

WARLOCK

11



TREASURE VAULTS

WARLOCK

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MIDGARD™

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TREASURE VAULTS OF MIDGARD

by Mike Welham

Many are those needing to store wealth, information, and other odds and ends they'd prefer not fall into the hands of thieves. All across Midgard, special repositories are built to this end: difficult to locate and access and often featuring traps and guardians to destroy intruders. Here are detailed but a few of those.

Bemmean Wandering Vault

The Wandering Vault is a semi-sentient construct that roams the Magocracy of Allain. The hexagonal building measures 40 feet on each side and is 20 feet tall. It is invisible and can become ethereal (rendering all creatures and objects within ethereal as well) for 10 rounds as a reaction, so it escapes the notice of most. It crawls on a thousand pairs of metal, millipede-like appendages, giving it a speed of 150 feet. It has a fly speed of 50 feet, and it can take an action to teleport up to 1 mile if an unauthorized creature attempts to breach it. The vault can take an action to attack with its appendages, making up to two attacks per creature within 10 feet of the building (*Walking Appendage*. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 20 (2d10+9) bludgeoning damage).

Very few people outside of the nine archmages of Allain have Bemmean key wands that unlock the vault. A successful

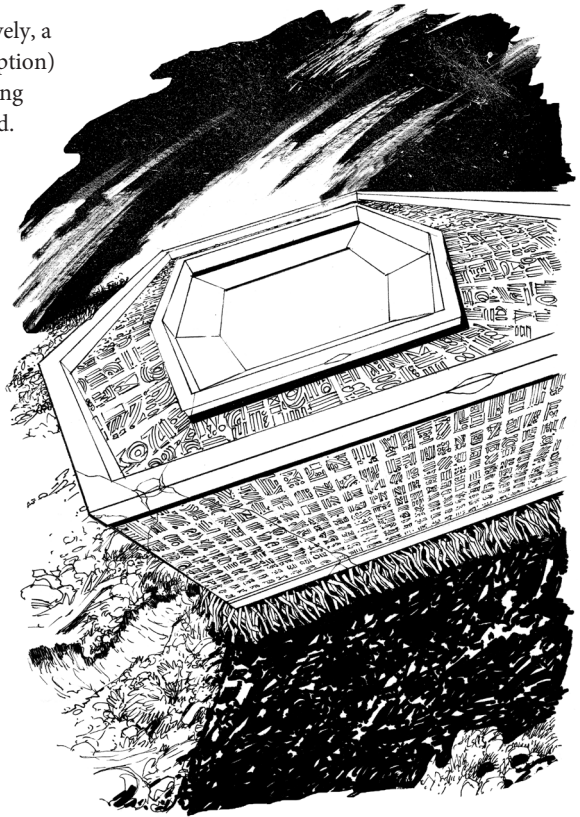
DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check fools the locking mechanism into unlocking while a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools bypasses the locking mechanism. On a failure by 5 or more, the creature making the check is targeted by *disintegrate* as though cast with a 9th-level spell slot.

Entering the vault is easy compared to exploring it. The layout forms a variety of sigils, each of which terminates at the beginning of a new sigil. The confounding paths created by these sigils sometimes overlap, incorporating portions of other sigils and making it difficult to walk each sigil perfectly as required. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns the path of each sigil, which terminates at the beginning of a new sigil. A creature that fails to follow the path must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage (determined randomly) on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Six iron golems patrol the vault's halls and are not required to follow the path of the sigils. The golems challenge all visitors to the vault, but presenting a Bemmean key wand to a patrolling golem allows the bearer and all creatures designated by the bearer to pass freely. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check using an object that requires attunement by a spellcaster

simulates the key wand. Alternatively, a successful DC 22 Charisma (Deception) check tricks the golem into believing the character presented a key wand. Failure on either check causes the iron golem to attack. It fights to the death and pursues creatures until they leave the building. (Note, also, that creatures failing to follow the path of sigils take damage as above.)

The vault is rumored to hold dangerous, powerful magic items and artifacts from the Great Mage Wars as well as ancient grimoires containing horrific knowledge, usually pertaining to the terrible entities roaming the Wasted West. The vault's extreme protections and difficulty to locate support the notion that it contains items the Magocracy does not want to fall into the wrong hands.



Dragon Empire Vaults

Most dragons in the Dragon Empire prefer their hoards easily accessible, either in buildings they own or on their own person, so they can admire their accumulation of wealth. However, paranoid or ostentatious dragons sometimes commission vaults where they store their hoards. Distrustful dragons consider the cost of a vault worth the protection granted by the structure. Flashier dragons see these vaults as a representation of their wealth and practically dare thieves to attempt to break into their vaults and loot them.

Regardless of the purpose for the vaults, the dragons commissioning them also hire kobolds to build diabolical traps. They also bring in drakes to serve as guardians with the promise of a reward (or fulfilling a term of punishment) upon completion of their

service. Coin drakes enjoy living in coin-filled hoards and often protect vaults merely for the pleasure of swimming in the coins contained within.

A vault in the dragon empire typically contains material wealth in the form of coins, gems, and jewels. Powerful dragons also sequester magic items—either items they take a liking to or those capable of harming dragons—in their hoards.

Spike Spike Trap. Kobolds created this two-step trap, which triggers when a creature opens the trapped door or chest. Each spike makes a ranged attack with a +8 bonus against up to four random targets within 20 feet of the trapped item. (The spike does not need to see a creature to attack it.) A target that is hit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity

saving throw to avoid being impaled by the spike. A creature can take an action to remove a spike with a successful DC 12 Strength check. Regardless of the check's success, pulling the spike out inflicts 3 (1d6) damage to the target.

One round later, on initiative count 10, a volley of spikes magnetically attracted to the first group of spikes launches from the other side of the chamber. All creatures within the chamber make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. Creatures impaled by a spike in the previous round have disadvantage on their saving throws.

Prevention: A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check notices holes in the trapped object. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, disabling the firing mechanism. A failure on this check triggers the trap.

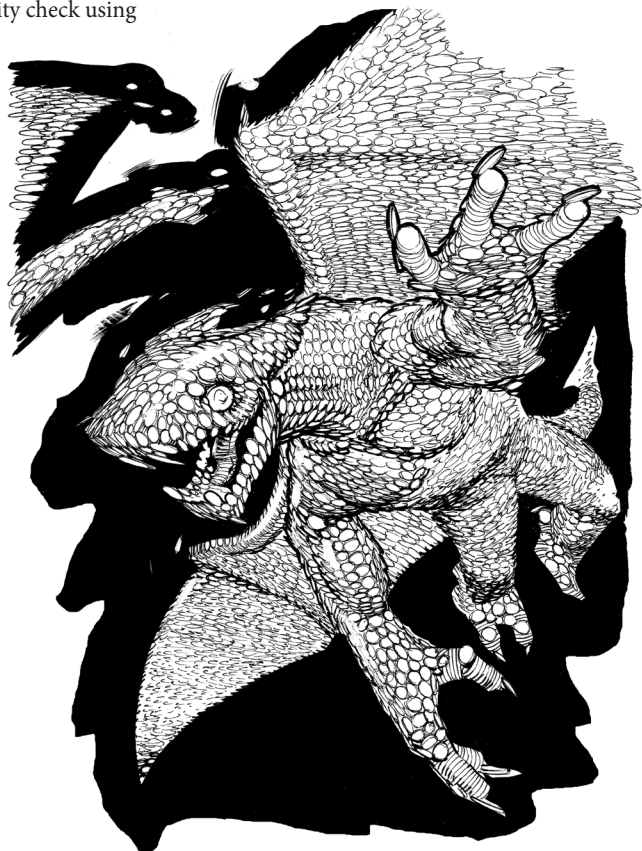
Another successful check spots the holes in the opposite side of the chamber. A successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the second part of the trap. A failure on this check only triggers the second part of the trap.

COIN DRAKE

Layers of coins of all description cover this draconic creature's head, body, and tail. Its teeth and claws appear to be coins filed down to a fine point.

Living Treasure. Coin drakes are their own hoard. When adult drakes produce an egg, they find a suitable pile of coins in which to place the egg. As coin drakes grow older and larger, they add more coins to their bodies and replace coins of lesser value with those of greater value. Coin drakes not associated with another dragon's hoard must constantly replenish coins they lose in combat. When they are killed, they collapse into a heap of coins.

