

THE HOOK An upstart settlement is in need of adventurers to explore the caverns beneath a mysterious stone hatch found in the forest floor. Little does the unsuspecting party know, they are merely pawns in the machinations of an ancient undead necromancer.

1. HATCH Made from a large block of stone, the slab has iron handles sunk into it. Once opened, dusty stone steps descend into the darkness. At least one set of recent human footsteps is visible in the dust.

2. FOYER The remains of coat racks and benches suggest that long ago visitors once stopped here to shed their outerwear before proceeding further. The double doors on either side of the room were once striking displays of opulence, but are now nothing more than half-rotted timber.

3. BARRACKS Old and ragged bunkbeds line the walls of this room. Close inspection reveals that each bunk contains a set of manacles. Dried blood spatters the ancient straw mattresses.

4. BEDCHAMBER What's left of a grand four-poster bed dominates this room. Whoever once slept here, though, has not done so in a long time.

5. TRAPPED LANDING A pressure plate on the bottom step causes poisoned darts to shoot from the wall opposite the stairs. The poison has long since dried, but damage is still possible.

6. LABORATORY At the bottom of the steps lies the remains of a once-great laboratory. It has been recently swept and dusted, although its tools, potions, and chemicals have become useless with age. The two sets of double doors leading away from this room have weathered the years better than their counterparts above.

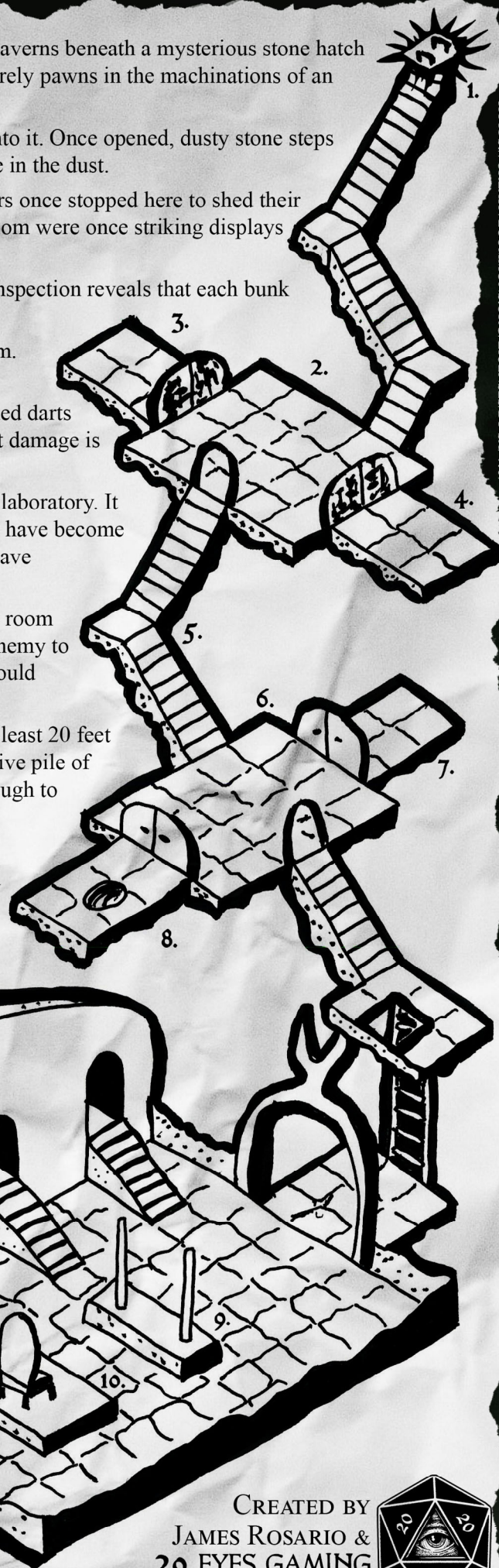
7. LIBRARY Large piles of disorganized books make opening the door to this room difficult. Once inside, study shows the subjects of these books range from alchemy to religion, from poetry to history and beyond. Spending an hour or more here could recover spell scrolls and even a spellbook.

8. REFUSE PIT In the center of this small room lies a cracked circular pit at least 20 feet deep. It was once used to dispose of body parts. At the bottom lies an impressive pile of bones. The edge is weak and may give way, risking a fall to those not fast enough to jump away.

9. SACRIFICIAL STONE Through an arched entryway covered in demonic carvings praising an unknown god is a large, finely-crafted gallery. Just ahead lies a bloody, half-eaten man strung up between two poles.

10. THRONE Behind the blasphemous altar sits the slumped, dried-out, rotting corpse of a large figure on a decorative polished throne. Gore covers the front of his newly-cleaned robes. The man does not stir until roused to do so by his profane congregation.

11. WORSHIP CHAMBER Hooded figures step forth from the doorways that line the gallery. As they begin to chant, the body on the throne rises, revealing a stunning longsword under his robes. The chanters are the villagers who hired the party. They have vowed to restore life to their benefactor by supplying him with the blood he requires. The chanting allows the sorcerer to regain health at the start of each round (a feature lost upon silencing the chorus). If vanquished, the vile thing explodes into an onslaught of blood, bone, viscera, and maggots. The sword is magical, and treasure lies hidden beneath the throne. The chamber doorways might lead to other parts of the cavern system, or may lead to more hatches on the surface. There is much more to discover in the depths beneath...



...THE HATCH. ➤

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