

A20

Lair of the Shorlee Wyrm

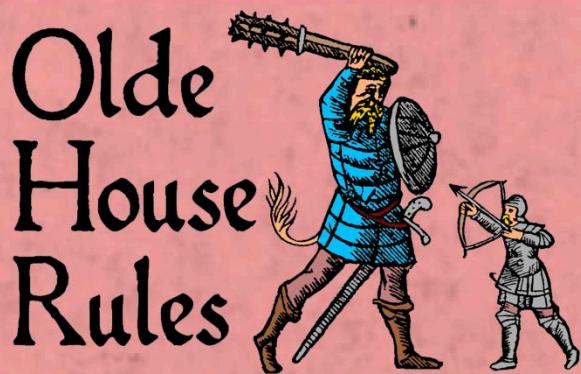
by

James & Robyn George



An adventure for use in old-school games, compatible with traditional OSR systems and easily added to an existing campaign.

For Lower-Level Adventuring Parties





Years ago, a dragon was slain in the Shorlee hills, or so said the one surviving warrior who made it back, only to succumb to his wounds before the morning came. But the attacks ended, so it must have been true. Dead men tell no tales, and the lone warrior died before revealing the location of the beast's lair. Who knows what riches it held; who can guess what treasures lay unguarded for the taking? There is an old saying in Shorlee: riches lie not for long, and who knows what dangers – and rewards – await those brave enough to go in search of them, for the site of the old lair is forgotten no longer. Its long-sought depths await the plundering hand of adventurers seeking their glory – or doom...

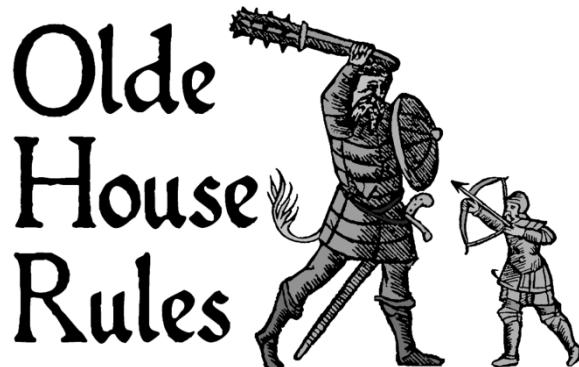
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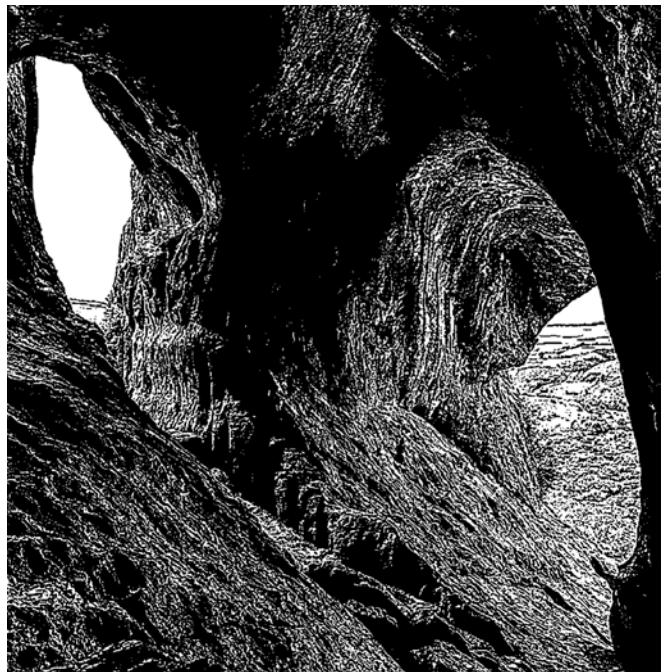
OSR Adventure A20

For Lower-Level Adventuring Parties

A century ago, on the feast day of some god or saint, a dragon was slain in the Shorlee hills. The beast had started with livestock before moving on to human prey; farmers mostly, but also a local cleric and a sergeant of the guard. Crops were razed and revenues disrupted, and this is what finally got the magistrates involved. The best scholars of the realm opined (although some said hoped) that the dragon was merely passing through before moving on. Caution and patience were counseled, for the danger was short lived. This was not the case, and the dragon ravaged on as autumn passed to winter (when the attacks thankfully slowed) and spring returned. There was growing pressure for something to be done. A militia was dispatched, what men could be spared with the wars raging on, and was defeated. They were the best the authorities had to offer.

It was summarily decided that humility, not prestige, would win the day. The Heavens would provide if only the people would fast and pray. The Church gathered seven men, second sons from the poorer houses, and blessed them on a High Holy Day before all. Armed with the shield of faith and the finest weaponry (some say dwarven blades procured at great cost), they set off to locate the Shorlee Wyrm and slay the monster in its lair – if they could find it. The Heavens must have listened, for after seven days spent searching, they found the beast and threw it down in a terrible fight. Only one returned. As an act of piety, their names were withheld from the Chronicles of Shor; but the lone survivor was the Seventh Man (now a minor saint). He re-

ported that the dragon, scourge of the hills, was bested before succumbing to his wounds and dying at sunrise.



The dragon was gone, and the people could return to living. But the experts were wrong. The wyrm was there to stay – and it had a lair. Sadly, the Seventh Man died before he could reveal its location, for a lair meant treasure. Unguarded wealth for the taking. There is a saying in Shorlee: wealth lies not for long. Soon enough, the nobles were searching for the dragon's lair, ostensibly to recover the bodies of the fallen. In truth, the wars were costly, and hoarded gold just might balance their ledgers. But the land was scoured to no avail. The dragon's lair proved elusive, supporting the church's claim that this victory was won by humility alone. There was a silver lining though; the old stories brought pilgrims – and their wealth – to the treasury. The lair of the Shorlee Wyrm would remain undiscovered for another hundred years.

But there is another saying in Shorlee: time tells all. After a heavy rain that flooded

the fields for a week and fouled the air with the bodies of livestock, the entrance to an earthen cave was found by the roots of an ancient oak. Surely this was not the entrance to the dragon's lair, for it was too small. But it hinted at a subterranean complex that just might be. It was found by a shepherd who followed a trail of coins to its mouth. He used these to pay off a debt, and this was duly recognized by the magistrate, who spread the word that wyrm's gold had returned to Shorlee. The nobles sent a party to investigate this, but they never returned. It was a stern rebuke from Heaven; but the rumors persist, and the region continues to attract heroes eager to seek their fortunes and see if the legends are true.

The Shorlee Hills

Shorlee is a place of rolling hills and rich farm (and grazing) lands, a veritable breadbasket for whatever setting the referee chooses. It is primarily rural, with multiple small villages of 100-150 people about a day's journey apart. Each of these fields a militia equal to 45% of the population treated as 1st level fighters armed with axes, bows (about half), or pole arms led by a 3rd level fighter in chainmail. The latter come armed with long swords and can fight mounted (a sign of their status). Pious people, every village has its own chapel with a cleric of 3-5th level (assume lawful/good alignment) to heal wounds and provide similar assistance in exchange for tithes or service of equal value. These are pacifistic, although the strongest among them might keep a suit of mail handy should danger threaten their parishioners.

Despite its famous dragon, Shorlee is a remarkably peaceful place located in the heartland of its country. Demi-humans

are largely unheard of and sure to draw notice, even in taverns frequented by outsiders. True monsters are likewise rare, for the lands were subdued long ago, making the prospect of mysterious caves both exciting and frightening. Magic is viewed with suspicion, especially by the local clergy, although spell casters of good alignment will be tolerated if they respect the local ways. Given its religious history, pilgrims are not an uncommon sight. These are exclusively wealthy and accompanied by 2-4 retainers (2-3rd level fighters in plate mail and shield armed with short swords) who see their service as a religious devotion and are fanatically loyal, fighting to the death.

Finally, each village is governed by a magistrate answering to the **Lord of the Shor**, who maintains several heavily guarded estates in the region (each has a house guard equal to the militia of a larger village clad in plate mail and shield with maces and spears). The Lord is perpetually afar, either fighting the King's wars or attending affairs of state, leaving things to his **Steward**, a 5th level fighter and veteran of repute. He has broad authority and maintains a network of spies such that news will reach his ears within a day. Adventurers, while not exactly outlawed, will still be watched until the Steward is satisfied they pose no threat. Any efforts to explore the cave will draw his immediate ire, for he fears stirring up evil things and worries about endangering the lucrative pilgrim trade.

The party may already know of the region's history, for the dragon is legendary and the subject of ballads; or perhaps they hear of it only after chatting with the locals. The cave, with its reputed treasure, has enticed others before, but none have succeeded in plumbing its storied

depths. That said, the referee should place the entrance within a day's travel from any given village to facilitate rest and resupply. A steady stream of wealthy pilgrims means most equipment is available at the standard price. Optionally, in addition to assistance from the local clergy, there will be 2-8 militia willing to sign on with a party. These come with axes or bows, again, about half, but must be armored at the party's expense. Wages can be negotiated under whatever terms the referee is willing to entertain.

Rumors

Each villager questioned has a 45% chance of spreading a rumor, whether true (T) or false (F) as shown, noting that a party's maximum charisma dictates the maximum result possible. The locals know little beyond guesses and hearsay.

