

HEART OF THE DAMNED



AN ADVENTURE FOR 4 PCs
OF 5TH LEVEL BY JERRY LENEAVE

HEART OF THE DAMNED

Previously

Warlock Lair 56: The Glowing Ossuary plunged the characters into the depths of a seemingly bottomless dwarven tomb complex within the heart of the Cloudwall Mountains in search of the source of skeletal raiding parties and abductions around the Blood Kingdom. This adventure is its sequel.

By the time the party has reached this far, they'll have descended through six levels of a strange, trap-filled tomb filled with glowing sigils, treasures, and lots of skeletons. Check out *The Glowing Ossuary* for the full story. But if you don't have it, you can easily drop this portion of the delve into any one-shot or ongoing campaign with a little bit of work. All you need is a lift that is descending a great shaft where many levels of dungeon await exploration!

Level 7

This level of the Glowing Ossuary takes players deeper into the remnants of a once great dwarven hall that Naz'Vaza and his minions have been modifying and using for their

own cruel purposes. Though some of it remains largely untouched, other aspects of these levels are at odds with one another as the spirits of the dwarves are still putting up a bit of a fight against the dark forces that have begun squatting among their resting place.

1. TOMB OF THE FOUR

The lift lurches to a stop with makeshift broken archways opening to the west and south into an L-shaped chamber. The stone here looks much older and more neglected than in the chambers above. There are four ornate doors, two to the west and two to the south, each carved depicting a different dwarven figure. The chamber continues to the east and the north via stairs leading farther down.

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The order or placement of the doors does not matter: each contains the remains of a dwarven lord buried long before Naz'Vaza's minions came. The door to each tomb is detailed with a depiction of its interred dwarf, hand-carved with well-polished gold inlay. Each chamber contains a simple stone sarcophagus and some trinkets. (One contains a key that will be crucial to unlocking a door in Area 9.) Forcing

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Open Game Content: The Open Content in this adventure includes the bone legion, flesh puddle, skeletal sentry and tormented soul monsters and the *challenger's drinking horn* and *Cruel Motivation* magic items.

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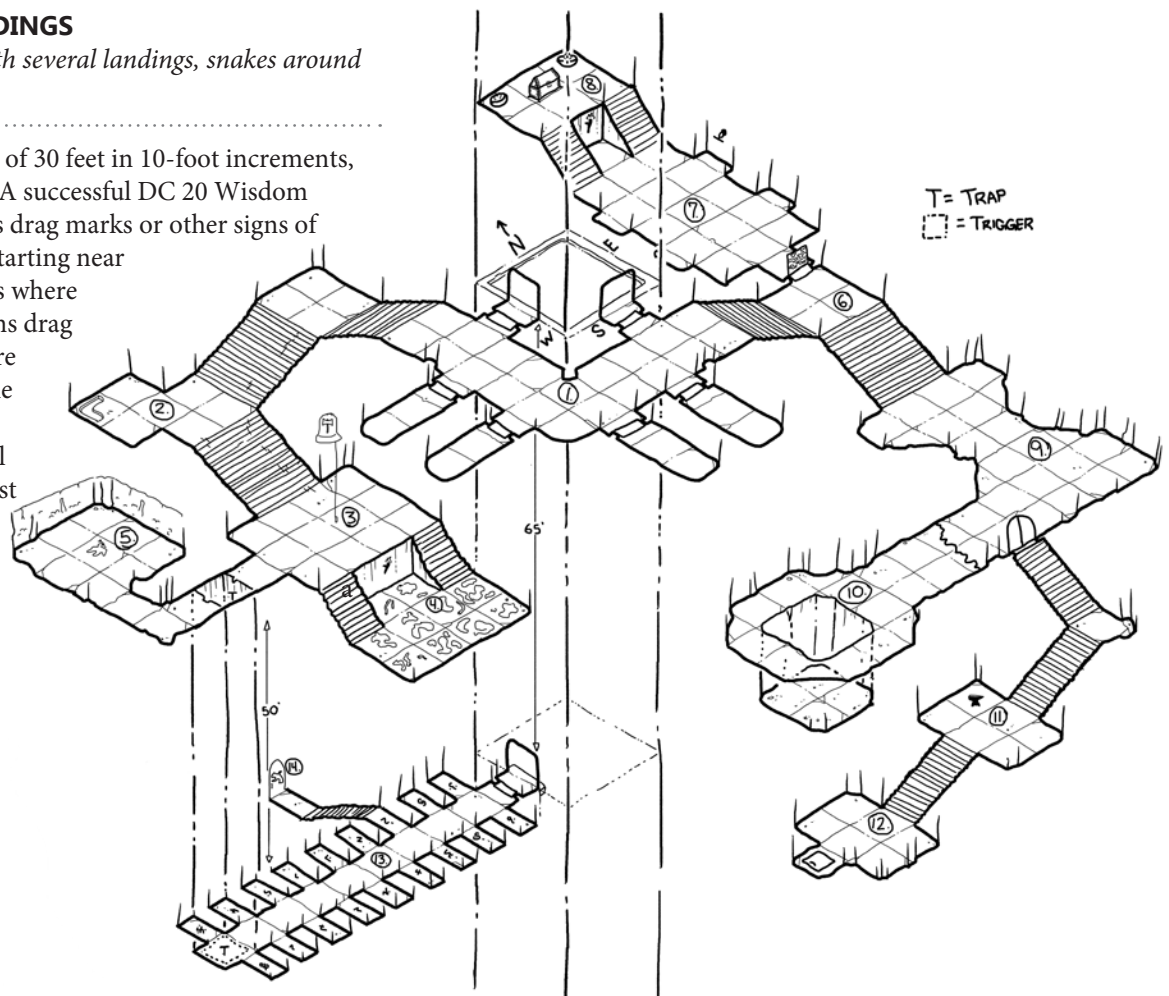
the door to each tomb open requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

