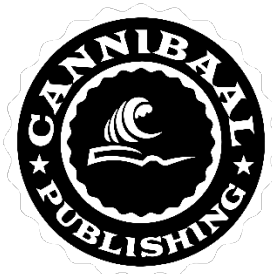


THE WATERFALL CAVE

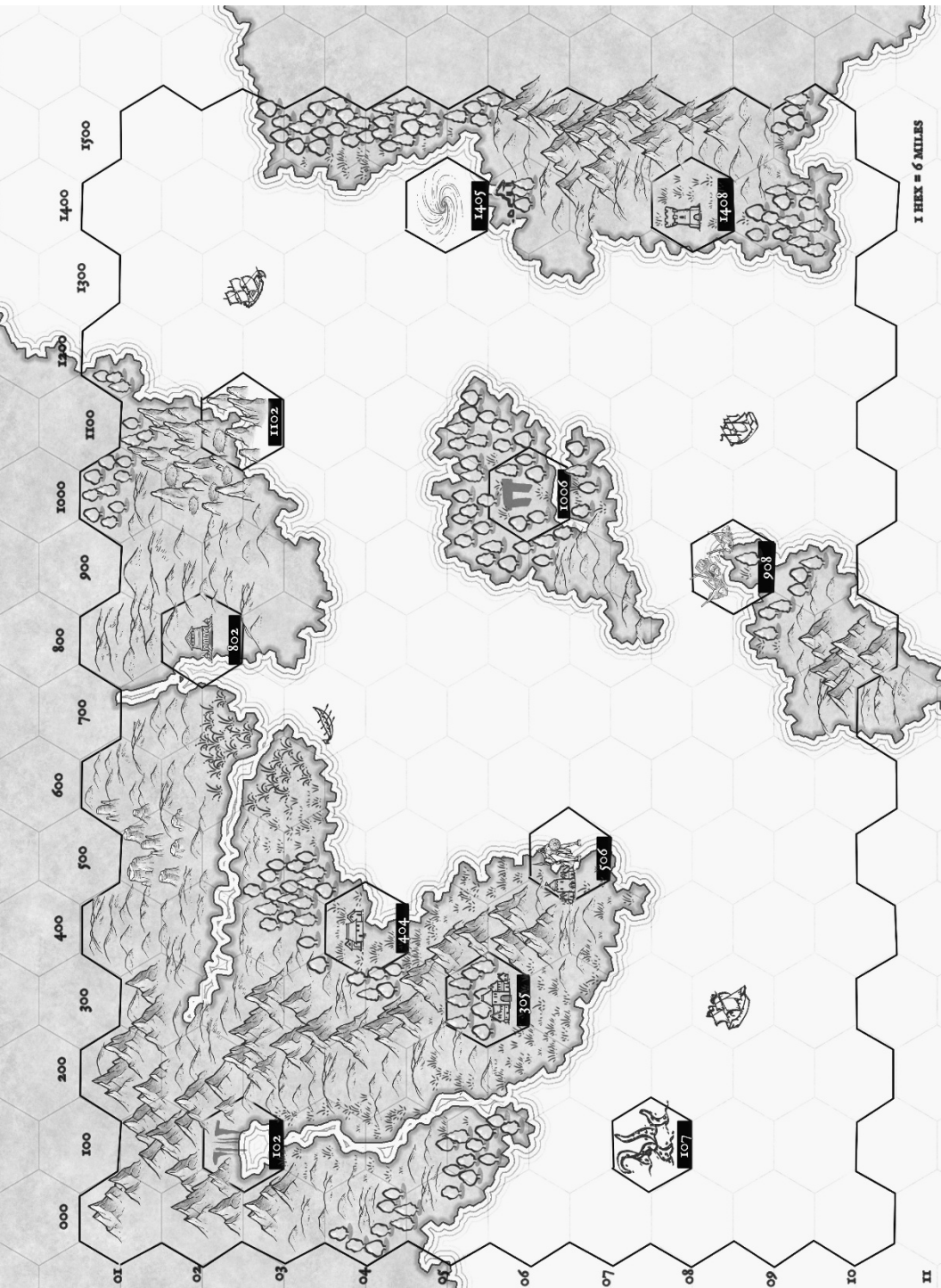
A Shadowdark adventure for levels 3-5



Designed for use with
ShadowDark RPG



By Troy Alleman



Point of interest 102 is The Waterfall Cave.

THE WATERFALL CAVE

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OVERVIEW

Disappearances haunt the foothills near **Stoneveil Falls**. Travelers whisper of strange figures slithering through the woods. Hidden behind the crashing waters, a cave mouth yawns — veiled by mist and the roar of falling water. The truth lies beneath, where serpents speak and old powers stir...

The Waterfall Cave lies hidden deep within the forested foothills known as **Irm's Reach**, an untamed land where the **Cairnshade Woods** press against rocky ridges and highland springs. Few settled folks live here. Traders and messengers from the lowland town of **Wolcroft** must pass through winding trails that skirt **Stoneveil Falls**, where eerie mists cling to the trees, and nightfall brings silence but for the sound of distant water crashing on stone.

