer was carrying a dead or unconscious companions when he was petrified.
11-12	This statue is smashed and broken—it is little more than a pile of rubble.

GM NOTES

Add detail to the statues as you see fit. Perhaps the PCs recognise an adventurer they have previous encountered. Such a discovery could lead to further adventures—particularly if they try to return the trapped adventurer to flesh.

The Pit: A crumbling ledge bounds a ten-foot deep section of cave to the north-western. Characters scrambling up (or down) the escarpment get a +10% bonus to their climb check.

Narrow Passage: A two-foot wide passageway leads roughly northward from the bottom of the pit. Small or larger creatures must squeeze if they plan to explore the passageway. Two short flights of natural steps each drop down about five feet.

GM NOTES

Organised inhabitants of the dungeon dwell in areas 8 and 9. They likely keep a watch in area 4 so intruders will find it difficult surprise them. Remember, if human bandits dwell in the caves these guards will probably have some source of illumination in area 4, which the PCs will automatically spot when they enter area 3.

4: CAVERN OF THE TWO

This raised ledge is a good place for organised groups claiming the caves to set a watch on the outer caverns.

Two more statues stand atop this low escarpment. A wooden door pierces the chamber's far wall.

The Statues: Two more stone statues stand here.

- **North Statue:** Missing its left arm, which lies half-way down the crumbling escarpment, this statue of a female half-elf is in a sorry state. A look of fury mars the woman's face.
- **South Statue:** This statue of a dwarven man wearing studded leather armour has been extensively vandalised. Some wag has carved his initials—MC—into the dwarf's buttocks.

5: UNFINISHED CHAMBER

This large chamber marks the extent of the dwarves' work in the cave complex.

The western portion of this chamber is akin to a natural cave, although here and there, signs of improvements are evident. To the east the far section of the cave has been shaped and smoothed to be habitable.

Stonework: The stonework in this chamber is rougher, less finished, than in areas 6 - 9.

6: SLOPED PASSAGEWAY

This area is a natural choke point; organised defenders may try to hold intruders here while more of their brethren use the secret door in area 9 to take intruders from the rear.

This 20-foot long passageway slopes gently upwards to a set of stone steps leading up to the east.

This area has no notable features. Roll on "Dungeon Dressing" or "Things to Find", if the PCs search here.

7: SHORT STAIRCASE

A wooden door stands at the bottom of the stairs. Defenders in area 8, may try and hold this door shut if intruders appear strong or numerous.

This short staircase spiral downwards to a wooden door.

Except the staircase, this area has no notable features. Roll on "Dungeon Dressing" or "Things to Find", if the PCs search here.

Staircase: The staircase counts as difficult terrain. Built for defence, the staircase was designed to hamper attackers. Characters lower down on the stair than their attacker gain cover from the curving wall.

8: BARRACKS

Here dwell the rank and file of any organised group claiming the caves.

Bedrolls and other personal pieces of camping equipment lie scattered about this large chamber. Soot covers the ceiling around a natural fissure in the north east corner. The remains of a large campfire fill the niche under the fissure.

Camping Equipment: The bedrolls, spare clothes and other miscellaneous equipment here are mundane and have little value.

9: DESZRAUL'S LAIR

Herein dwells the most dangerous creature in complex—either Deszraul or the bandit chieftain.

Surprisingly richly appointed, this chamber has several rugs on the floor and what looks like a comfortable bed in one corner next to a chest. In the east wall, clear, fresh water fills a small niche.

Secret Door: A secret door pierces the west wall. It is nothing more than a cleverly counterweighted slab of stone—simply pushing on it causes it to spin about an iron pole set into its centre line.

Natural Basin: Clear, fresh and cold water oozing from a crack in the rock fills this stone basin.

Rugs: The rugs are dirty, but serviceable; one has an interesting geometric pattern.

Bed: The bed is sized for a human-like creature; furs and blankets cover the bed.

Chest: This stout wooden chest is locked. The bandit chieftain, if one is present, has the chest's key. The chest holds clothes and the band's choicest pieces of treasure.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs have cleared out the cave system they can simply move on to their next adventure. Alternatively, the PCs:

- Could use the caves as a handy base from which to explore the surrounding area.
- Could be altruistic and try to return to flesh some of the unfortunate petrified individuals.
- Might become victims of their own success. If they claim the caves and fail to publicise their victory over the cave's denizens they could be assaulted by other bands of adventurers seeking to make a name for themselves by slaying the cave's foul denizens.
- Might discover another set of passages and chambers after a rock fall in area 5 reveals a narrow passageway in the north wall; the tunnel slopes steeply downwards into the bowels of the earth.

GM NOTES

If an organised group lair in the caves they'll likely make their stand in areas 8 and 9, but don't be afraid to have them send out skirmishers to attack the party from behind using the secret door in area 9.



THE DEATH KING'S FORLORN ISLE

A keening gale tears across the Bitter Sea, parting the clouds above to unveil a turgid crimson moon. Ominous rumbling resounds from the churning waters below. The surface of the sea boils and bubbles like a witch's cauldron—its waves foaming and swelling like a suppurating sore until a mass of jagged black rock erupts from the lightless depths. The Forlorn Isle has risen. Legend claims the small island holds the tomb of an ancient king whose crimes were so heinous his name was stricken from history. After his death, the weight of his evil deeds caused the isle to sink into the Bitter Sea.

But once every year, when the Blood Moon casts its baleful gaze upon the world, the cold brine rejects its cursed burden and the Forlorn Isle rises again, eagerly awaiting fresh victims. Despite the impressive tally of adventurers lost to the basalt bowels of the so-called Death King's ruined keep, many brave souls have sailed there over the years, drawn like moths to a flame by legends of lost ancient treasure. When dawn breaks, the bleak island sinks into the deep once more, entombing alive those who would steal its sinister secrets.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

Ten centuries ago, a multitude of small kingdoms jostled for power in the land that would become the Duchy of Ashlar. Petty rulers controlled these territories, waging constant war against one another to amass wealth and power. Amongst them was Raakus Muurhaja, an evil man renowned for his cruelty and treachery. From his basalt fortress of Helvettiin, which stood perched upon a lonely islet in the Bitter Sea, Raakus ruled with an iron fist. Every full moon, the tyrant sent his soldiers to pillage the surrounding lands and abduct women and children. Those who were carried off to his dark citadel were never seen again. It was whispered Raakus served the demon lord Dagon and that his captives were being sacrificed to the Shadow in the Sea.

ADDITIONAL GM RESOURCES

Depending on your design for the Forlorn Isle, the following resources might be useful to you:

- *20 Things #4: Smuggler's Lair*
- *20 Things #29: Lich's Lair*
- *Monstrous Lair #22: Sahuagin's Sunken Cave*
- *Village Backdrop: Coldwater* (or other Village Backdrop if you choose not to use Coldwater)

Despite their animosity towards one another, the other kingdoms banded together in a bid to destroy Raakus. They raised a great army and besieged Helvettiin as the tyrant-king rained evil spells onto the attackers from the parapets of his jet-black tower. After two days, the victorious besiegers sundered Helvettiin's bronze gates and Raakus was slain by King Voitto in hand-to-hand combat. Fearing Dagon's wrath, Voitto ordered his men to entomb Raakus' broken body in the dungeons beneath his own fortress. Helvettiin was razed to the ground and the name of Raakus Muurhaja stricken from history.

Three days after the citadel's destruction, the isle inexplicably sank beneath the sea. It rises again every year when the Blood Moon hangs low in the night sky.

ADVENTURE SETUP OPTIONS

When designing the challenges lurking in the Death King's Forlorn Isle, you have three basic options, for the isle's setup.

OPTION 1: RAAKUS RETURNED!

Raakus is a powerful undead being (for example, a wight, lich or anything else you desire). In this scenario, the Death King seeks to escape his sunken prison and conquer the lands of Ashlar anew. Helvettiin's passages are crawling with the undead—the remains of those who have drowned in its reeking halls.

OPTION 2: SHADOW OF THE DEATH KING

The tyrant-king may be dead, but his spirit lingers on. Raakus' ghost patiently waits for adventurers to find a way into his crypt, at which point he seeks to possess one of them; an unwitting vessel to carry Raakus to the mainland. If an NPC provides the hook for this scenario, they might secretly serve Dagon and seek to orchestrate Raakus' return through the heroes' unwitting actions.

OPTION 3: HELVETTIIN'S HEIRS

With the Death King imprisoned, dormant or destroyed, evil sea-dwelling creatures (such as sahuagin, scrags or the like) lair in Helvettiin's ruins. This option works on its own but also works if you decide Raakus and his undead servants are trapped in his crypt (area 8) while other creatures roam the rest of the dungeon.

COLDWATER

In Ashlar, the nearest settlement of note to the Forlorn Isle is the dismal, smuggler-haunted village of Coldwater. For more information about Coldwater, refer to *Village Backdrop: Coldwater*.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Seafaring characters could easily be shipwrecked on the sharp rocks of the Forlorn Isle and explore the place in search of a means of escape.

Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the party to the Forlorn Isle. Each of the hooks below uses a different notable NPC from the village of Coldwater; if you have placed the Forlorn Isle in your own campaign simply substitute suitable NPCs for those names below.

- **Iargo's Fate:** Last year, Iargo Itkunen (N male half-orc fighter 1) went to Helvetiin to seek its treasures. He never returned, and his mother Uzlen Itkunen (N female half-orc barbarian 1) is desperate to get his body back for a proper burial. Uzlen owns and operates Coldwater's only shipwright business of note and offers a reward appropriate to the characters' levels. She can also provide them with a sturdy fishing boat to reach the Forlorn Isle.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character may hear one or more rumours about the Death King's Forlorn Isle. The character can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the character learns.

Entries 1, 3, 4 and 6 are always true. Decide on the others based on your own preferences.

1. Once every year, when the Blood Moon rises, the Forlorn Isle rises from the Bitter Sea. When dawn breaks, it sinks back into the sea's frigid depths. (True)
2. Fire won't burn on the Forlorn Isle. Both magical and mundane flames are quickly snuffed out by the evil magic permeating the salt-caked basalt rocks.
3. Many centuries ago, an evil tyrant built a fortress called Helvetiin on the Forlorn Isle. The old kings of Ashlar allied against him and razed the citadel to the ground. (True)
4. Only a small section of catacombs remains of the citadel which once stood on the Forlorn Isle. Entombed within is the body of an evil tyrant whose crimes were so vile his name was stricken from history. Sages later named him the Death King. (True)
5. The Forlorn Isle sits atop the cyclopean tomb of a dark, primeval god who sleeps deep beneath the sea. The Death King was his faithful servant in life and the god raised him from the dead as his immortal champion.
6. Few adventurers ever return from the Forlorn Isle. Those who do claim the Death King's tomb is sealed by a massive stone door inscribed with a strange Elven poem. So far, no-one has managed to open it. (True)

- **The Onyx Trapezohedron:** While her motives remain unclear, Elina Vuolle (LN female human wizard 6), the ruler of the dismal village of Coldwater, hires the characters to recover the *Onyx Trapezohedron*. This mystical gemstone is said to have been owned by the Death King and yet languishes in his sunken crypt. According to whispered legend, the Death King received the black jewel from Dagon himself, and it is said to be the source of his power. Elina offers the party a reward commensurate with their level along with something else of great value—the thanks of a noblewoman of Ashlar, if they retrieve the gem.
- **What's in a Name?** The scholar Armas Hujanen (LE male half-elf wizard 5) seeks to learn the Death King's true name, claiming it can be woven into a spell to sink the cursed isle for good. He pays the characters handsomely to look for clues in Helvetiin, but depending on your design probably has some deeper purpose. Normally Armas can be found in his home in Coldwater researching the place's strange preponderance of hideously ugly villagers, but he makes a special effort to seek out visiting adventurers. He offers to pay the party handsomely for their efforts.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dungeon Backdrop: *Death King's Forlorn Isle* is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your characters to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make Helvetiin and the Forlorn Isle your own!

This *Dungeon Backdrop* is designed for use with the *Duchy of Ashlar* and the *Gloamhold* megadungeon or the *Lonely Coast*. However, the isle is entirely self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the adventure comprise:

- **Sunken Island:** A cursed island surfacing only once a year promises a unique dungeon setting.
- **Time Limit:** The characters only have until dawn to explore, loot and escape the dungeon.
- **A Perplexing Puzzle:** Helvetiin contains a clever puzzle for the characters to solve; characters failing to solve the problem must battle a powerful animate guardian.
- **Raakus Muurhaja:** The Death King was an evil tyrant who ruled the land in ancient times. Legends claim he was granted eternal life by Dagon. The remainder of Raakus' story has been left deliberately vague for you to design.

