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Dungeon Crawl Classics #31

The Transmuter's Last Touch

by Jeff LaSala
FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-2

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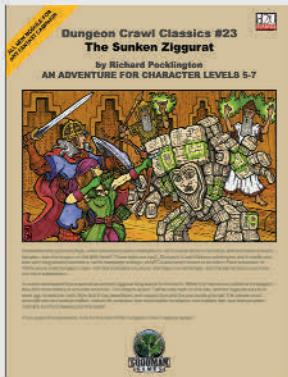
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Deep inside a catacomb at the base of a steep mountainside, the heroes encounter what appears to be a tribe of ordinary kobolds. But soon it becomes clear that these scaly humanoids have tapped into an ancient magic that augments their bodies! Exploring deeper into the mountain, the heroes learn more about the mysterious transmutation magic that haunts these old catacombs...

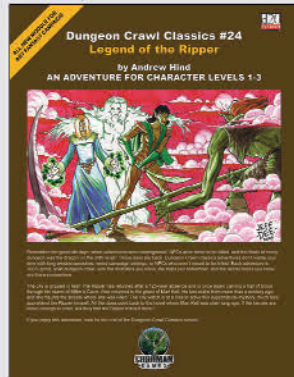
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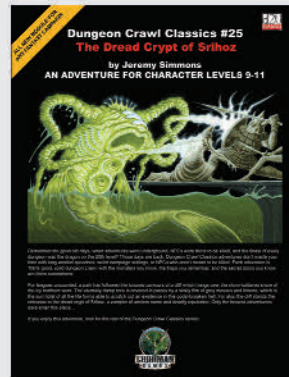
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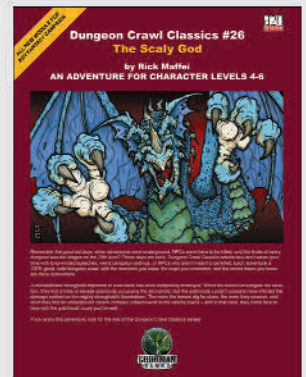
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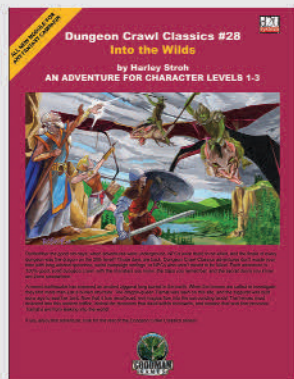
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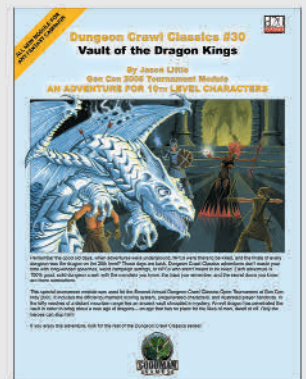
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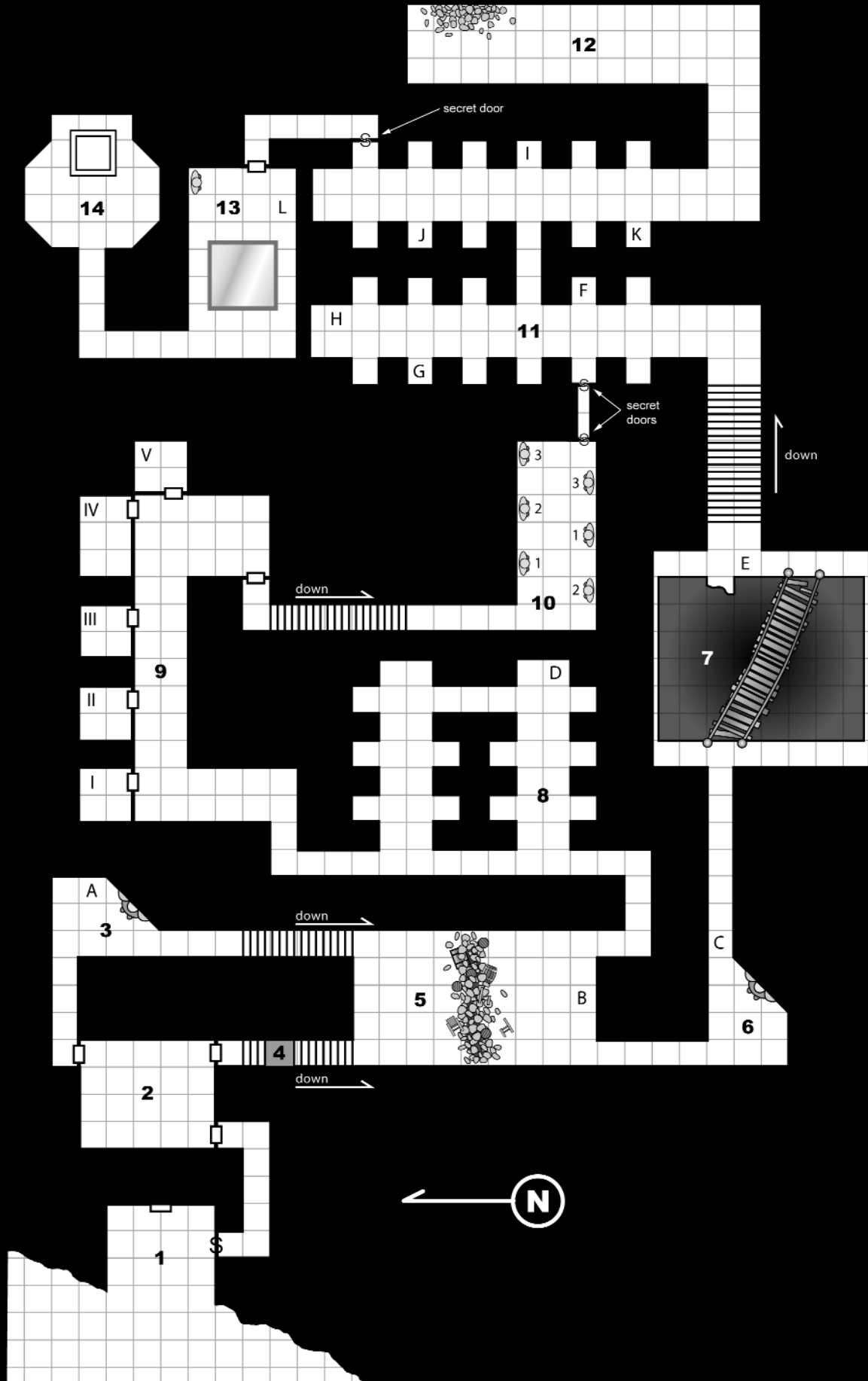


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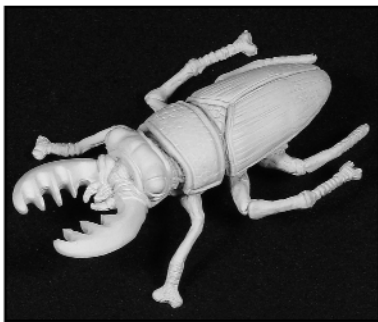
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Dungeon Crawl Classics #31

The Transmuter's Last Touch

By Jeff LaSala

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-2



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Introduction

Remember the golden days of role-playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

The Transmuter's Last Touch reminds players not to underestimate their enemies. Designed for four to six characters of 1st-2nd level, we recommend 6-8 character levels among the party members. The adventure is appropriate for any mix of character classes. Strong fighters will serve well against the sheer number of opponents the PCs must contend with, and having a cleric will certainly be advantageous for the many inevitable injuries. PCs with Spellcraft and Knowledge (arcana) skills may find the adventure particularly intriguing and will better understand the unique augmentations within. The quirks of this adventure are also more interesting if the players have faced kobolds before and think they know what to expect.

