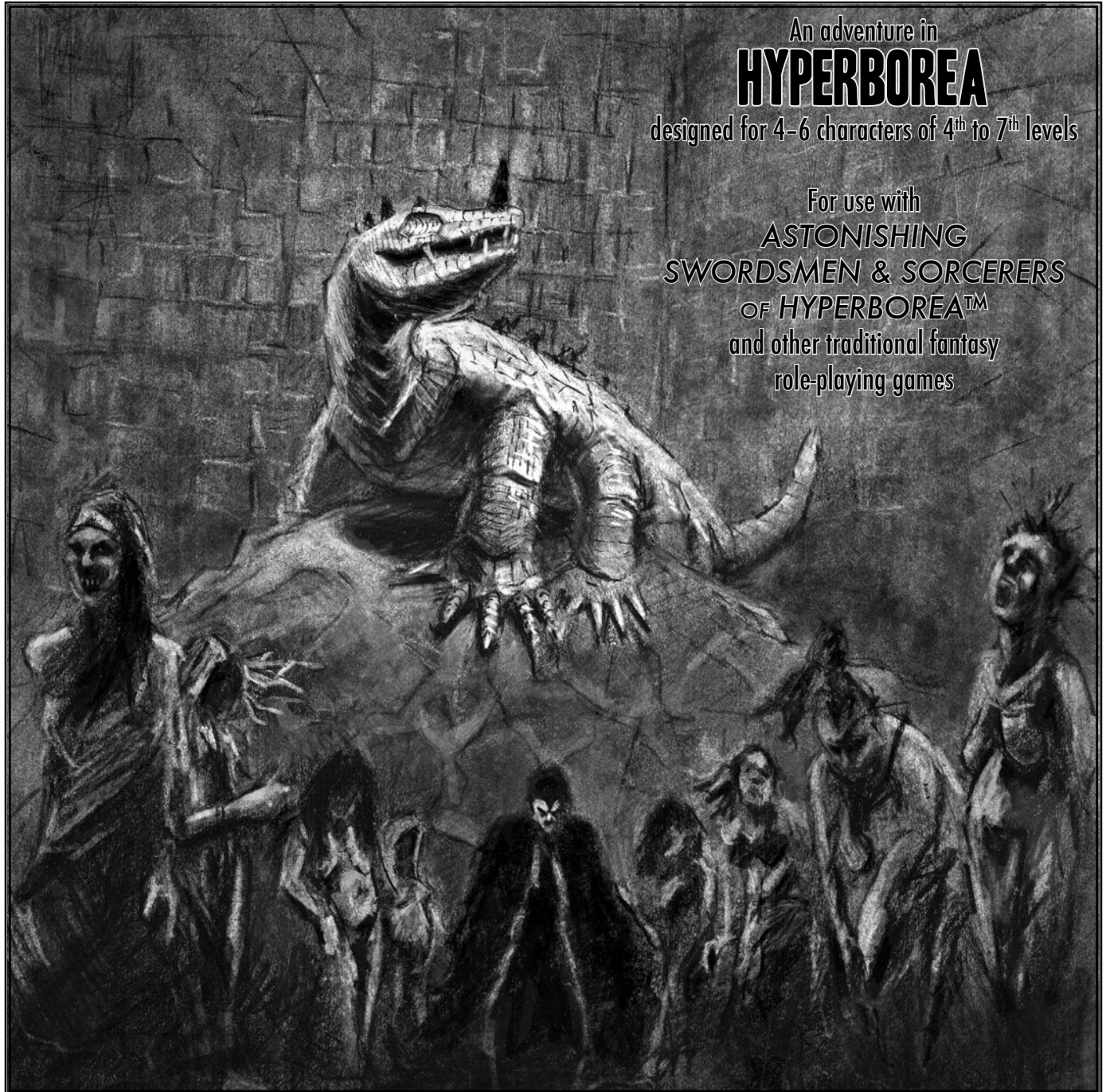


CHARNEL CRYPT OF THE SIGHTLESS SERPENT

by Jeffrey P. Talanian



An adventure in
HYPERBOREA

designed for 4-6 characters of 4th to 7th levels

For use with
**ASTONISHING
SWORDSMEN & SORCERERS
OF HYPERBOREA™**
and other traditional fantasy
role-playing games



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An Adventure in
HYPERBOREA
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Special thanks to Matthew J. Stanham for valuable feedback, and Dan Berube for the original “Forest of Bones” spell.

Originally appearing in **Knockspell Magazine** (sans art and professional cartography), *Charnel Crypt of the Sightless Serpent* is a system-neutral adventure compatible with most traditional fantasy role-playing games (c. 1974 to 1999) and their modern simulacra. The author suggests trying *Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea* as a rules system. *AS&SH* is inspired by the fiction of authors such as Robert E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft, and Clark Ashton Smith. Game rules and conventions are informed by the original 1974 fantasy wargame and miniatures campaign rules as conceived by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Special note regarding PDF version: When *Charnel Crypt of the Sightless Serpent* was originally conceived in 2009, the *AS&SH* game was still in early development. This PDF contains slight modifications to reflect the published rules of *AS&SH*. Despite some other cosmetic changes, the actual content remains unchanged. —*Jeff T. (2013)*

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INTRODUCTION

Plenteous run the gems from the eyeless sockets of the Xavadar Crypt Serpent. For countless generations treasure hunters have sought the lost barrow of the Xavadars, a noble family of some sixty persons that had built a vast vault remote from their familial dwellings. Therein they entombed themselves before the Green Death could claim them, for in that bygone age the plague spared neither servant nor lord, leper nor priest. They lay in their gilded sarcophagi, their arms folded, whilst their grand necromancer decanted a fulvous sleeping mist from which no man awakens. And by that one's baleful sorceries was the sightless serpent conjured to protect its lifeless charges from thieves and robbers. Once per quarter century does the sightless serpent emerge from that ancient charnel house to engorge itself on the flesh of Hyperborean beasts and men, before resuming its vigil. And so it has been for nigh a millennium.

Note: The above tale may be found in an old book or dusty tome, or perhaps it is the verse of a bard, skald, or tavern minstrel. It might be learned before or after the *players' background* information (below) is revealed. The above tale is reprinted in the **appendix** of this module so that it may be photocopied (**player handout #1**).

PLAYERS' BACKGROUND

Last night a knave who frequents the brothels of Khromarium drunkenly flaunted a fistful of gems he claimed to have found whilst hunting heron with his brothers out on the mud flats of the Lug Wastelands. According to the knave, he and his brothers three trailed a lumbering reptile, its prints indicating an awkward gait with a heavy, sweeping tail. From the mud they extracted gems enough to purchase a sailing galley, but Pietair (the knave) could not resist temptation, and at a local brothel he succumbed to wine, revelry, and an overly loose tongue. In consequence he was robbed and abused by agents of the Harlots' Guild; and in the dead of night, so too were his brothers served.

Pietair, a bruised and bloodied man, has now garnered the attention of your adventuring party at a tavern in Khromarium. He would lead your group to the serpent's trail before it is lost to wind and weather. Indeed, to slay the legendary **Xavadar Crypt Serpent** would make heroes of any adventuring band, and likely rich ones at that.

Pietair volunteers to guide your party across the fly-infested flats to where he and his brothers last spied the beast. All he requests in return is for but one gem so that he may attempt to repair the ill-will his brothers now reserve for him.

REFEREE'S NOTES

Players of this adventure are advised to read no further, for here forth is provided information intended for the eyes of the referee alone. There are some notable omissions in the above account, omissions which the players of this adventure might piece together as they progress, depending on their actions.

Monster Statistics:

AL = Alignment
SZ = Size
MV = Movement Rate
DX = Dexterity
FA = Fighting Ability
AC = Armour Class
HD = Hit Dice
hp = Hit Points
#A = Number of Attacks
D = Damage
SV = Saving Throw
ML = Morale
XP = Experience Point Value
Special = Special Abilities

Non-Player Character (NPC) statistics include:

Str = Strength
Dex = Dexterity
Con = Constitution
Int = Intelligence
Wis = Wisdom
Cha = Charisma

These statistics are compatible with most traditional fantasy role-playing game systems; albeit interpretations of the statistics may be at variance from system to system. For instance, Fighting Ability represents the monster's basic combative skill as compared with the fighter class, so a monster with FA 3 fights as a 3rd level fighter.

REFEREE'S BACKGROUND

The Necromancer: Ivgah is an evil sorcerer who yet survives in the Xavadar Crypt. Nigh a millennium ago, it is he who orchestrated the mass suicide of the noble Xavadar family. Empowered by the ritual, from the Black Gulf he summoned and bound to his service the Sightless Serpent, a quasi-deital **basilisk** that cyclically weeps rills of faceted gems. These pyramidal (or “brilliant cut”) gems are small but precious **black** and **violet sapphires**, (100-gp value each); but Ivgah cares not a shred for monetary riches. What he seeks (or, rather, sought) is the rare-ebbed **white sapphire** (1,000-gp value), this gem being an integral component to the baleful necromancy that would raise the noble family to an obsequious form of lichdom, in thrall to Ivgah.

