

THE SEQUENCE OF DEEL

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THE SITUATION

High in the hills is a village, plagued by nighttime poisonings. Though they have only seen her in dreams, the villagers blame the *creeping crone*, a shadowy woman who comes in through their windows at night. In a nearby mine, the *dead* patrol restlessly. They are guardians of their own, impromptu crypt, and act as gaolers to the *wraiths* within the strange sanctum below them.

CATWALK

The mine catwalks were built to allow access to tin deposits in its upper reaches. The wood has succumbed to *dry rot*, and creaks alarmingly with every step, sending plumes of dust into the darkness below.

DRY CHAMBER

The walls of this much-worked chamber are pitted with *bore holes* for scaffolds, long removed. A dozen *dead* stand here, silently receiving the dust of the ages, easily passing for stalagmites from above. The *floor collapse* reveals the antechamber below.

ANTECHAMBER

This sideways chamber with its whorled white stones clearly does not belong to the mine. *Engravings* praise the healing powers of “Deel.” The sideways *columns* are rare, resonant wood: if cleared of rubble, they ring in deep, pure tones when struck. If all six are struck within the same minute, the magically barred *double doors* to the *arc* open.

The *wraith* Ximandes waits here, prevented from ascending by the influence of the *dead* in the dry chamber. Like all the wraiths, Ximandes walks on the wall, respecting the arc’s orientation.

ELEVATOR

Years ago, the counterweight rope broke, sending it down into the water. The remaining rope down to the elevator is not properly secured, merely snagged in a rusted pulley.

ISOLATED CHAMBER

Twenty miners were trapped here by a cave-in, long ago. They are now *dead*, and although their companions from the dry and wet chambers have dug a small crawl hole to free them, the rescue came after they were limed over. Now they sit like stalagmites, closely spaced and immobile. Some have an arm or leg free to grab someone squeezing through them, if the dead have taken a dislike to them.

The *deep, narrow pool* at the end contains the *crone snail’s silver knife*, thrown here by the dead from the *wet chamber*.

WET CHAMBER

Eleven *dead* here are rotted by the moisture, and are dappled black and white by cave lichen and black mold. Unless they are disturbed, they wait silently, sworn to prevent the *crone snail* from leaving the cavern pool.

Between, around, and sometimes through them creeps the *proboscis* of the crone snail—a long, mottled tendril as thick as a plum. The slick tentacle is hard to notice among the watery drips of this end of the cavern. It moves slowly, tasting the air. If it contacts living skin, a powerful spurt of paralytic venom propels an arrow-sized *bone harpoon* into the crone’s prey. Victims are then gently pulled down off the ledge for digestion.

CAVERN POOL

Despite its wet, slimy appearance, the *limestone cascade* is rough and gritty to the touch. Myriad rivulets of water trickle from above into the *rank pool*.

