

Focus on Freeport #13: Deus Ex Machina

A d20 System Freeport Adventure in three parts for four 5th to 6th level characters.,
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Part Two: Forsaken Places

In which the adventurers learn what has become of the old God of Retribution's abode.

Clerics around the city have been losing their holy symbols for the last few weeks, and various relics and worship implements have gone missing. A group of rogues and clerics in service to the Trickster God have been pulling their majority of the heists. They have very recently stolen the holy symbol of the party's cleric. The party has tracked them to the belfry of the abandoned temple to the God of Retribution.

In part two of this adventure, the PCs must wind their way through a series of traps, setbacks, and misdirections to the basement of the old temple of the God of Retribution. There they must search for a secret door which will lead them to the secret storage room where the holy symbols are being held.

Encounter 2:

The Abandoned Temple (EL 6)

Some time ago, a vengeful lord petitioned the God of Retribution's church for help in settling an old score. The high priests of the church decided that the lord's "donation" in return for their services was enough money to fund a new, larger temple to better equip and house servants of such divine calling. When the clerics left their old temple, they took most of the building's contents with them, boarding up all the windows and doors. There was some discussion about using the old temple for storage or training, but the matter was tabled in the bustle to populate and promote the new temple's location.

The clerics of the Trickster God were quick to start rumors about why the Retribution clerics left. Several different stories were spread, including tales that anyone who worshiped there would be haunted by ghosts of the unavenged, that the land underneath the temple was irreparably desecrated, and that the God of Retribution had cursed the temple and would rain down disease on any who dared enter. For good measure, the Trickster clerics staged a few "supernatural" events among the superstitious.

So, despite stern ecclesiastical proclamations to the contrary, the old building was ruined as a useful tool for the Retribution church. The Trickster clerics moved in and took it as a base of operations.

The temple itself is a gothic, dark gray two-story building with an extensive basement. The walls of the building are reinforced masonry, and roof is steeply pitched, covered with slate tile.

The iron reinforcements within the walls are too closely set for any creature larger than Tiny to squeeze through. Climbing the walls is a Climb check (DC 15), and moving across the roof requires a Balance check (DC 15). Gargoyles sit poised at each corner of the building and at regular intervals along the edges of the roof, but they are merely waterspouts, not magical beasts.

All doors and windows are tightly boarded up. Breaking through the 2 inches of wood requires a successful Strength check (DC 25). To prevent intrusion from determined vandals, the Trickster clerics have reinforced potential entries on the first floor with sheets of iron from the inside. Windows on the second floor are each guarded with a *glyph of warding*. None of the rooms are lit on the second floor. Anyone who doesn't know the layout already must bring his or her own light.

Clerics and occupants of nearby temples have reported occasionally hearing inhuman shrieks and loud crashing noises from the second floor, screeching metallic noises from the first floor, and supernatural effects at odd hours. PCs can make a Gather Information check (DC 15) to pick up this information.

Three weeks ago, two young Retribution clerics took it upon themselves to reclaim the temple for their god. They only told a few people where they were going, as they wanted to reclaim the temple for the God of Retribution's glory, and not their own. They have been missing ever since.