Watchful Wardens. Coin drakes among a pile of coins become attuned to the coins



and can sense movement of those coins. This makes them excellent guardians of coin-filled hoards belonging to more powerful dragons who don't mind the loss of a handful of coins to drakes who must rebuild themselves after a fight.

Coin Dependent. Coin drakes measure 3 feet long and weigh 50 pounds with most of that weight coming from coins. Plucking individual coins from the drakes is difficult, but it sheds them when it engages in vigorous activity. A “naked” coin drake often dies within an hour of losing its last coin, prompting a desperate search for replacements.

COIN DRAKE

Small dragon, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (11d6 + 44)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +5

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, unconscious

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Coin Sense. The coin drake has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on vibrations when a creature comes into contact with coins within 20 feet of the drake.

False Appearance. While the coin drake remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a pile of coins.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The coin drake makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Hurled Coins. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Molten Gold (Recharge 5–6). The coin drake expels gold heated within its body in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) fire damage or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its save is restrained by the rapidly cooling gold. As an action, the creature can make a DC 15 Strength check, breaking free of the gold on a success.

The Frozen Bastion

The northern reaches of Jotunheim hosts the Frozen Bastion, a repository of wealth and devastating weaponry commissioned by Boreas and Loki. A squadron of eighteen **frost giants** guards the lone peak containing the vault. None of the giants are aware of the vault's existence, and they are afraid to inquire about the mountain's contents. They are aware of the **ancient white dragon** dwelling within the mountain and providing additional protection for the vault. The dragon spends most of its time slumbering in its lair, but its rare emergences to hunt for food may alert canny observers to the presence of something significant.

No living creatures guard the vault's interior. Instead, a ghost dragon (see *Creature Codex*) and a dozen quiet souls (see *Creature Codex*) roam the halls. These undead can sense any living creature who enters the vault, and they gather together as a group to attack intruders. Creatures killed by a quiet soul within the Frozen Bastion rise as a new quiet soul one round later, bolstering the guardians' numbers.

The vault is inhospitable to creatures without immunity to cold. A creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the end of each minute spent



within the vault to avoid taking 5 (1d10) cold damage.

Nearly all items contained within the Frozen Bastion are entombed in solid ice. Piles of coins, gems, and jewels, seemingly added to the vault within the past few days, are free of the ice. However, the ice appears to creep inexorably over this newly deposited wealth. A spell or effect that deals fire damage removes a 1-inch layer of ice in the area of the spell or effect for every 10 points of fire damage dealt. Alternatively (or additionally for a weapon that also deals fire damage), 20 points of weapon damage clears an inch of ice. Harming the ice triggers the vault's defense mechanism, which attempts to encase the origin of the spell or effect in ice. A targeted creature must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by ice. An inch of ice forms around the restrained target each round thereafter. Until the ice solidifies, a creature can take an action to make a DC 17 Strength check to free a creature restrained by the ice. After the ice forms, fire or weapon damage is necessary to free the target. A creature stuck in the ice takes 5 (1d10) cold damage. If it dies as a result of the cold damage, it becomes a quiet soul one round later.

Most of the material wealth not sheathed in ice is illusory, owing to Loki's influence in the vault's design. A creature that takes illusory treasure must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom check to disbelieve the illusion. When a creature that failed its save spends this illusory wealth, the illusion fades 1 minute after the treasure is handed over. If this is done in the Northlands, this usually results in a negative status change for the creature and its associates even if the creature makes up for the unintended indiscretion immediately.

The Frozen Bastion is rumored to hold a battleaxe capable of inflicting grievous wounds on cold creatures and able to

wound Boreas. The same rumors say that Boreas cannot destroy the axe, so he keeps it here, out of the hands of his foes.

Treasury of the Maze

This vault, built by the minotaurs below Gramvar on the Serene Isle of Kyprion, was once protected by an honor guard of minotaurs. Its twisty hallways that seemed to turn back on each other also confounded intruders. With the recent razing of Gramvar, however, the vault no longer has its minotaur guardians. Instead, treasure hunters must contend with demons and fiery undead, such as alnaar demons (see *Creature Codex*) and perpetually burning tar ghouls (see *Creature Codex*), to gain access to the vault. Fortunately, none of these unwelcome creatures have been able to reach the vault's treasures at the maze's center.

The maze is nearly impossible for non-minotaurs to navigate. At normal speed and without any unexpected detours, it takes 3 hours to reach the center. Every 10 minutes spent in the maze requires creatures traversing its corridors to succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence check to avoid becoming lost for 20 minutes. On a failure by 5 or more, this period increases to 1 hour. Intruders who managed to evade the minotaurs often succumbed to dehydration and starvation trying to find their way out of the maze. Those who managed to discover the exit often turned themselves over to the minotaurs, so they could receive treatment. For those who decide to rely on devices to mark a path through the maze rather than their wits, the maze has arcane measures in place to destroy physical objects, such as twine, or to erase chalk markings and the like.

The vault at the center of the maze is not unprotected as a pair of stone golems crafted to look like hulking minotaurs

wielding massive axes stand sentry. (These golems replace one of their slam attacks with a battleaxe attack, dealing the equivalent amount of slashing damage as their slam attacks.) The golems are programmed to inform non-minotaur visitors they are prohibited to enter the vault. Minotaurs can freely pass the sentries and designate others to enter the vault. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check allows passage as well, but a failure on this check provokes the golems to attack. They otherwise do not attack unless a creature attempts to pass by them or attacks one of them. Once engaged, one of the golems pursues fleeing creatures while the other remains at its post. The golems can navigate the maze without difficulty.

The vault is rumored to contain weapons and relics important to the minotaurs and brought to Kypriion by minotaurs fleeing Kadralthu and Roshgazi. One such item of great significance is the Ivory Comb of Hecate.

Treetop Vault of Tomierran

Many people envision vaults as structures locked away underground, but the elves of the Tomierran Forest have chosen an equally inaccessible location for their treasure repository among the boughs of the forest's taller trees, standing in the shadow of the corrupt World Tree.

Accessing the vault initially requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to find the correct branches to traverse and a successful DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check to ascend the branches. Eight additional checks, each requiring 10 minutes' worth of work, are necessary to reach the vault, and each check increases the DC by 1. Failing the Wisdom (Survival) check by less than 5 delays the journey by 10 minutes as no progress is made while failing the check by 5 or more requires the first creature

attempting its Strength (Acrobatics) check to succeed on a Dexterity saving throw at the same DC as the Wisdom (Survival) check or fall a distance equal to 10 feet times the save DC value. Failing the Strength (Athletics) check by 5 or more results in the same fall without a chance for a saving throw.

The vault is open to the sky, which makes it accessible to flying creatures. The vault is cleverly concealed, so a DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check notices it from above. Additionally, twenty rocs patrol the skies around the vault and attack unauthorized creatures. Finally, if an unauthorized creature flies into the vault, a dispel magic spell cast using an 8th-level spell slot targets the creature.

Navigation within the vault is fraught with danger as the leafy boughs conceal holes that result in fatal falls. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Survival) check notes these locations. If a creature travels more than 5 feet in a round and does not notice these empty spaces, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall 180 feet.

A cadre of fourteen wood golems (see *Creature Codex*) patrols the vault and has no difficulty navigating the treetop branches. These wood golems can make a special slam attack that pushes a target back 5 feet on a hit if the target fails a DC 16 Strength saving throw. If the target fails its Strength saving throw, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall 180 feet.

The Treetop Vault is rumored to contain ancient elven treasures left behind by the elves when they abandoned the forest. Additionally, the vault allegedly holds cultivars of animated plants, such as treants and wood golems. According to the rumors, tending these cultivars will produce full-grown specimens that follow the commands of the creature tending them.

TREASURES OF PERUN'S DAUGHTER

by Lysa Chen

Of threatened by raiding centaurs, dragon legions, and the bandits of the Ruby Despotate, the Duchy of Perun's Daughter doesn't take kindly to outsiders too curious about what lies in Perunalia's vaults and armories—especially those who gawk at the duchy's leadership of powerful women. Societies dominated by men are dominated too by their rampant emotions: envy, greed, rage. Waging war to capture the coveted treasures of their neighbors seems ridiculous to the matriarchal Perunalian despite its common practice. They believe it's much more sensible to nurture a legacy of culture, education, and invention. This rare peek at Perunalia's bounty has been pieced together by accounts from the Crossroads's noble daughters who've attended Perunalia's academies and Zobeck merchants who've crossed paths with Perunalian traders.

