

The Mirror Maze Of The Shrouded King

High on an unremarkable, southeast-facing mountain slope in northeastern Peredur, a few hundred feet (200+ metres) below the snowline, is a 7 ft tall (2.1 m) sealed stone doorway to which no path leads, and which is the **Sealed Entrance** to this maze-tomb. The peaks among which the doorway stands mark the southern limit of a vast, unhealthy land of dead trees and bodies, foul waters, evil steams and mists, where nothing wholesome walks unmolested for long, known as Lich Land. While set beyond its nominal boundary, this maze-tomb shares aspects of that forsaken place, not least the incredibly gigantic expanse of the Trapped Soul Maze (which begins 10 miles, 16 kilometres, northwest of the Mirror Maze, and which then continues for tens of miles, 50+ km, west from there). Outside on the slopes, the region is a cool to cold temperate one, around 52 degrees South latitude, and the terrain surrounding the mountainside is bleak and uninviting, as if determined to deter visitors and treasure-seekers.

The subterranean maze-tomb mapped here comprises two main sections. The larger part, to the southwest, and directly accessible through the Sealed Entrance, is the **Mirror Maze**. This begins with the short corridor immediately behind the doorway, and it continues northwest from there to the ends of the two similarly short passages, where they open directly into the second segment of the complex, the Tomb Chamber.

All areas in the Mirror Maze are a surprisingly uniform 9 ft high (2.7 m), with flat-cut, native stone floors and ceilings. The walls too are similar, although this cannot be seen, because throughout the Maze, they are all covered, without gaps, by rectangular, magical, silver-mirrored glass panels, stretching from floor to ceiling. Each panel is of variable width, generally between two and five feet wide (60 to 150 centimetres). The panels are in remarkably fine condition, all highly polished and reflective, free from dust or marks, and there is no obvious indication as to how they are fixed to the walls. While the Maze's layout is relatively simple on the map, these mirrored walls make the whole very confusing to try to navigate, especially when using light sources.

Trying to negotiate the Maze without light brings its own dangers, as trapped within the mirrors are several ghostly forms. They radiate their own soft, pale, rather sickly, glow, which is often overwhelmed by any stronger light source. Such light also makes them harder to see, or for them to act. When they can be identified, they may have, or take on, the appearance of dead friends or family members, wordlessly pleading for help. Should anyone try to do so, such **Mirror Ghosts** will attempt to possess that individual, if successful, swapping places with them to escape their mirror prison. The mirror panels have the magical power to trap and permanently hold the undead within themselves, converting them, regardless of their former power, into new weakened Mirror Ghosts in the process. The mirrors' purpose is to prevent the numerous undead in the Tomb Chamber from leaving it.

Leaving the Tomb Chamber for the undead there means their destruction. Although as weakened Ghosts trapped in the Mirror Maze, they can remain there indefinitely, and can move freely within the mirror panels, their sole means of escaping from the mirrors is to possess someone living, forcing that individual's psyche into the mirror as a similar, ghostly form. However, such possession is only ever temporary, as once outside the Entrance to the Maze the Mirror Ghosts quickly fade away for good, and the swapped psyche returns to its original form, if in a confused, sometimes terrified and traumatised, state. Consequently, the undead in the Tomb Chamber are afraid to leave it, and will not do so unless absolutely forced to, while the Mirror Maze remains.

Other problems exist within the Mirror Maze. One dead-end passage in its southern part has a **Secret Antimagic Trap**. This drains the magical power from any non-living items carried into the last ten feet or so (3 m) of the corridor. In the western passageway leading into the Tomb Chamber is a concealed floor panel that triggers rocky **Falling Debris** to drop into the indicated roughly ten-foot area, causing damage and making the floor there permanently more difficult to traverse. The Falling Debris does not harm the mirror panels alongside it. Another dead-end passageway in the western Maze has a **Spitting Cobra** in it. A curious living creature to find here, it may not be quite what it appears, as it is of abnormally large size, and has the power to reflect spells cast at it back on the caster. It has a venomous bite, or it can spit its poison instead up to 30 ft or so (9 m). This poison-spitting can be dodged at least, and is usually only effective if it strikes broken skin, or another easily damaged body part, such as the eyes or mouth. The Cobra is protectively curled around two large, spherical eggs, which a close inspection shows to be really a pair of unusually large, lustrous, valuable, pearls.

Finally in this section of the complex, is the more open area in its near-centre, the **Echo Chamber**. When someone speaks in here, faint echoing whispers occur, which are not true echoes at all, but new words, spoken by the Mirror Ghosts. What they may say, and its significance, is left for GMs to determine.

While the mirror panels can be smashed, albeit with some difficulty, as they have magical resistance to taking physical or magical harm, this will release all the Mirror Ghosts from them, effectively destroying

them (thus the Ghosts will try to prevent this happening). If sufficient panels were so destroyed, a path could be made to permit the undead from the Tomb Chamber to escape. Note though that all the panels reflecting even a small part of the route would need smashing, as any undead caught by just one intact panel along the way would become trapped as a new Mirror Ghost there.

