

# CRYPTS OF AZARUMME

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*Crypts of Azarumme* is a single-session adventure for four or five players of 3rd-level characters using the fifth edition of the world's greatest roleplaying game.

BY KELSEY DIONNE



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## SYNOPSIS

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- The adventure begins when the head **acolyte** of the Church of St. Terragnis contacts the party for **help** in finding the church's missing priest, **Father Reginal Baird**.
- While the characters are at the church, undead creatures erupt into the main chamber, **massacre** the people present, and retreat with living victims.
- The characters follow the undead down the empty **well** in the church's undercroft, leading them to the catacombs beneath.
- Inside the catacombs, the characters find **clues** about the fate of Father Baird.
- The adventure culminates in a **battle** against the fallen Father Baird and the horde of undead he controls with the *Whisperskull*.

## BACKGROUND

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- A few months before the adventure begins, **Father Reginald Baird** discovered an ancient set of **catacombs** under his church.
- The catacombs belong to a centuries-gone empire of dark priests and warlords who leveraged **necromantic magic**.
- Father Baird began secretly **exploring** the catacombs and recently fell to the temptation of a vile artifact hidden therein called the *Whisperskull*.
- Father Baird is now under the sway of the *Whisperskull* and has begun **animating** the bodies interred in the catacombs.
- The adventure begins when Father Baird takes his next step — capturing living victims to use their blood for the **rituals** the *Whisperskull* demands...

## A WORD TO THE GM

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This adventure is meant to be run at a glance with **minimal preparation** and a **natural delivery**. This required re-thinking the normal adventure presentation a bit. Here's what you'll find included:

- Each encounter contained on one page.
- Bulleted lists. **Bolded** keywords.
- Hyperlinks to monsters and rules online for quick reference.
- Printable cards for each monster and PC so you can run encounters using a card stack. A short video walkthrough of this method can be found **here**.
- Printable cards for special treasure handouts.
- Short room and area descriptions. No paragraphs of droning flavor text — set the scene naturally and embellish as desired.
- Briefly explained non-encounter rooms. Again, embellish as desired!
- GM maps and player-safe digital maps for use with virtual tabletops.
- A short video walkthrough of the adventure can be found **here**.

## PACING/TRANSITIONS

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A dramatic question is presented with most scenes. Once that question has been answered, the tension of the scene is resolved. That's your cue to work toward the **transition** provided at the end the scene — even if that means summarizing the end of a clearly decided combat, or in the case of clever players, skipping combat altogether. Keep the game moving toward the next challenge!

Room descriptions that are usually long blocks of literary read-aloud text have been left short and informational in this adventure. Many Game Masters prefer to paraphrase read-aloud text and set the scene based on what tone and level of detail his or her group finds engaging. Anything listed before the **Development** sections is safe to share however you prefer to do so.

## A MISSING PRIEST

The characters begin in any city of sufficient size to house a large church and the ruins of a fallen civilization below ground.

Allow the players to describe their preliminary actions in the city before moving on to the following adventure hooks.

### APPEAL TO REWARD

Tibalt Throgsden, the head **acolyte** of the Church of St. Terragnis, reaches out to the characters by messenger. He implores them, in the name of good St. Terragnis, to help find the missing Father Reginald Baird. Father Baird **disappeared** three days ago, and the church

will reward each character **100 gp** and a **boon** of healing or aid if they will help find the priest. Tibalt invites the group to the church to discuss the matter in greater detail.

### APPEAL TO HEROISM

While in a church of religious importance to the group (you can substitute another god for St. Terragnis, if needed), begin the adventure's first encounter, *They Came From Below*. Following the attack, the survivors ask the characters to **rescue** any victims the undead dragged down into the well. If Tibalt is alive, he reveals that Father Baird has been **missing** — probably down the same well — for the last three days.

### APPEAL TO DISCOVERY

Tibalt approaches the characters about an ominous turn of events — Father Baird recently discovered a series of ancient **catacombs** beneath the well in the church's undercroft. Father Baird warned Tibalt never to go down the well or to tell others about it in case it inspired foolish dares among the younger acolytes. Now the priest is missing, and Tibalt fears Father Baird got **trapped** in the catacombs while trying to ensure there was nothing dangerous down there.



