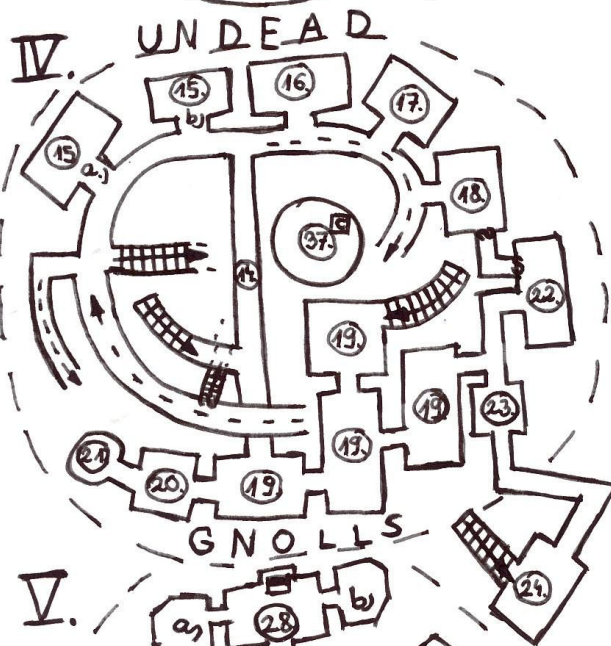
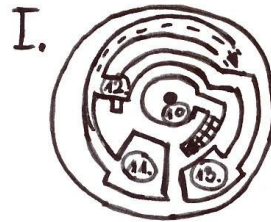
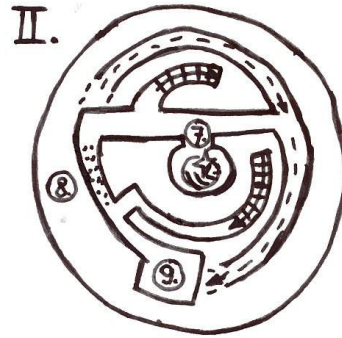
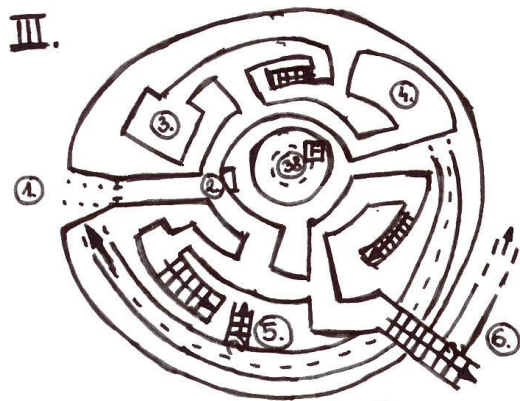


Strabonus

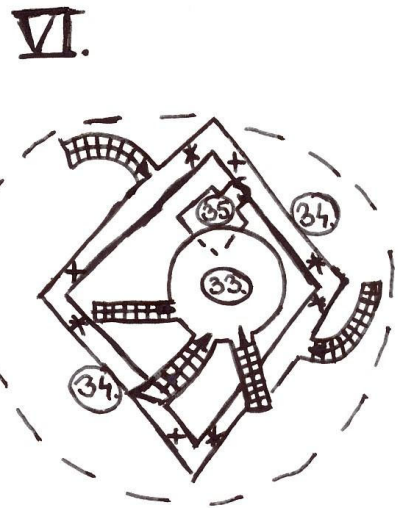
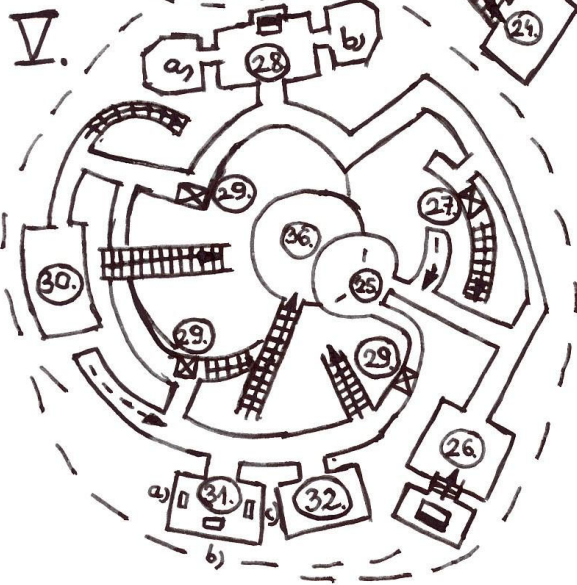
by: Gabor Lux



Castles & Crusades adventure module for six characters of 6th to 9th level
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ΣΤΡΑΒΟΝΥΣ
 MMVI. BY ΓΑΒΟΡ
 ΛΥΚΣ



Strabonus
(ΣΤΡΑΒΟΝΥΣ)
by: Gabor Lux

Illustrations and cartography: Gabor Lux

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Special thanks to: the geographer Strabon, founder of regional geography, for tolerating this abuse of his name.

