

Tomb of the Ghast Queen – an adventure for first level Characters in 5th Edition D&D
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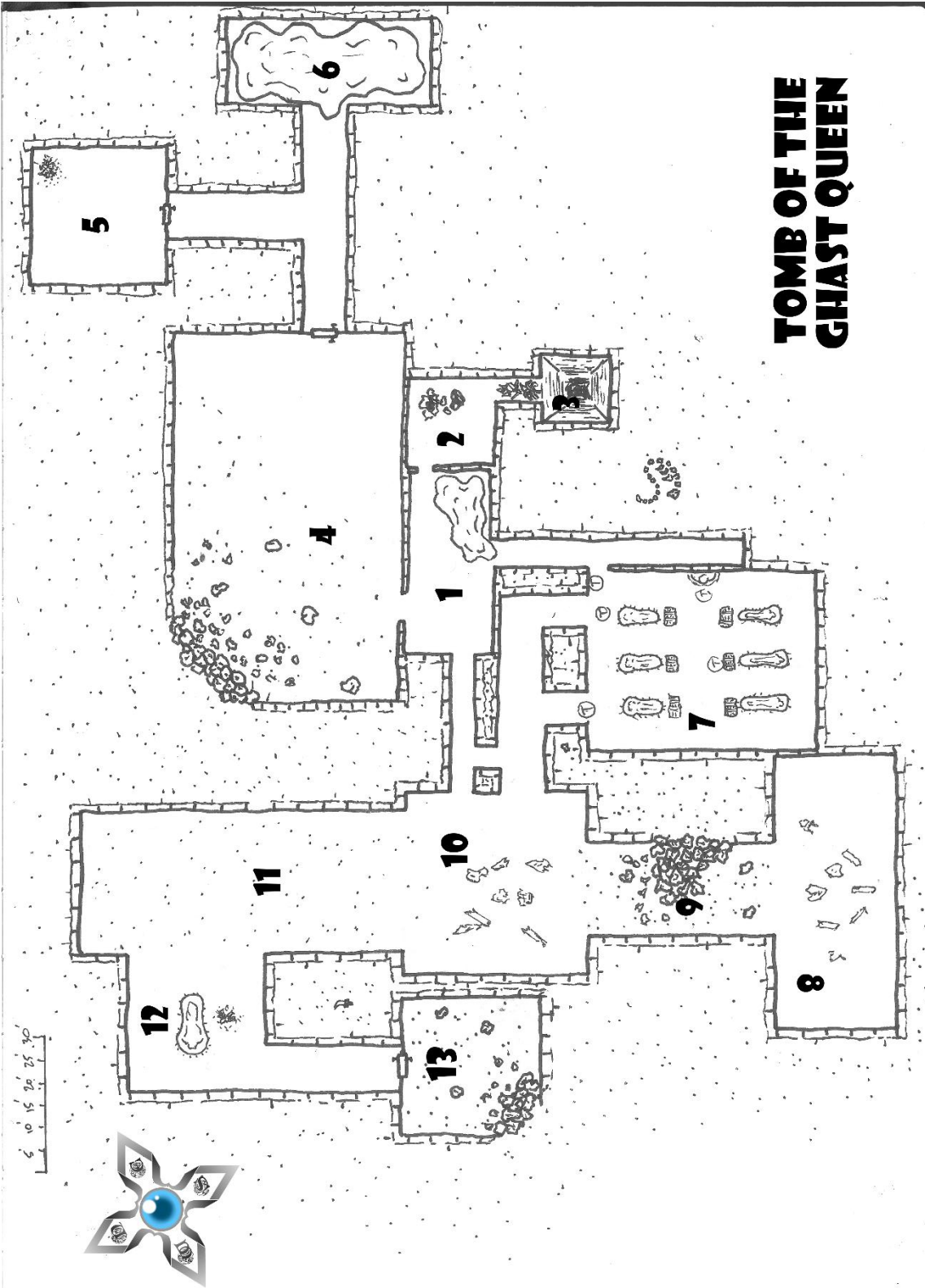
The premise for this adventure is that the players begin as criminals. The land they are living in is run by a cruel Ghast Queen who forsake life to rule in immortality. She is a tyrant like no other in this part of the lands. The players were taken as criminals for their actions that were construed as treason and put to hard labour for several years.

