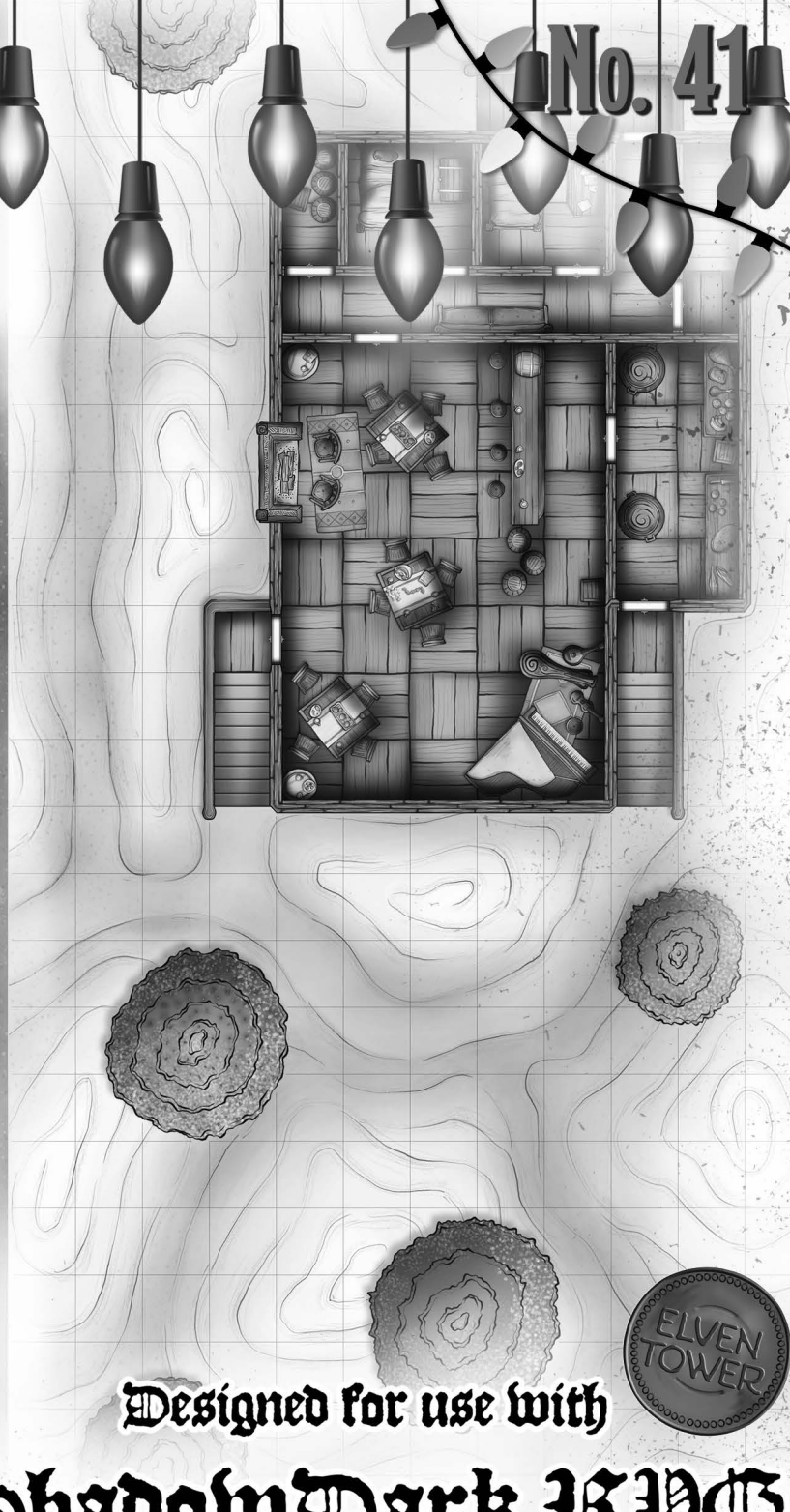
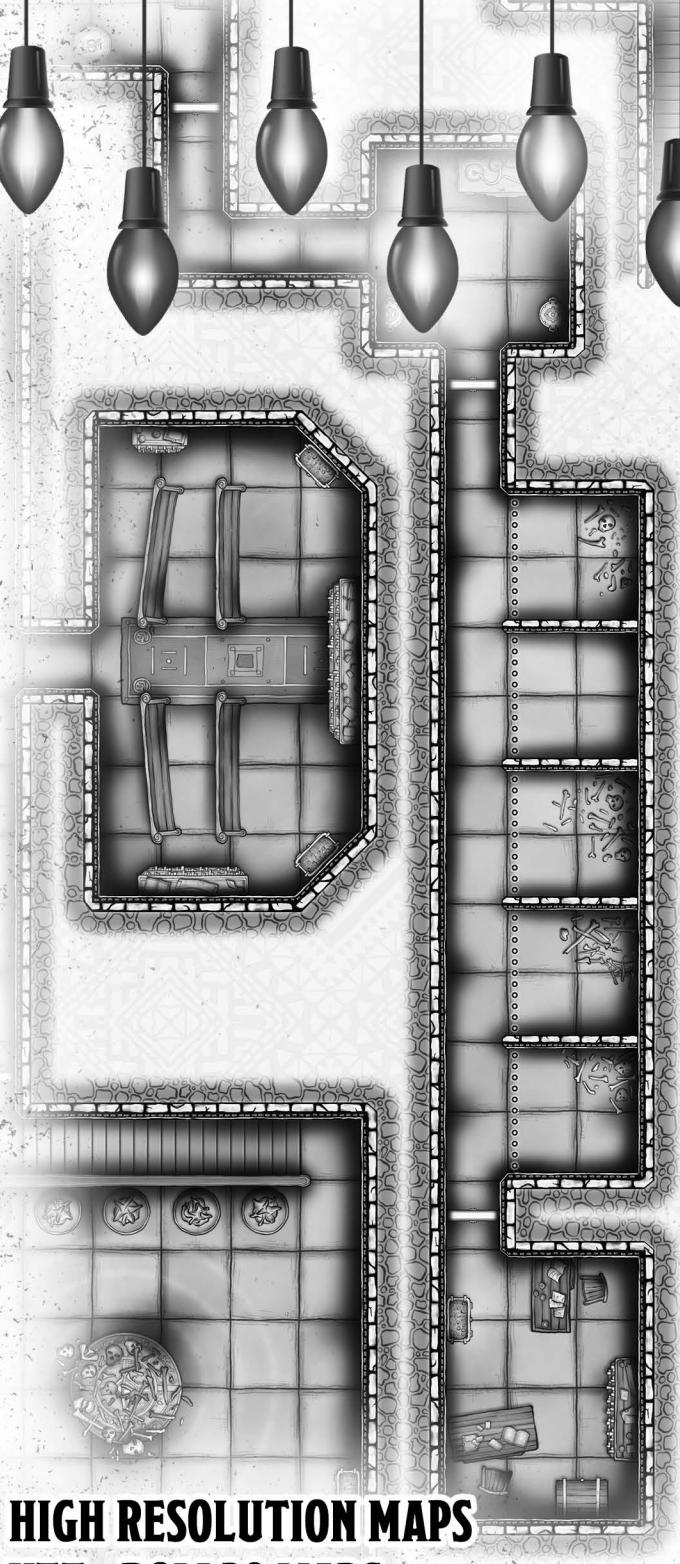


DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 41

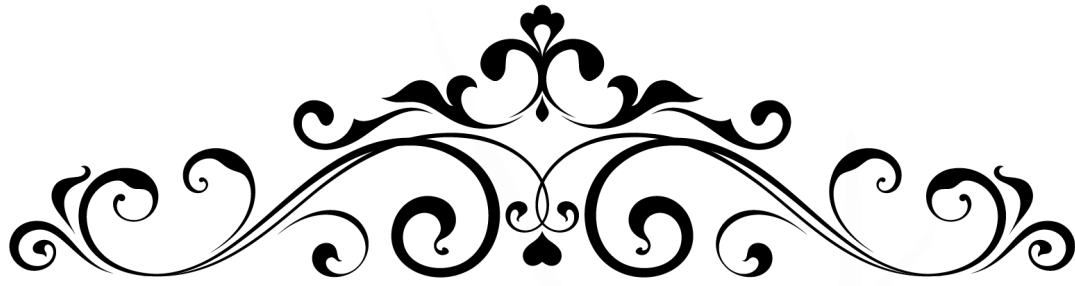


HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
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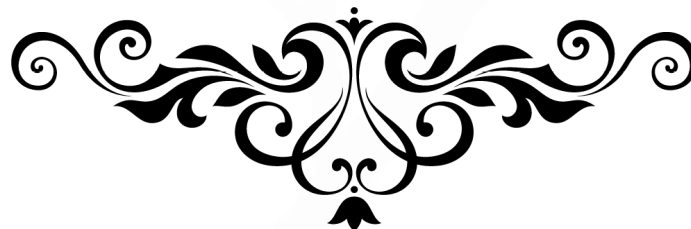




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits	2	The Winter Observatory20
		<i>Level 7 Dungeoncrawl</i>	
Table of Contents	3	Poisoned Candy23
Pond of Unfulfilled Dreams.	5	<i>One-Page Dungeon</i>	
<i>Level-6 Adventure</i>		The Forest Owlbear24
The Valthornes' Wish	8	<i>Level 3 Encounter</i>	
<i>Level-1 Adventure</i>		Snow, Bones, and Blood26
Blessing of the Sphinx11	<i>Level-3 Stand-Alone Adventure</i>	
<i>Level-6 Adventure</i>		The Aboleth's Dreams33
The Ephemeral Spirits Cult.14	<i>Level-8 Adventure</i>	
<i>Level 3 Dungeoncrawl</i>		Thank You36
Blade of the Stone Giant17	Licensing37
<i>Level-2 Adventure</i>			



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DUNGEON MAP PACK VOL. 2

WING & WEBS OF HATRED
LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

A PRAYER

ELVEN TOWER ADVENTURES



Delve the Dungeon!



Grab your torch and blade, and find that smoldering sliver of hope and determination, for you are about to journey into the dark. Who could know what you shall find in the dark depths?

POND OF UNFULFILLED DREAMS

“In the heart of winter’s embrace, the Yuletide Crypts awaken, a labyrinth of dreams and dangers, where wishes are weighed against the soul’s silent truths.”

Old Saying

People usually reignite their spark of motivation and ambition at the end of each year. It is during this time of hope and festivities when the common folk gaze at the stars and wish for better times, more fortune, or health. And there is a place that could make their dreams come true.

THE YULETIDE CRYPTS

In the realm of Eyrandel, there lies a forgotten place known only as the Yuletide Crypts. The legend claims that a pond lies within this dungeon, which emerges from the fabric of reality only during the fleeting end-of-the-year holidays. This arcane phenomenon is tied to the celestial alignment that occurs once every year, as the veil between worlds thins, allowing passage to this enigmatic place.

THE MAGICAL POND

THE YULETIDE CRYPTS are home to an incredible artifact. It is called the *Pond of Unfulfilled Dreams*. The water exudes an aura of serenity, a stark contrast to the perilous journey that leads toward it. In the heart of the crypt, the bravest of souls face their moment of reckoning. They are invited to gaze into the mystical pond, but with each gaze, they risk everything. For the pond does not simply grant wishes; it delves into the soul, and it punishes those with greedy hearts and selfish wishes. The pond stands as a testament to the enduring human quest for fulfillment, a place where dreams can be realized or broken, and where the very essence of one’s being is laid bare under the watchful gaze of destiny.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **Fulfilling Dream.** The Yuletide Crypts prophecy has spread across lands, drawing heroes seeking to fulfill their dreams or mend the errors of their pasts. A wealthy seer named Wilford Gapp hires a group of heroes to escort him to this remote place (1,500 gp, 7 XP).

► **Heirloom of Power.** Legends whisper of a mighty artifact, believed to have been lost in the depths of the *Pond of Unfulfilled Dreams*’ magical waters. Said to bestow immense power upon its holder, this relic lures adventurers and treasure seekers, eager to brave the crypt’s perils for a chance to claim the powerful relic (0 XP).

YULETIDE SNOWFLAKES

Within the crypt, snowflakes drift gently from unseen sources, never settling, each carrying the faint whispers of past adventurers. These snowflakes are said to be manifestations of the crypt’s consciousness, guiding or misleading travelers based on their intentions.

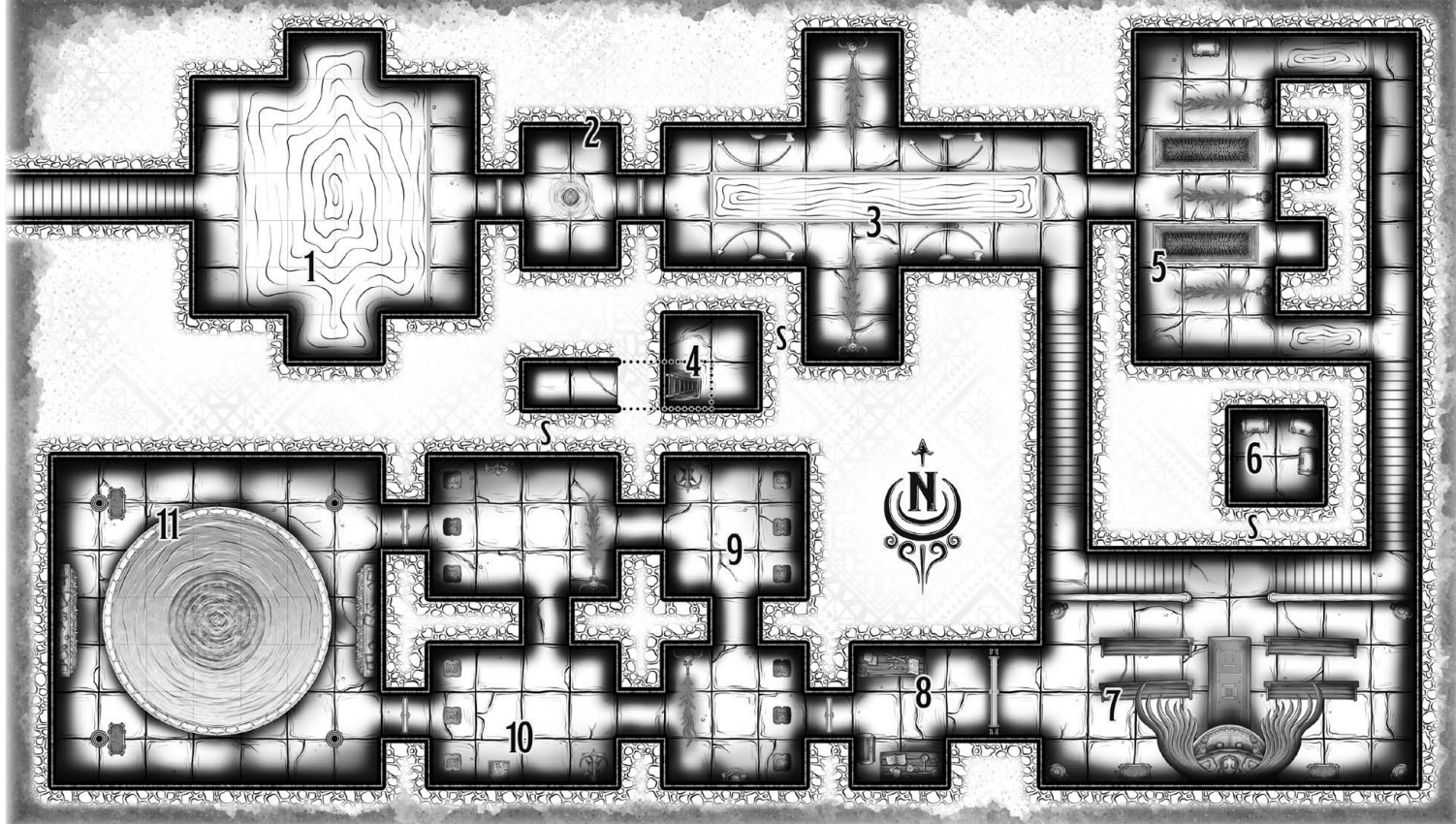
Level 6 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Luminous Fauna.** Besides a few braziers, there are rare, bio-luminescent flora and fauna, unique to the Yuletide Crypts. They illuminate some areas with an otherworldly glow. Glowing mosses and small, spectral creatures flit through the air, adding an aura of wonder to this place. Denizens of the dungeon are **dark-adapted**.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A hidden alcove suddenly illuminates, revealing an ancient tome inscribed with forgotten spells, but guarded by a spectral librarian (ghost) demanding a riddle be solved (GM’s choice). The heroes can refuse to participate. A wrong answer angers the ghost.
2	An icy gust sweeps the dungeon, extinguishing light sources. Ethereal voices offer cryptic guidance and misleading whispers.
3	The characters enter the domain of a swarm of centipedes . The insects flee when reduced to half their Hit Points.
4	A mirage of a grand feast appears, tempting adventurers with restorative delicacies (DC 13 WIS), but those who partake take 1d4 WIS damage and experience horrible nightmares for 1 crawling round . Magical healing removes this effect.
5	An adventurer’s ghost warns the heroes and says: “ <i>Be careful what you wish for, I paid the consequences...</i> ” before vanishing.
6	In an unexpected turn of events, it starts to snow. The dungeon is covered in 2 inches of snow in a matter of minutes.



1. ACID POOL

A pool of virulent acid emits a noxious vapor, its surface shimmering with a sickly green hue. The stone around its edge tells a tale of its corrosive power.

The characters must cross the 20-foot-long pool. Touching the acid burns the skin (1 damage). Getting submerged in the viscous liquid is lethal (1d10 damage per round). Jumping across is not easy (DC 15 STR).

2. SPHERE OF TRUTH

The Sphere of Truth is a steel orb that floats serenely above a stone pedestal, radiating a soft, pulsating light. This revered artifact hums with a mystical energy that beckons the curious and the brave.

This ancient artifact can be used once per day. A sentient creature only needs to place their hands on it, close their eyes, and ask a question. The GM is free to decide if this information is clear, mysterious, or hard to understand. Removing the artifact from its place renders it useless.

3. DEFENSE MECHANISMS

The acid here is similar to the one in area 1. Walking by the pool's edge triggers the axe traps on the walls. They deal 1d8 damage (DC 13 DEX for half). The jets expel fire frequently enough but leave a couple of seconds of rest between each flame stream. Creatures in the fire's path take 1d10 damage (DC 14 DEX for half).

4. SECRET PASSAGE

If the characters spot the loose brick in area 3, they find this passageway (DC 14 WIS). Pressing this brick causes a section of the wall to slide aside and reveal this room.

5. CHAMBER OF DEATH

This perilous chamber, a labyrinthine network of traps and snares, is a daunting test of agility and wit. The air is thick with tension, as each movement must be calculated to navigate through the deadly gauntlet.

