

Huo Yu Bing Caverns

The Trial of Fire and Ice

Whether drawn by desperation or greed or malice, prospective monks risk everything, even their very lives, to study the mysterious Path of the Morning Glow at the Zhao Guang Si monastery. There, apprentices learn the art of killing.

They climb cliffs without ropes, traverse fields filled with deadly traps, and duel to exhaustion, all to strengthen their bodies and reflexes. They are taught to hide emotions, manipulate the minds of their targets, and plan assassinations with surgical precision. And they study ancient grimoires containing magics that grant temporary invisibility, silencing voices, and even cursing the senses. These spells demand sacrifices, often blood, making the price of power high

Those who survive the training – and most do not – must pass two deadly trials to graduate and join the ranks of the the Zhao Guang Si monks.

The first of these trials is the Trial of Fire and Ice, which they must complete before embarking on the Trial of the Elements.

A Perilous Climb

To reach the entrance of the Huo Yu Bing Caverns, apprentices must scale the side of a cliff without benefit of rope or other tools. Those who fall may make the attempt another day...if they survive. Many do not.

Haunted and Infested Caverns

The caverns are infested with giant spiders and venomous snakes, but they are not the only peril in the caverns. When trainees perish in the caverns, their remains are not retrieved. Instead, a baleful magic infuses their bones while worms feast on their softer tissues. In about a month, those bones will reanimate, and these skeletons will attack the next trainee to brave the caverns. In addition, the spirits of those who die in the caverns are bound to them, haunting as a Spector and attacking the living who dare to enter.

The Cave of Fire

In one room within the caverns, a red crystal is embedded on the opposite wall of the room. A pool of lava blocks access to the crystal, but that is not the room's only perils. A pair of lesser demons guard the room and will attack anyone who enters.

Anyone who reaches the crystal can easily take a shard from it. This shard will grant the possessor immunity to damage from fire and heat. Although apprentices can complete the trials without the shard, possessing one will make their efforts considerably easier.

The Cave of Ice

In the Cave of Ice, a semi-frozen lake blocks access to a blue crystal embedded in the far wall. A pair of ice devils also guard the room. Visitors who reach the blue crystal can take a shard from it, which will provide immunity to cold damage. A trainee can survive the trials without the shard but possessing it will make their task easier.

The Labyrinth of Fire and Ice

At the end of the caverns, a spacious room holds a labyrinth traced on the floor. While monks at other monasteries use these labyrinths as a meditation tool, slowly walking the path in reflective contemplation, this labyrinth is a device of torture, pain, and possible death. The path of the labyrinth is made of ice, while its edges are magically lined with hot lava.

At the far end of the room, a statue of a horned skull will speak in an archaic but understandable tongue to anyone who enters, saying:

“Welcome, visitor. Art thou ready to brave the Labyrinth of Fire and Ice?”

If answered in the affirmative, the statue will continue:

“Step then at the beginning of the labyrinth and follow every step of the path to the center. Lest thee attempt to bypass the path, remember that the portal will only open for those who have followed my instructions and traversed the path.”

If the apprentice attempts to bypass the path by stepping over its edges or flying over the labyrinth, the statue will again say:

“The portal will only open for those who have followed my instructions and traversed the path.”

If someone reaches the center by flying, leaping, or otherwise avoiding walking along the path, the tele

Every turn, those walking along the path must make a Constitution saving throw. Those who fail with take 1d6 cold damage from unless they have immunity to cold damage, such as by possessing a shard of the blue crystal. In addition, each round they must also make a Dexterity saving throw. Those who fail slip on the ice enough to touch the hot lava, taking 1d6 fire damage unless immune to fire damage, such as from possessing a shard from the red crystal.

Those who perish while traversing the labyrinth will ignite from the heat of the lava. Over the course of an hour, even their bones will have been reduced to ash. For those who survive and

make it to the center, a teleportation portal will activate and magically transport them to the Trial of the Elements.