- **Galena.** Depicted with long, dark hair and feminine features, this dwarf is pale as the moon and holds a gilded chalice full of something red. Within this tomb are several dusty bottles of wine and mead. The sarcophagus itself contains a wooden stake and a stout skeleton that clasps a long silver key with a suit of armor depicted on its bow.
- **Neb.** Depicted with hair as long as beard, this dwarf stands atop a cask, wearing plate armor and raising a mug to the skies. Within this tomb is a small funerary trove containing various empty tankards and a challenger's drinking horn (see Appendix).
- **Rejeym.** Depicted as bald and with stoic face, this dwarf uses a scope to peer into the distance. Within this sarcophagus is a dust-choked, though still-working, retractable spyglass of superior craftsmanship.
- **Rolyat.** Depicted as being rather tall for a dwarf, this dwarf's beard is short, and they wield a staff made of pure light. Within this tomb is a small funerary trove, containing a few tin ingots and 1d4 miniature dwarven automatons.

2. THE WINDING LANDINGS

A winding set of stairs, with several landings, snakes around to the south and down.

Stairs here descend a total of 30 feet in 10-foot increments, the final set being Area 3. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals drag marks or other signs of struggle along the stairs, starting near the second landing. This is where Naz'Vaza's skeletal minions drag victims off to Area 4, where they harvest the bones. The overwhelming stench of death can be noticed by all descending beyond the first landing. The second landing is larger than the first and contains shallow stone basin filled with water.



3. THE DILAPIDATED BELFRY

The room is cobweb-choked with wooden scaffolding leading up to a vaulted ceiling. At the center is a massive brass bell. A thick rope with a heavy brass grip hangs from the darkness above. The air is putrid and smells of dust and rot. To the south are two short stairwells leading down, and to the west is a narrow hall, a low hum emanating from within.

Ages ago, this bell was used to signal danger throughout the great dwarven hall. It will now only serve to rouse the restless and hungering dead that have taken up residence. Pulling on the rope will ring the bell, and any character with a Strength score of 12 or better can do this without a check. Ringing the bell will awaken the eighteen starving skeletons in Area 13.

Pit Trap. Moving through the hallway to the west, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the loose stonework of a pit trap on the way to Area 5. If stepped on, the pit trap gives way, and the creature that triggered it must succeed a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or fall 50 feet onto a hard, stone pressure plate, suffering 5d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall and triggering the trap in Area 13 (see description).

4. THE SLOUGH

A pair of blood-slicked steps leads steeply down into a shallow, torchlit pit that glistens with the offal and entrails of what must be dozens of creatures.

This is where Naz'Vaza's minions harvest bones from their victims. Characters investigating the contents must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw at disadvantage or immediately gain a short-term madness. The stench is overwhelming, and the pit contains four hateful **flesh puddles** (see Appendix) that have formed from the dark magic and congealed remains, attacking anyone who descends the stairs. Creatures traversing the stairs must succeed a DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone and slide into the remains.

5. MOTHER'S SHRINE

A massive mural carved into all four walls depicts a variety of scenes. Throughout them, the figure of a gaunt humanoid in an extravagant dress and a veil covering their face can be seen amid dwarves. Among the scenes, the figure is seen performing many deeds, including giving food, providing shelter, entertaining, leading soldiers to war, and standing solemnly among a field of headstones. Throughout all these depictions, the figure's hands are held in a claw-like gesture, and a few shapes can be seen cowering from her otherwise deified imagery. This room hums with energy.

The hum here is generated by the residual energies that still echo throughout the hall, instilled by the sacred metal tools used to carve the murals. Characters focusing on the energy for a full minute can remove a single condition or heal 2d6 hit points. This cleansing effect can only be harnessed once per character per day.

On the ground, characters will find remnants of offerings made long ago, some pieces of art and pottery, and while there may be a spare gold coin or two, all the offerings that had monetary value have since been pilfered. Set into the smooth, stone floor is a carved golden dove, depicted in angular dwarven style with its wings outstretched and an olive branch in its beak. The dove is sizeable and made of solid gold. Most attempts to remove it are futile, but determined characters could spend a solid 4 hours to remove it if they have proper tools. If the dove is removed, any character that partook in its removal becomes cursed as though from a 9th-level casting of *bestow curse* and has disadvantage on Wisdom ability checks and saving throws until the curse is removed.

This room can serve as a place of temporary respite. Naz'Vaza's minions stay away from it.

