

The Lost Mage's Keep

A One Page Dungeon by Joel Russ

Adventurers are sent to explore a keep after hearing of monsters vanishing and rumors of a dark power gathering inside it. In fact, a mage took up residence in the keep, but an imp familiar betrayed the spellcaster to summon its true master. The mage's defenses still hold, so characters must navigate these hazards to even reach the imp and the summoning site. If the characters can discern it, a poem foreshadows their trials.

1. Path – A shell keep overlooks a bridge. Cudgels, troll footprints, and a burlap bag containing a few dozen silver coins rest on the bank near the bridge, along with an old astrolabe. *[This foreshadows the superstitious astrologer trolls within the keep.]* Four pedestals overshadow the door, but only two still have gargoyles *[inert]* perched atop them.

2. Narthex – A welcoming entry room has cloak hooks and an enchanted rug that cleans boots treading across it. The ceiling has a mirror finish, stone polished to reflect the room below. Before the far door is a pedestal with a page of parchment bearing a poem. *[The lines only fill half the page, a clue the poem should continue, and the mirrored ceiling is another clue. The poem foreshadows the encounters in the tower. It can be read both forwards and backwards, almost a palindrome, with spaces rearranged for the reverse.]*

3. Now are we not drawn onward? *[hall 4]*
Do good's deeds live on? *[room 5]*
No, I save no evil *[room 7]*
No evil star deliver *[room 8]*
Was it a rat I saw? *[room 9]*

[Poem inverted - Starting at the end, going backwards, the lines would read as follows]
Was it a rat I saw? *[room 9]*
Reviled rats live *[room 9]*
live on evasion *[room 10]*
No evils deeds do, O God. *[courtyard 10]*
Drawn onward to new era, won. *[exit]*

4. Rolling Ball – A trap that must be reset to escape. The door leads to a curved corridor sloping upward. The door locks after the Narthex is empty, requiring a key to open. Partway up the corridor lies a hidden pressure plate set in the floor, next to a tapestry covering an illusory wall hiding an alcove. Farther ahead, the exit is locked and barred with a grate, with the lock almost inaccessible behind the grate. The floor continues to slope upward, and the last 10 feet have a series of small pegs set into the floor *[part of the mechanism to access the door]* At the end of the corridor, atop of the slope, rests a boulder. Pegs hold it back until anyone steps on the plate. Two can hide in the alcove, but anyone outside the alcove risks injury. Stepping on the pressure plate releases the boulder. As it thunders down the ramp (depressing the pegs), the bars in front of the door rattle. A spare door key lies behind the boulder. The boulder must roll down (top to bottom) to engage the mechanism, then be pushed back up to withdraw the bars. *[Pressing the pegs in order, through trial and error, though difficult, can also work]* The mechanism resets when the door out closes. The mage already had a key and could press the pegs from a distance using magic, but in case of emergencies, there remains a way to access the door that resets the trap. The hall behind the room has a slot to deposit the key.

