

The
Soul Sword
Forge

Author: **Sam Zimmerman**
Beneath the Gates of Judgment written by **Josh Hitte**
Edited by **Jo Lindsay Walton**
Layout and Design by **Maria Mison**
Cover Art and 'Beneath the Gates of Judgment'
Cover by **Madeleine Ember**
Interior Art by **Ewerton Lua**
Photos from [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

Thank you to all our playtesters: Daniel, Jan, Jerel, Jim, Jon, Leandro, Marc, and Steven.

Special thanks to Gauntlet Publishing and the Conjured Games Co-op for their help and support.

The text, art, and layout of this book is © Typhos Games.

Trophy™ is a trademark of Hedgemaze Press. The trademark and "Designed for Trophy" Logo are © Hedgemaze Press, and are used with permission.

This adventure is designed for use with Old School Essentials. Old School Essentials and OSE are © Necrotic Gnome and Gavin Norman and are licensed for our use under the Old School Essentials Third Party License v1.4.

SC

The
Soul Sword
Forge

Sam Zimmerman

The Ballad of Castle Rex

*Upon a hill there stood a tree
With roots of fire and stone,
With leaves that stretched beyond the stars
And bark of flesh and bone.*

*A man one day took up his axe,
So bright, with vicious sheen.
And out he rode upon his mare
To strike down trees of green.*

*He felled the ash, he felled the oak,
He felled the birch and yew,
But when he came upon Yg'dir
His blood, it ran anew.*

*He heaved the axe with all his might
'Gainst tree upon the hill.
And with a crash the mighty axe
Felled tree and learned its will.*

*And there now stands the Castle Rex,
A keep of iron and stone.
Its gates are shut, its walls are thick,
Locked up with force unknown,
For when the man had breathed his last
He left an empty throne.*



SETTING

The *Soul Sword Forge* takes place in and around Castle Rex, an imposing fortress that stands atop a great hill. The incursion assumes that the players will be setting out from Wiltberg, a nearby settlement that the players can use as a home base.

Because the Creator of Castle Rex was heavily influenced by tarot, each set will include a list of tarot cards which evoke the themes and imagery of that set. As the players progress further into the hunt, lean further into the imagery of the cards you provide.

The Town of Wiltberg

Draw as many tarot cards as you like, and consult the tables below to build the town of Wiltberg.

LOCAL LANDMARKS

Wiltberg, a nearby settlement that the players can use as a home base.

- * **Cups** – A broken well that ran dry years ago. Treasure hunters will still sometimes toss coins into the well, and are occasionally rewarded with a sudden rush of brackish water from the depths.
- * **Wands** – The healing tents are a great and sprawling affair, with dozens of tents housing dozens of patients each. The chief surgeon, Dr. Mouldegard (he/him), works for room and board, and is writing a book on the hundreds of different mutations and afflictions that currently plague the town.
- * **Swords** – A set of rotted gallows marks the center of town. They have clearly been disused for many years, but no one bothers to tear them down.
- * **Pentacles** – A muddy and torn-up market square where strangely misshapen swine jostle in their pens, relic brokers lay out bright twisted mechanisms on black blankets, and food vendors offer steaming bowls of mysterious spicy broth.
- * **Major Arcana** – The river Kaylon runs through the center of town. Several stone moon bridges, carved with gargoyles and adorned with iron cornucopias, are reminiscent of the architectural style of Castle Rex. The dilapidated docks and vacant warehouses speak of better times.

WHO KEEPS THE LOCAL BESTIARY?

Wiltberg is filled with amateur historians, knowledgeable about many things, and hungry for any information you may bring back from within the castle.

- * **Pentacles** – **The local barkeep Gouly (he/they)** has a mind for tales and fantasies, and can precisely recite almost any story no matter how strange or obscure. His powers of recall are quite eerie, and he will relate tales word-for-word as he heard them, down to the rhythms and inflections of the tale-teller's voice.
- * **Wands** – **A travelling merchant named Dunnivan (he/him)** has set up a temporary shop on the outskirts of town. He's always willing to haggle for information, and knows the value of a well-placed word.
- * **Cups** – **The local priestess Baria (she/her)** is tired of treating the sick and wounded, and is searching fruitlessly for a solution. She believes something within the castle could save these people, and is desperate for any information the PCs can bring back.
- * **Swords** – **Justa (they/them), an injured veteran soldier,** was part of a raiding party that went into the castle a few years ago. They are too injured to leave Wiltberg, and are desperate to learn what happened to the rest of his compatriots.
- * **Major Arcana** – **A rogue and unsavory character, Madria (she/her)** is all smiles and honeyed words with the PCs. She has been seeking a way into the castle herself to steal its riches, and may follow the PCs into the castle if they seem strong enough. Madria is a dangerous character and poses a threat to any who underestimate her.

WILD MAGIC

The power once wielded by Creator seems to have a mind of its own these days, and occasionally manifests in unpredictable and unsettling ways.

- * **Pentacles – Sap.** Things in Wiltberg are often curiously sticky or damp. Coins in particular tend to exude a kind of musky, forest-scented resin. The players may hear, with no traceable source, the pitter-patter of raindrops, the tinkling of a brook, the rushing of sap in great tree veins, or the bleating of a drowning faun.
- * **Wands – Candles.** It is not uncommon to find a lit candle in some strange place, such as the roof of a house, or drifting in a tangle of twigs and reeds in the shallows of the Kaylon, or inside a chest that has been locked since the winter.
- * **Cups – Gangrene.** When wounds fester in Wiltberg, they often fill with tiny white flowers, or iridescent, butter-yellow lichens and mosses.
- * **Swords – Knives.** Be careful as you gather berries or fruit. A brush with the edge of a leaf, or a wisp of spider web, or a stray feather, may slice a deep gash in your hand.
- * **Major Arcana – Flowers.** Peer down a honeysuckle or foxglove blossom, and you may glimpse something strange. Bone, or stars, or a vision: crows wreathed in blue smoke, a cracked throne, a Maelstrom Gate writhing under chains ...

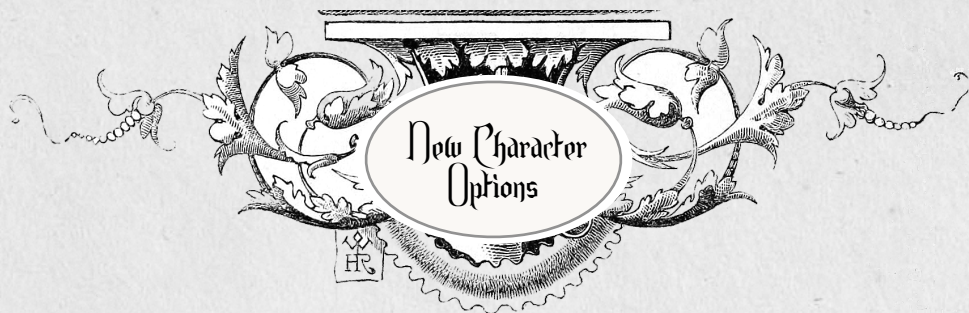
ABOUT CASTLE REX

Common Knowledge: A day's journey to the west of Wiltberg, the castle upon the hill was previously the seat of the Creator's power. From its throne the Creator wielded total control over the functions of the surrounding countryside, sending rays of magical energy shooting across the sky to change the world miles away.

Legend tells of a font of magical power buried deep beneath the castle, which fueled the Creator's magic and creations. Once a towering fastness of stone and iron, the castle is now a crumbling ruin. Since the Creator's death, many have tried to conquer the castle and claim this power for their own. The battles were long, bloody, and indecisive. All of the warring factions failed to decisively win the castle, destroying one another and themselves in their greed.

Secret: Not all who sought the power of Castle Rex failed entirely. Many who breached its walls are now imprisoned within the lower levels. The 'lucky' ones are imprisoned by the demon Zenovox, while the Seven Lords are bound directly to the Forge itself.

Long ago, the roots of Yg'dir were crafted into the Soul-Sword Forge, a font of immense creative energy, and kept beneath the castle. It is with this power that the Creator was able to control so much of the world, but his spells and binding rituals are beginning to fail. With the forge being used by weaker men, its will is growing and the magic yearns to break free from its shackles.