6. THE DESCENT

The shallow staircase ends on a granite landing. To the north is a stone door carved with cloud patterns, and to the south is a steep staircase descending into darkness.

A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals scattered bone fragments and bloodstains all over the descending stairwell and also a pressure plate on the adjacent wall. (The bone legion in Area 10 killed an entire adventuring party on these stairs, and there are barely any signs left of them after it took their remains into its mass.) When the pressure plate is pressed, the cloud-patterned door slides slowly into the floor to reveal Area 7.

7. CHAMPION'S CHAMBER

This echoing, rectangular chamber has four shallow alcoves cut along its east and west sides and two staircases to the north that flank a single blue-flame torch, leading up to a platform from which pale blue light emanates. The smooth stone walls here are covered in grime, and the northernmost alcoves each contain a heavy iron pull-chain that dangles from its center.

Long ago built as a trial for the dwarfs to show their fortitude in contest, this chamber fills with noxious gas and seals itself shut, allowing only those with iron lungs and diamond-hard nerves to emerge from it without having passed out. Unfortunately, the vapor mixture that was once only temporarily harmful has turned deadly as it's soured over time. The torch is magical fire and cannot be put out by normal means.

Noxious Dwarven Gas. Once the chest in Area 8 has been opened, the door seals shut for 5 minutes and only reopens once the timer has run out. Noxious gas deploys immediately, and two **flesh puddles** (see Appendix) ooze in from the alcoves that don't contain pull-chains.

Creatures inhaling the gas must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer 2d12 poison damage, or half as much damage if their save was successful. Those who fail their saves also become poisoned. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the gas is deployed via holes in the ceiling.

The door is made of solid granite (AC 24, 150 hp). The pull-chains in the alcoves act as a failsafe mechanism to open the door before the timer runs out. It can be activated only by both being pulled simultaneously, which manually relieves the counterweight that holds the door in place. To do so, each character pulling on a chain must succeed two consecutive DC 16 Strength (Athletics) checks. Failure requires repeating the process; each attempt takes 30 seconds to regain the proper hold and heave again. Once the door is open, the gas dissipates.

8. TRAPPED CHEST

Before you is a decadent metal chest. It is decorated in rubies and gold, lined in angular bronze filigree, and features a silver lock carved to look like a dwarven ancestor with its droll little mouth acting as the keyhole. In the corners behind the chest are two magically lit braziers that flicker with pale blue flames, illuminating the area in a strange haze.

The lock is all for show and can be picked with nearly any tool, containing only the simplest mechanism to hold the latch shut. Any attempt to pick it with even improvised tools will succeed. Opening the chest fully without first disabling the trap mechanism on the inner hinge will trigger the noxious gas to be deployed throughout Area 7. Inside the chest are several sets of dwarven ceremonial vestments made of fine fur and linen and stitched with golden thread (one for each PC, though each sized for a dwarf). Wearing these will grant advantage to anyone interacting with the blacksmith in Area 11. In the pocket of one of the vestments is a small piece of parchment detailing, in Dwarvish, plans to craft an enchanted obsidian warhammer.

Those in this area when the chamber fills with gas have advantage on their saving throws to resist it.

9. HALL OF HEROES

This hourglass-shaped chamber is roughly cut from the cave walls. Tattered tapestries of dwarven heraldry hang alongside many stone statues in varied states of finish, depicting dwarves of all statures and status. Some of the statues wield real weapons and decorated shields. Thick cobwebs choke the ceiling and walls. To the west is a well-lit area with fresh-cut stone floors and walls. To the south are double iron doors set with large bronze pull-rings.

Closer inspection of the statues will reveal that some of them have been defaced, and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check discerns that bits of skull and bone from other creatures have been affixed over their features. Characters looking for weapons can find axes and swords as well as a warhammer and a maul. Roll d100 for any weapon taken from amid the statues: on a roll of 95 or higher, the item is considered a +1 weapon, and any rolls of 5 or lower are cursed, suffering –1 penalties to attack and that cannot be unequipped without a *remove curse* spell or by destroying the *Heart of the Damned* in Area 21.

The iron doors to the south only open with the key from within Galena's tomb in Area 1, or with a successful DC 25 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check, and lead to Area 11. Faint, repetitious hammering can be heard echoing from below, beyond the doors, if anyone listens.

10. DEFILED BONE PIT

The dwarven stylings of your surroundings fade to the simple-cut stonework of the levels above and are dotted with scrawled glowing sigils. Bones decorate the joints in the masonry of the floor, walls, and ceiling. The end of the chamber is rounded, and there is a massive pit in the floor, filled with a mixture of fresh and decrepit bones.

As players approach the pit to investigate, read the following aloud:

From the pit arises a huge floating sphere of quivering bones. The air vibrates violently as the massive orb of skeletal remains clack together, bits of bone fragment orbiting it. A preternatural hum permeates the air, and the bones crackle with multicolored eldritch energy as it speeds in your direction.

The **bone legion** (see Appendix) attacks immediately once players reach this area. It will chase characters throughout the halls. The only place they can find refuge is Mother's Shrine (Area 5) or the Champion's Chamber (Area 7). Once the bone legion is defeated, it will burst into a shower of bone fragments, and at its core, players will find a hexagonal metal seal, which will be used later to get the lift to descend farther.