HELVETTIIN AND THE FORLORN ISLE

A bleak, crag-jagged islet in the Bitter Sea, the Forlorn Isle surfaces approximately one mile east of Coldwater every year on the night of the Blood Moon. But one structure stands upon the Forlorn Isle—the Death King's mighty citadel of Helvettiin which was reduced to rubble centuries ago. Beneath these dismal ruins lie the dungeons of the fortress, accessible only via heavy bronze doors set into the rock on the isle's west flank.

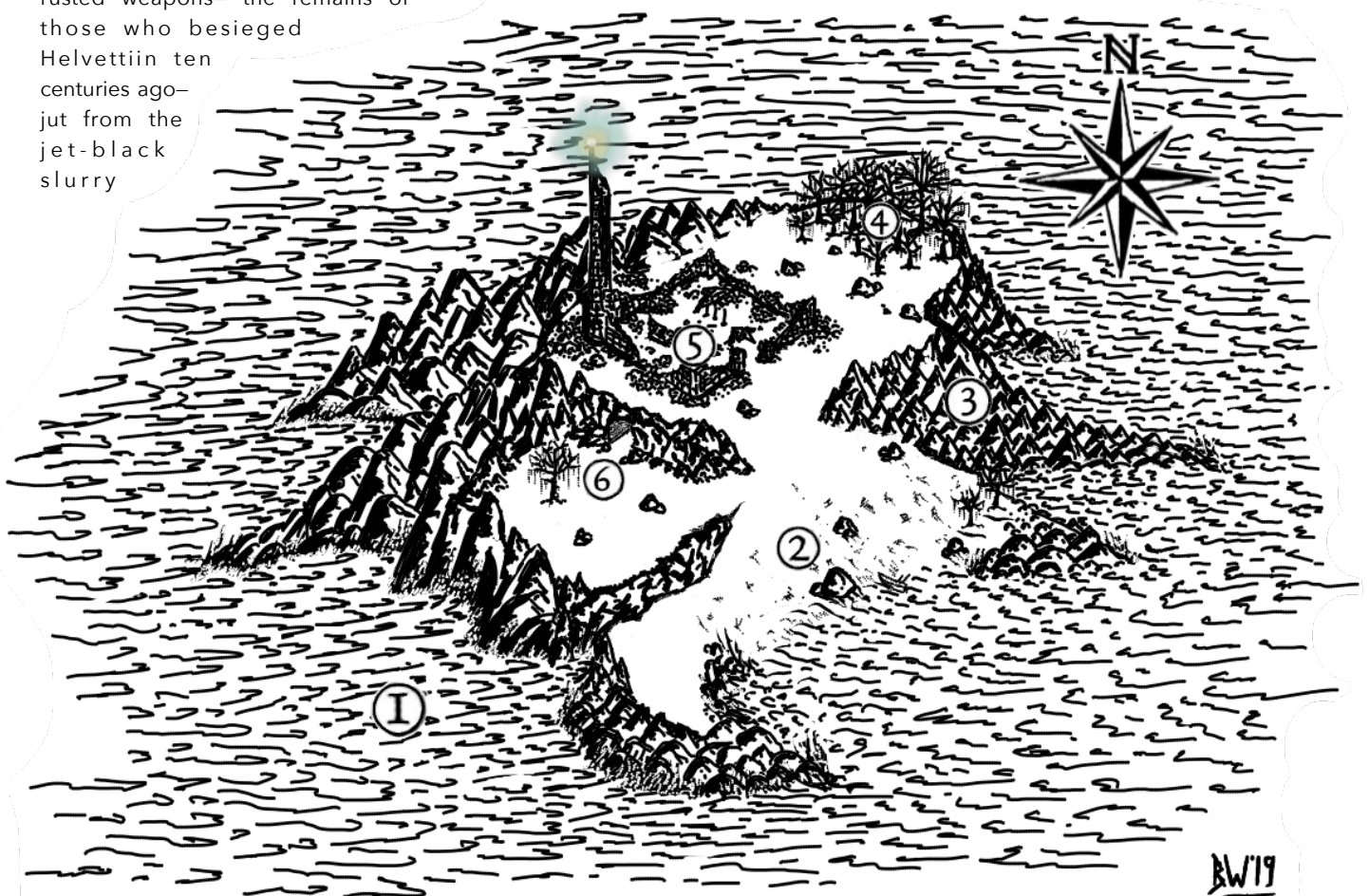
A rugged mass of black stone, pock marked by barnacles and swathed in reeking seaweed is all that now remains of the isle. Crabs, clams and other shellfish brought up from the bottom of the sea provide a feast for countless seagulls whose screeching fills the fog-shrouded sky with their shrill, haunting cacophony which mariners say are the screams of all those souls lost on and near the isle.

Measuring but a half-mile across, the Forlorn Isle takes little time to explore.

1. **The Bitter Sea:** Jagged rocks lurk just beneath the surface of the dark, choppy waters. A shallow-keeled boat is the best option to reach the isle. Even then, the characters must navigate the treacherous waters and avoid being shipwrecked.
2. **Black Silt beach:** Pitted yellow bones and rusted weapons— the remains of those who besieged Helvettiin ten centuries ago— jut from the jet-black slurry

covering the ground like so many charnel toadstools. If you are using "Optional Event: Rival Party" footsteps lead through the foul slurry to area 6.

3. **Crags:** Impaled upon the countless sharp spires of rock are the wrecks of several small and medium-sized boats. The cliffs on the isle's west side are 50 ft. high and slick with algae.
4. **Grove of Sacrifice:** Thick, reeking seaweed hangs from this dismal copse of dead, blackened trees like slimy spider webs. Nailed to the trunks and hidden beneath layers of algae and barnacles are the barnacle-encrusted skeletons of over a dozen victims; their weathered skulls gazing out unseeingly across the churning sea.
5. **Citadel Ruins:** Rising 30 ft. above the surrounding rubble like a glistening black needle, a single crumbling tower wall forms the sole remnant of the Death King's dark citadel. On stormy nights, the tip is wreathed in a nimbus of blue-green fire; a phenomenon known as "Serat's Torch"; mariners consider it a warning from the sea goddess herself.
6. **Dungeon Entrance:** This foreboding cavern hewn into the cliffside hides the only known entrance to Helvettiin's dreary dungeons. When the characters reach this locale proceed to "Helvettiin at a Glance".



REACHING THE ISLE

Whenever the Forlorn Isle rises, the very waters roar at its abomination and the howling wind rails against such an unholy blight. More often than not, a raging storm follows in the wake of the Forlorn Isle's resurgence, increasing the danger and difficulty involved in reaching its black-silted shore. Unless the characters possess magical means of reaching the isle, getting there by boat is their only option.

In order to reach the Forlorn Isle by boat, a character steering the boat must be vigilant against hidden dangers. The party suffers 1d3 events on the way to the island. Effects preceded by "A" occur only when the result is rolled a second time

1. The painful groan of splintering wood briefly drowns out the thunder's roar as the boat grinds across sharp rocks lurking beneath the surface.
 - A. The characters' boat breaks apart on some hidden rock and the party is shipwrecked, washing ashore on the Forlorn Isle's black beach. The characters are now stuck on the isle without a ready means of escape and are possibly missing some of their equipment and supplies. (In this instance, "Optional Event: Rival Party" provides a means for the party to escape the island.)
2. Barbed lightning strikes the waves nearby, followed by a cacophony of rolling thunder.

THE ONYX TRAPEZOHEDRON

An ancient object of fell and awesome power, learned sages have come to believe the *Onyx Trapezohedron* was the source of the Death King's power and a direct conduit to his fell master—Dagon, the Shadow in the Sea. Peasants, adventurers and other uneducated types have a wide-range of wild, and often implausible, theories about this transparent black stone. Characters native to Ashlar—or those that spend any time investigating the *Onyx Trapezohedron* learn the following.

- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* holds the souls of all those slain by the Death King. He used their energy to power his most powerful and evil magics.
- Hewn from the very stuff of the Abyss, the *Onyx Trapezohedron* is not onyx at all, but something else entirely more sinister.
- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* is the Forlorn Isle's keystone; remove it from the island and it won't sink back below the waves. Bring it back to the island once it has been removed causes the isle to immediately sink again.
- The Death King's soul lurks in the *Onyx Trapezohedron* waiting for an unwary explorer to claim the gem as their own. When they do, that person is doomed!

Some, none or all of the above may be true, depending on your setup.

- A. A fiery bolt strikes the boat! All characters suffer 3d6 electricity damage (save against breath weapon halves) and the boat catches fire.
3. Driven by the lashing gale, a massive wave approaches! It rises like a black wall, towering menacingly above the characters before crashing down, swamping the boat.
 - A. The wave is strong enough to knock a character overboard. (The character must roll equal to less than their Strength score on 5d6 or be knocked overboard).
 4. As a nearby flash of lightning illuminates the sea, one character catches a split-second glimpse of an enormous pale grey tentacle writhing just beneath the water.
 - A. The same character sees a great three-lobed alien eye staring back at them from the deep and is affected as though by a *fear* spell (save against spell negates).
 5. Floating face-down in the frozen brine is the corpse of a fellow adventurer, slain by the creatures of Helvetiin.
 - A. 1d4 zombies latch onto the boat and attack the characters.
 6. Coruscating green flame blazes from Helvetiin's ruined tower. A character wise in the ways of religion interprets this as a warning from Serat, Mistress of Storms, to turn back while they still can.

OPTIONAL EVENT: RIVAL PARTY

The characters may not be the only ones interested in unearthing Helvetiin's treasures! At any point during the adventure, a rival adventuring party may arrive at the isle intent on looting its treasures. (Or these adventurers could be Dagon cultists come to the isle for some unspeakable purpose).

These rival adventurers are likely to complicate matters for the party. If the characters lost their vessel or equipment on the journey to Helvetiin, such a rival party might provide convenient replacements. The rival adventuring party comprises:

- **Marke Ahti** (NE middle-aged female human wizard) cares only for herself and lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron*.
- **Albin Toivio** (CE male human fighter) believes he is the Death King's descendant and dreams of claiming his birthright.
- **Kaarle Vaito** (CE male human cleric [Brael or Dagon]) lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron* and dreams of using it to further his master's goals.
- **Ventla Kupias** (CE female human rogue) wants loot and the comforts it brings—no matter how many corpses she must climb over to get them.

Assign these NPCs levels as you deem appropriate.

HELVETTIIN AT A GLANCE

The dungeons of Helvetiitiin provide a small, self-contained adventure location set amid the crags of a mysterious sinking island. Use the descriptions below as a starting point and adapt them as necessary to suit your own design ideas.

GENERIC DUNGEON FEATURES

Ten hundred years spent at the bottom of the sea have rendered Helvetiitiin's drowned ruins uniformly dark, wet and slimy. All dungeon locations share several generic features.

Illumination: Unless otherwise note, it is dark in the dungeon.

Walls: Skilled masons built Helvetiitiin's walls in ages past. Barnacles, mussels and seaweed cling to the dripping wet stones, providing a rough yet slippery surface.

Floors: Loose, cracked flagstones comprise the dungeon's floor. Fine silt, wet seaweed and rotting algae coat every inch, making it easy to slip and lose one's footing.

Bronze Doors: These heavy doors are pitted and tarnished with age. A thick crust of peeling verdigris conceals time-eaten carvings resembling a tentacled sea monster. Doors open into the area they ward.

Ceiling: The barrel-vaulted ceiling in the dungeon is 15 feet high and dangerously sagging in places. Grey-green stinking seaweed hangs from the many cracks between the stones.

