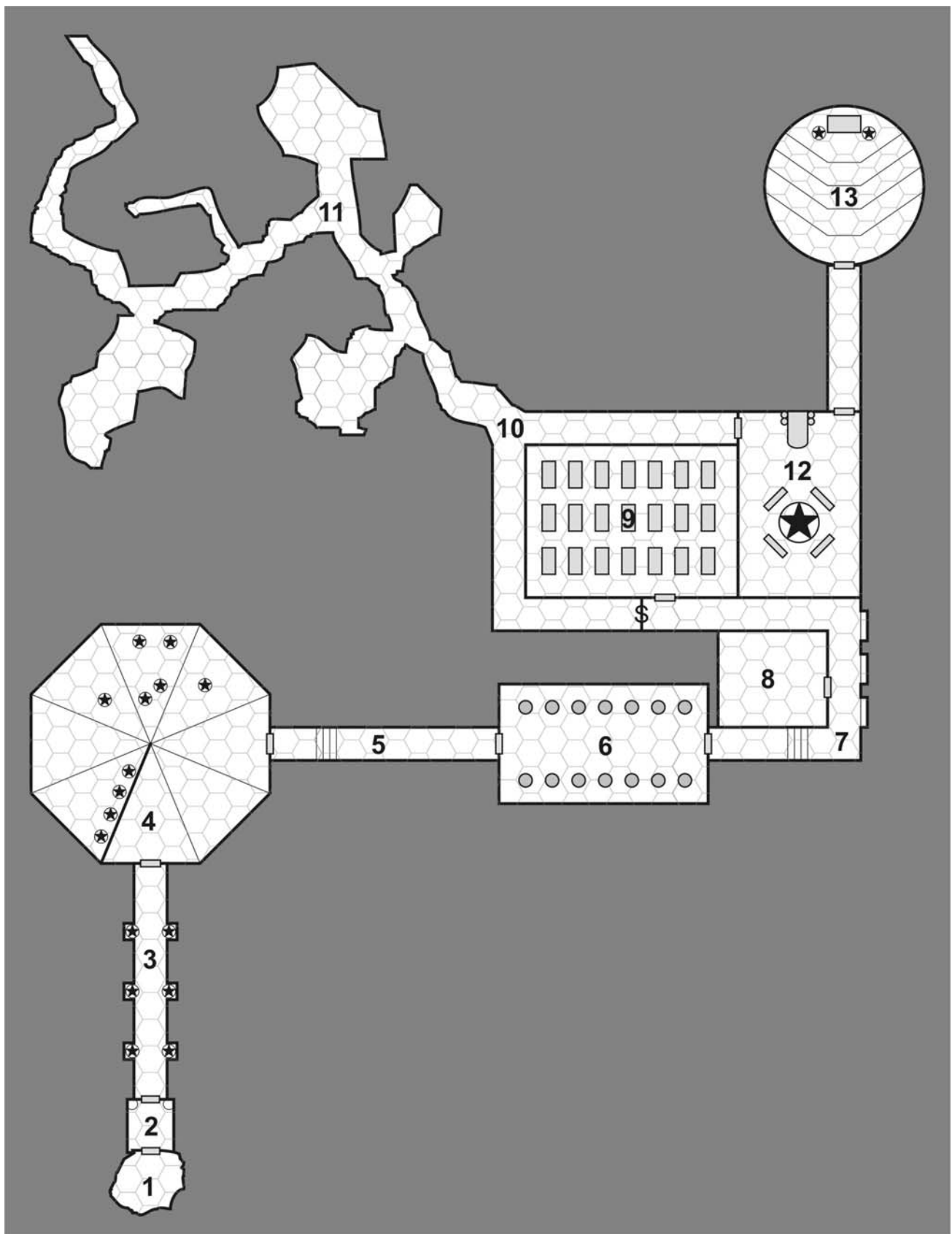


THE TOMB OF MARKALOS



Introduction

Elliot Terzani frowned as he watched his manservant's fumbling attempts at construction. "Andrew my good man, please be careful. You are stripping the threads on that leg. I am certain of it," Elliot said. He stepped closer to better see the work in progress.

