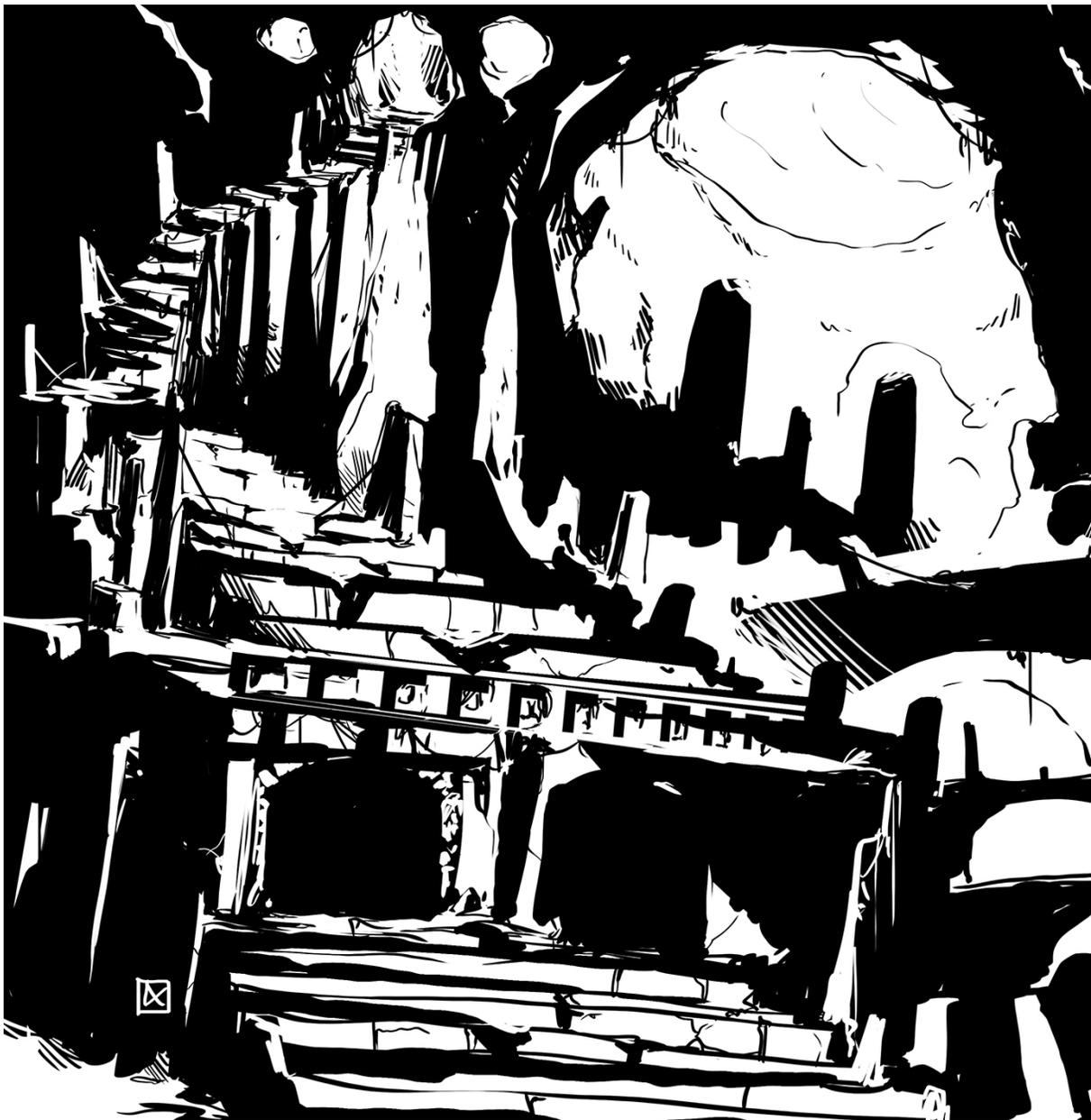




LAST OF THE LONGBEARDS



Last of the Longbeards

Rumours & Hooks:

House Invero of *Dol-Karok* is seeking explorers to locate some misplaced property in the *Lost Roads*. They are offering a very handsome finder's fee.

