

A STUDY IN MARBLE



An Adventure for Dungeons & Dragons, 5th Edition

by Robin Hill

Contents

Introduction	2
Beginning the Adventure.	2
The Syklos Estates	2
The Artisan's Street.	3
<i>Map: Alleyway</i>	4
The Twist	5
Petra's House.	5
<i>Map: House and Courtyard</i>	6
The Final Showdown	7
<i>Map: Seagull Cave</i>	8
Conclusion.	9
Acknowledgements & Notes.	9

Introduction

A Study in Marble is an adventure for a 3rd to 5th level party inspired by ancient Greek mythology. Players will unravel a mystery surrounding a sudden disappearance, with significant emphasis on social interaction and gathering clues; although there are a handful of combat encounters, savvy players may be able to avoid or circumvent almost all of them.

This adventure can be played as a one-shot or integrated into an existing campaign as a side quest. The story can be adapted to a variety of different games, but the specific mechanics/stat blocks identified in this module are meant for compatibility with D&D 5e. The setting is especially suitable for campaigns set in the world of Theros.

A Study in Marble takes place on Syklos, an island port city at the confluence of several major trade routes. With its winding streets perched above glittering waves, sun-drenched gardens and bustling agora, Syklos seems like an idyllic place... but its bright plazas and narrow alleyways hold many secrets.

Beginning the Adventure

Somehow—maybe through a posting on a job board, a tip from a friend, or an overheard rumor—the party learns that Lady Kroesus, matriarch of the wealthiest family on the island, wishes to hire some adventurers. Details on what the job actually entails are scant, but she asks interested parties to apply at the Kroesus Estate, a well-appointed mansion high on a hill overlooking the port.

A servant guides you down an arcade lined with delicate marble columns, grapevines climbing up the stone and entwining overhead. At the end of the walkway an arched door opens into a library, with shelves of scrolls

lining the walls and open windows providing a breathtaking view of the sea and sky. A stately middle-aged woman rises as you enter. "Thank you for coming," she says. "I have a job that requires the utmost discretion, and do hope I can count on you. You will, of course, be well-compensated."

The Kroesus family is the wealthiest on the isle of Syklos, and Lady Kroesus (female human **noble**) carries herself with the quiet confidence that her station implies. The job she's offering is to find her missing husband—she suspects that he's run off with a serving girl. Again. While this is not the first time he's strayed, however, he's never been gone for this long before. She hasn't heard a word from him in four days, and she's starting to become concerned.

Lord Kroesus is a heavyset man, slightly balding, with a mole on his cheek; Lady Kroesus has a portrait of him that the party can use for reference. The Kroesuses wed nearly thirty years ago; it was an arranged marriage made for economic and political reasons. Although Lady Kroesus doesn't begrudge her husband's dalliances, they are somewhat embarrassing to the family, which is why she's choosing to hire a private team to find him rather than notifying the city watch. She insists that the party keep their investigations quiet.

She's willing to pay the party a reward of 100 gold if they can return Lord Kroesus to her. If that's impossible, she is willing to pay them 50 gold if they can at least tell her what's happened to him.

While no servants are missing from the Kroesus household, she does recommend that the party begin their investigation by asking around the neighboring estates. Lord Vangelis, who lives next door, is good friends with her husband, and he may have some insight into the matter. They could also try asking around the serving staff—it's possible her husband has taken a liking to somebody else's maid.

The Syklos Estates

This well-swept street is lined with high, whitewashed walls, carefully constructed to keep away the prying eyes of the common rabble. Through one gate you glimpse a villa surrounded by lush gardens... until the doorman notices you gawking and loudly clears his throat. "Can I help you?"

Next door lives Lord Vangelis (male human **noble**), a good friend of Lord Kroesus. While he's not expecting visitors at the moment, a DC 15 Persuasion or Deception

check will convince the doorman to admit the party. Vangelis is a good-natured gentleman who is always willing to talk, and will be quite concerned if told about his friend's disappearance. He last saw Kroesus four days ago—he was on his way to the market, saying that he wanted to commission some new artwork for the house.

Alternatively, the party can inquire among the staff of any house on the street (for whom the habits of their employers are a frequent source of gossip). Any servant can tell them that Lord Kroesus' current mistress is a gardener on the Vangelis Estate named Cora; the party can simply ask the doorman to fetch her and he'll oblige.

