

CRYPT OF THE SCIENCE-WIZARD

BY SKEETER GREEN



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Crypt of the Science-Wizard

BOOK I OF THE TALES OF THE BLACK TOWER

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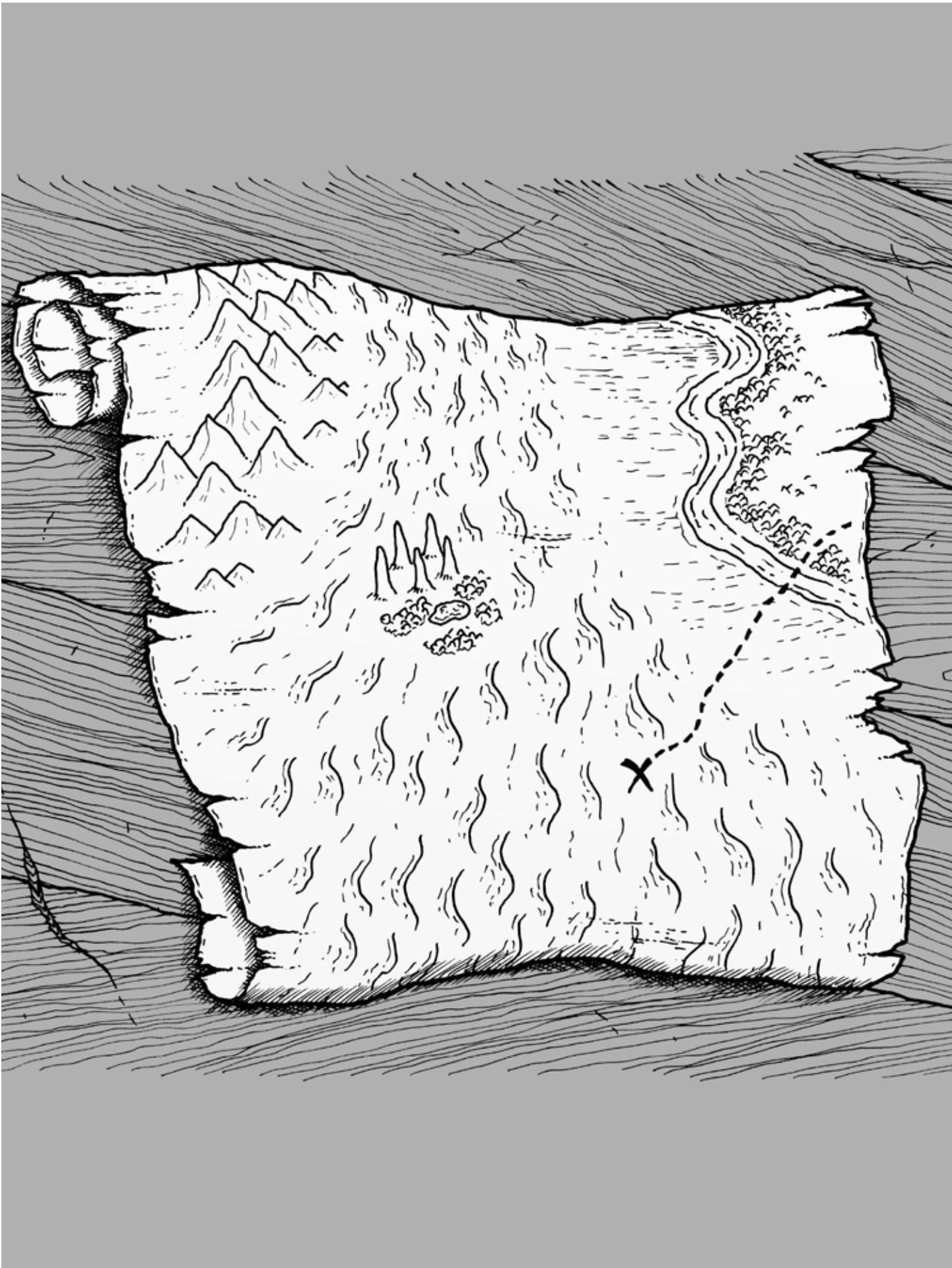
Special Thanks

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To everyone that puts having fun with friends ahead of a social agenda — you're why I do this

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INTRODUCTION

“These are not the worst of times we have suffered, Magnificent One. As has been passed down from the Time before Writing, this country is hardy, and has suffered much in its history. Plagues, wars, migrations, and natural disasters have shaped this land, forged its strength, and defined its character. These are not the delicate fields of the West beyond the hills; our home is forged in fire and blood.

In the Beginning, before even the eldest beings walked its surface, the grounds were fertile with life. Astounding creatures born of terrible powers lived below the surface world. None moreso than the Serpent. It is to the Serpent we give praise for writing, for magic, for the ability to grow crops. The Serpent gave us the knowledge to build structures and cities, to grow, and to prosper. But its gifts did not come without a price.

When the great hem-netjar, Kersete I, came to the land, and Spoke with the Serpent, it was the dawn of the Time of Bloody Sands. No time in our history has known more despair than the Time of Bloody Sands. When great Esh was displaced, and Kersete ruled the land, then did the world know sorrow. The great verdant grasslands withered and died; the jungles receded, waterways were poisoned and fouled. Mountains grew over the course of days, and hills were flattened into valleys. With the first sightings of the Black Tower, the elder knew ~ the time of decline was upon us.

But the people of the Time of Bloody Sands would persevere. They rose up, concealing their numbers but acquiring all the resources they could. Magic, craftsmanship, knowledge, arms and armor ~ all were combined to bring Kersete low. But even the combined might of a nation could not slay the wicked magi. Unable to destroy the sorcerer, the Lords of the Sun bound the maleficent priest in a tomb, far out into the Copper Desert.

This tomb held Kersete for ages, long enough for the memories of Men to forget. Generations later, his subtle influence would bring those of questionable judgment back to him. Lost travelers were the first to discover his tomb in the middle of the wastelands, seeking shelter from sudden storms. With their tales of the fabulous structures below the sands, treasure seekers were next to come. Plunder and riches were carted out of the tomb, but no evidence of the magi was recovered. Was this not the Tomb of Kersete?

When the treasures recovered by the foolish adventurers were brought back to encampments, towns, and cities, their insidious influence became apparent. The treasures were tainted with the malice of Kersete, and they bore curses and evil, spreading throughout civilized societies. This was the Time ~ of Discord, when brother fought brother, mothers abandoned children out of fear, and leaders abdicated their followers to wander alone. Nature itself turned bleak, and weeks and months of inclement weather destroyed crops, negating harvests, and inciting famine.

It was during this time a pale figure arrived in the great city of Suma, shortly before its destruction. The hermit claimed to be a dervish from the far North, beyond Irrit, and was travelling on a pilgrimage to Suma to aid the lands and cleanse its blight. The pilgrim was granted an audience with pharo Tea and accepted into the pharo's inner circle.

Of course, it was later discovered the pilgrim was none other than Kersete, returned from the wasteland, with a new plan. As you know, this set the Time of Cleansing into effect, and after a century, Kersete was again overthrown. This time, the Lords of the Sun discovered the means to slay the creature, due to its unliving nature. The Lords tattooed the flesh of the creature with powerful mystical and religious symbology, bound the creature's corpse in preserved and holy linens, and constructed another tomb, this time in the center of Suma.

It was their hubris that was their undoing.

The Lords had defeated a homunculus, a simulacrum sent by the true Kersete, to suss out the plans of any rebellion. The plan foiled, Kersete executed his revenge on the Lords, the city of Suma, and the Plains of Esh. Kersete appeared over the city of Suma as an apparition and figment visible on the great sandstorm that gathered. All the citizens of Suma, and many of those in the surrounding towns, were engulfed in sand, and those that had fled the city far enough witnessed the skies open, and a torrential downpour of rain, hail, and stones pound the city into the ground. The waters filled in the depression, on the site of what is now the God's Tear.

Since the Time of Cleansing, no other sign of Kersete has been uncovered. True, every few years a scrap of information surfaces about where the wyrd wizard's corpse may be, but few of these can be believed. Just this day a tattered missive was brought to my attention, about a small oasis on the eastern edge of the Blood Plains that supposedly houses the true remains of Kersete. A raving madman sold the map to one of our agents in the bazaar, claiming to have been there; a sole survivor. The agent, a student of history, slew the man immediately, fearing it was yet another envoy of Kersete. We have not followed up on the map as yet, Pharo. When we have a caravan headed that way, we shall contract an exploratory force to put this rumor to rest.”

— As interpreted from a recording by the storyteller Abishek Ket-Kettal, advisor to the pharo Hermetae VIII, during the Year of Despair.

BACKGROUND

The adventure is likely to play out as follows. The adventurers leave a major city of your choosing that fits in your campaign. They can either use the **Travelling the Wasteland** random encounters, or you can have the party arrive at the oasis to begin. The characters are likely alone, possibly confused, and are given no information about how to get into the crypt, or how to overcome the obstacles contained within. Eventually, the characters should discover the inner crypts, and the Wellcap, leading to further adventures below. If the characters become frustrated and wish to leave without discovering the route to further adventure, you can have them leave, and follow up on the lore of the crypt, and come back better prepared, or discover a clue in some other way. Or, they can leave and never know the secret contained within. Whatever works for your campaign!

Investigation is key, and players without analytical skills may have a harder time with this adventure's approach. Give clues where needed to maintain a fun atmosphere for play.

THE CRYPT OF THE SCIENCE-WIZARD, KERSETE

A core understanding that “ultra-science”, as presented here, is a technological replacement for magic is vital to running the adventure smoothly. Many of the effects, traps, and building techniques presented in this site-based adventure could only happen in a place of “magic”. The construction alone is impossible on some scientific levels, but by using the superior intellect of an entire land of science-wizards, we say: why not!

The **Crypt of the Science-Wizard** is the entry level to a great underground structure known as The Black Tower. The Tower is an amazingly advanced technological “campus”, with various levels, side areas, secret passages, and dimensionally-located rooms to fill out as you need. If none of these adventure seeds fits your campaign, please use the parts as needed or disregard as you see fit. The adventure contained here is designed to be used as part of an ongoing campaign, but if you prefer to use it as a one-off adventure, it is modularized to be useable that way as well.

The feel of the adventure is one of pulp exploration, of heroes investigating tombs lost to time, and uncovering fantastic treasures forgotten by the ages. If your campaign is more of a smash-mouth, combat oriented affair, this adventure may be a nice diversion, or may not fit into the grand scheme. Please read through the adventure, determine if its play style compliments your plans, and do try to have an enjoyable time with friends exploring the unknown!

REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

The **Crypt of the Science-Wizard** is a difficult adventure requiring the players to think about their environment — and requiring the characters to be skilled and lucky. The suggested starting level for this module is 3rd+; more seasoned players may be able to start at 1st level, but some of the encounters contained within are beyond typical entry-level characters. Strategy, insight, and puzzle-solving skills serve characters (and players!) better than combat prowess. Some good dice rolls certainly help as well.

However, it is possible (read: likely) some characters may die during the adventure. To keep the players invested, the oasis is a known, but avoided, stopping point along a trade route. Some caravans may come by while the party is investigating the crypt, and if a player needs a replacement character, this may be an excellent story tie-in. Or, if a seedier character is more interesting to the player, perhaps a criminal, banished to the Wastes, comes to the party, seeking and offering aid? However you chose to incorporate a new character, try to have it fit in with a storyline you can continue.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure's default starting location is the city of Iruk on the Tean River, south of the Kohshe Jungle. However, any large settlement meeting the criteria of “a large city” suffices. Several possibilities from other published campaign settings are equally possible. To get things rolling, read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

For the past several days, the talk in the tavern is all about the lone survivor of yet another expedition to find Kerseite's lost tomb, out in the Wasteland and the Blood Plains. Crazy-talk certainly, but the man was seen assaulted in this very cantina by a hooded figure, and that figure took a parchment left on the table. The staff all swear it was a map leading off into the Wasteland, but none can confirm that story. Surely it was some kind of merchant-suffle gone wrong, but there is still a nagging feeling that maybe this was a bigger deal than the cantina patrons think?

Anyway, it's an interesting distraction, and you are enjoying your last few days before your new commission. A couple of weeks out in the Blood Plains? Sounds terrible, but the coin is pretty good, and there shouldn't be much trouble this time of year...

At this point, invite the players to give some backstory about their characters, why they may be travelling together, and what they hope to accomplish out in the Wasteland.

When the players are comfortable with the group, and questions have been answered, have them make sure they have proper travelling equipment. The party's employers (the Pharo; a merchant; the city guard; the caravan master; or any other patron appropriate to your campaign) provides basics such as transportation (camels, horses, pack lizards, a cart), food and water for the travelers and all animals, plus tents, bedrolls, and some basic survival equipment. Any special items the characters may need should be acquired before they set out.

Depending on where you want to start the adventure, you can have the party set out from Iruk, their initial course plotted by the caravan master (see **Travelling the Wasteland**). If you want to start at the oasis and crypt proper, skip ahead to **Reaching the Oasis**.

TRAVELLING THE WASTELAND

A few miles away from Iruk, the farms and agricultural fields give way to utter desolation. The sands on the Blood Plains are aptly named; copper deposits and ancient strip mines have carried deposits of copper miles in the north-south direction. Like a scouring brush, the harsh winds of the Plains have burnished the lands, cutting a groove between the lush areas of the Kohshe Jungle and Tean River, all the way down to the Deadfalls, and the distant western mountains and the Cradle of Den. The only known waymark being the God's Tear oasis, nearly unreachable by common caravans.

Several drover tribes and migrant merchants dot the Blood Plains. A traveler runs into other travelers every few days on the known caravan routes; in the deep wastes, occurrences are much rarer. Consult the **Trade Route Encounters** table to determine who or what is encountered when on an established trade route (your discretion what constitutes an "established trade route") and use the **In the Wilds** table when off route, or when a particularly interesting encounter is called for (again, your discretion required). Encounters on a trade route are checked for daily, at dawn or dusk; encounters in the wilds are checked every 3 days. If an encounter doesn't fit your campaign, replace it with a similar encounter of your own devising, or simply ignore it altogether.

TIME TO THE OASIS

It takes the party 2 weeks to reach the oasis if there are no distractions or issues along the way. If you wish to supplement the character's level with other encounters, please use these provided as examples of what may be lurking on the Blood Plains.



Trade Route Encounters

Roll	Encounter
1	Caravan
2	Thugs
3	Wild Pack Animals
4	Sphinx
5	Swarm
6	Weather Event
7	Fiend or Elemental
8	Accident
9-20	No Encounter

In the Wilds Encounters

Roll	Encounter
1	Shapechanger
2	Thugs
3	Wild Pack Animals
4	Sphinx
5	Swarm
6	Weather Event
7	Fiend or Elemental
8	Dragon
9	Common Beast
10	Humanoid Scout Party
11	GM Special
12-14	Lost
15-20	No Encounter

Accident. This encounter is with a caravan that met with bad luck. Roll on the Caravan encounter to see what the caravan is and then roll again on the table to determine what caused the caravan's misfortune. Depending on the unfortunate circumstances, there may be injured still alive, goods may be missing, etc.

Caravan. A desert caravan has 1d6 wagons plus 2d6 pack animals as the train, with **2 guards** and **1 merchant** (Thief 3) per vehicle. There are 4d6 other travelers accompanying the caravan as support, passengers, or whatever suits your campaign. The caravan possesses trade goods and treasure worth 2d6 x 100 gp per wagon.

Caravan Guards (2): HD 1; AC 7[12]; Atk spear (1d6) or longbow (1d6); Move 12; Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** none. **Equipment:** leather armor, spear, longbow, 20 arrows, 2d12 cp.

Common Beast. This encounter is with a random common beast. Roll or choose any common beast; this could be a distraction or a potential food source if the party is in dire circumstances. A pack of 2d4 of the same kind of beast is encountered.

Dragon. An **adult copper dragon** flies overhead. If you roll 1–5 on 1d20, the dragon lands and interrogates the party. If the characters present a compelling case why the dragon shouldn't kill them, it leaves them alone, allowing them to keep their items, and does not require a toll. If the characters do not convince the dragon, it 'asks' for 1 magic item, 100 gp, or gems worth a total of 100 gp. If the party refuses, the dragon flies away or attacks (50% chance for either).

Adult Copper Dragon (7HD): HD 7 (28hp); AC 2[17]; Atk 2 claws (1d6) and 1 bite (2d10); Move 9 (Fly 24); Save 9; AL L; CL/XP 9/1100; **Special:** Spit acid or breathe slowing gas. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Fiend or Elemental. This encounter is with one of the more maleficent denizens of the desert. Roll 1d4 to determine the creature: 1–**rakshasa**; 2–**night hag**; 3–pack of 1d4 **hell hounds**; 4–3 **imps**, playing dice around a campfire. These encounters can be humorous or deadly, depending on the party's reactions.

Hell Hounds (1–4): HD 5; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 12; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** Breathe fire (10hp). 7 See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Imps (3): HD 2; AC 2[17]; Atk 1 sting (1d4 + poison); Move 6 (Fly 16); Save 16; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** Poison tail, polymorph, regenerate, immune to fire, hit only by magic weapons. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

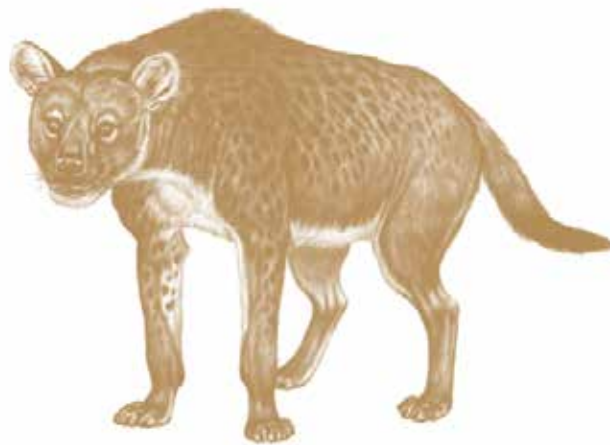
Night Hag: HD 8; AC 8[11]; Atk 1 bite (2d6); Move 10; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** Magic resistance (65%), +2 or better magic weapon to hit, magical abilities. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Rakshasa: HD 7; AC –4[23]; Atk 2 claws (1d3) and 1 bite (1d6); Move 15; Save 9; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** Illusory appearance, special magic resistance, spells. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

GM Special. In this encounter, you decide what you want to happen. This can be a reroll for a different encounter, you can make up a wild interaction with something not listed, or something campaign-specific that doesn't fit other places. Go wild!

Humanoid Scout Party. This encounter is with a group of 4d4 **gnolls** reconnoitering the area as an advance party. The scout party is not immediately hostile, and if they can escape conflict they attempt to do so. If cornered they fight to the last, and do not surrender.

Gnolls (4–16): HD 2; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or



weapon (1d10); Move 9; Save 16; AL C; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** None. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Lost. The party is 1d6 miles off course in a random direction. Roll 1d8 for direction: 1– too far north; 2– too far south; 3– too far east; 4– too far west; 5– too far northwest; 6– too far northeast; 7– too far southeast; 8– too far southwest. Characters making 2 consecutive successful saving throws at +1 get back on course.

Shapechanger. The characters encounter one of the desert's legendary shapechangers. Roll 1d4: 1– **rakshasa**; 2– **night hag**; 3– **weretiger**; 4– **lamia**. Depending on the creature's motives, it may appear hostile or helpful. Just because a creature is evil or good, does not mean it can't be on a mission that requires the party's assistance!

Lamia: HD 9; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 claws (1d6); Move 24; Save 6; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** Spells, touch drains wisdom. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Night Hag: HD 8; AC 8[11]; Atk 1 bite (2d6); Move 10; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** Magic resistance (65%), +2 or better magic weapon to hit, magical abilities. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Rakshasa: HD 7; AC –4[23]; Atk 2 claws (1d3) and 1 bite (1d6); Move 15; Save 9; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** Illusory appearance, special magic resistance, spells. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Weretiger: HD 6; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d10); Move 12; Save 11; AL N or C; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** Lycanthropy, hit only by magic or silver weapons. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Sphinx. A random sphinx (**andro-** or **gyno-**; 50% chance for each) stops the party along the trade route. It asks their business, interrogates them for information, and is generally a nuisance but not hostile. If the characters are respectful,

the sphinx leaves them alone, and may even watch out for them during their travels. If they are disrespectful or rude, the sphinx leaves, but may steer trouble their way.

