

THE HAUNTED CHAPEL

A Fifth Era Adventure
by Scott Marley

The old chapel outside of town holds a terrible secret. Many years ago, after the former rector died, a new priest arrived to take over. Some say the new rector went insane, locking his fellow priests inside the chapel and setting fire to it, burning the poor souls alive.

Badly burned himself, the rector confessed to the ghastly murders, but died without saying why he did it. The head priest was hastily buried in the burned-out chapel, and the cursed site was abandoned. It is now a crumbling ruin said to be haunted by ghosts of the murdered priests.

Lately, strange events have befallen the town and several locals have gone missing. Townsfolk suspect the haunted chapel is the source of their recent distress. The heroes must go there and put an end to the curse that plagues the town.

PLOT! In truth, death cultists secretly work to restore the chapel for evil purposes, and have turned its undead guardians into their deadly servants (or vice versa).

THE CHAPEL GROUNDS

- ① Rusted iron gates screech open onto a weed-choked flagstone courtyard. To either side, bent iron fences open into other areas of the grounds. Cracked steps rise to the façade, where one of the 40-ft. high belfries has toppled into a pile of rubble. One chapel door has fallen down; the other hangs loosely on a bent hinge (1-in-6 chance it falls on someone passing through the doorway).
- ② Old tombstones stand among rustling weeds. Eight graves were recently turned. Hidden in the grass are huge rat holes (x). Coming within 10 ft. of one attracts $1d4+2$ giant rats. Dozens more infest a warren of tunnels below. At night, (8) skeletons roam the cemetery.
- ③ Four burial vaults are carved with the names and deeds of holy knights. The lids were smashed open and the bodies removed.
- ④ A marble statue of an angelic figure. The first person to leave an offering receives a blessing for one hour. Nearby, a rusted gate leads into the rear garden.
- ⑤ Two giant spiders guard an algae-covered fountain.
- ⑥ Beneath the lid of the covered well, a cobweb-filled shaft leads to the well room in the undercroft.
- ⑦ The path here is completely overgrown with briars; hacking through reveals a rusted gate into the rear garden.
- ⑧ Hidden beneath the dense brush here is a hatch to the undercroft.
- ⑨ A deadly hangman's tree stands here. A glint at the tree's base is a lure to attack prey with its strangling vines. Among its roots are skeletal remains wearing a shiny silver pendant and a pouch full of gold coins.
- ⑩ The path here is completely overgrown with briars (which hide a huge nest of wasps).
- ⑪ A vine-shrouded mausoleum is barred by a locked iron gate. Inside is an ornate marble sarcophagus. Beneath the lid, a tight staircase descends to a foul-smelling crypt.

THE UNDERCROFT

The lower foundation of the chapel mostly escaped the fire's destruction. The vaulted ceilings are 9–12 ft. high.

- ⑫ Smashed barrels and crates litter the floor of this musty cellar. The west door isajar.
- ⑬ The refectory is strewn with broken stools and smashed cookery. A simple hearth stands in the corner. Two ghouls in burnt robes hunch over a wide table in the center of the room, hungrily devouring a dead local. These are the former chapel priests who were "killed" in the fire.
- ⑭ Dormitory: (6) cultists camp in the common area (C). Three of the five rooms are empty (E) save for broken remains of a bed and table. Room (T) holds (2) kidnapped townsfolk, locals who offer a reward if rescued. Room (R) is occupied by (4) giant rats. A dark hole in the wall leads into their warren.
- ⑮ The stone cistern is filled with greasy water. The bones of two missing townsfolk, along with a silver holy symbol and (2) vials of holy water, can be found scattered on the bottom.
- ⑯ Well Room: A stairway once led up to the belfry, but it is now filled with rubble. The passage ends at the lip of a fresh water spring. A cobweb-filled shaft ascends to the garden. On the sandy bottom of the 10 ft. deep pool is a sealed jar containing an iron key.

CHAPEL RUINS

The chapel grounds are surrounded by a 9-ft. high stone wall. The roof and upper walls of the stone chapel, as well as the east belfry, have collapsed into the interior, but most of the 20-ft. high outer walls are intact. The stained glass is gone from the 12-ft. high window frames, but the bronze lattices that remain prevent any trespassers from climbing through the openings.

Half the chapel grounds are completely shrouded with dense, thorny foliage (10–20 ft. high) that hinders movement and obscures sight beyond 10 ft. Anyone leaving a flagstone path must slowly chop their way through the prickly briars and tangling vines.

INSIDE THE CHAPEL

The chapel interior shows signs of a terrible fire. It is filled with tall piles of loose rubble, but the valleys between them are safe. Bootprints and drag marks can be spotted in the dust.

A ladder climbs 30 ft. to a narrow platform (12) where a bronze bell hangs from the rafters.

A 2-ft. rope dangles from the clapper. If the bell is rung, the platform collapses and (10) stigres nesting in the rafters attack.

The noise alerts those in the undercroft.

(4) giant centipedes strike from gaps in the rubble and then retreat into the debris to reemerge elsewhere.

The rubble conceals a locked door to the garden. The stuck door is difficult to force open.

The rubble conceals a staircase down to the undercroft (it can only be seen from NE corner).

A fire blackened marble altar bears a hastily-carved inscription:
"A wise man, possessed by madness; here we consign his wicked bones. May his poor victims rest in eternal peace."

Beneath the 600 lb. altar is a stone ossuary containing the maligned rector's bones and a +1 holy mace called "Salvation" (a clue to the true story).

The Undercroft (cont.)

Remains of old supplies lie scattered about both storerooms. The cultists dug a hole into the crypt through the east wall of one storeroom. A gold platter and chalice along with four gold candlesticks are found in the other storeroom.

The door to the rector's office is barricaded by a bookcase and desk. Beyond the curtain is a bed, a night table, and a tapestry (behind which is a secret door). Under the bed is the rector's journal.

The final entries reveal that he discovered his fellow priests (and the former rector) were really secret cultists performing unholy rituals in the chapel.

Shelves filled with dusty scrolls line the scriptorium walls. Four scribe's desks stand in the room's center. Two iron doors on the north wall are locked. The east door is trapped with a magic glyph but the iron key opens it safely.

A ladder ascends a 15-ft. shaft to a hatch that opens into the rear garden.

Dozens of niches hold sealed ossuaries. Each niche bears a priest's name. A skull wearing a priest's cap rests on a pedestal in the east alcove. If given an offering, the skull speaks: "Your gesture comforts my eternal soul; Brother Denton has a gift for you." Denton's ossuary contains (2) healing potions. If a blessing or prayer is conferred on the skull, it says: "Salvation awaits you in the chapel's heart."

The damp air of the crypt stinks of rotting flesh. Two carved pillars support the ceiling. Standing next to a marble sarcophagus on a raised dais are (4) skeletal knights (from the cemetery) wearing chain mail and wielding long swords and shields. When they attack, the sarcophagus lid slides open and a ghast wearing tattered robes and a miter appears—the former rector and secret cult leader. The skeletons and ghast wear a small fortune in jewelry.