

Heroic
10

THE GOLDEN HAND

5 Difficulty
4 Complexity

A short adventure for five players

By Corwin Riddle

The Golden Hand is a short adventure designed for five 9th to 11th-level adventurers. The city of Macetol is a paragon of peace, a shining example of justice and order. But beneath its golden streets lies a terrible secret; a violent past that threatens to reclaim power and return the city to tyranny.

The players will descend below the city to stop the ghosts of an order of fanatical knights, fighting off restless souls, a cabal of conspiring clerics, and finally the spirits of the knights and their zealous leader.

BACKGROUND

Led by a dedicated order of paladins following the will of Bahamut, the city of Macetol is a paragon of peace, justice, and order in a world rife with chaos. But things were not always so calm inside the golden walls. Long ago, during a period of civil unrest, a paladin named Arturius was given absolute power to deal with the rampant crime and corruption.

Calling themselves the Order of the Golden Hand, Arturius and his council of knights decreed a state of martial law upon the city, believing the only way to bring back peace and order was through controlling the population and destroying those that opposed their rule. Serving a perverted sense of order, Arturius and his knights ruled from an ornately decorated table, perfectly round—indicating that all men are equally accountable to the laws of Macetol.

The Order of the Golden Hand ruled the city without tolerance; those accused of dissent and sedition were executed, and the smallest crimes given excessive sentencing without a trial. After years of oppression, the denizens of the city fought back against Arturius and his council, subduing them. As a punishment for their atrocities, a group of wizards bound their souls to the round table, imprisoning Arturius and his council within. The temple itself was buried, and a new temple of Bahamut built on the remains.

Centuries passed, and the people of Macetol began to create a fiction in order to forget their darkest hour—a virtuous story of Arturius and his noble order, who defended the city during its golden age and now rest in a sacred chamber beneath their beloved temple. There are few left who know the truth of Arturius, and they dare not mar the memory of the city's greatest hero.

But now, the past threatens to return. After a devastating earthquake, the entrance to the temple below was unearthed, the table broken, and the knights released. Those brave enough to investigate have been lost, and those above speak of a dark presence—whispers heralding the city's return to true order.

USING THE ADVENTURE

The Golden Hand is designed as a short, one-shot adventure that guides the players through the story with a series of sequential encounters.

Though they are presented in a particular order, the encounters can vary or be used wherever they might fit within your narrative. There are several hooks provided to move the adventure along, and each encounter includes flavor text to transition into the next area.

Encounter 1: *The Burrows*

The players enter through the broken earth and make their way toward the buried temple, encountering restless spirits along the way.

Encounter 2: *The Ancient Annals*

Once inside the temple, the players discover a group of dissident clerics, who caused the earthquake in an attempt to release the knights.

Encounter 3: *The Council's Chamber*

The players enter the chamber of the Golden Hand, discovering that the knights have broken free from their prison. Arturius and the order, now tormented ghosts, appear and attack the players.

USING THE MAPS

Each of the encounters has a map you can cut out and use:

Encounter 1: *The Burrows*

Maps: M1a, M1b

Encounter 2: *The Ancient Annals*

Maps: M2a, M2b, M2c

Encounter 3: *The Council's Chamber*

Maps: M3a, M3b, M3c, M3d

INTRODUCTION

To start the adventure, the players should arrive in Macetol shortly after the earthquake; they can even see or feel the tremors as they approach the city. It's important that the players have no knowledge of Macetol's turbulent and secretive past; as far as they know, it has always been a legendary city of peace and justice. They can learn additional information with a history check:

History (DC 13): *Macetol used to be ruled by an order of knights of Bahamut, called "The Golden Hand", who took over control of the city during a brief stint of discord and violence.*

History (DC 18): *After peace was restored, the knights stepped down from power. They are rumored to be buried underneath Macetol's temple of Bahamut, as a tribute to their service.*

When the players enter Macetol, read:

Something seems a little off as you enter the city of Macetol. The pristine gate hangs feebly, broken and bent. Inside, clouds of dust rise above the golden buildings, which appear recently cracked and damaged—their once flawless stones scattered throughout the streets, now merely rubble. Residents and guards trot over the cobblestone pathways, many bloodied and bruised, carrying possessions and looking exasperated.

Nature (DC 13): *You easily recognize the damage as being some sort of natural disaster, most likely an earthquake.*

Perception (DC 13): *Though many of them are wounded, the city's residents all seem to be heading down the largest street, toward a temple sitting atop the highest hill.*

When the players approach the temple, read:

A large temple rests atop the hill, at what is clearly the highest point in the city. Of all the buildings in the city, this one appears to have sustained the most damage. The walls, even now, are still crumbling, and the roof appears to have been split in two. It seems to be only a matter of time before the entire edifice collapses.

Running back and forth between the guards, rubble, and on-lookers is a very official-looking cleric, dressed in the traditionally platinum garbs of Bahamut. Suddenly, his eyes lock on you and your allies, noticing your weapons. He pushes through the crowd, calling to you, looking desperately afraid.

HOOK 1: THE GOLDEN RULE

The man who approaches the players is Halad, an old and nervous cleric of the temple of Bahamut. He explains that the city has undergone a devastating earthquake, and that the point of origin appears to have been directly beneath the temple. Halad tells the players that the city's most revered heroes, the knights of the Order of the Golden Hand, are laid to rest beneath the temple in a magically-sealed burial chamber, and he fears that something, or someone, is attempting to gain access to the sacred tomb.