11. THE CURSED BLACKSMITH

The door unlocks with a satisfying clank and screams open as its rusty hinges haven't moved in ages. A wave of orange-red heat drifts up the stairs toward you. Clear as day, at the bottom of a steep set of stairs is a shirtless dwarf with a haggard gray beard, hammering away at a weapon on an anvil.

The dwarf blacksmith is unwavering in his craft and doesn't say much if called down to. As players approach him and his domain comes into full view, read the following aloud:

Beside the dwarf are the trappings of a master blacksmith: many aprons, tongs, a blazing furnace, crucibles, several quenching buckets, and an anvil that looks as old as Midgard itself. In the corner is a nest of jagged steel—a pile of pristine weapons that have been going to waste for untold ages. The dwarf has pale skin and not a drop of sweat on him. His eyebrows are bushy and the color of clouds. He introduces himself as Hemlig.

Hemlig is an undying dwarf, placed in the service of Lady Galena, a dwarven vampire heiress from ages ago. He toils still under her instruction to make weapons to arm all his

clan and has not left these chambers in several hundred years. To say he's in a daze or extremely focused might be a bit of an understatement. He loathes the undead, particularly skeletons. He's not entirely aware of his "condition," and attempts to convince him otherwise are futile. He's on a mission, and he won't deviate from it without great reason. He does offer to upgrade the armor and weapons of any dwarf he encounters and might do it even for a non-dwarf if they're dressed appropriately. The services he offers are as follows:

- **Weapon Enhancement.** He can add a +1 attack and damage bonus to any weapon.
- **Weapon Enchantment.** He can add an elemental property to a weapon's damage type, either thunder, lightning, or force.
- **Armor Enhancement.** He can improve any piece of armor to grant an additional +1 to AC.
- **Armor Enchantment.** He can add any of the following types of damage resistances to a suit of armor: acid, cold, or poison.

In addition to these services, which he will perform once for any dwarf or those in the good graces of the dwarves, he can also remove petrification and a single curse. He will not part with any of his crafted items or armor in any way, demanding they are reserved for his clan. He refuses to believe any notions that they are long dead or that he is dead. He will not join the characters in a fight against the undead under any circumstances, swearing that his job here must be done for the glory and duty of his clan and that he's better at the forge than he would be in battle. If Hemlig is attacked, he enters combat as a **vampire** with 200 hit points.

Hemlig can be put at peace if the bones within Galena's sarcophagus in Area 1 are cleansed with a *remove curse* spell or taken to the surface and given a proper burial, at which point Hemlig will have the spell broken on him and have 1 full minute of consciousness before he fades away to dust and ash.

12. CRAFTSMAN'S CACHE

This chamber is stocked full of metal ingots, barrels, weapon racks, spare crucibles, tongs, and everything else a blacksmith might need to continue smithing for a few centuries. It smells of metal and dust.

With a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, players investigating Hemlig's supplies might find a secret trapped door in the west end of the room behind some barrels. The trapped door has a makeshift rope ladder that

only goes about halfway down to Area 17 before it comes to a frayed end. Descending the rope and then falling into Area 17 results in a 40-foot fall.

Level 8

The lift comes to a hard stop, a series of iron rods barring its path further down. To the west is an archway that leads to a long, narrow path lit by red and purple light. On the wall near the archway is a hex-shaped recess the size of a fist.

In order for the lift to descend to Level 9, characters must acquire the hex-shaped seal from within the core of the bone legion in Area 10. Once they have set the seal into the recess in the wall, read the following aloud:

The metal rods beneath the lift retract into the walls, and the lift shudders to motion, plunging you farther into the depths of the ossuary.

13. MENAGERIE OF HUNGERING SKELETONS

This long, narrow hall is lit by alternating sigils of crimson red and eldritch purple above flanking alcoves that line its entire span, nine on each side. At the end of the hall is a small golden chest, its jeweled decorations glimmering in the strange light.

Each alcove contains the resting bones of a **skeleton** atop a short stone dais, which do not animate or attack until either the pressure plate at the end of the hall is activated or the bell has been rung in Area 3. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check, or trying to pick it up, reveals the chest is an illusion. The skeletons attack relentlessly and will clamber up or down the shaft of the ossuary in order to reach their target if need be.

14. UNKNOWN CHAMBERS

This door is very narrow and tall for a realm of dwarves, even for humans, reaching almost 10 feet high. On it is a golden embellishment of a dove within the claws of a bestial hand.

The door opens with a little effort but only reveals another foot or so inward before coming to a wall of rubble. The chamber is entirely buried and is inaccessible.

Level 9

As the lift reaches its next stop, you hear the taut rope of its pulleys echo all the way up the shaft. Before you are archways that open to the east and to the west into well-lit chambers.

15. HALL OF ANCESTORS

As the characters leave the lift in either direction, read the following to them aloud:

In front of you and behind you, through the other exit from the lift, are four shallow alcoves, each containing a plaque written in Dwarvish.

