

BAREBONES FANTASY

Role-playing Game



SOUL'S REACH

An adventure for Rank 1-2 characters

BY LARRY
MOORE



cbrasco 12

LICENSING

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CREDITS

Author	Larry Moore
Cover Art	Craig Brasco
Illustrations	Shell Alan Shoemaker
Cartography	Bill Logan



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INTRODUCTION

Background, setup, and maybe some action to get things started!

Soul's Reach is set in the Keranak Kingdoms in the western region of the Laridian Wastes and within the Dul'Urigh Underkingdom. It is designed for three to six low rank characters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Dul'Urigh Underkingdom has deep underground tunnels which span the vast mountain range where it holds dominion. Stronghold Gates exist in the east, west, south, and southwest. The underkingdom therefore prospers while it serves as a nexus for commerce between the scattered domains of the Laridian Wastes, the mind-touched sorcerer kings of the Western Reaches, the mysterious elves of the Emondran Clave, and the merchant princes of Far Vandimir. When one of the tunnels which establish these connections is jeopardized, the kingdom must act.

A recent cave-in claimed lives and closed off the route to the Western Reaches. Dwarf miners are diligently working to re-open the underroad, but this will take time. In the meantime, the nexus that is Dul'Urigh Underkingdom has halted as travelers and merchants fill the cities and towns beneath the peaks until they may reach their destinations. Dwarves of the mountain are filled with worry as their relatives who live in settlements beyond the cave-in are out of reach and their welfare is in question.

Prince Dwalin, a beloved and brave leader, set out with a band of adventurous dwarves to find safe passage through the Laridian Wastes to a rumored pass to the Western Reaches. He hoped to re-establish ties to the rest of the underkingdom as well as scout a trail to shepherd travelers to their destinations.

That's when it happened. Sometime during the night the prince and his dwarves disappeared. Boff'in (bloodguard to the prince) was the only dwarf who made it back to Dul'Urigh Underkingdom and reported the prince and his band became dull of wit the night before they disappeared. This news bodes heavily on the king's heart.

This adventure is designed for the BareBones™ Fantasy role-playing game by Dwd Studios.

This was the first adventure written for the game. It was run at many conventions and game stores. It has evolved along with BareBones Fantasy RPG.

With the addition of great interior artwork by Shell Allan Shoemake and a fantastic cover by Craig Brasco, the adventure has really come to life. We at Dwd Studios are proud of this and we hope it brings you a lot of fun.



GM BACKGROUND

Dul'Urich Underkingdom is the largest conclave of dwarves in the Keranak Kingdoms. They are a hardy folk surrounded by the Laridian Wastes on one side and the Western Reaches on the other. Many seek shelter and passage through this area on their way to trade with Far Vandimir or with the twisted sorcerer kings of the Western Reaches. Each race is represented here, many run shops and services for the inhabitants and travelers.

Kalak, a power-hungry sorcerer, has no hatred for dwarves but has found a way to enslave their souls with a powerful magical artifact known as the Slaving Stone. The immense emerald stone glows eerily green, wisps of smoke-white dwarven souls churn inside. Kalak, with his goblin minions, plans to free an imprisoned dragon trapped in a stone wall by mages of old. He wishes to control the beast for his nefarious purposes.

The enslaved dwarves are currently nothing more than soulless servants of Kalak. They obey his every whim. The dwarves are alive for now; their souls have been trapped in the stone. Once Kalak has enough souls he will summon the dragon through an elaborate ritual. If successful, many souls - including the prince's - will be lost forever.

The King is heartbroken over the loss of the prince and called out for adventurers to investigate. Unfortunately, all the adventurous dwarves were lost with the prince. Finally, he decided to hire outside assistance. He called on his assistant, Herald Gal'kut, to handle the mission arrangements. That's where the player's characters come in.

EXPECTED OUTCOME


The characters are expected to be hired by Gal'kut and travel with the aid of G'eof into the desert. They'll come across a village of desert elves where the prince and his men resupplied and looked for clues about the hidden pass. They'll have to brave the desert and its many dangers as they travel and will eventually discover that G'eof falls under the influence of Kalak.

Eventually they'll reach the hidden pass where the prince and his dwarves were lured by the Slaving Stone and they'll encounter a ruined castle of some ancient culture which once guarded the pass. Finding clues that the prince came this way, they'll have to brave the ruined castle and its many dangers.

Soon the heroes will come upon a chamber where Kalak is performing the ritual which will unleash draconic fury upon the world, while dwarven souls get devoured to fuel the ritual, one by one. In a race against time, they'll battle Kalak and his minions and hopefully stop the ritual before the prince and dwarves are lost to oblivion.

Having saved the prince, they'll receive a heroes' welcome in the Dul'Urich Underkingdom. Of course, if they fail to stop Kalak, the dragon will be unleashed and will ravage the land in the name of Kalak, who will proclaim himself king and try to usher in a new era of terror and control over an already war-torn people of the Keranak Kingdoms.

It is important for the GM to make sure Kalak gets away by use of his magic ring. If he is defeated in combat before he can do this, use your own judgment to come up with a way he gets away. Perhaps when the characters come to investigate the dead body they find



nothing but a pile of cloaks on the floor, the body mysteriously vanished. Kalak is an enemy which will span three adventures and should not be killed until the planned ultimate climax of this adventure series.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

One of the most challenging things when using a published adventure is figuring out how to get the players into it. This section provides a couple of suggestions. Whatever the manner, the players are eventually going to be brought before Gul'kut for a job briefing.

FRESHLY GENERATED CHARACTERS

If you are planning play this adventure right after character generation, then consider suggesting that one or more of the players make dwarves who hail from Dul'Urigh. That will give them the easiest background story why they are involved in this city. Of course, perhaps nobody wants to play a dwarf.

Right after character creation, go around the table one at a time and ask the following question: "How do you know [the character played by the person to his right]?" and give him a chance to answer. The person to his right may wish to interact with him, that's great... it will build a better relationship between the characters. If done in this way, each character will have history with at least one other character.

Next, go around the table again and ask the question "Why are you in the dwarven mountains known as the Dul'Urigh Underkingdom right now?" Allow each player to explain why they're here in their own way. Allow their imaginations to help build the setup to this adventure. You are encouraged to allow the adventure to evolve based on the players' answers to these questions.

Once you have established why they are all in Dul'Urigh, they are summoned to meet with Gal'kut, having been recommended by someone who knows the players' skills.

A CALL TO ARMS

Another way to drop a group of characters into this adventure is to have a rider approach them in whatever town they're in. The rider brings news that Herald of the Dul'Urigh Underkingdom is offering fame and fortune to any adventurous lot willing to help him search for their missing prince. The rider won't answer too many questions but will ensure the characters they will be richly rewarded. The rider will then escort the heroes to meet with Gal'kut in Dul'Urigh.

PASSING THROUGH

Have the characters be passing through Dul'Urigh on their way to some other destination. This is very common: people pass through Dul'Urigh all the time on their way to one bordering kingdom or another; the mountains are impassable on their own. Perhaps they are hired on as caravan guards protecting some cargo, and their employer orders them to help find the prince in hopes they'll uncover this fabled pass. Or perhaps the players have come here hiding from someone or some government – not all characters are heroes!

SENT BY A MENTOR

If the characters all report to a single person (high priest, baron, etc.) this works well for expositions. Simply have their mentor be an old friend of Herald Gal'kut and have him receive a letter via raven, asking for help with this problem. The mentor will decree the players must report to Gul'kut with expedience. The voyage to Dul'Urich should be quick and easy, and when they reach the gates with a writ given by their mentor they are taken in immediately to see Gul'kut.

A PERSONAL STAKE

This plot hook will work for characters whose players like to build elaborate backgrounds and who have a thirst for self-motivated heroism. One or more of the character's fathers are from Dul'Urich and went with the prince to seek the pass and never came back. After arriving to console a sister or mother, the players might insist on trying to help. That's when they are told to go see Gul'kut and pledge their swords and spells to this cause.

MEETING WITH GAL'KUT

However you get players to meet with Gal'kut, read or paraphrase the following. Allow players to interrupt you and interact with you, don't make them sit there and listen if they want to be active. Assume it is evening when this meeting takes place.

You are taken to a small office in a nook behind the primary administration buildings of the city of Eastgate in the Dul'Urich Underkingdom. It has been some time since you've seen daylight, but the cobblestoned path to the Herald's office is well-lit by lanterns. You are brought into the building and are greeted by the smell of papers, inks, and pipe smoke.

The building was built to accommodate visitors of various heights, despite being met by the small dwarf you see seated before you. Personal assistant of King Ul'rich himself, Herald Gal'kut is a slip of a dwarf. Skinny by dwarven standards and a full head shorter than most, he stares at you intently behind spectacles with silver trim and puffs on a tiny pipe. He waits silently until you are seated and your escorts leave.

"Greetings. I am Herald Gal'kut and have been given the task of hiring stalwart adventurers such as yourself to embark on an important mission.

"As some of you may have heard, a tunnel collapsed which connects Eastgate to points west. Our proud city has been cut off from most of the rest of the Underkingdom. While miners clear away and reinforce the tunnel road, Prince Dwalin took a band of dwarves into the Laridian Wastes in search of a rumored secret mountain pass to the Western Reaches. He meant to use this pass to clear the swelling occupation of the city, as travelers keep coming to use our tunnels. Unfortunately, the prince and his men were all lost, and the only one of his men who returned is being helped by healers in the temple as we speak.

"If you are willing to accept this mission, I am empowered to offer you 200gp apiece and a scout, my friend G'eof, to help you track the passage of the lost prince."

Gal'kut is eager for help before the trail grows cold. If the players haggle or seem disinterested, he is willing to increase the offer to as high as 350gp apiece. Once the players have seemed to accept the mission, read the following aloud.



"Excellent. I'll give you half up front and you will receive the rest upon return. Please – equip yourself and rest this night. G'eof will be ready for you by the Laridian Gates. Arrangements have been made for your stay at the Barefoot Lizard – an inn and tavern located nearest the gate. I recommend you visit the temple and speak with Boff'in before you leave. He may offer some assistance.


"Be warned, our wizards have found magical residue adhered to Boff'in when he returned. They have studied the strange magic, and crafted these amulets. They may help repel the evil that has befallen our prince, or may not. There is no guarantee in matters such as this.

"I bid you good day and good fortune."

OFFERED ASSISTANCE

Although the characters have been hired to provide a service, there are others who want the prince found and may provide assistance. Below are the most obvious ways the players may seek information or assistance. Anything else the players need you will have to decide for yourself if it is available and how it may be obtained.

- » **G'eof** – Gal'kut will provide a dwarven guide named G'eof to assist the party in tracking down the prince. G'eof is a sturdy dwarf, quite skilled in tracking, and handy in a fight. See statistics in the NPC and Creatures section, starting on page 30.
- » **Boff'in** – This wounded dwarf has been hospitalized since returning and will not be able to adventure for some weeks. Questioning Boff'in will be only barely helpful; he is normally non-lucid, though has a few moments of clarity, and he remembers very little. He will mention that the prince and his men became distant and strange and their eyes were coated over as if blind. He mentions a desert elf village and cautions about dangers on wings before he falls unconscious and becomes non-lucid.
- » **Hirelings** – Asking for help in Eastgate will not yield any adventurers. Gal'kut tried this already and came up short. Visiting some other villages and towns this side of the cave-in might yield some success: if the players persist, one Dwarf Militia 55 (leather armor DR2, spear 2D+2, shortsword 1D+3) per player can be hired to come along as hirelings, but will want payment of at least 2gp per day plus provisions.

