

Tomb of the Ghast Queen

A 0 Level Funnel Adventure for
Dungeon Crawl Classics

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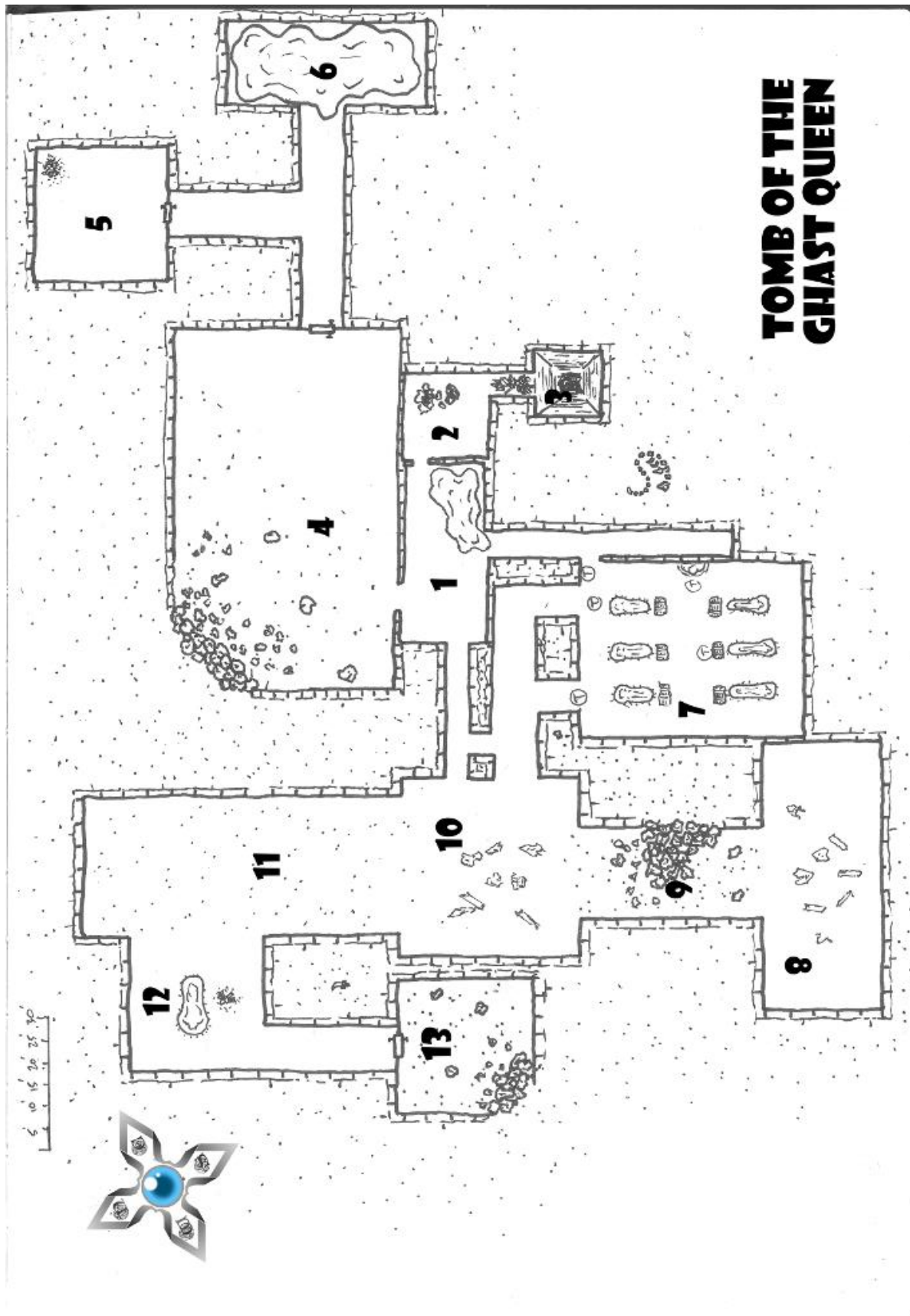


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Background

The only child of the former rulers Queen Esmerelda the III's coronation was held in the capital city some 208 years ago from the current day. She was elevated to Queen status in her early twenties after her mother had succumbed to consumption and her father fell to demons that had infiltrated the palace.

