

2014 Dodecahedron

Cartographic Review

Writing, Layout, Cartography, Cover Design and all that other stuff
DYSON LOGOS

2014 was the first full year where I published maps entirely under the Patreon campaign that has come to define the site. This book represents a curated collection of the maps posted to the blog during that year. Launched in late 2013, the Patreon campaign allows (encourages? begs?) fans and supporters of the Dodecahedron to throw a bit of money my way with each map released. The generosity of these patrons has allowed me the creative space to create at a level I've not had the option to work at before - dedicating a significant part of my time towards drawing and documenting these maps. It has also brought significant change to the mapping process for me - giving me the money to buy higher quality pens and papers and since I'm mapping at home instead of on the road all the time, the ability to work with larger media than the majority of my old maps which were drawn in a 4" x 6" cahier.

And these changes show up in the finished work. The works in this book are significantly more detailed, larger, and often tackle on bigger and weirder projects than I would have previously.

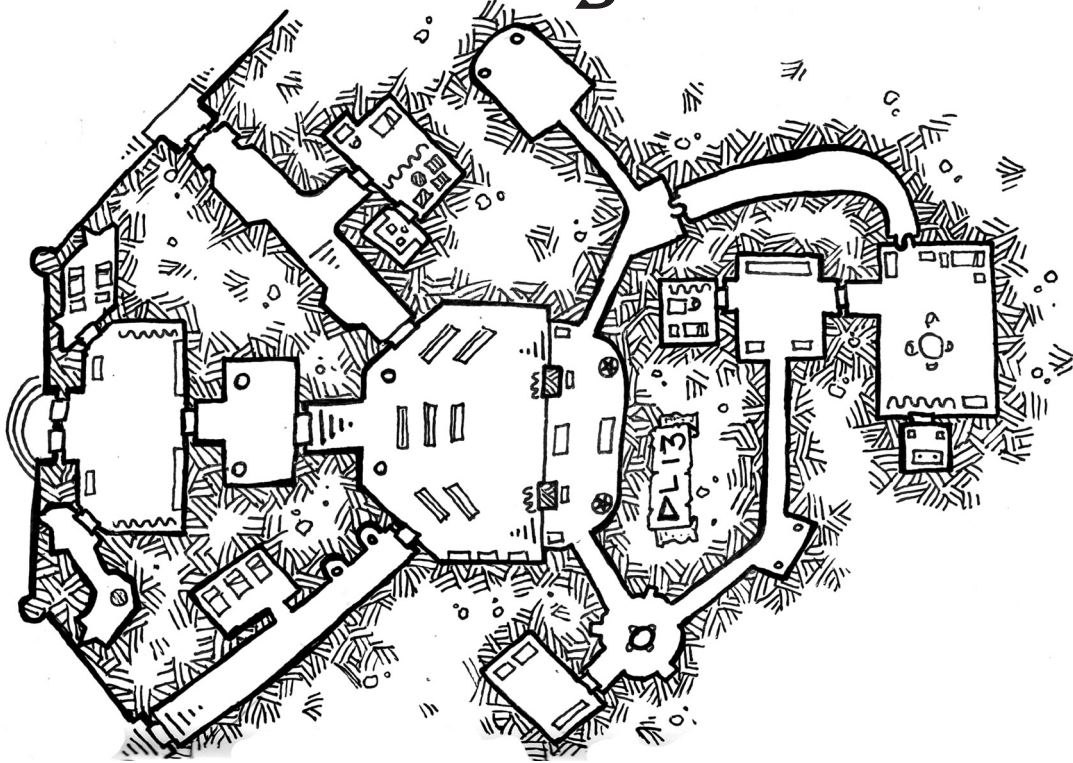
Thank you for supporting me into this new year.

Dyson Logos
Jan 04 2016

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The Temple of Poor Parenting Decisions



Strange things happen when you start drawing a map in the middle of your normal sleep-cycle. Things like... The Temple of Poor Parenting Decisions.

It has been noted that the temple is not nearly large enough to handle the number of converts to the faith that the church obviously has.

Delve of Dread (Next Page)

My thoughts on the Darkling Depths, other megadungeons in general, and my own geomorph mapping project lead eventually to the concept of the Delve of Dread. The Delve of Dread is a mother of a megadungeon project – not intended to run as deep as say Rappan Athuk, but to have larger, sprawling maps and to follow some of my ideals in megadungeon design.

I've been keeping a file of ideas for the Delve, and originally I titled it "Bottomless Delve of the Flail Snails" instead of the catchier "Delve of Dread". While I still kind of prefer the first title, it also feels like it is over-marketed towards the g+ OSR community with the Flail Snail reference.

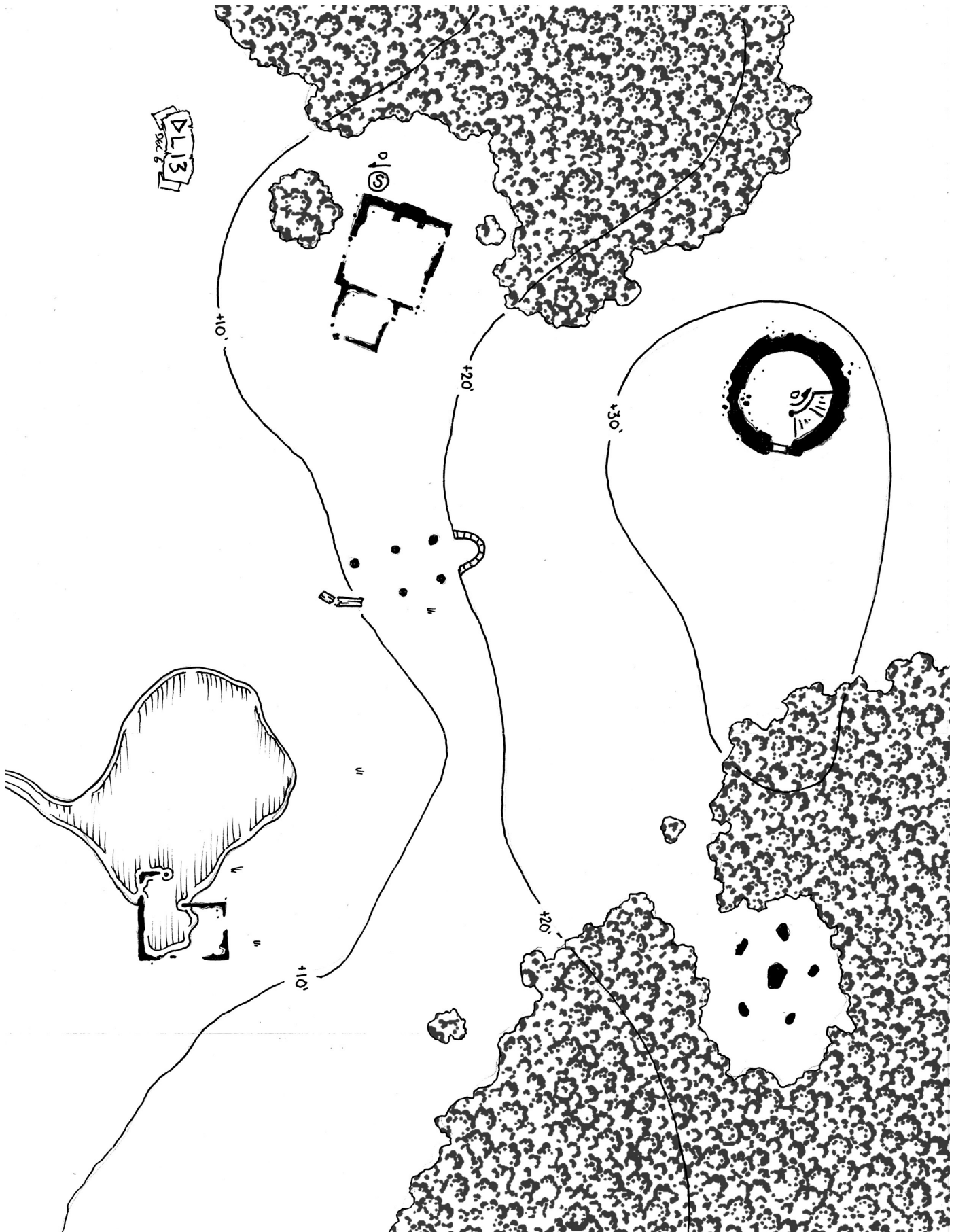
So here's the first surface area of the Delve of Dread – the Ruined Tower, Skald Manor, and the Tonsured Cave.

But beneath these we have the first level 1 map of the dungeon. Accessed through either the Ruined Tower or the Tonsured Cave, this level provides two points of access to level 2A of the dungeon as well as a massive shaft that leads down to lower levels. The secret door behind Skald Manor leads to level 2A directly.

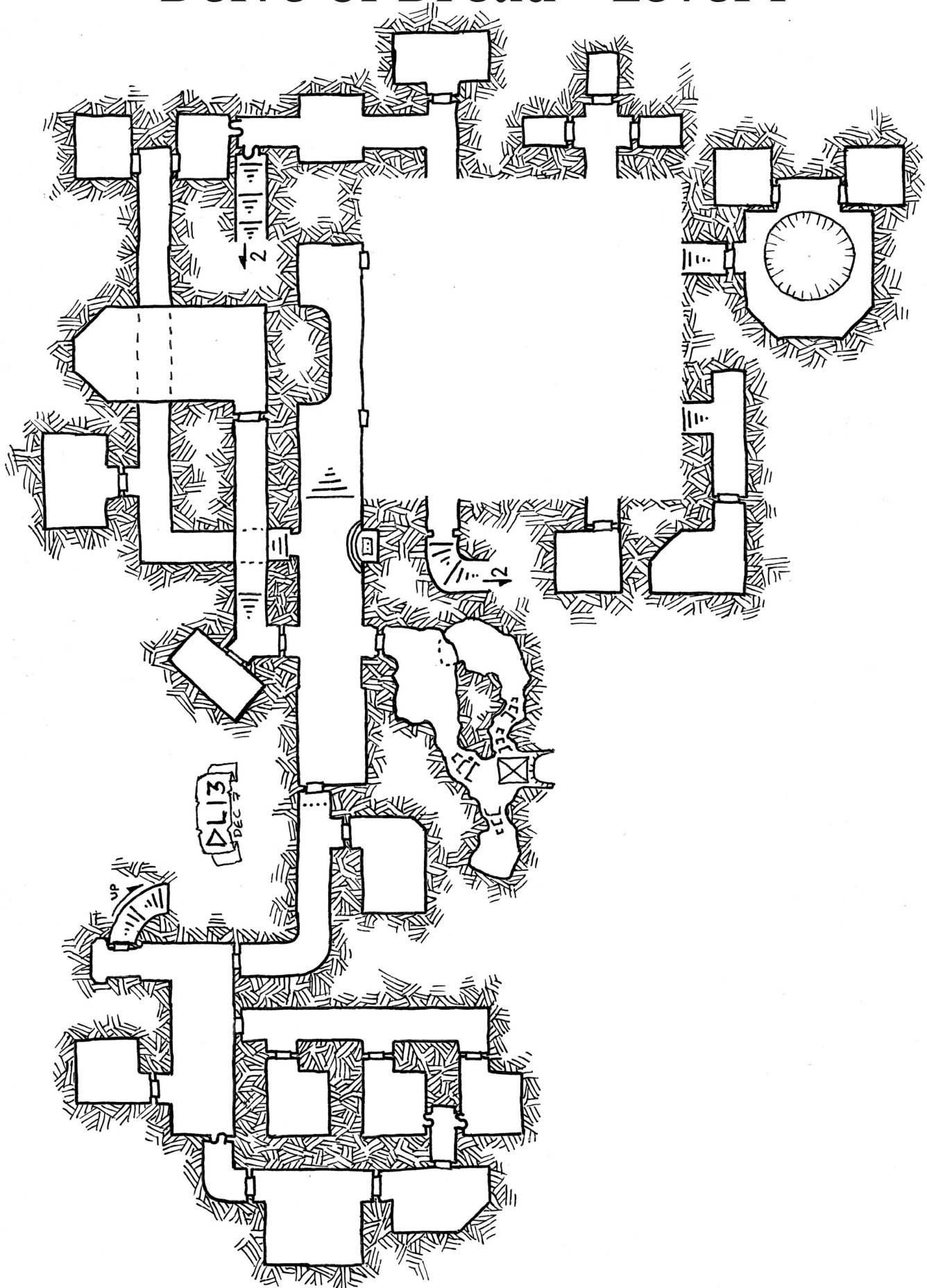
But in the quest to get to level 2A there's a nice big 100' x 100' blank spot on the map. A blank space with eight suspiciously symmetrical access points. That's right, go grab a dozen of your favourite geomorphs from my own Geomorph Mapping Project or from Dave's Mapper. Every time the party re-enters the dungeon, or whenever you are feeling particularly mean, swap out the geomorph that goes in that spot.

Throw those complacent adventurers for a loop when their maps are suddenly wrong.

Delve of Dread - Surface



Delve of Dread - Level 1

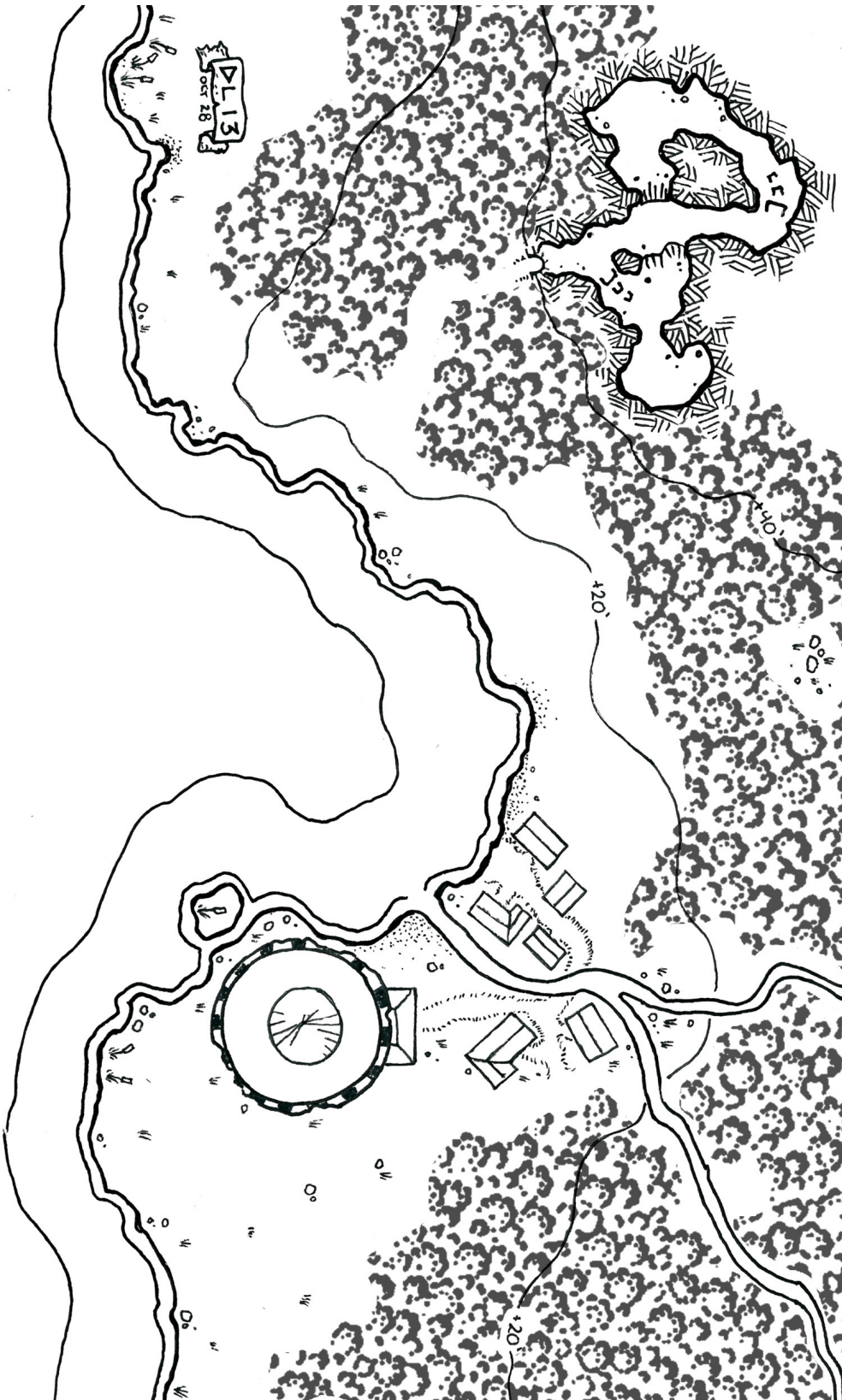


Ravenson's Landing

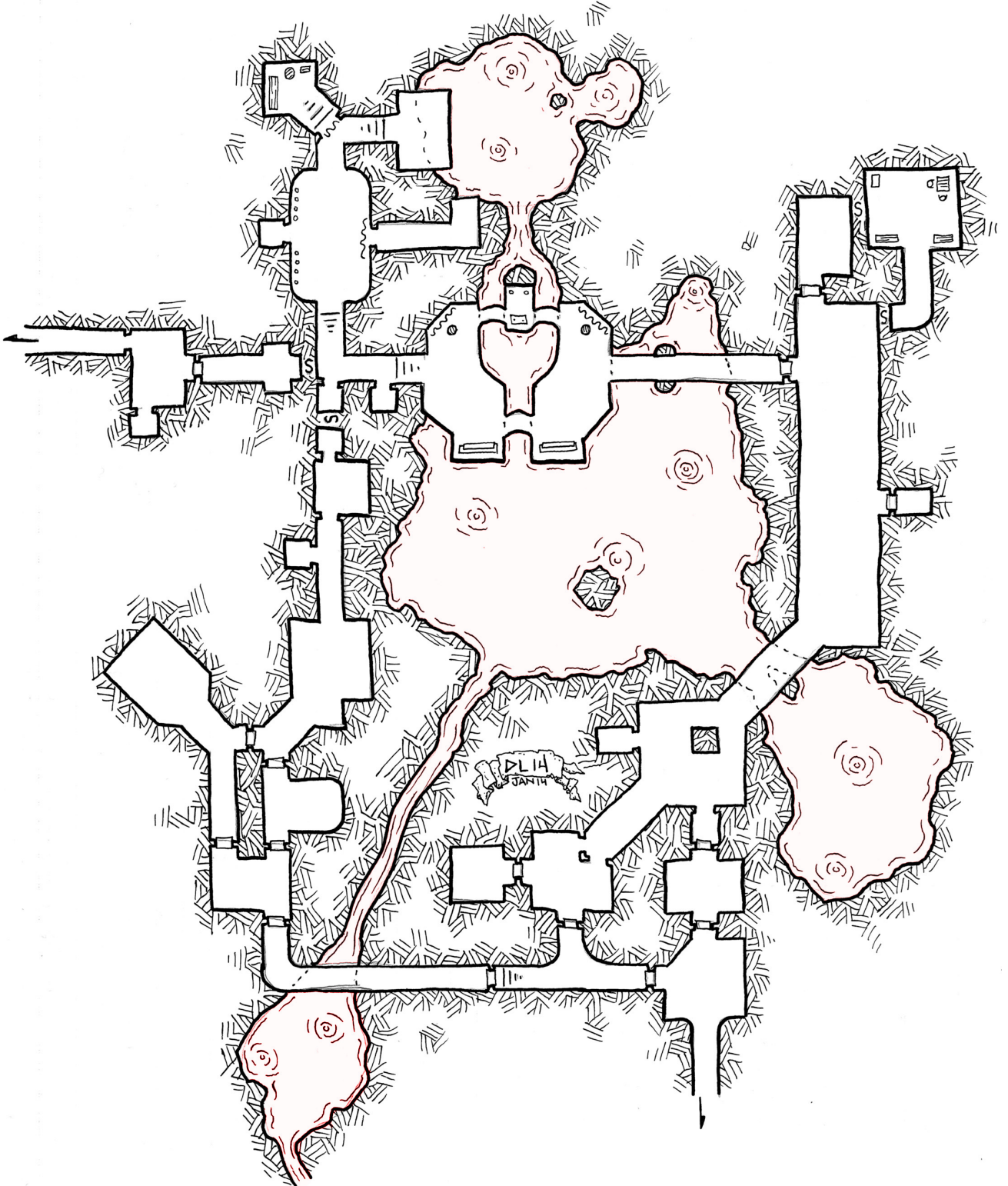
The small community of Ravenson's Landing lies in a shallow bay by a small river, a useful source of freshwater for traffic near the Hill Islands who wish to remain away from the major ports in that area – pirates, privateers and smugglers for the most part.

The inlet and community is on the edge of a forest and is easily spotted by those searching for it by the silhouette of Ravenson's Tower which overlooks the few nearby houses.

Slightly to the west of the settlement is Partridge Cave partially hidden in the woods. Partridge Cave is home to the secrets of Ravenson's Landing... whatever they may be...



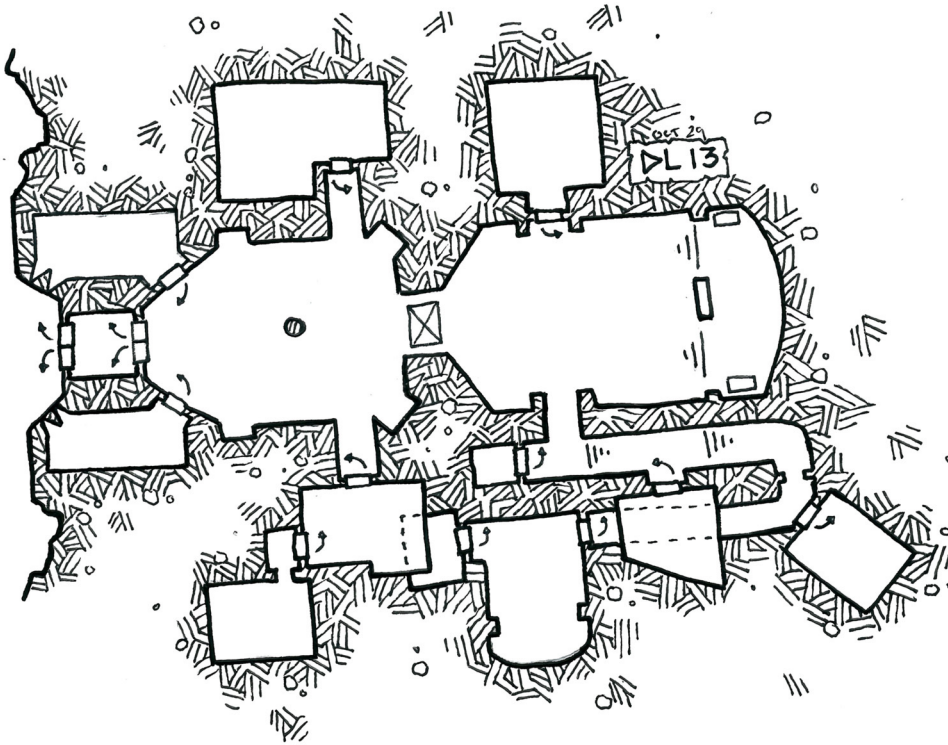
Gedak's Temple



Gedak, high priest of Drothos, was aided by divine inspiration and many protection from elements spells as he toiled to build a temple to the ancient banished god under the frozen caldera of a volcano that slowly spills it's lava down along the Iron Fang Abyss, a deep crevasse that divides the Kingdom of Tren from the lands of Warlord Yur.

There are three entrances into the temple, but only two are suitable for non fire-based entities. A small shrine on the mountainside leads to a secret entrance on the west side of the central shrine. The main entrance is on the south face of the volcano, and leads through the grand hall to the central shrine, sitting atop a lake of bubbling magma.

Champion's Retreat



When Rafael Chandler asked me to draw a map for Bad Myrmidon and explained what the general feel of the adventure would be, my first thought went to this map I drew less than a month before. Except of course that this map had the main encounter room as the first major room you wander into, with the other cool stuff jumbled around the outer edges of that main room.

I also really like how the map looks like some sort of crabby thing is watching the front entrance, ready to grab intruders with its arrow-slit-enhanced claws.

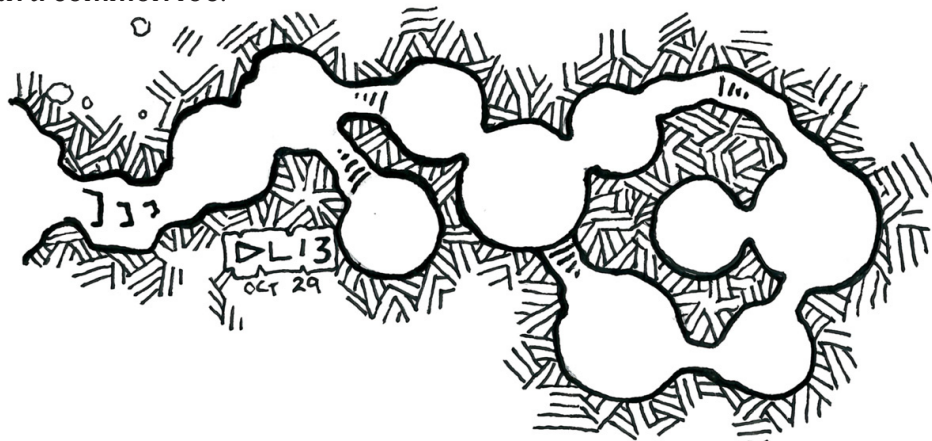
Zaelen's Hive

Zaelen is a zealous and insane cleric of community. He was originally a con artist who masqueraded as a small-town priest until he saw the power of community in action as the town came together under the banner of the church to fend off attacking barbarians.

As a true cleric of the faith, he tried to build up communities to get people to work together, but always he ran into the problems of people not getting along, communities fracturing, and the issue of "individuality" being a problem when communities weren't faced with a common foe.

Driven a bit mad after a few too many encounters with koprou on a distant island, Zaelen finally settled down and started building his "perfect community". Thirty years of patience and magical cross-breeding villagers with lawful insectoid creatures from the plane of earth...