3d6

Rumor

- 3 A farmer from a nearby village killed a kobold on his property. (T)
- 4 Wolves prowl the Shorlee hills. (T)
- 5 There are other entrances. (T)
- 6 The cave reopened because the gods are angry with Shorlee. (F)
- 7 Undead haunt the cave. (T)
- 8 The spirits of the seven warriors continue their vigil below. (F)
- 9 Ghosts haunt the hills at night. (F)
- 10 Druids worship in secret. (F)
- 11 All gold taken from the cave is cursed unless immediately spent. (F)
- 12 The dragon was never slain. (F)
- 13 Cave water is poisonous. (F)
- 14 Dwarven weapons were lost in the caves, some of them magic. (T)
- 15 Shorlee lies over the site of an ancient, fallen civilization. (T)
- 16 Giant spiders hide in the trees. (T)
- 17 A wizard was buried nearby. (T)
- 18 The dragon left a clutch of eggs. (T)

Of course, the local clergy are too sensible to spread rumors unless some offering (at least 5 gp) is humbly made.

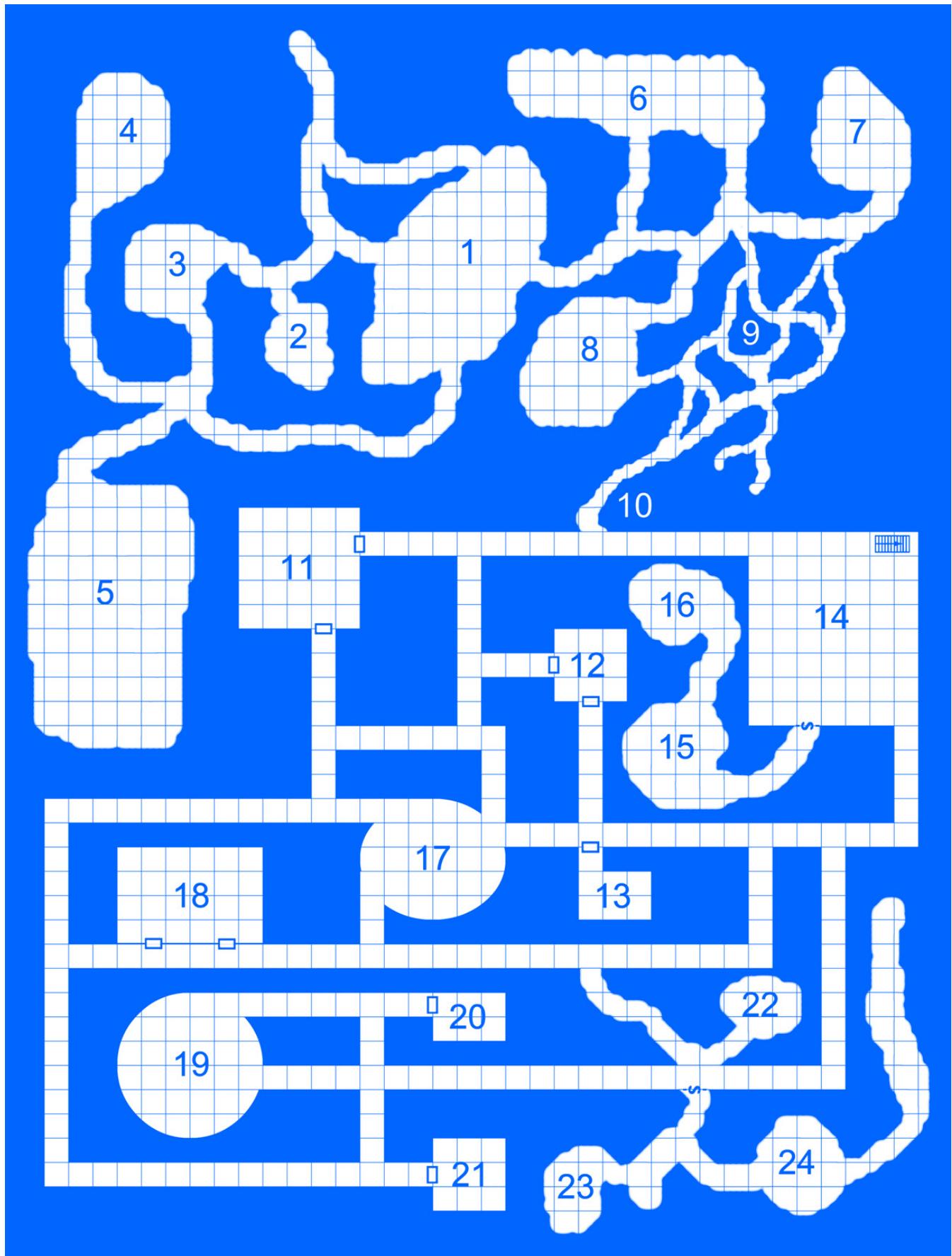
Wandering Monsters

While travel between the cave and civilization takes less than a day, there is still time for encounters to happen; generally, a 1 in 10 chance per wilderness hex explored, noting that these are included in the attached **Referee Worksheet** for quick reference should they occur.

1d10	Result	Number	Locale
1	Ogre	1-2	Hills
2	Basilisk	1	Hills
3	Bear	1-2	Any
4	Dryad	2-4	Woods
5	Wolf	1-6	Hills
6	Bandit	2-12	Any
7	Militia	2-8	Any
8	Kobold	2-12	Any
9	Pixie	1-4	Hills
10	Giant spider	1-2	Woods

While so-called true monsters are extremely rare, ogres are known to venture down from the mountains from time to time; and it is widely held that dryads and other faerie folk live in the wilds (a throw-back to an earlier pagan tradition), although there are no verified accounts of them beyond the old tales. Bears and wolves are a constant threat, and bandits prey upon wealthy pilgrims on their way to some shrine or another. Kobolds are a new introduction to the region, and will not have been encountered until the party arrives (of course, the Steward will not be pleased when he finds out).

Note: Encounters only occur in the indicated locale. If these conditions are not met, the referee moves up or down the table until a suitable result is found.



Level One: The Caves and Ruins

The referee can consult the following Dungeon Key for all levels, with additional details in the area descriptions.

Dungeon Level Key



Door



Secret Door



Stairs Down



Trap

One Square = 10'

The cave lies in a place of scattered ruins too old (and eroded) to tell much of a tale, although the locals speculate nonetheless. Indeed, many of the choicest stones, at least those small enough to carry, have been harvested; curious heirlooms repurposed in cottages or village wells (one sits proudly atop the altar of a popular church). But the region is also known for its impressive oaks, and it is under one such tree that the floods opened a cave into the earth. This is more of a hole, really, one halflings will declare suitably comfortable. An examination in daylight reveals that this extends about 5' down before gradually leveling off and continuing southward out of sight. It was here that the shepherd found his riches glimmering in the noonday sun, although he lacked the courage to go further.

Only one character of any size (or race), can enter at a time, although even halflings will have little trouble doing so, for it is a safe drop and easy enough to navigate owing to the twisted roots of the an-

cient oak. From here the ground levels off somewhat, inclining at a shallow grade (dwarves will detect this immediately) and widening enough for two to walk abreast and draw weapons. The referee should position 3d6 cp in plain sight to entice the party and verify the shepherd's account, with another 3d6 locatable if a search (assume 1 turn) is made. From here the earthen tunnel branches three ways as the air thickens. Increasingly large fungi, man-sized mushrooms and glistening moss, grow profusely as the underworld here is revealed as a lush environment, especially in the open areas (1-8 in particular). The expedition begins.

Wandering Monsters

As areas 1-8 constitute a unique environment, there is a 1 in 10 chance per turn spent exploring of some wandering monster turning up, rolling as follows.

1d8	Result	Number
1	Basilisk	1
2-3	Stirge	2-4
4-6	Fire beetle	1-2
7	Kobold	3-12
8	Giant rat	2-4

Note: There is only one basilisk occupying the level, so if this is encountered as a wandering monster, it will not be in its lair in area 6 unless retreating. Kobolds are unarmored for fast and quiet movement and armed with spears. Cowardly things, they flee superior numbers (and report their presence), but fight when outnumbering intruders unless successful negotiations are made, perhaps a tribute.

The referee can familiarize themselves with the level and incorporate wandering monsters coherently. For convenience, these are included in the attached **Ref-**

ree Worksheet, noting that stirges and beetles are a routine threat.