As Andrew looked up at his master, the sweat rolled down his forehead and formed a drop at the end of his nose. He reached up to wipe his face with hands nicked and scratched from fighting the wooden chair. He frowned, but said nothing before bending back to his work.

"And that support goes all the way up the back," Elliot said. "I almost took a nasty tumble last time."

"Yes Lord," said Andrew as he snapped the support into place. He wiped his forehead again and then set Lord Elliot's chair in front of him.

"Excellent, now you can make me a cup of shoshari," Elliot said, and he dismissed his servant with a wave.

Elliot leaned on his chair, testing its strength. It was a marvel of engineering. The legs unscrewed and fitted to the sides of the seat, and the back folded, permitting the entire thing to collapse into the size of a small pack. Elliot had designed the chair himself and was quite proud of it. Once, he had even been offered a tidy sum by a Guilded Engineer to sell the plans. He turned it down, of course. Sons of Bostonian barons did not need to worry about money - much better to have a comfortable place to sit.

Satisfied that his chair would hold him, Lord Elliot smoothed his robes and sat. He stretched his legs and rolled his shoulders. The sun was hot today and he had spent too much time walking under it. Most of the land around Haden's Cross consisted of plains and grasslands which baked in the summer. But here, on this one hill, a thick stand of Ash and Singing Sorrow trees grew thick enough to blot out all but a few thin fingers of sunlight.

From his seat, Lord Elliot watched as a dozen peasants tore at the ground with shovels and pickaxes. They had started only an hour ago, but with strong backs and shoulders they had already dug a deep hole in the hillside. Soon, they would find the entrance to the Pagan King's Tomb. They would be the first people in over one thousand years to set eyes on the mysteries within. Elliot rubbed his hands in anticipation.

"Andrew," Elliot called. "How is that shoshari coming? I find my mouth suddenly parched." His manservant just nodded as he stirred the contents of three pots.

"My Lord?" Elliot turned to see Borntraeger offering his water skin.

He waved aside the offering. "I prefer to wait for the shoshari, thank you."

The gray-haired sheriff shrugged his shoulders and then raised the skin to his lips for a long drink. When he finished, he wiped his mouth on his sleeve.

"A quick report, Lord. I am pretty sure we are digging in the right place. Even so, it will take most of our daylight to break through. I figure while those men dig, I'll set up a camp. And I'll use those

mercenaries from Ismoth to help me, since they're just sitting around right now."

"That is fine, Borntraeger," Elliot said, his voice flat with disappointment.

Borntraeger turned back to the others. Elliot frowned. Borntraeger had been sheriff of his father's lands for many years. His skin was rough from his travels, and bore scars from many battles. But now, he was thin and gray, and walked with a slight limp. Elliot wondered if he would have to hold the old man up so that he could swing his sword.

"Lord Elliot," Andrew said. "Here is your shoshari."

Elliot took the small, steaming cup and put it to his lips. The liquid was warm and thick, with just the perfect touch of sweetness.

"Excellent as always, Andrew," he said. Andrew bowed his head and turned to leave.

"Andrew," Lord Elliot said. "Prepare my gear for tomorrow. Take only what is necessary. I need you unburdened and ready to fight."

"Yes Lord," Andrew looked at the workers digging their tunnel. "Father keep us."

But Elliot had not heard the prayer. He had risen from his chair and now hurried to the tunnel entrance, anxious to hear of their progress.

ENTERING THE TOMB

1 EXCAVATION

Workers have dug a hole into the hillside almost 12 feet deep to reach the entrance to the tomb. A wooden ladder provides access to the bottom of the pit. A full action must be spent to climb up or down the ladder in combat.

The entrance to the tomb is a stone slab, flanked on either side by two crumbling cone-shaped pillars. The tops of the pillars almost reach ground level and are capped by two badly corroded bronze bowls.

