

False Tomb of Horrors by Joe Pallai

Forward:

I made this module in 1986 for two reasons; to prepare my players for Gary Gygax's masterpiece; Module S1 The Tomb of Horrors; and to mess with the two players who had played through the module, before I was the Dungeon Master.

"Oh that module, well, we already played that when I was DMing." I remember one of them saying.

Needless to say, this module was a huge success; and by the time the players stopped making assumptions based on the original module, they had lost two henchmen and one player character. They were scared, yet committed to the bitter end. When the morning came around, there were only a few characters still living; yet the audience remained largely intact. It isn't the most action packed module I've made and it is pretty much a player killer; but for the three groups I've run through it; the outcome is always the same: the survivors feel justifiably accomplished.

NOTES:

Originally made in 1986 this module has been converted to the 2nd Edition rules, but not the 3rd Edition rules, as I do not own those. If however you do that, I'd love to have a copy.

This module is designed for 4-8 characters of 12-14th level of experience and it is ideal that the players are experience as well, or they shall in all likelihood die quickly, as this is a module where player skills are more important than character abilities. Characters should be similar to those presented in S1 Tomb of Horrors. Also it is necessary to own the Tomb of Horrors to present the pictures from the module in order to continue the deception that this is, in fact, the real Tomb.

1) ENTRANCE TO THE FALSE TOMB OF HORRORS

"This is a plain stone passageway. The ceiling is 10 feet high; and a statue of a four armed gargoyle can be seen at the end of the hall."

As soon as the characters pass the 20-foot mark; a large iron portcullis will crash down where it's noted on the map. This portcullis cannot be bent or moved in any way except for the following: Disintegrate, Transmute Metal to Wood, Alter-Reality, Wish, or Gaseous Form (to get through the bars).

A)The gargoyle statue is made of stone and has an ivory horn (worth 500gp). This horn can easily be twisted off (it unscrews) and if placed point first into the gargoyle's mouth, a small crawlspace (3 feet high) will open in the base of the statue; allowing access to the False Tomb.

2) FALSE ENTRANCE TO FALSE TOMB OF HORRORS

"The walls of this passageway are painted with pictures and runes. At the end of the passage are two doors. A mosaic path leads down the hall."

If the players ask about the pictures, give them descriptions from the real Tomb of Horrors (Area 3). All pits are 10 feet deep, except where noted otherwise and filled with spikes. They open automatically on anyone stepping on it. Thrusting with a pole reveals them 4 in 6 (d6, 1-4). The chance to fall in is 100% modified downwards by dexterity (see Tomb of Horrors for details and for the details on the number of spikes that hit, etc.)

If the players open the west door; a 30-foot deep pit filled with a Black Pudding at the bottom will open up. This pit cannot be detected by any means (due to its 3' thickness) except a True Seeing spell; which will reveal a fine rectangle where the stone plug is. After this pit is triggered, it will remain open. Characters take 3-18 points of damage from falling.

Black Pudding (1): AC 6; HD 10*; hp 54; MV 60"; # AT 1; Dmg 3-24; Save as F5; ML 12; AL N; XP 1600

If the characters open the East door a Spear +1 will shoot out and hit the character if he fails a Save vs. Wands. The spear will cause 3-13 (2d6+1) points of damage if it hits; and the party can use the spear afterwards (as a Spear +1).

3) FALSE ENTRANCE TO FALSE TOMB

“Double doors are at the end of this 40 foot long hallway. The ceiling is 20 feet high and filled with spikes.”

If the characters open the double doors, they will see a wall with the painting of a skull with gems for its eyes and teeth. They will then hear a rumbling sound 30 feet behind them. Slowly count to 5 (1 ½ seconds per count); at the end of the count, daylight won’t be seen due to a slab of adamantine (5 feet in thickness at the 10-foot mark). If the characters react before the end of the count; either by running past the door, placing an iron bar in the way, trying to stop it or whatever; they will be doomed (see below to see what affects it) because in 10 more rounds, another slab of adamantine (5 feet in thickness at the 40 foot mark) will begin to slide. The characters have 5 rounds to get to the double doors or else they will be trapped within.