Unfortunately for Ivgah, a thousand years of quaffing longevity elixirs and conducting rituals of unspeakable perversity has compromised his once brilliant mind. Madness now grips him, and all the lofty ambitions he once pursued with subtle meticulousness are now obfuscated by his insanity. In the charnel crypt the sorcerer dwells, living amongst the noble family that once entrusted to him their most precious commodity: their very souls.

At present Ivgah commands scores of walking dead, the erstwhile serving staff of the Xavadars. They lavish whatsoever attentions upon him as he might choose to command, performing services akin to those they performed in life. In the deepest vaults of the Xavadar Crypt, the necromancer keeps the mummified remains of the noble family in their sarcophagi, in preparation for the time when he gains possession of the white sapphires that will allow him to cast his final incantations . . . if his ruined mind is still capable of the task. In the meantime, the Sightless Serpent endures, emerging every twenty-six years (two Hyperborean cycles) to feed. Despite its quasi-deital status, the beast is scant of intelligence; notwithstanding, it is possessed of a palpable hatred for Ivgah the Necromancer.

Hyperborea: Hyperborea is the default setting for *Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea*. Inspired by the creative works of R.E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft, and C.A. Smith, Hyperborea is a “flat earth” micro-campaign setting; a polar continent at the End of Time that might be reached via arctic travel, planar travel, or even time travel. Hyperborea is a bleak world ruddily illumed by

the scarlet light of a bloated, dying sun. At the rim of the world the seas spill perpetually into abysmal infinity. Several races of men populate Hyperborea, as well as humanoids (such as ape-men and orcs), weird alien beings (such as crab-men and mi-go), and all manner of horrific beasts of myth and legend. Hyperborea can be just beyond the *boreas* (“North Wind”) of any campaign setting, published or home-brewed.

Khromarium: The City-State of Khromarium is a major port city, its harbour being the largest known in Hyperborea. Khromarium is a dismal, seedy place, choked by the smoke of its factories, and poverty and homelessness account for the largest segment of the city’s population. Many of the destitute take sanctuary in Old Khromarium, where once dwelled the most affluent of families, such as the Xavadar Family; that is, before the Green Death decimated the city’s population a thousand years ago. Centuries later barbarians reclaimed the lifeless city and its favourably located port, but much of the old city remains a place of mystery and death. Like the setting of Hyperborea, the City-State of Khromarium is easily replaced by any port city.



Khromarium is governed by a Lord Mayor, selected by a ruling oligarchy of men comprising the city’s most powerful knights, nobles, and guild masters. At present, Gill Sampatose, Master of the Mariners’ Guild, serves as Lord Mayor. Khromarium’s populace is largely Neutral in alignment, though lean toward Chaos. Although the city is not without the influence of Law, justice is seldom served with any semblance of equality.

INVESTIGATING THE CITY FOR CLUES

If the party has yet to learn the *italicized* tale included in the introduction of this adventure, they might uncover it now by investigating libraries or temples, or through consultation with learned folk.

★ *What they might learn about the Xavadars:* In Old Khromarium the adventurers will find no clues, for a millennium of death and destruction, plague and misfortune have left no indications of what became of the Xavadar Family or their dwelling places.

★ *What they might learn about Ivgah:* Should a magician (illusionist, etc.) in the party gain access to the Magicians' Guild archives (10 gp for a non-member, free for members), something of the Xavadar Family's magician might be learned, the knowledge preserved in crumbling scrolls of vellum. A thousand years ago Ivgah was an apprentice who was expelled from the Magicians' Guild for treachery. Records indicate that he gained passage to the fabled Isle of Ix, where baleful necromancers learn their foul arts. Twenty years later it was noted that this once lowly apprentice had gained employment with the Xavadar Family in Khromarium. Before the noble family could be alerted as to Ivgah's dubious background, the Green Death had already begun to take its toll.

★ *What they might learn about the Sightless Serpent:* Throughout the various corners of Khromarium, the Sightless Serpent is largely regarded as an old wives' tale, sometimes used by mothers to warn their children not to venture off to the Lug Wastelands beyond the city walls: ". . . lest the Sightless Serpent find you and gobble you up." It is said that the beast weeps faceted gems from eyeless sockets, the gems reputed to be pyramidal in shape, or "brilliant cut".



Rhaimar the Red: Investigation might lead the party to an old huntsman who frequents the seedier taverns of Khromarium. Rhaimar the Red is some 60 years of age, missing a hand, toothless, and blind in one eye. He wears a soiled red sash around his neck. He reveals what he knows – if one pays his outstanding tab of 12 sp and also buys him at least two gills of wine to “wet his palate.”

Twenty-six years ago, Rhaimar claims to have bitten the 8-legged monster with three arrows before it escaped him. He says the beast devoured a **giant deer** that stood 10 feet at the shoulder. Satiated, it ignored his pinpricks and burrowed into the mud. Following its trail, Rhaimar says he procured hundreds of **sapphires**, which he used to purchase a manor and two concubines. He lost it all when his scornful wife poisoned his concubines and burned down his home, so his story goes.

Rhaimar the Red (ranger, 5): *With the exception of his tracking and wilderness survival skills, Rhaimar's age, alcoholism, and various physical handicaps have reduced him to a 0th-level man of 3 hp.*

Pietair “The Knave”: Pietair is the man who regales the party with his tale of riches and glory, agony and defeat. He is a slight man with a narrow face and long black hair, and he walks with a slight limp (though he does not always remember which leg to favour). He agrees to lead the party to the site, ten miles across the Lug Wastelands, the treacherous mud flats outside the walls of Khromarium.

Pietair carries a short bow and a pair of daggers, but claims his bad knee (“old war wound”) and poor health prevent him from fighting. He mentions that he intends to remain at a rocky outcropping within eyeshot of the sinkhole where he and his brothers spied the creature descending.

N.B.: Pietair is a member in decent standing with the Khromarium Thieves' Guild, though he is generally regarded as a fool. A thief in the party might know of him in the general sense.

Pietair “The Knave” (thief, 4): AL CE; SZ M; MV 40; FA 3; AC 8; HD 4 (hp 14); #A 1; D (by weapon); SV 15 (device +2, avoidance +2); ML 9; XP 120; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 7; *Special: All applicable thief abilities.*

Possessions: 2 daggers, short bow, 12 arrows, leather backpack, thieves' tools set, 25-foot rope, bedroll, 12 gp, 10 sp.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

This adventure begins in the Lug Wasteland, with the party and their guide en route to the sinkhole where Pietair and his brothers saw the beast descend.

Across the Lug Wasteland: The Lug Wasteland is a frozen tundra during the sunless winter, but come high summer the tundra thaws to treacherous mud flats, where unforgiving tar pits swallow men and beasts. During this time the landscape is alive with giant insects and amphibians, and covered flowers, sedge, shrubs, stunted trees, and other plants. **Red deer** run in large herds, and herons of many species pluck about the vast wetlands, all of them relying on speed to avoid the jaws of predators.

Experienced travellers of the Lug Wasteland know that wagons and other transports cannot be driven here, unless they make use of the North Road. Off-road travellers must simply walk. When hunting, Pietair and his brothers link themselves by the waist with rope, and Pietair suggests the party do the same, for much of the trip is off-road.

As the party crosses the flats, they are harried by **black flies** (q.v. **Random Encounters, Wilderness**, below). The journey is arduous, and dry land is dubious; the characters will often be forced to wade through muck of up to three or four feet in depth during the 10-mile journey.

Random Encounters (Wilderness): There is a 1-in-6 chance per mile travelled of a random encounter occurring; a minimum of 10 checks must be made en route to the adventure site. If a random encounter occurs, roll a d12 and consult the below chart.

