Plate Mail Games



The Living Cavern

A fantasy Location & audio tracks

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The Living Cavern



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Introduction

Welcome to the Living Cavern, a place of both danger and reward for anyone brave enough to explore this magical underground forest. This product is system neutral and can tailored to your party's current level or skill. Included with your purchase are soundscape tracks for each area, written **in bold** at the end of the area description. These are ten-minute loops which can be played in the background to add depth to the setting. Plate Mail Games has a wide range of these tracks for all genres and games. This location can be used in any setting on its own or as part of a larger underground complex. If you are playing *Realms of Rothaen,* I suggest placing the cavern in the Iron Blade Mountains that border Luxinvale though, again, it can fit anywhere. The cavern is designed to challenge your players.

History

Over a thousand years ago, when the fire drakes declared war on humanity, the alleys, cities, and forests burned lighting up the night skies. The elves did all they could to save their homes in the trees, but tens of thousands died, and acres went up in smoke and hellfire. One druid, Marith, decided to take a drastic step to save her grove. Using forbidden magic from deep within the world, she transferred her entire grove underground, saving it from the oncoming fire drakes. In the process, however, she corrupted it and herself at the same time. Marith did not know what she had done until it was too late. By using the dark magic, the plants and animals mutated while being teleported. The spell ripped the life force from the elf druid and trapped her twisted soul in the Living Cavern forever. Her ghost can appear anywhere in the cavern and will attack intruders with murderous rage.

Overview

This massive underground cavern stretches several miles in all directions. Packed into this space is a diverse ecosystem, kept alive by the river that runs through it and the massive luminescent fungus that grows from the ceiling and acts as the sun. When the grove was originally transported to this location, it was a third the size. With the warping effect of the magic used to teleport it here and the odd effect of the fungus, the grove expanded, taking over most of the cavern.

When first entering, characters will notice that the air is humid and hot. Two-foot thick fog covers the floor of the cavern. The sounds of birds, water drips, and the rumbling river fill the air. The ceiling is six hundred yards high with huge glowing fungus growing from it. This fungus is multicolored, casting strange ever-changing light onto the plants below. This light is not as bright as the sun, but its light seems to feed the plants. If the party spends longer than a day here, they will find there is no night. Undead are not affected by the fungus like they are by the sun and can walk freely in the cavern. One can find shade from the light easily enough, though. Additionally, the air has a hint of metal and sulfur in it which becomes more intense as you get closer to location two.

The map is numbered for the different areas the players may wander into. All of the ground is difficult terrain for any combat purposes due to the mix of red dirt and pebbles that cover the cavern floor. This is worse in the wooded area where there are fallen trees and massive roots. Remember that as a jungle environment, all the effects such a climate would have on characters are in effect.

1. The river that runs through the cavern is a dominant feature. Its quick-moving currents can be heard throughout the cavern. The speed of these waters can pose a danger for anyone knocked in or trying to cross. The water is thirty to forty feet deep, cutting into the cavern floor. Falling into the water while wearing armor will result in getting pulled under without a high swim or athletics roll or a rope guide. Even with these skills, a person in full plate armor will sink down no matter what. There are fish and other creatures, many just riding the current from further upstream, that one could catch if careful. This water is very clean and safe to drink. **Track: Underground River**
2. Here, characters will find a gigantic greenish-yellow, goo-filled pit that is slowly bubbling. The pool gives off a lot of thick sulfur and copper-scented steam. Breathing this in can cause dizziness from prolonged exposure, but it is not harmful in small doses. The goo itself has the properties of sulfuric acid. Characters need to be cautious when approaching the pit because liquid is being sprayed into the air, covering a ten-foot area around it.

   Closer to the lip, characters will notice incomplete human remains (all bones) and some items circling the pit. These poor adventurers lost their lives either to the spraying acid or to the thing living in the goo. Here are some suggestions for what might lurk in the acid:

   - A tentacle creature that waits for characters to get within a few feet of the pit and then tries to pull them in—it spits out the bones
   - An air elemental in the steam, just above the pit that lashes out at any who get too close
   - A demon or devil who breathes acid and loves dissolving flesh
   - Small goo spiders that pour out of the pit in a swarm and lay eggs in the adventurers' heads
   - The goo is tainted with death magic that reanimates the corpses around the pit.

