

TREASURE

The crystal orb is worth 25 gp. It can be used as an arcane focus but is not magical.

32. HIDDEN TRAPDOOR

The staircase ends at a landing with a 6-foot-high ceiling of close-fitting planks with a wooden trapdoor set into it. The trapdoor is bolted shut from this side and can be pushed open to reveal the den (area 3) above.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the trapdoor has been found and opened, it remains available to characters as a way into and out of the dungeon level.

33. CULT LEADERS' DEN

The door in the southwest corner is a **mimic** in disguise. Any creature that touches the door becomes adhered to the creature, whereupon the mimic attacks. The mimic also attacks if its takes any damage.

A chandelier is suspended above a table in the middle of the room. Two high-backed chairs flank the table, which has an empty clay jug and two clay flagons atop it. Iron candlesticks stand in two corners, their candles long since melted away.

34. CULT LEADERS' QUARTERS

This room contains a large wood-framed bed with a rotted feather mattress, a wardrobe containing several old robes, a pair of iron candlesticks, and an open crate containing thirty torches and a leather sack with fifteen candles inside it. At the foot of the bed is an unlocked wooden footlocker containing some gear and magic items (see "Treasure" below).

Two **ghasts** (Gustav and Elisabeth Durst) are hidden in cavities behind the earthen walls, marked X on the map; they burst forth and attack if someone removes one or more items from the footlocker. The ghosts wear tattered black robes.

TREASURE

Characters searching the footlocker find a folded *cloak of protection*, a small wooden coffer (unlocked) containing four *potions of healing*, a chain shirt, a mess kit, a flask of alchemist's fire, a bullseye lantern, a set of thieves' tools, and a spellbook with a yellow leather cover containing the following wizard spells:

1st level: *disguise self*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *protection from evil and good*

2nd level: *darkvision*, *hold person*, *invisibility*, *magic weapon*

These items were taken from adventurers who were drawn into Barovia, captured, and killed by the cult.

35. RELIQUARY

The ghostly chant emanating from area 38 fills this room. Characters can discern a dozen or so voices saying, over and over, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land."

The cult amassed several "relics" that it used in its rituals. These worthless items are stored in thirteen niches along the walls:

- A small, mummified, yellow hand with sharp claws (a goblin's hand) on a loop of rope
- A knife carved from a human bone
- A dagger with a rat's skull set into the pommel
- An 8-inch-diameter varnished orb made from a nothic's eye
- An aspergillum carved from bone
- A folded cloak made from stitched ghoul skin
- A desiccated frog lashed to a stick (could be mistaken for a *wand of polymorph*)
- A bag full of bat guano
- A hag's severed finger
- A 6-inch-tall wooden figurine of a mummy, its arms crossed over its chest
- An iron pendant adorned with a devil's face
- The shrunken, shriveled head of a halfling
- A small wooden coffer containing a dire wolf's withered tongue

The southernmost tunnel slopes down at a 20-degree angle into murky water and ends at a rusty portcullis (area 37).

36. PRISON

The cultists shackled prisoners to the back walls of alcoves here. The prisoners are long gone (their bones litter the floor in area 27), but the rusty shackles remain.

SECRET DOOR

A secret door in the south wall can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check and pulls open to reveal area 38 beyond.

TREASURE

Hanging on the back wall of the cell marked X on the map is a human skeleton clad in a tattered black robe. The skeleton belongs to a cult member who questioned the cult's blind devotion to Strahd. Characters who search the skeleton find a gold ring (worth 25 gp) on one of its bony fingers.

37. PORTCULLIS

This tunnel is blocked by a rusty iron portcullis that can be forcibly lifted with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Otherwise, the portcullis can be raised or lowered by turning a wooden wheel half-embedded in the east wall of area 38. (The wheel is beyond the reach of someone east of the portcullis.) The floor around the portcullis is submerged under 2 feet of murky water.

38. RITUAL CHAMBER

The cult used to perform rituals in this sunken room. The chanting heard throughout the dungeon originates here, yet when the characters arrive, the dungeon falls silent as the chanting mysteriously stops.

