

Tomb of the Iron God

A SWORDS & WIZARDRY ADVENTURE FOR 4-5 CHARACTERS LEVEL 1 OR 2

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TOMB OF THE IRON GOD

A Swords & Wizardry adventure for 4–5 characters level 1 or 2

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

For centuries, villagers from the Yarzu Hills have brought their dead to the Tomb of the Iron God, a largely-forgotten, minor deity of the underworld who guards the spirits and bodies of the dead. A community of monks has maintained an ancient temple above the god's sacred underground catacombs since before recorded history, performing funeral rites and bringing bodies below to rest in the Iron God's protection.

However, the monks of the temple became corrupt and venal, and under the leadership of one monk, Ardarus, they began accumulating treasure and secretly raising an army of undead to take control of the villages around the Monastery. About a month before the adventure begins, the High Priest, who remained loyal to the Iron God's true commands, denounced the renegade monks and ordered them to bring Ardarus before the statue of the Iron God for judgment. Enraged, Ardarus took and imprisoned the high priest, seizing control of the temple to declare himself high priest. Ardarus refused to feed the captive unless the high priest resigned and declared Ardarus his successor, which the high priest steadfastly refused to do. On the very night the high priest eventually died of starvation, the Iron God visited a terrible vengeance upon his disloyal servitors. Lightning struck from the heavens, lighting the dark skies for hours as every building of the temple complex was blasted from existence. The renegade monks were transformed into statues of living iron, still conscious but trapped in their almost-immobile bodies for all eternity. The subterranean catacombs under the temple still remain, filled with the treasures accumulated by the avaricious monks. The god, also, remains living within his great Idol in the Sacred Catacombs where he guards the dead entrusted to him. One other being remains as well, an immortal evil imprisoned a thousand years ago by the god himself - the Eater of the Dead.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure can begin in any large settlement near a range of hills, but in the World of Heryngard the Tomb of the Iron God is located on the Domain of Heryngard map in Hex 1010, and the adventure introduction assumes that the characters first hear of the place at Caer Morag (Hex 0912) or one of the adjacent hexes (Fallenstone, Hex 0910, Tree Hollow, Hex 0911, Ironhallow, Hex 1009, or Cairnside, Hex 1110).

Read or paraphrase the following —

You hear several rumors and some definite information about the Iron God's temple in the hills. About two months ago, lightning filled the skies over the remote monastery. According to the rural hill-people who live near the area, all the buildings of the temple were destroyed in one night by hundreds of bolts of lightning. They believe the Iron God destroyed his own monks as a punishment for their greed. All of them agree that heretical monks had been accumulating great treasures in the underground catacombs instead of maintaining the spartan life they used to follow. So far, no one has dared to explore the catacombs, so the monks' ill-gotten treasures must still be there, ripe for the taking.

Assuming the players make some effort to gather information about the place they're going to explore and possibly loot, they should automatically learn all the first three rumors (and the fourth, if you're using the Tombs as the seed of a larger dungeon complex). Rumors 5-11 are more difficult to learn.

SPECIFIC RUMORS

- 1 The tombs contain Sacred Catacombs, which are deadly to this who enter without the proper reverence and rituals. (True)
- 2 The underground halls of the priests were used to embalm and purify corpses before consigning them to the catacombs below. (True)
- 3 Do not attack the Guardian in Darkness. (Good advice)
- 4 The tombs were built in the uppermost level of a more ancient underground tunnel system. (False, unless you choose to build more levels onto the dungeon.)
- 5 The hill-folk have recently seen goblins near the ruins. (True)
- 6 It is death to bathe in the fountain of the priests. (True, if you've got the wrong alignment.)
- 7 Bathing in the fountain of the priests grants protection against the undead. (True, if you've got the right alignment.)
- 8 Iron allies await those who carry the three signs. (True)
- 9 The Iron God still lives within the Tombs. (True)
- 10 Those who stand before the god as nature made them shall receive a boon. (False)



ARRIVAL AT THE TOMBS

Depending on your gaming group and the kind of pacing you want to maintain, you might decide to have the characters travel to the Tomb, rolling for encounters and following the vague directions given to them by the folk of Caer Marbolg, or you might decide to jump straight to the action. Once the characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

After an exhausting trek through the hills, you finally reach the location of the Iron God's temple. It is marked only by the iron statue of a warrior, 8 feet tall, standing at the edge of a shattered field of ruined buildings, blackened and strewn with rubble. Apparently, this is all that remains of the aboveground temple buildings.

All the aboveground temple buildings have been reduced to ruins by divine lightning, unless you choose to map a few surviving structures. The statue is not magical and does nothing - it is not one of the "changed" priests that the characters will encounter in the temple's subterranean complex. If the characters approach the statue, they will see that it guards the stairs leading down to the tombs, a broad staircase 10 ft wide, descending into the darkness below.

