

WEB ENHANCEMENT:

The Lost

An adventure for a party of six 7th-level characters by Jeffery A. Dobberpuhl.

A free scenario for use with Monte Cook's Arcana Evolved by Malhavoc Press. Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Third Edition Core Books, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Note that this web enhancement starts on page 2; there is no page 1.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

To the west of the lands of the Diamond Throne lie the Bitter Peaks. These forbidding mountains are nigh impassible and contain the ruins of the dramojh's tyrannical rule. A tale from those days of woe tells of a legion of soldiers that marched against the dramojh. Known as the Red Walkers, they had many successful skirmishes before they reached the Bitter Peaks. That is when the legion simply vanished. Most scholars believe the legion was slain outright by strange and powerful magic. A few believe the Red Walkers entered the mountains and became trapped in the perilous peaks and died.

Fewer still believe otherwise, however. They think the Red Walkers entered the mountains and established a home there among their enemies, from which they could conduct raiding missions. On rare occasions, artifacts from that time can be found entering the Lands of the Diamond Throne, looking as new as if they were created yesterday.

Still, any reasonable person must question the validity of this tale. Why would anyone set up a secret lair next to such powerful creatures at the height of their power? How could any group succeed at such a task?

"The Lost" begins with the party finding a clue to the location of the missing legion of the Red Walkers. Players should not be able to easily ascertain much of the information contained here. Still, those able to tap into the akashic memory may be able to pick up some useful details. The DCs to questions not noted in the adventure should all be considered "extremely obscure" (DC 30), with relevant time penalties as well. If the question deals with the *stone krej* (see page 6 of the *Spell Treasury*), increase the DC by an additional 5, as much care was taken to erase the knowledge of them from the land.

The Red Walkers received their name because they fully expected to shed their blood on their march. They did, in fact, journey to the mountains, where they discovered, by accident, a nearly tropical valley magically sustained in the midst of the frozen peaks. Unbeknownst to them, the valley stayed warm due to magical energies seeping from the

The *Arcana Evolved Spell Treasury* contains hundreds of spells just waiting to be introduced into an existing campaign. Obviously, one can just add the spells as "now available," but that doesn't seem very heroic somehow.

The purpose of this adventure is to illustrate some possible ways to bring new spells into an existing campaign. Not all spell effects are available for players to use. Some are there to provide variety and challenges to the players, while others are there to add atmosphere and flavor to the story being told.

This short adventure, "The Lost," is a free web enhancement for the *Arcana Evolved Spell Treasury* by Monte Cook and Jeffery A. Dobberpuhl. While you don't need the *Spell Treasury* to use "The Lost," many of the spells referenced here come from that supplement. The scenario is suitable for any area of the Diamond Throne setting or any other *Arcana Evolved* or d20 System fantasy campaign.

The adventure presented is merely a skeleton for DMs to hang their ideas on. Feel free to modify the adventure as you see fit to better incorporate it into your campaign. Find out more about the *Spell Treasury* and get free supplements at <www.arcanaevolved.com>.



magic chamber beneath the earth: a chamber containing nothing less than the seventh *stone krej**.

The Red Walkers had taken on the symbol of the manticore, one of the dramojh's hated creations, perhaps as a symbol of defiance. They decided to establish a village in the valley.

They came to know the local region fairly well and made a point of keeping to their isolated settlement. On rare occasions, a member of the village would stray too close to the world at large and mingle with outsiders, or even perish; outsiders sometimes discovered their remains. Why they chose to stay isolated from the land outside their borders is unknown. It could be that magic energy from the *stone krej* somehow subtly altered their way of thinking, making them into additional (and unexpected) guardians of its secrets.

* *Legendary hidden tombs filled with lost or forgotten magic.*

LEGEND OF THE RED WALKERS

The party members can learn the story of the Red Walkers in a number of different ways. They could uncover writings in an ancient tomb, hear legends carried back with merchant caravans, or even experience a dreamlike vision sent by unknown forces. Here is one example.