Androsphinx: HD 12; AC 0[19]; Atk 2 claws (2d6); Move 18 (Fly 24); Save 3; AL L; CL/XP 15/2900;
Special: Spells, roar. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Gynosphinx: HD 8; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 claws (1d8); Move 18 (Fly 24); Save 8; AL N; CL/XP 11/1700; **Special:** Divination, Dispel Magic at 8th level (3/day). See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Swarm. When this encounter occurs on a Trade route, it is either a colony of **1d6 giant bats** (night only) or a nest of **1d6 vipers** (daytime). When in the Wilds, it can be a colony of **1d6 giant bats** (night only), a nest of **1d6 vipers**, or a mischief of **5d10 giant rats** (dusk). If the party presents a large fire source (a bonfire, *fireball* spell, etc.) the swarms are driven away in 2 rounds.

Giant Bat: HD 4; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d10); Move 4 (fly 18); Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** 10% chance of disease. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Giant Rat: HD 1d4hp; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d3); Move 12; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP A/5; **Special:** 5% are diseased. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Viper: HD 1d6hp; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 bite (1hp + poison); Move 18; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** Lethal poison (+2 save). See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Thugs. Roving bands of criminals, larcenous merchant pirates, and strange cultists banded together for survival are just some of the denizens that can be encountered in the Wasteland. **Criminals** are typically encountered in groups of 4d4 persons or more. Merchant pirates are typically led by a **captain** with **3d6 veteran pirates**. Thug groups in the Wilds can be up to 200% larger than those along trade routes.

Criminals (Thf3): HD 3 (d4); AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d4) or dagger (1d4); Move 12; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 3/60;
Special: +2 on saving throws vs. devices, backstab (x2), thieving skills. **Thieving Skills:** Climb 87%, Tasks/Traps 25%, Hear 4 in 6, Hide 20%, Silent 30%, Locks 20%. **Equipment:** leather armor, club, dagger.

Pirate Captain (Ftr2): HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d4) or sling (1d4); Move 12; Save 13; AL L; CL/XP 2/30.
Special: multiple attacks (2) vs. creatures with 1 or fewer HD. **Equipment:** leather armor, club, sling, 10 bullets, 2d4 sp.

Pirate Veteran: HD 1; AC 7[12]; Atk longsword (1d8) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 1/15;
Special: none. **Equipment:** leather armor, longsword, spear, 2d12 cp.

Weather Event. The weather can be un-predictable on the Blood Plains, and seemingly random effects are common. Any of the conditions in the *control weather* spell are possible (treat cool or cold temps as unbearable heat, and hail or snow as torrential rain). The effects last 6d6 minutes and then skirt the party's location.

Wild Pack Animals. Animals that have been left behind or broken free of their caravans band together for survival. Few pack animals are carnivorous, so most of these creatures are prey rather than predatory. The packs can contain **camels**, **horses**, **giant pack lizards**, **giant beetles**, or whatever makes sense in your campaign. A group of 4d4 creatures are present along a trade route; herds of 8d4 creatures or more roam the Wilds. If returned to a large city, the animals could be sold for 4d6 gp each.

Camel: HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d2); Move 20; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** None. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Giant Beetle (5ft): HD 5; AC 3[16]; Atk 1 bite (5d4); Move 9; Save 12; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** None. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Giant Lizard: HD 3; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 bite (1d8); Move 12; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** None. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

Riding Horse: HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d2); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** None. See *Monstrosities* by Frog God Games for more information.

REACHING THE OASIS

As the characters approach the oasis, read or paraphrase the following:

After travelling the Wasteland, you finally reach what you assume is your destination. The map you have followed for days has no additional information or clues, and you are at the small oasis that should be near the entrance to Kersete's supposed tomb. Situated at the base of a windswept dune, the oasis is little more than a small pond, perhaps thirty feet in diameter. Sparse reeds skirt the edge of the water, and a light eddy disturbs the surface.

There are no animal footprints around the edge of the water, and little evidence of recent traffic. The water appears clear and free of inhabitants. The only sound you hear is the whispering zephyr of the low desert. The smell of pungent desert flowers is thick around the water, from no apparent source.

Background. The oasis was created by an open *decanter of endless water* that the hapless tomb raider dropped out of their pack, upended and caught in the closing tomb door. The *decanter* has trickled out a continuous stream for years, saturating the surrounding sands to the point it created a basin and began to fill. Typical flora eventually took root; however, animals tend to shy away from the area, perhaps due to the insidious influence of the tomb.

I. ENTRANCE TO THE CRYPT

The Oasis and the Entrance. The pond is pure but cloudy and, save for a few bugs, uninhabited. Roughly 20 feet below the surface of the water is the top of a 15-foot-tall by 10-foot-wide door, a stone slab weighing several tons, obscured by swirling silt and fine sand. Caught in the seam where the door meets the stone lintel dangles a skeletal corpse, its arms and free leg gently waving in the subtle current. The cause of the water's movement comes from a smallish glass bottle at the base of the door, issuing forth a weak but constant rivulet of water.

Treasure. The source of the oasis is a small, decorative bottle on the top step of the entrance. It is found with a successful secret door check. When the bottle is recovered, a character casting *detect magic* immediately determines the item is a magical *decanter of endless water*. If the bottle is closed, the characters have recovered both a helpful magic item in the desert and begun the process of uncovering the entrance to Kersete's Tomb. Once the bottle is sealed, the water in the magically-created oasis begins to evaporate in the unforgiving desert conditions as well as soak into the

surrounding ground. It is not fast, but the water disperses over the course of several days.

The characters can either dive into the pond or wait until it drains sufficiently to access the tomb door. If the characters camp out and wait for the pond to drain, they are free of encounters while within 100 yards of the oasis.

Further Investigation. However the characters spend their time, once they investigate the door, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 2**):

As you gaze upon the massive stone portal, it is clear the dangling would-be thief was fleeing the tomb. Its bones held together by bits of clothes and equipment still strapped to the body, the corpse is a stark warning to all: whatever dangers lurk inside are unforgiving, even in retreat. Upon closer examination, it is obvious the great door rose out of the ground to pin the intruder to the stone lintel. How the door opens is a mystery; no handles or locking mechanisms are obvious.

The door appears stout, a single solid stone slab engraved with runes and decorated in repeating geometric motifs. The surrounding structure is no less impressive. The columns supporting the massive lintel are intricately carved and are half-encased in the surrounding brick walls. The bricks are tightly fit, and the supporting mortar is solid. Only the slightest crack separates the door from the surrounding structure.



If the characters drain the oasis after finding the *decanter*, read or paraphrase the following:

As the water escapes into the surrounding basin, half a dozen partially buried stone steps become visible. The steps are titanic, far larger than those suited for humans. How many steps exist, and how high this door may have once stood upon them, cannot be determined. The proportions of this entrance seem vast, judging from the size of the door and steps. The whole appears to be the top of a massive ziggurat or pyramid.

The Door. If characters attempt to bypass the massive door, all physical means of breaching, lifting or manipulating the door fail. The stone is too large, and magically enhanced, to be damaged by anything short of siege equipment, and even that is likely to fail.

The engraved runes and geometry may be of interest, and a character studying the runes learns this is indeed the Crypt of Kersete, magi and hem-netjer of ancient Esh. Whether Esh refers to the desert basin, or some actual being is unclear. Beyond the historical note, there is nothing of further interest regarding the door.

The Portal. If the characters specifically search the columns supporting the lintel, they find nothing out of the ordinary. The columns are massive 3-foot-diameter pillars supporting the 5-foot-tall by 20-foot-long beam spanning the width of the doorway. How these structural elements were placed is beyond the knowledge of even the most experienced dwarven architect.

If the characters search the brick walls to either side of the columns, on the right side one particular stone, detected with a successful secret door check, protrudes slightly more than the surrounding stones. If the characters drain the oasis before searching the door, the stone is obviously protruding. Once the stone is removed (with picks or magic),

a gout of sand begins pouring out of the hole, and a deafening grinding sound begins. The great door slowly begins to lower, and the basin begins to fill with sand.

If the characters have waited until the water recedes to open the door, the sand piles up on the right side of the door, which lowers 5 feet, then stops. If the characters managed to find the trigger stone while under water, the sand mixes with the water, temporarily blinding everyone in the oasis. The door still lowers, but only opens 3 feet, allowing water to pour in with some unintended effects (see 3. *Lobster Boil*).

2. FOYER

When the characters bypass the entry door, read or paraphrase the following (see fig 3):

After the massive door lowers, and daylight shines into the tomb through the gap in the portal, dust motes hover in the air, and the chamber beyond is dimly illuminated. Roughly twenty feet deep by thirty feet wide, the initial chamber is an incredible sight. The walls are coated in fine plaster or mud, smoothed and painted in pictographs and scenes of ancient life. Religious ceremonies, rites, and rituals are all depicted in painstaking detail. Runes and glyphs are scattered among the drawings, and what seem like geometric shapes adorn the walls at regular spacing and intervals. The mud is damp and sloughs slightly along the bottom edge of the walls. The ceiling is not visible from the lowered door. A hallway opposite the main door recedes into darkness.

The stale air smells slightly of mold, a mildewy stench that is not initially overpowering. No sounds issue forth out of the chamber except the water, and nothing seems to be moving beyond.

Entry Chamber. If the characters waited for the oasis to drain down, the floor of the chamber has only a few inches of standing water, the results of slow seepage through the tightly-fit door and portal. If the door is opened while the oasis is full, the subsequent rush of water splashes into the room and down the hallway, with some unintended effects (see 3. *Lobster Boil*). The mud on the walls of the chamber covers large, stacked stone and brick structure.

A character investigating the stones behind the plaster realizes this is a standard architectural style of ancient burial tombs, where construction alcoves and concealed passages were covered after initial use. The ceiling starts 15 feet up the walls, and curves into a dome with a 30-foot peak.

BEHIND THE GM SCREEN

The entrance to the crypt is designed to be a challenge to the characters but not an insurmountable problem. There is no fun if the players cannot pass the front door! If the dice rolls are not going the players way, offer a few ideas how they can overcome the obstacle: a character with Stonecunning may remember funeral sites often have secret doors or ingresses; a character rolling $1d20$ below their intelligence score knows the architecture of the day included “mechanical” augmentation; or any other story-based hint that can aid the players to continue the story.

3. LOBSTER BOIL (PIT TRAP)

If the characters proceed out of **area 2**, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 4**):

A high-arched hallway leads out of the initial foyer. Light flows down the corridor to reveal an intersection twenty feet away. The walls are a continuation of the decoration in the foyer; scenes of fertile fields near a river are shown. The damp floor is suddenly dry approximately five feet from the arch of the hallway, and faint steam is rising from the floor, almost invisible in the poor light. The faintest smell of copper or very old blood can be detected.

Pit Trap. An 8-foot-wide by 10-foot-long covered pit is in the center of the 15-foot-tall hallway, revealed by the water seeping in from the entryway. The seam in the floor is a sure giveaway something is amiss; however, characters may not initially understand what the absence of water means. The pit is 50-feet-deep but has slowly been filling with water for quite some time. The water is now only 20 feet from the surface — assuming the characters do not lower the entrance door and flood the dungeon!

Characters investigating the seam and making a successful secret door check notice the faint sound of water dripping under the lid of the trap. Anyone purposefully releasing the pit lid (with a pole or stomping on it, causing it to hinge downward) must make a successful saving throw at +2 or tumble into the pit. Unaware characters or those foolish enough to run headlong deeper into the tomb must make a successful saving throw at -1 to avoid falling into the pit.

The pit itself was designed to be a much deadlier trap than just a long drop; copper bands surround the bottom 20 feet of the shaft, raising the temperature at the bottom to several hundred degrees. The original intent was to cook trespassers to death while they awaited rescue, if they survived the fall. The water in the pit has been undergoing a slow boil, not quite bubbling out, but heated enough to build up steam.

Wise characters may suggest tying a rope to the triggering character — or may not. If a character falls into the pit, they suffer 1d3 damage from the fall (the water cushions most of the damage at this point) and 1d4 damage from the superheated water each round they stay in the pit. If characters swim down the additional 30 feet to the bottom of the pit, they encounter the heating elements in the walls and suffer 2 damage each round they stay in the lower 20 feet of the pit (in addition to the 1d4 damage each round they stay in the water).

Treasure. Enterprising (read: greedy) players may desire to have their characters extract the copper coils out of the stone. This is certainly possible, although very difficult with the current circumstances. If the water is somehow

drained from the pit, characters could mine out the copper, retrieving 4d10 gp worth of copper per hour, up to 400 gp worth.

Due to the superheating qualities of the copper and the surrounding rock, any characters mining in the pit with no surrounding water suffer 1d4 damage each round. If characters try to mine with the water still in place, the damage is as above, and the rate of excavation is 2d10 gp per hour.

BEHIND THE GM SCREEN

Resource management in the tomb is very important. The traps and obstacles are intended to put players as well as their characters to the test. These are not simply areas to systematically overcome; these challenges are designed to kill the characters and defeat the players. They need to use creative solutions to bypass these situations.

The storage areas contain some resources that may make the difference between success and defeat. The timbers in **area 4**, originally left by the tomb builders to walk over the Lobster Pit at **area 3**, may help stabilize the Bridge at **area 10**; the cloth used for shelter in **area 6** may be fashioned into masks and give advantage on the saving throw against poison in **area 9**. If the players are having a difficult time with the rolls to overcome these challenges, suggest alternative actions besides just “rolling the dice”.

4. STORAGE

This 10-foot-by 20-foot room off the promenade is a closet or storeroom main. The walls are coated in the same smoothed plaster or mud as previous rooms, although they lack the similar intricate decoration. The air smells stale, with a heavy wooden scent. The ceiling in this chamber is only 5 feet tall.

Got Wood? Investigating the back 10 feet of the room reveals several timbers, 6-inches by 12-inches, and 12 feet long. The timbers are solid and dry, made of some distant hardwood not native to the area. They serve no obvious purpose in this room; they were originally used by the tomb workers to bridge the pit trap at **area 3**.

Treasure. The exotic hardwoods could bring a high price from merchants in a medium or larger town. Each of the 4 timbers is worth 250 gp to an artist, crafter, or woodworker.

5. HALL OF HEROES

After the characters make their way through the Promenade (**area 7**) into this room, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 5**):

This long, rectangular room is twenty feet wide by thirty feet long with a bronze double door sealed at the northern end. Each of the eastern and western walls is divided into six recessed compartments containing a clay or mud statue, displayed upon a three-foot-tall pedestal on a two-foot-tall plinth. Each wears a chestplate of ancient armor and bears a decorative polearm. The armor looks to be fashioned of gold or gold-plate inlaid with bright stones.

In four locations, the statues have fallen off the pedestals; bones are mixed in with the armor and what looks like pottery shards. Two humanoid bodies, dressed similarly to yourselves, also rest in the clutter. The air is heavy and stagnant, and smells vaguely of metal, rot, and dust. The alcoves weirdly absorb and redirect sounds, so there is a strange echo chamber effect.

Double Door. The double door at the end of the hall is a ruse; it is simply 2 non-functioning doors inset into the wall to entice the characters to enter the room. The door does not lead anywhere, and only bare stone is behind it.

Alcoves and Statues. Each of the 12 alcoves are decorated in the same style; plain, inlaid script above the display, the stand is unadorned and utilitarian, and each of the remaining 8 statues is an exact duplicate. Bits and pieces of baked clay or pottery are scattered in front of 4 empty alcoves.

The remaining 8 statues depict the same form; an implacably stern-faced warrior. The stone figures each bear a fully functional halberd, and wear real golden breastplates (does not affect their AC). If any of the statues are investigated for more than 2 rounds, or if the door at the end of the hallway is disturbed, 2 **EXO Skeletons^A** leap from their pedestals to attack (marked as **S** on the GM's map). The **EXO Skeletons^A** attempt to flank the party initially, attempting to establish a coordinated attack. The skeletons aid each other in combat, using their tactical programming.

EXO Skeletons (2): HD 4; AC 4[15]; Atk polearm (1d8+1); Move 12; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** blindsight (30ft), immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, tactical programming. **Equipment:** halberd, nanite armor.

Fallen Adventurers. The 2 bodies on the floor were allies of the burglar at the front door. They fell to the skeletons but provided their buddy a means of escape. Their level of decomposition suggests they fell many years ago.

Treasure. Each of the skeletons wear a simple, unadorned breastplate of gold. The armor only appears to be gold (and each piece of armor looks like it is worth 10,000 gp); it is *nanite^B*, however, and designed to replicate a gold look. The armor completely dissolves if its skeleton is destroyed. Each

halberd is a perfectly functional normal weapon; however, the weapon was coated with *timeless oil^B*, so it shows no sign of decay. The pottery shards are worthless.

The adventurers still possess all their equipment from when they fell. One of them possessed a short sword, travelers' clothes, and a pouch with 17 gp. The other holds a dagger, wears a fine cloak (worth 50 gp), and carries 3 scrolls (2 maps of the Blood Plains area worth 25 gp each, and 1 scroll of *knock*).

6. STORAGE

This 10-foot-by 20-foot room off the main promenade is a closet or storeroom. The walls are coated in the same smoothed plaster or mud as previous rooms, although they lack the similar intricate decoration. The air smells stale, with a heavy burlap or linen scent mixed with a very sweet, syrupy aroma. The ceiling in this chamber is only 5 feet tall.

Keys and Crates. Another storage area while the tomb was being excavated, this area has 6 sealed half-barrels of water that are still potable (each barrel contains enough water to sustain 1 man-sized creature for 1 week in the desert), 3 barrels of spoiled wine (undrinkable; anyone who samples the wine must make a successful saving throw or suffer a -1 penalty on all rolls for 1 hour), and 2 crates of durable cloth (enough material for makeshift tents for up to 8 man-sized creatures).

Treasure. There are 3 casks of a vintage honey wine in the farthest corner of the room, sealed and potable. Each is worth 250 gp to a collector, and each weigh 50 pounds.



7. PROMENADE

When characters bypass the Lobster Boil (area 3) and enter the Promenade, read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 6):

After making your way around the pit, you enter a gorgeous twenty-foot by sixty-foot corridor. The ceiling towers thirty feet overhead in an impressive pointed arch. The plastered walls are brilliantly displayed with pictographic scenes of people, animals, and combinations of both, undertaking various tasks; speaking, working, or fighting. People of all descriptions are represented. However, a recurring theme of tall, almost impossibly thin men and women with various animal heads are dominant. The paintings are incredibly life-like and detailed, if not slightly alien.

About twenty to thirty feet down the southern branch of the corridor, you notice a horrific sight. Thick-hafted spears protrude from both sides of the walls, impaling a corpse suspended in the center. A large stain is directly below the corpse, likely caused from the undiscovered trap. A long pole also lays near the stain. The northern corridor leads directly into an alcove-filled hall with armed statues.

The air in this corridor is less stale than previous rooms, although a faint scent of decay lingers the farther north in the corridor you proceed.

Intricate Décor. The plastered walls of the Promenade depict historical events pertaining to the people of the valley. A successful secret door check at +2 allows a character to pick out specific details; the size and scale of the people represented do not seem to match normal humanoid proportions. The beings depicted are too tall and too thin to be normal humans or the like. Their appendages are often too thin and extend an unusual amount. Interspersed with the beings is text, numerals, geometric shapes, lines, and other, undecipherable glyphs. Characters able to read languages (either by skill or spell) can puzzle out some of the text in a language but cannot understand the writing.

Concealed Passage. Concealed under the layers of decorative plaster, a bricked-up passage leads to areas 17–19. The concealed passage can be found from the Promenade with a successful secret door check at –1. If the characters proceed in breaking or chipping off the plaster in large sections of the hallway, this check is made normally.

Tripped Trap. If characters have a light source, the tripped spear trap is obvious once characters enter the Promenade. Details are unclear until they approach in area 8 and investigate, however.

Northern Alcoves. Characters with sufficient light determine the hall to the north (area 5) contains several alcoves, and polearms can be faintly seen protruding from them.

Treasure. If the plaster clay can somehow be removed from the walls intact, and the characters can transport the pieces back to a town with an art or antiquities collector, a university, or a wizard interested in the area, each square-foot section is worth 20 gp for the historical value. Sections of over 25 square feet returned whole may fetch twice this amount. The plaster weighs 2 pounds per square foot.

8. SPEAR-TRAPPED HALLWAY

As characters approach the discharged trap, read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 7):

As you approach the spears, you notice the corpse is suspended off the ground, as if it tried to avoid the horrible trap at the last second. Closer inspection reveals the desiccated corpse is facing you, implying the would-be thief was caught leaving the tomb. Its equipment is still intact, although some straps and clothing have been cut through. The wooden pole on the ground is roughly eight feet long and sheared off at the end. Several copper and silver coins are scattered below the body.

There is only the faintest smell of decay on the corpse; the body is dried to the point of unrecognition. The stain on the floor is slightly in front of the body, and does not initially appear to be a blood stain.

