

Blight Pathologies

BP7: The Library of Spiders

Brian DiTullio



FROG GOD
GAMES

The Blight: Pathologies

The Library of Spiders

Credits

Author
Brian DiTullio

Developers
Alistair Rigg & Greg A. Vaughan

Producer
Bill Webb

Editors
Jeff Harkness, Keith Hershey Jr.,
Edwin Nagy

Layout and Graphic Design
Charles A. Wright

Interior Art
Chris McFann

Cartography
Robert Altbauer

FROG GOD GAMES IS

CEO
Bill Webb

Creative Director
Matthew J. Finch

Chief Operating Officer
Zach Glazar

Production Director
Charles A. Wright

Special Projects Director
Jim Wampler

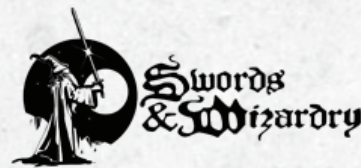


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Introduction

"There is a place where you can find just about anything that's been written down, as long as you're willing to spend just about anything ... and we're not talking strictly about gold. People have been known to lose themselves in that library. Knowledge, they say, is power; and that library could be the most powerful force in the city. Watch yourself."

— **Arlen Clevin**, *Official Messenger of the Council of Scholarly Research to university student Patrice Leevenaur (whereabouts currently unknown)*

How the Library of Spiders Came to Be

In the not-too-distant past, a man-shaped figure appeared out of the mists one morning in the middle of BookTown. Onlookers noted that the street was empty one moment, and the next he was just there, walking as if it was the most normal thing to do for someone who had appeared out of thin air.

The mist clung to the figure, who was shrouded in a heavy cloak and hood, giving him an otherworldly appearance that seemed most appropriate given the circumstances. Without even asking, the figure approached a recently abandoned building, took a moment to look it over, and entered. The previous owner of the building, who recently had departed the mortal world after a short bout with heart problems, had no objections to the takeover from beyond the grave, and there remained no other family to otherwise intervene.

Within a week, despite some minor objections from the local bureaucracy over taxing issues, the building was fixed up, repainted, and declared "Open for business, invitation only." Circumstances involving the disappearance of some local officials still never have been officially traced back to anyone, and the whereabouts of the local tax collector and building inspector remain a mystery to this day.

Upon further research, residents of the area found themselves rebuffed by the mysterious figure who called himself "Mr. Huxley, as that is as close as you will get to pronouncing my name correctly." He politely informed all curious parties that he was operating a private library and would be setting up a process for invitations "through the proper channels."

The library quickly formed relations with other scholarly organizations around town, although details of these transactions never have been detailed in any formal way, and the circumstances behind these alliances are murky at best. Very shortly after opening, Mr. Huxley's library was deemed to have one of the most extensive collections in town outside of the royal collection. To say it was better than the royal collection might have been considered scandalous, however, and therefore is never brought up.

Within the first year of opening and after receiving visits from local scholars, students, sages, and less reputable personages some people deemed "wizards" or "sorcerers," popular rumor and some little-confirmed facts revealed Mr. Huxley's Library to be quite extensive, and that it seems larger inside than the actual building should be able to accommodate. While there certainly must have been an explanation for it, a further examination of the phenomenon has never been undertaken (or encouraged, if you listen to those "in the know").

The spider population in the area also increased in the years just after the library opened, and Mr. Huxley's Library gained a more popular name among residents of BookTown, scholars, and adventure seekers: The Library of Spiders. When it comes to the preponderance of spiders in the area, Huxley always gives the questioner a blank stare and replies, "What spiders?"

According to the people of the neighborhood,

Mr. Huxley is a hard person to communicate with and keeps no friends of which anyone is aware. However, since he is quiet, keeps to himself,

and never runs through the streets wielding a meat cleaver like Old Man Sulley, who are they to stir things up?

