

You All Meet in a Tavern

The Very First Critical!: Go Westerly Adventure Module
by Geoff Bottone

Firestorm Ink



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Toronto, ON
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Prologue

Where some words are said before the adventure begins.

Hello there!

What you see before you is the first module I ever wrote for Critical!: Go Westerly. This module had its debut at Dreamation 2011 in Morristown, New Jersey.

This module was written as a way to introduce brand new players to the wild and whimsical Kingdom of Westerly. As such, it has quite a lot of setting details packed into it, in some particularly odd places, so that the players could really get a feel for the world.

Since it's an introductory module, I wrote it such that the player characters don't have to know one another to start. Like most classic fantasy adventures, you just drop them into the tavern and the rest of the plot just kind of happens. This also allows your players to either pick one of the pre-gen characters from the main rulebook or make their own, without having to worry much about backstory, logic or party dynamics.

I hope that you and your players have as much fun playing this module as I had designing and running it.

Geoff Bottone

Using the Module

Where information is imparted and knowledge is gained

This module is set up so that it can be read as a story. It has a prologue, an epilogue, and some chapters in between. It's written in the second person, so that it's always the players doing things.

We did this for maximum readability and ease of comprehension. By the time you read through this story once, you, the Bartender, should have a good idea of what's going on and where everything is. When you run the adventure for your friends, you'll be able to set the scene, role-play all the various parts, and be ready to ad lib when your game goes off the rails. If you're feeling stuck on descriptions and the like, you can always feel free to read or paraphrase from these chapters, but don't feel that you're limited to just the text we've given you.

You'll notice that each chapter also includes a section for **Bartender Notes**. These sections will give you some suggestions on how to run each chapter, the kinds of mechanics and monster stats you'll need, and, occasionally, anecdotes how previous groups of adventurers have dealt with problems in the past.

At the very back of the book, you'll find the **Appendix**. The **Appendix** has full stats for all of the monsters that the players will encounter within the module.

The Appendix also contains three maps:

1. The official map of the Perend Adventure Tours Dungeon Complex™. Players should find this map early on in their adventure, possibly as a plaque on a wall in the dungeon, or as a blueprint in the possession of one of the workers.
2. A second version of the same map, which has been heavily edited by the Faeries of the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria. This should be discovered by the players midway through the adventure, and gives some hints as to what's going on. Again, it can be found defaced on a wall or in the possession of one of the workers.
3. The third map is the super-secret Bartender map that shows you roughly where all of the encounters take place. You can use this map to keep notes and to keep track of where everyone is and what they're doing over the course of the adventure.

Prologue

Where a scene is set for the Bartender using words not for the players' ears.

The Duchy of Perendimi is notable across Westerly for two things: The mysterious and heavily enchanted Forest of Bigue, and it's extremely fractious and volatile political climate. Both of these things feature prominently in this adventure. Here's how:

Adventurers come from all across Westerly to gain Gold and fame fighting the monsters of the enchanted Forest of Bigue. These adventurers, while full of can-do spirit, are often times much less full on actual skill. They don't die permanently, of course. The Most Holy Edicts of the Westerlian Gods protect even those adventurers unfortunate enough to only appear as unnamed extras in a module's prologue.

What does happen is that these adventurers wake up destitute and dispirited back at the White Gryphon Tavern. Rather than attempting to assail the enchanted forest that so thoroughly defeated them, most turn their paths northward to the more adventurer-friendly plains of Zakid.

This concerned Duke Chariseau of Perendimi, because adventurers are a vital and necessary part of his duchy's economy. Having lots of successful adventurers around means that there are plenty of easily-bribed mercenaries in the area for when the perils of the Forest or Aelae the Necromancer decide to attack his domain.

To maintain adventurer morale, the duke has authorized the construction of the Perend Adventure Tours Dungeon Complex™. Once open to the public, this dungeon will allow novice adventurers to quest in relative safety, thereby giving them time to hone their skills in preparation for bigger threats. It also allows a place for defeated adventurers to easily regain Gold so that they can provision themselves for new explorations into the Forest of Bigue.

