



Strange places

2. The Sensate's Retreat

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A mystery

A sea of endless sand spreads out in each direction, and the sun leans close to glare at you, like the gleaming eye of an angry god. Nothing stirs on the surface of the land. All creatures are dug deep into the coolness below, seeking refuge in the darkness of subterranea.

Up ahead, ribbons of greenery spring up from the sizzling sand: desert shrubs, short, gnarled trees, waving grasses and thick cacti heavy with life-saving water. An oasis whispers quietly amid the heat.

But where is the water? There is no pool here. The source must be beneath your feet...

How To Use This Book

The most useful aspect of the *Strange Places* series

is its maps. Maps are provided for printing and tabletop use as well as “key” maps for Game Masters reading through the text.

Strange Places is meant to be a diverting side trip, an intriguing wrong turn, or a source of last-minute ideas for the busy Game Master. The Game Master may choose to use the hints and occasional mechanics provided, or decorate the place with ideas of his own.

The Ground Opens

Before the travelers get to the hidden opening that leads down to the Sensate’s retreat, they will notice a buzzard nudging a bright red bead of glass across the sand. Their approach will of course frighten the bird away; the glass bead is perfectly round, of no monetary or magical value; but a few feet away in the thick dry grasses, a successful Search check (DC 25) will reveal a broken circle of 16 other identical red beads hidden in the nearby grasses.

Standing within this circle causes the trapdoor below the sand to open, and the travelers will fall approximately 100 ft. (30.48 m.) down a sandstone



The Room of Longing

This room is connected to the main hallway by two smaller hallways. It is approximately 30 ft. (9 m.) long by 20 ft. (6 m.) wide.

Ten amethyst plinths, each about 3 ft. (1 m.) high, ring the walls of the room. A feather, leaf or small stone is placed upon each plinth.

When any of these small tokens is picked up and held, the person holding the token is transported instantly into a realistic daydream of that which he or she desires, regrets, or longs for. The token can only be let go if the person holding it makes a successful Will save (DC 18).

As each person leaves the room, they will see a large, roughly hewn stone bowl (where none was before) in the doorway, filled with small stones, flowers, leaves and feathers. A second successful Will save, DC 18, will be needed to ensure the person does not pick up a token and return to the room, to relive the daydream from which they just escaped.



The Room of Taste

This room is approximately 40 ft. (12 m.) long and 22 ft. (6.75 m.) wide. Seven frosted glass globes hang on short chains from the 50 ft. (15 m.) high ceiling, glowing with what appears to be natural daylight but producing no heat.

There is a large table of worn, pale wooden planks in the center of the room, and large stools made of highly polished stone.

When anyone sits at the table, dishes, platters, and bowls of delicious food will appear on the tabletop, as well as jugs of wine, beer and water. Steaming pots of coffee and tea will appear for those who enjoy such beverages.

The food will restore itself when depleted until all guests have left the table. There is nothing poisonous or unnatural about the food or beverages themselves. While the dinnerware and serving trays are all wrought of obviously luxurious and expensive material, they cannot be removed from the room - once they do, the servingware turns into handfuls of sand.

Sample List of the Sensate's Favorite Dishes

- Minced, baked beef with stone-pine kernels and green peppercorns.
- Pear and honey souffle.
- Leek and salmon chowder.

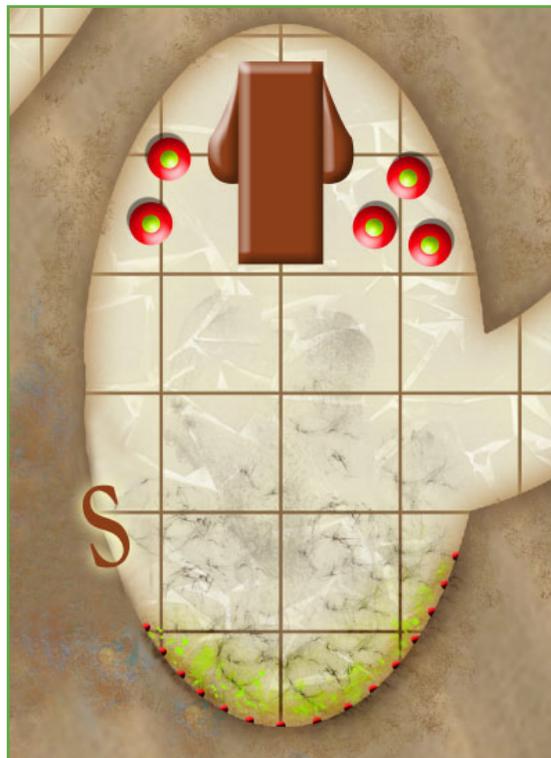
person touching it. The sensation causes no damage and ceases as soon as the person stops touching the cabochon.