The Obvious Trap. Characters investigating the spears jutting out of the walls easily determine they are part of a trap, but not what the trigger mechanism is. A successful secret door check at +1 or Delicate Tasks check while studying the spears determines that whatever the original trigger once was, it is no longer functional now. The spears can be leveraged back into the walls, but there is no mechanism to lock them into place (they spring back out immediately).

The Less Obvious Trap. The stain on the ground is toxic oil normally found deeper in Kersete's laboratories. The oil is still virulent, and characters interacting with the substance, without specifically stating they are not touching it, risk becoming poisoned. Characters touching the oil with bare skin must make a successful saving throw at –1; failure indicates the character takes 10 points of damage immediately and 1d6 points of damage the next round, or half as much on a successful save. If the damage exceeds the characters current hit points, all the victim's bodily fluids evaporate quickly, leaving a dried, desiccated corpse.

Treasure. The former adventurer retains some of its adventuring gear, including its leather armor. There are 3 belt

pouches and a bandolier somewhat intact. If the pouches and belt are searched, characters find thieves tools, 12 gp, 40 sp, a ball of string, and a magnifying glass.

9. LEVERS AND TILES

As the characters bypass the Spear Trap (area 8) and turn the corner at the southern end of the Promenade (area 7), read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 8):

As you turn the corner at the end of the Promenade, you notice two things immediately; the alternating light and dark stones on the floor, and three metallic levers set into the north wall, roughly four feet from the ground. The two outside levers are pointing down, and the middle lever is pointed up. The stones on the floor stretch fifteen feet down the hallway, all similar tightly-fit pieces, with obvious seams between them. Your mind screams “trap!”

Beyond the alternating stones, twenty-five to thirty feet away, you can make out what seems to be a two-foot-wide bridge, the rest of the floor dropping away. You cannot tell how far it descends from here. There is a sickening stench emanating from the pit even from this distance; whatever is down there is surely horrible. You also notice the ceiling is arched, and significantly lower than this end of the hall. There is only ten feet from the top of the bridge to the top of the arched ceiling. The area looks, from a distance, like a giant crypt.

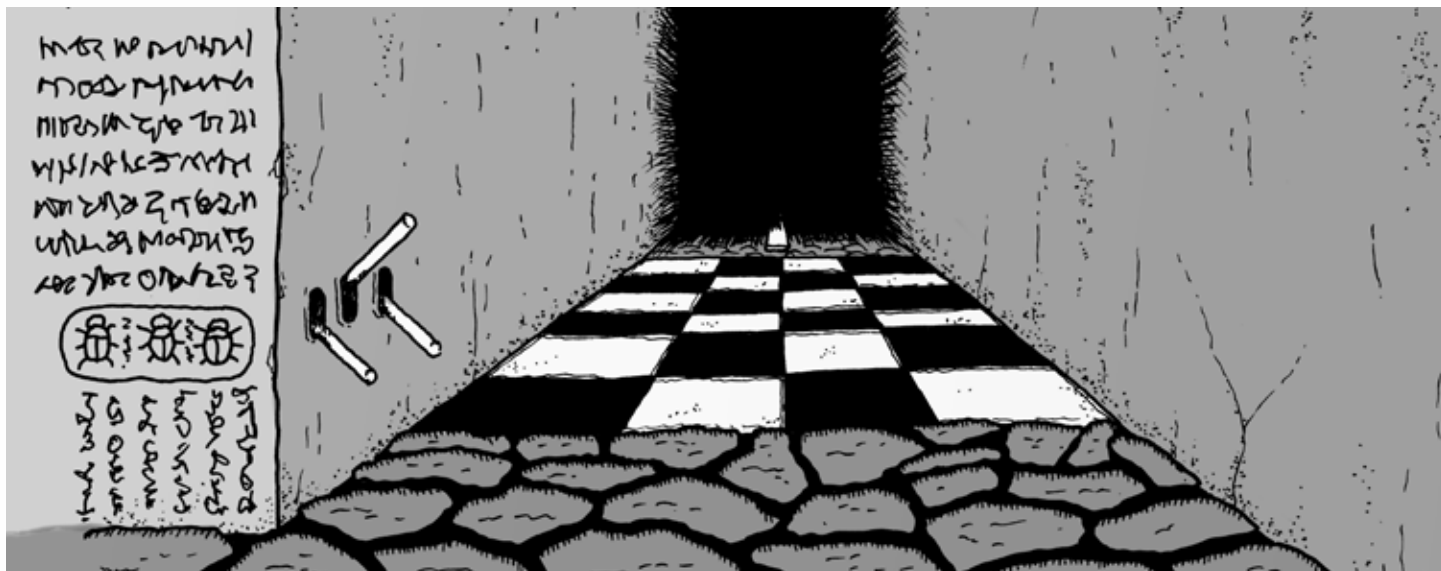
The hallway walls are the same smoothed mud surface common to the rest of the tomb, but without any adornment. They are a uniform drab dun coloration, with a matte finish that absorbs your light rather than reflecting it.

Why did it have to be Levers? Each of the 3 levers is made of *nanite*^B, untarnished by the passage of time and environment. Characters observing the levers closely, and making a successful secret door or Delicate Tasks check, notice the material is not weapon- and armor-grade metal; this material is entirely resistant to decay or rust, cannot be harmed or scratched by normal tools (magical weapons or tools can damage them normally), and is not like any metal any of the characters have ever seen.

The position of the levers is a ruse to waste the character’s time. Each lever has 3 positions: up, straight out, and down. If the levers are moved, a muffled grinding sound is heard “from a great distance”. No combination of lever moves has any effect in this tomb (if you choose to have the levers activate effects in another location, that is beyond the scope of this module but a great idea)!

White Stone/Black Stone. Ah, the classic checkerboard floor. The light and dark stones are another ruse designed to delay and confuse tomb raiders. If a character passes the stones in any way (stepping on either color of stone, *levitating*, flying, climbing the walls, etc.), the **trap** is activated. The only way to safely negotiate the floor trap is to *teleport* or *dimension door* (or use similar magic) to the other side bypassing the floor entirely.

Gas Trap. When any character passes over the front edge of the stones, an odorless gas, tasting slightly of ripe figs, is released into the air through cracks in the tiled floor. The effects take 2 rounds to develop, and if a character is on the checkerboard tiles, must make a saving throw or fall unconscious for 2d6 minutes. A successful save negates the unconsciousness. After 2 minutes, a pungent and obvious gas is released in the same area. This miasma smells distinctly of ammonia and is easily detected. Any characters on the colored tiles when the ammonia-like gas releases must make an additional saving throw at -1 or become poisoned for 1d4 hours.



Unconscious characters automatically fail this save. Any poisoned characters suffer disorientation and confusion — roll 1d10; on a roll of 1–6, the creature moves in a random direction. Roll 1d8 and assign a direction to each die face. The character takes no other action this round; on a roll of 7–8, the character takes no actions, and does not move; on a roll of 9–10, the character acts normally.

After 1 hour, a 3rd gas is released into the tile area. This is a byproduct from an area far removed from this one, a type of venting mechanism. The gas is partially-filtered hydrochloric acid; any characters on the tiles when this gas vents must make a final saving throw at –4. A failed save inflicts 5d8 points of acid damage per round of exposure. A successful save halves the damage. The gas completely dissolves non-living matter after 1 hour of exposure.

The area of effect for the unconsciousness gas is within the alternating stones (it does not go beyond the tiles). The ammonia gas billows out to 15 feet from the tiles, possibly affecting allies of the initial trespasser. The partially-filtered acid is thick and heavy, only emitted 1 foot above the floor, and confined to the area of the tiles. Gusts of wind do not affect the gases, unless they are of a magical nature.

BEHIND THE GM SCREEN

Poison Effects Timeline

Round 1: Trap is activated by passing the front of the tiles.

Round 2: Initial sleep gas is released and begins filling the tiled area.

Round 3: Anyone in the area of the checkerboard tiles must make a saving throw or fall unconscious for 2d6 minutes.

Round 23 (2 minutes later): Ammonia gas is released into the tiles space, requiring a saving throw at –1 or characters are poisoned and confused.

Round 83 (1 hour later): Acidic gas is released into the tile area to “clean” the hallway. Dead characters are melted down and dissolved away. Living characters are wounded by the painful gas and make all further saves against the confusion effect at +2.

Subdued Décor. The walls here are covered in plain mud plaster. The covering does dampen the effects of light, reducing all normal light sources to 50% illumination. Magical light is unaffected.

10. BRIDGE

After the characters bypass the alternating stones (area 9), read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 9):

Making your way past the alternating stones, you approach the crypt-bridge. The lowered ceiling gives a claustrophobic effect to the passage, almost making it feel more like a tunnel, though you can see that it opens back up after twenty feet or so. The façade of the arch just above the tomb entrance has scorch marks along the edge, and the mud is cracked and broken in places, revealing mortared stack-stone beneath. The walls inside the passage are unadorned with the plaster coating common to the rest of the tomb; the stack-stone construction is evident, although blackened as the façade wall. As you inspect further, you are struck by the similarity to an ancient village baking oven.

With close examination, you see that the “bridge” across the pit is a rectangular beam, and if pressed, rotates slightly on its axis in either direction. If rotated, a grinding sound is heard from both anchor points, and a few sparks drop into darkness.

The stench is incredible in the enclosed space; it reeks of an oily, acrid smell rising from the darkness.

The Bridge. The stone bridge is anchored to each side of the pit with a metal pin mechanism, allowing it to spin freely in either direction. The rotation can be stopped by spiking the bridge in place or some other means you deem viable. The bridge is 20 feet long, requiring a successful saving throw at –1 to proceed 10 feet without spinning the bridge; a few sparks are created but no other effects. A successful saving throw at –3 creates no movement whatsoever, and the character can proceed safely.

If the check is failed, the character rotates the bridge, having 2 effects. The first is that they fall due to the quick rotation of the bridge; a falling character can attempt a saving throw at –1 to grab the bridge. If this is successful, an additional saving throw at –2 is required to hold onto the bridge. The character can hold onto the bridge for 1 minute per point of Strength over 13 e.g. a Strength of 16 allows a character to hold on for dear life for 3 minutes.

Characters falling into the crevasse below the bridge fall 30 feet into a spring of natural petroleum. If not rescued immediately, they suffer a terrible fate (see **Lighting the Match**). The second, and by far worse effect, is that a great shower of sparks rains down into the crevasse below. See **Lighting the Match** for more information.

BEHIND THE GM SCREEN

The Bridge is a particularly heinous obstacle to the party. If the players are not experienced enough to seek ways to bypass the bridge, or do not have the proper equipment to increase their chances to survive, suggest they look for resources to help. The timbers from **area 4** could be laid on top of the beam to keep it from rotating, allowing characters to make the saving throws with a +1 bonus; the timbers could also be cut into wedges, and used to jam the rotation of the beam without causing a spark shower; rope could be wound around the rotation point at the end of the beam to interfere with its ability to turn, etc. Allow and encourage the players to create creative solutions to these obstacles.

Flint and Steel. The stone bridge is comprised of dark gray stone, which any druid or dwarf character believes to be flint. In truth, it is a chemically-treated alloy of flint which gives off great bursts of sparks when struck against metal. When the bridge is rotated, the stone ends grind against the metal edges of the pit supporting the steel pins, providing a brilliant display of showering sparks into the darkness below. Spiking the bridge into a stable position also sends a small shower of sparks below but does not ignite the petroleum.

Lighting the Match. If only a few sparks are created by some slight experimentation with the bridge, nothing terrible happens. If the beam is rotated 1 full turn, it is enough spark to ignite the natural “petroleum spring” at the bottom of the crevasse. Once the sparks ignite the sludge, it rapidly expands into a full conflagration, raising the temperature in the confined space to super-heated levels in 5 rounds. The temperature raises to over 200 degrees on the 3rd round, 300 degrees the 4th round, and well over 600 degrees on the 5th round. The heat stays at this level for 1 hour, and then slowly, over the course of 24 hours, returns to normal.

Characters caught on the bridge in this inferno suffer no damage the 1st round, suffer 3d6 points of fire damage on the 2nd round, take 9d6 points of fire damage the 3rd round, and are utterly incinerated on the 4th round. A successful saving throw at -3 halves this damage.

The Easy Way. The simplest way to bypass this encounter is to fly, *teleport*, or somehow climb the walls and not touch the bridge at all. The walls are sheer and oily; any enterprising climber must make a successful saving throw at -2 or Climb Walls check at -10% to move 20 feet. If the check is failed, the character must make another saving throw at -2 to hold onto the wall. If this second check is failed, the character falls into the petroleum spring. As long as the rest of the party does not turn the bridge/igniter, the fallen character is relatively safe (considering they are in a tank of petroleum under an ignition

source)! The character can be rescued by normal methods such as ropes, *levitation*, or other means.

II. HISTORY AND THE SCRIPTORIUM

Once the characters exit the Bridge (**area 10**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 10**):

The corridor stretches another fifteen feet beyond the narrow bridge, then turns to the north. The walls return to the bright décor of previous corridors, and the ceiling again rises to a thirty-foot pointed arch. As you proceed down the corridor, you notice a slight decline in the floor descending deeper into the depths of the earth.

Turning the corner and facing north, you see a truly impressive sight. The hallway widens to fifteen feet, the ceiling rises to about forty feet tall, and the entire visible area is covered in scenes of war, diplomacy, and royalty; the hallway is a historical record of some period in the valley long ago. The walls are brightly colored, and whatever paints or pigments were used maintain their luster. The air in this hall is heavy with a parchment or papyrus scent, and it seems to be coming from the open passage to the east.

Investigating the hallway, you catch a glimpse of light reflected off the far northern wall. In its center is a massive arched bronze door, and your light reflects off the highly polished surface. The door itself, with inlays of precious metals and stones, looks to be staggeringly valuable.

When the characters move into the passage off the main corridor, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 11**):

The antechambers beyond the main hallway are repositories for various written materials. Hardy hardwood shelves span each chamber, piled high with parchment scrolls, papyrus sheets, stone tablets, inlaid pottery, and other more exotic mediums, such as thin metal sheets with odd engravings, embroidered sheets of fabric, and some other less-identifiable pieces.

Each of the antechambers holds two sconces; the sconces have oil reservoirs and shields to protect the contents of the room from errant flames. The air is extremely stale in these chambers, and each has a sound-dampening quality; conversation inside one room cannot be heard in another.

Décor. Similar to **area 7** (the Promenade), this hall is filled with scenes of historical significance pertaining to the people of the valley. However, unlike the Promenade, this hall

seems filled with representations of violence and conquest. A character making a successful secret door check can pick out specific details in the atrocities; again, the size and scale of the people represented do not seem to match normal humanoid proportions.

Interspersed with the figures depicted is text, numerals, geometric shapes, lines, and other, undecipherable glyphs, as before. Characters able to read languages (either by skill or spell) puzzle out some of the text is a language but cannot understand the writing (it is scientific jargon beyond the comprehension of the characters). Any characters able to read the text determine the historical record is sufficient to prove this architecture is from the First Era of Kerseite. Returning with a sizable piece of the plaster completes their quest.

The Great Door. The great bronze door (see area 13) is sealed, with no obvious method of opening it. No hinges are visible on this side of the door. There is only a 1/4-inch gap between the door and the floor, with no seam visible around the edge. Characters making a successful secret door check at +2 determine the door cannot swing outward, due to the tight-fitting jamb.

Ancient Library. Proceeding down the eastern passage, characters find a series of side-chambers. Each of the chambers has stout wooden shelving seemingly untouched by time. The shelves have been coated in *timeless oil*^B, so they remain as strong as the day they were built. Each of the rooms is filled with various sources of media — every object is either a writing implement, bears some form of engraving, or is printed with an archaic language.

Characters able to read languages (either by skill or spell) understand the language is a form of Common containing incredibly complex and intricate academic jargon. With an additional successful saving throw at -1, the reader understands this is a complicated mathematic and scientific treatise.

A *read languages* spell allows the character to understand the concepts as long as the spell is in effect, then it is forgotten. If the writing is copied, the reader suffers the same effects (only understandable with *read languages*). The thieves' ability to read languages does not allow comprehension of the formulae, for any amount of time.

End of the Road? At the end of the hallway between the easternmost antechambers there is a concealed passageway underneath the decorative plaster. Without chipping away the plaster first, the door is nearly undetectable; it requires a successful secret door check at -2 to discover a slight ridge outlining the passage. If the characters proceed in breaking or chipping off the plaster in large sections of the hallway, this check is made with a +3 bonus. The stacked stones are easily removed once the plaster is gone.

Treasure. The historical references in the collected manuscripts are almost beyond value to a collector, and prove

this is Kerseite's tomb. Most of the objects on these shelves are incredibly ancient, and extremely fragile. Pottery is eggshell thin, scrolls are all but clinging dust, books are held together by memories of the past. Any time any of the objects are handled, the character must make a successful saving throw at -2. On a failed save, the object is destroyed (falls to dust, cracks and shatters, etc.) If successful, the object may be read or returned to its original location. If any attempt is made to carry the objects out of the rooms, another save is necessary, this time at -4. If the characters do manage to safely transport an object out of the rooms (you should determine the viability of any such plan), it is worth 1d6 x 100 gp in a large city from a university, wizard, sage, etc. Intact media weighs 1d20 pounds each.

There are a few exceptions to the delicate nature of the media. The metal sheets are nearly indestructible (AC -10[20]; hit points 50; magic resistance 75%) and take 50% damage from all forms of attack, including magic. Each of the 12 sheets has 1 random spell inscribed on it (any class, any level; at your discretion. This is an excellent time to place a specific spell if the party is having difficulties). Each of the metal sheets weigh 1/2 pound.

If the plaster clay can somehow be removed from these walls intact, and the characters manage to transport the pieces back to a town with an art or antiquities collector, a university, or a wizard interested in the area, each square-foot section is worth 50 gp for the historical value. Sections of over 25 square feet returned whole may fetch double or triple this amount to a collector. The plaster weighs 3 pounds per square foot.

12. HIDDEN SECRETS

If the characters break through the plaster and discover the secret passage, read or paraphrase the following:

This concealed passage was obviously never intended to be opened. As the stack-stone is dismantled, air rushing into the chamber churns up an over-powering smell of improperly cured leather or hide. The stench clears after a few minutes, as well as the dust from the excavation. The interior of the chamber is similar to the other library rooms, except for the rancid stench. The reek of the books contained in this chamber is eye watering but not quite vomit-inducing.

The shelves and alcoves here are packed with leather-bound tomes, hide-wrapped scrolls, and envelops full of other papers. If any of these bundles are handled, you notice the wrapping is damp to the touch.

Hidden Knowledge. The books, tomes, librams, scrolls, and other bound materials in this room share one consistent trait; they are all bound in a strange leather-like hide, which even after all these years has not fully “cured.” Each of the bindings still oozes some kind of fluid, not enough to puddle but enough to be thoroughly disgusting and off-putting.

The books found in this chamber are filled with ancient script, including numerology and other odd geometric symbology, essentially very specific reference books. The themes of the books vary from necromancy, conjuration of spirits, architecture, crafting, and other less-understood practices.

If a character studies the books contained in a specific collection e.g. necromancy, conjuration, crafting, or any subject that fits your campaign, that character must make an intelligence check. Roll 5d6 below the character’s intelligence score. If the check succeeds, that character gains 500 xp (at your discretion and if it fits within your campaign). It requires 1 full week to absorb the information in any particular book, and each subject contains 4d6 books.

Hidden Danger. One of the odd properties of the otherworldly nature of the material used to bind the books is that the ooze has a toxic off-gassing. When within 5 feet of the books, a character needs to make a successful saving throw at -2 or contract a disease with the following effects:

- The disease affects all humanoids and demi-humans
- Symptoms manifest after 4d6 minutes, and include paranoia, profuse sweating, and maniacal laughter
- High stress events (damage in combat, casting spells of 3rd level or higher, being reduced to 0hp or less, etc.) require a saving throw at -1. On a success, the infected character can control themselves enough to act normally, although symptoms are still obvious. On a failure, the infected takes 1d8 points of damage and becomes incapacitated with wild tantrums for 1 minute
- Infected creatures can attempt additional saves after 24 hours of bedrest. However, if the infected character fails 3 consecutive saves, all further saves are made at -4

Treasure. For the right collector, sage, or wizard, these books are a rare treat. While they are disgusting and dangerous, the concentrated knowledge contained within them is not found in many other libraries, let alone small collections. The books, if transported and sold in any large city, fetch 1d6 x 200 gp each (you should determine the size of the library based on your campaign). The books weigh 1d20 pounds each, so it is not simple to transport the entire library. Any of these texts also “prove” this is a tomb of Kersete, and can be returned for the party’s reward.