Seawater: All the water in the dungeon is salt water—it oozes from the masonry and forms puddles on the floor. Silt, grey-green seaweed and small crustaceans and like lurk in such puddles.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Helvetiitiin comprises the following notable locations:

1. **Entrance:** Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock comprise the dungeon's entrance.
2. **Sloped Passage:** This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward area 3.
3. **Flooded Chamber:** Long ago, this was Helvetiitiin's dreaded torture chamber. It now sits half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.
4. **Hall of the Guardian:** An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.
5. **Cruciform Chamber:** This is the largest room in the complex. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal spot for an ambush.
6. **Barricaded Room:** The dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the island barricaded themselves inside.
7. **Secret Passage:** Undisturbed since Helvetiitiin's fall, seawater this razor-sharp clam-lined passage lined.
8. **The Death King's Crypt:** The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

DUNGEON DRESSING

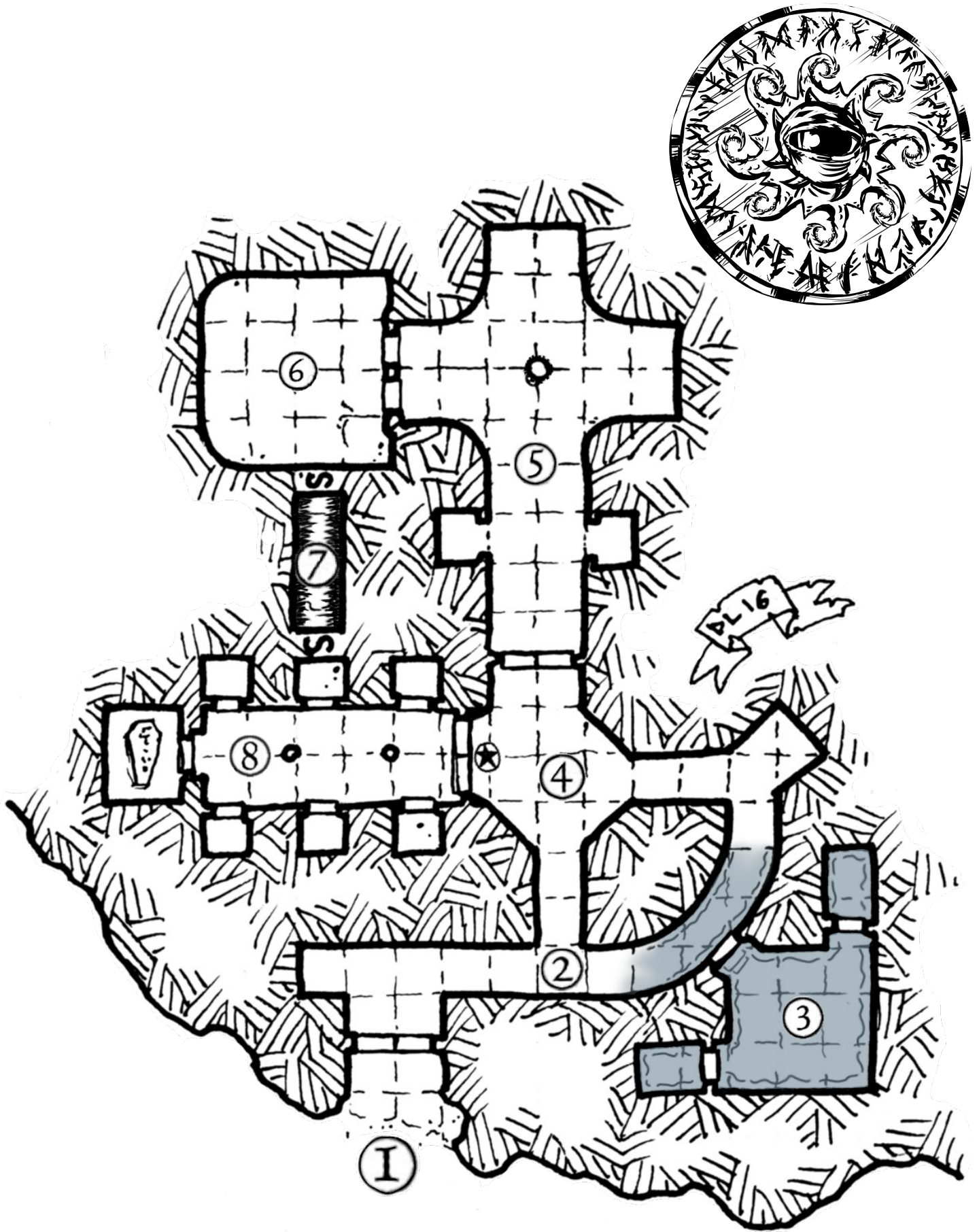
Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Tiny crabs nest in the seaweed. Characters disturbing the weeds are swarmed by 2d12 diminutive crabs.
2. The corpse of an adventurer lies twitching on the floor, its blotchy skin bloated with rot. If disturbed, the abdomen bursts open and 1d6 eels slither out.
3. Splashing noises sound from a shallow puddle where a large, ill-tempered moray eel is trapped beneath the seaweed. It attacks anyone who approaches.
4. A rotted skull sitting in a corner abruptly rises a few inches off the ground and scuttles towards the party, gnashing broken yellowed teeth. A large hermit crab inhabits the skull's brain pan.
5. A faint sulphurous odour and a slight ripple in the air hint at the presence of noxious gas. It could be harmless, suffocating or even explosive (unless rumour #2 is true).
6. A soft green glow shimmers across the wet basalt walls. Investigation reveals the source as bioluminescent algae.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Jet-black mussels encrust a centuries-old corpse huddled against the dripping wall. The mussels contain a total of 2d6 blood-red pearls, each worth 10 gp.
2. A seven-foot long trident impales a cracked human skull to the floor with two tines.
3. A rusted tinderbox and four unburnt torches, warped and split by the salty water, lie scattered about.
4. Slimy algae cover a length of rope lying stretched across the floor. Sturdy dwarven knots mark every five-foot section. The nearest end is cut and frayed, while the other trails off into the darkness ahead.
5. Scores of pale fleshy tentacles protrude several inches from cracks in the wall. They quiver slightly when approached. The "tentacles" are edible molluscs feeding off the algae in the dungeon. A party of hungry adventurers could subsist on them for several days.
6. Four heavy, bloated wineskins hang from a tangle of seaweed. While their contents have soured, the skins are intact and could be used as improvised floatation or breathing devices.



GM NOTES

The deep water in area 3 is perfect for undead or aquatic creatures to hide in and ambush the characters.

1: ENTRANCE

Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock form the entryway to the dungeon.

The hollow stretches wide like the maw of some enormous sea monster oozing its foetid breath. Several feet into its gullet a set of tall bronze doors stands ajar, mutely beckoning—or perhaps daring—you to step inside.

Illumination: The Blood Moon's pale crimson light illuminates the entranceway with dim light. Beyond ten-foot inside, however, darkness reigns.

Bronze doors: These tall double doors open when the isle rises from the deep and magically close when adventurers reach area 8 or interact with the statue or puzzle in area 4. They also open when the *Onyx Trapezohedron* (found in area 8) is brought within ten-foot.

2: SLOPED PASSAGE

This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward area 3.

The dripping black walls of this sharply descending passage are encrusted with mussels and barnacles. Strands of rank seaweed and rotting algae hang from the ceiling like slimy green cobwebs.

Slippery Slope: The eastern branch of this passage descends five feet on either side of the door leading to area 3. Characters moving down the passage must roll equal or less than their Dexterity score on 3d6 to avoid slipping and landing prone in front of the door.

Murky Water: The water in the southern branch gradually deepens to approximately two-foot deep in front of the door to area 3.

Door: The door to area 3 is bolted shut from the inside, and is slightly swollen with moisture. However, the mortar around the hinges has worn away.

3: FLOODED CHAMBER

Long ago, this was Helvettiin's dreaded torture chamber. It now sits half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.

Rotted seaweed and several bloated bodies float atop a black mirror of ice-cold brine in this dank, dark chamber. Heavy shackles blossoming red with rust line the walls.

Chest-Deep Water: The water conceals an impressive array of rusty torture devices, greatly hampering movement.

Doors: The doors to the side chambers have small trellised windows.

Side Chambers: These contain more torture implements, as well as the rotted corpse of a drowned adventurer, swathed in dark seaweed.

4: HALL OF THE GUARDIAN

An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.

Shattered skulls and broken bones lie strewn across the cracked flagstones of this battle-scarred chamber, A gigantic headless, four-armed giant blocks the west doorway.

Battle Damage: The damage to the flagstones, walls and bones was inflicted by a heavy, blunt instrument. Clever characters easily identify the statue as the likely culprit.

North Doors: These heavy doors are hard to open and can be pushed open with a +1 on the open doors roll.

West Doors: The doors leading west are blocked by a massive statue. A short poem is engraved into the left-hand door, while the right has eight images embossed upon it.

Giant Statue: The "statue" is a stone golem (or other kind of animate guardian). It remains dormant until someone tries to force open the west doors or turns the wrong image. Once animated, it hunts down and attacks all intruders. The golem returns to its dormant state in front of the doors when it has not encountered any intruders for one hour.

Text: Crude Elven runes spell a strange poem, engraved into the bronze doors:

**NOW I LIVE
DESIRE NOT SO LONG**

**NO, LOST ONE
RISE, DEVIL
I WON**

Images: Eight embossed images are arranged in a circle, representing a collection of mythical creatures. Clockwise from the top, they depict a:

1. Winged lion
2. Cyclops
3. Two-headed serpent (one head at each end)
4. Man-scorpion hybrid
5. Basilisk
6. Minotaur
7. Horned dragon
8. Griffon

Closer inspection reveals each individual image to be mounted on an axle, allowing it to be turned like a key.

SOLVING THE RIDDLE

The poem is a palindrome; its sequence of letters looks identical when viewed from either end. The correct solution is to turn the two-headed serpent: the only creature sharing the poem's peculiar property.

When the correct answer is given, the door's guardian steps aside and the doors to area 8 creak open.

GM NOTES

A rampaging stone golem could make short work of low-level characters. When faced with a lower level party, play the golem as a slow, ponderous brute, giving the characters a chance to run and hide until the construct returns to its dormant state. (Alternatively, replace the golem with a more appropriate guardian creature).

GM NOTES

If evil aquatic creatures dwell in Helvetiin (Adventure Setup option 3), area 5 is a likely place to encounter their leader.

The corpse in area 6 belongs to Iltanen. Those who knew Iltanen in life can confirm this when shown his medallion of Serat. Iltanen's mother, Uzlen, desperately wants his body returned for proper burial.

5: CRUCIFORM CHAMBER

This is the largest room in the complex. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal ambush opportunities.

A single pale glowing eye without pupil or iris unblinkingly gazes at you from the chamber's centre. Seawater drips from the thick curtains of algae lining the walls, filling the air with the constant murmur of falling water.

Glowing Eye: The "eye" is a large luminescent jellyfish with its tentacles entangled in the seaweed wrapped around the central pillar. Though harmless while trapped, it can still deliver a nasty sting if disturbed or touched.

Hidden Alcoves: Concealed by curtains of dripping algae, these alcoves provide an excellent hiding place or spot from which to launch an ambush.

Doors: The northern door is barricaded from inside. The southern door stands slightly ajar affording a narrow view of what lies beyond.

6: BARRICADED ROOM

This dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the isle barricaded themselves inside.

Huddled in the far corner are the decayed remains of a dead adventurer clad in rusted chainmail. Oily, stinking water oozes from the south wall, covering the stones in a waxy sheen.

Remains: Kept in place by the weight of its armour, the corpse in the corner has remained relatively intact. A silvered crossbow bolt is buried in the back of its skull. The prominent brow and broad jawbone suggest the bones belong to a healthy and muscular male half-orc. A pewter medallion bearing the image of Serat, the Mistress of Storms, hangs from his neck. The body has been comprehensively looted of all portable, valuable items.

Barricade: Several spikes and assorted debris were used in barricading the doors leading to this room. It seems the southern door was subsequently cleared—possibly to allow someone to leave...

Oozing wall: Water seeps from a five-foot wide section of stone along the south wall. The water has a distinct fishy odour.

Secret Door: Marked by the area of oozing wall, this secret door is easier (-1 on the d6 rolled to spot it) than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires a successful find/remove traps roll to operate or a successful open doors roll to force open. When the door (or the one in area 8) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out soaking everyone standing in front of the door.

7: SECRET PASSAGE

Undisturbed since Helvettiin's fall, this passage is filled with seawater and lined with razor-sharp clams.

The walls of this narrow passage bristle with razor-edged clams. Matted strands of pale grey algae hang from the ceiling almost all the way to the floor.

Illumination: Dripping algae extinguish all open flames and reduces the light radius from other sources to 5 feet (dim light). The slightly swaying algae throws weird shadows on the walls which look, to nervous explorers, a bit like questing tentacles.

Grey Algae: A profession of wet and slimy grey algae hangs from the ceiling, almost reaching the floor. The algae obscures vision of what lies further into the passageway.

Dagger Clams: Growing up to sixteen inches long, these leaf-shaped clams sport keen serrated edges meeting in a sharp point. Characters squeezing through the passageway suffer 1d6 damage for every 5 feet moved that round; a successful save against breath weapons negates this damage while moving slowly and carefully at no more than half speed gives a +2 bonus to this saving throw.

Secret Doors: From the secret passage, the rear of the two secret doors is obvious; characters in the passageway automatically spot both doors.

8: THE DEATH KING'S CRYPT

The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

The smell of mould and decay hangs heavily in this ancient prison. Seven dismal cells, each one sealed by a tarnished bronze door, line the walls.

