

Temple of Nidag (Underground)

This is a multi-level, subterranean complex, containing a pair of Temples and a series of ancillary areas, below part of the surface town of Stormwatch in northern Alarius. Showing signs of relatively recent construction in places, built from a mixture of excavations and making full use of natural topography, once the existing surface forest had been removed in this area, it was built exclusively (or so they will claim) by members of the Fellowship of Maleng, followers of a peaceful, local nature deity, known as the Herald of the Seasons. Maleng has numerous other worshippers scattered across the communities of the Emerald Crown Forest region, known for their good works in general, including aiding travellers in these wild parts with inns and rest-houses, and providing medical or veterinary assistance when required. However, here, the Fellowship is a front for the inimical cult calling itself the Fellowship of Nidag, the Blind Slayer, a far less pleasant deity altogether, one which requires occasional to regular humanoid sacrifices. This concealment, carefully maintained, is to help trick unsuspecting travellers into becoming the latest victims, albeit such folk are chosen with care to prevent the cult's secret getting out.

Labelled locations are described in more detail below. The layout was determined randomly using designs from two Inkwell Ideas Dungeonmorph Dice in the Trailblazer set, adapted here to fit the existing Surface map's layout. The basis for the "hidden cult" and other elements were taken and adapted from the accompanying book for this dice set, the "Dungeonmorph Book of Modular Encounters: Delver, Trailblazer, & Voyager Edition", also by Inkwell Ideas, while the names and natures of the two deities involved, and most of the separate Surface map's place-names, reused here, came from random tables in the "Tome of Adventure Design", and the "Nomicon", both published by Mythmere Games.

Location Notes

Maleng Hall is the only public access Entrance route from the Surface map into the Temple of Maleng, using the arrowed double doors marked on this map. The stairs and upper landing there are also featured on that Surface map. Blue-tiled floors indicate the extent of the Temple of Maleng section of the complex, where designs and decorations typical of Maleng worship elsewhere in the region can be found, much as unsuspecting worshippers would expect. Double doors off the lower stairwell landing lead into the **Temple Lobby**, where cupboards contain robes, texts and appropriate regalia for use in a range of ceremonies. When in use, everywhere in this section is well-lit with wall torches. Ceilings and walls throughout the Underground are stone lined, the ceilings being generally around 9 feet high (2.7 metres) unless noted, here including the corridor into the Temple itself. Much as with the above-ground parts of Maleng Hall, however, all the doors here can be securely fastened by hidden bolts to prevent access - or escape - by the more knowledgeable cultists and priests, if required. Subterranean temples are common to Maleng worship, sometimes in natural caves as well as artificial constructions like this one, so again should raise no suspicions.

Decorative features are more lavish in the **Temple of Maleng** itself, although the lighting is somewhat more subdued than elsewhere. The ceiling is around 15 ft here (4.5 m). A couple of cupboards and three small tables are by the northeastern walls, with well-made rows of long, wooden pews occupying much of the main part of the large chamber, facing towards the stone altar in the southwest corner. Anyone especially sensitive to such matters will feel uncomfortable in the area near the altar (for GMs, anywhere in the zone marked by the lower Temple of Nidag's dashed wall line surrounding the altar). The altar seems normal enough, with a typical bell, candelabrum and font basin on its top. On either short end, a hippogriff has been carved in low-relief, again not an unexpected creature design. Pressing a button hidden in the eye of either though unlocks the altar-top so it will swing down, opening a concealed shaft into the Temple of Nidag underneath if any weight more than about 15 pounds (7 kilogrammes) is placed on it, dropping said object about 20 ft (6 m) into the lower Temple. The altar-top then swings back and locks in place again. During a "Maleng" service, the priests and worshippers will put on a good show for visitors, persuading the chosen visitor to be specially anointed on the altar. The officiating priest changes a few words in the expected liturgy, and then drops the visitor into the Temple of Nidag. Friends of the visitor will be seized by the worshippers.

Although unconnected to the underground complex, the well-shaft from Maleng Square is shown here to help with orientation. It is even possible the shaft could be used as a means to escape the sub-surface areas using suitable digging equipment and enough time, or magic.