This area features two spiked pits that must be jumped across to reach either one of the two exits. However, three devious traps lie in wait, suddenly unleashing a ferocious burst of flame upon unsuspecting jumpers.

To cross this area, the characters must successfully jump the 5-foot-wide pits (DC 11 STR). On a fail, they only manage to grab the far end's edge. If they fail by 5 or more, they get impaled below. Plus, they must time their jump (DC 12 INT). On a fail here, they jump the distance but they do not avoid getting burned by the flame jets. The heroes do not have to bypass these traps but it is the only way to reach the treasure chest by the north wall.

► **Acid.** The heroes must jump across 10-foot-long pools of acid to find the stairs that descend to area 7. This acid works the same way as the one in area 1.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** The chest contains 400 gp, a bag of holding, and a wooden case with four potions of healing.

6. SECRET VAULT

An almost invisible lever lies by the stair's landing (DC 14 WIS). Pulling it reveals this treasure chamber.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** There are 1,200 gp, two griffon eggs (40 gp each), a mithral shield (80 gp), and a dragon-bone crossbow carved as a roaring dragon (55 gp).

7. STATUE OF ORD

In stark contrast to the Yuletide Crypt's perilous nature, this chamber exudes a tranquil aura, resembling a sacred meditation space with polished wooden benches arranged in contemplative silence.

At the far end stands a majestic statue of Ord, the Wise, the Secret Keeper. Its benevolent gaze casts a calming influence over the room illuminated by two braziers.

► **Challenge.** The statue comes to life (**stone golem**) and fights until it is reduced to half its Hit Points. The massive gate to area 8 opens only after it is defeated.

8. LOCKED STUDIO

Nestled within the dungeon's passages, a small workspace emerges, its surfaces cluttered with artisan tools, half-finished contraptions, and scattered blueprints.

9. ARCANE DEFENSES EAST

Automated crossbows, fire traps, and a puzzle are scattered across this large chamber divided into four sections (areas 9 and 10). The fire jets work in the same way as the ones in area 3. The crossbows can turn 45 degrees in each direction. They shoot bolts at any creature before them: Attack +4 (1d6). They reload every minute.

10. ARCANE DEFENSES WEST

There is a total of 12 tiles with runes carved on them. Pressing them in the correct order unlocks the final chamber of the dungeon (area 11). A clever character identifies the rune sequence that must be followed to solve the riddle and open the doors (DC 13 INT check).

► **Bypass.** A thief may attempt to disarm the traps and force the mechanic locks (DC 14 DEX check). One check is enough for all three panels (see map). But the thief must be close to all of them. This takes 1 **crawling round**.

11. POND OF UNFULFILLED DREAMS

This hallowed sanctum is bathed in an ethereal glow, its source seemingly the shimmering waters of the pond itself. The walls are adorned with murals depicting scenes of joy, sorrow, and wishes granted or denied.

DEVELOPMENT

► **Fulfilling Dream.** The pond has the power to grant one *wish*. Wilford Gapp makes it to the end of the dungeon. The man rushes, stares at the water, and wishes for wealth, riches, women, immortality, and whatnot. The Yuletide Crypts do not tolerate selfish, self-centered souls. Wilford screams as his body becomes a **gibbering moulder**. The monster fights until slain. If the heroes make a wish, the GM is the sole judge of the outcome.

► **Heirloom of Power.** The characters' objective is the *Pearl of Power* that rests at the pond's bottom. However, touching this mystical water is forbidden. Getting in contact with it summons the ire of three **invisible stalkers**. The immortal guardians protect the pearl at all costs.



THE VALTHORNES' WISH

They came from the woods near the cemetery. I heard a man say they roam an unmarked mausoleum. What cursed souls must be interred therein?

Concerned Merchant

In the somber shadows of the old Ebonwood Cemetery, shrouded by gnarled trees and perpetual mist, lies an ancient mausoleum. Its presence is an enigma, its origins lost to time and deliberate erasure. The weathered stone structure, adorned with faded, unrecognizable heraldry, stands as a silent memento of a family's eternal damnation.

Centuries ago, the mausoleum was erected to house the remains of the Valthorne family, a once-noble lineage that fell from grace due to unspeakable crimes. Their transgressions were so heinous that the ruling powers decreed their existence be stricken from all records; their memory erased from history. The Valthorne name was to be forgotten, and with it, the souls entombed within the accursed mausoleum. The few remaining relatives changed their names and step away from their heritage.

CURRENT EVENTS

AFTER A CENTURY of obscurity and silence, a malevolent force awakened within the crypt. The spirits of the Valthorne family, consumed by rage and a yearning for recognition, have begun to lash out. Spectral apparitions and undead manifestations plague the nearby settlements and roads, sowing chaos and fear. The locals, though aware of the source, are unable to quell the unrest. The decrepit mausoleum from whence the undead come is quizzical in that no records in the region mention it. No one knows who it belongs to or who is buried within. According to scholars, there is no other site of burial of its size that defies recognition. Despite the strange mystery, something must be done soon about the merciless undead attacks that scourge the area.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **A Cry for Help.** There have been recent reports of unrestful spirits. Brave adventurers are needed to investigate the source of these disturbances. This quest is sanctioned by the local governance who also offers a hefty reward to inspire more sellswords to act (100 gp, 3 XP).

► **The Scholar's Discovery.** An eccentric historian, Dr. Alessan, discovered a document fragment referencing the 'Erased Lineage,' sparking interest in uncovering the truth behind the forgotten mausoleum. Alessan wishes to visit the crypt himself if the characters promise to guard him from the undead creatures. (0 XP).

UNKNOWN HERITAGE

There is a slim possibility that one of the characters is a distant descendant of the Valthorne bloodline (1-in-10). All undead have disadvantage when attacking such a character and shall not attack them altogether. They inform the character of this and beg for deliverance: "You! Only you can help us regain our pride and peace."

Level 1 Adventure

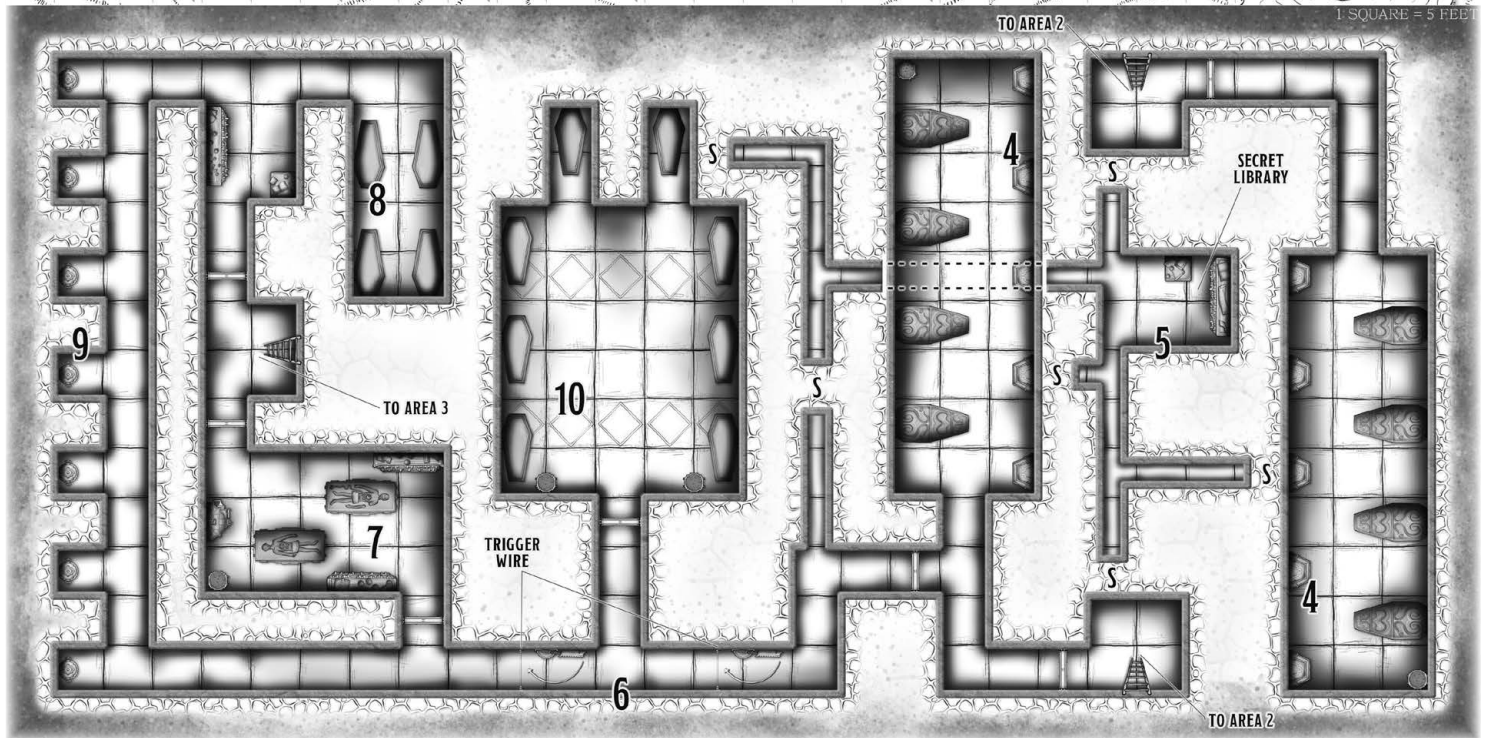
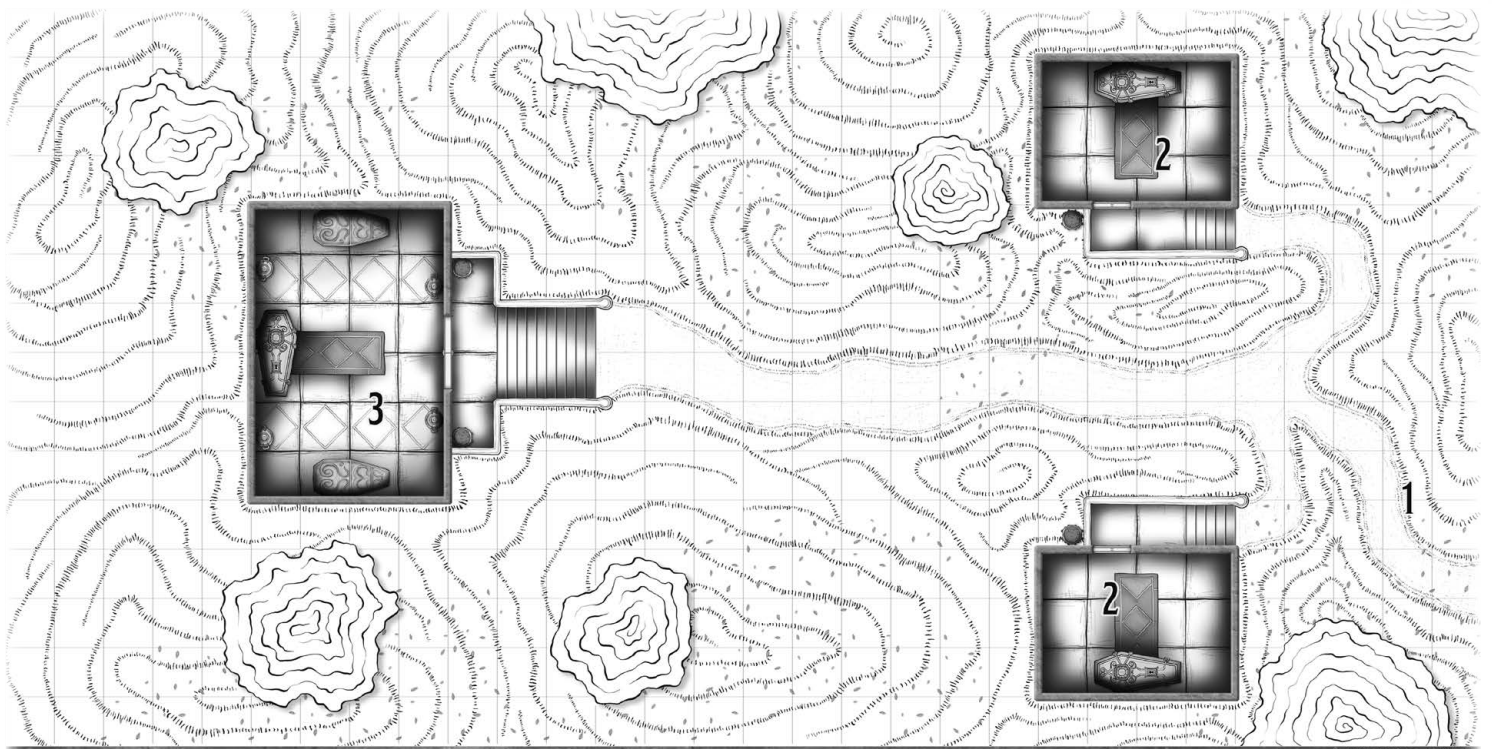
► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some chambers have braziers with *light* spells. The rest are dark. The denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Deathly Whispers.** Countless awakened spirits abound in the area. They clamor, barely audibly, for people to remember their name and place in the world.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	An animated armor , emblazoned with an erased crest, comes to life and attacks the party, driven by an unseen spectral force.
2	In a dimly lit alcove, a stone statue of a mournful figure weeps tears of blood. Anyone who touches it experiences brief, visions of the reason for the family's downfall and their terrible crime. The grim assassination of a rival family's children and heirs.
3	The ghost of a young Valthorne child appears, lost and confused, seeking help from the adventurers to remember his name.
4	A section of the floor collapses, revealing a hidden lower chamber filled with skeletal remains and cursed treasures. A skeleton wears a chainmail and carries a longsword. A spider swarm emerges from the cracked walls to attack anyone who descends.
5	The party discovers a series of runes etched into a wall; deciphering them reveals the presence of the library (area 5).
6	Two roaming skeletons stumble upon the characters. After a moment of confusion (1 round), they attack without mercy.



1. EBONWOOD CEMETERY

Finding the Valthorne crypt is a simple task. The characters must follow the tracks of the undead through the countryside and into Ebonwood Cemetery. Therein, the tracks lead to three mausoleums (areas 2 and 3).

► **Magic Darkness.** The area is shrouded in mist and darkness. A *detect magic* spell reveals its nature.

► **Roaming Guardians.** Three **skeletons** emerge from a random edifice looking for prey in nearby roads. They are drawn by light sources the characters carry.

2. LESSER MAUSOLEUMS

Two ancient mausoleums, their stone facades crumbling, stand solemnly amidst a fog-shrouded cemetery. Eerie, hollow whispers echo from their depths.

Heraldry. On the stone door, walls, and the decorative sarcophagus within, all family names and crests have been defaced. None can be read or deciphered.

Secret Entrances. Each of the decorative sarcophagi contains a narrow shaft that leads down to the crypt. These passages lead to the landings closest to area 4.

3. GRAND MAUSOLEUM

This building is twice as large as the other two mausoleums. It contains the same decorative sarcophagus plus two smaller enclosures. In the same manner, the central sarcophagus contains a hidden passage that descends to the landing just north of area 7 (see map).

► **Guardians.** Opening the central enclosure causes a **zombie** to emerge from each side sarcophagus.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The side sarcophagi contain 30 gp, a *potion of healing*, two torches, and a flask of oil.

4. CRYPT OF THE UNNAMED

This chamber houses five ornate niche columns, and four ancient sarcophagi, each etched with defaced runes that glow ominous under the torchlight.

► **Enclosures.** The sarcophagi contain the bodily remains of nobles of yore. The niches contain the ashes of lesser family relatives. Opening any of them causes two **shadows** to appear as a warning. They retreat if the party stops their intrusion. Otherwise, they attack.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The enclosures in each room labeled area 4 contain 60 gp and two rubies (10 gp each).

5. SECRET LIBRARY

This hidden area, accessible from several other dungeon areas (DC 14 WIS to find secret passage), contains a bookcase. The documents herein contain the only remaining records of the Valthorne family. If Dr. Alessan is present (see **Adventure Hooks**), he finds the tome from which the fragment he possesses was torn. These documents can be gifted to the ghostly patriarch in area 10 to lift the curse that assails the Valthorne family.

6. BLADE TRAPS

Two swinging-blade traps hide in the darkness of this hallway. Each is triggered by stepping through the trigger wire next to it. The swinging blade deals 2d6 damage and resets after 1 minute (DC 14 DEX check).

7. EMBALMING ROOM

Two half-embalmed bodies rest on metal tables. They appear fresh as if they had only been brought for burial hours ago; a trick of the necromancy that veils the crypt. The two **zombies** rise to attack living creatures.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Among the dusty shelves, there is a *potion of healing*, a crowbar, and two flasks of oil.

8. THE POET GHOST

A **ghost** sits on an unmarked sarcophagus. Once a poet, the person now exists in despair, crafting poems of the nameless family. In his art, he claims that all of them were doomed by the crimes of a few evil men. Thus resulting in the current rage that cannot be quenched.

9. TOMB OF ARTISANS

Craftsmen who once worked under the patronage of the Valthorne family were interred here. Their funerary urns are the only ones still bearing their names. All from different families; none of them named Valthorne.

10. TOMB OF PATRIARCHS

In this chamber, eight defaced sarcophagi lie in chilling symmetry. Their austerity and lack of heraldry are amplified by the stone braziers' cold, ghostly light.

The last Valthorne patriarch (**shadow**), wearing a shimmering robe, and two **skeletons** coalesce at the chamber's center. Like their kin, they suffer the curse of non-recognition and yearn to rediscover their heritage.

Eternal Rest. If the characters bring the papers from area 5 that reveal their lost family name, the undead in the crypt pass on to a better life and rest eternally. Otherwise, defeating the patriarch rids the region from their insane attacks for 1 century. Helping them thus is a morally gray deed that the characters must ponder with care.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The sarcophagi contain 40 gp, two emeralds (5 gp each), and the patriarch's magic robe. Whoever wears it knows the direction toward their worst enemy as long as they are located in the same plane.



BLESSING OF THE SPHINX

The goddess holds the secrets of fire magic. Flames, sparks, and ashes. It is all within the scope of the goddess's power. One must be fateful to her.

Adages of the Sand Sphinx



Deep within the scorched sands of the Abydos Desert lies a dungeon, known as the Hall of the Sand Sphinx. This hallowed sanctuary, carved into the heart of a great dune, houses the devout followers of a mystical sphinx deity.

Ages ago, Iraeas, a sphinx of immense power and wisdom, was revered as a deity by a nomadic tribe lost in the desert. The tribe stumbled upon Iraeas during a dire sandstorm. In exchange for her guidance and protection, the tribe vowed eternal servitude, establishing the Cult of the Sand Sphinx. As time passed, the cult grew in secrecy, developing their connection to the element of fire.