13. BRONZE PORTAL

As the characters approach the door to **area 14**, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 12**):

The massive portal in the northern wall towers to three times the height of a human. Fashioned of what appears to be a single slab of bronze, its face is inlaid with precious stones, lines of gold and copper geometric patterns, and draped with delicate, very intricate silver chains.

The door has no visible hinges from the outside, while the casing around the door is tightly fit. There is a large keyhole in the lower center of the door, and no handle or knob is evident.

The Door. When characters approach within 15 feet of the door, the glyphs and symbology on the wall surrounding the door glows faintly then returns to normal. A slight hum is heard and the faintest taste of ozone is in the air.

The door itself is huge, towering 14–15 feet tall, and 10 feet wide, weighing approximately 25 tons. The door jamb is also bronze-plated steel, somehow inset or fused with the surrounding stone walls. If touched, the door is slightly warm and solidly set in place. It does not budge with slight pressure. A character investigating the door and with rudimentary metalworking skills determines the door itself is made from bronze. The bronze is only a plating; the core of the door is made of a steel alloy. The inlays and engravings are incredibly complex, created by a master artificer. A *detect magic* spell reveals that the inscriptions and door are not magical in any way. Whatever caused the glow was not magically created.

There is no obvious method of opening the door. It is slightly warm to the touch but not harmful otherwise. The door is “held” by a magnetic lock; there is no key, bar, or mechanism to bypass. The only way to open the door is to release the mag lock holding it in place or remove the door and jam from the wall entirely. The door itself has no protections against magic, so any transmutation spells work normally. There are also no spells to prevent *teleportation* or *dimension door*, so those are viable options as well. A *knock* spell causes the door to open, but it then reseals 10 minutes later.

After the characters open the door and reveal **area 14** (False Tomb), unless they use some method of holding the door open, it slowly and quietly closes and reseals. There is no way to remove the mag lock from the door, short of destruction.

The Wall. The wall supporting the door is covered in the now-familiar pictographs decorating the rest of the site. If enterprising characters attempt to chip away at the plaster clay, they quickly determine that mining may be an easier

access to the room beyond than the bronze portal. It requires mining tools or magic of some kind, but a party can break through the 2-foot-thick stone walls faster than they can break through the door. The walls are AC -1[20] and have 40 hit points per square foot section.

Treasure. The metal comprising the door and jamb would be quite valuable in a large city. If the metal can somehow be transported out (likely in various-sized pieces), the characters receive 5 gp per pound (the complete door and jamb weighs 60,000 pounds if removed in their entirety). The plaster clay, if removed carefully, is similar in value to the History Hall (area 11); each square foot is worth 50 gp and weighs 3 pounds.

14. FALSE TOMB, THE FIRST

If the characters bypass the bronze portal (area 13), read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 13):

Bypassing the bronze portal, you witness an impressive sight. Dim torchlight fills this room, roughly twenty feet wide by more than double that in length. Sconces line the walls, and the light is steady, with no flickering change. This is obviously not natural light.

The room is dominated by stairs leading to a three-foot-tall dais. Atop the dais is a large stone block, and even from this distance you can make out the level of detail in the engravings covering the stone. What purpose the stone serves is unknown from this distance. There is some debris at the foot of the stairs leading up the dais; some broken stone and a few bits of metal remain on the steps themselves.

In the northwest and northeast corners of the room, beyond the stone dais, eight-foot-tall statues adorn the otherwise empty room. It is difficult to determine what the statues represent. It looks as if they have been partially melted or the stonework was never finished. To the right of the bronze entry door, in the southeastern corner of the room, is another 'unfinished' statue.

The air in the room smells slightly stale, as if the room hasn't been entered in a while.

Illumination. The 'torches' displayed around the room are merely decorative, to give a designated feel to the room. If the torches are covered — they cannot be extinguished — there is no change in the lighting in the room. The light comes from some unidentifiable source, but it is even and unwavering. The torches are removable from the sconces but cease to function if removed from this room.

Stairs and Dais. Approaching the stairs, it becomes obvious they are constructed of great slabs of stone, stacked on top of

each other to form the stairs and dais. Each is an almost perfectly uniform 7-inch thick slab of granite, incredibly hard and alien to the local environment. This type of stone would have to have been brought from a great distance to be placed here.

False Sarcophagus. The block looks like a sarcophagus, and any cleric of 2nd level or higher can confirm this fact. The detailing on the exterior is exquisite, and the broken pieces on the stairs appear to be the lid, smashed after it was previously opened. Peering inside the sarcophagus reveals that it is empty, and the interior gives access to a hole in the floor, leading deeper into darkness (see area 15, First Treasury).

Statuary. The eight-foot-tall statues in 3 of the corners of the room are strange, semi-melted or unfinished representations. It is impossible to tell what the original intent was, or if the artist was some madman and this IS the final form. What material the statues are made from is impossible to discern; it feels like a waxy stone, but it is not malleable in any way. They are completely resistant to magic if any spells are cast directly at them. The statues are not harmful or dangerous in any way.

Concealed Passage. The clay plaster covering the walls in this chamber are surprisingly unadorned. The drab, khaki mud feels out of place in what should be a hall commemorating a powerful or influential figure. In all, the room has an 'unfinished' overtone in the décor.

The plain wall covering conceals a secret door, but unlike the other covered passages, this is an actual door leading west to area 16, False Tomb the Second. Unlike previous concealed doorways, the matte finish of the walls makes the passage more visible. A successful secret door check allows a character to notice a protruding section of the wall as if the plaster is thicker than in other places. The static illumination in the room also enhances the tell-tale sheen on the wall where the passage is located.

Treasure. Several of the items in this room have value in a large city. Most obviously, the sarcophagus itself is quite valuable. If it can somehow be removed from the room and taken to a collector or temple, it is worth 5,000 gp as a historical and artistic piece. Even if broken up, the walls of the sarcophagus fetch 20 gp per square foot if returned, but such a chunk weighs 25 pounds.

The statues, while not appearing valuable, are made of a substance not found anywhere else on the planet. An alchemist, wizard, temple, or collector pays 10,000 gp each for the statues. They weigh 8,000 pounds each so moving them requires ingenuity. The torches, while removable, lose their properties if they are taken from the tomb area. However, they could be sold as well-crafted items, possibly even able to be enchanted. In a large city they are worth 150 gp each (there are 6 torches in total).

15. FIRST TREASURY

If the characters look inside the sarcophagus (in **area 14**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 14**):

The bits of stone on the stairs leading up to the great block must have once been a lid or cap on the stone, for when you approach, you see a hollow interior. Peering inside, you see the empty bottom of the sarcophagus, and where the head of the sarcophagus should be, there is only a three-foot diameter hole in the natural stone, leading further into gloom.

A strange acrid stench emanates from below; it is a combination of an overly sweet, almost fruity aroma with a stinging acidic miasma. The smell is faintly reminiscent of scented oil, but spoiled and offensive. There is no light or sound escaping the void.

If the characters enter the crypt and descend the hole, read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 15**):

As you peer into the lightless void, the smell intensifies, but your eyes do not adjust to the darkness. If light or darkvision is used to investigate the hole, the natural sandstone appears to be hand-dug or burrowed through. There are what look like faint tool marks as far as you can see, and the tunnel descends ten to twelve feet, opening into a larger room.

The tunnel drops almost twenty feet to a narrow, three-foot-wide natural hallway leading east. The walls are unadorned, smooth, and seem untouched by tool marks. The natural undulation of the stone suggests it was formed by water at some point in the long past.

The hallway stretches out for fifteen feet, opening into a square fifteen-foot by fifteen-foot chamber. The walls here are shaped, and shelves are carved into the natural sandstone walls. Pottery and debris litter the floor. The shelves hold various amphorae and clay jugs. Several spaces on the shelves are empty, and each of the spaces has a hole in the wall, with a protruding rod jutting out. It seems like the rods pushed the containers onto the floor.

What's that Smell? A character making a successful secret door check determines that the smell comes from a fruit-based sweet oil; the type used in wealthy homes like potpourri. The oil has spoiled or fermented, which is also obvious with the check. It comes from down the hole — that is certain.

Tool-dug Tunnel. The small tool marks on the walls are easy to see; what created them is indeterminate. Small gouges, shallow scratches, and strange repeating 'pin pricks' cover every inch of the passage leading up to the sarcophagus hole. If these are tooling marks, they must have taken a great amount of time, for some unknown purpose.

The truth of the marks is they were created by the hordes of devouring scarab beetles that are contained in some of the containers. Their pincers and legs have formed trails and pathways the others use to get out of the storage room.

Unworked Area. This area was originally carved out of the native stone by a spring of petroleum, similar to the one at the bottom of the crevasse (at **area 10**). The spring long ago dried up, and the area is relatively safe. However, if a large amount of flame is brought into the small space (if a spell producing fire, say, is cast in here), the confines and remnants of petroleum-soaked stone cause a massive explosion, effectively doubling the damage the spell would normally cause, and require any saving throw versus the spell be made at -4.

Shelves and Debris. The walls around the room feature several inset shelves containing amphorae, jugs, vases, and other containers filled to the brim with the pungent oils smelled previously. Shards of broken pottery litter the floor in front of some of the alcoves; their shelves barren save for an unusual stone rod protruding from the back of the niche. There is a thick layer of grey dust on the floor, but a successful secret door check allows a character to notice the shelves themselves are not similarly coated. Whatever created the unusual dust, it did not affect the shelves or other containers.

The stone rods protruding from the backs of the alcoves pushed their respective containers to the floor, breaking them open. Extremely careful observers making a successful secret door check at -2 notice not all the alcoves have the rods in back.

Containers. The various containers about the room are all filled to the top with a viscous eye-watering concoction. If one of the containers is carefully taken from its shelf, characters see it does not have a lid and the oily contents are filled to just below the lip of the container. The fluid in the containers is a mixture of *timeless oil*^B, several regional teas, a fruit nectar, and other unidentifiable substances.

The jugs hold various items in them — a few hold knick-knacks, only precious to their former owners, a handful of coins or jewelry, candied fruits — but by far the most critical contents are the 5 jugs containing the **devouring scarab swarms**^A. When a character selects a container to investigate its contents, roll on the **Contents Out of Time** table to determine what's in each jug.

Devouring Scarab Swarm: HD 3; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (2d6); Move 12; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** blindsight (30ft), 50% damage from weapons, immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, immune to targeted magic, swarm.

Oily Concoction. The oil in the containers keeps the contents in a state of stasis; they do not age and are unaffected by the passage of time. Some of the containers, those bearing objects or treasure, are not as affected by the oil — treasure ages pretty well! Other containers holding perishable fruits or other delicate items gain the benefit of being as fresh as the day they went into the mix. The most volatile of the containers are the ones that are broken on the floor, and a few others still waiting; the containers filled with the devouring scarab swarms. These containers, once spilled or broken, wake their inhabitants, which then go on a feeding frenzy, attacking anything in their wake.

Treasure. The bits of treasure in the jugs can be collected if the characters want to invest the time. The containers themselves are finely made, but fairly common (worth 25 gp each, due to the age and quality). The oil could be worth up to 100 gp per container to an alchemist or wizard's research.

BACK IN TIME

The only containers that require special attention are the ones containing the devouring scarabs. When these containers are dropped, broken, emptied, etc. the scarabs contained within are released. It takes 1 round for them to 'wake up,' and after that act normally. Their first action is to attack any living thing, and they devour everything in their path. If there is nothing in the immediate vicinity, they spread out, climbing out of their subterranean depths.

The shock to the system that coming back into time causes the scarabs is extreme and ultimately fatal. The beetles can only survive for 1 hour after they come back to this timeline, and at the end of their life, they rapidly disintegrate into a course dust. Very much like the dust covering the floor...

Contents Out of Time

Roll	Result
1	Random non-valuable object (dice, figurine, block, etc.)
2	2d20 coins (roll 1d6 for the lot: 1–3 silver, 4–5 gold, 6 platinum)
3	Various pieces of fruit, some whole (edible; worth 4d4 gp each piece, 2d10 pieces)
4	1 devouring scarab swarm
5	2 devouring scarab swarms
6	Oil only; if anything was contained in this, it is gone.

16. FALSE TOMB, THE SECOND

If the characters open the secret door from the False Tomb (in **area 14**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 16**):

A puff of chilling, musty air envelops you as the secret door scrapes open. Under the ever-present gaze of the formless statue, you peer into the newly found room. It smells of petrichor as if there has been a water leak in this room allowing some native groundwater or a natural spring to intrude. The unadorned sandstone is dark, and the temperature much colder, suggesting some form of moisture is nearby.

In the center of the fifteen-foot by twenty-foot room is a large stone block, intricately carved, similar to the grand stone in the previous room. What purpose it serves is not immediately apparent. cursory examination reveals no seams or cracks in the massive block. If anyone approaches the stone, it is noticeably colder than the surrounding walls. If touched, the block is not quite ice cold, and if struck or rapped upon, the stone sounds hollow.

Secret Door. As described in **area 14**, the irregularity in the wall concealing the secret door requires a successful secret



door check to notice, and if successful allows the character to notice the plaster is thicker than in other places. The static illumination in the room also enhances the tell-tale sheen on the wall where the passage is located.

The door itself is made of 3-inch-thick hardwood but has not been preserved well; the door is 'mushy' to the touch and has a thin coating of black mold on the interior. The door is locked and requires a successful Delicate Tasks check to open. With the condition of the door, characters may choose to bash it in rather than take a chance with the lock. Due to its flimsy nature, characters can break through the door with a successful Open Doors check at +1. Anyone violently disrupting the door (breaking it in, throwing it open if unlocked, etc.) disturbs the mold spores growing on the other side.

Black Mold. The mold on the inside of the door is a particularly virulent strain of normal mold. Anyone entering the room after a violent disturbance with the door must make a successful saving throw or become infected with *Raider's Lung*. If characters open the door calmly and do not disturb the mold, they are safe. Any disturbance in the room you determine as "violently affecting the door" requires the same set of saves as above.

A Second Sarcophagus? The great stone block in the center of the room seems very similar to the one in the previous room (area 14). The block is wider than the door, so how it was placed in the room is a mystery. The detailing and inscriptions are every bit as intricate as the previous sarcophagus, with similar runes detailing funerary rites. The tomb does not appear to have a lid; there are no seams or cracks anywhere on the block. Close examination reveals a chill emanating from the stone, and after a few minutes, it becomes uncomfortable. If characters leave their exposed skin in contact with the block for 2 rounds, they suffer 1 point of cold damage. Continued contact inflicts 1 point of cold damage every 5 rounds.

If characters decide they must get into the block, they can begin chipping away at the stone. It is AC 2[17], and if 25 points of damage are inflicted (the block resists any damage amount less than 8), a chunk breaks off. The room is instantly filled with a blast of frigid air, and characters in the room must make a saving throw, taking 6d8 points of cold damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

If characters stay in the room, they must make an additional save the following round or suffer 3d8 points of cold damage (no damage on a successful save). The 3rd round the air is still frosty but not painfully so. After the 3rd round, if characters investigate the now-opened block, they find it empty, save for a thick layer of frost and some wispy vapor pouring out.

RAIDER'S LUNG

It takes 1 day for Raider's Lung's symptoms to manifest in an infected creature. Symptoms include fatigue and a hacking cough, sometimes accompanied by blood. The infected character suffers a -1 penalty to all rolls, and does not recover hp normally from rest. Any magical healing cures 1/2 the normal amount. At the end of 24 hours, an infected character must make another saving throw. On a failed save, the character receives an additional -1 penalty (-2 total) to all rolls. On a successful save, the character receives no additional penalty. If the character succeeds on 2 consecutive days, they recover from the disease..

Treasure. As with other locations, the carvings are quite valuable to collectors in a large city.

For each square foot of the block returned to a collector, it is worth 40 gp and weighs 30 pounds.

17. ADVISOR'S CRYPT

If the characters break open the hidden passage from the Promenade (in area 7), read or paraphrase the following (see fig. 17):

After breaking through the ancient brick and stone wall, you see a ten-foot-wide walkway through a large sand floor. The room expands to roughly fifty-feet by fifty-feet. The walkway proceeds thirty-five feet, with north and south walkways extending out after twenty-five feet, creating a large crossroads in the room. The walkway is completely flat and level. The air is stale and dry, with no discernable airflow.

From the entry area, you can make out large stone blocks at each of the north and south 'crosses' in the walkway. A small dais or platform seems to be directly opposite the entry, about forty-five feet away.

If the characters toss any objects into the sand, or disturb it in any way, read or paraphrase the following:

As you disturb the sand floor, initially nothing happens. Within moments, the sand sucks down, forming a small sinkhole roughly one foot in diameter and one or two feet deep. It slowly begins to fill back in with sand, like water flowing in, and a deep, slow moaning or grumbling is heard from what seems like a great distance.

If the characters approach the southern block (in **area 17**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 18**):

This is obviously some form of burial sarcophagus. The intricate carvings and details show funerary rites, prayers to various gods for safety in the afterlife, and several cat motifs. The sarcophagus is inlaid with many colorful if not precious stones, and if looked at carefully, seem to make obscure but faintly recognizable patterns. There are no visible seams or cracks in the block.

Sandbox. This room is the largest you have encountered. It is filled wall-to-wall with sand, with flat stone tiles providing the only defined walkways in the chamber. The air is dry, stagnant, and does not seem to have any flow besides the concealed passage. Druid or ranger characters, and anyone making a successful saving throw, determine the chamber has been sealed without airflow for a long time.

The sand is quite unusual. It has a natural beige coloration, although there are several strains of grey, white, and occasionally light blue/turquoise material mixed in as well. If the sand is contacted, it initially drops away as if a hole of some kind opened up beneath where it was touched or prodded. It slowly fills in, like the sand is liquid. Much of the material mixed into the sand is magnetic and disturbing the surface tension of the sand causes it to be sucked 'down'. Once a hole is created, the weak magnetism breaks its bonds, and the material 'flows' back to its normal state of equilibrium.

Magnetized. The dangerous aspect of the quicksand-like nature of the magnetized sand is if a character contacts the sand with a metallic object like a sword, or worse yet a shield — the magnetism can grab hold of the character and begin dragging them into the sand. If a character probes the sand with a mostly-metallic object weighing over 3 pounds, the object is 'grabbed' by the magnetic fields below the sand (and below this level of the dungeon) and dragged under. If the character lets go of the object, it is lost to the sands. If the object is held, the character must make a successful Open Door check to retain possession.

This check is modified the longer the object is in contact with the sand and by the weight of the object. For every 5 pounds of weight the object is over 3 pounds (8 pounds, 13 pounds, etc.), the Open Door check is at an increasing -1 penalty. For example, if the sand is probed with a two-handed sword (15 pounds), the Open Door check is made at -3. If failed, the sword is sucked under the sand. The sand is 25 feet deep.

This magnetism also effects armor and shields, albeit slightly differently. The magnetism is less focused on objects with larger surface area. The penalty to the Open Door check is made at -1 for every 10 pounds. A character in

chain mail (50 lbs.) falling onto the sand must make a successful Open Door check at -5 to avoid being stuck to the sand. Armored characters captured by the magnetism are safe for the 1st and 2nd rounds, and at the end of the second round they begin being pulled under the sand. The draw is noticeable while walking the stone pathway, so characters in metal armor are aware there is danger here. If a character is drawn below the sand, they begin to suffocate, requiring a saving throw once under the sand. If this is failed, the character cannot breathe, and can hold their breath for 1 minute per point of constitution over 13. If the character is under the sand, and can no longer breathe, they are reduced to 0 hp. If the character is at 0 hp for 3 rounds, they perish.

The Pathway. The pathway is made of solid stone (the walkways are actually 25 feet tall, but it would be quite difficult for the characters to know this) and stable. The walking surface is flat and level, with only minor blemishes to its surface. The path is raised 2-6 inches above the surrounding sand.

Characters on the walkway bearing metal object feel the pull of the magnetic sands; the pull is significantly stronger depending on the abundance of metal each character is carrying. If characters stay more than 5 feet away from the edge of the pathway, the pull is easily overcome.

If combat is engaged in this room, and characters fight on the pathway, the situation gets more unpredictable. Any character wearing ring mail or heavier armor (any mostly metal armor over 40 pounds) must make — a successful saving throw for each round of combat. A failure means that the character maneuvered too close to the edge of the pathway and must deal with the magnetic sand (see **Magnetized**). The pathway leads to the Advisor's Crypt, **area 18**, the Consort's Crypt, and **area 19**, the Wellcap.

