



The Blight Pathologies



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Volume 3: Deceit at Thraken



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The Blight: Pathologies

Deceit at Thraken

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Introduction

Introduction

Steady work in Castorhage is a challenge for most of the inhabitants of the blighted city, but for visitors it is nearly impossible to find employment. Newcomers are viewed with suspicion and mistrust, and are rarely hired for jobs that locals can fill. Most of the available work is of the worst kind: jobs that pay little for hard work, jobs that won't build an adventurer's reputation, or jobs that are sure to end poorly, resulting in lifelong disfigurement or death. Foreigners need to catch a lucky break with a job that can lead to better paying, less risky jobs if they want to maintain a comfortable lifestyle in Castorhage.

Work disappears quickly from the local job board, so it's a surprise when a dwarven priest of Beltane's need of an escort into the Underneath remains on the board for several days. The posting says the job pays 5,000gp for a short trip under the city to drop off a gift to an important dignitary. A couple of days, it says. Sounds like an easy job, so why won't the locals take the work?

Adventure Synopsis

Unless they are part of the Fetch, savvy residents avoid most work tied to the vampire-god Beltane. Notorious for double-crossing the living, mortals rarely survive a chance or arranged meeting with the lord of the undead. Work that takes locals anywhere near Underneath locations where zealous servitude and tireless dedication drives undead to appease their vampire deity is avoided by human residents at all costs. When a dwarven priest openly serves the lord of the Fetch, it can only mean trouble.

High Priest Yuunglu has a special tribute to bring to one of Beltane's favored attendants, the ghoul-thane Grim-Cacor I, who resides deep within the Underneath in the lost town of Grim-Mathen. Also known as Thraken, the ghoul town is home to hundreds of undead who endlessly toil in meaningless tasks each day, living out their eternal lives in boring repetition. The high priest recently found an artifact to return to the ghoul-thane and his people: a small obsidian sculpture of Grim-Cacor's wife. The sculpture was recently unearthed in the Underneath and historians recognized it as the spouse of Grim-Mathen's thane. The church of Beltane has been looking for a way to reach out to Grim-Cacor to connect the two disparate groups in their servitude to the vampire-god and feels delivering the artifact is the perfect start.

Although safe passage and the meeting between the high priest and Grim-Cacor have been pre-arranged, the church of Beltane wants to protect their holy leader by providing him an escort during the trip. A group of seasoned and reliable adventurers should be able to protect the priest as he travels down to Thraken and to see him back to the surface safely afterward. A small group can move quietly through dangerous areas while still providing the needed protection if an unexpected encounter arises. His order magically imprinted the path to Thraken in High Priest Yuunglu's memory to maintain secrecy.

Background Information

For several years, the mining company of Ghort, Farrell, and Nabble Incorporated has been searching for a way to gain access to the pit below the fabled ghoul town. Rumors of vast riches and endless veins of gold, silver, and precious gems far below Thraken have driven the mining company to tirelessly search the Underneath for its location. No Fetch would dare disclose the cursed village's whereabouts, and they misled dwarven scouts and expert miners at every chance. The mining company was almost ready to give up on the dream of mining the unexplored pit

when Frago Ghort, one of the principal owners of the firm, came up with an ingenious plan. They would set up a false church to Beltane on the surface and begin communicating their newfound faith to the listeners of the Underneath. If they could slowly build up the trust of the undead below, they might be able to finally learn the ghoul town's location.

Years of hard work finally paid off; the first meeting between the city church and Grim-Cacor, under the false pretense of an artifact delivery, has at last been arranged. A single dwarven priest was chosen to make the trip to Thraken and was allowed a small contingent of security to safely navigate the perilous tunnels and passages of the Underneath. However, the greedy mining company wasn't satisfied with learning only the location of the ghoul town. They have other plans for the dead village.

Although the obsidian sculpture appears to be an ornate artifact, perfectly crafted in the form of Grim-Cacor's deceased wife, it is really an instrument of holy destruction. Magically imbued with captured sun rays, the artifact has been built to detonate in the ghoul town after the high priest departs, destroying its inhabitants once and for all. After its initial explosion, the artifact continues to pulsate with rays of the sun, either driving remaining undead out of the area or killing any lingering residents missed by the first blast. Within two weeks of the meeting, a contingent of soldiers and miners return to Thraken and begin to explore and mine the untapped chasm below the old town.