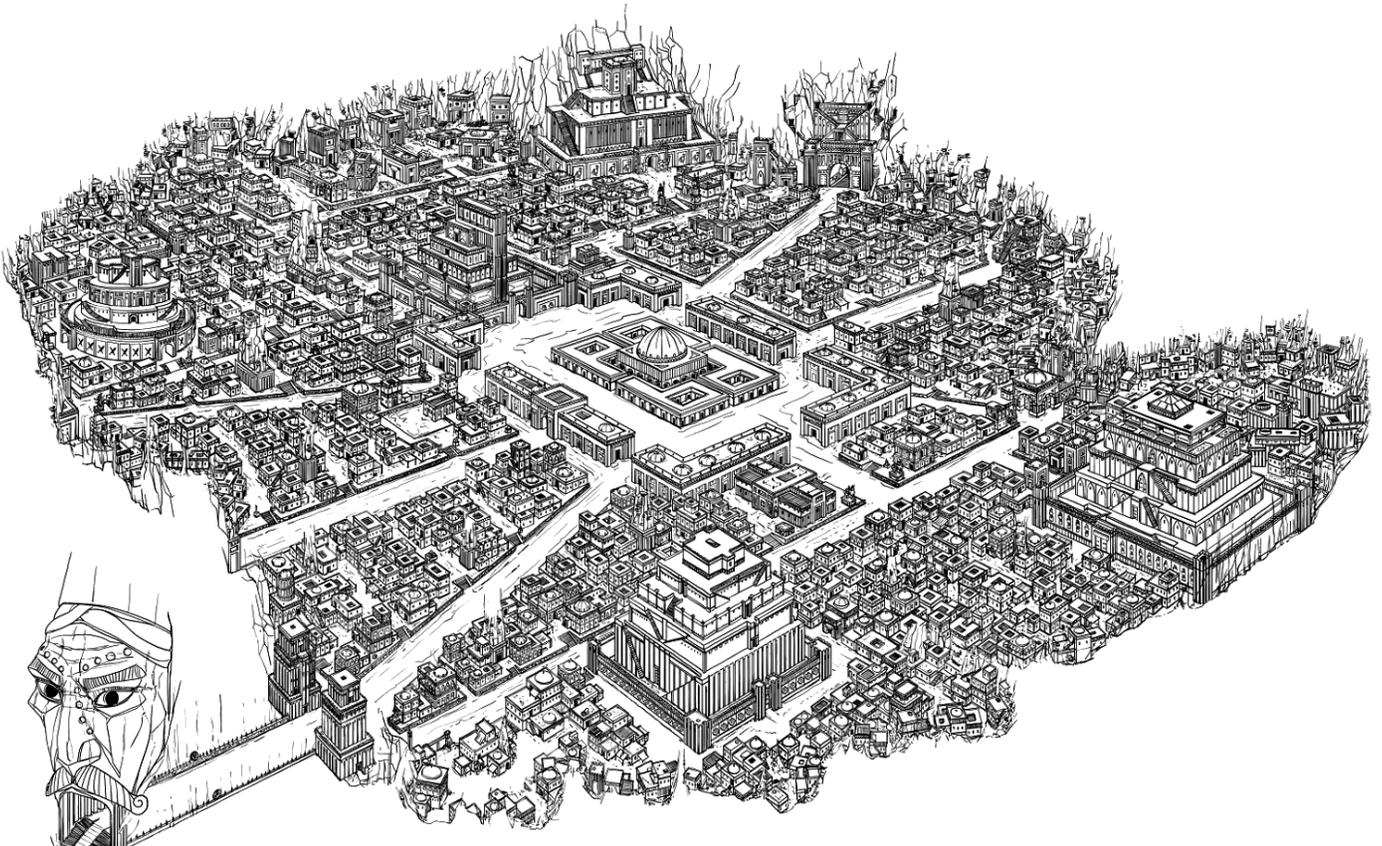
Dol-Karok, the Mountain Fortress, is the subterranean city of the albino Karoks, an old, wealthy and decadent human culture that has persisted since the Second Age.

The city is located within a colossal cavern, connected to many smaller chambers, tunnels and grottos like branching veins. Pyramids and ziggurats of the Great Houses and other landmarks rise above the smaller flat roofed buildings of the lower castes, the streets straight and expertly carved, with perfectly fashioned tiles and breathtaking bas reliefs.

