

ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #25

Beneath the Heart of Empire

by Benton F. Wilson

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3



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BENEATH THE HEART OF EMPIRE

Over one hundred years ago the Venirian Empire was a major power that had successfully conquered numerous other nations. The corrupt leadership, influenced by the Church of Moloch, pursued conquest after conquest, enslaving the people of the nations it conquered, using them as a labor force, for entertainment in gladiatorial games, and as sacrifices to the arch-devil. This expansion ceased when they attempted to take the lands of the Magocracy of Kraz. The Fifteen Sages, rulers of Kraz, convened in their sanctum within the nation's spired capital, enacting a great ritual against the aggressing nation. The ritual swallowed Venir, capital of the Venirian Empire, within the earth, crushing the emperor and his corrupt advisors beneath many tons of stone. With its central leadership destroyed, senators from outlying provinces took control of the nation, attempting futilely to keep the empire from crumbling.

Following the empire's defeat at the hands of Kraz, its territory was reduced to merely a quarter of its former holdings over the next few years. Nearly half of the nation's former land was taken by the forces of Kraz, and much of the remainder was lost to generals and local leaders seceding and staging violent coups against the imperial government.

In the hundred years since, the Venirian Empire, while still reduced in size, has begun its climb back towards its former glory. The senate has retained power, with no new emperor having been elected since Emperor Gaius IV's demise. The capital has been re-located back to Venir, and a thriving city has been built above the swallowed ruins of the old city. Various connections to the old city can be found in the sewers, cellars, and other underground portions of the rebuilt city of Venir, and adventurers frequently plumb these depths in search of the secrets and treasures of the empire's glory days.

STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.

Notes for the Game Master: Beneath the Heart of Empire is an OSRIC adventure designed for 6-10 player characters of levels 1 through 3. It takes place beneath Venir, an ancient city. This module describes a section of the undercity of Venir, detailing parts of both its extensive sewer system and the ruins of the old city further beneath. Below are four plot-hooks that could be used to entice groups into exploring the depths below the city.

1. A group of kobolds has recently escaped from one of the city's smaller arenas and fled into the sewers. These humanoids are believed to be responsible for several recent thefts of food and small valuables, as well as the murder of a baker in one of the city's poorer districts. Arena managers are willing to pay adventurers 10 gp a head for kobolds from the group in order to prevent any further negative publicity about 'their' escaped kobolds.
2. An elven traveller named **Neralas Silverwind** (Male elf, AC 5, MV 120 ft., HD 1+1, HP 6, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, AL CG) is looking for his missing sister, Nerissa, who was travelling to the city to trade her home village's wares at market. He has heard from various contacts that she has been captured by a slaver named Cassius, who is keeping her in some holding cell beneath the city, as he attempts to find a buyer willing to pay the right price for her. Neralas is willing to give 100 gp to any adventurer who is able to rescue his sister, and he will throw in a suit of elven chain mail if proof of Cassius's death is obtained during the process. He will pay only 20 gp for Cassius's head if his sister is not recovered safely.
3. A small consortium of mages from the government of Kraz is willing to pay for the demise of a renegade necromancer named Xartha who fled to Venir many months ago. Due to Kraz's strained relations with Veniria, they are unwilling to personally hunt him down. Fearing that he might possess secrets the city does not want spread to its enemies, they

are willing to offer 250 gp to any individual who can either kill him and bring back proof or provide proof that he has already died.

4. A local forger named **Aella** (Human female, 4th-level thief, AC 6, MV 120 ft., HP 16, ATK 1, Damage 1-6 +1 for **short sword + 1**, AL NE) is offering 550 gp and knowledge of various contacts to get an 'in' with the local underworld in exchange for a senator's signet ring retrieved from the undercity. She requires this to forge ancient documents that her employer, a senator named Alerio, needs to cement false claims of ancient deals that would give him vastly increased political sway.

Local Geography: The city of Venir is at the delta of two great rivers and is surrounded by fertile land. Major roads, rebuilt following the destruction of the capital, stretch from Venir to numerous other imperial cities and foreign lands. The area near the capital is generally easily-traversable terrain, and monsters roaming in the local wilds are kept nearly fully in check by the city guard and Venirian legion.

The city itself is massive, containing aqueducts, arenas, wide plazas, and sprawling markets. City streets are patrolled by lorica segmentata-clad (use banded mail statistics) **guardsmen** (Human males, 3rd-level fighters, AC 4, MV 90 ft., HD 3, HP 13, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, AL LN) wielding gladiuses (use stats for a long sword) and displaying the empire's symbol, a laurel wreath ringing a blade. The city openly allows slavery, but the slave trade is highly controlled and taxed. Many of the Venirian senators perform only token efforts to rid the city of its moderately-sized criminal underworld as they have various thieves guilds and assassins in their pockets. The city guard, firmly under the senators' control, also pays little attention to criminal organizations that remain out-of-sight and remain in the good graces of at least one powerful senator. The guard treats obvious criminals and those who have earned the ire of the city's rulers with lethal harshness, however. Despite this corruption, the city still stands as an improvement compared to its state in the olden days; the church of Moloch is now outlawed, and the imperial leaders eschew open orgies of violence and countless vices that the old rulers of the city were wont to participate in.

THE SEWERS

Random Encounters: Check once per every hour; a 1 on a 1d6 indicates an encounter. Roll 1d8 for each specific encounter with 5d10 indicating how many yards away.

