

The

Impostrous
Emissariat

a Trophy Dark incursion by Speak the Sky





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GUIDANCE

Questions

Questions marked ❖ (four diamonds) help define the world, the journey, and the hunters as a group, and should be asked to the group as a whole. Some invite answers from everyone; others require a single answer. For example:

- ❖ What missing preparation of yours does the hermit easily intuit?
- ❖ How can you avoid looking like the tastiest morsel?

Questions marked ◆ (one diamond) probe each hunter's individual thoughts and actions, and should be asked to each player in turn (or a single player depending on the question). For example:

- ◆ Who do you see as the leader of this expedition?
- ◆ What petty grudge do you have against them?

Moments and Conditions

Each Ring in this incursion features a short table of its own Moments and the incursion as a whole has a single table of Conditions. You can roll on and/or choose from them as you prefer.

Historical Notes

Meditative labyrinths are ritual paths with pre-Christian origins and Christian uptake. Walking to, and standing at, the (often six-lobed) centre is said to aid reflection, penance, and revelation. Unlike mazes or the minotaur's labyrinth, these labyrinths are unicursal—they are one convoluted 'course' or path. Give the players this information before beginning play. Whether their hunters are familiar with the practice is up to each of them.

Content Notes

This incursion includes body horror, psychological horror, mirrors, mazes, self-hatred, doppelgängers, unreliable narration, dissection, and vivisection.



There are **them** who'll pay
With their **own** child's **blood**
Just to **taste** the **truth**
Of the **Font** of **Sooth**.
(I'd like to think
I'm **not** like **them**
But **who** knows **what**
My **hands** can do.)



There are **them** who'll spend
Many **lives** of **men**
Just to **know** the **hour**
Of their **dismal** **death**.
(I'd like to think
I'm **not** like **them**
But **who** knows **what**
My **hands** can do.)



There are **them** who'll sell
All the **souls** they **know**
Just to **drink** a **drop**
From that **trophy** **dear**.
(I'd like to think
I'm **not** like **them**
But **who** knows **what**
My **hands** can do.)



I'd like to think I'm not like **them**
But **who** knows **why** my heart's **aquiver**?
Am I the one
Who'll **taste** the **truth**
Who'll **drink** the **drop**
Who'll **know** the **hour**?
Who'd **shed** child's **blood**?
Who'd **spend** men's **lives**?
Who'd **sell** all **souls**?
Who knows **what** my **hands** can do.



INTRODUCTION

Only fools look for truth when angels avert their eyes.

And yet... in ancient times people dug deep under the earth to reveal the Font of Sooth, a divine wellspring whose water gave revelations. The monks who opened it up meant it to bring peace to the world, but instead those who saw the future tried to change it by force. Many paid the cost and many myriads more paid the price. Legends say in time the Font was sunk back under the earth, sealed in a labyrinth under a chapel by the ancient forest.

And yet... the Font of Sooth endures. It brings water up from parts unknown and it cannot be stopped. As the world warded them off, the monks stayed beneath the chapel, drank deep, and went blind as visions of past and future swallowed up the present. They wrote down every esoteric, particular glimpse with the clarity of crystal clear memories. It's said everyone has a line in that library; a devastatingly powerful truth dedicated in their name. These truths can build dynasties and destroy hearts. The measure of a man is not always to their liking. Good, then, that they're not so easily obtained.

Unfortunately, the forest swallowed up the chapel long ago. Perhaps it was jealous, or thirsty for revelation. Well, the Font and library are treasure for foolhardy hunters now—mercenaries paid to risk their lives on others' behalf and desperate seekers looking for their own futures. All you have to do is find the Forest-flocked Chapel, tear a page from the right book or fill your water-skin from the Font, and return alive. Many say they've done it and become better for it.

And yet... perhaps not everything seen or spoken is truth.

