

Quests of Doom 4



Nightstone Keep

By Ed Greenwood



FROG GOD
GAMES

Quests of Doom 4

Nightstone Keep

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 Bill Webb’s Book of Dirty Tricks
 Razor Coast: Fire as She Bears ^{PF}
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 LL5: Borderland Provinces ^{5e, PF, S&W}
 LL6: The Northlands Saga Complete ^{PF, S&W}
 LL7: The Blight ^{5e, PF, S&W}
 LL8: Bard’s Gate ^{5e, PF, S&W}
 LL9: Adventures in the Borderland Provinces ^{5e, PF, S&W}

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 Fields of Blood ^{PF}
 Mountains of Madness ^{PF}
 Marshes of Malice ^{PF}

* (forthcoming from **Frog God Games**)

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Nightstone Keep

Nightstone Keep is a location-based adventure for characters of 6th to 8th level, and is centered on a ruined, long-disused stone keep in a temperate wild forest area (possibly not far off a caravan road or forest trail). If you are using the **Lost Lands** campaign setting, Nightstone Keep is located in the northeastern extent of the Unclaimed Lands where they extend between the southern reaches of the Forest Kingdoms and the Glimmroll Run. The Unclaimed Lands are detailed in **LL5: Borderland Provinces** by Frog God Games.

Aside from the initial carrion graw encounter, and any forest encounters or scuttling oversized spiders you wish to add for cosmetic interest as player characters cautiously explore the ruins, this is a foray into a plant colony. Characters encounter and fight various plant creatures spawned and controlled by their parent arauglyd, a gigantic sentient fungus wrapped around the main treasure of the adventure: a *gem of vitality*. This magic item is powering growth of the arauglyd, so the giant fungus wants to keep it.

You should seed the adventure by having several NPCs encounters (at inns, taverns, shops, or firesides in wayside peddlers' camps) in which the characters are told lurid tales of the various battles and lost treasures and rumored hauntings of "ruined Nightstone Keep" and how it got to its present state, a history summarized hereafter.

Adventure Background

Nightstone Keep is a stoutly built stone stronghold atop extensive cellars stores and an extensive armory. Legend holds that the keep was built more than two centuries ago by Arhel Roodhond — "King Redhand" — a self-styled local ruler.

Redhand was a successful mercenary warrior and adventurer who made his fortune slaying dragons. He brought home a long caravan of wagons groaning under the weight of coins and gems and built Nightstone to be the seat of his new realm.

The farming fiefdom of Roodhondyn flourished while its founder lived but was torn by civil strife when the Redhand died at a ripe old age. Factions led by his hot-tempered, young second queen, his three grown sons, and his lord marshal of the guard in the name of Redhand's oldest child (the Lady Ismrelle) all drew swords and fought for the Redhand's throne. Soon, the contested throne was black with blood. When the struggle finally ended, Queen Ismrelle was a scarred wreck attended by a handful of faithful retainers on a lone farm near Nightstone Keep. The forest had taken over all of the deserted farms that now stood in what had once been Roodhondyn — for everyone else was slain or fled. Then, the sickness came. A brown, fuzzy growth crept along the walls, ceilings and finally the floors of the keep's cellars, making folk cough and choke, leaving them ultimately unable to draw deep breaths. They ended their days as feeble shufflers.

In the end, Ismrelle and her few attendants packed a last wagon and departed for lands to the south, abandoning Nightstone to bandits, roaming beasts, and the elements. The bravest woodcutters and foresters explored the keep from time to time, finding large caches of coins and keeping alive the rumors of huge dragon riches still to be found, but no one tried to live in the keep.

These days, locals warn of giant birds that swoop from atop Nightstone's crumbling ramparts, snatching up and carrying off victims, so that now no one goes near it. Those still alive who have

explored the keep say the ruins aren't safe and that nothing worth taking is left aboveground save the stones.

Nightstone Keep

From a distance, the ruined keep looks like a stout, square black shaft rising out of trees and clinging vines, with crumbling crenellations featuring sharply pointed merlons that look like cracked and missing teeth. This unlovely tower is 80 feet square and roughly 120 feet tall. Its ground floor is windowless, with three floors above.

The vines are widespread but won't support the weight of even a child; they break off and crumple to the ground if any climber mounts them. None of the tree branches reaching close to the keep walls is large enough to support human weight; they bend and then crack and dangle in splintered ruin if any character seeks to use them to reach windows or higher points on the keep's walls. The walls themselves are deep black and polished smooth, even after the passage of so many years, and can't be climbed.

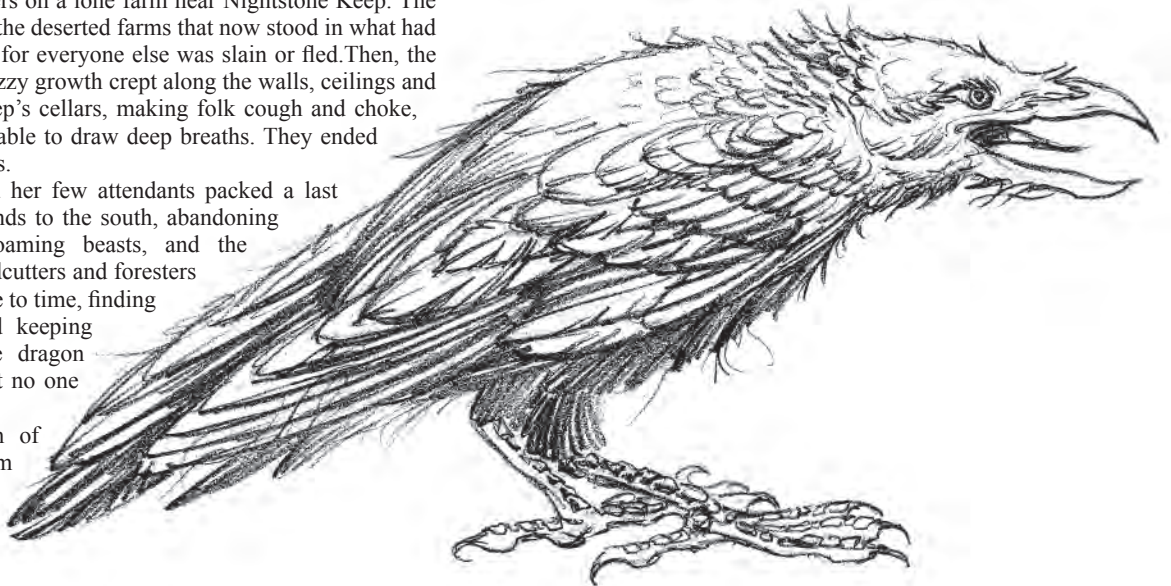
The keep's once-stout wooden doors collapsed into ruin long ago, and lie in spongy rotten heaps on either side of the opened entrance. There's a second open doorway on the facing wall of the keep that leads into a stone-walled, flagstone courtyard where wooden stable buildings long ago collapsed and vanished under the onslaught of trees, bushes, and vines.

The way between both doors is a curving route, because squarely in the center of the keep, blocking the direct way, is a massive central pillar of fitted stone blocks.

Death from the Skies

A mated pair of **carrion graw** nesting atop the keep see any characters approaching. The graw can't immediately be seen from below, as they lie on its roof with wings spread and heads down, peering out through the gaps where merlons have fallen away. The graws will swoop to attack as soon as any character moves into the open.

The graw have learned to keep clear of the plant growths in the courtyard and in the castle cellars, and now ignore them. They wait until characters enter the keep before pouncing, but then seek to disable





as many characters as possible, snatching them and flying them aloft to impale them on the battlement spikes to create a larder for later. Though they attack fearlessly, heedless of damage, the graw are neither stupid nor suicidal. A graw will fly away if it takes more than half of its hit points in damage, but may lurk nearby and attack again later as the characters leave.

The graw will attack with their beaks, but will attempt to grab any characters in heavy armor, or bearing weapons. Grabbed characters will either be dropped, taking 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage for each 10 feet fallen, or be dropped upon the spiked merlons of the keep. As described under the graw monster entry below, characters dropped on the spikes must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 13 (3d8) points of damage and be impaled. Impaled creatures are considered restrained and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to free themselves. Once free, the characters can move onto the roof of the keep.

If a graw is damaged by an attack while carrying characters, it drops its target down the hole in the courtyard adjacent to the keep. The hole opens into the arauglyd-coated Main Cellar below, inflicting 10d6 points of damage. They toss the bones of past meals into the same pit.

Inside Nightstone

The reason for the keep's name is obvious: It is fashioned of closely fitted, massive blocks of hard black volcanic stone mortared with a mud, lime, and salt solution scorched with fire to fuse the mortar and create a seamless surface. A typical block is 2 feet wide and high, and 4 feet long, and is heavy enough to take two strong humans to shift, and three to lift and carry. The walls are very solid.

Ground Floor

The western half of this vast open room (its stone ceiling is 50 feet high) is given over to the curving wagon-way between the two large doors, a way that bends around the central stone block pillar. On this level of the keep only, the stone stairs upward do not wind around the pillar; they climb around the inside of the east wall, up to the feasting hall above. Under their loftier reaches, there's a hole in the ground floor where a smooth, wide, and not very steep stone ramp descends into the Main Cellar, underground. Nothing much is left of the stout wooden trestle tables and benches that formerly furnished this level. These rotted into the

Unstable Floors

The keep's floors are far less sturdy than its walls. Floors above the ground level are made of flagstones laid atop boards resting upon once-stout timbers thrust into cavities in the keep walls, and running to rest on cross-beams supported by a central stone-block pillar (around which the keep's central stone-block stair spirals).

Unfortunately, the cross-beams are rotten and may collapse if combat occurs on them, if they are subject to heavy loads or shock, or if they are damaged by magic or area-effect weapons. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal the floor's instability, allowing the party to learn what will cause a collapse and allow them to take precautions.