1. 1-10 **Thugs** (AC 8, MV 120 ft., HD 1-6 hp, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, AL NE) Thugs prowl both the seedier area of Venir and its sewers. The thugs will likely attempt to mug and kill anyone they encounter, but a well-armed group could frighten them off, and clever negotiators could bargain for their lives.
2. 2-8 **Giant Rats** (AC 7, MV 120 ft./60 ft. climbing, HD 1-4 hp, ATK 1, DAM 1, SA 5% inflicts a disease, AL N) Large numbers of rats infest the city's sewers, serving as a general nuisance, prey for larger creatures, and a threat to those whom they overwhelm in large groups.
3. 1 **Crocodile** (AC 5, HD 3, HP 12, ATK 2, DAM 2-8/1-12, SA Surprises on a 1-3 on 1d6, AL N) Crocodiles, descendants of those who escaped from the city's gladiatorial arenas years ago, lurk in the muck of the sewers. They launch themselves at prey from the cover of the murky water, dragging their meal down and devouring it with their vicious teeth.
4. 1-5 **Skeletons** (AC 7, MV 120 ft., HD 1, DAM 1-6, SD Immune to cold, sleep, charm, hold, and mental attacks, AL N) Many of those killed in the destruction of old Venir rose as undead down in the ruined underground city. Several of these skeletons have made their way upwards, wandering into the city sewers, stalking the corridors and slaying any living beings that they come across. The skeletons, being unintelligent, attack the nearest living targets, fighting until either they are destroyed, or their opponents are either killed or manage to escape.

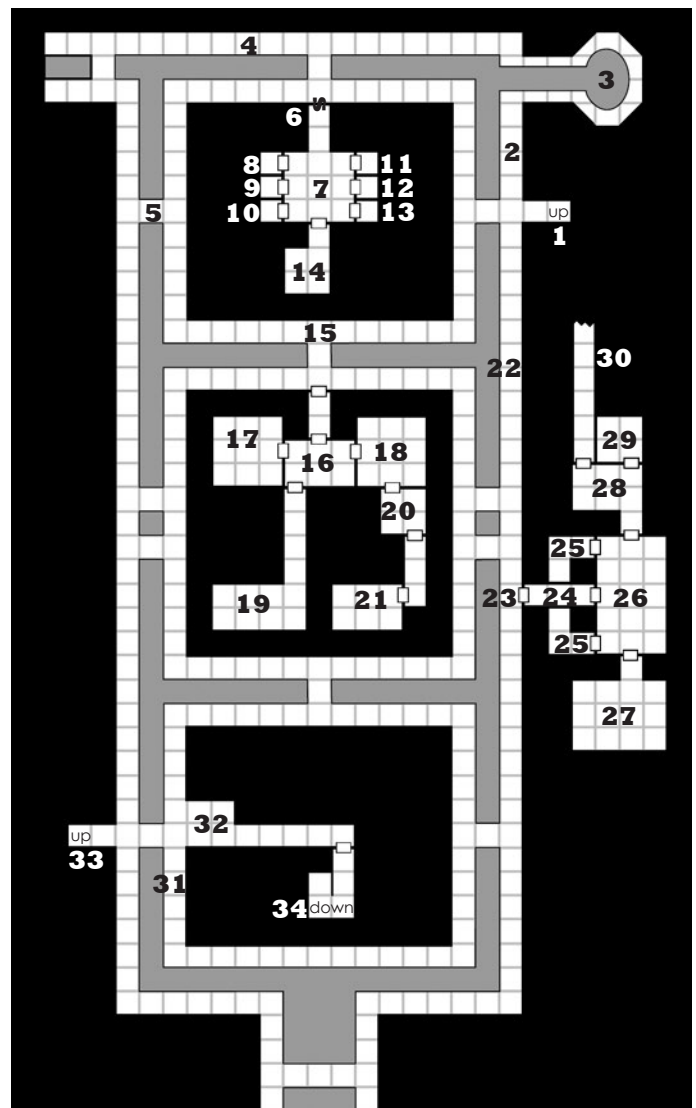
5. 2-10 **Escaped Slaves** (AC 10, MV 120 ft., HD 1-6 hp, ATK 1, DAM 1-2, AL NG) The escaped slaves are non-hostile unless encountering someone who is attempting to re-capture them while unable to run. They will plead for assistance in escaping from the imperial capital, though they have no valuables with which they can reward potential rescuers.
6. 1-6 **Giant Leeches** (AC 9, MV 30 ft., HD 1, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, SA Drains 1 HP per round, 50% chance to contract a disease that will be fatal in 2-5 weeks unless cured, AL N) The giant leeches will emerge from the muck and latch onto prey, refusing to let go until it is drained of blood.
7. 1 **Young Otyugh** (SZ S, MV 60 ft., AC 5, HD 4, HP 17, ATK 3, DAM 1-4/1-4/1-3, SA 90 ft. infravision, 30 ft. telepathy, bite causes typhus 75% of the time, AL N) Otyughs lurk amidst the filth of the deep sewers, devouring filth. The grotesque creatures are rarely seen, but their young wander the sewers attacking adventurers straying onto their path.
8. 1 **Furrower** (SZ L, AC 5, MV 90 ft., HD 3, HP 11, ATK 11, DAM 1/1-2, SA each tentacle grapples, reducing opponent to hits, AL NE) This furrower (see new monsters) travels throughout the sewer, scooping up what it comes upon. It flees at the first sign of effective resistance.