Random Encounter (Wilderness) Table

d12 result	Encounter
1–2	Deer, Red (3d10)
3	Elk, Giant (1d8)
4	Frogs, Giant (3d6)
5	Mammoths, Woolly (1d12)
6	Snake (Python) (1)
7	Stirges (3d6)
8	Ticks, Giant (3d12)
9	Tiger, Sabre-Tooth (Smilodon) (1d2)
10	<i>Hazard:</i> Tar Pit
11–12	<i>Hazard:</i> Black Flies

Encounter Descriptions:

Deer, Red: Deer with red (summer) or grey (winter) coat that stands three to four feet at the shoulder and weighs 250–350 pounds. They flee from most everything, though a cornered hart can butt with its antlers. AL N; SZ M; MV 70; DX 13; AC 8; HD 1 (hp 5); #A 1 (antlers); D 1d4; SV 16; ML 3; XP 13. *Special:* *Charging gore attack results in doubled damage dice.*

Elk, Irish (Giant Elk): Giant deer that stands 7–10 feet at the shoulder and has an antler spread of 12–15 feet. Giant elk attack only if threatened. AL N; SZ L; MV 60; DX 7; AC 7; HD 4 (hp 19); #A 2 (antler/antler); D 1d8/1d8; SV 15; ML 7; XP 90. *Special:* *Can attack two adjacent opponents with a single charge attack, doubling damage dice for each victim.*

Frog, Giant: Enormous frogs up to seven feet long and weighing up to 700 lbs. AL N; SZ L; MV 10 (hop 60/swim 30); DX AC 7; HD 3 (hp 14); #A 1 (bite); D 1d6; SV 15; ML 7; XP 101. *Special:* *On a natural 20 attack roll, the tongue reels in and swallows the victim whole, inflicting 1d6 hp damage per round thereafter. Swallowed prey can attempt to cut its way out.*

Mammoth, Woolly: Massive herbivores, 15 feet at the shoulder with tusks up to 15-foot length. They attack only when cornered and threatened. AL N; SZ L; MV 40; AC 3; HD 12 (hp 54); #A 2 (gore/trample); D 2d6/4d4; SV 11; ML 8; XP 1,700. *Special:* *If hit, 2-in-6 chance of going berserk (+2 “to hit” and damage).*

Snake, Giant (Python): Man-eating snakes, 40 feet long, always looking for their next meal. AL N; SZ L; MV 30 (swim 20); DX 8; AC 6; HD 5 (hp 23); #A 1 (bite); D 1d4; SV 14; ML 8; XP 275. *Special:* *constriction for 2d6 damage per round; victim can attempt to escape via extraordinary feat of strength or dexterity. Otherwise, allies whose strength totals at least 75 can remove snake in 1d4 rounds. Whilst constricting prey, giant python may be attacked at +2 “to hit”.*

Stirge: Feathered, bird-like monsters, 12 inches long, with a long, mosquito-like proboscis for sucking blood. AL CE; SZ S; MV 10 (fly 60); DX 10; AC 7; HD 1 (hp 5); #A 1 (sting); D 1d3; SV 16; ML 8; XP 19. *Special:* *+2 “to hit” on initial attack; blood drain for 1d4 points of damage per round until sated (c. 12 hp).*

Tick, Giant: Three-foot diameter arachnids that drain blood. AL N; SZ M; MV 20; DX 5; AC 3; HD 3 (hp 14); #A 1 (bite); D 1d4; SV 15; ML 12; XP 107. *Special: Surprises on a 3-in-6 chance. Bite transmits venom: make death (poison) save at +2 bonus or suffer paralysis for 1d2 turns. Tick remains attached once bite is established, draining blood for 1d6 hp damage per round until either tick or victim is dead. Can be driven off with fire; 3-in-6 chance it releases if already attached.*

Tiger, Sabre-Tooth (Smilodon): Massive carnivores up to 12 feet long, 4 feet at the shoulder, 10-inch canine teeth, and a taste for human flesh. AL N; SZ L; MV 50; DX 14; AC 6; HD 8 (hp 36); #A 3 (claw/claw/bite); D 1d6+1/1d6+1/2d8; SV 13; ML 8; XP 840. *Special: Surprise on a 4-in-6 chance. If both claw attacks hit, the cat automatically rakes with its two rear claws for 2d4 hp damage each.*

Hazard, Tar Pit: A semi-concealed tar pit. 1-in-6 chance that a random PC slips in. If a ranger leads the party, this chance is reduced to 1-in-10. Unless safety measures in place, a submerged PC has 5 rounds to live, unless a character of 13 strength or greater pulls him out. The rescuer also has a 1-in-6 chance of slipping in, if no safety measures are taken.

Hazard, Black Flies: A cloud of biting, swarming pests harasses the party for a period of 2d6 turns (20 to 120 minutes). During this time, attacks are made at a -1 “to hit” penalty.

KEY TO MAP #1

Referee Notes: There are several outcroppings surrounding the sinkhole where Pietair leads the party. These are composed of limestone, as is the sinkhole itself. Animal trails (dotted lines on map) connect some of the outcroppings; these are somewhat obvious, as the earth is tamped firm by the hooves of the **red deer** and **giant elk** that frequent the area. The referee might have a small herd of red deer or a solitary giant elk appear at any time. The salt lick at **Area #D** attracts these animals.

If the PCs go off-trail on Map #1: The mire of this area ranges from six inches to three feet in depth. There are no tar pits here, but the **red deer** herds have attracted **giant leeches**. Movement rate is reduced: it might take a normal, unencumbered man 10 minutes (1 turn) to move 60 feet. For every turn of movement, the referee should roll a d6. If a 1 is rolled, a random party member is attacked by a giant leech.

Giant Leech: An aquatic, blood-sucking worm of five-foot length. AL N; SZ M; MV 0 (10 swim); DX 8; AC 7; HD 5 (hp 23); #A 1 (bite); D 1d6; SV 14; ML 11; XP 225. *Special: Surprises on a 4-in-6 chance; must be killed to be removed. Drains 1-6 hp per round. Anticoagulant causes 1 hp damage per round for 2d4 rounds after leech removed; if tightly bandaged, blood loss reduced to 1d4 rounds.*

AREA #A: PIETAIR’S POINT. Pietair leads the party to a rocky outcropping, where a deep cleft in the limestone provides shelter from the elements. This particular outcropping is one of four that overlook the great sinkhole (**Area #E**). If the PCs insist on investigating the area before entering the sinkhole, Pietair complains of his bad knee (injury from the “great wars”, he claims) and says he must now rest and recover at this location.

AREA #B: HAWK NEST. There are **2 marsh hawks** here, a mating pair, building a nest at this 25-foot high outcropping. They fly off if approached. Soon, when the female lays her clutch, they will react more aggressively if intruded upon.

Hawks, Marsh (×2): Grey hawks with red-plumed tails and three-foot wingspans. AL N; SZ S; MV (fly 120); DX 15; AC 5; HD ½ (hp 2); #A 3 (claw/claw/bite); D 1/1/1; SV 17; ML 4; XP 9. *Special: Dive bomb attack (claws only) from 100+ feet at +2 “to hit” and damage.*

AREA #C: STIRGE NEST. There are **12 stirges** roosting at this remote outcropping, which is surrounded by mire of four foot depth. There is a 3-in-6 chance that the stirges will attack a party that approaches within 80 feet. If they have not already, they will attack once the party achieves the summit of the 20-foot-high outcropping.

Stirges (×12): AL CE; SZ S; MV 10 (fly 60); DX 10; AC 7; HD 1 (hp 5); #A 1 (sting); D 1d3; SV 16; ML 8; XP 19. *Special: +2 “to hit” on initial attack; blood drain for 1d4 points of damage per round until sated (c. 12 hp).*

AREA #D: GATE TO XAVADAR FAMILY CRYPT. An *illusion* of rock and debris covers the main gate to the Xavadar Crypt. Otherwise, this outcropping is among the most extensive in the area, rising to 30-foot height. A natural salt lick attracts **red deer** and **Irish elk (giant elk)** to this location. If the illusion is discovered (disappears when touched by an intelligent being; returns 6 turns later), a massive double door of bronze is revealed, of 12-foot width and 18-foot height. The door is barred from the interior (**locked**).

AREA #E: THE SINKHOLE. Pietair points out this deep cavity—just above the water level—as the place where he and his brothers saw the gem-weeping serpent descend. The sinkhole is about 15 feet in diameter, its walls of mouldy limestone. It drops some 50 feet down to a floor pooled to a depth of 1 foot with wet clay. A tunnel stretches northeast (see **MAP #2, KEY #1**).

There is a **gelatinous cube** hidden in a nook some 15 feet above the floor of the sinkhole bottom. Shortly after the PCs arrive (perhaps two to five minutes), it will squeeze down to the floor and begin to trail them. If the PCs have remained in the area, and it is daylight, they might notice the external light being blurred by the passage of the descending cube.

Gelatinous Cube: Transparent, cube-shaped jelly, contains a few red deer bones. AL N; SZ L; MV 10; DX 5; AC 8; HD 4 (hp 20); #A 1 (touch); D 2d4; SV 15; ML 12; XP 180. *Special: Immune to cold and electricity. Hit causes paralysis for 2d4 turns unless death save is made.*

KEY TO MAP #2

Referee Note: There are two means by which the party might enter the Charnel Crypt: The sinkhole (**Area #E**) pointed out by Pietair, and the illusion-covered secret door (**Area #D**).

Random Encounters (Dungeon): In the natural caverns portion of this dungeon (**keys #1 to #7**), there is a 1-in-6 chance per hour (6 turns) of a random encounter. If a random encounter is confirmed, roll another 1d6. A result of 1–3 means **giant centipedes (black)** are encountered; a result of 4–6 means **giant rats** are encountered.