Trade occupies every waking moment in the mountain fortress, with ambassadors from far and wide bargaining for precious metals, gems and other rare goods the mountain folk control.

The last of the dwarves languish here, numbering in their hundreds, toiling endlessly in the mines beneath the whips of their albino masters. Overcome by a combination of racial gold lust and indoctrinated despair, the branded *servitors* (as they are known) bear no resemblance to the grand longbeards of yesteryear.

Yet not all servitors are resigned to their fate. Two years ago, a band of fifty dwarves escaped into the tunnels of the *Lost Roads*. *House Invero* has finally managed to locate their slaves' hidey hole, and wants someone expendable to retrieve their "property" so that the House can make an example of them.



Like all the great houses, Invero has its fingers in many pies, but their speciality is servants and slaves, reflected in their shackle sigil. The newest member of the *Circle of Five* (the ruling council of the city), Invero is in the middle of fending off a hostile takeover by a trio of smaller houses, and securing the lost slaves would go a long way to restoring face since the escape two years earlier.

Mithri Invero (elderly, silver hair with a hunch back and walking cane) is offering 200 gp for each live slave, or 50 gp for their heads. He can provide a guide (*Horgak*, a dark skinned barbarian tracker in the house's employ, Ranger 2) to the dwarves last known location (as of a week ago). If the Mithri fears the party might not take up the work because of "slavery" issues, he will increase the bounty up to double, but no more. If the party still aren't interested, so be it.

The Lost Roads

The Lost Roads are a winding complex of tangled, unpatrolled and primeval tunnels that extend beyond the edges of Dol-Karok's garrisoned borders. Few explorers brave these shafts, as most do not return, but those that do report veins of iron ore ripe for the taking. Unfortunately, they also report plague worms, acidic oozes, choking spore fungi and worse besides. Legend suggests the Lost Roads eventually make their way to the northern side of the ranges, and the *White Drifts* beyond. But if that be so, no human has made the journey in centuries.

The passages and caverns of the Lost Roads are completely dark, breezeless and stifling to those unused to confined spaces. After 3 days of navigating the tunnels, a Will check is required by foreign PCs to avoid gaining a moderate madness: "*The stink of the mountain stifles me; its grit and dust, the cloying air heavy on my lungs. It is hard to breathe, is it not? By the gods, I cannot linger much longer in the smothering black. I must out, I tell you, and soon!*"

The trek to the servitor's hiding place, an ancient temple of a dead civilization, is at least five days trek into the mountain. There is a 40% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10:

1. A *Gelatinous Cube* (LFG p.108) fills a section of this 10 ft wide tunnel, distorting the air with a slight opaqueness (Perc (Detection) check to notice). It has been a long time since the hibernating cube fed. Its body is devoid of bones or other tell tale remains of past victims.
2. A small ore deposit of mithril (70%) or adamantine (30%) can be seen in the ceiling here if the light catches it correctly (Perc (Detection) check). With time and the right tools, the vein may be extracted; enough to fashion a breastplate, shield or similar.



3. 3d10 *Skeletons* (LFG p.124) guard a large cavern, an ancient leyline site "blessed" by a long dead druid.

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4. 2d4 five ft *Fungoids* are living in a winding corridor, hiding amongst a miniature forest of mundane fungi.

Fungoid, AC 10, HD 5, 2d6, 19: special, S15 D5 C14 I1 P10 W8 Ch4, L8, Mv 20 ft and may climb walls, ceiling etc. As an action, may spew sticky strands over a single target within 10 ft, preventing them from moving away (target may spend an action to make an opposed Str check to break free). On a natural 19, the toadstool blasts the target with toxic spores, causing 1 HD loss every 24 hours for 1d3 days. An apothecary with the right healing herbs may be able to neutralise the poison.

5. *Bergrim* (Ranger 3, blonde beard, scarred, with a powerful build) is one of Invero's escaped servitors, fairly deranged (paranoid: he believes a sorcerer is searching for him to cut out his heart) and had a falling out with his kin. *Bergrim* makes his own way in the tunnels, sneaking about and subsisting on monstrous worms and other "underdark delicacies". Craziness aside, *Bergrim* is a careful and resourceful subterranean ranger. He is extremely lonely, and might prove a useful guide for a time.

