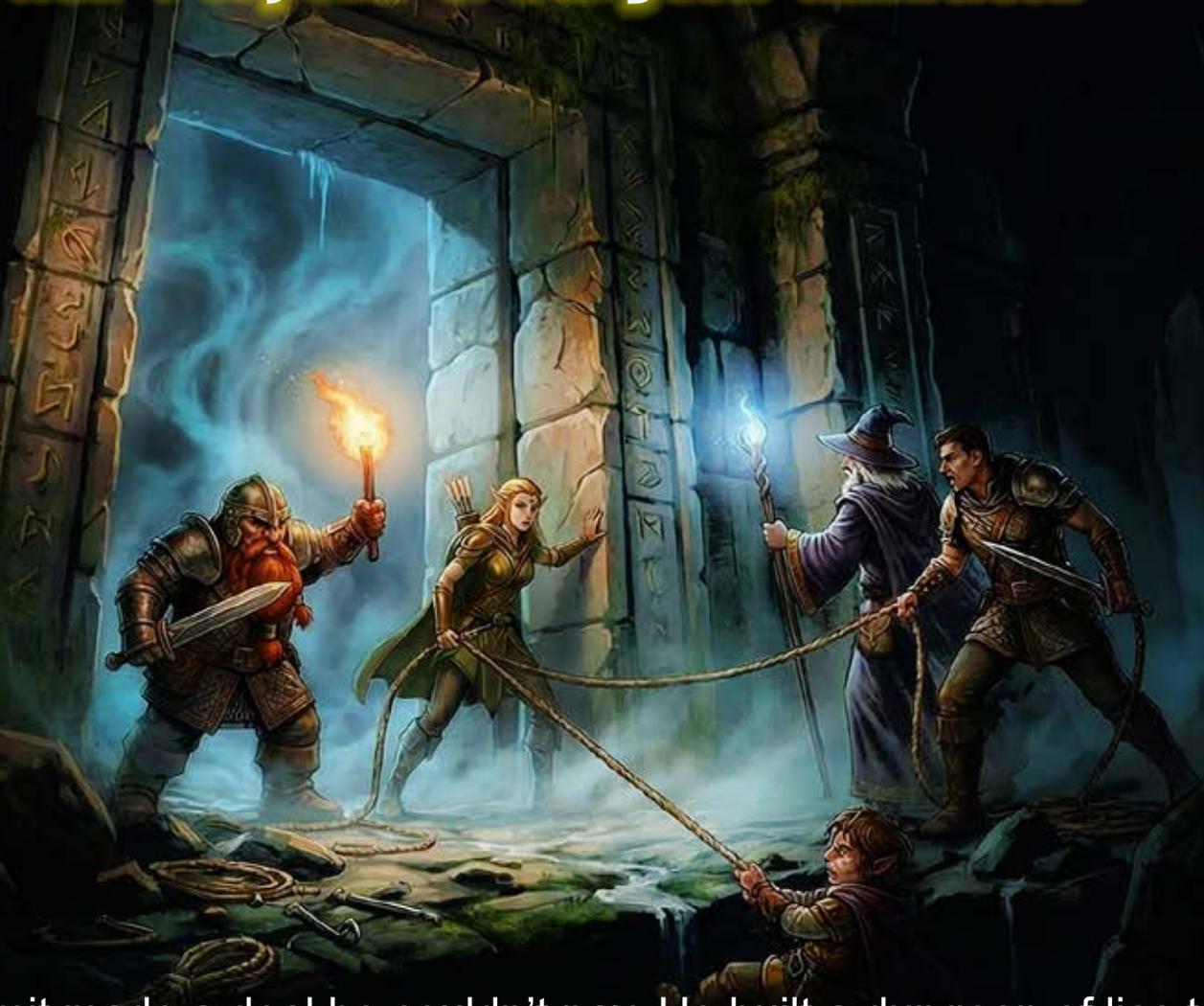


ECHOES BENEATH THE STONE

OPEN DUNGEONS RPG PRESENTS

An Adventure for
New Players & Dungeon Narrator



A hermit made a deal he couldn't pay. He built a dungeon of lies to hide from what he owed. Your players just found the real entrance.

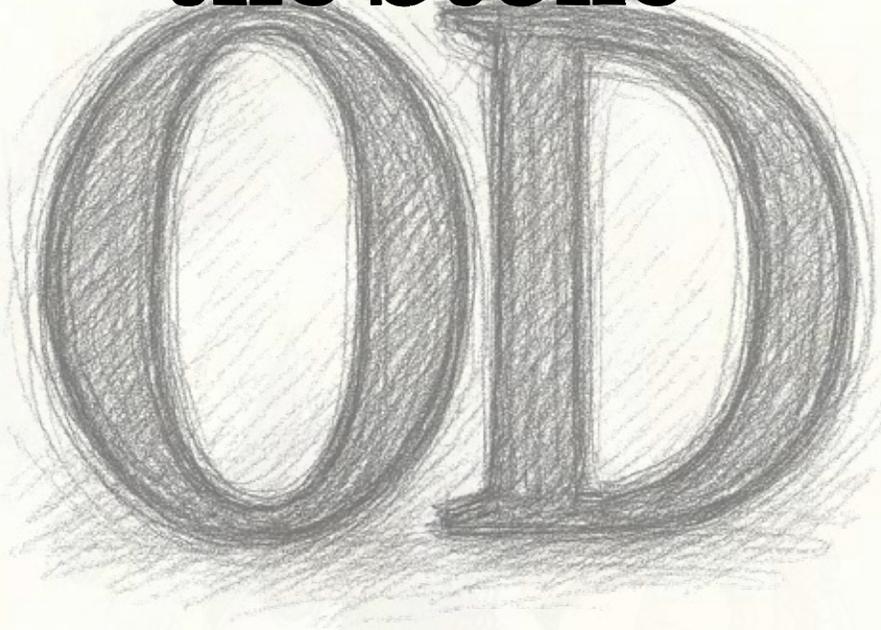
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Echoes Beneath the Stone



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Adventure Written for the DN

This adventure is written for the Dungeon Narrator (DN) though some Players may read, it's discouraged, to help keep out **metagaming**.

For Players

An adventure module is a story that describes places, dangers, and situations - with a goal. You're not expected to "win" by guessing the right answer. You describe what your character does, asks, or attempts. The world responds.

Most sections of this book are meant only for the DN. As a player, recommend you don't read.

For Dungeon Narrators

The text gives you locations, motivations, threats, and possible outcomes - and because this is your first Open Dungeons adventure, guidance will be ensured.

The adventure assumes 2 - 5 1st level characters of various classes: always adjust pacing, difficulty, monster behavior, and consequences to fit actual party size and classes.

For example: if you have no Thief in the party but have a Wizard, you'll want to ensure less traps are encountered and more puzzles.

Spell Note

When players use a magic spell for a scene, improvise how adventure scene or story responds.

Recommend reading adventure in advance so you can pivot adventure story as needed to cater to magic spells or unexpected character behavior, skills or abilities.



Metagaming is using player knowledge to influence a character's actions when the character has no way to know that information.

How Adventures Work in Open Dungeons

Adventures are built around exploration and player choice.

Yet understand, many players come to the table to adventure, not to shop or research, though this is possible if table agrees, but DN could reserve these particular details via online, emails, text, etc. i.e. a character might want to investigate a way to create a spell, negotiate a particular custom weapon, etc.

DN agency and rulings over rigid procedures.

Rooms are not puzzles with single solutions. Encounters are not balanced promises. Retreat is valid. Clever plans matter. Danger is real.

If players surprise you, let it work.
If they rush in, let it hurt.
If they plan well, reward them.

The goal is to create tension, discovery, and stories your table will remember.



For the Dungeon Narrator

Blue boxes are for the **Dungeon Narrator**.

Yellow boxes are Important to the **Dungeon Narrator**.

Green boxes are read to the **Players**.

A “scene” is a moment in the adventure story that characters participate in.

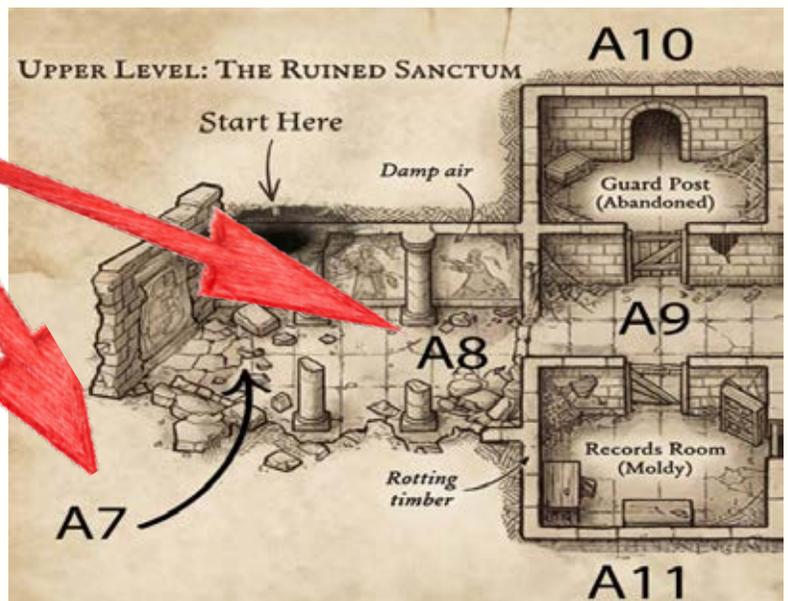
Adventure and map help designate scenes with A1, B3, etc. each one is a scene.

Look at map as the adventure progresses.

You'll see notations A1, A2, etc.

These correspond to sections in this adventure module that have either information and/or something to read to the players.

Notations may have important story details too.



Pro Tip: it's recommended that the DN read the adventure in advance before playing, or at least the blue and yellow text boxes, to get a strong feel for the adventure.

Adventure is designed for beginners - whether you've never rolled a d20, or never played a tabletop RPG at all. The structured format walks new Dungeon Narrators through running the game step-by-step while introducing players to core concepts organically through play. Downtime activities like gear shopping and spell research are intentionally minimized to keep the focus on learning the fundamentals: exploration, interaction, and combat.

Game Time Varies: From party size, number of players, Dungeon Narrator experience, etc. game can last a couple of hours to several hours. If time allotted for those playing at the table expires (because life happens), just continue where you ended when you meetup again on your next session.





Everyone has their character sheets, pencils, dice (or digital devices) and are settled in?

Recommend: everyone should have read at least the Core Guide and Character Builder relative to race and class they are playing. If a Wizard or Cleric, they should read through spells.

Remind players to read over their characters and abilities: makes gaming smoother and eases the burden off of you, the Dungeon Narrator.

Note: OpenDungeons.com you can find pre-generated first level characters ready to play.



You emerge from a large dungeon entrance.

A full day chasing legends. A full day finding nothing but empty chambers and bare stone. The hallways didn't add up - too many turns for the space, rooms that should have connected but didn't. Five gold pieces for a map that led to picked-over ruins. Someone got here first. Decades ago, maybe longer.

You came here chasing rumors that long ago, this place was created by a hermit, a recluse who bargained with an ancient spirit for forbidden knowledge. When the debt came due, he had nothing left to give. He ran away to here, and built the dungeon as a deception - layer upon layer meant to mislead, confuse, and delay.

The sun is nearly gone now. The forest around you is settling in with nocturnal life coming out.

As you glance around you see the overgrown cemetery at a distance and the thick forests darkening as dusk sets.

You're thinking about why you're here with these other adventurers you've just met weeks earlier. You took a chance on them and the stories. The legend was too convincing.

You'd heard animals avoided this place. Water drawn nearby tasted metallic and bitter. People who traveled here too close heard twisted whispers in their thoughts. Locals, miners, nobody dares to come around these parts.

You've witnessed none of these things, or maybe dared not to believe.

Every adventure should have a story. Not just rooms and monsters - a reason the place exists, a question to answer, something at stake beyond gold. Players remember what they felt more than what they fought. That emotional bond is what builds immersion and keeps them coming back to the table.

Ask players what would they like to do.

Let them decide. If they need help, give hints like prepare dinner, set camp, travel through the forest at night (very dangerous), visit the cemetery, etc.

This is when the players interact, thinking out loud. This is their time to build party cohesion.

There is no right or wrong, but sticking together and deciding as a party is important.

Give them time to make their decision.

Once decision is made, read decision on next page **Option Listing 1**

Scenes are the highlighted moments in an adventure story.

Players and their characters (player-characters) will make decisions to lead to the next scene.

What happens between those moments to the next scene should be improvised, between scenes.

For example, if the group will encounter a person, that scene might not happen until a decision is made to trigger the event, or at a moment of an improvised scene that makes the event ripe.

So, in this scenario, if players were to encounter a person, but decided to go shopping, explore an inn, visit a tavern, any of these improvised scenes based on character(s) decision could trigger the scene about the person encounter.

Another example. If the group are to encounter something at night while sleeping, though there is no scene mentioning them preparing camp, eating, sleeping order (who stands watch), etc. you should improvise the "make camp" scenes to build up to the nightly encounter while they are sleeping.

Option Listing 1

Start a Campfire:

Sparks catch, wood pops, and the fire settles into a steady glow. As the flames rise, shadows pull back from the clearing - except one. Near the edge of the light, fire glints off a flat stone slab set flush with the dirt, its edges straight where nothing else nearby is. Its surface is worn smooth and darkened by age, warming faster than the dirt around it, as if it has been waiting for this exact moment.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.

Camping (later that evening):

As you settle in, the forest refuses to fully sleep. Embers crackle low, shadows stretch long, and somewhere nearby stone clicks softly as it cools. One of you notices it then - half-buried at the edge of the firelight, a flat slab of worked rock, its straight edges tangled in roots and moss. It wasn't there before... or at least, you don't remember seeing it.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.

Going to leave area:

You turn away from the ruins, boots crunching through brush and fallen leaves. After a few steps, the ground subtly changes beneath your feet - firmer. A weathered stone slab extends from the dirt ahead, etched and worn smooth by time. As you pass it, the forest goes quiet, as if waiting to see whether you truly mean to leave.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.

Visit Cemetery:

The cemetery greets you with leaning markers and swallowed names. Vines coil around broken headstones, but one grave stands apart - its stone slab exposed, clean of moss, as if recently tended. The air tightens near it.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.

Go back into abandoned dungeon:

The dungeon mouth looms again, dark and patient. Near the entrance, a stone slab has shifted, cracked through by roots from below. Its surface bears marks like those on the walls inside - older, deeper. Standing near it feels like standing at the edge of a held breath.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.

Something else:

Beneath leaves, soil, beneath careless steps, something solid waits. A stone slab reveals itself not loudly, but deliberately - as though your choice has finally aligned with where it has always been.

If they ignore stone slab **Z1**. If investigate stone slab **Z2**.



Adventure over.

Players gather to adventure because they have busy lives with work, school, career, family, but sometimes they prefer not to.

You can continue running the game, with no preset adventure: this is called “Sandbox” - games built around open worlds with no single, required plot, letting players create their own adventures, exploring things - you just improvise.

Open world is outside the scope of this onboarding adventure.

Players should investigate the slab. They should try and move it. Which character does? Read to the players who characters touch the slab of stone.

The slab grinds and you hear a soft, ghostly whisper, “Let me in.” As it’s pulled free, cold air exhales from the ground beneath the impression it made, carrying the scent of old, musty schist stone. The slab itself is schist - dark, uneven, and faintly flaky to the touch, an ordinary-looking rock about four feet across, barely an inch thick, and heavier than it has any right to be.

Speak to only players that touched the slab of stone:

Those that touched the slab stone - feel and hear that the forest has become still.

The ground begins to tremble lightly. Ten feet away, the dirt tears open. Debris bursts outward as stone grinds against stone, and an arched stone doorway rips up from the ground until it locks into place with a deep, final crack - fifteen feet tall and eight feet across square.

Mist softly spills from the open doorway, curling and creeping across the ground toward your feet.

Player characters that didn’t touch the stone, see or witness nothing.

Only after player characters touch the stone do they see the giant arched stone doorway.

Continue after all players touch stone. Those that don't can't interact and will be left outside in the near future, until they touch stone. Doorway will only be open for 10 minutes, players not entering may miss out on the adventure.

Players may examine stone.

Arched stone doorway had magical symbols - undecipherable.

If players stick their hands or body in, it feels normal.

If they stick only their heads in read **A3**

Players roll a "**Chance Roll**," this will determine what their chances are to understand or do something.

Chance Roll can be called a "**Check Roll**." When specific abilities are checked against a Target Number (TN), that Ability Bonus of their's applies to their roll to beat the Target Number (TN is the number they must roll up to or beat).

Ask players to "Check Roll" against their Wisdom ability. When specific abilities are checked against a Target Number (TN), that Ability Bonus of theirs applies to their roll to beat the Target Number (a number they must beat, 1 through 20, 1 being easy, 20 extremely hard).

