

FORGOTTEN TEMPLE OF ATEUS



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Adventure Primer

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RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run this adventure, you need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

The core 5th Edition monster book contains stat blocks for most of the creatures found in this adventure.

Monster stat blocks created specifically for this adventure will be included at the end. When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block in the core monster book. If the monster is not included in the core monster book, it will be included in the appendices of the adventure.

Adjusting Encounters

This adventure contains advice for adjusting encounters based on the number of characters in the party. You are empowered to modify the number of enemies in an encounter and their hit point totals as you see fit. If you need to adjust the difficulty of an encounter during combat, you can alter hit point totals without the player characters ever knowing and have enemies retreat or reinforcements arrive as needed.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this adventure:

hp	hit points				
AC	Armor Class				
DC	D <mark>ifficulty</mark> Class				
XP	experience points				
pp	platinum piece(s)				
gp	gold piece(s)				
ер	electrum piece(s)				
sp	silver piece(s)				
ср	copper piece(s)				
NPC	nonplayer character				
LG	Lawful Good				
NG	Neutral Good				
LN	Lawful Neutral				
N	Neutral				
CN	Chaotic Neutral				
LE	Lawful Evil				
CE	Chaotic Evil				
NE	Neutral Evil				



Forgotten Temple of Ateus

Forgotten Temple of Ateus is a Fifth Edition adventure for three to seven characters, optimized for a party of five characters of 9th level.

This adventure details the ruins of the forgotten temple of Ateus where one of the four pieces of the staff of Harkhem is hidden.

This adventure is part of DMDave's Desert of Desolation adventure path. If you are running this adventure independently, consider switching out the piece of the staff of Harkhem for a different magical item or plot token.

BACKGROUND

The temple of Ateus is an abandoned temple carved out of the side of a mountain. Its stewards were druidic acolytes and priests. A piece of the staff of Harkhem was brought to them for safeguarding; however, shortly after the piece was sealed a group of shadowswords arrived and killed everybody in the temple. The couatl, Ateus, both servant and honored of the temple, was left to her own devices after the shadowswords left.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

It's recommended that you read and understand the following information before running this chapter.

Shadowswords

When the characters gather two of the three keys required to retrieve the piece of Harkhem's staff kept here, two **shadowswords** (see Appendix) arrive at the temple and begin hunting down the characters with the intent to take the keys, by force if necessary.

Additionally, there are six dead bodies belonging to acolytes and priests and one dead body belonging to a high priest scattered throughout the temple. They were killed by shadowswords that raided the temple long ago. If the characters use the speak with dead spell or similar magic to try and gather information from the dead, they might be able to learn about what killed the inhabitants before the shadowswords arrive.

The acolytes and priests know the following:

- They were killed by robed figures with morphing faces.
- The robed figures arrived shortly after the piece of Harkhem's staff was brought to the temple.

Staff of Harkhem

The piece of Harkhem's staff kept in this temple is sealed behind a magical barrier which can only be opened by using three keys that can be found throughout the temple. There are four potential keys, which can be found in the following locations:

- Washroom, area 7
- Breakroom, area 8
- Weapons Vault, area 11
- High Priest's Quarters, area 19

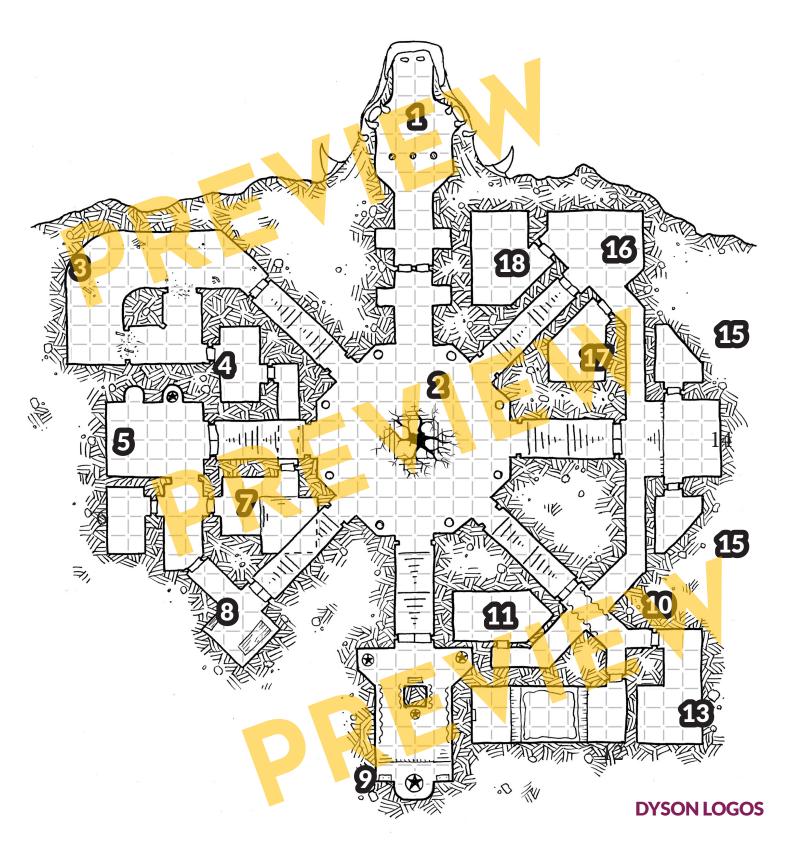
The piece of the staff itself is kept in the sacristy (area 9).