Characters must also deal with a last-minute change of plans once the high priest arrives in Thraken and discovers that the rumor of Grim-Cacor's young son, a grotesque yet powerful seer of past and future events, is true. Yuunglu hastily decides to abduct the undead child, seeking to bring him back to the mining firm to be used in future business dealings. Of course, this unplanned addition to a well hatched and careful master plan ends up being the high priest's undoing, setting events in motion that can lead only to the group's death.

Yuunglu (False Priest of Beltrane)

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 45 (8d8 + 5)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws DEX +4, WIS +3

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +5, Performance +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, dwarf

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. Yuunglu is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): friends, mage hand, vicious mockery
1st level (4 slots): charm person, healing word, heroism, sleep, thunderwave

2nd level (3 slots): invisibility, shatter

Song of Rest. Yuunglu can perform a song while taking a short rest. Any ally who hears the song regains an extra 1d6 hit points if it spends any Hit Dice to regain hit points at the end of that rest. The bard can confer this benefit on itself as well.

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Taunt (2/Day). Yuunglu can use a bonus action on its turn to target one creature within 30 feet of it. If the target can hear the bard, the target must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the bard's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Yuunglu makes 2 rapier attacks or one shortbow attack.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Travel to Thraken

The route to the lost village of Grim-Mathen is challenging and dangerous, but if the group stays on the predetermined path, they should arrive safely at the ghoul-town within a few days. Hundreds of smaller passages and unexplored tunnels interconnect with the known route and could slow a group if they decide to go exploring. Additionally, the characters may run into one of many wandering groups of Underneath denizens as they travel; you should decide how likely it is that the group encounters creatures along the way or if you need to add a little excitement before they arrive. The main action of this adventure takes place after the characters arrive in Thraken, but feel free to add more content along the way.

Much of the way down to the lost village has been forgotten by those who live in the Underneath. Most of the route follows abandoned mineshafts, barren river channels and little-used tunnels. As the characters near the undead town, fewer living denizens are encountered. However, small groups of undead begin to appear in various places as the group approaches Thraken. Grim-Cacor alerted his minions to the high priest's arrival, ensuring that the group faces no resistance as they enter the cursed ghoul-town.

Grim-Cacor no longer locks the doors to his home and other town buildings, fearless in his complete control over the undead village and surrounding tunnels. Even the dangerous denizens of the Underneath avoid the town, selecting routes that generally take them far from the village when they travel.

Grim-Mathen, also known as Thraken

Only one path leads to the ghoul-town, a narrow tunnel leading southeast into the area. The entry path opens onto a narrow ledge encircling the dark pit below the village. Four suspension bridges on the topmost level lead to a massive stalagmite that emerges from below in the center of the pit. Several ancient buildings are seen on the center location, an island amid the empty pit. A secondary ledge 50 ft. below the main level has four more suspension bridges leading to the center island. From the middle, residents can use any of the eight bridges to travel to all of Thraken's areas. Bridges A and D are the shortest routes from the entry tunnel to the ghoul-thane's manor house.

Grim-Cacor I, His Tattered Majesty, resides on the center island in the largest building within the village. His two-story home is mostly empty, although he keeps his abnormal son hidden away in the backrooms of the large home. The boy's unusual talents are also a curse, bringing pain, suffering, and chaos to the child's mind during every moment of his miserable existence. The ghoul-thane prevents townfolk from entering his home to keep them from finding out about his unusual son.

Most of the village's residents live in homes built into the side of the great pit along the two highest levels. All but Grim-Cacor believe they are still alive, untouched by the diseases that rampaged through the Underneath years ago. Villagers hide in their homes much of the time, still worried about the disease that has unknowingly already come and gone. Few residents venture out into the town now, but those who leave their homes do so to get supplies from neighbors or to check on family members in other parts of the town.

When the group arrives in Thraken, they find a desolate and empty village. Not a single resident is seen while they are in town (until High



Priest Yuunglu attempts to activate the deadly artifact). Yuunglu has been instructed to meet the ghoul-thane in his home on the center pit-island.

Occasional cries of sorrow, silent sobs, and moans of anguish can be heard behind the doors to the residences along either of the two primary ledges of the settlement. No residents open their doors to the group regardless of how much the characters urge, beg, or plead. Once the alarm sounds, however, the undead willingly leave their homes to hunt for the characters.