2 ENTRANCE CHAMBER

This small stone chamber serves as the entrance to the tomb itself. The age of this place is apparent from the cracked stone and crumbling mortar. The air is stale and damp. Condensation drips from cracks in the ceiling, creating small puddles on the floor.

A wooden door is set into an archway on the north wall, six inches above the floor. Stone braziers sit on either side of the door, filled with oily water. Above the door, two rusted chains hang down from rings set into the wall, which appear to have suspended a plaque in front of the door at one time. The plaque is lying on the floor, mostly rotted away. The only details still visible are a carved bas-relief of a burial scene along with some indecipherable writing.

The door has swollen shut from moisture and must be forced open. A STR test vs. DL 16 is required to pull the door open.

Growing in the corner of this room are a few pale plants with long white, mushroom-like stalks.

SKULLCAP

Climate:	Dark, Damp, Caves
Season:	Any
Knowledge DL:	16
Discovery DL:	18
Bunch:	1d3
Purchase:	50p / dose

Skullcap is found in dark caves. It is all white with fern-like leaves and a single long stem ending in a white cap that is shaped much like a mushroom. The fern is often used as bandages as they are very strong and resistant to infection. The caps can be eaten, but only keep for a couple weeks after they are picked.

Skullcap raises the empathy of the user with regards to the pain of others. A user of skullcap will take 1 point of damage if anyone around him (within say 10 meters) is hurt. He takes this damage each time a new injury occurs close to him, or a new injured person enters his "radius." A maximum of 6 hit points may be taken in this fashion.

In addition, it allows the user to more effectively heal others. All medical, physician and healing spells benefit from a +1 hit point bonus for each die rolled. This means a +1 to medical rolls, a +2 for physician and a +1 or 2 for most spells. This effect lasts for 6 hours. Afterwards, the user is so tired; he suffers a -1 to all skill rolls until he gets 8 hours sleep.

3 HALLWAY OF WIVES

A step up leads to a narrow passageway. This is much drier than the entrance chamber due to elevation as well as two shallow gutters running along the edges. The air here is stale and musty.

The hallway contains three sets of alcoves and ends in an iron bound wooden door. Each pair of alcoves contains an identical pair of statues. Before the first alcove, on the western wall is a tattered tapestry. It is covered in mold, but a scene of ornate buildings and people is still visible.

The first set of statues depicts a beautiful woman with long flowing hair, standing with her arms outstretched and her mouth open, as if speaking. She is dressed in an ornate robe wrapped with silk scarves. The statue on the left has sunken into the floor slightly and tipped upwards. The statue on the right is in perfect condition however.

The next alcove holds a pair of statues depicting another woman. She is wearing a fancy evening gown and standing with her arms crossed and a stern look on her face. While not as beautiful as the first, she has a look of commanding power about her. A few bones litter the floor between these two statues.

The final alcove contains statues of a woman in what appears to be the ceremonial clothing of a harem. Like the first, she has her mouth open and is pointing. On the floor between them are some rotted bits of clothing and a greenish scum.

TRAP: WIFE STATUES

Detect DL:	16
Telltale Signs DL:	18
Disarm DL:	18
Disarm Time:	30 minutes

Each set of statues has a different effect when activated. The effects are listed in the order the statues appear. While disarming the trigger mechanism is a difficult and time consuming task, if the location of the trigger stone is known, the trap can be circumvented easily.

Fireball: The trigger stone for this trap is directly between the two statues. Whoever steps on the trigger stone must make an AGI save vs. DL 12 to dodge the flames or take 2d8 points of damage as flames shoot from the mouths of both statues. Fortunately, only one statue is dangerous as

the other has tipped enough that the flames hit the ceiling instead.

Ice: The trigger stone for this trap is just after the two statues. When tripped, a freezing mist starts to pour from the eyes of both statues, filling the hallway. Everyone in the hallway must make a TOU save vs. DL 13 or take 2d4 points of damage and be -2 to actions for 2 hours due to frostbite.