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- » **Repelling Amulet** – The court wizards have crafted repelling amulets for the adventuring party. They will protect a dwarf who wears it from the luring power of Kalak's Slaving Stone (which only affects dwarves, but neither the party nor the court wizards know that). Each player will be given an amulet, which will last a few days to a few weeks (the bluish tint loses its luster over time).
 - » **Provisions** – The Barefoot Lizard has been instructed to provide one night of food and rest to the characters for free. In addition, the proprietor, Sanra Miller, is loyal to the prince. She sincerely wants to help. She'll offer 5 days of rations (food and water) for each character (though not for their hirelings, if any), packed and ready in their rooms.
 - » **Supplies** – There are a number of shops and services available in the city, though admittedly many will be closed at night. Assume most items costing less than 100 gold pieces are available for sale unless you think something shouldn't be available. Dwarf sized items will be plentiful, but other races are represented as well.

THE CITY OF EASTGATE


It is late when the characters arrived for their meeting with Gal'kut. Exiting the Laridian gate at night is generally a bad idea; it is very dark and cold, and tracking the prince would be impossible. The characters should spend one night at the Barefoot Lizard.

- » **The Flues** – The top of the city holds four great flues, and the thermals of the city do a good job lifting the scents, moisture, and smoke out of the city and into the sky far above. Non-dwarf residents use the location of the light coming through the flues as a sun dial timepiece, letting them know when to sleep, eat, pray, and do business.
- » **The Watch** – The city is well patrolled by the Underkingdom Watch, which serves as army and city guards. 2,000 Watch can be roused if the Underkingdom is threatened. The Watch is headquartered in the Laridian and Tunnel Gates. The gates are large gatehouse strongholds carved of the mountain, complete with towers, battlements, and portcullis. Eastgate is a very defensible city.

THE DISTRICTS

There are three basic regions of the city. There are additionally many sub-bureaus linking off the largest chamber, as well as a many buildings carved into the district walls. Eastgate is home to 10,000 souls, only three quarters of which are dwarves.

- » **The Laridian Gate District** – This is located just inside the mountainside and serves as the exit from the Underkingdom into the wastes. This region is where most human nomad traders of the wastes come and stay, seldom wishing to be any deeper into the mountain than this. It is a rough area, full of people who hide from the governments of other realms. The Underkingdom Watch holds a strong presence here, patrolling the streets at night. There are no buildings carved into the mountain here except one large cobblestone road, upon which are the foundations of many buildings. Shops, temples, and guilds all hold a presence here.
- » **The Tunnel Gate District** – This is the area located on the westernmost portion of the city, where the underroad leads deeper into the mountain and to points west. The underroad has collapsed about a league west, and dust settles everywhere in this district. Many travelers have begun to queue up here, and it is nearly impossible to find a room at an inn. The swollen nature of this district has begun to have a toll, and the Underkingdom Watch patrols the area at all times to quell arguments and stifle brawls. The main cobblestone road cuts through this region, leading to the underroad,



but the buildings that litter this road are only a fraction of the structures; the walls go deep with tunnels which serve as alleys and roads to other homes and businesses.

- » **The Inner City** – This region is the largest part of the city. It is a huge chamber, measuring nearly 500 feet by 600 feet, roughly in a circle. Many buildings exist here, which reach upwards several stories. The building rooftops are shaped like very steep pyramids, and heavy cloth canopies stretch out over entrances and walkways to protect pedestrians from falling rocks or dust. The four score buildings belong to a mixture of businesses, residents, and industries. The walls of the great cavern have been covered in flagstone and stone blocks, giving the appearance of a walled city from within. But this wall is littered with many gateways, each leading outward to tunnel roads which link to various suburbs and bureaus, each with their own chambers, roads, and buildings.

THIEVES OF EASTGATE

If you want to try to finish this adventure in one session, skip to the next chapter. If you want more excitement to this part of the adventure, consider this encounter.

THE SETUP

Describe the inn with detail. It is very busy, as travelers from all over the realm are packed into every nook possible. They laugh and drink and eat, and the poor proprietor (a pleasant but stressed human woman named Sanra Miller) is going out of her mind trying to keep up with everything. Not all customers are nice about how long she or her young daughter Alandra takes serving them.

THE EVENT

When the players are eating, they hear a loud smack and see a burly dark-skinned merchant back-hand a young boy next to him, accusing him of stealing his purse. Have the players make LOG checks. Those who succeed notice a young human dart out the door with a purse in hand. The crowd grows silent and looks to the characters. Everyone knows why the characters are here and expects them to handle the situation.

THE ACTION

Although the players can do whatever they wish, two scenarios are likely:

Settle the Dispute: If they wish to step up and work something out with the burly merchant, turn this into a great role-playing opportunity where tensions might eventually erupt into a brawl until the Underkingdom Watch finally come in and break up the situation. Hopefully the characters were smarter than to kill anyone or they might earn the scorn (or worse) of the Watch.

- » *Thirty Drunk Thugs 55 (impromptu weapons, 1D to 2D)*

Rooftop Chase: The more likely scenario is that one or more of the characters rush out after the escaping thief. He doesn't want to fight, he wants to flee. As soon as he's outside, he runs, climbs, leaps, and tumbles in an amazing display of acrobatic skill. Have him jump from rooftop to rooftop, leaping to landings and pulling himself up with skill. Make rolls for him, but even when he fails it's elegant. Have him shove things into the path of pursuers or worse. Eventually, he'll head down a side tunnel lit by flickering lanterns and turn around, appearing to be trapped by a dead-end. Then he smiles and crosses his arms as his friends show up behind the characters; he led them into a trap!



The characters are likely fatigued by the chase (unless they succeed in a STR check). The arriving friends want to defeat the characters and take their stuff. There will be 2 young thugs for each character in the party.

- » *Acrobatic Cutpurse 70 (dagger 1D, stolen purse of 88gp)*
- » *Young Thug 60 (short sword 1D+3, throwing dagger 1D, leather armor DR2)*

EXPECTED OUTCOME

It is assumed the characters will defeat the thieves and return the purse of 88 gold to the burly merchant. He'll reward them with a round of drinks and a 20gp prize (to split among them). If the bar-room brawl was prevented, Sanra Miller will be pleased and offer the characters another 20gp to thank them for all their help.

LARIDIAN WASTES

The search to find Prince Dwalin and his band of adventurers

The party meets with G'eof by the Laridian Gates and pass through its great portcullis. The group is on their way to the last known location of the prince in hopes of picking up clues. Once out in the wastes, passage is not very safe and characters should always be on their guard.

PROVISIONS

While in the desert, force the players to keep track of their rations and water. They require ample supplies of both in order to remain in good health. It is suggested that you refresh yourself with the rules on starvation and dehydration in the GM Guidelines section of the core rulebook (see "Getting Hurt"). If the players planned poorly for their desert voyage, they'll quickly find themselves fatigued and in need of supplies. You can use G'eof's scouting expertise to help guide the characters' choices.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The characters will head out into the desert and will follow G'eof's lead. They'll have many small adventures out in the dangerous wastelands while they journey. They will first come to the last known location of the prince; an abandoned campsite located a few leagues outside the city. Then they'll travel along the prince's trail until they come to a desert elf village, where they'll learn of clues about the prince's passage (and maybe gain some help, if things go well enough). Eventually they'll make it to an old gnarled tree where further adventure awaits. Assuming they survived these planned encounters and the random events of this perilous place, they'll eventually arrive at the fabled mountain pass and find it guarded by an ancient keep nestled between the peaks.

TRAVEL

As the players travel, G'eof guides them. Unless you wish them to get lost, assume G'eof does a good job of keeping them on track. The map of the wastes (see page 13) shows the path the prince and his men took (and therefore the path G'eof leads the characters). If the players decide to trek off in a different direction it will cost them time, and in the desert time is food and water and fatigue. Eventually, G'eof will get them back on track.

ARMOR IN THE LARIDIAN WASTES

GAMEMASTER TIPS

The fact that it is early autumn means the desert, although hot, is not as bad as it could be. Still, it is very dry and the characters find themselves sweating vital fluids. Wearing armor is foolish in this environment.

Any character who wishes to travel in armor must make a STR check at the beginning of any combat. The penalty is equal to -10 if in leather, -20 if in chain. If in plate, the check automatically fails. If he fails the roll, he is considered fatigued for the duration of that combat.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

On foot, players will cover 10 leagues per day (assuming 10 hours of travel). This can be assumed unless the players declare otherwise. Each hex the players enter should therefore be approximately one day of travel, and requires a roll on the random encounter table shown at right. If you roll the same encounter more than once on the characters' journey, feel free to substitute something creative of your own.

D00	Encounter	Page
00-63	No encounter	--
64-67	Bugbear showdown	12
68-71	Dust storm	12
72-75	Harpies with elf snacks	13
76-79	Harpy hunting party	13
80-83	Hell hound scout	14
84-87	Pack of wolves	14
88-91	Pile of bones	15
92-95	Provision problems	15
96-99	Small oasis	15

BUGBEAR SHOWDOWN

The party comes upon 3 bugbears out in the desert. One (which is a female) is standing arms-crossed and staring at the other two. The others (both male), argue with one another over who is the toughest. They have already given her shiny gifts (amounting to 25gp worth of trinkets) that she stands near and basically ignores while watching the males fight over her. They hurl rocks at one another and snarl and generally act like macho jerks. The female seems unimpressed.

Bugbear (Rank 2)

STR: 65 BP: 25

DEX: 55 INIT: 1

LOG: 45 DR: 5

WIL: 45 MOV: 8

» Rock 70%, damage 2D, range 6

» Flail 80%, damage 2D+4



The characters can ignore the bugbears if they wish, but if their presence becomes known to the males, they'll use the opportunity to impress their potential mate by showing her how well they can swallow a character. The female won't fight; she'll keep watching and bellowing in laughter when the characters hurt one. Eventually, if the males are slain or nearly so, the female will attempt to flee, leaving her shiny gifts.

DUST STORM

The Laridian Wastes are plagued by dust storms. The wind comes, and brings with it a wall of dust and debris. If players do not take precautions (such as wrapping wet cloth around their mouths and shielding their eyes) then they will be treated as if dazed for the duration of the storm. Of course, if a character has scout skills he may be able to find shelter... but unless he is native to the desert assume a -20 penalty.

The dust storm will last 2D hours. If doubles are rolled, then roll again and keep adding until eventually you stop rolling doubles. The party will not be able to travel during the dust storm (they go in circles, only progressing to the next hex on a 1-5 on a 1D roll).



If the players roll this result more than once, consider rolling another encounter while in the storm. Having visibility impaired by the dust will make for an interesting encounter.