### TRANSITION

Move to *They Came From Below* once the characters decide to go to the church.

# THEY CAME FROM BELOW

## CHURCH OF ST. TERRAGNIS

- The church has high, arched ceilings with windows that illuminate a haze of **incense**.
- Eight young **acolytes** scurry around main hall preparing for the evening's worship.
- **Tibalt Throgsden** greets the characters near the door. He sizes them up in conversation.
- If Tibalt trusts the characters, he pulls them aside in the main hall and explains his theory that Father Baird went **missing** down the **well** in the church's undercroft.

**Tibalt Throgsden**, LG dwarf **acolyte**

*"St. Terragnis protects those who keep their faith in dark times. He must have sent you to us."*

- *Appearance.* Young. Red beard. Lightly rumpled robes and an oversized tabard of St. Terragnis that's a bit too long.
- *Does.* Clucks his tongue at the younger acolytes and directs them with authority.
- *Secret.* Much less confident than he seems — on the verge of panic at running the church without Father Baird.

## DEVELOPMENT

- During the **discussion** with Tibalt, any character whose passive Wisdom (Perception) score is 13 or higher hears a distant **crash** back inside the church's chambers.

- **Two rounds** later, four **ghasts** and six **ghouls** with glowing, green eyes smash into the main hall from the interior rooms.

## DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the group survive the massacre and protect the acolytes?

## COMBAT

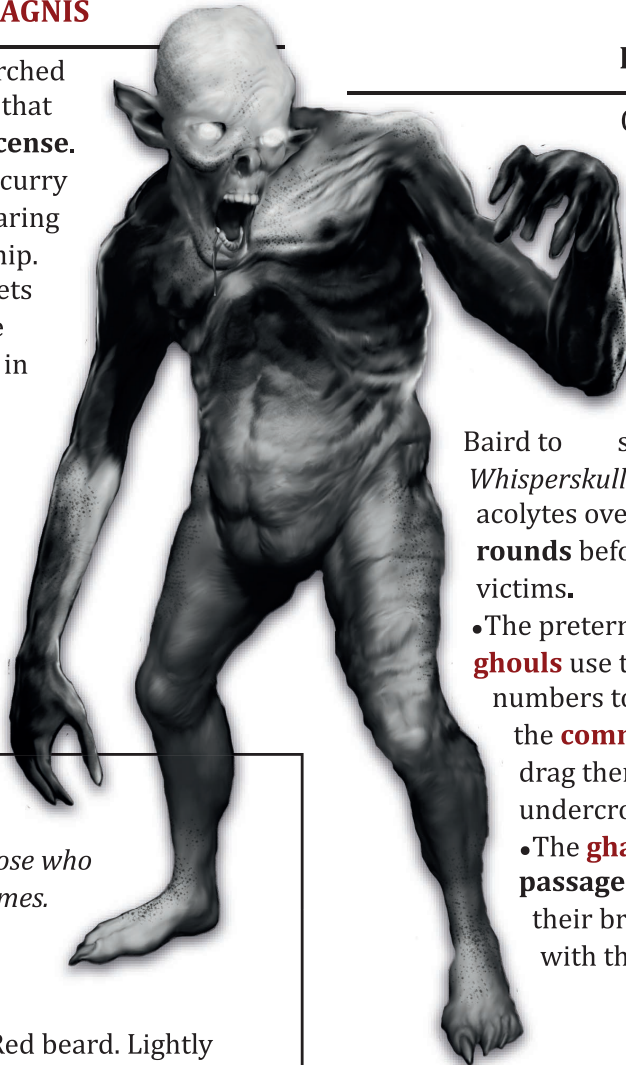
- The undead mob is here to collect **four victims** for Father Baird to sacrifice to the *Whisperskull*. They capture up to four acolytes over the course of **three rounds** before **retreating** with their victims.
- The preternaturally intelligent **ghouls** use their overwhelming numbers to paralyze acolytes (use the **commoner** stat block) and drag them to the **well** in the undercroft.
- The **ghasts** stay behind to **block passage** to the undercroft until their brethren have escaped with the victims.