Cell Doors: These doors have small trellised windows and are bolted shut from the outside, but not locked.

Cells: Each cell holds the barnacle-encrusted, seaweed-choked skeleton of one of Raakus's soldiers.

Secret Door: This secret door is easier (-1 on the d6 rolled to spot it) than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires a successful find/remove traps roll to operate or a successful open doors roll to force open. When this door (or the one in area 6) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out.

Sarcophagus: The Death King's basalt sarcophagus is plain and devoid of adornments. Its heavy lid can be pushed aside with a combined Strength score of 40 or a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

On the inside of the lid, the name "Raakus Muurhaja" has been scratched deep into the stone at least a dozen times. Along with Raakus Muurhaja's mouldering remains the sarcophagus contains a glistening black gem of irregular cut—the *Onyx Trapezohedron*.

GM NOTES

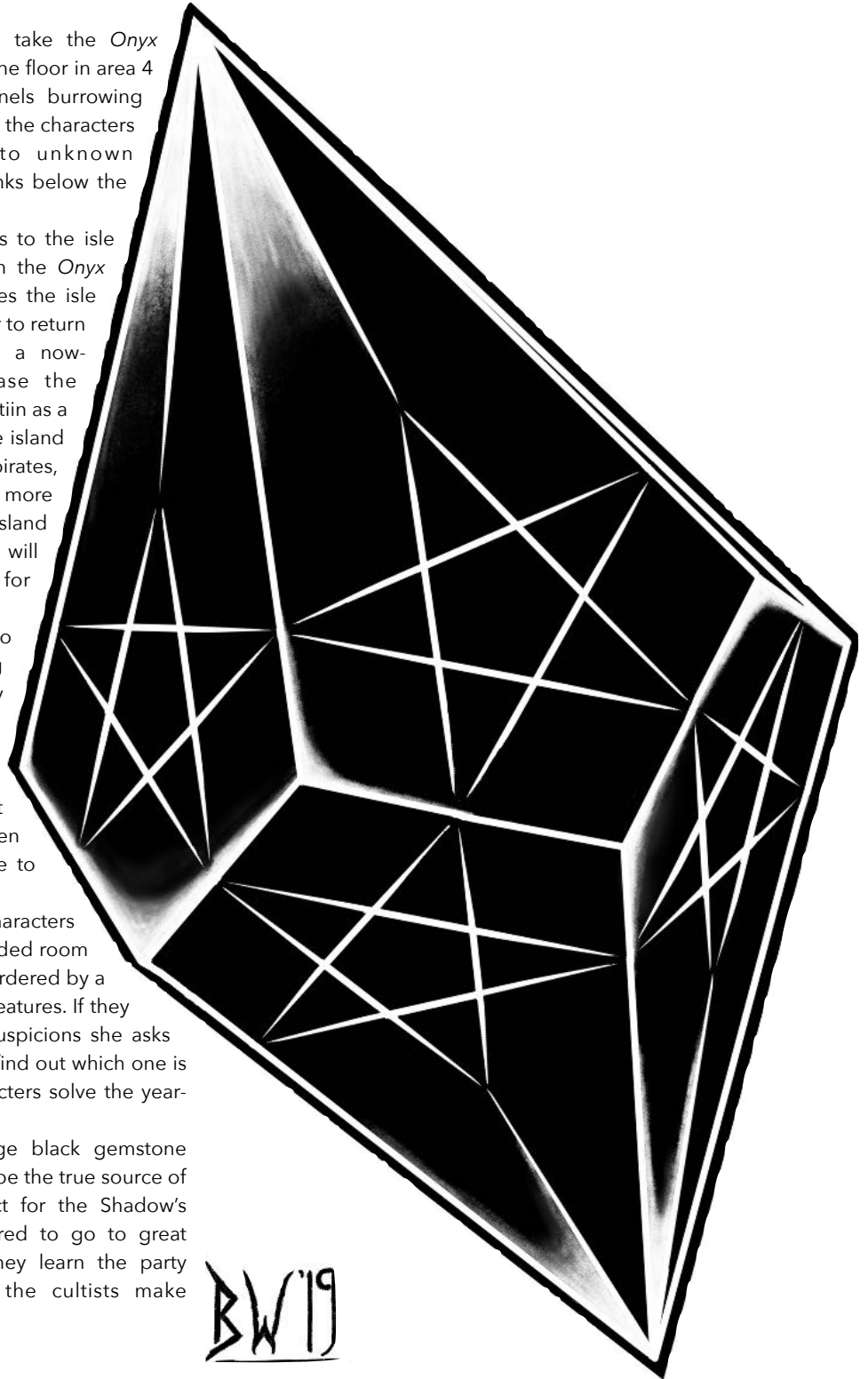
Unless you decided Raakus walks again (Adventure Setup option 1), the sarcophagus in area 8 contains Raakus' withered cadaver—the Onyx Trapezohedron clutched in one fist. The fingers of his other hand are worn to stumps from scratching his name into the sarcophagus' lid.

Refer to the Onyx Trapezohedron sidebar for more information about this fell stone and its powers.

CONCLUSION

When the foul creatures of Helvetiin have been defeated, the adventure doesn't necessarily end. Below are several suggestions on how to continue the story. Several of the options below may be combined to keep Helvetiin and the Forlorn Isle at the forefront of the characters' minds for many more months.

- **Tip of the Iceberg:** If the characters take the *Onyx Trapezohedron* hidden in area 8, part of the floor in area 4 collapses, revealing a labyrinth of tunnels burrowing deep down into the island's bedrock. Will the characters be able to explore these hitherto unknown passageways before the Forlorn Isles sinks below the ocean's waves once more?
- **Fate of the Forlorn Isle:** What happens to the isle after the characters leave (perhaps with the *Onyx Trapezohedron* in their possession)? Does the isle sink to the bottom of the Bitter Sea, never to return or does it remain on the surface as a now-permanent fixture? In the latter case the characters might claim the ruins of Helvetiin as a new base of operations. If they don't, the island is quickly visited by a succession of pirates, smugglers, adventurers and freebooters; more than one group are bound to claim the island as their own. No doubt many deaths will result as the various groups battle for dominion over the isle.
- **Raakus' Revenge:** Countless sacrifices to Dagon have earned the Death King immortality many times over. By breaching his crypt, the characters may have paved the way for his return! It is even possible one of the characters has become possessed by Raakus' ghost (Adventure Setup option 2), which then uses the unfortunate's body as a vehicle to finally escape the Forlorn Isle.
- **Murder Most Foul:** Assuming the characters found Iargo Itkun's body in the barricaded room (area 6) they can deduce the boy was murdered by a companion and not one of Helvetiin's creatures. If they tell his mother of their discovery and suspicions she asks them to hunt down his companions and find out which one is responsible for his death. Can the characters solve the year-old murder?
- **The Onyx Trapezohedron:** The strange black gemstone found in the Death King's crypt is said to be the true source of Raakus' powers and is a sacred object for the Shadow's followers. The cult of Dagon is prepared to go to great lengths to recover the gem, and if they learn the party possesses the *Onyx Trapezohedron* the cultists make repeated attempts to secure the gem.



THE SHADOW FANE

Evil is everywhere and humanity must be ever vigilant against its slow encroachment into all that is great and good. Small cults—dedicated to ancient, blasphemous powers—lurk throughout the world ready to carry out their dark patron's bidding. One such small cult dedicated to Braal, god of hate, malice and revenge, dwells in the Shadow Fane below Languard's High City. The cultists kidnap and murder in their dark god's name, but recently they made a mistake that threatens their very existence. Instead of kidnaping a beggar the cultists accidentally kidnapped the daughter of a wealthy merchant and he is offering a handsome reward for his daughter's safe return.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

Evil cults practise their foul rites wherever humans settle, for in humans certain dark powers find fertile ground for their whispered entreaties and honeyed promises. In every settlement, some folk will recoil from the light and embrace the darkness.

One such cult lurks under Languard, capital city of Ashlar. The cultists quietly worship their lord, and every month capture four doomed souls to sacrifice to their lord. Such activity cannot go unnoticed forever, however, and slowly several folk in the city are becoming aware of a pattern of disappearances among the denizens of the street as well other vulnerable people. Most citizens—wrapped up in their own lives and grappling with their own problems—spare little thought for the fate of a few beggars, homeless folk and the like. However, the recent disappearance of a wealthy merchant’s daughter (see Kidnap and Murder) has brought the matter somewhat to the fore.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are pushed for time, and want more tools and tables to help design and populate the Shadow Fane, check out *20 Things #37: Fane of Evil* from Raging Swan Press. The book contains five comprehensive tables and six fully-fleshed out NPCs (three priests and three prisoners) ready to be dropped into your game.

A NOTE ABOUT TENSE

Throughout the text I have used the present tense—effectively I have decided the fane is currently staffed and in use. If you rule the opposite—that it is abandoned—remember to modify the dungeon’s read aloud text to reflect its state. For example, dust might lie thickly on the floor and cobwebs may shroud the ceilings and walls.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can merely stumble on the Shadow Fane by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the PCs into the fane.

- **Kidnap and Murder:** An evil cult is active in the area and has been kidnapping locals to use as sacrifices in their blasphemous ceremonies. A few days ago, the cult made a mistake and accidentally kidnapped someone important, Aune Ehtaro—the daughter of Aatami Ehtaro. Aatami is an important and wealthy merchant and is fiercely protective of this family. Aatami offers the PCs 500 gp to rescue his daughter and slay those responsible.
- **Revenge:** The PCs have previously tangled with worshippers of the Dweller in Shadows (or with whichever power you replace him). The fane’s adherents attacks the PCs in revenge for previous setbacks; one of the slain cultists carries a crude map showing the fane’s location.
- **Kidnap, Interrupted:** The PCs foil an attempted kidnapping by the cult’s agents. They either find a crude map on one of the attackers or trail fleeing cultists back to the fane.



- **Skulking About:** Abroad late at night, the PCs notice a suspicious figure skulking about. Following the figure—a cultist on the way to the fane—the PCs stumble onto the fane mere minutes before the monthly service begins.

WHICH FELL POWER?

Of crucial importance to your design is the question: to which fell power is the fane dedicated? Answering this question enables you to embellish the descriptions herein with faith-specific details. For example, if the fane is dedicated to Braal's worship (see below), skull motifs are everywhere. Alternatively, if the adherents venerate Dagon eye and tentacle designs will predominate.

The evil god Braal has been specifically designed to be easily substituted for a power already extant in the GM's own campaign, and so my design of the fane assumes it is dedicated to Braal.

BRAAL

NE god of Hate, Malice and Revenge

Epithets: The Hated, Dweller in Shadows

Symbol: A cloven skull

Favoured Weapon: Morningstar

Raiment: Braal's adherents wear cowed black cloaks smeared with their sacrifices' blood and often shave their heads.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

If the PCs think to learn more about the dungeon, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns:

1. A foul cult operates in the vicinity; it is not safe to go outside after dark on your own. People that do sometimes disappear never to be seen again.
2. Whispers of terrible rites chanted in the dead of night and of faint screams coming from underground all centre on a part of the city near to the Svart's ever-flowing waters.
3. Dark figures have been seen moving furtively about the city at night.
4. A devotee of Darlen was raving a week ago about a dream he had. In it, he was flying above the city and could see a great darkness slowly oozing through the streets. He believed it to be a warning bestowed on him by his divine patron of a gathering evil.
5. Beggars and children of the street have been notable by their reduced numbers recently. No one knows where they are going.
6. A woman found a horrible necklace the other day. It was a crude cast iron thing decorated with a horrible grinning skull. She asked a blacksmith friend to melt it down so disturbed was she by its imagery.

Worshippers: Braal whispers dark promises to the disposed, the bullied and those who desire power over their compatriots. Goblins and half-goblins also worship Braal, although he disdains such odious worshippers.

Teachings: Strike from the shadows; punish those who have wronged you and show no mercy. Take what you want and destroy that which you cannot take.

Holy Texts: The worship of Braal is not as prescriptive as other religions. No universally agreed upon text exists, but several dark tomes are preferred by various sects.

Additional Notes: Braal is the dark to Darlen's light. The struggle between the two is ancient and unending, and there is great enmity between the two powers' worshippers. For all his plotting and evil doings, however, Braal is nothing compared to the elder powers of certain ancient, primal demons.

THE CULT

The small cult dedicated to the Dweller in Shadows numbers no more than a half-dozen priests and a score or so worshippers scattered about the city. A shadowy figure—the Dark Warden—leads the cult. Only the priests dwell in the fane; other worshippers live in the city and visit the fane for the monthly sacrifices or as directed by the Dark Warden. As with any evil cult, the Hated's adherents do not dwell in blissful harmony; constant jockeying for position is the norm, and the PCs may be able to use this to their advantage.