HARPIES WITH ELF SNACKS

Harpies (one per character) have captured small elf children. The party comes across the carnage of an attack just as the battle ended. Make a secret scouting check for each character. If successful, the character spots the harpies carrying small elven children within bow range. Hopefully they can be saved. If not, they can be followed to their nest high up in an old gnarled tree (see area 2 on the map and page 17 Old Gnarled Tree to run this encounter)

Harpy (Rank 2)

STR: 70	BP: 15
DEX: 60	INIT: 1
LOG: 40	DR: 0
WIL: 50	MOV: 6 (14 fly)

- » **Claw** 55%, damage 2D
- » **Alluring Song** range 0 (burst 1 mile), resist WIL-10, effect target follows song to its source.



The adult elves have been slain. They hail from a small elven village nestled in a deep canyon (map area 1). The tracks of the elves lead to the village. If the players rescue the elf children and return them to the village, they'll be met as heroes when they arrive.

HARPY HUNTING PARTY

A party of 1D harpies is flying up high, using the sun to blind anyone of their approach. They will hover for some time, looking for anyone straggling behind or scouting ahead. They are not overly powerful and tend to grab lone travelers before groups. However, they're quite hungry and will attack a group if no one breaks formation.

If they can, they'll carry off a character. It takes two harpies (each hitting with a claw attack) to pick up a Human, Elf, or Dwarf character and

PERSONALIZING THE ADVENTURE

GAMEMASTER TIPS

The encounter "Harpies with Elf Snacks" is an important one, linking the characters to the elf village. You should read the entire adventure and decide for yourself where you wish to place it. Randomly is fun, but you may prefer to place it specifically. You might even wish to wait until the characters reach the elf village and Sarin sends them as a mini-quest within the larger adventure.



1 hex = 10 leagues

begin to carry them off. A Halfling can be grabbed up by a single harpy. They will haul the character (whose arms will be bound by their powerful claws) up into a mountain peak and drop them unceremoniously into their nest, where their 1D young will begin to attack violently. Characters wishing to rescue a captured friend can try to hit a harpy with ranged attacks, but when the harpy falls the character will take damage too (assume a height of around 20 feet). Otherwise, the climb up to the nest will take the characters at least a day out of their way. If searched, the nest holds the bones of slow travelers, a broken spear, and a torn backpack containing 34 gold and an empty water skin.

HELL HOUND SCOUT

The characters come upon a hell hound (which they may initially mistake for a dog) returning to its den from a scouting mission. The den is new, and the female is nowhere to be seen (having been slain by gnoll hunters a day ago). Two hell hound pups are in the den (a small crevasse in the ground which enters into a small cubby), too young to have ever opened their eyes. If the characters approach the den, the hell hound father will attack with the fury of a parent protecting its young. If they keep their distance, he will growl but won't attack.

An arm hangs out of the den, its gloved hand covered in charred blood. If the players pull the body out, they'll find a gnoll that has been killed and brought back as food for the pups. The body has nothing of value remaining except a quiver with six arrows and a quarterstaff with the top shaped like a crescent moon (nice, but non-magical).

PACK OF WOLVES

Wolves are common in the Laridian Wastes, especially near the mountains where the characters will be spending most of their time. The first sign of the wolves might be their deathly howl as they announce their dominion over the night. Maybe later they'll see signs that they're being harried and surrounded. When the wolf pack finally attacks, it will either be opportunistic or will be to take out someone who has separated from the rest of the group (a scout, for instance). If they smell blood, they may attack prematurely.

There are 1D wolves plus the number of characters in the group. They fight with innovative pack tactics, surrounding victims and getting underfoot to prevent them from fleeing. They attack at the muscles in the leg to try to bring opponents to the ground, and then go for the throat. The wolves will try to flee if their alpha is killed or if more than half their number is slain. Remember that if a character is outnumbered 2:1 or more in melee he is at a disadvantage in his resistance check.

If the party carries meat and the wolves can get at it, they will try to do so and then flee into the desert without having to fight the characters. This could leave the party without food, which is like a death sentence in the harsh lands of the Laridian Wastes!

Hell Hound (Rank 3)

STR: 35 **BP:** 25

DEX: 55 **INIT:** 1

LOG: 15 **DR:** 0

WIL: 25 **MOV:** 13

- » **Fiery Bite** 60%, damage 2D plus 1D fire
- » **Fiery Breath** 70%, range 0 (burst 3), 1/3 turns, resist DEX (for half damage)



Wolf (Rank 1)

STR: 30 **BP:** 20

DEX: 45 **INIT:** 1

LOG: 20 **DR:** 0

WIL: 10 **MOV:** 15

- » **Bite** 60%, damage 2D



PILE OF BONES

The desert claims many. The bones might be from something large and powerful (a dragon or giant) or might be the remains of a camel, horse, or other wild animal. If you roll this result more than once, don't make the encounter the same every time. The bones may be broken or have long claw or tooth marks on them. They may be burned/charred, perhaps even recently. It's even possible the bones show a scene of mass murder, a group of prisoners tied to posts, long dead and rotting.

Let the characters worry about the bones animating and attacking them. Keep asking them "are you touching the bones?" or "how close are you to the skull?" and things like that. Make them wonder. If any of the players seem bored, maybe the bones will animate after all.

PROVISION PROBLEMS

One of the biggest threats to characters traveling in the desert is thirst and hunger. As the characters travel, inform them of a growing plague of flies. They land on the characters and annoy them but are basically harmless. When evening approaches, inform the characters that when they go to eat their food that it has maggots crawling all over it. Assume 1D/2 days' worth of rations are lost from one randomly-selected character.

If this encounter is rolled a second time, instead of flies and maggots, just claim a rapidly growing black mold has overtaken 1D/2 days' worth of rations. Or maybe have them crawling with desert spiders or even scorpions.

SMALL OASIS

It is said the Laridian Wastes hold many treasures for those who know where to look. If this event is rolled, the players have stumbled upon one of its scattered oasis. There is a 50% chance it is occupied by a nomadic band of humans or gnolls. If not, there is a 50% chance it is currently being used by some desert animal large enough to feed a man for 1D days if killed and cleaned. The party may refresh supplies of water and rest.

Dangerous Oasis: If you are feeling nasty, the oasis and its offerings are an illusion spell, and



the characters actually just drank from a source of water tainted with froctil fruit nectar, a rare poison which renders victims paralyzed for 1D hours unless they succeed in a STR-20 check (in which case they are only slowed and dazed one turn). A gnoll shaman and his 1D warrior guards set this elaborate trap up to catch meals for the rest of their village, where the characters may end up being the main course. Play this encounter out as you see fit, if you choose to use it. The gnoll village is located deeper in the wastes than the players may wish to go, approximately 15 leagues east of the old gnarled tree depicted in the map on page 13.

Gnoll (Rank 2)

STR: 60	BP: 20
DEX: 55	INIT: 1
LOG: 50	DR: 0
WIL: 40	MOV: 8



- » **Spear** 65%, damage 2D+3, range 20
- » **Shortbow** 55%, damage 2D+1, range 60

Gnoll Shaman (Rank 3)

STR: 50	BP: 15
DEX: 55	INIT: 1
LOG: 60	DR: 0
WIL: 40	MOV: 8



- » **Spear** 55%, damage 2D+3, range 20
- » **Spellcasting** 60%. As level 3 caster.
Hinder, Offensive Strike, Entangle

LAST KNOWN LOCATION

The party arrives at the campsite where the prince and his band disappeared. The campsite is covered with a thick layer of dust, and the party almost misses it. This is a good opportunity for G'eof to warn the players about the commonality of sand storms.

As the characters sift around through the campsite looking for clues one of them will uncover a nest of scorpions. They will scurry away at the character's stirrings, but if the character tries to attack or stomp on them, their parent springs from the sand to attack.

Scorpion, Huge (Rank 2)

STR: 55	BP: 22
DEX: 65	INIT: 1
LOG: 20	DR: 10
WIL: 10	MOV: 13



- » **Pinchers** 70%, damage 2D
- » **Tail Stinger** 60%, duration continuous, resist STR-10, effect 2D and dazed

A character with the scouting skill (or G'eof) should be able to follow the days-old trail from this old campsite to the elven village (area 1).

1 DESERT ELF VILLAGE

A score years ago, disgruntled with the politics of the Emondran clave, Sarin came to this wasteland and founded this yet-to-be-named village. Sarin's first thought he would have easy trade with the dwarves of Eastgate, but quickly learned that his village was fairly self-sufficient. He and his elven followers built a housing complex into the cliff face of a narrow canyon. Bridges have been built across the shortest points. The bridges fold by a series of ropes and pulleys, inhibiting invaders from crossing and offering a superb defensible position. Enough water was found in the mountainside for them to bathe, drink, and plant crops. Sarin and the villagers who have been attracted here (most of whom are elven) are happy and peaceful.

Recently, a group of children played beyond the bridge and got lost when a sudden sand storm came. Parents of the children set out to locate them, and their sad story can be learned in the encounter "Harpies with Elf Snacks" described on page 13. Depending on whether or not the characters show up with the rescued elf children, this encounter may go one of two ways:

If the characters show up without the children: If the characters arrive without the missing elf children, Sarin will greet them and ask their business here. He will not allow them over into the village; he will instead cross the bridge with a group of one dozen

desert elf spearmen. If the players role-play well, Sarin will be cordial. He will admit that the prince and his dwarf companions came this way and resupplied on their way north. He will then tell the characters about the missing children. Sarin will admit he knows the location of the hidden pass to the Western Reaches... but he won't tell the characters unless they help look for the children. If the adventure goes this way, refer to "Harpies with Elf Snacks" in the random encounter section, then have the characters return later as heroes.

If the characters show up with the children: If the characters arrive bringing the elf children home after rescuing them, the elves will rejoice at the children's return while lamenting the loss of the parents who went out to find them and met their demise. Sarin will be most grateful, since one of the children was his own. The village will extend the bridge and a hand of friendship to the characters. They will be fed and bandaged, and allowed one day of rest. When they leave in the morning, they'll have 5 days' worth of rations and water. Sarin will take the characters aside when they depart and tell them that the pass can be found three days north of the old gnarled tree where the children were rescued. He instructs them to keep to the edge of the mountains and they will know the pass by the first glimpse of evergreens on the slope of the mountainside.

2 OLD GNARLED TREE

If the party did not save the children (see Harpies with Elf Snacks above) this is a good opportunity to use that encounter. Next to an old dried up riverbed is a husk of a huge tree. It is old and twisted, having tried desperately to grab moisture from the air in its last months. A harpy nest can be found in its limbs. Have the characters be here when the harpies come, bringing the elf children. The characters can rescue them to earn the trust of Sarin and the rest of the elf village. Refer to page 13.

If the players already saved the children, the old gnarled tree is nothing but a landmark.

3 THE PASS

The party either finds the fabled mountain pass on their own (with much difficulty) or are guided by the instructions given by Sarin from the elf village. They see a mountain sloping on two sides covered with evergreen trees nearly half way up their peaks. The angle of the pass is concealed, but when approached, the pass comes into view.

As the party enters the pass they spot a band of 1D spear-wielding gnolls (one will have a bow) that have captured a basilisk. Its head is covered with a burlap sack and tied off with ropes. They are prodding the beast forward paying no attention to their surroundings. The beast shifts its large head from side to side hoping to catch its captors and crush them on the rock walls. Once the gnolls become aware of the characters they will immediately attack. They are tired from dealing with their prey and may flee if half of them fall in battle.