West of the well-shaft is the **Priests' Study**. A ladder connects up to the trapdoor access in the more northerly of the two surface buildings comprising the Priests' Quarters there. Bookcases, cupboards, a table, desk and seats comprise the furnishings, along with numerous papers and documents relating to the worship of Nidag, in what is essentially the Nidag Temple's library. There are no light sources normally in here unless the room is in use, nor are there any torch brackets on the walls. It is often empty, and thus completely dark. In common with all the other green- and brown-tiled areas in the complex, the decorations here are clearly

indicative of Nidag worship, albeit rather crudely and sketchily designed, unless noted otherwise. As with the Temple of Maleng section, ceilings here are around 9 ft high (2.7 m).

A door in the Study's west wall opens onto a landing, with a set of steeply-descending stairs down to the **Nidag Temple Guardroom**. The door at the foot of the stairs appears normal from the stairwell side, but is a fully concealed secret door from within the Guardroom itself. Similarly, the door leading into the Temple of Nidag (A) here is concealed from the Guardroom side, except that scratch marks on the floor where it opens betray its presence. Opening it is a little trickier, and needs to be done using a hidden handle in a patch where the wall mortaring seems to have fallen out, leaving a shallow nook with a lip that can be used to pull the door open. This door too is quite ordinary in appearance from the Temple side. In the Guardroom is a round table with two chairs, another couple of chairs elsewhere, and a pair of long, narrow, wooden seating benches towards the chamber's centre. Only two wall torch-holders are present here, on the south wall either side of where the table is sited, always kept lit. At least two guards are on-duty here at all times, usually sitting in the chairs playing cards or dice at the table, sometimes dozing instead, if they think nobody will see them, except when a ceremony in either Temple is happening. The only obvious door here leads north into another steep stairwell, leading up to the landing door into the Nidag Temple Lobby (B).

The **Temple of Nidag (A)** is a large, circular room with a domed ceiling 20 ft high (6 m). A steeply-sloping, open-ended shaft links to the underside of the altar in the Temple of Maleng above, down which victims will slide once the altar-top trap there is activated. There are three tables, some chairs, and papers, scrolls and books scattered over the tables. All the texts relate to Nidag worship and summoning magics. The central floor is dominated by a huge, red-and-black summoning circle inlaid into the tiled floor. Large candles, only lit during ceremonies in here, are positioned at particular spots around the outside of the outermost ring-line of this circle. Although the coloration of both tiles and circle make it difficult to tell, there are several blood splatters on different parts of the floor, especially towards the middle of the circle, although these have somehow avoided touching any of the circle's lines. Oil lamps placed on one or more of the peripheral tables provide further illumination when someone is working here, or a ceremony is happening. There are no other light sources in this chamber. At times, one or both of the Temple's leading priests will be in here preparing, cleaning-up, practicing for some ritual, checking texts, and suchlike, commonly with at least one guard. During a ceremony intended to provide a victim from the Temple of Maleng, both priests and two guards will be in here, with additional clergy, plus a few worshippers, if it seems prudent to allow them away from the congregation in the Temple of Maleng (dependent on how many friends of the victim may be present there). If the fallen victim has not been killed or knocked-out by the fall, the priests and guards will seize and bind them, prior to holding a summoning ceremony, when most of the full Nidag cult will be present. Their idea is to place the victim in the circle's centre, and have the priests perform a ritual to call a minion/avatar of Nidag to this plane, to try to use the body as a vessel for that lesser being. Decorative elements here are on a distinctly grander scale, and better-executed, than elsewhere, and several have been painted to emphasize the exit from the altar shaft in the central northeastern ceiling.

Much of the northern part of the complex is the route used by the majority of the Nidag cult to gain access to their Temple, culminating in the **Nidag Temple Lobby (B)** by the top of the northern stairwell down to the Temple. This room is poorly-lit by just a couple of torch-holders on the south and west walls. Two cupboards contain items for use by worshippers and the lesser clergy in the Temple, and a table with two seating benches is in the middle of the floor. Usually, a couple of guards will be here most of the time, seated at the table, except when a ceremony is due, when people will be passing through here in small groups as the Temple fills up. The north wall door leads to a corridor to the **Nidag Temple Entrance** chamber, another ill-lit area with an unusual shape and size. It is also surprisingly empty, as if it may have been intended for a different purpose originally. Two cupboards with some priestly gear and texts are in the northwest corner, other than which the furniture consists of a large table-like desk and a chair. The wooden double doors in the northeast wall are elaborately carved with ornate symbols relating to Nidag on both sides, and are flanked in this chamber by a pair of guards, while one of the Curates from area 2 sits in the chair at the desk to identify all who pass through here; anyone not recognised will be seized.