Halad asks the players to head down through the catacombs beneath the temple and locate the council's chamber, where the Golden Hand rests. He asks only that you verify the chamber's magical door is still intact and sealed, and specifies that you are to return to him immediately after finding it. He nervously repeats again and again that you're not to enter the tomb under any circumstances, as you're not part of the Golden Hand and as such would have no place in their presence.

Quest XP: 500 XP for discovering the Council's Chamber.

Religion or History (DC 13): *The Order of the Golden Hand has a reputation for upholding justice to the fullest extent of the law, up and beyond even Bahamut's traditional practices.*

Insight (DC 18): *Although he tries to hide it, Halad is sweating with fear and clearly afraid of something. If asked, he tells the players that it's his duty to ensure the burial chamber is kept intact, and he fears punishment by his superiors.*

HOOK 2: THE GOLDEN AGE

Hearing of their intent to head into the catacombs below the temple, a timid elf approaches the players and asks them for a moment of their time. The elf's name is Lancel and he holds the position of chief historian of Macetol. For years, he has been trying to find the ancient texts that detail the glory days of the city under the Order of the Golden Hand, but those texts are rumored to be lost, buried somewhere deep within the dangerous caverns below the temple. He explains that the ancient temple of the Golden Hand is actually below the current temple, and its library is on the way to the tomb.

Since the players are heading in that direction, he asks if they wouldn't mind stopping in the library and looking for any historical scrolls or books or documents that might help him bring the glory days back for the people of Macetol, so that the heroic exploits of the Golden Hand can finally be recounted in detail. He offers a modest sum if the players are successful, citing that knowledge is its own reward.

Quest XP: 500 XP and 500 gp for returning with Macetol's history.

HOOK 3: A LOST HEIRLOOM

Word of the players' intent has spread quickly, and a timid young man approaches. He introduces himself as Dremdor and tells the players that he is descended from Arturius, the benevolent leader of the Order of the Golden Hand. He also tells you that his ancestor's famous sword, Calibrax, remains buried with its owner. He'd like the sword for his family's estate, to more properly honor their heritage. He offers the players a generous sum if they'd return the sword to him, and tells them that it's easily identified—the name is written on the blade.

Quest XP: 1,000 XP and 2,000 gp for returning Calibrax.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE BURROWS

Encounter Level 9 (2,100 XP)

The players descend into the catacombs leading to the sunken temple, but must pass through the burial chambers of others laid to rest below the city. These catacombs, called the burrows, hold many restless spirits from forgotten wars, and they will attack the players as they pass through.

When your players enter the tunnels, read:

The tunnels below were not spared from the earthquake's damage. Walls are cracked and unstable, and weak tremors can still be felt as you tread along the cold dirt and rock floors of the burrows. A ghostly wind makes its way through the catacombs, sending a chill down your spines.

Perception (DC 13): The dirt below you shows signs of footprints, and they seem to have been made quite recently. Near the tracks are many single marks, side by side, about the size of your thumb—the tracks all lead in the same direction.

When your players reach the burrows, read:

The tunnel breaks into a small opening, its walls covered in stone and moss and spiderwebs. Dust fills the air, stirred to life from the tremors. As you move further into the room, a large spider skitters away into a hole beneath an ancient sarcophagus. Nearby, the ghostly image of a humanoid drifts into view, floating toward you with its arms outstretched. Other spirits join it in attacking.

Perception (DC 13): The spirits each have a golden and glowing emblem chained around their otherwise insubstantial bodies. The sarcophagi in the room seem to have similar emblems, but will require further inspection.

THE MAP

Use maps **M1a**, **M1b** (pages 11 and 12).

SETUP

2 Grave Spider (S)

4 Bound Souls (B)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The burrows are dimly-lit.

Spider Holes: Marked as black holes in the floor, these count as difficult terrain. This is also where additional Grave Spiders will appear. See **Special Features**.

Sarcophagi: Marked as greyish stone coffins, these sarcophagi will temporarily weaken and slow one of the four souls, if moved adjacent to them. See **Special Features**.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Binding the Souls:

- Each Bound Soul has a number associated with it, which corresponds to a sarcophagus in the room.
- If a Bound Soul moves or is moved adjacent to the sarcophagus of the same number, it becomes slowed and weakened until the end of its next turn.
- If aware of the emblems, players can use a minor action to make a **DC 15 Perception** or **DC 15 Insight** check to identify the number of a sarcophagus or an emblem.

Endless Spiders:

- As long as one Grave Spider is still alive, an additional Grave Spider will appear at the end of every other round and join combat, starting at either of the two spider starting points.

Bound Soul	Level 9 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 400
HP 76; Bloodied 38	Initiative +9
AC 24, Fortitude 22, Reflex 24, Will 22	Perception +8
Speed 7, hover 6	Darkvision
Immune poison, disease	
Vulnerable 5 radiant	
TRAITS	
Phasing Creep	The Bound Soul does not provoke opportunity attacks by its movement, and it cannot take opportunity attacks provoked by movement.
Soul Shackled	If the Bound Soul enters a square adjacent to its sarcophagus (see Special Features), it is slowed and weakened until the end of its next turn.
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Shadow Touch (necrotic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: +13 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage	
↓ Spirit Snatch (necrotic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: +13 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d6 + 8 damage and the target is grabbed.	
Effect: If the target has not broken the grab by the start of the Bound Soul's next turn, the target takes 1d6 necrotic damage and is weakened (save ends). The Bound Soul can sustain the grab as a minor action.	
Special: A target grabbed by the Bound Soul can move as normal, though the Bound Soul moves with the target, staying adjacent to it.	
Str 12 (+5)	Dex 20 (+9)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 14 (+6)
	Wis 18 (+8)
	Cha 16 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages –

Grave Spider	Level 8 Lurker
Small natural beast	XP 250
HP 26; Bloodied 13	Initiative +7
AC 20, Fortitude 20, Reflex 21, Will 19	Perception +6
Speed 6, climb 4 (spider climb)	Tremorsense 5
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Poisoned Bite (poison) ♦ Recharge [1][2][3]	
Attack: +13 vs AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage and an ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
↓ Bite (poison) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: +12 vs AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage	
Str 14 (+6)	Dex 17 (+7)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 8 (+3)
	Wis 15 (+6)
	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages –

BOUND SOULS IN COMBAT

The Bound Souls are mindless ghosts, feeling only the pain and torment of their spirits refusing to rest. They are not aware of the spell meant to hold them to their sarcophagi and they won't intentionally try to avoid them; they will, however, attempt to move out of the aura if they are affected by it, sensing the weakness.