CULT OF THE SAND SPHINX

THE CULT IS structured around the worship of the Sand Sphinx, Iraeas. Her followers, known as the Pyre Priests, are fervent zealots who believe that through unwavering devotion, they can channel Iraeas's fiery essence. The cult's doctrine states that fire represents purity, transformation, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge; the same attributes embodied by their feline deity.

In the depths of the desert dungeon lies the Sanctum of Embers, where a statue of Iraeas sits, its eyes glowing with magical fire. The priests believe that an ember of the deity's soul burns eternally within the effigy.

The Pyre Priests seek to imbibe the essence of Iraeas. Those whose faith and dedication are deemed worthy are granted control over fire magic. These abilities range from conjuring small flames to wielding great torrents of fire without trouble. Alas, some of their ritual involve the sacrifice of animals and involuntary prisoners.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **The Eternal Flame.** A rare celestial alignment is approaching, during which Iraeas's power is said to surge. The cult plans a grand ritual to harness this energy, potentially unleashing a destructive force upon the world. An informant has alerted the authorities of nearby desert settlements. The characters are offered a reward to thwart the cult's immediate plans. (800 gp, 5 XP).

► **A Flicker of Doubt.** A cult defector seeks the adventurers' help to stop a dangerous ceremony that could escalate the cult's power to alarming heights. Hadin, a minor cultist, believes that the Pyre Priest leader might summon the Sand Sphinx itself. He begs the characters to follow him back into the cult's lair before the solstice. Otherwise, it shall be too late to act (0 XP).

Level 6 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Cultists refill the areas with bronze, ornate braziers. They burn for 3 hours. Other areas are dark.

► **Fire Magic.** Spellcasters within 100 feet of Iraeas's statue cast any fire-based spell with advantage. It is not necessary to be part of the cult to benefit from this.

► **Doors.** Access to some areas is restricted (see map). These doors feature high-quality locks (DC 17 DEX check). Only the Pyre Priests carry the keys.

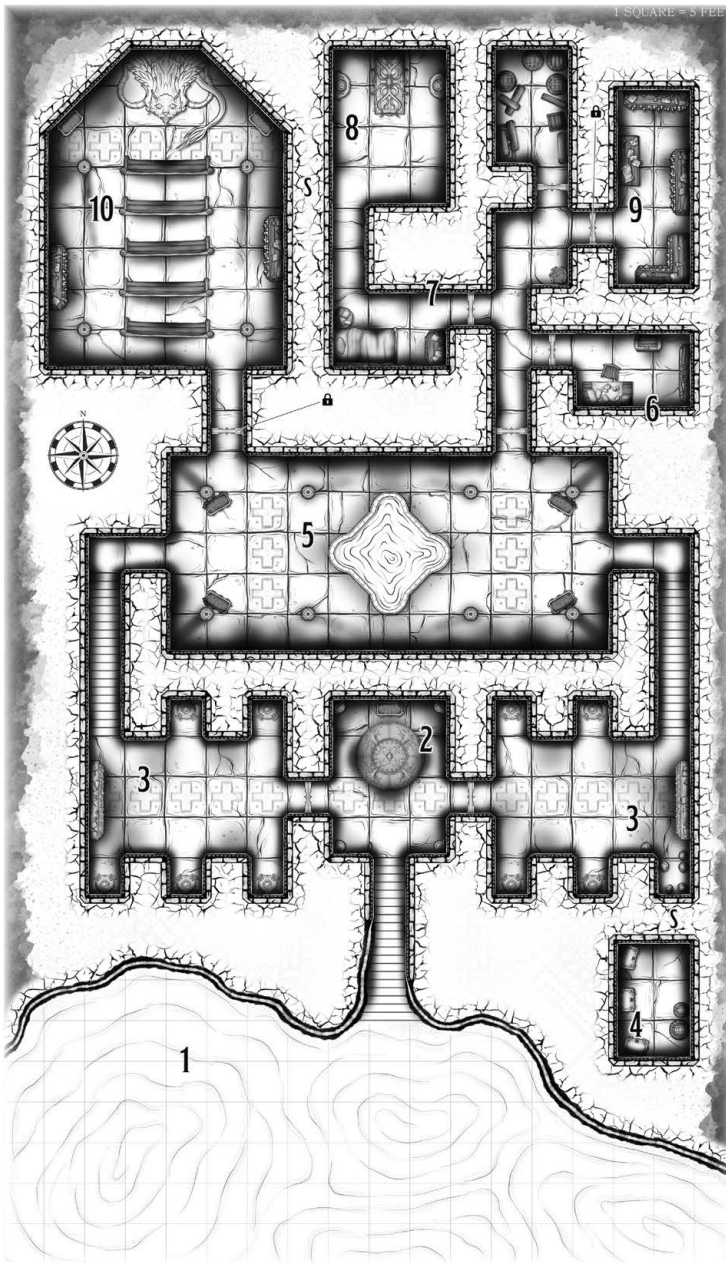
► **Secret Passages.** Two secret hallways can be revealed by pulling a special brick next to the passage's threshold by areas 4 and 10 (DC 14 WIS to notice).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6

Details

- 1 Upon entering a new area, the party is suddenly enveloped in a vivid mirage of an oasis, a cunning illusion meant to conceal a fire-jet trap (DC 13 INT). Those caught in it are hit by the fire jet that comes out of nowhere (3d6 fire).
- 2 Ghostly flames flicker, coalescing into a **lesser fire elemental** that attacks the party as it protects Iraeas's sanctum.
- 3 The party stumbles upon a ritual where four **cultists** attempt to summon a fire elemental by sacrificing a captured traveler.
- 4 Among charred runes and reliefs on the wall, magical insight reveals the location of the sphinx's effigy (DC 15 INT check).
- 5 A radiant crystal embedded on a wall offers glimpses of possible futures (*augury* spell). However, each vision attracts the attention of the cult. After the casting, one Pyre Priest (**mage**) and two **cultists** become aware of the party's position.
- 6 As the cultists perform their grand ritual, all fire sources burn up rapidly and become extinguished after a few seconds.



1. ABYDOS DESERT

It is known that the followers of the worshippers live in nearby settlements and gather at the Hall of the Sand Sphinx for ceremonies. To reach the dungeon, the characters must travel 4 hours through the desert (DC 12 WIS). On a fail, they are ambushed by a **salamander**. If Hadin is present, he knows the way through the dunes.

2. ENTRANCE HALL

The chamber is illuminated by a bronze brazier's flickering flames. Before it, a meticulously carved magic circle vibrates as if following the flames.

► **The Circle.** Reading the runes etched on the circle for 1 **crawling round** reveals it is dedicated to Iraeas, the Sand Sphinx. Scholars know it is a neutral goddess associated with fire and consuming souls (DC 14 INT).

3. URNS OF FLAMES

A grim chamber lined with five gilded urns, each intricately marked with glowing flame runes. Their presence suggests a mysterious ritual or a treasure.

Each of the urns contains the ashen remains of past rituals and/or sacrifices. Things are consumed by fire in the rituals and the ashes are kept as they are believed to hold the sphinx's magic. Alas, a portion of the ash comes from forbidden human sacrifices (DC 15 WIS to notice).

► **Treasure (3 XP).** If the characters search the bookcase, they find a rack with several spell scrolls: *light*, *burning hands*, *flame strike*, and *fireball*. One of each.

4. SECRET VAULT

The cult's leader, Pontiff Adaggo, is the only person who can enter the vault. He has amassed a considerable amount of wealth to further the cult's purposes.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The chests contain 170 gp, 2,680 sp, a set of chainmail armor, a *potion of forgetfulness*, and eight flasks of oil. The two barrels contain a powdered explosive and can be used to blow stuff up.

5. HALL OF BALANCE

This is a spacious chamber with four raging braziers casting shadows around a serene pond of crystal-clear water. It radiates tranquility amidst the light.

A core tenet of Iraeas, the sphinx, is to seek balance. Hence this pond of clear, fresh water is surrounded by the inferno of the burning braziers. The Pyre Priests come here to meditate and ponder Iraeas's commands.

► **Guardians.** A Pyre Priest (**mage**) and three junior members (**cultists**) kneel by the pond to pray. The characters may catch them unaware (DC 14 DEX). These cultists fight fiercely to protect the entrance to area 10.

6. STUDY ROOM

This chamber is used by the high-ranking priests to study the cult's literature. It is believed that through hard study and knowledge, they can attain a purer state. A state more ready to accept the Sand Sphinx's blessings.

► **The Ceremony.** A tome named *Adages of the Sand Sphinx* lies spread on the desk. If a character studies it for 1 hour, they learn of the solstice ceremony. If successful, the ritual shall transfer the ember of Iraeas's soul into the body of a Pyre Priest, empowering him.

7. PYRE PRIEST'S QUARTERS

The Pyre Priest, Pontiff Adaggo, is the only cultist who sleeps in the dungeon full-time. This is, though, a utilitarian room that is used only for sleeping. The wooden wardrobe contains two spare tunics that the characters can use to impersonate one of the Pyre Priests.

8. TOMB OF THE FIRE SEER

An ornate sarcophagus embedded with a large ruby dominates this chamber. The remains of the Fire Seer are interred within. He was the first Pyre Priest and remains to this day a figure of worship akin to a saint.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The ruby is worth 200 gp but removing it causes a **wraith** to emerge from the enclosure.

9. LIBRARY OF SAND

Four bookcases line the walls of this chamber. They contain historical recounts, biographies, and arcane treatises about the blessings that the Sand Sphinx has conferred to the cultists over the cult's existence.

► **Counter.** Exploring the chamber for 1 **crawling round** reveals a ritual that counters the solstice ceremony being readied in area 10. Only a priest may cast it.

10. SANCTUM OF EMBERS

A chapel-esque chamber, adorned with sacred symbols. Dominating it is a gilded sphinx effigy, its eyes ablaze with ethereal fire, casting a solemn gaze.

The rest of the cult members gather here in silent prayer to ready the solstice ceremony. Pontiff Adaggo (**mage**), two **cultists**, and four **peasants** become enraged at the characters' unwanted presence. The zealous believers draw their weapons and fight to protect Iraeas's effigy.

► **The Sphinx.** Once per round, the statue shoots a jet of fire at a random intruder (2d6, DC 12 DEX check).

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The statue's eyes are worth 300 gp each. Stealing them is considered a gruesome offense.

DEVELOPMENT

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

THE CULT DESTROYED

The adventurers confront Pontiff Adaggo in the Sanctum of Embers and succeed in deadly combat. The cult is destroyed but it may rise again from its ashes in the far future. Strangely enough, the statue of Iraeas issues a telepathic calling to the characters (see **Fiery Priesthood**; unless the statue's eyes have been stolen).

FIERY PRIESTHOOD

The Sand Sphinx offers a spellcaster to become the next Pyre Priest. If the spellcaster accepts, they gain great power (access to three random fire-based spells), but they are bound for life to obey the Sand Sphinx's commands. If a Pyre Priest disobeys a direct command, they perish in a conflagration of flames soon after. A character becoming a Pyre Priest can serve as a great tool to craft new adventures and lead the party into interesting adventures as they fight to further the sphinx's goals.

PETTY THIEVES

If the characters remove the sphinx's eyes for profit, Iraeas herself becomes enraged with the party. The sphinx goddess inhabits a different plane but it is in contact with other cultish cells in the Material Plane.

Soon, the characters become the target of merciless assassins seeking to enact the Sand Sphinx's revenge. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



THE EPHEMERAL SPIRITS CULT

In the sprawling metropolis of Eldoria, the kingdom's capital, a clandestine organization known as the Ephemeral Spirits Cult has taken root. This enigmatic group is shrouded in secrecy, their intentions and beliefs obscured. The Ephemeral Spirits Cult is an esoteric gathering of individuals united under a mysterious leader, known only as the High Priest. They believe in the transcendental powers of the spirit realm, seeking to bridge the gap between the mortal world and the ethereal plane. Their doctrine speaks of enlightenment and spiritual ascendance, achieved through mystical, ancient rituals.

Beneath the bustling streets of Eldoria, hidden away from the prying eyes, lies the secret sanctuary of the Ephemeral Spirits Cult. Accessible through a labyrinthine network of ancient sewers, this dungeon is a place of great evil. At the heart of the sanctuary is the Room of Prayer, a sacred chamber where the cult's signature ritual is performed. The High Priest burns rare pink orchids, harvested from a hidden grove. These flowers are said to be blessed by the spirits themselves, possessing otherworldly properties. As the orchids are placed upon the braziers and set aflame, they emit a thick, intoxicating smoke that fills the chamber. This smoke is believed to be a conduit to the spirit world, used during initiations to break the minds of otherwise reluctant neophytes. The inebriating effect of the smoke subdues them and makes them susceptible to the High Priest's suggestions. Most subjects have joined the cult after this ritual.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Rescue. The daughter of a wealthy merchant, Anna, is missing. Her father, Ilaryo, believes that the culprits are Anna's friends, as a few of them are connected with an obscure organization known as the Ephemeral Spirits Cult, based in the sewers. The characters must find the cult's lair and rescue the abducted girl (4 XP, 450 gp).

Suspicion. Bailiff Olarg has tracked the devious organization to a labyrinthine section of the city sewers. He has no evidence but believes that the cult is guilty of several abductions over the past few months. The bailiff offers the characters a reward for rooting out the cult and finding out if the missing people are connected to the cult. He provides a map and a list of fifteen missing people connected with the cultists (2 XP, 450 gp).

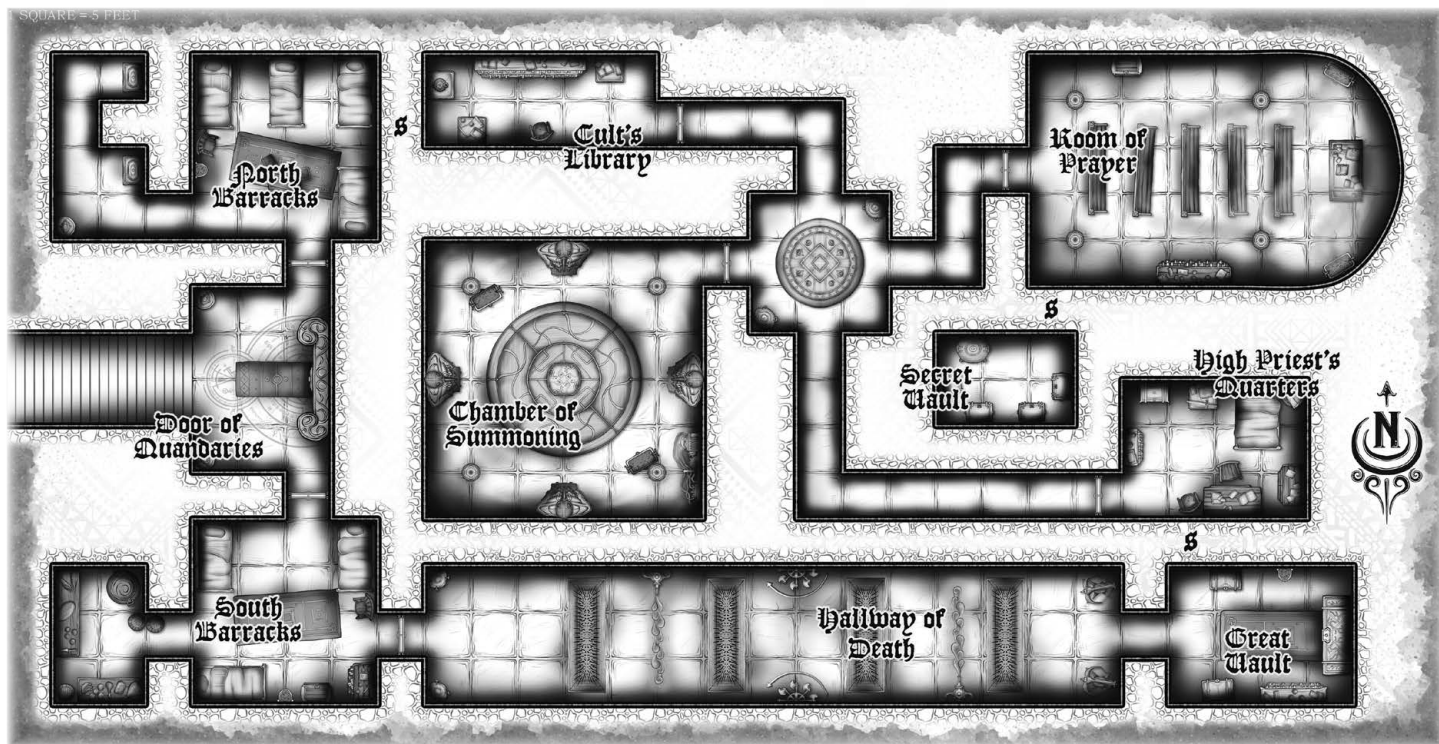
Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent **light** spells. The undead denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **The Smoke.** The stench of burnt pink orchids smells like rotting corpses. It can be detected from anywhere in the dungeon. The smoke in the Room of Prayer causes a stronger effect when inhaled during the encounter there.

► **Secret Doors.** Hidden passageways connect some areas by finding the buttons to access them (DC 14 WIS).



RANDOM EVENTS

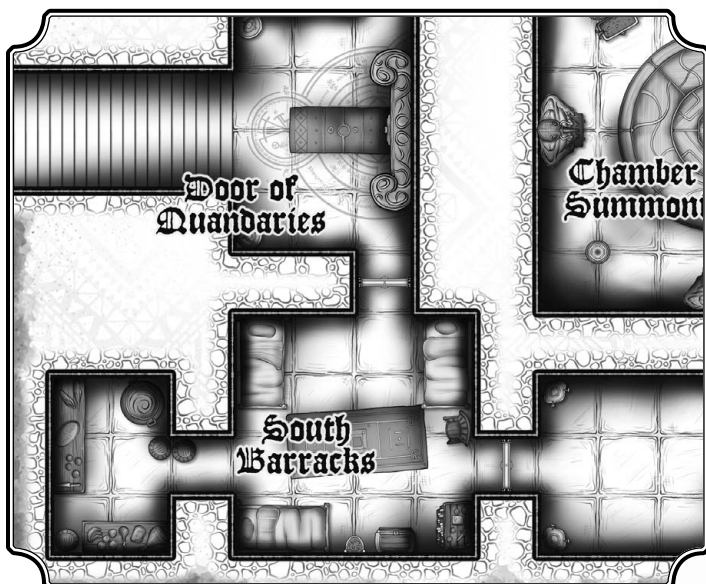
d6	Details
1	The faint sounds of a sorrowful hymn echo through the walls; a disorienting effect caused by pink orchid smoke.
2	Shadows cast by the flickering torchlight begin to move independently. Four shadows converge and attack!
3	A confused and frightened cult initiate (peasant) pleads with the adventurers for help. He was unaffected by the smoke but has pretended to be a cultist for two days.
4	A magical current of wind traverses the entire dungeon. All light sources are immediately extinguished.
5	A wall section suddenly fades away upon approach, revealing a previously hidden path to an adjoining area.
6	Stepping on a tile triggers a trap, briefly binding the trespasser in spectral chains (DC 18 STR to escape).