1. The Belfrey

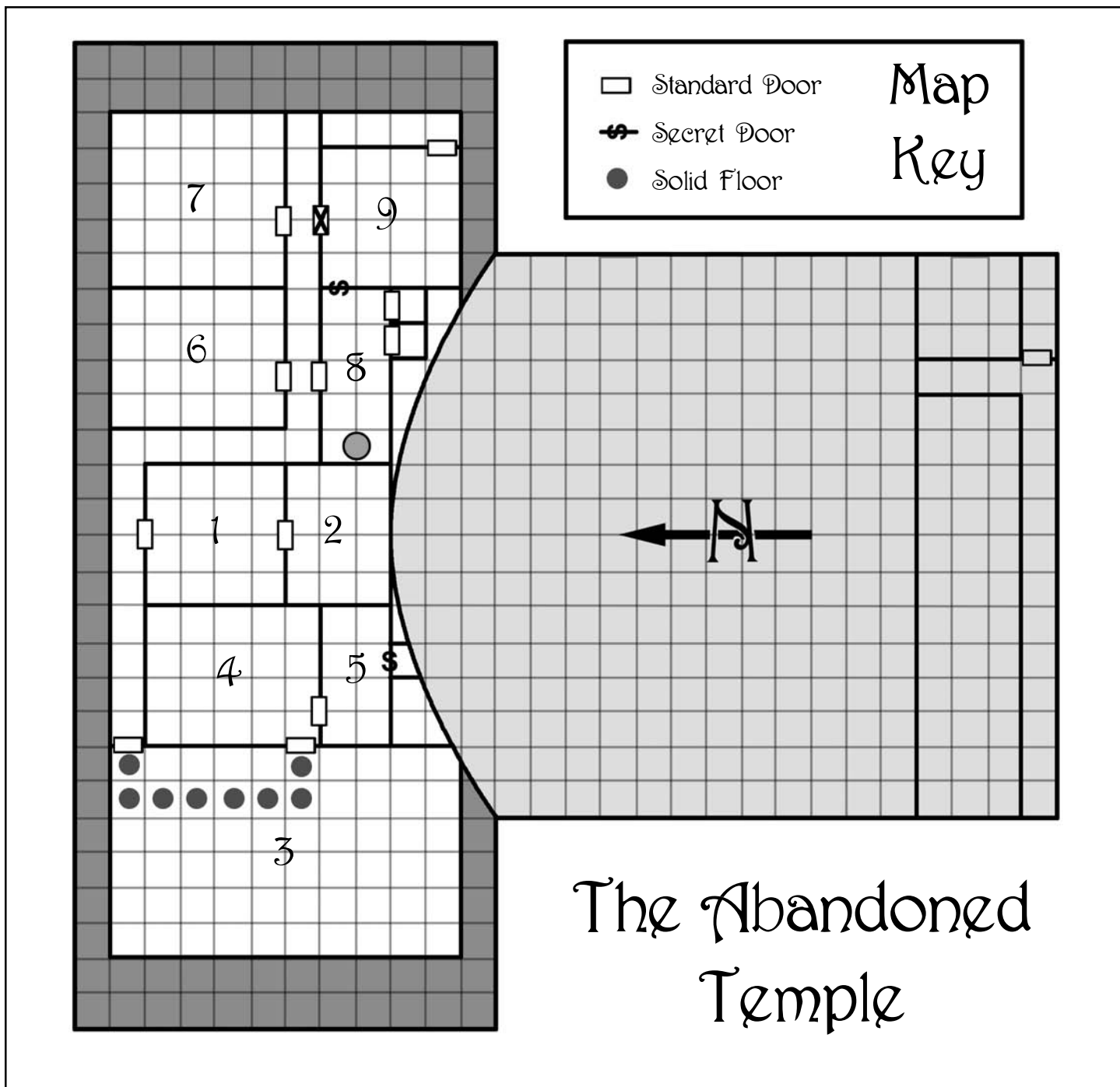
The belfrey is the easiest way into the temple. The bell was removed by the previous owners, replaced by the new occupants with a rope dropping 15 feet to the floor of the room below. The 20 foot by 20 foot room sees a lot of travel, and is not dusty at

What If They Decide It's Not Worth The Effort?

Basic holy symbols only cost 1 gold piece. The PCs might decide to just go buy another one rather than risk their necks delving into an abandoned, reportedly cursed, temple. If the characters try this, they learn that nearly every known seller or crafter of holy symbols in the city has been hit in the last day.

A successful Gather Information check (DC 10) reveals this in an hour. Without the check, the PCs must spend an entire day prying the same information from embarrassed or uptight clerics and clerical suppliers. Not all the symbols are gone, but the few remaining ones are in use, and getting them from their owners will require impressive feats of Diplomacy.

If this happens, then over the next few days they hear stories of a weird creature, like an iron golem crashing around town.



The Abandoned Temple

all, as this is the common (though inconvenient) entrance and exit for Trickster clerics who operate out of the temple.

The belfrey has an illusion cast on it, causing the room to appear turned 180 degrees from its actual orientation. Anyone attempting to leave the room by what appears to be the south door will actually be leaving by the north door, and vice versa.

2. Fungus Room (El 6)

This unlit room contains shriekers and violet fungi. The Trickster clerics threw spores in when they first took over the temple to discourage anyone who doesn't know about the illusion. One such discouraged person was one of the lost God of Retribution clerics, Brother Jalelu, who sought to learn what had happened in

the old temple. Caught in the fungal trap, his Strength became so damaged that he was rendered immobile, and could not cry out to his companion, Brother Knoxton, who had gone through the "south" door. As he lay in the dark, unaware of what even happened to him, the cries of shriekers drove him mad. In a last struggle, he killed himself to end the misery before the violet fungi ate his body. His horrible death and thirst for revenge brought him back as an allip who now lies in wait near the fungi for the ones who laid this trap to return.

