



LAST MARCH OF THE TYRANT WYRM



A dying red dragon walks on the edge between good and evil.
For the good of Faerun, you must fight for his life and redeem his soul.

JEAN LORBER & JEFF C. STEVENS

LAST MARCH OF THE TYRANT WYRM

A 5TH EDITION DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURE
FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF LEVELS 4TH-6TH

A crippled red dragon embroils the PCs in his suicidal plans. The dragon could be a valuable ally to Faerun's forces of Good and must be kept alive. The party will be caught between a dragon-worshipping Cult that wants the Red alive and a necromancer who wants him dead.

The dragon's ultimate redemption is in the PCs hands. For the good of Faerun, bring him into the light. Bahamut is waiting...

CREDITS

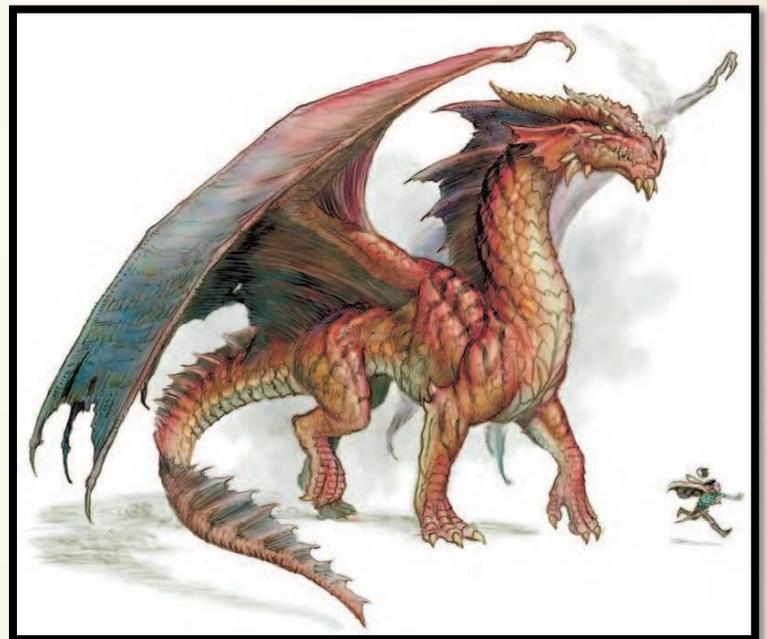
Design	Jean Lorber	@jlorber4
Developmental Editor	Christopher Sniezak	@thelight101
	Ken Carcas	
Editor	Ken Carcas	
Cover Art	Eric Jonasson	
Interior Art	Christopher Spence	@hominidart
	Penflower Ink	@tomfummo
	Daniel Walthall	@axebane
	CHGuise	@chguise
	Wizards of the Coast art resources	
Cartography	Jean Lorber	
Layout	Jeff C. Stevens	@jcorvinstevens
Page Background	Nimgyu (color and saturation changed)	
With special thanks to	Teos Abadia	

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREDITS	1	SECTION II. NECROMANCER’S TERRITORY	15
INTRODUCTION	3	Synopsis.....	15
Materials and Formatting	3	Traveling Tips	16
Story Overview.....	3	Mapped Locations.....	18
Adventure Goal: Redemption	4	Section 2 Wrap-Up	30
Character Hooks.....	4	Triggered Encounters in Section II	31
‘Tyranny of Dragons’ Hook.....	4	Random Encounters in Section II	36
Scaling the Challenges.....	4	SECTION III. NECROMANCER’S CAMP AND FINALE	42
BACKSTORY.....	5	Synopsis.....	43
A Dragon Changed	5	Before the Big Battle	43
A Minion Betrayed	5	Mapped location--Necromancer’s Camp	44
A Necromancer Rising.....	5	Running the Big Battle.....	49
RUNNING THE DRAGON	6	Triggered Encounters at Area 14.....	50
Dragon-powered PCs?	6	Post-Battle Consequences.....	52
Healing the Dragon	6	Other Mapped Locations.....	53
MAJOR DESIGN ELEMENTS.....	6	Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs	55
Redemption Dice.....	6	Appendix B: Magic Items	61
Kefleek’s Enchantment	6	Appendix C: Maps - see additional download material	
Detecting the Dragon.....	6	Appendix D: Illustrations & Handouts - see additional download material	
The Dragon’s Death	6		
SECTION I. IT BEGINS WITH A CRASH	7		
Synopsis	7		
Mapped Locations.....	7		
Section I Wrap-Up.....	14		



INTRODUCTION

“And what happened then? Well in Whoville, they say that the grinch’s small heart grew three sizes that day”

-‘How the Grinch Stole Christmas’, Dr. Seuss

‘*Last March of the Tyrant Wyrms*’ is an 8- to 12-hour adventure for a party of four to five characters of 4th - 6th level. It’s an adventure about redemption, and for that, you need someone worth redeeming. In D&D, what better creature than a red dragon?

To turn the dragon around, the adventure relies on a good dose on role-playing. Not to worry, you’ll still get to fight a tar-pit necromancer and battle the Cult of the Dragon. But this adventure is primarily about a journey of the spirit that the PCs undertake. Skills checks will suffice to move that journey along, but role-playing is how your PCs inspire others and maximize the fun of this scenario.

Adventure design elements help to facilitate story development and role-playing (e.g. Redemption Dice, encounters triggered by character growth) but be prepared to help your players focus on this important D&D pillar.

Materials and Formatting

To run this adventure, you’ll need the following 5th Edition Dungeons & Dragons books:

Player’s Handbook (**PHB**)
Monster Manual (**MM**)
Dungeon Master’s Guide (**DMG**)
Volo’s Guide to Monsters (**VGtM**)

There are several visual cues used in this document to call your attention to important features or bits of information:

- Major NPCs, monsters, or key features will be named in bold type the first time they are mentioned in the encounter—e.g. **kobold** or **secret door**, followed by the name of the source 5e book (MM).
- Some game mechanics are capitalized when they are mentioned, such as Inspiration, names of Actions, etc.
- When referenced, skill checks and saving throws are listed with the ability in all caps—e.g. a successful DC 13 WISDOM (Perception) check is needed to spot the trap.

Text in these boxes is meant to be read aloud to your PCs. Boxed text is used to set a scene, but many times it contains hints or clues about the upcoming encounter. If reading boxed text isn’t your style, make sure to relate the key information to your players.

Story Overview

SECTION I. The PCs are witnesses to the crash landing of a red dragon. A kobold minion speaks for the dragon and offers his hoard as payment for an escort to the dragon’s old lair, two days to the north. Through these interactions, the characters uncover the adventure’s central tension and their role in resolving it:

- The dragon wants to kill himself at his old lair.
- The dragon isn’t evil and secretly wishes for redemption.
- A band of good-aligned elves needs the dragon alive and is looking for him near his lair.

Thus, the PCs goals come into focus: **inspire the dragon** to redeem his evil past and **deliver him** safely to the elves. The first stop is an ruined illusionist’s tower, which yields dragon-cloaking items for the trip ahead.

SECTION II. With the dragon’s lair at Mount Carnass as their destination, the party must travel through the undead-filled territory of a necromancer. The necromancer aims to **kill the dragon** and re-animate his corpse for her own plans. The Cult of the Dragon also shows up, seeking to **revert the dragon** to his evil ways.

In the battle for the dragon’s mind, the PCs must first identify then remove an **enchantment** over the dragon, cast by the kobold to keep him docile. With the enchantment removed, the PCs can now improve the suicidal dragon’s mindset by seeking out encounters that have a redemptive theme. The PCs must balance their search for inspiring, redemptive acts with the looming dangers. A hunting blue dragon ensures that they don’t dally.

SECTION III. All paths to the dragon’s lair go through the necromancer’s camp, built around **tar pits** which she has been mining for skeletons. Whether surprised or lying in wait, the necromancer gives the PCs a mighty battle. The Cult also shows up to make one last attempt to re-awaken the dragon’s evil tendencies.

During this battle or the next, a **reckoning** of the dragon’s soul occurs. All the redemptive acts the PCs completed along the way will play a pivotal role in the reckoning. If the PCs are inspiring enough, Bahamut himself shows up to redeem the red dragon in a unique way.

A final challenge comes as the PCs must travel further to reach the elves and are ambushed by the rival blue dragon. But if they’ve honored the adventure’s theme of redemption, they’ll have some powerful boons from Bahamut. A touching reunion concludes the adventure.

Adventure Goal: Redemption

Scoriaptrak will face an ultimate decision towards the end of the adventure whether to embrace Good or revert to Evil. The PCs will play a deciding role in that decision; the more they have emphasized and acted on the themes of redemption, atonement, and altruism, the greater their influence is over the dragon.

Planned encounters involving these themes are spread throughout the adventure, but your PCs may create others. Whatever the situation, think about whether your players' ideas of redemptive action would sway someone to truly change, either through bravery, kindness, or true, pure conviction. Think of Gandalf, cautioning Frodo against killing the wretched Gollum because of some echo of good within him. Think of Luke, trusting that his father would save him and tossing aside his lightsaber in front of the Emperor. If your players are having their characters creating moments like these, reward them!

Character Hooks

Drawing the characters into the adventure isn't an issue since it literally crashes into them. But keeping them invested...well, that's where these hooks come in:

For the Good of Faerun. Early on, the PCs receive signs from a good-aligned faction or deity that the dragon is important. A similarly-aligned PC might feel obligated to protect the dragon from the world and himself. To encourage this thinking, ask your players to give one reason why their PC would want to protect the dragon.

Seeking Redemption/the Righteous. Any PCs with these themes in their backstory or class might feel sympathetic towards the dragon and therefore be eager to help redeem him.

Acquire Key Campaign Information. The dragon's knowledge could come in handy in dealing with a villain or plot plaguing your ongoing campaign. Hinting that the dragon has pertinent information for the characters should draw their attention.

'Tyranny of Dragons' Hook

This adventure is easily fit into the *Tyranny of Dragons/Hoard of the Dragon Queen* (HotDQ) campaign. In HotDQ's Episode 4, the PCs are required to make a multi-day journey from Greenest to Elturel to track the Cult of the Dragon's hoard caravan. The original campaign suggests that this journey is uneventful--a perfect place to crash-land a red dragon! The wooded region of this adventure stands in nicely for the Reaching Woods and Mount Carnass for the

Sunset Mountains. This adventure, involving the redemption of a red dragon, could give the PCs a meaningful ally and source of information further along in their campaign.

Scaling the Challenges

Using the new encounter-building guidelines in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* (Chapter 2), this adventure is calibrated for a party of four, 5th level characters. Here's what that means:

- There will be around 6-8 encounters per day
- Most encounters contain creatures/hazards/traps that add up to around four PCs worth of challenge for 5th level characters. A handful of key encounters have a higher level of challenge. In these cases, the adventure grants extra benefits to the PCs, or they need to figure out non-combat ways to navigate the obstacle.

IF YOU FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE...

THEME

Redemption of a formerly-evil creature.

GOALS

Inspire the dragon to ally with the Forces of Good. Deliver the dragon to a band of elves, located beyond Mount Carnass.

FACTIONS

Cult of the Dragon. They want the dragon **ALIVE!** They wish to worship Scoriaptrak and help him re-build an evil empire.

NECROMANCER. SHE WANTS THE DRAGON **DEAD!** She wishes to reanimate the dragon's corpse and terrorize the region with it.

FOREST ELVES AND BAHAMUT. They want the dragon **ALIVE!**

An elven druid knew of the dragon's changed heart and valuable knowledge, and his tribe now seeks the dragon to offer him a home. Bahamut heard the druid's prayers and seeks to facilitate the dragon's change.

SECRETS

THE DRAGON AIN'T EVIL. The dragon was traumatized and crippled by a long imprisonment, but it changed him. He wants to be good now but feels his evil past makes that impossible. Despair has taken over and he seeks his own death.

THE KOBOLD IS IN CONTROL. The kobold has enchanted the dragon and wants to revive his master's evil nature. He drives their current mission to Mount Carnass and will not deviate from it until he is defeated.



BACKSTORY

A Dragon Changed

Scoriaptrak used to be a typical red dragon: he ruled over a section of Faerun as a despot, amassing gold, knowledge, and power through fear and violence. But decades ago, a mighty wizard brought the dragon low, **imprisoning him** in a small cell deep underground. An **elfen druid** named **Myoris** was tossed in for sport.

The wizard began testing the limits of the dragon's body and mind. Torture, in other words, all the while making orderly notes. The regimen of pain was repeated daily, for years, with only the druid Myoris as a witness.

As the prisoners' world shrank to the size of their cramped cell, Scoriaptrak and Myoris forged a bond, out of a need at first. The dragon needed distraction, with the druid being happy to provide it by telling the epic stories of elven heroes and villains. Their companionship grew and Myoris came to love the dragon and prayed to **Bahamut** every day to grant Scoriaptrak some relief. In that small, moldy cell, Scoriaptrak weakened and lost his hunger for destruction and domination. In short, **he became something other than a red dragon.**

But one day, their captor did not appear. Food and basic needs continued to be met by automated magics, but their captor was never seen again. They heard muffled explosions and roaring once, but the noises faded, and they were left with only each other's company. *Thirty long years passed.* Only last month, the druid's kin finally found the prison and liberated their long-lost elder. Myoris told his people to spare the dragon, knowing that the dragon's deep knowledge of the Realms' villains could prove useful. Scoriaptrak was overwhelmed by the sudden change: he roared at the elves then fled.

The dragon returned to a former lair only to find it almost empty; **a devoted kobold named Kefleek** had maintained a lonely vigil these many years. Scoriaptrak was weak, listless and uninterested in re-building his empire. He soon received a message from the elves that Myoris, weakened from his imprisonment, had passed away. Overwhelmed by an unfamiliar sense of loss and grief,

combined with his own self-loathing, the dragon's depression became terminal: he contemplated suicide.

A Minion Betrayed

Kefleek's joy at reuniting with his master soon turned to shock, then disgust; his "... *dreaded tyrant wyrm* ..." had become a withered shell of his former evil self. In desperation, Kefleek reached out to the **Cult of the Dragon** for help. The Cult was skeptical whether the red dragon had actually returned but agreed to meet at the former seat of the dragon's domain: Mount Carnass.

However, the depressed dragon wouldn't budge. Furious, Kefleek drew on previously-unknown sorcerous powers and **enchanted the dragon** to do his bidding. His tenuous hold on Scoriaptrak was enabled by the dragon's low state of mind. Drunk on power, the kobold commanded Scoriaptrak to travel to Mount Carnass, keeping the Cult's involvement a secret. He would renew the dragon's evil heart, or they would die trying.

But Kefleek's plans were shattered during their flight to Mount Carnass as they were attacked by an ambitious, young blue dragon. Emaciated and weak, Scoriaptrak received grievous wounds but managed to escape. The attack occurred just minutes ago, and his endurance has finally run out. He is plummeting to the ground this very moment!

A Necromancer Rising

A year ago, an aspiring necromancer named **Rhezicora** noticed the red dragon's absence and took up residence in the shadow of his old lair at Mount Carnass. She became obsessed with natural tar pits, thereafter raising the skeletons of long-dead, ancient creatures. She hired minions and captured an entire village to be her slave labor. Once her skeleton army is complete, she will set out to conquer the nearest kingdom.

WHY THIS MATTERS: The dragon and kobolds' past and secrets are driving the plot. Uncovering their past and secrets allows the adventurers to understand their true motivations and inspire them to embrace life instead of evil.

RUNNING THE DRAGON

This section has details about the dragon's personality and suggestions for how he fits into the adventure. To begin with, he is an emotional and physical mess of a dragon. Underneath his pain is the true change in heart he underwent during imprisonment, including a shift to Chaotic Neutral.

Enchanted. Kefleek's enchantment keeps Scoriaptrak confused and docile, similar to a sleepwalker. He'll look to Kefleek to deliver anything more than a few words.

Depressed. Scoriaptrak's depression stems from regret of his past evil deeds and the recent loss of his only friend Myoris; he sees no way to make amends and sees no value in living.

Impressionable. Anything the PCs can do to show that redemption is possible helps inspire the dragon to change. Witnessing and completing redemptive acts improve his outlook. His malleable state of mind can also be a liability: the Cult of the Dragon attempts to re-awaken his evil nature.

Dragon-powered PCs?

With a red dragon on their side, some players might get the bright idea that they are now invincible. I can hear it now: "Why can't we fight 50 orcs?! We have a flippin' dragon!" Several features limit Scoriaptrak's involvement: he's enchanted, and mentally and physically fragile.

While Kefleek's enchantment is active, he insists that the PCs handle any dangerous business. Under dire circumstances, Kefleek may force Scoriaptrak to act. Once freed from the enchantment, the dragon is capable of choice, but his depression and self-loathing cause him to be disengaged. Until the PCs set a good example and inspire the dragon (see encounter T6), he does not act to benefit others. Once inspired, Scoriaptrak can be convinced to participate in a battle, especially one with a redemptive component. But even if the dragon joins a battle, he is not overly useful; he is without a breath weapon and prone to exhaustion (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs - Scoriaptrak).

Healing the Dragon

The dragon's weakness and loss of typical red dragon features are due to his long, torturous imprisonment. These conditions cannot be healed with any spell short of *regenerate*, a 7th level spell. The wounds from his recent attack can be healed, granting him hit points, but not reversing any feature listed in his stat block.

MAJOR DESIGN ELEMENTS

Redemption Dice

Redemption Dice are awarded by the DM and are designed to help characters inspire Scoriaptrak. The ultimate use of the dice are during pivotal encounters for Scoriaptrak's Redemption (Areas 14 and 15). Redemption Dice can be

earned in many encounters along the way by engaging with the encounters' redemptive theme. Examples include:

- Convincing a drunken knight to reclaim his birthright (Area 13).
- Accepting a curse from an afflicted child (Area 12).
- Simply holding an earnest conversation with some troublesome kids and the dragon about the nature of good and evil (Area 5).

Details about when a DM should award Redemption Dice are found in each relevant encounter's description. Once earned by a character, a Redemption Die can be used once on any skill check related to interacting with Scoriaptrak (e.g. a CHARISMA (Persuasion) check). Each player may use as many Redemption Dice as they want on a roll but must declare their intention to do so before the roll.

Some encounters include the possibility that Redemption Dice may be taken away; these typically involve situations where the PCs engage in uninspiring or unheroic behavior.

Kefleek's Enchantment

Kefleek's control of the dragon is achieved by the spell *dominate person* (5th level), augmented with a focus (a coin-see inset page 14) that grants him automatic success when using the spell on the dragon, and that extends the spell's duration to 8 hours. Dispelling the enchantment causes Kefleek to covertly recast the spell. Confronting Kefleek triggers the **Kefleek Revealed** encounter (page 33). Kefleek's enchantment blocks Scoriaptrak's ability to be inspired by the PCs; Redemption Dice can be earned, but not used, if Kefleek's enchantment is active. In this case, help the players sense their characters are on the right track, but that their efforts are being blocked by something magical.

Detecting the Dragon

If the dragon is seen on two separate occasions by the necromancer's faction, the necromancer herself is alerted. This triggers a specific encounter and gives her time to set up an ambush at her camp (see Area 14). Each opportunity for Detection is noted in the relevant encounter's description.

The Dragon's Death

The adventure actually counts on Scoriaptrak dying in Section III (in Area 14 or 15), as a necessary step towards a divine redemption. If his death occurs earlier, it cuts this story arc short. So, in Sections I and II, combat encounters are mostly focused on the PCs. If the dragon is close to death, consider re-directing monster attacks to the PCs. If the dragon is felled, the PCs feel a divine presence, and the dragon is revived to 1 hit point. This latter intervention should be used only once.

Whenever he is finally killed, the encounter **Make Peace with Your Dragon God** is triggered (page 51).

SECTION I. IT BEGINS WITH A CRASH

Synopsis

The PCs come across a kobold and an injured red dragon. The pair need to reach Mount Carnass and want to hire the PCs as a protective escort. The dragon is subdued and reveals that he intends to die once he reaches his destination. But the PCs uncover clues, messages, and incentives that should encourage them to help the dragon and keep him alive. Once their escort mission has begun, items for hiding the dragon during their journey are found at an illusionist's tower.

Mapped Locations

I. CRASH SITE

SETTING: On a trade road through a sparsely-settled region.

UTILITY: Introduces major NPCs, the quest, and the adventure's goal of keeping the red dragon alive.

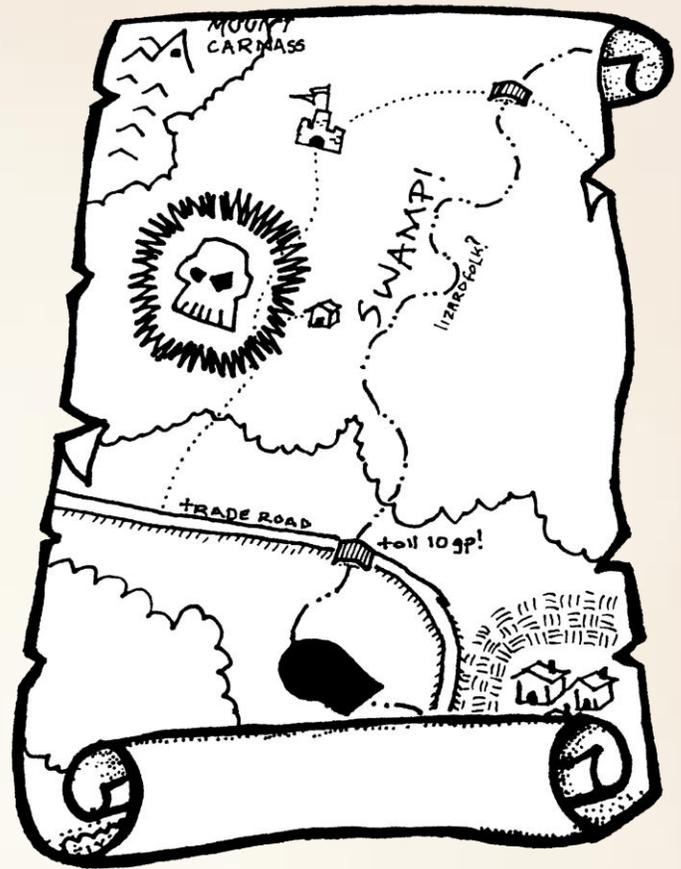
The adventure begins as the characters are traveling east along a trade road. An old merchant named Bodrin (neutral good male human **commoner**, MM) stops his wagon to ask a question about the road ahead; he's worried about undead. Show your players Map A (Appendix C: Maps) and inform them that they are to the west of the "trade road" label (left-middle the map). Bodrin has annotated the old map to reflect rumors of new undead and lizardfolk threats.

NOTE: Map A shows the major features of the region, as they used to be: the main trail the PCs will follow north to Mount Carnass (Area 16) is visible, as is the now-abandoned Blackwater village (Area 8) and now-ruined Twinpred castle (Area 12).

When you're ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following:

Bodrin stops mid-sentence and his eyes widen in terror as the sun is blotted out by something large overhead. Gouts of scalding blood sizzle in the dirt road, and you turn in time to glimpse a scaled hide rushing by mere feet above you. With a deafening crash, a red dragon plows into the nearby forest, knocking over trees as tall as towers. The dragon grinds to a halt, with the only sound now being the creaking of broken trees and a faint buzzing.

The buzzing is a disturbed nest of 15 **stirges** (MM), located in the southwest corner of the map. If the PCs investigate the buzzing, the stirges attack. Otherwise, they attack later (see page 10).



The red dragon is **Scoriaptrak** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs), who just escaped an attack from a rival blue dragon. He is unconscious, so allow the characters to investigate without fear of attack. The following information can be obtained:

- Any inspection reveals fresh, giant claw marks and a mostly-missing left-wing (rendering him flightless). A successful DC 9 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals the claw marks were made by a dragon.
- He is clearly emaciated, with shrunken muscles and loose scales.
- A successful DC 8 INTELLIGENCE (Medicine) check reveals that the dragon has horrific injuries that are older:
 - a broken leg which appears healed but twisted.
 - missing teeth.
 - broken and missing claws.
- A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the presence of a small saddle strapped in behind the dragon's right ear.

If the PCs decide to kill the dragon, inspect the dragon further, or leave, read or paraphrase the following:

“No-kill my dread lord!” screeches a small voice from somewhere around the dragon. A rickety old kobold emerges from under the dragon’s ear. It draws a dagger from a stuffed satchel and shakily waves it in your direction. A scroll case falls out of the satchel and lands at its feet.

“This Scoriaptrak, breaker of Crimson Coven, ruler of Sunset mountains, leveler of castles –(insert event/location from your own campaign if desired)—. Leave alone!” The old kobold stands firmly by the unconscious dragon.

The kobold is **Kefleek** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs), the dragon’s sole remaining subject. Kefleek is ancient by kobold standards and looks it: he is slow, and his eyes are clouded by cataracts. He perches on the small saddle during travel. Show your players Illustration A (see Appendix D: Player Handouts and Illustrations) when they meet Kefleek. See ‘But a Scroll Offers Redemption’ for more details about the scroll.

Kefleek’s physical infirmity belies his cunning and iron will: **he is controlling the dragon** with an enchantment and some old-fashioned emotional manipulation. Kefleek’s motivation right now is to get the dragon to Mount Carnass, so that they can meet with members from the Cult of the Dragon. Roleplay Kefleek as wary at first, but then solicitous of the PCs help:

- *“My lord tired; he go to rest in old lair.”*
- *“He no talk much now. (whispers) He not think right...”*
-taps his head knowingly-

A LUCRATIVE OFFER

He offers to pay them 100 gold pieces for an escort to the mountain. If pushed, he miserably offers the dragon’s hoard, but doesn’t specify its size. It is common knowledge that Mount Carnass used to be a red dragon’s lair. Bodrin, or a successful DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (History) check, reveals that it is thought to be empty now. A successful DC 15 WISDOM (Insight) check reveals that Kefleek isn’t being fully honest about the dragon, but he can’t be intimidated into saying more.

Once the PCs have interacted with Kefleek, are ready to kill the dragon, or just leave, run the next section to introduce the dragon.

Kefleek the kobold



THE DRAGON WANTS TO DIE

Scoriaptrak wakes before the PC’s attack (or leave). He is dazed, partially free from Kefleek’s enchantment. Read or paraphrase the following:

A massive ear twitches and the dragon slowly raises his head. Through clouded eyes, he looks over your party, then rumbles, *“I must end my life in that mountain...Help me reach it, and I will pay you.”* He motions to the prominent peak on the horizon.

Scoriaptrak’s motivation is indeed to reach Mount Carnass, where he plans on tossing himself into a deep chasm. He can answer only a few basic questions before passing out. The kobold’s hidden spite and loathing for him have seeped into the dragon’s mind, and flavor his slow, monotonic responses:

- Regarding his wounds: *“A blue did this...I was too weak...”*
- Regarding his plans: *“My life ends in Mount Carnass.”*
- Regarding his motivation: *“I am not a red dragon anymore. I am...nothing”*. He does not elaborate further.
- If asked, *“Why don’t I just kill you now?”* (or similar), he responds: *“Mount Carnass was where my empire was born. It must be where I die.”*

- If asked about the scroll from “M”, Scoriaptrak shuts his eyes in pain and Kefleek screeches, “*that not yours!*”. Neither says anything more on the subject, but the PCs now have Disadvantage on any CHARISMA-based checks with the pair for the rest of the day. Scoriaptrak will forget this interaction once Kefleek enchants him again.

The PCs have now been given 2 different stories by Kefleek and Scoriaptrak. The context for the stories and guidance about what to do are found in the form of a scroll and a supernatural sign.

BUT A SCROLL OFFERS REDEMPTION

The scroll at Kefleek’s feet offers details about the dragon’s history and why he should be helped. It was written by the elf Myoris before his recent death and shows the following:

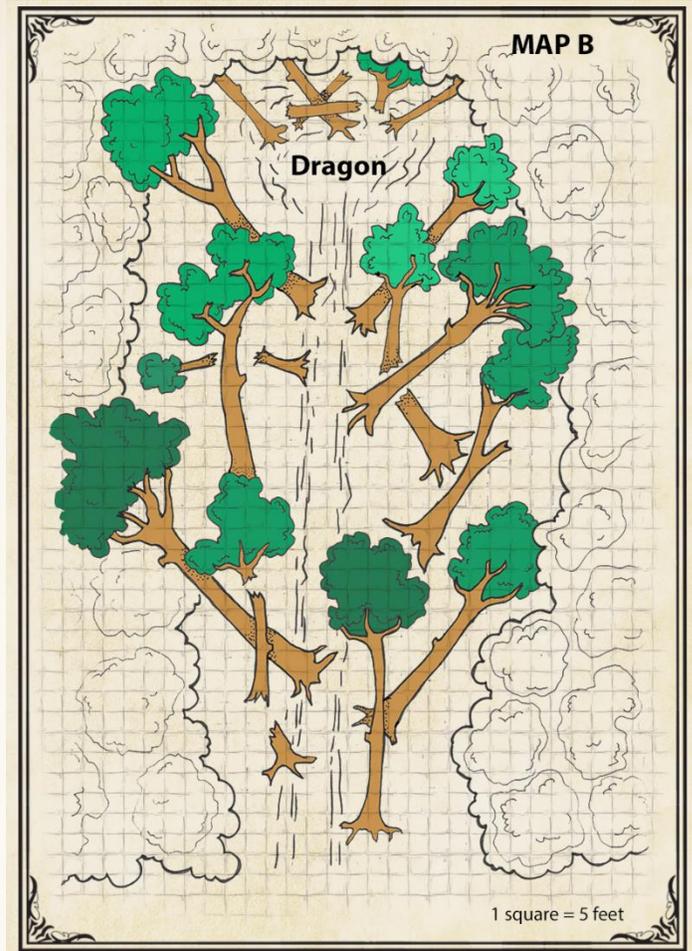
- That the dragon longs for redemption.
- That the elves are seeking the dragon.

So, if the PCs don’t steal the scroll now, make it visible at the next stop. If the PCs don’t pick up the scroll, they see Kefleek snatch it up nervously. A successful DC 10 DEXTERITY (Sleight of Hand) check and some distracting roleplaying are needed to separate the scroll case from Kefleek.

The scroll is made of magical, fire-resistant paper but the ink is only visible when fire is applied. A tag is attached to the case that reads, “*To read, use your gift*”, which is a clue to Scoriaptrak. The nature of the scroll and ink can also be discerned with a successful DC 13 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) check. If your PCs manage to acquire the scroll and activate the ink, give them Illustration B (see Appendix D). The letter reads as follows (in Elven or Common):

*“My dear friend,
After decades together, we parted suddenly and without a word. I will recover soon and seek you out. I know that you wish to make up for all your past wrongs. With all that you know of Faerun’s evils, there is much you can do for our land, much you can put right. Let that be your goal for your long years to come. Even as I write, dark shadows fly over the Great Forest. We could use your help to combat this evil. I wish your heart peace.”*

-M



Scoriaptrak is valuable to Faerun’s good-aligned factions (e.g. the Emerald Enclave) because of his knowledge of its villains and their long-term ‘Big Plans’. A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Insight) or INTELLIGENCE (History) check reveals these possibilities.

NOTE: The ‘dark shadows’ that Myoris refers to within the scroll does not show up in this adventure and could, therefore, be modified to fit a foe from your existing campaign.

If playing the ‘Hoard of the Dragon Queen’ campaign, Myoris is referring generally to the increase in activity of the Cult of the Dragon, but also specifically to attacks from the Cult-allied green dragon Chuth in the Misty Forest (Episode 4 in ‘Rise of Tiamat’).

A PLEA FOR HELP

To prompt the PCs, Myoris sends a sign from beyond the grave. After some interaction, or if the PCs decide to attack, read or paraphrase the following:

A raven hops out of the forest and alights on the dragon's neck. Unconcerned about this giant, apex predator, the raven hops up the dragon's body. It taps the dragon's snout and makes a series of loud squawks. *"Cwaap, cwaap! Dragon must stay ALIVE! Dragon GOOD! Cwaap!"*

This **raven** (MM) has been momentarily guided by the spirit of Myoris. If spoken with, the raven proudly admits it was possessed by an old elf spirit, but doesn't have any more useful information. It hitches a ride on someone's shoulder, if the PCs are interested. And it's hungry.

This encounter is important as the dragon's redemptive potential isn't visible just yet, and the raven's message will hopefully entice the characters to help. If needed, adapt the encounter by adding a similar message from whatever Higher Power is relevant to your PCs— proof of the dragon's worth. Ask your players to explore their PC's reaction to the situation with the prompt: *"What is one reason why your character would want to protect the dragon?"*

STIRGE ATTACK

If the PCs didn't investigate the buzzing sounds before (see Area 1-Crash Site above), the stirges attack now. Read or paraphrase the following:

The sound of the dragon's deep raspy breathing has been replaced by something else; the droning of many sets of wings. Kefleek grabs your hand and screeches *"You promise to protect! Do now! Do now!!"*

A nest of 15 **stirges** (MM) was disturbed by the dragon's crash, and the smell of blood has whipped them into a frenzy. Three **giant centipedes** (MM) are also attracted to the site. Show your players Map B (Appendix C: Maps) and inform them that their characters have 3 rounds to prepare any defenses.

TACTICS: The centipedes scuttle out of the forest from the north, which begins the encounter. Two stirges attack each character, and the rest fly to the dragon's wounds.

Scoriaptrak does not participate unless he reaches 20 hit points, at which time he sleepily swats at and kills 2 attacking creatures per round. In this case, any nearby PCs must also make a DC 10 DEXTERITY saving throw to avoid taking 10 bludgeoning damage.

NEXT STEPS

Once the stirge attack is over, Kefleek thanks the PCs and asks, *"You take us to mountain?"* If the characters accept the kobold's offer, remind everyone of Bodrin's map as they consider their options (Map A). The following are points to consider:

- Traveling off-trail isn't possible for the dragon due to his size (see page 17).
- The nearby trade road sees regular traffic, including heavily-armed patrols (4 **knights** and 2 **veterans**; MM) who might report back to the local Lord.
- Bodrin may also offer that the swamp will be slow-going (*"... it holds many dangerous lizardfolk who have dammed the river ..."*).

Kefleek suggests they head north on the trail towards Mount Carnass. He also suggests stopping at the Illusionist's Tower (Area 2) since the party will likely need magic to hide the dragon during their travels.

WHAT IF THE PARTY DON'T TAKE THE JOB?

If the PCs don't accept the job, Kefleek and the dragon limp to the Illusionist's Tower (Area 2). They discover the hobgoblin commander and hire his squad for escort duty.

This may result in the conclusion of the adventure, unless the DM can come up with another way to convince the characters to get involved. This section falls outside the scope of the adventure and, therefore, is left up to the ingenuity of the DM to solve.

2. ILLUSIONIST'S TOWER

SETTING: Overgrown field surrounded by forest.

UTILITY: The tower's second story holds magic items for camouflaging the dragon--useful for the road ahead.

BACKGROUND: This tower used to be home to the illusionist Ammodrammus. A few years ago, the illusionist was ambushed by a band of goblinoids. Caught unawares and gravely injured, he retreated to the top floor. Although he hastily constructed traps that repelled the attackers, his injuries didn't allow him to leave, eventually perishing behind his own defenses.

The PCs should hear about the tower from Kefleek: "My tyrant remember wizard tower up ahead. Scoriaptrak crush his dreams once, and he pay tribute. Many good hiding spells there." No one knows the current condition of tower.

When the PCs arrive, a hobgoblin-led team is probing the tower's defenses, revisiting the site where their tribemates failed years ago. Show your PCs Map C (Appendix C: Maps).

2A. TOWER EXTERIOR

When the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following:

A 50-foot tall tower sits in an overgrown field. The tower's stone surface is windowless, but an empty doorway is found at the base. Surrounding the tower is a dense field of red flowers, blowing in the breeze.

A large, dog-like creature stands at the outer edge of the flowers, its head hidden below the red blooms. A decaying, swampy smell fills the air, and the sound of hammering comes from within the tower.

