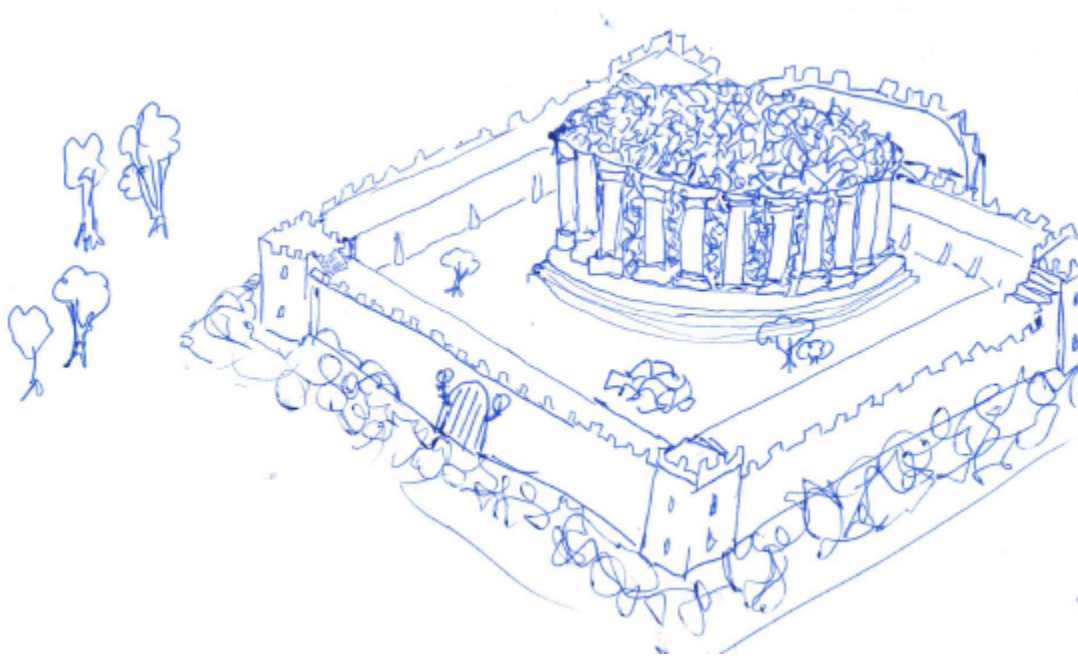


The Castle of the Gribblies

v1



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Tedious Backstory

The wizard Shadoom was cast into the sun a century ago, but it was still the work of a generation to destroy his creations, and another generation still to demolish his many secret strongholds.

The Light Collector discovered one such stronghold—the Groaning Pit. He destroyed the artifice of that place, and scattered the foul things that lingered there. He then sealed the pit beneath woven stone, and left his servants to guard it.

Foremost of those servants was The Scornblade, who hired dwarves to build a castle that would encircle the dome. As the castle neared completion, a dispute arose, and The Scornblade was destroyed. The following decades broke down the ancient seal, and soon shadows gathered and gibbered in the pit once more.

In the years since his “death”, the Scornblade managed a resurrection of sorts, and now commands a paltry squadron of decrepit undead. A few dwarves, too, have returned, claiming ownership of what they built but were never paid for. This is the situation the players find themselves in.

The Gribblywood

People have forgotten about the pit, but everyone knows that there’s a “big old castle in the middle of the Gribblywood”.

The Gribblywood gets its name because it’s completely infested with gribblyies.

Lvl 1 (HP 1) Def leather **Bite** 1d4 **Move** baboon **Int** stupid dog **Dis** hungry, noisy

Gastrofecundity - On a successful bite attack, spawn another gribbly.



Pyrophobia - Gribblyies flee from any flame bonfire-sized or larger, and prefer not to attack anyone carrying a torch. They make morale checks if attacked with a significant source of flame. If they are driven off in this way, they’ll return 1d6 minutes later, still hungry.

Gribblyies abhor the sun. Only in the Gribblywood are they found above ground.

Gribblyies are created by the Groaning Stone, at the bottom of the pit.

The Dwarves

Tomborius Clow (miner) - Boisterous, gruff, clever but feigns stupidity/cowardice to avoid work.

Hammerhaw Clow (blacksmith) - Quiet, critical. Brass rings woven into beard.

Pobblestone “**Pabu**” Clow (their son) - Cheery, naive. Hobby is polishing stones into marbles.

