

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 10

8 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
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About this Magazine

Dungeon Vault Magazine is all about providing interesting ideas and lore to DMs and storytellers. Within this issue, you will find varied adventure ideas.

These short modules do not stick to a unified template of sections. Instead, they are organically created and follow their own pace. The types of modules you can expect are city/town settings, regional settings, dungeons, outdoor locations, encounter maps, and one-page adventures.

The modules are written with 5th ed. OGL in mind but rules are often left to a minimum. Most adventures are appropriate for low to mid-level (Levels 1 to 10) adventuring parties. We include a note at the beginning of each adventure with a ballpark estimation of party level and playing time.

As the DM, you are free to change or modify any or all the information found here. NPC names and settlement names are the first you should consider changing to accommodate any homebrew-world lore. All material in this release is intended personal use.

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They say the treasure is enough to make the royal family blush, but no one has ever returned, no. It is too dangerous!

Local Tavernkeeper

THE SCARLET VAULT



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

ADVENTURE HOOK

What follows is the description of an underground vault complex where a large treasure is hidden. Or so the local legends say. No one knows for sure what is in there because no one has returned from the place. The vault is located deep underground. As the DM, you can place the vault under a great city, deep in the mountains, or in any underground location you deem appropriate for the setting. The vault in particular is no secret at all. There are local legends about it and gossip about its contents. But it has become a taboo subject because no one has dared to visit the place for a long time. There is a monument in town to a faceless adventurer where people mark the number of people who have tried to rob the vault but never returned.

To make matters more personal for the adventurers, you may choose to make the Scarlet Vault the resting place of an ancient piece of equipment, weapon, spell, book, or anything the adventurers are looking for. Whatever important MacGuffin they need for their current quest is now hidden in the Scarlet Vault. This adventure is appropriate for 4-6 level 6 adventurers.

THE VAULT

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 9 correspond to the Scarlet Vault map.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The underground vault complex features rough granite flooring. The granite slabs are old and eroded. Some of them sustain burnt marks and splotches of dried

volcanic lava. Moving through a square partially covered by lava (as in area 8) is considered difficult terrain. Jumping over a canal requires a successful DC 11 Strength (Athletics) check. Failure by 5 or more causes the creature to fall into the lava.

Lava. Falling into the lava pit or the lava canals is a constant danger in the Scarlet Vault. The molten lava has a high density and viscosity and a person falling into it does not sink quickly. A creature that falls into the lava takes 21 (6d6) fire damage on the first round, 35 (10d6) fire damage on the second round, and 70 (20d6) fire damage on the third and any subsequent rounds. If the creature manages to escape the lava, it still takes 21 (6d6) fire damage at the beginning of its next turn outside of the molten rock. This happens again at the beginning of the next two turns unless the creature spends an action removing the pieces of molten rock attached to its body. Dousing the creature with water prevents any subsequent damage too.

Doors. The doors are unlocked and made from large stone slabs that stand on subtle rails on the floor. A creature can push the doors aside with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

Light. The lava from the main chamber provides bright red light in the chamber and any adjacent rooms. Other areas and the stairs are in complete darkness.

Smells and Sounds. The whole complex has a smell of sulfur and ashes. The low-pitched grumbling sound from the revolving lava is ever-present in the vault.

Respawning. The skeletal guardians and the fire elementals in the vault reform and return to their positions 1d6 days after being destroyed. A switch inside the main vault turns off the traps and respawning measures (see area 9).

1. VAULT ENTRANCE

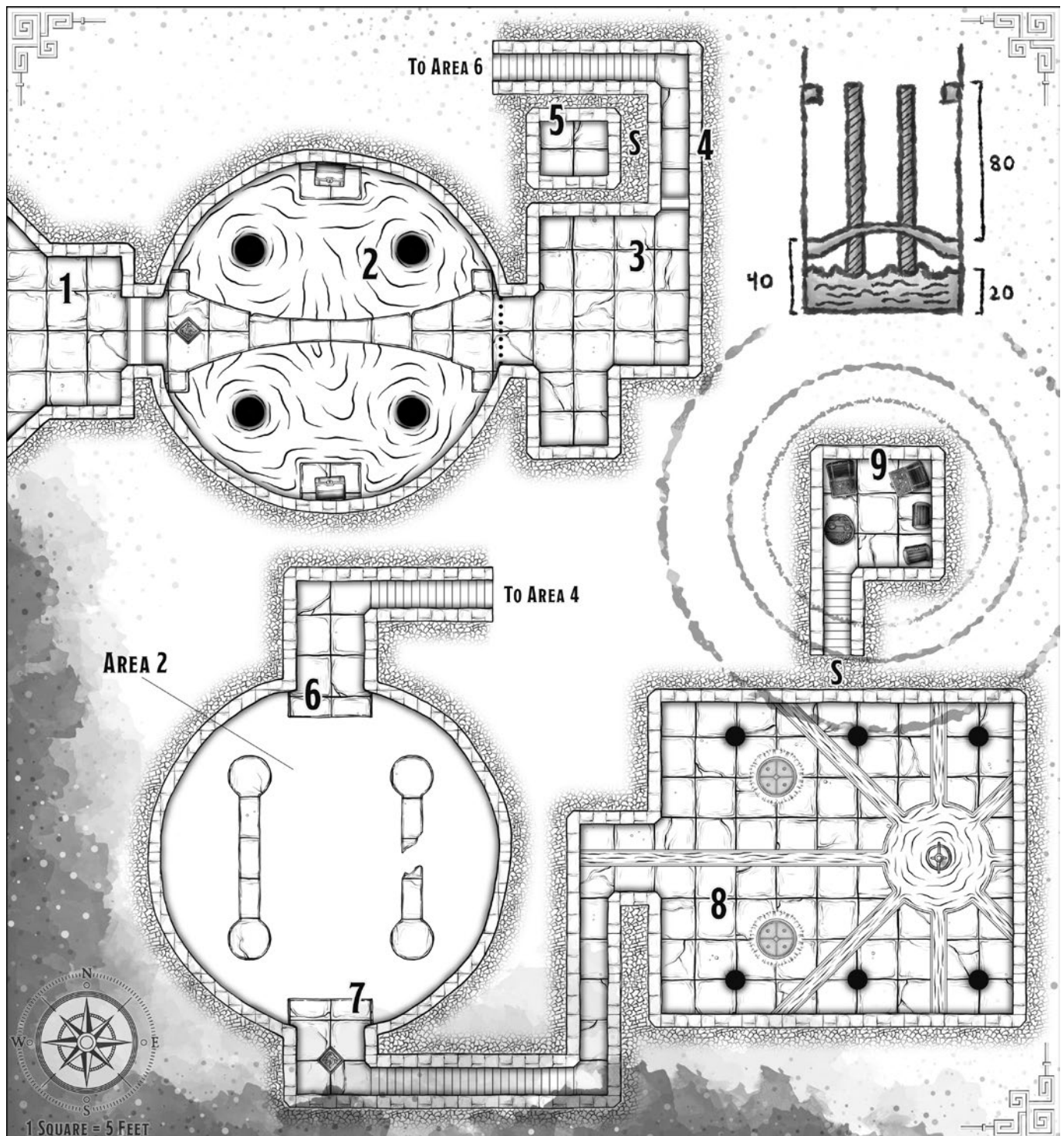
The grand doors that lead to the Scarlet Vault are 20 feet tall. An expertly made bas-relief on their surfaces depicts two pit fiends on a bloody battle arena. Scores of demonic entities clamor from the audience around the two warriors. Pushing the doors apart releases a gust of burning hot air to gush out of the lava pit.

2. THE LAVA PIT

This is a round shaft-like chamber with no floor. The only way to reach the barred door on the other side is by walking over a thin stone bridge that crosses 15-20 feet over the molten rock below. Four stone pillars hold a passage-

way 80 feet above. There are four **skeleton guardians** on top of the pillars (area 6). They attack any creatures that enter the lava pit (area 2) and try to cross the bridge or access the two stone chests close to the lava surface. The skeleton guardians have cover if the adventurers attack them from this area.

The iron-barred gate at the end of the bridge lifts when the stone button close to the entrance is pressed with at least 60 pounds. The iron bars fall back down quickly when the button is released. The creature pressing the button can attempt to run to area 3 before the iron bars fall with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.



SKELETON GUARDIAN

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (armor scraps)

HP 30 (5d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Harpoon Arrow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. The target must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid having the arrow lodged to a piece of armor or equipment. The skeleton guardian can spend an action to pull the target 5 feet if the target fails a DC 14 Strength saving throw. The target can spend an action to remove the harpoon arrow from its body.

Trapped Chest. The north chest is empty; it is a trap. If a creature opens the chest lid, a gust of wind emerges from inside. The creature must make a successful DC 14 (Strength or Dexterity) saving throw to avoid falling into the lava pit. The trap resets magically after 1d4 hours.

Treasure. The south chest contains a leather pouch with 200 gp, a strange belt with a pewter buckle (70gp), an ornate soapstone vase, in poor condition (25gp), and an ornamental silver figurine of a beholder, set with a jasper (95gp).

3. THE MYSTERIOUS SCONCE

This is a seemingly empty room. The only thing of notice is an iron torch on a sconce on the north wall, next to the stone door. The torch is interestingly placed in a room that requires no light sources because of its proximity to the lava pit. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals that the sconce is a lever. A creature can determine that pulling the lever causes several orifices on the ceiling to open with a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The purpose of this remains unclear.

If a creature pulls the lever, a dozen orifices on the ceiling open and release streams of liquid lava on the 20 by 20 section of the room (the 10 by 10 south alcove is safe).

Any creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

4. STAIRS ACCESS

This is a pitch-black hallway that turns west into a stairway that ascends 80 feet to area 6. The walls in the stairs section are decorated with one-inch-diameter pieces of stained glass of different colors that form a grand mural that extends throughout the stairs. It is difficult to make out the image because of the proximity but it portrays a pit fiend demon sitting on a throne of bones. Thousands of smaller demons bow before it as a sign of fear and respect.

Secret Door. A passive Perception of 14 or higher reveals the outline of a secret door on the west wall. Pushing an adjacent brick causes a section of the wall to move aside and reveal a secret passage to area 5.

5. FAKE VAULT

This room is a decoy vault designed to confuse and harm any visitors. There are two skeletons on the floor of this room. The bones have burnt marks on them. The west wall of the fake vault features a bas-relief of a grinning demon.

Firejets Trap. The floor of this chamber is a pressure plate that triggers a firebolt trap when at least 40 pounds of weight is applied to it. When the trap is triggered, holes on the floor open and release excess heat from the lava below in the form of fiery jets. Any creature in the chamber and the secret passage must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

6. NORTH BALCONY

The north balcony overlooks the lava pit. The top of the four pillars form platforms where four **skeleton guardians** stand with their bows ready (unless they have already been defeated from area 2). Slim rock passages join the north and south platforms.

If the adventurers defeat the skeleton guardians and attempt to cross over to the south balcony, the skeleton guardian hiding in area 7 may try to activate the trap button there to drop the adventurers into the lava pit (see below).

7. SOUTH BALCONY

The south balcony overlooks the lava pit. A **skeleton guardian** hides by the stairs, waiting for the perfect moment to push the button near the balcony. Pushing the button causes the four pillars and the passageways to collapse into the lava pit below. The guardian waits until at least two adventurers are over the collapsible structures. When the pillars collapse, any creatures on them must make a successful DC 15 dexterity saving throw to fall

on the bridge or the stone chests 80 ft. below, in area 2. Falling this way still causes 24 (7d6) bludgeoning damage. Otherwise, they fall into the lava pit and take both the falling damage and the lava damage.

The pillars are a magical trap that resets at dawn. The pillars remerge from the lava and the passageways reform.

8. LAVA FOUNTAIN

A magical fountain and pond next to the east wall dominate the room. The fountain is an arcane device that heats the rock and keeps it in liquid lava form. The lava flows from the pond in two-foot-wide canals that feed the main lava pit and the other contraptions in the complex. When any creature enters this chamber, the two magical circles on the floor activate and summon two **fire elementals**. There are two **skeleton guardians** by the easternmost pillars. They shoot their arrows from behind the lava canals.

Secret Door. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the outline of a secret door on the north wall, behind a pillar. Pushing an adjacent brick causes a section of the wall to move aside and reveal a secret passage to area 9.

9. THE VAULT

A short 10-foot-long flight of stairs leads up to the main vault. There are several wooden chests, a wooden table, and a few metal shelves on the walls. There are all kinds of valuable objects and coins in the chests and shelves.

A large metal lever on the north wall is in the “up” position. Pulling the lever down deactivates the lava fountain in area 8, turns off all traps in the underground complex, and destroys any remaining guardians in the vault. This also stops the respawning magic for the guardians. The lava remains in liquid form for at least 1d6 hours after turning off the fountain. Returning the lever to the “up” position reactivates the vault entirely but it gives the user a window of 30 minutes before it all returns to normal.

Treasure. The vault contains the following: 2200 gp, 3400 sp, 1800 cp, and three diamonds (300 gp each). An engraved belt with a marble buckle (80gp), a sturdy belt with a silver buckle (60gp), a strange ceramic figurine of a thief, set with blue quartz (60gp), an antique granite figurine of a skeleton (60gp), a strange pewter vase, inlaid with maple wood (110gp), a sturdy dragonbone plate, inlaid with mithral (450gp), a marble framed painting of a fish (150gp), and an engraved pewter vase decorated with a moonstone (125gp). One of the shelves holds a +2 *longsword*, a +1 *chain shirt*, and a *spell scroll* of *greater restoration*.



Remember, dying there is lethal. Your mind would be trapped forever. You must succeed!

Jitan, Court Wizard

THE CURSE OF KING TRUP



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

BACKGROUND LORE

The City of Trupos is experiencing dire times. King Cornelius Trup has been unconscious for weeks now. Jitan, the court wizard and the King's best friend is desperate. His powers have been enough to keep the king alive, but he knows this is not sustainable. He must find a way to cure the king, and soon.

It all began when King Trup came back from a long journey inside the country. Passing by the deep, dark forest about a day from Trupos, the royal carriage had to stop due to something blocking the road. It was the body of a massive elk. The beast looked weak and wounded, but it was alive. Beside it, a white-haired woman wept loudly. The woman stopped sobbing when she saw the carriage. She stood up and approached the king's guards.

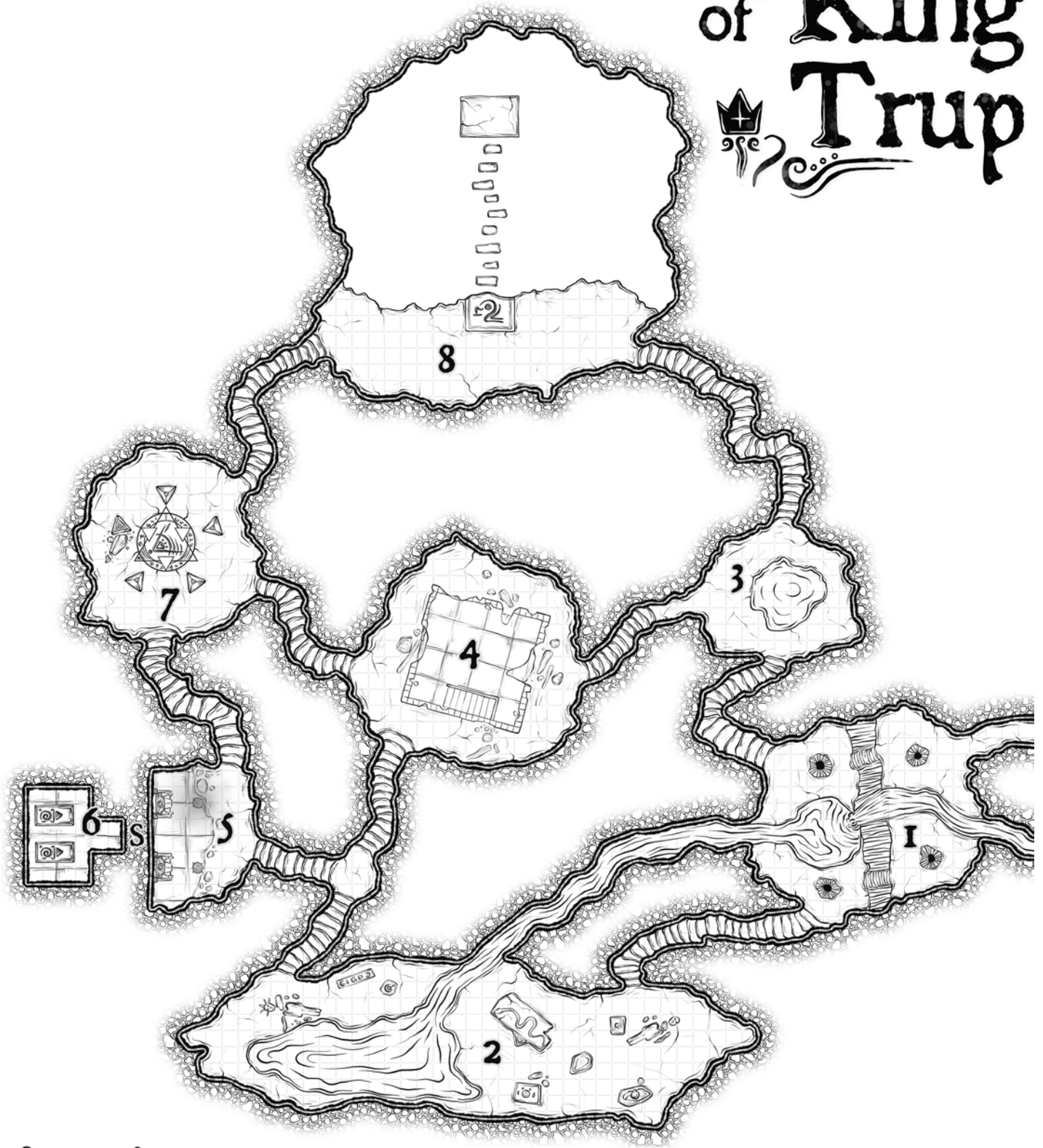
The frail lady introduced herself as a free spirit of the forest, her name was Esmeralda. She asked for help. She said the elk was her friend, and that she could not bear its loss. The guard's informed the king, who just gave a glance through the gold-inlaid window of his varnished wood carriage. Jitan, his friend and counselor, recommended he should consider helping the woman since she could be protected by the forces of nature and wild magic. The King was in a hurry to arrive home and lie down on his feather-stuffed pillows. Hence, with a swift move of his hand and an unpleasant grimace, he ordered his men to move the animal body aside and continue. The guards did as he asked without question while the woman tried to stop them in vain. Before leaving, Esmeralda cursed the king and yelled at his cold-hearted will. She shouted at the top of her lungs that the spirits of the woods have long memories and hold large grudges.