DOOR OF QUANDARIES

The magical gate by the east wall leads nowhere but sheds an arcane aura perceivable with the *detect magic* spell. The door is an artifact from a forlorn time that was here before the Eldoria was founded. Draconic script on the arch reads: “*Step forth and reveal for inner side. Then you shall be granted access to the cosmos.*” The High Priest has tried countless times to activate this portal unsuccessfully. The true secret to operating this device lies elsewhere in a dragon’s library.

SOUTH BARRACKS

The room contains three double bunk-beds, a chest, a wardrobe, and an adjoining kitchen and larder. Four **peasants** and two **cultists** rest in this room. Half of them are on Bailiff Olarg’s list. Alas, the hypnotic effect caused by the pink orchid smoke prevents them from betraying the cult. The cultists know at once that the characters are trespassers as they lack the pinkish coloration in their eyes that all cultists possess. They fight but one of them attempts to rush to the Room of Prayer to let the High Priest know of the characters’ intrusion.

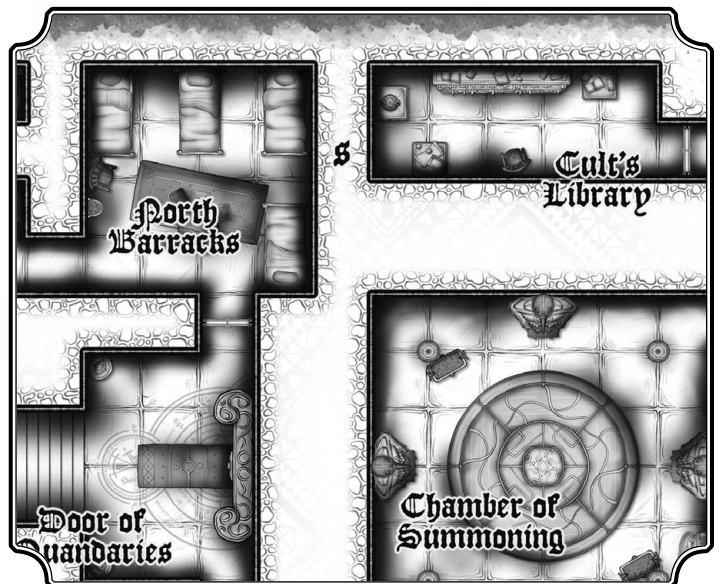


NORTH BARRACKS

This room contains four double bunk-beds and a small table. The adjoining chamber contains two stone, funerary enclosures that predate the cult’s coming to this dungeon. On the leader’s orders, the chamber is left alone.

► **The Cultists.** Six **peasants** and three **cultists** rest in this room. If the characters barge in carefully, they may catch them unaware (DC 14 DEX check). Four of them are in the bailiff’s list. One of the cultists is Ilaryo’s daughter (see **Adventure Hooks**). Contrary to what the merchant thought, Anna was not abducted. She is a full-fledged cultist who believes in the High Priest’s word and even brought some neophytes herself recently.

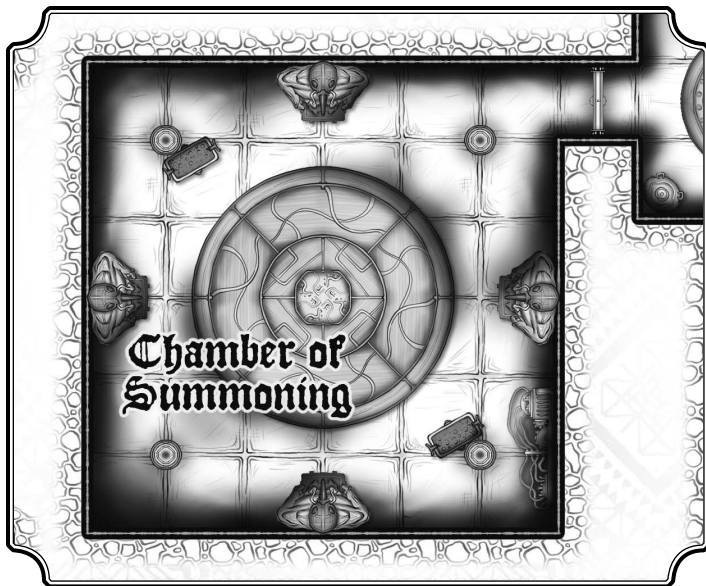
► **Funerary Plinths.** The stone enclosures are marked with Draconic script and contain red ashes. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of necromancy on them. If opened, an evil **wraith** coalesces in the room and attacks. It does not pursue beyond the dungeon’s stairs.



CULT’S LIBRARY

The room contains a large bookcase with a disparate array of subjects. If the characters review the contents for 1 **crawling round**, they unearth the following:

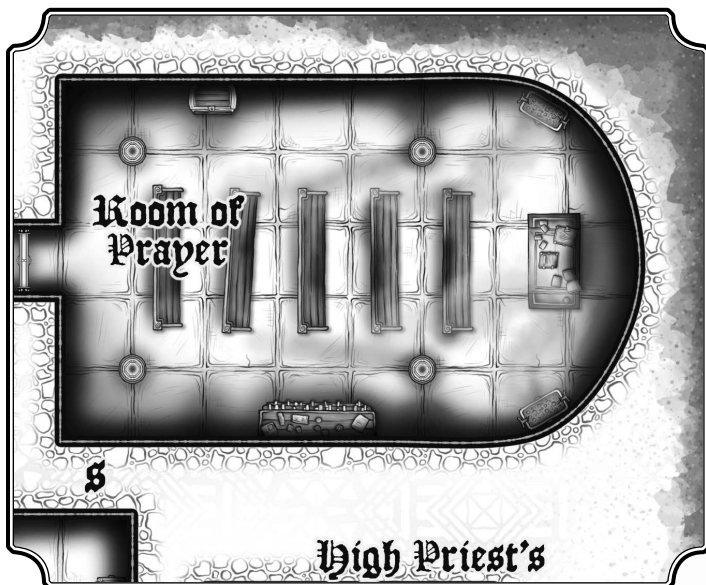
- The High Priest’s power comes from a fey entity associated with the rare pink orchids.
- The cult’s ultimate goal is to amass fifty members to perform a deadly ritual to invoke their fey patron.
- There is a secret passage to the Great Vault from the High Priest’s Quarters, right behind the wooden desk.
- Obstructing the nose with an oil-drenched fabric protects a person from the pink orchid smoke’s effects. It may prove essential in the Room of Prayer.



CHAMBER OF SUMMONING

A vast summoning circle is carved by the chamber's center. Four stone effigies of beaked men stand guard, their gazes fixed eternally towards the circle.

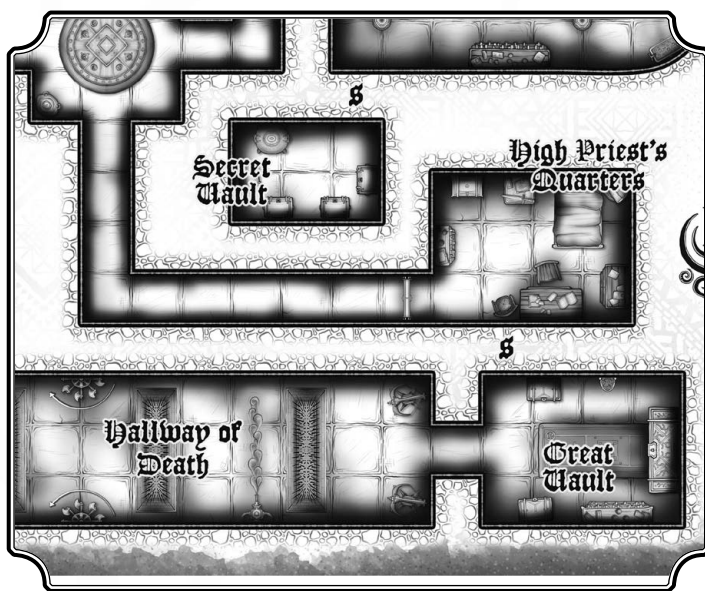
- ▶ **The Circle.** A spellcaster that inspects the circle for 1 crawling round, learns that it has been modified; the original purpose lost to the defacement. The runes now speak of summoning a being from the fey realm. The ritual requires the unholy sacrifice of forty-nine people.
- ▶ **The Statues.** The four beaked effigies are a testament to an old dragon-allied race (DC 16 INT). They studied the multiverse and shared knowledge. Today, these beaked humanoids live in the north ranges.
- ▶ **The Device.** The clockwork device by the southwest corner controls the flow of the poisonous gas machines in the Hallway of Death. A character can use tools to disable the machine (DC 14 DEX) or sheer force to destroy it (DC 12 STR, 2d6 lightning damage on a fail).



HALLWAY OF DEATH

The trap-filled hallway leads to the Great Vault. There are four spiked pits, two poison-gas generators, two circling axe traps, and two automated crossbows.

- ▶ **Poison Gas.** The machines can be deactivated from the Chamber of Summoning. Inhaling the gas causes intense coughing and 1d6 damage (DC 14 CON check).
- ▶ **Swinging Blades.** The axes rotate swiftly. Direct contact with the apparatus deals 2d6 damage (no save).
- ▶ **Crossbows.** The clockwork crossbows shoot a steel-tipped bolt every two rounds (ATK +3, 1d6 damage).
- ▶ **Great Vault (8 XP).** The stone coffer contains 350 gp, 4,250 sp, an *amulet of vitality*, a *bag of devouring*, two *immovable rods*, and a spell scroll of *fireball*.



HIGH PRIEST'S QUARTERS

The cult leader's quarters are seldom. The most important feature is the secret door to the vault behind the desk.

- ▶ **Treasure (2 XP).** The chest contains a *potion of healing* and two spell scrolls (*zone of truth* and *bles*).

ROOM OF PRAYER

Dense, vivid smoke permeates this chamber. The High Priest and the rest of his cultists are ready to give their lives to save the Ephemeral Spirits Cult.

- ▶ **The Cultists.** The High Priest (**priest**), two **cultists**, and three **peasants** stand guard. Half of them were abducted from the capital only weeks ago. Alas, they fight with zealous ferocity to defend the High Priest.
- ▶ **Pink Orchid Smoke.** Characters that inhale the smoke become intoxicated and confused (DC 13 CON). In this state, they obey anyone's orders without question.
- ▶ **Secret Vault (4 XP).** The coffer contains 310 gp, 180 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a *potion of vitality*.

BLADE OF THE STONE GIANT

The Emberblade is the source and end of all warmth in the world. In its heart of volcanic stone burns a smoldering core of heat that cannot be quenched.

Ode to Fire and Stone

In the elder days, when the world was still in the throes of its primordial shaping, the stone giants, colossal beings carved from the heart of mountains, walked the Material Plane. Among them was Brondrak, a master smith whose skill in shaping stone and metal was unrivaled. In the belly of Mount Ilkanar, Brondrak forged a blade of grand power. The *Emberblade* was an artifact imbued with the essence of the fire, capable of controlling the very seasons.

For ages, the artifact lay dormant, hidden behind the ethereal veil of the Verdant Falls, a majestic waterfall revered by the locals for its mystical beauty. In the present, the world is under the deep embrace of winter, and the small towns and hamlets nearby prepare for the Winter Solstice Holiday, a time of reflection and celebration amidst the frost and snow. Little did they know that the slumber of the *Emberblade* was about to end. On the eve of the Solstice, a great tremor shook the land. The skies darkened as if night had fallen prematurely, and the Verdant Falls, which had been frozen in winter's grasp, thawed with unnatural speed. The blade had awakened. The shrine, once veiled in ice and snow, now stood bathed in the warmth of an eternal summer. However, this event was not without consequences. The abrupt clash of summer's warmth against winter's chill birthed raging tempests and fierce snowstorms that ravaged the surrounding regions. Villages were buried under avalanches, ancient trees snapped like twigs in the howling winds, and the skies wept in unceasing blizzards.

The authorities seek brave mercenaries for this perilous, yet vital, task. They must venture into the heart of the unnatural summer and find a way to quell the *Emberblade*'s before the entire region is ravaged.

THE SONS OF SUMMER

Soon after the first storm hit the locality, refugees from the ravaged hamlets and towns converged at the Verdant Falls. They found a place to survive and the warmth of Summer here. They already work to set up a small hamlet by the river. The traumatic event caused a fervor in them that led a commonfolk farmer to organize the motley crew into a cult-like group to defend the area.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **End to the Heat.** The characters are sent from Northham, a town recently hit by a deadly winter storm, to the Verdant Falls to find the source of the heat to bring the climate back to normal. They are informed that a group has gathered by the falls. They regard the false summer as a miracle and have vowed to guard it (400 gp, 4 XP).

► **Sons of Summer.** The characters are called to the Verdant Falls to help the impromptu cult defend the Verdant Falls from mercenaries sent by local authorities. The group's leader, a farmer named Harold, claims he had a vision of this strange winter heat in a dream. He calls this miracle a prophecy come true. (0 XP).

Level 2 Adventure

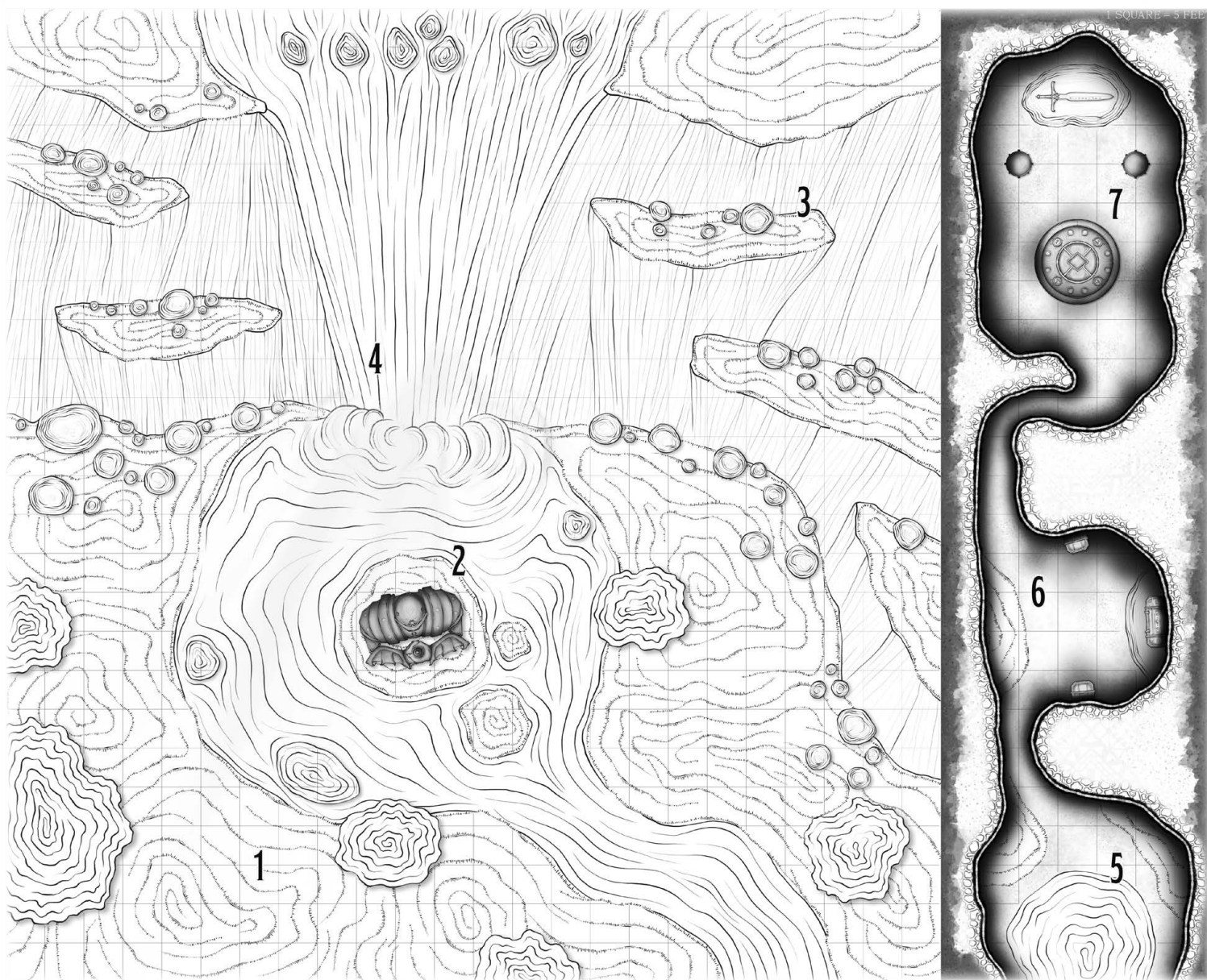
► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** All areas are illuminated by an unnatural, warm luminescence that appears to have no source.

► **Fire Magic.** Spellcasters within 200 feet of the *Emberblade* cast fire-based spells with advantage.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	2d4 frostbitten refugees (peasants) from a nearby village, seeking shelter and warmth, arrive at the Verdant Falls. They know nothing about the Sons of the Summer. However, they are desperate enough to join them so they can finally rest and be warm.
2	In the verdant grove, the adventurers stumble upon runes etched by dryads a decade ago. They spell a hymn for fire and warmth.
3	A brown bear , roused from hibernation by the clash of seasons, approaches the area in confusion and hunger; a perilous threat.
4	A band of five thugs , drawn by tales of the shrine's treasures, engage anyone by the Verdant Falls and attempt to rob them.
5	A frost dragon , attracted by the thermal anomaly, circles the area, curious and playful. Its ominous presence causes tension among the local wildlife and adventurers alike. Fortunately, it refuses to come within 100 feet of the <i>Emberblade</i> .
6	A heat wave emerges from the Emberblade. The wave burns the skin of those nearby (1 fire damage within 100 feet).



1. THE SONS OF SUMMER

A ragged group of townsfolk refugees gathers by the river shore. They work tirelessly to build a makeshift community in the strange untimely heat of the falls.

► **Confrontation.** Many of those present are non-combatants or wounded. A group of ten **peasants** (including Harold), rises to defend the area from attackers.

► **Defense.** If the characters join the Sons of Summer to defend the area, they are attacked by ten mercenaries (**thugs**) hired by the nearest city the morning after.

2. BRONDRAK'S EFFIGY

Already here before humans settled the region, the giant-made effigy of Brondrak stands as a guardian of the Verdant Falls; a beacon of the *Emberblade's* location. The statue is made of volcanic rock and bears the marks of erosion and the passage of time. The Giant runes at its base read: "Here stands great Brondrak, crafter of fire and merchant of might. May your work live forever."