Construction has been done largely in secret with workers quickly carving out chambers and passageways beneath the city. The dungeon's first level is nearly complete, and Perendimian merchants have just transported the first shipment of caged creatures from the Razorback Mountains to stock the dungeon.

Of course, the political factions in and around the city have caught wind of this plan and don't like it very much. Some groups are protesting at the Ducal Manse and the Provost's Place. Several other political factions have decided to abandon the typical protest route entirely, and have descended into the dungeon complex to take more direct action...

Chapter 1

In which a long-standing trope is embraced, and a party is formed.

The city of Perend can be a dangerous place. On the outside, it's hemmed in by the heavily-enchanted Forest of Bigue. On the inside, the streets are clogged with protestors demanding secession from Westerly, greater access to it's neighbour Zakid, the preservation of the Forest of Bigue, the cutting down of the forest of Bigue, and a whole bunch who are just calling the Duke all sorts of unpleasant names.

But danger is why you have come to Perend. You are an Adventurer! Or, at least you will be, once you join a proper party and sally forth seeking fortune and glory. With your new Items in your pack and a brochure in your hand, you head to Perend's local franchise of the White Gryphon Tavern, for one of their monthly Adventure-Nite Meet and Greets.

You join the line outside of the Tavern with several other hopeful new Adventurers. When the doors open, the smiling Adventure Coordinators take 4-8 people at a time and sit them down at tables. You are eventually whisked off to a table with several other strangers.

The Adventure Coordinator for your section steps over and, in a cheerful voice, introduces themselves.

“So this is your adventuring party!” the coordinator says, “isn't that nice? You should take this time to get to know one another. If you're stuck for things to talk about, you can always start with your name, a brief description of your physical appearance, and a short list of your skills. The wenches will be around to take your orders shortly and, after dinner, we'll send you on A First Quest. Nothing too dangerous, but it should give you all practice working together? See me if you have any questions.”

The Adventure Coordinator breezes away after this rapid-fire bit of exposition, leaving you with a gold-colored envelope and several confused dining companions. The wizard to your left starts discussing the new spell he's mastered, and the young priestess of the Gourmand picks up the drink menu.



Bartender Notes

Use this chapter to ease the players into the game. Set the scene, answer questions, and give your players time to describe themselves and get into character. If they want to start ordering drinks, talk to the other patrons of the tavern, or peek into the Quest envelope, let them*. When they start to get restless, you should drop the earthquake on them ... literally. This earthquake is what gets them to the next scene.

Also, keep in mind that anyone who starts drinking heavily in this chapter will have increased Alcohol Content for the rest of the adventure.



*The Quest should be something insanely trivial, like acquiring a dozen rat tails, or asking the players to introduce themselves to a random person halfway across Perend.

Chapter 2

In which we find something more interesting to do than harvest wolf pelts.

Plates fall off of walls. The chandeliers shake. A glass of Elvish Wine spills and rolls dramatically across the floor. From somewhere far below, you hear a rending, tearing, crashing thud. A cloud of dust and smoke explodes through the doorway behind the bar.

When the shaking finally subsides, the tavern keeper pokes his head up from behind a table. “Two Gold to any adventurer brave enough to go into the basement and find out what that racket was all about!”

The adventurers at the other tables start talking amongst themselves. Forming a party and going on a First Quests is one thing, but going into dark, structurally unsound basements wasn't in the leaflet. You get the feeling from listening to them that most would prefer just to stay up here and follow the much safer adventure path offered by the White Griffon.

You look around at your new companions, and in their eyes, you see the same determination that burns inside your heart. You're true adventurers, with a capital A, and here is a chance for you to risk your lives to prove it. Almost in unison, you rise and walk around the tipped over chairs and broken dishes to the bar.

