

CASTLES[®] CRUSADES

THE UNDERCAVERNS OF GAXMOOR



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CASTLES & CRUSADES®

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Printed in the United States of America



THE UNDERCAVERNS OF GAXMOOR

The Undercaverns of Gaxmoor is a stand-alone adventure for fantasy role-playing games. Although it is set in the Lost City of Gaxmoor in the World of Aihrde, it may be adapted for use in any setting desired with little effort on the CK's part. The adventure is designed for exploration by a group of 4-6 characters of levels 9-11, with standard equipment and several magical items of low to moderate power. The CK can increase or decrease the difficulty to accommodate a slightly more or less potent group. A well-rounded party will fair far better than one with an abundance of any particular class or profession. Thieves, mages, healers, and warriors all have their parts to play as this plot unfolds, and you should encourage your players to include on their team as many classes and professions as possible.

In general, bold text is meant to be read aloud to players, while italicized text most often contains an important item, monster, or plot information for the eyes of the CK only.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the start of this adventure, the characters decided to journey to the City of Gaxmoor. It is an ancient city, once one of many large cities that made up the Aenochian Empire. That grand civilization fell long ago, but the City of Gaxmoor was preserved, pulled out of Aihrde and cloistered in a pocket dimension. It has since been returned to the world and had a rough reintroduction, courtesy of a collection of foul humanoid scum led by a vile cambion. Those details are chronicled in the adventures of The Lost City of Gaxmoor. The characters undertaking this adventure need not be the same ones who cleared Gaxmoor of its unwanted evil invaders. You as the CK should have ample incentive and plot devices to play it either way.

The City of Gaxmoor was saved some months ago and a massive rebuilding project is underway, led by the most powerful noble in the region, Eurich Gunshoff IV, the Count of Cleves. The Count has leveraged the reappearance of Gaxmoor and the recovery of many valuable ancient treasures to attract new followers and increase his power. In fact, the Count is currently brokering a pact through his representatives in the region, in order to unite several minor nobles and solidify his sovereignty over a large swath of territory. The key to this agreement is the design and building of a mighty temple to honor the various patron deities of each noble house, with funding to upgrade each of the existing shrines at their strongholds.

The nobles all desire the acclaim of taking part in this endeavor because of the wondrous architectural feats promised by the Count. A lone master stonemason survived the calamity that befell Gaxmoor upon its return to Aihrde—and not just any master, but a descendant of a renowned Aenochian engineering family—a man named Velparun Aolis. The Count has retained Velparun's services to design and construct the Grand Temple of Gaxmoor. As part of the agreement, Velparun will train one master mason of each noble family—a promise of prestige, power, and wealth, if they can master the Aenochian engineering in their own holdings.

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All parties are favorably disposed to the deal, and now only need to meet and impress their signet rings in the wax on the treaty next to their respective house sigils. The gathering is only four days away when Velparun fails to arrive for a dinner engagement with Sir Guntar, the key advisor to the Count on this matter. Velparun's daughter, Nortiah, approaches the adventurers and asks them to meet at the Aolis manor house (S61 on the Gaxmoor map) where she makes an emotional plea for the return of her father, who saw her through the horrors that befell their beloved city, and without whom she feels lost. She informs them that Sir Guntar wishes to impress the importance of locating and safely returning Velparun before the end of the third day, lest this important diplomatic agreement be shattered. The Count is offering 25,000 gold coins and a hide of land on the frontier (enough to build and support a tower or small keep) to whoever returns Velparun in time for the meeting.

Both Nortiah and Sir Guntar are truthful and genuinely interested in the safe return of Velparun. Nortiah last saw her father at lunch the day before. He stated he was going to the Gnoll's Head Inn (formerly The Green Inn, S24 on the Gaxmoor map) to ask the proprietor, the dwarf Thormak Hammerfist, for payment on the structural repairs he completed, then to the Coliseum (S13 on the Gaxmoor map) to look at the vomitoriums and drainage in preparation for the upcoming celebratory games.

Thormak was not at the Gnoll's Head when Velparun stopped by to speak to him. He was visiting the Shapely Siren and speaking to one of the workers there. In fact, he has spent much of his money at the Shapely Siren, gambling and otherwise, though with his spouse Garnette Downybeard listening, he is reluctant to discuss his whereabouts. After he missed talking to Thormak at the Inn, Velparun went to the Coliseum and had old Valdivius the caretaker open the gate to the drainage and sewer lines beneath the Coliseum.

Velparun was waylaid by a group of variant gargoyles in the sewer. These creatures are escapees of the imperial armaments laboratory hidden beneath Gaxmoor—a secret so well guarded that few if anyone alive know of its existence. These beings are not only stronger than their traditional counterparts, they are also much more intelligent (and are dubbed "garguile" in reference). They have used their aptitude for subterfuge to remain hidden and gather intelligence on the whereabouts of Velparun Aolis prior to his disappearance. They know his ancestor Berus Aolis crafted the vault that seals in the majority of creatures trapped in the laboratory—including their leader.

Note: There are many types of garguiles. Below, the party will encounter crystal garguiles (scouts), basalt garguiles (warriors) and granite garguiles (captains). Make note of their various stat blocks as they have different abilities.

The players will need to track the last known whereabouts of Velparun, through questioning NPCs or the use of divination or other magical means. However, the imperial laboratory has many spells and wards placed on it to disrupt scrying of and teleportation to it or the immediately-surrounding area. Any attempts to track, *scry*, or *teleport* to the Undercaverns have

only 1/10th the normal chance of success, and a ten times greater risk of catastrophic failure. Velparun is being held in the Undercaverns more than 1,000 feet below the sewers of Gaxmoor. There are two ways to access the Undercaverns: either by delving into a tunnel in the sewer line near the Coliseum, or descending a great well and exploring.

Both routes to the deepest caverns where the garguiles hold Velparun pass through upper caves with shafts leading down to the Undercaverns. There are several challenges along either route before the group encounters the garguiles. They are relatively few in number, but smart and powerful. Their goal is to open the laboratory and liberate the remainder of their fellow garguiles therein. To that end, they interrogated Velparun and determined that for him to gain access he needs the Pendant of Opening hidden in the inner sanctum of his manor house. When contact with the group is established by either side, they will attempt to parley—presuming the characters survive to such a point. But if so, the garguiles will return Velparun relatively unharmed if the party gives them the Pendant of Opening and Velparun opens the vault. The garguiles are confident they can outwit the last remaining Magus and his golems long enough to escape through an open front door.

Of course, the Pendant of Opening itself is protected with traps placed by the Aolis family generations ago. Nortiah knows of the Sanctum, but not of its protections. She will open the secret door to the steps that lead down to the Aolis Sanctum. The sanctum holds the Pendant of Opening as well as a few items that could prove effective against the garguiles' rocky substance, thus making them far less deadly for the characters to engage in combat.

The adventure concludes with the final garguile encounter outside the vault to the imperial laboratory. What lies within its heavily-warded perimeter is the subject of another supplement.

For the moment, let us focus on this introductory scenario with its various intrigues and challenges...

AN INVITATION TO HOUSE AOLIS

If the characters have adventured in Gaxmoor previously, adjust the dialogue as needed to fit your campaign. The party has recently arrived in the City of Gaxmoor. It is bustling with activity, as the massive rebuilding effort has attracted craftsmen, artisans, laborers and assorted folk to support the increased population. The party is staying at one of the newly-renovated inns of Gaxmoor and looking into rumors of an Aenochian artifact hidden in the City.

Select one or two of the characters most likely to be out and about in Gaxmoor, sightseeing, marveling at its architecture, etc. As they are examining the Hall of Heroes or Public Oratorio, Nortiah will approach them in a friendly manner. She will say she is an actual citizen of Gaxmoor, and curious about their thoughts on its buildings and the like. She will eventually let them know she is of the Aolis family, who built many of the city's structures, and invite them to dine with her at her manor (S61) later that day. She will be quite insistent. If the players

seem obtuse, she hints of her need for stalwart heroes and her ability to compensate them accordingly.

A seemingly chance encounter early today resulted in an invitation to dine with an actual survivor of the Aenochian Empire—and not just any citizen of Gaxmoor, but a member of one of the most prestigious families. After accepting the invitation and spending the short time available unpacking your best clothing or brushing the worst of the travel stains from your boots and cloaks, you hurriedly cross to the southwestern portion of Gaxmoor and locate the entryway to a stunning villa with the name “AOLIS” etched into a stone archway. A servant in a gold-trimmed white robe ushers you through the courtyard and into the main building. The lovely Nortiah and a middle-aged man, whose garb suggests he is a noble from the surrounding lands, rise to greet you.

Nortiah formally introduces herself, then presents the man next to her as “...Sir Guntar, a vassal of His Grace, the Count of Cleves.” Sir Guntar is of average height and his stout frame is indicative of strength and a hearty appetite. He is dressed in the fashion typical of landed gentry in the region: a linen shirt with a dark blue tunic and gray breeches. Nortiah is garbed in the Aenochian style, with a voluminous white robe and decorative silks draped over her frame, along with the jewelry one might expect of a wealthy person of influence.

After mutual introductions and pleasantries are completed, Sir Guntar clears his throat and addresses you. “As you may have guessed by my presence, this meeting is not simply a social event. There is something afoot in Gaxmoor, and I need your help.” He goes on to explain that Nortiah's father, Velparun Aolis, was to meet with Sir Guntar and the High Priest of Urnus Gregaria the previous night, but the Aolis patron never arrived. More troubling, he has not been heard from since yesterday afternoon.

Velparun is the only known living Aenochian master stone mason. Further, he is at the center of a deal that would gain the allegiance of several lesser nobles for Count Cleves. The bargain is relatively simple in its concept: the nobles would all combine their efforts to build a Grand Temple of the Val Austlich pantheon in Gaxmoor. The majority of the funding would come from the Count, and the prestige of the deed would be shared by all. Of equal importance, the nobles could have their respective master masons work alongside Velparun. The opportunity to construct such marvelous Aenochian structures would bring the noble houses great prestige, and attract more merchants and artisans to their lands.

The agreement is to be finalized in a meeting with the Count, the High Priest, Velparun, and the nobles in two days. Without Velparun this crucial deal is certain to fail. Not only would the Count lose face, it could incite aggression from one or more of the petty lords.

In light of the gravity of this situation, the Count is offering 25,000 gold coins and a hide of land to anyone who can safely return Velparun in time for the meeting. Sir Guntar asks, “Will you help us—Lady Nortiah, the Count, myself—indeed all of Gaxmoor and her people? Will you find Velparun Aolis?” Nortiah looks to you with tears welling in her eyes. Her manner and voice carry humility not normally found in one of such high nobility as she pleads, “Please, good people, I beseech you...please find my father.”

Note: If the players elect to accept the job, proceed with the rest of the adventure. If they decline, while taking their next meal they will be approached by Captain of the Watch Garigus Flavius, who will tell them of a serious problem with monsters coming forth from the well. He sent a squad of his best men with a valiant sergeant down the well, and the time by which they should have returned is well past. He can't spare more men to the cause, and he needs their aid. Though he is loath to do so, if he feels it necessary, he is not above implying they may otherwise be implicated in very serious crimes. Hopefully this leads the party back into the plotline of the scenario.

