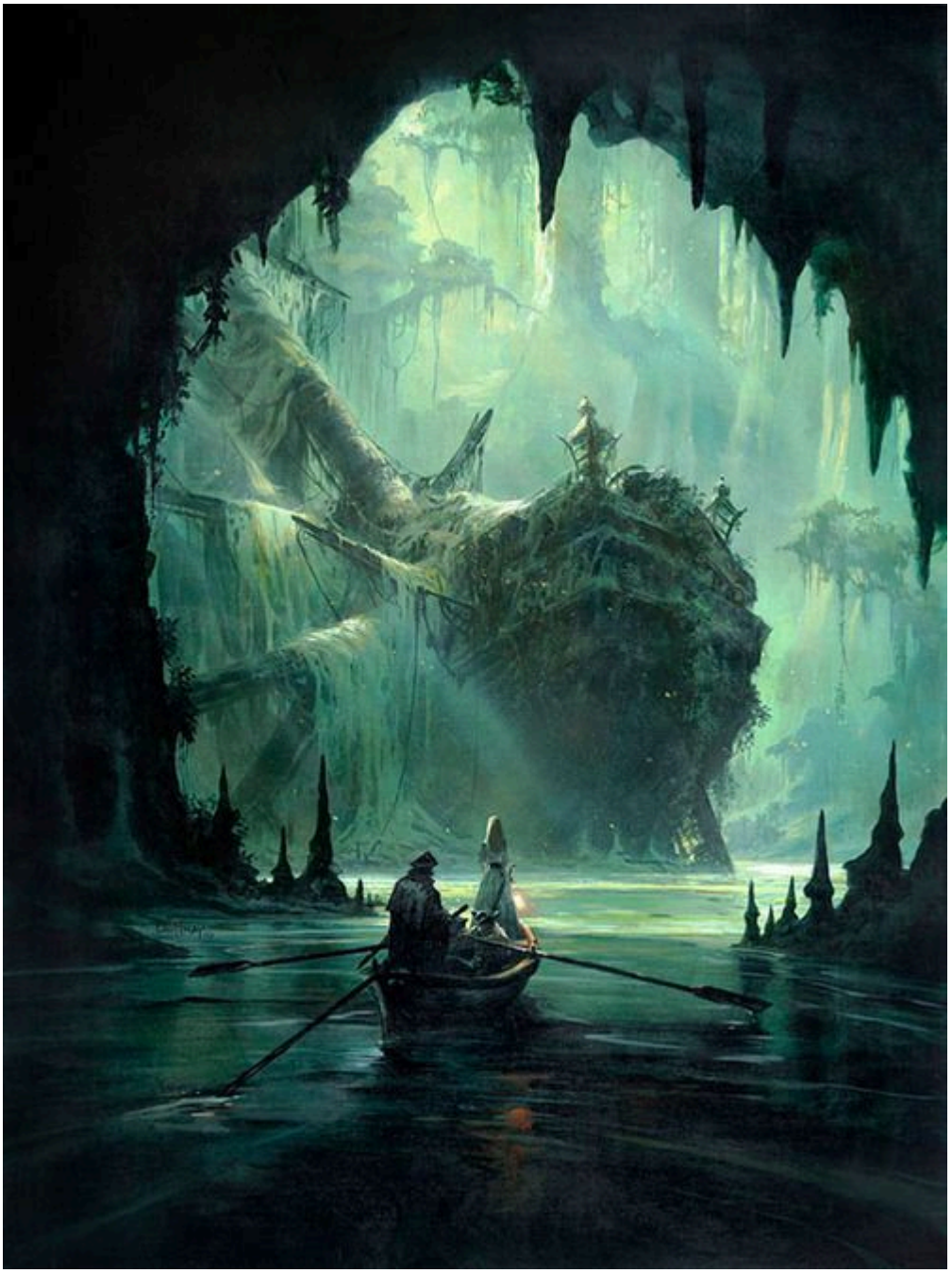
The Wraith Caverns

This dungeon was discovered through rumors of a cursed well on a hill seemingly in the middle of nowhere. It is said that moans and voices can be heard echoing from deep below and none of the nearby villages dare draw water from there, afraid of what might come out. This well leads to a massive underground lake filled with various sea creatures, however most of these are not too dangerous as they are not very intelligent. The drop from the entrance is quite high, however there is water below, about torso deep. It is pitch black in the cavern and only those with darkvision would be able to see the ceiling roughly 40 feet above covered in stalactites.



