



Hall of the Dead

Synopsis by Robert E. Howard

Story by L. Sprague de Camp

Adaptation for D&D by Wesley Connally

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This series of adventures that I created are based on Robert E. Howard's Conan short stories (or with some exceptions, Carter/de Camp). I've changed a few things here and there, and fleshed out places like abandoned palaces etc. for a true dungeon crawling experience. There should be a few surprises for those who have read the short stories. Almost all of the text boxes for you, the DM, to read are taken directly from Howard's own writing. This provides a great atmosphere for your players. You may warn them that some are lengthy, but just sit back, relax, and allow the text to paint the world for them. This will enrich their experience.

I have modified Howard's text to represent plural adventurers and rewrote all text for the present tense. I had to add a few dialogue boxes of my own writing to fill in important roleplaying gaps in the original story lines.

All adventures are written for D&D 2nd edition, but could easily be adapted to more modern versions. I highly recommend my other handouts and rules to create a more full Conan-World experience. I also recommend familiarizing yourself with the original Howard/Carter/de Camp story.

Levels: 4-5, but at least 15 levels

Reputation: 3, Zamora (Country Reputation is based on a 1-5 scale from barely known (1) to heroic status (5). For every 5 points of Adventure Reputation the characters earn, based on a successful adventure, their score for the Country Reputation in the country where the adventure takes place, goes up by 1. Reputation will affect NPC reaction rolls, prices, jealousies, women etc.)

Adventure Summary

Characters begin outside the Zamoran city of Arenjun near some ruins infamous for an ages-old curse. The party finds Bruthia a victim of a date gone bad. Characters deal with a giant slug guardian outside the palace, then venture inside the palace to claim their rewards dealing with the denizens that inhabit the palace.

World Map

At any appropriate time, you can show players Figure 0: World Map—Zamora and let them know this is where they will be adventuring.

To capture the spirit of the Conan world, I offer a “Babe-In-Distress bonus (BID).” As there is almost always a BID in the stories and thus these adventures, I have the characters “compete” for her favor. If you wish to do this, when the characters first meet the BID, have characters average their Comeliness and Charisma scores. Then have them roll a d20. The one who comes closest *without going over* their averaged score has struck the fancy of the BID for whatever reason (“he’s not the best looking, but he has kind eyes”). He then becomes responsible to oversee her safety. If the adventure is completed and she is still alive with only a few nicks, that character is awarded a 10% experience point bonus, not to mention her undying gratitude in the bedroom. Of course, this process apply to female player characters as well. The BID perhaps is intimidated by men and seeks the safety of female protection, or perhaps the BID “just swings that way...”

Part One: The Ruins

The gorge is dark, although the setting sun has left a band of orange and yellow and green along the western horizon. Against this band of color, a sharp eye can still discern, in black silhouette, the domes and spires of Shadizar the Wicked, the city of dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery—the capital of Zamora.”

Rumors: “Stories of the death that lurked in these ruins were rife in the bazaars of Shadizar. As far as you’ve been able to learn, not one of the many men who, in historic times, had invaded the ruins searching for the treasure rumored to exist there, had ever returned. None knew what form the danger took, because no survivor had lived to carry the tale. A decade before, King Tiridates had sent a company of his bravest soldiers, in broad daylight, into the city, while the king himself waited outside the walls. There had been screams and sounds of flight, and then—nothing. The men who waited outside had fled, and Tiridates perforce had fled with them. That was the last attempt to unlock the mystery of Larsha by main force. According to the tales, the famed treasure of Larsha lies in the royal palace. Trying to remember the scraps of legend you overheard in the wineshops of the Maul concerning the abandonment of Larsha, you recall that there was something about a curse sent by an angered god, many centuries before, in punishment for deeds so wicked that they made the crimes and vices of Shadizar look like virtues...”

The gates consists of two massive valves, twice as high as a man, made of foot-thick timbers sheathed in bronze....Thirty paces north of the gate, you see that the wall has crumbled so that its lowest point is less than twenty feet above the ground. At the same time, a pile of tailings against the foot of the wall rise to within six or eight feet of the broken edge.