SEWERS ENCOUNTER KEY

1. SEWER ENTRY: An eight-foot ladder here eads down from the city streets into the sewers beneath.
2. SEWER PASSAGE: This passage is rank and filled with flowing filth. The chittering of rats can be heard from nearby drain pipes, but these normal rats do no emerge to attack.
3. NORTHERN CESSPOOL: This cesspool once possessed drains keeping the waste from stagnating, but its inhabitant has clogged them to make a lair for itself in the filth. In this putrid pool lives a lone **furrower** (SZ L, AC 5, MV 90 ft., HD 3, HP 17, ATK 11, DAM 1/1-2, SA each tentacle grapples, reducing opponent to hits, AL NE). This furrower is old, powerful, and will fight to the death. Within the depths of the clogged pool lies 928 cp, 342 sp, 172 gp a pearl locket on a brass chain worth 110 gp, a **dagger +1** and a **ring of feather falling**.
4. THREE GLADIATORS: Three gladiators wander through this sewer corridor. They are attempting to improve their current reputation, which is presently tarnished by a string of losses coupled with (true) accusations of reprehensible off-the-job behavior. The trio has no desire to see anyone else claim the glory for eliminating the escaped monsters, making them likely to attack any group they see as potential competition. The trio are named **Marcus** (Human male, 1st-level fighter, AC 6, MV 90 ft., HD 1, HP 7, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, AL NE), **Remo** (Human male, 1st-level fighter, AC 8, Mv 120 ft., HD 1, HP 6, ATK 1, DAM 1-6+1, AL CN), and **Gaius** (Human male, 1st-level fighter, AC 8, MV 120 ft., HD 1, HP 4, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, AL CE). Marcus wields a long sword and small shield, and wears ring mail. Remo wields a trident and wears a helmet and leather armor. Gaius wields a short sword, wears leather armor, and carries a net. Each has 3-18 gp in their possession.
5. BRIDGE OVER MUCK: A stone bridge extends over the flowing sewer water here. Below this bridge lurks a lone **crocodile** (AC 5, HD 3, HP 10, ATK 2, DAM 2-8/1-12, SA Surprises on a 1-3 on 1d6, AL N). This crocodile will typically attack the last member of a group crossing the bridge should more than one person cross at a time, lurking in wait and then leaping to pull its victim into the sewer water.
6. HIDDEN ENTRYWAY: The entrance to Cassius's small prison is hidden by a secret door in the sewer wall. Odds of detecting the door are increased by 1 on a d6 due to wear from its opening and closing reducing the general amount of scum and mold growing directly in front of it.

MAP OF THE SEWERS

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 10 FEET



7. CONFINEMENT MAIN CHAMBER: This hidden chamber is being used by a smuggler named Cassius to bring monsters and slaves into the city to sell to noble clients without paying the city's high taxes on such wares. There is only a 10% chance that Cassius will be present in this room during the day, and a 15% chance of such at night. **Cassius** (Human male, 2nd-level thief, AC 7, MV 120 ft., HP 5, ATK 1, Damage 1-6, AL NE) wears leather armor, wields a short sword, and carries 60 gp on him at all times. If outmatched, he will offer to pay this in exchange for his life. This room contains a simple wooden table and chair; on the table is a record of each cell's occupant, as well as a key to the cells. Each of the cells adjacent to this room is clearly labeled on the door.
8. CELL ONE: This cell contains an angered **lizard man** (AC 5, MV 60 ft./120 ft. swimming, HD 2 + 1, HP 10, ATK 3, DAM 1-2/1-2/1-8, AL N). He was formerly restrained with a pair of manacles, but he has since broken them and waits to ambush his captor whenever his cell door is opened.
9. CELL TWO: This cell has no occupant and contains only a flat board to sleep on and an empty bucket.
10. CELL THREE: This cell contains a female elf named **Nerissa Silverwind** (Female elf, AC 10, MV 120 ft., HD 1+1, HP 6, ATK 1, DAM 1, AL NG). She is unarmed and clad only in rags; Cassius took her possessions and pawned them off before sticking her in this cell while waiting for a buyer. She will be extremely grateful

for her rescue, and she promises that her brother Neralas will reward anyone who helps her escape from the city.