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Introduction

The warlord Strabonus, in his time known as the Lord of the Middle Seas, was a mighty conqueror in the years after the fall of the dragon kings, noteworthy for his cruelty and the decimation of small city states, whose destruction was so thorough that even their names and locations are lost to history. His own conquests were short lived, and soon after the news of his demise came, a slave uprising swept away what remained of them. It is written that the hatred of these slaves was so all-consuming that they tore down the very rocks of his city, and, paying no heed to pillage and loot, destroyed every living being they found.

The resting place of Strabonus was never located, although it was said to have been very rich and to have also contained the bones of the warlord's old companions, who, it is written, were the only people he would trust. The whole place was constructed in utmost secrecy far from civilisation by slaves and architects who were killed after everything had been finished. This burial mound was only discovered through an accident much later. The original treasure hunters who found it met their end inside the labyrinth Strabonus commissioned, and the groups who followed them were either unsuccessful or not thorough enough to loot it. Attracted to such environments, a minotaur and his 80 gnoll followers settled the upper levels, driving out much of the undead they found. With their raids on surrounding settlements growing bolder and bolder, rumours of the once unknown vault have spread to the cities on the coast, where there are always those whose pursuit of heroics is aroused by the possibility for material gain.



Location and preliminary notes

This small dungeon was originally placed in Judges Guild's *Wilderlands of High Fantasy* setting, at hex 4006 of Map 5, City State, but almost any other location along the Pazidan Peninsula's eastern coast is appropriate. Play may start with rumours of the dungeon and its wealth, and proceed with a trek to the mound of Strabonus and an encounter with the minotaur and the gnolls. One hex away from the dungeon, there is a 1:6 chance of a random encounter, while in the densely forested hex surrounding it, this increases to 1:3. Roll on the table to determine what is encountered (1d6):

1-4: 1d2*10 gnolls

5: minotaur

6: minotaur and 20 gnolls (raiding party)

Once the PCs reach the mound, the gnolls will sound the alarm and meet the intruders on the entry level, using the layout of the dungeon to surround and destroy them from both sides. The available forces move in groups of ten and may feign retreats for strategic advantage. They use volleys of javelins, the flaming oil, oil kegs and the vial of choking gas they possess. Only the first is available if an encounter occurs outside the dungeon. If there is heavy fighting, the minotaur investigates the commotion and joins the fray. If the defenders are reduced to ½ strength and the invaders seem to be in good strength, the females and young are evacuated through the secret escape route (6.) and the rest retreat, abandoning this hideout for a less conspicuous one.

Minotaur (1): HD 6+3; hp 27; Spd 30'; AC 14; Atk +6 huge flail 2d6+2; SA charge for 3d6 points; AL CE; SV P.

Gnolls (80): HD 2; Spd 20'; AC 15; Atk +2 halberd 1d10 or +2 javelin 1d6; AL CE; SV P.

Squad #1: hp 12, 2, 9, 4, 6; 10, 4, 13, 12, 11.

Squad #2: hp 3, 12, 9, 12, 5; 13, 7, 8, 7, 9; 3 HD leader (17 hp, two-handed sword for 2d6).

Squad #3: hp 9, 4, 13, 15, 16; 12, 7, 7, 12, 7.

Squad #4: hp 6, 6, 16, 14, 7; 7, 5, 9, 9, 11; 3 HD leader (17 hp, battleaxe for 1d8).

Squad #5: hp 8, 12, 8, 10, 14; 9, 5, 8, 8, 7.

Squad #6: hp 10, 12, 12, 14, 10; 11, 7, 14, 6, 6.

Squad #7: hp 6, 11, 8, 9, 14; 10, 13, 6, 3, 11.

Squad #8: hp 6, 13, 15, 15, 9; 12, 9, 10, 6, 12.

War cache (to be distributed in case of siege):

Flaming Oil (7): 2d4 points on a direct hit, Dexterity save to put out.

Oil Keg (4): 4d6 points of damage, explodes as *fireball*.

Choking Mist (1): this vial contains a mold-grey mist that requires two saving throws over two consecutive rounds. Damage is 3d6 for every failed save. 10' radius.

Designer's note: this battle, although hard, is possible for a 5th to 6th level party of six characters. Succeeding in one go, or succeeding without casualties is another matter.



Key to the dungeon

The mound of Strabonus is a round pile of earth surrounded by dense forest and covered by grass. The entrance is immediately visible, since numerous paths converge there at a dark opening. The only other entry is a secret passage created by the gnolls (6.). It is not in use and thus impossible to find without a thorough search of the area.

Passages in the labyrinth are wide enough for two to fight abreast. Walls are made of stone blocks piled atop each other without mortar. On higher levels, they are covered in colourful but crumbling stucco with geometric patterns.