Jitan could not hold it and he confronted the king when they were in the royal palace. The loyal wizard spoke his mind because he was concerned. But the king's pride turned into arrogance. King Cornelius wasn't going to let anybody tell him what to do, he ordered Jitan to leave him alone. The wizard, reluctantly followed his command, wishing the woods witch wasn't serious with her threat.

The poor wizard couldn't have been more wrong. The king did not wake up the day after that. His majesty's bed is now a constant pool of sweat and King Trup's sleeping screams can be heard hundreds of feet away. He is in a sort of unconscious state. He doesn't wake up, but he is not asleep or unconscious either. Cornelius scratched his face and ripped his clothes during the night. So the servants had to tie his arms and legs to the bedposts to prevent him from harming himself any further. Jitan's magic helps to buy time but the wizard needs some rest too.

After some research, Jitan concludes that the king needs an internal intervention. He pulled one of the ancient magical books from the royal library. Inside, he found a ritual to bring the minds of willing subjects into another's. He figured this was the right way to help the king. The people used for the ritual must be powerful warriors for the mind of the king could be swamped by indescribable horrors, so the first thought was the most capable men in the city, the royal guard. However, Jitan isn't completely sure that he has what it takes to pull this off. It could be dangerous for the subjects. He fears for the life of his king and friend, but he cannot risk the lives of innocent guards either, less so the lives of every single royal guard in Trupos. Hence, the royal court orders all city guard commanders to rally their men and find a group of adventurers. Jitan hates himself for doing so, but the severity of the ritual must remain a secret, otherwise, nobody would accept the risk. They

The Curse of King Trup



1 Square = 5 ft.

look in taverns, inns, and brothels until they find a group of renowned heroes.

They are summoned to the royal court. After a brief interview with Jitan, in which the wizard determines if the heroes are to be trusted and if they are skilled enough to help, he asks them to follow him to the king's chambers. Of course, he assures a hefty pay and reward if they succeed.

Inside the room, Jitan performs the ancient ritual. He warns the adventurers about the risk of dying inside the mind of the king; their minds would be lost forever. He draws a 10-foot-diameter magic circle in front of the king's bed and he also explains that they might need to find a similar circle in the king's mind to be able to get out. The court wizard proceeds to transport the spirits of the heroes into the king's mind. The lifeless bodies of the heroes fall on the floor, as if in eternal sleep.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 8 correspond to King Trup's representation of this mind and thoughts.

Terrain. The mind of the king is a foreign plane in itself. The soil of the mind cave is made out of fine red sand.

Light. Even though there are no sources of light inside this pocket plane, all areas are bright and clear, as if touched by sunlight.

Smells and Sounds. The whole mental realm doesn't have an odor. And the only sound that can be heard is a sort of wind gushing around the walls.

Surfing Through the Mind. King Trup's mind is trapped in the dreamscape. The memories found through the mental maze are representations of the king's grudges, hobbies, or regrets. Each area contains enemies to be defeated and there is a riddle to be answered. Only when all enemies are dealt with and the riddle solved, do the flying steps in area 8 appear.

About Direction. The king's dreamscape is a pocket self-contained dimension with limited existence. There is no north or south. The map depicts compass rose as a reference to avoid confusion. Descriptions below use this point of reference to depict the contents of the areas.

1. ENTRANCES

The mind of the king is a turmoil of feelings and souvenirs. Half the heroes arrive from the eastern tunnel, and the rest are brought to the same area floating on the river. The water looks crystal clear and it is warm to the touch. Strangely enough, those who were in the water aren't wet at all. Going back from either way doesn't lead anywhere. If the heroes go back from where they came they arrive at the same spot a minute later.

Two irregular stone pillars flank the artificial river, which continues 30 feet below. The waterfall becomes a small pond and continues to the west to area 2. The 30-foot-tall cliff has two sets of carved handles to climb down. Two more pillars flank the pond below.

When the adventurers are halfway down, four dream hunters (**shadows**) come out of the water. They attempt to attack those who are still climbing down. These creatures are responsible for the king's screams and his mental suffering.

2. MONUMENTS IN RUINS

This large area holds some of the king's memories. There are several destroyed idols and statues scattered all over the fine sand. The water stream ends here in a large pool of water. The broken sculptures correspond to some of the famous historical monuments in the City of Trupos. One of them is a depiction of King Trup himself. There is a narrow tunnel north of this area, just past King Trup's shattered statue on the ground.

The middle section of the pool looks darker than the rest. When the heroes approach the water, two **black puddings** come out and attack them. These are the mental representations of the king's darkest thoughts.

3. LAKE OF STARS

King Trup is an admirer of the stars and constellations of the universe. He spends hours looking through his golden telescope. He is no savvy, but he finds immense peace when he watches the bright candles in the sky. This lake represents his love for the stars and their place in the universe.

The water is dark as the night. The ripples and wrinkles in the water have their tides. White stars shine and change places in the shifting water. Any creature that looks directly to the stars in the water must make a successful DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed as if targeted by a *hypnotic pattern* spell. The creature stands idle by the lake of stars, watching in awe, in a complete state of stupor.

Once one of the adventurers becomes charmed by the lake, two dream hunters (**wraiths**) and two **shadows** come out of the lake and attack any hypnotized creature first.

4. DESTROYED TOWER

This tower is part of King Trup's youth memories. Many years ago, when the king was just a prince, he had a friend in the military named Tyler. He was very skilled and a sword prodigy. The young lad stepped up the ranks and earned the title of Royal Guard. He became friends with the heir to the throne and used to give him fencing lessons. One day the city was attacked by an evil dragon. And even if the defense was successful, Tyler's squad and

his outpost were obliterated. The tower where Tyler kept watch at was destroyed by the dragon's lethal fire. After the commotion, the prince wanted to know if his friend was safe and sound. When he heard the reports he went to see the tower and the blankets covering several bodies on the ground. He never got to say good-bye.

The tower walls are darkened and they show burn marks all over. The second level of the tower is in similar conditions. Several pieces of charred wood and stone litter the ground around the tower. There are two tunnels to the east and south of this area. The **ghost** of Tyler haunts this tower and it attacks any creature that approaches it. The moment Tyler ghost attacks, two dream hunters (**wraiths**) materialize beside it and attack as well.

5. THE CONTRAST OF A HEART

There are two large, identical statues of King Trup seating on the royal throne. Two 3-foot-tall pedestals on the floor hold a crystal at the top. The yellow crystal shines

with a warming orange light. The blue crystal has a cold sapphire glow to it. The two statues and their correspondent crystals represent the two sides of the king's heart. One is its warmth and love to the world and others, it has a soft smile and its face expresses kindness. The other is the complete opposite; an angry look with a twisted mouth pressing its teeth conveys evil. A successful DC 13 Intelligence check allows a character to realize the south statue represents good.

Any interaction with the lights or the statues wakes both of them up. The eyes of one of them share the light of the yellow crystal, while the other one features cold blue eyes. The two stone kings (**earth elementals**) arise and start to fight each other. Without any intervention, the blue-eyed elemental wins. It beheads the yellow-eyed statue with a massive swing of its fist. The yellow crystal stops glowing while the blue one shines brighter. Its victory recovers its vigor and the evil version of the king regains all its Hit

Points. It continues its rampage against the heroes.

If the heroes concentrate their fire on the evil elemental specifically, the yellow-eyed elemental turns out victorious. The blue crystal stops glowing and the yellow one shines brighter. However, if the adventurers attack both elementals at the same time, they join forces and fight together. Defeating the evil depiction of the king is the first step to solving the dream riddle.

Secret Passage. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the outline of loose bricks on the west wall. The bricks can be easily removed with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

6. HIDDEN VAULT

A small portion of the king's mind is aware of the heroes' presence. In an effort to save himself, he looks for a way to communicate with the heroes. This room contains two identical sarcophagi. Each of them has a corpse of King Trup. When the adventurers open either of them, the remains of the king inside grab the nearest creature by the clothes and say: "Read the letters, erase my past and cleanse my heart". After which it falls again, immobile.

Both sarcophagi have an old parchment inside. They are letters. One of the letters describes how the king regrets many of the things he did during his lifetime. The second letter is just ram-



blings and complaints about how he did not have it easy and blames his misfortune on others. Any creature that takes the papers in their hands knows they must return the letter of complaints into the sarcophagus where it was found and keep the letter of regrets. This is a way to bury all negative thoughts with the king and leave them to die.

7. BROKEN OBELISK

This area is the physical representation of the king's relationship with Jitan, the court wizard. One of the five obelisks of the circle is broken. This is because their friendship has deteriorated. The king used to listen to the wise words of his wizard friend more often. Since he stopped, fed by his pride and vanity to always be right, he hasn't taken the best decisions on various occasions.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals this is the circle from which they need to escape. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to lift the broken obelisk and put it in its place. The stone magically attaches and glues itself to the base. However, even if the circle is restored, it doesn't work until the king's mind is freed. To do so, the heroes must visit area 8 and cure his mind with the cleansing stone (area 8).

8. FLYING STEPS

A pitch-black abyss dominates this area. In the center, at the edge of the immense cliff, there is a large stone slab with a rune inscribed on it. There is a yellowish platform about a hundred feet from the cliff, floating about 50 feet above ground level. When the heroes arrive, a spectral figure materializes on top of the stone slab. A massive elk lying on its side. It appears wounded and weak. A woman made of mist stands beside it. She has glowing red eyes, her fingernails are long and sharp, and her robes are torn and filthy. The woman sobs softly but she stops when the heroes approach. She asks them with a firm voice: "What shall you do? Might the brave heroes help a woman in distress and her animal friend? Or perhaps you don't trust me, and you would just push me aside..."

This is the exact event that brought the king to his current state. The heroes must use their criterion and decide what to do. If they trust the woman and help the elk, Esmeralda's body comes back to normal and she stops looking like an evil spirit. She thanks the adventurers and says: "This fool of a king might learn a thing or two from you, go ahead, heal the bastard." And she points at the steps that start floating towards the cleansing stone above the abyss.

However, if the adventurers are hesitant to help her or decide not to, Esmeralda (**night hag**) becomes hostile. Two dream hunters (**wraiths**) ascend from the dark pit

and help the witch. She yells: "You lot are just alike! Why do I even bother?? I'd rather just kill your right here and now! I'll take care of your minds later." When the hag is defeated, a set of floating steps that goes up to the cleansing stone appears.

Either way the adventurers choose to deal with this problem takes them to the large platform. There, King Trup's letter of regrets shines bright and burns, though the flames don't hurt. The cleansing stone helps the king attune for his sins and releases him from the curse.

Reaching the Platform. If the adventurers reach the platform by any other means besides the floating steps, the cleansing energy doesn't burn the letter of regrets. The only way to heal the king's mind is by dealing with the spirit witch.

DEVELOPMENT

King Trup wakes up an hour after the heroes return to their former bodies. Jitan asks the royal servants to serve the heroes a royal feast. His majesty is weak and famished, but he summons the heroes to thank them in person. He grants them the title of Ally of Trupos which allows them to stay anywhere in the city and the crown shall pay for their daily expenses. He also commands his servants to bring a large wooden chest. King Trup pays his saviors with gold and silverware, sophisticated pieces of art, and accessories and items inlaid with precious stones.

Treasure. The chest contains 50 platinum pieces, 1,500 gold pieces, and 5,000 silver pieces. A collection of fancy spoons, forks, knives, and plates (250 gp), and a small collection of six golden goblets with small rubies on the sides (350 gp). An ornate granite figurine of a snake with jade eyes (250 gp), a marble drinking horn inlaid with glass (125 gp), an ornamental belt with a silver buckle (80 gp), an antique fur cloak with marble clasps (120 gp), and an oak framed painting of a tower (100 gp). The king also gifts the heroes one of his favorite weapons. A *+1 heavy crossbow*, and Jitan expresses his gratitude with a *cloak of invisibility* and four *potions of greater healing*.

This guy, here? Bah! He was just another murderer like us. He just murdered the right people... Attack!

Golden Teeth, Dark Hand's Leader

A STATUE ON THE ROAD



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

BACKGROUND LORE



Statues and busts of remarkable individuals are built periodically. These expressions of art come to be for many reasons. People's desire to remember someone, religious zealotry, or merely the vanity of an egocentric king is enough for gold to be spilled on the best sculptors and artists. The story behind Tai Kalum's statue is controversial. But whatever they say, Tai Kalum was immortalized, and the 35-foot-tall sculpture is a landmark in the outskirts of the small town of Harriet.

It all started with The Holy Guard about two years ago, the criminal faction in Harriet. Fat Tommy was the alderman of the town, and he bought and corrupted every single one of the guards in it. This group of uniformed bullies and thugs demanded every one of the small businesses in town paying for "security". It was all a scam, of course. And those who missed to pay on time got what they deserved by the very same hands that "protected them" in the first place. The people in Harriet were in a dire situation. They had no one to run to. Tai Kalum lost his business to these men. The Holy Guard burned the half-orc's fruit and vegetables shop after he failed to comply with the monthly security tax.