3. HIDDEN CROSSBOWMEN

Three **peasants** wielding crossbows rest by the cliff face. They guard the area from approaching parties, letting Harold and the others know when someone comes to the Verdant Falls. If a battle breaks out in the area, the crossbowmen use their weapons to aid Harold and protect the Sons of Summer. Depending on the characters' disposition upon their arrival, they may be allies or foes.

4. THE VERDANT FALLS

A breathtaking cascade, shrouded in a luminescent mist, emanates an unusual warmth. Behind its water veil, vague glimmers hint at hidden, mystical depths.

The *Emberblade's* creator placed an enchantment that kept mortals away from the waterfall; it causes people to turn away from the place and do something else. Alas, with the blade awoken, the enchantment is suppressed. Stepping through the waterfall leads to the Verdant Grove (area 5) and toward *Emberblade's* shrine.

5. THE VERDANT GROVE

Behind the waterfall, its sound echoing from the walls is disorienting and deafening. The characters cannot communicate verbally in this damp cavern chamber.

► **Architecture.** What appears to be a natural cavern is a crafted structure that has suffered centuries of water erosion and seismic movements (DC 15 INT check).

6. TOMB OF DRYADS

The chamber contains three stone enclosures etched with intricate Sylvan runes. They spell the names of three dryads who studied the shrine over two centuries ago and were interred here after their passing. Their bodily remains have been taken over by aggressive, mindless, and ravenous fungal lifeforms (see below).

► **Irate Fungus.** Forcing any enclosure open (DC 16 STR check) causes a **mushroomfolk** to emerge from each. They fight mercilessly to the death.

7. SHRINE OF THE EMBERBLADE

The fabled Emberblade lies on a stone plinth. An unnatural radiance and heat pours magically from the giant-made blade. The light pulses like a heartbeat.

No mortal can wield this blade. Mortals cannot even lift it from its resting place. All the characters can aspire to do is submerge the *Emberblade* once more into slumber.

► **The Ritual.** A spellcaster that inspects the blade for one **crawling round** infers that infusing the blade with arcane energy may subjugate it, if done properly; but it incurs a terrible risk. A spellcaster must focus his power on the blade to do this (DC 15 INT check). If successful, the blade becomes dormant again and the spellcaster ages 2d10 years. On a fail, the blade is quelled too but the spellcaster loses 1 CON. Failure by 5 or more causes the spellcaster to spend his life achieving this.

DEVELOPMENT

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

After the blade is appeased, it lays dormant once more. This effort shall last for a few lifetimes. The Sons of the Summer ruefully disband and return to their homes. The winter season returns to normal fast enough for the Winter Solstice Holiday. Most damage to structures shall be fixed when the next spring season arrives.

If the characters side with the Sons of Summer and withstand the first attack, a few days pass before the climate becomes even more dire in the region. It becomes so bad that the organization splits and starts to fight among them as some regret the deaths and destruction in the area. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



THE WINTER OBSERVATORY



estled in the heart of the Glacial Peaks, the Winter Observatory stands as a testament to the ingenuity of the deep gnomes, a reclusive and ancient civilization renowned for their arcane prowess and architectural marvels. This observatory was designed not merely to chart the celestial bodies but to harness and decipher the arcane secrets woven into the very fabric of the infinite cosmos.

Crafted from ice that never melts and stones hewn from the heart of mountains, the observatory is an architectural marvel encased in shimmering frost. The walls of the observatory are lined with intricate runes and diagrams, glowing faintly with an otherworldly light. The Winter Observatory is not only a place of wondrous beauty but also a hub of magical knowledge and power, a destination for heroes seeking to explore the mysteries of the cosmos and enhance their abilities.

The Winter Observatory has the power to tap into the unique cosmic energies and celestial alignments to enhance and improve weapons. This marvelous place also offers unparalleled access to ancient lore and the secrets of the world, essential for those seeking to unravel mysteries or foresee the future. Lastly, the observatory serves as a vital nexus for extraplanar exploration, enabling heroes to gaze into distant realms, uncover hidden paths, and engage with entities beyond their world.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

THE HEROES LEARN about this place or discover its location in one of their quests. Consider the following to get the characters involved with the Winter Observatory.

Power. The heroes are motivated to come because they wish to make their weapons more powerful and infuse them with the ancient gnomish magic (0 XP).

Guidance. Lord Jassimar, an influential prince, hires the heroes. Their job is to use the observatory to read the stars and learn the events of the future. This secret knowledge and insight may give Jassimar the political boost he needs to become king (8 XP, 1500 gp).

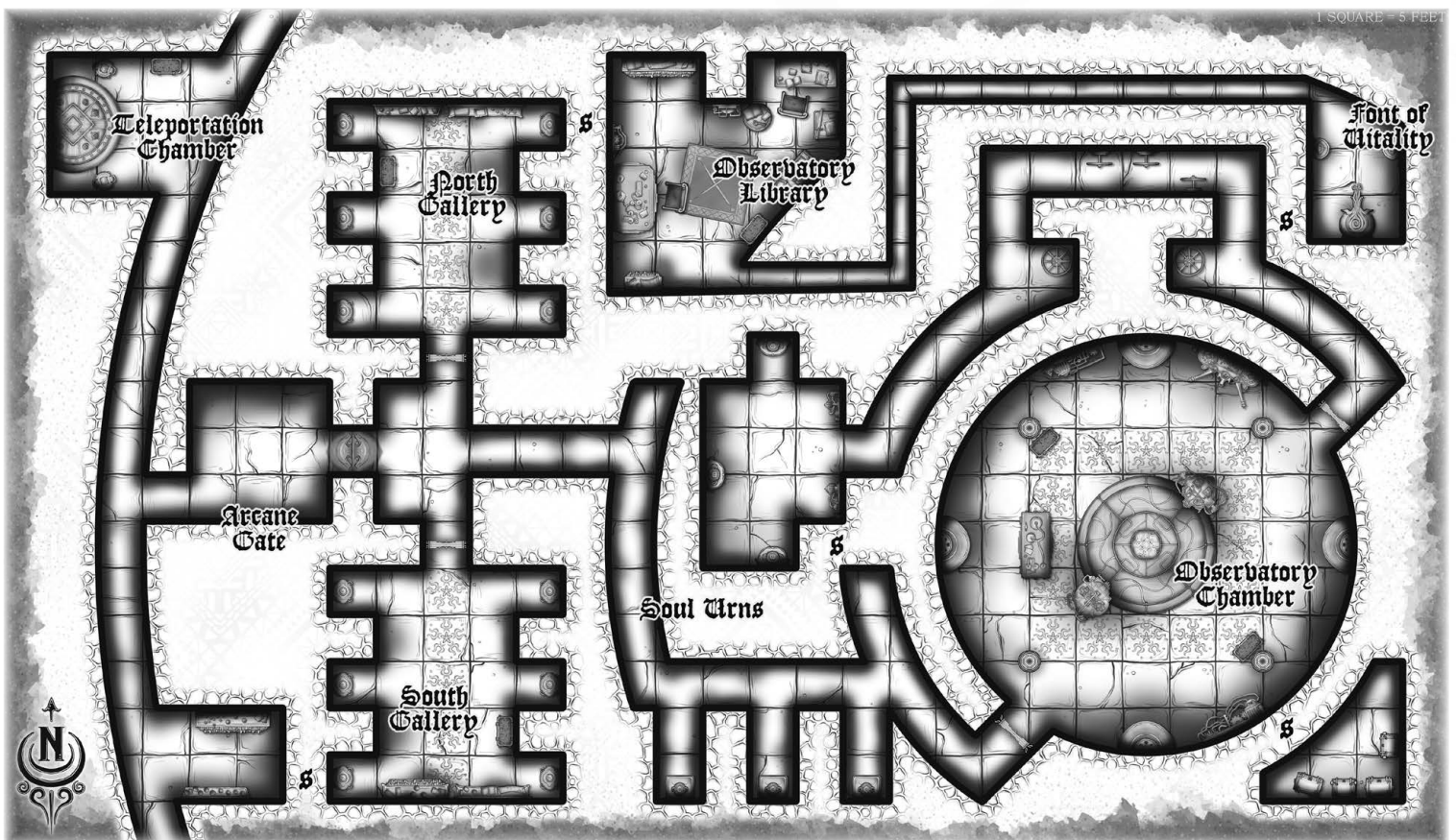
Search. The characters must find a certain individual. A kidnapped friend, an old acquaintance, or a possible ally in another world or plane. The gnomish magic of the Winter Observatory may help them get there (0 XP).

Level 7 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent light spells. The dungeon denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Snow.** Magical snow that vanishes when it touches the floor never stops falling. The dungeon is very cold.



RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

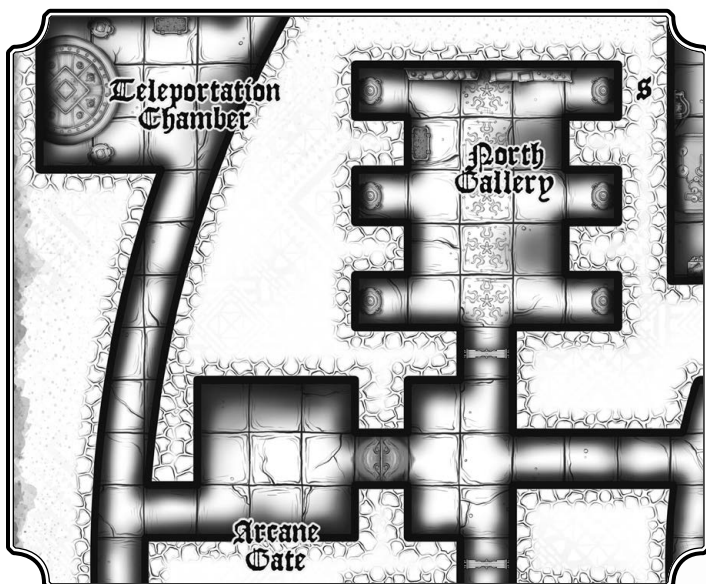
- 1 A rare alignment of planets enhances the luck of anyone within the observatory, granting all heroes a **luck token**.
- 2 The **ghost** of a gnome astronomer appears, he is happy to answer any question about the observatory. However, he attacks if the heroes antagonize him in any way.
- 3 A sudden malfunction in the observatory's ancient mechanisms triggers a chaotic release of magical energy that affects anyone within the dungeon (DC 15 WIS). On a fail, the heroes lose any **luck token** they previously had.
- 4 A breach in the planar fabric allows an **ice elemental** to invade the observatory. (Use the stats of an earth elemental but its **Avalanche** ability buries creatures in snow).
- 5 A sudden shift in the nearby ley lines causes the observatory to become a nexus of wild magic, altering the effects of spells cast within its walls for 1d3 hours. (Spells cast are rolled at random to determine the result).
- 6 An unassuming relic in the observatory, charged by a unique cosmic event, awakens from dormancy, releasing an immortal gnome guardian (**angel, domini**).

TELEPORTATION CHAMBER

The heroes are given or obtain the rune sequence to teleport here when they learn about the Winter Observatory. The curved corridor extends north and south of the compound but both paths end in abrupt cul-de-sacs. A south alcove features a couple of shelves. An observant character spots the two magic spell scrolls (*mirror image* and *illusion*) hidden among the disarrayed papers (DC 14 WIS and 1 **crawling round** of search).

ARCANE GATE

There is a key that unlocks the gate and negates the summoning of the guardian. It got lost in time and the heroes have no means to get it. Without this key, the characters' presence summons the guardian when they stand 15 feet from the gate. A **stone golem** appears and blocks the passage until dropped to 0 Hit Points.



NORTH GALLERY

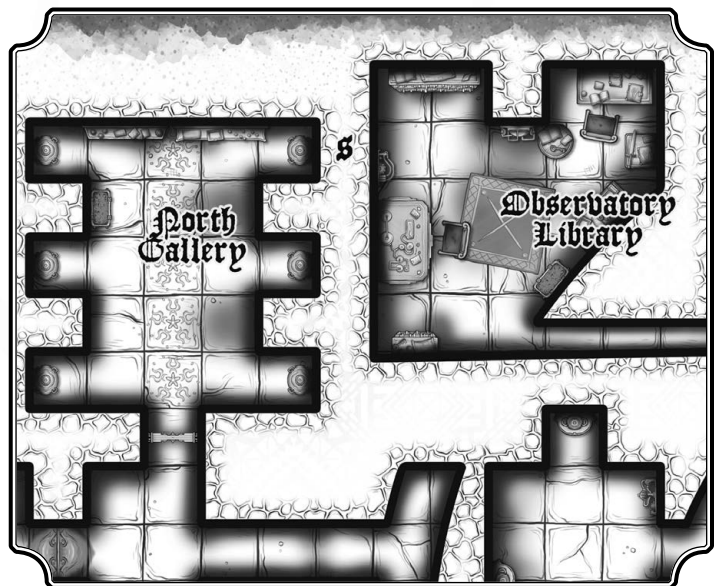
Three golden urns rest in the symmetrical alcoves on each side of the chamber. The winter runes on the floor are crafted from etched glass. The two tables at the end hold ancient scrolls and a couple of gnomish diaries.

► **Gnome Blood.** Whenever a non-gnome creature stands on the central runes, the black ashes in the golden urns fly and coalesce into four **shadows**.

► **Gnomish Lore.** If the characters spend 1 **crawling round** reading the documents here, they learn about the Winter Observatory and gain more insight on how to use it properly. Reduce the DC to use it by 1 (see below).

SOUTH GALLERY

This chamber is a replica of its northern counterpart. Likewise, the characters' presence summons the anger of four **shadows** when they approach this area. After combat, the heroes may learn more about how to employ the Gnomish device. This reduces the DC to use it by 1.

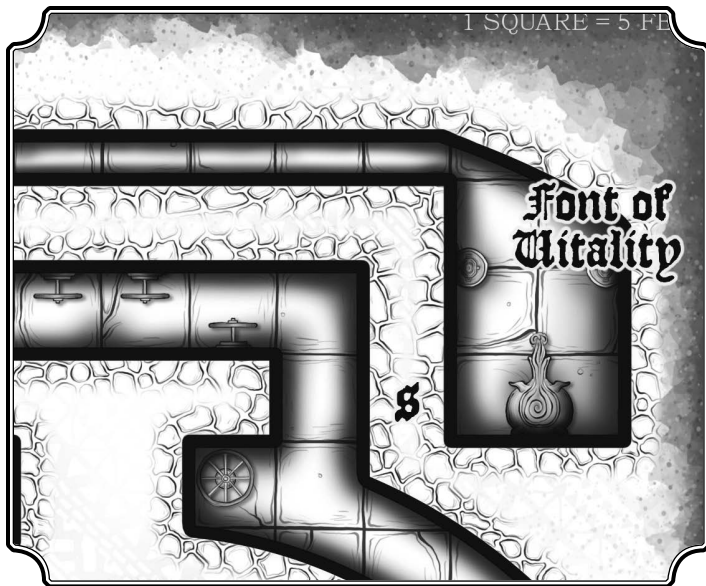


OBSERVATORY LIBRARY

The Gnomish Library is a trove of ancient wisdom, its shelves laden with scrolls, tomes, and star charts. These texts encompass a vast array of subjects, from the intricacies of celestial mechanics and astral navigation to the forgotten histories and treatises on planar magic.

► **The Lens of Starlight.** A rare optical instrument that allows the viewer to decipher the hidden magical scripts and celestial codes embedded in ancient manuscripts. Users may cast *detect magic* and *detect thoughts* once per day without spending a spell slot.

A Gnomish Safebox lies by the wall, a curious invention designed to secure the most valuable items. Astrological puzzles and rune-encoded locks make this box impenetrable. Opening this safe is an entire quest in itself.



FONT OF VITALITY

Situated in a tranquil chamber adorned with celestial motifs, the Font of Vitality is a revered feature of the observatory. This mystical font, imbued with the rejuvenating powers of the cosmos, serves several key purposes:

- **Restoration.** Imbibing its waters heals injuries, cures ailments, and dispels negative conditions. However, this only works once per person during their lifetime.
- **Revitalization.** The water can restore spent magical energies. A spellcaster can regain two spell slots of their choice whenever they take a sip. This works once a day.
- **Longevity.** This fluid can also extend someone's lifespan by 20% of the normal average. This does not make people immune to death by combat or illness, though. This effect works once per person during their lifetime.

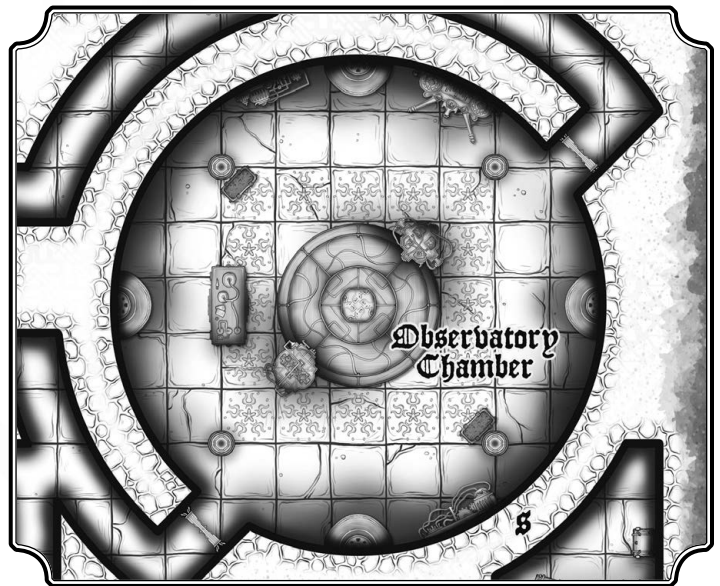
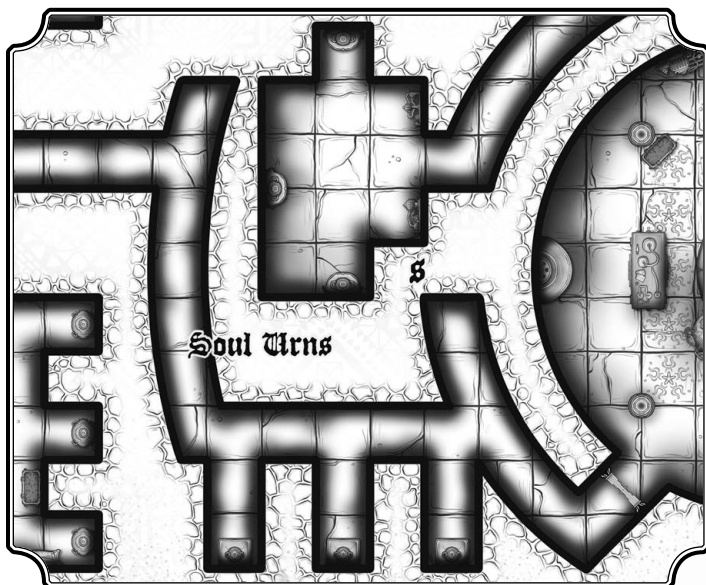
SOUL URNS

The Soul Urns are ancient, enigmatic artifacts of gnomish creation. They were crafted from a red crystalline material that shimmers like a crimson sky.