- **Stoneveil Falls** is a dramatic, 60-foot cascade tumbling from a high cliff into a mist-

shrouded basin. It is visible from afar, especially at sunrise when the rising light refracts through the spray like a curtain of shimmering glass. Local superstitions say the waterfall sings at night.

- The **forest trail** that skirts the base of the falls once connected several hillstead hamlets to **Wolcroft**, but most were abandoned generations ago.

Wolcroft (nearest village)

A riverside farming village three days south, Wolcroft has suffered **five disappearances** in the last two months — mostly hunters and messengers. Livestock from outer farms go missing. Wolves howl strangely, and serpentine tracks wind near fence lines.

- **Mayor Elra Nollin**, a retired adventurer, offers coin and supplies to any

brave enough to investigate.

- An old drunkard hermit, **Sildran the Quiet**, insists the cave behind the waterfall was a **place of sacrifice** in “the old times.”

The Legend of the Blood Coil

Ancient Serpent Worship

Before the old peoples roamed these hills, the deep places belonged to the **Serpent Priests**, cold-blooded beings who built winding sanctuaries beneath the earth. They worshipped **Uthshalass**, the World Coil — a primordial serpent said to slumber beneath the world, dreaming venomous dreams into reality.

- Their temples were hewn in stone where **volcanic heat met fresh water**, drawing serpents in vast number.
- The **glyph at the stair** (“The Blood Coil Awaits”) is a remnant of this older faith, suggesting continuity between the

ancient priests and modern **Viperians**.

Ssarthak the Coil-King

The Viperian warlord **Ssarthak** claims descent from the Serpent Priests. His appearance (with cobra hood and pupil-less eyes) marks him as more than mere serpentfolk — perhaps something born of **ritual rebirth** or long-forgotten magic.

- Ssarthak seeks to restore the **“Serpent dominion”** over the surface world, beginning with remote settlements.
- The **Venom blood Cloak** he wears is rumored to be woven from the skins of ancient holy serpents, an heirloom of the Blood Coil faith.

Mystical Phenomena Near the Cave

- **The Black Water Moon:** Each new moon, the pool near Stoneveil Falls reflects no stars — only writhing shadows. Some say this is when Ssarthak communes with the World Coil.

- **The Singing Mist:** Travelers report that the waterfall's mist sometimes carries voices — usually indistinct
- whispers or hisses, occasionally the voice of a lost loved one.
- **The Crystal Basin (Room 4):** Locals whisper of “the Mirror Pool” that shows your truest self — or curses it. It may have once been a site for serpentfolk oracles.

Hidden Truths

- The cave complex behind the waterfall predates **all known settlements** in Irm’s Reach — a remnant of a time when snake folk ruled the wilds.
- **The disappearances** are orchestrated not just for expansion, but as **ritual sacrifices** intended to

- awaken something below — a **serpent demigod**.
- Some **ancient glyphs** in the **Lower shrine (Room D)** match scripts found in ruins hundreds of miles away, suggesting a vast serpentfolk empire once slithered beneath the land.