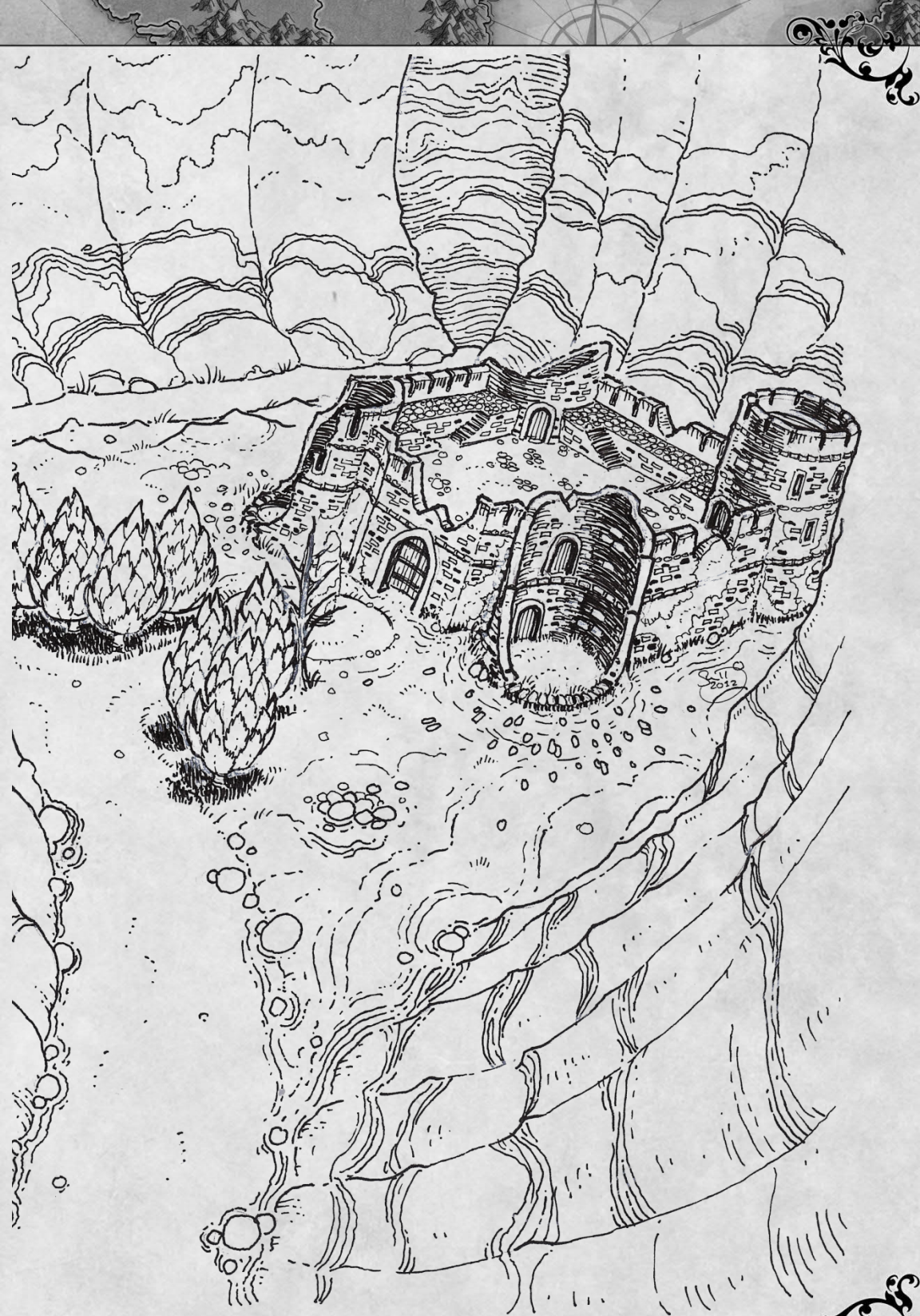
An ingenious PC (or gnoll) may try to remove the sack hoping its gaze will paralyze enemies. Basilisk fangs are a desired ingredient in potions, and their bodies can be cleaned and cooked to make 1D days' rations. When the gnolls and basilisk have been avoided or defeated, continue on to the next chapter – the Ancient Keep.

Gnoll (Rank 2)

STR: 60	BP: 20
DEX: 55	INIT: 1
LOG: 50	DR: 0
WIL: 40	MOV: 8



- » **Spear** 65%, damage 2D+3, range 20
- » **Shortbow** 55%, damage 2D+1, range 60



THE ANCIENT KEEP

...into the heart of Kalak's power to save the prince, and the world?

Long ago a civilization held this secret pass through the mountains as its own. A crumbling stronghold is all that remains of their reign here. Its towers are crumbling, and its second story is long gone. A stream runs alongside the structure and disappears into the mountainside. Refer to the map of the ancient keep.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The characters will find evidence that the prince came this way and be forced to delve into the ruined keep. Kalak has set up traps and ambushes in order to keep people out while he works his ritual, which is finally underway. The characters will explore the ruins and search for the hidden underground chamber to confront Kalak. Hopefully, they'll stop the ritual before too many dwarves are consumed by its magic. If they take too long, the ritual will be complete and the dragon will be released from its ancient prison, ushering in a new era of madness and terror. Even if the characters defeat Kalak, he will escape to return another day!

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

As the characters explore the keep and deal with its many obstacles, they should occasionally be plagued by the roaming goblins Kalak has in his employ. There are 3 goblins times the number of characters in the party (counting G'eof if he is still able to fight, but not counting any hirelings).

They have a leader named Sral who speaks english and has been taught the command words and phrases described in the entries below. The rest only speak goblin or perhaps broken tradespeak. The goblins patrol in groups of 3 (normally with spears). Feel free to spring a patrol on the players at any moment to help keep things lively. Try to have one get away from the characters and report their location back to Sral, who will plan an ambush for them in the kitchen (room 13). See page 31 for more information on Sral.

FIXING A BROKEN ADVENTURE

GAMEMASTER TIPS

Sometimes things don't go as well as planned. Maybe the characters focus on things irrelevant to the story, or kill an important NPC. All is not lost, just be creative!

If the players can't find any other way to get to the mountain pass, consider this option. Have G'eof's repelling amulet shatter in a fight. He'll fall under Kalak's power and will head towards the ancient keep with white-coated eyes.

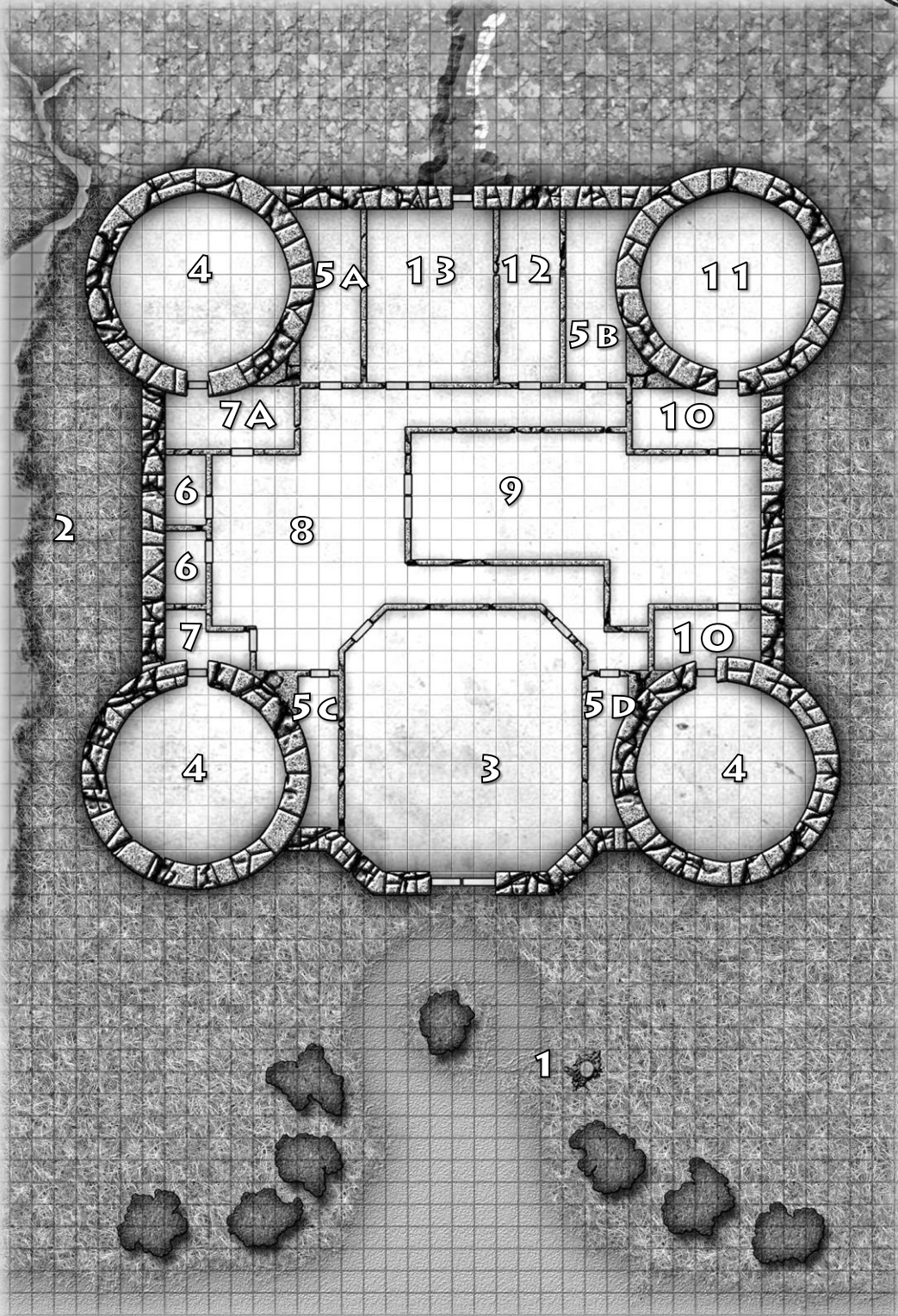
Be careful though; when G'eof is under the power of the Slaving Stone, Kalak can see and hear through his eyes and ears if he chooses to do so. This might prepare him for their arrival and he just might have an ambush planned!

Goblin (Rank 1)

STR: 45	BP: 8
DEX: 50	INIT: 1
LOG: 35	DR: 0
WIL: 30	MOV: 6



- » **Shortsword** 45%, damage 1D+3
- » **Shortbow** 45%, damage 2D+1, range 60
- » **Spear** 45%, damage 2D+2, range 20



1 Path – A path lined with dead trees leads to the ancient keep which lies in ruins. The path leads to a turnaround, in the middle is a statue covered in foliage and lichens. Only one of the four towers remains intact. It juts above the overgrowth, black and ominous. The main door stands open, apparently welcoming visitors to this long-forgotten place.

This door is an illusion cast by Kalak and anchored with pixie dust (see Appendix); the door is actually closed and locked (LOG-30 to detect the illusion). There is also a 20' deep pit in front of the door, covered by another similarly-anchored illusion. Anyone who approaches the door dissipates the illusion over the pit and falls, taking 2D damage and falling prone, no resistance check allowed. Anyone who tries to leap over the pit to the "open" doorway will strike the door under the illusion and fall into the pit as well, also taking 2D damage and falling prone (though a resistance check is allowed for the second character since he can see the pit). It will take some creativity to finally enter the keep.

