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DCC #101: A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
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THE VEILED VAULTS OF THE ONYX QUEEN



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A 0 LEVEL ADVENTURE

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*I have felt a nameless wind blow
with a stench of fetid breath
And walked with gruesome acolytes
through benighted halls of Death
I have seen unholy urns belch
sapphire smoke into the gloom
And I have gazed upon the unreality
of the charnel corpse god in its tomb
I have seen its gruesome jaws and
provided provender for its board
And listened to its soulless hierophant
whisper secrets with poisoned words
I may no longer die as men may die
nor sin as men may sin
I now forever haunt the underworld
without the sun upon my skin*

Strange epitaph found scratched
inside an empty tomb.

INTRODUCTION



his adventure begins *in media res*, with the characters awakening deep within the royal burial vaults where they are set to become unwitting sacrifices to the corpse god Mordiggian. There, they must piece together the clues as to their whereabouts, contend with a cabal of death cultists, stop a vile sacrament, close a gate to the underworld, and ultimately thwart a vile queen and the corpse god himself—if they want to escape the charnel palace and save their very souls.

The Veiled Vaults of The Onyx Queen is a 0-level adventure intended for 12 or more characters. Inspired by the works of Clark Ashton Smith and H.P. Lovecraft, judges wishing to use this scenario to kick off a campaign can easily place it anywhere in their own setting and campaign world.

During the course of this adventure, the characters' occupations and alignments play a large role in shaping the outcomes of certain situations. Judges would be best served to make note of both before starting, as it will go a long way toward making the PCs and the game more memorable for the players.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



For centuries, house Yoros has ruled over the eastern realms. Benevolent and just, the good family Yoros has governed with impunity, and under the rule of its current queen, the people flourish.

But within every great family there lies a dark secret.

Queen Yoros is not the merciful ruler she portrays but rather a ruthless cultist who practices dark sorcery, vile necromancy, and demon worship. Obsessed with youth and

everlasting life, she has spent a lifetime secretly mired in vile sacraments and profane ceremonies, all in the hope of achieving her goal of immortality. Yet despite the countless souls who have perished screaming on her blood-soaked altars, it wasn't until a chance encounter with a strange figure deep within her family burial vaults did she learn of Mordiggian—the forgotten demon-lord of the dead.

Convinced that Mordiggian alone could grant her darkest desires, Queen Yoros quickly set to venerate the forgotten lord. Through grotesque rituals not performed since ancient times, she called forth the charnel god from realms beyond reality, where forgotten deities wait dreaming in the dark. Together, they formed a dark pact that would see the queen live forever and the corpse god's death cult once again flourish. Secretly, she transformed her own family's burial palace—a megalithic windowless structure used to house the royal dead—into a mausoleum-cathedral of Mordiggian. There, within its shadow-haunted vaults, purple-robed death cultists once again honored their corpse god, and the queen was granted everlasting life.

But all power comes with a price.

Along with maintaining the death cult, Queen Yoros must deliver 95 souls every 95 years to mark the Onyx Jubilee of her dark covenant, thereby renewing her pact with Mordiggian. Failure to do so results in an eternity of torment and unfathomable agony as the corpse god's bride in the underworld.

Now, the queen's 95th year approaches, and the Onyx Jubilee is set to begin. As the realm celebrates the good fortune of their long-lived monarch, a group of unsuspecting villagers are set to become provender for the corpse god himself. Trapped within the gloom-haunted halls of the dead, they must fight for their lives to escape the veiled vaults of the Onyx Queen.

RUMORS AND SUPERSTITIONS



For the common folk of the realm, the lives of the ruling monarchy have always been a source of fascination and envy. As such, there is no shortage of rumors and gossip spread among market stalls and ale houses regarding the royals and their often-scandalous behavior.

Before beginning the adventure, each player should roll 1d8 on the following table to determine what juicy bit of gossip their PCs may have overheard. It is up to the players to determine if what they have heard is true or false.

1. Since the death of her beloved and only nephew more than 30 years ago, the queen has not been seen in public. (T)
2. Your old nan swears her mother often spoke of attending an Onyx Jubilee when she was a young girl. (T)
3. The queen is dead, having passed away years ago. The celebration is an elaborate ruse to maintain law, order, and morale within the realm. (F)
4. The queen is actually bedridden and near death, and

it is her unscrupulous lady-in-waiting who steers the realm from the shadows. (F)

5. Having no heirs, the queen has called the best and brightest of the realm to attend her palace where she is to secretly name a successor from among them. (F)
6. The queen has an unnatural fear of fire and has gone so far as to outlaw the practice of cremation within the capital city. (F/T)
7. Despite the queen never marrying, there has been scandalous accounts of men and women being secretly escorted into the palace during the night. (T)
8. Although the royal courtiers claim to be inviting only those villagers most prestigious in their chosen occupation to attend the palace during the celebration, you know of a few villagers who have been chosen despite not being very good at their jobs at all. (T)

PLAYER BACKGROUND

The merciful Queen Yoros' Onyx Jubilee is fast approaching, marking the 95th year of her glorious rule, and preparations are in full swing. So, when royal courtiers appeared in towns and villages across the realm, identifying those subjects who showed uncommon skill in their given profession, the masses rejoiced. For Queen Yoros was long-lived and much-beloved throughout the land.

As luck would have it, you have been chosen to attend the royal palace and ply your given talents (whatever they may be) in preparation for the great celebration. Honored with your newfound fortune, you find yourself treading the lavish splendor of the royal palace with a sense of great anticipation and wonder.

PLAYER START

The adventure opens *in media res*, that is to say, right in the middle of the action! The PCs begin the game in **Area 1-1 - Larder of the Dead**, as they slowly awaken from their poisoning.

JUDGES NOTES: PCS' STARTING ITEMS

Having been poisoned during their initial visit to the palace and presumed dead, the PCs' bodies have been moved to the former royal burial palace where they are to be sacrificed as food to the corpse god himself. As such, the PCs begin the game with only the clothes on their backs and any items that would normally be found stored upon their person. This includes most tools, weapons, and trade goods that would be kept slung to belts or stored in a pouch. Any animal companions or items that must be carried (e.g., staff, shovel, pushcart, etc.) are not present and have been disposed of prior to the PCs' internment. Should a player or judge question the availability of a starting item, a simple Luck check can be made to determine the outcome.

THE MAUSOLEUM-CATHEDRAL OF MORDIGGIAN

General Features: This megalithic windowless structure has housed the royal dead for generations, serving as the royal burial palace before secretly being converted into a mausoleum-cathedral of the corpse god Mordiggian. Now it is a cultist-ridden warren of terror and obscure shadow where the corpse god eternally watches all things from his black vault beneath the temple.

Unless noted otherwise, the structure is a riot of swarming opulence, wrought of solid white marble gilded in gold reliefs. Massive pillars rise 50' to sweeping ceilings whose vastness is but half-revealed by the glowing coals that smolder in urnlike vessels throughout.

The air carries with it a faint fetor of corruption and temple incense that disturbs the senses. The entire palace hums with a sense of mystery and deathly menace. Yet, despite the stillness that haunts the gloom, there is always a lingering sense that some invisible presence is watching from beyond the shadows.

Royal Burial Vaults: The six royal vaults located within the burial palace house the greatest of the empire's departed monarchy. As is customary for the rich and noble, burial vaults are often outfitted with traps, tricks, and puzzles whose complexity and lethality serve to ward off tomb robbers as much as it serves as a symbol of status and prestige for its departed occupant. The 20'-tall doorways to all six royal burial vaults are constructed of solid alabaster and have no handles or fixtures. The doors are unlocked, and despite their ponderous size, they swing open with even the gentlest push.

Area 1-1 - Larder of the Dead: *Your eyes open to oblivion.*

No spark of memory, nor tremor of recognition fills your mind, as if awakened in the midst of a dreamless slumber. Only the sour taste that fouls your mouth gives any indication that you yet live.

Slowly, you struggle to gain movement in paralyzed limbs and find yourself lying in a great marble hall. A flickering light shines dimly upon the slack faces and lifeless eyes of countless others who also lay prostrate throughout the chamber.

When suddenly, movement betrays the deathly stillness of the room; purple-gowned figures wearing silver masks carved in the likeness of skulls move about, loading limp bodies into a curious-looking cart made of leather and monstrous bones.

Be it divine providence or just plain luck, the PCs have somehow resisted the fatal kiss of the lotus tincture they were given upon entry to the palace. They now find themselves alive and trapped within the royal burial palace where they are to be offered as sacrifices to the charnel god.

They awaken lying upon the cold marble floor amid ordered rows of dead bodies. Prowling the room are the hunched figures of four death cultists who go about loading bodies into a cart. Should the PCs' actions reveal they are among the living, the cultists attack with savage ferocity.

