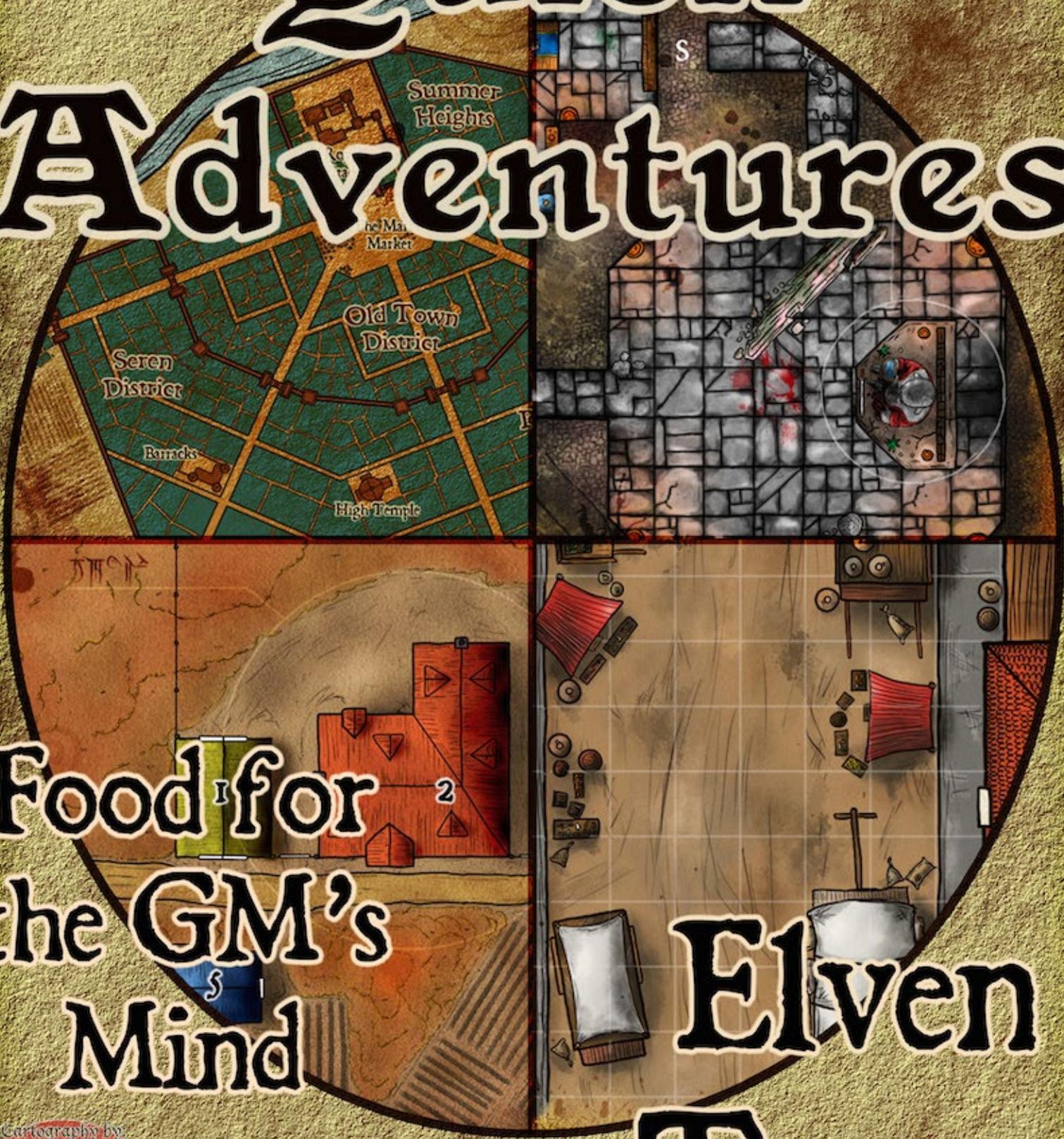


Quick Adventures



Food for
the GM's
Mind

Elven
Tower

Elven Tower Cartography

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Cartography by:



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The Beating Heart Cult

About this Resource

This resource features the general description of a cult. The Beating Heart cult has an underground lair/headquarters. This resource includes adventure ideas that are appropriate for low-level (Levels 1 to 5) adventuring parties. Challenge Rating (CR) is calculated using a party of four as the model.

The DM is free to change or modify any or all the information found here. NPC names and settlement names are the first the DM should consider changing to accommodate any homebrew world lore. To modify the challenge rating of the adventure, the DM must first consider the power level of the party. Considering the PCs' individual levels and the number of players is crucial to presenting a good challenge. Not all parties are the same, different playing styles and command of the system in the party can increase or decrease their effectiveness in encounters. The DM may adjust the encounters slightly by adding or subtracting monsters. Alternatively, controlling monsters with more intelligence and strategy is often the easiest way to raise the difficulty of an encounter.

