



The Wives of the Mad Duke

By Jenna Stively & Nick Franco

A ghostly woman appears to you in a dream:

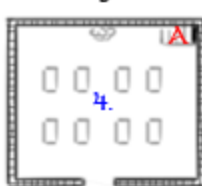
"The mad duke has locked away his pregnant wife. He craves a son. Tomorrow, she will give birth to a daughter. In his rage, he will murder his wife and daughter, just as he has done three times before. Please, save her from our fate! You can find them in the tower. I will help you if I can, but be warned: the spirits of the other queens are restless and unpredictable. They may not wish you to succeed."



The mad duke's castle is an isolated keep far from any other town or settlement. It is staffed by clockwork servants who will go about their programmed duties unless hindered.



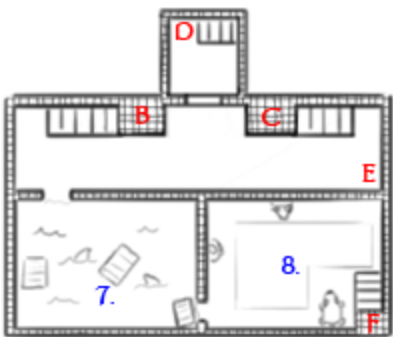
1. The entrance hall is lined with portraits of the king's family, including his three dead wives, Arabella, her hands clasped in prayer; Tara, wearing an emerald necklace; and Stebitha, holding a filigreed dagger.



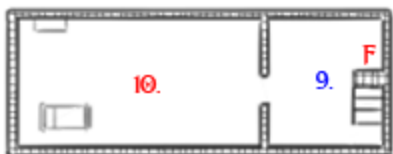
2. Inside the feast hall, there are half a dozen tables set for a feast, a raised dais at one end with two thrones, and the king's sad parrot in a gilded cage. Two sets of large stairs lead up to the second floor, flanked by 2 sets clockwork guards who won't let anyone past without a fight. The parrot asks for a joke. If the players tell him one, he reveals a set of servants' stairs behind the dais, an alternate way to the second floor.



3. Inside the chapel, the ghost of Agatha prays by herself. If any of the players join her in prayer, she'll give the party a holy relic hidden in the chapel floor, which gives the holder +1 to their defense.

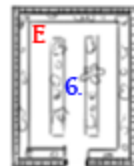


4. The crypt holds the tombs of the dead wives and the empty tomb of the duke, adorned with a half finished sculpture, holding the duke's ancestral sword. The sword is enchanted and knows information about the castle. It may give helpful information if the players are stuck.

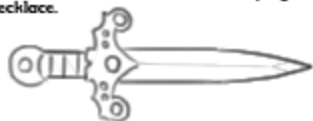


5. Inside the hitchens, a clockwork cook prepares a meal inside. It will try to eject the party if it sees them and attacks them if they resist. Hidden in the cupboards are 2 bottles of fine wine worth 20 g each and a healing potion.

6. The greenhouse contains 1 carnivorous plant and 3 poison plants, which will attack when anyone walks by. There are also 4 rare plant specimens that are worth 5 g each. One set of harmless vines has grown out of control, completely enveloping a clockwork gardener, who holds a jar of "Mir-a-Grow". If the players apply this to plants inside the greenhouse, the plants will grow out of control, bursting through the glass roof and providing a way up to the second floor.



7. The library is supernaturally flooded. On the far wall, the door to the next room is blocked by floating wreckage. Water remains suspended inside the room even when the door is open, approximately 7 feet deep. Tara is weeping in one corner, and rebuffs any attempts to speak to her. Her tears threaten to fill the entire room. 2 sharks circle the room, attacking the players. The players can console Tara with her last emerald necklace, which is in the mouth of one of the sharks. Giving Tara her necklace will dry up the water in the room. Tara's tears also act as a healing potion, and she offers a flask of them to the players for finding her necklace.



8. Stebitha has taken up residence in the trophy room, possessing taxidermied skins and mounts. She can change the trophy she is possessing at will, switching between a boar's head, a stuffed grizzly bear, and suit of armor. As a ghost, she is unable to physically harm the players, but gains additional stats when possessing the trophies. Destroying all of her possessed objects renders her harmless, but delivering the killing blow with her family's filigreed dagger (displayed in the room) will imbue the weapon with her rage, giving you +1 to attack when fighting the duke.

9. When the players reach the third floor, they hear the thin wail of an infant and the unsteady voice of a midwife from the next room, "It's...a girl." The mad duke howls in rage.

10. The duchess, midwife, and duke are in the tallest part of the tower. When the players enter the room, the duke is advancing on his wife, who is holding her newborn daughter. He turns to fight the players immediately. The duke is a skilled knight and he homes in on whichever party member has the lowest health. He fights with a twin to the ancestral sword in the chapel, and the wielders of the ancestral swords have a 50% chance of missing against each other. His cry summons 2 clockwork guards, who enter the chamber and fight the party.

When the duke is defeated, the duchess thanks the party. As a sign of her thanks, she offers to let them name her daughter. As the players leave, the duchess holds her daughter in her arms, and for a moment, the ghostly forms of the duke's three dead wives hover near her, then vanish.