THEME: REVELATIONS

CHARACTER CREATION

Occupations

- Navigator (*skilled in navigation, survival, bow*)
- Haruspex (*skilled in proclamations, rituals, knives*)
- Monk (*skilled in prayer, scripture, sanctified murder*)
- Poacher (*skilled in hunting, smuggling, trespassing*)
- Executioner (*skilled in consoling, herbcrafting, killing*)
- Artist (*skilled in words, poisons, rituals*)



Backgrounds

- Exiled Pamphleteer (*skilled in agitation*)
- Incompetent Augur (*skilled in bird-handling*)
- Amnesiac (*skilled in one most convenient thing*)
- Blacklisted Surgeon (*skilled in dissection*)
- Forgotten Fugitive (*skilled in imitation*)
- False Martyr (*skilled in expedient sacrifice*)

Drives

- Avenge the decline of House Lepidopsis
- Cleanse my dreams of Kormoran's Eye
- Purge the vengeful spirits that haunt me
- Fund my expedition to the Blossoming Abyss
- Amass a following so great I'll never fall again
- Vindicate my crimes against the Painter King





Rituals

- Peek (*see the forbidden*)
- Shroud (*hide in plain sight*)
- Misinform (*implant false visions*)
- Eulogise (*read the guts of the dead like sermons*)
- Coax (*inexorably attract a creature*)
- Appal (*embrace Ruination*)




CONDITIONS

 Your skin begins to peel and part like the petals of a lotus flower.


 Your fingerprints secrete a thin, foul-smelling acidic slime.





 You can feel your skin crawl over the flesh beneath, pulling, prying, desperate to be away from you and what you are.


or




 Your inner ears hatch and slither away on glistening trails, leaving behind pinholes that hear more than you ever wanted to.

 Your skin withers into a map of stony labyrinthine whorls.

 A second face begins to grow—somewhere—on your body. Its first instinct is to make you miserable.

 You can no longer close your eyes, and see staring eyes everywhere.





 Food turns to writhing, luminescent slugs in your mouth.


or




 Living viscera call to you, begging your touch and interpretation.

 You feel a mounting, abyssal pressure when in others' sight.


 You can hear the incessant and unkind chatter of birds and slugs.

 Everyone you see is obscured by clouds of revelatory words.

 You refuse to let seemingly-innocent explanations go.


 Knowingly speaking or hearing lies causes you physical pain.





 You feel that others know you far better than you know yourself, and increasingly turn to others to define who you are.

or



 You burn with an urge to confess, flagellate, and seek the same of others, treating physical pain and spiritual exposure as validation.

 Your thoughts tumble out of your mouth in a mumbled stream of consciousness unless you stem the flow by strength of will.

 You pretended to be someone else for so long that you've forgotten who you really are—and now you're starting to remember.

RING I: THE FOREST

Terrors

Early light. The hunters, having crossed the tree line several hours ago, spot a creature among distant aspen—a monster in the mist, anthropomorphic, face oddly coloured and feathered. It stands over a dead forager, picking pieces of flesh to meld to its own body so as to assume a convincingly human form.

- ❖ What other signs reveal its monstrosity, despite its human mimicry?
- ❖ How do these tell-tales fade as the shape-shifter fully assumes the form of its prey?

Apothecaries comb the forest floor wearing garish and unique masks on the backs of their heads. They gather beautiful, bloated insects, but at first sight or sound of the party draw steel and challenge the hunters to reveal themselves. This land, they say, belongs to their 'liege', whom they refuse to identify.

- ❖ Which forager seems least like the others—most out of place?
- ◆ What lie do you use to convince them you have the right to be here?
- ◆ Why does this come so easily to mind?

They confer and, still on their guard, may agree to let the hunters go to their doom. Otherwise: They're armed, but not fighters. A strong show of force will convince them not to tell a soul of the hunters' presence.

Temptations

A two-faced hermit steps between the trees, dressed in plain garb strung with long, pearlescent feathers. They carry bundled branches on their back and an axe in their hand. The first face sizes up the hunters while the second wearily insults their motives and preparations, but offers to guide them to the Parish of Dissection regardless: If they must die, they could at least do it elsewhere.

- ❖ What missing preparation of yours does the hermit easily intuit?
- ◆ Which quality of yours do they mock as unsuited for the expedition?
- ◆ How would you normally treat those who insult you in this way?
- ❖ How do you defend each others' skill and character?