The tavern keeper escorts you through the door and down a set of wooden steps to the cellar. You quickly discover the problem. The cellar is gone. The stairs end in a jagged tangle over the top of a rather deep sinkhole. Down below, the entire stock of the tavern lies in a pile of stone wreckage in what looks like a rough-hewn tunnel.

The tavern keeper hasn't a clue where the tunnel came from, but that's a secondary concern right now. He has a lot of hungry adventurers upstairs, and he needs to get any surviving foodstuffs up into the kitchen. He asks that if you go down there and salvage what you can, he'll double your reward.



Bartender Notes

If the players aren't motivated by the tavern keeper's initial offer, he's willing to go up as high as 4 Gold per player.

The major difficulty for the players is getting from the broken steps into the Adventure Tours Dungeon Complex. In the past, players have used a number of methods. Most go with either magic or long pieces of rope. Angelique, being an adrenaline junkie, just jumped down there and trusted to her own chutzpah and skill with the dice to protect her.

She made it down in one piece.



Chapter 3

Where it is revealed that Yok and Steve meant what they said.

You reach the floor of the tunnel in more or less one piece and start picking through the rubble, looking for anything that can be saved. You begin to feel slightly weird. Maybe it's a reaction to the strange events of the night, or maybe it's being down here in a tunnel under Perend, but you can't shake this growing feeling of omnipresent dread.

The tunnel is expertly carved and carefully decorated to look old and dusty. Behind a strategically-placed curtain of spider webs, you discover a sign that reads, "Perend Adventure Tours Dungeon Complex, Access Hallway 7, Level 1."

You turn your attention back to the inn's stock. There's probably some magical spell or complicated block and tackle mechanism that will allow you to transport anything that's still good back up to the White Gryphon, right? As you ponder what to do, you hear a noise.

It turns out that a small group of kobolds have arrived on the scene and have already plundered a large portion of the tavern's goods. They flee off into the darkness, and you follow them, desperate to seize the stolen goods and claim your reward. You pursue the kobolds through rooms with broken open cages, past partially-constructed dungeon rooms littered with masonry tools and drop cloths, along walls scrawled with large, fanged letter A's painted in hot pink.

Almost too late, you realize that you have followed the kobolds into their warren. That's where things start to get nasty. You see, kobolds love to set traps...



Bartender Notes

Oh man are there a lot of traps here. Use the main rule book for inspiration, or make up your own.

The players can do whatever they like here to get the food back from the kobolds. They can fight, chase, parley, bargain, or beg. For their part, the kobolds really just want to escape with their ill-gotten food, and won't fight unless cornered. If there's an opportunity for dialogue, the kobolds will take it. They'll even talk with adventurers who are impaled or crushed in one of their many traps.

The kobolds can explain that they were captured and brought in from the Razorback Mountains in cages. They think that they're meant to stock this dungeon, which upsets them, *since all they really want is to be left alone!*

They will say that they were freed relatively recently by magical means. Since they don't know how to get out of the dungeon, they just decided to create a heavily-trapped lair and make the best of it.

They don't know what caused the earthquake and they, too, can feel the rising levels of dread and fear, but they don't know what it means.



Chapter 4

Wherein we find chances to do good deeds and to learn interesting things.

On your way back from the kobold lair, you cannot help but notice that there is now a feeling of palpable evil in the Dungeon Complex. The stench of brimstone hangs in the air, and the hair stands up on the back of your neck. Your eyes dart hither and yon, looking around for ambushes or monsters. When the feeble cry for help comes, it almost shoots you up out of your boots.

Answering the cry, you find a workman in a partially-constructed side hallway, pinned under an avalanche of rubble. A very large, and still somewhat damp, Fanged A has been painted on a patch of wall nearby.

He explains that he was banging away on this one section of wall for more than an hour...for reasons that escape him, when the earthquake hit and the ceiling collapsed. He tells you that he's worried about the three other people in his work detail, and he asks if you could help find them.