If any characters are caught between the two slabs, then the ceiling will lower at a rate of 2’/round (10 rounds to live) and at round 9 small holes for the spikes will appear in the floor. In the following round the characters trapped will be crushed and spiked to death.

If the characters try to run past the slabs (either one); allow them to cover 1’/1” of movement rate and at the end of 5 rounds, see where they are. If caught between a slab, then they are crushed to death. If an iron bar is wedged in the place of a slab, it will not move. If an iron bar is placed in front of a moving slab; it will give the characters one count for every three bars (rounded down).

Magic will not stop the slabs due to powerful anti-magics; but the following spells will allow the characters to get around the slabs: Plane Shift; Word of Recall; Transport via Plant (only if the Druid brought a small tree with him); Dimension Door; Teleport; Duo-Dimension; wish; Alter Reality (gives 5 rounds nothing else).

The ceiling cannot be stopped; but can be avoided by the following spells: Plane shift; Earthquake (this breaks the machinery and hits the characters for 10-100 points of damage from falling rocks, etc.); Stone Shape (wedges it); Web (gives 1 more round); Slow (makes it move 1’ every round); Dig (makes a pit for characters to hide in); Pass-Wall (makes a 10’ deep hole in the ceiling that the characters can stand under and not get hurt); Transmute Rock to Mud (characters must Save vs. Death Ray or be smothered to death); Disintegrate; move earth (wedges it); Wish; Alter Reality.

4)SITTING ROOM

“This room contains a desk, a mirror, and a door on the west wall. The mirror is framed in gold and on the south wall. The desk is ordinary and on the east wall.”

If the characters search the desk, they will find a piece of paper with 12 names on it and a platinum comb. The comb is magical and evil and will detect for both. This is a Comb of Baldness, and anyone foolish enough to use it will lose all their hair permanently (lose 1 point of comeliness no saving throw). The comb appears to be worth about 700gp.

The mirror is a Mirror of Life Trapping. It currently holds 12 prisoners and can hold 8 more. If the players look into the mirror, make them save vs. spells or they will be trapped. There is a 5 in 6 chance that a trapped creature will ask the players to release them. Two of the prisoners are Hill Giants and the rest are normal character types (Roll on the Tomb of Horrors character chart to determine class and magic items). The creatures if freed will pay the characters back by going on the adventure and asking for no pay. Four of the characters are bald.

5)SECRET DOOR COMPLEX

“This is a bare room with no visible exits.”

Each of these rooms requires a different method to open each door. The locked door is an extremely difficult lock that penalizes the thief with a +10% penalty. The door cannot be magically opened.

5A Pivots to the left.

5B Lifts up.

5C Push 3 knobs simultaneously and then push open

5D Pull down. The pit here is 10’ deep and filled with spikes.

5E Pull inward and then upwards.

6)GARGOYLE LAIR

This gargoyle appears to be the exact same one in Room 8 of the Real Tomb of Horrors (use its statistics). It has a gem-studded collar (8 gems, deep green jade worth 100gp each). There is NO secret compartment in this collar however.

7)DARK ROOM

“This room is pitch black, the darkness seems to absorb your light.”

This room is under a Permanent Continual Darkness Spell. No light will enter this room (only a Continual Light spell would). If the characters walk into the room, they will trip over a trip wire and fall onto 1-6 poisoned spikes. Damage is 1-6 for each spike and each spike is poisoned (save or die).

If a Continual Light spell is cast, characters will notice that the whole floor is spiked (except near the door). Characters will not trip over the spikes, but there is a 5% chance/character that a spike will nick the character (save at +2 or die if nicked).

😈 DEVILS DEN

“The winding passage leads to a 30’ by 30’ room that has its ceiling supported by 4 black columns and on each wall is a green devils face. A sword is stuck into the floor in the middle of the columns.”

The green devil faces look like the Picture 6 in Tomb of Horrors. The faces are about 10’ tall and are three dimensional (they stick out). Each devils face’s mouth is a deep red color and is about 3’ wide. Nothing happens when something is placed in the mouth.

The sword can only be removed with a combined strength of 30 or more. The sword is a 2-handed sword -3 that has a Sympathy spell cast on it (save at -2 or keep the item).

9) CAVERN OF CURSES

“This is a small cavern that has an alcove in the northeastern wall. There seems to be a figure in the alcove. An altar of green rock lies before the alcove.”

