

Hermit Alchemist Tower

by David Van Slyke for the [2012 One Page Dungeon Contest](#)

An explanation of the [NAME](#) map design acrostic is [here](#). The map is a tribute to the *Tor at Hightower* map by Nick Isaacs, which is available in the free PDF 3.5 D&D module *A Dark and Stormy Knight*. My own optional Player's version of the map is [here](#).

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You were given an odd annotated map as part of someone's thanks.

"After an Errant routed bandits from this Isolated Keep the hilltop tower stood empty for a decade until claimed by a hermit alchemist who studied crystal formations. He dug into the hill, excavating basement rooms and a majestic cave to hold his secret garden of crystal stalagmites and stalactites."

Intrigued, you decided to try visiting the tower and its secret cave. Finding the tower on a hill was easy with the map.

As you approach, you are surprised to hear shouts and screams. Kobalts and Ghouls are fighting inside an unexpected cave mouth that darkens the foot of the hill. The only Kobalt wearing armor notices you and shouts, "Whoever you are, please help us!"

Enter/Exit: The wall closest to the hillside has collapsed, creating a "cave mouth" littered with rubble.

Ambush: A large **guard dog** kept by the Kobalts defends the tower's ground floor room, which also contains **food**, **drink**, **rope**, and **candles**.

Broken Science: A vertical shaft connects the tower with this basement workroom. Anyone who stands at the top or bottom of the shaft is gently lowered or raised.

Complicated Combo Combat: Unfortunately, **Ghoul** reinforcements from other rooms arrive until the **Kobalts** are killed. The Kobalt leader is mortally wounded but before dying tells his story to the PC (see K3).

Deadly or Fragile Foe: Several one-hit **Zombies** guard this storeroom. They cannot break down doors.

Exotic Item/Location Causing Permanent Random Changes:

Touching this room's glowing **treasure chest** curses the person's sharpest weapon or item and causes their footwear turn blue.

False Ending Revealed: This **secret door** has not been opened since the alchemist used it.

Grandeur: Behind a secret door lies a steeply descending tunnel to the alchemist's garden of crystals. But the cave and its delightfully colored contents are actually only a few inches tall. The tunnel is full of shrink gas. Anyone living becomes mouse-sized for one hour.

Heights: This room's back wall has a sturdy wooden shelf.

Item that Works Best in Combination #1: In one corner of this ancient storeroom is a desiccated **corpse** of a famous alchemist.

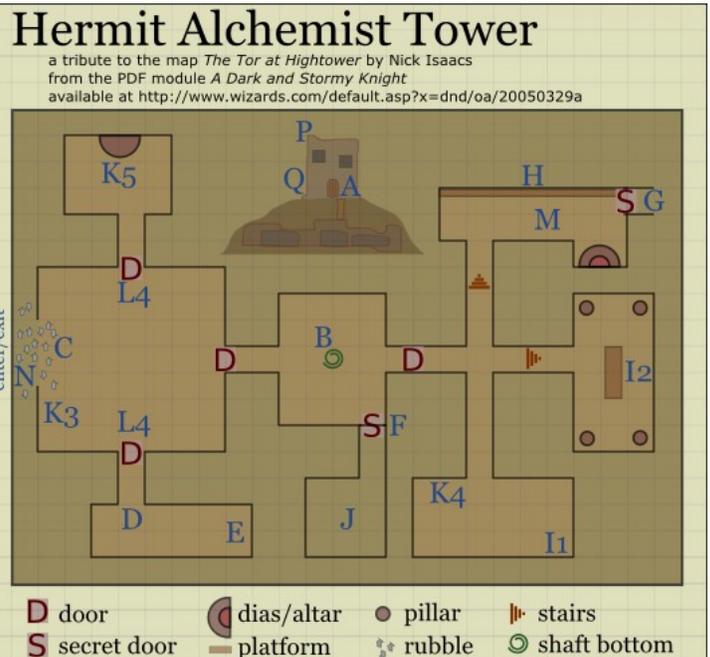
Item that Works Best in Combination #2: The enchanted **table** in this room is large and has a humanoid-shaped depression in the middle. Any humanoid body or skeleton placed upon it will answer one question. Asking another changes the body into a **Zombie**. (The hermit alchemist would kill other alchemists, transport their corpses here, and then demand their secret alchemical knowledge.)

Joy: This room contains whatever type of challenge, item, clue, or exploration the Player most enjoys.

Key #3: The dying **Kobalt leader** tells this story after the battle with the Ghouls. *"Were sent to claim tower. As clan lookout. Two days ago. Tower is safe. Use our supplies...A few minutes ago we opened. Basement inner unlocked door. The Zombies were waiting...Clan will send scouts. Five days. Please. Make our bodies safe. From scavengers. We can be taken home...and buried with honor."*

Key #4: A **key** to doors L4 is hidden on the floor in the corner of this room, covered by dust and rotting rags.

Key #5: A **statue** of the hermit alchemist on the **dias** shows he was an **Ogre!** On his shoulder rides a mouse-sized copy of himself, part of the same stone as the main statue.



Locked Door #4: The key at K4 opens these doors.

Monster: A **Ghoul Cat** guards this room and the evil **altar** in the back. It moves quickly but does little damage and cannot jump well or reach the high shelf that spans the room.

NPC: The **Hermit Alchemist** had moved elsewhere, but his enchantments alerted him when the Kobalts occupied his tower. He arrives to investigate just as the PC attempts to depart.

Problem/Pitfall: The tower's upper story is almost all ruined and rotted. Hidden on the small portion of the floor that remains is a **shrink potion** that makes anyone who drinks it become mouse-sized for one hour. How to retrieve it without causing the floor to collapse and the delicate glass vial to fall?

Quick Heal: The Kobalt supplies on the ground floor include **two healing potions** and one **vial of poison**. All appear identical.