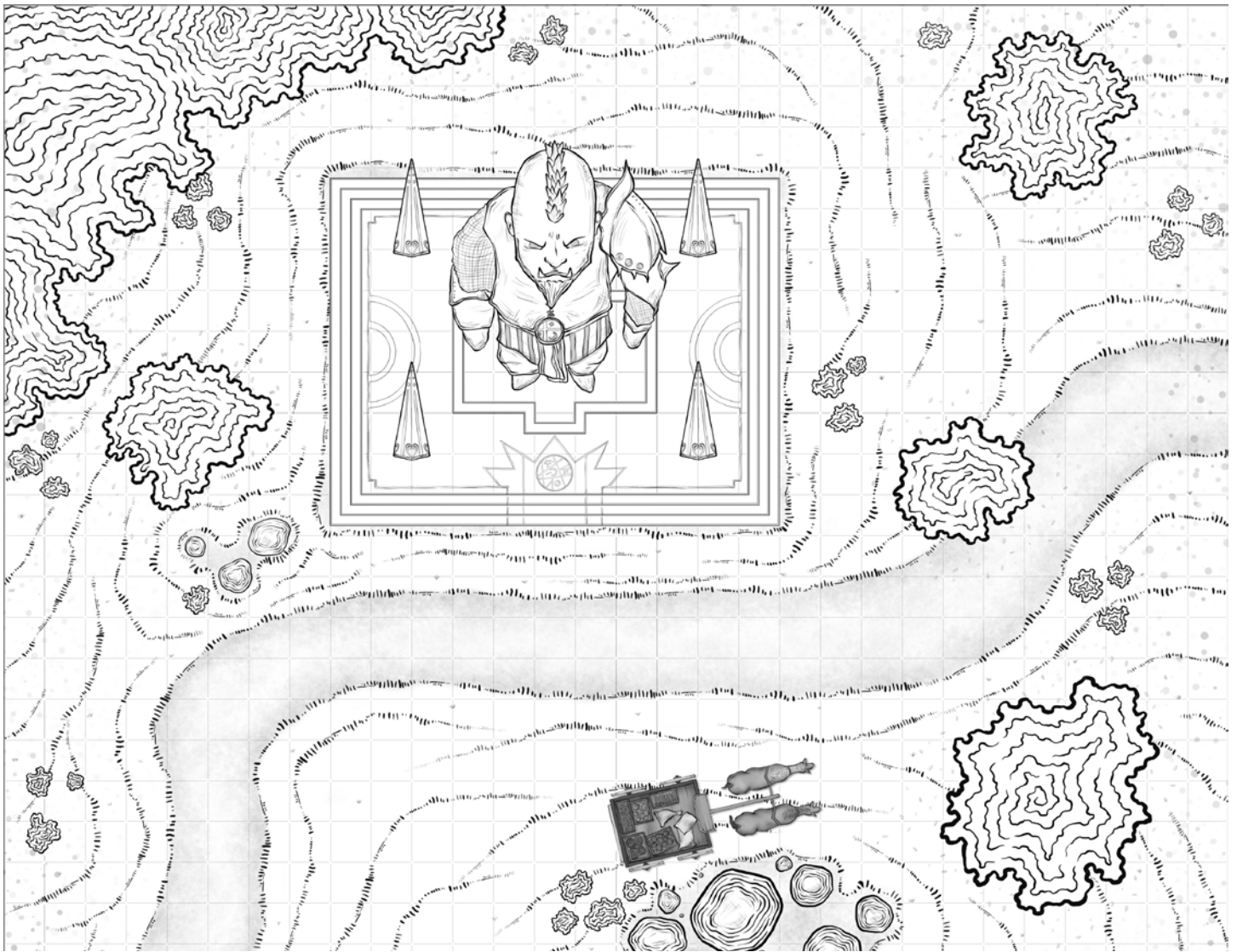
Drunk and depressed, Tai grabbed a pike and a hammer and went after Fat Tommy, the root of all evil. He was no fighter, but he was no coward, plus he spent all his life lifting heavy sacks of fruit and grain. He had nothing left to lose anyway so he entered The Pumpkin, the local tavern where The Holy Guard meet every night. It was his lucky day since Fat Tommy seldom shared the table with his goons. In a reckless rush of fury and rage, Tai smashed

the heads of three men before reaching Fat Tommy and dispatching him in as well. Recovering a bit of reason, Tai fled the scene. Everyone in the bar froze for a minute, in shock. The few remaining members of The Holy Guard couldn't react on time and took a while to process what just happened.

Tai had many friends in Harriet, and little business-owners watch each other's backs in this little town. Tai's wounds were taken care of and every single villager in Harriet learned about what happened at The Pumpkin that night. The owner of The Pumpkin made sure everybody knew what Tai did. No one thought one could ever face Fat Tommy like that and fight fire with fire. Most men in Harriet, sick and tired of being bullied, pledged their loyalty to Tai Kalum, the liberator. They grabbed sickles and shovels, determined to put an end to the foul corruption.

It took two days for Tai and his followers to get rid of almost all members of The Holy Guard. However, in the final confrontation, bloodshed was inevitable, and Tai was severely wounded. The conflict was won and Harriet's corruption was destroyed from the core. But the victors' crown was dented. Tai lost his life fighting for everyone's freedom and rights. He died a martyr, and the people of Harriet weren't going to let his memory be forgotten. News of Harriet's coup d'état upset the king but he recognized he had kept the small town in the shadows for too long. He ordered his council to send a trustworthy leader.

The guild of merchants where Tai belonged made the necessary arrangements and gathered the gold to build him a statue. The populace felt happy to help with a few coppers at least. In the end, a 35-foot-tall Tai Kalum's statue was built about half-a-year after his death. It has



become a landmark and a point of reference for all travelers and visitors. Most people in Harriet like the statue and remember Tai Kalum as an example to follow and an excellent influence for young generations.

However, a few people say it was a good thing he died. They believe Tai would've become a tyrant. Someone who delivers justice by his own hand and ends the life of all those that oppose him. It is a farfetched thought but all coins have two sides.

The leader of the Dark Hand, a band of mobsters and ruffians, is one of those detractors of the statue. She goes by the name of Golden Teeth, or "GT". The Dark Hand travels from place to place, blocking the roads and robbing nomad merchants and passers-by. Once they attack for two or three days, they leave before the guard comes looking. When they arrived in Harriet and learned the story of Tai Kalum, they considered he wasn't better than any of them. They defiled the statue and drew rude caricatures on its base and legs. Now, they wait for any person traveling the road to Harriet to threaten them and demand a toll to pass.

CONFRONTATION

When the adventurers arrive at Tai Kalum's monument, Dark Hand is about to jump on an innocent nomad merchant named Tristan. The brave halfling merchant yelled at the Dark Hand tough guys for disrespecting the statue. Tristan thinks Tai Kalum deserves to be immortalized but he didn't consider the outcome of yelling at a bunch of thugs. The Dark Hand surrounds the poor halfling in the middle of the road.

The Dark Hand is prepared for all kinds of situations. They placed a couple of ropes behind the statue and two of their men stand in Tai Kalum's shoulders as vantage points to shoot arrows. If the heroes attempt to stop the Dark Hand, Golden Teeth stops her men and asks the adventurers to pay for two things. She says: "The Dark Hand charges 15 silver pieces per head to pass. And since you want to play hero today, I ask 50 gold pieces for the halfling merchant's life." Even if the adventurers pay what she asks, it is all a ruse. The Dark Hand has orders to attack everyone even after they have paid.

NPCs

GOLDEN TEETH, G.T.

Chaotic evil dwarf (age 115)

Despite her short stature, Golden Teeth is fierce and strong. She brandishes a large war hammer with ease. Her followers stay with her out of a mix of respect and fear. Those who wish to leave the Dark Hand decide it is better to stay after G.T. persuades them of the contrary. She wears her long brown hair in thick braids. Her clothes have a purple tint to them. She wears a black leather glove on her left hand, as do all the members of her group.

Personality Trait. “If you injure me, I will crush you, ruin your name, and salt your fields.”

Ideal. “I will do whatever it takes to become wealthy.”

Bond. “I will do anything to protect the members of my clan.”

Flaw. “I’m never satisfied with what I have—I always want more.”

TRISTAN LIGHTFOOT

Chaotic good halfling (age 56)

Tristan has a big heart but a small brain. He is an idealist and the fact that he is still alive is surprising. His big mouth has gotten him in very complicated situations but there has always been a friendly soul to help him out. Tristan’s business are vegetables. He sells cabbages, lettuces, carrots, and some corn grains. He has two friendly mules named Bleep and Bloop.

Personality Trait. “I always speak my mind. Always”

Ideal. “The world can improve with my take on it.”

Bond. “I protect everything I consider to be right for the world.”

Flaw. “I speak without really thinking through my words, invariably insulting others.”

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the area shown in Tai Kalum’s statue map.

Terrain. The road zigzags in the middle of a long green field. The long waves of grass and smaller trees move with the wind. Tristan’s wagon is stationed 10 feet south from the road.

Tai Kalum’s Statue. Four obelisks with pretty patterns adorn each corner of the rectangular base. On its center, a 35-foot-tall stone representation of Kai Talum stares directly to the road. The lowest sections of the statue’s legs are all painted and drawn on.

Light. It is about noon when the adventurers find The Dark Hand threatening Tristan. All the area is illuminated with daylight.

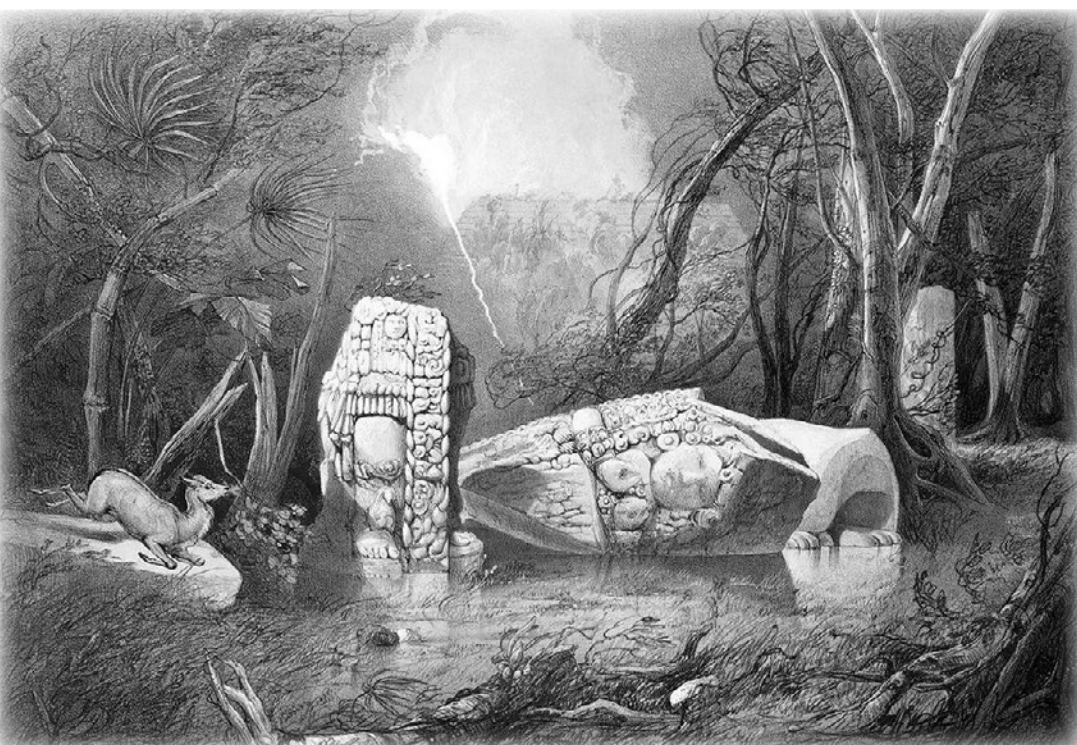
Smells and Sounds. Tristan’s calls for help are heard as far as a hundred feet away. The Dark Hand’s members aren’t the emblem of hygiene and neatness so a strong odor of sweat accompanies them wherever they go.

ENCOUNTER

Golden Teeth (**bandit leader**) orders her men to attack the adventurers regardless of their compliance to pay or not. The Dark Hand has two **scouts** placed on the statue’s shoulders and G.T. is protected by two **thugs** and four **bandits**. If Golden Teeth drop to 0 Hit Points in combat, any remaining members of the Dark Hand drop their weapons and beg for mercy.

The adventurers can recover any gold they paid to the Dark Hand after defeating them. Additionally, the brigands deliver all the stuff they have stolen for the last few days. All this can be taken to Harriet since most of it belongs to those who traveled the same road in the last 48 hours.

Treasure. Without counting any of Harriet villagers’ belongings, the bandits have a total of 332 gold pieces among all of them. The treasure also includes a couple of books, an ornamental hand axe, a chain shirt in excellent quality, a worker’s toolkit, two pairs of glasses, and a wheel of cheese. If the adventurers decide to keep everything, add 102 gold pieces to their bounty.



Two fishermen were attacked this week. We've got to stop this or the community will starve!

Townspeaker Challa

DAGON'S SANCTUM



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

In this short adventure, a school of kuo-toa fanatics attacked a small fishing settlement in search of suitable sacrifices to their deity. This is a low-stake, low-tier adventure that you can include as a sidequest in any small to middle-sized settlement. The encounters and treasure below are balanced for a party of 4-6 level 3 characters.

BACKGROUND LORE

A school of kuo-toa fanatics has risen from the depths of the ocean. They follow a self-appointed priest who has led them for at least a year. Their priest, Blin-dul-boog, informed them a few months ago that it has felt the strong influence of an obscure deity of old named Dagon. To them, Dagon is a powerful entity that shall bring them gifts and influence in the world. The otherworldly perceptions of the kuo-toa attuned to Blin-dul-boog's and the whole group became focused on finding the ancient place of worship that the priest mentioned. After months of searching, the kuo-toa found an arcane, semi-submerged, forgotten temple to Dagon. The place is in shambles but the main sanctum is in good enough condition. The four limestone statues of the fish, god-like entity were proof to the fish folk that this was the right place.

The kuo-toa are prone to worshipping obscure entities from beyond the Material Plane without much knowledge or practical experience with them. Their form of worship is evolving and almost improvisational. Priest Blin-dul-boog spends long hours among the limestone statues communing with Dagon. It has become the voice of their impromptu religion and everything he says is considered

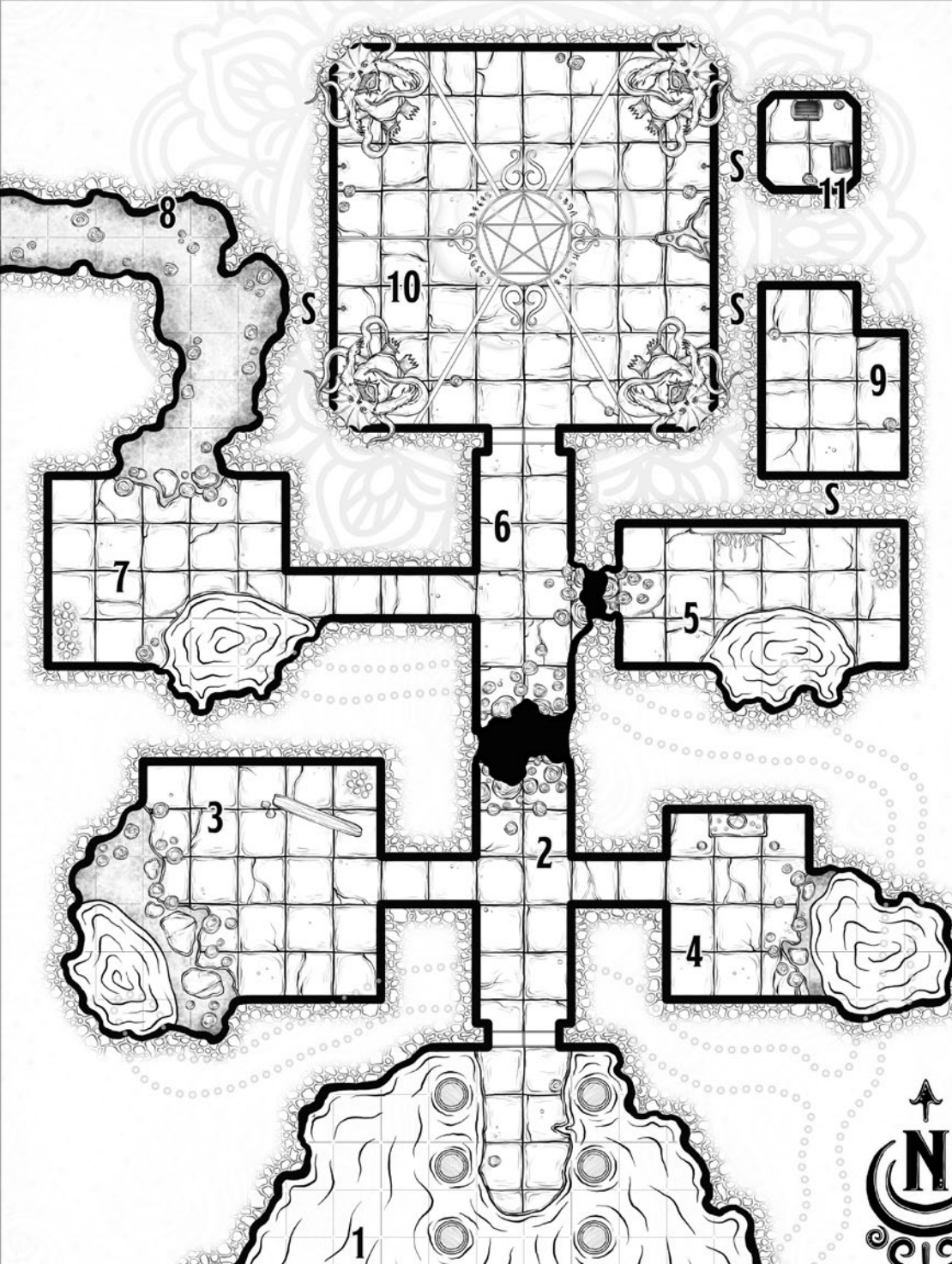
sacred scripture to the other kuo-toa. Blin-dul-boog has instructed the others that, to gain Dagon's favor, they must bring human sacrifices and burn the bodies in the magical circle in the sanctum. Only then, will Dagon look their way and pamper them with its gifts. The other kuo-toa saw no incongruence with the plan and went out to find humans for sacrifice. The fish folk are not numerous enough to raid a settlement so they have chosen to follow and attack small fishing parties. Over the course of several weeks, they have had mixed results. Sometimes the fishermen manage to scare them off, other times the kuo-toa manage to extract a person and bring the victim to the sanctum.