This cavern is an extremely evil place and if detected for it, it will be almost unbearable. The altar is of unknown origin and materials. If any non-evil being touches the altar, that character will be cursed. The curse is a -1 penalty to all hit and damage rolls and a +1 penalty to AC. The curse can be removed with a Remove Curse spell.

The statue is of a skeletal man in rich, rotting clothes that is holding a gold staff and wears a gold crown. If anyone touches the gold staff, then one magic item will get drained of all power (choose randomly). If the gold crown is worn, then that character will instantly be turned into a pile of ash and is forever lost (wishes notwithstanding).

10) DOORS OF DROWNING

“This is a small room with doors on each wall.”

All f the doors here are locked—even the false ones. If any character opens a false door, than that character needs to make a Saving Throw vs. Wands to avoid getting impaled by a spear that is spring loaded to the door. (The character takes 2-12 points of damage if hit.)

When the characters reach Area “A”, all of the doors will Wizard Lock shut and then a series of holes will appear in the ceiling (each room will have 100 holes). The characters will hear the rushing sound of water and in 2 rounds, water will begin to pour into the rooms. In one turn, $\frac{1}{2}$ a foot of water will be in the room (it takes two turns for each foot of water. These rooms are ten feet high, so the characters will have 20 turns to do something). The doors will not open by any means except a Wish. If a false door is Wished open, the spear will still shoot out, but will only cause 1-6 points of damage. The holes in the ceiling are 1” in diameter and can be plugged with spikes (15% chance/turn cumulative that a spike will get wedged out).

The following spells will keep the characters from drowning: Airy Water, Water Breathing, Wish, Polymorph (either one), Lower Water (for a time).

11) GAS FILLED CHAMBER TO FALSE CRYPT

“An orange cloud is preventing you from seeing where this corridor goes.”

If the characters say that they will hold their breath before entering the cloud, then nothing will happen; otherwise the characters must Save vs. Poison or lose 1-8 points of Strength for 48 hours. After two days, the character’s Strength will return to normal.

A) FALSE CRYPT OF FALSE TOMB

“Ten coffins lie against the east and west walls. A jet black throne with ivory skulls and jade serpents for armrests is on a dais in the south wall. A rotting skeletal figure dressed in rotting robes is seated in the throne. The figure stands and yells in a booming voice, “Who dares to disturb the rest of Acerak! It is your death which you have found!”

This is a magically prepared skeleton (AC-2, MV 12", hp 28, #AT 1/rnd as 4HD monster, Dmg 3-9 (2d4+1), SA Attacks as 4HD Monster, SD, Can absorb 9 spell levels before being affected)

Attached to the back of the door is a silver inlaid mace that glows brightly with a golden glow. (the last character will find this). This will automatically "hit" the "lich" and the "lich" will roar with pain. (see Room 18 for details). The throne is worth 35,000 gp (and weighs that much). Also lying around is a leather bag containing: 100pp, 7 gems (60 gp each), and a Potion of Good Dragon Control (2 doses), Potion of Longevity, and a potion of ESP)

12)CHAMBER OF STATUES

"Four vicious looking statues made of iron are in the corners of this room. Each holds a polearm. A large stone vat is in the middle of the room."

If the statue in the southwest corner is moved (requires a combined Strength of 50) a trapdoor will be found. The trapdoor will move easily revealing a crawlspace heading west.

In the vat is a green goo. This goo is green slime.

Green Slime(1): AC (always hit); HD 2***, MV 3' (1'); #AT 1; D Special; Save F1; AL L; XP 5

When they defeat the Green Slime; the party will find a Stone Key (called the 1st key). This key cannot be destroyed in any way (just like ivory or crystal key).

13) PRISON OF INSANITY

"This is a small 10' by 10' by 10' room. The walls are painted with pictures of mangled forms devouring children, ghouls coming out of their graves, demons torturing victims, and a man in black robes who is half man and half death."

This prison can only be escaped by using the secret trap door in the floor and then the secret trap door in Room 12 (the statue will move magically). Note: these trapdoors will only open once by any group of characters. For example, if the characters come here from the trapdoor at area 12 they are forever trapped here; otherwise they can use the trapdoors to escape.