6. 1d6 *Plague Worms* (see Area 15) are burrowing through the tunnels nearby, tracking the party with termorsense.

7. The skeleton of a long dead giant scorpion is here, brittle with age. Its skull is caved in by means of blunt trauma. Two human skeletons are also present, armour broken and torn. One lies slumped against the wall, a hammer by its side (still in excellent condition, random permanent magical item, LFG p.152).

8. A truly enormous 12 ft *Giant Centipede* (LFG p.102 but 7 HD, Luck 9, 2d6+1 damage, poison causes 1d3 Dex loss, *Off Turn Attacks*), is curled up into a ball in

a corner, covered in dust. It has been hibernating for some months.

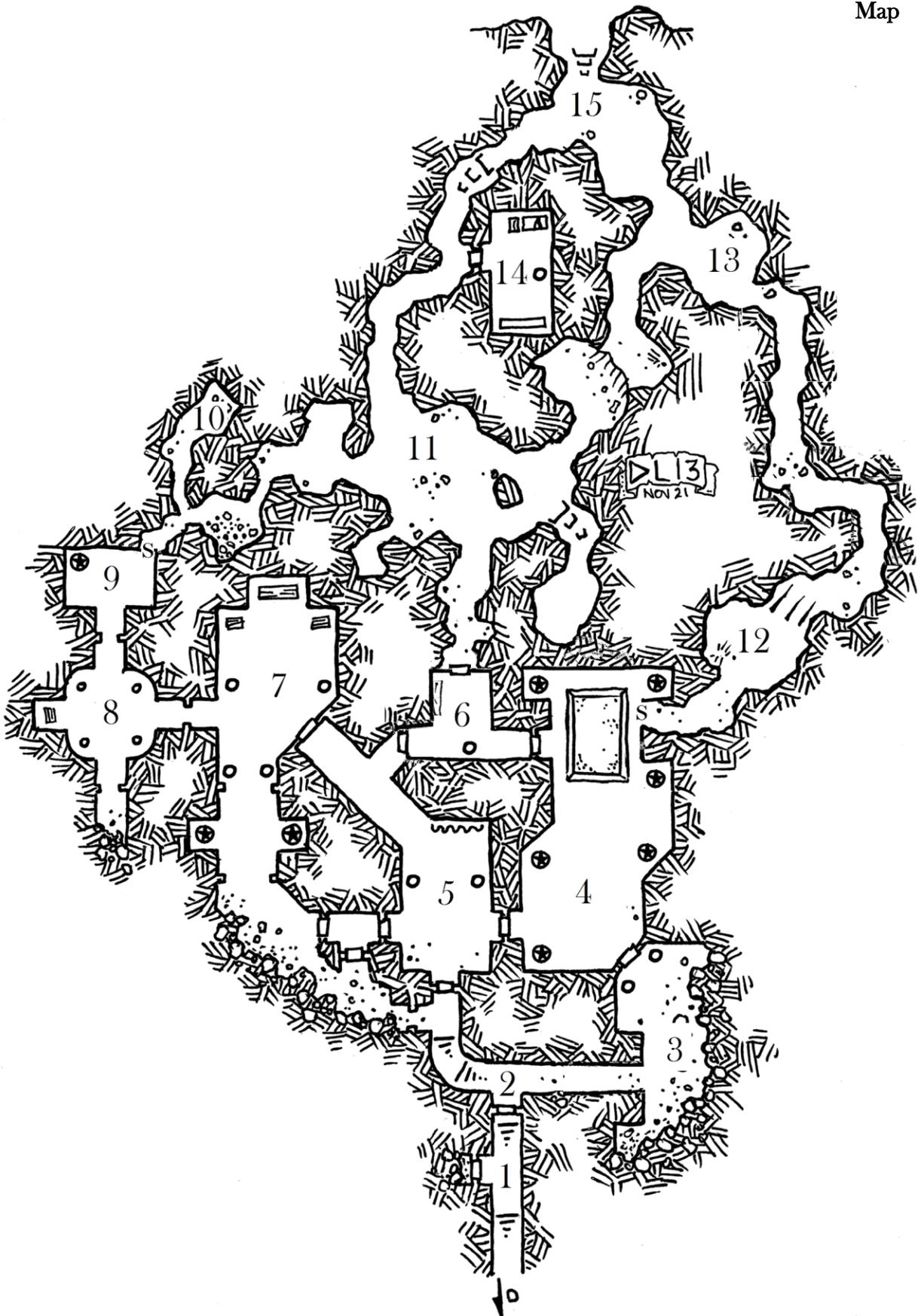


9. The ceiling or floor of this tunnel is dangerously fragile, care of a *Bulette's* recent burrowing. A Group *Luck* (Dex) save is required to avoid a partial roof collapse or 20 ft pitfall, causing 2d6 damage.

10. A *Grey Ooze* (LFG p.112) begins tracking the party from behind, attempting to lure a PC away with its telepathic abilities.

Temple of Nogerzu

The Nogerzu were a race of goatmen, proficient in stonework and bronze metallurgy. Their main civilization thrived in the high mountains, but explorers also scouted new southern lands. The temple served as a stop over while journeying the deep roads, and as a marker of the goatmen's southernmost boundary.



Wiped out early in the Second Age, the Nogerzu temple still remains, hidden a few days journey beyond the borders of Dol-Karok.



There are two entrances to the temple. One to the south (formal entry, Area 1) and one to the north (back entry, Area 15). The party's guide, Horgak is aware of the front entrance, and suspects there may be a back entrance, but is uncertain (he ventured nearby Area 15, tracking Bergrim (random encounter 5 above), but fled from the *Plague Worms*). Horgak can lead the party through some winding tunnels that connect to Area 15 however if they wish (takes two extra hours of travel).

If the party asks Horgak how he knows the dwarves are within, he explains he followed two different servitors to the front entrance. He did not venture into the entry way itself however, as he could hear multiple voices coming from within (which he surmised were guards, after a few attempts). By then he felt he had accomplished his mission, and reported back to the Mithri.