Any character who succeeds on a **Wisdom Check Roll** of a Target Number (TN) 12 or higher by rolling a 20-sided dice read **A1**



A1

Intuitively, you understand the dungeon has awakened and the dungeon you just explored earlier is a "false dungeon." A decoy.

Continue reading when they enter through doorway without any light. Note **A2**

Continue reading when they enter through doorway with light, read **A5**

If character reaches in to feel before entering - it feels cool and empty.

If character peeks in with their head only read **A3**

Anything else characters might do - improvise, act freely, wing it, respond creatively.

 **A3**

Peering your head into the magic doorway - it's dark inside.

If characters enter with a torch, lantern, some form of lighting, read **A5**

If entering with no lighting, note **A2**

 **A2**

Character(s) entering without light, a torch, or a lantern is blind. If they insist on moving more than 10 feet without the aid of light, the DN should assume they cannot detect hazards, unless the character has a vision or sense that functions in total darkness, such as Night Vision or Thermal Vision.

Dark Sense does not detect terrain unless a non-visual cue is present such as sound, rushing water, or moving air.

Read **A4** if no character can see in the natural pitch black.

If character(s) can see in natural pitch black, improvise what they find with the reading of **A5**

 **A4**

DN, randomly select a character, the lead, the curious, the brave... .

The room beyond is dark. Very hard to see. The terrain is that of dirt, without warning, a misstep sends you over the edge of a hidden pit.

Character has 50% chance of grabbing ledge (roll 1 - 50) and no damage.

If they fall, improvise this scene, and **A6**.

Use percentile dice (image): 10s and 1s, so a 20 and 3 would be 23. 00 and 0 is 100%



If character does fall, it's 15 feet down onto stone flooring for 1d6 damage, DR applies, read **A6**

 **A5**

Inside, the room appears vast - branching halls stretch away in multiple directions, archways layered upon archways, each promising depth and distance.

There is an opening in the center of the chamber - a dark hole descending straight down, waiting just several feet ahead.



A5 Continued

Perception **Check Roll** for Wisdom **Chance Roll** vs illusions. Target Number is 13, if character rolls 13 or over on a 1d20 they notice all pathways offered are illusions. Add Wisdom bonus to roll.

If they try and venture out into these pathways, they will bump into solid dirt - all paths, except for the pit, are illusions.

Improvise scene on what they do to get down the 15 foot drop. Should use rope to climb down.

Awaiting is a dark corridor, stone floor.

Once characters reach the bottom to new corridor, read **A7**



A6

There is no warning.

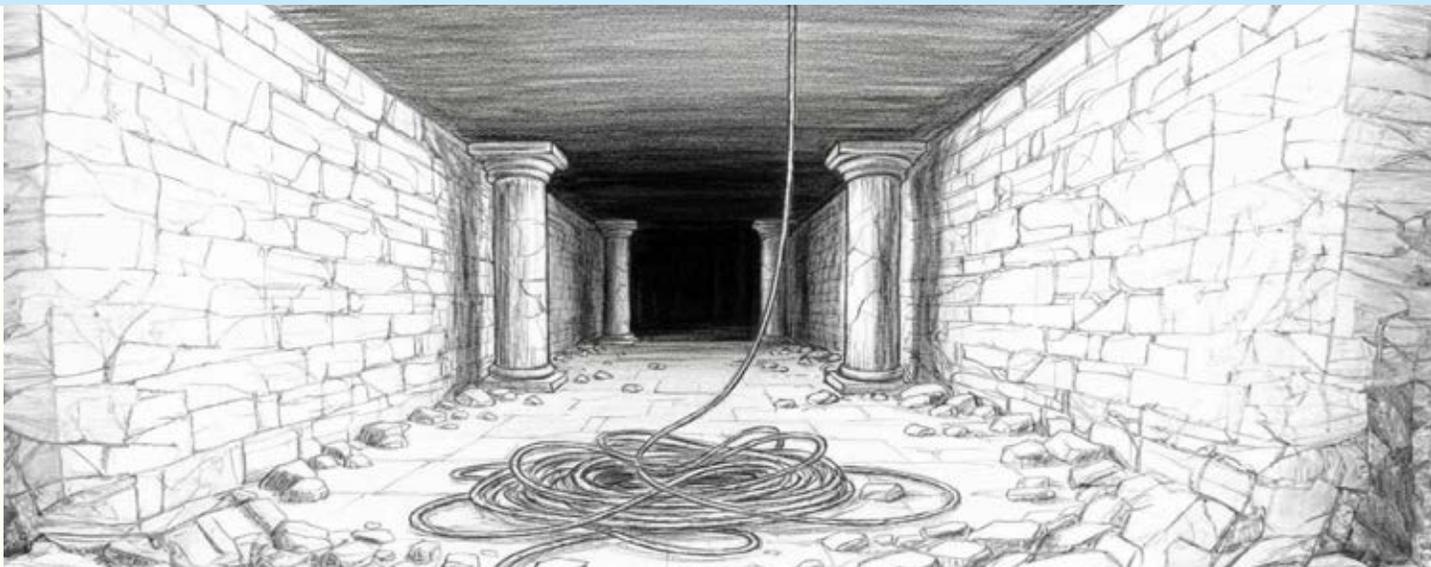
Without light, the stone floor simply vanishes. One step carries forward into nothing, and gravity takes over before there is time to react.

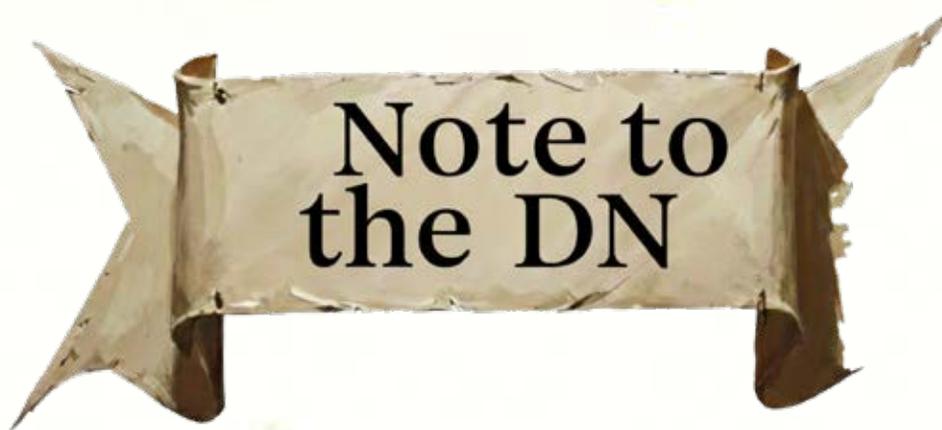
The darkness deepens as the character drops, air rushing past in a sudden, disorienting plunge. Stone scrapes close by, unseen, until the fall ends hard against the floor below for 1d6 damage.

The sound of impact echoes sharply through the darkness, followed by a settling hush. Dust rises and hangs thick in the air, unseen but felt in the lungs. For several heartbeats, there is nothing but darkness, disorientation, and the realization of depth.

Until there is light available or someone has vision to see in natural dark, improvise this scene.

Once characters begin to safely make it down into this corridor, read **A7**, or improvise it.





By this point, you have already been improvising scenes. That skill is essential, hard-earned, and learned only through play - congratulations, you are doing it.

From here on, the adventure loosens its grip. You will be given fewer instructions and greater responsibility to guide the game through improvisation. The adventure will still step in when specifics matter, but you are now expected to invent what is necessary to keep play flowing.

Map Usage & Player Description

Maps are provided as visual aids only and are not to scale.

Maps show general layout and atmosphere, not exact distances or precise positioning.

Players must describe their actions and positioning in the space; if details are not stated, the DN should assume reasonable but potentially risky behavior. The DN may ask clarifying questions and adjudicates distance, movement, and outcomes based on the fiction, not the illustration.

Each section on the map will be declared, refer to it in this adventure book for specific details that could apply to the story, scene, room, hall, etc.

For areas of the map not labeled or things might do, unexpectedly (players always do), improvise.

Player Mapping

Players are expected to keep their own map using paper and pencil. Usually, one player-character is designated as the “mapper,” who records the layout and shares it with the group. If “mapper” wants to use a digital tool, one is provided at <https://opendungeons.com/dungeon-explorer-map-maker/>

The DN describes spaces, connections, and notable features; players record layout based on those descriptions.

Maps provided in this adventure are for the DN’s reference and are not shown to players unless stated otherwise.

Movement and Direction

This adventure is not about maps and compass directions. It is about memory, landmarks, and choices.

Players do not move through this dungeon by north or south. They move by what they remember. They return to places by name, by danger, and by feeling - “the flooded barracks,” “the chalk arrows,” “the pit,” “the rope ladder.”

If the party retraces a path they have already traveled and nothing has changed, getting back there is simple. Do not require rolls. Do not repeat hazards. Describe the return briefly and move on.

Use compression when players backtrack. Summarize familiar areas in a sentence or two. This keeps the story moving and reinforces that the danger lies ahead, not behind.

Direction only matters when something has changed.

If a tunnel collapsed, a floor gave way, or a loud event disturbed the dungeon, the path may no longer be safe. In these moments, reintroduce uncertainty. Describe what is different. Ask how the party proceeds. Let the environment respond naturally.

Hazards do not disappear just because a path is familiar. Slippery steps, unstable ledges, rope ladders, and flooded rooms remain dangerous. When players return through these areas, remind them of the hazard and ask how they cross. Do not invent new threats unless the situation demands it.

Landmarks are your compass.

Chalk arrows, warning graffiti, pits, water sounds, corpses, and changes in air or stone all help players orient themselves. Refer to these when describing movement. Ask questions that anchor decisions to known places,

not abstract directions. “Do you head back toward the flooded barracks, or toward the open pits?” is always clearer than “Do you go east or west?”

If a player chooses to draw a map, allow it to be imperfect. Do not correct it unless it becomes wildly misleading. An imperfect map is a record of experience, not a technical diagram.

Going back should feel easier than going forward.

Leaving known areas is quicker. Descending deeper is slower, riskier, and heavier. Reinforce this through description and pacing rather than rules. The dungeon itself should make the choice clear.

Above all, remember this:

Players are not lost unless you make them feel lost. Clarity builds confidence. Confidence keeps the story moving.

Scene Transitions Rule

From one keyed area to the next (A1 → A2, etc.), always narrate the movement unless the text already does it for you. No teleporting adventurers. Feet must touch stone.

Use simple connective narration like:

“You walk another 50 feet and come across...”

“You continue down the corridor, the air growing cooler...”

“After exiting the chamber, the passage bends

and leads you to..."

"Leaving the room behind, you press onward..."

Why this matters (aka why future-you will thank you):

- 1) Maintains spatial logic - no Schrödinger's dungeon
- 2) Reinforces dungeon scale and distance
- 3) Keeps immersion intact - feels explored, not clicked
- 4) Prevents players from feeling railroaded between room IDs

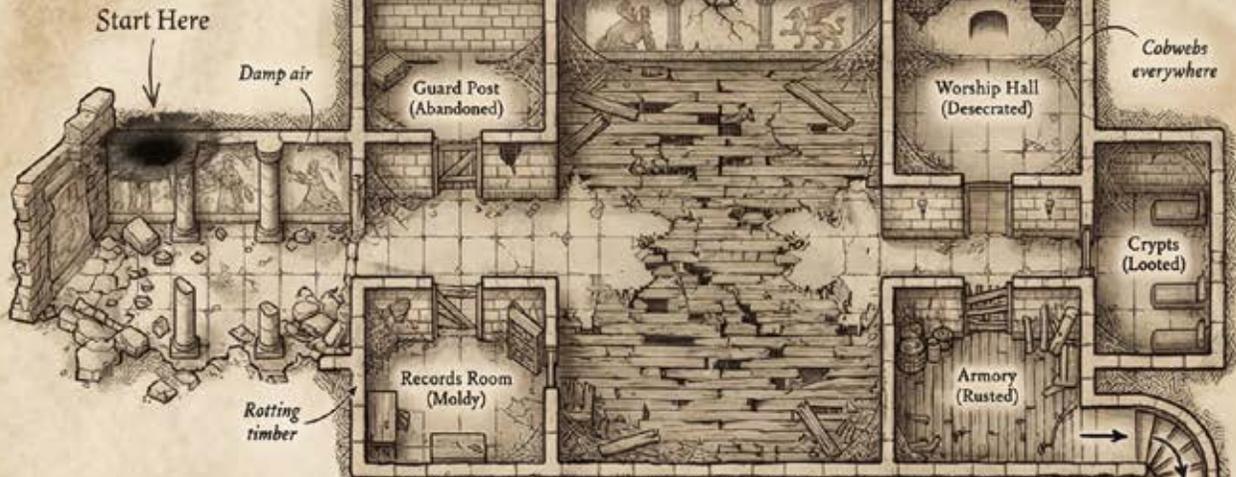
Think of it as the dungeon equivalent of a film dissolve instead of a jump cut. Rooms don't smash together. They connect.



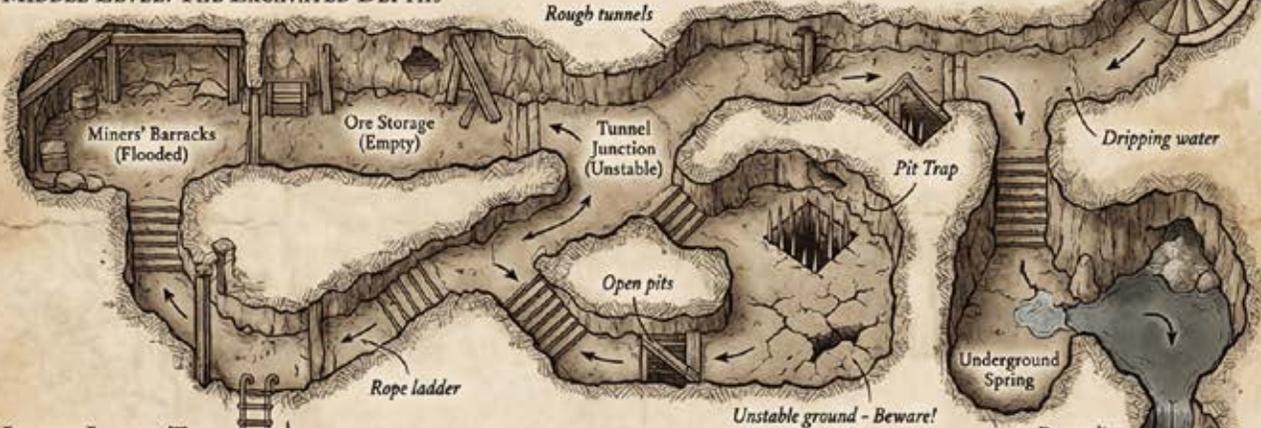
"ECHOES BENEATH THE STONE"