The three workers are all nearby, in three rooms off of this side corridor. The first has fallen down to the bottom of a pit trap. The second is stuck inside of a magical force-field trap that she'd just finished installing. The last is inside the Most Holy Trap Room of the Thief, standing very still amidst a whirl of flashing blades.

All of the workers have similar stories. They were doing some installation work when they all heard tittering giggles. Then the traps activated. They're all very grateful, but are desperate to get back to HQ to see if the other dungeon workers survived the earthquake. They tell you that if you escort them back there, they can let you out of the dungeon through the service entrance.



Bartender Notes

This is where we mention that you shouldn't read all the text to the players. Let them rescue the workers, and encourage the players to use cunning and lateral thinking to get the workers out of the traps. The first worker just requires some careful digging. The one in the pit may need a tossed rope and some first aid. The one trapped in the force field can be released by magical means, by finding the control lever, or by some other means left to your player's disposal.

The worker in the Thief's trap is going to be the tricky one, since the trap cannot be disarmed unless and until the players locate the Offering Box for the Thief and drop one or more Gold into it. That doesn't mean that this is the only way to rescue the worker, however. In a previous run of this module, Angelique used her insane sports skills to vault into the trap, dodge all the traps, grab the worker, and vault out again.

The workers know about the history of the dungeon and its construction (from the Prologue) and are only happy to answer the players' questions once they're free. They don't know what-all is up with the Fanged As, the escaped monsters, or the earthquake, but they do confess that they've been having a lot of issues with protesters...



Chapter 5

Where we learn that the protesters really must protest, with good reason.

Things are starting to get really freaky as you follow the workers back to the service entrance. You see things out of the corner of your eye. There are wisps of low-lying fog that cover the floor. You come upon tunnels that are haphazardly and confusingly dug. There are open, abandoned cages and more Fanged As everywhere.

You hear distant, rhythmic chanting. Following it, you come to a large cave where a Blasphemous Altar is still under construction. You see more of cages here, but these are both occupied and locked. Several of the people trapped inside the cages are dressed like dungeon workers. The rest are dressed in normal peasant garb.

The people in peasant clothing are also holding signs that read. “Down with the Duke,” and “Perendimi for Perenders,” and “Get your Dungeon out of My Basement.”

They’re also ones who are chanting. As you get closer, you can finally make out what they’re saying. Mostly, these are along the lines of, “Hell no! Let us go!” and, “What do we want? To be released from these cages! When do we want it? Now!”

As you move into the room, unseen figures flit about in the air above your head, giggling anarchically.



Bartender Notes

The peasants are from the Brothers and Sisters of Perend, a political group that has been protesting the Duke and the construction of the Dungeon Complex. They have a long list of grievances, which they will happily relate to the players once they’re freed.

The reason why they’re trapped is that there are a number of faeries from the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria flying around the Dungeon Complex. They’re another protest group, which are focused mostly on graffiti and other acts of vandalism. They’re responsible for all the Fanged As painted everywhere, as well as for freeing the monsters, mind-slaving all the workers to dig in stupid or dangerous places, and locking up the workers and the protesters in this room.

The players can attempt to free the protesters and the workers and escort them all to the service entrance, but by doing so they will wake the wrath of the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria. From here on in, the faeries will harass them under cover of invisibility, blasting them with fairy curses and generally making their lives harder. The players can choose to confront them directly or not. Either option is fine.

In a previous game, Barnabas loudly proclaimed that he didn’t believe in faeries, which caused the members of the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria to keel over and die on the spot. None of the other players clapped.



Chapter 6

In which there is a fight scene is both desperate and dramatically-staged.

You escort your charges through the Dungeon Complex, trying to keep the arguments between the protesters and the workers at a minimum while keeping as best a lookout as you can for invisible faeries. You can't wait to get to that service entrance the workers keep talking about. You're really tired of this place.

The creep factor continues to ratchet up. You can now hear the disembodied mutterings of a thousand tortured souls. Also, the walls are starting to bleed. Some of the workers chalk it up to more faerie pranks, but this seems a lot more ghoulish than their usual style.