THE FANE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dungeon Backdrop: *The Shadow Fane* is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your PCs to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make Delthur's Folly your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar and the Gloamhold megadungeon or the Lonely Coast. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the fane comprise:

- **Evil Power:** The fane is dedicated to an evil power such as Braal. Substituting a suitable evil power from your own campaign should be easy.
- **Located Anywhere:** The fane can be located almost anywhere—in an out-of-the way locale in the wilderness, in a larger dungeon complex or even under a town or city.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The Shadow Fane is a small, self-contained dungeon complex dedicated to Braal. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design of the fane and its inhabitants.

1. **Portal of Darkness:** Banded with iron straps graven with fell runes of evil, blasphemous power this stout oak door wards the complex beyond.
2. **Hall of the Damned:** Many of the fane's adherents never progress passed this area. Here stand four skull-shaped wrought iron braziers blazing with hellish magical light along with four small shrines complete with manacles to secure prisoners and sacrifices.
3. **The Dark Chapel:** The venue of the cult's blasphemous ceremonies, the Dark Chapel is where sacrifices die screaming in foul rituals enacted to glorify Braal.
4. **Store Room:** This locked chamber holds many boxes, crates and barrels filled with the possessions of the sacrificed. The cult periodically sells the items here to various local fences.
5. **The Dumping Ground:** The fane's priests dump the headless corpses of those sacrificed to Braal in this chamber. They then strip the corpse of anything remotely valuable before dumping the remains in area 7.
6. **The Old Ossuary:** This small natural cavern holds the skeletal remains of the cult's oldest victims. Partially hidden behind heaped piles of bones, a narrow, twisting corridor leads way from the fane. At the GM's discretion, the passage could end in a dead-end or intersect with more caves, the city sewers or some other dungeon complex.
7. **The New Ossuary:** Packed full of bones, decomposing bodies and the grizzly remains of the fane's sacrifices this small network of caves reeks of death, decay and disease.
8. **Tower of Skulls:** A towering column comprising hundreds of skulls dominates this lofty chamber. Risen in veneration to the fane's fell patron the column holds the skulls of all those who have been sacrificed to Braal's glory. At the end of every profane service, the column grows a little higher.
9. **The Dark Guardian:** A cloaked stone statue of a towering skeletal warrior clutching a two-handed morningstar watches over this junction. It stares impassively toward the door leading to the Tower of Skulls.
10. **The Processional:** Extensively decorated with lurid frescoes praising Braal, this wide corridor is both a thoroughfare and a place of devotion.
11. **Adherents' Dormitory:** In this communal sleeping chamber slumber the fane's minor priests.
12. **Chamber of the Dark Warden:** This sumptuously appointed chamber is the dwelling place of the fane's warden. Here are also kept the shrine's choicest treasures.

DUNGEON DRESSING

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. A fresco of a large, blackened skull decorates the wall. Blasphemously—for the faithful—someone has scratched away the paint from where the skull's eye sockets should be.
2. Drips and smears of dried blood lead toward area 5.
3. Thick—perhaps unnaturally thick—shadows cluster in the corners where the walls meet the ceiling. Paranoid PCs may suspect they detect movement in the deepest shadows.
4. From deeper into the fane, comes the faint sound of chanting in some alien, foul language.
5. The faint scent of death, decay and blood reaches the PCs' nostrils. (The smell comes from the direction of areas 5-7).
6. Thick drops of water drip from the ceiling with annoying regularity. The water drains away through cracks in the floor.
7. This fresco—depicting bloody slaughter before a gigantic, obscene statue—is particularly detailed and arresting.
8. Screams, sobs or harsh, mocking laughter come from elsewhere in the fane.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Dropped and forgotten, a tarnished holy symbol of two clasped hands—Conn's holy symbol—lies against one wall.
2. A loose flagstone hides a small storage niche, perhaps constructed in secret by one of the fane's priests. Roll again to determine what lies within (ignoring inappropriate or duplicate results).
3. A tarnished silver unholy symbol hanging from the remains of a fine silver chain; dried blood covers the chain.
4. A small black velvet pouch holds six gold-filled teeth ripped from the jaws of those sacrificed in the fane.
5. A crumpled scrap of parchment holds a short list of people's names in cramped handwriting. Most of the names are crossed through.
6. A small, obviously old, brass idol depicts the shrine's patron. Its head is worn and slightly shiny.
7. Crafted from black iron, this small handbell has a worn handle and horrible etchings of skulls and death around its rim. When rung, it creates a harsh, discordant sound.
8. Wedged into a crack in the floor, an iron ring cast in the shape of a skull is scratched with wear.

GENERIC FANE FEATURES

Many of the locations in the Shadow Fane share certain features:

Illumination: Unless noted in the text, darkness fills the fane. Read aloud descriptions assume the PCs can either see in the dark or they have their own light sources.

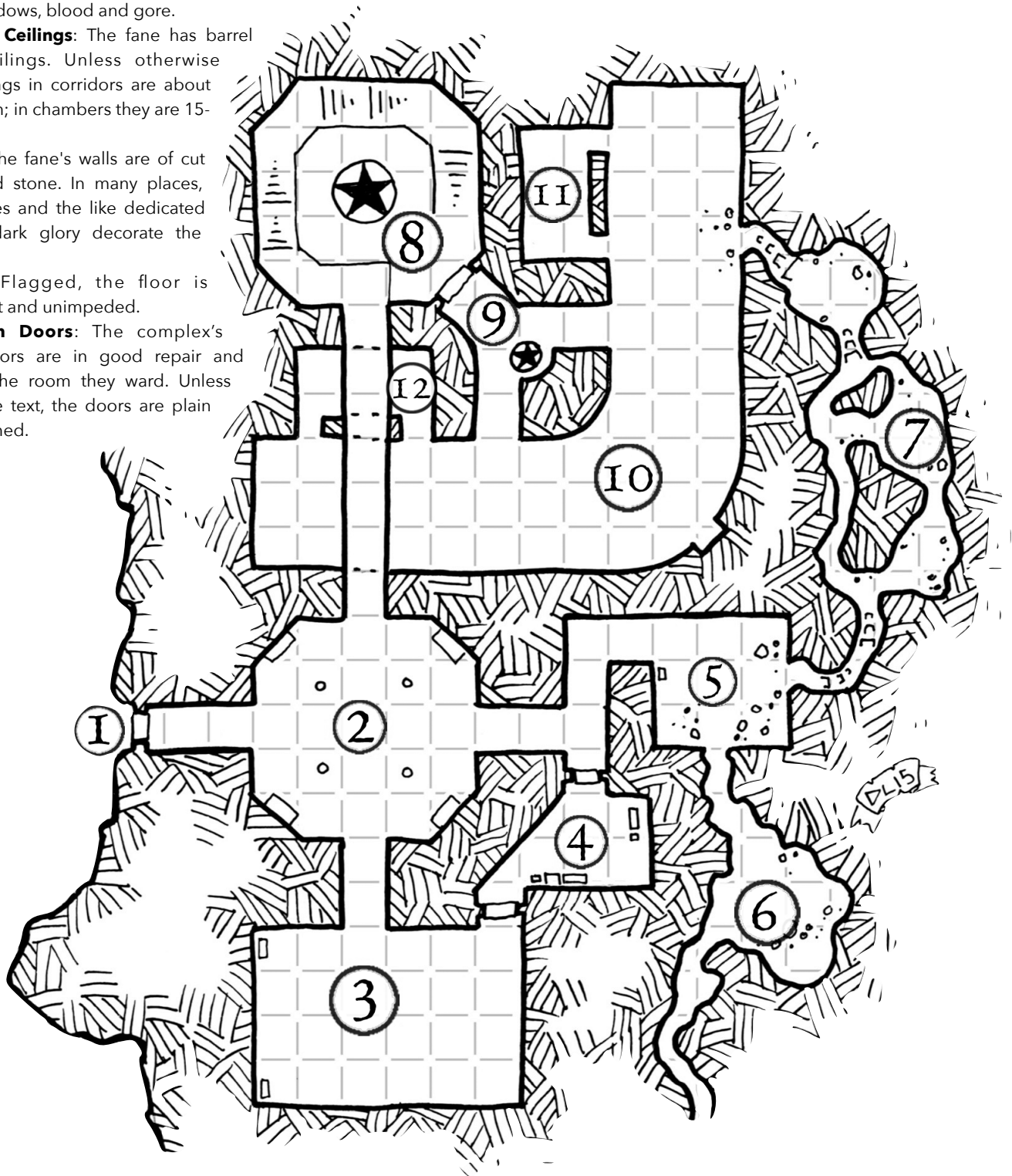
General Decorative Features: As befits a shrine dedicated to an evil power, the fane's decorations are lurid and foul. Skull motifs feature prominently everywhere as do frescoes of deep shadows, blood and gore.

Vaulted Ceilings: The fane has barrel vaulted ceilings. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings in corridors are about ten-foot high; in chambers they are 15-foot high.

Walls: The fane's walls are of cut and dressed stone. In many places, lurid frescoes and the like dedicated to Braal's dark glory decorate the walls.

Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded.

Wooden Doors: The complex's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.



GM NOTES

Modify the read aloud text of area 1 to take into account where you place the fane. If the portal lies under a city its surrounds will be different to if it stands deep in the wilderness.

The portal in area 1 is a good place for a trap.

If the shrine has any prisoners, perhaps including Aune Ehtaro, from the Kidnap and Murder hook, the PCs discover them chained to the four shrines in area 2.

1: PORTAL OF SHADOWS

Beyond this door lies the Shadow Fane.

A stout iron-bound door pierces the wall ahead. An iron lock cast in the shape of a skull wards the door.

Portal: This stout iron-bound door has a large lock set into it shaped like a skull complete with a gaping, wide mouth. Every cultist has a key.

2: HALL OF THE DAMNED

Here languish the fane's doomed prisoners.

Four skull-shaped wrought iron braziers emit hellish, flickering light from their eye sockets. Four small shrines complete with manacles to secure prisoners stand against the walls.

Illumination: Dim light from the four wrought iron braziers illuminates the centre of this chamber. Behind the braziers, darkness and shadows shroud the room.

Shrines: Each set with manacles these four small shrines are where the cult's prisoners are kept prior to sacrifice and decapitation. The wall behind each shrine is painted black, but splatters of blood and the faint smell of urine surround each shrine.

Wrought Iron Braziers: Wrought to look like skulls these braziers have lids which can be removed to add more fuel to the fire. Flickering light shines through each skull's eye sockets.

3: THE DARK CHAPEL

Here, the cult practise their blasphemous ceremonies and sacrifices die screaming in foul rituals enacted to glorify Braal.

The scent of death and some foul kind of incense hangs in the air of this large, rectangular chamber. To the west, stands a bloodstained altar seemingly hewn from a single piece of black basaltic rock.

With the exception of the Tower of Skulls (area 8), this chamber is where the cultists feel closest to their foul lord.

Wrought Iron Candelabras: Four candelabras, each treated with a *continual light*, illuminate the chamber with flickering, sickly yellow light. An iron "cap" hangs from a hook on each candelabra, and can be used to extinguish the flames.

Bloody Black Altar: Hewn from a single piece of black basaltic rock brought here from some unknowable, alien place the altar is the chamber's centrepiece. Dried blood and viscera splatter the altar and the floor around it.

Two sets of heavy manacles are set into the altar's uppermost surface.

The altar conceals a secret niche which can be opened by pushing in a small outcrop of rock protruding from the altar's rear. Within lie keys for all the manacles in area 2 and 3 and more incense for the burners.

Incense Burners: Several five-foot high incense burners stand behind the altar. Incense—foul and heady—burns within.

4: STORE ROOM

This locked chamber holds many boxes, crates and barrels filled with the possessions of those sacrificed to Braal's glory as well as things the fane's priests need on a daily basis. The cult periodically sells the items stored here to various local fences.

Many boxes, barrels and chests stand against the walls of this small, irregularly shaped chamber.

Boxes & Barrels: PCs searching the various boxes, crates and barrels discover many mundane items such as clothes, hats, shoes and the like. A PC spending ten minutes searching the chests finds something valuable. At the GM's discretion, if the PC searches particularly thoroughly, they may find more than one treasure. Each item can be found only once.

1. **Shoe:** One of the shoes has a false heel; inside, the PCs find three gold coins wrapped in a scrap of cloth.
2. **Headscarf:** A blue silk headscarf worth 5 gp, when the splatters of blood staining it are cleaned off. An overlooked silver necklace is tangled about the bloody scarf.
3. **Belt:** A thick, black leather belt has a secret storage compartment; it contains 1 pp.
4. **Belt Pouch:** This leather belt pouch has an overly complicated set of cords to keep it closed. They make pick pocketing much harder, but take twice as long to open.