Two permanent illusions are in effect here. The first illusion camouflages **two upper windows** to look like the surrounding stone. The second illusion is the 15 foot-wide **field of red flowers**—the area is actually a swamp-like moat with the following features:

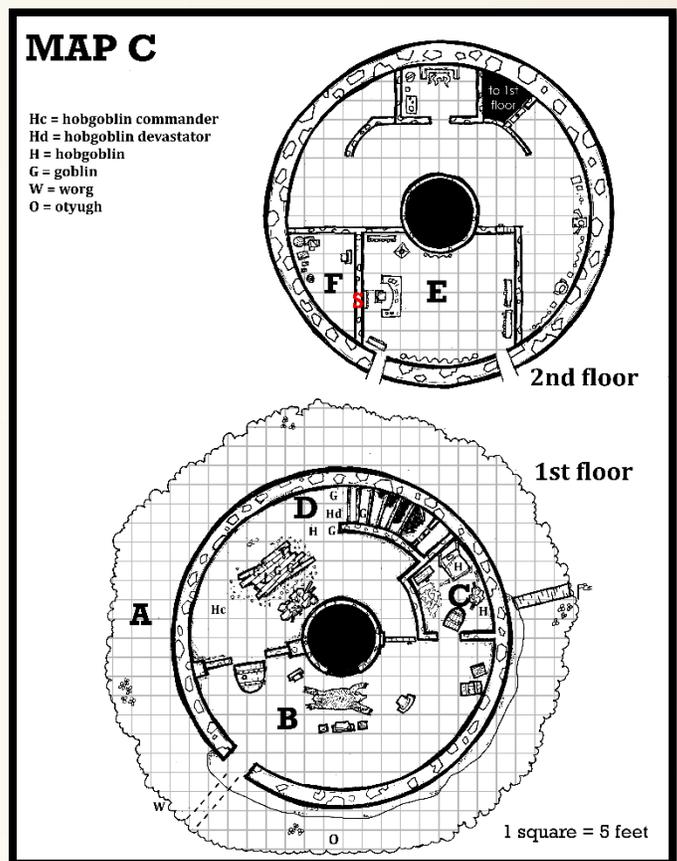
- The moat's surface is 10 feet down, and the muck-like water is 3 feet deep.
- The moat is home to an **otyugh** (MM), which has been waiting to grab a goblinoid. The otyugh is located at the six o'clock position in the moat, due south of the tower.
- Once within 10 feet of the moat, any character making a successful DC 10 (INTELLIGENCE) Nature check recognizes that the stench belongs to an otyugh.
- An illusory, 5 foot-wide **trail** through the flowers, leading to the tower's empty front doorway. Stepping onto the "trail" triggers a DC12 DEXTERITY saving throw to avoid immediately falling into the moat.
- A **small pole** sticking up out of the flowers (flag icon on the map to the east of the tower). This is a marker set by

the goblins to indicate the actual 5 foot-wide bridge across the moat.

- A 5-foot swath of solid ground around the outside of the tower connects the front door to the bridge.

Protective wards are in place that complicate any attempt to magically pierce these defenses:

- Casting *detect magic* at the tower reveals only the generalized presence of illusion magic.
- The DC for removing any illusion (e.g. with *dispel magic*) is 25, while the DC for seeing through the illusion is 17.
- A successful DC 14 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals that the flowers' swaying is not consistent with the surrounding winds.



GUARD DOG

The dog-like creature is a **worg** (MM); the trained mount of the hobgoblin commander currently inside the tower when the characters first arrive. The smell of the otyugh masks the adventurers' scent, negating the worg's *keen hearing and smell* (i.e. no Advantage on related checks). Once the box text is read, the worg makes an opposed WISDOM (Perception) check vs. the PCs DEXTERITY (Stealth) every round the party moves. If the worg prevails, it spins around and howls at the PCs, alerting the goblinoids inside.

2B. MAIN ROOM

If the goblinoids aren't alerted, read or paraphrase the following when the characters peer through the front door:

A large pile of junk has been pushed together in the middle of this room, held together with rickety wooden scaffolding which reaches to the ceiling. Three goblins are at the top of the pile, chopping the wooden ceiling beams.

To the left of the scaffolding, an armored hobgoblin sits on a makeshift seat, sipping a cup of steaming liquid. A faint tinkling of lovely music can be heard. At that sound, the hobgoblin yells in Common, "Shut your noise, Gleeek!"

The **hobgoblin commander** Muk-Chash (MM) is in charge. He is determined to reach the upper floor, and the wealth he assumes is there, but has been unable to get past the stairway trap (Area 2D). He'll sacrifice his goblins without a second thought but is more strategic when deploying his other troops.

He's directed some troops to disable the stairway trap and ordered three **goblins** (MM) to build a 20-foot-tall scaffolding (AC 12, HP 15) to break through the ceiling. If combat breaks out, the goblinoids in Areas 2C and 2D automatically detect it and attack, unless the PCs have taken extra precautions to keep it quiet.

Gleeek (a goblin) works on the scaffolding but is distracted by a music box that she has pilfered (from Area 2C). The underside of the box has an inscription: "for Ammadrea" which is the password for a magical item (see 2F. Secret Room – Treasure).

LET'S MAKE A DEAL

If the PCs are seen, Muk-chash orders shortbow volleys while barricading the door. But the glory-seeking hobgoblin devastator (see area 2D) disobeys and gleefully launches into a melee scum. If the devastator is killed, Muk-chash calls for a parley. Consider the following during the parley:

- He'll cooperate with the PCs, but demands 75% of the treasure found (he'll settle for 50%).
- If pushed for more, he offers to give his goblins to the PCs, to serve as slaves.
- If the music box is mentioned, Gleeek visibly squirms. A successful a DC 8 Wisdom (PERCEPTION) check reveals that she is hiding something from the party.

TREASURE: Muk-chash wields a *short sword* +1 and has a small chest with 200 gp in various coinage.

2C. AMMADREA'S ROOM

The room contains all the furnishings of an upper-class child's bedroom, decorated for the wizard's daughter, Ammadrea. Two **hobgoblins** (MM) are ransacking the room, looking for valuable items. The hobgoblins are focused on their search and have a passive Perception of 7, but they hear any sounds of combat if it breaks out.

Any WISDOM (Perception) check within the room reveals a broken, velvet-lined box that once held a music box.

2D. STAIRWAY TO SECOND FLOOR

When the PCs approach the staircase, read the following:

A narrow staircase curves upward around the edge of the room, its ending hidden behind a wall. Scorch marks cover the walls and the stairs' surface is pitted with small holes. A charred goblin corpse is splayed at the bottom of the stairs.

A landing at the top of the stairs holds one of Ammodrammus' traps. Within sight of Muk-Chash, a **hobgoblin devastator** (VGtM) leads the attempt to disable the trap, along with a **hobgoblin** and three **goblins** (MM). They haven't made any progress. The charred corpse holds nothing of value.

Ammodrammus' trap is located in front of the doorway and is designed to play on the weakness of his goblin attackers: **greed**. The adventurers can use that fact to deduce the nature of the trap and disarm it. As a creature reaches the mid-point of the stairs, an illusory chest and image appears. Read the following:

A translucent green figure appears in front of the chest, a wizard by the looks of him. He speaks deliberately, as if to a child: "You greedy and selfish creatures have trapped me. Well done, you win! But only a true goblin can have what's in my treasure chest. Just answer two questions..."

The figure leans towards the topmost humanoid on the steps and whispers, "Who of you gets my gold? And how much do they get?" He waits for a response.



TRAP: THE CHEST OF COSTLY GREED

TRIGGER: A creature reaches the mid-point of the stairs.

EFFECT: An illusory chest appears at the top, as does an image which poses the questions above.

SOLUTION: If the likely “goblin answers” are spoken (“I get gold” and “ALL gold!”), or a humanoid moves past the image, then a damaging spell is triggered; roll a d4 and consult the below table (all spells are cast at 3rd level).

- 1 *fireball*
- 2 *lightning bolt*
- 3 *melf's acid arrow*
- 4 *ice storm*

If non-greedy or non-selfish answers are given, the trap deactivates and the figure states: “*Based on your answers, I suppose you aren't goblins. It's safe to come up now. Please rescue me, I'm quite badly wounded. I'll be in...well, let's just say I'm behind in my studies.*”--a veiled reference to the secret room behind his bookshelf.

If no answers are given within a minute, the image disappears.

COUNTERMEASURES: Players could negate the trap with *dispel magic* (DC 16), but that won't trigger the second “easter egg” message that informs them about the secret room.

If a clue is needed about the trap's mechanics, a scrap of the spell's scroll is visible at the base of the stairs. To anyone trained in Arcana, it reads “...If speaker is 'greedy', then 'destroy'...”

Once past the trap, the PCs must still get past a locked, wooden door, requiring a successful DC 15 DEXTERITY check with thieves' tools.

TREASURE: A cubby in the wall holds a jerry-rigged arcane device that powers the trap, linked to a *ring of spell storing*. If removed, the ring holds 1 of the evocation spells listed above (DMs choice).



2E. SECOND FLOOR

This is Ammodrammus' personal space. A variety of heirlooms are displayed along the wall and a small kitchen is around the corner. The only door is unlocked and leads to his library. When inside, read or paraphrase the following:

The light from two windows reveals bookshelves and cubbies lining the spacious room.

A large tapestry hangs on the wall. It flickers then depicts several scenes, including a snowy mountaintop, a shady forest, then an exact match of the surrounding stone walls.

The windows are real, made of glass, but hidden by illusion when viewed from outside. Each window is trapped from outside entry (see **Trap: Glyph of Warding** below).

TRAP: GLYPH OF WARDING

TRIGGER: A Medium or larger creature enters a window from the outside.

EFFECT: The glyph explodes doing 6d8 force damage to anyone with 5 feet of the window.

COUNTERMEASURES: Each glyph can be de-activated with a successful DC 17 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) check or by anyone trained in Arcana who spends an hour studying it. Failure on the check results in the activation of the trap.

A successful DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check reveals the secret door behind the desk.

TREASURE: A silken *tapestry of illusion* hangs on the wall, which can display a scene mimicking its surroundings, equivalent to the *major image* spell (see Appendix B: Magic Items).

The 15-foot square tapestry can partially cover the dragon; to be completely covered, he must curl up like a sleeping dog. In this state, he is detectable only with a successful DC 20 WISDOM (Perception) check. Kefleek suggests this trick if the adventurers don't think of it.

2F. SECRET ROOM

A bookshelf hides a door to this small room, where Ammodrammus eventually succumbed to his wounds. His skeleton holds a *book of fancies* that was intended as a gift for his daughter (the book's password is his daughter's name, found on the music box stolen by Gleek in Area 2B).

TREASURE: The *book of fancies* (see Appendix B: Magic Items) is a magical pop-up book portraying life-size, illusory scenes. An inscription on the inside cover reads: “*Only for my darling daughter*”.

Section I Wrap-Up

By the end of Section I, the characters should have a clear sense that **Scoriaptrak should be kept alive** and **that he secretly yearns for redemption**. Having these goals in mind will help the characters make decisions in Section II.

Two quick interactions below could be run to provide more insight into the dragon and kobold: a clue about Kefleek's enchantment (see **A Clue about Kefleek** below) and an illustration of the dragon's value (see **Deep Dragon Knowledge** below).

A CLUE ABOUT KEFLEEK

As the PCs return from the tower, Kefleek is secretly refreshing his enchantment over the dragon. Inform the players that their characters notice a hushed conversation taking place between Kefleek and Scoriaptrak. If they don't immediately request and succeed on a DC 10 DEXTERITY (Stealth) or WISDOM (Perception) check, they are noticed, and the opportunity to observe the interaction is lost.

On a success above, the PCs witness the kobold holding a small object in the dragon's face and speaking in Draconic. Before any further checks can be requested, Kefleek notices the PCs, quits the conversation and hurriedly hides the 'something' from the characters view (it's a special coin—see inset).

After the interaction, a successful DC 10 WISDOM (Insight) check reveals that the dragon is now quite placid and the kobold a little flustered. If pressed about the interaction, Kefleek attempts to distract the characters with offers of knowledge (run the **Deep Dragon Knowledge** encounter). If that doesn't work, Kefleek hops into the dragon's mouth and wishes the party a muffled "... *good night ...*". If pressed further, he'll lie and say that he was just showing the dragon his favorite coin; Scoriaptrak placidly agrees.

If needed, refer to **Kefleek Revealed** (page 33) for details about Kefleek's enchantment and how to break it. Note that if Kefleek's spell is broken and he is confronted, this encounter is triggered.

A SINGLE COIN

A dragon without a hoard is prone to depression and anxiety. During Scoriaptrak's long imprisonment, the only coin he ever saw was a single copper carried by Myoris. The dragon became obsessed with the coin, staring at it for days on end. After being released, Myoris sent the coin to the dragon along with his letter.

Kefleek now uses the coin as an arcane focus; the dragon's obsession with the coin enables Kefleek's control of him.

DEEP DRAGON KNOWLEDGE

Kefleek wishes to illustrate the dragon's worth, either to keep the characters loyal or to distract them from inquiring about their whispered conversation.

"My master know much about evil boss plans around here. What you want know?"

Kefleek allows the PCs one question, hopefully about a villain from your ongoing campaign. Scoriaptrak listens to it all silently then Kefleek makes a big show of a whispered conversation. Scoriaptrak answers one question, slowly and with few words. Kefleek then says pointedly, *"Maybe he answer more tomorrow."*

Kefleek hops in the dragon's mouth (if not already there) and goes to sleep. The party has the night to think up their next move. Begin the next morning with **Section II**.

SECTION II. NECROMANCER'S TERRITORY

This section summarizing likely events in this region, followed by full descriptions of the locations, random encounters and triggered encounters. All locations reference Map D (see Appendix C: Maps).

Synopsis

With the dragon's redemption on their mind, the party must cross a region controlled by the necromancer Rhezicora, with all roads eventually ending at her camp. The entire trip should take 2-3 days; any longer and new threats loom large. The major tasks for the PCs are summarized in the **Encounter Summary and Utility** table below.

Stay out of Sight. If the party evades Rhezicora's gang, they will have advantages in Section III. But if the dragon is **Detected** on two separate occasions by her gang, the necromancer is alerted. Once alerted, Rhezicora has extra time to develop a plan to kill Scoriaptrak at her camp (see Section III, Area 14). Each opportunity for detection is noted in the relevant encounter's description.

Break Kefleek's Enchantment. Determining that Kefleek controls the dragon is an early challenge; his enchantment must be removed before the dragon can be inspired towards redemption. Kefleek's enchantment over the dragon is magical and psychological, and both elements must be broken.

Inspire Scoriaptrak. Once Kefleek's enchantment is broken, Scoriaptrak is still intent on suicide at Mount Carnass. However, he is now open to inspiration engineered by the characters. Many redemptive opportunities are available during the journey. Inspiration is mechanized using **Redemption Dice** (see **Section I, Major Design Elements, Redemption Dice** page 6), awarded to a character after completing a task that speaks to Scoriaptrak's inner struggle.

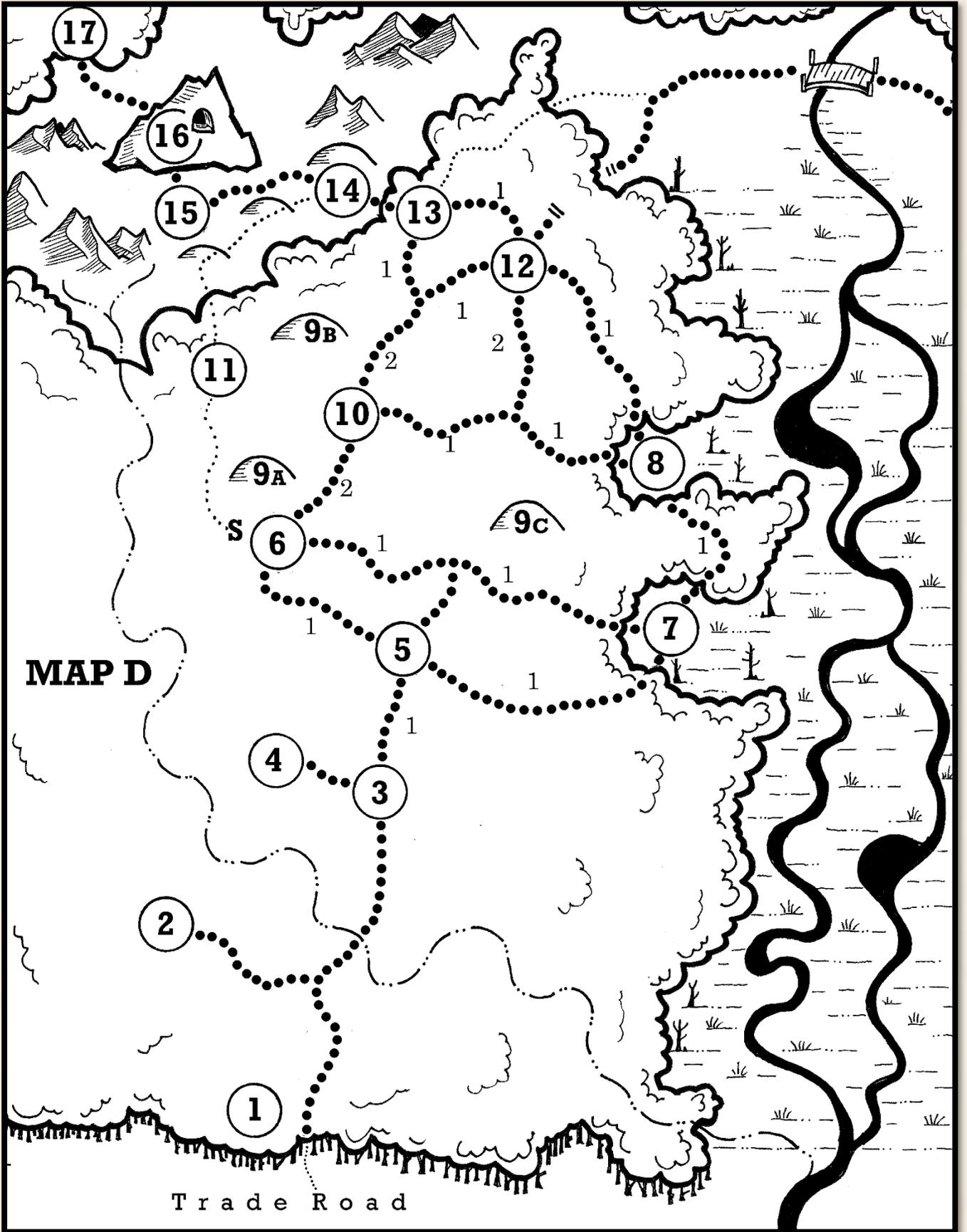
After the characters earn 5 Redemption Dice, the dragon is no longer suicidal. However the Cult of the Dragon soon shows up and tempts Scoriaptrak to revert to his evil ways. The dragon's struggle against depression now becomes a struggle between choosing good vs. evil.

The dragon's ultimate chance at redemption occurs when he dies, likely in Section III.

The likely story progression in Section II is encapsulated in the encounters below.

Encounter	Summary and Utility
Country Kids	Introduces Redemption Dice mechanic
A Grave Warning	Introduces the necromancer faction
Kefleek Revealed!	Identifies Kefleek as the mastermind. Removing his enchantment allows the PCs to begin inspiring the dragon. The dragon's depression remains as an obstacle to Redemption.
Various	The party must avoid Detection by the necromancer's network. The party must complete redemptive or altruistic acts to inspire Scoriaptrak (and gain Redemption Dice)
On the Path to Redemption	With multiple Redemptive acts, the PCs have inspired Scoriaptrak-he is no longer suicidal.
Kenku Cornered	The PCs learn of the elf/dragon connection have a new destination: Dygyrus Falls
Cult of the Dragon Intro	Introduces the new threat: Scoriaptrak could be coerced back into evil by Cult worshipers.





Traveling Tips

This adventure uses a point-crawl structure to keep navigation options simple and keep the focus *on moving the plot forward*. In between mapped points, random encounters fill in the time spent traveling, reinforce the region's theme and advance the plot.

The distance between mapped points on the Regional Map (Appendix C: Maps - Map D) is denoted with the number of random encounters experienced while traveling that section. A party should be able to progress through 3-4 locations in a days' time.

Off-Roading. To keep the party focused on the *mapped* locations, bush-whacking through the trackless forest should be kept to a minimum. You can simply have Kefleek inform the characters of the prohibition of off-road travel due to Scoriaptrak's size; *"My lord can no slither between trees! He dragon, not snake!"*

Hiding the Dragon. The dense forest doesn't always provide a spot to stash a dragon. To find a hiding place before any encounter, a character must succeed on a DC 14 WISDOM (Survival) check. Without success on this roll (and assuming no other helpful factors), the dragon cannot even attempt to hide. If the check is successful, the normal rules for hiding apply. With time to prepare, the PCs can even use natural materials to aid in the hiding attempt. With a good description from your players on how their characters proceed, grant Advantage on the dragon's Stealth check.

The magic items in Area 2 can camouflage Scoriaptrak from prying eyes but they do have a limited number of uses.

Small Talk. The relationship between the PCs and the dragon/kobold is a major part of this adventure. While traveling, use these conversation topics to breathe life into the draconic duo and stimulate roleplaying. Some topics are idle banter while others can reveal clues about the dragon's past. Earlier subjects represent the dragon in a low state of mind while later subjects hint at a more positive outlook:

- Kefleek waxes on about the good old days: burning villages, extorting wizards, flinging bugbears, their mountain of gold. Scoriaptrak is non-committal.
- Scoriaptrak complains about his injuries, and Kefleek makes snarky comments about the dragon's abilities.
- Kefleek is interested about what are the PC's children like? How many do they have? Do they ever eat them? How soon do they try to overthrow you?
- Kefleek wants to know what humans think about kobolds.
- Kefleek mentions his hatred for elves, and Scoriaptrak visibly tenses. Kefleek tries to hastily change the subject. Scoriaptrak knows some elven lore trivia.
- Scoriaptrak demands a song. If it's an elven tune, Scoriaptrak stops and stares at the musician: *"I remember that..."*, and then the moment fades.
- Scoriaptrak asks for an explanation: *"Tell me again how kings rule without killing their subjects? Why are they listened to, let alone obeyed?"*
- Scoriaptrak asks if the PCs have friends. After their responses, he replies with, *"I don't see the point. They all die..."*. With engaging roleplaying, he will talk about Myoris.
- In the midst of a conversation, Scoriaptrak awakens, turns to Kefleek and states, *"I dreamt of a far-off lake, Kefleek. A lair hidden from Man. My wings...the color of a coin..."*, then drifts back to sleep.
- Scoriaptrak looks towards one of the 'less vocal' characters and asks, *"What would life be like, working for...Good?"*

Whether he admits it or not, the topics that most resonate with the dragon are overcoming one's past, friendship, and atonement. Grant your PCs Advantage on any CHARISMA-based checks if they roleplay with this focus.

To reinforce this adventure's theme, encourage roleplaying from your players that focuses on their character's examination of their past, and musings on redemption. These moments could occur during big moments (e.g. the **Kefleek Revealed** encounter) or during quiet moments, at night, around a crackling campfire.

Remember that while Kefleek's enchantment is active, Scoriaptrak is only capable of short responses laden with self-loathing; Kefleek does most of the talking. Once the enchantment is gone, the dragon becomes more verbal in general about his impending demise. Later on, he'll waffle between more upbeat and more brooding, depending on how successful the Cult of the Dragon is.

Mapped Locations

3. COUNTRY KIDS

SETTING: A small meadow with scattered trees.

UTILITY: Avoid Detection.

Introduce the Redemption mechanic.

Five local children have abandoned their shepherding duties and are wandering about, looking for mischief. The PCs have a chance to hide Scoriaptrak before the encounter begins. To begin the encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

As you turn the corner, a group of children sit on the road. One boy sobs and holds a bloodied bandage to his leg. An older girl looks up and calls, *“Hey! Can you help us? My stupid brother hurt his leg...”*

The injury is fake, noticeable with a DC 8 INTELLIGENCE (Medicine) check. Three of the children (**commoner**, MM) attempt to pick the adventurers’ pockets. If detected, the kids laugh and scatter, throwing eggs to cover their retreat. Even if the PCs take immediate action to prevent them from running into Scoriaptrak, one eventually does.

Once they see Scoriaptrak, they are in awe...but soon start climbing him. Kefleek is offended at their lack of respect, while the dragon seems to tolerate the attention.

Unless further steps are taken (e.g. bribery, intimidation), the children return to their homestead (Area 4) and talk about the dragon, which is overheard by a visiting henchman of the necromancer. At this point, the dragon is considered **Detected** by Rhezicora’s network unless the PCs are able to neutralize the henchman.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES

The youngest child just stares dubiously at the dragon, while asking the nearest PC, *“Is it a good dragon or a bad dragon?”* Encourage your PCs to roleplay, engaging the dragon in conversation about his mindset, good vs. evil, and whether redemption is achievable. If the characters attempt to have a meaningful conversation, and Kefleek’s enchantment has been lifted, reward them with Redemption Dice (this may be the first opportunity to showcase this mechanic).

REDEMPTION DICE

If successful above, inform the PCs that the dragon’s mood seems to be lifted for the moment while giving one player a **d4**. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

4. FARM HOMESTEAD

SETTING: Cleared fields with two houses and farm buildings.

UTILITY: Avoid Detection.

Gain Redemption Die.

BACKGROUND: Two brave families have banded together to carve out a farmstead in the wilderness. The Holdbridges are halflings and have 8 children (all boys). The Westrocks are humans with 2 children (gender) and elderly parents. All farmsteaders are neutral good **commoners** (MM).

Last week, a henchman of the necromancer named Lupo the Finger (neutral evil male human **spy**, MM) came upon the farmstead. Lupo’s only goal was to leech off the families; drink their ale and eat their best food. Lupo has a droopy mouth, a hand with only a thumb, and controls a **crawling hand** (MM); he uses all of these features to terrify the families into submission.

If the PCs investigate this area, they find Lupo in the Holdbridge house. He’s reclining with his feet on the kitchen table, eating a slab of undercooked bacon and ordering the kids to massage his terrible bunions. The crawling hand “paces” back and forth at the table.

Lupo will fight by ordering the crawling hand to attack one of the children. If the situation appears to be going against him, he’ll then attempt to bargain his way out of a fight by saying, *“Let me go and I’ll let the brat live”*. If captured, Lupo tells the PCs about the traps in Area 5.

DEVELOPMENTS

If Lupo escapes or otherwise leaves, he returns to the necromancer (Area 14). If he’s seen Scoriaptrak (or hears of it from the children in Area 3), then the dragon is considered **Detected** once by Rhezicora’s network.

If rescued, the families are grateful and offer the PCs their humble food and a few silver pieces. A successful DC 8 WISDOM (Insight) check reveals that these meager coins may be the last of their savings. If the PCs decline the money, Scoriaptrak notices and later asks about their reasoning. If the characters discuss why they wanted to help the family, or the themes of altruism in general, reward them with Redemption Dice.

They can also describe Area 5, and relate that they’ve seen a ghost there, who seems to be friendly.

REDEMPTION DICE

If successful above, inform the PCs that the dragon’s mood seems to be lifted for the moment while giving one player a **d6**. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

5. A GRAVE WARNING

SETTING: Along the trail, surrounded by forest.

UTILITY: Introduce the undead theme.

Uncover Scoriaptrak's backstory.

Hint at Kefleek's enchantment.

Gain Redemption Dice.

To begin, read or paraphrase the following:

The surrounding forest now seems to loom closer than before. Up ahead, 3 gibbets hang from trees on each side of the trail, their long-dead occupants rotting within. In line with the last pair of gibbets, a large stone sits in the middle of the trail. Painted on the stone are the words: TURN BACK!

The encounter begins with the PCs 50 feet south of the first pair of gibbets. A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals that the stone is, in fact, a crude sarcophagus.

This whole set-up, a creation of the necromancer, is intended to be a deterrent to travelers. Both the gibbets and the stone are traps. If the PCs get within 20 feet of 'the stone', they hear frantic scratching coming from within. Also, a neutral good **ghost** (MM) appears and pleads to the PCs (see **Undead Redemption** below). If the party still don't recognize this as a crude sarcophagus, they may now attempt the Perception check above at Advantage.

TRAP: GIBBETS

Trigger: A creature moves past the first gibbets, to the north.

Effect: A **zombie** (MM) animates in each of the 6 gibbets and releases itself, falling unharmed to the ground. They attack at once.

Countermeasures: A glyph on the ground near the first gibbet controls the awakening of the zombies. A successful DC 17 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the glyph, allowing it to be disabled with a successful DC 12 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) check. Failure on the check triggers the trap.

TRAP: STONE SARCOPHAGUS

Trigger: A creature moves past the stone, to the north.

Effect: The lid slides from the sarcophagus and the occupants attack: a **ghast**, 2 **ghouls** and a **skeleton** (all MM).

Countermeasures: A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals that the top of the stone is actually a lid. Placing 200 pounds of material on the lid wedges it shut.

PTSDRAGON

Upon seeing the gibbets, Scoriaptrak has a traumatic flashback to his own long imprisonment; he begins shaking and only stares blankly ahead. If the characters don't notice

this, Kefleek calls their attention to it by saying, "He no like this, make go away!". Until the gibbets are cut down and destroyed, Scoriaptrak remains immobile, muttering only, "no more cages, no more cages...". This also compromises Kefleek's enchantment.

UNDEAD REDEMPTION

Before the PCs trip the stone trap, the ghost of **Eld Arbuckler** appears. Read or paraphrase the following:

A ghostly halfling adventurer appears in front of you. With his palms up placatingly, he pleads, "Please help me. My skeleton is here, and I need it."

Eld will guiltily relate his backstory: he betrayed the location of his compatriots to save his own life and was killed anyway. The characters should recognize that Eld is **seeking redemption** and that providing it could help inspire Scoriaptrak. If the PCs agree, Eld points to the stone, saying, "I'm in there, but I'm here, too. So are others. It's confusing."

If his skeleton can be restrained for 2 rounds, Eld can possess it. In this case, he stands up and shakes a PCs hand. Show your players Illustration C for a happy Eld (see Appendix D). After the battle, he begins a day-long process of burying his companions (the other undead). He insists on doing the work alone (he'll return again to aid the PCs in Section III). If asked, he'll offer up basic information about Areas 6 and 7: "... a ruined temple ...", "... a swamp ...".

BACKSTORY AND ENCHANTMENT TUNE-UP

If still active, Kefleek's enchantment has been compromised by the dragon's trauma; he is suddenly more talkative, but not yet aware of the enchantment. Read the following:

Scoriaptrak watches Eld work in the gloom of the forest, staring a long minute even after he vanishes. In a new, clear voice, he says to no one in particular, "... was he evil or did he simply do an evil thing? Maybe there's no difference ..."

If the PCs engage on this subject, Scoriaptrak will talk about his imprisonment--relate the details of the dragon's backstory up to, but not including, his rescue. He does not name Myoris. His language should sound more natural than before.

Kefleek soon interrupts, calling a private talk with the dragon to re-assert his enchantment by casting *dominate person*. A successful opposed check WISDOM (INSIGHT) check against Kefleek's CHARISMA (Deception) reveals reveals that the dragon is subdued and more monotonic after the talk. Dispelling the enchantment and confronting Kefleek triggers the **Kefleek Revealed** encounter (page 33).

REDEMPTION DICE

If the PCs engage in heartfelt roleplaying regarding the dragon's imprisonment and emotional state, award one player a **d6**. If they helped Eld, award another **d6**. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

6. NECROMANCER'S SCOUT

SETTING: Temple ruins along a forest trail.

UTILITY: Introduce the necromancer gang.
Avoid Detection.

As the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following:

A scruffy young man in robes sits by a campfire just off the trail. A short, sturdy figure in adventurer's gear stands with its back to you, slowly turning a roast boar on a spit. The man's arm is stretched towards his companion, his gaze focused. Behind them are the ruins of an old temple.

The man is an **apprentice necromancer** named Andravar (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs), tasked with guarding this intersection.

The temple was dedicated to Torm but has long been abandoned. Inside is a fallen statue, scattered pews, and a broken crypt. A fenced graveyard lies just to the east. Show your PCs Map E (see Appendix C: Maps).

Andravar has cast *alarm* on the trail, 50 feet south of his position. While the characters can sneak through the trees, remember that the dragon must travel on trails and open ground. Andravar is practicing the cantrip *chill touch* and has a passive Perception of 6. The sturdy figure is a dwarf **skeleton** (AC 16) under his control. Andravar has a skeletal homing pigeon (**hawk**, MM) in a cage next to him, which is imbued with the spell *magic mouth*.

Andravar is loyal to his mistress, but not very brave. He's the architect of the trap in Area 5, and overly proud of it. He doesn't care for Eld's ghost. Andravar will talk to the PCs, but will eventually suggest that they turn around. If pressed, he'll only say that, "... my mistress doesn't want trespassers ...". If threatened, he animates any dormant undead, including

3 **ghouls** (MM) lurking in the temple and the now-**undead spitted boar** (see Appendix A: Monster and NPCs). When appropriate, show your players Illustration D (see Appendix D: Player Handouts and Illustrations).

ANDRAVAR'S ESCAPE

Andravar will try to escape if seriously injured or if he sees the dragon. He shouts the word "... *bandits ...*" or "... *dragon ...*" at the pigeon and releases it (he's now activated the *magic mouth* spell). He then uses an emergency feature within his spellbook's cover: a flat, metal skull known as a *brooch of costly teleportation* (see Appendix B: Magic Items).

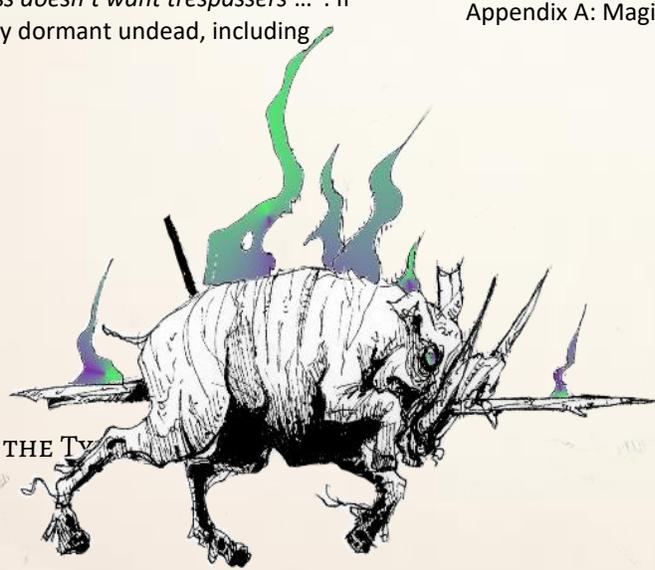
If Andravar sticks his finger in the brooch's mouth, it is bitten off but he becomes invisible (as per the spell *invisibility*) and is teleported 200 feet west, near the secret trail. At the same time, a sickly green glow advertises their awakening of 3 **zombies** (MM) that rise up from the temple's graveyard, move purposely towards the characters, and attack.

DEVELOPMENTS

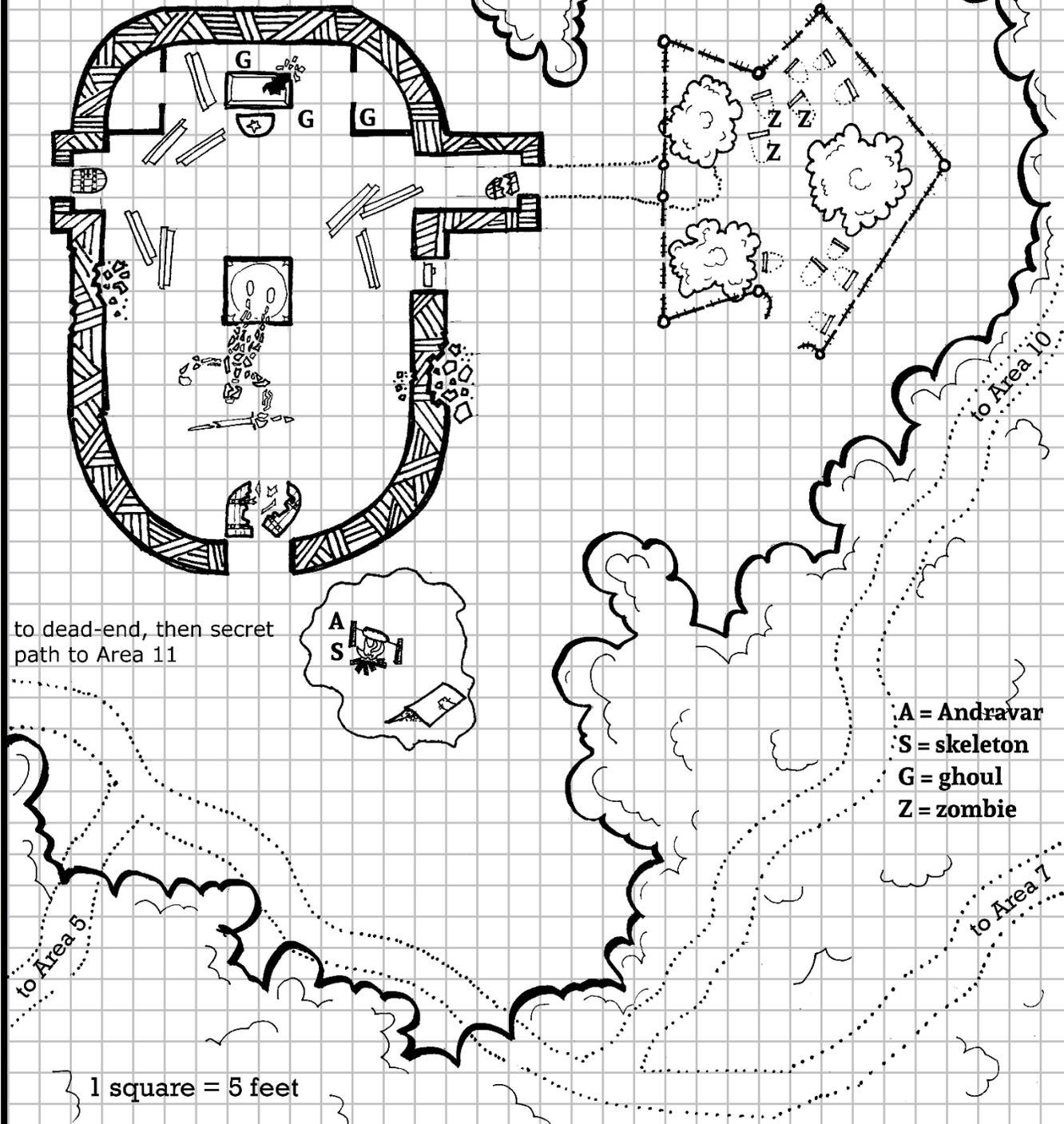
If the pigeon escapes with Andravar's "... *dragon ...*" message, it flies to Rhezicora, counting as one **Detection**. If teleported, Andravar heads for Area 11 via a secret path. The characters must immediately declare that they search for him—a successful DC 14 WISDOM (Perception) check revealing his groan of pain and receding footsteps. Otherwise, his trail is difficult to find, with a successful DC 18 WISDOM (Survival) check needed to find the blood-spattered teleport site. In either case, a successful DC 15 STRENGTH (Athletics) check is needed to catch up to him on the trail. Failure results with him reaching Area 11, then Rhezicora a couple of hours later, again counting as one **Detection**.