The souls are invulnerable to opportunity attacks provoked by movement, thanks to *Phasing Creep*, and will use *Spirit Snatch* to grab a player and deal ongoing damage. A player grabbed by a ghost can still move, taking the ghost with it.

GRAVE SPIDERS

The spiders will gang up on an individual player, calling others to assist with their attacks. Those spiders will appear at the nearest spider hole. Grave Spiders will use *Poisoned Bite* as soon as possible, reverting to *Bite* until it recharges.

FLAVOR TEXT

If you want, use the following flavor text to explain powers and effects to your players as an organic narrative.

When a player identifies an emblem, read:

You exam the emblem hanging around the ghost's neck, noticing its unique runes and patterns so as to recognize it again.

When a player identifies a sarcophagi, read:

You exam the runes of the sarcophagus, noticing its unique runes and patterns so as to recognize it again.

When a Bound Soul is affected by Soul Shackles, read:

A spiral of magical runes extend from the sarcophagus, pulling the spirit closer and temporarily restraining it.

When a Bound Soul uses Spirit Snatch, read:

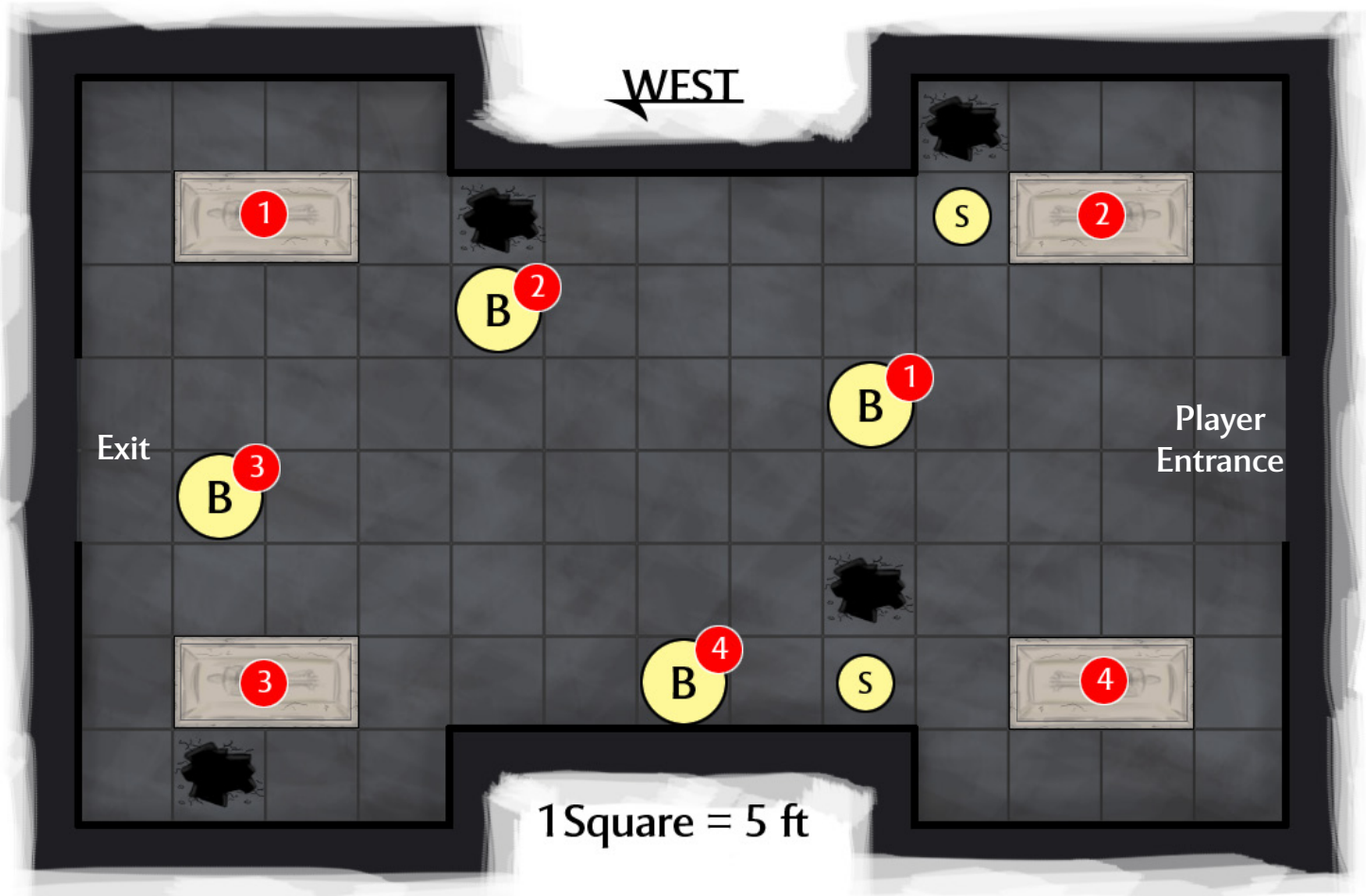
The ghost becomes partially substantial, grabbing hold of you and attempting to drain your life force.