If the floor does collapse for any reason, it falls in 10-foot squares (or more at your discretion). Any creatures in the affected area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall through the floor to the level below. The ceilings of all the chambers in the keep are 20 feet high, causing 2d6 points of falling damage to any creatures who come through the ceiling. Any creatures that fall through onto any floor besides the ground floor must make another successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or cause another collapse, then another, until the falling creature finally strikes the ground floor. The collapse of course creates a 10-foot hole in the floor of the chamber, and in the ceiling of the chamber immediately below.

ground long ago, to be replaced by now-shriveled toadstools and creeper vines. (It takes some time to rake through this refuse, but nothing of value is found except a lone, long-lost copper coin, a Suilleyn copper spoke.)

Feasting Hall

The keep's central stone support pillar, and the stone-block stair that ascends around it, dominate this large open room. The tables and benches that formerly filled the rest of the room (with a "high table" surrounded by six magnificent high-backed chairs, the grandest two at either end of the table) are all now mere rotten traces on the floor. Nothing of value is here.

Throne Room

The keep's central stone support pillar, and the stone-block stair that ascends around it, dominates this big, open room. Centered along the east wall is the feature that was intended to dominate the room: a tall, narrow stone throne blackened with old bloodstains that stands at a lean, facing west down the room but listing to the south. The floor underneath its southern side hasn't collapsed yet, but is well on the way to doing so thanks to earlier adventurers pulling out some stones under the throne in search of hidden treasure. A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal that the floor is even more unstable than the rest of the keep. If any party members enters the unstable area there is a 70% chance of collapse. Anything of value in this room has been long since taken.

Royal Chambers

This floor is the only level of the keep divided into rooms. Stone walls box in the stair around the central pillar so climbers can't see into the rooms around. The stair landing is part of this central room. A door — now sagging open, well on its way to collapse and easily broken through — separates it from a receiving room running the length of the southern wall of this floor. The Receiving Room holds two long toadstool beds along the south wall that are home to slithering, hissing snakes and scuttling spiders. These creatures are harmless. The toadstool patches were once long, overstuffed couches, but long ago sagged to the floor and rotted to become rectangular festering lumps. Three candle-wheel lanterns spaced down the room hang on rusty chains from the ceiling.

Two once-grand but now spongy-rotten closed doors open off the north walls of this room. The one to the west of the central stair gives into a Robing Room (wardrobe) that now contains racks of hanging black tatters of decay and stools that disintegrate if sat on. The chamber is home to many dead, shriveled-up spiders the size of human heads. The door to the east of the central stair opens into the royal bedchamber.

When the bedchamber is entered, no matter what the characters do, a trap springs: an array of rusty sword blades plummets from the ceiling on a chain to slam down to the floor inside the door, filling the entire 10-foot-square area there. Luckily for the characters, the blades, grid, and chain are all on the verge of disintegrating, and fly apart in a cloud of dust and rust flakes upon impact, doing no damage but possibly, at your discretion, triggering a floor collapse. The door faces the ruins of a huge and once very grand four-poster bed that now lies in rotten collapse atop a crushed human skeleton (an unfortunate adventurer killed by the falling bed when it collapsed atop her as she was crawling under the bed to reach a coffer behind a chamber pot). Two skeletal legs, still clad in a few scraps of leather that were once boots, protrude from under the foot of the bed.

Quite useful and still sturdy, the chamber pot miraculously survived uncrushed, and is a human-head-sized brass pot with two handles and a rim "seat" cast of solid brass, worth at most 25 sp. The coffer was roughly chopped open by a subsequent searcher and whatever it held was carried off.

Battlements

The stair up to the keep's roof once ended in a wooden trapdoor sheltered by a wooden-hood "weather shed" that kept rain and snow at bay, but both trapdoor and hood are now crumbling husks. The carrion graw haven't disturbed either, but have covered the rest of the roof with their foul-smelling white droppings, and small bones from meals that began as creatures smaller than human size.

A human-waist-deep tangle of branches and twigs that serve the carrion graw as a nest cover the east end of the roof. Clambering around atop this is a slow struggle. Many of the pointed, fanglike merlons of the keep's crenellations have broken off and fallen, but those that remain are quite sturdy. Characters can use them to anchor ropes and climb down without them cracking and giving way — though climbing down the outside of the keep while either of the carrion graw can still fly is suicidal. The carrion graw delight in attacking such exposed targets.

Anyone falling from the keep's roof to the ground takes 12d6 points of falling damage. If the character instead falls through the existing hole in the courtyard to the floor of the Main Cellar, the landing instead does 14d6 points of falling damage.

The Keep Courtyard

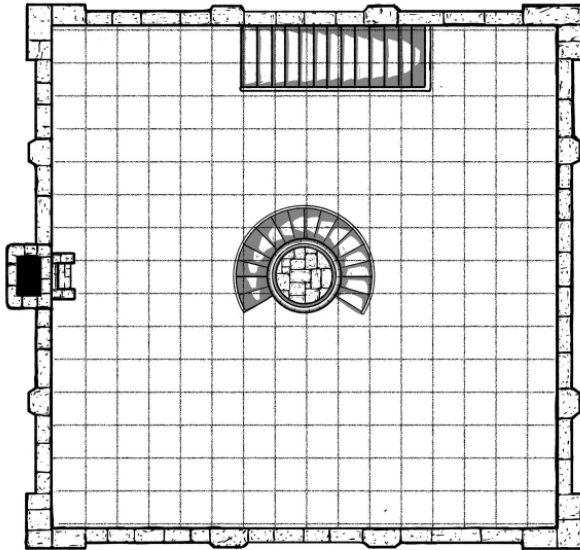
This overgrown, desolate unroofed area has a flagstone surface that has heaved upward in some places due to winter frost and tree roots in other seasons, and is missing — revealing dark holes down into depths below (the Main Cellar) — in others. Its rambling curtain wall isn't as black as the keep tower, and is in far worse repair. Trees have forced open several gaps, and in other places, the wall slumps over into untidy heaps of stone blocks.

Interior wedge buttresses located at intervals around the inside of the curtain wall also seem to have collapsed. If examined more closely, it can be seen that they all incorporate stone chimneys connecting to underground areas in the Main Cellar beneath. Vandals in search of treasure pulled the stones from these shafts, causing the chimneys to either fall out into the courtyard, or to fall in, collapsing down into themselves and choking off the chimney shafts. Dead, gnarled trees thrust up through some of the "fallen out" chimney gaps, their bare branches reaching for the sky like the finger bones of a giant skeletal hands.

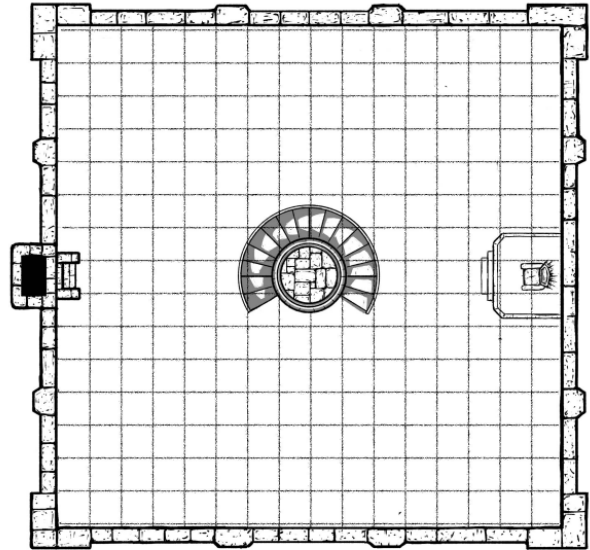
Character movement around the courtyard, especially near any of the existing holes, may well cause collapses (using the same collapse rules as the main keep), as more of the flagstone courtyard floor gives way and crashes down to the floor of the underlying Main Cellar (30% chance in most places, but 50% chance within 10 feet of any existing hole). The courtyard floor is 4 feet thick, and the cellar room is 16 feet high, so a collapse deals any falling characters 2d6 points of falling damage.

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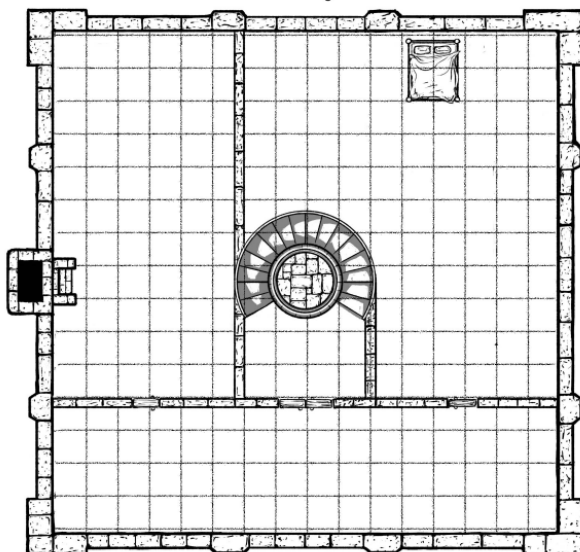
Second Floor: Feasting Hall



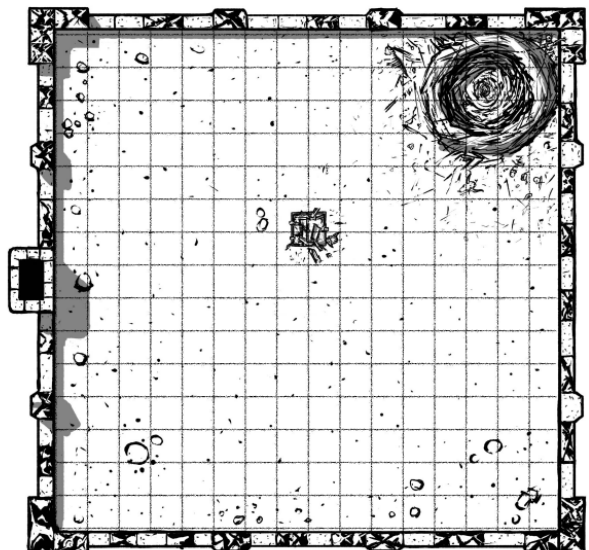
Third Floor: Throne Room



Fourth Floor: Royal Chambers



Fifth Floor: Battlements



Nightstone Keep

Upper levels

There are five giant-mushroom-like **glaur pods** standing in the courtyard, clustered around a huge stone treasure chest.