Daughters of War and Thunder

Perunalia is ruled by the demigod Vasilka Soulay, the daughter of Perun, god of war and thunder. Although Vasilka is a woman of wisdom and learning, she is also a goddess of great courage, and Perunalia's warrior women—whether paladins of the

Order of the White Lions or archers for whom Perunalia is famed—are quite adept at defending the duchy. Their natural and trained skills are aided by masterfully crafted items and by relics discovered in Sephaya, the current capital city and former ancient city of the elves.

ANCIENT SEPHAYAN BOW

Weapon (longbow), uncommon

Perunalian historians believe these longbows uncovered in the trees of Sephaya were crafted by elves who lived in an ancient city on the same land. The wood does not match any found in the plentiful gardens of Perunalia's capitol city, and the true origins of these bows—flexible and light yet sturdy and strong—remains a mystery.

This longbow does not have the heavy property.

ARCH OF THE TEMPEST

Weapon (longbow), legendary, requires attunement

Some say the master bowyers of Perunalia gained the knowledge to craft these longbows as a gift from Perun himself. Others say the boldest women of Perunalia stared into the heart of the storm without fear and learned to harness its power themselves.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a target with the longbow, it takes an extra 3d6 thunder damage.

Righteous Lightning. The longbow has 3 charges. When you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon, you can expend a charge to cause a stroke of lightning 5 feet wide to blast after your arrow in a straight line ending at your target. Each creature in the line, including your target, must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 8d6 lightning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. The longbow regains all expended charges at dawn.

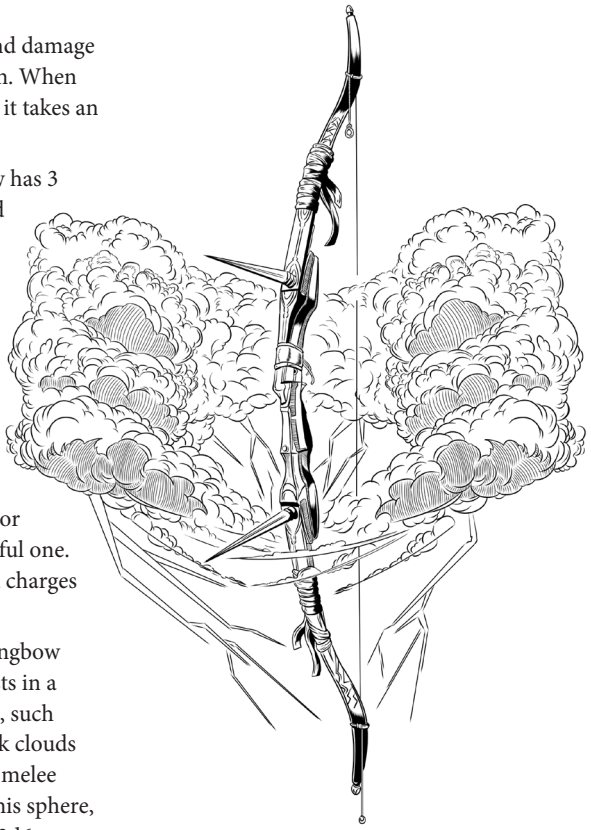
Avatar of the Storm. When the longbow is fully charged, its power manifests in a 10-foot-radius sphere around you, such as swirling winds or crackling dark clouds above you. When you are hit by a melee attack and the attacker is within this sphere, you can use your reaction to deal 3d6 lightning damage to the attacker.

For Perunalia! Only those native to Perunalia can wield this weapon freely. If you are not native, when you attune or break attunement to this bow, you must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 100 (10d10 + 45) thunder damage or half as much damage on a success.

ARROW OF GRABBING

Weapon (arrow), very rare

This arrow has a barbed head and is wound with a fine but strong thread that unravels as the arrow soars. If a creature takes damage from the arrow, the creature must succeed a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 4d6 damage and have the arrowhead lodged in its flesh.



A creature grabbed by this arrow cannot move farther away from you. At the end of its turn, the creature can attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 4d6 piercing damage and dislodging the arrow on a success.

As an action, you can attempt to pull the grabbed creature up to 10 feet in a straight line toward you, forcing the creature to reattempt the saving throw. If the creature fails, you can move it.

ARROW OF UNPLEASANT HERBS

Weapon (arrow), rare

Perunalia is known for its botanists who use their skills to beautify the duchy's many gardens and to create healing and helpful potions and poultices. But their discovery

of more “unpleasant” herbs doesn’t go to waste. Handle these arrows carefully. Their arrowheads are rubbed with poisonous leaves.

If a creature takes damage from the arrow, it must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failed save, the creature spends its next turn retching and reeling.

BLOODBOW

Weapon (longbow), rare (requires attunement)

A fresh *bloodbow* is carved of a light, sturdy wood such as hickory or yew, but to reach its full potential, a *bloodbow* must be stained in the blood of creatures it has slain. You’re more likely to see a *bloodbow* in a deep maroon hue, lacquered and aged under layers of sundried blood and sometimes embellished with dragonborn teeth, centaur tails, or other battle trophies. Perunalians use these weapons to make their enemies’ blood boil into madness.

Bloodbows affect creatures of the type with whose blood the weapon was last soaked. When you make a ranged attack roll with this magic weapon against a creature of that type, you have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. If the attack hits, your target must succeed a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become enraged until the end of your next turn. While enraged, the target suffers a short-term madness effect.

Bloodbows most commonly are soaked in the blood of bandits, dragonborn, and other humanoids. If you soak this weapon in the blood of a different creature type, the *bloodbow* immediately ceases to affect the previous type. The bow affects the new type after a long rest.

CLOAK OF THE WHITE LIONS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This cloak is woven with crisp white and shining silver threads to create the image of a roaring female lion’s head. While wearing this cloak, you have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of your allies is within 5 feet of the creature and isn’t incapacitated.

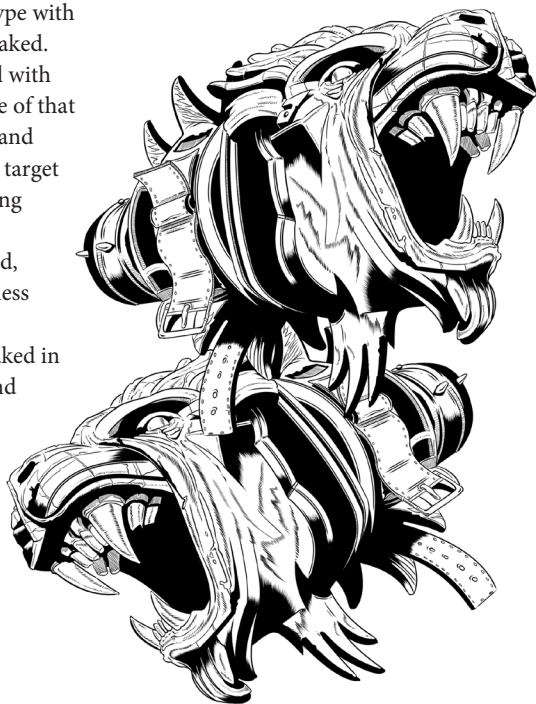
While wearing the cloak, you can use your action to cast *polymorph* on yourself, transforming into a lion. While you are in the form of the lion, you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. The cloak can’t be used this way again until the next dawn.

GAUNTLETS OF THE WHITE LIONS

Wondrous item, uncommon

(requires attunement by a paladin)

The female paladins of the Order of the White Lions defend their lands against the onslaught of warring men. These



gauntlets—steel cast in the shape of lions' heads and polished to a nearly white gleam—strengthen their divine powers for this cause.

While you wear these gauntlets, when you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack and use your Divine Smite feature, the damage increases by 1d8 if the target is an evil humanoid, to a maximum of 6d8.