Over the years, the curator's appearance has changed, but he still insists everyone call him Mr. Huxley. He never talks about his past, where he came from, and he never divulges any other personal information. He always tells customers that knowledge is all he seeks and that they should just leave him and his past alone. Given that the library has been open for well over a century, some say it couldn't possibly be the same man, but that kind of talk can get one in trouble. Visiting scholars ignore the facts before their eyes lest they lose their invitation to what has become one of the most interesting places of research in town.

Over the years, several researchers have disappeared or gone insane after stating their intention to do some research at the Library of Spiders. Mr. Huxley claims ignorance on all matters. Serious inquiries have resulted in dead-ends — in one form or another.

The Truth of the Matter

Mr. Huxley is a Denizen of Leng, whose real name is about 15 syllables long and completely unpronounceable for most humans. While traveling through the area, Mr. Huxley became fascinated with Castorhage and its connections to various planes, powers, and Between. He spent several years studying the city, walking the streets, and interrogating those who seemed to know something about the inner workings of the town before he hit upon the idea of bringing people to him.

The building where he took up residence had a portal to Leng in it, which the previous owner was unaware of due to pure luck and a fluke of construction (the building's back wall was built right in front of the portal). Mr. Huxley sensed the portal as soon as he entered the city, and quickly discerned that the man had a heart issue and took advantage of the situation. With the help of "friends" he fostered or bought over the years, Mr. Huxley has created a library filled with extradimensional spaces to create a rather large complex that far exceeds its actual physical borders.

Mr. Huxley uses magic to appear as human as possible, but neighbors note that dogs and cats do not like him, and even they feel uncomfortable in his presence. Mr. Huxley, to his credit, rarely ventures outside in his public identity, preferring that the neighborhood view him as a very private eccentric. He remembers to change the face he presents to the public every 30 years or so to keep up appearances, and claims that since the name "Mr. Huxley" appears on the library's sign, that is what everyone should call him.

As to what happened to the previous men calling themselves "Mr. Huxley," he always says they passed on to the next phase of their lives. He abruptly changes the subject when it comes to his past or the façade of his public face. Only one serious investigation into Mr. Huxley's past was ever started. That investigation currently is "ongoing" if you bother to search public records, but the person responsible for it has been catatonic for more than a decade.

No one else felt a need to pick up the investigation, and the authorities moved on with their lives.

As an outsider, Mr. Huxley defends his nature and his home from intrusion, and characters should be aware of the sinister reputation of the library. Disappearances are rare, and never have been directly linked to Mr. Huxley. That being said, scholars still seek out his library due to the borderline supernatural nature of the collection. Treatises on almost every subject can be found in his library, and it is not completely uncommon to find extremely rare books, or ones that supposedly should no longer exist.

Finding the Library

The library is not hard to locate, and anyone with knowledge of BookTown can tell you where to find it. The library keeps no set hours, as all research is done by appointment via an invitation through another organization, or more rarely, from Mr. Huxley himself. The building itself does not stand out from the surrounding structures, but a small sign sits in the window, and the door is unlocked.

Paying for Research

Huxley has no actual use for money, but transacts with it anyway to keep up appearances. To access the first few rooms of books, Huxley charges 50gp per day of research. For the second set of rooms — which contain much rarer books and more detailed treatises on various areas of scholarly study, Castorhage, occult research, and other esoteric matters — the cost is 100gp per day of research, or a piece of information about the town, the Royal Family, or underground networks.

For access to the third level of the library — Mr. Huxley's private library — the price is information. His research is unfathomable to a human mind, and his questions do not follow the normal course of a scholarly man. He is obsessed about the relationship between the Royal Family and Between, and has been studying both for more than a century. His questions may seem irrelevant to the laymen, but his thought process has progressed and operates beyond the normal human modes.

He asks petitioners to answer questions about their past, where they were at a certain time, during certain events, and their relation if any, to the Royal Family. If they've had contact with the Royal Family, he wants to know every detail of their last visit. If they will meet with them again, he asks about the minutiae of the visit.