On the floor is an invisible skeleton holding a piece of parchment. The parchment reads, "Look in many places where Acererak would not be and you will find him. His fakes are many and his jokes cruel."

Also invisible on the floor is a magic user's scroll: (Shatter, Explosive Runes, Wall of Fire).

14) ROOM OF ANSWERS

"This is a 30' by 30' room. The walls a jet black with red spider webs painted on the walls, A chest is on the floor in front of the north wall. It appears to be locked."

The chest is locked and trapped (thieves have normal chances to find/remove traps and to open locks). If the thief fails to remove the trap, 3 spears will shoot out of the walls (at the places marked "T") for 2-12 pts of damage each (No saving throw allowed).

Inside the chest is 2500 gp, 3500 cp, a Rod of Cancellation (27 charges command word is on the hilt, written in Gnomish); and a note. The note reads; "Acererak congratulates you on finding this chamber and this message. Here is someone to greet you!" (The note has brought a Type I Demon to greet the characters.

Demon, Type I: AC 0; HD8*; hp 40; MV 120' (180'); #AT 5; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8/1-8/1-6; Save F10; ML 9; AL CE; SA Magic Use; SD Anti-Magic 50%; XP 1675

The demon has a small sack containing: Silver Bracelet (300 gp); Platinum Necklace set with gems (7000 gp); and a Dagger +2;+3 vs Creatures larger than Man-sized. (which it might use?)

If the characters look up, they will see the following message painted in blood: "I thought I fooled you with my first crypt; I was wrong. If you're up to it then I am an unlucky number of miles to the Southeast"

This means that 13 miles southeast is the actual tomb.

15) PIT FILLED WITH 200 SPIKES

“A long, open pit filled with spikes lies ahead of you.”

Show them illustration #20. This pit is quite harmless; all the characters have to do is walk across and then climb up to the other side.

16) PIT ACTIVATED BY FALSE DOOR

“The door that you opened leads to a blank wall; suddenly the floor opens up and you fall into a pit along with your associates.”

Opening the false door triggered a 20' long pit trap to open. There is no way to detect this pit by tapping the floor due to the floor's 3' thickness. Only a True Seeing spell will show a thin red rectangle around the pit lid. Any character who is within 20' of the False Door will take 4 - 24 pts of damage (the pit is 40' deep).

There is a concealed door inside the pit that is painted to look like the wall (normal chances to find). This leads to a tunnel that brings characters to Area 17).

17) HALLS OF HELL

The door to this room cannot be opened unless the 1st key (Stone Key) is used. If any other key is used; a Poisonous Gas will fill up the chamber and all must save at -2 or die.

“This is a large column-filled chamber. The columns are made of gold and the ceiling is 20 feet above you.”

The columns are actually made of brass and are under a Fool's Gold spell. There is no way of telling that the columns are fakes. Allow the characters to strip the columns anyway at a rate of 1 column per day, with an apparent value of 10,000 gp per column.

17A) THRONE OF EVIL

“A large black throne is resting on a dias. A small flight of stairs leads to the throne. The throne's armrests are made of human skulls that have gleaming rubies set into the eye sockets.”

Should any character be foolish enough to sit on the throne; have the character Save vs Spells. If the character fails the save, have them make a System Shock check and if the character fails that; then his/her character will die. If the character survives the System Shock roll, then he/she will be possessed by a Pit Fiend and immediately attack the other characters.

Except for hit points, the Pit Fiend will have the following statistics (hit points are those of the possessed character when fully healed):

Pit Fiend(1): AC-3; HD 13; hp (as character); MV 60' or 150'; #AT 2; Dmg 5-8/7-12; ML 12; Save F13; AL LE; SA Tail (2-8); Magic Use; Psionics (PSI Ability 213, Attack Modes A, C,E Defense Modes G, H, I); SD Hit by +2 or better weapons; Regenerate 2 hp/round; Magic Resistance (65%); XP Value 7900

If the Pit Fiend is slain the character will be left-dead.

The 4 rubies in the throne are worth 5000gp each.

18)MIST OF MIRACLES

“A gray mist swirls in the archway. Three stones in the archway begin to glow red, green, and yellow.”

The lower left base stone is glowing red.