Plaque A reads:

Two Join as One
Lay Their Life in Sequence
Lest You Become Undone
Hide the Light's Beacons

Or as an alternate riddle:

All in Life's Order
In Their Places Sealed
No Light Escapes Their Border
Then Our Secret Is Revealed

Plaque B reads:

I.
IN THE MOUNTAIN'S WOMB
WE ARE FORMED

Plaque C reads:

II.
WITHIN LIFE'S CRUCIBLE
WE ARE FORGED

Plaque D reads:

III.
THROUGH TWILIT WISDOM
NEVER FORLORN

As characters round either corner and the rest of the chamber comes into view, read the following to them aloud:

Before you is a massive, well-lit chamber. A mural on the walls of the western half of the room depicts a mother raising her child, and along the eastern half is depicted a father raising the same child. Around the room are ten thin stone doors hanging open, revealing ten small rooms, each containing a pedestal with a statue upon it, awash in flickering pale-blue light.

The depictions show common dwarven traditions for both mother and father. Most dwarf characters will understand, but succeeding a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check will also garner the same knowledge. There are ten rooms but only nine of them contain pedestals and statues, which are keys to the puzzle.

Puzzle. The puzzle must be solved before the lift will continue to function. Once it is solved, the players will obtain the *Enneagon Seal* that will allow them to enter the final level of Naz'Vaza's domain. Naz'Vaza has learned how to bypass this ancient dwarven mechanism, but the characters cannot afford the time the undead have on their side to learn such things.

Each statue represents a phase of life, and the statues must be placed on the pedestals in order (left to right, 1–9), starting at infancy and ending in venerability, and then all the doors must be shut. When characters first reach the chamber, it is up to you where the statues are, perhaps the dead adventurers in Area 16 finished the puzzle correctly and simply never shut the doors to complete it, or perhaps the statues are completely out of order, leaving the characters up to shuffling them around. It should be a fairly obvious puzzle given the plaques are chronologically labeled. However, all of this is up to you as the GM to make this puzzle as time consuming as you'd like. Here are the nine statues and their dwarven depictions listed in proper puzzle-solving order:

1. **The Infant.** A swaddled infant, chubby as can be.
2. **The Toddler.** A small child, curious and wide-eyed.
3. **The Adolescent.** A taller child, smug and apprehensive.
4. **The Student.** An older child, holding books and looking inquisitive.
5. **The Worker.** A person wearing an apron, wielding tongs and hammer.
6. **The Teacher.** A blacksmith, gesturing as if instructing many others.
7. **The Elder.** A well-dressed figure with small children at their side.
8. **The Sage.** A figure with a long beard, heavily decorated, smoking a pipe.
9. **The Venerated.** A feeble-looking figure wielding a cane, decorated beard dragging on the ground.

Each time the doors are all shut with the statues in the wrong order, 2d6 angry dwarf **skeletons** enter from the lift, having clambered through the shaft, and attack the party with a flurry of clawed, bony hands, hammers, axes, and maces.

Once the puzzle has been solved, read the following aloud:

From across the room, you hear a clank and thud near the lift. With a low rumble, a bit of masonry in the floor begins to grind, stone against stone, as one of the tiles slides away, and a stone column rises from beneath. Atop that stone column is a strange bronze seal with nine sides.

This seal is the *Enneagon Seal*, and it can be used as the final key to gain access to Naz'Vaza's most profane experiment yet, the *Heart of the Damned*.

16. UNFINISHED CHAMBER

This chamber is empty, but you can clearly see that the wall has been tunneled to lead farther back as a narrow pathway snakes off to the northwest.

Following the pathway leads to a small unfinished room where the corpses of another adventuring party lie. There are 2d12 + 4 **giant bats** asleep on the ceiling that scare easily. Those bitten by the bats must succeed a DC 12 Fortitude saving throw or become poisoned for 4 hours. Read the following aloud once characters reach the back of the tunnel:

Before you on the floor are the deteriorating corpses of three adventurers: two halflings and an elf. A pair of pickaxes lie on the floor next to what's left of their belongings.

These adventurers were running out of food and found themselves stuck, unable to solve the puzzle in Area 15, and they attempted to tunnel out. Things didn't go as planned when they were attacked by the bats living above though. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check notices the corpses are covered in dozens if not hundreds of tiny bite marks. Within their belongings are three daggers, a quarterstaff, 1d4 *potions of healing*, spoiled food, a half-full waterskin, 25 feet of rope, and a retractable 10-foot pole.

Level 10

As the lift slows to a stop, you feel it lock in place, echoes reverberate up the lightless throat of the mountain. To the west is a massive set of hewn stone doors, a puddle of reddish liquid pooled in front. To the east, an open archway leads into a narrow hall to stairs leading up. You hear a repetitious thump, low and faint, throughout the area.

When the doors to Area 21 are investigated further, read the following aloud:

Before you are a pair of stone doors that are almost 10 feet tall. A bubbling red puddle of viscous liquid gurgles from the gap at their base. To the side of the doors are three recesses: two of them glow brightly with green light, one is a triangle and the other a hexagon. The third has nine sides, and it appears as if the seal gained from the Hall of Ancestors above will fit within it perfectly.

A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices the bubbling in the red liquid coincides with the thumping sound heard throughout this level.