ZERXER'S GIFT

The party encounters a verrik seer in an obscure shop located down a twisty dead-end alley. Read or describe the following to the characters when they first see the shop:

The alley you find yourself in twists and turns in unexpected ways. The cobblestones show years of neglect, and bits of trash litter the edges. Still, there are signs of life. This alley accesses a number of apartments, and many of the buildings have small storefronts on the ground floor. On one side, the smells of a bakery fill the air, and a display of treats is presented on a shelf in the window. On the other side, a cobbler's shop stands closed, with a sign in the window saying, "Back after funeral." And so it goes to the end of the alley.

Just before the alley ends in a brick wall, on the moonrise side, a dusty storefront nearly escapes notice to the casual observer. It has no windows, and the door is old with faded paint. Only the faintest of lettering appears on the door's upper panel: Zerxer's Rarities and Fortunes.

Entering the shop causes a small bell above the door to jingle. The place is very tiny (5 feet wide by 10 feet long) and crammed with oddities from all over the land, none of which seems especially valuable. Still, spell components and the like might be available here.

Puttering over a small brazier (about the size of a fondue pot) is an ancient man. His long white hair is neatly braided and hangs down his shoulders from beneath his black

silk hood. His eyes are yellowed with age, and the light of the brazier gives them an eerie, otherworldly glow. He is a seer by trade and will claim to have foretold the party entering his shop. The pragmatic Zerxer politely "tsk tsks" at any perceived foolishness. Clearly he takes his profession seriously.

Zerxer tells the group he acquired a set of copper plates, which he will give them freely, for reasons of his own. If pressed on this point, he cryptically states, "The stars have shifted in the sky, and it is time for the lost to be found. On this I can say no more."

The plates contain strange runes. The script can be deciphered via magic or a Decipher Script check (DC 30). One can use the akashic memory (DC 35) to analyze the runes and determine that they come from the age of dramojh rule and are military in nature. Once deciphered, the plates reveal themselves to be a much older telling of the Red Walker legend. The characters receive the following information from them:

- Around 1390 CY, a legion of soldiers, men and women known as the Red Walkers, marched against the dramojh's tyranny.
- They got their name because of their belief that they would see their own blood shed while on the march. Their symbol was a manticore, one of the dramojh's hated creations.
- They made it to the Bitter Peaks, home of their hated enemies, and entered the mountains.
- They established a mountain home and used it as a safe base from which to strike out against their foes.
- The camp was located about two weeks' climb into the mountains.
- Originally, the Red Walkers had some contact with the outside world, as stories of their military strikes became known.
- But then, all contact came to an abrupt end. No further word was received from the Red Walkers.
- Around 1408, just after the defeat of the dramojh, a map was discovered in the possession of those creatures. The map is reproduced on one of the plates.
- The author of the plates suggests that if the Red Walkers were at all successful against the dramojh, they may have untold treasures and items of power at their disposal.

Zerxer will not reveal where he got the copper plates. If forced to do so, such as by magic, he says they were delivered to him anonymously in a shipment of spell components.

If asked about trinkets for sale, Zerxer is willing to sell a scroll of three spells: *ability boost*, *cliffwalker* (*Spell Treasury*, page 55), and *levitate*. The cost is 500 "of the Queen's gold coins." Zerxer is also willing to read each player characters's fortune. Doing so costs "50 more coins of gold" per person.



Roll 1d20 to find out what Zerxer sees when he stares into his brazier (reroll fortunes so no two players get the same one). The seer makes strange gestures and whispers to unseen forces as he calls up visions. Any appropriate skill checks would reveal he is intuitively tapping into unusual divinations. Each vision leads him to offer a fortune to the character, and each fortune carries with it a game effect that lasts 60 days. Such effects are insight penalties or bonuses, as appropriate. The players do not necessarily know the result of his vision, only the fortune attached to it.