11. CELL FOUR: This cell contains a cage, which in turn contains a lone **compsognathus** (SZ S, AC 7, MV 180 ft., HD 1+2, HP 6, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, AL N). Cassius obtained the wee dinosaur in exchange for some slaves that he gave to a foreign trader. He keeps it well fed, as he finds the creature amusing and overestimates its worth to a collector of exotic animals.
12. CELL FIVE: This cell is empty, containing a flat board for sleeping. Its bucket went missing half a year ago during a failed escape attempt, and Cassius hasn't bothered replacing it.
13. CELL SIX: Cassius caught one of the escaped **kobolds** (SZ S, AC 7, MV 60 ft, HD 1-4 hp, HP 1, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, AL LE) wandering around near his prison and managed to capture it. He is debating whether he should simply turn it in to the arena for the offered reward or try to hawk it off illegally for a higher profit.
14. OVERSEER'S QUARTERS: This ten-by-ten stone chamber contains a dusty bed, a simple wooden table, and a poorly upholstered chair. An empty torch sconce is set into the wall. This room was the home of the overseer hired by Cassius to watch over the slaves and monsters, preventing escape and unwanted intrusion. Cassius decided that the man's pay was cutting into his profits too much and now solely relies on his jail's hidden door to protect it from intruders. Should any of his slaves be let out or killed, Cassius is likely to resume his practice of hiring an overseer (or change locations entirely).
15. SEWER PASSAGE: This passage lacks the chittering sound of rats and contains a constant gloomy haze that reduces the radius of all light sources by 5 feet. This is one of several visual effects devised by the necromancer Xartha to warn curious intruders away from his lair.
16. ENTRANCE TO XARTHA'S DOMAIN: A door is built into the sewer's wall here. It is heavy and made of stone. An image of a dancing skeleton is painted on its exterior. The image cavorts when exposed to light, which begins to dim eerily (but not go out) when brought near the picture. This strange, but ultimately harmless, decoration, has served well at warding curious intruders away from the chambers beyond. Xartha, a necromancer from Kraz who was exiled by his peers following his delving into illegal research into forbidden blood magics, set up a lab beneath the city of his former masters' ancient enemies. His experiments into the dark arts lasted for months before he botched his bid for lichdom.
17. BONE STORAGE: This chamber's floor drops down two feet from the door outside into a pit. This pit would be four feet deep, but it is filled with a two-foot layer of assorted bones. Most of the bones are human or humanoid, but some come from animals and stranger beasts. When this chamber is entered, collections of mismatched bones animate into six terrible, **part-human skeletons** (AC 7, MV 120 ft., HD 1, HP 2, 3 (x2), 5, 6, 7, DAM 1-6, SD Immune to cold, sleep, charm, hold, and mental attacks, AL N) and attack. This animation process is terrifying, requiring all who see it to save vs. spell or become afraid and flee if 1HD or less. Those of greater might suffer a penalty of 1 to AC and a -1 on to hit rolls and to damage.
18. NECROMANCY LAB: This chamber's floor is inscribed with mystic symbols and runes, and three large bowls filled with caked, dried blood are set in smaller circles at the edges of a large mystical diagram in the chamber's center. Black candles sit half-burnt in a ring around each of the bowls, and a single skull sits in the center of the mystic symbol.
19. XARTHA'S BEDCHAMBER: This chamber contains a simple pinewood bed with dirtied, pale-blue blankets atop it. It also contains a wooden table, a single chair, a pile of bowls and cups, a box of wooden utensils, a small burgundy rug with frayed edges (worth 30 cp), and a diary describing Xartha's research, his flight from Kraz, his settling in the chambers beneath Venir, and his dealings in the city, culminating in an entry pondering his eventual fate after passing from what seems to be an inevitable wasting curse. He describes his research into lichdom in the book, hinting at a possible apotheosis after death, but his research into the area contains few actually-useful clues towards any sort of functional process. The sections are, in actuality, a combination of his own wishful thinking and foolish exaggerations that may make would-be looters of his domain fearful of the cosmetically-augmented zombie he botched himself into.
20. SIMIAN ENCLOSURE: This chamber contains one of Xartha's few successful experiments. In this room is a lone **monkey ghou** (AC 8, MV 120 ft./180 ft. climbing, HD 1, HP 4, ATK 1, DAM 1-3 plus paralysis, SQ turn as ghoul. AL NE) that has been confined to the chamber since the necromancer's death. It hungers for the flesh of the living, and should it hear individuals in the adjacent chamber, it will cling to the ceiling above the door, waiting to drop down on the first fleshy individual who enters its lair. If the door is left open, there are no living beings in the room, and the creature is still alive, it will leave the necromancer's lair and begin to hunt for flesh in the sewers and alleys of the city.
21. XARTHA'S STUDY: The necromancer's animated corpse dwells in this room as a **zombie** (AC 8, MV 60 ft., HD 2, HP 13, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, SD Immune to cold, sleep, charm, hold, and mental attacks, AL N). Xartha so botched his attempt at lichdom that he turned himself into a zombie. However, he did succeed in placing various enchantments on his body that activated upon his demise. As such, the zombie's eyes glow with a cold fire that also flickers about its hands. While this is a purely cosmetic effect, it can make the zombie difficult to properly identify. This room has been severely water damaged, and all the bookshelves are ruined. Only a few of Xartha's spells in his spellbooks have survived: **affect normal fires, magic aura, magic missile, protection from good, and blood servant** (see *new spells*).
22. SEWER PASSAGE: This sewer passage is regularly traversed by groups of kobolds who are out raiding the upper town. As such, trackers can find their tracks here and swiftly follow them to the door to the kobolds' lair.
23. ENTRANCE TO THE KOBOLD LAIR: A rotting, metal-rimmed wooden door stands in the sewer wall here, formerly part of a larger, now-abandoned station used by masons as lodging and storage space during the construction of a major sewer expansion. Kobold tracks leading to the door can be found by any skilled tracker.
24. KOBOLD CHOKEPOINT: This short passage is guarded by four **kobolds** (SZ S, AC 7, MV 60 ft, HD 1-4 hp, HP 1, 3, 4 (x2), ATK 1, DAM 1-4, AL LE), who are tasked with guarding the clan's home at all times. The clan rotates which members hold this position. Protracted or noisy combat will draw the attention of kobolds in the living quarters, followed by kobolds in the sleeping quarters and the chieftain's chamber. The kobolds will attempt to hold this chokepoint as best they can, as their crossbowmen can fire at intruders during the combat from two adjacent guard chambers, and their back escape route is not yet constructed.
25. SIDE GUARD CHAMBERS: Each of these chambers contains a single **kobold** (SZ S, AC 7, MV 60 ft, HD 1-4 hp, HP 2, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, AL LE). These kobolds are armed with light crossbows and fire through slits the kobolds hacked into the walls between these chambers and the chokepoint, shooting at intruders who are fighting against the hideout's guards.