Player’s best bet is to climb over the broken edge: Climbing +10%

Meeting Bruthia

As you begin to climb, you hear a woman’s scream! Looking in the direction of the sound you see a flash of color, the red of the woman’s dress, as it disappears behind a large stone. She reappears again, running as fast as she can from some unknown monstrosity directly toward you. Behind her, in a blur of hair, teeth and blood runs a wild boar.

[Boar (AC:6 HD:3 hp:24 Th:16 D:1d8 SA: gore X3 on a crit SD: Mv:15 S:m ML:12 XP:180)]

After the fight with the boar:

“Th-Thank you,” she stammers. “The man who brought me here...he, he’s over there.” She points a shaking tentative finger in the direction from whence she ran.

[The party finds the man, gutted and dead. When they ask about her and what she was doing....]

You look over Bruthia, either to make sure of her health or to appreciate the tan beauty standing before you. Bruthia appears well, except for a few scrapes and being obviously shaken from the close call with the boar. Her auburn hair is coiffed behind her head, its fullness kept in place by silver barrettes. Thin curls of hair drop strategically down her temples. Her thin semi-transparent green skirt plays in the breeze. Her tiny waist is girded by a silver coin belt complemented by a matching necklace which depends low between her breasts disappearing between her cleavage and white low-cut shirt.

“My name is Bruthia. That man,” she glances in the direction of the corpse, “called himself Tarn. He brought me here saying it would be exciting, romantic. I begged him not to come! The haunting! The curse! Though I hardly knew him, I can say he was a fool to bring me here.” Her back arches in defiance at these words.

She casts a wild glance in the direction of the ruins. “Oh please help me! I don’t want to be alone!”

[Show “Figure 1: Bruthia”]

Roll for the BID. The characters will obviously have to decide whether to escort her back to Arenjun or take her into the city. A wicked lightning storm brews over Arenjun and is heading this way. Perhaps this will dissuade the characters from heading back to town.

[Bruthia AC: 10 HD: 1 hp: 5 Th: 20 Mv: 12 D: d2 Sz: 5’1”]

S: 7 C: 12 D: 10 I: 11 W: 14 Ch: 11 COM: 20 PER: 15

Vitals: Age: 18 Measurements: 32DD 22 31 Hair: Auburn Eyes: Brown Skin: Bronze

Streets

Inside the wall is a cleared space, where for centuries plant life has been waging war upon the ancient pavement. The paving slabs are cracked and up-ended. Between them, grass, weeds, and a few scrubby trees have forced their way. Beyond the cleared area lies the ruins of one of the poorer districts. Here the one-story hovels of mud brick have slumped into mere mounds of dirt. Beyond them, white in the moonlight, you discern the better-preserved building of stone—the temples, the palaces, and the houses of the nobles and the rich merchants. As with many ancient ruins, an aura of evil hangs over the deserted city.

You notice that your boots or sandals as the case may be tend to stick to the shattered pavement, as if it were covered with warm pitch. Pausing to examine the sucking sounds your feet make you notice that the pave is covered with a film of a colorless, sticky substance, now nearly dry.

Allow characters to wonder if it’s an echo, move on, and hear it where no echo is possible...

Soon you wander toward the inner-city and the palace, you hear a great sucking sound. The sound increases to an indescribable slithering, gurgling hiss. At last around the next corner pours a huge, slimy mass, leprous gray in the moonlight. It glides into the street before you and swiftly advances upon you, silent save for the sucking sound of its peculiar method of locomotion. From its front end, rise a pair of hornlike projections, at least ten feet long, with a shorter pair below. The long horns bend this way and that, and you see that they bare eyes on their ends. The creature is, in fact, a slug, like the harmless garden slug that leaves a trail of slime in its nightly wanderings. This slug, however, is fifty feet long and as thick through the middle as you are tall. Moreover, it moves as fast as a man can run. The fetid smell of the thing wafts ahead of it.

[Slug: (AC:8 HD:14 hp:66 Th:9 D:d12 bite SA: 3d8 acid (sv breath weapon 1/2); burrows through earth 1'/rd, or wood 6"/round SD:blunt ¼ Mv:12 S:h ML:16 XP:3000)]

The slug has only a 10% chance to hit with spit the first round. Afterwards it is 90% for a 30' shot, dropping 10% for every 30' beyond that.