Shriekers (4): hp 10, 11, 12, 12, no treasure; see *MM* page 93.

Violet Fungi (2): hp 14, 15; 100 sp, 2 flasks of holy water, 2 potions of *cure light wounds*; see *MM* page 93.

Allip (1): hp 30; no treasure; see *MM* page 16.

3. Collapsible Room (EL 3)

This empty room has been radically altered from its previous function. The floor of the entire 30 foot by 50 foot room is loose flagstones, resting precariously on wooden pillars in the area below. Only the squares with circles are safe to step on. Placing more than 40 pounds of weight on any other square causes that square and all adjacent squares (even “safe” ones) to collapse. Because of this sliding effect, the Reflex save necessary to keep from falling is higher than a normal pit trap.

Anyone in an adjacent square to someone who has triggered the trap must also make Reflex save, and this triggers the collapse of all adjacent areas around that character. The collapsing effect halts at the door, where solid construction resumes.

Anyone caught in the trap takes 1d6 points of damage from falling, and 4d6 points of damage from collapsing stones falling down. As with a cave-in, a successful Reflex save (DC 15) allows characters to take half damage from the collapsing damage. A Strength check (DC 24) is required to extricate anyone trapped within.

Simply by walking into the room, dwarves may make a Search check with their stonemasonry bonus to detect the safe and unsafe areas to step on. Others may (of their own volition) make Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Craft (stonemasonry) checks (DC 20) to spot unsafe areas.

Collapsible Floor Trap (10 Ft. Deep): CR 3; no attack roll necessary (5d6); Reflex save (DC 23) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

4. Psychological Torture Chamber

The second Retribution cleric who entered the temple, Brother Knoxton, got nearly pummeled to death by the girallon in room 6 before the Trickster clerics pulled him out. Rather than letting him go, they decided to have some “fun” with him.

The Tricksters locked him in this stuffy room in a cage with a black bag over his head. Every day, one of the clerics enters through room 5 in a devil costume with food and water. Loud noises, smoke, fire, and dramatic shadows heighten the effect as the “devil” taunts the poor cleric, assuring him that his cries go unheard by his god, and that the legions of the damned are only keeping him alive until the time of proper sacrifice comes to pass. The poor cleric is convinced that he is in some infernal region after an untimely death at the hands of a four-armed hellspawn. He has not lost faith, however, and views the PCs as deliverers sent by his god.

Brother Knoxton is weak and somewhat hysterical, but relatively healthy. He has lost all sense of time. He has been here for almost three weeks, though due to light and sleep deprivation, he believes he has been here for months. If he is returned to the Retribution church, the highest-ranking cleric wants a full account of what the PCs have seen. She then asks their help: to go back in and act as a distraction while she musters her clerics to storm the old temple and bring their god’s vengeance down on those who would do this.

The Retribution church will grant free *lesser restoration* and

cure spells to any PCs who volunteer for the task. All the PCs must do is enter the old temple again and continue what they were doing before i.e., cause trouble, bang around, and keep the occupants busy. Of course, the PCs may just want to continue on and finish the matter at hand for themselves. They are adventurers after all.

Brother Knoxton: Male human Clr1

5. Devil Prop Room

This room contains all the props the Trickster clerics use to convince Brother Knoxton that he is in an infernal realm. Two combat practice dummies wear heavy cloaks and leering “devil” masks. Heavy, four-fingered gloves rest on a table with fake pointed “tails” and “cloven-hoof” shoes. The room also contains torches, green wood to create smoke, two gongs, several sheets of metal, sticks, horns, and numerous other items designed to mimic what hell would look like by someone who had never been there.

In the southeastern corner of the room is a sliding door leading to a small crawlspace. A successful Search check (DC 15) is required to find it. (Remember that elves get a free Search check if they come within 5 feet of a hidden door.) The crawlspace leads to a rope ladder, which extends into the worship area below.

6. Girallon Room (EL 5)

The door to this room is barred and locked with a thick, heavy padlock. Interested rogues must succeed at an Open Locks check (DC 20) to get it open. A Listen check (DC 15) reveals slow, steady breathing inside the room.

Not long after claiming the temple for their own, one of the Trickster clerics found a censer the Retribution clerics left behind. Somehow, while fooling around with it, she accidentally summoned a girallon. The clerics took a beating until they managed to get a *hold* spell to take on the beast. Assuming the summoning spell would end eventually, they stuck the creature in this room to wait it out. The summoning still hasn’t ended, so they keep it fed and locked up here until they think of something better to do with it. It has become sort of a mascot for the clerics. They’ve named it “Alouicious.”