1d20 Fortune Result

- 1 "Rely not on brawn."
–2 penalty on Strength-based skill checks.
- 2 "A nasty fall awaits you."
–2 penalty on Dexterity-based skill checks.
- 3 "Your spirit is weak."
–2 penalty on Constitution-based skill checks.
- 4 "Your studies shall fail you."
–2 penalty on Intelligence-based skill checks.
- 5 "You will make bad choices."
–2 penalty on Wisdom-based skill checks.
- 6 "Beware of alienating others."
–2 penalty on Charisma-based skill checks.
- 7 "You have an inner strength."
+2 bonus on Strength-based skill checks.
- 8 "Quick hands make for quick work."
+2 bonus on Dexterity-based skill checks.
- 9 "A strong spirit lies within you."
+2 bonus on Constitution-based skill checks.
- 10 "Your mind shall be keen."
+2 bonus on Intelligence-based skill checks.
- 11 "Consider your options carefully."
+2 bonus on Wisdom based skill checks.
- 12 "New friends await you."
+2 bonus on Charisma-based skill checks.
- 13 "Be ready for sudden danger."
+2 bonus on initiative die rolls.
- 14 "A warrior spirit walks with you."
+1 bonus to melee attack rolls.
- 15 "The eyes of the eagle guide you."
+1 bonus to ranged attack rolls.
- 16 "The earth shall shield you."
+1 armor bonus.
- 17 "The night shall embrace you."
+2 bonus on stealth-oriented skill checks.
- 18 "You resist attempts to break you."
+2 bonus on Fortitude saves.
- 19 "You will avoid unseen peril."
+2 bonus on Reflex saves.
- 20 "You determine your own fate."
+2 bonus on Will saves.

PLANS AND HIRELINGS

Assuming the player characters decide to take up the journey to locate what is left of the Red Walkers, they have the opportunity now to prepare. They could seek out information on good travel methods, reports of dangers on the way, as well as ideas of what sort of climate to expect. Depending on where you base the party, the travel time could be months by foot. The PCs should feel free to establish a full expedition if they desire.

Men-at-arms can be made available to assist on the journey. It is recommended that any such hirelings be limited to 1st-level warriors with average skills. After all, the player characters, not their followers, are the heroes here. A typical wage for these hirelings is five deuce a day plus food and shelter (tents, bedrolls, etc.). Men-at-arms typically come equipped with a one-handed weapon and a leather jack. Missile troops are available at the rate of seven deuce a day and come equipped as above plus a light crossbow and 20 bolts.

Dividing one share of any treasure among the men-at-arms is considered a fair bonus. Thus a party of six would divide any treasure found seven ways, with the seventh share being divided among the surviving men-at-arms.

More unusual hirelings could be made available depending on the party's needs and desires. Such men-at-arms could prove to be invaluable for hauling away treasure, acting as guards, etc.

Adding hirelings can make an adventure seem cumbersome. If this is the case, limit or prohibit the use of hirelings. Or, have the hirelings act more or less as a group. Overall, it should be an enjoyable addition to the roleplaying experience. If the party treats the hirelings well, news of their treatment could spread and attract other followers (or rivals). News of ill treatment will also spread and have possible ramifications as well.

JOURNEY TO THE BITTER PEAKS

As mentioned above, depending on where the party starts out, the trip to the Bitter Peaks can be quite long. DMs can simply gloss over the journey with a statement of, "After many months of hard travel, you finally draw near the Peaks." On the other hand, one could structure a weekly roll for encounters.

It is possible that Zerxer told another group about the Red Walkers, or that another band of adventurers somehow found out about the party's quest. Having a rival group, perhaps working for malevolent or opposing forces, can be a fun diversion. Such a group could be shadowing the party or merely racing along from a different direction. Dropping clues that the party is on the trail of someone ahead of them (regularly finding campfires, similar tracks appearing on a too-frequent basis, etc.) may give the adventure a sense of immediacy.



ENCOUNTERS

Below are some possible encounters for the journey to the Bitter Peaks. Not all of them require resolution through combat. Allow the party to try unexpected and unusual solutions for any of these encounters. For example, if the characters are using good scouting tactics, they may be the ones who surprise the chorrim and his band (see Encounter 1), rather than the other way around. In that case, perhaps they can convince him to join them, leave them alone, or just avoid the encounter altogether.