   Whatever danger you pick, make sure to add the acid damage from the spray and to any attacks. The goo sticks and keeps burning until it is washed off. The bodies lying around the pit will have items at the GM's discretion. **Track: Acid Pit**

3. This large, dense tropical forest is home to strange and horrible vegetation. Man-eating plants, vines that wrap around unsuspecting throats, and living murderous trees are all here waiting to feast on adventurers. The plants have a reddish-green tint to them from all the blood they have consumed over the years. Those who spend enough time here take to calling it Vampire Wood.

   The canopy of trees blocks most of the light from the fungus above, though the rain still makes its way down creating a red, muddy mess for characters to walk through. The vegetation below the tree canopy consists of large misshapen plants and flowers. Through part of the day, the

mist rises to be five feet high. This is when the creatures that live here come out in an effort not to be eaten by the plants. At the center of Vampire Wood is an old stone circle that belonged to Marith the druid. Those brave or foolhardy enough to get here will find a magic item which she can't use in her current state. What this item is has been left up to the GM and should fit their campaign. **Track: Vampire Wood**

Ideas for what your party might run into here include:

- Hangmen trees, whose vines lash out and try to strangle characters
- Man-eating Venus fly traps… so, I guess Venus human traps
- Flowers that shoot out deadly spores
- The extra fog that rolls in hides murderous goblins, frog men, or imps (or any small ankle-cutting creature)
- Huge snakes
- Swarms of deadly insects
- Mud pits
- Poisonous fruit

4. In the second large, dense, forested area, the plants are not tainted. In fact, there are many trees that produce great tasting fruit here. Wild boars are plentiful for those brave enough to hunt them. The problem with this forest is the small tribe of humanoids, a mix of goblins, orcs, and ogres, living here. They see all the game and fruit as their own and will attack anyone who enters their area. If defeated, the characters will find treasure befitting such rabble. This is also a great place to add on a wet, gross goblin hole for characters to explore.

   In the south, the forest gives way to bushes, moss-covered rocks, and small, yellow berry-producing plants. If eaten, these plants will heal characters up to 5 points or a minor wound, whichever fits your game best. **Track: Living Cavern**

5. Here the party will find a huge dwarven bridge that was built long before the grove was transported here. The only reason it is still up is because dwarves build things to last, but it wouldn't take much for it to crumble. The bridge is covered in vines and large chunks of stone have fallen off due to age and water erosion. Despite this, it is still the safest point to cross.

   If the vines are cleared away, the characters will discover ancient dwarven runes that show the location of their king's burial ground (see area sixteen). To decode this message, one must be able to read magic and the dwarven language. The message was left for any dwarves who wanted to pay their respects to the fallen king. The two biggest dangers lurking here are the bridge itself and, of course, trolls. Two people may cross the bridge at the same time without penalty. For each person beyond two, there is a ten percent chance the bridge will collapse sending the characters into the rushing waters below. *Example: Six characters means there is a 40% chance that the bridge will fail.* **Track: Underground River**

6. Large crater-shaped pools of water mixed with natural geysers are carved into this area of barren rock. The geysers shoot water into the air every fifteen to thirty minutes but are not connected to the pools of water. Those pools, on the other hand, are connected via large cracks near the bottom that medium-sized creatures can traverse. There is no discernable current in these pools, but many of them have marine life that originated from some underground source. Though there are colorful algae growing on bottom of the pools, they do not obscure the view. The water is crystal clear. The pools can be up to two hundred feet deep and up to half a mile wide. **Track: Underground Geysers**

   What lurks in the deep?

   - Merpeople have created a sanctuary away from the prying eyes of their foes in the ocean deep. This means that the pools are salt water and undrinkable. How these merpeople react to anyone who enters their realm is left up to the GM. With potions of breathing, one could do an entire adventure in this network of pools where the characters help the merpeople in some way.
   - Treasure can be seen at the bottom of some of the pools, but lurking in the algae or in a huge crack off to the side is an underwater beast who waits to eat victims whole.
   - The pools are magical, and each one imparts a gift or curse onto those who swim in them. Gifts could be a bonus to an ability, regained strength, or some secret knowledge of a hidden treasure. At the same time, cursed pools might inflict harm, take away an ability point, or cause temporary blindness.
   - The pools are home to a mythic beast of great power who will grant a wish if its riddle is solved. You could also have the creature give the party a quest.
   - The pools are home to water elementals who hate intruders and will try to force the characters out of the area.

