



## THE HEX OF AGONY

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The Hex of Agony has plagued the known worlds for centuries. Believed to be an unimaginably cruel or perhaps out of control rite of sacrifice, the Hex materializes for a period of six months, during which time it slowly tortures all life to death before disappearing again, leaving nothing but a six-sided depression in the earth and thousands of pain-wracked corpses to mark its passing.

The Hex itself is a large but low six-sided building that appears to be constructed of polished ruby jack, seamless but for three heavy grey ironwood double doors at its vertices. For each of the first three months of its presence, one of the three doors on the outside of the Hex is open, in sequence. After that, it is impenetrable until it reappears at its next killing field.

Those who have ventured into the Hex during these first months report that the inside is dark, putrid, and sweltering, almost entirely composed of polished ruby jack like the exterior, carved or shaped into baroque columns and archways that echo the six-sided theme. The Hex is populated by mindless, starving thralls who fight to the death and devour the fallen. The only saving grace of the hellish fortress is that the pain the Hex causes is diminished inside its walls.

Each of the outer doors leads to a different dungeon, all three of which end at a second, unopenable door. The doors are adorned with identical golden seals with settings for three gemstones, but only one setting in each door is filled.

It is speculated that if all three gems were brought to the third interior door and placed in the seal, the door would open -- but none who have attempted this feat have ever returned from the third dungeon.

**Encounters** - the outer dungeons are entirely populated by adventurers who have failed to solve the Hex's puzzle and fallen under its thrall. The Hex's thralls cannot harm each other, nor can they leave the Hex. The thralls are few, and patrol the Hex erratically; every 20 minutes the party spends inside the hex there is a 25% chance of encountering a patrol.

- 1 - The first thing the party will notice is the intense stink of sewage that pervades the outer dungeons. In the center of the room is a large dais. At the center of the dais is a life-size statue facing the outer door, of a smug horned and tailed man dressed in devilish fashion. When all three gems are placed in one of the Hex's inner doors, these daises become teleporters leading to the next dungeon in sequence: 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 1.
  - 2 - This room is the source of the Hex's rank odor. It is a midden, with a raised path crossing a pit filled to the brim with excrement. Pale, almost translucent, rubbery mushrooms sprout in the dung; eating these is enough to keep a man alive, but only just. Subsistence on the mushrooms for a week renders a PC weak enough to be affected by the Hex's enthrallment effect.
  - 3 - This room contains a baroque fountain decorated with devilish gargoyles. The fountain overflows, coating the floor with water that flows into a french drain around the edges of the room. The water is unpleasantly warm but potable.
  - 4 - Upon leaving this room, the PC with the lowest willpower out of the group must test against suggestion or take the next available opportunity to backstab the party member with the strongest personality, applying all appropriate hit and damage bonuses. The only reason the geased PC can give for his betrayal is that his target "had it coming to him."
  - 5 - This room is extradimensional in nature -- once the entire party is inside, all of the entrances shift one corridor to the right, making it appear to any who do not succeed at a difficult navigation test that they entered the chamber from one door to the left of where they actually did.
  - 6 - All of the Hex's thralls are compelled to toss their valuables into this room. Over the centuries it has collected quite a hoard. Any enemy inside the Hex has the ability to animate any coin or small gemstone that was once in this room as a standard action, imbuing it with enough velocity to puncture flesh. Because this attack comes from a PC's coin purse, it cannot be dodged, only resisted by armor.
  - 7 - This room is identical to Room 3, but the fountain water causes any who drink it to retch violently, vomiting up 1d4+1 giant maggots. Although the maggots' flesh tastes vile, it is highly nutritious and will keep those who eat it strong enough to resist the Hex's enthrallment effect.
  - 8 - Walking down this corridor in the direction of the arrow causes the limbs and eyelids of any PC who does not test against exhaustion to become heavy with sleep. If this effect is not reversed by walking the opposite way down the hall, afflicted PCs will pass out in 1d4+2 minutes.
  - 9 - On the inner wall is a heavy black-lacquered ironwood door bearing a round golden seal of hellish origin. Three gem settings are evenly spaced around the seal, one of which contains an easily removed ruby jack gemstone.
- When all three gems are placed in one of the Hex's inner doors, the outer doors all lock tight and the inner doors are each open for one month: Dungeon 1 for the remainder of month 3 and month 4, Dungeon 2 for month 5, and Dungeon 3 for month 6. At the end of month 6 the gems reset to their original positions as the Hex moves.
- 10 - Six ruby jack stone golems in the form of hulking devils of wrath guard this broad, colonnaded corridor, two at each inner door. If any of these are destroyed, the golems from the other doors will move to support.
  - 11 - In this room, the air is hot as a blast furnace, and filled with a high-pitched keening. At the center of the room, a wide natural pillar of ruby jack shines blindingly with the light of a furious red sun, throwing off waves of crippling pain. Before the pillar stands an ornate throne, and before that a bowl-shaped altar.
- Slumped over the bowl is the desiccated corpse of a horned and tailed man, dressed in dirty but intact finery. His mummified face is twisted in a rictus of pain, and his arms hang limply over a large patch of dried blood, with a curved black knife clutched in one bony hand and the opposite wrist slashed open.
- If the warlock's dried blood is reconstituted with water in the altar bowl, it completes the warlock's final desperate sacrifice and the pain is released from the Hex in a deafening scream as the central pillar shatters. Free, the searing light takes on a life of its own and assaults the party as a powerful pain elemental.
- When the entity is defeated, the party finds that the Hex is rendered inert. All magical effects cease, all the doors unlock, and any surviving thralls are freed. The remainder of the room is appointed like a noble's city apartments, with a bed, a desk, bookshelves, a small kitchen, and other amenities, and the dry heat in the room has preserved much of the warlock's collection of magical possessions. The party is free to salvage them.