

DEATH OF THE SINNER

Introduction

The Vantærum Academy was created for the training of Holy Warriors. The Dean, Arbatarius Vantærum, laboured to magically amplify an artifact called The Orb of Judgement in an attempt to banish all traces of evil from the land. Instead he unleashed the power of Unholy Judgment which devastated the Academy.

The land around the Academy, once fertile, is now blasted and forlorn, with tormented undead roaming ceaselessly. Mostly in ruins with its three top stories shattered and collapsing, the only discernable entrance to the Academy leads down into the subterranean Temple area.

The Orb of Judgement

Once a character has crossed the threshold of the Temple any lie, curse or other verbal transgression will result in a spark of electricity leaving their mouth (causing minor damage e.g. d3) and cutting the offending phrase into the nearest stone surface. The walls are crowded with all the oaths and untruths of those who have trespassed here.

1: Archway of the Sentinel

The entrance is framed by two massive stone arms emerging from the ground with the fingers steeped at the top to form an archway. There's a 3ft tall stone column in front of the hands with the top carved into a bowl. If an offering of value is placed into it then the hands will raise to the sky for a moment and the characters may proceed unimpeded. If no offering is made the arms will grasp at the characters if they try to enter. Only relatively minor damage is taken from the grappling itself but on contact the fingers unleash a powerful electrical charge.

2: The Ledger Keeper

The Ledger Keeper is an intelligent robed ghost with a long beard who remains to keep a record of all who enter the Academy. From behind his desk, with his quill poised above his records book, he asks in a gravelly voice: "Name and purpose of visit?". He merely wants to keep the ledger accurate and up to date. He will not attack unless provoked.

3: Twisted Tunnel

Beyond stout wooden doors is a flagstoned tunnel that once saw daily processions of worshippers. Now the very fabric of the stone is unnaturally warped. This spiralling corridor of slimy stone is very difficult to traverse, with no flat surfaces.

Anyone travelling here will be trampled by a mass of panicking, fleeing ghosts of students still trying to escape the Academy's horrible cataclysm. The ghosts don't attack, just push and crush.

4: Anteroom

An ornate marble bench is next to the wall on the right as you enter this waiting area. On the left wall is a large fresco of an angel and a devil weighing a man's soul while a priest says the sinner's last rites. The devil peels off the painting and attacks.

5: Shrine of Donlün

This corridor slopes upwards to a hump in the middle where stands a statue of a warrior, badly wounded but still resolute. A small platinum plaque under it reads: "Taken from a stronghold in the city of Donlün where a valiant band of the faithful held against a siege of heretics. Remember their sacrifice."

Showing this plaque to Arbatarius will remind him of his ideals and make him hesitate. Touching the plaque triggers a magic trap that turns the statue into a 6ft diameter rolling granite sphere the characters must use their reflexes to avoid. It rolls in the direction the toucher approached it from.

6: Lurking Oozes

Oozes are squelching over a festering pile of humanoid bones.

6: Lift Shaft

A secret door bars entrance, the password is cut into the wall: "I told you, the password is 'penitence', you damned simpleton."

The winch drum operates a simple cage & counterweight system. The cage holds four people. A subservient zombie acolyte mans the mechanism, it gestures at the characters to enter the lift.

7: Bridge of Sinners

A bridge made of zombies chained together hand to hand and foot to foot, like a paper chain, spans a pit full of daggers.

When a character walks on them they writhe, moan and call out their sins ("I murdered my brother!", "I burned down the temple!"). If a character tells them they're forgiven the sinners settle down and weep quietly for a while.