Note: Undead are considered to be one category higher as far as turning is concerned. No teleportation is possible within the labyrinth.

Level III.

1. Entry

This gentle slope leads into a half-sunk opening. It is flanked by six spears holding human skulls. Some of these have metal helmets. The capstone above the opening has a relief depicting a man struggling with a bull and the following inscription: „*I am Strabonus, hated enemy of Atlantis and the scourge of its proud kings. Look upon my last great work and marvel at its ingenuity. I say onto you, neither the gods above, nor the gods below can help you unravel it.*”

Originally, the entrance was sealed by a stone slab, but it lies broken by the entrance now.

2. Alcove

A greenish bronze bust of a bearded, balding human sits in an alcove. Its features are somewhat goat-like – the eyes are slanted and cynical, the mouth smiling and the beard unkempt and wild. The gaze of this metal warden is rather unpleasant, almost indulgently evil.

3. Fountain room

This is a pleasantly cool room with water flowing into a large rectangular basin from the mouths of three bronze figures depicting fish. Murals on the wall depict people picking grapes, making wine and drinking from thin vessels. The water of the basin spills out and drains through gaps in the floor. There is a copper decanter by the basin. If someone drinks directly from the water without using the decanter, a **drench** – an enchanted creature composed

of animated water – emerges to attack. If the decanter is used, there is a 10% chance the character doing so retrieves the monster in stead of normal water.

Drench: HD 3+3; hp 16; Spd 30'; AC 16; Atk +3 special; SA drown, immunities and vulnerabilities; AL CE; SV P.

Drown: on a successful attack, the drench paralyzes and draws its opponent into the water. The victim immediately begins to drown.

Immunities and vulnerabilities: the creature is invulnerable to edged and piercing weapons, and even if it is slain, it reforms at full strength in two rounds. Fire does normal damage, and *purify food and drink* or *bless water* dispels it instantly.

4. Storage

Part broken, part intact clay amphorae are piled atop each other. Their contents are moldy grain, which has attracted **31 giant rats**.

Giant Rats (31): HD ½; Spd 20; AC 13; Atk +0 bite 1d4; SV P.

Squad #1: hp 3, 2, 2, 2, 4; 1, 1, 1, 2, 2

Squad #2: hp 1, 3, 2, 1, 2; 1, 1, 3, 2, 3

Squad#3: hp 2, 1, 3, 2, 1; 1, 8, 1, 2, 2, 1.

5. Secret Door

This secret door opens by pressing a stone in the ceiling, but operating the mechanism also triggers a boulder trap. The huge boulder rolls down the circular slope. Anyone in the way who fails a Dex save (TN +6 unless the character ducks into the opening) suffers 10d6 points of damage.

6. Escape Route

A crude tunnel beyond the secret door serves as an escape route if the fighting goes wrong for the gnolls. The passage exits into the forest 100' from the labyrinth.



Level II.

This level is more intact than the one above, and its walls are of stucco instead of bare stone.

7. Observation room

This domed room is illuminated by a beam of sunlight coming from glass-filled openings in the ceiling, relayed by cunning mirror-mechanisms from outside. A larger and indestructible glass plug in the floor allows one to see the burial chamber of Strabonus just below. The body of Strabonus rests on a bier in an antique bronze plate mail and like death mask displaying his features, surrounded by mounds of pale electrum coins, as well as a number of sizable golden vessels likewise overflowing with treasure. He clutches a long brass-tipped spear still, and also has a small shield on his left. His chamber is deserted, dusty and has obviously lain undisturbed for ages.

8. Spear trap

A small, formless heap rests on the passage floor, the desiccated remains of a gnoll who had fallen prey to a spear trap triggered by stepping stones. Wicked brass spears emerging from cunningly hid gaps in the wall skewer for 6d8 points unless a TN +6 Dex save is made. The trap is repeated once more, and the walls appear safe after this, but only because the third array comes from above.

9. The sword of Hereklitae

A caption above the doorway to this chamber reads: “*THE SWORD OF HEREKLITAE*”. There are three trapezoidal stone slabs here, and each has a sword thrust into a slot on the top. The grip of the first sword is wrapped in blue cloth, the second in black silk, the third in red leather. A fresco on the wall depicts three allegoric figures; women with veiled eyes. The first is clad in blue, holds a bunch of grapes and an inscription identifies her as “*Plenty*”. The second wears black, holds a

scroll and is named “*Contemplation*”. The third woman holds a sword and her name is “*War*”. Above these three is yet another caption with these words: “*Take that which you genuinely desire.*” If the characters take any of the swords except the red one (“*War*”), all three animate and attack.

Swords (3): HD 7; hp 19, 33, 39*; Init +3; Spd 40; AC 20; Atk +7 strike 1d8+3; AL N; SV P, M.

