

## THE TEARS OF MOTHER PESTILENCE

**Hook:** For centuries, the people of Eridu have baptized their infants in the Tears of Mother Pestilence – two waterfall pools that pour from the eyes of her great stone face in the side of a mountain. This ritual inoculates the children against an ancient adult-onset plague. However, young adults grow ill once again.

**Mother Pestilence:** The goddess of disease, insects, and the inevitability of decay. Salt is sacred. Naia is her true name, though few know it. The labyrinth was once her citadel and the origin of the great plague; however, she was betrayed by her lover Asar-Segt, her diseases reversed and avatar rendered inert by a pair of crystals (rooms AA and EE). Her avatar stirs from stasis due to the weakened crystals. If she wakes, or if she is not destroyed or negotiated with, all of Eridu is damned.

**Se'Har:** A society of pyramid-dwelling, serpent-worshipping humans from the other side of the sea. They first came through the great gate (room J) 20 years ago after discovering another such gate. They believe the labyrinth to be their god's final resting place in the Exalted Domain. Pilgrimages for adolescents occur daily: they lie in a sarcophagus in room H as a rite of passage. This rite has become integral to their culture. Their constant travel through the gate drains the crystals. They speak no Common.

**Nephrax:** A neutral tiefling necromancer exiled from the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the dungeon dwells in the northern halls. He too drains the crystals' power; he does so to animate undead followers. His faithful lead raids on the Se'Har, capturing warrior and pilgrim alike so that they might serve him. Lairs in room X.



- A. Mouth of Pestilence.** Three sandstone obelisks, bowls of salt at their base. Hymns on obelisks in both Ancient and Common, can be used to transliterate. Align four concentric letter wheels on door to spell PASS in Ancient, spelling NAIA opens secret tunnel from B to E. Incorrect entry releases winged tarantula swarms from obelisks.
- B. Baptismal Waterfall.** Shallow pool, holy symbols strewn about with precious stones removed. Hidden tunnel behind waterfall.
- C. Ruined Foyer.** Cave-in. Collapsed obelisk reveals clue if reassembled and translated. Patches of black slime. Mated pair of hydraic grub-blighted carrion crawlers.
- D. Birthing Halls.** Thousands of larvae, cocoons. Murals depict Naia copulating with Asar-Segt, then giving birth to herself. 1 in 20 chance each entry that one dungeoneer permanently desires children with an ally. Iron door to E bears Sunwheel image, locked. Magic trap inflicts a permanent vulnerability.
- E. Flooded Vault.** Unnatural shadow. Contains moderate hoard of treasure, *scorpion familiar*.
- F. Heretic's Trap.** Fake door to south embossed with the holy symbol of Naia's ancient and obscure rival. Opening fake door triggers famine mist in hallway, conjures a band of locust callers into room D.
- G. Domed Hall.** Well-maintained. Naian murals covered by Se'Har tapestries and ornaments. Se'Har serpent guards. One torch among many is heatless (*torch of cleansing*).
- H. Crypt.** Five open glass sarcophagi cleaned and inlaid with grey velvet. Sixth sarcophagus recently sealed with heavy chains. Se'Har makeup on Naian statues.
- I. Great Door.** Images of the Exalted Domain, gods stepping through upright diamond-shaped gates.

- J. The Great Gate.** Ornate. Fresh incense and Se'Har décor. Diamond gate 20' in diameter, inlaid with glyphs. Serpent guards, priests.
- K. Guards' Camp.** Cluster of spartan tents. Numerous serpent guards. Equipment.
- L. High Priest's Chamber.** Glass altar filled with amber. The dreams of creatures that sleep atop the altar are visible in a nearby basin. *Gauntlet of sleep* hidden inside bust.
- M. Mud.** Mud floor swallows careless intruders.
- N. Dust of Judgment.** Worthy who pass through contained dust storm emerge to meet the Hooded Maiden of Worms, who grants the boon of Naia before teleporting the dungeoneer to room D. The unworthy have the flesh stripped from their bones.
- O. Mass Grave.** Bones of many creatures, runes burnt onto them. Can be used to assemble a unique skeletal servitor. *Hasted neo-otyugh*.
- P. Altar of the Blight Caller.** Worms grow from the floor like grass. Altar of beetles with scorched tome. Devour the heart of a diseased corpse and survive to call a plague of the dungeoneer's creation down upon a people of their choice – and one ally.
- Q. Descent.** Stairs down into the unknown. *Arcane marks* on the wall warn of danger.
- R. Precarious Chasm.** 30 ft. pit filled with cloud of fiendish stirges. Statue fires random eye rays; faces in wall fire homing spikes that polymorph into beetles that burrow into the victim's skull. Tiefling skeleton at bottom of pit carries magic items and *chaos device*.
- S. Amber Puzzle.** Walls filled with amber cubes containing gems and mosquitos. Amber can only be melted by *torch of cleansing*. Melting correct cube releases harmless bugs and valuable magic gem; incorrect cubes contain fake gems and mosquitos carrying extinct civilization-killing disease.

- T. Wall of Infernal Torches.** Gallery of torches made from the sentient hollowed-out skulls of demons slain by Naia's plagues.
- U. Hourglass.** Rotated gravity puts dungeoneers at bottom of quickly-filling salt hourglass. Salt mummies in bottom, wraiths with timehammers wait in the upper half, blocking escape. *Lesser ring of time reversal* dangles from chain in upper half.
- V. Nest.** Carrion crawlers from room C make their nest here. Warded door to north bestows fever and hallucination curse.
- W. Meditation Chamber.** Ghost laments loss of child to Nephrax, console or destroy her to open cursed door in room V. Reliefs depict one dungeoneer's ancestor as a child of Naia.
- X. Chapel of Nine Fevers.** Nephrax lairs here with Se'Har prisoners, zombie serpent guards, and other undead. Moderate relics.
- Z. Great Hall.** Defaced Naian statue. Grey render zombie, two acolytes of Nephrax.
- AA. Western Grotto.** Crystal of Asar-Segt guarded by battle wights and flameskulls.
- BB. Catacomb of Tears.** Royal urns. Stone face of Naia, cries two fountains of tears. Demonstrate great endurance to reveal *scythe of drought*.
- CC. Plague Gate.** Sealed with divine magic.
- DD. Hidden Crematorium.** Skull of centipedes demands advice on devising a magic plague to defeat a new divine enemy. Opens gate in room CC if dungeoneers are helpful.
- EE. Eastern Grotto.** Crystal of Asar-Segt. Sleeping Se'Har serpent guards, gauth.
- XX. Obex of Naia.** Flies, dead crops, bloated livestock, pillars of salt. Upon entering, the avatar of Mother Pestilence wakes: winged mummified conjoined lamia twins. Major treasure and magic item cache, including the *cloak of pests* and *ankh of swarm control*.