8: Reflecting Pool

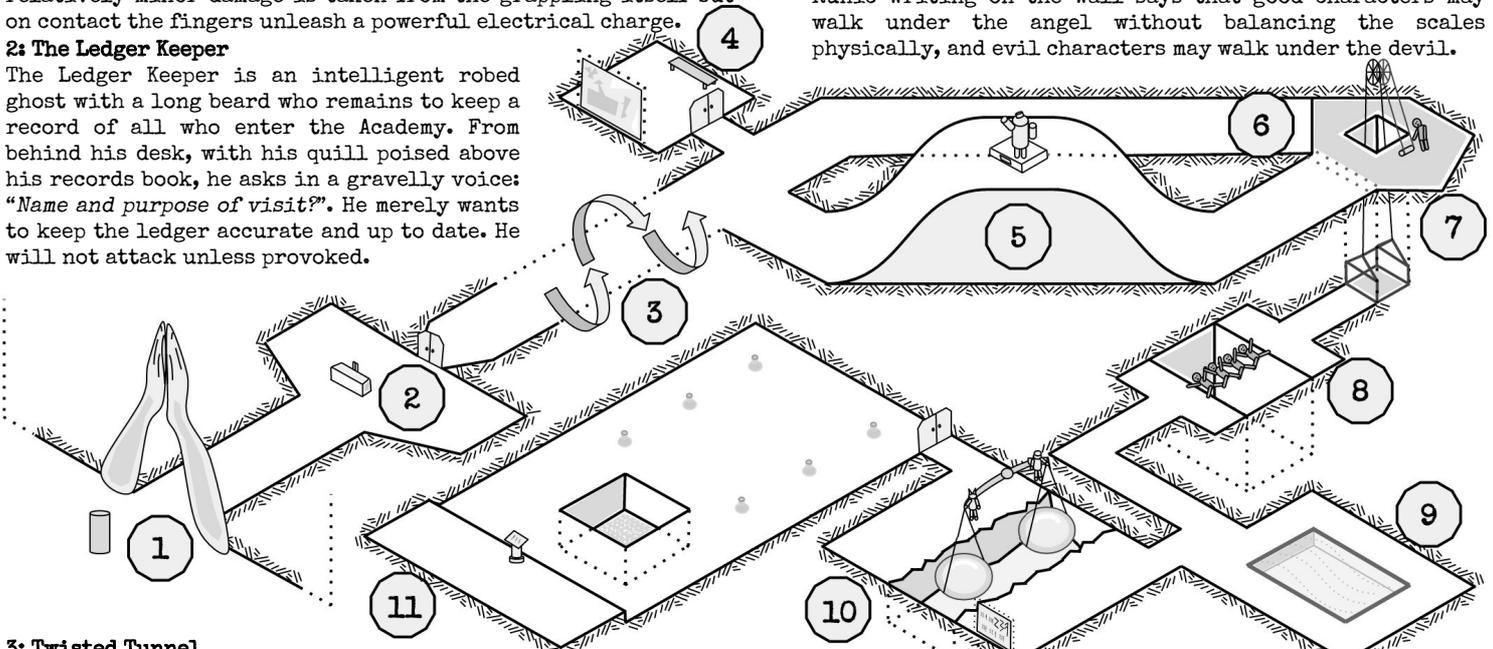
When the first character looks in this still, mirror-like pool a twin version climbs slowly from the water and approaches its original. If they attack the twin it will fight, but if they are peaceful the twin will merely observe them and climb back into the pool when they leave. A slain twin and its possessions turn to water. Only one twin may exist at a time.

9: The Weighing of Souls

A pit of cold energy is bridged by the pans of a set of brass scales suspended from the ceiling. The pan on the left has a brass devil holding the chains, the one on the right an angel.

The solution is open ended (rust/jam the mechanism, balance the pans with equally weighted characters crossing at the same time) but if they jump across without touching the scales it triggers a trap that tilts the opposite platform down to slide them into the pit of crackling cold.

Runic writing on the wall says that good characters may walk under the angel without balancing the scales physically, and evil characters may walk under the devil.



10: Arbatarius Vantærum

Cracked marble arches line the walls of this cathedral-like chamber and statues lie splintered all across the flagstones. The Spectre of Arbatarius Vantærum is behind a lectern atop the grand altar, incorporeal hands on the Orb of Judgement.

He will ask: "Who among you is the greatest sinner?" If the players don't nominate someone the GM will decide, based on their knowledge of the characters. Faceless grey creatures float out of the Orb of Judgement and congregate swiftly around the 'guilty' character to drag the character (and themselves) into a pit of fire near the centre of the room. They will not attack the other characters unless they are attacked. When one of them is destroyed another forms from the Orb of Judgement. There are 6 large jars of holy wine that will cause the pit of flames to temporarily splutter out for d4 rounds if thrown in.

Conclusion

The Orb shatters if it is touched by anyone but Arbatarius or if Arbatarius is destroyed. Once the Orb's influence is ended the temple becomes a still, lifeless place. Its undead are released from service and life begins to return to the surrounding area. All may speak and act freely now.