OpenDungeons.com

UPPER LEVEL: THE RUINED SANCTUM



MIDDLE LEVEL: THE EXCAVATED DEPTHS

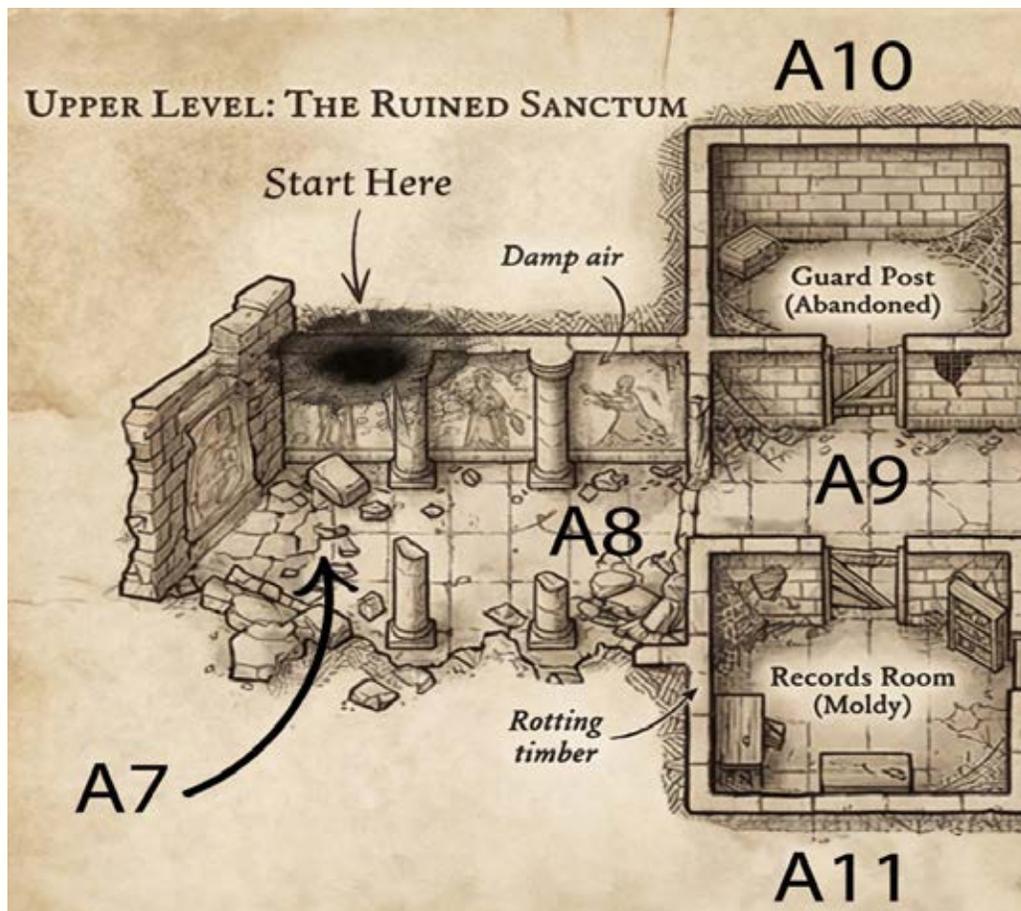
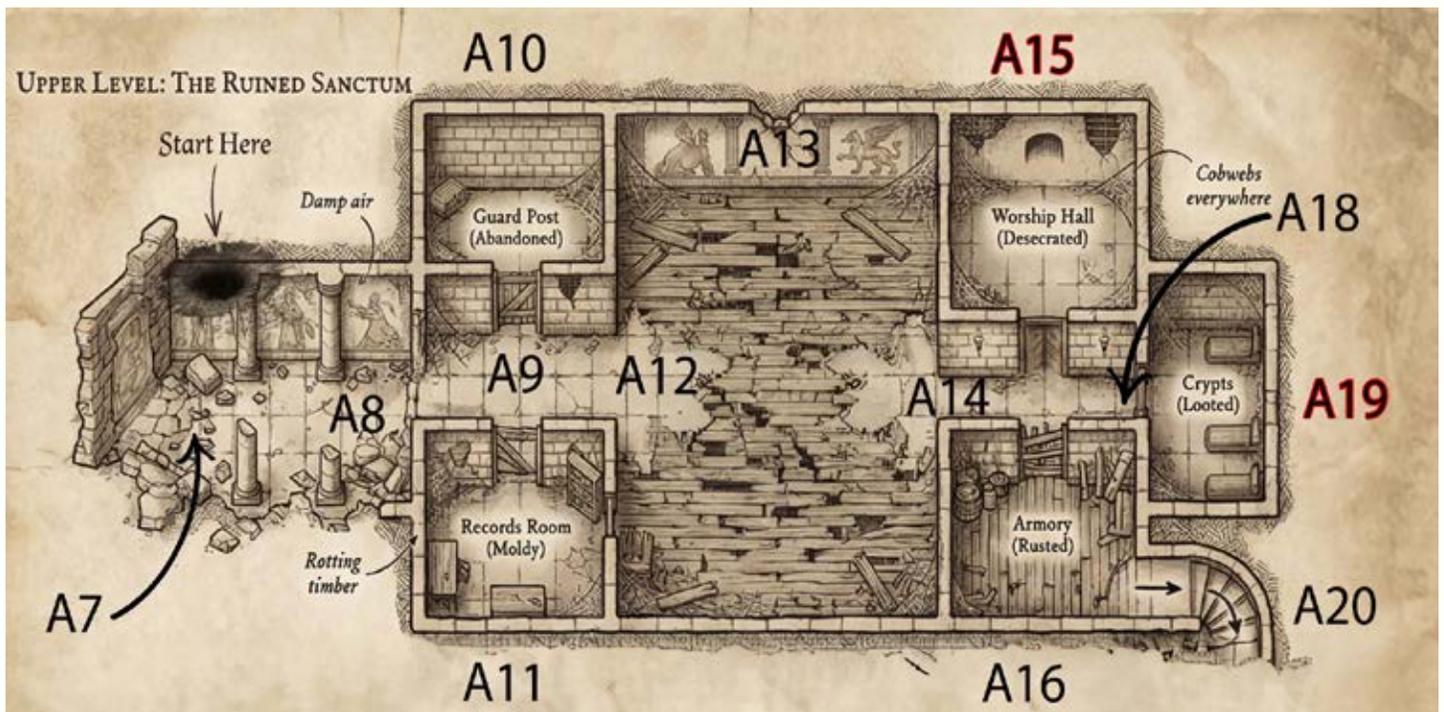


LOWER LEVEL: THE PRIMAL CAVERNS



ENTER AT YOUR OWN PERIL

Map Overview
Not to scale



Maps not to scale - see scene descriptions for details and dimensions.

UPPER LEVEL - THE RUINED SANCTUM

Dimensions, if not called out, but players might ask.

Z2 - Stone Doorway: 15 ft tall, 8 ft wide (archway entrance)

A1 - Illusory Entry Chamber: ~30 ft wide, ~30 ft deep, with a 15 ft deep pit in the center

A2/A3/A4/A5/A6 - Entry Pit & Corridor Below: 15 ft drop to stone corridor below

A7 - Collapsed Passage: 15 ft high, 20 ft wide (dead end behind, leads forward to A8)

A8 - Hall of Faded Murals: 75 ft long corridor, ~20 ft wide, ceiling lost in darkness (~25-30 ft high). Four stone columns.

A9 - Antechamber: 15 ft by 15 ft square

A10 - Guard Post (Abandoned): ~10 ft by 10 ft (described as "cramped"). Arrow slit is 3 inches wide, 3 ft tall, bored through 3 ft of masonry.

A11 - Records Room (Moldy): ~15 ft by 15 ft (similar to A9, adjacent room)

A12 - Collapsed Great Hall: ~100 ft wide, ~300 ft long (football field length). Partially collapsed ceiling. Contains a 6 ft drop crawlspace (A12B).

A12B - Crawl Space: 6 ft below A12 floor, ~3 ft high (barely tall enough to kneel)

A13 - Chamber of Frescoes: ~20 ft by 25 ft (large enough for two massive frescoes and a stone pedestal)

A14 - Central Corridor: 15 ft wide, ~30 ft long (30 ft to the doors on left/right). Contains an 8 ft deep open pit trap.

A15 - Worship Hall (Desecrated): 30 ft by 30 ft, high ceiling (lost in darkness, ~25+ ft)

A16 - Armory (Rusted): ~20 ft by 20 ft (weapon racks along walls, barrel, stone stairs in far right corner)

A18 - Antechamber to the Crypts: ~10 ft by 10 ft (described as "cramped antechamber," narrow stone doorway)

A19 - Crypt (Looted): ~20 ft by 30 ft (fits 3 stone sarcophagi along walls). Contains a 90 ft angled chute down to C0.

A20 - Spiral Staircase: ~5 ft wide spiral, descends ~30-40 ft to B1



A7 – Collapsed Passage

This passage has partially collapsed and remains unstable. The rubble slopes upward toward A8.

Hazard - Unstable Debris:

If any character runs or moves carelessly, require a Dexterity check TN 13. Failure triggers a small collapse dealing 1d4 damage and echoing loudly through adjacent rooms.

What's Here:

A skeleton partially buried beneath a beam. A snapped, rusted dagger nearby. This is a previous explorer drawn here by whispers from below.

There is nothing of value beyond atmosphere that leads to **A8 - Hall of Faded Murals**

The passage ahead is choked with fallen stone and splintered timber. Broken masonry forms a sloping mound of rubble, loose stones shifting underfoot. The air smells of damp dust and rot, and the walls lean inward as if they gave up long ago.

Half-buried beneath a collapsed beam, you spot a skeletal hand reaching out of the debris. Nearby lies a rusted dagger, its blade snapped cleanly in two.

The wall behind you is a dead end. The passage is 15 feet in height, 20 feet in width. Ahead is pitch black.



A8 – Hall of Faded Murals

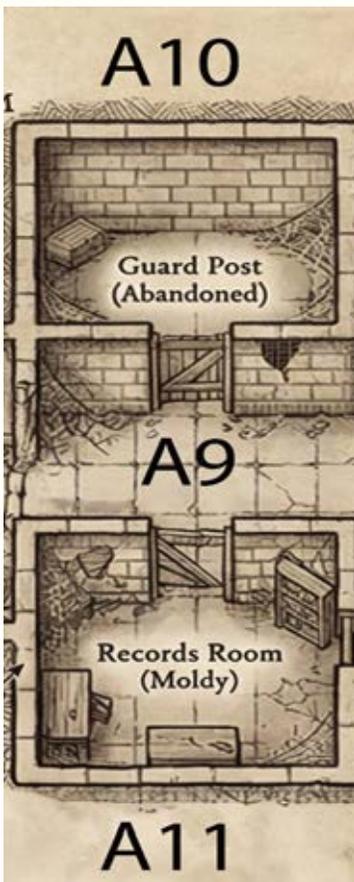
This was once the main entry hall.

The murals depict a fabricated religion.

No magic. No real danger. Seeking out the water droplets is impossible, it's an echo.

Walking 75 feet down the corridor, this wide hall opens beneath you, its ceiling lost in the dark. Four cracked stone columns still stand, casting long, unmoving shadows across the floor. Faded murals line the walls - paintings of robed figures in solemn procession, their faces worn smooth by time.

The air here is stale and still, broken only by the faint sound of water dripping somewhere beyond sight. There is a chamber room up ahead.



A9 – Antechamber

A simple staging room. The pressure plate is disarmed and harmless.

The medallion is part of the warlock's false symbolism. No magic. Worth 5sp

This 15 foot by 15 foot square chamber feels cool. Dust coats the floor and clings to the walls. A rotted wooden bench sags against the left wall, and iron pegs are driven into the stone as if cloaks or weapons once hung here.

One of the pegs still holds something - a corroded bronze medallion etched with a sun eclipsed by a hand. Door to the left is made of decaying wood, and door south, right of you is a half broken door. You're unable to see immediately into either rooms.

Investigating doors, they find scratches (the scratched warning is a deliberate fabrication meant to scare intruders).

A10 – Guard Post (Abandoned)

Hidden Cache:

Loose stone conceals bolts, 8 copper coins, and a human tooth.

The arrow slit look out to A12 which is pitch black, no lighting.

This cramped chamber reeks of dust and old stone. A narrow arrow slit, just 3 inches wide and 3 feet tall, is bored through 3 feet of solid masonry, peering into an unexplored room beyond. A broken cross-bow lies abandoned on a stone shelf, its string long since rotted away. Cobwebs sag in the corners, untouched for ages.

Scratched into the stone behind the shelf are frantic words:

“THEY DON'T STAY DEAD.”

If shelf investigated:

Scratched into the stone behind the shelf are frantic words:

“THEY DON'T STAY DEAD.”



A11 – Records Room (Moldy)

Heavy mold infestation.

Hazard - Yellow Mold:

Hidden on the shelves. Spores can cause 1 Hit Point of damage and coughing when disturbed if **CON Tough Save Roll**. This is where players roll 1d20 to beat their own CON Tough current value.

Key Clue - searched scrolls:

Ledger entry mentions the lower door being sealed. Other entries checked off mentions traps completed, but no other details.

Treasure:

If room search, under moldy cloth, lockbox with silver and a ring. Not trapped.

Sagging wooden shelves line this room, packed with scrolls, ledgers, and loose papers. The smell hits you immediately - thick, wet rot. Mold creeps across the shelves and fuzzes the edges of every page.

The air feels heavy, damp, and unpleasant to breathe.



A12 – Collapsed Great Hall

Partially collapsed ceiling.

Hazard - Weak Floor:

Center Room, 1 character Save Roll vs Dexterity TN 12 or higher, failure drops a character 6 feet into a crawlspace for 1 HP of damage. **A12B**

Treasure:

Bone-handled dagger among debris usable and worth 3gp, dagger does 1d4 damage.

This once-grand hall lies in ruin. Stone and broken beams bury much of the far left side, while the floor itself buckles and cracks beneath your feet. Splintered timbers jut from the rubble at odd angles.

The space feels unstable - as if the room itself is slowly giving up.

It's a large great hall, so large, your light doesn't reach the side walls, doesn't reach the far side up ahead and sound echoes. Might be around 100 feet wide and 300 feet (football field) in length.

If players investigate room:

Left wall go to **A13**

If straight ahead go to **A14**

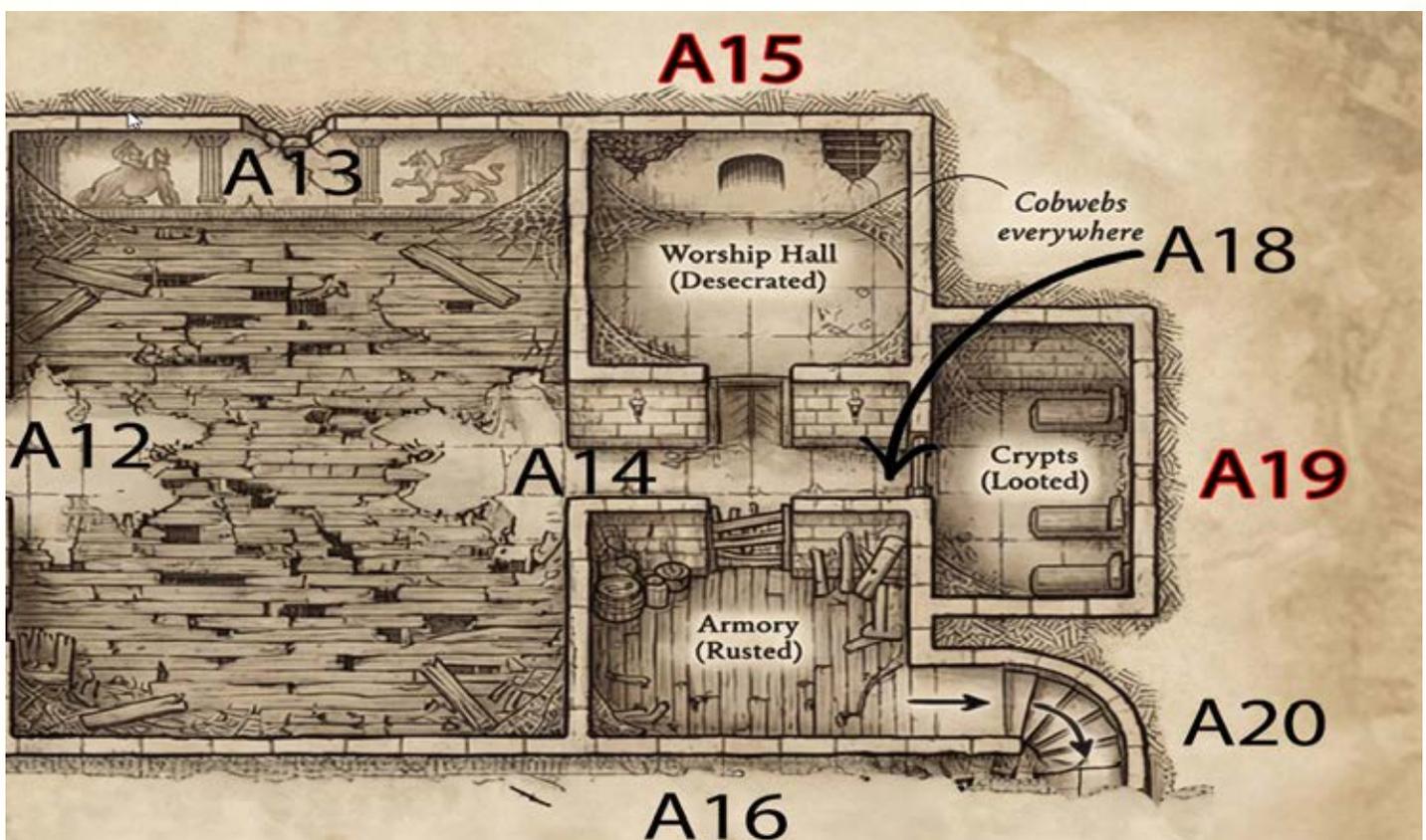


A12B – Crawl Space

The floor gives way with a sharp crack. Rotten boards splinter and vanish beneath your weight, and you drop six feet straight down. Dust explodes upward as you hit hard, landing in a cramped crawl space barely tall enough to kneel in. Jagged planks hang overhead like broken teeth, and faint light spills down through the hole you just made.

Character can get out with little effort.

There is nothing in this crawl space.



A13 – Chamber of Frescoes

Two faded, massive frescoes dominate the north wall. One depicts a griffin with wings spread wide, the other a lion at rest, watchful and calm. Between them stands an empty stone pedestal coated in dust.

The colors have faded, but the craftsmanship is unmistakable.

Frescoes are wall paintings made by applying pigment directly onto wet plaster, so the art literally becomes part of the wall as it dries.

If they investigate, wall of **A13**

Secret:

Hidden wall safe behind griffin fresco.