Centipedes, Giant (Black) (3d12): Multi-segmented insects that are up to 2½ feet long, narrow, with a pair of legs at projecting from each segment. AL N; SZ S; MV 20; DX 13; AC 9; HD ½ (hp 2); #A 1 (bite); D 1d2; SV 17; ML 7; XP 25. *Special: Bite delivers poison; make death (poison) save or suffer an additional 2d6 hp damage.*

Rat, Giant (3d10): Rodents of 3 to 3 ½ feet long and weighing up to 60 lbs. AL N; SZ S; MV 40 (swim 20); DX 8; AC 7; HD ½ (hp 2); #A 1 (bite); D 1d4; SV 17; ML 8; XP 9. *Special: 1-in-6 chance of infecting victim with disease, unless death (poison) save is made. If save fails, victim either dies in 1d6 days, or is bedridden for a month with pain and fever. Roll a d6: On a score of 1–3, the disease is terminal; otherwise the non-deadly strain is contracted.*

#1: SINKHOLE TUNNEL. Note the **gelatinous cube** as mentioned at **Area #E**. Shortly after the party begins to traverse this tunnel, the cube will begin to follow them. It should catch up to them at a time as logically determined by the referee.

The tunnel at the bottom of the sinkhole runs from 10 to 20 feet in width and about 12 feet in height, sloping downward at a slight angle. The tunnel is largely composed of limestone, its walls and ceiling slick with algæ and mould. A stream 3 feet in depth runs along the right side of the tunnel. The water is the result of seepage, and is thus well-filtered and drinkable.

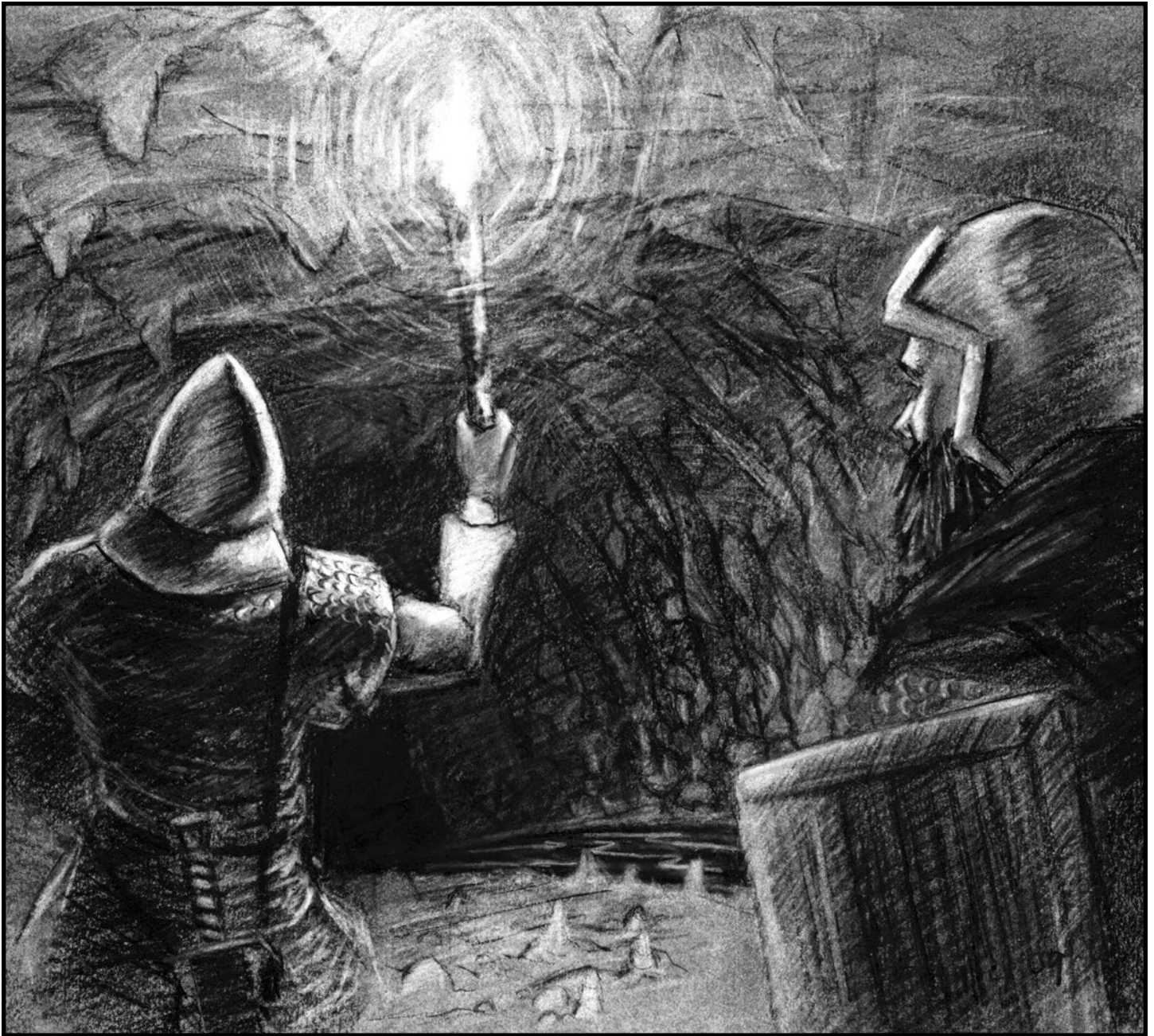
A few animal bones are littered about; a ranger (or other huntsman-type) will easily identify these as red deer bones, clean and parched. These remnants are not from victims of the Sightless Serpent; rather, they belong to those unfortunate animals which ventured too close to the rim of the sinkhole, fell to their deaths, and had their flesh consumed by the gelatinous cube. To the astute, the arrangement of the bones might indicate something more than death from falling.

#2: C-SHAPED CAVERN (NORTH END). About **500 bats** roost here. Stalactites bristle from the 30-foot ceiling of this large, C-shaped, limestone cavern. A large pool of water is fed by the stream of the tunnel southwest. A stream from the tunnel to the southwest feeds the large pool within.

The cavern is quite rancid, smelling of bat guano. The pool hosts no life and is poisonous to drink. If a small quantity is sipped, *save vs. death (poison)* or suffer a stomach illness for 3 days, resulting in –1 “to hit” and damage; if a large amount is consumed, *save vs. death (poison)* or die.

The **500 bats** are not easily disturbed, unless foolhardy adventurers seek to provoke them. They are insectivorous and swarm off to feed for at night, leaving at dusk and returning at dawn. Incidental conflict is a possibility during these hours, if the referee so desires. If incited, 11–20 bats will swarm past each opponent, clawing and biting.

Bats (×500): Brown bats of 1 foot wingspan. AL N; SZ S; MV 0 (fly 80); DX 15; AC 5; HD ¼ (hp 1); #A 1 (bite); D 1; SV 17; ML 3; XP 9. *Special: 1-in-4 bats will carry a disease. A bite victim must make a death (poison) save or suffer infection. Death ensues in 2d6 days.*



#3: C-SHAPED CAVERN (SOUTH END). Here lies a ledge overlooking the underground pond. Hundreds of years ago, when Ivgah the Necromancer still possessed his sanity, he had his undead servants carve a path from **#10** to this location, so that he might fish the pond. At that time, there was an abundance of blind albino fish to be snagged, but as the sinkhole widened (see **Area #E**), **bats** (see **#2**) found this place; as they proliferated, their guano and urine poisoned the water. The iron-bound door here is not locked, but it is swollen and **stuck** (*force door check required*).

#4: HUB CAVERN. This high-ceilinged cavern bristles with stalactites and stalagmites, some of which connect to form great limestone pillars. A violet glow emanates in intermittent patches from the walls and ceiling here. This **violet glow moss**, if harvested in 12-inch patches or greater, sheds a 15-foot radius of dim, violet light for 11–20 turns.