17. NARROW HALL

These narrow stairs are choked with strange organic matter that seems to pulse and shift on its own. As you reach the top, you see ahead into a grandiose tomb, burning bright with light and decorated in gold.

Pit Trap. Just before the entrance to Area 18 is another pit trap, 15 feet deep. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the trap. Those who fail to notice the trap must succeed a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall in. The bottom of the pit contains jagged bones that serve as makeshift spikes and deal an additional 3d6 damage to anyone falling in.

18. THE FALSE TOMB

All the surfaces of this chamber are decorated with gold inlay, and it's brightly lit from the four yellow sigils carved into the alcoves on its north and south sides. At the far east of the room is a single golden door with a pull-ring. The door itself is decorated in ornate royal carvings and bears the name "Naz'Vaza." It depicts a man with crossed arms and an upside-down face, resting atop a bed of skulls.

Beyond the golden door is a false and empty tomb that has been warded with an *alarm* spell. Opening the door releases a thick fog that rolls out along the floor and into the pit traps. The fog is a noxious green but isn't actually harmful. A *programmed illusion* made to look much taller and more intimidating than the actual Naz'Vaza emerges from the tomb wielding a whip. While all of this is going on, so long as the *alarm* wasn't dispelled, the actual Naz'Vaza is alerted to the characters' presence, which will set him into motion, retrieving his phylactery from Area 20 via the secret passage found within Area 23. If the players have not found his phylactery within 5 minutes, he successfully retrieves it and hides it in the westernmost chamber of Area 21. If players do reach his phylactery in Area 20 before the 5 minutes have elapsed, they encounter him alone for a cramped final battle in Areas 19 and 20.

Pit Trap. This room contains two pit traps. The north pit trap is identical to the one found in Area 17, except it is 20 feet deep. The one to the south is the same, except without the jagged bones and with an entryway into Naz'Vaza's true tomb, through Area 19.

19. THE CLOISTER

This darkened, winding passage is made of rough-cut stone and smells strongly metallic. It contains several rectangular alcoves along its way and ends in a stout iron door.

Each alcove contains a **skeleton** that lies dormant unless Naz'Vaza is encountered here, in which case he will speak a command word to bring them to life, hoping to overwhelm characters so that he can escape again through his secret passage back to Area 23.

20. PHYLACTERY CHAMBER

On the floor of this small chamber rests an inconspicuous looking iron box amid a pile of gold coins and several other valuable-looking trinkets and weaponry.

Naz'Vaza's trove lies here as well as his phylactery. The iron box is the phylactery and can be destroyed with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check or from being damaged (AC 18, 45 hp). Scattered on the floor with it are 5,500 gp, a fist-sized ruby, three small emeralds, a necklace of fireballs, a scrying orb, a sentient +1 halberd (with the soul of a gnome baker trapped within it), and a serrated +2 dagger (that deals poison damage and turns into a talking snake named Chalmers when its command word, *kerchooh*, is spoken).

If Naz'Vaza's phylactery is destroyed, he immediately loses half of his hit points.

21. THE HEART OF THE DAMNED

Outstretched before you is a grand chamber of gray stone lit by dozens of odd crimson sigils, glowing bright and casting red light over the undulating veins and organic pustules that have overtaken everything, seeping ruddy fluid from the walls and ceiling. Directly ahead of you, down a staircase covered in sinew and blood, is a massive, beating heart the size of a dwarven ale cask. The drips and squelches of moving liquid are all around you, only drowned out by the rhythmic thump of the heart that lies on the stone floor.

The heart is Naz'Vaza's profane experiment, attempting to construct an ultimate evil, using it as a source of power to begin building new thralls, hybrids of rotten flesh and ancient bone. If players approach it or begin attacking it in any way, **Naz'Vaza** (see Appendix) emerges from his chamber (westernmost) behind the heart as two of his new creations come out from their chambers to the north and south of the heart. These skeletons function as **skeletal sentries** but also have the Absorb Flesh trait and the Coil of Entrails attack of the **flesh puddles** (see Appendix). (Describe them as a hybrid of both creatures.)