Area 1: Meeting at Grim-Cacor's Manor

Two wide bronze doors lead into a nearly empty waiting room that encompasses most of the lower level of the manor. The ghoul-thane removed nearly all of the furniture from the home years ago, no longer needing chairs, couches, and tables in his home. **Grim-Cacor** waits for the group at the front doors on the northern side of the large manor. Devoid of emotion and skeptical of the dwarven priest, His Tattered Majesty coolly welcomes the group into his home to receive the valuable artifact. Unused to having visitors, Grim-Cacor lacks the social graces of an active town leader; after several direct questions about the artifact and where it was found, he remembers his manners and rushes off to get tea for the group.

Ghoul-Thane Grim Cacor I, his tattered majesty

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 16 (breastplate)
Hit Points 50 (10d8)

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Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+2)	18 (+4)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 7 (# XP)

Magic Resistance. The ghoul commander has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The ghoul commander's innate spell-casting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect good*

3/day each: *disguise self*, *inflict wounds*

2/day: *staggering smite*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ghoul commander makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success

Grim-Cacor's son

Small undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 24 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the Grim-Cacor's Son to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, Grim-Cacor's Son drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

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

When Grim-Cacor disappears into the kitchen of the home, Yuunglu sets the artifact down in the center of the great home. He activates the artifact by twisting its head around once, setting the countdown to five minutes before the radiant burst envelops Thraken. After starting the countdown, he rushes off to another part of the home in search of the

ghoul-thane's son. The sophisticated artifact cannot be turned off before detonation.

This behavior should surprise the characters, as they should be unaware of the dwarf's plans. Before Grim-Cacor returns with tea, Yuunglu emerges from a backroom of the manor carrying a deformed, grotesque child. With little discussion, Yuunglu reveals his plans as he attempts to escape, with or without the characters. The characters should definitely feel as if they have been played by the high priest and should realize that they have little time to decide on their next action before the situation explodes into chaos.

As the artifact begins to activate, the ghoul-thane returns, quickly realizing that he has been deceived. If he sees his son with the high priest, he enters a bloodthirsty rage and attacks anyone within range as he tries to get to his son. He uses a high-pitched wail to alert the residents that Thraken is under attack. An attack on the village is the only event that brings the villagers out of their homes. Undead residents pour out of their ledge homes, using their nearest suspension bridge to get to the center island. **Zombies, skeletons, ghouls and ghastrs** scramble across ledges and over bridges to answer their thane's call.

Roll 1d12 twice on **Table 1** to select the number of new undead residents and which bridges they use as they rush to support Grim-Cacor each round. Bridges A and D should automatically be selected during the first round.

Table 1: Residents and Bridges

1d12	Bridge(s)	1d12	Bridge Occupants
1	A, D	1	2d4 zombies
2	C, D	2	2d6 skeletons
3	A, B	3	1d4 ghouls
4	B, C	4	1d2 ghastrs
5	A, E	5	2d4+2 zombies
6	D, F	6	2d6+3 skeletons
7	G, H	7	1d4+1 ghouls
8	A, D	8	1d2+1 ghastrs
9	A, C	9	1d4 zombies, 1d6 skeletons
10	B, D	10	1d4 ghouls, 1d2 ghastrs
11	F, G	11	1d4+1 zombies, 1d6+2 skeletons
12	E, H	12	1d4 ghouls, 1d2 ghastrs, 1d4 zombies

Thraken's residents change direction as necessary to intercept fleeing characters. If the undead have to choose between the high priest and the characters, they chase the dwarf first but hunt for the characters once the high priest falls.

Note that the undead continue to emerge from their homes until 200 creatures have been rolled. You should keep track of the number of undead generated from **Table 1**.

Other Notable Buildings on the Center Island

Six additional buildings are found on the center island, each abandoned and mostly empty. The characters might enter any of the buildings to hide from foes or to construct a defensible position against waves of undead. The roof of each building is easily accessible from inside the building and from the exterior. A few broken tables and chairs may be found in some of the rooms within the structures, which could prove useful for barricading doorways or stairs.