Two of the pods have intact, spread-eagled human skeletons (off which the pods absorbed all the flesh and tissue) stuck to their outsides.

The oversized “treasure chest” (a tall stone box with massive stone handles on either end, and a dome-topped lid) is actually a collective burial coffin for multiple people (the dead royals of Roodhondyn). It

contains their tangled, intermingled bones and no treasure. The lingering remnants of a failing preservative spell cause some of the bones to levitate and move together in midair as one skeleton tries to reassemble itself in an upright stance, shedding bones that aren’t part of it. But none of the five skeletons crammed into the coffin is undead, and if the standing skeleton isn’t disturbed, the magic fades and it silently drifts downward back into a heap of bones again.

Nightstone Below

Main Cellar

This large, irregular subterranean space has stone-block walls and 16-foot-high vaulted ceilings, but a floor of smooth solid bedrock. The air is dry rather than damp thanks to the ongoing moisture absorption of the fuzzy brown coating that is inches thick across the walls, floor, and ceiling — the “net” of *araunglyd*. The smell here is like very faint burnt toast (the smell of the *araunglyd*) rather than the more usual scent of earth or stone. All subterranean areas leading off the Main Cellar were carved out of solid rock, so their walls are relatively smooth stone, not stone blocks.

This cellar underlies the keep and part of the courtyard immediately west of it. There is a hole in its ceiling where a collapse occurred in the courtyard, flagstones and earth plummeting in the past to litter the floor after a latticework of timbers that held up the flagstones rotted (eaten by the expanding *araunglyd*).

Characters activities may well cause other collapses to occur precipitously (effects as described in the “Inside Nightstone” and “Keep Courtyard” sections).

The stone ramp descends into the Main Cellar from the ground floor of the keep, into a large open area. Around the walls of the room stand the stone benches and fire-blackened but long-cold hearths of the keep kitchen. Above the hearths are collapsed chimneys that formed part of the buttresses of the courtyard wall.

The “net” coating the walls, floor, and ceiling of the Main Cellar is a layer of fuzzy brown fungus, a carpet composed of star-radiating threads of mycelium emitted by the parent *araunglyd*. It now serves as a sensory net (through this extension, the main fungus can sense vibrations, see, smell, and hear).

Non-fire damage to the net in the Main Cellar, North Pantry, and South Pantry doesn't harm the parent *araunglyd*. If set aflame, the net melts away very slowly, producing thick, opaque purplish-brownish-white and evil-smelling (“like wet unwashed puppy stink”) smoke that does a breathing creature 1 point of damage per round of inhalation (no saving throw). Characters can't stop the burning except by dousing it with water, urine, or wine, or by cutting and scraping channels through the net so the burning part consumes up to the edge of the channel and then dies away rather than continuing on to burn the rest.



If the burning continues, and reaches the Deep Cavern, the parent *araunglyd* eventually suffers 7 (3d4) points of fire damage per round. However, if the characters don't take fire directly to the Deep Cavern, but leave the net to burn, the parent *araunglyd* is perfectly capable of sundering itself and withdrawing from the burning mass to let the fire “burn out” without extending farther. It can and does this repeatedly if necessary, and directs its spawn to concentrate attacks on the specific sources of fire attacks (i.e. particular characters).

Three **glaur pods** stand like giant mushrooms in widely separated spots in the main cellar. They do nothing unless attacked.

The Tentacle-Spider

On the ceiling of the Main Cellar, in the extreme northwestern corner but reaching out with its tentacles for 30 feet in all directions, is the dead, desiccated husk of a gigantic dead tentacle-spider of some sort. Its tentacles are suspended from the ceiling by rather elastic threads of mycelium that the parent *araunglyd* can extend and retract at will, to make the tentacles ripple and writhe, seeming to “crawl” along the ceiling toward the intruding characters. Detecting the spider as fake is difficult, requiring a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The main body of the spider is similarly suspended, so the entire creature can move slowly forward as if responding to the presence of the characters. The *araunglyd* is able to control this corpse like a marionette to try to scare off numerous or formidable foes — or in the case of groups of humans likely to unleash magic to “draw their fire.” The tentacle-spider corpse is very light (not much more than dust) and won't even burn readily; if it falls on characters, it may hamper their vision and movement for a round or two, but does no other damage.

North Pantry

This cavern was stripped of useful contents before Queen Ismrelle fled; just one large split and leaking wooden ale cask was left behind in its cradles. It's now a sad, rotting ruin. But behind its wreckage lurks a flight of 12 **speartongues**. They dart up into the air in a dozen different directions, scattering, before all turning and racing to attack characters, forming four trios, so 3 **speartongues** assault a single target at a time. The **speartongues** are under orders to concentrate on anyone using magic first, then anyone making use of fire (open flame, then any light source), then anyone using missile weapons. They fight to the death, pursuing until destroyed or all intruders are dead.

South Pantry

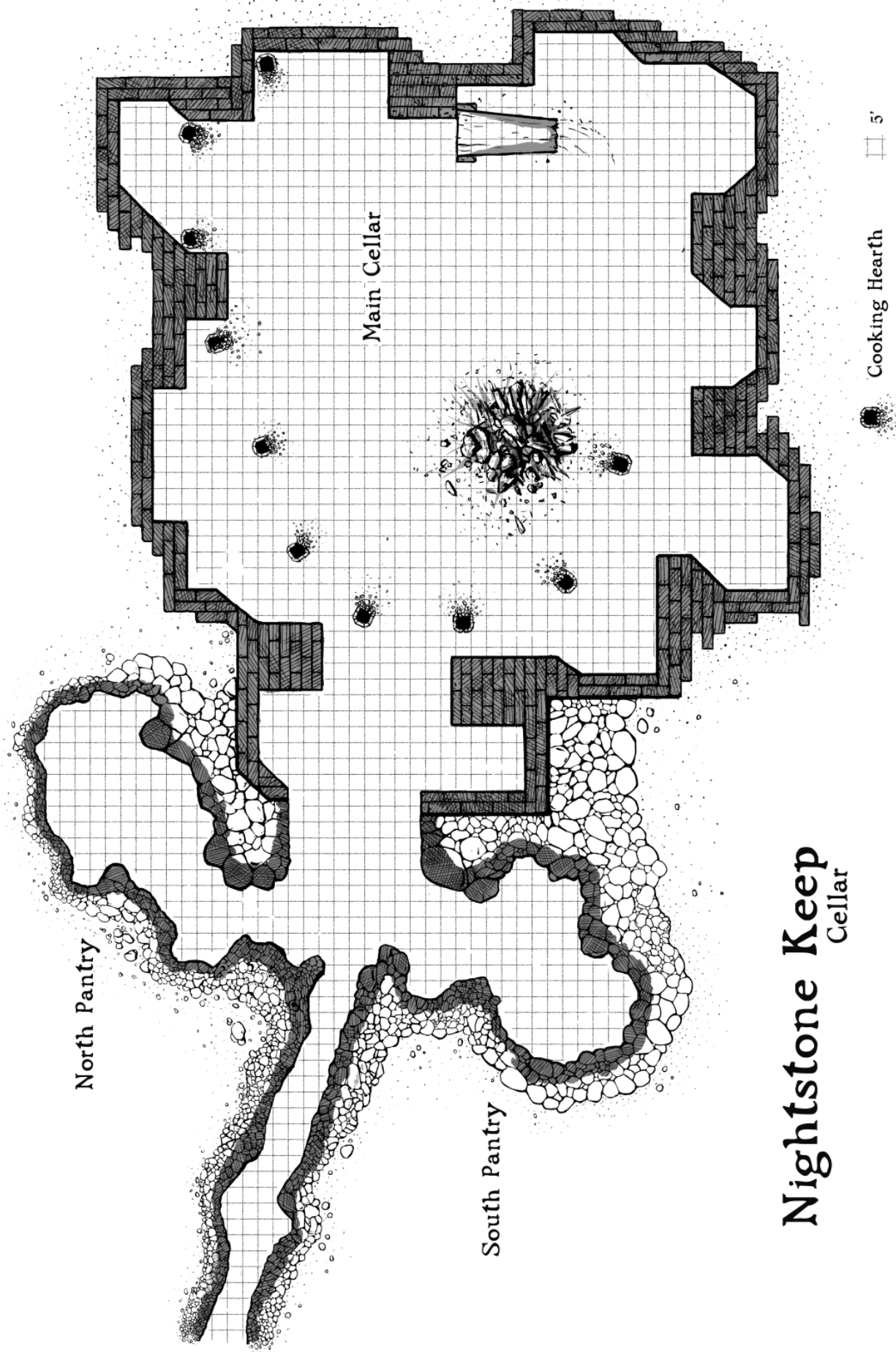
This cavern contains a neat row of seven sealed, 50-gallon wooden barrels standing on end, their widest hoops just touching. The moment any intruder enters the room, 3 **speartongues** soar up from behind the barrels and swoop to the attack (fighting to the death). The **tendrilled maw** then thrusts through the center of the row, sending heavy, spoiled-ale-filled barrels rolling in all directions. Characters can avoid them with a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw; a character struck by a barrel takes 7 (3d4) points of bludgeoning damage. The **tendrilled maw** moves as quickly as it can to the lone entrance to the room, trying to get to that entrance and block it as it turns to fight any characters in the cavern. The **maw** also fights to the death.

Long Passage

A **glaur guardian** hovers 60 feet down this passage. It slowly advances to meet and fight any intruders (other spawn of the *araunglyd* aren't “intruders”). Forty feet beyond is a second **glaur guardian** that follows the first and joins in any fray. These guardians fight to the death in the passage, but won't leave it; characters who retreat out of the passage or who reach the Armory, Oubliette, or the Wine Cellar are left alone, though the guardians watch them and attack anew should they re-enter the passage.