Generally speaking, the interior of the temple is crudely worked stone, with large flagstones set into the floor. Ink based murals are faded but still readable, depicting scenes of goatmen dancing, hunting or mating. Great mountains and bonfires feature prominently. Pictures of men are rare, but when they appear relate to scenes of war and feasting. Doors are unlocked, ancient wood, brittle and easily broken (automatic for Str 12+, otherwise advantage).

The dwarves keep the temple lit with cultivated *gloomspore*, which gives off an eerie green luminescence. Occasionally lanterns and torches are also used, periodically restocked via sympathetic contacts within Dol-Karok.

Temple Encounters

Whilst exploring the unnumbered sections of the temple complex, there is a 30% chance of an encounter every 15 mins. Roll 1d6 or select from the following:

1. 1d3 *Dwarves* turn the corner, dragging ore to or from Area 5 in large sacks. At the sight of the PCs, they drop the sacks and reach for their hammers/picks.
2. An infant *Bulette*, befriended and adopted by the dwarves, comes burrowing out of the wall, uncertain what to make of the PCs (as *Bulette* but 4 HD, 2d6 damage, S19).
3. *Shuzar*, the partner of *Gimric*, is on patrol through the halls with 1d3 other dwarves (as *Dwarf* but 2 HD and S16). He and his crew will attempt to capture the PCs and take them to Gimric.
4. This area is very poorly lit, most of the *gloomspore* has been recently consumed by a *Green Slime* (LFG p.112) that spawned from cracks in the ceiling.

5. A gentle tremor rocks the tunnel, releasing a cloud of noxious gas. The PCs must make a *Luck* (Con) check or lose 1 Con. The gas dissipates in 1d4 rounds.
6. *Gimric* (Area 4) is travelling the corridors, certain that he has picked up the scent of some curious precious metals (per Dwarf ability LFG p.30). The scent leads him to the PCs.

LFG p.125 but with 2 Claw (1d6+2) attacks as well as the usual Bite).

6. A *Speckled Ooze* is hiding behind some rubble, waiting to ambush a meal.

Speckled Ooze, AC 13, HD 7, Pseudopod 4d4 + special, 19: the ooze puffs out a toxic cloud, 15 ft radius, causing 1d6 Int or Will loss (50/50 chance, *Luck* (Con) save resists), S18 D14 C17 I2 P14 W15 Ch1, L9, Mv 5 ft burrow or 30 ft (inc walls, ceiling, etc). On a hit, victims suffer 1d8 damage due to painful flesh melting for the next 1d4 rounds (alcohol negates).