Cora is initially reluctant to discuss the situation, but if the party succeeds on a DC 12 Persuasion check, she will tell them that Kroesus recently broke up with her. He insisted that he needed to make amends with his wife, and was talking about purchasing an extravagant gift as an apology. She last saw him heading for the market and would recommend they ask around the artisans' street there.

Pacing Note

The Vangelis Estate provides some fun roleplay opportunities and draws out the mystery slightly longer, which makes the ultimate twist more impactful. This sequence is not, however, absolutely critical to the plot. If you know ahead of time that your session will have to be fairly short, if your party is unusually large, or if your players tend to dawdle, you can cut this section out for the sake of time.

If you do choose to remove this section, then have Lady Kroesus tell the party that she last saw her husband departing for the market a few days ago, saying he wished to commission some new artwork for the house.

The Artisans' Street

A few blocks away from the bustling agora, the artisan's district is a quieter, more refined area of the marketplace. Linen awnings shade open-air workshops where craftspeople are plying their trades; a weaver works on an ornate tapestry to the left while a silversmith and expert potter flank a dim alleyway to the right. At the far end of the street is a shop with a sizable collection of marble statues.

Each of the merchants here saw Kroesus four days ago; they were, in fact, the last people to see him before he disappeared.

The Potter

The pottery shop is filled to bursting with red-and-black urns, intricately patterned bowls, and vases with heroic scenes wrapped around the sides. The potter is Keramikos (male human **commoner**) a big burly man who doesn't speak much. If the party asks, he can tell them that Lord Kroesus came to his stop, but then decided to buy a statue instead. He otherwise isn't interested in chatting.

The Weaver

The weaver is a young, effeminate man named Pani (male human **commoner**), who is working on a gorgeous tapestry as they enter—a scene depicting a battle of the gods, highlighted with gold and silver thread. He is innocent and friendly; he can tell the party that Kroesus passed by here a few days ago, talked to Keramikos, talked to Clio, and then took a shortcut through the alleyway when he left. He hasn't come back since.

The Statue-Seller

The statue shop features some of the most beautiful sculptures the party has ever seen—incredibly lifelike carvings of joyful children, birds in flight, and slender deer. The finest details, from folds in clothing to individual hairs, are all exquisitely rendered, and the white marble gleams in the sunshine.

The shop is run by a middle-aged halfling woman named Clio (female halfling **guard**). Stout, no-nonsense, and quite intelligent, Clio is an excellent saleswoman who immediately tries to establish a rapport with the party.

Unlike the other merchants on the street, Clio is a businesswoman, not an artisan. She didn't carve any of these statues herself; instead she represents Petra, who is widely renowned as the finest sculptor of the age. Petra has carved portraits of kings and statues of gods; her work decorates several temples on the isle of Syklos and beyond.

If the party asks to meet Petra, Clio will inform them that Petra does not take social calls, and won't meet with anyone unless they're willing to commission her work. If the party expresses interest in commissioning something, Clio will offer them the last appointment of the day, giving them directions to Petra's house (in the hills overlooking the city) and telling them to come at sunset.

Clio is a private person; she's not willing to speak about herself or about any aspect of Petra beyond the quality of her work. She will always attempt to redirect the conversation to the wares around her.

If they ask about Lord Kroesus, Clio will tell them that he came by a few days ago and commissioned a statue of himself and his wife. Obviously the man knows quality when he sees it—and if the richest family on the island wants one of these sculptures, perhaps the party may wish to own one as well?

If pressed, Clio will tell them that she hasn't seen Kroesus since.

The Silversmith

The silversmith is a cheerful, gossipy woman named Asimi (female human **commoner**), who is hawking mirrors, tableware, and jewelry. She will happily chat with the party about nearly anything, and is especially interested in the rumors of Lord Kroesus' infidelity.

She did see him come here a few days ago; he seemed interested in the statues Clio offered. Asimi tried to sell him some jewelry as he passed her stall to enter the alleyway, but had no luck. She suspects that he's trying to make up with his wife—a necklace or bangle is a good gift for a mistress, but a marble statue is more appropriate for a spouse. If the party mentions anything about their investigation, she will press for details—she would *love* to hear more.