The Artifact's Effects

Although the artifact detonates five minutes after it is set, it does not have the desired effect. It explodes as expected, sending radiant energy

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outward for 100ft in every direction, but it ceases to function after the first pulse. The first explosion should give the characters a little breathing room, but the device no longer helps repel the undead after this initial burst.

The artifact explodes for 10d8+20 points of holy damage in a 100-ft. burst, affecting undead creatures only. While the characters and High Priest Yuunglu are immune to the damage, Grim-Cacor and his son take damage from the blast.

The artifact can be repaired and reset if returned to the tinkerers at the mining firm. However, it is extremely likely that Grim-Cacor, if he survives the initial radiant blast, tosses the false artifact into the pit.

Grim-Cacor's Treasure Room

If the characters dispose of all the undead in Thraken and search the town for treasure, they find a large treasure room in one of the backrooms of the ghoulish-thane's manor. Grim-Cacor has accumulated much of the abandoned village's treasure within his manor. The entrance to the treasure chamber is unlocked and easily found at the end of one of the hallways in the back of the building.

Treasure Found in Grim-Cacor's Manor

- A great, wooden chest filled with silver coins (6751sp total)
- Five metal boxes with neatly stacked gold coins (1,468 gp total)
- Ten bars of silver (250 sp each) and ten bars of gold (250 gp each)
- Two gold candelabras (each worth 500gp)
- A full eight-piece silver service set (plates, cups, cutlery, etc., worth 250gp)
- Three wooden boxes with assorted gems (2,623 gp value total)
- Five sets of matching earrings, necklaces, and bracelets (1,499 gp value total)
- Two paintings of venerable dwarfs (750 gp value each)
- One painting of the ghoulish-thane's wife (1,000 gp value)
- Marble sculpture with gold inlay of a squatting dwarf (1,255 gp value, weighs 300 pounds)
- A silver dagger with a large ruby in the pommel (500 gp value)

Notable Areas Within Thraken

Several dozen doors leading to residences are found along the two primary ledges of the pit. Most of the doors will be found open after the villagers exit to answer the call of the their thane. Few items of value are found within these residences. However, a few of the homes are of interest:

Area 2: Bladesmith

Gever B'dall was once a renowned bladesmith, forging high quality swords and knives for prestigious benefactors across the realm. The talented bladesmith has been reduced to a mindless ghoul who will be found in one of the first waves of undead to assist their thane. His well-stocked store has many valuable weapons within.

Bladesmith Inventory

Item	Details
Ornate Broadsword	Non-magical but well-made and ornate, worth 250 gp
Punch-dagger	Non-magical, punching dagger useful for stealthy attacks (dagger)
Silver dagger	Non-magical

Item	Details
Longsword in tattered scabbard	Old scabbard hides a magical longsword +
Two-handed sword, extra-wide blade	Greatsword +1
Dagger hidden under counter	this dagger +1 is so badly damaged it has only 1 hp remaining before it is destroyed, and it has the broken condition.

Area 3: Gem Merchant

Although Grim-Cacor absconded with much of the gem merchant's inventory, he was unaware of the secret stash in the floor behind the counter. Four loose floor tiles can be pried up to reveal a small niche containing a 1 ft.-square wooden box. Inside are 200 perfectly cut rubies, emeralds, sapphires, topazes, and diamonds (40 of each). These smaller stones surround a fist-sized fire opal in the center of the silk-lined box. Each of the smaller gems is worth 50 gp each, but the fire opal can fetch as much as 5,000 gp.

Area 4: Healer

Thraken was once the home of one of the most proficient and capable healers in the Underneath. Kass Nroto was known for scouring the tunnels and caverns of dark and remote locations to uncover rare minerals and powerful fungi. She created dozens of different salves and potions for the residents of Thraken, but unfortunately was unable to cure them of the pestilence that swept through the area. She left the village before becoming infected herself, leaving several valuable potions and ointments behind.