1 – Shrieker’s Cave. This area extends 12' high and is filled with enough big mushrooms to feel like a forest. Indeed, the vegetation makes it difficult to detect enemies unless the party posts a watch or takes similar precautions; and even then, they must describe their positions (and actions) precisely. Failure to detect monsters results in the party being surprised and losing the initiative. It takes 2-3 turns to explore this area, long enough that wandering monsters may appear. Near the center of this fungal cavern lay several skeletal remains, all human and too ruined for the exact number to be known (or anything else about them), although the best guess is maybe four. There are 11 ep and 9 gp spilling from a rotted sack and a fine bracelet worth 60 gp on one skeletal wrist. A closer examination of this alerts the nearby shrieker.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 1 HD: 3 HP: 11 #AT: 0
DAM: Nil (noise attracts monsters)

As new characters will have no prior experience with such a thing, it blends in nicely against the mushrooms. Anyone stooping to retrieve the bracelet will invariably trigger its deafening wail, which lasts 1-3 rounds; and given the relatively close quarters here, always attracts something from the wandering monster table within 2-3 rounds (long enough to create a false sense of security). Fire beetles tunnel up from below, while stirges swarm from the south. The dreaded basilisk, if present, comes from the west (1-3 in 1d6) or the east (4-5 in 1d6). Giant rats and Kobolds come from anywhere, but avoid superior numbers. Digging through the skeletal remains turns up a potion of **delusion** (taken to be invisibility) and a scroll

with a **shield** spell in an ivory case worth 15 gp. This is watertight.

Note: Where applicable, the skeletal remains are too decayed to respond to the necromancer’s ring from 3, below.

2 – Bone Den. Large stones protrude from the packed earth here, and one has fallen over, crushing the remains of some unfortunate victim (also unaffected by the necromancer’s ring). A rotted cloth sack spills 18 cp for the taking, the source of the shepherd’s lucky discovery. This is the remains of a thief who robbed pilgrims and fled to his just reward.

3 – Stone Camp. Outside of 20', an approaching party sees what appears to be living “figures” among the fungi. Upon closer inspection (within 10') these are revealed as a pair of eerily realistic stone statues, cultists from the temple complex who ran afoul of the basilisk and met their end. One is crouched defensively and the other stands with its hand raised in a warding gesture. The latter is noteworthy for the simple golden ring worn on one finger. This is a **necromancer’s ring** (explained at the end of this book) and may be removed in 1 round. An Identify spell cast by anyone below 10th level reveals a **ring of protection +1**, and it functions as such, with the additional power of **undead control**, but only for cultists initiated into that rite. All others wearing it cause any humanoid corpses within 90' to rise as skeletons or zombies (as per the **Referee Worksheet**) to attack in 1-3 rounds.

4 – Bony Remnants. Six forgotten skeletons, all of them stripped clean by fire beetles, line the passageway leading up to this small circular alcove. If someone is wearing the necromancer’s ring, these animate in 1-3 rounds after coming within

range and attack the party immediately unless bested or clerically turned.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (with bony claws)

Like all skeletons, these take only half damage from edged (or pointed) weaponry, with resistance to sleep, charm, hold, and/or cold-based attacks.



5 – A Fell Feast. Here the ceiling rises 18' high, a sign of gradual descent only dwarves (and possibly halflings) will notice. Recent flooding has eroded a sink-hole above through which some merchant's horse has fallen. This is strangely desiccated and is being feasted upon by a pair of fire beetles picking its bones clean with grim efficiency.

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 12 HD: 1+2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (deadly mandibles)

A swarm of 8 stirges occupies the limestone ceiling. These have drained the horse dry and are uninterested in more

food at the moment (the beetles, being naturally armored, are not typically preyed upon). Characters are another matter however, and there is a 25% chance of 1-2, not content with their recent meal, coming down to attack exposed (unarmored) flesh.

AC: 8[11] MOVE: 3/18 HD: 1+1 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d3 (and 1d4/round thereafter)

Otherwise, the stirges remain hidden in the darkness above, although anyone listening may hear rustling and mistake them for ordinary bats. Should the party slay the beetles and later return, the stirges will be hungry, noting that these quickly replace their losses. A prize of 2,000 cp has spilled from the horse's saddle bags, a tempting sight and sure to encourage greedy adventurers.

Note: Each fire beetle has two glowing glands that generate light in a 10' radius for 1-6 days unless badly damaged.

6 – Basilisk's Cavern. The big mushrooms grow especially large here, creating a jungle atmosphere. If using the south-central entrance, the party sees two "statues" similar to those in area 4, except kobolds frozen in surprise. This is the work of a basilisk, latest in a long line of the things that excavated these tunnels over many generations. Luckily, the beast is only in its lair 1-3 in 1d6 of the time, going often to the surface to seek prey.

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 6 HD: 6+1 HP: 16 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d10 (claws or petrifying gaze)

Mercifully, the endless vegetation here makes it harder to meet the basilisk's gaze, adding +2 to saving throws vs. petrification. That said, frontal attacks are rolled at -4 unless the monster is viewed

through a mirror, wherein attacks are rolled at -2, as doing so is awkward and renders activity difficult. A party's best chance involves making the thing see its own reflection or flanking it among the tall mushrooms. Its nest, a bed of crushed bones and filthy waste, holds 150 sp, a pair of **elven boots**, and a potion of **healing** in a dented copper vial.

7 – Wholesome Cave. No mushrooms grow in this place, although the ground is blanketed with bright green moss. Daylight streams through fissures in the ceiling, and fresh rainwater collects below, providing a safe way to refill canteens. There is nothing else of interest here unless wandering monsters arrive, and these are easily detected with little effort.

8 – Lonely Girl. The mushrooms return here, and an approaching party will notice red light, not unlike the glands of a fire beetle, shimmering through the fungal stalks. A closer inspection reveals an unexpected sight; a small human girl, no doubt from one of the villages, sitting on a makeshift bed and holding a fire beetle gland. She appears about seven years of age and has a dirty face, although not abnormally so given her surroundings. Her black hair falls in tangled locks, and her demeanor is innocent, but wary; just what might be expected from a frightened child glad to see adults again. She is, in fact, the last surviving child of the Shorlee Wyrm (one of a race of shape-shifting dragons explained later) and her consort, a wizard buried in this place.

AC: 2[17] MOVE: 9 HD: 9 HP: 27 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d8 (or breath weapon)

This puzzling child has a mix of dragon and human traits; most notably, superior toughness and a budding breath wea-

pon useable once per day. This comes as a fiery cone 10' long dealing damage equal to her remaining hit points. As her race ages differently, she is really 100 years old, but with the body and mind of a young girl. She is also unaware of her heritage and cannot yet take dragon form, something that will not emerge for another century. If treated kindly, she joins the party, never speaking beyond simple gestures and never intervening on their behalf (as one would expect of a child) unless a motherly figure is present and proves themselves through many encounters. Monsters avoid her, although never the party, and she inevitably leaves even a friendly group, especially if they attempt to take her from the cool silence of her dungeon home. The referee can mediate this as they wish, but the girl must never be weaponized in a party's favor unless seriously balanced. Aside from her simple bed, she has no valuables.

9 – Giant Rat's Warren. No vegetation grows here, not even moss, although the ground is slick. For every 20' travelled, there is a 1 in 6 chance of 2-12 giant rats emerging from the dark to attack with their bite and filthy claws. Unlike the typical variety, these ones are aggressive against superior numbers as if compelled by magic or some disease.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12/6 HD: 1/2 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d3 (with possible disease)

Of course, taking a direct route minimizes the chance of this happening; but the warrens are twisting, and forward visibility limited. There is a silver necklace with emerald stones buried in the muck near the center of this worth 150 gp found after a turn of searching. The referee should roll for rats again when the party indicates a desire to look for such treasures. Like

stirges and fire beetles, rats are endemic and quickly replace their losses, for the warrens have an unlimited supply, hungry and ready for something more than the usual diet of luckless kobolds.

Note: Regular wandering monsters are not rolled for in the warrens, although kobold patrols are not unheard of.

10 – Wet Mud Slide. The warrens converge here as the ground becomes a wet downward slide (the result of rainwater from above). Each character must save vs. petrification (alternately, roll under dexterity) or slide roughly to the bottom, making enough noise to alert nearby monsters and always losing initiative while getting up. This is a good way back to the surface and may be scaled with patience. The dungeon awaits.

The remainder of this level is worked stone carved from the bedrock below the fungal caves long ago. It is dark except where fire beetles (who broadcast their presence) or human cultists (with torches) happen by. Except where noted, doors are unlocked and must be listened at to discern occupancy. This is part of a larger complex dating to some ancient, now-vanished civilization, perhaps ancestors to the kobolds who still wander its halls. But despite their debased condition, they are well organized and pose a threat to any who would plunder their riches.

Note: If the girl is brought here, she clings to a friendly party, but shows no fear in the face of danger. The dungeon's denizens, for their part, ignore her, including animals like fire beetles. The kobolds and cultists are aware of her heritage and confident in her ability and divine judgment. If physically threatened by the party, however, she flees to the catacombs,

beyond reach, and the faithful attack at +1 in their zeal thereafter.

Wandering Monsters

For every turn spent exploring, there is a 1 in 8 chance of the party encountering some wandering monster, noting that kobolds will avoid a superior force and report what they see unless quickly slain or captured. Dwarves capable of speaking their language can attempt to interrogate prisoners, with only a 25% chance of getting anything useful from this.

1d10	Result	Number
1	Fire beetle	1-2
2	Ghoul	1-2
3-4	Skeleton	4-8
5-7	Kobold	3-12
8-9	Initiate (w/ring)	1-2
10	Giant centipede	2-4

Once again, and except where noted, wandering monsters should correspond to the **Referee Worksheet**.

Enemy Intelligence

If kobolds are reluctant to answer questions, the fanatical human cultists are happy to spill the beans (before swallowing the poisonous herbs hidden in their cheeks that is), with knowledge rolled on the following intelligence table.