5: THE DUMPING GROUND

The fane's priests dump the headless corpses of those sacrificed to Braal, here. They then strip the corpse of anything remotely valuable before dumping the remains in area 7.

Four headless naked corpses sprawl on the floor of this charnel house. Blood and gore splatters the walls and floor while over all hangs the nauseating stench of decay and death.

The fane's clergy have not yet got around to disposing of their most recent sacrifices.

Headless Corpses: The headless, naked corpses comprise two human males, one human female and one male dwarf.

6: THE OLD OSSUARY

This small natural cavern holds the skeletal remains of the cult's oldest victims.

Deep piles of yellowing bones fill the chamber.

Piles of Jumbled Bones: The skeletal remains of scores of the cult's victims lie scattered about the room. A PC searching the bones notices there are no skulls here.

The remains halve a character's movement rate.

Concealed Passageway: Partially hidden behind the heaped piles of jumbled bones, a narrow, twisting corridor leads away from the fane. This could end in a dead-end or intersect with more caves, the city sewers or some other dungeon complex.

GM NOTES

The finds in area 4, 5 and 6 should highlight the cultists' foul practises and their penchant for wringing every morsel of value from their victim's possessions.

Area 6 is a great place for the PCs to encounter undead—perhaps headless skeletons.

GM NOTES

Area 7 is a great place for the PCs to encounter undead—perhaps skeletons or zombies.

Area 8 is an excellent area to place an undead creature of some sort. Perhaps the shrine's guardian lurks inside the skull tower or can animate portions of the foul structure.

7: THE NEW OSSUARY

Packed full of bones, decomposing bodies and the grizzly remains of the fane's sacrifices this small network of caves reeks of death, decay and disease.

The pungent, nauseating stench of death and decay fills this natural cave. Rotting, decaying corpses and heaped piles of white bones cover the floor.

These narrow, claustrophobic tunnels and chambers have an oppressive feel.

Narrow Passageways: Characters moving through the narrow passageways here are considered to be voluntarily squeezing,

Rough Hewn Steps: Several sets of crude steps lead down through the cave to the north. The steps count as difficult terrain.

Piles of Decomposing Bodies: A PC searching the pile of decomposing bodies notices there are no skulls here.

8: TOWER OF SKULLS

The centrepiece of the fane, the column of skulls is a monument to Braal's glory. At the end of every profane service, the tower grows a little higher.

A towering column comprising hundreds of skulls dominates this lofty chamber. A spiral staircase spirals around the room's wall.

Column of Skulls: A PC examining the tower of skulls carefully notices many of the skulls atop the tower still have flesh and hair. The column is sturdy and can be scaled by a careful climber.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 40-foot high in this chamber.

Stairs: Squares containing stairs halve a character's movement rate. The stairs have no handrail.

9: THE DARK GUARDIAN

A cloaked stone statue watches over this junction. It stares impassively toward the door leading to the Tower of Skulls.

A cloaked stone statue of a towering skeletal warrior clutching a two-handed morningstar stands at the intersection of two corridors. The statue stares to the north west.

Stone Statue: The statue is about seven-foot tall and wears a cowed black cloak draped over its shoulders. It represents Braal.

10: THE PROCESSIONAL

This wide corridor is both a thoroughfare and a place of devotion.

Lurid frescoes praising Braal decorate this wide corridor.

Frescoes: Lurid, blasphemous and done in a variety of styles these frescoes depict all manner of slaughter and perversion. Deep shadows, sometimes with the suggestion of sinister shapes lurking within, predominate.

11: ADHERENTS' DORMITORY

In this sleeping chamber slumber the fane's minor priests.

Woollen sheets cover the bunkbeds set against the walls in this small chamber. Two sconces hold flickering torches.

Illumination: The torches burning here provide bright light.

Bunkbeds: Rickety two-storey bunkbeds about six-foot tall line the walls. A character can tip over a bunkbed by rolling less than their Strength on 3d6. A successful saving throw against breath weapons enables a character to avoid being knocked prone under a falling bunkbed. Characters trapped under a fallen bunkbed can heave it aside by rolling less than their Strength on 3d6 or can wriggle free by rolling less than their Dexterity on 3d6.

Bin: A small bin holds two dozen torches, several lanterns and four oil flasks.

Chests: Under each bunkbed two chests hold the priests' personal gear. If the PCs search a chest, roll on the list below to determine what they find. Each item can be found only once.

1. **Coin Purse:** This small pouch holds 15 sp, 7 gp and 1 pp.
2. **Foul Parchment:** This long, unused, scroll is made from stretched skin. It is curled up in a bone scroll tube.
3. **Book:** Holding a series of litanies and personal prayers, this book is the work of one of the fane's adherents.
4. **Flask of Fine Brandy:** A small half-full bottle of brandy lies at the bottom of one chest. It is worth 10 gp.

12: CHAMBER OF THE DARK WARDEN

This sumptuously appointed chamber is the dwelling place of the fane's warden. Here are also kept the shrine's choicest treasures.

Chain Curtain: A floor-length chain curtain fills both entrances. It obscures sight of what lies beyond and inflicts a -20% penalty on Stealth check made to sneak into the room.

Curtains of fine chain fill the two entrances to this sumptuously appointed bedchamber.

Illumination: A permanent magic flame (a *continual flame*) cast on a brazier—or more accurately a lump of coal in the brazier—illuminates this chamber with flickering light.

Four-Poster Bed: This double bed has four black velvet curtains (each worth 50 gp) which hides whatever (or whoever) is in the bed. A skull-shaped finial tops each of the bed's posts.

Chests: One chest holds the Dark Warden's personal possessions. Another locked, metal-bound, oaken chest holds the fane's greatest treasures and several ceremonial objects. They include:

- **Silvered Skull:** This jawless skull has been dipped in molten silver. It is a macabre, sinisterly beautiful thing.
- **Serrated, Curved Dagger:** Used in sacrifices this old dagger is wrapped carefully in a scrap of black velvet.
- **Nameless Book:** Black of cover, and thick, this book is the Dark Warden's diary and personal notebook. Inside—in narrow, cramped handwriting—he has made a careful accounting of the cult, its practises and his own dark thoughts.

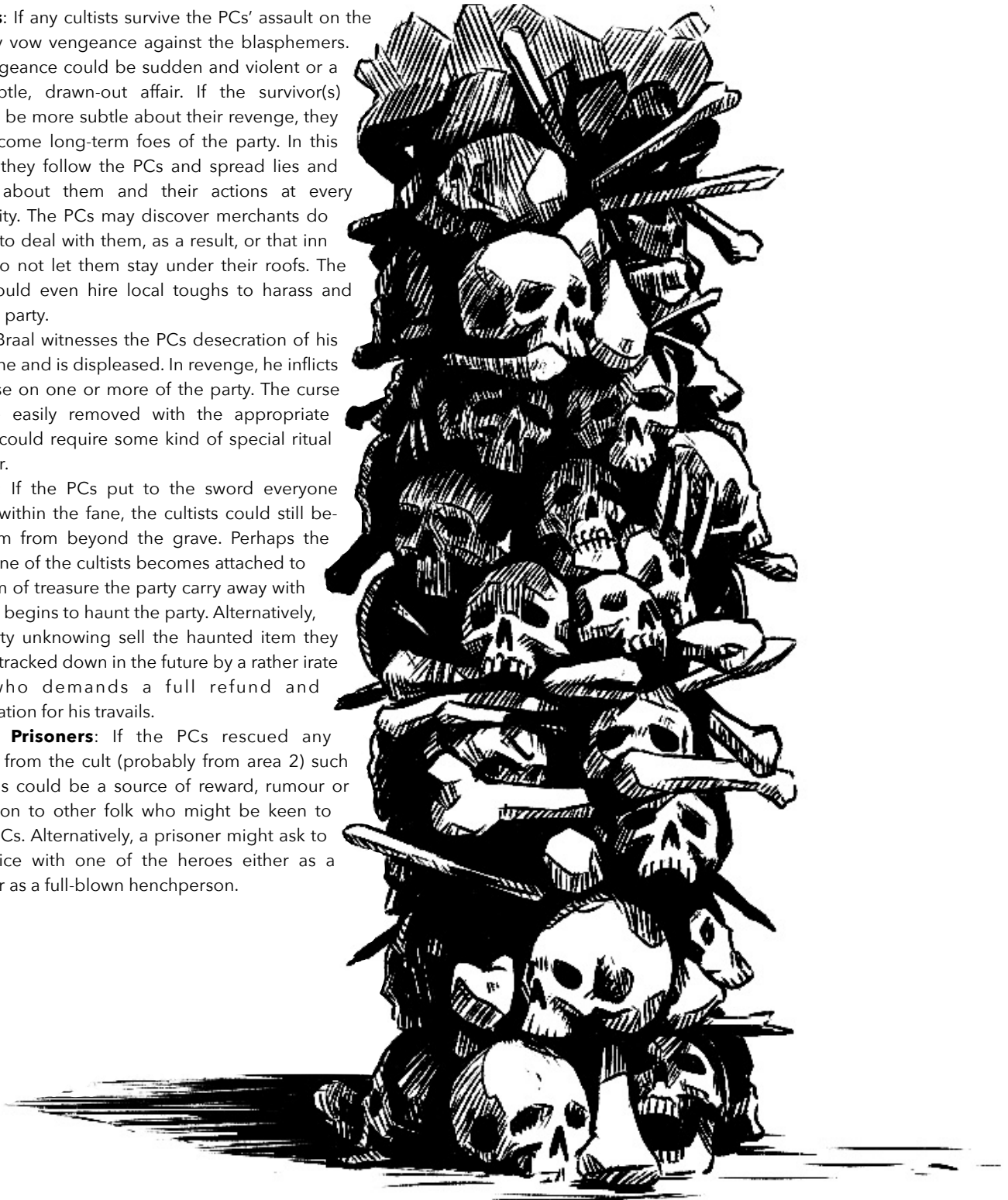
GM NOTES

The number of bunkbeds in area 11 should equal the number of minor priests serving the fane.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs have dealt with the fane's cultists, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end. While the PCs may forget all about the cultists and move on, surviving cultists might not necessarily forget about them.

- **Survivors:** If any cultists survive the PCs' assault on the fane, they vow vengeance against the blasphemers. Their vengeance could be sudden and violent or a more subtle, drawn-out affair. If the survivor(s) decide to be more subtle about their revenge, they could become long-term foes of the party. In this instance, they follow the PCs and spread lies and rumours about them and their actions at every opportunity. The PCs may discover merchants do not want to deal with them, as a result, or that inn owners do not let them stay under their roofs. The cultists could even hire local toughs to harass and attack the party.
- **Cursed:** Braal witnesses the PCs desecration of his unholy fane and is displeased. In revenge, he inflicts a fell curse on one or more of the party. The curse could be easily removed with the appropriate spells or could require some kind of special ritual to counter.
- **Haunted:** If the PCs put to the sword everyone dwelling within the fane, the cultists could still bedevil them from beyond the grave. Perhaps the spirit of one of the cultists becomes attached to some item of treasure the party carry away with them and begins to haunt the party. Alternatively, if the party unknowing sell the haunted item they could be tracked down in the future by a rather irate buyer who demands a full refund and compensation for his travails.
- **Rescued Prisoners:** If the PCs rescued any prisoners from the cult (probably from area 2) such individuals could be a source of reward, rumour or introduction to other folk who might be keen to hire the PCs. Alternatively, a prisoner might ask to take service with one of the heroes either as a hireling or as a full-blown henchperson.



THE SPLINTERED CRYPT

Famed for his unswerving devotion to his celestial lord and his magical sword, Demon Bane, Kal Voren was a paladin-hero of old. For five decades he stood between Ashlar's commonfolk and the darkness ever-pressing in on the small, isolated domain. Death is an implacable foe, however, and eventually old age caught up with the redoubtable paladin. Laid to rest not in the scared sepulchre below Tor Abbey but among the hills of his youth Kal Voren's legend—and stories of his legendary blade—live on long after his hidden crypt was lost to time.

A recently landslide, however, has returned Kal Voren's lost crypt to the world of men. And with it have returned the stories and legends of Demon Bane which is said to rest unclaimed and wielded with him in his sepulchre.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

The Order of the Watch Eternal has ever stood in the vanguard of the fight against evil and chaos. An order of paladins and warrior-priests devoted to Darlen (LG greater god of Law, Order, Justice and the Sun) its members are heroes and protectors to the commonfolk. Of the many illustrious personages who have filled the order's ranks few are as well-known or celebrated as the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren. Riding the land three centuries ago, Kal bore a magical sword of surpassing power. He called his blade *Demon Bane*, but it had another, older name: *Heaven's Fury*.