Nortiah will inform the group that she last saw her father at yesterday's midday meal, where he said he was going to the Gnoll's Head Inn (formerly the Green Inn S24 on the Gaxmoor map) to speak to the dwarven proprietor Thormak Hammerfist about payment on the structural repairs he completed, and then to the Coliseum (S13 on the Gaxmoor map) to inspect the vomitoriums and drainage ahead of the upcoming celebratory games. She also emphasizes that his nature is grounded in reliability and routine. Any deviation from his schedule is unthinkable.

Sir Guntar doesn't have any useful information as to Velparun's whereabouts. He will note that Velparun seemed well-satisfied with the compensation when he agreed to design and build the Grand Temple, and enthusiastic about training the master masons assigned to the project.

SEARCH FOR VELPARUN: ROLE PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

With little information to go on, the party's likely options are The Gnoll's Head Inn (S24) or the Coliseum (S13). The Gnoll's Head is ultimately a dead end and may result in a substantial amount of wasted time. Investigation of the Coliseum should lead to the discovery of the entrance into the sewer system, and from there, the Upper Caverns.

A. THE GNOLL'S HEAD INN (S24)

As noted, the Gnoll's Head is now owned by Thormak Hammerfist. He runs a pretty tight establishment. The Inn is clean and orderly, patrons quickly served with a variety of food and drinks. The service is exceptional and the servers polite.

However, being one of the few operable inns in Gaxmoor it tends to draw a rough crowd. There are all manner of people here, from lack luster adventurers, to stalwart heroes. They come to

eat, drink, recuperate and swap tales. The CK should people the Gnoll's Head with any NPCs they feel would be helpful (or otherwise) to the characters. Guides to the Coliseum are here as well as a few who may know more of the history of Gaxmoor, her people, her noble families and even the Undercaverns if the CK sees need of it.

B. THE COLISEUM (S13)

The Coliseum has an extensive drainage system of tunnels roughly 4 feet high and 2 feet wide that all lead to one central chamber beneath the northern wall of the massive building. Here the tunnels spill into a larger waterway that carries water and waste down beneath Gaxmoor. The water gathers here and flows down the main sewer.

Note: The main waterway begins in this room and flows down.

This is where Velparun was waylaid. He was taken by the gargoules while inspecting the drainage systems underneath the Coliseum.

Lying on the ground, next to the main water way is a leather bound notebook with a lead pencil stuffed within. Even a quick look over the book reveals it as Velparun's notebook and contains copious notes on a variety of projects. The pencil is pushed into a page with notes on the sewer.

They read as follows:

“Flow of water. Sediment patterns. Updraft. Larger caverns beneath a possibility.”

And, after a few smudges of ink and water stains.

“The Deep Well? Proximity to the City Well indicates possible connection.”

There are no other clear signs. A ranger able to track underground may find where Velparun stood before he was taken, but as the gargoules picked him up and carried him down to the Eastern Upper Caverns there are no further tracks to follow.

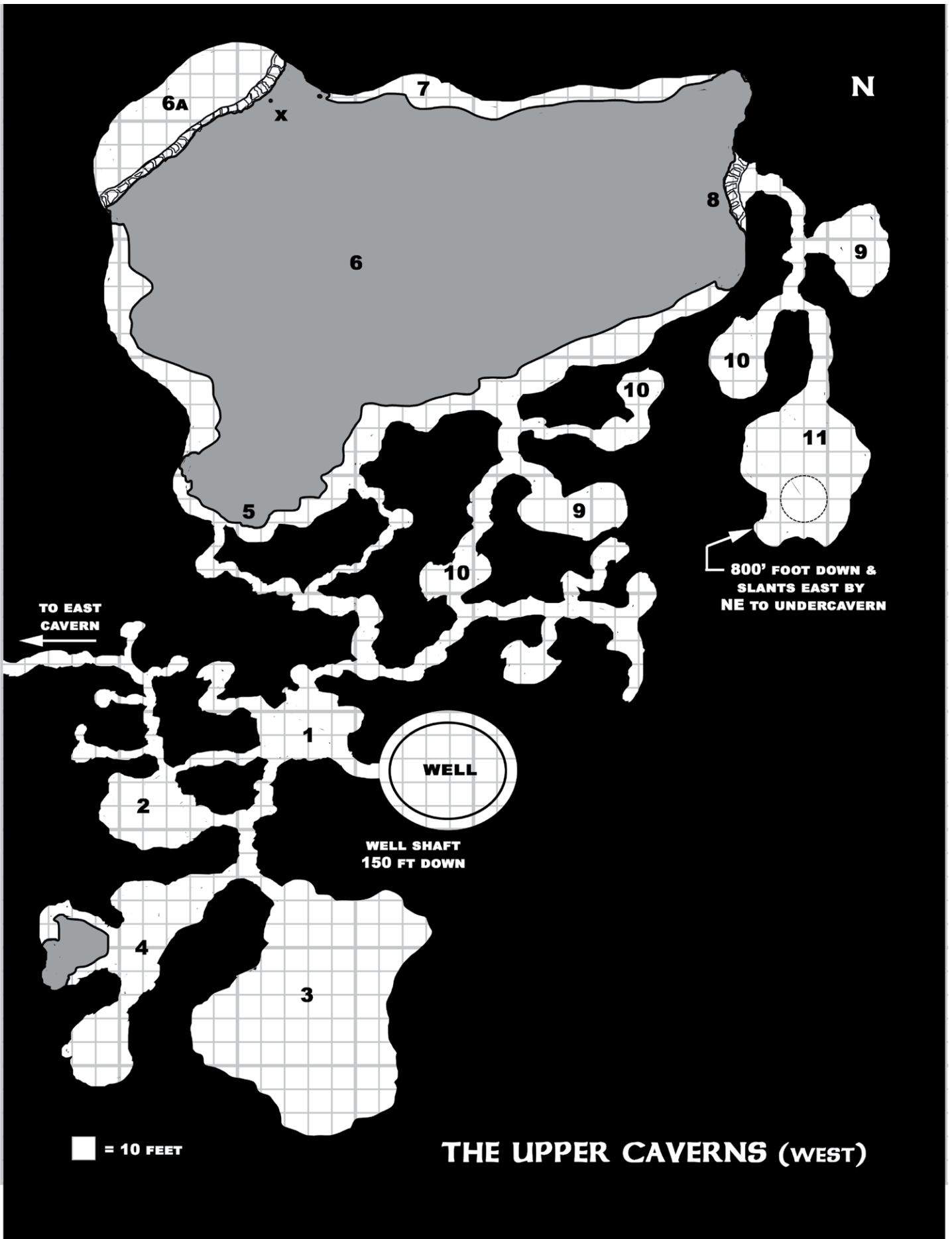
THE CAVERNS BENEATH GAXMOOR

The caverns beneath Gaxmoor are divided into two major areas: the upper caverns and the Undercaverns. The former is further divided into a western portion accessible via the well (S10) and an eastern portion accessible via the sewer line below the Coliseum. The Undercaverns section contained in this scenario are the outer naturally formed caves that lead to the Imperial Armory and Laboratory. This facility was a well-kept and securely guarded secret under the Empire. Its purpose was to design and research better weapons, spells and creatures to suit the purposes of the Emperor's Will.

UPPER CAVERNS (WESTERN)

The huge well has a narrow stairway circling down its wall to a depth of 150 feet. The stairs are slick with moisture and smooth with age. Anyone moving down the stairs at more than

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half their speed must make a successful dexterity save every 10 feet to avoid slipping and falling. Anyone who falls down the well shaft strikes the water below. They suffer 1d2 cumulative damage for every 10 feet they fall.

Narrow stairs wind down along the inside perimeter of this enormous well, fading off beyond the limits of your vision. The stairs are also worn and slick—a careless moment or misstep could quickly send you plummeting to the bottom.

When the party travels down far enough to see:

As you near the bottom of the well you see a narrow stone ledge around the water's surface and about a foot above it. Perhaps a dozen feet beyond the last stair, there is a sizable breach in the wall. An assortment of rough, moss-covered chunks of stone debris lay strewn on the path near the far side of the opening.

The ledge is 5 feet wide, but with the combination of the well's confines and water surface's close proximity, that measurement seems generous. The stone debris has been in place for quite a while, as evidenced by the moss covering it. There is no rubble on the near side of the hole, as it was cleared and tossed into the water by the squad previously sent down by Garigus Flavius (see above). The water within the well itself isn't regularly inhabited and is reasonably clean, although dire rats from Area A have sometimes used it – more recently in the case of a few that used it to escape slaughter by the recent patrol when it entered here and neither took kindly to the other.

Note: If the party has the means, it may be possible for industrious characters to follow the well's water source and eventually find the underground lake to the north (Areas 5, 6, 7, and 8). There isn't a singular, straight and direct route there, however, so this should not be possible short of magical means. If it happens to come up, the CK is free to decide how to reasonably determine the likelihood and/or difficulty of success—but if characters manage to do so, keep the contents of Area 6 (the water itself) in mind and adjudicate accordingly upon their arrival.

The opening is smaller than most parts of the general passageways, which are almost universally taller than they are wide. Though some sections of the cavern's passages can narrow to a couple of feet, more often they tend to be between 5 and 10 feet wide. As a good rule of thumb, assume a given section is twice as high as its width.

The rough, uneven hole and first few feet inside isn't large – perhaps 6 feet high at best, and maybe half as wide – but certainly sufficient for entry. The area not far inside looks appreciably larger and more accommodating – probably twice that of the entry. It appears a natural cavernous passage had already been in close proximity to the well.

AREA 1 RAT NEST

Until recently, this was part of a nest of giant rats (small to medium dog-sized). They were mostly eradicated by the soldiers

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sent in by Watch Captain Garigus Flavius, due to the potential public hazard from disease. Roughly a couple dozen of the rats survived, and they reproduce quickly—which is helpful to the nearby cave fisher (Area 2) and hunting spiders (Areas 9), for which the rats had been a primary source of food. The giant rats are now mainly concentrated in the northwesterly tunnel. As it happens, none of them currently carry disease. They avoid the party unless sorely pressed, and even if so, will seek to escape either via another tunnel, or preferably, the pool of water at the end of their tunnel, as it offers a route to the larger pool in Area 4.

There are many bits of nesting material – fur, fibrous strips of mushroom stalks, even some scraps of cloth and straw brought from the surface – though there is nothing among it of value or particular note.

The chamber closest to the entry point from the well reeks of feces and rot, and is abundantly-littered with all manner of bits of flotsam, as well as the decaying, fly and maggot infested carcasses of many dog-sized rats in the area. The chamber seems likely to have been their nest. As you note this, a couple of similarly-sized rats scurry north along the wall to the far west, each carrying bits of nesting material in their mouths. They glance over almost in unison, then quicken their pace as they hurriedly hug the rugged wall that curves out of sight to the northwest.

RATS, GIANT (*These small-sized neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d4, HP variable, AC 13. Their prime attributes are physical. Their movement is 30 feet per round on the ground, 15 feet per round climbing, or 10 feet per round swimming. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d2 points of damage.*)

AREA 2 CAVE FISHER

This is the primary lair of an elder cave fisher. At 20 feet long, this rare specimen strain is far larger, faster, hardier, and more dangerous than the normal variety. Area 2 is its main lair, but it often ranges out a bit to await prey where the “fishing” might be more favorable (specifically, in this case, the passage intersection directly east of Area 2). This is more likely to be the case in the aftermath of the recent near-eradication of the giant rats by the soldiers of Gaxmoor, as it significantly affected the fisher’s most frequent source of food.