PCs who attempt to play dead and not alert the strange fig-



DEATH CULT OF THE CORPSE GOD

The primary worshippers of Mordiggian are men and women who, through vile rituals and necrophagy, have transformed themselves into hideous flesh-eating monstrosities. As such, these death cultists are not truly undead but rather a perverse parody of un-death. Yet their soulless nature and sluggish decline into un-death allows them to be turned as unholy by clerics. Only those followers who reach the title of hierophant and beyond have made the true transformation into the living dead.

Death cultists crouch beastlike under heavy purple gowns that trail about their feet, keeping the horror of their visages hidden beneath silver masks (30 gp) carved in the likeness of leering skulls. Beneath the masks are diabolic faces that are half human and half canine, with long spiky teeth that protrude from snarling lips. In combat, death cultists move with the swiftness of tigers, howling like blood-mad hyenas as they deliver devastating blows from their hooked talons with bestial ferocity.

ures must succeed in a DC 10 Luck check to do so. Note that, for the purpose of this check, each player need only roll once for all their characters, using the PC with the highest Luck score. Should the check fail, the cultists become aware of the still-living PCs and attack.

If the death cultists attack, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, the robed figures close upon you with unnatural swiftness. Howling like blood-mad hyenas, they lurch forward with hooked talons held high.

Death Cultist of Mordiggian (4): Init +1; Atk claw +0 melee (1d5) or bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 3 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP can be turned as unholy, aversion to sunlight; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C; Crit M/d6.

A death cultist has an unnatural sensitivity to the sun. Each round a cultist is exposed to direct sunlight inflicts 1 hp of damage as their flesh bubbles and sears under its rays.

Dead Villagers: The dead lay side by side and are comprised of many ages and differing ranks. Nobles and rich merchants are crowded beside beggars in filthy rags; there are many gaps in the ordered rows, suggesting that certain corpses had been removed.

A more thorough investigation of the 15 bodies show that each of them bear no wounds save for bloated black lips that smell of a sweet narcotic perfume, the same smell and taste as in the PCs' own mouths. An untrained DC 8 Intelligence check determines the cause of death as poisoning by a tincture of black lotus blooms. Note that PCs with the profession of alchemist, apothecarist, forester, sage, healer, herbalist, shaman, smuggler, or wizard's apprentice can make a trained skill check given their background and would thus roll 1d20 on their attempt.

Anyone searching the bodies find all manner of items. To determine these, roll for the corpse's occupation using Table 1-3 in the *DCC RPG rulebook*. Note that the bodies will only have the clothes on their backs and any items that would normally be found stored upon their person. This includes most tools, weapons, and trade goods that would be kept slung to belts or stored in a pouch. Any animal companions, or items that must be carried (e.g., staff, shovel, pushcart, etc.) are not present.

Area 1-2 – Halls of Opulence: *You tread a massive hall built of pure white marble dotted by columns that rise to lofty ceilings lost in darkness. Blackened metal urns set throughout smolder with crimson flames, their hellish glow casting strange shadows in the gloom. You catch the faint fetor of corruption upon the air that fills you with a sense of deathly menace despite the swarming opulence that surrounds you.*

Whispers from the Dark: Shortly upon entering the hall, all PCs who have a lawful alignment begin to hear a sad, muffled voice in their minds. Read or paraphrase the following to lawfully aligned PCs only:

You suddenly hear a sorrow-filled feminine voice whisper in your mind. It calls out, "Help me, I implore you. Help me...", before quietly fading away into oblivion.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, the voice they hear is no person at all but in fact *Sanctuary, The Aegis of Mercy*, a magical shield of Justicia that has been sealed in area 1-19 by the death cult long ago. This sentient artifact is a powerful relic of law and was venerated by worshippers who visited the royal burial mansion before its fall to the cult of Mordiggian. Now the magical shield is kept prisoner in its own reliquary by powerful wards of chaos, and it can only manage to communicate fleetingly. The artifact wants nothing more than to be free of its foul prison and find itself once again in the hands of the just.

Judges are encouraged to keep the identity of the strange voice and its reason for choosing the PCs a mystery. At no time should the judge divulge what the voice is or that the PCs were chosen because of their lawful alignment. Allow the players to come to their own conclusions as the adventure plays out.

Area 1-3 – Portal of Eternal Rest: *Four towering statues rise like sentinels of nightmare, each of them depicting a weeping angel in the throes of grief. Beyond the solemn figures of stone looms a ponderous door bound in bronze.*

The massive 40'-tall portal radiates with eldritch energy and has been magically sealed until the queen's vile sacrament comes to an end or the charnel god Mordiggian wills it open. Once opened, the doorway leads out of the mausoleum complex and into the great city.

Attempting to open the massive bronze door while it is still sealed triggers a magical trap whereby the statues begin weeping inconsolably, filling anyone who hears them with madness and despair. Anyone within 5' of a weeping statue must make a Will save and consult the **Choir of Agony Table** for results.

CHOIR OF AGONY TABLE

Will Save Roll	Result
4 or less	The victim falls to their knees weeping uncontrollably, a victim of heartbreak – literally! The victim's heart cracks in their chest, instant death!
5-10	The sounds of sorrow causes absolute panic, forcing the victim to drop anything they hold and flee at top speed from the statues along a random path for 2d3 rounds. During their harrowed flight, a victim can take no other action except movement.
11-15	The miserable wailing makes the victim so uncomfortable they are compelled to move away from the statues' area of effect for a least 2d3 rounds before they are able to return.
16+	Aside from the sobbing being incredibly disturbing, there is otherwise no effect.

Area 1-4 – Secret Stairwell: Beyond a secret portal lies a stairwell that leads down into the undercroft (area 2-4). Note that the secret portal is a one-way door and cannot be opened from area 1-2.

Area 1-5 – Ghastly Pantry: *As you draw nearer to the open archway, you catch sight of several dark figures moving about beyond. Two of them share the burden of a human body, which they load into a strange cart.*

Much like area 1-1, this chamber is also filled with dozens of dead bodies ordered in neat rows, only these have been stripped of their outer garments and possessions. Currently, two cultists are busy going about the task of loading bodies. PCs may attempt to avoid the cultists and sneak past the chamber with a DC 6 Agility check. Note that, for the purpose of this check, each player need only roll once for all their characters, using the PC with the highest Agility score. On a failed check, the cultists attack. If the cultists are not disturbed, they leave the chamber within 20 minutes and make their way to area 1-16 where they use the lift to lower the sacrificial bodies into the undercroft before returning for another load.

Death Cultist of Mordiggian (2): Init +1; Atk claw +0 melee (1d5) or bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP can be turned as un-holy, aversion to sunlight; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C; Crit M/d6.

Area 1-6 – Sacristy: *The wooden door opens on creaking hinges to reveal a dust-covered room that smells stale with mold.*

This room once stored the vestments, sacred objects, and other materials used in maintaining services within the royal burial palace. Now it is little more than a collection of overturned shelving and smashed wooden crates that lie scattered across the floor in disorganized heaps. A thick layer of dust coats everything within, signaling the room has not been entered in decades.

Although most of the valuable items contained within the sacristy have been taken by the cultists more than two centuries ago, PCs may still attempt to search through the detritus for an object of worth. For the purpose of this check, each player need only roll once for all their characters, using the PC with the highest Luck score. Consult the **Sacristy Search Table** for results.

SACRISTY SEARCH TABLE, ROLL 1d20 + LUCK MODIFIER

Roll	Result
3 or less	A large shelf collapses during the search, causing a booming echo to reverberate throughout the room. If the cultists are still present in area 1-5, they hear the clamor and arrive to investigate in 1d3+1 rounds.
4-7	An old crate containing rotting white ceremonial vestments.
8-11	A box of 1d12 white prayer candles and tinderbox.
12-14	A book of burial records that reveal the last person interred within the Royal Burial Palace was Queen Yoros' father close to 300 years ago.
15-16	A small collection box containing d30 gold pieces.
17-18	A silver ceremonial vessel (50 gp).
19+	A small vial of sacred ceremonial oil. If the oil is applied to a weapon, it grants a magical +1 bonus to attack rolls. If the oil is applied directly to the skin, it grants the user +1 bonus to AC and saving throws. Each application of magical oil has a duration of 1 hour. The vial contains enough oil for 2d5 applications.

Area 1-7 – Refuse Room: *Haphazardly strewn about the floor are piles of clothing, tools, and equipment.*

The piled goods and equipment are all former possessions of the sacrificed victims used by the cult to feed the dread god Mordiggian over the years. To determine the items found while searching through the debris, roll on *Table 1-3: Occupation* in the *DCC RPG core rulebook*. Note that any animal companions rolled are not present.