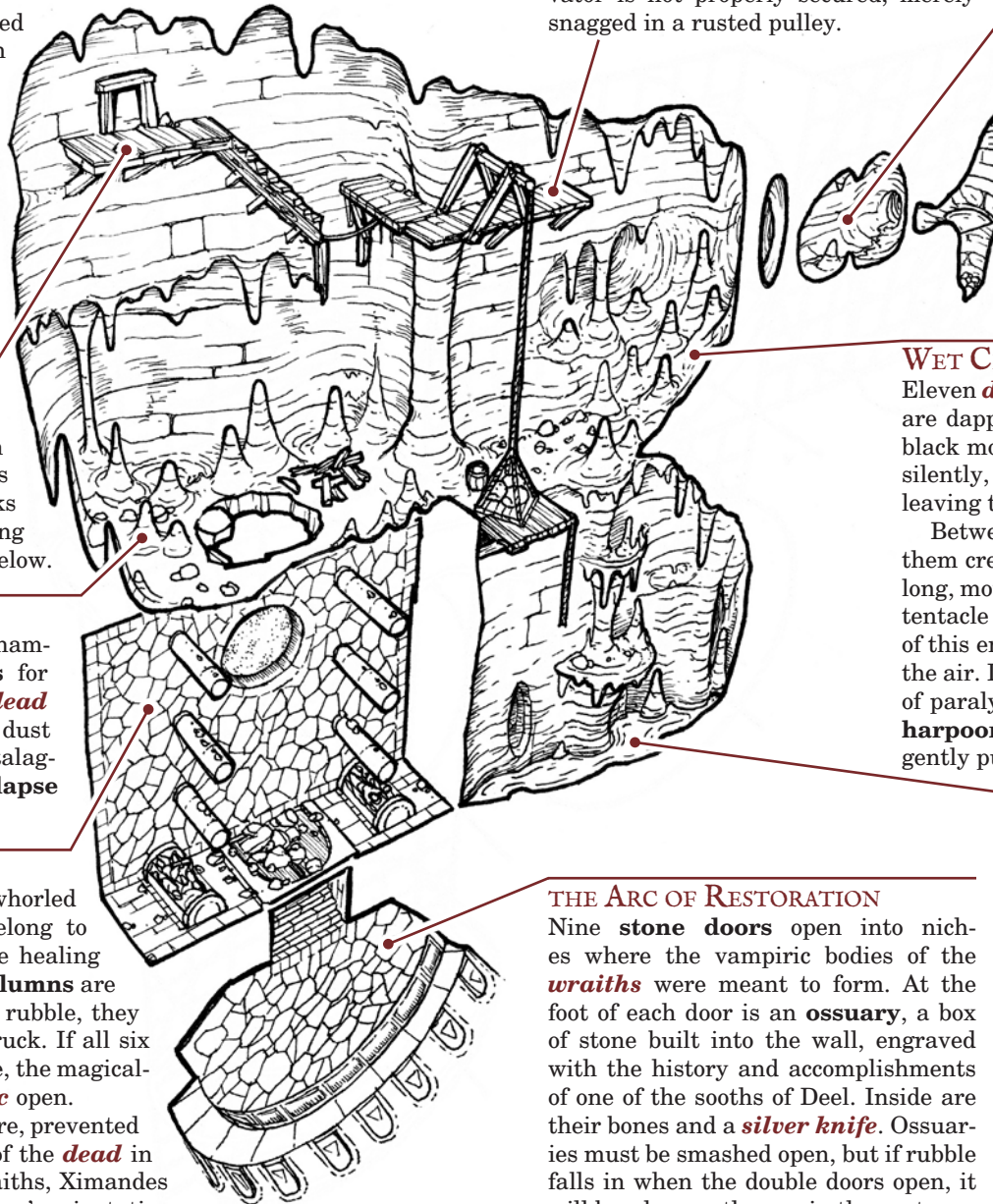
The *crone snail* waits at the waterline, a conical, stony shell the size of a cow. If she has a paralyzed victim with her, they bob in the water at her side.

If confronted, two more *harpoon proboscises* emerge from within her shell.

The *water* is only waist deep, and beneath the scum rests dozens of small mining chisels, mallets, lamps, buckles, and hundreds of silver coins.

THE ARC OF RESTORATION

Nine *stone doors* open into niches where the vampiric bodies of the *wraiths* were meant to form. At the foot of each door is an *ossuary*, a box of stone built into the wall, engraved with the history and accomplishments of one of the sooths of Deel. Inside are their bones and a *silver knife*. Ossuaries must be smashed open, but if rubble falls in when the double doors open, it will break open the one in the center.



NINE SOOTHS EJECTED

Long ago, a simple people raised a stone sanctum to celebrate and explore the mysteries of Deel the Protectress. The sooths who prayed there were blessed by her gaze, and their ritual words brought comfort to the sick or injured.

Those beyond saving died, but in death they joined the ancestral host. For all eternity they would sing their whispering songs of love and guidance to their descendants: Deel's gift to the living.

In time, however, the sooths became arrogant and ambitious, sensing a path that Deel had not meant for them to see: the possibility of a return from death, to live and walk the earth again.

Nine were needed for the ritual, but finding them took generations, for only the fiercest, most magically talented sooths could avoid merging with the ancestral host and remain independent *wraiths*.