Due to the variable circumstances in which the party might experience this menace, the CK should customize the description normally provided as “read aloud” text.

CAVE FISHER, ELDER (*This large-sized neutral creature's vital stats are HD 9d8, HP , AC 21. Its primary attributes are physical. Its movement is 20 feet per round. It has 8 legs, but only uses 2 to attack – the other 6 anchor it over a suitable spot to catch prey passing below. It attacks with two claws for 5d4 points of damage each. Its special ability is trap line. As prey passes below it, a sticky, viscous strand very quickly and silently lowers from its proboscis. A “to-hit” roll is needed against a random victim, with no dexterity bonus included in their AC.*)

Those struck by the strand are caught fast and must succeed on a strength check (CL 10) to break free. If the strand attaches to an easily-removed item like a helm or shield, it can be removed and the victim will not be hauled upward. If otherwise unable to be freed, the victim is hauled up to the elder fisher – a process that takes 1 round. When it gets its prey to it, it attacks with the 2 claws. A victim suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls due to the precarious position. When a victim dies, the fisher will immediately begin to feed.)

AREA 3 FUNGAL FOREST

This large cavern is home to a wide assortment of giant fungi.

The cavern also hosts a wide variety of minor, mundane creatures (beetles, albino crickets, etc.) and a luminescent moss that emits dim illumination sufficient for creatures with twilight vision.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is nothing overtly harmful here, so it might serve as a relatively safe resting spot. For whatever reason(s), nearby pests and dangers do not enter this chamber. The CK is encouraged to let the creative juices flow. Embellish and expand on the flora and fauna listed – consider perhaps even assigning some beneficial properties and/or effects to certain things.

The tunnel widens into a spacious area. Its jagged walls and high ceiling are almost entirely covered in a strange moss or lichen with a soft bluish-white luminescence that transforms a forest-like array of large-to-huge fungi into a surreal-looking setting. The chamber also appears teeming with many smaller life forms – beetles, albino crickets, and bright yellow moths are a few you can readily see.

AREA 4 QUICKSTONE

This area features a spring-fed pool of water in the western portion, to which giant rats from the northwest branch of Area 1 may flee if pressed by the party or other threats.

The southern portion is quite unusual and dangerous. With the exception of a narrow, 3-foot-wide strip lining the perimeter of the southern sub-chamber, the rest of the floor is made up of a widely unheard of phenomenon called “quickstone.” 2d4 seconds after anything heavier than 10 pounds moves or is placed onto it, it begins to sink rather quickly, as if being drawn in by extremely dense, clinging mud. Unless freed almost immediately, they become incrementally and drastically more likely to be completely drawn into its depths, never to be seen again. Regardless of the weight (over 10 pounds), whatever begins sinking in the quickstone will be gone after 3 rounds elapse.

A dual-chambered area stretches out before you, and looks to be naturally divided into two sub-chambers. The closer one to the west is mostly occupied by a pool of water. The other portion extends to the south, and with the exception of a narrow strip around its perimeter, its color is unlike any you’ve yet seen down here – a veined

combination of deep grays, reds, and browns, with thin ribbons of black, that subtly glisten with crystalline flecks throughout.

Anyone with underground skills, such as a rogue, gnome or dwarf, might notice the abnormal floor. They are allowed a wisdom check. If they walk in cautiously they have a greater chance of noticing the quickstone (CL 7), if they walk in heedlessly (CL 10). A failed save means the advance members of the party fall into the quickstone and immediately begin sinking. A successful save means they notice the quickstone before they stumble into it.

Quickstone

If someone falls into the quickstone, they begin sinking immediately. They continue sinking whether the character thrashes about or stays still. They can attempt to pull free by reaching out to someone else or by trying to grab at the edge of the quickstone.

Note: If the person has, for some insane reason, jumped into the middle of the quickstone, there is nothing to grab ahold of and pull themselves free, unless someone helps them. In this case they just sink.

In order to pull free, they must make a successful strength save (CL 6). This is in the 1st round, it gets worse if they fail as the quickstone clings to them like a thick mud or clay, making them weigh more and sink faster. In the 2nd round they must make a successful strength save (CL 10) to break free. In the 3rd round they must make a successful strength save (CL 12). Anyone who helps the sinking character may add their strength bonus to the check.

Once submerged, a character can hold their breath for a number of rounds equal to their constitution. Two checks are required now to survive. They can continue to make strength checks as outlined above (CL remains at 12) as long as they are alive, but they must make a drowning save as well. To avoid drowning requires a successful constitution save (CL 0). Each round the character is submerged the CL increases by 1. If they fail a save, the character is immediately reduced to -7 hit points, suffering a further 1 hit point in damage per round until dead.

AREA 5 THE BEACH

This area is a beach of dark greenish, wet stones that range from the very small to the size of a giant's foot. The stones are slippery with slime. Anyone moving too quickly across the beach must make a successful dexterity save (CL 2) or slip and fall with all the accompanying noise.

Note: Due to the reasonable possibility that elements from the other areas listed above could come into play, these areas will require extra care and consideration on the CK's part. With that in mind, the set-up and information following will mainly focus on events that specifically relate to this area.

This stone "beach" is where (nearly) the entire squad sent by Watch Captain Garigus Flavius (mentioned earlier as possible

back-up plot hook) were killed in horrific fashion by merrows enthralled to the aboleth ZxYx*. There were 13 merrow initially, but three were killed by the squad before they were defeated, torn apart, and partially eaten. None of the soldiers carried polearms (favored by merrow), and the creatures have no regard for armor or shields, so they left those behind and took only their coin and a few appealing-looking trinkets down to their lair 25 feet below the western end of the rock "beach."

*Like [ZIX-yix] with emphasis on omitting the "i" sound (it's aberrant/alien, after all!)

When the party arrives in Area 5, six merrow are in the nearby lair, and the other four are beneath the waters close by, engaging in recreation similar to a game of "keep away" – using one of the guard's heads. They're not actively watching Area 5, but if the party (or something else nearby) makes noise louder than speaking in a normal tone of voice, each of the four gaming merrow receive a mental attribute check to notice (CK should determine CL based on the amount of noise the party is making). In any event, 2d6 rounds after the party's arrival, the game head is broken in a struggle and the four return to fetch a replacement. If the characters are present on the beach, the one about to come out of the water last will go to the lair to alert the other six merrow.

In perhaps a second, you realize the tunnel gives way to an immense cavern dominated by a lake, and you also note the area's heightened acoustics. The realization is fleeting, however. On the ground not 10 feet away, you spot a round metal shield of Gaxmoor, with such a dent its curvature almost seems more inward than out.

In the next heartbeat, you realize the stone shelf floor between the tunnel and lake is littered with bodies. No, not bodies...pieces of bodies – so many pieces. Armor and weapons – several of them broken – and more shields. Wooden shields, borne by the lower ranks, several of which are shattered – splintered like tinder. Bits of the sheaf, sword, and stars heraldic symbol of Gaxmoor that adorned pieces of equipment and tabards lay unceremoniously scattered about the scene of a massacre, along with enough dried blood that the floor could be painted in it. And roaches seem to cover all of it.

Then your mind registers the smell.

MERROW x 10 (ABOLETH THRALLS) *(These large-sized creatures' vital stats are HD 4d8, HP variable, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 1d10 points of damage. They greatly prefer to use spears or polearms, with a particular affinity for ranseurs. They will focus attacks first upon foes bearing those weapon types – with preference given to ranseurs if applicable – seeking to destroy them first and take the weapon as their own. In such cases, the hit point damage they inflict is by weapon type, with a +4 damage bonus due to their great strength. Their movement is 30 feet per round on the ground, or 30 feet swimming. Their special abilities are Darkvision to 60 feet and waterbreathing. They can only be out*

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of water for 1d3+1 hours, after which they lose 1d4 HP per round until they die or return to water.)

The 9 soldiers of the elite Gaxmoor squad (all human) were: Sergeant Krisner Hoff (m), “Swordleaders” Darsel Forn (f) and Clev Stormson (m), and “Swords” Edrikr Gahlir (m), Rieden Smiddy (m), Avlas Brewhorn (f), Yeldi Makkar (f), Quint Nordal (m), and Buckner “Buck” Pench (m). Swordleader Stormson’s head was the largest, so it is currently in the lake as the merrow plaything.

It is likely impossible to properly piece together the disparate pieces, but aside from what was eaten (and Stormson’s head in the lake), the bodies are mostly present in the area of their demise, if the party wants to gather them for return to the surface. If they happen to do so, and with some measure of decency and respect, they should receive some sort of honor, recognition, acclaim, or perhaps some kind of non-monetary boon.

Note: The merrow will only play in the water for an hour or so, after which, the dive into the water and return to the den.

AREA 6 FRESHWATER LAKE

This area contains a freshwater lake within a vast subterranean cavity. Its craggy ceiling is nominally spherical and ranges from low points of 20 to 35 feet above the waterline near the extreme edges, upwards of 70 to 100 feet toward the center.

The water itself is cold though rather clear if enough light is shined into it. The water fills a deeper part of the cave and is marked by its sudden depths. The drop off begins only a few feet into the water. On average the lake is 20-30 feet deep. It is continually fed from feeder streams in the north-west corner.

The water is good and drinkable.

The cavern abounds with animals. Small albino fish, frogs and the like make the water their home. The ceiling is acrawl with large cave crickets, small spiders, roaches and centipedes. The lake itself is home to an aboleth and its enslaved merrows. The aboleth’s den is at the bottom of the lake.

The following description presumes arrival to this area via the tunnel east of Area 5, though the initial two sentences are the same as the ones given there. If the party has already been to Area 5, the last sentence should suffice.

The cavern into which you peer is appreciably immense—much of the ceiling isn’t within the range of your light (or vision, as applicable). The chamber is dominated by an underground lake, and based on recurring sounds of small splashes from various indeterminate, widespread places, the heightened acoustics of the area are apparent.

AREA 6A DEN

Unless the merrow have been dealt with they are clearly still in the lake or in area 6a, their lair. It is important to note that the merrow can breath underwater and are all vaguely humanoid.

They wield weapons like men, preferably pole-arms. When the party enters six are sleeping in the lair while four, as noted, are playing a game in the water with the head of the guardsman. They will defend the aboleth’s treasure if it is threatened. They have precious little of value for their master allows them to keep nothing.

Anyone physically entering the water, even to walk into it, unless they have taken extraordinary cautions to hide or move silently, draw the attention of the aboleth. The giant beast of a fish rises from the depths to investigate.

The aboleth is highly intelligent and watches the party from within the safety of the lake, to determine what, if any move, it should make. It plots how best to enslave the party, rather than kill them.