Treasure:

30 gold and a planted warning note.

DN - remember, you're improvising the scenes now to create connections between them.

See Page 12, Scene Transitions Rule

WARNING NOTE STATES:

“What lies beyond this mark is sealed by design, not fear.
Take what is offered and go.
Those who press further do so by choice - and none are forgiven for it.”

If player-characters continue go to A14

If player-characters turn around and leave dungeon go to **A13B**



A13B

One by one, you climb back toward the hole above, hands raw from rope, muscles aching from the effort. The stone offers no help. No carvings. No guidance. Just cold resistance, as if the place itself is reluctant to let you go.

As the last of you pulls free, the rope slackens - not from weight, but from release. Below, the darkness does not echo. It does not chase. It simply withdraws.

Ahead, the portal waits, slowly brightening brighter and brighter, activated to guide you. The same threshold you first crossed now stands silent, patient.

You pass through. Behind you, the ground groans - not collapsing, not breaking, but closing. Stone draws inward. The opening seals without haste or anger, as if the dungeon is merely finished with you.

Unseen below, it does not collapse.

It exhales. The End.



A14 – Central Corridor

Main connector hallway.

Hazard - Open pit that was a trap: All players Chance Roll, 35% of seeing it (because now its a pit and not an active trap) - if none sees it, 1 character is randomly selected to fall down the pit trap that is already open. 8-foot fall, 1d4 damaged (remember to apply DR).

At Bottom of pit:

Human skeleton with broken stakes piercing through it, a broken short sword, 2 silver pieces, and a deliberately inaccurate map.

A long stone corridor stretches ahead, the floor worn smooth by countless footsteps that stopped long ago. Empty torch sconces line the walls, crusted with old tallow. The air here is stale and unmoving.

Your steps echo farther than they should.

The corridor is 15 feet wide, ahead about 30 feet you see what looks like doors on the left and right side.

Hazard, see A14 DN note (blue box)

Approaching closer...

The door on the left is made of solid wood, its planks thick and intact. The surface is scarred with age but cared for, the hinges firm, the frame square. It is closed, and whatever lies beyond it has remained that way for a long time.

The door on the right is something else entirely.

Its wood is split and broken, boards warped and half-missing, the frame sagging inward as if it has given up on standing straight. Gaps yawn between the planks. Through them, you can just make out the faint outline of weapon racks inside - empty shapes and long shadows, barely visible in the dim.

One door was meant to endure.
The other was left to rot.

Characters decide door on left **A15** or door on right **A16**.



A15 – Worship Hall (Desecrated)

Psychological intimidation room.

Voice:

No real threat.

Treasure:

Silver necklace worth 20sp.

This chamber rises high above you, its ceiling swallowed by darkness. Stone pews lie toppled and shattered. At the far end of this 30 feet by 30 feet room, a raised dais holds a broken altar slab.

The temperature drops. Sound behaves strangely here - footsteps echo from the wrong directions.

A rasping voice fills the hall:

“YOU STAND ON SACRED GROUND. THE DEBT IS UNPAID,” and a rubble stone is heard behind the broken altar slab moving for a moment.

If players investigate the dais, broken altar slab, rubble on the far side of the wall, the lead character sees a **Cave Viper Snake** that is 5 feet in length, coiled, nearly 1 foot thick.

Dais (DAY-iss) is a raised platform, usually shallow, built to elevate a person or object above the surrounding floor. It's meant to draw attention, grant importance, or mark authority.



Battle the Cave Viper Snake?

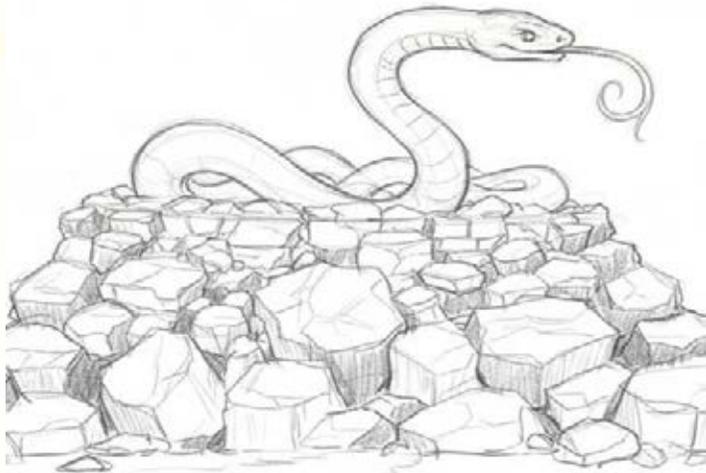
If lead character investigates altar, moves too abruptly or attacks, the snake attacks them.

If player hums, whistles, talks softly to the snake it retreats.

If battle occurs, remember the rules of combat as outlined in Core Guide, summarized on next page.

This room, this scene is improvised; hope you've been getting the hang of making up scenes on the spot for your players. If not, keep playing, it could take a little bit to get the hang of, but you'll get there.

HP 12
AC 12
DR 0
Attacks 1 | Damage 1d4
Save Rolls Quick +2 / Tough +0 / Mind -3
Align Wild Impartial (Hunter)
INT Animal (1) | Magic Resistance: -



About

This five-foot ambush predator strikes once from concealment, then immediately attempts to flee into cracks, loose stone, or rubble if its prey remains standing. It will only fight to the death if cornered or unable to escape.

The cave viper is unnervingly silent. It does not hiss when threatened or attacking - only when content, coiled around a fresh meal, or during mating. In the dark, the absence of sound is often the only warning it has already struck.

Special Defense

Heat Sense - Perceives warm-blooded creatures within 20 ft, even in total darkness. Doesn't work against cold-blooded targets or constructs.

Find **Cave Viper Snake** online at:

<https://opendungeons.com/monsters/cave-viper-snake/>

Melee and Spell **Combat Summary** from Core Guide

Attacking:

To make a physical attack:

Roll 1d20 vs target AC. No ability bonus to attacks. If the roll meets or exceeds AC, the attack hits.

Roll damage and apply Damage Reduction (DR), A natural 20 hits automatically, ignores DR, and deals double damage.

Apply bonuses from magic, traits or class, if applicable.

Defense:

AC determines how hard a target is to hit.

Armor reduces damage using DR instead of increasing AC. Shields add to AC.

Saving Rolls:

Saving Rolls are used to resist danger, not weapon attacks.

Quick (DEX) - dodge or evade
Tough (CON) - endure physical harm
Mind (WIS) - resist mental or sensory effects

Roll 1d20 + ability bonus and meet or exceed the Target Number (TN). At level 1, TN is 15 and improves with level.

Combat ends when one side is defeated, escapes, or the DN determines the threat is resolved.

Turn is a creature's chance to act, allowing movement and one significant action. A turn represents about 5 seconds of game time.

Round is completed once every creature in the encounter has taken a turn.

Spells: Attack and Defense

Spells do not use attack rolls. Instead, the target makes a Saving Roll determined by the spell. Targets resist spells with a Saving Rolls (Dex, Tough, Mind).

Roll 1d20 + ability bonus and meet or exceed the Save Target Number (TN).

Spells will state whether a successful save negates or reduces the effect.

DR applies only to physical damage.



A18 – Antechamber to the Crypts

Former passage into the burial chambers.
Heavily neglected and long undisturbed - until recently.

Cobwebs are old, but several are broken.

No trap.

A narrow stone doorway opens into a cramped antechamber choked with thick cobwebs. The webs hang in heavy sheets from the ceiling to the floor, some torn and sagging as if brushed aside not long ago.

The stone threshold is worn smooth and slightly grooved, as though something has been dragged back and forth across it many times. Beyond the doorway, the air is noticeably colder, and sound seems to dull the farther you peer inside.

The silence here feels deliberate, as if the room beyond is waiting.

Antechamber: A small room or passage that serves as an entry space leading into a larger or more important chamber.



A19 – Crypt (Looted)

False burial chamber. There are no mummies or bodies in the sarcophagus.

Treasure:

3 gold coins and stained, aged silk shroud worth 2 gold pieces.

Secret:

False-bottom sarcophagus conceals ladder to lower level of the dungeon.

Each time the party as a whole investigates a sarcophagus, and inspect it, there is a 30% they may find a false bottom: if they do, they open it up and they find a large moist hole.

Monster lives in it? Monster uses it to crawl through dungeon?

If attempted, and a character drops in, they slide roughly 90 feet down an angled moist chute, emerging in C0. Player-characters must determine this on their own.

3 stone sarcophagi line the walls, their lids pushed aside or shattered on the floor. The names carved above them are written in an unfamiliar script, the letters shaped wrong.

The air is cold and perfectly still.

Sarcophagi (plural of sarcophagus) are stone coffins.

Crypt is an underground stone chamber used to bury the dead - usually tucked beneath a church, temple, mausoleum, or ruin. Think of it as burial real estate for people who mattered

The party may make up to three group investigations of the sarcophagi. Each investigation has a 30% chance of revealing a false bottom. After three attempts, no further discoveries can be made in this room.



A20 – Spiral Staircase

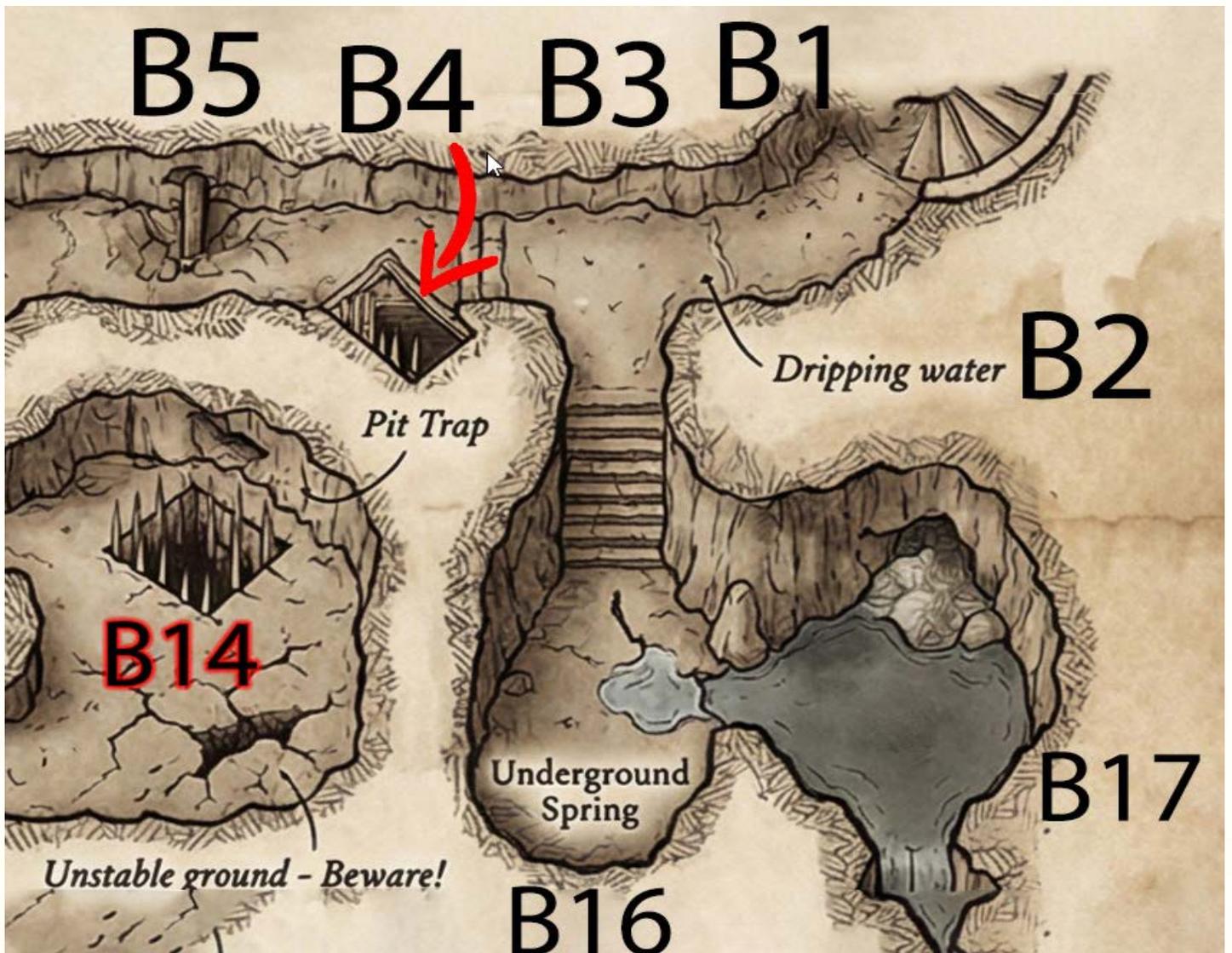
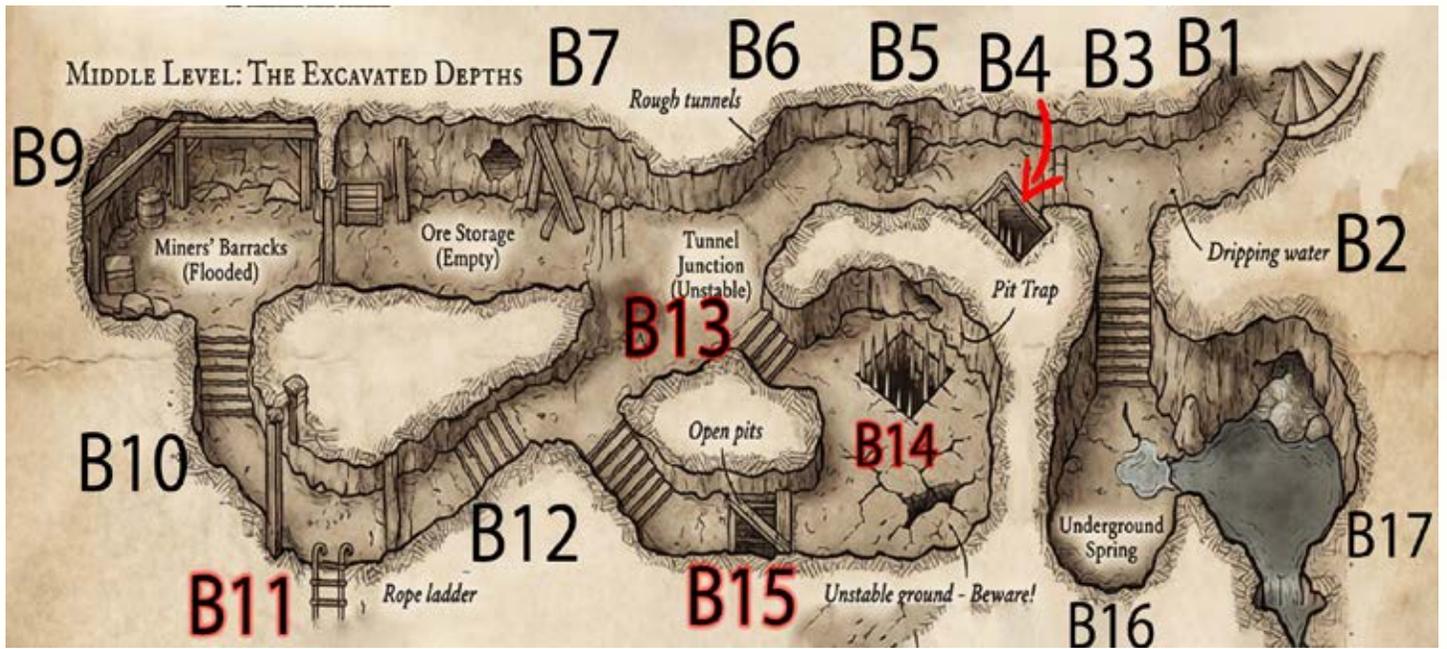
Obvious descent path.

A stone staircase spirals downward into darkness, carved directly into the bedrock.

The steps are worn smooth at the center, and cool, damp air rises from below, carrying a faint metallic scent.

Continue to **B1**





MIDDLE LEVEL - THE EXCAVATED DEPTHS

Dimensions, if not called out, but players might ask.

