

TRIAL OF THE UNDERKEEP

- 19 New Creatures
- 26 New, Unique Artifacts and Treasures-some that are as Dangerous as the Monsters!
- New Traps, Hazards & One Hell of a Poison
- 2 New Spells & A New, Terrifying Disease



- Custom Sleep Table
- Custom Optional Fumble Table
- 4 Illustrated Maps
- Fearful Situations that Call for Brains Over Brawn-Your Party May Just Turn on Itself!

Some things are better left buried and entombed, like an entire castle that slid into the earth 1000 years ago, hiding its shameful secrets. It was only a matter of time until its doors were blundered upon and unsealed, unleashing unimaginable horrors upon a small town.

What unknown abominations stir in the slimy subterranean castle? Something has punctured through from another plane of existence. It has tasted your world and found it easy to digest. Worst of all now you have been afflicted by its presence and you must save yourself as well.

Can anyone survive the Trial of the Underkeep?

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For use with the 4th Edition

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and Dungeon Master's Guide core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



TRIAL of the UNDERKEEP, a 4E D&D adventure for characters, level 4-6

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TRIAL OF THE UNDERKEEP



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Summary (for DMs - Do NOT read aloud):

Trial of the Underkeep is a dark, twisted, Lovecraftian castle that was buried underground for one-thousand years and forgotten. The trouble is, that the castle is not content to just fossilize and fade into the rock. The magics that were toyed with by the arrogant Baron Vanreist brought forth discoveries from the margins of teleportation and gate spells (the space between planes). The Baron believed that when a wizard travels by magic he or she doesn't simply dematerialize and rematerialize, they actually zip through a place where time is malleable. While hiding behind ritzy parties and royal glamor, he began to assemble a cult of mad wizards, driven only by world domination through complete control and dissection of magical portals. To guarantee fast, reckless breakthroughs in research, his cultists were assembled from villainy and the insane, and it was not long before they punctured a rift in space, holding a new kind of gate open indefinitely. Much to the Baron's surprise, all teleportation magics trespass an obscure, inhospitable plane of exotic matter, which they called the Nethervoid...and it is inhabited by creatures that for eons glimpsed beings for only seconds, until now.

The player's survival depends on uncovering the tragic last days of the castle's residents. Things went as horribly wrong as possible and at the apex, the whole place was swallowed by the mountain in an earthquake/Nethervoid gate collapse. Once inside, they are stuck there as if the castle has sprung a trap and clenched its jaws down on a tasty group of adventurers. The sense of dread is such, that the players may feel they are moving toward an impossible goal, and may inevitably join the legions of ghosts within. Most of the spirits in the Underkeep are the furious dead who were suddenly crushed in the earthquake or buried alive-or worse, shifted out of life by the rift and stuck between planes (as many artifacts are as well). Now they walk the line between a "natural" haunting and something that tugs at them-and through them from the Nethervoid.

When the castle originally disappeared, the locals took that as an ominous portent and eventually the local string of nearby towns and villages began to collapse. Barbarism returned to the mountains, along with trolls and ogres and then, like a tide, small villages began to dot the hills again and were prosperous, one thousand years later.

A strange set of doors were discovered by prospectors in the town of Suldroon. They had an eerie, ornate, twisting iron fencing, as if it was a balcony underground. The town council of mages was sent to investigate and take "first right of plunder," but instead they ran screaming from what they called "The Underkeep" and unknowingly brought back spectral parasites capable of a plague that literally drains the life from mankind. Now, only a band of heroes can shine light on the ugly white underbelly of the buried keep, and seek out the cause and resolution of the plague to save the town and themselves.

Notes on the Setting

(Castle Hywreth on the Mount: 1000 years ago)
(for DMs):

In the castle's heyday, it was a center for arts, culture and knowledge. The region had flourished long enough to launch a sort of renaissance with a Victorian Era feel. Nothing that transcends the "4E villagers, swords and sorcery vibe," just a tad more cultured, arrogant and stuffy than most. The wizards thought of themselves as scientists or at least pioneers of discovery. Bards would have been paid and respected performers. Architecture was becoming ornate, art nouveau-ish. Most of the artifacts, treasures and weapons were intricately carved and jeweled. The labeling on flasks and potions was over-done and lacy.

The Baron, in his arrogance and privilege, didn't think he was going too far and had never considered his methods (even when he was robbing graves, murdering and kidnapping) as anything but a rightful means to an end for a great man. Despite the obedient class system, his servants despised and mistrusted him. A coup was looming. All that was needed was a push from a stranger who came, seemingly from out of nowhere.

Arcus Typhon was indeed a great man. In his time, it was his vast intellect and prowess that led him into the very discoveries that Baron Vanreist was pursuing, but many years before and from a distant land. Arcus had accidentally imprisoned himself in the Nethervoid and was consequently digested and altered so that he became something altogether new. When he was snagged by the mad cult and yanked back into the material world it was like being torn from a coma inside a cocoon. He was a plotting villain in his former life and now his treacherous quest for power began anew.

