

Gate to the Past

Gate to the Past is written for approximately 4 characters of level 18. While most of the individual encounters are not terribly challenging or deadly for level 18 characters, there is also a 24 hour time limit which will take its toll as the party expends its resources to get through all of the gates within a one-day stretch. While several short rests, and even a long rest are possible, that would further limit the ability of a party to complete the mission in time.

As preparation for this adventure, the DM should place amongst the treasure trove at the end of the prior adventure a scroll tube containing a tattered scroll and a 2" spherical black gem featuring screw holes on opposite poles, one deeper and wider than the other. The scroll was written in an archaic version of the common tongue, and tells of a temple dedicated to the Norse god Frey (or any suitable deity). The temple supposedly guards the key to recovery, assembly, and activation of a powerful staff which had been broken apart and the pieces separated and hidden away. The black sphere contained in the scroll tube is described in the scroll as the first key to unlocking the secret of the staff, which is referred to as the Staff of Daedros. The scroll provides a map showing the general location of the temple, which may be placed by the DM in any desolate, unpopulated region that would be difficult to reach.

The gemstone radiates magic, and is actually one segment of the sundered staff. Attunement to the gem does not reveal anything about it, but an Identify spell will reveal that it is part of the Staff of Daedros and is key to locating the remaining segments. No properties of the staff can be divined until it has been assembled. There are a total of 8 segments to the staff, including the gem contained in the scroll tube. There are screws and corresponding insert screw holes to allow assembly of the staff components.

While nearly impossible to find without magical means, the secluded temple can be found using "Find the Path" or a similar spell searching for a lost temple of Frey. There is sufficient historical and descriptive information in the scroll for a reader to become "familiar" with the temple, so that "Find the Path" would work, using the gemstone as an object associated with the location being sought.

Travel to the temple by foot is nearly impossible, but flying in can be achieved without encountering adversity. Other means of reasonably safe travel include ethereally, or via teleportation. If the party uses a teleport spell, use a Familiarity of "Description" to determine its success.

Once the temple is found, there are no adversaries in the immediate area.

The Temple

The temple is built entirely of black/gray marble, on a marble foundation 150' by 190', 10' above the surrounding earth, with 40' of steps across the south face leading up to the actual temple construct. Marble pillars surround a smaller (70' by 120') walled temple. The ceiling of the temple is of the same stark marble, and is a partly-sloped trapezoidal shape atop the 25' tall temple walls, adding 10' to the overall height. The south face of the building is open, and there are two openings on each of the other faces (north, west, and east). These openings are 8' tall and 6' wide.

1. Near the steps on the south edge of the foundation stands a half-elf **priestess**, unmoving and not appearing to notice any approach or possible danger. She is in fact in a time-slowed zone which occupies the footprint of the foundation, including the steps, and to a height of 60' above ground level (15' above the highest level of the temple roof). She is a servant of Frey and is performing her temple service which is to guard the temple and offer advice to those who would worship Frey and/or make sacrifices to him. While she is not powerful, she can summon celestial beings who would destroy any creatures that would deface or cause mayhem at the temple. They would also be summoned in the event of the priestess' death or disappearance. Once the temple footprint is entered by outsiders, time resumes its normal movement, until all outsiders have left the temple area again. When time is slowed, time inside the temple grounds passes at a rate of one day per year outside the temple. A priestess' period of service is 20 years, which passes as 20 days to the priestess inside the time-slow zone.

The priestess will attempt to discern if creatures are there on pilgrimage, or to attempt recovery of the staff. Either way, she will expect some kind of sacrifice, and will provide more information for better sacrifices. For staff seekers, at a minimum she will instruct characters that they must have a part of the staff in hand in order to seek the rest, and that part must be placed in the hand of the Frey statue inside the temple building. Sacrifice of 100+ GP, and/or magic items, will result in more information. The most valuable information might be that there is an urgency associated with completing the mission in one day or all is for naught.

Any monetary or magic treasure offered in sacrifice will be consumed in a ritual performed by the priestess, after the party embarks on the quest.

2. Frey Statue and Altar – In the center of the temple building is the statue of Frey (facing south), with outstretched hand and open palm. A large marble altar rests between the statue and the open (south) face of the building.