You hear the screams of real, live people up ahead, and the sound of it spurs you onward into a large room. This is the dungeon entrance. There are kiosks set up around the room, which will eventually be places where adventurers such as yourselves might buy torches, spikes, ropes, and ten-foot poles at an obscene markup before heading into the dungeon complex.

Holed up in the kiosk are more workers and protesters, trying to off a small army of skeletons with picks and picket signs. The skeletons have come from a jagged hole in one wall, from which a black and noxious fog pours. As you watch, another phalanx of skeletons rattles into the room.

One of the workers in your entourage points to a hidden staircase with a narrow door at the top. The service entrance, at last! Now all you have to do is rescue all these people and escort them out of here.

No problem!



Bartender Notes

The players will have to deal with quite a number of skeletons and keep them from harming both the protesters and workers in their charge, as well as the ones in the kiosks. If the players haven't dealt with the faeries in a permanent manner, they're here too, still invisible and adding to the chaos.

About the only good thing about the continued presence of the faeries is that they're just as likely to curse and befuddle the skeletons as they are the players. Especially if it's funny.

The service entrance is the only way out of the dungeon. Everyone could use it to easily escape in a few rounds, unless the faeries decide to magically lock the door. Or the protesters refuse to let anyone open the door for fear that the skeletons will follow them outside and destroy Perend.

Just when the battle becomes most dire, with the players trapped by a horde of skeletons on the staircase, Aelae the Necromancer shows up in a column of sparkling black smoke. Proceed to Chapter 7.



Chapter 7

Featuring a villain with verve and style, and a round of hasty apologies.

Everything is a confusion of terrified workers, screaming protesters, and legions of skeletons. You and your companions are exhausted. Unless you can get this door open, you may all just fall right here.

It's at that moment when all seems darkest that the unearthly wailing noises reach an awful crescendo and a pillar of sparkling, black smoke appears in the midst of the skeletons. A woman appears floating in the smoke. She wears a spider silk dress that matches the color of her long, ragged white hair. Her arms and throat heavy with the weight of skull-and-bone-themed jewelry.

Oh, hell. It's Aelae the Necromancer, the most infamous inhabitant of the Forest of Bigue. She slaughters adventurers like you before breakfast every morning, and then animates their broken corpses to so that she has someone to serve her tea.

She opens her mouth and, in a magically amplified voice that sounds like fire and blood, roars, "JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO DIG TUNNELS INTO MY BASEMENT?"



Bartender Notes

Here's the big reveal! It turns out that some of the faeries told some of the mind-slaved workers to dig a tunnel that just so happened to open out into the miles of labyrinthine catacombs located beneath Aelae's distant tower stronghold.

The earthquake, as well as growing feelings of dread and horror, were caused by Aelae's eldritch power boiling through the tunnel into the dungeon complex. After hearing all the chanting protesters and the other ruckus, Perend's most famous necromancer animated up some skeletons and sent them in to investigate.

When those skeletons started dying, she decided to take matters into her own hands and see what was what.

Trying to fight Aelae is a terrible idea. Talking will work much better. A few well-placed words and possibly some dice rolls should sort out most of the mess. Aelae will be pleased to learn about the existence of the new dungeon, since it means less adventurers trekking out into the woods to bother her. After a reasonably civil discussion, she'll be more than happy to withdraw with her undead, have the tunnel to her catacombs filled in, and let bygones be bygones.

In a previous adventure, Barnabas threatened Aelae with his magic, which led to him learning that she, like he, was a graduate of the Wizardry. This led to a very civil discussion about coursework and the personalities of various professors, which ultimately led to the resolution of the adventure.



Epilogue

In which rewards are meted out and take-out is considered.

You emerge from the access stairwell onto a quiet side street in Perend's scenic downtown. The protesters and workers look askance at one another, too tired from the long night's ordeal to argue any more about zoning laws and legal issues. More than a few of them thank you profusely before stumbling off home to bed.