Area 1-8 – Empty Larder: *This room is empty save for a few loose articles of clothing scattered about the marble floor.*

This chamber is identical to the other larders, except the bodies that used to rest here have already been delivered to the undercroft. Only a few lonely articles of clothing are left behind to tell the tale.

Area 1-9 – Whispers from the Dark: Any law-aligned PC who mounts the stair will once again mentally “hear” the voice of *Sanctuary, The Aegis of Mercy*. Read or paraphrase the following to law-aligned PCs only:

Once again you hear the same sorrow-filled feminine voice call out in your mind, “Rescue me...I am trapped above...” before the voice once again fades away.



Area 1-10 – Gallery of Contemplation: *Beyond decorative silver gates rests a closed area dotted with marble benches and a dry crumbling fountain. Choking everything in its pallid embrace is a monstrous tangle of serpentine creepers and hydra-headed blossoms that appear to turn and move like living eyes.*

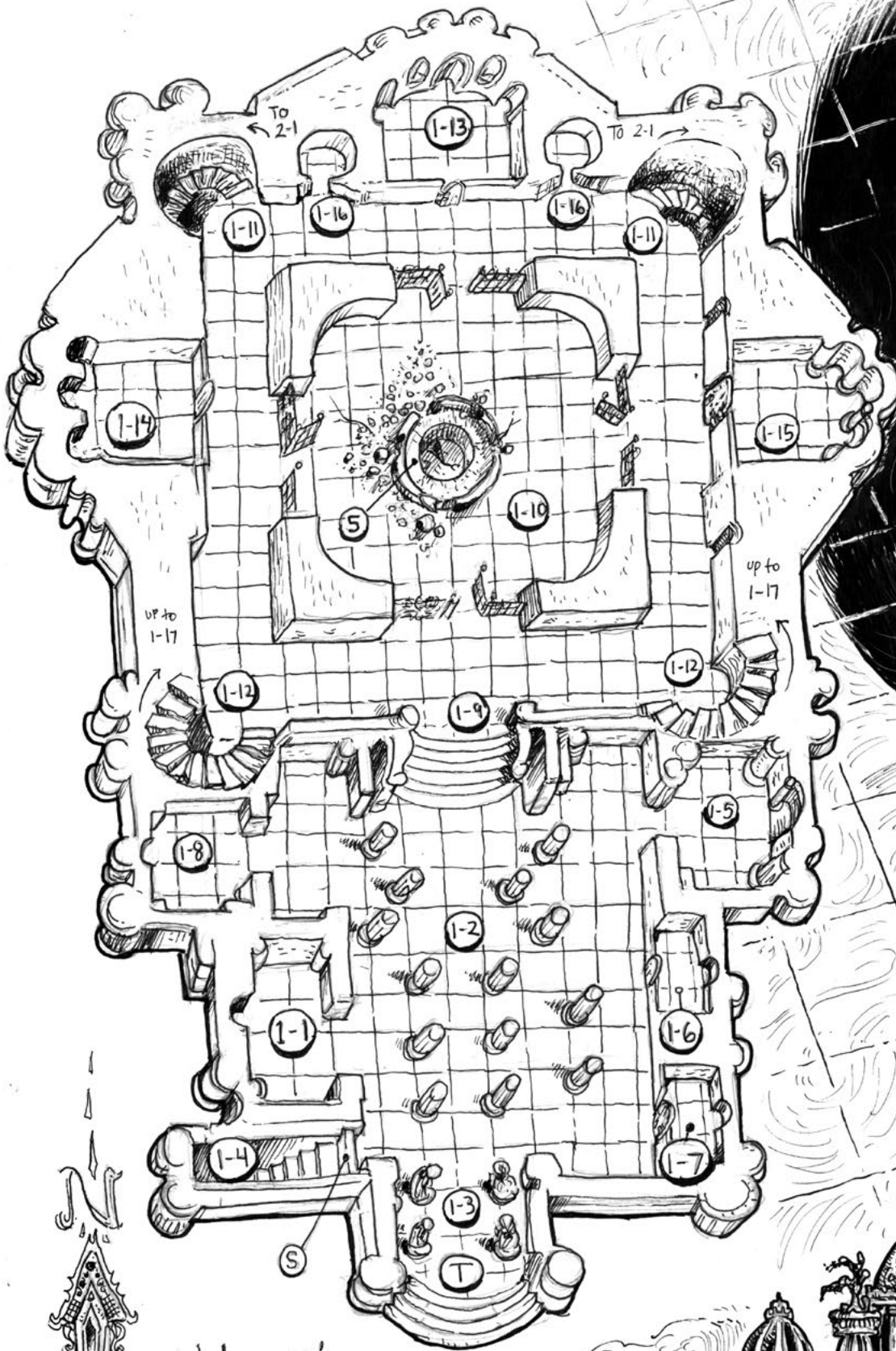
Beyond an unlocked set of decorative silver gates lies the former Gallery of Contemplation. It is a somber place of meditation and reflection where grieving nobility once lolled upon marble benches set about a great cascading fountain to lament lives and loves lost.

Now the fountain sits crumbling and dry, as the ancient aqueducts that once delivered its assuaging waters have long since been diverted. The entire area hums with a sense of loss and sorrow; a strange tomb moss has taken the area over, choking everything in its pallid embrace. The tomb moss is an abyssal plant that grows in places never beheld by the sun. It thrives in areas of heartache and suffering; it requires no water to survive, as its roots are firmly anchored in the underworld where they are nourished by the dreams of the dead.

If the tomb moss is disturbed, it emits a cloud of cloying yellow pollen that brings about a feeling of narcotic distortion that lulls its victim into an unnatural slumber for 1 turn (DC 13 Will save to resist). During the unnatural stupor, the victim's anima enters the underworld where its dreams become one with the dreams of the dead. Upon awakening, the victim's anima returns but fundamentally changed. Roll a 1d20 + Luck on the **Tomb Moss Effect table** to determine the results.

Tomb Moss: Init +0; Atk pollen cloud (see below); AC 5; HD 1d6 per 5' square; hp 2 per 5' square; MV 0'; Act special; SP pollen cloud 5' radius, sunlight sensitivity (automatically dies if exposed to sunlight), plant traits; SV Fort -5, Ref -5, Will +0; AL N; Crit n/a.

Mausoleum Cathedral of Mordiggian



= 5'



TOMB MOSS EFFECT TABLE

Roll	Result
3 or less	The character's anima can no longer return to its body and is lost forever in the underworld where it dreams with the dead for eternity.
4-5	PC's cerebral sojourn to the underworld is fraught with loss. The PC rises with a permanent loss of 1d3 points of a randomly determined ability score. Note that an ability score cannot fall below 3 in this manner.
6-7	PC rises with the feeling that they have lived a different life. Reroll the character's occupation as per <i>Table 1-3: Occupation</i> in the <i>DCC RPG rulebook</i> .
8-9	PC rises with the feeling that they were born in a different time. Reroll the character's birth augur as per <i>Table 1-2: Luck Score</i> in the <i>DCC RPG rulebook</i> .
10-14	PC returns from the underworld with distinct and detailed memories of (1) a bizarre vault buried under ice within the forlorn north, (2) a war on a distant purple planet, (3) life in a mazy-alleyed metropolis just west of a great salt marsh, (4) being a crewmate on a ship called the Star of Nostro, (5) being a gladiator in a strange spectacle called Xcrawl, (5) passing through a great, round, shimmering mirror known as the dragonglass.
15-17	PC rises and is able to fluently speak and write an additional language.
18-19+	PC's spiritual sojourn to the underworld brings about newfound growth. The PC rises with a permanent increase of 1d3 points of a randomly determined ability score. Note that an ability score cannot be raised above 18 in this manner.
Natural 20	PC's spiritual visit to the underworld bestows them with a sorcerous gift. The PC rises with the ability to cast a randomly determined 1st-level wizard spell. It can be cast any time the recipient wishes until it is lost. Roll normally (1d20 + Intelligence modifier) for spell effect and mercurial magic. Once lost, the spell cannot be cast again.

Destroying the Tomb Moss: The only safe way to destroy tomb moss is by exposing it to sunlight, whereby it emits an agonized wail before turning to ash. Acid or fire will also destroy the tomb moss, albeit doing so produces a 10' cloud of toxic yellow smoke for every 5' of tomb moss destroyed in this manner. The toxic smoke causes the lungs to fill with blood, dealing 1d3 points of damage per round (DC 11 Fort save to resist) and lingers for 1d3 rounds per 5' area destroyed.

Secret in the Fountain: Should the tomb moss in the fountain's basin be destroyed, a corroded metal drain grate is discovered (DC 10 Strength check to force open). The grate leads to an old tomb robber's tunnel. The narrow passage has two branches. One branch leads to a collapsed portion

of the tunnel and the skeletal remains of a tomb robber who was crushed while trying to escape with his plunder long ago. The other branch of the tunnel leads to a hole in the ceiling of area 2-5.