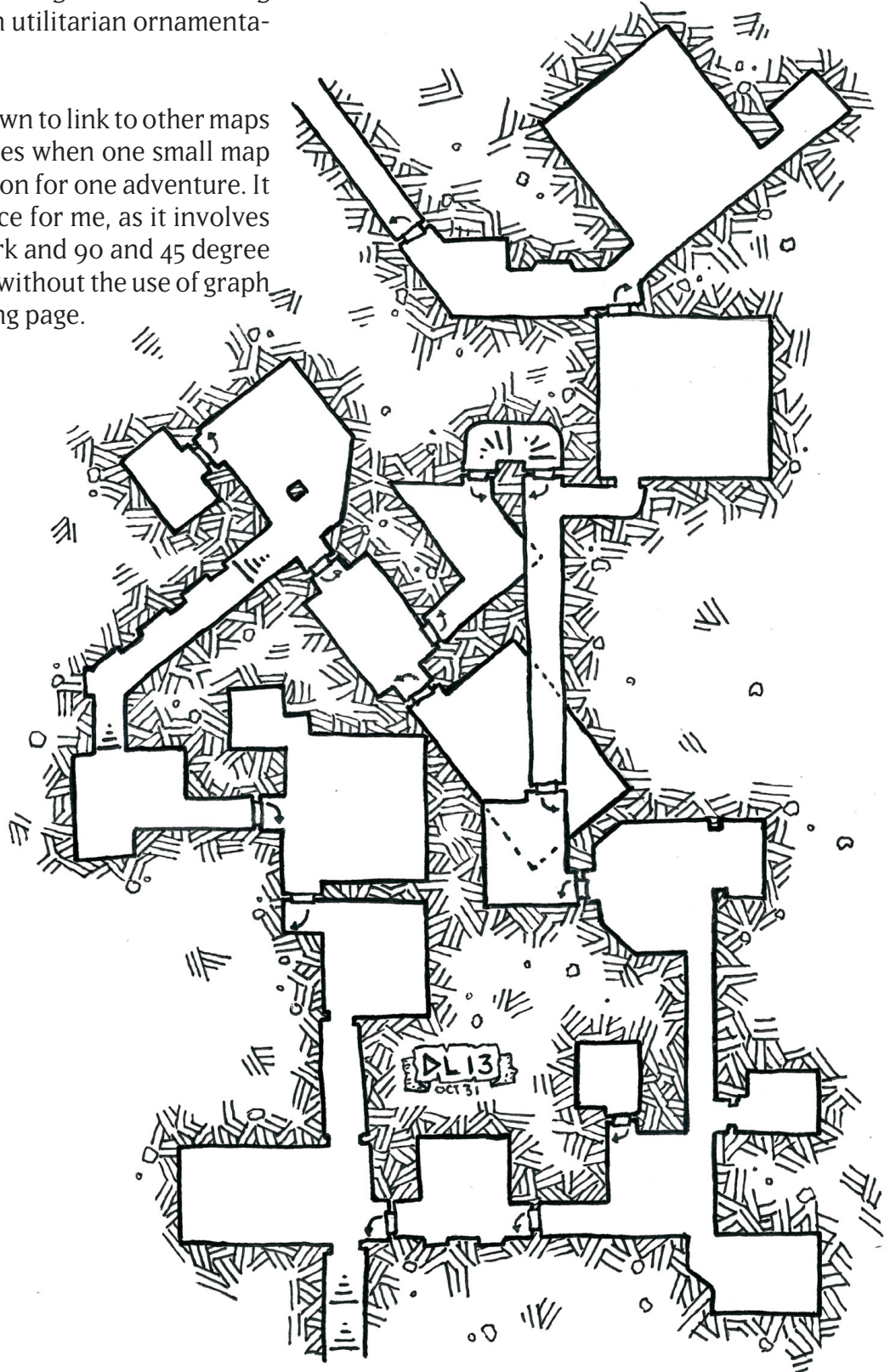
Now the town is abandoned, and the little church by the town square is mostly full of rubble, dirt and rocks, with more piled up in the graveyard behind it. But beneath the church, Zaelen's obsession remains hidden in Zaelen's Hive.



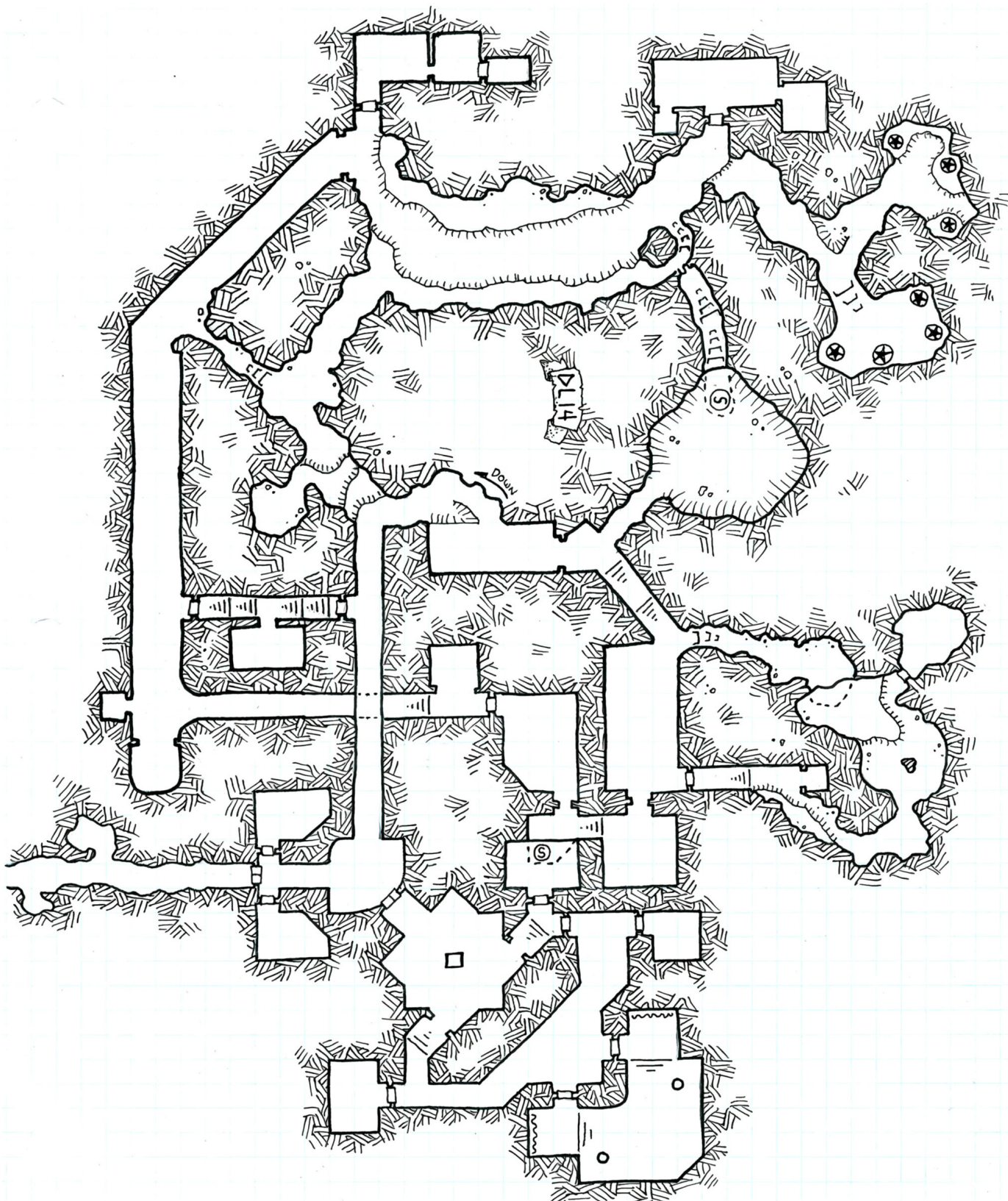
Firebeard's Cut

Deep underground, dwarven construction teams built the passages and rooms of Firebeard's Cut along the fault lines of the hard rock of the area. Dark and cold now for so many years, these halls cut through the stone along sharp angles with clean utilitarian ornamentation.

Firebeard's Cut was drawn to link to other maps together for those games when one small map just isn't enough dungeon for one adventure. It was also a practice piece for me, as it involves lots of straight line work and 90 and 45 degree angles, and was drawn without the use of graph paper or a graph backing page.



Dysons & Dungeons



This dungeon map was drawn and scanned in progress to make a series of 12 steps that I could animate and put up on the blog.

Originally I was thinking of making it a video that I could put on the Patreon campaign page since that's kind of expected of most Patreon campaigns, but now, two full years later, it still hasn't made it up onto the campaign...

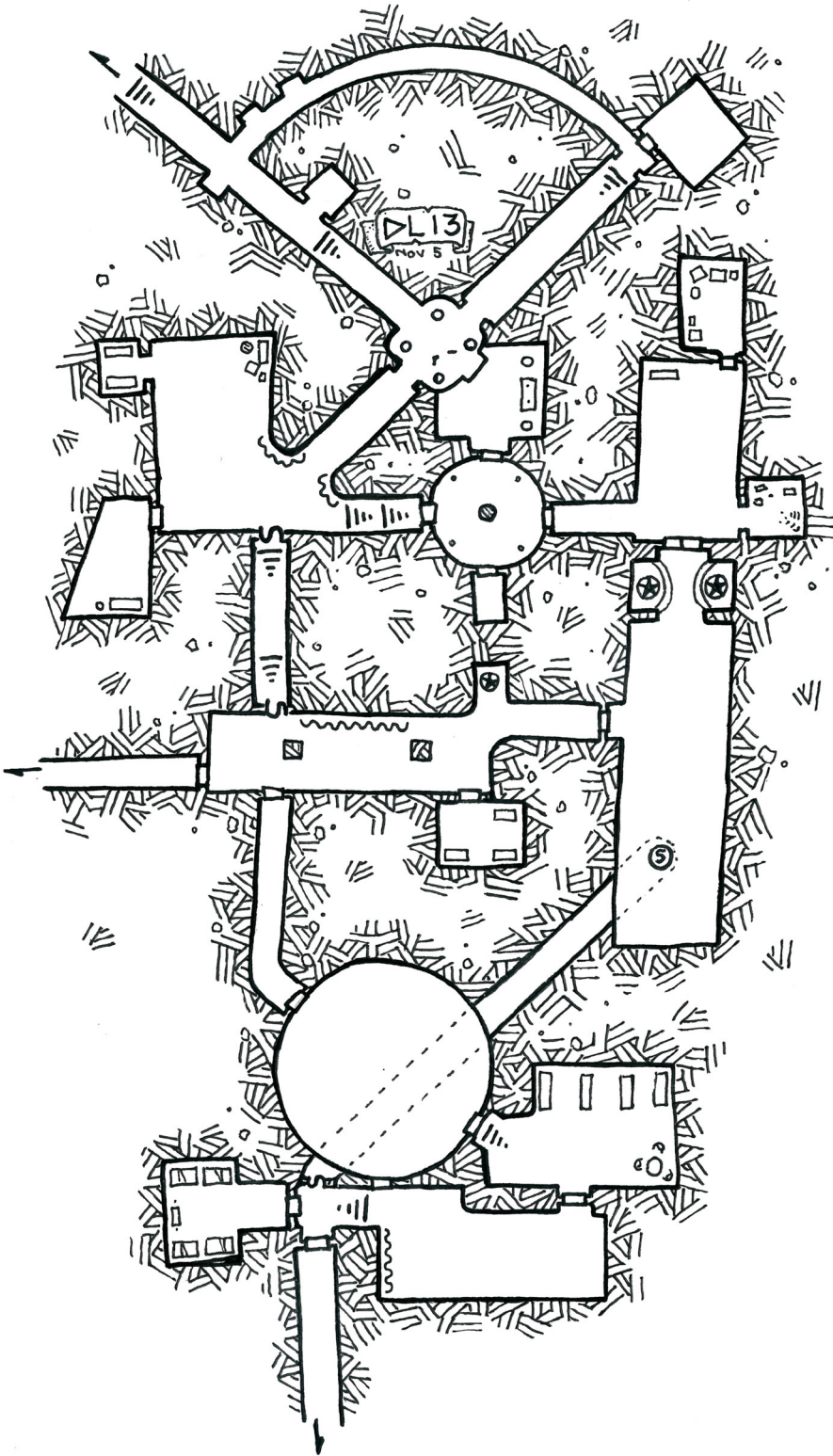
Stariphos Bay

Too far from the Hill Islands to be protected by their navy, and too close to be not seen as good plunder by those jealous of the wealth and stability of the Hill Islands, Stariphos Bay has to maintain strong defensive structures as well as a small fleet of ships to interdict maritime raiders.

In a break from my standard style for mapping cities, I didn't fill in either the fortifications nor the housing in black. I also didn't put the tree fill in the forests nor the water fill in the water. I wanted to see what the raw map would look like and was curious about the lack of contrast from not filling the major walls and fortresses.



Traven's Redoubt



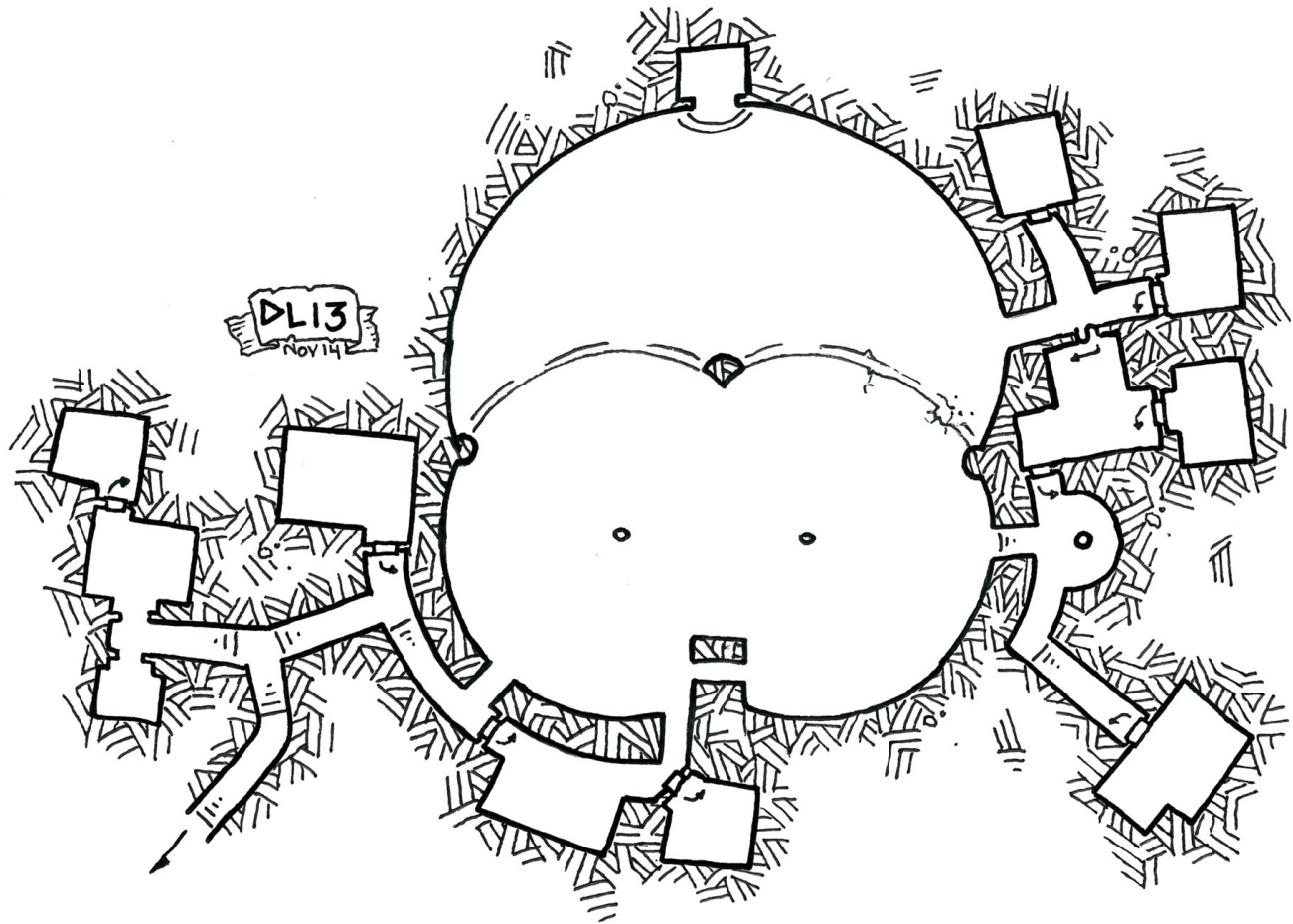
Drawn as part of the same exercise that brought us Firebeard's Cut, Traven's Redoubt is an exercise in straight line corridors and 90 and 45 degree work without the use of a grid or grid backing.

This particular map links to three other maps – any of these (or all of these) could be entrances to the dungeon, or all could be other dungeon maps that you want to convert into something bigger. In fact, I put together a map showing how I would use this as a linkage between maps... I'll post it on Saturday.

Traven's Redoubt was drawn with a pair of gel pens – 0.7mm and 0.5mm (the larger for the walls, the smaller for the detail work and crosshatching). It was drawn in my new sketchbook that I got at the end of October (which has nice thick paper that just sucks up ink). It started with a rough set of straight lines laid out on the page in pencil that I then converted into these rooms and halls in pen as I went along.

Maybe I'll get around to filling them in digitally at some point soonish. No promises though.

The Seer's Font



Hey look, I bought a compass!

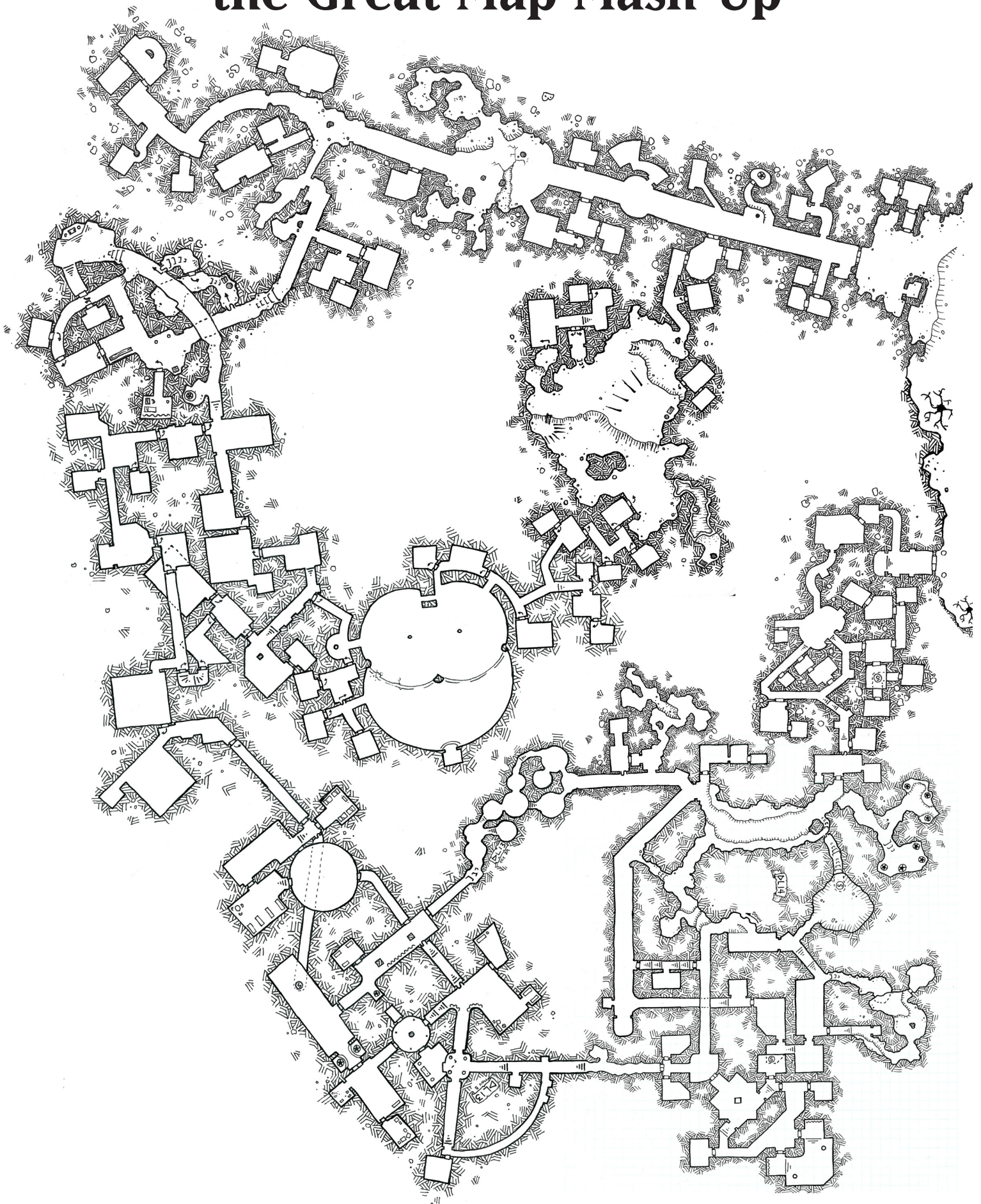
No, seriously. That's exactly what triggered this map – I picked up a compass in November (along with some circle templates) and this was the result of me doodling with its help a few days later while at a long and boring meeting.

The Seer's Font is a temple cut under the roots of a massive tree. The central circular chambers are walled in ancient roots and a pair of small fountains are on the upper level of this central chamber. The true seer's font however is in a smaller chamber just off the side of the great room and down a small flight of stairs. The seer is an ancient man, now seemingly more tree than human, who stares

into the font for weeks and months at a time, occasionally murmuring prophecies and observations of the world around him.

Over time, an institution has grown up around the ancient seer – a small obsequious army of tree-hugging troglodytes that the seer seems to be fortunate enough to not notice the incredible stink of. These dark green troglodytes speak among themselves in dwarven, and occasionally break into common when discussing the words of the seer or when dealing with petitioners to the font. They are generally non-hostile, but encourage significant "donations" to the font and seer (as administered by the trogs) in order to spend any amount of time in the company of the seer.

the Great Map Mash-Up

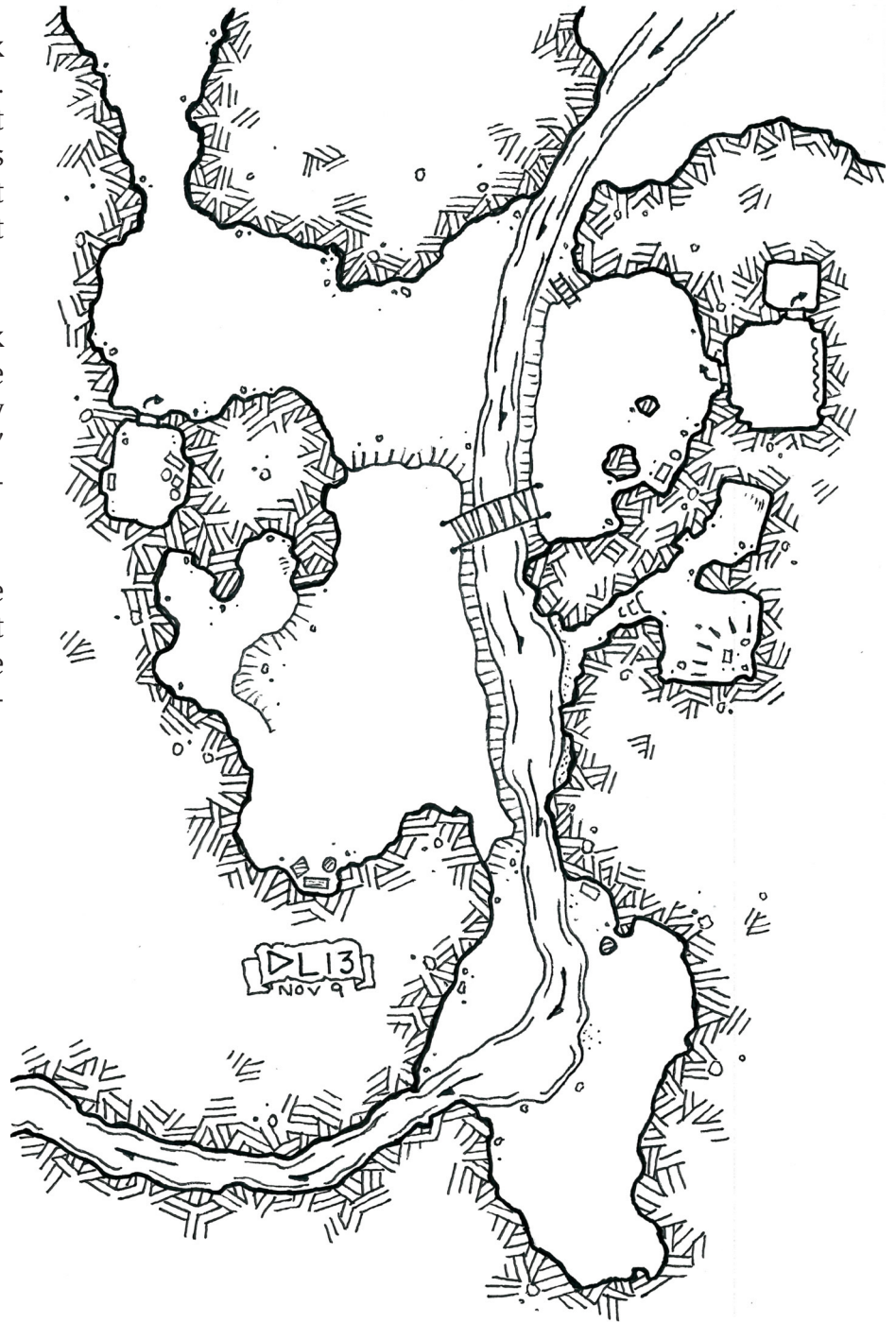


Kin's River Cave

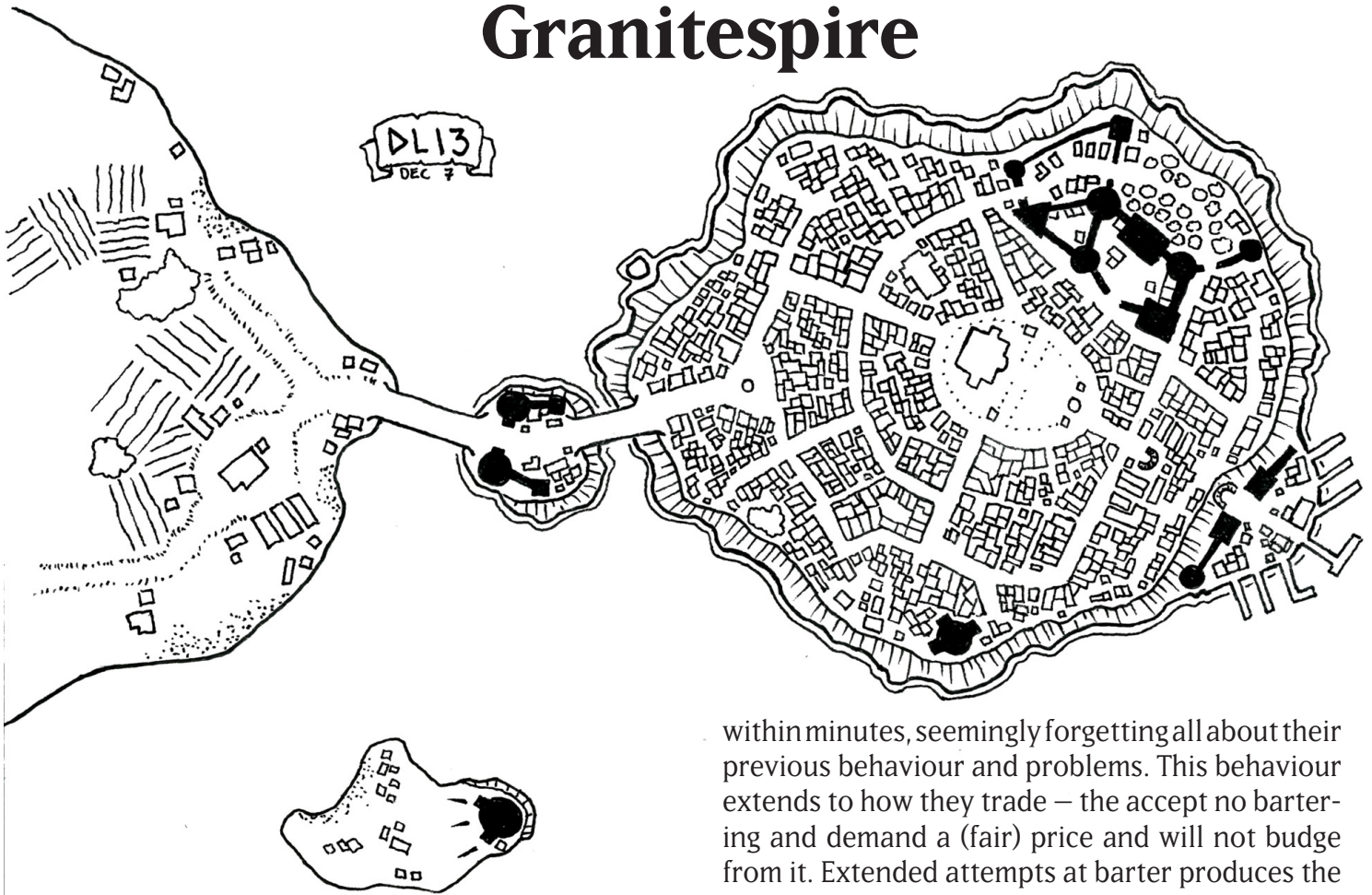
This paragraph is where I talk about what this map is about. Sometimes when I'm putting a post like this together this paragraph is just a simple little text block that says "stuff" until I figure out what to write.