After each encounter, a suggested encounter level (EL) is provided. You can pick the ones you prefer to run or roll 1d10 to generate one randomly.

1) A group of bandits, looking for quick profit, decides to try to ambush the party. The bandits are led by a chorrim outcast. Having fallen out from normal chorrim society, he is determined to prove his martial worth by any means necessary, even if it means leading a rag-tag mob of malcontents. (EL 8)

2) The party camps too close to an ancient battlefield. Once every ten years, a few of the dead rise from their graves and re-enact their battle. This happens to be the night they fight again. Depending on where the player characters are, they either can be mistaken for enemies (by one or both sides) or merely observe the grisly battle. Use the undead warmain from page 412 of *Monte Cook's Arcana Evolved* for the combatants. There should be one warmain for every three hirelings, as well as an additional 10 per side. (EL 10)

3) Obscured signs of a recently abandoned campsite are found by the side of the road. Tracks lead to the campsite, but none seem to lead away from it. The site apparently was used by a dozen humanoids, possibly sibeccai. But what happened to them and where they went is a mystery. (EL none)

4) A random hireling begins harboring a grudge against one of the party members over a duty or assignment he or she feels was unfair. The hireling decides to silently sabotage the food supply. A series of mysterious illnesses occurs, and the party must discover and deal with the saboteur. The disease is a variant of Sonish Sea Blight; see *Spell Treasury* page 62. (EL varies)

5) There is an opportunity to resupply with a nomadic band of litorians. However, the litorians are nervous about the party's intentions, having recently faced a series of bandit raids (maybe from the chorrim and his party in Encounter 1, above). The characters first must convince the litorians they mean no harm, and then must earn the nomads' trust in order to trade. Otherwise, the litorians may attack them to preserve their own band. (EL 8)

6) Strange noises accompany the party at night. These sounds begin to spook the hirelings, who start to slip away to head for more civilized lands. The sounds are actually made by some faen who felt the party was getting too close to one of their secret encampments. They made the noises using their innate *ghost sound* ability. If the party members can prove they mean no harm (based on the way they deal with the faen once they understand the situation), the faen



might compensate the party for their troubles with a few minor potions (about 300 gp worth). If the party was especially kind to the faen and wishes to stay at least two weeks, they will offer to teach the spell *slips* (*Spell Treasury*, page 191) to anyone in the group that is capable of learning it.

7) Traveling through a dense forest, the party is attacked by an insane treewarden (*Spell Treasury*, page 237). A magister summoned it via a *changestaff* spell. The magister wanted to use it to attack a village of alabasts, but the summoning was imperfect. As a result, when the magister died at the hands of the alabasts, the treewarden could not be “unsummoned.” The intense pain of the imperfect casting has driven it mad. It has slaughtered the village of alabasts and now directs its rage at the party. (EL 8)

8) A warband of alabast mage blades and warmains is investigating the loss of communication with one of their villages (see Encounter 7, above). They come across the party. If the player characters have any loot from the slaughtered village, the alabasts do their best to silently stalk and slay them, mistakenly believing they destroyed the village. (EL 9)

9) A hill contains the cave-lair of a mojh magister of strong learning (10th level) and extreme selfishness. It thought itself safe from prying eyes to conduct its research into the arcane. It views the PCs’ approach as a threat and begins to send summoned creatures after them from hiding, favoring summoned energy beings (*conjure energy creature* spells; see *Monte Cook’s Arcana Evolved*, pages 246 to 248). If discovered, the mojh uses its heightened *heat metal* spell (*Spell Treasury*, page 114) on the party to cover its escape. If they defeat it, the party can find notes in its lair for the spell *heat metal*. These notes will take six days of research and 400 gp in resources to reach the point of castability. (EL 10)

10) There is an earthquake, as described for a diminished *giant’s fury* with caster level 16th; see *Spell Treasury*, page 102. The quake sends the party reeling. It is a natural occurrence and does not appear without warning. There are slight tremors for about 30 seconds before the big one hits. If the party members take any reasonable actions to prepare, such as watching for crevasses to occur, seeking more stable shelter, etc., they receive a +4 bonus to any resulting Reflex save. In any event, there is a 20 percent chance per wagon or cart that the earthquake damages the group’s supply vehicles. (EL 8)

THE BITTER PEAKS

Once the player characters reach the Bitter Peaks, they can use the notes and map on the copper plates to find a path to the hidden valley of the Red Walkers. DMs should impress upon the party that the mountain journey is not easy and might even prove fatal. Narrow walkways, steep cliffs, and loose boulders all could cause the party problems. As a result, the group moves at one-half normal speed.