2 Stream – This small stream once carried refuse from the tower's privies. It comes out of the mountain from about 50' up the peaks, takes a quarter-mile path near the ancient keep, then pours back into the mountainside to feed an underground river. If examined, the characters will find fresh refuse (goblin, if anyone has a way to discover this fact).

3 Entrance – Here is a large unfurnished room with rotting wood support poles and musty tapestries. Evidence of an old battle can be seen in the form of dark blood splatters on the walls and floor, though no bodies remain. Kalak's goblin goons have built a portable trap that sits on the far wall of the room. It has been cleverly disguised by hanging musty old tapestries from the ceiling. The trap will strike when the door from area 1 is opened.


Poison Dart Trap (Rank 1)

» **Avoid** DEX-20; **Notice** Thief-30; **Disarm** Thief -10; **Range** 10; **Usage** 1/2 turns; **Duration** continuous; **Resist** STR-20 to resist poison (not damage); **Effect** 2D; slowed and stunned. If DR absorbs all damage poison has no effect.

4 Broken towers – These three towers rise just above the main building complex. Two of the towers appear to have been torn off; there isn't enough debris to account for the towers collapsing. The third is a crumbling heap of black and green stone. If a character climbs the foliage over one of the tower walls he will find that the wooden floors are rotted as well as the staircase leading to ground level.

5A This room's door has been torn off its hinges as well as the tower's door. The room and tower are nothing more than a crumbling heap of rock. There is sufficient debris to climb up to the hill behind the tower. If the characters spend too much time in any of these unstable towers, feel free to request DEX checks to prevent falling for 1D damage as floor boards give way to rot under their weight.

5B This small cloak room leads to area 11 and has a new wood door, which is locked. A thief with the proper tools can pick the lock. The cloak hooks are currently empty. The door has a rune carved into its wood that resembles an eye as the pommel stone to a curved dagger, horizontal lines emanating behind it. This is Kalak's personal sigil, a symbol of his believed destiny to rule over all he surveys.



5C The doors in this room are jammed and must be forced open with a STR-10 check. The still-intact ceiling has a large hole filled with webs. A long-decayed human body dangles securely in its embrace, still holding a sword and shield, his body a dried-up husk. A silver necklace dangles from a chain around his neck; the locket catches the light just right to reveal a griffon flying over the mountains. The old web is easy to climb, stretching from the floor to the ceiling. Small tendrils of the web will be inhaled by anyone climbing it, they will tickle the character's nose; make a STR check or sneeze... which might attract a goblin patrol!

5D Rainwater has accumulated in this room from the ruined tower. A perceptive character will notice water leaking around the perimeter of the door. Once opened, the water will gush out, slamming each character in the door's path back towards the corner wall of area 9. The door and rushing water will cause 2D damage. Roaming goblins may hear the water (or the screams of the characters) and rush in while the characters are lying prone in the now puddle-deep water.

6 Privy – These two privies have been recently used and the refuse is piling up. The release door that would allow the refuse to drain into the stream is currently stuck. As the characters are in the privy, consider throwing a goblin patrol at them. A pitched battle in the privy can be fun – especially if someone (goblin or character) is knocked into the refuse pit.

7 Storage – This small room used for storage contains nothing of value, unless you're a mold collector. Room 7A holds 3 captured lizardmen chained to the floor. It appears they were left here to die (and one of them has). The other two are weak from lack of food. One will speak clipped tradespeak and if the characters feed and free them they will be thankful but will not wish to help (their wills are broken). The lizardmen will tell the characters that Kalak was experimenting with a large magical stone on them. He will explain how it didn't work on them and that Kalak grew frustrated until he figured out it would work only with dwarves. The lizardmen will carry their dead with them as they head out of the keep.

8 The Commons – This area is open and connects several of the other rooms together. A few benches hold remnants of stuffed padding and show evidence that they have been used as beds for the goblins. Urine coats the floor in one corner. A pile of crude spears leans against another corner, fresh ammunition for goblin patrols. If searched, the characters can find a ring containing a chipped emerald worth 25gp hidden under the cushion of one bench (this is a treasured prize owned by Sral).

9 Great Hall – The civilization which built this keep and guarded this pass were envoys of the sorcerer kings whose magic damaged the Western Reaches over three centuries ago. This great hall was once an archive of information. Today it holds only the last recorded image of the attack which destroyed this keep.

An unusual raised dais in the middle of the room will immediately catch the characters' eyes. When approached, a shimmering light will appear in the center of the room where a mist rises; scenes depicting the tower's destruction shimmer in the mist. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.

You see a giant man, tall as the once-standing towers, roar with delight as if he found a long-lost thing. Ignoring the arrows being rained down upon him, he pulls a tree from the ground – roots and all – and uses it to strike the front towers repeatedly. Unsatisfied with the slow pace of his destruction, he grabs the tower itself, ripping it from the keep, and meanders off into the woods where five more giants wait to take their turns. Six unstoppable giants tore this keep down, and hundreds died.

The scene repeats as long as any character is in the room. If characters spend enough time, they can figure out that the “archive” was designed to spy on distant points and record what was seen. It is a scrying tool, but is long since fallen into disrepair. Kalak spent a lot of time trying to get it to work, but lacked the skill.

10 Private Chambers – These are small private rooms with rotted furnishings. In the north room an old leather scroll lies in a corner. To the un-magical eye it is blank but to those trained to see magical writing it is a *scroll of light*. When the magical writing is read (requires 1 or more levels of spellcasting) one of the scroll’s ends starts to burn and can be used as a torch which will shed its light for 1D days. The same words extinguish the flames so it can be reused.

11 Kalak’s Chamber – While searching for the lost slaving stone Kalak set up his quarters in this tower. It has been abandoned for months. Kalak was not thorough in cleaning the area; he left behind a spyglass with a fine silverwork finish. If a character has the scholar skill, make a secret scholar check. If successful he will know the spyglass was crafted for a royal house in Far Vandimir, giving a hint as to the lineage of Kalak.

12 Botanical Garden – This once beautiful garden is now very overgrown. Something lives here, hidden in the foliage, and hunts living beings that come here. Is it a huge spider lurking in the shadows of the ceiling rafters, a living tree summoned by a treant and then left behind? Skeletons of the once proud keep’s inhabitants? A laired basilisk? You decide!

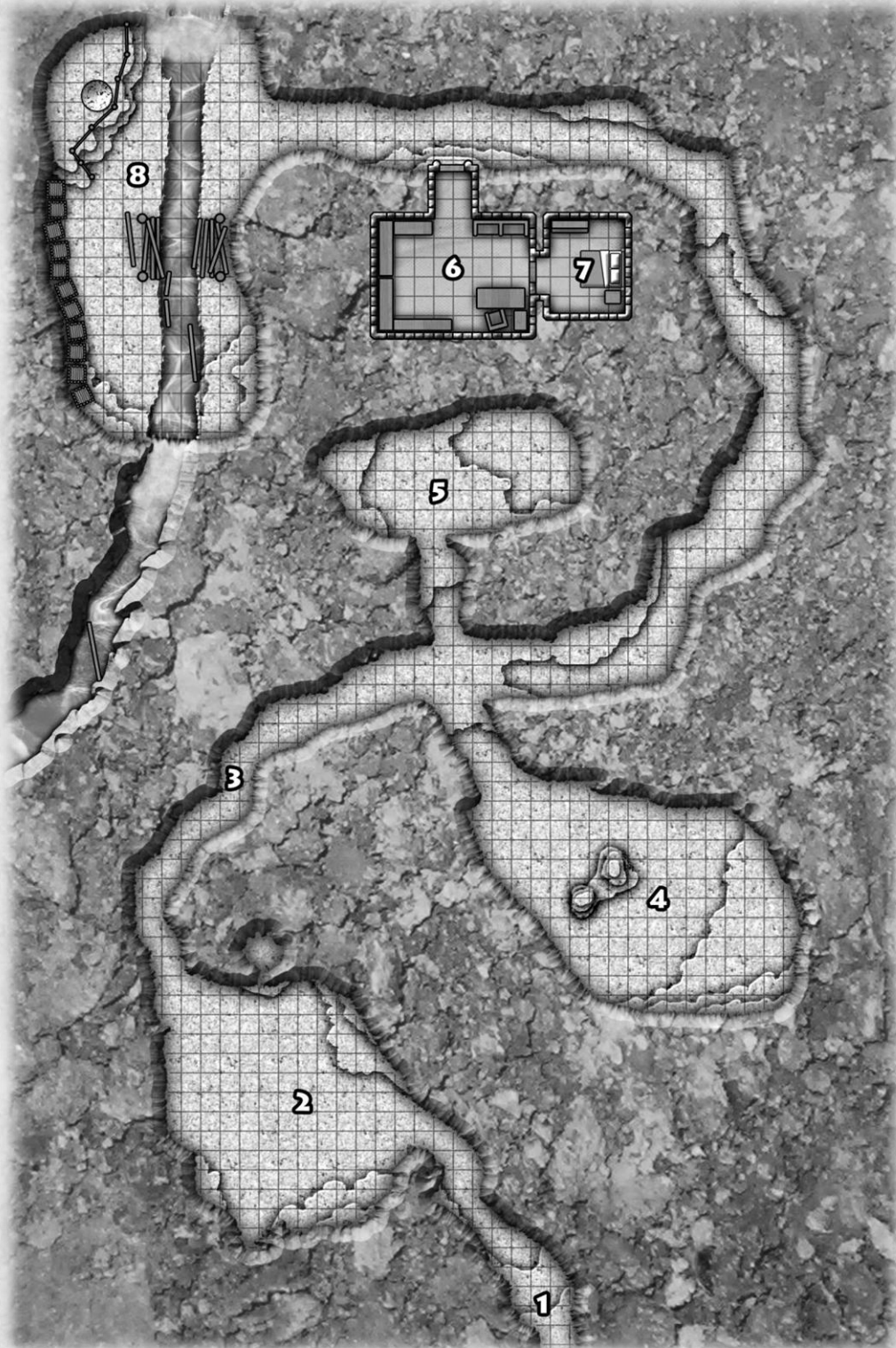
13 Kitchen – This is an unremarkable kitchen with old, tarnished fixtures and furnishings. The once dusty floor has a path worn into its middle, showing a great deal of passage through this room. A hidden door in the northeast corner (hidden behind a musty tapestry) leads to a staircase to the underground chamber. See area 1 of the Underground Chamber, below.

WHERE DO WE GO NOW?!

GAMEMASTER TIPS

One of the most frustrating things for a group of players is when you, as GM, present a situation where the players would have no way to know what to do. For instance, how the heck do they know the concealed door in the kitchen leads to the final encounter caverns?

If players seem to lose their way, consider having the screams of the dwarves being consumed by the summoning ritual echo through the keep and lead the characters to the kitchen. Or maybe they can interrogate a goblin to get the information they need. If all else fails, G’eof can lead them but use this last tactic carefully. Players hate to feel like they had little role in the solution to an adventure.



UNDERGROUND CHAMBER

At the back of the kitchen is a hidden door that eventually leads to Kalak where he is in the middle of performing a summoning ritual. Once the door is opened and the staircase is revealed, the characters will hear distant loud chanting and screams.