Upon the second total **Detection**, the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (page 34).

TREASURE: In the temple's graveyard are glowing tombstones that have been re-shaped with necromantic glyphs. Each glyph (6 in total) contains an onyx gemstone (100 gp each). The dwarf skeleton wears a *breastplate of bludgeoning resistance*. Andravar's possessions consist of 50 gp and a *brooch of costly teleportation* on his spellbook (see Appendix A: Magic Items).



MAP E



7. HIGH WATER

SETTING: The swamp's edge.

UTILITY: Preview the swamp's denizens.
Gain Redemption Dice.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The trail ahead meanders in and out of murky water and a light fog obscures the deep swamp to the east.

As the party traverse this stretch of flooded trail, a series of small encounters take place. Roll a d4 and consult the table below to find out in which order they occur. Each encounter happens only once:

Roll	Encounter
1-2	Foragers
3	Timber!
4	Protect the swamp-maker

Foragers. The PCs see 3 **lizardfolk** (MM) hunting frogs, armed with wooden spears. Three other lizardfolk are planting swamp grasses in the muck. If alerted to the characters presence, the 3 planter lizardfolk sink into the water and disappear. The remaining 3 lizardfolk let out a shrieking hiss and make a bluff charge, stopping 10 feet away; an opposed STRENGTH (Intimidation) vs. the PCs INTELLIGENCE (Nature) or WISDOM (Insight) check allows a character to discern the bluff, and that backing off will de-escalate the situation.

If the PCs turn around, the lizardfolk take no further action (but they do covertly continue to watch the trail for the next few hours). If the PCs stand their ground or wish to talk, a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check is needed to avoid an attack. The check is made with Advantage if combined with non-threatening roleplaying (e.g. sheathing weapons). During parley, the lizardfolk will let the party pass only if they are offered a useful item like a metal weapon.

Timber! A series of loud, slow cracks rapidly becomes a cacophony of breaking wood as a large tree falls nearby. Unless the marching order merits otherwise, 2 randomly chosen characters must make a DC 10 DEXTERITY saving throw, take 5 bludgeoning damage from the tree's branches on a failed save. A successful DC 5 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals that a nearby family of beavers are responsible.

Protect The Swamp-Maker. A **lizardfolk** is protecting 2 baby beavers from a **giant leech** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs). The leech is clearly winning, wrapped around the lizardfolk's leg. It is currently, as the characters arrive, just managing to keep the beavers out of reach. If the

characters choose to help, it is grateful (but still expressionless).

She gives the PCs her bone necklace as a token of gratitude, which allows the chosen character Advantage on any subsequent interaction with lizardfolk. Show your players Illustration E once this encounter has begun (Appendix D).

DEVELOPMENTS

Use this collection of small encounters to engage the characters in roleplaying with the dragon about redemption and what it means to be Good. After the encounters are concluded, Scoriaptrak might question the characters about their actions. If the dragon is still enchanted, Kefleek might do the questioning out of mere curiosity.

The kobold and dragon don't fully understand non-aggressive or altruistic behavior, so their questions always probe at the PCs reasoning for their placating or altruistic actions (if they in fact committed them). Samples are provided below, in Kefleek's voice:

- Foragers. *"Why no crush the lizards? You stronger than they. And they in our way!"*
- Timber! *"Why no kill tree-chewer? He attack you!"*
- Protect The Swamp-Maker. *"Why help lizard and tree-chewer? They no help you."*

Generally speaking, if the party attempt to explain the benefits of seeking cooperation instead of domination, or of simply not murdering indiscriminately, then they make a positive impression on Scoriaptrak.

REDEMPTION DICE

If the PCs engage in roleplaying as described above, award one player a **d4** for each of the 3 encounters they discuss.

LIZARDFOLK GOALS

The lizardfolk began actively expanding their territory last year by damming a river, downstream of where this adventure begins. They have an uneasy truce with Rhezicora the necromancer, who is trying to curry their favor (see Random Encounter R3 below).

BLACKWATER SWAMP

As part of their "swamp conversion" plan, the lizardfolk have been planting swamp grasses and young trees, and have released catfish and a number of beavers, whose swamp-building endeavors they consider sacred.

Sights: Tall trees, many of which are dead or dying. Dense thickets of young trees growing in sunlight. Waist-deep black water as far as the eye can see.

Smells: The fetid odor of aging swampland.

Sounds: The shrill whistles of wood ducks and drumming of woodpeckers. Occasionally, a dead tree falls over with a prolonged series of cracks, followed by a huge splash.

8. BLACKWATER VILLAGE RUINS

SETTING: The swamp's edge.

UTILITY: A fun combat encounter.

Gain an item useful for the adventure finale.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The trail branches off towards the edge of an open swamp, its dark waters partially hidden by fog. The rotting roofs of a dozen huts stick out above several feet of water. One small raft is tethered to a tree and bumps aimlessly among the old huts. Further in, the forest resumes but many trees are dead or dying. Several low mounds are visible over the waterline.

This village was flooded by the lizardfolk's dam, forcing villagers to relocate. A gnome named Zygaree (neutral male **druid**, MM) has taken up residence, building a 'nest' in one of the trees. A successful DC 12 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the nest. He's watching the mounds with interest; they are lizardfolk nests about to birth a mess of hatchlings. If addressed, he shushes the characters, then points to the fog, smiles excitedly and says, "it's starting!!"

TREASURE: The nest holds a collection of bird eggs and a *whistle of reptile stunning* (see Appendix B: Magic Items for more details). The whistle could prove highly useful here or in the finale.

LIZARDFOLK HATCHLING INITIATION

The mounds are lizardfolk nests, chock full of eggs that are about to hatch. The hatchlings must immediately pass their first challenge: avoid large water snakes. Lizardfolk elders lurk in the shadows, but do not interfere as this ritual is designed to weed out the weak. The elders are aware of the PCs unless they've been taking appropriate measures to conceal themselves since arriving at this location.

If the PCs spend any time investigating, they get caught up in the event. To begin the encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

From the gloom of the deep swamp, a high chirping call rings out. A tiny lizardfolk bursts out of the fog, its legs pumping furiously as it streaks atop the water's surface directly toward you.

This is a **lizardfolk hatchling** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs), which is instinctively heading for higher ground. It might head for the swamp's edge or a character's shoulders!

Slowly build tension with more chirping calls and the hissing of unseen 'animals'. Unless perceived by the PCs, eventually reveal that other figures are present: 4 **lizardfolk** (MM)

and a **lizardfolk shaman** (MM) clad in snakeskin. The creatures step out of the shadows and simply stare at the PCs. When ready to begin the main encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

The swamp suddenly explodes! Hundreds of lizardfolk hatchlings erupt from the mounds, chirping and skittering in all directions. A wave of them sprint toward you on top of the water ... followed closely by large, undulating forms!

One hundred **hatchlings** run towards the adventurers, some seeking to climb them for safety. Six **constrictor snakes** (MM) follow and will reach the characters position within 2 rounds. The test will conclude in 10 rounds unless prolonged. The following situations can occur:

- The snakes chase the hatchlings but mistakenly target an adventurer 25% of the time.
- Three snakes swarm a PC that attacks any of them.
- If the PCs harm a snake, only the ritual's overseer, the shaman, attacks.
- If the PCs harm any hatchling, all the adult lizardfolk attack. Helping hatchlings provokes no response.
- If the party manages to remain calm, harming nothing, the adults just watch.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the dragon is seen, the lizardfolk and Zygaree flee in terror. Afterward, although not civilly cultured, Zygaree will tolerate questions from the party. He mostly knows about the swamp, relating the details in the 'Blackwater swamp' inset. He also mentions he's had bad dreams about a trapped "... forest spirit ..." in that direction (Area 10).

Zygaree will trade the PCs for his whistle if they aren't hostile—a weapon or shiny object will satisfy the gnome.

If the PCs didn't trigger an attack, the lizardfolk will parley with them. The lizardfolk hiss in halting Common, telling them of Area 10, "... sick tree woman ...", and Area 14, "... Bone magic, black magic, black water." (referring to tar pits).

Note: The DM may wish to include a few weak hatchlings limping along the swamp's edge. The party could come across them, allowing the party to take them as companions if they so choose. They'll eat the PCs food, but are snappy buggers that leave in the dead of night after a day or two.



9A-C. HILLTOPS

SETTING: Forested slopes that give way to open plateau.

UTILITY: Learn more of the dragon's backstory.

Re-direct the party's destination to Dygyrus Falls (Area 17).

At 3 different locations, a plateau rises 100 feet above the surrounding forest. The tops are dominated by grasses, scattered trees, boulders, and shallow caves. From the top of each plateau, every mapped location adjacent to the plateau is partially visible; read the **Setting** description from each location if asked.

Soaring vultures are visible above the plateaus, but a successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals 2 **harpies** (MM) amongst them. At night, the harpies roost on a high, exposed rock outcropping.

Each plateau must be reached either by walking up through steep forest or by climbing a cliff face with a successful DC 10 STRENGTH (Athletics) check. The walking route is open enough to accommodate Scoriaptrak but is watched by a **harpy**, which ambushes the party from the treetops. The cliff is unwatched. At the base of the cliff, a DC 8 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals old "pellets"—the harpies' regurgitated waste, full of bones.

Run the next encounters on the first plateau the characters climb; any subsequent exploration of the other plateaus reveals only empty forest and grasslands.

ELVEN ALLIES IN PERIL

Three kenku rangers, hired by Myoris weeks ago, are searching for Scoriaptrak. Each evening, they climb to the 3 plateau tops and check in with one another (see **Kenku Conversation**, page 31). At the top of the plateau, the PCs witness an attack on a ranger, described below.

One **kenku** (MM) named Tweeskree has run afoul of some harpies. They have trapped her in a cave, but the encounter is currently at a stalemate; Tweeskree partially blocked the entrance with rocks and stuffed wax in her earholes to avoid their *Luring Song* ability.

A **harpy** lurches and hops clumsily around the mouth of the cave, trying in vain to move the large stones. Two **harpies** and a pet **peryton** (MM) circle in the sky, waiting for a fight. If the PCs completed the **Blink Dogs** encounter (page 36), 2 **blink dogs** (MM) burst from the forest to help. When appropriate, show your players Illustration F (Appendix D).

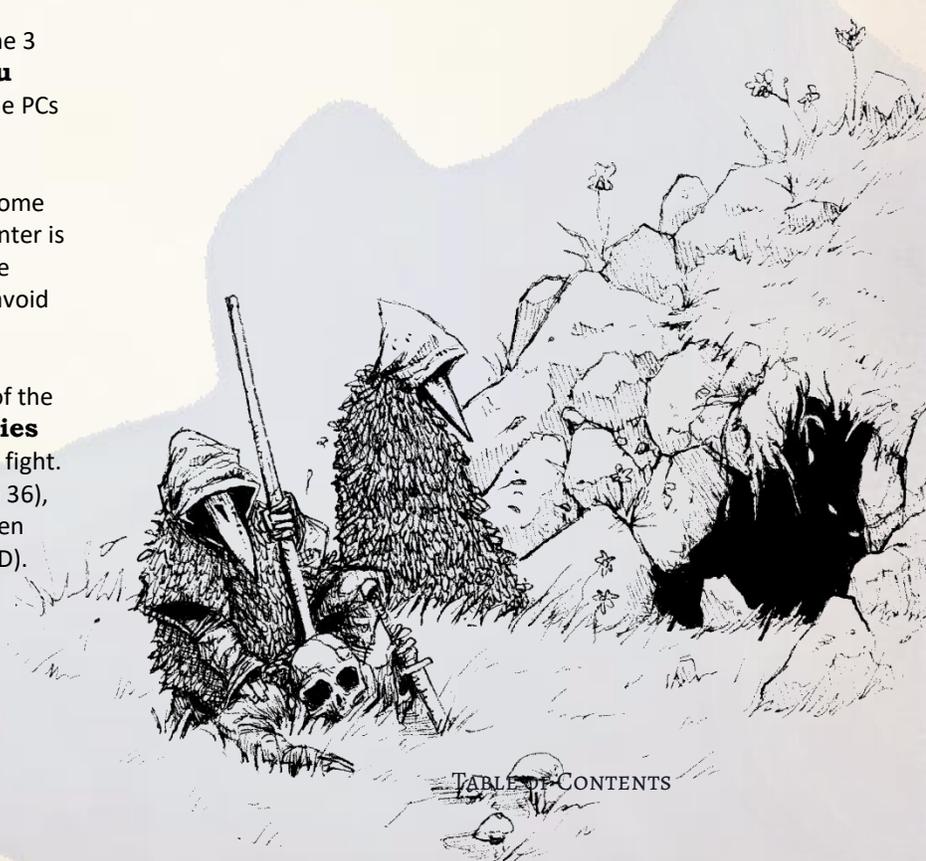
A MIXED-UP MESSAGE

If Tweeskree is rescued, she lets loose a series of warbles, including the words, "Many thanks!". She eventually emits a startling, draconic roar and points around the landscape questioningly—she's looking for a dragon. If Tweeskree sees Scoriaptrak, she whoops in joy. Her goal now is to convince the dragon to follow her, or failing that, to run back to the elves and inform them of Scoriaptrak's location. She first delivers a message; read the following:

The excited kenku clears her throat and begins speaking in a new voice—that of a male elf. The message is garbled, though, spoken in fragments...

Tweeskree "recorded" a message from Myoris weeks ago, just before he died. Her Common isn't great, though, and she's mixed up the order of the phrases. The actual message is ordered as seen below. But when relating the message to the PCs, roll a d10 and consult the table below. She 'replays' each phrase only once, but will happily 'replay' the complete message if the PCs unscramble it.

Roll	Phrase
1	<i>My dear Red. If you are hearing my voice</i>
2	<i>then it means that these -cough,</i>
3	<i>cough- clever kenku have found you.</i>
4	<i>I hope you received my letter.</i>
5	<i>I fear I don't have much -cough,</i>
6	<i>COUGH- time left.</i>
7	<i>We'll be camped by the</i>
8	<i>Dygyrus Falls until winter, waiting for you.</i>
9	<i>Then we must leave. Remember friend</i>
10	<i>...there is good in you. I've seen it.</i>



After hearing Myoris' unscrambled message, Scoriaptrak is deeply affected. Even if Kefleek's enchantment is active, the dragon will talk about Myoris, his imprisonment, and their friendship; show your players Illustration G (Appendix D). With heartfelt roleplaying, the dragon's spirits will be lifted.

NOTE: This message has additional meaning, as the PCs now know where to find the elves mentioned in Kefleek's scroll.

After delivering her message, Tweeskree is content to let the characters decide her next action: accompany them or run ahead to make contact with the elves at Area 17. If she heads to the elves, she and an elf show up during the **Section III finale** (see page 49). If asked, Tweeskree can relate basic information about any mapped location, except Area 14.

REDEMPTION DICE

If the dragon hears the unscrambled message, award one player a **d6**. If the PCs also engage in heartfelt roleplaying regarding the dragon's imprisonment and friendship with Myoris, award one player a **d10**.

10. STRANDED DRYAD

SETTING: Forested opening.

UTILITY: Gain an NPC ally.

Learn about the cruelty of the necromancer.
Acquire useful magical items.

Read or paraphrase the following:

A clearing opens ahead; a single tall tree stands, surrounded by cut stumps. The ground around the tree is covered by a black, sticky substance, 60 feet in all directions. A 15-foot-long twisted log sits at the edge of the tar, pointing towards the center.

The tree is inhabited by a **dryad** (MM) named Eurae. She fought Rhezicora last month and is being punished. In addition to tarring the surrounding ground, the necromancer has cut down the trees around Eurae, negating her *Tree Stride* ability. The tar is poison to the dryad, and after weeks of imprisonment, Eurae is starving and weakened.

A wandering **hill giant** (MM) named Shawk!! has recently discovered Eurae. The dryad kept him at bay by telling him stories of the Feywild, but Shawk!! is growing hungry. The giant avoids the tar, so is making a log bridge to reach her. When the characters arrive on the scene, Shawk!! is away from the area foraging, but will be back soon.

Any creature attempting to navigate the tar must make a DC 10 STRENGTH (Athletics) check in order to move. If the check is successful, the creature's speed is halved; failure results in no movement that round.

DEVELOPMENTS

Shawk!! will happily fight the PCs but could be bribed into talking with (a LOT of) food, or a shiny object to the value of 10gp. In addition, if the party can engage Shawk!! in conversation, in exchange for an amusing tale (and a successful DC 10 CHARISMA (Performance) or WISDOM (Persuasion) check), Shawk!! might consider accompanying the party through to the next location. Shawk!! knows that the necromancer camp is nearby and that it contains, "... a bone mountain ..." (Area 14C).

Shawk!! runs away if he sees the dragon, with a 40% chance of running towards the necromancer's camp to 'blabber' about what he saw; this counts as a **Detection** by the necromancer.

If rescued, Eurae is grateful. Even if she sees the dragon, she gives the party the benefit of the doubt and remains calm. She requests a lift to the nearest tree and disappears. An hour later, she re-appears wherever the PCs are, gives them a reward (see **Treasure** below) and offers to scout ahead (the characters learn some basic information about the next location or random encounter they're headed for).

TREASURE: Eurae gives the PCs trinkets, each imbued with a spell. If eaten, each trinket allows the imbuing character one use of the accompanying spell:

- a piece of oak bark (*barkskin*)
- a small bundle of fluffy cotton plants (*fog cloud*)
- a crunchy withered frog leg (*jump*)

11. SECRET TUNNEL

SETTING: Underground

UTILITY: Gain information about major obstacle

The PCs can reach this location either by following Eld (Area 5) or Andravar (Area 6) along a hidden path, which ends here at a rocky hillside and the tunnel's entrance.

This 10-mile-long, old mining tunnel winds under mountains and exits at an overlook in the necromancer's camp (Area 14K). The tunnel is only 8 feet-tall, not large enough to accommodate the dragon.

The necromancer has constructed a trap (see **Trap: Ward of the Living** below) at the tunnel entrance to keep out the living. A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals a dead bear in some nearby underbrush, a victim of the trap. There is dried froth around the mouth and a green dusty tint to it's fur; clues to the trap's nature.

TRAP: WARD OF THE LIVING

TRIGGER: Any living creature of Medium size or larger that passes through the tunnel entrance.

EFFECT: A glyph of poison spews noxious gas, doing 4d8 poison damage to anyone within 20 feet (half damage with a successful DC 12 CONSTITUTION saving throw).

COUNTERMEASURES: A successful DC 14 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the trap. It can be de-activated by *dispel magic* (DC 14). With an hour of work from anyone trained in Arcana, the glyph can be carefully scrubbed clean, thereby also deactivating the trap.

SNEAK PREVIEW OF NECROMANCER'S CAMP

The tunnel exit is almost completely blocked by a constructed rock pile. Creating a Small-sized gap is possible, but it would automatically attract the attention of the skeleton patrol below. Observing the camp without moving the stones is possible, revealing the following features:

- Large skeletons are hauled out of tar pits by bipedal skeletons and human workers (Area 14D).
- Skeletons patrol the camp and nearby forest (all areas)
- A woman in black robes inspects the operation from a high ledge and is arguing with an armor-clad man (Area 14I).
- A kobold exits a cave and ignites a small pot (Area 14H)

After relating the first piece of information above, inform your players that their characters notice that 2 **skeletons** (MM) have shown up on the trail nearby and are headed towards their location. They don't appear to have sensed the party yet, appearing to simply be on patrol. The characters can continue to observe, but each new piece of information requires a round of observation and triggers a WISDOM (Perception) check by the skeletons. If they beat a DC 17, or beat the observing character's Stealth check, they have spotted the characters location.

If the characters are spotted, one skeleton attacks and the other attempts to signal the camp below—it is successful after 2 rounds. Two half-orc **guards** (MM) show up, followed by an escalating stream of reinforcements from Area 14, including Rhezicora herself if combat continues. At the very least, the guards remain at the tunnel exit for the next 24 hours.

12. CASTLE TWINPRED

SETTING: Open fields around a central hill.

UTILITY: Opportunities for Redemption

BACKSTORY: Scoriaptrak sacked this castle decades ago. The destruction of the castle and the noble Twinpred family is what started the decline of this whole region, allowing Rhezicora to take over last year.

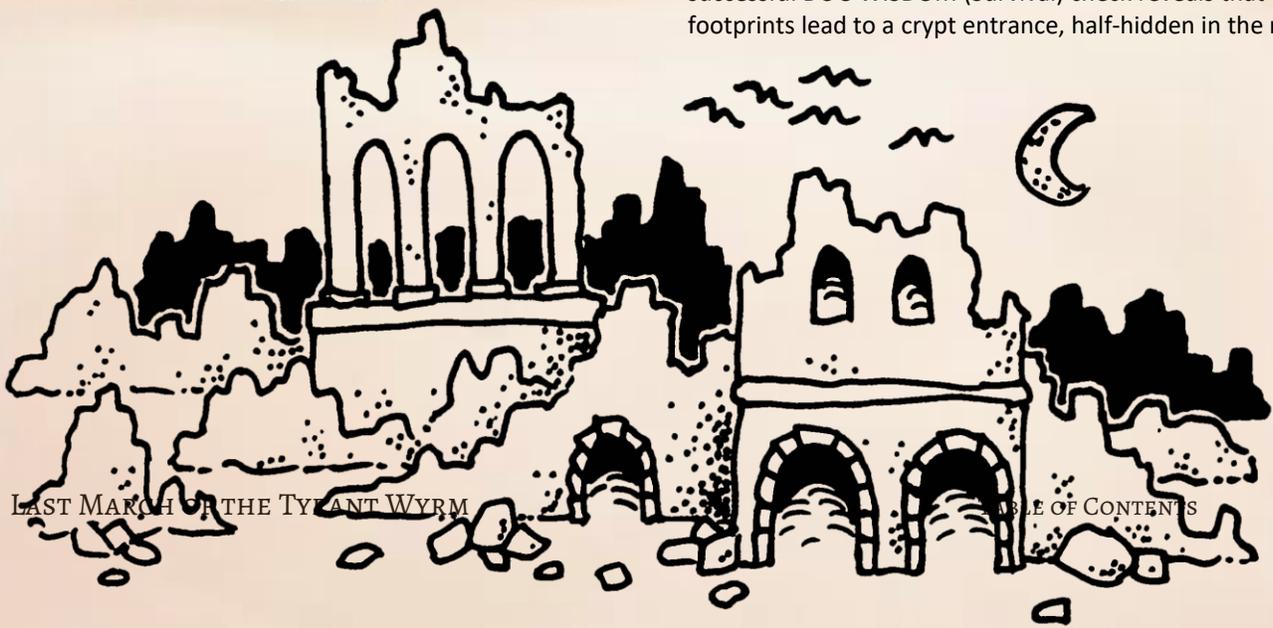
Read or paraphrase the following:

The ruins of a modest castle sit atop a low hill, surrounded by long-neglected fields and orchards. The castle's main door hangs rotting on its hinges, its portcullis bent and useless on the ground. The dragon fidgets uneasily.

Any investigation of the ruins reveals giant, claw-shaped gouges in the stonework and char-covered scraps of wood. A successful DC10 INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check reveals that a dragon destroyed the castle.

Assuming Kefleek's enchantment has been lifted, Scoriaptrak remembers this place and does not wish to be confronted with his terrible deed: "*We should leave this place. Now!*" A resulting successful DC 13 WISDOM (Insight) check reveals that he looks guilty, avoiding eye contact.

There is nothing of value in the ruins, but a successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals signs of recent habitation—an old cooking fire, footprints, inedible fruit rinds. A boy named Tellis (neutral good human **commoner**, MM) has been living here and hides in the crypt below. A successful DC 8 WISDOM (Survival) check reveals that a set of footprints lead to a crypt entrance, half-hidden in the rubble.



CURSED CRYPT KID

Tellis is from Bonestore and was exiled after stealing. Rhezicora inflicted him with a leg-withering curse. He ekes out a living here, but his health is failing. The specters ignore him, mistaking his necromantic curse for a kindred spirit. He is half-feral until captured, then resigned. Winning his trust requires kindly roleplaying and a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check, made with Advantage if he's given food.

Any PC trained in Arcana can identify the curse: Tellis' necklace houses a modified version of the *ray of weakness* spell. An hour of study or a successful DC10 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) check reveals the extra features of the curse:

- If the curse is ever dispelled, Tellis will be struck and killed by a bolt of necromantic energy (20 points of necromantic damage).
- The cursed necklace can be transferred to another willing creature, but this does not remove the threat of the above attack on Tellis. The transfer must be done within 5 rounds of taking it off the previous owner or else the attack on Tellis is triggered.
- The willing creature is now the new owner of the necklace, gaining the cursed condition and is subject to the following conditions:
 - A leg becomes weakened. Speed is halved, and checks made requiring the leg have Disadvantage.
 - When rolling initiative, the cursed creature must succeed on a DC 7 CONSTITUTION saving throw to avoid one level of Exhaustion for the duration of the encounter.

Tellis remembers that Rhezicora made a 'a little doll' of him when she inflicted the curse, a material component of the spell. If the PCs destroy this doll (in Area 14I), the curse and the extra threat to Tellis are both destroyed. If a PC takes on Tellis' curse, Scoriaptrak is inspired by the selfless act.

KARMA'S A B...GHOST

The remnants of the Twinpred family haunt this site. Two **ghosts** (MM) lurk in the ruins, attacking any who trespass. They whisper their surname as they stalk around the party.

If Scoriaptrak visits this location, the specters converge; they point and howl accusingly at him. With any questioning, the dragon's conscience is triggered and he admits that he razed the castle, stole the Twinpred's heirloom magic sword and traded it for riches and information.

This reminder of Scoriaptrak's evil past could be a setback for inspiring the dragon. Failure to resolve Scoriaptrak's guilt about his deeds here results in each player losing a single random Redemption Die. Running away or killing the ghosts buys the party some time, but it should be made clear to the characters that Scoriaptrak's guilt lingers and will get worse if

not addressed. The party has 24 hours to resolve the dragon's guilt, as described below.

A KNIGHT'S FORGIVENESS

The ghosts will not absolve Scoriaptrak, but their descendant, **Sir Patkyt Twinpred** (in Area 13) could. One specter points to a barely-visible family crest (a two-headed griffon) on its chest, then points towards Area 13 and gasps the family name: "...*Twiiin-preddd...*" If the PCs bring Sir Patkyt back here, they can attempt to engineer a reconciliation of sorts. Engineering forgiveness by Patkyt requires the following:

- A successful DC 15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check to prevent Patkyt from attacking Scoriaptrak on sight, even if he's partial to the PCs from a previous interaction.
- An apology from Scoriaptrak, extracted out of the dragon with a DC15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check.
- Roleplaying that focuses on Scoriaptrak's ongoing redemption or Patkyt's own redemption grants Advantage on either of the above checks. Convincing Scoriaptrak (no check needed) to reveal who has Sir Patkyt's heirloom magic sword grants Advantage on checks with the knight.

Two failed checks result in Sir Patkyt's permanent hostility towards Scoriaptrak. As to how this hostility plays up is left to the DM to decide based on the reactions and roleplaying of the characters.

NOTE: The villain who now has the Twinpred sword has purposely been left out of the adventure. The stock answer would be an evil warlord, but you could choose a villain or NPC from your ongoing campaign (see the DMs Guild supplement 'Villains and Lairs' for some great suggestions).

Should the encounter play out successfully, Sir Patkyt forgives Scoriaptrak for his past 'crimes' against his family and spends the night consoling the family ghosts. Doing so calms the specters and they pass peacefully into the afterlife. Patkyt is ready to join the party on their mission.

REDEMPTION DICE

Give one player a **d4** if Sir Patkyt lays his ancestors to rest. Give a **d12** if Scoriaptrak receives forgiveness from Sir Patkyt. Give a **d10** to the player if their character willingly took on Tellis' curse. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

13. BONESTORE

SETTING: A muddy field around a small, ramshackle outpost.

UTILITY: Opportunities for Redemption Dice
Weaken Rhezicora's forces.
Gain possible allies.

BACKSTORY: The makeshift camp where Rhezicora sells exotic skeletons has come to be known as Bonestore. Villagers from the surrounding region have been kidnapped and forced to work here; the men labor at the tar pits (Area 14), while the women and children forage, farm, and piece together skeletal fragments.

The party can observe the outpost from a safe vantage point along the road or at the edge of the forest. If the party are able to recon the entire area, show them Map F (see Appendix C: Maps) and read or paraphrase the following:

Up ahead, a small outpost has been carved out of the forest—most recently, by the look of things. Two buildings and a cluster of ill-looking tents cough smoke into the air. The two proper-looking buildings seem to be a stable and a tavern. A small group of fancier tents is set off from the outpost, away from the muddiest part of the clearing.

The southernmost building is a crooked tavern known as 'The Black Bones Tavern' (see Area 13B). The northernmost building is the accompanying stables (see Area 13C). The road north is an old, overgrown trade road, outside the bounds of this adventure (but visible on Map A).

The forest around Bonestone is dense; the dragon must travel through the outpost in order to move on. The muddy ground will leave ample evidence of the dragon's footsteps...

SET-UP THE CULT?

If the PCs have attempted to play the Cult of the Dragon against Rhezicora, Bonestore could be a good site for a fight.

13A. MAIN YARD

This muddy yard is Boneyard's central congregation point. Small caravans of supplies arrive semi-regularly.

During the day, women and children bustle to and fro (to Areas 13B-D)--preparing food, fetching firewood, etc. At night, only a handful of servants can be seen, along with two burly humanoids (**thugs**, MM) who serve as the night guard.

A KNIGHT IN NEED OF REDEMPTION

Sir Patkyt Twinpred (**knight**, MM, but *poisoned*) drunkenly slumbers between parked wagons. He wears filthy breeches and an incongruously-ornate breastplate, scrawled on with lewd pictures. The breastplate bears his family crest, a two-

headed griffon, though this can only be clearly seen when up close, due to a layer of mud.

Sir Patkyt is seriously hungover, which can be cured with some tending and a successful DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Medicine) check. Failure results in checks involving interactions with Sir Patkyt having Disadvantage.

In conversation, Sir Patkyt will first state his vague desire to "... reclaim his birthright ...". With more sympathetic conversation from the characters, he will recount his backstory. Engaging Patkyt's sense of honor (e.g. plight of the villagers, his role as the local Lord, etc.) and a successful DC 15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check will inspire him to take action. Returning heirlooms grants the PCs automatic success with Sir Patkyt:

- **A Dagger.** Sir Patkyt lost his dagger in the stables after a night of drinking. A successful DC 8 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check reveals a rumor of a stableboy chasing a chicken with a fancy dagger.
- **A Gauntlet.** Sir Patkyt can mention that a tiefling guard named Dwichee robbed him of his beloved gauntlet. Asking around the area (a successful DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check) or visiting The Black Bones Tavern reveals Dwichee proudly wearing the silver gauntlet while playing a game of cards.
- **A Magic Sword.** Scoriaptrak knows where the companion sword is located (see Area 12).

With 2 heirlooms returned, Sir Patkyt will find his courage. He insists on liberating the slaves in Bonestore but is willing to follow the characters plans first.

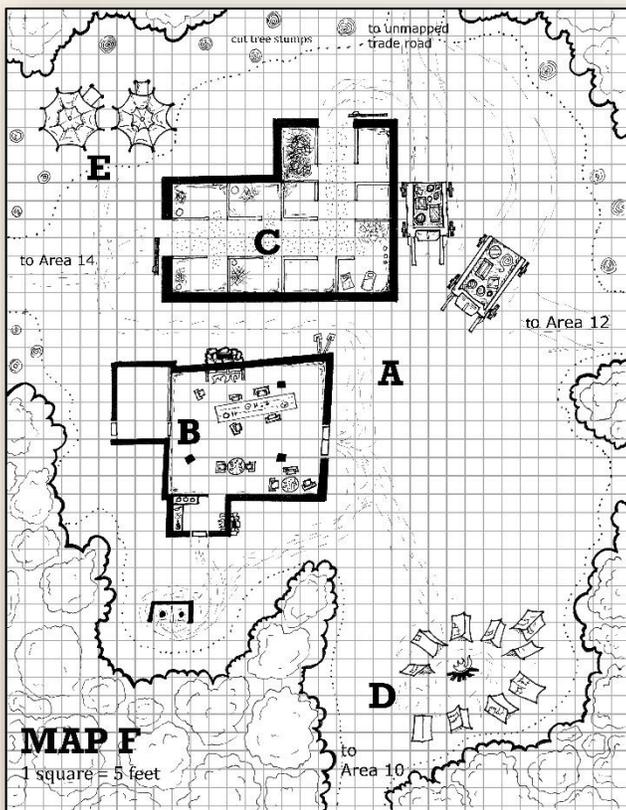


SIR PATKYT'S BACKSTORY

Sir Patkyt Twinpred is the sole surviving member of his family, who perished when Scoriaptrak destroyed their castle decades ago. Sir Patkyt was just a child and managed to escape, along with most of his family heirlooms, thanks to a servant. It was only once they were gone that it was noticed that the families most-precious magic sword was missing. Being too dangerous to return, the magic sword was given up as lost.

Sir Patkyt became a soldier, vowing one day to reclaim his ancestral lands. He did, but a series of poor choices have left him destitute and broken. He took up drinking and, unfortunately, excelled at it.

Just last month, he wandered back to his homeland, and now resides in Bonestore as the local, drunken vagabond that everyone loves to bully.



13B. THE BLACK BONES TAVERN

The tavern is nothing more than a thin-walled excuse for heavy drinking. Nothing about the building, from its dangerously crooked angles to its sloping floor, indicate that a quality experience can be had here.

The tavern would collapse if either of the 2 support pillars take more than 20 hit points of damage (AC15). The rickety nature of the tavern is apparent with a successful DC 8

WISDOM (Perception) or INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check. A putrid outhouse (DC 10 CONSTITUTION saving throw to not wretch upon entry) is found behind the building.

At any given time, 5 villagers (neutral human **commoners**) will be serving and cooking, while 2d8 off-duty hirelings eat, play cards, or just drink themselves drunk. The hirelings consist of a pair of **bugbears** (MM), a tiefling named Dwichee (chaotic evil female **thug**, MM), and assorted other humans (use **bandit**, **guard**, and **cultist**, MM). A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the occasional whisper about gold hidden in back, but no one would dare steal from Rhezicora...while sober, that is.

One other hireling stands out: a halfling in fine clothing named Yurlo Threebarrel (lawful evil male **spy**, MM). He is Rhezicora's current lieutenant, designated to deal with the visiting delegation from Waterdeep. He attempts to affect a noble bearing, even though his manners and poor teeth would indicate otherwise.

Should the characters manage to strike up a conversation, a successful DC 10 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check will get him to reveal that he is quite excited about a big transaction tomorrow; no further questioning (or checks) will result in additional details about it. In fact, further inquiry will arouse unwanted interest towards the characters, leading to **What's Yer Bizness 'ere?** After their initial question, allow your players to roll a DC 8 WISDOM (Insight) check to reveal this possibility.

