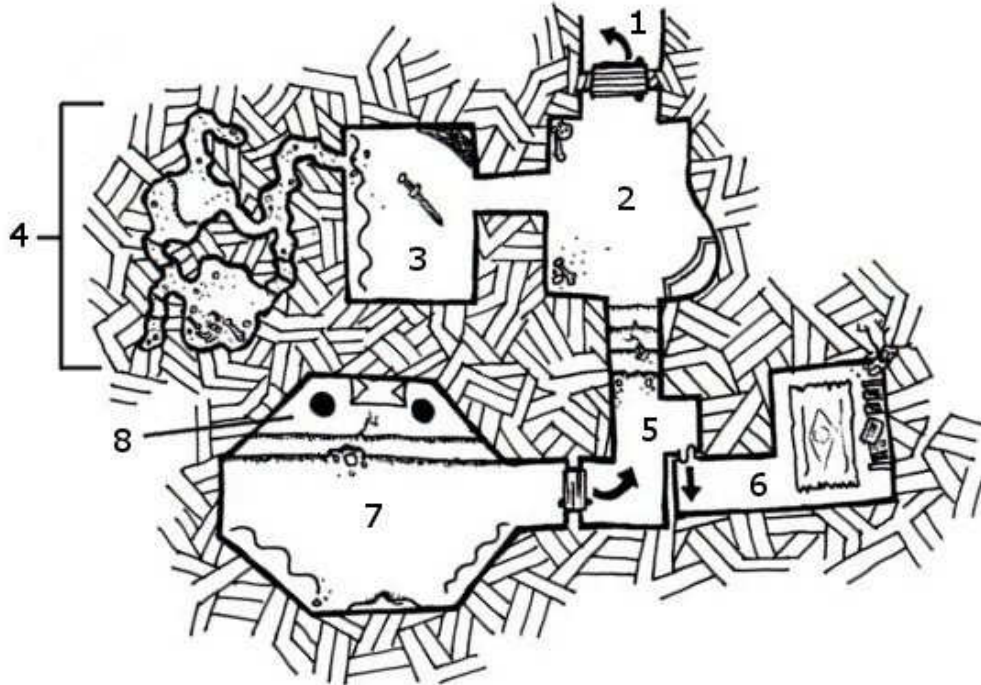


Workshop of the Mad Alchemist

While staying at a manor house, the PCs stumble upon an abandoned secret workshop



Hook: The PCs are staying in a manor house or castle, and stumble upon a secret door concealed behind a bookcase. The current residents are unaware of the secret workshop, although they are aware that the previous owner (their uncle) was a bit “eccentric.”

Note: There are several hooks included in this mini delve that can turn into side quests, or even introduce a major campaign arc. Some ideas are listed at the end of the mini delve.

Background: Half a century ago, the lord who owned the manor house secretly worshipped The Dark One. He used his considerable wealth and influence to procure an ancient altar of great power in order to curry favor with the god and show his devotion. The king of the land eventually heard of this, and had the lord executed for worshipping an evil deity. The king also had all traces of the lord’s name and lineage wiped from history. However, no one was willing to remove or even touch the evil altar, and so a wall was built to entomb it “forever.” Five years ago, the most recent owner of the house, a man by the name of Arkin, was declared “mentally unstable” and taken away to an asylum. In reality, he was an alchemist who was performing unorthodox experiments. He was not evil, though he did not consider possible negative outcomes of some of his work. He was simply interested in knowledge and mastering his craft (and may have been hired by someone interested in his research). The experiments being done just before the alchemist was taken away involved trying to brew a potion that could give ordinary mushrooms sentience. Little did he know that some of the power of the Dark One was still leaking out of the nearby altar, giving his elixirs a power that they would not have otherwise had. As a result, he was ultimately successful in his endeavor; the first Myconid that was created from the brew tried to escape. Fortunately, Arkin was able to kill him before he got far. As a precaution against further escape attempts, Arkin magically warded the cave exit, trapping the rest of the Myconids inside.

Area 1: The Hidden Door

The characters are staying in rooms that line a long hallway. At the end of this hallway, there stands a huge floor to ceiling bookcase. Characters trained in any knowledge skill can make a perception check (Moderate DC) to notice that some of the book titles are strange, if not obviously made up. Succeeding at this check grants a +2 to Perception checks to find the secret door to the hidden workshop.

Special Features: Secret Door to Area 2 (Perception, Difficult DC)

Area 2: Ceremonial Washing Room

There is a large marble basin situated in the (curved) southeast corner of this room. It holds cobwebs instead of water, and anyone trained in Religion will know this is a ceremonial washing basin for sacrificial rituals. There is nothing in this room that will indicate a specific god or religion. There is also a pile of sticks and other dried up vegetable matter in the southwest corner, and in the northwest corner there is a crate of empty glass vials.

Area 3: Empty Room

There is a sword lying on the floor in the middle of a patch of mushrooms (this is where Arkin killed the mushroom man who was trying to escape). A giant spider web blocks off the northeast corner. A curtain on the west wall billows slightly and characters can smell warm, damp air. Moving the curtain reveals an archway with runes inscribed around it. Through the arch is a dark cave. An Arcana check (Moderate DC) reveals the runes to be runes of warding – but not to keep things out of the cave; rather, to keep things in. This same check should reveal that the characters are not the targets of the wards (and therefore, they can freely pass), though it is unclear who, or what, is the target.

