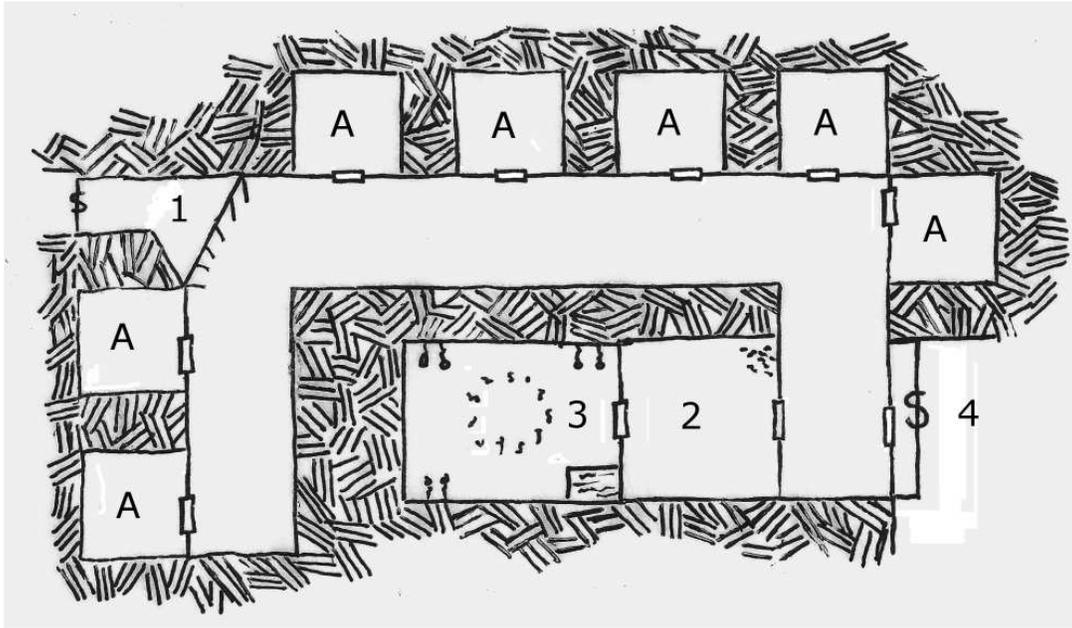


Lair of the Life Drinker

A gracious host hides a horrific dungeon. Will the heroes find it?



Possible Hooks:

- It is nearing nightfall, and the characters have set up camp on the Earl's land. A steward comes across them and invites them to stay the night at the manor.
- A cleric or other divine character has a "strong feeling" from their deity that they need to go to the Earl's manor to stop some sort of evil that is happening or will happen there. No further details can be discerned.
- The Earl is a major NPC in the campaign, and the characters are his guest. Discoveries made in this delve change the character's attitude towards him, or give them evidence that he should be stripped of power.
- A search for a missing person has led the characters to the Earl's manor.

Background:

No one really knows where Gregorian, the fifth Earl of Wayland came from. There is no recollection of his arrival, only the rapid rise up the social ladder and the impression he made upon the Duke. When the fourth Earl of Wayland died suddenly and without an heir apparent, Gregorian was the obvious choice to take over the Earldom. It is not a large Earldom, nor is it powerful, but it is remote and oft forgotten, and the fifth Earl likes it that way.

Gregorian is a charming and charismatic man. However, he holds a dark secret. He is a life drinker; a being that feeds off the life of others. Over the years, he has abducted various travelers passing through his lands as well as peasants from neighboring lands to feed on. He is careful above all, and no one suspects him of anything. He is well regarded among the populace.

He keeps his victims in a dank dungeon below his manor, and feeds upon them periodically; this feeding leaves no visible marks, dominates the victims, drives them mad, and eventually kills them. The ambiance for this delve is a dungeon crossed with an insane asylum.

General Mechanic: Dominated by the Earl

Characters that become unconscious have the possibility of becoming dominated by Gregorian. If this happens, the only way for the character to break this domination is for the player to solve a puzzle (or series of puzzles) assigned by the DM. If other players would like to assist in solving the puzzle(s), they must roll a successful free action Heal check (Moderate DC). They may only assist when it is not their turn, and may only roll the check once per round.

General Mechanic: Combat with the Earl

The Earl arrives on the balcony at some point while the characters are exploring the dungeon. Realizing that his guests have found his lair, he releases his thralls, with the plan of capturing the characters and making them victims as well. He remains on the balcony and directs his dominated thralls to fight for him, while using his Drink Life power to attack from range. It is the DM's choice as to whether the Earl fights to the death. This combat is not tied to any specific area, but rather wherever the characters happen to be.

Special Features: Combat (Earl Gregorian, Life Drinker; 10 Soldiers [1/2 HP, Basic attacks only, no effects other than damage])

Area A: Prison cells

In each of these cells reside one or more NPCs that the Earl has captured, and has been feeding on. They are totally under his control, and will do his bidding at any cost. Their minds have been irreparably broken. To generate the inhabitants of any given cell, roll 2d6 on (or pick from) the random tables below. There should be about 10 living inhabitants in the dungeon. The rest of the cells are empty at the moment, but may show signs of having been inhabited at one time: scratchings on the walls, bits of rotting clothing, or even skeletons.

Area 1: The Balcony

The secret door opens onto a balcony, 20 feet in the air. There are several levers on the balcony that operate the dungeon cell doors (Areas A). When the Earl wants to feed on his victims, he opens cell doors, and commands them into the corridors. There is no ladder or other means of safely climbing off the balcony. When the Earl wants to enter the dungeon proper, he uses the secret door in Area 4: Wine Cellar.

