

The Crypt of Morgrath

A Crypts & Things adventure for some low-level characters

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Setup

You have all traveled north as part of the Black Banner mercenary company, hired to help the baron of Hogarth's Keep repel raids on his land by the local barbarian tribes. Your campaign was successful as the Black Banners crushed the savages. Flushed with victory, you took your earnings and mustered out of the company, planning on continuing your adventuring careers as free agents.

Unfortunately, like so many adventurers, drink was your downfall. As the rest of the Black Banners left town, you stayed behind in Drunken Dowager Inn. The wine and ale flowed a bit too freely as you all celebrated. Insults were spoke, punches were thrown, tables were turned, and you woke up hungover and bruised in the dungeons of Baron Markus Hogarth.

You now stand before the Baron, a mountain of a man with a bristling blood-red beard. He stares you down with steely eyes. "You have caused a lot trouble and carnage in my town. By rights, I should have you in the pillory, ready for a flogging. But I remember your valor in the campaign against the savages, and I am in a forgiving mood. I'm going to pardon your crimes and even cover your bar tab, but I want you to do a simple task for me..."

While the heroes were busy whooping it up last night, a group of thieves were busy breaking into Baron Hogarth's treasury. They stole no gold, and took but a single item—a black gem of questionable value set between two serpents of red-gold and set into a simple headband of silver. The circlet has been in the treasury since the baron's grandfather's rule, and it was far from the most valuable thing in the vault.

A trap in the vault disabled one of the thieves, and the Baron's guards captured him while his fellow thieves escaped.

Under the "gentle persuasions" of Hogarth's chief interrogator, the thief revealed that his group of robbers were hired by a magician named Varnagon. They were instructed to retrieve the circlet (and only the circlet)

from the Baron's vault and bring it back to him. Varnagon and the bandits have set up base in the ruins of an ancient crypt to the north of the Hogarth's Keep. He does not know what Varnagon wants with the circlet, but he paid well for their services.

Unfortunately, the captured thief died under interrogation, so the heroes are unable to question him personally (not without dark magic, anyway).

Baron Hogarth wants the heroes to retrieve his stolen property. He'll also pay them a bounty for each bandit (50gp a head) and 200gp for the head of the wizard Varnagon. They're also welcome to whatever they find in the crypt.

Hogarth will not risk his own men to hunt down a sorcerer in a shunned tomb. The heroes might be able to hire help in town.

What's going on here?

The black-jeweled circlet once belonged to Morgrath, a sorcerer from Times of Old. While the circlet is not magical, it was a prized heirloom of great sentimental value to the evil wizard. After Morgrath's death and rebirth, the circlet fell into the hands of wandering adventurers and passed through many hands before finding its way back to Morgrath's former haunts and into the coffers of Hogarth's ancestors.

Morgrath had ambitions of becoming a lich, but the rituals proved to be beyond his ability. He had to make do with becoming a ghoul. While he lost his ability to perform magic, immortality was immortality, as far as Morgrath was concerned.

Varnagon is an evil magician with dreams of power. He has located Morgrath's tomb and divined the existence of the circlet. He hopes to earn the favor and tutelage of the undead former wizard by returning to him his lost treasure.

The Crypt of Morgrath

The surface structures of the old mausoleum have long ago fallen to ruin. Only the underground structure remains intact. The crypt lies about a day's ride to the north of Hogarth's Keep. The terrain consists of hills and pine forests lightly covered with snow. The crypt's location is commonly known and shunned by the locals as a haunted place.

Random Encounters

While in the crypts, check for random encounters every hour. The heroes have a 1-in-6 chance of having an encounter.

Roll 2d6 Encounter

2	1 Giant spider, man-sized
3-4	A chunk of masonry falls on a random hero. Save or take 2d4 damage.
5-7	1 bandit, frightened, insane, and desperate Thick mist rises from the stones, -1 to attack rolls for the next hour, +1 stealth saves.
8-9	1d3 skeletons
10-11	1d2 zombies

1) Upper Courtyard

An ancient courtyard of broken stone flagstones made of some gray-green stone. Old stone columns are shattered and toppled. Moans of pain and pleading echos across the flags.

A dying bandit with nasty gut and leg wounds (he was attacked by skeletons) lies behind rock, menaced by wolves.