Cavern Encounters

Whilst exploring the unnumbered sections of the caverns, there is a 50% chance of an encounter every 30 mins. Roll 1d6 or select from the following:

- 1d3 *Plague Worms* from Area 15 are exploring here, curious about the ground vibrations the party are causing.
- 1d10 *Stirges* have grown restless and are out hunting without the rest of the swarm in Area 12.
- A single *Tentacle Spawn* (LFG p.126) has ventured up from the deep tunnels and is exploring this near surface region (it bypassed the plague worms using its mental blast).
- A growing tremor culminates in a sudden explosion of rock, heralding the arrival of a colossal *Purple Worm!* The behemoth thrashes its way across the corridor, massive jaws snapping, before burrowing through the opposite wall and beyond. 1d3 PCs must make a *Luck* (Dex) save or be swallowed by the monster as it passes (LFG p.121). The beast's tunnel collapses behind it as it departs.
- A *Giant Spidercrab* is exploring this area, scuttling across the ceiling, hiding in large, shadowed recesses (as *Giant Spider*

Area 1 - Front Entrance

A 10 ft wide, 50 ft long arched tunnel with iconography of dancing goatmen marks the front entryway to the temple. The doorway to the west cannot be opened, the chamber beyond collapsed centuries earlier. Two dwarves are on sentry duty here at all times (30% chance both asleep, in a drunken stupor or amorous tryst).

Dwarf, AC 15 (heavy chain), HD 1, Axe 1d8+1 (two handed), 19: as weapon, S11 D9 C13 I10 P10 W10 Ch10, L4, Mv 30 ft. Advantage on checks vs magic or poison. The sentries each carry warhorns and a single fire pot.

If the sentries detect the party, they do not attempt to fight, but rather rush to Area 5 for reinforcements. If trapped they will blow her warhorns.

Area 2 - Trap

The dwarves have trapped this corridor junction with an extremely large and heavy dropstone. A pressured plate in the floor sets it off. All the dwarves know about the trap and fastidiously avoid it. Examining the floor might reveal hairline cracks outlining the plate (Perc (Detection) check), otherwise moving through here has a 50% chance of setting off the trap (*Luck* (Dex) save or reduced to zero hp).

Area 3 – Travellers’ Quarters

This 20 ft by 60 ft hall has partially collapsed, with tonnes of rubble filling the eastern side, which originally housed guest quarters for goatmen explorers (or other allied humanoids). The western wall depicts various war scenes with the goatmen triumphant, burning their enemies in great, smoking conflagrations.

Area 4 – Living Quarters

This 100 ft by 40 ft hall is decorated with crudely carved goatmen statues in various poses; holding weapons aloft, frolicking, gazing skywards and so on. At the northern end is a 30 ft by 20 ft pit, 4 ft deep, that the Nogerzu once used as a mating pit. The dwarves are aware of the secret door in the north eastern corner (triggered by pressing a section of the wall inwards), but also know about the stirges and will only use it if desperate.

Presently 4d4+3 dwarves live here, with sleeping bags, weapons and heavily patched clothes scattered about. These are the bulk of the surviving servitors, branded with House Invero shackle icons on their forearms.

The dwarves are led by *Gimric* (50’s, thick beard with a silver clasp, steely eyed stare), a traditionally stoic, determined and utterly humourless steward of his people. Gimric and the dwarves take their freedom very seriously, and returning to servitude is almost unthinkable.

However, if battle is joined, and the outcome seems adverse, Gimric and 1d4 others will seek a truce and offer to return with the PCs if they let the remainder go (an almost certain death sentence, but a price Gimric and his lieutenants are willing to pay if the others go free).

Gimric, Boss Monster, AC 15 (heavy chain), HD 5 (45 hp), Great axe 1d12+2, 19: as weapon, S17 D13 C17 I13 P10 W15 Ch14, L8, Mv 30 ft. Gimric is a *Boss Monster* with the usual benefits (LFG p.95). Advantage on checks vs magic or poison.