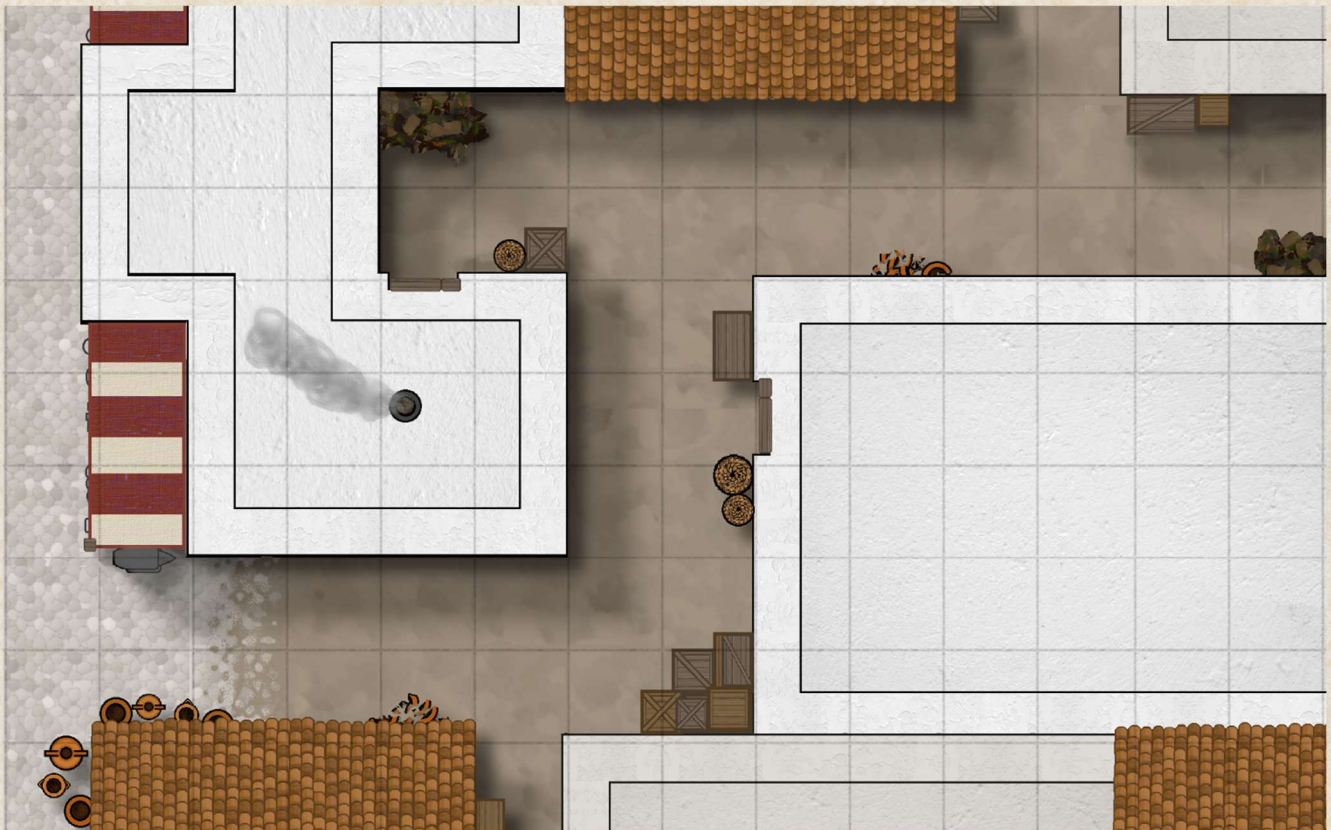
If they ask about Petra, Asimi can confirm that she's one of the most talented sculptors in the region—but she's incredibly odd. Petra is a recluse who hardly ever leaves her house, and when she does, she's wearing a full-length veil. Nobody actually knows what she looks like; Asimi's personal theory is that she's been badly disfigured.

The silversmith will admit that Clio is a skilled merchant, but thinks she's oddly protective of Petra. Asimi's suspicion is that they're not just business partners, but lovers. She finds Clio is nice enough, but closed-off and unwilling to discuss anything personal.

If they party didn't set up an appointment with Clio, and they've managed to befriend Asimi (which isn't overly difficult), she can also give them directions to Petra's house.

The Alleyway

The alleyway is dimly lit and crowded with various crates and baskets. A few shops have back entrances here, and the route appears to wind through most of the market. The ground is unpaved and slightly muddy; you catch a whiff of rotting garbage.