Additionally, the climate quickly becomes horribly cold. Parties that are not properly equipped to deal with freezing temperatures find themselves fighting the elements while traversing the mountains. Of course, the characters may have other ways into the mountains (such as flying) that make their journey much easier.

The area the party is traveling through is not completely uninhabited. Mountain creatures (goats, etc.) are visible occasionally, as are large birds of various sorts. While to the casual eye it might appear the party is following naturally occurring ledges and cleared slopes, anyone trained to spot such things will realize this is actually the remnants of a fairly well-formed trail. Indeed, certain places suggest that in the distant past this was a narrow road. Still, no fresh tracks or signs of civilized life are readily apparent. Some intelligent creatures do live in the mountains (see the encounters, below, for some examples), but they tend not to use this trail on a regular basis.

If the party insists on extremely diligent searches (reducing movement in the mountain pass to one-quarter speed instead of one-half speed), then on three occasions, a Search check (DC 25) reveals some small artifacts:

- 1) **A copper belt buckle.** Bits of leather are still attached to one end. The buckle has a raised image of a manticore on it.
- 2) **A rotted leather drinking flask.** The cold air has somehow preserved this flask. It is of excellent workmanship but very old design.
- 3) **A masterwork silver dagger.** It remains in excellent condition. The pommel is shaped like a man’s snarling face. The crossguard has a winglike style.

ENCOUNTERS

The party members might encounter any of the following diversions as they traverse the Bitter Peaks (choose or roll 1d6):

1) A small cyclops family (two adults and one child) established a cave home here, feeding on mountain goats and the like. They are actually peaceful but do not know the party’s intentions. If attacked, they defend themselves ferociously. If befriended, they may offer an unlikely base camp of operations. (EL 12)

2) Rounding a particularly sharp pass reveals two enormous statues of lizardlike humanoids carved into the face of the mountain. Each rests its clawed hands upon the hilt of a greatsword, the point of the blade situated between its clawed feet. The akashic memory (DC 35) may reveal these to be carvings from the age of the dramojh and suggest that, long ago, they probably could come to life, if the proper magical spells were used. (EL —)

3) As the sun sets, a horrible howling whips down the walls of the mountains. A ferocious blast of wind is followed by a darkening of the sky to the point where even without clouds, the stars no longer appear. Then ghostly

lights begin bobbing along the mountain pass. This is a supernaturally appearing occurrence similar to a *faen glow* (*Spell Treasury*, page 84). The lights are the manifestation of the pain and suffering victims of the *dramojh* experienced in ages past. If the party follows the lights throughout the night, they will lead the player characters to a crevice in the rock. Through the crevice the party can find a hewn chamber, now ruined by earthquake activity. In it are countless fossilized bones. Further investigation may reveal there was more of a fortress connected to the outside of this chamber, but it has fallen into rubble. (EL —)

4) A team of three shadow trolls has picked up the party's scent. These trolls live in underground warrens that lead, ultimately, to the lands west of the mountains. The cunning trolls stalk the player characters rather than attack them outright. (EL 10)

5) A roc can be seen flying in the distance. Tracking it to its lair is fruitless and may lead the party members off their intended track. (EL —)

6) A heavy blizzard hits this area of the Bitter Peaks. The party must deal with the environmental effects of the blinding snow and cold. (EL 5)

VALLEY OF THE RED WALKERS

Ultimately, the characters' journey leads them high into the mountain range. Presuming movement at half speed, this would take the party a week of travel within the Peaks.