Sample Questions

Below are a few sample questions Mr. Huxley might put to characters who seek admission to the third level of the library. Feel free to invent others as you see fit.

"What color dress does the countess wear for her afternoon walks?"

"You spoke with a member of the Royal Family last week. Did that person end a sentence in a preposition?"

"Where were you during the last high tide? Did you notice any anthills?"

Alternatively, Mr. Huxley needs what is behind the spider lich's lair. What the spider is guarding is up to the Referee, and can be of specific use to the individual campaign or just a MacGuffin for the characters to gain access to the private library. Suggestions include another rare text, a magical crystal, or some other of magical item. Defeating the spider grants the players unlimited access to the entire library for a month.

Doing Your Research

The local sages and scholars deem a successful search at his library a badge of honor, and note that some people sometimes involve themselves in risky business regarding their research. Thus, a few disappearances here and there should not be treated as anything more than the person attracting the wrong kind of attention. All Mr. Huxley says about the occasional disappearance is "They received answers to questions they were not ready to ask."

When using this library in a game, bear in mind that the library is extensive, containing books on just about every subject. The library has whatever books you as the Referee want it to contain. Finding the books can be broken down into as simple or as complex a system as you would like it to be, bearing in mind that the harder the book is to find, the deeper into the library the characters will need to look.

All the rooms with books exist in an extradimensional space, so no map is provided for them. The rooms are as big as you want them to be, but in general, the rooms get bigger and more grandiose as you go. The hallways in between the rooms can be laid out however you like, although the Hallway to Nowhere should be in the vicinity of Mr. Huxley's Private library on the third floor. You can add turns, empty rooms, dead-ends, etc., as you prefer for your campaign.

1-1. Entrance

Beyond the entry door is a comfortable looking room with a long table, several plush chairs, and a desk behind which Mr. Huxley is seated, quietly perusing a large tome and taking notes. If the characters do not have an invitation, Mr. Huxley immediately points this out and asks that they leave. The characters must get his attention to avoid being thrown out. If they succeed, Mr. Huxley becomes intrigued and tells them to come back the next day. If they don't find a way to hold his attention, Mr. Huxley again orders them out as he leaves the room, locking the door behind him.

1-2. Common Area

This room is very comfortable looking with some cushioned chairs, two writing tables, and a larger table with room for six people.

Any guest of the library may bring books here to read or to transcribe passages since Mr. Huxley does not lend out any of his volumes. Writing utensils and ink are available in the drawers underneath the writing table. Mr. Huxley charges a small fee for their use. He does this only to keep up appearances, as he really does not care about money or people using all his ink.

1-3. Lavatory

This is a simple lavatory, and nothing else of interest is in here.

1-4. Courtyard

A small, enclosed courtyard is located in the middle of the library. Dominating the courtyard is a 10ft-tall fountain with a wide base and two tiered layers. A face with no expression is carved around the base of the

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fountain, but the eyes seem to follow whoever is in the courtyard. Two benches are on opposite sides of the fountain.

If anyone speaks to the face, it speaks back. The fountain is actually a sentient magical object. It has no name and responds to whatever anyone chooses to call it, unless they are rude, in which case it falls silent and refuses to speak to that person or anyone associated with that being again.

Mr. Huxley does not help researchers and does not answer questions, but the fountain has been here since the library opened and remembers everything it has seen and heard during that time. The fountain may be useful for reducing time spent looking for books, as asking it where certain tomes and subjects are kept likely produces an answer.

The fountain knows Mr. Huxley's true nature, but it means nothing to the fountain, and it is unable to answer any questions about Mr. Huxley as a result. "Mr. Huxley is the curator" is all the fountain says if asked for specifics.

In addition, the fountain has a chance to know the location of other things around Castorhage, but it does not know what lies down the Hallway to Nowhere. No one who has ventured down that particular hallway has come back to tell it anything.

Next to each bench is a small box. Inside each box are four sticks of incense.