The entrance to the alleyway is between Asimi's smithy and Keramikos's pottery shop, although all the doors opening onto this street are locked. A DC 15 investigation check will reveal that something heavy was dragged through the mud a few days ago, and that there are small flecks of dried blood on a nearby wall.

As the party explores the alleyway, they will be confronted by a robber named Listos (male human **bandit captain**), accompanied by Id4 **thugs** (you can adjust based on the size of the party). They will demand the party hand over their purses, and will attack if they're resisted. However, the robbers aren't willing to fight to the death, and will attempt to flee if one of their members is killed or if they are all badly injured.

If they party can placate (or capture and interrogate) the robbers, they might learn that nobody saw Kroesus—although there has been a "scary-looking lady" in a dark hood lurking around here recently. Four days ago Listos heard the sounds of a struggle, then saw the hooded woman dragging away something heavy and person-sized; since then they've done their best to stay out of her way.

The Twist

By this point, the party will probably think they've solved the mystery—Petra is a medusa, and she turned Kroesus to stone. They'll be only half right. Petra IS a medusa, and Kroesus HAS been turned to stone... but Petra isn't the one responsible. Somebody is trying to frame her.

In her youth, Petra was a human woman who joined a cult worshipping Achlys, goddess of poison (although you may replace that with any suitably evil deity in your setting). During the cult's most sacred ritual, worshippers are transformed into medusas and unleashed into the world to create chaos—but Petra later grew to regret the fear and pain she was causing with her "gift". She wanted to do penance for her wrongs and longed to return to civilized society—so she blinded herself.

Ever since then, she's been working as a sculptor, using her affinity for stone and her supernatural sense of touch to create incredibly beautiful works of art. She knows that she would be feared and hated if the islanders knew there was a medusa among them, so she rarely leaves her home and is never seen in public without a veil on. Her partner Clio is the only one who knows her secret.

Unfortunately, the other members of the cult were furious at her betrayal, and decided she must be punished. Another

medusa, Agatei, has been hunting Petra for years, and has finally managed to track her down. Agatei arrived on the island about a week ago, and has been sending Petra threatening notes in order to torment her; ultimately she's planning to frame Petra for the disappearance of several islanders and bait the locals into killing her. She's been watching Clio's stall in order to accost people who commission Petra's work—Lord Kroesus was her first victim.

Petra is a neutral good female **medusa**, but one who lacks the Petrifying Gaze trait. Additionally, she suffers permanently from the Blinded condition. If attacked, she will defend herself with her snake hair, but will never initiate hostilities.

Agatei, on the other hand, is a full-fledged neutral evil **medusa**, and will probably be a formidable opponent for the party.

Petra's House

Situated on the outskirts of the city, where streets and gardens start to give way to scrublands and farmers' fields, Petra's home is a small, nondescript villa. A little courtyard and the adjoining house are completely enclosed by a stone wall, broken only by a heavy wooden gate.

If the party chose to make an appointment with Petra, Clio will be waiting at the front gate around sunset to let them in. If they did not, the gate is locked and will require a DC 18 Sleight of Hand check to open. Unfortunately for the party, the gate will creak loudly when opened, potentially tipping off anyone inside the house.

The wall is 15 feet tall and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

The Courtyard

The courtyard is filled with completed statues—much like the ones you saw in Clio's market stall. There are busts of nobility, depictions of gods and heroes, beautiful renditions of animals and monsters. All of them are eerily lifelike and perfectly still.

In addition to the statues, the courtyard is also home to a sizeable "guard dog"—a **dire wolf** that Clio acquired as a pup and raised by hand, who watches over Petra while Clio is away. He will be quite aggressive if somebody tries to

break into the compound, but is perfectly obedient to his owners; if the party is here on an appointment, Clio will keep him in check.

There is a single entrance to the house here; it has a DC 13 lock on the door.

A DC 12 Investigation check will reveal that there's a statue here that doesn't seem to match the others—on the left side of the courtyard, tucked between the rest of the sculptures, is a depiction of a man who looks significantly more afraid than the rest, his arms raised in defense and his face twisted in horror. There's a cut on his forearm and a mole on his chin—he perfectly matches the description of Lord Kroesus.

If they look at the statue more closely, a DC 15 Investigation check will reveal that there is a note clutched in his hand.