Lvl 2 Def chain Axe 1d8 Crossbow 1d8 (takes a full turn to reload)

Within the dwarven city of Storbulgorm, Tomborius was something of a pest. When it was decided that *someone* should attempt to reclaim the castle in the Gribblywood, the elders were more than happy to send Tomborius on this fool’s errand.

However, Tomborius is more interested in staying drunk and doing nothing. His days are mostly filled with drunken arguments, teaching Pabu, and vast quantities of “observation logs”. The dwarves have eaten all of their food and are now subsisting on a barrel of moonshine. Dwarves can subsist on alcohol alone, although this is considered a very bland diet.

When you first meet them, the dwarves will tell you that they’re here to reclaim that castle and tell the whole sad story (“... and then the demon refused to pay us!”). They’re eager to secure your assistance and offer you some cups of moonshine.

The dwarves were escorted here by a human woman named Leydrada. She vanished one night, leaving behind her bedroll. The dwarves suspect that she was probably captured and killed by the undead on the north side.

Tomborius will warn you that there are hostile undead on the north side of the castle, and that there’s something hiding under the boulders in the courtyard. (He has seen the boulders shifting around at night.) They ask you to avenge Leydrada. The mission is to clear out the undead. In return, you can keep all the treasure you find, except for any gold and gems. All gold belongs to the dwarves—it’s their ancestors. And all gems belong to the dwarves, too, since those are symbols of their covenant with Zulin.

Tomborius won’t accompany you because *so-many-excuses-holy-shit*. Hammerhaw won’t accompany you because he’s just here to keep Tomborius company. And so they’ll send Pabu with you, so you can teach him to fight (but also to claim any gold you find).

When they find out that “the demon that refused to pay them” is leading the undead, they’ll demand that you kill him. They don’t know too much about this place (wrong generation) but they remember that detail. They’ve heard that an “ancient evil” is sealed under the dome, but won’t mention that fact, because they intend to plunder the pit once the undead are dealt with.

NOTE: The three dwarves look similar, and have the same last name, so the PCs may assume that they’re brothers, when they’re actually a married couple. (See Appendix C: Culture, unless you want to keep it simple and just make them brothers in actuality.)

The Scornblade

It took him a (human) lifetime, but The Scornblade has managed to raise some dead to aid him. He has five members of his old allies (the Lucky Fish mercenary company) and one stupid dwarf skeleton, which he verbally abuses whenever possible.

Normally, when wielded by a mortal, he can “take the reins of his chariot” and puppet them perfectly, but these undead are so deteriorated that he can barely steer the damn things.

His goals are to drive out the dwarves and secure the castle. He suspects that there are horrible things stirring underground, but that’s a second priority. He doesn’t know the full story, but he knows that Groaning Stone exists, and has guessed the truth about the gribbles.

If he is able, he will try to take a hostage, in order to force the party to assassinate the dwarves and then leave. (Or at least get the dwarves to leave.) Then he’ll want help murdering whatever is down below. Then he’ll want to report back to the Light Collector (wherever he is).

If he seems like he is losing, he will call for parley, and demand to know why the party is there. As a last resort, he can also attempt to possess anyone that touches him with their hand (even through a glove). The Scornblade cannot be destroyed by mortals and if buried, he will eventually lure someone through dreams.

The Scornblade is a magic sword +1 that possesses anyone who touches it (Cha negates, can reattempt every minute). A possessed target can reattempt to free themselves every time they are forced to do something abhorrent, but they get a cumulative -1 penalty on this save every time. Telepathy with wielder, but mostly speaks out of the mouth of his “chariot”. Can also speak directly—the hilt has a mouth on one side and an eye on the other.

The scornblade prefers to be sheathed inside his chariot’s body, in the shoulder and out above the hip. Although this is very painful, it causes no real damage unless The Scornblade wishes it.

Leydrada

Leydrada is intelligent, pragmatic, sarcastic, and friendly. Her familiar is a golden bee.

She is also secretly a sorceress from the Subtle Stair, a secret town led by Shadoom’s grandchildren. She’s here to steal the Groaning Stone and is partially responsible for the soft exile of Tomborius. Fed up with the dwarven loitering, she slipped into the pit and was captured.

Leydrada knows the whole secret history of the Groaning Pit, but will only tell as much as she needs to. She’s not evil, and hates the thought of people getting hurt. But she is utterly dedicated to serving the Subtle Stair.

Lvl 4 Def leather Dagger 1d6 Int genius Spells *shrink*, *monsterize*, *invisibility*, *clairvoyance*

If she gets her staff back, she can also cast *cone of fire*.