Remaining Healer Inventory

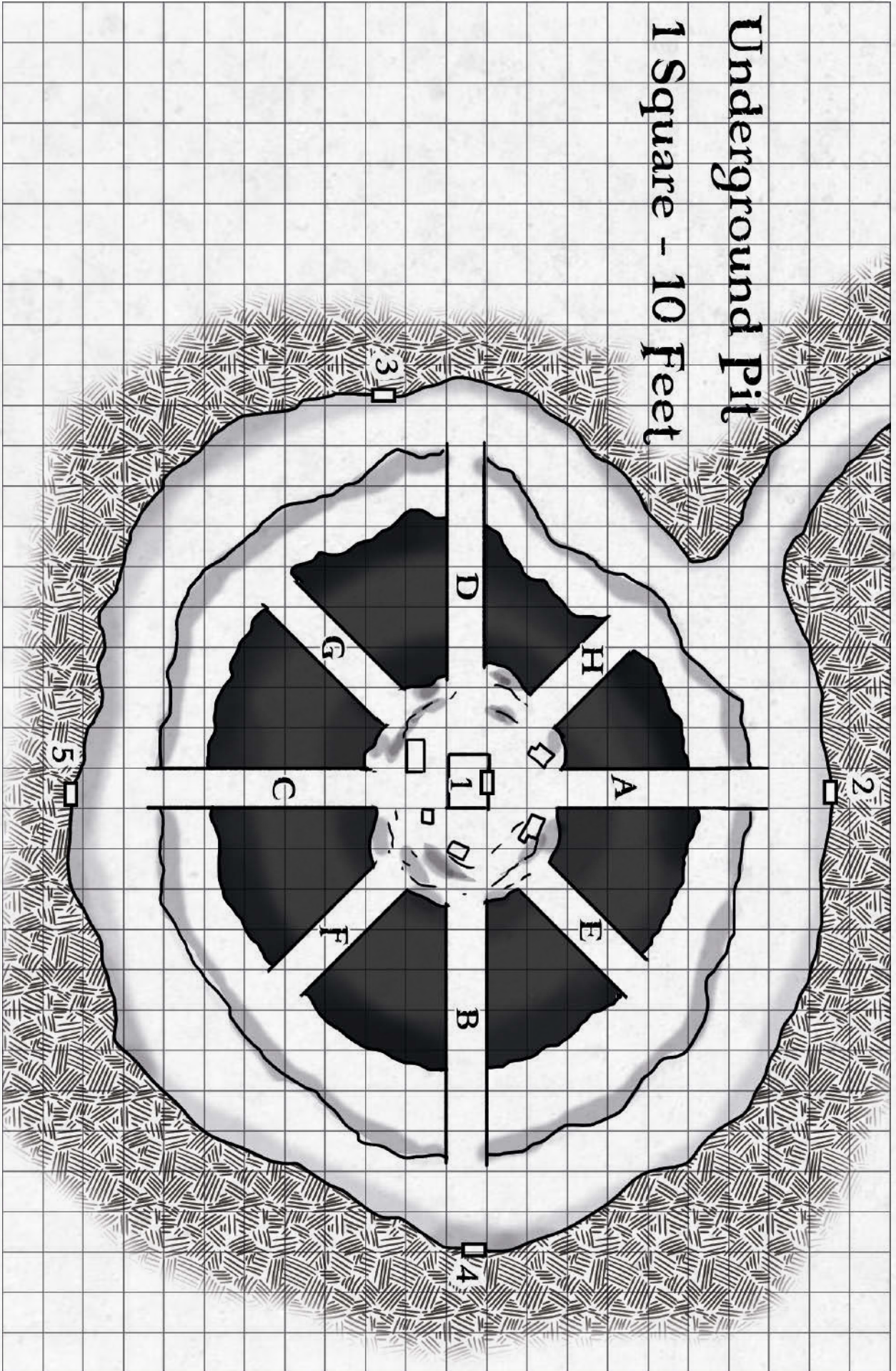
Item	Details
Healing salves (x3)	When applied externally to surface wounds, treat as a <i>potion of healing</i> , but can only be identified using the Medicine skill.
Burn creams (x2)	This cream restores 1–2 hit points of fire-based damage.
Potion of Healing (x2)	Potion of Greater Healing
Slime mold of clarity	Clears mind of any magical and non-magical mental ailments, as <i>greater restoration</i> , but provides no other benefit of that spell.
Ointment of restore senses (x2)	When rubbed upon the eyes, ears, nose, or mouth, it returns the associated sense, as <i>remove blindness/deafness</i>
Mushroom of weightlessness	Treat as a <i>potion of levitation</i>