Special Features: Secret Door (Perception; Easy DC)

Area 2: Worg's Chamber

This room is occupied by a worg. The worg has been a companion of the Earl in his evil for many years, even before he became the Earl. In return for personal protection and guarding of the dungeon, Gregorian allows the worg to consume the bodies of his victims. There is a pile of bones in one corner of this chamber.

Special Features: Combat (1 Brute)

Area 3: The Parlor of Breaking

The Earl uses this room to break the minds of his victims before he relegates them to a dungeon cell. Manacles hang from the walls. Currently manacled to the wall are a young boy, about 11 years old, in shock and terrified. Across the room from him is the dead body of his father. Flies have already found the body, and the stench in the room is overwhelming. (The Earl killed the boy's father in front of him)

In one corner stands a table with all manner of torture devices. In the center of the room is a circle of magical runes inscribed in blood. Alternating between the runes are large rubies set into the floor. An Arcana check (Easy DC) reveals that this circle aids him in gaining access to a healthy, alert mind.

Special: Treasure (gems)

Area 4: Wine Cellar

From the dungeon hallway, there is an obvious door. If the characters walk through it, they will realize that it is a secret door leading from the Earl's wine cellar into the dungeon.

Special Feature: Secret Door (only secret from the wine cellar side) (Perception; Hard DC)

CELL INHABITANTS RANDOM TABLES

Inhabitants

1	A young child
2	Twins
3	An elderly woman
4	Three male dwarves
5	A female Halfling & a male elf
6	A half-orc woman & a half elf woman

Mannerisms

1	Converses in a gibberish language. Shows signs of understanding the characters.
2	Ignores characters. Mimes digging a hole, and finding something. Repeat.
3	Sitting on the floor, knees clutched to chest, staring off into space. Unresponsive.
4	Demands that the characters "give back the necklace." Won't talk about anything else.
5	Acts like a barnyard animal.
6	Begs the characters for food. If given food, they become angry and throw it in the character's face. Repeat.

Earl Gregorian, Life Drinker	Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human	
Immune psychic; Vulnerable 5 per tier lightning and radiant	
Action Points 1	
Traits	
Force of Personality	
When rolling a diplomacy, bluff, or intimidate check, the Earl rolls twice and uses the higher result.	
Psychic Interference	
When the Earl is damaged by an attack with the lightning or radiant keyword, he cannot use the Take My Pain power until the beginning of the triggering creature's next turn.	
Standard Actions	
Drink Life (psychic) – At-Will	
<i>Attack:</i> Ranged 10; Level +5 vs. Fortitude	
<i>Hit:</i> Avg dmg psychic damage, and the target loses one healing surge. The Earl gains a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt.	
Minion Control – Recharge 4-6	
<i>Effect:</i> Close burst 20 (Dominated creatures in burst); creatures dominated by the Earl can make a melee basic attack with a +2 power bonus.	
Minor Actions	
Now You Are Mine – At-Will	
<i>Attack:</i> Close burst 10 (Unconscious creatures in burst) Level +3 vs. Will	
<i>Hit:</i> The target gains hit points equal to its bloodied value, and is dominated by the Earl (solving a puzzle ends).	
<i>Miss:</i> If the target is dying, they must make a death saving throw.	
Triggered Actions	
Take My Pain – At-Will	
<i>Trigger:</i> The Earl is hit by an attack that would do damage	
<i>Effect (Immediate Interrupt):</i> The Earl can instead assign the damage to a creature that is dominated by him.	
<i>Special:</i> The Earl cannot use the power if the attack has the lightning or radiant keyword.	
Psychic Deflection – At-Will	
<i>Trigger:</i> The Earl would be subject to a stun or daze effect	
<i>Effect (Immediate Interrupt):</i> The Earl can instead assign the effect to a creature that is dominated by him.	
Skills: (add ½ level to the bonus listed) Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Insight +6, Intimidate +9	
Alignment: Chaotic Evil	

Followup Hooks:

- Who is the young boy who was in the Parlor of Breaking, or who will he become?
- The rubies from the magic circle possess some latent evil magic that grant the characters bad luck.
- If the Earl was killed: with the Earl gone, and no heir apparent, who will be the next Earl?
- If the Earl escaped: where did the Earl go? Will he set up shop somewhere else?

You awaken to the warm sun on your face, filtered through the green canopy of a forest overhead. Sitting up, you hear nothing other than the chirping of birds, and a bubbling brook nearby. A butterfly flits by and lands in the patch of fragrant flowers that you seem to be laying in. Confused, you stand up and look around. Surely this is paradise.

As you look around at the fruit laden trees, mouth watering, a sense of creeping dread steals over you. There is a threat - a threat to you, and to this perfect place. The interlopers must be stopped. The Earl of this domain must be defended. Your arm feels strong enough to strike down any enemy that might appear. You can smell the tang of their blood. It excites you.

Then, a man (woman? being?) dressed in a white robe appears before you, and holds up its hand. A feeling of warmth and trust steals over you. There is something...real...about this being. Something true and right. The scenery surrounding it seems to fade and lose its color just a bit.

"Do not give in," it says. Its voice sounds like a chorus of people talking all at once. "You are not yourself. Find the three enchanted birds, and you will find your way out of this dream. Otherwise, remain a dreamer forever."

Just as suddenly as the being appeared, it is gone.

Instructions to the player: Arrange the tiles so that they match each one of the bird silhouettes to the right. Each silhouette uses all the tiles, and the tiles may not overlap. Once you have a bird silhouette correct, verify the shape with the DM, and then you may move on to another. When you have made all three birds correctly, the domination effect on your character will be broken.