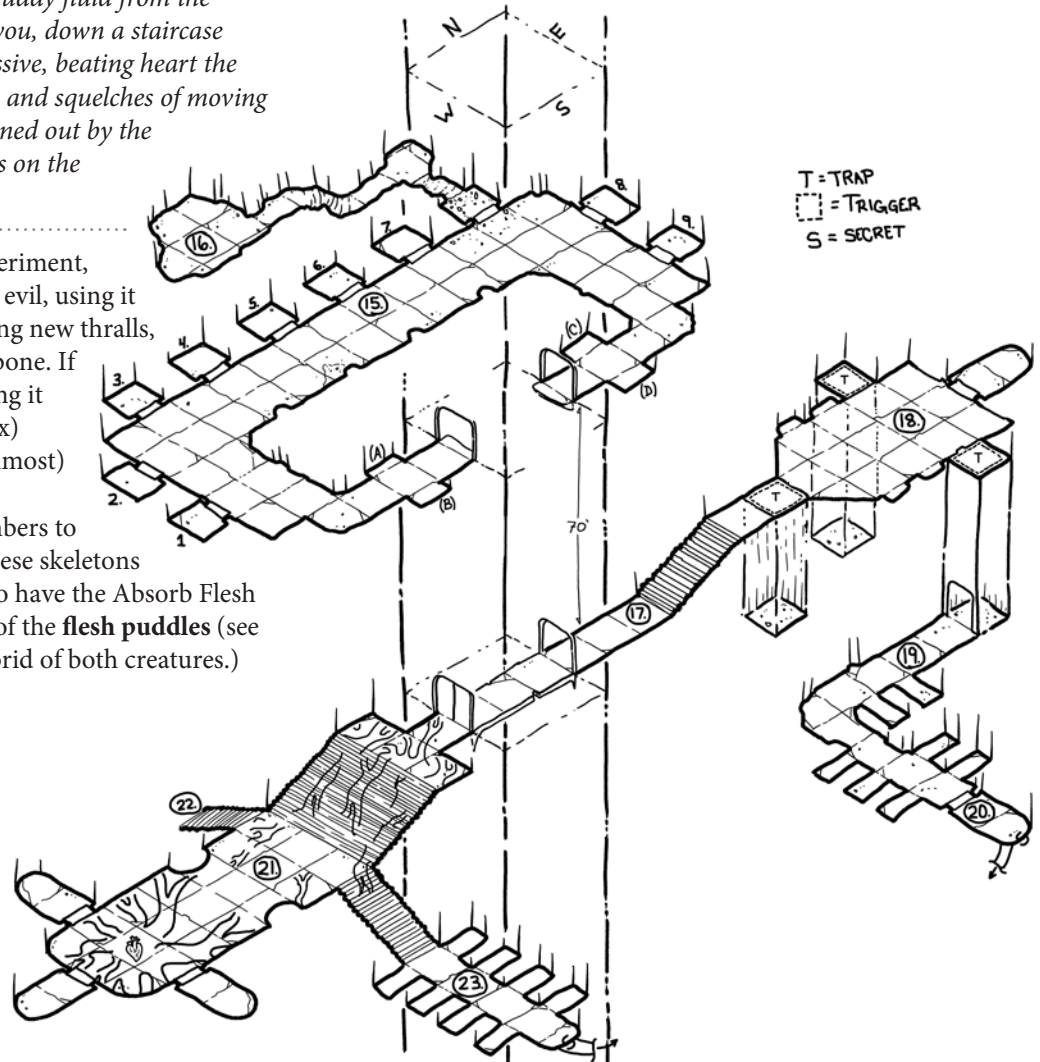
When Naz'Vaza and his sentries enter the fight, read the following aloud:

A skeletal figure with a horrific upside-down visage emerges from behind the giant heart, wielding a barbed whip and cackling with inverted breath: "USURPERS!" At his side shamble into view two tall skeletons with undulating innards writhing within their rib cages and mouths. Their eyes glow bright orange as they roar and brandish their cruel weapons.

Additionally, if the **tormented souls** and **skeletons** from Area 23 have not been vanquished, they enter battle from the staircase to Area 23.

If the heart (AC 13, 100 hp) is destroyed, Naz'Vaza immediately loses half of his hit points and his **skeletal sentries** fall to pieces, destroyed. (If his phylactery has been destroyed, he instead dies outright at the heart's destruction.) The heart is protected by a *shield* spell that lasts 5 rounds, starting when combat begins.

Upon Naz'Vaza's death, all other undead within the ossuary are immediately destroyed, and he drops his whip, *Cruel Motivation*.



MAP: [CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THIS MAP FOR YOUR VIRTUAL TABLE TOP.](#)

22. THE NORTH DEMESNE

The staircase here is crumbled and caved in. There's no telling if this is a chamber that once was or one that's yet to be.

23. THE SOUTH DEMESNE

This dim and battered stairwell leads into an area of eight stone sarcophaguses set into dugouts along the wall.

This chamber serves as a sort of “barracks” for Naz'Vaza while he conducts his profane magics with the heart. Creatures in this area will rush to his aid or attack intruders on sight if disturbed. It contains 1d4 + 1 **tormented souls** (see Appendix) and 1d6 + 2 **skeletons**.

This area also contains a hidden passageway, a rift wreathed in necromantic magic, that allows only undead to walk through, allowing near-instantaneous travel from this area to Area 20. Any undead traversing this passage do so in 2 rounds. The passage is well hidden, but a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals it as a smoky-black crevice in the stone. The passage can be dispelled with a successful DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check by a spellcaster who knows at least one necromancy spell or ritual. If for any reason the passage is dispelled while undead are currently traversing it, they are immediately destroyed, and their remains are spit out on the side of the direction they were traveling toward.

Epilogue

Once Naz'Vaza has been defeated and the heart destroyed, a wave of relief can be felt, even if only momentarily, over the region. All the glowing sigils within the ossuary shudder to darkness and no longer have a hold over any of its bones. The spirits of the dwarves whose home has been defiled can once again rest.