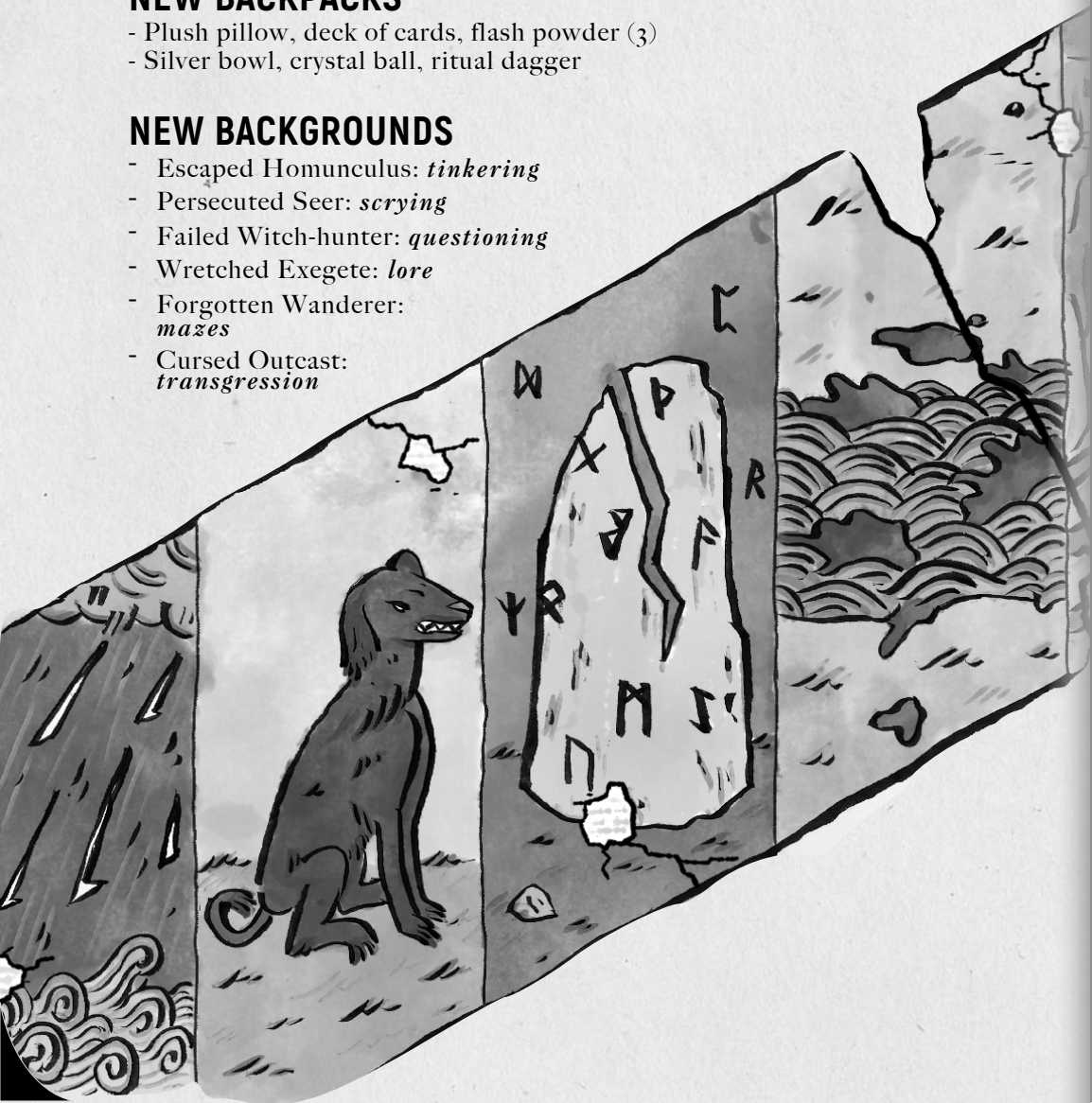


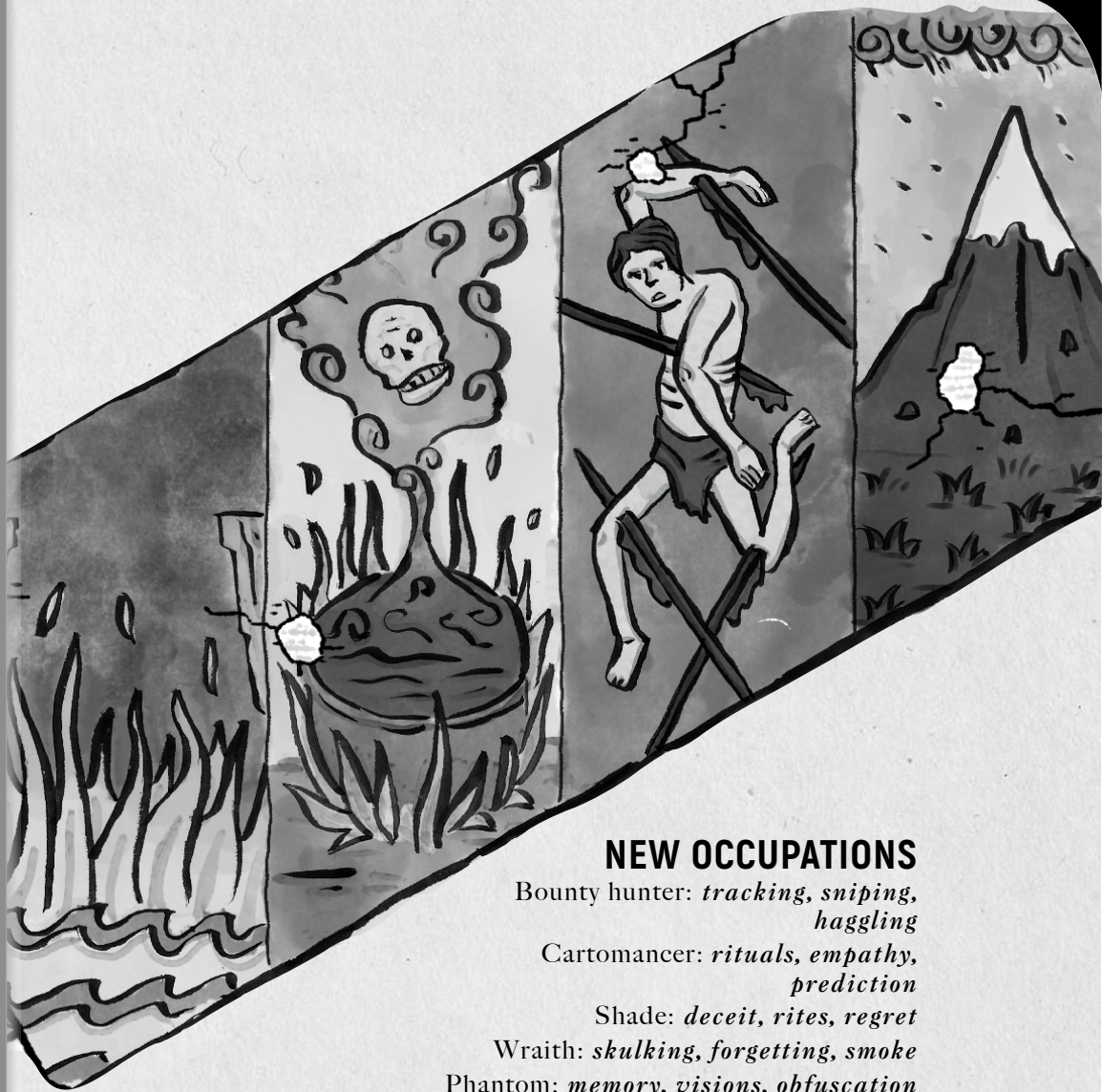
NEW BACKPACKS

- Plush pillow, deck of cards, flash powder (3)
- Silver bowl, crystal ball, ritual dagger

NEW BACKGROUNDS

- Escaped Homunculus: *tinkering*
- Persecuted Seer: *scrying*
- Failed Witch-hunter: *questioning*
- Wretched Exegete: *lore*
- Forgotten Wanderer:
mazes
- Cursed Outcast:
transgression





NEW OCCUPATIONS

Bounty hunter: *tracking, sniping, haggling*

Cartomancer: *rituals, empathy, prediction*

Shade: *deceit, rites, regret*

Wraith: *skulking, forgetting, smoke*

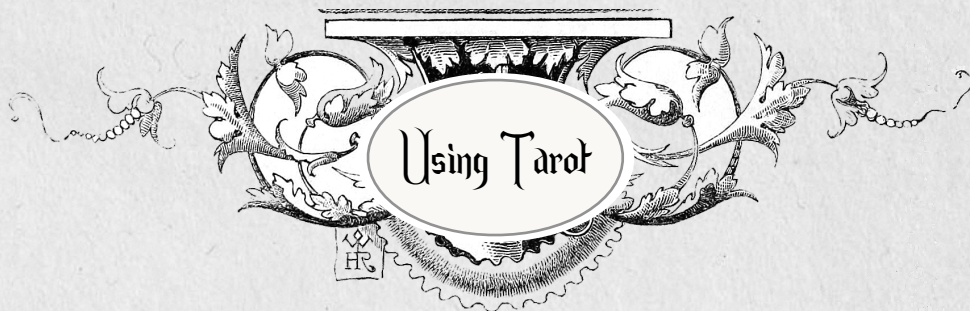
Phantom: *memory, visions, obfuscation*

NEW RITUALS

- Fossilize: Create a trap of slow forming amber.
- Fetter: Summon spectral chains that grasp and pull.
- Glimpse: Swallow a piece of stone to see through the eyes of a statue.
- Adjudicate: Judge a single action or statement as worthy.

When the players create their characters, have each one choose or draw randomly a name and a connection. That character was long since lost to the castle, though it is a mystery how. Draw secretly on the Cause of Death table: do not tell the players how their connection died or show the other options.

Tarot Card	Name	Connection	Cause of Death
A-3	Hosrik Herstein	Your lover's father, missing since childhood	Hung by the neck with the bell rope
4-5	Zentomier Ballurat	Your childhood friend	Chained to the wall and starved to death in the throne room
6-7	Rannin von Falk	An ancestor for whom you were named	Imprisoned by Zenovox in the prison pit
8-10	Svalt Godrissenek	Your old liege-lord, who disappeared years ago	Ripped apart by crows on the hillside
Page-Queen	Lathla of Kellhen	A sibling who left home on a futile quest	Stabbed in the back in the dining hall
King+	Jaeffild Veswenn	Your spouse who left suddenly and mysteriously	Soul lost to the Forge, becoming one of the Seven Lords



The Soul Sword Forge is heavily inspired by the tarot, and you may want to incorporate the themes and ideas of the tarot at your table. These rules are entirely optional, but may provide additional ways for you to engage with the themes and motifs of the adventure

THE THEME OF EACH SET

Each of the six sets presented in this adventure has one of the Major Arcana cards as a core theme. You may choose to take that card out of the deck and place it, face up, on the table for everyone to see. Reference imagery in the card in your description of the room, and think about the themes of the card as the set plays out.

TREASURE DETAILS

Whenever the PCs find treasure during the incursion, have the player draw a card from the deck and ask them to incorporate the imagery or themes of the card into the treasure. This can change the design, coloration, effect, or condition of the treasure but should not change its value or mechanics.

If you're using the Trophy Gold ruleset, you can take this one step further and replace the Hunt Tokens with tarot cards. Then whenever the player spends a Hunt Token to find treasure, they use the themes of that card to influence the treasure they find.