The lower right base stone is glowing yellow.

The keystone is glowing green.

If a character enters the mist before pressing the glowing stones in the proper sequence (Red, Yellow, Green) the character will lose 1000-100,000 Experience Points (D% * 100).

If the characters enter the mist after the proper sequence, roll d% to see what beneficial thing happens:

01-10 Gains 1 point to a randomly determined Ability Score

11-25 4 Potions of Extra Healing appear on the character

26-70 Fully Healed

71-75 If Spell Caster, they remember all spells; otherwise roll again with +20%

76-80 Gains 15,000 Experience Points

81-90 Permanently gains 1-4 Hit Points

91-95 One magic item is given an additional +1 (a Sword +1 would become a Sword +2)

96-99 1 Wish is granted

00 All Ability Scores are raised by +1

19)INVISIBLE ROLLING BOULDER TRAP TRIGGERED BY FALSE DOOR

“Behind the door that you have just opened is a blank wall. Shortly after opening the door, you hear a rumbling noise from the west. The floor begins to tremble and a rolling noise can be heard from the west.”

Unless a thief states that he is searching for a trap and then successfully removes this trap; a large boulder (5 tons and almost perfectly round) will roll off its pedestal and roll down the hall at a rate of 10 feet per round and cause 10-100 points of damage to anyone who gets hit by it. Characters who stated that they run to the east will run at a movement rate of 1' per 1" of Movement Rate in a round. It is most likely that the characters will be run over by the Invisible boulder (unless a Mage casts Detects Invisible and then immediately runs and tells his friends).

20)LABORATORY

“This is obviously a laboratory; for there are several tables, urns, beakers, jars, and tubes scattered around the place. A door with red lettering is on the west wall.”

The beakers, jars, and tubes are all useless for the characters; and half of them contain only dried-up shriveled things (can't tell what it was). The urns are heavy, but can be moved and if the urn against the wall is moved; a leather glove and an ivory key will be found. This is the 2nd Key and if it is touched without wearing the leather glove that was

found with it; then the character touching it will lose a level of experience (each time touched). This key is the key that opens up the Flase Crypt of Acerak (room 25). If this key is used to open the door to Area 20A; all creatures within 10' of the key will be teleported to The Forsaken Prison (Room 7 in the actual Tomb of Horrors) or Area 13-The Prison of Insanity in this dungeon (60/40 %)

20A)DOOR WITH WRITING ON IT

“A message is scrawled in blood on the door.”

If a Comprehend Languages spell is used; the message will read as following:

“Three keys are to be found. Each has one purpose and one curse. All eventually lead to your doom. Acerak.”

21)FALSE TOMB OF ACERAK IN FALSE TOMB OF HORRORS

“The staircase leads down into a dark, column filled chamber. The columns are gold and have hundreds of gems set into each column. A coffin is lying on the floor in the alcove to the north.”

The columns are magical and if anyone touches them, then that person must Save vs Spell or be Disintegrated (no recovery of the body will be possible).

If anyone comes within 10' of the coffin, a Prismatic Sphere will form around the coffin (this Prismatic Sphere is only 1' across instead of 20'). The characters will have to figure a way to get to the coffin if they want to destroy Acerak. If they succeed and open up the coffin, they will find a rotting body that is wearing a jeweled crown (8000 gp) and has a Crystal Key (3rd Key) tied to a string around it's neck.

This Crystal Key is the 3rd Key and it is the only thing (other than a Wish) that will open the secret door found in this room. If this key is used to open any other door, the character trying it will suffer 1-20 points of damage. If this key is used to open the chest in Room 25, the character will instantly become blind (No Save). This key; like the Stone Key and the Ivory Key cannot be destroyed except by a Wish spell cast from a Greater God of good Alignment.

22)IDIOCY GAS

“A black cloud lies before you. You cannot see into the cloud.”

If any character breathes this gas they must make a Save vs. Poison as a 5th level character of the same class or become an idiot (Int 3, Wis 3). A Heal spell will remove the idiocy, as will a Wish.

23)ACERAK'S SUPPOSED FINAL RESTING PLACE

There's only a 1 in 6 chance that the pit will open. This pit is 30' deep (no spikes) and anyone falling in will take 3-18 damage. There is a concealed door in the pit (Plastered and painted to look like a wall).

