

The lake is large but shallow, nowhere more than knee-deep. Whether it is the echoing sound of the waterfall in the otherwise silent lagoon, or some other unfathomable thing, a faint feeling of ancient power lingers here. No life exists in these waters and although the water of the Sascasm river is drinkable and the lake is crystal clear, the atmosphere of this place doesn't quite invite its consumption, almost as if it were holy water. If legend is true, this lake works as a power source for revealing and defensive magic as long as the water keeps flowing. Whatever ancient powers are unleashed if ever the flow of the water would dry up is anyone's guess.

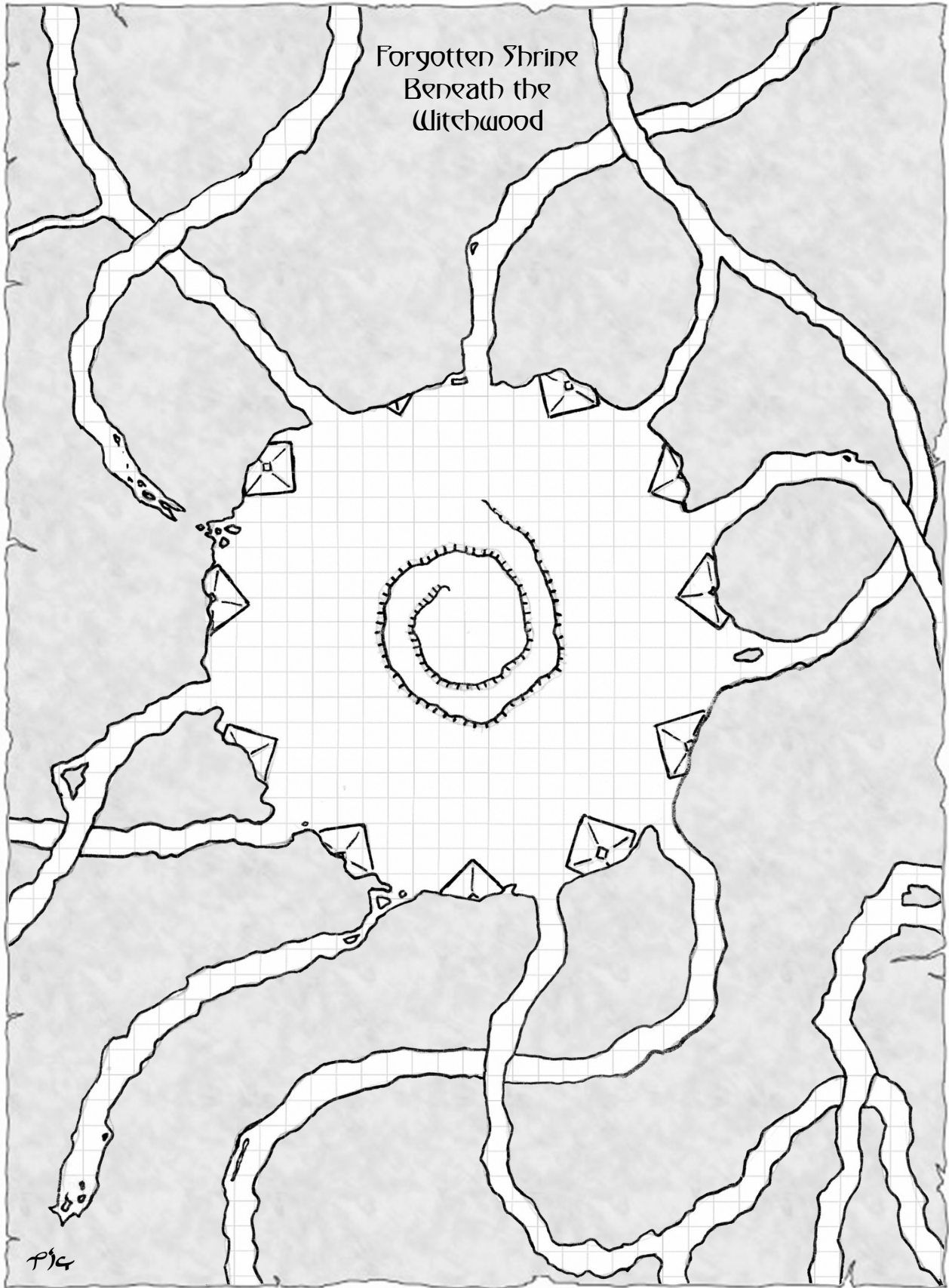
A narrow corridor guides a fast stream of excess water to another waterfall into a lake in the next cave. The grotto that is entirely filled with the deep waters of this second lake is very uneven. Light sources reflecting on stalactites, rocks in the water, and other structures in the cave walls cause many shadows that make it difficult to see where exits might be. As this lake is one of the major water sources to the rest of the Western Waterways, there are many streams out of this place. Only few are large enough all the way through to be used for travel. Some exits carry invisible markings over them that can be revealed by magic, though the meaning of these has been forgotten. Most of the marked exits can be used to reach other places. If the currents in the water are studied with care, it will become obvious that one other river, coming from the north, contributes to this lake instead of flowing away from it.