Kal fought the ever-gathering forces of darkness for almost five decades before dying peacefully in his sleep. Respecting his wishes, the order did not inter one of their greatest heroes in the

ADDITIONAL GM RESOURCES

Depending on your design for the Splintered Crypt, the following resources might be useful to you:

- *20 Things #6: Ancient Necropolis*
- *20 Things #16: Necromancer's Lair*
- *20 Things #29: Lich's Lair*
- *Monstrous Lair #8: Ghoul Nest*
- *Monstrous Lair #29: Vampire's Crypt*
- *Town Backdrop: Dunstone*

Additionally depending on your setup you might also need a town or village in which the PCs hear of the Splintered Crypt—Raging Swan Press has many such Village Backdrops available.

deep sepulchre beneath Tor Abbey. Instead, they dug for him a hidden tomb in the hills to the west of Dunstone near the nameless hamlet where he had grown up so long ago. Here, the hero rested, among the land of his forefathers.

However, the world did not forget Kal Voren or the mighty sword which he had borne for so many years. Many folk desired *Demon Bane* and sought the tomb. Kal Voren had foreseen this and had sent the sword away shortly before his death. This fact was unknown to all but a few at the time and now is all but forgotten, and thus adventurers still search for his tomb. A recent landslip has uncovered the hidden tomb and it is just a matter of time before unscrupulous adventurers loot the place.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can stumble on the Splintered Crypt by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the PCs to the crypt.

- **The Graven Door:** Rumours tell of a stone door graven with strange runes of unknown sort recently exposed by a landslip. The PCs learn of the door while resting in a nearby tavern's

CREIGHTON'S DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

Given the main feature of this small complex, when stocking the Splintered Crypt, you've essentially got three choices about the state of the crypt and what might dwell within:

1. **Looted:** In this instance, the crypt has been looted before the characters arrive—this doesn't mean, though, there is no treasure to be found within. The band of adventurers who looted the crypt could have suffered casualties during their exploration of the crypt. Those casualties could still be present...and they could have risen as undead (or their corpses could warn the characters of traps lurking ahead).
2. **Undisturbed:** The rock fall (area 2) is a recent occurrence and the PCs are the first to reach the crypt; thus, the crypt itself remains undisturbed—and ripe for plundering.
3. **Being Looted:** When the characters arrive, another band of adventurers is already in the crypt. The characters might discover their rival hirelings and campsite outside the crypt and have to negotiate or fight their way inside.

The Moral Dimension: This adventure has a moral dimension—if you want it to. The characters will—essentially—be exploring the tomb of a long-dead paladin. Depending on your setup, this may present certain moral challenges for some of the group who might be reluctant to loot the final resting place of a mighty hero of good and light.

Of course, your setup may also give the PCs the excuse they need to explore the tomb. Perhaps an evil band of adventurers has already set out for the crypt and are already inside looting the tomb. Thus, it is the characters' duty to safeguard Kal Voren's remains and any holy relics still in the crypt.

common room when they hear excited locals discussing the discovery. The locals know rumours 1,2, 3 and 4 from the sidebar below. Intrigued, the PCs decide to investigate.

- **The Graven Door #2:** As above, but a peasant was in the vicinity of the stone door just yesterday and reported a second smaller collapse of the nearby cliff has revealed what looked like a dusty corridor. Obviously, the commoner didn't get too close to investigate, but he will happily guide the PCs back there for a small fee. The PCs realise if the collapse is recent, the complex beyond the stone door has probably not yet been looted, and decide to investigate.
- **Priest of Darlen:** The party encounter a priest of Darlen looking for a trustworthy band of adventurers. The priest has heard of the recent landslip and the discovery of a hidden tomb. He knows who rests within the tomb and is troubled by reports of several adventuring bands preparing to loot the place. Of course, he worries about Kal Voren's eternal slumber being disturbed, but he also fears *Heaven's Fury* may fall into the wrong hands and begs the PCs to secure the blade before it is too late.

THE ORDER OF THE WATCH ETERNAL

Devoted to Darlen this order of holy warriors stands between Ashlar and the encroaching darkness. Its members are heroes and protectors of the common folk. Some of members delve into

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

If the characters think to learn more about the Splintered Tomb, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the characters learn:

1. The tomb is the final resting place of Kal Voren—a famed paladin-hero of old. Kal Voren was a mighty hero renowned both for his faith in unwavering Darlen and his magical sword, *Demon Bane*, with which he slew countless foes.
2. The tomb holds not only Kal Voren's remains but also the paladin's accumulated wealth from a long, storied adventuring career. (False rumour).
3. Ferocious monsters—orcs, ogres and worse—dwell in the hills near the newly discovered crypt. Several adventuring bands have already fallen to their depredations.
4. Several adventuring parties have heard of the recently discovered so-called Splintered Crypt and are preparing expeditions to find, explore and loot the place. Several of the parties involved have unsavoury reputations.
5. A terrible curse lies upon the tomb; within its ebon depths lie the unquiet spirit of an ancient sorcerer-king. Explorers will only find death and madness within. (False rumour).
6. Kal Voren was not a hero—he betrayed the Order of the Watch Eternal. That is why he is buried in this tomb and not in the order's sepulchre under Tor Abbey. (False rumour).

Gloomhold's sinister, benighted depths while others ride Ashlar's bounds in search of evil to drive back into the wilderlands.

The order maintains an extensive, well-defended sepulchre beneath Tor Abbey in which they inter their fallen members. Many followers of Darlen—paladins, fighters, cleric and the like—rest within.

SAMPLE MEMBERS & PATRONS

If you decide to use the "Priest of Darlen" hook, use one of the NPCs below. Both appeal to the PCs' good natures to recover *Demon Bane* and Kal Voren's remains, but will resort to bribery and pay if all else fails.

- **Kaija Timonen** (LG old female human cleric 3) nears the end of her days and worries the recent discovery of Kal Voren's tomb will result in his remains being desecrated. She further frets *Demon Bane* will fall into the wrong hands and become perverted by an unworthy wielder. Kaija walks stooped over with a cane, but remains indefatigable in her faith.
- **Sakari Ojanen** (LG male human paladin 2) energetically hurls himself into every day. Consumed with energy—and a determination to worship Darlen with his deeds—Sakari is a driven man. He dreams of wielding *Demon Bane* and smiting Darlen's foes like Kal Voren did of old. Unfortunately, Sakari cannot accompany the party as he must answer a summons to Tor Abbey, but he will await the party's news there.

THE CRYPT IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Splintered Crypt is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your characters to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make the place your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar and the Gloomhold megadungeon. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the complex comprise:

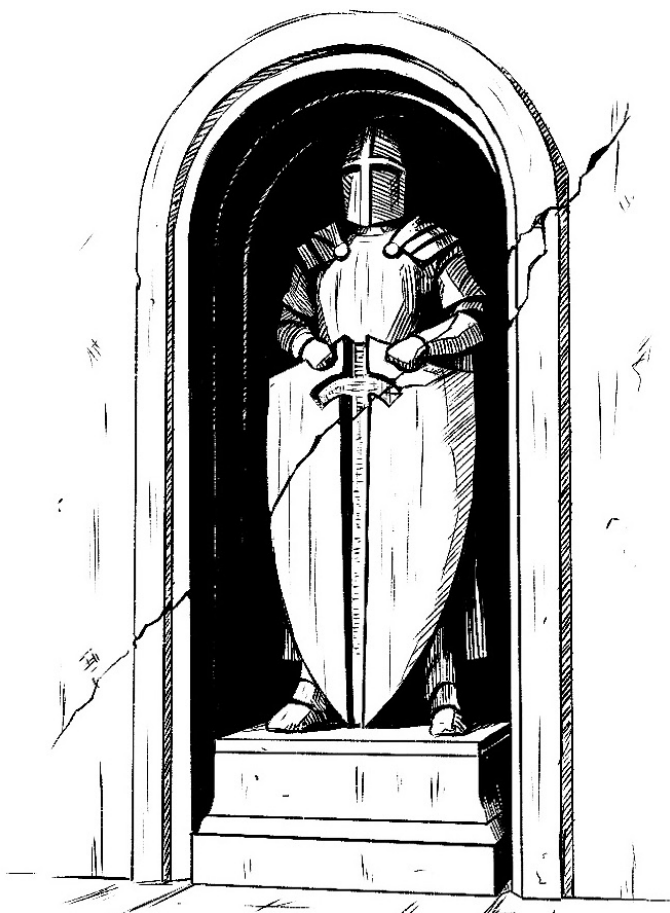
- **Self-Contained Crypt:** The Splintered Crypt is a small self-contained tomb that has lain undisturbed for centuries.
- **Long-Dead Hero:** Changing Kal Voren's identity and replacing him with an NPC of your own design is simple. Remember, though, you also might need to alter some of the tomb's cosmetic details to better suit the deeds and persona of the tomb's resident.

Because the crypt is essentially self-contained it could be placed anywhere in almost any campaign setting. It could even appear as an "add-on" or sub-level in a larger dungeon.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The Splintered Crypt is a small, self-contained dungeon complex. It has the following notable locales:

1. **The Graven Portal:** This heavy stone door wards the tomb. Beautifully ornate, flowing runes decorate the portal.
2. **Crumbled Wall:** This portion of the cliff has collapsed, creating a second entrance to the Splintered Tomb.
3. **Chamber of Wards:** Three deadly, camouflaged spear traps ward this chamber (and, originally the chambers beyond). The collapse at location 2 means explorers can bypass this area.
4. **Tahvo's Rest:** Herein lie the bones of Kal's faithful squire, Tahvo Ehtaro, who died shortly after his master. Together in life, they rest together in eternal slumber.
5. **Hall of Pillars:** Kal Voren's stone companion guard watch over the approaches to his tomb from four deep wall niches.
6. **Chamber of Deeds:** The now faded murals decorating this chamber's walls celebrate Kal Voren's most famed victories. The crypt's architect also included several clever traps here.
7. **False Tomb of Kal Voren:** Designed to fool tomb robbers and the like, this tomb is nothing but a decoy.
8. **True Tomb of Kal Voren:** Here lie the undisturbed remains of the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren.



DUNGEON DRESSING

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Here the floor is cracked and uneven and small pieces of rubble—fallen from the ceiling—lie scattered about.
2. Dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling and almost brush the floor. Tiny desiccated spider corpses hang therein.
3. A large carving of Darlen's holy symbol—a blazing, rising sun, —decorates the floor. Once painted in vivid reds and yellows, the now faded carven sun has a sullen air to it.
4. Water oozing down the wall has created a smear of faded colour down a once-fine, but now ruined, fresco.
5. A sudden gust of wind from location 2 stirs up the dust on the floor and it swirls around the characters' ankles.
6. Dust sifts down from the ceiling onto the characters' heads.
7. Outside, the wind howls down the valley; the faint sound reaching the characters could sound like a wolf's call.
8. A faint, chill feeling sweeps over the party and the shadows in one corner of the area seem to become denser and to have a certain, disquieting substance to them. (If the characters are looting the tomb, perhaps a ghostly guardian emerges from the shadows to attack.)

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Indistinct smudges in the dust could be footprints or they could be nothing more than dust blown by the breeze entering the tomb through area 2.
2. An old, tarnished silver holy symbol of Darlen lies on the floor amid the dust, where it was dropped centuries ago.
3. Carven graffiti on the wall reads, "Darlen preserve Kal Voren".
4. A small niche in the wall holds the remains of a burnt down candle. The candle stands on a wax-covered gold holder.
5. A pattern in the dust is vaguely reminiscent of Darlen's holy symbol. Is it a coincidence or does the Noble One yet watch over his servant's rest?
6. Part of the plaster onto which this fresco was painted has crumbled and fallen away, exposing the crypt's wall.
7. A loose flagstone hides a small niche in the floor; within lies the mouldering remains of some small offering to Kal Voren's eternal soul.
8. A particularly well preserved fresco—depicting Kal Voren in all his glory— adorns the wall.

GENERIC CRYPT FEATURES

The Splintered Crypt has the following generic features:

Illumination: Unless noted in the text, darkness fills the Splintered Crypt. Read aloud descriptions assume the characters can either see in the dark or have their own light sources.

Vaulted Ceilings: The Splintered Crypt has barrel vaulted ceilings. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings in corridors are about ten-foot high; in chambers they are 15-foot high.

Walls: The crypt's walls are of cut and dressed stone decorated with (now faded) frescos celebrating Kal Voren's life and deeds.

Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded, although some of the flagstones have shifted and moved over the centuries.