The passage ends in an oval chamber dominated by the stone statue of a human in plate armor, wearing a helm and gauntlets, who stands with

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his left hand upraised in greeting, and his right hand on the hilt of his scabbarded broadsword. The brown fuzzy “net” of the *araunglyd* entirely covers this likeness of King Redhand. Hiding behind it is a **tendrilled maw** that lashes out at anyone approaching the statue, and thereafter emerges to fight to the death.

Three archways open off this chamber: from the viewpoint of someone proceeding along the passage from the Main Cellar, the archway on the left opens into the Armory, the archway in the center opens into the Oubliette, and the archway on the right opens into the Wine Cellar.

The stone statue of King Redhand has a head that unscrews to reveal a storage hollow inside its torso. This secret niche can be located with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. A decaying canvas sack was thrust into this hiding place and contains 148 gp.

The Armory

This small chamber was emptied long ago of everything of value. What remains are spongy-rotten wooden racks all around the walls that once held multiple spears, swords, and quivers of arrows or crossbow bolts. In the center of the room lie two tilted rectangular piles of ruin that are the remnants of central tables where daggers, shields, and helms once lay, oiled and ready. These and the walls, floor, and ceiling are all overgrown with the fuzzy brown net of the *araunglyd* — and fist-sized brown spores (fuzzy brown balls with spikes sticking out of them in all directions) drift lazily in midair in this room. They are harmless, but the *araunglyd* senses if any are moved or damaged, and readies its defenders and traps.

If characters rake through the overgrown wrack on the floor, they find dozens of scurrying, harmless copper-hued beetles, both tiny and the size of an adult human palm, and three rusty links (hammered-flat iron rings, now orange-brown and crumbling) of chainmail.

Oubliette

Here, the net of *araunglyd* is particularly thick, for it fed on years of grease, dead pets, and human waste that had been tossed over the waist-high stone wall that crosses this room, into the pit beyond. This refuse disposal is an irregularly walled natural hole down into the depths of the earth (If you wish to expand this adventure, you could connect it to deeper caverns beyond), but the human inhabitants of Nightstone Keep never cared to explore it.

The *araunglyd* entered the ruined keep up the walls of this natural underground cavity. Now, 3 **tendrilled maws** lie hidden on the pit side of the wall, clinging to the stone verges of the shaft. They fling their tentacles up over the wall to lash out hungrily at any intruder.

The maws fight aggressively until reduced to 6 hit points or fewer, whereupon they’ll tug themselves to where they’ll topple down the hole, and fall out of sight (presumably to recuperate below, or perish and be absorbed by the *araunglyd*).

Any characters falling into the shaft by the maws falls 60 feet onto a stone ledge, taking 6d6 points of falling damage. The walls are slick with *araunglyd*; any characters trying to climb out without the aid of comrades letting down ropes must make three successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) checks to climb out of the shaft. Failure indicates that the character has fallen, taking an additional 2d6 points of falling damage and forcing the character to start over again.

The Wine Cellar

This cavern once stored many rundlets (small kegs) of wine to slake the thirsts of the Roodhonds, but they were all taken away, either when Queen Ismrelle abandoned Nightstone or by brave foragers since. Only the stone niche shelves that stored the kegs and kept them cool remain (around every part of the cavern except a stretch of its eastern wall), and they are thickly coated in the brown fuzz of the *araunglyd*.

A **glaur guardian** floats in this cavern, centered in front of the east wall and about 10 feet out from it. It guards that section of east wall. It watches characters who investigate the shelving, but does nothing. However, it fights any who try to get past it to reach what it is guarding: a natural

spring of clear, potable water that trickles out of the east wall near the ceiling, into a carved-out stone basin, then drains away into the depths of the earth. The basin cut out of the floor was enlarged until the seepage rate out of the floor exactly kept pace with the flow of the spring, so the basin is always full. Almost 20 rotten wooden buckets stand on the floor here adjacent to the basin. They were once used to ferry water wherever it was needed in Nightstone, but have long since moldered, abandoned.

A plain, unlocked wooden door set in a frame is on the east wall beside the spring.

If characters open it, they discover that the door is concealing (and controlling access to) a natural rent or fissure in the stone wall where the Wine Cellar cavern was naturally connected to deeper caverns beneath the earth. From the Wine Cellar, the way leads on (via a damp, sloping natural passageway).

Descending Passage

Sixty feet from the Wine Cellar, the rough-walled natural passage descends about 10 feet, and crosses a fault in the rock, a four-inch-wide crack crossing the passage. The ceiling of the passage fell away along the fault long ago. Someone subsequently cleared away the rubble, so that what is left now is a four-inch-wide crack crossing the passage floor and in either wall — and a half-conical cavity in the passage ceiling, its “straight” wall being the deeper side of the fault (the direction the passage is descending, away from the Wine Cellar). This cavity is 20 feet high and only inches wide at its top, but down where it meets the passage ceiling, it is 20 feet across, which is plenty of room for a **glaur guardian** to hover here, up in the half-cone above the passage, waiting to attack intruders in the passage beneath it.

Upper Cavern

Forty feet deeper than its floor at the cleft, the Descending Passage opens out into this large, irregularly shaped natural cavern. The rock is limestone, and the floors and ceiling are hundreds of long, slender, fanglike stalactites and stalagmites. The thick, brown fuzziness of the *araunglyd* coats all of them.

In the many clefts among the stony fangs lurk 20 **speartongues**. They remain motionless, looking like tiny stalactites among all the real ones, until the foremost intruding characters are near the center of the chamber (unless only one character ventures forward to explore; in that case, they’ll wait until two or more have passed the midpoint of the cavern).

All then dart down to attack in unison, swarming intruding characters from all sides, and fighting until they or all intruders are destroyed (they pursue retreating characters all the way to the surface and beyond, if need be).

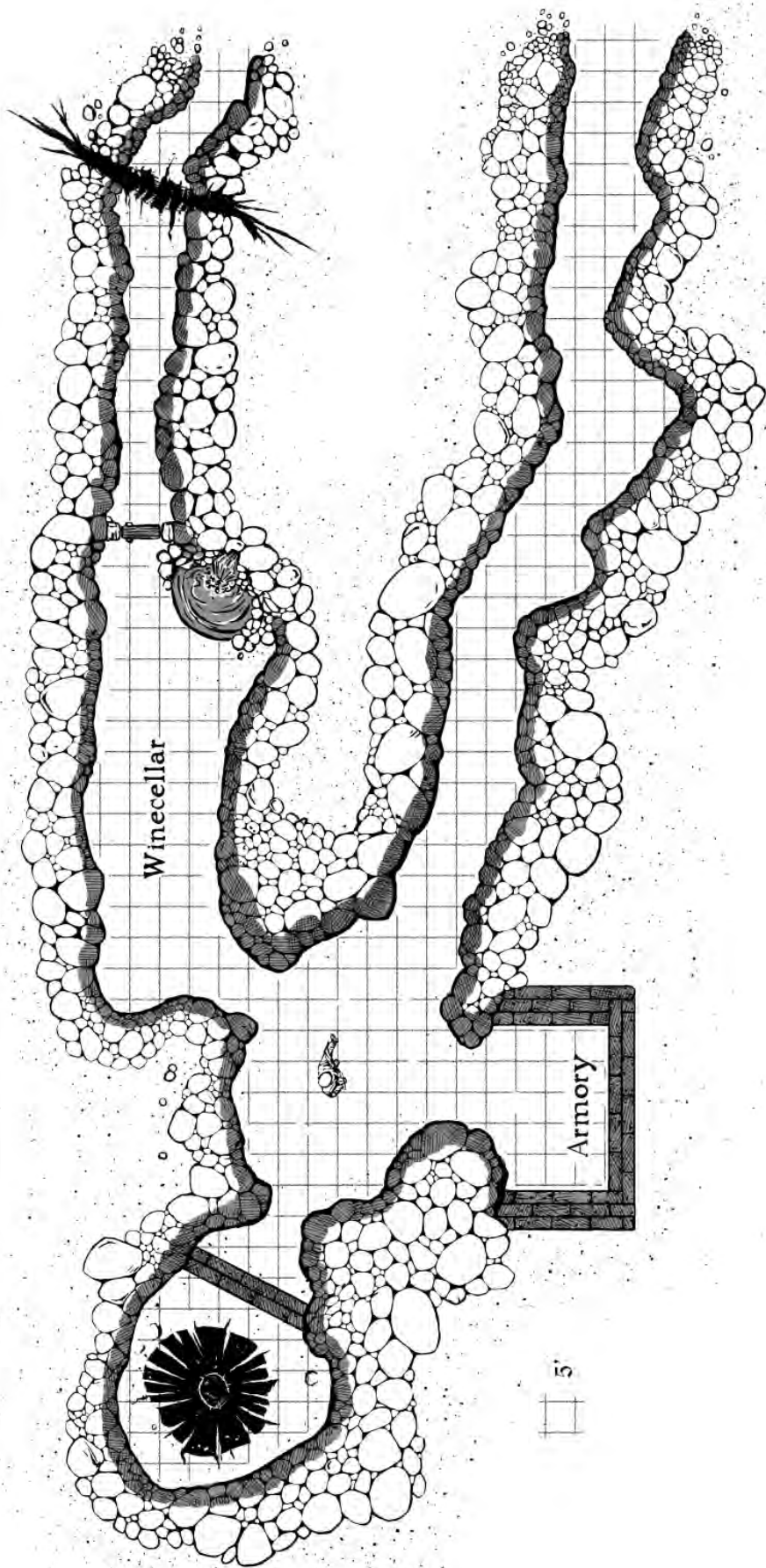
In some places, the *araunglyd* arranged its net in a double layer, so intruders who enter the wrong area and disturb the mycelium threads hidden in the brown carpet beneath their feet trigger a fall of thick, clinging fungus in which fragments embedded with pieces of broken stalactites. Creatures caught in this net must make a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded and pinned. Each round trapped creatures must make a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) points of fire damage from the searing effect of the *araunglyd*’s dust. On a success, the trapped creature takes half damage. At the end of their rounds, trapped creature can attempt a DC 11 Strength check to free themselves. Untrapped creatures can clear a 5-foot square of fungus each round.