Esmerelda would prove to be a solid ruler for the first decade on the throne but she would not wed, regardless of the number of suitors that courted her. The populace began to worry that an heir would never be apparent as the good Queen turned them away.

Esmerelda the III was said to be an entirely vain ruler and as her beauty began to wane she began to withdraw from public view. What she did in the shadows is hard to determine for her servants and nobles were all sacrificed and interred in the tomb that had been built for her inevitable demise. The calling of the nobles and servants was a time honoured tradition that was performed when the ruler was terminally ill. The country fell to grief and prepared itself for an inevitable war of succession.

The required month of mourning was observed and the Tomb of Queen Esmerelda was sealed on the final day. The following day a great fanfare erupted in the heart of the Capital and the citizens of the great country arrived in droves to see who the scholars would name the next sovereign of the realm.

Instead Queen Esmerelda stood on the parapet of the Palace. She proclaimed that she had been spared her death by the gods and risen to immortality so that the realm would live in peace forever. The closing of the Tomb would be the last that the country would ever see.

Rumour immediately filled the streets and the powerful sought to find out the truth. The general populace was pleased but other people of power had much invested in the supposed death of the Queen.

It came to light over the following year to those that sought the information that the Queen had been dealing with powers beyond the Stars. She sought to find ways that would restore her beauty of a younger age and make her immortally beautiful. The Queen should have been careful what she wished for.

Her withdrawal from society earlier was so she could practise the arts she had learned and become greater in power. the more gifts that she had though warped her body and it was only via these same magics that she could hide the changes that had wracked her body.

As a final step the servants and creatures of the Patron beyond the stars whispered to Esmerelda that her immortality could only be achieved with rituals that would see her consume only the flesh of humans and intelligent creatures. They told her of the hunger that she would always have as a sign of the hunger that her Patron has, so that she may worship it better.

Queen Esmerelda had the servants and nobles that knew the truths of her consultations sacrificed and she fed off many of them in a month long ritual that saw her rise to a kind of immortality in the form of a Ghast.

Her rule was initially tempered by the humanity that was left to her, and the love for her country. But after fifteen years the humanity left and the love for her country was all that consumed her. She saw enemies in shadows that did not exist and knives in the hands of peasant children.

Her armies rose in power and they were largely turned on their own people. The

slave population bloomed and prisoners worked hard in the country fuelling its defences.

Under advisement from her generals the Ghast Queen (as her name was now known by the common folk) ordered the Tomb reopened and the opportunity for thirty prisoners a year to enter in an attempt of redemption for five of the thirty.

This became known as “Running the Gauntlet” amongst the prisoners for the opportunity offered a slim chance of freedom against the greater likelihood of ending up a meal for the Ghast Queen in the palace if they failed.

Now

The players will take on the roles of some of the petitioners seeking freedom by “Running the Gauntlet”. They are lead to a small mountain that overlooks the Capital city and the rock quarry that they had been serving as prisoners. At the top of the mountain they find an elevator shaft and a rickety elevator carriage that is raised and lowered by a pair of Minotaur on a winch.

They are lowered into the darkness and torches are lit. The elevator shaft descends a hundred feet into the mountain where the group are led by their guards through a temple to a God that looks after souls of the dead into a twenty by forty foot room with a large pool of water about a foot deep is located.

The lead guard tells them that the five petitioners that are freed will be those that find one of the five gems that combine to make the “Hand of the Lich”, a sculpture dedicated to the Queen. Once those five gems are located and all other petitioners are dead the elevator will return to take them to freedom. He then reads some strange words from a scroll. As the final

word is read the entire group falls into unconsciousness in area 1.

Tomb of the Ghast Queen

1. Embalming Workshop with Pool of Water

The wake-up room. Players wake up here in complete gear, others are also waking up at the same time – there are 15 or so other criminals in the room, all carrying the equipment that they walked in with. On how to use the other petitioners see *Handling the NPC's and Adapting the Adventure* on page XX.

There may be a battle here, there may not – depends on how the players work it out. The other criminals are more inclined to try and find the gems first and then fight for their lives.