## Treasure

The undead have shards of **emerald** embedded in their eyes. The shards glow with green flame while embedded in an animate undead's eyes, but the glow fades five minutes after a shard is removed from its host. Each is worth **10 gp**.

## TRANSITION

Use one of the adventure hooks in *A Missing Priest* if the characters are not already invested in searching for Father Baird. Move to *Down The Well* when the group goes down the dry, crumbling well in the undercroft.





## DOWN THE WELL

### *Sidebar: Inside the Catacombs*

- The catacombs are redolent with **necromantic energy**. The halls reek of decay and stale air, and darkness permeates.
- Thousands of **bones** are packed together to form grisly walls and ceilings.
- For each **hour** the PCs spend here, each must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. Upon failure, he or she is afflicted with an effect from the *Corrupt The Living* table (Appendix C). The effects last for 24 hours.

### AREA 1: THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

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- The well goes down 40 feet to a circular, crumbling **chamber**.
- Two **tunnels** of unworked stone extend in opposite directions from the chamber. **Water** sloshes somewhere in the distance.
- A sealed, **stone door** sits opposite the tunnels. Two hands holding a deep bowl form the handles. The door has no lock.

### DEVELOPMENT

- The **door** bears a faded inscription carved in **Infernal** that says, "Pay now the toll of the living lest ye enter the domain of the dead too rich in life."
- A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals traces of magic in the **bowl**.
- Characters can smash the **door** open with a DC 23 Strength check. The door glides open if the bowl is filled with 1d10 hit points' worth of fresh **blood**.

### AREA 2: HALLS OF BONE

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- **Alcoves** line the walls of a hall extending into a large, open chamber. A **skeleton** is lashed into a standing position in each alcove. They clutch rosaries of human teeth.
- A hooded **statue** looms over an **altar** at the end of the chamber. Its hands reach down to a shallow bowl that flickers with **green fire**.

### DEVELOPMENT

- Tarry **blood** congeals in the glowing bowl on the altar. If a character places an inert **emerald shard** into the bowl, the shard glows and energizes for five minutes.
- Inspecting the **skeleton** in the second alcove reveals shallow gouges in its eye sockets. If a character jams an energized **emerald shard** into the socket, the **skeleton** jerks to life with a scream and pushes the **secret door** behind it open. It is restrained, weaponless, and won't fight.

### AREA 3: ALTAR OF THE SKULL

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- The walls and ceiling are decorated with hundreds of leering **skulls**.
- A rune-carved **altar** with an empty, shallow divot in the center dominates the chamber.
- A torn, bloody priest's **tabard** lies on the floor.

### DEVELOPMENT

- Touching the **altar** imparts an unpleasant, temporary numbness.
- The **inscription** on the altar is in Infernal: "Feed life to the skull, and it shall give ye death to wield against the enemies of Azarumme."
- Characters proficient in Intelligence (History) know **Azarumme** was an ancient, dark empire that fell centuries ago.
- Characters with a passive Intelligence (History) check of 15 or higher know Azarumme was a bloodthirsty **dynasty** ruled by vampiric warlords and lich-queens.

### Treasure

Tangled in the priest's tabard is a silver **holy symbol** of St. Terragnis worth 50 gp. A good-aligned creature who wears it has advantage on one Wisdom ability check per day.

### TRANSITION

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Go to *Twisting Catacombs* if the characters move to the tunnels in Area 1.

## TWISTING CATACOMBS

### *Sidebar: Unstable Ground*

- Sinkholes lurk along the floors of the catacombs. These pits are 30 feet deep. For each round a creature stands in a square adjacent to a pit, there's a **25% chance** the square will collapse into a new 5-foot wide, 30-foot deep pit (maximum two per pit).
- Characters may avoid **falling** into a pit with a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.

