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Dungeon Crawl Classics #50

Vault of the Iron Overlord

by Monte Cook

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 7-9



Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

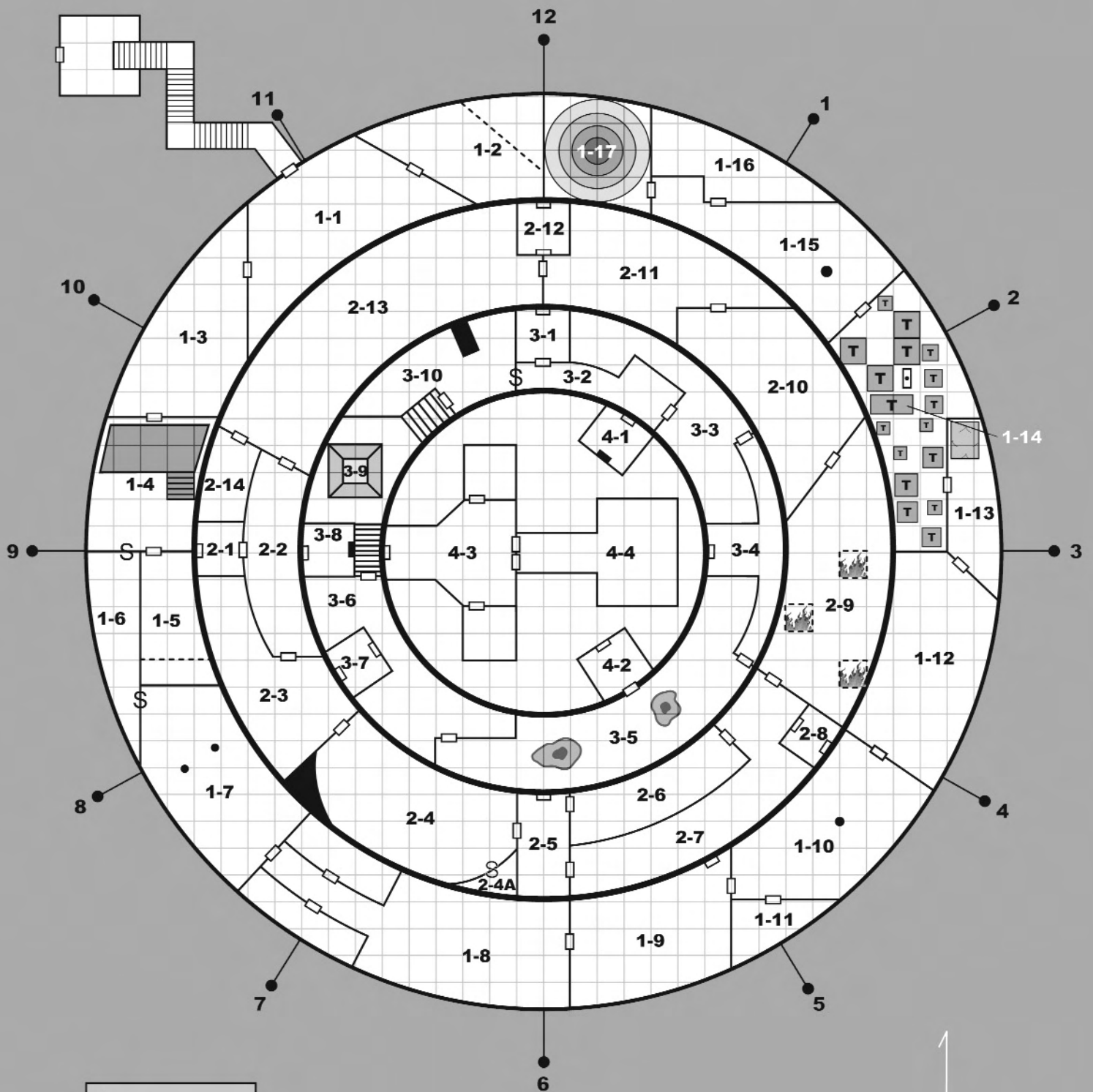
Chaos reigns in the kingdom as the king and queen have died, leaving no heirs. The heroes are commissioned to go into the king's vault to retrieve the *scepter of succession*, a magical relic that legends claim to be able to determine who should be the rightful ruler of the kingdom. The king kept his treasures in no ordinary vault, however. The so-called Vault of Rings was designed to not only keep out thieves but to train his heir, who would be unable to access the kingdom's wealth until he or she could overcome the trials and obstacles found within the vault....




If you enjoy this adventure, look for the rest of the Dungeon Crawl Classics series!




The Vault of Rings – Starting Position

When you start the adventure, the rings on the inside front cover should be in this position.



-  door
-  false door
-  one-sided door



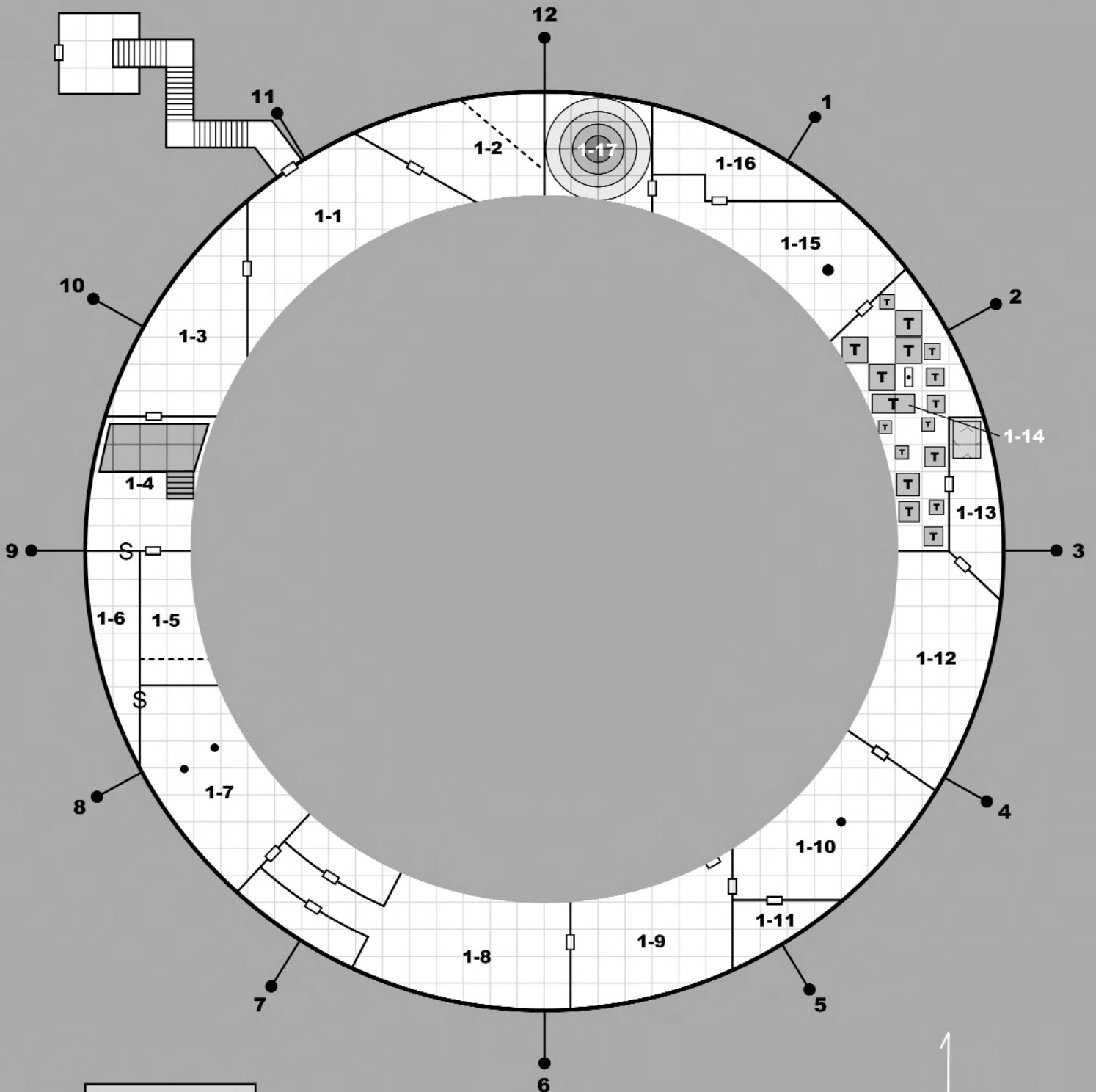
 = 5 ft.

Instructions for PDF purchasers:

This DCC module includes a map on the inside cover that actually rotates. There are four rings in a concentric pattern. Three of them rotate on a central axis as the dungeon is explored. Obviously, the PDF can't rotate. We have provided you with each of the rings on separate pages. You should stack these pages atop one another, use a rotating fastener to align them through the center of the rings, and then clip the rings out of the paper. You will end up with the same map that is provided in the print version.

The Vault of Rings

Rotate the rings as the heroes explore the dungeon. See inside back cover for starting position.

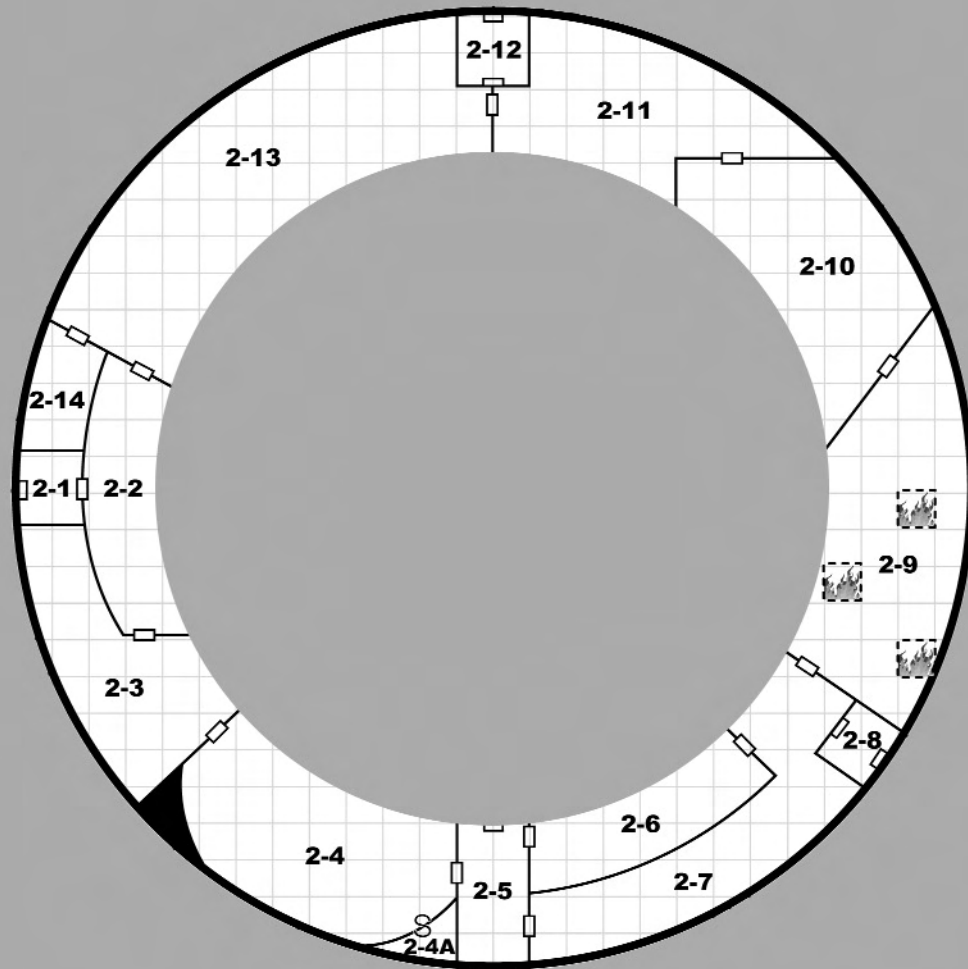


	door
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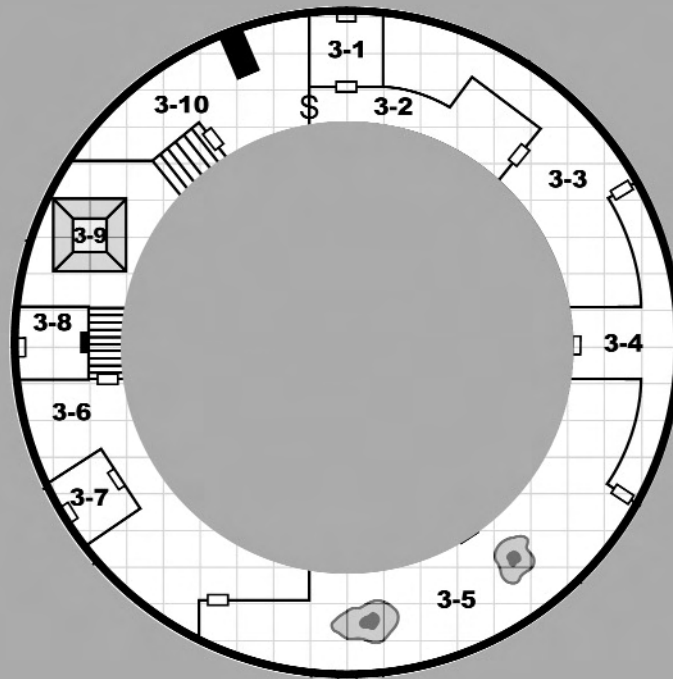
The Vault of Rings

Rotate the rings as the heroes explore the dungeon. See inside back cover for starting position.



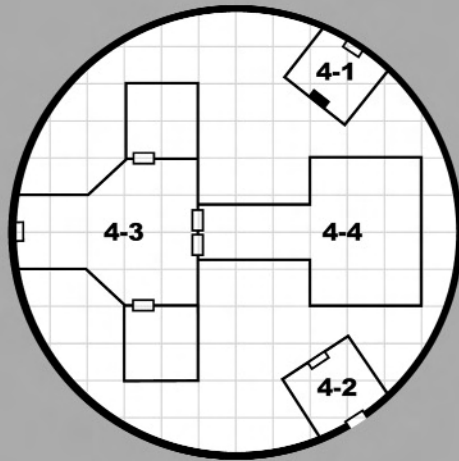
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The Vault of Rings

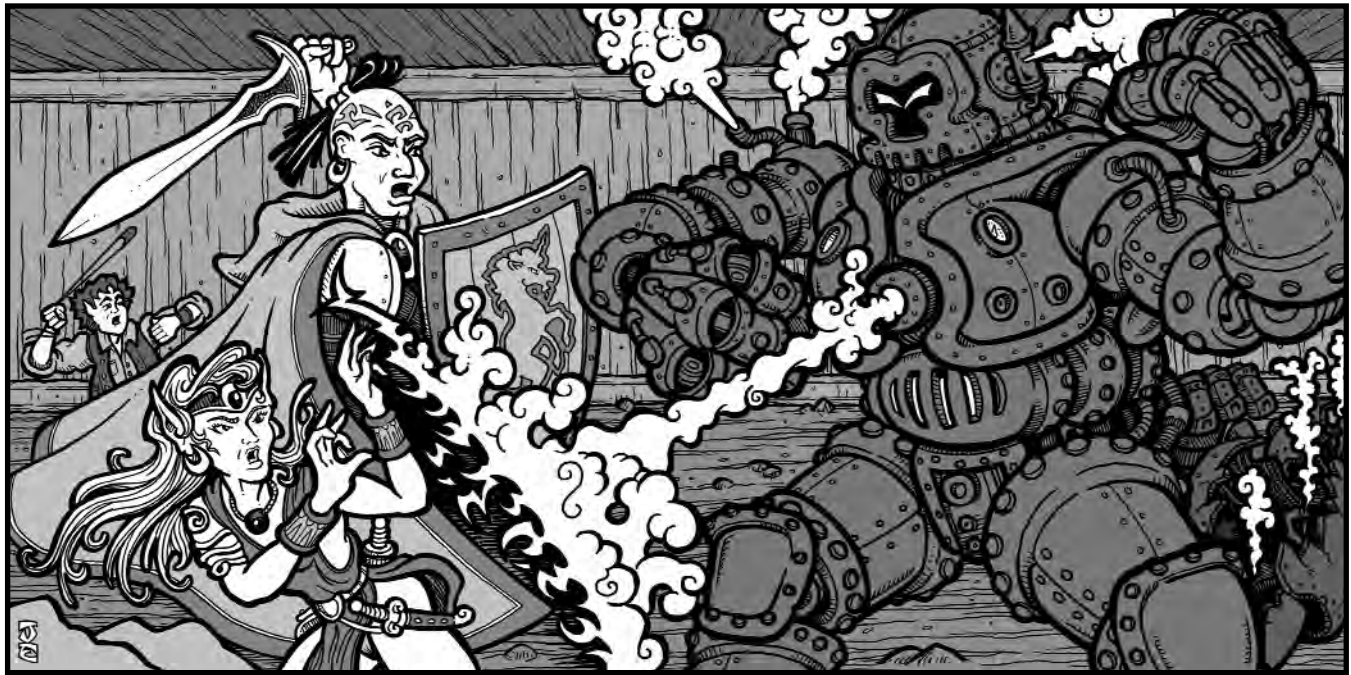
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Dungeon Crawl Classics #50

The Vault Of The Iron Overlord

By Monte Cook and Søren Keis Thustrup
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 7-9



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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Game Master's Section.....	2
Background Story	8
Areas of the Map	10
The First Ring: Entrance to the Vault	10
The Second Ring: The Test of the Land.....	17
The Third Ring: The Derro	24
The Fourth Ring: The Inner Vault	31
Player Handouts	34
Pregenerated Characters.....	39



If you like this adventure, be sure to look for the rest of the Dungeon Crawl Classics series at your local game store.

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Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

The Vault of the Iron Overlord is designed for four to six characters of 7th through 9th level. We recommend 35-40 character levels between the party members. While characters can be of any basic character class, a good mix of character classes is helpful. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group's unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

Chaos reigns in the kingdom as the king and queen have died, leaving no heirs. The player characters are commissioned by a minor noble to go into the king's vault to retrieve the *scepter of succession*, a magical relic that legends claim to be able to determine who should be the rightful ruler of the kingdom.

The king kept his treasures in no ordinary vault, however. The PCs learn that the king's obsession was, in fact, the so-called Vault of Rings, and it was designed to not only keep out thieves but to train his heir, who would be unable to access the kingdom's wealth until he or she could overcome the trials and obstacles found within the vault. The vault is made of a series of rings that turn mechanically using mechanisms within the rooms in each ring. Each ring must be manipulated precisely in order for the PCs to proceed deeper into the vault – the vault itself is a lock that must be opened to get at the center!

To make matters worse, however, the PCs also discover that the Iron Overlord who created the vault, whose consciousness now resides within a bizarre construct body, has gone quite mad. He killed the king and queen and commands that the Vault of Rings' construction must continue. Ultimately, they must confront this villain and his insane work crew at the center of the vault if they are to recover the *scepter of succession* and restore peace in the kingdom.



Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
1-2	10	C	Modified gorgon	8
1-3	11	C/T	2 girallons Energy floor	9
1-8	12	C	<i>Liliarata</i> , medusa Shield guardian	9
1-10	14	P	Blocks puzzle	6
1-13	15	C/T	Black pudding <i>Telekinesis trap</i>	9
1-14	15	C/P	Pit trap maze	7
1-15	16	C/T	2 deviant lamias Magical mirrors	9
1-17	16	T	Shifting floor	7
2-3	18	C	3 advanced air mephits 3 advanced dust mephits	10
2-6	19	C	3 cloaklers	8
2-7	20	C/T	Animated reading stand <i>Vacuous grimoire</i>	8
2-8	20	T	False entrance trap	10
2-9	20	C/T	Bearded devil 3 <i>fireball</i> traps	9
2-11	22	C	2 Large water elementals	8
2-12	23	T	False entrance trap	10
2-13	23	C	Dire boar zombie Dire lion zombie Dire wolf zombie	8
3-3	25	C	<i>Horolas</i> , guardian automaton	8
3-4	26	C	<i>Baraszor</i> , derro Sor6 Allip	9

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
3-5	27	C	Cambaceros, mad xorn 4 Derro	10
3-6	28	C	5 Derro	8
3-7	28	T	False entrance trap	10
3-8	29	T	False entrance trap	10
3-9	29	C	Gibbering moulder Derro Sor2	7
3-10	30	C	5 Derro	8
4-1	31	T	False entrance trap	10
4-2	31	T	False entrance trap	9
4-3	31	C	Iron Overlord 2 tough gargoyles 4 ordinary gargoyles	11
4-4	32	T	Poisoned dart trap Prismatic spray trap	10

Scaling Information

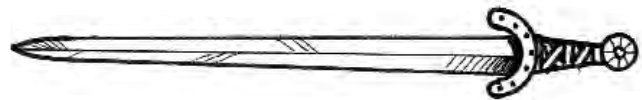
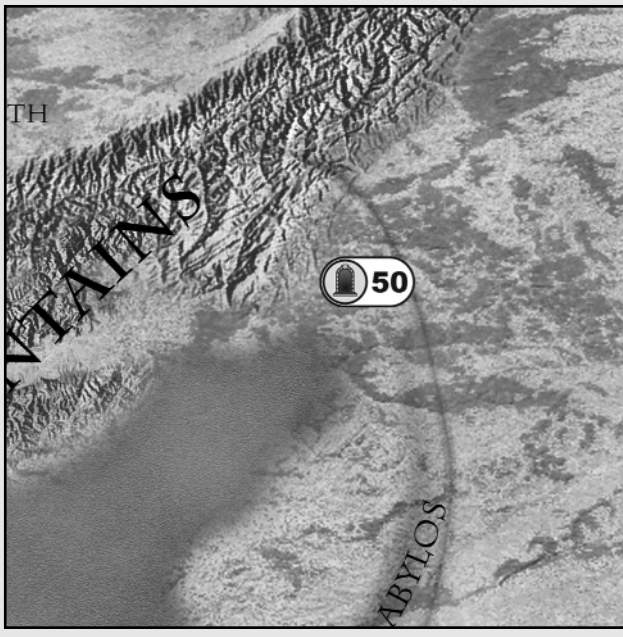
The Vault of the Iron Overlord is designed for 4-6 characters of 7th-9th level, but it can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker Parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 7th level): The modified clay golem assassin is a 4th-level doppelganger monk with construct traits. Reduce the Iron Overlord's AC and Hit Dice by 4 and his steam venting ability damage by 2d6. Reduce the number of girallons in area 1-3 to one and have the floor only inflict 2d6 damage. Remove the shield guardian in area 1-8, but give Liliarata a level of fighter. None of the pits in area 1-14 have multiple targets or spikes. Reduce damage from the shifting floor in area 1-17 to 8d6 and reduce Balance, Jump and Climb DCs by 4. There are only two cloaklers in area 2-6. Replace the *fireball* traps in area 2-9 with *scorching ray* traps (2 rays each). Remove the dire wolf zombie in area 2-13. Remove 1 derro from areas 3-6 and 3-10. Baraszor in area 3-4 is a 4th-level sorcerer. Cambaceros in area 3-5 is a half-fiend average xorn and loses its Chaos Earth abilities. The trap in area 3-7 summons a Bone Devil. Remove the two tough gargoyles in area 4-3. The *prismatic spray* trap in area 4-4 is a *cloudkill* trap.

Stronger Parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 9th level): Give the Iron Overlord immunity to magic as an iron golem. Add 4 HD and the abilities of a 2nd-level assassin to the Assassin Construct with a DC 17 against its death attack. Add one gorgon in area 1-2. Give Liliarata in area 1-8 two levels of ranger with the archery style and a +1 *frost composite longbow*. In area 1-13, add a *mass hold person* effect that goes off when the PCs hit the wall above the black pudding. Both lamias in area 1-15 are 1st-level barbarians; the mirrors shoot *rays of exhaustion*. Replace the mephits in area 2-3 with two groups of 3 belkers each. In area 2-8, a *symbol of stunning* goes off just before the pit trap opens. Replace the bearded devil in area 2-9 with a chain devil; the traps are with *cone of cold*. Each zombie in area 2-13 has a gem in an eye socket that fires off *energation* once per round as a free action. Baraszor in area 3-4 is an 8th-level sorcerer; the allip has Cha 22, giving it AC 18 and a save DC 18 vs. its babbling ability. Cambaceros in area 3-5 is also a half-fiend in addition to its other powers. Add 4 HD to the gibbering moulder in area 3-9; the caretaker is a 3rd-level sorcerer. All gargoyles in area 4-3 are the tough version, and each begins by using an ounce of *stone salve*. The *prismatic spray* trap in area 4-4 is heightened to 9th-level spell for a DC 22 Reflex, Fortitude, or Will save.

DCC World

If you are using the world of Áereth from *DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms*, The Kingdom of Eslan and the Vault of the Iron Overlord are found in the east, where the Wall of Abylos runs to the Dragonspire Mountains. Isolated from the nations (and internecine plots) of the Northlands, the people of Eslan pride themselves in their fierce independence and liberty.



Getting the Players Involved

As a prelude to the events of this adventure, the GM should let the PCs learn of the troubles in a small, nearby kingdom where the rulers have died and many forces vie for control. Shortly thereafter, one of the following options can be used to bring the characters into the situation:

- The PCs learn that Lord Niel Hammersh seeks experienced adventurers to enter the Vault of Rings and recover the *scepter of succession*. While he has no skill in dungeoneering or fighting, Lord Hammersh shows every sign of being a wise and benevolent fellow, and of course hopes that the scepter will indicate that he should be the new ruler, which may actually be the best thing for the kingdom. With a ruler in place, the chaos in the kingdom can come to an end. Regardless, Lord Hammersh is willing to pay the PCs well if they are successful – each gets 2,000 gp reward, plus any treasure recovered that isn't from the treasury itself. (Lord Hammersh knows very well that the kingdom's coffers are almost empty after diverting so many resources toward the building of the vault, so even if the PCs plan on plundering the treasury, he suspects that this will be no terrible loss.) Lord Hammersh arranges for the PCs to obtain the key to the entrance to the Vault of Rings. He knows nothing of the Iron Overlord or any of the traps or guards within.
- The PCs learn that King Arsidan and Queen Kathenta were murdered and the mastermind behind their slaying hides within their own vault. Seeking justice and vengeance for this dark deed, the PCs enter the vault looking for the villain, whom they have heard lives forever in a body of iron, with a heart of fire. Sponsored by one of the various nobles of the kingdom who informed them of the truth behind the king and queen's death (perhaps Lord Hammersh, described above), they can obtain a key to the entrance to the vault.
- The PCs learn that with the king and queen's demise, the kingdom's treasury is ripe for the picking. The entrance to the vault lies in a now-unguarded locale that they can find with a little exploration. Any treasure they find is for their own benefit. If they find any royal relics of importance, well, treasure is treasure.



Features of the Vault of the Iron Overlord

Each ring of the Vault of the Iron Overlord is separate, allowing it to move independently. The three rings that surround the Inner Vault are like a lock mechanism. Each ring must be moved into a particular position before the PCs can move further into the vault and closer to the treasure at the center.

The vault is a fairly new construction. The Iron Overlord only just recently finished the First Ring. The vault gets older (30-40 years old) as one moves toward the center.

Moving the Rings

GMs should study the movable circular map on the inside back cover. Around the rings there are twelve points delineating equal distances around the circumference, like a clock face. Each ring also has an indicator to provide a handy reference – it should always be at one of the twelve points around the circumference. Using these marks, the GM can measure the amount a ring moves at a time – always at least the distance between two marks, but sometimes more. This distance will hereafter be referred to as a “click.” It takes each ring 1-2 rounds to move 1 click.

The first time a ring moves, read or paraphrase the following:

The room begins to vibrate and shudder, causing you to struggle to stay on your feet, and somehow you feel the room moving. A deep grinding sound, like an impossibly large millstone, reverberates through the room. The grinding is punctuated by a deep “thunk” (or several, depending on the activator).

Characters will have to make a DC 8 Balance check to stay on their feet, but individual GMs may decide to skip these rolls unless circumstances warrant otherwise.

Perceptive players may use the number of clicks to navigate. A dwarf may get additional benefits from his Stonecunning ability: A DC 25 Listen check will let the dwarf hear a slight change in the clicks when the rings align with a door to the next ring. Note, however, that the character cannot distinguish between a false entrance and the true one (see below).

The rings are moved by a series of “activators.” These are usually in the form of a button, a lever, or some similar mechanism, although many are disguised. Each activator moves the ring in a precise way, for example, one lever might move its ring two clicks counterclockwise and another might move it one click clockwise. These movements occur starting wherever the ring is positioned at the time the activator is used. Once an activator is used, it cannot be used again until all the activators on that ring have been used, at which point they all reset, or until the special reset activator is used on that ring (each ring has one such reset mechanism). GMs should note that the activators in the Third Ring have their own special way of functioning.

The indicator for each ring should start at the “twelve” position when the adventure starts.

Each ring has a single door that leads out of it and into the ring next to it; however, at the outset of the adventure, these doors lead to a blank wall. Only by using the activators to turn the ring can this door be made to match up with a corresponding door on the next ring. Because each activator moves the rings in a precise way, only a specific set of activators gets the doors to match up correctly (although the order is not important, and there may in fact be other solutions). The doors connecting the rings close while the rings move and cannot be opened until the rings stop moving. Fortunately, the king has left clues for his future heir to help determine which activators to use and the proper order to use them. Once the doors between the two rings are matched up, characters gain entry into an access passage.

Access Passages

The Second and Third Rings, as well as the Inner Vault section, each have built into them three “access passages.” Each of these has a door that opens out of the ring toward the outside, allowing characters within the next outermost ring access into that ring if the rings have been moved to make the access passage line up with the correct door. However, two of the three access passages on each ring are false and trapped.

The correct access passage allows movement between the two rings. It also does more than just that. Anyone passing through an access passage is rendered forever immune to the special poisonous gas that permeates that ring.

Poisonous Gas

The Second and Third Rings, as well as the Inner Vault section, are each filled with a different invisible, odorless gas that has debilitating effects. Anyone entering a ring through the correct access passage is rendered immune to that ring’s gas. Anyone entering using another means, such as *dimension door* or tunneling, is subject to the gas. Such characters must make a Fortitude saving throw each round (bonuses to saves against poison effects or immunity to poisons apply, even though it does not function like a typical poison). Each failed save results in damage, depending on the ring:

Second Ring: 3d6 hit points and 1 point of temporary Strength

Third Ring: 3d6 hit points and 1 point of temporary Wisdom

Inner Vault: 3d6 hit points and 1 point of temporary Constitution

Physical Construction of the Rings

The mechanisms for the movement are above and below each ring. The floor, exterior walls and ceiling of each ring are made of a foot of stone, and an inch of lead sand-

Leaving the Vault to Rest

The Iron Overlord is one of the world’s greatest experts in the creation of magical machines and constructs. A few years ago, he sent one of his manufactured servants to the surface to act as his only above-ground operative. When King Arsidan decided that the vault was completed, against the Iron Overlord’s wishes, the Iron Overlord had his construct operative murder both the king and queen.

The construct is a modified clay golem construct able to alter its appearance. Should the PCs enter the vault and then exit (to rest, get supplies, etc.) the Iron Overlord is likely to send his assassin construct after them.

GMs should use the assassin construct carefully, springing it upon the PCs when their guard is down after they leave the dungeon, or as they prepare to re-enter. Using its doppelgangerlike change shape ability and its immunity to spells that would reveal its deception, this creature of soft, malleable clay can flawlessly impersonate someone to get close to the PCs, and then move in for a devastating attack against unprepared foes. The PCs may not even be wearing their armor or have their equipment at hand, making this a very difficult encounter.

Assassin Construct (Modified Clay Golem): CR 9; Medium Construct; HD 11d10+20; hp 80; Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 27 (+3 Dex, +14 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +8; Grp +15; Atk slam +15 melee (1d10+7); Full Atk 2 slams +15 melee (1d10+7); SQ Change shape, construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/bludgeoning, haste, immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 25, Dex 17, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1.

SQ – Change Shape (Su): Can take the form of any Small or Medium humanoid.

SQ – Haste (Su): 1/day. After one round of combat, can *haste* itself (as the spell) for three rounds as a free action.

SQ – Immunity to Magic (Ex): Immune to all spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance. However, a *move earth* spell drives the golem back 120 feet and deals 3d12 points of damage, a *disintegrate* spell slows the golem (as the *slow* spell) for 1d6 rounds and deals 1d12 points of damage, and an *earthquake* spell stops it from moving and deals 5d10 points of damage. The golem gets no saving throw. Lastly, any damage from magical acid heals the golem 1 point for every 3 points it would normally deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

wicked between two plates of iron. To break through an exterior wall, floor, or ceiling, one must first break through the stone wall, then the first iron plate, then the lead plate, and then the second iron plate. To bust one's way from one ring to another, one must do this twice (stone, iron, lead, iron and then iron, lead, iron and stone). Because of the powerful magic inherent within the vault itself, each portion of the main structure is considered magically treated for purposes of hardness, hit points, and saving throws (+12 save bonus to all saves). The lead sheets prevent all scrying and detection spells from functioning through the walls, so attempting to use *clairvoyance*, for example, to see what's going on outside of the ring the caster stands within won't work. The iron sheets prevent *passwall* effects.

The walls of the access passages, both real and false, are considered exterior walls for these purposes.

Interior walls are simply one foot thick stone and are not considered magical.

Unless otherwise noted, all doors are strong wooden doors reinforced with iron bands.

Magic Stone Wall: 1 ft. thick; hardness 16; hp 180; Break DC 55; Climb DC 20.

Magic Iron Plating: 1 in. thick; hardness 20; hp 50; Break DC 50.

Magic Lead Plating: 1 in. thick; hardness 16; hp 35; Break DC 40.

Stone Wall (interior): 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 180; Break DC 35; Climb DC 20.

Strong, Reinforced Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23 (stuck), 25 (locked).

Iron Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28 (stuck), 28 (locked).

Unless otherwise noted, all ceilings are twenty feet high, and there is no illumination other than what the PCs bring for themselves.

Damaging the Mechanism

If PCs manage to break through the floor or ceiling anywhere on the rings, they see the huge iron gears and other mechanisms that turn them. Inflicting 100 points of damage (assuming a hardness of 20) on the mechanism renders that ring immovable until it is repaired.

Damaging the mechanism is sure to alert the Iron Overlord and the Maintenance Crew, and one or both shows up 1d4 minutes later to slay the vandals and repair the damage. Given 1d6 hours, they can repair 100 points of damage. It is likely that if the PCs damage the mechanism and then leave the vault, it will be functioning again by the time they return. Of course, if they are on the Second or Third Ring, damaging the mechanism may trap them inside the vault.

Wandering Monsters

There is a 15% chance (1-3 on d20) per hour spent in the Vault of the Iron Overlord that the characters will encounter a wandering monster or experience a random event.

1d8	Encounter
1-3	Mechanism Shudder
4	Ring Resets
5-6	Maintenance Crew (1d4+1 derro)
7	Maintenance Crew (Cambaceros and 1d4+1 derro)
8	The Iron Overlord

Mechanism Shudder: There is a small quake that reverberates throughout the ring. PCs hear gears grinding beneath their feet and over their heads. PCs failing a DC 15 Balance check fall prone the first time this occurs (thereafter they grow accustomed to it, just as all the inhabitants have).

Ring Resets: The mechanism malfunctions (or the Iron Overlord looks to toy with the PCs) and the ring returns to the 12 position. All activators reset.

Maintenance Crew (1d4+1 derro): These derro travel throughout the Vault of Rings (aided by Cambaceros the xorn) making sure the mechanisms work, feeding the guardians, and generally keeping the place functioning. They are a bit mad (see the Third Ring) and generally attack intruders on sight, fighting to the death.

Derro: See stats on page 24.

Maintenance Crew (Cambaceros and 1d4+1 derro): As with the standard maintenance crew encounter, these derro and the xorn are here to check up on things and make sure that everything continues to function. If seriously threatened, Cambaceros flees to its lair in the Third Ring, taking the derro with it if possible.

Derro: See stats on page 24.

Cambaceros: See stats on page 27.

The Iron Overlord: The Iron Overlord, as he calls himself, was once a human man whose name is now lost. He was an expert architect and craftsman, King Arsidan's master mason, given the job of planning and constructing the Vault of Rings. Originally, he worked on Arsidan's specifications, but long ago his project went beyond those specifications and took on a life of its own. When the King demanded that the vault's construction come to a close, the Iron Overlord did finish it, but then immediately had the king and queen assassinated so that he could begin working on more rings, and making the vault even larger.

During the construction of the Vault of Rings, the Iron Overlord transferred his consciousness into a mechanical/magical construct body with a tremendously powerful furnace at its heart. However, he retained his own mind (and his skills and feats), differing him from most constructs. In this new self-repairing form, he gains the ability to vent superhot steam in a cone as a weapon through a

valve in his chest and he can teleport anywhere within the vault of his creation.

Strangest of all, however, is that he does not inhabit one body, but three, each one nested within the others. This means that when his body is destroyed, an undamaged, smaller body inside the wreckage rises up to continue the fight (or teleport away). To defeat the Iron Overlord, one must actually defeat him three times. While each nested body is physically weaker than the previous form (they are called Stage 1, 2, and 3), the smaller bodies are faster and have greater access to its fiery heart, allowing them to vent more steam and even channel heat to their fists. Lastly, each body's teleportation limit is its own; however, a smaller body cannot leave the larger until the larger is destroyed.

The Iron Overlord uses his teleport ability to wander the Vault of Rings, checking and servicing the mechanisms and managing the inhabitants. Ideally, the PCs should encounter him twice before reaching the Inner Vault. Each time, after defeating him, the next stage rises out of the wreckage and *teleports* away to safety so that the PCs must confront Stage 3 in the Inner Vault.

In every stage, the Iron Overlord is a barrel-chested, human-shaped construct made of iron with an obviously burning hot furnace within. Steam spouts from vents and clockwork mechanisms churn as he moves, although the image of his original human face shows on the glass faceplate on the front of his head.

Iron Overlord (Stage 1): CR 10; Huge Construct; HD 15d10+40; hp 122; Init -1; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 25 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +18 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +11; Grp +27; Atk Slam +17 melee (4d8+8); Full Atk 2 slams +17 melee (4d8+8); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA Hot heart, improved grab (successful hit with both slams triggers immediate grapple attempt); SQ Construct traits (although not immune to mind-affecting effects), darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, greater teleport, immune to fire, low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 27, Dex 8, Con -, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4 (+6 alchemical items, sculptures, stone items, traps, and weapons), Craft (alchemy) +18, Craft (sculpting) +18, Craft (stonemasonry) +25, Craft (trapmaking) +22, Craft (weaponsmithing) +16, Disable Device +22, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +22, Open Lock +17, Search +20 (+22 secret doors), Spellcraft +15, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Combat Reflexes, Craft Construct, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft (stonemasonry)).

SA – *Hot Heart (Su):* Grappled characters are automatically pulled in close and suffer 3d6 points of fire damage per round while grappled.

SQ – *Greater Teleport (Sp):* 3/day. Any location within the Vault of Rings.

Iron Overlord (Stage 2): CR 10; Large Construct; HD 15d10+30; hp 112; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 26 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +16 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +11; Grp +21; Atk Slam +16 melee (2d10+6 plus



1d6 fire); Full Atk 2 slams +16 melee (2d10+6 plus 1d6 fire); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Steam venting; SQ Construct traits (although not immune to mind-affecting effects), darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, greater teleport, immune to fire, low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 12, Con -, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4 (+6 alchemical items, sculptures, stone items, traps, and weapons), Craft (alchemy) +18, Craft (sculpting) +18, Craft (stonemasonry) +25, Craft (trapmaking) +22, Craft (weaponsmithing) +16, Disable Device +22, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +22, Open Lock +19, Search +20 (+22 secret doors), Spellcraft +15, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Combat Reflexes, Craft Construct, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft (stonemasonry)).

SA – *Steam Venting (Su):* 60-foot cone of steam, 10d6 fire damage, Reflex save DC 17 halves, usable every 1d4 rounds.

SQ – *Greater Teleport (Sp):* 3/day. Any location within the Vault of Rings.

Iron Overlord (Stage 3): CR 10; Medium Construct; HD 15d10+20; hp 102; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 27 (+3 Dex, +14 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +11; Grp +16; Atk Slam +16 melee (1d10+5 plus 2d6 fire); Full Atk 2 slams +16 melee (1d10+5 plus 2d6 fire); SA Final blast, steam venting; SQ Construct traits (although not immune to mind-affecting effects), darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, greater teleport, immune to fire, low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 21, Dex 16, Con -, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4 (+6 alchemical items, sculptures, stone items, traps, and weapons), Craft (alche-



Background Story

King Arsidan ruled a very small realm tucked away beyond the major kingdoms of the land. Thirty years ago, he commissioned the construction of a fabulous vault in which to hide the kingdom's treasury and his personal wealth. A gear-driven, magical monstrosity, this Vault of Rings would serve as both a way to protect the king's riches and serve as a training ground for his heir, for to access the kingdom's wealth after the King was dead and gone, the new ruler would have to penetrate the vault somehow on his own – no secrets as to how it could be entered would be available, not even to a young prince or princess.

Unfortunately, King Arsidan produced no heirs. As time went on, he diverted more and more of the kingdom's resources into the creation of the vault, somehow believing that the more elaborate it became, the more likely he would have a child. Ironically, both King Arsidan and his wife Queen Kathenta died on the day the vault was completed.

Today, the kingdom is in turmoil. There is no obvious heir to the throne, and the magical *scepter of succession* that has traditionally always been used to find the next worthy soul to sit upon the throne in such times is hidden away in Arsidan's elaborate vault. So far two interested parties have entered the Vault to recover it, and neither has returned.

The entrance to the Vault of Rings lies at the bottom of a set of stairs found in a small building in the rear part of the courtyard of King Arsidan's castle. While the royal guards watch over the keep itself to keep out looters or potential usurpers, they do not watch over the entrance to the vault.

