



EYES OF THE STONE THIEF

A 13TH AGE ADVENTURE

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Pelgrane



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MARBLEHALL

LEVELS 6-7

This sublevel consists of a single building—the house of Marblehall. As described on page 332, the Witch of Marblehall (Casila Artalin) used the dungeon-summoning ritual to trick the Stone Thief into consuming her family's mansion. The dungeon came as, well, a thief in the night, before the Witch expected it to arrive, so it also swallowed several members of her family and their servants, along with their dinner guests. To protect them, she bewitched them with an illusion, so they are mostly incapable of noticing that they're trapped in a living dungeon. The rituals of life continue in Marblehall as they have for generations, even though the family's circumstances have changed drastically.

If the characters are guests of the Witch, then they can enter Marblehall freely. If they're her enemies, or just wander into her realm by mischance, then they must deal with her magical defenses.

We also suggest checking out the *Keys of Marblehall* adventure (page 331).

FEATURES & FACTIONS

This is the Witch's domain. Not even the Stone Thief has any power here—the Witch prepared her family home to be invulnerable to the living dungeon's insidious thievery. That means that Marblehall's internal configuration doesn't change. It's stuck inside the living dungeon, but isn't part of the dungeon.

The only 'factions' here are the Witch and her magical servants, and her family and their mundane servants. The latter are all bewitched to remain ignorant of what's going on, which makes them appear insane to the PCs. This curse convinces them that Marblehall is just as it always was, and to misinterpret all evidence to the contrary. Depending on your interpretation of the curse, the Witch might have intended it to protect her family and servants from the dangers of the living dungeon, or maybe it's just whimsy.

DESCRIPTORS

Marblehall is a magnificent country house, as fine as any in Axis or Forge. Lots of marble (obviously), oil paintings, statues, ceiling murals, tapestries, fine furniture, and magical heating and lighting—if you're going to be trapped in a dungeon for eternity, this is certainly one of the nicer ones.

MINOR ENCOUNTERS

Sir Leopold

Leopold is one of the Witch's cousins. He fancies himself to be a shining knight, and he certainly has a very shiny suit of armor. Before Marblehall was swallowed, he amused himself by hunting beasts and 'monsters' in the woods of the Artalin estate. Now, he's under the Witch's curse and still thinks he's doing exactly that, even though the monsters right outside his door are infinitely more dangerous than anything in the woods of his youth. However, Leopold's squire Etwin has broken free of the curse and knows exactly what's going on. He's terrified that if the Witch finds out he's no longer under her illusion, she'll do something even worse to him, but he also frets that if he isn't constantly vigilant, Leopold will wander out the door and get eaten. When the PCs arrive, both Leopold and Etwin look to them for help; Leopold, in his cursed delusion, assumes the PCs are the new groundskeepers, and demands that they explain to his cowardly squire that Sir Leopold can battle any monster in the woods. Etwin begs the PCs to play along so they don't alert the Witch, but that they also help him keep Leopold from going adventuring in a champion-tier deathtrap.

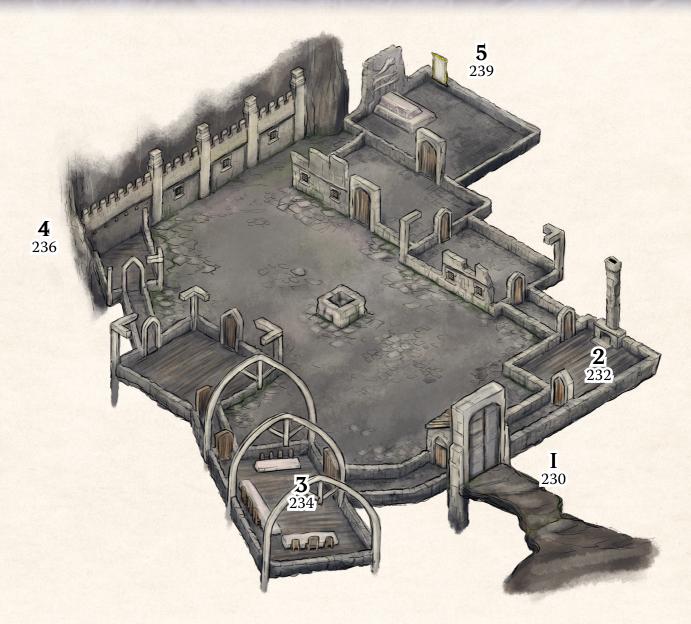
Play Leopold for laughs—the PCs have to bow and scrape and play low-status yokels while he preens about what a brave adventurer he is. Why, he's faced kobolds on the field of battle. Twice.