The fishermen live in the small town of Amira. The townsfolk panic because the fishermen are unwilling to risk their lives any longer until the problem is solved. However, waiting too long could cause the local economy to collapse and many people to starve. Townspeaker Challa has vowed to put a stop to the hostilities at sea. He has posted an attractive bounty contract to incentivize traveling mercenaries and sellswords to take care of the problem without risking any more local lives.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The kuo-toa have attacked fishing boats over the past three weeks. Four fishermen have gone missing and are presumed dead. The de-facto leader in the fishing settlement of Amira, Townspeaker Challa, offers a considerable bounty to passing mercenaries and adventurers. He wants the scary fish folk dead. He offers 300 gp for the elimination of the fish creatures.

Besides, retrieving the bodily remains of the four missing fishermen is worth an extra 40 gp. He explains that this



THE SANCTUM

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 11 correspond to Dagon's Sanctum map.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The limestone flooring of the sanctum is in terrible condition. Some parts are broken, others have degraded into fine sand. The water erosion and salinity in the tiles reveal that the entirety of the dungeon becomes submerged for extended periods. Perhaps the temple is only so exposed during this season.

Doors and Obstructions. The two double stone doors stand on old but still serviceable rails. A creature can move any door to the side by spending an action. Some of the hallways in the dungeon have collapsed completely. The packed rubble prevents any movement. Besides, clearing any of the blockades is an impossible task that may well cause more structural damage to the structure.

Submerged Tunnels. A network of natural submerged tunnels connects several areas of the dungeon (see dotted lines in the illustration). The tunnels are short enough that any creature can swim through them in a single file, assuming they bring a light source with

them. Fighting the kuo-toa underwater is a terrible choice because they are not penalized with disadvantage for it. Besides, the fish folk can breathe underwater.

Light. All of the areas in Dagon's Sanctum are in complete darkness except for the main sanctum (area 10). Four magical torches on sconces with *continual flame* spells provide bright light.

Smells and Sounds. The smell of brine and rotting algae are prevalent throughout the structure. The distant sound of shallow crashing waves from area 1 fades as one explores the place further.

is almost impossible since the ocean is so vast. It would only be possible if the kuo-toa brought the poor fishermen back to their lair.

Townspeaker Challa reveals that the kuo-toa have been seen frequently near a small rocky island formation. Sailors avoid it because the exposed rocks can cause serious structural damage to most ships. A brave local sailor is willing to bring the adventurers to the place in his fishing boat. He too is getting a moderate reward for this service.

Circling around the rock formation and following the occasional trail of kuo-toa swimming, the sailor brings the characters to a covered cove that leads to area 1. It is an underground submerged cavern with a large double stone door and six pillars.

1. ENTRANCE

Six pillars flank a narrow passage to a set of large stone double doors. The doors used to be engraved with delicate and complex bas-reliefs but little remains of them. The water erosion and colonization of corals and barnacles have rendered any chance of legibility impossible on both sides of the door. A human femur bone lays scattered on the floor in front of the entrance.

Submerged Tunnel. The characters can use an underwater tunnel to the east of the entrance to swim to area 3 and area 4.

2. BROKEN HALLWAY

The walls and ceiling of the hallway collapsed ages ago and closed off this passage. Clearing it or digging through it is, in practice, impossible. A **kuo-toa whip** looks around the surface rubble in search of valuable trinkets. It looks up in surprise and gets ready to fight the invaders.

3. SMALL NEST

There are three **kuo-toa** and one **kuo-toa whip** in the room, tending to the eggs in the nest. They are very territorial and defend the nest fiercely. One of the **kuo-toa** doesn't join the fight and attempts to grab as many eggs as possible and jumps into the pond. It tries to bring them to area 7 for safeguarding.

Submerged Tunnel. The characters can use an underwater tunnel in the pond to swim to area 4.

4. MEDITATION ROOM

There are a limestone tabernacle of sorts next to the north wall and two stone incense burners. They are all eroded beyond recognition. A mural on the wall has peeled off enough that nothing of it is distinguishable anymore. There are two **kuo-toa whips** hidden in the pond, ready to pounce when an adventurer gets close enough to the water.

If the adventurers come this way through the submerged tunnel, the two **kuo-toa** fight them underwater and try to foil any attempts at leaving the water.

Submerged Tunnel. The characters can use an underwater tunnel in the pond to swim to any of the other areas connected to it. This location is directly connected to all others.

5. ALTAR OF TENTACLES

This location can only be reached from the underwater tunnels. An ineffable altar attached to the north wall of the room defies all explanation. Two dozen octopi and squid tentacles are attached to a limestone slab on the wall. The tentacle trunks are fused to the stone and appear to be a part of it. The tentacles are alive; they wiggle and move around as if trying to grasp something. If a non-kuo-toa creature approaches within 5 feet of the altar, it must

make a successful DC 14 Strength saving throw to avoid becoming grappled. Once grappled, the creature takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage in any subsequent turn as the tentacles attempt to constrict the creature. The altar can grab up to two medium-sized creatures at the same time.

There are two **kuo-toa** and two **kuo-toa whips** in the room tending to the nest. They fight fiercely. If any of the **kuo-toa whips** manages to use its Pincer Staff ability, they attempt to push their targets to the tentacles on the wall.

Submerged Tunnel. The characters can use an underwater tunnel in the pond to swim to area 4 or area 7.

Secret Door. A hidden button next to the altar of tentacles causes a section of the wall to slide outward and reveal a secret passage to area 9. A creature can find the button with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

6. THE GREAT DOOR

The northmost section of the main hallway continues after the debris pile in the middle. It ends with a double set of stone doors similar to the ones in area 1. The state of conservation of these limestone doors is marginally better than the ones in the entrance. The bas-relief on the door, while eroded and cracked, is somewhat legible. It depicts a grand semi-humanoid, toad-like, reptilian creature with large fangs and several tentacles. The creature emerges from the ocean and howls at the sky. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Religion) check reveals this is an Old One named Dagon. It is an obscure entity that is said to roam the deep oceans. The true king of the depths.

The doors are closed but unlocked. Opening this door triggers the ambush encounter in area 10

7. LARGE NEST

The group of **kuo-toa** in this room appears to be in a frantic panic. Some of them gather as many eggs as possible in algae baskets to move them away to the cavern complex in area 8. They intend to keep as many eggs as possible safe from the intruders. The rest of the fish folk stand guard and protect the ones tending to the nests. Two **kuo-toa whips** and three **kuo-toa** fight to the death.

Submerged Tunnel. The characters can use an underwater tunnel in the pond to swim to area 5 and area 4.

8. CAVERN ACCESS

A cave-in during an earthquake a couple of decades ago opened this passage. The tunnel leads down to a gigantic network of tunnels and semi-submerged chambers. The network eventually connects to the Underdark in several locations under the seafloor level. The **kuo-toa** have only partially explored some caverns that allow them to escape back to the ocean waters. The contents and perils of these caverns are not within the scope of this module and are left to the DMs discretion.

Secret Door. A section of the wall adjacent to area 10 is fragile and cracked. The light from the magical torch in the sanctum filters through the cracks and is visible if no other light source is available. A creature can dig through the rubble and break down the wall with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check.

9. SECRET PASSAGE

This empty side room remains unknown to the kuo-toa. There is nothing of value in the room. The two secret doors to area 5 and area 10 are not hidden from this side. The outlines of the doors are visible and each of them has a handle to pull them inward. If the adventurers use the secret door to area 10, they avoid the ambush attack and may surprise the kuo-toa in the room.

10. DAGON'S SANCTUM

Blin-dul-boog (**kuo-toa archpriest**) stands in the center of the room by the magic circle. The mistreated remains of the missing fishermen lay at its feet. The priest must interrupt his dark ritual to confront the intruding adventurers.

There are four **kuo-toa** close to the south door ready to use their Net ability to restrain the adventurers. The two **kuo-toa whips** use their *sacred flame* spells as soon as the doors open. Afterward, they use their Pincer Staff attack to prevent the adventurers from reaching the priest. The archpriest uses his *spirit guardians* spell as soon as the encounter begins.

Secret Doors. Pulling the south-east sconce causes a section of the wall to slide outward and reveal a secret passage to area 9. Pulling the northeast sconce produces the same effect to reveal a secret passage to area 11.

11. VAULT

The kuo-toa have hidden things of value in this room. Some of them were recovered from the bottom of the ocean, others were stolen from fishermen and merchants. The two wooden chests contain an ancient belt with a bronze buckle (60gp), a sturdy limestone tiara, inlaid with oak wood (60gp), a rough wool hat (30gp), an old alabaster jewelry box (80gp), a durable dragon-bone amulet with a black pearl (500gp), a sturdy silver tiara, set with a carnelian (95gp), an engraved soapstone cup, set with a malachite (70gp), an engraved carved wood figurine of a ship, set with an obsidian piece (70gp), and 450 gp.



It is a death sentence; a fight he cannot ever win! That's why you have to save him!

Francine Delacour

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

In this short adventure, the group of courageous adventurers must help Francine Delacour rescue her son, Frank Jr. He is a prisoner in The Slaughterhouse, a fighting pit, and arena. He was kidnapped and he is going to be forced to fight to the death unless someone stops the massacre. The heroes must participate in the arena to be able to help Frank Jr. The encounters and treasure below are balanced for a party of 3-5 level 3 characters.

BACKGROUND LORE

The Slaughterhouse is an illegal fighting arena. Lord Blosty is a self-proclaimed lord and the owner of the clandestine pit. He is the kingpin of the criminal underworld in the vast city of Galawa. He is the mastermind behind all the fights and contests in The Slaughterhouse.

Its modus operandi is quite simple. Lord Blosty's bookie, Dirty Smith, is in charge of practical operations. His plethora of goons and hired muscle kidnap random people and citizens. They usually target people that know too much, snitches, bums and beggars, and other kinds of folk who are certain to not be missed. These shall be imprisoned until they are scheduled to fight.

Lord Blosty has strong and important contacts everywhere. He bought most of the bureaucrats in Galawa, and half the city guard is under his payroll. Hence, Slaughterhouse is immune to the justice system. Wealthy citizens and bourgeoisie attend the bloody spectacles in the arena. Their gold and wealth have bought them everything they

could dream of, so they have nothing else to do with their money than to satisfy their dark, inner, morbid curiosity.

Dirty Smith is also in charge of finding fighters. These men are heartless mercenaries who have no honor. They get paid for slaughtering unable contenders. The prisoners are never a match to the experienced swordsmen, so the bets are about how long the victim shall last, or how many hits can the contender take before dropping lifeless on the floor. It is not a show for weak stomachs.

A MISSING YOUNG BOY

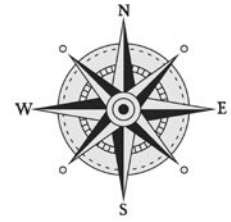
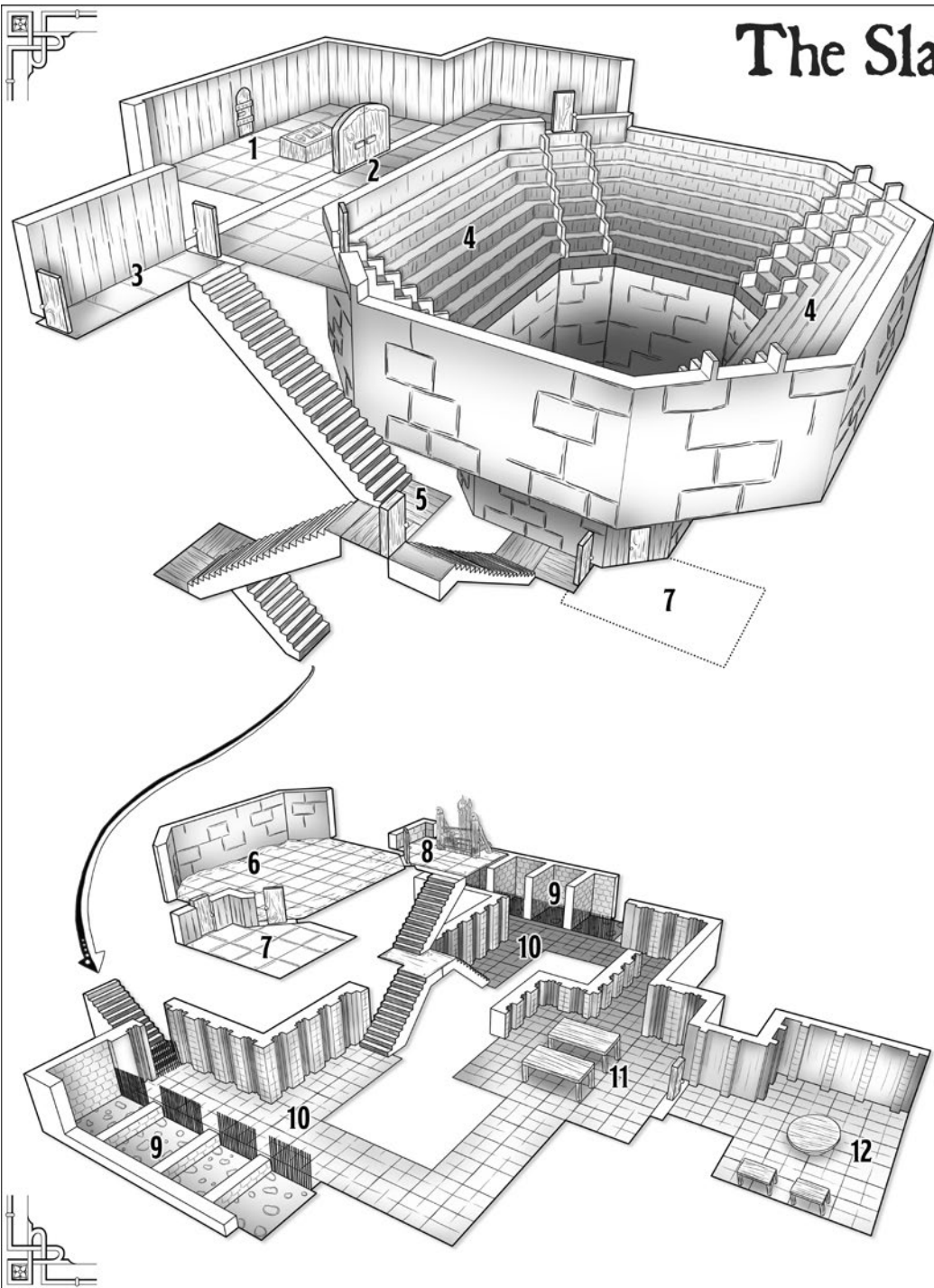
Francine Delacour's son, Frankie Jr., has been kidnapped. The young man is a good-for-nothing who only causes turmoil and stress to his poor mother. Francine is a single mother and she works hard every day to make ends meet. Her fatherless son has always meddled in fishy and dangerous business. He messed with the wrong people and Dirty Smith ordered some of his goons to deal with the boy. The scared young man is a prisoner at the slaughterhouse and it is only a matter of time before he fights.

The Delacour is a powerful family in the city. They are aware of the Slaughterhouse existence but only a couple of them have attended the atrocious events. Francine is certain that her son was kidnapped by Dirty Smith after she received a horrible note. Frankie is hated by all his family, so she knows she cannot count on them to help her. She plans to hire a group of adventurers and ask them to participate as fighters in the arena. She believes that with a bit of luck, they might be put up against Frankie, her son. In that case, they could rescue him.

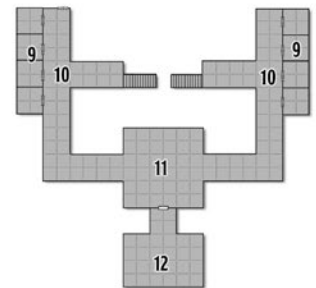
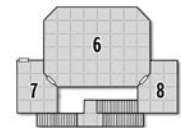
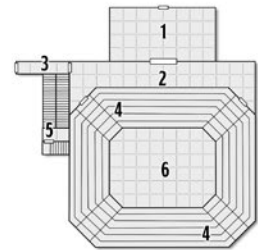
She posts messages around the city to draw the attention of a group of adventurers. Francine can pay 50 gold pieces

The Slaughterhouse

Fighting pit and arena



1 square = 5 ft



to each of the brave heroes once they bring her son back safe and sound. She tells them about the Hairy Boar, the tavern where they can find Dirty Smith and enroll as fighters. She assures them that they can earn some extra gold since they would also be providing a service to the arena. She also asks the adventurers to stick to the plan. If they try to threaten Dirty Smith or mess around with him in the tavern it could ruin the plan and risk Frankie's life.