The Advisor's Sarcophagus. This magnificent stone block is inlaid and carved with funerary rites, glyphs of power, felines of several types, and semi-precious stones. The entire block is a facade for the sarcophagus beneath. If the exterior is carefully chipped away, the pieces can be returned to a large city for a substantial reward. The exterior is AC 4[15], and 15 hit points per square foot. Characters making a successful Delicate Tasks check can chip the sides at the corners, giving the characters slabs of decorative stone to return (see **Treasure**).

Inside the exterior stone facade is a plain reed casket. It is significantly smaller than the stone sarcophagus, only 5 feet long and 2 feet wide. If the casket is opened, the **techno-mummy**^A inside opens its eyes and rises up to attack its tomb defilers! The advisor attacks all living creatures in the crypt room, moving to cut off escape and taking advantage of the sand's magnetic properties if possible (the mummy is not magnetic in any way, so the sands do not affect it in combat).

Advisor, Techno-mummy: HD 8; AC 6[13]; Atk rotting fist (2d4+2 plus rot); Move 9; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 10/1,400; **Special:** biohazard, blindsight (30ft), dread, rotting touch, unliving, vulnerable to fire.

Treasure. The 2 ends of the exterior of the Advisor's Crypt are 25 square feet each (worth 1,000 gp and weighing 1,250 pounds), while the 2 sides are 50 square feet each (worth 2,000 gp and weighing 2,500 pounds). Removing the pieces of the crypt would be an engineering marvel, but adventuring parties are clever! The advisor has no personal wealth.

18. CONSORT'S CRYPT

If the characters approach the northern block (in **area 18**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 19**):

This is obviously some form of burial sarcophagus. The intricate carvings and details show funerary rites, prayers to various gods for safety in the afterlife, and several snake motifs, intertwining and writhing upon the stones. They almost look lifelike, as if they could animate at any time. The sarcophagus is inlaid with striations of gold, copper, bronze, and other metals. There are no visible seams or cracks in the block.

The air is colder immediately next to the sarcophagus and smells lightly of jasmine and spices.

The Sandbox and the Path. These are described in **area 17**, Advisor's Crypt.

The Consort's Sarcophagus. All previous sarcophagi pale in comparison to this masterpiece. The carvings are master-quality, and the inlaid precious metals are worth a king's ransom. The carvings display funerary rites, glyphs of power, and snakes of several types. The entire block is a facade for the sarcophagus beneath. If the exterior is carefully chipped away the pieces can be returned to a large city for a substantial reward. The exterior is AC 4[15], and 15 hit points per square foot. Characters making a successful Delicate Tasks check can chip the sides at the corners, giving the characters slabs of decorative stone to return (see **Treasure**).

Inside the exterior stone facade is an exquisitely woven reed casket. It is significantly smaller than the stone sarcophagus, only 5 feet long and 2 feet wide, and has an iron padlock clasping several lengths of iron chain. If the chains are removed — opening the lock requires a successful Delicate Tasks check at -10% — the **techno-mummy**^A inside the casket begins to stir; characters feel an overwhelming presence affecting their minds! The consort attacks all living creatures in the crypt room, using its mental powers to cut off escape and taking advantage of the sand's magnetic

properties if possible (the mummy is not magnetic in any way, so the sands do not affect it in combat).

The Consort. The consort is a normal **techno-mummy**^A with the following changes:

Consort, Techno-mummy: HD 8; AC 6[13]; Atk rotting fist (2d4+2 plus rot); Move 9; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 10/1,400; **Special:** bio-hazard, blindsight (30ft), dread, spell-like abilities, retained memory (it knows every-thing about its past life), rotting touch, un-living, vulnerable to fire. **Spell-like abilities** (At will: *detect thoughts, guidance, mage hand*; 3/day each: *charm person, comprehend languages, magic missile* (3 missiles); 1/day each: *blur, command, confusion, dispel magic, hold person*).

Treasure. The 2 ends of the exterior of the Advisor's Crypt are 25 square feet each (worth 2,500 gp and weighing 1,250 pounds), while the 2 sides are 50 square feet each (worth 5,000 gp and weighing 2,500 pounds). Removing the pieces of the crypt would be an engineering marvel, but adventuring parties are clever!

The consort was buried with a fraction of its wealth from life. It wears a golden torc of intertwined snakes worth 2,500 gp and 8 rings worth a total of 3,500 gp. Inside the reed casket are silken sheets worth 200 gp.

19. WELLCAP

If the characters proceed down the eastern walkway (in **area 19**), read or paraphrase the following (see **fig. 20**):

The squat dais at the end of the walkway is a roughly circular five-foot diameter platform. It appears to be formed from the same clay as the walls but smoothed and glazed. Geometric shapes cover the upper surface — their purpose beyond your grasp.

Upon close inspection, you notice a seam between the base of the dais and the stone floor. There is no airflow, scents, or sounds emanating from the seam. Water does not flow into the crack if any is poured around the dais.

The Sandbox and the Path. These are described in **area 17**, Advisor's Crypt.

Glazed Cap. The clay comprising the cap is a hardened version of the clay plaster used everywhere else in the tomb. The baked clay was also coated in *timeless oil*^B, so it has maintained its strength and luster through the ages.

The seam separating the cap and the surrounding floor is obvious, although its purpose is unclear. It is too narrow to place fingers in although a thin tool could be used to probe it. The shapes and glyphs on the cap are not deep enough to give much purchase to manipulate, rotate, or move the

cap. The cap is AC 4[15], 25 hit points, immune to all damage from attacks that inflict less than 6 points, and takes 50% damage from slashing and piercing weapons. It is completely resistant to all forms of magic.

Sealed Portal. If the glazed cap is broken and separated, the clay coating reveals a metallic portal beneath. The door is hinged on one side and has a circular wheel in the center. The door sits flush to the surrounding floor tiles, an airtight seal. There is no obvious lock or keyhole.

The hinges and wheel mechanism are both coated in *timeless oil*^B to maintain their function. If the wheel is turned (requiring a successful Open Door check at -2; 2 characters may grasp the wheel at a time, gaining a +2 bonus on the roll), a blast of air escapes once the seal is broken. Unidentifiable smells emerge from the darkness, something akin to pungent perfume, with a definite alchemical property.

The portal covers a shaft or well leading off into darkness. The walls of the shaft are metallic, and metal rungs form a ladder leading down, further into the crypt.

END OF THE LINE

The Wellcap is the completion of this adventure. A description of the passage leading further underground is provided here, and you are encouraged to devise additional adventures for your group, or you can wait patiently for the next installment in the *Tales of the Black Tower* series.

The Wellcap is an excellent foil for the party. If you do not have more material for them to proceed into, just let them know they cannot open the portal, or require some code or key they must find in another location. While this is the end of this adventure, it is only the beginning of adventures in *The Black Tower*!

What could possibly go wrong?

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

DEVOURING SCARAB SWARM

Hit Dice: 3

Armor Class: 7[12]

Attacks: 1 bite (2d6)

Saving Throw: 14

Special: blindsight (30ft), 50% damage from weapons, immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, immune to targeted magic, swarm

Move: 9/9/3 (climb/burrowing)

Alignment: Neutrality

Number Encountered: varies

Challenge Level/XP: 5/240

The devouring scarab swarm is a malign mechanical version of a standard swarm of insects, created in a laboratory by Kersete in ages past to dispose of debris of all kinds. The insects are individually nonthreatening, but as a swarm, they inflict horrendous damage. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for an insect. If the swarm is within melee range of a target at the end of its turn, it automatically inflicts 2d6 points of biting damage. It does not need to make a successful to-hit roll to inflict this damage. A scarab swarm can reduce an unliving creature to nothing in 1d4 rounds. The swarm can eat through metal, glass, and ceramics in an additional 1d4 rounds. The



only material the scarabs do not eat is stone, but they do burrow through it.

Due to its mechanical nature, the swarm is immune to all poisons, charm, fear, and hold-type spells, and any spells that specifically target an individual creature. Area of effect

spells harm the swarm normally, but spells requiring a target fail when cast, as if the swarm had 100% magic resistance. The spellcasting character loses whatever spell was cast. The swarm takes half damage from all physical weapon attacks.

The moving swarm is a mesmerizing experience when it's not coming towards you. The swarm is attracted to high-pitch sounds which could be used to distract it. Unfortunately, the frequency at which adventurers scream is also quite attractive to the creatures!

Scarab swarms can 'see' all objects within 30ft, including invisible or incorporeal targets. However, the swarm is held at bay by strong acrid scents. This does them no harm, but they avoid any area with an acidic scent. Ammonia, urine, and acidic compounds can hold scarab swarms at bay if poured on the floor as a barrier. The tiny constructs are not particularly hardy, and once they begin their function (clearing debris), they begin a slow disintegration of their atomic structure. Ironically, as cleanup creatures, this reduces them to a fine grey dust or ash over the course of 24 hours.

Devouring Scarab Swarm: HD 3; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (2d6); Move 12; Save 18; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** blindsight (30ft), 50% damage from weapons, immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, immune to targeted magic, swarm.



EXO SKELETON

“EXTENDED EXISTANCE COUNTERPART”

Hit Dice: 4

Armor Class: 4[15]

Attacks: by weapon (1d8)

Saving Throw: 13

Special: blindsight (30ft), immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, tactical programming

Move: 12

Alignment: Neutrality

Number Encountered: 1d6

Challenge Level/XP: 5/240

EXO skeletons are scientifically-created simulacra designed to replace the need for living creatures to perform mundane tasks. While EXO skeletons are mindless, they do have a technology that guides their actions. The skeleton can make a coordinated attack when within 30 feet of another skeleton. This allows the skeletons to use combat actions to close ground, avoid attacks, or any other action to improve its combat prowess. Treat the EXO skeleton as an intelligent foe with regards to combat tactics.

Typically, these automata are used for unpleasant, or in some cases dangerous work (refuse collection, mining,

soldiering, etc.) Like animated objects, the EXO skeletons continue to perform their last ordered tasks to the best of their ability until given another command. The EXO skeletons are capable of some limited independent action although they typically have 3–4 innate commands (known as Behavior Laws, or BLs, for short) that they cannot normally defy. Normal EXO skeletons lack the ability to communicate although some advanced designs may be able to communicate in different ways (writing, speech, or some other method).

An EXO skeleton does not require food, drink, sleep, or air. It does need to self-recharge for 1 hour every week; during that time, it cannot perform any tasks, but it can accept commands to carry out at a future time.

Very rarely, an EXO skeleton encounters a situation where it has a conflict with one of its Behavioral Laws. In these situations, the skeleton must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. If the skeleton fails the save, it acts in accordance with its BL and continues with its programming. If the construct fails its save, it has gained a degree of independent thought, and it can act free-willed. These episodes of free will rarely last more than 24 hours but on occasion may be permanent (your discretion).

EXO Skeleton: HD 4; AC 4[15]; Atk by weapon (1d8); Move 12; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:**

blindsight (30ft), immune to poison, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold*, tactical programming.

TECHNO-MUMMY

Hit Dice: 8

Armor Class: 6[13]

Attacks: rotting fist (2d4+2 plus rot)

Saving Throw: 8

Special: biohazard, blindsight (30ft), dread, rotting touch, undead, vulnerable to fire

Move: 9

Alignment: Chaos

Number Encountered: 1 or 2

Challenge Level/XP: 10/1,400

These mummies are prepared with technology and science, not dark magic or curses. The undead creatures are created in scientific laboratories in places where technology has evolved to an extremely high level. While some may be the result of medical experiments failing, or chemical interactions gone awry, they are usually part of a larger meticulous plan. Unlike the “more common” mummies, dark necromantic rituals have no part of their creation. Observing the mummy being animated by powers other than the gods fills all onlookers with a sense of nihilism and dread. Any viewer within 30 feet must make a successful saving throw. If the save is failed, the viewer is frightened and suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls for 1 minute. If the save is failed by 5 or more, the viewer is unconscious for the same duration. If the save is successful, viewers may act normally. They can ‘see’ all objects within 30ft, including invisible or incorporeal targets.

The chemicals and preservatives used to prepare the techno-mummy have potentially damaging effects upon living tissue. Any character striking the mummy with a weapon (melee or ranged) releases a cloud of chemicals that surround the creature in a 5-foot radius. Anyone entering the radius must make a saving throw. If successful, the chemicals are merely an irritant, and all further attacks made within 5 feet are made at a -1 penalty. If the save is failed, the character is poisoned and must make a new saving throw every round for 4 additional rounds. Every failure of this save inflicts 2d6 points of poison damage.

The techno-mummy makes a single attack with its rotting, disfigured fist. If the target is a living creature, it must succeed on a saving throw or suffer chemical burns from the mummy’s preservative fluids. The fluids do not mix with living flesh; the afflicted target can’t regain hit points normally, and its hit point maximum decreases by 3d6 for every 24 hours that elapse. If the chemicals reduce the target’s hit point maximum to 0 its body turns to chemical sludge. The affliction lasts until removed by a *neutralize poison* spell or similar magic.

Techno-mummies do not rot or decay normally. They are well-preserved and last for thousands of years, if not forever. Rarely, a techno-mummy retains some of its memories from when it was living and thus has the basic goals and drives as it did in life. They are all Chaotic and thoroughly evil. Some of these creatures turn on their creators, but others follow commands and plans, attempting to aid their “masters”. Some of these creatures may retain a semblance of their former skills if they were adventurers (the parameters of these abilities are left to your discretion). Divine spellcasters are universally cut off from their former deities and retain no abilities.

Techno-mummy: HD 8; AC 6[13]; Atk rotting fist (2d4+2 plus rot); Move 9; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 10/1,400; **Special:** biohazard, blindsight (30ft), dread, rotting touch, unliving, vulnerable to fire.

APPENDIX B: NEW ITEMS

The following items are new discoveries of a technological or scientific nature. If such items do not fit into your campaign, they are easily explained with similarly magical properties. If they unbalance your campaign, feel free to remove them and use any magic item you see fit to duplicate their effects.

TIMELESS OIL

This clear, thick oil is used to coat objects to resist the passage of time. Items coated in timeless oil are shielded from the ravages of time, do not age, and are effectively in a permanent state of stasis. One dose of the oil can protect 1 object of up to 1 cubic foot. The effects are permanent. The oil does not affect living matter, nor does it affect consumables such as foodstuffs or drinks. The oil is incompatible with magic items, and if used on a magic item, there is a 50% chance of 1 of 2 effects: either the magic is drained from the item, dispelling it permanently, or the oil has no effect and is wasted.

NANITE

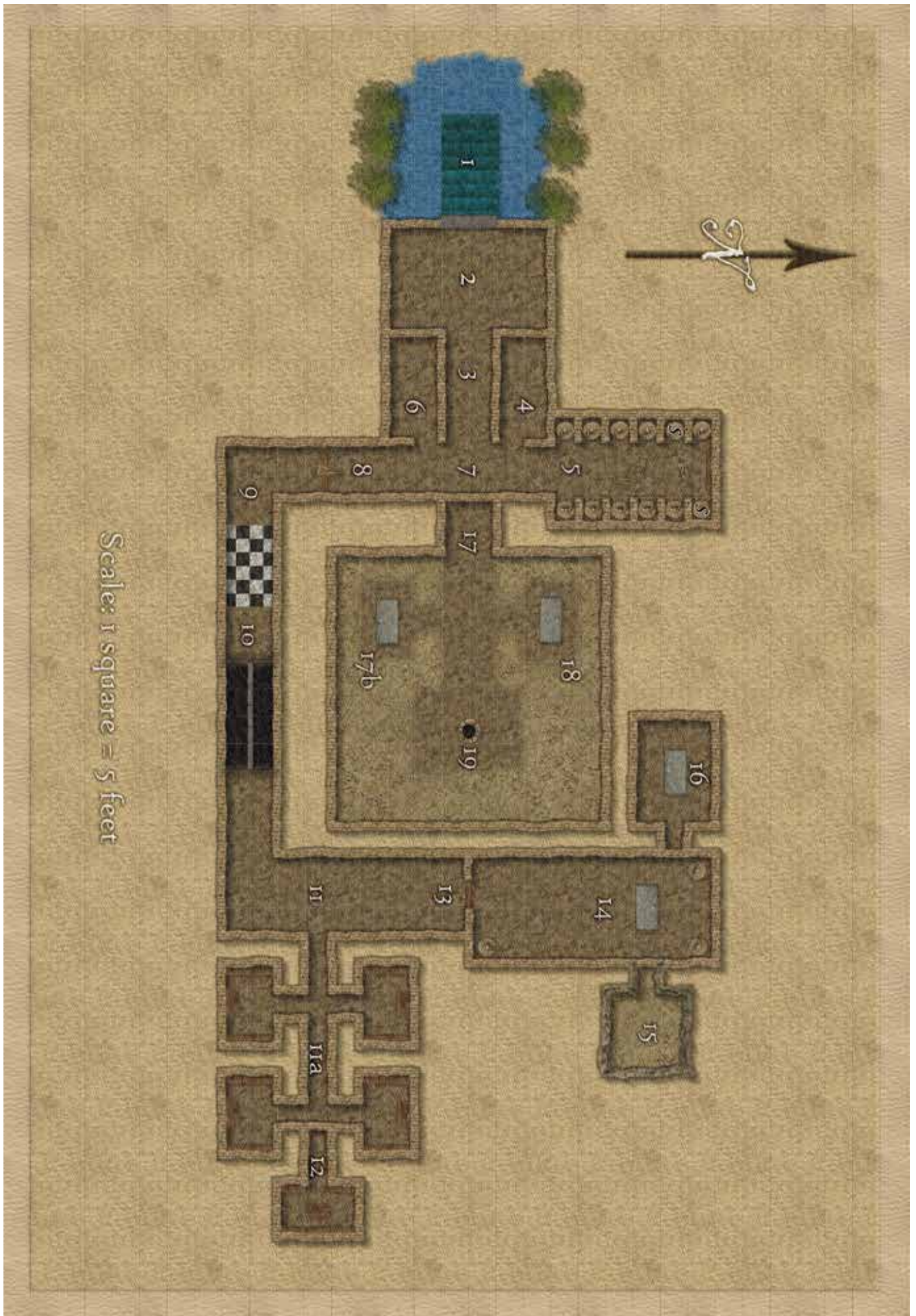
Nanite is a highly malleable substance able to take the form of any material. The substance is crafted to the form desired, and then a manufacturing process stabilizes it to remain in its new form permanently. Nanite’s native form is very similar to clay, and master craftworkers can create objects of amazing complexity out of it. Nanite does not change spatial properties, so enough must be used for the result desired. Example: a fist-sized ball of nanite could not be used to build a boat (unless you want a fist-sized boat). Once the nanite is stabilized into its final form, it cannot be used again.