They go off the faint track, guiding any following hunters over root-knuckled ground, weaving between trees according to signs kept only in their minds.

- ❖ What safe-seeming place do they challenge the most antagonistic hunter to walk alone?
- ❖ How do those things reveal their true dangers as you pass them by?

The hermit sternly reprimands those who speak and tells them to save their secrets for the cold dead earth. Either way, the hunters have time to think.

- ◆ Who do you see as the leader of this expedition?
- ◆ What petty grudge do you have against them?
- ◆ What do you admire about their vision for the future?
- ◆ What weighty grudge do you—

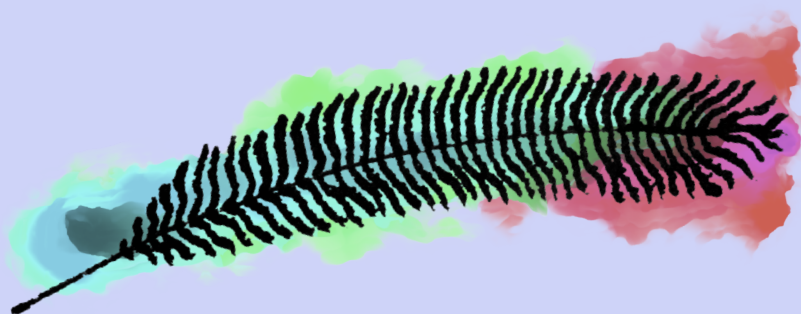
—the breeze carries the faint peal of a brass bell sounding twelve times. The hermit refuses to guide the party any closer.

- ❖ What single tool or provision do they give you?

The hermit watches impassively as the hunters disappear between the trees.

Moments

-
- All the knots on the trees crack open and snap to face the hunters.
-
- The waters of a reflecting grove refresh tongue and refill water-skin, but the face each hunter sees in the surface speaks unbidden of their regrets.
-
- An arm of lightning reaches down from the grey sky to touch a tree, to blast it open and reveal its inner imperfections for all to see.
-
- The dawn chorus refuses to sound as the hunters pass; birds scrutinise the hunters in coldly judgemental silence.
-
- A tangled snake knots ever-deeper into itself, too panicked to get free.
-
- Six times six fingers coil round a tree, then retreat with one sharp breath.
-



RING II: THE PARISH

Terrors

The foliage abruptly shifts from knot-eyed aspen to prison bar-straight trees, coated in mirror-sheen dew, standing amorphous and anonymous in every direction on a plain of dark earth. When the hunters look out, a thousand-thousand eyes look back—not all their own. Sometimes, the reflections seem to move by themselves. At other times, they vanish, only to reappear on other trunks moments later. All around is the smell of rot, the source always just out of sight.

- ❖ What horrid rumours have you heard about this place?
- ◆ Which one do you most hope is false, and why?

The hunters now become the hunted. Stymphalian stalking birds, taller than the hunters, silently wind between the trees. Their talons rend leather, beaks puncture iron, and pearly feathers turn aside blade and arrow, and they choosily flay and dissect—or vivisect—their prey to select the most flavourful organs. They only seem to advance when the hunters are looking away.

- ❖ How can you tell that they haven't fed in some time?
- ❖ How can you avoid looking like the tastiest morsel?
- ◆ Do you distract them when your fellows are in danger?

Dusk approaches. A gargantuan wyrm lurks behind the rod-trees, too large to attack and too malevolent to leave the hunters alone. They speak between glacier cackles and avalanche laughter, provoking anger and insinuating their knowledge of the hunters' secrets for no reason other than to make them suffer.

- ❖ What revolting features of the wyrm are you glad you can barely see?
- ◆ What do they somehow know about you that you kept from the party?
- ◆ How do you deflect their sinister conversation onto your fellows?



Temptations

By the time they reach the Forest-flocked Chapel, all is dark save the flicker-glow of a candle playing solar idol to an auditorium of whispering leaves. It's true: the forest bends in to this place like a religious flock, listening attentively to each peal out of the bell tower.

- ❖ What ruinous acts are depicted in its shattered stained-glass windows?
- ◆ Which one seems to contemptuously foreshadow your future?
- ❖ How does the congregation of jealous trees react as you approach?