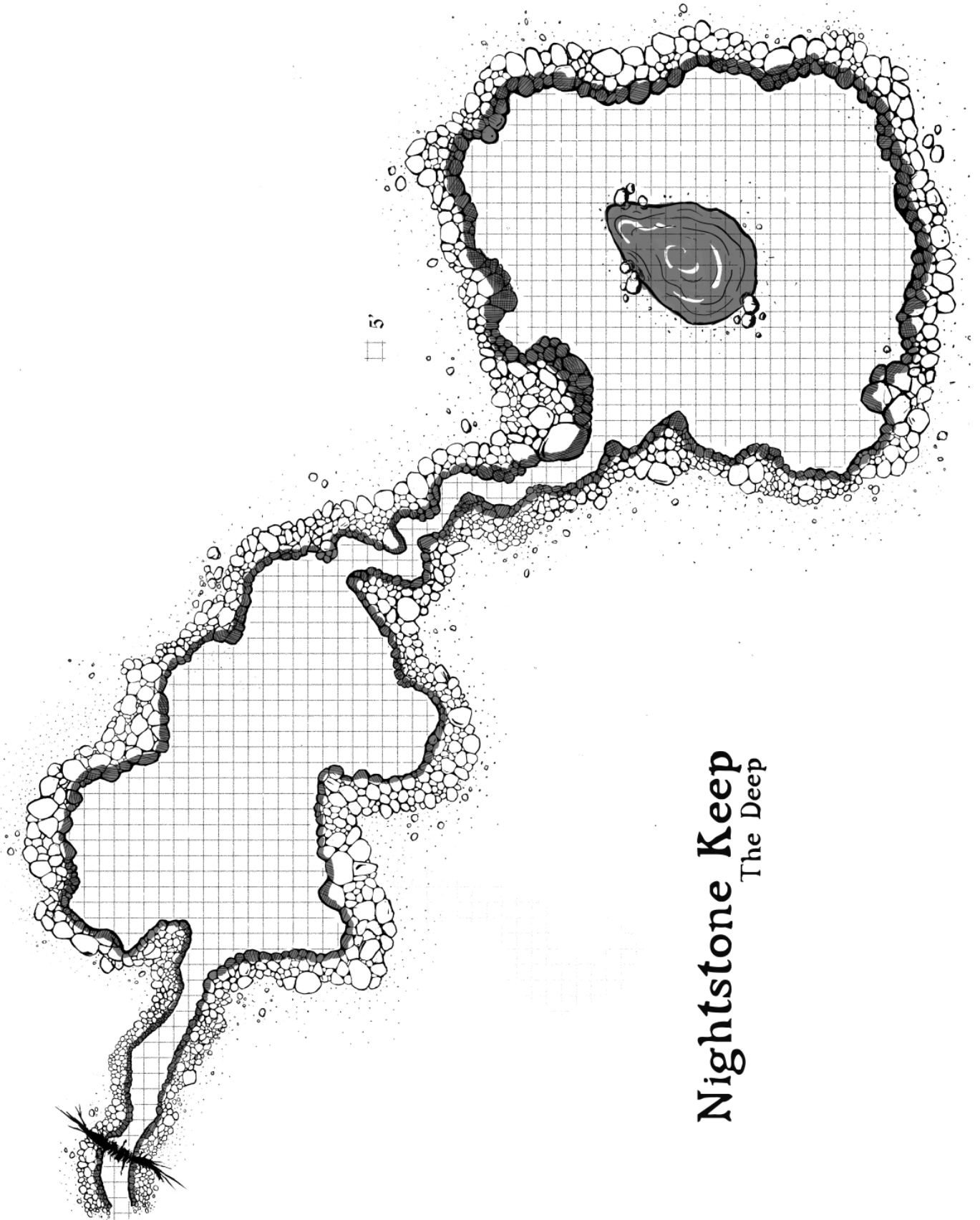
The *araunglyd* coats dead, immobilized or trapped creatures in its net, and slowly (over a period of days) drains their bodily fluids, causing them to end up as shriveled empty skin over bones, and then just bones.

In other places in this cavern, the floor falls away in deep cavities, but the *araunglyd* has spread itself to cover these pits — and even shaped false stalagmites of itself, which can be discerned with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Any intruder stepping into these areas of the ever-present brown fuzzy carpet of fungus must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall through the fuzzy brown fungal carpet into the pit — the bottom of which is furnished with natural stalagmite “spikes” — so they’ll suffer 2d6 points of falling damage plus 11 (2d10) points of piercing damage.

From the Upper Cavern, a narrow, winding passage descends steeply into the Deep Cavern.

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Oubliette





The Deep Cavern

This cave lacks stalactites and stalagmites. It does have several pits in the floor, but these are hidden under the brown fuzzy net (see “Sucking Pits,” below.) The main **araunglyd** thickly carpets everything here — walls, floor, and ceiling — up to 4 feet in depth, for this is its main body.

In the center of the cavern is a natural pool of upwelling water that the araunglyd absorbs as it needs moisture, providing it with resistance to fire.

The araunglyd fights to the death, extending pseudopods from the ceiling and floor behind the characters for its initial slam attacks and trying to propel characters into each other to hamper spellcasting and weapon use. It fills the air with swirling spores, giving itself cover, and ripples itself underfoot constantly, forcing characters who are not standing on bedrock to make DC 10 Dexterity saving throws each round or fall prone.

If the characters do not threaten the araunglyd with fire or lightning, it manages to spontaneously spawn a **glaur guardian** in the sixth round of combat, and another **glaur guardian** in the twelfth (spawning doesn’t sacrifice any of the main araunglyd body’s hit point count, because it’s been calling on the gem to power growth of these spawn within it).

Sucking Pits: The araunglyd conceals four pits in the cavern floor. Whenever a character steps into one, the araunglyd surges up around him like a fist and yanks the characters down. The characters must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the attack. On failure, the target is engulfed.

The araunglyd also uses its decoy ability to lure characters toward the sucking pits and to spread them apart so they can be attacked separately and overwhelmed.

The araunglyd keeps the part of itself that’s firmly wrapped around the *gem of vitality* submerged in the pool. Only after it is reduced to half of its total hit points will it be thinned enough that the glow of the gem becomes visible, glimmering up through the water. Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) will notice the gem in the pool. This particular *gem of vitality* is mounted in a silver-alloy-coated harness of steel that holds it securely without gripping it hard, in a cage that has multiple rings built into its frame through which chain “straps” have been threaded (and bolted, to prevent them being pulled out of the rings). It can be worn by a human on chest or back, or strapped to them as they lie wounded on the ground or in a bed or litter.

The araunglyd is wrapped around the *gem of vitality*, and is drawing on its magic to grow and expand itself, so it has no intention of surrendering the magic stone. In addition to its normal regeneration of 10 hit points per round, it recovers 1d4+1 lost hit points per round as long as it remains in contact with the gem.

The araunglyd can regenerate, and learns from its experiences. If it’s sorely wounded by an initial battle against adventurers and thinks survivors may soon return with reinforcements, it raises barriers, increases traps, and retreats behind layers of its own guardian spawn. However, it will not abandon the caverns beneath Nightstone, for it considers them an ideal lair.

If at any point a character is engulfed but gets free, or falls asleep in contact with any part of the araunglyd net, you may elect to have a few stealthy spores of araunglyd creep into the character’s ears and be carried along inside his body. It is expelled with human waste when it is in a locale it desires to spawn new colonies of itself — traveling characters can unwittingly spread scores of future foes to fight — foes that expand and grow remembering them, and planning for their doom.

Appendix A: New Creatures and NPCs

Araunglyd

Araunglyd can grow to vast sizes, given enough matter (animal or vegetable, including rotting and bone) to feed upon. They are most often found in damp, dark or dimly lit environments, are sentient colonies that

behave like a lone creature because their telepathic minds are diffused throughout their substance (rendering them immune to mind-affecting effects), and resemble a fuzzy mottled brown carpet or heaped mass adhering to walls, floors, and ceilings of surroundings, moving along (usually in slow silence). They attack by slamming with pseudopods they raise up from their amorphous body mass, and they can shift the hue of various parts of that mass to match surroundings (such as gray stone and dark tree roots or bark).

Araunglyd are in constant telepathic communication with all of the creatures they have spawned if those plants of their colony are within telepathic range. An araunglyd parent has a range that it can reach out with that far outstrips the range of its attendant spawned plants to reply to it. The parent can give two sorts of commands: “standing orders” that govern what spawn do when out of telepathic contact, and the frequently-updated direct orders given by the araunglyd in light of what it can see through the eyes/minds of its spawn.

Most araunglyd want to be left alone by intruders wielding fire or lightning, and by other sentient plants (which they “warn off” telepathically, often sending mental images of possible harm or destruction from means that the araunglyd can’t bring about, but which it knows the recipient will fear). Conversely, they want to lure creatures and mobile plants they can readily feed on to them, and sometimes send subtle telepathic suggestions and images to do so. They far more often remain silent and have the movements and behavior of their spawn do any luring for them by attracting the attention of sentient intruders, intriguing those intruders, then “leading” the intruders to follow them into the “heart” of the area covered by the main body mass of the araunglyd (which can cover thousands of square feet).

If an araunglyd is brought to zero hit points, its regeneration ceases and it instantly dies, turning blood-purple and then black; it begins to shrink rapidly as it “sighs,” dissipating moisture into the air. It gives off spores that burst (pop) vainly and harmless and is eventually reduced to a browning stain on the ground.

The death of a parent araunglyd doesn’t harm its spawned creatures, which continue to carry out their last orders until doing so is no longer possible, whereupon any surviving spawn begin to think for themselves and become independent entities.

Araunglyd are spawned when glaur pods or guardians release spores, and their development takes years or decades. Developing araunglyd devote all their energies to eating and hiding, avoiding combat or damage as much as possible before they develop into full-fledged colonies.

Araunglyd

Gargantuan plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 310 (20d20 + 100)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +13, Perception +9, Stealth +10

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Camouflage. While the araunglyd remains motionless, an araunglyd can change its color to resemble surrounding terrain. In this state, it has advantage on Stealth (Dexterity) to hide in most terrain.