Special Features: Treasure (Magic sword)

Area 4: Cave Complex

The floors of this cave complex are earthy, and the air is warm and damp; it is the perfect environment in which to grow mushrooms. In fact, the characters will find mushrooms of all sizes, shapes, and types growing everywhere. Characters trained in Nature will find it odd that so many different types of mushrooms exist in the same place, including ones that are normally found outdoors. The sentient Myconids are hiding among the many ordinary mushrooms (Perception, Difficult DC+5) and will wait until the characters are in the southernmost chamber to attack from all directions.

Special Features: Combat (Myconids*, Brute (2), Soldier (4), Leader/Controller (1), Minion (6); Surprise round if PCs did not notice them)

Area 5: Antechamber

The crumbling stairs lead into a dead end hallway with two alcoves – one of which holds a bookcase.

Special Features (2): Secret Bookcase door to Area 7 (Perception, Easy DC); Secret workshop door to Area 6 (Perception, Difficult DC)

Area 6: Secret Workshop

The mad alchemist used this room as his workshop. He was very messy, and since his “admittance” into the insane asylum was unexpected, he did not have time to hide or otherwise dispose of his work. Lying on the workbench are notes on various mushrooms, as well as magic texts relating to plants. The workbench is also littered with vials and other alchemical equipment and different alchemical ingredients. PCs with the Alchemy feat recognize all the alchemical potions in the room except for one, and by examining the notes can also deduce the mad alchemist’s aim: to create sentient mushrooms. The third alchemical potion – Plantmind Potion – is alchemy of Arkin’s own design; it was one of the test potions in the course of his research. On the bookshelf lay more books on botany and mycology, as well as some obscure necromantic titles on reanimation. In a workbench drawer, the characters find a golden key with a ruby and sapphire set into the head (treat either as mundane treasure or a plot hook).

Special Features: Treasure (Various Alchemical Items; Plantmind Potion (3); Golden Key with a Ruby and Sapphire set into the head)

Area 7: Summoning Room

A face is carved into the south wall, flanked by curtains. An Arcana check (Moderate DC) reveals that this is some type of communication device. Also, a magic circle of runes is carved into the floor. Characters trained in Arcana will recognize this as a summoning circle. Some of the plaster on the north wall has crumbled away to expose bricks (characters will note that the rest of the dungeon is made from granite blocks).

Special Features: False Wall to Area 8 (Defenses 5, HP 100)

Area 8: The Hidden Shrine

There is an altar and two braziers made out of iron atop pedestals of human bones. The altar itself is made out of human and elven skulls, and the table of the altar is obsidian. There appears to be dried blood caked on it. Lying on the altar is a holy symbol, and a Difficult Religion check reveals the god. Runes in the Abyssal language are carved in the wall behind the altar.

Characters with the divine power source should feel especially uncomfortable near the altar, even if they can’t explain why.

Special Features (2): Treasure (Holy Symbol of The Dark One); Hazard (Evil Altar & Holy Symbol)

Plantmind Potion

Level 8

This light blue liquid gives plants a crude sentience

Alchemical Item 125 gp

Power (Consumable ♦ Zone): Minor Action. The liquid creates a burst 1 zone of Grab Grass (DMG p.68) within 5 squares. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter.

Special: This alchemical item will only function outdoors and in the presence of grass or other undergrowth.

Evil Altar & Holy Symbol

Hazard

This altar and the holy symbol atop it make you very uncomfortable, though you can’t quite figure out why

Hazard: Evil artifacts wreathed in dark energy

Religion

Difficult DC: The creature notices an aura of dark energy surrounding the altar and holy symbol, and knows that touching either would deal damage.

Triggered Action

Trigger: When a creature touches the altar, including touching it with an object, or if a creature picks up the holy symbol.

Effect: The creature takes 10/20/30 necrotic damage (by tier). This damage cannot be reduced or negated in any way. It cannot be healed until after the creature has taken two extended rests.

Special: This damage cannot be healed by any means while the creature is carrying the holy symbol.

Embedded hooks to consider:

- The key in the workshop
- The current whereabouts of Arkin
- Is there anyone else who is aware of (and duplicating) Arkin’s research or who might have stolen some of the potions he made?
- The status of the Dark One and his followers
- Who might be looking for the evil altar or holy symbol?
- Who was communicating with Arkin through the carved face?

**Note: Myconids are found in the D&D 4th Edition sourcebook Underdark. If, instead of using them, you want to reskin another monster, consider adding the following traits as well as one or both of the following two powers to the reskinned monsters:*

Poison damage

Tremorsense 10

Rotting Stink – Aura 2

The stench of vegetable rot makes your stomach churn

Any non-plant creature starting their turn in the aura has -2 to attacks and all defenses.

Triggered Action - Spore Explosion

At-Will – No Action

The mushroom chokes the air with a puff of toxic spores

Trigger: The Myconid is first bloodied, and again when the Myconid is reduced to 0 hit points.

Effect: Close burst 1. All non-plant creatures in the burst take ongoing 5/10/15 (by tier) poison damage until they spend a healing surge to regain hit points.