ABOLETH, “ZxYx” (*This lawful evil creature’s vital stats are HD 9d8, AC 16, HP 58. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with four tentacles for 1d6+8 points of damage each. A successful tentacle hit releases a toxin into the victim’s skin, causing it to make a constitution save. Failure means the skin slowly turns into membrane, which must be kept wet. The process takes 1d4 minutes, after which the victim becomes aquatic in nature, with all associated benefits and penalties, such as being able to breathe and swim underwater, but unable to breathe air, etc. Prior to transformation, the process can be halted by remove disease. Thereafter, only heal or wish can alter the outcome. Immunity to poison does not protect against this effect. The aboleth is also able to use a charm-like ability to enslave creatures. Victims must make a wisdom saving throw or be completely dominated indefinitely. This effect immediately ends if it is separated from its slave by a mile or more, or if a victim receives a remove curse. It can also surround itself with a thick cloud of mucus. All creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a constitution save or be unable to breathe air for 3 hours. It can maintain the cloud for up to 3 minutes per day and can start and stop the ability at any time – it does not need to be continuous. This ability can only be used under water. Aboleth have the following spell-like abilities, cast as a 16th level illusionist: hypnotic pattern, illusory wall, mirage arcane, persistent image, programmed image, project image and veil.*)

Treasure: The aboleth has a small trove of treasure hidden at the bottom of the lake (where the x is marked on the map). It consists of 400gp, a cure light wounds potion and a ring of feather fall.

AREA 7 THE LEDGE

This area consists of a small ledge that runs along the shore of the lake. The ledge itself is only a few inches above the water line, at places a few inches beneath it. It consists of jagged limestone rock, perpetually wet and covered in slime. A small flock of dire stirges have made this area their home, their droppings clearly marking the area.

Presently the stirges are at rest, clinging from the ceiling above, half asleep, though always alert to the sounds of creatures moving to and from the cavern area.

THE UNDERCAVERNS OF GAXMOOR 9

Note: Due to the reasonable possibility that elements from the other areas listed above could come into play, these areas will require extra care and consideration on the CK's part. With that in mind, the set-up and information following will mainly focus on events that specifically relate to this area.

DIRE STIRGES (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 3d10, HP 14 apiece, AC 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8 points of damage. Once they have scored a successful hit they are able to drain their prey's blood for 1d10 points of damage a round. Their extraordinary speed grants them a +5 to attack as well as any dexterity attribute checks. They have darkvision to 60 feet and twilight vision.)

AREA 8 TUNNEL

Thirty feet above the waterline is an opening in the cave wall. This opening leads to Area 11 and the Undercaverns where Velparun is being held. The ledge is difficult to detect (CL 7), however if the dire stirges are disturbed and scattered they tend to fly into that area, revealing the ledge and tunnel.

Climbing to the ledge is equally difficult. Anyone attempting to do so must work their way up and over the rough cave wall. It requires a successful dexterity check (CL 8) to get up and over the ledge, unless some rope or other aid is used. Rangers and rogues do not need to make an attribute check.

The passage itself is guarded by two thralls: gargoyles bound to the gargoules that have kidnapped Velparun. Two of them have been set here to guard the chamber. They are aware of anyone attempting to climb up the ledge. They watch, gathering what intelligence they can and then pull back from the ledge quietly and quickly, falling back to Area 11. As with most gargoyles, they have little intelligence; if they are attacked they engage in a fighting withdrawal back to Area 11.

Note: Due to the reasonable possibility that elements from the other areas listed above could come into play, these areas will require extra care and consideration on the CK's part. With that in mind, the set-up and information following will mainly focus on events that specifically relate to this area.

GARGOYLE THRALLS, 2 (These medium-sized creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 23, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d3 points of damage each, a bite for 1d6 points, and/or a gore for 1d4 points. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 75 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them.)

AREA 9 SPIDERS

Each area marked with an "9" is a nest for 2d4+1 medium hunting spiders. At any given time, 1d4 of them will be out hunting, so it is technically possible for the lair to be unoccupied—and also possible one or more of those could be encountered outside of its lair (CK discretion), likely crawling stealthily along the ceiling or high on a wall. In such cases, characters whose vision and prevailing light conditions could allow them to see the spider(s) must succeed on a wisdom check (CL 3) to spot them. For in-lair purposes, spiders might not attack unless their webbing is disturbed, the lair is penetrated too deeply, or spiders are soon to go on the hunt (CK discretion).

SPIDER, MEDIUM (HUNTER) (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a poison bite for 1d6 points of damage – see poison, below. They are able to move 30 feet and climb 20 feet per round. Their special abilities are poison and twilight vision. Anyone bitten must make a constitution save. Failure causes an additional 1d6 points of damage the first round. On the following round, the victim suffers 1d4 ad-



ditional points of damage, and is paralyzed for 2d6 hours. Success reduces the secondary damage by half, and the victim is not paralyzed. An individual bite has no additional effect beyond the second round, and paralysis is not cumulative.)

AREA 10 SCREECHERS

Each area marked "10" contains 10 screechers. If the party employs exceptional, no-light methods of entering this area, the CK will need to adjust the read-aloud text below. Otherwise the keening begins either when someone – or a light source thereof – enters the chamber from one of the tunnels leading into it. There is nothing of value or note in the chamber. The screechers serve as a primitive but effective potential alarm system for nearby creatures.

The rocky passage opens into a larger chamber dotted with pale red, blue, and green mushrooms. These few facts are no sooner noted when the mushrooms begin emitting ear-piercing keens that reverberate around – and surely throughout – the caverns.

SCREECHERS (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 16, AC 10. They have no primary attributes. Their special abilities are shriek and twilight vision. They are able to move only extremely slowly at 1/5th feet per round. They cannot attack. Their only method of defense is to shriek in order to scare foes off or draw in other monsters.)

AREA 11 GARGUILE EMISSARY

The gargoules have not yet decided how to make contact with those in the city above to strike up their bargain. They only know they have a good bargaining chip. But they are very aware that someone is likely to come looking for Velparun and to that end they have stationed two of their number in Area 11 to guard against any surprises and to meet with whomsoever they might to discuss terms.

Warned by either the retreating gargoules or by the sounds of battle in Area 8 (assuming the characters surprise and attack the gargoyle guards) the gargoules are well aware of anyone coming down the hall.

One of the gargoules stands in the center of the room, watching the opening to Area 8. The other is stationed down the tunnel tasked with fleeing down to the Undercaverns to bring news of whatever transpires between the gargoules and the party.

There are four gargoyle thralls with the gargoules, plus the possible 2 from Area 8 ranged along the back wall.

The tunnel opens to a wider room. It is damp and cold with an updraft from a large fissure in the cavework beyond, indicating, no doubt, some deeper, danker hole. Before you stands a huge gargoyle, easily 7 feet tall, with massive wings. His skin is mottled with darker and lighter spots, bringing to mind the image of uncut, dirty stone. The creature is emotionless, but clearly, with the glint of intelligence in its eye, desiring something more than a blood filled contest.

The gargoules make his pitch to the characters, promising them that they will return the stonemason if they go to his house and fetch an amulet hidden there. If the party does not, they will be forced to rend him limb from limb and devour him.

If they attack, all the thralls join the fray, but the second gargoules flees to the Undercaverns to warn their comrades.

If they take them up on their offer, skip forward to The Aolis Sanctuary below.

GARGOULE, CRYSTAL, SCOUT (These large creatures' vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 54, AC 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or use their barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them for what they are. They have the scent ability. They can track as a 6th level ranger. They can move silently and hide as a 5th level rogue. All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The gargoules is intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues.)

GARGOYLE THRALLS x 4 (These medium-sized creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 23, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d3 points of damage each, a bite for 1d6 points, and/or a gore for 1d4 points. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 75 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them.)

UPPER CAVERNS (EASTERN)

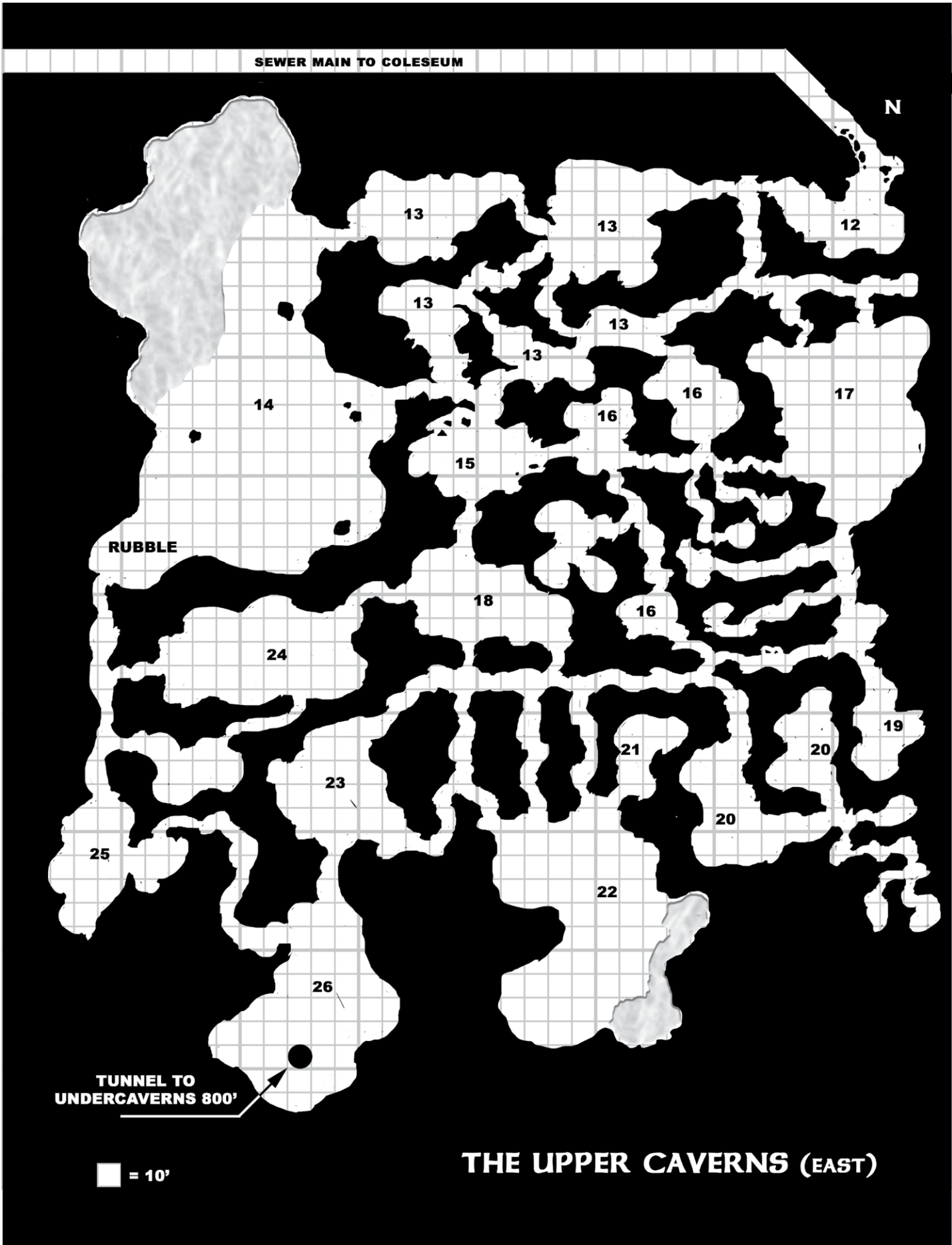
As noted, the sewer line beneath the Coliseum leads down to the Eastern Upper Caverns. The line itself begins beneath the Coliseum and consists of an arched corridor 10 feet wide and 12 feet high. There are narrow ledges, 18 inches wide, built along the tunnel, about 6 inches above the water level. Though it is clear to anyone that the water gets much deeper, probably during rain storms or the like, often flooding over the ledge itself.