TREASURE: In an otherwise-empty back room, Yurlo hides a lockbox that holds 2,000gp in various coinage—a down payment from the Waterdavians.

WHAT'S YER BIZNISS 'ERE?

The PCs should come up with a plausible backstory for their presence in Bonestore, otherwise, Yurlo grows suspicious and summons his crew to evict them. A successful DC 10 CHARISMA (Deception) check is needed, rolled with Advantage if the PCs backstory is particularly well-crafted.

If the dragon is seen, all hirelings hide in The Black Bones Tavern, then run out the back door towards Area 14. If they escape, it counts as **2 Detections**.

13C. STABLES

A stable with 12 stalls and a corral has been built with a little more care than the tavern. During the day, 3 stableboys (MM, **commoners**) watch over the draft and caravan horses. By night, they sleep in the lofts.

One boy named Bowdan found **Sir Patkyt's dagger** and plays with it during his breaks. His goal: kill a chicken with it.

13D. HOVELS/WORK AREA

The patchwork tents are the homes of a few dozen captured villagers, all related to the workers in the tar pits (Area 14). Mostly women and children, they are ordered to avoid outsiders. That said, if the characters seem kindly, they will beg them to rescue their spouses from Area 14. Scoriaptrak or Sir Patkyt could be moved if they hear the plight of the villagers and see the party taking on their cause.

A woman named Dabra (**commoner**, MM) will also ask someone to stop her fool child Bowdan from hurting himself with a dagger he's found at the stables (Sir Patkyt's dagger!).

13E. WATERDEEP DELEGATION CAMP

The fancy tents belong to a delegation from the Arcane College of Waterdeep, consisting of 2 scholars (neutral half-elf female **nobles**, MM), an **apprentice wizard** (neutral human male, VGtM) and a guard named Medrash Greencrest (neutral good dragonborn female, **veteran**, MM, with acid breath weapon).

The College is scheduled to buy the never-before-seen ancient skeletons to study and display. The scholars will state the nature of their deal, proudly stating that it will be the envy of all Waterdeep, including "...that rascal Neverember..." (who is an unpopular Lord in Waterdeep). The delegation know nothing about the source of the skeletons. The scholars respond favorably to any noble or noble-seeming PC; grant Advantage on CHARISMA-based checks.

Gold to buy the skeletons is kept inside a 500-pound, trapped safe in the scholar's tent. The scholars and Medrash know the pass-phrase and the scholars each have a key.

TRAP: SAFE

TRIGGER: The safe's lock is unsuccessfully picked.

EFFECT: Poison gas spews out, as per the spell *poison spray* (as if cast at 5th level).

COUNTERMEASURES: The safe's lock can be picked with a successful DC 15 DEXTERITY (Sleight-of-Hand) check made with thieves tools. Alternatively, speaking the phrase "...that rascal Neverember..." disarms the trap and opens the safe. The existence of a spoken pass-phrase is denoted by a small glyph on the safe, recognizable by anyone trained in Arcana or fluent in Thieves Cant.

TREASURE: The safe holds 500 platinum pieces.

AN ALLY OF CONSCIENCE

If confronted with the nature of Rhezicora's operation (slave labor), the scholars and apprentice wizard are uncaring, but Medrash, a follower of Torm, is visibly uncomfortable. Appeals to morality, and a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) or INTELLIGENCE (Religion) check with the veteran, will cause him to oppose the sale. He will even ally with Sir Twinpred to liberate Bonestore and beyond.

REDEMPTION DICE

Give one character a **d8** if Sir Patkyt attempts to liberate the slaves at Bonestore. Give another character a **d4** if Medrash joins the cause. Give another character a **d8** if the riches in the tavern or tent are distributed to the slaves. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

Section 2 Wrap-Up

By the end of Section II, the characters should have seen to the removal of Kefleek's enchantment and have been working diligently to inspire Scoriaptrak. The characters are hopefully invested in the dragon's well-being, drawn together by the perils of Section II and the dragon's changing personality and motivations.

If Kefleek's enchantment hasn't been lifted, Scoriaptrak's depression is unchanged, and the players have no ability to use Redemption Dice. This makes the Big Battle and Reckoning encounters in Section III much more difficult. If the party is getting close to concluding Section II with the enchantment intact, help your players recognize the adventure goal that is going unmet: their characters might overhear Kefleek refresh his enchantment or Scoriaptrak might begin to respond to a redemptive moment only to shut down a moment later.

The PCs should level up once this section is complete.

Triggered Encounters in Section II

These encounters help to advance the story in Section II but don't necessarily take place at a set location. Rather, they take place at a specified time (e.g. the first night) or after certain events occur (e.g. after the PCs discover Kefleek's secret). They are listed below, in likely order of occurrence, and more fully detailed afterward.

Encounter	Trigger
Kenku conversing	1st night in Section II
Cult of the Dragon intro	1st night in Section II
With friends like these	The party allies with the Cult
Kefleek revealed	Kefleek confronted about his control over the dragon
Dragon Detected	Scoriaptrak detected twice by Rhezicora's gang
On the path to Redemption	5 Redemption Dice awarded to PCs
Kenku interrupted	2nd night in Section II
An ill woodwind blows	2nd night in Section II or breakup of alliance w/Cult

T1. KENKUS CONVERSING

TRIGGER: First evening in Section II.

UTILITY: Nudge PCs to investigate a link to the dragon.

BACKGROUND: Elf-allied kenku rangers are communicating from clifftops (areas 9A-C) after searching for Scoriaptrak.

The PCs hear the kenku rangers in the evening. Read or paraphrase the following:

The dragon suddenly raises his head, listening very intently. You hear the faint strain of a song, originating a good distance away. The bulk of the sound is a high, flutelike warble. But underneath the warble is an irregular clicking. The song dies out after a minute but is soon answered, this time from the opposite direction. A third song follows from a different direction but seems to stop short. Silence follows.

Each kenku is sharing the results of their day's exploration. The warbling is just for fun, the clicking is the real data.

- Any PC with proficiency in CHARISMA (Performance) or INTELLIGENCE (History), or with a relevant background recognizes the melody of an elven tune.
- A successful DC 8 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals that the warbling sounds birdlike.
- A successful DC 11 CHARISMA (Performance) or WISDOM (Perception) check reveals a code in the clicking.
- With success on the check prior, a subsequent successful DC 12 INTELLIGENCE check reveals the following words in the code: "big monster" and "search". Knowledge of

Thieves Cant or a relevant background involving codes grants Advantage on this check.

The dragon can be heard unconsciously humming the tune later. If asked, he denies knowing it. If your PCs want to find the source, inform them of its origin at the nearest occurrence of Area 9.

T2. CULT OF THE DRAGON INTRODUCED

TRIGGER: First night in Section II.

UTILITY: Introduces a new threat to inspiring the dragon.

BACKGROUND: In advance of their meeting with Scoriaptrak, a team from the Cult of the Dragon has been scouting the path to Mount Carnass. They came across signs of the dragon, but have not approached him; they are suspicious about Scoriaptrak's condition and the PCs. The cultists' mission is only to gather information, not seek a fight or subsequent conflict.

While Scoriaptrak sleeps deeply, Kefleek senses the Cult and attempts to make contact. If a PC is on watch, inform them that they see Kefleek (noisily) trying to sneak into the nearby woods. If Kefleek isn't challenged, he parleys with the cultists. A successful DC 10 DEXTERITY (Stealth) check is needed to get within earshot of the conversation. In this case, read or paraphrase the following:

Kefleek is talking to a group of robed humanoid. He's bowing while a torch-bearing figure scolds him, saying, "I'll ask you again, wretch: what is your master's plan? Where has Scoriaptrak been all these years?! Who are these people with you?"

The speaker is a **dragonwing cultist**, a neutral evil half-elf named Galinix. With him are 2 **dragonfang cultists** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) and a **guard drake** hiding behind a tree. The Cultists don't wish to wake a sleeping dragon, but want to know about Scoriaptrak.

At this point, Kefleek is likely still interested in Scoriaptrak reverting to evil (see sidebar if not). Therefore, he is happy at the Cult's arrival, and tells them that Scoriaptrak "... needs more evil thoughts ...". He doesn't want to reveal the dragon's full weaknesses for fear that the Cult's interest will evaporate. It's clear to the Cultists that Kefleek isn't telling the whole story, but they agree to keep to the plan and meet at Mount Carnass. If allowed to play out, the Cultists soon return to the rest of their group.

FAST LEARNERS? If the PCs have completed Triggered Encounters T4 and T5 by the first night, well done! In this case, Kefleek is now on their side and wishes only to make the Cultists leave without revealing their original plan: “My master fine now, you can leave.” The Cult grow frustrated and demand to speak to Scoriaptrak.

A PARTING SHOT

Before the Cultists leave, they can’t help but venerate Scoriaptrak. When appropriate in the encounter, they shout out in unison:

*“One of Five! Red commands!
One of Five! Red burns the world!”*

This chant is part of an ancient invocation to Tiamat, the 5-headed, evil goddess of chromatic dragons. Kefleek will reveal this information if asked. Upon hearing the chant, Scoriaptrak’s evil tendencies are tickled, and his internal struggle for redemption is threatened.

However this encounter concludes, reveal that the characters hear the dragon muttering parts of the chant during the next day. **He is in an altogether darker mood**; he might speak of past dark deeds with a hint of nostalgia.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters make their presence known to the Cultists, the dragonwing asks them the same questions he asked Kefleek. Even if befriended, the Cultists remain suspicious and send a covert message back to the rest of their group: “*Found Red. Dragon weak, but continue with plan.*”

If attacked, they flee to their camp but fight to the death if they feel there is no other recourse. Assume the Cultists’ camp is one mapped location away from PCs.

Following these Cultists to their camp could trigger a fight or an alliance; read and adapt the encounters **With Friends Like These** (below) and **An Ill Woodwind Blows** (page 35). With no other developments, the Cult returns the next night with the latter encounter.

T3. WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

TRIGGER: The party tries to ally with the Cult.
UTILITY: Create risk/reward for allying with Cult.

Clever PCs might try to feign an alliance with the Cultists. The Cult will fight for the party in the next few encounters, but they are likely to kill monsters and innocents. Should an innocent be killed, the following occurs:

- After the first time, reveal that Scoriaptrak’s temperament appears to have changed, becoming more brooding and dark.
- After the second time, inform the characters that Scoriaptrak seems troubled by the death, though there is also a glint of pleasure in his eyes. The party randomly **loses 1 Redemption Die**.
- Should innocents continue to be openly killed in the dragon’s presence, the party **loses 2 Redemption Dice** for each innocent killed as Scoriaptrak quite visibly begins to shift back to his former evil ways.

After each encounter, the Cult demands a private audience with Scoriaptrak, being refused only with a good excuse and a successful DC 14 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check.

During an audience, the Cult wishes to hear Scoriaptrak’s evil plans. A Cultist also whispers unknown evil ideas to the dragon which puts him in a dark mood; should this be allowed to continue, reveal that a random character has lost a single **Redemption Die** of their choice as Scoriaptrak appears to sway further away from the path towards goodness.

After being twice-denied an audience, or an overall severance of the relationship, the Cult responds by attempting a takeover and control of the dragon (run **An Ill Woodwind Blows**, page 35).

T4. KEFLEEK REVEALED

TRIGGER: The PCs dispel Kefleek's *dominate person* spell and aggressively confront him about his apparent control over the dragon.

UTILITY: Major plot twist.

Unlock the dragon's ability to be inspired.
Hints at the involvement of Bahamut.

If Kefleek is backed into a corner, seeing no other way of retaining control of the dragon, he lashes out: he screams for Scoriaptrak to kill the PCs. If relevant, inform the players that even though Kefleek's spell has been broken, its residual magic allows him one last command.

Any ensuing combat results in Kefleek lying to prevent any attacks on himself: *"Dragon and I together! I die, HE die!"*

The dragon attacks but looks increasingly confused. To stop the attack immediately, and permanently end Kefleek's enchantment, the PCs must complete the following actions:

- Dispel *dominate person* (assumed here to have already happened).
- Destroy the coin (it's in Kefleek's robes).
- Identify Kefleek's enchantment to the dragon and succeed on a DC 18 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check. Redemption Dice can be used here.

Without the above, combat continues for a maximum of 10 rounds, at which time the dragon collapses from exhaustion; Kefleek is still free to re-fresh his enchantment later.

DRACONIC CONFRONTATION

If the PCs are successful above, the dragon is fully aware, and he and Kefleek clash. Read or paraphrase the following:

Scoriaptrak rises up to his full, terrible height, seemingly bigger than before, bellowing, *"KEFLEEK! How dare you!? You've betrayed me!"*

Kefleek stands his ground, trembling and shaking his fist. *"NO! YOU betray ME! I wait for you. All kobolds die, leave. I stay! For YOU! For Lord! And you come back! I so happy! I give you new plans! But you no care for me! You no want destroy, rule. You ... now ... NICE! I HATE you!!"*

The kobold collapses in a sobbing heap. The dragon snarls and raises a foot...

To Scoriaptrak, Kefleek is the embodiment of his evil past, and at this moment, he wants to be done with it all. The PCs must take immediate action to prevent him from killing Kefleek. Attempting to restrain him or clear roleplaying that protects Kefleek will succeed, no checks needed. If Kefleek is killed, Scoriaptrak tailspins into further depression; the characters randomly lose a further 3

Redemption Dice. If the PCs defuse the situation so that Kefleek is saved, the dragon and kobold both pout, and avoid each other's company.

STILL DETERMINED TO DIE

With Kefleek's enchantment now permanently broken, Scoriaptrak can now be **inspired towards Redemption**.

But at this moment, Scoriaptrak is still suicidal. Kefleek's enchantment merely kept him docile and had no impact on the dragon's self-loathing. After everyone has gathered themselves, this problem becomes more clearly apparent.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Scoriaptrak gives a resolute snort. *"I can see clearly now that I cannot make up for my evil deeds. I shouldn't even try. So let's get going. We hired you to throw me into a mountain chasm, not stand around like sausages."*

Kefleek shrugs and says, *"This not my fault"*.

Only with multiple redemptive acts (and earned Redemption Dice) can the PCs change the dragon's state of mind, setting Scoriaptrak up for an incredible transformation in the finale (see **On the Path to Redemption**, page 35). For now, the dragon is content to work within the PC's plans, as long as he believes he is headed towards Mount Carnass.

BAHAMUT'S BLESSING

The lawful good dragon deity Bahamut (**ancient gold dragon**, MM) has been watching Scoriaptrak, drawn by Myoris' prayers and the struggle in the red dragon's soul.

Bahamut seeks Scoriaptrak's conversion to Good, but cannot act directly on the Material Plane. He therefore greatly values the PC's efforts. He visits one PC while they are resting. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you drift through the twilight between wakefulness and sleep, a deep, golden voice surrounds you:

"Show my child the good he can do...", it rumbles, *"... for We wait for him at the end."*

Allow one character to ask one question, then inform them that the presence leaves without answering. As they awaken, they come to realize that Scoriaptrak knows nothing of the godly visitation, but does state that *'... he feels odd ...'*

A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals one of the scales on the dragons chest has turned gold. Scoriaptrak has no comment. Once the PCs earn a total of 6 Redemption Dice, the **On the Path to Redemption** encounter is triggered (page 35).

T5. DRAGON DETECTED

TRIGGER: The dragon has been Detected twice by the necromancer's network.

UTILITY: Introduce necromancer as the big boss.
Alert characters to a new threat.

After hearing word (twice) of the dragon, Rhezicora travels to see for herself. This will be the PC's first encounter with Rhezicora. Begin by reading or paraphrasing the following:

Three large animal skeletons crash through the forest ahead. bears from the look of it. One skeletons rises up on its hind legs and a tall, black-haired woman steps out from inside the rib cage. She addresses you: *"I have come to pay my respects to the red dragon."*

Three **cave bear skeletons** guard **Rhezicora** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs). Show your players Illustration H (Appendix D) when you want to reveal Rhezicora. She has half-cover (+2 to AC) when inside the bear's ribcage.

She is nervous about the presence of a dragon in her 'backyard' and figures the best solution is to pay it a tribute, in the hope that it moves on. Inside one skeleton, she has secured a chest containing 2,000 gold pieces.

She knows the dragon is near, even if he is hidden (*detect magic* helps if the dragon is hidden via a magical item). She will parley with the party, intent on learning the dragon's plans. Her wariness is something the PCs could use to keep her at bay.

If she doesn't speak to Scoriaptrak, she leaves, spying on the party (from a distance) until such time as the dragon makes itself seen (DM's discretion).

Whenever she sees Scoriaptrak, she senses his fragility and her plan evolves: kill the dragon and make him the crown jewel in her army. She makes an offer to the PCs. Should this occur from watching the party from a distance, she makes the trek back to the party.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Upon seeing Scoriaptrak, an evil smile spreads across the necromancer's face.

"The cloud of death hovers over you, dragon. I could give it to you. Easily I think, now that I've had a closer look...Kill him for me, mercenaries, and I'll reward you handsomely. Reject my offer, and your skeletons will serve me dinner tomorrow."



Rhezicora offers the PCs her 2,000gp to kill the dragon. If attacked, she attempts to flee in one of the cave bear skeletons whilst the others cover her retreat. She assumes she will be followed, and heads to her camp (Area 14) to devise a trap for the party's arrival.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Rhezicora's consort, Darbarik, has also learned of the PCs and believes they could help him; he wishes to start a new life with Rhezicora. A short while after Rhezicora leaves, a skeletal messenger pigeon lands with a crash by the PCs feet, a note visibly tied to its ribcage. It reads:

"If ye be people of honor, please heed this message. The necromancer is dangerous, but she is my beloved. I wish us a new life, without the black arts she now devotes herself to. I can help you on your quest, but you must help me with mine. Find me above her camp. Look for the red sword."

If the PCs wish, they can find Darbarik in Area 14F, waiting to make contact.

T6. ON THE PATH TO REDEMPTION

TRIGGER: The PCs have been awarded 6 Redemption Dice

UTILITY: Showcase a change in Scoriaptrak due to the PCs.
Changes the party's destination.

The characters commitment to Redemptive acts has helped Scoriaptrak to shed his depressed, dark state of mind. The dragon is no longer suicidal, and your PCs see a change in him. Scoriaptrak attempts to reconcile with Kefleek, culminating in the following exchange:

The dragon stares past the kobold and says to him quietly, *"Kefleek. Thank you for your loyalty for these many years. But the dragon you remember...the one who committed so many evils...is gone. I do not know who stands in his place...But I have no anger for you."*

The kobold blinks his cloudy eyes and stands up, unsure of the dragon's words. He stares for a long second then embraces the dragon's snout.

Kefleek is slowly coming to terms with Scoriaptrak's new, less-evil side. Scoriaptrak also thanks the PCs for being inspirational figures, and for helping him see that anyone, no matter how dark their past, can be redeemed.

The tension over the dragon's *internal* struggle is now replaced by an *external* threat: the Cult of the Dragon's attempts to revert Scoriaptrak to evil (see encounters **T2**, **T8**, and **T10**).

Showcase the progress the characters are making in changing Scoriaptrak's heart. With appropriate encouragement from a PC and a successful DC 10 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check, Scoriaptrak can now be convinced to participate in whatever combat encounter comes next. If he does, award a player a **d10 Redemption Die**. Afterward, positive attention or accolades will be rebuffed by the dragon, but a perceptive PC will notice a tiny smile flash across his face.

TO THE ELVES!

With suicide at Mount Carnass now not a problem, Scoriaptrak is unsure of his next step. He would be interested to meet with the elves at Dygyrus Falls, if the characters bring it up. If the characters have not visited area 9, which reveals this destination and an elven ally, run encounter T1 and subtly remind them of Scoriaptrak's connection to elves (e.g. Kefleek fiddles with Myoris' scroll case).

Kefleek is the only one who knows about the planned meet-up with the Cult of the Dragon at Mount Carnass. He keeps this to himself, hoping it is now irrelevant. He tries to steer the party away from Mount Carnass or Dygyrus falls, with no good explanation of why. A successful DC 10 WISDOM

(Insight) check will reveal that he is hiding something. He will admit to his former plan, if pushed and/or realizing that he can no longer keep it a secret.

T7. KENKUS INTERRUPTED

TRIGGER: The evening of the 2nd night in Section II.

UTILITY: Nudge your PCs to investigate the song.

If area 9 hasn't been explored, the kenku repeat their communication the second night (see **Kenku Conversing** on page 31—the PCs may repeat the checks listed in that encounter).

The song begins as before, spreading to all three plateaus of area 9. But after the PCs checks (if any), the song from the nearest plateau turns into a warble of alarm; one kenku is under attack. Silence follows.

T8. AN ILL WOODWIND BLOWS

TRIGGER: The second night in Section II or the breaking of the alliance with the Cult.

UTILITY: Threaten the characters progress towards inspiring Scoriaptrak.

The Cult of the Dragon now actively seeks to control Scoriaptrak using enchanted instruments. But every dragon responds differently to their music, and they must test Scoriaptrak's vulnerability. In the dead of night, read or paraphrase the following:

The gentle midnight breeze lessens, and a low tune is now audible from somewhere in the darkness. Discordant notes sound from some sort of wind instrument.
Scoriaptrak lets out a low growl.

A **dragonwing cultist** plays the Cult's first instrument, a *flute of the Abyss* (see Appendix C: Magic Items), but not very well. He and a **guard drake** are 150 feet north of the PCs.

Tracking the music to its source requires a successful DC 15 WISDOM (Perception) check. The music is laced with enchantment magic, but it doesn't affect Scoriaptrak. The flutist plays for 3 rounds then gives up.

After a minute's pause, a second **dragonwing cultist** begins the test with her instrument, 150 feet south of the PCs. Read or paraphrase the following:

Opposite the flute's location, the harsh scraping of a stringed instrument pierces the night. Immediately, a whine escapes Scoriaptrak's mouth, and you see a dull, yellow glow in one of his eyes as it flutters open. The tune picks up in tempo.

This instrument, a *darkheart violin* (see Appendix C: Magic Items), can indeed control Scoriaptrak, but only with a more skilled performer. The dragon shakes his head and roars, “*Get out of my mind!*”, but is otherwise unaffected this encounter.

Tracking the music to its source requires a successful DC 13 WISDOM (Perception) check. Two **guard drakes** and their handler (neutral evil male dwarf **cultist**, MM) hide in front of the dragonwing.

After 2 rounds of playing, the violinist notices the instrument’s effect. Her goal now is to get the violin back to the Cult’s camp to be used later. She quaffs a *potion of invisibility* and flees to the Cult’s camp (a half-mile into the surrounding wilderness). She orders any surviving force to cover her retreat. If any cultists are captured, they reveal nothing. Destroying the instruments forces the Cult to adapt another, inferior instrument when they show up again in Section III.

DEVELOPMENTS

Scoriaptrak is shaken by the evil music. Even if he is no longer suicidal, **he clearly acts slightly eviler** the following day; he’s less concerned about any innocents the party encounters, and he talks about destruction and seizing gold. Overall, his behavior should feel like a setback, signaling to the PCs that they must not stop working to inspire the dragon, and possibly double their efforts.

Random Encounters in Section II

When traveling between mapped locations, the party will experience random encounters. Most involve potential interactions with Rhezicora’s network, but many contain useful hints or clues about the enemies the party is facing.

Roll	Encounter	Utility
1	R1. Blink dogs	Connect with elven allies
2-3*	R2. Blue Dragon Hunting	Ticking clock
4	R3. Decorated Skeleton	Necromancer clue
5	R4. Turtle Power	Tar pit preview
6	R5. Necro Minions on a Mission	Avoid Detection
7	R6. Hunting Party	Learn about necromancer
8	R7. Player-created	Immersion, info dump
9	R8. We’re Putting on a Show	Avoid Detection Redemption Dice
10	R9. Necro Minion Patrol	Avoid Detection
11	R10. Zhentarim vs. Harper	Avoid Detection Redemption Dice
12	R.11 Glory to Gruumsh!	Combat

*could be used more than once

R1. BLINK DOGS

SETTING: Along the road.

UTILITY: PCs can be connected with allies of the elves.

Canine-like yipping comes from up ahead. You hear several sharp, snapping sounds, and the yipping is suddenly closer now.

A pack of 4 **blink dogs** (MM) is traveling through their territory and will arrive at the characters location in 2 rounds. The blink dogs are friendly with the elves in Area 17, but know nothing about the PCs or dragon. They also know that elf-allied kenku are nearby, searching for someone.

The dogs automatically smell the dragon unless the PCs can take some action to hide his scent. Once alerted, they freeze and stalk towards the dragon in unison, growling.

Without a successful DC 12 WISDOM (Animal Handling) check and roleplaying to calm the intelligent beasts, the dogs launch themselves at the dragon. Mentioning elves grants the PCs automatic success. On a failed check, the dogs attack the dragon for 2 rounds (who only seeks to defend himself) then teleport away. With a successful check, the alpha female listens to the PCs while glancing at the dragon suspiciously.

If the PCs explain their goals, including any connection to elves, the alpha lets loose a happy, yodeling howl which her pack imitates; they are signaling the elf-allied kenku in areas 9A-C. The kenku respond, similar to the **Kenku Conversing** encounter (page 31). The blink dogs indicate that the PCs should head to Area 9, but if that has already been resolved, will scout ahead, preferring to lead the PCs to the stranded dryad in Area 10.

R2. BLUE DRAGON HUNTING

SETTING: Anywhere.

UTILITY: A 'ticking clock' to keep the party moving forward. Foreshadows of the final battle.

The blue dragon that fought Scoriaptrak is still hunting for him. This encounter can be run more than once, to remind the PCs about this ever-looming threat. The blue is closer each time, but it will not show up until the finale (see **Section III, Area 16** for more details). The first time you run this encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a faraway cry from above. In the distant sky, a large winged form wheels back and forth over the landscape. You see a spike of bluish light shoots from the creature's mouth before it issues a frustrated cry and flies off. Scoriaptrak's gaze follows the receding creature for a long while, his black eyes unreadable. "That is the blue. She'll be looking for me. We should go..."

R3. DECORATED SKELETON

SETTING: In the woods near the road.

UTILITY: Wilderness flavor.
A clue for countering the necromancer's power.

A group of tiny, winged humanoids flit around a very slow-moving skeleton. They are laughing and decorating the skeleton with flowers.

A group of **pixies** (MM) is toying with one of Rhezicora's **skeleton** (MM) servitors, whose animating force is running low (5 levels of Exhaustion). Roleplay the pixies speaking in gruff voices and making rude gestures with its arms.

They fly away giggling, but watch the PCs from behind nearby trees. They claim to know a secret, and a bribe, a beautiful song or a successful DC 14 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check convinces them to reveal it: a carved glyph on one of the skeleton's ribs. The glyph is recognizable as necromantic to anyone trained in Arcana. If the glyph is marred, the skeleton goes completely dormant; a useful clue for future interactions.

R4. TURTLE POWER

SETTING: Near the road.

UTILITY: Preview the tar pits.

A rustling in the undergrowth reveals a fey-touched turtle, which has become stuck in a very small tar pit. A **dire wolf** (MM) menaces it. If the PCs rescue it, the turtle glows lime green and stretches out its neck towards them. Touching it causes 10 *goodberries* to appear and the turtle trundles off.

R5. NECRO MINIONS ON A MISSION

SETTING: Forest or forest edge.

UTILITY: Reinforces the necromancer theme.
Threat of Detection.

Two of the necromancer's gang, female halflings named Kicki (neutral evil **spy**, MM) and Dzigga (neutral **druid**, MM), are on their way to deliver her message to the lizardfolk; "... dig me a canal and I shall give you a substance to make your dams watertight ..."; the necromancer needs a water supply for processing the tar. They carry a pot of tar as a gift.

Kicki holds a *bullroarer of skeleton control* (see Appendix C: Magic Items) which allows her to control 8 **skeletal gibbons** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs), creeping in the treetop shadows. A successful DC8 INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check while inspecting the bullroarer or gibbon skeleton reveals matching glyphs, a key to this items' function (and a clue for the final battle).

The halflings are suspicious of the PCs and ask them who they know in Bonestore (see Area 13). Without a successful, opposed CHARISMA (Deception) check by a PC, the pair flee to either Area 7 or Area 14, whichever is closer.

Kicki is loyal to the necromancer, but Dzigga is loyal only to Kicki. If Kicki is killed, Dzigga transforms herself into a rage-filled **awakened tree** (MM) and fights to the death. If captured, Dzigga trades information for their lives, relating the nature of the necromancer's operation (see Section III, 'Camp Conditions' inset). If they escape to Area 14, it counts as one **Detection** by the necromancer's network. If this is the second Detection, then the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (see page 34).

TREASURE: The halflings wear matching purple robes and have skull-embossed signet rings (20gp value each). Dzigga has a vial of *dust of sneezing and choking*. Kicki has a *bullroarer of skeleton control* (see Appendix C: Magic Items).

R6. HUNTING PARTY

SETTING: Near the road or in relatively open woodlands.

UTILITY: Threat of Detection.

Foragers from Bonestore (Area 13) wander close to the PCs. Read or paraphrase the following:

A group of tired-looking men walk slowly through the forest ahead, carrying two dead deer on a makeshift litter. A scout leads the group, a small medallion held in his outstretched hand. A low growling sound issues from behind you.

The party consists of 4 **commoners** (MM) and Retrew (neutral human male, **scout**). The weary foragers are prisoners of Rhezicora, bound to serve her because their families are also captive. They are wary of roaming undead; Retrew holds a medallion he believes to be a ward against them, but it's not.

The growling is Scoriaptrak's stomach; he smells the deer. To avoid an interaction, the PCs must prevent Scoriaptrak from giving in to his hunger (a successful DC 13 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check with whispered roleplaying and/or a successful group DC 15 STRENGTH (Athletics) check).

If the hunters see just the PCs, they become wary but seek no confrontation. With any sympathetic roleplaying, they relate their plight: they are forced to work for the necromancer as their families are held hostage. They can also reveal basic information about Rhezicora's camp (Section III-Area 14); describe the features of 2 locations there (DMs choice).

If the men see the dragon, they plead for their lives. They make up wild tales about gold and plunder in Blackwater village (Area 8), hoping to pique the dragon's interest. Without calming roleplaying and a successful DC 15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check, the men do not trust the party; they try to flee back to Bonestore. If they successfully flee, it counts as one **Detection** by the necromancer's network. If this is the second Detection, then the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (see page 34).

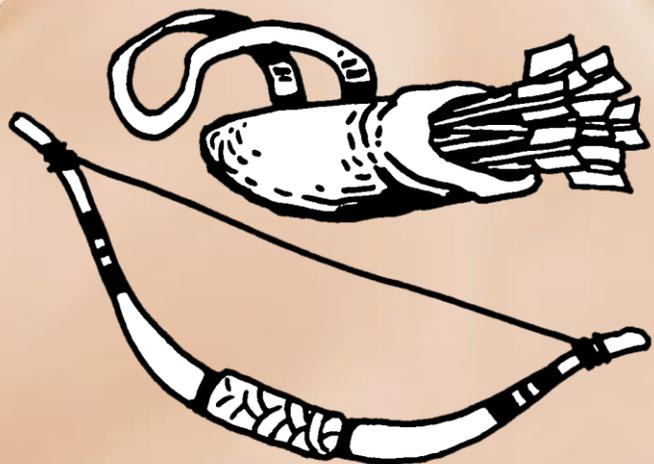
R7. PLAYER-CREATED ENCOUNTER

Your players will collectively develop and resolve a small encounter, prompted with the following: *"You come across a scene that clearly indicates you're in a necromancer's territory. What is it?"*

To begin, one player could roll a d20. On a roll of 1-8, the scene has a threatening tone, on a 9-15 a neutral tone, and on a 16-20 a friendly tone. Inform your players that their PC's success in navigating this small encounter is certain; this will free them from worrying about optimizing any opponents and focus on imagining fun details. The DM should ask questions about the players ideas, helping to integrate it within the context of this adventure.

The point of this exercise is to draw your players into the adventure by allowing them to shape a small part of the world around them. They might end up with a NPC companion, a useful item or just a flavorful location.

There is additional benefit for the DM: you could adapt whatever scene the players describe to include something their characters missed previously. But if your group of players are not the type that enjoys this sort of gameplay, feel free to disregard this encounter.



R8. WE'RE PUTTING ON A SHOW

SETTING: Along the side of the road.

UTILITY: Threat of Detection.

Gain Redemption Dice (through roleplaying).

BACKSTORY: While on a mission, a crew of Rhezicora's has had a chance encounter with a lost theatre troupe. Upon pain of death, the troupe has 'agreed' to put on a show. The PCs can observe the scene undetected

Read or paraphrase the following:

Up ahead, you see a gaudy wagon is surrounded by a collection of nasty-looking types. On second glance, it appears they are actually an audience, waiting as a stage show is set up.

To one side, a heated discussion is taking place between a thug and the troupe's leader. The entire roadway is blocked with wagons.

The assemblage consists of the following:

- A **bandit captain** (MM) named Hurred Rednose (due to his excessive drinking). He loves prat falls.
- A **manticore** (MM) named Spikes. Hurred's pet. Hurred's favorite trick is to feed Spikes vegetables, which it then hatefully spits into the thug's faces.
- 3 **thugs** (MM). Two are morons, but the third is clever and quite bored; he whittles in silence.
- 5 women and children servants (**commoners**).
- 8 members of the acting company (**commoners**) of a variety of races and genders. They are led by Oyemma (neutral good female half-elf), known for her dead-on impersonation of dwarves.

Oyemma and Hurred are arguing about what show to perform. Hurred accepts the PC's presence if they give him a reasonable cover story and succeed on an opposed check: Hurred's WISDOM (Insight) vs a PC's CHARISMA (Deception).

The PCs could use this opportunity to suggest (and enact) a scene that speaks to Scoriaptrak's inner desire for atonement. The dragon admits to liking tales (see Scoriaptrak's backstory), and the troupe clearly needs help. Options are below if needed. Roll 2d4 to pick an idea from each column:

Roll	Story	Scene
1	Farcical tale of a 2 incredibly-stupid elven nobles	Stage fighting
2	Revenge tale of a dead sailor haunting his ship	Comic relief
3	Bawdy tale of 2 halfling thieves and a djinn's harem	Confrontation
4	The tragic tale of a wizard's wish gone wrong	Dramatic soliloquy

To get the dragon past this roadblock unnoticed, he must succeed on 2 opposed checks:

- The dragon's DEXTERITY (Stealth) vs the human bandits' passive WISDOM (Perception-DC9). Vivid stage-acting and a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Performance) check distracts the bandits, granting Advantage on the roll.
- The dragon's DEXTERITY (Stealth) vs the manticore's WISDOM (Perception). Participating in Hurred's "trick" or offering food distracts the manticore, granting Advantage on the roll.

With a completed scene, Hurred and crew are satisfied and head south. The troupe also heads for civilization. If the dragon is seen, Hurred attempts to flee on his manticore. If he escapes, it counts as one **Detection** by the necromancer's network. If this is the second Detection, then the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (page 34).

REDEMPTION DICE

Give one player with the best Performance check a **d8** if Scoriaptrak watches a play with themes of redemption or atonement. Give each other a **d6** their PC actively, or enthusiastically, participated in said show. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

TREASURE: A locked box in the wagon contains 1,000 gp, payment for the components Hurred was sent to collect.

R9. NECRO MINION PATROL

SETTING: Variable.

UTILITY: Previews necromancer's operation
Threat of detection

A **bugbear** (MM) named Gurro, two **tar skeletons** and a **giant armadillo skeleton** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) patrol a wide circuit through the necromancer's territory. There is a 25% chance that Gurro is napping inside the balled-up, armadillo skeleton. The skeletons attack at Gurro's command. Gurro assumes the PCs are mercenaries on the way to Bonestore. He demands they pay him a "... *toll of 10gp each* ..." and doesn't hesitate to threaten the use of the skeletons or the wrath of the necromancer.

If he sees the dragon, he jumps in the armadillo skeleton and flees for Bonestore (Area 13). If he escapes, it counts as one **Detection** by the necromancer's network. If this is the second Detection, then the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (page 34). If close to death, Gurro is happy to trade information for his life:

- Rhezicora the necromancer is the boss. She has a large strongbox filled with gold (Area 14F). You could steal it!
- Slaves work in the tar pit, uncovering strange skeletons. You could boss them around!

RIO. ZHENTARIM VS. HARPER

SETTING: Along the side of the road.

UTILITY: Avoid Detection.

Unlock dragon's backstory (if needed).

The party comes across an almost innocent-looking scene. Read or paraphrase the following:

On the roadside ahead, a woman is loading pelts onto a full wagon whilst a dwarf sits on one stack, singing an old tavern tune. It sounds terrible.