You and your companions spend a few moments dusting yourselves off, counting your blessings, and complimenting one another on an adventure well and successfully completed before you remember all the foodstuffs you still have stowed away in your packs. You hustle across town to the White Gryphon Tavern, just as it's about to close down for the night. The tavern keeper is pleased and delighted to see you, and happily rewards you with the promised Gold, as well as with free room and board for the night.

The free rooms sound great, but considering that the jars of prunes, basket of hard tack, and wrapped package of slightly crushed, unleavened elf-bread you brought back are the only food in the house, you and your companions decide to sneak out just before dawn to spend your well-earned Gold at another eating establishment.

Fin

Appendix

Where you can find more information, and things only for Bartenders

Monsters

Regular People

If you need stats in a pinch for an inhabitant of Perend, whether it be a dungeon complex worker, protestor, tavern keeper, serving wench, or whatever, simply use these.

To Hit	4
Be Hit	4
Damage	1
Fortitude	1
Gold	0

Kobolds

Abducted from the Razorback Mountains, thrown into cages, and transported to the dungeon to serve as, “first level crunchy monsters,” all the kobolds want to do is survive and be left alone. As is typical for members of their race, they have immediately created a comfortable, trap-riddled den to keep adventurers and other pests at bay.

To Hit	4
Be Hit	6
Damage	1
Fortitude	2
Gold	1

Skills

Divine Trap Making (Cheat - 3)

Bartender Notes

When kobolds are defeated in combat, their Gold is magically converted into IOUs by the Thief, their divine patron. Adventurers must trek to a Temple of the Merchant to trade these IOUs in for actual coin.

Faeries

These faeries are part of the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria, an anarchic political group in Perend whose ideological platform consists largely of, “make things horrible for the humans.”

Under the protection of their innate invisibility, they are using compulsion magic and minor curses to free all the kobolds, harass the protestors, and force the workers to dig pointless tunnels. Mostly because it’s fun, and because anarchy rules.

If you’ve read the module in order, you’ll know that they’re the ones who are actually at fault for what happens, since they force the humans to tunnel into Aelae’s stronghold, causing the initial earthquake. Woops.

To Hit	5
Be Hit	8
Damage	1
Fortitude	2
Gold	4

Skills

- You Can't See Faeries (Help Self - 3)
- Taste My Poison Sting (Hurt Others - 1)
- Up to No Good (Cheat 3)

Habits

- Take that Authority-Figure Man! (3)

Skeletons

These are the bony, dry-as-dust legions of the Necromancer Aelae. Unfortunately for your players, as well as everyone involved in this module, Aelae has a nigh-infinite supply of skeletons.

To Hit	3
Be Hit	3
Damage	1
Fortitude	4
Gold	0

Skills

- Them Dry Bones (Help Self - 2)