PERUNALIAN TRAINING BOW

Weapon (shortbow), uncommon

For girls in Perunalia, beginning one's archery training is a rite of passage at the age of 14. Families send their daughters to the best archery schools throughout the lands, and mothers traditionally gift their daughters' first bows and arrows at this age.

This bow has 5 charges. When you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon and miss the target, you can expend 1 charge and reroll the die. Alternatively, when you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon, you can expend 3 charges to forgo rolling the d20 to get a 13 on the die. The bow regains 1d4 charges daily at dawn.

PERUNALIAN TRAINING QUIVER

Wondrous item, uncommon

The wealthy families of Perunalia ensure their daughters are equipped with everything they need before sending them away to archery academies. In addition to holding your standard arrows, these *training quivers* have extra adventuring gear any young warrior might need.

As an action, you can reach into the quiver and request adventuring gear worth up to 50 gp. Roll 1d100. If you roll higher than the numerical value of the cost of that item, you find it in your quiver. For example, if an item costs 5 cp, you must roll 6 or higher. If an item costs 50 gp, you must roll 51 or higher. The quiver cannot be used in this way again until the next dawn.

Once you've pulled 5 items from the quiver, it becomes a non-magical quiver.

The Duchess's Fair

All of Perunalia's archers put their skills on display at this famous summer fair and tournament. Archers earn colorful feathers that are markers of their warrior rank. These tiny feathered objects have a single-use effect, after which they become mere decorations—more motivation for archers to return to the tournament each year to earn new feathers.

CLOUD FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, uncommon

This *feather token* is shaped like a white cloud. You can use an action to step on the token, which expands into a 10-foot-diameter cloud that immediately begins to rise slowly to a height of 20 feet. Any creatures standing on the cloud rise with it. The cloud disappears after 10 minutes, and anything that was on the cloud falls slowly to the ground.

DARK OF THE MOON FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, rare

This feather token is shaped like a black moon. As an action, you can brush the feather over a willing creature's eyes to grant it the ability to see in the dark. For 1 hour, that creature has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet, including in magical darkness.

GRAND MAIDEN'S FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, legendary

The annual winner of the Duchess's Fair is deemed the Grand Maiden. This multi-colored *feather token* is shaped like the flag of Perunalia: a red flag with a roaring white lion and a blue thunderbolt. While carrying this token, you gain a +2

bonus to ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls.

As an action, you can choose one of the following effects:

- **Tear off a red feather.** You are immune to all damage for 10 minutes.
- **Tear off a white feather.** Allies within 30 feet of you regain hit points equal to half of their maximum hit points.
- **Tear off a blue feather.** Furious lightning and showers of arrows strike to the ground at four different points you can see within 1 mile. Each creature in a 40-foot-radius sphere centered on each point you choose must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 20d6 lightning damage and 20d6 piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

HELD HEART FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, very rare

A Perunalian warrior bearing the red feather has mastered her weapon. This feather token is shaped like red heart held aloft by a hand. While carrying this token, your initiative rolls have advantage. As an action, you can press the feather against a willing creature. The target regains all its hit points.

A Center of Culture, Art, and Trade

Although Perunaliens' mastery of war brings them renown, the women of Perunalia find more joy in the pursuit of education, the study of art, and the trade of their gentler bounties: fish and oysters, gardening, fine jewel work, and more. The merchants of Zobeck to the northwest speak highly of shrewd Perunalian traders and their wares.

BOOK SHROUD

Wondrous item, uncommon

They say there are two sides to every story, and hidden in the Perunalian Palatial Library's shelves, there are some books that prove this truer than ever. While browsing tomes of ancient lore, you might happen upon a book spine whose title seems to shift and shimmer. This book might be hiding its true knowledge beneath a *book shroud*.

When not bound to a book, this red leather cover is embossed with images of eyes on every inch of its surface. Once wrapped around a tome, it shifts the book's appearance to a plain red cover with a title of your choosing and blank pages on which you can write.

When viewing the wrapped book, other creatures see the plain red version with any contents you've written. A creature succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check sees the real book and can remove the shroud.

EARRINGS OF THE STORM OYSTER

*Wondrous item, very rare
(requires attunement)*

When storms pass through Perunalia and lightning strikes the Argent River, Perunalia's fishers know to check for oysters washed ashore, for they might hold rare storm-touched pearls with a characteristic deep blue hue. Only the duchy's finest jewelers can afford to craft with such a coveted material, and rarely do they get ahold of more than one or two such pearls. As such, often these blue pearls are fashioned into earrings.

While wearing these earrings, you gain the following benefits:

- You have resistance to cold, lightning, and thunder damage.
- You can understand Primordial. When it is spoken, the pearls echo the words

in a language you can understand, at a whisper only you can hear.

- You cannot be deafened.
- You can breathe air and water.
- Once per day, you can cast the spell *sleet storm* (DC 13). Once used, this property of the earrings can't be used again until the next dawn.

INSTRUMENT OF VASILKA'S BLESSING

Wondrous item, legendary
(requires attunement by a bard)

Although her father is the god of war and thunder, Vasilka takes after her human mother Illyena and spends her time in contemplation and study. She is a patroness of learning and the arts and holds bards in high esteem, hoping to entice more female bards to her capitol city Sephaya. Bards whose music moves Vasilka are gifted powerful instruments bestowed with her divine favor. A creature that attempts to play the instrument without being attuned to it with Vasilka's blessing must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 6d4 psychic damage.

One Woman Band. This item can transform into any musical instrument. As an action, you can transform the instrument into the form of any with which you are proficient.

Legendary Performer. While attuned to this instrument, you have advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks.

Vasilka's Divine Magic. You can use an action to play the instrument and cast one of its spells: *bless*, *calm emotions*, *control weather*, *death ward*, *guardian of faith*, *mass heal*, *sanctuary*. Once the instrument has been used to cast a spell, it can't be used to cast that spell again until the next dawn. The spells use your spellcasting ability and spell save DC.

LOOM OF FATE

Wondrous item, rare

Although many women who flee the Despotate or the Magdar Kingdom to the duchy's borders join Perunalia's army as soldiers, nearly as many find a livelihood as weavers. Beautiful woven cloth is one of Perunalia's chief exports. This portable frame loom is appropriate for adventurers with a taste for arts and crafts as well and offers insight into why Perunalia's fabric is so valued.

If you spend 1 hour weaving on this loom, roll 1d20 and record the number rolled. You can replace any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, made by you or a creature that you can see, with this roll. You must choose to do so before the roll. The loom can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Once you have used the loom 3 times, the fabric is complete, and the loom is no longer magical. The fabric becomes a shifting tapestry that represents your adventures those 3 days.

WHITE DANDELIONS

Wondrous item, common

These fluffy white flowers are the bane of many a Perunalian botanist as they seem to wage war against a carefully curated garden with the same efficacy of any Perunalian warrior. However, Perunalians also associate the flower with their protectors, the Order of the White Lions, and Perunalia's children gleefully blow on the flowers' seeds to spread their good omen, much to the botanist's chagrin.

Perhaps there is something to their reputation as protectors. As a reaction, you can choose for the *white dandelion* to explode in a flurry of seeds that distract your attacker, adding a +1 bonus immediately to a saving throw or to your armor class until the start of your next turn. Once it is used in this way, the remaining flower stem wilts.

11 MAGIC STAVES OF MIDGARD

by Marc Radle

Magical staves are among the most sought-after magic items for many spellcasters. In Midgard, there are a number of unique magical staves, many with rich histories and lore.

SPELL SOURCES

While many magical staff spells are found in the SRD, those marked with an asterisk (*) appear in the Midgard *Heroes Handbook*.

CRYSTAL STAFF

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

A staff carved from a single piece of solid crystal, it has numerous reflective facets that produce a strangely hypnotic effect.

These strange magical staves were relatively common in the Valeran Empire before its fall and in Ankeshel during its golden age. Today, those few crystal staves that remain can be found almost anywhere in Midgard.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *color spray* (1 charge), *hypnotic pattern* (3 charges), *confound senses** (3 charges), *confusion* (4 charges), *jeweled fissure** (3 charge), *prismatic ray** (5 charges), or *prismatic spray* (7 charges).

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the crystal shatters, destroying the staff and dealing 2d6 piercing damage to anyone in a 10-foot radius.

