

# Temple of Death

Perched precariously on a jagged, narrow peak within a transient demiplane of judgment, the Temple of Death is a foreboding crypt that exists in the liminal space between the living and the dead. Carved into the spire's stern face, its cold, stone halls are etched with ancient runes and filled with an eerie silence. The temple's most formidable guardian is a malevolent fiend known as Mor'Tanath, a being of pure evil, yet unwaveringly dedicated to the singular purpose for which it was created: to ensure that the souls entombed within never escape. Within these hallowed and haunted walls lie some of the multiverse's most powerful undead—lich kings, mummy lords, and greater vampires, all bound by the god of death's unyielding wards. Despite their formidable power, they remain prisoners, thwarted from leaving by the temple's arcane barriers.

Death cultists, driven by fanatic devotion, frequently attempt to infiltrate the temple to liberate their dark masters. However, Mor'Tanath, with its fiendish cunning and might, ceaselessly thwarts these intruders, maintaining the delicate balance of life and death ordained by the god of death.

## Temple Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the temple, as shown on the facing page.

**1—Cliffside Entrance:** The only way into the temple is through the daunting cliffside entrance, a narrow passage carved into the sheer face of a 500-foot tall spire, challenging and deterring all but the most determined or desperate souls.

**2—Lesser Crypts:** This large, circular chamber echoes with the restless stirrings and muffled bangs of lesser undead, trapped behind doors leading to their individual crypts; at its center lies a pool for offerings, flanked by four statues representing the gods of death, including Mor'Tanath's master, where visitors must pay their respects to explore deeper.

**3—Grand Crypt:** The Grand Crypt is home to the sarcophagus of Lord Valthazar, a once-powerful lich king, whose phylactery is bound to a chained coffin atop a dais. Fiendish, cackling guardians eternally watch over the coffin to prevent his malevolent resurgence. The air in this crypt is heavy with ancient, dark magic, and the faint sound of Valthazar's whispers can sometimes be heard, murmuring spells of old.



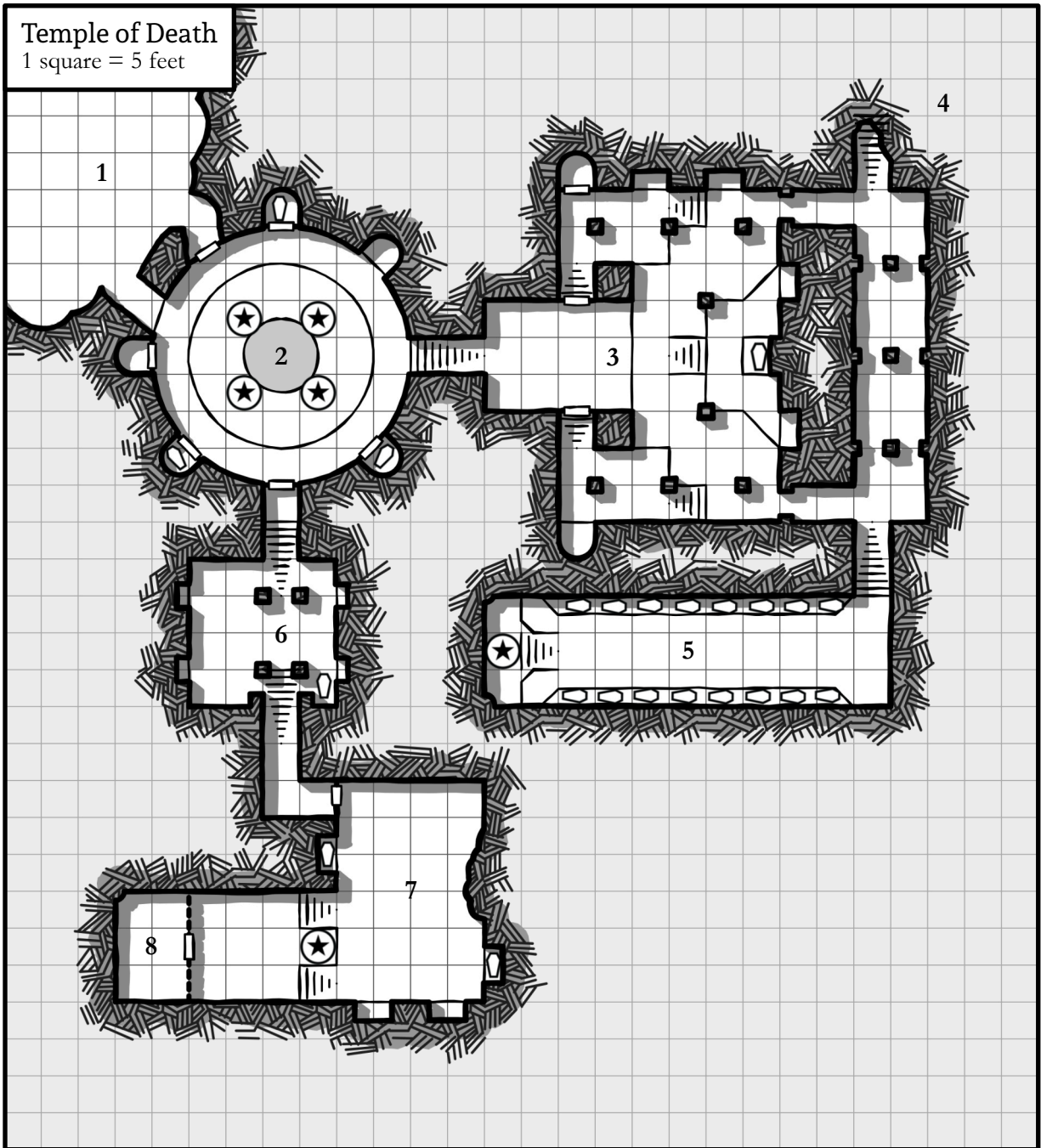
**4—Collapsed Staircase:** Once a passage to another crypt, this staircase now lies in ruins, a remnant of a cataclysmic war between fiends and celestials, its upper reaches blocked by rubble and haunting memories.

