

# The Tomb of General Chengdai

Lost among the maze of low, grassy and rocky hummocks and tors known as the Mingjue Ruins, that lie just north of the eastern end of the great Mingjue Canyon on the Tiantang Grasslands of Kumarikandam, is the entrance to this maze-tomb. Despite that, rumours persist of the magical Tomb of General Chengdai - and the fabulous treasures said to lie within, which continue to draw adventurous treasure-seekers.

The General was once a popular, now legendarily famous (or infamous to his enemies) leader, known in his time across Kumarikandam for his exploits. His untimely death was brought about when he was betrayed by his lover, the Lady Zhembo, after which his powerful followers arranged for his burial here, in what was at the time a great city, now long-since fallen to ruins. Much of the above-ground entrance chapel collapsed to rubble many generations ago, but a short, descending, cave-like passageway was dug from it that remains open now as the marked Entrance on the map, providing access to the Tomb itself. There is some evidence for old adventurers' campsites in the surface Ruins nearby, although the Entrance itself remains quite a challenge to locate.

Many of the details for the Tomb were taken, with adaptations, from the suggested ideas for the pair of random geomorphic dice designs involved in creating the map's layout (from the "Trailblazer" set), in the "Dungeonmorph: Book of Modular Encounters - Delver, Trailblazer & Voyager Edition", published by Inkwel Ideas. Most of the names involved were determined randomly from tables in the "Nomicon" published by Mythmere Games.

## Tomb Notes

Once underground, the whole Tomb complex is clearly steeped in magic, to the point where magical detection spells fail to work, because there is just so much magic all around. In addition, religious powers that involve the turning-away of undead creatures will also not function within the Tomb complex, as such creatures that inhabit the complex are also protected by magic from these effects. The interior is completely unlit.

Inside, the complex is divided into two sections. The first, into which the only entryway leads, is the **Spectral Minotaur Maze**, indicated by the grey stonework flooring on the map. It is magically alive. All the doors in this section are of stone. While they are unlocked, and open readily, they will close on their own equally readily, even if attempts are made to hold them open by unattended means, such as door wedges or caltrops. Such things simply slide out of position, or the stonework shifts around them magically as soon as they are unwatched, and the door shuts. Similarly, attempts to mark a trail through the Maze always fail. Walls will spontaneously form condensation to wash off chalk marks, for instance, or prove impossible to physically chip signs into them, the doors, floors or ceilings (while apparently successful at first, the stonework simply heals itself as soon as it is left unwatched). Strings will untie or be cut and moved from where they were left, and so forth.

Unless the GM requires otherwise, the Maze chambers are all empty of items normally, with identical, unmarked doors and stonework throughout. Ceilings are all 10 feet high (3 metres), as is the straighter part of the **Entrance** passageway, although the more open, cave-like surface accessway is only about 8 ft high (2.4 m) at ground level.

As noted on the map, there are five **Sliding Walls** in the Maze, labelled "W" with a number. Each of these walls can be in one of two positions, and toggles in the FCW version of the Atlas map allow these different positions to appear on the map. At GM's option, a simple 1d6 roll can be made to decide which wall moves at any given time, with a "6" meaning they stay in the same place. Alternatively, all or only some could be moved together, as required. None of these movements blocks access to any part of the Maze, or the Tomb proper beyond, but they do act to increase the difficulty of trying to traverse the area as a whole. The walls move almost silently, and at a speed that still allows anyone in the way to avoid being struck by one, unless they deliberately stand in its way (not a good idea).

Each Maze chamber and passage segment, is allocated a number from 1 to 20, allowing GMs to roll 1d20 to identify where the Spectral Minotaur Javeng that defends the Maze begins, whenever adventurers first pass into the Entrance passageway segment. Javeng has been set to guard the Tomb, and protect it against all intruders. He was the former personal bodyguard of General Chengdai. Believing he had failed in his duty on the General's death, he willingly allowed himself to be placed and bound here in perpetuity to continue serving the General beyond death. He now has the powers of a physical Minotaur and the undead abilities of a Spectre. If destroyed, he reforms unharmed here in 3d4 days. Over time, he has created a further six Spectres, who all appear quite similar to Javeng, regardless of what they were originally (all were once adventurers). Where they appear can be determined randomly as well, or wherever the GM may require, given that Javeng has control over them too. Like him, if destroyed, they will reform here in 3d4 days.