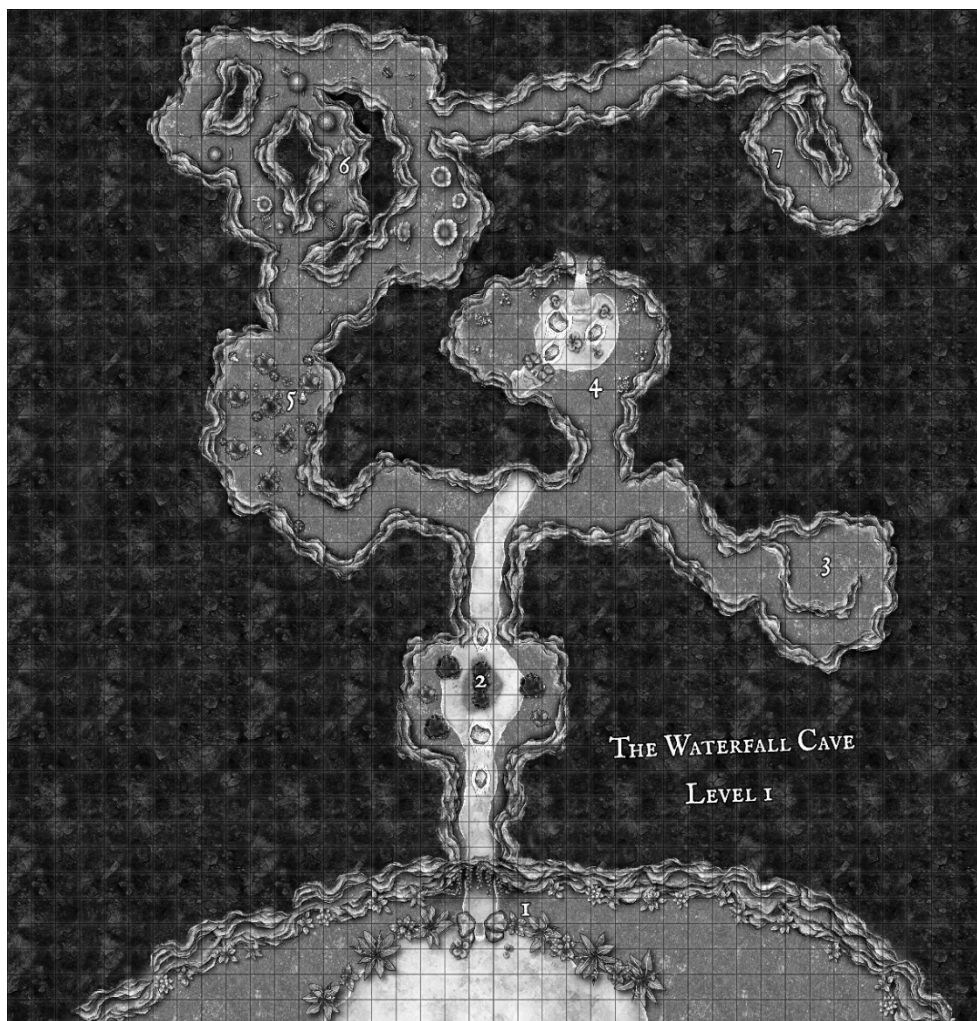
Adventure Hook

- The PCs **are hired by a nearby village** to investigate disappearances along a forest trail near Stoneveil Falls.
- **Locals** report strange tracks, missing livestock, and flickering eyes in the woods at night.
- A **hermit** claims there is an old cave behind the waterfall — a place where no one returns from.

WATERFALL CAVE LEVEL 1

Part I: The Limestone Caverns (7 Areas)

Environment: Damp, echoing, slick stone with sudden drops and thin mist from the waterfall above. Many creatures hunt by sound.



AREAS 1 - 7

Area 1. Hidden Entrance

Water cascades before you, loud and cold. Behind the curtain, a narrow ledge skirts a dark crevice in the cliffside. Mist clings to the stone, and moss-slick rocks wait to betray the hasty or unwary.

- Movement too fast or careless requires a **DEX save or fall (2d6) damage**.
- Loose rocks above are disturbed easily: **DC 12 DEX or 1d6 damage + prone**.
- The entrance “smells” of wet earth and mildew.

Behind the waterfall is a slick ledge and a narrow crevice. Any creature moving quickly must succeed on a **DC 11 DEX save or fall (2d6 damage)**.

Trap: Loose rocks fall on intruders — **DC 12 DEX save or 1d6 damage and prone**.

Area 2. Echo Chamber

A low-ceilinged space amplifies every sound a dozen fold. Stalactites drip from above, and the air tastes of minerals and rot. Something moves in the dark — not on the floor, but above...

- A **darkmantle** hangs perfectly still among the stalactites.
- A skeleton lies partially submerged beneath mineral run-off, obsidian dagger in hand.
- Perception checks echo, making stealth exceedingly difficult in this chamber.

Stalactites loom overhead. **A Darkmantle** clings above, waiting to drop on a target.

- **Darkmantle (HD 2, AC 14, Slam +3, Darkness aura 10 ft, DC 12 DEX to avoid being blinded).**

Treasure: A dagger of carved obsidian on a skeleton (worth 50 gp).

Area 3. Flowstone Pit

A bowl-shaped depression dips sharply downward, its sides coated in slimy flowstone. Faint wet slaps echo from somewhere unseen. The scent here is coppery, like old blood and wet rock.

- Cave leeches cling to the sides, blending with the stone.
- Climbing down triggers attacks; characters may slip and slide toward them.

The deep bowl-like depression with slick steps leads down. Two **Cave Leeches** cling along the sides, attacking any who descend.