SERPENT STAFF

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Fashioned from twisted ash wood, this staff's head is carved in the realistic likeness of a serpent preparing to strike.

Serpent staves are often found in the hands of lamia sorcerers in Kush and Nuria Natal and among the serpent-scholars of Lignas.

You have resistance to poison damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *poisoned volley** (2 charges), or *protection from poison* (2 charges).

Serpent form: You can use an action and expend 2 charges to assume the shape of a beast (snake only) that has a challenge rating of 2 or lower. You can remain in this form for up to 1 minute. You can revert to your normal form before then by using an action. Otherwise, treat as the druid's Wildshape ability.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the carved snake head twists and magically consumes the rest of the staff, immediately destroying it.

SPIDER STAFF

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Delicate web-like designs are carved into the wood of this twisted staff, which is often topped with the carved likeness of a spider.

Said to have been created in the Southlands by mages loyal to the Spider Prophet, these magical staves are occasionally encountered in regions far from that windswept desert land.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *spider climb* (2 charges) or *web* (2 charges).

Spider Swarm: While holding the staff, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to cause a swarm of spiders to appear in a space that you can see within 60 feet. The swarm of spiders remains for 1 minute, until you dismiss it as an action, or until you move more than 100 feet away from it.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a swarm of spiders appears and consumes the staff and then vanishes.

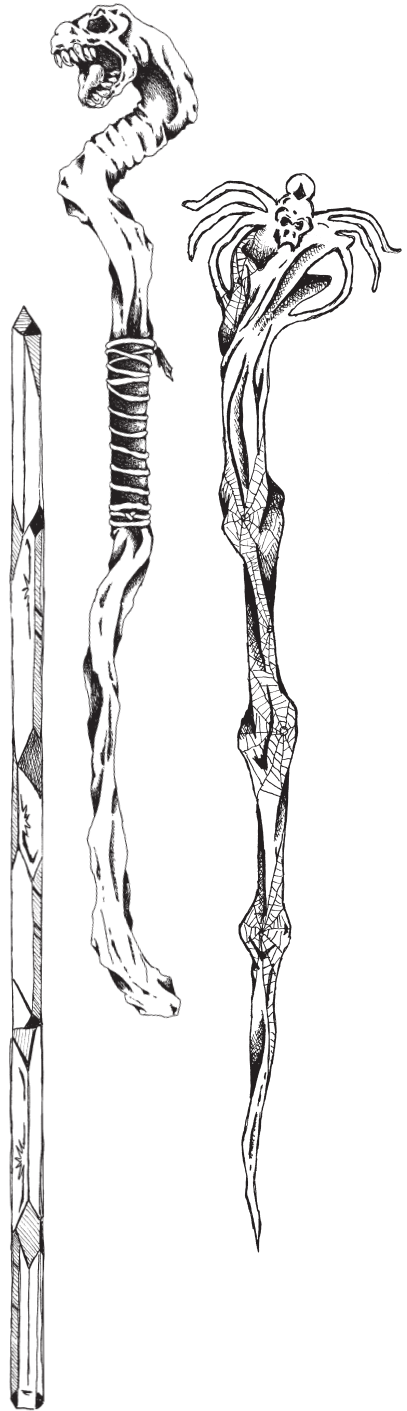
STAFF OF BINDING

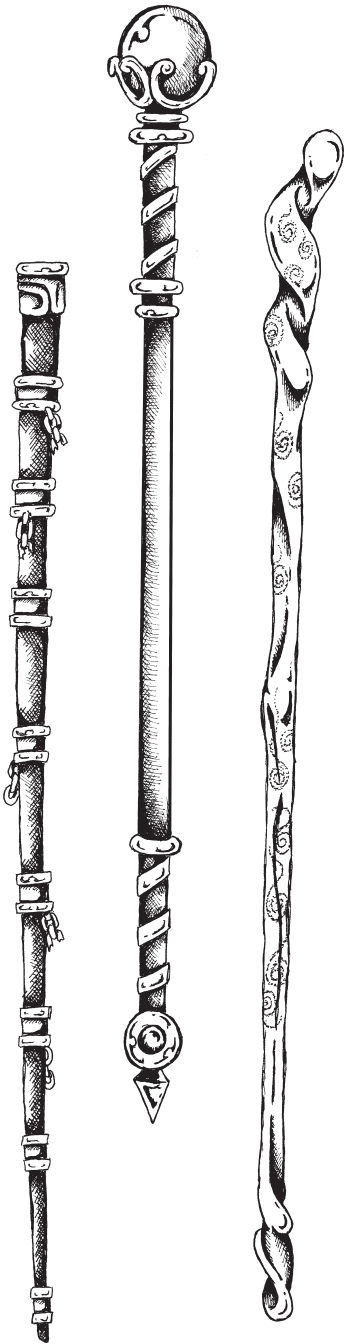
Staff, rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Made from stout oak with steel bands and bits of chain running its entire length, the staff feels oddly heavy.

First known in the magocracies before the collapse, there are still a few of these staves in Bemmea and Bourgund today.

This staff has 10 charges.





Spells: While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *arcane lock* (2 charges), *hold monster* (5 charges), *hold person* (2 charges), *lock armor** (2 charge), or *planar binding* (5 charges).

Unbound: While holding the staff, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and gain advantage on a saving throw you make to avoid being paralyzed or restrained.

The staff regains $1d6 + 4$ expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff constricts in upon itself and is destroyed.

STAFF OF SCRYING

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This is a graceful, highly polished wooden staff crafted from willow. A crystal ball tops the staff, and smooth gold bands twist around its shaft.

The first known reports of these staves come from the courts of the Grand Duchy and the Seven Cities, especially Friula, Triolo and Capleon, but they can now be found in almost every part of Midgard.

This staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *detect thoughts* (2 charges), *locate creature* (4 charges), *locate object* (2 charges), *scrying* (5 charges), *true seeing* (6 charges).

The staff regains $1d6 + 4$ expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a bright flash of light erupts from the crystal ball and the staff vanishes.

STAFF OF THE FOUR WINDS

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Made of gently twisting ash and engraved with spiraling runes, the staff feels strangely lighter than its size would otherwise suggest.

First created in Kel Azjer, a secluded mountaintop city in the Southlands region known as the Dominion of the Wind Lords, these staves can be found throughout most of Midgard due to the network of magical Red Portals located within the city.

This staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *circle of wind** (1 charge), *feather fall* (1 charge), *gust of wind* (2 charges), *Perun's doom** (3 charges), *wind wall* (3 charges), *wind walk* (6 charges), *wind tunnel** (1 charge), or *wresting wind** (2 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *wind lash** cantrip from the staff without using any charges.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff crumbles into ashes and is taken away with the breeze.

STAFF OF THE WHITE NECROMANCER

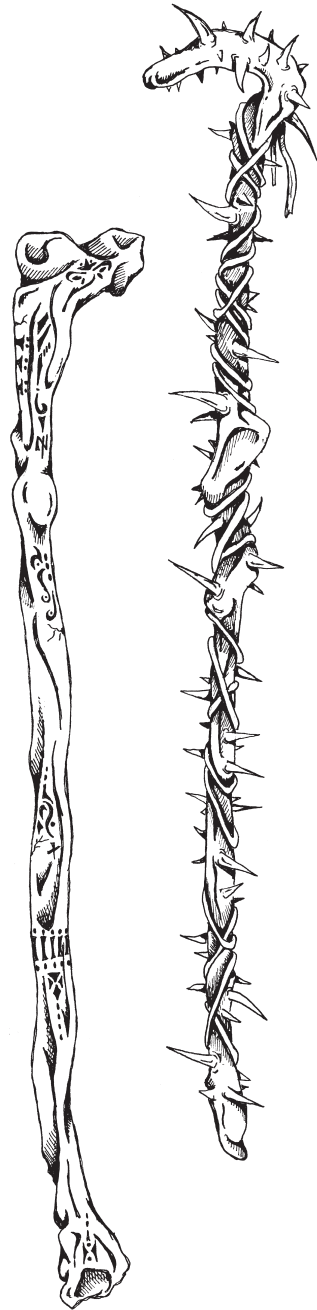
Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a cleric, sorcerer, or wizard of a non-evil alignment)

Crafted from polished bone, this strange staff is carved with numerous arcane symbols and mystical runes.