This paragraph is where I talk about how I drew this map. Like the paragraph above, it is initially represented as the word "stuff" until I replace it with relevant information.

And this is the paragraph where I tell you that this map wouldn't be possible without the awesome support of the patrons of my Patreon campaign.



Granitespire



GraniteSpire is a coastal city west of the Hill Islands, and a regular point of trade for ships heading to and from the Hill Islands. The entire city is built up on a granite plateau that lurches sixty to eighty feet out of the sea. There are two ways to access the spire – there is a lowland port on the east coast of the spire with a tunnel that leads up onto the plateau, and there are a pair of bridges from the mainland that lead in turn to the “Stepping Fort” and then to the spire proper.

Slightly to the south of the Stepping Fort island is another sloped island with a fortified presence that houses the main fishing depots of the city.

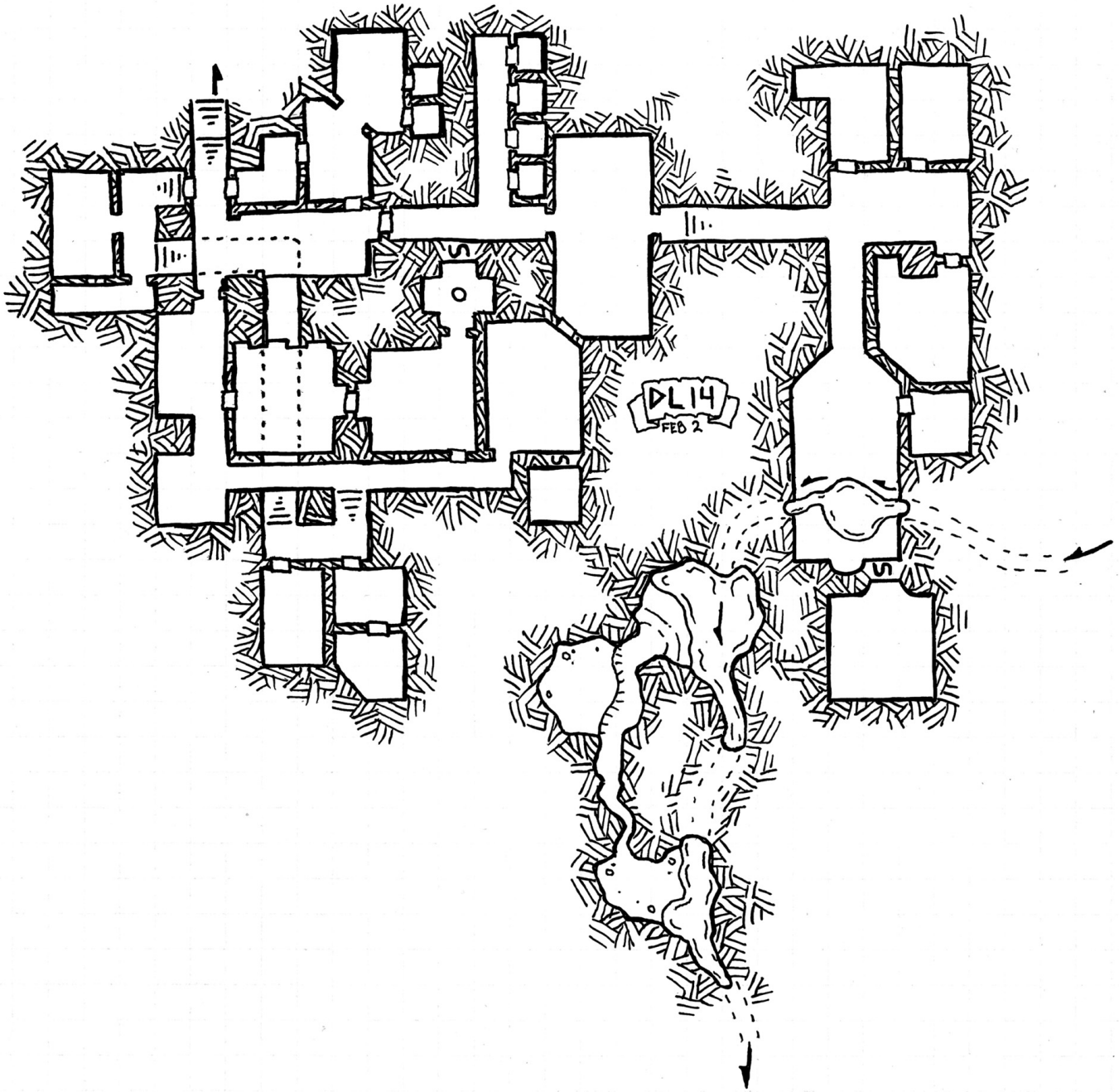
Strange masked monkeys make up a significant part of the merchant class of GraniteSpire where they have worked together to corner the market on cloth and silver goods in the region. While significantly more intelligent than a typical monkey (approaching human average on some occasions), they remain at heart monkeys. They enforce their trade dominance through swarmings, gang theft and beatings, and then return to business as usual

within minutes, seemingly forgetting all about their previous behaviour and problems. This behaviour extends to how they trade – they accept no bartering and demand a (fair) price and will not budge from it. Extended attempts at barter produces the same loud, offensive behaviour as attempting to compete with them (and occasional flung feces).

Able to understand common but not speak it, they communicate mostly through simple signs and screams. They take great pride in wearing their masks, using them to show that they are better than their unmasked wild kin. However, since they don't work in ceramics or wood (and don't work in silver either – they have a monopoly on the trade, not the actual crafting), these masks are often abused and verge on being horrifying masquerades of human faces and dolls.

Monkeys who lose their masks are exiled from the merchant class and will be chased off and even beaten by the masked mob should they return without a mask. Others have had their masks removed and destroyed by their kin and will not be welcomed back even if they were to acquire a new one (most do eventually find a new mask anyways, because they are deeply uncomfortable interacting without one). These monkeys often become thieves, pickpockets and rogues in the undercity.

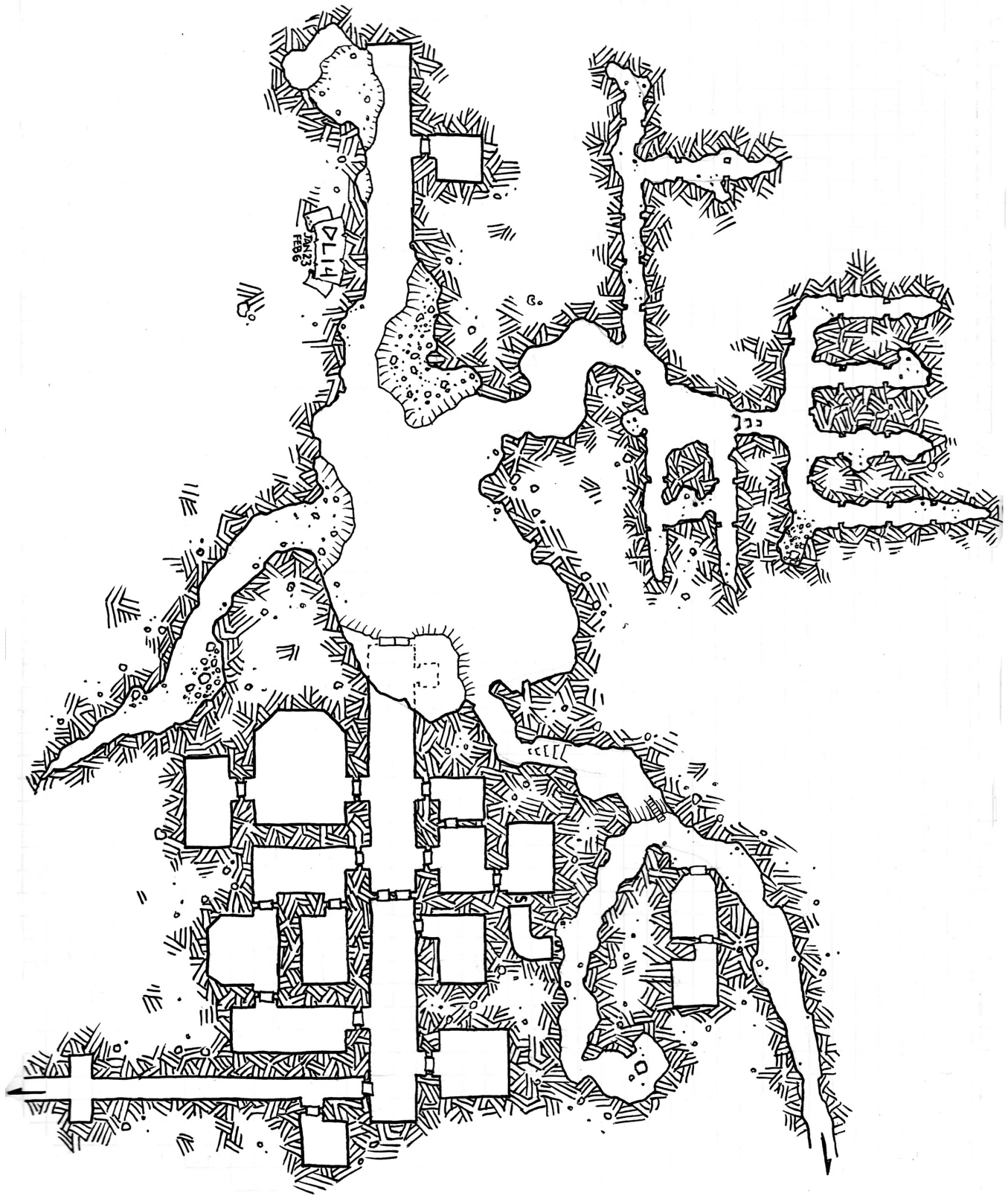
Subha's Fountain



Subha is a mighty warlord of the Satrapy who has carved out his own subdomain in the mountains that form the southern border against the Empire. The Satrap encourages Subha's ambitions because Subha's domain acts as a further defensive boundary between his lands and the aggressive expansion of the Empire.

There is a secret to Subha's domain however, a magical pool beneath Subha's tower. While the existence of the pool is not general knowledge, word has spread that Subha brings those most loyal to him to a "fountain" hidden somewhere in his domain. The rumoured magical powers of the fountain include longevity, protection from wounds in battle, bravery, and healing (depending on who you are talking to at the time).

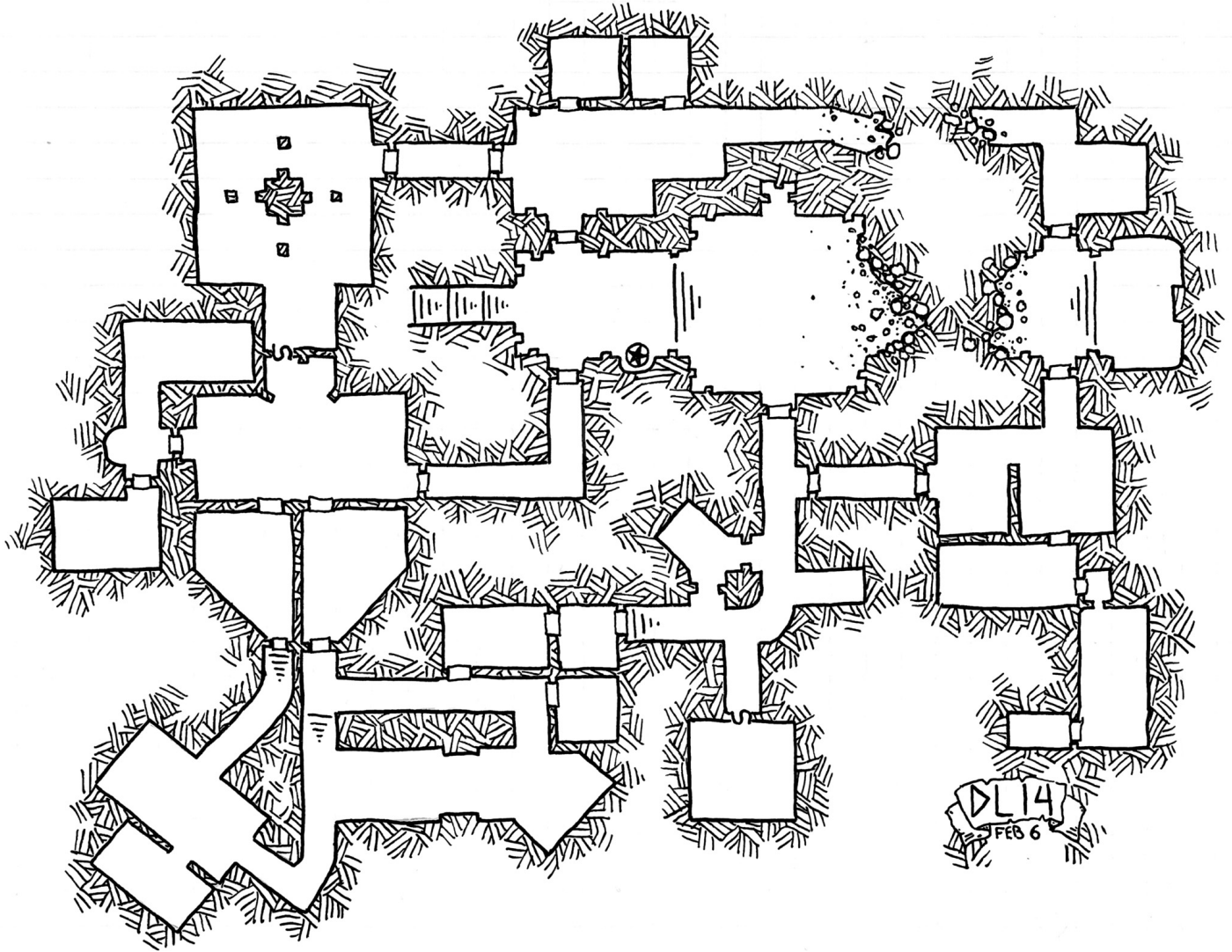
Dwarven Mines of Kuln



Normally mines are far more extensive than these, but the majority of these mines were converted into more typical dwarven structures, leaving only the unobtainium mines on the northwest face of a large underground cave.

These mines are meant to be linked to another dwarven stronghold, perhaps part of the fallen dwarven fortress of Kuln (as hinted at in the Challenge of the Frog Idol).

Deep Scarlet Halls



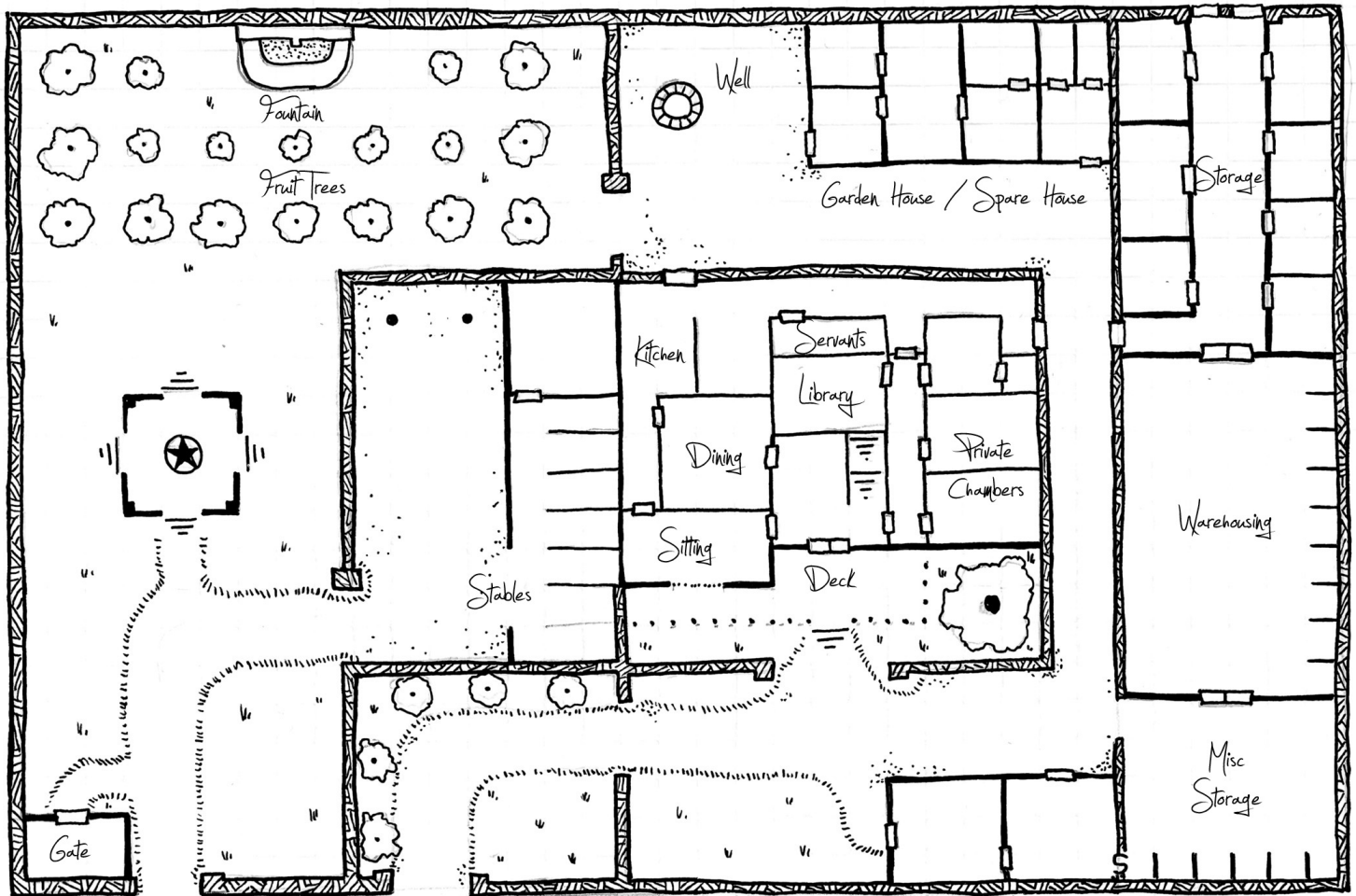
Under the ruins of the Monastery of To were the infamous Scarlet Halls. The hobgoblin monastery was badly damaged in an earthquake and the subjugated locals saw the opportunity to rise against the hobgoblins and strike while the walls were damaged and many of the hobogoblins were travelling to acquire the stone and masons required to repair the structure.

By the time of the hobgoblins' return, the monastery was but burning ruins and the rebellion had gained enough following that they could find no safe place for them in the region and retreated back into the hills.

Under the charred and pulled down ruins of the Monastery are a set of stairs that lead down to the scarlet halls where dark rituals of the hobgoblin monks were held, as well as their prisoners (who occasionally also doubled as food supply). The main temple hall was shattered in the same earthquake that helped pull down the walls above, but much of the rest of the halls remain in fine shape, barely assaulted by the peasant rebellion.

And of course, where there are religious ruins,
there must be treasure...

The Crawford Estate

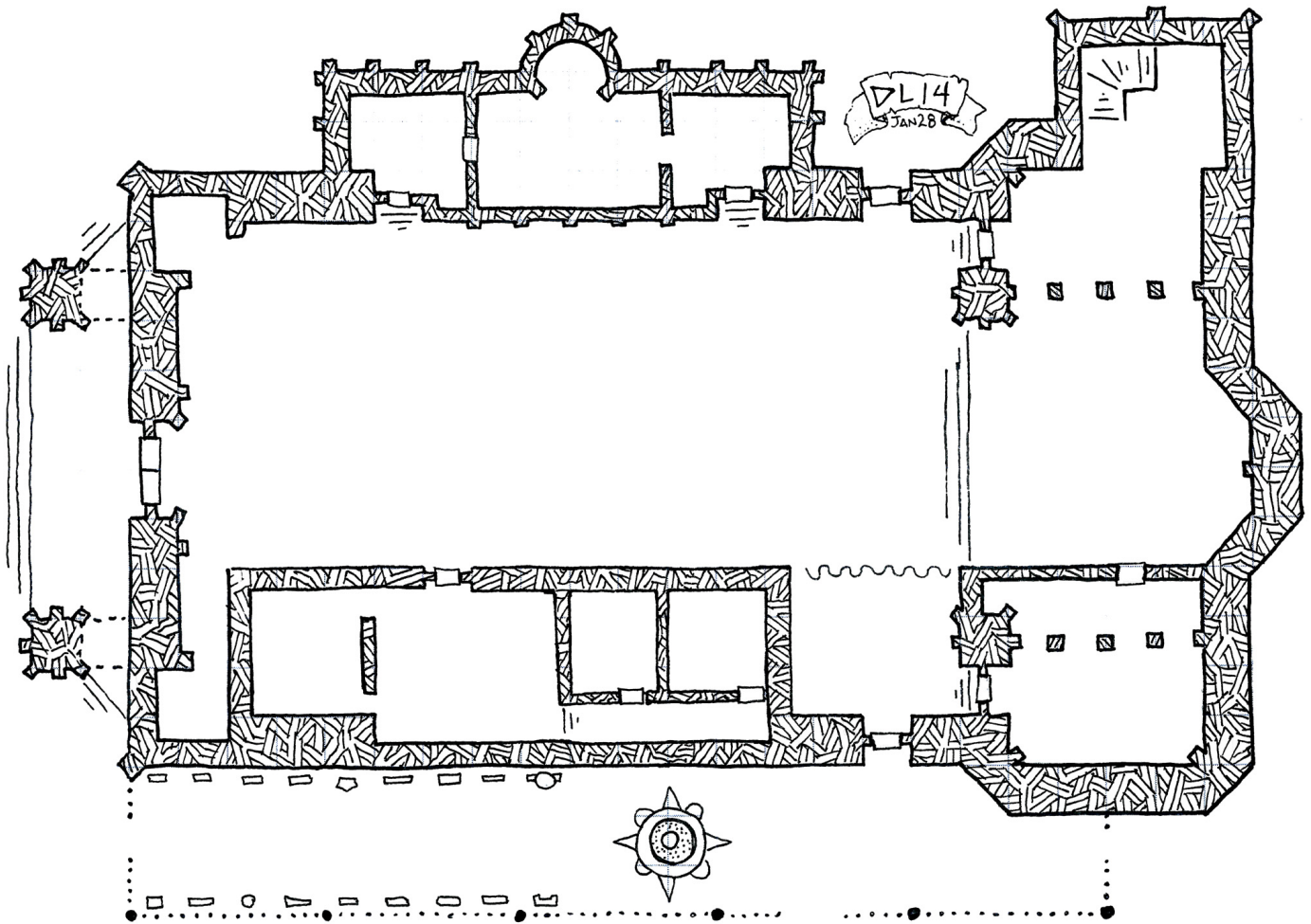


The walled Crawford Estate is nestled in Uphill, a well-to-do neighbourhood of Granitespire.

Because of the lack of land in the city even in the richer areas, most estates are walled with other buildings typically abutting on two or more walls of the structure. The Crawford Estate is built around a moderately large house with attached stable, and contains warehousing and storage buildings, fruit trees, a fountain, and a small stone shrine containing an exceptional statue of the deity of storms.

There are three means of entry (besides climbing the outer wall) - one gate leads to the stables and gardens, the other to the front door of the house. The back entrance (for deliveries) leads directly into the storage shed and is occasionally used by the residents when they need to slip out as if they were servants instead of nobles.

Temple of the White Flame

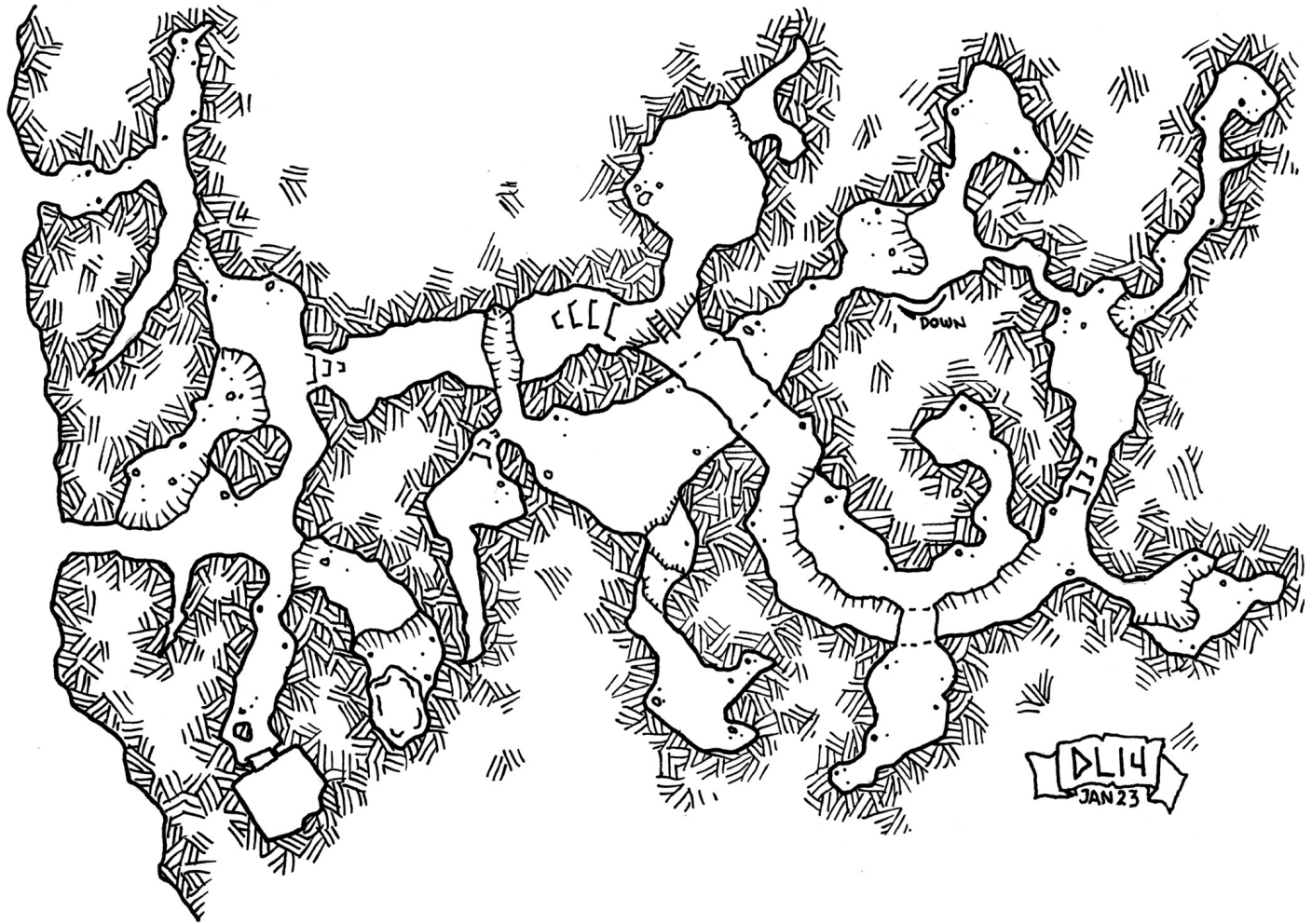


This massive stone church is best known for the chapel on the north side that contains an ever-burning white flame that produces little heat and seems to only singe most things placed in contact with it except undead and those tainted by necromantic magics.