Dirty Smith is surrounded by a score of thugs and goons at the Hairy Boar. He is the only one who doesn't have a drink. He smokes a pipe and reads his notes and logs. He introduces himself when he meets the heroes and accepts their proposal to fight. He explains how things work in the arena and makes emphasis on a couple of rules:

- Hired fighters usually fight on a weekend, when The Slaughterhouse's cells are full.
- They get paid according to how many contenders they vanquish.
- They also get to decide when to stop, as long as it isn't during a fight.
- They usually handle one-on-one fights but sometimes parties of fighters clash against each other in a bloody spectacle.

Dirty Smith offers 10 gold pieces per elimination and 5 additional gold pieces for beheadings and other gory ways to kill. He asks them to put up a good show and suggests them to fight until the final round if they want to earn the full pay, otherwise, they shall get a portion of it. Since

they are a group, they are certain to fight a minimum of three rounds. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check allows a character to convince Dirty Smith to pay half their wage in advance.

If questions about the prisoners start to be asked Dirty Smith gets uncomfortable and says he doesn't deal with snitches and spies. Fighters shouldn't be afraid or curious about whom they fight since they always win. He tells them to do their job and shut their mouths or leave.

NPCs

DIRTY SMITH, THE BOOKIE

Chaotic evil dwarf (age 213)

Dirty Smith has a fine beard and he trims it with fine precision. He looks neat and his eyes are always looking around. He has a deep voice and he has a jovial character when it suits him. He is clever to make business and he has a quick mind. He has kept his current position at the Slaughterhouse since it opened, Lord Blosty counts on Dirty Smith to run things smoothly and he does so.

Personality Trait. "If it provides gold, it is good."

Ideal. "One day the arena shall be the fighting pit of the greatest gladiators and not simple bums."

Bond. "I must always keep an eye on the arena."

Flaw. "I always follow the protocol and that makes me miss good business opportunities."

FRANCINE DELACOUR

Neutral good half-elf (age 47)

Francine has long light brown hair. Her blue eyes match her light blue and green fancy robes. She wears a couple of bracelets and other jewelry pieces. Her face has a soft brown color and she has sophisticated features. Her voice is soft and melodic. She is worried sick when she speaks to the adventurers. Her eyes are puffy, evidence of her hours spent crying, though her cheeks maintain their rosy glow.

Personality Trait. "I cannot ever abandon my blood."

Ideal. "I wish my son would change for the better, for the sake of our family."

Bond. "Trying to change my son is my life mission, I know there is good in him."

Flaw. "I'm so obsessed with taking care of my son that I spoil him."

THE MISSION

The adventurers enter the arena from the Alternate Entrance (area 3). They are instructed to wait in the Fighters' Vestibule (area 7) until it is time for their presentation and fight. When the heroes hear their names called, they must exit the vestibule and enter the arena (area 6). It

is the heroes' choice to wait until the event begins or to sneak out of the vestibule.

The following encounters are the three rounds of battles that the adventurers were hired to fight. Frank Jr. is part of the second batch of prisoners. It is the heroes' choice to abandon the fight from the first round or go through it. It is also the adventurers' choice to attack the prisoners with full force or to avoid lethal blows.

Encounter 1. The adventures are faced with five poorly armed men. They have the stats of a guard with the following changes: reduce their Hit Points by half and change their Armor Class to 14 since they aren't wearing any shields.

If the adventurers are through the first round, four of the employees in The Slaughterhouse come and shove the corpses aside and pile them up near the north wall. There is a small break of 5 to 10 minutes while the second batch of prisoners is brought to the pit. The heroes are asked to wait in the vestibule once more. If none of the prisoners is killed in a bloody manner the public starts to boo and throw stuff at the heroes when they come back for the second round.

Encounter 2. The adventures must fight the second group of prisoners. Frank Jr. is part of the five more men that enter the arena. Frank pisses himself when he sees the bodies from the other prisoners piled up and starts to cry for his life. There are four men (**guards**) with Frank Jr. (**commoner**).

If the adventurers are through the second round, Frank Jr. is either dead or unconscious. At this point, the public is restless and demands blood to be spilled. The heroes are ordered to behead one of the bodies. The Slaughterhouse men pick Frank's body from the pile and place it in front of the heroes. This is the point of no return for the adventurers and they must figure their way out of here with Frank alive.

If the adventurers abandon their job in front of the crowd and Lord Blosty, he orders his men to arrest and imprison them in the dungeon. The four scouts in the stands (area 4) shoot their bows to the traitors. If the heroes turn out to be a threat, the public goes wild and runs to the exit while Dirty Smith and Lord Blosty are escorted outside by their two bodyguards (veterans) through the alternate entrance (area 3).

Encounter 3. Five more prisoners are waiting in their cells. They are to be called for the third and last round of combat. However, depending on the outcome of round two, these five prisoners might still be locked in their cells or waiting in the Prisoners' Vestibule (area 8). If for any reason this battle occurs, the five men (**guards**) are as poorly armed as the rest.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 12 correspond to The Slaughterhouse.

Terrain. The Slaughterhouse is divided into three main levels. The upper level features clean fancy stone tiles. The pit's sand is rough and it contains small pebbles. The lower level is the prisoners' area. The stone tiles here are dusty and unclear. They also show marks of erosion and wear.

Doors. The wooden doors in the arena all have standard quality locks. A character using thieves' tools can pick their locks with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check. The cell doors and barred door have better locks that require a successful DC 17 Dexterity check to bypass.

Light. Sconces on the walls illuminate all the arena. The guards and employees of the arena make sure that all areas are always well lit.

Smells and Sounds. The upper level of the arena smells of rich people. Dozens and dozens of high-class society members come every week. There is a constant coming and going of perfumes and exotic fragrances so they have created a sort of permanent sweet floral odor in Lobby and the Antechamber (areas 1 and 2).

1. LOBBY

The depth and grasp of The Slaughterhouse's administration can be perceived at the very entrance. Two bouncers

(**guards**) guard the main door and two more (**guards**) stand guard at the opposite side, at the antechamber's entrance (area 2). A man wearing spectacles welcomes all visitors, he spends his day making notations at the visitors' log. A fancy feather pen and a small pile of wax-sealed scrolls decorate the varnished counter. A passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals that his fancy clothes hide a leather armor beneath, and his puffy pants a sword's scabbard. The host (**thug**) that can take good of himself.

Treasure. If the adventurers have the time to loot the bodies and search the receptionist desk, they find several scrolls of expensive paper (15 gp), a couple of silver rings (25 gp), and some gold from the entries (250 gp).

2. ANTECHAMBER

The narrow corridor after the golden-framed double door takes to the only two doors to enter the stands. To the west, there is a locked door that takes to area 3. A bouncer (**guard**) stands guard at each entry spot.

3. ALTERNATE ENTRANCE

This is the side entrance to The Slaughterhouse. A **guard** stands guard outside this door at all times. And there is another **guard** at the door that takes to the Antechamber (area 2). Hired fighters and other employees of the place use this door to avoid disturbing the guests in the Lobby with their presence.

Treasure. If the adventurers have the time to loot the bodies of these guards, they have 12 gold pieces.

4. STANDS

The stands can hold up to a hundred guests. The southernmost section of the stands is reserved for Lord Blosty, Dirty Smith, and their entourage. The stands are guarded at all times by four **scouts**. They are posted at each corner of the stands. Lord Blosty's pair of personal bodyguards (**veterans**) never leave their boss's side.

Treasure. If somehow the adventurers defeat Lord Blosty's bodyguards and manage to stop him and Dirty Smith, they beg for their lives and give the adventurers everything they have on them at the moment. The bookie holds 350 gold pieces that belong to the day's bets. They also have an old silk hat (25 gp), a fur ribbon (10 gp), a gilded flask for wine (15 gp), a fancy fur cloak with alabaster clasps (75 gp), an ornate soapstone ring, set with a banded agate (40 gp).

In case Lord Blosty is alive or conscious, he swears to take vengeance on the heroes. He tells them they'd better leave Galawa fast, otherwise, they shall become fodder for the next Slaughterhouse show.



5. STAIRS

These stairs are never used by the prisoners. To verify both fighters and prisoners follow procedure, there is a **thug** in each of the landings of the stairs. They must inform any kind of abnormal activity and impede the prisoners or fighters from escaping or ditching the job.

6. PIT

The dimensions of the pit are enough for 5 to 5 battles (40 ft. wide and 30 ft. long). The thick grains of sand in the pit hurt those who enter barefooted. Numerous portions of the sand are blood stained. Blood dries for days and nobody ever cares to wash it off.

The walls of the pit are almost impossible to climb. They are 50 feet high and the large bricks with which it is made were sanded to make them smooth. Even so, a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to climb the wall.

7. FIGHTERS' VESTIBULE

This small room has the same quality flooring as the upper level. There are a couple of chairs and a large bench to rest while waiting to be called for the battle. A small table features a pitcher of water and five mugs along with some cheap appetizers.

8. PRISONERS' VESTIBULE

This room has sand on the floor. The Slaughterhouse's employees sweep the Fighter's Vestibule but not this one. The weapon rack on the east wall is a joke to any weapon wielder. The weapons and armor displayed are old, rusty, and poor-quality. These are the only choices the prisoners have when they are thrown to the pit to fight for their lives.

9. CELLS

There are eight identical cells in the Slaughterhouse. The cells are large enough to hold up to two people without any crowding problem. However, Dirty Smith sometimes goes as far as to have four people in each cell. Only the leader of the guards of the lower level has keys to open the cells.

10. HALLWAYS

These two long corridors meet in the center of the lower level in the dining room (area 11). A group of four **guards** patrols this area.

11. DINING ROOM

The prisoners eat here. They make their food in the kitchens (area 12) and are allowed a time to eat. The leader of the cells' guards (**bandit leader**) spends his time sitting down in here. He sometimes plays cards with the guards on the large tables. He helps his men if he hears any problem going on in the corridors.

Treasure. If the adventurers have the time to loot the bodies of the bandit leader and the rest of the guards in the hallways (area 10), they find 36 gold pieces among all of them.

12. KITCHENS

The prisoners use this area once a day when they are allowed to eat. They have about an hour to cook their meal of the day and eat it. The kitchens are nothing to be proud of. They lack the most basic cooking tools. The prisoners do what they can with what they are given. At least they can eat.

DEVELOPMENT

Outcomes. Whatever the adventurers do to escape the Slaughterhouse without being caught is their choice. They can of course go out of their way and try to save more people, or even stop or murder Lord Blosty. But their mission is to save Frank Jr. and Francine must see her son safe to complete her part of the deal.

If the adventurers bring Frank Jr. safe back home, Francine pays the agreed-upon amount of gold and thanks them deeply. If the heroes rescue more prisoners, these men run to different directions when they are freed. Francine tells them that Lord Blosty is a vile man. She plans to move and leave Galawa forever since sooner or later they shall come looking for Frank Jr. again. She suggests the heroes do the same.

If by any chance the heroes could defeat Lord Blosty's bodyguards and all of The Slaughterhouse's guards, they become a target. The more so if they kill Lord Blosty. None of the rich people that attend the events take it lightly if their sick entertainment is taken away from them. Plus, half the city guard shall miss Lord Blosty's gold on their paycheck, so they would be very interested in knowing who put an end to his reign of terror.

If the heroes fail to save Frank, Francine bursts into tears in front of the heroes after they tell her the sad news. She ignores any comment about the payment and continues crying and sobbing while trying to speak and say something. She manages to say the words: "useless, bastards, murderers, my boy, and why?" before shutting her door. In this scenario, the adventurers are in danger if they stay in Galawa for too long, but this time Francine doesn't tell them about this. Lord Blosty and Dirty Smith find the adventurers and try to imprison them once more three days after their failure.

The heroes could not only fail but be imprisoned by Lord Blosty for a future fighting pit event. If this happens, the heroes' next mission shall be to come up with a prison break plan.

A few moons ago, another explorer entered, he seemed very confident but he never made it back.

Manny Sarr

THE CURSED PYRAMID



3-5
PLAYERS



2-4
HOURS



5-10
TIER 2

ADVENTURE PRIMER

In this short adventure, the adventurers visit the desert of Ma'az. After traveling through the dangerous sands for days, they reach the city of Leira, which was built around a magical oasis. The heroes learn about the many explorers that look for wonders and secrets in the vast desert. Manny, a local Leirian, tells the heroes about The Cursed Pyramid, a dangerous forgotten place that holds riches and treasures. The encounters and treasure below are balanced for a party of 4-6 level 5 characters.

BACKGROUND LORE

The vast desert of Ma'az is a dangerous place. Its hot temperatures and inclement dryness make it a hazardous place to travel in. However, all kinds of civilizations have adapted to the most difficult weathers, and the desert of Ma'az is not the exception. In its center, there is a magical oasis. Legends say that the gods blessed this place with eternal pure water. Since the first settlers found it, its water has never run out.

Nowadays, a whole city surrounds the oasis. The infinite source of water has allowed the population of Leira to prosper through the decades. The presence of such a large city in the center of the desert has also permitted explorers and archeologists to prepare week-long journeys in the depths of Ma'az. In the last ten years, more and more gold and fame-seekers have come to Leira. The sands hide many wonders from forgotten civilizations.

The Dusty Boot is a well-reputed local tavern. Manny goes often; he is friends with everybody there. Manny is a

historian and cartographer, so he is always curious about where the explorers might go. One day, he met Edward Ply, a half-elf explorer. The merry traveler bought a round for everyone at the bar and pre-celebrated his apparently imminent success. He claimed he had the key to enter The Cursed Pyramid. He swore he would not come back empty-handed, and that he would buy another round for all customers. Manny remembers the resolve of this man, and he genuinely thought Edward Ply would succeed.

Manny never heard of Edward Ply again. It has been three months since he left Leira. Manny thought he was wrong all along. Perhaps the explorer was all talk and he was just bluffing. Or perhaps the desert was too dangerous for him. The Cursed Pyramid is said to be dangerous and a horrible maze, though these are just legends since no one has ever come out alive. Either way, it is not the first, nor shall it be the last life that the desert of Ma'az claims.

To the day, the cartographers in Leira, including Manny, know pretty much the whole extension of the Ma'az desert. However, The Cursed Pyramid remains a mystery to all. No one knows who built it, or what was its purpose. It is about two days away from Leira, but those who explored it have never come back. Some started saying the pyramid is a maze and an evil minotaur guards its center. Others say ancient mummies and the spirits of restless war leaders have cursed the place and created an unhalloved ground. However, most explorers infer the security measures of the pyramid are a sign of great treasures and wealth within. Hence, their persistence to risk their lives.

Manny likes to promote The Cursed Pyramid's reputation. He believes the more adventurers and explorers know about it, the sooner Leira shall learn about the real history behind it. He sometimes wonders that perhaps the

answer to the oasis's magic lies hidden in the pyramid. Or that its water is not infinite in truth, one day it might run out, and the pyramid holds the only way to restore the water flow. So, he tries to convince groups of adventurers to travel to the pyramid and solve its mysteries.

The real purpose of the pyramid was to protect an important treasure hidden behind door X (see map). However, some earthquakes in the land in the past few centuries, plus the presence of critters and underground monsters caused the flooring in that room to crack and sink in the sand. Most of the treasure was buried under hundreds of feet of sand. All that remains is the lair of a deadly dweller of the desert. Fortunately for those who dare enter, The Cursed Pyramid still holds enough treasures and riches that make a visit worth it. Plus, the fact of stepping in and out of it is a feat that deserves praise in itself.