1-5. Storage Room

This room contains nothing of value, mainly old pieces of furniture, some extra shelves, and cleaning supplies. The room is noticeably dusty, and full of cobwebs and spider webs. Small spiders scurry away from the door as it is opened, but no threatening spiders are in the room.

1-6. Mr. Huxley's Private Room

This room is sparsely furnished with a simple bed in one corner, a wardrobe beside it, and a small writing desk opposite the bed.

The door to this room is locked with physical and magical traps. Anyone attempting to open this door without the key, or by saying the password, triggers the traps. Three blades spring out of the door, inflicting 1d8 points of damage to anyone within 5ft of the opening. Characters can make a saving throw to jump out of the way, but that might not help them, as arcing bolts of electricity soon after target anyone within 15ft of the door for 2d6 points of damage (save for half damage). The room itself has very little of interest in it from a research standpoint, although Mr. Huxley keeps his personal wealth in a lockbox in a false bottom of the wardrobe. Inside the box are 350gp and four rubies worth 500gp each.

1-7. The Door to the Libraries

This is plain-looking door is set against the back wall and locked at all times. Mr. Huxley has the only key. He accompanies all guests through this door to the various libraries beyond and personally ushers them into whichever room they paid access to enter. Once there, he leaves. At the Referee's discretion, the hallways may change their layout every time the characters return. Mr. Huxley does not comment on the phenomenon.

The Scholar's Room

Bookshelves line this room from floor to ceiling. In the center of the room is a long table with room for 10 chairs. Two smaller bookshelves sit on either end of the table. The room smells of dust and parchment



This room actually is an extradimensional space, although the source of this magic cannot be determined. Nothing short of a *wish* can dispel the space, and any attempt to do so catches Mr. Huxley's attention and bring his wrath down on the offender.

The books in this room cover a wide variety of topics, but are expertly organized. A casual glance allows a visitor to quickly home in on the right section. Finding books pertaining to the character's research should take no more than 30 minutes to an hour.

The Gage's Room

The ceiling of this room soars 50 feet into the air with a round dome to cap out the room. Murals depicting men in robes speaking with strange creatures from the stars decorate the dome. The bookshelves in this room are packed, and a long ladder appears to be the only way to access the higher shelves.

This room is actually an extradimensional space, although the source of this magic cannot be determined. Nothing short of a *wish* can dispel the space, and any attempt to do so catches Mr. Huxley's attention and bring his wrath down on the offender.

This room contains more detailed tomes on subjects also found in the Scholar's Room. However, the order of the books is not as neat as the Scholar's Room and researching in here takes at least two hours to find a specific book without help.

Mr. Huxley's Private Library

A very large room greets you, much larger than the surrounding building should be able to contain. Stretching at least a hundred feet in front of you are low bookshelves. The walls, a good 50 feet to the left and right, rise at least another 70 feet. Made of marble, they also feature alcoves with statues of humanoids that defy casual inspection. At the opposite end of the room is a large window overlooking a vast desert.

This room also exists in an extradimensional space. Mr. Huxley is always present in the room when people are researching here. He hovers at the edges of the room, pacing occasionally, and answers questions with other questions that make no sense. Any attempt to damage the room or its contents provokes Mr. Huxley as well as the rooms' 2 **stone golems** guardians to attack.

This room contains very rare tomes, some of which are only whispered about in scholarly circles. The collection includes a few spellbooks, but nothing above a 5th-level spell is written in them. There is a chance the characters might find a magical grimoire, but this possibility is left up to individual Referees and what they want to allow characters to access. Also, there is little rhyme or reason to how these books are organized, by design. These books are organized according to Mr. Huxley's research methods, which are not discernible to the sane human mind. Finding a specific book in this room can take up to 1d4 hours (or 1d4-1 hours if the characters receive help from the sentient fountain in **Area 1-4**).

This room also contains a special book, the *Tome of Unchained Thought*. Should the characters come upon the book, Mr. Huxley says nothing. If asked specifically about the book, he shrugs and says, "Knowledge is dangerous. Know the dangers of walking in the forest at twilight."