- **Cave Leech (HD 1, AC 12, bite +2, attaches, 1d4/round).**

Area 4. Crystal Basin

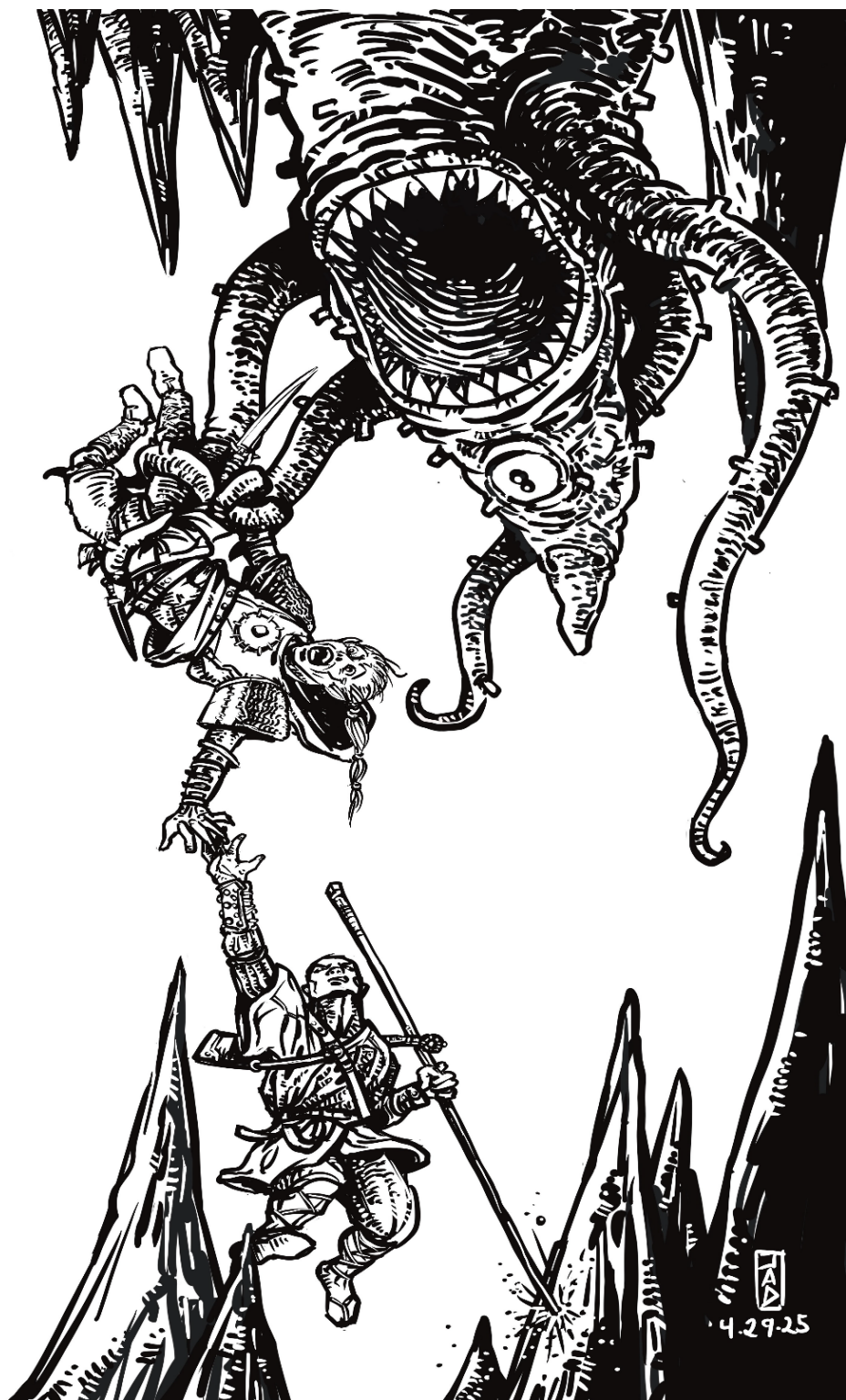
A soft glow emanates from a rippling pool. Its surface

reflects not just your face — but something... more. Sometimes your reflection blinks when you do not.

- **Magical pool:** drinkers roll 1d4 for random boon/bane.
- The rock here is smooth and cool. Crystals line the edges faintly humming.

A **glowing pool** reflects light strangely. Drinking from it gives **a temporary boon or bane (roll 1d4):**

1. +1 to attack rolls for 1 hour.
2. -1 to saves for 1 hour.
3. Vision in the dark (30 ft) for 1 hour
4. Hallucinations (**disadvantage on WIS checks until rest**)



Area 5. The Maw Chamber (Roper's Lair)

Stalagmites jut like fangs in a circular chamber. The air feels tense, as if held in a breath. Bones litter the floor, half-melted candles long extinguished. Something... watches.

- The **roper** is camouflaged among stalagmites. DC 14 INT (Nature) to spot.

Treasure half-buried in refuse: **gem, wand, gold.**

Stalagmites encircle the room like teeth. A **Roper** (ancient, immobile) lurks in the dark.

- **Roper (HD 6, AC 17, tentacle lash x3 +5, pull, bite 2d8).**
- Camouflaged. DC 14 INT (Nature) to spot before it strikes.

Treasure: In a pile of bones: 120 gp, a *wand of light* (1d6 charges), and a gem worth 100 gp.

Area 6. Seep Tunnels

Thin tunnels branch off, barely wide enough to crawl through. Muck and tiny bones litter the path. Wet chittering echoes ahead, accompanied by a sudden rustle of movement.

- Disturbing bones summons **1d4 giant centipedes.**
- The air is heavy and moldy; walls pulse slightly with trickling water.

Narrow side tunnels filled with slime and tiny bones. **1d4 Giant Centipedes** skitter from the walls when disturbed.

Area 7. Flowstone Descent

*A grand stairway of natural stone curves downward. Flowstone ridges glisten with dampness. Strange glyphs glimmer faintly, the words of an ancient tongue: "**The Blood Coil Awaits.**"*

- **Pressure plate trap** is cleverly set at a midpoint.

- A serpent motif coils along the walls in the flowstone if studied closely.

A wide, sloping natural stair winds down. **Glyph etched in Viperian script:** *"The Blood Coil Awaits."*

Stepping wrongly triggers a **pressure plate trap:** darts (1d6, DC 12 CON or poisoned for 1 hour — -1 to all rolls).