Each urn contains the ashes or essences of gnome scientists, artificers, or mechanics. These are the remnants of powerful mages who devoted their lives to the mysteries of the cosmos. The urns' alcoves feature dancing lights that represent constellations. Characters that interact may earn a **luck token** if they prove their worth and rearrange the astral bodies in order (DC 14 INT check). On a fail, any luck token they previously had is spent.

However, failing by 5 or more is an insult to the ancient gnomes' intelligence. A spectral custodian (**invisible stalker**) materializes and attacks the dumb intruders.

► **Treasure.** The urns contain 318 gp, a mahogany pipe (25 gp), a mace inlaid with holy symbols (50 gp), and six black candles with golden runes (10 gp each).



OBSERVATORY CHAMBER

The observatory is an incredible device; it is required to have a certain level of arcane knowledge to use it (DC 17 INT). This difficulty can be reduced by investigating one or both North and South galleries (see above).

- **Console.** Adorned with levers and runic interfaces, this is used to manipulate the observatory's functions. It also displays a detailed astral map showing the convergence of magical ley lines and arcane planar paths.
- **Mission.** The heroes use the observatory to complete their mission (see **Adventure Hooks**). The gnomish magic delivers. The heroes find the magic to enhance their weapons, the guidance they seek, or the person they look for. It is up to the GM to interpret how this comes to pass.

SECRET PASSAGEWAYS

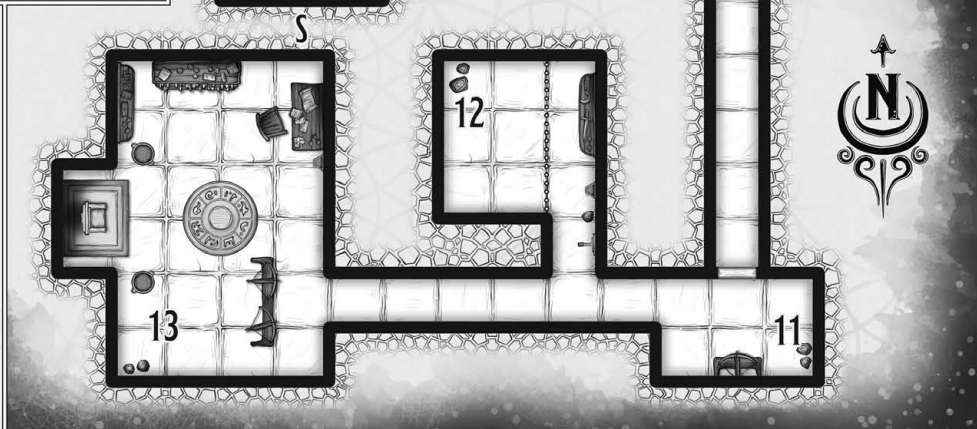
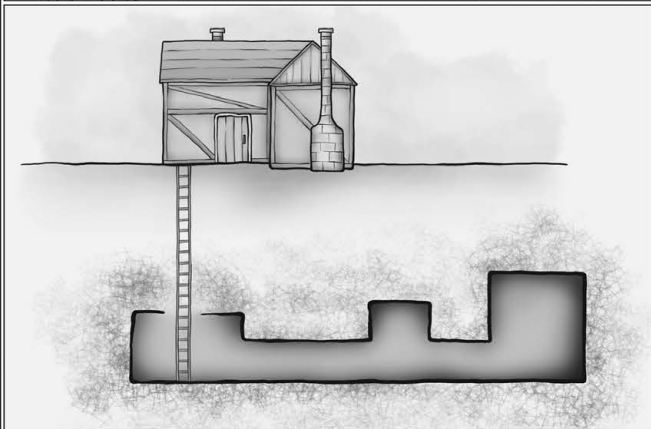
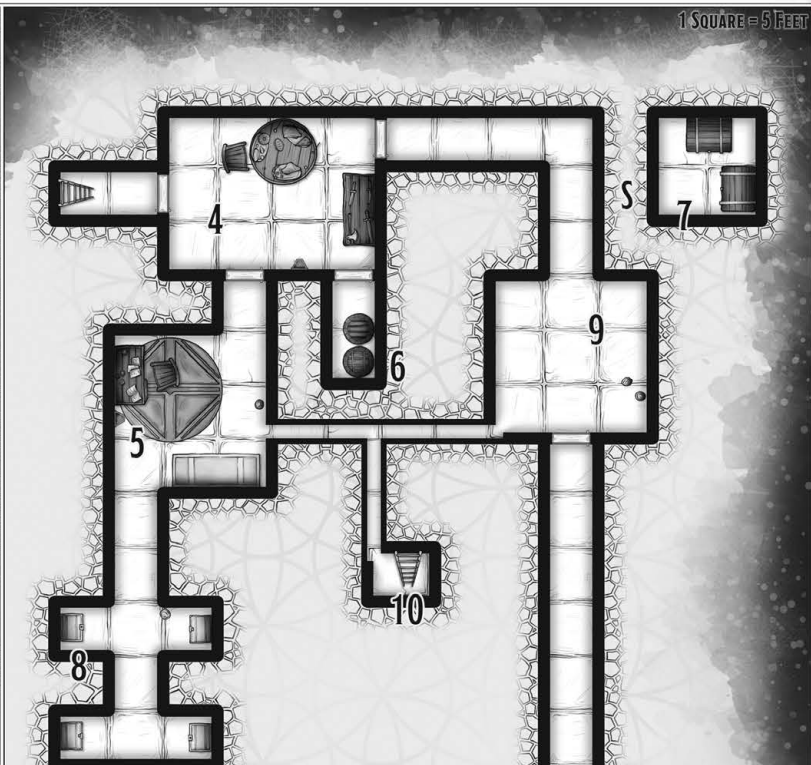
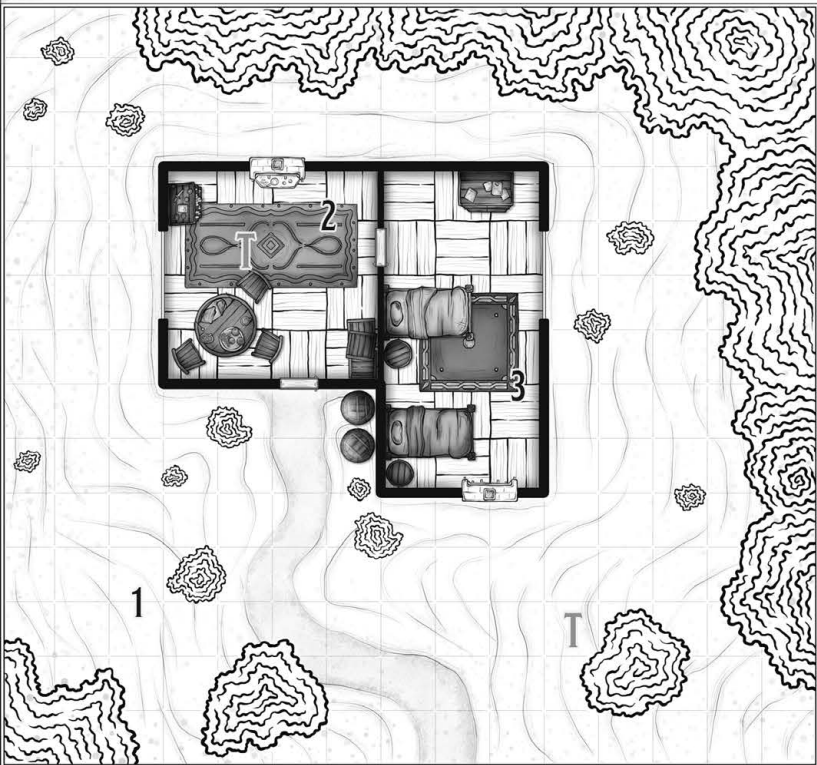
There are hidden paths throughout the dungeon (see map). The characters may go through them if they spot the concealed mechanisms to reveal them (DC 14 WIS).

Poisoned Candy

Calamity scourges the region after many younglings and a few adults have grown sick. For all, it happened a few hours after eating the candy that a forest hermit, Old Margo, purveyed. She bartered cheaply for them. Too cheaply, in fact. As if she desired that as many people as possible consumed her candy, regardless of the cost. Two men visited her yesterday but none of them came back. Now, the townsfolk cry foul and claim the woman is a witch. Alas, their superstitions are their doom as no one dares approach her cottage in the snowy forest. The locals offer a hefty reward in gold to valiant adventurers willing to investigate the matter further.

1. The seller's cottage is one hour from the nearest settlement. The trail to it is barely kept clear of the mounting snow. A dim light shines through the curtained windows. Astute characters find a secret trapdoor near the house that leads down to area 10. This is Old Margo's secret exit.
2. The living room appears lived in but the food on the table is stale. If the rug is moved aside, a wooden trapdoor is revealed. It is secured with an iron padlock that can be destroyed. The ladder in the shaft leads to area 4.
3. A crumbling skeleton lies under the bedsheets on one of the beds. It is the witch's husband, who perished two years ago. His death led her to enormous grief. It caused her to become a recluse who enjoys the suffering of others. The poisoned candy's effects mimic her husband's last days.
4. The dungeon landing contains a table served with fresh food and difficult-to-find delicacies; four bladed weapons lie on a side table. The chamber is guarded by three summoned shadows at the witch's service.

5. The witch's journal lies on the table. If the characters spend time reading it, they learn of Old Margo's woes. The journal also specifies the poison's recipe which allows a spellcaster or alchemist to craft an effective antidote to heal the affected individuals in the nearby settlements.
6. The small storage room contains two wooden barrels. Removing the lids reveals they contain a form of powdered explosive. The barrels violently explode when in contact with fire, destroying everything around them.
7. The vault, accessible after pushing a hidden button, contains two wooden chests with 250 gp, two *potions of healing*, and a random spell scroll.
8. Each of the four empty chests features a deadly trap. The first one has a poisoned needle trap. The second one has a flame jet trap. The third one is marked with explosive runes. The last one is filled with noxious gas.
9. A **swarm of rats** loyal to the witch guards this chamber. The rats emerge from the cracked walls and attack trespassers viciously.
10. The ladder in this room climbs to area 1 and can be used as a secret exit. If the witch faces defeat, she attempts to escape through this area.
11. Opening the north door triggers the automated crossbow to shoot three bolts. Whoever stands in the hallway may be gravely injured by these.
12. Two merchants have been imprisoned here for a week. They beg the characters to free them and offer to help. They too want the witch gone.
13. Approaching the chamber from area 12 exposes the characters to the automated crossbow near the path and alerts the witch. The secret access from area 8 can be used to ambush Old Margo. The deluded witch brews the poisoned candy here; the desk features alchemy tools. She is angered by the characters' intrusion and fights furiously to make them leave.



THE FOREST OWLBEAR

Nestled between the snow-capped peaks of the Galdor Mountains and the dense, whispering pines of Merwood Forest, lies the quaint village of Frosthaven. This serene hamlet, known for its hearty folk and bountiful harvests, faces an unforeseen peril as winter's icy grip tightens. A rare creature, an owlbear, fierce and unpredictable, has made its lair in a cavern near the town. Recently, it has begun to attack travelers and hunters, leaving the villagers in fear and confusion. None now how to approach this danger.

It all began when a merchant caravan that passed near Merwood Forest was attacked by the owlbear. It came from the snowy thicket and viciously attacked the caravan guards and then the merchants. A guard and a merchant were the only survivors. They reached Frosthaven with frostbite wounds and a terrible story to tell. Since that day, the two roads that pass near the woods have been guarded by the hungry beast. Sir Marin, Frosthaven's constable, already considers spending some from the winter coffers to hire outsiders to help them overcome this terrible threat during the deep winter.

Unbeknown to the villagers of Frosthaven, this owlbear is not driven by mere bloodlust. Deep within the shadowy recesses of its cavern, the beast has adopted four orphaned, regular bear cubs; their mother slain by heartless trophy hunters. This unprecedented act of maternal instinct heightens the owlbear's territorial aggression, as it seeks to protect its newfound family at all costs.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Rescue. The characters arrive in Frosthaven looking for shelter for the season just as the town is abuzz with tales of the owlbear's latest attack. The village elders and Sir Marin, the constable, desperate to protect their people and restore peace, offer a reward to valiant sellswords enough to venture into the snowy wilderness and deal with the monster. In a self-aggrandizing display of bravery and ego, Sir Marin (**knight**) offers to accompany the characters. He sees an opportunity to become relevant and to be reelected for his position as constable.

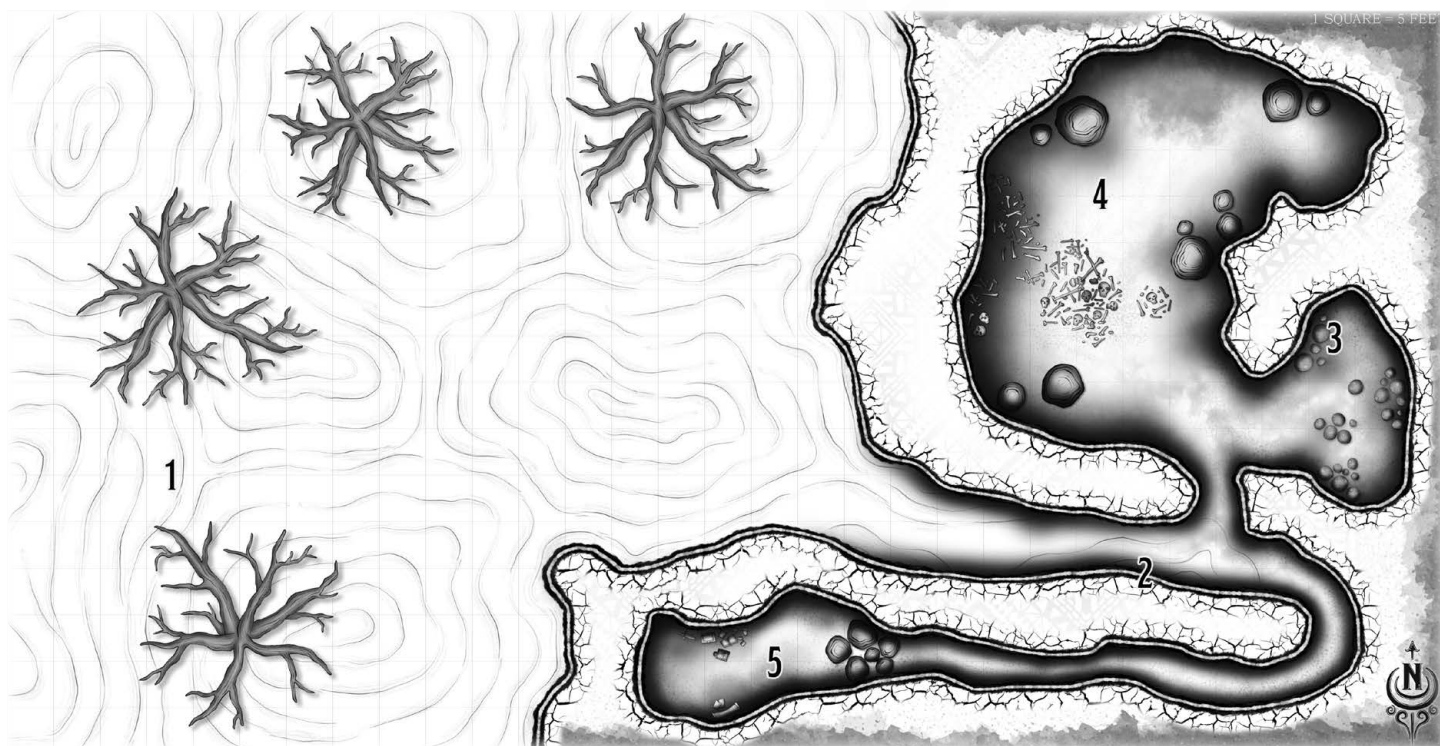
Sir Marin fights bravely but lacks compassion, which may be relevant if the characters want to find a non-violent solution to this situation (4 XP, 500 gp).

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** During the day, visibility outdoors is impaired due to the snow glare. Characters without protective gear cannot see further than 15 feet and have disadvantage on visual checks. The owlbear is **dark-adapted**.

► **Nature's Mind.** The owlbear's maternal guarding of the bears has caused Merwood Forest to react in sympathy. There is a heightened amount of fauna near the cave. These creatures may come to the owlbear's aid as described in the areas below and random encounters.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6 Details

- 1 Four **orcs** and a snow **ape** battle over deer meat. Their clash spills over by the owlbear's territory.
- 2 A murderous fur trader (**thief**) on the run tries to sell pelts stolen from an attacked caravan (DC 12 WIS).
- 3 1d6 **will-o'-wisps** made of arcane ice float around a frozen pond within eyesight of the owlbear's cavern.
- 4 Two hungry **giant frogs** from area 3 leap out from under the snow and attempt to swallow a character.
- 5 An opportunistic **swarm of scarabs** emerges from cracks in the cavern wall to attack trespassers.
- 6 A lone rancher (**guard**), thinking wolves stole his cattle, has come seeking to take revenge on the forest beasts.

1. THE OWLBEAR'S CAVE

On a squat, rocky hillside, the cavern entrance is marked by towering icicles and the footprints of many woodland creatures. Around the entrance, several leafless oaks stand; their branches reaching up to the sky like fingers. The coming-and-going owlbear tracks can be found nearby. However, smaller sets of tracks are there too. These belong to the four bear cubs in the cave (DC 13 WIS).



2. THE LONG TUNNEL

There are ancient cave paintings on the natural cavern walls. Most are faded beyond recognition but a few still show hunters-gathers in their way of life. Some show the worship of the stars and strange deities. Characters with a fine nose detect the sour stench that comes from area 3 and identify it as fungal spores (DC 14 WIS).

3. MUSHROOM GROVE

A dangerous variety of mushrooms grows in this cavern. They produce dense spore-saturated clouds that burn the lungs and eyes when a person is exposed to them. Characters in the area are temporarily blinded and suffer from coughing (DC 16 CON check). Two **giant frogs** live among the fungi. They are immune to the spores.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Among the farthest patch of mushrooms lies a sheathed *+1 dagger* with a ruby handle.

4. THE BEARS

Beyond a bed of bones in the chamber's center, a large creature looms closer. Its body that of a brown bear. Its head that of a shrewd owl. Behind it cower four common bear cubs no larger than a dog.