Several cages near the wagon hold small, furry animals.

A Zhentarim team has captured a Harper agent, who posed as a fur trapper. The Harper has been bound and gagged, then hidden under his wagon full of pelts. The team consists of a dwarf (neutral evil male **cult fanatic**, MM), a neutral female **wererat** (MM) in human form, and a lawful evil male Zhent captain on horseback named Tawzin (**spy**, VGtM).

From a distance, a successful simple DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check (becoming a DC 5 up close) reveals that the cages hold a number of beavers, these being plentiful due to the lizardfolk' swampland creation (See Area 7).

The wererat is loading pelts, while the dwarf sings; the singing covers up the muffled cries of the Harper, noticed with a successful DC 15 WISDOM (Perception) check. The crew seems eager to be off.

If questioned, the Zhent captain claims to run a trapping operation. He is city-bred and knows nothing about nature, which shows: "... You'll find these miserable, bitey..uh..swamp rats all over the place. The lizardfolk breed them for meat. They taste great, but the skins are worthless" All very wrong; a successful DC 5 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals these errors.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the dragon is revealed, then the Zhent captain on horseback immediately attempts to escape towards Rheizcora's camp (Area 13). Should he successfully escape, his escape counts as one **Detection**. If this is the party's second Detection, then the **Dragon Detected** encounter is triggered (page 34).

The Harper Nillam (chaotic good male human **bard**, VGtM) is grateful for the rescue and gives the PCs 100gp from a secret compartment in his wagon. He'll maintain his humble cover story (he's a fur trader) and encourage the PCs to turn back: "A necromancer holds sway ahead."

Nillam also flashes the secret sign of the Harpers, noticeable by any PC in that faction. If a PC reveals their own Harper connection, PCs have Advantage on checks related to

interacting with Nillam. If Nillam sees the dragon, explanatory roleplaying and a successful DC 15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check are needed to convince him to trust the PCs. On a failure, he makes his excuses and leaves at the first chance, playing no further role in the adventure. On a success, proposes to relate the PCs mission to a local Harper leader. In this case, Nillam returns as an ally in the finale.

PTSDRAGON (OPTIONAL)

Use this subsection if you need another chance to allow the characters to find information about the dragon's backstory. Its effects are duplicative of those in Area 5. If this subsection is run, then the **Backstory and Enchantment Tune-up** (see below) is also triggered.

Upon seeing the cages, Scoriaptrak has a traumatic flashback to his own long imprisonment; he begins shaking and only stares blankly ahead. If the players don't notice this, Kefleek calls their attention to it: "He no like this, make cages go away!" Until the cages are destroyed, Scoriaptrak remains immobile, muttering only, "... no more cages, no more cages ...", which could become audible to the Zhents. Scoriaptrak's break-down also hurts Kefleek's enchantment (see below).

BACKSTORY AND ENCHANTMENT TUNE-UP

If still active, Kefleek's enchantment has been compromised by Scoriaptrak's reaction to the cages. After the encounter, Scoriaptrak is suddenly more talkative, but still confused.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The dragons voice sounds shaky: "I can't breathe in this forest! It's too ... crowded. Where is the sky, Kefleek!?"

If the PCs can calm him down, requiring a successful DC 15 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check, Scoriaptrak will talk about his imprisonment--relate the details of the dragon's backstory up to but not including his rescue. He does not name Myoris. His language should sound different than his previous, more monotonic responses (consider applying Advantage to the check if you believe the players successfully roleplayed the situation).

Kefleek soon interrupts, calling a private talk with the dragon to re-assert his enchantment by casting *dominate person*. A successful opposed check of DEXTERITY (Stealth) or WISDOM (INSIGHT) check against Kefleek's CHARISMA (Deception) reveals that the dragon is subdued and more monotonic after the talk. Dispelling the enchantment and confronting Kefleek triggers the **Kefleek Revealed** encounter (page 33).

REDEMPTION DICE

If the PCs engage in heartfelt roleplaying regarding the dragon's imprisonment and emotional state, award one player a **d6**. See page 6 for details about using Redemption Dice.

RII. BRING GLORY TO GRUUMSH!

SETTING: A small camp near the road.
UTILITY: A major combat encounter.

The characters arrive upon the carnage that used to be a seasonal woodcutters' camp. Begin the encounter with PCs at the bottom left of Map G (Appendix C: Maps), and read or paraphrase the following:

The path ahead cuts through the ruins of an encampment. From the looks of the carnage, a celebration has recently come to a bloody end; decorations and bodies lay strewn in the mud.

Many green-skinned humanoids are spread among the buildings, looting the camp, with a number of dead woodcutters and craftsmen lying scattered about.

A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) or DC 7 WISDOM (Survival) check allows the characters to estimate that about three dozen orcs are present throughout the camp. Show your players Map G (Appendix C: Maps).

After reading the box text, the party (including the dragon) must succeed on a group DC 10 DEXTERITY (Stealth) check, or else 4 **orcs** in the nearby woods notice them and attack. They don't alert the rest of their band for 2 rounds, hoping for the glory of a kill for themselves. If the party remains undetected, read or paraphrase the following:

In the village, the orcs are setting up camp for the night. An orc of notable presence lets loose a triumphant bellow. His warriors only half-heartedly respond.

The **orc** of notable presence is Gra-dak (MM, but with 40 HP), who is trying to build his reputation as a fierce warrior. He led the raid on this camp but didn't find much glory in such a weak target. In the camp is Gra-dak, 32 **orcs**, and a **Orc Eye of Gruumsh** (MM). Show your players illustration I (Appendix D: Player Handouts and Illustrations).

Should combat erupt, Kefleek will prompt the PCs by saying, "Should my tyrant fight? He can try to scare." With some role-played encouragement, Scoriaptrak can muster a single use of his lost Frightful Presence ability. He rises up and roars for his full, terrifying effect (a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw to avoid being Frightened for 1 minute); the PCs are excluded

from its effects but assume 80% of the orcs flee. After the roar, the dragon's infirmity takes hold, and he collapses.

GRUUMSH'S GIFT

If the dragon roars and is subsequently seen, Gra-dak is ecstatic! He realizes that a tremendous foe like a red dragon is his chance to finally attain glory. In this case, read or paraphrase the following:

The orc leader just stares at the dragon while many of his troops flee in terror. The massive warrior raises his arms to the sky, chants gutturally then plunges a sharp stone into his eye. His screams somehow become amplified to a deafening level, then form a single word:

"... GRUUMSH! ..."

Thunder cracks overhead and a glowing red battleaxe streaks down from the clouds, landing between you and the stony-eyed orc. The chief looks at you through the weeping gore, smiles evilly, and sprints towards the axe.

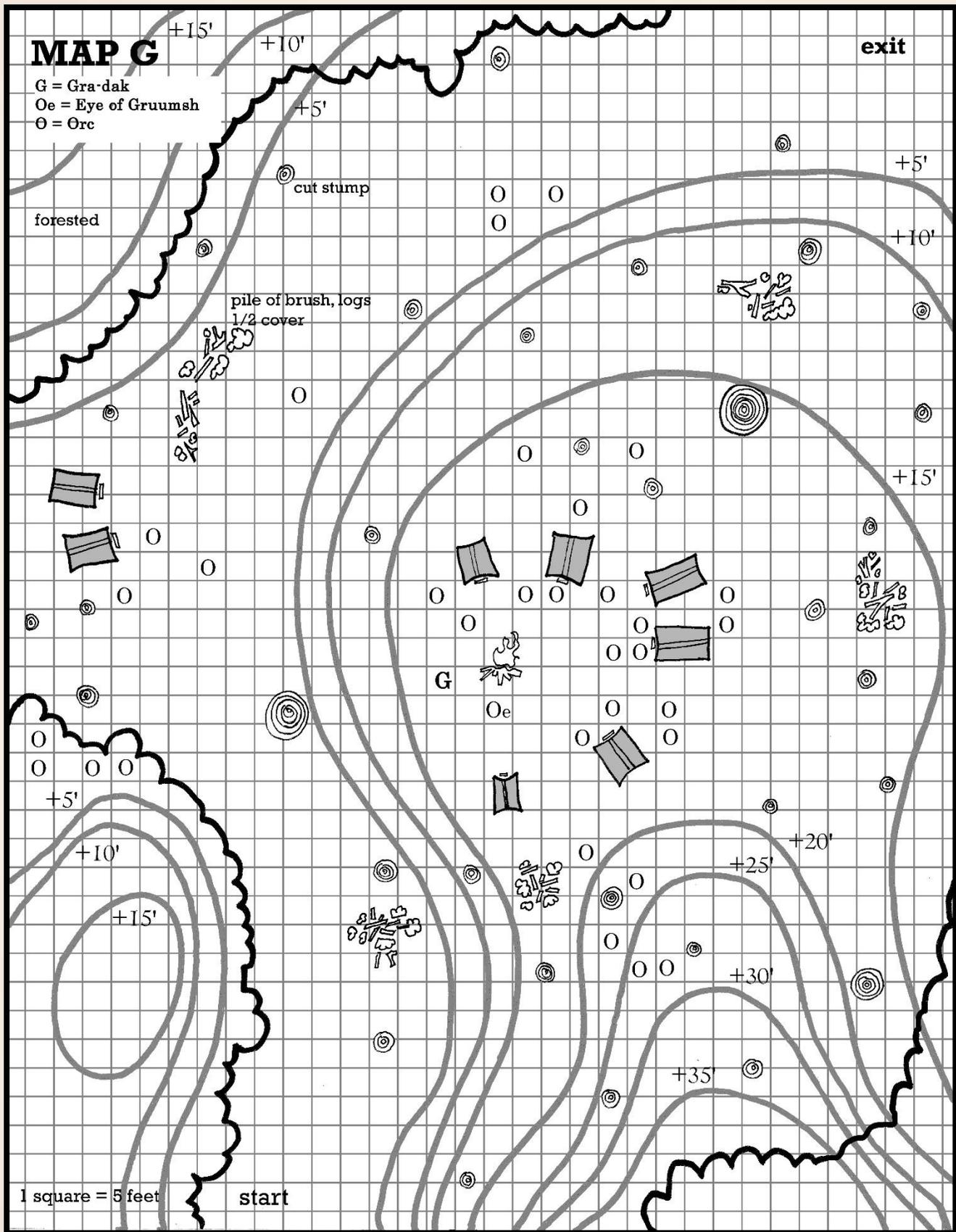
His appeal to Gruumsh, the orc deity of battle, is answered with a magical axe (a *+1 battleaxe of bloodlust*; see Appendix B: Magic Items). If Gra-dak reaches the axe, he gains the statistics of an **orc war chief** (MM, but with 40 HP). The axe is 60 feet from both Gra-dak and the characters.

Gra-dak's only goal is to slay the dragon and bring its head home as a trophy. He ignores the PCs and runs straight for the axe. Whether he succeeds or not, Gra-dak summons back 1d10+6 orcs, rolled with Advantage if he holds the axe.

At the conclusion of combat, characters searching the woodcutters' camp reveal little of value. A successful DC 8 WISDOM (Perception) or INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check reveals a note that mentions meeting a friendly kenku ranger who's been hiking the surrounding hilltops (Areas 9A-C).

TREASURE: The *+1 battleaxe of bloodlust* crumbles to dust if Gra-dak is defeated, but it leaves behind a smoldering chunk of obsidian in the likeness of Gruumsh's frowning face. To collectors or to a Temple of Corellon (a hated foe of Gruumsh), this artifact is worth 1,000 gp. The camp's wealth, now held by the Orc Eye of Gruumsh, consists of 100 gp, 1,000 sp, and a *handaxe +1*.





SECTION III. NECROMANCER'S CAMP AND FINALE

Synopsis

The party must get through Rhezicora's expansive operation in order to reach Mount Carnass. A number of pivotal story points will occur here, likely during heated battle. The most important story beats of this section are listed below, followed by advice on running The Big Battle, then descriptions of each mapped location.

Fight Rhezicora and the Cult. The necromancer wants the dragon's skeleton for her army and will sacrifice almost everything to get it. If she has previously **Detected** the dragon, then she has laid a trap. If not, she improvises much the same plan, but with some key weaknesses.

The Cult of the Dragon also shows up, complicating the fight. They make a last-ditch attempt to re-awaken Scoriaptrak's evil spirit. If they're successful, an evil Scoriaptrak presents a dilemma for the PCs. On the plus side, any allies the PCs made during the adventure can also show up to help turn the tide. See 'Running the Big Battle' for details on all of the above.

Scoriaptrak's Reckoning. The redemptive journey for the PCs and dragon can end here, culminating in the dragon's death, either by the necromancer or even the PCs own hands. But fear not! Scoriaptrak's death is merely the next step in his redemption. In front of Bahamut and Kelemvor, the PCs plead for the dragon's soul. All the inspiring deeds the PCs completed during the journey come into play. See 'Judgement' for more details.

Blue Dragon Ambush. Once past the necromancer, the party encounters a surprise last obstacle: the blue dragon that's been hunting Scoriaptrak. The party has some nifty power-ups, courtesy of a grateful Bahamut. See Area 15 for details. If the party kept Scoriaptrak alive in the previous battle, then he is killed now, triggering the Reckoning.

Reunion. After all threats are dealt with, the party can find Myoris' band of elves, concluding the adventure.

SCORIAPTRAK'S STATE OF MIND

By now, Kefleek's enchantment has been removed and the PCs have (hopefully) completed several inspiring acts, encouraging Scoriaptrak on his road to redemption. His struggle now isn't against suicide, but rather against slipping back into evil.

CAMP CONDITIONS

SIGHTS: Sickly forest ends at a large, stony field, behind which are the rocky foothills of Mount Carnass. Barrels of lit pitch produce little flame but much smoke.

SMELLS: The air is smoky and heavy with the acrid tang of burning tar.

SOUNDS: The occasional clang of a pick hitting rock. Indistinct, yelled orders and the cries of whipped laborers.

BACKGROUND: Rhezicora discovered the tar pits two years ago, drawn to the death they contain: untold hundreds of creatures, both ancient and recent. In the pits' contents, Rhezicora saw her chance to build an army. She summoned her network of underlings, enslaved a local village as her workforce, and has been hard at work.

But necromancy doesn't pay the bills. Or does it? The pits' ancient, weird creatures are unknown to Faerun's scholars. Antiquities researchers from Waterdeep have been purchasing specimens, unwittingly funding Rhezicora's operation.

Before the Big Battle

Whenever Rhezicora is alerted to Scoriaptrak's presence, she formulates a simple plan: **shackle the dragon and pull him into a tar pit**. If she first encounters the dragon [here](#), she'll parley with the PCs as described in the 'Dragon Detected' encounter (page 34).

Your players might come up with a number of plans for getting past this site. If Rhezicora is forewarned, any plan the PCs develop is more difficult to pull off. Considerations for common strategies are below:

Just Run Fast. The camp could be caught off-guard, delaying the arrival of 1 or 2 foes. Rhezicora counters by springing a trap that should slow the party up (see '**A Chance for Redemption**', page 51).

Reconnoiter. Sneaking around the camp edge will identify any ambushes in place, allow contact with a possible ally (Darbarik), or give the PCs a chance to de-activate the glyphs on key undead creatures.

Create a Distraction. Lighting the forest floor on fire or igniting Wyz's lab (Area 14H) would trigger a fire-fighting response from the henchmen.

Parley. Rhezicora will be interested in learning about Scoriaptrak, particularly if she's not previously Detected him (in this case, run **Dragon Detected** on page 34). Otherwise, she can be distracted with talk of her deals in Bonestore or with the lizardfolk being cancelled.

Mapped location--Necromancer's Camp

The rocky landscape past Bonestore funnels all travelers towards the camp. Show your players Map Ha as they approach (see Appendix C: Maps, thumbnail below). The slaves work into the night, allowed to sleep for only a few hours. The undead continues to toil (a skeleton crew, if you will).

14A. UNDEAD GATE

A watchful guardian resides on the gate to Rhezicora's camp, but he can be placated to gain entrance undetected. Read or paraphrase the following:

A 15 foot-wide bone archway spans the trail into the camp. At the arch's center, a skull peers down at the road. Dense, tall thickets of debris and thorny shrubs extend on either side of the road.

A character can attempt to dodge the gate by cutting through the thickets, taking 1d6 piercing damage and requiring a DC 10 STRENGTH (Athletics) check. Any failed check awakens the skull. The archway itself is imbued with an *alarm* spell (and the aura of abjuration magic); any living creature walking through awakens the skull. If awakened, green lights glow in the skull's eye sockets and it swivels around, saying, "Hey, you there! Are you dead?" Without a successfully opposed check--a group DEXTERITY (Stealth) vs the skull's WISDOM (Perception)—an interaction with the skull is triggered.

The skull, formerly a dwarven tavern-owner named Grolsk (1 hit point, AC10, but use **bandit captain** for Ability scores/Skills), informs the PCs that he is bound to reveal their presence with a scream. But he'd like a bit of conversation first - he's quite bored. He'll reveal his former job and tell a tavern brawl story or two, punctuated with thirsty, lip-smacking sounds.

If the skull is destroyed, it reanimates as a **flame skull** (MM, but with 20 hit points) and attacks, with the combat alerting the patrol from Area 14B.

GIVE 'IM A DRINK

If the characters give Grolsk a beer (real or fake) he is thrilled; his previous dwarven stubbornness allows him to override his 'programming' and he lets them through. He'll also give the PCs an additional bit of help: if asked, he'll answer one question about Rhezicora's operation.

14B. CAMP EDGE

Once the PCs near the camp, read or paraphrase the following:

The forest gives way to a stony field, a hundred yards across. Several ramshackle structures have been built in the field, but the central feature is large pits, filled with a viscous, black substance. Dozens of workers labor in and around the black pits, seemingly intent on removing their contents ... bucket by sticky bucket.

Skeletons of numerous, unrecognizable creatures are piled under a low pavilion, which blocks the path to Mount Carnass.

The ground of the surrounding forest is covered with pitch, making it difficult (and flammable) terrain. A large rock outcropping provides cover for the party to observe the camp undetected.

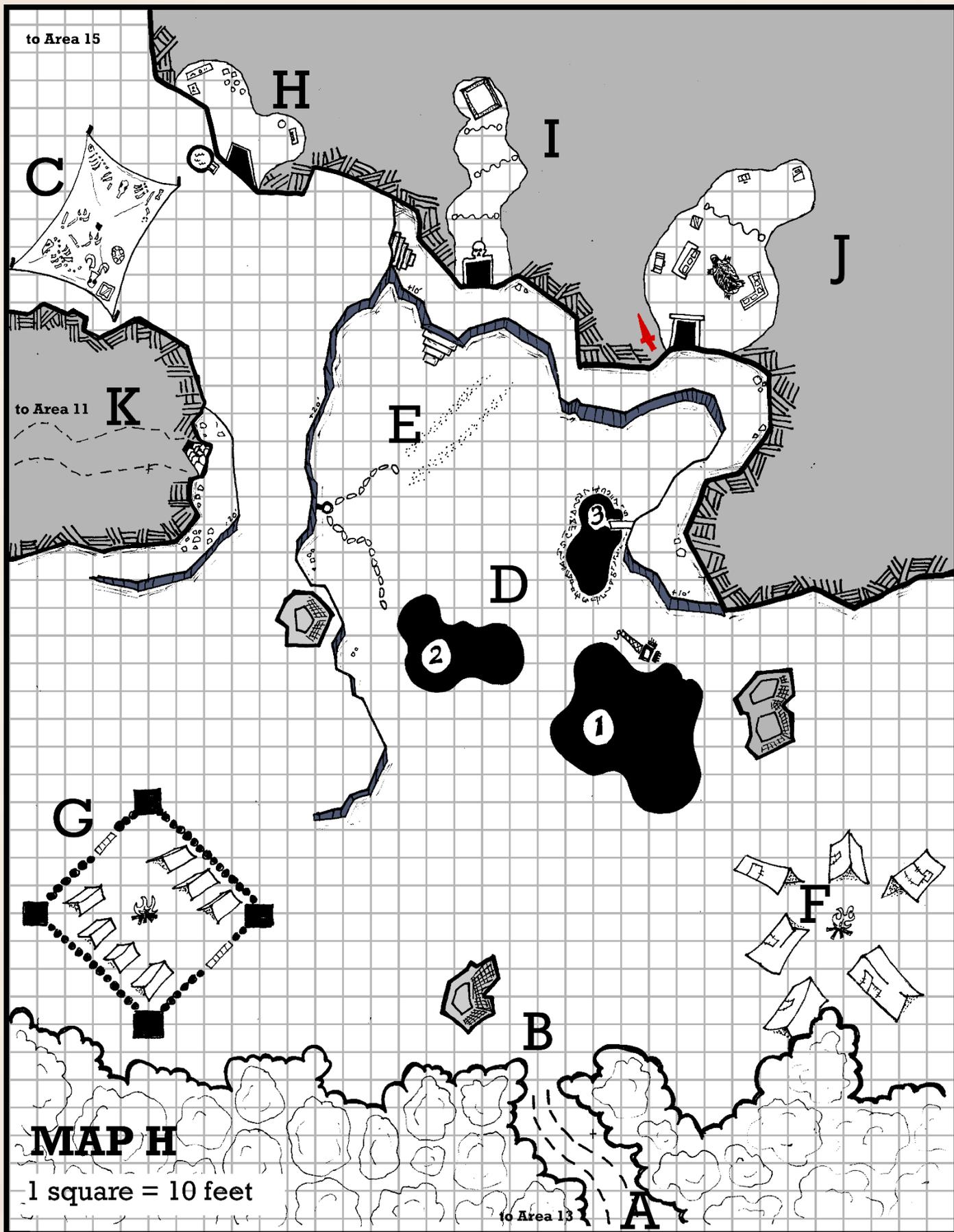
If asked, briefly describe any two lettered locations on the map. Any further attempts for information require a successful DC 13 WISDOM (Perception) check and has a 20% chance (per check) of triggering the possibility of a patrol. If triggered, a **spy** and **thug** walk to PC's location as part of their regular circuit.

AMBUSH: The patrol has retreated to Area 14G but watches this location. They begin making Opposed Perception (patrol) vs. Stealth checks (party) after the characters have had 2 rounds to observe the camp. If they detect the characters, they covertly signal Rhezicora (Area 14I), who signals the attack once the party is deeper into her camp.

14C. SKELETON ASSEMBLY-LINE

Thousands of bones pulled out of the tar pits have been dragged here under a large tent. Twenty women and children (neutral human **commoners**) are painstaking reassembling the bones into skeletons; only then are they functional to Rhezicora. A **cave bear skeleton** and **giant armadillo skeleton** are complete but not animated. Rhezicora could animate one of these creatures and a **skeleton swarm** by touching them.

Ambush: The **skeleton swarm** and **giant armadillo skeleton** are animated and attack at Rhezicora's signal.



14D. TAR PITS

This large area contains several open tar pits, with rocky, open ground in between. Read or paraphrase the following:

A harsh smell wafts through the air, emanating from pools of a sticky, black substance.

Humans and skeletons alike busily toil in and around the pits. A huge rib-cage is being pulled out of one pit by a wooden crane mechanism.

The deep pits contain numerous specimens of ill-fated creatures. The skeletons break apart over time, so salvaging must occur bone by bone. Rhezicora uses a different salvage method in each pit.

A successful DC 8 INTELLIGENCE (Nature) check reveals the 'sticky black substance' to be tar. A successful DC 10 WISDOM (Perception) check on any pit reveals some basic information; read the first two sentences of each pit's description.

Pit 1. One **skeleton** (MM) floats on a raft, attaching haul lines to buried bones. Six slaves at the pit's edge assist with hauling. Four other **tar skeletons** serve as 'divers', plunging into the depths.

A rustic crane (AC 15, HP 20) has been built by the edge, to help haul up bones. The crane is 20 feet tall and can reach any point within 30 feet of it. The crane is operated from a collection of pulleys at its' base.

CRANE MECHANICS: A successful DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Investigation) check allows a PC to operate the crane, raising or lowering the hook and chain or making the Hook bash attack. Hook bash. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 30ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

These skeletons can organize into a **sticky skeleton swarm** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) by all taking a single Action together. In combat, this swarm grabs the chain (AC 18, HP 20) and lock from **Pit 2** and attempts to secure it around Scoriaptrak's neck (a contested grapple). The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 DEXTERITY check with thieves' tools. Any attempts to unlock the lock during combat is made at Disadvantage.

Pit 2. Twenty male villagers (neutral human **commoners**) toil here, carefully emptying out a walled-off quarter of the pit using buckets. When they uncover large bones, they harness the mammoths in Area 14E.

An unused **lock** and **chain** to the mammoths lies on the ground close by when not in use.

Pit 3. This pit is under a rocky ledge that juts out from the nearby mountain. Large, red arcane glyphs are scrawled around the perimeter of the pit, visible with any inspection. The ledge used to be the sacrificial site of a Cult of Asmodeus, who dumped their victims in the pit. Strong evil lurks here and Rhezicora has drawn protective wards around the pit to keep it dormant. A DC 12 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) or WISDOM (Religion) check reveals the nature of the wards.

Anyone who falls in this pit has a 20% chance of every round of awakening a **bearded devil** (MM). If awakened, it attacks the nearest creatures, regardless of their faction. A successful DC 14 STRENGTH (Athletics) check is required to get out of the pit.

Ambush: The villagers' labor here unguarded. A **sticky skeleton swarm** hides in Pit 2 and will charge the dragon at Rhezicora's signal, attacking with the chain and lock as described above.



14E. MAMMOTH TRACK

One **mammoth skeleton** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) is being used to haul up large bones from the sticky depths of the tar within **Pit 2**. Another **mammoth skeleton** sits idle. Their chains run to a large metal ring bolted onto the mountainside which acts as a fulcrum. The mammoth handler (**bugbear**) takes frequent naps between hauls.

Should combat ensue and Scoriaptrak become chained, the mammoth and the dragon make a contested STRENGTH check. The winner of the check pulls the loser 10 feet in a direction of their choice. If two mammoths are involved in the contest, they have Advantage on the check and can pull the dragon 20 feet.

Ambush: Both mammoths are attached to the chain to be put around Scoriaptrak. Two henchmen guard the mammoths (**bugbear** and **scout**).

14F. SLAVE QUARTERS

At any one time, 5 villager slaves will be here, preparing food or sleeping in ratty-looking tents. The site isn't fenced, as the villagers' families are being held hostage in Bonestore. All villagers have constantly 2 levels of Exhaustion at all times.

AMBUSH: The villagers will be nervously whispering to each other: "... something's up ... Rhezicora is planning something ...". They don't know any details about the plan. The slaves won't report the PCs, but they also won't join in the fighting.

14G. HENCHMAN QUARTERS

A wooden palisade surrounds the henchman's camp which provides extra protection at night against stray undead. During the day, 3 **bandits** (the night guard) sleep here. At night, 1d8+2 **bandits** are here, playing cards, drinking, and sleeping. Should combat break out, they take several rounds to wake up and respond to the alarms of others.

AMBUSH: A **henchmen swarm** waits, ready to attack after Rhezicora's signal. Add another **henchmen swarm** a few rounds later if Bonestore hasn't been cleared of enemies.

14H. ALCHEMISTS LAB

A bright blue glow emanates from a wide cave mouth. Barrels of a black substance form a neat line at the cave entrance, next to another giant, elevated barrel. Several pipes can be seen connected to the barrel that enters the mouth of the cave.

One large cauldron, full of what appears to be the same black substance, bubbles just outside.

Rhezicora hired the **kobold trap-maker** (VGtM), Wyzz, to develop novel uses for the pitch. If he's alive, **Andravar** (from Area 6) assists Wyzz. Water for processing the pitch is piped in from the 1,000-gallon water barrel outside. The barrel is rickety and could be pushed over with a successful DC 16 STRENGTH (Athletics) check.

Inside the cave, Wyzz has fabricated benches and shelves using cast-off bones. They are laden with small pots of experiments in progress, many exuding colored vapors. Usable items include:

- **Sticky bomb.** A liquid form of pitch is stored in small bladders. If a bladder is thrown (range 30 ft.), it bursts on impact and the pitch immediately hardens like *sovereign glue*.



- **Flamethrower.** A pump-handle attached to a backpack tank ignites and squirts flaming pitch (cone 20ft., DC 12 DEXTERITY saving throw or 10 fire damage). 5 uses.

Wyzz lights his lab with glowing blue mushrooms instead of torches to avoid disastrous fires. Any fire in the lab has a 1 in 6 chance per round of igniting random pitch products scattered about the area. If ignition occurs, pots begin fizzling and sputtering. If not smothered within a round, the fire causes one explosion every round, doing 1d8 force damage to anyone in the cave. After 4 rounds, the whole cave ignites, doing 20d10 force damage to anyone inside.

Wyzz is loyal to Rhezicora, and will try to sound an alarm if attacked. Fortunately for those entering the room, he concentrates intently on his experiments and can be surprised easily (Wyzz has a passive Perception is 6).

AMBUSH: Wyzz, Andravar, and a **sticky skeleton swarm** are waiting inside for Rhezicora's signal. Wyzz is armed with the flamethrower. The swarm holds a chain and collar and immediately runs towards Scoriaptrak (speed: 20 feet).

14I. RHEZICORA'S QUARTERS

Rhezicora (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) will be here most of the day and night; she makes regular inspections of the camp but always returns here. The necromancer maintains a spartan existence, foregoing normal human comforts in order to stay focused on her dark arts. A stone slab serves as a mattress, and only bread and water are kept nearby for sustenance. Her one indulgence is red, silken curtains, hung throughout. A trapped chest holds her valuables; Rhezicora wears the key around her wrist.

TRAP: CHEST

TRIGGER: The safe's lock, shaped like a skull, is unsuccessfully picked.

EFFECT: Any creature within 5 feet of the lock is teleported 10 feet in the air above tar pit 1 (Area 14D) and falls into the pit. This effect can occur up to two times.

COUNTERMEASURES: The safe's lock can be picked with a successful DC 16 DEXTERITY (Sleight-of-Hand) check made with thieves' tools. An aura of conjuration magic emanates from the lock.

TREASURE: 5,000 gp (in various coinage) and a childlike doll kept in the wooden chest. The doll is the arcane control mechanism to Tellis' curse (see Area 12).

AMBUSH: Rhezicora watches Area 14B for confirmation of the PC's presence. She then signals the attack at a disadvantageous moment for the party and joins the fray in her cave bear 'armor'.

14J. DARBARIK'S MANCAVE

Darbarik (neutral human male **besserker**, MM, but with 20 hit points and 2 levels of Exhaustion) is Rhezicora's consort, and he spends most of his days and nights here. He's maintained personal quarters in a natural cave on the cliffside. Its entrance is well-marked with a sigil of a red broadsword.

Darbarik wishes to kidnap Rhezicora so that the two can start over somewhere else. He has been unhappily serving his beloved Rhezicora for years. The once-proud barbarian has even starved himself to please her; she has a penchant for a thin, emaciated figure. He can now barely lift his treasured broadsword, but still drags it around.

Darbarik is currently brooding after his latest argument with Rhezicora. He can no longer stand the dark magic his beloved wields: "... it's the black magic amulet that makes her do evil things! I remember her as a kind girl ..."

NOTE: Darbarik is wrong about Rhezicora's amulet driving her passion for the dark arts—it's an ordinary emerald. Rhezicora is evil all on her own...

If confronted, he doesn't attack the PCs initially, intrigued by any possibility to enact his plan. With a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check, he'll be open to the idea of working together; the check is made with Advantage if a PC promises to help him 'free' Rhezicora. On a failure, he attempts to alert the guards.

AMBUSH: Darbarik is expecting the PCs, and immediately proposes that they work together.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the PCs agree to capture Rhezicora, then Darbarik agrees to help them in the upcoming battle. He tells them what he knows: "... she plans on drowning the dragon in a pit ...". He also tells the characters about the necromantic control glyphs (see inset below).

In any planning, he makes one thing clear: "... she must not be killed. I know it'll take some bloodying to get that amulet off. But if she dies, I'll take this whole place down ...". His threat would involve taking munitions from Wyzz's lab and lobbing them at anyone in range.

TREASURE: Darbarik has accumulated a number of skull-themed baubles, gifts from better times with Rhezicora. They total 500 gp in value. He wields a *broadsword +1*.

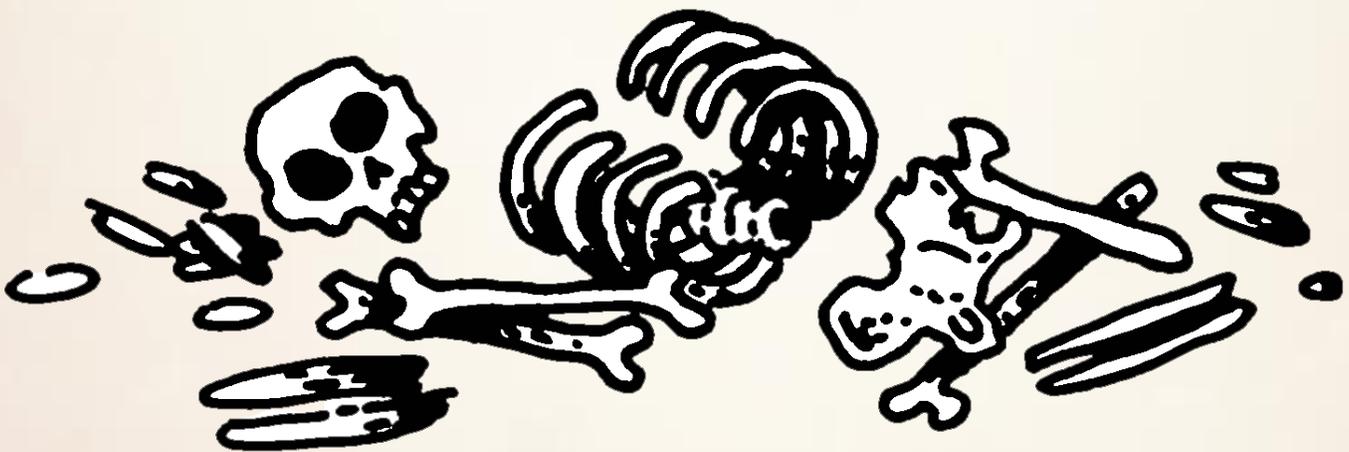
14K. TUNNEL ENTRANCE

The entrance to an old mining tunnel is mostly blocked by a rock pile. Creating a Medium-sized hole takes an hour of moving rocks. The tunnel exits miles away at Area 11.

NECROMANTIC CONTROL GLYPHS

A glyph is carved into each skeleton that gives Rhezicora power over it. Destroying a glyph (e.g. by a sword strike) renders the skeleton inanimate, but still intact. Rhezicora can repair the glyph of any creature she touches.

A successful DC 13 WISDOM (Perception) check from close range reveals the creature's glyph. Destroying the glyph requires a successful melee attack that targets the glyph, which is made with Disadvantage.



Running the Big Battle

GET A LITTLE ABSTRACT

With multiple factions employing a multitude of forces, this battle can get complicated quickly. Too much bookkeeping can get in the way of focusing on the real point: the characters trying to accomplish awesome, heroic acts.

To counter the complexity, a couple of design tricks are used:

- In battle, most of Rhezicora’s forces are treated as swarms, each with a single stat block. This reduces the number of discrete attackers from over 20 to 4-5. Unique individuals, like Wyz, retain their own statistics.
- Each swarm has a single goal (e.g. the skeleton swarm seeks to shackle and drag Scoriaptrak). When considering how a swarm might act or react, focus on the swarm’s goal.

Allow your players some flexibility when acting against the swarms; if an action would affect multiple individuals in a swarm, double the damage or effect. This battle should be about big moves against gangs of enemies.

LIKELY SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- **Detected.** PCs are seen or are ambushed.
- **Bum Rush** (ENCOUNTER T9). Several waves of undead and humanoids attack the party, seeking to lock a chain around the dragon and drag him to a tar pit.
- **Evil Fiddler on the Roof** (ENCOUNTER T10). The Cult of the Dragon bard shows up with the *darkheart violin*, awakening the dragon’s inner evil which the PCs must counter with their earned Redemption Dice.
- **A Chance for Redemption** (ENCOUNTER T11). To distract the party, Rhezicora reveals a trap that endangers her innocent slaves.
- **Make Peace with your Dragon God** (ENCOUNTER T12). Scoriaptrak is killed and time is frozen. The party must argue for the dragon’s salvation (using Redemption Dice) to Bahamut and Kelemvor, the God of the Dead.

To make this extended encounter easier, you can tweak any of these steps; plans aren’t always enacted flawlessly, are they? The less time Rhezicora’s had to prepare, the greater the chance that something goes wrong.