Wooden Doors: The crypt's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.

Air Quality: The air in areas 4 (and the corridor leading to the room), 6, 7 and 8 is stale. Elsewhere, the air in the tomb is fresh.

A NOTE ON TRAPS

When the crypt was dug from the living rock of the surrounding hills the architects included several cunningly designed and hidden traps in its design. Such features appear in areas 3 and 6, but could also feature in areas 4, 7 and 8. The state of these traps (if they exist) depends on your setup of the crypt. In particular, if another adventuring party has already breached the tomb, it is likely they have disarmed or set-off one or more of the traps.

OUTSIDE THE SPLINTERED CRYPT

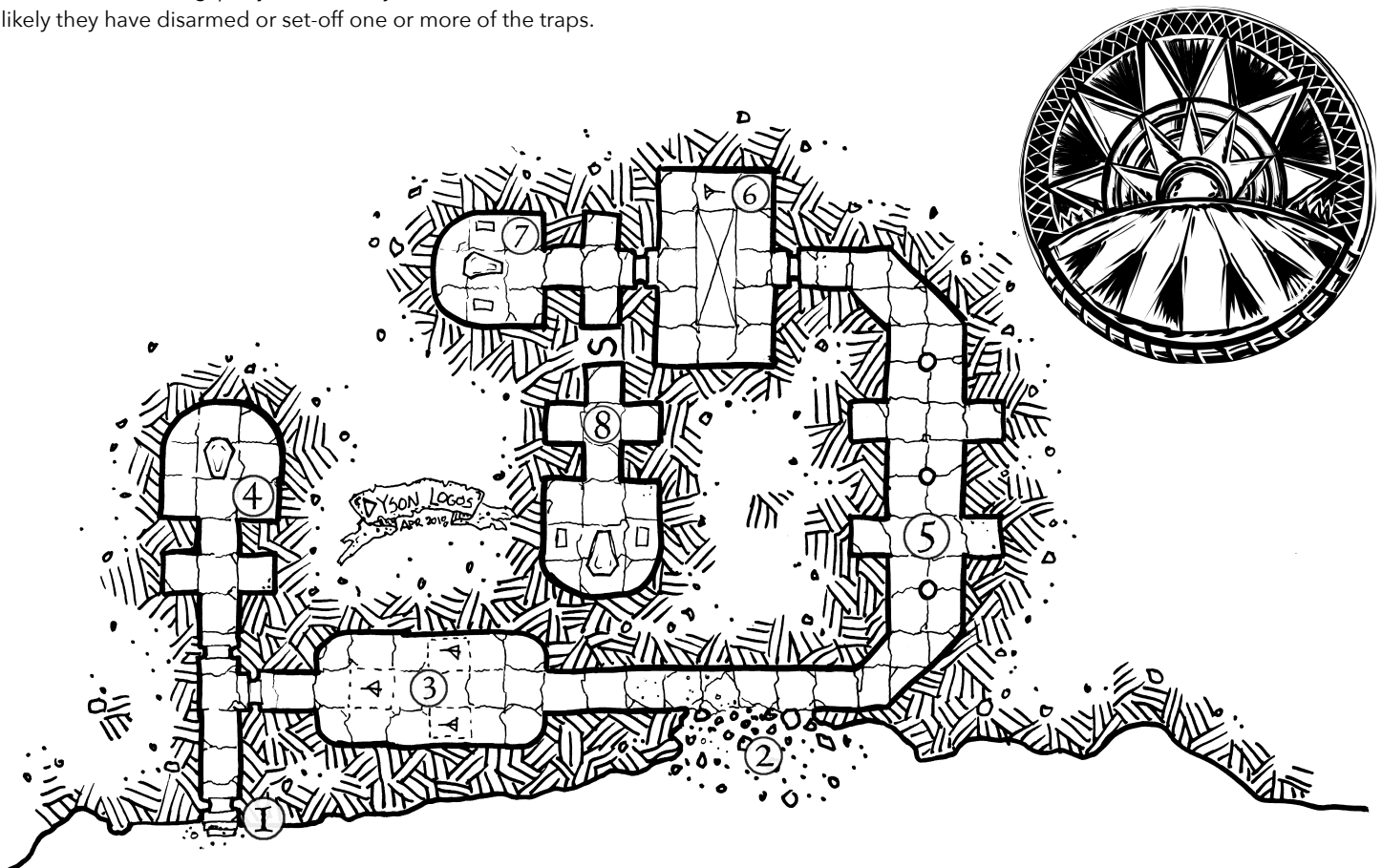
The Splintered Crypt lies in an isolated rocky valley a half-score of miles to the south and west of the town of Dunstone. It lies near a rocky promontory known throughout Ashlar as the Sphinx (for its decidedly singular, exotic appearance). The Sphinx is a well-known landmark lying along the dangerous trail wending its long way through the wild, monster-infested western hills to eventually reach the isolated castle-hold of Ravenscrag.

The area in the crypt's immediate vicinity comprises several steep-sided valleys. Some of the deeper valleys feature sheltered woodlands of elder trees which local legends populate with lurking creatures of foul and sinister intent. Isolated homesteads and tiny hamlets of woodcutters, hunters and the like dot the area.

RIVALS' CAMPSITE

Depending on the GM's setup there could be a campsite outside the Splintered Crypt. If another group of adventurers has already reached the site their retainers and servants—or the adventurers themselves—could be in camp when the characters arrive. This could set up an interesting role-playing encounter between the characters and their rivals (or their servants), or could herald the adventure's first combat.

The surrounding hills, as detailed above, are home to many dangerous monsters and the other adventurers no doubt know this. Thus, the camp's occupants are likely to be on their guard, and therefore difficult to surprise.



GM NOTES

The status of the traps in area 3 depends on your setup of the crypt. If the characters are not the first to explore the place, the traps may be sprung or disarmed. Similarly, the stone door in location 1 is a good place for a magical trap—perhaps exploding runes or a glyph of warding lurk among the door's runes.

1: THE GRAVEN PORTAL

Originally, this was the only entrance to Kal Voren's tomb.

A heavy stone door—covered in beautifully ornate, but now worn and pitted, runes and sigils—pierces the cliff.

Graven Stone Door: Graven with many religious symbols and the like, this heavy stone door wards the Splintered Tomb. Carved in the language of the heavens, the symbols read, *"Herein slumbers Kal Voren. Despair oh evil-doer at his goodness and righteousness"*.

2: CRUMBLED WALL

This portion of the cliff has collapsed, creating a second entrance to the Splintered Tomb.

Piles of rubble lie in front of a jagged gash in the cliff face. Beyond, a narrow passageway runs parallel with the cliff.

Dense Rubble: The rubble is difficult terrain; it slows movement rates by half and inflicts a -10% chance to move silently.

Illumination: Dim light fills the corridor within ten-foot of the collapsed wall. Darkness shrouds the rest of the area.

3: CHAMBER OF WARDS

Three deadly, camouflaged spear traps ward this chamber (and, originally the chambers beyond). The collapse at location 2 means explorers can bypass this area.

Opposite you, a single corridor leads away from this long and dusty, but empty chamber.

Traps: The crypt's builders placed several hidden traps here. They may—or may not—be active, depending on your design.

4: TAHVO'S REST

Herein lie the bones of Kal's faithful squire, Tahvo Ehtaro, who died shortly after his master. Together in life, they rest together in eternal slumber.

A stone sarcophagus, graven with many symbols, stands in the middle of this chamber. Faded frescoes depicting the same man at various stages of his life decorate the chamber's walls.

Stone Sarcophagus: Decorated with many graven symbols this stone sarcophagus has a heavy lid. A cleric or other character trained in matters of religion can identify several religious icons associated with Darlen. Inscribed over the symbols are the words, *"Tahvo Entaro, Faithful in Life, Faithful in Death"*.

INSIDE THE SARCOPHAGUS

The skeleton of a short, burly man, his arms crossed over his chest, lies in the sarcophagus. He is clad in chainmail and a longsword lies at his feet.

5: HALL OF PILLARS

Kal Voren's stone companion guard watch over the approaches to his tomb, from four deep wall niches.

Three slender pillars hold this long hallway's ceiling aloft. Four niches—two to the east and two to the west pierce the walls.

Stone Pillars: Carven images of weeping angles carrying Kal Voren to his rest decorate the pillars. Originally, the carvings were painted, but such decoration is now faded and has flaked away in many places.

These slender stone pillars provide partial cover (+2 AC) to anyone in an adjacent square.

The Companion Guard: Each of the four wall niches in this hall hosts a stone statue of a vigilant knight. Each wears plate mail and holds a large shield in front of them. Each shield has a carven groove in it sized for a longsword. Filling each carven groove with a longsword unlocks and opens the door to Kal Voren's true tomb. Removing the swords locks the secret door.

6: CHAMBER OF DEEDS

The faded frescos decorating this chamber's walls celebrate Kal Voren's most famed victories. The crypt's architect also included several traps here which may, or may not, be active.

Faded frescos depicting a noble warrior triumphing over a succession of terrifying demonic or undead foes decorate the walls of this chamber.

Faded Frescos: The frescoes here depict Kal Voren's greatest victories such as his banishment of the otherworldly fiend Bala Sygax, the Despot of the Smouldering Hills, and the utter destruction of the Lord of the Nineteen Obsidian Steps, the lich lord Namtar Anshan.

7: FALSE TOMB OF KAL VOREN

Designed to fool tomb robbers and the like, this tomb is nothing but a decoy.

A plain stone sarcophagus dominates the centre of this chamber; two wooden lecterns, black with age, flank the sarcophagus.

Plain Sarcophagus: This stone sarcophagus is a decoy placed here to deceive tomb robbers.

Plain Lecterns: Twin lecterns watch over Kal Voren's apparent resting place. The mouldering remains of old prayer books lie atop both.

INSIDE THE SARCOPHAGUS

A jumbled mass of bones lies among a variety of grave goods and the like. Chief among the dusty remains are a silver holy symbol of Darlen and a pitted, rusted sword with an ornate gold hilt.

GM NOTES

Kal Voren's false tomb (area 7) is an excellent place for a fell trap or the locale in which to encounter another adventuring party.

Additionally, the sarcophagus in Kal Voren's false tomb is likely stocked with treasures to placate any tomb robbers getting that far into the tomb.

8: TRUE TOMB OF KAL VOREN

The characters are the first explorers to discover this hidden chamber. Here lie the undisturbed remains of the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren.

Secret Door: A locked secret door wards Kal Voren's true tomb. Perceptive characters searching the tomb discover the door and a nearby loose stone in the wall. Prying out the stone reveals a small niche; a recessed carving of Darlen's holy symbol decorates the niche's rear wall. Placing a holy symbol of Darlen in the recessed carving unlocks and opens the secret door. Alternatively, a successful open locks roll unlocks the secret door.

A stone sarcophagus decorated with a carving in high relief of a skeleton at rest dominates this dusty, stuffy chamber. Two ornate lecterns carved to look like kneeling angels flank the sarcophagus.

Dusty: Dust lies thickly in this chamber.

Ornate Sarcophagus: A large, ornate sarcophagus stands in the centre of the room.

Lecterns: Ornate lecterns carved to look like kneeling angels holding aloft prayer books flank Kal Voren's sarcophagus.

INSIDE THE SARCOPHAGUS

Kal Voren's Remains: Preserved in death by his celestial lord's beneficence, Kal Voren appears as he did when he died—an elderly man with a careworn face. He wears simple white robes edged with silver and gold thread.

Inscription: The underside of the sarcophagus' lid bears the inscription, "*The Ravens and the Grey Mistress Show the Way.*" A graven image of a flaming sword points to the inscription. This is a clue to the hidden location of *Demon Bane*.

CONCLUSION

Once the characters have explored the Splintered Crypt, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end.

Desecrated Crypt: Depending on who you decide slumbers in the crypt the characters may have to decide what to do about the desecrated paladin's tomb. Its location is now general knowledge and even if the characters have defeated any immediate threat to the place other adventurers will no doubt eventually try their luck in Kal Voren's tomb.

Where Lies Demon Bane?: *Demon Bane* (or *Heaven's Fury* to give the weapons its original name) does not lie with Kal Voren in his tomb. Characters aware of the hero-paladin's famed weapon may well wonder where it now rests. If the group counts a paladin among its ranks the quest for *Demon Bane* could become a personal goal for that character. Alternatively, any follower of Darlen would surely like to ensure the weapon remains in the faith and is not borne by a non-believer (or even worse, falls in the hands of the faith's enemies).

Characters discovering the inscription in Kal Voren's sarcophagus have their first clue regards the sword's location, but the significance of the carving may not be immediately clear.



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