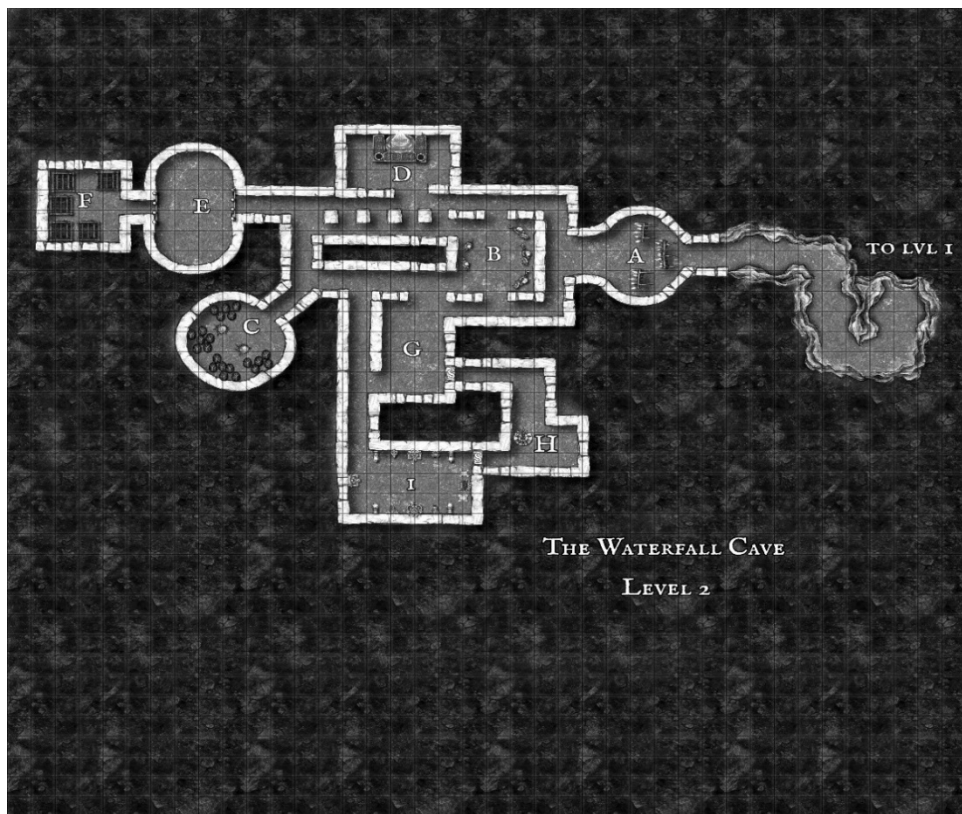
WATERFALL CAVE LEVEL 2

Part II: Viperian Subterranean Settlement (9 Areas)

This lair, called **Nag'tharil**, is carved into the warm stone far beneath the waterfall — a thriving underground enclave of **Viperians**, snake folk with plans to expand their dominion.

Viperian Types

- **Viperian Warrior** (HD 2, spear +4, AC 14)
- **Viperian Mystic** (HD 3, poison spell, charm, AC 12)
- **Viperian Guard** (HD 4, glaive +5, AC 16, elite defender)



AREAS A - I

Area A. Watch Post

Two torch sconces illuminate a wide passage. Twin viperians, lean and scaled, stand on alert with glaives in hand. Their eyes shine like wet obsidian. They hiss in Common: "You do not belong."

- Guards may allow a bluffing party through if roleplayed well.

Two **Guards** observe the flowstone stairway. They challenge intruders in hissing Common.

Area B. Training Pit

Hisses and grunts echo from a wide chamber where younger viperians duel in ritualized combat. The floor is stained with old blood. One initiate bares fangs, pausing as you enter.

- PCs pretending to be new recruits may gain access or insight.

- Losing a mock duel earns respect but may alert guards.

Viperian initiates spar. PCs may gain info if they bluff as "new recruits."

Area C. Hatchery

The walls pulse with warmth. Dozens of leathery eggs cluster in damp recesses, glowing faintly with internal fire. A massive serpentine female coils around the chamber's center, her gaze fixed and full of fury.

- **Broodmother** reacts violently if disturbed.
- Broken eggs may release **1d4 serpentlings** if players are not careful.

Egg clusters glow faintly. A **Viperian Broodmother** defends the site violently.

- **Broodmother (HD 5, bite +6, spawns**

serpentlings if damaged)

Area D. Shrine of the Serpent Flame

A circular altar rises amid heat and haze. Volcanic steam pours from a vent in the floor, casting the chamber in red light. Snake carvings twist in impossible knots on every surface.

- **Mystic** is deep in ritual unless disturbed.
- Staying here too long causes **heat damage**.

A volcanic vent fills this altar room with heat and fumes. A **Viperian Mystic** offers prayers.

- Anyone remaining here more than 3 rounds makes a **DC 13 CON** save or takes 1d4 fire damage.

Area E. Snake Pit Arena

A massive circular chamber used for ritual combat. A single **Giant Venomous Snake** dwells here, unleashed on challengers.

A sunken arena, ringed with spiked stone and carved

serpents. Deep grooves mark the floor — trails left by something heavy and slithering. A low hiss echoes.

- **Giant Venomous Snake** emerges if summoned or released.
- Could be used as a test or punishment arena.

Area F. Slave Pens

A carved stone room with cages and animal pens lines the walls.

A captured scout and three villagers (**HD: 1, 5hp each, AC 10**) are imprisoned. They can offer guidance or a reward for rescue.

Area G. War Council Chamber

A room of conquest: tattered maps, banners with snake emblems, and weapons stacked neatly. A large table is carved from a single slab of green-black stone. Two guards and a lieutenant (has two rows of black scales running the length of his body) pore over invasion plans.