The following items can be found with the tomb robber's body:

- Grapple and 50' of rotting rope (DC 10 Luck check each use to see if rope snaps)
- An iron crowbar
- A rotted sack containing 500 gp worth of precious stones and jewelry
- A silver-bladed dagger with a moonstone hilt (75 gp)

Area 1-11 – Stairway Down: *A foul chanting and strong odor of decay rises from the darkened stairway.*

The stairs descend into the undercroft (area 2-1).

Area 1-12 – Stairway Up: *A marble stairway winds upward into the gloom.*

The stairs ascend into the upper halls (area 1-17).

Area 1-13 – Vault of Queen Yoros: *The door opens to a flutter of shadows as terrified villagers scurry to hide behind a large marble sarcophagus at the crypt's center.*

Sarcophagus: The marble sarcophagus stands open and empty; an unfinished silver funeral plaque (30 gp) affixed to its lid reads "Queen Yoros" and sets her birth at more than 350 years ago. The date of death has been left blank.

Wall Graffiti: *Unlike the opulence that has surrounded you thus far, the walls here are covered in coarse drawings not made by skilled artisans, but rather crude graffiti scratched by something other than human hands. The drawings depicts a crowned queen leading a procession of figures to an immense, swirling, black cloud surrounded by blazing urns of blue fire.*

The scene was crafted by the hierophant (area 2-3) as a vile reminder to the queen of her dark covenant with the corpse god Mordiggian. There are exactly 95 figures being led to the monstrous shadow in the drawing.

Replacing Lost Characters: Huddled throughout the tomb are fearful villagers who have also awakened from the failed poisoning attempt and stumbled here in search of refuge. If an unlucky player has lost all of their characters during the adventure, the judge can allow the other PCs to convince villagers hiding here to join them. Believing it to be the best chance of escape from this accursed place, the characters become PCs under the player's control. The fearful villagers recall nothing other than being invited to attend the queen's Onyx Jubilee and then waking up here with a strange taste in their mouths. The player should roll up the 0-level PCs per the standard rules. If none of the players need replacement PCs, the terrified villagers refuse to accompany them if asked, choosing to remain here and hide instead. Note that should the PCs return to this location, they may replace lost PCs as needed.



Area 1-14 – Vault of the Virgin Queen: *A blinding light streams forth from beyond the stone door, dazzling you with its radiance. Your eyes adjust to reveal painted walls depicting a glorious sunrise over a green field. In the center of the vault rests a glass sarcophagus and the incorrupt body of a woman within, her face a mask of peaceful rapture.*

Interred within is the saintly remains of the Virgin Queen, Magdalennia the Pius. Murdered more than 900 years ago by a spurned suitor, she was most known for her beauty, purity of heart, and devotion to the deity Ulesh, God of Peace, Prosperity, and Health.

PCs who succeed in an untrained DC 7 Intelligence check have knowledge of the previous historical information regarding the Virgin Queen. Note that PCs with the profession of beadle, artisan, sage, minstrel, noble, scribe, and squire can make a trained skill check given their background and would thus roll 1d20 on their attempt.

Golden Light of Ulesh: *The entire chamber is awash in a golden light that emanates from an unknown source, seemingly shining from the very air itself. Every breath taken in the room becomes luminous, floating to fill the tomb with its invigorating glow.*

So long as the golden light of Ulesh shines within this chamber, all law-aligned characters who spend at least 1 turn here feel a calming sense of peace and are healed 1d4 hp and cured of any diseases. Neutral-aligned characters are healed 1 hp, while chaos-aligned characters feel nauseated and suffer 1 hp of damage. Note that creatures who have an aversion to sunlight refuse to enter the tomb while the golden light shines.

Glass Sarcophagus: *A young woman lies in peaceful repose within the glass enclosure; her body is in a perfect state of preservation and completely untouched by time. A silver diadem worked into a jeweled sunrise graces her brow, and a small white prayer book is clutched in her delicately folded hands.*

The sarcophagus is comprised of sheer glass and is a masterwork of artisanship. Only PCs with the profession of artisan, glassblower, and jeweler are able to separate the panes of glass that form the lid without breaking it. All others who attempt to separate the glass panels to gain access within must make a DC 20 Agility check. A failed check shatters the glass.

If the glass is broken, the entire sarcophagus shatters with the shrill sound of silver chimes that echoes throughout the burial palace like an alarm. This immediately plunges the vault into darkness, negating the Golden Light of Ulesh and its healing properties. In addition, the radiant peal of shattered glass causes the Devourer in area 1-17 to bellow savagely as it races toward the sound with butcherous intent. The savage creature reaches the vault in 3d3 rounds. Note that if the glass sarcophagus is shattered, the body of the Virgin Queen turns to ash.

Items within the glass sarcophagus include:

- A silver diadem richly worked with an elaborate floral pattern and stylized topaz jeweled sunrise (300 gp).
- A silver string of pearl prayer beads (100 gp).
- A small white leather prayer book, embossed in gold script (acts as cleric scroll) containing three spells: *holy sanctuary*, *neutralize poison or disease*, *protection from evil*. Any character class may attempt to cast a spell from the book by making a spell check appropriate to their class (typically a d10 for 0-level characters). Followers of the God Ulesh may attempt a spell check with a +1d bonus to the roll. A failed spell check does not destroy the spell, and it may be attempted again in subsequent rounds. A successfully cast spell disappears from the prayer book with a flash of golden light and can no longer be cast.

Area 1-15 – Vault of the Philosopher King: *The ponderous door opens to reveal a well-appointed burial vault. Its walls are festooned in colorful frescoes of a wise king surrounded by common folk as he reads to them. In the center of the vault is a large alabaster sarcophagus decorated with carved images.*

Interred within is the renowned Philosopher King Zortulla the Wise. Recognized as one of the great philosophers and teachers of his day, King Zortulla is celebrated for his extraordinary efforts in the edification of his subjects through his teachings of logic, mathematics, and language.

PCs who succeed in an untrained DC 7 Intelligence check have knowledge of the previous historical information regarding the Philosopher King. Note that PCs with the profession of alchemist, astrologer, barrister, sage, minstrel, noble, scribe, and wizard's apprentice can make a trained skill check given their background and would thus roll 1d20 on their attempt.

Alabaster Sarcophagus: *A curious-looking sarcophagus graces the center of this tomb; its lid is a masterwork of sculpted images depicting everything from musical instruments to fantastical beasts. A silver funeral plaque affixed to its side bears a strange epitaph.*

Silver Plaque: This silver plaque is inscribed with a strange funeral epitaph (see Player Handout 1). This epitaph is actually a riddle and the first part of the Philosopher King's Final Test (see the following section). Note that the silver plaque can easily be pried off the sarcophagus and is worth 30 gp.

Carved Images Upon Sarcophagus: This magically sealed sarcophagus is decorated with carved images (see Player Handout 2) that may seem to some as simply a random assortment of objects and creatures. In fact, the entire tableau is a large alphabet chart whereby each of the 26 images correspond to the phonic sound of each letter found in the alphabet.

The sarcophagus and its carved images are imbued with powerful magic that, when used correctly, solves the last part of the Philosopher King's Final Test. But woe to those who fail the test, for touching a carved image incorrectly can spell certain death. See the **Philosopher King's Alphabet Table** (right) for consequences and results for touching a carved image out of sequence.

The Philosopher King's Final Test: Both the odd epitaph and the bizarrely carved sarcophagus serve as a puzzle that, when solved, opens the Philosopher King's magically sealed tomb. But unlike a normal test, one wrong answer could spell disaster for those who fail.

The test is comprised of a two-part puzzle. The first part corresponds to the strange and improperly spelled epitaph graven on the silver plaque. The four missing letters in the misspelled words on the epitaph (book, stripped, believed, contents) spell the word "OPEN".

The second and final part of the test is completed when the PCs spell the word OPEN by touching the carved images upon the sarcophagus that corresponds with the phonetic sound of each letter found in the word.

Owl - Pig - Egg - Needle

Once the four images are touched in that order, the sarcophagus springs open on noiseless hinges revealing the desiccated figure of King Zortulla the Wise clutching a large grimoire in his boney hands.

Philosopher King's Grimoire: This heavy tome is bound in minotaur hide and contains the following wizard spells: *color spray*, *Ekim's Mystical Mask*, *flaming hands*, *force manipulation*.

While a PC may choose to keep the grimoire as their own in hopes of becoming a wizard one day, others may choose to use the book as a scroll, directly casting spells from its enchanted pages. To do so, a 0-level PC rolls a d10 spell check modified by Intelligence and consults the spell result as written in the *DCC RPG rulebook*. Note that a 0-level PC may not use spellburn in the attempt but can burn Luck on the spell check roll. Once a spell is successfully cast in this manner, it permanently disappears from the grimoire in a puff of noxious purple smoke.

Area 1-16 – Gruesome Dumbwaiter: *A thick wooden platform rests in an open alcove along the stone wall. Peering in, you can see a vertical stone shaft along with the simple rope-and-pulley mechanism used to operate it.*

Royal burial priests once used this rope-and-pulley-operated lift to move the necessary funerary items between floors when needed. Now it serves as an abhorrent dumbwaiter of sorts, used by the cultists to deliver corpses into the undercroft for the charnel god's foul feast. The lift is 10' x 10' square and has a weight capacity of 700 lbs.

PCs who investigate the lift hear a foul chanting coming from below along with a strong odor of decay (DC 5 Intelligence check to notice).



PHILOSOPHER KING ALPHABET TABLE

Letter	Image	Effect If Image Touched
A	Ant	* Summons - Ant, giant (1) : Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 1d8+2; hp 7; MV 50' or climb 50'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will -3; AL L; Crit M/d6.
B	Bat	* Summons - Bat, giant (1) : Init +6; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will -2; AL C; Crit M/d8.
C	Centi-pede	* Summons - Centipede, giant (1) : Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 9; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C; Crit Md/8.
D	Dog	* Summons - Hell hound (1) : Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4) or fire breath (2d4); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP fire breath is a cone 10' wide at its end and 30' long, DC 12 Ref save to resist, immune to damage from fire or heat; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L; Crit M/d8.
E	Egg	No effect. This image is part of the solution to the puzzle (see <i>Philosopher King's Final Test</i>).
F	Frog	The user is transformed into a frog. The newly transformed character retains all of its memories but assumes the creature's manner of locomotion as well as the ability to survive in the creature's normal habitat. The change is permanent, and no saving throw is allowed
G	Gorilla	* Summons - Jungle ape (1) : Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4) or slam +3 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 8; MV 20' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; AL L; Crit M/d8.
H	Heart	The user suddenly feels a sharp pain deep within their chest as their heart explodes - instant death!
I	Igloo	The entire chamber is suddenly blasted with frigid sleet as if caught in a violent blizzard. All creatures within are dealt 1 point of damage (DC 10 Fort save to resist). The ice storm last for 1 round.
J	Jewel	All items made of precious metals, gems, coins, and jewels in the user's possession instantly turn to dust. Magical items are not affected.
K	Knight	* Summons - Knight (1) : Init +1; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C; Crit III/d8.
L	Lizard	* Summons - Lizard, giant (1) : Init -3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 6; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N; Crit M/d8.
M	Moon	The user feels nothing more than a sudden and fleeting sense of dread. In truth, the character is now cursed with lycanthropy and will transform on the next full moon into a (1) werewolf, (2) werecrocodile, (3) weregoat, (4) weresnake, (5) wereagle.
N	Needle	No effect. This image is part of the solution to the puzzle (see <i>Philosopher King's Final Test</i>).
O	Owl	No effect. This image is part of the solution to the puzzle (see <i>Philosopher King's Final Test</i>).
P	Pig	No effect. This image is part of the solution to the puzzle (see <i>Philosopher King's Final Test</i>).
Q	Quill	A randomly determined level 1 wizard spell is magically scribed onto an item in the character's possession. The PC is unaware of the inscription until the next time they use the item. The spell can be cast as a scroll or scribed into a wizard's grimoire.
R	Rat	* Summons - Rat, giant (1) : Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4 plus disease); AC 10; HD 1d6+2; hp 5; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (DC 7 Fort save or additional 1d3 damage); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL N; Crit M/d6.
S	Snake	Summons - Snake, giant (1) : Init +8; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 plus poison, DC 15 Fort or death); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +2; AL N; Crit M/d8.
T	Turtle	The user is cursed with slothfulness and suffers a permanent -10' movement speed penalty. This curse can be lifted by eating a bowl of turtle soup or with a successful <i>remove curse</i> spell.
U	Unicorn	A randomly determined level 1 wizard spell is suddenly cast from the sarcophagus targeting the user.
V	Volcano	A gout of burning lava spews from the sarcophagus dealing 1d3 damage to all targets within a 10' radius (DC 10 Ref save to avoid).
W	Wolf	* Summons - Wolf, dire (1) : Init +5; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL L; Crit M/d8.
X	Xylo-phone	The user is overcome with the maddening music of the spheres that plays relentlessly in their mind, causing them to unnaturally age 2d30 years. For every 20 years aged, the user permanently loses 1 point of Strength, Agility, and Stamina but gains 1 point of Intelligence and Personality. Note that no attribute can fall below 3 or be raised above 18 in this manner.
Y	Ball of Yarn	The user's clothes suddenly (1) unravel and disappear, (2) grow to 3x its current size (resulting in a +1d fumble die penalty if worn), (3) shrinks to half its current size (results in a -5' move speed penalty if worn).
Z	Zom-bie	* Summons - Zombie (1) : Init -4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4); AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 9; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C; Crit U/d8.

* All summoned creatures immediately attack anyone within the vault. The summoned creature may not exit the vault and has a duration of 1 hour or until either killed or another creature from the sarcophagus is summoned.



UPPER HALLS

Area 1-17 – Upper Halls: *A grand marble staircase covered in dust and cobwebs delivers you to a darkened hall above. The dry mustiness of the air brings with it a chill and the promise of unseen horrors.*

Lurking the upper halls of the mausoleum-cathedral like a figure of doom is a grotesque creature born of nightmares. With the forequarters of a lioness, the hindquarters of a hippopotamus, and the head of a grinning crocodile, this horrifying beast is a servitor of Mordiggian and has been tasked with keeping an eternal watch over the defiled chapel of Justicia. It attacks any living creature that treads these upper halls.

Devourer: Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6) or claw +2 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 16; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP belch charnels; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C; Crit M/d8.

In lieu of its melee attack, a devourer can projectile vomit a deluge of putrid flesh and bloated grave worms in a 15' cone (DC 10 Ref save to avoid). Anyone struck by the disgusting vomit shower suffers 1d3 points of damage as the worms feast upon their exposed flesh.

Area 1-18 – Chapel of Justicia: *A massive rotunda looms before you; its white stone walls are marred in chaotic symbols and disturbing hieroglyphs that seem to shimmer with a malignant evil. A solid silver door, similarly blighted with foul iconography, stands barred with a heavy, red metal lock and chain.*

The Chapel of Justicia is a massive rotunda, easily bigger than any church found in the PCs' village. Once used as a sacred shrine and reliquary, the chapel has been defiled by the followers of Mordiggian and is covered in powerful symbols of chaos. The windowless edifice's only means of egress are four large silver doors that have been locked and chained.

Whispers from the Dark: Any law-aligned PC standing before one of the chained doors will hear the voice of *Sanctuary*, *The Aegis of Mercy* call out in their mind. Read or paraphrase the following to law-aligned PCs only:

Once again you hear the same sorrow-filled voice call out in your mind, only this time more clear and resounding. "I lie beyond these doors...a prisoner forgotten to time...beware...for only magic can destroy magic..."

Abyssal Lock and Chain: The lock and chain are powered by potent chaos magic that burns anyone who touches them for 1 hp of damage. They have been placed here by the death cultists to forever secure the mighty *Aegis of Mercy* from the world. The chaos-enchanted lock and chain are immune to non-magical weapons and tools and therefore cannot be sundered or picked open without the aid of magic. A magical weapon can be used to break the chain with a successful DC 15 Strength check, while opening the lock requires a DC 5 Pick Lock check using a magical lockpick only.

Area 1-19 – Sanctum of Sanctuary: *You enter what can only be a chapel to the Goddess Justicia. The place radiates with a divine energy; its walls are decorated with images of armor-clad*



sword-saints in scenes of valor, mercy, and justice. In the center of the chapel, suspended from the ceiling by chains, is a heavy shield wrought of gleaming silver and emblazoned with the flaming golden longsword sigil of Justicia.

The displayed shield is *Sanctuary, The Aegis of Mercy*, a fabled artifact of Justicia and source of the strange voice imploring the characters for aid. This shield has been kept prisoner here in its own shrine for more than 300 years by Queen Yoros and the Mordiggian death cult, and it wants nothing more than to once again be in the hands of the just.

The shield will ask of the lawful PCs who among them best exudes the aspects of the goddess: righteousness, mercy, justice, freedom, and might. Only a law-aligned PC who will swear their fealty to the Goddess can claim the *Aegis of Mercy* for their own. Should a neutral or chaos-aligned PC attempt to claim the shield, they are immolated by a flash of golden flame for 1d6 damage (DC 10 Fort save for half).

Sanctuary, The Aegis of Mercy, +1 shield

Alignment: Law

Intelligence: 8

Communication: Can communicate telepathically to any lawful creature within 100'.