The Dark Secret

Although the fact has been kept from the public, King Arsidan and his wife were murdered, and even those who know this secret have no idea who did it. It turns out that the culprit behind the slaying is the Iron Overlord in charge of the vault's construction, who has gone mad with his power. His mania drives him to continue to build onto the vault.

The actual murderer is a modified clay golem that works for the Iron Overlord, which is able to alter its appearance. The construct is still at large, and still poses a danger to any that would oppose the Iron Overlord.

my) +18, Craft (sculpting) +18, Craft (stonemasonry) +25, Craft (trapmaking) +22, Craft (weaponsmithing) +16, Disable Device +22, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +22, Open Lock +21, Search +20 (+22 secret doors), Spellcraft +15, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Combat Reflexes, Craft Construct, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft (stonemasonry)).

SA – *Final Blast (Su)*: When this stage reaches 0 hp, it explodes in a 20-foot radius inflicting 10d6 points of fire damage (Ref DC 17 save for half damage).

SA – *Steam Venting (Su)*: 60-foot cone of steam, 15d6 fire damage, Reflex save DC 17 halves, usable every 1d4 rounds.

SQ – *Greater Teleport (Sp)*: 3/day. Any location within the Vault of Rings.

Replacing, Resetting, and Repairing

The Iron Overlord and his servants constantly work to replace slain guardians, reset triggered traps, repair damaged structures and relock unlocked doors. They even strive to clean up messes and dispose of dead bodies. If the PCs leave an area and return many hours later, they may find it changed – slain monsters' corpses are gone, damaged walls are repaired, and traps are reset. They may even find brand new monsters to fight or challenges to overcome. Random encounters with the maintenance crew or the Iron Overlord often occur during such restoration processes.

Player Beginning

Before the PCs enter the vault, they may want to use Gather Information or Bardic Knowledge to learn more information about the situation at hand.

DC

Information Gained

- 15 The king spent vast amounts of money building an elaborate vault filled with challenges for his heir to overcome.
- 18 The Vault of Rings gets its name from the fact that it is built as a series of concentric rings around the treasury at the center.
- 20 Each of the rings that comprise the Vault of Rings moves via a massive magical mechanism. Turning them in the proper way is necessary to travel from one ring to the other and thus reaching the center.
- 22 In the last few weeks, two different groups of adventurers have already gone into the vault. One sought the treasure contained within; the other was sponsored by a noble who seeks the *scepter of succession*. No member of either group has returned.
- 24 Each ring has a different theme based on a different aspect of trial or challenge the king felt it necessary for his heir to overcome.
- 25 The king and queen did not die of natural causes, but were murdered.
- 28 Attempting to move through the vault by bypassing the elaborate system in place brings a quick and terrible death.

The GM may also wish to add a few rumors, regardless of the results of any checks made by the PCs, the truth of which is impossible to ascertain without going into the Vault of Rings themselves. Choose a few from the following list:

- King Arsidan is in fact not dead, but now resides within the vault as its insane master. (False)
- The builder of the vault has not come to the surface for decades. His name is now lost forever and he calls himself only the Iron Overlord—and he's still down there. (True)
- One adventurer of the first group that entered the vault did indeed return from their foray, but he was quite mad. (False, although if the GM wished to create an opportunity for the PCs to find out more cryptic clues of the vault, it could be true)

- No workmen have gone into or come out of the vault in many years. The builders used only supernatural workers and magic to build the underground structure. (more or less True)
- A set of magical rings contained within the vault is what really gives the Vault of Rings its name. Among their other powers, these rings allow the wearer to move freely throughout the vault and control the mechanisms found within. (False)
- A *holy avenger* sword is among the treasures stored within the vault. (False)

At the Entrance to the Vault

However they found their way there, the PCs find themselves standing in the courtyard of King Arsidan's castle. The castle is quiet. The guards who are still loyal who aren't out trying to help keep the peace have decided to guard the keep at the central part of the castle and leave the rest, including the courtyard and the entrance to the Vault of Rings. If they are on their own, the PCs have likely sneaked into the castle, finding that task surprisingly easily. If sponsored by Lord Hammersh or on some other officially-sponsored business, they did not have to sneak, although no guard challenged their entry.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Standing in an out-of-the-way section of the castle's courtyard, you see a small stone building with no windows and a single door. The wooden door bears a carved symbol of three concentric circles. The door bears a hefty iron lock. No one else is around. The castle walls are unpatrolled, the stables are empty, and the other outbuildings appear abandoned. All the windows of the central keep are dark, although you noticed a few guards watching over that structure. The castle is as quiet and still as the king and queen who recently lived here.

No further details of the castle are provided, because they are completely inconsequential to the adventure at hand. Nothing of value or interest can be found in the courtyard or the outbuildings.

The door is identical to those found in the vault below, and the lock requires a DC 24 Open Locks check to open. (If here on official business, the PCs will have the key to this lock.) The building is empty except for the stairs down to the door that leads to the First Ring, which is unlocked.

The First Ring: Entrance to the Vault

The largest of the three rings, this ring represents the Test of the Body in regard to the various trials King Arsidan designed for his future heir to undergo before he could gain access to the treasury. The encounters here are geared to test Arsidan's heir's physical prowess, might, and agility.

Unless otherwise noted, all creatures were brought here by the Iron Overlord to serve as guardians. They are fed and cared for by him and his servants. All traps and puzzles are likewise maintained by the Iron Overlord and his servants, and it is likely that those triggered that do not reset themselves by the PCs are reset within 1d3 hours after the PCs vacate an area.

Two groups of adventurers have entered this ring already. One met their demise here, and one managed to pass to the Second Ring. PCs should find occasional evidence of their passing. The ghillies, for example, bear scars of previous battles. With the exception of the remains in area 1-12 (and other examples mentioned specifically in the text), much of the damage that has been wrought and the bodies of the fallen have been repaired or removed by the maintenance crew.

In order to get the First Ring into the correct position to get into the Second Ring, the PCs will have to find the clue in area 1-16 and figure out which activators to use. The easiest combination involves the activators in areas 1-2, 1-10, 1-15, and 1-17. However, since the PCs won't know that they need to do that until exploring for a while, they are likely to move the ring a few times randomly. If so, they will need to reset the ring using the reset mechanism in area 1-5 or by using all of the activators.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Main Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

The door leading in is framed in wood crafted beautifully and engraved with these words: "Strength Enables Leadership."

The large, oddly-shaped room beyond echoes with emptiness. It seems surprisingly clean, although a few spots on the stone floor show some wear. On the wall opposite the door, a circular dial-like mechanism made of iron shows four concentric circles, one nested within the next. The outer circle is about eight inches across.

On the floor in the middle of the room, a square stone plate one inch high and ten feet across bears the following message:

"Welcome, my child, to the Vault of Rings. It is here that you will pass through three trials to determine if you are fit to rule this grand kingdom.

"To succeed, you must unlock the vault itself, using an exacting proscribed method that you will discover as you meet challenge after challenge.

"Attempting to bypass the tests and reach the center by means other than the proscribed method, if that lies within your power, will result in a terrible punishment that will likely cost you your life.

"There is no need to wish you luck. A true monarch will have the strength, the knowledge of the land, and the spirit to reach the center without luck."

Give the players Player Handout A to show them the dial mechanism. This device is actually a model of the Vault of Rings itself that is tied into the actual mechanism so that as the actual rings turn, the rings in the model turn. The rings of the model cannot be turned otherwise, unless too much force is applied (Strength check DC 30), in which case the model is destroyed.

The warning in the message on the floor refers to the poison gas in the inner rings that can only be survived if the proper access passages are used. Anyone examining the plate on the floor closely (Search DC 15) finds that on the edge facing the door, the inscribed message continues: *"And if you are not the proper heir to the throne, you are a thief and an intruder. The likes of you has no hope of surviving the challenges ahead. Flee now while you can."*

Development: Once the ring begins to move, the doorway to the stairs will open onto a blank wall until the ring is put back into its original position.

Area 1-2 – Gorgon Statue (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

Atop a rectangular dais stands a massive statue of a muscular bull, carved in a majestic pose. Its horns appear to be made of glistening gold, with strange characters engraved across their surface. The statue and its stand rise more than nine feet from the floor. The dais bears an engraved stone plaque that reads: "Strength." The back corner of the room, opposite the door, is cut off like a cell by iron bars that run from floor to ceiling. The stone floor is very scuffed and scratched, and the walls are covered in red and gold banners.

Show Player Handout B.

The statue of a bull is not actually a bull, but a magically modified gorgon trained by the Iron Overlord to serve as a guardian. Experienced adventurers will likely see through this almost immediately, so the gorgon is trained to attack almost immediately.

Tactics: As stated, this is a *modified gorgon*. This

monster's breath doesn't turn people to stone, it holds them motionless like *hold person* with a 10 round duration. One round after being held, whether they make the new saving throw or not, the magical effect then teleports them either out of the vault, into the castle courtyard above (50% chance) or into the cell in the rear corner (50% chance).

The gorgon fights to the death, ignoring foes in the cell. It will not leave this chamber.

Activator: A sliding lever painted green is hidden within the dais (Search DC 20 to find). The lever causes the ring to turn one click counterclockwise.

Treasure: The inscribed gilt on the beast's horns gives it its altered powers (which can be determined with a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check), but serves no other useful purpose. If scraped off, a greedy adventurer can come away with about 10 gp worth of gold.

Development: The only way to escape from the cell is to bend or destroy the bars.

Iron bars: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 25.

Modified Gorgon: CR 8; Large Magical Beast; HD 8d10+40; hp 85; Init +4; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 20 (-1 size, +11 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +8; Grp +17; Atk Gore +12 melee (1d8+7); Full Atk Gore +12 melee (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Breath weapon, trample 1d8+7; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Listen +9, Spot +8; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

SA – Breath Weapon: 60-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds (but no more than five times per day), *hold person* for 10 rounds, *teleport* one round later, Fortitude DC 19 negates.

Area 1-3 – Brachiating Terror (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

The oddly-shaped chamber before you is filled with iron bars that come out of the walls at various heights. Other bars depend from chains connected to the ceiling. Most of these bars are straight, but some have L-shaped turns or other bars which extend off from them not unlike like metallic tree branches. The whole effect resembles a strange tangled maze of iron that fills the room from floor to ceiling. The door on the other end of the room is near the ceiling, not the floor and hangs open. The room stinks of animal musk and urine.

The room is made for climbing. Using the iron bars to climb up the walls or move along the ceiling requires a DC 10 Climb check.

Trap: The floor here is trapped with a magical field of resonating energy. Anyone standing on the floor suffers 3d6 points of damage each round or partial round



that they touch it. The damage type changes each round – electricity, fire, cold, and then starts over.

Energy Floor Trap: CR 7; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; unique effect (energy damage, 15th-level wizard, 3d6 electricity, fire, or cold damage, no saving throw); multiple targets (all touching floor); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Development: Once anyone comes into the middle portion of this chamber (presumably by climbing or flying), two girallons come through the door from area 1-4 howling to attack. These trained girallons use the iron bars on the ceiling and walls to leap and climb around the room. They never come down to the floor, being well aware of the trap. They do not lose their Dexterity bonus while climbing. There is no place in the room that a girallon cannot reach by using the bars, and since they also use their feet to climb, they can rend while hanging from a bar.

Tactics: The girallons will almost certainly have a huge speed and maneuverability advantage in this chamber, being able to move 40 ft. when even the best climber in a group of PCs is likely to only have a climbing speed of 15 ft. If the PCs effectively use ranged attacks on them and the girallons cannot easily retaliate, they retreat to area 1-4 and stay there.

Girallons (2): CR 6; Large Magical Beast; HD 7d10+20; hp 56 and 67; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch

12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +7; Grp +17; Atk Claw +12 melee (1d4+6); Full Atk 4 claws +12 melee (1d4+6) and bite +7 melee (1d8+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Rend 2d4+9; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14, Move Silently +8, Spot +6; Iron Will, Toughness (2)

Area 1-4 – Girallon Resting Place: Read or paraphrase the following:

One half of this chamber is occupied by a wooden platform only eight feet from the ceiling. A short flight of wooden steps connects the platform with the stone floor. The platform is covered in straw, torn strips of cloth, and broken bits of bones. The floor of the chamber is covered in feces and refuse. A door is at the level of the platform, while a small door is at floor level, on the wall opposite the other door. The stench of offal and urine here is strong.

This is where the girallons sleep and eat. If they are not in area 1-3, they are here. Those investigating the platform find evidence that recently there were twice as many girallons living here (some were killed by previous adventurers).

Activator: On the floor beneath the wooden platform there is an activator in the form of an iron lever painted red. Using it moves the ring nine clicks counterclockwise.

Secret Door: The secret door in this chamber pivots when opened. It can be found by a Search check (DC 22). It is not locked.

Treasure: Amid the bones and straw on the platform a character making a Search check (DC 18) finds the remains of an adventurer's equipment: bits of a destroyed chain shirt, torn clothing, broken glass, a rent and bloodstained pack, and so on. Along with this useless junk, there lies a masterwork heavy mace and 24 scattered gold coins. A much harder Search check (DC 25) reveals a gold holy symbol with rubies (worth 250 gp) and a *ring of water walking*.

Area 1-5 – Illusory Wall: Read or paraphrase the following:

This room is empty and has no other exits. The far wall bears a painted relief that shows King Arsidan holding his arms out in a welcoming gesture.

The wall opposite the door is a permanent illusion. Characters must make a Will save (DC 19) to determine its nature, if they interact with it.

Activator: The illusory wall hides an activator in the form of a purple lever. This is the reset activator for the First Ring. Activating it puts the ring back to the twelve position and resets all of the other activators in the ring.

Area 1-6 – Secret Passage: Read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the secret door lies a roughly triangular room with one wall that curves slightly. The long straight wall bears a number of weapons of all different types and styles hanging on pegs. Some are quite ornate while others are crude.

Anyone making a Knowledge (history) check (DC 18) recognizes that these 38 weapons are replicas of weapons wielded by famous heroes and great warriors of the past. None of the weapons are real or usable, nor are they valuable. After at least ten minutes of study, a character might notice that only one weapon, an ornate axe, does not fit. Another Knowledge (history) check (DC 20) suggests that it is not a weapon of historical importance. Removing it flips a switch that opens the secret door into area 1-7. (If it and other weapons are removed at the same time, the switch is not activated. So removing all the weapons accomplishes nothing). The secret door can otherwise be found through searching (Search check DC 28).

Locked stone secret door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Locks DC 30.

Area 1-7 – Liliarata's Guardians: Read or paraphrase the following:

This large room boasts a pair of granite columns that rise to the ceiling. Craftsmen have carved both to resemble tall, thin men wearing only loin-cloths. Each figure is contorted in pain or struggle, and their faces bear expressions of distress.

Scattered behind the columns, between them and the door, are small bits of shattered stone.

If anyone comes within twenty feet of these columns, each of them lets out a low moaning sound, altering the creatures in Area 1-8 of intruders. The bits of stone are the remains of three petrified adventurers slain by Liliarata (see area 1-8). A Search check (DC 25) suggests that the bits of stone were once pieces from statues.

Area 1-8 – Liliarata's Bedchamber (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

Torches on the walls light this chamber with its adjoining corridor with a door at the end and one to each side. The corridor curves slightly, as does the room. A large canopy bed sits atop an intricately woven rug in the center of the room, but despite its size the bed is dwarfed by the vast space. A shapely human woman reclines on the bed, garbed in silks. Looming over her next to the bed is a figure of metal and wood crafted roughly in the shape of a man. The walls are covered in silky drapes of beige and brown, matching both the bed and the rug.



This room belongs to a medusa, Liliarata, and her shield guardian. The construct was a gift from the Iron Overlord, who captured the medusa and brought her here almost three months ago to serve as a sentinel to keep intruders out of the Vault. Despite her excellent treatment, Liliarata hates it here and considers herself a prisoner. She plans on attempting an escape soon, although she does not have a key for the locked door between areas 1-6 and 1-7. She considers the whole test aspect of the vaults to be foolishness. Still, she is angry and lashes out at any creatures that she sees (see area 1-7 for an example).

Tactics: The PCs, most likely coming from Area 1-7, will alert Liliarata of their approach by activating the guardian columns.

If the PCs appear to be adventurers (and not servants of the Iron Overlord), she will try to entice them closer with seductive remarks along the lines of, “this is yet another physical test – think you can pass?” It’s unlikely that a PC who enters the room will be within range of her gaze attack right away, so she maintains her disguise of being a human woman until they get closer. As soon as she can, however, she uses her gaze and commands the shield guardian to stand beside her and defend (giving all attacks made against her a -2 penalty in addition to the shield other effect).

If hard pressed, Liliarata flees, likely to area 1-9, but perhaps all the way to 1-11 to hide (which is what she

did the last time adventurers came through here).

If the PCs attempt to talk to her, a Diplomacy check (DC 30) makes her friendly. Those offering to help her leave the vault gain a +5 bonus.

Treasure: As one enters from area 1-7, there are two smaller side rooms. The one on the left is a bath chamber with a recessed marble tub and a furnace for heating the water. It also serves as a closet filled with hundreds of different garments, shelves with cosmetics and perfumes (worth 250 gp), and a wood and ivory jewelry box (worth 50 gp) containing 2,000 gp worth of jewelry.

The other room is a sitting/dining room with wooden cupboards full of food and drink, a table with a single chair, and an elegant divan and chair next to a wooden bookshelf of (relatively valueless) books.

Liliarata, medusa: CR 7; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 36; Init +4; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 19 (+4 Dex, +3 natural, +2 *bracers of armor*), touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk Masterwork composite shortbow +11 ranged (1d6+2/x3) or masterwork dagger +11 melee (1d4+1/19-20) or snakes +10 melee (1d4+1 plus poison); Full Atk Masterwork composite shortbow +11/+6 ranged (1d6+2/x3) or masterwork dagger +11/+6 melee (1d4+1/19-20) and snakes +5 melee (1d4+1 plus poison); SA Petrifying gaze, poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6;

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Intimidate +4, Move Silently +10, Spot +8; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse.

SA – *Petrifying Gaze (Su)*: Turn to stone permanently, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 15 negates.

SA – *Poison (Ex)*: Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial damage 1d6 Str, secondary damage 2d6 Str.

Possessions: Masterwork composite shortbow (+1 Str), 10 +1 arrows, masterwork dagger, +2 bracers of armor, shield guardian amulet.

Shield Guardian: CR 8; Large Construct; HD 15d10+30; hp 112; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 24 (-1 size, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +11; Grp +21; Atk Slam +16 melee (1d8+6); Full Atk 2 slams +16 melee (1d8+6); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, find master, guard, low-light vision, shield other, spell storing; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

SQ – *Find Master (Su)*: As long as the shield guardian and its amulet are on the same plane, it can find the amulet wearer (or just the amulet, if it's removed after the guardian is called).

SQ – *Guard (Ex)*: Attacks against amulet wearer suffer -2 penalty when shield guardian is adjacent.

SQ – *Shield Other (Sp)*: Shield guardian takes half of amulet wearer's damage when within 100 feet.

SQ – *Spell Storing (Sp)*: Stores one spell of 4th level or lower; currently: *cure critical wounds*.

Area 1-9 – Liliarata's Training Room: Read or paraphrase the following:

This curved chamber has a wooden door on each end and another on the convex wall. This third door has an elaborate wooden frame with the engraved phrase: "Success Comes From a Deep Connection to the Land." Weapons and shields cover the walls, and various weapon racks, barrels of arrows, archery targets, and sparring dummies fill the room. Soft, woven mats cover the floor. The room is pristine, if a little dusty.

Near the center of the room stands an out-of-place statue of a creature that appears half woman, half lion, recoiling in anger.

The Iron Overlord created this room as a training room for Liliarata, keeping with the theme of this ring, but she never uses it. The statue of the lamia is actually a petrified specimen from area 1-15 that wandered down here, exploring.

Treasure: The weapons on the wall are standard for their type, but come in all varieties. Virtually any mundane weapon can be gathered here, as well as literal hundreds of arrows.

Development: If the ring has not moved, the door facing the middle of the ring opens onto a blank stone

wall. Only after the ring moves to one of the doors (starting at 12, 9, or 4 o'clock around the ring), will the door lead into another room.

Area 1-10 – Blocks Puzzle (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

In the center of this strangely-shaped chamber, a short marble pedestal rises from the floor, and atop it, a silver lever. A number of brass cubes, about three feet to a side, surround the pedestal. The cubes are scattered haphazardly across the floor, and each bears a symbol upon each face: a silhouette of a man lifting a large sphere, a silhouette of a man bending a rod over his head, and a silhouette of a man pulling a rope.

The pedestal bears the inscription: "Unity Through Strength."

Show Player Handout C.

The pedestal is surrounded by an invisible *cube of force* (a *forcecage* spell using the windowless cell version). In order to bring the *cube of force* down (unless the PCs have access to a *disintegrate* spell, which will also work), they must solve the puzzle here, which is a test of physical strength more than of wits. Overthinking the puzzle is liable to make things much more difficult. There are three blocks bearing each symbol, so there are nine blocks in total. Each has a faint aura of magic and each is hollow, but still quite heavy (300 pounds).

