

ANATOMY OF A

Prison



Prisons are a staple of fantasy storytelling, and a good jail break always gets the PCs' blood pumping. Use the following tables to generate an intriguing and memorable prison.

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PROTECTION & ESCAPE

Many fantasy prisons are so much more than simple cells and guards. Use the following table to generate a means of protection and possible way of escape. For high security prisons, roll more than once. *Choose one or roll a d12.*

1. **Blast Collars.** Each prisoner is equipped with a blast collar, set to detonate if the prisoner escapes. **Escape:** Removing blast collars is tricky without the right tools. But maybe somebody in the prison has the expertise? Alternatively, shut down the system that detonates the blast collars.
2. **Brick and Mortar.** Sometimes, the simplest methods are the best. Guards patrol hallways of cells, and either let the prisoners go into the dining areas or bring food to them directly. **Escape:** Over the course of months, a prisoner may dig an exit beneath their cot or behind a poster. However, the route must be hidden from regular inspection at all times.
3. **Creatures.** Terrible creatures guard this prison. Usually of some base intelligence, they realize that any escapees must be returned or eaten. **Escape:** The creatures are dangerous, but they are not smart. It is best to determine their weaknesses and then take advantage of it.
4. **Deep Underground.** The walls of this prison are solid rock thousands of feet thick. This prison is so far underground that most conventional means of escape simply won't work. **Escape:** Teleportation or digging are the only way out. Stone shaping magic is extremely useful, though it may take months to craft an exit. Alternatively, try to navigate the tunnel through which the guards arrive, though this can be blocked off at a moment's notice.
5. **Floating.** When you are high in the sky, the only place to go is down. This prison floats in the high atmosphere, and any winged prisoners lose their flying limbs upon arrival. Guards arrive through teleportation or flight. **Escape:** Prisoners should build their own hang gliders, capture flying creatures or cast flying magic.
6. **Force Field.** The outer wall of this prison is made from arcane energy. An immense force field surrounds the prison grounds in their entirety. **Escape:** Enough force can destroy a force field, but there may be easier ways out. Prisoners should seek out and disrupt the source of the field (a meditating yogi, power crystals or an enchanted tome, for example).
7. **Hostage Situation.** This prison has no locks and no keys. It may simply be a village on the border. However, each citizen knows that if he leaves, his captors will murder a loved one (either kept in a separate prison or completely unaware of the danger). **Escape:** Each escape must also be a rescue mission. A prisoner must reach his hostage and flee before the authorities catch on. It is either that or getting their freedom by losing a loved one.
8. **Illusory Town or Pocket Dimension.** The prisoners live in a simple town which is actually an illusion or a pocket dimension. This town provides everything the prisoners need, including ample distractions from the truth of the situation. Some towns are terrible places, but most are pleasant. Some prisoners may have no idea that this is not reality. **Escape:** Wizards who craft such prisons usually leave emergency escape routes hidden by passcodes or invisible passages. The trick is understanding the creator well enough to find these safeguards. Alternatively, if the condition of the town deviates far enough from its original state, then it may fall apart completely.
9. **Island.** This prison is on an island in the middle of the ocean. **Escape:** Once a prisoner gets past the more traditional defenses, they have water to contend with. Swimming is usually not an option, so prisoners must build makeshift rafts and then hope for the best.
10. **Labyrinth.** The prison is at the heart of an immense maze, often complete with traps and monsters. Such prisons are prohibitively expensive, so are usually repurposed from

minotaur's lairs or other dungeons. The prisoners are teleported into the center of the labyrinth to fend for themselves and supplies are regularly teleported in. **Escape:** The only way out is to play or break the game. Prisoners should collaborate with their peers to slowly draw a map of the prison.