26. **KOBOLD LIVING AREA:** This chamber contains a cooking pit, a pile of charcoal, bones from various kills, scraps of food, and assorted low-quality household goods stolen from local businesses. This room is generally populated by whatever kobolds are not out raiding, guarding the entryway, attending the chieftain, or digging the escape tunnel. There are 15 **kobolds** (SZ S, AC 7, MV 60 ft, HD 1-4 hp, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, AL LE) in total, and at any time 6 will be guarding the main entryway, and 2 will be acting as the chief's attendants. The 7 other kobolds have a 20% chance to be conducting raids, a 30% chance (to a maximum of 2 at any time) of working on the back-exit tunnel, a 20% chance of being in the sleeping quarters, and a 30% chance of being in this room.
27. **COMMON SLEEPING QUARTERS:** This chamber contains many piles of straw and stolen pillows. At any time there is a chance of some kobolds resting in this chamber (refer to the kobold living area to determine the locations of various kobolds). Various kobolds keep their treasure in pouches, small boxes, and piles in the back-side of the room. In total, the treasure contains 85 cp, 2 sp, 1 ep, a silver necklace worth 60 gp, 2 daggers, and a small shield with a golden image of a griffon painted onto it worth 20 gp.
28. **CHIEFTAIN'S LAIR:** This chamber contains the makeshift throne of the chieftain of the escaped kobolds. It is a mismatched construct of wood, scrap metal, and bones. The kobold chieftain is typically in this chamber plotting with two attendants and determining which segments of the city the tribe should raid next. The attendants are regular **kobolds** (AC 7, MV 60 ft., HD 1-4 hp, HP 3, 4, ATK 1, DAM 1d4, AL LE), whereas the **chieftain** (AC 6, MV 60 ft., HD 1-1, HP 6, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, AL LE) is more dangerous and wields a gladius stolen from a city guard post, wielding it effectively despite his small size.
29. **KOBOLD TREASURE HORDE:** This former storage room, a plain 20 ft. by 20 ft. stone chamber, has been converted into the kobold chief's personal treasure hoard. It contains 2,515 cp, 413 sp, 1 beryl worth 60 gp, a gold comb worth 90 gp, 2 longswords, a baker's cleaver (treat as a dagger), and an amulet with a glass bead on the end worth 14 cp.
30. **HALF-BUILT TUNNEL:** The kobolds have begun digging a tunnel leading outwards from this section of the sewers toward the Northern edge of the city. They eventually plan to use this tunnel as a hidden escape route in the back of their lair in the case of an attack that they cannot repel. The tunnel is only part-way finished, however, and contains two small pick-axes, a small shovel, and a bucket filled with dirt and rocks. At any time there is a chance of some kobolds being present and working on this tunnel (refer to the kobold living area to determine the locations of various kobolds).
31. **SEWER PASSAGE:** This sewer passage is faintly lit from the lantern hanging in the watch station near the undercity entrance.
32. **WATCH STATION:** This simple watch station is manned by rotation of lower-class citizens who are paid a copper per six-hour shift. The chamber contains a stool, a string connected to a warning bell in a short tower sitting in the city above, and a lantern. One peasant is always on watch. The **peasants** (Human male, AC 10, MV 120 ft., HD 1-6 hp, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, AL N), though armed by the city with daggers, are terrified of combat, and will ring the warning bell and then attempt to flee if hostilities are initiated or if any creature emerges from the undercity. The peasant manning the station will allow anyone who does not look like an obvious criminal or escaped slave to pass without question; adventurers are permitted into the undercity, thanks to measures that the Venirian senate recently passed in hopes of ridding the ruins beneath the capital of some of their lurking terrors. The majority of sewer creatures avoid the watch stations for the most part, more so because of the fast response-time of **city guards** (Human males, 3rd-level fighters, AC 4, MV 90 ft., HD 3, HP 13, ATK 1, DAM 1d8, AL LN), who rush to the scene in teams of eight if the bell is rang than because of the peasants manning the station. The guards wield gladius blades, wear lorica segminta armor, and bear medium shields. Because of this, wandering encounters only have a 1 in 20 chance of actually appearing within sight of the station.
33. **SEWER ENTRY:** An eight-foot ladder here leads down from the city streets into the sewers beneath. This entryway is used by the city guard to investigate if the warning bell is rung.
34. **TO THE OLD CITY:** This sloping passage, hidden inside a sewer alcove, was built by the city government years ago during a project assessing the viability of reclaiming the underground city for additional space within the capital. After surveyors reported the presence of undead, devils, and strange man-things from the depths of the earth, the project was abandoned, and a watch station posted outside.

LOWER LEVEL

35. **RUINED CHAMBER:** This chamber, formerly a small plaza outside one of the old city's many arenas, now lies beneath the ground. A broken fountain lies at its center, with no water flowing into its basin any longer. Large boulders litter the ground from the time when the earth swallowed the city, and a large well can be seen at the far side of the chamber from the stairs.
36. **WELL INTO DARKNESS:** This old well once stood near the arena entrance when old Venir still stood above ground. Now, it opens into a shaft of seemingly endless blackness. The well connects to a cavern 300 feet down. **Grimlocks** (AC 5, MV 120 ft., HD 2, ATK 1, DAM 1-6 or by weapon, SD save as 6th-level fighters, AL NE) inhabit the depths beneath the ancient city, and a group of 1-8 is likely to be roused to climb the shaft and investigate 1-4 turns after any object is dropped down the hole. The well is remarkably easy to ascend and descend, as the shaking of the city has made many solid hand-holds.
37. **HALL OF COLUMNS:** This hall is sixty feet long, twenty feet wide, thirty feet high, and lined with two rows of towering marble columns. The columns are covered with frescoes depicting Veneria's ancient conquests. Many of the columns are now shattered, filling the room with loose rubble, and the once-majestic paintings covering them are chipped and dirtied.
38. **THE ARENA PIT:** This large arena pit is covered with coarse sand. The restless spirit of a gladiator named Brutus now animated as a **dust centurion** (AC 5, MV 60 ft., HD 3, HP 13, ATK 1, DAM 2-12, AL LE) (see *new monsters*), stirs within the sand. He rises and issues a challenge to any group that enters the chamber. Brutus finds himself denied a rightful death by combat thanks to the magical catastrophe, and refuses to let any group pass until one of its members can defeat him in single combat, allowing his soul to pass on. Should Brutus be defeated fairly, he will leave a **trident +1** behind. Brutus is incapable of leaving the arena proper to pursue groups and any team that attempts to gang up on him will face his wrath. Remember, those who ignore Brutus's honorable challenge find themselves unable to damage him with non-magical weapons.
39. **GLADIATOR CELLS:** These cells contain the corpses of many gladiators who were imprisoned here when the city fell. Each of the 20 cells had a lone occupant, a mattress, a pillow stuffed with straw, a pot for waste, and a cheap copper bowl for food. The occupant of the third cell in the leftmost row stuffed both a dagger and two gems each worth 30 gp in his mattress, planning to use all three items however was necessary in escaping from the arena. One of the gladiators, Brutus, rose from the dead following the catastrophe; however, he haunts the arena floor and not this chamber.