When monsters are referenced, book name and page numbers are noted in parenthesis. Be aware that page numbers may vary depending on the book

print. If the DM can't find a monster where noted, it means it is a different book print. Page differences tend to be small so whatever is missing will be reasonably close to the pages noted in the adventure.

Background Lore



The Beating Heart Cult is an evil organization. From outside, evidence and reports available congruent with a criminal guild with subtle religious overtones. From inside, newcomers or prisoners realize that the Beating Heart Cult is a full-fledged sect of evil worshippers. The Beating Heart Cult's belief system centers around bloodlines and the consumption of human blood.

Bloodlines are important to the cultists. They strongly believe that a person's blood has a type of memory. The red liquid remembers all past ancestors in the family tree. The experts in the matter are the three hematologists: Paudro, Adarask, and Lucerna. The three alchemists/hematologists have dedicated most of their lives to studying the properties of blood. They met a few years ago after exchanging mail and documents of their research. The hematologists claim that blood conserves the qualities of past ancestors in the bloodline, but the rate of conservation is something complicated to predict. Adarask came up with a solution after years of study. For each person or specimen, a personalized analysis had to be made. Adarask was a mathematician and alchemist. He derived complicated formulae meant to discover the rate of conservation or a particular person by reviewing the family tree and assigning numeric values to the branches. The formulae introduced variables that depended on the number of generations in the family tree and the number of offspring for each member in the bloodline. The study did not seem useful or practical to outsiders but Adarask swore by its accuracy. After this long calculation, Adarask was left with a number, the ancestry quotient. This figure is supposed to represent the percentage of blood from a particular ancestor in the current specimen. The cult is in constant search for people with high levels of ancestry in the thirteenth generation above them.