Adventure Summary

By accident or intention, the PCs discover a secret door at the base of a steep mountainside. Within, they find a catacomb occupied by what appears to be a tribe of ordinary kobolds, but they soon discover that the scaly humanoids have tapped into some kind of old magic that can augment their bodies for short periods of time. Cunning as they are, the kobolds, led by their magically mutated chieftain, have taken full advantage of the lingering power of the catacomb's former occupant. While exploring deeper into the mountain, the PCs will have the opportunity to learn more about the nature of the transmutation magic at work. If so, they can utilize these curious abilities just as well as the kobolds. Ultimately, they confront Tazex, the chieftain, and will either put an end to his threat or number among his victims.



Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). Encounter – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. EL – the encounter level.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
1-1	6	P	Secret door	–
1-2	6	C	5 kobolds <i>Ydak</i> , kobold War3	3
1-4	7	T	Collapsing stairs	1
1-5	7	C	5 kobolds	1
1-6	8	C, T	3 kobolds Statue <i>sleep</i> trap	3
1-7	9	C, T	3 kobolds Collapsing ledge	2
1-8	9	C	<i>Fikk</i> , kobold Rgr1 1 dire weasel	3
1-9	10	C	<i>Idruma</i> , kobold Adp4	3
1-10	11	P	Statue puzzle	–
1-12	12	C	12 kobolds	4
1-13	12	C	Animated object	2
1-14	13	C	<i>Tazex</i> , mutant kobold Ftr3	4

Scaling Information

Although designed for 1st-2nd level PCs, The Transmuter's Last Touch can easily be scaled up for higher levels.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 2nd level): All kobolds' class levels should be increased by 1, area 1-8 should include a second dire weasel, and Tazex should have fast healing 2.

Getting the Players Involved

There are various ways to introduce this adventure to the PCs. They may be passing through any forest, mountains, or foothills when they encounter the entrance to the catacomb, which is concealed by thick foliage at the base of a rock wall. The following possibilities can introduce the PCs to this adventure:

- The PCs come across an overturned caravan wagon that has been thoroughly ransacked. A ranger easily locates tracks leading to the entrance of the catacomb. A ranger might also be able to identify the prints as belonging to kobolds. If no one has the ability to track, the trail might be obvious to anyone, marked by spilled blood and dropped loot.
- The PCs may have been hired to locate the source of recent caravan strikes. The only description one survivor had was that “a demon with four arms” led a small group of reptiles. Searching through the area eventually brings the PCs to the mountainside.
- While camping in the forest one night, the PCs are robbed! A small group of kobolds creates a nearby commotion, and two or three of them run into camp quickly and grab the most valuable things they can, then immediately all the kobolds retreat. After searching for the thieves, the PCs come upon the hidden entrance.

Augmentations

This adventure utilizes temporary magical changes to creatures, hereafter known as augmentations. They are a byproduct of the intense transmutation magic once employed in this dungeon by the wizard Verdivis in his deranged experiments. An augmentation works like a simplistic template, merely conferring an ability or two for a short period of time, and does not alter a creature’s other inherent stats. Anytime an augmentation is referenced, use the details below to apply them depending upon its type.

A subject moving into a trigger spot initiates the augmentation. The locations of the triggers, limited to specific 5’x5’ squares, are denoted on the map by letters A through L. These magical “hot spots” are permanent, but only one creature may benefit from a given trigger per round. Merely moving through a square triggers the augmentation. The duration of any augmentation is 5 rounds.

The kobolds know of every augmentation and make good use of them. If any of the PCs step into a trigger spot, they *feel* the transformation and gain the same abilities but may have to experiment to employ them. A successful DC 15 Spellcraft check allows a subject to innately learn the properties and utilize them to full effect.

If a *detect magic* spell is used within range of a trigger, the caster will detect a moderate aura (Spellcraft DC 21 to identify it as transmutation), and will be able to see its precise location.

Dispelling an augmentation is difficult. Treat the opposing caster as 12th level for the roll. A creature enhanced by an augmentation is treated as having a CR of one increment higher for purposes of determining XP (e.g., a CR 1/4 kobold would become a CR 1/3 kobold). A creature under the effect of one augmentation cannot be affected by another until the first effect ends.

Below each entry is a short description of how a kobold might appear when the augmentation takes effect. Simply alter the specifics for any creature using the augmentation.

A – Noisome: The subject is infused with a powerfully offensive odor. Foul vapor leaks through the subject’s pores. All living creatures within 5 feet must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 13) or be sickened for 5 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The subject is immune to this stink.

Issuing from the humanoid’s scaly hide is a greenish vapor, which roils outward into the immediate vicinity. Even from a distance, you can tell the stench the creature now exudes is foul indeed.

B – Fire-infused: The subject becomes infused with the element of fire, gaining the fire subtype and the ability to breathe a 15 ft. cone of fire (damage 1d4, Reflex DC 13 half). This attack is a standard action that does not provoke an attack opportunity, and may be used once per round.

The humanoid’s red-glowing eyes brighten and flicker, as though a living flame burned behind empty sockets. As its mouth opens to pant, you perceive the red-orange intensity of fire dancing within.

C – Quickened: The subject is *hastened*, as the spell.

The humanoid’s every action, from its blinking eyes to its steps, seems supernaturally accelerated.

D – Earth-infused: The subject becomes infused with the element of earth, gaining damage reduction 2/–, and the ability to breathe a 10-ft. cone of rock shards and pebbles (damage 1d4, Reflex DC 13 half). This attack is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and may be used once per round.

The red, glowing light of the humanoid’s eyes are replaced with a hollow darkness. Its shrill growl becomes a coarse sound like the churning of dry soil.

E – Clouded: The subject is surrounded by a 10-ft.-radius cloud of vapor that moves with it. This replicates the *obscuring mist* spell, except that the vapor cannot be blown away and the subject may see and attack normally.