The **Tomb Chamber** has many more aspects to it. Its square central area, with the large raised Dais platform in its middle, has an 18 ft high ceiling (5.5 m). The open groups of four alcoves set into each side wall of the Chamber share the lower height of the two mirrored passages to the southeast, at 9 ft (2.7 m), as does the short alcove-passage leading to the door to the Owl Shrine. All the walls, floors and ceilings are of flat-cut native stone, with no mirror panels.

A single, plain, wooden coffin is fixed to a raised stone platform in each side alcove. Two larger wooden sarcophagi, also attached to similar stone bases, stand atop the **Dais**, which is raised around 2 ft (60 cm) above the Chamber's floor by two broad steps leading up onto it. All the coffins and sarcophagi are sealed shut. The first living individual to step onto the top of the Dais platform activates an area of dangerous cold, due to necrotic energy, all across the Dais platform and its steps.

Four large, **Demon-Faced Gargoyles** stand immobile, one at each lower corner of the Dais platform's steps. Unless commanded to act by the Shrouded King once he is active, they will remain like statues unless someone tries to forcibly damage them, or anything in the Tomb Chamber. Opening any of the burial caskets is not classed as such damage, nor is opening the Secret Door to the Treasure Room, or picking the lock to the Owl Shrine. Forcing the Shrine's door, however, would awaken the Gargoyles, as would leaving the Tomb Chamber with any items or treasure from it, as their primary task is to guard the Tomb Chamber, and stop anything from leaving it. While this extends to the more corporeal undead here as well, the Shrouded King's insidious powers of mental command are such that he can overrule parts of their original programming, once he is awakened. The Gargoyles have the added ability that they can magically howl alarmingly, causing fear in the living who hear them. They are unaffected by the Mirror Maze.

Eleven of the side-alcove coffins have undead occupants. The five others contain humanoid remains, but no undead. Their former undead occupants are now Mirror Ghosts, having tried to escape at earlier times. Each occupied coffin is indicated by a symbol in the alcove, which is there purely for the GM's convenience. Nothing in the alcoves or on the coffins indicates what is where within them. Opening a coffin will cause its occupant to awaken and become active within the Tomb Chamber.

Four coffins contain **Shadows**. In life they were, and still act as, the Shrouded King's personal guards. However, they are, or have become, craven and cowardly, preferring sneak attacks from behind. They will try to flee and hide if the Shrouded King is destroyed. Each coffin contains rags and humanoid remains in or around which they may be initially, or subsequently, concealed.

One coffin on the northeast wall, in the alcove nearest the Owl Shrine, contains a humanoid body, and a terrified **Peasant Ghost**. It is pitifully afraid of the four Wraiths, who seem to want to hunt it for sport. While it will tend to flee rather than fight living humanoids here, it may also attempt to possess someone, just to try to evade the Wraiths and escape the Tomb Chamber. This body and Ghost were swapped for one of the former royal body-servants and hand-maidens (the rest of whom are now Wraiths here), before the burials and trapping ceremonies were performed, a long time ago.

The four ex-royal-servant **Wraiths** in the coffin-alcoves along the northwestern wall, are more intent on finding, chasing and attacking the Peasant Ghost, than anything else. Thus they will largely ignore anyone or anything in here besides that Ghost, unless they are attacked, or should someone try to block them from reaching the Ghost. They will though attack anyone the Ghost possesses. They believe (wrongly) that the Peasant Ghost can tell them how to successfully escape from here, and resent it as representing the traitorous one of their number that managed to avoid their fate.

In the second alcove from the south corner among the southwest wall's four alcoves, is one of the few corporeal undead here, the **Muttering Lich**. In life, he was the court seer, astrologer and magician. Now, he is powerful enough to be unconcerned by the living or the undead here, and from awakening, is always distractedly muttering to himself, mostly about highly obscure matters. He could ordinarily teleport himself away, but his ability to do so is blocked by the nature of the Mirror Maze complex. Thus while he can still teleport, all he does is randomly do so from one part of the Tomb Chamber to another, repeatedly. What he really wants is to get out, as he thinks the magic of the Tomb is also preventing him from recalling where he left his phylactery, and wants to find it and his study-workshop again. Or at least remember where they all are. When his coffin is first opened, his initial words are likely to be along the lines of, "Is it morning already?" If attacked, he will naturally retaliate, albeit probably quite distractedly, for all he will otherwise busy himself with some random conversation with himself. He may become irritated if there is too much noise and activity here once he is awakened. The, as he puts it, "juvenile antics" of the four Wraiths chasing the Peasant Ghost will particularly annoy him, and he may well banish all five back to their coffins, simply by force of personality. He

despises the Shrouded King, his former patron and overlord, whom he regards as, “that pompous little idiot who got us all stuck here.” He has equally little regard for the former Queen, who, as a Bone Naga, now seems to him, “little different from how she was in life, spitting bile, slinking about, and always fretting over her looks.” For all this, somehow he is still wearing an amazingly intact, clean, high-quality silken robe with pearl button fastenings.