The bandit is mad with pain and terror and will die shortly unless the heroes decide to help him. He will tell them that Varnagon went mad and summoned up "fiends from Hell" to slaughter his fellow bandits. Even if healed, he refuses to return to the crypt and will fight the heroes if they try to force him.

2 Wolves

Armour Class: 12
Hit Dice: 2+2 (10, 12hp)
Attacks: Bite (1d4+1)
Saving Throw: 16
Special: None
Move: 18
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

Wounded Bandit

Armour Class: 12
Hit Dice: 1(4 hp, currently 0)
Attacks: 1 (unarmed)
Saving throw: 17
Special: None
Move: 1
Challenge Level/XP: 0/0

2) Main Gallery

A huge, arched chamber of crumbling black stone. The thick dust on the floor was recently disturbed, but the tracks are too jumbled to follow.

A large ruined statue of black marble sits in the center of the room. Five thick, trunk-like legs are all that's left of the alien statue.

The heroes can hear the meaty sounds of rending and chewing to the south.

3) Temple

An arched chamber with nooks evenly spaced around the walls. The nooks hold the residue of ancient black candles. A large altar of black-green metal covered with tattered black cloth rests near the back.

Four skeletons hunker down around two human bodies, tearing off bloody hunks of meat, shoving them into their mouth, and chewing. Bloody gobs of flesh fall out of their empty torsos and splat to the floor. This triggers sanity check. Upon detecting the heroes, the skeletons will attack the fresh prey.

A strength save moves the altar. A hidden compartment holds Morgrath's spellbook, a rotting black leather tome with an iron seal on front bearing the impression of left hand. This magic lock only opens if Morgrath's left hand (dead, alive, or otherwise) is placed on seal. Forcing open the lock destroys 1d4 spells per level.

4 skeletons

Armour Class: 11
Hit Dice: 1(2,2, 3, 7 hp)
Attacks: Weapon or strike (1d6)
Saving Throw: 17
Special: None
Move: 12
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Morgrath's Spellbook

Level 1

Cause Light Wounds

Hex

Hold Portal

Sleep

Soul Blast

Wailing Lament

Level 2

Curse

Invisibility

Snake Charm

Wizard Lock

Level 3

Fireball

Monster Summoning I

4) Pool of Madness

This wooden door is locked. This low-ceilinged room contains a low pool of cold black water. A statue stands in center of pool—a faceless woman in a hooded robe holding a horned animal skull from which water pours.

Several gold coins (58gp) and a couple of bright red jewels (worthless cut glass) glint in the bottom of the pool.

Touching the water triggers horrific hallucinations, paralyzing the character (CON save to avoid) for 1d4x10 minutes and triggering a sanity check. The screams of the effected causes a wandering monster check.

5) Ruined Library

The wooden door to this room has been battered down. Several rotten wooden bookshelves fill the room. Mouldered old tomes are torn apart and scattered across the floor. Several have Morgrath's sigil on the pages.

Spending an hour or so piecing together fragments of the books will reveal that the books are mostly theology of dark gods and Morgrath's mostly-ruined journals. One scrap reads: "Though lichdom has been denied me, I pray the Unpeakable Ones will at least..."

The heroes can hear the sounds of fists pounding on wood to the south.

A giant centipede lurks beneath a pile of books and will probably surprise the heroes if they search through the litter.

Giant, man-sized centipede

Armour Class: 14

Hit Dice: 2 (6 hp)

Attacks: Bite (1d8)

Saving Throw: 16

Special: Lethal poison, +6 save

Move: 15

Challenge Level/XP: 4/240

6) Hallway

Three desiccated corpses (zombies) in tattered black and green robes hammer on the splintering wooden door at the end of the hall. They will not notice the PCs unless they make themselves targets, as they are concentrating on the bandits behind the door. If the PCs do nothing, they will break through to the next room in 1d4+1 rounds.

3 Zombies

Armour Class: 11

Hit Dice: 2 (3, 7, 10 hp)

Attacks: Weapon or strike (1d8)

Saving Throw: 16

Special: Immune to sleep and charm

Move: 6

Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

7) Bandit Barricade

Three bandits and their leader, the only survivors of Varnagon's mad scheme, have holed themselves up in here, hiding from the undead until they can figure how to get out of the crypt. They have piled crates and chests against the door, giving a -2 penalty to knock it down.