RHEZICORA’S TACTICS

She takes center stage once the battle begins:

- She stays within her cave bear skeleton (+2 to AC) and casts spells to weaken the PCs or bolster her forces. The cave bear is her shield, but also a vicious fighter.
- If the PCs start erasing her control glyphs on key creatures, she attempts to speed over to re-animate the creature with a touch.
- She’ll attempt to dispel the bullroarer’s magic if it is used (contested Arcana check, hers w/Advantage)

ALLIES AND RESOURCES

A number of allies could be available to the PCs during this extended encounter. This is a reward for players that had their characters put in the hard work of completing Redemptive acts during the journey.

- **Eld Armbackler.** From Area 5. He is immune to Rhezicora.
- **Tweeskree and elf.** From Area 9.
- **Sir Patkyt and/or Medrash.** From Area 13.
- **Darbarik.** From Area 14J. Won’t harm Rhezicora.
- **Hunting party.** From random encounter R6.
- **Nillam.** FROM RANDOM ENCOUNTER R10.

Ally Assistance. Each ally can be utilized once to overcome enemies of CR 1 or less, or deal up to 20 hp of damage to a larger enemy. If an ally has fictional positioning to provide the Aid action, then they can also grant a character Advantage on one roll.

Allow your players some flexibility with their characters coming up with imaginative uses of the resources, but as always, keep things reasonable. For easier accounting during the battle, consider giving your players a **card** to represent each ally. Additionally, several items acquired along the way could help the PCs:

- **Book of Fancies.** From Area 2. The book’s illusions could cause confusion or fear among the attackers, giving them Disadvantage on their next attack roll, saving throw, or ability roll.
- **Whistle of reptile stunning.** From Area 8. Counteracts the bard’s instrument for 1 round.
- **Bullroarer of Skeletal Control.** From encounter R5. Wielding this could de-animate some undead enemies.

A ‘cheat sheet’ showing map Ha and summarizing the battle’s major elements is presented as Map Hb (thumbnail below, see Appendix C: Maps).

Map Hb: Cheat Sheet for the Big Battle at Area 14

The Battle begins
 Encounter T9: Rhezicora detects the dragon and sends her minions to drag him to a tar pit.
 • Swarms of skeletons and henchmen from Areas C, D, E, and F try to drag Scoriaptrak.
 • Uroo, Darval, skeletal humanoid, H. Area L attempt to pull him free, no reason for aid.

Mid-battle twists
 Encounter T10: The Cult of the Dragon appears (bard, thug/priest, cultist, guard, drake) and tempts Scoriaptrak to evil.
 • Scoriaptrak must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw (they would be can kill the drake) or join the Cult of the Dragon.
 • Wep, if follows the beeches chameleon, it attacks the PCs.

Encounter T11: Rhezicora distracts the party by dangling a group of innocent villagers over a falling tar pit #1. A giant serpent skeleton guards them.

Encounter T12: If the dragon is evil, time is frozen and the dragon and PCs are now in an alternate world Kelemvor and Bahamut. The PCs must succeed on two separate checks before a fall or an other check.
 • A DC10 CHARISMA (save or roll) check or Kelemvor.
 • A DC10 WISDOM (check or roll) check or Scoriaptrak.

If it succeeds above, Scoriaptrak is transformed into a young gold dragon and he had his freedom. The reconnoiterer fights to the death.

Don't forget to use Redemption Dice!

Ally
 Allies made along the way can show up to help. Each ally can be used once to remove up to a CR enemy or hazard, or up to 20 hp of damage. An ally may also use the Aid action to grant Advantage to a single roll.

Area	Enemies	Entrances (ambush)
1-2A	Plumed skull	Plumed skull
1-4B	Spy, thug	None
1-6C	None (arrived at first)	Skeleton swarm, giant armadillo skeleton
1-10D	1 skeleton, 4 tar skeletons	Sidly skeleton swarm, Giant serpent skeleton (T11)
1-12E	Harpy skeleton, bugbear	2 minotaur skeletons, bugbear, stout
1-4F	None	None
1-10G	3-10 bandits	1-2 handman swarms
1-14H	Kobold trap-maker, Androver (if alive)	Kobold trap-maker, Androver (if alive), sidly skeleton swarm
1-14I	Rhezicora	Rhezicora
1-14J	Darbarik (Berserker)	Darbarik (Berserker)

Area	Ally
5	Eld Armbackler
9	Tweeskree, elf
13	Sir Patkyt, Medrash
14J	Darbarik
16	Hunting party
R10	Nillam, the Harper

Area	Ally
2	Book of Fancies
8	Whistle of reptile stunning
R4	Bullroarer of skeletal control

Triggered Encounters at Area 14

These encounters help to advance the story and take place during the battle. They are detailed below, in likely order of occurrence.

T9. BUM RUSH

TRIGGER: Rhezicora sees the dragon and signals the attack.

If Rhezicora had not Detected the dragon before this point, then her forces are situated as written within their mapped locations. If she's been aware of Scoriaptrak, her ambush is set; her forces are situated as written under the **Ambush** sub-headings of the mapped locations.

Once combat begins, the minions in several Areas form "swarms" then attack as one creature. The exact number of creatures joining the swarm isn't important, but if the PCs have killed numerous creatures **before** the battle, the swarm can (DM discretion) begin with half its hit points (30).

Remember that Rhezicora's only goal, at this stage, is to lock a chain around Scoriaptrak, allowing her mammoths to pull the dragon into a tar pit. The sticky skeleton swarm in **Pit 2** is given this task initially, but if they're destroyed, the henchmen will take it on.

T10. EVIL FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

TRIGGER: DMs discretion; a few rounds into the battle or when the PCs gain the upper hand against Rhezicora.

The Cult of the Dragon leader shows up with the *darkheart violin*, seeking to awaken the dragon's inner evil. If the PCs have destroyed the original violin, then the bard plays a back-up instrument (with inferior effects noted below).

The leader (neutral evil male human **bard**, XGtE) has set up in front of Rhezicora's quarters (13I) or at the mouth of the secret entrance (13K). He is guarded by a **dragonfang cultist**, a **cultist** (MM) and a **guard drake**. When ready, read or paraphrase the following:

From the mountainside, a fervent voice rings out: "*Scoriaptrak, you have forgotten your true nature. In Tiamat's name, I will remind you!*" A passionate tune begins with the sound of a violin dancing through a melody filled with wild energy. But an acidic edge creeps into the notes, and the song now shrieks in joy at the prospect of darker things.

Once the song begins, Scoriaptrak begins to fall under its sway. His eyes turn a neon yellow and he howls in torment: "*I'm seeing all the things I've done! All the terrible things....and I want to see...MORE!!*" The Cultists yell out encouragingly, reminding the dragon of his past deeds.

DESCENT INTO EVIL?

Each round the violin plays, Scoriaptrak must make a DC 18 CHARISMA saving throw (DC 14 if the back-up is played). Failure results in Scoriaptrak succumbing further to its evil song. If he fails 3 saving throws, he immediately reverts to Chaotic Evil, regains 40 hit points and his breath weapon, and attacks the PCs.

BAD BREATH: With failed saving throws, give your players a visual cue that Scoriaptrak is reverting to his evil, red dragon nature. One ominous cue is increasing amounts of smoke issuing from his snout; his breath weapon has been non-functional throughout the adventure but is now re-activating!

In this special case, any **PC can aid Scoriaptrak's saving throws** using their Redemption Dice as a Free Action. Each Redemption Die is rolled with Advantage if it is accompanied by effective roleplaying, examples include:

- Recalling a redemptive event during the journey.
- Stating the values of a Good alignment.
- Anything else creative that the player can come up with.

The instrument's magic is designed to manipulate dragons, but also could have a minor **side effect on the characters** due to their involvement in the dragon's state of mind. The first time the instrument plays, each PC must make a DC 12 WISDOM or CHARISMA saving throw. Failure results in that PC being Stunned for 1 round and getting a 'taste' of the instrument's dark magic. During that round, read or paraphrase the following to the PC(s) who failed:

Your mouth begins watering with the prospect of the delicious evil that you are about to witness...

While Stunned, the PC is prevented from using Redemption Dice to aid the dragon in his saving throws.

Kefleek is affected similar to the characters.

NECROMANCER VS CULT

Rhezicora could be made into a temporary ally at this stage. Pointing out that an evil dragon will likely kill her, too, will bring her around. She doesn't stop attacking the PCs but diverts some minions to fight the bard.

T11. A CHANCE FOR REDEMPTION

TRIGGER: Later in the battle, or if the PCs are escaping.

Rhezicora senses that the dragon is not evil. So she creates a trap that preys on his (and the party's) good nature. She either improvises this mid-battle or has it prepared beforehand, whichever is appropriate.

Ten villagers are bound and dangled from the crane over the tar within **Pit 1**, which has also been set ablaze. A **giant serpent skeleton** (see Appendix A: Monsters and NPCs) attacks any rescuers. The villagers can last 6 rounds before succumbing to the flames, heat, and fumes from the pit. Rhezicora taunts the party if they ignore this trap by saying, *"But how will you sleep at night, noble dragon?! Knowing that you could have saved these poor, innocent wretches!?"* This should feel like an important moment that hits the adventure's theme: the PCs could escape, but the villagers will die. Scoriaptrak trying to saving them could be a redemptive moment for him. Prompt your players to roleplay their characters with Scoriaptrak about the situation.

Once the characters have pleaded their case, have Scoriaptrak say something along the lines of, *"I could save lives to balance out some of what I've taken..."*

REDEMPTION DICE

If the party ignores these villagers and they perish, the characters **lose** their three largest Redemption Dice (in total, not per character). If the PCs attempt to save the villagers, give one character a **d6**. If Scoriaptrak attempts to help, give two characters a **d10**.

T12. MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR DRAGON GOD

TRIGGER: Scoriaptrak is killed.

BACKSTORY: Bahamut has been watching Scoriaptrak since Myoris' prayers caught his attention. Bahamut believes that the red dragon is worthy of becoming a metallic dragon.

When Scoriaptrak is killed, Bahamut intercepts the dragon's soul and gains an audience with Kelemvor, the God of the Dead. He hopes to gain Kelemvor's favor.

When Scoriaptrak dies, read or adapt the following:

Scoriaptrak's broken body slumps. He is lifeless. Rhezicora lets out a triumphant shriek, which hangs in your ears as the world suddenly freezes. The motes of dust in the air, the battling figures, the flames, your bodies...all still.

A figure walks out of the shadows: an elf clad in vibrant green raiment's, streaked through with silver. He has kind eyes.

The elf nods as he walks by you, striding to Scoriaptrak's crumpled form. Without turning back, he addresses you: *"Thank you for bringing my friend this far. Now I must ask you to bring him one step farther. THEY wait to hear why the dragon deserves a new, golden heart."*

Looking up at a sky that was moments before empty, two immense figures, a platinum dragon and a man, turn to regard you. A spectral Scoriaptrak now hovers over his own body, silent with eyes cast down.

It is Myoris that walks among the PCs, sent as an envoy to explain the situation. Bahamut and Kelemvor regard the party from above. The party may take no actions except as related to this scene and now have **two tasks**:

- Convince Kelemvor that Scoriaptrak is worthy.
- Inspire Scoriaptrak to speak on his own behalf.

SKILL CHALLENGE 1: CONVINCING KELEMVOR

Roleplay Kelemvor (**empyrean**, MM) as kindly, but stern, and seemingly with his mind made up about Scoriaptrak: *"I see a great, red stain of Evil upon you, dragon, and only a faint blush of Good. My judgment would seem to be easy. Who here would speak on your behalf, to tell me why it is not?"* Scoriaptrak is silent and stares at the ground. Kelemvor and Bahamut look towards the PCs.

Kelemvor can indeed see all of Scoriaptrak's past, naming off a list of evil deeds for emphasis. But time is different for gods and mortals, so Kelemvor hasn't quite pieced together the dragon's recent turn towards good during this adventure.

The characters must succeed on a DC 20 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check with Kelemvor, involving the following:

- arguing that Kelemvor should separate Scoriaptrak's evil past from his less-evil present.
- appealing to Kelemvor to withhold judgment.
- With **one** failed check: Kelemvor's brow furrows with impatience, but he prompts the characters to continue.
- With **two** failed checks: the challenge ends in **failure**. Kelemvor shrugs and leaves, and Bahamut voices his disappointment: *"I thought you were one of mine, despite your red scales. Perhaps we will meet again..."* The PCs can only watch as Scoriaptrak's soul rises up out of sight, mumbling: *"Sorry to have wasted your time..."* Time resumes where it left off before this challenge.
- With **success**, proceed to Skill Challenge 2.

NOTE: Scoriaptrak succumbing to the Cult’s evil violinist in the previous encounter has no mechanical bearing on this challenge, but could be good roleplaying material.

The checks are made with Advantage if the party has earned at least 8 **Redemption Dice** during the journey, any of which can be used here.

SKILL CHALLENGE 2: INSPIRE SCORIAPTRAK

Once the PCs convince Kelemvor, all Scoriaptrak must do is ask Bahamut (**ancient gold dragon**, MM) for forgiveness and pledge himself to Good.

Bahamut prompts this resolution: *“I do not accept evil into my service, dragon. What do you seek from me?”* But Scoriaptrak remains silent, newly-ashamed as his whole life has been laid bare in front of gods and friends.

If your players need prompting about the needed direction in roleplaying, Bahamut speaks to the PCs: *“Is he remorseful? Is he one of mine or not? He must tell me”*.

The characters must succeed on a DC 20 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check with Scoriaptrak, involving the following:

- Convince the dragon to ask Bahamut for forgiveness.
- Roleplaying to bolster Scoriaptrak’s spirits, remind him of his recent good deeds or a related topic.
- With **one** failed check: Scoriaptrak leans his head towards the characters and whispers, *“Let this end. Kelemvor was right. I am not worthy of forgiveness...”*
- With **two** failed checks: the challenge ends in **failure**, as described in the first challenge.
- With success, read or paraphrase the following:

Scoriaptrak speaks with a new voice, unclouded now by pain and regret: *“I have been shown that my past does not define me. I can come back from a dark place. I ask you, my Judge Kelemvor, and you, my father Bahamut, to allow me into your service, in this life or the next.”*

Kelemvor gives a satisfied nod and turns to Bahamut, saying, *“He is yours now.”*

With that, Kelemvor’s form recedes and Bahamut glides down to you and speaks: *“Thank you for all your efforts. When your lives come to an end, I will greet Kelemvor with you, as an ally. Until then, know that you may call on me in dire need.”*

Without waiting for an answer, the dragon god turns and swallows Scoriaptrak, then disappears in blinding light.

Redemption Dice should be used on this check, making this an easy but satisfying check as the players get to cash in

on all the redemptive work they’ve done up to now. As an added boost, inform your players that their characters may also assume the persona of any **ally** (alive or dead) and speak of their own redemption; doing so grants Advantage on any one of their Redemption Die rolls.

DRAGON(RE)BORN

Bahamut transforms Scoriaptrak into a **young gold dragon** (MM), currently in humanoid form: a curly-haired haffling in red and gold robes. Kefleek is also reborn in a way—he has a new, gold-scaled body and is slumbering inside an **egg**. Scoriaptrak is somewhat confused. His wits will eventually return, but at first, roleplay him like a contented, somewhat-dreamy sleepwalker. He absent-mindedly holds and pets the egg.

Bahamut gives each PC a **boon**--a favor they can call on in the future. Each boon looks like a gold scale (see Appendix C: Magic Items for more details).

BACK TO THE BATTLE

Once the redemption sequence is concluded, time snaps back to normal. **If the dragon has not been Redeemed:** Rhezicora animates his corpse (**red dragon zombie**, see Appendix B) in 1 minute and attacks the PCs. The Cult considers the zombie an abomination and can be convinced to attack it with a DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check.

If Scoriaptrak has been Redeemed: The red dragon body vanishes and his humanoid form, holding an egg, appears near the PCs. Rhezicora and her forces forfeit all actions for one round, due to her surprise and confusion. They ignore the harmless-looking halfling and egg but fight the PCs to the death (except Darbarik--see below). Scoriaptrak seems befuddled and doesn’t fight during this encounter.

Post-Battle Consequences

SPARING RHEZICORA?

If the PCs made and honored a pledge to leave Rhezicora alive (reducing her to zero hitpoints but knocking her out instead of killing her), Darbarik is grateful. He hands the characters Rhezicora’s “evil” amulet--it’s just a plain emerald.

Darbarik leaves with his unconscious beloved. Once out of sight (maybe several hours later), Rhezicora awakens and, enraged by his betrayal, kills him in his sleep. So deep is her malevolence that she re-animates his corpse and storms off with it (at the DM’s discretion, she might find the PCs and seek revenge at a later date...).

FREEING THE VILLAGERS

The villagers are very grateful to be freed and immediately seek to be reunited with their families in Bonestore. If Bonestore is still held by Rhezicora’s henchmen, the

freedmen will attack it, aided by Sir Patkyt and/or Medrash. The PCs can also be involved, but it is not essential. The henchmen in Bonestore flee at the sight of the freed mob.

TO THE FALLS!

A slightly-confused Scoriaptrak is clear about one thing: he must go to Dygyrus Falls (Area 17) to meet...someone.

Other Mapped Locations

15. CARNASS FOOTHILLS

SETTING: Rocky, sloping ground with sparse vegetation.

UTILITY: Final combat encounter.

The PCs get to fight a dragon!

Once past the necromancer's camp, a half-day of traveling is needed to reach Scoriaptrak's lair. As this is Scoriaptrak's old home territory, he knows the way. Ask your players to describe their surroundings as their characters are seeing it, prompted by the question: *"tell me one detail that clearly shows this used to be a red dragon's territory"*.

OUT OF THE BLUE

A rival dragon ambushes the party. The blue dragon, Nymixeartia, has been hunting Scoriaptrak since he escaped her just prior to this adventure. She investigated the smoke and activity of the recent battle and to her joy, she saw Scoriaptrak (if he's been transformed, she just sensed his presence).

Contact with an elven ally kicks off the scene. When ready to begin the encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

Scoriaptrak's lair entrance is now barely visible on the mountainside before you. Two dilapidated huts sit at the cave mouth.

On a scree slope between you and the cave, a small rockslide betrays the presence of a lone figure, rapidly sliding downhill. He seems to be hailing you and waving.

The cave entrance is 500 feet away when the encounter starts. The huts are the remains of a failed goblin settlement, abandoned a few years ago. A forgotten cache of rusty weapons and a total of 5gp in various coinage can be found under a false section of floor within one of the huts.

The elven **scout** (MM) Andralir has been stationed by Scoriaptrak's lair in case the dragon returned. He hails the PCs, excitedly so if Scoriaptrak is still in red dragon form, then the following occurs:

- He sees the blue dragon plummeting from the sky above. A successful DC 13 WISDOM (Insight) check reveals that Andralir's waving has gone from friendly to frantic, allowing the party one round to react.

- Should a character look up, a successful DC 16 WISDOM (Perception) check reveals the blue dragon streaking towards them, negating the element of surprise.

If Scoriaptrak is still a red dragon, Nymixeartia (**young blue dragon**, MM) crashes into him, claws first (doing an extra 4d10 slashing damage). She seeks to kill Scoriaptrak, ignoring all attacks on her until she's done so. When (not if) Scoriaptrak is killed, the encounter **Make Peace with Your (Dragon) God** is triggered (page 51).

If Scoriaptrak has been Redeemed and is in his new, humanoid form, the blue lands on Andralir instead and tosses him like a broken toy. She roars: *"Where is the weakling red?! I shall finish what I started!!"* Nymixeartia will listen to the PCs but doesn't tolerate much stalling. No matter what, after 3 rounds, she recognizes Scoriaptrak's new form and attacks him as above.

BAHAMUT POWER-UPS

The PCs should realize that they are outmatched by the blue dragon (CR9) and that they may have to cash-in **the boon** given to them by Bahamut. When/If they call upon the deity, read or paraphrase the following:

Bahamut's golden voice rattles the teeth in your skull with its weight. The blue dragon screeches and spins in circles, panicked. Bahamut rumbles, *"Friends, I did not expect you so soon. But, ah...I see your troubles. My new son will not be felled on the day of his birth. Take my gifts now, and send this wretched lizard back to her 5-headed mistress."*

Golden parcels appear on the ground before you.

The parcels are magic items, one per character: a *helm*, a set of *wings*, a *mask*, a *pair of greaves* and a *pair of gauntlets* (see Appendix C: Magic Items).

HIS FINAL FORM

If the PCs are getting the worst of it with Nymixeartia, humanoid Scoriaptrak can awaken and transform into his new **young gold dragon** (MM) form. You could tease this possibility during combat with Scoriaptrak saying something like the following:

- *"I am starting to remember who I was."*
- *"I was quite fierce, wasn't I?"*
- *"Just a minute ... Ahhhh ... Nope ... Lost it."*
- *"What is this egg? ... Is it breakfast?"*

If a PC asks Scoriaptrak to join the fight, he takes 3 rounds to transform; a successful DC 12 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check and roleplaying that expresses the urgency of the situation, allow for the transformation to speed up to 1 round.

16. SCORIAPTRAK'S LAIR

SETTING: A large, empty cave complex.

UTILITY: Closure on this chapter of Scoriaptrak's life.
The adventure's major cache of treasure.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Inside the large cavern, the stone floor is smooth, worn down by years of scaled bellies and tails. The central chamber is quite empty, but, for those with a keen imagination, the smell of old coins appears to hang within the air.

Scoriaptrak studies his old lair for a long moment, then coughs and shuffles his feet. From the look deep within his eyes, he seems ready to leave.

Movement from unrecognizable figures can be seen in the gloom towards the rear of the cave.

The remnants of the Cult of the Dragon cell have been waiting to formally meet with Scoriaptrak here, as arranged by Kefleek. Whether they are aware of the developments of this adventure is up to you.

The team consists of 2 **thugs**, a **dragonwing cultist** and a **swashbuckler** (VGtM). The dragonwing carries a tribute in case they deemed Scoriaptrak a useful ally. The team stays out of any fight between two chromatic dragons but would be happy to fight against the PCs and/or a gold dragon.

This site represents a good roleplaying opportunity, focused on Scoriaptrak shedding his old life and beginning a new one. The chasm that Scoriaptrak was going to hurl himself into is deep under the mountain, but the dragon has no need to go there now.

Part of the dragon's hoard is still intact, protected by a few of Kefleek's traps, which he can de-activate easily. If your players are in the mood, ask them for details about the traps prompted by the following:

- Describe one trap that Kefleek constructed.
- Who (or what) has tried to bypass it?
- How did they fail?

TREASURE: The Cults tribute consists of a crystal-framed mirror (500 gp value), 200 pp and a gilded statue of Tiamat (500 gp value). The dragon's hoard consists of the following:

- 1,500 gp in various coinage.
- A pair of carved, ceremonial ivory daggers from the land of Al-Qadim (300 gp value).
- A *weapon (mace) of warning* (DMG).
- 5 rubies valued at 100gp each.
- 1 *Eversmoking bottle* (DMG).

17. DYGYRUS FALLS

SETTING: Roaring waterfalls at the mountain/forest edge.

UTILITY: Reunion with elves and the conclusion of the story.

The landscape grades from rocky foothills back into lowland forest, and the stream winding down from Mount Carnass takes an abrupt plunge: Dygyrus Falls.

At the base of the 100-foot waterfall is a small encampment.

This is the main camp of Myoris' band of elves who have been looking for Scoriaptrak. Depending on who the PCs have interacted with, Tweeskree, the blink dogs, and Eurae the dryad could be there, too.

At the sight of the party or Scoriaptrak, the elves let loose a mighty cheer (by elven standards). Once in the camp, Myoris' apprentice, Gryvenir (**druid**, MM), speaks directly to Scoriaptrak, quoting an elven poem that was his favorite. Scoriaptrak is touched by the gesture and relaxes. Gryvenir offers Scoriaptrak a home, which he accepts.

The band's leader, Nihymia, addresses the PCs: "*We are all in your debt. What happened to this dragon may be unique in Faerun's history. He will be a valuable ally to us all.*" Nihymia heals the PCs fully, and consults with them about their ongoing adventures; she and Scoriaptrak can likely give them some useful information.

Before the PCs leave, Scoriaptrak turns to the PCs to thank them. It can end with: "*I'm where I'm supposed to be now. But I would have died a miserable beast were it not for you. I am in your debt.*"

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Scoriaptrak and his elven allies could become a powerful patron for your PCs, using the dragon's information to plot the downfall of a myriad of despicable villains that you've developed for your campaign.

One plot thread to pull is found in Myoris' letter to Scoriaptrak in Section I; it mentions a threatening enemy: "*dark wings fly over the Great Forest.*" Whether this refers to a dragon, devil or other winged terror is up to you.

Another plotline could involve Rhezicora if she was left alive after the battle. Her thirst for vengeance on the PCs would be terrible indeed. A more local adventure could involve helping the formerly-enslaved villagers re-establish a secure homestead; the ruins of Castle Twinpred could serve nicely. Lizardfolk seeking to expand their swamp might need to be dealt with, however.

TYRANNY OF DRAGONS CAMPAIGN INTEGRATION

Scoriaptrak could ferry the PCs to their original destination of Elturel (*HotDQ*, Episode 4) or even Baldur's Gate, where they join the Cult's loot-filled caravan headed north. At the very latest, the party would need to rejoin the caravan at the Carnath roadhouse (Episode 5).

Later in the campaign, Scoriaptrak could help the elves and PCs take on the green dragon Chuth in the Misty Forest (Episode 4 of *Rise of Tiamat*) or help win over metallic dragons at their pivotal meeting (Episode 6).



APPENDIX A: MONSTERS & NPCs

ANDRAVAR, APPRENTICE NECROMANCER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (14 with mage armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +3

Skills Arcana +4, History +4, Intimidation +2

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Dwarven, Abyssal

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting: The mage is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *true strike*

1st level (2 slots): *alarm*, *mage armor*, *ray of sickness*

ACTIONS

Sickle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Sickle, pixie skeleton in a glass jar, frog leg jerky, flask of oil (2), spellbook.

CULTIST, DRAGONFANG

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +4

Skills Athletics +4, Survival +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Fanatical Advantage. Once per turn, if the dragonfang makes a weapon attack with Advantage on the attack roll and hits, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage.

Pack Tactics. The dragonwing has Advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonwing's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonwing attacks twice with its war pick.

War pick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

CULTIST, DRAGONWING

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Deception +3, Stealth +5

Damage Resistance fire

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dragon Fanatic. The dragonwing has Advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Limited Flight. The dragonwing can use a bonus action to gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of its turn.

Pack Tactics. The dragonwing has Advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dragonwing's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragonwing attacks twice with its longbow.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, 150/600, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

GUARD DRAKE

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (7d6 + 21)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The drake has Advantage on WISDOM (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

HENCHMEN SWARM

A huge group of humanoids, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4

Damage Vulnerabilities damage from area of effect spells and weapons

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting: Someone in the swarm is a 1st-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *ray of frost*

1st level (1 slot): *color spray*, *thunderwave*

If the swarm is reduced to 30 hp or less, the swarm makes a DC 10 CONSTITUTION saving throw. If the swarm fails, it loses its ability to cast spells (ie: the spellcaster has fallen in battle).

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium humanoid.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm makes a spell attack and three melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

KEFLEEK

Small humanoid sorcerer (kobold), neutral

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 24 (7d6)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)

Skills Persuasion +5, Deception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The kobold's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *friends*, *crown of madness*

3/day each: *sleep*, *dominate person* (Scoriaptrak only)

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 -1) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Robes, dagger, arcane focus (coin), pouch with several red dragon carvings, 10 pp, 50 gp, 3 rubies (100 gp each).

LIZARDFOLK HATCHLING

Tiny humanoid (lizardfolk), neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Draconic

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Water walk. The hatchling can take the Dash Action to run on top of water.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d2) piercing damage.

RHEZICORA THE NECROMANCER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 75 (7d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Intimidation +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarven, Abyssal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting: The necromancer is an 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage armor*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *mage armor*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *ray of enfeeblement*, *web*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (1 slot): *stoneskin*

ACTIONS

Withering touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) necrotic damage.

EQUIPMENT

Black robes, emerald necklace, *wand of fear*

SCORIAPTRAK, ADULT RED DRAGON

Huge dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dexterity +5, Wisdom +8

Skills Perception +10

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can make two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

SKELETON, CAVE BEAR

Large undead, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 37 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Knockdown Charge. If the skeleton moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 STRENGTH saving throw or be pushed 10 feet and knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

SKELETON, GIANT ARMADILLO

Large undead, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 28 (8d8 - 8)

Speed 20 ft., 40 ft. (rolling)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	19 (-1)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Roller Derby. The skeleton can move through any space during its move that is occupied by a creature of up to Large size, causing each creature in its path to make a DC 14 STRENGTH saving throw. On a failure, the creature is knocked prone, and takes 7 (d10+2) bludgeoning damage.

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

SKELETON, GIANT SERPENT

Huge undead, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 40 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Rib-cage. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the serpent must make a DC 10 DEXTERITY saving throw or else be restrained inside the skeleton's ribcage. A DC 10 STRENGTH check or a successful melee weapon attack against the skeleton is needed to break free.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

SKELETON, GIBBON

Small undead, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 5 (2d6-2)

Speed 20 ft., climb 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Cannonball. From above, the skeleton launches itself at its target, which must make a DC 14 DEXTERITY saving throw to avoid taking 8 (d8+3) bludgeoning damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

SKELETON, MAMMOTH

Huge undead, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d12 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the skeleton moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Tusk Sweep attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 16 STRENGTH saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the elephant can make one stomp attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Tusk Sweep. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone creature. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

SKELETON, STICKY SWARM

A huge swarm of undead, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning, any damage from spells that target multiple creatures

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sticky brawl. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the swarm must succeed on a DC 8 STRENGTH saving throw, or else be Restrained. Breaking free of the swarm is a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium humanoid.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm makes three Vicious Scrum attacks, described as headbutting, biting, scratching, or kicking.

Vicious Scrum. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning/slashing/piercing damage.

SKELETON, TAR

Medium undead, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Sticky embrace. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the swarm must succeed on a DC 8 STRENGTH saving throw, or else be Restrained. Breaking free requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

UNDEAD SPITTED BOAR

Medium undead, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 22 (5d6 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Meatbomb. When the boar reaches 0 hit points, it explodes in a shower of steaming meat and bone shrapnel. All creatures within a 10-foot radius takes 2 fire damage and must succeed on a DC 10 CONSTITUTION saving throw to avoid being blinded for 2 rounds.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The boar makes one trip attack and one gore attack.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Skewer Trip. *Melee Attack:* reach 5 ft., one target. The target must succeed on a DC 12 DEXTERITY saving throw or be knocked prone.

ZOMBIE, RED DRAGON

Huge undead, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d12+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Smoking cloud. Any creature within 10 feet of the zombie must make a DC 10 CONSTITUTION saving throw to avoid being blinded by acrid clouds of smoke, issuing from the zombie's mouth and wounds.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The makes two make two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It can't make both attacks on the same target

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS

BATTLEAXE OF BLOODLUST (+1)

Weapon, rare

This jagged, obsidian axe smolders with the dull glow of eternal savagery. Every successful melee attack grants the wielder 5 temporary hit points and causes a surprisingly large amount of blood to spray from the target.

BAHAMUT'S BOON ITEMS

Wondrous items, unique

Donning any item grants a one-time recovery of all hit points and spell slots. It also grants a +2 to Armor Class and resistance to lightning damage.

Helm. This skullcap is golden-scaled, featuring the horns of a gold dragon. While wearing the helm, you have a +2 to spell attacks and your spell save DC. In addition, the wearer can cast the following spells once per long rest without using a spell slot: *fly*, *mage armor*.

Wings. When this backpack is worn, a large pair of golden wings unfurl from it. You gain the ability to fly (speed 60ft.) as well as a Flap attack: each creature within 15 ft. of you must succeed on a DC 18 DEXTERITY saving throw or take 12 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. You can then fly up to half your flying speed.

Mask. This golden muzzle fits over the wearer's lower face, resembling a snarling dragon's snout. While wearing the mask, you can use the following breath weapon attack (a number of times per day equal to your CONSTITUTION modifier):

Fire Breath. You exhale fire in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 DEXTERITY saving throw, taking 40 (8d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Greaves. When you wear this pair of golden greaves, your legs become longer, golden-scaled and more powerful. You gain 20 temporary hit points, can jump up to 50 feet, landing without taking damage. You can also make a Claw attack with your feet (+9 to hit, 2d6+5 piercing damage) as a Bonus Action.

Gauntlets. When you wear this pair of golden gauntlets, your arms become mighty, scaled appendages, ending in wicked claws. While wearing the gauntlets, you gain 20 temporary hit points and +2 to all weapon-based attacks.

BOOK OF FANCIES

Wondrous item, unique

This pop-up book portrays scenes from children's stories. By speaking the correct password ('Ammadrea'), one of the book's illustrations can become an illusory, life-sized scene, as per the *silent image* spell. Ask your players to describe the scene or use the list below for inspiration:

- three children sneaking by a sleeping goblin,
- two halflings springing a snare trap on an ogre,
- a giant swinging a club at a charging knight.

The book can be used once per day.

BREASTPLATE OF BLUDGEONING RESISTANCE

Armor, uncommon

This battered breastplate is etched with the angry face of a ram. The wearer gains Resistance to bludgeoning damage.

BULLROARER OF UNDEAD CONTROL

Wondrous item, uncommon

This oval, wooden disk is attached to an arm-length leather strap. A single, necromantic glyph is carved on one side. When spun rapidly, a loud, low whirring is emitted, and the magic is activated. The wielder can now control undead creatures that possess a matching glyph, as per the *animate dead* spell. The wielder can control a combined total of CR1 worth of creatures within 30 feet (e.g. 8, CR 1/8 creatures or 1, CR1 creature).

Attunement with this item is needed for it to function, triggering a DC 10 CONSTITUTION saving throw. On a failure, the subject can still attune, but any use of the bullroarer causes the subject 2 necrotic damage.

CLASP OF COSTLY TELEPORTATION

Wondrous item, uncommon

This flat, metal skull looks like a mere decorative item. If any living appendage is inserted into the open mouth, it clamps down, severing the appendage. The clasp's owner then has one use of the *teleportation* spell.

DARKHEART VIOLIN

Wondrous item, rare

If a musician is evil-aligned, playing this violin can change the alignment of a single draconic target to chaotic evil. Each round that the target can hear the violin, it must succeed on a DC 18 CHARISMA saving throw. After 3 failed saving throws, the target's alignment shifts to chaotic evil.

DUST OF SNEEZING AND CHOKING

Wondrous item, uncommon

When you use an Action to throw a handful of the dust into the air, you and each creature that needs to breathe within 30 feet of you must succeed on a DC 15 CONSTITUTION saving throw or become unable to breathe while sneezing uncontrollably. A creature affected in this way is Incapacitated. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on it on a success. The *Lesser Restoration* spell can also end the effect on a creature.

FLUTE OF THE ABYSS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

If a musician is evil-aligned, playing this flute can change the alignment of a single draconic target to chaotic evil; this instrument works only on *some* dragons (DMs discretion). Each round that the target can hear the violin, it must succeed on a DC 14 CHARISMA saving throw. After 3 failed saving throws, the target's alignment shifts to chaotic evil.