THE CURSE STRIKES!

The Witch's curse begins to affect the player characters. At first, it manifests as momentary flashes of Marblehall-as-it-was—an empty bowl suddenly seems to be overflowing with succulent fruit, or sunlight starts pouring through a window that looks out only onto solid rock. Have each PC make a save; those who fail suffer from the curse in the next encounter. That means they'll perceive themselves to be in a magnificent and wholly subterranean mansion having a ball, and interpret all events to fit with that delusion. So, if they're then attacked by, say, the arkad demons, they'll see them as overly attentive footmen instead of murderous extradimensional horrors.

THE LIBRARY

The Library at Marblehall focuses more on dwarven culture, Imperial history, and dull treatises on geology than arcane lore. There's also an extensive collection of salacious bard songs, assembled over the years by **Uncle Martyn**, one of the elder members of the Artalin family. He spends his days in the library, practicing his singing, which means he's alone most of the time. His solitude has given him time to think, and he's on the verge of breaking free of the Witch's curse (of course, to him, she's not the Witch—she's his lovely if odd niece Casila).



If the PCs help him break free—or, conversely, push him back into his delusion so he is more compliant—he can tell them about Casila. She has her own sanctum in the old chapel, but she comes to the library to read and consult the books sometimes. She was especially interested in one book on architecture, the *Catalogue of Imperishable Works*. If the characters examine that book, they discover annotations by the Witch describing other likely targets for the Stone Thief.

By the way, Martyn's collection of scandalous songs includes one that's clearly a coded reference to an icon (roll dice to determine which one that is). If a bard with the Balladeer talent learns that song, they can gain an extra positive relationship die to any foes of that icon, as well as an additional cursed die for the embarrassed icon.

The library also contains an account of the events in Marblehall at the end of the 12th Age—see *Passage Perilous*, page 232.

Terrified Servants

The servants of Marblehall are more resistant to the curse than the Artalin family, and this particular band of three palace guards have realized that something terribly strange is going on in Marblehall. They've taken one of the guests from the banquet (see page 234) as a hostage (she has no idea what's going on, since she's still under the full effects of the curse), but the curse prevents anyone from reacting properly to their threats other than the Witch, and they know she'd *disintegrate* them if she found them. So, they wander the halls in the hopes of meeting someone who can be intimidated into helping them.

Enter the PCs. The footmen—half-starved, bedraggled, maddened, and desperate—demand to know what happened to Marblehall and how they can escape, and they threaten to kill their hostage unless the PCs answer. The footmen are no match for the PCs, so this encounter is about giving the players a chance to demonstrate overwhelming power without killing anyone, as well as showing them that Marblehall is a darker place than the amusingly deluded nobles might suggest.

Mirror, Mirror

As described in *The Keys of Marblehall*, the Witch possesses a magical mirror that she can use when conditions are right to contact her icon patron on the surface. Reliable communications out of the dungeon are a rare treasure, so she keeps her mirror safely locked away in her Sanctum (see page 239). This mirror is a decoy, made to precisely resemble the real thing.

If a character looks into the mirror, roll a +15 vs. MD attack. On a hit, the character falls victim to the mirror and is shown a vision of a horrible potential future, one so ghastly that the shock may be lethal. Take that player out of the room (or whatever the equivalent is for your play environment—open a side chat window with them, disconnect their brain jar from the collective) and describe how they see something flicker in the depths of the mirror for an instant. Ask them to think about what sight would scare their character most.

Then, go back and tell the other players what's really going on while the player of the cursed PC waits. The next battle is going to be an illusion experienced by the mirror-cursed PC. In that battle, everyone else is going to die. The players should do their best to sell the defeat to the cursed PC—they should end up dying, but make it look convincing and plausible. Make sure they keep track of powers and consumables that get used, so the correct values can be restored afterward. If there are any long-simmering personality clashes in the party, then maybe those can come to the fore in the illusionary fight.

Bring the cursed player back in and ask them what they saw in the mirror. The horror of their vision costs them a recovery.