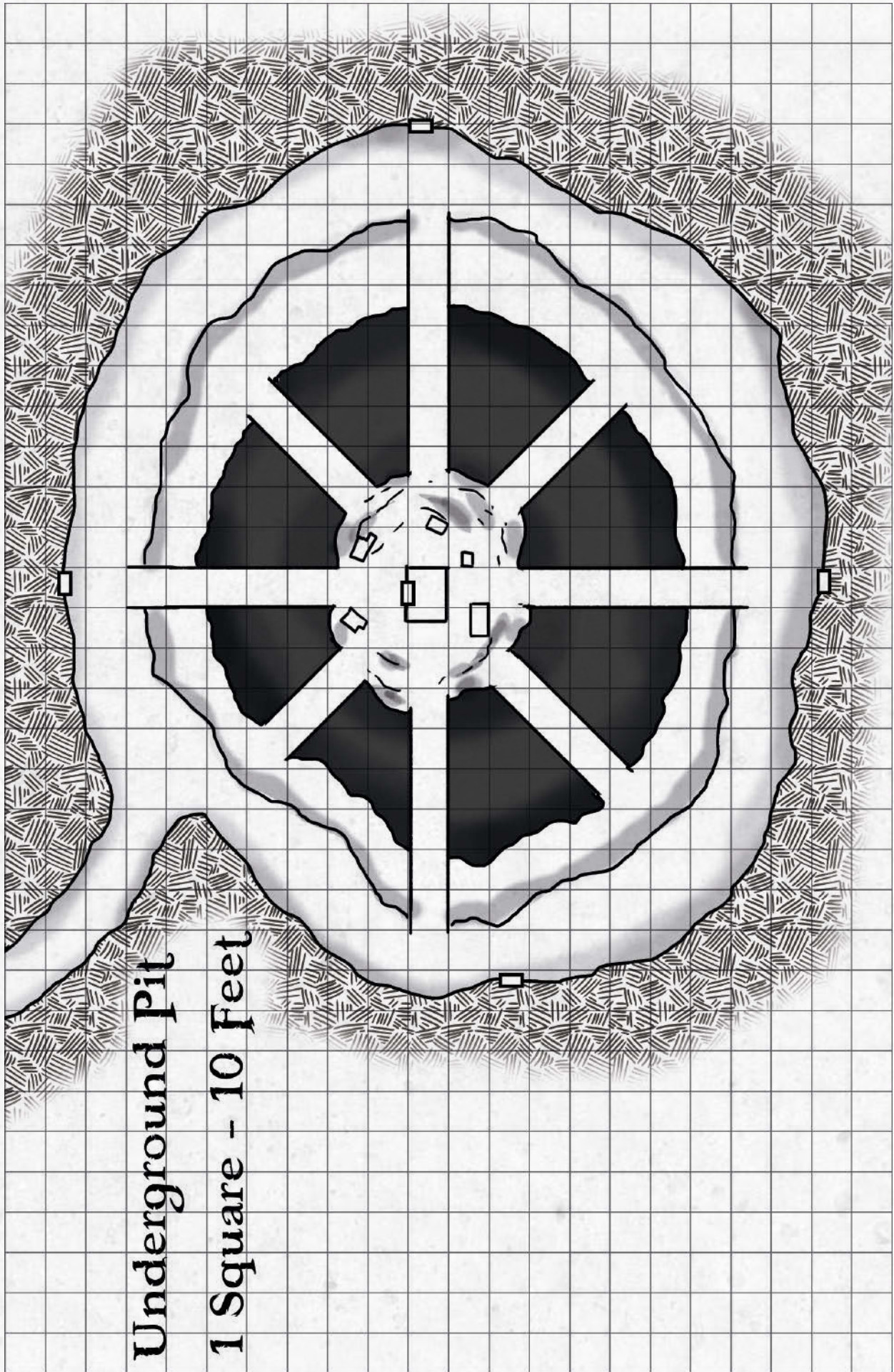
Area 5: Orphanage

Dozens of children were locked into this multi-level home with months of supplies. Caregivers thought the children would be protected from the curse spreading through the Underneath. But like all in Thraken, they were unable to avoid the pestilence that affected all residents, young or old. Two dozen small **zombies**, **skeletons**, and **ghouls** endlessly shuffle around the home. Noise causes the undead children to swarm intruders, targeting the first foe they find.

Underground Pit

1 Square - 10 Feet





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