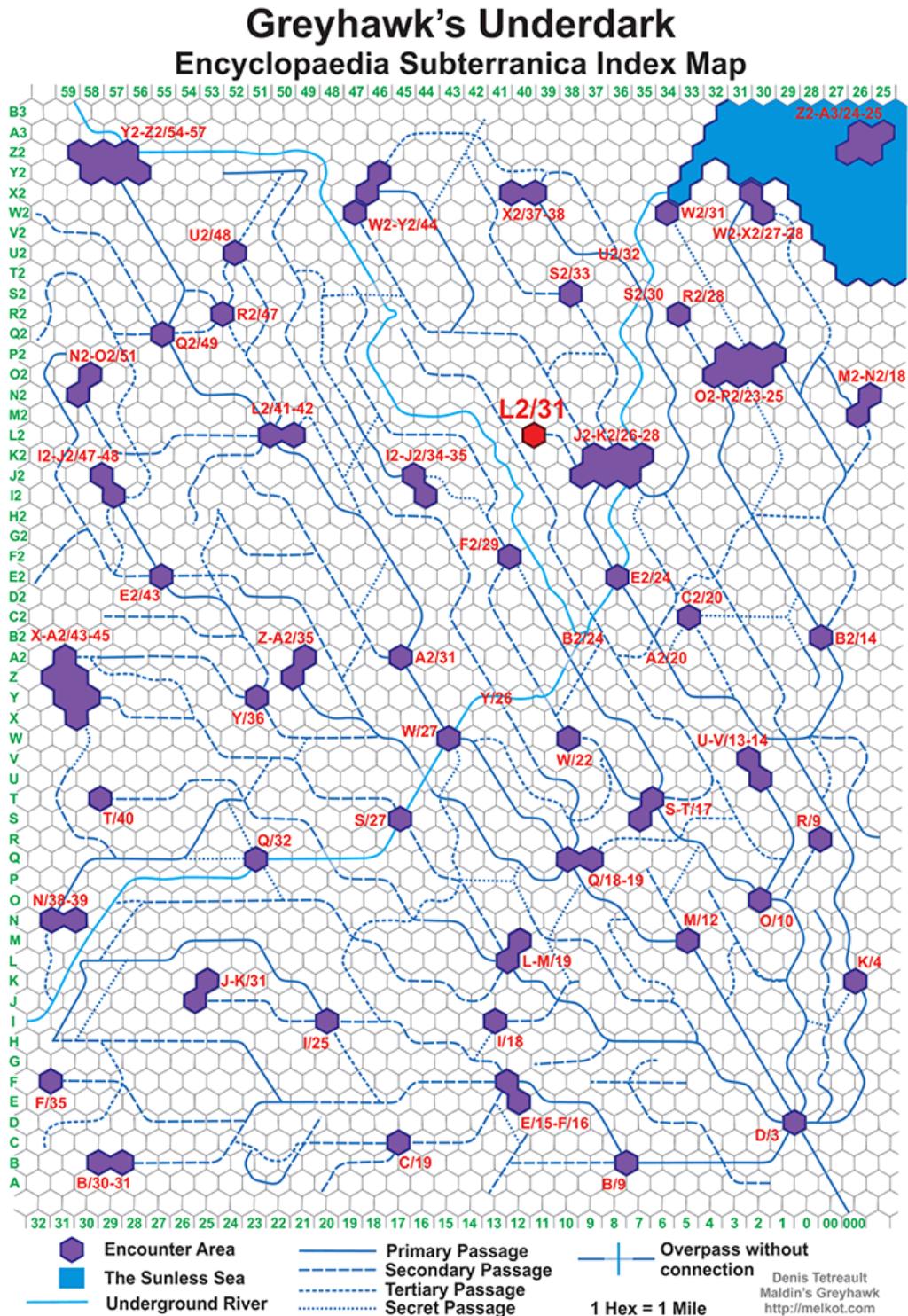


D4: ENCYCLOPÆDIA SUBTERRANICA

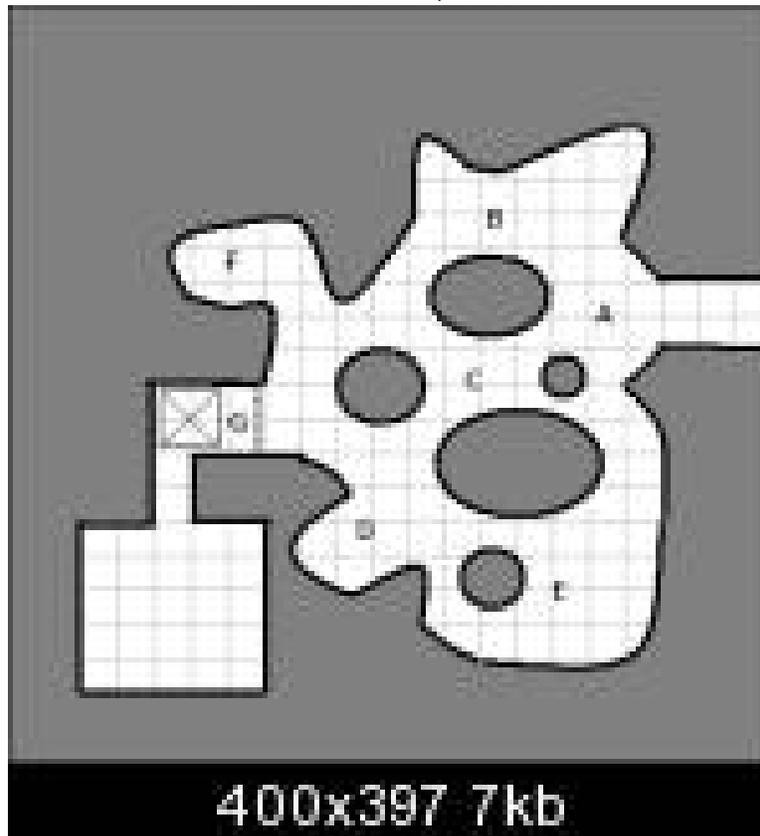
ENCOUNTER AREA L2/31
Sanctum of the Absent Mage