Petitioner: Use the statistics for the Peasant located in DCC rulebook (p.434).

2. Chapel dedicated to God of Death with collapsed floor

The floor has given way in a couple of places here where a small amount of water pooled and loosened the limestone over time. This hints at the level below this one. Should a character look into the collapsed sections of the floor there is a 50% chance that the area they are standing on collapses also, taking the character 10' down to the collated rubble (1d6 damag, DC 11 Ref save for half).

Through the archway to the south a permanent 10' conflagration of flame that acts as the *Control Fire* spell (p. 239 DCC core rules) with a result of 24-25 except for the duration which is permanent until the gems are collected and the other petitioners are dead. The effect protects the entrance to the elevator shaft (where the

criminals were initially brought in). The room is dedicated to the Gods of the Dead and protectors of the souls which were meant to guard Queen Esmerelda, so long ago.

3. Elevator Shaft

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

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

Inside this voluminous chamber there is a massive amount of debris. Hiding in this debris there is a servant of the Ghast Queen who is here to test the will of the criminals that are running the gauntlet. It is a servitor from beyond the stars sent to serve the Ghast Queen and to oversee her faith to the Being that Is.

The servitor is a vaguely humanoid form made from the darkness that exists in space beyond all the stars and thus can remain invisible except when a light is directly shined on it. It remains largely out of sight in the rubble of the Northern corner unless an individual seeks to pass through this room in possession of one of the gems that makes up the Hand of the Lich. At such a time it will descend and attempt to kill the petitioner *unless* there are only five petitioners left. It will not pursue anyone past any of the entrances of this chamber. Door to this room is wooden and unlocked. Strength DC 15 break, 30 HP.

Servitor from Beyond the Stars: Init +0; Atk Chill Touch +4 melee (1d4 cold damage); AC 12; HD 2d8+4; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP vulnerable only to fire damage; SV Fort +2, Ref +0; Will +6; AL N.

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

Lairing in this room at the bequest of the Lich Queen is a Hollow One (p.418 DCC Core Rulebook) by the name of Togs. Togs is a follower of the Being that Is also and is revelling in the attention from actual servitors of the being. In thanks to the Ghast Queen Togs has agreed to defend the gem of the Hand of the Lich it was given. Togs also holds a pouch with 17 CP and a small glass vial holding the nail clippings of a sea hag. Door to this room is wooden and unlocked. Strength DC 15 break, 30 HP.

Hollow One: Spells Known 1st: *Cantrip, Charm Person, Chill Touch, Magic Shield, Sleep*; 2nd: *Mirror Image, Nythuul's Porcupine Coat*.

6. Crypt for less important burials with pool of water

Water leeching from the ceiling has caused a permanent 4' pool of water to settle here. Jars and baskets of corpses that were once the Ghast Queen's servants have fallen into the pit and the water is black with their contagion. Living in the pool of water is a mated pair of Toadmen{Tridlplop & Sisslsplloosh} who have one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich.

The pair are carriers of disease and with any successful bite attack must make a Fort save DC 10 or contract the Black Spot Disease which comes on in 24 hours

reducing the characters Stamina score by d4. The character must save with a Fort DC 10 for two consecutive days to overcome the disease or their body slowly becomes covered in hard black nodules and they die when their Stamina score hits 0. Must make one save a day and a failed save always does 1d4 Stamina damage. They carry 28 silver pieces otherwise.

Toadman: Init +2; Atk Bite +4 melee (1d4+1 and disease); AC 13; HD 2d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +3; Will +0; AL C.

7. Tomb of the wealthiest nobles

This is where the Ghost Queen had her closest nobles interred as she had prepared for her own death. Their worldly goods are in the chests that lay with them and they are looked over by the statue of Set on the south eastern wall. Treasure in the chests of the room (all locked with DC 15 to unlock or break the chest open is: 320 CP, 100 SP, 50 GP, 3 pieces of jade worth 50 GP each, a gem of the Lich Hand and a Potion of Gaseous Form. Distribute this treasure amongst the five real chests as you wish.

In total there are five traps in this room. Experience should be awarded only to those traps that the characters interact with.