Ateus the Couatl

The temple is protected by a couatl named Ateus who lives in a large cactus at the temple center (area 2). She uses scrying, dream, and telepathy to communicate with creatures in the temple. She avoids detection with a combination of her shapechange and shielded mind features.

She has a divine mandate to protect the temple and its inhabitants. However, the only inhabitants left in the temple are beasts and objects. It's been decades since Ateus last received a visitor and her time in isolation has exaggerated her peculiarities. She's prone to predictions of doom, each more elaborate and grandiose than the last, which she inflicts on creatures that don't belong in the temple through dreams and telepathic messages. She enjoys coming up with terrifying stories about whatever intruders are currently interacting with.

She has little care for the piece of the staff of Harkhem that's kept in the temple because it gives her "bad vibes"; much to her chagrin, she can't simply throw it from the mountainside.





FORGOTTEN TEMPLE OF ATEUS

The following locations are keyed to the provided map of the Temple of Ateus.

General Features

Unless otherwise noted, locations in the Forgotten Temple of Ateus have the following features.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The temple is carved out of a mountain. The halls and rooms have 10-foot ceilings, and the walls are 5 feet thick.

Doors. All of the temple's doors are 2 feet thick, 4 feet wide, and 6 feet tall. They have AC 17, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Except where otherwise noted, all of the doors are unlocked.

A locked door can be forced open by succeeding on a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. A creature that is proficient with thieves' tools can pick a locked door with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

Lighting. The forgotten temple is void of light.

Sleeping Mold. The mold in this room produces an odorless gas that causes asphyxia and death. A patch of sleeping mold typically covers a 10-foot square and produces gas that fills a 20-foot-radius area.

At the end of each minute that a creature spends in this room, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking on level of exhaustion on a failure. Additionally, a creature that fails by 5 or more falls unconscious. Another creature can use an action to wake up an unconscious creature.

When fire is used within the 20-foot radius, the gas combusts. Each creature within a 20-foot radius of the mold must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (5d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire spreads around corners. It ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried, including the mold.

Webs. The temple is draped in spiderwebs, which make the entire dungeon difficult terrain. A 5-foot patch of web can be burned away by a source of fire.



1 - Dragon's Maw

The entrance to the temple of Ateus is carved out of the mountain in the visage of a massive dragon's head, its agape mouth curled into a nasty snarl. Exposure to the elements has smoothed over many of the carving's intricacies, such as the spikes, teeth, and scales. Inside, the floor of the dragon's maw is carved in the shape of a grooved tongue and the walls of the throat are decorated with an expansive mural. Lizards sit calmly all over the walls and floor, staring absentmindedly.

Encounter: Ateus. Ateus (couatl in area 2) has a series of webs that alert her when Small or larger creatures walk past the three pillars at the entrance. Ateus responds by casting scrying on the entrance to inspect the new arrivals.

Creatures that get within 50 feet of the doors leading into the garden (area 2) are within Ateus's telepathic range. Ateus adopts the persona of the lizards (see "Lizards" below) as she interacts with new arrivals, using the scrying sensor to respond appropriately.

Lizards. As creatures proceed into the dragon's maw, dozens of lizards skitter away from the floor and clamber up the walls. A creature can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) to interact with the lizards, handling the lizards safely on a success, or taking 5 piercing damage as multiple lizards bite them on a failure. On a success by 5 or more, several of the lizards begin following the creature as long as they are within the temple.

Doors. When they're pushed open, the two wooden doors barring entrance to the sanctuary (**area 2**) groan as they scrape against the ground.

2 - Garden

Natural light cascades through gaps in the ceiling, casting a soft light on the 40-foot-diameter, tree-like cactus that dominates the center of this octagonal room that's coated in a blanket of plant life. Excluding the temple's entrance to the north, staircases extrude outward from the perimeter walls, descending into the dark. Despite the crumbling infrastructure and stagnant water accumulated on the ground, the air smells sweet and warm.

Encounter: Ateus the Couatl. Ateus the **couatl** is disguised as a **spider**, either in the dragon cactus or on the ceiling. Ateus does her best to stay clear of any creatures that enter the chamber.