### AREA 4: UNDERGROUND SPRING

- The halls stacked with skeletal remains widen into a broad, echoing **cavern**.
- A still pool of sulfurous **water** simmers at the back of the cavern. Several limp **bodies** in white tabards float in it. Blood drifts from their wrists in thin ribbons.

### SPARE THESE MORTALS

- Father Baird had his minions toss the blood-drained **bodies** of the captured acolytes here.
- Two of the acolytes (treat them as **commoners**), human female **Mariel** and male dwarf **Naugrem**, are still clinging to life. They are both on their final death saving throw.
- Roll **initiative** to keep track of time by the round as the characters react.

### DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the characters save the living acolytes?

### DEVELOPMENT

- If revived, the acolytes speak with chattering teeth about the **hooded sorcerer** who slit their wrists and filled bowls with their blood. Then, the undead beasts dragged them here.
- The **sorcerer** wore a black robe, had a raspy voice, and his nails were falling out. His eyes glowed with the same green as the undead.

### AREA 5: COLLAPSED MAUSOLEUM

- A **pit** in the corner of this cavern houses a gibbering, wounded **ghoul** that has fallen in and can't escape. Its eyes burn with green fire. It tries to **climb** by bracing itself against the sides, showing unusual intelligence, but its wounds keep it from progressing.
- A ruptured **mausoleum** sits half-open in the collapsing wall. The narrow, stone **coffins** inside have all recently been torn open.

### Treasure

A dusty cache of **150 gold pieces** stamped with the profile of a forgotten Azarummian lich-queen lies piled at the back of the mausoleum. A bubbling *Potion of Gaseous Form* sits among the coins.



### TRANSITION

Go to *Down The Well* if the characters return to the well in Area 1, or *Crypt of the Fallen* if they take the tunnel to Area 4.

# CRYPT OF THE FALLEN

## AREA 6: GLOWING CAVERN

- A hooded **sorcerer** stands over a guttering brazier boiling with green fire.
- Four swaying **ghouls** stare in thrall at the emerald-eyed **skull** inside brazier. Piercing whispers emanate from it in a vile language.
- Shattered **mausoleums** loom around the edges of the cavern. Green flashes reflect inside the tombs like cat eyes.
- Four **statues** encircle the brazier. Blood spills from the full bowls in their hands, tracing lines to the sputtering brazier.
- **Sinkholes** dot the uneven floor.

### DEVELOPMENT

- The sorcerer, who is **Father Baird**, hears the characters coming if they don't make an effort to be **stealthy**. He prepares by summoning three green-eyed **skeletons**.
- Father Baird takes sick delight in revealing that he is the **priest** the group seeks.
- If the characters show any **aggression**, Father Baird snaps his rotting fingers and the **ghouls** spring to attention. Go to the *Combat* section.



### Father Baird, LE human

*"St. Terragnis orders you to abandon this dark place, my children. Leave us to rot. Come now, will you defy our saint's holy commands?"*

- *Appearance.* Short. Thin beard and delicate features. Nails blackened and dying. Eyes burning with green marsh-light.
- *Does.* Smiles twitchily and admonishes the group to heed St. Terragnis's "commands."
- *Secret.* Feared the growing power and divine favor Tibalt was showing.

### Sidebar: The Whisperskull

- The *Whisperskull* is a relic the Azarummian sorcerers used to raise undead armies. A burning **emerald** glows in the cyclopean skull's lone eye socket. Fell secrets leech from its hollows in an echoing whisper.
- While the *Whisperskull* does not have specific game statistics, the scope and nature of its abilities can be defined by the GM. For the purposes of this adventure, it grants its bonded wielder **lair actions** and the power to **animate** unusually intelligent undead.
- The *Whisperskull* has an **AC of 14** and **30 hit points**. Its effects end if destroyed.

### DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the characters defeat Father Baird?

### COMBAT

- Father Baird uses his **lair action** to summon three **skeletons**. He casts *spirit guardians* on his first turn, staying out of melee range and in cover as long as possible.
- The four **ghouls** grapple characters who get close to Father Baird and drag them along for a shared fall down the **sinkholes**.
- Father Baird **panics** if anyone attacks the *Whisperskull*. He focuses *guiding bolts* on those individuals.