Where the well is located is more of a side cavern with only one way to go, and that is to the mouth of a cave that opens up to the sight of a large sea ship covered in algae, marooned on a rocky outcropping at the edge of a massive underground lake. The ship was once, perhaps a few decades ago, a pirate's one, however, over time no signs to indicate it as one were left aside from a few treasures inside - oh, and the ghostly pirate captain looming over the railings with a grin on his shaggy face. He would invite any passerbys onto his once proud vessel, and offer them a deal: kill the knights and destroy their temple to receive all the treasures that can be found on the ship. Should the deal be refused, the captain and his unholy crew will proceed to kill the guests. Should they accept and ask the captain why he wants them to kill these so called knights, he glady tells them. He and his crew had been imprisoned in this cave after stealing from some sort of sorcerer and he believes that whatever is keeping their spirits trapped in here is inside the temple they guard.



Around the edge of the lake there are rocky outcroppings that can be traversed pretty easily as long as one has a light. However, having one is not always the best idea as it might attract unwanted attention. On the far side of the lake a ruined, old temple can be seen, but it definitely is not abandoned. Full plate suits of armor can be seen guarding the entrance, unmoving yet watching. The armor itself is gleaming in golden colors, adorned more for a ritualistic purpose than for combat. They don't engage you but neither do they let you get close to the temple.

Dungeon Start

The players start at the well, which is very old and weathered away. There is no bucket and nothing of value to be found here. They can potentially hear faint moaning if they roll high enough on perception but even then it might just be their imagination. The well is about 110 ft deep, so the players will need a lot of rope to get down safely. If they do not have enough, they can go to the nearest village to get some, which would take around 2 hours for a round trip. If they question the villagers about the well, they would know nothing about it as it is too far away to be used and thought to be haunted. When descending into the well, they safely get to the bottom without rolls as long as they go one by one and aren't too heavy. Gear can be dropped down and will fall in water. If anyone has an arcana proficiency, let them make a check of dc 16. If they succeed, they will feel as if they just passed through something but can not feel it again anymore. The inside of the cave is dark and moist with water also being torso high where they enter. It is difficult terrain and short players have to pretty much swim. This area is a cave that leads into the underground lake. The sides of the cave have dry land when nearing the lake.

1st Encounter

The players will need to get out of he water quickly here as they are infested with leeches. Roughly every minute spent in the water causes 1 leech to attach themselves onto a player. Each leech will periodically do 1 damage (ignoring soak) but they can be taken off using an action or bonus action. If they are outside of water no roll is required, however in water it would be a sleight of hand roll of dc 14 at disadvantage. Those wearing heavy armor can not take the leeches off while wearing the armor, as the leeches are under it. If there are any remaining leeches after using their actions to remove them, they deal their damage. A leech falls off after it has dealt 4 damage. The first person down the well will need to get to land quickly, as they will get swarmed by leeches if they wait for the entire party to come down.

2nd Encounter

After exiting the cave and reaching the main area of the underground lake, the first thing that greets the players will be a ship that is pretty much unrecognizable, however it is a pirate ship. Captain Salton Fletcher would greet the players from atop the ship and ask them to come aboard. If they decide not to the pirates will do nothing, however they will be more mistrusting should they return later. If the players

get onto the ship, the captain will offer them a reward for killing the knights. If they refuse, he will get desperate and offer them everything they can find on the ship (which is actually not much as most of it is also ethereal). If the players still refuse or attack the pirates in any way, they will retaliate. The captain will not fight against the players in the first encounter, letting his men do it. The pirate crew all use the specter stat blocks, adjusted as needed for difficulty, with the first mate being a poltergeist with a few levels as a swashbuckler rogue. The poltergeist will attempt to push people off the ship. The captain will walk down to his quarters disappointed. He will wait for the players there with all the treasures on the ship. If they ask him questions after either accepting his deal or beating his crew, he will talk freely.
(A generic ship deck can be used for this encounter such as this)