*"Petra,
Your walls and your veil and your silly excuses will never be enough. You can't hide what you really are.
-Your dearest sister"*

During an appointment to discuss a commission, Clio will ask the party to wait in the courtyard, then guide Petra out. Petra will be wearing a full-length white veil that completely conceals her face and body. She is soft-spoken and gentle, and will ask in-depth questions about what kind of sculpture the party is interested in (subject, pose,



size, et cetera), while Clio takes notes. Depending on what they ask for, she will estimate the sculpture will probably take several weeks or months to complete; she may also request a live animal or person to serve as a reference for her (since a painting or drawing obviously won't suffice). Since she is one of the most talented artists alive and marble statuary isn't cheap, the quoted cost will probably run into several hundreds or thousands of gold pieces; Clio may offer to set up a payment plan.

If asked about Lord Kroesus, Petra will say that she understands he wished to commission a portrait from her, but unfortunately he never showed up for his appointment.

If the statue of Kroesus is pointed out to Petra or Clio, they will both react with shock and fear. Clio hadn't noticed the new addition—Petra is always adding her latest works to the courtyard—and Petra (obviously) couldn't see it. They both recognize the statue as an attempt to frame Petra.

The House

Petra's house is divided in two: half is a living area, and half is her studio. A small entryway connects the rooms.

Ceilings in here are 10 feet high, and the walls and floors are made of stone.

The Studio

This artist's studio is completely filled with partially-completed statues of all shapes and sizes. The center of the room is dominated by a statue of a minotaur, half-emerging from a block of marble. Chisels, hammers, and other tools are littered around, and the smell of stone dust fills the air.

This room should make it obvious to the party that Petra is a conventional sculptor—her statues are the work of a prodigious talent, not petrification.

While Petra prefers to sculpt things life-sized, she can also create larger or smaller models as her clients request. If the party searches the room, they'll find 2d4 statuettes that are small and light enough to be carried; each one is worth about 30 gold. (Obviously, however, Petra and Clio won't appreciate being stolen from.)

Petra is working here during the daytime, without wearing her veil. The door to this room creaks loudly as well, so she'll hear anyone attempting to enter. During the night, the studio is empty.

The Apartment

The living area is small but comfortable, with embers faintly glowing in the hearth and a vase of flowers on the table. It includes a cooking area, a few cupboards, and a chaise longue; against one wall is double bed with a nightstand next to it.

Petra and Clio share this apartment. The storage cupboards are mostly unlocked, holding merely clothing and bedding—but one chest with a DC 20 lock on it contains 250 gold. Lying on the nightstand is a letter that has a cut through the center, as if it was pinned in place by a dagger.

*"Dearest sister,
Your betrayal of our kind is such an embarrassment that I was sent to put you out of everybody's misery. I could just kill you, but after learning of your laughable attempts to live a normal life among these swine, I've decided that's far too simple.
I'm going to make THEM tear you apart instead.
-Agatei"*

During the daytime this room is empty. During the night both Clio and Petra (unveiled) are asleep here. They will not take kindly to intruders.

The Final Showdown

Once the party has learned Petra's story, they'll have to confront Agatei. How and where this confrontation takes place depends on the party's choices up to this point, your personal preferences, and how quickly you want to end the session.

Option I: Seagull Cave

This option is ideal if your players end up on good terms with Petra, if they figure out the truth early on, if they want to proactively hunt Agatei down, and/or if you need to extend the length of the session.

Petra (or any player character with an excellent sense of smell) will notice that the letters Agatei has been sending smell faintly of seawater and guano. A DC 14 Nature check (or an afternoon of searching) will lead the party down the coast to a rocky cliff that's popular with nesting seabirds. At the base is a small cave, just above the waterline at high tide.



The narrow passage between the rocks opens up into a small cavern, slick with moisture and reeking of bird droppings. The light from outside barely penetrates the gloom, but you can just make out the shape of a bedroll and a knapsack on the driest part of the floor.

Something crunches underfoot, and on closer inspection you find a stone carving of a seagull. The cave is littered with easily a dozen of them.

Agatei can be found in this cave during the day, preferring to remain hidden when she isn't lurking around the market. The cavern is dimly lit (protecting her from the effects of her own gaze) and small enough that she can see the entire space at once. If she hears the party coming, she will attempt to ambush them, then fight to the death.

Option 2: Petra's House

This option is ideal if your characters haven't figured out Petra's backstory, or if they don't believe her. It also works well if they get caught breaking into Petra's house or if you need to end the session soon. Additionally, this is the best option for smaller/weaker/lower-level parties, as it offers the potential for allies to join the fight.