1d8	Result
1	Ghouls are kept as slaves.
2	The kobolds serve the Wyrm Wife, a dead shape-shifting dragon.
3-4	Centipedes prey on the unwary.
5-6	The human cultists are fanatical servants of the wizard buried below.
7	Special rings control the dead.
8	A magic portal allows endless numbers of both factions to appear.

The referee should roll once for every successful interrogation, with kobold replies framed as guttural fragments and cultist knowledge as the ramblings of fanatical madmen. This is the only sure way to understand what is happening here, although the referee can expand upon this however they see fit.

Note: Marked by their gods, cultists, regardless of rank, cannot be raised by the necromancer's accursed ring.

11 – Kobold Barracks. This area is notable in that it holds two dozen filthy cots and has a floor of long wooden planks. There are 22 kobolds garrisoned here, unarmored and equipped with spears. Depending on which entrance the party arrives by, two of these flee through the other to alert their chief, going at double speed (12) when doing so.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 6 HD: 1/2 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (sharpened iron spear)

These keep a pair of fire beetles that attack swiftly on command.

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 12 HD: 1+2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (deadly mandibles)

There is also a sergeant (treated as a goblin) in chainmail and shield equipped with a **hand axe +1** who adds +1 to morale checks while still alive.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6 HD: 1-1 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (+1 magic hand axe)

The kobolds carry 9 sp each and their sergeant 22. Observant characters, meaning those who ask, notice that the floorboards creak and ring hollow. A search beneath the beams turns up some 2,000 sp (future wages) in a locked iron

box that must be picked or opened with a key around the sergeant's neck.

Note: Searching the barracks takes at least 3 turns, and if messengers reach their chieftain, he comes with 3-12 fresh kobolds through the opposite door. Moreover, if the necromancer's ring remains in operation, it raises up any kobold dead as weak zombies in 1-3 rounds.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 6 HD: 1/2 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d2 (filthy bite and/or claws)

In this form they are immune to sleep, charm, hold, and/or cold-based attacks, being now undead opponents.



12 – Chieftain's Hold. Here the kobold leader, a massive specimen treated as a hobgoblin, holds court with his elite bodyguard of 2 sergeants and a trained fire beetle. He is clad in **chainmail +1** and fights with a huge battle axe. Koruck the Tooth knows the common tongue and might engage the party if he thinks it in his best interest. He is loyal (out of superstitious fear) to the Wyrm Wife and more so

to his power over his people, which he aims to preserve. As such, he cannot be convinced to betray the cultists and remains an enemy to the bitter end.

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 9 HD: 1+1 HP: 9 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d8 (giant battle axe)

The chieftain's pet may be commanded to attack the strongest party member (typically a fighter). It is more intelligent, not to mention stronger than most.

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 12 HD: 1+2 HP: 9 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (deadly mandibles)

His bodyguards are not unlike the sergeant garrisoned with the rank and file, being treated as goblins (but without magical arms). These fight to the death.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6 HD: 1-1 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (ordinary hand axe)

If things go badly, Koruck flees through the nearest exit and either alerts the shaman (in area 13) or picks up 3-12 fresh kobolds and takes whatever course is in his best interest (per the referee). The chieftain sits upon a bone and wooden throne behind which is piled filthy furs (his royal bedding). He wears an intricate torc worth 150 gp and carries 32 sp on his person. His sergeants have 18 sp each, and there is a satchel containing 350 gp hidden beneath a pile of straw under the stinking furs in the southeast corner.

Note: If anyone in the party is wearing the necromancer's ring, slain kobolds (even Koruck, where applicable) rise as zombies as per the **Referee Worksheet**.

13 – Shaman's Study. The entryway to this small room is cluttered with 9 skeletons; human, kobold, and, disturbingly, ghoulish

remains. Anyone still wearing the necromancer's ring will activate these within 1-3 rounds of entry, although the shaman, if slain, does not rise, for she is considered a priestess of the necromantic faith.

AC: 6[13] MOVE: 6 HD: 3 HP: 11 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (necromantic staff)

Agrid the shaman is a female kobold studied in the necromantic arts and transformed because of it, being treated as a 3rd level cleric and 2nd level magic-user with the following spells prepared: **Cure (or Cause) Light Wounds**, **Light (Darkness)**, and **Magic Missile**. She is unarmored, fighting with a staff and possessing a necromancer's ring identical to the one found in the fungal caves. Agrid uses this to command the assembled skeletons, which are capable of following complex orders in defense of their mistress.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (with bony claws)

Once distracted by the skeletons, the shaman casts Darkness to fill the 30' area of the room, after which she feels along the walls to escape, moving 3. If confronted in close quarters, she casts Cause Light Wounds or Magic Missile when she needs to heal her own wounds first. There is a macabre hookah made from a skull sporting two gemstone eyes worth 100 gp each and potions of **clairvoyance** and **healing** in tin vials among Agrid's personal effects. The latter are hidden beneath the stinking furs she uses for a bed.

14 – Chamber of Legends. An ambient light of indeterminate origin floods this chamber enough to interfere with infravision, although the trade off in visibility makes it worthwhile. The walls, starting along the north and going clockwise, de-

pict a scene of kobold figures walking among dragons, perhaps as equals, while the floor is a colorful mosaic showing a dragon and a wizard standing together in a radiant light. A flight of stone stairs in the northeast corner descends to the next level, meaning the chamber is travelled enough that wandering monsters occur 1-2 in 1d8 of the time, typically from the lower level unless recent events suggest otherwise. It is peaceful, but exposed, as there is no good place to hide.

Note: A secret door lies along the southern wall, opened by pressing against a certain stone at arm level, pushing in and then to the right. This opens to areas 15 and 16, a packed dirt tunnel unknown to all but the ghouls who secretly use it.

15 – Charnel Cave. There is a crude iron handle on the back of the secret door that allows it to be closed from the inside, although the portal is too thick to listen through. Unknown agents built this, and anyone who thinks to ask will observe ghoulish footprints on the floor, although there is nothing else to be found.

16 – Ghoulish Trash Heap. A pile of bones, too disjointed to rise as skeletons, covers the northern wall here. To the left of this is what might have been a collapsed tunnel filled with turned earth. Searching the heap reveals little of interest, but wakes the giant centipede who nests within.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 15 HD: 1/4 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: Nil (weak poisonous stinger)

As the centipede's poison is weak, saving throws are rolled at +4. For every hour spent occupying this area, there is a 1 in 1d6 chance of a ghoul burrowing through the collapsed tunnel to attack, noting that it is impossible for characters to tun-

nel back to where these things originate from. When encountered, they correspond to the **Referee Worksheet**.

17 – Chapel of Peace. This egg-shaped chamber is where the cultists come to meditate and pray. There are roughly a dozen, black robed and shaven such that they are virtually sexless, deep in commune with their gods. Barring previous contact, this might be a party's first exposure to them; and it is the best possible way, for an unknown power makes any and all violence impossible, however badly it may be desired. This is a place of respite and one the players can exploit, although **rest and recovery are not possible here**. The cultists are oblivious to all else, including intruders, and an ambient glow, not unlike area 14 above, fills the chapel such that infravision will not work and stealth is impossible. Characters having an intelligence, wisdom, or charisma of 15 or better who concentrate for a turn may be privy to secret knowledge from the intelligence table rolled at +2. There is nothing else of value here.

18 – Initiate's Dorm. Cold, this room of stone is barren of all but some dozen rough bunks and a long wooden table where 8 initiates, cultists of the lowest rank, debate their faith. These debased humans are treated as 1st level magic-users with a **Magic Missile** ready for discharge. Each carries a necromantic staff at their side and wears an **initiate's ring** (explained at the end of this book), which confers the ability to command a single skeleton or zombie within 30' and grants a **Cure Light Wounds** spell (self) once per day for cultists alone. These do not raise dead for unwitting users, however.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (necromantic staff)

Given their necromantic power, each initiate has a skeletal servant by their side, armed with a short sword ready to fight in their master's defense. Per the rules governing their rings, these cannot be raised again for one game day if turned.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (claws or short sword)

Each initiate carries 5 sp, noting that these are not affected by the necromancer's ring. There is nothing else here but empty shadows and the stench of decay.



19 – Dome of Entry. This circular chamber has a domed ceiling, but is empty aside from debris left by others (the referee can place this as they wish to confuse or enlighten). If the girl is present, she examines the marble walls with great interest, running her fingers over the smooth stone as if she can see something. When asked, she regards the party with her blank stare and goes back to her reverie, communing in a way that should be familiar to the party by now. In fact, she understands

the chamber's purpose in her own child-like way and delights in the friends who come here, for this is a place of teleportation allowing the kobolds and their allies to arrive from somewhere else. Indeed, if the party lingers for at least a turn, something arrives from beyond.

1d8	Result
1	2 ghouls in spiked slave collars
2-4	6 kobolds with spears, 1 sergeant in chainmail armed with an axe
5	4 initiates with staves, 4 skeletal servants wielding short swords
6-7	2 kobold sergeants leading a ghoul on a 10' long chain (as above)
8	8 initiates (as above, no skeletons) carrying a chest with 1,000 sp

Once again, the above correspond to the included **Referee Worksheet**.