Notes on Play (for DMs):

At my D&D table, the biggest complaint about 4E is the speed of the battles. To that end, most of the encounters in the Underkeep are centered on one major solo monster and minimal alternate elements. There are traps and hazards and all sorts of mayhem going on around the fight, so play those elements up if your party seems to breeze through too easily. HP of the monsters has also been reduced and customized beyond formula. Some of the monsters are ultimate controllers, allowing you to access certain powers in order to increase difficulty.

The artifacts are indeed treasures, but they are designed to trip players up in their time of need and even cause mistrust amongst bosom companions. ***I highly recommend making color copies of the treasure entries and handing them out to players as they are discovered to save time.** Ghost possession can happen almost randomly and should be used as a similar element. Although, the more a party disintegrates to "every man for himself" the faster the Underkeep could kill you, so be careful forcing possessions or too many Xull Clot parasites.

*For the encounters in this adventure you may want to brush up on “Resist Insubstantial” (see the D&D 4E PLAYER’S HANDBOOK as well as the D&D 4E MONSTER MANUAL I).

The Color Key for Text in this module:

Black Text: Go ahead and read aloud to your players, but stop reading when you see Gray Text.

Blue-Green Text: STOP! This is for the DM’s eyes only OR a check needs to be passed before an entry can be read.

Blue-Green Text in front of Black: STOP! Read first why the entry is marked for the DM’s eyes only. It’s probably a bit of narration hidden by a required Dice Check (DC:)

Room Headings - The details of doors and entrances. For the DM’s eyes, partially. Some things, like plaques should be read to the PCs.



UNDERKEEP CAVE-IN
Hazard

Level 6 Lurker
XP 300

Hazard: Depending on a particular spot in the Castle, either the heaviest thump or the lightest footfall can cause a further cave-in. (can be ceiling or floor)

Perception:

DC: 21 Character notices that the walls or flooring are unstable or damaged.

Countermeasures:

Dungeoneering

DC: 20, must be adjacent. Character can determine if a single floor tile or ceiling area will cave-in (attack).

Athletics

DC: 16, single tile is jumped over in time.

Attack:

Standard Action. Close burst 1 **Miss:** Half Damage

Target: all creatures in burst

Attack: +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d12 + 5 damage.

Underkeep cave-ins attack each turn if possible.

*Some cave-ins could leave behind interesting holes or force PCs to find alternate routes.

GIANT VELVET WORM, JUVENILE
Medium Natural Beast

Level 5 Controller
XP 200

Initiative +3 **Senses:** Perception: +4, Tremorsense 10

HP: 50, Bloodied 25

AC 15, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 19

Speed 5, **climb** 5 (spider climb)

Special: This creature is always considered **prone** due to its shape

(mb) **Bite Out Yer Brain** (standard, at-will) * **Poison**

+7, vs. Reflex; 1d6 +3 damage, target takes ongoing 5 poison and is dazed (save ends). **First Failed Save:** Target goes numb and begins to become confused and light-headed attacking at -2 cumulative.

Second Failed Save: Target drops weapon and stands frozen, allowing the worm to make 1 Bite attack for 1 round.

(rb) **Glue strand** (standard, at-will) close blast 5 * **Acid**

+7, vs. Reflex; 1d6 +3 acid damage, target *stunned* until next turn

(rb) **Spurting Slime** (standard) *recharge on 6*, burst 5, * **Acid**

+7, vs. Reflex; 1d6 +3 acid damage, target *stunned*, *prone*, save ends. **Second Failed Save:** Target drops weapon and stands frozen, ready to accept the fate of being devoured for 1 round.

Velvet worm rears back, puffs up and spurts frothy, sticky strands chaotically in all directions.

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: - nil

Str: 17 (+6)

Dex: 16 (+6)

Wis: 10 (+0)

Con: 17 (+6)

Int: 1 (-1)

Cha: 16 (+6)

Treasure: Enzyme makes a good poison (+3 & Stuns) but expires every round and must be reapplied constantly. If bottled, it is worth approx. 50 gp.

FUMBLE TABLE (FOR THE UNDERKEEP)

Random
Complication

An optional table to spice a natural roll of “1” when a PC or a monster is attempting an attack roll (1d20).

Have PC Roll 1d6:

1) Your swing (or your spell) has gone way off course, further damaging the crumbling walls and/or floor of the Underkeep. Mark an adjacent square as an “Underkeep Cave-In” Hazard tile.

2) You drop whatever weapon, item or implement was in your hands. (Spend your next minor action to pick it up (if you choose))

3) If there are allies or targets (monsters) adjacent to you, your wild swing does 1d4 +2 to all of them.

4) You manage to hurt yourself with your clumsy attempt, take 1d4 +2 damage.

5) You stumble over some rubble or debris and go prone

6) Your gesture or swing knocks into a wall or section of floor that disturbs ages of thick dust. Until the end of your next turn, (Burst 3, creates **Lightly Obscured terrain** in burst area, Perception DC: 22, (-5) to see or hit targets.)

Second Fumble within 1 Encounter: Your reckless clumsiness knocks a part of the floor or wall away, revealing a large slimy worm that attacks you. (Add 1 Giant Velvet Worm, Juvenile to the encounter)