A cloud of gray mist manifests from the air, completely obscuring the humanoid and much of the space around it. It churns in place, but does not seem to flow beyond its localized center point.

F – Enlarged: The subject and the subject’s equipment increase by one category. Equipment reverts to its original size if it loses contact with the subject. The subject gains +2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, and -1 on attack rolls. A



Medium subject becomes Large and also gains reach.

The humanoid's body trembles for a moment, then expands to the full height of a human. Its proportions – and even its weapons and armor – have grown with it!

G – Forceful: Once per round, the subject can hurl an invisible ball of force at any target it can see within 30 feet. This deals 1d3 points of force damage, and initiates a bull rush with a +6 bonus on the check (+4 for Strength, +2 for charging, which it always gets) plus the subject's own Strength modifier, if any.

A section of the air appears to ripple and blur at the humanoid's fingertips.

H – Mucilaginous: The subject's body becomes viscous and slimy. The subject gains ooze traits (although it does not become immune to mind-affecting spells) and can make a slam attack at the creature's regular melee attack modifier, dealing damage appropriate for its size and an additional 1d3 points of acid damage. The subject's equipment remains unharmed.

An unpleasant sheen of purplish slime appears to cover the humanoid's body, and a strange, alchemical smell taints the air.

I – Evanescent: The subject is sporadically rendered invisible for the duration. At the beginning of every round, roll a d4: on a 1-2, the subject is invisible, on a 3-4 the subject is visible.

The humanoid suddenly vanishes from sight, then flickers back into existence.

J – Venomous: One of the subject's appendages grows a poisonous barb at its tip. It can make an attack (with its regular melee attack modifier) that deals 1 damage plus poison with a successful hit. Poison: Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage unconsciousness for 1d10 rounds.

One of the humanoid's digits suddenly curls and thickens, becoming more like a curving thorn than a finger. From its tip drips a glistening green fluid.

K – Solidified: For one round the subject is petrified. On the following round it may move again. It is granted construct traits: low-light vision; darkvision 60 ft., immunity to all mind-affecting effects, and immunity to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. It cannot heal damage, and is not subject to critical hits, fatigue, exhaustion, or energy drain. It gains 5 temporary hit points for Small creatures, or 10 for Medium creatures.

The humanoid's body stiffens, its body and equipment darkening to a deep gray. Then it stops moving altogether. It appears to have turned itself into stone!

L – Vitreous: The subject's body and equipment hardens to a mirrored, glass-like material. This does not impede movement, attacks, or skill checks, though it does grant a +1 natural bonus to AC. Its body dazzles opponents who the subject attacks or is attacked by unless the opponents make a successful Fortitude save (DC 13). If the subject is slain while the augmentation is still in effect, it explodes in a shower of glassy shards, dealing 1d3 damage to all within 5 feet unless they make a successful Reflex save (DC 13).

The humanoid's entire body and even its equipment takes on a reflective, mirror-like solidity. Light seems to reflect and brighten off its form as though riddled with thousands of separate facets.

Background Story

Verdivis, a name remembered by bards, was a powerful transmuter who shirked the path of lichdom to extend his life. Instead, he chose to transform and manipulate his own body to correct the imperfections of the mortal form. Verdivis has since disappeared into legend. Some say Verdivis journeyed to another plane, while others claim he become another creature entirely and abandoned even his own wizardry.

But all famous wizards must begin somewhere. When Verdivis had achieved sufficient power in his youth after years of adventuring, he found a long-forgotten catacomb in the side of a mountain and set up a laboratory where he could pursue his experiments uninterrupted. Neither greed nor evil drove him; Verdivis's amoral mind was an artful labyrinth obsessed with *possibilities*. Altering and replacing the magical abilities of his subjects became his

greatest love, and merging the traits of one monster with another's appealed to him like nothing else. Creatures like the bulette and the owlbear were conceived by the minds of wizards like Verdivis. For years, the great transmuter ceaselessly labored with his spells. When at last he'd learned all he could from his subterranean laboratory, Verdivis moved on to greater things.

The sheer power of Verdivis's magic saturated the catacomb, forever altering it. To this day, transmutation magic lingers in the air, and some of it has eddied into small, concentrated "pockets." These regions remain potent enough to transform any creature that steps within them. They are living remnants of Verdivis's long-forgotten experiments.

Many years passed, until at last the catacomb was discovered by Tazex, a kobold lieutenant exiled from his tribe. Despondent, he came upon Verdivis's old experimenting ground and accidentally stepped into an enduring flux of the wizard's most powerful incantation. The magic effected a mutation in him that changed the course of his life. Thus augmented, Tazex returned to his tribe and challenged the chieftain. In the ensuing fight, the tribe was decimated and the chief was slain. Tazex gath-

ered the remaining kobolds and led them to his new lair, wooing them with the idea that he could make each and every one of them more powerful.

Tazex now rules his small army from within the catacomb. With his reluctant consort, an adept named Idruma, he is studying Verdivis's lingering magic with a view toward making the augmentations permanent. Tazex alone was permanently warped by the magic he was exposed to, but he envisions armies of transformed kobolds at his command.

To fund his research and feed his army, Tazex has been ordering small strike teams out against human caravans passing through the forest. He has even led some of the ambushes himself, delighting in the reaction his victims have upon seeing him. Meanwhile, he has been fortifying the catacomb against inevitable intrusion. Styling himself Tazex the Everchanging – for indeed the mutation steadily pullulates within him – the arrogant kobold believes that great things lie in store for him. The kobolds who serve him do so out of fear and morbid fascination, not because they are endeared to him as a leader. Indeed, most of them liked the old chieftain better.

Player Beginning

Whatever their reasons for being there, the PCs find themselves entering a grove of trees near the base of a steep hillside. Whether led there by a ranger, their own determination, or purely by accident, the PCs will at last draw near the entrance.

A steep, rocky wall rises up behind a thick tangle of trees before you. You spot a small belt pouch lying discarded

upon the ground at the base of a briar-filled thicket. Just above it you can see a patch of shade which, upon closer scrutiny, appears to be a gap in the foliage...

One of the kobold raiders dropped this pouch in a careless moment of glee. Inside it is a polished, red and grey jasper worth 50 gp. If the PCs press through the brambles, they will find themselves in area 1-1.

The Catacomb

Originally intended as a resting place for their dead, this catacomb was carved from the mountainside by an order of human priests who served the god Soleth. Before completion, the priests were forced to abandon their project when a tribe of grimlocks, flushed from their home in the underdeep by some greater horror, overran the complex. They made it their home until the coming of Verdivis, who purged the catacomb of their filth in one day.