MONSTER TRACKING

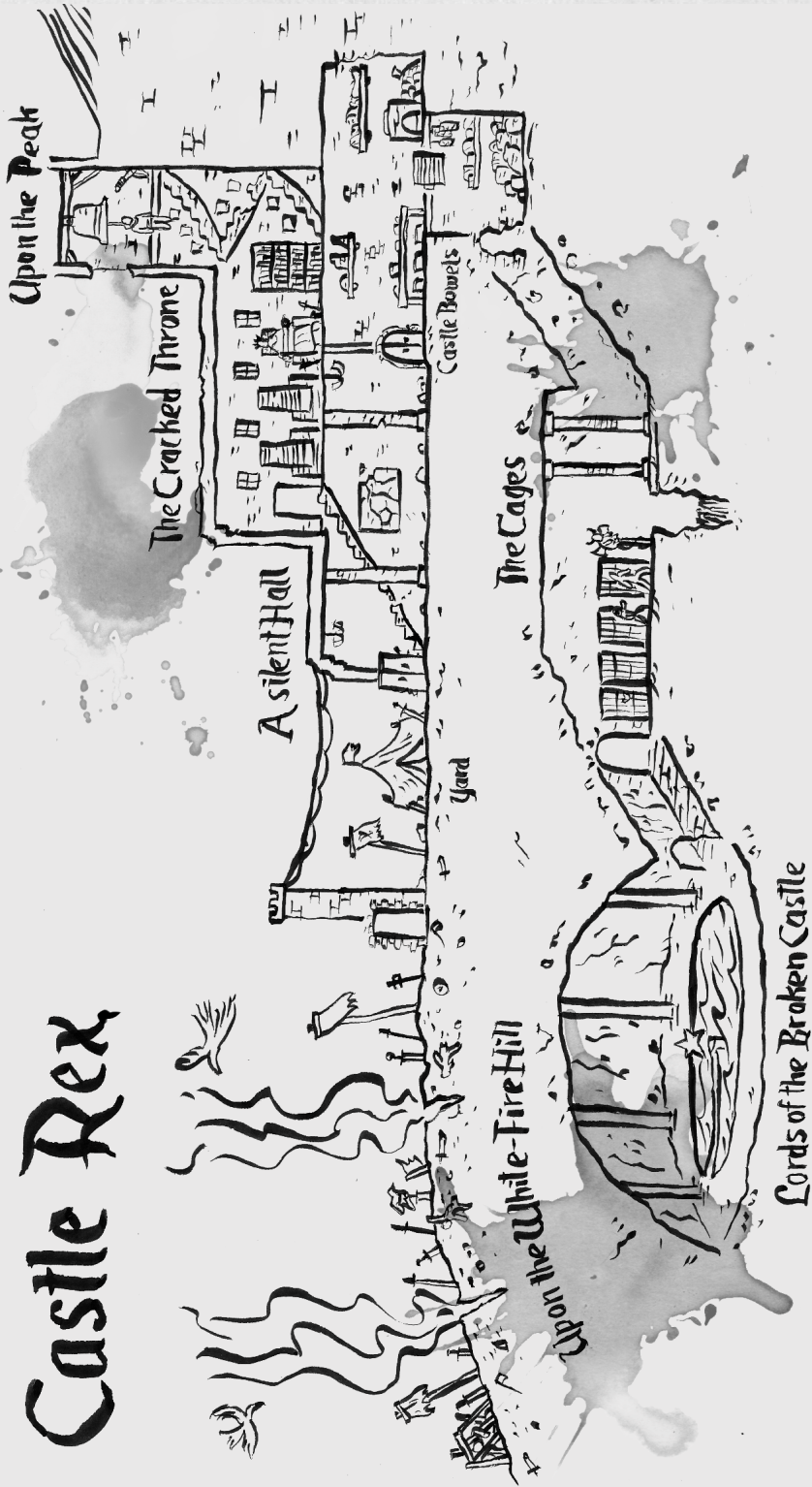
When the players engage in combat with multiple monsters, draw a tarot card for each monster and lay them out on the table. Use the imagery of the card to describe each monster, and try to modify the monster's actions and tactics based on the card they are represented by. If you're using a system that has an initiative tracking system, the tarot card can double as an initiative marker.

THEME: BINDING

Castle Rex served as the original prison for the magic that fuels the Creator's power, and that binding will is still infused into the walls and rough stone floors.

The rooms within the castle are filled with all manner of binding or locking objects. Chests, ropes, shackles, manacles, cages, gates, doors, bars, stocks, cells, chains, and straps should be in every room. Some cages and traps should be fractured or broken open to give the players brief glimmers of hope. Most however should be shut tight, many with skeletal prisoners trapped within their grip, surrounded by traces of their doomed escape attempts. Ask questions about times the characters were prevented from accomplishing something or times they were trapped by their own morality.

Castle Rex





CARDS

Death, Five of Swords, Ten of Swords

SET GOAL

Get past the crows. Until they manage to scare the crows away, this goal resets whenever the group leaves this area.

OVERVIEW

The white-fire hill is a battlefield. Bodies litter the ground, and the muddy ground is soaked by rain and blood. Carrion birds circle and peck at the bodies of the dead, while massive fissures occasionally belch jets of white-hot flames into the air.

MOMENTS

- * A black crow stands on a dead man's chest, pecking at his now empty eye sockets.
- * An armored knight crushed under his white horse.
- * The skeletons of two soldiers stabbing each other. They both wear the same uniform.
- * Cages of captured prisoners who died from starvation when their captors never came back.

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p>Cracks of Earth: The hill is cracked and broken, almost as if the hill were splitting at the seams. Jets of white-hot flame leap from the fissures at random intervals.</p>	<p>Fire leaping from the fissures will burn anyone who gets too close. (1d10 damage, save vs. breath attack). Going into the fissures is certain death.</p>	<p>Your lover's father, missing since childhood.</p>
<p>Broken Bodies: The bodies of the dead lie scattered on the battlefield. Their myriad uniforms and insignia tell of a battle with many factions. Some of the bones here look to have mouldered for decades (picked clean by the carrion crows), whereas other bodies are so fresh the blood still runs from their wounds.</p>	<p>Touching one of the bodies provides a conduit for the <i>trapped spirit</i> within to escape.</p>	<p>The corpses' gear is rusted and dented, but still usable. Players can opt to increase their burdens to pick up additional combat equipment here.</p>
<p>Slashed Banners: Dozens of different banners lie broken and slashed across the hillside.</p>	<p>A very unlucky person may find themselves momentarily transported back to the midst of the battle. (Save vs. spells or suffer hallucinations for 1d6 rounds).</p>	
<p>Prisoner Cages: Scattered across the battlefield are wooden cages that likely held prisoners of war. The bodies inside reach out through the bars, still yearning for release from their imprisonment.</p>		<p>The bodies in the cages are by far the best preserved, and at least one is wearing an insignia well known to one of the treasure hunters.</p>

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p><i>Castle Gates:</i> Two great doors of oak and iron are barred on the other side. There is a hidden door to the right side of the main entryway, and its mechanism could be located or picked.</p>	<p>Approaching the castle will cause the <i>carrion swarm</i> to descend and chase the players into the building. The birds will not follow into the castle, but will attack anyone who tries to leave.</p>	
<p><i>OTHER TRAPS</i></p>	<p>The mud is deep and sticky, grabbing items and armor that is not well attached. (Dexterity check to avoid losing an item).</p>	
<p><i>OTHER TREASURES</i></p>	<p>Rooting around in the deep mud will uncover coins, trinkets, and jewelry with a multitude of different insignias. It is impossible ever to piece together the full picture of what happened.</p>	



5 – Trapped Spirit – A soul composed of billowing blue smoke. Glowing chains keep it bound to its body and trapped in the pain of its final moments.

1. Psychic screams of pure anguish	3. Soundless cries of “help” that no one can hear	5. Sobbing in tune with the wind	
2. Clinging to your soul to pull itself free	4. Corpses floating in the mud	6. Blue smoke twisting between blades of grass	
<i>Mind Wrack</i> : Touching the spirit lets it access your memories, bringing forth painful memories to fuel its own escape.		<i>Weaknesses</i> : Magic, Silver	
Armor Class	7 [12]	Saves	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)
Hit Dice	1* (4hp)	Morale	6
Attacks	1x touch (1d6 + lesser energy drain)	Alignment	Chaotic
THACo	17 [+2]	XP & Treasure Type	6 – Q
Movement	0' (bound to the body)	Number appearing	1 per body

- * **Undead**: Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g. poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. Charm, Hold, Sleep).
- * **Mundane weapon immunity**: Only harmed by silver weapons or magic.
- * **Lesser energy drain**: A successfully hit target temporarily loses one experience level (or Hit Die). This incurs a loss of one Hit Die of hit points, as well as all other benefits due to the drained level (e.g. spells, saving throws, etc.). A character affected by lesser energy drain retains all XP, and recovers their lost levels after resting or receiving magical healing.

13 – Carrion Swarm – *A massive flock of black crows darkens the sky. Too many to possibly count, the endless swarm descends upon a potential meal.*

1. Shrieking and cawing

3. Circling like buzzards over a corpse

5. Blotting out the sun with sheer numbers

2. Pecking a bloody third eye into your forehead

4. Ripping out each others' feathers in hunger

6. A white crow lands upon a corpse and lets out a human scream

Multitudes : Attacks against any single bird are ineffective at stopping the tides.

Hungry : The birds will target the character's eyes for an easy meal.

Weaknesses: Flames, smoke, or loud noise. In the set Upon the Peak, ringing the bell in the bell tower will scare the flock away.

The Carrion Swarm acts like 10d100+100 Stirges.



CARDS

The Hanged Man, Two of Swords, Eight of Swords, Page of Swords

SET GOAL

Find the passage to the lower levels.

OVERVIEW

The first floor of the Castle Rex is extravagant, if cracked and crumbling. The walls are plastered in vibrant hues and gold leaf, and the polished stone floor is inlaid with silver. A sweeping staircase leads up from the entryway, and a large door leads to the banquet hall.

MOMENTS

- * A rumbling earthquake from below sets everyone off balance.
- * A groaning, haunting sob echoes from somewhere just out of sight.
- * A bloody whip is stashed in a conveniently accessible location.
- * In the banquet hall, a gut-wrenching crash as a heavy tapestry and its wall supports come loose. The badly tattered tapestry depicts knights in flying scarlet cloaks, seemingly lost in a millefleur forest.
- * Skittering sounds and the flap of wings come from the rafters above your heads.
- * Screaming and banging come from behind a locked door. Opening the door reveals an empty closet with no one inside.

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p><i>The Courtyard:</i> The large overgrown courtyard is crowded with a multitude of tents and banners, all abandoned. Every army that managed to breach the walls made camp here, and the remnants of their bivouac are still available for the PCs to use.</p>		<p>The <i>Cobinding Manacles</i> are in a locked chest in the courtyard, hidden behind crates of rotting food and rusted weapons.</p>
<p><i>The Great Staircase:</i> A set of curving stairs loops around the right-hand side of the entryway. The polished steps are cracked and crooked in places, but sturdy enough if tested. The staircase leads up to the set of the Cracked Throne.</p>	<p><i>Giant Centipedes</i> make their nests in the rafters above the staircase.</p>	<p>A great mural is painted along the side of the stairs, depicting (in ascending order) a howling black storm, a snarling dog, a great cracked boulder, a slime-covered river, a flaming pit, a pot of boiling blood, a twisted and mangled corpse, and a frozen mountain (the best-preserved of all the images).</p>
<p><i>The Banquet Hall:</i> A long hall with benches and tables set for two hundred men. Dust lays thick on every surface, and huge cracks break through the stone floor to the depths below. In a rift in the northernmost wall, a thorn thicket flourishes.</p>	<p>Getting too close to the cracks in the banquet hall will provoke Chain Serpents to spring from the holes.</p>	

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p>Kitchens: A door off the banquet hall leads into the kitchens, unused for decades. Ask each player how they know what implements of punishment they find here, and how they imagine they were used against the kitchen staff. The smell of rot and decay is thick in the air, and the chests, cupboards, and pantry are full of decayed and rotting food.</p>	<p>The stench of decay from opening the pantry is horrendous and will cause nausea and headaches unless dealt with. (Save vs. poison or be violently sick).</p>	<p>A trapdoor in the pantry leads down into the larder, where a broken wall provides access to the set of the Cages.</p>
<p>Servant's Quarters: These rooms are cramped, stuffy, dingy, dirty, and contrast starkly with the grandeur of the hall just outside. Five cots are placed end-to-end on either side of the room, with barely enough space between them for a chamber pot and room to stand. Tree roots poke through the low ceiling. The feeling that someone is watching intensifies.</p>	<p>The spirits of the servants still live in the room. They will not attack, but their pain and anguish are infectious for anyone who lingers too long in the Servant's Quarters. (Save vs. spells or flee the room in terror).</p>	

OTHER TRAPS	None
OTHER TREASURES	Golden cutlery and delicate china can be scavenged from most places in this set.