Alouicious is asleep on the far end of the room when the PCs enter. If they make any noise above a whisper, the girallon springs up and attacks in a blind fury.

Girallon (1): hp 50; no treasure; see *MM* page 104.

7. Spike Trap Room (EL 2)

This room used to be a classroom, and dusty chairs and tables still sit in disarray. There’s nothing else of interest here.

The Tricksters have set up this room specifically to harm intruders. This room is completely out of the way of any normal function. Anyone opening this door obviously doesn’t belong here. Simply opening the door triggers the trap—a large spiked grate that falls on anyone who enters the room.

When triggered, this trap also pulls a rope that rings a bell in the basement, alerting the clerics that someone has opened the

wrong door. If this happens, two cleric/rogues are dispatched to see whom the intruders are and what needs to be done about it. One moves to room 9 to keep an eye on the “front” door. The other moves to the worship area to make sure no one uses the rope ladder to let themselves down into the first floor.

Spiked Plate: CR 1; +8 melee (1d10/x2 crit); Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 20).

8. Old Prayer Room

In its previous life, the Retribution clerics would pray to their god in this small chapel. The room is now empty, though a round pedestal still sits on the west end of the room where an icon or some other object of worship used to rest. In the south end of the room, two small cubicles are partitioned off. These used to be private conference rooms for the faithful to meet with a cleric for advice or penance. One Trickster cleric now uses the westernmost one as a personal stash. He keeps 50 gp in a rough sack underneath a bench.

The rest of the Trickster clerics mainly use this room as a hallway. Though a secret door is not strictly necessary, doing things in a straightforward way is never a Trickster cleric’s first choice. The Search check required to find this door is DC 18.

9. Meeting Room

The door on the north end of this room has been nailed shut. A Strength check (DC 23) is required to force it open. The door in the southeastern corner leads to the staircase going down to the first floor.

This room used to be a meeting room for worshipers of the God of Retribution. Now it’s used as a largish cloak room for the Trickster clerics. Coats, cloaks, boots, and wet-weather gear line the walls. If the PCs triggered the trap and alarm in room 7, Temmel, one of the halfling rogue/clerics, moves at full speed to get here and hide inside a heavy human coat. Temmel can make it from the basement to the room in eight rounds, and must take an ninth round to hide properly. If the PCs get to this room before he does, he hides under the stairs.

If the PCs enter the room just as he is hiding on the ninth round, he quickly drinks his *potion of invisibility*, runs through the door, and slams it behind him. He knows he can’t outrun anyone Medium-size or larger, so instead of running downstairs, he waits silently on the landing in the space behind where the door swings open (the door swings out onto the landing).

If all his tricks fail him and he gets caught, Temmel promises to trade information for his freedom. He will

tell the PCs any of the following information if they so much as move their eyebrows menacingly.

- The holy symbols are downstairs in the basement. They’re being used in some kind of ritual.
- The stairs to the basement are on the west end of the first floor.
- To avoid any more problems, turn left at the bottom of the stairs, go through the door on the right, go through the small room, go straight across the large room, and the stairs will be nearby.

He will also tell them anything else he thinks they want to hear. All of these things are perfectly true, but he says them so quickly, and with a nervous tic. Even when telling the truth, Temmel looks like he’s lying. PCs may make an opposed Sense Motive check against Temmel’s Bluff to figure out what’s true and what isn’t.

Down the Stairs

Somehow, the PCs will eventually find their way to the first floor, by walking, climbing, or falling. The next level down is theoretically more lived in, and less prone to traps. But the tricks get much worse in Part Three of *Deus Ex Machina* — especially when the opponents know you’re coming....

Statistics for Part Two

Temmel

Male halfling Rog3/Clr1; CR 4; Small humanoid; hp 21; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atk +3 melee (1d4, +1 dagger); SA Sneak attack, rebuke undead; SQ Halfling qualities; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Climb +6, Escape Artist +9, Hide +14, Jump +6, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +9, Pick Pocket +9, Sense Motive +6; Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: leather armor, thieves’ tools, +1 dagger, *potion of invisibility*, 40 gp

Description: Temmel is weaselly and thinks largely of his own profit and well-being.

Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *light* (2); 1st—*entropic shield**, *sanctuary*.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Luck (good fortune); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).



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