TAPESTRY OF ILLUSION

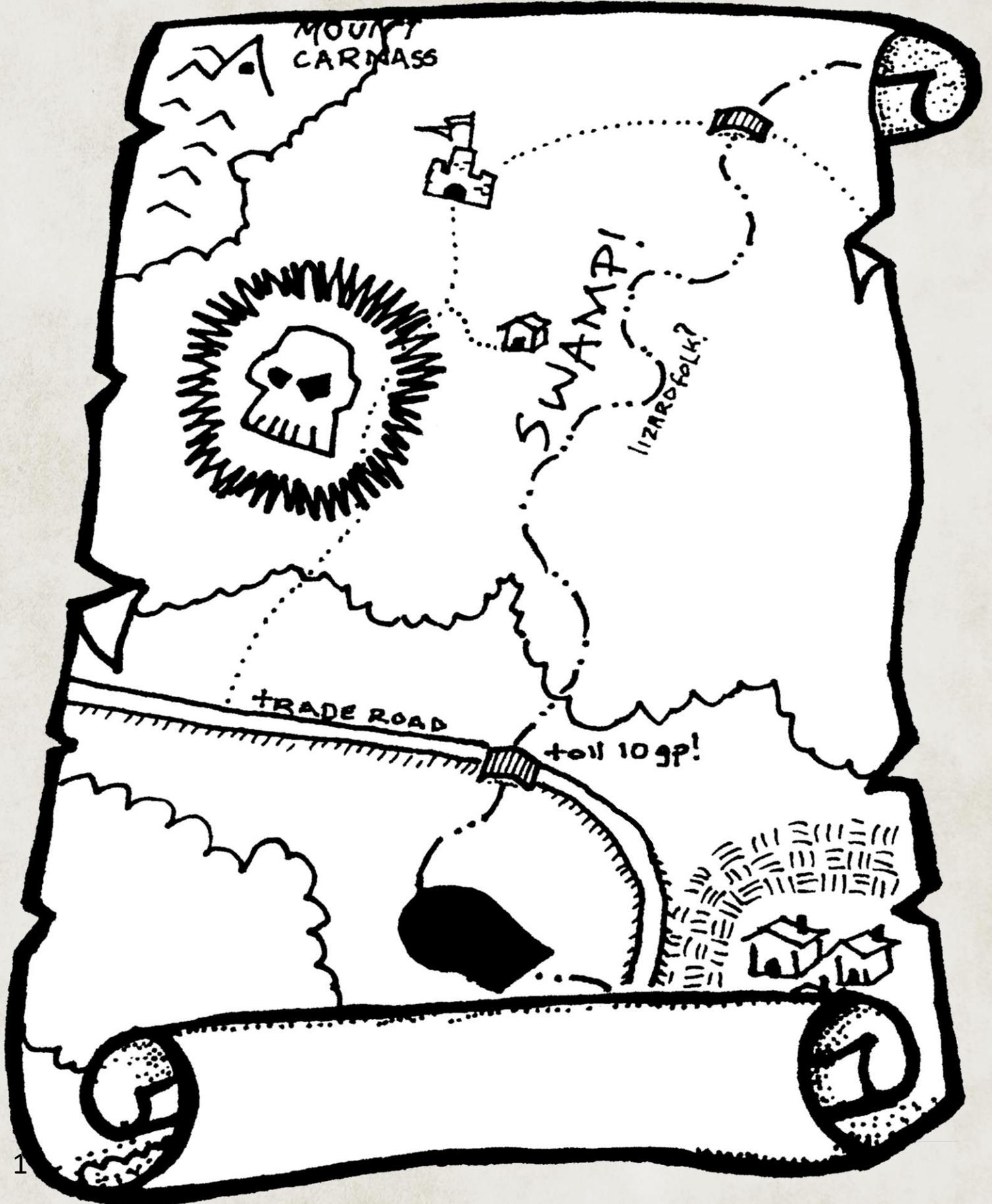
Wondrous item, rare

This silken tapestry is 15x15 feet. It can display a scene mimicking its surroundings, equivalent to the *major image* spell. A creature must use a spell slot or attempt a DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (Arcana) check to activate this effect, up to 2 times per day. A failed check does not activate the illusion but does count as a "use" of the item. Objects covered by the tapestry are detectable only with a successful DC 20 WISDOM (Perception) check.

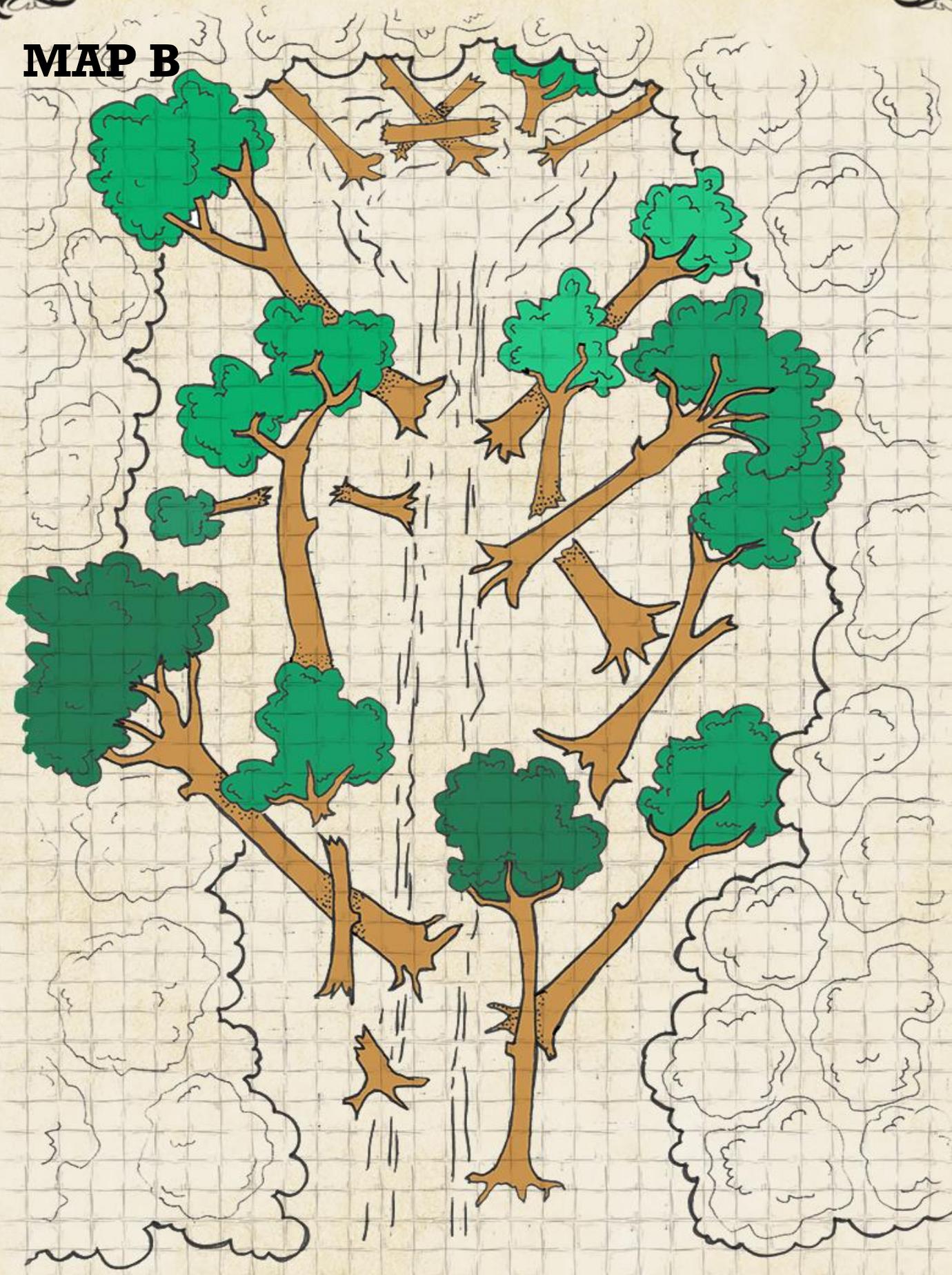
WHISTLE OF REPTILE STUNNING

Wondrous item, rare

This fragile bone whistle emits a frequency that disrupts the thoughts of any reptilian or draconic creature within 30 feet. Any such creature within 60 feet of the whistle is Deafened and must succeed on a DC12 CONSTITUTION saving throw to avoid being stunned for 1 round. After each use, the user must succeed on a DC12 DEXTERITY (Sleight of Hand) check or else the whistle breaks.



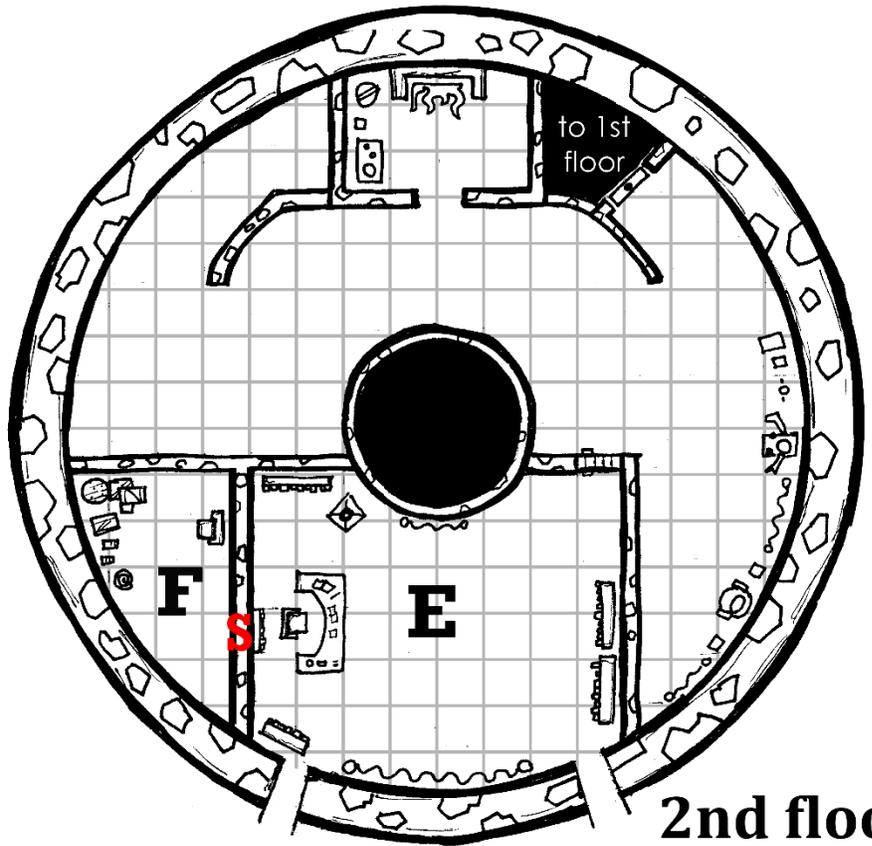
MAP B



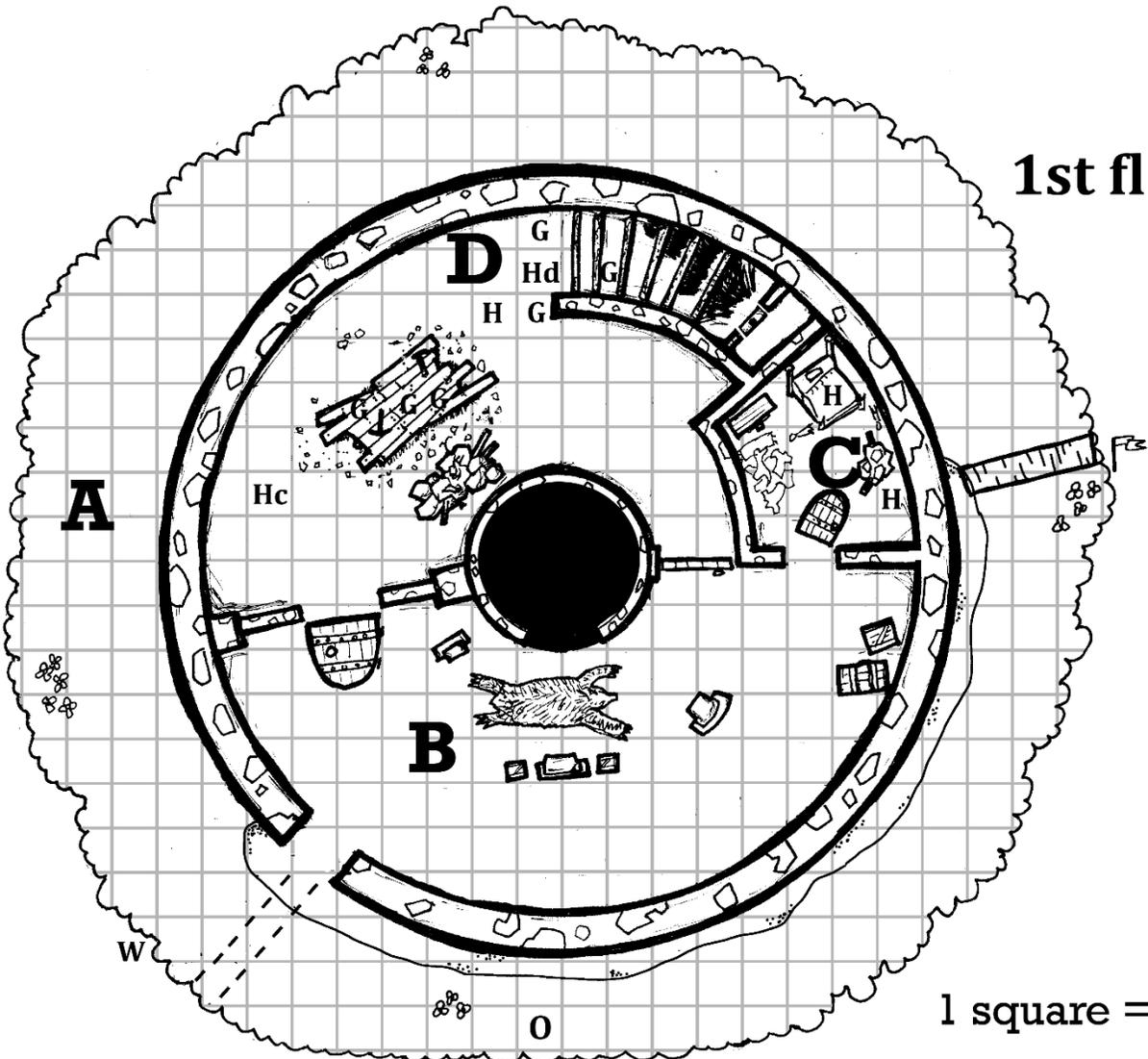
1 square = 5 feet

MAP C DM

- Hc = hobgoblin commander
- Hd = hobgoblin devastator
- H = hobgoblin
- G = goblin
- W = worg
- O = otyugh



2nd floor

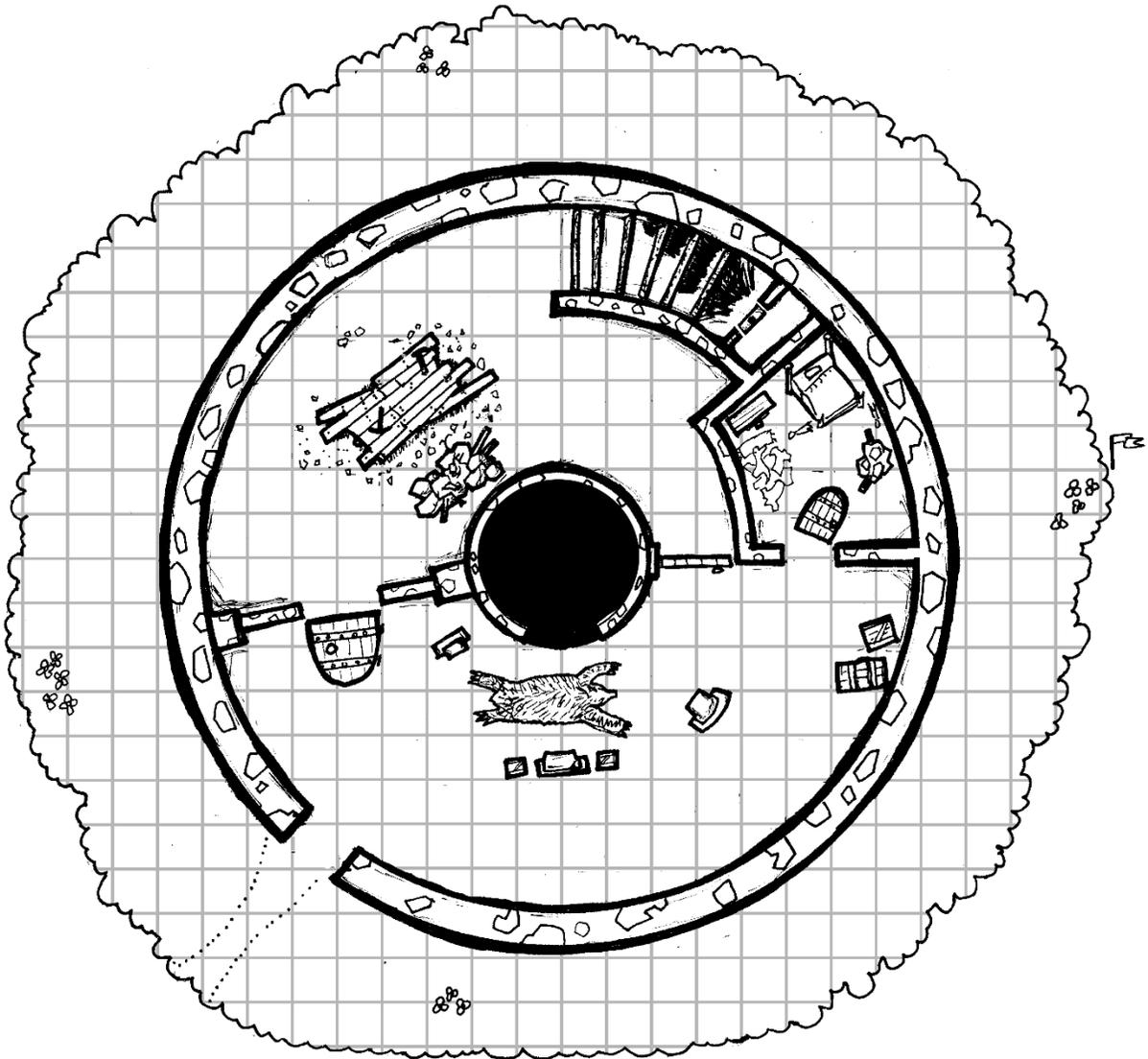
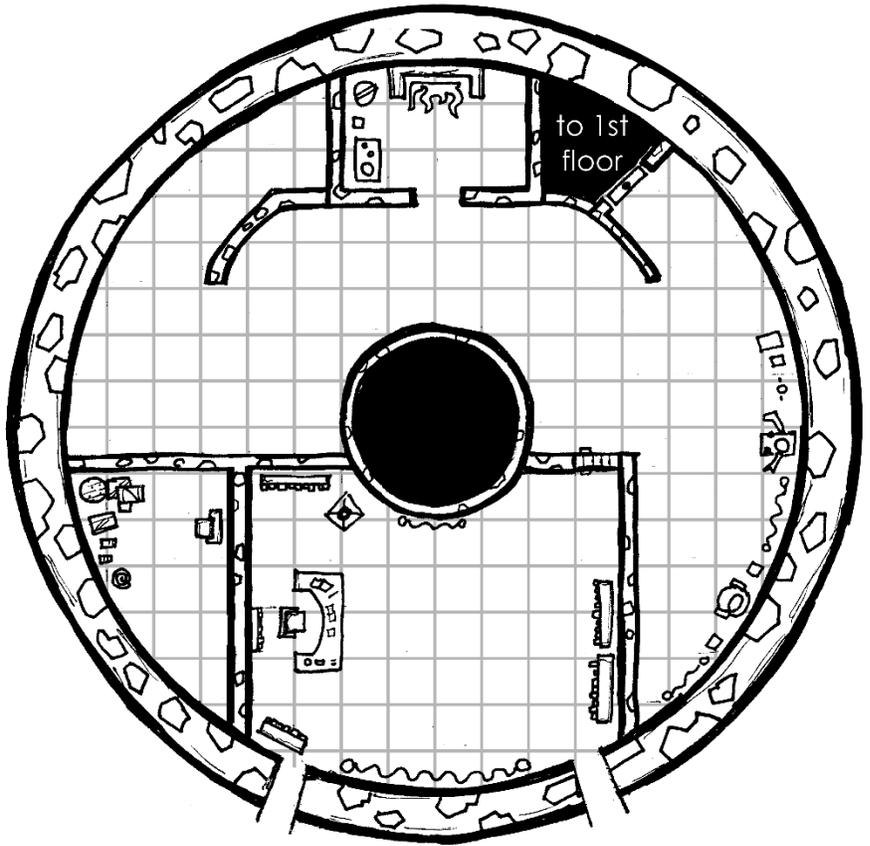


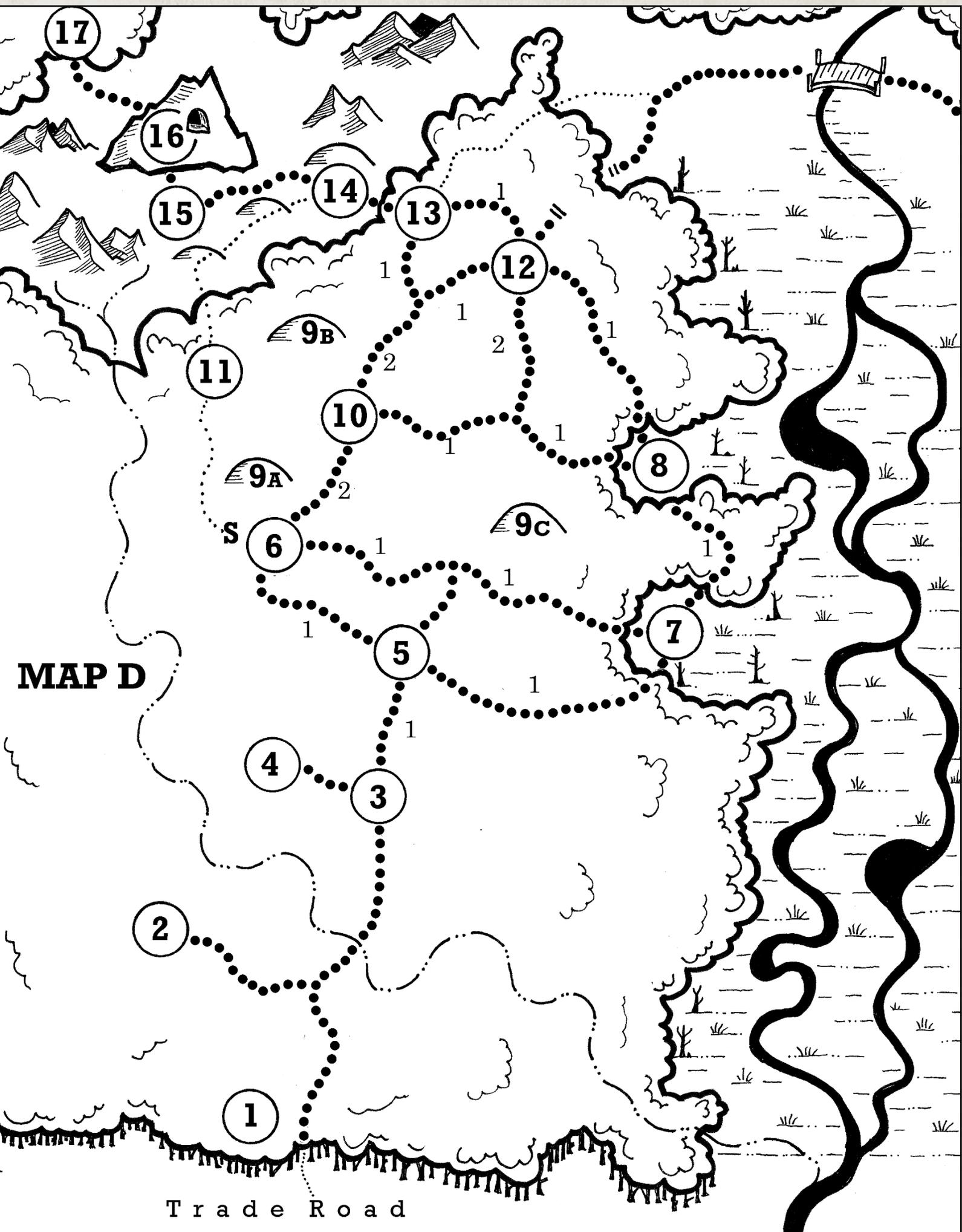
1st floor

1 square = 5 feet

MAP C

1 square = 5 feet

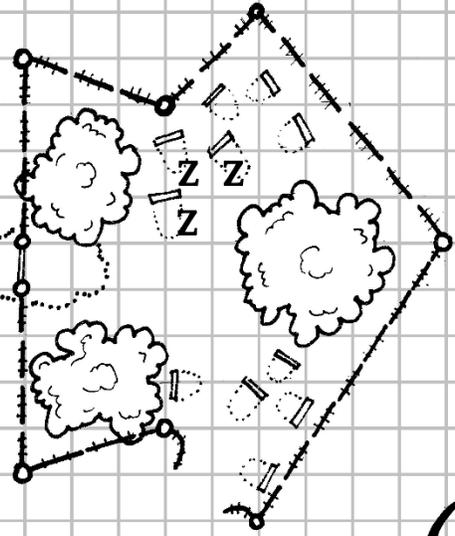
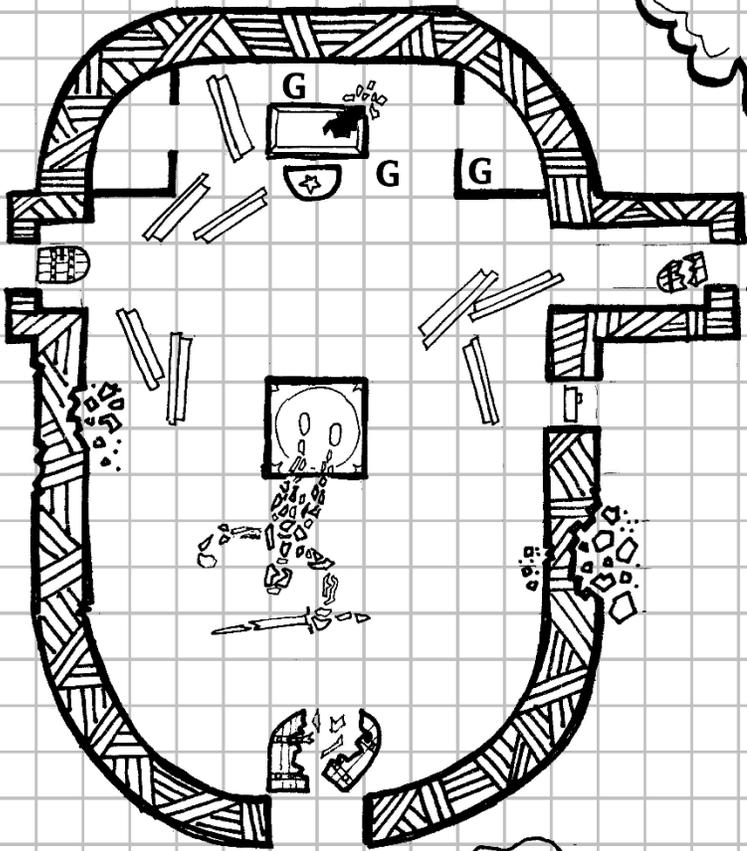




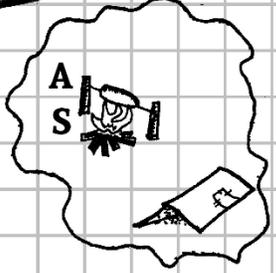
MAP D

Trade Road

MAP E DM



to dead-end, then secret path to Area 11

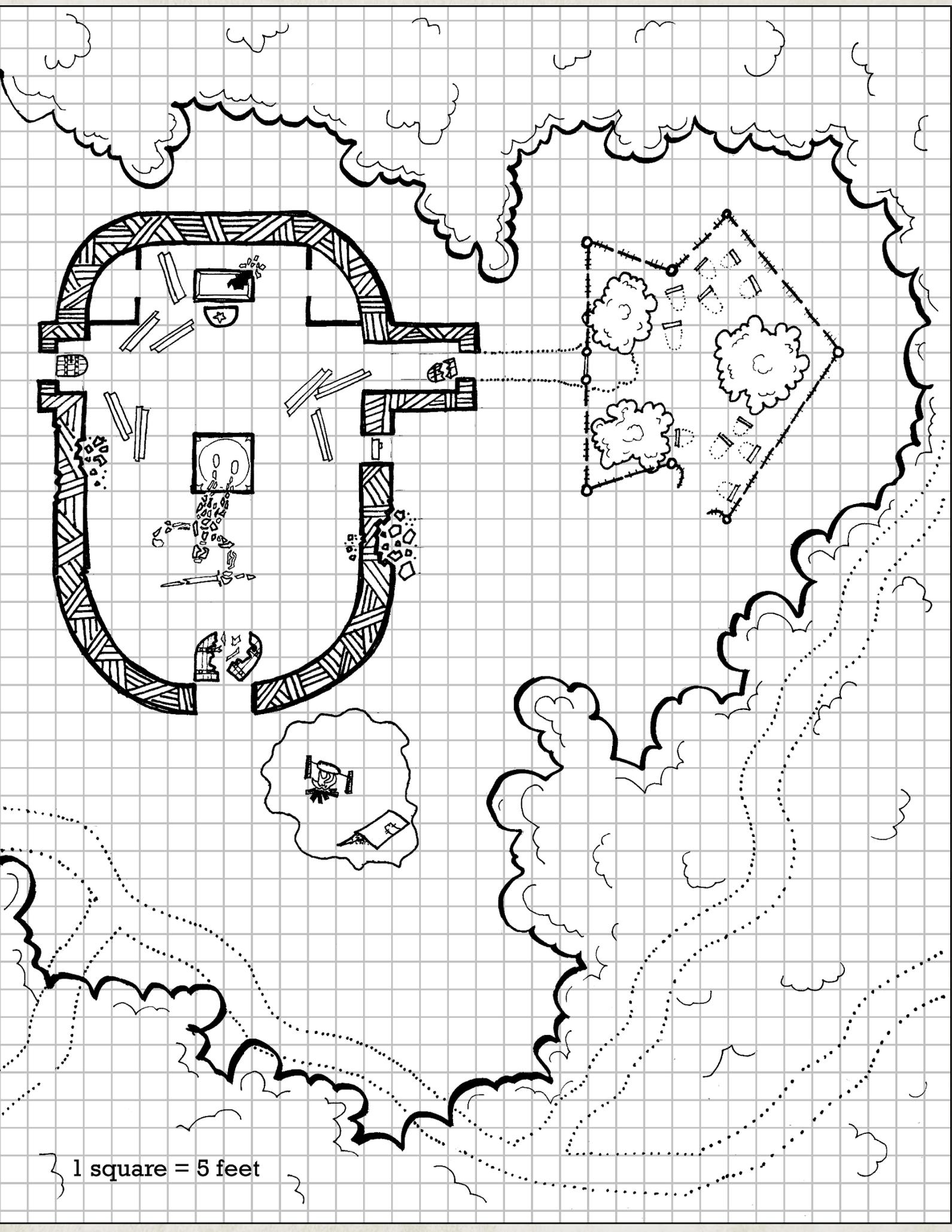


- A = Andravar
- S = skeleton
- G = ghoul
- Z = zombie

to Area 5

to Area 7

1 square = 5 feet



1 square = 5 feet

cut tree stumps

to unmapped
trade road

E

C

to Area 14

to Area 12

A

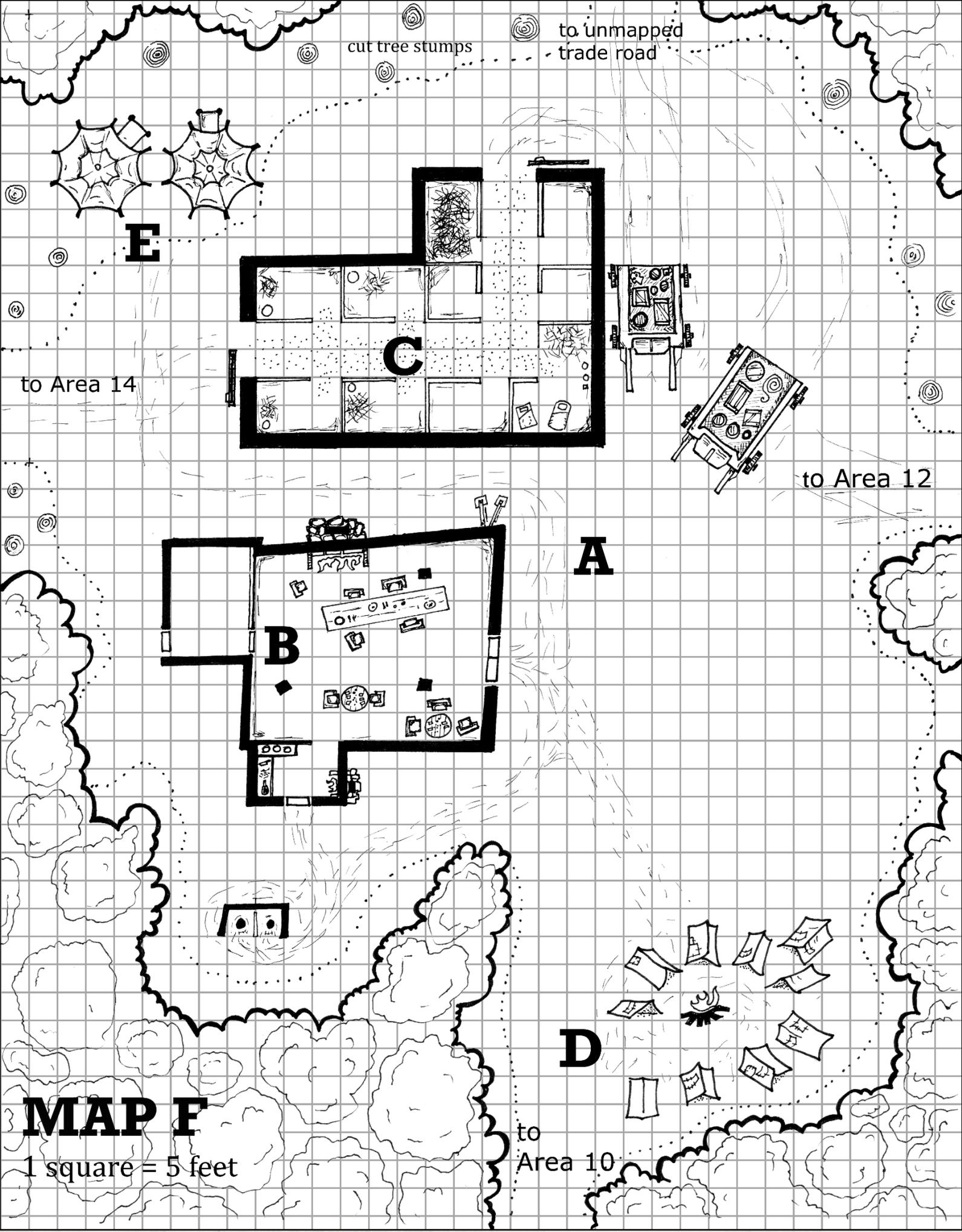
B

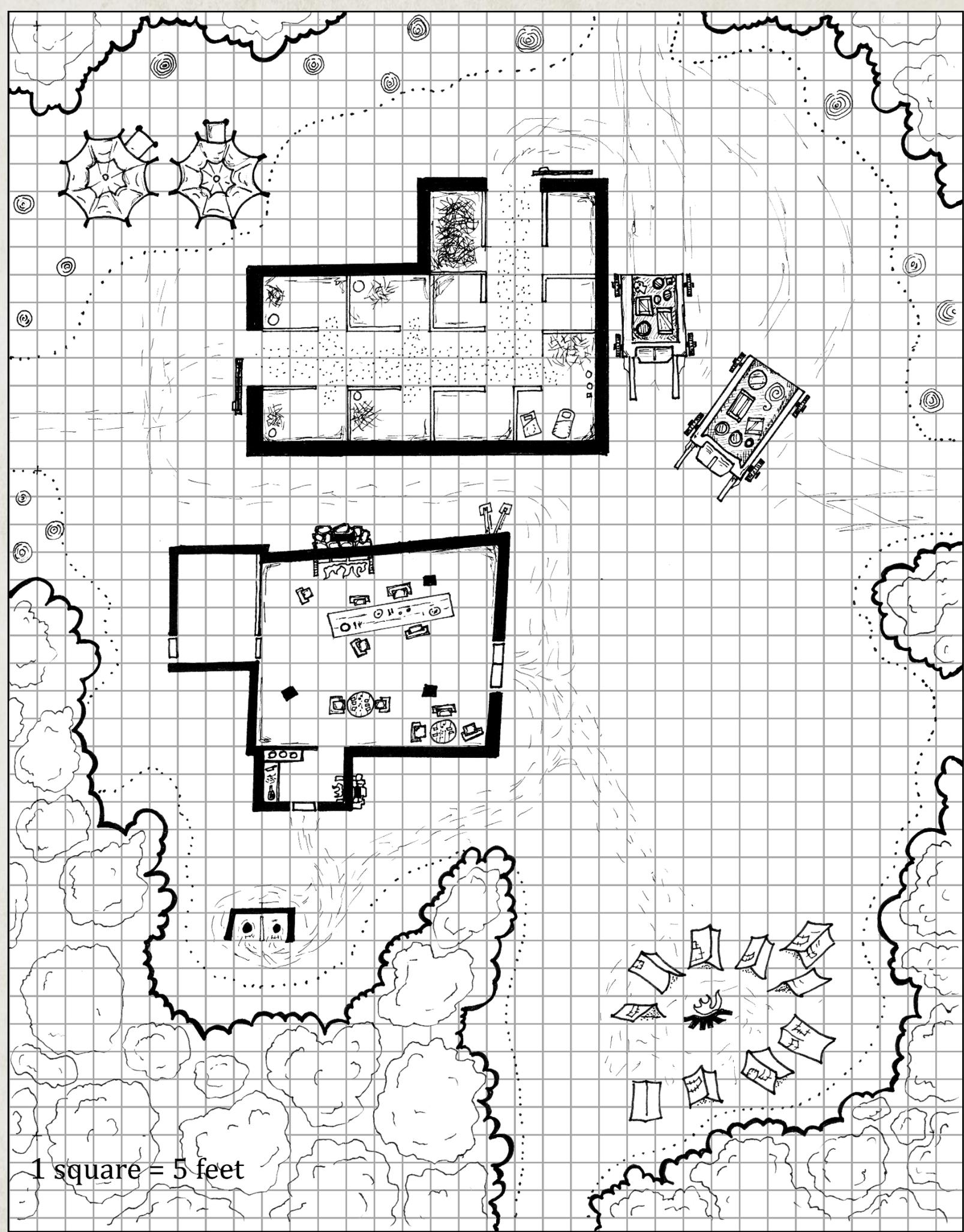
D

to
Area 10

MAP F

1 square = 5 feet



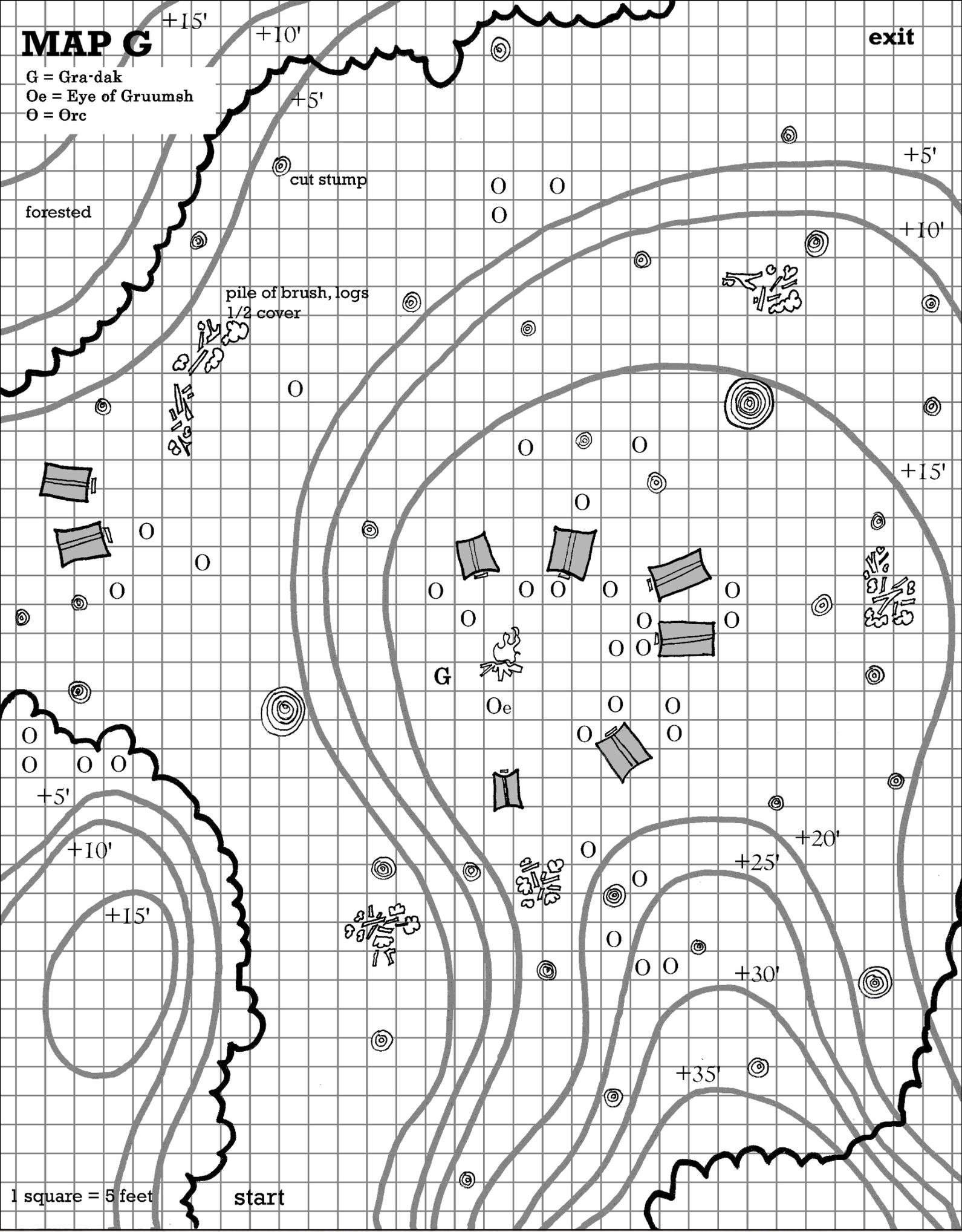


1 square = 5 feet

MAP G

G = Gra-dak
Oe = Eye of Gruumsh
O = Orc

exit



forested

cut stump

pile of brush, logs
1/2 cover



+5'