Powers:

- Shed sunlight in a 20' radius at will.
- The wielder receives a +1d bonus to saving throws made

against evil effects, evil creatures, un-dead, demons, and anything else unholy to their faith.

- In the hands of a cleric of Justicia, the shield grants a +1d bonus to turning unholy checks.

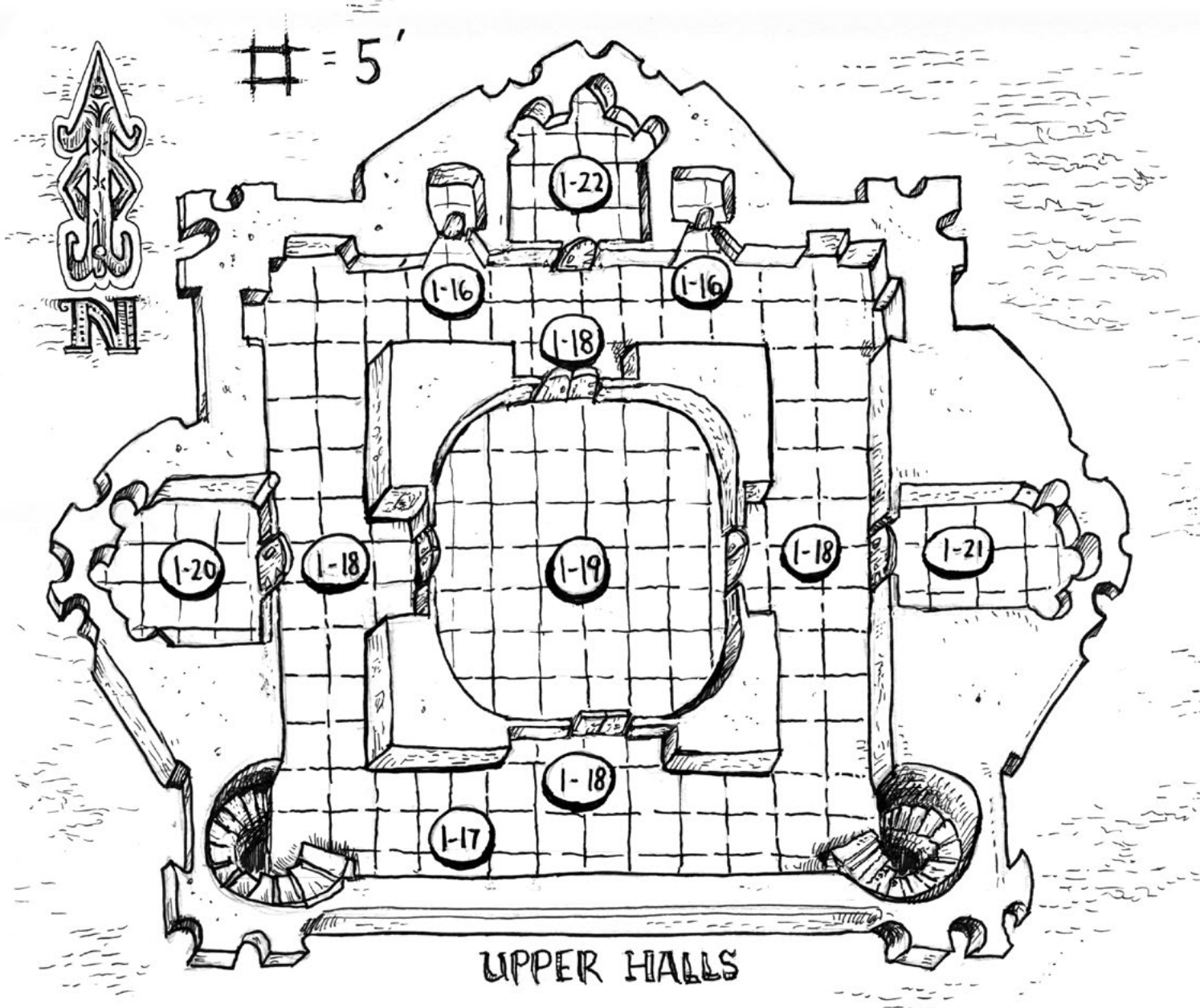
Area 1-20 – Vault of the Tyrant King: You enter the vault of a time-forgotten king. Its walls are covered in murals depicting bloody conquest. Each scene shows the same armor-clad warrior king at the fore, leading his troops into battle with a massive sword held high. In the center of the vault rests an iron sarcophagus that is as cold and grim as a weapon of war.

Interred within is the infamous Tyrant King Relgarr the Cruel. Notorious for his affinity for war and conquest, it is said that bloodlust ruled King Relgarr's heart over all things.

PCs who succeed in an untrained DC 7 Intelligence check have knowledge of the previous historical information regarding the Tyrant King. Note that PCs with the profession of sage, noble, scribe, soldier, and squire can make a trained skill check given their background and would thus roll 1d20 on their attempt.

Iron Sarcophagus: A heavy sarcophagus wrought of black iron dominates the center of the vault. Its lid is carved with the image of an armor-clad warrior clutching a massive sword to his breast. A large silver funeral plaque reads "King Relgarr" and marks his death more than one-thousand years ago.

The lid of the iron sarcophagus has no lock, but it is extremely heavy. To lift the lid, a combined Strength score of 100 is



necessary. Up to 10 individuals can assist in lifting the lid, combining their strength scores in the effort. PCs who use tools such as a crowbar or other levering device may double their Strength score in the attempt.

Unfortunately for those who do manage to lift the lid, resting inside is the accursed remains of King Relgarr who rises up with *"Conquest"* in hand to once again spill blood. Note that the silver funeral plaque can easily be pried off the sarcophagus and is worth 30 gp.

If the lid to the iron sarcophagus is opened, read or paraphrase the following:

Rising from the sarcophagus' black embrace like a nightmare is a near seven-foot skeleton clad in black chainmail. It rears up with the sickening creak of grave-rotted bones, lifting a massive black-bladed sword on high.

King Relgarr the Cruel (Skeleton): Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3) or *Conquest* +3 melee (1d10); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP cleave, un-dead traits, half dam-

age from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C; Crit III/d8.

Each time King Relgarr slays an enemy with his blade, he automatically receives another attack against any creature in melee range.

Along with a human-sized suit of chainmail that has surprisingly maintained its condition within the iron sarcophagus, King Relgarr's skeleton is also in possession of *Conquest*, his infamous magical two-handed sword.

***Conquest*, +1 two-handed sword**

Alignment: Chaotic

Intelligence: 3

Communication: Simple urges.

Power: Cleave. Each time an enemy is slain with this blade, the wielder automatically receives another attack (but cannot move). Note that if there are no other enemies in melee range, the bloodthirsty blade compels the wielder to attack

a random ally in range instead (DC 15 Will save to resist).

Area 1-21 – Vault of the Fallen Prince: *This vault sports walls decorated with life-sized paintings of a serf, saint, scholar, and soldier. An ornate marble sarcophagus veined in gold rests in the center of the chamber.*

Interred within is the much-lamented Prince Amero, nephew to Queen Yoros. Struck down by an unknowable illness before his 20th year, the death of Prince Amero shocked and saddened the realm, most notably his grief-stricken aunt. Despite the comprehensive investigation ordered by the queen into the strange and suspicious passing of her only nephew, his death was deemed to be of natural causes.

Having died only 30 years ago, the PCs need only succeed in a DC 3 Intelligence check to have knowledge of the previous historical information regarding the fallen Prince.

Sarcophagus: The ornate marble sarcophagus has a curious riddle engraved into its lid that reads as follows:

*My life is a volume of grief,
each sorrow upon a new leaf.
Stiff is my spine, and my body is pale,
yet ready am I to tell you a tale.*

The sarcophagus has no lock, and if opened contains only moldering funeral vestments. The body of the prince is missing, having been taken as food for the charnel god and his followers long ago.

Hidden Warning from Beyond the Grave: The fresco upon the wall (see Player Handout 3) and the riddle engraved upon the lid of the sarcophagus (see previous) combine to form a puzzle that, once solved, issues a hidden message from beyond the grave.

The puzzle is in two parts. Part one requires solving the riddle upon the sarcophagus. The answer to the riddle is BOOK. Once the PCs have deduced the answer, they may proceed to the wall fresco of the scholar and speak the word *book* while touching the book he is carrying, thereby completing the second and final part of the riddle. Once both have been done, a folded leaf of fine parchment magically falls from the painted book. Opening the folded letter reveals a written note (see Player Handout 4), along with a strange owl-headed lockpick.

The Owl's Talon: This owl-headed lockpick is wrought of pure gold and is a sacred magical item bestowed to the followers of the Hidden Lord, God of Secrets. It allows anyone who uses it the ability to *pick locks* as a 1st-level thief. In the hands of an experienced thief, the magical lockpick allows the user to perform the *pick lock* skill as if they were 1 level higher. Note that the Owl's Talon can be used to bypass the magical lock on the Chapel of Justicia (area 1-18).

Area 1-22 – Vault of the Verdant Queen: *The ponderous door opens to an amazing sight. A massive oak tree grows from the center of the vault. Its leafy branches are heavy with acorns and stretch to the ceiling before curving down along the walls in a defiant display of life within such a desolate place.*

Hidden Wall Frescos: Obscured by the mighty oak's thick branches are frescoes of Queen Suma upon the walls (DC 8 Luck check to notice). If the frescoes are found, read or paraphrase the following:

Through the mighty oak's heavy branches, you catch sight of bright-colored frescos upon the walls depicting a floral queen crowned in garland. She sits in a lush garden surrounded by gentle creatures of the forest.

Interred within this vault is the gentle, nature-loving Queen Suma. Known for her diplomacy and goodwill, Queen Suma was a passionate nature-lover who much preferred spending time in the forest rather than the throne room. Despite her dying wish to be buried in the palace gardens, she was interred here instead as royal custom dictated.

PCs who succeed in an untrained DC 7 Intelligence check have knowledge of the previous historical information regarding the Verdant Queen. Note that PCs with the profession of beekeeper, apothecarist, mushroom-farmer, falconer, sage, farmer, herbalist, hunter, minstrel, noble, shaman, trapper, and woodcutter can make a trained skill check given their background and would thus roll 1d20 on their attempt.

Glorious Oak: The massive oak that grows out of the cracked sarcophagus is a testament to the dead queen's passion for nature and devotion to her patron Yddgrl, the World Root. It grows strong despite the conditions; its roots are firmly planted within the intersection of the elemental planes of air, water, and earth. Should anyone collect an acorn from the magical tree and plant it outside, it immediately sprouts into a full-sized oak tree, allowing the character to form a patron bond with Yddgrl, the World Root.

Shattered Sarcophagus: At the base of the tree are the remains of the shattered stone sarcophagus. Searching the rubble (DC 15 Luck check) yields a silver funeral plaque (30 gp) that bears the name Queen Suma.

UNDERCROFT

General Features: The undercroft is a low and many-pilared hall built of somber stone that is now corrupted with the purple hue of decay. The air is thick with the smell of charred bone and corrupted flesh. Throughout the undercroft, the chanting of cultists cuts through the silence; their inhuman voices mount and fall in some unholy psalm of forbidden blasphemy.

In the far southeast of the undercroft, a rough-cut hole in the ceiling connects the old tomb robber's tunnel to the crumbling fountain above in area 1-10.

Area 2-1 – Ghoul-Ridden Warrens: *Dozens of open burial niches line the walls like black windows into the abyss. Shimmering within each are unblinking eyes of reddish fire.*

Formerly the tombs of lesser royals and minor nobility, these burial niches now house acolytes in the vile process of becoming death cultists of Mordiggian. They dwell within these reeking tombs, where vile rites and forbidden sorcery slowly complete the transformation process that sees them change into hideous creatures of un-death.

The queen’s hands are charged with necrotic energy that delivers the chill touch of the grave. Note that each time the queen’s necrotic touch attack is successful, she loses 1 hp in the effort, as the necromantic powers drain her life as well.

Queen Yoros is mad with rage, incensed that the PCs somehow live to threaten her dark sacrament. She keeps away from the action, choosing to steer clear of melee as she directs the monstrous cultists to dispatch the PCs. If forced into melee, she uses her necromantic abilities to charge her hands with necrotic energy or wields a silver, onyx-tipped scepter (250 gp) with little skill.

Avatar of Mordiggian: Init +0; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 10d10; HP 55; MV 0’; Act 6d20; SP reach (tentacles can reach anywhere within the undercroft); SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +6; AL C; Crit M/d16.

Not only does Mordiggian not trouble himself with the living, he is also blind to them. Incapable of sensing anything that dwells in the living world, he requires his followers to

provide nourishment to him in the form of dead bodies. As such, the corpse god does not openly attack any of the PCs, although once his grisly feast is interrupted, he lashes out in a blind rage against everything in the chamber (see **Onyx Jubilee Combat Matrix**).

Banishing Mordiggian: Note that battling Mordiggian is sure to result in the wholesale slaughter of the party. Yet there are three sure ways to banish Mordiggian back to his nether vault.

- **Destroying all the blue-flamed ceremonial urns within the chamber.** Once the urns are destroyed, the blue flames sputter and die, thereby disrupting the summoning ritual and forcing Mordiggian back into his black vault. See previous urn description for game stats.
- **Killing Queen Yoros.** Killing the queen severs the dark pact between her and Mordiggian, forcing her to take her place as the corpse god’s ghoul-queen in the underworld forever. If Queen Yoros is brought to 0 hp, read

ONYX JUBILEE COMBAT MATRIX

Round	Event
1	<p>The blue flames within the great urns rise tall like writhing phantoms, bleeding darkness into the air while an unnatural wind begins to blow, scattering debris throughout the hall.</p> <p>The entire circle of cultists are too intent upon their unholy ceremony to notice the PCs at this time. Allow the PCs a free round of actions before calling for initiative rolls next round.</p>
2	<p>As the chanting rises, dark threads of black vapor serpentine from the urns, interweaving themselves into a growing shadow. A reek of septic flesh fills the chamber with the promise of approaching doom. The crowned woman whirls, her narrow eyes alight with the red lust of murder. “No one defies their queen!” she screeches. “All of you must die!”</p> <p>All remaining cultists form a protective perimeter around the queen and hierophant, attacking anyone who approaches.</p>
3	<p>The shadow grows into a colossal bulk of darkness that sucks the sapphire flame from the urns and fills the chamber with a chill of utter death. Alive with the energy of eon-veiled horrors, the swirling bulk of gloom spreads to reveal an enormous set of sharklike jaws surrounded by worm-shaped tendrils that coil into the chamber with malignant life.</p> <p>The full visage of Mordiggian is revealed, causing widespread madness to all who gaze upon him for the first time. Gazing upon the unreality of the corpse god grants the viewer a forbidden glimpse into the frightful vistas of the underworld (DC 8 Will save to resist). Those who succumb to these visions are rendered paralyzed for 1 round by the haunting images of countless dead that march million-footed and grotesque beneath fetor-belching skies that stretch off into infinite ruin.</p>
4	<p>The ungodly fire within the urns flares with a sapphire brilliance as the putrid wind rises to become a storm, lashing everyone with its stinging fury.</p> <p>Anyone within 10’ of an urn takes 1d3 damage (DC 10 Ref save to resist) as the sapphire flames flare. Everyone within the room must also make a DC 10 Fort save or be thrown 15’ and knocked prone by the wind.</p>
5 and each round beyond	<p>The wormlike tentacles begin to thrash wildly about, blindly pulling down columns and fracturing the vaulted ceiling in a riot of tumbling debris.</p> <p>Unable to feed, the corpse god’s insatiable appetite for the dead cannot be controlled, causing him to lash out in anger like a mindless force of nature. Everyone within the undercroft (cultists and queen included) must make a Luck check. For the purpose of this check, treat all NPCs as having a 10 Luck score. Failure results in cascading debris striking the target for 1d3 damage (DC 8 Ref save to avoid). If a natural 1 is rolled on the Luck check, Mordiggian has inadvertently attacked the character, roll a tentacle attack to resolve.</p>

or paraphrase the following: *The queen stumbles as her eyes turn into vacant voids and her face begins to decompose, its flesh peeling away as if eaten by rats. Suddenly one of the wormlike tentacles sweeps her up and drags her into its swirling black mass where she disappears with a horrific scream.*

- **Declaring fealty to the charnel god Mordiggian.** Once declared by all PCs, they must agree to enter into a similar dark covenant that sees the PCs compelled to deliver the dead as food to the charnel god. Failure to do so results in certain calamity.

Note that once Mordiggian is banished, all remaining cultists flee into the nethermost regions of the crypts. No longer protected by the corpse god's presence, they are little more than frightened children who choose to cower rather than fight.

Mordiggian Banished: Once Mordiggian is banished, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly the monstrous black god sweeps into the nethermost regions of the crypt like a retreating shadow, disappearing from sight. Only a hollow voice like the baleful tone of a funeral bell sounds from out of the darkness, echoing wildly throughout the hall.

"Go! And know that Mordiggian is a just god who claims only the dead. Be free to roam the lands of the living. But know, ever and anon, all succumb to the ravening kiss of death and return to darkness. In time, you too will return to me, and I shall be waiting...."

And with the finality of those words, you hear a great metallic grating from above, accompanied by a rush of fresh air that streams down the stairs and into the hall.

