

OLD CRUIK HOLLOW



INTERIORE DEL SEPOLCRO DELLA FAMIGLIA DE NASONI sulla strada. De Terni

"Interior of the mausoleum of the Nasoni family," The British Museum

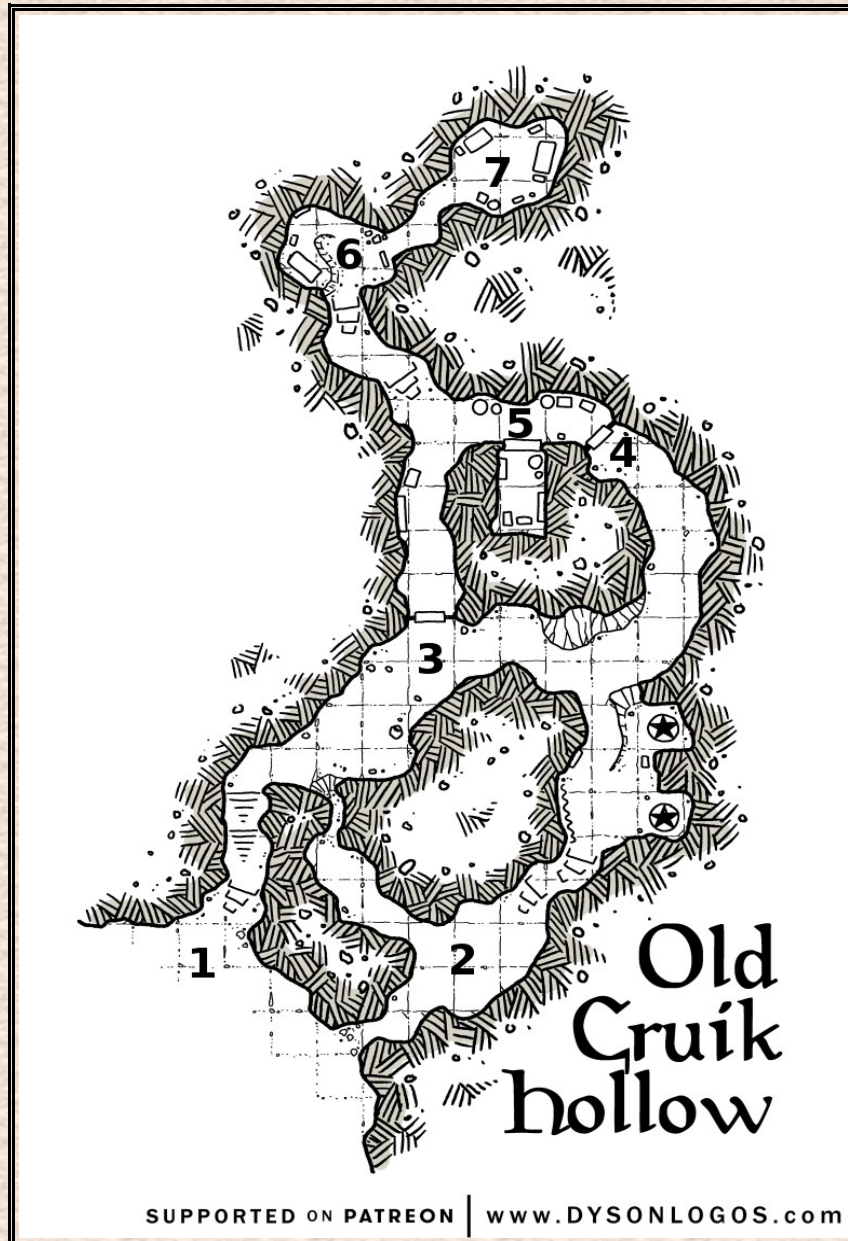
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Old Cruik Hollow contains a cavern that has, over the years, been re-purposed as a temple to the earth-god Izdall, mausoleum for a local lord's family, a shelter for herdsman, and a cache in times of need. Currently, though, it is the hideout for a crew of bandits led by the charismatic Ola Zeldade. While they have been a bane on travel in the region for some time, rumor has it that she has recently lost some of her stalwarts, and Zeldade herself hasn't been seen for a month. Whispers suggest that she has fallen ill from some malady, or that some internal power play may be at hand. Thinking that the time is ripe to end this local threat, the PCs have been hired by the local reeve to root the gang out. It shouldn't be too hard to wrest the cavern from a few bandits, after all...

Ola Zeldade retreated to the Hollow with her band of thieves after a misguided raid on an old snake-god's forest temple. The place was lightly guarded by a few snake-men acolytes, who turned out to be better at praying for their lives than fighting for them. She laughed and ignored the last acolyte's lisped, dying curse about the monkeys desecrating the temple. Soon after, her transformation began... Shocked at the the warping of her body, Zeldade sought out the hidden refuge with the members of the band who chose not to abandon her.



1. West Entrance: The cavern has been improved with some rough steps, a remnant of its intended use as a tomb complex and worship space. Ola Zeldade has stationed two of her gang, **Soq** and **Polgha**, here as a watch and distraction to any curious folk who may happen into the Hollow. Soq or Polgha station themselves to watch both entrances (Rooms 1 and 2) and either dissuade entrance or waylay intruders towards the "temple."