40. **BEAST CELLS:** This large chamber contains many broken cages and the bones of ancient beasts. It was used during the arena's more functional days as the holding pen for its monstrous combatants, who would be led into the arena and back by teams of armed handlers. Now it is the domain of a **zombie ogre** (AC 6, MV 9, HD 6, HP 28, ATK 1, DAM 4-16, SD Immune to cold, sleep, charm, hold, and mental attacks, SQ attacks last in round, turns as ghastr, AL N), which rose from the dead shortly after the magical catastrophe destroyed the city. The brutish animated corpse will attack any who disturb it. In this chamber are 5 whips, 10 pikes, and a jeweled collar worth 350 gp, all tossed about in the wreckage of the handlers' arming stand.

41. **ARENA STANDS:** The arena's stands are both massive and empty. Their stone rows sit undisturbed for decades, and dust covers the benches that fill the great, ruined structure.

42. **SENATORS' BOX:** This luxurious box was where members of the imperials senate sat when they came to watch battles at the arena, often being invited to give a speech to the other patrons before a major fight. It is similar to the even grander box reserved for the emperor himself in the old city's largest arena; thanks to the smaller size and lesser prestige of this arena, however, the emperor himself never visited. Seated in the box is the corpse of a senator clad in fine red-and-gold robes (175 gp) with a golden laurel wreath (250 gp) around his head and an official insignia ring (500 gp) on his right hand's ring finger. The senator, strikingly, is the only corpse in the entire arena; the arena was closed when the city fell, leaving only the imprisoned gladiators and beasts to die within it.

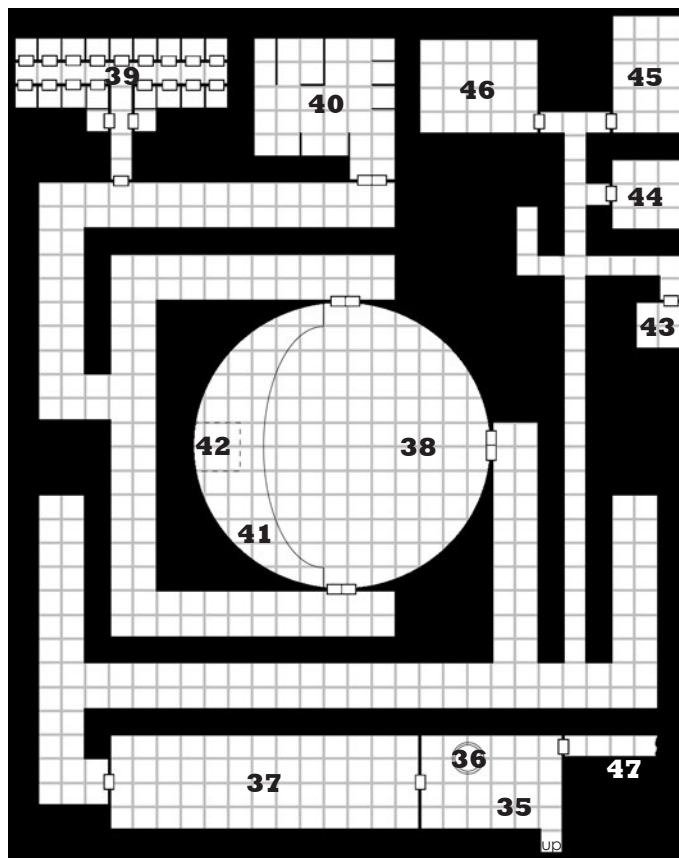
The senator, named Julius, came to the arena after his death, wandering to the chamber as a strange type of unique, **intelligent skeleton** (AC 5, MV 120 ft., HD 3, HP 19, ATK 1, DAM 1-8+1, SA Wields a **longsword +1**, SD Immune to cold, sleep, charm, hold, and mental attacks, turns as a ghoul, AL LE). He is capable of conjuring illusions of warriors and passes his days summoning forth phantasmal warriors to battle in the pit for his amusement. Brutus, trapped on the sands, has learned to ignore his phantoms, for they can inflict no harm to the centurion. Should a group intrude upon his box, Julius conjures a quartet of armed, ghostly guards to distract them while he himself uses his **longsword +1**, a golden blade adorned with images of thorny vines, to attack the intruders.

43. **OLD ARMORY:** This old armory lies unopened since the ancient city's fall. It is a 10 ft. by 10 ft. chamber lined with racks of weapons and stands of armor. In total, the chamber contains 30 gladius swords, 10 spears, 5 tridents, 5 daggers, 3 slings, 30 javelains, 10 medium shields, and 5 full suits of lorica segmentata. The chamber was used to arm both guards of the arena and gladiators.

44. **SANCTUM OF THE TYRANT:** This chamber was added to the old arena at the behest of the corrupt senators of the ancient city. It contains a profane altar to moloch and many braziers that burn with unholy fire to this day. An **ember devil** (AC 6, MV 30 ft./60 ft. flying, HD 3, HP 11, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA fling coals, SD +1 or better weapon to hit, immune to fire, vulnerable to holy water, AL LE) (see *new monsters*) devil is bound to the room. Any cleric possesses a 10% chance per level (max 90%) of knowing its weakness to holy water, while magic users possess a 5% chance per level (also max 90%). The devil cannot leave the chamber, but will fling burning coals at anyone who attempts to defeat it at a range, hiding behind the altar if this proves ineffective. Next to the altar is a bowl of sacrificed jewelry, which contains 150 gp worth of assorted trinkets and a ring made of platinum carved with designs of fire worth 110 gp. Any individual who consecrates the altar and extinguishes the profane fires with holy water will be blessed by the gods of good for the remainder of the week, receiving +1 to all saves.

THE LOWER LEVEL

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 10 FEET



45. **OLD GARDENS:** This beautiful chamber, illuminated by the flickering purple glow of a broken magical light hanging from the ceiling, contains numerous ceramic pots and basins, all of which contain dirt. Most of the pots and basins contain still-living plants that are kept nurtured by nutrient-providing spells cast upon the exotic gardens back during the finer days of the empire.