The Groaning Stone

No one has any idea what the Groaning Stone is (except Leydrada). It's as heavy as two men and shaped like a cartoon raindrop. It's made of "leathery" obsidian that sweats black "blood" when chipped. And it groans, loudly. As soon as the Dome is open, you'll be able to hear it groaning.

In truth, it is a cursed child of Goxlagon, the Evil God of Earth. The earth elemental in the courtyard was sent here to rescue it. The shadow inside is a sickness of stone. If you could speak to it, it would tell you as much. If you could rescue it, you would have Goxlagon's favor, when he notices the deed (in about 10 years).

The Stone's groans are actually words. It's begging you to help it. It gets about 1 word out every hour, but you won't figure that out unless you sit for a few hours and listen. Leydrada knows this, but ignores it. The sickness is more valuable than the patient.

A patient person could speak to it at the same rate.

How It All Ends: The Doors

1 The players could side with the dwarves and defeat The Scornblade.

2 The players could side with the Scornblade and defeat the Dwarves.

3 The players could piss off everyone.

4 Everyone can be friends. If The Scornblade ever gets to talking with the Dwarves, it'll quickly devolve back into the century-old argument. The Scornblade refuses to pay for the castle until the castle is done—AND THAT INCLUDES THE DOORS! The dwarves refuse to install any doors because they were HIRED AS MASONS, NOT CARPENTERS!

The easiest way to resolve this is just for the players to start building the doors themselves.

The Dwarves will start criticizing your shoddy craftsmanship, before stepping into show you how.

The Scornblade will mock you for how long it takes you cut lumber, and start chopping trees just to humiliate you.

And Leydrada will cook. She's an amazing cook. And at night, she'll tell stories. (This is a great time to lore dump, roleplay, and get cozy.) This takes a month of work, so get cozy. If the dungeon has been cleared, there are no random encounters. (If not, roll 1/week.) The Scornblade doesn't have the money now, but he can get it from the Light Collector.

By the end of this, everyone should be friends. Even The Scornblade will stop mentioning how pathetic mortals are, and give Pabu some swordfighting lessons. Give everyone +1 Carpentry.

Make it cozy, up until the part where Leydrada steals the Stone and suddenly leaves.

How It All Ends: The Stone

The Scornblade is happy to leave the castle to the Dwarves, as long as they promise to seal up the Groaning Stone.

Leydrada will probably steal the Stone when it is easiest. For example, when the dwarves are drunk from celebrating and The Scornblade is attempting to contact his master. Stealing the Stone is simple when you have the *shrink* spell.

If he hasn't already been dealt with, touching the Groaning Stone will awaken the crawling giant. If the giant ends up running into the earth elemental, they'll destroy each other dramatically.

Another possibility is that the party will want to destroy the stone, or claim it for themselves.

The Stone can be destroyed, but you have to hit it *really* hard. A strong guy with a sledgehammer isn't going to cut it. If the stone is destroyed, all gribblyies above ground will turn grey and die in the space of a few days.

If the players take the Groaning Stone with them, they'll find that it attracts, sustains, and creates gribblyies. If they take it to Lon Barago, this will kill a full ⅓ of the population (or more, if the PCs are doing this on purpose).

If the players heal the Groaning Stone, they'll receive an adamantine sword from Goxlagon in a few years—lightning fast for evil earth god.

Disclaimer

This adventure isn't a railroad. I've just described one possibility, but respecting your players means giving them the freedom to shape the world with their actions, not just live in the script you've written for them.

If Leydrada dies, she dies. If the players would rather leave than explore the pit, that's fine too. Let the world go on without them. It's the least you can do.

Random Encounters

All random encounters are with 1d8 gribblyies, unless the Scornblade is actively pursuing you or something.

DM Tips

1 You have everything you need for good faction play here.

- Multiple factions who are opposed but also aligned in some ways.
- An unstable situation that the players can tip in a significant direction.
- The factions are all talkative, likable (more-or-less), and trustworthy.
- They all *need* the party for something.

When you're DMing this, make sure that the three factions talk early, talk often, and come across with a reasonable request. Even General Scornblade needs to be presented as a reasonable person that the party can negotiate with.

After you kill a couple of his soldiers, the General will be like "Parley! Parley! I would speak with you!" "I protect this place. What are you doing here and what will it take for you to leave?"

2 Remember that you need the factions to seem at least likeable. Even General Scorn should come across as sympathetic—the dwarves did murder him and bury him, and he's just trying to secure this place against a greater evil.

3 Remember to space out the info dumps.

- Dwarves can tell you about the castle's construction.
- Scorn can tell you about the Light Collector and Shadoom.
- Leydrada can tell you about the Groaning Stone.

4 The dungeon is semi-linear. Expected flow is dwarves -> undead-> dome -> pit -> excavation, but that is not the only path.

1. The players will probably meet the dwarves first, but if they want to stealth around the castle side and peek in the windows, let them. (Watch out for the archers, though.)
2. Exploring the castle is probably second. This is an assault, not a dungeon crawl. This probably ends with the Scornblade surrendering and/or proposing cooperation.
3. Entering the dome probably requires you to find the key, but you can also bait the earth elemental into cracking a wall. There's also a secret passage that bypasses it entirely.
4. The pit and the excavation site are a pure dungeon crawl, so let them crawl.

If the players skip a few steps and go straight into the dungeon, The Scornblade/Dwarves will follow the PCs in (assuming that they're even aware of it). The dwarves will follow because they didn't know that there was a way down there, and The Scornblade will follow because he is trying to secure this place. If this happens, the next random encounter will be with dwarves/Scorn.

The Castle

The Forest touches the moat.

The Moat is dry, but full of thorny blackberry bushes.

The Walls are 20' tall, 4' wide, and approximately 200' long.

The Drawbridge can be pulled down if you have a grappling hook and a couple of donkeys.

The Towers are 25' square and hold a stairwell. Each tower has a door that opens to the courtyard, and a reinforced hatch for the stairs.

The SW Tower smells like piss on the outside. This is where the dwarves live. **L1** = marbles, pickaxes, hammers, map on the wall. **L2** = smelly dwarven bedrolls, stack of observational logbooks, **Roof** = chairs, crossbows, 1d3 dwarves (but usually Tomborius).

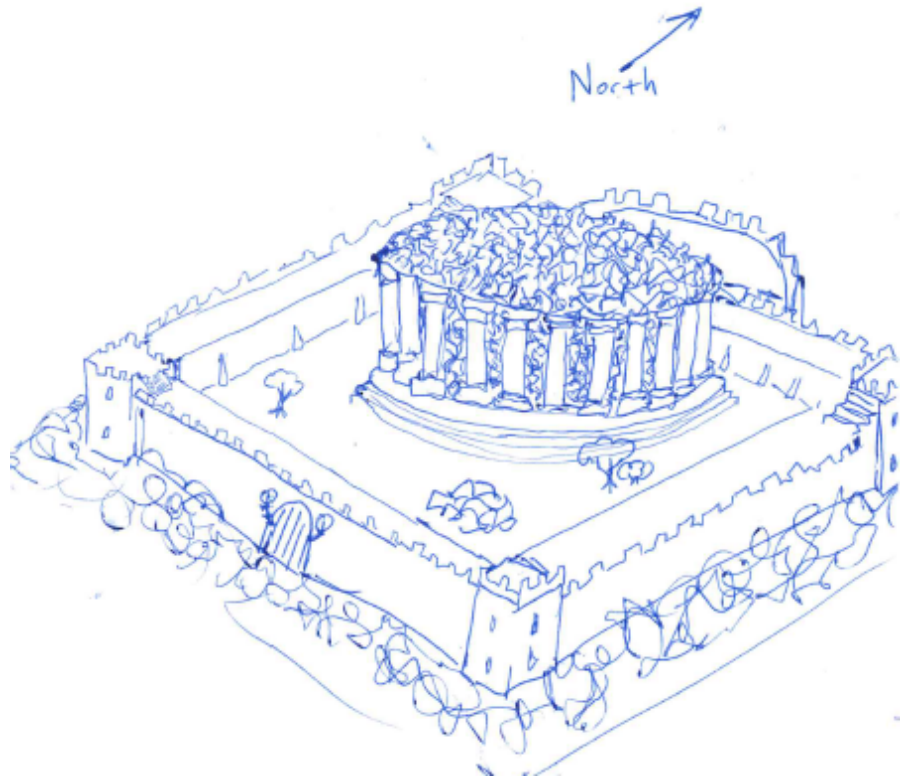
The SE Tower repels the dwarves because birds live there. **L1** = garbage, mold, spare bricks, a small sealed barrel of cement, heavy timbers (like railroad ties), and a 10' pole with a hook on the end. **L2** = four families of bluebirds, a table, an amateurish painting of a frog on a carrot in a lake (see 12 VAULT). **Roof** = chalk graffiti that reads "DANGER: BIRDS".

The NW and NE Towers Each tower has 3 highly visible corpses standing on top of it. One corpse is an **undead archer**, and the other two corpses are regular corpses propped up on sticks. (The Scornblade wasn't able to raise them.) The archers will move out of position to support each other. Lvl 1 Def leather Bow 1d6.

Iron spikes hold closed the NW and NE towers' courtyard doors and rooftop hatches. You can still destroy the reinforced doors with 10 minutes and some pickaxes, though.

The Dome is made from woven stone. A small keyhole is barely visible, near the boulders. The key opens it. Alternatively, you could get the earth elemental to smash it.

The Pile of Boulders in the courtyard is actually an **earth elemental**. It attacks if anyone gets close to it (or the keyhole). It's slow but can be baited into destroying walls. If you want to kill it, the best way is to jump on top of it and use pickaxes to destroy its crystal brain (visible from above). If the dwarves are watching they may yell this at you. Its stats are two pages down.



Fighting the Earth Elemental

The earth elemental attacks whenever someone gets within 20'. The keyhole in the dome is about 19' away.

This is more of a puzzle-fight than a straight puzzle. It's easy to run away from but hard to kill, unless you jump on top of it and attack its brain. (You can't climb up the sides—its feet are slow but its arms are not.)

It's also possible to lure the elemental away, then sneak in and open the dome with the key. As soon as the dome is open, the horrible groaning sound comes out.

Earth Elemental - Lvl 6 Def chain Attacks * Move 60' per hour Int child Dis guardian

Stonebody - all damage is reduced to 1 point unless it was inflicted by a bludgeoning weapon or appropriate magic (*e.g. shatter, earth to mud*). Immune to fire, cold, etc.

Crystal Brain - anyone standing on the earth elemental can attack its crystal brain, dealing double damage and getting +4 to hit.

Wind-Up Attacks - At the end of each turn, it will telegraph the next attack. At the start of the next turn, it'll execute the planned action, then telegraph the attack for the *next* round. It can cancel an attack if the original target is no longer in range.

The attacks have the following priority, from highest to lowest:

Slam (someone is in melee range): 3d6 to one target, 1d6 to everyone else in 10'. Strong enough to knock down a wall (including the dome).

Clear Head (if someone is on top of its head): 3d6 to all creatures on head. Anyone getting attacked can get +4 to their defense roll if they jump down as part of their defense roll.

Boulder Bowling (no one in melee, target in courtyard): Treat as 2d8 trample.

Boulder Throw: 2d8 damage, 50' range.

All of the earth elemental's attacks are strong enough to knock down a wall, even the strong walls of the dome. If a player is attempting to intentionally bait the elemental into knocking down a wall and doing nothing else, they get +4 Defense. The first time the elemental attacks, be sure to have it split a tree or something so the players can see how strong it is. The elemental is about as smart as a 5-year-old kid.

The huge crystal brain is worth 200s if shattered, 1000s if intact.

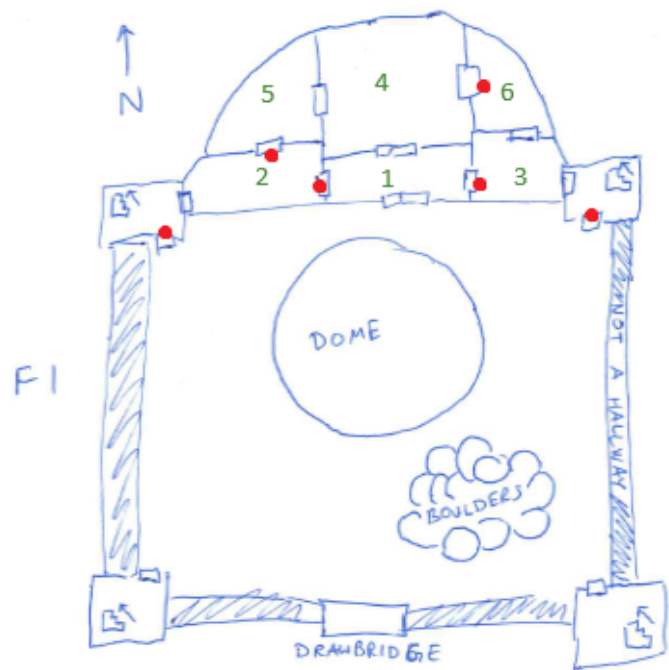
The Castle is most easily accessed through the double doors on the courtyard.

The castle is a trap, of course. The doorways marked with ● are held shut with iron spikes. (The knobs turn, they just don't move.) Anyone inspecting the "stuck" doors will notice the iron spikes.

The Scornblade is hoping that the party will be so distracted by the treasure in 4 GRAND HALL that they won't hear him pulling out the iron spikes between room 2 and 1. Then he'll sneak up behind you.

Ask your party what they are doing. If no one is keeping watch near the door, then no one hears the iron spikes being pulled.

The Scornblade carries the silver key that unlocks the Dome.



1 HALLWAY moldy blue carpet, 1 iron spike on floor.

2 MUD The Scornblade and 4 undead soldiers wait here, behind a door that's been spiked shut.

Undead Soldier (Scornblade) - Lvl 3 Def plate Spear 1d6 Scornblade 1d6+1 Mov slow
Regular Undead Soldier - Lvl 2 Def plate+shield Spear 1d6 Mov slow Int low

3 CORPSES dwarven (2 builders) and human (3 Lucky Fish mercenaries). Covered in chalk, blood, and insects crushed in necromantic patterns. Not undead—just failures.

4 GRAND HALL huge table, 100 s scattered across the floor, mounted animal heads (pig head wears a necklace with 9 small gems in ROYGBIVBW color sequence, worth 500s).

5 KITCHEN broken chairs, oil-soaked pile of wood and poisonous herbs. An undead soldier stands here with a candle. When the PCs open the door, roll initiative. On his count, he will drop the candle, filling all Level 1 rooms with poisonous smoke. (Take 1 damage every round.)

6 PANTRY cabinet covered in yellow mold (obvious), 32 bottles of wine (Asrian Red, 20s each)

NW STAIR water pooling in a low section of floor.

NE STAIR anyone checking under the stairwell will notice that the floor sounds hollow. Anyone lifting the lip of the second stair clicks a switch, opening a secret trap door leading to the pit.

The Master's Room

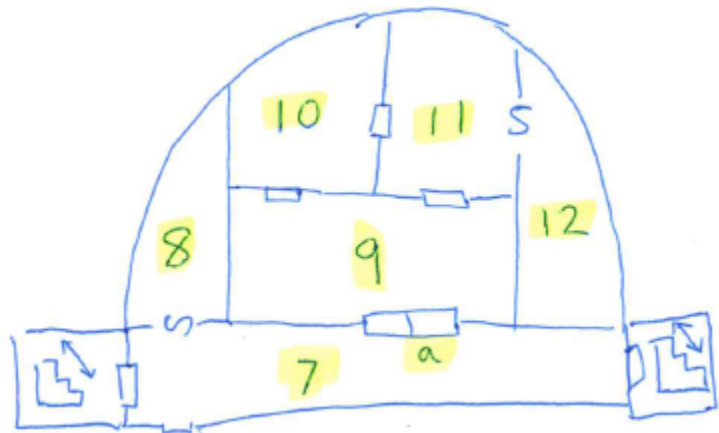
The rooms upstairs were meant to be used by the Light Collector, and so they were not finished by either dwarves or men. The sorceress Whiteraven completed them. However, the rooms were never fully completed (which is why the laboratory and library seem so incomplete).

The presence of the secret rooms is pretty obvious. The hallway is 100' long, but the bedroom is only 60' wide. Even an amateur mapper should realize that some space is not accounted for.

7 UPSTAIRS HALL Another long blue rug. On the west side, there are seven alcoves. A blade of grass has been placed on the fourth (middle) alcove, and the alcove glows with a faint green light. Each alcove will light up if the correct colored item is placed on it. If all seven alcoves are lit (**red**, **orange**, **yellow**, **green**, **blue**, **indigo**, **violet**), then the secret door will open. Alternatively, hitting it with *color spray* also opens it instantly.

The bedsheets in 9 are **indigo**, and there are **violet** flowers in the forest.

a DOOR The door is covered with green serpent sigils. If you bash it in, it summons ten venomous serpents. Lvl 0, leather, bite 1+poison (1d6). If you are standing in front of the door when this happens, they appear draped around your body and bite immediately. Roll initiative.



8 LOUNGE Sumptuous sofa. Decanter of brandy. As soon as you enter, a pair of **velvet slippers** walks over. If you do not take off your boots and put them on, it will start tapping its toes. If you still don't get the hint, it will start kicking you (harmless). Worth 1000s.

There's also a tiny fairy sitting on top of a 4' tall marble plinth. She'll immediately perk up and start singing a beautiful song. If you stop her, her first worry will be that you didn't like her song. Her name is **Fenfera** and her queen commanded her to come here and sing songs for the Light Collector for the next 200 years, and to never leave the plinth. She's cheerful, a little stupid, and extremely bored.

She won't think of it herself, but if you take the plinth with you (200 lbs) she's free to leave and go see more interesting things. When she realizes you can move her plinth, she'll ask if you can move her closer to the window. If you suggest taking her out of the room, she'll start crying from happiness—she didn't even realize that she could leave.

If you break the plinth, she'll start crying. She really didn't want to disappoint her queen.

She also really wants to find the Light Collector. She's supposed to sing for this guy, after all.

9 BEDROOM Massive bed with indigo sheets, now faded and decayed.

A small table holds a bottle of wine (Asrian Black, 50s) and a [vase](#) with fresh-cut red roses in it. (The roses are ordinary, but anything placed in the vase does not age or decay.) Under the wine bottle is a note: "Lacheron. I hope we can enjoy the bed together soon. W"

10 LIBRARY Four shelves, a comfy chair, and six books. As soon as you walk in, the books shuffle restlessly. If you linger, the books will attack you. If they are destroyed, the ink bleeds out of them and they become illegible. If they are captured alive, they can be restrained and read. You can also train them as easily as hawks.

- *Embrittlement and other Diseases of Metal*. Geology. +1 to relevant checks.
- *Sacherlon and the Stars Inside the Mind*. Astronomy. +1 to relevant checks.
- *The Brinderbillion Exchange*. Demonology. +1 to relevant checks.
- This is an illusionist's spellbook. As 3 scrolls: *color spray*, *disguise self*, *illusion*.

Feral Book - Lvl 2 Def leather Bite 1d6* Fly vulture Str low Int animal Dis territorial

* The spellbook also casts *confusion* on anyone it bites.

The fight shouldn't be too hard if the PCs are trying to destroy the books. If they want to preserve them, it'll get trickier.

11 LABORATORY workbench, 10 glass vials. A small desk contains a [solar scalpel](#) (cuts anything, 3 charges) and an excellent [squid ink set](#) (100s). An oval mirror, 6' tall, is set into the wall and surrounded by all sorts of flowers.

A silver mirror is flanked with all sorts of painted flowers. Close inspection reveals that each flower is actually a button. There are nine flowers total. The correct sequence is [ROYGBIVBW](#) ([red-orange-yellow-green-blue-indigo-violet-black-white](#)). Once a button is depressed, it makes a click (if it's in the correct location) or a clunk (if it's not). Once all 9 buttons have been depressed, it replays the sequence of clicks and thunks. If they were all correct, the secret door/mirror opens to 12 VAULT. If any were incorrect, a trap triggers. After all 3 have been triggered, there are no more traps, so feel free to brute force it.

1st Failure - poison gas, 10' radius, 1d6/rnd until Con save

2nd Failure - lightning bolt, 3d6, straight line out of mirror surface

3rd Failure - summon a pair of demons (Lvl 2, Def chain, Claws 1d8 + rust 1 random metal item)

The bracelet found in 4 GRAND HALL contains a hint to the correct sequence.

12 VAULT A **crystalline statue** of a swordsman (worth 1000s, 300 lbs, nonmagical, very fragile).

On the wall there are two small vaults and **two paintings** (each with another vault behind them, for a total of four small vaults). Originally, there were four paintings that obscured **four vaults**, but two paintings are missing. The two amateurish paintings in this room are worth 10s each.

Each vault accepts a four digit code. If the correct code is entered, a turn of the handle will open the vault. If the handle is turned while an incorrect code is displayed in the tumblers, a *magic mouth* will form on the wall and count down “9”, “8”, “7”, etc, one count for every mistake. If it reaches zero it summons a dragon into the bedroom where it is crushed to death as its spine is contorted beyond what it can accommodate. (It was a smaller dragon when the enchantment was placed.) The **dragon scales** are worth 2000s and take up 200 inventory slots. It would take three days to harvest them all.

The codes are hidden in their respective paintings. The position of the item matches the position of the number, with the innermost item corresponding to the first number, the outermost element of the painting corresponds to the last number, and so on. The color of the item corresponds to the number (the same sequence you’ve seen before):

Red (1) - Orange (2) - Yellow (3) - Green (4) - Blue (5) - Indigo (6) - Violet (7) - Black (8) - White (9)

Here’s some examples, because this is confusing: the first painting contains a **frog (4)** on a **carrot (2)** in a **lake (5)** beneath a **sky (5)**, so the sequence is 4-2-5-5.

Similarly, a **strawberry (1)** on a **yellow (3)** pastry in a **pink (7)** basket on a black fur (8) = 1-3-3-8.

A wide painting worth 10s. A <i>pink basket lays on a sable fur. Inside the basket is a saffron pastry, topped with a single strawberry.</i>	1-3-3-8	Already unlocked and open. Empty. The correct sequence is visible in the tumbler. (This is a huge clue!)
A small painting once hung here, but is now <u>missing</u> ! (The painting: <i>Beneath a clear sky, a small frog sits on a carrot that floats in the middle of a pond.</i>)	4-2-5-5	200s. Roze quartz glasses (100s) Potion of <i>spider climb</i> Potion of <i>fire breath</i> Potion of <i>gaseous form</i>
A large painting once hung here, but is now <u>missing</u> ! (The painting: <i>fresh steaks in a brick fireplace, above orange flames. Purple banners flank the fireplace.</i>)	1-2-1-6	TBD. Something pretty good.
A tall painting once hung here, but is now <u>missing</u> ! (The painting: <i>A closeup of a beautiful woman. Her eyes are closed. She holds a cigarette between her ruby lips. Her porcelain face is framed by hair as dark as midnight.</i>)	9-1-9-8	TBD. Something really good.

The missing frog painting is in the SE tower.

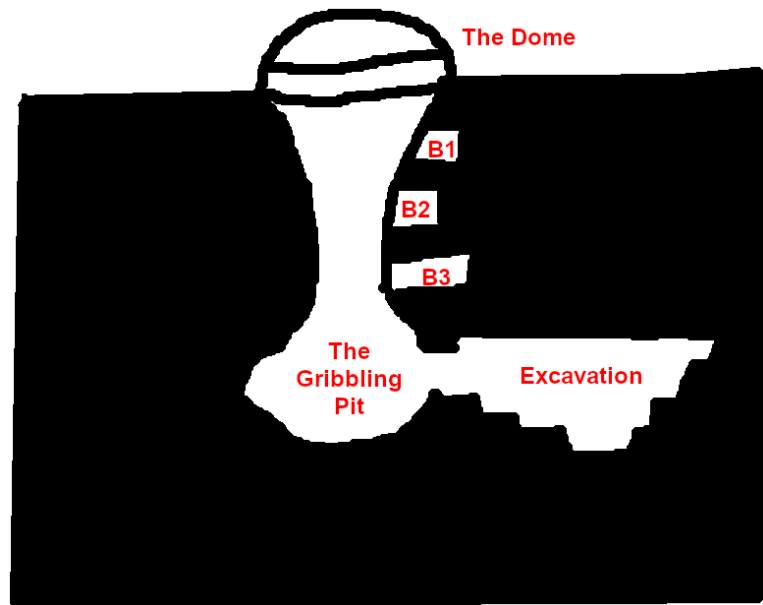
The Gribbling Pit

When you get inside of the dome, there's no floor. Just a big hole in the ground where loud groans issue forth every few minutes. And when the groaning stops, you can hear a fainter sound: a *vast and restless gribbling*.

There's like, a million gribblies at the bottom. Hope that's not a spoiler.

Discussion

I'll admit that the painting puzzle is not an OSR-style puzzle. The earth elemental is an OSR-style puzzle. So is how to deal with The Scornblade.



The three other puzzles (alcoves, buttons, and paintings) are more like escape-room-style logic puzzles. Find the pattern and then apply it. The two easier puzzles (alcoves and buttons) are meant to teach the players to think chromatically, before applying their skill on the over-puzzle (the paintings). Hopefully they remember the frog painting that they saw back in the SE tower.

The other two paintings are hidden in the Gribbling Pit somewhere.

This has had zero playtesting, so I expect it'll go through some significant rewrites once I can see it in action.

Dwarven Culture

Remember that dwarves charge each other for stuff as a matter of social cohesion. If everyone owes each other money, then everyone is bound to each other, and the group is strong. Debt = community bonds.

Of course, it's better to not have a crippling debt hanging over you, but neither is it always best to be the debt holder.

For everything else regarding dwarven culture, I'll point you here:

<https://goblinpunch.blogspot.com/2023/01/some-words-on-dwarven-gender.html>

I will point out that these dwarves are all drunk, which makes them less overtly weird than most.