THE TOMBS

There are three sections of the Tombs. The first section is the outer halls of the first level, where the monks lived, studied, conducted last rites for deceased villagers, and ceremonially embalmed the bodies of the dead. The second section is the inner temple — the Sacred Catacombs on the first level. These catacombs are highly sacred to the Iron God, for they contain the idol in which the god dwells, and the chamber where he imprisoned his enemy, the Eater of the Dead, in stone. The third area of the Tomb is the Sacred Catacombs of the second level. These are the serpentine passageways of the actual tombs, where dead bodies have been interred for centuries. In any of the Sacred Catacombs, on both the first and second levels, it is important for the adventurers to wear a sacred garment, the "hoods of reverence," or the characters suffer hallucinations — and even eventually die — if they remain too long without this protection.

The Iron Priests: all the renegade priests in the Tombs were turned into iron statues by the god, but they retain their souls, trapped in an iron body. The faces of these statues move almost too slowly to see the movement (like the minute hand of a watch - you don't notice the movement unless you look again later on). All the statues wear expressions of pain and horror. They appear in the text in various places through the dungeon - wherever they happened to be when the god's vengeance struck.



- ★ Statue
- S Secret Door
- ⊠ Pit Trap
- 🪨 Stalagmite

1 square = 5 feet

FIRST LEVEL

MONASTERY (AREAS 1-26)

Areas 1-26 were the monastic part of the complex, used for routine prayers, sleeping, and studying. With the exception of area 1, which was open to any visiting worshippers and used for funeral services, this area was forbidden to all but the monks, who spent much of their day in the aboveground temple area (now destroyed). The area is now occupied by an enterprising band of goblins, who are in the process of looting the catacombs. Pit traps shown on the map are 10ft deep.

The goblins in the complex are a band of scouts from the Uldra Cthon, in the service of the Goblin King Ungwarag.

WANDERING MONSTERS

Every hour the characters are in the dungeon, check for wandering monsters (1 in 6 chance). If an encounter is indicated, roll 1d6 on the table below. The table also includes the total number of creatures of this type that can be encountered. If the party has killed all of a certain type, treat that result as no encounter. Wandering monsters killed by the adventurers are not subtracted from the keyed encounters; only from the totals shown here.

NOTE: Any sound of combat in the dungeon (including combat against wandering monsters) has a 1 in 10 chance to call wandering monsters. It is possible to have one encounter cause a second one or even a third one if the dice really fall the wrong way.

WANDERING MONSTERS

1	1d6 goblins (40 total)
2	1d4 skeletons (50 total)
3	1d4+1 giant rats (50 total)
4	1d3 giant centipedes (50 total)
5	1d2 zombies (20 total)
6	1d2 stirges (10 total)

Giant Centipedes (small, lethal) (50 max): HD 1d2 hp; AC 9[10]; **Atk** bite (lethal poison); **Move** 13; **Save** 18; **Morale** 7; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** lethal poison (+4 save or die).

Giant Rats (50 max): HD 1d4hp; AC 7[12]; **Atk** bite (1d3); **Move** 12; **Save** 18; **Morale** 8; **AL** N; **CL/XP** A/5; **Special:** 5% are diseased (saving throw negates).

Goblins (40 max): HD 1d6 hp; AC 6[13]; **Atk** weapon (1d6); **Move** 9; **Save** 18; **Morale** 7; **AL** C; **CL/XP** B/10; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight.

Skeletons (50 max): HD 1; AC 8[11] or 7[12] with shield; **Atk** weapon or strike (1d6) or (1d6+1 two-handed); **Move** 12; **Save** 17; **Morale** 12; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** immune to sleep and charm spells.

Stirges (10 max): HD 1+1; AC 7[12]; **Atk** proboscis sting (1d3 + blood drain); **Move** 3 (fly 18); **Save** 17; **Morale** 9; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** +2 to-hit bonus, blood drain (automatic 1d4 after hit).

Zombies (20 max): HD 2; AC 8[11] or with shield 7[12]; **Atk** weapon or strike (1d8); **Move** 6; **Save** 16; **Morale** 12; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** immune to sleep and charm.

GENERAL FEATURES

The monastery has been recently occupied, so most of the furniture is in good condition (although some has been damaged by the goblins). The priests at least theoretically lived a spartan lifestyle, so the walls are mostly bare stone. The blocks of stone were originally mortared in place, but the tombs and priest-complex are so ancient that most of the mortar has eroded away, leaving deep cracks between the worn stones.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

This is a great, dark chamber dominated by a huge, iron statue of the Iron God. The statue holds a massive jar, tipped downward so that the opening is almost (but not quite) level with the floor. The mummified head of a goblin sits on the floor in the center of the room.

This hall was the only room where non-monks were allowed access. It was used for funeral services in which a body was slid down into the protective jar of the Iron God (a chute that slides the body to the embalming chamber, area 2). This is the secret door marked on the map. The priests would enter in a procession from the side doors to conduct the services and then consign the body to the Iron God's protection.