The solution to the puzzle is to make three stacks of blocks of three blocks each, each bearing the same symbol (thus, "unity"). The strength comes into play because each block has a mild repulsion effect on it that reacts only to other blocks. If two blocks are brought together, they push away from each other about six inches. If one block is set atop another, the force pushes it off. Thus, it requires strength to not only lift the blocks, but to hold them in place once they are in a stack. A character with Strength 13+ can lift one block atop another, and a character with Strength 18+ is needed to put one atop two stacked blocks. A Strength check (DC 11) is needed to hold a block in place. So to solve the puzzle easiest, six characters are required – one to lift and hold each block in place. The puzzle could be solved by as few as four, however. Character #1 places one block on another and holds it in place, and then Character #2 lifts one atop that, holds both in place (Strength check (DC 16), freeing up Character #1. Character #1 lifts a block on another and holds it in place, and then Character #3 lifts one atop that, and holds both in place. Then Characters #1 and #4 finish the final stack. (PCs should be allowed to take 10 on the Strength checks, but not taking 20 since there are repercussions for failure as the block falls).

Alternatively, if at least three hundred pounds is placed

atop a cube, it will be held in place. Balancing that can be difficult.

Activator: Once the force field is down, it stays down for an hour. PCs can use the lever to move the ring three clicks clockwise.

Area 1-11 – Refuse Heap: Read or paraphrase the following:

This small side chamber is filled with trash and excrement. The stench is thick and decidedly unpleasant.

Anyone coming into this room must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) to avoid contracting filth fever (see DMG).

Activator: While this room is actually used for garbage, it's also a bit of a trick, for beneath the garbage lies a large blue stone button that is an activator, as revealed by a Search check (DC 15). Pushing the button moves the ring twelve clicks clockwise.

Area 1-12 – Dead Guardians: Read or paraphrase the following:

This was clearly the site of a bloody battle, although it has been somewhat cleaned up. Green, scaly humanoid corpses lie in a grisly heap on the floor. Broken weapons and various items lay amid the pile as well.

One of the previous adventuring parties slew the lizardfolk warriors that maintained a vigil here. The maintenance crew has not yet finished disposing of their bodies. There is nothing of value in the pile of corpses, although it does take about twenty minutes to determine that fact.

Development: While nothing occurs the first time the PCs pass through this room, if the PCs come through this chamber a second time, there will be a crew of derro here getting ready to dispose of the refuse here if the PCs have not yet encountered them randomly so far. (See page 6 for Maintenance Crew random encounter.)

Area 1-13 – Pudding Trap (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

A seeping, dripping sound greets your ears here. A long, narrow chamber, this room is empty save for a dark pool at the end of the room farthest from the doors. A briny, acrid smell fills the air.

Trap: This room is a trap. Anyone weighing 375 pounds or less that enters the room through the door from area 1-12 feels a powerful, telekinetic pull that flings them against the far wall. Then, gravity takes over and they fall into the pool which is actually a black pudding. Once a character makes a saving throw, whether it succeeds or fails, further saves are not required.

Characters that fall into the pudding immediately suffer 2d6 points of acid damage and their clothing, armor, and anything in their hands is destroyed unless they make a Reflex save (DC 21), as provided in the monster's description. This damage (and the required saving throws) continues until the pudding is dead or the character gets out of the pool. Getting out of the pudding requires either a Strength or Dexterity check (DC 20). (You cannot "swim" or "climb" in a pudding, so these skills do not apply.) If no one is flung into it, the black pudding attacks all intruders normally. Otherwise, it concentrates its attacks on those already in its morass.

Telekinesis Trap: CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*telekinesis*, 15th-level wizard, 1d6 damage plus ooze, DC 17 Will save negates); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Black Pudding: CR 7; Huge Ooze; HD 10d10+60; hp 115; Init -5; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.; AC 3 (-2 size, -5 Dex), touch 3, flat-footed 3; Base Atk +7; Grp +18; Atk Slam +8 melee (2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid); Full Atk Slam +8 melee (2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA Acid, constrict (2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid), improved grab; SQ Blindsight 60 ft., ooze traits, split; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref -2, Will -2; Str 17, Dex 1, Con 22, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

SA – *Acid (Ex)*: The pudding's acidic touch deals 21 points of damage per round to wooden or metal objects, but the pudding must remain in contact with the object for 1 full round to deal this damage.

SA – *Improved Grab (Ex)*: If the pudding hits with a slam attack, it can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

SQ – *Split (Sp)*: Slashing and piercing weapons deal no damage. Instead the creature splits into two identical puddings, each with half of the original's current hit points (round down). A pudding with 10 hit points or less cannot be further split and dies if reduced to 0 hit points.

Area 1-14 – Pit Trap Maze (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of this oddly-shaped chamber bear painted frescoes of athletes engaging in all manner of contests and feats of strength, speed, and stamina. A large lever, covered in bright orange tassels, sticks up out of the floor near the room's center.

Trap: This room is filled with a number of difficult to find pit traps, all of different sizes, arranged almost like a maze. Each is 20 feet deep with spikes at the bottom.

Pit Traps: CR 7 overall; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); some have multiple targets (first target in

each adjacent 5-ft. square); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+2 each); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20.

Activator: The lever, when pulled, moves the ring 9 clicks counterclockwise.

Area 1-15 – The Chamber of Subjugation (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

The floor, walls and ceiling in this chamber are painted bright red, making the room a bit hard to look at. Glowing yellow and orange balls of light illuminate the room as they randomly float and flutter near the ceiling. Large, golden-maned lions crouch away from the door, surrounding a large pedestal bearing four mirrors, staring at you intently. There is a thick odor of animal musk and raw meat in the air.

Show Player Handout D.

The creatures are not, in fact, lions, but lamias using their illusory powers to appear as such. There are only two creatures, but their *mirror image* ability, likely already in effect, makes them appear to be in greater number. These lamias are not normal members of their kind, but a rare southern breed with some different spell-like abilities and a touch that drains Strength, not Wisdom. These creatures are actually quite terrified. There once were many more of them, but previous adventurers and the medusa in area 1-8 have reduced their numbers. Their immediate reaction is violence, due to their nature. They love this chamber with its mirrors (built specifically for them by the Iron Overlord), though, and now are loathe to leave it. They sleep, however, in area 1-16.

The mirrors in this room fire *rays of enfeeblement* at any of the non-lamia in the room, up to four rays per round (one from each mirror). The *rays of enfeeblement* are cast at 10th level, and thus inflict a 1d6+5 penalty to Strength. The magical mirrors each have a hardness of 2 and 5 hit points.

Tactics: The lamias here listen for intruders and move into position after using their *bull's strength* (adding +2 to melee attack and damage, as well as grapples) and *mirror image* power on themselves. Complementing the mirrors, they are likely to start with their *ray of enfeeblement* powers, and then springing forward to use their Strength drain. Their goal is to get all their foes weak or helpless, and then finish them off.

Activator: The pedestal holding the mirrors conceals an activator. A Search check (DC 25) reveals a hidden catch that opens a compartment inside the pedestal. Within, characters can see a yellow metallic button. Pushing the button moves the ring five clicks counterclockwise.

Deviant Lamia: CR 6; Large Magical Beast; HD 9d10+9; hp 55 and 61; Init +2; Spd 60 ft. (12 squares);

AC 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +17; Atk Touch +12 melee (1d4 Strength drain) or claw +12 melee (1d4+4); Full Atk +12 melee (1d4 Strength drain) or 2 claws +12 melee (1d4+4); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Spell-like abilities, Strength drain (1d4 points); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +16, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Spot +11; Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack.

SA – Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *disguise self, ventriloquism*; 3/day – *bull's strength, hold person* (DC 16), *mirror image, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 14); 1/day – *deep slumber* (DC 16).

Area 1-16 – Tapestry: Read or paraphrase the following:

The stone floor of this room is covered in well-gnawed bones, broken skulls, and fur. Blood stains spatter the floor and walls. Six large, straw-filled mattresses lay amid this grisly clutter. A single tapestry, itself a bit blood-stained, hangs on the wall to the right of the door.

The lamias of area 1-15 use this room as a lair.

The lone tapestry holds the clues to the order in which to use the proper activators to get to the next ring. It bears the colors in bands, descending from the top in this order: yellow, green, silver, and brown, referring to the activators in areas 1-15, 1-2, 1-10, and 1-17. In truth, the order is not important, but the PCs may not realize that.

Treasure: Amid the bones and other remains lie some treasure and gear from adventures slain by the lamia in the past, found using a Search check (DC 20): a gold and sapphire brooch in the shape of a lightning bolt (450 gp), a +1 *heavy steel shield*, and a *scroll of cure serious wounds* and *locate object*.

Area 1-17 – Shifting Floor (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

This room appears empty. The wall opposite the door bears an elaborate tile mosaic of leaping frogs in a marsh.

As soon as anyone enters this room, putting weight on the floor, different portions of the floor begin to move up and down in random and violent thrusts. The floor sections that move are those indicated on the map in the rings (the corners and the center of the room are safe). Each ring moves independently – sometimes up, sometimes down to different heights or depths. The floors can go as far down as 20 feet below the floor level and as high as the ceiling itself. When this happens, a small panel in the middle of the room opens to reveal a large brown lever that rises up. This is an activator.

Characters wishing to cross the room to the middle

must make a Balance check (DC 20) or they go flying across the room, quickly bumped around from floor section to floor section until they are either smashed against the ceiling or end up in a corner. To avoid being smashed, characters failing their Balance check must make a Reflex save (DC 20). Those that succeed manage to get to a corner, while those that fail suffer 12d6 points of crushing damage.

Those that make the Balance check must also make a Jump check (DC 20) or a Climb check (DC 30).

Success on either means that the character reaches the center of the room and the lever. Characters failing their Jump or Climb check start the process over (making a Balance check again).

Flying characters need only make the Reflex save to avoid a floor section smashing them into the ceiling to reach the middle.

Activator: The lever moves the ring five clicks counterclockwise.

The Second Ring: The Test of the Land

Here the Prince would have been tested in his knowledge of and feel for the Kingdom. During the test, the Prince would come to visit all the important landmarks from the kingdom's long history as well as experience the Land as a metaphysical entity. The activators are reliefs or models of these landmarks and symbols.

It is not necessary for the PCs to have a solid knowledge of the Kingdom's history. However, if they do have ranks in the relevant Knowledge skills, a successful check may reveal a clue. The type of check and the associated DC are noted in the text for the relevant area.

In order to get the Second Ring into the correct position to get into the Third Ring, the PCs will have to use the clues in area 2-2 and figure out which activators to use. The easiest combination involves the activators in areas 2-3, 2-4, 2-7, 2-9, and 2-10. It is likely that they have learned the trick behind moving the rings in the First Ring and will be looking for activators and a clue to guide them.

Areas of the Map

Area 2-1 – Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

This sparse 20-foot by 20-foot chamber has a solid-looking door opposite you. A slight smell of paint and chemicals hangs in the still air.

The door opens easily into area 2-2.

Area 2-2 – Map Chamber: Read or paraphrase the following:

This long, slightly curved chamber measures about 80 feet from end to end. Across the door through which you have entered is an enormous mural that stretches from floor to ceiling, 20 feet up. The mural consists of a huge map of the Kingdom, adorned with gold leaf and semi-precious stones. The map is 40 feet wide. To the left of the map is a painting of King Arsidan with his name below in gold letters, while to the right hangs a painting of a thin man holding a compass and a square before his face. Under that painting, iron letters spell out: The Master Mason.

Around the frame of the map, the following lines are etched in gold: "A king must know this: Just because a thing is important, does not mean it must be used."

Show Player Handout E.

It shows the map of the Kingdom with the clue and the 8 points of interest marked with semi-precious stones. If the PCs wish, they can scrape about 50 gp worth of gold leaf and 8 bright red faceted rhodochrosites (10 gp each) out of the map.

The map shows the following places, included here with the location of the relevant activator in parentheses. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) or Bardic Knowledge check will reveal what each depicts.

- A well with the word "Wisdom" on its side. (The Well of Wisdom, area 2-7)
- Three golden stalks of corn (The Sheaf of Life, area 2-10)
- Three granite-grey angels (The Three Sisters, a sacred rock formation, area 2-9)
- A group of stars in the sky above the map (The Scepter Constellation, area 2-4)
- A large forest in the middle of the map (The Heart of the Kingdom, a great forest, area 2-3)

In addition, the following activators, while shown as places on the map, are not part of the easiest means of correctly positioning the ring and are there to teach the Prince that it is also important to know what NOT to touch.

- A blue bird with a curved, red-spotted beak (a moonwing, the national bird of the Kingdom, area 2-13)
- A lake with a beautiful white lotus growing from its center (The Sacred Lake, a holy place, area 2-11)
- A host of knights with many banners, three of which can be clearly seen (The Battle of Nobles, area 2-6)



Area 2-3 – Hall of the Realm (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

The floor of this quiet chamber is covered in a rich carpet. A 2-foot-diameter globe of cloudy crystal stands in the middle of the room. The sentence “Embrace the Land and She Will Embrace You” is written in white letters across the long, curved, burgundy-painted wall. In an alcove stand two braziers.

If the two braziers are placed on either side of the globe and lit, it turns clear. Within a land can be seen from above, although quite distorted because of the crystal. If the PCs embrace the globe (touching it will do as well), they are immediately pulled into the globe. Once it has been used, it will not work again for 10 rounds, making it dangerous for any scouts or impulsive PCs.

Once a PC enters the globe, read or paraphrase the following:

With a sudden flash you find yourselves floating approximately 200 feet above a large-scale model of the kingdom. It is very windy.

The PCs are in a pocket plane, about 25 miles from end to end and 750 feet high, above a 1:4 representation of the central part of the kingdom. They enjoy a *permanent overland flight* effect at 9th caster level. If they wish to return to the chamber, they can do so just by concentrating on it.

If any of the PCs succeed at a DC 35 Spot check, they see a group of three air mephits approach from 150 feet away. The next round, when the mephits are 50 feet away, the DC to spot them is 25.

In addition to the mephits, the PCs have to contend with the churning winds. Each round, they must make a DC 15 Reflex save or have to spend the entire round righting themselves. If they fail to right themselves, they fall 200 feet to the ground. If they succeed at the save, they suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and checks.

Development: Two rounds into the fight, another group of mephits, this time three dust mephits, appear.

Activator: In the exact center of the model is the forest called the Heart of the Kingdom. The center portion of the forest model can be pushed down. This causes the ring to move one click counterclockwise.

A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check reveals the location of the Heart of the Kingdom and its significance to the kingdom. Otherwise the PCs can find and recognize the Heart of the Kingdom from the map with a DC 25 Search check.

Treasure: If the PCs decide to look for the mephits’ lair, 2 hours’ search and a successful DC 15 Search check reveals a cluster of nests in a small valley. Here lie the remains of three of the four adventurers who made it to the second ring. The only salvageable equipment is a suit of +1 *half-plate*; a +1 *greatclub*; a gilded scroll tube (worth 3 gp) with two scrolls: *glitterdust* and *displacement*; a pair of *goggles of minute seeing*; and 294 sp.

Advanced Air Mephits (3): CR 4; Small Outsider (Air, Extraplanar); HD 5d8; hp 21, 22, 23; Init +8; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 50 ft (perfect); AC 18 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +1; Atk Claw +6 melee (1d3); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d3); SA Breath weapon, spell-like abilities, *summon mephitis*; SQ Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2 (in moving air only); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +16, Intimidate +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Spot +8, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings); Dodge, Improved Initiative.

SA – *Breath Weapon:* Usable every 1d4 rounds. 15-foot cone of dust and grit, 1d8, Reflex DC 13 half.

SA – *Spell-Like Abilities:* 1/hour – *blur* (caster level 3rd). 1/day – *gust of wind* (DC 14, caster level 6th).

SA – *Summon Mephitis:* 1/day. 25% chance to summon one mephitis. Functions as a level 2 spell.

Advanced Dust Mephits (3): CR 4; Small Outsider (Air, Extraplanar); HD 5d8; hp 22, 23, 25; Init +8; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft (perfect); AC 18 (+1 size, +4

Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +1; Atk Claw +6 melee (1d3); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d3); SA Breath weapon, spell-like abilities, *summon mephit*; SQ Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2 (arid and dusty environment only); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +16, Intimidate +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Spot +8, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings); Dodge, Improved Initiative.

SA – Breath Weapon: Usable every 1d4 rounds. 15-foot cone of irritating particles, 1d4, Reflex DC 13 half. If save is failed, living creatures also suffer -4 to AC and -2 to attack rolls for 3 rounds.

SA – Spell-Like Abilities: 1/hour – *blur* (caster level 3rd). 1/day – *wind wall* (DC 15, caster level 6th).

SA – Summon Mephit: 1/day. 25% chance to summon one mephit. Functions as a level 2 spell.

Area 2-4 – Observatory: Read or paraphrase the following:

This grandiose chamber shows the night sky over the Kingdom. The floor is dominated by a large table filled with astrological and astronomical charts.

Activator: A constellation of 7 stars called The Scepter, about 10 feet up. It is considered a part of the mythology surrounding the royal line. Pressing the stars in the constellation causes the ring to move five clicks clockwise.

A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) will reveal this fact and the activator. Otherwise, it takes a DC 30 Search check to discover that some of the stars can be depressed.

Another constellation, called the Vessel of Life, can be depressed to open a secret hatch into area 2-4A, a hidden niche containing 5 *potions of cure serious wounds*. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals the constellation and then the secret door is only a DC 15 Search check to find. Otherwise, it is also DC 30.

Area 2-5 – Hallway with Ring Exit: Read or paraphrase the following:

This paneled hallway smells of cedar. It has four doors, one of which sits in an elaborate frame with the phrase: “The Road to Power Is Paved with Wisdom.”

Development: If the ring has not moved, the door facing the middle of the ring opens onto a blank stone wall. Only after the ring moves to one of the doors leading into the Third Ring (starting at 12, 9, or 8 o'clock around the ring), will the door lead into another room.

Area 2-6 – Banner Room (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

This large, cool room is eerily quiet. The only sound comes from four rows of 42 banners, each hanging from iron rods high above. A faint breeze makes the banners sway ever so slightly. On the floor a large mosaic spells: “To return, touch the depicted three.” However, the letters are obscured by an inordinate amount of blood from a small, torn corpse lying in the middle of the floor.

The last survivor of one of the previous adventuring groups, this halfling druid was killed by the cloakers hiding here. After taking the halfling's possessions, the Iron Overlord let the cloakers keep their meal.

Three of the banners are easily recognizable as being identical to the ones shown in the great map in area 2-2. Three other banners are illusions, though (shielded by a *non-detection* spell cast at 10th level), and cover the fact that these “banners” are in fact cloakers, who attempt to attack by surprise. A DC 25 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check reveals the three illusory banners do not depict any coat of arms found in the kingdom. If the banners aren't recognized as fakes, the cloakers get a +8 circumstance bonus on their Hide check to see if the PCs are surprised.

Activator: Pulling the three banners seen on the map in any order resets the ring and all activators in the ring. This should enable passage from area 2-1 into area 1-9, assuming the First Ring is still in the same position as when they left it.

Cloakers (3): CR 5; Large Aberration; HD 6d8+18; hp 45, 48, 52; Init +7; Spd 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 40 ft (average); AC 19 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +7 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +13; Atk Tail slap +8 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk Tail slap +8 melee (1d6+5) and bite +3 melee (1d4+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (5 ft. with bite); SA Engulf, moan; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., shadow shift; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Listen +13, Move Silently +12, Spot +13; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

SA – Engulf: As a standard action, attempt a grapple without provoking an attack of opportunity. If successful, it establishes a hold and bites with a +4 bonus. While grappling, the cloaker can still attack with its tail. Attacks that hit a grappling cloaker deal half their damage to the cloaker and half to its victim.

SA – Moan: 4 effects: *Fear* – All within a 30-foot spread must make a DC 15 Will save or be panicked for 2 rounds. *Nausea* – All in a 30-foot cone must make a DC 15 Will save or fall prone or be nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds. *Stupor* – One creature within 30 feet must make a DC 15 Will save or be affected by a *hold monster* spell for 6 rounds. *Unnerve* – All within a 60-foot spread automatically take a -2 penalty to attack

and damage rolls; after 6 consecutive rounds make a DC 15 Will save or be unable to attack or defend until moaning stops.

SQ – Shadow Shift: 20% concealment for 1d4 rounds. *Mirror image* at 6th caster level (1d4+2 images). *Silent image* (DC 15, Caster level 6th).

Area 2-7 – Library (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of this room are completely covered with shelves crammed with books, apparently all the knowledge in the realm. It also contains a comfortable chair, a desk with writing equipment on it – including a silver inkwell and a gold pen – and a reading stand shaped like a rearing dragon. On the reading stand is a book with the words “From the Well of Wisdom” embossed in great golden letters.

If this seems too easy, it's because it is. The book is a *vacuous grimoire*, and the reading stand animates the minute anyone touches the book. The stand attacks with a large iron tail and alternately breathes fire and casts *magic missile* (both as a free action). A DC 25 Knowledge (local) or a DC 15 Bardic Knowledge check reveals that there is a saying associated with the Well of Wisdom: “True wisdom rests in the pen.” Finally, a successful DC 25 Search check of the desk reveals that the inkwell can be pressed down.

Activator: Pressing down the inkwell on the desk causes the ring to move four clicks clockwise.