- Documents detail raids on surface towns.
- If intercepted early, PCs might disrupt Ssarthak's timing.

Tapestries of conquest. A map with surface raids planned soon. 2 guards and a lieutenant are here.

Area H. Venomblood Chamber

*An alchemical lab reeks of herbs, ichor, and molten metal. Bottles line carved niches, some bubbling with green fluid. A **Viperian Alchemist** mutters to himself, injecting venom into a lizard's spine.*

- PCs can recover potions of **poison or snakeform**.
- The alchemist may be reasoned with — or explodes a concoction on death.

Lab of a twisted alchemist-sorcerer experimenting with poisons and snake grafts.

- Potions (2d4 doses of poison, 1 potion of snake-form)

Area I. The Coiled Throne (Final Encounter)

*A throne of carved bone and crystal rises in a domed chamber. **Ssarthak the Coil-King** reclines atop it, his cobra hood flaring. Vines and snake motifs line every inch. His gaze freezes the heart.*

- **Final boss fight:** **Ssarthak** + summoned snakes.
- Lair reacts to the battle: glyphs ignite, poison mists spread.

Here sits **Ssarthak the Coil-King**, a massive viperian with a cobra-hooded visage and cruel insight. He seeks to expand his empire to the surface.

Boss: Ssarthak the Coil-King (Shadowdark Stat Block)

- **HD:** 7 (55 HP)
- **AC:** 17 (scaly robes and warding glyphs)
- **Attacks:**
- **Serpentstaff** +6 (1d10, DC 13 CON or 1d4 poison/round)

- **Constricting Gaze**
(1/day): One creature in 30 ft must make DC 13 WIS save or be paralyzed with fear for 1 round.
- **Special:**
- **Summon Snakes:** Once per day, calls 1d4+2 serpent swarms.
- **Venom Aura:** All adjacent foes make DC 12 CON saves or take -1 to

attack rolls while in melee with Ssarthak.

Treasure:

- 300 gp worth of emeralds
- **Ring of Serpent Speech**
(speak with reptiles at will)
- **Venomblood Cloak**
(resist poison)



RANDOM TABLES

Trap Table (1d6)

D6	DESCRIPTION
1	Swinging spike pendulum in tight passage (1d8, DC 12 DEX)
2	Pressure plate triggers a dart (1d6, DC 12 CON or poisoned)
3	Crumbling ledge collapses (DC 11 DEX or fall 20 ft)
4	Sleep gas from urn (DC 12 CON or fall unconscious 1d4 rounds)
5	Viper statue sprays venom mist (1d4/round in area)
6	Alarm glyph alerts guards in next room

Encounter Table (1d6)

D6	DESCRIPTION
1.	Viperian patrol (2 warriors, 1 mystic)
2.	Swarm of snakes bursting from a fissure
3.	Cursed villager-turned snake zombie (HD 2, venom bite)
4.	Giant centipede nest blocking the way
5.	Viperian Broodling (HD 1) swarm spilled from broken broken egg sacks
6.	Unstable ceiling-loud noise causes partial collapse (DEX save or 2d6 bludgeoning damage)

Rumors Table (1d8)

D6

DESCRIPTION

1. "The waterfall hides more than water. It sings at night."
2. "Snake people live beneath us. They took my brother ..."
3. "A glowing pool can curse or bless you, depending on your heart."
4. "They say the serpent king never blinks."
5. "The eggs ... they're not just snakes. They are something worse."
6. "There's a treasure in the stone – guarded by a creature of living rock."
7. "Sometimes the water turns black... and whispers."
8. "The villagers didn't disappear – they serve the coils now."

MONSTERS

VIPERIAN. WARRIOR

A giant anaconda body merges into a human torso and a hooded snake head. Emerald scales on most of the body with lighter scales on the belly. They wear metal bracers and a torc of silver and onyx.

AC 14. **HP** 16, **ATK** 2 spear (close/far) +2 (1d6), **MV** near, **S**+2, **D**+1, **C**+0, **I**+0, **W**+1, **Ch**+0, **AL** C, **LV** 2

VIPERIAN. GUARD

A giant anaconda body merges into a human torso and a hooded snake head. Emerald and black scales alternate on most of the body with black scales on the belly. They wear metal bracers and a torc of gold and onyx.

AC 16. **HP** 32, **ATK** 2 glaive (close) +5 (1d10), **MV** near, **S**+4, **D**+2, **C**+1, **I**+0, **W**+1, **Ch**+0, **AL** C, **LV** 5

VIPERIAN LIEUTENANT

A large anaconda body merges into a human torso and a hooded snake head. Emerald with gold flecks cover the body with two rows of black scales running the length of the body with black scales on the belly. They wear gold bracers and a torc of gold and onyx.