This is a perilous situation. However, astute characters may see the opportunity to avoid bloodshed.

► **The Remains.** The deep bed of bones in the cavern belongs to all kinds of beings. Most of them are from woodland creatures but a few recent ones belong to the hapless merchants and travelers attacked on the road.

► **The Mother.** The **owlbear's** protective instincts cause it to fight to the death if necessary to protect the cubs. It puts their welfare above its own. The owlbear, exalted by the very Merwood Forest, can speak Sylvan. The owlbear is wary of humanoids from past experiences but it may accept the following terms (**Reaction**): To remain in the forest as long as it stays away from the roads. To keep from attacking travelers. And that no further retaliation befalls the owlbear or the cubs from the human settlements. The owlbear mother promises to hunt only in the faraway depths of Merwood Forest.

► **Sir Marin.** He does not trust the owlbear and recommends the characters attack at once to slay it. If antagonized, Sir Marin charges the owlbear valiantly.

5. FROZEN BONES

Removing the boulders in the tunnel requires two hours of continuous work and the use of spades and pickaxes. Within, there are papers, tattered clothing, and bones.

The Remains. A skeleton is half-buried among the remains, there is no way to tell how long it has been here.

Treasure (2 XP). One bag contains 90 gp and a scroll with a map that leads to an uncharted tomb.



SNOW, BLOOD, AND BONES

By Elven Tower

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-3 ADVENTURE

A SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT SAVING THE HOLIDAYS FROM THE KRAMPUS

ADVENTURE PRIMER

If it is to become your fate, the Solemn Sire can not only foresee it, but he can place the stepping stones that move you toward that goal, whatever it is...

Tales of the Sire



sinister legend weaves through the whispers of travelers and the tales of old. It speaks of Krampus, a devilish entity born from the darkest depths of the world. Cloaked in shadows and malice, it seeks to punish those he deems sinners with searing birch rods, a symbol of its cruel justice.

Krampus, through fell magics, has established a deceptive haven known as the “Birchwood Hearth.” This rest house stands near a well-traveled road. Weary travelers, lured by its inviting warmth and the promise of shelter, find themselves ensnared in a perilous trap. From the outside, the establishment seems a quaint inn, with smoke curling from its chimney and light flickering through its windows. Its host is but a guise for Krampus, who ensnares his guests with charm and hospitality. With glamour magic, he can impersonate others.

As night falls, the guests, lulled into a false sense of security, retire to their rooms. It is then that Krampus reveals his true nature. Through enchantments woven into the very fabric of the inn, he imprisons the guests, spiriting them away to the dungeon that lurks beneath.

Beneath the Birchwood Hearth lies a dungeon, where the air is thick with despair and the walls echo with the cries of the damned. Here, Krampus enacts his twisted retribution. Some prisoners meet their end under his burning rods, while others endure torment only to be returned to their cells, broken in body and spirit.

Krampus grinds the bones of the deceased into a dense, ghastly paste. With this morbid material, he crafts grotesque misshapen effigies imbued with the essence of the fallen. These effigies stand as grim sentinels, a haunting reminder of the fate that awaits the wicked.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 3 Adventure

MISSING TRAVELERS

The characters learn of a generous reward for investigating recent disappearances on the road. The clues point to the North Road where a rest house, the Birchwood Hearth, has been established recently (450 gp, 5 XP).

UNSAFE SHELTER

The characters are drawn to the Birchwood Hearth as they look for a place to rest. A snowstorm scourges the land soon after, guaranteeing their stay. The characters soon notice that something is not right in this unnatural establishment. They must be brave and resilient to resist Krampus’s spells and overcome this place (0 XP).

A CRY FOR HELP

A friend of the party has found their way into Krampus’s dungeon. Miraculously, the characters receive a mental calling during dreams that alerts them to their friend’s perilous situation. The characters know the way toward the Birchwood Hearth but nothing about its nature or Krampus. To save their friend, they must act fast (0 XP).

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent light spells. Enemy denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Secret Features.** Hidden pathways in-between areas can be discerned by observant individuals (DC 13 WIS).

RUMORS

d6

Details

- 1 The Birchwood Hearth is owned by a charismatic and confident man known as Karlus. People speak of his hospitality.
- 2 An old tale about a horned, half-goat demon has recently resurfaced in the local folklore. It is said that this unnamed demon punishes sinners with searing birch rods. To what end the entity does this remains an unknown part of this ancient myth.
- 3 Almost two dozen people have gone missing in the last month. All of them while traveling the North Road; a merchant’s daughter is the most prominent person among them. At least half of them have been known to visit the Birchwood Hearth.
- 4 Night travelers have seen a strange figure roaming the region. They claimed a horned man meanders under the moonlight.
- 5 Bloodstained footprints have been spotted near the North Road. People say the devil roams these snowy hills.
- 6 Travelers claim the Birchwood Hearth was not there last year. Nor did anyone ever see the building under construction. The edifice suddenly appeared out of nowhere, fully staffed and ready to cater to the needs of travelers.

THE BIRCHWOOD HEARTH

Show me a man and I shall tell you his sin. No soul is pure enough to escape my searing punishment. Life is just a hierarchy of poisoned minds and souls.

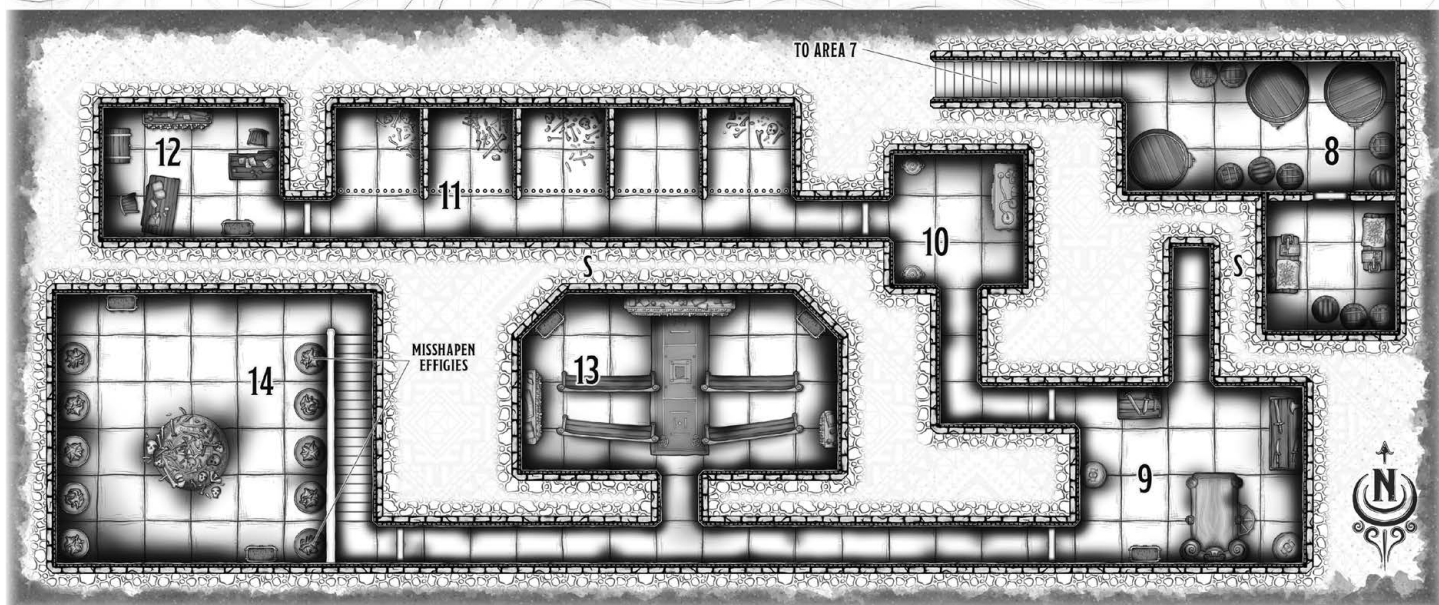
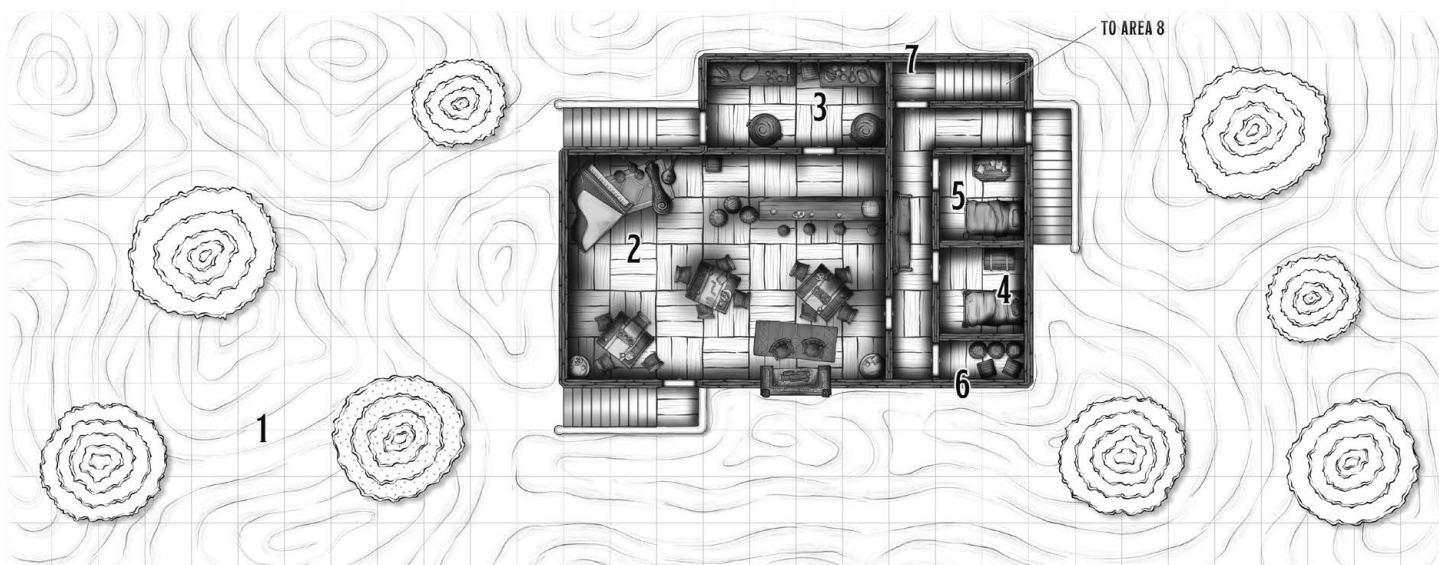
Krampus

RANDOM EVENTS

d6

Details

- 1 A haunting melody plays from beneath, lulling mortals into a deep, unnatural sleep (DC 14 CON to resist it).
- 2 A portrait weeps tears of blood, its eyes seeming to follow guests as they move through the area. If a character inspects it, the portrait shifts into a grim, dark mockery of the character. A **shadow** then detaches from the painting and attacks.
- 3 Ladenna (**thief**) arrives at the Birchwood Hearth to investigate the recent disappearances. She may join the party but is wary of strangers, especially after hearing disturbing rumors about the missing people (**Reaction** check).
- 4 Krampus's laughter resounds throughout the dungeon and the tavern above. After the laughter's wake, the tormented screams of pain and agony of those imprisoned in area 11 can be discerned by those of acute ears (DC 13 WIS check).
- 5 A warrior (**knight**), allied with Krampus, approaches and challenges a random character to a deadly duel.
- 6 Within the dungeon, four **stingbats** swoop from the dark ceilings and attempt to drain the characters' blood.



1. THE NORTH ROAD

A cozy tavern and inn stands near the road. It is surrounded by snow-piled pine trees. One pine is decorated with shining crystal beads in festive colors.

A wooden sign over the main door reads “*Birchwood Hearth: Respite and Shelter.*” Footprints on the snow lead to the entrance. Smoke comes from the chimney. The characters may also enter through the back door. The door to the kitchen is locked (DC 14 DEX check).

► **The Tree.** A *detect magic* spell reveals a magic aura in each bead. The decoration is common for end-of-the-year holidays. Removing the beads renders them inert.

2. THE BIRCHWOOD HEARTH

Six patrons enjoy hot spiced wine in the grimly-lit tavern. The keeper smiles heartily behind the bar.

► **Karlus.** The devil in disguise. Krampus greets all visitors and gauges their character and their sins. The glamour spell is difficult to see through (DC 19 WIS). If discovered, Krampus laughs and vanishes in a snow cloud.

► **Patrons.** Travelers and merchants, half of them plan to stay the night and may end up trapped in area 11. One of them, Dimas (**thug**), may join the party if befriended.

► **Artists.** Three elves play music by the corner. They have been bound to serve Krampus by dark spells. They know of the innkeeper’s nature but cannot speak about it or denounce him. They must keep playing music. Their facial expressions are not affected, though; the characters may infer their fear and woes (DC 14 WIS).

3. THE KITCHEN

Dishes fly, knives cut, and stews are brewed but no cooks are here to do it. Krampus keeps three invisible servants here working the kitchens. A *dispel magic* spell disables the servants until Krampus restores the servants’ magic.

4. SOUTH ROOM

The characters lease this room if they wish to stay the night. It contains a triple bunk-bed with clean linens and a wooden chest to store their belongings.

► **The Scratch.** There are markings on the wooden floor; nail scratchings as if a person were dragged out of the room. A torn fingernail lies nearby (DC 12 WIS). The tracks lead down the hall toward the stairs (area 7).

► **The Attack.** During the night, Krampus uses his magic to put all to sleep (DC 13 CON). Half the party, preferably those under the sleeping spell, are then drawn magically into the hall, down the stairs (area 7), and to a cell in area 11. If awake, the character can grab a piece of furniture or an ally to resist this spell (DC 13 STR). The party hears a similar event occurring in area 5.

► **Challenge.** If Krampus has already been discovered, deep laughter and a challenge are heard from beneath. Krampus awaits the characters in area 14 as he deems them worthy combatants and particularly sinful.

5. NORTH ROOM

This room is identical to area 4. It is shared by four travelers, Dimas is one of them (see area 2). During the night, if Krampus has not been unmasked yet, Dimas and one of the travelers disappear and are brought to area 11.



6. STORAGE ROOM

This narrow chamber contains piled-up wooden crates and barrels, and hanging coats of travelers.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** There are 35 gp, a mithral bracelet (40 gp), and an identification document that belongs to one of the missing people; a merchant named Ralgur.

7. CELLAR ACCESS

The pinewood door marked with a carved star features a high-quality lock (DC 16 DEX to open). It can also be forced open (DC 17 STR). The dark staircase descends into darkness and leads to the wine cellar (area 8).

► **Spikes Trap.** Stepping on the fourth step from the top causes three spikes to emerge abruptly from below, piercing whoever stepped on the trigger. The hapless victim takes 2d6 damage (DC 14 WIS check).

8. WINE CELLAR

Wine barrels rest in the dark surrounding three large fermentation vats. The chamber is humid and dark.

The adjoining room to the south contains two bottling machines, wine barrels, and wine bottles.

► **Grim Tracks.** Scratching marks from above lead to the bottling room and straight to the east wall (DC 12 WIS). They suggest the presence of the secret door.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The wine barrels and bottles can be resold in volume for 60 gp in the nearest city.

9. TORTURE CHAMBER

A bloodstained, iron bed with leather straps dominates this room. Splintered wood lies scattered across the cracked granite slabs of the dungeon floor.

Krampus tortures his victims with burning birchwood rods here, the last victim was slain. The splintered birchwood on the floor is the result of his heartless spankings.

► **The Blood.** A healer who studies the bloodstains determines that they are less than a day old (DC 13 WIS).

► **Treasure (2 XP).** There are three shortswords, a dagger, a flask of oil, and a *potion of healing* on the tables.

10. ALCHEMY ROOM

The chamber contains two gilded vases and a complex alchemy apparatus that Krampus uses often.

► **The Vases.** Each vase contains a strange alchemical reagent that can be used as a solvent for any substance.

► **The Antidote.** A spellcaster may operate the apparatus to decant the concoction into three vials (DC 14 INT check). The substance, when consumed, heals a mortal creature from any ailment of natural origin except death of natural causes. The antidote also rids a person from any curse acquired in the Material Plane.

11. GRIM CELLS

Five iron-barred cells line this long hallway. The whimpering and cries of those imprisoned therein pierce the grim silence of this terrible dungeon.

► **The Inmates.** Spread across all cells are eleven prisoners in varied states of physical torture. If the characters are here to seek an ally (see **Adventure Hooks**), their friend is in the middle cell, hungry and in pain from yesterday's torture session. Dimas (**thief**, see area 2) may also be here depending on how the adventure unfolds. The rest are **peasants** with 1 HP and no fighting disposition. If healed, they may yet join the characters in their fight against Krampus (**Reaction** with disadvantage).

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The bones of past victims litter the cells. One of them still carries a magical ring (DC 14 WIS to find). The relic is a *ring of feather falling*.

12. KRAMPUS'S STUDY

Often misunderstood as a creature of mindless violence, Krampus is an intelligent scholar who specializes in philosophy and the nature of mortal emotions.

► **Lore.** If the library is inspected for 1 **crawling round**, a treatise on devilish creatures that mentions Krampus turns up. It reveals his abilities and, most importantly, Krampus's vulnerability to fire-based attacks.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The bookcase contains a sizable collection of philosophy literature with seven rare volumes (60 gp). There are also six spell scrolls tucked in the shelf (one of each): *hold person*, *invisibility*, *animate dead*, *fabricate*, *gaseous form*, and *magic circle*.





13. DEVILISH SHRINE

Ghastly apparitions sit sorrowfully on the four wooden pews and cry, disregarding their surroundings.

► **The Ghosts.** The ten manifestations are the souls of some of those slain by Krampus. They are trapped here, even after dead, in anguish. One of them retains a grasp on reality and can converse with the characters. Her name is Moranna, she was a traveling apothecary who was killed by Krampus six days ago. She begs the characters to contact her husband, Borlu, in the city, to let him know of her fate. Only slaying Krampus or the spell *lay to rest* can send them to the afterlife.

► **The Vision.** Staying 1 crawling round here triggers an arcane vision for all mortals present (no save). In this vivid foresight, the characters see a lonely figure walking in the untouched snow, leaving bloodstained footprints in its wake. The fur-covered, horned entity reaches the open ground, utters a devilish invocation, and causes a building to emerge from the ground fully formed. The sign by the door reveals it to be the Birchwood Hearth.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Tucked in the central bookcase is a leather pouch with 50 gp and a *Tome of Hadebe*.

14. GALLERY OF MISSHAPEN EFFIGIES

A narrow staircase descends 20 feet to a square chamber that contains the grimmest of galleries. Ten effigies crafted from bone meal stand in grotesque, mindless poses that defy understanding and sanity.