Then they are offered a chance to show the Ghast Queen their rehabilitation. Once a year 20 to 30 prisoners are selected to "run the gauntlet". They are taken to the tomb that was prepared for the Ghast Queen in life (Once Queen Esmerelda the III). Here a task is created for the prisoners to collect five (or however many players in your group there are) gems that fit together to become an art piece known as the Hand of the Lich. The five holders of the gems, once all other petitioners are dead, are then pardoned and set free from servitude.

Each participant is equipped (i.e. they get the equipment that they purchased in their basic character build) and they are each given one healing potion each. They are then lead to an elevator shaft on top of a mountain operated by two Minotaur pulling a rope and lever system. They are lowered a hundred feet down an elevator shaft of polished granite (DC 20 Athletics for climbing), lead through a room dedicated to the worship of Set (or another god of death that fits your campaign) and into a room that once was used as an embalming chamber.

The guards then read from a scroll and the group (around 20 - 30 as you see fit) fall unconscious. They wake up an hour later (though it seems much longer to them) and the other occupants of the room wake up at the same time - the Gauntlet has begun. For details on how to run the extra NPC's look after the descriptions of all the rooms.

TOMB OF THE GHAIST QUEEN



The map of the tomb. The compass rose was created by August Firmonsaya Phoenix under Creative Commons Licence

Tomb of the Ghast Queen for Level 1

Characters

1. **Embalming Workshop with Pool of Water:**

The wake-up room. Players wake up here in complete gear, others are also waking up at the same time – there are 15 - 25 other criminals in the room, all armed and armored. There may be a battle here, there may not – depends on how the players work it out. The other criminals are more inclined to try and find the gems first and then fight for their lives. Use the Thug template for the other NPC's p.350 MM.

2. **Chapel dedicated to Set with collapsed floor:**

The floor has given way in a couple of places here where a small amount of water pooled and loosened the limestone over time. This hints at the level below this one. Through the archway to the south a permanent 10' mass of spinning whirling blades as per the *Blade Barrier* spell protects the entrance to the elevator shaft (where the criminals were initially brought in). The room is dedicated to the Gods of the Dead and protectors of the souls which were meant to guard Queen Esmerelda, so long ago.

3. **Elevator Shaft:**

This shaft is where the players come in. There are no ropes or elevator here and the top side of the challenge is one hundred feet above along a polished granite surface (DC 20 Athletics to climb). However, the shaft drops a further 25 feet and opens into a set of natural caverns below the elevator that is not covered by this adventure.

4. **Antechamber for preparation of meeting dead with collapsed ceiling portion:**

Inside this voluminous chamber there is a massive amount of debris. Hiding in this debris there is a servant of the Ghast Queen who is here to test the will of the criminals that are running the gauntlet. It is a scarecrow (p.268 MM) that has been cursed by the Ghast Queen to feel pain in the presence of one of the gems. The scarecrow remains largely out of sight in the rubble of the Northern corner unless and individual seeks to pass through this room in possession of one of the gems that makes up the Hand of the Lich.

5. **Priest Robing Room that has been used as a campsite:**

Lairing in this room at the bequest of the Lich Queen is an Ogre (p.237 MM) by the name of Togs. Togs has been promised the flesh of any creature it manages to kill, as

long as it holds onto the gem of the Hand of the Lich it was given. Togs also holds a pouch with 17 CP and a small glass vial holding the nail clippings of a sea hag. Door to this room is wooden and unlocked. DC 15 break, 30 HP.

6. Crypt for less important burials with pool of water:

Water leeching from the ceiling has caused a permanent 4' pool of water to settle here. Jars and baskets of corpses that were once the Ghast Queen's servants have fallen into the pit and the water is black with their contagion. Living in the pool of water is a mated pair of Bullywug's {Tridlplop and Speliplash p.35 MM) who have one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich. The pair are also carriers of disease and with any successful bite attack must make a save DC 11 or contract the Sewer Plague. They carry 28 silver pieces otherwise.

7. Tomb of the wealthiest nobles:

This is where the Ghast Queen had her closest nobles interred as she had prepared for her own death. Their worldly goods are in the chests that lay with them and they are looked over by the statue of Set on the south eastern wall. Treasure in the chests of the room (all locked with DC 15 to unlock is: 3200 CP, 1000 SP, 50 GP, 3 pieces of jade worth 50 GP each, a gem of the Lich Hand and a Cube of Force. Distribute this treasure amongst the five real chests as you wish.