When another Grave Spider appears, read:

Another large spider emerges from one of the cracked walls, skittering across the floor as it joins the others in attacking.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the spirits are destroyed, the players can check the burrows for treasure before moving on. They'll find gems inside the sarcophagi equal to 1,000 gp. The burrows lead directly into the ancient temple of the Golden Hand.



ENCOUNTER 2: THE ANCIENT ANNALS

Encounter Level 10 (2,800 XP)

The players exit the catacombs and enter the sunken temple, navigating its passageways as they search for the Council's Chamber. On the way, they'll pass through the temple's library, where they will encounter a group of fanatical clerics.

When the players enter the temple, read:

Following the remains of a winding hallway, it's clear by the architecture and wall carvings that this temple used to be a sacred site of great importance. The arched ceilings are covered with beautiful sculptures of knights, mounted on the walls. Though old, dirty, and diminished by the recent earthquake, the halls still display a regal feeling; decisions made here echoed throughout the city.

As the players approach the annals, read:

Up ahead, you see the familiar glow of a torch, reflecting from inside a nearby room. The sound of shredded paper and hushed whispers echo off the empty walls, though most of it is unintelligible. Suddenly, a loud voice breaks through the commotion: "Yes, that's the one! Burn it all, my friends—we must leave no trace of the past!"

The players can attempt to sneak up on the enemies within the annals with a **DC 20 Stealth** check, gaining a surprise round for all that were successful.

When the players enter the annals, read:

The library has been demolished, and you get the impression that the earthquake is not entirely responsible. Dusty bookcases lie tipped over, pieces ripped off to form a large bonfire in the center of the stone room. Several men in robes adorned with a golden fist gather and toss documents into the fire, while others hastily flip through books and browse scrolls.

Perception or **Nature (DC 13)**: It's possible to put out the fire before all of the books are destroyed, but they're burning quickly!

When combat begins, read:

One of the men is dressed in full plate armor, adorned with the same familiar golden fist. Upon seeing you, he draws his sword and shouts to his allies, a look of intense anger overtaking his face. "Kill them, there must be no witness to our work! The Golden Hand shall return to power, and the city of Macetol will embrace their rule!"

THE MAP

Use maps **M2a**, **M2b**, **M2c** (pages 13, 14, and 15).

SETUP

- 6 Golden Hand Zealots (Z)
- 2 Fanatical Clerics (C)
- 1 Guirvan, Descendant of the Golden Hand (G)

Golden Hand Zealot		Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid		XP 250
HP 50; Bloodied 25		Initiative +7
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 17, Will 18		Perception +5
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Brutal Advantage		
The Zealot deals an additional 1d6 damage with attacks while it has combat advantage.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +14 vs AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 8 damage.		
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 18 (+8)	Wis 11 (+4)
Con 15 (+6)	Int 12 (+5)	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common

Fanatical Cleric		Level 9 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid		XP 400
HP 90; Bloodied 45		Initiative +7
AC 22, Fortitude 18, Reflex 20, Will 20		Perception +8
Speed 6		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Quarterstaff (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +14 vs AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.		
Ⓢ Zealous Lance (radiant) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10; +13 vs Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage and the target takes a -2 penalty to AC until the end of the cleric's next turn.		
Ⓢ Flame Lash (fire, radiant) ♦ Recharge ☞☞☞		
Attack: Ranged 10; +13 vs Reflex, two targets		
Hit: 1d8 + 8 fire damage.		
Effect: The target is pulled 1d4 squares closer to the bonfire and takes an additional 1d8 fire damage.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Transfer Life ♦ Encounter		
Effect: The cleric loses 25 hit points and one ally within area burst 10 gains 15 hit points.		
Skills Endurance +13, Intimidate +11		
Str 12 (+5)	Dex 16 (+7)	Wis 19 (+8)
Con 14 (+6)	Int 20 (+9)	Cha 14 (+6)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, elven

Guirvan, Descendant of the Golden Hand		Level 10 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		XP 500
HP 100; Bloodied 50		Initiative +10
AC 22, Fortitude 18, Reflex 20, Will 20		Perception +14
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Fanatical Morale		
Guirvan gains a +1 bonus to all attack rolls and damage rolls for each Golden Hand Zealot within 5 squares.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +15 vs AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage.		
Ⓢ Righteous Fury (radiant) ♦ Recharge ☞☞☞☞☞		
Attack: Close burst 2; +14 vs Reflex, all enemies in burst		
Hit: 2d8 + 8 radiant damage and the targets grant combat advantage until the end of Guirvan's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Knight's Command ♦ At-Will		
Effect: Instead of moving, Guirvan can grant a move action to any of his allies, which can be taken immediately.		
Skills Endurance +13, Intimidate +11		
Str 22 (+11)	Dex 12 (+6)	Wis 19 (+9)
Con 17 (+8)	Int 10 (+5)	Cha 15 (+7)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common

SPECIAL FEATURES

Bonfire:

- Start a counter for **Fire**, beginning at 5. At the end of every round (except the surprise round), raise the fire counter by 1.
- Any creature within burst 1 of the bonfire takes damage equal to the number of fire counters. When the counter reaches 8, this damage affects creatures in a burst 2.
- When the counter reaches 12, all of the books have been burned and the players cannot extract any information from them.
- *Allow your players to put out parts of the fire with ice or water attacks, and consider allowing them to remove a counter by spending a standard action to stomp it out.*

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: The ceiling is 20' high.