In desperation, you look around and see an old temple. The structure seems stable and intact despite its age except for some large crenellations atop the structure which seem precariously perched. The entryway to the temple is much smaller than the slug even though it is a set of double doors. Perhaps if you can make it there in time, you could find some temporary sanctuary.

If the characters make it into the temple, they can slam and bar the door. It will take the slug four rounds to dissolve the thick doors. After four rounds, it will start to ooze through the open doorway and will take two more rounds to get in. When the characters look around, tell them that the roof is long since gone; probably it was a version of a thatch roof. The area is very open inside. There are no other exits, except jumping down from the parapet to a rubble-littered ground, forty feet below. What was once rooms within the edifice now are just three foot high walls of stone. A set of stone steps leads up to what was once the second level, but now one can only gain entrance to the perimeter ledge where the precariously perched crenellations are. If characters think to push a crenellation on top of the slug, it will take 18 points of strength to do so. The falling stone will crush the slug, even if the slug has wormed its way partially into the temple.

Part Two: The Palace

The royal palace of Larsha stands in the center of the city, in the midst of a broad plaza. It is the one structure that has not crumbled with age, and this for a simple reason. It is carved out of a single crag or hillock of rock that once broke the flatness of the plateau on which Larsha stands. So meticulous had been the construction of this building, however, that close inspection is needed to show that it is not an ordinary composite structure. Lines engraved in the black, basaltic surface imitate the joints between building stones.

Inside the archway, the flickering yellow flames of the torches are reflected from polished walls of black stone; but underfoot the dust lays inches thick. Several bats, hanging from bits of stone carving overhead, squeak angrily and whirl away into deeper darkness. You pass between statues of horrific aspect, set in niches on either side. Two skeletons, in ancient armor etched with sigils unknown,

stretch out upon the floor, seemingly instantly struck down while on duty. You are at a 4-way crossroads. Dark hallways open on either hand and straight ahead.

1. Throne Room

The throne, carved of the same black stone as the rest of the building, still stands. Other chairs and divans, being made of wood, have crumbled into dust, leaving a litter of nails, metallic ornaments, and semi-precious stones on the floor. On each side of the throne's back wall, you notice two shredded curtains, one on each side, barely holding back the blackness behind them. You look again at the throne and to your horror you are able to barely make out black nails and inhumanly long fingers gripping the sides of the throne from the back. They move upward, climbing until a head with a mass of black hair sticking out in all directions emerges followed by a sickly greenish body. It perches atop the throne regarding you suspiciously. The face grins showing rows of razor teeth. Its skin is stretched across its skull tightly. Other hissing noises can now be heard from behind the set of curtains as well. The perched creature suddenly howls and leaps toward you.

[Thrall (8) (AC:8 HD:1+1 hp:7 Th:18 D:d4/d4/d6 SA: SD: Mv:12 S:M ML:16 EX:65)]

These thralls are undead creatures, weaker cousins of ghouls and do not paralyze.

The secret door behind the throne reveals a short set of spiral stairs which exits to the hallway leading to Room 13, Temple. This is the only way to get to the temple.

2. Supply Room

Rotten sacks of grain and other foodstuffs lie here, long since gone bad. A large open window, presumably for handing supplies and meals easily to and from the kitchen, stretches across the west wall. A skeleton lies slumped over and through this window.

3. Guard Room

Six former guards lie around this room, seemingly in a state of comfortable repose still gripping their ancient halberds and tarnished shields in death.

A secret door hides a large munitions depot. Several ancient weapons of various sorts can be taken but all is of poor quality.

4. Prison Check-in

As you descend down the sloping passageway, you hear the odd, dull clank of metal on metal continuously in rhythmic pattern. Reaching a chamber, you see that you are in what must have been a sort of check-in station for the prison you see beyond the arched doorway to the north. Portcullises prevent any progress northward or eastward though a third archway provides egress westward. A simple chair and table sit eternally expectantly in the northeast corner.