Golems, Stone (2): HD 12; HP 60x2; AC 5[14]; **Atk** fist (3d8); **Move** 6; **Save** 3; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** +2 or better magic weapon to hit, immune to most magic, slowed by fire.

Mr. Huxley, Denizen of Leng: HD 12; HP 93; AC 3[16]; **Atk** bite (1d6 + lassitude), 2 claws (1d8+1); **Move** 12; **Save** 3; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 15/2900; **Special:** constant ESP, immune to poison, lassitude (save [at -2] or -2 to attacks, damage and saves), mirror image (1/day, as spell), regeneration (5hp/round). (**Monstrosities** 116)

Equipment: ring of protection +2, amulet against scrying, potion of healing.

If the party is particularly powerful, increase the number of stone golems as appropriate.

Miscellaneous Magical Item

Tome of Unchained Thought

This book was written around 1500 years ago. Its first mention comes shortly after the fall of Tsen, when a scholar attempted to collate and record many of the stories of the time to understand the calamity that destroyed the city. His work mentions several books that he felt illuminated several factors that contributed to the downfall of the city. The book's author is unknown, but several centuries after the fall of Tsen, a monk named Brother Skavius picked up where the unknown scholar left off and noted at least six copies of the tome existed and were available at the time of his writing. He recommended all copies be rounded up and secured due to the tendency for many readers to gradually lose their grip on reality if they spent too long reading the tome.

Brother Skavius notes he perused a copy of the tome, but avoided a deep study of the material due to its disturbing nature and possible heretical claims about gods, nature, and the very essence of time and reality as we know it. To date, he is one of only three people known to have more than a cursory knowledge of the book and still retain all his mental faculties. He notes Chapter Two was "disturbing," but says he pondered its meaning for years after he first read it. Brother Skavius did not divulge where he read his copy, if he kept it in his possession, or its fate.

References to the book are found throughout libraries across the Lost Lands, as many cults consider possession of the book a noteworthy goal. Successfully reading the book without going completely insane is something few people ever accomplish. To the few who manage it, all have gathered groups of followers before disappearing forever, all claiming that the truth of existence lies on another plane. Whether they succumbed to their own form of insanity is a matter scholars debate to this day.

The book is bound in rich, brown leather and the pages are made of some form of animal skin that feels almost like vellum. The book is lavishly illuminated, and the text appears to jump off the page at the reader, something most readers consider an optical illusion created by whatever was used for ink combined with the mysterious paper.

Chapter One

This introduction is a long but surprisingly coherent treatise on the nature of thought, sanity, point-of-view, and the various ways people expand their mind through meditation, rituals, drugs, and magic. The section dives deeply into various philosophies using a very conversational tone. It briefly touches on several different theories regarding morality and the nature of good versus evil. Scholars seek this section out to help in their teachings and research.

Chapter Two

This rambling sometimes incoherent chapter focuses on a series of events in someone's life, although it is not clear if each of the vignettes in the chapter are all about the same person. In between the stories is commentary on the "moral" of the previous story before the text dives into the next one. The handwriting looks as if it was penned by a different person than the introduction, and does not appear anywhere else in the book. The chapter contains several warnings about the dangers of losing oneself within your own mind. Also, some readers have been known to go briefly mad due to the "secrets" they say are hidden within the text, and a handful never recover. Reading this section may cause the reader to temporarily go insane (saving throw with a -3 penalty to avoid). A successful save results in a permanent +1 to the reader's wisdom score.

Chapter Three

This section focuses on the nature of time and space, looking at how sentient beings perceive time and experience its passage. It also addresses the concept of time travel, the possible magical ways of traveling through time, the idea of a paradox, the "Grandfather Paradox," and alternate timelines. Reading this section can be dangerous. Attempts at copying passages of this chapter usually fail due to the complex nature of the

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subject and the ramifications of reading it. It is one of the main reasons so few copies of the book exist. Readers must make saving throw or find themselves transported 24 hours back in time. Events that happened during that period can now be changed if the person wants them to. No one around the reader is aware of what happened, even if they were sitting right beside them.