[DM Note: The time constraints of the adventure may be difficult to understand and apply without a careful study and consideration; but they are an important component of the adventure and challenge. The DM should track the approximate time required in each gate and make sure the entire quest is completed within the 24-hour limit.]

If the gem is placed in the open hand, and the statue rotated so that the hand points to one of the doors, then all of the doors, and the open south facing, will become gates with opaque blue swirls covering them. The doors must be entered in order, so that the first door (SW) is the only one which can be entered until the segment of the staff from that gate is brought out. Each gate in succession can only be entered after the previous gate's segment has been retrieved. Possession of the segment is all that is required, not assembly; also, no further rotation of the statue is required, only retrieval of the (next) segment. The gates provide access to the staff segments which are each hidden away in past time and in different locations. Seasons may be different in the various locations, but the time of day will correspond to time of day at the temple.

Until the staff is completely assembled and blessed by the priestess, any event will become undone 24 hours after it happened. The staff must be assembled and blessed within 24 hours of entering the 1st gate, or the events required to retrieve the first segment will become undone. Each retrieval becomes undone if more than 24 hours elapse from the time of entry to that gate. If all of the prerequisite/prior segments are no longer held, then entry to the next gate is not possible. If all of the segments are retrieved and the staff assembled, the blue swirl will dissipate and exit from the temple is possible. If all of the segments are not retrieved, the gates will remain open and in place (and exit impossible) until the last gate exited times out (24 hours after exit from it).

In addition, each adversary will have memory of the events that transpired (and were subsequently undone), just as the party members do.

Beyond each gate are adversaries (or a path leading to them) which will have a segment of the staff, along with other treasure. Unless otherwise noted, travel along the paths is standard from the PH:

	Distance Traveled per . . .			
Pace	Minute	Hour	Day	Effect
Fast	400 feet	4 miles	30 miles	-5 penalty to passive Wisdom (Perception) scores
Normal	300 feet	3 miles	24 miles	-
Slow	200 feet	2 miles	18 miles	Able to use stealth

The priestess will leave the temple building before the gates are activated, in order to avoid getting stuck there for 24 hours. It is not possible to exit the temple building while any of the gates are active. They can all be deactivated by removing the gem from the Frey statue's hand.

Having passed through any of the gates, characters may pass back through at any time. Only those passing through from the temple can pass back to the temple. From the other side of the gate, the gate appears as a faintly shimmering transparent rectangle and is only visible to those who have passed through from the temple side. Any characters remaining on the far side of the gate when the gate vanishes due to the 24-hour limit will be stuck there unless/until the gate is activated again.

3. Upon entering the gate, a rocky path leads about ¼ of a mile through a forested area, to a large cave opening in a hillside. Strewn about the mouth of the cave, and extending inside, are dozens or hundreds of animal and humanoid remains, along with badly degraded gear. Flies buzz loudly amongst the remains. A [Nemean Lion](#) hides in the shadows inside the mouth of the cave, waiting for unsuspecting prey to venture by. While hiding, it has advantage on stealth and perception checks. Further in the cave is a **Gynosphinx** which considers the Nemean Lion its “pet”. If it hears the Lion roar or otherwise engaged in battle, it will immediately come to investigate. It favors its Greater Invisibility and Banishment spells. If defeated, it would take 15 minutes of exploring the inner cave to find the treasure worth keeping amongst the spoor littering the cave floor. The treasure includes **+1 Throwing Axes (X3) in a finely constructed walnut box, 280gp/3.4#, a 40gp brooch, and the Gem Set for the Staff of Daedros.**

4. A path from the gate winds through a meadow and then into a heavily wooded and hilly forest. After about ¼ of a mile, the path abruptly ends at a cleanly cut passage which enters a hill side and descends into the hill. This is the lair of a **Beholder** and its **3 Hill Giant servants**. The Beholder’s lair is under construction so the defenses are not well developed yet. There are plenty of throwing-size rocks strewn about the east side of the pit where the giants are working. The east side of the pit is dimly lit by four torches on the walls. The Beholder’s treasure, including **a set of Studded Leather +2, 300gp in coins weighing 2.8#, 30x5gp gems, a 50gp ring, and the staff’s Gem Point**, is hidden in a crevice which is blocked by a boulder. A perception DC of 25+ will reveal that there are marks on the cavern floor where the boulder was rolled into place. The magic items are blocked behind >1 foot of stone, so a detect magic spell will not reveal their presence.