Decoy. The araunglyd can reshape parts of itself to resemble figures trapped in its net, including the ability for the decoys to move and gesture as if they were humanoids trying to break free of the sentient plant. It takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the creature. A target that tries to enter the

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araunglyd's space while unaware of the it is surprised by the araunglyd.

Spawn. When an araunglyd takes fire or lightning damage, a frantic reproduction cycle is triggered and it begins to spawn glaur pod and guardians. On the round after the araunglyd takes fire or lightning damage, it ripples and convulses, spewing forth 1d4 pods or 1 guardian (50% chance of either), shooting them into the air and then drifting in a direction of the araunglyd's choice. Guardians attack immediately after spawning while pods attack only after they have reached the ground.

Actions

Multiaffack. The araunglyd can make up to six slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 19), and the target is restrained until this grapple ends.

Engulf. The araunglyd makes one slam attack against a Large or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also engulfed. While engulfed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside of the araunglyd, and it takes 15 (6d4) fire damage at the start of each of the araunglyd's turns. An araunglyd can only engulf two creatures at a time.

If the araunglyd takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the araunglyd must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or release the creature, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the araunglyd. If the araunglyd dies, an engulfed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Carrion Graw

Carrion graw, despite their name, prefer to kill and eat prey; their name derives from their croaking call ("Graw! Graw!") and their habit of descending (like vultures) on battlefields to gorge themselves on the wounded, dying, and dead — and of leaving corpses to dine on later. They are burly, broad-shouldered birds that look like giant crows. Graw lair in high places, alone or in a mated pair (one egg will be laid per spring, hatches by mid-summer and is fed by the parents until fall, when it flies away as an adult to forge a life of its own). Graw have keen eyesight, are always alert, and react quickly. They fear nothing, but are canny fighters; if they aren't guarding an egg, they'll often flee a large, numerous, or persistent foe to show themselves briefly and draw fire (spells in particular) to wear opponents down, or await a chance that foes will be scattered, sleepy, or busy fighting others, before tarrying for a "proper" fight.

Carrion Graw

Large beast, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 104 (16d10 + 16)

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Evasion. If the carrion graw is subject to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the creature instead takes no damage if it

succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Actions

Multiaffack. The carrion graw makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its beak.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 13) if it is a Medium or smaller creature and the carrion graw doesn't have another creature grappled already. The target is restrained until the grapple ends.

Beak. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Skewer. Carrion graw instinctively try to drop their victims on sharp or impaling objects such as the limbs of trees. Once a carrion graw has a creature grappled, they will fly upward at maximum speed and then drop them on the nearest tree or other object that will impale the creature. Creatures that are dropped by the graw suffer 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet they fall, and an additional 13 (3d8) damage from impalement.

Glaur Guardian

Glaur guardians hang in the air like giant jellyfish. They are large, flat-headed blobs of a mottled yellow-brown hue, with the rough shape of an inverted cone, blistered all over with irregular pimple-like bulges. A "tail" of half a dozen stalk-like tentacles or tendrils of the same hue, with long, narrow leaf-shaped flattened ends, hang down from the unlovely central body. Glaur guardians "see" through their skin, and lack visible eyes. They fire spores from any of their pimples (determine randomly), and raise a random pair of tendrils to lash out with, extending these retractile tendrils as they strike (somewhat like a fly fisherman letting out line during a cast).

Glaur guardian spores are round, spiky varicolored brown globes of dust that burst on impact with any solid object, to reveal their gooey innards, and to hamper any creature they hit. Spore goo very quickly becomes tough and resilient when exposed to air; it can be used to glue items together if they're smeared with it and touched together in the round after the spore "burst"; thereafter, the goo is hard rather than sticky.

Glaur guardians are silent. They communicate telepathically with intruders only with a relentless repetition of "go away" that is often focused on trying to usher intruders away from whatever they're guarding (often a doorway or connecting passage). They communicate with their araunglyd parent, whom they serve, only when the araunglyd gives them orders or they emit a "dying shriek" of silent telepathic agony (which usually serves to warn the araunglyd of approaching danger).

Glaur guardians feed irregularly on animal flesh and tissue and plant matter through their tendrils, through a very slow dissolving and sucking process that leaves behind only bones. The can go for long periods without eating. If they want to remain in a spot against strong winds or prodding, they can exude a natural glue from their tendrils to adhere to rock walls or other anchors.

Glaur Guardian

Huge plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 120 (16d12 + 16)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

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Languages Telepathy 120 ft. with other araunglyd colony members only
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Levitation. The glaur guardian is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Spawn Araunglyd. If a glaur guardian is reduced to 6 or fewer hit points, it will disengage and flee to a dark or dimly-lit area and begin emitting brown spores that will eventually develop into another araunglyd.

Actions

Multiaffack. The glaur guardian makes two attacks with its stinging tendrils or one attack with spores.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or suffer 1 level of exhaustion. Only one saving throw is required if a target is hit by multiple stinging tendril attacks in the same round.

Spores. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw against the slowing effect of the spores. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. These effects last for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Glaur Pod

Glaur pods look like tall and “fuzzy” mottled brown giant mushrooms (they're covered in brown, dust-encrusted sensory hairs) that sway but remain upright as they drag themselves along on a dozen small, root-like tentacles. The tentacles provide locomotion and suck up water and nutrients from plants and dead animals, and on rare occasions curl around and drag along items at their parent araunglyd's bidding. They act as fighting defenders of the araunglyd that birthed them, spitting out grenade-like spores as their only weapons.

Glaur pods have a solid consistency when struck, but tend to bend around blows and tremble (a natural means of robbing attacks against them of some force). They give off a faint, sweet aroma like roasted nuts when damaged.

Glaur Pod

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Telepathy 30 ft. with other araunglyd colony members, 120 ft. with parent colony

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spawn Araunglyd. If a glaur guardian is reduced to 6 or fewer hit points, it will disengage and flee to a dark or dimly-lit area and begin emitting brown spores that will eventually develop into another araunglyd.

Spew Spores. If a glaur pod is hit for more than 8 points of damage in a turn, it spits out a caustic spore on its turn at the creature that inflicted the most damage against it. The spore bursts in a choking brown cloud (5-foot radius). A creature caught in the spore cloud must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Actions

Spores. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw against the slowing effect of the spores. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target

Speartongue

A speartongue has a cylindrical body with a needle-thin tail, fins, and eyes on either side like marine squids, but lack the tentacles of a squid. Their mottled brown bodies can shift hue to match surroundings, such as gray stone, though their eyes always remain white of sclera and brown of iris. Speartongues are darting, aggressive scouts and defenders of a parent araunglyd, highly mobile flying plants that behave like animals and are often mistaken for such. They are the only araunglyd colony plants ever sent outside the expanse of a colony to observe or fight. Flights of speartongues (known to some humans as “biters”) have been known to tirelessly patrol forest or swamp areas to deter intruders — or sometimes to lure prey, depending on the desires of the parent araunglyd they serve. The orders that parent gives them determine whether they fight fearlessly to the death, or flee if a fight goes against them — or if one flees right away to “carry word” while the rest fight until they or an intruding foe is eliminated.

Speartongue

Small plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 30 (12d4)

Speed 15 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Telepathy 120 ft. with other araunglyd colony members only

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiaffack. The speartongue makes two melee attacks: one bite and one tail slash.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Tail Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (3d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Tendrilled Maw

Tendrilled maws take the form of mottled brown amorphous blobs that ooze along the ground, usually maintaining a cylindrical central mass, one end of which juts forward (at the fore of the direction the maw is moving, or toward the direction the araunglyd that birthed it and that it serves has

directed it to face and pay attention to). That end is almost always shaped like an open, wide oval mouth (with huge protruding lips) or tunnel.

When a maw detects creatures not part of the araunglyd colony, the protruding lips unfold and lash out, revealing themselves to be 20-foot-long tendrils rooted in pairs around either end of the mouth. The tendrils slap and slam intruders, or sweep them within reach of the mouth — whereupon fearsome bone fangs (large, curved bones very like the ribcages of some monsters, with wickedly pointed ends) burst into view around the edge of the maw and nip at the intruder, inflicting damage, then retracting. A tendrilled maw may bite chunks out of a creature, but never grabs or grapples.

Tendrilled maws are created by an araunglyd as stationary guardians, and loyally serve their parent, becoming slow mobile hunters only if their parent araunglyd dies. If “freed” by the araunglyd’s destruction, they stay with fellow tendrilled maws, and hunt and forage as a group. Tendrilled maws eat leafy green plants as well as their preferred food: living creatures of any sort. When a tendrilled maw dies, its digestive acids typically dissolve the long teeth it keeps within itself, unless speedily carved out and immersed in water, alcohol or sap to dilute the acid. The eyes of a tendrilled maw take the form of many small orbs located around the bases of its tendrils.

Tendrilled Maw

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 135 (18d12 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Telepathy 120 ft. with other araunglyd colony members only

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The tendrilled maw makes up to 6 tendril attacks, and one bite attack against a grappled target.