7. This rocky grass plain is home to a herd of elk. The grass has been tainted by the pit in location two, but the elks have adapted to the acid. Eating their meat, though, will lead to a grave sickness, too much might even mean death. These elk are also aggressive and will stampede any who they feel are a threat. **Track: Living Cavern**

8. When the characters walk up to this area, they will only see what seems to be wet rocks and mud. On closer inspection, they find slime an inch think covering a large area. If they pass through it, this sentient slime will rise up and engulf the party. They must cut their way free in order not to drown in slime. **Track: Living Cavern**

9. Locations nine and ten are home to the Death Fang ogre tribe. Not long ago, their chief died and his two daughters Isik and Grutilla have been fighting for control of the people, which has led to a split among the ogres.

   The areas are divided by a river and are much cooler than the rest of the cavern. There are many high bushes interspersed with a few trees where wild boar and other smaller game live. Like

most of the areas, the floor is rocky with loose dirt. The ogres do not hide themselves at all, so PCs can see their campfires through the trees.

Coming into this area, the characters will also find a strange blue fruit that grows on small purple bushes. These are yucle berries, and they are highly addictive. Eating only a handful of berries will send a character into a psychedelic state that lasts for thirty minutes. While in this state, the character can do nothing but sit and stare up at the light emitting from the fungus. They will feel compelled to eat more of the fruit. Side effects are left up to the GM, but it should alter their overall health for at least an hour. An overdose, more than a handful in a thirty minute period, can lead to death and should require a health check of some kind. Breaking someone's addiction can take up to two months. Until then, the PC will always look to eat more of the fruit. The Black Fangs are very much addicted to this fruit and do not take kindly to anyone trying to take it. **Track: Underground River**

Here are some things players may do or find at this location:

- Help one of the sisters defeat the other through head-to-head combat or assassination.
- Steal a few yucle plants to harvest and sell on the black market at a major city.
- Rid the area of ogres and take their gold.

10. See location nine.
11. Razor sharp rock formations reach up towards the ceiling with small paths leading around them at the bottom. There seems to be no vegetation here. A large crack in the ground, which is almost a mile long and four hundred yards wide, can be found in the middle of the Razor Rocks. Giant spiders, scorpions, and snakes make their homes here as well as other smaller animals including birds. The cavern at the center can lead to a new level of catacombs below, a huge chamber where a dragon lives, or a dark elf city. **Track: Razor Rocks**
12. Trees sway to a gentle breeze here as birds sing and the sound of water falling like rain fills the air. This is a safe place to rest and regroup. **Track: Living Cavern**
13. Originating from the acid pit at location two is a cloud of acidic fog and smoke that is two miles long and almost a mile wide. Visibility in the cloud is less than a foot, so stumbling over rocks or falling into the river is easy to do. The acid vapors will burn both skin and lungs, causing damage every minute the party is within them. Finally, something lives in the smoke, hunting those who trespass in its territory. What that something might be is left up to the GM. **Track: Living Cavern**
14. At the head of the eastern entrance is a small grove of trees and several bone piles. These bones are a mix of human, animal, and monster and seem to have been bleached by the acid spray from area two. If one was to search the area, they might find some treasure hidden among the remains. However, they may find undead, former servants of Marith, looking to add to the pile. **Track: Acid Pit**
15. Not far from the dwarven bridge at location five is the original grove that Marith transferred here all those years ago. This is where she was transformed into the hideous undead beast she is now. Her remains are buried here, and if they are disturbed, she will appear and attack. What

type of undead she was twisted into is left up to the GM and what fits their game. She can appear anywhere the GM likes and should be a hard fight for any group to overcome. If her remains are destroyed, the deadly plants in Vampire Wood will revert to normal plant life. **Track: Living Cavern**

16. If one escapes the choked, corrupted, claustrophobic Vampire Wood to the north, they will find a much more open space here. Strange colorful plants are intermingled with palm trees. These plants are not carnivorous, and the PCs will not find any wildlife or monsters here either. There are large swarms of bugs that will attack anything larger than them.