1 Stairs – Stairs have been roughly hewn into the dirt and eventually turn to rock. There is no light. The bottom of the stairs leads to an antechamber. Kalak hung a magical rune trap over the entrance to the antechamber. If the correct passphrase, “Hail Master Kalak!” is not uttered in english within 2 spaces of the rune it will shriek loudly for six turns. A character can attempt a DEX check -20 to leap, grab the rune and stuff it in a bag; or the rune can be destroyed by causing 10 points of damage in a single hit. If the rune is set off there is a 50% chance of attracting 2 huge spiders located in area 2.

2 Antechamber – This area appears carved by hand. Characters will notice deep grooves all over the chamber, obviously from someone skilled in masonry. Spider webs fill the roof of this chamber. Assuming the characters did not attract the spiders from this chamber, they will be hidden in the webbing.

One of the spiders will drop silently in two turns from the ceiling using a web strand in a darkened shadow, the other one will drop down on an unlucky character. Allow the characters a LOG check to perceive the spiders.

Assuming the party has torches, they will notice light glittering from inside a small opening in the wall as they walk towards the opening to the tunnel (area 3). If the party does not have torches, dwarves will notice round heat sources. Nestled into the wall is a small cave, the entrance is large enough for a Halfling to enter. The cave holds large spider eggs the size of a gallon jug, their shells glisten with mucus that has hardened to the egg and cave floor. Cracking the mucus might draw the attention of more spiders!

3 Tunnel – Eight goblins have been magically melded into the walls of a narrow section of this tunnel. Kalak's other goblins only work for him because he threatens to do this to them as well. Only their arms stick out from the wall, each bearing a sharp melee weapon. Mud

Spider (Rank 3)

STR: 45 BP: 35

DEX: 80 INIT: 2

LOG: 40 DR: 2

WIL: 60 MOV: 16



- » **Poison Bite** 75%, duration continuous, resist STR-10 (poison), effect 2D and poisoned (slowed and dazed).
- » **Web Sling** 70%, range 10, resist DEX, effect immobilized, STR-20 breaks webs.

WHAT DO THEY KNOW?

GAMEMASTER TIPS

How much do characters know about magical creatures and nightmarish monsters? Scouts are familiar with flora and fauna in wooded realms, open plains mountain side, etc. Do they possess knowledge of dark creatures? If they're new to adventuring (this adventure is for rank 1-2 characters) you could assume they have little knowledge of such things.

The Eggs: It's obvious these are huge spider eggs. What characters may not know is their value to the scholarly study, magical properties or market value. Perhaps grant them a Scout-30 check to see if they know anything. Success would tell the scout an approximate time the eggs will hatch, how to care for them and how much they are worth to interested parties. Of course it would be fun if they hatched on the return trip.

has been packed around each arm to hide it. A passphrase (“Bitter sweet in thy bowels”) when spoken deactivates the trap long enough for a small group to pass. The goblins cannot be charmed, however they can be dispelled, transformed, or transported (or even pulled from wall with a STR-20 check). Goblins that are pulled from the wall will remain immobile for 1D turns. If they are not dispatched (chopping them into pieces or removing their weapon arms) the mud and clay covered goblins will animate, brandishing their weapons and attacking the characters. If the party has moved to the next chamber, the goblins shamle towards Kalak to protect him. Nothing can remove the weapon save cutting the arm from the body.

Goblin Wall Trap (Rank: 2)

- » **Avoid** none; **Notice** LOG-40; **Disarm** (See above); **Resist** DEX-20; **Effect** 2D+2; goblin wall makes 2 attacks against each character

Animated Goblin (Rank 1)

STR: 60	BP: 10
DEX: 50	INIT: 1
LOG: 0	DR: 0
WIL: 0	MOV: 6

- » **Shortsword** 45%, damage 1D+4



4 Goblin’s Sleeping Area – Several dirty and smelly straw beds line the walls of this cave, half of them have tattered blankets with dark stains. Two wood benches and a large rock table covered in rotting food rest in the middle. 190gp can be found in this room hidden in nooks in the wall, under disgusting beds, in the pockets of garments hung on jagged metal hooks, etc. It will take a while to find every last piece.

Lying in a pile are mining tools and supplies used to clear some of the passages. Makeshift weapons could be fashioned that would cause 2D damage, however when used as such they will fall apart on a critical failure roll. Searching through the pile will reveal two dwarven skeletons not fully disassembled.

5 Store Room – Shelves put together with saplings and twine hold an assortment of foods, spices, caskets of mead, oil flasks, etc. Salted pork hangs from ceiling. It is clear this food is intended for Kalak. Wise characters will restock their supplies from the long trip from Dul’Urich Underkingdom. If cut up and wrapped, it could provide 3D days of rations for one person (or 1D for 3 people, etc.).

6 Kalak’s Study – This study and adjacent sleeping area have been hewn from the rock, obviously new construction. The stone ceiling is reinforced with strong supporting timber, it even has a fireplace. While experimenting with the Slaving Stone Kalak use the captive dwarves to excavate and construct these rooms.

A large makeshift desk sits in the middle of this room. Large tables to each side are covered with candles, maps and books. A small chest contains quills, ink, candles, parchment and a whistle.

7 Kalak Sleeping Area – This well-lit room features standup lanterns in the four corners. A finely crafted bed sits against the wall, the covers hastily thrown to one end of the bed. An enchanter will recognize the runes carved in the bed posts allow a character to rest for 4 hours as though it were 8 and heal 2D each hour.

A clothing drawer filled with Kalak’s belongings rests at the foot of the bed. It contains changes of clothes, jewelry (worth 10gp), and a deed to a silver mine valued at 1,000gp. To keep prying goblin hands out of his belongings Kalak placed scorpions in one of the drawers. There is a 60% chance one or more will strike anyone rummaging through the drawers. **Poison** – duration continuous, resist STR, effect dazed.

8 Ritual Chamber – This is the final encounter of the adventure, and will decide many things. If Kalak is defeated before he finishes the ritual, the wizard will be robbed of his believed destiny. If Kalak is not defeated before the ritual is complete, the dragon will be released and it and Kalak will usher in a new era of terror on the kingdoms. Read or paraphrase the following as characters enter.

Amber light is shed by large hovering lamps 2 spaces above the floor. A strong stream roars through the earth and divides the chamber in two. On the west side of the chamber is series of eleven cages filled with immobile dwarves. It does not appear to be crafted to keep them in but to keep people out. Three of the cages hold dwarves which appear collapsed and dried-up, lifeless. The rest contain dwarves with white-covered eyes standing patiently and awaiting their turn to die. The prince is in the last cage, furthest from the dead dwarves.

Kalak's bony arms are raised high, his voice echoes throughout chamber, "Ala archet tira acca miloden!" Another dwarf collapses in screaming agony and is dead, his soul consumed by Kalak's chanting. Suddenly, an enormous clawed hand protrudes from the north wall from behind the waterfall's mists, flailing and flopping violently, reaching further and further towards where the characters stand.

FINAL ENCOUNTER

The River: Characters wading through the stream will need to make a STR+10 check to avoid being dragged under water and eventually underground!

The Platform: The north-west corner of this chamber has a raised area 4 spaces high. Rough cut stairs have been hewn into the rock to access the platform. At the top is an immense emerald stone which glows eerily green, wisps of smoky-white dwarven souls churning inside. The stone is recessed in a granite bowl. As long as Kalak is on the upraised platform behind the slaving stone he will be very difficult to target with ranged attacks (give a -60 penalty to any attempt due to cover, distance, and the mists from the waterfall).

Backup Arrives: Any remaining goblins which have not been encountered yet should now show up behind the characters to complicate the encounter.

Race Against Time: Each turn, as long as Kalak keeps casting, another dwarf soul will be taken. He therefore has six turns before only the prince remains. If the combat lasts a seventh turn then the prince will be dead as well and the dragon will be released from his prison.

THE ART OF THE RECURRING VILLAIN

GAMEMASTER TIPS

If you are planning to play the other two adventures in this series, Kalak must survive. His Survival Ring will see to it that, if defeated, his body will be transported somewhere safe for him to recover his wounds and live to fight another day.

For instance, if the characters defeat Kalak, they will find a loose pile of robes bereft of a corpse when they finally try to loot his body.

Even if you don't plan to play the other two adventures in this series, consider having Kalak get away anyway. Using a recurring villain in your adventures is a fun tactic to build exciting stories for your players. They get a great sense of accomplishment when they finally defeat him for good.



The Dragon's Arm: As the characters arrive, the dragon's hand and arm has been freed. It sweeps randomly around blindly and will attack one randomly-selected character (50%, damage 3D, range 6). The rest of the dragon won't be released until the ritual is complete.

Tactics: Kalak will do everything he can to avoid getting involved in the fight. He will hurl his *dagger of summoning* into the ground and it will flash and disappear, being replaced by a summoned creature – likely a vampire or something else which can summon additional creatures. He will also use his own summon spell calling creatures to appear next to the heroes. Kalak doesn't want to directly engage the heroes himself, since that might screw up his ritual. Remember Kalak has a *Survival Ring* (see Appendix) and this will help assure he survives to fight another day. Relying on his *survival ring* (and his perceived destiny), he will keep his attention on the ritual as much as possible.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

so they saved a dwarf prince and destroyed an evil mage – now what?

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

If Kalak unleashed the dragon, characters are probably hoofing it back to Dul'Urich Underkingdom to tell the king of the terrible events. If they were successful, characters can use the healing bed (in Kalak's sleeping area) on the surviving dwarves. However, tearing out a soul has a dire effect on the body and mind. If your characters decided to travel back to the underkingdom with the dwarves, travel will be very slow and some may not endure the trip. It might be better to leave the dwarves, travel back to the underkingdom and bring come back with horses, wagons and an armed guard. The dwarves should be safe in Kalak's chamber for a week or two. Reduce the traveling movement by half the number of leagues per day if any of the dwarf survivors (including Prince Dwalin) travel with the party.

If the characters befriended Sarin at the elf village they will be received with open arms. Sarin's folk have no reason to distrust Dul'Urich dwarves and this may be a good opportunity for one of the characters to become an ambassador between the underkingdom and Sarin's village.

You could simply say the characters bring the dwarves back to the underkingdom without incident; however a more realistic approach might be necessary. On page 12 is a random encounter table used for travelling in the desert. On the way back consider rolling on this table every two hexes instead of one. If characters end up in trouble a scouting party from Sarin's village might find the party and assist them.

WHO OWNS THE KEEP?

This decision lies with you, however here are some considerations. Herald Gal'Kut will be interested in a lost keep, especially if it is part of the underkingdom's territory. The king will want to reclaim it, to protect the pass to the Western Reaches and to guard their northern front. He may even pay for the discovery, especially if he is provided a map of the keep and notification of some of its pitfalls and traps.

If you decide the keep does not belong to the underkingdom, you might consider "gifting" it to the characters. At this stage of their adventuring career they will likely have insufficient funds to rebuild the keep. They might have to register their find at Dul'Urich or in Kingsbridge located in the Keranak Province (many of the records of the kingdoms are kept at the archives here). Registering their claim would ensure that the keep and its surrounding lands does indeed belong to the player characters. The players may not have the funds to restore and make residence in the keep yet, but they could profit from negotiating with scholars and historians who might wish to learn the mysteries of the ancient people who once called the place home.