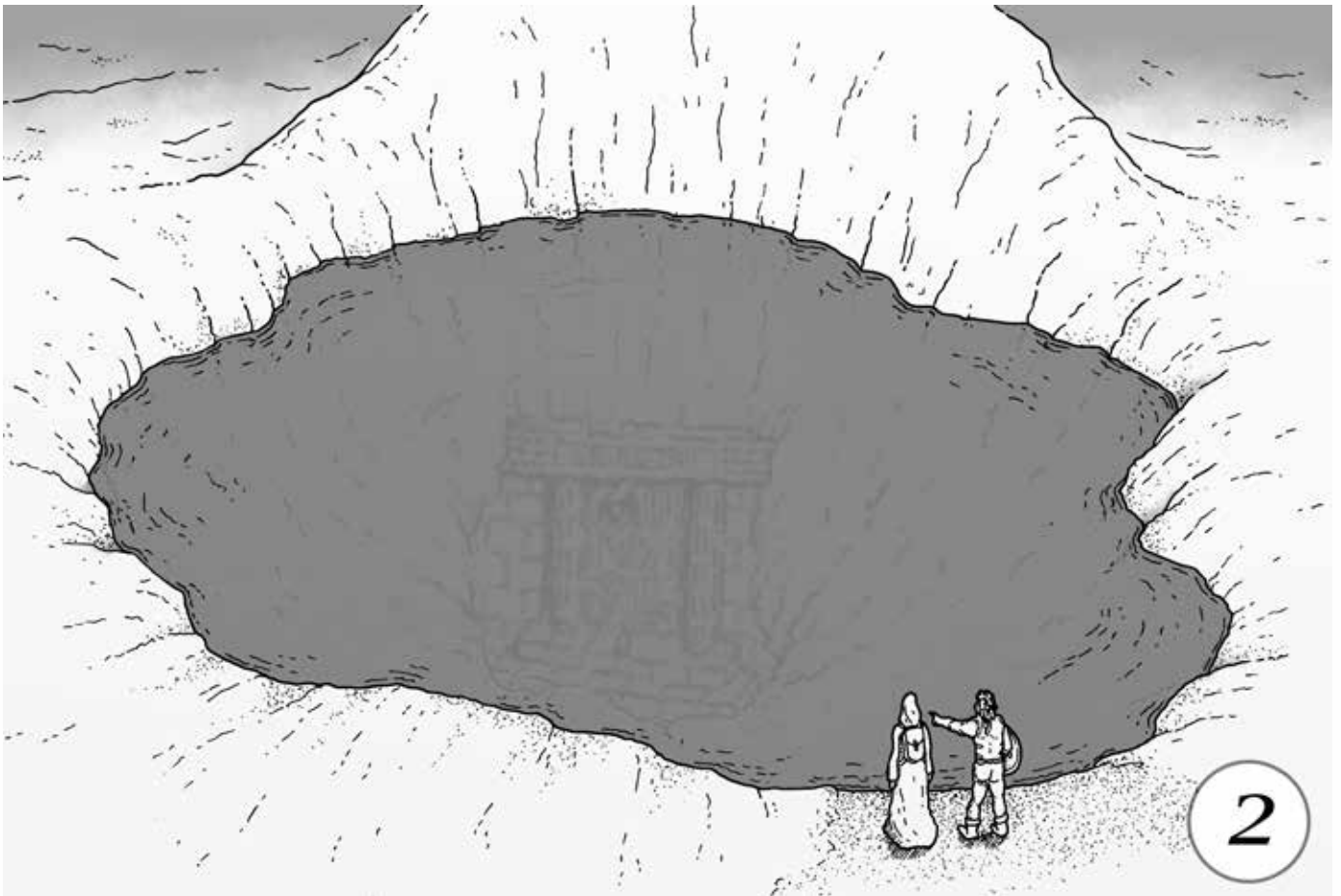
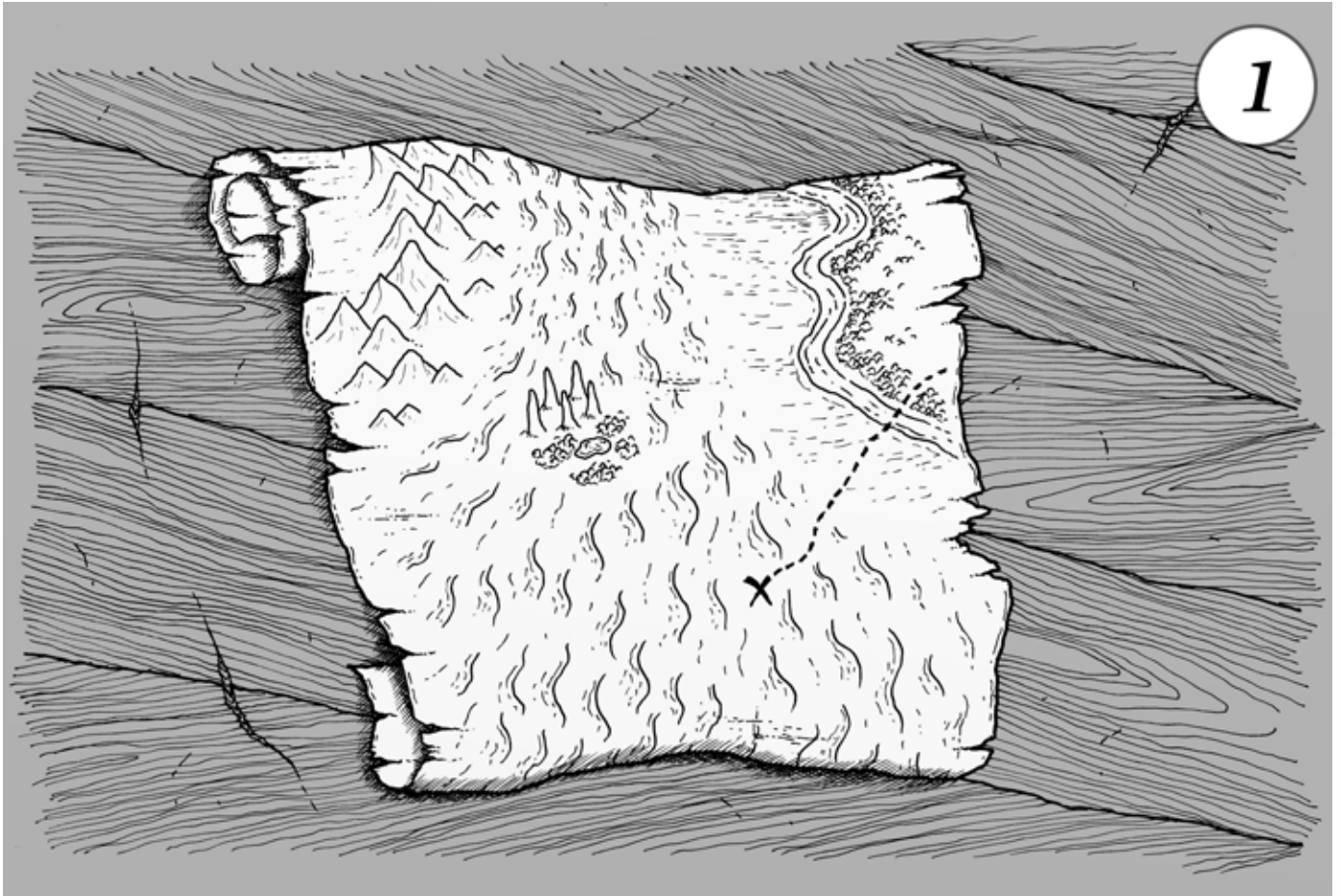
Nanite is similar to the *fabricate* spell, except items with a high degree of complexity could be created if the proper skill and tools are available. Also, nanite is extremely rare and would be quite sought after if its existence became widely known.



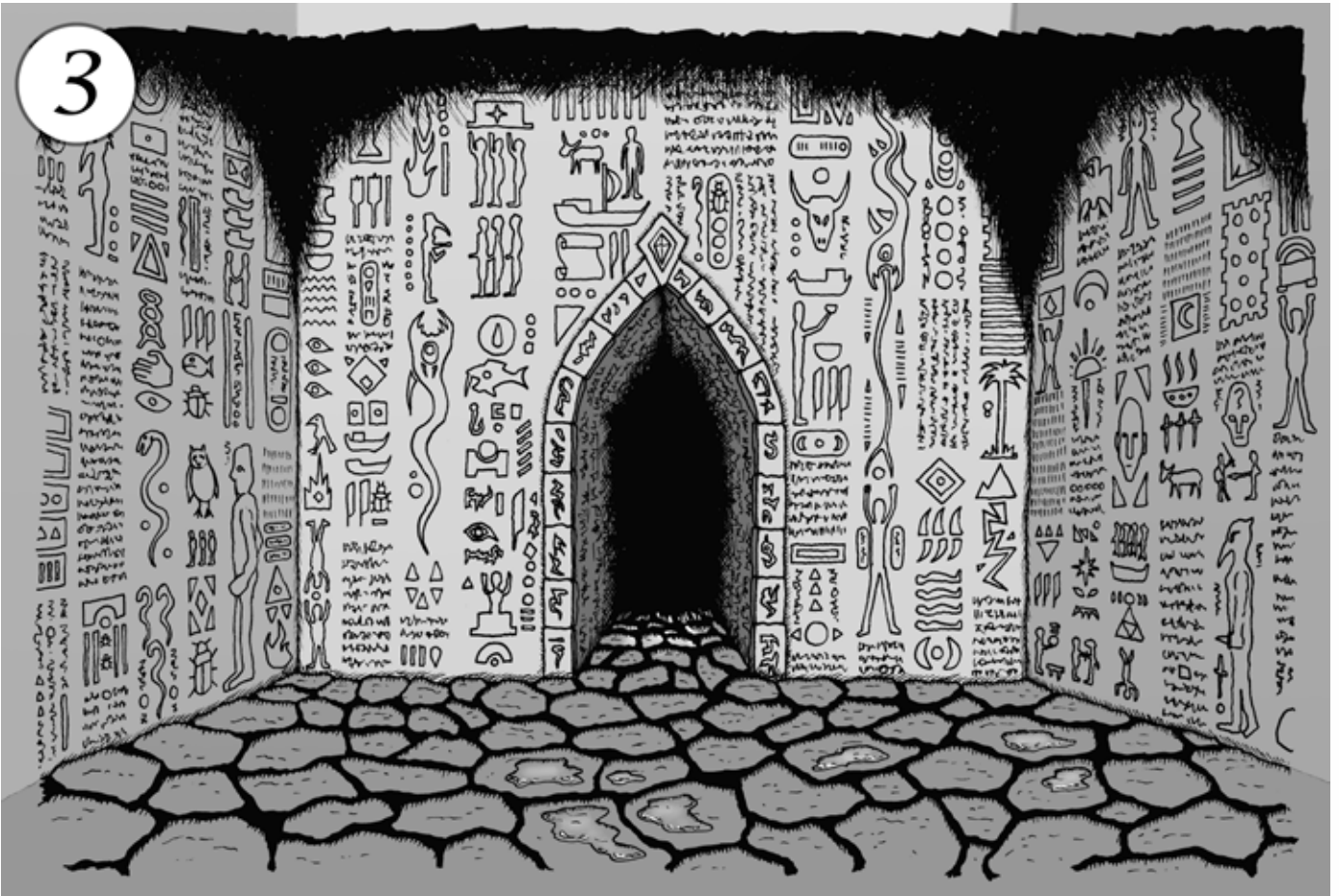
THE SUMARA BASIN

ART BY MONKEYBLOOD DESIGN

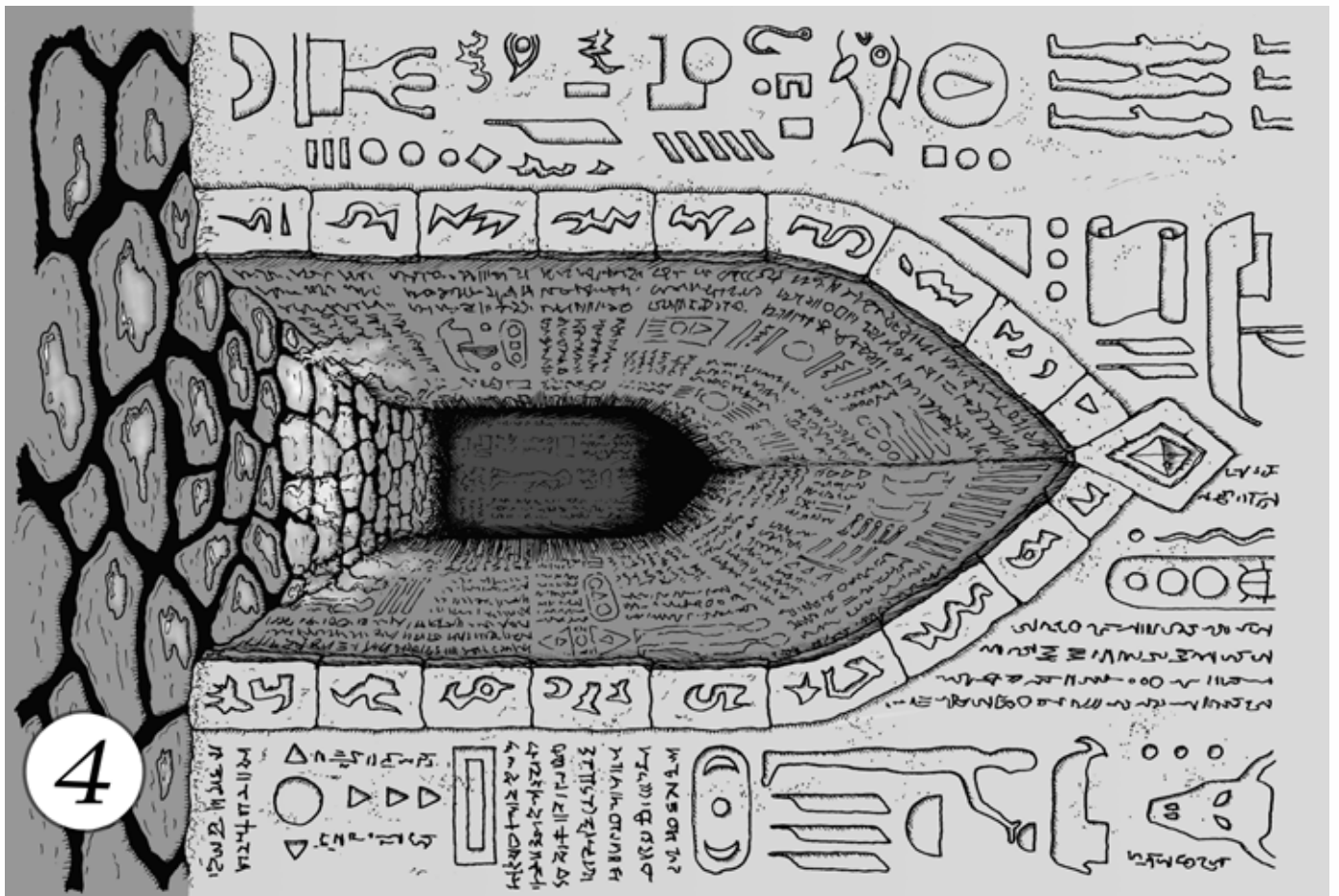


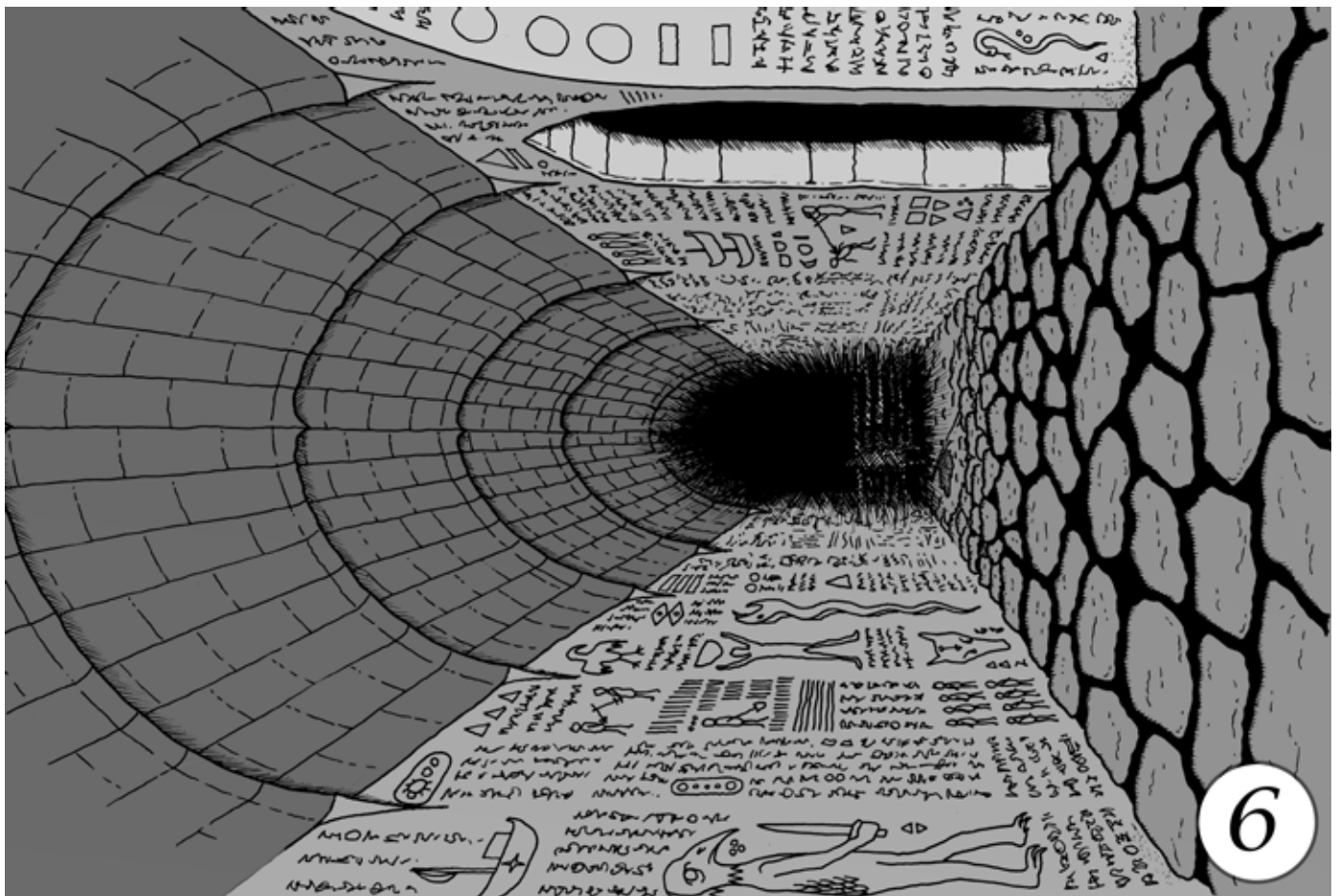
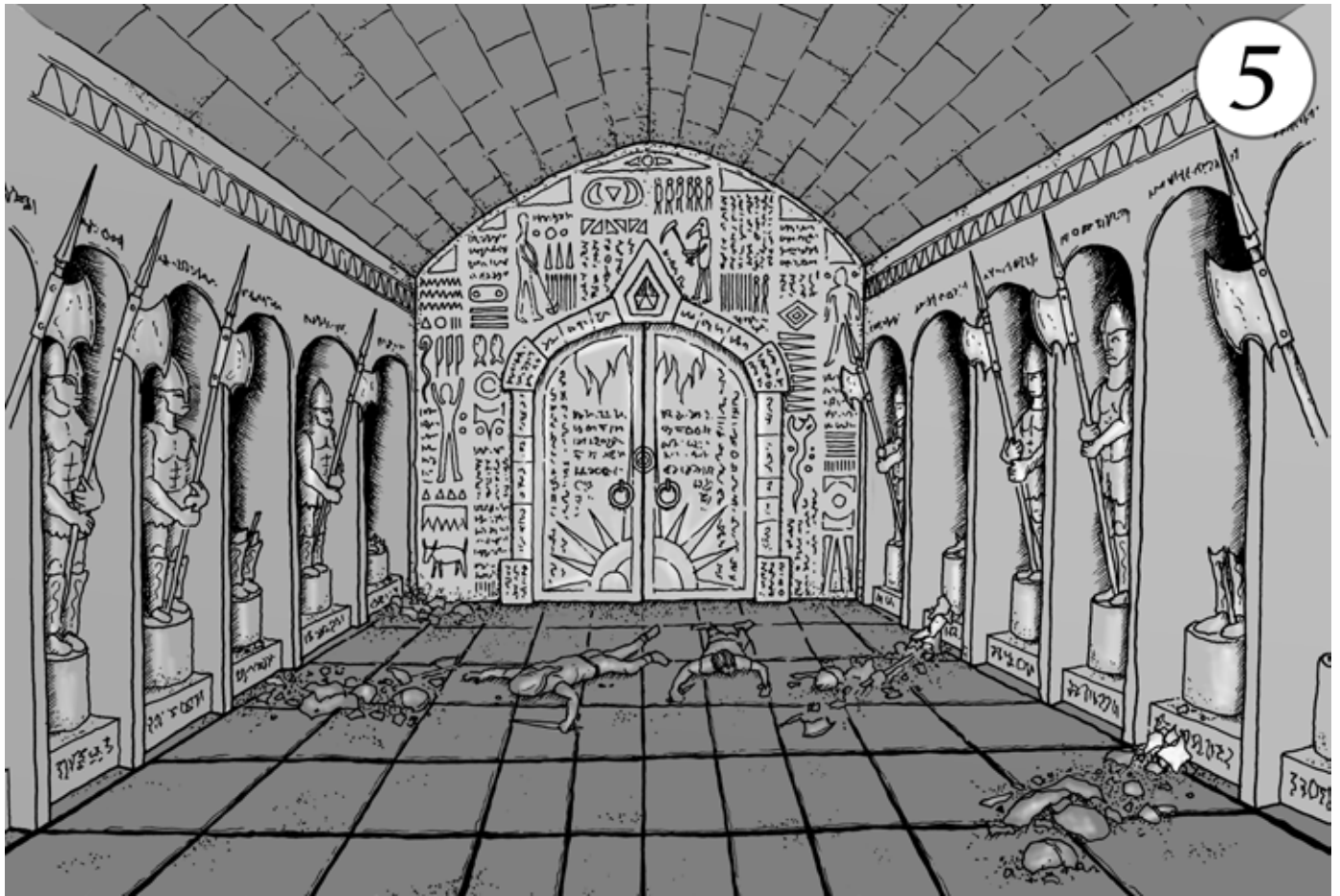