2. East Entrance and False Temple: Soq (3rd level thief, 8hp, AC 6[13], leather armor+DEX, *dagger +1*) and **Polgha** (1st level thief, 4hp, AC 7[12], leather armor, concealed short sword) are arrayed in vestments redolent of those worn by various earth-priests and followers of the two minor earth deities whose statues are found deeper in the cavern. They take a certain twisted pride in their work and have made a small industry of conning 'tithes' off numerous visitors (alms-box with 25 gp, 181 sp, 73 cp, bundle of incense sticks (2 gp)). They will attempt to dissuade the curious from deeper explorations, explaining that the inner cavern is a mausoleum and sacred space and that there's really nothing interesting to see. "But would you like to purchase some blessed incense for a few coins? It will bring you good fortune on your journeys..." If intruders attempt to force their way past the "priests" or otherwise penetrate into the caverns, one will ring a battered ceremonial gong as a warning to their compatriots.

3. West Inner Door: The door has recently been repaired and reinforced. It is locked, Soq has keys on a cord around his neck for both doors (3 and 4). Otherwise the doors will require picking or breaking down. Along the corridor past the door is a bunk for a guard. There is a 30% chance that one of the bandits will be here and able to raise an immediate alarm if either the door is opened or the warning gong is rung.

4. East Inner Door: This door has also been repaired and locked. A few casks and chests of provisions line the corridor past the door.

5. Storeroom: This room was originally intended as a tomb, but became used as hidden storage and larder by itinerant herders before being commandeered by the gang. A portion of the gang's ill-gotten gains are stashed here (approx. 500 gp of mundane items). A lockbox contained 31 gp and 1303 sp is found under one of the bunks. Three of the gang bunk here and will hear any commotion at the east door, if present.

6. Unfinished Tomb: A second set of rough stone steps climb into a small alcove. Scarring of the rock walls is visible, evidence of an aborted project to expand the cavern into a more extensive tomb complex. Someone dragged an unadorned, empty stone sarcophagus here. A bag hidden in the sarcophagus contains 171sp, three gems (12, 30, and 60gp) and a silver dagger (35 gp).

7. Ola Zeldade's Quarters: The gang's leader will likely be reclining here. She sleeps a lot these days, as her "condition" takes a lot of energy and drains her reserves. There will be one gang member here with food prepared for when she awakes. Although that whole distended jaw thing really weirds them out...

Zeldade retreated to the cavern after developing a debilitating ache in her bones, followed by her skin becoming scaled, and her eyes slitted as a reptile's. Her legs are beginning to transform and meld into a serpentine form, slowing her movement to 2/3 normal rate. She is not sure how far her transformation will advance. While the painful transformation initially seemed a curse, Zeldade has had premonitions of communion with the snake-gods and recognizes that her Naga-self will likely give her different and more terrifying abilities than she had as a mere thief.

She has particularly enjoyed her new venomous bite as a threat to disobedience (as one untrustworthy goon was made a graphic example). And the spells that have begun to lurk in her head give her a mad glee.... **Ola Zeldade:** 5th level thief/Naga-kin, 19HP, AC 6[13], leather+natural armor, Atk: longsword (1d8), bite (1d4+poison (save+4 or die)); Move 9, Save 11; AL C; CL 7/600; Spells: Magic User: *Charm Person, Sleep, Darkness 15' Radius*; Cleric: *Cure light wounds, Protection from Good*; 388gp, jade necklace (90gp), *Potion of Invulnerability*.

The Gang: Composed of outcasts, ne'er-do-wells, and thugs, the little band has begun to make a name for themselves. They are under the thrall of Zeldade and her transformation, if not particularly comfortable about the whole affair. 1D4+4 of the gang will be present at any time:

- Peldred**, 0 level ruffian, 5hp, AC 9[10], unarmored, Club, Dagger, missing nose
- Gytag**, 0 level ruffian, 3hp, AC 9[10], unarmored, Hand Axe, Dagger, cowardly
- Sturmar**, 0 level ruffian, 3hp, AC 8[11], unarmored+DEX, Club, Dagger, scarred
- Murlin**, 1st level fighter, 5hp, AC 4[15], chainmail & shield, Battle Axe, lisp

- e. **Valna**, 1st level fighter, 6hp, AC 5[14], leather & shield+ DEX, Spear, Dagger, tattooed eyelids
- f. **Soldox**, 1st level thief, 4hp, AC7[12], leather armor, Club, Dagger, very tall
- g. **Floki**, 1st level thief, 3hp, AC7[12], leather armor, Light Crossbow, Dagger, blue face paint
- h. **Lolwood**, 1st level thief, 4hp, AC6[13], leather armor+ DEX, Light Crossbow (+1 to-hit), Dagger, toothless

If one of the doors is breached, an alarm will be raised. The gang members will attempt to split up to confront the intruders and summon Zeldade, with the remainder attempting to encircle the intruders by exiting the opposite door and waiting until battle is joined to attack from the back. Zeldade will use her spells to subdue enemies, closing to fight only as a last resort. If things are going south, she will cast *darkness* to sow confusion, allowing retreat.

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