    The lack of beasts in this area is not due to the bugs, though they can be a menace. Instead, it's because of the guardians of King Blackfire's tomb. What these guardians are is left up to the GM, but my favorite things to use are golems. Blackfire was not an evil king, so his guardians should not be undead. Anyone roaming this area will alert the guardians, especially if they are getting too close to the tomb. The bridge at location five has clues to the location of the tomb. If you want to add an extra challenge, traps throughout the area would work well. **Track: Living Cavern**

King Blackfire's Tomb

Long before the grove was transported, the dwarven king Blackfire was buried here. He was not a great king, in fact, his rule was cut short by his son, Grimfist the Impatient. Grimfist had no plans on giving his father a big sendoff, which is why there is a small tomb here, far from the dwarven realms. The only mention of him is carved in the bridge at location five. His loyal men attempted to keep his memory alive. The tomb is a simple affair, two chambers separated by a hallway. The ceilings are only 6' tall, leaving taller adventurers to have to hunch over. Below are the details of the king's tomb. **Track: Dwarven Tomb**

1. Entrance: The outside of the tomb is heavily overgrown, making it difficult to see the mound. The stone door that leads to the entrance hallway is trapped with a fire glyph. Disarming it should be moderately difficult. If the trap is sprung, it will cause a 6d8 fireball to explode. This will not only hurt, but any guardians in the area not dealt with beforehand will come to stop the PCs.

   The hallway to the first room is 45' long and has dwarven runes carved into it that tell of the king's deeds and the treachery of his son Grimfist. A history roll will reveal that the tomb is at least a fifteen hundred years old. The door leading to the first room at the end of the hall has a warning of a great curse for any who would break the door's seal. Unless the curse is dispelled, whoever opens the door cannot leave without slowly rotting to death. Instead, they must stay in the tomb as a guardian forever, slowly turning into living stone. Removal of the curse through magic is the only way to save a person from this grisly fate.

2. The first room of the tomb is a 115’ x 55’ room that contains several barrels of ale, all of which have gone bad. In the center of the room is a large font of water flanked by two dwarven warrior statues. Next to the statues are stone and gem sculptures. These are magical conduits that power the statues. When someone enters the room, the statues spring to life and attack. Until the gems on the sculptures are destroyed, the statues will not stop fighting.

   There are two statues in the corners of the room. These are just decorative. The water in the font is poisoned. There is no treasure to be found in this room.

3. The hallway connecting the first room to King Blackfire’s burial chamber is 60’ long before it doglegs to the northeast for another 30’. All along the walls are frames with blacked-out glass which signify loss and grief. Right before the door to the crypt is a pit trap that is triggered when anyone steps on it. At the bottom of the pit are large spikes, adding extra damage to the ten-foot fall. A d8 is recommended.

4. The tomb of King Blackfire is an 80’x75’ chamber with six magically lit braziers, one in each corner and two flanking the king’s sarcophagus. The sarcophagus has his hammer resting on the top. Being the item of the dwarven king, it is no doubt magical, but those details are left up to the GM. Two water fonts are in front of the braziers. There are several wooden coffins lining the south wall, all perfectly preserved. These caskets hold the remains of servants who volunteered to serve the king after death. There is a dusty bed, shelves, a desk, ale kegs, and a golden cup on a pedestal. Just beyond the golden cup are a few locked chests and treasures laid out on the floor.

   This room screams trap, and greedy characters may think they hit the jackpot, but they will soon learn how wrong they were. First, four of the caskets hold constructs that will attack if anyone touches the treasure. If no one picks up the hammer, one of the constructs will pick it up and get whatever magical bonus it might have. The magical fire in the braziers will start raising the temperature in the room. This has no effect on the constructs, but it will set flammable objects not magically protected ablaze and start cooking flesh after about five minutes. To stop this, the magical fire must be dispelled. Dumping water on it will only create scalding hot steam.

   If all these obstacles are overcome, the players will reap the reward of the king’s treasure. But, it should be noted that Blackfire was not an evil king—he was an average, lackluster one. There are no undead guarding the tomb, no righteous reason to pillage his final resting place. In short, breaking in, destroying the king’s constructs, and looting his treasure is an evil act. This might not matter to the PCs, but if they claim to be good, the moral ambiguity should be brought up. If you are playing a system where alignment is used and powers can be lost for doing evil acts, this may be a good time to drop the hammer, so to speak. While they are making their way through the tomb, let them know they see no signs of evil or monsters. Also, the bridge where the runes are written were in old dwarven for those who want to pay their respects to the dead king, not a sign that says “Hey, loot here!”

One way to make it interesting is to have the dwarven kingdom notified magically when the front door is breached. The current king would send soldiers to deal with the grave robbers. When the characters emerge from the tomb, they quickly find themselves outmatched by very angry dwarves. They could be killed, yes, but for my money a better way to go is to have them arrested and dragged back to the dwarven capital to face charges. This could lead to a whole new set of adventures.

In conclusion

I hope you enjoyed The Living Cavern. My goal was to give you a ton of ideas for your game that will challenge your group. Plate Mail Games works hard to bring you the very best in gaming quality and value.