The sword marked with an asterisk is the sword of Hereklitae, a +1 *longsword*. In battle, it gains the appropriate bonuses to hit and damage. If the swords are “defeated”, they cease animation and fall on the floor.



Level I.

10. Dusty dome

This chamber is just above the observation room (7.), and its purpose is to collect beams of light from small openings in the wall and channel them towards glass-filled openings in the floor. Dust is everywhere and there is nothing else save a few dead bats.

11. Shrine

This is a small altar-room dedicated to Baphomet, demon lord of minotaurs. The altar is a stone pillar with a brass bull's head on the top. The eyes of the effigy are mother of pearl with obsidian inlays, altogether worth 5 gp apiece. Around the pillar are rotting hunks of meat, bones and a gnoll's severed head with copper earrings.

12. Hidden treasure

The wall has been disturbed at this location. The stucco is missing and there is a thing gap barely enough for a small man to squeeze through. The crawlspace

beyond is dusty and narrow. There are broken stones on the floor, mason's tools, dust, and a curled-up skeleton who still clutches a dagger in his right and a leather bag of 280 gold in his left. This man was Solataz, a member of the original looters and a thief from the City State. He has been dead for some 80 years, and retreated here after his companions were killed by the undead and he himself was mortally wounded.

13. Minotaur den

The stench of rotting meat and unclean filth is overpowering in the minotaur's lair. The beast has a straw pallet, which is surrounded by scattered bones and piles of hay. Hidden in a pile is a large silver drinking vessel with bone inlays. Its sides have been decorated with small bull's heads with pearl eyes (some missing), and the whole is worth 480 gp. The lid of the cup is a round helmet scavenged by the minotaur.



Level IV.

Level IV. is divided into two regions. The chambers to the south belong to the gnolls, who have succeeded in driving out the former undead inhabitants and erected a barrier in the middle of passage 14. The undead hold the northern rooms and level V. (they don't venture below that unless in pursuit of intruders). They are mummified bodies wrapped in gauze, walking in a tiptoeing manner and fighting with clawed, deformed paws. They smell of dust and ancient spices.

Mummified corpses (35): HD 3+3; Spd 20; AC 15; Atk +3 claws 1d8; SQ fire inflicts +2 hp/damage dice, holy water inflicts 2d6 hp; AL CE; SV P, M.

Squad #1: hp 17, 14, 13, 15, 16; 9, 7, 21, 17, 20.

Squad #2: hp 11, 23, 17, 18, 16; 18, 21, 15, 12, 14.

Squad #3: hp 15, 19, 16, 20, 15; 18, 22, 15, 18, 15.

Squad #4: hp 13, 22, 12, 23, 18.

Note: these undead are turned as 4 HD. They may be turned by clerics but not destroyed or commanded. They desire blood above all, so a heavily wounded character will be targeted by an inordinate amount of attackers. In fact, some will pause to grab a recently slain foe and carry it away for devouring.

14. Barrier

Like the rest of the level, this passage is dry and dusty. A barrier constructed of large stones, pieces of wood and other material has been erected in the middle. Normally, a gnoll sentry checks for undead every ten minutes. To the north of the barrier are two dead gnolls. Anyone checking them will likely be attacked by the undead (80%).

15. Burial chambers

These two chambers are the resting places of the mummified corpses. Each is filled with 30 wormeaten sarcophagi made of wood and decorated with hammered copper sheets. Most of the undead (10-10 to a room) slumber here, but emerge at once if there is rummaging or loud talk. The sarcophagi are empty of treasure, but a character investigating them contracts crypt fever (TN +0 Constitution save, 2 Constitution lost per day, incubation period 1d6 days).

15/a) The caskets in this room surround a truncated pyramid. Its flat top has a carving – an eye from which straight sword-blades radiate. The pyramid is magical but has no apparent power.

15/b) This room is much less orderly than the other, and most of the sarcophagi are in a worse shape too. A constant sound of murmuring, as if someone was praying, is

audible. The sounds come from a row of magic mouths placed along the top of the wall. If the sounds are somehow muted, there will be a feeling of a threatening presence, and each PC will receive a psionic strike (TN +4 Intelligence save negates) for 5d6 points of damage. A character who dies due to this will have his head explode in a bloody mess.

16. The daggers of Parathor

A caption above the doorway reads: „*THE DAGGERS OF PARATHOR*”. The chamber seems deserted, but just opposite the entrance, a pile of rags slumps against the wall, surrounded by scattered coins. This is the mouldering body of a thief who fell victim to a trap. Careful examination reveals sticks protruding from the body. Next to the thief is a skeleton in leather armour, who is reaching into an open chest.

The first one through the door will be in for a nasty surprise as the 20 daggers currently in the thief’s body are hurled at him. Roll to hit 20 times.

Daggers (20): HD 1; Atk +3 strike 1d4+2.