Illumination: The library is well-lit from the fire.

Bonfire: A large fire of books. *See Special Features.*

Books: Marked as various piles of books and documents, these count as difficult terrain.

Pillars: Marked as brown pillars, these block line of sight.

GUIRVAN AND HIS ALLIES IN COMBAT

Guirvan is a strong tactician and will use *Knight's Command* to allow the zealots to coordinate for flanking, where they gain a bonus. Guirvan uses *Fanatical Morale* to gain a bonus to attacks and health depending on how many of the zealots remain, so he will do his best to keep them alive. When bloodied, Guirvan will command both of the clerics to heal him immediately.

The clerics will try to stay at a distance, using *Flame Lash* to pull the players closer to the bonfire, attacking with *Zealous Lance* to debuff the players for the zealots' attacks. The zealots themselves will listen to Guirvan and attempt to flank the players; if Guirvan dies, the zealots will surrender, though the clerics will continue to fight.

FLAVOR TEXT

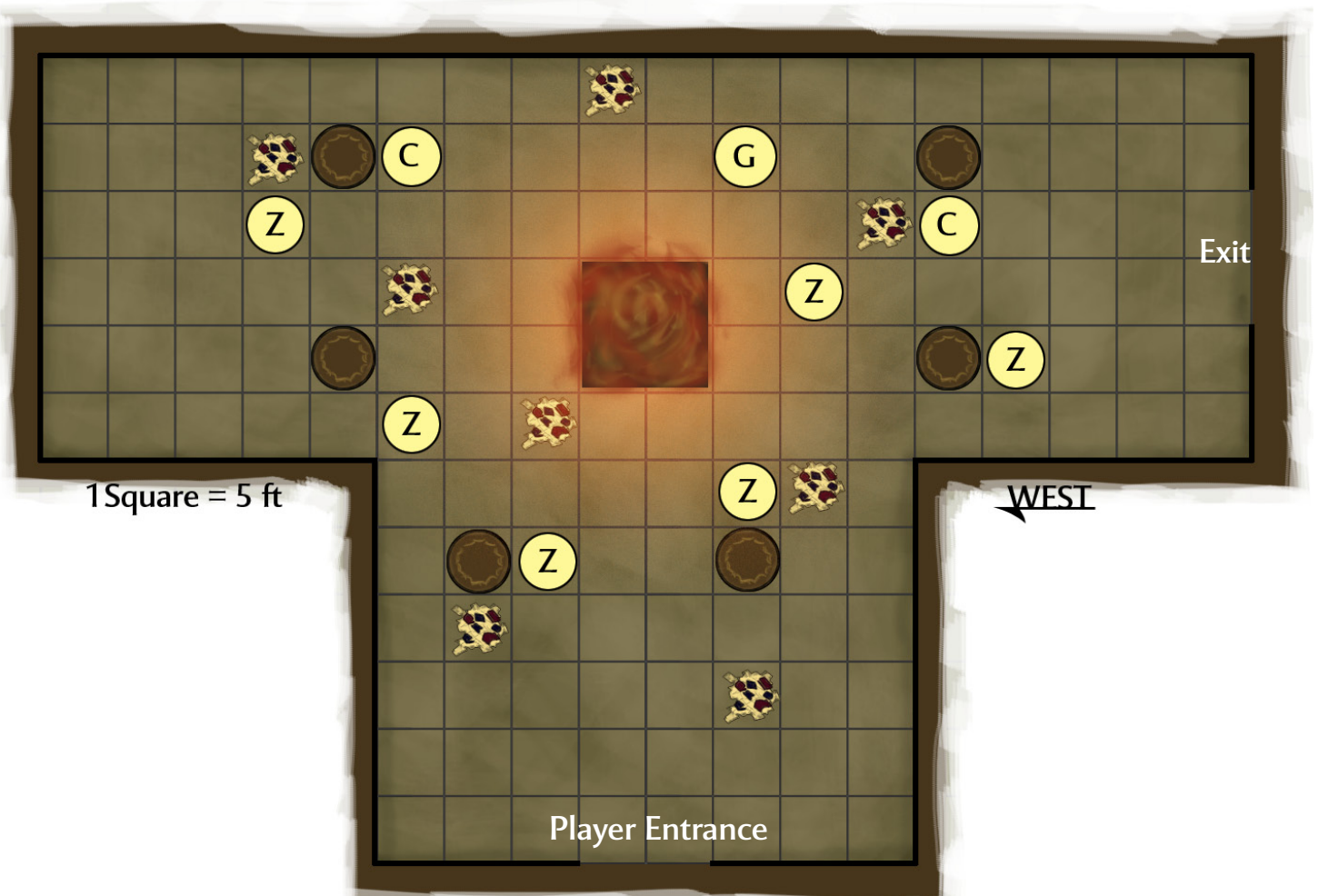
If you want, use the following flavor text to explain powers and effects to your players as an organic narrative.

When the fire counter increases, read:

The books and wood feed the flames, which grow in size and power.

When Guirvan uses *Knight's Command*, read:

Guirvan bellows over the battle, ordering his men into position.



When Guirvan uses Righteous Furor, read:

Guirvan lets loose a blast of radiant energy, knocking you and allies in the burst temporarily off-balance.

When Guirvan makes use of Fanatical Morale, read:

Guirvan's morale is bolstered by the presence of his allies, giving his attacks more power.

When a zealot benefits from Brutal Advantage, read:

The zealot takes advantage of your combat position, dealing an especially brutal strike.

