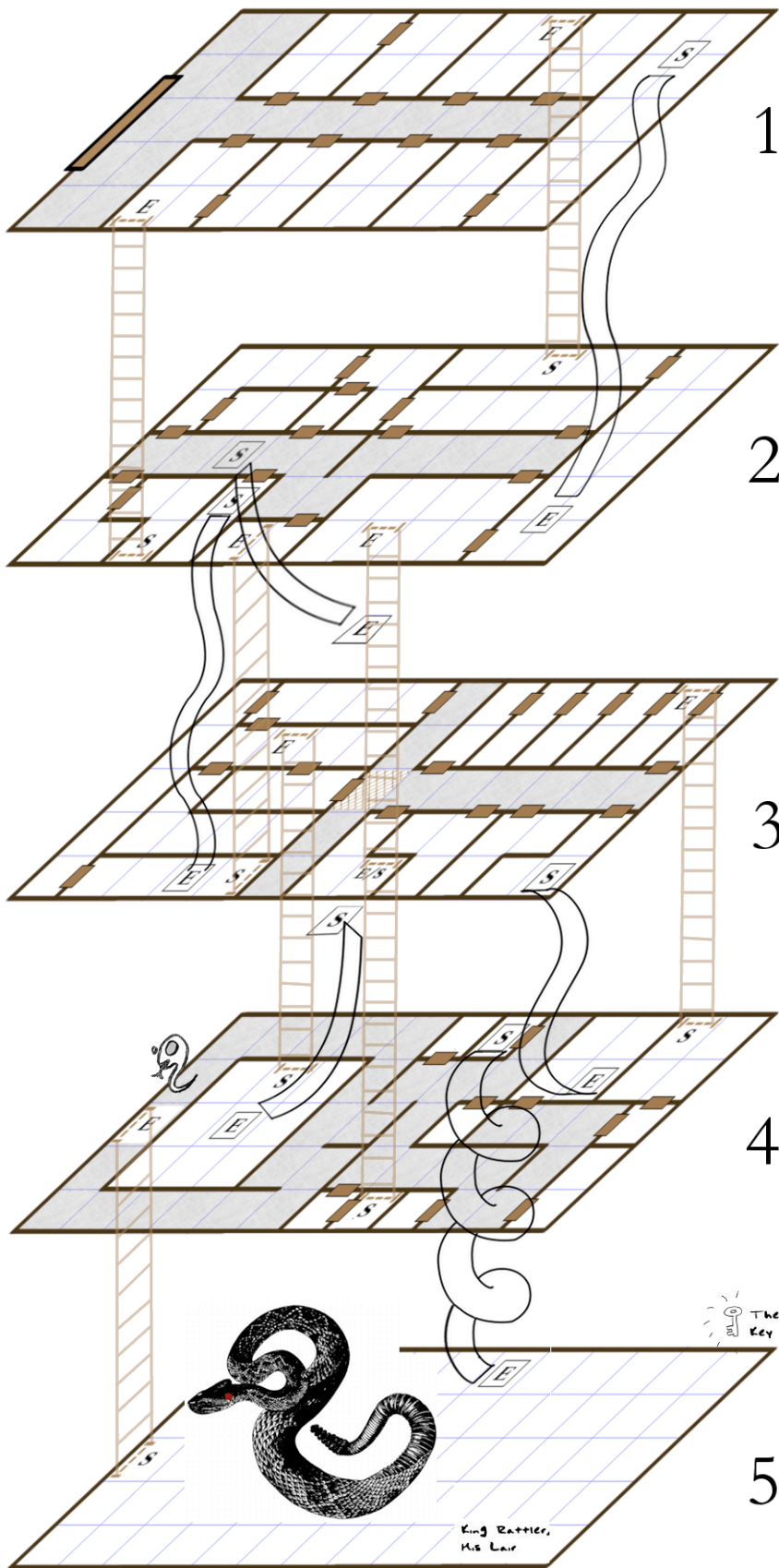


# Snakes AND Chutes and Ladders

venomous fun • by s.harlan



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The 12th Earl had a sense of humor. He offered prisoners a choice: five years added to their sentence in his dungeon (not a healthy place), or instant freedom through the Pit.

Prisoners choosing the Pit were taken to a large metal door in a hill. They were given a club or cheap dagger, a pair of boots, a pair of baggy pants, and, if they had the money for it (which some of his political prisoners had), a potion of *neutralize poison*. They were shoved inside; the door closed and locked.

The only way out was through the door. The only way to open the door from the inside was with the key. The only way to get the key was to get past a giant rattlesnake, five floors down.

The Earl designed the Pit himself. Chutes take you down. Ladders take you up. If you try to climb down a ladder, 2d8 rungs, starting from the top, turn to snakes (as the spell *sticks to snakes*).

The floors are thirty feet apart, but there is a layer of twenty feet of dirt under each floor before the ceiling of the level beneath. The chute walls are smooth and torches have a 20% chance of going out during the exciting ride down.

The slide that starts in the second floor hallway deposits its rider five feet above a hole in the third floor, which leads to a chute to the fourth floor. Falling damage may apply.

The curving slide from the fourth to the fifth floor makes a person dizzy. Torches have an 80% chance to extinguish.

The 12th Earl let the Pit fall into disuse, but the 16th Earl revived it briefly for the traitors in the Rebellion of Prince Loré, and then again for the traitors to King Bron's Reinstatement, and the traitors to the Second Rebellion of Prince Loré. The 16th Earl was politically savvy, and also humorous.

The Earls are long gone now, of course, but the Pit is still there. Rumor has it that the giant rattler that guards the key, magically enchanted to live forever, was given two large rubies for eyes, and those gave him a taste for treasure. Rumor has it that over the decades he has sent out his snakes through the air holes to find him gems and jewels and shiny coins. Rumor has it he has amassed a vast hoard this way, over the decades. No one can say, though—like the long-ago prisoners, no adventurer or thief has ever returned with the tale.

## Inhabitant of room or hallway segment (check when corners are turned)

d20	Inhabitant of room or hallway segment (check when corners are turned)
1-3	Nothing
4-7	1d2 pit vipers
8-11	1d2 spitting cobras
12	1d4 garden snakes
13-16	snake food (2d10 rats)
17-18	snake food (insect swarm: spider)
19	snake food (insect swarm: leech)
20	ghost of adventurer, moaning and wringing its hands but doing little else

NOTE: Because the Pit's inhabitants can move through holes that have developed in the walls due to rats' enthusiasm and other corrosion, even previously-cleared rooms are likely to have fresh creatures. Check again!

## d6 What's lying around a room or hallway

1-2	Nothing
3-4	1d6 skeletons of prisoners
5-6	1d4 corpses of adventurers

Adventurer corpses have either 1d2 potions made by a reasonably competent local apothecary, which have a 70% chance of working (d6): *healing* (1), *cure disease* (2-3), *neutralize poison* (4-5), or something unidentifiable and ineffectual (6); or an anti-venom counteract a snakebite within 1d4 rounds. (Adventurers come prepared [although these adventurers did not come prepared enough].)

Lurking around the top of the ladder going from the bottom floor to the fourth floor is a pit viper wight. There was a time when adventurers were coming here like it was an amusement park, whacking at him endlessly until one of them finally did him in. Man, is he *pissed*. He is just like a regular pit viper, except when he successfully bites an adventurer he starts draining levels rather than injecting poison. To be avoided.