Like most temples, it serves both as a place of worship and as the organizational centre for the cult in question. Senior staff of the church work out of the chambers on the south side of the structure, with the high priestess in the chamber immediately south of the raised pulpit and altar area.

The understructures of the temple were originally dug out to serve as crypts, but as the church grew they were instead turned into dormitories for young members of the clergy as well as congregants and pilgrims who require a place to stay or solitude to truly understand the wonders of the faith.

Hessel's Caves



A set of natural limestone caves that drip with moisture, Hessel's Caves are near enough to town that they have been used on occasion by locals while out hunting or as cold storage for food or contraband. Near the lower of the two entrances is a small chamber that was enlarged from a relatively dry section of the caves and upgraded with a sturdy door and lock.

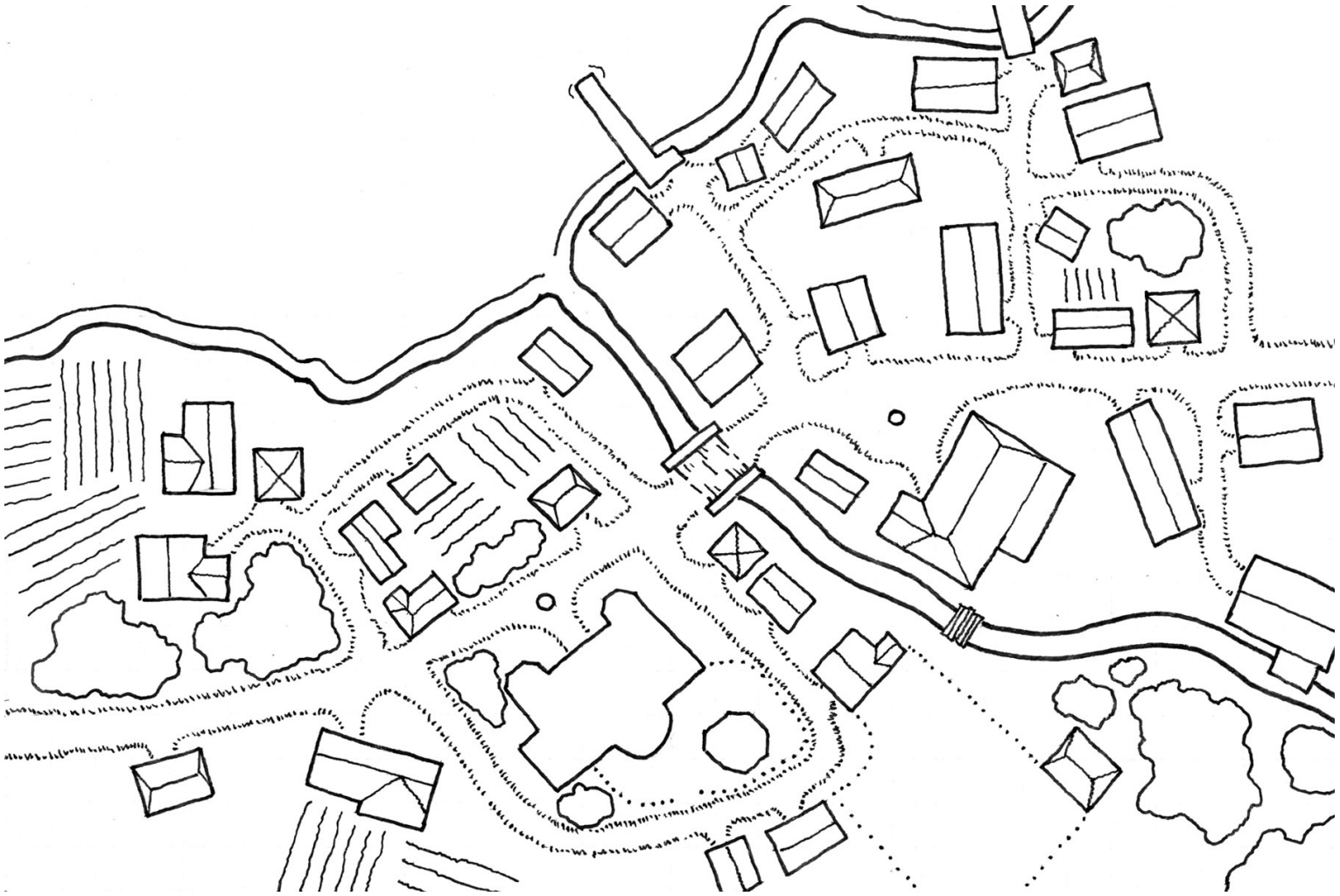
But even those who have used the caves generally don't go much further in than this.

A pair of sheer drops immediately beyond the chamber lead to a pool of clear water and somewhere much deeper into the caves a ladder still links an upper gallery to the main caverns.

Exploring deep into these caves requires a fair amount of preparation (and preferably a map from one of the locals who may have explored them a bit as a child).

And of course, exploring them is necessary, because the son of the innkeeper is missing, and the blood trail leads deeper...

Upper Bellem Village



Down the hills from the ruined Monastery of To is Upper Bellem, a small town of slightly over two dozen households centred around the Bellem Inn and Greathouse.

The only stone structure in town, the greathouse is home to the "mayor" of the town and serves as a rest point along the Bellem Trail for merchants and pilgrims alike. The presence of the stone greathouse and nearby water mill has encouraged the growth of the town which now also boasts one of the best small watercraft clinkers in the region.

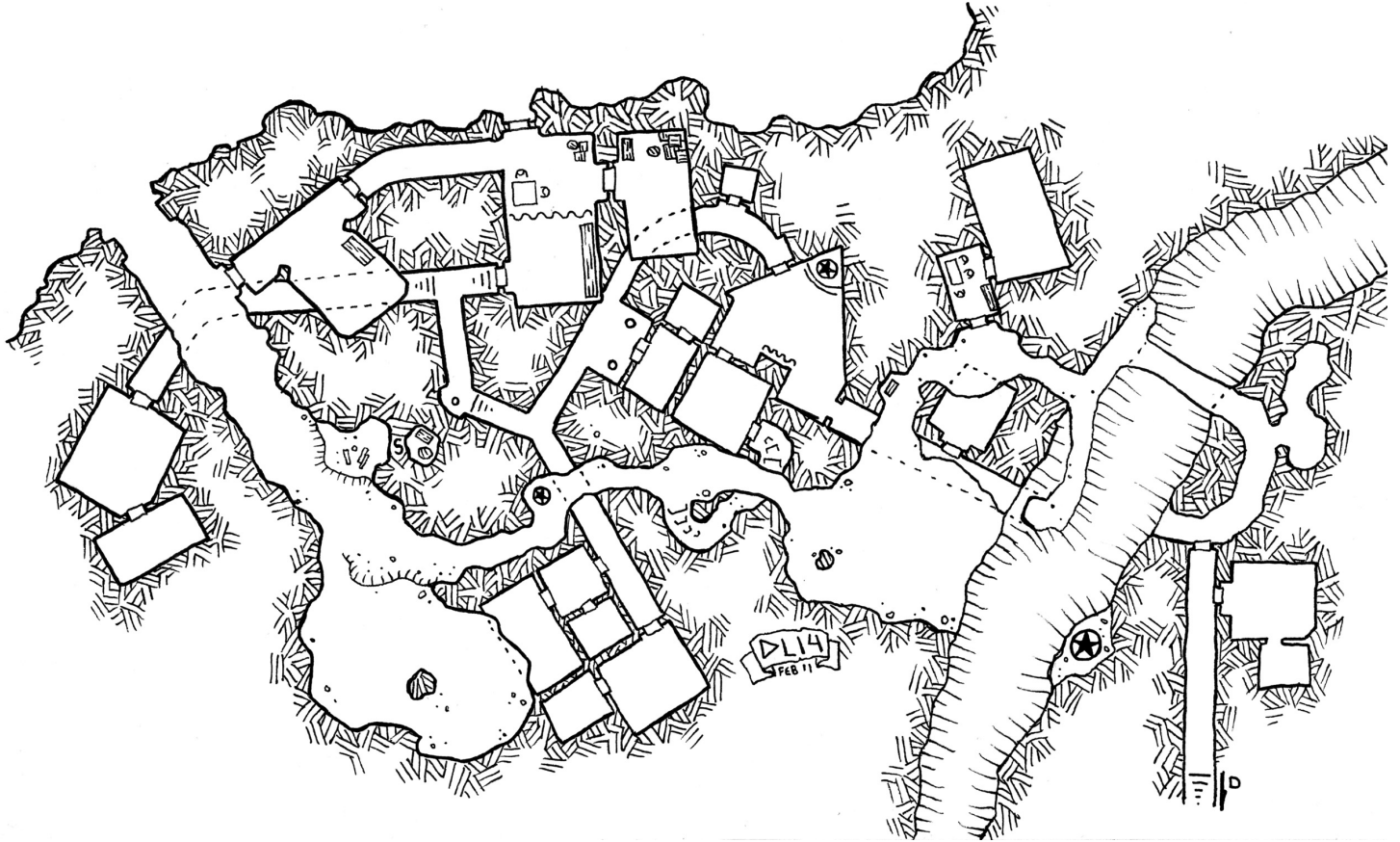
Ruins of Baybeach



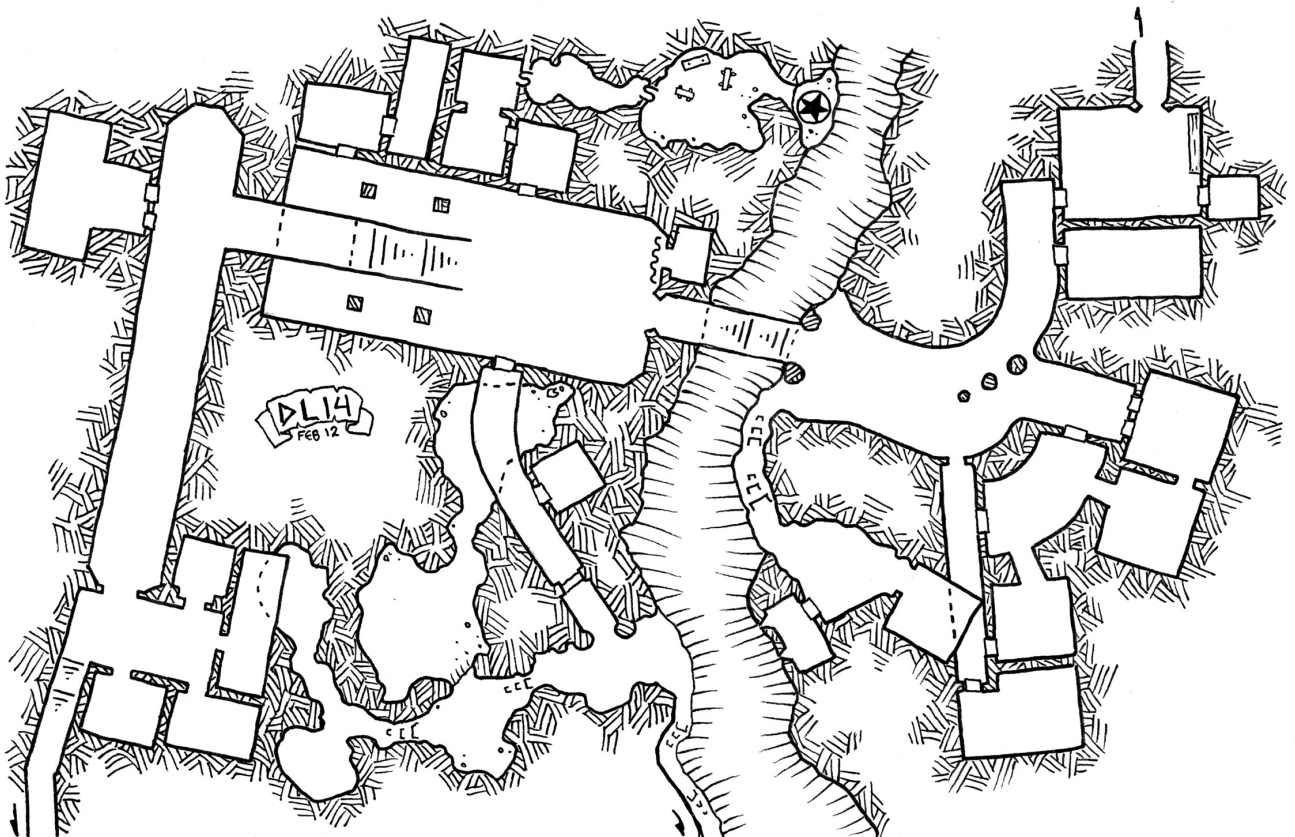
Something happened to the town of Baybeach. Only a few of the houses remain standing, accented by dead and leafless trees, all standing about the dark stone mass of the town church.

Even those houses that still have steady and solid walls have had their roofs partially collapsed or burned away...

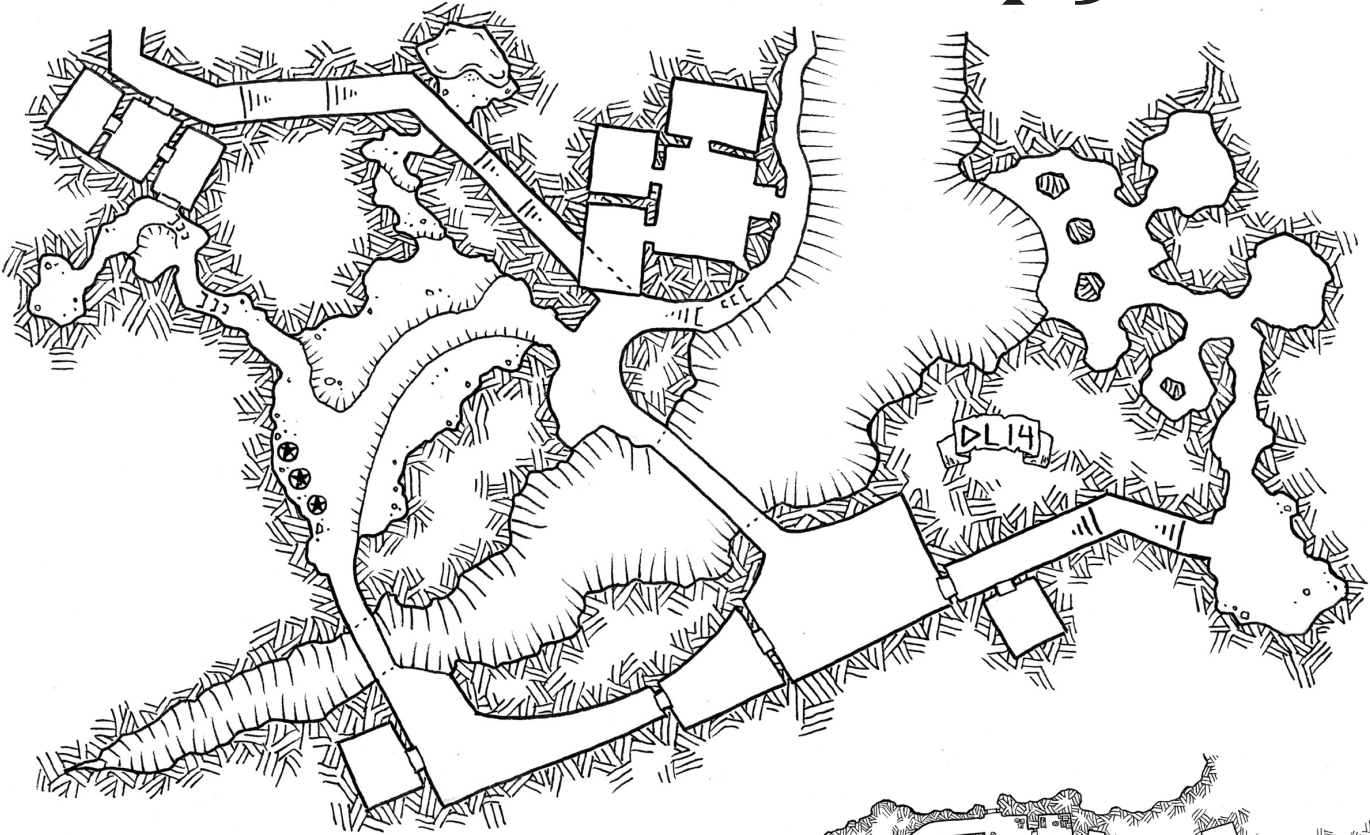
Torn Mountain Map 1



Torn Mountain Map 2



Torn Mountain Map 3

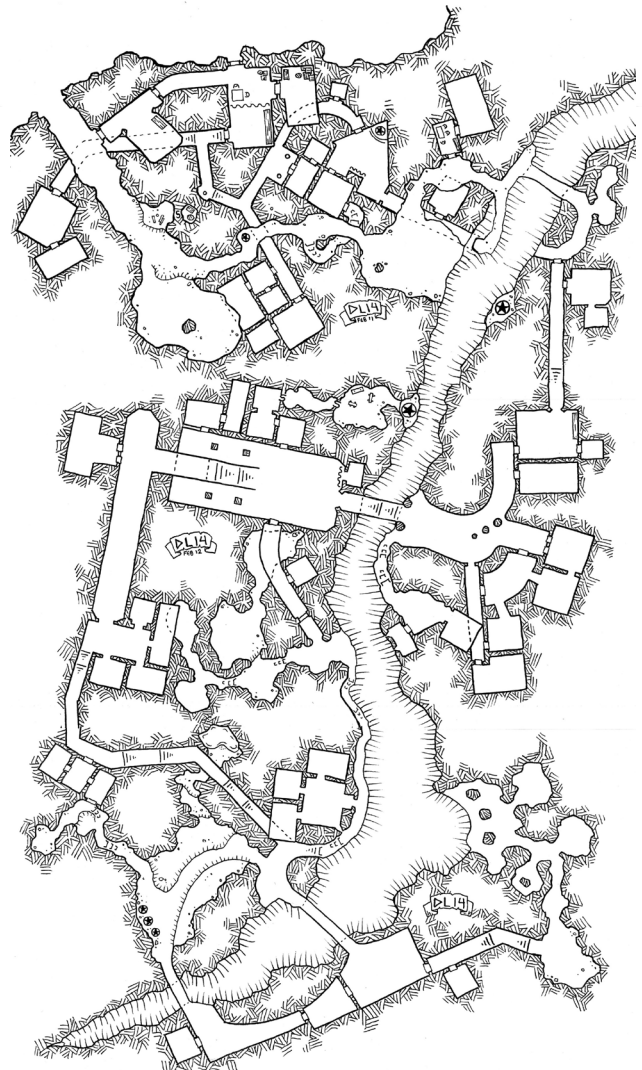


Known as Waynnor Mountain (on the western edge of the Kingdom of Garebeth) to the elves and humans in the region, it is known to the dwarves and orcs of the region as the Torn Mountain because of the massive chasm that seems to have been torn into the very roots of the stone.

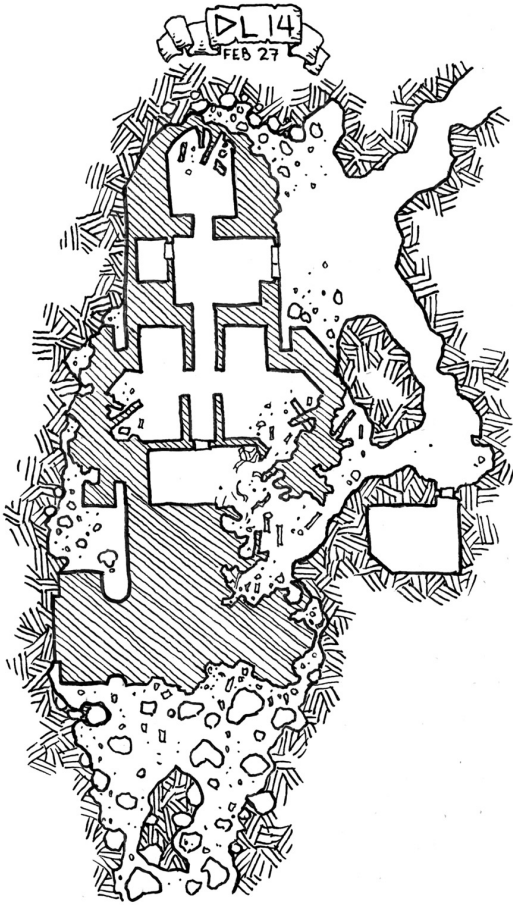
In the dialect of the local dwarves, however, it is Shebole (pronounced shih-BOH-lay somewhat like chipotle)

Shebole has been sealed to outsiders for over three hundred years, the dwarves within silent and presumed by most to have died, been devoured by some fell beast, or perhaps still mining deeper into the mountain in determined stoic silence.

Two days ago the grand iron doors to the main entrance were thrown wide by great magics and now lie twisted on the ground before the mountain. It's said a wizard and two companions came through town last week heading towards the Torn Mountain. Evidently they found their way inside - now's the chance to follow them and perhaps find some of the treasures and machinery of the dwarves hidden within the mountain - before other treasure hunters beat you to the loot!



The Mithril Temple



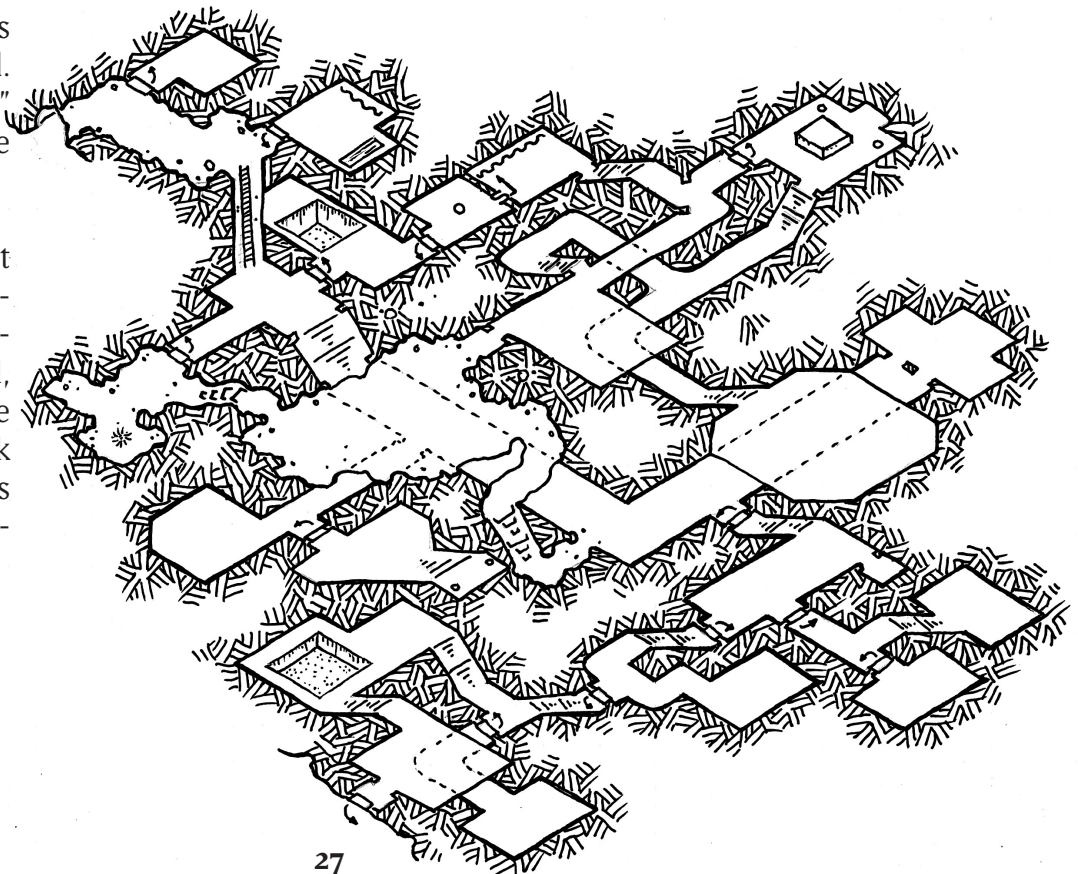
Roughly 20 miles northeast of the Resplendent Roadside Inn are a few hills that seem out of place – their forms almost shattered as if they had been lifted from the ground, crushed, and then dropped back into place. Beyond the northernmost of these shattered hills is a small hole in the hillside that leads down about thirty feet to a formidably sealed door marked with glyphs or warding and warning in the dwarven tongue.

Beyond that door is the Mithril Temple – a small cave where one entire wall is made up of that strange metal, worked and refined. Further back in the cave is a small room housing the priest-care-taker of the temple, forever protecting the temple from the predations of those seeking the precious metal. In this task he is aided by truly mighty powers – with but a prayer the temple seems to defend itself with blasts of energy and lightning that strikes down those who intrude.