AC 15. HP 28, ATK 2 dagger (close) +4 (1d4), MV near, S+3, D+2, C+1, I+1, W+1, Ch+2, AL C, LV 5

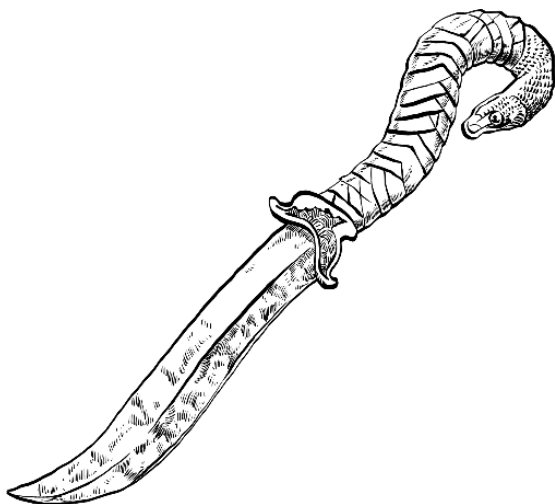
VIPERIAN. MYSTIC

A medium sized viperian with emerald scales and a black and yellow dot in each. They wear leather hide armor and usually have a dreamcatcher in hand and a bone mace.

AC 14. HP 28, ATK 2 mace (near) +2 (1d6) or cast spell, MV near, S+2, D+1, C+0, I+0, W+1, Ch+0, AL C, LV 5

Poison Cloud (WIS Spell). DC 12. A toxic green poison cloud fills a near-sized cube within range. It spreads around corners. Creatures inside the cloud are stunned for one round and take 1d6 damage at the beginning of their turns.

Venomblood Curse (WIS Spell). DC 12. One creature you touch loses a luck token (10% chance) and has DISADV on spellcasting checks for the duration.



VIPERIAN ALCHEMIST

A medium sized viperian with emerald scales covering the body, stripes of bright green scales along their back and a black tip tail. They wear cloth armor and usually have a dagger in hand.

AC 12, **HP** 24, **ATK** 2 dagger (near) +2 (1d4 + poison) or toxic touch, **MV** near, **S**+2, **D**+2, **C**+0, **I**+2, **W**+3, **Ch**+1, **AL** C, **LV** 5

Special:

Venom Aura: All adjacent foes make DC 12 CON saves or take -1 to spellcasting rolls while in near of the alchemist.

Toxic Touch: Anyone touching the Viperian Alchemist or that is touched at any time must make a DC 11 CON save or be paralyzed for 1d4 turns.

SPELLS

POISON CLOUD

Tier 2, Mystic/Shaman

Duration: 3 rounds

Range: Far

A toxic green poison cloud fills a near-sized cube within range. It spreads around corners. Creatures inside the cloud are stunned for one round and take 1d6 damage at the beginning of their turns.