by eldersphinx



This encounter was developed as part of a collaborative exercise on the Dragonsfoot forums (<http://www.dragonsfoot.org>) to describe the rest of the "Depths of the Earth" from Dungeon Modules D1-3 by E. Gary Gygax, developing those areas illustrated on the map but not detailed in the modules themselves. For more information about D4: Encyclopædia Subterranea and the other encounter areas on the index map, visit **Maldin's Greyhawk - Greyhawk's Underdark** at <http://melkot.com/locations/underdark/underdark.html>

ENCOUNTER AREA L2/31: MAP A



ENCOUNTER AREA L2/31

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This cul-de-sac cavern is the domain of a powerful, but temperamental, mage from the surface world, who has long felt the need for a bolt-hole and refuge within the Underdark. Though he has a decent understanding with the svirfneblin city to the southeast (ENCOUNTER AREA K2/26 and further), sometimes bartering lore and services with their leaders, the mage considers the cavern itself to be his personal space, and so allows the lesser denizens within to roam freely as part of keeping the deep gnomes from exploring his sanctum.

This encounter deals with exploring, and dealing with the creatures resident within, the sanctum. The master of the cavern will not arrive within the sanctum during the duration of the adventure, unless the Dungeon Master chooses otherwise, being occupied with other business elsewhere. He may choose to hold the player characters accountable for damage done to his domain, however. Dungeon Masters are encouraged to make the master of the sanctum any notorious and memorable Wizard already present in their campaigns, or create a new non-player character.

The monsters lurking within the sanctum are as follows. Note that most of these monsters are not intelligent and manage to coexist mostly by avoiding one another. If player characters manage to lure one monster into another's lair, the monsters, at Dungeon Master's discretion, may do battle with one another in addition to combating the player characters.

1. Eight piercers of the maximum size (4 HD; 19 H.P. each) cluster around the main entrance to the sanctum (location A), where the tunnel first widens. These creatures will strike at the first large

creature to pass within their reach. Note that the piercers do not differentiate between player characters and a pack animal or similar bait. One of the piercers, unusually enough, has a 50 g.p. gem wedged into a crack in its side. A careful examination of the piercer bodies will reveal this prize.

2. Two nests of carrion crawlers are in cul-de-sacs off the main tunnel (locations B and D). The first nest contains five carrion crawlers (hit points of 15, 13, 11, 10, 8) while the second has but three (hit points of 19, 17 and 14). These creatures roam the entirety of the outer caverns, feeding off rats and other lesser vermin, but avoiding the roper lairing in the western part of the sanctum.
3. A large colony of brown mold has recently begun slowly spreading throughout the southernmost areas of the outer cavern (location E), unknown to the mage ruling over the cavern. Its growth within the sanctum of a powerful wizard seems to have given it some ability to feed on magical energies in addition to heat, to the point where casting a 4th level or higher spell within 5' of the mold has a 20% chance of causing its size to double, as if a torch or lantern were lit near to it. The carrion crawlers and the roper are aware of the brown mold and will generally seek to avoid it, though the roper may be cunning enough to chase a fleeing party of adventurers into its clutches.
4. A lone roper (35 H.P.), undernourished and ill-tempered, lairs close to the entrance to the inner sanctum (location F). It has lurked within these caverns for years, ever since the mage trapped it here to serve as a guardian, and is now half-mad with frustration and hunger. It has survived mostly by chasing

the carrion crawlers off of vermin they have caught and eating the very rare intruder. It will stalk any adventurers that arrive, intending to kill and eat them. Within the thing's gullet, in addition to 9 platinum pieces, are 7 gems worth 200 g.p. each, and a **gem of brightness**.

The entrance to the inner sanctum (location G) has been well-guarded by the mage who claims this area. To begin with, it has been sealed by a **wall of force**; in addition, the well-appointed space behind has been disguised via **hallucinatory terrain** to appear as bare cavern, with all surfaces of unworked stone and many jagged outcrops. Should these defenses be overcome, explorers must still beware the pit trap which lies beyond; it is 20' deep, with spikes, and disguised by a **permanent illusion** blending seamlessly with the surrounding floor (imposing a -50% penalty to a thief's ability to Find Traps).

The interior of the sanctum has many prizes. In addition to sumptuous bedding and furnishings, worth up to 5,000 g.p. if somehow successfully transported to the surface and offered to a properly discriminating buyer, a small, but well-chosen, library may be used by magic-users and illusionists to reduce the costs of independent spell research by half (as per the Dungeon Master's Guide). A brain mole is kept in a cage near the bedside as a pet and object of study, and a barbed devil (40 H.P.) has been frozen in **temporal stasis** in the corner. At the Dungeon Master's option, additional treasures or information about nearby encounter areas may be found here. The Dungeon Master may also choose to place a teleportation chamber connecting to the mage's tower in the surface world, or possibly one or more locations on another plane, as a lead-in to future adventures.