**5—Hall of Black Ice:** Along this chilling hallway, coffins of solid, enchanted ice line the walls, their frosty embrace holding incorporeal undead at bay, their faint whispers and cold presence palpable as one passes by.

**6—Antechamber:** The antechamber, a space of deceptive calm, is often where Mor'Tanath, the temple's fiendish guardian, can be found, its presence both commanding and ominous, a sentinel to the sacred and profane; this chamber frequently sees a diverse array of visitors, from devout pilgrims coming to worship to undead hunters seeking counsel, all drawn to seek audience with the enigmatic Mor'Tanath.

**8—Forgotten Crypts:** In this neglected part of the temple, a handful of scattered sarcophagi lie in dust-covered obscurity, their occupants long forgotten by time and the world of the living.

**9—Necromancer's Prison:** Here lies the cell of Elzar the Unbound, a necromancer of infamous repute, now confined within a cell of complex magical enchantments that constantly alter reality, ensuring his endless imprisonment. Despite his confinement, Elzar's presence exudes a menacing aura, and his eyes flicker with a cunning intelligence, always plotting his next move.



*Original map design by Dyson Logos, recreated by DMDave in Dungeon Scrawl. Permission granted to photocopy this image for personal use only.*

## Mor'Tanath

---

Mor'Tanath, the fiendish guardian of the Temple of Death, is a formidable and imposing figure. Towering in stature, he possesses a striking appearance with his deep red skin and massive, twisted elk antlers that add to his fearsome demeanor. His eyes are a void-like black, devoid of any warmth, reflecting a soul shaped by eons of solitary vigilance. Torn black bat wings, ragged yet powerful, extend from his back, fluttering softly with an unsettling grace. In his clawed hands, he wields a grim mace known as *Mortiferum Sceptrum*, a dreaded artifact imbued with the power to annihilate undead, its presence alone enough to instill fear in even the most formidable of undead creatures.

Created by an evil god of death, Mor'Tanath's existence is bound to the Temple of Death, his sole purpose to oversee the greater undead trapped within its walls. The god of death, rather than seeking the destruction of these undead, aims to study and learn from them, harboring the ambition to find a method to eradicate undeath from the multiverse entirely.

Despite the grandeur of his role, Mor'Tanath is burdened with discontent and loathing for his eternal position. He harbors secret ambitions, constantly scheming and plotting in the shadows of the temple. Driven by a deep-seated desire for freedom and power, Mor'Tanath aspires to ascend beyond his current station, dreaming of the day he might rise to become the next god of the dead, a position he believes he is destined to claim. His presence in the temple is a complex blend of duty, resentment, and hidden aspiration, making him a guardian as enigmatic as he is fearsome.