Monsters appear with an audible pop, much to the delight of the girl, who squeals and claps if present. The party is noticed immediately, although normal initiative is still rolled, and engaged for the intruders they are. If things go badly, surviving kobolds and cultists retreat back through whatever portal they came from, beyond the party's reach. This is a mystery the characters never solve, for there is no discernable way to operate this strange device, and they would not be able to use it anyway. Only those taken into the mysteries of the Wizard and his Wyrm Wife can travel thusly. There is nothing else of interest or value here unless a party successfully intercepts the treasure chest (filled with kobold wages).

Note: Optionally, there is a 35% chance that the girl, following any encounter here, goes through the portal to some location per the referee although; again, there is no hope of the party ever learning

how to operate this. It should be abundantly clear that the girl is more than someone's child at this point, although no amount of interrogation gets this knowledge out of a prisoner.

20 – A Hard Bargain. All is empty here save for a lone pedestal along the southern wall that displays a human skull inscribed with strange (and obviously foul) runes. Simply holding this causes gold coins to spill from its base, a torrent lasting endless minutes, or so it seems, until the things pile up on the floor. The character doing this cannot stop, although they come to no harm. Everyone else is filled with visions of strange ruins appearing throughout Shorlee, with skeletal minions emerging to harass the countryside. If left undisturbed, the skull drops 1,000 gp for the taking. However, if someone interrupts the character, the strange windfall stops at $1d6 \times 100$ gp. This matters because the dark visions speak the truth: for every 100 gp won, an ancient ruin rises somewhere in the hills through which skeletal guardians emerge to raid.

This is the bargain of the skull. The details are left to the referee to work out, although there should be no shortage of interesting ideas. In general, the ruins are ancient stone, each 30 x 30 (or thereabouts) with 3-12 skeleton warriors armed with spears. These raid the countryside at night, frightening locals and killing livestock with wicked abandon. For each ruin spawned, there is a 25% chance of a villager being killed. Either way, the party is blamed for this and return to charges of murder and/or witchcraft, although some redemption is possible if the characters make restitution (an adventure unto itself) to everyone's satisfaction. The Steward will not be pleased, and this is sure to earn them the wrong reputation regardless of

the final outcome. At any rate, the wealth so gotten is real and good for experience points, having been earned through service to the dark powers that rule this mysterious underworld.

Note: Lawful/good characters, especially clerics, are absolutely obligated to decline necromantic payment, for it makes them accomplices. Neutral or evil characters, on the other hand, may not have any qualms. That said, if the gold is donated to charity or other good works, the good character still gets experience for thwarting evil's dark designs.

21 – Necromancer's Rectory. A hooded figure, clearly a cultist, sits upon a dark throne in the middle of this chamber, notable for how many skulls (human and otherwise) litter the floor. This is the high priest of the cult, formerly one of two until his companion was turned to stone in area 3. He is treated as a 5th level magic-user, although transformed, like all the others, by exposure to necromancy. His head is clean shaven, his face ashen, eyes sunken until his face resembles the skulls that lay about his sanctum.

AC: 8[11] MOVE: 12 HD: 5 HP: 14 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (dagger or spells)

Thul, servant of the Wizard, fights with a cultist's dagger and has the following readied: **Detect Magic, Hold Person, Hold Portal, Levitate, Light (Darkness), Sleep, and Web.** High ranking, he wears one of three necromancer's rings, much like its counterparts, using this immediately to raise up a bone pudding (explained later) from the assorted skulls. Once again, if someone is wearing the original, this happens within 1-3 rounds, after which it takes orders from its maker. Protected by this dark defender, Thul uses Sleep or Web to

even the odds or flees, casting his Hold Portal once through the doorway. Being undead, bone puddings are turned as wights, with success reducing their attack rolls (not hit points) by 1 hit die.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 4 HP: 16 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (then 1/round)

The pudding deals 1-4 points of damage with its first successful hit, after which a target is engulfed, with further movement reduced to 3 while taking 1 additional point per round thereafter. Like other skeletons, this variation takes half damage from edged or piercing weaponry and is resistant to sleep, charm, hold, and/or cold-based attacks, taking but 1-6 damage from holy water. A foul thing.

If Thul is bested, any necromancer's ring worn or held by the party crumbles to dust that can be sold to an alchemist or jeweler for 5 gp. Otherwise, he has 28 gp and wears a brass key around his neck that opens the iron strongbox beneath his throne. This holds 750 gp, 2,500 sp, a potion of **healing**, and two old scrolls: **Charm Person** and **Lightning Bolt**. The coins are from some far-distant kingdom.

22 – Black Quarry. Dark, this soft-earth cave is accessed on both sides by breaks in the level's construction. It is similar to areas 15 and 16, except not a secret from anyone. There are several skeletons, all gnawed beyond rising (one of the parties that never returned). These have been picked clean; however, a search turns up 5 **arrows +1** and a **wand of metal detection** with charges per the referee and the system being used. It takes 1-2 turns to find these, during which there is a 1 in 1d6 chance of a ghoul coming through the collapsed tunnels the players will only notice if they ask. When rolled, these cor-

respond to the **Referee Worksheet** for greater ease in combat.

23 – A Ghastly Excavation. This area is accessed through a secret door that operates much like the one to area 15 except the kobolds and cultists know of its existence and use it as a pen for their ghoul slaves. These are immune to sleep and/or charm-type effects, and their mere touch paralyzes all but elves, making them fearsome indeed. There are currently 2 here, working hungrily at some bones, but eager for softer meat.

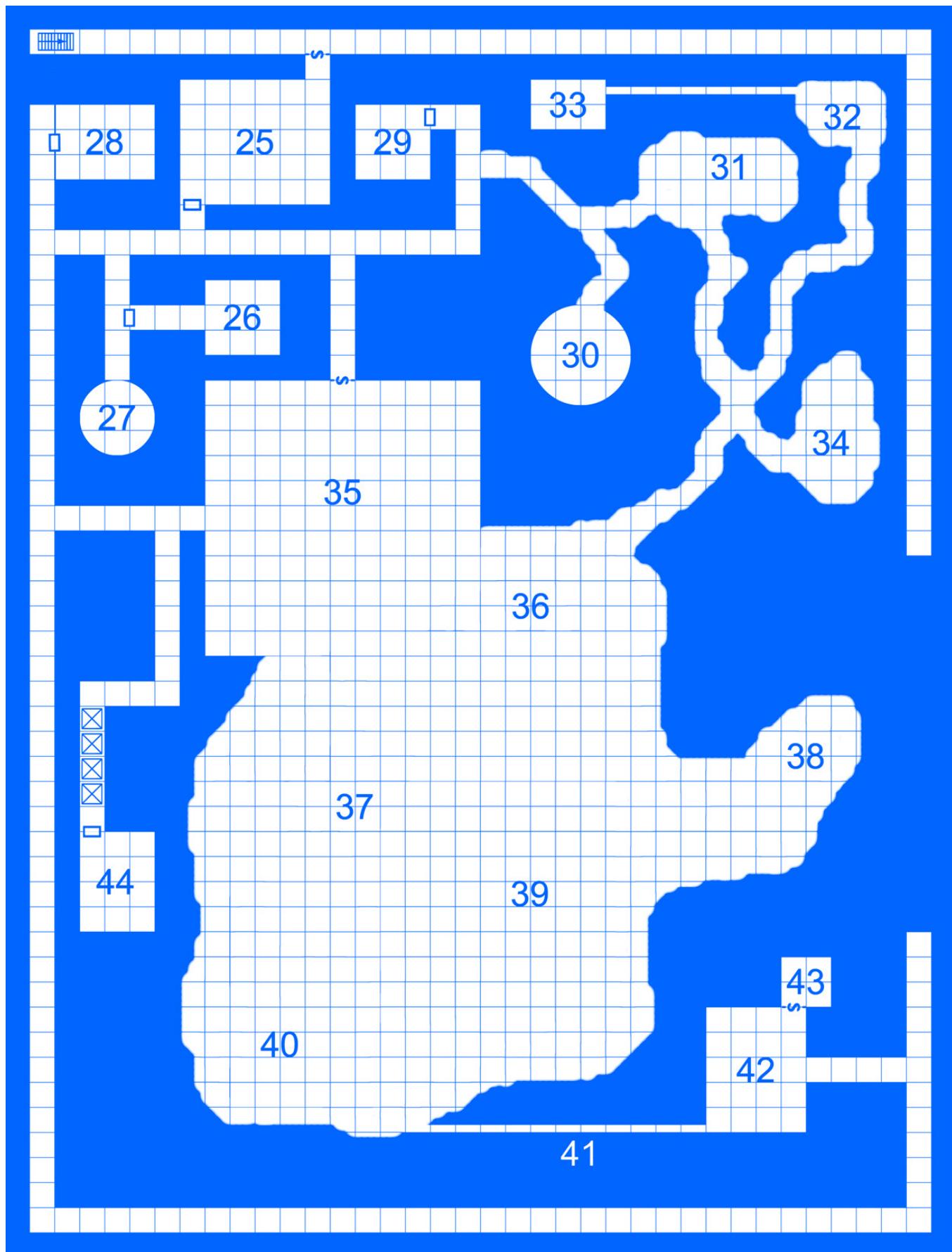
AC: 6[13] MOVE: 9 HD: 2 HP: 8 #AT: 3
DAM: 1d3/1d3/1d6 (paralysis)

There is nothing of value here, for ghouls desire rotting flesh above all else.