The chapel-mouth gapes, doors rotted off their hinges like fallen teeth. Inside are scattered pews, slug-smothered angelic statuettes, and a mosaic labyrinth set in the floor. At the far end, in place of an altar, is a sunken doorway.

- ❖ How can you tell this place was not willingly abandoned?
- ❖ What part of the chapel has the forest most reconsecrated in its image?
- ◆ What premonition chills your heart as you cross the labyrinth?

The party descends through the door into darkness and the echoes of water.

Moments

-
- ☐ A solitary peal brings a reverberant reply from the trees of the Parish.
-
- ☐ A forager lies torn apart by stupendous jaws, a rare and hallucinogenic herb clutched in their one un-mangled hand.
-
- ☐ A fox ahead stares and snarls at something unseen behind the hunters.
-
- ☐ Blood drops and talon tracks lead to a twitching hunter, skull half picked clean. Their mumblings echo deadly events past and future.
-
- ☐ A veiled figure carries a lit candle through the darkening mirror-woods.
-
- ☐ Half a dozen rod-trees grow through the old corpse of a treasure-hunter.
-



RING III: THE MAZE

Terrors

Note: you can use the table on pg17-18 for further set-pieces.

The hunters are walking through a pitch-black subterranean maze lined with aqueducts carrying clear water to and from parts unknown. There is no way out. All attempts to navigate or escape are frustrated by the maze's scornful metastatic chapelry: mismatched pews and grotesque altars; passages at odd angles in all dimensions; doorways to nowhere. The chapel has reproduced out of control. Days pass between events important enough to remember.

- ❖ How would your missing provisions or preparations have helped here?
- ◆ Who's really at fault for their lack?
- ◆ If you die here, what weighty grudge will die with you?

After long days of travel, the party meets a human presence—figures behind decorative iron latticework holding lights like those of hunters. They stare in curiosity and horror, but at the party's approach turn hostile and retreat.

- ❖ What about them seems too similar to you to be mere coincidence?

Days later, the hunters cross another group at an intersection. A light paints them in ghoulish chiaroscuro; they examine a corpse. When they turn to the party the truth is revealed: the hunters look back at themselves. The corpse is likewise a copy of one of the party. More bodies lie further behind them. The doppelgängers make peaceful overtures, say they mean no harm, but...

- ◆ What personal tic reveals that your doppelgänger is lying?
- ◆ Who do you have the fewest qualms about killing?

The battle is a merciless, bloody, confusing melee in cramped quarters.

Temptations

The hunters stumble upon a deserted, ruined camp in vestry encrusted with dripping pus-white candles. It's been torn-up, left in a hurry, and smashed through by something, but not recently. The room provides comparative shelter, sleeping in turns while one hunter keeps watch.

- ❖ What about this camp is uncannily alike you and your possessions?
- ❖ What useful scraps of supplies can you scavenge?
- ◆ From who or what do you seek warmth and comfort while you sleep?
- ◆ While you're on watch, whose weaknesses do you study and think on?

The hunters each in turn awake from portentous dreams and nightmares of leering eyes, confessions, and abysses.

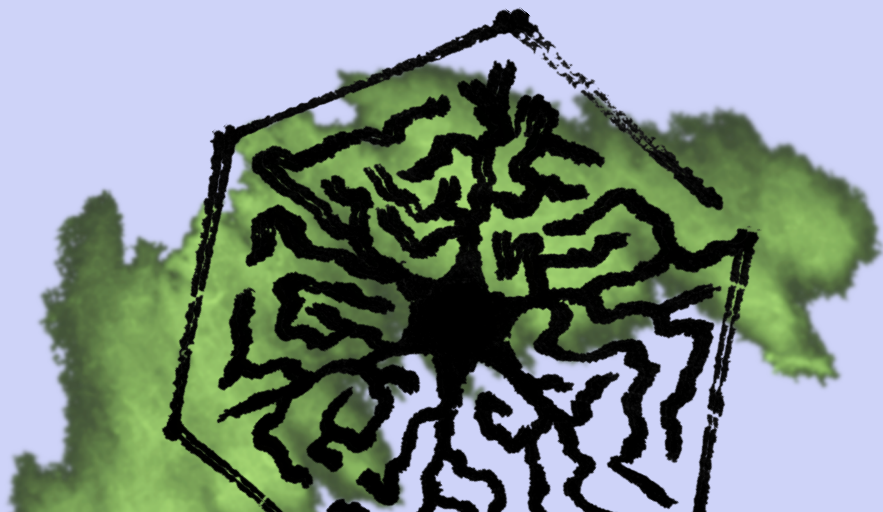
- ◆ Which hunter confessed their sins to you in dream?
- ◆ Which part of their confession was so bitterly familiar to you?
- ◆ Which part of your own confession is so terribly true?