When a cleric uses Fiery Justice, read:

A tendril of fire reaches out from the bonfire and grabs you, pulling you toward the roaring flames.

When a cleric uses Zealous Lance, read:

The cleric's fanatical power constricts your movement, reducing the efficacy of your attacks.

DEVELOPMENT

When Guirvan is killed, he laughs. "Our work is done," he says, coughing up blood. "They have been released. Macetol will return to order, you cannot stop us." If any of the zealots or clerics remain, they do little else than proclaim the return of the knights of the Golden Hand; they freely admit causing the earthquake and trying to destroy the order's history. In addition, the players will find a level 10 magic weapon.

If the players finish combat before the counter reaches 12, they will also find the following intact excerpts from books and documents pulled from the fire:

- ... killed for a mere pittance, executed for all to see...
- ... Arturius and his fanatical devotees... a perversion of the law...
- ... none go unpunished for crimes, if "crime" were the term...
- ... talk of a revolt, an uprising against this injustice...
- ... forever free of the oppression, it is over...
- ... but the city will lose its soul, it's reputation... no choice but to honor the butchers as heroes, lest we lose all faith in justice...
- ...we bear the burden of truth, and shall keep its secret...

These are the documents that Lancel has requested, which the players can retain until after the last encounter. Once the players are finished investigating the annals, they are free to head down the main hallway of the temple toward the Council's Chamber.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE COUNCIL'S CHAMBER

Encounter Level 11 (3,000 XP)

Once the players have defeated Guirvan and his allies in the annals, they will approach the Council's Chamber, where Arturius and the other knights of the Golden Hand have been laid to rest.

When the players near the Council's Chamber, read:

Though the temple was able to withstand most of the earthquake's damage, the ceiling and walls here are in ruins. The stone floor has fallen away into a small, jagged chasm. It's difficult to see through the dust and rubble, but you notice several bodies have been crushed underneath the large stones. Nearby, a grand doorway stretches to the ceiling, its arches and doors imprinted with magical runes, now faded—the door itself is open, the thick stone broken into pieces.

Arcana (DC 13): You sense a lingering magical essence here. You believe this is where the earthquake originated, caused by a powerful magical spell.

Perception (DC 13): The bodies beneath the rubble are wearing wizard's robes, adorned with the familiar image of a golden fist.

When the players enter the Council's Chamber, read:

A large stone door lies in pieces on the floor, covered with faded runes. Inside the chamber, strange circles of bluish runes illuminate the walls and ceiling, pulsing with a magical glow. Near the center of the room lies the remains of a round table, shattered into pieces – the glowing runes that once adorned it are now still and silent, their power gone.

A ghost fades into view, wearing pristine golden armor adorned with the familiar emblem. "How dare you imprison the rulers of Macetol," he says, as other ghostly knights appear near the faded runic circles. "Such treason will not go unpunished; the Golden Hand will see justice done!"

THE MAP

Use maps **M3a**, **M3b**, **M3c**, **M3d** (pages 16, 17, 18, 19).

SETUP

1 Arturius (A)

5 Knights of the Golden Hand (K)

SPECIAL FEATURES

Challenge of Souls:

- The knights have a minor action called *Challenge of Souls* that they will use to mark a player.
- Each knight will cast it on a different player; no two knights will target the same player.

- If a knight's mark is removed, the knight will reapply it on the same player on its next turn, if possible.
- While marked, that player will take half damage from the knight and deal double damage to that knight.

Golden Creed:

- Arturius has extremely high defenses, which will be lowered permanently by 1 each time a knight is killed.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: The ceiling is 30' high.

Illumination: The room is well-lit.

Runic Circles: Marked as yellow magical circles, if Arturius or a Knight enters one of these squares, they are immobilized until the end of their next turn.

Rubble: Marked as cracked stones and dirt, these squares count as difficult terrain.

Pillars: Marked as brown pillars, these block line of sight.

ARTURIUS IN COMBAT

Arturius is more concerned with directing and protecting his knights than focusing on his own combat; *Golden Creed*