24 – The Way Out. Many generations of ghoulish meals lie here, with bones piling high. Luckily, if the necromancer's ring remains, these are too ruined to animate as skeletons. There is a single, very fat, ghoul sitting atop the heap happily sucking marrow from a bone that ignores a party if they leave it alone. Otherwise, it fights to the death, being bigger with a chilling touch that paralyzes.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 3 HP: 17 #AT: 3
DAM: 1d4/1d4/1d8 (chilling touch)

There is nothing else of interest or value here, although the referee can place 3d6 gp to whet the player's appetite. A passage to the east rises north, leading to an opening (a 3' wide fissure) outside. This can be used as an alternate (and easier) entrance, although the bigger ghoul remains if not dealt with. Otherwise, ghouls are always being brought through the Dome of Entry, with 1-4 new ones waiting should the party come this way again.



Level Two: The Lower Halls

The lower level was carved out of solid bedrock, an engineering feat that dwarves should admire. This was never finished (for whatever reason) and includes several caves, one of which was used by the Shorlee Wyrm, perhaps owing to its size and proximity to the Wizard's tomb. The kobolds maintain a substantial presence here, and the higher-ranking cultists hold their rituals in its secret places alongside the other cavern dwellers.

Wandering Monsters

There is a 1 in 10 chance per turn spent searching this level of encountering some wandering monster as shown.

1d10	Result	Number
1	Huge spider	1
2-3	Skeleton	4-8
4-6	Kobold	2-12
7-8	Servitor (w/ring)	2-4
9	Rust monster	1-2
10	Gelatinous cube	1

When indicated, these follow the attached **Referee Worksheet**, noting here that huge spiders are hunting and lose the element of surprise. Moreover, gelatinous cubes are only found in narrow passageways. If rolled in any other environment, nothing is met or, alternately, undigested valuables from their guts are found scattered about the place.

1d4	Result	Notes
1	3d8 cp	scattered
2	3d6 sp	scattered
3	2d6 ep	scattered
4	Magic item (no scrolls)	

Note: Gelatinous cubes surprise 1-3 in 1d6 of the time, but may reflect torchlight or

distort objects behind them, being visible if care is taken. Where indicated, undigested magic items are selected by the referee by whatever criteria they wish, noting that scrolls are ruined.

Finally, this level is accessed through a flight of stone steps, although these lead only to a dead-end corridor unless the party finds the secret door to area 25, for the lower halls are guarded. This portal operates by sliding a colored stone aside and turning the iron lever behind it.

25 – Grisly Dining Hall. The kobolds and cultists take their meals here, although at different times. Once entered, the referee rolls 1d6 for which of the level's occupants wait in the filthy kitchen.

1d6	Result
1-3	6 hungry servitors (no skeletons)
4-5	12 well-armed kobold diners
6	1 ogre chef with 2 kobold assistants

Kobolds and servitors are treated as wandering monsters, noting that undead are not brought into the dining hall for various reasons. The ogre chef, a terrible monster called Gruel, wields his cleaver like an axe. His nameless kobold servants are non-combatant and flee. They correspond to their fellows (except for being too cowardly to fight even weak foes).

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 4+1 HP: 28 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d10 (fists or giant cleaver)

If encountered, Gruel, is preparing a grisly banquet of fungi-wrapped beetle on a brick oven in the southeast corner of the room. This has an iron grill over a deep shaft through which heat rises from some unknown source (it is far too narrow for even halflings to enter, and nothing good comes from trying to do so). Of course,

the referee must roll for occupants every time the party enters here, noting that the ogre chef never returns if slain, whether here or in his personal lair. He has 60 gp in the pocket of his blood-covered apron, with nothing else of interest (aside from a dozen wooden tables) to be found.

26 – Portal Control Room. A volcanic rock, 6' high, stands at the center of this chamber. This has two gigantic skulls, possibly trollish, partially encased in either side, as if caught in some ancient eruption and enshrined forever. Each has two gemstone eyes that light up the current status of the private portal in area 27, decided by rolling on the following.

1d6	Gem Color	Meaning
1-2	Red	Portal malfunction
3-4	Yellow	Inbound, portal in use
5-6	Green	Operational, idling

While the party has no chance of exploiting this device, they might discern the meaning of its colored lights. If monsters are inbound, the referee should roll on the table given below, noting that while kobolds and cultists identify intruders, there is a 15% chance that any others will not.

27 – A Private Portal. This room is much like the Dome of Entry, and an experienced party should easily discern its true purpose. The referee rolls for its current status once per turn (using the above table), with monsters on the following.

1d8	Result
1	1 ogre armed with a maul
2-3	8 kobolds with spears, 2 sergeants in chainmail equipped with axes
4	2 lizard men (devotees of the Wyrm)
5-7	3 servitors with daggers accompanied by 3 skeletons with short swords
8	3 ghouls in spiked slave collars

Where called for, ogres (except Gruel) and visiting lizard men are included in the attached **Referee Worksheet**.

28 – Servitor’s Dwelling. Herein live the servitors, a higher rank among the cultist’s numbers. While still essentially human, years of necromantic exposure has left its mark, withering while simultaneously imbuing them with power. There are 6 here, each treated as a 2nd level magic-user with the following readied: **Magic Missile** and **Web**. Additionally, each wears a **servitor’s ring** that casts a 2nd level **Shield** spell once per day while controlling 2 skeletons or zombies within 60’. These are only useable by the cult’s faithful and do not “accidentally” raise undead for others who might wear them unwittingly.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 2 HP: 5 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (ceremonial dagger)

There are also 12 skeletons ready to defend their masters, noting that if slain, the servitors are not affected by the necromancer’s ring. It is a small blessing.

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (claws or short sword)

In combat, half of the cultists cast Web to immobilize the party, while the rest use Magic Missile. Thereafter, they lead skeletons in their defense. Each has 12 gp, and there is a wooden chest in the north-east corner with a scroll of **Hold Person** stored against future intruders. Otherwise, there is nothing worth taking here.

29 – Ogre’s Room. If Gruel, the ogre chef is not met (and defeated) in the dining hall, he waits here with 3 large hobgoblins in chainmail equipped with big spiked mauls. When killed, the latter rise as zombies (per the **Referee Worksheet**) in the

presence of the necromancer's ring within 1-3 rounds, fighting on in death.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 1+1 HP: 9 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d8 (big spiked maul)

Each carries 20 cp and 6 gp on their person; and while the room is piled high in stinking furs that do not invite inspection, a search of these yields a leather sack with 1,500 sp and a pair of **bracers of defense AC 4[15]** wrapped in old rags.

30 – Unfinished Dome of Entry. Anyone familiar with an operational portal should recognize this as an unfinished project, long since abandoned. What the party does not know is that this one is still operational, albeit with malfunctions. Simply standing in its center (marked by a blood-red circle big enough for two) carries a chance of transporting the affected individual(s) elsewhere as shown.

1d12 Result	Notes
1	Area 14 By the downward stairs
2	Area 17 No other occupants
3	Area 24 Near the surface opening
4	Area 33 Alone in the darkness
5	Area 44 By the old sarcophagus
6-12	No transportation occurs

Obviously, this is a very dangerous situation, and the referee might grant a round of warning where the circle glows, perhaps allowing a save vs. magic to avoid transportation (and isolation) events.

31 – Spider's Cavern. This cavern is avoided because of the hunting spiders dwelling here. These huge specimens hide among the fallen rocks to the north and strike when prey comes within 30', surprising 1-5 in 6 of the time unless efforts have been made to identify their presence. This is between the players and the

referee, but might include throwing objects to draw anything out. There are 2 of the things, growing fat on careless fire beetles and the occasional rust monster, but happy to devour adventurers.

AC: 6[13] MOVE: 18 HD: 2+2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (poisonous bite)

These are poisonous ambush hunters; luckily, saving throws vs. poison are rolled at +1 owing to their weak venom. Generations have nested here, accumulating a hoard of 17 cp, 8 sp, 10 ep, and 4 gp scattered among the rocks. There are also 2 potions of **healing** in copper flasks worth 5 gp each to the right buyer.



32 – Rust Monster Grotto. A natural copper seam runs through this place, and the cavern here was largely excavated by several generations of rust monsters, seen as a nuisance by the kobolds, who employ metal armor and weaponry. There is also the scent of metal from the armory found in area 33; but this is tarnished such that its aroma is less tempting than what

the party, equipped with fine armor and (possibly) magic weaponry bring.

AC: 2[17] MOVE: 18 HD: 5 HP: 14 #AT: 2
DAM: Nil (devour metal)

When encountered, the area's one monster is greedily devouring a suit of plate mail and ignores a party 50% of the time unless harassed, although each item of magical metal armor or weaponry within 10' reduces this by 5%. The rust monster blocks the forgotten armory such that the party always comes within 10' when attempting to pass. There is nothing else of interest aside from the threat it poses.