5. Passage through this gate deposits the characters on a rocky and sandy beach in the midst of a rainstorm. About 250 feet up the beach are **three Storm Giants** throwing rocks out over the water and casting lightning bolts attempting to hit the rocks. They are distracted and the noise of the rain, surf, and lightning will mask the sound of any characters approaching them. Their perception is good, however, so their passive perception is still 15 to detect approaching enemies unless they are invisible.

When the PCs arrive at the beach, Giant#1 and Giant#2 both have recharged their lightning strike capability. Giant#3 is just casting his strike as the PCs arrive to see it. Each giant has some treasure in a sack around his waist (G1: **Cloak of the Manta Ray; 80gp in coins weighing 2#.** G2: **80gp in coins weighing 2#; 50gp clasp.** G3: **80gp in coins weighing 2#; 30gp earring.**). Giant#2 has the staff’s **Shaft Top** in his sack. If it becomes apparent that the giants would lose a battle, Giant#2 will attempt to break away and escape.

Atop a bluff above the sandy part of the beach is a giant one-room stone hut with thatched roof. If is the giants’ cottage and although it contains food and knick-knacks, there is nothing of use there.

6. This gate opens to a path in a heavily shaded and damp forest. The path is muddy and traverse is at half speed unless special means are used to speed up progress. The path descends slightly and goes

about one mile. The last several hundred yards descend more sharply into a boggy box canyon surrounded by sheer rock rising several hundred feet. In the face of the left side is a large overhang with several levels of rock shelves. The smell of death and decay is heavy in the air. The buzz of dragonflies, the chirping of crickets and other insects, and the croaking of frogs echos in the canyon, effectively masking other noises. At the bottom of the canyon basking in the hot sun is an **Adult Black Dragon**. A [Young Adult Black Dragon](#) watches from one of the rock shelves under the overhang. The dragons' treasure (**a set of scrolls: Acid Splash (4d6 damage, Dex DC 18 save), Fireball (9d6 damage, Dex DC 15 save, Lightning Bolt (9d6 damage, Dex DC15 save), Cone of Cold (8d8, Con DC 17 save), Thunderwave (5d8 damage, Con DC 14 save); 245gp in coins weighing 4.1#; 20x8gp gems, and the staff's Handle**) is stashed in a recessed bowl in the rock shelf where the YABD sits. The staff handle is the same size and composition as the gem found in the scroll tube, but the screw holes are of different sizes.

7. This gate opens in a rough underground passage filled with smoky sulphurous air. Passage here is considered difficult and is at half speed unless special means are used to speed up progress. 100 yards down the path is a fissure which emits noxious fumes and heat. Molten lava and bursts of fire can be seen several hundred feet down in the fissure. The fissure is 30 feet wide where it splits the path, but the path can be seen to continue on the other side.

After another mile, the passage opens into a larger cavern where a **Pit Fiend** and its **Horned Devil** sidekick are torturing a **Cyclops** chained to a stone table. Their passive perception scores are used to determine if they detect the arrival of interlopers. The cavern ceiling is 80' at the center. It is dimly lit by various bursts of flame from the walls and floor.

The Cyclops may be slain, left chained, or set free, but can offer no help and cannot exit through the gate. The Pit Fiend's treasure (**an Ancient Relic: blue topaz gold ring forged by Odin worth 1200gp (possibly useful for the "Holy Aura" or other spells); 305gp in coins weighing 3.2#; 40gp bracelet; 30gp gem, and the staff's Shaft Bottom**) is contained in a large magically locked chest near the center of the cavern. The chest requires one of the following means to open:

- a) dispel magic, knock, or similar spell
- b) DC 19 roll to pick the lock using thieves' tools
- c) speaking the infernal language word for "*fiend*." Inscribed on the lid of the chest, in the infernal language, is the phrase "*speak, fiend, and enter*."