### Treasure

The emerald inside the *Whisperskull* is worth **200 gp** (it becomes mundane if the *Whisperskull* is destroyed).

### TRANSITION

Go to *Down The Well* if the characters return to Area 1, or *Twisting Catacombs* if they take the tunnels to Areas 4 and 5. If the characters have defeated Father Baird, they can move on to the *Aftermath* section.



## AFTERMATH

### WHO WILL RUN THE CHURCH?

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- Without Father Baird, the Church of St. Terragnis is without concrete **leadership**. If Tibalt is alive, he volunteers to be the interim priest, but his training isn't complete. The characters may devise a plan to help with this situation.
- Tibalt or another member of the church makes sure the characters are paid **100 gp** each for their help in the catacombs. The clergy will also fulfill a **boon** for each character (within reason).



### THE WHISPERSKULL

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- Characters who want to use the *Whisperskull* instead of destroy it may make gains in the short term, but the skull's **ill effects** are inescapable in the long term. In this situation, the GM is encouraged to create specific positive and negative effects for the *Whisperskull*. If the characters use it, they draw the **attention** of more powerful parties, both good and evil.

### FUTURE ADVENTURE HOOKS

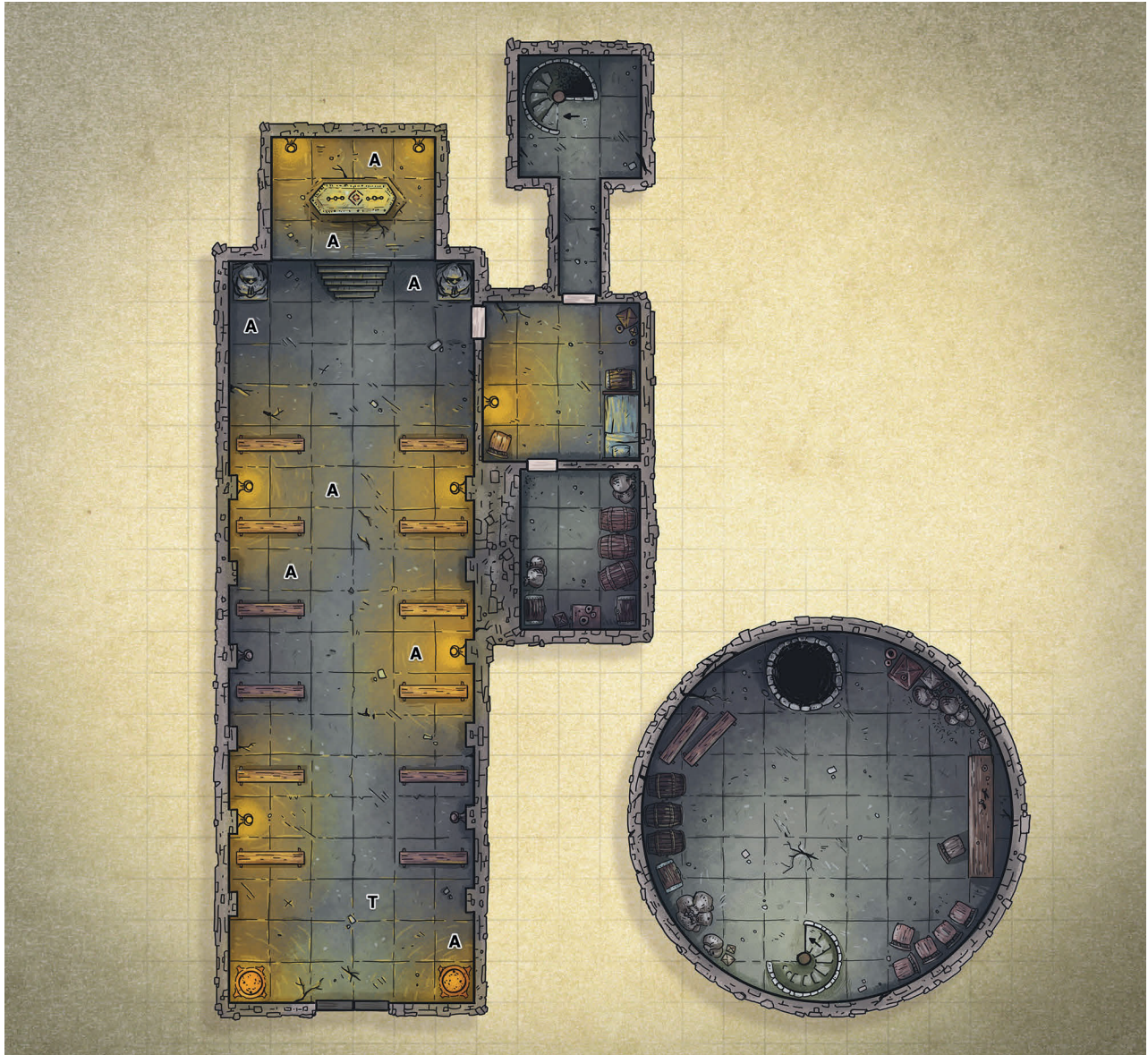
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- The group may decide to seek out further information or treasures from the **Azarummian empire**.
- Tibalt may ask the party to deliver the **news** about Father Baird to the Bishop of the church of St. Terragnis, requiring travel through dangerous territory.
- The characters may be called upon to help find a **new priest** to lead the Church of St. Terragnis, or to lead it themselves during the search for a new priest.
  - The *Whisperskull* in this crypt may not have been the **only one** left in the world...