These rare and powerful staves originate from the gravebinders of Siwal in the Southlands, though they have been reported in the possession of powerful white necromancers as far away as Valera and Trombei.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *false life* (1 charge), *gentle riposte* (2 charges), *heartstop** (2 charges), *death ward* (4 charges), *raise dead* (5 charges), *revivify* (3 charges), *shared sacrifice** (2 charges), *speak with dead* (3 charges).



You can also use an action to cast the *bless the dead** cantrip from the staff without using any charges.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the bone staff crumbles to dust.

STAFF OF THORNS

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This gnarled and twisted oak staff has numerous thorns growing from its surface. Green vines tightly wind their way up along the shaft.

The origin of these staves is unknown, though many say that the first such staves came from the druids of Verrayne.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend up to 3 of its charges. For each charge you expend, the target takes an extra 1d6 piercing damage.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *barkskin* (2 charges), *entangle* (1 charge), *speak with plants* (3 charge), *spike growth* (2 charge), *vine trestle** (2 charges), or *wall of thorns* (6 charges)

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the thorns immediately fall from the staff and it becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.

STAFF OF WINTER AND ICE

Staff, legendary (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This pure white, pine staff is topped with an ornately faceted shard of ice. The entire staff is cold to the touch.

Crafted in the Northlands, there were once many of these staves. Now, there are only five known to exist. One is rumored to lie somewhere in the great ice castle of the frost giant jarl, Holgi the Grim; another is said to be in the possession of the trollkin sorcerer Ulraag the White; a third staff was last seen among the hoard of the fearsome white dragon Gelidaxis; the whereabouts of the remaining two are not currently known.

You have resistance to cold damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 20 charges

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *Boreas's breath** (2 charges), *curse of Boreas** (6 charges), *ice storm* (4 charges), *flurry** (1 charge), *freezing fog** (3 charges), *frostbite** (5 charges), *frozen razors** (3 charges), *gliding step** (1 charge), *sleet storm* (3 charges), *wall of ice* (6 charges), *cone of cold* (5 charges), *freezing sphere* (6 charges), *snow boulder** (4 charges), *triumph of ice** (7 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *chill touch* or *ray of frost* cantrips from the staff without using any charges.

Retributive Strike: You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it.

You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to a random plane of existence, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid

the effect, you take cold damage equal to $16 \times$ the number of charges in the staff.

Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of cold damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

DISTANCE FROM ORIGIN	DAMAGE
10 ft. away or closer	$8 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
11–20 ft. away	$6 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
21–30 ft. away	$4 \times$ the number of charges in the staff

The staff regains $2d8 + 4$ expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its resistance to cold damage but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains $1d8 + 2$ charges.

STONE STAFF

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Sturdy and smooth, this impressive staff is crafted from solid stone. Most stone staves are crafted by dwarf mages and few ever find their way into non-dwarven hands.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *earthskimmer** (4 charges), *entomb** (6 charges), *flesh to stone* (6 charges), *meld into stone* (3 charges), *spire of stone** (2 charges), *stone shape* (4 charges), *stone skin* (4 charges), or *wall of stone* (5 charges).



You can also use an action to cast the *pummelstone** cantrip from the staff without using any charges.

The staff regains $1d6 + 4$ expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, hundreds of cracks appear across the staff's surface and it crumbles into tiny bits of stone.

UMBRAL STAFF

Staff, legendary (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

Made of twisted darkwood and covered in complex runes and sigils, this powerful and sought-after staff seems to emanate darkness.

There have only been three umbral staffs known in the world. Rergrith, a powerful centaur warlock of the Rothenian Plain possesses one of the staves; a mysterious shadowmancer known only as *The Night That Walks* is said to have one; and the last is thought to be lost somewhere within the fallen magocracies of the Western Wastes.

You have resistance to radiant damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 20 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *become nightwing** (6 charges), *black hand** (4 charges), *black ribbons** (1 charge), *black well** (6 charges), *cloying darkness** (1 charge), *cloak of shadow** (1 charge), *darkvision* (2 charges), *darkness* (2 charges), *dark dementing** (5 charges), *dark path** (2 charges), *darkbolt** (2 charges), *encroaching shadows** (6 charges), *night terrors** (4 charges), *shadow armor** (1 charge), *shadow hands** (1 charge), *shadow puppets** (2 charges), or *slither** (2 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *claws of darkness**, *shadow blindness**, or *douse light** cantrips from the staff without using any charges.

Retributive Strike: You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion of darkness (as the darkness spell) that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it.

You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to the Plane of Shadow, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid the effect, you take force damage equal to $16 \times$ the number of charges in the staff.

Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

DISTANCE FROM ORIGIN	DAMAGE
10 ft. away or closer	$8 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
11–20 ft. away	$6 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
21–30 ft. away	$4 \times$ the number of charges in the staff

The staff regains $2d8 + 4$ expended charges daily at midnight. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its ability to cast the *claws of darkness**, *shadow blindness**, or *douse light** cantrips but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains $1d8 + 2$ charges.

RANDOM TREASURE

STAFF	% ROLL
Crystal Staff	01–11
Serpent Staff	12–23
Spider Staff	24–35
Staff of Binding	36–45
Staff of the Four Winds	46–53
Staff of Scrying	54–63
Staff of Thorns	64–73
Staff of the White Necromancer	74–85
Staff of Winter and Ice	86–87
Stone Staff	88–98
Umbral Staff	99–00

THE DARKEST VAULTS OF THE GREAT MAZE

by Richard Pett

A maze within a maze within a maze... Every minotaur whispers its name, senses its presence, wonders at its complexity, its enigma, its beauty—the First Labyrinth.

To them, the Plane of the Great Labyrinth is just one facet of all mazes, and all mazes are one. Their darkest secrets, their greatest treasures, their deadliest dangers, all may be found beyond the next turn or through the next portal.

The First Labyrinth—maze of the world, cradle of convolution, and insanity of endless complexity—is one of the great mazes of the world. Or maybe it's one aspect of all mazes given form in Midgard. For now, the First Labyrinth may be the most unstill of all mazes. Through the Plane of the Great Labyrinth, the Great Maze touches every maze in existence, senses kinship and reaches out: touches, sometimes binds, absorbs, embraces, often fleeing, occasionally forever.

The First Labyrinth is in the Southlands city of Roshgazi but exists everywhere. The city decays on the shores of the Middle Sea, her towers torn by dragons 300 years ago, her soul fractured like that of her guardian and ward, the enigmatic and shattered Heart of the First Labyrinth. The Heart

reaches into the dreams of minotaurs, haunts them, teases them, guides them, yet it is insane. One face of the Heart is called the Poet: wise and benevolent, it seeks to bring aid to repair its fractured home. The dark face is called Broken, which still believes the war with dragons goes on in the city streets above and reaches out, claws outward to draw aid into the First Labyrinth for the battle that rages only inside its mind. And to its fractured mind, that aid can take so many different forms.

The madness is spreading. Yearning for aid, it stumbles blindly around every corner of every maze searching.

Mazuli Sul (the Heart's name in the native tongue of minotaurs) thus gropes outward, ever searching for help, opening portals into mazes that should be left undisturbed and unknown. Mazes grow into mazes, ways become confused, complex, unpredictable. The greatest maze-conjuring minotaur priests have an inkling of the dangers this holds—accidents in their own summonings have taught them that no maze is ever truly tamed—and they whisper tales of dread but also tales of vaults groaning with secrets, magic, and treasure. These vaults may be encountered around any turn in the most mundane dungeon or simplest

maze. There is therefore an endless vigil, watching alert for what the Heart has drawn to its bosom to aid the minotaurs and thus potentially reap their destruction through desperation. They call these vaults the Dark Vaults of the Great Maze.

The Plane of the Great Labyrinth is endless and so is the potential for these dark corners. A few are listed below, but in truth, when maze links maze, there is no knowing what may lurk beyond the next turn...

Belphegor's Penance

Do archdevils dream?

In their endless plotting and hate, do thoughts come unbidden to them? Paranoid, powerful, hungry, what crooked wants lurks behind those demented minds? Is there any doubt? Is there any fear?