The chests contain 12 blankets, 2 flint & steel, 12 torches, 100 feet of rope, a grappling hook, 3 large sacks, 9 days of rations, 138 gp and 127sp in a small sack, and 2 bottles of strong wine (3 "strong drink" in each bottle)

The bandits are eager to get the hell out of the crypts. Even if the heroes rescue them from the zombies, they will want to leave. It will take a lot of convincing (threats, bribery, etc...) to convince them to stick around.

The bandits can tell the heroes that once they returned to the crypts and gave the circlet to Varnagon, the wizard went mad and turned against them with his magic. He captured a couple of the younger bandits and took them further into the crypts, no doubt to sacrifice them to his dark gods. Before the bandits could regroup and try and rescue their fellows, they were set upon by the undead.

3 Bandits

Armour Class: 12 (Leather Armor)

Hit Dice: 1(2, 3, 4 hp)

Attacks: 1 Short Bow (1d6) or Shortsword (1d6)

Saving throw: 17

Special: None

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Bandit Leader

Armour Class: 13 (Leather Armor + DEX)

Hit Dice: 2 (8 hp)

Attacks: 1 Longsword (1d8)

Saving throw: 16

Special: None

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

8) Stairs Downward

Sloping passage and eroded stone stairs twist further into the earth. A group of skeletons armed with bone shortbows and rusty swords lay in wait on the stairs.

5 skeletons

Armour Class: 11

Hit Dice: 1(1,2,4,6,6 hp)

Attacks: Weapon or strike (1d6)

Saving Throw: 17

Special: None

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

9) Crypt Corridor

The corridor is cold and damp. In the flickering circle of light from a dying lantern, a dead bandit lies in front of a the door to Room 10. His head is missing.

On the bandit's body: Leather armor, short sword, hooded lantern, flint and steel, 1 flask of oil.

10) Idol Room

The stone door is locked and trapped. A spring-loaded scythe blade inflicts 2d4 damage (save to avoid) to anyone who tries to open the door.

The room is a small shrine to a forgotten and lost god. A small statue of green-black metal depicts a writhing mass of teeth and tentacles on top of five trunk-like legs. It is flanked by large black candles that glow green when lit. The idol is worth 500 gp to the right buyer, but will plague its bearer with nightmares, triggering a sanity check each evening and interrupting sleep. It weighs 50lbs.

11) Crypts

This is the resting place of Morgrath's minions, who followed him into death.

A) Eight stone slabs, dusty but empty, hold only the tattered remnants of black and green robes. Three ornate longswords, rusted beyond repair, can be found among the scraps.

B) Slabs, flagstones, and coffins are all busted up. Large, thorny grey-green roots or vines have burst through the walls from the earth. A skeleton in rusted black platemail with a large green gem on silver chain hanging around his neck (250 gp value) lies twisted in the vines.

Sick Weed

Armour Class: 14

Hit Dice: 3 (14hp)

Attacks: three tendrils 1d8 each

Saving throw: touch Causes Vomiting. Pollute water by touching it.

Special: 14

Move: 0

Challenge Level/XP: 4/120

C) Eight stone slabs hold skeletal remains of men and women in tattered black and green robes. These bodies are non-animate, and bear no treasure.

12) Abyssal Well

This room contains only a round stone well. A cold, chanel wind blows from the darkness bellow. The stone shaft descends for 75 feet, then opens into a massive, dark, bottomless abyss.

Whether this abyss is merely a huge natural cave, an entrance to further chambers below the earth, or a literal portal to some nether hell is up to the GM, but it should be used as a seed for further adventure and/or danger.

13) Morgrath's Tomb

Varnagon is here, sacrificing a bandit on a burial slab, under the direction of Morgrath (now a ghoul). Morgrath wears the jeweled circlet stolen from Baron Hogarth and is dressed in black and green velvet robes, eaten by age. A pile of gold and treasure (1030gp, 123sp, and a platinum ring with a bird motif worth 121gp) lies in the cob-webbed shadows behind the slab.

Morgrath has agreed to teach Varnagon the ways of black magic and thus bring glory to the Ancient and Unspeakable Ones. His first test of devotion is to kill his hirelings, a task Varnagon readily accepted. Unless stopped, he will kill the helpless bandit, who will rise up as a zombie the next round.