Once they have attacked once, the daggers are once more lifeless for the duration of this expedition. One of them is a particularly nice and well-balanced weapon, its hilt wrapped in gold wire. It is a +1 *dagger* and vampiric – on a 20, the inflicted damage is transferred to the user. This weapon is the dagger of Parathor. The thief’s wealth is 29 gp and a few thieves’ tools. The chest is empty.

17. The arrows of Ag

The caption above the doorway reads: „*THE ARROWS OF AG*”. A stone statue of a naked archer is the only thing in this room. He holds a stone composite bow in one hand and grasps five stone arrows in the other. There is a plaque on the statue’s stand with the following words: „*Here is Ag, who was the greatest archer before death dulled his eyes.*” If *cure blindness* or

a similar spell is cast on the statue, it relaxes its grip and five iron arrows with glowing, orange crystal tips tumble to the floor. The arrows are +2 and cause +2d6 fire damage on a successful hit.

18. The breath of Afamagon

The caption above the entry to this empty chamber reads: „*THE BREATH OF AFAMAGON*”. If the PCs wait and listen, they can hear soft murmurs, like gentle wind. The breath Afamagon is a concentrated *gust of wind* hitting those who enter (unless they are undead) and repeating every minute. It may be inhaled by a character who so desires, and may be exhaled later for the same effect. However, if it isn’t used in three hours, the force of the breath causes interior concussion for 3d6 points of damage.

19. Gnoll rooms

This is the place where the gnolls live. In addition to any males who may be here, there are 20 females and 15 adorable, spotted young. The females are ferocious in the defence of their non-combatant young, but they prefer to flee at once through the secret escape and let the males defend them. There is no treasure.

Gnoll Females (20): HD 2; Spd 30; AC 13; Atk +2 knife 1d4; AL CE; SV P.

Squad #1: hp 2, 7, 6, 2, 3; 3, 9, 9, 4, 3.

Squad #2: hp 9, 7, 9, 5, 5; 3, 7, 8, 7, 9.

20. Larder

Sacks, barrels, hanging smoked meat, sausages and other goods stolen in raids are stored in this room. A fading fresco on the wall depicts a battle scene.

21. Room of the guardian

A caption above the doorway reads: „*ROOM OF THE GUARDIAN*”. The round chamber is now used as the chief’s room, but there are remains which suggest it might have been a living room even before this: an elegant wooden couch (or bier, probably?) and dusty cushions lie

here, accompanied by moth-eaten tapestries on the wall. Next to the rest, there is a round steel shield (*shield* +1, brass, with entangled snakes on the rim), a silvered brass bowl (90 gp) full of small bones, a shoddy chain shirt, and a locked iron chest (TN +6). The key to the chest can be found in one of the cushions. It contains 650 gp and six beeswax-coloured vials, all labelled: #1 *potion of dragon control* (the imbiber will instantly be controlled by the next dragon if he drinks this), #2 *super-heroism*, #3 *diminution*, #4 *flying*, #5 *climbing*, #6 *healing*. Note that the +1 *shield* is in fact the shield of Haiar (see 30.).

22. Shunned room

The gnolls are deathly afraid of this place, since – unknown to them – there is a secret door which the undead occasionally use to kidnap one of their kind to feed on. Four asphyxiated human bodies (withered and black) lie on the floor, a torn black string about the necks.

23. Sacrificial stone

This is a small, rectangular chamber with a marble dais in the middle. Red traces indicate that the gnolls have been using it as a sacrificial altar in an attempt to placate the undead.

24. Guard post

Unless a battle is in progress, at least five gnolls are stationed at this location.



Level V.

Level V. is ruled in its entirety by the undead, who may be encountered in every corridor, although not the rooms excluding 25.

25. The image of Strabonus

This domed room has a rather low ceiling. Opposite the entrances stands a bronze

bust on a rectangular slab. The inscription is simply „STRABONUS”; the face is identical to the one found at 2. A knee-rest of stone lies before the bust.

If a player character follows the instructions given at 33. and kneels before Strabonus, the results depend on what items he has on his person. The „armament of companions” consists of the following:

- the armour of Xatolún (28.)
- the helmet of Zoimión (26.)
- the shield of Haiar (21.)
- the vestments of Melanos (31.)
- any of the following: the sword of Hereklitae (9.), the arrows of Ag (17.) or the dagger of Parathor (16.)

If any of the five are missing, all items vanish from sight and nothing happens (they will reappear in exactly 8 years but not a day before). If the items are on the kneeling person, he has to roll two Charisma saves, both at TN +6. If the first save (versus Curse) is saved, the character’s body becomes stronger, gaining +1 hit points per HD, +1 to all subsequent saving throws, +1 AC and immunity to hunger, thirst or weariness. If the second save is failed (versus Geasing), the character becomes a champion of Strabonus. As such, he is the new guardian of the tomb; his intentions being to defend it from any looters – including former companions. This may involve violence, trickery, persuasion, straight talk or any means. Although the character normally prefers to reside in room 21., he is relatively free to go, and may even venture seven days from the mound. If he dies, he returns as an undead with equal HD.