When at last they had their ninth, Deel saw the plan in their hearts and descended upon them in fury. She broke the sanctum and hurled it from her sight in a terrible dislocation.

THE CRONE SNAIL

Of all the *wraiths*, only "Wifmurta" was strong enough to escape the prison tomb. With her *silver knife* in hand, she seeped upward through the earth, hoping to find a living body to claim through *vampirism*.

Instead, she found only a humble snail. Desperate, she drank its ichor and took its form, infusing it with her sorcerous vitality.

Confined to a primitive, mollusk brain, all of her ambitions were channeled into a single direction: finding prey. When village miners eventually dug deep enough to break into her caverns, she was waiting for them. She ate many over the years, poisoning them,

pulling them into the depths, and draining them of blood, all in hiding.

THE DEAD

The stones of the dislocated sanctum still throb with the words of Deel. Where normally it takes centuries and a thriving village for a host to accumulate and grow strong, the magic in the stones filled Wifmurta's victims with purpose immediately.

When miners broke through to the antechamber, the host acted to defend them from the *wraiths*.

They animated the pile of dead bodies from the pool, and took up positions in the dry and wet caverns. Their whispering songs are all that keeps the eight other wraiths from rising out of the arc and finding victims on the surface.

Unless bothered, the dead don't move, but they are watchful and in silent, joyful communion with one another. Anyone who falls unconscious in the mine (through sleep, accident, or venom) hears their songs and learns their purpose.

They are individually weak and brittle, but in the close confines of the mine caverns, their biting and clawing as a mob is very dangerous.

THE WRAITHS

Including Ximandes, there are eight wraiths in the arc. They are ghostly, and can only be hurt by silver or magical weapons.

Used to the sanctum from life, they walk on the "wall" that was once the sanctum's floor. Unless their ossuaries are disturbed, the wraiths will remain sleeping and inert, although Ximandes will move to awaken them if anyone living enters the antechamber.

Each is a potent sorcerer, having mastered many rituals of Deel, and other magics brought to them by the distant whispers of demons during their long imprisonment in the sanctum.

When they are alerted to intruders, consult the *wraith attack* table.

SILVER KNIVES

Each wraith has a knife made of silver (handle and blade), which exists on both sides of the veil, allowing them to wield it to harm the living (or in turn, be harmed by it).

Any touch or cut by a wraith's silver knife causes that person to abide by the orientation of the original shrine, falling to the "wall." This lasts until they leave the mine, when they tumble out along the mine track a short way.

VAMPIRISM

A wraith that drinks the blood of a person immediately forms a physical body, which appears in one of the niches of the arc. If the living body is slain, the vampire returns to wraith form once more. Vampires are careful to keep a silver weapon hidden somewhere safe, so they can use it to drink blood again if their body dies.

If the wraiths are under threat, any wraith that achieves vampirism will flee the mine on a roll of 1-2 on a d6



d6	Wraith Attacks
1-2	Awaken another wraith from the arc; if there are none, attack.
3	Emit a shriek so terrifying that none can look away
4	Skulk in shadow form, moving to attack a victim from behind
5	Stab a victim and drink their blood, performing <i>vampirism</i> .
6	Psychically enthrall d6 dead from the dry chamber. Thralls walk on the wall-floor, like the wraiths do. This requires four wraiths to be active.

rather than staying to aid their companions. The pull of the living world is strong, and they will protect their new body at all costs.

THE CREEPING CRONE

In the long years, Wifmurta did manage to learn a magical trick, despite her mollusk brain: by inserting her proboscis into the ground, she can cause them to emerge anywhere up to six leagues away. When the mine became empty of the living, this is how she had to hunt.

At first, she targeted livestock, but she has grown fond of the taste of human flesh. Her proboscis slithers out of the soil and probes windows and eaves for any gap to reach a sleeping victim.

Unable to pull her victims through the soil to drain them completely, she drinks what she can where they lie.

Most eventually recover, and speak of nightmares of a crone, creeping in through a window or chimney before binding them, smothering them, and burning them with a hot brand.

TRILEMMA ADVENTURES