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. The tendrilled maw can only grapple one target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target grappled by the tendrilled maw. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Appendix B: New Magic Items

Gem of Vitality

legendary

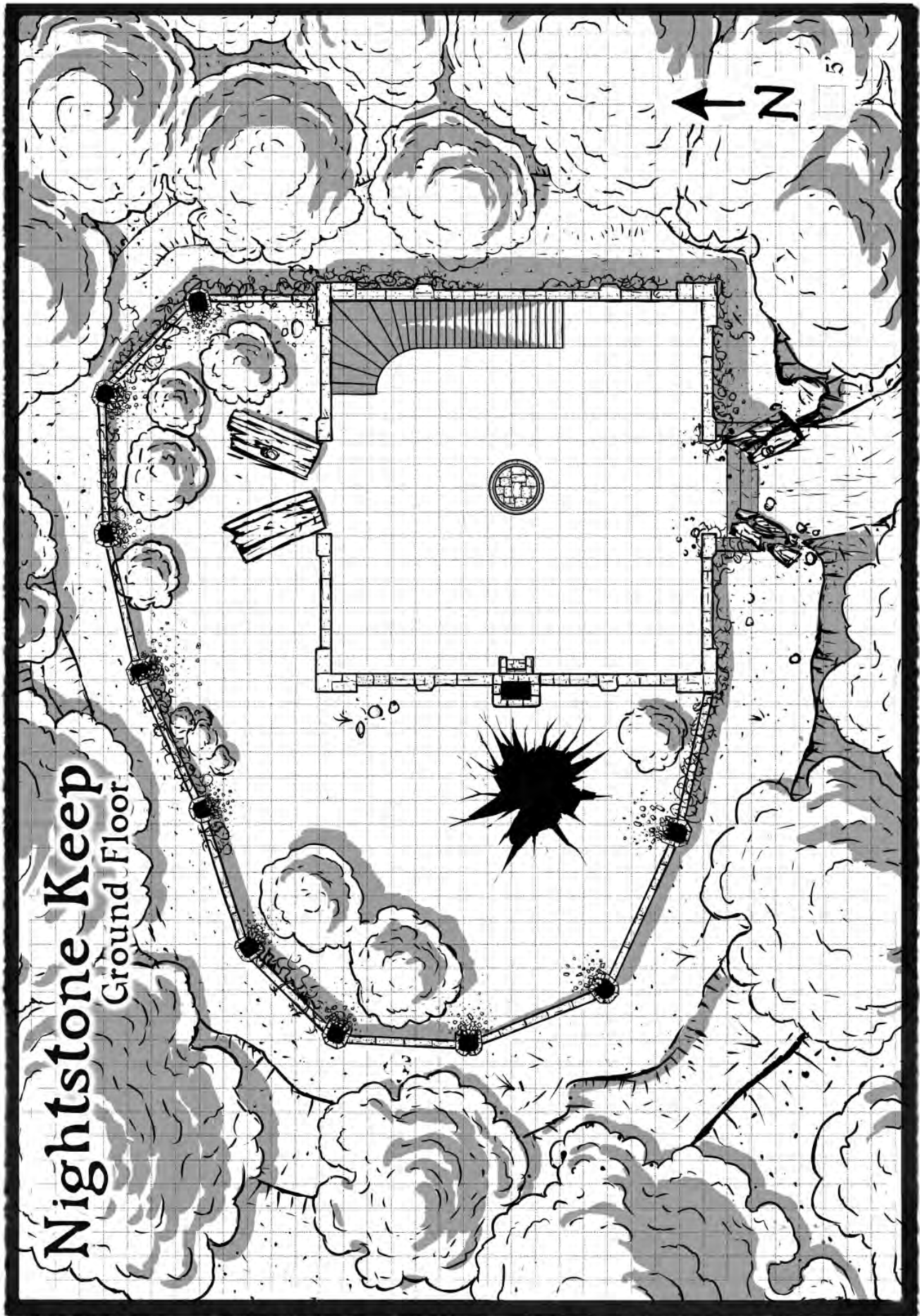
The gem has 50 charges for the following properties. It regains 4d6 + 2 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 20, the gem regains 1d12 + 1 charges.

Regeneration. While holding the gem, you regain 1d6 hit points every 10 minutes.

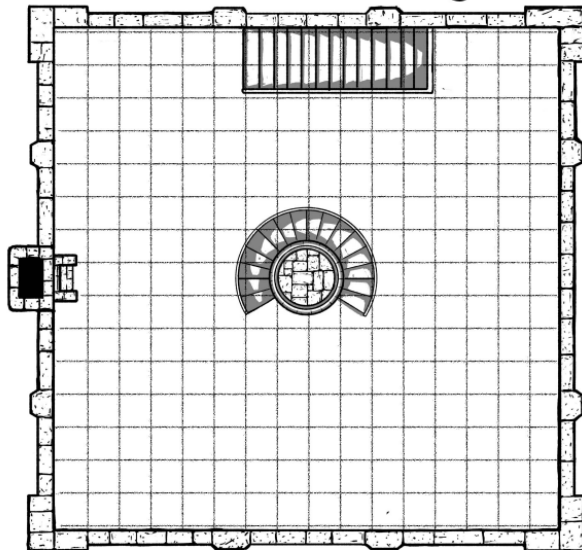
Spells. While holding the gem, you can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast one of the following spells:

- *Lesser restoration* (3 charges)
- *Greater restoration* (5 charges)
- *Cure Wounds* (6 charges, 3d8 hit points)
- *Revivify* (40 charges)