There are numerous small side tunnels that connect with the sewer itself, but these are clearly side tunnels.

Rat hordes are frequent in the sewers of Gaxmoor. They are drawn to the smell of blood, meat, food stuffs and the like.

RATS, GIANT x 100 (These small-sized neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d4, HP variable, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d2 points of damage. Their movement is 30 feet per round on the ground, 15 feet per round climbing, or 10 feet per round swimming. For each extra rat attacking, they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if 5 rats are attacking they each get a +5 to hit.)

THE UNDERCAVERNS OF GAXMOOR 11



Alternatively, the sewers are haunted by otyugh; huge, tentacle beasts that live on garbage and sewage.

OTYUGH (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 17, HP 32. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two tentacles for 1d8 points of damage and a vicious bite for a further 2d4. They have an improved grab ability allowing the otyugh to make an automatic hit with its bite. They can cause diseases as well.)

AREA 12 SEWER ROOM

The sewer ends in this large cavern, spilling across the floor and into a deeper subterranean system. A large lake dominates the far wall, clearly created by backed up water. The room has a pungent odor to it, but nothing atrocious as the sewer's run off is large and constant and the lake deep and porous.

This room is the den for the otyugh that haunt the sewer line. It is presently home to one gigantic otyugh, no doubt the source of the spawn.

OTYUGH (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 12d8, AC 20, HP 88. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with two tentacles for 1d10 points of damage and a vicious bite for a further 3d4. It has an improved grab ability allowing the otyugh to make an automatic hit with its bite. It can cause diseases as well.)

It has slain before, devouring those who have wandered into the room. Their remains, that which survived the creature's digestive tracts, are heaped by the shore of the lake. It consists of a +2 dagger of wounding (causing 1d2 bleeding damage per round unless magically healed), a rope of climbing, a +1 buckler and 2 gems worth 100gp each.

AREA 13 GIANTS RATS

There is a huge rats nest spread through five large rooms (each marked Area 13 on the map). Each room contains 10-50 rats. If there are less than 50 rats they do not swarm but rather flee to another part of the nest. As soon as 50 or more are gathered in one place they begin to swarm, attacking everything in sight, including their own wounded. The frenzy summons rats from other parts of the nest as well.

They attack until half the swarm is broken up, but will regroup when they mass again.

RATS, GIANT x 100 (These small-sized neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d4, HP variable, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d2 points of damage. Their movement is 30 feet per round on the ground, 15 feet per round climbing, or 10 feet per round swimming. For each extra rat attacking they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if 5 rats are attacking they each get a +5 to hit.)

AREA 14 OCHRE JELLY

This chamber contains a plentiful source of fresh water dripping from the back part of the ceiling into dozens of small pools.

Though it isn't particularly harmful, the water in the pools isn't as high quality as that dripping from above. This is due to the many crickets of a rare species exclusive to certain underground habitats. They give off a very faint luminescence, their stridulation isn't as loud as the common variety (it generally doesn't need to be in cave settings), and they are completely harmless. What they are not, however, is worthless. The species is worth good coin to alchemists, who will pay a full silver piece each for specimens of the size and quality found here, and characters with an alchemy secondary skill know this. Otherwise, any character can recall this bit of trivia with a successful intelligence check (CL 10). The crickets have essentially developed an instinct for staying to the inner part of the room (see below).

This is also the lair of an ochre jelly. It is positioned on the ceiling just inside the entrance, and will attempt to drop down on prey as soon as something edible enters the chamber. Its previous meals were relatively mundane in nature, so there is no undissolved material around. Characters who specifically look to the ceiling (about 30 feet above) are allowed a wisdom save to spot a large, asymmetrical area. If they are able to see in color, it is the approximate color of rust (unlike the rest of the ceiling) – otherwise it only seems a subtly different shade than its surroundings. If they exceed their save by 5 or more, they also note the area does not appear to be stone. Though hardly an intellectual realization, the crickets tend to attract an ample amount of food for it, so the jelly is instinctively content to leave the crickets in the chamber alone.

A tunnel branch to the north widens into a more spacious, chamber-like area, from which you smell fresh water and hear several sources of dripping. You also hear the stridulation of crickets, although it is notably quieter than what you are used to. The source of the noise is quickly apparent, as only a dozen or so feet inside, there are many very faintly-luminescent shapes on the floor and walls. Some move along slowly, though most are generally stationary. Of those close enough to see more clearly, though, they definitely appear to be crickets – about an inch long and of a singularly-unique quality.

OCHRE JELLY (This large-sized creature's vital stats are HD 6d10, HP 48, AC 4. It has no primary attributes. It attacks with an acid for 2d4 points of damage. Its special abilities are acid, constrict, and split. It moves slowly at 10 feet per round, but can climb at the same speed. Electrical and slashing attacks deal no damage to jellies, and instead split them into two identical blobs. Their AC remains the same, but divide HP equally between the two. Acid damage from smaller jellies is halved as well. Splitting causes no other loss of abilities. Jellies can be further split if they have more than 1 HP)

Rubble: The tunnel here has collapsed into a huge heap of rubble, blocking access. It can be excavated, but that will take a great deal of time. There is 40 feet of collapsed corridor. Ten feet can be cleared every 8 hours. Unless the tunnel is buttressed there is a 10% chance of collapse for every hour of excavation.

AREA 15 RAT POOL

The room serves the rats as a water source. The room has fresh water trickling down from above and is clear and normally drinkable. However, at the moment there is a bloated, half rotted corpse floating in the water. It is half devoured, clearly a victim of the rats who attempted to escape in the water and died. Any attempts at recognizing him are pointless, as much of his face has been chewed away and floats around him much like a halo.

He is carrying a ring of invisibility in a pouch at his side and a wand of lightning (7 charges). Otherwise his clothes are waterlogged and disintegrating. He also has a small gem in his pocket. It is the gem of controlling for the skeletal warrior in Area 17.

AREA 16 STONE GARDENS

Since Gaxmoor's recovery began the Undercaverns have seen a marked growth in life. The increased sewage and waste from above has fed the rats and otyughs, who in turn have supported growing populations of piercers and slicer beetles. The piercers have been particularly successful, spreading through a number of caves and tunnels, clinging to the ceilings, waiting for hapless prey to wander beneath.

Anyone entering any of the Area 16's or the tunnels between them run afoul of these creatures. They are not easy to spot, even for the experienced dungeoneer, requiring a concentrated spot check (CL 7). If someone unused to the underground looks it is even more difficult (CL 12). The piercers wait until someone passes beneath and then attacks.

Note: There should be as many piercers as the CK deems would make a challenging encounter.

PIERCER (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 17, HP 40. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by dropping from above. They automatically hit unless the target makes a successful dexterity save (CL 8). If they fail, they suffer a catastrophic wound of 50% of their hit points, or 25% if they make a successful constitution save. They continue to bleed out 10 hit points a round until the piercer is removed and they are healed.)

AREA 17 BONE ROOM

This is the room the gargoyle use in their journey to the Undercaverns. It is wide and open, but covered in rubble. The ceiling, some 40 feet above, is unstable, and large, flat, broken chunks of shale and rock lie everywhere on the floor. Much of the debris is caused by the flying gargoyle and their thralls.

Beneath one large rock there lies a skeletal warrior. The rock has pinned him, covering all of his body but for a jeweled hand that he managed to slip from beneath the stone. There is a ring on the index finger with a ruby in it worth 150gp. A golden arm band is clearly visible but is pinned beneath the stone. To retrieve it the characters will have to lift the stone off the skeleton.

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Doing so rouses the skeletal warrior, who, with sword in his other hand, immediately attacks. He concentrates on anyone carrying the gem found on the body in Area 15.

SKELETAL WARRIOR (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 10d10, AC 18, HP 90. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by weapon for 1d12 points of damage. It is immune to mind controlling spells and causes fear for any creatures 4HD or less (roll for charisma). It has an SR of 15.)

AREA 18 SLICER BEETLE

This room is a wide room with a low ceiling, only about 9 feet high. It is very jagged with little room to walk. The floor curves up in the middle toward the ceiling.

Recently a large slicer beetle has moved into the area. It feeds mostly on piercers, dire stirges and rats that come down the corridor, but is not averse to eating human or demi-human flesh. It clings to the ceiling in a small crevice that it fits its enormous body into, waiting and watching for any potential prey.

The floor of the room is strewn with small bones and the mutilated husks of piercers. These latter appear as curled and dried up shells, flaking and broken. The bones are those of rats. It is possible to determine what is on the floor with a successful track check (CL 5) or intelligence check (CL 10).

The slicer beetle watches from its crevice, taking note of any movement. It, however, is hard to see, requiring a successful spot check (CL 8).

Whenever someone comes into the center of the room, it lunges from on high, snatching the victim in its mandibles and eviscerating them with its horn-like appendage just beneath the jaw.

SLICER BEETLE (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 9d8, HP 67, AC 18. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with powerful mandibles for 1d12 points of damage. Once it has taken hold of a target it eviscerates it with its powerful beak for a second 1d12 points of damage. Upon a successful attack with its mandibles the target is held and can only break free with a successful strength. Any held creature suffers an automatic hit from the beak.)

AREA 19 HOVEL

This room was home to a large wererat some time ago. It laired here, gathering whatever it could from the surface and making this its den. It is heaped now with garbage but there is nothing here of any value.

The room is carpeted with all manner of debris. Old clothes, broken weapon hafts, boards, small boxes, and canvas. Much of it is heaped into a huge pile toward the back of the room, shaped into a dome shape. It is clearly hollowed out for there is a door in the 12 foot high heap. Rags hang over the entrance. The whole area stinks of old decay.

The wererat is dead, killed when Gaxmoor was overrun, but his hovel remains. Within the dome is a small room, about 12 feet wide. It contains a makeshift bed, a few jars with the remains of dried food in them and a bowl with the bones of a small lizard.

A 12 inch long dagger, shaped in a wavy pattern, lies upon the floor. It is marked with two crossed swords on the pommel. It is worthless and hardly holds an edge.

AREA 20 AND 21 DIRE STIRGES

A second colony of dire stirges have made Areas 20 and 21 their nest. They cling to the ceiling for the better part of the day, until nightfall when they go on the hunt. Anything that enters the room is likely to attract their attention. If one group attacks, the second group takes note and comes to join in on the feeding frenzy.

There are two flocks of the dire stirges, each numbers between 5-20. The Castle Keeper should adjust as needed.

DIRE STIRGES (These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3d10, HP 14 apiece, AC 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8 points of damage. Once they have scored a successful hit they are able to drain their prey's blood for 1d10 points of damage a round. Their extraordinary speed grants them a +5 to attack as well as any dexterity attribute checks. They have darkvision to 60 feet and twilight vision.)

AREA 22 LURKER ABOVE

This large room contains a small underground lake. The water has flooded the far southern reaches of the room. It is clean and good to drink. The water is very clear. The room seems little traveled, but in fact is the home to a huge lurker. This creature lies in wait by the lake shore, and has devoured anything that has entered the room.