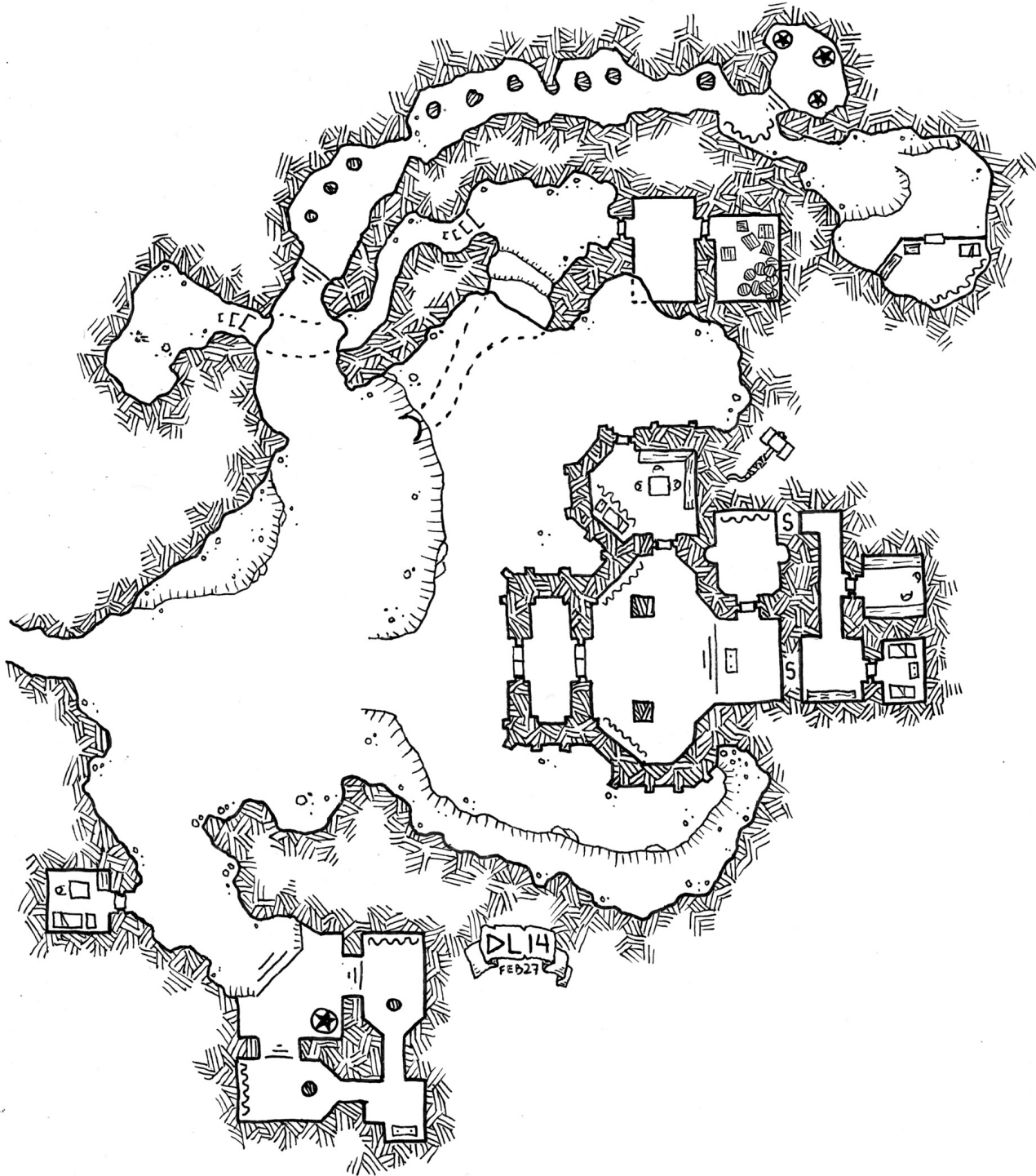
Isometric Dungeon Experiment #4

Sometimes I draw dungeons without a real goal in mind. Other times the goal is “just” to experiment and practice my techniques.

2014 saw some of my first successful forays into isometric maps. This particular dungeon is functional, but a little difficult to parse because of the lack of back walls or other 3D structures other than the floors themselves.



Three Underworld Temples



Somewhere down below a pantheon is worshiped at three distinct and separate temples built around a grand cavern.

Each temple is maintained by a staff of two to six priests and layfolk and they welcome travellers and send them to the appropriate temple for their needs and observances.

At one point this cave must have been alive with the sounds of construction and the lives of the workers who built the two southern temples (the northern temple is to a deity of nature, and has seen very little modification from its initial form). But now it is almost deathly silent - a dark cave where the air smells always faintly of incense.

The Circle of Hands

In early 2014, I received my first major series of commissioned cartographic work. Ron Edwards of Adept Press was kickstarting his Heartbreaker Redemption game, Circle of Hands, and wanted to tap me for my cartographic skills.

In the end I produced seven maps for this game - a wonderfully dark and muddy fantasy RPG set in an iron-age fantasy world called the Crescent Land - a setting specifically not medieval, feudal or chivalric. It is a "mud and dung dark ages game". Many thanks to Ron Edwards for licensing these works back to me for inclusion in this book - these seven maps remain the copyright of Adept Press and are reproduced here with permission.

THE RIVER FORD represents a small encounter area where a river turns back and forth with a pair of fords (although one is only useable by horses and pedestrians).

THE CHURCH IN THE WOODS is an old abandoned church surrounded by new growth forest and brush that has reclaimed the sanctified land.

THE ANVIL FORTRESS is one of my favourite fortress maps - a small partially ruined keep above a mountain pass looking down on travellers.

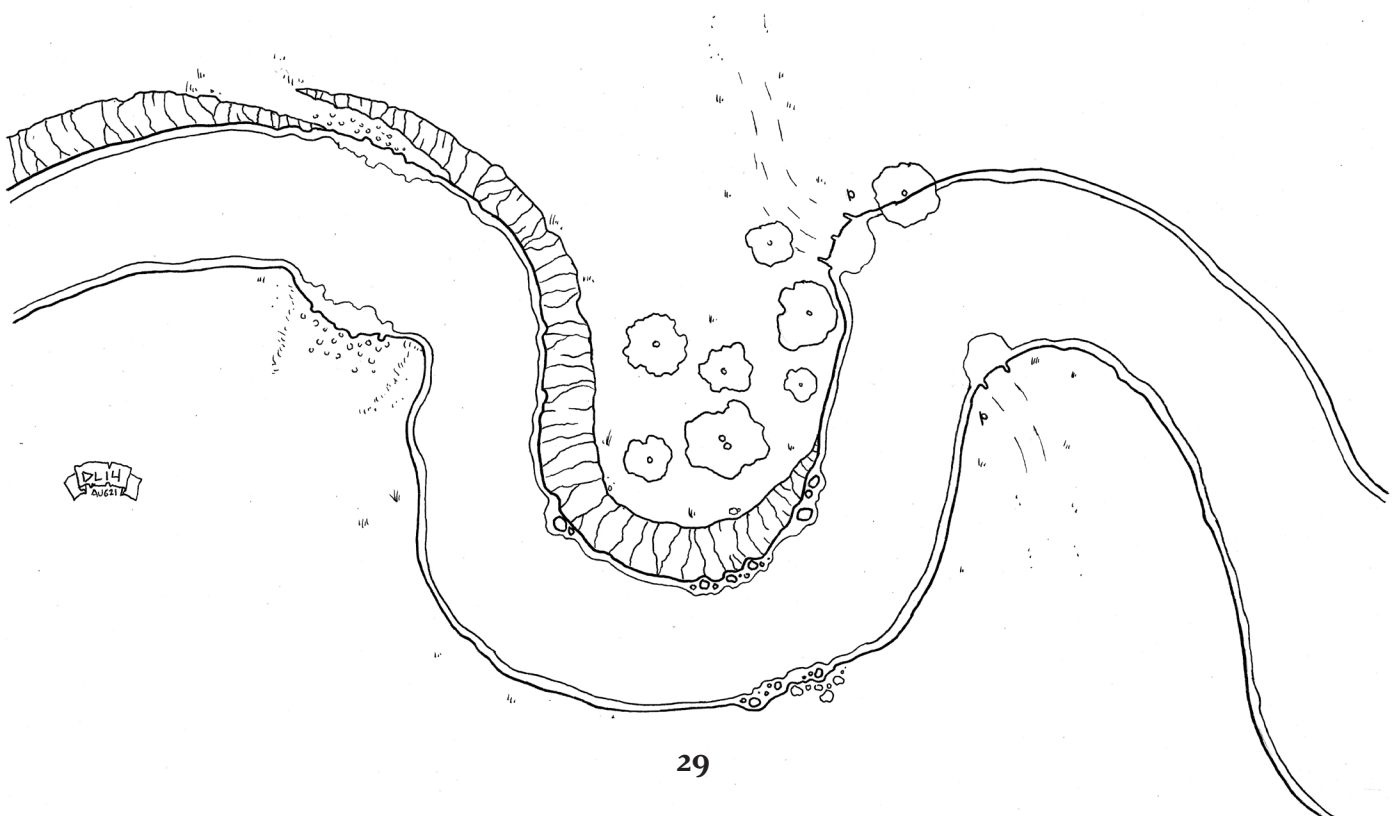
EDWARD'S FORT is a large village and small fort built up on inhospitable ledges and hills along the sea-side. It is quite defensible, but not a place I would like to live.

THE WALLS OF SPUR is a city map with a lot more fortifications than would be typical in the era of the game setting. I've ended up using this map in two of my own campaigns as a classic small D&D city.

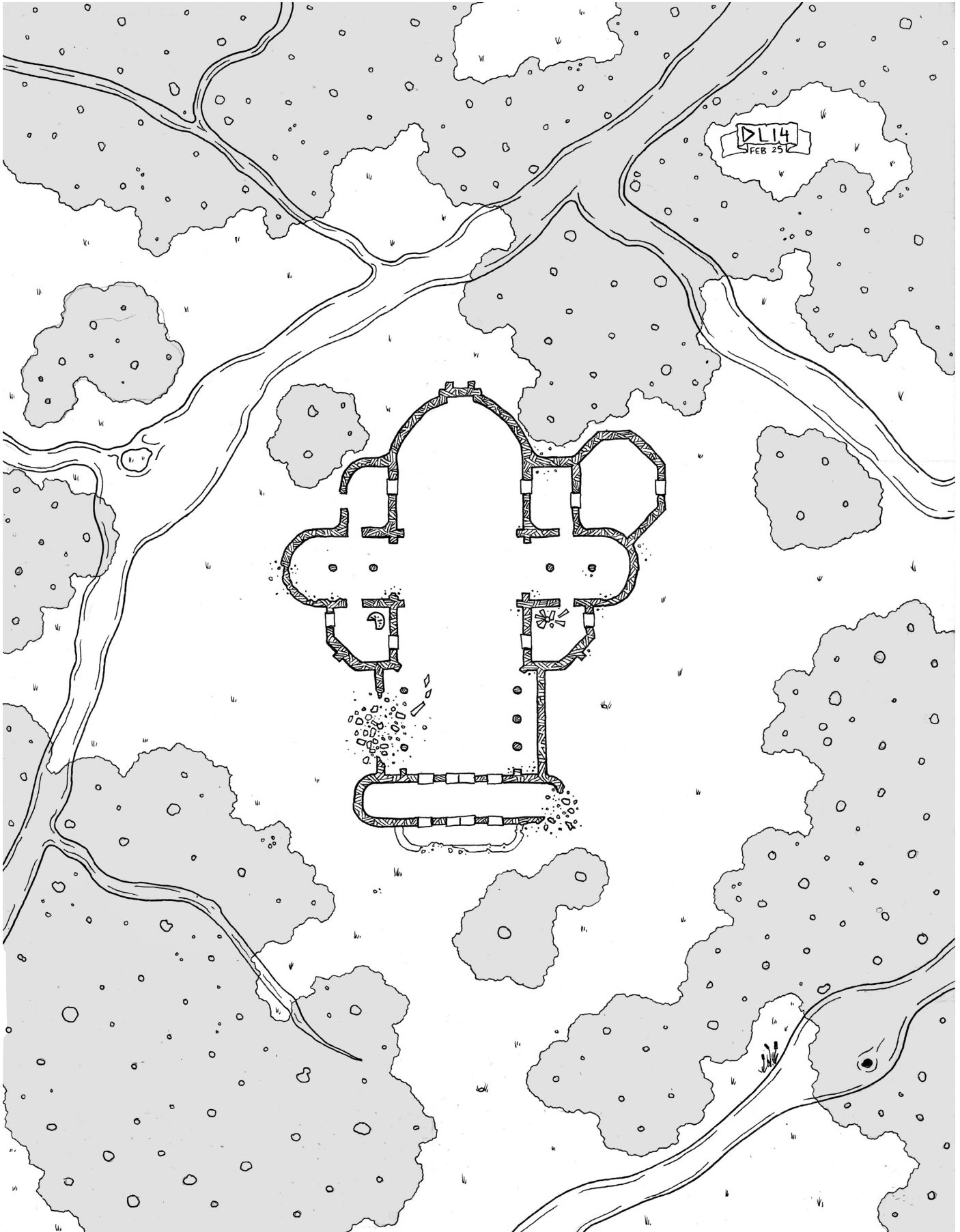
CAULDRON ON THE MOUNTAIN is a pair of mountain lakes fed by springs that progress into a cascade down the side of the heights. A stone structure sits quietly behind the lake, ensconced in the small mountain valley.

THE LICH'S TOWER is a pair of towers embedded into the craggy side of a cliff face with caves and dungeons cut into the cliffs behind.