8. This gate deposits the party in a sandy desert in a sandstorm. The swirling sand limits visibility to 80' during daylight, 50' at night (unless using truevision) ,and most sounds are masked by the ferocity of the storm. 50' away, a **Marilith** and **Nalfeshnee** guard a 10' cubic sandstone monument inscribed with demonic runes. The monument radiates magic because the demons' treasure is secured in the center of the rock. That treasure includes **200gp, 2x35gp gems, and the Bottom Gem of the staff**. If either the Marilith or Nalfeshnee are reduced to 10hp, or both are reduced to 20hp, and the party has taken no casualties, they will attempt to negotiate and

will give up the Bottom Gem if they are spared. If either is killed and the other reduced to 40hp or less, it will attempt to flee (teleport 120') and will offer no further resistance. It will take one hour to chip through the sandstone to the center using magic weapons. A Passwall spell and possibly other means will achieve the task more quickly.

9. This gate leads to a land of ice and snow. The air is cold and crisp, but bearable. A path is discernible but covered with a dusting of snow. There is a slight breeze but the only sounds are the occasional cracking of ice and an occasional breeze blowing crystalline snow against the rock and ice. Due to the snow cover, attempts at stealth are at -5 if walking in the snow. The path leads up a slight incline to an ice cave in the side of an ice and rock mound. Terrain is difficult and is at half speed unless special means are used to speed up progress. The cave opening can be seen from the gate as it is but 500 feet as the crow flies; but it is about 2000 feet walking due to the double-backs, ice bridges, and obstacles which must be crossed to get there. The cave opens to a larger tunnel which zigzags to block sunlight from entering a larger ice cavern. The cavern and tunnel are covered by a Forbiddance spell which was cast 10' in front of the throne. The cavern and tunnel are also unlit. **Six Wraiths** attend a [Dust Lich](#); if during daylight hours, there will be two wraiths watching the cave opening from inside. The others will be in the cavern with the Dust Lich. If after sunset, 2 wraiths will be outside the cavern, two at the entrance, and two in the cavern. The Dust Lich sits in an ice throne near the northernmost cavern wall. If possible, the wraiths will alert the Dust Lich to the presence of intruders. The Dust Lich has a completed version of the **Staff of Daedros, which is a Staff of Power**. He can and will use it in his defense, and it improves his AC to 18: It has all the properties of a Staff of Power, but is considered an Artifact.

If killed, the Dust Lich turns to dust and the staff falls to the floor, flickers and then disappears except for the staff's **Bottom Set**. If the DL is reduced to 15hp and has exhausted its means of escape there is a 50% chance it will use the staff's Retributive Strike feature. If the Dust Lich uses the staff's Retributive Strike, the DL disappears and his staff is broken apart into its components, which briefly flicker and then disappear except for the Bottom Set which remains. XP are awarded for defeating the DL, whether it is killed or escapes to another plane. Its other treasure (including its **spellbook: all Wizard spells in the Dust Lich spell list; 4x80gp jewels; 250gp in coins weighing 4.7#; potion-Greater Healing (4d4+4); scroll-Maze**) is located in a translucent sealed ice chest which will require 50hp of fire/heat damage to melt away enough to retrieve the treasure.

10. Completing the Quest

If the party successfully retrieves all of the staff segments within the 24-hour window, the gates will shut down, the opaque blue swirls blocking each egress disappear, and the temple building may be exited. The temple priestess will be waiting (awake or asleep depending upon time of day) and will offer to bless the staff to activate it. She will happily do so for good or even neutral parties, and will do so grudgingly for evil parties, with words of admonishment.

If the party is unsuccessful but wishes to try again, she will expect at least some additional sacrifice.

The blessing process takes about 15 minutes but this does not count against the time limit. The blessing spell produces strange noises, colorful auras, and unrecognizable odors, and it causes the staff to become a solid state device which cannot be dissembled again except by invoking the Retributive Strike. Once the blessing is complete, the staff is fully functional as a Staff of Power, only requiring attunement to use it. The priestess will stay at the temple until the party leaves, and only then will she summon an attendant celestial to take her away.