5. Prison Cells

The dull metallic clatter you heard gets louder as you approach a long corridor. It is obvious within a few paces that you are in the prison ward. Long rusted bars partitioned by cell walls separate you from the piles of bones within the cells. With imagination you can see that the bone piles could form a roughly human shape if by some enchantment they could pull themselves up from the bowels of

hell and animate themselves. The clatter becomes louder as you walk. The prison has a west and an east cell block. The sound seems to be coming from around the corner, in the east block...

Up ahead you see someone holding a tin cup and raking it across his prison cell bars. For a moment, your mind forgets impossibilities and you wonder if someone could actually be trapped down here.

Approaching Rhion

Your curiosity is quickly answered. You see a man, or rather creature. Its appearance is loathsome. Even its shaggy white hair seems to be attempting to flee its body as it stands on end in every direction. Its bulging eyes glare out from dark sockets. A smell like death assaults your nostrils. "Let Rhion loose," it croaks from vocal cords unused for at least decades.

[Rhion Ghast (AC:4 HD:4 hp:16 Th:17 D:d4/d4/d8 SA:sv vs poison orretch & -2 on dice SD:immune sleep charm SW: cold iron X2 Mv:12 S:m ML:13 EX:650)]

If Rhion is attacked, he will hide behind a makeshift stationary shield he has constructed from his small bed and table. He will then command the skeletons in the prison cells to attack, at which time, their arms and hands will creep through the bars and attack. He will command one to grab the keys off of the slumped skeleton in the northwest corner.

[Crawling Claws (14) (AC:7 HD:1 hp:7 Th:17 D:d6 SA: choke d4 SD: no piecing Mv:9 S:s ML:20 EX:140)]

6 , 7, 8, 9 Flooded Area

What this area used to be is difficult to tell for it has been flooded and no furniture or other ornaments decorate this area. The water is black, even when you raise your torches toward it. But when you do so, it does seem to give off a metallic sheen, as if oil has been poured over much of its surface. A dumbwaiter waits for its next supply load up to the open window above. A central room, surrounded by the moat of oily water is up ahead, a door being visible along both the southern and eastern walls.

[Ooze (3) (AC:8 HD:3+3 hp:21 Th:17 D:2d8 SA: corrodes metal in 2 rds or less SD: no spells, fire, cold, Mv:1 S:m ML:10 EX:270)] The Ooze cannot travel beyond the water's edge, nor can it dive into the water. It travels on top just below the oil's surface. Characters can learn to look for a ripple effect on the water's surface to prepare for the Oozes.

10. Temple Preparatory

This room appears to be a waiting room of sorts. Decaying furniture looks like at one time it was comfortable. Two braziers serve as metallic sentinels before an ornately carved door. The carvings on the door depict priests holding what appears to be children and infants aloft and sacrificing them to a serpent-headed god. A pile of human skulls and other bones are stacked at the god's feet. This malevolent dark god holds an obsidian sword aloft. It seems that the obsidian is really obsidian, set into the door's wood.

The braziers are filled with bone dust. This was a preparatory room for the Temple.

11 & 12 Torture Chambers

This is obviously the torture area. As you would expect, implements of pain grace the large room. As with other areas, skeletons lie, stand, or sit as if they instantly died. Whether the god's curse also affected the hapless prisoners too or whether they simply were left attached to the racks and wheels of pain and simply starved to death, you will never know.

Nothing much can be found here except in the Master Sergeant's rotting belt pouch one can find 8 gp, 15 sp, and 3-25gp gems. All of the coins are of ancient mint. The belt and pouch disintegrate into fragments upon touch.

13. Temple

This temple, like the rest of these ancient ruins, is deathly quite. The crunch of your footfall on old bones breaks the silence like a scream in the night. This unholy place is littered with bones. Most seem to be the pieces of 5 fallen priests, at least you assume so. The skeletons wear tattered vestments of purple, black and red. Their long-flowing robes crumble when kicked or otherwise moved. But what is strange is that a pile of bone dust lies where each skull should have been, as if their entire heads were disintegrated!

At the north end of this diamond-shaped room, rests an altar, stained black from coat upon coat of dried blood. At one end of this altar is a six-inch spike of obsidian, its base rooted to the altar's surface by a band of iron.