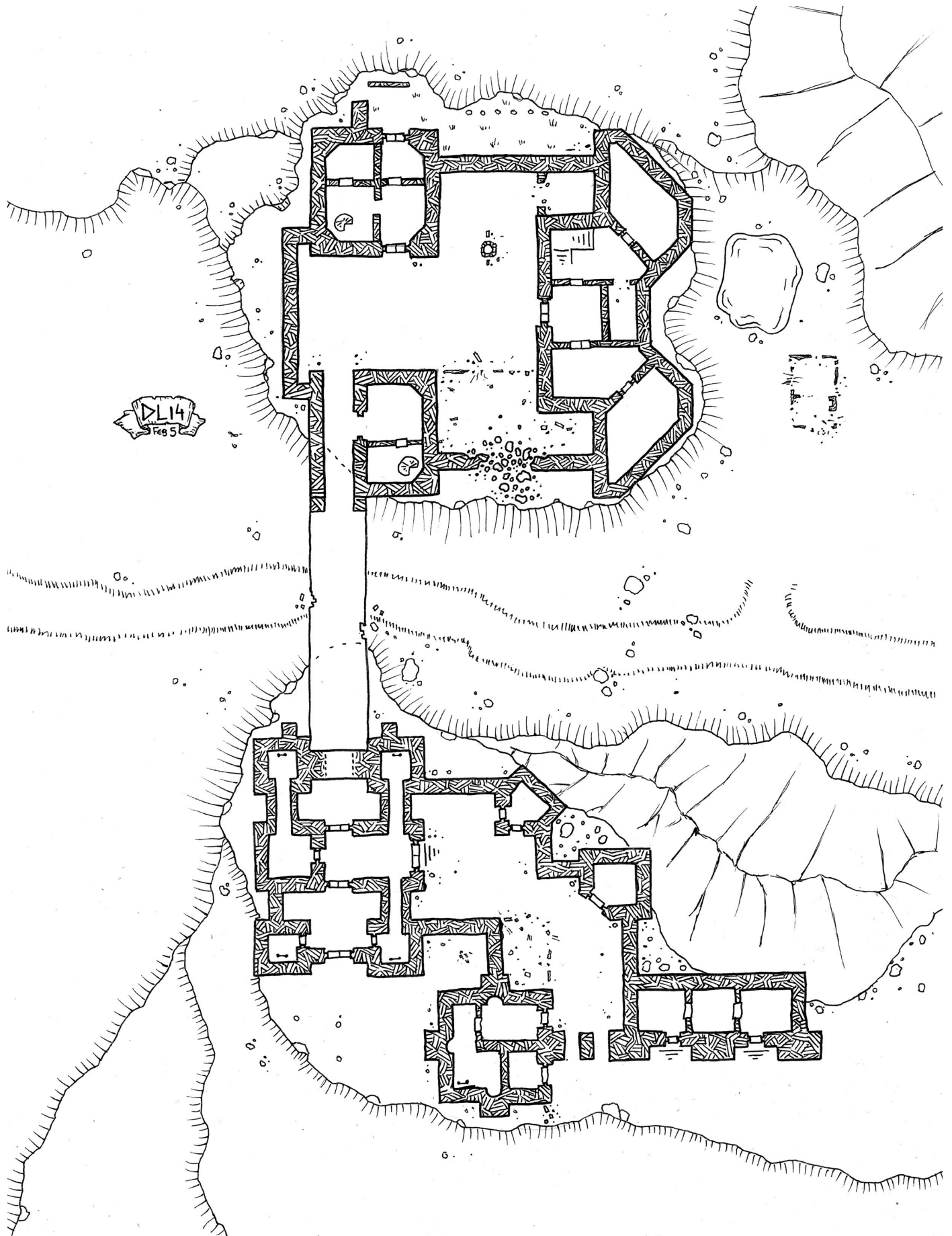
The River Ford



The Church in the Woods



Anvil Fortress



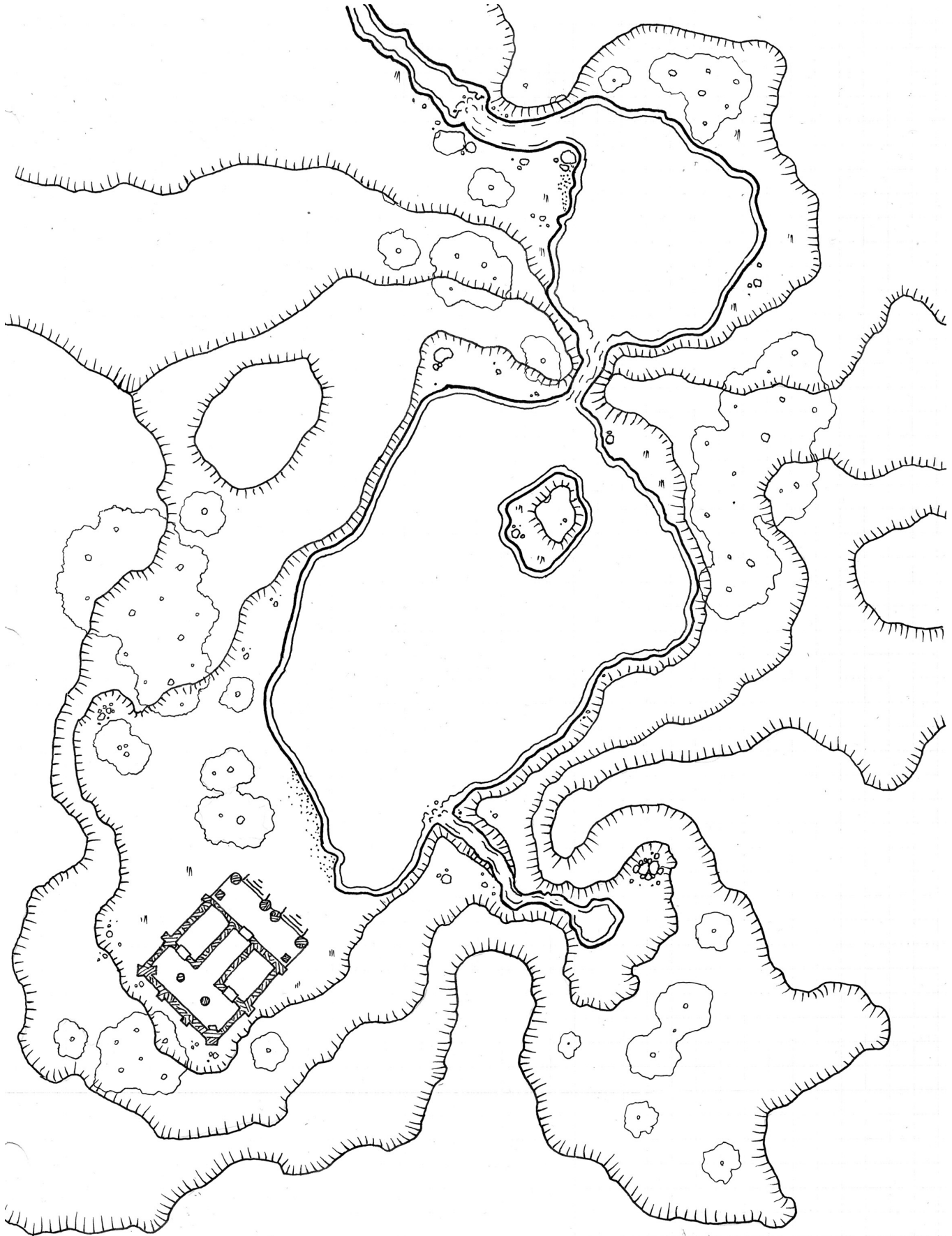
Edwards' Fort & Village



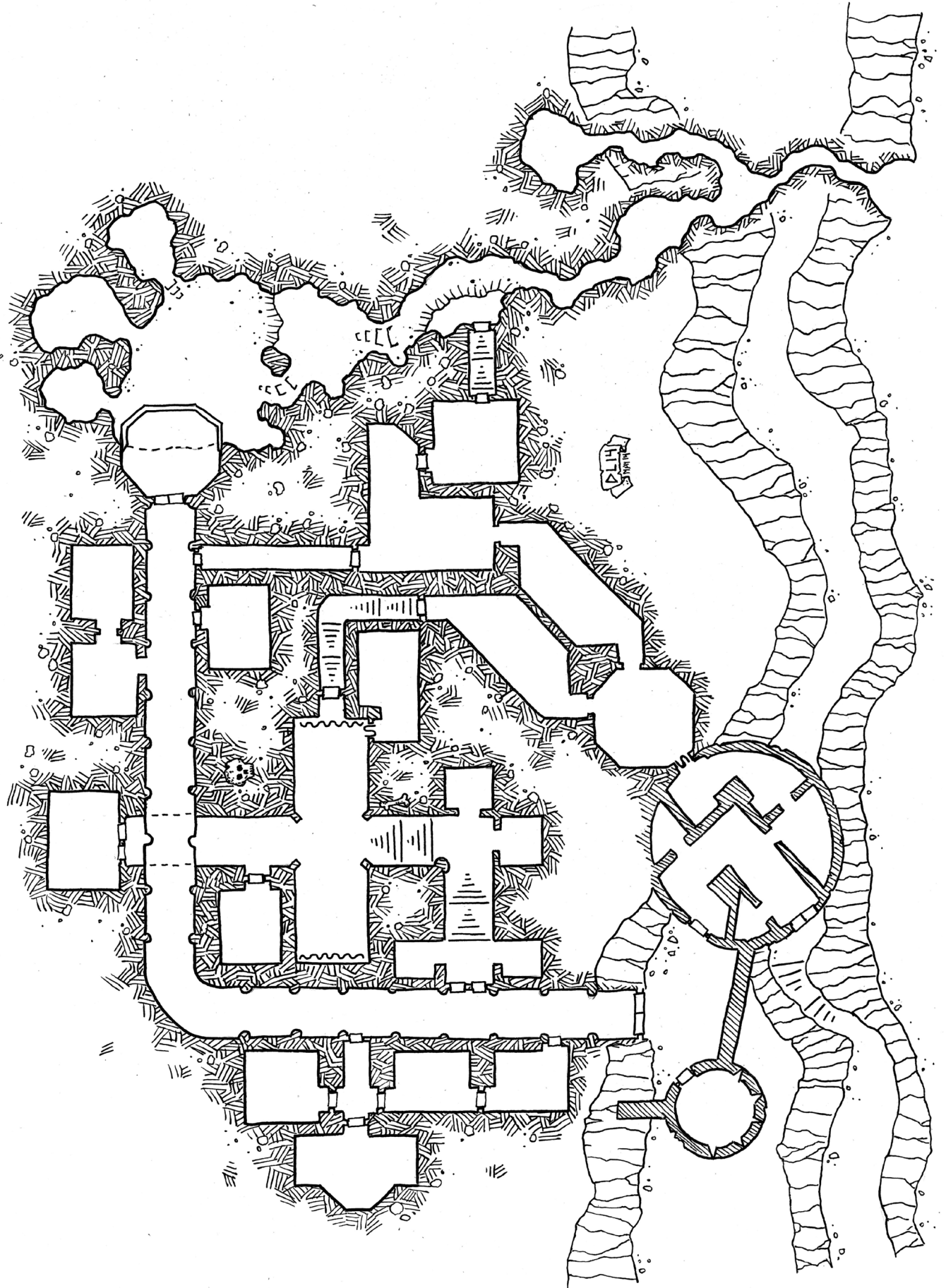
The Walls of Spur



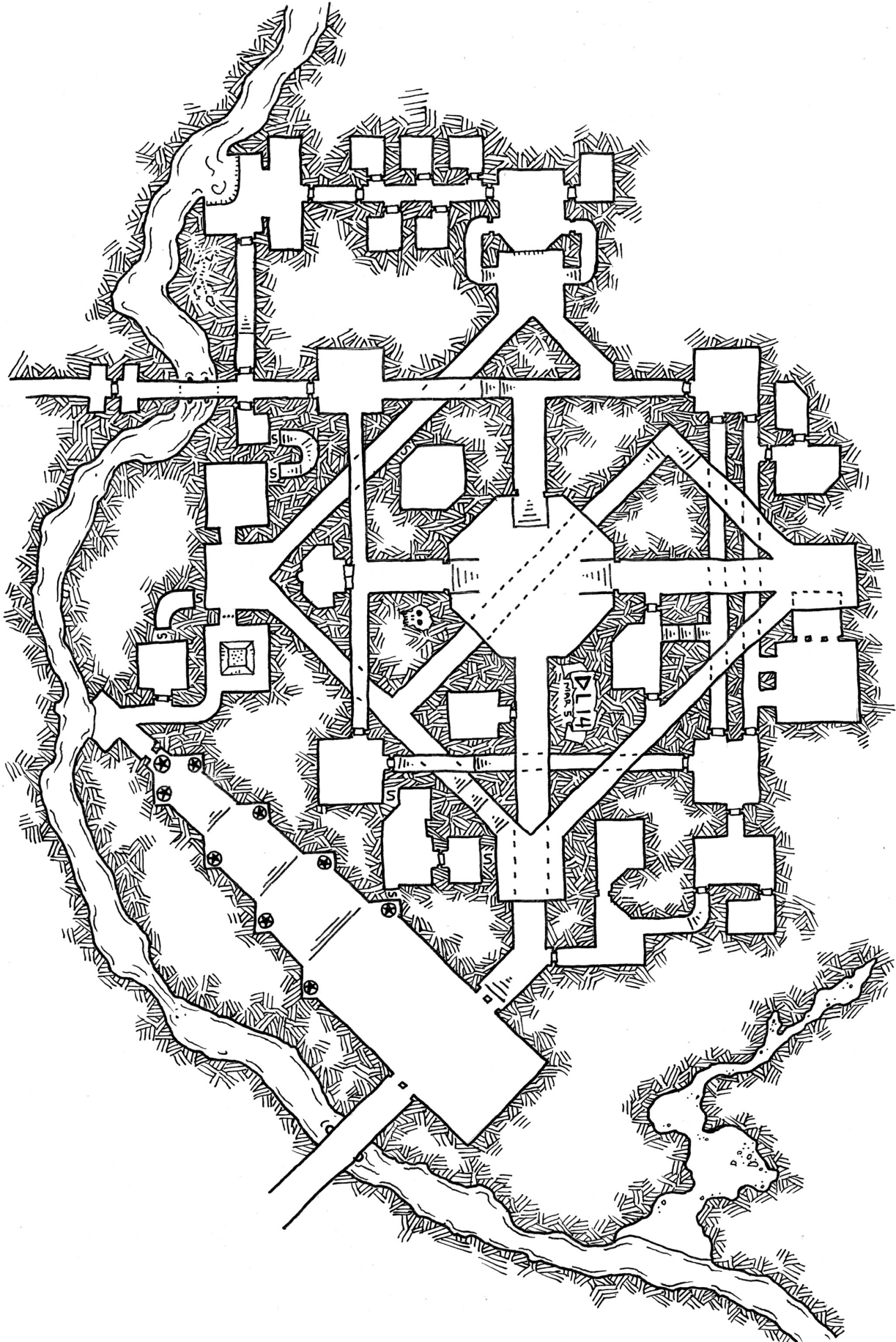
Cauldron on the Mountain



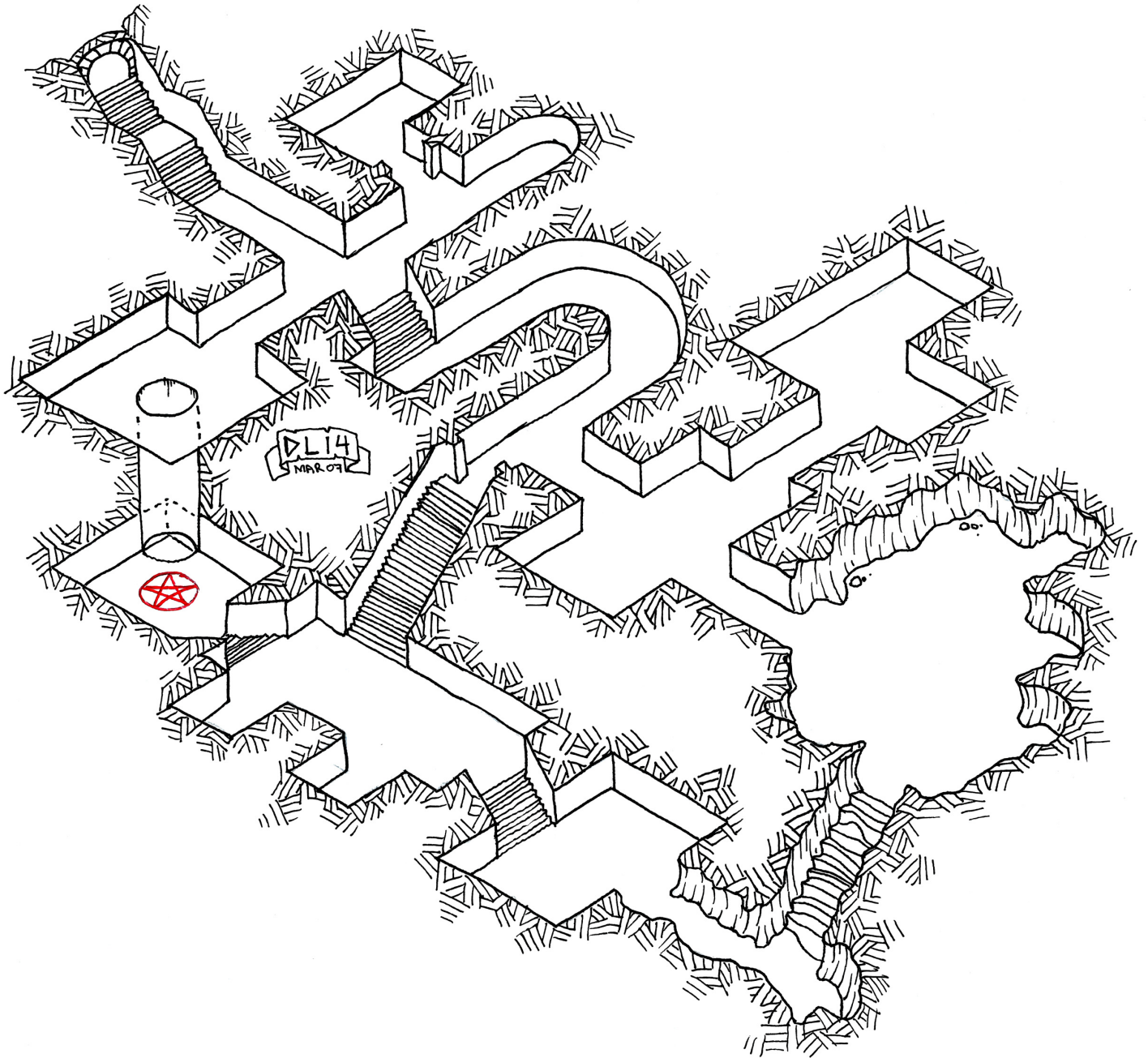
The Lich's Tower & Dungeon



The Granite Shore



Isometric Dungeon #3



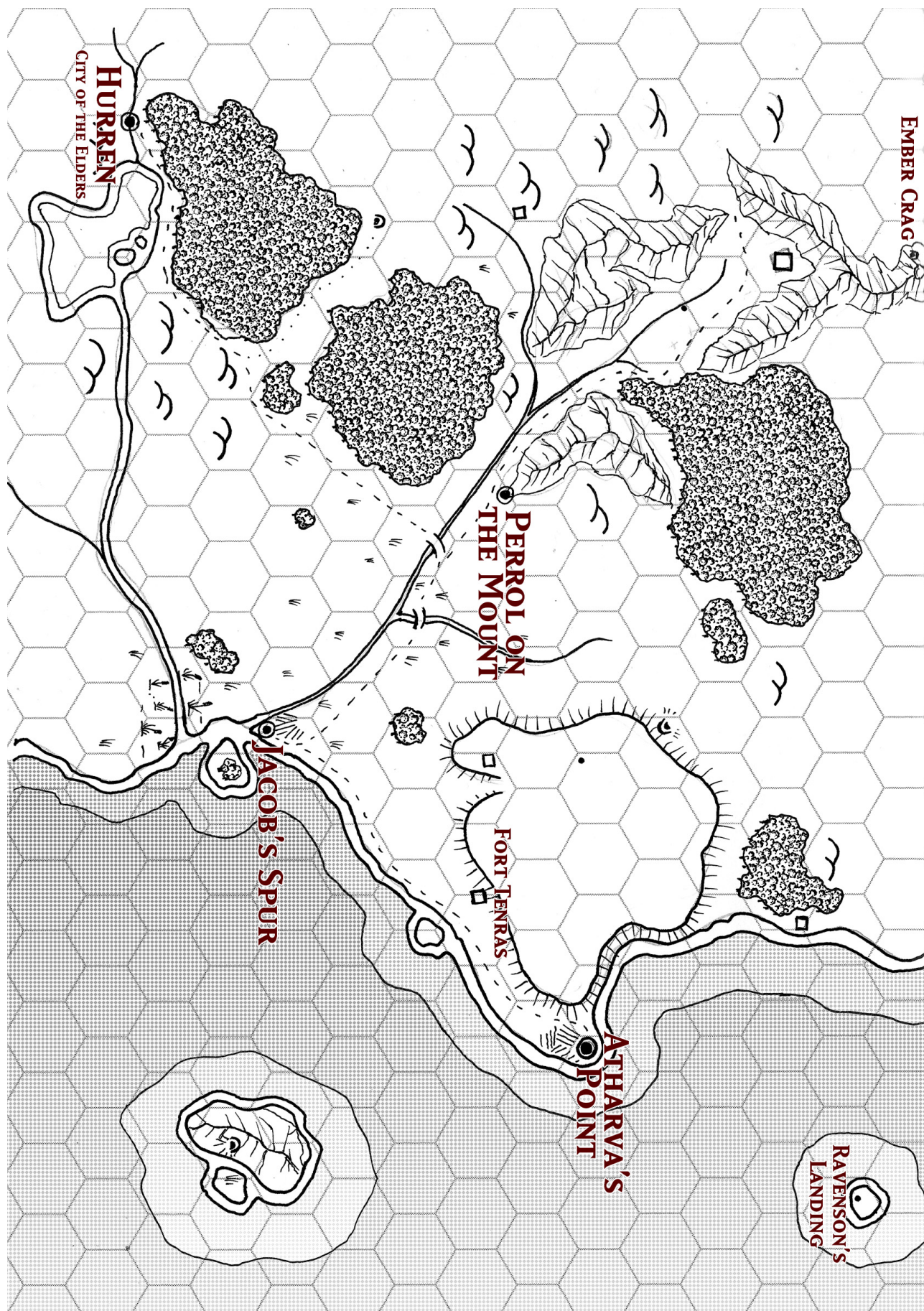
By adding walls to my isometric drawings, they suddenly come to life and it becomes much easier to parse the 3D structures and connections. I consider this map to be my first really successful 3D construction - a style which I continue to work on with various isometric maps appearing on the blog throughout 2015 and beyond.

The standout feature of the dungeon is of course the upper and lower chambers connected by a circular shaft between them - with a pentacle on the floor directly below the shaft. Of course, some-

thing foul will occur should someone plummet to their death down that shaft, spilling their lifeblood within the pentacle.

I like to mix natural caves with finished dungeons, but I find natural caves significantly harder to draw in an isometric environment - mainly because without the straight lines it gets harder to track where elevation changes are happening. In fact, in this map there is a mistake in the stairs in the natural area - they don't go down far enough to actually reach the room they connect to.

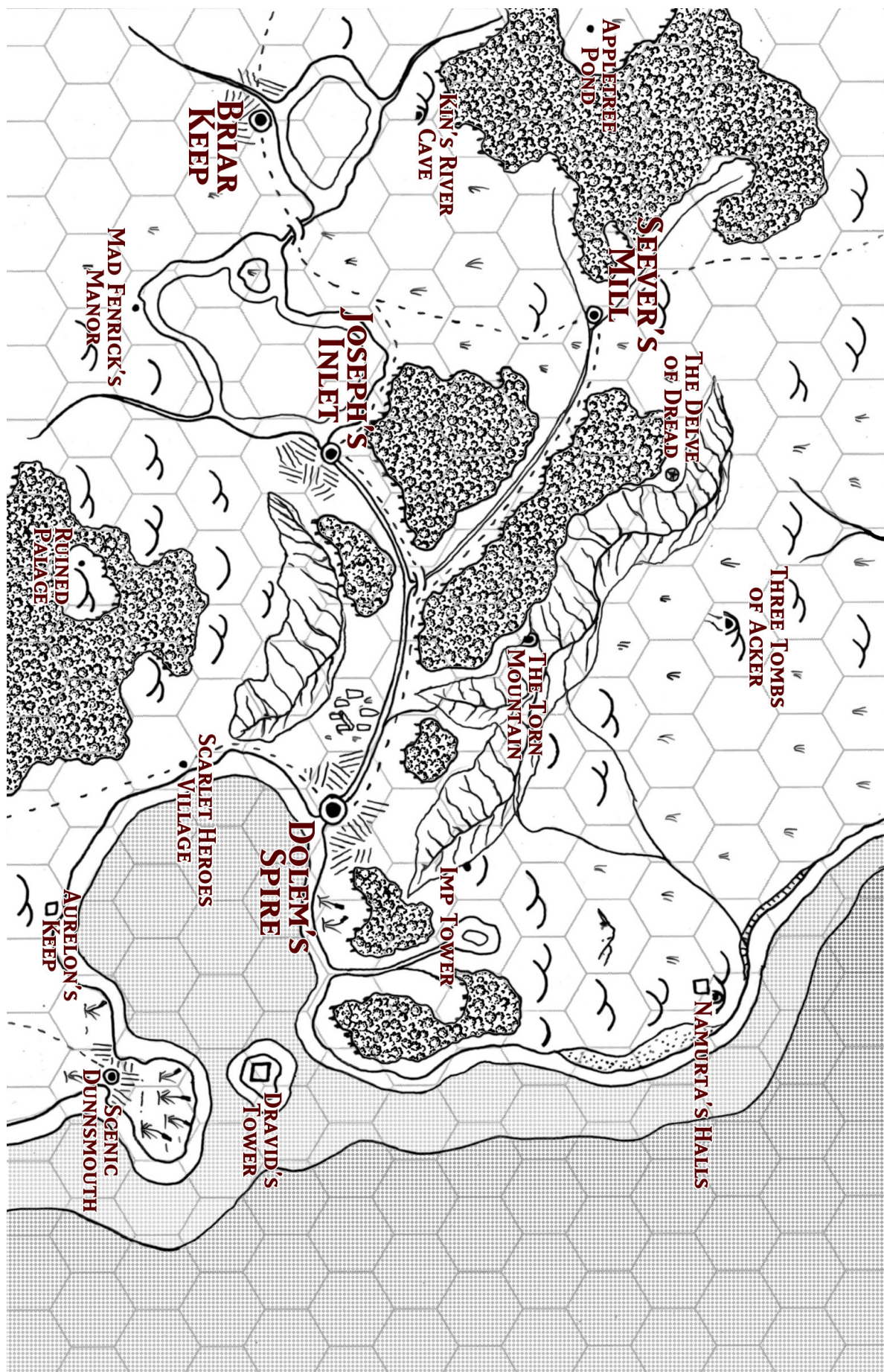
Atharva Plateau Player Map



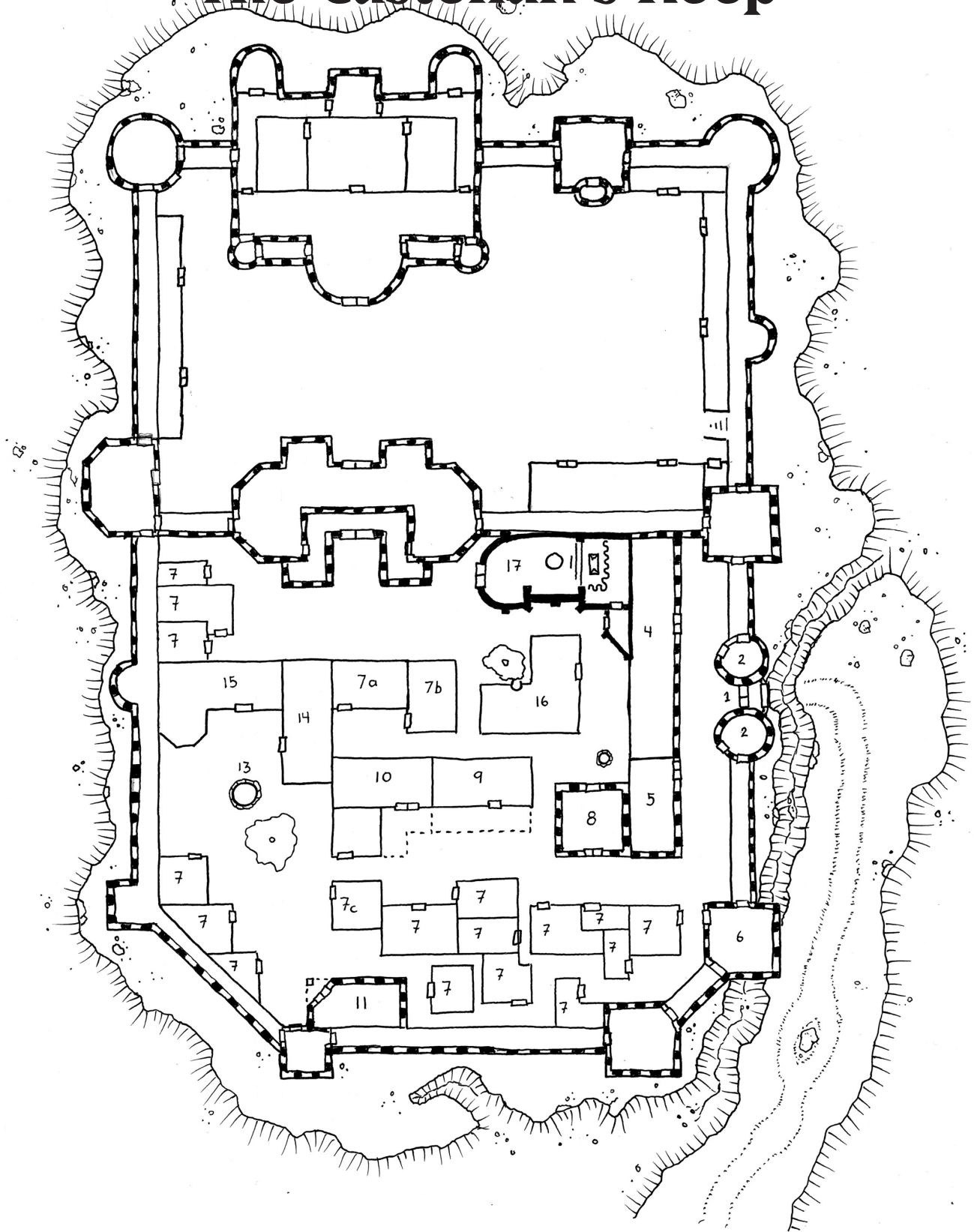
Atharva Plateau GM Map



Places South of Atharva



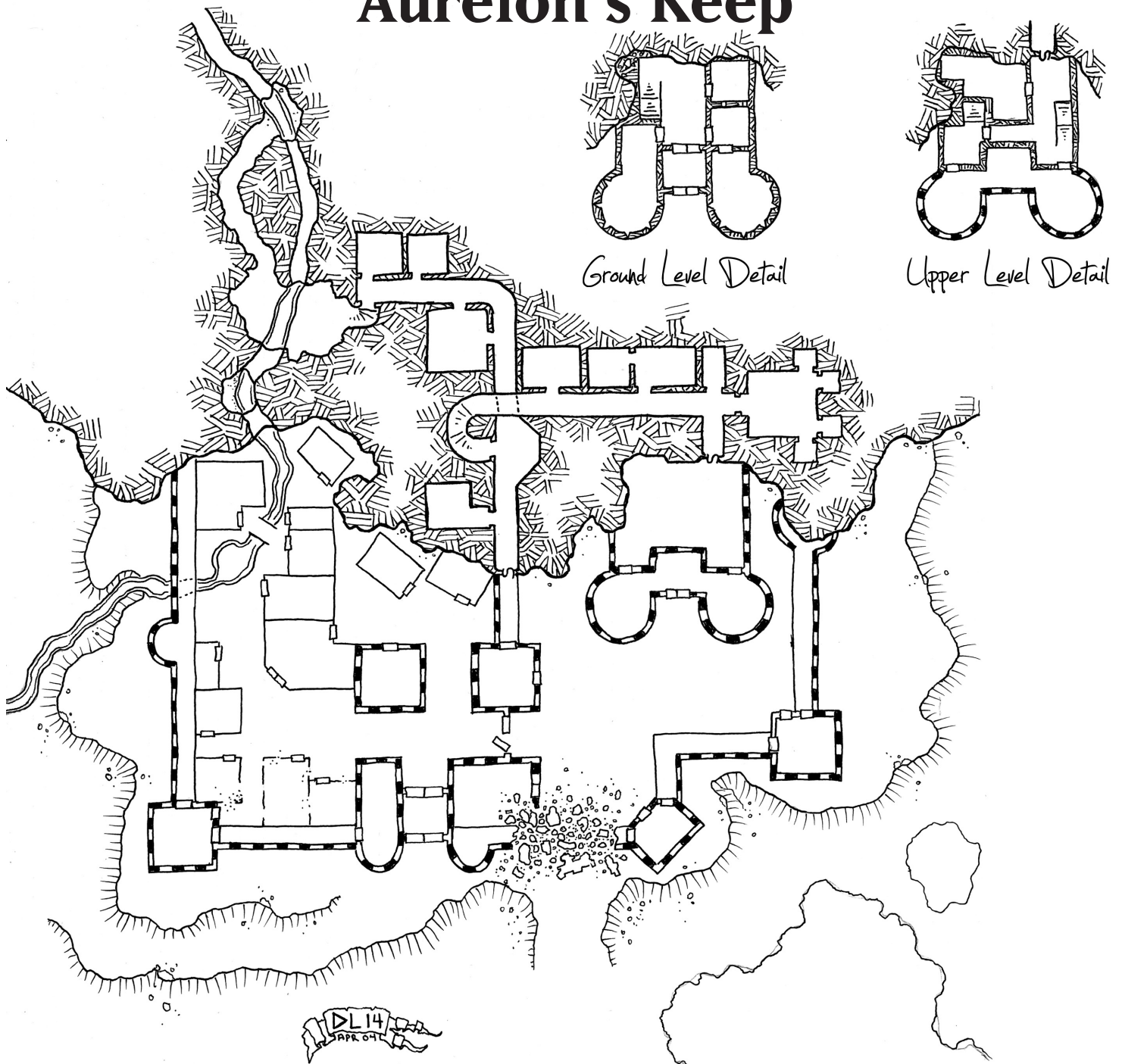
The Castellan's Keep



Yes, this is a redraw of a map from another source, but one that I needed to do because I required more residences in the keep (and thus more citizens to mess with the PCs and for the PCs to mess with), and I wanted to upgrade the shrine (area 17)

to a full-fledged temple. A temple of Law. One with a prison hole in the middle of the floor that I can use for "the Screams from Jedder's Hole". I also moved (and fortified) the bank, because... well... players.

Aurelon's Keep

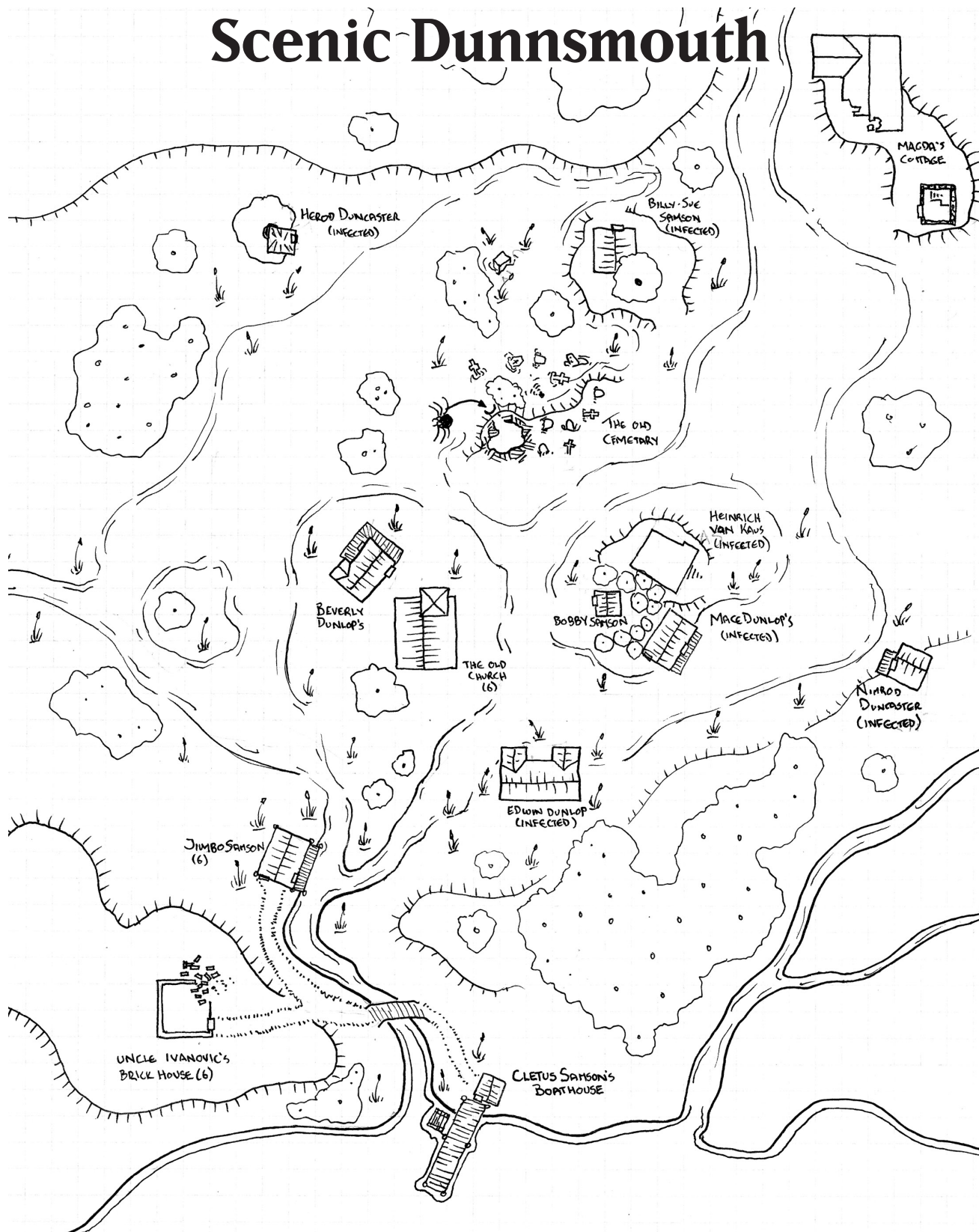


Redrawing the Castellan's Keep for my DCC game put me in flashback mode regarding both keeps and gaming. With crenelated battlements on the mind, I thought back to an adventure I ran using the Rules Cyclopeda when it first came out (back when I was in University).

Like most of my older gaming papers, the map is long lost to everything except my vaguest of memories. But I recalled what I could and let my pen guide itself a bit to finish off with this new version

of Aurelon's Keep. Not nearly as extensive as the Castellan's Keep, Aurelon's Keep was besieged and rapidly conquered with the assistance of a few earth elementals who built up the ramp leading to the destroyed wall. Today it is home to a few poor clans of goblins and their ilk who base hunting and gathering operations from the old wooden buildings of the keep while keeping away from the old stone keep itself that they believe to be haunted.

Scenic Dunnsmouth

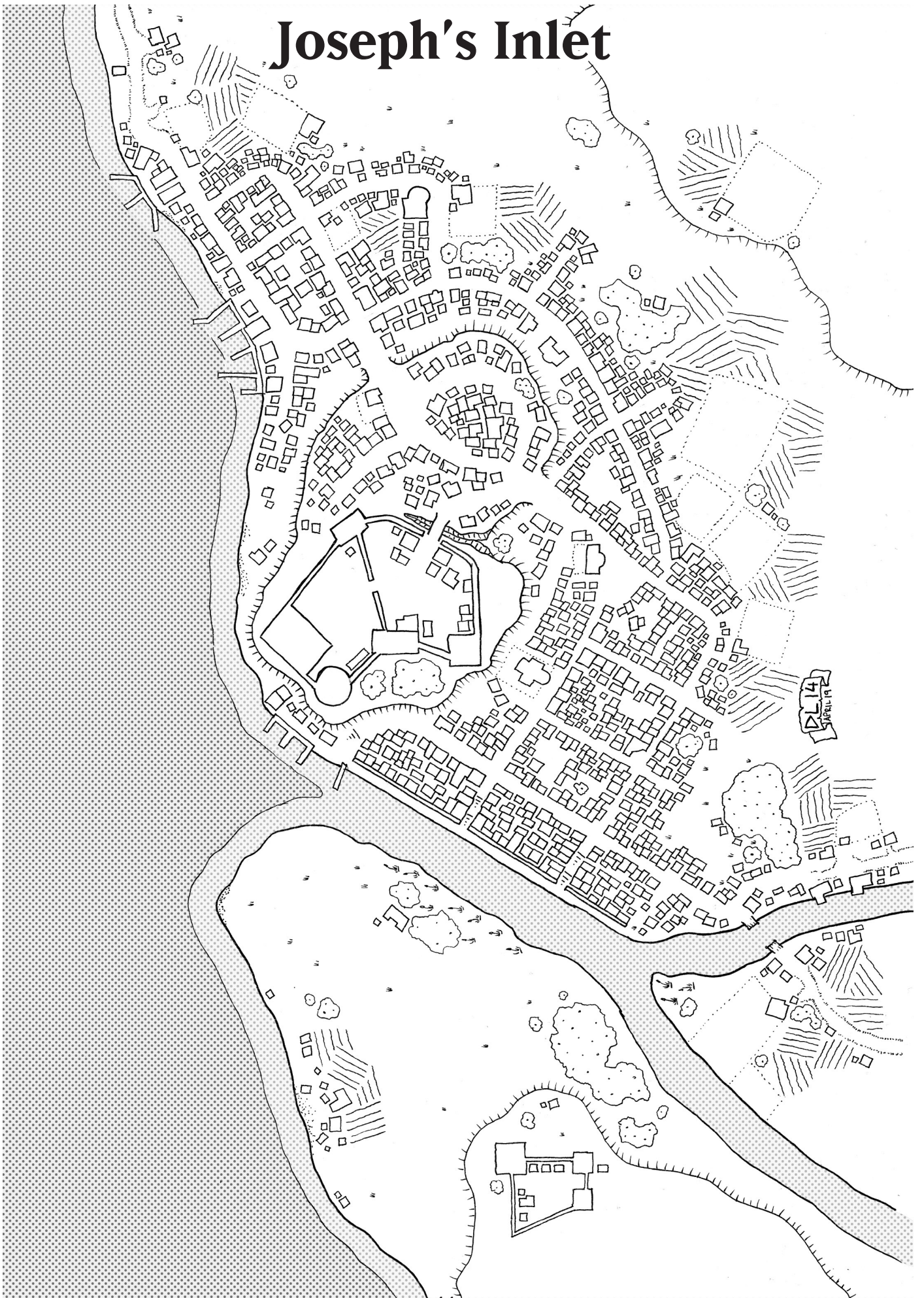


So, Zzarchov Kowolski wrote a thing and it is epically produced by James Raggi and Jez Gordon (who's art and production I drool over) for Lamentations of the Flame Princess. This thing is called Scenic Dunnsmouth. It is a moderately low-level classic D&D adventure which is centred around a town (Dunnsmouth) that is randomly generated when

you set up the adventure. The random generation makes every instance of Dunnsmouth unique.