If defeated, 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136) may be scavenged from this chamber. In addition, Gimric’s axed is forged of *cold iron*.

Area 5 – Storage Hall

This 50 ft by 30 ft waiting hall has a 15 ft ceiling and two large pillars decorated with the painted skulls of the goatmen’s enemies. A bronze wall hanging on the northern side depicts a raging bonfire with smoke like, horned spirits rising upwards (400 gp, but bulky).

The dwarves currently use this hall as storage and a secondary living space, cluttering it up with various small piles of metal ore (mostly iron, mined from the tunnels, 1d6 x 10 gp worth), a collection of recently forged tools (picks, axe heads, armour pieces) and some circular rock stools (very heavy) that must be tilted onto one edge to move (by rolling). At any one time there

are 2d4 dwarves in here, tidying piles or gossiping.

Area 6 – Forge and work room

This 20 ft by 30 ft chamber is being used by the dwarves as a workroom, and includes a crude forge, a deep well, several craft tools and a large stone bench with an iron top. Flues and vents from the forge protrude through the northern wall into Area 11. 1d4+1 dwarves are here at any one time, forging or crafting tools or weapons. The door to Area 11 has been reinforced with iron banding (Str check at disadvantage to break down, requires 3 successful attempts). 1d4 random weapons may be scavenged.

Area 7 – Worship Chamber

This 100 ft by 40 ft room remains the original worship hall, with five wall pillars decorated with bronze glyphs. At the northern end is a massive, 18 ft stone idol in the likeness of a monstrous goatman skull. Steps carved into the floor lead to a concealed, red stained altar at the base. A disturbing grey green smoke wafts upwards from the idol, quickly dispersing into the air.



The worship chamber is protected by unholy blessings that have endured for thousands of years. The rising smoke is obviously eldritch in nature (it appears seemingly from nowhere, and vanishes after a few brief moments). The dwarves consider this room cursed (rightly so) and do not enter here. A thick layer of dust has settled over everything.

Non-goatmen moving into this chamber feel a definite chill run through their body. Progressing beyond the last two pillars requires a Will check to resist dropping prostrate before the idol, unable to approach further. Entering the altar's inner sanctum unleashes the curse; the trespasser is overwhelmed by urges to kill all non-goatmen (lasts 1 hour, *Luck* (Will) save resists). There is no treasure in this room (see Area 8).

Area 8 - Tribute Vault

This square 30 ft chamber has four pillars carved in the likeness of blazing bonfires in the corners. In the centre of the room is an 8 ft bronze statue of a monstrous goat with six horns standing on its hind legs. The statue is a *Goat Golem* that protects the treasure vault in the western alcove. Non-goatmen entering the chamber are attacked.

Goat Golem, AC 15, HD 8+3, Horns 2d6+1, 19: target is thrown 20 ft and stunned (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D14 C19 I- P12 W- Ch-, L9, Mv 40 ft. The goat golem has 60% *Magic Resistance*, except vs *Speak with Animals* which charms it for 1d10 minutes. The goat golem has *Off Turn Attacks* and *Major Exploit Protection* (LFG p.95)

In the stone vault (unlocked) is 1 x 6 HD Lair Treasure (LFG p.140).

Area 9 – Priest's Vestibule

This 30 ft by 20 ft chamber has a statue of a goatman in a skull motif tabard, with a cowl pulled up over her head, a stern and searching gaze on her bovine face. A number of stone chests hold the rotting remains of priestly

vestments, and yellowed tomes that crumble to dust if opened. One book however does not crumble; a weighty 2 ft tome encased in bronze flecked with bone.



An Int (Arcane) check recognises it as the *Bronze Fusicarnum*; a artefact of the First Age, said to house the soul of a ferocious demigod. A PC must attune to the book to read its spidery scrawl. Doing so allows the user to transform into the *Brutox* once per month, an 8 ft naked behemoth of hunchbacked rage, as noted below. Each round the user may end the transformation by making a Will check, otherwise the duration is up to 1 minute. Invoking the tome's power requires an automatic roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table.

The Brutox, AC 13, HD same hp as PC, 2 Fists 2d6+1, 19: special, stats as PC but S19 I5 Ch4, Mv 40 ft. On its turn, the *Brutox* must attempt to attack the closest enemy in melee, or if there are no enemies left to fight, the closest ally. The *Brutox* causes critical hits on a natural 19+ attack roll.

