

The Spiral

An incursion through the dragon.



TROPHY

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INCURSION

The Spiral

On the doors of the homes in Fort Duhrin, a strange mark has begun appearing. A spiral, roughly carved and splashed with ink, first made its appearance on a blacksmith's shop. Four nights later, the same mark was noticed on the door of a washerwoman. Four nights after that, the Governor's inquisitors started dragging folks from their beds, demanding answers for "the mark found on the Governor's wardrobe this eve."

Expeditions into the forest of Kalduhr have been halted by the Governor until the perpetrators are apprehended. A sizable reward has been set aside for information that leads to their capture, and with the forest expedition you had planned now stalled, that reward may be your best chance to make good on your debts.

THEME

Serpent

MOMENTS

- ◇ The constellation of the Serpent hangs brightly in the sky.
- ◇ A rodent stumbles across the floor, leaving a spotty trail of blood behind it.
- ◇ A member of the kingsguard retches into a worn wooden bucket.
- ◇ A peasant works furiously to put out a fire.
- ◇ The moon is briefly blotted out by a strangely shaped cloud.
- ◇ A young cutpurse tries to snatch one of your bags, but fails.
- ◇ A rattling is heard from within a pile of hay, cloth, or other soft material, then stops suddenly.
- ◇ Light from within a house doorway is momentarily obscured by a person stepping inside.
- ◇ Your heel is stung by something sharp, as you notice too late two upturned nails.
- ◇ A guard wolfs down a massive chunk of meat and bread, nearly choking to swallow it down.
- ◇ A tremor shakes the ground beneath your feet.
- ◇ A steadily dripping liquid burns and stings when it splashes you.

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CONDITIONS

- ◇ Your skin begins peeling and sloughs off.
- ◇ You begin hoarding disgusting items.
- ◇ You have the urge to eat inedible things.
- ◇ Your blood becomes acidic when it comes in contact with air.
- ◇ You will only eat things that are still alive.
- ◇ You are now cold-blooded and find it difficult to stay warm.
- ◇ Your pupils are now slits, which makes people uneasy when they notice.
- ◇ A dark green, scaly rash is spreading all over your body.
- ◇ You feel compelled to file your teeth into sharp fangs.
- ◇ You have started sprouting a snake-like tail.
- ◇ Your vision is slowly being replaced by a thermal sense.
- ◇ Your tongue forks, making communication difficult.

RING 1

TERRORS: One of the treasure-hunters knows an inquisitor who will grant you access to the Governor's keep and quarters.

- Why are they willing to risk their position for you?
- What might it cost you both if you were discovered here?

Everyone at the Fort has heard rumors that the Governor had peculiar tastes.

- What rumors have you heard?

Upon entering the Governor's bedroom, it's finally clear what he collects and keeps hidden from all but his inner circle.

- What bizarre, profane and strange collection is piled up into a shrine, and how is it worse than any of the rumors?
- What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?

TEMPTATIONS: When they see the mark carved roughly into the wardrobe door, the initial impression is of a spiral carelessly splashed with black ink. Someone in the group experienced with rituals knows better. This mark is similar to ruins used in rituals like *Burrow*, *Guide*, *Project* and *Summon*: rituals of summoning and travel. It has long been speculated that these rituals are all derived from an ancient, more powerful rite that could allow near-instantaneous travel between any two locations.

- How might you be rewarded if you figured out how to perform this ritual?







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RING 2

TERRORS: Peering inside the wardrobe reveals a hallway and a short staircase leading up to a door, which is ajar. This hallway makes no sense given the layout of the Governor's keep.

If the treasure-hunters enter the wardrobe, the hallway shakes and ripples from one end to the other like a slithering serpent. For a brief moment, the hallway smells of bile and the air stings your eyes and throat. The door at the top of the stairs starts to close. Anyone who rushes toward it can get to it. The door opens to the blacksmith's.

If the treasure-hunters close the Governor's door and later re-open it, roll a die to find out what happens:

-  *or*  They create a portal to the blacksmith's door.
-  *or*  They create a portal to the washerwoman's door.
-  *or*  They create a portal to a dream-like subterranean tunnel. Anyone looking inside immediately makes a Ruin Roll. If the treasure-hunters enter the tunnel, immediately proceed to RING 4.

The same process is true closing and re-opening the door from either the blacksmith's or the washerwoman's, just with portals to the Governor's door instead.

If the treasure-hunters leave the Governor's keep and investigate one of the other marked locations—the washerwoman's or the blacksmith's—they find kingsguards attempting to keep watch. However, the guards are overwhelmed by a noxious, acrid odor emanating from the marked doors, forcing them to regularly step away from their posts.