Captain Salton Fletcher

The captain and his crew had once many decades ago stolen a treasure from what they now believe was a powerful sorcerer. They did not know what it was they stole or from whom, just that it looked to be worth a pretty penny. Not too long after, the entire crew along with the ship were teleported into the underground lake where they are now located. He believes that the ghostly knights on the other side of the lake are protecting whatever is holding their spirits trapped, however the pirates can not go onto dry land and are thus stuck. After talking, he will fight the players if they came into his quarters. The captain is a boss fight, using the ghost stat block along with some levels in swashbuckler rogue. He is accompanied by a few more crew members (specters) who appear behind the party. The captain will periodically attempt to possess party members, prioritizing tanks. Sneak attack can still be used in this manner along with his other rogue features. The captain also possesses a hidden matchlock pistol which he will start using. (The exact difficulty to be adjusted by the dm based on the party strength, including escalation effects. Escalation 6 can potentially be an instant reset to his possession ability.) As he is dying/about to disappear he thanks the players (for freeing him and his crew).

3rd Encounter

Travelling along the lake's shore can be dangerous and have random encounters, especially if the party is moving carelessly or with a light source. Water weirds, piercers, gricks, or even a chuul can be found in this underground lake, along with various other non-humanoid sea creatures. The first of these will happen as they make their way to the temple the ghostly knights are protecting, and any other time the dm judges as appropriate while the party is travelling out in the open.

4th Encounter

This is where the players meet the knights after arriving at the temple. The temple itself is incredibly old and is seemingly made of the same stone as the surroundings. While the knights will not allow any outsiders into the temple, inside there are various murals which do not look as old as the temple itself, but are still a few centuries old. More on this in the temple section later. The knights appear to be only armor, however they are still spirits. They are more like echoes of their former selves, existing only for the purpose they had come down here for; protecting the temple from outsiders and overseeing the trial of the hydra. Only their captain, who has forgotten both his own name and the name of their order, can speak. Even then he is very limited and simple minded. He will tell the players “Begone, outsiders” unless there is a paladin in the party or someone who looks the part (half or full plate armor for example) or someone tries to convince him that they are not outsiders (once again the captain is very simple minded). If so, he will then ask the players if they are here for the trial and direct them towards the hydra’s lair/prison. The knights will not start a fight unless the players try to get into the temple or attack them.

Knight’s Captain

Boss fight
The knights use the phantom warrior stat block with the captain himself having possibly better equipment as well as levels in the champion fighter class archetype (once again the exact numbers would vary depending on the level of the party). Escalation 6 could cause the captain to do a whirlwind attack around him, hitting all within 5ft of him. The phantom warriors will be tough to kill as they are resistant to physical attacks and have high ac due to the armor. Could give them each varying weapons to make them each more unique with a different threat (a tank with a shield, an archer, one with a two handed weapon). The captain wields a heavy scimitar. Killing the knights causes the armor to turn into old, weathered and rusted pieces of junk (used to be full plate). There is no treasure to be found from killing them.

5th Encounter

The 5th encounter is in narrow tunnels that lead to the hydra's lair/prison. It is a direct path to the hydra with no turns. As the players are passing through here, they will be ambushed by shadows, created from those who came to attempt the trial and failed. While these are relatively weak on their own (only ½ CR), they can be dangerous in a group as they drain strength. It is not a deadly encounter as there is a hydra battle right after and no chance to rest here. If the party attempts to rest, have more shadows show up. Same if they leave and come back. The shadows will not appear after the party has faced the hydra (even if they dont kill it). There should be one shadow per party member, possibly more if the party is breezing through everything else. It is very much possible this will be only the 2nd fight the party encounters at this point if they do not engage the pirates or the knights.