Belphegor once had a dream—or more correctly a nightmare. In his nightmare,

Belphegor (see *Creature Codex*) was stripped of his beloved Prime, his steed and citadel and love, and cast back to the terrible pit from which he crawled an eternity ago. In that pit, his fears were laid bare: his terror, his desires, his misery. And that suffering was given flesh, a wretched, pitiful man thing that sobbed as it dragged its flaccid wings behind its emaciated form.

But when Belphegor awoke, the nightmare did not go. The given flesh and form and pain lay humble and broken before him. So quite naturally, the archdevil tore it to pieces and wondered in its dark heart who

had caused it. They would suffer as only an enemy of an archdevil can.

Alas, it returned to his dreams and grew flesh anew, and each time the archdevil tore the thing apart, it came back stronger, slowly taking pieces of the archdevil with it—memories, desires, hungers. Strength. His twin, his alter ego, grew, and Belphegor knew he would never be free of it.

Belphegor spoke to his beloved Prime, anger of toil—the thing of bones and metal and hate—and Prime whispered a plan. *Build again*, it impeached. *Build a prison about your shadow that it can never escape*



from and where nothing can ever find it to use against you.

It called the prison Belphegor's Penance.

The Penance is alive, alive with wickedness in its cat's cradle of gears and gates and traps and structures, a maze with a dark secret. Shambling constructs roam its endless levels: crooked gorgons with too many heads, pale golems made of the flesh of things that have never cast a shadow. In mockery of his own crooked shadow, his unwanted twin, Belphegor flensed his skin and gave it life, gave it hunger and lidless eyes that never tire of their watch. And there within, in a tower within a maze within a citadel, lurks the true Penance of Belphegor, his alter ego, his intimate, his shame, a thing that calls itself the Shadow of Belphegor—a wretched sickly thing that embroils all the terrors and paranoia of an archdevil. And in its terror, it wears the skin to keep it safe, crooked limbs to fend off foes and bloated eyes that forever seek escape from its vile guardians.

And one night, the dream of Belphegor entered the dream of Broken.

Broken sensed the awful power at the other end of that vision, a twisted kinship in the constructed maze with a dark brooding purpose and anger. And one day, Broken reached out, and the First Labyrinth touched the Penance...

Now fronds of its demented limbs caress the First Labyrinth, grope in the darkness, the great mazes somehow sensing kin, wanting to embrace. For now, such couplings have been rare—a scent upon the air of maze walkers of oil and flesh and torment, confinement beyond counting in mortal time. Screams made with mouths that have never seen the sun. Tales from demented things that lurk in the deepest parts of the Plane of the Great Labyrinth tell of something out there in the dark that is a prison, but for what?

And alas, for Belphegor also senses this and fears a joining, fears that his Penance

will be breached, violated. And that cannot happen. He sends his own crooked creations into the aspects of the Great Labyrinth to seek, to cut these ties, to break these limbs, and to destroy the thing that seeks to embrace his misery—Broken itself.

The Bastion: The Great Folly or Cathedral of Iasona

There is a poem called the *Epic of Iasona* that is sung by minotaurs on their darkest festivals and mid-winter nights. The tale of a cold, immortal priestess of Hecate who has spent her years constructing a maze of such astonishing beauty and terror that minotaurs often weep merely at its mention. In the poem, the Bastion exists partly above and partly below ground and grows constantly. An army of minotaur craftsmen (many of which are slaves but some who work for joy) and a host of undead minotaurs ruled by Iasona toil endlessly to grow the vast cathedral. It is built in honor of Hecate, yet the priestess oddly twists the doctrines and philosophies of the Lady of Sighs and Tears. Iasona extolls the view that everything that is not minotaur is an enemy of the minotaur—or will be one day—and her twisted vision of Hecate has caused her to seek to spread her glory in her own cold, mistaken way.

The Folly (as some minotaurs refer to it mockingly) is vast, a hymn in stone to Hecate and the abilities of the minotaur crafters who work here, and this work has been going on for centuries. Each wall is carved with a thousand faces, each chamber themed—some are swirling in stone flowers or carved trees so beautiful that they actually bloom. Impossibly graceful spiral stairs wind upward into the dizzying space below the gables, which are supported by thousands upon thousands of angels. Somehow, songs are woven into the very stones of the building and graceful singing echoes at all times, praising the Opener of Doors.

However, the paranoid mind of Iasona has crammed the place with guardians and a small but powerful group of fanatical spies and creatures called the Horns of Iasona. These stalk the mazes of the world (and other places), seeking the greatest craftsmen and guardians and treasures as well as enemies of Hecate. Unfortunately, to the fervent mind of their demented priestess, what constitutes an enemy can be varied to the point of madness: is it not possible that even those devoutly worshipping Hecate herself are tricking the goddess? To Iasona, enemies lurk behind smiles and may be very close at hand.

To Broken, she is a heroine who must be courted. Their minds share a vision of a race persecuted by others and that must defend itself or fail. The two infest each other's dreams and have become lovers in the world of thoughts. Broken sees enemies in shadows and dwells in a dead war; her friendship is something he seeks, arguing that to have such an ally, graced with a *Book of Doors* (see below), could purge all enemies of the minotaurs.

For now, the waking times of the Poet cause Broken to forget where the search has taken the First Labyrinth's groping corridors, but its insane messages to Iasona reach her loudly. The quest of Broken to save Roshgazi is conducted at a distance until the two meet at last and their quest can truly be consummated with a crusade that will be sung throughout time.

The House of the Mad Kobold

Beware the sound of great cogs and gears turning, for that may herald the House of the Mad Kobold Abrin.

It is said that the Mad Kobold was a captive of the minotaur for many decades and learnt from them the ways of mazes and their essence, stealing their darkest secrets before escape. A master wizard of the

clockwork domain and worshipper of Rava the Clockwork Oracle, Abrin consorted with dragons who used his copious talents to aid them in their conquering and to defend their precious hordes. But Abrin delved too deep into the dark and twisted corners of the Great Labyrinth where madness and the despair of the lost lurks. His mind became locked with those dark places and unraveled as they tattooed their secrets onto his soul. Centuries passed as the Mad Kobold built about himself a maze made of madness—his House—to protect himself. The kobold was obsessed only with his own safety, toiling alone for long years as his mind became focused on one thing—on his own continuation.

As his frail body finally neared collapse, the Mad Kobold disappeared. Died some say. Others whisper something else.

They say that his lonely house has only one occupant of flesh and bone and that its mechanisms toil away under the gaze of a single machine that lurks at its very heart. A machine with a wicked heart. And within



that heart lurks the Mad Kobold's sleepless essence, seeking to continue, to perfect his own skin. Surrounded by clockwork servitors that exist in mockery of a mundane life, the Mad Kobold has become king over a domain of metal.

The World Maze: Vault of Mammon, Morsel of Hell

The mazes of Hell, they say, have no equal.

The Vault is no mere maze; it is a world, a hollow world of anger locked in perpetual nightfall at the edge of the event that destroys it. The day it was swallowed by Mammon. The archdevil's vast, bloated form hangs in the heavens of this dying world, a world that offended the Archdevil of Greed, his salivating mouth agape in the act of devouring. His monstrous form filling the dark sky.

Below, this hollow world has become torment. Scoured across its skin is an endless maze, a maze that holds the people who dared to offend him. Their lives are one of survival and despair under the mocking gaze of their tormentor. Into this maze, the archdevil cast his brood, things stepped out from children's nightmares and given flesh. These odd creatures stagger the maze wanting, hungering, mocking. To further show his displeasure, the Archdevil of Greed took all the beauty of this world and hung it in his palace at the Halls of Avarice, sucking the soul of the place and leaving it a dead sphere riddled with endless tunnels into which his children—his hunting rats—feed on those left until at last, hungry, they will turn on themselves and leave nothing. Such is the end of those who refuse those who want.

His eye is wrath as it gazes down with detached amusement at what he has created: a symphony of suffering. Sometimes that laughter is heard, or more often felt, by those who step into the Great Labyrinth...

Other Vaults in the Dark

It is endless, as we have already said, but its darkest corners lurk so close. The songs and poems of minotaurs name a thousand, thousand places within the Great Labyrinth; some are apocryphal, surely, but many have a knack of growing skin and bones and doorways, looming out of the stories and into your path.