# APPENDIX A: MAPS

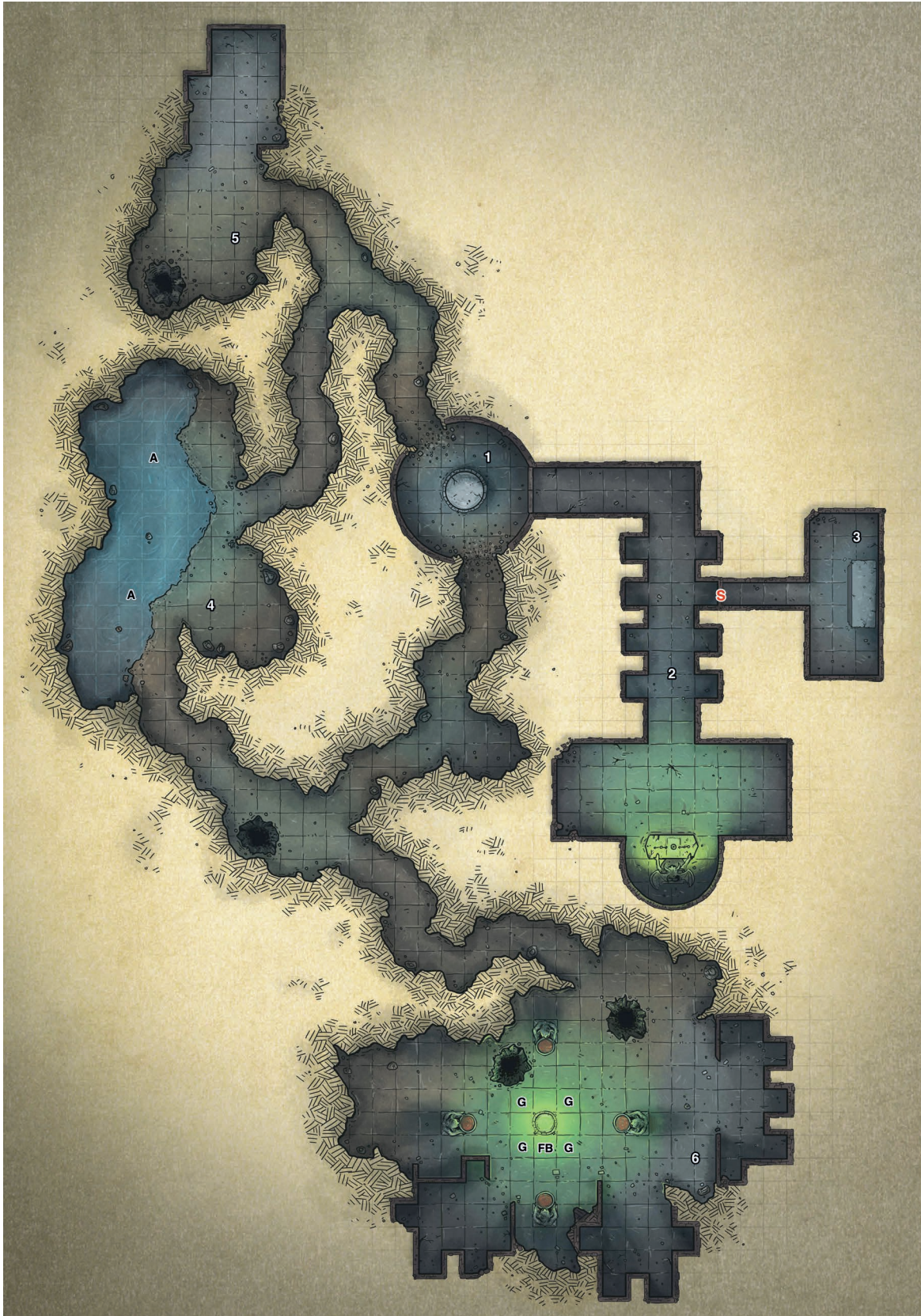
## CHURCH OF ST. TERRAGNIS

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# CRYPTS AND CATACOMBS





## APPENDIX B: NEW MONSTERS

### Reginald Baird

Father Reginald Baird is a thin, middle-aged man with hollow cheekbones and a twitching smile. He was once a man of conviction, preaching the word of St. Terragnis with the stoic duty espoused by his god.

**Dangerous Knowledge.** Father Baird focused on the study of arcane magic and artifacts during his tutelage as a priest of St. Terragnis, rather than the more typical healing and medicinal arts. While his superiors found his interests odd, they also believed broad knowledge among the clergy would cement the church's influence as a source of wisdom and guidance. They didn't realize Baird's fascination with the arcane bordered on obsession.

**Tempt Them Slowly.** Once Father Baird gained the independence of his own church and flock, he was able to study necromancy in secret. Over the years, his intellectual curiosity in the dark arts gave way to an insatiable thirst for potent secrets. St. Terragnis taught self-control, duty, and the acceptance of discomfort. Necromancy, on the other hand, taught the furious, self-indulgent denial of Father Baird's greatest fear — cold death itself. When the *Whisperskull* called to him from beneath his own church, he knew it was a sign from the tenebrous gods that his destiny had come.

### FATHER BAIRD, FALLEN PRIEST

*Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (chain shirt)  
**Hit Points** 38 (7d8 + 7)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

**STR**    **DEX**    **CON**    **INT**    **WIS**    **CHA**

10 (+0)   10 (+0)   12 (+1)   13 (+1)   16 (+3)   13 (+1)

**Skills** Arcana +3, Persuasion +3, Religion +5

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The fallen priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The fallen priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, resistance, sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *command, guiding bolt, inflict wounds*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, hold person*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