Hydra

Boss fight
While this is a boss fight, the hydra is stuck in its room so the party can run away at any point. If they do so, the hydra will recover back to its original state of 5 head (or more). Since the goal of the party is to simply bring back one of its heads, they do not need to kill the hydra. However, valuable loot should be placed here that can only be gotten if they slay it. This loot would be from all the past trial attempts that have failed. If the party decides to simply take a head back, make it drop right in front of the hydra, take a strength check to lift it up (taking up their action and allowing the hydra to take an opportunity attack as it is a vulnerable action to pick something up), and have the hydra take another opportunity attack if they back off with the head. This will provide some more challenge to the players if they simply try to grab a head. The shadows just before this encounter can make it even harder because of their strength drain. Escalation can potentially increase the number of heads the hydra has, possibly even recovering any cauterized heads at escalation 6. It will also focus on anyone that has a fire. The room is long and narrow, shaped roughly like this where the loot is behind the hydra.

Tl;dr
Optional boss that lets the party avoid confrontation with the knights and has lots of loot if killed. Can be attempted again but will essentially 'reset'.

Temple

Newer murals depict the trials of the knights where it can be learnt that it is a trial of initiation for them into their order. Underneath these murals are even older ones which can be discovered as the murals of the knights' trial are newer than the rest of the temple. The original ones show that the entire caverns are a prison for a massive kraken and it kept in there with the power of a large prismere crystal which uses the kraken's own power to sustain itself. Underneath the temple is a path to the prismere crystal which can be found from a slight hollow sound on the floor of the temple. It can either be excavated or opened up using an alternative method such as a hidden switch which would be really difficult to find.

Maze

From the temple to the final chamber, the halls/maze can be filled with various traps, however there shouldn't be any creatures in here aside from possibly shadows.

Guardians

Boss fight
Two spectators guard the final room and the crystal within which is imprisoning everything in the caverns. If they destroy the crystal (it is embedded into the wall and can't be taken out) all the spirits will disappear. The spectators attack anything and everything that comes into the final chamber. They can be seen arguing/bickering if they do not spot the party.

Kraken

Final boss
Kraken which was sleeping at the bottom of the lake wakes up and confronts the adventurers the moment they come out of the temple. It uses the malformed kraken stat block. If undefeated it will escape into the world and become a regular kraken once it reaches the ocean.

Additional Notes

A list of characteristics and information about the dungeon that the players can potentially discover

- While everything can still feel hunger and thirst inside the dungeon, nothing can die of either. This is caused by the imprisonment gem.
- The gem draws its power from the kraken, causing it to be severely weakened (as such it is a malformed kraken rather than a regular one)
- The kraken will eventually regain its full strength if the gem gets destroyed. It will then escape the underground lake by tearing a massive hole in the ceiling.
- This dungeon was originally a prison for the kraken, and due to that nature kept on capturing various other life forms such as the hydra over many years, even though the gem does not directly prevent them from leaving like it does with the kraken and the spirits.
- Any player that dies in this dungeon will eventually return as a spirit, much like the pirates and knights.
- The knights were trapped in the cave by a cave in. They were unable to dig themselves out and rescue attempts were not made as everyone believed them to be dead, or that they would starve to death by the time they dug out the cave. Most of the knights died to the various monsters living in the lake while trying to find a way out. The captain and a few of the remaining survivors took their own lives as they would not die of starvation while still feeling its effects and knew that they were going to either die from the monsters or from old age.
- The knights worshiped the God of war and strategy, Uthra, and developed a trial of initiation over many years where they had to chop off one of the hydra's heads and return with it to be fully accepted into the group.
- The temple had been repurposed by the first knights that discovered the underground lake to a temple worshiping Uthra and indicating the trial of the hydra on the murals.
- The original murals of the temple are still intact underneath the newer ones, and reveal the true nature of the lake as a prison for the kraken.
- Pirates do not have to be fought at all. Either the hydra or the knights can be avoided. All can be fought. Kraken will attack as soon as the players get out of the temple after destroying or messing with the gem so it is likely players will be unable to go back to other places for loot (such as the pirate ship or the hydra cave).
- All of the spirits/ghosts disappear after either the gem is destroyed or the kraken is killed.