11. Sentient Prison: The prison itself is alive. It is either an organic creature or it has been animated by supernatural means. This prison keeps careful watch over its occupants, but may be somewhat limited in its ability to directly influence them. **Escape:** Prisoners have a few options when dealing with a sentient prison. All sentient prisons have a blind spot, and it may simply be a matter of finding the correct route out (through vents, for example). Most sentient prisons have a central brain which can be destroyed. And some sentient prisons can simply be convinced of the error of their ways.

12. Sleep Containment. Prisoners who check into this prison are placed into permanent sleep or time stasis, and are then stored like books. **Escape:** Escape from a sleep containment prison is virtually impossible. A prisoner must rely on incompetence from the guards or a prison break from the outside world.

In addition to the security measures detailed above, most well equipped fantasy prisons block teleportation magic.

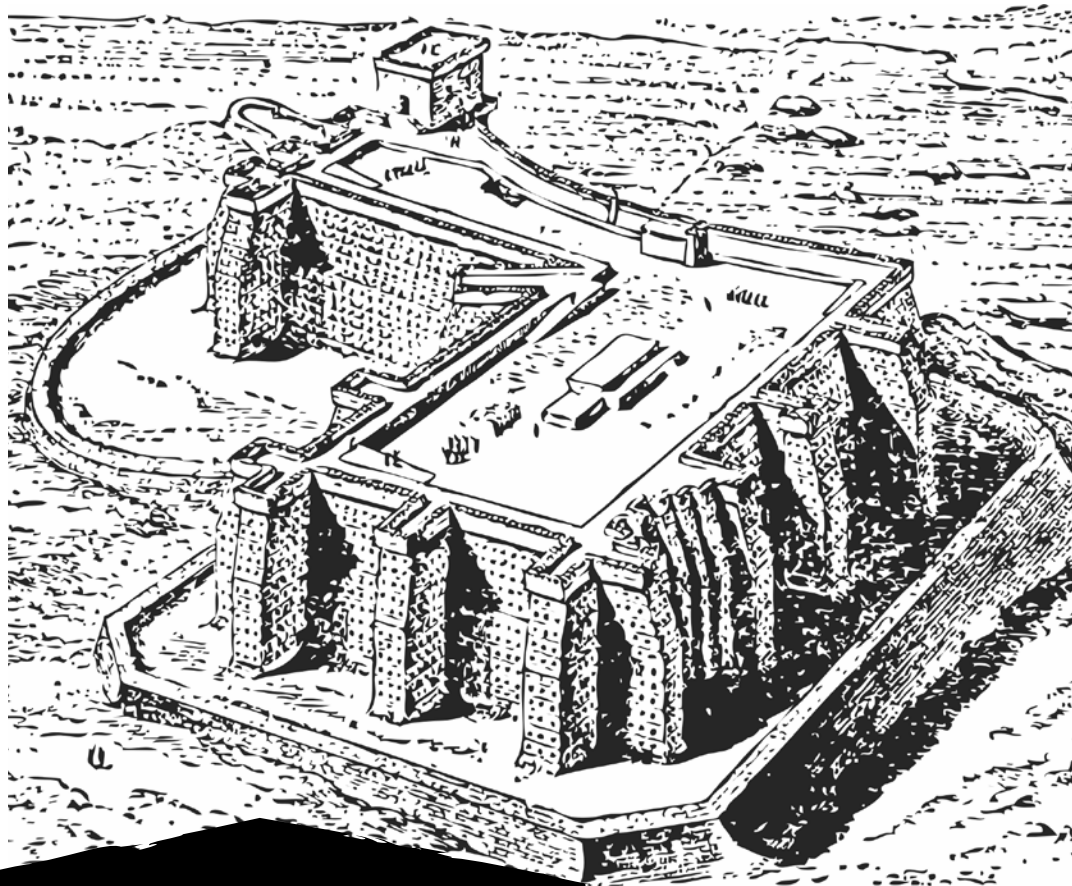
One method of escape is available in every prison with guards: find out how the guards get in—and out—and copy that. This may involve a mass prison riot, disguises or simple stealth. However, the guard passageways are often the

most thoroughly protected in a prison, so other options should be explored.