A tattered map resembling a colossal living thing catches the hunters' eyes in the debris—it shows a way on by plotting a method in the maze's madness.

- ❖ How does the map seem more like a diagram of anatomical dissection?

Moments

-
- An uncomfortably familiar hunter lies on an altar, dissected with about as much competence the party themselves would have managed.
-
- Dead doppelgängers lie in a circle of plucked eyes—a hunter is absent.
-
- A school of eyeless albino fish flits by along the aqueducts.
-
- A string tied along maze-passages appears to lead somewhere, but no: it only traces a long, wide circle, seamlessly threading back into itself.
-
- Nearby cracks in the stone walls expose rubbery, pinkish-grey folds of flesh that weep a thin, water-clear liquid.
-
- Six brains of human size hang from chains in a warm, pulsating alcove.
-



RING IV: THE LABYRINTH

Terrors

Note: you can use the table on pg17-18 for further set-pieces.

Festering chaos gives way to a feeble order. Infinite sprawling pathways in all dimensions slowly turn into one convoluted route with branches that break off and return. The maze is now a labyrinth, walls glistening with moisture.

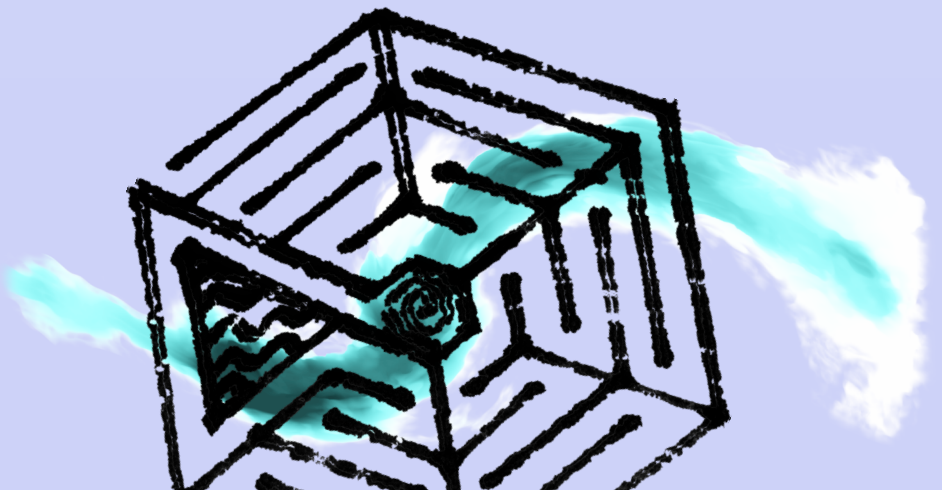
- ❖ How long have you been travelling?
- ◆ What provision have you kept from the others?

Lights ahead! What seem to be swaying lanterns are revealed to be the bowed, glowing eyestalks of a colossal slug whose bulk cracks the walls. It devours all in its path, shredding flesh and stone with its glassy black radula and gliding on a trail of acidic slime with unseemly speed and in deathly silence.

- ◆ What precious thing must you sacrifice to evade or distract the beast?
- ◆ What vision of the future do you see in the swirling liquid beneath the slug's corrugated skin?

A dishevelled mob of dozens of weary doppelgängers shuffles behind it, each periodically bending to scoop its slime from the floor and drip it into their acid-scorched mouths. Their eyes twitch in silent ecstatic delirium as they mutter visions of the future. Individually, they are weak—together they are a wall of hands and teeth ready to defend their **vile ambrosial messiah** from perceived thieves or threats, the hunters included.