26. The helmet of Zoimión

The caption above the doorway reads: „THE HELMET OF ZOIMIÓN”. The interior is filled with the broken remains of six stone statues, fallen stucco, a suit of full plate armour mangled beyond usability, two broken sword hilts and piles of assorted rubble. Something glowing under a pile turns out to be a gauntlet with *continual light* on it. The steps leading to

the inner chamber are littered with the colourful shards of a shattered glass shield. The sarcophagus – and the entire inner chamber – is blackened by soot and ashes. The lid is easy to remove since the whole place has been looted. There is nothing inside but an old mummified cadaver with a parchment scroll stuffed into its mouth. The scroll bears a puzzling message:

„This treasure was taken by Thagon the Thick,

And if that's a problem, you can come and we shall talk.”

Thagon the Thick is an 8th level fighter. He lives on the isle of Croy (hex 4710) where he has a small tower in the mountains and some 40 men. It is no great accomplishment to find him; however, he considers the helmet a valuable trophy and isn't going to part with it easily.

27. Pit trap

This is a 60' deep pit trap (Dex save to avoid). Its walls are close to collapsing, so a character attempting to scale its walls before examining the stonework has a 50% chance of bringing the whole thing down on himself.

28. The armour of Xatolún

The caption above the portal reads: „*THE ARMOUR OF XATOLÚN*”. This is accompanied by the following words: „*Come, mighty hero. The further your pride, the greater you fall; the more humble you are, the better the surprise.*”

Across the room, a stone sarcophagus is visible. The walls of the chamber have the usual stuccoes – wide bands of geometric patterns. However, these have been painted to present an elaborate optical illusion. In truth, there are almost invisible side passages leading to rooms each containing a giant magnet. A character wearing metal armour must roll a Strength and a dexterity save to keep his footing and avoid falling either way (TN +1 for every sizable metal item, +2 for shields, +3 for medium armour, +4 for heavy armour), while a TN +6 save must be made to keep metal

weapons in hand. The „fall” in both directions is 50'. Once stuck to the magnets, a character must roll a TN +6 Strength save to break free of the magnetic columns and another one halfway out to avoid „falling” back. Letting go of metal items is an easy way out; of course, it also means these items are lost!

28/a) There are two skeletons in this side chamber. Both wear chainmail and horned helmets. Their shields have Warvik's coat-of-arms. One has a pouch with 25 gp.

28/b) This chamber has a fellow in full plate, still trying to hold on to his dagger with gauntleted hands. A longsword is stuck to the column next to him. On his side, he wears a haversack filled with broken potion bottles.

It is possible to navigate the magnets if the character wears no metal items. The sarcophagus of Xatolún is a simple stone coffin standing on a raised platform. Behind the sarcophagus (and thus invisible from the entrance) lies a dusty skeleton clutching a gnarled club. If the sarcophagus is opened, the mummy-skeleton of **Xatolún** springs forward to attack! He fights in bronze plate, using a huge bronze two-handed sword. He is also *hasted* and has a 18 Strength. If his opponents managed to bring metal armour or weaponry, his first thing to do will be to hurl these opponents backwards, hopefully into the range of the magnets. He wears *+1 bronze plate mail*. This is the armour of Xatolún.

Xatolún: HD 7; hp 36; Spd 40; AC 21; Atk +12/+12 two-handed sword 2d6+5; AL N; SQ *hasted*, may not be turned, Str 18; SV P.

29. Pits

These three pit traps are 60' deep and need a Dexterity save to avoid.

30. The shield of Haiar

The caption above the entry reads: „*THE SHIELD OF HAIAR – VENOMOUS TREA...*” [the rest has been scraped away].

Around the walls in this rectangular chamber are a total of nine round metal shields, three to the sides and three on the facing wall. They are engraved with the likenesses of various animals. There are also two statues by each wall (between the shields). They depict stone warriors. Taking any of the shields without replacing with another animates the statues.

Living Statues: HD 4; hp 22, 16, 19, 22, 20, 10; Spd 20; AC 18; Atk +4 strike 1d8; SQ ½ damage from slashing and piercing, magic immunities; SV P, M.

All metal shields except the eighth are magical and detect as such. Touching one triggers the sorcery within (TN +0 unless noted).

#1 lotus flowers: Constitution save or fall asleep for 1d6 hours.

#2 fly: Constitution save or contract disease.

#3 bull: Charisma save or berserk rage for 1d6 rounds.

#4 fish: Intelligence save or silenced for 1d6 hours.

#5 jellyfish: Wisdom save or paralysis for 1d6+4 rounds

#6 lizard: Dexterity save or *heat metal*.

#7 vulture: Charisma save or character develops a taste for cadavers (1d6 weeks).