8 – Giant Centipede – *Dozens of skittering legs and a pair of horrible mandibles are attached to a long, segmented and carapaced body. At nearly five feet long, this insect is a true monstrosity.*

1. Peeling out of their silken cocoons	3. Coughing up half-liquefied human flesh	5. Vomiting up stomach acid to pre-digest its prey
2. Skittering across the broken murals	4. Reeling in a missed catch with their string	6. Screeching and screaming in frustration and hunger

String Shot: The centipedes prefer to attack from range, shooting sticky webs to immobilize their prey before moving in for the kill.

Clamping Jaws: The centipede's jaws lock into place when they latch on, refusing to let go even after the centipede dies.

Weaknesses:

- Piercing weapons targeted between the hard outer plates.
- Lye and potash are basic enough to react with the centipede's acid and neutralize it.

Armor Class	5 [14]	Saves	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)
Hit Dice	2 (9hp)	Morale	7
Attacks	1x bite (1d8, grab) 1x string shot	Alignment	Neutral
THAC0	18 [+1]	XP & Treasure Type	35 - Q
Movement	90' (30')/90' (30') along walls	Number appearing	1d8

- * **Grab:** When hit with a bite attack, the victim is clamped in its powerful jaws and is bitten automatically the next round.
- * **Cling:** Can walk perfectly on walls or ceilings
- * **String Shot:** A glob of sticky silk is launched 40' to immobilize its prey. On a successful hit, the target is entangled and unable to move. Breaking free depends on Strength: 2d4 turns for Strength in the normal human range; 4 rounds for strength above 18; 2 rounds for creatures with giant Strength. The silk can be destroyed by fire in two rounds. All creatures in flaming silk suffer 1d6 points of damage.



8 – Chain Serpent – *Writhing chains pull themselves through cracks in the floor, snaking around to ensnare anyone unwitting enough to get close.*

1. Clanking and rattling	3. Coiling and winding, ready to strike	5. Prodding and feeling blindly for its prey	
2. Shedding flakes of rust that disperse in the air	4. Sending sparks flying as they scrape across the stone floor	6. Combining into a massive chain tentacle	
Grapple: Grabs adventurers' legs to trip them and drag them through the cracks. Continue the fight in one of the cages from the Cages set.		Weakness: Targeting a weakest link.	
Armor Class	6 [13]	Saves	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)
Hit Dice	2* (9hp)	Morale	7
Attacks	1x slam (1d4, constriction)	Alignment	Neutral
THAC0	18 [+1]	XP & Treasure Type	25 - None
Movement	90' (30') / 90' (30') along walls	Number appearing	2d8 (3d8)
* Constriction: When a slam attack is successful, the iron serpent wraps around the victim and begins to squeeze, inflicting 2d4 automatic damage immediately and on each subsequent round.			
* Mundane damage immunity: Can only be harmed by magical attacks.			

The Cobinding Manacles

These heavy iron manacles are linked by a delicate golden chain. The chain is easily snapped by anyone actively attempting to break it, though it stays intact through normal wear and tear. If the chain is broken, bringing the two manacles close together will cause the chain to quickly reform.

The manacles lock automatically when placed around a wrist or ankle, and have no keyhole nor obvious mechanism of unlocking them. The two cuffs will not lock to the same person. When both manacles are attached to different people, all ruin or physical damage taken by one wearer is suffered by the other wearer instead. When one of the wearers dies for any reason, both manacles unlock.





CARDS

Justice, King of Swords, Seven of Swords

SET GOAL

Learn of the Creator and understand the purpose of the castle (see the Castle Rex secret history section in the introduction).

OVERVIEW

A great throne room, with rows of benches around the edge and a large dais at the far end.

MOMENTS

- * The eyes of the statue follow you as you move around the room.
- * Broken bones hang limply in a pair of manacles
- * The smell of dust and rot makes you sneeze, which echoes in the quiet house.
- * The top half of a skeleton hangs limply out of a statue's legs and hips. Further inspection shows that the linking vertebrae are half petrified.

Props	Traps	Treasures
<i>The Grand Dias:</i> A great altar at the far end of the hall. Three great thrones sit in the center, with faded red velvet on each one. The right-most throne is occupied by a 15' marble statue of a beautiful, crying woman.	Removing the crown from the <i>living statue</i> or touching <i>The Creator's Sceptre</i> will cause the statue to awaken and attack.	The statue's golden crown is worth 2 gold, and <i>The Creator's Sceptre</i> is leaning up against the central throne.
<i>Seats of the Lords:</i> The walls are lined with smaller chairs, each engraved with a different lord's name. Close inspection reveals that most of the chairs have manacles on the arms or shackles on the floor.	The manacles and fetters will automatically latch onto nearby persons. (Save vs. paralysis, bound in place until fetters are broken or unlocked). Will always target the least faithful if allowed to choose.	
<i>Knowledge is Power:</i> Behind the dais is a set of tall oak bookshelves. The leather-bound books are worn with use and poorly maintained, with lots of ripped pages and stained edges. To the right of the bookshelves is a spiral staircase that leads up to the set Upon the Peak.	One of the bookshelves is trapped and is rigged to fall, crushing and trapping someone beneath it. (Int check to disable, idro damage)	Copious books line the shelves, many of which detail the many lives and exploits of the Creator. One book mentions a <i>rebinding ritual</i> , which talks about the Maelstrom gate and requires a willing sacrifice and <i>the ritual dagger</i> .
OTHER TRAPS	None	
OTHER TREASURES	Cloth finery (lace, velvet, satin, etc.) and valuable books.	

11 – Living Statue – A 9-foot tall marble behemoth, the statue creaks to life and raises a stone executioner’s sword against those foolish enough to disturb it.

1. Joints creak and groan with years of disuse	3. A woman’s scream from between its marble lips	5. Castle-shaking footsteps move inexorably toward you	
2. Eyes flash with a white flame	4. The sword carves a deep groove through the dais	6. Wisps of blue energy escape from its skin before getting pulled back inside	
<i>Mighty:</i> The heavy sword is dull, but crushes bones like toothpicks and will send people flying across the room.		<i>Weaknesses:</i> Acids, The Golden Clapper	
Armor Class	0 [19]	Saves	D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (10)
Hit Dice	15 (75hp)	Morale	11
Attacks	1x sword (3d10 + slam)	Alignment	Neutral
THAC0	6 [+13]	XP & Treasure Type	650 – None
Movement	20' (5')	Number appearing	1 (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Slam: If hit by the sword, the target is launched 20 feet directly away from the Living Statue. If that path hits a wall, the path is stopped and they take an additional 1d8 damage. If the wall is weak, flimsy, or rotten, the path is not stopped by the wall: they take 1d6 damage instead, and a large hole is broken through the wall. * Mundane damage immunity: Can only be harmed by magical attacks. * Energy Immunity: Unharmed by fire, cold, and electricity * Initiative: -2 penalty due to stiff and lumbering movement. 			



The Creator's Sceptre

A wooden staff topped with an enormous chunk of amber, the Sceptre acts as a weak focus for the energy welling up from the base of the castle. This staff may be used as a weapon in melee, and also grants access to the following effects while inside the castle:

- * Flesh to Stone
- * Wall of Stone
- * Transmute Mud to Rock

Using any of these effects will start a chain reaction that begins to turn anything around the target to stone. This effect moves at 5ft / minute for 20 minutes and cannot be stopped by mundane means.

Trophy Gold: This grants access to the unique ritual **Petrify** (turn something to stone), and the above effect is always on the table as a devil's bargain.

The Sceptre has no magical energy outside of the vicinity of the castle (the White-Fire Hill set is close enough to still maintain the magic), but retains its considerable value if sold.



CARDS

The Tower, Queen of Swords, Ace of Swords

SET GOAL

Ring the bell to scare away the storm of crows.

OVERVIEW

The bell tower of the castle is crumbling and decrepit, but the bell still hangs on its mount and likely would serve to scare away the carrion swarm.

MOMENTS

- * The setting sun shines through the great hole in the outer wall.
- * A broken stair snaps beneath your foot and falls to the floor below.
- * The wind howls across the open platform, whipping your hair into a frenzy and stinging your eyes.
- * A limp corpse hangs by its neck from the broken bell cord, his hands shackled together.

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p>The Shattered Stairs: The wooden steps are splintered and jagged. Great stones lay across many portions of the staircase where chunks of the outer wall have been knocked away.</p>	<p>Falling out of the tower, broken or weak railings.</p> <p>The openings in the outer wall provide access for the <i>Carrion Swarm</i> (see The White Fire Hill) to continue harassing the party as they make their way up the tower.</p>	
<p>The Bell: At the top of the stairs is a great brass bell, nearly 5 feet in diameter and 7 feet tall. The platform of rotted wood feels like it will break at any moment, and the mechanism to swing the bell is broken away to nothing.</p>	<p>Ringing the bell has a chance of knocking the whole contraption down, crashing through the tower, destroying the stairs and knocking out portions of the tower wall.</p>	
<p>Alcoves: The stairs are lined with small alcoves, each one intricately painted with a depiction of a different region of the world. Ask each player how the alcove they find reminds them of home, and how their town was manipulated by the Creator's magic.</p>		<p>The alcoves are full of intricate carvings, small statues, and jewelry including an intricately carved bronze statue of a wizard and the <i>ritual dagger</i>.</p>
<p>OTHER TRAPS</p>	<p>If the treasure hunters have freed any souls in the lower levels of the castle, they will start to funnel upward through the tower (as if getting sucked up by a tornado). The souls act as <i>Trapped Souls</i> (see The White Fire Hill).</p>	
<p>OTHER TREASURES</p>	<p>The foreign coins, exotic art, and strange objects from the alcoves have spilled into the central room over the years.</p>	



CARDS

The Devil, Three of Swords, Nine of Swords

SET GOAL

Learn the binding ritual (and how to undo it).