Animated Reading Stand: CR 7; Large Construct; HD 8d10+30; hp 110; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (-1 size, +6 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk Tail slam +10 melee (1d8+7) and breath weapon or spell; Full Atk Tail slam +10 melee (1d8+7) and breath weapon or spell; Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon (4d8 fire, Ref DC 14 half), spell (*magic missile*, 2 missiles, 1d4+1 each); SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 10, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -3; Str 20, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Area 2-8 – False Entrance (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

This small chamber has a pale blue metal door opposite the one you enter. A set of chimes tinkles faintly.

This is one of the two false entrances from area 1-9. If the PCs have used some of the false activators, they are likely to end up in this area or in area 2-12.

Trap: As soon as more than 100 lbs are placed on the floor, a 20-foot-by-20-foot trap door opens into a 60-foot deep pit. At the same time, a chime of interruption – placed 30 feet down in the pit wall – activates. One round later, the trap door slams shut and the pit begins to fill with water, being completely filled in 3 rounds.

The trap door can be opened with a DC 20 Strength check or a DC 25 Open Lock check. It can also be hacked through: it has 45 hp and hardness 8.

The *chime of interruption* is stuck to the side of the pit with *sovereign glue*.

Wide-Mouth Water-Filled Pit with Chime of Interruption: CR 10; mechanical; location; automatic reset; Reflex save (DC 24 avoids); 60 ft. deep (6d6, fall) plus water and *chime of interruption* (Concentration DC 15 + spell level check to cast spells with verbal components); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 24.

Area 2-9 – Statuette Chamber (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

This large chamber has a vaulted ceiling that gradually comes to a point 30 feet above. Every available surface is covered in shallow shelves and niches each with one or more statuettes of people, buildings, animals, and other creatures. The entire place seems lit by scores of candles. A faintly sickening smell of incense, sulfur, and blood permeates the chamber.

Show Player Handout F.

In practically every niche is a flame from a *permanent dancing lights* spell. The room contains a bearded devil and three *fireball* traps, all of which can be set off with floor triggers. The devil knows the location of all the traps. The Iron Overlord has tricked the devil into 100 years' guardian service by promising it all the statuettes in the room – “my kingdom,” as the devil calls it.

Tactics: This particular devil owes a favor to another devil, namely a good fight. It will therefore begin by attempting to summon it (35% chance of success). If it can catch some of the PCs by walking over a trap, it will do so. After that, it will attack while trying to set off as many traps as possible. As each trap is centered on its trigger, just walking over it will set it off. Each trap resets after 10 rounds.

Activator: A statuette of three cloaked and hooded women. Pressing it back in its niche causes the ring to move five clicks clockwise.

A DC 22 Knowledge (religion) check enables the PC to recognize them as the Three Sisters.

Treasure: One of the other statuettes is a *bronze griffin*.

Bearded Devil (Barbazou): CR 5; Medium Outsider (Evil, Extraplanar, Lawful); HD 6d8+18; hp 48; Init +6; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 19 (+2 Dex, +7 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk Glaive +9 melee (1d10+3 plus infernal wound) or claw +8 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk Glaive +9/+4 melee (1d10+3 plus infernal wound) or 2 claws +8 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with glaive); SA

Battle frenzy, beard, infernal wound, spell-like ability (at will – *greater teleport*, self plus 50 lbs) , *summon devil*; SQ Damage reduction 5/silver or good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, see in darkness, spell resistance 17, telepathy 100 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Diplomacy +2, Hide +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9; Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (glaive).

SA – Battle Frenzy (Ex): Twice per day, a barbazu can enter a frenzy similar to a barbarian's rage (+4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 morale bonus on Will saves, -2 AC penalty). The frenzy lasts for 6 rounds, and the devil suffers no ill effects afterward.

SA – Beard (Ex): If both claws hit, the beard deals 1d8+2 points of damage and infects the victim with devil chills (Fort DC 16 negates, incubation time 1d4 days, damage 1d4 Str).

SA – Infernal Wound (Su): Wounds from the barbazu's glaive keep bleeding for 2 hit points per round per wound. The wounds can only be healed with a DC 16 Heal check, any *cure* spell, or a *heal* spell. The latter two will only work on a DC 16 caster level check.

Fireball trap (3): CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*fireball*, 7th-level wizard, Ref DC 14 half, 7d6 fire); Search DC 28, Disable Device DC 28.

Area 2-10 – Banquet Hall: Read or paraphrase the following:

In front of you is an incongruous sight: Tables laid with the finest silverware and crystal glasses sag under the weight of every kind of food imaginable. Interspersed with all the food are huge centerpieces showing animals, castles, even battles.

From behind a wine rack against the wall, a soft female voice says, "Do you come on behalf of the Iron Overlord?"

Silena Rondshead, the last surviving member of the more successful of the two previous parties, has been hiding here since she and a wizard companion encountered Horolas the Guardian Automaton (see area 3-3). Twice, she has attempted to reset the Second Ring in order to return to the First Ring, but the cloakmakers have chased her away. Now she hides under a table and uses *ventriloquism* to ascertain the PCs' disposition.

If the party makes it clear that they do not work for the Iron Overlord, she reveals herself. Otherwise, she casts *confusion* and attempts to flee. At this point, all she wants to do is leave the Vault of Rings and never return. She has lost many close friends here. If the PCs promise to help her, she will tell them the following:



- The location of all the activators for the Second Ring and which are useful for getting to the Third Ring. However, she has mixed up the activators in area 2-11 and area 2-10 (this area). This is because she was caught in a water elemental's vortex while her druid party member identified the lotus, and didn't pay attention when the rest of the group tried explaining the difference to her.
- How to reset the First and the Second Ring.
- The basic nature of the test in the Third Ring. Her bardic training enabled her to identify the five royal symbols and colors, but her companion botched the conversation with Horolas the Guardian Automaton ("A horrid sword-wielding steel monster!"), and was killed. She fled, but will tell the party the correct answer to Horolas' question – red, purple, silver, gold, platinum. She can also tell them that the Third Ring is home to mad derro and a xorn, who "run this place on behalf of the Iron Overlord, a powerful, intelligent construct."

She punctuates her information with tales of the encounters that she and her friends had, making it clear that the Vault of Rings once had even more guardians (or the guardians that they have encountered, but in greater number) and barriers than it does now. However, it's just as clear that they encountered many of the exact same challenges that the PCs did. It should be very obvious to the PCs by this point that some intelligent force works to restock the dungeon's guardians and reset its traps.



Silena is scatter-brained and self-centered. While her spells, class abilities, and skill with her crossbow would make her a good support character, she really has no interest in helping the PCs progress further – she wants out.

Silena Rondshead, 7th-level human female bard: CR 7; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 7d6+7; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 19 (+3 Dex, +5 +1 chain shirt, +1 ring of protection), touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk Masterwork longsword +6 melee (1d8/19-20) or +1 light crossbow +9 ranged (1d8+1/19-20); SA *Fascinate*, *suggestion* (Will DC 17 negates); SQ Bardic knowledge (1d20+7), countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage; AL CG; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +12, Jump +3, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +10, Perform (string instruments) +19, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +14; Acrobatic, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Perform (string instruments)).

SA – Fascinate (Sp): Up to 3 creatures. Duration: Concentration, up to 7 rounds. Will save DC 1d20+19 (Silena's Perform check) negates.

Spells (3/4/3/1, DC 14 + spell level): 0 – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *know direction*, *lullaby*, *read magic*, 1st – *expeditious retreat*, *grease*, *hideous laughter*, *ventriloquism*, 2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *glitterdust*, *heroism*, *mirror image*, 3rd – *confusion*, *good hope*.

Possessions: Masterwork longsword, +1 light crossbow, 18 bolts, +1 chain shirt, +1 ring of protection, wand of cure serious wounds (6 charges), masterwork hand harp, backpack with 40 gp worth of standard equipment.

Activator: Twisting the Sheaf of Life, one of the centerpieces with three heads of wheat bundled with a gold chain, causes the ring to move five clicks clockwise.

A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (nature) check reveals its significance. Otherwise, a successful DC 27 Search check reveals the activator.

The food on the tables is magically created and refreshes itself every 24 hours. It is perfectly safe to eat.

Area 2-11 – Water Tank (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

A solid wall of standing water greets you as you pull open the door to this chamber. Not a drop spills out, though. In fact, the side of the door facing the water isn't even wet!

Peering into the room, you can't see much because of the reflections and the distortion in the water. You can only tell that it appears to be well lit and that the water seems clear.

This room is completely filled with water. Magic on the doorways prevents water from spilling out (it even removes any water on the PCs leaving them completely dry) as well as bestow a *water breathing* effect on anyone entering the room.

Visibility in the room is about 80 feet. The elementals are effectively invisible until they begin to attack. At that point, debris and bubbles reveal their position.

The room is guarded by two Large water elementals that immediately attack any intruders. Refer to the DMG for rules about fighting underwater.

Activator: A glowing statuette of a lotus on the floor in the middle of the chamber. Pressing it causes the ring to move eight clicks counterclockwise.

The flower is a black lotus, however, not a white one as shown in the map. It is a symbol of evil and signifies that this activator is not part of the shortest sequence to aligning the ring properly. A DC 22 Knowledge (nature) check reveals the nature of the lotus.

Development: Once the PCs have dealt with its inhabitants, the room is a fairly safe place to rest. The derro are insanely afraid of water, and the Iron Overlord is still not sure how complete submersion will affect his new body (it won't, but he doesn't know that yet).

Tactics: As soon as they notice the PCs, one elemental activates its vortex and moves towards them. At 16 feet in height, the vortex is easily big enough to contain all the PCs. The elemental will keep the PCs in the vortex for three rounds before ejecting them through one of the doors.

The other elemental will harry those who escape the first elemental's vortex. As the first elemental ends its vortex, the second takes over if possible.

Large Water Elementals (2): CR 5; Large Elemental (Extraplanar, Water); HD 8d8+32; hp 67, 68; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares), swim 90 ft.; AC 20 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6;

Grp +15; Atk Slam +10 melee (2d8+5); Full Atk 2 slams +10 melee (2d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Drench, vortex, water mastery; SQ Damage reduction 5/-, darkvision 60 ft., elemental traits; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Listen +5, Spot +6, Swim +13; Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack.

SA – *Vortex (Su)*: Form a vortex up to 16 feet high for up to 4 rounds once per 10 minutes. All who come into contact with the vortex must make a DC 19 Reflex save or take 2d6 points of damage. A second DC 19 Reflex save is needed to avoid being picked up for automatic damage each round.

SA – *Water Mastery (Ex)*: The elemental gets a +1 bonus to attack and damage if both it and its opponent touch water.

Area 2-12 – False Entrance (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-ft.-by-20-ft. chamber has a round rug covering most of the floor. The rug depicts a soaring cloudscape in intricate detail. Across from you is a beautifully carved wooden door.

The rug is worth 500 gp to an interested buyer. Touching the door or the rug immediately sets off a trap, which automatically resets the next round.

Crushing Ceiling Trap: CR 10; mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; block crashes down (14d6, crush); multiple targets (all targets in the room); Reflex DC 27 negates; Search DC 27, Disable Device DC 27.

Area 2-13 – Bestiary (EL varies): Read or paraphrase the following:

This large chamber contains a wide variety of stuffed or mounted animals. From bears, tigers, and boars to birds, small mammals, and even bugs mounted in cases, this hall presents most of the fauna of the kingdom.

Contrary to what the PCs may expect, nothing untoward happens here the first time they pass through. The only strange effect is the fact that whenever a PC comes within 10 feet of an exhibit, the sound of the animal can be heard clearly.

Development: The second time the PCs pass through the room, however, the Iron Overlord has come around to finishing his preparations for this chamber and rigged a dire boar, dire lion, and dire wolf to animate as zombies when the PCs pass them. This is an EL 8 encounter.

Activator: Twisting a stuffed moonwing, the national bird of the kingdom, on its stand causes the ring to turn twelve clicks counterclockwise.

This particular moonwing is a magpie dyed with markings that resemble those of a moonwing – the two

birds have a similar body structure. A DC 25 Spot check indicates that something is not right about the bird. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check reveals the deception, and suggests that this activator is not a part of the proper sequence.

Dire Boar Zombie: CR 4; Large Undead; HD 14d12+3; hp 94; Init -1; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares) (can't run); AC 17 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +20; Atk/Full Atk Gore +15 melee (1d8+13) or slam +15 melee (1d8+13); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 29, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Dire Lion Zombie: CR 5; Large Undead; HD 16d12+3; hp 107; Init +1; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares) (can't run); AC 17 (-1 size, +1 Dex +7 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +20; Atk/Full Atk Claw +15 melee (1d6+8) or slam +15 melee (1d8+12); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 27, Dex 13, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Dire Wolf Zombie: CR 4; Large Undead; HD 12d12+3; hp 81; Init +1; Spd 50 ft. (10 squares) (can't run); AC 16 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +18; Atk/Full Atk Bite +13 melee (1d8+12) or slam +13 melee (1d8+12); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 27, Dex 13, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Area 2-14 – Tools: Read or paraphrase the following:

This workshop contains all sorts of tools and working surfaces. You see tools for taxidermy and bookbinding, pottery equipment, glue, paints, boards, nails, and carpenter's tools, to name a few. One strange thing you notice, however, is that all the working surfaces, except one, are only 2 feet above the floor. The last one is 10 feet high.

This is where the derro maintenance crews, and occasionally the Iron Overlord, store their tools as well as do some of the work.

Treasure: There are masterwork artisan's tools for the following Craft skills: bookbinding, carpentry, goldsmithing, leatherworking, and taxidermy.

The Third Ring: The Derro

This ring was to have been the Test of Heart, Mind, and Spirit. Where the previous ring tested the Prince's dedication to the Kingdom, this ring tests the core of what it means to be royal.

Most of this area has been taken over and ransacked by a tribe of derro. They venerate the mad xorn like a god, and the xorn is also the only creature – other than the Iron Overlord – who can command them.

The Iron Overlord does not come to this level often. He can't stand seeing how the derro treat his masterpiece. On the other hand, he realizes the value of the mad dwarves, so he leaves them alone.

The Puzzle

The activators for this level are five royal symbols and five royal colors that must be combined in the right order to activate the ring. For the prince, this would have been more a ritual than a puzzle. Each colored symbol has immense signification for the Royal House, and it would be very plain to the prince which symbol to press when.

The only clues the PCs will get, however, come from the derro. As the PCs encounter the mad dwarves, some of them will repeatedly scream, mutter, and gibber a clue. This clue is not something they consciously remember – it is an imprint in their minds from the magic of the original ritual and of the Vault itself. In addition to screaming them, the derro have also scribbled each clue repeatedly on the ring walls. Below are the clues as well as some other ravings that can be added for color.

- 1 *"The sword that is not purple is second! The heart is not a white metal!"*
- 2 *"That which is gold comes before the Crown and the Orb."*
- 3 *"The scepter is not first! And it is red or purple!"*
- 4 *"The orb is not last nor is it metal! The THIRD is RED!"*
- 5 *"The scepter goes before the crown, not of platinum made. And the orb is NOT fourth!"*

Additional ravings:

- *"The Iron Lord is Three and One!"*
- *"When the brother dies, the brother goes mad!"*
- *"Rocks weep. Gold drips. In the maelstrom the obex smiles!"*

The Activators

The activators are five panels with five symbols in each. Each panel has a symbol – a Heart, a Sword, an Orb, a Scepter, or a Crown – in five different colors: Red, purple, platinum, gold, and silver. Unlike in the previous two rings, the order is important, and the ring doesn't turn until the correct sequence is activated.

The Solution:

First – golden heart (button found in area 3-5)

Second – platinum sword (button found in area 3-10)

Third – red orb (button found in area 3-6)

Fourth – purple scepter (button found in area 3-9)

Fifth – silver crown (button found in area 3-4)

If the five buttons are pressed in the right order, the ring immediately moves so that the door in area 3-4 is in the "9 o'clock" position. In case of any mistake, the ring moves so that the door opens into either area 4-1 or area 4-2. Note that unlike in the two previous rings, the Third Ring doesn't move until five buttons have been pushed.

The only exception to this is the gold crown button in area 3-4. If the PCs press it 3 times, the third ring resets along with any other activators.

The Derro

Unless described otherwise, all derro in this ring have these stats:

Derro: CR 3; Small Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+3; Init +6; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +3 studded leather armor, +1 buckler), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk Short sword +4 melee (1d4/19-20) or repeating light crossbow +6 ranged (1d6/19-20 plus poison); SA Poison use, sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., madness, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 5, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Hide +10, Listen +1, Move Silently +8; Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative.

SA – Poison Use (Ex): Medium spider venom: Injury DC 12; 1d4 Str/1d4 Str.

SA – Spell-Like Abilities: At will – darkness, ghost sound; 1/day – daze (DC 13), sound burst (DC 15). Caster level 3rd.

SQ – Madness (Ex): Immune to confusion or madness effects.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, buckler, short sword, repeating light crossbow, 10 bolts, 2d4 doses of Medium spider venom.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-1 – Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

This small, square chamber has a door opposite the one you have just entered. Three red lines are painted all around the plastered walls.

There is no danger to the party here.

Area 3-2 – Clue Room: Read or paraphrase the following:

At the end of a short hallway stretching to your left is a small chamber with a sturdy door. A large plaque once hung on the left wall as you enter the chamber, but now it lies thrown on the floor, its brass surface heavily scarred and almost melted in places.

Show Player Handout G.

The plaque reads as follows. Missing text is given in parentheses, for use if the PCs manage to repair the plaque, e.g. with a *make whole* spell:

“My child, you now stand at the precipice of your destiny with the might of a kingdom spread before you.

“This last test is (but a repetition of the dual lesson that) all royal symbols are colored by royalty (itself, and that there is a strict) order in ceremony.

“Walk (these empty halls. Reflect on the task before you. And choose your) path (as the royal) line shows you.”

The secret door to area 3-10 can be discovered with a DC 30 Search check.

The derro's screams – as an asylum gone wild – can be faintly heard on a successful DC 20 Listen check.

Area 3-3 – Workshop (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

This irregular chamber is quiet with a faint smell of oil, wood, and hot metal. The walls are covered in mosaics in steel, tin, copper, and bronze that reflect the glow of several oil lamps hanging from the ceiling in thin iron chains. Across from where you enter, a door leads out of the room.

With a whirring sound, a steel figure with articulated arms and legs and glowing gems set as eyes in an expressionless face emerges from a slightly curving corridor. In a flat voice, it intones, “At last, some other creature than those insane pests. I would love to talk with you, but if you are intruders, you must be killed. What are the five colors of royalty?”

The steel figure is Horolas, an intelligent guardian automaton, created by the Iron Overlord as an overseer of the Third Ring. The Iron Overlord also hoped

that it would be able to work with Cambaceros, but instead, Horolas has secluded itself in this chamber. It hates the other occupants of the Third Ring, but its very construction forbids it to take action.

Development: The answer to Horolas' question is “Gold, platinum, red, purple, and silver,” in that order.

If the PCs' reply to its initial question is incorrect, Horolas says, “You are intruders,” and attacks with two swords emerging from its forearms.

The PCs may already know the colors from Silena Ronshead in area 2-10, but most likely not the order. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) reveals the colors, but as their order is unique to the Vault, no Knowledge check will reveal it. If the colors are given in another order, Horolas will accept the answer, but will admonish the PCs about the “Importance of order.”

Horolas' initial attitude is indifferent. Trying to adjust its attitude with Diplomacy checks carries a -4 circumstance penalty because some of the Iron Overlord's paranoia has gone into the guardian automaton's construction.

If Horolas is made friendly, it tells the PCs about the derro and mentions that “the panels are still there, but because the beasts have trashed the rooms, it will be more difficult to use them in the right order. Still, you will manage.” It continues to complain about how the derro have ruined everything (“once, every room in the Third Ring was like this one”), but concludes that “The Master” knows best.

Asking more about the panels or the test makes Horolas even more suspicious than it already is and calls for another Diplomacy check – this time with a -6 penalty. And in the unlikely event that Silena Ronshead (see area 2-10) is with the party, it attacks immediately, recognizing her as an intruder (and still seething about her use of a *grease* spell on it in their first encounter).

In no case will Horolas help the PCs any more than mentioned here. Attempts to convince or coerce it to do more will likely result in the construct attacking the PCs.

Treasure: In the part of the room closest to area 3-1 is an iron barrel with a small chest next to it. In the barrel, a corpse – Silena Ronshead's wizard companion – is slowly dissolving in acid. The chest contains a blood-spattered backpack with mundane equipment and 2 flasks of alchemist's fire and a sunrod, a severed finger with a *ring of feather falling*, a *scroll of jump and levitate*, and a vial with a dose of *salve of slipperiness*.

Horolas, Guardian Automaton: CR 8; Medium Construct; HD 5d10+20; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 25 ft. (5 squares); AC 23 (+1 Dex, +11 natural, +1 shield),

touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk +2 *short sword* +13 melee (1d6+9/19-20); Full Atk +2 *short sword* +11 melee (1d6+9/19-20) and +2 *short sword* +11 melee (1d6+5/19-20); SA Battle tricks, breath weapon; SQ Construct traits (although not immune to mind-affecting effects), darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 3, immune to fire, low-light vision; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 25, Dex 12, Con –, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +0 (+2 masonry and metalwork), Craft (masonry) +5, Craft (metalwork) +5, Diplomacy +1, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +6; Improved Initiative^B, Improved Sunder^B, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Weapon Focus (short sword).

SA – *Battle Tricks (Ex)*: Usable 3/day each as a free action. Use at the beginning of the round. Defensive Trick (+1 to AC for 1 round), Offensive Trick (+1 to all attack rolls for 1 round), Dirty Trick (make a touch attack at an opponent; if successful, the opponent suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to AC for a full round).

SA – *Breath Weapon (Su)*: Cloud of poisonous gas, 10-foot cube directly in front of Horolas lasting 1 round, free action every 1d4+1 rounds; DC 12 Fort save, initial damage 1d4 Con damage, secondary damage death.

Area 3-4 – Derro Taskmaster (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

A short corridor leads into this small room. It is almost as torn up as the last chamber, but remnants of tapestries, carpets, and once-beautiful furniture betray the status of the occupant. A door sits in an elaborate frame in the middle of the wall of the chamber, and across from the door is a panel with five crown-shaped buttons, each in a different color.

Sitting cross-legged on a sagging bed, a short humanoid sits in babbling conversation with a small, transparent figure.

This is where Baraszor, the derro taskmaster, lives. He lives with his dead assistant who was killed two months ago in a freak accident. The assistant has returned as an allip, unaware of her condition. Baraszor is too mad to notice and, being immune to her babbling, usually just babbles along with her.

The door leads out of the Third Ring. Over its frame it says, “Face Your Destiny With Pride.” On the wall, Baraszor has scribbled the phrase, “*The scepter is not first! And it is red or purple!*” In a pocket, Baraszor has a large, flat piece of gold crudely cut in the shape of a crown with the number 3 carved in it. It is a reminder to him how to reset the ring so that his derro can move between the rings.

The panel has 5 buttons shaped like crowns. The buttons are colored red, purple, gold, silver, and platinum.

Development: If the ring has not moved, the door facing the middle of the ring opens onto a blank stone wall. Only after the ring moves to one of the doors (starting at 1, 9, or 5 o'clock around the ring), will the door lead into another room.

Activator: The silver crown.

Baraszor always has *mage armor* active. Deduct 1d3 1st-level spell slots to reflect this. He wields a beautiful small +1 *scimitar* with gold leaf and green lacquer trimmings from the dead halfling druid in area 2-6.

Tactics: Baraszor casts spells and uses his crossbow. His first action is to cast *shield*, bringing his AC up to 23. He then attempts to take down strong fighters with a *ray of enfeeblement* or disrupt enemy spellcasters by targeting them with an *acid arrow*. Should he be cornered, Baraszor casts *blink* and sticks to *magic missile*, as that spell will affect anyone, even if it is cast while Baraszor is ethereal.

The allip babbles before moving into melee. If the PCs succeed on a DC 10 Listen check, they can make out the following among the babbling – provided they make their saving throw: “*That which is gold comes before the Crown and the Orb.*”

Baraszor, 6th-level derro sorcerer: CR 9; Small Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 6d4+6; hp 37; Init +6; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +2 *ring of protection*), touch 15, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +2; Atk +1 *scimitar* +8 melee (1d4+1/18-20) or +1 *shock repeating light crossbow* +10 (1d6+1/19-20 plus 1d6 electricity plus poison); Full Atk +1 *scimitar* +8/+3 melee (1d4+1/18-20) or +1 *shock repeating light crossbow* +10/+5 ranged (1d6+1/19-20 plus 1d6 electricity plus poison) or +1 *shock repeating light crossbow* using Rapid Shot +8/+8/+3 ranged (1d6+1/19-20 plus 1d6 electricity plus poison); SA Poison use, sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., madness, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 5, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Concentration +13, Hide +10, Listen +1, Move Silently +8; Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

SA – *Poison Use (Ex)*: Giant wasp poison: Injury DC 14; 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex.

SA – *Spell-Like Abilities:* At will – *darkness*, *ghost sound*; 1/day – *daze* (DC 14), *sound burst* (DC 16). Caster level 3rd.

SQ – *Madness (Ex)*: Immune to confusion or madness effects.

Spells (6/7/6/4, Caster level 6th, DC 14 + spell level): 0 – *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, 1st – *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*, 2nd – *acid arrow*, *scorching ray*, 3rd – *blink*.

Possessions: +2 *ring of protection*, +1 *scimitar*, +1

shock repeating light crossbow, 15 bolts, 5 doses of giant wasp poison.

Allip: CR 3; Small Undead (Incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +5; Spd Fly 30 ft. (6 squares) (perfect); AC 16 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 deflection), touch 16, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk Incorporeal touch +4 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); SA Babble, madness, Wisdom drain; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4; Str –, Dex 12, Con –, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Hide +12, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7; Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

SA – *Babble (Su):* All sane creatures within 60 ft. must make DC 16 Will saves or be affected by a hypnosis spell for 2d4 rounds. If a creature makes its save, it cannot be affected by the allip's babble for 24 hours.

SA – *Madness (Su):* Anyone targeting an allip with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability takes 1d4 Wisdom damage.

SA – *Wisdom Drain (Su):* On each successful attack, the allip gains 5 temporary hit points.

Area 3-5 – The Mad Xorn (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

When you enter this room, you wonder if you have been transported away from the Vault of Rings. The chamber before you consists of unworked stone with stalactites hanging down from the 30-foot ceiling and two 15-foot-high rock formations rising from the uneven floor.

Suddenly the ground before you turns to slippery mud as a stony, three-armed creature rises up through the floor. At the same time you hear sounds of crossbows being cocked from the columns above.

The PCs are under attack by Cambaceros, the mad xorn Lord of the Third Ring, and its four derro servants. Cambaceros is the Iron Overlord's main assistant, as it can use its earth glide ability to move through rock to get anywhere in the ring. It can even use this ability and carry up to 5 derro with it (but no other creatures). Three of the servants are on the two columns while the fourth hides on a ledge near the door leading to area 3-4. As one of the derro fires at the PCs, it screams, *"The orb is not last nor is it metal! The THIRD is RED!"*

The rock floor counts as difficult terrain, costing two squares of movement to enter each square. Each column is 15 feet high, leaving only 5 feet to the ceiling (which is plenty for the derro, though). On the top of one of the columns, a derro has carved *"That which is gold comes before the Crown and the Orb."* The ledge has a panel with 5 heart-shaped buttons in the colors red, purple, gold, silver, and platinum.

Show Player Handout H.

Activator: The gold heart.

Tactics: Cambaceros likely achieves a surprise round as it rises from the ground in front of the PCs – assume that the creature's tremorsense has tipped it off to their presence. It uses this surprise round to get in front of the party while its chaos earth power turns a 20-foot-radius area around it into mud.

Meanwhile, the derro, who are all trained archers, fire down at the party and use their spell-like abilities the minute they get a line of sight, readying actions to shoot if necessary.

Treasure: Across one of the columns is draped a huge sheet of fine elven silk. The sheet is studded with gemstones, and the xorn sees it as an object to be venerated. The sheet contains 10 pieces of amber (100 gp each), 5 pieces of topaz (500 gp each), and a large fire opal (1,000 gp). The sheet itself, if cleaned, would fetch 100 gp. As a complete work of art, however, the sheet is worth 5,300 gp. The sheet covers a small niche with 4 +1 *holy bolts* that the derro think are "unlucky" to use. The niche is found automatically if the sheet is pulled down, otherwise it takes a DC 20 Search check.

Cambaceros (Elder Xorn): CR 9; Large Outsider (Earth, Extraplanar); HD 15d8+63; hp 130; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares), burrow 20 ft.; AC 25 (-1 size, +16 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +15; Grp +26; Atk Bite +21 melee (4d8+7); Full Atk Bite +21 melee (4d8+7) and 3 claws +19 melee (1d6+3); SA Chaos earth effects; SQ All-around vision (can't be flanked), damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., earth glide, immunity to cold and fire, resistance to electricity 10, tremorsense 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 25, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Search +22, Spot +22, Survival+18 (+20 following tracks or underground); Awesome Blow, Cleave^B, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness.

SA – *Chaos Earth Effects (Su):* Once per round, as a free action, the Mad Xorn activates a random effect as given below – roll a d5 for each. If you do not have a d5, use a d10 and divide the result by 2. Each effect functions at caster level 10 for the purpose of dispelling and spell resistance:

1. Muddy ground surrounding the xorn for 1d4 rounds – Creatures other than the xorn within 20 feet move at half speed and must make DC 15 Balance checks to take an action without falling prone.
2. *Slow* for 1d4 rounds – as the spell, from increased gravity – Will DC 17 negates.
3. Loose earth rises up, covers one PC and hardens – the PC cannot move or take any actions for 1 round. Fort DC 17 negates.



Area 3-6 – Barracks (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

This small chamber looks like a mixture of a nursery and a midden heap. Small-sized furniture lies smashed and scattered on a floor mostly hidden by heaps of rags, clothing, and rotting food. The air is thick with the stink of urine and sweat. Something is scribbled again and again on the walls in blood and offal. From a corridor you hear sounds of brawling and fighting.

No matter from which end the PCs enter, the fight is in the distant half of the area. The five derro here fight about who sleeps where. They use fists, kicks, and teeth, but haven't inflicted any real damage on each other.

Most of the floor is covered by scraps of parchment, paper, and leather. All of them have the same phrase written: "The orb is not last, nor is it metal! The THIRD is RED!" On a wall in the short corridor between the two parts of this area is a panel with 5 buttons shaped like orbs. The buttons are colored red, purple, gold, silver, and platinum.

Activator: The red orb.

Development: The PCs may surprise the squabbling derro, who suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to their Listen and Spot checks. When they do notice the party, they attack, one of them screaming, "The sword that is not purple is second! The heart is not a white metal!"

Treasure: Hidden among the rubbish is a small sack with 200 gp. A sharp spike of reddish metal is used to pin a rotting lizard carcass to the wall. The spike is a wand of keen edge with 11 charges.

Derro (5): hp 15 (x2), 16, 17.

Area 3-7 – False Entrance (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

This bare chamber only contains a door painted bright gold. The walls are plastered and painted dull ochre.

This is a trap. Once the door is touched, a forcecage springs into effect, and a barbed devil is summoned for 13 rounds.

Tactics: The devil first attacks with an *unholy blight*. It then divides its attacks between as many PCs as possible, using its fear ability against heavily-armored opponents and its impale attack against lightly or unarmored PCs.

Forcecage and Summon Monster IX Trap: CR 10; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; multiple traps (one forcecage trap and one summon monster IX trap that summons a barbed devil); spell effect (forcecage, 13th-level wizard), spell effect (summon

4. Dust rises, obscuring vision for 1d4 rounds – treat as *obscuring mist*, except that spellcasters must make DC 17 Concentration checks to cast spells.

5. *Spike stones* for 2 rounds – as per the spell. Reflex DC 17 negates lasting injuries to legs and feet.

Derro (4): CR 3; Small Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 16 (x2), 17, 18. Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +3 studded leather armor, +1 buckler), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk Short sword +4 melee (1d4/19-20) or masterwork repeating light crossbow +7 ranged (1d6/19-20 plus poison); SA Poison use, sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., madness, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 5, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Hide +10, Listen +1, Move Silently +8; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

SA – Poison Use (Ex): Medium spider venom; Injury DC 12; 1d4 Str/1d4 Str.

SA – Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *darkness*, *ghost sound*; 1/day – *daze* (DC 13), *sound burst* (DC 15). Caster level 3rd.

SQ – Madness (Ex): Immune to confusion or madness effects.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, buckler, short sword, masterwork repeating light crossbow, 10 bolts, 2d4 doses of Medium spider venom.

monster IX, 13th-level wizard, barbed devil); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Barbed Devil: Medium Outsider (Evil, Extraplanar, Lawful); HD 12d8+72; hp 126; Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 29 (+6 Dex, +13 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +22; Atk Claw +18 melee (2d8+6 plus fear); Full Atk 2 claws +18 melee (2d8+6 plus fear); SA Fear, impale grappled opponent 3d8+9, improved grab; SQ Barbed defense, damage reduction 10/good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, see in darkness, spell resistance 23, spell-like abilities, telepathy 100 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +12; Str 23, Dex 23, Con 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +21, Diplomacy +6, Hide +21, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Listen +19, Move Silently +21, Search +16, Sense Motive +17, Spot +19, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks and on other planes); Alertness, Cleave, Improved Grapple, Iron Will, Power Attack.

SA – *Fear (Su):* *Fear* (as the spell, caster level 9th). The same creature can't be affected more than once every 24 hours.

SA – *Improved Grab (Ex):* On a successful claw attack, the devil begins a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

SQ – *Barbed Defense (Ex):* Any creature striking the devil with a handheld weapon or a natural attack takes 1d8+6 points damage. Weapons with reach do not endanger their user.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *hold person* (DC 17), *major image* (DC 17), *scorching ray* (2 rays only). 1/day – *order's wrath* (DC 18), *unholy blight* (DC 18). Caster level 12th.

Area 3-8 – False Entrance (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

This small chamber sports a grey-tiled floor. Across from you is a heavy-looking iron door.

This is a trap. If a living creature comes within 5 feet of the door, a *wall of iron* springs into being across from the entrance, followed by a Maximized *acid fog* spell.

Wall of Iron and Maximized Acid Fog Trap: CR 10; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple traps (one *wall of iron* trap and one

maximized *acid fog* trap); spell effect (*wall of iron*, 17th-level wizard), spell effect (maximized *acid fog*, 17th-level wizard, 12 acid/round for 17 rounds); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

Area 3-9 – Oracle of Insanity (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

Right beyond the entrance to this room is a staircase that leads 20 feet down into an irregularly shaped chamber. A two-tiered pyramid dominates the room. Above the pyramid's flat top hangs a cage with a fleshy monstrosity consisting, apparently, of all eyes and mouths. A short dwarflike female with coarse white hair and bluish-white skin stands below the cage and adds her own frenzied screams to the cacophony from the creature in the cage.

Show Player Handout I.

Long ago, the derro captured a gibbering moulder. Over time, they began to see its gibbering as prophecies to be studied and heeded. They have therefore constructed a small temple for it. A derro sorcerer serves as its caretaker.

From floor to ceiling, the chamber is 40 feet high. The staircases start 20 feet above floor level. The pyramid is 20 feet high, and the cage hangs some 8 feet above the top. The cage's bottom can be opened with a chain hanging down, causing the gibbering moulder to flop down with no damage. All over the pyramid is scribed "*The sword that is not purple is second! The heart is not a white metal!*"

On the wall near the staircase leading up to area 3-10 is a panel with 5 buttons shaped like scepters. The buttons are colored red, purple, gold, silver, and platinum.

Activator: Purple scepter.

Development: Upon seeing intruders, the derro pulls the chain as a move-equivalent action, all the time screaming, "*The scepter goes before the crown, not of platinum made. And the orb is NOT fourth!*"

Tactics: The gibbering moulder and the derro stay on top of the pyramid for as long as possible using ranged attacks against the PCs. The derro's first action is to cast *shield* while releasing the moulder. Then she lobs

Gamescience Dice

The wandering monster tables in this adventure (and Cambaceros' chaos earth effects) utilize the unique dice manufactured by Gamescience. Gamescience is a pioneer in the development of new polyhedrons. After all, they invented the 100-sided die – what could be cooler than that? Their product line also includes the 1d3, 1d5, 1d7, 1d14, 1d16, 1d24, and 1d30. If you don't have the appropriate dice for the wandering monster tables in this adventure, you can substitute other dice as appropriate: for 1d3, divide 1d6 by 2; for 1d5, divide 1d10 by 2; for 1d7, roll 1d8 and reroll any 8s; and so on. To acquire some of these amazing dice for yourself (yes, they're real), ask for Gamescience dice by name at your local game store, or visit www.goodmangames.com.

a 6d6 *fireball* (from her *necklace*) before drinking her *potion of barkskin*.

GM's Note: Remember that if the gibbering moulder blinds anyone, the derro can sneak attack with her crossbow if the victim is within 30 feet of her.

Gibbering Moulder: CR 5; Medium Aberration; HD 4d8+24; hp 42; Init +1; Spd 10 ft. (2 squares), swim 20 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk Bite +4 melee (1) or spittle +4 ranged touch (1d4 acid plus blindness); Full Atk 6 bites +4 melee (1) or spittle +4 ranged touch (1d4 acid plus blindness); SA Blood drain, gibbering, ground manipulation, improved grab, spittle, swallow whole; SQ Amorphous, damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Listen +4, Spot +9, Swim +8; Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse.

SA – *Blood Drain (Ex):* A swallowed opponent automatically takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round.

SA – *Gibbering (Su):* Will DC 13 save to avoid being *confused* for 1d2 rounds. If the save is successful, a creature can't be affected by the moulder for 24 hours.

SA – *Ground Manipulation (Su):* At will and as a standard action, the gibbering moulder can cause all adjacent squares to become like quicksand in 2 rounds. Anyone other than the moulder must make a move-equivalent action to avoid being mired (treat as pinned).

SA – *Improved Grab (Ex):* On a successful bite attack against a Medium or smaller creature, the moulder begins a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

SA – *Spittle (Ex):* Usable once per round as a free action. Struck creatures must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

SA – *Swallow Whole (Ex):* On a successful grapple check, an opponent is engulfed (swallowed) if size Medium or below. Once inside, the gibbering moulder can use its blood drain ability. The gibbering moulder can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, 8 Tiny, 32 Diminutive, or 128 Fine creatures. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by inflicting 5 points of damage.

SQ – *Amorphous (Ex):* Not subject to critical hits and cannot be flanked.

Caretaker, 2nd-level derro sorcerer: CR 5; Small Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 2d4+2; hp 24; Init +6; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk Short sword +6 melee (1d4+1/19-20) or repeating light crossbow +7 (1d6/19-20 plus poison); SA Poison use, sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., madness, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 5, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Concentration +5, Hide

+10, Listen +1, Move Silently +11; Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative.

SA – *Poison Use (Ex):* Medium spider venom: Injury DC 12; 1d4 Str/1d4 Str.

SA – *Spell-Like Abilities:* At will – *darkness*, *ghost sound*; 1/day – *daze* (DC 13), *sound burst* (DC 15). Caster level 3rd.

SQ – *Madness (Ex):* Immune to confusion or madness effects.

Spells (6/5, Caster level 2nd, DC 13 + spell level): 0 – *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*, 1st – *grease*, *shield*.

Possessions: *Cloak of resistance +1*, *necklace of fireballs (type II)*, *potion of barkskin +3*.

Area 3-10 – Barracks (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

This irregularly shaped room is eerie in that it is completely quiet and very, very clean. There is nothing here. The faintly brown walls are smoothed. The floor is spotless. Everything is sterile.

Until you look closer. Then you see that the walls have been smoothed with fingernails that have broken off to be stuck in the wall and the faint brown color is from old streaks of blood from hands obsessively cleaning and scraping the walls.

From around a wall jutting into the room five still shapes appear.

The derro in this barracks have attempted to find perfect stillness. Therefore, they do not speak and they keep no possessions except what they carry.

They stop being quiet in combat, however, where they scream as much as their kin in the other rooms. One of them in particular yells, "*The scepter is not first! And it is red or purple!*"

On the wall right next to the secret door to area 3-2 is a panel with 5 sword-shaped buttons. The buttons are colored red, purple, gold, silver, and platinum. Across from the panel, on the wall jutting into the chamber, this phrase is written in blood: "*The scepter goes before the crown, not of platinum made. And the orb is NOT fourth!*"

Activator: The platinum sword.

Derro (5): hp 17, 18 (x2), 19, 20.

The Fourth Ring: The Inner Vault

The Inner Vault lies at the center of the Vault of Rings. It does not turn, nor does it have any tests. Before reaching this area, the PCs should have encountered the Iron Overlord twice before, so that here they face the Stage 3 Iron Overlord.

Areas of the Map

Area 4-1 – False Entrance (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

This is a small chamber with a wooden door opposite the one you just opened. The walls are plastered and painted white, and a blue and white rug lies upon the floor.

This is a false entrance to the Inner Vault from the Third Ring. The door is fake. If touched, however, an iron wall one inch thick slams down in front of the real door into the room (from area 3-4) and the walls begin to close in to crush whomever is in the chamber.

Crushing Room Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; walls move together (16d6, crush); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft.-by-20-ft. room); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20.

Iron Wall: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 30; Climb DC 25.

Area 4-2 – Another False Entrance (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

This small, square chamber has a single door opposite the entrance. Empty sconces hang upon the side walls.

This is another false entrance to the Inner Vault from the Third Ring. The door is fake. One full round after anyone enters this room, it fills with a sudden blast of magical cold.

Cold Blast Trap: CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*cone of cold*, 15th-level wizard, 15d6, DC 17 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Area 4-3 – Entrance to the Vault (EL 11): Read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond a twenty-foot entryway, the chamber before you widens. A set of double doors made of glistening adamantine are straight ahead, flanked by inset shelves in the wall filled with grinning gargoyles and leering idols of strange, unknown gods. The room has smaller steel doors to the left and the right. The floor bears a complex mosaic of a king at his coronation, kneeling before his throne, with a crown being placed upon his head by an angelic figure.