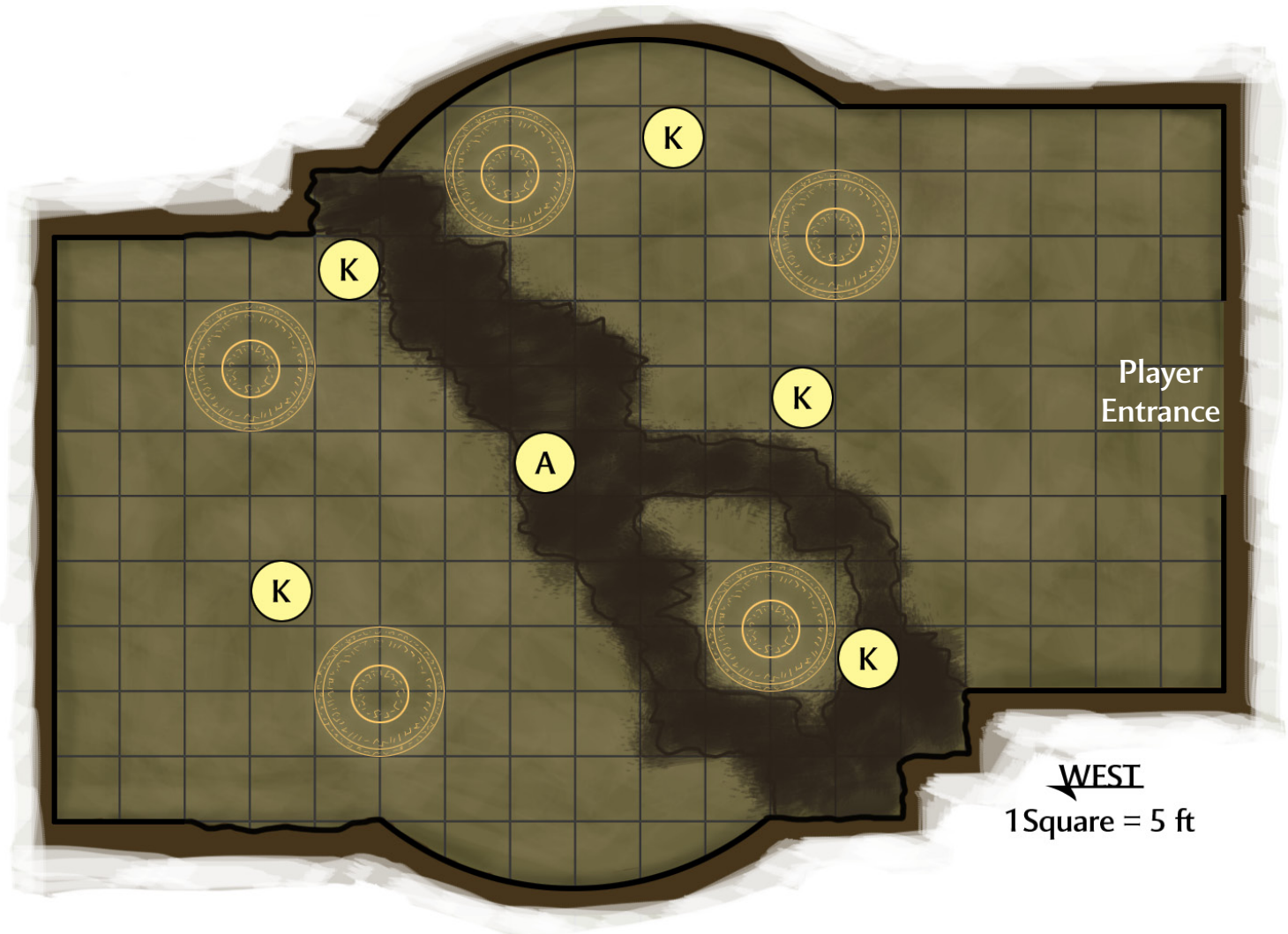
makes him much more difficult to engage while his knights are still alive. He will use *Knight's Command* to help his knights get into position to use *Phalanx Formation*, and will not bother engaging players until at least two of the knights have been killed (or he is attacked directly).

He will use *Justice of the Dead* to slow players and allow his knights to either catch up to them or escape if that particular knight is vulnerable to a player (through *Challenge of Souls*). He will use *Golden Ground* when his knights have positioned themselves, since it will not damage them.

KNIGHTS IN COMBAT

The knights are well aware of the power that one player will have against them because of *Challenge of Souls*, and will try to attack that player without taking attacks from them. They are tactically sound and cautious, and will not enter the runic circles or provoke opportunity attacks unless it helps them take a player out of the encounter or help them strategically.

The knights will try to coordinate for *Phalanx Formation*, using *Cautious Approach* to avoid opportunity attacks, and will protect Arturius if he comes under heavy attack. The knights will continue fighting even if Arturius dies.



FLAVOR TEXT

If you dislike reading powers and effects to your players, give them hints with the following flavor text.

When a player misses Arturius due to Golden Creed:

Your attack bounces harmlessly off Arturius, who laughs and says: “You must best my knights before challenging me—have you no sense of honor?”

When one of the knights dies, read:

Pieces of Arturius’s armor instantly rust and fall to the floor, leaving him more vulnerable than before.

When a knight uses Challenge of Souls, read:

You feel some of your lifeforce being drained as one of the knights assaults you with a burst of radiant energy. You feel compelled to attack the knight and answer its challenge.

- **Arcana (DC 13):** The knight has linked itself to your soul through a magical spell, allowing both of you to sense each other’s weaknesses in combat.
- **Perception (DC 13):** The knight that challenged you appears different to you than the others; its armor is cracked and covered in rust, an easy target for your attacks.
- **Insight (DC 13):** The knight has challenged you, and although moving to better attack you, it also seems more wary of your actions.

When a knight makes use of Phalanx Formation, read:

The knights fall into a combat formation, raising their shields and holding down a defensive position.

When Arturius uses Knight’s Command, read:

Arturius calls to one of his knights, ordering them to take a more strategic position on the battlefield.

When Arturius uses Golden Ground, read:

Arturius launches a burst of radiant energy, which spreads across the ground, consecrating it against the Golden Hand’s enemies.

When Arturius uses Justice of the Dead, read:

Arturius hits you with a blast of radiant light, temporarily slowing you as you are judged by the Golden Hand.

When a knight uses Cautious Approach, read:

The knight moves quickly and hardily over a short distance, avoiding attacks from nearby enemies as it passes.

If a knight becomes immobilized in a circle:

The runic circle glows brightly as the knight is momentarily imprisoned within.