Among Verdivis's many alterations to the catacombs is the magical nullifying of sound, which he'd effected to prevent his subjects from disturbing each other. Even the sounds of heavy combat do not travel from one room to another. As a rule, sound travels normally for 60 feet before it begins to fade out. Hearing even the sound of combat beyond this limit requires a successful Listen check (DC 15 + 1 for every additional 5 feet beyond 60). For example, hearing combat from 75 feet away requires a DC 18 Listen check.

As a result, only the gong in area 1-2 can immediately alert Tazex to the presence of intruders. If the PCs do not dispatch all kobolds in each area, however, some may escape to warn their chieftain.

If the PCs use a *detect magic* spell anywhere within the catacomb, they will detect a faint aura everywhere, and with a successful DC 21 Spellcraft check will recognize it as transmutation. This is not due to epic-level magic; it is merely a result of the overwhelming amount of magic that once flowed through these halls. Additionally, any transmutation spells cast within the catacomb are empowered as though the caster were 1 level higher. This feature does not interfere with other existing auras.

Unless noted otherwise, the catacomb features ten foot ceilings. The stone walls themselves have been gradually altered by magical osmosis. They still resemble regular masonry walls, but are riddled with small craters and have a bluish tinge to them. They block all *detection*

spells. The few doors there are in the catacomb are newly installed, but Tazex neglected to acquire keys for them, so they're all unlocked.

Masonry Wall: Hardness 9; hp 100; break DC 35; Climb DC 13.

Good Wooden Door: Hardness 5; hp 15; break DC 16 (stuck), 18 (locked).

Most of the kobolds within the catacomb are 1st-level warriors and have the following statistics. Exceptional kobolds are presented in the area entries. Most speak only Draconic, and often cry out to each other in their yipping, dog-like tongue. Some know a few words in Common, with "run," "surrender," and "no kill" being the most common. Due to their irrational trust in their chieftain's power, these kobolds are exceptionally brave. As a rule, whenever at least one of the kobolds is augmented magically, they will only flee when overwhelmingly outnumbered.

Kobold, War1 (1): CR 1/4; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk Spear +1 melee (1d6-1/x3) or sling +3 ranged (1d3); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Profession (miner) +2, Search +2, Spot +2; Alertness.

Possessions: Leather armor, sling, spear, 10 sling bullets, 2d4 cp.

Languages: Draconic

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – The Secret Door: Read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself looking upon a squared depression in the rock wall that is heavily choked with ivy. The space ends with the conspicuous outline of a large stone door that looks like it hasn't been opened in centuries. There doesn't appear to be any opening mechanism or pull-ring for the door. Many of the curling vines have been half torn down from the walls, and behind them you can make out a series of intricate bas-reliefs.

The door on the north wall is, in fact, a false one. It is a decoy to distract would-be tomb raiders from the real door on the east wall. However, it does contain a clue for entrance. When the PCs move in closer, give them handout A and continue with the following description:

Upon the stone door is carved a morbid scene. It depicts a robed and hooded man administering a potion to an enshrouded, skeletal corpse that lies upon a bier. Behind them, an open sarcoph-

agus awaits. Upon the left-hand wall is carved a tall, life-sized figure in a long, hooded robe. Though his countenance is grim, he strongly resembles the man depicted on the central wall. Finally, a life-sized skeleton wrapped in a death shroud is carved into the right-hand wall. The grooves of the relief are deep, giving the impression that it is about to step out of the wall. Though its arms are folded across its chest, the skeleton's jaw hangs open wide as though screaming in silence.

The false door's bas-relief represents both a common practice of the clergy of Soleth (see sidebar) and a clue to opening the real entrance. Just as the priests of Soleth administer purification draughts to the dead, so must entrants to the catacomb administer to the skeleton on the eastern wall. Pouring any liquid into its mouth will trigger the mechanism that opens the door. Any potion or an equal amount of water will suffice.

Some skill checks can yield more clues:

- A DC 15 Search check reveals the northern door as false.
- A DC 20 Search check reveals the presence of the secret door. A fine crack is just barely discernable around the skeletal bas-relief. Close inspection also reveals that the shadowy niche that is the skeleton's mouth is deeper than it first appears, which will also become apparent if the PCs guess the solution.
- A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the scenes depicted in the relief refer to the purification ritual carried out by the clergy of Soleth.

Area 1-2 – The Guard Chamber (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

This wide chamber is accessed from three separate wooden doors beneath lofty arches. It clearly serves as a guard room, for a group of small reptilian humanoids now sits around a chalk circle on the floor, playing at bones. They wear piecemeal leather armor and each has a spear within reach. Looking on with a scowl is a humanoid in chain armor hefting a mace. At the far wall, a heavy disk the color of dark gold and scored with many dents hangs from a pair of hooks. Beside it hangs a metal rod with padding on one end.

These kobolds have been given the sole duty of sounding the alarm in case of intruders. A kobold merely needs to strike the gong hanging on the north wall with any heavy item. The leader of this little squad is Ydak, an elite warrior currently out of Tezax's favor.

If sounded, the gong doesn't seem particularly loud – certainly not loud enough to alert the whole complex. In fact, the gong serves as an *alarm* spell (left over from Verdivis's occupation), resounding audibly in areas 1-13 and 1-14. It alerts Tazex to the presence of intruders.

The ceiling in this room is 15 feet high. Etched into the north wall is an *arcane mark*, the personal symbol of Verdivis. A bard can make a bardic knowledge check, or any PC with the appropriate Knowledge (local) skill can make a check (DC 18 in both cases), to recognize the symbol of the famous wizard and perhaps alert the PCs as to the nature of this dungeon. Success also reveals that he was said to dwell in this region in his youth and was a practitioner of transmutation magic.

Tactics: The kobolds have not been expecting intruders so soon. Their first instinct is to attack, but they take their first round of combat to pick up their weapons and stand ready. Ydak is able to attack immediately, and shouts for the others to sound the gong. If Ydak is slain during the first round of combat, the kobolds neglect to sound the alarm. Any kobolds who flee this chamber exit through the west door and make use of the augmentation trigger (A) in area 1-3.

Treasure: The gong is a masterwork instrument made of gilded bronze. It is not magical itself, merely the focus of an irregular *alarm* spell. The gong can fetch up to 120 gp with the right buyer, although it is quite heavy (40 lbs.). There are five pieces of chalk strewn on the floor, as well as 10 bone dice.

Kobold guards (5): hp 4 each; see stats above.

Ydak, kobold War3: CR 2; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 3d8; hp 18; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk Masterwork heavy mace +4 melee (1d6/x2) or throwing axe +4 ranged (1d4); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +6, Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Profession (miner) +2, Search +2, Spot +2; Alertness, Iron Will.

Possessions: Chain shirt, masterwork heavy

mace, throwing axe, 31 gp.

Languages: Draconic

Area 1-3 – The First Shrine: Read or paraphrase the following:

Seeming to step from the wall itself is the stone figure of a large man in a billowing cloak. He is a hooded figure bearing a grim expression and holding a broadsword with its blade facing down. His other hand he holds out with the palm facing you as if commanding a halt.

The statue depicts Soleth, a normally benevolent god of the dead, who was revered by the priests for whom the catacomb was intended. The statue is a simple warning for trespassers to turn back. A character with Knowledge (religion) can make a DC 12 skill check to recognize the god.

Area 1-4 – The Trapped Stairs (EL 1): Even the original carvers of this catacomb intended this hallway as a trap, effectively halving the chance that an intruder would choose the correct path to move further into the mountain. The moment a character of at least Small size reaches the halfway point down the stairs, the steps all sink downward until they create a crude, inclined plain. Concealed metal hooks spring from the walls on either side, skewering anyone who falls down. The collapse begins at the second space down the steps, and anyone standing there risks damage as they fall to the bottom of the steps. As much as they respected peaceful death, the priests despised those who would deny others their due rest.

Collapsing Stairs: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger, automatic reset; Atk +10 melee (1d6+1, hooks); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15 (jam stairs to prevent collapse and block pathway for hooks).

Area 1-5 – The Barricade (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

Flickering green torchlight on the far side of this tall room silhouettes a massive barrier of some kind which appears to divide the room. The smell of unwashed, scaly hides is beginning to grow stronger. A faint smell of rotting flesh also taints the air.

Soleth

Soleth, the god of peaceful death, is lawful neutral. He is sometimes called the Silent Death or the Merciful One. His clergy, a misunderstood and soft-spoken crowd, believe that death should be a quiet, dignified event. Soleth abhors undeath, and his clerics often seek out the undead to lay them to rest. It is said that the priests of Soleth brew a special draught that they administer to the corpses of the faithful that prevents them from ever being raised as undead (short of a *wish* or *miracle*). Soleth's domains are Healing, Law, and Protection. His symbol is a stone coffin etched with a pair of open eyes upon its lid. Soleth's favored weapon is a bastard sword.



Here Tazex has ordered his kobolds to construct a barricade in the event that a large contingent of enemies is ever sent against them, for the catacomb doesn't feature many of its own barriers or doors. The barricade is constructed of salvaged caravan goods: wheels, doors, furniture, steed harnesses, and the like.

The well-formed barricade blocks all movement, though it can be climbed (Climb DC 15). The barricade is 10 feet high, 5 feet thick, and completely bisects the room. Two ladders incorporated into the barricade on the far side allow two kobolds to stand upon them and make ranged attacks against opponents on the opposite side of the room. The barricade provides them with cover and gives them a +1 circumstance bonus on attack rolls for higher ground.

There is a well disguised gap (Search DC 15) in the barricade near the south wall that allows Small creatures an easier way to bypass it. Medium creatures can squeeze through the space, but take a -4 penalty on attack rolls and a -4 penalty to AC for 1 full round while doing so.

A group of 5 kobolds has gathered on the far side of the barricade. They linger here, throwing daggers at the wall in a contest for accuracy. A freshly killed human caravan guard slumped against the wall is their target.

Tactics: Allow the kobolds an opposed Listen check when the PCs enter this room to see who hears whom first. If the kobolds win, they immediately investigate, climbing the barricade or slipping through the gap, but not before making good use of the augmentation trigger (B).

Kobold guards (5): hp 4 each; see stats above.

Each carries a dagger as well (Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4-1)).

Treasure: A 3-pound iron torch mounted in the middle of the south wall has a green-flamed *continual light* spell cast upon it. Aside from being a useful item in itself, it can fetch up to 160 gp to the right buyer. Removing the torch from the sconce requires a DC 15 Strength check. The dead caravan guard wears a ragged, but salvageable, suit of studded leather armor. Tucked in his belt beneath his armor is a flask of *oil of magic weapon* that the kobolds never found. A DC 18 Search check locates it.

Area 1-6 – The Second Shrine (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The front half of a large man appears to be stepping from the wall before you as though emerging from the stone itself. He is cloaked and hooded, holding a broadsword upright in one hand, and with his other hand he points forward, as though accusing someone. The flesh on his face looks as though it was burned away. The stony contours of the skull are carved into a menacing grin.

Show the players handout B. As in area 1-3, the figure represents Soleth, god of the dead. A character with Knowledge (religion) can make a DC 12 skill check to recognize the god and know his name. A character who successfully identified him from area 1-3 will already know him and realizes this statue represents the god's dual nature as a god of judgment. This depiction of him is a more aggressive warning against intrusion into the catacomb.

If anyone passes directly in front of the statue without speaking a prayer of some sort to the god, a

sleep spell triggers 5 feet directly in front of the statue (10-ft.-radius burst). Tazex knows about the trap but hasn't put any effort into disabling it yet, figuring it a worthwhile defensive measure for now. Usually the kobolds just suffer the effects and move on when they wake up.

Tactics: Three kobolds linger now in the corridor just north of here, ready to investigate any sounds. They make use of the augmentation trigger (C), and target anyone who succumbs to the trap.

Treasure: A hidden panel (Search DC 17) at the base of the statue contains a secret cache of supplies, including a pouch of 10 pp, 2 vials of holy water, and a *potion of cure light wounds*. The kobolds have not found this.

Statue Sleep Trap: CR 2; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*), automatic reset (10 minutes later); spell effect (*sleep*, 1st-level wizard, DC 11 Will save negates); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

Kobold guards (3): hp 4 each; see stats above.

Area 1-7 – The Chasm (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter. This text assumes the kobolds are on the opposite side of the room from whichever direction the PCs enter:

A chasm yawns ahead as you enter this large chamber. The damp smell of earth and decay rises up from the murk below. Three pairs of glowing red eyes regard you from the darkness beyond. Remnants of a crumbled stone bridge jut from the chasm's edge. In its place, a ramshackle bridge of weathered rope and wooden boards reaches diagonally across the span.

Show the players handout C. When the priests who built the catacomb came across this subterranean river, they simply created a stone bridge (now collapsed) to span it. The natural stream provided fresh water for the stonecarvers.

Now, kobolds who displease Tazex or who otherwise perish are tossed into the chasm. The drop is 40 feet into a 10-foot-deep, slow-running river flowing through narrow cracks. A fall into the river from the chasm's edge deals 2d3 points of nonlethal damage. The walls of the chasm are smooth and slick, and climbing them is impossible without assistance. A successful DC 15 Search check reveals a series of tiny metal rungs leading up the wall on the northeastern corner, though a DC 13 Climb check is required to ascend it.

The rope bridge was constructed at Tazex's behest as both a means of passage and a quick way of dumping intruders into the river. Despite its appearance, it is actually quite sturdy. A 2-foot-wide ledge

runs along the side walls. Crossing either requires a Balance check (DC 10, moving at half speed). However, the kobolds have weakened the integrity of the masonry on the western ledge so that it collapses at its midpoint.

Nested hinges have been installed in both sides of the north exit, but the priests fled the catacomb before doors could be added.

Tactics: If the PCs begin to cross the rope bridge, the three kobolds sitting guard at the other end try to drop it. If two each use a full-round action, they can untie the two supporting ropes, or they may opt to simply sever them by dealing 8 points of damage to each. Severing or untying both supporting ropes dumps anyone on the bridge to the river (no save). The first kobold to act utilizes the augmentation trigger (E) to disguise their strategy.

Treasure: At the bottom of the river are the skeletal remains of a tomb raider who found the catacomb years before Tazex. Accidentally triggering an augmentation, he began to flee in a panic and fell to his death when the river was shallower. Though most of his possessions have rotted into uselessness, around one bony finger he still wears a *ring of protection +1*, and a successful DC 16 Search check will yield it.

The River: The river moves so slowly that there is no chance of a PC being swept away. In either direction it is swallowed up in darkness. If you wish to expand the dungeon, you could add a mysterious corridor connected to the riverbank, visible only from water level.

Kobold guards (3): hp 4 each; see stats above.

Collapsing Ledge: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger, no reset; Reflex DC 20 avoids; 40 ft. drop (2d3 nonlethal damage) for the person who triggers it; Search DC 20; Disable Device 20. The ledge does not collapse until an individual reaches the third square from the southern side.

Area 1-8 – The Den (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A wide hall breaks off from the main corridor, and in shadowy niches you can see upright stone sarcophagi bereft of lids. A heavy animal musk taints the air and you can hear rustling noises in the darkness beyond.

Here the kobolds stable their last-remaining pet: an ill-tempered dire weasel.

Tactics: The weasel's keeper, a kobold ranger named Fikk, urges it through the augmentation trigger (D) if he suspects a battle is imminent. Fikk's strategy is to stay in the shadows and shoot from afar, especially while the weasel attacks. The weasel

has been trained to use the augmentation's breath weapon.

Treasure: An insolent kobold has stashed his secret find, a masterwork dagger of alchemical silver, in a corner of one of the alcoves so that Tazex doesn't get it. A DC 15 Search check locates it.

Fikk, kobold Rgr1: CR 1/2; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 1d8; hp 6; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk Longsword +2 melee (1d6/19-20) or shortbow +4 ranged (1d4); SA Favored enemy (humans), track, wild empathy (-1); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Handle Animal +2, Heal +2, Hide +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +2, Knowledge (nature) +1, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Profession (miner) +2, Ride +2, Search +3, Spot +2, Survival +2, Swim +2, Use Rope +2; Point Blank Shot.

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, shortbow, 25 arrows, 13 gp.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Dire weasel: CR 2; Medium Animal; HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk Bite +6 melee (1d6+3/x2); SA Attach, blood drain; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Spot +5; Alertness, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

Attach (Ex): A dire weasel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire weasel loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. An attached dire weasel can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached dire weasel through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the creature.

Blood Drain (Ex): A dire weasel drains blood for 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Area 1-9 – The Cells (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A pair of torches illuminates a row of large cells along the left-hand wall. You hear the nervous rustle of prisoners within and you detect the unpleasant smell of unwashed bodies. Strangely, a mouth-watering scent of cooked meat and vegetables also lingers in the air.

The five cells, originally intended to imprison enemies of the church, never saw any use. Tazex, however, intends to place captives here that he believes may be ransomed to nearby human settlements for

greater gain. This area now serves as both a cell block and kitchen.

Around the corner is Idruma. She stands ready to fight amidst recently hung shelves, crude kitchenware, and a table laden with crockery and half-prepared food. Idruma is Tazex's reluctant consort, the community healer, alchemist, spiritual leader – and most recently, jailer. She is an attractive creature by kobold standards. But Idruma is unhappy with her present position in life. She liked the old tribe and the cautious sensibilities of her former chieftain. She believes Tazex is reckless and needlessly brutal, driven insane by his mutation.

Idruma has been treating the prisoners very well. The doors are locked and Idruma bears the only key for them.

Cell #I: This cell contains a well-fed but scared goblin named Duzin. He's afraid of everyone but Idruma, whom he's come to like (though they do not share a common language). However, he's pretty well convinced that he's doomed, so he will look for any opportunity to run. He attacks only to defend himself. If the PCs try to carry him along, he alerts the kobolds of their presence at the first opportunity to earn Tazex's mercy.

Cell #II: Empty, save for a large puddle of brackish water.

Cell #III: Two kobolds have been placed here as punishment for questioning Tazex's commands. The chieftain has told them that he will most likely execute one of them as an example. These two have been trying to convince Idruma to let them go. She has been seriously considering it, as well as escaping herself.

Cell #IV: Residual magic has gathered into a corrosive cloud in this room, which is utterly scentless outside the cell itself. Consequently, this is a place only for the dead or the dying. Every minute spent in this cell deals the victim 1d4 points of acid damage (no save). The deteriorated remains of four humans can be found in here, victims of Tazex's cruelty.

Cell #V: This cell, always hanging wide open, has a table and two chairs in it. This is where Tazex comes and dines with Idruma.

Tactics: Idruma is no coward. Though she'll stand up to intruders, she shows no interest in fighting them. She only flees if attacked, heading to the secret door in area 1-10. If the PCs can improve her attitude from indifferent to helpful (DC 15 Diplomacy check), she may be willing to reveal Tazex's general scheme. She may even tell them there is a secret door nearby, but she will not reveal its mechanism solution. Only intimidation can garner further information from her.

Treasure: There is food enough here (half of which is beginning to spoil) to feed 30 Small creatures or 20 Medium size creatures. Buried amidst the food is a *potion of sanctuary*, requiring a DC 15 Search check to locate.

Idruma, Kobold Adp4: CR 3; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 3d6; hp 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp -2; Atk/Full Atk Morningstar +2 melee (1d6-1/x2) or dart +4 ranged (1d3); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Craft (alchemy) +3, Craft (trapmaking) +3, Handle Animal +3, Heal +4, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +2, Profession (miner) +4, Search +3, Spellcraft +4, Spot +2, Survival +5; Alertness, Brew Potion.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/3/1, save DC = 12 + spell level): 0-level – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st-level – *cure light wounds*, *obscuring mist*, *sleep*; 2nd-level – *web*.

Possessions: *Potion of bear's endurance*, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure light wounds*, 185 gp, cell key, antitoxin, tanglefoot bag.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Duzin, Goblin War1: CR 1/3; Small Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk Unarmed +1 melee (1d2 nonlethal); SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +4, Spot +2; Alertness.

Languages: Goblin.

Kobolds (2): hp 4 each; see stats above. They are weaponless, and any attacks they make unarmed deal only 1d2 points of nonlethal damage.