NPCs

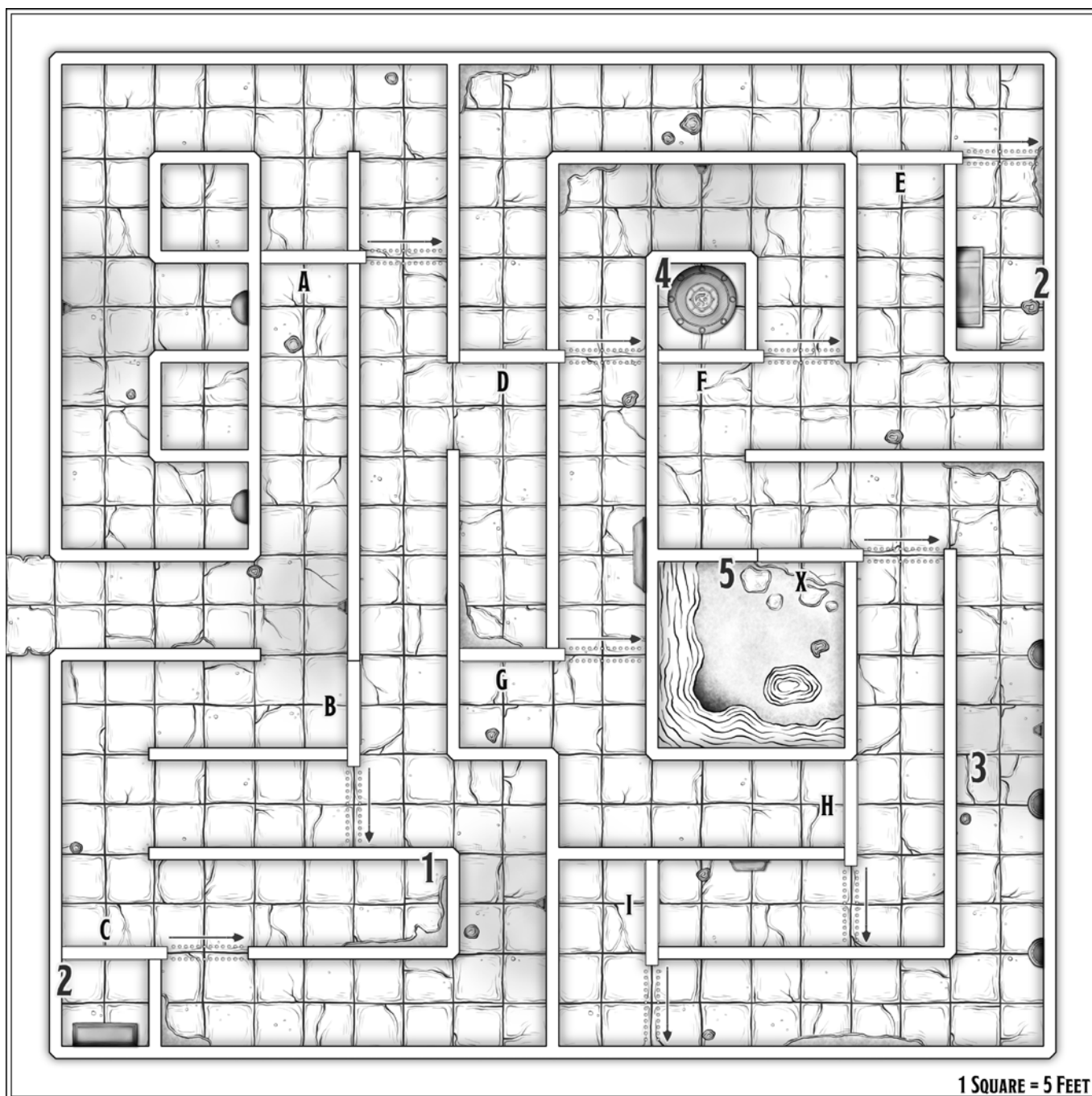
MANNY SARR, HISTORIAN, AND CARTOGRAPHER

Neutral human (age 41)

Manny is a tall man. He is 6'2" but he is not corpulent. His arms look like spaghetti and his long legs make him look even taller than he is. He trims his beard but he fails to do it properly and there are blank spots in his face. He is always chewing dried and curated meat, he loves it. He has a small dagger scabbard but when he pulls it out it is a dagger's hilt with several quills attached to it. Manny enjoys drawing and writing books.

Personality Trait. "History is our past, and we cannot ever escape it."

Ideal. "Knowing all the secrets I can is my goal in life."



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

Bond. “The desert of Ma’az and its secrets, I must know them all.”

Flaw. “I think too much about the past and forget about the future.”

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 5 correspond to the pyramid map.

Terrain. The stone tiles inside The Cursed Pyramid are hundreds of years old. They show considerable marks of wear and erosion. A layer of sand covers the majority of the place.

Magical Doors. The doors in The Cursed Pyramid are magical. They have withstood the passage of time and they look neat and bright. They are made of a hard mix of ivory and pearl. They can be moved 10 feet aside (see The Puzzle).

Light. There are five magical sconces in The Cursed Pyramid. They are infused with a permanent continual flame spell. If the sconces are removed the flames go out in 1 minute. There are areas in the pyramid with no source of light, these corridors are sunk in darkness.

Smells and Sounds. The areas in the pyramid where there are undead stink of death and rot. The rest has a heavy smell of sand and dirt.

THE PUZZLE

The Cursed Pyramid’s magical doors are the puzzle. The adventurers can figure out how to solve the puzzle when they find Edward Ply’s corpse in area 1 (see map). Only bones and pieces of torn clothes remain of the former explorer. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check allows a character to determine that Edward was beaten to death. The leather backpack of the half-elf contains a map of The Cursed Pyramid drawn on a piece of an ancient scroll. The origins of this document are impossible to determine. The scroll also has some instructions written in elvish.

The instructions as per Edward state the following:

- There are 9 magical doors in The Cursed Pyramid. They answer and move aside after a magical command is spoken.
- The magical word is “Ril’thumip”.
- The Cursed Pyramid is cursed. The doors summon evil spirits if they are opened without the right command or by force.
- There is an ancient bronze talisman inside one of the pyramid’s small chambers. This is the source of the pyramid’s evil. Thus, destroying the talisman breaks the curse.
- The talisman feels the presence of life when someone enters and activates the defense mechanism.

The doors shall move if the right word is uttered, but only four of them.

- Once 4 doors are moved, the magical word stops working. Though any of the doors can still be moved by force, they all summon evil spirits. The Cursed Pyramid claims another life.

How Edward Ply obtained this information and the map is an adventure for another time. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the word Ril’thumip belongs to an arcane tongue that has been dead for centuries. No spells or magic function with these ancient symbols anymore. The heroes must decide if they trust Edward’s instructions or not, and delve further into the pyramid. If they decide to go with the deceased explorer’s intel, they must figure out which is the best way to reach the talisman.

THE DOORS

All the doors in the pyramid look the same. They occupy an entire wall section. Each door can be moved in one direction only with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. Moving the doors again returns them to their original position. The doors open or close different sections and corridors in the pyramid. In other words, opening one way might close another.

If the adventurers attempt to move any of the doors by force or by any other means besides the right command, one wraith and two specters are summoned. The undead attack any living creature nearby. Once the enemies are dealt with, the door can be moved aside. Each door returns to its original position in 1 hour. Interacting with the doors again summons the evil spirits.

If the adventurers use the word Ril’thumip to move the doors, no spirits are summoned. However, as per Edward’s notes, only four doors can be opened this way.

1. EDWARD’S CUL-DE-SAC

At the end of this 20-foot-long corridor, the remains of a corpse lie on the dusty floor. Poor Edward Ply didn’t even make it far in his quest. He thought that having the map and his notes were enough to bypass the pyramid’s dangers. He wasn’t ready to face and fight the forces of the dark.

2. SARCOPHAGI

If any of the sarcophagi are interacted with, their lid opens. A mummy comes out and attacks any living creature that dared disturb its eternal sleep. Both sarcophagi are inlaid with decorative precious stones. And the mummies carry gold and silver jewelry.

Treasure. Each mummy has a couple of golden bracelets (75 gp), an onyx necklace (30 gp), and a few silver rings (20 gp). A successful DC 15 Dexterity check allows a char-

acter to remove the stones (150 gp) from the sarcophagi carefully. An individual check must be made for each of the sarcophagi. Failing the check destroys the stones.

3. ILLUSION FOUNTAINS

These three small clay pots are part of the wall. They cannot be removed. Clean water runs and fills the pots to the brim. The water looks clear and refreshing. However, it is all an illusion, and the water is cursed. The water is black and muddy. Bubbles pop on its surface and release a putrefying odor. Whoever makes it this far inside the pyramid is now faced with incredible danger. The fountains look appealing and their magic attempts to brainwash nearby creatures.

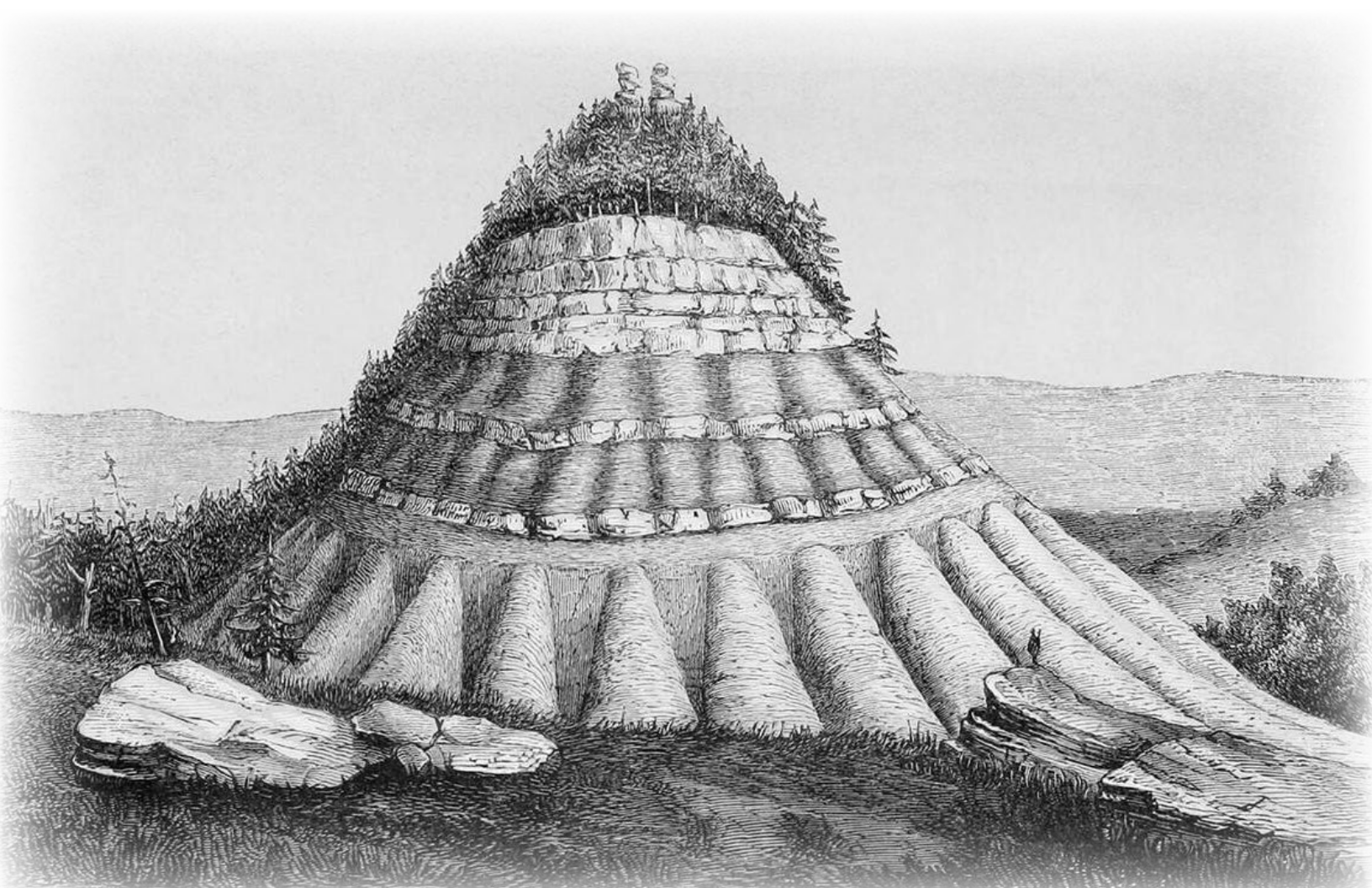
Any creature near the fountain must make a successful DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by them. Charmed creatures feel a great urge to drink from the fountains. Any creature that drinks from the fountains must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become 20% older. The aging is not an illusion and the character's main scores might be modified if this new age is considered elderly for their race. The effect of the water fountain can be removed with a remove curse spell if applied within a week. Additionally, destroying the evil talisman in area 4 breaks the curse as well.

4. TALISMAN

A large, circular, bronze talisman lies on the floor in this small cubicle. The talisman features a strange symbol in its center. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the symbol belongs to an arcane tongue that has been dead for centuries. No spells or magic function with these ancient symbols anymore. Breaking the talisman doesn't require special tools. The talisman has 10 Hit Points and 10 AC.

However, any creature that attempts to attack the talisman wakes its guardians. Three ghosts come out of it and laugh maniacally before using their Horrifying Visage ability. After that, they attempt to use their Possession ability to make the adventurers fight each other. Additionally, the ghosts take advantage of their Incorporeal Movement and pass through the pyramid's walls with ease.

This is the last security measure. Once the ghosts and the talisman are destroyed, the magical doors stop summoning evil spirits, the illusion fountains (area 3) look as they do in reality, with black filthy bubbling water. And the mummies in the sarcophagi become immobile corpses. However, nothing happens in the monster's lair (area 5) since its presence is a rather recent addition to the pyramid's ecosystem.



5. MONSTER'S LAIR

A family of desert dwellers has created a net of underground tunnels in the desert of Ma'az. One of the many ramifications of their home leads to The Cursed Pyramid. The earthquakes from the past few decades, plus the constant burrowing of these sand monsters made the whole floor of this chamber to collapse, along with everything within it.

The desert monsters become aware if door X (see map) is moved, regardless of the talisman's state. They come out of their den to see what caused such noise. Two desert chuuls attack any living creature near their cave. If any of the desert crustaceans is reduced to half its Hit Points, they both flee through their cave. The whole family of chuuls comprehends about ten individuals. How complex and long is the chuuls' network of tunnels is left to the DM's discretion.

Desert Chuuls. These monsters are distant cousins of the aquatic chuuls. They have the same stats as their aquatic counterparts but make the following modifications to their stats:

- Swap their swim speed 30 ft. for burrow speed 30 ft.
- Remove their amphibious racial feature.

Treasure. There are treasures and hidden trinkets under the sand in this room. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to find several gold and silver pieces. Fancy cups, silverware, rings, anklets, earrings, and many other bourgeois accessories. It all has a total worth of 334 gold pieces.

The real treasure and protected belongings from The Cursed Pyramid are buried in the sand, past the entire crustacean family of desert chuuls. This is not shown in the present module and it is left to the DM's discretion. This treasure may well be lost forever.

DEVELOPMENT

If the adventurers make it back to Leira, Manny takes a while to believe they entered the pyramid and came back alive. If the heroes show Edward's map to Manny, he opens his eyes wide and tells them he is very happy for them but happier for Leira. He explains that The Cursed Pyramid was one of the few spots in the desert of Ma'az that they had never been able to explore. Now Leira's history books can be complemented with this information. Plus, a search party might be able to go to the pyramid now that the dangers and curses are gone.

Manny asks the adventurers if he can keep the pyramid's map. He figures they shall not need it anymore. In case the adventurers aren't willing to give it away, he offers 100 gold pieces for it.



I beg you, don't go. It is better to bury that place forever! No one will miss it.

Fiardensh, the Mage

THE THRONE OF WANT



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



10-16
TIER 3

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

This is a tier-3 adventure where the characters track a powerful undead individual to its resting place. The lore below suggests this is a powerful overlord that scourged the land and affected a large portion of the world. This is a save-the-world climax where a high-level party stops the evil plans of the death lord. You can add this location and ultimate boss as a final encounter after an undead-themed campaign. Alternatively, this could be a low-scope adventure where an ancient tomb broke open and powerful undead creatures come out and destroy life in a relatively small area, as of yet. This adventure is written for a party of 4 to 6 level-13 characters.

Since the end of a tier-3 adventure cannot be accounted for in a short module, the information below is vague enough for the MD to change or adapt to their current needs. Feel free to omit any of the optional lore below.

BACKGROUND LORE



For months now many have perished under the yoke of Serleth, the Dark Lord. What started as irregularly-timed raids on the lone roads transformed into a direct attack to small settlements and then open assaults on the last bastions of the civilizations of men, elves, and dwarves. The advance of the Dark Lord's undead forces on unprotected land stained the countries with blood and pain. Countless are the victims of this war that shall be remembered grimly by future generations; should any of them endure.

The Dark Lord commands an undying army of despicable creatures. These monsters do not know fear. They do not know pain. They advance relentlessly through day and night until they reach their destination and destroy anything in their path. Only a few well-protected cities remain impregnable. How long shall this moment of false safety last? No one knows. There is little hope. Most champions and valiant warriors have already perished in vain. What little remains of mankind cowers behind their tall walls and wait for a miracle.