Knight of the Golden Hand		Level 9 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 400
HP 100; Bloodied 50		Initiative +4
AC 23, Fortitude 23, Reflex 18, Will 21		Perception +13
Speed 5		
Resist 5 radiant		
TRAITS		
Phalanx Formation		
While adjacent to one of its allies, the knight gains +1 to all defenses. This effect is cumulative.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Guarded Slash ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +14 vs AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 10 damage.		
Effect: The target takes a -1 penalty to AC for the next attack against it.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⚔ Challenge of Souls ♦ At-Will		
Effect: One enemy within 10 squares loses a healing surge and is marked until the end of the encounter. Damage dealt by the knight to the target and from the target to the knight is doubled.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
⚔ Cautious Approach ♦ At-Will		
Effect: The knight can shift 2 squares.		
Skills Endurance +13, Intimidate +11		
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 11 (+4)	Wis 18 (+8)
Con 22 (+10)	Int 9 (+3)	Cha 14 (+6)
Alignment evil		Languages Common, elven

Arturius, Leader of the Golden Hand		Level 10 Elite Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 1,000
HP 200; Bloodied 100		Initiative +8
AC 29, Fortitude 28, Reflex 26, Will 26		Perception +14
Speed 5		
Resist 5 radiant		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
TRAITS		
Golden Creed		
When a Knight of the Golden Hand is killed, Arturius takes a permanent -1 penalty to all defenses. This effect is cumulative.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Sweeping Slash (weapon, radiant) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +18 vs AC, two targets		
Hit: 2d8 + 12 radiant damage.		
Effect: A knight adjacent to either of the targets can shift 1 square.		
⚔ Justice of the Dead (radiant) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +15 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 10 radiant damage		
Effect: The target is slowed (save ends).		
⚔ Golden Ground (radiant) ♦ Recharge [1] [1] [1]		
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10; +15 vs Reflex		
Hit: 1d6 + 10 radiant damage to all enemies in the burst.		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of Arturius’s next turn. Any enemy that starts its turn in or enters the zone takes 2d6 radiant damage and grant combat advantage until the start of its next turn. Arturius can spend a minor action to sustain this zone for another turn.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
Knight’s Command ♦ At-Will		
Effect: Instead of moving, Arturius can grant a move action to any of his allies, which can be taken immediately.		
Skills Endurance +11, Intimidate +12		
Str 22 (+11)	Dex 12 (+6)	Wis 19 (+9)
Con 17 (+8)	Int 10 (+5)	Cha 15 (+7)
Alignment evil		Languages Common, elven

CONCLUSION

Upon killing Arturius, he will fall to the ground, gasps his last few breaths: *“We carried the burden of necessity... Is it not better to err on the side of order, rather than let chaos run free? There was no other way...”* On Arturius is a level 12 magical item, and golden armor pieces worth 2,000 gp. The sword Calibrax was used by Arturius, and the players can reclaim it to return to Dremdor.

When the characters return to the surface, they can find Halad at the temple. If they meet him and tell him of the state of the sunken temple and their victory over the knights, Halad will reply with the following:

“I was afraid of this. There are some still loyal to the memory of Arturius and the Golden Hand—this is not the first time they have attempted to release their spirits and return them to power. Alas, if only they knew of abominable things the knights had done, such a thing might have been avoided—but such knowledge would tear the city apart.

“Thank you for your service, adventurers. The Golden Hand would bring about a second age of fear and oppression, had they returned to the surface. But I must ask you to keep your victory a secret; I am one of the few charged with preserving a false memory, one to keep our city alive—our strength and order persist not through the truth of our history, but how the people remember it.

If the players investigate further, they might learn the following facts from Halad, other members of the temple, rumors, and stories passed down through the generations:

- Arturius and his knights sat at a round table, symbolizing that all are equal in the eyes of justice.
- Long ago, the king had died, thrusting the city into an age of violence and chaos; the Golden Hand took over control of the city during this time.
- At first, Arturius and the Golden Hand worked to restore order, but progressed into fanaticism, executing citizens for the slightest crimes.
- A council under the Golden Hand rose up against the order, killing them and binding their souls to the council’s chamber with a series of magical runes.
- Several of the council’s members, wizards and clerics, then brought the temple down into the earth.
- The council fabricated a story of the Golden Hand’s mysterious death during a natural disaster, and rewrote history to convince future generations of their heroism.

ADJUSTMENTS

Below is some advice on how to run and adjust the adventure according to the needs of your particular group:

We have too few or too many players:

For 4 players, remove all spiders from the first encounter and add them every 3rd round, remove a cleric and a zealot from the second encounter, and remove a knight from the third encounter. For 6 players, add the opposite, but start with 4 spiders present for the first encounter.

We aren’t the right level:

*The knights are based off the Knight Accordant. The spiders, ghosts, and clerics are all based off similarly named creatures, and can be easily leveled up or down with the **Monster Builder**.*

It’s too easy/hard:

- The first encounter is meant to be easy enough to entice the players to continue on without taking an extended rest. Consider removing the sarcophagus weakness if the players are not sufficiently challenged.
- The difficulty of the second encounter depends on how long you give the players to save the documents and how close the players stay to the bonfire. Consider changing the recharge # on the cleric’s Flame Lash, and possibly removing the penalty on Transfer Life to adjust the difficulty.
- The third encounter depends entirely on the players’ tactics for dealing with the knight that marked them and whether they realize that Arturius is easier to hit once the knights die.

My players listened to Halad and didn’t go inside the Council’s Chamber, instead returning to the surface:

If your players actually listen to Halad and decide to return to the surface without entering the chamber (which is unlikely), then you have a few options:

1. *On their way back to the surface, the tunnel collapses, forcing them to find an alternative route and forcing them to pass through the Council’s Chamber.*
2. *Halad, upon hearing that the seal has been broken, tells the players the true history and pleads with them to return and kill the knights to keep the truth hidden.*
3. *The knights could follow the players to the surface, and the third encounter could take place in the temple above, or really anywhere (you’re on your own for a map, though).*

Where do we go from here?

The players could be sent to track down the group of people responsible for causing the earthquake, decide to spread the truth of the Golden Hand, or even explore the rest of the sunken temple, encountering monsters brought up by the disturbance.