The chanting stops as you peer into this forty-foot-square room. The smooth masonry walls provide excellent acoustics. Featureless stone pillars support the ceiling, and a breach in the west wall leads to a dark cave heaped with refuse. Murky water covers most of the floor. Stairs lead up to dry stone ledges that hug the walls. In the middle of the room, more stairs rise to form an octagonal dais that also rises above the water. Rusty chains with shackles dangle from the ceiling directly above a stone altar mounted on the dais. The altar is carved with hideous depictions of grasping ghouls and is stained with dry blood.

The water is 2 feet deep. The ledges and central dais are 5 feet high (3 feet higher than the water's surface), and the chamber's ceiling is 16 feet high (11 feet above the dais and ledges). The chains dangling from the ceiling are 8 feet long; the cultists would shackle prisoners to the chains, dangle them above the altar, cut them open with knives, and allow the altar to be bathed in blood.

Half embedded in the east wall is a wooden wheel connected to hidden chains and mechanisms. A character can use an action to turn the wheel, raising or lowering the nearby portcullis (see area 37).

The hole in the west wall leads to a naturally formed alcove. The half-submerged pile of refuse that fills it is a **shambling mound**, which the cultists dubbed Lorghoth the Decayer. It is asleep but awakens if attacked or if the characters summon the cultists but refuse to complete their ritual (see "One Must Die!" below). A character standing next to the mound can discern its true nature with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check.

"ONE MUST DIE!"

If any character climbs to the top of the dais, read:

The chanting rises once more as thirteen dark apparitions appear on the ledges overlooking the room. Each one resembles a black-robed figure holding a torch, but the torch's fire is black and seems to draw light into it. Where you'd expect to see faces are voids.

"One must die!" they chant, over and over. "One must die! One must die!"

The apparitions are harmless figments that can't be damaged, turned, or dispelled.

Characters on the dais when the cultists appear must sacrifice a creature on the altar or face the cult's wrath; characters can ascertain what must be done with a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Religion) or Wisdom (Insight) check. To count as a sacrifice, a creature must die on the altar. The apparitions don't care what kind of creature is sacrificed, and they aren't fooled by illusions.

If the characters make the sacrifice, the cultists fade away, but their tireless chant of "He is the Ancient. He is the Land," echoes again in the dungeon. Strahd is aware

of the sacrifice, and Death House now does nothing to hinder the characters (see "Endings" below).

If the characters leave the dais without making the sacrifice, the cultists' chant changes: "Lorghoth the Decayer, we awaken thee!" This chant rouses the shambling mound and prompts it to attack. It pursues prey beyond the room but won't leave the dungeon. It can move through tunnels without squeezing and completely fills its space. At the start of the shambling mound's first turn, the chant changes again: "The end comes! Death, be praised!" If the shambling mound dies, the chanting stops and the apparitions vanish forever.

ENDINGS

The mists of Ravenloft continue to surround Death House until the characters stand atop the dais and either appease or defy the cultists. Strahd is satisfied either way, prompting the mists to recede.

THE CULT IS APPEASED

Death House harbors no ill will toward a party willing to sacrifice a life to appease the cult. Once the sacrifice is made, the characters are free to go. Upon emerging from the house, the characters advance to 3rd level.

THE CULT IS DENIED

If the characters deny the cult its sacrifice and either destroy the shambling mound or escape from it, Death House attacks them as they try to leave. When they return upstairs, they must roll initiative as they discover several architectural changes:

- All the windows are bricked up; the bricked-up windows and the outer walls are impervious to the party's weapon attacks and damage-dealing spells.
- All the doors are gone, replaced by slashing scythe-blades. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to pass through a blade-trapped doorway unscathed. A character who spends 1 minute studying the blades in a particular doorway can try to take advantage of a momentary gap in their repeating movements and make a DC 15 Intelligence check instead. Failing either check, a character takes 2d10 slashing damage but manages to pass through the doorway. Any creature pushed through a doorway must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take the damage. The blades can't be disarmed.
- Every room that contains a fireplace, an oven, or a stove is filled with poisonous black smoke. The room is heavily obscured, and any creature that starts its turn in the smoke must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d10 poison damage.
- The interior walls become rotted and brittle. Each 5-foot-section has AC 5 and 5 hit points, and can also be destroyed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Each 5-foot section of wall that's destroyed causes a **swarm of rats** to pour out and attack. The swarm won't leave the house.

Keep track of initiative as the characters make their way through the house. Once they escape, they advance to 3rd level, and the house does no more to harm them.