- B1** - Staircase Landing: ~10 ft by 10 ft landing (transition from carved masonry to rough excavation)
- B2** - Dripping Passage: ~5-8 ft wide, ~40 ft long (narrow passage with slippery steps)
- B3** - Narrow Ledge: ~10 ft wide ledge, skirts B4's pit. Crumbling stairs descend ~15 ft to B16.
- B4** - Open Pit: 10 ft deep, ~10 ft across, jagged stone bottom
- B5** - Junction Passage: ~8 ft wide, ~20 ft long (transition corridor with chalk arrows)
- B6** - Rough Tunnels: ~10 ft wide, ~5 ft ceiling (characters over 5 ft must crouch). Fork splits to B13 and B7.
- B7** - Collapsed Tunnels: Dead end. ~20 ft wide, same low ceiling as B6.
- B9** - Miners' Barracks (Flooded): ~25 ft by 20 ft (former sleeping quarters, waist-deep water, rotted bunks along walls)
- B10** - Down Stairs: ~5 ft wide stairway descending ~10 ft into flooded area below B9
- B11** - Rope Ladder: Vertical shaft, ~3-4 ft across, 15 ft drop to Lower Level C1
- B12** - Central Cavern: ~40-60 ft across, natural cavern (ceiling beyond torchlight, ~30+ ft high). Two sets of stone steps leading down.
- B13** - Tunnel Junction: ~15 ft by 10 ft (unstable wooden support beams, stairway down to B14)
- B14** - Open Pits: ~30 ft by 40 ft area with multiple mining shafts. Central pit is 30 ft deep.
- B15** - Unstable Ground: Broad cavernous corridor, ~15 ft wide. Contains a 10 ft by 5 ft wooden lid covering a chute to C0.
- B16** - Descending Shaft Area: ~15 ft by 15 ft (reached by crumbling stairs from B3, connects toward B17 and underground spring)
- B17** - Underground Spring: ~100 ft by 100 ft natural cavern with water pool (visible on map as a dark water-filled grotto)

Grotto: is a small, cave-like chamber - usually damp, shadowy, and secluded - formed by nature or stonework.



B1 – Staircase Landing

Arrival point from A20.

Immediate tonal shift from worked sanctum stone to rough excavation.

No hazards. Establishes that this level was not meant for visitors.

The spiral staircase ends abruptly on uneven stone. The carved masonry above gives way to rough walls hacked from soil and rock. Tool marks scar every surface. The air here is heavier, damp and stale, pressing against your lungs.

This place wasn't built to be entered.
It was dug.



B2 – Dripping Passage

Water seepage from natural stone. Leads toward B16 and B17.

Hazard - Slippery Steps:

Moving quickly requires a Dexterity check, failure, the character slips, falling and taking 1d2 damage.

When mentioning ability check like "Dexterity check" think how hard it is to succeed a check, in this scenario assume 12 or higher on 1d20 roll, applying DEX Bonus to roll to help succeed.

For damage like 1d2, take a 1d6, roll 1-3 1 HP of damage, roll 4-6 take 2 HP of damage

Atmosphere only. No hidden meaning.

Water drips steadily from the ceiling, each drop echoing through the narrow passage. The stone underfoot is slick and cold.

The sound of dripping water echoing never stops.
It feels like time leaking away.

At times, ask players if they would like to do anything at scenes. Some characters might chalk up a spot to remind themselves they visited here earlier, or assess environment, take a break to rest or eat, etc.



B3 – Narrow Ledge

Passage skirts the edge of B4's pit.

Hazard - Crumbling Edge:

Characters not hugging the wall must make a Dexterity check or stumble toward the pit.

No treasure.

Walking through cavernous passage starts to tighten here, and will be forcing you sideways against the stone wall if you continue to walk forward. The floor slopes subtly toward a dark break in the ground ahead. Loose gravel shifts beneath your boots.

You find yourself at a crossing. Continue going forward, or down some crumbling stairs that seem to go about 15 feet lower.

There's no railing for either path.

No room for mistakes either.

If party continues forward, read **B4**

If party decides to take stairs, read **B16**



B4 – Open Pit

Visible danger. The threat is instability, not surprise.

Hazard - The Pit:

10 feet deep, jagged stone bottom. Falling deals 1d6 damage.

At the Bottom:

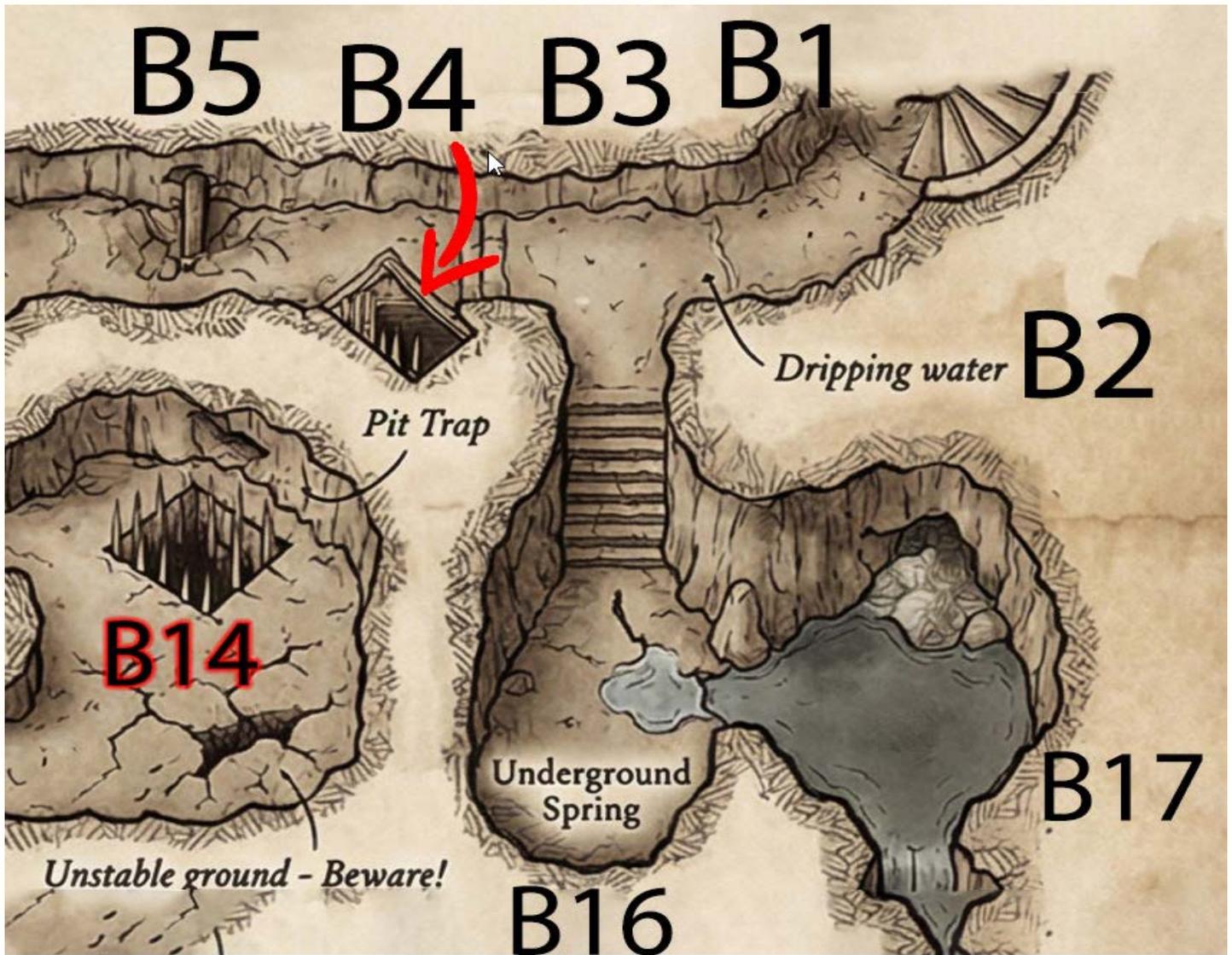
Skeleton, rusted pickaxe, satchel with 4 silver pieces and a destroyed journal (unable to make anything out).

The floor opens into a wide pit, its edges broken and uneven. Darkness swallows the bottom. The stone walls are gouged with pick marks, frantic and overlapping.

Something pale lies below - bones.

And metal glinting beside them.

Continue to **B5**



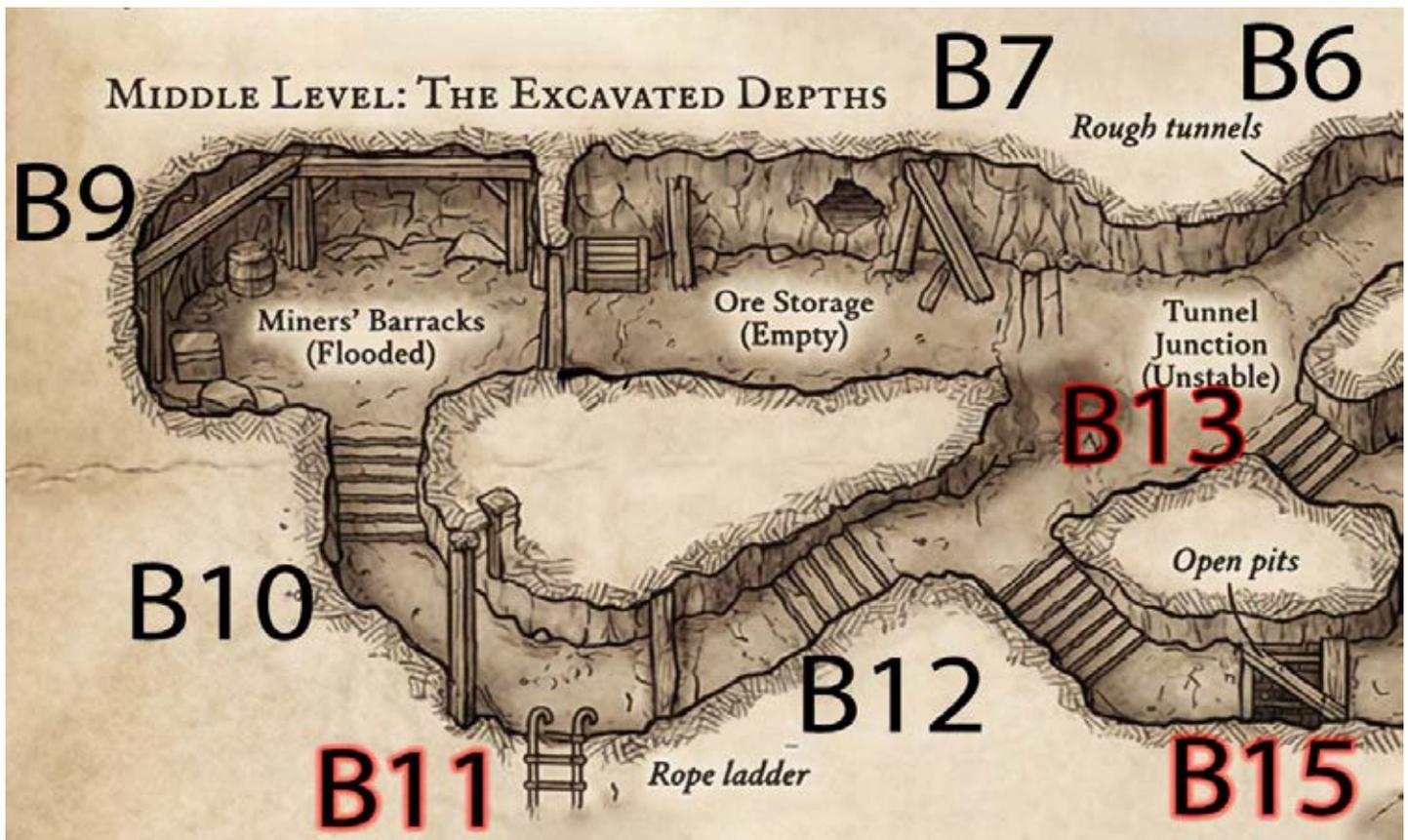
 **B5 – Junction Passage**

Transition corridor.

Chalk arrows point back toward B1, towards original swirling stairwell.

There are chalk marks streak the wall - arrows drawn in haste, pointing back the way you came.

The final arrow stops halfway through its line.
Whoever drew it didn't finish.



 **B6 – Rough Tunnels**

Unfinished mining tunnels.

Hazard - Low Ceiling:

Characters over 5 feet tall must crouch. Melee combat suffers disadvantage for them.

The see a fork: 1 one way leads to B13 stair, other way ahead B7

The tunnel closes in around you. The ceiling drops low enough to scrape your head if you stand straight. Pick marks cover the walls in chaotic patterns, overlapping and rushed.

This wasn't careful work.

This was panic.

Group goes left, leads them down to stairwell on **B13** and they can see **B15** - they choose.

Group stay the course, forward to **B7**



B7 – Collapsed Tunnels

Dead end.

Hazard - Unstable Rubble:

If players start to search around:

10% chance disturbance risks collapse. 10% for each player that decides to do some searching. If collapse is caused, Dexterity check against TN 13, if fail 1d4 damage.

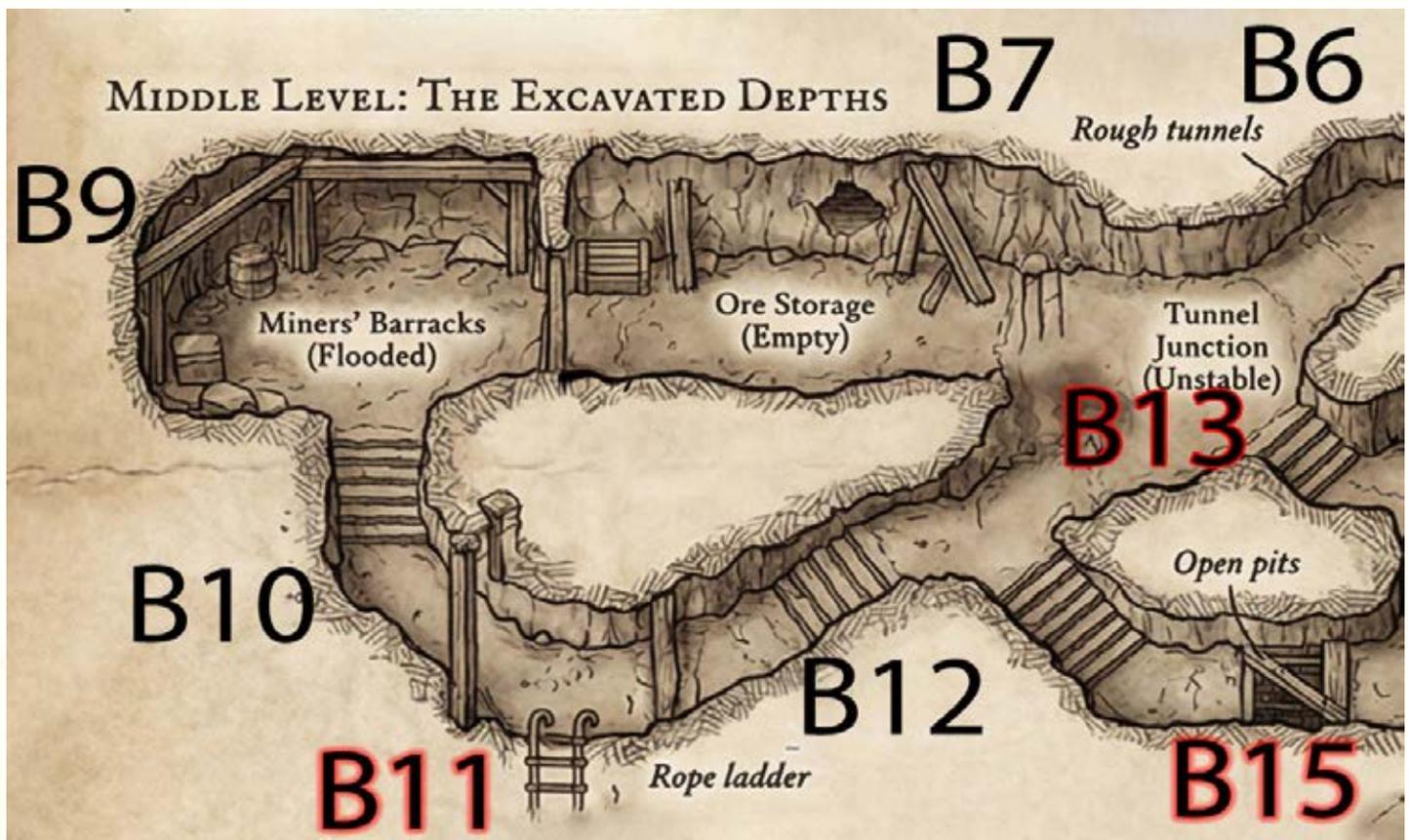
Finds:

Broken lantern, snapped pick handle, skeletal foot still inside a boot.

The tunnel ends in collapse. Stone and splintered timber choke the passage completely. A broken lantern lies half-buried in dust.

A single boot sticks out from the rubble.
It isn't empty.

After character turn around, they'll end back at B6, with the option to go down passage to B13 or B15.





You Are The Dungeon Narrator

Now the reins are removed. You got this. The adventure story will tighten in presentation so you can move faster, with less bloat, assuming the party didn't find themselves going to C0.

So far, you've been improvising, answering questions for player-characters, details of scene not in adventure, owning the story, becoming the Dungeon Narrator - the storyteller.

The adventure will now allow you to move forward with less guardrails, you are the DN.