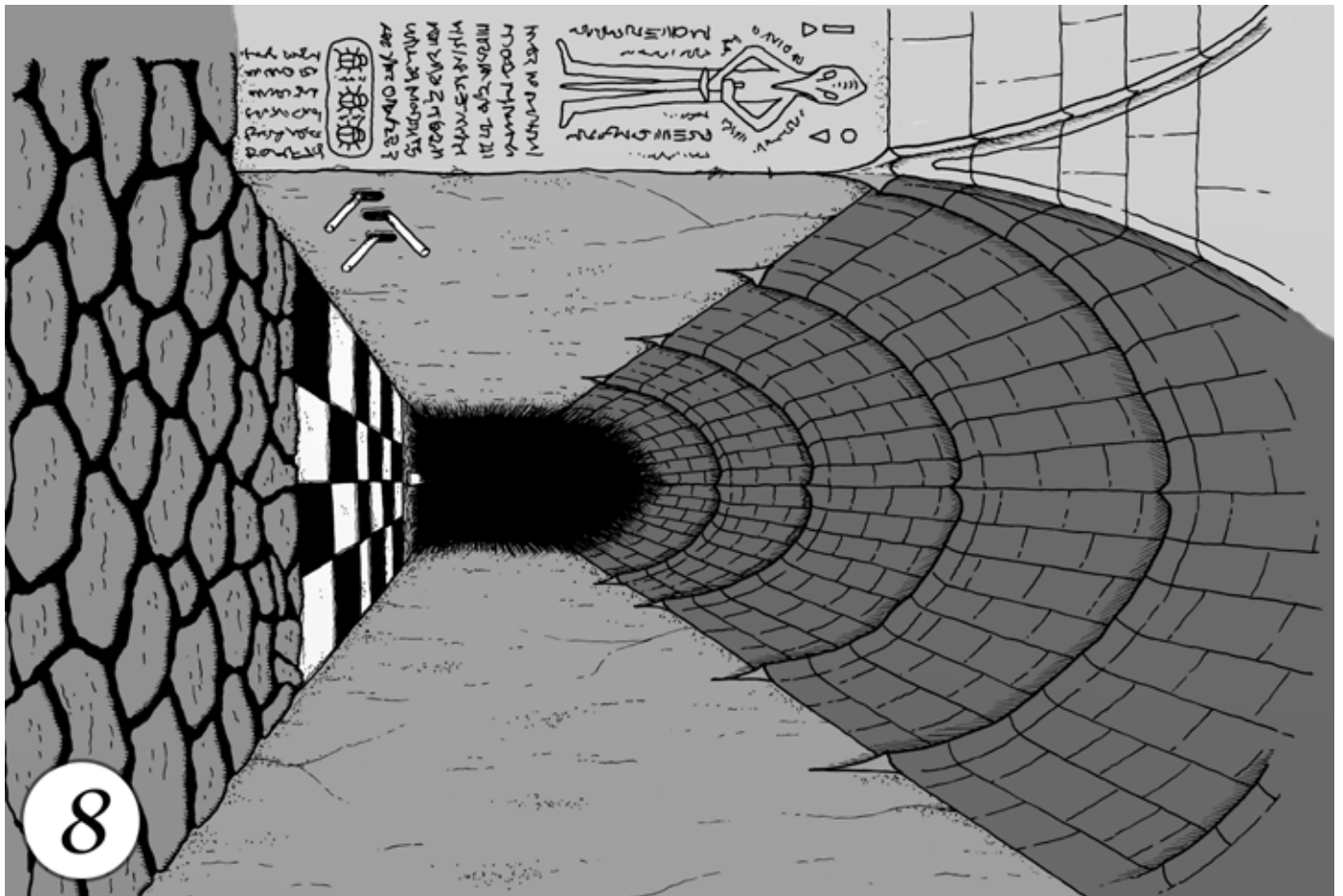
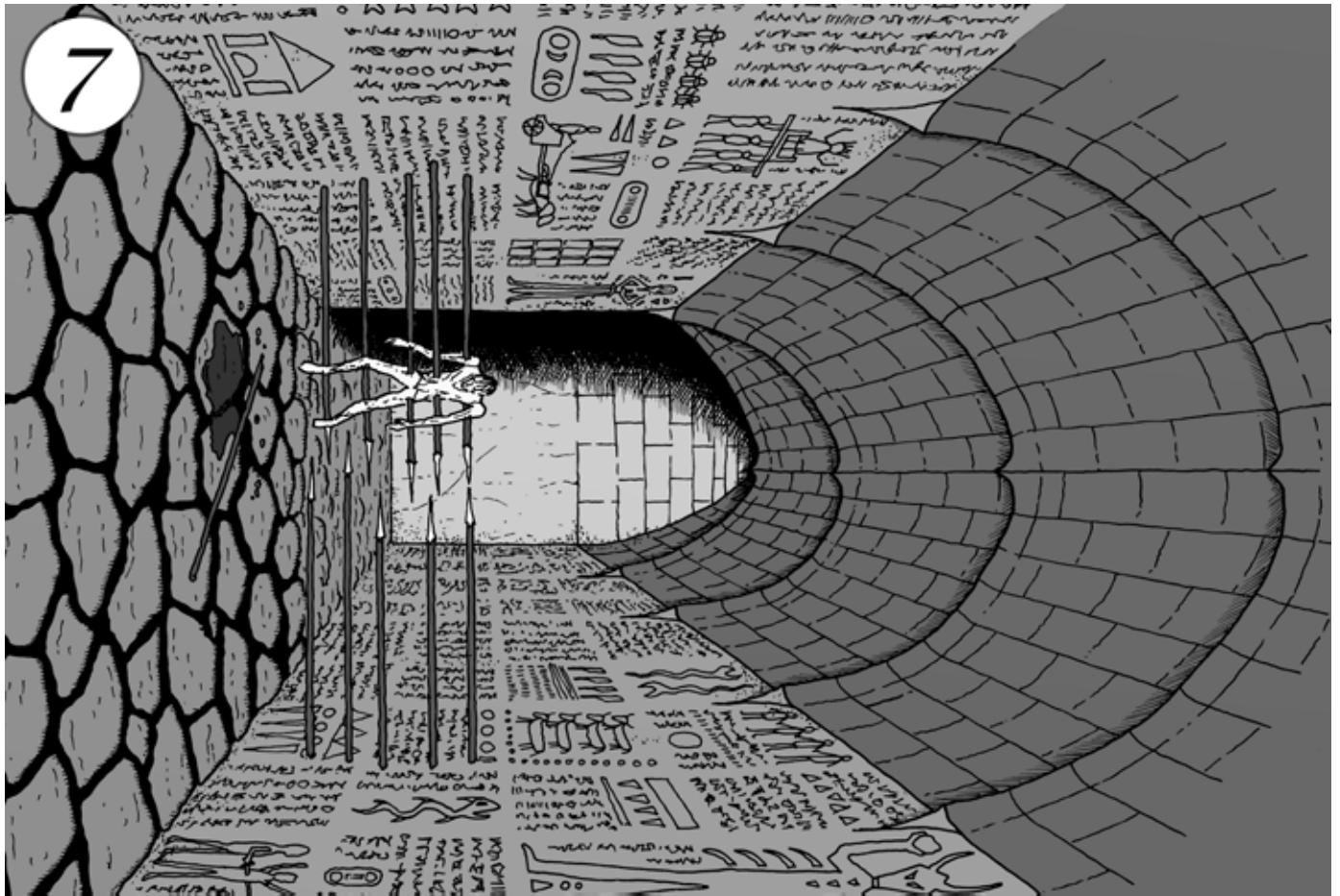
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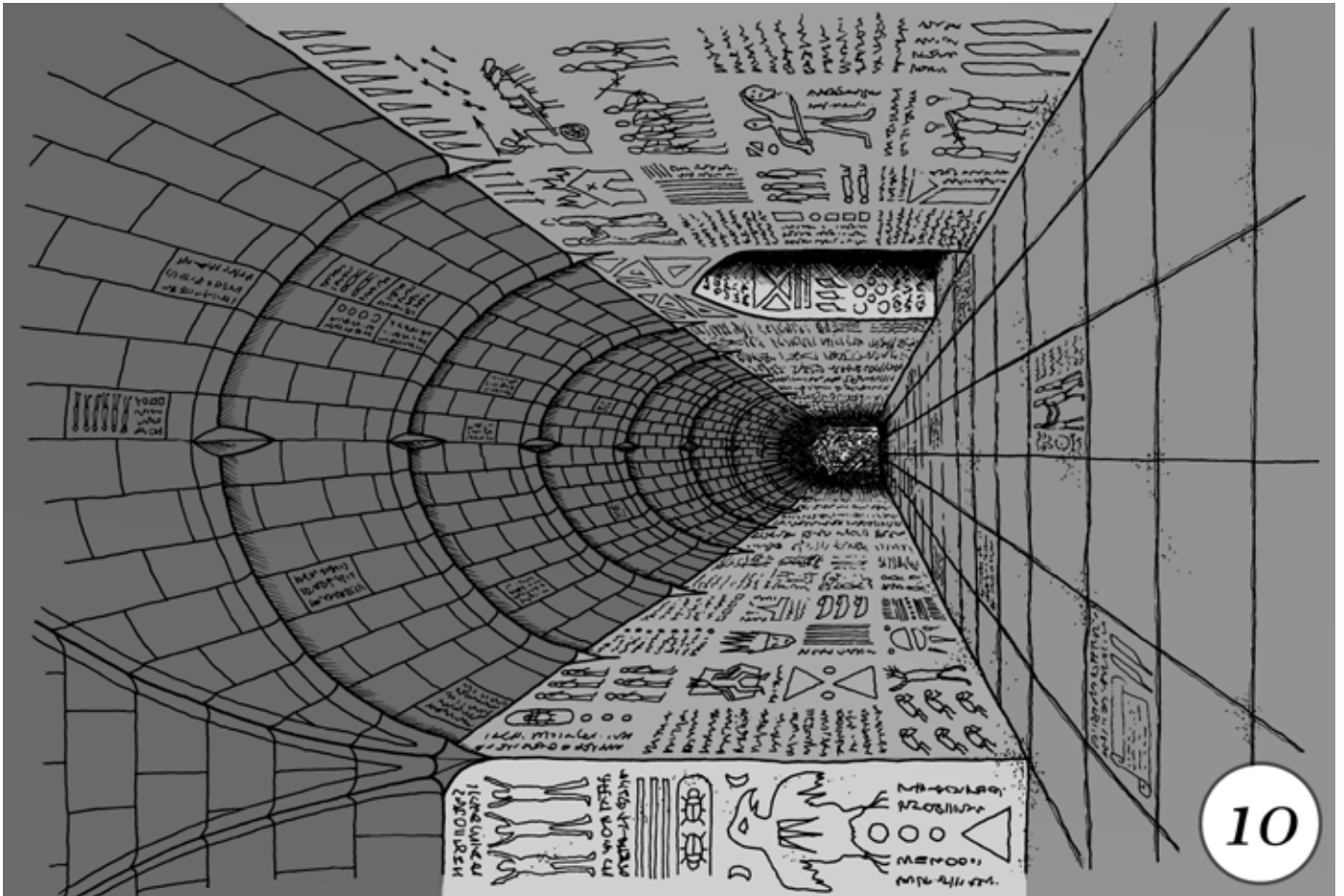
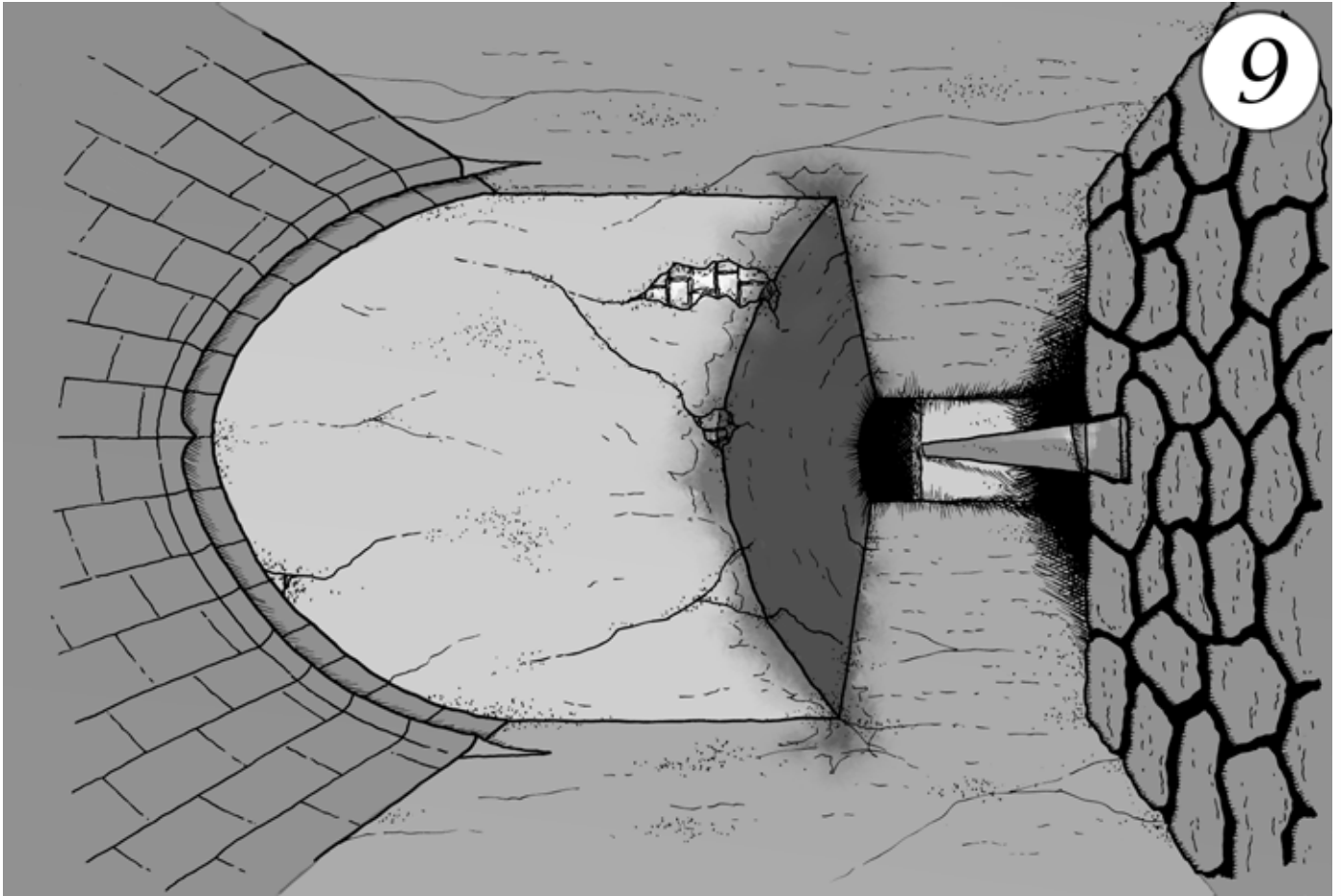


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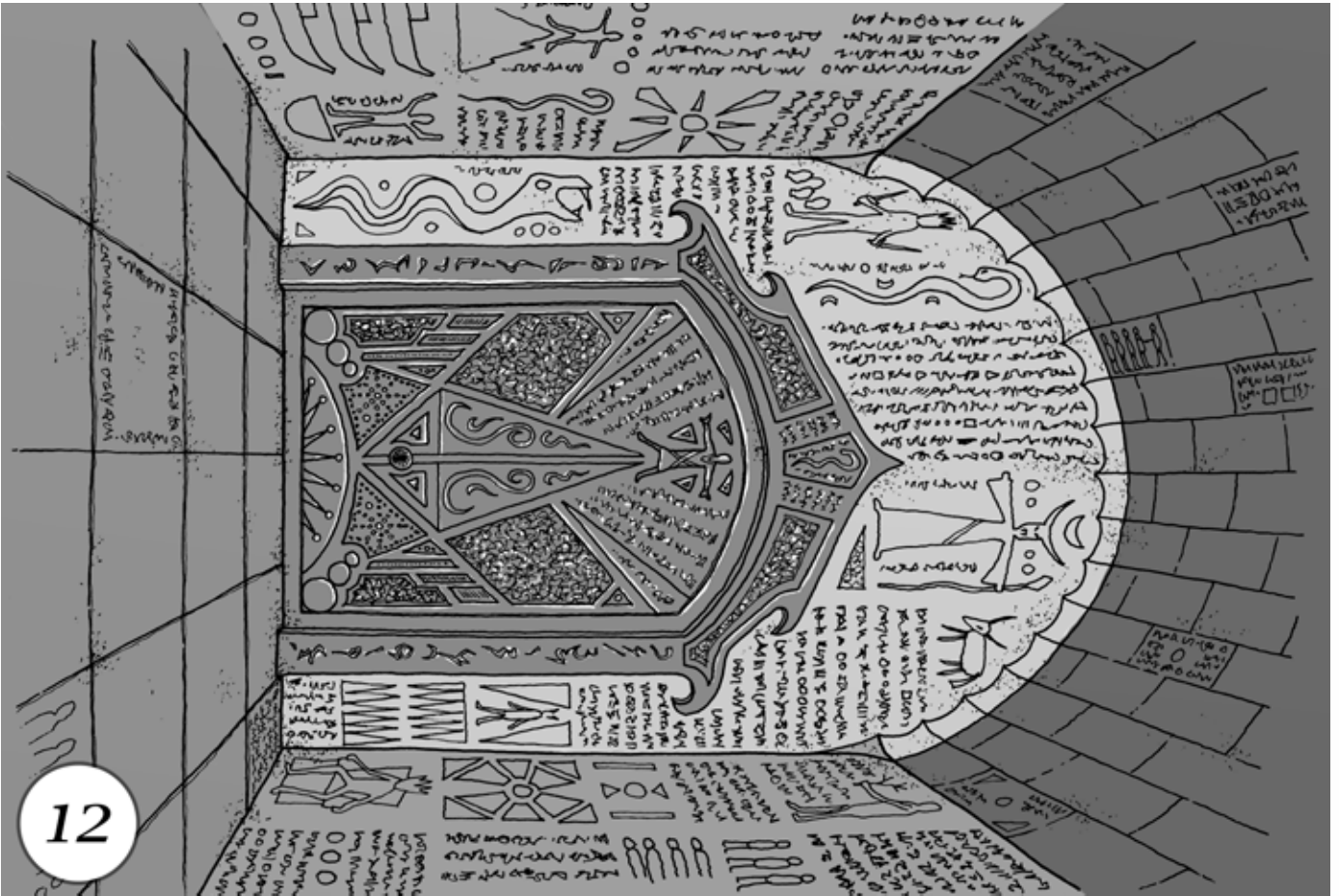