Show Player Handout J. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) reveals that each of the idols and statues on the shelves depicts a god of avarice, a demon of greed, or a spirit somehow relating to money – all except two, that is, which are real, living gargoyles compelled to remain here as guardians. (A Spot check (DC 20) also reveals the real gargoyles.)

Tactics: If spotted for what they are, or if anyone comes at least twenty feet into the room, the gargoyles attack. These are large, extremely tough specimens, hand-picked by the Iron Overlord. If possible, they fly over the PCs' heads to attack potentially weaker, unarmored foes (or, if possible, obvious spellcasters) first.

Development: One round after combat with the gargoyles begins, the Iron Overlord teleports into this room and immediately attacks. If all has gone according to plan, this is the Stage 3 version of the Iron Overlord. In any event, he does not flee from this room, fighting to the death. This means that if it is Stage 1 or 2, the PCs will have to fight him multiple times.

The doors of this room are enchanted so that they can open and close at the Iron Overlord's command, which is a free action for him. One round after the Iron Overlord appears, he causes one of the two side doors to open. Two more gargoyles (this time, more standard specimens) come out to assist him, obeying all his commands. If they are slain, or if the Iron Overlord is particularly close to death, he has the other door open to release two more gargoyles.

If given the opportunity, he also uses his power over the doors to trap any PCs that move into those chambers during the fight. Treat the doors as if *arcane locked* in this instance. He will not open the adamantine doors leading into area 4-4 in any circumstance. If magically compelled, treat opening the doors for someone else to be akin to killing himself. However, if he dies, all the doors in this room, including the adamantine doors, revert to normal. The side doors are unlocked, and the vault doors are locked only conventionally, albeit impressively (Open Lock DC 35 to open). The vault doors can also be opened – once the Overlord is slain – by touching both with the ornate axe from area 1-6, the stuffed moonwing from area 2-13, or the head of Horolas from area 3-3.

Iron Side Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 38.

Adamantine Vault Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 50.

Tough Gargoyles (2): CR 5; Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Earth); HD 4d8+23; hp 55 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +4

natural, +4 chain shirt), touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk Claw +8 melee (1d4+4); Full Atk 2 claws +8 melee (1d4+4) and bite +6 melee (1d6+2) and gore +6 melee (1d6+2); SQ Damage resistance 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., freeze (DC 20 to spot); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Hide +6 (+14 with stone back-ground), Listen +4, Spot +4; Multiattack, Toughness.

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt (colored to appear very stonelike).

Gargoyles (4): CR 4; Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Earth); HD 4d8+19; hp 37 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk Claw +6 melee (1d4+2); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+2) and bite +4 melee (1d6+1) and gore +4 melee (1d6+1); SQ Damage resistance 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., freeze (DC 20 to spot); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7 (+15 with stone back-ground), Listen +4, Spot +4; Multiattack, Toughness.

Area 4-4 – The Vault and Treasury (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the adamantine doors lies the treasure of King Arsidan and his kingdom. You see a total of ten wooden and iron chests, a suit of full plate armor standing in each corner, holding a halberd, and an ornately carved ebony wood table with a glass case atop it against the far wall. The left wall bears a huge golden plaque, 3 feet high and 6 feet long engraved with the image of the kingdom's royal crest. The right wall has an inset shelf filled with bottles and books.

This treasure room is filled with valuable objects including:

Chest #1: Locked (Open Lock DC 25) but empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins).

Chest #2: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins).

Chest #3: Locked (Open Lock DC 25) containing 1,560 gp and 1,902 sp, which fill it a little over half way.

Chest #4: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins).

Chest #5: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins). The chest itself, however, is small and inlaid with ivory making it worth 275 gp.

Chest #6: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins).

Chest #7: Locked (Open Lock DC 25) and trapped with poisoned darts. Contains 2,825 gp, which fill it about half way.

Poisoned Dart Trap: CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 ranged (1d4+4 plus poison, dart); multiple targets (1 dart per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); poison (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude save resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 22.

Chest #8: Contains 97 gp and 181 sp. The chest itself is small and inlaid with small pieces of decorative glass making it worth 275 gp.

Chest #9: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins). However, this chest is very old and has a false bottom that even Arsidan and the Iron Overlord don't know about (Search DC 30 to find), placed by a former monarch. Beneath it is a small compartment that contains 12 large golden pearls (250 gp each) and a bag of 300 pp.

Chest #10: Empty, although it clearly once held many small objects (coins).

Armor/Halberds: The armor and the halberds are all masterwork. They are also ornately decorated, making their value increase by +500 gp each.

Glass Case: This case holds the *scepter of succession*. Touching the glass triggers a *prismatic spray*. Otherwise, it is simple to open.

Prismatic Spray Trap: CR 8; magic device; touch trigger; no reset; spell effect (*prismatic spray*, 13th-level wizard, DC 20 Reflex, Fortitude, or Will save, depending on effect); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Plaque: This massive crest is worth 8,000 gp,

The Scepter of Succession

The Scepter of Succession: This magical golden scepter is a minor artifact that only functions when there is no blood heir to the throne of the kingdom in which it currently rests. In this situation, it can detect the next proper ruler as based on the will of the gods, the needs of the kingdom and the worthiness and nobility of the subject (GM's discretion) with no range limitation. The wielder senses the direction and distance, as if using a *locate creature* spell.

Strong divination; CL 20th; Weight 3 lbs.

although it would be very difficult to find a buyer for it. If melted down, it would provide gold worth 3,000 gp.

Bottles: This collection of ornate bottles, some of which are jeweled, inlaid with gold or silver, or otherwise beautifully decorated, was prized by the queen but ultimately placed here with the idea that they would be sold when the kingdom ran out of funds (which would have been soon). The collection is worth 2,500 gp. In addition, one bottle is actually an *eversmoking bottle*. Another of the bottles holds a small bit of liquid at its bottom, which is actually a single dose of *oil of magic weapon +2*.

Books: All of these are mundane. Most detail the history of the kingdom in one way or another, although one is a census of the kingdom and another a geological survey. Two others are of particular interest, most likely. One of these is a careful accounting of the building of the Vault, step by step, and the reader can clearly see the descent into madness experienced by the creature now called Iron Overlord. It also mentions the creation of the various constructs, including the assassin construct and the Iron Overlord's three-part body as well as the gathering of the various guardian creatures. The second is a ledger carefully showing the expenses of the kingdom over the last thirty years. It shows that the vast amount of the kingdom's wealth – hundreds of thousands of gold pieces – were squandered on the construction of the Vault of Rings, explaining why the chests are mostly empty. If a buyer could be found, the book collection would sell for 1,300 gp.

Wrapping Up

You look up from the empty crates and survey the scattered pieces of treasure. The wealth of a kingdom spent on guarding it! The next king will certainly have his work cut out for him. Whether you will play a part in that tale remains to be seen. For now, you are just happy to take the spoils you've found and leave this place of iron, madness, and death.

The GM will need to figure out what happens to the kingdom in his campaign. Options include:

1. The PCs find King Arsidan and/or Queen Kathenta's corpses in the Inner Vault, allowing them to be resurrected and returned to their rightful throne.
2. The *scepter of succession*, recovered and turned over by the PCs, reveals the next proper ruler of the kingdom, who likely will become an ally of the PCs.
3. The PCs sell the scepter off and it ends up in the wrong hands. A wrongful usurper uses the scepter deceitfully and gains the throne. The PCs are wanted for theft of the royal treasury.
4. Someone else eventually recovers the scepter and puts the rightful heir on the throne. The PCs may still be wanted for theft.

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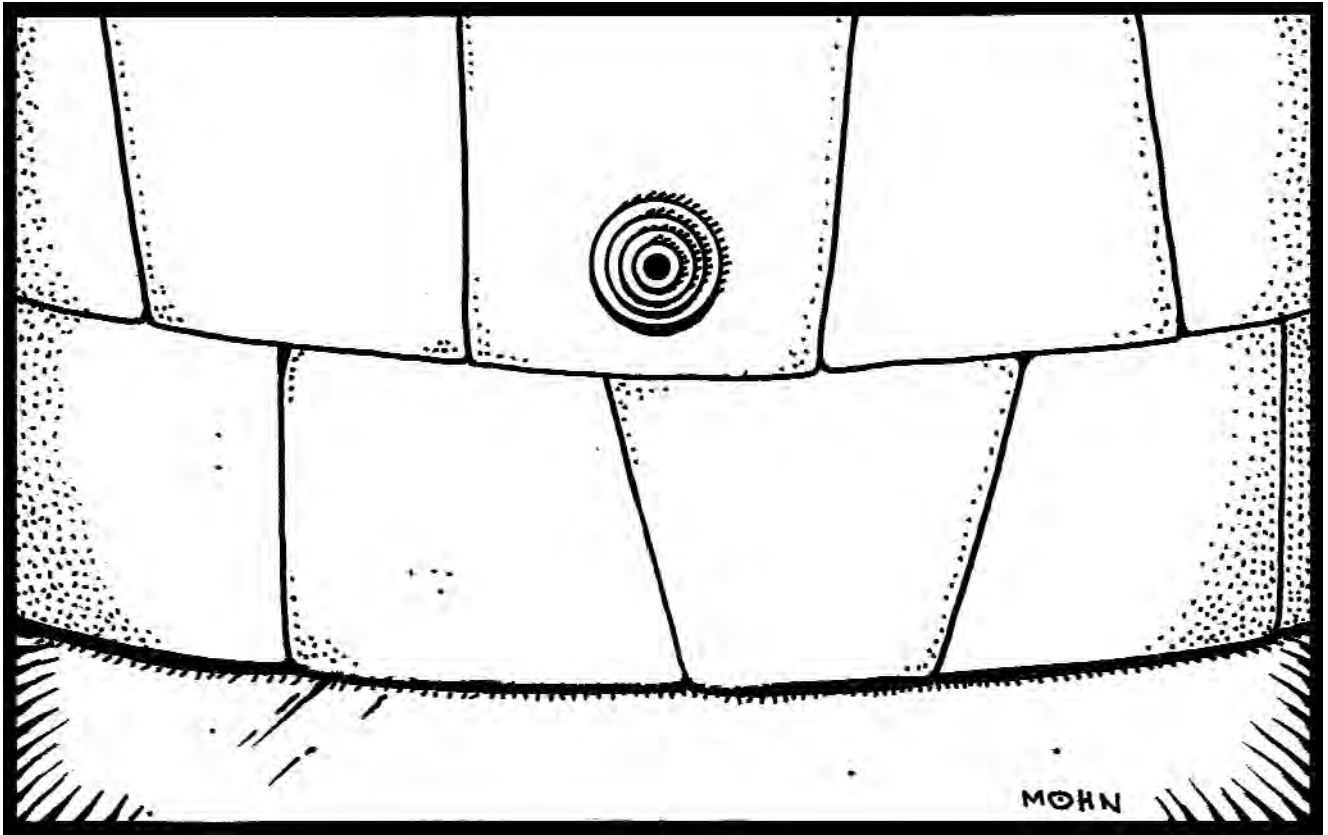
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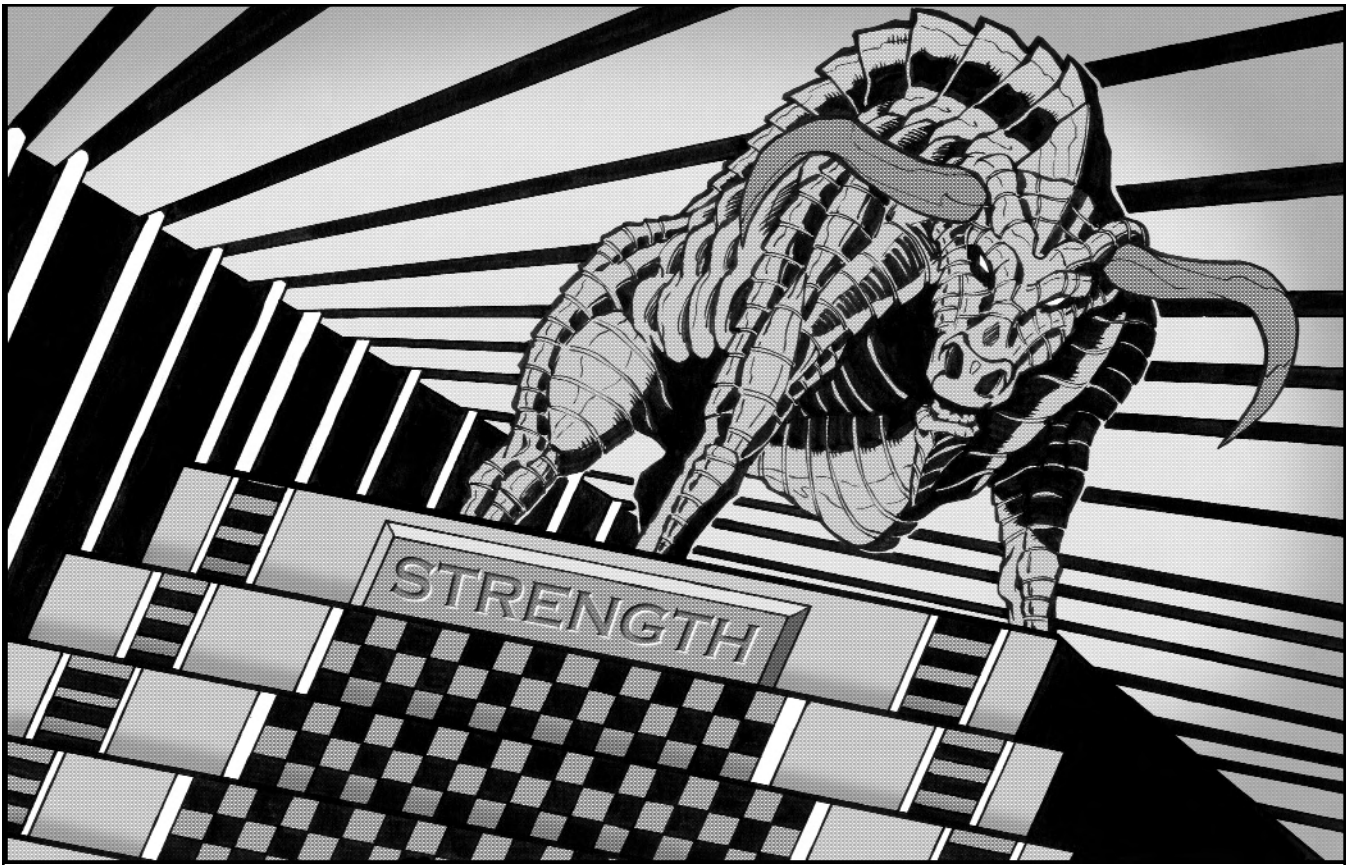
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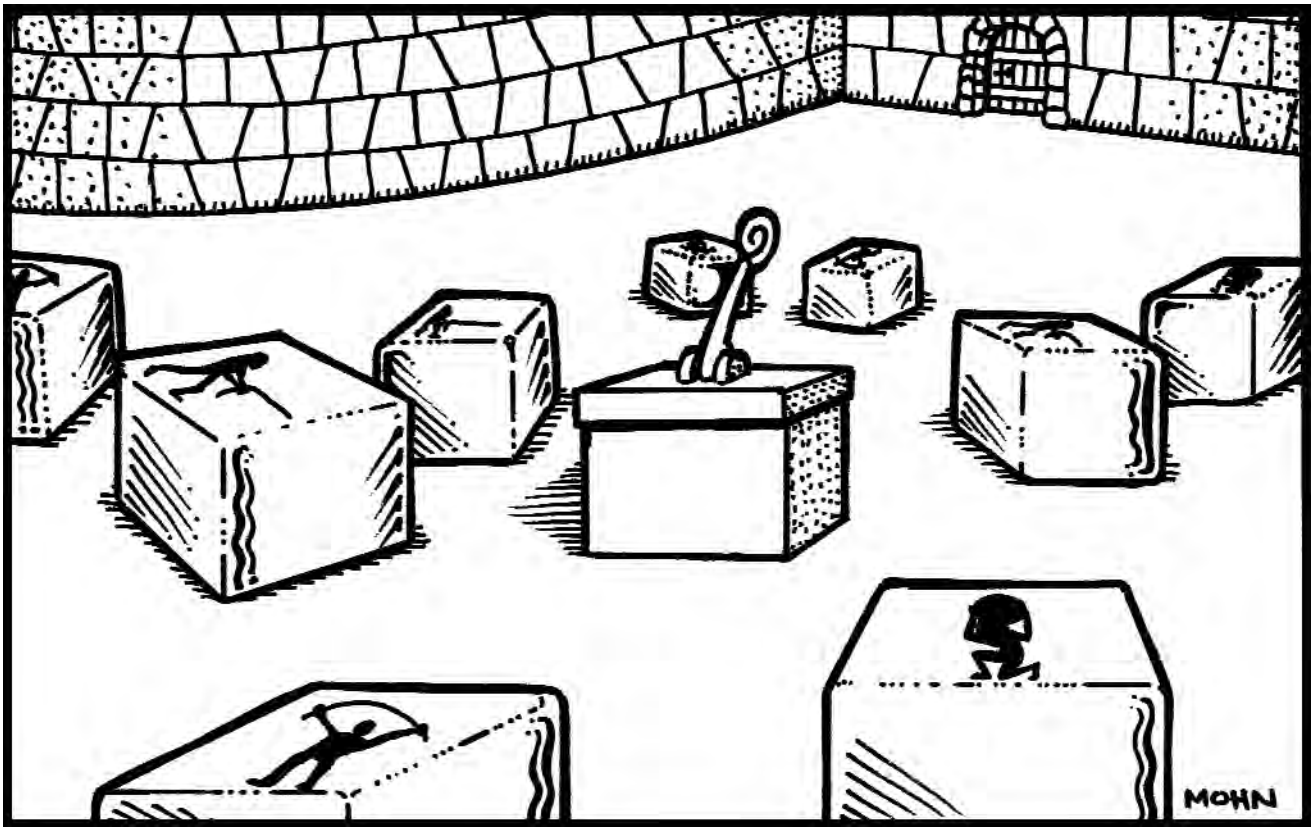


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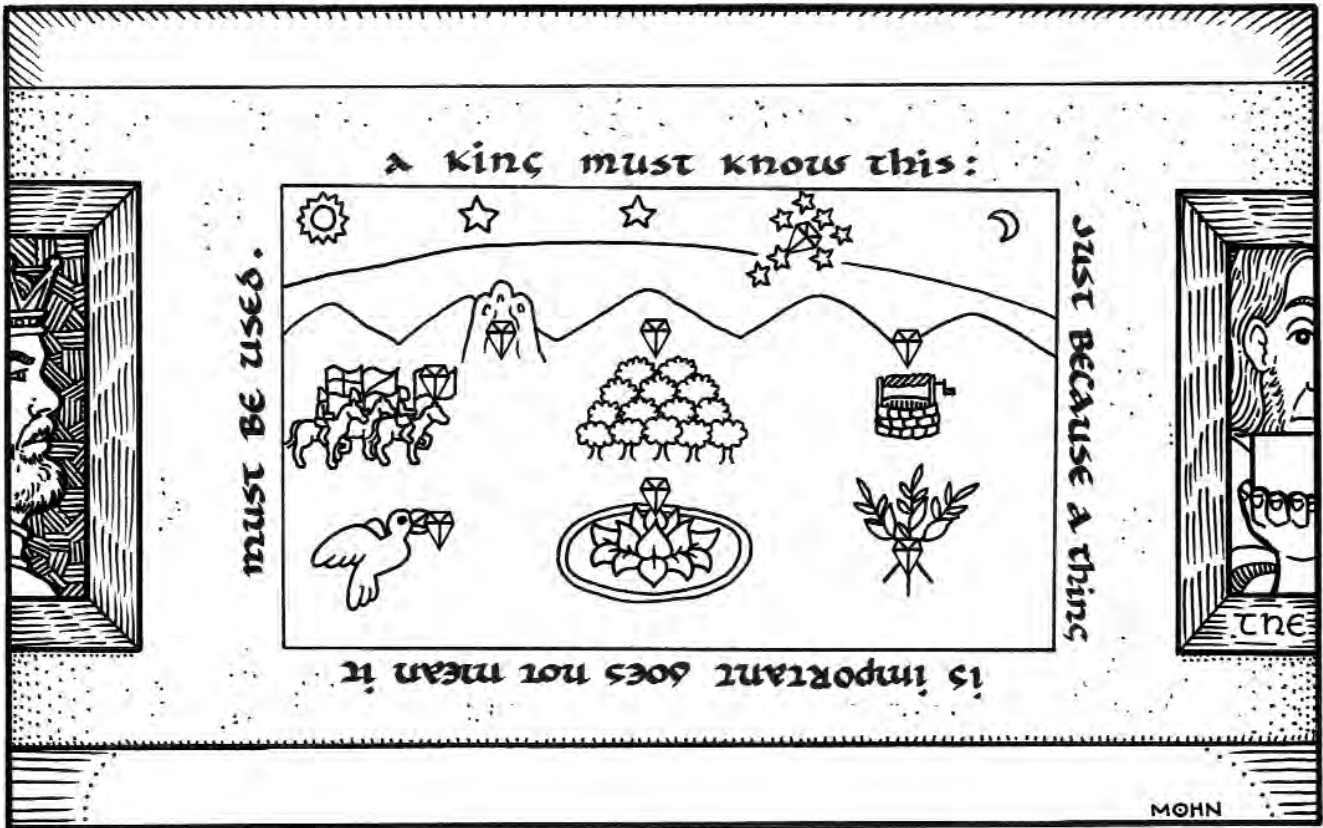