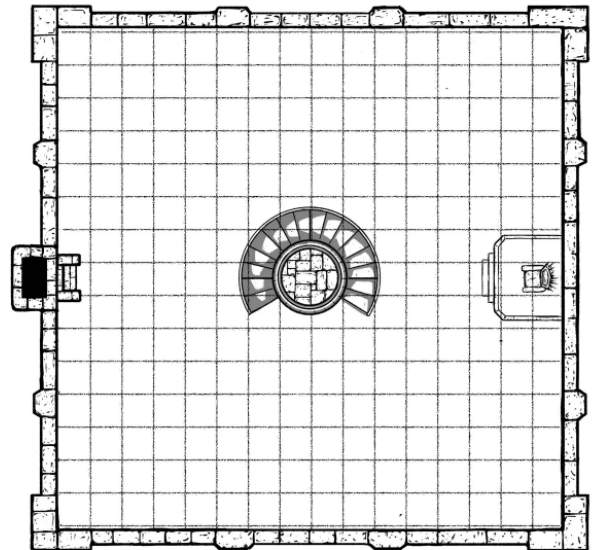
NIGHTSTONE KEEP



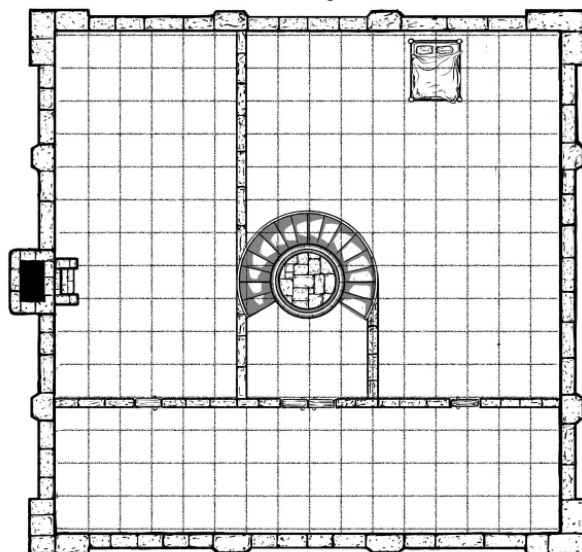
Second Floor: Feasting Hall



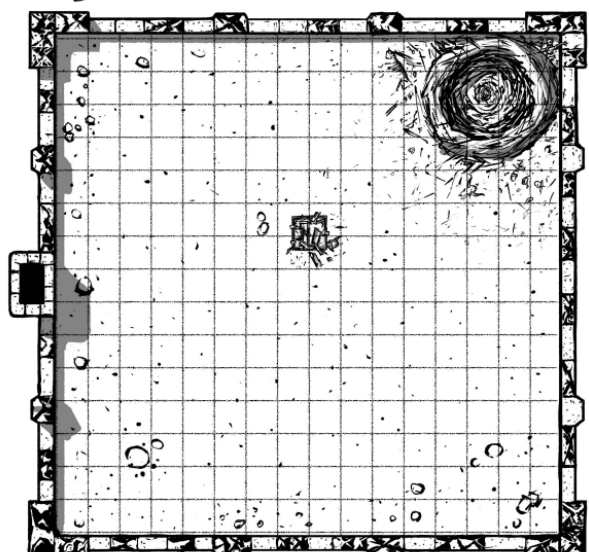
Third Floor: Throne Room



Fourth Floor: Royal Chambers

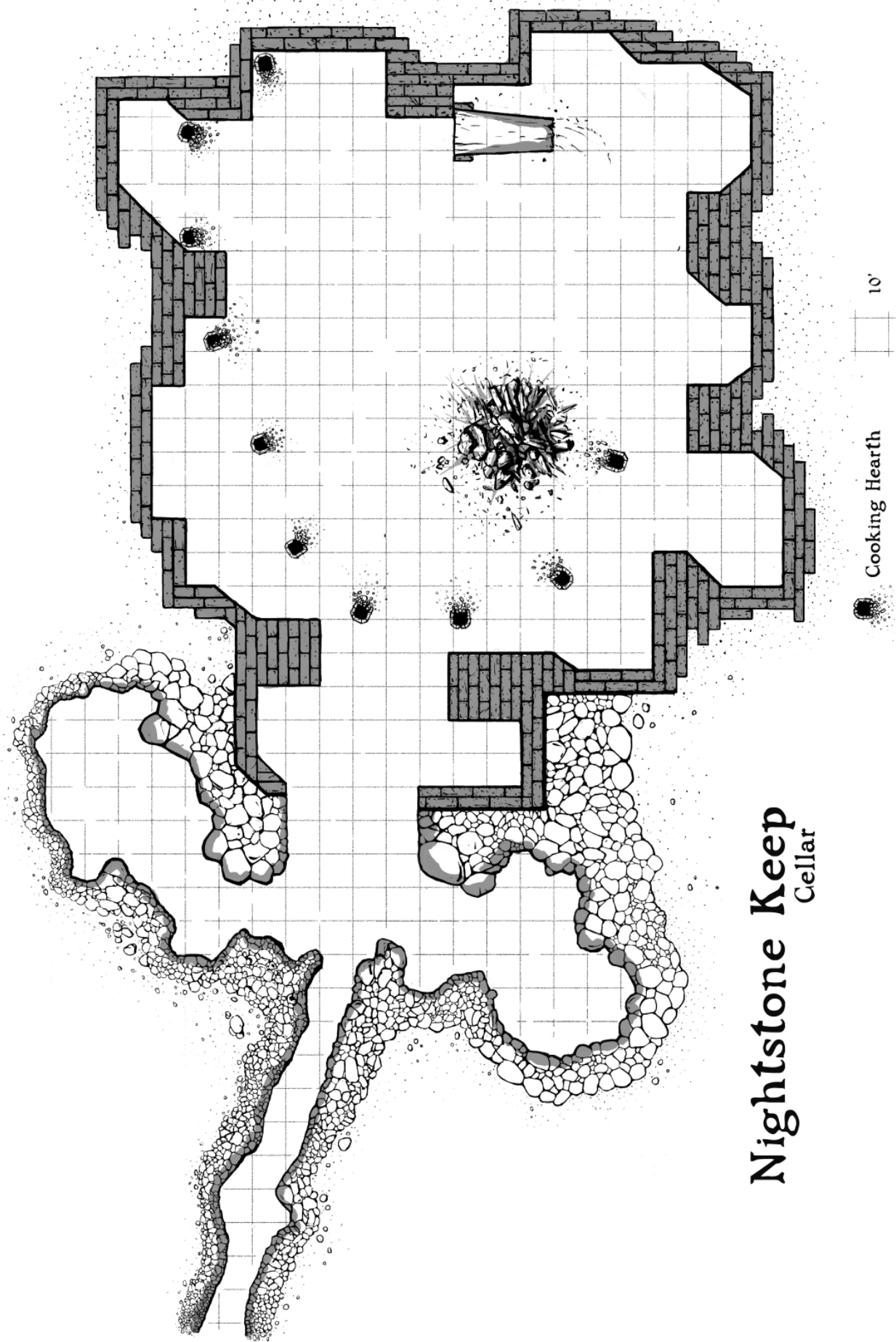


Fifth Floor: Battlements



Nightstone Keep

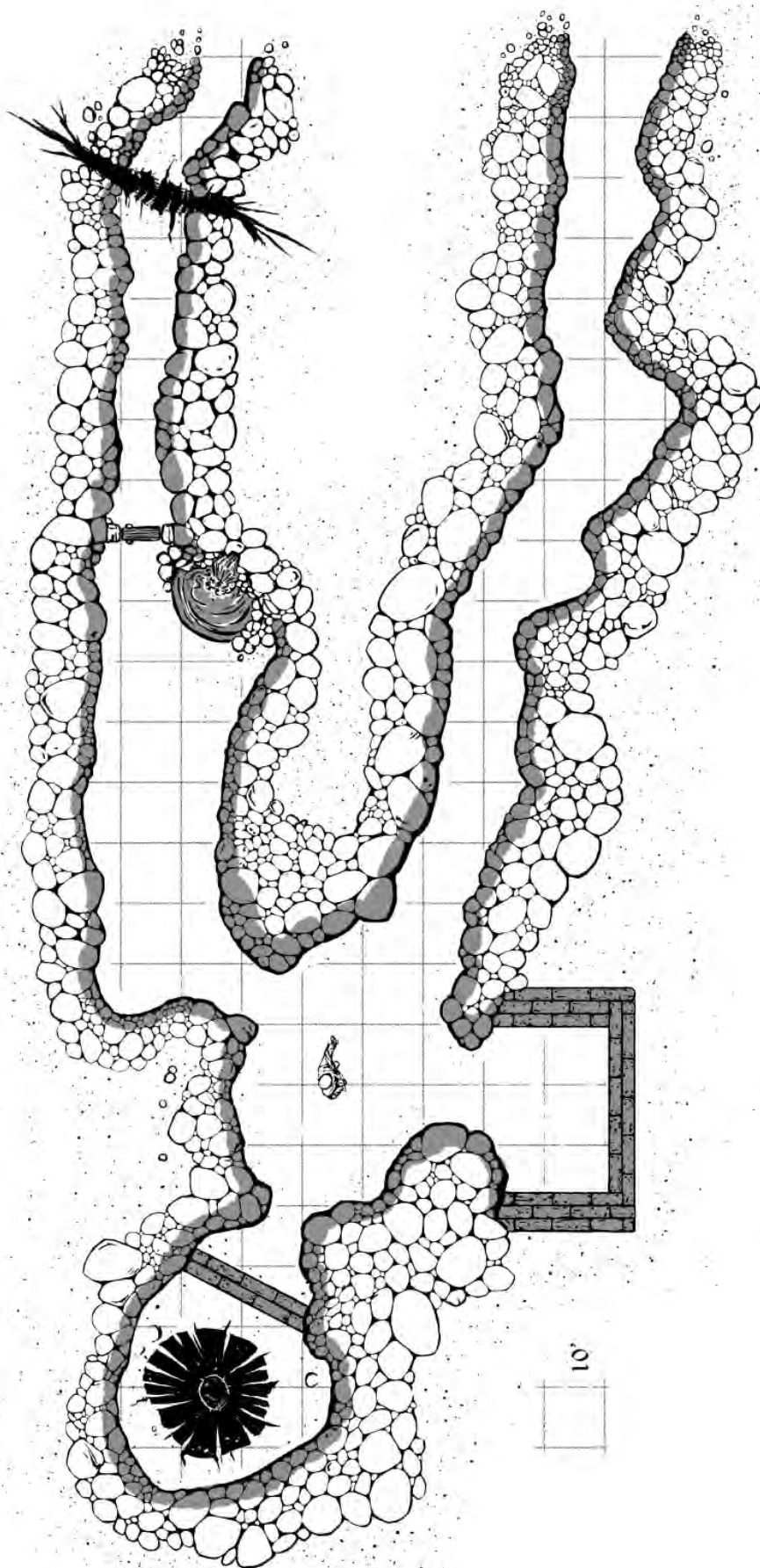
Upper levels

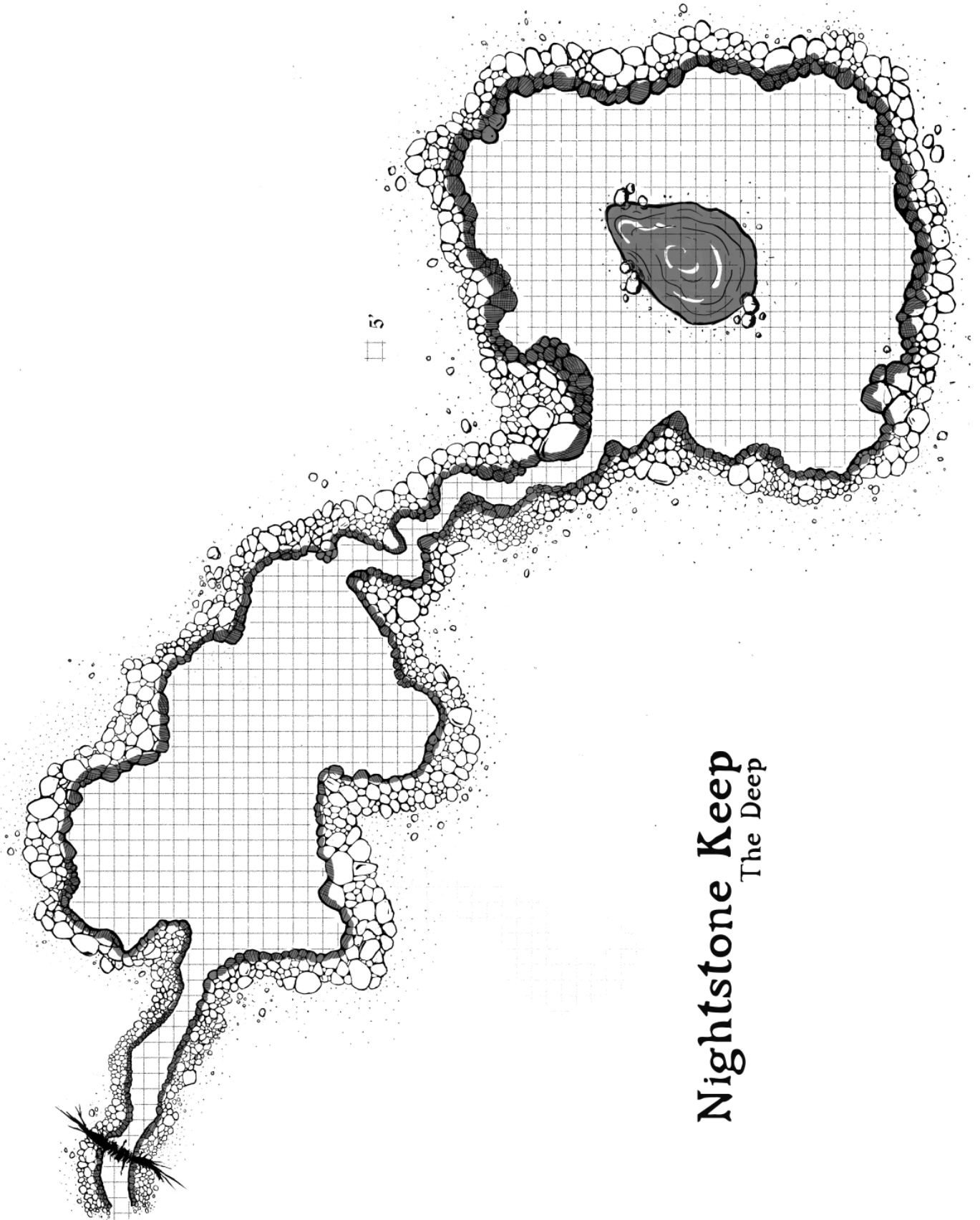


Nightstone Keep
Cellar

Nightstone Keep

Oubliette





Nightstone Keep
The Deep

QUESTS OF DOOM 4

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QoD 4h

Quests of Doom 4

Nightstone Keep

Nightstone Keep is a location-based adventure for characters of 6th to 8th level, and is centered on a ruined, long-disused stone keep in a temperate wild forest area (possibly not far off a caravan road or forest trail).

If you are using the Lost Lands campaign setting, Nightstone Keep is located in the northeastern extent of the Unclaimed Lands where they extend between the southern reaches of the Forest Kingdoms and the Glimmrill Run.

The Unclaimed Lands are detailed in *LL5: Borderland Provinces* by Frog God Games.



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