

# The Incandescent Grottoes

## Session 7 10-8-23 The Gibbering

Next Session 15-8-23 (18:00)

In world time 10:00.

Standing in the large, chillingly cold chamber they observe the ooze and skeleton statues somewhat warily. They've all heard stories of statues animating and attacking adventurers and tomb raiders, although they haven't actually experienced anything like it themselves. Approaching cautiously they go to the southern end of the room to read the inscription above the doors and to take a closer look at both the skeleton statues and the obsidian doors themselves. The skeleton statues remain fixed to their plinths since they are actually just statues. The inscription reads...

"Final Dissolution Awaits Those Who Plead"

Fenella decides that she is quite happy with her lot in life entirely without any dissolution and she certainly has no intention of pleading for it either. Vlad is quite keen to try the doors but Angus wants to check out the ooze statues to the north first so they carefully examine them, also just statues (dripping - pink, mounded - green, tentacled - blue). "Next?", says Vlad nodding towards the doors, so they return to the imposing entrance. Angus quips, "You only live once and chicks dig scars", which causes Fenella to ponder whether guys dig scars too... probably not, she thinks, so better stay at the back then.

Vlad squares up to the great doors and leaning against one treats it to a solid Vlad shove. It gives a bit but doesn't yield, seemingly from mass and mechanism rather than any sort of magical trickery. He takes a breather and as Angus joins him they give it another try together, heaving mightily but although the door gives a little more, it's not quite enough. All of this is quite enough however to get Angus worrying about what might be behind the doors, perhaps pressuring them closed with a roomful of ooze or acid, recent experience of exactly this sort of thing still being fresh in his memory. Still, it does sound like a possibility so he has no problem persuading Reme and Fenella to take a few steps back as he and Vlad go for it again. Heaving mightily, ready to run and with every sinew straining, the two of them manage to overcome the resistance, forcing the door steadily open until it locks into its open position, revealing a large hall unpopulated by ooze or acid.

The hall is constructed of the same familiar dark pockmarked stone which glows dully providing a shadowy illumination to a space of similar dimensions to the room they've just left but with large recesses to the west and east. Between the recessed areas, in the centre is a pit or shaft with a large obsidian floor-mounted lever on the far side. The southern end of the room is dominated by a raised altar, carved with screaming human faces, atop which stand two golden ruby-encrusted chalices. Between the chalices on the altar sits a large mound of earth. Behind the altar stand another pair of oversized skeleton statues. Hmm, "altar", thinks Fenella wondering if this might be one of the teleport disc destinations. Recalling his dungeoneering skills and considering how much work was needed to open it, Angus insists upon spiking the door open which he immediately does, making quite a racket as he hammers an iron spike firmly home beneath the door. This done they cautiously approach the centre of the room, instinctively spreading out a little, perhaps to avoid any potential area attack.

## **Mouthy McMouth Face**

As the first of the group passes the pit, the mound of "earth" reveals its true self as hundreds of wildly staring eyes and champing teeth-filled mouths suddenly open to scream and screech a terrible gibbering sound, almost deafening the adventurers in its hideous cacophony. Reme and Fenella are overcome by the horrible noise and find themselves moving and acting randomly, seemingly unable to control themselves. Vlad and Angus however resist the appalling racket and gritting their teeth against the din, raise their swords and shields and charge the creature!

Acting decisively the two warriors strike but perhaps the sound also has some effect on them since they both miss the slowly approaching mound of deranged rubbery protoplasm. The creature extends multiple gnashing mouth tentacles which lash out at them, narrowly missing Angus but striking at Vlad, biting into him and attaching to him as he is pulled off his feet, crashing to the ground as the mound moves eagerly towards him. Standing transfixed Fenella gazes upon the scene unable to process anything as Reme walks deliberately to the East, narrowly avoiding the pit before bumping gently into the wall.