Varnagon is a shabby man in a dirty brown robe with thin yellow hair going prematurely bald. An iron scimitar hangs from a black chain around his waist. He is quite mad indeed.

Morgrath (ghoul)

Armour Class: 13
Hit Dice: 2 (10 hp)
Attacks: 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d4)
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Immunities, paralysis
Move: 9
Challenge Level/XP: 3/60

Varnagon

Armour Class: 10
Hit Dice: 3 (12 hp)
Attacks: 1 scimitar (1d8)
Saving throw: 13
Spells: Magic Missile, Entangle, Mirror Image
Move: 12
Challenge Level/XP: 3/120

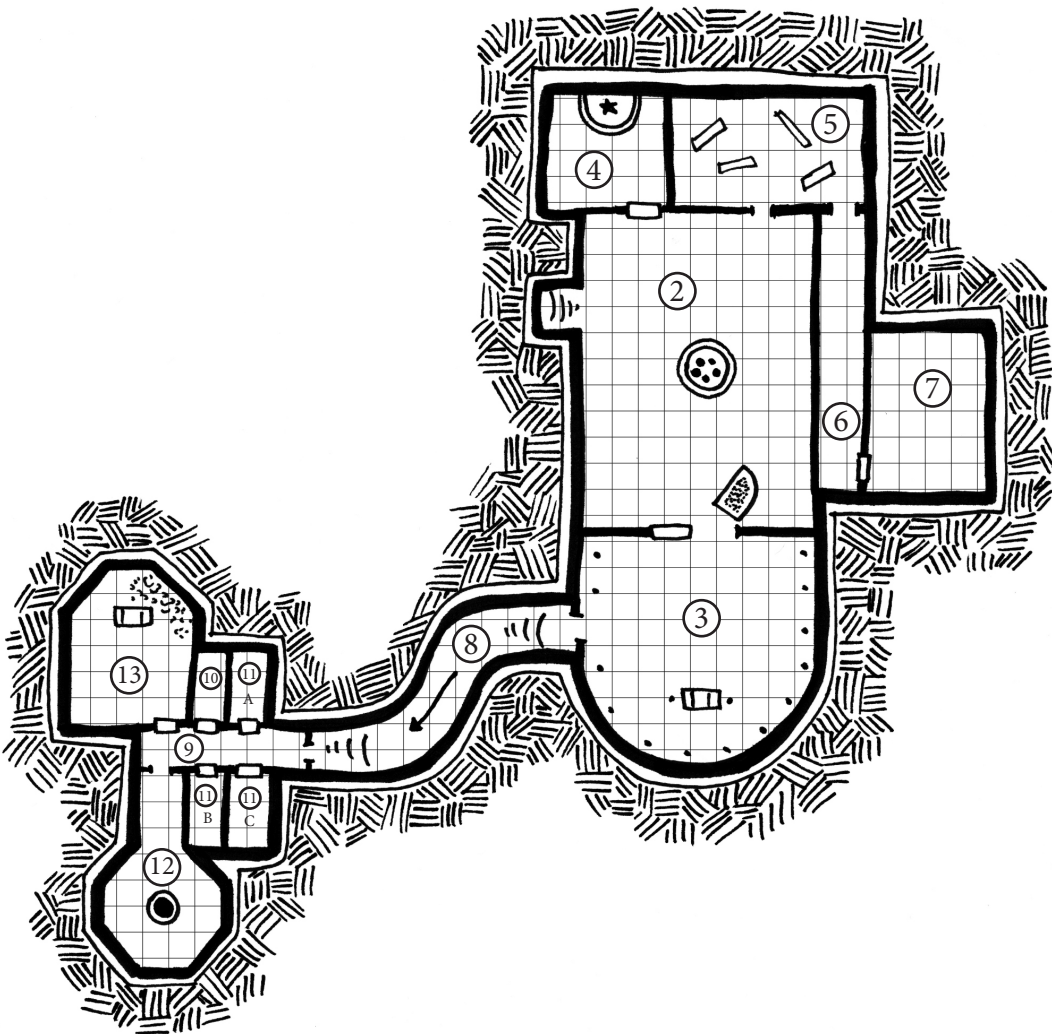
Zombie Bandit

Armour Class: 11
Hit Dice: 2 (6 hp)
Attacks: Weapon or strike (1d8)
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Immune to sleep and charm
Move: 6
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

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1 square = 10 feet



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