In total there are five traps in this room.

1. In the northern most room if a character passes through this archway it triggers a Scything Blade trap DC 10 to spot, DC 10 to disable +4 to hit, 1d10+2 (7) slashing damage
2. Archway in the north east has a pressure plate just inside the door that breaks the floor and drops into a 10' pit filled with spikes. DC 15 to spot and DC 10 to disable. DC 10 reflex save to avoid falling into the pit or take 2d6+2 damage (9) piercing and bludgeoning damage
3. On the pillar next to the entrance of the north eastern archway there is a glyph of warding present which triggers a sleep spell when read. DC 15 to spot and a DC 10 to disable. DC 14 Will save to resist the effects of the sleep spell (18 HP worth).
4. On the statue of Set (if it is touched, it has a Zircon worth a 100 GP held in an outstretched hand like a black heart) the statue breathes a 15' cone of acidic mist directly in front of it. DC 20 to spot, DC 15 to disable. 5d8 acid damage or half as much on a successful Dex (14 save); and
5. The middle chest of the southernmost chests is an illusion and covers a 20' pit. To spot is DC 15 and DC 15 to disable. Dex save vs. DC 10 or fall into the pit for 2d6 damage.

8. Divination Room:

This room has been totally destroyed in previous gauntlets. A backpack with 12 gold in it lays in the southern corner and a green slime (p.105 DMG) is directly above the pack waiting for a victim to appear.

9. Gallery with the ceiling collapse:

There is nothing of interest in this area. It used to house oil paintings and statues but they are all rubble now.

10. Guard Room:

The furniture in this room has been smashed by the many battles it has seen and the table and chairs that once housed human guards lays as debris on the ground. Eight skeletons (p.272 MM) exist in this room and attack anyone that attempts to enter it. There are two skeletons to the entrance of each gallery, one at each of the other entrances and two in the center of the room.

11. Gallery reduced to ashes:

This room has been destroyed by a major fire that burnt away all of the paintings and sculpture. There are three bases to statues left and with a successful spot DC 15, the characters can locate a tin container that holds one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich.

12. The Grand Crypt and camp site:

This area is where the Ghast Queen would finally have rested but it now stands empty as a shrine to her stupidity. Inside the coals of the campfire is one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich which can be found with a DC 15 spot check

13. Embalming chamber with partial collapse:

Inside here is the final and most dangerous of the guardians in the Gauntlet. A wight (p.300 MM), once the lover of the Ghast Queen, guards the final piece of the gems of the Hand of the Lich.

Handling the NPC's and Adapting the Game

First, to adapting the game. This is obviously geared toward a group of five or less players due to the number of gems that make up the Hand of the Lich. all you need to adapt to a larger group is make the number of gems greater and scatter them about. There are plenty of spaces that can be used for placing the gems and increasing the number that can be freed of the Gauntlet.

What of the other NPC's though? They are only mentioned in room 1 but there may be heaps of them around. Do not be scared of these NPC's. They are an invaluable resource for you as the GM. Do what you will with them but I see them being used usefully in the following ways;

- It is not envisioned that any other NPC's will find any of the gems, but if the players miss one because of a bad roll then one of the NPC's could have it instead.
- The NPC's are criminals and so can be used in encounters where they attack the PC's to obtain the gems they have on them for adding some XP into the mix.
- Most of the NPC's will not drink the healing potion they were given (a small number should so they are not seen as a never-ending supply) and so are a good source of healing in the adventure.
- If the PC's are coming toward a difficult encounter (e.g. the Wight) and they are all banged up you could weaken the creature as though it had already been attacked by the NPC's. Throw some dead NPC's around the room (all with potions of healing on them) and reduce the hit points of the creature.

So, use the NPC's. You could also introduce some side quests that lead on from this when the players are free of the Tomb with them. They are a brilliant resource.

The end of the adventure requires the five that have the gems to congregate in the temple of Set. There must be only five living creatures left and they will find that the Blade Barrier spell has been lifted and the elevator has been lowered to lift them to their freedom or doom? That part is up to you. If the XP from this adventure did not lift them to second level you should award a bonus XP amount for running the Gauntlet that places them perfectly on the 2nd level amount.