Area 1-10 – The Gallery: Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you is a long chamber with a high, vaulted ceiling. Along the sides are two rows of solemn, helmeted figures carved in stone. Each is slightly taller than a regular man and appears to be well armored and heavily cloaked. Clutched in each man's stony grasp, however, are real weapons.

The ceiling in this room is 20 feet high. A well-hidden secret door (Search DC 22) on the north wall leads to a narrow tunnel out into area 1-11.

The stone warriors represent an old knightly order allied to the church of Soleth. Each statue represents a number, depending on how many sharp points the weapon in its grasp has. The statues along the west side are holding, respectively, a longsword (1 point),



a scimitar (2 points), and a trident (3 points). The statues on the east side are holding a double-sword (2 points), a spear (1 point), and a round steel shield with three spikes on it (3 points).

Close inspection of any of the statues (DC 15 Search check) reveals a fine seam around each statue's neck (with an axis within), allowing the heads to rotate a complete circuit. When the heads of all the matching statues are turned in such a way that they face one another (such as statue 3 on the north wall facing statue 3 on the south wall and vice versa), a resounding click in the walls precedes the smooth sliding of the secret door. The secret door can open easily from the other side, allowing easier access from area 1-11 to this one, but from this direction it cannot be opened any other way. Idruma solved this puzzle already, but the kobolds usually avoid the trouble of using it. The complex mechanism resets itself 5 minutes later.

Area 1-11 – Halls of the Absent Dead: Read or paraphrase the following:

A single torch gently flickers in the darkness of this solemn tomb, but its pale blue flame fails to illuminate the whole of the chamber. Six rows of alcoves line each side, and within each you see upright stone sarcophagi. There are no lids, and the sarcophagi themselves appear to be empty. If ever the dead were interred here, they are gone now. The air is chilled here, though strange, sourceless currents of warm air occasionally interrupt the stillness.

If the PCs somehow managed to get this far without alerting Tazex, they may continue uncontested through this area. All the warrior kobolds in area 1-12 will remain there unless somehow alerted. No matter the circumstance so far, Tazex will become aware of them now from his viewing mirror in area 1-13. He

waits for them in area 1-14.

However, if any kobolds have successfully fled from the PCs or if the gong in area 1-2 was struck, then Tazex is already aware and waiting for them. In the meantime, eight of the warriors from area 1-12 will be lingering beyond the shadows in the northern hall. At least four will stay in 1-12 to guard their young.

Whatever circumstances brings kobolds into this area, they will make use of the various augmentation triggers. Overwhelmingly confident in his superiority, Tazex is content to throw his kobolds at the PCs and observe the augmentations at work. If the battle goes ill for the kobolds, then Tazex prepares himself for their inevitable intrusion.

Treasure: As with area 1-5, a torch bearing a *continual flame* spell can be had in the same fashion, though its flame is blue in color.

Secret Door: Two sarcophagi hide secret doors behind them. The secret door leading to area 1-13 from the northwest alcove can be located with a DC 16 Search check. The secret door to area 1-10 along the southern side of this hall requires a DC 20 Search check to find. It opens from either direction. It is quite possible this secret door is the means through which the PCs entered this room.

Area 1-12 – Kobold Encampment (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

This vast hall is clearly the main encampment of the residents. Animal skins, beds of fur, small chests, and miscellaneous trinkets lie strewn about, with many of the small humanoids moving to and fro throughout the room. Dozens of red-glowing eyes look upon you, full of alarm, anger, and fear. Diminutive females and their young recoil and clutch each other. The warriors begin to take up arms.

The ceiling in this chamber is fully twenty feet high. In the north wall, along the western side, a great archway once led deeper into the mountain. It is from those depths that the grimlocks once came. Verdivis long since collapsed the tunnel, sealing the catacomb off from the underdeep to avoid unexpected intrusions. From the archway, tons of rock have spilled into this chamber. It would take the efforts of an army of accomplished miners to reopen the passage.

Tactics: Any warriors in this chamber immediately move to defend their weaker kin, though it takes them 1 round to ready themselves. If all the warriors have already vacated this room, the females and young move to the western end of the tunnel and cower. They only attack if provoked. If they are spared, they begin to flee the catacombs the moment

the PCs have moved away from the room. They abandon Tazex now, knowing that he and his powers have failed to stop the intruders and failed to protect them.

Treasure: Scattered throughout their personal sleeping spots are 80 gp, 150 sp, and 300 cp. Many personal but monetarily useless ornaments such as small bones and beads lie about. This is all the wealth that Tazex has allowed the kobolds to keep for themselves.

Kobold warriors (12): hp 4 each; see stats above.

Kobold females and young (10): CR 1/8; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 1d8; hp 2 each; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk -1; Grp -6; Atk/Full Atk Club +0 melee (1d4-1); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 7, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Search +2, Spot +2; Alertness.

Languages: Draconic.

Area 1-13 – The Summoning Chamber (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

In the corner of this large chamber is a badly tarnished and heavily dented bronze statue of a robed man. Near the center of the room and floating with perfect stillness ten feet above the ground you is an immense cube of glass. The bottom face of the cube appears to be missing. Affixed to the eastern wall is a large mirror enclosed in a frame of gold. Instead of reflecting back the room, however, through it you can glimpse the hall of sarcophagi that you recently passed through. The mirror appears to be placed into a sliding rack, so that it can be moved along the length of the wall. Lines of runes have been carved into the stone on each wall.

The mirror is a magic item created by Verdivis called a *stoneglass mirror*. Its gilt frame is 8 feet wide and 5 feet high. The *mirror* allows the viewer to look through the stone behind it as through a clear glass window. Its current placement allows it to peer into area 1-11. The sliding rack, seemingly well-oiled even after all these years, allows the viewer to see both corridors in that area. Tazex has been using the *mirror* to remotely view the PCs through that room. But for its size and shape – and the fact that this *mirror* functions constantly while it remains within the catacomb – it otherwise functions like lesser *stoneglass mirrors*, as described in the sidebar.

The statue, sculpted in bronze and made to resemble Verdivis himself, was once a servitor golem under the transmuter's control. When he left, he stripped it of its power and left it behind. The magic lingering in

the catacomb, however, has slowly imbued the statue with a semblance of its former existence. Unknown to Tazex, it is an animated object now, although it has no concrete orders. If a fight breaks out in this area or area 1-14, one round later the statue lurches into motion join the fight, attacking enemies randomly. Each round, roll 1d4 to determine its target: on a 1-2, it attacks the PCs; on a 3-4, it attacks Tazex or his kobolds. It always targets the nearest enemy first. The moment fighting ceases in these two areas, the statue desists and returns to its station in the corner. It will defend itself, but it will not willingly exit these rooms.