## FORGOTTEN SHRINES

From the east side of the second lake in the Dead Lagoon, several deep but narrow streams wind into the dark soil of Witchwood. The narrow passages with low ceilings and sharp bends only allow the smallest of vessels to pass. The dark, brittle and damp soil through which these streams run, gives an oppressive feeling and are no place for claustrophobes. Falling overboard is not a good idea here, for the muddy walls provide

nothing in the way of footholds, and burying the point of a boat in them risks not being able to get it loose again. The water is surprisingly cold, and grows colder as the streams get deeper into Witchwood soil, but it never freezes. Sound doesn't carry far down here. These shallow waters split many times and other streams join without any signs of where they might be heading. Towards the centre of Witchwood, there is no longer any current in the streams and the oppressive feeling becomes more intense. It's a feeling like being in a room with increased atmospheric pressure without ventilation and someone invisible is staring at you. Staying in this area for more than a few hours is enough to raise the hairs in anyone's neck. After several days, paranoia becomes a very real and overwhelming emotion.

Continuing upstream, eventually the water becomes shallower and dries up. A muddy path leads upward and becomes hard sand and finally solid rock. These paths all end at a circular room, one of a number throughout Witchwood. Large obelisk-like stones are set in the wall and are carved with strange symbols and glyphs. Each of these rooms lies directly below one of the stone circles in Witchwood and holds the same ancient magic. It is conceivable that the magic involved in a summoning ritual above resonates in this room, increasing the power of the ritual. This would explain the power of the Dhuna to wield such ancient magic to create their witchgates. Another theory is that these rooms become the actual portal that brings the summoned entities into the world before they are gated to the world above. It is better not to think about what would happen if a ritual backfired and a being from whatever dimension the Dhuna were communing with broke free and began roaming these tunnels. Otherwise, these forgotten shrines are perfect places to study ancient magic, as the glyphs and runes on the stones here are not as faded as above. These shrines are particularly sensitive to summoning magic and any summoning spell cast here benefits from a +5 bonus.



## THE THREE SISTERS

West of the Dead Lagoon lies a strange formation of smooth blue rock, called the Crying Eyes. From two large openings water falls down into another lake, named the Lake of Tears. This big, deep lake is the home of a deceptively violent species of aquatic predators, called tearfish (see Chapter 5 for more information). These slender and gracious silver and purple striped fish with large wavy fins and tails possess a strong flexible set of jaws set with a razor-sharp row of needles for teeth, that penetrate and rend leather with ease. Tearfish are hunters that innocently approach their prey, showing off as beautiful and playful animals. Then the group of tearfish attack the victim suddenly. The surface of the lake looks like it is boiling as the creatures fight to get their share of food.

Tearfish are named well, for not only do they tear apart their victims up into small enough pieces to eat, but also because they process indigestible bits into a dark red goo that they excrete from an opening just behind their eyes, as if they were shedding tears. As a consequence, the water is slightly salty and has a reddish hue. Fan-Ra-San tales claim that these fish feed on the dead of an ancient civilisation, and that the bottom of the lake is a treasure store. In fact, tearfish only live on fresh meat and refuse to eat carrion. Whatever is to be found in the depths of the lake was left by those unaware of its dangerous inhabitants.

The Lake of Tears feeds three large underground rivers, called the Three Sisters. According to a Phaedran legend, three divine—or more probably divine-looking—sisters tried to persuade a handsome hero from the north to marry one of them. At the moment the hero would have made his decision, a giant came along and bashed him on the head with his giant club so hard that only his blue skinned head remained above the ground. The three sisters sat down in shock and wept. They shed tears until they were all dried out and died, but by then these three rivers had formed.

The most northern river is the underground twin of the Weeping river, running its exact course underground. The Northern Sister, the youngest, was the golden one. Her tears mixed with the water and gave the soil its yellow colour. The river easily carved a way through the soft sandstone, bending this way and that to circumvent blocks of granite and other hard stone. Like the Weeping river, it is a narrow, fast river that can be travelled by small boats that are easily handled. As it progresses, the river dives deeper and becomes wilder. There are no banks and a trip on this river must be travelled to its end in one go. Near the mouth of the Weeping river, the Golden Sister ends in a small lake that is one violent vortex draining the water to places unknown. At the side of the lake is an artificial pier where boats can be moored. At the end of the pier, a long spiral staircase was cut out in the rock, by people long forgotten, and leads all the way up to the top of a small hill, deep in the forest.

The Middle Sister was the black one. Her tears, mixed with strong anger, went in a straight line west into the soil of the Werewood, turning the earth black. Where the anger lost its strength, near the Valley of Forgetfulness, the river suddenly splits into many smaller streams, most of which eventually spill their water into the Necros river. A few streams steer away from the Valley of Forgetfulness into the grounds below the Dread Forest. These streams take on the black colour of the rock they run through. By slowly dissolving this stone, or maybe fed by vengeful feelings of the Black Sister, the waters turn acidic and carve an ever deeper path into the rock. Any vessel or organism that stays in those waters for any length of time slowly gets eaten away. Only on well-lit nights, the Sarista dare to relate a legend that tells about dark ghosts from Khazad sailing their vessels of black mist on the Necros river. As ghosts can't cross the open sea, it is speculated that there might exist a passage below the ocean floor into Khazad. If this is true, the Black Sister would certainly be a candidate.

The Southern Sister, the oldest, was the silver one. With a calm sadness, her tears streamed south through Gnorlwood soil, where they turned west into Silvanus. Her tears give the ground its silvery grey colour and her strong will and big heart made this the largest of the three rivers finding its way through the hardest of rock. Calmly, the Silver Sister follows a low-roofed, smooth tunnel

into Silvanus without any place to stop or choose between different paths to follow. There the river ends in a hidden pool deep in the forest. The Sarista know this pool as a place of serenity and revelation, where the reflection of the moons tell about things to come, where the best water is found to make potions, and where Death won't come until Time forces it to visit there.