+10'

+15'

+10'

+5'

+5'

+10'

+15'

+20'

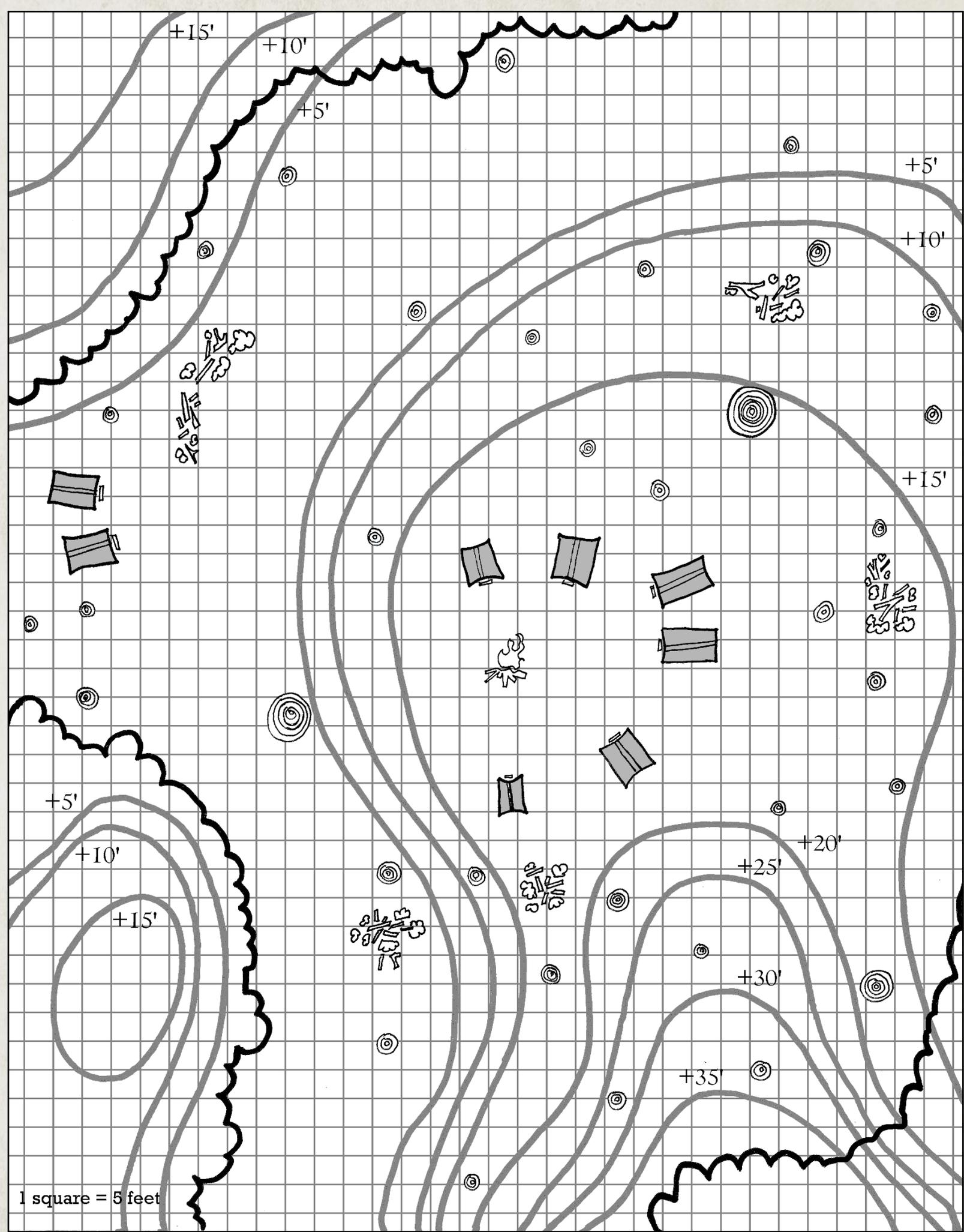
+25'

+30'

+35'

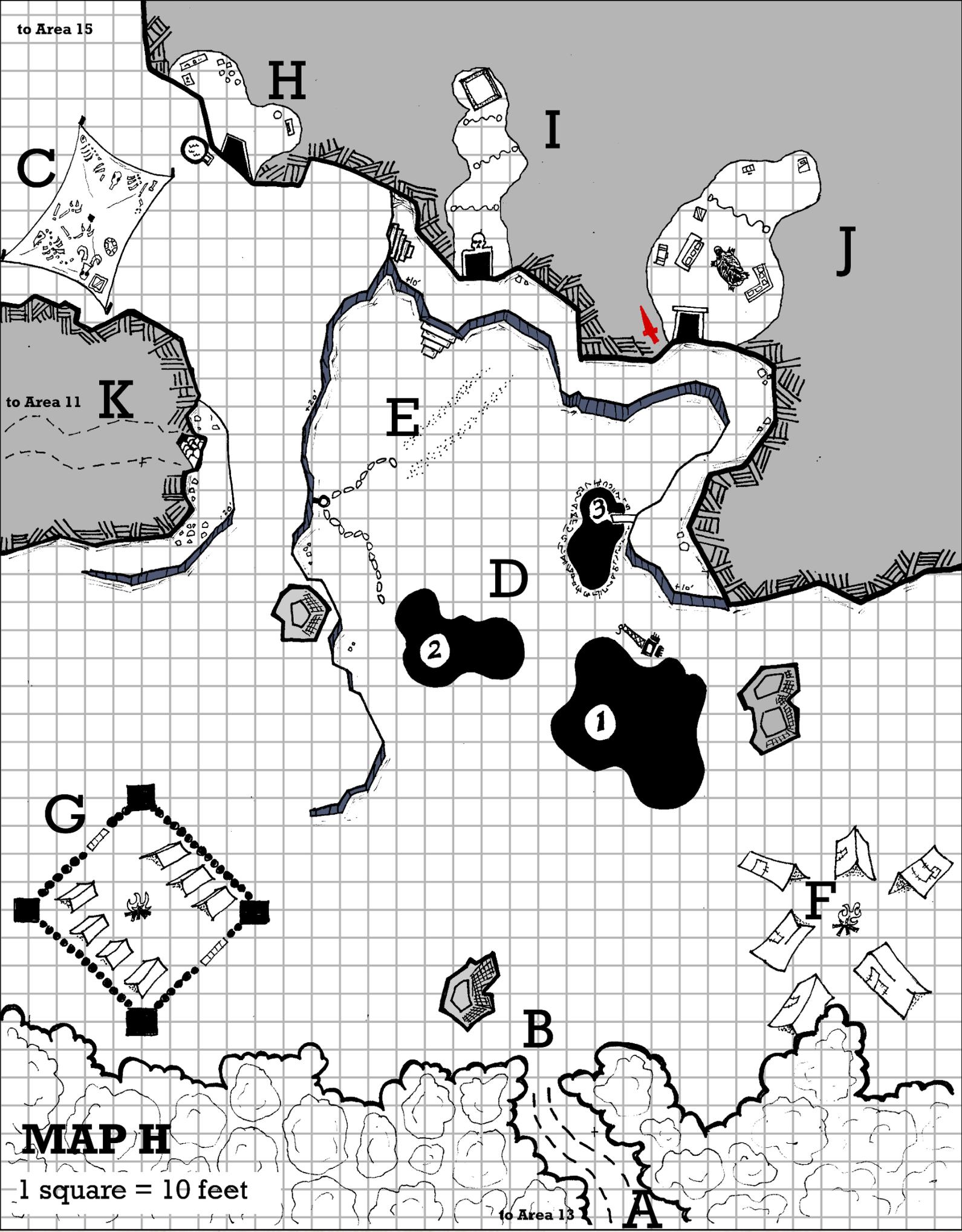
1 square = 5 feet

start



1 square = 5 feet

to Area 15



MAP H

1 square = 10 feet

to Area 13

A

B

F

G

D

E

J

I

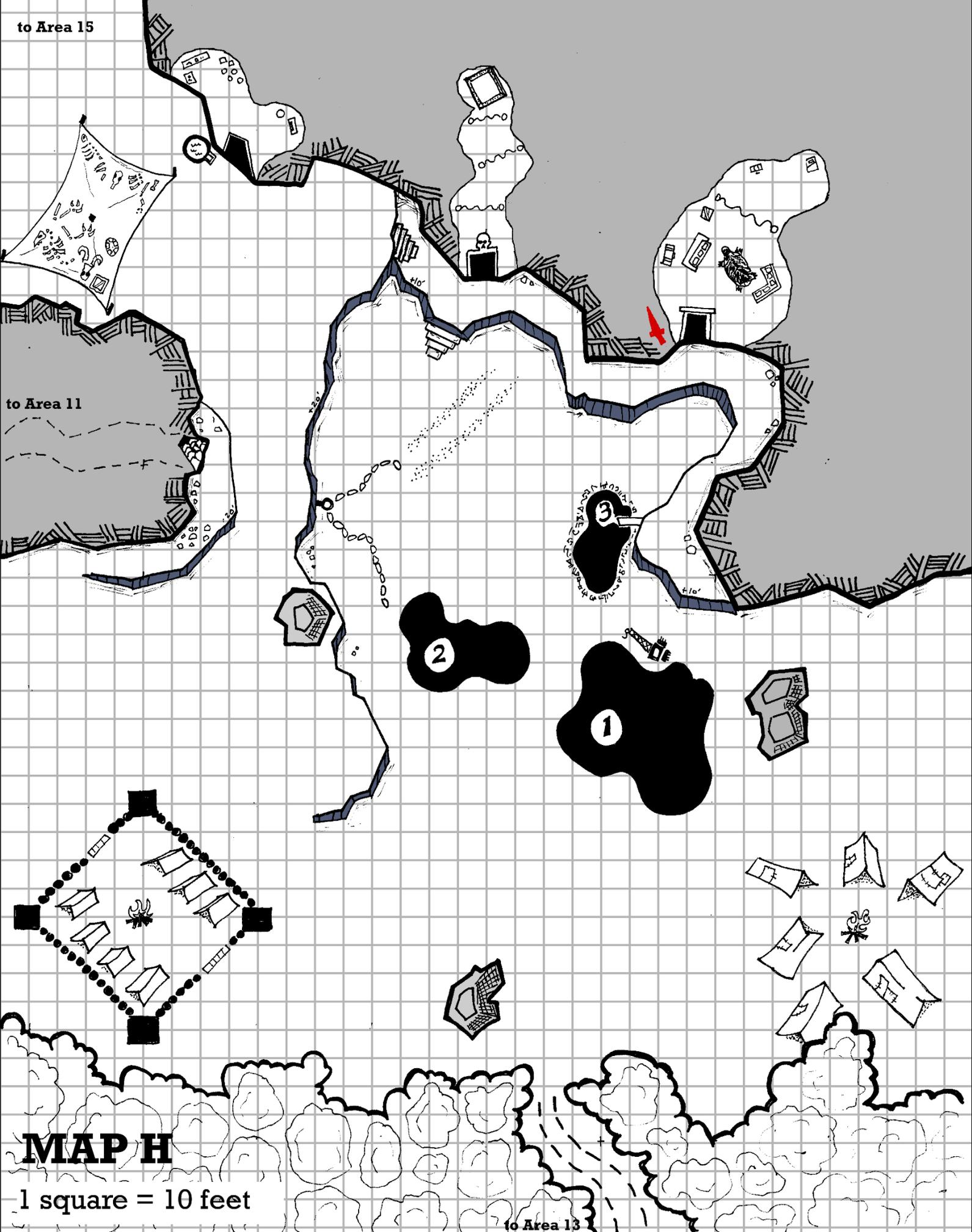
H

C

K

to Area 11

to Area 15

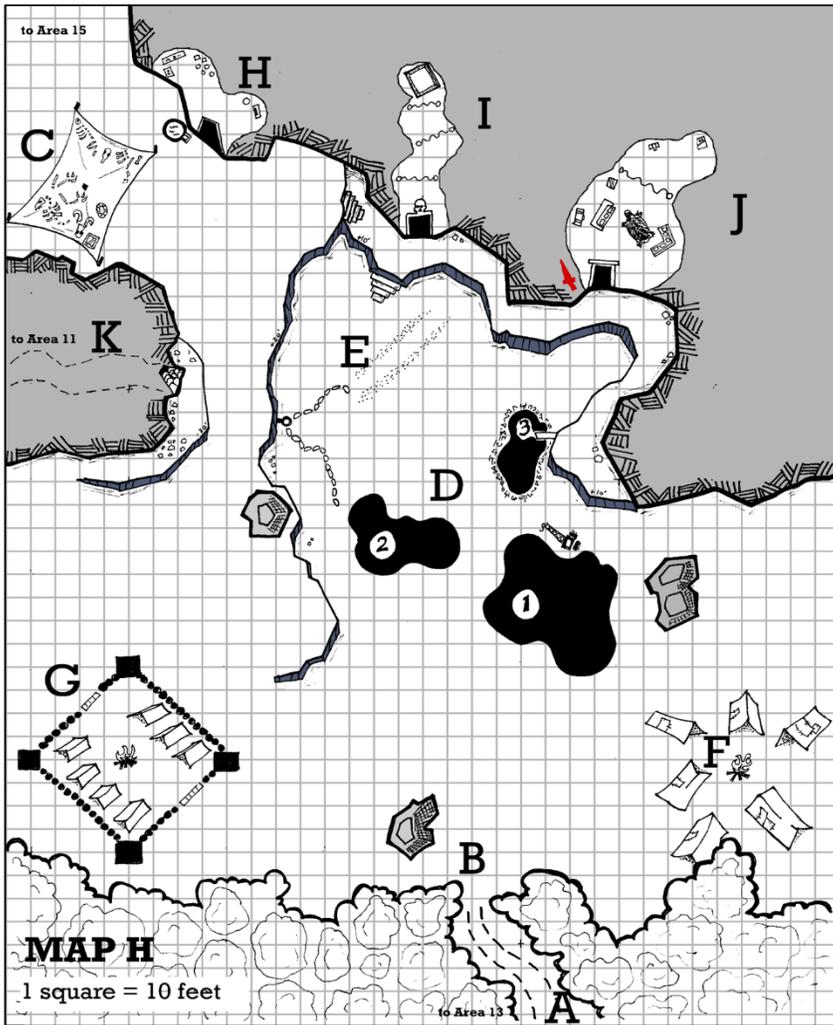


MAP H

1 square = 10 feet

to Area 13

Map Hb. Cheat Sheet for the Big Battle at Area 14



Below is a summary of enemies across Area 14, in 2 scenarios: the PCs catch necromancer unawares or the necromancer has set an ambush.

Area	Enemies	Enemies (ambush)
14A	Flame skull	Flame skull
14B	Spy, thug	None
14C	None animated at first	Skeleton swarm, giant armadillo skeleton
14D	1 skeletons, 4 tar skeletons	Sticky skeleton swarm Giant serpent skeleton (T11)
14E	Mammoth skeleton, bugbear	2 mammoth skeletons, bugbear, scout
14F	None	None
14G	3-10 bandits	1-2 henchman swarms
14H	Kobold trap-maker, Andravar (if alive)	Kobold trap-maker, Andravar (if alive), sticky skeleton swarm
14I	Rhezicora	Rhezicora
14J	Darbarik (beserker)	Darbarik (beserker)

The Battle begins

Encounter T9: Rhezicora detects the dragon and sends her minions to drag him into a tar pit.

- Swarms of skeletons and henchmen from Areas C, D, G and H try to chain Scoriaptrak.
- Once chained, skeletal mammoths in Area E attempt to pull him into the nearest tar pit.

Mid-battle twists

Encounter T10: The Cult of the Dragon appears (bard, dragonfang, cultist, guard drake) and tempts Scoriaptrak to evil.

- Scoriaptrak must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw every round he can hear the *darkheart violin* (DC 14 if it's the backup).
- With 3 failures he becomes chaotic evil & attacks the PCs.

FAILURES

Encounter T11: Rhezicora distracts the party by dangling a group of innocent villagers over a flaming tar pit #1. A giant serpent skeleton guards them.

Encounter T12: If the dragon dies, time is frozen and the dragon and PCs are now in an audience with Kelemvor and Bahamut. The PCs must succeed on two separate checks before 2 failures on either check.

- A DC20 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check w/ Kelemvor
- A DC20 CHARISMA (Persuasion) check w/ Scoriaptrak

FAILURES	

With success above, Scoriaptrak is transformed into a young gold dragon and the battle continues. The necromancer fights to the death.

Don't forget to use Redemption Dice!

Allies

Allies made along the way can show up to help. Each ally can be used once to remove up to a CR1 enemy or hazard, or up to 20 HP of damage. An ally may also use the Aid action to grant Advantage to a single roll.

Area	Ally
5	Eld Armbackler
9	Tweeskree, elf
13	Sir Patkyt, Medrash
14J	Darbarik
R6	Hunting party
R10	Nillam the Harper

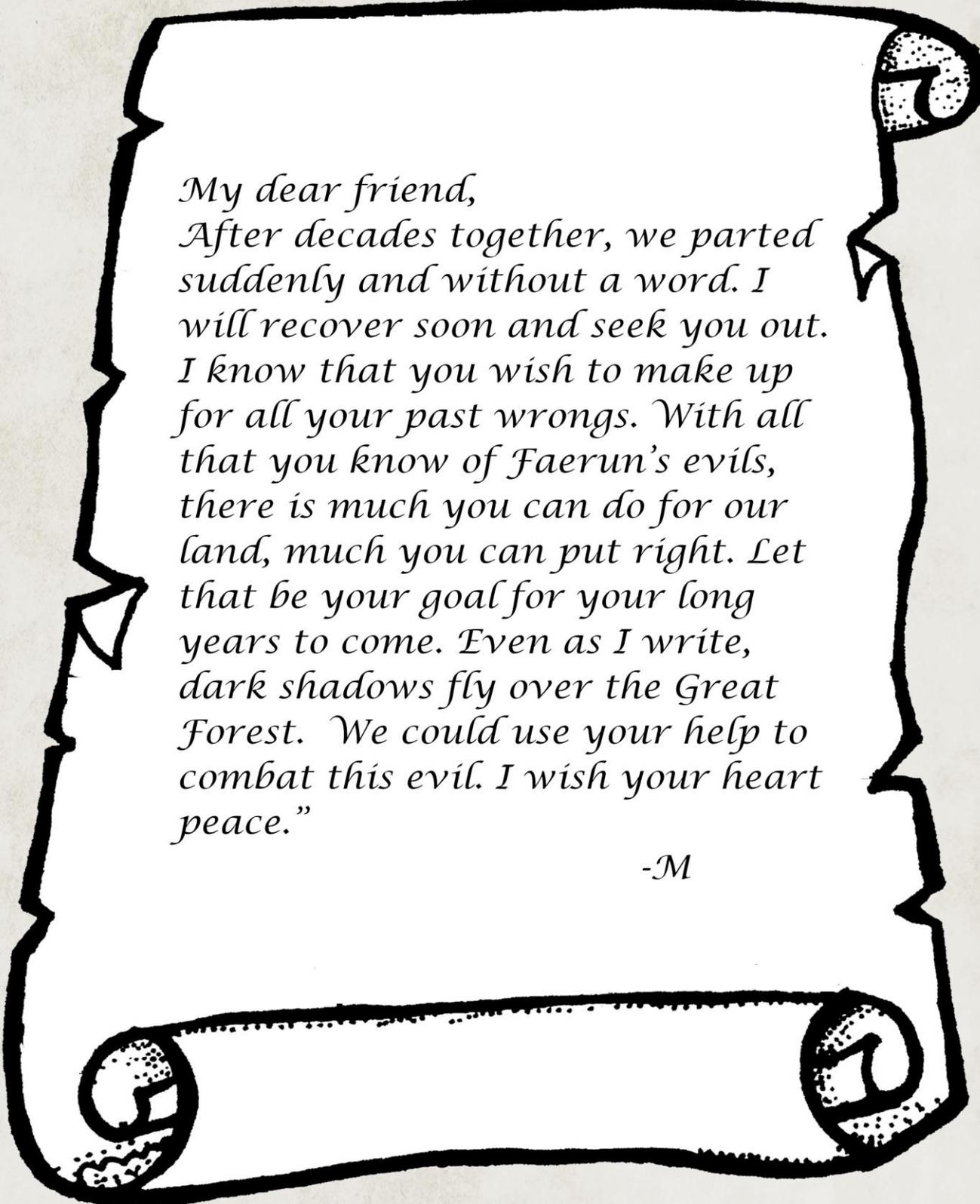
Other resources

Area	Ally
2	<i>Book of fancies</i>
8	<i>Whistle of reptile stunning</i>
R4	<i>Bullroarer of skeletal control</i>

Appendix D: Player Handouts and Illustrations

Illustration A (Area 1)





*My dear friend,
After decades together, we parted
suddenly and without a word. I
will recover soon and seek you out.
I know that you wish to make up
for all your past wrongs. With all
that you know of Faerun's evils,
there is much you can do for our
land, much you can put right. Let
that be your goal for your long
years to come. Even as I write,
dark shadows fly over the Great
Forest. We could use your help to
combat this evil. I wish your heart
peace."*

-M

Illustration C (Area 5)



Illustration D (Area 6)

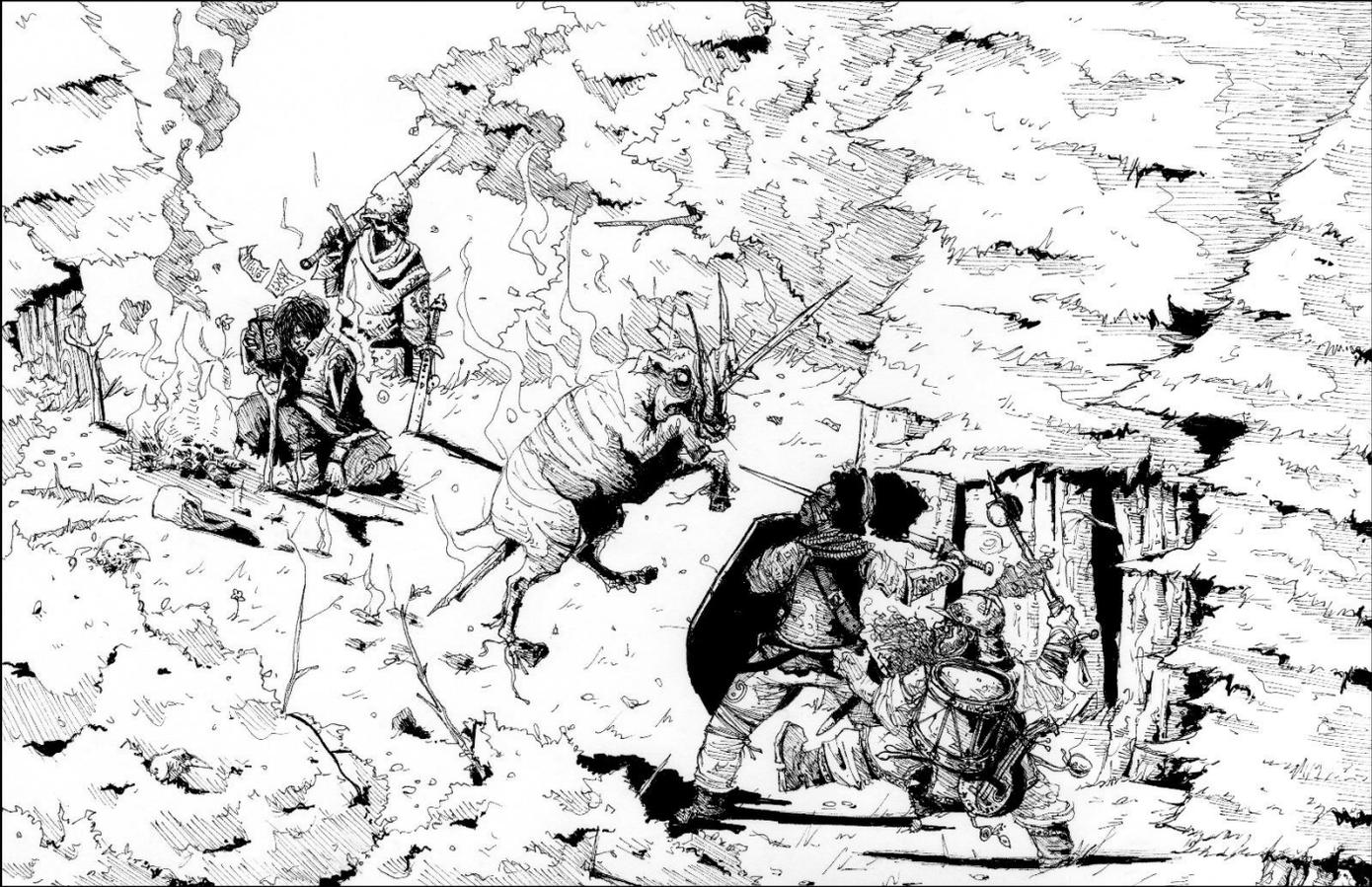


Illustration E (Area 7)



Illustration bonus (lizardfolk hatchling-Area 8)



Illustration F (Area 9)



Illustration G (Area 9)

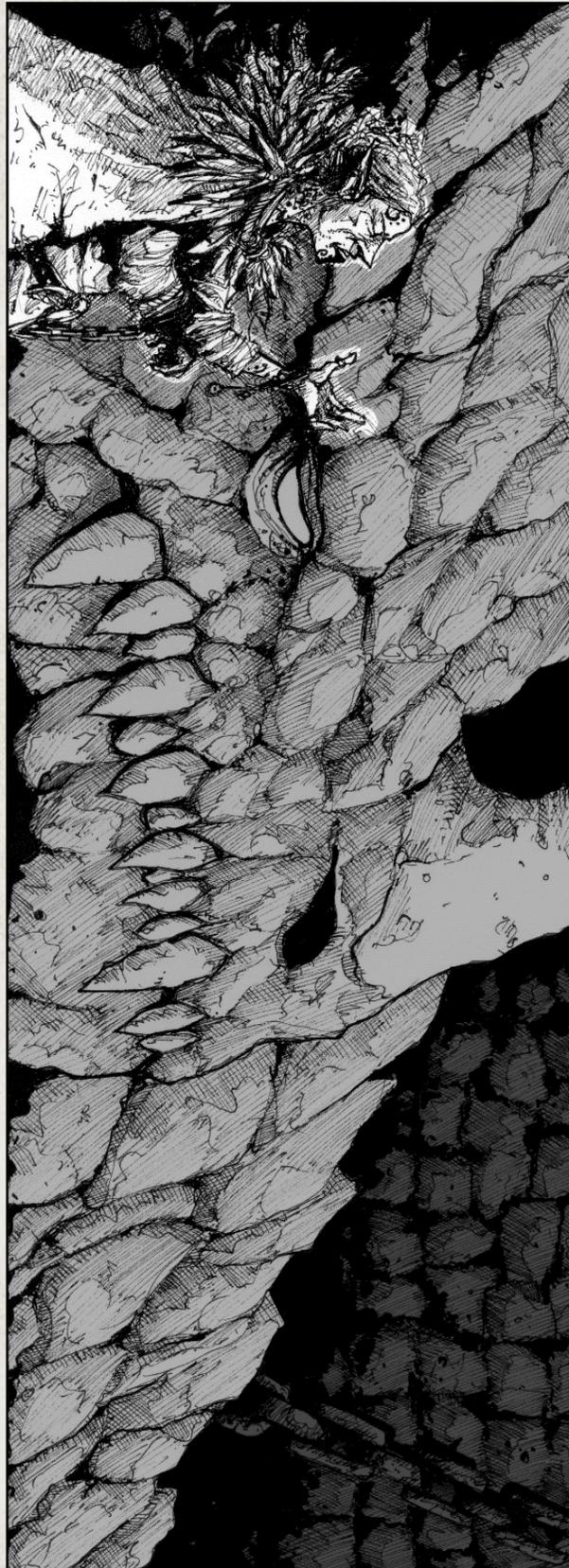


Illustration H (Area 14 or encounter T5)

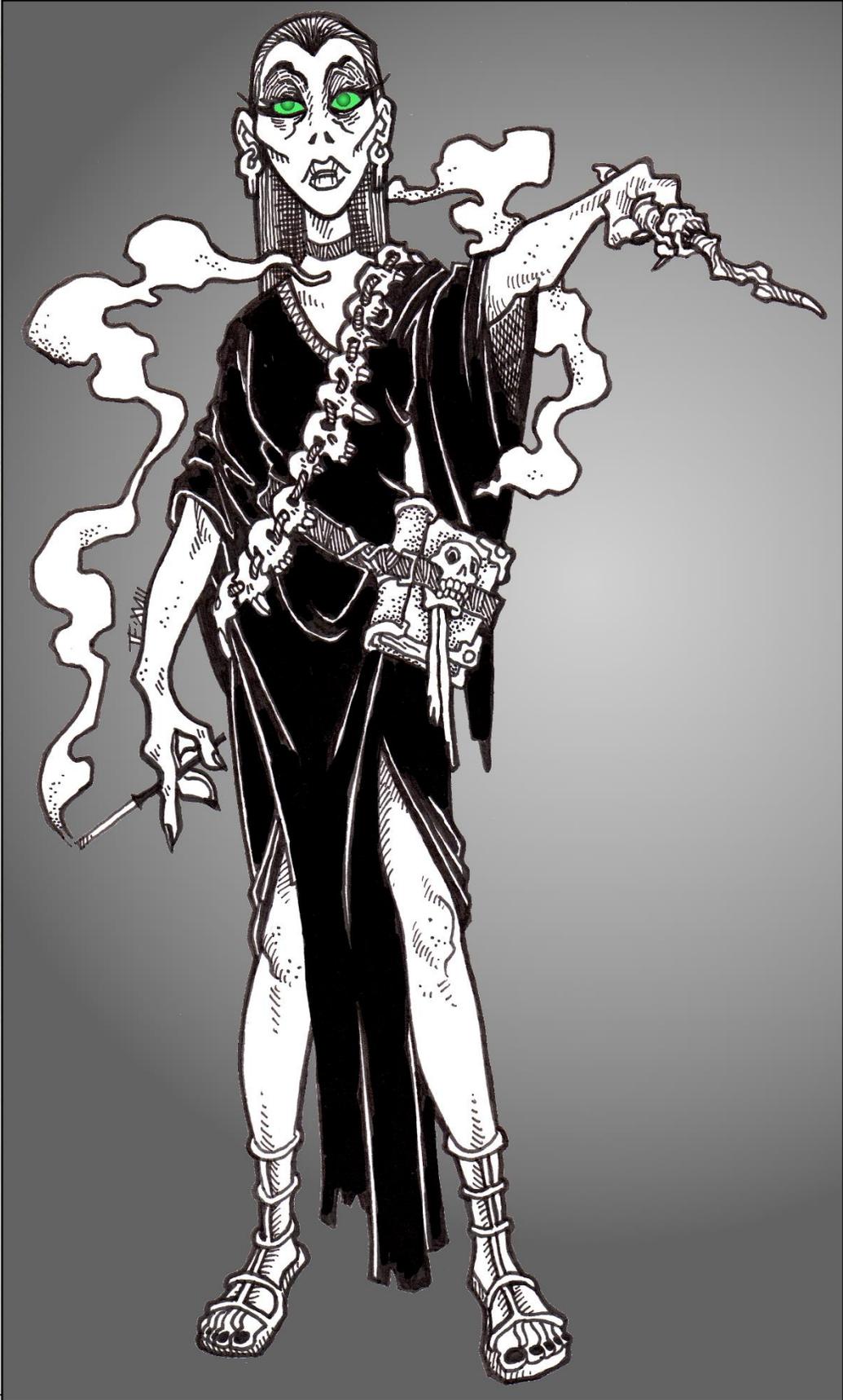


Illustration I (Random encounter T11)



Illustration bonus (uncropped cover art)