So here's the result of me throwing some dice at a piece of paper and flipping a few cards - a small village in the swamp home to some weird families, a spider cult and of course, the hypercube.

Joseph's Inlet



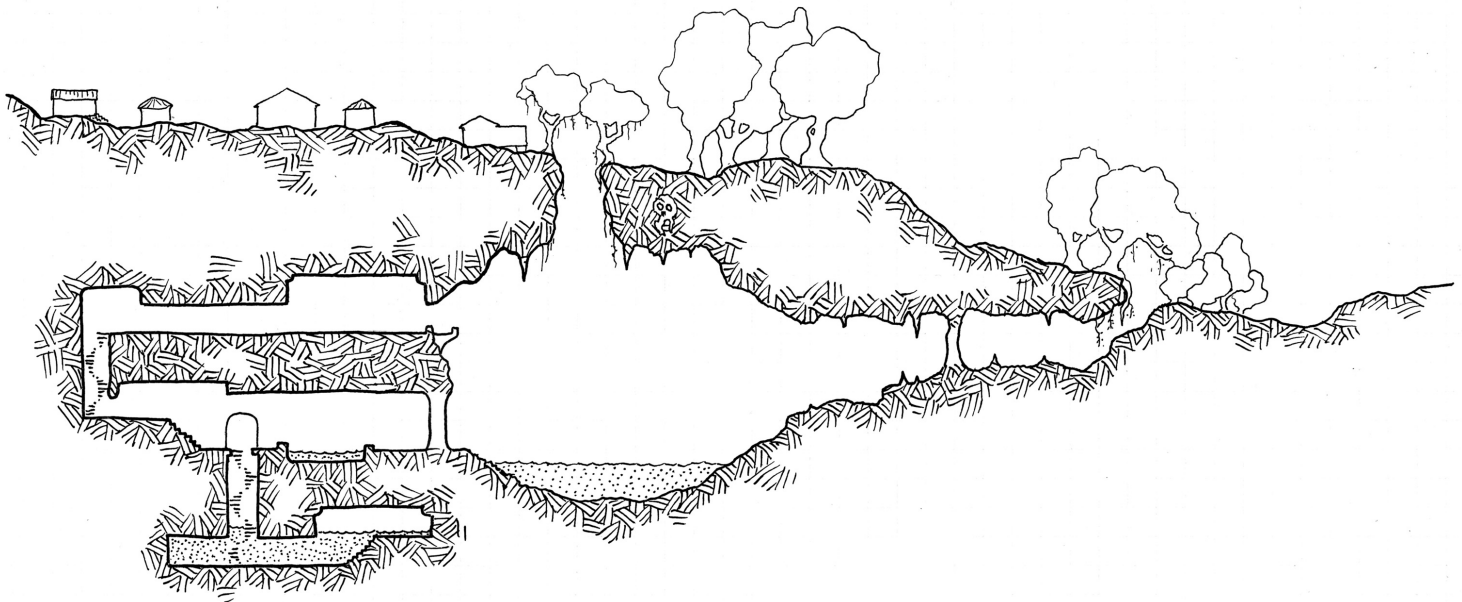
Joseph's Inlet

Joseph's Inlet has a few features that I wanted for a few stories / adventures. Some fantasy novel I had read in the past year had a section of town down by the river with a large retaining wall blocking the houses from the river front. You can see that wall (with two streets with stairs that break through the wall) along the river front. Boats moor along this area, and the town watch keeps up regular patrols here (particularly at night) to keep the transient population from causing too much trouble

with the locals (or vice versa in some cases, keeping the boat crews from falling victim to local cut-purses and con men). There are two markets in town where vendors set up stalls and tents to sell goods – one on the plateau east of the keep, and the other (larger market) almost due south of the keep.

Everything else? Well, that's up to you!

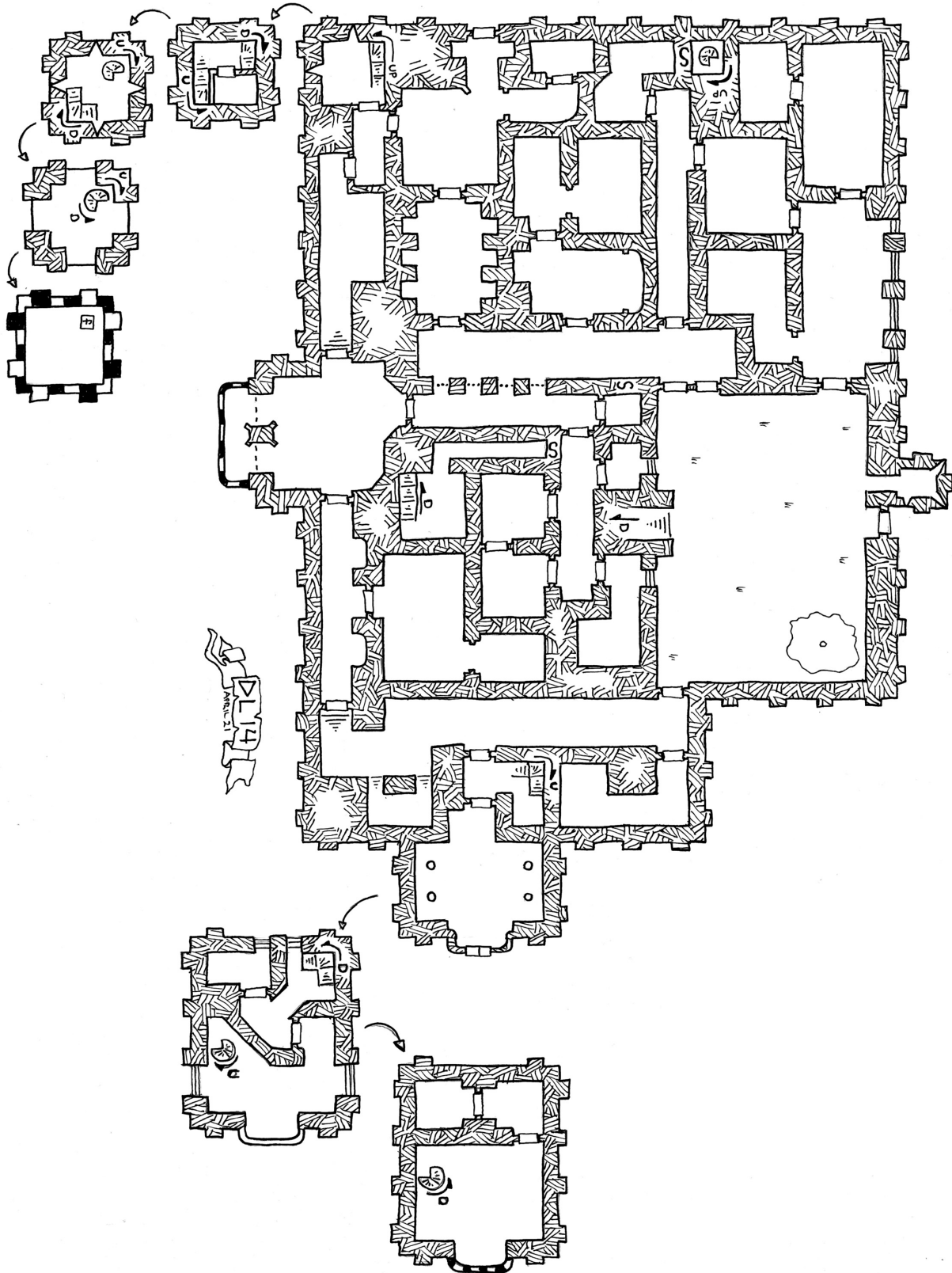
the Cenote Shrine



The villagers above this particular cenote are unaware of the shrine that is beneath them, using the cenote as a place to dispose of their dead, aged, and infirm. The cave entrance to the cenote is hidden in the forest, protected by a foul beast that lives within it and is clever enough to only eat the occasional goat of the villagers instead of the villagers themselves.

The shrine itself is a long abandoned temple of the Frog Idol, now partially flooded and ripe for plundering.

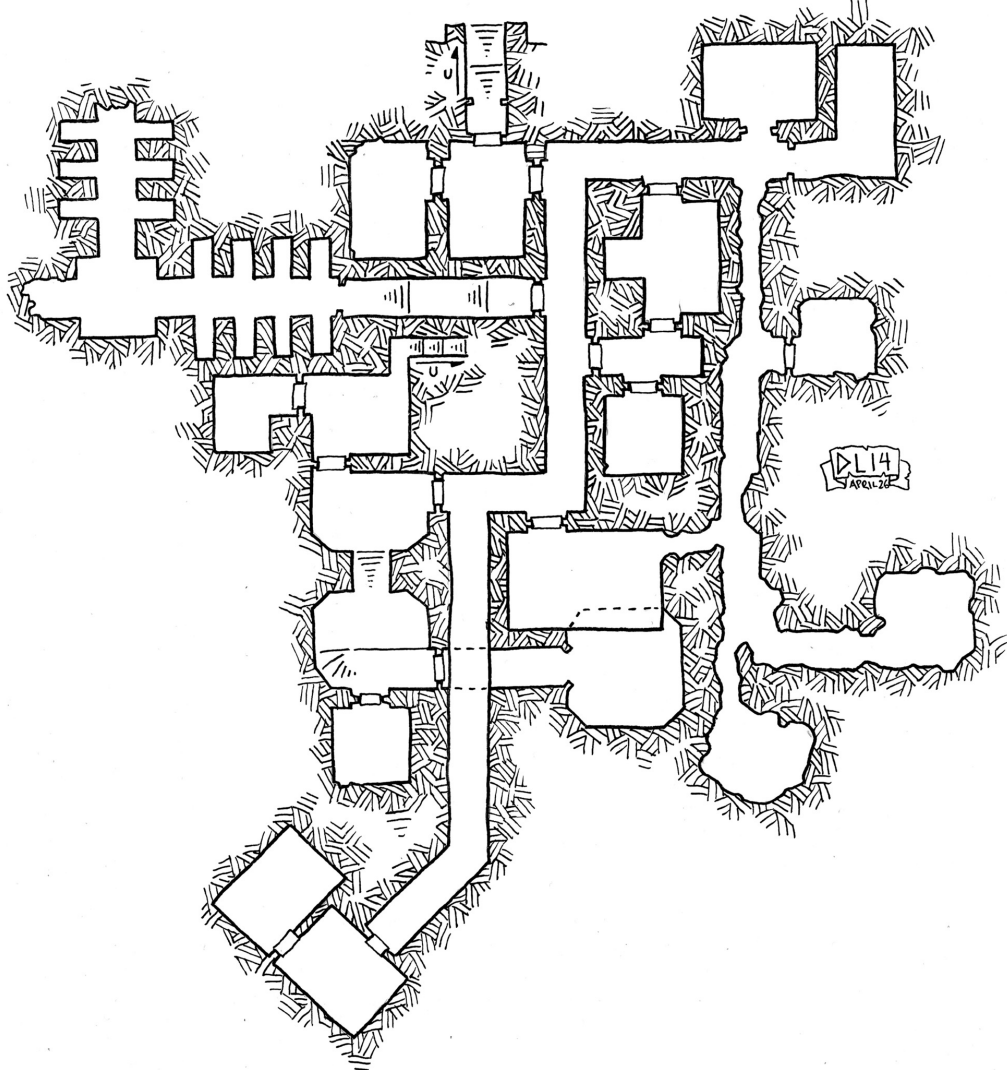
The cenote shrine was drawn to expand on the existing materials in the "Challenge of the Frog Idol" adventure I published a few years back. The new material still sits in a folder of incomplete ideas that need more work to go to print.



Mad Fenrick's Basement

A few miles from the nearest outposts of civilization, just over those hills to the west of here, are the old estates of the Trent family. Sitting almost smugly on a hill in the midst of overgrown hedge mazes and fallow fields is the manor of "Mad" Fenrick Trent. Sure the first parts of the structure were initially built by his grandfather, and the last Trents to live in it were his great-grandchildren, but Mad Fenrick is the Trent who put the most work into the half-fortified squat monstrosity.

26 years ago, my AD&D group adventured into Tegel Manor. It was a strange adventure, and we didn't stay too long (four sessions? long enough to realize the module was larger than our attention span, and to get the one thing we needed). However, the map of Tegel Manor left an impression with me that I haven't shaken after all these years. And I finally feel I have the skills to let that impression take form – in the significantly smaller form of Mad Fenrick's Manor..

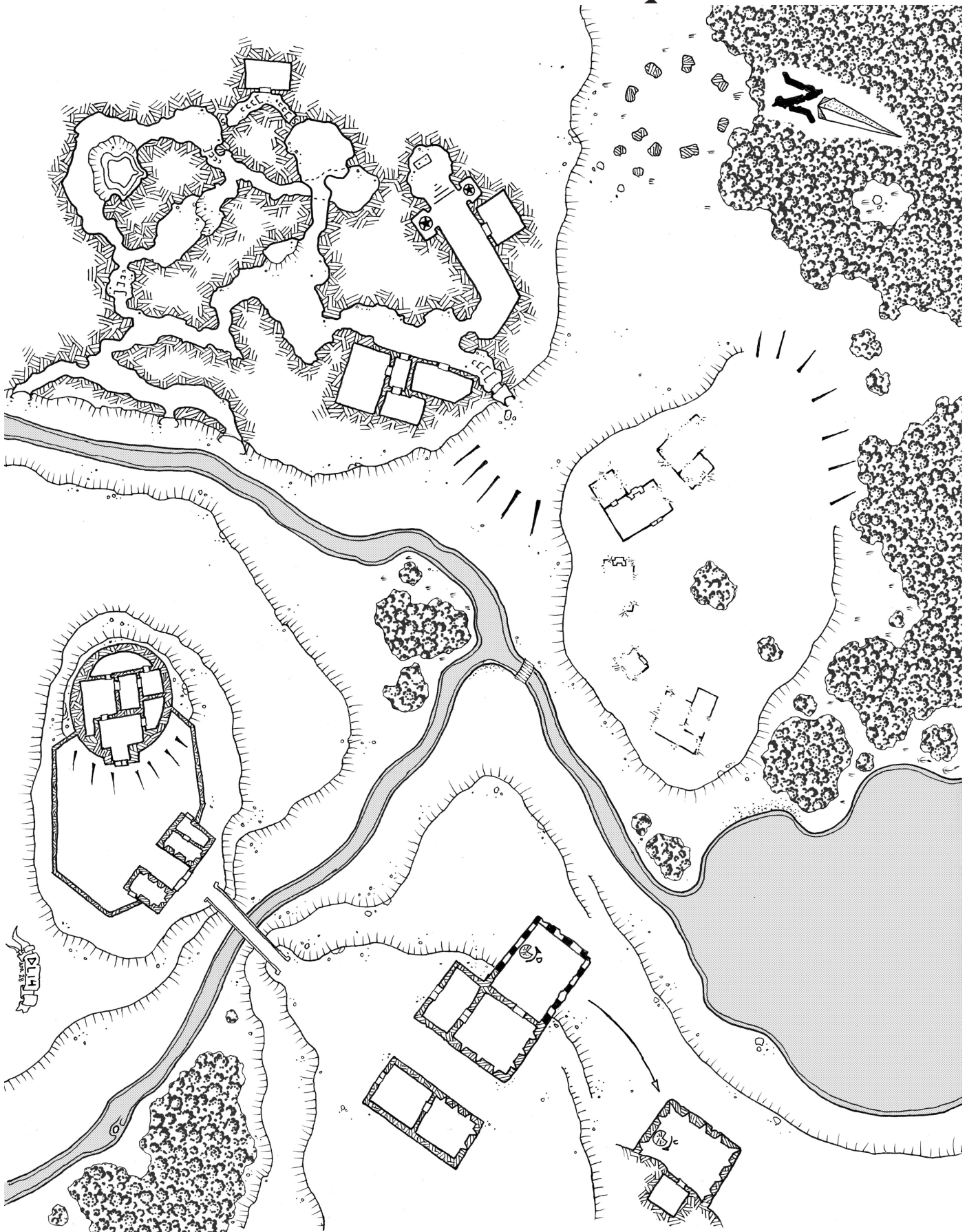


Of course, a massive cobbled together and defensively structured manor like Mad Fenrick's Manor doesn't stop with just the main level and a few towers. In the main courtyard of the manor is a set of stairs that originally lead to the Trent family crypt, but that now connects to a small dungeon (as well as Mad Fenrick's Root Cellar, Mad Fenrick's Family Crypt, Mad Fenrick's U-Store-It, and Mad Fenrick's Large Rodent Repository., of course).

With the manor grounds now abandoned, who knows the sorts of things that crawl about beneath the old manor house. Whatever they are, they are probably very lonely and would love to play with any visitors.

Welcome to Mad Fenrick's Basement! Stay a while... Stay FOREVER!

Chuck's Valley



Chuck's Valley

I like adventure locations without an obvious "this is the important bit" marker. This map is chock full of little places where fun can be had (or characters slain). We have woods to the north, with a clearing and a circle of standing stones. We have the burned out ruins of a small collection of buildings just north of the centre of the map. There's a lake just begging for a watery tart to lob scimitars from. There's a tower and fortress that is difficult to access, along with a second fort protecting it. And

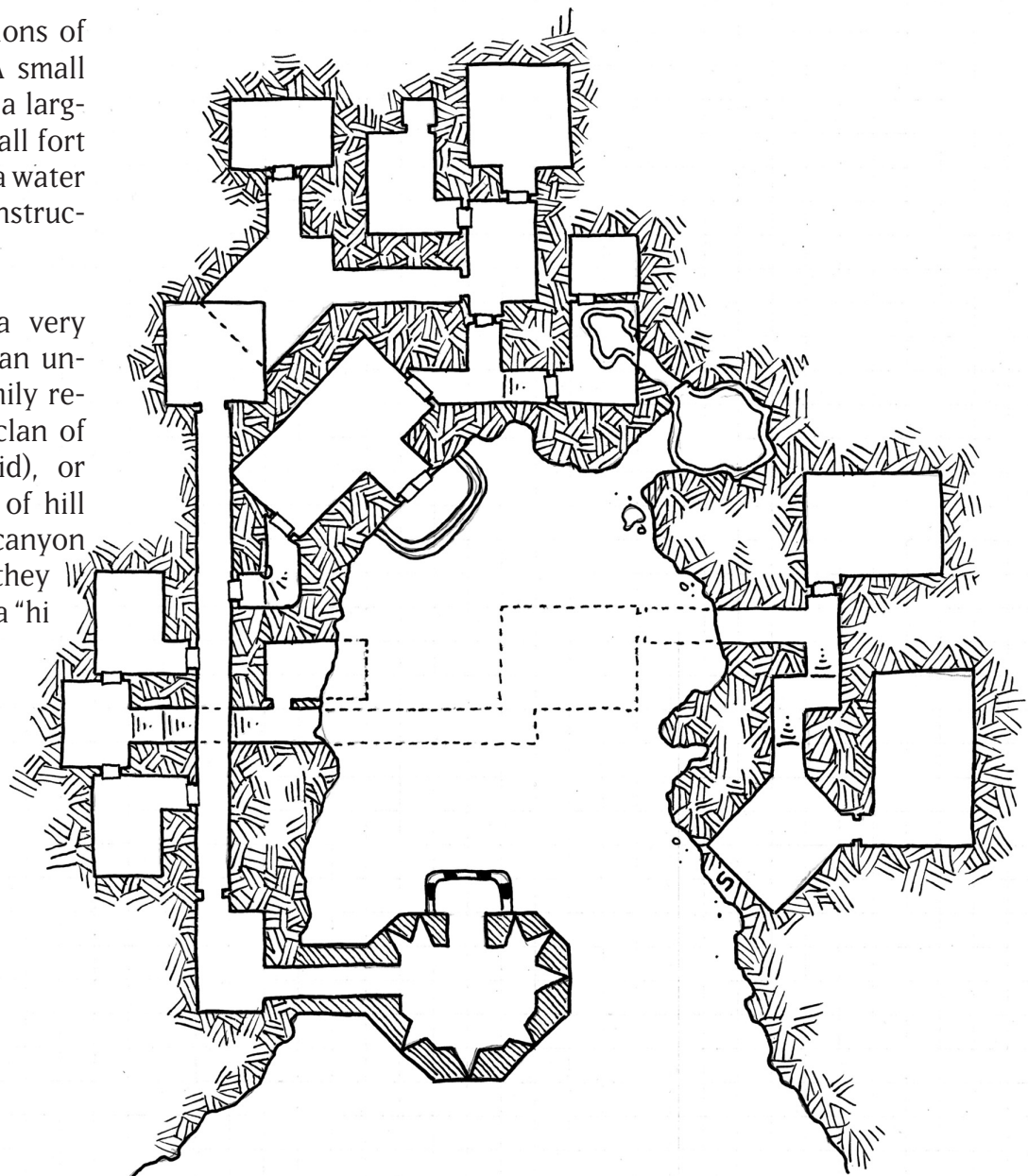
of course we have natural caves under the rise to the west, which have been modified at one end to include some rooms and what appears to be a cavern shrine that's been partially upgraded by the worshipful (or those seeking the approval of the worshipful).

This leaves us, of course, with a good dozen places that you could add an access point to another dungeon map.

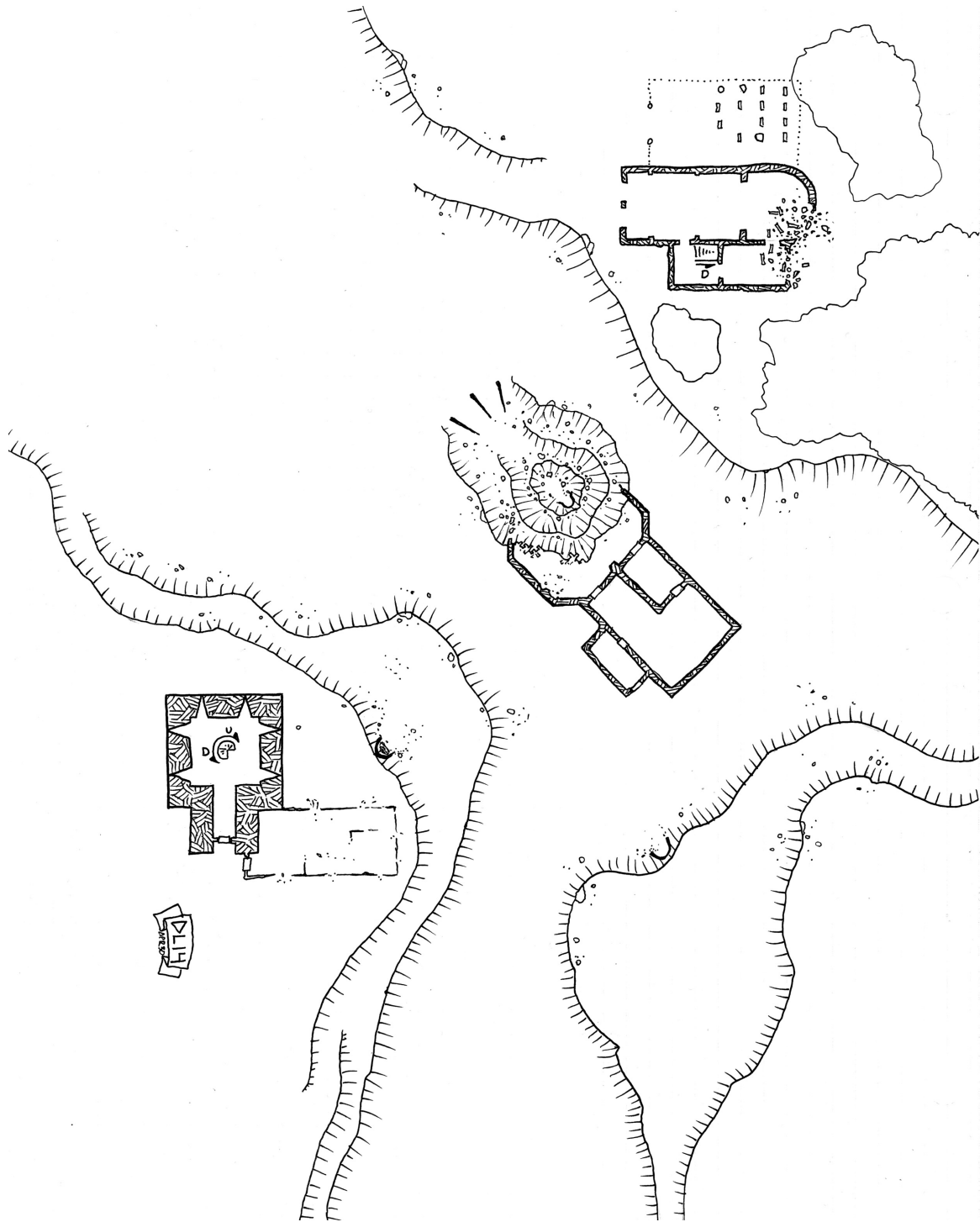
Haben's End

I feel like I've drawn versions of this map a dozen times. A small box canyon or node off of a larger cave complex with a small fort guarding the entrance and a water source and excavated construction at the end.

Haben's End makes for a very defensible location along an underdark passage (for a family retreat perhaps, or a small clan of some underdark humanoid), or the home to a small clan of hill dwarves set up in a box canyon with mines nearby that they head out to every day with a "hi ho, hi ho!"