Grooves have been cut along the altar's surface to allow the blood to flow down to the floor and over to two large braziers. The braziers are filled with skulls, but every one of the skulls is a child's or infant's. Unholy is this place indeed!

[Allow characters to act, then pick the character with the lowest Wisdom score.]

[Aside to that character] You hear a whisper in your ear. It seems a voice is calling, thirsting for blood. [That character must Save vs Spell or attempt to move to the altar to impale his head on the altar's spike. If detained for three rounds, the impulse passes.]

One of the priest's daggers is a **Dagger +2 "Blood Soaker."** This dagger is set with 3 rubys and an obsidian handle, valued at 300 sp. If left imbedded in a living body, it will continue to drain blood at a rate of d5 until it is sated with 10 hp of blood at which time it will turn a crimson red.

Another priest has a **Hag's Eye**, an eye from a real hag complete with tendrils, cast in amber. The amber glows when the eye faces a magic item within 3 inches of its pupil.

14. Flooded Room

Opening the door reveals more water. But in the center of this room, under the water, shines a light. It is difficult to see, however, as not only is the light coming from deep within a pool, but the oily water reflects your torchlight.

Once the torchlight is hidden, the party can see that the shining object is in the shape of a sword. This is **“Dark Water” a Sword +1**. It glows when immersed in water and provides water breathing and free action while underwater.

15. Kitchen

This kitchen is flooded with the same brackish water as the rest of this area. Three skeletons lie slumped over tables and cooking islands.

16. Barracks

Water stands about 7” high here. In this large room, you see dozens of rotten beds, all bunk in style. About half of them have eternally sleeping skeletons, presumably off-duty guards who never woke when the curse struck.

A careful meticulous search will eventually garner 180 sp. One skeleton has a set of magical leather boots **“Boots of Endurance”** which allows the user to double his normal endurance with regard to walking, running, jumping etc. The chance of noticing these is 3% cumulative chance per skeleton searched, or 15% per turn of searching.

17. The Council of Warriors

Around the room, seven giant warriors, each at least seven feet tall, sprawl in chairs. Their heads lay against the chair backs and their mouths hang open. They wear the trappings of a bygone era; their plumed copper helmets and the copper scales on their corsets are green with age. Their skins are brown and waxy-looking, like those of mummies, and grizzled beards hang down to their waists. Copper-bladed bills and pikes lean against the wall beside them or lay on the floor. In the center of the room rises an altar, of black basalt like the rest of the palace. Near the altar, on the floor, several chests of treasure lay. The wood of these chests have rotted away; the chests at some point had burst open, letting a glittering drift of treasure pour out on the floor. The block of black stone in the middle of the room rises to waist height. On its flat, polished top, inlaid in narrow strips of ivory, is a diagram of interlaced circles and triangles. The whole forms a seven-pointed star. The spaces between the lines are marked by symbols in some form of writing that you do not recognize. On each point of the star, winking in the ruddy, wavering light of the torches, lays a great green jewel, larger than a hen’s egg. At the center of the diagram stands a green statuette of a serpent with upreared head, apparently caved from jade.

[If they wish to inspect the gold]

One side bears a face, whether of a man, a demon, or an owl you cannot tell. The other side is covered with symbols like those on the altar.

[As soon as any treasure is taken or the giants disturbed...]

You hear a creak off to your side. Glancing that way, you see a small stone, a ruby from its crimson glint, fall from a skeleton's helm and trickle from its shoulder to its arm, leg and finally, finds rest on the floor with a rattle. Then, the horror of your worst fears happens. Around the walls, the seven mummified warriors are coming to life. Their heads come up, their mouth close and air hisses into their ancient, withered lungs. Their joints creak like rusty hinges as they pick up their pikes and bills and rise to their feet. [Show “Figure 2: In the Hall with Giants” and “Figure 3: the Jade Serpent”]

[Skeletal Warriors (AC:5 HD: 3 hp:18 Th:16 D:d8 SA: SD: piercing = ¼ damage; slashing = ½ damage; undead immunities SW: Turn as 3HD, sunlight destroys them Mv:9 S:m ML:20 EX:450)]

Should the characters attempt to flee, the Warriors will follow them. Normally, the characters could outrun them and make a straight shot out to the open. But all of the skeletons within the palace awaken too. If the party did not take the precaution to dismantle any skeletons found, then their way will be blocked!