► **The Effigies.** Each one is a malformed mockery of a humanoid with little resemblance to the person whose bones form it. Krampus has imbued in each of them the artistic essence of a single sin. That which he deemed was worthy for the person to perish under torture. A *detect magic* spell reveals a faint aura in each of them. Each of the spirits in area 13 is tied to an effigy.

► **The Magic Circle.** A marvel of arcane artistry is carved on the chamber center. The circle is marked with Diabolic runes. Krampus pulverizes his victims' bones here to prepare a bone paste. Creatures standing on the circle have advantage on casting checks.

KRAMPUS

Krampus, the devil, stands in the magic circle when the characters arrive. He has been expecting them. Krampus is working on its next effigy, plucking bone paste with a trowel and using it to sculpt a shapeless form. Krampus's fiery gaze falls on the characters as they approach. He knows no fear nor mercy. Grabbing his searing birchwood rods, the devil incarnate is ready to deliver punishment and make the characters his next victims. And perhaps, his next misshapen effigies.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

KRAMPUS DEFEATED

The characters overcome the last challenge and beat Krampus in deadly combat. The devil is sent back to the fiery chasm from whence it came, but it is not killed. Krampus cannot be destroyed in the Material Plane. But at least, the souls bound to the effigies are released and they find eternal rest in the afterlife. The living prisoners are grateful; some of them promise to make it back to the characters later on. Dimas offers to remain in the party if the characters will have him. After all survivors leave the Birchwood Hearth, the edifice crumbles to dust. With the survivors' testimony, the characters soon collect the reward offered in the nearby settlements for their work.

KRAMPUS PREVAILS

If the characters fail to defeat Krampus, they are dispossessed and sent to rot in the cells of area 11. Then, Krampus takes turns torturing them with his birch rods. After such a challenge, Krampus is in no haste to dispose of them, dragging the painful affair as long as humanely possible. The characters may come across a chance to escape their imprisonment during this period. Krampus may make a mistake that harbors a window of opportunity. Or an ally of the party may come to their aid. They must still fight on their way out and confront Krampus again. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

Krampus

Horned like a goat and covered in thick pale fur. The fire that glimmers in its eyes is harsh enough to melt the dreams and hopes of mortals and fey alike.

AC: 16

HP: 35 LV 7

ATK: 2 searing birch rods (near) +7 (2d6), or 1 fire blast (far) +4 (2d8)

MV: Double Near

S:+5 D:+2 C:+3 I:+2 W:+1 Ch:+2

.....
Gore. Deals an extra die of damage if it hits the same target with both birch rods.

Iron Hide. Half damage from non-magical weapons. Fire deals an extra damage die.

Change Shape. Krampus can transform into any similarly-sized humanoid.

Fearless. Immune to morale checks.

.....



THE ABOLETH'S DREAMS

“From time immemorial, aboleths have weaved their sinister plots, their memory eternal, outliving empires and gods, a testament to their enduring malevolence”

Fragment of Creatures of Evil Vol. II

In the dark, forgotten depths beneath the sprawling city of Eldoria, lies an ancient, submerged ruin, a place shrouded in enigmatic history and sinister tales. At the heart of these submerged ruins resides Xalathes, the aboleth, a creature of immense evil and arcane prowess.

TIME FOR WISHES

ELDORIA, UNBEKNOWN TO its inhabitants, was built upon the Sunken Citadel, a network of crumbling structures and submerged halls, masking the dark presence lurking beneath. Xalathes was defeated eons ago and stayed dormant for centuries. Its isolation only fueled its hatred and its desire to dominate and control the surface dwellers. And, as the end of the year approaches, a time when the veil between consciousness and the dream world grows thin, Xalathes enacts its sinister plan.

INCEPTION

DURING THE FESTIVE celebrations, people's minds are clouded with joy and merriment. It is then that they are most vulnerable. Xalathes taps into this weakness, weaving potent magic into the dreams of the unsuspecting citizens. These dreams, imbued with the aboleth's malevolent will, are vivid and surreal, filled with images of ancient, sunken cities, eldritch runes, and the overwhelming presence of a dark, omnipotent god. A fragment of Xalathes' consciousness is embedded within those affected. They become puppets of the aboleth's will, their actions and thoughts subtly influenced to further its dark agenda. These are the Dreambound.

The possessed individuals act in ways that undermine the city's well-being, spreading dissent, sabotaging structures, and performing evil rituals in hidden corners of the city. Xalathes seeks to weaken the city from within, creating chaos and discord, and eventually, when the time is right, to rise from the dark and reclaim the world that was once under the dominion of its kind.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **Crisis.** The High Oracle of Eldoria urgently seeks brave adventurers to investigate the source of these nightmarish dreams and put an end to the growing unease among the populace. The city offers nobility titles and a huge reward for this job (10 XP, 6,000 gp).

Level 8 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** The lava glows a little but not enough to illuminate. All areas are dark. The denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Dreambound.** All of the people in the dungeon are Eldoria's citizens. They are thralls under Xalathes's yoke. It is impossible to reason with any of them. Their loyalty toward the aboleth knows no fear, limits, or boundaries.

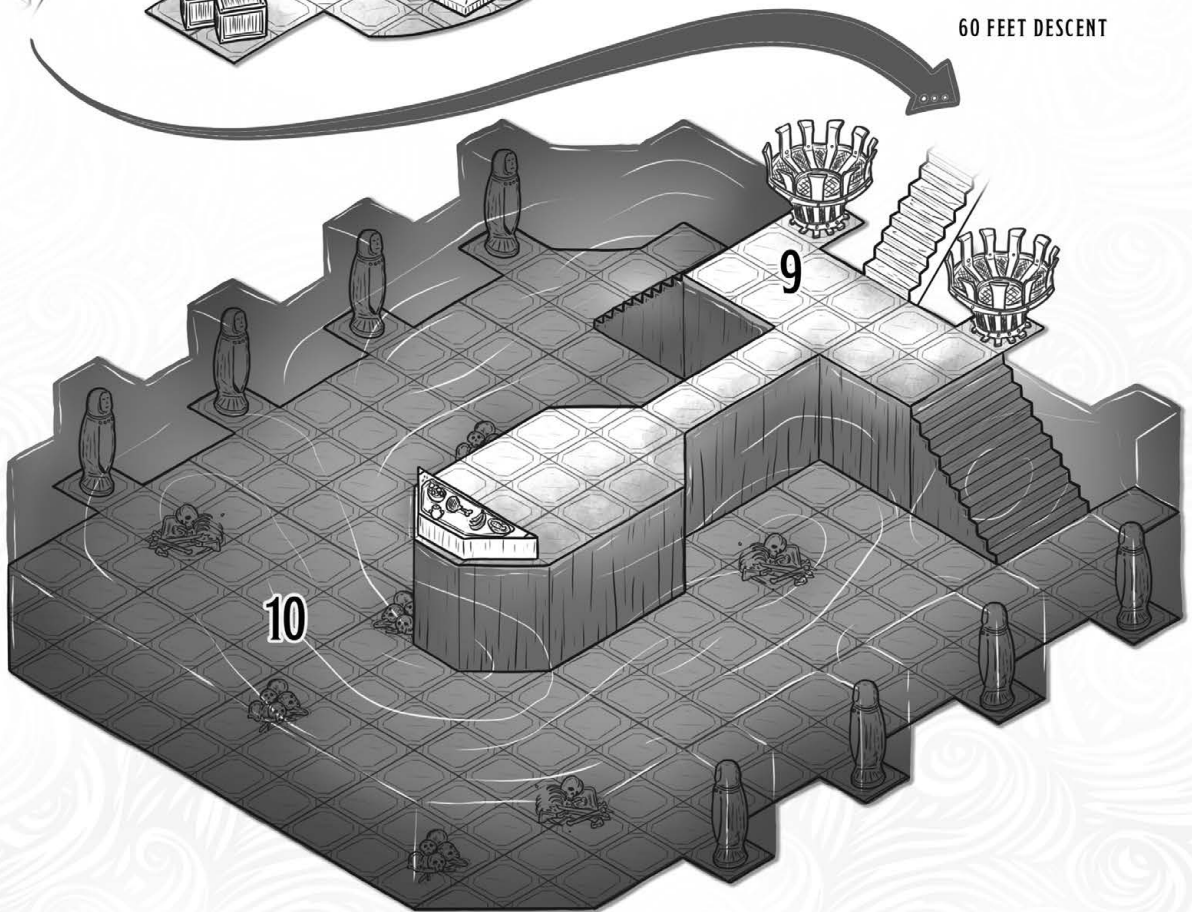
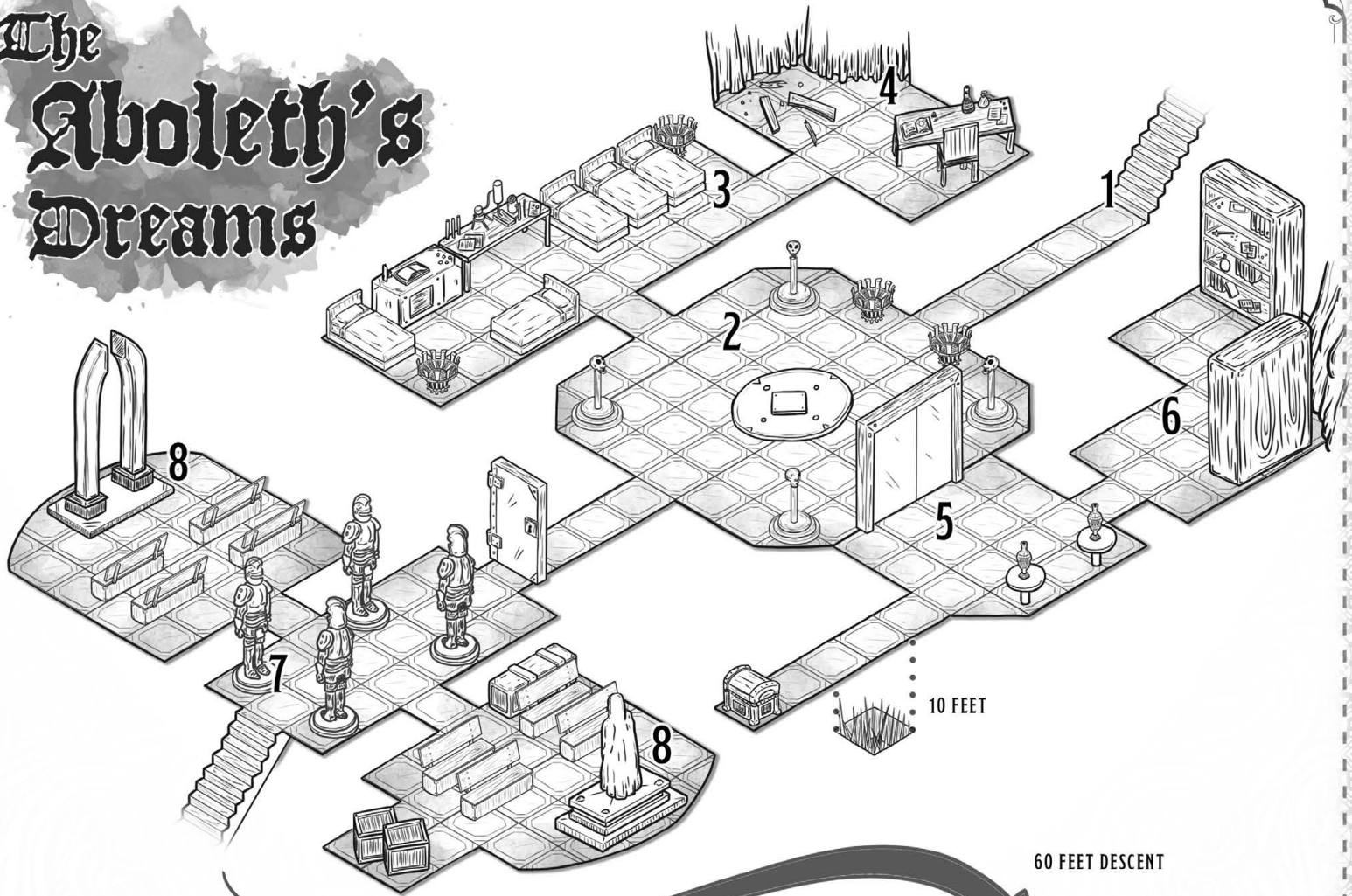
1. ENTRANCE

The High Oracle senses the core of this evil is hidden in the Sunken Citadel below the city. He gives the heroes clear instructions on how to find this place. After a few hours of traveling underground tunnels, they are greeted by dimly lit corridors, lined with intricate carvings that hint at the once-great civilization now lost to time.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	The characters hear eerie whispers in their minds. Xalathes speaks in a forgotten tongue yet they understand its message. “Welcome to my lair mortals. Know that our meeting can only have a single outcome. You shall join the Dreambound, and me”.
2	The characters fail to spot a tripwire and trigger a trap (DC 14 WIS). Poison darts fly. A random hero loses half their Hit Points.
3	An animated aboleth statue (stone golem) attacks the party. The mindless construct fights until it is reduced to 0 Hit Points.
4	The heroes stumble upon a small statuette or Ord. They may meditate for 1 crawling round , if they do, they earn a luck token .
5	Four cloaked men (cultists) guide two new Dreambound recruits (peasants). They go toward one of the shrines (area 8). when they stumble upon the characters. The peasants, willing to show their newly found devotion, charge into battle.
6	A small tremor causes a boulder to fall on a random hero. They take 1d10 damage if they do not move on time (DC 14 DEX).

The Aboleth's Dreams



INNOCENTS INVOLVED

The Dreambound look, work, and act like a cult. But it is composed of innocent people. Heroes may be branded murderers if they hack and slash through every area of the dungeon. The characters are aware of this but are free to choose the best path of action for this quagmire.

2. MAIN LANDING

Four pedestals at each corner hold skulls with gemstone eyes, casting eerie, flickering shadows across the walls. A teleportation circle lies at the center of the room. One **mage**, accompanied by two **cultists** and two **thugs** appears on the circle when the characters pass.

3. QUARTERS

Even while possessed, the Dreambound need to rest. And Xalathes never fails to strengthen its grip whenever its goons sleep either here or at home. An **apprentice**, two **thieves**, and three **peasants** defend the place from intruders. They help their friends in area 2 if alerted.

4. FOYER

A desk holds cryptic notes and maps, possibly belonging to a servant of the aboleth. The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** reading the papers to learn that the aboleth is a few days away from taking over most of the city.

5. JARS OF MEDITATION

These magical jars feature a button. When pressed once, they produce a sweet lavender smell covering a 40-foot area. They stop if the button is pressed once more. The jars are worth 300 gp each (3 XP). A **wraith** guardian appears when they are moved from their place, though.

► **Trap.** The chest at the end of the corridor is a clever illusion. Guided by their greed, a hero may fail to spot the concealed spiked pit (DC 15 WIS). Falling creatures get impaled and take 2d10 damage (DC 18 DEX for half).

6. ARCHIVE

The shelves' content is written in ancient scripts that challenge even the most learned scholars to decipher (DC 20 INT). Whoever succeeds unearths a *tome of mordanticus* as the reward, 2 **crawling rounds** later.

7. ANTECHAMBER

Four **animated armors** feel the presence of intruders and fight. The noise draws the attention of the people in the shrine, who arrive in the next combat round.

8. ABOLETH'S SHRINES

The Dreambound perform rituals and initiations in these two chapel-like chambers, just like Xalathes wants. A total of six **peasants**, three **bandits**, two **cultists**, and one **mage** are scattered among the two areas. They try to stop the intruders but flee to area 9 if things go sour.

9. UNDERGROUND LEVEL

The stairs lead to a large area with a 50-foot-high ceiling. The T-shaped catwalk surface with two braziers is one inch above the aboleth's massive pool. A table at the far end holds luxury meat and exotic fruits. Xalathes enjoys being fed some of the mortals' foods and delicacies.

10. POOL

Xalathes keeps its water crystal-clear and clean. The bones of past victims lie at the bottom of its pool.

► **Encounter.** Xalathes's right hand (**assassin**) and three **bandits** defend their submerged master. Any survivors from area 8 are here too. The **aboleth** fights from the safety of the water, enslaving targets to its will.

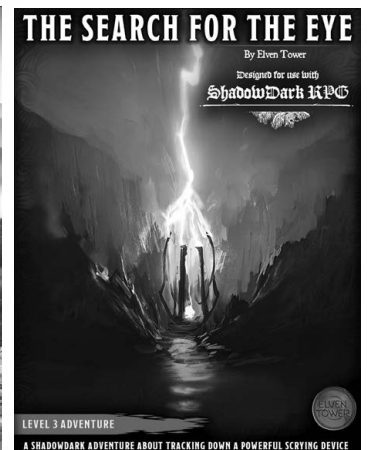
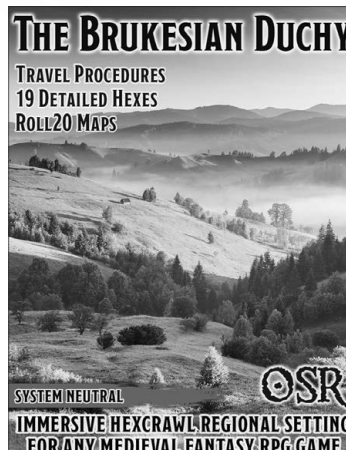
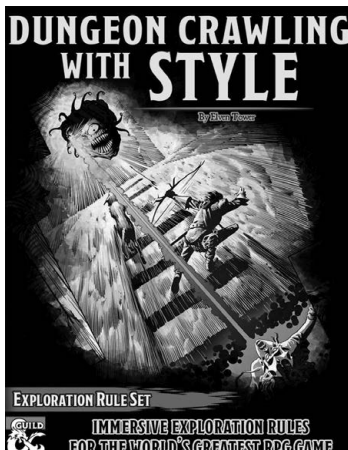
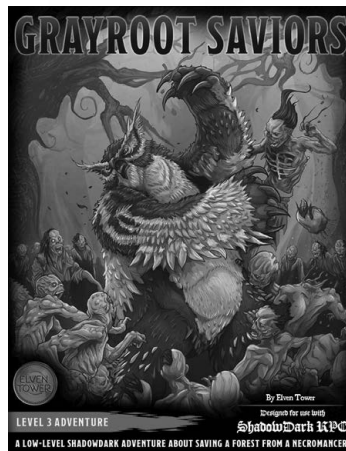
Defeating Xalathes is no easy task. The aboleth is clever as a demon and sneaky as a slithering snake. It is cruel and shall not hesitate to use its goons as a shield if needed. The entire city and hundreds of lives could be lost if the aboleth is not stopped, but if the heroes persevere and succeed, they shall be named Heroes of Eldoria.



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