#5: SHALLOW CAVERN. There are **2 rust monsters** dwelling here. This wide but shallow-ceilinged cavern is dark and dry. Its lumpy ceiling is of five-foot height, and despite the otherwise wet conditions in the surrounding areas, here it is dry and somewhat dusty. A film of red and green dust coats the floor and walls. Lying about the floor there are **3 black** and **violet sapphires** (100-gp value each). Deeper within lie the skeletons of two men garbed in rusted chain mail, rusted blades by their sides. Each has a leather pouch, stiff and rotted with age. One pouch contains **12 gp** and **1 black sapphire** (100-gp value); the other holds **15 gp** and **1 violet sapphire** (100-gp value). In one man's rotted satchel there is a **potion of heroic action** and a **rope of climbing** (see **appendix**). A **bone scroll case** can be found by the other man's hip. It contains a note scribed on vellum that reads:

***Entry #1:** Our journey across the Lug Wasteland was met with success. We encountered a terrible monster along the way, and after pricking it with our arrows, we fled. We have now discovered the sinkhole where the Sightless Serpent has been witnessed.*

***Entry #2:** Shortly after descending, we discovered a tunnel. The tunnel has opened to a few larger caverns that shew no sign of our ancestral family vaults. Had we not discovered a pair of sapphires to corroborate the legend of the Sightless Serpent, we surely would have been discouraged. Alas, hope is rekindled, and we will press on. We must find and destroy the treacherous and abominable necromancer, Ivgah, lest he complete his incantations and forever mar the souls of our good and noble ancestors. Ivgah must die.*

—Uvlah Xavadar

N.B.: The above text is duplicated in the **appendix** so that it may be photocopied (**player handout #2**).

Inspection of the bodies incites the **2 rust monsters**. Note the five-foot ceiling; it might affect those who are hunched over, particularly if they employ large weapons.

Rust Monsters (×2): Large armadillo-like creatures with long antennae. AL N; SZ M; MV 40; DX 12; AC 2; HD 5 (hp 22, 18); #A 1; D 0; SV 15; ML 7; XP 175. *Special:* When contact with metal is made, rust effect is immediate. Metal armour and weapons are at once oxidized to complete disrepair. Magical armour and weapons have a 1-in-6 chance per "plus" to not be affected; e.g., a **+2 short sword** has a 2-in-6 chance of resisting the effect. Such magic items are not immediately rusted if the resistance fails; rather they lose one "plus" per successful hit that is not resisted.

#6: LARGE EMPTY CAVERN. This large cavern has an 18 foot ceiling from which stalactites hang. **Violet glowmoss** is profuse here (see **#4**).

#7: TUNNEL TO XAVADAR FAMILY VAULT. This tunnel is in part natural, in part gouged out by the Sightless Serpent. The beast smashed through the entry chamber (see **#9**) when it sensed the presence of this tunnel, and has since used it as a point of egress from the vault when it departs every twenty-six years (two Hyperborean cycles) to feed. Although the necromancer Ivgah bound the beast from touching the main entry (see **#8**) of the vault, it has proved resourceful and found other means to exit the Crypts. An astute observer might note the clawed tracks of the beast.

***Referee Note:** Once the party enters the actual vault (keys **#8** to **#18**), an event might occur at a time selected by the referee. Twelve ghostly forms manifest: robed, noble looking beings wearing tall, conical hats. Haunted and shimmering, they speak in a single, hollow voice, beseeching the party to locate their tainted remains and burn them in a proper funeral pyre, releasing them from the necromancer's curse.*

#8: DESCENDING INTO THE VAULT. From **Area #D**, long, broad stairs descend to another double door of bronze set in a Gothic arch. Graven upon the door in bold letters is the word "XAVADAR". The door was once magically sealed, but the magic has since faded – a fact Ivgah is unaware of. Now the doors are simply **locked**.

#9: ENTRY CHAMBER. Here, in this dimly illumed chamber, lies the Sightless Serpent. The referee, of course, is at liberty to relocate the beast; it might be resting anywhere from **#1** to **#7**, for example.

The walls of this chamber are painted in murals (albeit faded and chipped) depicting noblemen garbed in silks and tall conical caps, and seated on thrones. The walls are 18 feet high, and the ceiling arches to a 26-foot apex. An enchanted **brass chandelier** depends from the centre of the ceiling, providing the chamber's dim illumination. It holds **24 magic tapers** that burn, yet do not melt. If removed, the tapers begin to burn down, taking 24 turns (4 hours) to do so, each providing a 10-foot radius of light.

There are four doors in this chamber: a double door to the north, a double door to the south, and two normal doors to the east and west. All are unlocked, save the door to the east, which is **stuck** (force door check required).

The northwest corner of the chamber has been demolished, now opening to a lengthy tunnel (see #7).

The southeast corner holds a massive pile of mud-stained debris. The pile has a semi-circular shape and rises to a height of 12 feet. This is the nest of the Sightless Serpent. Astute characters will note that the mud stains are relatively fresh. Further scouring of the debris (1d6 turns) results in the discovery of **2d4 black** and **violet sapphires** (100-gp value each). The monster is disturbed only if a PC climbs and looks into the nest, or if the adventurers begin pulling apart or otherwise attempt to harm the nest. Silent parties, however, might surprise the slumbering monster, for it is exhausted after its recent feeding. If disturbed, the creature emerges.

The Sightless Serpent is an 8-legged, 14-foot long **unique basilisk**, a pale and bloated monstrosity. There are no eyes in its massive skull; only deep, empty sockets remain. The beast hisses as it emerges from its lair, and at first “sight” of the intruders, it emits an angry roar, and from those vacuous sockets ebb a pair of pyramidally-shaped **sapphires** (100-gp value each). Next, it attacks!



Sightless Serpent (unique basilisk): AL N; SZ L; MV 20; DX 7; AC 2; HD 9+4 (hp 66); #A 3 (claw/claw/bite); D 1d6/1d6/2d8; SV 12; ML 12; XP 1,600. *Special: Its bite, as well as touching its hide causes one to turn to stone unless a transformation save is made. When enraged, it roars (1–2 times during the battle), and gems stream from its empty eye sockets like tears (2d4 black and violet sapphires, 100-gp value each).*

To slay the beast is significant in that it forever prevents Ivghah from completing the necromancies that would raise the Xavadars to servile lichdom. Presently he has but four of the requisite **white sapphires**; regardless, his own madness is now his largest obstacle. If *remove curse* is cast on the monster, it will be freed of its bond and immediately seek vengeance on the necromancer, Ivghah.

#10: PREPARATION ROOM. There is a large stone-carved desk in this chamber before which stands a large chair of oak. A large bookshelf spans the south wall. There is a **secret door** here, a revolving bookcase (3 × 8 feet). Brittle sheets of papyrus and debris are littered about, the largest accumulation on the desk itself.

Bookshelf: Contains many historical volumes pertaining to what is now termed “Old Khromarium”. All the information is pre-Green Death, and in total there are 18 volumes that will be of great interest to the sages at the Khromarium Library. A total price of **250 gp** might be earned.

Ivghah’s Papyrus Scrolls: These sheets largely hold the fragmented and incomplete ravings of a madman. Only a magician (or subclass) can understand all that is written; Ivghah uses many esoteric terms, an antiquated alphabet, and unusual sentence structure – language as spoken and written a thousand years ago. But it is close enough to the “Common Tongue” as to be generally understood by any literate person. What becomes clear after 2 hours of organizing and perusing is this:

★ Ivghah lied to and betrayed the Xavadar Family into believing his ritual would deliver their souls to a higher place; in truth, the ritual and mummification process was all part of an evil scheme to animate them to **liches** bound to obey his will.

★ He has a deep hatred for the men of Khromarium, and aspires to unleash his **12 liches** upon that “despicable shantytown” and bring ruin to it, leaving the Magicians’ Guild for last, to prolong their terror.

★ He used a **poison gas**, to which he had inured himself, to euthanize the 12 noble family members and their 48 servants.

★ He indeed learned his dark arts at Ix, the dread Isle of the Necromancers.

★ He ensorcelled the Sightless Serpent both to guard the crypts, and to gain its rarely-produced **white sapphire**, which must be set in the skull of the prospective lich to animate it. His writings reveal that he was waiting for the serpent to produce 12 such gems before conducting his wicked ceremony. The later entries (of the last century, at least) suggest he may have forgotten or lost comprehension of this task, his mind corrupt with madness.

★ His **elixirs of youth**, he believes, have compromised his great mind; he was warned of this whilst apprenticing at the Isle of Ix. He eventually came to believe the dire warnings given to him – that the elixirs would corrupt his mind in strange and awful ways.

Scattered amongst the various papyrus scrolls the players can find a misplaced **scroll of animate dead** (see **appendix**) and **2 keys** (to **Area #D**, and **#8**). Up to 200 sheets of blank papyrus can be recovered, as well as quills of various sizes and several pots of squid ink.

#11: SERVANTS' VAULT. The odious stench of death hangs heavy here. The open archway leads to a massive crypt lined with 48 sarcophagi (simple, pine). This is where the 48 family servants were interred, but Ivgah animated them each and all to serve his vile purposes. He selected his favourites to remain with him, and for centuries charged the rest to positions of guardianship and other menial tasks. At some point, however, these **30 skeletons** returned to their coffins. If one coffin lid is lifted or otherwise disturbed, they all emerge to attack.