33 – Bygone Armory. This finely worked chamber was kept secret for some unknown reason, for it is reachable only by way of a narrow (3' wide) passage allowing only single-file movement. Its contents, even under centuries of dust and cobwebs, reveal its purpose as an armory containing undiscovered gear.

1 suit of (dwarf-sized) plate mail
2 chainmail coats (elf or human sized)
1 round **shield +1** of dwarven make
1 **mace +1, +2 vs. undead** challengers
12 spears (not suitable for throwing)

Note: The rust monster's plate mail meal is devoured by the time the party is ready to leave this place, and the scent of fresh metal brings it to the narrow passage, blocking all escape. For every piece of armor thrown out as bait, there is a cumulative 25% chance that the monster ignores the party. Weapons add +5%, noting that the passage is too narrow for the thing to get through, try as it might.

34 – Kobold Altar of Prayer. While the kobolds ostensibly serve the same mysterious gods as their human allies, they fear

and despise the cultist's obsession with the undead and worship separately in the manner of their people, although this still involves blood and sacrifice. Three monolithic stones rise up in the center of this area, surrounded by enough kobold remains to create an army of warriors in the hell their gods occupy. These are consecrated against magic such that the necromancer's ring cannot raise them, even in the hands of a true practitioner. This shrine is currently unoccupied, but the referee can roll for wandering monsters, with any result of kobolds bringing twice the indicated amount, who will not be happy with others defiling "holy" ground.

35 – Pit of the Dead. This impressive chamber speaks to the splendor of what once was, although at some point the southern wall collapsed; and it does not take long to see why, for in its center lies a massive (50' radius) blast crater. This is filled with countless skeletons; fortunately, too ravaged to rise under the power of any necromancer (or the necromancer's ring). An air of dreadful anticipation hangs over this place, so much so that the party might overlook the 18 armored kobolds patrolling its southern rim.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6 HD: 1/2 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (short bow or throwing spear)

This is an elite party sent to patrol the deeper reaches of the dungeon, for while they revere their dead mother, they are nonetheless fearful (and why worship anything one does not deeply fear). These are clad in chainmail coats small enough for halflings and armed with short bows and quivers with 24 arrows. In melee they switch to spears, which can be thrown if necessary; and should the battle become an outright brawl, they fight with their filthy claws to the bitter end, for their death

is an offering to the Wyrm Wife, who demands such sacrifice. Each wears a pack containing kobold rations (fire beetle jerky), 14 cp, 9 ep, and 3 gp. Searching the mass grave yields nothing of value, much less any clue as to its origin.

Note: Of course, these respond to the necromancer's ring (if still worn) within 1-3 rounds, fighting as kobold zombies per the provided **Referee Worksheet**.

36 – The Great Cavern. Herein lays the earthly remains of the Shorlee Wyrm and those who finally defeated her. To the northeast, near where the natural caverns enter from area 34, the bodies of 6 warriors lay scattered in death. One of these has a **long sword +1** of dwarven make, confirming the legends, although there is nothing else left. Their bones, roasted beyond recognition or necromancy, are impossible to remove, although clerics might perform last rites if of lawful/good persuasion. Areas 37-40 denote other important features of this storied place.

37 – Where the Wyrm Fell. South of the great chamber and its pit of the dead lay the remains of the Shorlee Wyrm, white with age. Her bones reveal a large beast at least 30' long with a 50' wingspan, impressive for sure, and the party should be left wondering how such a thing could ever be overcome. There is nothing else here but proof of the legends.

38 – Blocked Passage. At one time this was the main entrance to the Wyrm's hidden lair, although it has since been buried under fallen rocks, the result of time and seismic shifts. The same tremors have opened a very narrow (3' wide) fissure, however, which rises to the surface into a river valley a mile from where the party first entered. This crack is easy enough to

bridge, although bulky gear such as armor may have to be passed through with care. It is a viable retreat.

39 – Smashing the Family Tree. To the southeast of the great cavern rises a dirt mound which, upon closer inspection, holds a clutch of shattered eggs, confirming yet another legend. These are thick like leather, but brittle with age. There are a dozen here, and all but one bear the skeleton of a small child smashed beyond necromancy. These are the offspring of the Shorlee Wyrm and the Wizard, for she was of a race of shape-shifting dragons who took a mortal lover and bore young to take her place. The Shorlee warriors must have understood and smashed her eggs, ending that line forever – all but one that is, for the girl survived. If she remains with the party, she might even curl up in her shell and giggle playfully.

Note: Lawful/good characters (and any of a philosophical mind) may ponder whether or not a terrible crime was committed here, for the children were innocent – but then, perhaps not.

40 – The Serpent's Hoard. Stalactites plunge downward, forming a secluded recess in the southwest corner of the great cavern. Here, among the rubble, lies the rumored hoard of the Shorlee Wyrm: a pair of rotted chests spilling their bounty of 10,000 cp, 5,000 sp (rich by local standards), potions of **healing** and **gaseous form** in brass vials, and an aged scroll of **Wizard Lock**. Skeletal remains, crushed beyond raising, litter the ground here, victims of the constrictor serpent lurking above, for this has gotten fat on endless waves of greedy adventurers.

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 6+1 HP: 34 #AT: 2
DAM: 1d4/2d4 (bite and constrict)

The serpent strikes from above, dropping to bite the tallest party member and, if successful, attacking again to crush them in its mighty coils for 2-8 damage per round. Given the greater power of this creature, the referee might allow the party to release an entangled companion after 1-2 rounds if they can take opposite ends and have a combined strength of 25 or better. Thereafter, it targets the one nearest its head, so coordination and teamwork are essential. This is the closest the party gets to slaying a dragon.



41 – Claustrophobic Passage. This corridor is much like that leading to the armory, only much longer, making it impossible to see what lies beyond. Those in heavier armor may need to go through sideways and indeed; there is an ancient suit of mail wedged at the halfway point. This can be removed by pushing it forward (in whatever direction the party wishes to move), but with a 45% chance of disturbing the giant centipede within.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 15 HD: 1/4 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: Nil (weak poisonous stinger)

Should the thing hit with an unmodified (or natural) 20, it crawls beneath the nearest character's armor and does not attack unless excessive movement is made (i.e., counterattacks). All saving throws vs. poison are rolled at +4, as their venom is weak. A small nuisance.

42 – The Bone Eaters. There is something most unwholesome about this terrible place (more so even than the cultists with their dead gods). It is piled to the shins with crushed and gnawed skeletons (all beyond the necromancer's ring), through which crawl 24 juvenile centipedes sucking marrow from their bones.

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 9 HD: 1/4 HP: 1 #AT: 1
DAM: Nil (weak paralyzing venom)

These are almost worse than their adult counterparts, for they paralyze with a successful attack, but only if a target fails their saving throw (made at +4). Their weakness is countered by sheer numbers, making them deadly. One of the skeletons wears a brass key around its withered wrist that opens area 43, a repository of neglected wealth. While the centipedes are numerous, they scatter when fire is presented, but only enough for the party to scramble from the main entrance to the narrow passage (in area 41).

43 – Secret Cache of Riches. This secret chamber is opened with the brass key from area 42. Whoever holds (or wears) this and stands within 5' of the door causes a keyhole to magically appear. Of course, this is opened by the key to reveal a room holding endless terracotta urns, most broken and empty, but some intact and worth searching. Among them the party collects 9,000 cp, 3,500 ep, and 500 gp. There is also a tapestry rolled up in one corner (depicting some obscure for-

gotten battle) that nets 25 gp in town, but fetches 350 from a mysterious and well-connected antique dealer who must be found by greasing local palms.

44 – The Wizard's Tomb. A 50' long passage leads up to the Wizard's final resting place. This is under a special hex such that anyone passing through takes an automatic 1 point of damage per 10' travelled up to the maximum of 4. Climbing or levitation makes no difference, for simply passing by triggers this powerful magic. Only the last 10' before the tomb door is secure, and damage is suffered again when turning back! Smart players should quickly see this for what it is and have to make some hard choices about how to proceed or whether or not it is even worth it. The door to the tomb itself is unlocked and untrapped.

This chamber is a Spartan affair, with no adornments save for the great marble sarcophagus in the center of the Wizard's burial chamber. It requires several characters with a combined strength of 30 to slide the heavy lid off, and it falls with a deafening thud that threatens to summon wandering monsters, except that these avoid this place and its magic. Within lies the remains of the Wizard, reduced by time to a skull and a moldering skeleton, so fragile that it crumbles to dust when disturbed. Anyone standing within the 10' diameter cloud released is subject to a secret saving throw vs. poison, with failure resulting in the affected character contracting a serious disease, much like that spread by giant rats. There is otherwise nothing of value here; no riches in secret panels; no magic staff in the Wizard's clutching hand; nothing at all.

Of course, the party must reverse its steps and once again cross the hexed passa-

geway. The referee should allow players to use healing magic (potions or spells), provided they think to do so, noting that while the Wizard and his Wyrm Wife are ostensibly central to the dungeon and all within, it is really about something else completely. The dead exist to tell a story and set the stage for new challenges stemming from the past – but the future belongs to the next generation.