Now, play through the next battle and cheat. Have the monsters roll exactly what they need to hit the PCs every time, be unfair, give the bad guys extra-nasty specials, and arbitrarily cut off escape routes. Embrace your inner rat bastard dungeon master. (It's best to use a comparatively unimportant battle, like the Arkad Demons (page 231) or the Dungeon Intrusion (page 242)—don't use the confrontation with the Witch.) Kill off the PCs, one by one, until only the cursed character is left, then go for the total party kill.

When that character is down and making death saves, their first successful save means they wake up. For the rest of the party, only an instant has passed. The unfortunate player character who got hit by the mirror has still lost any recoveries/hit points/powers expended in the fake battle. If the unlucky character never makes a successful death save, they wake up down another recovery when they 'die'.

THE PORTRAIT

One of the player characters spots a portrait on the wall that depicts a young noblewoman in a rich gown. Something about her eyes seems strangely familiar. Wait a moment—that's the PC's grandmother! No one ever knew where she came from, and she always refused to talk about her family. Could Gran have been a member of the Artalin dynasty—and if so, doesn't that make the player character an Artalin?

THE HOARD OF THE ARTALIES

The Artalin family is famously wealthy. Even if the player characters are on a quest to save the world from a malicious living dungeon, they can justify a quick side trek to find the family's treasure vault. It's guarded by another clutch of arkad demons, as well as a complex lock (DC 30 to open). Inside is a vast hoard of thousands of gold pieces.

This raises two issues:

- How do the players transport such a pile of treasure out of the dungeon?
- Unlike the other treasure in the Stone Thief, this gold unambiguously belongs to the Artalin family. If the characters take it, they'll be stealing from one of the noble families of the Dragon Empire. That positive relationship with the Emperor may be imperiled...

I. THE DOORS OF MARBLEHALL

Before the PCs get to the battle itself, they've got to navigate the discontinuity between the living dungeon of the Stone Thief itself and the Marblehall sublevel. The dusty corridors and vaults of the Pit of Undigested Ages end in a line of stone that writhes and boils. White tendrils of ectoplasm dart and recoil at the foundations of



the palace. If the characters visited the Wild Caves (page 94), then they saw a similar phenomenon there. As long as they don't poke the angry dungeon with a ten-foot stick, they can just jump over the discontinuity and continue on to Marblehall.

In front of the doors, the PCs find signs of past battles—dead orcs, shattered stone imps, the exploded remains of other, more exotic monsters. From the look of the wounds, most of the damage was done with a barrage of *fireballs* and other blasting spells, but there are also demonic claw marks and sword cuts. Judging by the state of the remains, there were at least four waves of attackers.

The Doors of Marblehall were made by the best dwarven craftsmen; they stand so tall that a giant could enter without bowing, and are decorated with plates of gold and black adamant. These ceremonial doors are rarely opened, but there is a smaller portico built into each of them for day-to-day use.

Unless the characters are expected by the Witch, the doors are locked. Optionally, if any of the PCs share a positive icon relationship with the Witch's patron, an icon benefit might open the doors for them. Otherwise, a huge ornate keyhole awaits the attention of the party's designated burglar, or they could try the equally huge and ornate doorbell. (Or, if they have the key from the Folly (page 337), they can simply unlock the door and slip inside).

Picking the Lock: The lock is DC 30; failure means the thief can get the door open, but it takes another round or three—ask for another skill check at DC 20, then DC 10 in subsequent rounds. Meanwhile, the arkad demons materialize and attack.

The arkad demons materialize and attack on a success, too, but the PCs can choose to escape through the open door.

The Bell: The PC who rings the bell senses an insidious presence in their mind, trying to ascertain who they are. Make an attack: +15 vs. MD; on a hit, the Witch learns whatever the first thing was that the PC tried to conceal from her telepathic assault (so, if the PCs are here to kill the Witch, that thought is what the Witch picks up). On a miss, have the PC roll their relationship dice to determine the 'taste' of their mind that the Witch detects.

The Witch opens the door if the adventurers appear interesting or harmless. If they're threatening, she summons the arkad demons to slow them down and prepares her own defenses. If they're not threatening, but appear potentially useful, then she sends the arkad demons to test the PCs; if they can beat up her minions, then they may be able to get the ritual element she still needs (see page 352).