Beware the Terrible Endless Stair of Tharb: some say those who walk the stair do so for all time or perhaps find heaven at its summit—or hell at its base. The Swallowing Maw lies somewhere out there, bards say, a dungeon that hungers for visitors to feed its lonely madness and many mouths. If you hear a howling song on the wind, is it the stalking Hound of Garth that hunts the Great Labyrinth with its sisters? Does that door conceal the Singer of Blood Songs with her countless hungry children? Is that whistling the Grymm of Dar who hobbles on his staff made of the stolen feet of travelers he meets within the Great Labyrinth and who would dare step through the Portal of the Wan King and meet the ruler itself?

Once a door is open and her threshold crossed, there is sometimes no stepping back.

Beware the darkness, my friend!

The Book of Doors (Artifact)

The greatest and most ancient of minotaur maze priests spent their days toiling at a single work—the so-called *Book of Doors*. The book details every aspect of the Plane of the Great Labyrinth, a catalogue of mazes, but it is so much more than that. Part religious supplication to the goddess Hecate, these magnificent tomes are clothed in gold and jewels and chained to the chamber in which they were created and which forms part of their unique magic. Remove the book from its (usually adamantine) chain

and room, it withers—and any wrathful magic weaved into its fabric is then released.

It would be correct to call the entire book an artifact; however, since its component parts are found scattered across the labyrinth of the world, it is more properly considered fragments of a single artifact, yet artifacts themselves. Some worshippers of Hecate are bound by a vision they share—possibly before an earthquake threatens the Plane of the Great Labyrinth or when conversely its riddle is about to be solved and all of creation swallowed by its joy and beautiful deliberate confusion. They believe that at that time all the component tomes will be drawn into a single chamber at the heart of the plane and herald something momentous.

THE BOOK OF DOORS

*Wondrous item, artifact
(requires attunement)*

Each book is unique, sumptuously illustrated and weighing as much as an adult minotaur. They are always encountered in chambers richly displayed with wondrous scenes weaved with dire warnings about the ignorant attempting to steal or deface the book. All books are sealed with a clasp made of carved minotaur fingerbones (often of a



saint) that are intricately woven into a metal clasp designed to look like an incredibly complex maze: this maze is a lock, and only by tracing the correct pattern through the maze with a finger (or other appendage) can the book be opened. All other attempts result in the book being destroyed and any protection magic released. A minotaur can automatically see the way through the maze lock to its heart and thus trigger the opening; all other characters must make a DC 25 Intelligence check to do so.

Gateways. The book contains a number of illustrations of aspects of the Great Labyrinth. Characters attuned to the artifact are able to use these pages to summon a portal, which remains until dismissed by the attuned character in question. If that character is slain, the gateway remains permanently in place. Each aspect of the book contains 1d12 such pages. The locations of which can be chosen by the GM; such locations are not limited by where the book is or at what time or in which plane of existence. This makes ownership of the books something many seek—particularly in those rare books that are able to trigger portals into different times.

Vengeful. Each tome has a unique vengeful aspect if the book is destroyed or removed from the chamber it is linked to—something that also always destroys the book. Such magic is invariably associated with mazes: sometimes the despoiler is magically drawn into a maze spell that they share with something suitably terrible such as an ophanim angel (see *Creature Codex*) or gypsoshinx (see *Tome of Beasts*) that stalk the violators through the maze and occasionally keeps returning time after time despite destruction. Sometimes it is the maze itself that is the revenge; stories circulate of inescapable mazes where victims starve to death or—much worse—endlessly walk in solitude through eternity.

Random Properties. 2 major beneficial properties, 1 minor detrimental property.

Possible Adventures

All mazes linking to one gives you a great way to introduce something that runs contrary to the location the PCs are in—and design an adventure accordingly. What happens if the crooked children of Mammon stumble through a strange new opening from the World Maze and into the long-abandoned dungeons above the village of Clubbman. Do greedy maze-hunter minotaurs arrive at a remote mountain village en masse, the Hecate-obsessed Horns of Iasona here looking for a Book of Doors? These minotaurs stop at nothing to achieve their end, but whispers about vaults groaning with treasure soon reach the PCs' ears. During a mundane exploration of a small dungeon filled with hobgoblins, the PCs suddenly hear gears clicking and run into clockwork abominations. Does the mission change to simply trying to find a way home, or does the PCs' clockwork host have another use for the PCs?

Who knows what lurks around the next corner, my friend.

The Enigma of the Heart of the First Labyrinth

For those of you interested in learning more about Broken and the Poet, check out the forthcoming tremendous adventure *An Enigma Lost in a Maze* from Kobold Press.

The fractured Heart of Roshgazi reaches out in madness for aid, just as an enormous black dragon and a small army of kobolds arrives at the ruined city seeking it. An Enigma Lost in a Maze is an adventure for 5th Edition and is designed for 5th- or 6th-level characters.

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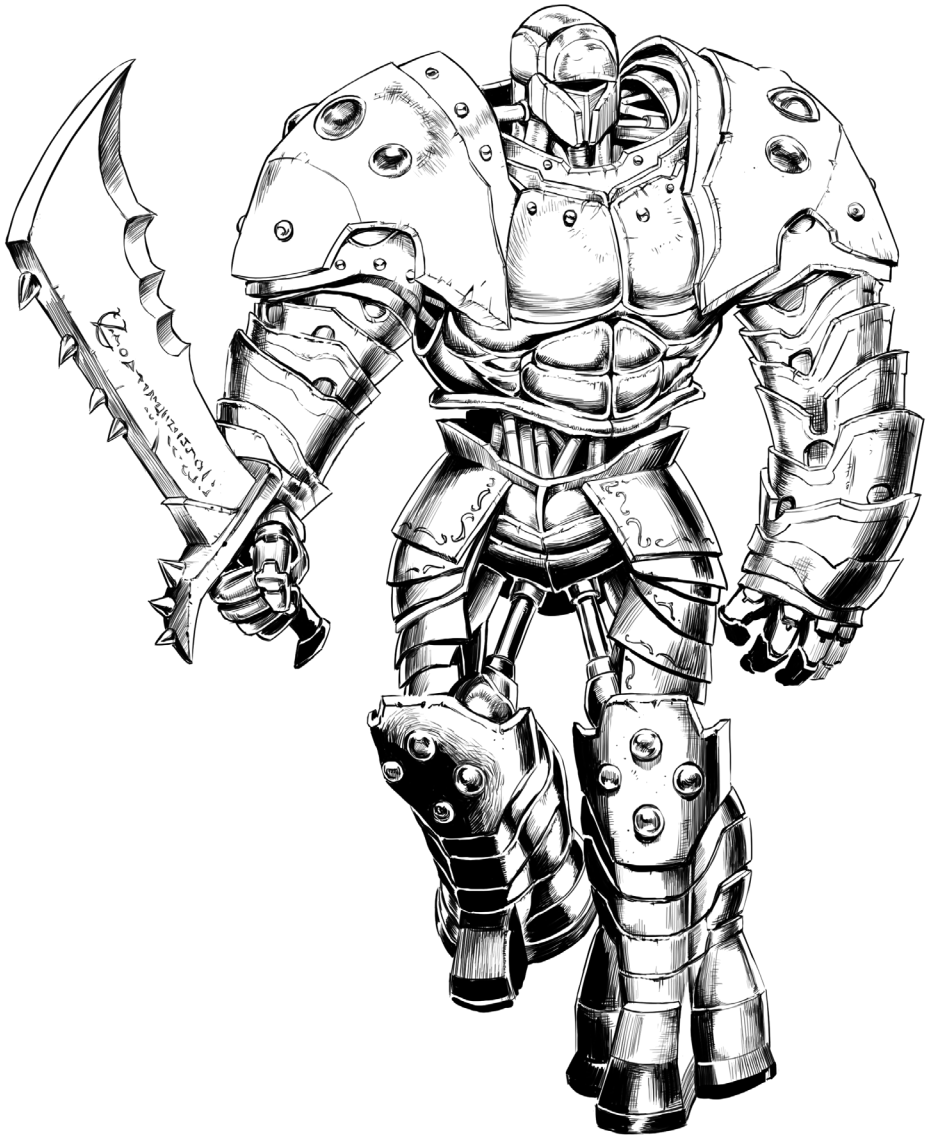
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