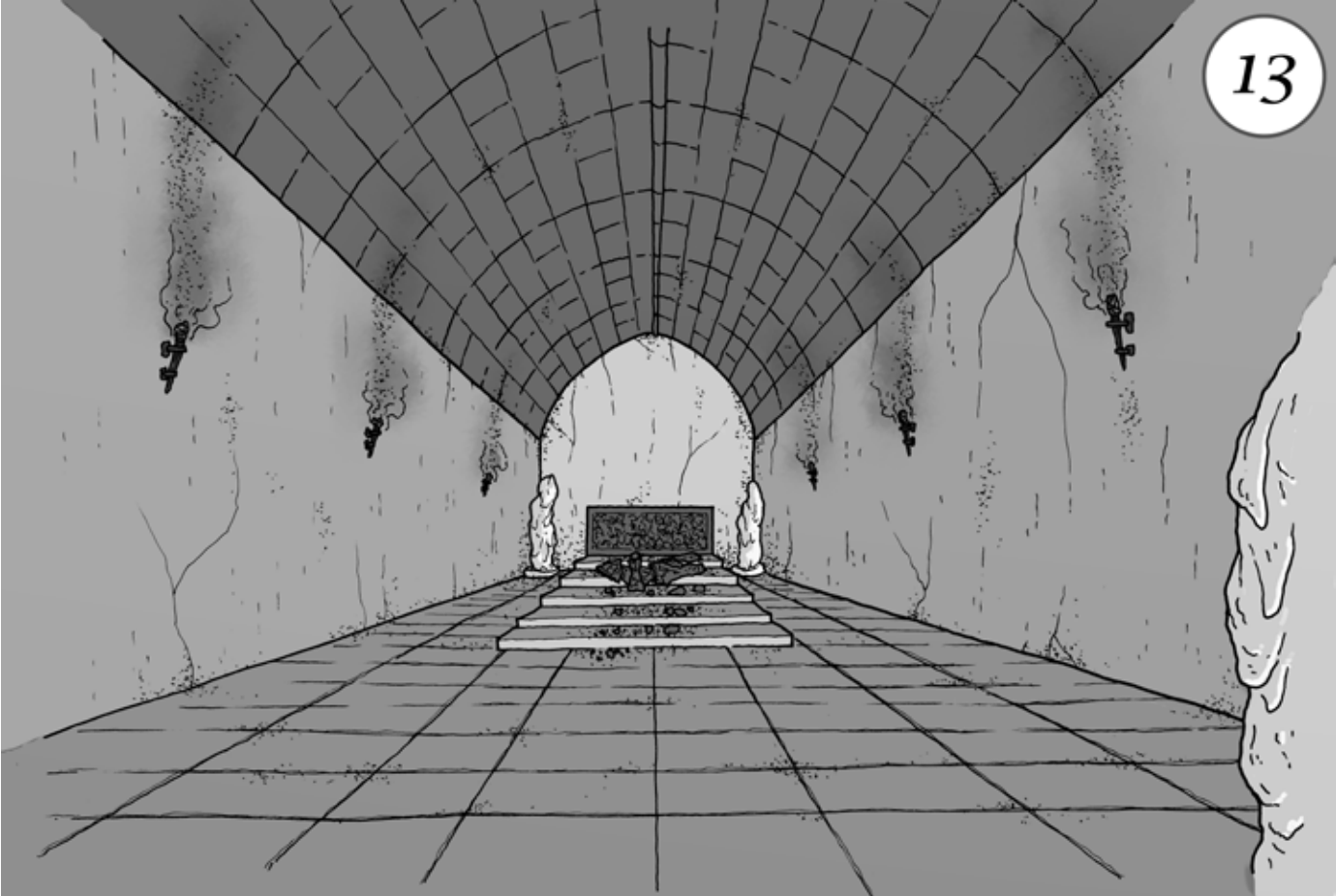
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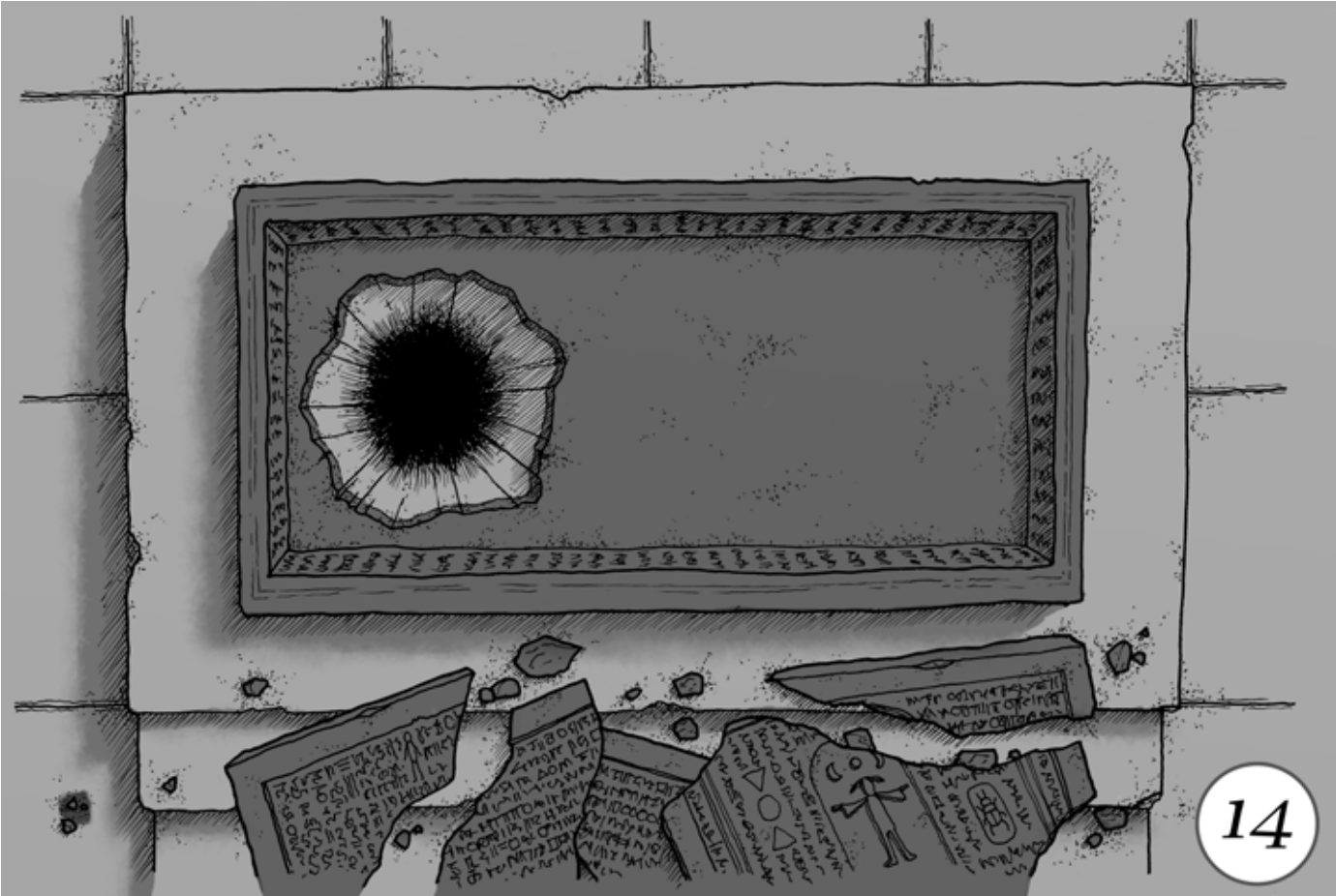
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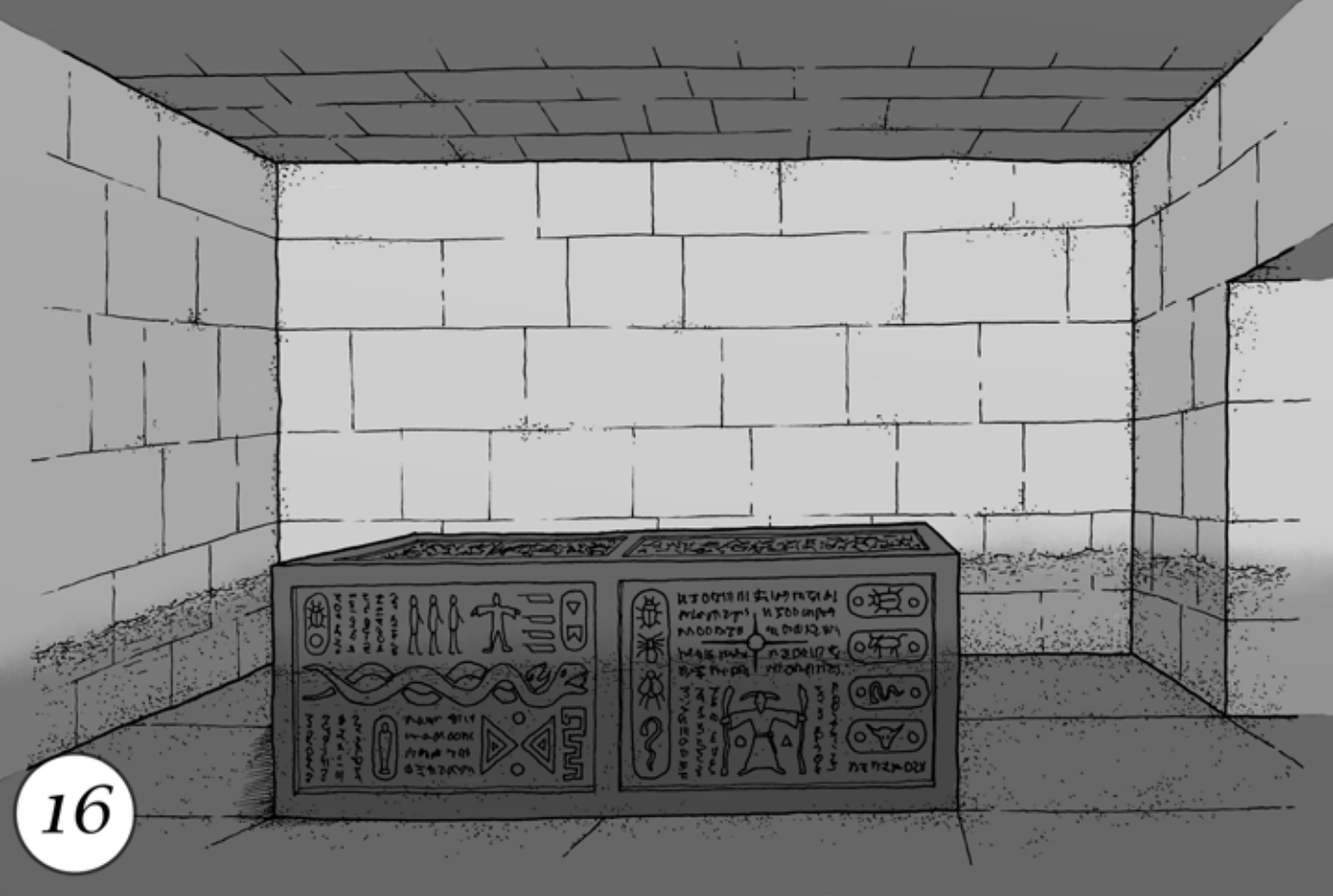
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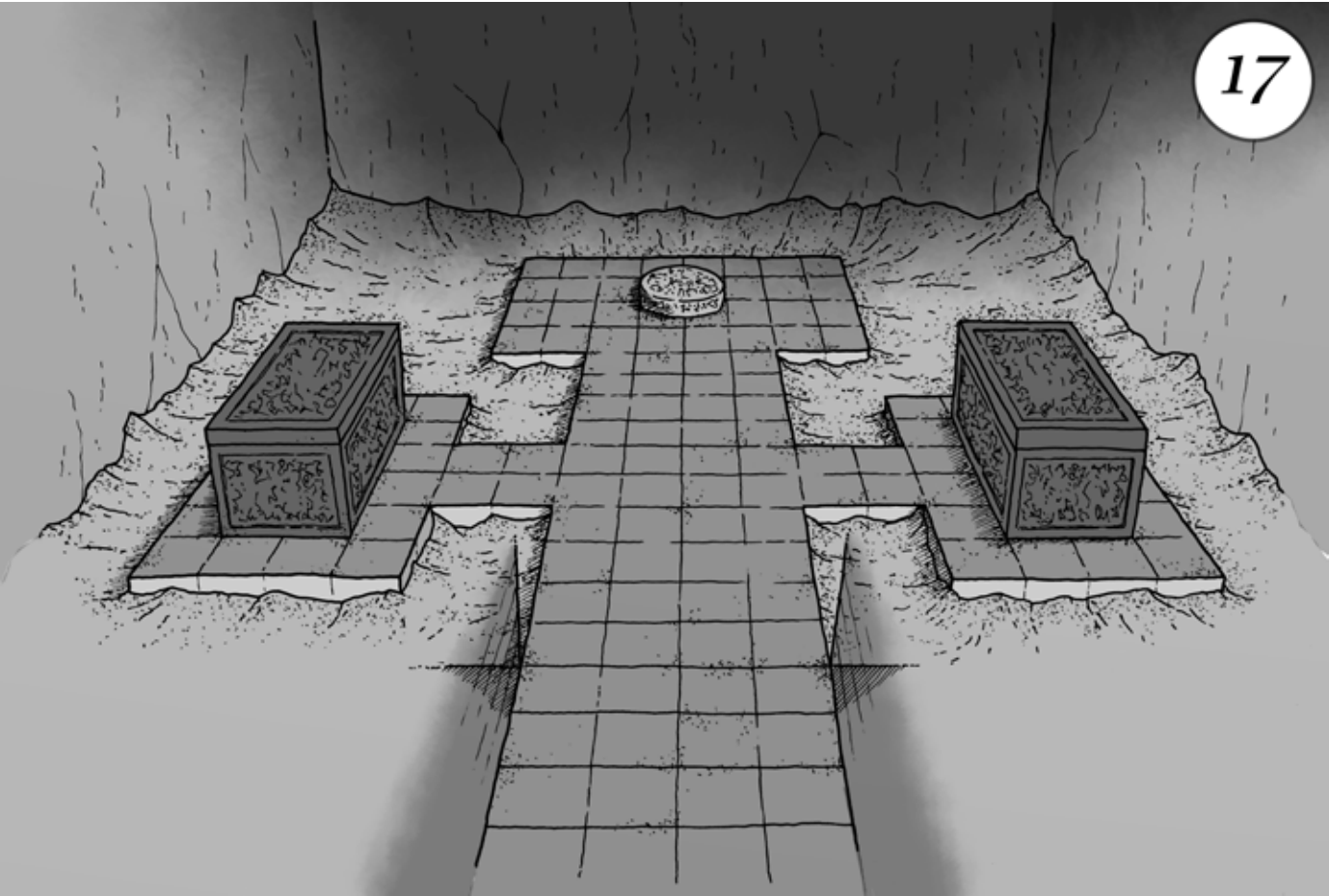
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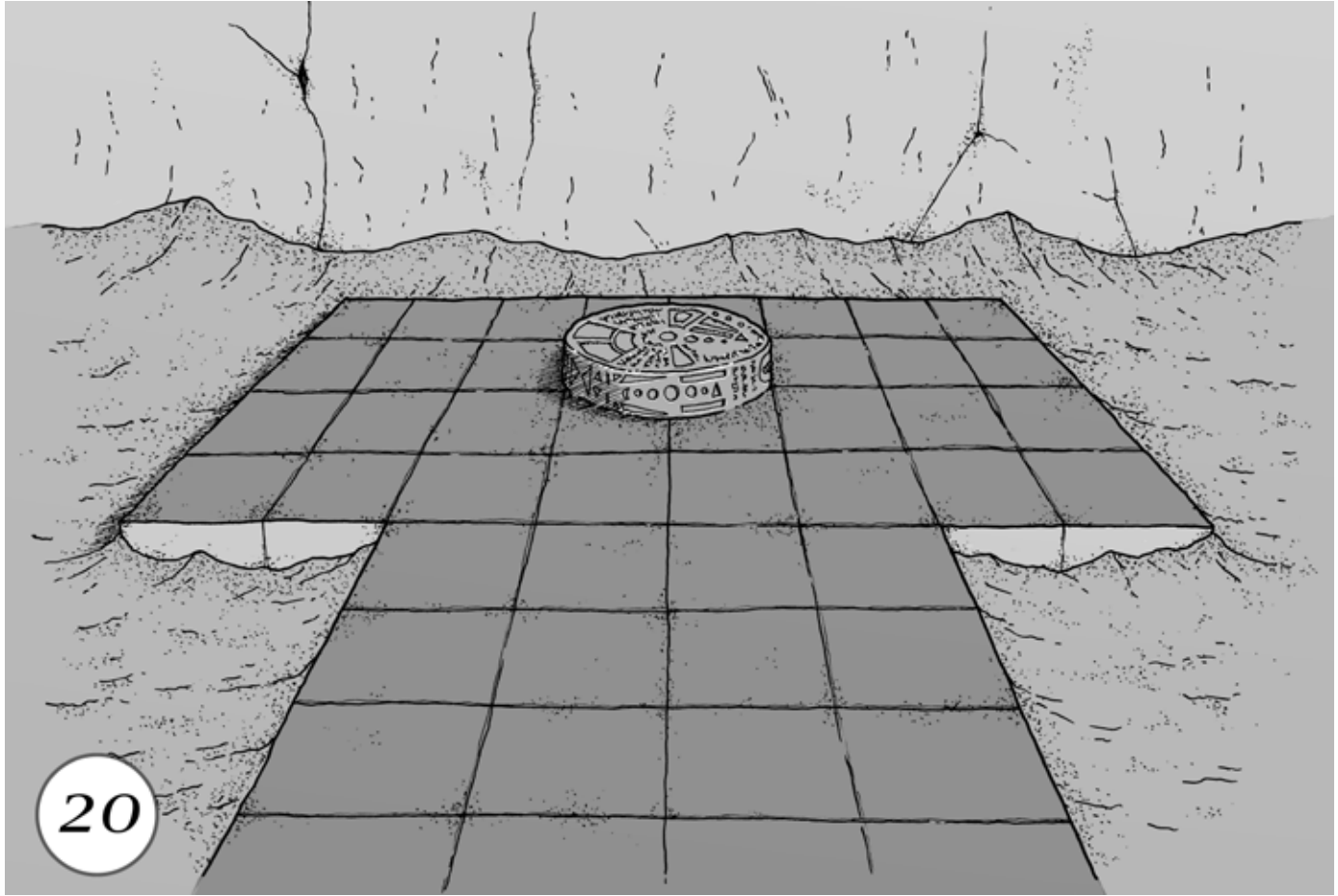
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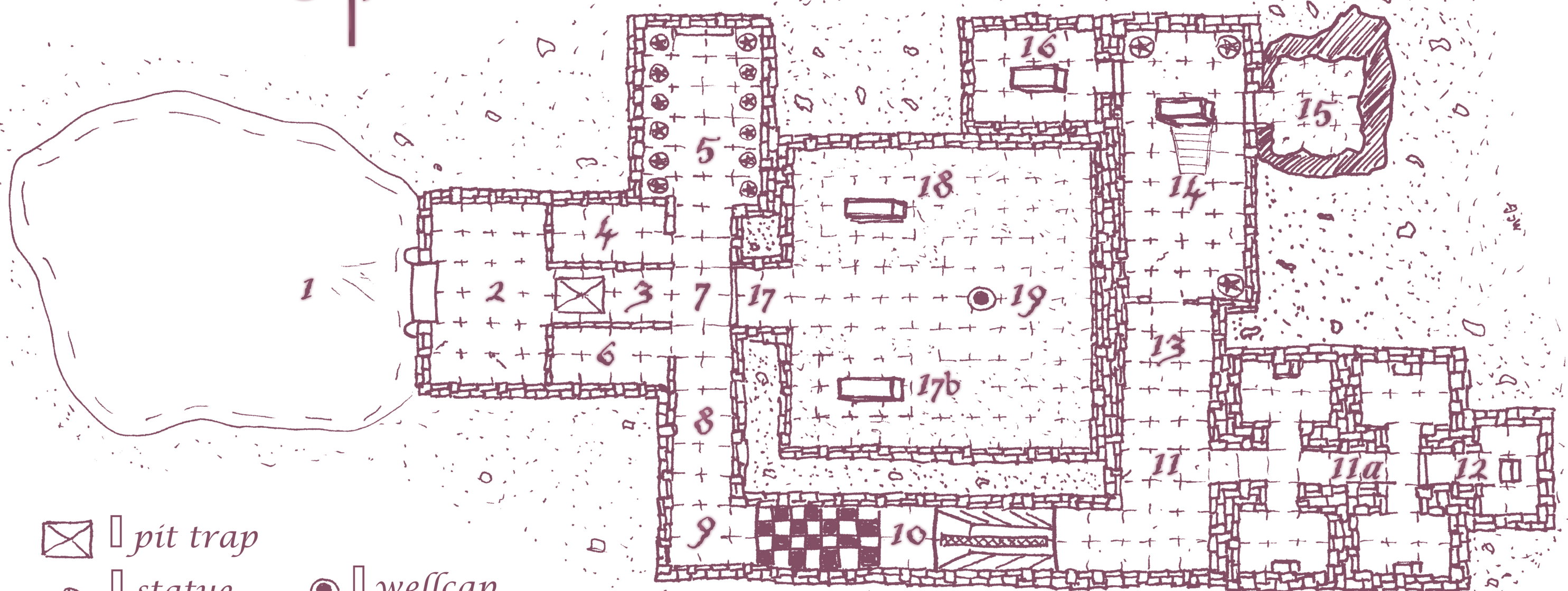
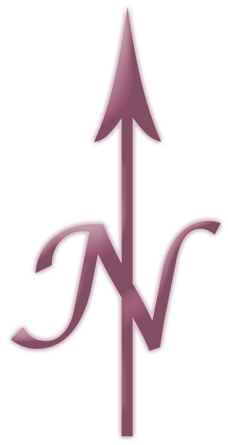
ALWAYS BE A WIZARD.
UNLESS YOU CAN BE A
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JW

THEN BE A SCIENCE-WIZARD!



-   *pit trap*
-   *statue*
-   *wellcap*
-   *sarcophagus*

Scale: 5 feet =  1 square

CRYPT OF THE SCIENCE-WIZARD

BY SKEETER GREEN

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