Dragon Cactus. The gargantuan, treesized cactus at the heart of the sanctuary is a magical hylocereus, or dragon cactus, which bears dragonfruit. It has AC 19, 150 hit points, and immunity to psychic damage. The fruit dragons are dormant, awakening only if plucked from their resting place on the cactus.

Plants. The walls and floor of this chamber are coated in a thick blanket of vegetation, providing enough sustenance to keep the temple's creatures well-fed each day. While the characters stay in the temple, they do not require rations.



3 - Dining Room

This 80-foot-wide chamber has a large stone column at its center. The remains of broken and decayed wooden doors mark where the room was divided along the east and south faces of the stone column. Overturned tables, broken chairs, and dented copper plates litter the northwest half of the room, while broken shelves and dented cookware litter the southeast half. Lazily draped over the rubble are several giant lizards.

The first time the characters enter or exit through the doorway connecting to the garden (area 2), Ateus offers this unsolicited commentary telepathically:

Beware the great scaly beasts of burden! Their appetite is as great as their size! Surely, they will consume the entire plane, if let free!

Giant Lizards. There are five **giant lizards** in this room. They are fairly well-fed by the garden and enjoy basking in the temple's warmth.

4 - Pantry

Bare shelves line the walls of this room, which once held drinks and dried food for the temple's inhabitants.

Encounter: Giant Lizard. There is one **giant lizard** in this room with its tongue on the wall. When a creature enters the room, the lizard turns toward them, tongue still stuck out. A creature that inspects the wall near the lizard finds nothing of note.

East Door. This door is locked.

5 - Dormitory

The floor of the room is littered with the remains of a broken couch, shattered tables, and other detritus befitting a dormitory. Across from the mess, arranged along the western wall, are three sets of bunkbeds with trunks at their feet.

The first time the characters enter or exit through the doorway connecting to the garden (area 2), Ateus offers this unsolicited commentary telepathically:

Do you fear decay? It consumes and grows, and you cannot kill it in any way that matters!

Bunk Beds. There are three skeletons belonging to long-dead acolytes laying on the beds. Their bones are damaged in ways consistent with scimitars. A creature that succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check also notices necrosis around the slashing marks, reminiscent of the damage **shadowswords** deal.

Trunks. Each trunk contains 4d10 sp and a pair of tattered robes. One of the trunks contains a bottle of ale rolled up in the robe.

6 - Storage Room

This room is filled with buckets, crates, brooms, and other supplies. There is nothing else of value here.



7 - Washroom

This warm, damp room has several large growths of chunky, white-and-yellow mold along the north wall where bench toilets are fixed to the floor and in the dry basin where people once bathed. The skeletal forearm of a body is visible beneath a mound of mold in the southeast corner of the room.

North Door. This door is locked.

Hazard: Sleeping Mold. See "Sleeping Mold" in "General Features."

Priest's Body. The skeleton is wearing a golden bracelet worth 25 gp on its forearm, which can be taken without any trouble. It takes 3 minutes to dig the body out of the mold (see "Hazard: Sleeping Mold" above) unless the mold has been destroyed. The skeleton is wearing an amulet with an obsidian shard suspended in a metal ring—one of the keys to retrieving the staff of Harkhem.

8 - Breakroom

The skeletal remains of a giant lizard lie amid a wreckage of tables and chairs.

Giant Lizard Remains. The giant lizard skeleton bears sword wounds. A creature that succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check also notices necrosis around the slashing marks, reminiscent of the damage shadowswords deal. A necklace near the lizard's neck lies on the ground. It has an obsidian shard suspended in a metal ring—one of the keys to retrieving the staff of Harkhem.

9 - Sacristy

The walls, floors, and ceiling of this room is suffocated by a thick layer of vines, flowers, and roots that coalesce in a large column at the southernmost point of the room.

The first time the characters enter or exit this room, Ateus offers this unsolicited commentary telepathically:

A very angry stick lies within! The angry stick will be the death of us all!

Piece of the Staff of Harkhem. The staff is enclosed in a twisting cylindrical mass of vines that reach from the floor to the ceiling at the southernmost point of the room where an altar once stood. The cylindrical vines sealing the staff are magical and can only be forcibly removed by a wish spell. There are three vacant circular reliefs embedded around the perimeter of the vines.

When three of the gemstone keys are placed in the reliefs, the magical vines recede into the gemstones, which become non-magical objects worth 50 gp each.

10 - Hall Junction

Two heavy curtains obscure the northeast and southwest halls, guiding people toward the training pit (area 12) and kennel (area 13).

11 - Weapons Vault

This room once held a wide array of weapons; however, the racks are now torn apart, and the metal parts of the weapons are missing. Four large, beetle-like creatures are dormant on the floor.