Numerous metal bracelets, head bands and similar adornments may also be scavenged, worth 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136).

Area 10 - Elemental Nook

This 10 ft by 15 ft cave conceals a *Small Earth Elemental*, which is slowly gathering strength from the nearby stone. It is in a hibernation like state, but will awaken if it detects any humans within 60 ft (Perc check). The elemental has naturally formed, and is not inherently hostile, but will sense any precious metals the party have and wish to absorb them.

Small Earth Elemental, AC 19, HD 5, Fist 2d6, 19: the target is knocked prone and momentarily stunned, losing its next action (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D10 C22 I3 P10 W16 Ch3, L16, Mv 40 ft inc burrowing. Earth elementals may pass through earth like water or burrow and leave a tunnel. Immune to mundane weapons, except those of cold iron, which affect it normally.

Area 11 - Fungi Field

This 80 ft by 50 ft cavern has high 30 ft ceilings, the walls and floor littered with mushrooms, some as large as a man. The dwarves harvest the fungi and eat it as a major part of their diet. Some of the mushrooms are poisonous if not prepared in the proper manner, causing nausea (Con check or -3 penalty on physical activities for 24 hours). The highly rare *Striped Moonshroom* is growing here, enough to make 1d6 doses of poison by a skilled apothecary (contact or ingestion, *Luck* (Con) save or blind for 1d4 hours).

Area 12 - Stirge Nest

A swarm of 3d10 Stirges nest in the ceiling here, fluttering and buzzing to each other. The swarm flies through the caverns seeking out worms, dol-Karok patrols or other denizens to feed upon. They are always hungry.

Stirge, AC 12, HD 1d4 hp, Sting 1d3 + blood drain, 19: blood disease, 1d4 Str loss over 1d6 hours (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S4 D16 C6 I2 P10 W5 Ch4, L3, Mv 60 ft flying.

Area 13 - Detritus pile

A large and mouldering pile of plague worm detritus is lumped here, incorporating the last remnants of many a Dol-Karok patrol or other lost roads venturer. Sifting through the pile reveals 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables and 1 x Trinket & Curios (LFG p.136, 147, 141). There is a 50% chance of 1d2 *Plague Worms* making a deposit here at any time.

Area 14 - Isolated Retreat

This 20 ft by 40 ft room was excavated as a retreat for the Nogerzu holy men, a place to meditate and conduct rituals away from the main temple. The door to this room is well preserved and subject to a *Wizard Lock* spell (bars entry to non-goatmen, 3rd level).

The interior is greatly decayed, a wooden cot and bookshelf broken and collapsed, with a few metal trinkets in the debris (1 x Trinkets & Curios, LFG p.141). In a crumbling chest is a runestone carved of bone (as *Potion*, LFG p.151).

Area 15 - Plague Worm Den

This roughly 40 ft cavern is the den for a brood of 2d6 *Plague Worms*, who retire here to sleep for days before venturing into the wider caverns for food. When the dwarves first arrived, they fought a great battle with the worms, with many dying on each side. Since then, the worms have stayed in the northern tunnels, seeking easier prey.

Plague Worm, AC 17, HD 3, 2d4+1, 19: special, S17 D10 C13 I3 P10 W10 Ch5, L6, Mv 30 ft or 5 ft burrowing. Plague worms are slick, 8 ft chitinous worms that burrow through rock and soil. On a natural 19, the worm smears contaminated mucus on the target, infecting it with *Worm Fungus* (skin hardens and cracks painfully, causing one random limb to become unusable for 1d4 weeks (per *Injuries & Setbacks* table, entry 2 or 3). An apothecary with the right healing herbs might reduce this time by half.



Aftermath

If the party retrieve at least some of the servitors (alive or dead), Mithri Invero is content and pays the agreed fee. If most are returned alive, he is very happy, paying a bonus (GM discretion) and recommending the party for future endeavours to important Mithri of other houses, gilding the party's reputation.

If the party fail to return any servitors (alive or dead), or worse, ally with them to ensure their escape elsewhere, Invero either blacklists them (fail to return any) or sends assassins after them (if they positively assisted the dwarves).

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