OVERVIEW

The castle jailer Zenovox still dwells here, though his charges have long since died. The imp sits upon a post in the center of the room, shaking the chains of the four bodies still tied to the post. A glowing door at the far end of the room leads down to the Lords of the Broken Castle.

MOMENTS

- * The husks howl in sandpaper voices and rattle their chains.
- * The imp snickers in glee and calls out to the intruders.
- * The bones of the long dead prisoners crunch underfoot.

Props	Traps	Treasures
<i>The Prison Pit:</i> A 10-foot deep pit cuts the room in half lengthwise. The jagged and crumbling edges of the pit prevent you from progressing to the glowing door at the far end.	Four chained husks are trapped at the bottom of the pit and chained to the Hitching Post.	The Golden Clapper rests at the bottom of the prison pit.
<i>The Hitching Post:</i> A tall post in the far side of the prison pit. The imp jailer Zenovox sits on top of the post and shouts insults across the gap. He will attempt to lure people into the pit by offering them deals, treasure, or information (none of which he gives freely).	Getting too close to the hitching post will activate the binding ritual. Thick chains leap from the post and will clasp manacles onto an unsuspecting neck or wrist, and drag the bound character into the prison pit.	The hitching post has the runic inscription for the rituals Fetter and Knock engraved upon it. Given some time to carefully study the post, either (or both) rituals could be learned.
<i>The Back Cells:</i> Across the room from the pit are four large cells. The floor of each cell is sticky with blood, and the bars on each cell are rusted and jagged. A dried human heart is impaled by the broken cell bars.	The doors of the cells will close on their own, and separate the group. Unlocking the cells is a Dexterity check. Breaking the doors is a Strength check and the rusted metal automatically deals 1d8 damage.	A prisoner's stash behind a loose brick. 1 gold worth or TT-R.
OTHER TRAPS	The earthquakes from below are particularly violent this close to the epicenter, and have a significant chance to send everyone tumbling to the ground. (Save vs. Paralysis).	
OTHER TREASURES	A bent and misshapen golden key, inlaid with tiny rubies, some missing.	

6 – Chained Husks – *Barely recognizable as human, these dried corpses still move with an artificial life*

1. Getting yanked back into the pit by the throat

3. Straining against the tight chains

5. Moaning in an almost inaudible whisper

2. Skin flaking off in dusty sheets

4. Coughing out clouds of dust

6. Terrible black fingernails scrabbling at the walls of the pit

Chained: Blocks swinging weapons with chains and manacles.

Group : Fighting all of the husks at once is an endurance of 9.

Weakness: Fire

Chained Husks act as **Zombies** but take double damage from Fire and double the number appearing.

0 – Zenovox – *A small, batlike imp with tattered wings and a wicked smile.*

Zenovox will not put up much of a fight if confronted directly, but if the party underestimates him he does have a nasty poison stinger and a vicious wit. He can easily be overpowered by coordinated adventurers.

Zenovox will continually spout temptations, insults and taunts at the players:

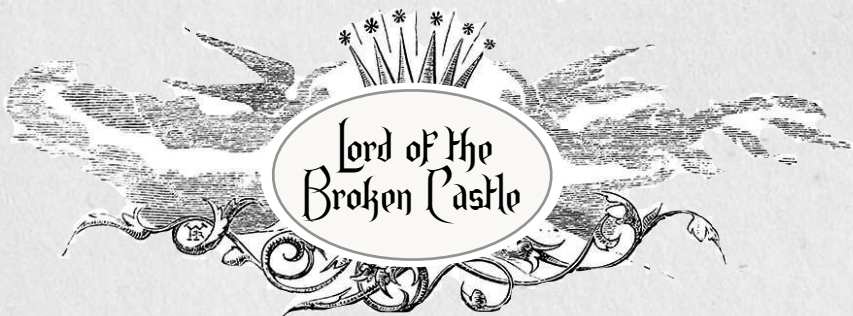
- * Oh look at you, praying to your little gods. No gods down here sonny, you're in my realm now!
- * Oops, cut yourself on something did you? Does babby need medicine? Ohhh booo hooo.
- * You children are powerless against me, don't you know who I am? I am the great Zenovox and your souls shall fill my cages!
- * Ohhh so it's information you want? Come closer and I'll whisper it to you. I don't trust these other buffoons.
- * Oh I see you looking around for treasure over there. Won't find nothing. Lots of people came through before and cleared this place out. Guess you're too late!
- * See this magical post? The engravings are solid gold! Come see for yourself!

Armor Class	3 [16]	Saves	D12 W13 P13 B15 S15 (E1)
Hit Dice	1* (4hp)	Morale	7
Attacks	1x sting (1d4 + poison)	Alignment	Chaotic
THAC0	9 [+10]	XP & Treasure Type	13 - R+S
Movement	0' (bound to the post)	Number appearing	1 (1)

- * **Poison:** Zenovox's tail secretes a powerfully paralyzing poison. Anyone stung by the imp must make a saving throw or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds (long enough for the hitching post to bind them or for them to get dragged into the pit by the chained husks).
- * **Trickster:** Always surprise.

The Golden Clapper

This three foot long, lustrous and surprisingly heavy bell clapper acts as a +1 mace. Whenever the clapper hits an inanimate object, it rings as an enormous brass church bell. This resonating shock wave can destroy most stone or brickwork in a 5' radius. The Golden Clapper acts as a weakness of the *Living Statue* on page X, and deals 3x damage to creatures made of stone or crystal.



CARDS

The Emperor, Six of Swords, Seven of Swords

SET GOAL

Access the power source of the Creator.

OVERVIEW

Deep beneath Castle Rex, the Creator tapped into the arcane energy of the maelstrom to create the Soul-Sword Forge.

MOMENTS

- * The earth shudders as the fires slam against the edges of the pool.
- * A bright flash as fire breaks through the seal, lancing up toward the ceiling, escaping through the giant cracks.
- * Seven figures float above the pool of fire. They swirl and dance with light shining from their fingertips.
- * Shimmering white mist swirls throughout the room and obscures the far edges.
- * A man's spirit being continually drawn and quartered. His soundless screams play across his face as his limbs get ripped from his body. The four limbs regrow, only to be chained and ripped apart again. Who recognizes the visage of the Creator?

Props	Traps	Treasures
<p>Stone Walkway: A 10-foot wide, stone walkway that circles the Maelstrom Gate. Huge pillars of rough-hewn granite support the ceiling, 20 feet above you.</p>	<p>The stone walkway is littered with half-formed creatures and failed creations. Most of these are just obstacles that get in your way, but some creations still have a weak spark of life.</p>	<p>Trinkets and oddments made from the wrong material. Everything is either a mundane object made from a priceless material (such as a jade garden trowel) or a beautiful work of art made from something horrific (such as a beautifully carved bust made from rotting carrot flesh).</p>
<p>Maelstrom Gate: In the center of the room is a 100-foot diameter hole. Just below the walkway swirls the Maelstrom, a vortex of searing white flames. A rippling chain barrier keeps the flames contained, but occasional jets break through the numerous broken links and tears in the fabric. These rogue pulses leap toward the ceiling and escape to the surface through the massive fissures in the stone.</p>		
<p>Soul-Sword Forge: A thin stone bridge arches out into the center of the Maelstrom Gate. In the exact center stands a 10 foot diameter stone platform with a glowing white tree stump. As the adventurers approach the forge, they start to hear whispers: "Take what is yours, release the magic, use your power, you've earned these riches, use the Forge, take it all, let the magic flow..." Each time a player uses the Forge, a new tear appears in the chain barrier that holds back the magic. The Lords telepathically laugh in delight with each new tear.</p>	<p>Crossing the bridge toward the Forge provokes the attention of the Lords, who will swoop down to encourage the adventurers to use the Forge. If a player approaches the forge but does not use it, the Lords will attempt to block their escape until they use the forge.</p>	<p>Access to the Soul-Sword Forge is itself quite a treasure (see The Forge Roll below). Whenever someone uses the Forge, a new tear rips through the barrier holding the magic in.</p>

OTHER TRAPS	Arcs of energy leap from the forge (1d8 damage)
OTHER TREASURES	None

5 – Failed Creations – *Half formed creatures, some human and some bestial, all with wood or stone appendages that hang limply from raw joints.*

1. Stumbling out of a pile of garbage	3. Broken limbs swing limply	5. Dragging a dead leg along the stone	
2. Sobbing and coughing	4. Vomit and spittle dribbling down its chin	6. Babbling and howling incoherently	
None		Weakness: fire	
Armor Class	8 [11]	Saves	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)
Hit Dice	3* (13hp)	Morale	12
Attacks	1x slam (2d8)	Alignment	Neutral
THACo	17 [+2]	XP & Treasure Type	50 - 1d10 pieces of wrong material jewelry
Movement	10' (3)	Number appearing	1d4 (2d6)

- * **Blend in with garbage:** Difficult to tell apart from the piles of refuse that line the cavern.
- * **Unnatural vitality:** The creations are not animated by standard means, and their limbs will continue to move on their own when separated from the main body.