Encounter: Dormant Rust Monsters.

There are four **rust monsters** hibernating in this room. They awaken if a creature wearing metal enters the room and attempt to consume the metal, whether it's worn or not. A metal chain is hanging from one of the rust monster's mouths.

The rust monster with the chain hanging from its jaw ate one of the keys required to access the piece of Harkhem's staff in the sacristy (area 9), which is now stuck inside of its body. To acquire the key, the characters can either kill the rust monster and dissect it or they can feed it metal that's been coated in a poison to induce vomiting. The amulet is an obsidian shard suspended in a metal ring.

12 - Training Pit

This room is divided by a 10-foot-deep pit lined by wooden planks that functions as a fighting ring for training. There is one **animated armor** in the pit and three more stationed along the far west wall, each with a number carved into their chest plates.

Animated Armors. The animated armors are inactive unless identified by number and issued a specific verbal command:

- "Present." The animated armor enters the fighting pit.
- "Retreat." The animated armor exits the fighting pit.
- "Fight." If the animated armor is in the fighting pit, it begins sparring.

A creature can use the *identify* spell or spend 1 hour meditating with the animated armors to learn their command phrases.

13 - Kennel

This southern half of this room is locked behind metal bars, accessible through two sets of broken metal gates. Rotting saddles and old brass food bowls indicate that it once held animals of some kind.

Saddles. A creature proficient in Animal Handling recognizes that the saddle straps are reinforced on the inside, protecting them from being torn by large scales, indicating that they were worn by lizards or another scaly creature.

14 - Stage

A wide staircase ascends 5 feet up to an elevated platform where several old pillows are set out.

Mats. When a creature walks onto the stage, rats scurry out of the hollowed pillows and scamper away.

15 - Supply Closet

This room is filled with chairs, rotting pillows, and floor mats. There is nothing else of value.



16 - Library

Broken tables and chairs, eaten away by termites litter the floor of this small library. The room's shelves are thick with a chunky, white-and-yellow mold.

The first time the characters enter or exit through the doorway connecting to the garden (area 2), Ateus offers this unsolicited commentary telepathically:

Beware the memories of the dead! Their knowledge brought their demise!

Hazard: Sleeping Mold. See "Sleeping Mold" in "General Features."

Trap: Warded Shelves. The bookshelves are warded to prevent unworthy creatures from taking books. When a creature with a Wisdom score of 15 or lower attempts to take a book, they take 2 (1d4) psychic damage and must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, becoming stunned for one minute on a failed save, or becoming incapacitated for one minute on a success.

Books and Scrolls. Many of the books and scrolls crumble to dust when touched, and those that don't are rendered illegible by mold.

17 - Couatl's Quarters

Every surface of this once-opulent room is upholstered with rotting velvet and silk.

Treasure: Offerings. There is 200 gp worth of vases, figurines, and other art objects placed around the room.

18 - High Priest's Quarters

This bare-bones room has a modestlysized bed, desk, wardrobe, and a skeleton laying in the remains of a broken chair.

Wardrobe. Inside the wardrobe are several vestments, martial outfits, and common clothes. Set on a shelf is a small mahogany puzzle box with gold-leaf accents. The box has AC 15 and 5 hit points. A creature can open the puzzle box with a successful DC 15 Intelligence check. Inside of the box is an amulet with an obsidian shard suspended in a metal ring—one of the keys to retrieving the staff of Harkhem.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

By the time the characters finish exploring the forgotten temple of Ateus, they should have encountered the shadowswords again and recovered the piece of Harkhem's staff kept here.

Appendix

SHADOWSWORD

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor) Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64) Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +8

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +6, Perception +3, Stealth

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned, exhaustion

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Hive Mind. All Shadowsword within 50 miles of one another constantly communicate with each other. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If a Shadowsword is reduced to 30 hp or less, it becomes mindless (Intelligence 0) and loses its innate spellcaster ability. At 0 hp, it bursts into shadowy threads and must spend months in the shadows reforming.

Innate Spellcasting. The Shadowsword's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: Chill Touch 3/day: Animate Dead

Memory Loss. A creature that sees or interacts with a Shadowsword must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw 1 minute after the Shadowsword leaves. On a failure, the details of the Shadowsword and the events surrounding its appearance rapidly fade from the creature's mind, including the presence of the Shadowsword.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the Shadowsword has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The Shadowsword makes two Cursed Scimitar attacks.

Cursed Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) slashing damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and the target must make a DC 14 Intelligence save or suffer the effects of Memory Drain.

Memory Drain. The Shadowsword drains memories from an adult creature within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage and its Intelligence score is reduced by 1d4. On a success, the target takes half the damage and its Intelligence score isn't reduced.



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