The exotic plants include multi-colored fronds, palms, a massive, needle-covered bush (which deals a single point of damage if someone tries to walk through it while unarmored), and a lone **addelevetch** (AC 6, MV 10ft., HD 2, HP 7, ATK special, DAM special, SA see monster description, SD Cannot be surprised, AL N) (see *new monsters*), which was imported from a foreign nation and kept in a protective field to be observed from a safe distance. The protective field failed when the city fell, leaving the creature able to move about again; it has remained in the chamber, however, because it has no obvious means of escape from the underground and requires the nutrient-providing field of the chamber to obtain sustenance while in the depths. Any party that rests in this chamber will find that the nutrient-providing field will also work on them, providing them with a full day's sustenance for an hour spent in the chamber; overnight healing in the room is doubled.

46. **RECORD HALL:** This stone chamber is filled with many bookcases. The bookcases contain lists of fighters, records of combats, logs of injuries and deaths, copies of speeches delivered by senators before fights, ledgers tracking the arena's profits, and other documents relating to the operations of the battle pit. The paper inside the books is brittle and will easily be ruined by rough handling, fire, or contact with liquids. An intact and complete collection of records from the old arena could be worth as much as 700 gp to the right collectors of historical documents, but the entire collection weighs over 400 lbs., so transport will be an issue.

47. RUINED EXIT: This passage continues for fifteen feet before reaching a massive pile of rubble. If the rubble were cleared, more of the underground city of ancient Venir could be explored. Doing so would, however, be a massive undertaking that would take a team of well-equipped workers days and is thus beyond the scope of this adventure.

CONCLUSION

If a GM wishes he can greatly expand the sewers, ruined undercity, and caverns even further beneath the ancient capital, for that detailed here is only a slice of what could be a much larger system. The ruins beneath the imperial capital could include the old imperial palace, which contains the old emperor himself and many of his corrupt senators and advisors, now risen as terrible undead creatures. Even larger gladiatorial arenas could be discovered, at least one of which was said to have once held a minotaur lord who wielded a great magic axe. Finally, a full temple to Moloch would prove a formidable location for higher-level play, especially if it still calls a single devil into its halls every year, adding to an ever growing legion of flame. Above ground, further political intrigue involving the various factions of the senate, outlying cities of the empire, and adjacent Magocracy of Kraz also present possibilities for continuing a campaign.

THIS ENDS THIS EXPEDITION BENEATH THE EMPIRE'S HEART!

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

ADDEVETCH

SIZE: Small
MOVE: 10 ft.
ARMOR CLASS: 6
HIT DICE: 2
ATTACKS: Special
DAMAGE: Special
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Eye rays
SPECIAL DEFENSES: All-around vision
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 15%
RARITY: Uncommon
NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-2
LAIR PROBABILITY: 0%
TREASURE: None
INTELLIGENCE: Low
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
LEVEL/X.P.: 2 / 50 + 1/hp

General information: Addlevetch are mobile, carnivorous plants found in desert regions. They prefer to lie in wait along pools of water, usually wedged between rocks (improving AC to 4) or at the base of a palm tree. When an animal or other prey comes near, an addlevetch uses its rays to disable and kill the creature. Once any threats have passed, the plant nestles into the corpse to consume and grow. A few desert tribes hunt and kill addlevetch to create a fiery tequila beloved by the brave, daring or foolhardy.

Every addlevetch possesses three "eyes." These are at the tips of curved stems growing from the center of the plant, and each eye has a different magical ability. Each eye must succeed on a to hit roll to successfully target a victim. The yellow eye shoots a yellow ray that acts as a confusion spell against the target only. The red eye shoots a red ray that causes a massive itching sensation throughout the target's body, resulting in a -2 to all to hit and damage rolls with a failed save against spells. The smallest eye, the blue eye, shoots a blue ray that acts like a cause light wounds spell. The addlevetch can use two eye rays per round in combat. The eye stems are very quick and flexible (AC -5) but can be severed by dealing 1 hit point of damage with a slashing weapon. An addlevetch that suffers a severed eye usually makes a fighting withdrawal from the combat to regrow the eye. Regrowth takes a minimum of two weeks.

Addlevetch possess all-around vision and cannot be surprised. They are automatically aware of any creature of small size or larger

within 30 feet, including invisible ones. Addlevetch sometimes hunt in pairs, sharing in kills.

Physical description: An addlevetch look similar to a small agave cactus common in some desert regions. They have a rosette of thick, fleshy leaves spanning up to three feet in diameter. Where the tall flowering stem would grow during the flowering phase of a true agave, the addlevetch possesses three long and curving stems. Each of these stems sports a colorful and shiny sphere at its tip, looking like a closed flower. Typically there are several dead leaves at the base of the plant which help insulate it from the cold desert nights and hide the web of shallow roots used for mobility. These dead leaves are more common in winter and are sometimes completely absent during high summer.

Variants: There are reports of different types of addlevetch possessing different eye abilities, such as fear, slow, and sleep. However, all these variants possess the cause light wounds eye. It is rumored that there are addlevetch adapted to subterranean life, but such has not been confirmed, nor has the rumor of a greater addlevetch possessing 6 eyes.