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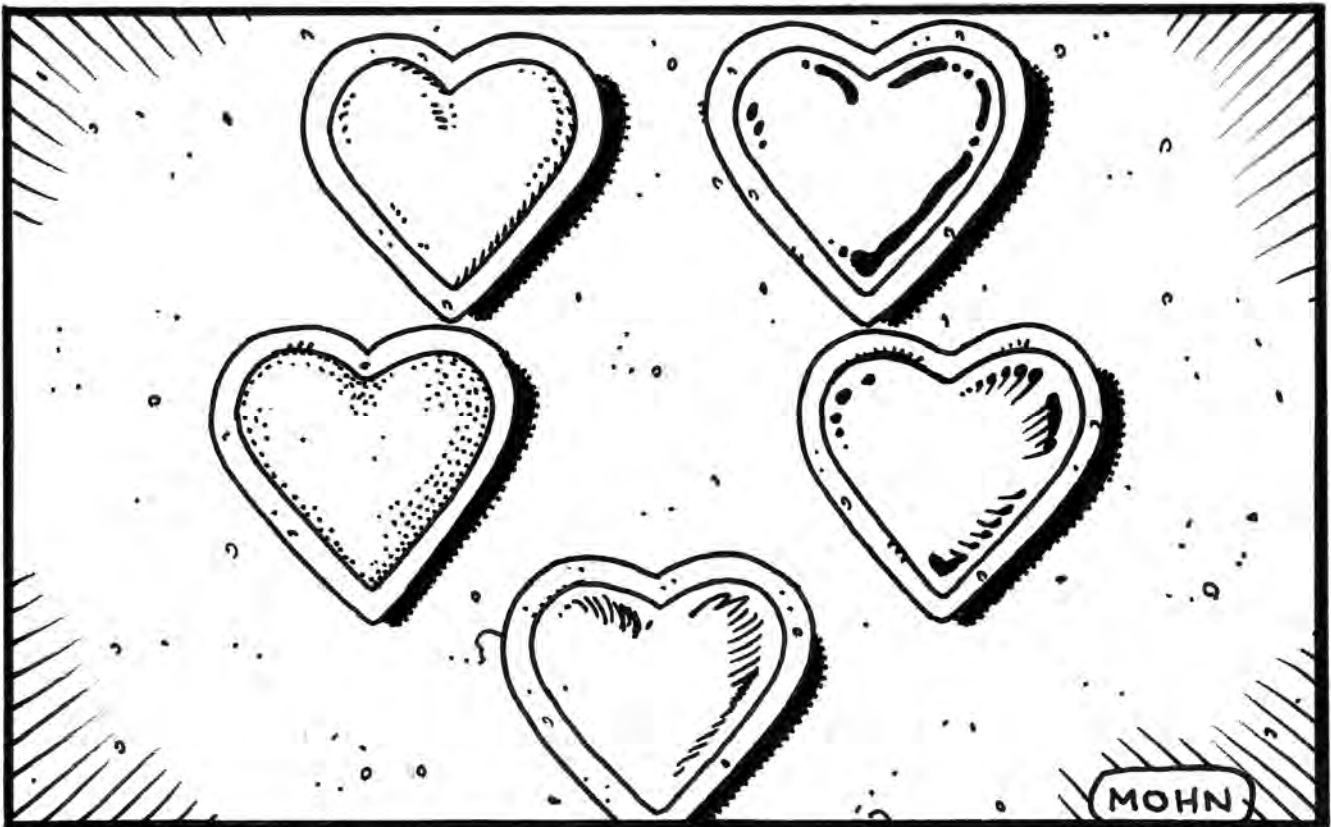
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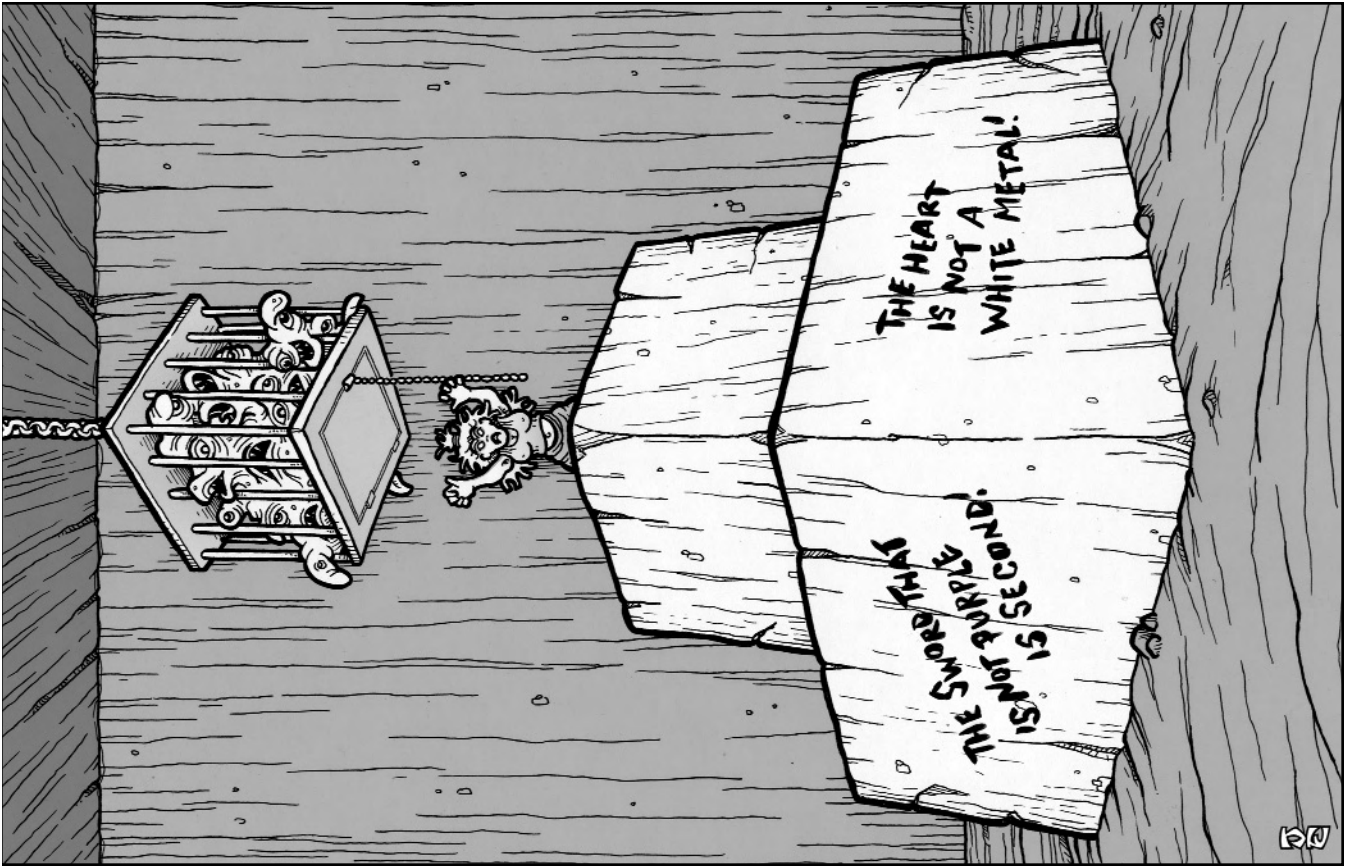


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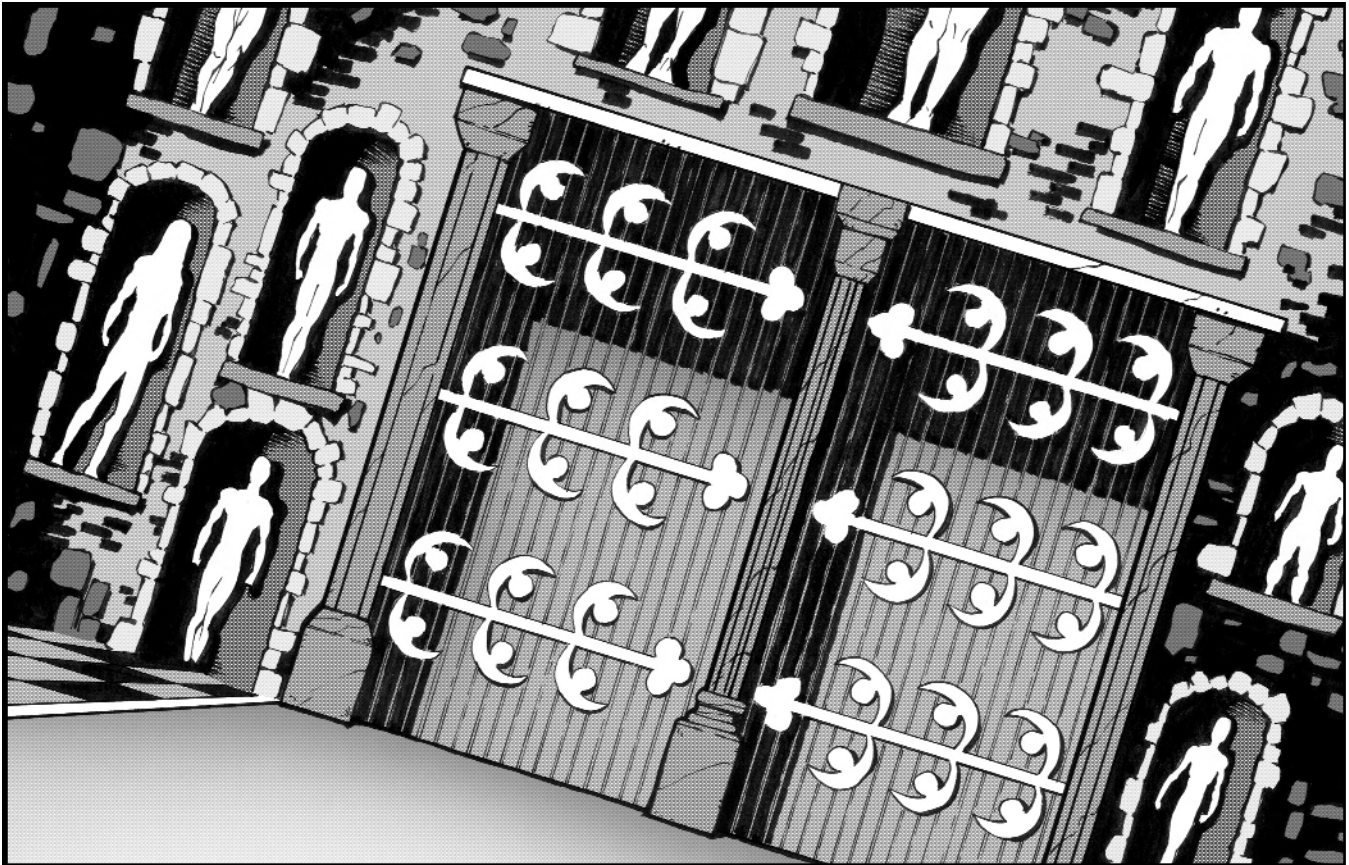
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Player Handout J



Pregenerated Characters

Basic Stats

Character	Kakloban	Dereyna	Fedorcia	Quintilian	Siri Kenter	Nardusz
Sex	M	M	F	M	F	M
Race	Dwarf	Elf	Human	Half-elf	Human	Kobold
Class/Level	Cleric 8	Rogue 8	Wiz (Conj) 7 / Lor 1	Bard 8	Fighter 8	Sor 6/DDi 2
CR	8	8	8	8	8	8
Size	M	M	M	M	M	S
Height	4' 2"	5' 4"	5' 7"	5' 10"	5' 9"	2' 5"
Weight	150 lb.	140 lb.	124 lb.	130 lb.	165 lb.	43 lb.
Alignment	LN	CG	LG	CN	LG	N
AC	22	21	15	21	23	18
AC - touch	9	15	13	14	11	16
AC - flat-footed	22	21	12	17	22	15
Hit Points	63	46	40	38	64	36
Speed	20 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	20 ft.	30 ft.
Initiative	-1	+5	+3	+4	+1	+3
Strength	14	12	8	10	21	8
Dexterity	8	20	16	18	13	17
Constitution	16	14	14	12	14	12
Intelligence	10	13	20	13	13	10
Wisdom	22	8	8	9	10	9
Charisma	12	9	10	16	9	20
Fort Save	+9 (+11 vs. poison)	+4	+8	+3	+9	+8
Ref Save	+1	+11	+9	+10	+4	+5
Will Save	+12, +2 vs. spells and spell-like effects	+1, +2 vs. enchantment	+8	+5	+3	+7
Armor	+2 <i>full plate</i> , +1 <i>heavy steel shield</i>	Mithril shirt, darkwood shield	None <i>breastplate</i>	+1 <i>mithril</i> +1 <i>heavy</i>	+1 <i>full plate</i> , <i>steel shield</i>	None
Languages	Common, Dwarf	Common, Elf, Sylvan	Common, Draconic, Dwarf, Elf	Common, Elf, Sylvan	Celestial, Common	Common, Draconic
Spells Per Day	6/6+1/5+1/ 4+1/3+1	None	5/7/5/5/4* *1/lvl must be a Conjunction	3/4/4/2	None	6/8/7/5
Melee Bonus	+8	+7 or +11	+2	+6 or +10	+13	+4 or +8
Ranged Bonus	+5	+11	+6	+10	+9	+8
Damage Adj	+2	+1	-1	+0	+5	-1
BAB	+6	+6	+3	+6	+8	+4
Grapple	+8	+7	+2	+6	+13	-1

Domains, Spellbooks, and Spells Known

Character	Domains, Spellbooks, and Spells Known
Kakloban	Earth, Protection
Fedorcia	0 – all, except Ench and Necro; 1st – <i>burning hands, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, enlarge person, grease, mage armor, magic missile, protection from chaos/evil/good/law, shield, summon monster I</i> ; 2nd – <i>glitterdust, invisibility, knock, Mel's acid arrow, mirror image, resist energy, rope trick, see invisibility, summon monster II</i> ; 3rd – <i>arcane sight, clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, displacement, fireball, stinking cloud, summon monster III</i> ; 4th – <i>Ev's black tentacles, greater invisibility, stonkskin, summon monster IV, wall of ice</i>
Quintilian	Specialty: Conjunction. Prohibited schools: Enchantment and necromancy 0 – <i>dancing lights, daze, detect magic, flare, know direction, resistance</i> ; 1st – <i>cure light wounds, feather fall, grease, remove fear</i> ; 2nd – <i>blur, cat's grace, heroism, invisibility</i> ; 3rd – <i>confusion, cure serious wounds, haste</i>
Nardusz	0 – <i>acid splash, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, ray of frost, read magic, resistance</i> ; 1st – <i>enlarge person, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, shocking grasp</i> ; 2nd – <i>blindness/deafness, spectral hand</i> ; 3rd – <i>vampiric touch</i>

Skills & Feats

Character	Skills	Feats
Kakloban	Appraise +0 (+2 stone/metal items), Concentration +14, Craft (metalworking) +2, Craft (stoneworking) +2, Heal +17	Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Weapon Focus (heavy mace)
Dereyna	Balance +7, Bluff +10, Climb +8, Diplomacy +1, Disable Device +14, Disguise -1 (+1 acting), Gather Information +1, Hide +12, Intimidate +1, Jump +10, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen +3, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +14, Search +14, Sleight of Hand +18, Spot +3, Survival -1 (+1 following tracks), Tumble +12	Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Finesse
Fedorcia	Appraise +9 (+11 alchemical items), Concentration +13, Craft (alchemy) +14, Decipher Script +16, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Knowledge (geography) +16, Knowledge (nature) +16, Spellcraft +18, Survival -1 (+1 underground, in aboveground natural environments, and to avoid hazards and getting lost)	Augment Summoning, Empower Spell ^B , Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll ^B , Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana)), Spell Focus (conjuration) ^B Familiar: Weasel; AC 18; hp 23.
Quintilian	Balance +10, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Gather Information +5, Jump +2, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (nature) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Listen +0, Perform (lute) +19, Search +2, Spot +0, Survival -1 (+1 in aboveground natural environments), Tumble +11, Use Magic Device +14	Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse Bardic Knowledge: 1d20+11
Siri Kenter	Climb +10, Intimidate +10, Jump +4, Swim +4	Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (longsword) ^B , Improved Disarm, Mobility ^B , Spring Attack ^B , Weapon Focus (longsword) ^B , Weapon Specialization (longsword) ^B , Whirlwind Attack ^B
Nardusz	Concentration +12, Craft (trapmaking) +9, Profession (miner) +1, Search +4, Speak Language (Common)	Multiattack, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Finesse Familiar: Rat; AC 17; hp 18

Weapons & Equipment

Character	Weapons	Magic Items	Other Items
Kakloban	+1 heavy mace of spell storing (w. inflict serious wounds), masterwork light crossbow, 10 bolts	+2 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +2 periapt of wisdom, lesser metamagic rod (extend), 2 oils of magic vestment (+2), 3 potions of cure serious wounds, 2 potions of shield of faith, scroll of restoration	Backpack with waterskin, two days' trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, 3 vials of holy water, two torches, silver holy symbol
Dereyna	Sword of subtlety, +1 composite shortbow (+1 Str), 20 arrows	Mithril shirt, darkwood shield, <i>potion of barkskin</i> (+2), <i>potion of cat's grace</i> , 3 <i>potions of cure light wounds</i>	Backpack, 2 waterskins, two days' trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, hempen rope (50 ft.), grappling hook, masterwork thieves' tools, hooded lantern with 3 pints of oil
Fedorcia	Dagger, masterwork light crossbow, 10 bolts, 3 +3 bolts	<i>Headband of intelligence</i> +2, <i>amulet of natural armor</i> +2, <i>cloak of resistance</i> +2, <i>wand of monster summoning IV</i> (10 ch.), <i>wand of bull's strength</i> (5 ch.), <i>potion of cure serious wounds</i> , <i>elemental gem (earth)</i> , scroll: <i>stoneskin</i> and <i>wall of ice</i> , scroll: <i>clairaudience/clairvoyance</i> , scroll: <i>magic missile</i> (caster level 7) (x2)	Backpack with waterskin, two days' trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, 5 candles, two pages of parchment, ink, inkpen, spell component pouch, spellbook
Quintilian	+1 flaming shortbow, 20 arrows, +1 rapier	+1 mithril breastplate, <i>circlet of persuasion</i> , <i>gloves of dexterity</i> +2, <i>ring of protection</i> +1, <i>potion of barkskin</i> (+3)	Backpack, 2 waterskins, two days' trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, mwk. lute, 2 tanglefoot bags, 2 sunrods
Siri Kenter	+3 longsword, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str), 20 arrows	+1 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, <i>gauntlets of ogre power</i> , <i>cloak of resistance</i> +1	Backpack with waterskin, two days' trail rations, hempen rope (50 ft.), grappling hook, bedroll, sack, flint and steel
Nardusz	+2 light crossbow	<i>Gloves of dexterity</i> +2, <i>ring of protection</i> +2, <i>wand of magic missile</i> (caster level 9; 50 ch.)	Backpack with waterskin, two days' trail rations, bedroll, spell component pouch

Special Qualities

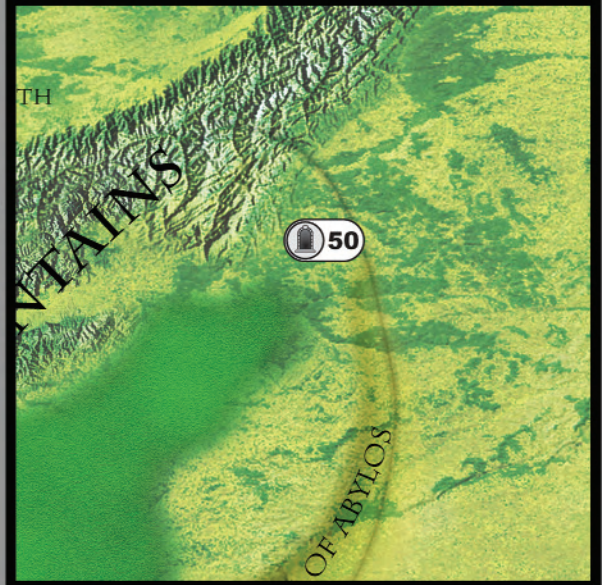
Kakloban	+1 to attack rolls vs. orcs/goblinoids, +4 AC vs. giants, darkvision 60 ft., stability, stonecunning
Dereyna	Evasion, immunity to <i>sleep</i> spells and effects, improved uncanny dodge, low-light vision, sneak attack +4d6, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge
Fedorcia	Secret: the lore of true stamina (already factored in)
Quintilian	Bardic knowledge, bardic music, countersong, elven blood, <i>fascinate</i> , immune to <i>sleep</i> spells and effects, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, low-light vision, <i>suggestion</i>
Nardusz	Bite attack (1d4-1), claw attack (1d3-1), darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity



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