The Necromancer Aelae

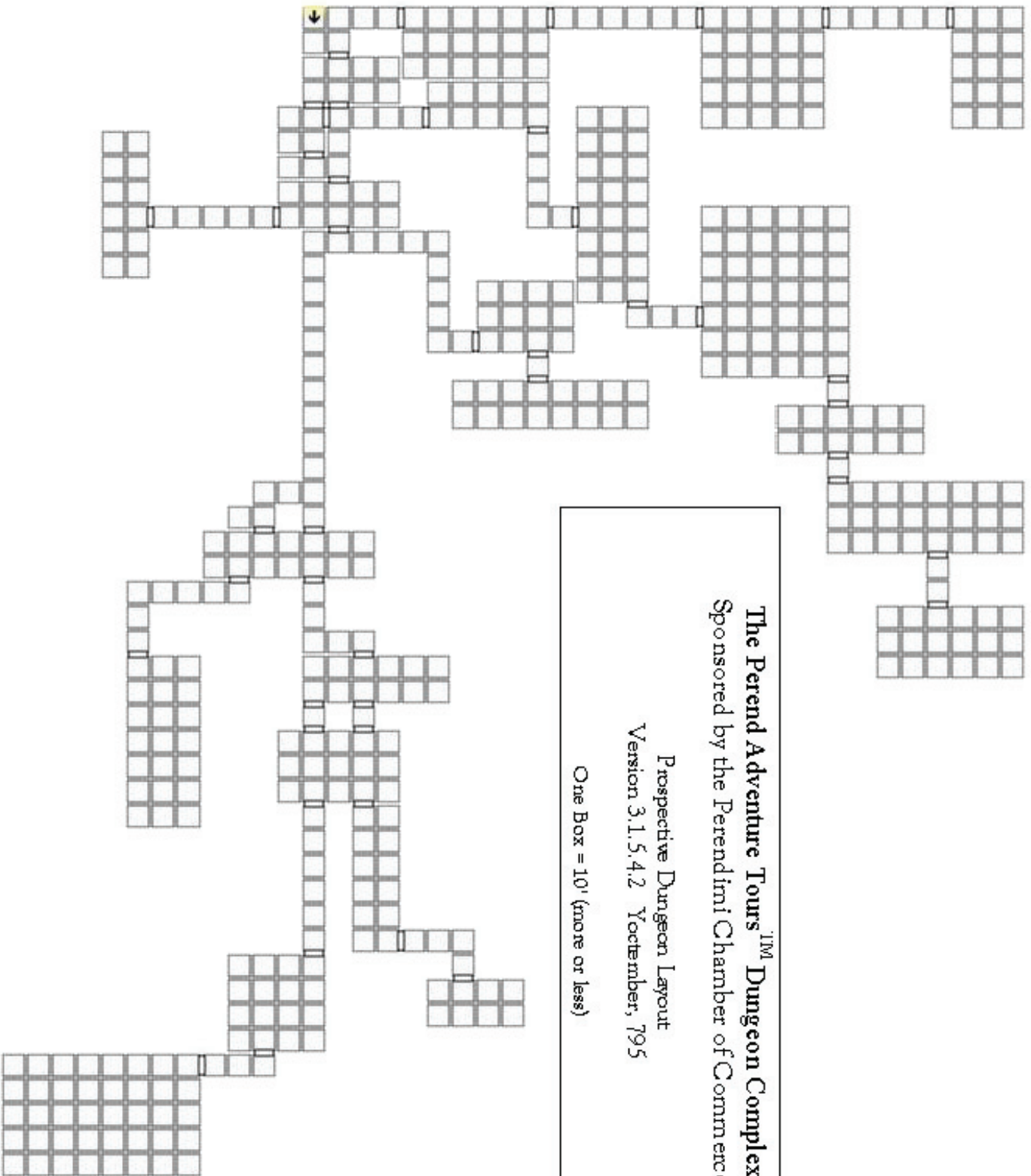
Very old (but well-preserved) and very powerful, this mistress of the necromantic arts has set up shop in an ancient tower (with attached labyrinthine catacombs) in the Forest of Bigue and has spent many decades being a constant thorn in the side of Perend. Many adventurers see her as the Elite Boss of the forest, and seek to defeat her in her tower so that they might secure glory and riches for themselves.