DUST CENTURION

SIZE: Medium (5-6 ft. tall)
MOVE: 60 ft.
ARMOR CLASS: 5
HIT DICE: 3
ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE: 2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS: None
SPECIAL DEFENSES: +1 or better weapon to harm if not in one-on-one combat
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%
RARITY: Very rare
NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4 or 100-6000 (Legion)
LAIR PROBABILITY: 100%
TREASURE: +1 Weapon
INTELLIGENCE: Average
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral (50%) or Lawful Evil (50%)
LEVEL/X.P.: 3 / 150 + 2/HP

General information: A dust centurion is the departed spirit of a former warrior who perished in a great magical calamity, unable to achieve the death in combat that it desired. This longing, combined with the great magical energies from the disaster, transform it into a spirit that animates the dust and wreckage left from the calamity, forming into a humanoid shape when approached. Each dust centurion is compelled to issue a challenge to living beings that near it, demanding a one-on-one combat. A dust centurion is completely vulnerable to attacks from a combatant facing it in fair combat, but, should its opponents attack it in violation of the duel, its vulnerability disappears, leaving it as a magical undead entity that can only be harmed by +1 or greater weapons. Should it be defeated fairly, it will leave its weapon behind, imbued with the magical power that departs from its now-freed spirit, turning the weapon into a +1 piece of equipment.

A dust centurion is unable to leave the place of its demise, though dust centurions can often claim entire battlefields or ruined cities as their lair. Legends tell of some entire legions who rise from the grave, only able to pass on when defeated by another force of on the field of battle, trading their one-on-one challenges for ones on a more massive scale of battle; fortunately, such legions will typically ignore any small group of travelers, waiting for an entire army to battle against.

Physical description: A dust centurion appears as a warrior made from swirling dust and sand, clad in a legionnaire's raiment and wielding weapons appropriate to its past life. The precise material that a dust centurion is made of depends on the great calamity that it perished in; one that died in a massive magical blaze may be made of ash, whereas one that died to an unnatural blizzard could be made of floating crystals of ice. This material composition has no effect on its statistics.

EMBER DEVIL (Lesser Devil; Ukobach)

SIZE: Small (2-3 ft. tall)
 MOVE: 30 ft., flying 60 ft.
 ARMOR CLASS: 6
 HIT DICE: 3
 ATTACKS: 1
 DAMAGE: 1-6 with poker or 1-4 fire from flung coals
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fling coals
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to fire, +1 or better weapons to hit, vulnerability to holy water
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 10%
 RARITY: RARE
 NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-8
 LAIR PROBABILITY: 60%
 TREASURE: 1-20 gp (melted and mixed with coals)
 INTELLIGENCE: Average
 ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
 LEVEL/X.P.: 3 / 125 + 2/HP

General information: Ukobach devils are known to serve many greater devils, but the largest concentrations of their kind work in service to the Archdevils Moloch and Beelzebub. They tend to Moloch's sacrificial fires and furnaces, and they keep hot the oils that Beelzebub has distilled from the blood of sinners to use in his diabolical experiments.

An ember devil's affinity for unholy fire leaves it with a great vulnerability to holy water. If an ukobach or its pan of hellish coal is doused with holy water, then it loses its immunity to nonmagical weapons, ability to fling burning embers, and flight for 24 hours.

Physical description: An ember devil is a small, ugly humanoid with green skin, standing approximately 2-3 feet in height. It has an oversized nose and is prone to smirk, sneer, or snivel, depending on its demeanor and current surroundings. Ukobach devils carry around large pans of burning coals from hell, each of which is tipped with a red-hot metal poker.

FURROWER

SIZE: Large (8 ft. wide)
 MOVE: 90 ft.
 ARMOR CLASS: 5
 HIT DICE: 3
 ATTACKS: 11
 DAMAGE: 1 (x 10), 1-2
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: None
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: None
 RARITY: Rare
 NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-3
 LAIR PROBABILITY: 50%
 TREASURE: In Lair: 1-12k cp (20%), 1-6k sp (30%), 1-4k ep (10%), 1-6 gems (25%), 1-3 jewelry (20%), any 2 magic items (10%)
 INTELLIGENCE: Semi
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral evil
 LEVEL/X.P.: 3 / 110 + 2/HP

General information: Furrowers live in sewers and swamps, where they leave distinctive trails as they pass. These furrows are how they gain their name, but they are also known as sewer terrors by the unfortunates forced to work in the dangerous underground systems.

Furrowers attack with their grasping tentacles. An initial hit does no damage, but constriction on the following rounds deals 1 hit point of damage per tentacle. Worse however, is the interfering nature of these limbs: for every tentacle upon a target, he suffers a corresponding -1 on to hit rolls. For example, a creature gasped by 6 tentacles of a furrower is at a -6 to hit. Severing tentacles is fairly easy (AC 9, 2 hit points), but the furrower seems to have an almost inexhaustible supply of them, so it is rarely a wise tactic.

A furrower has a truly impressive-looking mouth, but it is composed of weak and soft teeth coupled with paltry bite strength. Sages speculate that furrowers use their mouths more to scare off

dangerous foes than as a tool of attack or defense. Furrowers are very acquisitive creatures and have a horde of treasure in their lair somewhat incongruent to their real danger.

Physical description: A mass of writhing tentacles with an impressive, but weak, mouth is most anyone sees of a furrower. They vary in color from green to gray.

APPENDIX B: NEW SPELLS**Blood Servant**

Arcane Necromancy
 Level: Magic User 1
 Range: 10 ft
 Duration: Permanent
 Area of Effect: See Below
 Components: V, S, M
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Saving Throw: None

This spell is functionally identical to the spell *animate dead*, save that it requires an additional sacrifice of its caster's blood as part of the ritual. This blood flows into the created skeleton or zombie and gives it unlife, but the spell's caster loses 1 permanent hit point per hit die of undead animated in this method. When an undead creature created by this spell is destroyed, sacrificed hit points return to the caster at a rate of one point per week.

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Beneath The Heart of Empire

The Venirian Empire, while still reduced in size, has begun its climb back towards its former glory. The senate has retained power, with no new emperor having been elected since Emperor Gaius IV's demise. The capital has been re-located back to Venir, and a thriving city has been built above the swallowed ruins of the old city. Various connections to the old city can be found in the sewers, cellars, and other underground portions of the rebuilt city of Venir, and adventurers frequently plumb these depths in search of the secrets and treasures of the empire's glory days.

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