- * **Wrong Material:** Parts are made of metal, vegetable, wood, or other materials other than flesh. Roll twice on the table below to determine the composition:

D6	body part	material
1	arm	carved ebony
2	leg	glowing hot steel
3	head	rotting fruit
4	hands	flowing mercury
5	regurgitating	sticky rubber
6	whole body	blood-red marble

10 – Seven Lords – *Glowing amber figures dance above the surface of the Maelstrom Gate. Their sunken eyes stare through skin and skull, to see what lies within you. Their voices whisper in the back of your mind.*

1. Staring into your eyes	3. Whispering telepathic temptations	5. Amber skin sparks with electricity
2. Leading you through the trash heaps	4. Glowing eyes illuminate the portal steam	6. A soul trapped in the amber tries to push through the surface

Energized - Electricity leaping from their skin will change the material of anything it arcs onto. Coordinated - The given endurance is for one Lord. Each round of combat, another Lord joins the fight and increases the endurance by 1.		Weakness: Wrought iron (not cast iron or steel), <i>The Creator's Sceptre</i>	
Armor Class	2 [17]	Saves	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)
Hit Dice	3* (13hp)	Morale	11
Attacks	1x slam (2d8)	Alignment	Law
THACo	17 [+2]	XP & Treasure Type	1,250/1,750/2,300 - F
OTHER TRAPS		Arcs of energy leap from the forge (1d8 damage)	
OTHER TREASURES		None	
Movement	120' (40')	Number appearing	Exactly 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mundane damage immunity: Can only be harmed by magical attacks. * Charming gaze: Save versus spells at -2 or be charmed: move toward the forge, pour their soul into the Forge, break the barriers, push garbage into the Maelstrom Gate, unable to attack the Seven Lords. Killing any one of the Seven Lords breaks the charm. * Multi-faced: At will; over the course of 1 round (does not take actions) will slowly assume the features and voice of someone the target has lost. Claims that the Forge can bring them back 			

THE FORGE ROLL

When attempting to access the power of the Soul-Sword Forge:

1. Grasp both sides of the glowing stump firmly with uncovered hands. Feed a portion of your soul into the forge to activate the magic, and take a number of gold dice equal to the energy you are willing to impart into the forge, as many as you want.
2. The magic of the Forge will focus the raw energy of creation below to create a replica of whatever treasure you desire. Roll the gold dice you gathered and gain a single treasure with value equal to the number of 4s, 5s, and 6s you rolled. If you are unhappy with the quality of the treasure, you can continue feeding your soul into the Forge and roll additional dice as long as you want, adding the new dice to the total.
3. Once the Forge's magic is complete, a backlash of energy hits you as your soul adjusts to the missing energy. Take black dice equal to the total number of gold dice you rolled for step 1. Roll the dice and increase your ruin by the number of dice less than or equal to the value of the treasure you created.

Example: Kelwyn attempts to harness the power of the Forge and chooses to roll three gold dice. He rolls 3, 3, 6: giving him a treasure worth 1 gold. He wants more gold, so he chooses to roll one more dice and gets a 5. This increases the value of his treasure to 2 gold. He then rolls four black dice and gets 1, 3, 4, 4. Since the 1 is less than or equal to 2 (the value of the treasure he created), he increases his Ruin by 1.

If increasing your Ruin this way would kill you, you become one of the Seven Lords and the treasure is destroyed.

Attempting to create a living creature using the Forge will always result in a *Failed Creation*. The PCs simply do not have the capability to create true life.



Beneath the Gates of Judgement

Introduction

The Inverted Castle hangs, like a coiling stalactite, as if bursting down from the hazy dark mists that swirl at the boundaries of this quiet realm. It is sprawling and tangled, with towers and spires dripping and dangling like pointed growths. The dense mists clear for a moment, revealing the massive, imposing stone entry doors flanked by ornamented columns. These doors form the entrance to the Inverted Castle. Their stone flanks loom large, making everything else around them seem so very small.

After the cold and darkness, the Hunters have emerged from the mists, ascended a slender stone stairway from nowhere, and stand now before these massive doors. Their last memories were of violence, pain, and blood. Somewhere out there, beyond the choking clouds of darkness, they met their brutal, small, petty, ends. But instead of drifting off into whatever unknown oblivion lies past the mortal coil, their souls have been ensnared and shackled. Something keeps them bound here. Something within the Inverted Castle coils around them like chains.

At their core, each Hunter knows that escape lies ahead, past those impossibly imposing doors. Something reaches out from the mists, whispering to them, "I await in the Throne Room. Find me and face your final Judgment. Should you be proven worthy, great power and freedom await." Each Hunter feels this being inscribed onto every bone. They can feel this message in their very marrow. Behind them, there is nothing but swirling void and dark oblivion. They must push onward.

Judgment rules and shapes the Inverted Castle. It is Judgment's domain and they are always watching. They can speak to the Hunters if they wish, but prefer to watch them struggle; Judgment is petty and cruel.

THEME: Judgement

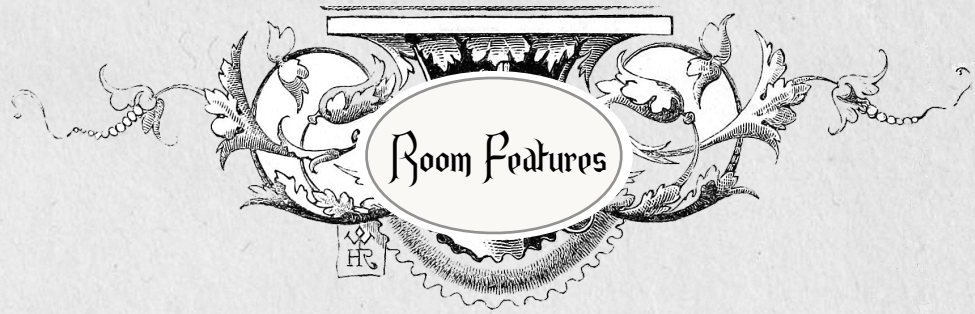
Running this Adventure

Beneath the Gates of Judgment is a significantly different adventure from a typical module. Your characters have already died, the world is crumbling around you, and there is almost no chance of making it out in one piece. If you are running *The Soul Sword Forge* and multiple characters die within the castle, this adventure makes an excellent epilogue to follow their souls' progress through the afterlife.

This module is designed to be run using *Trophy Dark*, but can be adapted to run with almost any OSR system by adding a few major conceits. Read these conceits to your players before beginning play.

1. Your characters have died before the adventure began. Their ghosts awaken with no items, no weapons, and no armor, though they may use whatever items they pick up along the journey. The monsters in this adventure are adept at consuming spectres. As such, combat is particularly deadly.
2. As a spectre, you have very little energy holding your body together. Your HD is reduced to 1, though you keep any other benefits from leveling up normally—spells, saving throws, skills, etc.

If you are playing this adventure using *Trophy Dark*, you can adjust the game slightly by having the players draw tarot cards equal to the amount of Ruin they have. Whenever they take Ruin, ask them to draw another card. Encourage the players to think about the imagery of the cards; how the cards make them feel or key motifs they notice about them. Lean into that imagery as if it were a condition.



To create extra rooms within the Inverted Castle, draw a card and consult the following tables. The value of the card indicates the kind of room, and the suit provides options for extra details.

ROOM TABLES - VALUES

Ace: A plaza

2: A stone garden

3: A library

4: A nave

5: A solar

6: A chapel

7: A great hall

8: An atrium

9: A shrine

10: A great chamber

Page: An antechamber

Knight: A conservatory

Queen: An undercroft

King: A vault

Major Arcana: Draw again and include the themes of the Major Arcana card in the room decoration.

ROOM TABLES - SUITS

Pentacles

- * Cracks in uneven floors give glimpses to ever deeper stories below.
- * Crumbling stone statues depicting scenes of vile decadence piled upon each other.
- * Faint music disturbs the stillness, echoing from some distant corner of the Inverted Castle.

Swords

- * The room is filled with an obscuring miasma.
- * Rows and rows of columns connected by stone arches zig-zag overhead.
- * Entrancing geometric tile patterns cover the floors.

Cups

- * The marble floors are polished to an ice-like reflective surface.
- * Hundreds of candles dripping hot scented wax cling to open surfaces.
- * Grotesque painted portraits are crammed onto every inch of the walls.

Wands

- * Smoking braziers hang suspended from ornate golden chains.
- * The floors are blanketed in plush rugs that muffle every footstep.
- * Impossibly familiar faces emerge from the stone blocks of half-carved statues.

Major Arcana

- * A massive statue of Judgment looms over the room, changing positions when no one looks.
- * Mirrors cover nearly every flat surface, reflecting unseen and judging eyes.
- * Vein-like cracks crawl up the wall, seemingly filled with slowly pulsing amber.

TREASURES

Draw a card to discover new treasures within the Inverted Castle:

Ace: Handfuls of amber droplets.

2: Gold coins, from across the ages.

3: Precious stones, shaped like eyes.

4: An ornamental knife, its blade stained.

5: A bolt of rich, luxuriant, night-dark fabric.

6: A length of fine platinum chain.

7: A fist-sized chunk of amber, polished to a glaring sheen.

8: Dark black quartz lenses set in a thin golden wire frame.

9: A decanter carved from translucent alabaster.

10: A silver amulet depicting a balanced scale.

Page: A heavy leather-bound tome, secured with a golden lock.

Knight: The hilt of a broken sword, studded in gemstones.

Queen: A signet ring with a symbol that shifts and warps upon its face.

King: A fragmented golden crown, broken into sharp, jagged pieces.

Major Arcana: Draw again and include the themes of the Major Arcana in the treasure.



MOMENTS

- * The sound of your steps is muffled by rich, lush, rugs and carpets.
- * Passing a mirror, you catch the sight of faint spectral chains wrapped around your limbs in the reflection. They are frail and fraying.
- * Innumerable statues line these halls. You feel their blank stares down upon you as you walk past, their necks craned.
- * The hall you travel stretches and stretches. Your vision warps like a fish-eye lens as the length seems to swallow you up.
- * As you walk these stairs, they grow too tall, too deep. Built to accommodate something much larger.
- * Each door you pass bears a keyhole shaped like a watching eye.
- * Amber leaking from a crack in a statue, like frozen, golden blood. Something within the hollow catches your eye.
- * Windows that cast a pale light shrink away and fade to darkness as you walk toward them.
- * The sensation of the space behind you dissolving into the mist as you push forward, yet when you turn to check, all is as it was. Or is something slightly different now?
- * The sound of stone grinding on stone, as behind you the halls and stairs rearrange themselves.
- * Out of the corner of your eye you think you see a coil of chains twitch.
- * Chandeliers that hang like stalactites, accumulating more and more candles as they leach through the ceiling.
- * Cracks in the walls and floors reveal sticky rivulets of amber, as if the Castle itself was bleeding in slow motion.
- * The gold you put in your pocket feels like pebbles to the touch. But pull them out and they are glinting coins once more.
- * An arched ceiling, pitch black marble with specks of distant light that shine like sharp, pricking stars.
- * A statue, sculpted with a scale in their hand. A stone moth set crawling across their open, ever-seeing eye.
- * This room narrows, walls, floor, ceiling sloping inward like a funnel. The way forward becomes a claustrophobic squeeze.
- * The marbled floors with fractaling veins seem to pulse with a rhythm, a beat.
- * A distant door slams, the impact reverberates with multiplying echoes as more doors slam shut, funneling you toward something else.