Northeast beyond these doors is the **Grand Corridor (3)**, a broad, well-lit passageway whose stonework has been carefully plastered, with impressive mouldings and paintings, as usual all relating to Nidag. These decorations extend across the ceilings as well, which here is 12 ft high (3.6 m). Each single door has complex, quite abstract, designs carved into it. Some of the symbols involved definitely relate to Nidag worship; others are more obscure and may be magically protective.

First door on the right wall heading northeast down the Grand Corridor leads to **Banys Hall Barracks (1)**, essentially the cellar of the northeastern building of the two surface structures comprising Banys Hall. A spiral stair leads down into an enclosed space within the room, which forms the main accessway for guards and lesser Nidag priests to enter the lower Temple from Banys Hall (or to reach the surface from this Underground level). The room is provided with bunk-beds, chests, cupboards, a table and chairs for more-favoured priest-worshippers and guards, those who spend most of their time on this level rather than on the surface. The room is much less cramped than the two barrack rooms in the upper storey of Banys Hall.

Further along the Grand Corridor, on the opposite wall, is the doorway to the **Lower Kitchen & Kitchen Cellar**. There are no Nidag-related decorations here, with the walls having quite plain stonework, and

the floor is roughly flat-cobbled, as it is a place that sees rather harder use than other parts of the sub-surface complex. A ladder on the back wall leads up to a trapdoor in the Kitchen floor of The Hooded Satyr inn on the surface, down which many stores for both Kitchens are, lowered and retrieved using ropes, with the ladder as a slide. Some stores are kept in cupboards, with bulkier items maintained in sacks, crates and barrels. Tables, stools and chairs are for Kitchen staff use, and there are two stoves also on the back wall (with unmapped narrow flues leading through the northeast wall that connect with the surface chimney outlet). Double swinging doors provide access into the adjoining Grand Dining Hall, allowing staff to serve the feasts held there after certain ceremonies. Anywhere up to a dozen staff might be working here when preparing and serving such a feast, and even at other times, there are usually at least one or two people here, cleaning up, checking stock, or preparing food for use upstairs during busier times there.

Next door on the Corridor leads southeast into the **Curates' Quarters (2)**, a large study-bedroom for use by the higher-ranked Nidag clergy just less than full priest level. Among the furniture here are shelves with books, scrolls and papers relating to Nidag, chiefly copies made by the Curates themselves of works held elsewhere in the complex. The beds are bunks, so there can be up to four Curates present here at certain times, working, chatting or sleeping, although one is normally on duty in the Nidag Temple Entrance hall. During ceremonies all will be absent from here, participating in ceremonies at either Temple.

Largest of the chambers in this part of the complex, the **Grand Dining Hall**, is further along the Corridor, off its northwestern side, a room with an 11 ft ceiling (3.3 m), lavishly decorated with plaster mouldings and paintings across walls and ceilings in the same manner as the Grand Corridor. Three large, finely-made, tables, set with ten similar quality chairs each, are the main furnishings, with two long sideboards on the southeast wall holding cutlery and an assortment of tableware for use during the post-ceremony feasts held here for selected worshippers and clergy. Often unoccupied except when a feast is being prepared or underway, or when the room is being cleaned-up afterwards.

Nearly opposite the Dining Hall's doorway are two neighbouring doors, giving access to the studies and bedchambers for the Nidag cult's leaders, in the **Priest's** and **High Priest's Quarters**. Either may be present at any time other than during ceremonies or feasts, and in either room of their Quarters, although they may be elsewhere in the complex, or even on the surface. As the substantial beds indicate, they need not be alone when here, and their study-rooms are used for instructing staff, including the Curates, when required. The most dangerous and secret Nidag and cult-related writings are kept in their bedchambers, along with various accoutrements, robes and other gear (including magical weapons).

At the northeast end of the Grand Corridor is the door from the **Worshippers' Entrance**. The outer room in this final chamber contains the spiral staircase that rises into Luke House on the surface, the hidden route by which Nidag worshippers from elsewhere in Stormwatch, and out of town, enter the Temple complex. There are always at least two guards here, and, when an event is to happen underground, one of the Curates, who will check the identities of all who wish to gain entry, including those inn staff who also work in this subterranean level when required, who sometimes use this accessway. The inner chamber off this area has a couple of benches and more cupboards with equipment for the guards to supplement that available in the outer chamber's cupboards, together with spare robes and temple gear for worshippers.