Note that the longest series of connected passage segments in the Maze has been allocated numbers 12 to 15 inclusive, with a placement that requires some GM interpretation. This is because with four Sliding

Walls at various places in these corridors, the precise starts and ends of each passage section here can change. As ever, GMs are naturally free to adapt or alter things as they see fit, of course!

The smaller second, northern, section of the Tomb, denoted by plain, sand-coloured stonework floors on the map, surrounds the General's actual burial place. The Spectral Minotaurs are unable to pass beyond the door into this section from the northern passage extension to Chamber 19, where the grey stonework floors end. Everything here is ordinarily very still and silent, once more with 10 ft high ceilings (3 m). The door from Chamber 19 opens into that Chamber's passage extension, revealing a broad set of steps leading into the **Spiral Descent Passage**, down to the first landing corridor and beyond.

Like all the secret doors here, that off this first landing into the **Treasure Chamber** is very well hidden, and opening it is a challenge too. Three small rectangular panels are concealed at different heights in a vertical line in the stonework to the left (east) of the secret door, each roughly 6 inches horizontally by 4 inches vertically (15 by 10 centimetres), hinged at its top inside edge. Each must be pushed hard into the wall, which releases the panel's latch, letting it then swing out, revealing a simple bolt in the wall. Once all three bolts are drawn, the secret door freely swings into the Treasure Chamber. Inside, a wide range of treasures are apparent, for use in the General's afterlife, including a small boat and a wagon. Both these are filled with chests, barrels, silks, gold, jewellery, gemstones, some books and scrolls, although the more fragile items (including the silks, books, scrolls and parts of the woodwork) are in very poor condition, and liable to crumble to dust if treated roughly, or sometimes even if touched. In addition, there are five skeletons here, each in what remains of their former adventuring gear, of which just the metalwork remains in good condition. These will all animate as undead Skeletons to defend the Chamber if any of the treasure is touched.

The Treasure Chamber is powerfully cursed, such that any who die in the Chamber must remain here as undead to protect it in future. In addition, unless the secret door is held open, then much like those in the Maze, it will swing silently shut, the three bolts will audibly lock back into place, and their hidden panels outside the room will each shut and reset once more. There is no interior mechanism to operate the secret door, nor are there any visible hinges to it. The door and the wall it is in is specially enchanted such that magical attacks intended to create any kind of portal through it (including reopening the secret door magically) simply fail to work. Similarly, again like in the Maze, physical attacks of any kind do little damage to the stonework, which here repairs itself immediately, even while the attackers look on.

Another broad set of steps off the northern side at the east end of this first landing continues down the Spiral Descent to the second landing, past the secret door to the **Rock Trap Room**. This door is actually the entire last 10 ft (3 m) section of the eastern passage wall. It cannot be opened ordinarily from the second landing side, as it is part of a trap, triggered by any weight of 10 pounds or more (4.5 kilogrammes) placed on the lowest step of the staircase descending to the third landing, west of this secret Room. When activated, the secret door swings out, hinging from its southern edge, completely blocking the passage to the rest of the second landing and the stairs back to the first. A stone panel inside the door in the Rock Trap Room drops into a short ramp, and a large number of rounded boulders, each roughly 1 ft in diameter (30 cm), start rolling noisily from the tilted floor of the Room down both the lower stairwells and connected passageways of the rest of the Spiral Descent. The floor towards the outer angle at the western end of the third landing, beyond the trapped step, is rounded and tilted such that these boulders all continue rolling at pace right down to the doorway to the General's Tomb, area G. Anyone in the way of these bouncing boulders who fails to dodge most, will take considerable damage from them. Several minutes after the last boulders have clattered to a halt at the foot of the fourth landing passage, the rocks then magically all roll back up the stairs into the Rock Trap Room, and the trap resets itself, reopening the passageway back to the second descending stairwell.

At the foot of the Spiral Descent Passage, a locked, solid brass door on the east wall leads to **General Chengdai's Tomb (G)**. The door is virtually impossible to break through, but its lock could be picked by someone with sufficient skill in a short time (say 1d4 rounds). The door opens out into the Passage. Inside, the walls are covered with 5 ft wide (1.5 m) brass panels, each separated from the next by narrow white marble strips, with broader white marble bands at their bases and tops. The floor and ceiling are of green marble, with an 18-inch (45 cm) high black marble platform filling the eastern end of the chamber, on top of which is a great brass sarcophagus containing the General's remains. An inconsolably sobbing, spectral, woman in softly glowing white robes, kneels on the platform by the sarcophagus.