CONDITIONS

- * The feeling of heavy chains pulling you down, making movements sluggish.
- * Every statue you see appears as a mocking reflection, jeering.
- * A constant feeling of the surroundings growing larger, overwhelming, vertigo-inducing.
- * You are plagued with taunting whispers, reminding you of your greatest mistakes.
- * Mazelust: the desire to lose yourself in the perhaps infinite corridors of the Castle.
- * Justice-driven: no transgression can go unpunished, least of all those of your fellow Hunters.
- * Stinging flecks of gold sprout beneath your fingernails.
- * Your skin takes on the appearance of marble, it chips and cracks with sudden movements.
- * You feel the Eyes of Judgment upon you. Show your worth with every action you take. The bolder, the better.
- * Time appears to flow in halting leaps and starts. Sometimes too fast, sometimes far too slow.
- * Restless whispers plague your pauses and stops, seemingly coming from the ever-present statues.
- * Your flesh starts to fade, becoming ghost-like, spectral.
- * Faint tattoo-like markings resembling chains spread across your body.



THE FIRST GATE

The stone doors swing open, becoming a great gate, the First Gate. Carved deep into the stone lintel above the Hunters are the words, "Pass through these Gates and be Judged. The Worthy will be Gifted untold Power, Riches, and Freedom. For the Unworthy, only cold Nothingness awaits." Each Hunter must proclaim why they are worthy to be here. Why should they, and they alone, be allowed passage through the Inverted Castle and the chance to face a Final Judgment?

Following their proclamation they may pass beneath the First Gate. A cool tingling passes over them as they cross the threshold into one of the bottommost turrets of the Inverted Castle. The Hunters hear the faint clinking of metal chains as they step inside.

Ask the Hunters, 'As you cross the threshold, a memory flashes before you, of a simpler and gentler time, before you knew true suffering. How old were you? What is the scene you remember?'

The halls of the interior welcome them like an open mouth, gaping and hungry. The Castle here is spacious, almost welcoming. While disorienting and strange, there is a pull that draws in visitors in. However the Castle is much more insidious. It's a giant fish trap for lost souls; there is never a way back.

White marble with wet-red veining stand in stark contrast to the soaring walls blanketed with dark, luxurious tapestries. Hands sink into the plush fabrics as the Hunters' eyes are drawn to the hyperreal, and hyperviolent, embroidered scenes (save vs. paralysis or become hypnotized by the scene). In the depictions of hunting scenes they can see something familiar, something they've left behind from their life, bathed in the silken gore.

Closed doors meet the Hunters at irregular intervals as they walk through the entryway. Each door is different. Some are carved from rare woods, the whorls and loops of the grain reminiscent of fingerprints. Others are gilded in precious metals, cool to the touch; their corners blood-letting sharp. The halls wind and stretch, moving ever outward. The floor slopes with strange elevations. The Hunters may walk up an incline but find themselves instead descending deeper and deeper into the Castle.

TERRORS

Wretched, formless souls are bound in cold, heavy chains that fade into the floor and walls (See stats for *Trapped Spirit*, pg. 16). Unable to pass any deeper into the Castle they claw at your legs. They try to swap places with you; pitiful. Will you show them mercy? Will you end their suffering?

- * How do the Hunters see themselves reflected in these poor creatures?

Creeping from the shadows, from beneath closed doors, from right behind. These are shades of the Hunters' past transgressions. The sharp opulence around the Hunters throws these shapeless wraiths into stark relief. These shades are easily banished by those confident enough, though their piercing gaze can paralyze those unlucky Hunters who stare too long into their depths (save vs. paralysis).

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What petty, small, pointless sin of yours do you see in these shades?'

- * Ask the Hunters, 'How will you hide your sin from your companions?'
- * Ask the Hunters, 'What do you see among your transgressions that puzzles you? What past act does not appear as a sin at all?'

The echo of a roaring beast from deeper down these winding halls. From a distance the Hunters see a glimpse of it: a gigantic looming shape, a warping mass, a roiling anger before it turns a corner and stalks away.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What sharp glimmers of your deepest fear do you see hidden in the beast? Why do you feel so small before it?'

TEMPTATIONS

As they travel these muted halls, the vast treasures of the Castle are laid out before the Hunters. Flashes of their sure triumphs are found painted onto elaborate urns. When they lift the urns they can hear the gentle clinking of precious trinkets inside.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What small personal item do you find within? What old stinging regret does it remind you of?'

In a sequestered alcove the Hunters find a set of small statuettes, cast in precious metals with eyes of glowing amber.

- * 'These statuettes resemble you Hunters, but which among you is missing from the set?'

In a dim, shadowy room, a silver crown sits on a plush cushion the color of wet blood.

- * Should a Hunter place it upon their head, tell them of the glimpses of their triumphant future they see. Then ask, 'What must you sacrifice to ensure these visions come to pass?'



THE SECOND GATE

A massive, grand arcade opens up to the Hunters as they pass beneath the Second Gate. Its columns stand tall, made of a reflective grey stone that ombres into a pitch black toward the bottom. It is elaborately carved with depictions of drowned souls, weighed down by their transgressions and dragged into the deep. Standing at the top of an ornate, massive, imperial staircase, the room before the Hunters is impossibly sized. The ceiling seems distant, hazy, as if cloaked in far-off clouds. Below, the floors are criss-crossed by a series of black-tiled canals.

A tall fountain, capped with a statue of an all-seeing judge, pours out water, rushing down a grand staircase to the floor far below. This interior vista strikes the Hunters like a cliff or a waterfall would. The path forward and down is treacherous; the marble steps become wet and slickened, as the water comes pouring forth from the fountain. The scent of salt bites through the air.

If the Hunters follow the maze of canals cut through the distant floor their vision strays out into a fading salt-tinged horizon (save vs. spell or become hopelessly lost in the maze). The roar of crashing waves floods their minds. And then they blink, the sea is gone, but the pounding of pulsing tides lingers in their ears. Nearby, the monstrous fountain ever flows.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, this section of the Castle stretches out: an ornamental garden of sorts, but one of carved stone, and gilded tile. Fountains are scattered throughout the rooms, creating the continuous sound of water. Each one bears a statue that seems to stare through each of the Hunters no matter what direction they travel in. The floor is covered in a reflective black tile that continues down into the canals. There are metal rings attached to the edges of the canals. They bear signs of old chains and old bindings.

TERRORS

Here and there, the canals have spilled over and the currents become quick. The Hunters must watch their step. These strange canals are themselves treacherous. Some are much wider than others and often the water is far deeper and faster than it appears. Be wary when making a crossing.

If the Hunters step too close to the hard-angled banks of the canals wretched, grasping hands burst forth and try to drag them under. They want the Hunters to join them as fellow unworthy drowned (stats as *Zombie*, but cannot leave the water). They are all grasping hands, binding chains, and drowned screams.

The waters themselves leech old memories, memories of the Hunters' warm life from before the Castle. Falling in will wash away those bright memories they hold dear.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What memory of your old life, your old power, do you feel slipping away?'

Rushing waves, sudden tides. Should you be caught in the crashing water, you are overwhelmed with the accumulated memories these waters have stolen. Save vs. paralysis or be lost in the overwhelming sounds and images.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What terrible fate do you glimpse in these memories of lost souls? What are you willing to do to avoid it yourself?'

TEMPTATIONS

The Hunters easily spot glittering treasures at the bottom of a shallow canal. The canals are covered with black-glass tile mosaics, the rippling of the water makes the faces grin and leer. Seashells made of gold, droplets of sunken amber, and fragments of razor-sharp corals clinging to submerged statues sit just below the still surfaces. The waters seem placid and safe, but how long will that last?

Drinking from the water may give the Hunters glimpses of the trials ahead, but should they take a sip, ask of them, 'What are you willing to lose?'



THE THIRD GATE

The Third Gate stands like a slit in the wall. A faint light emanates from beyond it, flickering slightly as though things are crossing in front of its source. The gate itself seems to be carved from a stone that exudes denseness. Reliefs dance across its surface, and as the Hunters peer closer to look at them, chillingly, they recognize the carvings as the trials they have just been through.

- * Ask each Hunter, 'What past betrayal do you see in these carvings?'

It is here that Judgment plants the seed that each Hunter alone is worthy. They seek to expose their secrets (real or manufactured) as the Castle becomes a twisted mirror.

Squeezing through the oubliette you enter another room. Like all rooms in the Castle, it is ornate and filigreed, but much darker, almost cave-like. The only source of faint light is the guttering candles set in sconces and chandeliers, scattered around the walls and ceilings at odd, unpleasant angles. The Hunters' own light sources seem less effective here. Shadows drip and cling to torches and lanterns.

Each room here leads to another room, and then another: a labyrinthine enfilade. Each room is askew, the walls and ceilings set at varying heights. No halls, just doors upon doors that lead in impossible turns; the room to the right should have been on the left, or maybe in front. It is nearly impossible for the Hunters to determine if they are traveling in circles. The ever present, ever staring statues seem to drip rivulets of amber. Like tears. Like blood.

The walls here are also covered in broken mirrors; the light from the dying candles bounces off the mirrors, creating a disorienting sense of jagged infinity. Each mirror reveals to each Hunter every imperfection of their rivals. These glimpses they see convince them, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that their rivals are not worthy of power, of salvation.

- * Ask the Hunters: 'What lies about you do these reflections show to your fellow Hunters?'

TERRORS

As you enter this room, something in the corner catches your eye. Half-hidden behind a soft, black curtain is a person-sized lump of amber. Stepping closer reveals another poor lost soul caught within. Their limbs contorted and curled around themselves. Their face frozen in a gasping scream.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'Which of your sins do you see reflected in the poor wretch?'

The reflections in the mirrors are malicious. The Hunters can catch glimpses of unnatural movements in their periphery as the reflections move detached from their caster. They smile with too many teeth. (AC 2 [17], HD 3 (13hp), Att 1 × weapon (1d8 or by weapon), THACO 19 [0], MV 60' (20'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1 to F3), ML 9, AL Chaotic, XP 35, NA 1 per hunter, TT V).

- * Ask the Hunters, 'Who among you was last out of sight, was most likely to be replaced with one of these wicked doppelgangers?'

Leaking from cracks in the walls and ceilings are more drops of amber. They glitter in the soft strange lights of these rooms. But these precious stones are sticky like honey. They cling to hands and limbs, slowing you down the more you try and pry them loose.

TEMPTATIONS

The Hunters find themselves in a softer room. It appears to be a bedchamber of sorts. Scattered cushions and lounges would give comfortable rest, and the way the Hunters entered would be the only exit. A large fireplace is set in one wall; dying embers of a past fire flicker softly. The statues in this room have been turned to face the walls, perhaps by some previous lost souls that were lucky enough to stumble upon this promise of rest. It would all feel like the Hunters were somewhere else, no longer within the Castle, were it not for the creeping chains that sit tangled at the corners of the room.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'What will you do once you have left the Castle, once you have earned this great promised power, treasure, and freedom? What do you believe your mighty futures hold?'