Skeletons (×30): AL CE; SZ M; MV 30; DX 11; AC 7; HD 1 (hp 5); #A 1 (claw); D 1d6; SV 16; ML 12; XP 16. *Special: Immune to poison, paralysis, fear, and cold-based attacks. Edged and piercing weapons do half damage.*

The coffins are not very elaborate, built of pine and with loose lids. Searching through them, the following treasure might be discovered: **15 gp**, **30 sp**, **5 silver chains** (3-gp value each), **15 engraved silver rings** (5-gp value each), **1 pearl** (100-gp value). A **key to #13** can also be found here.

#12: HALL OF TAPESTRIES. A dim violet glow emanates throughout the length of this long hall. Massive tapestries, rotten and thick with mould, depend from rusted iron rods mounted upon the 12-foot-high walls, the arched ceiling rising to 16 feet. So ancient are the tapestries, so long exposed to mildew and moisture, that their design is lost to the ages. **Violet glowmoss** (*if harvested in 12-inch patches or greater, sheds a 15-foot radius of dim, violet light for 11–20 turns*) is sporadic throughout, intermingled with normal moss and mould. At the end of the hall there is an iron door mottled with rust.

Trap: Ten feet before the iron door, there is a **trap**. It is triggered by a 2 × 16-foot pressure plate that, if depressed, causes the walls left and right to slam shut, iron spikes projecting. If a character is in the area of effect of the sprung trap, an *avoidance save* must be made. Failure results in 5d6 damage, success indicating half damage. The referee might give a +2 bonus on the save to anyone at the edge of the trap's range. One turn after closing, the walls (and spikes) slide back into place and the pressure plate lifts. **N.B.:** Astute characters might discover the trap by discovering the trigger plate or the cavities that pock the walls left and right (from whence the spikes emerge).

#13: STATUARY OF THE ANCIENTS. The south door of this chamber is **locked**. This large hexagonal chamber has a statue in each corner (six in total). The floor is composed of large square flagstones, and the walls are 18 feet high, with a ceiling that vaults to 26 feet at the apex. The angled walls northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest each have a shallow alcove holding a large bronze scone sculpted to portray a leering, demonic visage. Each holds a green flame (as *continuous light*) that washes the entire chamber in a lime-green glow. An iron-bound, oaken double door (unlocked) is set in the north wall. The double door is 10 feet wide and rises to a Gothic arch of 16 feet. The archway is of solid granite and engraved with the words, "XAVADAR FAMILY CRYPT".

Xavadar Ancestral Statues: These were transported here from the Xavadar mansion in Khromarium when the family fled the city to escape the Green Death. The statues, each sculpted of white marble, take on a green hue from the wall sconces. Each statue is set upon a marble plinth. They portray four men (c. 7 feet tall) and two women (c. 6½ feet tall) of the Hyperborean race.

The four male statues are large and bearded, each garbed in a breastplate and wearing a horned helm. Each holds a boar spear in a “shoulder arms” position, the butt of the weapon touching the plinth whilst the shaft rests in the crook of the shoulder. Each man is slightly different from the next, but they all share the same brooding features.

The two female statues are voluptuous of hip and breast. They are garbed in light gowns, and each bears a severe, unforgiving countenance. Their hair is tightly bound and wreathed in flowers. One woman is portrayed with her arms thrust forward and bent at the elbows so that her open-fingered hands are lifted to chin level; the other woman’s arms are similarly portrayed, thrust and bent at the elbow, but her forearms and hands are unnaturally downturned.

The plinth of each statue is mounted with a brass plate, each engraved with a different name.

★ **The men:** *Hrith Xavadar, Vledemar Xavadar, Yuugmir Xavadar, and Grishmek Xavadar.*

★ **The women:** *Grelda Xavadar* (upturned arms) and *Eringa Xavadar* (downturned arms). Grooves along the elbows of the two female statues might be observed by an astute searcher.

Trap (Eringa Statue): If the forearms of the statue labelled “Eringa” are upturned (to a natural looking position from the unnatural), a **poison gas trap** releases. It fills this chamber and up to 10 feet beyond with a putrid mustard-yellow gas that burns the eyes, nose, and throat for 3d10 damage unless a *death (poison) save* is made for half damage.

Secret Trap Door (Grelda Statue): If the forearms of the statue labelled “Grelda” are downturned (to an unnatural position from the natural), a **secret trap door** in the centre of the chamber clicks open, a flagstone on a hidden hinge. Underneath, there is a 10 × 10-foot shaft that descends 15 feet. Iron rungs are drilled in the shaft, forming a ladder.

#14: FALSE XAVADAR FAMILY CRYPT. A dozen stone sarcophagi line this large, dusty chamber, six on each side. In the centre there is a massive, 10-foot-tall stone statue of a warrior girded in plate mail and bearing arms.

Thaumagorga Statue #1: This statue depicts a Duke of Hell with whom Ivgah has made dark pacts. The statue is posed in an attitude of attack. It wears a great horned helm that conceals its features. The hands of the faceless warrior grip the stout shaft of a halberd. On its back is strapped a two-handed scimitar, and by its side there is a broad sword. The statue radiates magic, as well as an intense Evil and Chaos. The figure is recognizable to any cleric or magician, and many other Hyperboreans, too. Only a fool would desecrate it. The punishment for doing so is left to the diabolical imagination of the referee.

Trap: If anyone approaches within ten feet of the Thaumagorga Statue, a pair of bluestone slabs recessed in the walls of the entryway slam shut. If anyone is standing where the slabs close, he must attempt to avoid being crushed to death (*avoidance save* or die). After the walls close, six of the sarcophagi burst open: **2 ghouls** emerge, screeching and gnashing their broken teeth, followed by **7 skeletons** bearing spears and shields.

Ghouls (×2): AL CE; SZ M; MV 40; DX 11; AC 6; HD 2 (hp 9); #A 3 (claw/claw/bite); D 1d3/1d3/1d6; SV 16; ML 10; XP 68. *Special: Immune to poison, paralysis, fear, and cold-based attacks. Protection from evil holds them at bay. Hit causes paralysis for 2d6 turns unless death save is made. Slain victims later become ghouls.*

Skeletons (×7): AL CE; SZ M; MV 30; DX 11; AC 7; HD 1 (hp 5); #A 1 (claw); D 1d6; SV 16; ML 12; XP 16. *Special: Immune to poison, paralysis, fear, and cold-based attacks. Edged and piercing weapons do half damage.*

This room is a ruse and a trap intended to foil would-be grave robbers. Once the stone slabs close, they can only be re-opened by prying them apart at the seam; to do so requires an *extraordinary feat of strength*, similar to lifting a portcullis or bending the iron bars of a jail cell. Two characters can work together to part the slabs (thus combining their probability of success).

There is no treasure in this room. The stone sarcophagi that did not burst open simply hold the chewed bones of victims past. Lastly, a wise character who recalls the “Legend of the Sightless Serpent” might recall that the noble family’s sarcophagi were noted as *gilded*; on the contrary, these simple stone structures are not gilded.



#15: PIT AND IDOL. There is a covered **pit trap** in the hall here, 20 feet deep. If the trap is not discovered, it triggers when 100+ pounds of weight presses on it. West of the pit, set in an alcove, there is a 2½-foot tall **malachite idol** (500-gp value) of a fat, warty toad with horns upon its head, sleepy eyes, and folded, membranous wings. From its mouth lolls a thick, wart-covered tongue. This is a crude effigy of Xathoquua, whose religion is widespread in the City-State of Khromarium and elsewhere.

#16: IRON DOOR AT END OF TUNNEL. At the bottom of the three sets of stone stairs a rusty iron door blocks further passage. The door is not locked, but it is **stuck** (*force door check required*). If a player character attempts to burst open the door, the referee should ask the player to explain how he or she goes about it, for on the other side of the door there is a **20-foot open pit**.

To the right of the iron door there is a **secret door**, which is 6 × 6 feet and pivots on a greased central axis if pressed.

#17: XAVADAR FAMILY CRYPT. Here lies the true chanel house of the Xavadar Family. There is another **Thaumagorga Statue** here, identical to that which is found in the false family vault (see #14), except that it is sculpted of bronze. At the east side of the room there is an iron door (**locked**).

Thaumagorga Statue #2: It radiates an intense aura of Evil and Chaos. In a secret compartment at its base, there lie **4 white sapphires** (1,000-gp value each) and the **key to #18**.

There are 12 tombs in the vault. Within each reposes a gilded bronze sarcophagus, graven with necromantic symbols of a portentous species. Each sarcophagus can slide out on a greased slab, though a combined total of 25 or greater strength is required (anything less requires a *test of strength* check). Each sarcophagus contains a mummy, tightly wrapped in hardened, yellow linens. These are the 12 noble Xavadars that Ivgah would have raised to a subservient form of lichdom, had he not lost his mind before he could complete the process. The potential of four **liches** being raised by Ivgah is a future possibility, for he possesses the required material components (as noted above). At one time the Xavadar family had thousands of gold pieces worth of valuables here, but the necromancer expended them on the foul materials and forbidden tomes essential to his dark art. See (**Concluding the Adventure**) if the mummies are burned, as requested by the ghosts.