Adventure story will focus on adventure for you and your players, relieving the text of mechanics, how-to, and other suggestions you are now capable of commanding.



B9 – Miners' Barracks (Flooded)

Former sleeping quarters.

Hazard - Waist-Deep Water:
Movement halved. Combat hindered.

Treasure:

Gold ring worth 3gp

Dark water fills this room to your waist. Rotted bunks jut from the surface wall like broken teeth. The smell is thick - stagnant water and decay.

Something brushes against **character** leg beneath the surface.

Investigate? It's a dead snake.



B10 – Down Stairs

Waterlogged rotted steps going down.

The water is calm.

Debris floating.

The stairs are made of rock, soil and wood that descends here, going down into another room, but several steps have crumbled away. Wooden planks have been jammed into the gaps as makeshift repairs.

You see the room below filled with water.

Stairs creak when you test them with bubbles rising with any step.



B11 – Rope Ladder

Vertical shaft to Lower Level.

Hazard – Frayed Rope:
Only one climber safely at a time.
Second climber risks anchor failure.

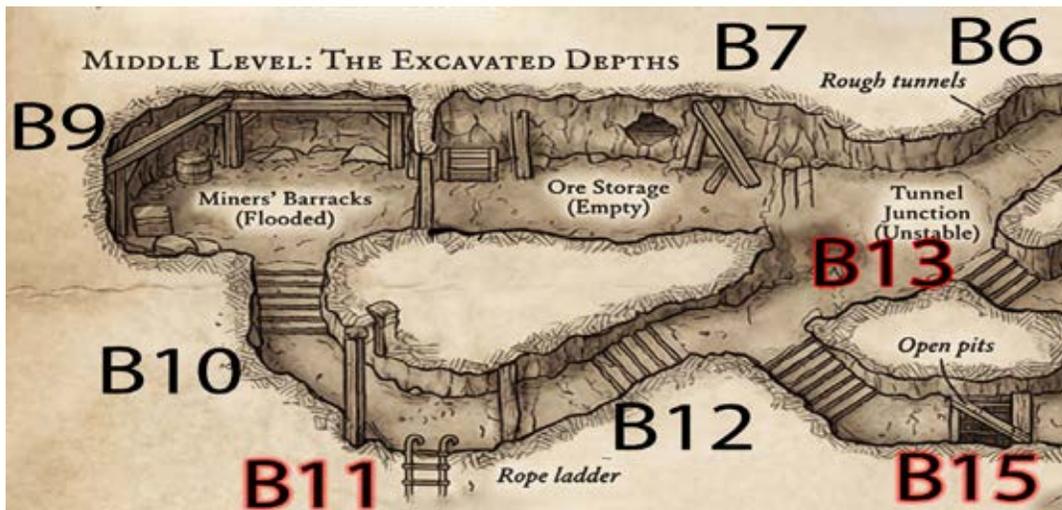
Leads to Lower Level C1.

A vertical shaft drops into darkness. A rope ladder hangs from iron spikes driven into the stone. The ropes are frayed, the rungs worn smooth.

It held this long.
Whether it holds again is another question.

For each player that use the rope that is available in B11, 1st character has a 10% chance it breaks while climbing down, 2nd character has a 20% chance it breaks while climbing down, and so forth.

If rope breaks character falls 15 feet for 1d4 damage, DR applies.



 **B12 – Central Cavern**

Natural cavern discovered by miners.

Hazard - Stalactites:
Loud noise 25% risk falling, Save Roll DEX Quick to dodge, if fail: 1d2 damage with helmet, no helmet is 1d4 damage.

The tunnel opens into a vast natural cavern. The ceiling rises beyond your light, lost in shadow. Stone teeth stalactites hang overhead, dripping of water steadily.

You suspect this place wasn't carved and miners broke into it.

You see 2 sets of stone steps lead further down into this cavernous dungeon. The stairs in front of you and the stairs off to the side.

 **B13 – Tunnel Junction**

Undead waiting below in B14 - there are 2 zombie corpses.

They can't see it but hear it making hissing noise.

The thick wood beams are cracked and bowing. Dust trickles down with every vibration.

The wood groans softly, like it's begging you not to stay.

Roll Wisdom perception TN 13, if successful, they understand its actually something down there groaning and not the wood beams.

Players ignore zombies, stay upstairs, if they do the zombie charges upstairs at them.

See page 150 Monster Trove First Encounters or visit <https://opendungeons.com/monsters/zombie/>

See Turn Undead on page 14 of the Character Builder.

If a Cleric uses Turn Undead, both zombies are instantly destroyed per the Turn Undead rules. Doing so expends the Cleric's daily use, leaving them unable to cast Turn Undead again until the next day and vulnerable to future undead encounters.

Zombie

HP: 8

AC: 10

DR: 0

Save Roll: Quick -3, Tough +2, Mind -2

Alignment: Unaligned

Intelligence: Non-Intelligent (0)

Magic Resistance: -

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 1d4+1

Special Defense: Mindless: Immune to charm and fear.

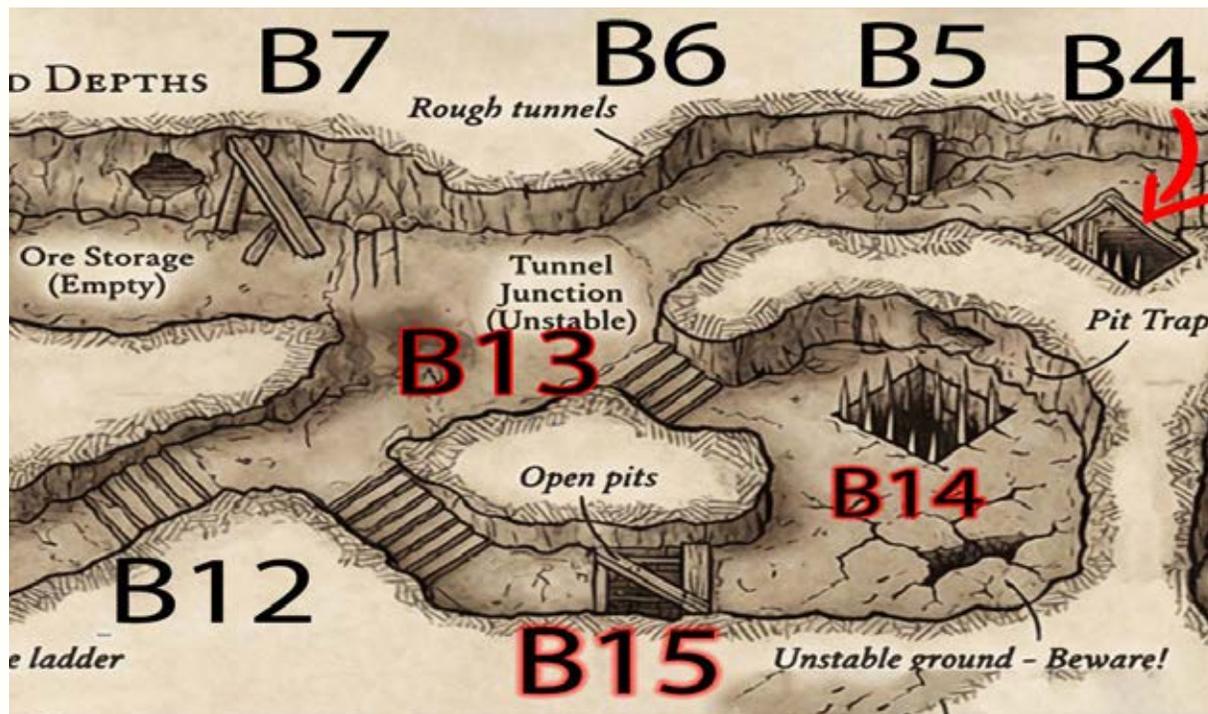
Special Attack: Death Grip: Melee 5 ft, save Dex Quick, target seized until zombie is destroyed; cooldown 2 rounds.

Size: Medium

About:

Rotting corpses that drag themselves forward with bone-cracking persistence. They clutch whatever they catch and refuse to let go until nothing warm remains.





 **B14 – Open Pits**

Multiple mining shafts.

Hazard - Unstable Edges:
Dexterity checks near pits.

Central Pit:
30 feet deep. Cold air rises
from a narrow crack below.

The floor is broken by
deep pit shafts, their edges
rough and falling apart. The
miners dug straight down,
searching for something
beneath the stone.

One pit is deeper than the
others.

The darkness inside it
feels... aware.

Investigate central pit: they
see 3 dead skeletons skewer-
ed by stakes.

If they climb down the cen-
tral pit to investigate, they
discover a weathered, old
leather backpack:

15 gold pieces
22 copper pieces
Magical Items:
A Potion of Darkvision
Duskblade Dagger

Damage
1d4

Bonus
+1 to hit and damage.

Effect
+1d6 damage when striking
from concealment or surprise.
Permanent. Curved dagger
with polished obsidian blade
that reflects no light.





B15 – Unstable Ground

At the bottom of the steps there is a 10 foot by 5 foot wooden lid, like a cover to an open pit.

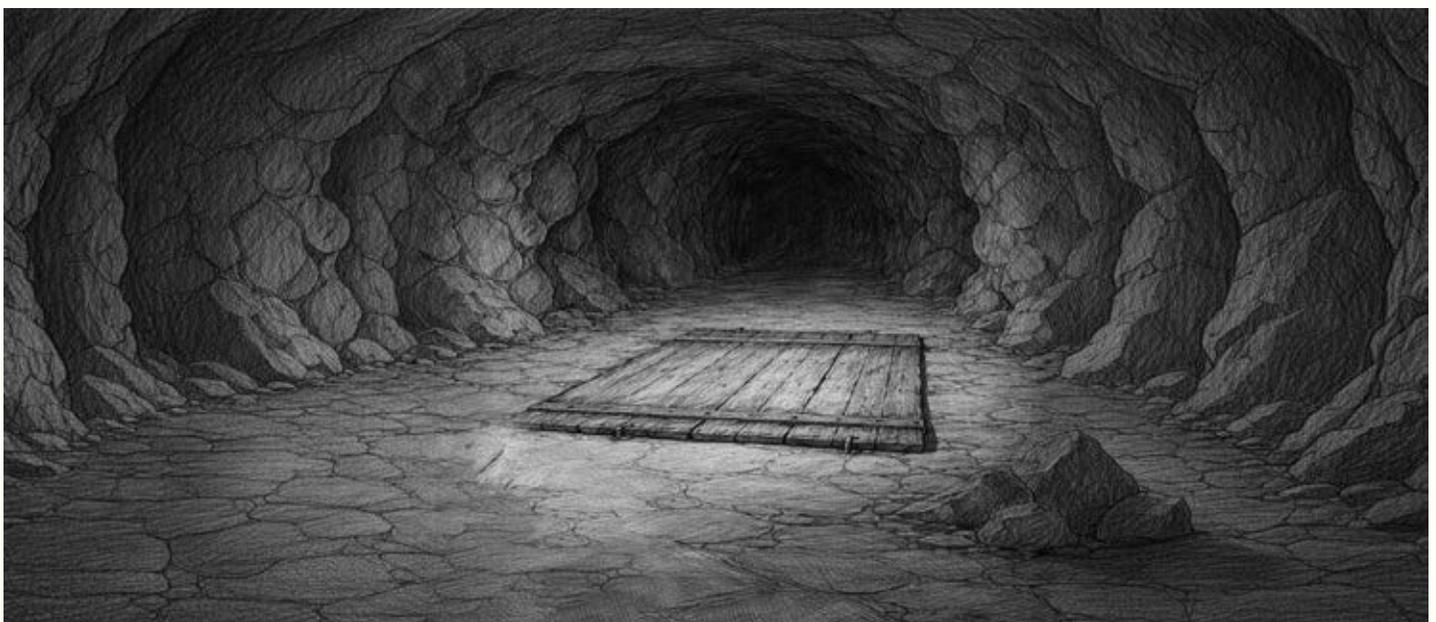
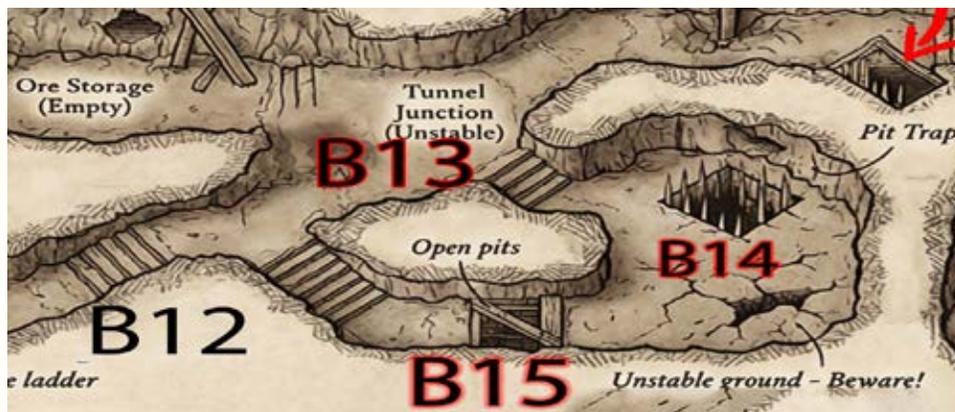
If players open it, they see a wet empty hole going down, that looked similar to the sarcophagus they discovered in earlier (if they made that discovery) in A19.

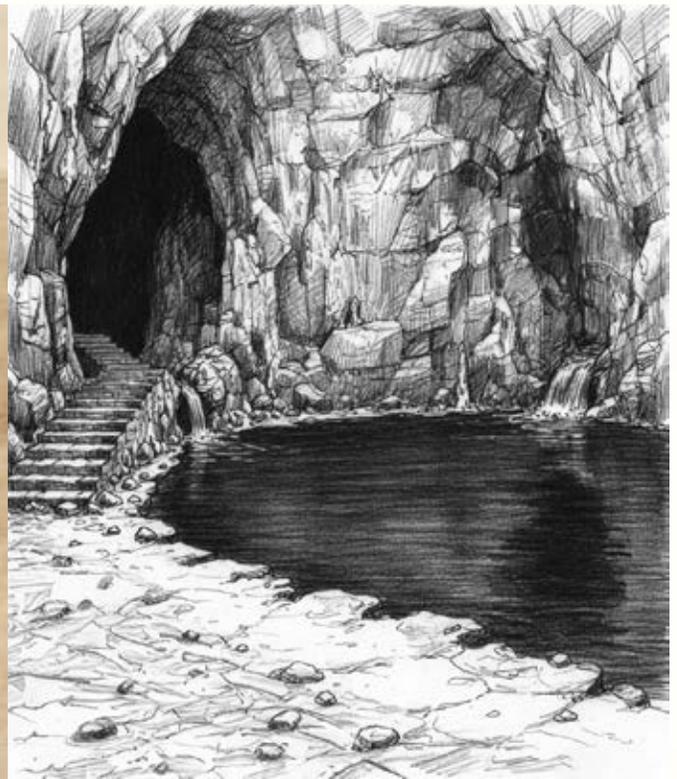
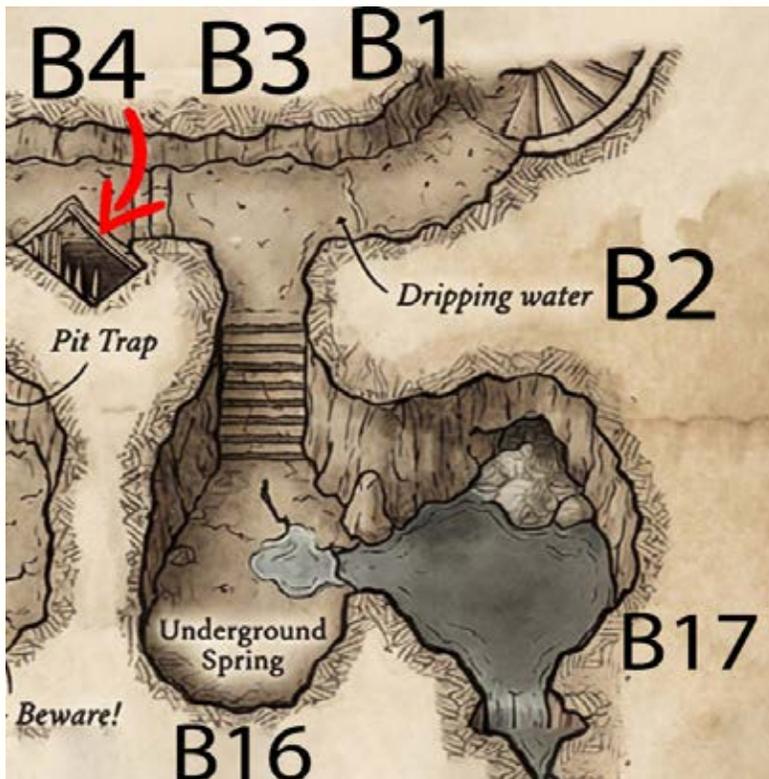
This will lead them to C0 too.