As the party climbs to what appears to be yet another cliff, read or paraphrase the following:

As you climb onto the cliff's edge, you see before you a ring of stones. They clearly were originally stacked in a precise manner (although many have fallen down). A quick guess would suggest they were placed in a way that would have originally formed a barricade of some sort.

A pair of stones about twelve feet tall still stands about thirty feet away. Crossing them is another heavy stone, probably eight feet long. It appears this was originally a gate of some sort.

The cliff they have climbed up to is actually a plateau about a third of a mile across. While the rubble of the stone blocks currently blocks the PCs' vision, once they get past the rubble they can see the hollow interior of the plateau. Read or paraphrase the following:

The sun shines clearly through the ice-blue sky, illuminating fully the interior of the plateau. It looks like someone literally carved out the inside of the mountain.

A fine layer of hoarfrost covers the lip and everything you can see inside. Starting at your very feet, a clear white, icy trail (originally the roadbed) leads down the side of the basin, winding its way to the bottom about a quarter of the way around. From there, you lose sight of it for a bit; the edges of

the basin are lined with frozen trees, snow piled at their bases and leaves still hanging from iced-over limbs. But then, it picks up again, cutting straight as an arrow through the midst of a few dozen buildings to the very center of the basin. There it ends in a white circle, perhaps fifty feet across.

As to the buildings, they are all squat stone huts with window spaces clearly visible even from here. To your far left, at the edge of the village, is a statue, apparently of a winged lion.

There is no readily apparent sign of life. That is not to say there is no life here. Indeed, after the villagers died when the climate changed, a *remorhaz* found their remains to be a tasty snack and made the basin its home. It now lairs at the very edge of the basin, where snow has piled up. On occasion, it leaves its home to hunt for prey (mountain goats and the like). This cunning beast will lie quietly at the edge of the basin. It leaves to attack the party only if it thinks it can quickly snatch away a solitary individual (for example, if the party splits up to search the area or sends scouts around). Otherwise, if it supposes this area is now becoming too inhabited (the party lights a lot of fires or gives the appearance of inhabiting this place for a while), it tries to slink away in the night to a new, quieter, lair. (EL 7)

When the party members enter the village, they find no recent signs of activity. Still, it looks as if people simply vanished in the middle of the night.

The buildings (which are made from hewn stone) contain lots of signs of life interrupted. Visitors see cups and dinner plates set out, daily goods ready for use, and so forth. However, there are no people to be found, nor animals. The trees, as mentioned above, are frosted over with a full set of leaves. There are gardens visible on the earthen floor, also iced over in the middle of growth. Apparently, whatever took place here happened quickly and without warning.

The player characters can gather as many of the trinkets of everyday life as they would like. Getting them home will be a difficult task, as there are enough items here to fill 50 backpacks. Such items might fetch a value among collectors of antiquities, as the make is very unusual and old and they are still in excellent condition. Each backpack full of sundries would fetch about 100 gold crowns (5,000 gp total). Curiously enough, there are no "valuables" to be found (coins, expensive jewelry, and the like). Many of the items bear a *manticore* design.

There are also bits and pieces of normal weapons and armor here, but nothing in excess of 200 gp (as shown in *Arcana Evolved's* Equipment chapter, starting on page 150). The PCs could round up an additional 1,200 gp worth of such items, although how they would get them out remains a question.

Finally, the village holds a number of ancient writings, still preserved. These equate into three *books* +5 on each of the following topics: Knowledge (history), Knowledge (geography [Bitter Peaks region]), and Knowledge (architecture).



The player characters might want to investigate the ice covering everything. A successful Spellcraft check (DC 30) reveals that the ice is the result of a magical blast of cold. A runethane may be able to detect the rune inscribed on the underside of the bedrock layer with a successful Sense Rune check (DC 30). The ice effect was caused by a variant of the rune of destruction (elemental cold) and the effects of the *hoarfrost* spell (*Spell Treasury*, page 116). However the actual effect was more devastating than one would normally anticipate. The rune effect was triggered when the seal in the center of town cracked during seismic activity. The spell effect happened only five years ago.