Detecting it requires a successful spot check (CL 15). Dwarves and gnomes and others who can see underground gain a +5 to their checks.

LURKER (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 75, AC 15. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a constriction attack for 1d6 points of damage. It waits upon the floor to enfold anyone who crosses over them. The initial attack requires a dexterity save, if the intended target fails, they are constricted. The lurker need not attack thereafter, but does cause 1d6 points of damage each round, no attack roll necessary. The lurker can cover an area 25' x 25' and can strike multiple targets. It remains hidden unless spotted with a successful wisdom check, CL 15 for anyone not able to see underground.)

AREA 23-25 SOBEEKI

These three rooms have been taken over by a band of half-crazed sobekki, a primitive race of crocodilian humanoids. The people of Gaxmoor domesticated them to maintain the sewers and aqueducts in the city. Long ago they took to dressing in clothing similar to the people of Gaxmoor (Ancient

Roman style) and speaking the Imperial language. They range about the sewers hunting for whatever pleases them.

This particular band has taken to worshipping an aboleth (similar to the one in the Western Undercaverns). They are utterly mad and attack anything that enters the area except the gargoules. These they have made a tentative alliance with as the larger monsters slew many of their number.

Any battle that carries sound any distance brings the other sobekki.

Note: Unless the gargoules have made an alliance with the characters, they allow the sobekki to weaken the party.

AREA 23 THE HIVE

This area holds roughly 25 of the creatures. They live here and the area shows it. It is filthy, covered in animal carcasses, equipment that is both stolen and abandoned and other dungeon detritus. The sobekki are gathered in the mouth of the tunnel that leads to Area 22. They are in a ball, closely curled up with one another, the larger ones on top. They watch the cavern in front of them, fearing the gargoules but hungry for anything else. Anyone entering the room, unless they are accompanied by one of the gargoules, draws their chattering rage and they attack, calling for their leaders from Area 25.

SOBEEKI, 25 (These lawful neutral creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 11, AC 11. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d4 points of damage, or with hand axes for 1d6, or at a range they hurl javelins for 1d4 points of damage. They swim well (40 ft) and hold their breath for 4 times as long as a human. These sobekki have none of their special war paint. They are vulnerable to cold.)

AREA 24 SOBEEKI GARDEN

This area is part of the sobekki nest, but the whole room is covered in all manner of underground vegetation and fungus. They farm the thick mushrooms for their meaty stems, eating them almost daily. The room is very damp, fed from on high and the floor is covered by a thick, 1 foot layer of dead fall.

There is a sickly, death-like odor in the room. Another band of the beasts tend the garden.

SOBEEKI, 25 (These lawful neutral creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 11, AC 11. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d4 points of damage, or with hand axes for 1d6, or at a range they hurl javelins for 1d4 points of damage. They swim well (40 ft) and hold their breath for 4 times as long as a human. These sobekki have none of their special war paint. They are vulnerable to cold.)

AREA 25 SOBEEKI LEADER/ SHAMAN

This is the den for the sobekki shaman. He has built a massive shrine to his aboleth god, constructing it mostly from bone and bits and pieces of armor he has gathered on his raids to the world above. The shrine dominates the far corner and it is there

that the shaman retreats with his band if they are overpowered in Area 23 or 24.

The shaman, Vlethrai, is wickedly evil and seeks nothing more than to kill and devour any that come across his path. He has been cowed by the garguiles, but if any chance to turn on them presents itself he'll take it, leading his raiders on a mad attack against them.

VLETHRAI (This is a lawful neutral exceptional sobekki, with the abilities of a 7th level druid, and the following vital statistics: HD 7d8, HP 44, and AC 17. His primary attributes are physical. His significant attributes are strength 18 and wisdom 13. In combat he uses his magical +2 morning star for 1d8+2 points of damage, or his +1 punch dagger for 1d4+1 points of damage. He swims well (40 ft) and can hold his breath 4x longer than a human. His special ability is war paint that gives him +2 to hit and damage and +2 AC. He is vulnerable to cold. He speaks Sobekki, ancient Imperial, and the Druidic language. He wears reed armor (+1 AC), carries a +2 trident, a +1 dagger, and possesses 9 potions of cure light wounds, 2 potions of water breathing, and a horn of fog. He currently has the following spells prepared: 0- create water, detect neutrality, detect poison, light 1st – animal friendship, entangle, obscuring mist 2nd – hold animal, summon swarm).

Woven into the shrine of the aboleth is a +3 chain shirt.

AREA 26 ENTRANCE TO THE UNDERCAVERNS

As noted above, the garguiles have not yet decided how to make contact with those in the city above to strike up their bargain. They only know they have a good bargaining chip. But they are very aware that someone is likely to come looking for Velparun and to that end they have stationed two of their number in Area 26 to guard against any surprises and to meet with whomsoever they might to discuss terms.

Warned by either the sobekki or by the sounds of battle in Area 22 or 18 the garguile are well aware of anyone coming down the hall.

One of the garguile stands in the center of the room, watching the opening to Areas 23 and 25. The other is stationed down the tunnel, tasked with fleeing down to the Undercaverns to bring news of whatever transpires between the garguile and the party.

There are four gargoyle thralls with the garguile.

The tunnel opens to a wider room. It is damp and cold with an updraft from a large fissure in the caverwork beyond, indicating, no doubt some deeper, danker hole. Before you stands a huge gargoyle, easily 7 feet tall, with massive wings. His skin is mottled with darker and lighter spots, bringing to mind the image of uncut, dirty stone. The creature is emotionless, but clearly, the glint of intelligence in its eye, desiring something more than a blood filled contest.

The garguile makes his pitch to the characters, promising them that they will return the stonemason if the party will go to his

house and fetch an amulet hidden there. If they do not, they will be forced to rend him limb from limb and devour him.

GARGUILE, CRYSTAL, SCOUT (These large creatures' vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 54, AC 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or use their barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them for what they are. They have the scent ability. They can track as a 6th level ranger. They can move silently and hide as a 5th level rogue. All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The garguile is intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues.)

GARGOYLE THRALLS, 4 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 16, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3, a bite for 1d6, or a gore for 1d4 points of damage. They fly at a speed of 75 feet per round. They have darkvision to 60 feet, and are able to appear as stone statues by freezing themselves in place.)

If they attack, all the thralls join the fray, but the second garguile flees to the Undercaverns to warn their comrades.

If they take them up on their offer, skip forward to The Aolis Sanctuary below.

THE UNDERCAVERNS

The Undercaverns are deep beneath the surface. Here the original inhabitants of Gaxmoor constructed a secret laboratory and armory, safe from all prying eyes. It was locked and bound by the stonemason House of Aolis and has stood thus for many hundreds of years.

The air is dry in these deep Undercaverns, and the ground mostly cleared of rocks and debris. A thin layer of dirt covers everything, showing any with the ability to spot such things that this area saw, at one time, more traffic than the previously explored caverns.

AREA 27 GUARDIANS

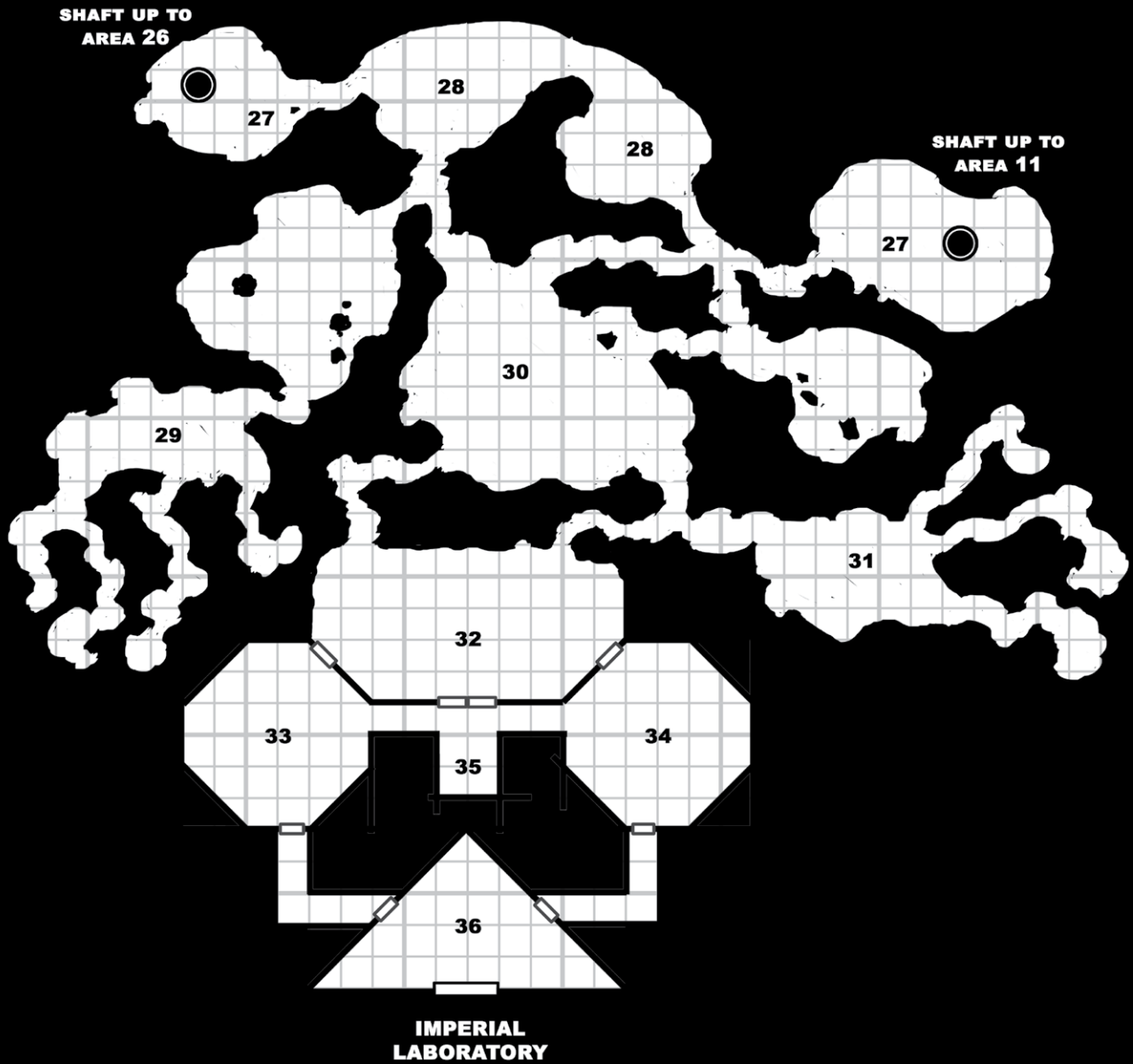
The tunnels from Areas 11 and 26 lead into similar rooms, each guarded by a garguile. These guards will possibly be forewarned by the garguiles descending from the upper caverns with news of a deal having been struck or that battle is soon afoot.

You descend down a long tube, one that must be hundreds of feet long, and exit in the middle of a large roughly oval shaped cavern. The cavern is similar to the ones above; utterly dark, silent and rough-hewn.

There is a crystal garguile in each of the rooms watching the tubes. They are crouched in the darkness of the passage just beyond the room and very difficult to see (spot check CL 20).