#8 blank: nonmagical.

#9 scorpion: save versus poison or die (TN +6).

None of these are the shield of Haiar as it was removed from this chamber by the gnoll chieftain and is currently found in his room (21.).

31. The vestments of Melanos

The caption above the entry reads: „*THE VESTMENTS OF MELANOS. UNDOER OF THE UNBELIEVERS, HE WHO IS OF THE LIGHT AND THE GIFT OF GODS*”. There are three wooden chests in the room, and each has a cloak inside.

a) A red cloak embroidered with a golden crown and a sceptre. This is a **cloak** monster. It waits until worn and only

strikes with its poisonous teeth at an opportune moment.

Cloaker: HD 6; hp 22; Spd 30 fly; AC 14; Atk 2*+6 claws 1d4 and +6 teeth 2d4 plus poison plus blood drain; SQ blood drain, poison; SV P, M.

Poison: Constitution save or fall into a catatonic, nightmare-filled dream.

Blood drain: 1d6 hit points per round are lost.

b) A blue cloak decorated with a multitude of golden stars. The stars surround a crescent moon glowing with magical light. This is a *cloak of poisonousness*, and anyone wearing it will be dead.

c) A white cloak embroidered with a decorative war hammer surrounded by a halo of golden light. This is a *cloak +1* and also the cloak of Melanos.

32. Tomb of dust

The words above the entry have been chiselled away. The interior of the room is covered with a thick layer of dust. Upon entry, this dust is disturbed as sounds of running feet, muffled shouts and such are audible... only to fall silent once more. If magic is used in here, the dust briefly coalesces into a human form before falling back to the ground.



Level VI.

33. Room of invocations

The walls of the circular room are domed, their colour red except a yellow sun at the top, surrounded by yellow light-beams. In the middle, there is a small circular depression with a round basin. The basin is made of red marble and is half filled with clear water. Two invocations are found on the wall. The left reads:

„*Praise Strabonus, praise! Praise him above and praise him below, but above all praise him in your descent and ascent, for*

what is in between as you make your rounds is the matter. Lest laxitude crush you, take of his companions seven: six without and one within. Thus serve in prayer, thus serve in sacrifice."

The one to the right reads:

„Follow Strabonus, follow! Follow him here, follow him by the plentiful shedding of your blood and above all follow him in the garbs of companions four. The armaments and one instrument of slaying shall do good as you kneel before his image. Thus sacrifice in servitude, thus in servitude pray."

If a character cuts himself with a weapon and pours blood into the basin, the water becomes unclear and the wound keeps bleeding at the rate of the damage the weapon he used usually inflicts (bonuses excluded). The minimum is 1d6 per round. Every curative spell halts the flow by one point per round. For full healing, points equal to the maximal damage must be cured in this way. If a character dies by bleeding out, he will soon rise as an undead with one HD lower than his level. This undead form compulsively desires blood.

After filling the basin with 18 hp worth of blood, the fluid ignites and burns. These flames burn for as many hours as the number of hit points expended. They cause a further 1d6 damage but seal all wounds.

34. Shadowy passages

These narrow but high tunnels are carved out of the bare rocks. They are unnaturally dark; all lights cast long, dancing shadows. Characters may only progress in single file, unless they are of small stature and employ spear-type weapons. Dust is everywhere.

At eight locations, there are swinging traps in the tunnel. Markings of an asterisk (*) indicate blades waist-high and markings of a plus (+) indicate skewers from above and below. In both cases, a Dexterity save is needed to avoid suffering 2d6 points of damage.

In addition to the traps, **10 shadows** roam the corridors. They hide in the walls and

always emerge en masse to attack the character in the back (preferably all shall strike simultaneously). Once the victim is dead, they move on to the next until detected. Upon discovery, they flee back to safety.

Shadows (10): HD 3; Spd 30; AC 13; Atk +3 touch strength loss; SQ silver to hit; AL CE; SV M.

35. Corpse room

Ten shrivelled corpses are tied to iron rings set in the wall, heads bowed. Drops of water from the ceiling drip with regularity into a copper bowl. If a sacrifice has been performed in room **33.**, the water is bloody.



The demesne of Strabonus

This is not so much a level as three rooms forming the core of the burial mound. The only way to gain access here is through the secret door at **5**. The warlord Strabonus rests here, but so do puzzles and fiendish dangers...