Chapter Four

This section focuses on gods and religion. It examines the theories behind the origins of the gods and traces the rise of the earliest religions up until the time of the writing. The writing questions many commonly held beliefs about the role gods play in the world and whether there is even a need for them. Even if the need is there, it questions why the gods act as they have, posing many moral conundrums and if there is a “grand plan” to everything. It makes no judgments on good or evil, but does a thorough examination on the nature of religion, faith, and the role followers play in the phenomena of a religious following. Devout followers of most religions find portions of this chapter offensive or heretical.

Chapter Five

This final chapter takes elements of the previous chapters and looks at the nature of the mind itself, what it is capable of, and what it can perceive. Perception versus reality is the pervading theme of the chapter, and it incorporates how the use of magic, drugs, and exposure to other planes may forever alter a person’s perception of the world around them. The chapter contains an overview of the inner and outer planes with brief descriptions of the various known planes. It talks about several different planes, specifically mentioning the concepts of Heaven and Hell, the Abyss, the elemental planes, the Plane of Shadow, and a place called Leng.

Role-Playing Time Travel

Should a player fail the save while reading the time and space section of the *Tome of Unchained Thought*, the Referee should alert the players what has happened, but remind the unaffected players they are “trapped” in that particular loop and unable to change any previous actions unless the affected player does something to change the timeline.

This replay option also can be used strategically by forward-thinking players. For example, they can try to use this option to repeatedly “storm the castle,” or characters may try to intentionally fail the save to go back a day to prevent another character from being killed. These are the most extreme options for this book, but clever Referees may use this replay option to add another layer to the game.

If the Referee thinks the players are abusing the power, have the replay work only once or apply a –2 penalty to the save for each repeated reading of the chapter.

The Hallway to Nowhere

This plain looking hallway is just off the main corridor. It is dimly lit by *continual light* spells for the first few feet before tapering off into darkness. Huxley warns guests not to go down the hallway, but he does not stop anyone from doing so.

Anyone who decides to venture down the hallway finds the darkness always receding as the lights come on every few feet that they walk. They also find after a few minutes that the corridor does not seem to have an end, nor are there any doors. When turning around, guests find they’ve traveled only about 30ft from the original intersection.

If anyone decides to leave the corridor, attempts to disbelieve, or uses any kind of detection magic, they must make a saving throw to see what appears to be a doorknob on the left wall where none was before.

The door is not locked or trapped, but if Mr. Huxley is asked about this, he scolds the characters about not listening to his warnings. If they insist on seeing what is behind the door, that is their prerogative and he won’t stop them. His final word on the matter is this: “It is a different place than here. You have been warned.”

The door is the mysterious portal to Leng that Huxley used to come to Castorhage. Once the characters open the door, they see a barren landscape and feel a chill breeze waft through the doorway. Should they step through, they see the open doorway standing in the middle of the blasted, barren plain. Walking behind the portal causes the door to disappear, but it reappears once they walk back to the other side. It remains visible to anyone who doesn’t walk behind it.

In the distance, the characters see a hut with a light in its single window. Inside is a tall figure in black robes, its face obscured by the shadows of a large open hood. In front of the figure is a large, leather book. What this figure is, what it may want, and what the book contains have never been recorded. If asked about the figure, Mr. Huxley only says, “To ask is to want an answer. Answers are elusive and are not necessarily the truth.”

If attacked, the figure and the hut vanish instantly, and the characters find themselves standing in the middle of the Leng Plateau. The doorway is gone, and nothing else is in sight. The characters must find another way back to the Prime Material Plane. What this figure is, its goals, and the contents of the book are left up to the Referee.

If the characters decide to fight the spider lich that Huxley spoke about, he leads them down this hallway for an indeterminate length before stopping and turning toward the right-hand wall. A door appears where none previously existed. Huxley opens the door and tells the characters he will be waiting for them when they finish their task.