N.B.: Excessive noise at this location might stir the necromancer from his deep slumbers at #18. The door that opens to the passage west of #18 is **locked**.

#18: CONJURATION ROOM. This hexagonal chamber is where Ivgah the Necromancer dwells with his **9 zombies** (females all), preserved to the necromancer's warped tastes, scantily clad in rotting green and yellow silks. The zombies stir when the iron door at the end of the hall is opened, and soon afterward Ivgah awakens.

It has been centuries since Ivgah has dealt with intrusion, but he is always prepared with his full allotment of spells. He sits upon his throne of bone in the centre of the chamber, where he is surrounded by a **magic circle of protection from good** (functions as the *protection from good*, 15' r. spell). The circle is set within a pentagram etched in the flagstone floor.

Ivgah bids his "guests" to enter shortly after they open the door at the end of the hall. Surrounded by his zombies, he presents as a tall, bald necromancer, pale of skin, and garbed in tattered robes. He attempts to frighten the party away, promising to lay upon them a most wretched plague if at once they do not flee his crypt. The plague, he promises, will spread quickly, ushering in a new Green Death for which the party will be responsible – unless they run for their lives. He laughs and mocks his intruders, cackling somewhat incoherently, and twitching madly. If fear and intimidation fail, he and his zombies simply attack.

N.B.: The referee should prepare by reviewing the necromancer's spells; for example, he might throw *lightning bolts* down the passage that accesses his room. In *Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea*, a necromancer is a subclass of magician and utilizes a combination cleric and magician spells, as well as several spells unique to the subclass.



Zombies (×9): AL CE; SZ M; MV 30; DX 3; AC 8; HD 2 (hp 10); #A 1 (pummel or bite); D 1d8 (pummell), 1d3 (bite); SV 16; ML 12; XP 64. *Special: Slow to react, always attacking last on initiative. Immune to poison, paralysis, fear, and cold-based attacks. Cure disease destroys zombie. Arrows and bolts inflict but 1 hp damage (plus bonuses, if applicable); other piercing / thrusting weapons cause ½ damage (damage dice halved, with bonuses added afterwards). Any natural 19–20 attack roll versus a zombie is considered a “head shot” inflicting maximum damage, regardless of weapon type.*

1-in-4 chance of bite attempt; otherwise, pummel attacks apply until the zombie drops its foe, which it will then attempt to eat. Bite infects victim with the zombiism disease, no saving throw allowed. Infection manifests 1 turn after bite and begins with an intense fever, followed by loss of consciousness 1d6+6 turns later. Within 1d10+2 hours the victim dies; then, 1d6 turns later, he rises as a zombie. Cure disease can disrupt and alleviate this process, if cast before victim's death.

Ivgah (necromancer, 8): AL CE; SZ M; MV 40; FA 3; AC 8 (4); HD 8 (hp 20); #A 1; D (by weapon); SV 13 (*death* +2, *sorcery* +2); ML 9; XP 1,200. *Special: All applicable necromancer abilities.* Str 9, Dex 15, Con 7, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 11. *Possessions: defensive bracers (AC 5), +2 dagger.*

Spells Memorized

Level One: *command* ×2, *protection from good, shocking grasp* ×2

Level Two: *darkness*, *forest of bones**, *ray of enfeeblement*

Level Three: *lightning bolt* ×2, *slow*

Level Four: *animate dead*, *black tentacles*

(*) **New spell**, see **appendix**.

Note: Necromancer stands within a permanent *protection from good*, 15' r. (good characters attack at –1 “to hit”, +1 saves vs. good character spells).

Throne of Bone: Under the throne the necromancer hides what remains of his tools and components: his **gargoyle-skin spell book** (*contains the spells indicated above; 2,300 XP value, 12,000-gp value*), **5 violet sapphires** (*100-gp value each*), and **4 elixirs of longevity** (see **appendix**). There is also an iron box that holds some of his necromantic components: a steel vial containing some gelatinous cube matter, a vial of powdered mammoth bone, and some mummified bat wings.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

When the PCs have done all they intend to, or are capable of, they will likely exit via the main gate (**Area #D**) or through the sinkhole (**Area #E**). Pietair awaits (unless the party has been gone for several days, in which case he will have fled). He begs for his sapphire, and then for three more (one for each brother, so he claims). He will then lead the party back to Khromarium. As they enter the gates of Khromarium, he says his goodbyes, patting his “comrades” on the back whilst attempting a hurried pick-pocket attempt on a random character. He then runs off (his bad knee conveniently healed).

If the party burns the Xavadar Crypt mummies, twelve ghostly spirits will manifest to thank the party, and (per referee discretion) leave a boon for them, such as a blessing of some sort. Freeing the family of their curse might also be ample reason for a bonus 500 XP award for each PC involved.

APPENDIX

NEW SPELL

Forest of Bones

Level: nec 2; *Range:* 90 feet; *Duration:* 1 turn

Skeletal hands and claws emerge from the earth, grabbing and clutching at all within this spell's 40-foot-diameter area of effect. Those who fail *sorcery* saving throws are held fast for the duration of the spell; those who succeed can carefully negotiate their way through at half their normal movement rate (unless, of course, they are at the very edge of the area of effect). *Turn undead* does not affect the *forest of bones*. Confined victims do have one recourse: An *extraordinary feat of strength* allows a victim to break free. Giant humanoids, monsters, or robust animals might not be affected by this spell, or they might gain +4 saving throw bonuses, as judged by the referee.

MAGIC ITEMS

+2 Dagger: +2 “to hit” and damage, sheds 10-foot radius of light when unsheathed. *Value:* 500 XP; 3,000 gp

Defensive Bracers (AC 5): A pair of metal forearm bracers (vambraces), composed of bronze. They may appear quite plain, or ornamental. When donned, they conform perfectly to the forearm of any wearer, endowing him with magical protection akin to armour. *Value:* 2,000 XP; 12,000 gp

Elixir of Longevity: Drinking this potion reduces the age of the imbiber by 2d6 years. However, always a 1-in-20 chance exists that the opposite will occur. Additionally, If more than one such potion is quaffed in one's lifetime, the chance-in-twenty increases by one (+1), cumulatively; thus, the third such potion quaffed carries a 3-in-20 chance of the opposite effect. *Value: 500 XP; 1,000 gp*

Potion of Heroic Action: This potion is effective solely on fighters (and their subclasses) whose level is less than 10th. It increases the drinker's fighting ability (FA) and hit dice (HD) on a sliding scale according to his level:

- ★ 0th level = +4 FA/HD
- ★ 1st to 4th level = +3 FA/HD
- ★ 5th to 8th level = +2 FA/HD
- ★ 9th level = +1 FA/HD

Accordingly, hit points are also temporarily increased (using the appropriate HD type); any damage sustained is subtracted from the temporary total first. *Value: 300 XP; 600 gp*

Rope of Climbing: This half-inch-thick, 60-foot-long rope weighs only three pounds, though is able to support up to 3,000 pounds. The rope can be commanded to snake in any direction at a rate of 10 MV. It can then fasten and unfasten itself at the command of its controller; too, it can be made to tie knots along its length at any desired intervals. *Value: 1,000 XP; 10,000 gp*

Scroll of Animate Dead: As per the spell. *Value: 400 XP; 1,200 gp*



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PLAYER HANDOUT #1

LEGEND OF THE SIGHTLESS SERPENT

Plenteous run the gems from the eyeless sockets of the Xavadar Crypt Serpent. For countless generations treasure hunters have sought the lost barrow of the Xavadars, a noble family of some sixty persons that had built a vast vault remote from their familial dwellings. Therein they entombed themselves before the Green Death could claim them, for in that bygone age the plague spared neither servant nor lord, leper nor priest. They lay in their gilded sarcophagi, their arms folded, whilst their grand necromancer decanted a fulvous sleeping mist from which no man awakens. And by that one's baleful sorceries was the sightless serpent conjured to protect its lifeless charges from thieves and robbers. Once per quarter century does the sightless serpent emerge from that ancient charnel house to engorge itself on the flesh of Hyperborean beasts and men, before resuming its vigil. And so it has been for nigh a millennium.