When the characters enter the room, the mummified head suddenly hisses: "Begone, tomb robbers, or you will all find your fate. Death awaits you." This disturbing little piece of magic is the work of the goblin ombramancer (area 23), an attempt to frighten away other would-be tomb robbers.

Inspection of the head reveals two interesting facts. The skin is marked with pinpricks in a magical pattern, and the bone needle used to sew the skin has been left in the last stitch. These clues might (possibly) indicate to an intelligent group of players that the head is not a warning from the Iron God, but from other interlopers who use magic and tools not made of iron. Allow any cleric or druid a 50% chance to make this deduction.

Inspection of the room discloses a few things. (1) Epitaphs for thousands of people are inscribed on the walls in spidery scratches under the dust. Some of the incisions are clearly the work of a professional carver, others are in a barely legible scrawl, and some are in languages so old that they've been forgotten. (2) The floor of the chamber is worn and uneven (countless knees and feet). (3) The movement of some creatures has disturbed the dust of the floor. A ranger can tell that the footprints are those of either halflings or goblins.

OMBRAMANCY

Goblins and some other creatures of the Gloomfey have spell-casting abilities drawn from the power of the dark, subterranean fey realms. Ombromancy is not a character class so much as it is a special ability of the monsters who use it. The goblin ombromancer in the tombs is able to animate a mummified goblin head, but other goblin spellcasters might not have the same particular ability.

2. EMBALMING CHAMBER

A large stone slab occupies the middle of this room, carved with many runes, symbols, and languages. Stone shelves are built into the walls, and three large iron cauldrons sit beside the slab, dusted with a light covering of rust. In the corner of the room stands a pile of what look like big wicker trays six feet long and three feet or so wide.

The tunnel through the Iron God's jar in **Area 1** leads to this room, where bodies were embalmed after funeral services. A body (or a character) sliding through the tunnel lands on the floor near the slab. When used for funerals, one of the large basket-trays was placed at the bottom of the chute to catch the body.

The symbols and writing on the slab are all religious phrases and prayers to the Iron God. Some of these have been chiseled away and replaced with new writing about allowing the priesthood to keep certain offerings.

3. STAIRS TO CATACOMBS

This room contains stairs leading down into the dark. Words are carved in stone over the archway.

Monster: A grey ooze lurks on the ceiling near the stairs, almost indistinguishable from the stones.

Grey Ooze: HD 3; HP 17; AC 8[11]; **Atk** strike (2d6); **Move** 1; **Save** 14; **Morale** 12; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 5/240; **Special:** acid (dissolve metal [save resists]), immunities (blunt weapons, heat, cold, spells).

The stairs lead down to **Area 34** on Level 2. Over the stairs, a solemn warning is carved: "In the name of the Iron God, beware, you who enter the Sacred Catacombs of the Dead, which the Iron God watches over. Be you not draped in respect, and do you not speak your name for the scribe of the dead, you shall suffer the wrath of the Catacombs."

NOTE: Anyone entering the catacombs without wearing a special devotional hood and speaking their name must make a saving throw or begin hallucinating later on within the catacombs. The room doesn't contain any of these hoods: they are kept in areas 25 and 26.

If the characters don't heed (or don't figure out) the warning about being "draped in respect," they may end up in trouble when the hallucinations start.

Hallucinations in the Sacred Catacombs are all about blood, death, rust, and iron, and you will generally have to invent them as you see fit. However, their general effect is this: for any saving throw or combat die roll, a character has a 25% chance to suffer from hallucinations at the critical moment, and the die rolls will be made at -2 (this will apply to the character for an entire combat if the roll indicated hallucinations).

Treasure

One of the stairs has a lifting flagstone, revealing a secret hiding place beneath. The cache contains a bag with 82 gp, a brooch set with small jewels (300 gp), an axe (1 gp), and a spool of 20 feet of gold wire (50 gp).

4. ROBIN CHAMBER

This room contains several moldy robes hanging from iron hooks on the walls.

A robe hidden under the rest has 10 seed pearls in an inside pocket, not yet found by the goblins, worth 1 gp each. The pearls are contained in a small iron box, 3 inches square, which has a latch and is inscribed with a rune. The rune is simply the mark of the owner, and cannot be deciphered since it has no intrinsic meaning.

5. EMPTY ROOM

This is apparently an empty room.

Searching the room results in a disappointing haul of 6 forks, 5 spoons, and a rusting dagger all piled in one corner, all worthless.

6. GOBLIN LAIR

Nine goblins in this room are playing a game, poking a frantic tabby cat with white sticks (bones), as the cat dashes around the room trying to escape.

These 9 goblins, together with the ones in **Area 7**, are an outpost of the larger band lairing in **Area 23**. Noise in this room will alert the goblins in **Area 7**, who will circle around the corridors to attack from behind.

Goblins (9): HD 1d6 hp; AC 6[13]; **Atk** weapon (1d6); **Move** 9; **Save** 18; **Morale** 7; **AL** C; **CL/XP** B/10; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight.