

THE SHATTERED GATE

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THE SITUATION

A swampy forest sits within a valley that is avoided by hunters and travellers, as much for its unhealthy air as for the strange and disturbing mutated creatures that inhabit it.

Far below the ground, a magical **spell engine** pulses with arcane energy, distorting the animals of the forest.

THE RUIN

A corner of an inner wall is all that remains of a once-grand fortified manor.

At noon every day, 3d6 **mutated animals** congregate at the **awakened tree** to hear a sermon, following the habits of their former (human) lives.

MUTATED ANIMALS

As a side effect of the underground **spell engine**, souls of the dead are reincarnating as forest mammals with human features.

There are 2d6 mutated creatures in the area at any time; during sermons, they arrange themselves awkwardly on the benches facing the tree.

Mutated animals with human mouths can speak, though poorly and awkwardly. All mutated creatures have worse senses than their normal animal equivalents, as well as a random human feature.

d6	Strange Animal	Human Feature
1	Deer	Ears
2	Boar	Hands, legs
3	Moose	Eyes, mouth
4	Bear	Skin patches
5	Hare	Nose
6	Fox	Head hair

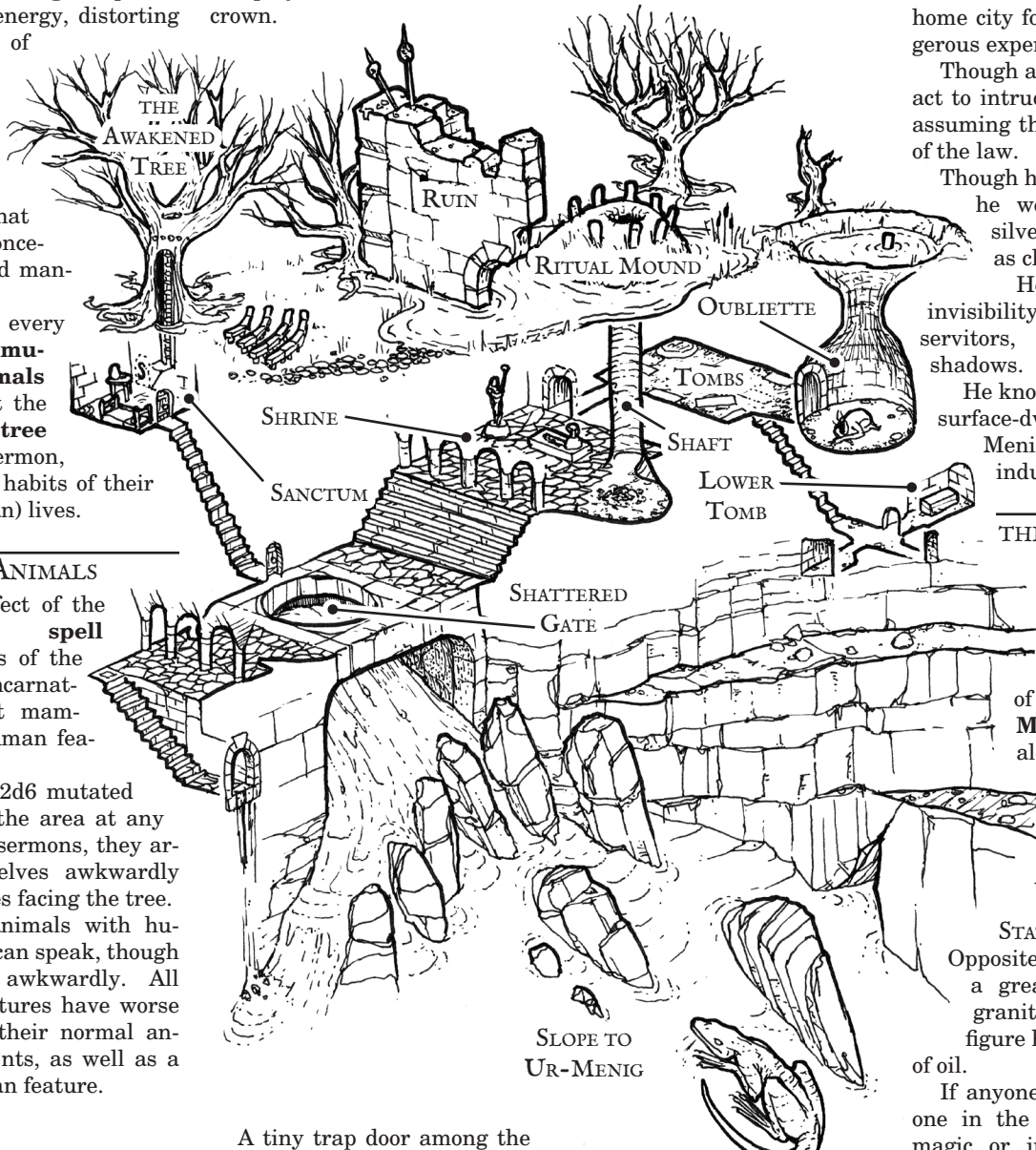
THE AWAKENED TREE

This old and hollow tree is much feared and respected by the mutated creatures.

Gelemos the gnome hides within and preaches to his flock here, using a simple magic that deepens and amplifies his voice and projects it from holes in the crown.

THE RITUAL MOUND

The former occupants of the mansion maintained this ritual mound for strange rites related to their care of the **gate** to the **underworld sea** below.



A tiny trap door among the branches reveals the naturally hollow interior. Crude rungs form a ladder that allows access to the **sanctum**.

Sermons deliver a distorted version of Panurian doctrines of acceptance, often ending with a demand for an animal to end its sad life by throwing itself into the **shaft** in the **ritual mound** as a sacrifice.

THE SHAFT

This shaft of dressed stonework falls 40' to the stones below. The stones bear a faint enchantment: anyone who knows the proper command word ('Soffel!') can fall harmlessly (though still alarmingly) to the floor of the **shrine**, or float from the bottom to the top.

GELEMOS

A fugitive gnome has taken up residence here, building his **sanctum** far from bother and the inconvenient hand of laws.

He seeks to bind himself to the **spell engine** in the deeps, and to that end is trying to curry favour with the **Guardian Klisp**, by bringing fresh meat (the self-sacrificed animals) to feed to the great lizard.

He was driven out of his home city for carrying on dangerous experiments.

Though a coward, he will react to intruders with hostility, assuming that they are agents of the law.

Though he is simply clothed, he wears an elaborate silver ring that protects as chain armor.

He knows rituals of invisibility, animating bone servitors, and telekinetic shadows.

He knows more than most surface-dwellers about **Ur-Menig**, if he is somehow induced to talk.

THE SHRINE

The former shrine of the manor's family and their cult, dedicated to the protection of the gate to **Ur-Menig**. The round alcove at the base of the shaft is covered with splattered blood and remains from the falling suicides.

STATUE

Opposite the shaft, facing a great **tapestry**, is a granite statue of a robed figure holding a lamp, full of oil.

If anyone touches it, everyone in the room must resist magic or intone a prayerful vow to protect the gate to the **Ur-Menig**.

TAPESTRY

The tapestry is woven throughout with silver thread depicting the ley lines of **Ur-Menig**; around the edges are roundels with recognizable depictions of Seree wizards (stylistically dateable to a post-Seree peri-

od), a **spell engine**, and robed figures trading with the underworld Carreg people.

THE TOMBS

The tombs of the family and loyal priests of the cult that maintained the shrine.

An inscription above the door is in an archaic script, and claims a curse will affect those who enter the tomb. The curse is mostly non-functional, but trespassers will bear an invisible mark that the **Guardian Klisp** can see; he will know what it means, and is wary of grave-robbers.

Gelemos is so marked, which is part of why he has not advanced beyond the gate. Gelemos has so far overlooked the false bottom in one sarcophagus, which leads to the lower tomb.

THE LOWER TOMB

Not yet despoiled, this lower tomb has a low altar with a funereal urn on it. The urn is finely painted with scenes showing the accord between the family and the **guardian**. The dusty ashes inside are those of the member of the family who first contacted the **guardian** and founded the shrine.

A small door leads out onto a ledge, where a quiet group might make a wide circuit around **Klisp**, who has focused all of his attention on the gate and his own thoughts.

d6 Shrine Encounters	
1	The statue's lamp is lit, and Gelemos is here studying the tapestry. Two servitors accompany him.
2	A mutated creature has just thrown itself in and lays on the floor dying. 2d3 servitors will arrive shortly to carry it to the gate.
3-5	2d3 servitors stand waiting for a sacrifice.
6	A ghostly apparition calls for help. It is a projection from the sleeping demon in the oubliette .

THE OUBLIETTE

The door to this room is locked and barred. An inscription, in the same old script as before, enjoins the reader to let what sleeps lie. Inside, a tall humanoid in finely-wrought enchanted plate and an impressive horned helm lies asleep on the ground.

An extravagant lacquered shield depicts scenes of the conquest of the underworld beside it.

The air of this enchanted room is the **unbreathable air** of the **Ur-Menig**.

DENLEGATH SLEEPS

The sleeping man is the demon Denlegath, the same who destroyed the manor and gate, and led his army into the depths, before an accident led them all to succumb to its effects.

The army has long since been eaten by **Klisp**, but the demon was imprisoned here by the last of the priests of the shrine, so he could not reach the **spell engine**.

If removed from the room, he will make a show of thanks, but he is deceptive and incapable of gratitude.

THE SANCTUM

When not in the shrine, Gelemos is here, working at his notes and books.

Any of his six servitors not already encountered in the shrine or by the gate will be attending him here.

The room contains a bed, a large stout table, covered with his work, a small coffer containing a purse of gold, a bag of useful herbs, and a set of robes and amulet looted from the tombs.

A three-foot long scroll lies open on the table, containing the **Mantra of Ur-Menig**. It is easy to understand but long and repetitive.

A pair of decorative screens (both valuable as art) separate his living and study areas. One depicts the manor and surroundings as they were in their heyday, with intact gate beneath.

The other shows robed figures walking among sleepers in

a great cavern; acute observers may notice the hand postures for the advanced version of the **Mantra of Ur-Menig**.

THE GATE

Once a great circular gate of stone inlaid with white metal designs, the gate was shattered by forces led by the demon Denlegath, in an attempt to reach the **spell engine**. Now reduced to rubble, a devoted team of labourers with a great deal of time could sort through the great pile of rock and recover 2d8 ingots of white metal from the remains.

In the darkness below the gate is the **Guardian Klisp** and a long slope leading down into the **Ur-Menig**.

BONE SERVITORS

Skeletal servants made of mismatched animal bones, animated by Gelemos.

They are simple creatures; their only orders are to carry bodies to the gate, but they will respond if attacked, interfered with, or if Gelemos wills it.



THE GUARDIAN KLISP

The Seree placed their spell engines in the care of magical, living guardians. Created from mundane animals (reptiles were favored for their uncanny stillness), guardians were enhanced with a regimen of powdered gemstone and protective rituals.

Long exposure to the intense magical environment of their **spell engine** caused them to grow in size and raw magical potency, while centuries of conversation and meditation granted them wisdom.

Klisp began life as a small, mottled rock lizard, but has become vastly larger and more dragon-like over the long centuries.

Klisp has grown bored of his diet of isopods and is grateful for the surface meat that contact with Gelemos has pro-

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vided him, though he does not trust the gnome.

Curious about the outside world, he can be engaged in conversation. Though he speaks slowly, his movements can be quick and powerful. He will not allow anyone to pass him without knowing their purpose clearly, and he must be thoroughly convinced of good intentions to even think of letting anyone near his **spell engine**.

UR-MENIG

The Ur-Menig is an unfathomably vast, dry subterranean lake.

Along its strange shores can be found the *Steeps of Ur-Menig* and the abandoned shrine of *Though Flesh Be Vast*, and within its depths is rumored to be the great city of the Carreg.

THE UNBREATHABLE AIR

Below Klisp's waiting place on the slope, anyone who breathes the air will immediately fall into a deathless sleep.

MANTRA OF UR-MENIG

Surface dwellers can breathe the air of the Ur-Menig while chanting this ritual, and linger for d3-1 minutes after.

Secret, advanced hand postures extend the effect to 6 other companions, and prolong the lingering effect to d2 days.

THE SPELL ENGINE

Two hundred paces downslope of Klisp is a Seree spell engine—a battered sphere of mica and silver embedded in the gray sand. It crackles with static electricity.

Normally secured in impregnable vaults, it was moved here in haste by the Seree (along with Klisp) in the hopes that the unbreathable air would be sufficient protection. Many such compromises were made during the Seree's final wars.

It contains the knowledge of how to cast 14 spells of varying potency. Touching it imparts d3 of them, along with a potentially lethal electric shock.