Acid: The trigger for this trap is several feet before the statues, but the effect is delayed several seconds. A concentrated acid sprays out from the mouths of both statues, covering anyone standing between them and pooling on the floor. Anyone caught in the spray must make a SPD save vs. DL 11 or take 1d6 points of damage. In addition, 1-3 random items owned by that person are damaged (40%) or destroyed (20%).

TRAP: Pit

Detect DL:	14
Telltale Signs DL:	19
Disarm DL:	11
Disarm Time:	10 Minutes

If the door is opened (either the lock picked or the door broken) without the proper key a floor panel directly in front of the door swings down. Anyone within 1 hex of the door must make a SPD save vs. DL 18 to jump clear before falling into the pit. The pit is 20 feet deep, causing 3d6 points of damage from the fall onto the hard stone floor. The pit is wider at the bottom than the top, making it almost impossible to climb without aid or equipment.

Inside the pit are a couple of bodies. The bodies are very old, by the look and style of the clothing they are wearing. Scattered among the bodies is a silver dagger, a brass key (that happens to fit the door above) and a shattered lockbox. The lockbox contains various old coins worth about 45 p in total.

4 HALL OF LEGENDS

This is a large octagonal room with a high ceiling. It is arranged into a series of steps, each about three feet higher than the last. The steps start to the left of the door, ending in the last step about 20 feet above the floor. A handful of broken arrows and old, dried blood lie just inside the doorway.

The first step has a mural painted on the wall depicting a number of peasants who appear to be begging the young king for help against a rampaging barbarian hoard visible in the background.

The mural on second step shows the king speaking to some cobrat. He seems to be searching for something. Behind the cobrat is a beautiful temple, full of hanging plants. The doorway on this wall is painted as part of the scene as well. A DL 14 check against knowledge of cobrat will reveal that this is a rather famous temple. Considered one of the wonders of the world, it contains virtually every plant

known to man or cobrat. The door is in good shape and unlocked.

The mural on the third step extends onto the floor itself. Rising from a crack in the floor is a statue or a creature of mud, lava and flame. The creature appears to be reaching out to the painting of the king, kneeling awaiting his blessing.

The fourth step contains a grand battle scene. On the mural the king is depicted locked in combat with a barbarian chieftain. Markalos is shown here with flaming hands as he grapples with the chieftain. The battle stretches to the floor of the step, with four of warriors in fighting poses. There are two bodies on this step as well. The bodies are old and decayed but wearing what could be considered "modern" clothing. The bodies are stripped and contain nothing of value.

TRAP: WARRIOR STATUES

Detect DL:	10
Telltale Signs DL:	16
Disarm DL:	14
Disarm Time:	10 Minutes

All of the warrior statues on this step have been trapped to "swing" their weapons at anyone who approaches. Only two of the statues are still active, however, the others have been tripped by the unfortunate souls lying at their feet. Anyone who trips one must make a SPD or AGI save vs. DL 13 or take 2d10 points of damage from the blow.

The fifth step contains a single statue of Markalos in his full glory. His entire body is on fire as he casts streams of lava onto an approaching hoard of barbarians. The floor around him has been sculpted and painted as cracked, burnt earth.

The fifth step shows an elderly king in his audience chamber. He is dressed in opulent robes and waited on by one of the women depicted in the hallway below. At the edge of the step are four archer statues, poised as if firing at the doorway below. While the mechanisms can be reset, none of them have any arrows remaining.

5 WATER-FILLED PASSAGE

A few paces past the doorway, the hallway descends in a series of shallow steps. The lower end is filled with ankle deep water and ends in a doorway. The door is warped and rotted from the water. A STR test at DL 10 is all that is required to break it open.

6 HANGING GARDEN

This is a long room built to resemble the garden temple depicted in the mural. It is a long room lined with columns on either side. Stone tables and planters are scattered about here, many overturned and broken, in addition to planters hanging from chains set into the ceiling. All of them are filled with rotted earth and decayed plants.

The ceiling is crisscrossed with a number pipes, one of which has burst, dripping water constantly into the room. Like the hallway, the floor is covered in ankle deep water, tinted sludgy brown from the earth. In the far corners on the ceiling are set two glass gems, apparently to focus light into the room but long since broken.

The door at the far end of the room is in no better shape than the other door. It is rotted and swelled in place, forcing another STR check at DL 10 to smash it open.

In the southeast corner of the room sleeps a moss man. It has been dormant here for many years, sleeping under a pile of broken tables and planters. It would take a PER check at DL 18 to tell the vaguely humanoid body from the surrounding dirt and decay. The creature will slowly awaken if anyone enters the room and attack from concealment after 5 minutes.

Moss Man

Physical	12	Initiative	+1
Swiftness	15	Attack	11
Mental	5	Damage	1d6 + weapon
Perception	10	Defense	13/11/10/9
Move	6	Armor	1,2,3,4,4
		Hit Points	32

Special Abilities

Camouflage: Moss men can change their appearance to fit their surroundings. When camouflaged and in cover, a character must make a PER test at a DL of 19 to detect the creature. If the creature is moving, then the PER DL is only 12.

Infectious: If any horror moss (moss men are totally covered in it) contacts a characters skin, the character must make a TOU test at a DL of 17, or become infected by horror moss. Horror moss immediately starts acting on the character's skin, spreading at a fearful rate. Each round, the horror moss causes the character to lose 1 point of STR, DEX, AGI, SPD, TOU and CHR. Once any of these characteristics reach 0, the character is comatose and is being overtaken by the moss. In one hour's time, he will be totally consumed and become a moss man himself.

The moss may be scorched off by a torch or lamp flame any time until the character is comatose. The character must be scorched for one round and 1d4 points of damage for each round he was infected by the moss. However, as long as any flame is applied, the spread of the moss is checked and the character loses no more ability points.

Once the character goes comatose, then only a physician or magic can save him. A physician skill test at DL 17 will remove the moss. Otherwise a spell that cures disease will do the same.

Weapons Usage: Moss men can use any weapon a normal human can, but tend to favor spears. They will use any weapon they have found or stolen, and failing that,

crude, self-made wooden spears. Moss men never wear clothing or armor.

Description

Horror-Moss men are humans, which have been transformed by infectious "Horror-Moss". Horror-Moss is actually not a moss, but a semi-sentient fungus. Anyone who contacts Horror-Moss with their bare skin becomes infected. If unnoticed or untreated, the fungus grows on the victim's skin in a thin layer at a rate of 10 inches a day. If the victim is not cured within 3 days of the infection, the fungus begins to warp their mind. The victim becomes very paranoid of other humans, and will start making constant attempts to flee to the nearest unpopulated area.

About a month and a half after infection, a victim is completely and permanently transformed into what is commonly referred to as a "Moss Man". Moss Men are completely covered in the Horror-Moss fungus, their skin completely eaten away and replaced by it. All hair, ears, nose, and sexual features are also gone, presumably eaten away by fungus, leaving a slim, humanoid creature. The Horror-Moss looks somewhat like fuzzy velvet in texture, but has the ability to both change color, and become phosphorescent. This gives the creature the ability to camouflage itself, or make disorienting light displays. The mind of the creature has been reduced to that of a smart animal, and is influenced by the fungus. Moss men tend to live in forested areas, dwelling in the dense cover, feeding on large animals they hunt with amazing stealth and speed.

It is not unheard of for wizards to use magic to control moss men, and use them as guards or troops. Even when controlled, moss men are only slightly more intelligent than most animals, and cannot be used as laborers for anything remotely difficult.

7 SERVANT ALCOVES

Shortly before the corridor turns left another short set of steps rises out of the water. Along the East wall are six shallow alcoves set in two rows. Each of the alcoves contains a corpse dressed in fine but decayed clothing. Hidden amongst the bones are an ornate dagger (30p) and a plain gold ring (20p).

The first door is unlocked and will open easily, though the hinges make a good deal of noise. If anyone in the party makes a PER check at DL 13 they can hear some shuffling and clattering in the room beyond.

The door at the end of the hallway is a solid heavy door banded in metal. The door is unlocked and opens easily into the room beyond.

There is a secret door at the very end of the hallway. A PER check at DL16 is required to locate the mechanism. Pushing on one of the stones on the nearby wall will cause the door to open smoothly and soundlessly.

8 SLAVE QUARTERS

This room is full of scattered bones and broken urns filled with ashes. There is nothing of value to be found here.

Two ghouls are in this room, rooting through the bones looking for something to eat. They are quite preoccupied, clattering through the bones and murmuring to themselves and are not likely to have heard the party enter the hallway beyond. They will certainly hear the door to this room squeak open however. They will fight if cornered but if possible they will make a run for the secret doorway to warn their fellows.

GHOUL

Physical	12	Initiative	+0
Swiftness	10	Attack	13
Mental	10	Damage	1d8+1d6
Perception	10	Defense	12/10/9/7
Move	6	Armor	0
		Hit Points	32

Special Abilities

Grab Attack: A ghoul can grab an opponent, doing no damage that round. Each round afterward, the ghoul can attack the grabbed opponent with a vicious bite at a +2 attack skill, doing 2d8 damage. They attack in this fashion until dislodged, or killed.

Iron Stomach: Ghouls are immune to poison and disease. They can eat almost anything to sustain themselves.

Description

Ghouls are often thought to be undead creatures. However, they are simply humanoid mutants who emerged from their watery enclaves too early and were changed by the poisoning of the world. They are cannibals that crave human flesh - even rotting flesh - over all other foods.

Ghouls travel in packs of 6-20. They are insane, gaunt creatures with white leathery flesh. They hunt together, acting on instinct and cunning to capture and kill their prey.

9 CHAMBER OF WARRIORS

This room is filled with closely spaced ranks of coffins, 21 in this room altogether. Several of the coffins have been opened and a number of scattered bones and bodies lie on the floor.

Anyone disturbing any of the unopened coffins will wake the remaining skeleton warriors in this room. There are 12 remaining warriors who will rise from their coffins to attack the trespassers. They are armed with variety of old rusty weapons (swords, axes and spears) and many of them carry shields as well. The undead will attack anything living they come across, including the ghouls, who avoid this room if at all possible.

Most of the weapons and armor in this room is too rusty to be of much use. However, there are about a half dozen various

weapons that are salvageable. They should be given durability values of 1-3 and cause -1 damage until repaired and sharpened.

10 HALLWAY

In the northwest corner of this hallway is a cave-in. The ceiling has partially collapsed here, littering the floor with rocks, dirt and debris. It appears that much of the debris has been cleared away, leading to the runnel beyond.

At the end of the hallway is a stone archway. Light is spilling from the archway, flickering like flames.

11 GHOUL TUNNELS

These tunnels are natural cracks and caves with an occasional sign of rough tooling. There are four small "rooms" off the tunnel, each littered with bones and other debris. The tunnel exit is on the far side of the hill from the tomb excavation, well hidden behind a large boulder and some thorny bushes.

The tunnels are home to about a dozen ghouls at the moment. They found the tomb years ago and have lived here since that time, occasionally making small forays into nearby villages for food. At any given time 2-4 will be out "hunting" while the others sleep or feed.

The rooms extending off the tunnel are rough and filled with debris. Bone, bits of clothing and other less pleasant things can be found here. Scattered among all of the rooms are 2 crowns, 57 pennies and 32 bits. There are also a number of pieces of cheap jewelry here, worth approximately 50 p in total.

12 TEMPLE

Along the northern wall of this room is a stone table with a human-shaped indentation carved in the top. There are holes in various low points of the indentation and 2 cylinders on either side of the table nearest the wall. Pipes run in a shallow groove in the floor from the cylinders to the base of the statue.