The iced-over road leads to a circle, fifty feet across, located in the middle of the village. Examining it up close, the party can see that this circle is actually a massive chunk of stone inset into the very bedrock of the basin. It is carved with the bas-relief shape of a mantichore standing rampant. In one claw it holds a banner (there is no symbol on it) and in another claw it holds a sturdy-looking axe. This is the symbol of the Red Walkers.

However, the stone seal is cracked in three chunks. It has clearly loosened away from the edges of where it was originally inset. Examination shows that the inset is precisely six inches thick. Beneath it one can see a different colored layer of stone. With leverage, the party members can move each stone chunk, assuming they have a combined Strength available of 70 points or more.

THE SEVENTH STONE KREJ

The player characters have stumbled upon one of the *stone krej* of myth, which are reputed to hold the vast knowledge of Nexin Oathmaker (see *Spell Treasury*, page 6). Once the mantichore seal is removed, read or paraphrase the following:

At first glance, the stone beneath the seal is just bedrock with a nasty crack running through the middle of it, just bigger across than a grown giant is wide. However, that gash in the stone actually reveals it is not natural bedrock at all, but cunningly worked stone. One can see a space beneath this "bedrock layer." Someone must have constructed a room beneath the earth and covered it with a very believable layer of rock.

The gap in the bedrock reveals a chamber beneath the village. If anyone lowers a light source down, it appears to be a fifty-foot drop to the ground below. From this angle, one cannot see the edges of the room, which suggests that it is at least fifty feet across as well.

The player characters can lower themselves through this gap in the earth with successful Climb checks. The air in here is even more brisk than outside. The room below is a circular chamber fifty feet in diameter. Five feet in from the edges are six equally spaced pillars that reach up to an arched set of ceiling supports. The supports are cracked in the middle, but the roof has not yet collapsed.

Set into the walls are five smaller niche chambers. Each is just over five feet in diameter. Four of the niches contain a statue: two of men and two of women, all humans wearing a most unusual clothing style to modern eyes. The fifth chamber contains a humanlike pile of rocks, which is the chamber's guardian (see below).

The floor here is inlaid with a tile mosaic. The design shows a hand covered in a warm violet glow. The walls are layers of quartz bricks, polished smooth. Any light down here reflects off the quartz to give the room a healthy pinkish glow.

In the chamber's ceiling, between the broken supports, one can see that magic symbols were traced into the surface. Originally, these formed the warding spell to this chamber. However, when the earthquake cracked the rock, it also cracked the magic bound into the rock, releasing icy death on the villagers above.

When the first party member enters the chamber and touches the floor, the guardian leaves its niche and walks toward the character. In an ancient form of Common, it asks, "What was the answer at the sixteenth?" This riddle refers to a chamber the guardian expects would have been found by proper heirs to the knowledge it is guarding. Unfortunately for the party, there is no practical way for them to know this answer except by guessing. Still, the clue to this riddle lies in the rune inscribed into the ceiling (Skill check to decode rune at DM's discretion). The correct answer is "ice."

If the correct answer is given, the creature looks as relieved as an earth elemental can look and gratefully leads the party to the last chamber (see next page). It cannot answer any questions about what is in the chamber, nor can it answer any questions about the location of any other *stone krej*. It simply does not know.

What it does know is that it was approached ages past by what it calls an "earth-friend" and asked to guard the next chamber until it heard the correct answer to its riddle. It agreed to do so for two reasons. First, the earth-friend had time and again showed the elementals great kindness. Secondly, the earth-friend had explained that a great war was coming, and the treasures being guarded across the land would be used as weapons if the earth-friend lost the war. Thus they were being locked away to ensure their safekeeping from forces hostile to all life, including elemental life.

However, if the PCs do not manage to give the proper answer within a half a minute, the creature moves to attack, shouting, "By my oath, I shall defend! By my oath, I shall destroy!"

This Medium earth elemental has voluntarily sacrificed its freedom to become an oathsworn defender of the treasures contained within the last chamber (see next page). Further, the chamber is under the permanent effects of a *hallowed earth* spell (*Spell Treasury*, page 109) at caster

level 20th. The spell was cast using the intricate floor mosaic as its focus. If the mosaic is destroyed, the spell fades away within 1d3+1 rounds.