APPENDIX

non-player characters, creatures, and magic items

G'EOF

Dwarven NPC Guide

STR:	70	BP:	40
DEX:	60	INIT:	1
LOG:	50	DR:	5
WIL:	45	MOV:	6

Rank:	2
Primary:	Scout
Secondary:	Warrior

Equipment:

- » purse with 82gp
- » survival pack
- » extra rations
- » repelling amulet
- » chainmail armor

Skills:

- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| » Scout (3) | 75% |
| » Thief (0) | 30% |
| » Warrior (1) | |
| - melee | 55% |
| - ranged | 50% |

Weapons:

- » Great axe - 55%, damage 3D+3
- » Unarmed - 55%, damage 1D/2+3

KALAK

Evil Human NPC Sorcerer

STR:	45	BP:	23
DEX:	65	INIT:	3
LOG:	75	DR:	0
WIL:	75	MOV:	8

Rank:	3
Primary:	Spellcaster
Secondary:	Scholar

Spells:

- » hinder
- » illusion
- » offensive strike
- » protection
- » summon
- » transport

Rituals:

- » slaving stone ritual

Skills:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| » Scholar (2) | 68% |
| » Scout (1) | 48% |
| » Spellcaster (2) | 78% |
| » Thief (0) | 33% |
| » Warrior (1) | |
| - melee | 33% |
| - ranged | 43% |

Weapons:

- » Dirk of Summon 33%, damage 1D (or thrown: 43%, 1D+2)
- » Unarmed - 33%, damage 1D/2

Equipment:

- » 100gp gem
- » two doses of Pixie Dust
- » survival ring
- » regal robes

CREATURES

There are several creatures used in this adventure. Most of them are described within the text rather than force you to flip to the appendix all the time. The creatures listed below are described only because more detail is required:

GOBLIN GOONS

Refer to Goblins on page 51 of the core rulebook. There are 3 goblins for each character. They patrol inside and outside in groups of 3. They mostly carry shortswords and one will have a shortbow. It's not uncommon for them to have spears as well, which they'll chuck at the first opportunity. Only the goblin leader, Sral, knows anglish to speak the passphrases for Kalak's traps. He is a better equipped, larger, and smarter goblin.



Goblin (Rank 1)

STR: 45 BP: 8

DEX: 50 INIT: 1

LOG: 35 DR: 0

WIL: 30 MOV: 6



- » **Shortsword** 45%, damage 1D+3
- » **Shortbow** 45%, damage 2D+1, range 60
- » **Spear** 45%, damage 2D+2, range 20

Sral, Goblin Leader (Rank 2)

STR: 60 BP: 20

DEX: 50 INIT: 1

LOG: 45 DR: 5

WIL: 50 MOV: 6



- » **Scimitar** 55%, damage 2D+1
- » **Crossbow** 45%, damage 2D+2, range 80
- » **Chainmail Armor** responsible for DR
- » **Shield** +20 to physical resistance checks

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

In addition to the scroll of light found in the ancient keep, the following magic items are new and described below for the first time.

PIXIE DUST

This rare dust is extracted from a pixie in a process that results in the pixie's demise. The technique of properly extracting it is known only to a few wizards, and they guard that information carefully.

The pixie dust can be sprinkled over a recently-cast illusion and causes the visible aspect of that illusion to be permanent until it comes into contact with a living being.

In this adventure, pixie dust is used to trap intruders at the entrance to the ancient keep. Kalak has two doses of this powder remaining on his body and characters may claim it if they defeat him.

SURVIVAL RING

This simple silver band has a red gemstone of unknown origin. Several survival rings are known to exist.

The owner can place the ring with a drop of his blood onto any solid surface and speak the word "home" in elven. From that point on – no matter how far the ring's owner travels – if he is reduced to 0 BP the ring will teleport him back to his "home." The ring doesn't guarantee the owner will survive, only that he will be teleported away from

danger and perhaps go uneaten. The wearer will arrive naked except for the ring, everything he was wearing or carrying left behind in a heap.

Kalak has a ring such as this and the characters won't be able to claim it since his body will be transported away along with it.

DIRK OF SUMMON

This dagger can be used as a normal dagger and causes 1D damage with a successful hit. If the owner wishes, he can hurl the dagger into the earth and imagine a creature (whose rank is no more than the character's). The dagger will disappear – destroyed by the magic released. The creature that was imagined will appear in its place and will immediately be charmed to defend the summoner.

Dirks of Summon are rare to find. Kalak acquired this one in the ruins of the keep and will use its summoning power in the final encounter to buy him time to complete the ritual. Since the dagger's power destroys the dagger, it is unlikely the characters will come into possession of it.

SLAVING STONE

This giant emerald-colored gemstone is nearly impossible for one man to carry around. It normally requires four men and some kind of sedan or cart. Kalak came to this ancient ruined keep to find this powerful artifact, and it has remained in the underground chamber since he can't move it.

The Slaving Stone found in this adventure is attuned to dwarven souls. Other stones may exist attuned to other species. A character with spellcasting levels can use the stone to enslave dwarves within 15 leagues. The dwarves can be controlled or summoned to appear before the controller (they do not teleport to the controller; they must journey across whatever distance separates the dwarves from the controller).

A more sinister capability of the device is that once the dwarves are summoned, they can be consumed to oblivion one at a time in a complex ritual and the consumed souls can feed immense power to the controller. In the case of this adventure, Kalak is trying to use the souls of the dwarves to free a dragon and bind it to his command.

DEALING WITH THE SLAVING STONE

GAMEMASTER TIPS

The Slaving Stone is an important part of this adventure, but if the characters defeat Kalak, what the heck should they do with the stone?

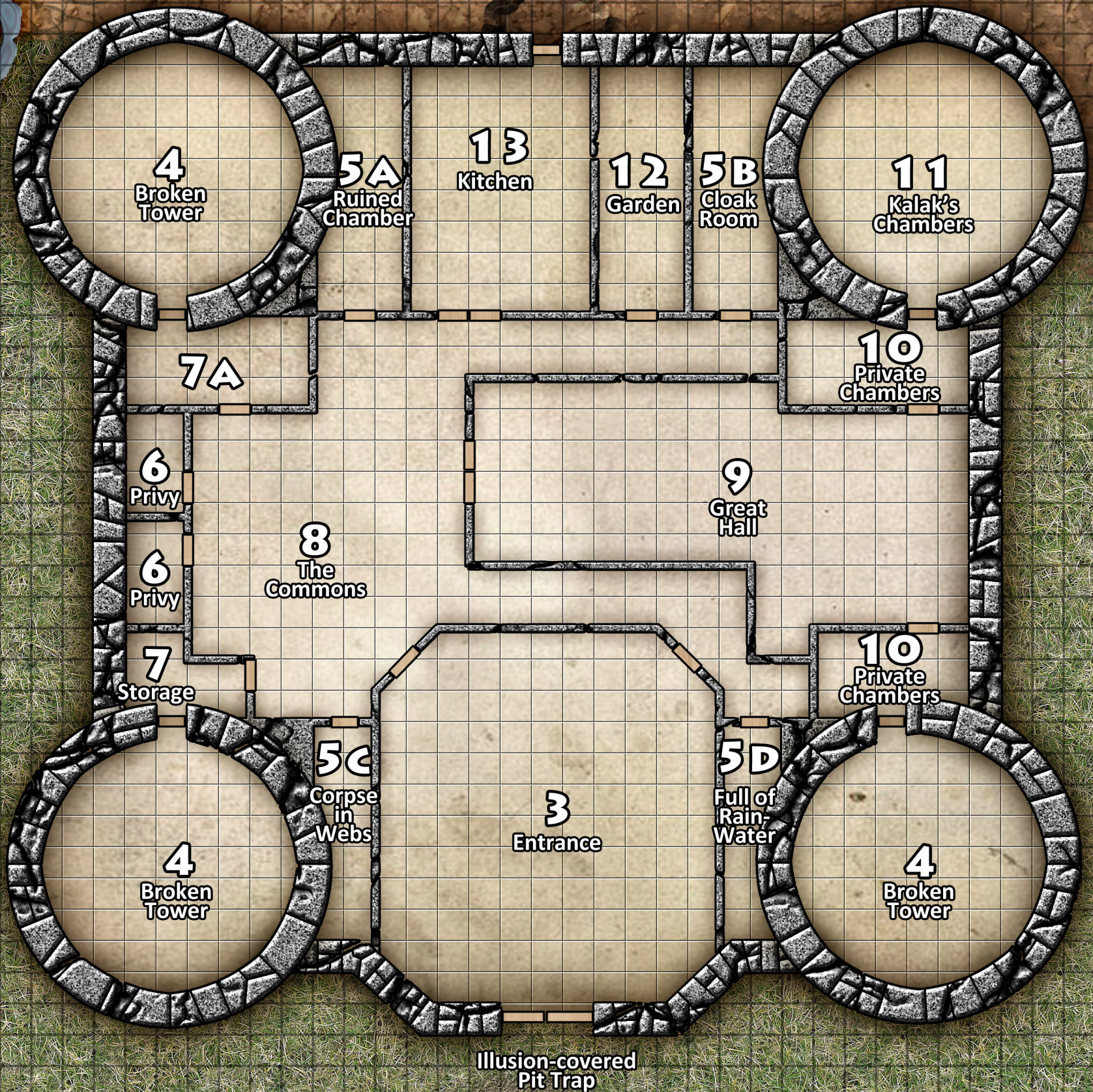
Anyone who tries to destroy it will find that it is impervious to harm. Not even a critical success rolled by a powerful character will even crack it. It is immune to any form of damage the characters can dish out.