Once the party turns to leave (and perhaps only after the door to the tomb closes behind them), they can hear the sound of the sarcophagus lid sliding back into place. If broken, it reassembles, as does the scattered dust of the Wizard, who persists beyond all efforts to erase his mysterious presence. When the party passes the hexed corridor, a strange sack appears before them on the ground; a consolation from the Wizard or a gesture of respect for a mystery well played, for this holds 250 gp, each impossibly ancient and bearing the visage of the Wizard in his prime. This is real money and quite spendable in town. Herein ends the last mystery of the Lair of the Shorlee Wyrm, although surely there are many more adventures to be had here.

The Aftermath

The first time the party returns to civilization after taking up the skull's bargain, stony ruins will have erupted throughout Shorlee through which come skeletal warriors. Of course, the party is blamed for stirring things up, although public opinion varies depending on how they handle things in the aftermath. Short of this, kobolds will become a nuisance and, once again, the party gets the blame. And then there is the strange girl, proving once and for all that staying alive is really just the beginning of many more challenges!

Original Content

The following original content is referenced in this adventure and provided here for use in a campaign.

BONE PUDDING

FREQUENCY: Very Rare

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVE: 9

HIT DICE: 4

% IN LAIR: Nil

TREASURE TYPE: Nil

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1-3

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4, then 1 per round

SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: See below

INTELLIGENCE: Non-

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SIZE: M to L (pile of skulls)

The making of these foul things is a well-kept secret, but seems to involve initiation into a necromantic cult. Only then can **Animate Dead** be used to build one, and then only if the right remains are available, for this is a pile of horrid skulls (possibly mixed with other bones) towering high above its prey. Most are 6' tall with but a single attack against a target, although some grow large enough to engulf 2-3 man-sized opponents. This appears to be linked to the number of nearby remains and the power of the necromancer. First the pudding attacks with its bite for 1-4 points of damage, after which the target is engulfed and slowed to 3, thereafter taking 1 automatic point of damage per round until beaten, for turning only reduces their attack capability (but never hit points) by 1 hit die. Like other skeletons, these only sustain half damage from sharp/pointed weapons. Sleep, charm,

hold, and/or cold-based attacks have no effect on them. Moreover, holy water deals but 1-6 damage, for they are stubbornly defiant against the divine. Fearsome things, bone puddings are turned as wights. They guard no wealth unless specifically tasked with doing so.

Necromancer Rings

Certain necromantic cults, dealing as they do with corpses, find it useful to grant their low-ranking members some power over the dead despite lacking the magic needed to do so. This is accomplished using powerful necromantic rings.

Initiate's rings are made for the lowest-ranking (and weakest) devotees. These bestow a **Cure Light Wounds** (self only) spell once per day and let them animate a single skeleton or zombie from nearby (within 30') remains, getting a servant that fights on even if its master dies. Raising requires 1-3 rounds, noting that if clerically turned, those same remains cannot be raised again for one game day, although new ones can be found. **Servitor's rings** grant a 2nd level **Shield** spell and animate 2 skeletons or zombies within 60'. Both may only be used by those fully taken into this cult of dark necromancy.

Necromancer's rings are incredibly powerful, but cursed in the hands of anyone not entitled to use them. First, they act like a regular **ring of protection +1** and will be taken for one, as only magic-users of 10th level or better can know their primary power, which allows the wearer to animate any number of skeletons or zombies within 90' (as per the rest). Any wearer benefits from the former, but only trained practitioners can employ the latter. Other wearers unwittingly reanimate the dead however, who rise to attack them instead!

Referee Worksheet

The following is a quick-reference for wandering monsters. Every system is a little different, and the referee should become familiar with their choice.

Bandit

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 5 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (axe or short sword)

Basilisk

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 6 HD: 6+1 HP: 16 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d10 (claws or petrifying gaze)

Bear

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 3+3 HP: 12 #AT: 3
DAM: 1d3/1d3/1d6 (claws or hug)

Dryad

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 2 HP: 9 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (dagger or powerful charm)

Fire Beetle

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 12 HD: 1+2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (deadly mandibles)

Gelatinous Cube

AC: 8[11] MOVE: 6 HD: 4 HP: 12 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (paralyze and digest)

Undigested Treasure In Cube

1d4 Result

- 1 3d8 cp
- 2 3d6 sp
- 3 2d6 ep
- 4 Magic item (no scrolls)

Ghoul

AC: 6[13] MOVE: 9 HD: 2 HP: 8 #AT: 3
DAM: 1d3/1d3/1d6 (paralysis)

Giant Centipede

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 15 HD: 1/4 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: Nil (weak poisonous stinger)

Giant Rat

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12/6 HD: 1/2 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d3 (with possible disease)

Giant Spider

AC: 4[15] MOVE: 3/12 HD: 4+4 HP: 9 #AT: 1
DAM: 2d4 (poisonous bite)

Huge Spider

AC: 6[13] MOVE: 18 HD: 2+2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (no web, poisonous bite)

Initiate

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (Magic Missile, staff)

Kobold

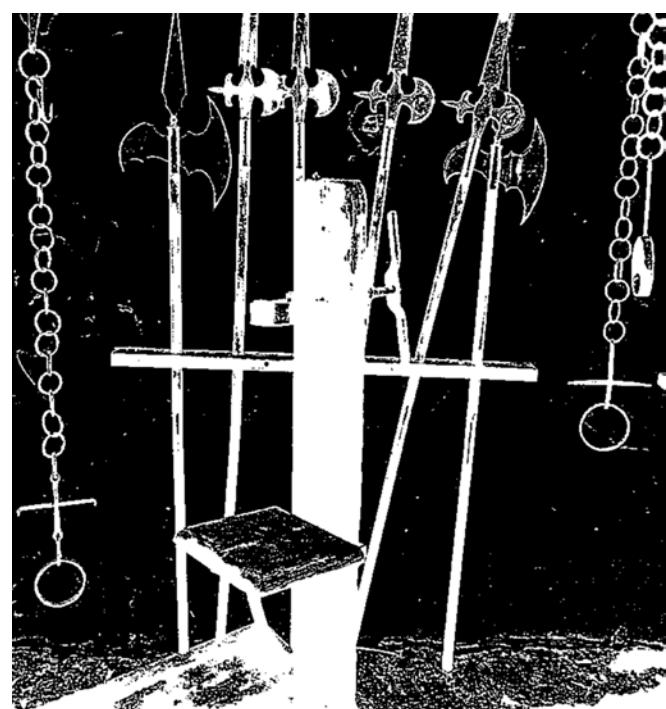
AC: 7[12] MOVE: 6 HD: 1/2 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (sharpened iron spear)

Kobold Sergeant

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6 HD: 1-1 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (claws or hand axe)

Lizard Man

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6/12 HD: 2+1 HP: 9 #AT: 3
DAM: 1-2/1-2/1-8 (bite and claws)



Militia

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 6 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (axe and long bow)

Ogre

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 9 HD: 4+1 HP: 22 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d10 (fist or big maul)

Pixie

AC: 5[14] MOVE: 6/12 HD: 1/2 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (+4 magic/sleep arrows)

Rust Monster

AC: 2[17] MOVE: 18 HD: 5 HP: 14 #AT: 2
DAM: Nil (devour metal)

Servitor

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 12 HD: 2 HP: 5 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4 (dagger, Magic Missile, Web)

Skeleton

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 12 HD: 1 HP: 4 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d6 (claws or spear)

Stirge

AC: 8[11] MOVE: 3/18 HD: 1+1 HP: 3 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d3 (and 1d4/round thereafter)

Wolf

AC: 7[12] MOVE: 18 HD: 2+2 HP: 11 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d4+1 (bite and claws)

Zombie (Kobold)

AC: 9[10] MOVE: 6 HD: 1/2 HP: 2 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d2 (filthy bite and/or claws)

Zombie (Miscellaneous)

AC: 8[11] MOVE: 6 HD: 2 HP: 7 #AT: 1
DAM: 1d8 (bite and filthy claws)

Referee Notes

Monster entries read as follows, noting here that the referee can add or change anything to suit their campaign and/or the particulars of the system being used.

AC – armor class. This item is listed as AC[AC], where the first number is the traditional value, which has its adherents, and the second (in brackets) is ascending AC, which has become increasingly employed for its convenience.

MOVE – movement. This corresponds to the most common version from the assorted literature and represents average movement, noting that higher speeds are possible for brief periods of time.

HD – hit dice. This value is provided for monster attacks, experience, and/or saving throws, where applicable. To accommodate d6-based systems, hit points can be easily reassigned.

HP – hit points. Where applicable, one value is given for all monsters of the same kind (i.e., multiple humanoids), although referees can roll separately for each if this better suits their game's approach.

#AT – number (and, where applicable, type) of attacks. Some familiarity with the source material is assumed; however, special attacks relevant to an encounter are cited to remind the referee to use them to the monster's benefit.

DAM – damage. This is given for each attack from the highest to lowest. In systems using d6 damage, this can be adjusted accordingly and without too much trouble. Indeed, the referee can make whatever changes they wish, substituting attacks (or weaponry) as needed.

Every effort has been made to keep this as universal as possible. Where something differs only slightly from the referee's system of choice, a monster can be treated as a local variant. Alternately, changes and/or substitutions can always be made.

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