36. The room of companions

The stairs descend into a brightly lit domed room filled with masterful frescoes – in fact, the entire wall is one fresco, united in a cloudy sky above the centre. Three steps lead down into a wide depressed area. The floor is of white marble with letters in mosaics running around: „*ROOM OF THE COMPANIONS*”. There are six figures in the fresco.

a) A woman wearing a multicoloured gown of blue, red and black. She holds up a longsword in preparation to defend herself from advancing enemies. If the sword of Hereklitae is placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

b) A nude man struggling with three harpies. One has been run through and slain by an iron arrow, yet the two others

are upon the muscular archer and flanking him. If the arrows of Ag are placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

c) The twin brother of the previous man, except he wears a large face-obscuring helmet (somewhat resembling a kabuto, except of metal) and wields a heavy iron mace against a giant lizard. If the helmet of Zoimión is placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

d) A man of bronze skin and bronze armour, proud of stature and hooked of nose. His hair is a mane of black and his eyes are slanted and green. He tries to escape from the claws of a gigantic armoured crab. If the armour of Xatolún is placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

e) A woman of similar features. She raises her small metal shield to avoid the fiery breath of a great bat-monster. If the shield of Haiar is placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

f) A short man with short black hair, moustache and beard, a black cloak on his shoulders. He smiles as an unkempt savage behind his back gazes in disbelief on a broken sword. If the vestments of Melanos are placed before the figure, it disappears from the fresco.

Finally, once all figures have disappeared and the scene is empty, a character who had inhaled the breath of Afamagon may exhale it to part the clouds and reveal a circular shaft to the next level. The shaft remains in place for one day.

37. The room of worshipping

Yet another round, domed room. Emerging from the shaft leading down, the following words are visible around its rim: „*THE ROOM OF WORSHIPPING*”. There are six pedestals around the perimeter and a bronze bust on a square slab to the northeast. The pedestals each hold a potion. In order:

#1: *potion of heroism*

#2: *potion of haste*

#3: *potion of strength*

#4: *potion of cure serious wounds*

#5: *potion of deadly poison*

#6: *potion of levitation*

The bronze bust is yet another image of Strabonus. If respectful sacrifice is performed before the idol of the warlord, all participants (but not those who just watched the proceedings) benefit from the following *permanent* gifts: +1 hp per level (ex-post only), +1 to all saves and +1 AC. However, defilement yields the exact opposite (TN +12 Constitution save avoids, but three saves must be rolled for each decrease).

Just above the idol, there is a thin shaft in the ceiling (hard to spot in the dark, especially since the stuccoes are a dark indigo brown here) leading upwards. The shaft ends in a stone plug that may with some difficulty be pushed aside on hinges to enter the treasure chamber of Strabonus!

38. The room of burial

Just atop the plug (if the PCs care to investigate) are the following words: „*THE ROOM OF BURIAL. IT IS A HERO'S FATE, TO BE BURIED WITH SUCH GAINS.*” However, it is more likely that attention will be drawn to the piles of glittering coins, the golden vessels, and the bier of Strabonus, the fallen tyrant! There is a total of 22.000 electrum pieces in the burial vault, in mounds and mountains, dusty but still glinting. There are large, hammered plates of gold also (these are valued at 120 gp, and ten may be recovered), four golden decanters, three at 500 gp, and one at 800; and finally five golden candelabra of 100 gp value apiece. This whole scene, illuminated by the beam of light from the large glass slab above, is a stuff of dreams.

The riches of Strabonus are not any less impressive. He wears a +3 *full plate armour* made of enchanted bronze. His weapon is a +2 *long spear*, his shield is +3, and the javelins by his feet are *javelins of lightning bolts* (each strikes for 1d6+20 points on impact or 20 points for all in its path, TN +4 Dexterity save for half in the latter case).

Those who would believe that Strabonus is undead will be disappointed. Those who thought the loot would be so easy will be likewise. In fact, the whole room is a **null-magic area** where no enchantment functions. Spells may not be cast in, into and out of the room. There are, however, appropriate mechanical traps. The heavy stone plug is balanced by a counterweight connected to an ingenious pulley system. After some time, the descending weight reaches a certain point and the entire plug is pulled down from below into its place with a tremendous force! This is strong enough to crush or dislodge lesser items placed just to avoid this. Opening the plug again requires a narrow yet strong tool such as a better crowbar or a magical sword, plus about half an hour of work. That might be too much! Just as the plug returns to its position, the same mechanism activates stone pistons that push

compressed air into the room through cunningly hidden openings in the wall. The resulting draft disturbs the thick dust – this is intermixed with black lotus concentrate, the deadliest poison known to man. Two TN +6 Constitution saving throws are necessary. Each failed throw results in the loss of 3d6 Constitution points. And even if the lotus dust settles, sudden movement may trigger it once again (with a TN of +0). Handling the treasure causes another disturbance, etc., etc., etc. Those who remain still and wait under the glass will chose another form of unpleasant dress: during the day, the focused sunlight form above will result in 1d6 points of damage for every hour, not to mention the perils of starvation... Clearly, those who are of adequate merit to claim the treasures of Strabonus deserve no less than the amount they can so recover.

THIS ENDS THE EXPEDITION TO THE ΜΑΘΣΟΛΕΘΜ ΟΦ ΣΤΡΑΒΟΝΘΣ



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