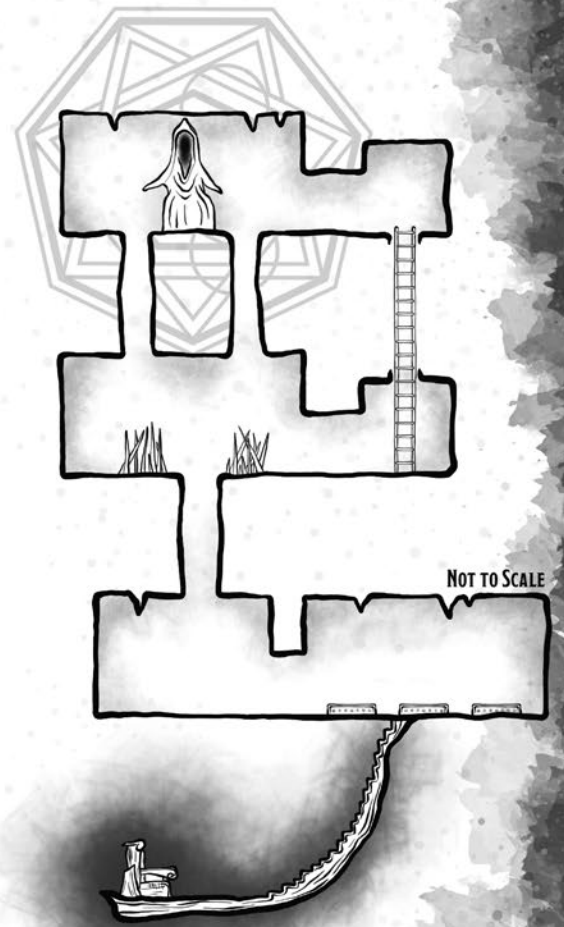
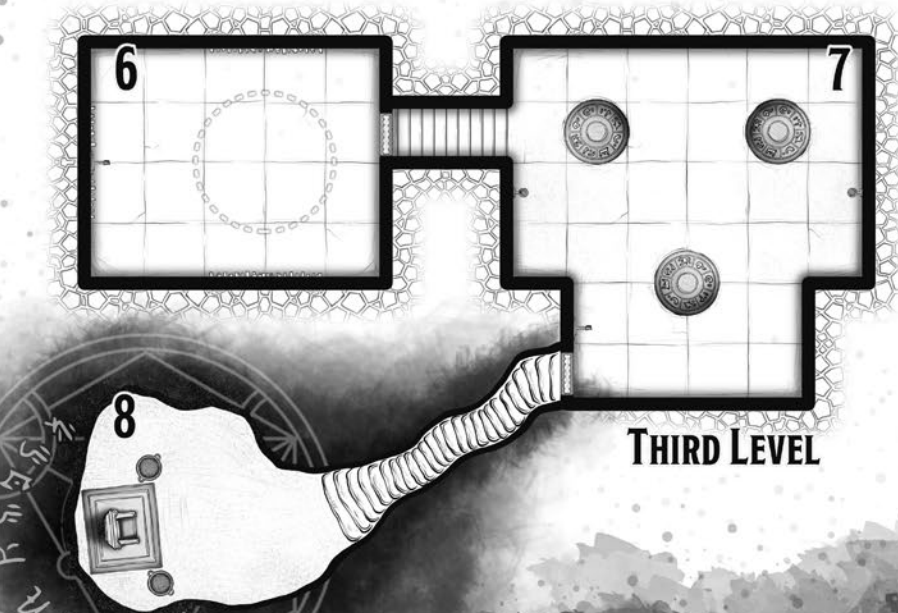
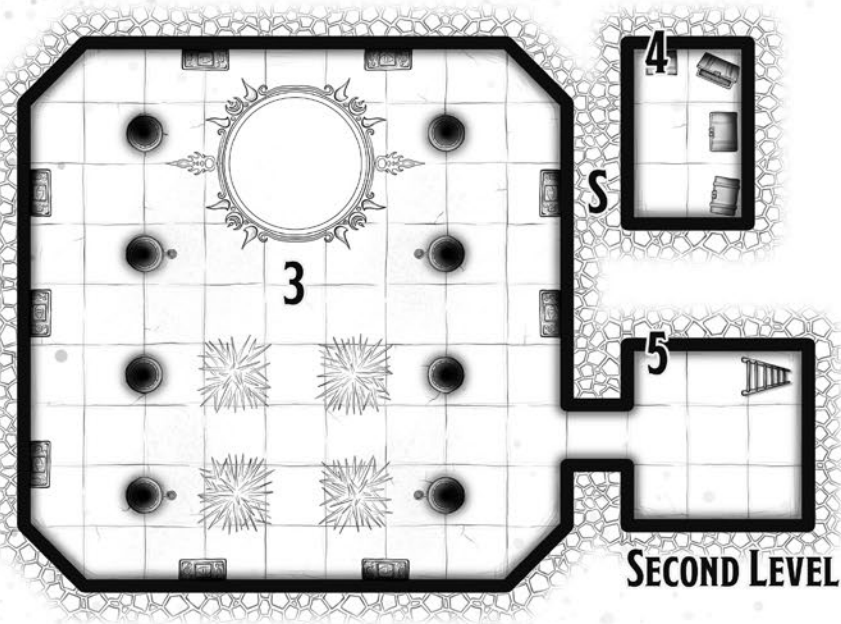
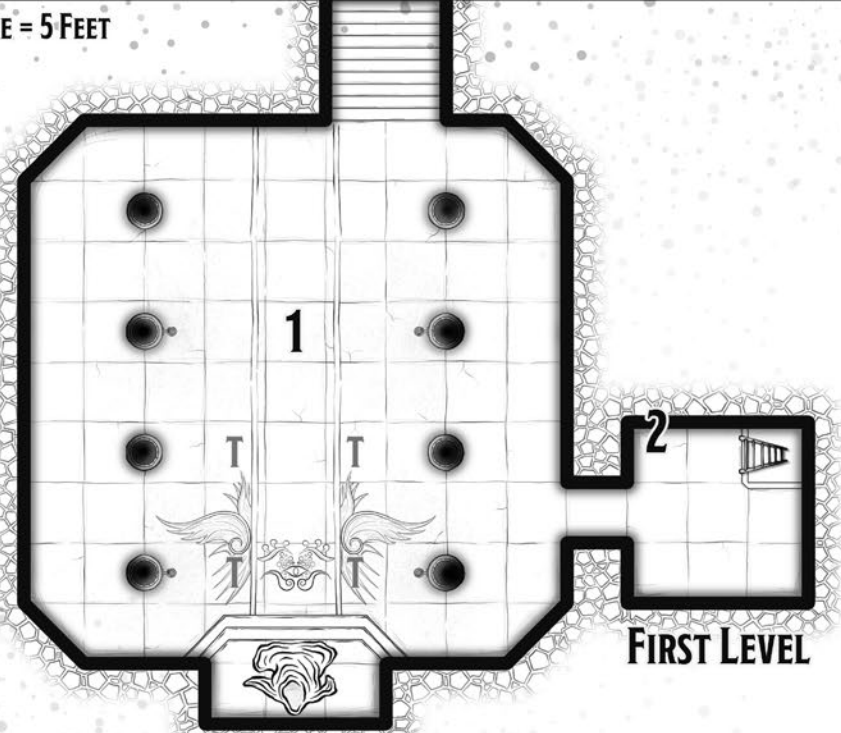
Serleth came from nothing. He was a failed necromancer with little talent for the dark arts and less ability to weave spells and magic. But he was an investigator without equal that searched all around the forgotten world in libraries and documents until he found the location of the Throne of Want. It is a fabled location where a witch-king of old once ruled. The throne is said to contain incommensurable power to whoever sits in it. The one on the throne is to be named the Master of Death. Serleth tracked the location of the throne to a half-forgotten ruin near the center of a great mountain. An underground complex filled with strange guardians and lethal traps. Serleth knew about most protective measures from his documents. He came prepared and bypassed or defeated most of them until he reached the Throne of Want. Upon sitting in it, the spirit of the ancient witch-king of old emerged from the throne and possessed Serleth. His powers returned slowly until he became the world-threat everyone knows.

THE WITCH KING'S TOMB

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 8 correspond to the underground tomb complex map.

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

THRONE OF WANT



AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The tomb's three main levels have granite flooring in average condition. The rock appears cracked and worn but it is still serviceable.

Doors. There are two stone doors on the third level. They do not have locks and can be pushed aside by spending an action.

Light. There are magical iron sconces with *continual flame* spells in several areas of the tomb. They provide bright light. Removing any of the sconces causes it to lose its magic after 1d6 minutes.

Guardians and Traps. The undead guardians of the tomb and any traps are a magical manifestation of the witch king's power. Even if destroyed or disabled, any undead or trap reforms after a period of 4d6 hours.

Smells and Sounds. The whole complex smells of old dust and powdered bones. Its sepulchral silence is oppressive and unnerving.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

A perilous journey through the mountain brings the adventures to the witch king's tomb. The entrance hall is a large chamber with two rows of pillars and a large statue of the witch king at the far end. The statue depicts a hooded figure with a dagger and a staff in its hands. The face is not visible but two dots of red light shine from beneath the hood, like eyes.

Two **wraiths** and two **specters** emerge from the statue and attack any intruders. They attempt to bring them close to the pitfall trap squares (see below). The area is considered unhallowed ground; any attempt to turn undead fails.

Pitfall Trap. Four stone tiles open downward and may drop any creature standing on them to the metal spikes below in area 3. They are marked with a "T" on the map. A passive Perception score of 20 or higher reveals the outlines of the four tiles as a possible false floor. When a creature stands on any of the tiles, they must make a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall to the spikes below. If a creature falls, it takes 35 (10d6) piercing damage. A creature that falls triggers the encounter in area 3 immediately.

2. SIDE ROOM LADDER

The room contains nothing of importance except a hole on the ground with an iron ladder that descends 50 feet to area 5. The walls of this room are in exceptional condition, the DM may take advantage of this to include paintings, runes, or bas-reliefs or important lore bits that the adventurers may uncover before they venture further.

3. ROOM OF IMPALEMENT

This chamber is similar in dimensions and the arrangement of the pillars to area 1. There are nine ornate stone sarcophagi by the walls of this chamber. The sarcophagi are engraved with runes in an ancient tongue that describe the person entombed in here, their deeds, and how they died. There are four spots with irregular arrangements of pointy spikes near the south wall of the room. Any creature that falls through the pitfall traps in area 1 is impaled in the correspondent spikes. When any creature enters the chamber from area 5 or by falling through a pitfall trap, four **wraiths** and five **shadows** emerge from the sarcophagi and attack.

There is a large 10-foot-wide circular opening on the floor near the north wall that descends 50 feet to area 6. There are no ladders, manholes, or an apparent way to descend.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the irregular outline of a section of the wall that hides a secret passage. The sarcophagus near it features a false bottom that moves aside to reveal a secret passage to area 4.

4. SECRET VAULT

Four identical stone chests have withstood the passage of time in this room. They contain 2500 pp, 3420 gp, and a little more in lower coinage. A *staff of the magi* leans against one of the chests. A +2 *mithral chain shirt* is tucked at the bottom of one of the chests.

5. SECOND LEVEL LANDING

The room contains nothing of importance except an iron ladder that ascends 50 feet to area 2. The walls of this room are a good state of preservation, the DM may take advantage of this to include paintings, runes, or bas-reliefs or important lore bits that the adventurers may uncover before they venture further.

6. A WALL OF DARTS

The north, south, and west walls of this room are lined with several rows of two-inch-wide circular openings that shoot poison darts when the trap is activated (see below). The stone door by the east wall is engraved with the image of a large throne where a dark figure sits. The throne radiates what appears to be a kind of light or energy.

Poison Dart Trap. The four tiles directly below the opening in area 3 are a large pressure plate. Applying forty pounds or more to the plate triggers scores of poison darts to shoot from three different walls. The pressure plate is accurate enough that it causes a new barrage of darts when a new creature steps on it, possibly targeting several creatures as they descend. This trap has a seemingly unending supply of darts. A passive Perception score of 20 or higher reveals the outline of the pressure plate but its purpose remains unknown until a creature

descends and sees the shooting holes on the walls. When a creature stands on any of the tiles, they must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

7. THE TRIPARTITE TOMB

The bodily remains of the Witch King and some of his most loyal subjects are spread in equal amounts amongst three shallow circular niches. They are closed shut with mortar and stone. A powerful glow emerges from the three stone circles on the floor. Like a dense mist that floats around each of them and exchanges matter from time to time with the others.

Serleth, the Dark Lord (**death knight**) is in the room waiting for the intruders, by the south wall. He is accompanied by his two bodyguards (**wraiths**), and three

wretched souls (**shadows**). The area is considered unhallowed ground; any attempt to turn undead fails. Serleth begins the battle by hurling a Hellfire Orb at the back wall, trying to target as many of the characters as possible. Defeating Serleth causes any other undead in the room to be destroyed too.

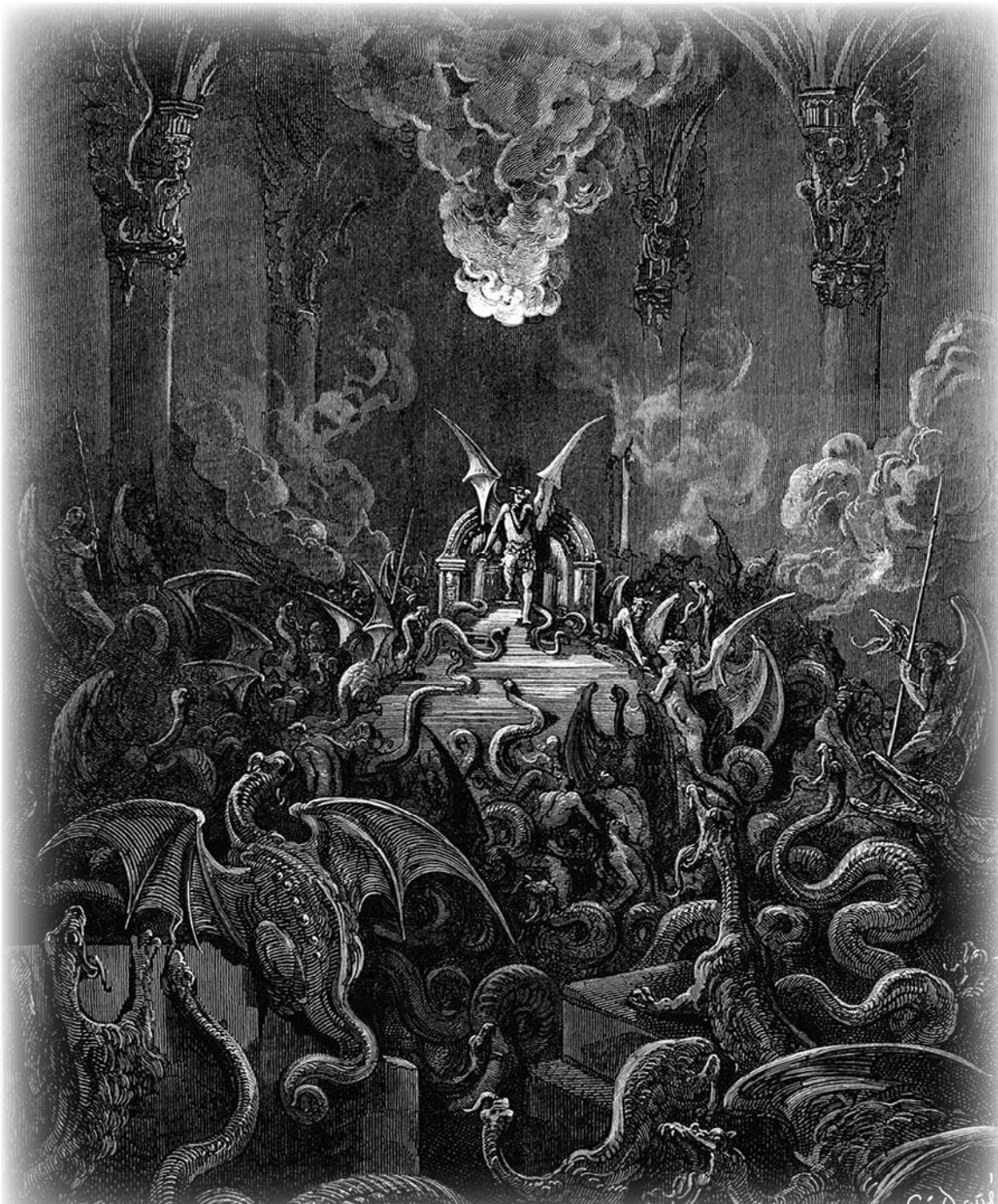
8. THE THRONE OF WANT

The throne is located on what appears to be a floating stone platform after a short flight of stone stairs. The area has no walls, it floats in an abyss of darkness and oppressive silence. Meditating in this place for a prolonged period opens a new layer of perception in anyone that attempts it. After 3d6 days of meditation, the person acquires a rare gift that allows them to see into the void and distinguish shapes and images from the world of the dead. The character can now see invisible undead creatures as if they were in plain sight.