This portion of the ossuary also borders a forgotten corner of the Ghoul Empire, though Emperor Nicoforus isn't aware of the ossuary or anything regarding the story of Naz'Vaza and his current efforts. Though if for some reason Naz'Vaza is defeated and the heart is left intact, Lord Nicoforus's minions will eventually come to learn of and find it within 2d4 weeks and begin to use it for their own nefarious purposes, perhaps even recruiting Naz'Vaza if his phylactery wasn't destroyed, and working with him to bring a new darkness to the region.

The characters are welcome to make the ossuary their base of operations or call in others to help cleanse and restore the bits of it that have been defiled. Their notoriety across Midgard increases as word travels of what was brewing in those mountains and what evils were laid to rest.

APPENDIX

All of the new game elements in this adventure are presented here.

New Magic Items

These items may prove useful to resourceful adventurers.

CHALLENGER'S DRINKING HORN

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This hollowed ram's horn is black and banded with brass around its lip. Its curved shape makes it quite difficult to drink from in the hands of an amateur.

While attuned to this item, you will never become intoxicated from anything you drink from it. However, others who are not attuned to this vessel will become drunk from even the slightest sip of alcohol from it. The horn also allows you to belch noxious gas once per day after drinking from it, as the *poison spray* cantrip but using Constitution as your spellcasting ability.

CRUEL MOTIVATION

Weapon, very rare (requires attunement)

This well-crafted whip is made of braided black leather and lined in tiny barbs that resemble a ram's horns, each meticulously forged in detail. It is wreathed in smoke and festooned with heavy iron tips.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon, which has a reach of 15 feet. When you hit with an attack using this magic whip, the target takes an extra 2d8 necrotic damage.

In addition, those damaged by this weapon must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain a temporary madness effect.

Curse. This whip is cursed. Becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the whip, keeping it on your person at all times. While attuned to this weapon, you suffer from grievous nightmares, and your mind wanders toward dark deeds while awake. Once per week, at the end of the week before you sleep, you must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or awake the next day in a blind rage, attacking anything nearby for 1 minute.

You can break the curse in the usual ways. The sword then becomes a +2 *whip* with no other properties.

Monsters & NPCs

There are many foes that seek to block your progress.

BONE LEGION

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Perpetuity of Death. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by the bone legion must immediately make repeated death saving throws, deciding their fate before their next turn: if they fail three death saving throws before they succeed three, the creature dies immediately, and its flesh is rendered from its bones as the creature is eviscerated by the bone legion. The creature's own bones are then absorbed into the bone legion, healing the bone legion for an amount equal to half the killed creature's maximum hit point value.

Transmogrification. If the bone legion is subjected to transmutation magic, instead of the intended effect, the bone fragments of the bone legion are fortified, resulting in a +2 bonus to AC and an extra 1d6 damage to all its attacks for 1 minute.

ACTIONS

Spur. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one or two targets. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one or two adjacent targets. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) slashing damage, and the target is pulled to within 5 feet of the bone legion.

Crush (Recharge 5–6). The bone legion can move its speed in a straight line, barreling into all in its way. Each creature in its path must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 36 (5d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. On a success, the target takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone. When using this action, the bone legion does not provoke opportunity attacks from prone targets, and it doesn't treat other creature's spaces as difficult terrain.



FLESH PUDDLE

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Absorb Flesh. At the end of its turn, the flesh puddle deals 1d12 damage to any creature it is grappled with, which also heals the flesh puddle for the same amount.

ACTIONS

Slap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (4d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Coil of Entrails (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (4d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained.

NAZ'VAZA

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 110 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +8, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Perception +4

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages understands all languages he knew in life

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Naz'Vaza's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic, mage armor*

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, Naz'Vaza gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all his hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of his phylactery.

Spellcasting. Naz'Vaza is a 10th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, mage hand, minor illusion, poison spray, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat, magic missile, protection from evil and good, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *acid arrow, blindness/deafness, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, fireball, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, blight*

5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill*

Turn Resistance. Naz'Vaza has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Naz'Vaza makes three Cruel Motivation attacks.

Cruel Motivation. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. The target must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain a temporary madness effect.

Nether Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. Once per turn, Naz'Vaza can instead charge a single melee weapon attack to deal an extra 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

SKELETAL SENTRY

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)

Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Antimagic Aura. When detecting magic, the skeletal warrior does not give off an aura nor does it show up when *detect evil and good* is cast or a paladin's *divine sense* is used.

Turn Resistance. The skeletal warrior has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The skeletal warrior makes two greatsword attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

TORMENTED SOUL

Tiny undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 40 (9d4 + 18)

Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Perception +2

Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Resistances lightning, necrotic, piercing

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Blazing Hatred. The tormented soul blazes with bright light in a 10-foot radius. Creatures ending their movement adjacent to a tormented soul take 1d6 fire damage.

Magic Resistance. The tormented soul has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The tormented soul is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The tormented soul has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrip (at will): *fire bolt*

1st level (3 slots): *magic missile, shield*

2nd level (2 slots): *blur, scorching ray*

3rd level (1 slot): *fireball*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tormented soul uses Incendiary Spit twice.

Incendiary Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d6) fire damage and must make a constitution saving throw or be set on fire, taking 1d6 fire damage each round until a successful Constitution saving throw is made or they douse themselves with water.

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