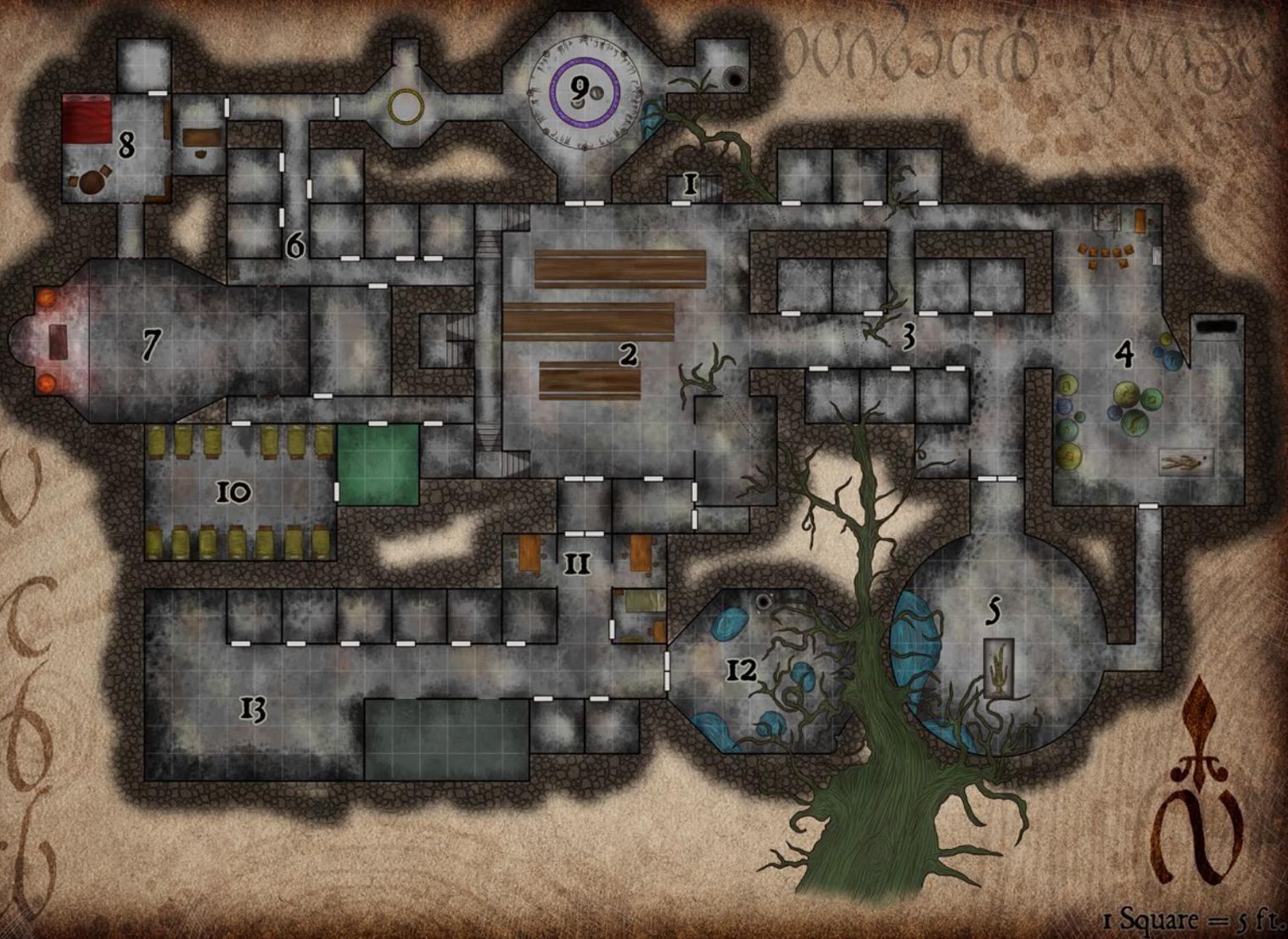


The thirteenth generation back is revered as the genesis of life as it is known to the Beating Heart Cult. The people of the first generation are considered purer than each generation that came after them. That generation is so far back from the current bloodline that very few people have any of their blood running through her veins. The Beating Heart Cult often kidnaps random people for a single night to run a blood examination and determine whether they have old blood or not. The study is purely mathematical and based on Adarask formulae, thus it does not portray reality in all cases. The end goal for the three hematologists is to consume as much thirteen generation blood as possible to purify their bodies and become more powerful.

Paudro, one of the three hematologists, saw the potential in blood as an object of worship in the decadent great city. From his work in history and archeology, he was well aware that blood had been an object of religion in many belief systems in the

past. History is bound to repeat itself in cyclic ways, but this time Paudro took the reigns of history and created a cult around it once more. The cult is led to believe that all of their blood is impure after generations of decadence and inbreeding. This is the reason for the current state of the world and society, Paudro explains. The only way to reverse the process and go back to their more purer selves is to slowly replace the bad blood with good blood. Paudro and Lucerna set themselves up as leaders and spiritual guides of the organization. Lucerna is an accomplished wizard specialized in charms and enchantment spells. Through clever use of indoctrination techniques and a few well-selected spells, they have indoctrinated almost sixty cultists. The majority of them come from the lowest echelons of society, but a few of them are well-placed people in the city. Two of the cultists are participants in the city council.

The cult's modus operandi. The cult revolves around consuming blood, members of the cult are



to look for interesting qualities and features in possible specimens. Adarask changes these parameters constantly, according to his mathematical formulae. Once a possible target is identified, the cultists abduct him and bring him underground. Adarask then performs his calculations and determines the ancestry quotient. If Adarask discovers the subject's blood to be pure, the cult is informed that the subject died during the examination process. Later the three hematologists kill and consume the subject's blood and still-beating heart to purify themselves. If Adarask discovers the subject's blood to be of no value, then Lucerna informs the cult that they found a good one. The subject is then ritually killed in front of the cult in a ceremony called "The awakening of Bloodlines". The subject's blood is drained from the body and placed in a gold chalice. The cultists then pass the chalice from one another, taking a sip of blood along the way.

Adventure Design

The cult's lair is underground. It is built below a great city where plenty of subjects for their ceremonies live. The background lore is vague about the science and accuracy of the blood purification process and Adarask's mathematical formulae. The DM is free to determine whether this is all bogus science, or if there is some truth to it. Regardless of the decision, the three hematologists should get more powerful after each intake of "pure" blood. If the ancestry argument is false, then they may be subjects to an otherworldly patron from the abyss who rewards them for their evil deeds.

Adarask and Paudro may use the stat-block for **Cult Fanatic (Monster Manual, page 345)**, while **Lucerna (Monster Manual, page 347)** is a Mage.

The rest of the cult are **Cultists (Monster Manual, page 345)**, a few **Thugs (Monster Manual, page 350)** and two **Spies (Monster Manual, page 349)**.

Underground headquarters.

1. Entrance.
2. Dining room and common area.
3. Cultist's quarters.
4. Adarask's laboratory.
5. Preparation room for blood and heart consumption.
6. Cultist's quarters for important members.
7. Ceremony room for "The awakening of Bloodlines"
8. Lucerna and Paudro's quarters.
9. Teleportation circle.
10. Prospect members quarters.
11. Interrogation rooms.
12. Room lost to the aggressive underground vine.
13. Prison and barracks.