Disagreeing with the creature's plans for a laid out picnic lunch and using his great strength, Vlad climbs painfully up as the attached mouth chomps down on him for more damage. He strikes brutally with the sword of Sir Chyde, cleaving vertically into the thing causing jets of protoplasmic stuff to spurt out and splatter onto the floor. Angus swings but again misses as the creature moves to attack the pain-inflicting Vlad. The tentacles lash out again completely missing Vlad but one latches onto Angus, biting down cruelly, attempting to pull the Ranger off his feet but to no avail, Angus is rooted like a mighty oak and remains standing. Reme and Fenella struggle against the malign influence of the awful noise but fail to escape its influence as Fenella suddenly imagines Reme as an enemy to be attacked and killed. Casting Faerie Fire on Reme to aid her attack, she grips her spear and advances menacingly towards the defenceless Ranger who is oblivious, standing quite still against the wall.

The attached mouths gouge and bite into both Vlad and Angus as the tentacles lash out again, with two more of them biting into Angus, tugging and shoving eagerly at him, trying to pull him off balance but Angus is not having it and remains standing, however he still can't manage to hit the mound of protoplasm as his blade swings wide again. Stepping forwards, Vlad takes a bead on the centre of the creature and with a mighty swing of his sword cleaves the blob horizontally completing a final quartering as the sound blessedly subsides into a burble of oozing protoplasmic life fluid, the mound collapsing into a puddle of slowly disintegrating gloop.

Snapping out of their crazed state, Fenella and Reme regard each other as Fenella rather embarrassedly stows her spear and tries to forget what she was about to do. Angus and Vlad stand over the dead creature, tearing various bits and pieces of it off themselves then stamping on the remains. All is quiet again.

Vlad examines the ruby encrusted golden chalices, both clearly very valuable so he puts them in a safe place, his backpack. Angus searches carefully around the altar area, nominally for traps but he finds instead a concealed compartment in the base of a skeleton statue and a small finger-sized hole in the wall behind the altar which he thinks is related to a secret door. Dealing with the compartment first he opens it up and finds 12 platinum ingots which they divide between themselves, a silver ring engraved with ivy which Fenella wears and a badly dented and bashed about black metal shield which he examines more carefully. Although the shield looks like it might be ready for the scrap heap, Angus notices that the leather fittings and bindings are solid and well made. Hefting it up he finds it sits perfectly balanced on his arm and indeed it feels superior to his existing shield so he decides to give it a try for a while.

Angus and Vlad trade various vulgarities regarding small holes in walls before Vlad bravely sticks his finger in the hole, discovering a mechanism that opens the secret door into a room they recognise, the cracked skull of the Dissolved One on the floor reminding them of their earlier victory over one of the denizens of the grottoes. Turning their attention back to the main room Angus notices that the obsidian door did indeed attempt to close automatically but the sturdy iron spike just dug in more firmly keeping the egress open. They examine the shaft in the centre of the room finding a familiar eye-watering toxic odour wafting up so with half an idea already they give the lever a try and are rewarded by the sound of running chains and mechanisms from below followed by a loud splash, presumably as the iron grid floor descends into the toxic fluid below. Pulling the lever back again causes the reverse, a sound of clanking chains lifting a heavy load and after, the sound of liquid dripping.

Aware that they've made a lot of noise in this area they walk and talk regarding their next move and decide to descend to level 2 to take another look at the beach and the underground lake. Arriving without incident at the beach Angus notices some tracks. He does this so well he is able to identify 3 booted individuals have recently passed this way, landing and leaving on a small boat. With their eyes on the far side of the flowing water they fashion a simple lasso and try to catch the bridge post on the other side. Vlad and Angus both miss even after a few tries but fortunately Reme is able to drop a loop neatly over the post the first time he tries. Tightening the rope and tying it securely they safely make their way across.

The mist is a lot clearer here and they can see that they stand on an island in the middle of, not a lake but an underground river. In the centre of the island stand 3 stone coffers. Climbing up onto the island, as Fenella and Angus step forward, the lids of the stone coffers abruptly slide aside, 3 figures emerging and advancing towards the group. In the centre dressed in purple robes of heavily embroidered silk stands a pallid bloated human female with three eyes, two milky and faded and one large central staring red eye. Her gold bangles jangle as she approaches, raising an arm to indicate the adventurers. She is flanked by two blackened corpse-like figures wielding long dark swords. Purple slime oozes from their eye sockets as they follow the 3-eyed figure dutifully, directly towards the adventurers.

In world time 13:00.