Introduction

The Vantærum Academy was created for the training of Holy Warriors. The Dean, Arborarius Vantærum, laboured to magically amplify an artifact called The Orb of Judgement in an attempt to banish all traces of evil from the land. Instead he unleashed the power of Unholy Judgment which devastated the Academy. The land around the Academy, once fertile, is now blasted and forlorn, with tormented undead roaming ceaselessly. Mostly in ruins with its three top stories shattered and collapsing, the only discernable entrance to the Academy leads down into the subterranean Temple area.

The Orb of Judgment

Once a character has crossed the threshold of the Temple any lie, curse or other verbal transgression will result in a spark of electricity leaving their mouth (causing minor damage e.g. 4d) and cutting the offending phrase into the nearest stone surface. The walls are crowded with all the oaths and untruths of those who have trespassed here.

1: Archway of the Sentinel

The entrance is framed by two massive stone arms emerging from the ground with the fingers steeped at the top to form an archway. There’s a 3ft tall stone column in front of the hands with the statue of a warrior, badly wounded but still resolute. A small platinum plaque under it reads: “Taken from a stronghold against a siege of heretics. Remember their sacrifice.”

2: The Ledger Keeper

The Ledger Keeper is an intelligent robed ghost with a long beard who remains to keep a record of all who enter the Academy. From behind his desk, with his quill poised above his records book, he asks in a gravelly voice: “Name and purpose of visit?” He merely wants to keep the ledger accurate and up to date. He will not attack unless provoked.

3: Twisted Tunnel

Beyond stout wooden doors is a flagstoned tunnel that once saw daily processions of worshippers. Now the very fabric of the stone is unnaturally warped. This spiralling corridor of slimy stone is very difficult to traverse, with no flat surfaces. Anyone travelling here will be trampled by a mass of panicking, fleeing ghosts of students still trying to escape the Academy’s horrible cataclysm. The ghosts don’t attack, just push and crush. A bridge made of zombies chained together hand to hand and foot to foot, like a paper chain, spans a pit full of daggers.

4: Anteroom

An ornate marble bench is next to the wall on the right as you enter this waiting area. On the left wall is a large fresco of an angel and a devil weighing a man’s soul while a priest says the sinner’s last rites. The devil peels off the painting and attacks.

5: Shrine of Donlün

Cracked marble arches line the walls of this cathedral-like chamber and statues lie splintered all across the flagstones. The Spectre of Arborarius Vantærum is behind a lectern atop the grand altar, incorporeal hands on the Orb of Judgement. He will ask: “Who among you is the greatest sinner?” If the players don’t nominate someone the GM will decide, based on their knowledge of the characters. Faceless grey creatures float out of the Orb of Judgement and congregate swiftly around the ‘guilty’ character to drag the character (and themselves) into a pit of fire near the centre of the room. They will not attack the other characters unless they are attacked. When one of them is destroyed another forms from the Orb of Judgement.

6: Lurking Oozes

Oozes are squelching over a festering pile of humanoid bones.

7: Bridge of Sinners

A bridge made of zombies chained together hand to hand and foot to foot, like a paper chain, spans a pit full of daggers. When a character walks on them they writhe, moan and call out their sins (“I murdered my brother!” “I burned down the temple!”) until a character tells them they’re forgiven the sinners settle down and weep quietly for a while.

8: Reflecting Pool

A pit of cold energy is bridged by the pans of a set of brass scales suspended from the ceiling. The pan on the left has a brass devil holding the chains, the one on the right an angel. The solution is open ended (rust/jam the mechanism, balance the pans with equally weighted characters crossing at the same time) but if they jump across without touching the scales it triggers a trap that tilts the opposite platform down to slide them into the pit of cracking cold.

9: The Weighing of Souls

A pit of cold energy is bridged by the pans of a set of brass scales suspended from the ceiling. The pan on the left has a brass devil holding the chains, the one on the right an angel. The solution is open ended (rust/jam the mechanism, balance the pans with equally weighted characters crossing at the same time) but if they jump across without touching the scales it triggers a trap that tilts the opposite platform down to slide them into the pit of cracking cold.

10: Arborarius Vantærum

The Spectre of Arborarius Vantærum is behind a lectern atop the grand altar, incorporeal hands on the Orb of Judgement. He will ask: “Who among you is the greatest sinner?” If the players don’t nominate someone the GM will decide, based on their knowledge of the characters. Faceless grey creatures float out of the Orb of Judgement and congregate swiftly around the ‘guilty’ character to drag the character (and themselves) into a pit of fire near the centre of the room. They will not attack the other characters unless they are attacked. When one of them is destroyed another forms from the Orb of Judgement. There are 8 large jars of holy wine that will cause the pit of flames to temporarily splatter out for 3 rounds if thrown in.

Conclusion

The Orb shatters if it is touched by anyone but Arborarius or if Arborarius is destroyed. Once the Orb’s influence is ended the temple becomes a still, lifeless place. Its undead are released from service and life begins to return to the surrounding area. All may speak and act freely now.