Whenever a cabochon is touched, a small issue of green slime squirts out from around the gem and oozes down the wall; it appears to do no harm, but smells like ripe sweat.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1 - 5 | being skinned alive |
| 6 - 10 | being stung by one hundred bees |
| 11 - 15 | being pierced by a sharp weapon in the liver |
| 16 - 20 | having one's knees broken |
| 21 - 25 | having one's hands amputated |
| 26 - 30 | being bludgeoned on the back of the head |
| 31 - 35 | being dragged naked across broken glass |
| 36 - 40 | having large splinters of wood pushed beneath one's toenails |
| 41 - 45 | being disemboweled |
| 46 - 50 | having boiling oil poured across one's back |
| 51 - 55 | having one's teeth removed |
| 56 - 60 | drinking acid |
| 61 - 65 | falling down a rocky cliff face |
| 66 - 70 | being crushed by stampeding herd animals |
| 71 - 75 | having one's beating heart squeezed by a strong hand |
| 76 - 80 | being eaten alive by lions |
| 81 - 85 | having large amounts of electricity pass through one's body |
| 86 - 90 | being digested in the belly of a large beast |
| 91 - 95 | having intense intestinal distress |
| 96 - 100 | having one's ribs cracked open |

Secret Door

A successful Search check DC 30 will reveal this door that leads out of the Room of Pain.



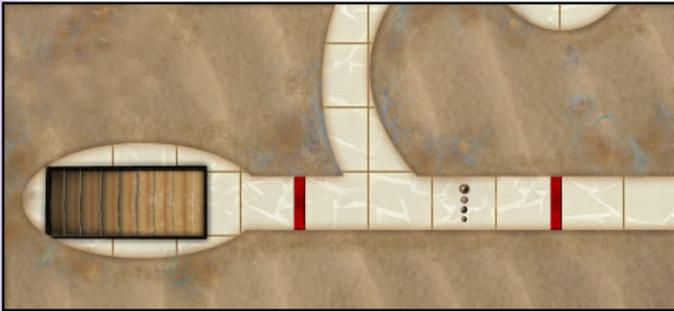
The Corridor of Chance

The corridor that exits the Room of Pain via the secret door connects to an enclosed section of the Corridor of Chance. Two red doors, identical to the door the visitors first encountered in the Fountain Room, block each end of the corridor. The doors have a Hardness of 5, 20 HP and a Break DC of 23.

The four spice jars the visitors encountered are in the middle of the floor.

This time, the results of handling the spice jars are different:

- If #1 is picked up, Door A opens, leading to The Fountain Room.
- If #2 is picked up, Door B opens, revealing the steps that go down to the Room of Instinct.
- If #3 is picked up, the holder and anyone next to him is transported to the Room of Taste.
- If #4 is picked up, the holder and anyone next to him is transported to the Room of Touch.



The Room of Instinct

The steps leading down from the Corridor of Chance descend 300 ft. (91 m.), ending in a small room approximately 10 ft. (3 m.) long by 7 ft. (2 m.) wide.

The Room of Instinct was given as a gift to the Sensate - it senses when someone enters it, and immediately begins to count the minutes the visitor takes to reach each of the Four Marks. Somewhere hidden from view, a loud, solemn bell chimes for each minute past.

To determine how many minutes are allowed to reach each mark, roll according to the following chart:

| # of Players | Dice |
|--------------|------|
| 1 - 2 | 1d10 |
| 3 - 4 | 1d8 |
| 5 or more | 1d4 |

If the First Mark is not reached in time, a shadow mastiff is released from the Starting Point. The mastiff will try to find the visitors and attack them.

If the Second Mark is not reached in time, a second shadow mastiff is released from the starting point. This mastiff will try to find the first mastiff and attack the visitors if it finds them.

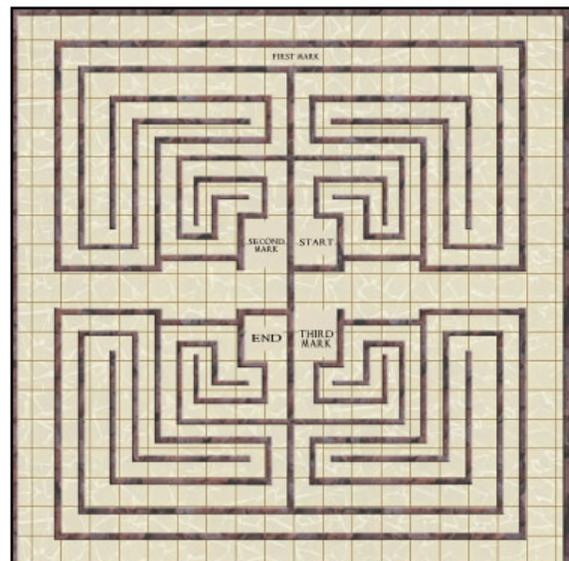
If the Third Mark is not reached in time, a third shadow mastiff is released from the starting point. This mastiff will try to find the first two mastiffs and attack the visitors if it finds them.

Aspects of the Maze

There are no windows or doors in the Room of Instinct, and the walls, made of granite, are as thick as a man's forearm is long and extend 50 ft. (15 m.) up. The ceiling is 55 ft. (16.75 m.) above the floor. The walls and floor give off a dim glow, casting no discernable shadows.

Unlike the other maps in this book, the map for the Room of Instinct uses a grid which represents 10 ft. per square.

If and when the visitors reach the End of the maze, they are instantly transported to The Fountain Room.



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