Bards can make a DC 20 bardic knowledge check to recognize the statue as resembling the famous wizard Verdivis himself. Tazex will be as surprised as the PCs to find the statue moving. A DC 18 Spellcraft check identifies the wall runes as belonging to the school of conjuration. They are empty of power now, but once served to enhance Verdivis's summoning spells.

The glass cube, 10 feet square, was once used as a temporary cage for unruly creatures during Verdivis's conjurations. Now it moves of its own mindless volition. Whenever a living creature moves into any of the spaces beneath it, the glass cube drops to the ground at a frightening speed. It will not harm a captive; it merely contains it. The cube lifts up again 2 rounds later, to hover again until something moves beneath it again. Treat it as a *wall of force* for all efforts to penetrate it. A DC 21 Spellcraft check used in conjunction with a *detect magic* reveals moderate evocation on the cube.

The ceiling of this chamber is 20 feet high.

Treasure: If the PCs can somehow carry out the solid bronze statue (roughly 800 lbs.), they may be able to find a buyer. Though it is dented and tarnished, it is worth about 4,000 gp. The statue must be brought to 0 hit points before it will become truly

inanimate again, and it will defend itself against attacks. The *stoneglass mirror* itself is quite valuable although it weighs 120 pounds.

Animated Object: CR 2; Medium Construct; HD 2d10+20; hp 20; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk Slam +2 melee (1d6+1); SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 6, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -5; Str 12, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Area 1-14 – The Crucible (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

Lit by a lurid, purple glow on the far side of the room, the walls of this chamber appear deep crimson in color. The very air seems to undulate with magic, yet moves slowly like underwater currents. The light emanates from a raised dais accessed by a couple of short steps.

The dais was once Verdivis's primary workspace for his experiments, the crucible of his art. When Tazex stepped upon the dais for the first time, he triggered the cumulative power that had gathered there over many undisturbed years. The dais is now empty of power (except for the purple glow, which much resembles a *continual flame* spell), but the mutation it harbored now germinates within the mighty kobold.

If Tazex waits for the PCs in this room (as he most likely will), then continue with this description of him:

Standing before you and looking as smug as an imperious archmage is a creature you can only assume is the chieftain of the tribe. Yet this creature barely resembles his smaller kin. Standing a well-muscled five feet high, his rat-like tail appears to have been split into three separate writhing appendages, and his elongated torso also harbors a second pair of arms. Each arm is unclad, heavily furred, and ends in razorlike claws. Grasped in his primary, reptilian hands is

Stoneglass Mirror

Framed in gold or platinum, this oval mirror is usually about 1 foot long and 8 inches high, and bears two ornate handles on either side. When its back is placed against stone and the command word is spoken, the surface of the mirror ceases to reflect. Instead the mirror serves as a window, making the stone behind it appear like clear glass. Up to 5 feet of stone can be penetrated in this way, making this device most optimal for peering through thinner dungeon walls. The mirror does not provide illumination through the stone and the viewer's light sources do not pass through it. The viewer is subject to gaze attacks through the mirror. Each use lasts for 5 minutes and the *stoneglass mirror* can be activated only 3 times per day.

This is the standard version of the *stoneglass mirror*. The mirror found in area 1-13 is the original and most powerful version, which was created by Verdivis himself. Lesser wizards attempted to replicate the rumor of his design, and the resulting mirrors have proven more useful for adventurers.

Moderate divination; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *scrying*; Price 9,000 gp; Weight 3 lbs.

a wicked battle axe stained dark with blood.
"Tazex the Everchanging greets you," he hisses.

Tazex is no longer a regular kobold. Aside from being a competent fighter, his body has been altered by Verdivis's most powerful lingering transmutation effect and it continues to mutate within him. Eventually, Tazex's kobold traits will vanish altogether. He is larger than he used to be, has sprouted a second pair of furred arms like a girallon, and his tail has split into three blue and white furred appendages that are beginning to resemble a phase spider's legs. The mutation has also made him an aberration for all intents and purposes.

Tactics: Tazex isn't stupid. Though he's overconfident in his own abilities, if he's outnumbered he will look for any advantage. Unless the PCs look very unprepared for him, he will make use of his *ethereal jaunt* ability to escape the room after one round of combat. Tazex knows the catacomb well and will lure the PCs into any room he finds the most strategic. Unwilling to let the PCs loot his lair, he will harass them if they do not pursue him.

If any of his kobolds from area 1-12 are still around, he will rally them against the PCs now. They will generally try to wage battle in area 1-11 so they can make use of the augmentations. Without those, they are cowardly.

Due to his magical mutation, Tazex cannot himself benefit from any of the augmentations.

Treasure: Gathered into a sloppy pile on the other side of the dais is Verdivis's growing hoard. It includes 1,000 gp, 12,000 sp, 1 silver pearl (100 gp), 1 star rose quartz (50 gp), 1 silver chalice (105 gp), a masterwork short sword, a masterwork guisarme, a *scroll of comprehend languages*, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, a gilded hourglass (80 gp), and a gem-encrusted music box (2,500 gp).

Tazex, Mutated Kobold Ftr3: CR 4; Medium Aberration (Reptilian); HD 3d10+3; hp 23; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk +1 *shock battleaxe* +6 melee (1d6+2/x3 plus 1d6 electricity); Full Atk +1 *shock battleaxe* +6 melee (1d8+3/x3 plus 1d6 electricity) and 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+3); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., *ethereal jaunt*, light sensitivity; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0;

Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Profession (mining) +4, Ride +5, Search +3, Swim +4; Alertness, Dodge, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Ethereal Jaunt (Su): Tazex can shift from the Ethereal Plane to the Material Plane as a move action and shift back again as a move action (or during a move action). The ability is otherwise identical to *ethereal jaunt* (caster level 13th).

Possessions: +1 *shock battleaxe*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Conclusion

The valuables taken by Tazex came from various caravans, and it is all but impossible to track down the original owners – most of whom have given up seeking retribution. Consequently, the PCs will be able to keep what they find. PCs who make any attempt to locate the rightful owners of some of these treasures should receive 50 XP regardless of success or failure.

If Tazex was slain, all remaining kobolds flee in terror and do not harass the PCs. Only Ildruma, if the PCs managed to make her helpful, continues to treat with them. Freed from her servitude, she tells them all that she knows about the catacomb. Mostly, she just wants to go her own way.

Further Adventures

If Tazex manages to escape – and he won't stay and fight if things go ill for him – he may represent a considerable threat to the PCs. He will be suitably angry at them for thwarting his occupation of the catacomb. His arrogance continues unabated, but he'll be less inclined to underestimate his enemies.

Tazex continues to mutate and grow more powerful as time passes. He will develop fast healing or regeneration, and slowly add fighter levels as well. Eventually, he will barely resemble his true heritage as he takes on more monstrous features. Though the erstwhile kobold won't get much smarter, he may seek out companions as villainous as himself to temper his vengeance.





Players' Handout A

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Players' Handout B



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