The Star Pool

An Introduction

Your torches sputter in the damp cold and perfectly still air of the underground tunnel. You've been travelling for hours, on occasion passing side passages or clambering through unremarkable caves. Your scout leads the way, stopping on occasion to listen, feeling for the slightest movement of air and looking for tracks that might hint at the correct route. He looks competent, you hope he is, losing your way down here would be a death sentence.

The scout pauses once again, your companions whisper quietly to themselves until he holds up a hand for silence. He listens for a moment and turns to you "Something strange lies ahead, I know not what" he whispers with a frown. You continue forward with caution, until once again the scout stops and raps a damp cloth around his torch, motioning the rest of the party to do the same. You look at each other dubiously before complying. At first the tunnel seems to be pitch black but slowly, as your eyes adjust to the darkness you begin to see a glow ahead, slightly illuminating the walls. As you creep forward you soon find yourself at the entrance of a large flooded cavern. Water stretches out in front of you, so still it resembles the surface of a mirror. In its surface is a sight you can barely comprehend. A deep blue and purple night sky of stars and nebulae sparkle in the darkness of the water. You look to the roof of the cave, expecting to see the night sky but all you see is rock illuminated by starlight emanating from the water. You hear a gasp from your companions before the scout raises his finger to his lips. He gestures to an island in the center of the underground lake, and then whispers into your ear "Something sleeps upon the pinnacle, we must be quiet as we make are way around the edge of the cavern". You look dubiously at the water before nodding.

Stepping lightly into the ice cold water, with as little noise as you can, you make your way around the edge of the lake. The water at the cavern edges is no more than a foot or so deep, but even so you can't help but make small ripples that emanate out across the surface and lap at the islands rocky shore.

You look back to see your dwarven cleric making his way gingerly through the water, almost waist deep for him. He takes another step and vanishes below the surface. In seconds he resurfaces, spluttering and gasping for air, you rush to his aid, pulling him upright. "There's a bloody hole right there!" he shouts indignantly before clamping his hand over his mouth and going red.

At the center of the lake, at the top of the small island you hear a rustle, something stirs in the darkness. Two large glowing eyes rise up from the islands peak. "Sorry" the cleric says sheepishly, while unbuckling his war mace.

Notes and Tips

- 30x30 map grid
- The water in the cavern can be as shallow or deep as you wish, however having it dark, so it's difficult to see the bottom should be fun.
- Place holes throughout the lakes bottom, these can be fallen into by the players and also things could move through them.
- The central island can be a resting place of something dangerous. Dragons of all types could live here, but any subterranean creature could use it as a perch.
- Ropers and Cloakers could be hanging out on the caves roof.
- I love Flumphs, have some floating about in the cavern, or maybe have one float up to the party glowing red to try warning them of some danger in the cavern.
- This could be the breeding ground of some subterranean monstrosity. Describe eggs or pupae hanging from the ceiling or floating in the water. This can be a great way to introduce a monster that may be to powerful for your party, simply use a juvenile creature instead.
- Have the stars be some kind of underwater plant that drags its prey into the water. Use tendrils as monsters with a few hit points and throw a bunch up each round.

Variants

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