THE FOURTH GATE

The Fourth Gate is like a teeth-filled maw. Its columns are jagged, sharp, ready to gnash and tear at your flesh. Coiled around it like venomous snakes are heavy chains, winding up and down. Glaring eyes are carved into the edifice at the top, glinting rubies that follow your movement. Watching. Judging.

This stretch of the Castle is adorned with red walls, red floor, red woods, plush and fleshy carpets, wet and glinting rubies in the mouths and eyes of the ever present statues. Here and there are massive portraits of tormented faces, covered in a thick, amber-like varnish.

- * Ask the Hunters, 'Whose face do you recognize among the portraits? Is it yours? Are you truly worthy to be here?'

The halls of the Castle are dizzying here. A maze of stairways, balconies, and mezzanines. Sturdy banisters, from which more heavy chains dangle and block the Hunter's paths forward like prison bars, forcing them to take dangerous alternate routes. Clinging to balustrades like a cliff-climber. Edging across treacherous overhangs. Jumping to a balcony that is hopefully just within reach. Falling will send them hurtling through the infinite depths, never again to touch a solid surface.

Stairways travel up walls onto ceilings, twisting and inverting on themselves in angles that sting the eyes. Doors open to new orientations of space. Lean over a balcony and see the ceiling below. The Hunters find themselves able to follow these paths, but it hurts the mind to think about them too much (save vs. spells or be lost and turned around). Space is impossible here.

The seemingly never-ending Escher-esque stairways lead the Hunters deeper and deeper into the Castle. There is no way to return, the only path is ever forward, as if the Castle itself refuses the Hunters exit.

TERRORS

That roar from before echoes through these twisting halls and atriums once more. The Beast (use stats for a Black Dragon) is finally fully revealed. It appears to the Hunters as a great shadow, an amalgamation of all their past sins. It stalks them through these halls. Its form is shifting, warping. The Hunters constantly see it across the way, behind columns, on the opposite balcony, stalking past a door frame, above them as it descends impossibly inverted stairs. The Beast is almost always in view, growing ever closer as the Hunters rush to flee toward the next gate. The halls and stairs move and shift, treacherous beneath the Hunters' feet. Escape will not be easy.

TEMPTATIONS

The whisper of Judgment grows louder. Each Hunter hears it in turn as they flee from the Beast and rush through this maze. Judgment whispers directions as they finally guide the Hunters toward the next gate. And then in the distance, past inverted stairs, through doors that are more like windows, they see it: the Fifth Gate. Judgment reminds each Hunter that all they need be is faster than their slowest companion to reach it.

- * Ask each Hunter, 'Who are you willing to sacrifice as you flee the Beast? Will you do it?'

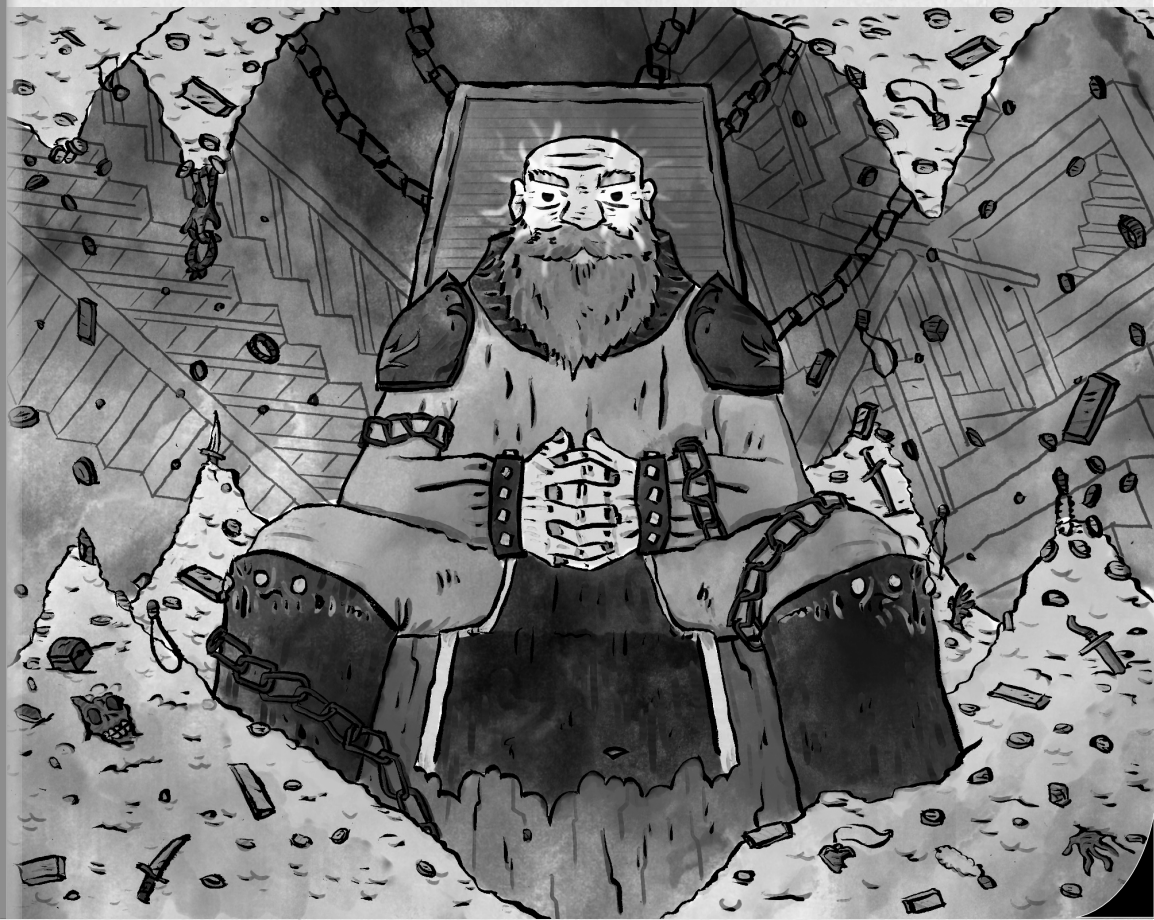


THE FINAL GATE

The Fifth Gate is an ornate hole in the ground, a tunnel into darkness. A terrible face is carved into the floor around the Gate, framing the Hunters' final descent with terrible pointed teeth. The elaborate carvings and reliefs that fill the tunnel provide enough hand- and footholds for careful climbers making their way down, but it would be oh-so-easy for someone to accidentally slip and tumble all the way down.

The Castle here is as much a cave as it is a gallery of exquisite ornamentation. The halls are narrow, forcing the Hunters to squeeze through or crawl on their hands and feet. Swept into the corners like dust and detritus are piles of gold coins encrusted in specks of amber as if they had been chipped out of some larger chunk. It would be very easy to reach out and snag a handful. The marble floor is jagged and uneven, and door frames are set at skewed angles. The silence is broken by the occasional sound of clinking treasures clattering down a tall pile. The faint light is tinted a darkling red, as if filtered through a malevolent stained-glass.

Eventually the Hunters reach it, the Throne Room. Its scale is sickening with dizzying vertigo. The entire Castle could fit in this room alone. Far above is a gilded dome, covered in murals and mosaics, a kaleidoscope of stories and parables. The Hunters recognize themselves in these decorations. There! Wearing a crown. There! Sitting on a throne. There! Huddled masses bowing down before them. This is what the Hunters were promised; it is all here.



Dominating the space is Judgment's Thone. A massive, crude, stone structure wrapped in glowing white chains. The chains are like branches, emanating outward and spreading throughout the whole castle from this point. Piled up in massive heaps are innumerable treasures. Precious stones and coins fall like snow from far up above, continuously adding to the drifts. Looking too closely will reveal that all of the treasures are somehow wrong, bent and broken, carved of rotting meat or gilded tin. Trapped in these tempting piles are dozens of lost souls clutching at the precious goods. Buried skeletal hands struggling against chains clutch desperately at handfuls of amber and gold.

Judgment waits here for the Hunters, seated upon their throne, all opulent and petty. Statuesque, eyes open and ablaze. Their body moves in stutters and jerks, like a corrupted recording or skipping track, and their stare pierces through each of the Hunters, scraping across their bones and chilling their blood.

TERRORS

Judgment awaits the Hunters. Only one can be chosen as worthy. Only one can gain Judgment's favor, given great and terrible power. But what about freedom? A small voice whispers to each Hunter that freedom is worthless. The voice coils around their minds, caressing them, assuring them that what Judgment has to give is far better than whatever they left behind outside the Castle. All Judgment needs is a heart, still beating and wrapped in chains. Placed upon the offered scales, to be weighed against their transgressions. One final chance to prove your worthiness.

Judgment leans forward and gestures to a set of scales upon a great glowing stump. One scale drips a dark red fluid, old evidence of previous trials, which seeps into the rings of the oak wood below. Beyond the scale, one more gate. One final threshold. The voice of Judgment tells them that it will show what lies beyond. All it asks of the Hunters is everything. Then everything will be theirs. Judgment has AC 0 [19], HD 20** (90hp), Att 1x fist (3d10 + Binding), THAC0 6 [+13], MV 0, SV D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (10), ML 12, AL Lawful, XP 4, NA 1, TT None.

- * Judgment is immune to mundane damage and fire damage.
- * Binding: Save vs. death. On a failure, the target's soul is bound to the glowing stump and consumed. A new chain link sprouts from the stump and weaves itself into the great tree of chains.
- * If Judgment is defeated, the chains that hold the castle together begin to disintegrate and the stump grows brighter and brighter. The castle collapses in on itself as the full energy of the binding ritual is unleashed.

TEMPTATIONS

Tell the Hunters that they know what the final test is. Judgment cares not for your heart, all it wants is for you to prove yourself. Any heart will do. A heart, a life in exchange for Judgment's gift. There are so many chains here, tantalizingly within reach: chains that bind, chains that cling.

Judgment will only choose one of you to give their gift to. Only one of you can truly be worthy. How do you ensure that it is you?



Castle Rex has lain abandoned these last twenty years. Since the Creator disappeared and the great war ended without resolution, no one has been able to retain control over the castle. Stories of ancient magics, terrific treasures, and a forge of creation itself have lured you into the castle depths. Will you make it out alive?

Included in this book:

- * The Soul Sword Forge - a tarot inspired old-school fantasy adventure for tabletop RPGs
- * Beneath the Gates of Judgment - an introspective horror adventure that can be run alongside The Soul Sword Forge
- * A town generator to create your own version of Wiltburg.
- * 17 new character creation options for the Trophy role playing game.
- * 3 new magic items for Trophy and OSE
- * And much more!

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH
**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**

DESIGNED FOR
TROPHY
DARK + GOLD