Agatei has been out hunting, and she's bringing another victim to plant in Petra's courtyard. She might arrive during a confrontation between Petra and the party, or interrupt their break-in. If she has reason to believe that the party knows the truth, she will immediately attack anyone who isn't Petra. (She'll also attack Petra, just not immediately—taking the opportunity to taunt her first).

If present and friendly (or at least not actively hostile) towards the party, then Petra, Clio, and/or the guard dog may fight Agatei as well. If you want to make the encounter harder, however, or if the party has attacked either of them before this point, Clio or Petra may choose to flee.

You hear footsteps approaching from the street outside, as well as the sound of something heavy being dragged. There's a loud creaking noise as the gate swings open, revealing the outline of a woman in a dark hood. She's dragging what looks like a life-size statue of a screaming man—wearing a city guard's uniform.

If the party chose to attack Petra, Agatei will arrive during the fight and conceal herself to watch what happens. (After all, islanders attacking Petra is exactly what she wanted.) If at any point the party becomes aware of the truth—because

Petra/Clio tries to plead with them, or because they find one of the threatening notes—Agatei will attack.

Option 3: Ambushing the Party

This option works if your players have completely derailed the session, if they refuse to confront Agatei, or if for some reason the other combat scenarios are no longer viable. In her attempt to frame Petra, Agatei is hunting people who have been seen to frequent Clio's stall in the marketplace. The party visited Clio's stall earlier in the day. Even without any other reason for enmity, that's enough for Agatei to try to ambush them as they go about their business.

As you head down the road, an odd silence falls—no birds sing, no insects buzz, and you realize the area is deserted. Suddenly there's a noise behind you, and you turn to see a woman wearing a dark hood step out onto the road. "Sorry, nothing personal," she says. "You were just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

With that, she sweeps back her hood, revealing a terrible pair of burning eyes.

Option 4: Ambushing Agatei

Especially astute players might realize that if Agatei regularly lurks in the alleyway at the market, then they can lie in wait for her and launch an attack on their own terms. If the party develops this idea on their own, allowing them to pursue it is excellent for player engagement; however, *pushing* them towards it is not recommended, especially if they already had a fight in that same spot with the thugs earlier.

If the party chooses to ambush Agatei here, she'll arrive around dawn—about an hour before Clio normally opens shop. Listos and his crew of lowlifes will not be present, but if the fight becomes overly loud or too much of a disturbance, it may draw unwanted attention from the public. News of a medusa on the island of Syklos will cause a panic and threaten Petra's hard-earned anonymity.

You wait in the filthy alley for what seems like forever, as the sky gradually lightens and the air begins to warm. When you think you might go mad from the silence, however, it's suddenly broken by the sound of footsteps. Farther up the alleyway, a woman in a black hood is approaching.

Conclusion

Agatei is carrying 10d4 gold, a finely crafted shortsword, and a bracelet carved from jet. Her head does not possess the power of petrification after she dies.

If Petra and Clio are still alive at the end of the adventure, they will beg the party not to reveal Petra's "condition" to anyone else on the island. If the party saved them from Agatei, Petra may choose to reward them by creating a custom sculpture for free (any sentimental value aside, it's worth quite a bit of gold).

Restoring Lord Kroesus to life will probably be beyond the abilities of the party, but they are free to remove the petrified Lord Kroesus from Petra's courtyard and may return him to his wife. Lady Kroesus will have him brought to the local temple the next day for a Greater Restoration, and is also willing to fund the restoration of any member of the party who might have been petrified during the fight with Agatei. She will, of course, pay them in full for their services.

This may not be the last that Petra hears from her fellow medusas. If the party leaves her on good terms, she might appeal to them for help again in the future—offering an excellent opportunity for you to lay new plot hooks.

Acknowledgements & Notes

Created by Robin Hill (u/Yeah-But-Ironically).

All maps and images created in GIMP, using elements from the public domain.

Thanks to Anemone, Delia, and Xenia for playtesting, proofreading, and emotional support.

Dungeons & Dragons is the property of Wizards of the Coast. Please support their work and do not engage in piracy.

Adventure template created by the Dungeon Masters Guild.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike International license. This means that you are free to use, share, and adapt this work however you wish, as long as you give appropriate credit and distribute the new work under the same license.