PLAYER HANDOUT #2

Journal of Uvlah Xavadar

Entry #1

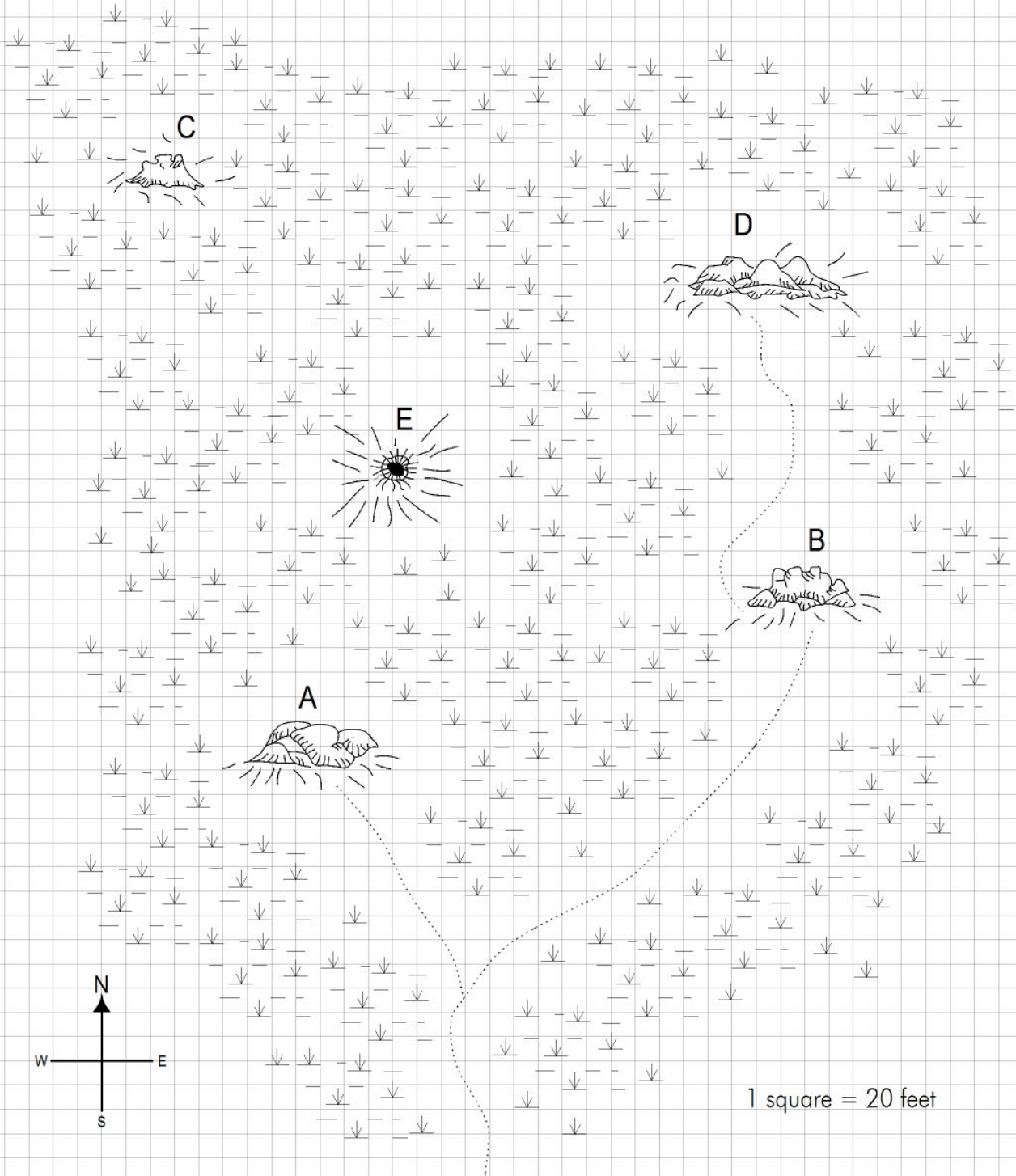
Our journey across the Lug Wasteland was met with success. We encountered a terrible monster along the way, and after pricking it with our arrows, we fled. We have now discovered the sinkhole where the Sightless Serpent has been witnessed.

Entry #2

Shortly after descending, we discovered a tunnel. The tunnel has opened to a few larger caverns that shew no sign of our ancestral family vaults. Had we not discovered a pair of sapphires to corroborate the legend of the Sightless Serpent, we surely would have been discouraged. Alas, hope is rekindled, and we will press on. We must find and destroy the treacherous and abominable necromancer, Ivgah, lest he complete his incantations and forever mar the souls of our good and noble ancestors. Ivgah must die.

CHARNEL CRYPT OF THE SIGHTLESS SERPENT

MAP 1



1 square = 20 feet

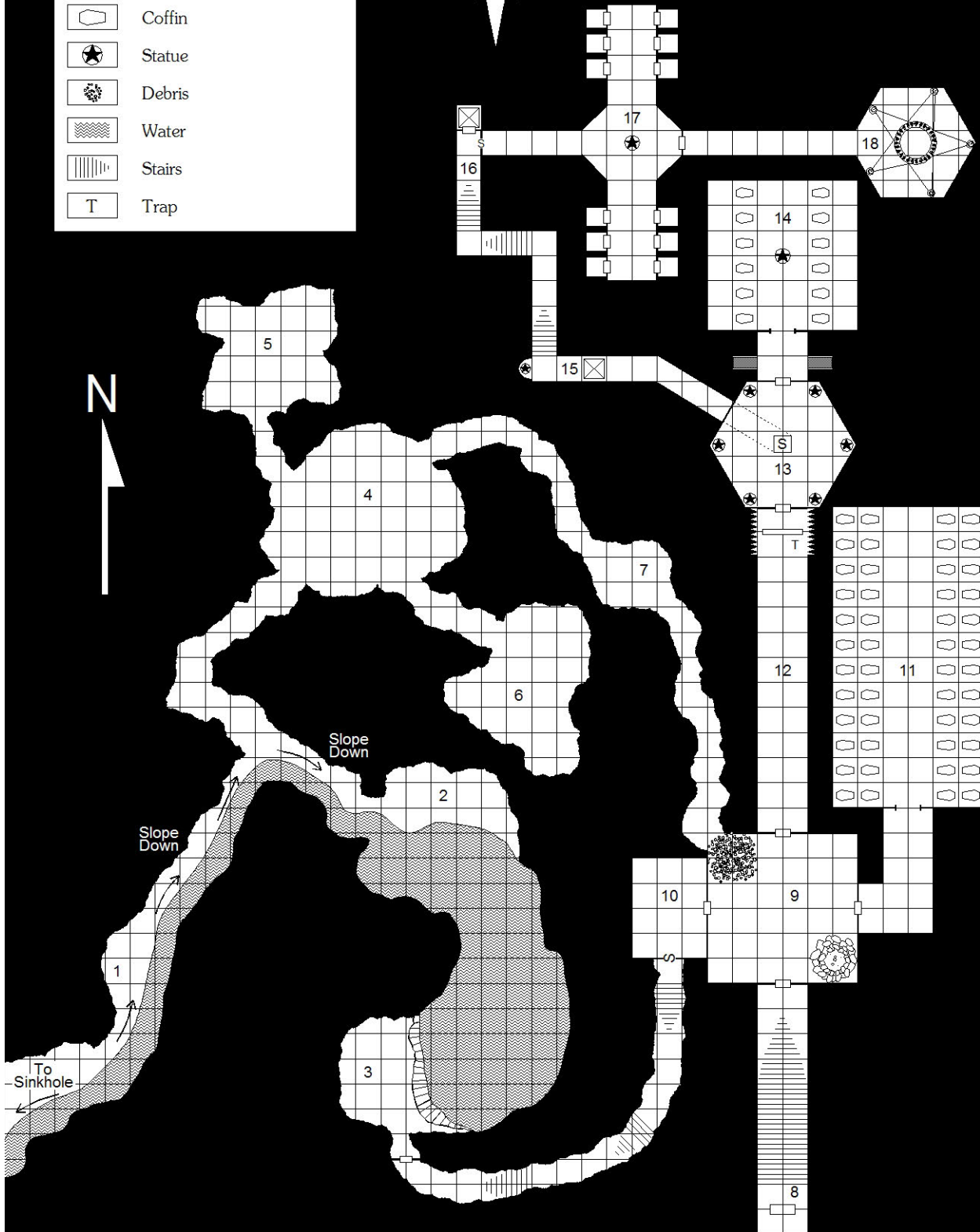
CHARNEL CRYPT OF THE SIGHTLESS SERPENT

MAP 2

Map Key

1 square = 10 feet

-  Door
-  Double Door
-  Secret Door
-  Pit Trap
-  Coffin
-  Statue
-  Debris
-  Water
-  Stairs
-  Trap



HYPERBOREA



CHARNEL CRYPT OF THE SIGHTLESS SERPENT

A millennium has passed since the Green Death swept across Hyperborea. In that bygone age of pestilence, a noble family fled the City-State of Khromarium. Far beyond the walls of the city, they entombed themselves in order to elude the inescapable plague. Their necromancer placed them in a deep slumber from which they never wakened. Also he summoned a mythical serpent to guard the vault, a beast reputed to shed gems for tears from eyeless sockets. Tales speak of this beast as the Sightless Serpent. Now, a knave of Khromarium claims to have witnessed the legendary beast. For a pittance he will lead your party to its trail . . .