- ◆ What betrayal do your doppelgängers know you're capable of?
- ◆ What knowledge would it take for an exact duplicate of you to willingly submit to this semi-conscious degradation?



Temptations

A wounded doppelgänger lies up against a wall, gasping for air and staunching the flow of blood from their opened guts. The red trail leads further into the labyrinth. They give a hollow laugh when they see the party and weakly point the way on.

- ❖ Whose doppelgänger are they?
- ❖ What other agonising mutilations have they suffered?
- ◆ What relief do you give them, if any?

The aqueducts now carry cloudy water, and those who stop to drink this deep into the labyrinth at last receive foggy glimpses of past and future.

- ◆ Who do you see confronting you in a vision of anger and pain?

The dwindling branches of the labyrinth soon die out. No more side passages, alcoves, or shelter. With the slug and mob behind them, there's no way out—only deeper in. The corridor eventually opens into the hunters' penultimate destination: a massive ring-shaped library, swamped with water and crawling with luminescent slugs. Books rot on shelves. Only scraps remain. The core of the library—a massive circular chamber radiating aqueducts—awaits them.

- ◆ What incomplete scraps of your truth can you glean from the library?

Moments

-
- ☐ A Brutally personal visions of the lives of important strangers are written on fragments of vellum lying around a broken pulpit.
-
- ☐ A trail of slime, and foot- and bootprints, crosses the path; trinkets that the hunters recognise as their own are discarded, trodden into the muck.
-
- ☐ Skinless doppelgängers hang from rafters by blood-slicked ropes.
-
- ☐ Neatly discarded doppelgängers' belongings reveal unwholesome truths.
-
- ☐ A doppelgänger rocks back and forth in an alcove, their skin covered with copies of their own face that babble endlessly and malevolently.
-
- ☐ A lectern holds a book foretelling six armageddons.
-

RING V: THE FONT

Terrors

A shaft of light pours straight down from a hole in the ceiling into the centre of a vast, stinking cistern. Rod-like roots coated in mirror-sheen dew pierce the ceiling and hang into the water, drinking the future. Giant slugs—infants, human-sized—hang by ropes of mucus. Underwater lies a floor labyrinth of spongy pink-grey stone and, at its centre, the hunters see the Font of Sooth. At last, an overflowing well dug deep into a gargantuan brain that spans the full floor of the chamber, its petrified folds forming the labyrinth that the hunters now walk.

- ◆ What dreadful realisation do you come to as you cross the labyrinth?
- ❖ What shared visions of godlike power overtake your minds?

The floor labyrinth isn't the only thing underwater. Rippling humaniform flesh breaks the surface, a mountainous figure heavy-laden with human skins worn one over the other. The hunters' own flayed faces stare back at them in many-layered multitudes. It's hard to tell where flayed skin ends and flayer begins—if indeed there is anyone under the drapes of hide. The **wretched familiar flaycoat** carries cruel implements for measurement, flensing, and evisceration, and advances on the hunters with a terrifying certainty.

- ❖ How can you tell that the flayed skins are, in some terrible, impossible way, still conscious?

Temptations

The flaycoat's unslain skins beg the hunters to join them. There are no secrets kept among them; no inner psyches; no painful compromises. They soak in the waters of revelation and gain ultimate wisdom from the decrepit mind of whatever giant, god, or abomination died here. All skeins of possibility are explored in the brain of the beast. There is no escape but to escape the pain of being human.

- ◆ Why does surrendering your secrets to the gestalt tempt you so?
- ◆ Would you rather wear the monstrous mantle than join it?

Living visions of inglorious pasts and terrible futures mingle in the senses of those who drink the Font's rancid water. Revelations swirl together and all turns clear as the

hunters' secrets are shared with each other and themselves.

- ◆ What sick truth overwhelms you?
- ◆ Which part of it is shared with the other hunters who drink the water?






“Two people can keep a secret—if one of them is dead.”