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

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THE UNDERCAVERNS

Each will spend one round observing and then move to Area 28 to alert Fugmobo. They will then fly rapidly west through Area 30 and Report to Hornfels, the leader of the garguiles. They do the same if word comes to them of a deal having been struck.

GARGUILE, CRYSTAL, SCOUT, 2 (These large creatures' vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 54, AC 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or use their barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. These creatures are made of translucent rock and are very difficult to see with normal vision. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL wisdom check to see them for what they are. They have the scent ability. They can track as a 6th level ranger. They can move silently, hide and back attack as a 5th level rogue. All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The garguiles are intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues.)

AREA 28 FUGMOBO'S HOLE

This is the lair of one Fugmobo, a formorian giant. He dwells in the darkness for he has been driven from Gaxmoor above. He has struck up an uneasy alliance with the garguiles. He has a mountain of skins piled on the floor that serve as his bed and a giant lizard, Squirt, for company. The garguiles make sure he is kept in food and with plenty to drink. A dozen barrels of stolen beer serve as a testament to this, half of them are empty.

Fugmobo attacks to hold off the party while the other garguiles can be brought up if battle is offered, or they are warned from above. Otherwise he sits on his throne of animal skins and greets the party with little more than a cold glare.

FUGMOBO, FORMORIAN GIANT (This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 13d10, AC 17, HP 98. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam for 4d6 points of damage. It has darkvision to 60 feet. It generally likes to grab its opponents and slam them to the ground.)

SQUIRT, LIZARD, GIANT (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 24, AC 16. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 2d6 points of damage. It moves 30 feet a round, but can climb as fast. Squirt can spit a jet of acid up to 20 feet in a 15 degree cone. The acid does 6d6 points of damage to anything in the area of effect, dexterity save for half.)

Treasure: Fugmobo has amassed quite a small treasure horde. He keeps it in a trunk hidden beneath his mountain of skins. Within are 1500gp, twelve 25 gold piece gems and a necklace worth 500gp. He also has a flask of cure light wounds (8 doses), a potion of giant strength, +1 crossbow and a quiver with 12 +2 arrows in it and a ring of freedom of movement).

AREA 29 SPECTRE'S GRAVE

This is a chamber even the garguiles and the giant avoid. The spectres of three fallen creatures remain here.

18 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The short tunnel to the west opens up into a large chamber extending west at least 60 feet and about 30 feet to the south. There are tunnels on the south wall approximately 10 to 15 feet wide heading south. The room is quiet except for the occasional drip of water hitting the floor.

This chamber contains 3 spectres who wait to attack any living thing that comes close enough to release their spirits. The water dripping is actually the sound of tear drops hitting the floor from one of the spectres trapped in the southern wall between the center and eastern most tunnels south. A glimmer can be faintly seen if the players look in that direction; the ghostly image of a sobbing human man half in the wall (spot check, CL 6). These are the spirits of three people that tried to teleport into the laboratory to steal some magical items. The protective wards directed them into the walls, one in the south wall and two into the center of the north wall. The spectres are all released to roam the Undercaverns for 6 hours if anyone comes within 10 feet of one of them. They will seek to trap the characters in the dead end tunnels.

SPECTRE (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d12, AC 15, and HP 84. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with an incorporeal touch for 1d8 points of damage. They are able to drain levels through an energy drain attack. Those struck by the creature lose 2 levels. The spectre gains 5 hit points per level he destroys. Animals avoid spectres and the creature is able to create spawn from those it has killed. They are powerless in sunlight.)

Treasure: If the players excavate the area where the apparition in the wall was seen, they discover the remains of the hapless soul and 15,000gp in gems, a set of magic lock picks that grant a (+2) bonus to open locks and a wand of trap detection. If they take the time to check his boots, they are Elven Boots.

AREA 30 MUSHROOM GARDEN

A deposit of silt has allowed a host of fungi and mushrooms to grow in this area. The floor is covered in a forest of mushrooms, from very small to over 20 feet tall. There are puffballs, toadstools, and many more varieties here.

You stumble into a virtual underground garden. Mushrooms, puffballs, toadstools, and troglaphiles grow in a thick loamy soil. Fungus creeps along the walls, filling every crevice with a soft, sponge-like felt. Cave crickets, some as large as a mace head, cling to the ceiling and walls. Rats scurry for cover beneath the thick foliage. But it is the colors that capture your attention, for everywhere the underground flora is awash in color: dull brown, black with red stripes, yellow with black stems, spotted green and blue and black.

The room has no real occupants, being too near the iron golem and the garguiles. Whatever fed here once, does so no longer. There are lots of places to hide and blend in.

The mushrooms are edible but have a variety of effects. If any character decides to eat some or one of the mushrooms, the effect is by color.

1. Dull brown caps: imparts true seeing for 10 turns.
2. Black with red stripes and slimy: poisons as Type A poison.
3. Red with black strips, not slimy: heal 2-8 hit points.
4. Yellow cap and black stem: imparts darkvision for 24 hours.
5. Green and blue spots on an orange puffball: +2 strength for 10 rounds.
6. Black buttons: cure poison.

It is possible with a successful legend lore check, or underground ranger wisdom check, to ascertain what each mushroom does. Roll once for each color.

AREA 31 CAVERNOUS OOZE

The hall that leads to these series of rooms descends at a steep angle and crosses a small stream until it comes to a wide, open room. A great deal of sediment has slid down the hall and into the cavern from Area 30. It comes with a small mirror of the fungal forest above. Mushrooms, toadstools and the like grow along the cavern floor and wall. But these are much younger and show signs of decay and burn marks.

This is the lair of a black pudding. It feeds upon the fungal and other plant growth that crawls and creeps its way down from Area 30. Passing over the growth and slowly devouring it, the pudding leads a path of destruction in its wake. The pudding is presently in the center finger cavern, about half way down, sprawled against the wall. Anyone who approaches is attacked.

BLACK PUDDING (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 10d10, HP 87, AC 3. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with an acid attack for 3d6 points of damage. If it is struck by an edged weapon it splits in two. Their AC and HD remains the same but the hit points are divided equally.)

AREA 32 HORNFELS' LAIR

Here is where Hornfels and his greater garguile gang have gathered. They are sitting here with Velaprun attempting to figure out how to get past the guardian golem (Area 33-34) and open the valves that lead into the Imperial Armaments Laboratory.

As noted above, they will seek to parley with a group that is strong enough to get past the denizens and guardians. They seek the "Pendant of Opening" referred to as the opening device, so they can open the valve. They will exchange Velaprun for the Pendant. If questioned as to why, they will say that their brethren are imprisoned inside and they must free them.

Any garguiles who have come down from the upper caverns to warn Hornfels should be here. Those who were bypassed are not.

Note: Hornfels' reaction depends upon what he knows. If the characters have slain those above, he may know nothing, if some escaped to warn him, he may be primed for battle. However, no matter what happened above, whether his people were killed or not, he attempts to parlay with the characters as the Pendant of Opening is the only sure and safe way to bypass the guards and wards and iron golem.

HORNFELS, GARGUILE, GRANITE (This large creature's vital stats are HD 10d10, HP 100, AC 28. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or uses its barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Its movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. Its special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. It can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see it for what it is. It has the ability to hide in shadows as a 15th level rogue. It has damage reduction 2 (every wound is reduced by 2). All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The garguile is intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues. It is able to enthrall other gargoyles and is usually accompanied by 1-4 of the creatures.)

GARGUILE, CRYSTAL, 2 (These large creatures' vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 54, AC 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or use their barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them for what they are. They have the scent ability. They can track as a 6th level ranger. They can move silently and hide as a 5th level rogue. All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The garguiles are intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues.)

GARGUILE, BASALT (These large creatures' vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 75, AC 24. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each, a bite for 1d8 points, a gore for 1d6 points or use their barbed tail for 1d4 points of damage. Their movement is 45 feet per round on the ground, or 90 feet when flying. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and freeze. They can remain perfectly still and go virtually undetected while doing so. In such cases, characters make a CL 10 wisdom check to see them for what they are. They are ferocious in combat and possess an extra attack every other round. They have damage reduction 1 (every wound is reduced by 1). All edged weapons do half damage. All electric and elemental attacks are halved, save for no damage. The garguiles are intelligent and able to speak most human and demi-human tongues.)

GARGOYLE, 8 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 16, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physi-

cal. They attack with 2 claw for 1d3, a bite for 1d6, or a gore for 1d4 points of damage. They fly at a speed of 75 feet per round. They have darkvision to 60 feet, and are able to appear as stone statues by freezing themselves in place.)

AREA 33 TELEPORTATION ROOM

A series of friezes dominates this room. Carved into the wall they recount the tale of Gaxmoor's early construction and history. They list the names of the prominent families of the city and depict the various deeds that earned the acclaim, power and a place in the history of the Empire. Most notable of all is the name Aolis and it shows the whole city as in a diorama, under construction. The construction is intricate and the detail amazing. The carvings are matched by the intricate stone tiles set into the floor, each bearing geometric patterns which point the viewer to look toward the walls.

The detail is such that it is designed to distract any who enter the room, keeping their mind away from the series of glyphs set into the floor before the door on the far side of the room. Anyone entering the room must make a successful intelligence save (CL 8) or they are distracted from the frieze and are unlikely to see the small glyphs in the floor by the door. If they succeed and are not distracted and they are approaching the door with caution, looking at floor and walls, they may detect the glyphs in the floor (CL 6).

The whole room glows magical if a detect magic spell is cast, as a *permanency* spell was set into the walls.

Anyone who takes an inordinate amount of time to look at the floor and walls may detect the glyphs (spot check CL 8).

Anyone passing over the glyphs is instantly teleported to Area 35, immediately activating the golem.

The teleport can only be overcome if a dispel magic is cast upon it (CL 25), in which case it is disabled for 10 rounds, or if they are carrying the Pendant of Opening.

AREA 34 TELEPORTATION ROOM

This room acts in all ways the same as Area 33.

AREA 35 THE GUARDIAN

This small alcove is dominated by one large iron golem. He stands watch over the Laboratory entrance, attacking anyone and anything that comes before it that is not carrying the Pendant of Opening.

The golem has a permanent *haste* spell on it.

GOLEM, IRON (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 14d10, HP 140, AC 30. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam for 4d10 points of damage. It is immune to magic except for the following: electrical damage slows it 1/2 for 3 rounds and fire damage heals it for 1 hit point per die of damage. It is able to emit a toxic breath weapon. Anyone in the area must make a constitution save or fall to the ground immobile.

The breath continues to affect them even after they have fallen and they lose 1/2 of their HP with a failed save in each successive round.)

AREA 36 THE ANTECHAMBER

This simple, unadorned chamber has nothing but a large iron valve-shaped door in it. It is the entrance to the Laboratory.

The room is simple and unadorned. A large, round, brass door stands in the far wall. It possesses a lever on one side, huge in and of itself. The door itself is without décor, being simple and plain. There is a small, simple recess delved out of the center of the door, big enough to hold a small pendant or other device.

The door is magically sealed and shut. It and the wall around it have an SR of 21. There is no way to open it, magically or otherwise, unless the pendant is used.

THE AOLIS MANOR'S SANCTUM

For the complete layout of Aolis Manor see the Lost City of Gaxmoor (S 61). It is recently rebuilt and an inviting home. The characters must make their way to the lower chambers.