If ignored, deciding not to go down to hole to discover where it leads, their current path up ahead takes them **to or back to B14**.

The passage opens into a broad, cavernous corridor. The stone walls pull back here, the ceiling rising into darkness. Set into the floor ahead is a rough wooden covering - ten feet long and five feet wide - planks bolted together and worn smooth by age. It sits slightly lower than the surrounding stone, like a lid laid over something the builders did not want seen.

If they haven't encountered Zombies yet like in B13, it can happen now, or in B14.





B16 – Descending Shaft

The passage tilts sharply downward, stone polished smooth by water over centuries. Moisture beads on every surface. The sound of flowing water grows louder below.

B17 – Underground Spring

True safe haven.

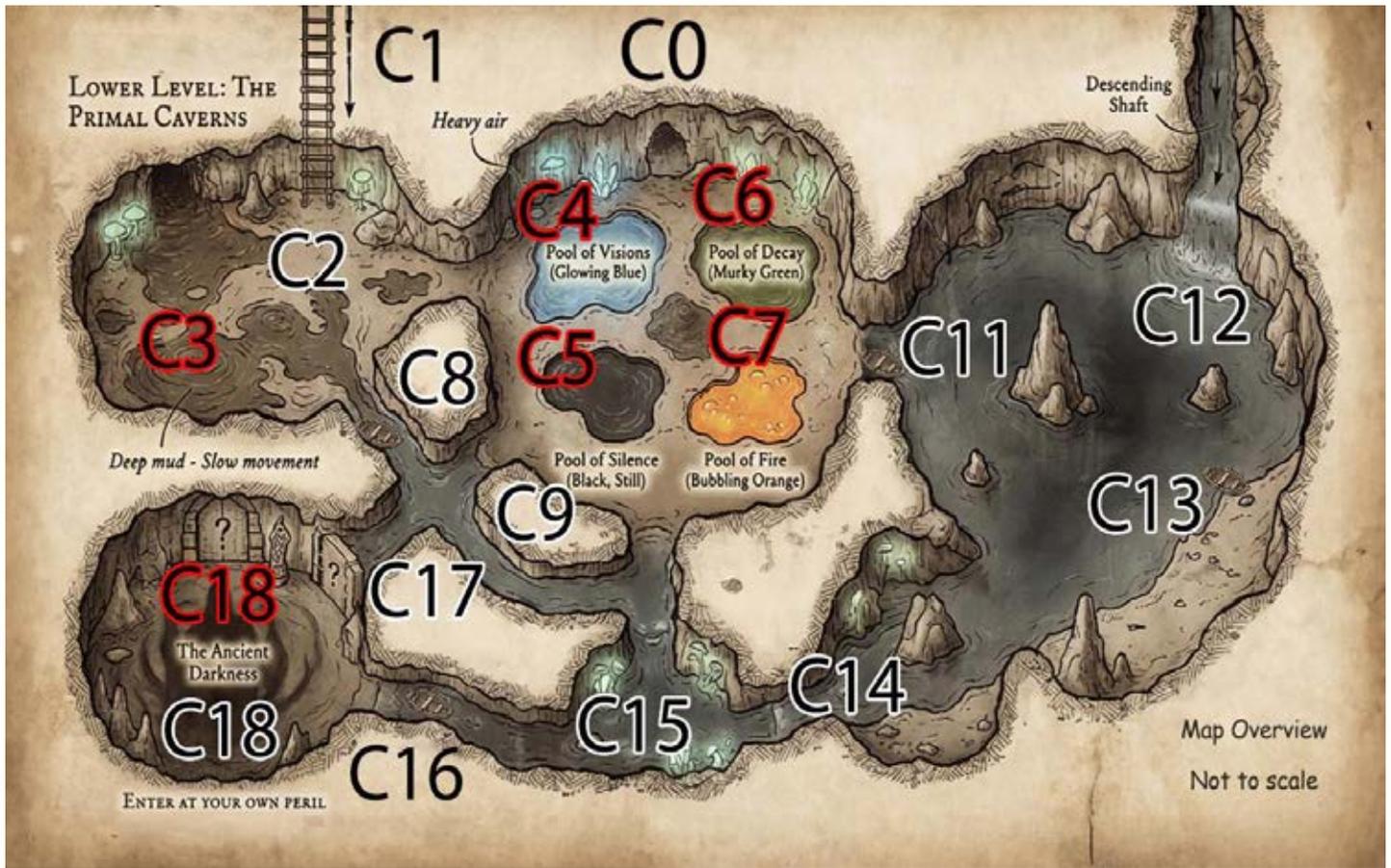
Water:
Fresh, clean, drinkable.

Water exiting through a small cavernous opening that leads to a small water fall, descending 20 feet to C12

The passage opens into a natural cavern. A pool of clear water fills the center, fed by a thin stream trickling down the far wall. The air here is cool and clean - the first truly fresh breath you've drawn since entering.

The water is still, reflecting your light like dark glass.

On your right side, about 30 feet into the water you can hear the water exiting like a water fall.



LOWER LEVEL - THE PRIMAL CAVERNS

Dimensions, if not called out, but players might ask.

C0 - Main Cavern (Entry): ~300 ft (large central cavern, arrival point from A19 chute and B15 chute). Heavy air.

C1 - Rope Ladder Landing: arrival from B11 rope ladder, C2

C2 - Passage: ~300 ft wide (with C3), ~30 ft long (connects C1 to C3 and C0)

C3 - Mud Rocks/Scree Slime: 30 ft across

C4 - Pool of Visions (Glowing Blue): ~10 ft diameter pool

C5 - Pool of Silence (Black, Still): ~12 ft diameter pool

C6 - Pool of Decay (Murky Green): ~10 ft diameter pool

C7 - Pool of Fire (Bubbling Orange): ~10 ft diameter pool

C8 - Crystals on wall

C9 - Passage: ~20 ft wide, to and from many areas (C2, C17, C15, C0)

C10 - Central Lower Passage: ~10 ft wide, ~30 ft long

C11 - Underground Lake: ~30 ft by 25 ft (large dark water body visible on map, stalagmites)

C12 - Underground Lake: ~300 ft by 10 ft (connects to descending shaft from B17)

C13 - Cavern ~200 ft by 30 ft (large cavern with stalagmites and dark water)

C14 - Passage: ~100 ft wide, ~60 ft long

C15 - Cavern: ~30 ft by 30 ft (faint glow area)

C16 - Passage: ~20 ft wide (connects to C18)

C17 - Hidden Secret Doors Area: ~30 ft width and 15 ft height

C18 - The Ancient Darkness: ~200 ft circular chamber



C1 – Rope Ladder Landing

Arrival from B11.

The tone shifts immediately from "dangerous dungeon" to "wrong place."

SS1

If they investigate oozing rocks, read over **C3** for the lead investigating character who is within 10 feet, rolls perception **Check Roll, Wisdom vs 16**.

If they roll 16 or higher they recognize that's a Scree Slime, if they roll lower than, it attacks!

The rope ladder ends on damp stone.

The air here is thick, pressing against your chest. It smells of wet earth, old rock, and something faintly metallic - like rust in water.

To your left, the cavern has two openings, left and right.

To your right, mud like substance oozing around rocks.

You are deeper than anyone was meant to go.

<https://opendungeons.com/monsters/scree-slime/>

Scree Slime

Stats

HP: 18

AC: 14

DR: 0

Attacks

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 1d6+1

Save Rolls

Quick: 1

Tough: -1

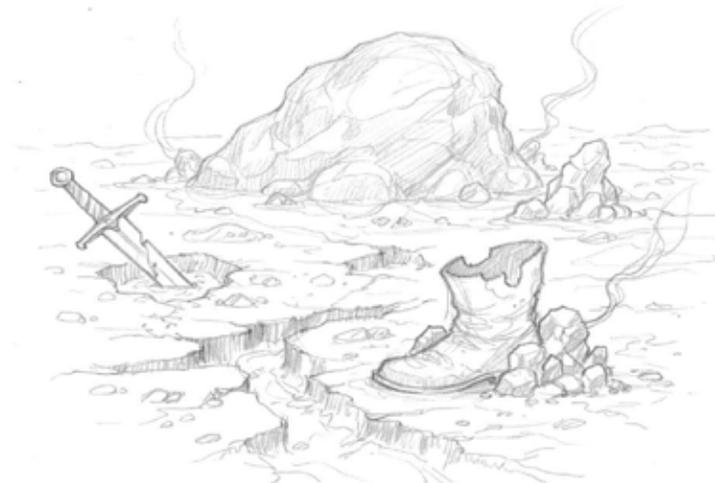
Mind: -3

Special Attack

Rock Acid: 30 ft, save Dex Quick, fail save roll 1d4+1 acid, cooldown 3 rounds.

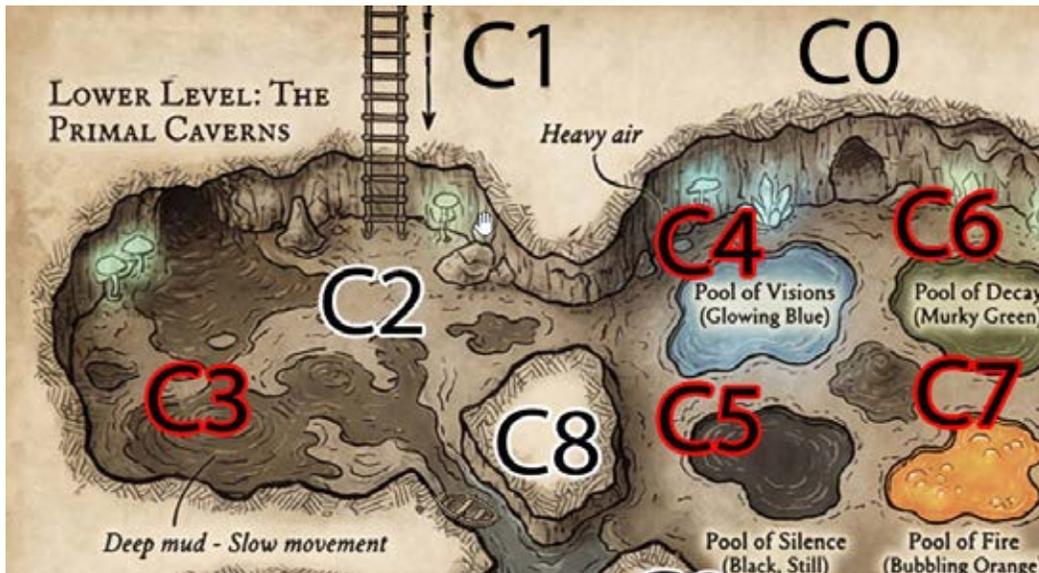
Special Defense

Stonebound: Resist being moved.



Note monster's attacks: a physical attack is different than a Special Attack - spitting acid at a distance.

If you are feeling comfortable Dungeon Narrating, and characters ignore this area, you could have the oozing Scree Slime follow them, and have at times play with characters (being followed, watched, etc.) and/or attack later



C2 – Fungal Grotto

Bioluminescent fungi provide dim, eerie light. They are not poisonous, magical, or valuable.

They are a quiet reminder that life persists here - but not the kind anyone prays for.

Pale fungi cling to the walls and ceiling, shedding a faint blue-green glow. It is barely enough to see, but after the darkness above it feels almost like mercy.

The growth pulses slowly, as if the stone itself is breathing.

This place is alive in ways you do not understand.



C3 – Deep Mud and Rocks

Movement severely impaired.
 Hazard - Sucking Mud: Mud is knee-deep. Speed is halved. Running is impossible. If a character falls prone, they must make a Strength check to stand or remain stuck until helped, TN 12.

Stealth is impossible here - loud, wet steps.

The cavern floor drops into a wide basin of thick, dark mud. Every step sinks past your knees. It grips your boots and drags at your legs like a hand that does not want to let go.

Moving here is not walking.
 It is bargaining.

If character(s) continue to the rocks, going forward in the mud, see page before, Scree Slime - **SS1 page 44**



C0 – Main Cavern (Entry)

The passage opens into a vast cavern, the ceiling lost in shadow far above. The air here is heavy and damp, pressing against your skin as if the stone itself is breathing.

Strange lights stain the darkness.

To one side, a pool glows with a cold blue radiance, its light rippling across the rock like moonlight underwater.

Nearby, another pool churns with murky green liquid, bubbles rising slowly from its depths.

Farther off, an orange glow flickers and pulses, casting wavering shadows as heat rolls through the cavern in slow waves.

At the center of the chamber lies a pool of perfect black. It reflects nothing. The stone around it looks worn smooth.

Crystals jut from the walls in jagged clusters, catching and splitting the colored light. Mud and slick stone make footing uncertain.

There are several cavern openings at a distance.

This place feels old.

Not abandoned - but watched.

Natural milky quartz formation. Common and non-precious. Brittle and jagged.

No inherent gem value. Removing pieces offers no meaningful profit.

If characters visit pools there are entries for each, **C4 - C7**.

If characters visit crystal formations there is an entry for this at **C8**.





C4 – Pool of Visions (Glowing Blue)

Magical pool. Safe to touch. Strange to experience.

Effect - Looking In: A character sees their reflection, but wrong - older, younger, wounded, triumphant, or wearing unfamiliar gear. Personal and unsettling. No damage.

Effect - Drinking:
A brief flash of memory of pain, suffering, forbidden thoughts, a glimpse of the warlock's past. No mechanical effect.

A pool of still water glows faintly blue, casting rippling light across the stone. The surface is perfectly calm, like glass.

Your reflection looks back at you.

And something about it is wrong.



C5 – Pool of Silence (Black, Still)

Magical pool. Dangerous if misused.

Effect: Within 5 feet, speech produces no sound. This ends as soon as you step away.

Hazard: Any creature that submerges their head must make a CON Tough Save Roll or becomes permanently deaf unless magically cured.

This pool is black and utterly still. No reflection. No ripple. It swallows light like a wound in the floor.

As you draw close, your footsteps fade. Your breathing disappears. Near this pool, sound itself dies.



C6 – Pool of Decay (Murky Green)

Hazardous. Do not touch.

Effect: Acidic liquid. Contact deals 1d4 damage per round. Submerged objects dissolve within minutes. Submerging a limb deals 1d6 damage.

At the bottom lie corroded bones of something large - identity destroyed by time and acid.

This pool churns with murky green liquid. Slow bubbles rise and pop with a faint hiss.

The smell is sharp and chemical - wrong in a place that should only smell like stone.

Bones rest at the bottom, bleached and pitted.

Whatever they belonged to did not climb out.



C7 – Pool of Fire (Bubbling Orange)

Thermal pool. Bright, loud, hungry.

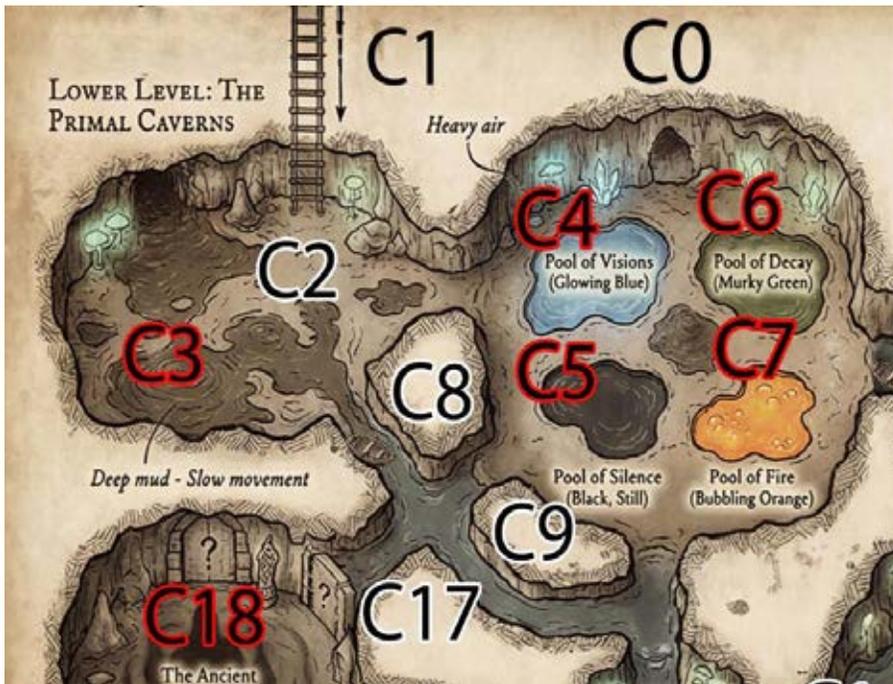
Effect: Touching the liquid deals 1d4 fire damage. Standing within 5 feet longer than a minute deals 1 damage from heat exhaustion.

The pool can ignite flammable material or heat metal quickly in emergencies. It also tempts reckless players.