Moments








-
- ◻ Reflections in the water show glimpses of violence seconds in the future.
-
- ◻ The face each hunter sees in the water speaks unbidden of their regrets.
-
- ◻ Everything precious the hunters ever lost is just out of reach underwater.
-
- ◻ The hunters' own voices echo from the light; flashes of conversation or argument from earlier in the journey echo from the walls.
-
- ◻ Corpses surface in waxy waves, reaching up to drag the hunters down.
-
- ◻ Six roots descend into the well itself, glowing with unearthly power, ringing in response to the chapel bell far above.
-



THREE DOZEN MAZE FRAGMENTS

-  Vestry with robes of human skin, with a tannery off in an alcove
 -  Store lined with drawers of pungent incense pastels; familiar scents
 -  Ceiling-high reliquary whose tightly-shut door weeps tears and tar
 -   Crypt of broken, living corpses who offer to forgive your sins
 -  Vestry with ragged red robes longer than any human would wear
 -  Crypt where sounds of future violence echo forever

 -  Alcove with a statue of an unwelcoming saint taking shelter
 -  Narthex with doors that whisper to those who listen at the keyholes
 -  Corridor of windows blocked up with hands sculpted from wet clay
 -   Narthex that gushes freshwater from a mouldy chapel beyond
 -  Narthex with six arches open to chapels in various stages of decay
 -  Branching burrow-like passages tangling round each other

 -  Sprawling grid of identical crossroads under stone arches
 -  Bridges of interconnected pulpits over a warm, breezy abyss
 -   Corridor floored with living, staring, stained glass lit from below
 -  Cloister under a dark sky full of whispering leaves and light-motes
 -  Wide room filled with stone fonts containing only bones and ashes
 -  Recursive crossroads that leads back to itself until a price is paid
-

Glossary

Note: these are approximate definitions only.

Nave: main area of a church, often with pews for worshippers.


Narthex: general area, room, or entryway before or behind the nave.


Chancel: front area reserved for clergy, containing the altar and choir.


Pulpit: raised, semi-enclosed platform with a lectern for sermons and texts.

Vestry: a room where ceremonial clothes are stored, also called a sacristy.


THREE DOZEN MAZE FRAGMENTS


 Windowless spiral staircases up and down and up and down and...

 Staircase worn so deep by feet that fossils are revealed in the stone


 Junction signposted by grotesque stations of personal suffering





 Corridor spliced with pews and altars that flicker back and forth

 Stairway that meets the wall and forces gravity to bend with it


 Dead end, but the way the hunters came is no longer the same path


 Upside-down nave where the only walkways are rotting rafters


 Nave with windows onto scenes of malevolent annihilation


 Nave with stations mockingly cast in the shape of intruders





 Chancel with nooses strung from above, choral pews like jury boxes

 Nave stretching into darkness, flickering shaded figures in the pews


 Gilt chancel protected by a small maze of white-hot iron filigree


 Ashy room with a cauldron full of tallow and tattooed scraps of skin


 Two bell-towers, bells strung between them, a rope bridge beneath

 Subterranean graveyard, headstones cut from the cavern floor



 Turreted tower littered with broken swords and the skulls of birds

 Spiralling path leading in- and upward to a giant mirror-sheen bell

 Damp crawlspace under a nave from which bleak hymns emanate

Glossary, cont'd

Note: these are approximate definitions only.

Stations: a series of images showing scenes of religious importance, from the Christian 'stations of the cross' showing Jesus Christ on the way to crucifixion.

Undercroft: a stone-lined cellar for storing and sometimes selling goods.

Crypt: an underground vault for the storage and display of human remains.

Reliquary: a container for relics (human remains of saints and other figures).

Only fools look for truth where angels avert their eyes, so it must have been fools who dug the Font of Sooth, a wellspring whose waters grant clear visions of the future.

They hoped knowledge would bring peace. They were wrong, and so the Font was sunk beneath the earth in a confounding labyrinth.

Time turned, but tales remain. Truth-seekers and mercenaries alike hunt for the Font, hoping for a draught of revelatory spring-water that is valuable beyond measure. They do not understand that the journey will reveal far more about them than they ever wanted to know.