ROOM 1 HALL OF ANCESTORS

This long room is one of quiet contemplation for the members of the house of Aolis. Here are statues set in the walls, one after the other, each one of the glorious ancestors of the house. When in need of guidance and aid, members of the house came to this lower chamber for the quiet solitude that the room affords.

The largest of the statues is the founder of the House of Aolis. It stands in the center of the room. Behind it is a secret door. Finding it is not difficult (CL 4).

ROOM 2 SLIDE TRAP

This small secret room has a large lever set into the wall. When pulled forward it locks, or disarms, the slide trap.

The trap is difficult to detect (CL 12) and very hard to disarm once discovered (CL 12), unless the lever is used.

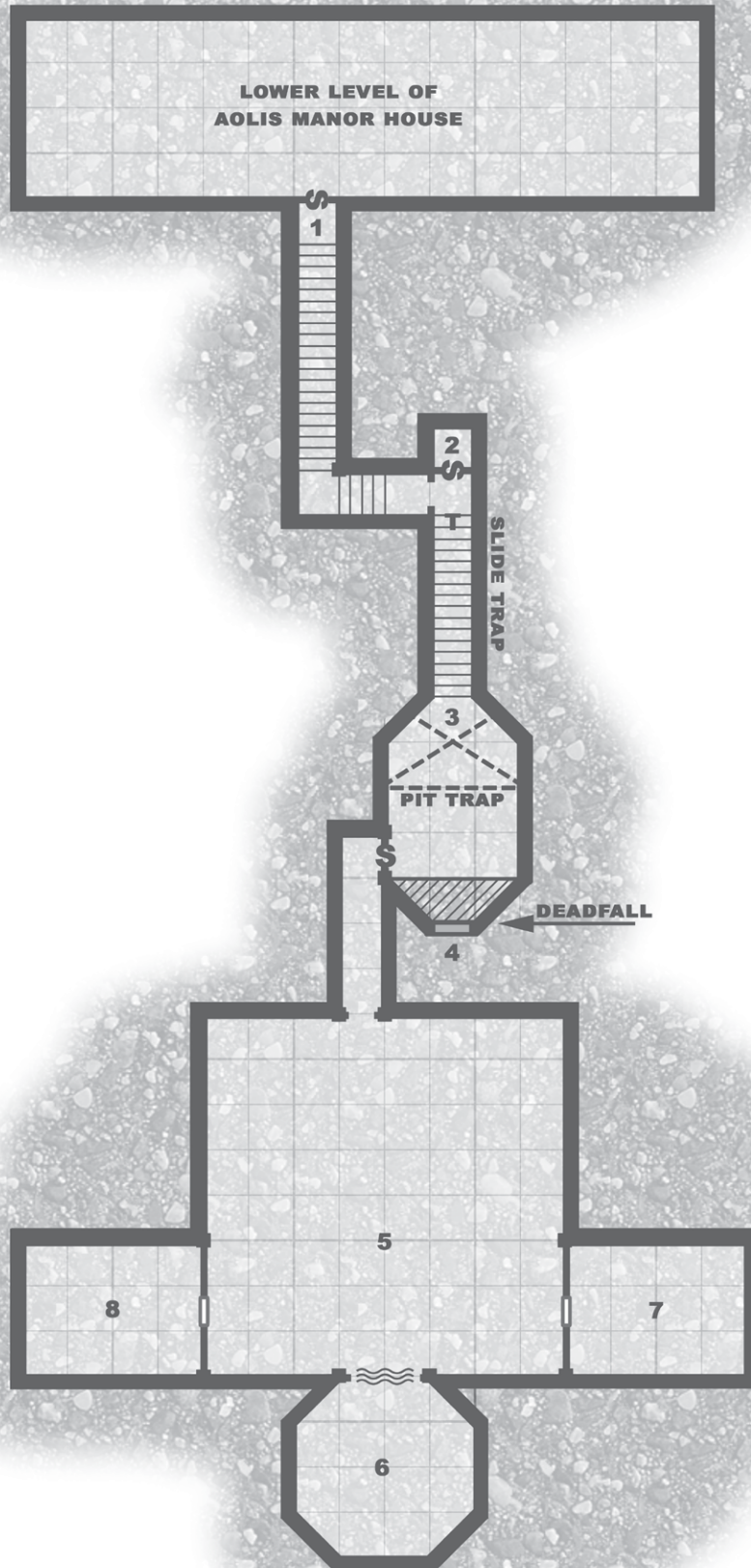
Anyone walking down the stairs without disarming the stair trap triggers it. After the sixth step is hit, about 1/3 the way down, the trap triggers; all the steps flatten and anyone on the stairs slides down and into the floor below. The floor gives way at the slightest pressure and opens up to a pit trap lined with stakes. Anyone falling in takes 15d6 points of damage, dexterity save for half.

ROOM 3 PIT TRAP

Half this room is the Pit Trap. Those unfortunate enough to suffer the slide trap end up impaled on the stakes. After 5 rounds the trap resets, the doors to the pit close seamlessly and the room is pitched into utter darkness. However, there is a small ladder that leads up and out of the room. It is located in

AOLIS SANCTUARY

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1 SQUARE= 5 FT



the south-east corner. At the top of the ladder is a small lever that triggers the trap, flattens the stairs, but opens the pit.

There is a secret door that leads to Room 5.

ROOM 4 FALSE DOOR

There is a false door in Room 3. It appears normal in all respects, however if one searches for the trap (CL 8) they may notice small irregularities in how the door is set in the frame, specifically that the hinges appear solid.

Otherwise an attempt to turn the door latch triggers a block of stone to come crashing down from above. Anyone beneath is allowed a dexterity save (CL 12). If they fail, the block crashes into them and they are instantly crushed to death. The trap resets after 5 rounds.

ROOM 5 MASON'S WORKSHOP

This is a stonemason's work shop. Benches line the walls and tables cover the floor. There are several stools here and there. The room is dominated by a large grinding wheel, a small forge and a mountain of tools, from hammers and chisels, to punches and adzes, set squares, claws and borers. All the equipment is in decent shape. It seems well used.

Several small scale models are on the main bench, each denoting some building in Gaxmoor.

ROOM 6 SHRINE

An illusionary wall hides the Sacred Items Shrine of the Aolis family. The wall blends with the surrounding walls almost flawlessly and can only be detected on a successful intelligence check (CL 7). A successful find secret door (CL 4) does not reveal the door but makes one suspect something is amiss with the wall, gaining a +2 on any intelligence check. It can be temporarily dispelled with a *dispel magic* or similar spell (CL 7).

Beyond the door is a simple room with several small pews set before an altar and statue of a clearly deified figure (the house god of the Aolis family). Lying upon a velvet stand before the altar is the Pendant of Opening.

There are also three big foot lockers along the back wall. Each contains a different item. The first is a +2 maul that does double damage against any stone creature (gargoyle, stone golems, etc). The second is a +4 pick that does maximum damage against any stone creature, and also doubles one's rates of speed when digging out tunnels or mines. The third are 8 exploding geodes used to blast out caverns. Each inflicts 6d6 points of damage in a 20 foot area. It affects both gargoyles and golems.

ROOM 7 LIBRARY

This small room is lined with bookshelves. A thick animal pelt lies upon the floor and several reading chairs with lantern stands are against the far wall. It is clearly a library. There are some 125 books in the room and 327 scrolls. The scrolls are all kept in bone cases, sealed and marked. Notations on the

outside reflect their contents. The vast majority of the books and scrolls are books about masonry, projects plans, treatises on architecture and the like. Hidden deep in the scrolls and not easily found without a systematic search, is one tube containing the following Druid spells: *Stone Shape* (x4), and *Transmute Rock to Mud* (x2). They are all part of Velparun's private collection.

ROOM 8 BED CHAMBERS

This small room has a simple four poster bed and wardrobe in it. The furnishings are simple in shape and form. The curtains on the bed are white cloth as is all the bedding. It shows a simple comfort and an unostentatious man. The wardrobe has clothes and boots in it.

NEW MONSTERS

STIRGE, DIRE

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 2-16

SIZE: Large

HD: 3 (d10)

MOVE: 20 ft., 60 ft. (fly)

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Bite (1d8)

SPECIAL: Attach, Blood Drain, Agile, Darkvision 60 ft., Twilight Vision

SAVES: P

INT: Animal

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 1

XP: 140 x 3

Dire stirges are much larger and formidable versions of the more common mosquito-like bats. Though far rarer, they too tend to live near large, stagnant water sources, are often encountered in swampy regions or dank underground caverns, and their relatively sword-like proboscis grievously impales foes and quickly drains their blood. The audible buzzing sound they make as they fly is much more pronounced than those of their smaller cousins.

COMBAT: A dire stirge will dive into a target, jutting its proboscis into flesh, where it attaches and feeds until sated.

ATTACH: Whenever a dire stirge attacks, it seeks to impale its prey with its feeding proboscis. If a dire stirge successfully hits a victim, the victim must succeed on a strength save. Failure indicates that the dire stirge managed to attach itself. A new save is allowed each round to attempt to remove the creature, but if successful the victim suffers 1d10 points of damage from ripping it away.

BLOOD DRAIN: A dire stirge that successfully attaches to a victim automatically inflicts 1d10 points of damage per round. Only when a dire stirge is able to drain a victim of 30 hit points in this way, does it release and fly away.

GREAT AGILITY: Dire stirges gain a +5 bonus to attack rolls and dexterity checks.

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CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE UNDERCAVERNS OF GAXMOOR

RISEN FROM THE ASHES THE CITY OF GAXMOOR IS NOW ENJOYING A RENAISSANCE. COUNT GUNSHOFF HAS TAKEN THE CITY UNDER HIS WING AND HAS BEGUN REBUILDING IT. TO SOLIDIFY HIS CLAIMS, HE TURNED TO OTHER NOBLES, SEEKING THEIR AID AND VASSALAGE WITH PROMISES ONLY HE COULD OFFER. FOR WITH HIM STANDS VELPARUN, A STONEMASON OF ANCIENT LINEAGE AND SINGULAR ABILITIES, ONE WHOSE FAMILY HAILS FROM ANCIENT GAXMOOR. THROUGH HIM GUNSHOFF HAS PROMISED TO BUILD A GRAND TEMPLE TO BOTH SHOW HIS POWER TO ALL AND TO HAVE VELPARUN TRAIN MASTER MASONS FOR EACH OF THOSE WHO SUPPORT HIM.

WITH THIS THE LOCALS FLOCKED TO JOIN HIM AND TRAVEL EVEN NOW TO GAXMOOR TO SIGN WITH THEIR SIGNETS.

BUT VELPARUN HAS GONE MISSING, KIDNAPPED AND HAULED TO THE CAVERNS FAR BENEATH GAXMOOR. ALL ATTEMPTS TO RESCUE HIM HAVE FAILED AND THE COUNT NOW LOOKS TO OUTSIDE HELP, PROFESSIONAL ADVENTURERS TO ENTER THE CAVERNS AND RESCUE VELPARUN. BUT TIME IS RUNNING OUT, FOR THE NOBLES ARE IN ROUTE, AND IF THEY FEEL AS THEY HAVE BEEN DUPED BY THE COUNT THEN THE ONLY PROMISE THEY'LL BRING IS THE PROMISE OF WAR.

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