The brass wall panels have been skilfully etched with many scenes from the General's life, showing his greatest achievements (some of which are still remembered in legendary stories about him). These include: A triumphal procession; A planning session with The Seven (a vague designation in the tales, but perhaps other generals or leaders); Recovering a lost relic from a pyramidal ruin; A victory over a barbarian warrior force; Overthrowing a demonic-looking, legendarily evil, ruler; Single-handedly battling a Giant Naga to rescue several fallen comrades; Discovering a great river delta; Sitting in judgement in an impressive courtroom; Rescuing survivors from a calamity that looks like an earthquake; Fighting a duel against a noble-looking opponent; Signing a treaty suggesting great diplomatic success; Founding a great city (perhaps that of the surface Ruins here); Worshipping at a temple with a single, great, apparently sacred, single, flaming eye in it; The creation of a maze, somewhat like that in the Tomb complex; Founding a monastery; Sailing with a great fleet on the ocean; Battling a Kraken-like monster; and Flying on a magical carpet to a forested land in the clouds, with an adjacent panel showing the General meeting a Dryad-like leader in that same land.

Etched scenes and inscriptions cover the General's brass sarcophagus too, along with a skilfully relief-moulded, if stylized, rendition of the General's physical form in life on its top surface. The inscription includes dire warnings to defilers of the Tomb, while the scenes include those from the afterlife as well as more of the General's triumphs in life, including several that are repeated from the wall designs.

The sobbing woman is the General's betrayer, Lady Zhembo, who was caught and ritually slain after the General's death, before being raised as an undead Spectre, condemned to be trapped here in perpetuity as punishment for her crime, always in mourning. If disturbed, she will invite others to join her in mourning, and if so, will subsequently tell the story of her betrayal and punishment. Should anyone here be from the priestly order that condemned her, she will transform into a fiendish spectral form, rippling with power, screaming that all she regrets is having been caught, and that she would do it all again, taking the entire priestly order too, if she could. While she can vent her frustration at intruders here, her curse means she cannot leave this chamber. If destroyed, much like the Spectres in the Maze, she will reform in 3d6 days.

Inside the sarcophagus there are few treasures, except that the General's remains are still wearing his best armour and weapons (all magical), and a few pieces of non-magical, sentimental-value jewellery. Should his corpse be disturbed, the undead High Priest Chetseng will come to this chamber.

Both the remaining secret doors in this lowest part of the Tomb complex are as hard to discover as ever, though that north from the General's Tomb has a shallow groove where the brass and white marble trim meet, allowing it to be used as a handle to swing the door into the Tomb chamber. It will swing closed again unless held by someone, but it can be readily reopened from the north side simply by pushing on it. The hidden door leading east to the High Priest's Tomb is of similar design, with a concealed groove in the plain wall stonework that can be used as a pull handle from the General's Tomb side, and which simply pushes open again from the High Priest's Tomb passageway.

From the General's Tomb, the passage north leads directly into **Lady Zhembo's Tomb**, a plain stone chamber with an equally plain, unmarked, small stone sarcophagus in it. The sarcophagus contains the body of the General's betrayer, imbued with the curse that locks her presence here permanently. Her body is surprisingly well-preserved inside the casket, transfixed by a mesh of silver wires that power the binding of her curse. If a complex ritual were to be carried out here to release her spirit, it might allow her to move on into the afterlife and depart from here, or it might free her vengeful spectral spirit from the bond that prevents her from leaving the Tomb. In addition, the nature of the curse, and the powerful magics of the whole Tomb complex, may mean the ritual will not function as expected at all. Attempting to remove the silver mesh without carrying out any form of ritual would likely have especially dire consequences for all involved. If she is destroyed, she does not reform here, but in the High Priest's Tomb instead.

The eastern secret corridor off the first secret passage beyond the General's Tomb gives direct access to **High Priest Chetseng's Tomb**, he who bound Lady Zhembo here, and then had himself entombed when he too died, with a ritual performed that transfigured him into an especially powerful Spectre (treat as double-strength in most RPG systems) to personally ensure her fate. Much like the Lady's Tomb, this room is of unadorned stonework, as is its sarcophagus. The High Priest is always aware of any intruders in the Tomb complex, but manifests to intervene only if General Chengdai's corpse is disturbed, or an attempt is made to free Lady Zhembo. If she is released, he will track and destroy her utterly. If destroyed while still trapped in the Tomb complex, she reforms in this chamber. Should High Priest Chetseng be destroyed, he too reforms in this room after 3d4 days.