The statue in this room is almost identical to the statue in the Hall of Legends, though much larger. A foul looking beast made of mud and lava stands, pointing to the sacrificial table. Jets of flame shoot up from numerous small holes in the statue, giving the appearance that the beast is on fire. The flames are more than enough to light this room and a bit of the hallway beyond. The statue's eyes appear to be some kind of large red gem, and are lit from behind presumably by the same mechanism that causes the flames.

Surrounding the statue are four stone benches. The room is otherwise empty and well kept.

16 KING'S TOMB

This is a circular with wide steps leading up to an ornately carved coffin flanked by two menacing looking axe armed warrior statues. Three chandeliers are hung from the ceiling of this room, long since extinguished. An old tattered carpet leads up the center of the steps to the coffin.

TRAP: STEPS

Detect DL:	14
Telltale Signs DL:	18
Disarm DL:	16
Disarm Time:	30 minutes

Each step up to the King's coffin has a different trap. All of the traps except for the statues affect only the center of the room, along the carpet. They can be easily avoided simply by walking along the sides of the room.

Step 1: Stepping on the first step will cause razor sharp blades to swing out from both sides of the step at ankle level. Anyone standing on the step must make a SPD save vs. DL 14 or be cut by the blades. This attack does 2d6 points of damage to one leg, which automatically causes a roll on the wound severity chart, regardless of the actual damage.

Step 2: The chandelier supported above the second step falls directly onto the center of the step. Anyone standing in the center hex must make an AGI save vs. DL 14 to dive to safety or take 2d8 from the falling chandelier. Anyone one hex away must save at DL 10 to avoid taking 2d4 points of damage from the flying pieces.

Step 3: This step opens into a pit. Anyone standing on this step must make a SPD or AGI save vs. DL 16 to jump clear or fall into the pit below. The fall will cause 3d6 points of damage.

Step 4: Both statues are designed to swing their axes in an arc, catching anyone approaching from any angle but directly behind them. Anyone approaching must make a SPD or AGI save vs. DL 13 or be struck for 2d10 points of damage. This trap can affect multiple targets but is only sprung once per statue.

The coffin contains a hidden lever just inside the lid. When the lid is closed and the lever pulled, the base of the coffin descends down a slanted track to the king's treasure room. The mechanism will only support one person at a time in this fashion.

The treasure room contains the following:

- 1000p worth of assorted coins
- Assorted jewelry worth 250p
- 12 red/yellow gems (Firestones, DL18 to appraise, value 150p each)
- A wand of fire
- An ornate axe (300 p value for a collector)

Guarding the treasure room is the spirit of the pagan king Markalos. The king will try to ambush the party from within his coffin, waiting until the first trap is sprung. He will try to lure the party onto the steps, causing them to spring the various traps as they advance upon him.

THE PAGAN KING MARKALOS

Physical	10	Initiative	+1
Swiftness	15	Attack	14
Mental	18	Damage	2d8
Perception	16	Defense	13/12/10
Move	6	Armor	0
		Hit Points	36

Special Abilities

Undead: Markalos takes no penalty for wounds sustained, as he feels no pain. In addition, he does not have to roll for unconsciousness. His SPI score of 17 is his resistance to being turned by a priest. Undead also take damage from water blessed by Stratus. Such water does 2d6 damage for each vial poured on them.

Magic User: Markalos has bound the magma rune and can cast spells from it at a skill level of 22. Since this rune is not yet written, the GM is free to use any effect that seems reasonable for this type of rune. Some suggestions include a ring or wall of fire to trap the party in the room, flaming armor to cause damage to anyone striking the king, jets of flame from his hands, etc...

Description

The king appears to be a well preserved corpse in tattered by elegant clothing. He wears a simple golden crown on his head. Most of the flesh is missing from his body, and fires burn in the eye sockets of his empty skull.

To be continued...