1. In the northern most room if a character passes through this archway it triggers a swinging axe across the corridor with a +2 to hit for 1d10 damage;
2. Archway in the north east has a pressure plate just inside the door that breaks the floor and drops into a 10' pit trap lined with rusty iron spikes doing 2d6 damage Ref Save DC 12 for half damage;
3. On the pillar next to the entrance of the north eastern archway there is a

magical glyph which triggers a blast of flame in a 10' radius doing 2d4 damage to anybody in range fire damage save Ref DC 14 for half damage.

4. On the statue of Set (if it is touched, it has a Zircon worth a 100 GP held in an outstretched hand like a black heart) the statue breathes a fine acidic mist out in a 15' cone dealing 3d6 damage to anybody in the area of effect. A Fort DC 14 save halves the damage.
5. The middle chest of the southernmost chests is an illusion and covers a 10' deep pit doing 1d6 damage, a Ref save at DC 10 halves this damage.

8. Divination Room

This room has been totally destroyed in previous gauntlets. A backpack with 12 gold in it lays in the southern corner and where a Green Slime has attached itself to the ceiling. Anyone taking the backpack is dropped on by the Green Slime and if hit with a +3 attack takes 2d6 acid damage.

The green slime is not an intelligent creature and is immune to all attacks. It is too slow to be of any further danger once it has dropped to the ground.

9. Gallery with the ceiling collapse

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

If the characters go searching through the rubble a further 10' radius section of the ceiling collapses doing 1d6 damage to anyone in the area, though a Ref save of DC 12 halves this damage.

10. Guard Room

The furniture in this room has been smashed by the many battles it has seen and the table and chairs that once housed human guards lays as debris on the ground.

Eight skeletons (p.426 DCC Core Rulebook) exist in this room and attack anyone that attempts to enter it. There are two skeletons at the entrance to the Gallery to the north, two skeletons to the entrance to the southern gallery. There is a skeleton standing at each of the entrances from the east and the final skeletons stand in the centre of the room moving to replace any skeletons that fall at the other entrances.

11. Gallery reduced to ashes

This room has been destroyed by a major fire that burnt away all of the paintings and sculpture. There are three bases to statues left and with a successful Intelligence check DC 10, the characters can locate a tin container that holds one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich.

12. The Grand Crypt and camp site

This area is where the Ghast Queen would finally have rested but it now stands empty as a shrine to her stupidity. Inside the coals of the campfire is one of the gems of the Hand of the Lich which can be found with an intelligence check DC 10.

Any character that touches the sarcophagus of the Ghast Queen is subjected to the effects of a Turn to Stone spell (p.233 DCC core rules) made at a spell check +17.

13. Embalming chamber with partial collapse

Inside here is the final and most dangerous of the guardians in the Gauntlet. A wight,

once the lover of the Ghast Queen, guards the final piece of the gems of the Hand of the Lich. Door to this room is wooden and unlocked. Strength DC 15 break, 30 HP.

Wight: Init -1; Atk Longsword +4 melee (1d8+2) or Draining Touch +4 Melee (1d6 life drain); AC 13 (Chain Mail); HD 3d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0; Will +1; AL C.

Life Drain is added to the Wight's HP total when drained from the character. The Wight cannot drain more life than the character has HP and the Life Drain cannot take the Wight over its maximum HP total.

Handling the NPC's and Adapting the Game

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

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

- It is not envisioned that any other NPC's will find any of the gems, but if the players miss one because of a bad roll then one of the NPC's could have it instead.
- The NPC's are criminals and so can be used in encounters where they attack the PC's to obtain the gems

they have on them for adding some XP into the mix.

- If the PC's are coming toward a difficult encounter (e.g. the Wight) and they are all banged up you could weaken the creature as though it had already been attacked by the NPC's. Throw some dead NPC's around the room for set dressing.
- If a player loses all of his characters he could take on the role of one of the other NPC's.

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

The end of the adventure requires the five that have the gems to congregate in the temple of the God of Death. There must be only five living petitioners left and they will find that the Control Fire spell has been lifted and the elevator has been lowered to lift them to their freedom or doom? That part is up to you. All remaining players should be given enough experience to lift them to level 1.