ATMOSPHERE

The quality and mood of a given prison varies dramatically from facility to facility. *Choose one or roll a d6.*

- 1. Chaos.** The prisoners are unruly and the halls ring with the sound of angry screams. Made tired and cruel by the endless racket, the guards never let the prisoners out of their cells.
- 2. Filthy.** Blood, feces, and dirt streak every surface of this foul-smelling place. Water (or something else) drips endlessly.
- 3. Incompetent.** The staff is poorly trained and easily corruptible. Prisoners openly mock them and prison breaks are not uncommon.
- 4. Resigned.** Both guards and prisoners have reached an unspoken understanding. They are both in this for the long haul and, accordingly, they try to make the best of a bad situation. Friendships can even form between members of the two groups.



5. **Sterile.** This prison is quiet, clean, and orderly. Prisoners sit in dejected silence through all activities and guard routes are meticulously planned and followed.
6. **Tyrannical:** The prisoners have been beaten into submission by horrific guards. These guards take every pleasure in torturing and taunting their captives.

GUARDS & LEVERAGE

Most prisons have guards to take watches, escort prisoners, and respond to emergencies. All guards can be subjected to some sort of leverage based on their personality. *Choose one or roll a d6.*

1. **Cety** tries to get along with the prisoners, but is mocked behind his back. This wimpish fellow thinks he can mingle with the rabble. **Leverage:** Cety is a coward and can be intimidated with a simple display of strength of any kind.
2. **Dainarv** constantly smirks and takes great pleasure in bullying weaker prisoners and guards alike. **Leverage:** Dainarv actually should be in a cell, but nobody knows the truth of his misdeeds. Blackmail might be an option here.
3. **Fisinder** is portly and sweats through his armor. A blunt scar on his forehead indicates that he suffered some kind of brain damage. **Leverage:** Fisinder can easily be tricked by even the simplest ruse.
4. **Gorguy** is extremely lazy. Slow and obnoxious, it's a wonder that the prison staff keeps him at all. **Leverage:** Gorguy is always looking for the easy way out. If a prisoner can offer him riches, he will take them.
5. **Hammond** is a tall and lithe, with dark hair and sharp features. He is quiet, but can be extremely cruel. **Leverage:** Hammond has a penchant for hard drugs.
6. **Tigsman** is a down on his luck adventurer with better things to do. He wears non-regulation armor and shows off. **Leverage:** Tigsman will exchange almost anything for a lead into a fascinating quest.

PRISONERS

You meet the most interesting people in prison. Just don't forget: they are all in there for a reason. *Choose one, or roll a d6.*

1. **Dobar** is a slow, pudgy, and happy fellow. From his constant dull smile, you would never suspect he massacred almost his entire town. Nobody knows why, and Dobar is only confused when the topic is brought up. **Guilty of:** mass murder.
2. **Ethes Finchley** is a babbling ex-priest who awakens screaming in the middle of most nights. His ramblings got him thrown out of the church and into prison. **Guilty of:** heresy.
3. **Gauwalt** has been in here so long that even the guards don't know his crime. The normally sunny old man refuses to speak on the issue. **Guilty of:** an unspeakable crime.
4. **Indrig** knows that he got unlucky. He accidentally pickpocketed a wealthy duke and wound up with an inflated sentence. Indrig is constantly hatching escape plans, but needs a few allies to make it out. **Guilty of:** thievery.
5. **Osbec** is a scowling, holier than thou ex-guard captain who thinks he doesn't belong in here. In truth, he doesn't. He was framed by a rival who wanted his position. **Guilty of:** corruption, but he is actually innocent.
6. **Symath** doesn't understand why adultery is a crime. He loved the woman, and the woman loved him. And why is he in jail while she goes free? **Guilty of:** adultery.