### ACTIONS

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

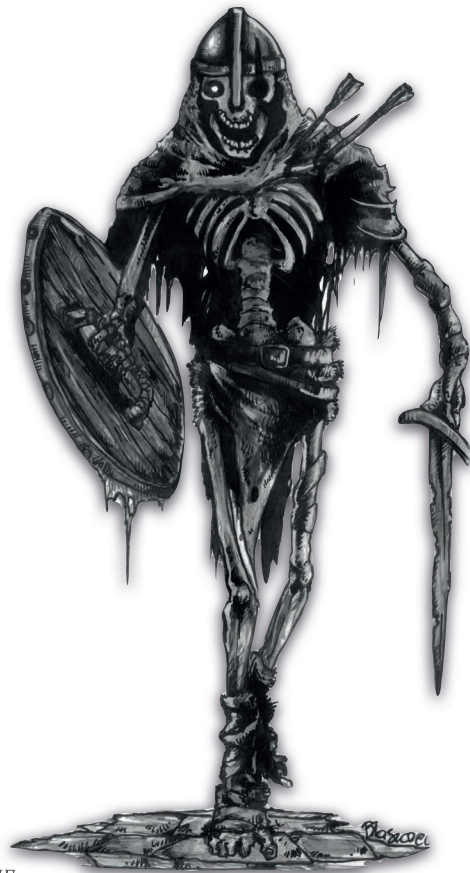
### LAIR ACTIONS

While the *Whisperskull* is whole, on initiative count 20 (losing all initiative ties), Father Baird takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Father Baird can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

**Rot the Flesh.** One target Father Baird can see makes a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 2d10 necrotic damage on a failure or half on a successful save.

**Rise.** Three **skeleton** allies with glowing, green eyes emerge from a tomb within 60 feet of Father Baird and may take their turns. They act on initiative count 20 going forward.

**Sinister Whispers.** One target Father Baird can see makes a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the target has disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws until initiative count 20 on the next round.



## APPENDIX C: TABLES

### CORRUPT THE LIVING

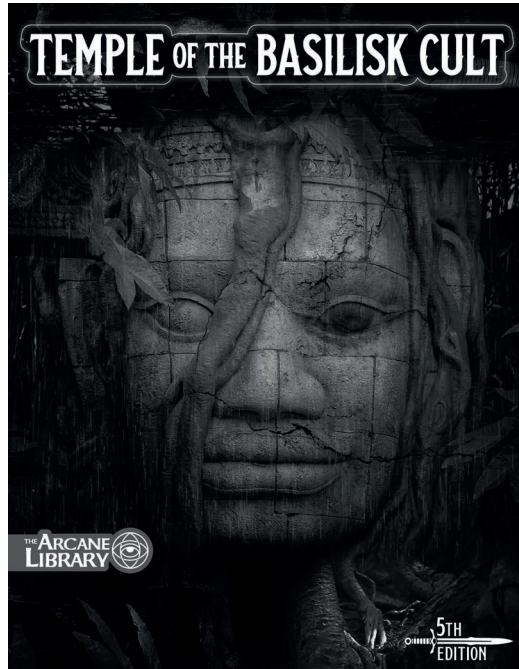
| D8 | Detail   |
|----|--|
| 1  | <b>Skin sloughing:</b> 1d10 necrotic damage  |
| 2  | <b>Nails falling out:</b> Subtract 1d4 from melee damage rolls   |
| 3  | <b>Chattering teeth:</b> Disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks  |
| 4  | <b>Bleeding ears:</b> Disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks   |
| 5  | <b>Maddening whispers:</b> Subtract 1d4 from Wisdom saving throws  |
| 6  | <b>Primal fear:</b> 50% chance stunned the first round of combat, 50% chance advantage on attacks instead                      |
| 7  | <b>Hum uncontrollably:</b> Subtract 1d4 from Constitution saving throws for concentration for you and allies within 30' of you |
| 8  | <b>Visions of power:</b> You may add 1d6 necrotic damage to your damage rolls, but you take 1d6 necrotic damage                |





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If you **join The Arcane Library's** newsletter, you'll get a FREE copy of *Temple of the Basilisk Cult*, a 1st-level adventure set in the jungle!



## **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks to John from [www.5thsrd.org](http://www.5thsrd.org) for permission to link to his site. Major appreciation to Hank at [Runehammer](#) for being a tremendous creative inspiration. Very many thanks to [The Angry GM](#) for wisdom, especially about pacing and structure. Finally, my most heartfelt gratitude to [Jessee Egan](#) for phenomenal art direction, design, and support.

## **Art Credits**

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*Dwarf, Ghoul, Green Potion, Cyclopean Skull, Coin Bag, Gravestone*: Publisher's Choice Quality

Stock Art © Rick Hershey / Fat Goblin Games

*Green-Eyed Skeleton*: Bartek Blaszczec / Blaszczec Art

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