The hallway’s right-hand doorway appears only if Mr. Huxley accompanies the characters.

Inside the door is a shadow-filled room with two lit torches to either side of the doorway. The floor is paved stone, and the ceiling only is about 10 feet off the ground and appears to be natural stone. Opposite the door, about 15 feet in front of you, is an open doorway leading into the darkness. A puff of breeze wafts past you, but no sounds can be heard from the corridor.

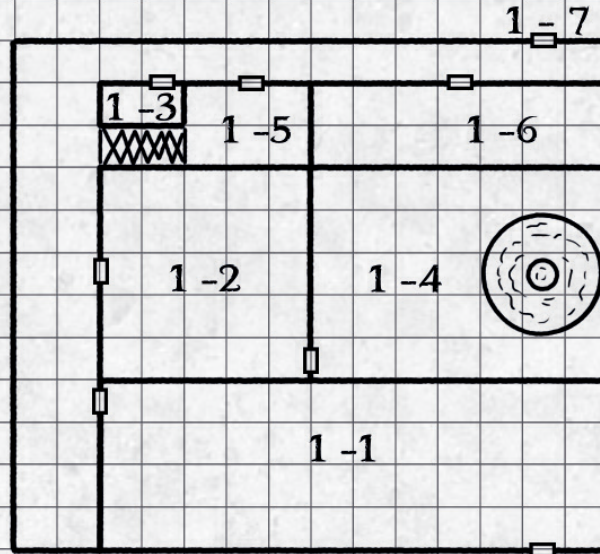
The area past the doorway is beyond the scope of this adventure, and Referees are free to make this section as simple or elaborate as they like. The only creature they need to defeat, though, is the **spider lich**.

Spider Lich: HD 12; HP 90; AC 0[20]; Atk bite (2d8 + paralysis [1d6+12 minutes] + poison); Move 15; Save 3; AL C; CL/XP 18/3800; **Special:** fear aura (60ft radius, as fear spell), immune to cold and electricity, +2 or better weapon to hit, poison (save or 1d4 strength), rejuvenation (regrows in 1d10 days), spells (5/5/5/4/4/3/1), web (at will, save or 1d4 acid damage). (*Tome of Horrors 4* 205)

Spells: 1st—charm person, detect magic, magic missile (x2), protection from good; 2nd—detect invisibility, ESP, locate object, phantasmal force (x2); 3rd—dispel magic, fireball (x2), suggestion (x2); 4th—charm monster, ice storm (x2), wizard eye; 5th—cloudkill, magic jar (x2), teleport; 6th—anti-magic shell, disintegrate (x2); 7th—limited wish.

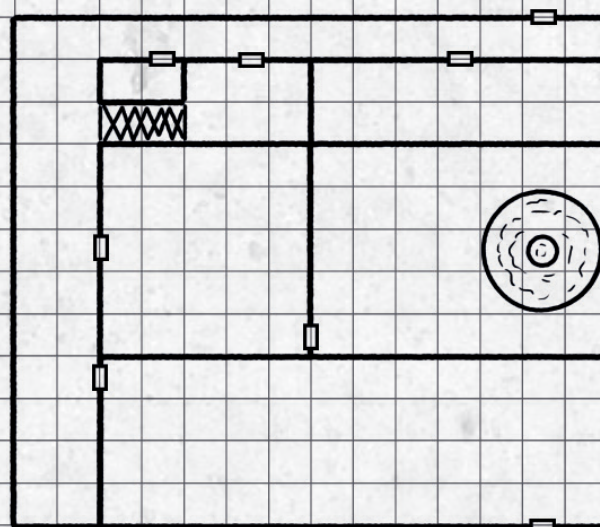
Mr. Huxley's Private Library

1 Square - 5 Feet



Mr. Huxley's Private Library

1 Square - 5 Feet



THE BLIGHT: PATHOLOGIES

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