The door to the burial palace (area 1-3) has been opened and the PCs are free to exit.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

With Mordiggian banished, the party may exit via the front door (area 1-3). Read or paraphrase the following:

The massive bronze door of the burial palace stands open to the glorious light of day, where you hear the sounds of feasting and jubilee issue from the city.

Having finally put an end to the vile queen's merciless predation upon innocent lives, you emerge from the vaults reborn. Not as common folk or even heroes but something more...something stronger.

Caked in the blood and filth of the vanquished, the thirst for action now burns hot in your veins, and with it the promise of gold and glory unbound! And despite the sounds of boisterous revelry that calls you toward its comforting embrace, you hear another call.

The call to adventure!

And you shall answer it...

Although this marks the end of the adventure, but it is truly only a start to the glorious adventures to be had. Judges wishing to continue this tale can have the PCs return to explore the warren of dark tunnels that run beneath the mausoleum-cathedral. After all, legends whisper that the entire burial palace rests over a forgotten necropolis that has been lost in darkness. But that is another story...

Wherever the PCs' path leads next, XP and Luck should be awarded prior to the beginning of the next adventure, for—be it by luck or skill—surviving PCs have surely earned their just rewards.

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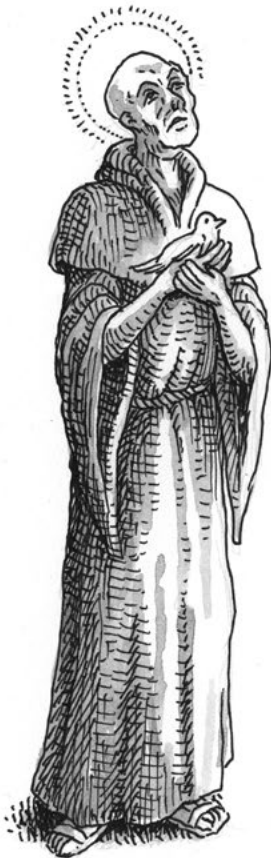
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Here lies the body of King Zortulla the Wise,
like the cover of an old bok.
Its contents torn out
and striped of its lettering and gilding.
It lies here, food for worms.
But the work shall not be wholly lost.
For it will as he belived
appear oce more.

HANDOUT 1



Serf



Saint



Soldier



Scholar

HANDOUT 3

HANDOUT 2



Verily, I fear that my worst suspicions are true.

The queen mother, my beloved aunt, is not what she claims to be.

Often have I seen her skulking into the royal burial palace by night, accompanied by strange figures bearing oblong boxes whose contents I shudder to imagine. But worst of all — she does not age! What nameless evil has granted her such powers, and at what cost!

I know now that I am not long for this world, already she gazes upon me with vile contempt, for surely she has realized I alone know her secret. I hope and pray to the Hidden Lord, God of Secrets, that this letter finds the hands of someone who may avenge me — for I grow too sickly and weak to save my own soul. So that the living may remember,

— Prince Amero

THE PHLOGISTONIC EYE SEES ALL!



Behold! The unblinking gaze of the Phlogistonic Eye perceives all things within the boundaries of the multiverse. It peers into the habitats of gods, demons, and mortals alike, stealing wisdom from those who would guard it like a miser's hoard!

See what it has gleaned about the author of this adventurous tale, one mortal recognized as Marzio Muscedere:

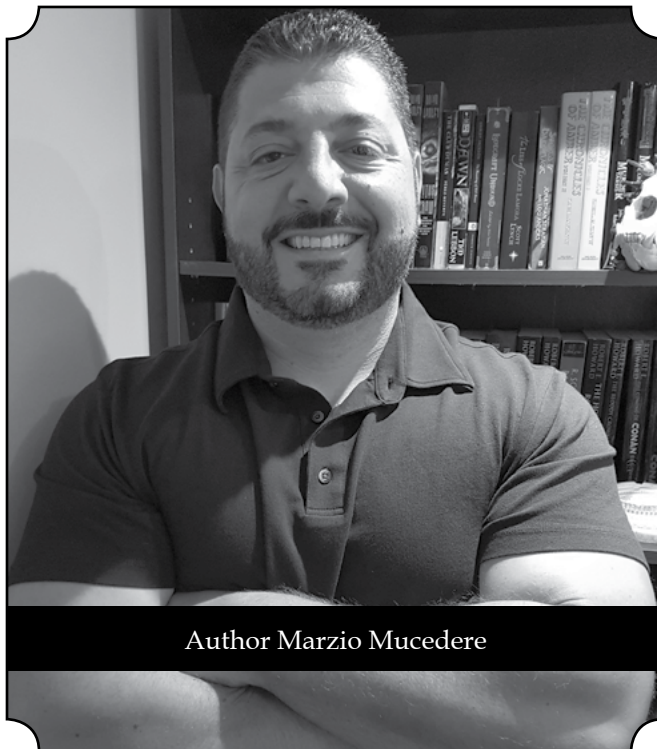
"Know, oh DCC gamer, that between the years of the Commodore 64 and the rise of Netflix, there was an Age undreamed of, where ponderous rulebooks lay spread across kitchen tables like old encyclopedias at a yard sale... Hither came Marzio, the Canadian, black-haired, mighty-thewed, dice in hand, a gamer, an author, a slayer of PCs without mercy, with a massive hangover and a colgate smile, to tread the gaming shelves and spinner racks of the RPG publishing world beneath his purple prose." - The Gygaxian Chronicles

Marzio Muscedere began gaming in the fourth grade when his best friend landed the D&D red box. And yet, despite many a year spent playing, things that should not have been forgotten were lost, and for time uncounted the hobby passed from his knowledge. Until, as chance would have it, DCC emerged, and like the poisonous gleam of a forbidden jewel enticed him back into the hobby. Since winning the 2017 Rodney's Design Award, Marzio has gone on to write for the DCC line, MCC, Weird Frontiers, Lankhmar, Xcrawl, and Dying Earth just to name a few.

DCC #101 *The Veiled Vaults of the Onyx Queen* began with a simple request from the Goodman brass, "we'd like you to do a funnel that starts with the PCs in the middle of the situation and work themselves out of it."

That's it. That was the extent of his instructions.

Oh, there might have been something about it needing to be 10k words in length, but like any good author Marzio promptly pretended not to read that part. What happened next, as is almost always the case for him, was a deep dive into some of his favorite Appendix N authors. This adventure drew its inspiration from the works of Clark Ashton Smith, chiefly his story "The Charnel God", as well as Lovecraft's tale "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs". Two fantastic stories that have stuck with Marzio over the years. Couple that with the real-life event of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which seemed to be plastered all over Canadian TV airways at the time (as much as Marzio wished it wasn't). He then combined the two and sprinkled it with a good amount of DCC awesomeness. The unholy result was DCC #101 *The Veiled Vaults of the Onyx Queen*, and Marzio hopes people will find to be an incredibly exciting adventure to play.



Author Marzio Muscedere

Now, see now what else the Phlogistonic Eye would have you perceive!

Recall that on each year, in the moon-time called "June" by mortal beings, an event renowned across the multiverse is celebrated. This legendary day of celebration is Free RPG Day, a time when many humble shopkeepers bequeath role-playing supplies to any petitioner brave enough to ask! You may discover what merchant near your plane of existence is participating by visiting freerpgday.com.

Know also this!

With this book in thy hands, a new epoch is heralded! Long has the line of Dungeon Crawl Classics lingered, thwarted not by time nor its enemy's stratagems. For twenty years, the scribes and illuminators of Goodman Games has produced tales of high adventure and base treachery for heroes and villains to explore. Now, with DCC 101 unleashed upon the world, Goodman Games embarks on its next grand journey, one certain to bring the multiverse even bigger and better adventures! Are you brave enough to join them on their quest? Answer not carelessly, for danger – but also glory – awaits you in the years to come!

The Phlogistonic Eye sees all, knows all! Keep your own eyes open and await its next return in future Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures!



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THE VEILED VAULTS OF THE ONYX QUEEN

DCC #101: A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY MARZIO MUSCEDERE

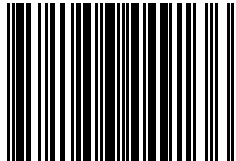
The Queen's Onyx Jubilee is set to begin, marking the 95th year of the merciful monarch's glorious reign. While the entire realm celebrates the good fortune of their long-lived sovereign, a group of common villagers fight to stay alive. For them, the festivities have become a nightmare, as the sounds of revelry are replaced by screams of terror — their own!

Imprisoned in opulence, marked for death, hunted by creatures both grotesque and foul. This ragtag group of unsuspecting villagers must band together to brave the vile mysteries that haunt this place and stand defiant in the face of death itself — if they hope to escape the Veiled Vaults of the Onyx Queen and save their very souls!



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