To make matters worse, on the second round after the idol is moved, the earth begins to shake. Every round characters (and skeletons) have -2 to hit and must make a DEX check to stay on their feet. Skeletons need not make such DEX checks.

Summary of when skeletons arrive in entry way “A” after the serpent idol is moved:

[Skeletons (AC:7 HD:1 hp:7 Th:19 D:d6 or d8 SA: SD: ¼ piercing, ½ slashing undead immunities SW: holy water 2d4 Mv:12 S:m ML:20 EX:65)]

Round 1	2 Skeletons (Guards in Entryway)
Round 3	6 Skeletons (Guards in Room 3)
	1 Skeleton (Servant in Room 2)
Round 4	5 Headless Skeletons (Priest in Room 13)
Round 5	5 Skeletons (Tortures and Victims Room 11 & 12)
Round 7	3 Skeletons (Cooks in Room 15)
Round 8	20 Skeletons (Guards in Room 16)

If the situation gets really bad, e.g., the party is caught between a mass of skeletons crowding the entryway and the Warrior Skeletons emerging from the Council Chamber, AND if they said or did anything to show pity or remorse for the sacrificed children, read the following:

You begin to get the sense that your adventuring career will end wildly but all too shortly. As you grit your teeth, and clench your weapons for a final desperate swing, a host of ghosts appear before you. All are children. All have faces hung with sorrow. They speak to you, or rather to your mind for their lips never move: “Because you [fill in blank with what the party did] have come to return your favor. Flee back out into the sun, quickly!” They point in the direction from which you entered this cursed palace. As quickly as your mind comprehends their imperative, they meld and swirl into a whirling mass of faces, arms, torsos, and legs. This mass has caused even the undead to pause in their tracks. The unearthly whirlwind now moves quickly among the skeletons blocking your path. Bones and shards of bones fly from the mass and in 3 heartbeats, only the statues looking out from their dark niches remain. The way has been prepared for you, but the warriors behind you continue to close...

The warriors will continue to advance, even to the point of exiting the palace, but as they do, they will burst into flame and dust as soon as the sunlight hits them. The earthquake has not stopped but rather intensified. Characters must make 3 more checks to reach safety. If they fail 2 of the 3, the earth swallows them up.

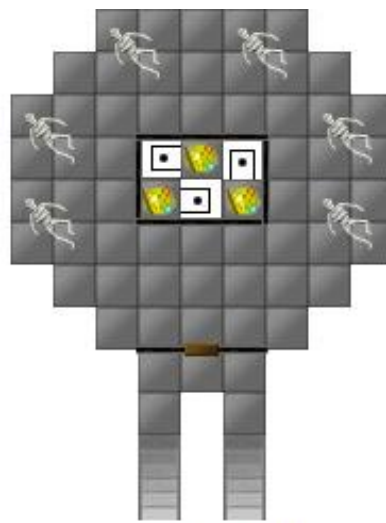
Part Three: Epilogue

1. the ruins crumble into the earth from the earthquake
2. any coins taken from the Council Room will turn to dust
3. the hens eggs laying at the pentagram's points are worth 200sp and will not crumble.
4. the serpent statuette will come alive and bite any who reaches in the bag. If not placed in a bag, it will bite whoever is holding it a turn after leaving the palace.
SV VS Poison or take d4 CON four times over a 4 turn span
5. any treasure gathered elsewhere is fine

If they escape with their lives, award PCs with Xps or if you use a simplified system like I do, this adventure should be worth 1/3 of a level for each 4 hour playing session (but no more than 1 level per adventure in any case).