DEVELOPMENT

Destroying Serleth causes the spirit of the Witch King to enter a dormant state for 1 year. During this period, the true power of the throne is inactive. After this period of dormancy, a new person can sit on the Throne of Want and receive the power of the ancient Witch King. Serleth was weak enough that the spirit overtook him completely but a strong soul may be able to absorb the power without relinquishing control to the angry phantom of the past.

Whether a new person takes this position or a member of the adventuring party tries their luck with the Witch King's throne, is an adventure for another time. These future possibilities are not within the scope of this adventure and left to the DM's discretion.



They must be hiding inside the well; a farmer boy followed them and saw one jumping in.

Olivia Wullet

THE WELL THAT'S NOT SO WELL



3-5
PLAYERS



4-6
HOURS



1-4
TIER 1

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

This short adventure takes place near a small town or village. Insert this module when the adventurers are just arriving at a small village after some days on the road. The heroes could also learn of the village's difficulties from traveling merchants, a few miles before reaching the village. This adventure is planned for 4 to 6 level 3 characters.

BACKGROUND LORE



he village of Zumty is located a day away from the capital on horseback. Its main source of income is the exporting of livestock, food, and other goods. Zumty is mostly composed of farmers and ranchers. They breed more pigs than any other town near the capital.

The village used to draw the water they needed from the well to the east. But an earthquake a few months ago caused the underground water currents to shift and end up elsewhere. The well became useless and abandoned. Another well was built in a different area and the people of Zumty forgot about the first one. However, they never wondered the empty well could mean trouble.

A group of goblins that roamed in the vicinity of the village encountered the empty well. Their leader, a bugbear named Gnim, decided the well could come in handy. They explored the underground tunnels under it and noticed they had more than enough space to build a base. Gnim and the goblins developed a clever pulley device to build a sort of elevator to move between levels. They also dug

a few tunnels and placed ladders that connect a couple of the underground chambers. In time, they even created two artificial cave-chambers of their own, placing some wooden beams to reinforce the ceilings and walls.

Gnim and the goblins found their zone of comfort in that well. An ever-present shelter and home was something Gnim and his goons hadn't experienced for a long time. They felt confident and strong. Zumty became the goblins' main target and source of food due to its proximity. A current mob war in the capital requires all members of the guard to be present there, so there isn't much security in the small village.

At first, the goblins snuck up at night and stole a few loaves of bread or a pound of salted meats. They were subtle and swift. The villagers didn't notice stuff went missing after a week of robberies. This gave more confidence to the greedy goblins, who then opted for higher scores.

It happened three days ago. The goblins tried to break into a barn and steal a pig. The poor porcine animals squealed and made enough noise to wake the villagers. Olivia Wullet and her husband, Francesco, caught the goblins red-handed. Mr. Wullet grabbed a shovel while a couple of neighbors arrived with farm forks. They did what they could and managed to drive the goblins away. However, Francesco's right leg was gravely wounded. He must stay in bed for weeks. Plus, one of the neighbors, Samuel, died fighting the goblins.

Olivia knew the city guard would take weeks to come, maybe more. She is worried sick that the goblins might attack again. Her husband is incapacitated and the rest of the villagers are afraid to fight and end up like Samuel. Olivia Wullet has always been a voice in the crowd. She

rallies the villagers and comes up with an emergency fund of 100 gold. They collected enough gold to hire a group of adventurers or mercenaries to take care of the goblins.

NPCs

OLIVIA WULLET

Neutral good human (age 38)

Mrs. Wullet is a stout, chubby woman. She has red cheeks and a welcoming smile. Her nose is very small compared to the size of her head. She wears her long hair in a thick braid. Her clothes are always stained from the farm work with the pigs all day.

Personality Trait. “We must adapt to survive; the world won’t change for us.”

Ideal. “There’s no good pretending to be something I’m not.”

Bond. “Wullet Farm is my life.”

Flaw. “I obey the law, even if the law causes misery.”

THE GOBLIN LAIR

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 14 correspond to the Goblin Lair.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The underground complex is a natural cavern. Its walls are eroded from the water that used to be here. There are some boulders scattered around the caves. The squares where the boulders rest are considered difficult terrain.

Light. There are no torches or lamps in the goblin lair, all rooms are in complete darkness. The goblins see well in the darkness and see no need to illuminate their home.

Smells and Sounds. The humidity in the cave makes the air feel thick and the smells stick. The rooms with more concentration of goblins smell bad. Animal carcasses, rot, and bones create a foul stench. Goblin laughs and grunts echo through the cavern and the elevator shaft (see the Goblin Lair map).

1. ABANDONED WELL

It is a 30-minute-walk from Wullet Farm to the well. It is surrounded by tall green grass that dances with the wind. The well looks old and its bricks are eroded and moldy. The well has a 10-foot opening and goes down 40 feet. The goblins have sanded and shaped some of the bricks in the inside of the well to create stepping stones. This facilitates the task to climb down. Still, any creature requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) to climb down successfully. Failing by 5 or more means the creature falls in area 2 and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

2. LAIR ENTRANCE

The presence of goblins can be perceived in this room. Filth and bones are scattered all around. Small footprints with tiny toes with claws mark the dirt on the ground. There are two **goblins** here standing guard. If a creature fails to climb down the well and falls here, the goblins attack them immediately.

3. WOODEN ELEVATOR

Gnim and the goblins feel very proud of their contraption. They attached wooden beams on the top of the cave and hanged a pulley-system to move a wooden elevator up and down the shaft. The ropes and wooden gears don’t appear to be of top quality. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals the wooden frame of the basket cannot hold more than two medium creatures (180 pounds).

If three or more medium creatures (220 pounds) get on the elevator, it collapses and falls to area 11. The shaft is 80 feet long but the ropes and gears slow down the fall. Any creature on the elevator when it falls lands in area 11, triggers the encounter there and takes 12 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Reduce this damage by half if the elevator falls from area 7.

4. DUMMIES

The goblins have placed some human-sized hay and animal skin dummies in here. The words “*stupid*” and “*dies*” are written on them. Goblins practice their aim here. They throw rocks or arrows at the targets and organize contests between them. Three **goblins** practice their sharpshooting abilities. Near the entrance of this room, there is a ladder that descends to area 9.

5. GOBLIN DORMITORY

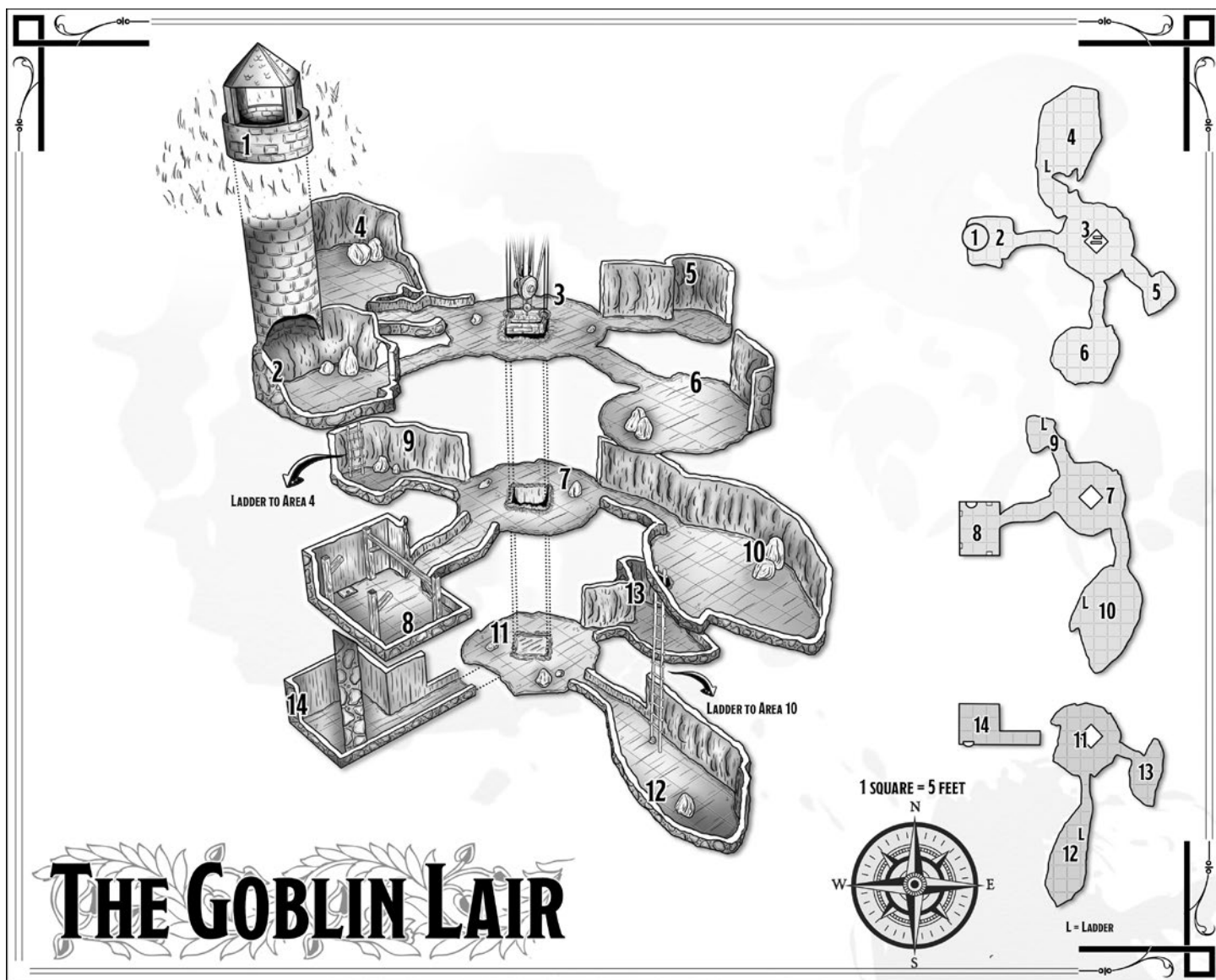
Several animal pelts and hay are scattered all over the floor in this room. A strong smell of sweat and filth comes out of this room. Two **goblins** sleep in this room unless loud noises from areas 3, 4, or 6 woke them up.

6. GOBLIN ARMORY

There are two improvised wooden racks with a couple of wooden swords, one rusty long sword, and many poor-quality short swords. These are back-up weapons in case the goblins lose the ones they have on them or if more goblins join their cause. Goblins spend some time of the day practicing their fencing abilities here. The long sword is too heavy for any of them to wield but they have fun pretending to be noble knights. Gnim doesn’t like the rusty sword and would rather swing his morningstar. Three **goblins** role-play a battle where two of them defeat a knight.

7. MID-LEVEL LANDING

Stopping the elevator’s wheel in this area allows for passengers to get off the basket. There is a single curious



THE GOBLIN LAIR

goblin here. He waits to see who might be coming down to say hello. He screams and flees to area 10 when he realizes non-goblin creatures have invaded the lair. He warns any comrades in the war room.

8. THRONE ROOM

This is one of the chambers that the goblins built. They did their best to sand the walls to make them smoother. Gnim ordered his goons to place wooden beams not only to reinforce the structure but also because they look good. Gnim improvised a throne with some planks, leather, bones, and animal pelts. He sits on it with the poise of a king. Gnim (**bugbear**) and four **goblins** are here at all times.

Secret Door. There is a trapdoor hidden under a rock. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals its location. This artificial tunnel has a ladder that leads to area 14.

9. GOBLIN DORMITORY

This is a dormitory similar to the one in area 5. One **goblin** sleeps in here. There is a ladder at the far end of this chamber that leads up to area 4.

10. GOBLIN WAR ROOM

The goblins gather here with Gnim to plan their raids and attacks. There is a rough and badly-drawn map of Zumty on the floor. The goblins scratched the ground with a rock to make it. It is full of "X's" and other incomprehensible markings. There is a ladder on the west wall that leads to area 12.

There are three **goblins** here. If they become aware of the intruders, they don't stay and fight them. They flee down the ladder and join their colleagues in area 12.

11. LOWER LEVEL LANDING

This is the farthest the elevator goes. The elevator's wheel stops moving and the pulley can only go backward from here. If any of the adventurers made the wooden basket

collapse, this is where they land, and the basket pieces scatter all over the ground. The goblins in area 12 hear the crash and approach the scene.

Secret Tunnel. Gnim blocked the second entrance to the secret chamber (area 14). A passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals the rocks and boulders can be removed to reveal an artificial tunnel that takes to area 14. It is not possible to rearrange the boulders.

12. GOBLIN DORMITORY

This is the largest dormitory in the caverns. It is similar to the other two. There are more animal pelts and the stench is stronger. Three **goblins** rest in here. They are ready for battle if a teammate wakes them up, or if they hear the elevator crash. The ladder in this room goes up to area 10.

13. STORAGE

The goblins keep food and other goods in here. Most of it is useless trash but the goblins think otherwise. However, a character can find something valuable among the junk with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Treasure. The valuable objects lost in the trash are a sturdy wool ribbon (30 gp), an antique wool hat (20 gp), and an ugly belt with a marble buckle (40 gp).

14. SECRET CHAMBER

Gnim and the goblins stored the real treasures in here. There are two wooden chests and several wooden crates with goods and valuables.

Treasure. There is a large leather bag with 100 silver pieces and 50 gold pieces. There are two daggers and a longbow, several pieces of expensive silverware like plates and utensils (30 gp), and a collection of salts and spices (15 gp).

DEVELOPMENT

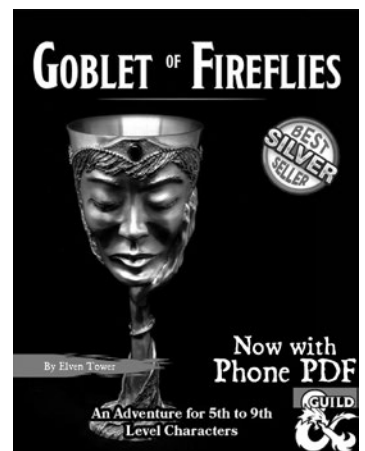
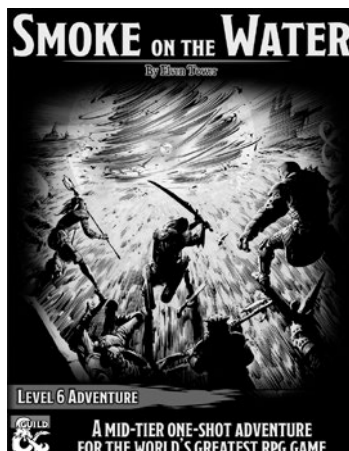
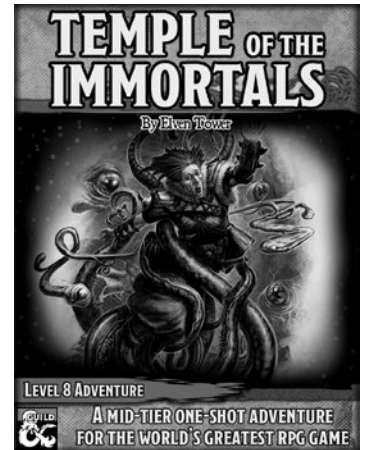
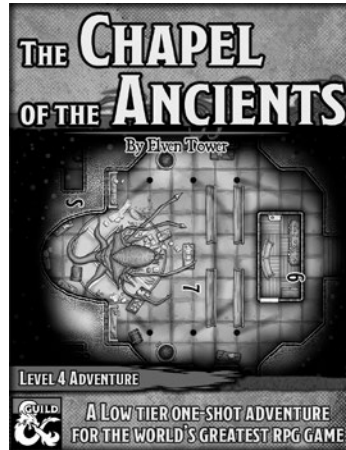
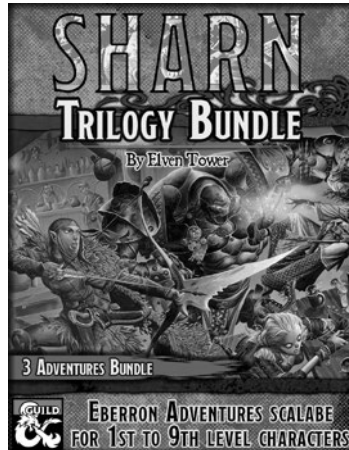
Olivia Wullet and the people of Zumty are forever grateful to the heroes and pay them the agreed-upon amount. They also give them a letter of recommendation so they can bring it to the capital and state to the city guard that they're friends to the village of Zumty.

They also ask the heroes to deliver a letter asking the authorities of the capital to return the usual guards to the village, in case they run into another emergency. Perhaps the adventurers can help with the current mob war in the big city and release the city guard from this mayhem. But that's an adventure for another time.

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