Orange liquid bubbles and churns, throwing flickering light across the cavern. Heat rolls off it in waves - you feel it on your face from ten feet away.

The surface never stills.

It looks like the earth is bleeding fire.



C8 – Crystal Formation

Natural milky quartz formation. Common and non-precious. Brittle and jagged.

The crystals have no inherent gem value. Removing pieces offers no meaningful profit.

If handled roughly or rushed, sharp fragments break free and cause 1 HP of damage from flying shards.

Crystals erupt from the wall in a jagged cluster of cloudy white stone, dull and opaque.

Torchlight diffuses inside them instead of flashing, scattering into cold, chalky light across the stone.

Some are as long as your forearm.

They look interesting.

They do not look valuable.



C9 – Echoing Passage

Sound behaves strangely due to natural acoustics, not magic.

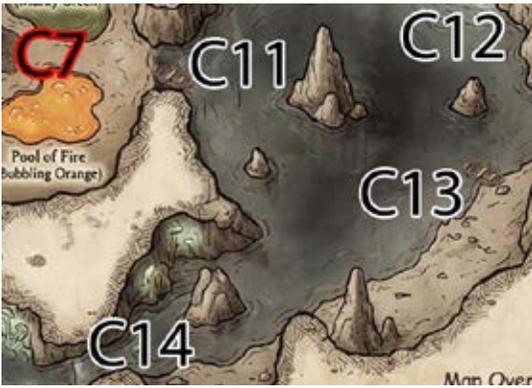
Footsteps seem to come from the wrong direction. Whispers multiply.

Silence feels louder than noise. The warlock understands this passage and uses it to track intruders by sound. Players do not.

A broad stone corridor nearly 20 feet wide, its floor drowned beneath dark water that is neck deep. The air is cold and heavy, carrying the smell of wet stone and long-stagnant depths. Your light vanishes quickly ahead, swallowed by the water and the dark beyond.

Here, a whisper would travel.

So would a scream.



C11 – Underground Lake

If players are coming from C12 to C11, then read **C0** for C11



C12 – Underground Lake

The cavern opens onto black water stretching beyond your light. An underground lake, still, cold, and silent.

The far shore disappears into darkness. A rotted raft bobs near the edge.

The edge of an underground lake. The water is cold and deep.

Swimming requires Strength checks, and armored characters risk drowning quickly without help.

Boat near shore **C13**.

The lake itself. Cold and deep. Swimming across requires multiple Strength checks, best stick to shoreline.

IMPORTANT

Characters should use boat, if they don't, or stay in the waters long enough they will encounter Telepathic Jelly: <https://opendungeons.com/monsters/telepathic-jelly/>

At any point you decide to use the Telepathic Jelly encounter, note its Alignment is Orderly King (Guardian) - it might seem threatening to characters to see such a creature while adventuring in water, but it wants to help, though if players attack it won't help and run away.

It circles hoping to communicate telepathically, and will lead them straight to C18 (via C16) cavern and leave.

It will not explain itself, it will be cagey and vague.

See next page water and boat map.



Blue on map is where water is at least neck deep and small boat can be used, else where Telepathic Jelly is encountered.



C13 – Underground Lake (Boat)

The lake itself. Cold and deep. Swimming across requires multiple Strength checks. Failure risks going under and taking 1d4 cold damage. Armored characters sink without assistance.

An intact chest is wedged between rocks on the lake floor. Retrieving it requires diving, which is dangerous.

The chest contains 25 gold pieces, 100 copper pieces, 20 silver pieces.

Magic Items:

Belt of Dexterity: +1 Dexterity (max 18)

Ring of Warding: +1 to all Saves

The lake stretches wide and dark. Stone formations rise from the water like broken teeth. The surface reflects nothing, not torchlight, not faces.

Somewhere below, something glints.

Metal? Or bone.



C14 – Underground Lake

A skeleton is slumped against a boulder, a rusted helmet still on its skull. A pitted but functional shortsword lies nearby, along with a pouch containing 12 sp and an empty locket.

The water presses against a broad rise of stone, broken by protruding boulders that jut up like the backs of submerged beasts. Beyond them, the cavern - many feet across and stretching some feet into darkness.

A skeleton rests wedged against one of the larger stones, a rusted helmet still clinging to its skull. A sword lies beside it, not fallen, but placed.

One bony hand clutches something small. A tarnished locket - cold, intimate, and deeply out of place in this cavern.



C15 – Faint Glow Passage

A stable connecting passage. Dim bioluminescent growth clings to the stone.

The passage opening up, it glows faintly with pale light, moss and fungi clinging to every surface of rock in the cavern.

Water is neck deep.

The walls press close, but the way forward is clear.

The glow leads deeper.

Toward something waiting.



C16 – The Approach

The final passage before C18.

Proximity to the threshold subtly alters the feel of reality. Footsteps sound muffled. Voices feel too small. The sensation is of being watched, not attacked.

Carved into the wall in careful letters is a warning, written in the warlock's hand: TURN BACK.

The shore comes to your feet.

The passage straightens.

The walls smooth, as if shaped by intent rather than nature. The air turns cold. Your breath mists.

Carved into the stone, the letters are deep and deliberate:
TURN BACK



C17 – Hidden Alcoves

Small chambers flank the approach to C18.

They show evidence of long habitation. An old, yet functional bedroll lies against the stone. Empty water containers are scattered about. Bones from countless small meals are piled in corners.

Well designed, hidden **secret door** to C18

Each character that attempts to search has a 10% chance of finding the secret door.

NOTE: some characters might have a better chance, like Dwarf with Stonecunning ability.

As you move closer through the neck-deep water, small side spaces open off the flooded passage.

The stone walls spread wide, the ceiling rising high above your head, but the space feels empty rather than open.

On a large patch of shore lies an old bedroll, worn thin. Empty containers are wedged into cracks. Bones from many small meals are piled on dry stone, sorted and picked clean.

Nothing here feels rushed.
Nothing feels hopeful.

Someone has been living here.

For a very long time.



C18 - The Ancient Darkness

Overview - Read This First

Everything the players have experienced leads here. Take a breath before running this section. Read through it fully before your session so you know where it goes.

This room has no combat unless the players choose it. The entire encounter is built around a single decision: open the door, or walk away.

Here is the full sequence of events:

Players arrive in the chamber. Read the arrival text.

When anyone approaches within 30 feet of the doors, the warlock appears.

The warlock begs them not to open the door. Let the players ask questions.

THE CHOICE: Players decide to turn back or open the door.

If they turn back: The warlock thanks them. Adventure ends peacefully.

If they open door: Demon appears. CON Save. Warlock teleports the party out.

Outside: Players hear battle below. They can flee or stay.

Collapse: Dungeon collapses. Characters within 30 feet of the slab take damage.

The Ascension: The warlock ascends. The adventure ends.

The warlock is not a villain. He is a broken man guarding a mistake. Play him as someone desperate and sincere, not theatrical or menacing. He is begging, not performing.

IMPORTANT - READ BEFORE RUNNING THIS SCENE

The players are not the heroes of this encounter. They are witnesses. They will not defeat the final threat. They will not save the day. They will watch someone else do it - someone who earned that moment across decades they will never fully understand.

This is a different kind of ending than "you killed the dragon, here's your reward." The players leave carrying a story, not a trophy. For first-time players, this teaches something most adventures never do: sometimes the most powerful thing you can experience is something that wasn't about you at all.

C18 continued: The Arrival

The passage opens into a vast cavern chamber. The ceiling disappears into darkness. The air is cold - not damp cold, but empty cold, like heat itself has fled.

At the far end of the cavern, a pair of massive doors that are closed, rise from floor. They are carved with symbols you cannot focus on - your eyes slide away, refusing to hold them.

The Warlock Appears

When any character approaches within 30 feet of the doors, the warlock emerges from shadow near C17 wall. He has been here for decades, alone, guarding this door. He is not hostile.

Let the players react to his appearance before reading his dialogue. If they draw weapons or act aggressively, he raises his hands and says: "I'm not your enemy. Please. Listen."

The warlock is a 10th-level wizard with access to 34 spell slots per day, including spells that could kill the entire party instantly. He does not use them. He is no longer truly a warlock - he is a penitent.

A penitent is someone who has chosen to suffer for their sins, not because anyone forced them to, but because they believe they must. He has not used offensive magic against a living person in decades.

If attacked, he does not retaliate. He may instinctively Shield or Ley Step away, but he will not harm the players. His goal is to talk, not fight.

If the players persist in attacking him, he looks at them the way a tired parent looks at a child throwing a tantrum - not with anger, but with the desperate awareness that every moment wasted is a moment the door sits unguarded.

He will say whatever he must to make them stop and listen. If they kill him - and at 10th level with defensive magic, that is nearly impossible for 1st-level characters - the safety net is gone.

No one will teleport them out when the demon arrives. The Ascension cannot occur. His story ends on the floor instead of in the sky. The demon will TPK (total party kill) - all will die.

C18 continued: The Warlock

A figure steps from the darkness - gaunt, lean, haggard, wild-eyed, dressed in a ragged robe. He moves like someone who hasn't spoken to another person in decades. His voice cracks when he finally forces it out.

"Stop. Please - stop."

"You don't know what you've found. You think this is treasure? Secrets? Some dead wizard's leftovers?"

He laughs - dry and broken.

"I built this place. Every false wall. Every dead end. Every lie carved into stone. I built it to hide. Not from you."

He looks at the doors, and the tone of his voice becomes dead serious.

"From what's behind that."

Running the Conversation

Let the players ask questions. Soren answers honestly but briefly - he is desperate, not theatrical.

Key information the warlock can share:

His name is **Soren Tolen**. He has been here for decades. He has lost count.

He is at least 100 years old human but moves with surprising sharpness.

He made a deal with **a demon, Thane**, from the Lower Realms.

What he learned shattered him.

The price was one door - a threshold opened by willing hands.

He found a loophole: if no one opens it, the spirit cannot cross.

He built this dungeon to hide the door and scare intruders away.

He haunts area with his magic to scare away travelers, but the demon lures travelers in.

The demons draws adventurers here, hoping someone will choose to open it.

If the door is opened willingly, something steps through that should never walk this world.

Soren will not reveal what he learned.

Do not improvise cosmic lore - his refusal is absolute.

If players test for lies, he is telling the truth. Let them confirm this.

He wants them to leave and never speak of this place. He will offer **48 gold pieces**.

C18 continued: Soren Tolen

"So I'm begging you."

His voice breaks.

"Turn around. Forget this place. Take whatever you found above - it's yours. Take these 48 gold pieces and be satisfied and leave."

"Allow me die down here with my mistake."

"Don't open that door."

THE CHOICE

This is the moment. Do not rush it. Let the players talk among themselves. Let them argue. Let them sit in the silence. The warlock waits. The doors wait.

Do not prompt them. Do not ask "so what do you do?" Let the weight of the decision sit. When they are ready, they will tell you.

They Turn Back = Go to **C18 Turn Back**

If They Open the Doors = Go to **C18 Open Doors**
(even if they slightly open one to peek)



C18 Turn Back

The warlock thanks them with genuine, shaken relief. He does not celebrate. He sags, like a man whose body has only been held together by fear.

He asks them to never speak of this place.

This is a valid and complete ending. If players feel disappointed, that's okay - but the warlock's relief should feel real. They did a good thing. Not every adventure ends in battle. Sometimes the bravest choice is to walk away.

The warlock looks at you, in relief.

He is standing before the doors again. Alone. As he has been probably for longer than you've been alive.

His vigil continues. Lastly, he waves to you.

Unknowingly your body blurs and bends.

He teleports you, in an instant, back to the top, back where you first moved the stone that isn't there anymore.

You stare down at the soil from where Soren stands guard. You will carry this place in your minds for the rest of your lives - the door you chose not to open, the man you chose not to doom.

Your adventure had ended.





C18 Open Doors

The Door Opens

The doors are not locked. They never were.

They swing inward at your touch - slowly, silently, as if grateful to finally move.

Beyond is darkness. Not shadow. Not absence of light. Darkness - absolute and aware.

For a moment, nothing happens.

Then the cold hits you like a wave - not temperature, but wrongness - pouring through the doorway like breath from a wound in the world.

All characters must make a **CON Tough Save Roll**. Failure means 1d4 damage. This is not an attack - it is the wrongness of the open door pressing against their bodies. Describe it as nausea, pressure, the feeling of the air itself rejecting them.

Something moves in the dark.

It steps forward - twelve feet tall, hunched, wrong.

Skin gray and slick. No eyes, only smooth flesh where eyes should be. A snout opens to reveal rows of teeth like broken glass.

It breathes in - tasting the air, tasting you.

The warlock, standing his ground while casting magic that starts to glow before his hands, yells in a deep desperate voice:

"YOU DAMN FOOLS!"

The demon howls, piercing the ears in this chamber.



Thane, The Unbound

HP: 300

AC: 20

DR: 3

Saves: Quick +2, Tough +6, Mind +3

Alignment: Wild Vile (Reaver)

Intelligence: Average (8-10)

Magic Resistance: +3 to saves vs. spells

Attacks: 2

Attack damage: 3d12+7, 3d12+7

Size: Huge

Special Defense: Mythic resilience, eyeless (immune to gaze attacks, blindsight 120 ft), aura of wrongness (10 ft, creatures starting turn in aura make CON Tough save or take 1d6 cold damage and suffer -2 to all rolls for 1 round)

Special Attack: Rending claws (piercing, melee 10 ft, save: DEX Quick, damage + bleeding 1d6 per round until healed, cooldown 2 rounds), Howl of the Threshold (psychic, 60 ft radius, save: WIS Mind, frightened 3 rounds, success: 1 round, cooldown 3 rounds)

All characters must make a **WIS Mind Save Roll**. Failure means character stands there frozen for 3 rounds in absolute panic and fear.

The warlock's eyes change. The desperate, broken man you've been speaking to is gone.

In his place stands something else - someone who has been holding back more power than you can comprehend.

He raises one hand toward you. There is no incantation. No gesture. No effort. The air around you tightens like a fist. You feel the dungeon rip away from you - stone, darkness, cold - all of it torn from your senses in an instant.

He did not ask. He did not warn. He decided

Unknowingly your body blurs and bends.

He teleports you, in an instant, back to the top, back where you first moved the stone that isn't there anymore.

The teleported characters are now outside, at the entrance slab.

They were just ripped out of the deepest chamber of the dungeon in an instant.

They are disoriented, frightened, and separated from whatever is happening below.

You slam into solid ground - grass, dirt, night air. Stars wheel overhead. You're outside. At the stone slab where this all began, but the slab of stone isn't there anymore.

Below your feet, the earth trembles.

You hear it - muffled by stone and soil - the sounds of battle.

Inhuman screaming.

The crackle of magic unleashed without restraint.

The ground shakes and moves.

If they flee: They live. No further danger. Go to **The Ascension**.

If they stay where they are, they will take damage. Go to **The Collapse**, then afterwards go to **The Ascension**.

The Collapse

The earth groans. Cracks split the ground around the slab.
The dungeon is collapsing - swallowing itself.

The ground beneath and all around you drops ten feet without warning.

Characters take 1d4 damage each. No Save or Chance Roll as all ground around them has collapsed downward.

The Ascension

DN Notes - Why the Ascension Happens

In Open Dungeons, Ascension occurs when the inner resonance of a character outgrows the boundaries of the Material Realm. Their will, deeds, experiences, and the weight of their story press against the limits of mortality until the world can no longer contain them. *See DN Guide for more.*

The warlock's decades of isolation were not punishment - they were his trial. Every year alone in the dark, every adventurer he watched die trying, every night guarding a door he could have walked away from - all of it was building toward this.

And when the door finally opens, when his worst failure arrives in the flesh, he does not run. He fights. He chooses to face the thing he spent his life hiding.

That is what pushes him over the threshold. Not power. Not victory. Completion.

The demon is not the final boss of this adventure. The warlock is. The demon is just the lock. The warlock is the key that has been refusing to turn for thirty years. And when he finally does, the world cannot hold him anymore.

Read this slowly. This is the final moment of the adventure. Lower your voice. Let the silence between sentences do the work.

Now silence.

Absolute. Complete.

The battle has ended. The trembling stops. Even the insects have gone quiet.

Seconds stretch into eternity.

Then the sky breaks. A column of light - pure, blinding, impossible - shatters down from the heavens and strikes the collapsed earth where the dungeon once stood. It makes no sound. It casts no heat. Within the light, a figure rises.

The warlock - but not as he was. His robe is gone. His wasted body is no longer wasted. He rises not floating, not flying, but ascending - drawn upward by something beyond mortal understanding. For one moment, he looks at you.

He raises one hand - not a wave, not a blessing. An acknowledgment. You were here. You saw.

And then he is gone.

The light fades. The night returns. The stars resume.

You just witnessed something no living person has ever meant to see.

An Ascension.

GAME OVER

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