- How do you keep yourself from being attacked by the poisonous air?

TEMPTATIONS: A few of the guards are attempting to remove—as quickly as possible—a collection of objects from the locations. Like the Governor's, small hoards of strange objects can be found there, though these are being extracted from the homes under cover of darkness.

Careful investigation reveals the blacksmith to have been collecting dozens of iron cages filled with dead, snake-like creatures, the length and width of a human arm.

- What do the creatures look like up close?

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- Despite their large size, how do you know these are juveniles?
- What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?

The guards at the washerwoman's home are removing large barrels sloshing with liquid. Prying the cover off of one exposes the opener to a caustic liquid that stings the eyes. The liquid is clear, and glancing inside reveals a large, egg-shaped object floating within. Trying to dump the liquid out to retrieve the object will invariably cause the egg to break. Its shell is leathery, soft, and fragile. The egg contains a cloudy, viscous slime, and a pale, half-formed serpentine creature.

- What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?

Regardless of how much the party searches, they will not find either the blacksmith or the washerwoman. No one they talk to will know where they are either. The kingsguard and the inquisitors will both claim to offer a reward for information about their whereabouts.

RING 3

TERRORS: At least one of the treasure-hunters will notice something that another took, no matter how well they hid it.

- Why do you now want it?
- How do you believe it is connected to the traveling ritual?
- Why do you think they hid it from you, specifically?

A member of the kingsguard is paraded around by the inquisitors, who loudly proclaim her complicity in allowing criminals into the Governor's keep, and in the theft of "sensitive artifacts." The party should assume these artifacts are whatever things they took in previous rings. The inquisitors lead the guard to a pyre, bind her, and set it ablaze. The inquisitors shout to an assembled and terrified public that they know other conspirators hide among the citizens "like snakes in a garden."

TEMPTATIONS: During the speech, the party notices a scrawny figure wrapped in a dirty cloak skulking away in the shadows. From a distance, they see the figure briefly hunch over a cellar door, pull the door open, and run inside, closing the door behind them. Whoever approaches the cellar door finds the mark scratched into it.

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- What strange ritual implements did the figure leave behind?
- What insight do the implements give you into the traveling ritual?
- How will you achieve your drive when you finally perform this ritual or capture this figure?

Ask the following to the treasure-hunter with the highest Ruin:

- Did you mean to start opening the cellar door?

The door opens into a dream-like subterranean tunnel. Everyone looking inside immediately makes a Ruin Roll.

Whether the treasure-hunters are interested in learning the ritual or collecting the reward, following this figure into the tunnel is their best lead.

RING 4

TERRORS: The tunnel ripples, and a great roar follows. The walls shimmer, briefly flashing between glistening, violet muscles and black, stone-like scales. It's as if the tunnel can't decide whether it's the interior or exterior of a massive, world-devouring serpent. The walls constrict at points, squeezing the treasure-hunters. If they turn around, the door is gone, replaced by a long tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, teeth gnash and fire rages. An incomprehensibly massive mouth eats the body: an ouroboros of titanic proportions.

TEMPTATIONS: Moving forward, there are many doors within the tunnel. Each door shows a step in the process of creating the ritual.

- How does a door reveal its knowledge?

Treasure-hunters who are skilled in rituals must make a Risk Roll or be compelled to learn the ritual:

Spiral (create a portal to travel through the World Serpent)

Learning it automatically increases a treasure-hunter's Ruin by 1.

The World Serpent can open a door to any room storing a hoard, but it inevitably begins using the hoard to birth its children into the world. Its children turn the keepers of the hoard into protectors of the children and servitors of the World Serpent.

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RING 5

TERRORS: The treasure-hunters who have learned the ritual can open doors to anywhere there is a hoard. As soon as they enact the ritual, they'll become paranoid.

- What will your companions steal from you once they know the ritual?
- How can you keep any of your possessions safe from them while they're still alive?

Any treasure-hunter who doesn't learn the ritual will find doors buried in the World Serpent's muscular walls. The doors open into random, monstrous hoards in the world where the World Serpent's children dwell: snakes and dragons and basilisks and wyverns and hydras, consuming and destroying everything. Walls of fire and rains of acid eat away at everything.

- What serpentine terror do you see through the door?

TEMPTATIONS: Eventually, allow them to find or open a door directly do their drive or that shows them how they can fulfill their drive. Give them everything they want. They are the dragon and the world is their hoard. But like the fire inside the World Serpent, they'll always need to consume more and more and more...

- Why is this even this—your dream of dreams—not enough?
- What will you consume next?