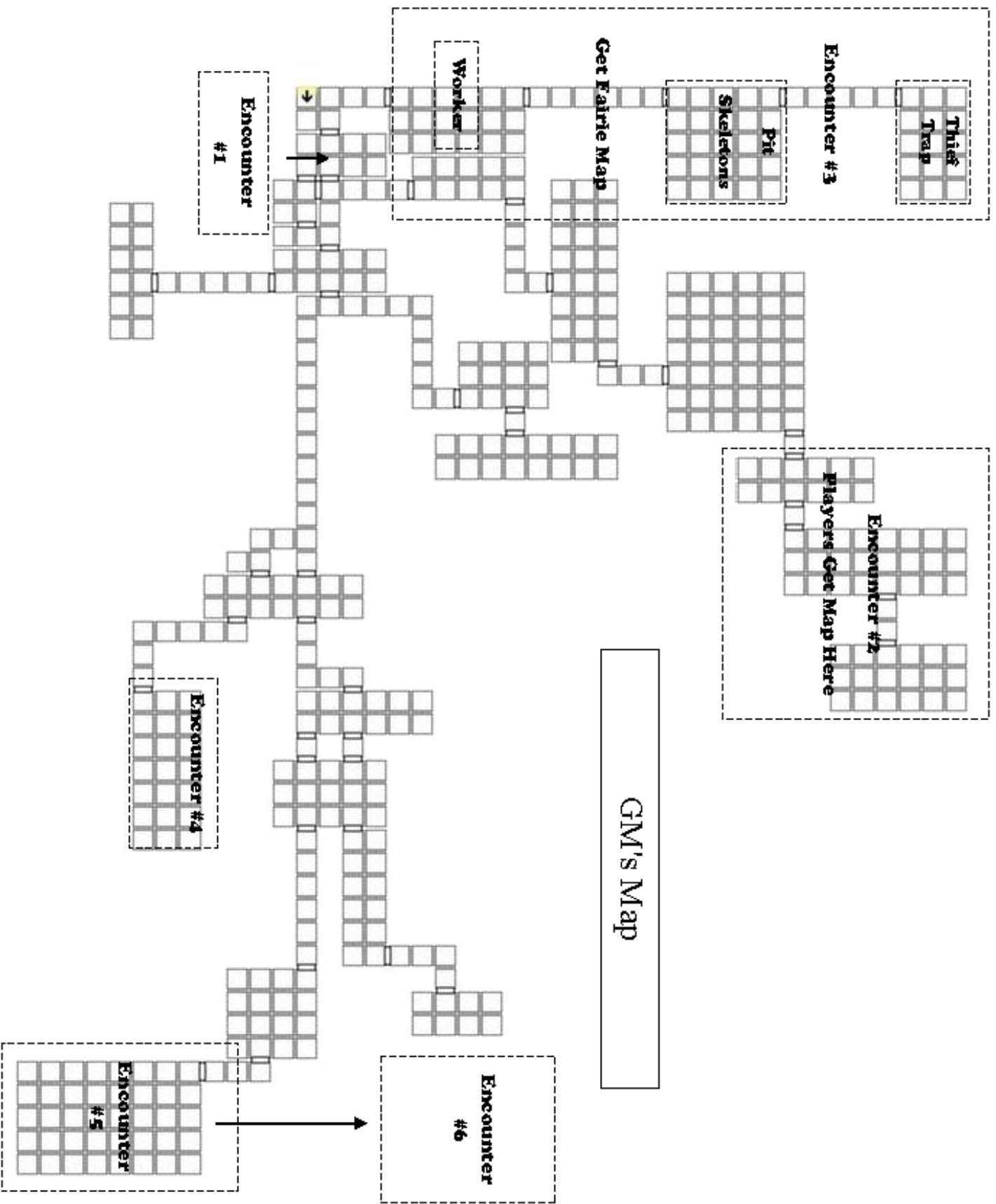
This never ever works out well for them, which is fine with Aelae. New skeletons have to come from somewhere, after all.

To Hit	8
Be Hit	6
Damage	4
Fortitude	15
Gold	11

Skills

- Behold the Power of Necromancy (Cheat - 3)
- Command Undead Legions (Helps You - 3)
- Control Shadows (Helps You - 3)
- Enervating Bolts of Uncomfortable Tingling (Hurts Others - 3)





AB

Tools of Oppression!!!

The Perend Adventure Tours™ Dungeon Complex

Sponsored by the Perend Chamber of Commerce

Prospective Dungeon Layer

Version 3.1.1.4.1 (October 2005)

One Box = 10' (width or less)

Boo!

DIG WHEREVER!!

DIG HERE!

DIG HERE!