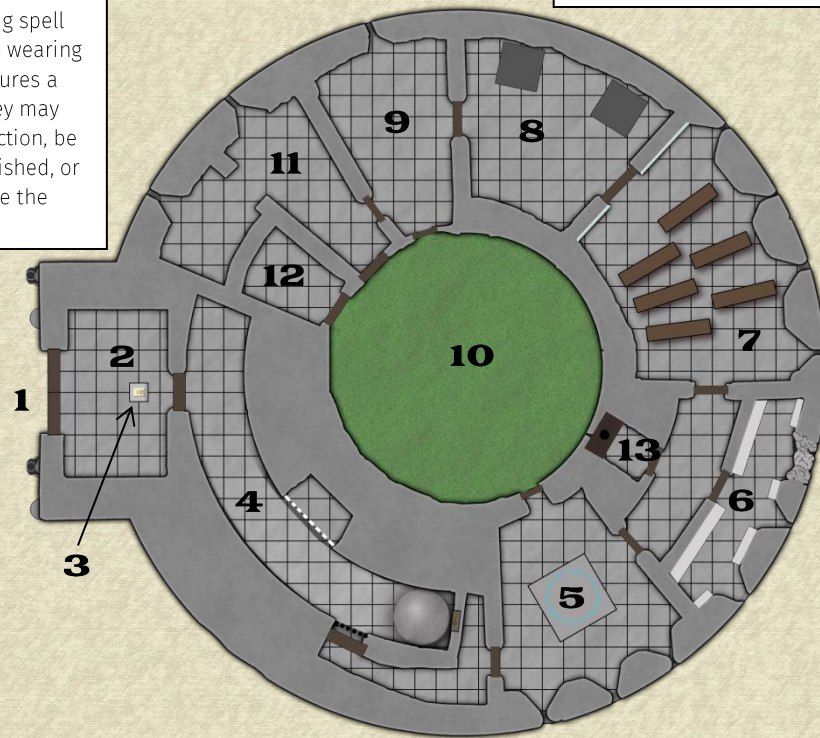
5. Coins – Glowing runes etched in a metal plate form a circle 10 ft. across, with clusters of coins piled inside the circle. A character entering the circle disappears, and a handful of gold, silver, and copper coins fall to the plate, clattering loudly. *[The illusion serves as both alarm and delaying trap. The character is invisible for a brief time, and can observe, but not interact.]* The coins bear the likeness of the person who disappeared. Other characters can add their own coins to the circle to end this illusion, provided the value is more than that of the illusory coins that appeared. After 10 minutes, the invisibility fades, as do the "personalized" coins. *[Observant characters may notice signs of an invisible imp. It acts to vex the characters, trying to ward them off without arousing suspicion. The imp trapped the mage in the mage's own enchantments, between planes, in order to free its master, a demon.]*

6. Gargoyles – Two gargoyles from the entrance recently broke free and smashed through a storeroom window. They consume the clay, glass, and stone containers of the components and scrolls in the room. The binding spell to guard the tower is wearing off, making the creatures a potential hazard. They may provide aid and direction, be a threat to be vanquished, or be convinced to leave the intruders alone.

9. Rats – The imp has given form to the mage's illusions. Rats swarm in the master bedroom, fighting the characters. They try to prevent the characters from discovering the mage is imprisoned within an illusion, unable to interact with the world.

10. Imp – The imp ostensibly served as a familiar, biding time until it could use the mage's magic to release its true master, a demon. The imp attempts to delay the characters until the demon appears. The characters may be in time to fight a weakened demon still forming on this plane, or may have to fight the creature at full strength. They must either kill the demon in the courtyard or disrupt the ritual (blocking the demon) and kill the imp to bring back the mage. *[It does not manifest if they explore the courtyard before it thinks itself ready.]* The mage rewards the characters with spell scrolls and cleansed artifacts *[room 7]* if the characters succeed.

11. Kitchen and storeroom
12. Guestroom
13. Garderobe



7. Mirror Room – A workshop/study contains items waiting to have curses dispelled. One wall is reflective, and shows an illusion to indicate what the curse would do if activated by removing it from the table. The mirrored surface makes the room appear larger. The exit is set opposite the entrance, and a mirror image of a character with a cursed item looks and feels like it reaches out and stops anyone with a cursed item from leaving the room. If they do not have a cursed item, they appear to be prevented, but can depart by closing their eyes as they reach for the door, backing into it, or other means of blocking line of sight to break the illusion.

8. Trolls – A study with a work table and shelves bearing scrolls and reagents along one wall, and a pair of cages near another, with sleeping trolls inside. The cage doors creak ajar as characters enter *[the work of the imp]*. The trolls have crude constellation tattoos. They fall asleep due to a safeguard enchantment on the cages when the invisible imp opens the doors. The mage held them while seeking a humane way to release them, away from populations they could endanger. The imp continues to try to thwart the players, waking the trolls if necessary. Notes on the table depict illusions and incantations to access a pocket dimension. *[A keen observer can detect changes overwriting the glyphs, the imp's handiwork. The imp has successfully warped the mage's spell to trap the mage between planes.]*