The *hallowed earth* provides the following effects:

- It is keyed to an oath to defend this place against outsiders (i.e. anyone not knowing the answer “ice” or anyone trying to loot the treasure, etc.).
- Such individuals may not summon or conjure creatures, or send summoned or conjured creatures into the room.
- Such individuals face a –2 penalty on attack rolls and saves in this room. Spell resistance applies to this effect.
- The area is infused with positive energy, giving undead entering the room a –2 penalty to their Armor Class in addition to any other penalties.
- The spell also wards the area with the permanent effects of *invisibility prohibition* (again cast at level 20th).

Guardian of the Seventh Stone Krej; Earth elemental

oathsworn; CR 8; Medium elemental; HD 4d8+12 (elemental) + 5d10+15 (oathsworn); hp 80; Init +3; Speed 40 feet; Armor Class 20 (–1 Dex, +9 natural, +2 insight), touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Attack +6; Grapple +12; Attack/Full Attack +13/+8 (1d10+6 fist); SA Earth mastery, push; SQ Darkvision 60 feet, earth glide, elemental traits, swear an oath, eschew food, shattering blow, evasion, fast movement, throw object, lesser adaptation, refuse fatigue, refuse fear; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Improved Initiative; Weapon Focus Unarmed Strike.

Combat Rites: Battle Focus.

Languages: Common, Terran.

Possessions: None.

The guardian had been standing in its niche on a small pedestal one foot tall. After the creature’s defeat, the party can examine it. Turning the pedestal activates a secret door at the back of the chamber. Finding the secret door is difficult because of the cunning stonework. (Search check, DC 25).

THE LAST CHAMBER

This last chamber on the other side of the secret door is a rough-hewn cavern approximately 20 feet round and 20 feet high. Stalactites hang from the ceiling, and rough jutting rocks pierce the uneven floor. In the center of the room is a granite casket unmarked by any runes. The lid is difficult to shift (Strength check, DC 30). Once the lid is opened, a clean white light fills the room, emanating from the casket. The light seems to seep into the very fiber of anyone in the chamber. As a result, those touched by the

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light can call on the effects of a *magic ward* (*Spell Treasury*, page 135) at caster level 5th, as a standard action once a week for the next year.

Inside the casket are three heavy platinum-bound books. Each one contains a number of notes on magical lore. These books hold research notes and descriptions for the following spells:

Book One: *oath of speed*, *song of sleep*, *vow*, and *danger-sense*.

Book Two: *aid*, *peace*, *play the fool* and *soul weapon*.

Book Three: *dream learning*, *melee arcane*, and *rainbow pattern*.

Learning these spells will take time, as described on page 4 of the *Spell Treasury*. Further, the books provide a +4 insight bonus to the Knowledge (magic) check required to learn the spells they describe.

Also enclosed in the casket is a +2 *small light steel shield*. The surface of the shield has been inset with precious metals to form the image of longsword, point down. On the inside of the shield is written: “Be true to your self. Do not fear shedding your blood for others.” In this inscription, “your self” is written as two words.

If the owner of the shield purposely cuts himself and bleeds on the shield (shedding at least 25 percent of his hit points in blood loss) and recites the words in the shield, the shield will spin furiously, landing finally on the ground. The sword inscribed on it will be pointing in the direction of another chamber of lost magic. DMs can create this new locale on their own and use it as a basis for another adventure.

CONCLUSION

So what happens next? This can be a one-off adventure or incorporated into a full campaign. Perhaps Zerxer is an agent for an organization that hopes to recover the lost magic (and the party members are merely pawns). It may be that, when the PCs return, his shop is no longer there and none of the neighbors have ever heard of him. Or he could seek out the party members in the middle of the night, demanding a share of their loot, which he considers his. Word of the PCs’ find could spread (a hireling talks?), and as a result they become hunted, sought and begged for information and details about the ancient magic.



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