I also keep track and award the following bonuses, one per PC, each worth 1/10 of a level:

1. Most Damage in a single blow/spell
2. Coolest Critical Hit by a PC
3. Weirdest/Funniest Happening
4. Scribe (one player must write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
5. BID if she is alive and relatively unharmed
6. Best Idea



To Room #1

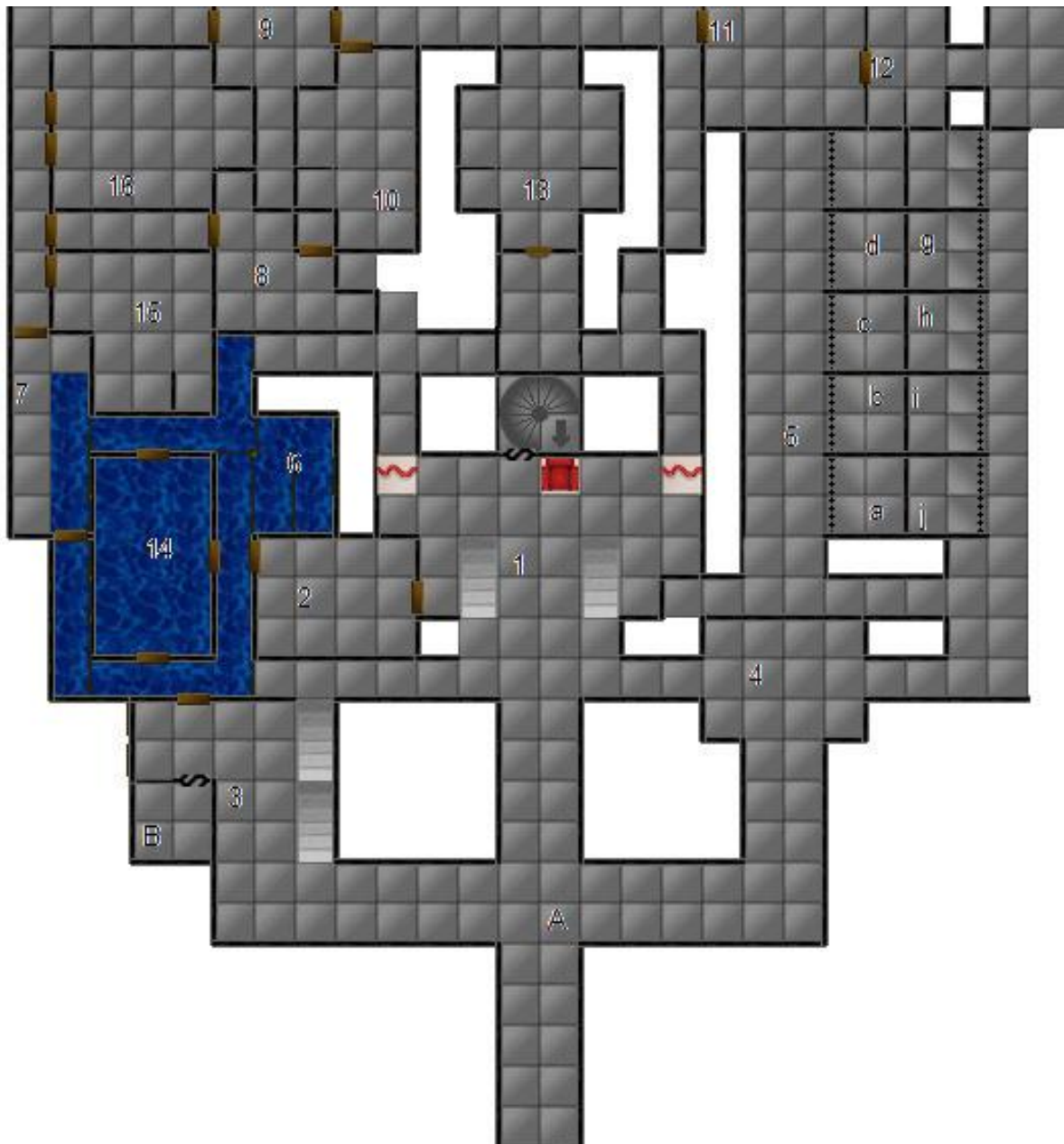


Figure 0: World Map---Zamora



Figure 1: Bruthia



Figure 2: In the Hall with Giants



Figure 3: The Jade Serpent