Within the somber confines of the Temple of Death, all the servants are fiends, each employed and commanded by Mor'Tanath. Among these sinister beings are the pair of cackling demons that stand guard at Lord Valthazar's crypt, their grotesque smiles and haunting laughter echoing through the stone corridors, a chilling reminder of their vigilance and loyalty to their fiendish overseer. In the shadowed halls, a trio of impish creatures scurry about, carrying messages and executing Mor'Tanath's orders with mischievous efficiency. Greeting travelers in the Lesser Crypts is a hulking brute of a demon, its massive frame and glowing eyes instilling fear and obedience in the lesser undead.

## Services

---

Mor'Tanath and his fiendish lackeys provide the following services.

**Guarding the Crypts:** Mor'Tanath and his fiends vigilantly guard the crypts of powerful undead, ensuring that they remain confined within their eternal prisons.

**Conducting Dark Rituals:** They perform ominous rituals to reinforce the magical wards and barriers that keep the undead bound to the temple.

**Interrogating Intruders:** Mor'Tanath's servants expertly interrogate any intruders, extracting information about potential threats or plots against the temple.

**Maintaining the Temple:** They tirelessly maintain the temple's structure and magical enchantments, ensuring it remains a formidable bastion between the living and the dead.

**Patrolling the Grounds:** The fiends patrol the temple's grounds, deterring and repelling would-be grave robbers and unwelcome visitors.

**Communicating with the God of Death:** Mor'Tanath acts as a conduit between the temple and the god of death, conveying divine will and receiving instructions.

**Overseeing Sacrifices and Offerings:** They oversee the collection and preparation of sacrifices and offerings made by death cultists and other worshippers.

**Training New Fiends:** Mor'Tanath trains newly summoned or created fiends, inculcating them in the ways of the temple and their duties.

**Enforcing Temple Law:** The fiends enforce the strict laws of the temple, punishing those who break them, be they undead or living.

**Supervising Dark Research:** Mor'Tanath supervises research into necromancy and dark arts conducted within the temple, seeking new ways to control or understand undeath.

**Training Undead Hunters:** Mor'Tanath occasionally trains select undead hunters in specialized techniques to combat rogue undead, ensuring they do not disrupt the balance maintained by the temple.

**Cult Development:** Mor'Tanath strategically develops and nurtures cults devoted to the worship of death, spreading the influence of the temple and its deity across different realms.

## Adventure Hooks

---

Below is a list of adventure triggers that could occur while the characters are visiting or staying in the temple, particularly those aligned with the god of death.

### The Unruly Lich

Mor'Tanath tasks adventurers with tracking down a rebellious lich who has escaped the temple's confines, threatening to upset the delicate balance between life and death.

### The Lost Artifact of Death

Adventurers are sent on a quest to recover a powerful artifact stolen from the temple, vital for maintaining the barriers that keep the undead contained.

### Seal the Rift

A rift between the living world and the realm of the dead has opened, and Mor'Tanath needs brave souls to venture into it and seal it before the balance is irrevocably disturbed.

### The Forbidden Tome

Mor'Tanath seeks a rare tome containing forbidden necromantic knowledge that is in the hands of a rogue necromancer; the adventurers must retrieve it to prevent its dangerous contents from being misused.

### Pacify the Restless Dead

A surge of restless spirits has been disturbed by a breach in the temple's wards, and adventurers are needed to pacify these spirits and restore order within the temple's hallowed grounds.

### The Heretic Cult

A cult has arisen, preaching a twisted version of death worship that threatens to undermine the temple's influence; adventurers must infiltrate and dismantle this heretical group.

## Random Encounters

---

Every four hours the characters are in or near the temple, roll a d20. On a result of 17 to 20, a random encounter or event occurs. Roll a d8 to determine what happens.

### TEMPLE OF DEATH ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	The characters witness a tense confrontation between Mor'Tanath and a newly captured undead, attempting to breach the temple's wards.
2	In a secluded chamber, the characters discover a group of death cultists fervently praying, oblivious to the party's presence, absorbed in their dark worship.
3	An ethereal voice echoes through the halls, offering cryptic guidance or foretelling ominous events linked to the temple's ancient past.
4	Mor'Tanath appears to test the characters' resolve or loyalty to the temple's cause, presenting them with a moral dilemma or a challenging task.
5	A group of fiendish temple acolytes is seen performing a cleansing ritual, purifying an area recently tainted by an escaped undead's presence.
6	The characters come across a solemn procession of fiendish monks carrying relics through the temple, chanting prayers to strengthen the temple's magical barriers.
7	The party encounters a repentant necromancer seeking redemption, offering knowledge or assistance in exchange for safe haven within the temple's walls.
8	The characters find themselves in the presence of a celestial envoy in a tense parley with Mor'Tanath, discussing the balance of power between life and death and the role of the temple in the cosmic order.