

The Steeps of Ur-Menig

An adventure location by Michael Prescott

Into the Steeps

It is said that the sorcerer Bethelan drew his power from the depths of the earth, and that his chosen place for his meditations is rich with his treasures.

The Steeps

A natural cavern system, the steeps are rough, unstable, and wet. The uneven slopes will require much climbing and clambering. Each elevation line indicates a drop of ten feet.

From Time to Time (Roll d6 twice)

d6 #1: 1-2: encounter; 3-6: distant sounds, foreshadowing, or remnants.

d6 #2: 1: 2d6 hungry isopods; 2: cloud of moths; 3: abrasive, wet sand gets everywhere; 4: sudden 10' subsidence; 5: giant centipede; 6: the cave wyrm.

1. Entrance Gallery

This high-ceilinged cavern slopes gradually downwards to the north. A trail has been worn into the floor, cutting east toward location 4. The northern end is divided by a row of rusted iron stakes, each a foot long, driven into the clay of the floor.

2. Echoing Depths

The remarkable echoes here will soon start to come slightly before the original sounds.

3. Moths

A huge number of fat, grey moths dwell here, preyed upon by spiders and whip scorpions.

4. Meditation Chamber

The path from the west winds to the top of a 30' tall plateau. At the summit stands a small stool and a sturdy leather case containing a set of silver tuning forks.

5. Low Cavern

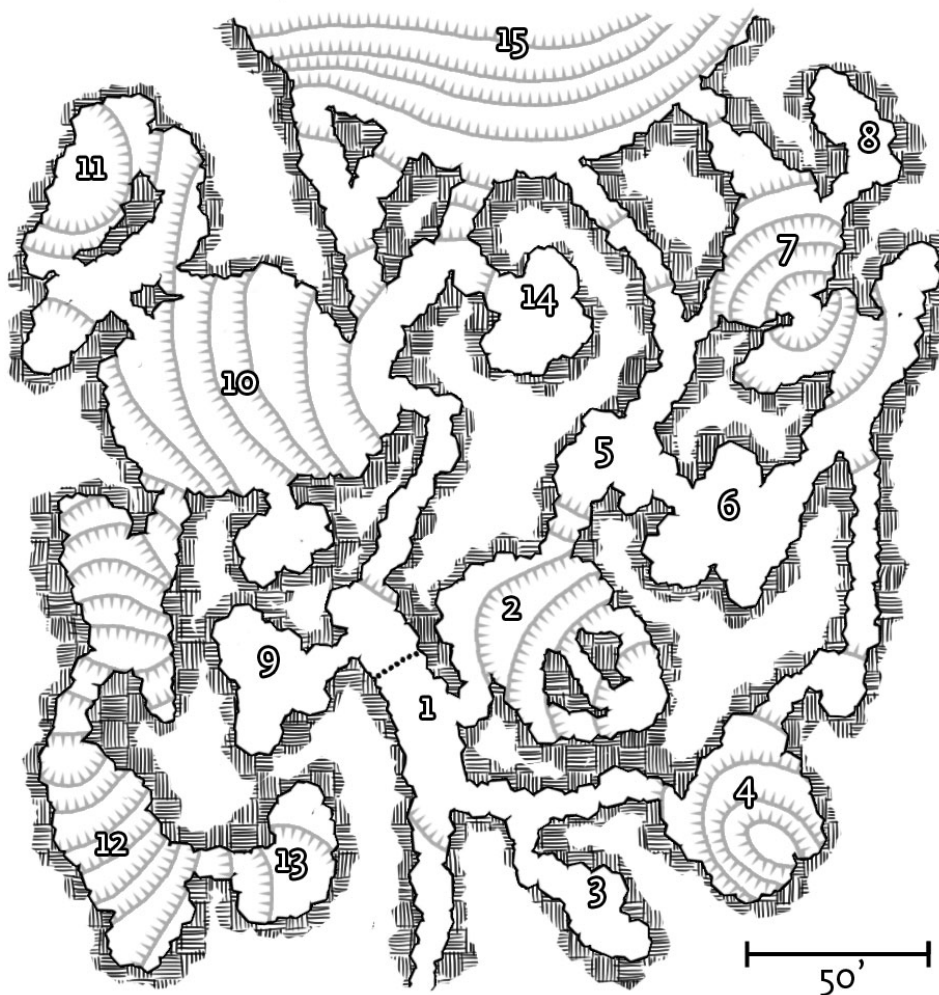
The ceiling presses down claustrophobically, dropping to a mere 3' in the middle.

6. Flat Chamber

Hidden by rubble around a flat, circular cleared space are the remains of candle stubs and a gold-handled ceremonial knife.

7. Bethelan's Musical Geode

Gigantic crystals, some twice the size of a man, line this large, bowl-shaped chamber.



If struck, the crystals ring with clear tones of surpassing beauty. Given time to learn the layout of the geode, it is possible to play music here, perhaps by throwing coins.

Anyone who hears such a piece gains local telepathy with all fellow listeners.

8. Hermit

A filthy, sour-smelling man clad in rags. He is a demon, brought here by Bethelan and imprisoned by the power of the crystals. He will plead with the party for assistance crossing the geode. If helped across, he may take his natural form. He is patient, a liar,

and will use his freedom with alarming malice.

9. Sodden Grotto

Crude etchings appear to show genderless beings frolicking amid stalagmites, pools, and strange cathedrals.

10. Dormant Isopods

Buried in the steep slope are 13 giant cave isopods. Mature adults, they resemble 4-foot earwigs, save for their many legs. They have lain dormant for years, but noises or careless clambering will awaken them. They are hungry.

11. Bountiful Pool

A pool wriggles with immature isopods. The entire chamber, in fact, is contaminated with isopod eggs, barely distinguishable from the sand. If any eggs find their way to fresh water, they will infest it.

12. Lair of the Cave Wurm

The lower portion of the cave is littered with shattered isopod fragments.

At the top of the cave waits the wyrms. Wingless, eyeless, and without forelegs, it has sought this cavern as a refuge against the shame of its deformities. Nevertheless, its hoarding instinct is strong, and it will pursue anyone it suspects of being able to contribute to its cache.

13. The Wyrms' Cache

Packed into the sand in the upper reaches of this chamber are three wyrms' eggs and a mass of chewed silverwork, evidently fittings from several princely saddles. Cared-for eggs hatch as wyrms-isopod hybrids.

14. Carreg Waiting Post

Five genderless beings with skin of supple clay rest here, eating an isopod. They are a party of carreg scouts, awaiting Bethelan in the hopes of obtaining expertise in warfare or magic to aid their embattled homeland. They expect relief in three days' time.

Carreg fear iron, but will fight using bone javelins if pressed. Fungus bed mats, quartz dice, d6 gems.

15. Maw of Ur-Menig

This chamber is vast beyond reckoning. The ceiling swoops up and out of view, while the ground of packed, rippled sand slopes precipitously downward. Once holding a lake of considerable size, it is now a black void filled with icy currents of air.

20' below the level of the corridors is a rowboat, overturned and half buried. Beneath it is a sack containing garnets, emeralds and a map showing a route to the homeland of the carreg.

Beyond the boat the air is unbreathable. Anyone ignoring the sensations of light-headedness will swoon into a deathless sleep, resting there until returned to higher ground.

If the carreg are on friendly terms with the PCs and trade looks possible, they will offer to carry them across the maw, unconscious, to their homeland, a service they claim they have performed for Bethelan many times.

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