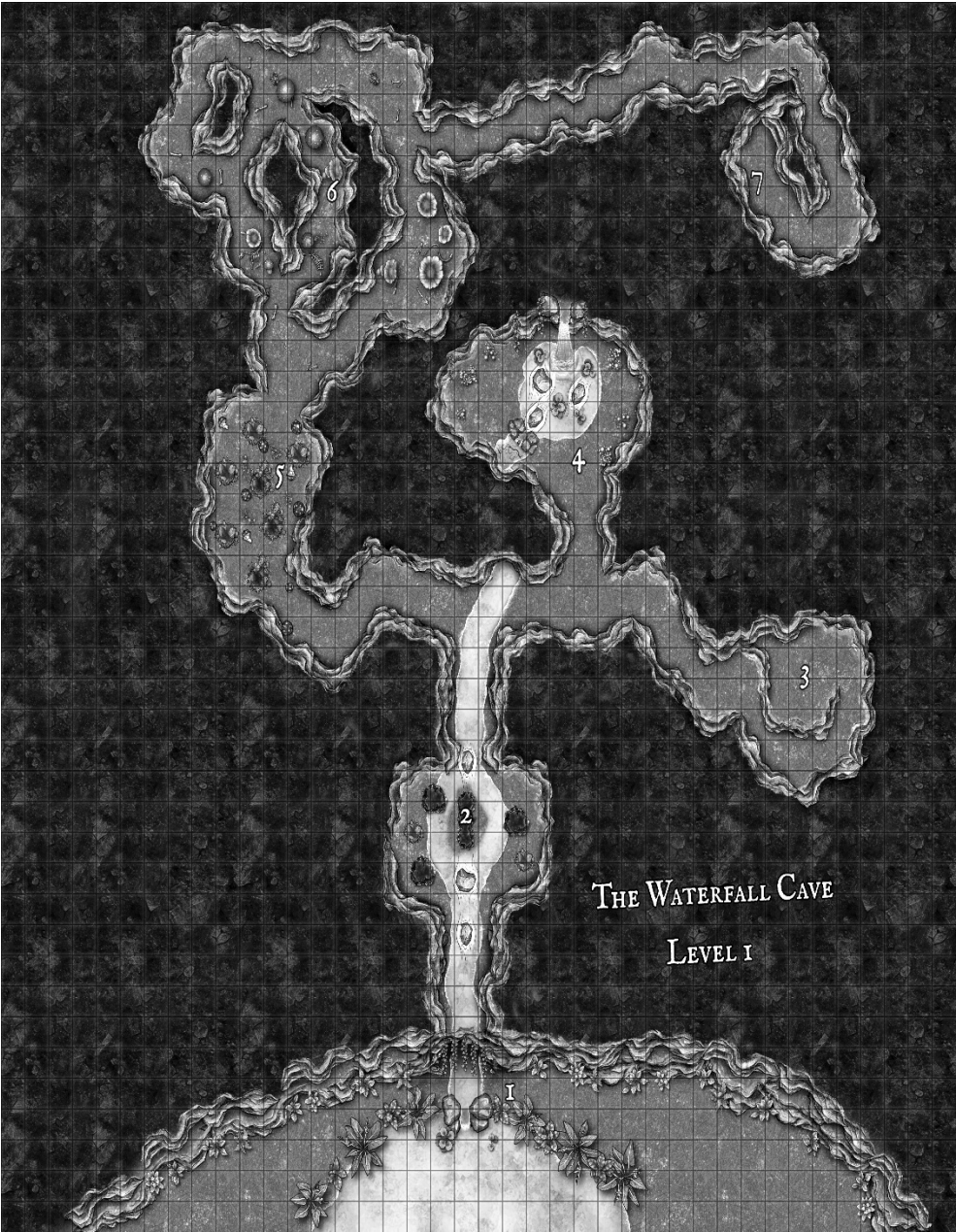
VENOMBLOOD CURSE

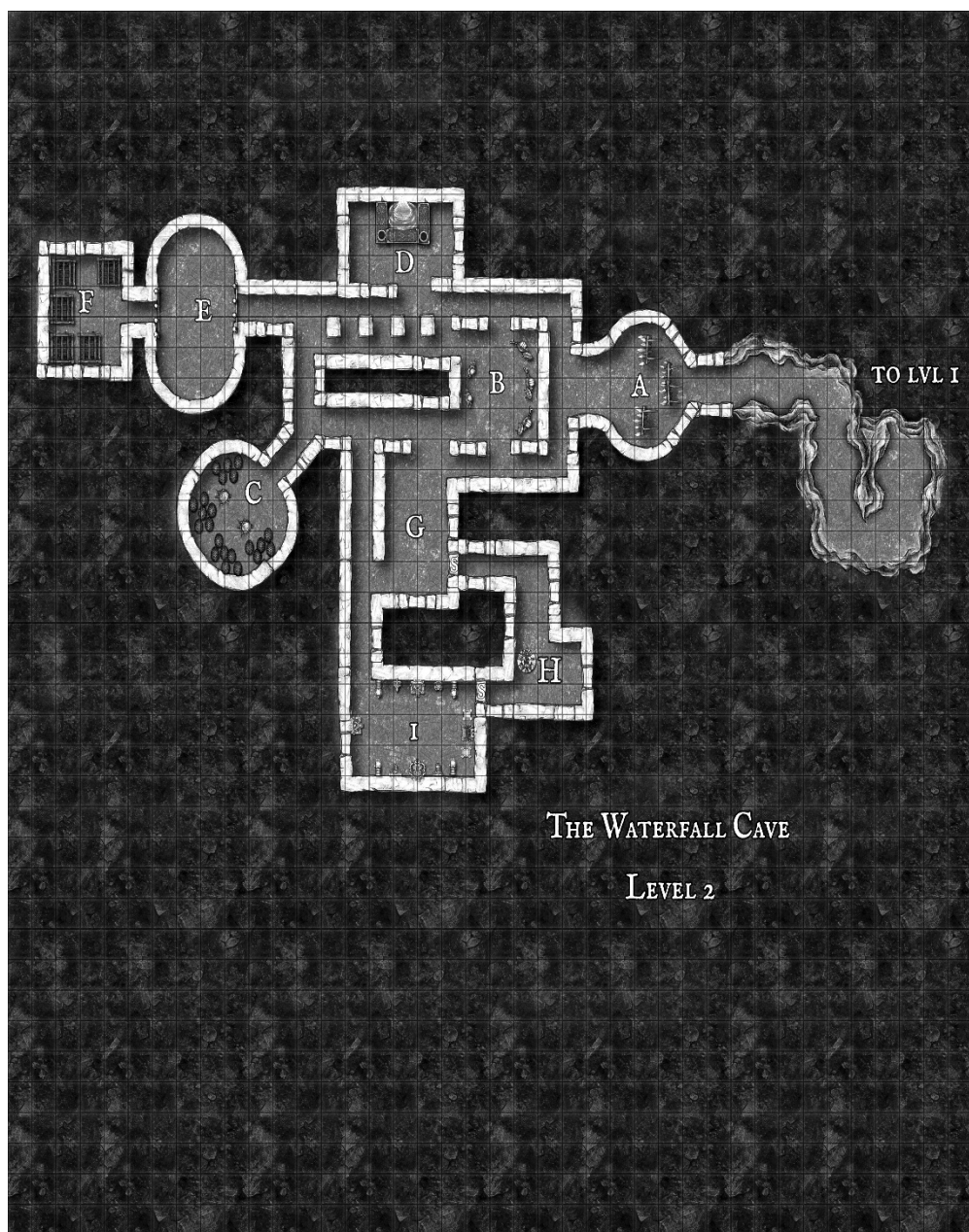
Tier 2, Mystic/Shaman

Duration: 2 rounds

Range: near

One creature you touch loses a luck token (10% chance) and has DISADV on spellcasting checks for the duration.





THE WATERFALL CAVE

LEVEL 2

Coming late 2025 / early 2026.

This adventure is a teaser for an anthology of ten mini adventures around a single theme culminating into a final battle.