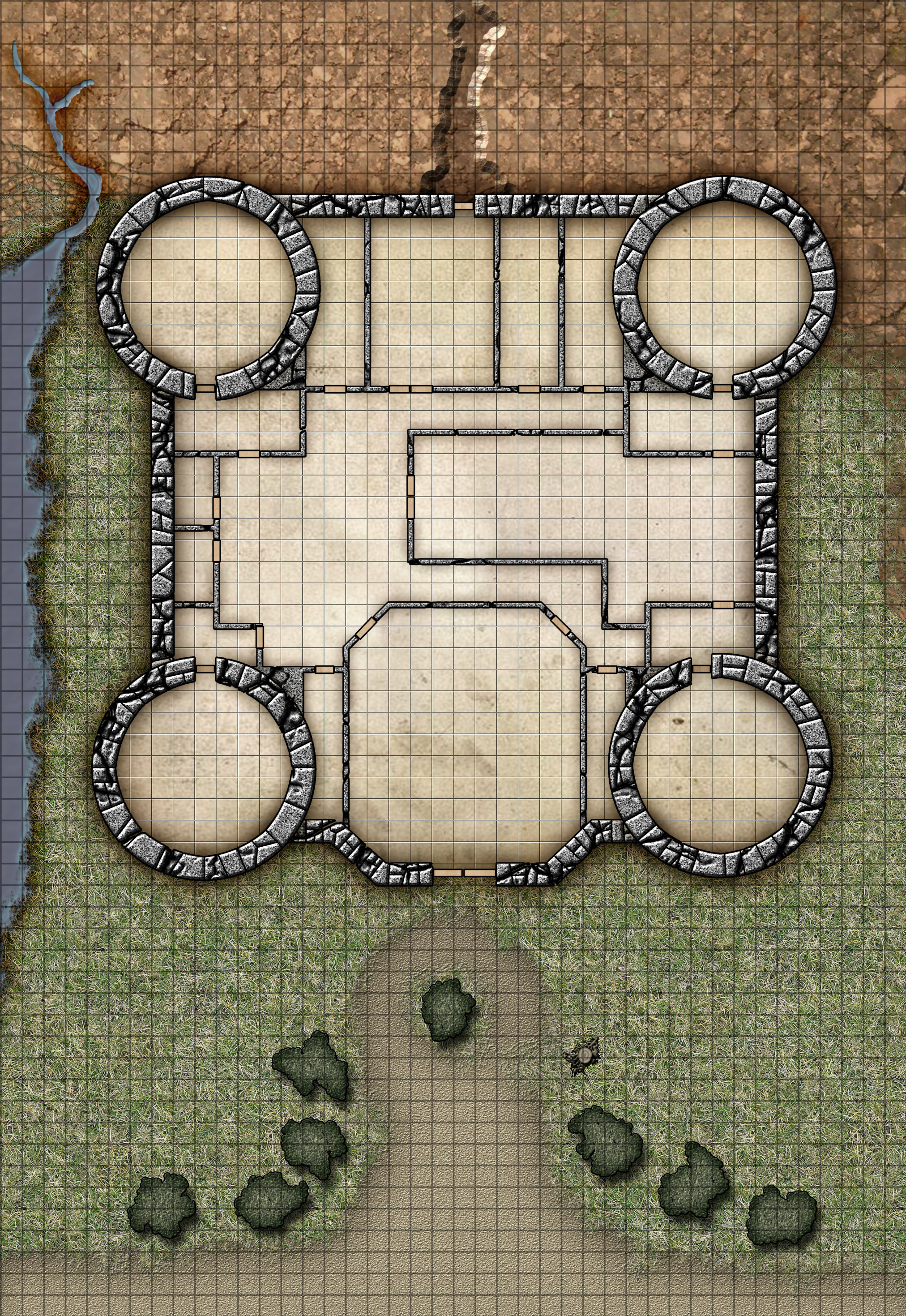
If the prince is returned to Eastgate, Gal'kut may insist the stone needs to be transported back to Eastgate to be kept from others who would use it to enslave his kind. This could be used as the basis for a follow-up mini-adventure, sending the characters back to the keep to fetch the stone. Enough wood can be salvaged from the ruins to construct something which allows four characters (or dwarves) to carry it. But when the stone is out in the open it becomes a lure for magical creatures attracted to the corruptive nature of its foul magic.

SOUL'S REACH

BY LARRY MOORE

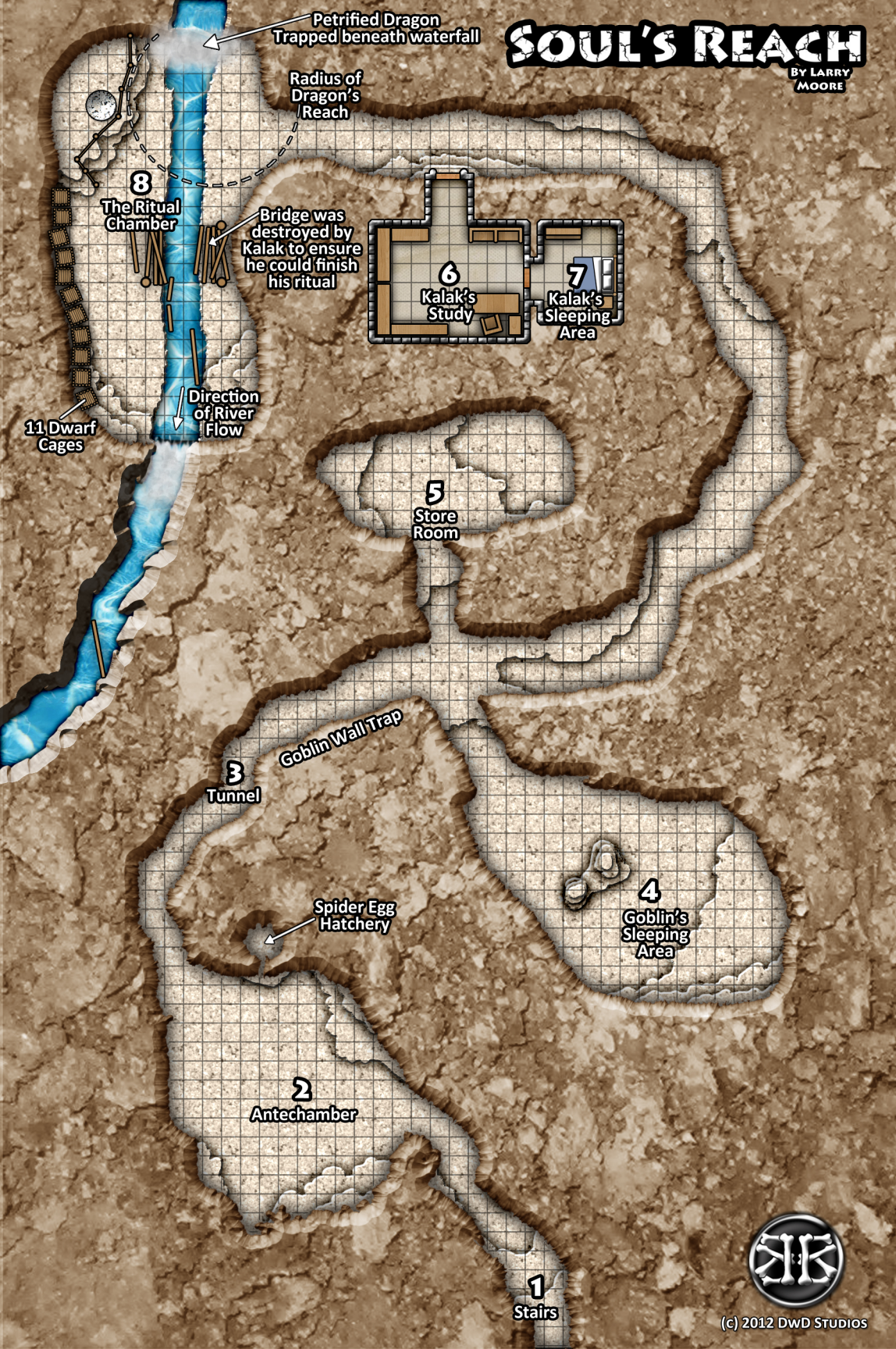
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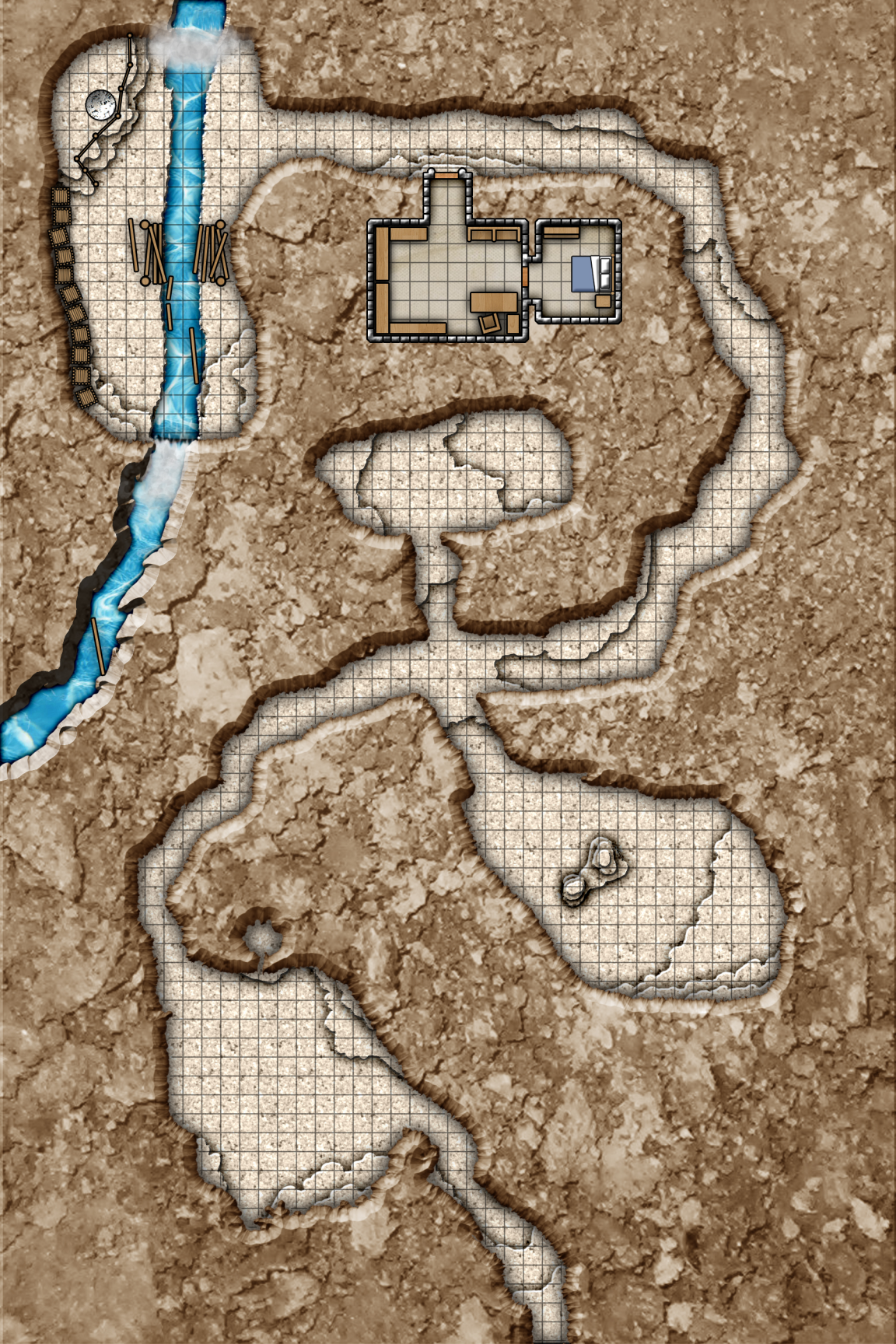


SOUL'S REACH

BY LARRY
MOORE



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SOUL'S REACH

BY LARRY
MOORE



When a tunnel collapses in the Dul'Urich Underkingdom, Prince Dwalin is sent to find a fabled pass in the north. Several days later his bloodguard returns beaten and malnourished claiming the prince and his band became dull of wit and disappeared sometime in the night. The news bodes heavily on the king's heart and he entrusts his Herald the task of finding his son.

Enter the characters. Herald Gal'kut hires you to find the Prince. This is no easy task, as the prince's path lies over the Laridian Wastes - an area teeming with harpies and hell hounds. Even if you think you're ready to find them, think again. Someone powerful has found them first, and if he succeeds in his foul plans the world will never be the same again.



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AN ADVENTURE FOR RANK 1 OR 2 CHARACTERS