Located in the second alcove from the south corner on the southeast wall, is the coffin containing the **Radiant Holy Wight**, the other main corporeal undead creature here. Unlike typical Wights that drain life energy, this radiantly-glowing Holy Wight can use its power to restore life energy to the living, helping to heal them, while its magical greatsword trails pleasingly-scented incense when it strikes, causing notably more harm to any undead creatures as it does so. It will attempt to aid or protect those being attacked by more typically inimical undead, and is the only creature here that may emerge from its coffin unaided, if the commotion in the Tomb Chamber grows too loud. Despite its positive nature, it is also unable to leave the Tomb Chamber, like the rest of the undead. It was sealed in here to further prevent any of them from leaving.

Upon the Dais, the more northerly sarcophagus is that of the **Shrouded King** himself. His mortal remains are wrapped in tattered black silk, and his undead form is a Wraith that appears like a large, black-shrouded, loosely humanoid figure. His face is never seen. Unusually intelligent as Wraiths go, he can command the four Shadows here, including having them rise from their coffins, to act as his guards (note their own limitations in this regard, however). He can also command the four Demon-Faced Gargoyles, in a limited manner. He has several other powers. He can become invisible when he wishes. Parts of his shroud can behave like extensible tentacles, allowing his innate life-draining ability to reach up to 30 ft (9 m) from him, and all his communications are purely telepathic - including with other creatures in the Tomb Chamber he does not control. He wants to leave this place, to reclaim his former surface realm, without realising that has long vanished. All those buried here were once members of his former inner court.

Southeast of the King's tomb on the Dais is the sarcophagus of his former **Queen**, which contains her mortal remains. These seem to be merely a collection of disarticulated, unusually long, bones when the box is first opened, which rapidly slide and click sickeningly together, combining into her undead form as a Bone Naga. In this shape, she is not the usual mindless creature many such Nagas are, instead possessing much of her previous strong intellect and will, and is able to spit bolts of either ice or acid, or bite with her wickedly sharp, long teeth. She is keen to leave the Tomb, and will tend to follow the Shrouded King wherever he goes.

Beyond the locked door to the **Owl Shrine** (the key is hidden in the Treasure Room) is a plain, square chamber with a 9 ft, 2.7 m, ceiling, in the centre of which is a square stone altar pillar, set on a low plinth. Atop the altar is a small owl statue, which has hooded, yet still glinting and sharp-looking eyes, for all these too are simply of the same carved stone the statue comprises. It faces directly towards the room's west corner, as if looking through the wall into the Tomb Chamber beyond, watching over it. It grants to one person who touches it the temporary ability to create and see through a tiny, magical, floating eye, that can fly, see in even complete darkness, and pass through openings as small as a keyhole, providing it remains within about 30 ft (9 m) of its user.

Hidden in the wall behind the coffin and its stone stand in the second alcove from the west corner on the northwest wall, is a 5 ft tall **Secret Door** (1.5 m). Opening it is straightforward. However, the first person passing through it triggers a magical webbing spell trap, catching them and snaring any who are immediately behind them in its sticky strands. The hidden **Treasure Room** through this Door has the same plain stonework as the Tomb Chamber, although its ceiling is only 6 ft high (1.8 m). A large, closed chest is in the middle of the floor, which contains the following items in the order they may be discovered in it. Each smaller item is wrapped in a piece of sackcloth, with larger pieces of similar fabric laid over the top of the larger items.

Treasure Items

- * A cracked emerald.
- * A cloth bag holding ten silver spikes.
- * A pair of silk slippers and a silken robe once belonging to the Queen.
- * A round, magical shield with a single large, golden, cat's eye painted in the centre of its face; it grants the additional property that its user cannot be knocked over while they remain conscious, although it also grants the disadvantage that its user takes more damage than normal from blunt weapons.
- * A good-quality broadsword with a fiery pearl decorating its pommel.
- * A hard, large, blue egg, the size of a coconut and of stone-like weight, this is the magical “Egg of the Cockatrice” which allows its owner to command the egg to hatch a Cockatrice able to follow simple commands for a short while, before flying away; so long as the pieces of the stony shell are kept, they will reform into their original shape over the following week, and can then be reused.
- * An average-quality, double-handed greatsword that has an unusually serrated blade.

- * A heavy iron key, the key to the locked door of the Owl Shrine.
- * A wooden finger-ring, carved with an intricate knotted pattern.
- * A mahogany smoking pipe with an inlaid ivory hunting scene on it.
- * A wyvern hatchling encased in a small block of amber.
- * A golden censer with hooded, skeletal figures decorating it.
- * A glittering, faceted emerald.
- * A tall, narrow mirror in a bronze frame.
- * A mail hauberk in which several rows are made of golden links.
- * A rolled, dragon-skin scroll, onto which have been tattooed magical charms that allow its owner to speak to and understand any animal, to be immune from poisons, and to be invulnerable to the effects of fire, which bears the title, "The Scroll of the Covenant".