“The short hallway leads to a 30' by 30' room that has a stairway centered in the south wall that leads up to an alcove.

Bodies are littered all over the place; along with broken weapons, dented shields, and broken staves.”

“The stairway leads up to a 10' by 10' alcove that has a black stone table against a black stone wall. The table is covered with thick dust and some bones. There are a few scraps of rotten clothing; along with a skull that has a silver cross piercing through it.”

If Detect Magic or Detect Good is cast on the silver cross; it will radiate for both. This is a magical cross that gives clerics of good alignment 1 point of Wisdom and a +1 bonus to Turn Undead. These benefits last only as long as the cross is kept.

If the characters search the bodies, they will find: 327 cp, 427 sp, 514 gp, 104 pp; 9 gems (50 gp each) and the following magic items: a Silver Horn of Valhalla, and a Mace +1

24)SCYTHING BLADES

“The steep, rickety stairs leads into a 20' by 30' room that has a hallway in the west wall near the northern corner. Behind you, the stairs suddenly collapse; leaving a 20' high climb to the tunnel that lead you here.”

If the characters walk past the (symbol) carrying any magic items, 2 scything blades will shoot across the corridor at neck height (for humans) and anyone in the front row must save vs wands or take 1-20 points of damage. If the Saving Throw is a natural 1, then that characters head is spinning on the floor with the headless body not far from it. The door at the end of the hall opens easily.

25)POISON GAS

“This corridor leads to a dead end.”

In this corridor is a cloud of poison. The cloud is invisible, but characters will feel sticky in this corridor. All characters must save vs poison or die.

26)ACTUAL FALSE TOMB OF HORRORS

“After opening the door using the Ivory Key, you enter a strangely shaped room. It is basically diamond shaped and there is a table resting against the south wall. A cobwebbed covered skull is resting upon the table and a large chest with a rotted body clinging to it rests in the middle of the floor.”

This room can only be entered by using the Ivory Key (a Wish will only tell the location of the Key). The chest can be opened by the Crystal Key, but the opener is struck blind (No Save). The only way to open the chest safely is to pick it open (Knock Spell won't work).

The body appears to be that of a fighter and if searched, the characters will find the following: a map to the actual Tomb of Horrors, a Longsword +4, and a Scarab of Protection.

The skull is a Druj (a type of spirit ---D &D Master Set?) and has the following statistics. It will attack the characters immediately if it is night (DM should be keeping track of time, if not assume that it is night.)

Skull Druj(1): AC-4; HD 14****; hp 68; MV 90' (30'); #at 1 or 4; Dmg 2-8 + poison; Save F14; ML 11; AL CE; XP5150 SA poison touch and presence (all consumables automatically ruined—ie potions); clerical spells; can split into 4 identical parts; SD Hit only by +2 weapons or better; immune to all spells below 4th level

The 1st round it will animate the fighter's body into a zombie (AC2; hp 16; #at 1, Dmg 5-12; +4 to hit using longsword)

After 2 rounds the Druj will split into four parts, with three skulls attacking while the forth skull casts clerical spells.

Cleric Spells (1time/round): Darkness, Silence 15' Radius, Cause Disease, Animate Dead, Finger of Death (All cast as if by 16th level caster)

If the characters defeat the Druj, they may safely pick open the chest (assume automatic success). Inside are the following: 12 potions (all ruined), Scroll of Protection from Magic, Cleric Scroll (Detect Evil, Exorcise), Magic User Scroll (Leomund's Trap, Haste, Massmorph); a Magic User Scroll (Shatter, Tongues, Conjure Elemental) and 4 pieces of jewelry (2500gp; 10,000 gp; 2600 gp; and 4000 gp).

This is the end of the adventure. The characters must still make it out of the Tomb, but by now they've encountered most of the pits. The invisible boulder will have to be climbed over.

All surviving characters should receive 25,000 xp + 1xp/2gp worth of treasure. The characters should also have the location of the actual Tomb of Horrors and should advance a level of experience each.

This adventure was created to prepare the characters for the actual Tomb of Horrors and to give them a chance at getting magic items that would aid them in the actual tomb.

I hope you enjoyed it,

Joe Pallai