THE ARKAD DEMONS

The guards are summoned spirits from some otherworldly dimension where corded muscles and giant flesh-ripping claws are as fundamental as breathing. Despite their horrific appearance and equally horrific treatment of intruders, they are unfailingly courteous, like the best footmen in the Empire. They apologize for the mess when they rip a foe's throat open, and congratulate sir on his fine choice of weapon when they suffer a critical hit. In addition to their claws, they carry magical halberds that animate and fight on their own.

The halberds phase out of existence when the guards depart.



ARKAD DEMOR

Red looks excellent on sir today. Sir is to be complimented on his choice of blood color. The only thing that might improve sir's ensemble would be sir's intestines, worn as a dashing cravat. Spiffing.

8thlevel troop [DEMON] Initiative: +13

Claw +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage

Phase Strike: If the arkad demon phased in this round, its *claw* attacks have their crit range expanded by 2.

Phase Out: As a move action, the arkad demon may attempt to phase out of our reality. It needs to make a normal save (11+) to do so; when phased out, it removes itself from the battlefield.

Phase In: As a move action, a phased-out arkad demon may appear anywhere on the battlefield. Roll a d8; if the result is equal to or less than the value of the escalation die, the arkad demon is dazed (–4 to its attacks) until the start of its next turn.

AC 24 PD 18 HP 144 MD 22

Animated Halberd

No one knows if they're actually animated weapons, or if there are phased-out Arkadi wielding them in some alien dimension.

7th level mook [CONSTRUCT] Initiative: +11

Strike +**12 vs. AC**—18 damage *Miss:* 9 damage.

Flying: The halberds float in the air and fight as if wielded by invisible hands.

Grabbable Weapon: Instead of attacking, a PC can try to grab a halberd with a DC 20 Strength check. If successful, the PC grabs the halberd and can wield it as a weapon. The halberds are +2 melee weapons that can hit phased-out Arkadi. The halberd-wielder can see into the Arkadi dimension. If the PC rolls a natural 1–5 while wielding the halberd, the weapon breaks free and immediately makes a *strike* attack on its former wielder.

AC 23 PD 18 MD 18 HP 27 (mook)

Mook: Kill one halberd mook for every 27 damage you deal to the mob. Grabbed halberds are exempt from spillover damage.

Raising the Alarm

If the PCs are trespassers in Marblehall, and the Witch knows they're coming, then she augments her defenses. Treat the PC group as having an extra character. For example, if you've got three PCs, use the monster chart row for four adventurers.

ARKAD DEMOR SERGEARTS

Sir has been exceedingly rude to the staff. Yes, I mean the halberds. Sir's life is regrettably forfeit.

9th level leader [DEMON] Initiative: +15

Claw +14 vs. AC (2 attacks)—25 damage

C: Phase Grab +14 vs. AC (one nearby foe)—50 damage, and both the demon sergeant and that character phase out and vanish from the battlefield. The phased PC may phase back in by making a successful normal save (11+).

Phase Strike: If the arkad demon phased in this round, its *claw* attacks have their crit range expanded by 2.

Phase Out: As a move action, the arkad demon may attempt to phase out of our reality. It needs to make a normal save (11+) to do so; when phased out, it removes itself from the battlefield.

Phase In: As a move action, a phased-out arkad demon may appear anywhere on the battlefield. Roll a d8; if the result is equal to or less than the value of the escalation die, the arkad demon is dazed (–4 to its attacks) until the start of its next turn.

Phase Commander: While the arkad demon sergeant is phased in, all arkad demons need only make an easy save to phase out, and may roll 2d8 when phasing in to avoid being dazed.

AC 25 PD 21 HP 180 MD 21

Doors of Marblehall Fight Chart

Number/ Level of PCs	Arkad Demon	Animated Halberd	Arkad Demon Sergeant
3 x 6 th level	2	2	0
4 x 6 th level	3	3	0
5 x 6 th level	2	3	1
6 x 6 th level	3	4	1
7 x 6 th level	4	5	1
3×7^{th} level	2	3	1
4 x 7 th level	3	4	1
5×7^{th} level	4	5	1
6 x 7 th level	4	6	2
7 x 7 th level	5	7	2

VARIATIONS

- Marblehall is under attack by forces of the Stone Thief.
 To get into the mansion, the characters have to carve their way through a host of stone imps.
- •If the PCs are returning to Marblehall, the dungeon might move the entrance corridor so it brings them somewhere nasty and dangerous instead.