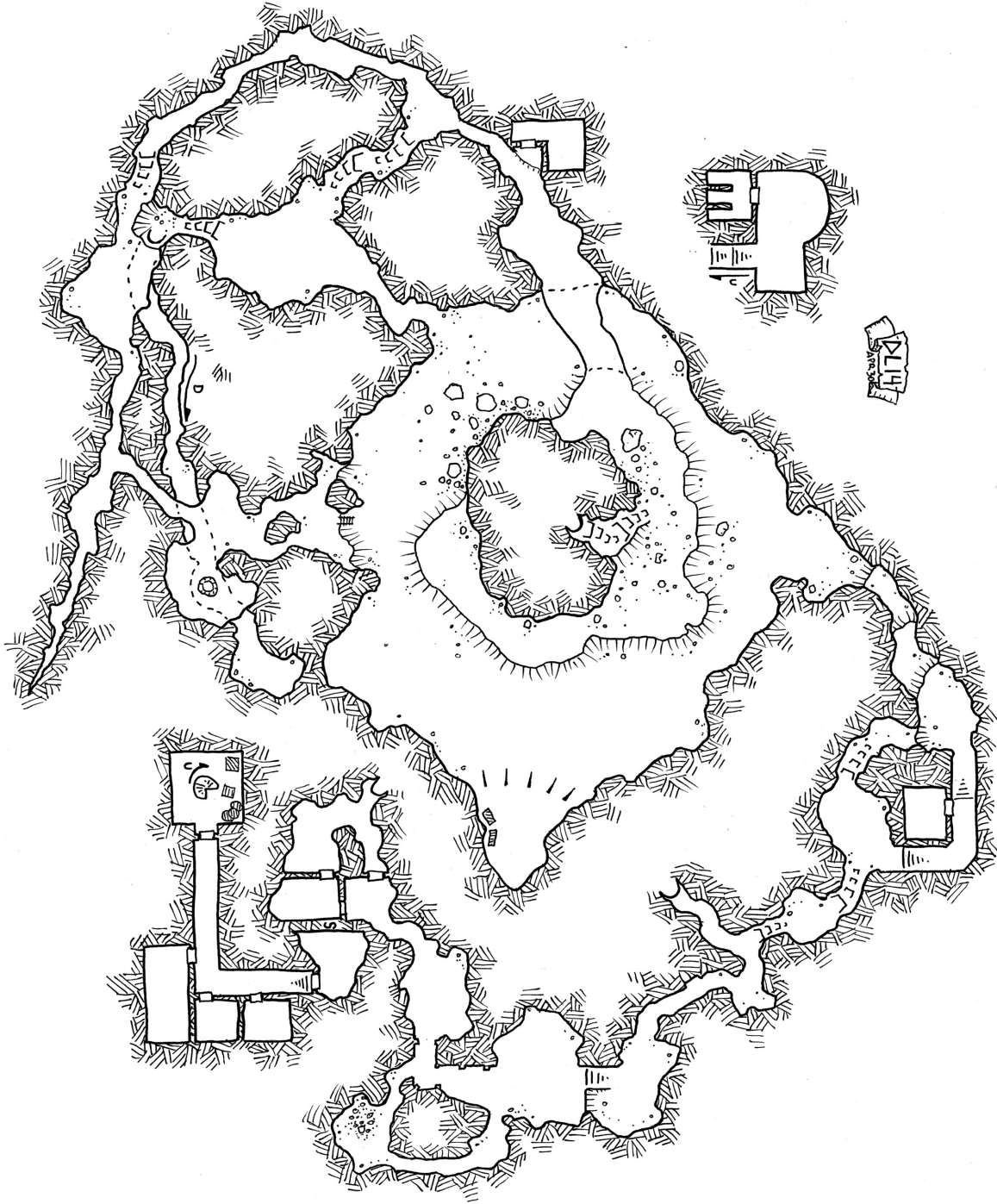
Namurta's Halls - Surface



Whenever I pull out the random dungeon generator from the classic 1e DMG (which I used to do a lot as a teen and still do on occasion), I'm haunted by the indication that we should have fully mapped and detailed surface ruins prepared before going into the actual act of dungeon generation. You see, I rarely had a surface ruin to start with, just whatever first room I chose from the random generator.

I drew Namurta's Halls so I would have something that could be used with the generator. Purely coincidentally, it can also be used with my classic mini megadungeon, Dyson's Delve – the tower in the lower right and the cave on the hillside beneath it are just about perfect for that dungeon setup – leaving you with three additional entrances that can lead to other dungeons (the entrance in the sinkhole, the cave in the upper right hill, and of course the stairs under the old church).

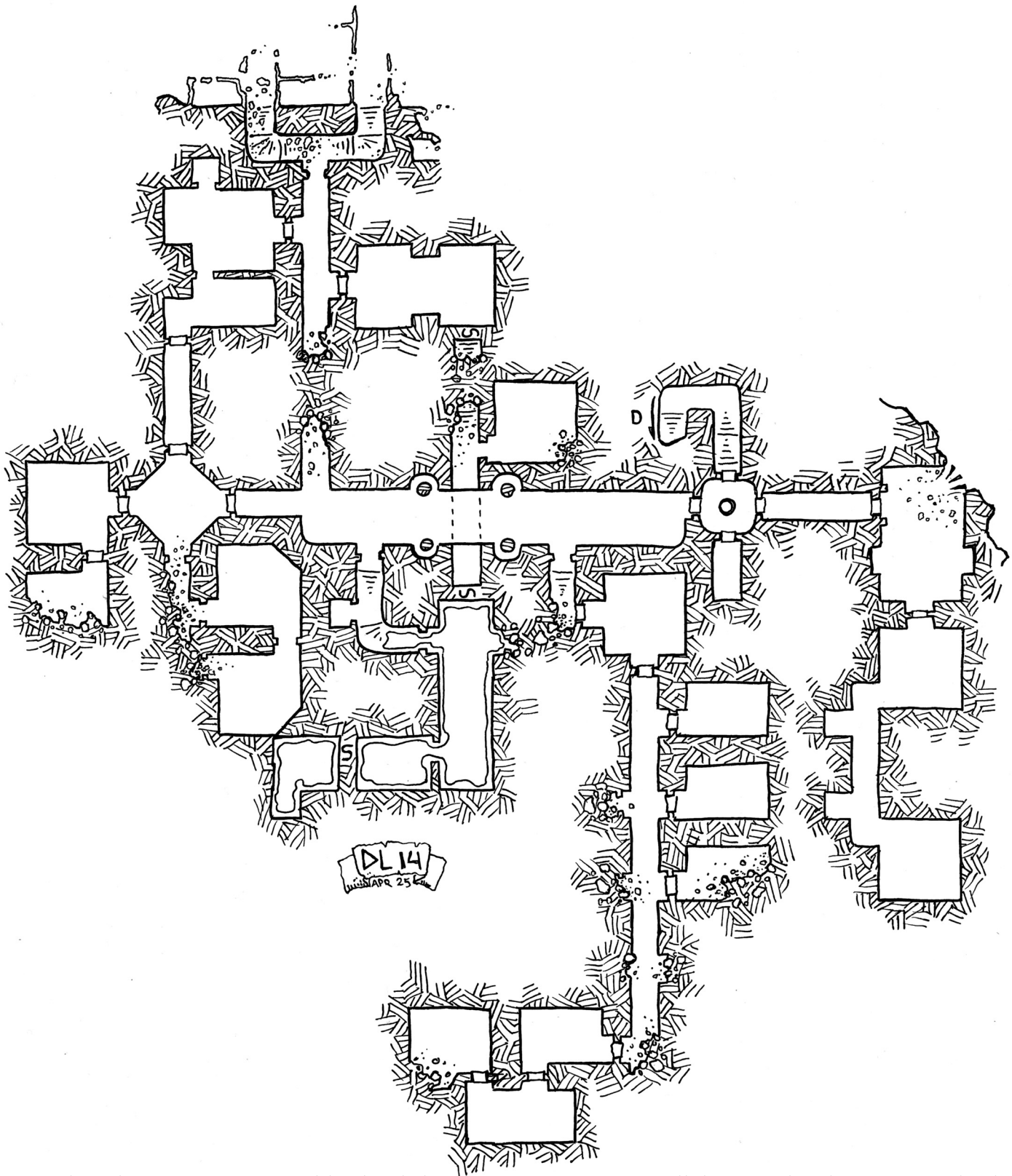
Beneath Namurta's Halls



While I originally drew Namurta's Halls for use as the launching point for random dungeon generation (and potentially as the home of the classic Dyson's Delve), I asked around my google+ circles for what people would like to see underneath it. In the end I was inspired by a response by Chris Mata asking for "One cave & three mini dungeons, only one overall complex. The cave should be huge and the ceiling at least 100ft high on average."

In the end, I didn't go with a full 100' ceiling height. I think the rough ceiling height for the biggest parts of the cave is 70', with the upper platform and stone bridge being a good 30' above the floor. The caves have been expanded on occasion, with some areas becoming full-on "dungeons" and others just slightly upgraded cave walls.

Ruins under Axehead Mound



My default assumption for old school dungeons is that you've come across the ruins of something huge and underground – something like the ruined cities of the Elderlings buried in the swamps in the Rain Wilds stories by Robin Hobb. It's the basis I use for all my “random dungeon” rolling.

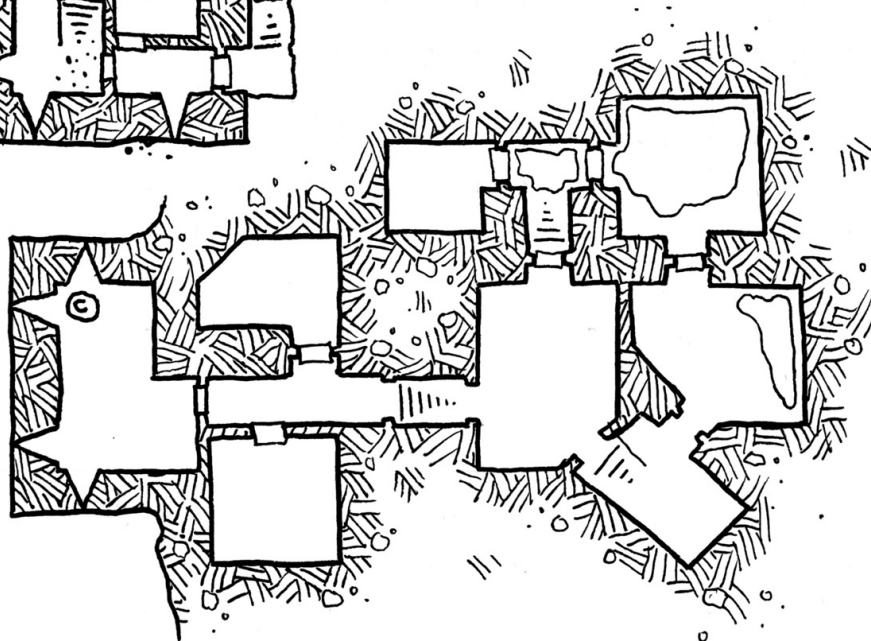
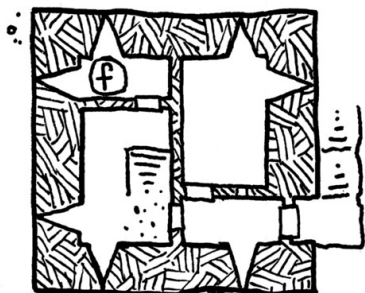
Here is a small dungeon level set up exactly along those premises – the ruins under Axehead Mound have two entrances – one a collapsed wall section that leads into a chamber, the other a pair of ruin-cluttered stairs that lead into the ruins from a ruined above-ground building.

Dravid's Tower

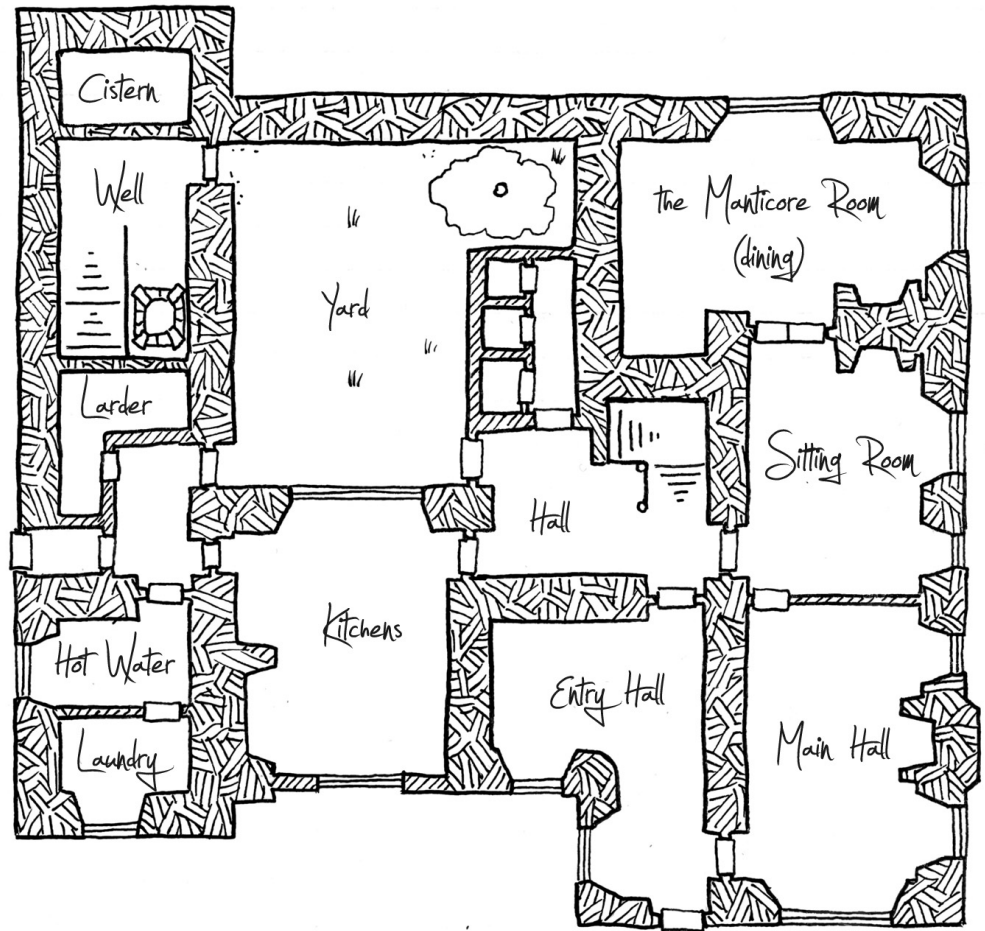
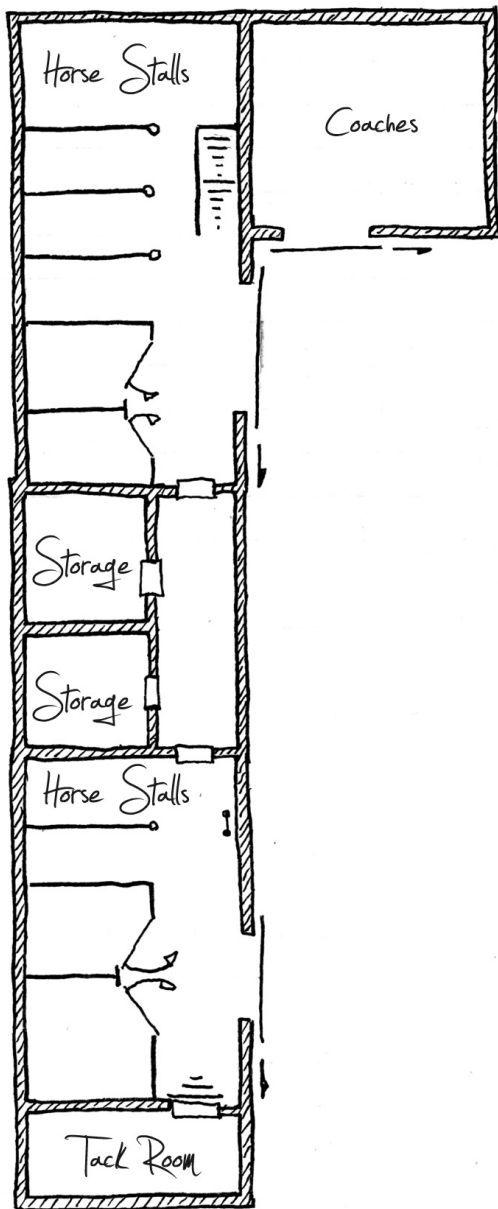


Ruins. Ruins rock my boat and feel like the core of D&D for me ever since the adventure in the back of the 1981 Basic rulebook. Today's small map is a tower built into the side of a hill and the dungeons beneath.

Rising a good thirty feet over the crest of Hound Rock Hill, Dravid's tower was built into the rocky flank of the hill and once provided a bird's eye view of the area. Now fallen into ruin and decay, the upper levels of the tower have partially collapsed, leaving much of the interior open to the elements. Access to the lowest level of the tower is through an old trap door (which has been used by travelers because it is probably the most secure area in the tower). In the lower level, a rusted and stuck iron door leads into the hillside proper. There are obvious signs where people (or perhaps roving humanoids) have tried to pry open the door, but it remains sealed, probably by some enchantment or other magic.



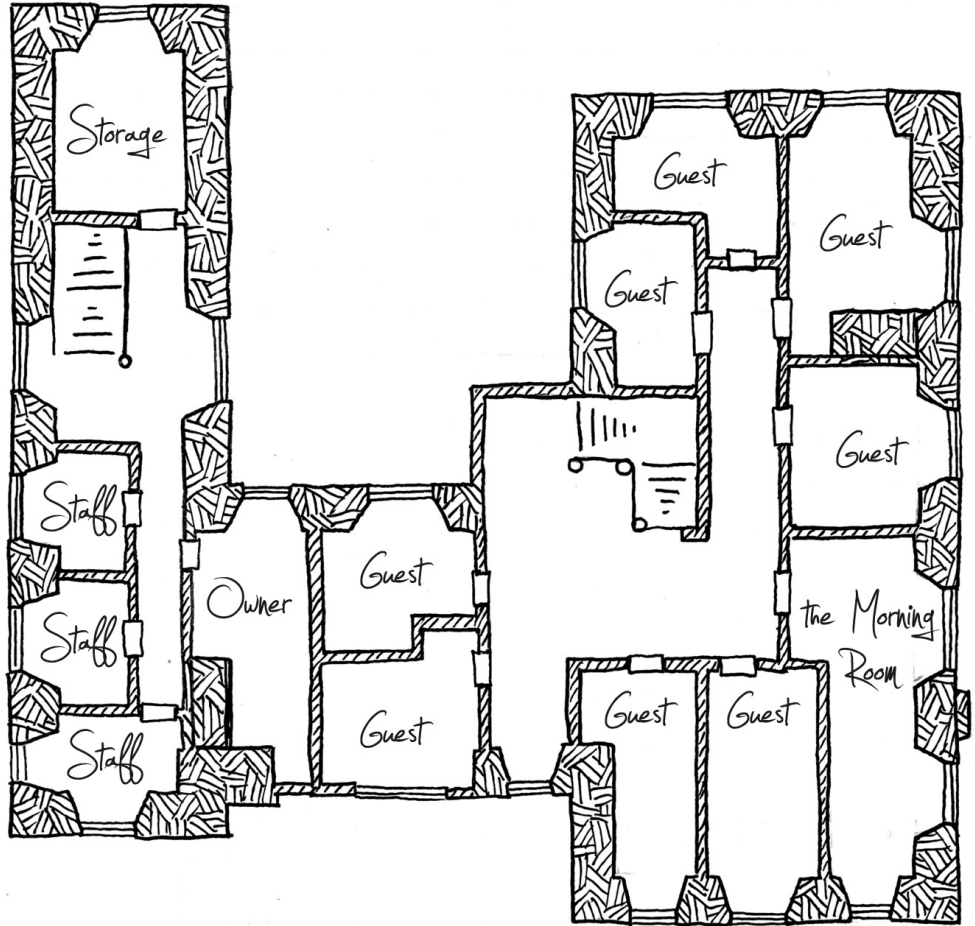
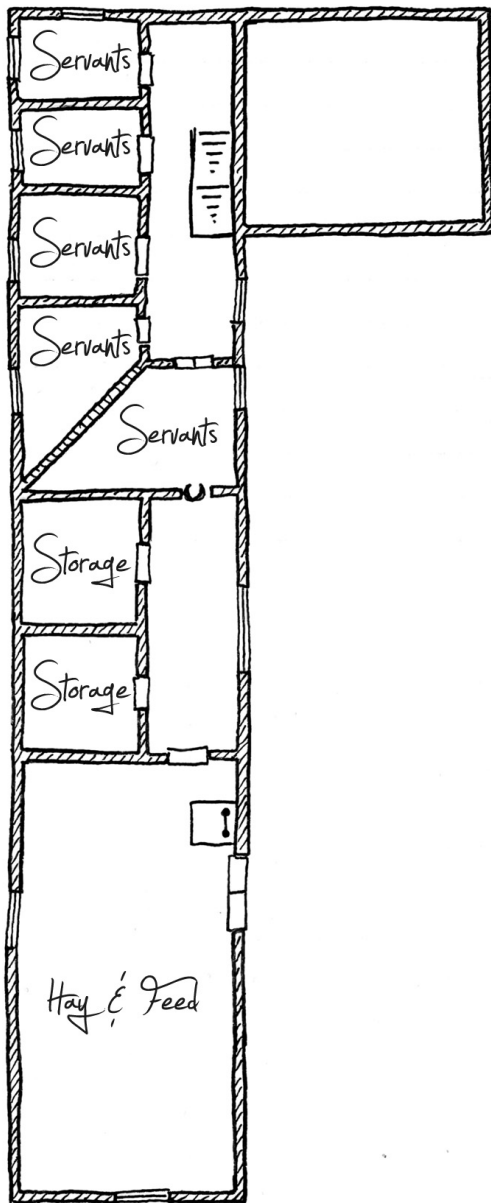
Four Javelins Coaching Inn Ground Level



Big inns, even if they are mostly an anachronism in a traditional medieval RPG, are definitely a big part of what we expect when playing RPGs. I have inns and coaching inns turning up fairly frequently as a place to gather information, sleep, and eat. Even more importantly, they act as a signpost of civilization. Coming across a walled coaching inn along the road means that you are somewhere safe-ish, or at least on the verges of civilization.

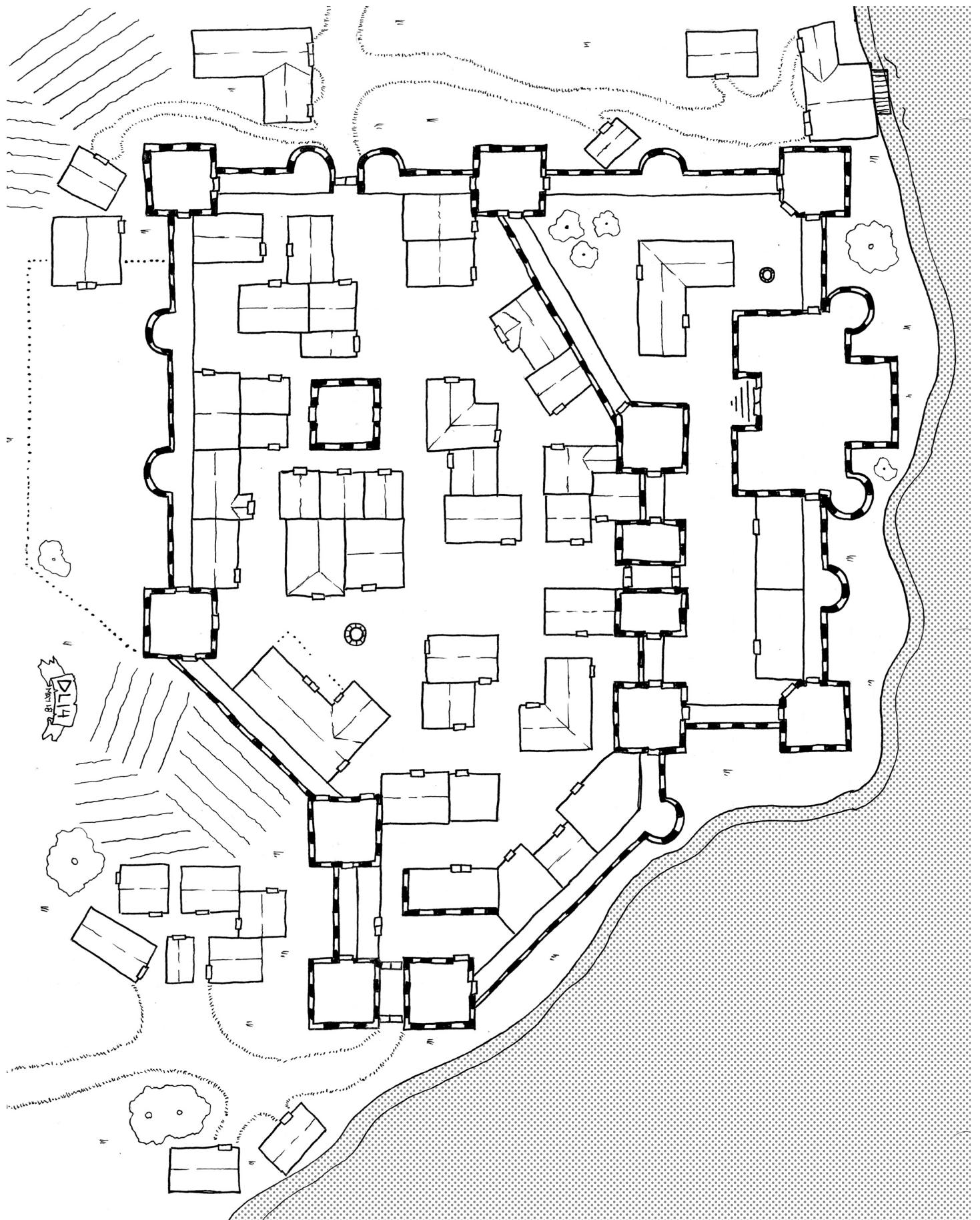
Four Javelins Coaching Inn is the kind of establishment you find either just outside of a small city, or about one day's travel out along a major road. It is a large stone two-story structure with a wooden stable and coach garage set beside it. As an inn, the establishment provides food, drink and lodging for both travelers and their horses and coaches. The large dining room (The Manticore Room) is reserved for large dinners and rich guests – the majority of guests take their meals in the main hall, sitting room, or even in the enclosed courtyard when the weather is nice.

Four Javelins Coaching Inn Upper Level

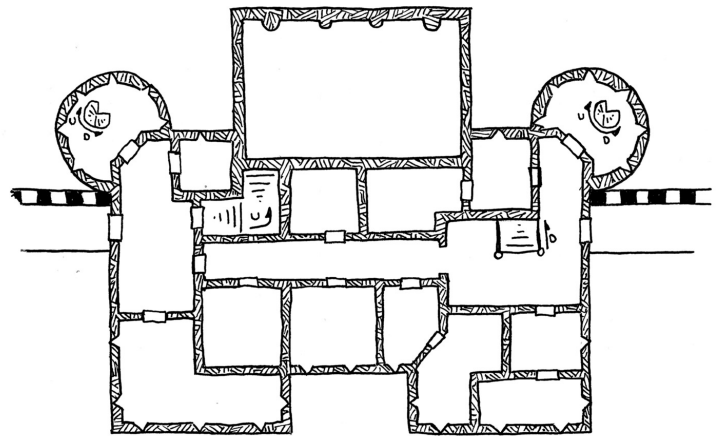
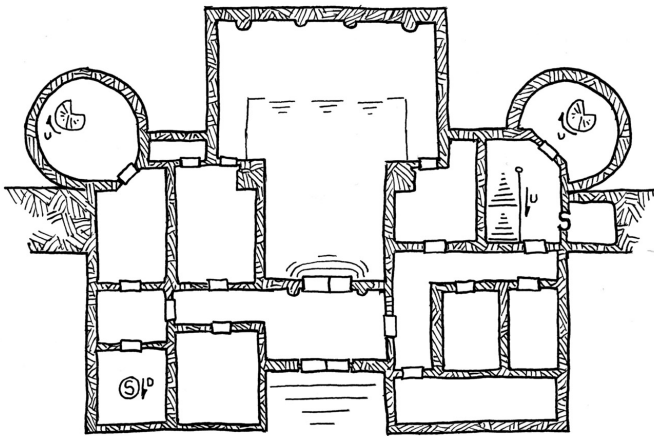
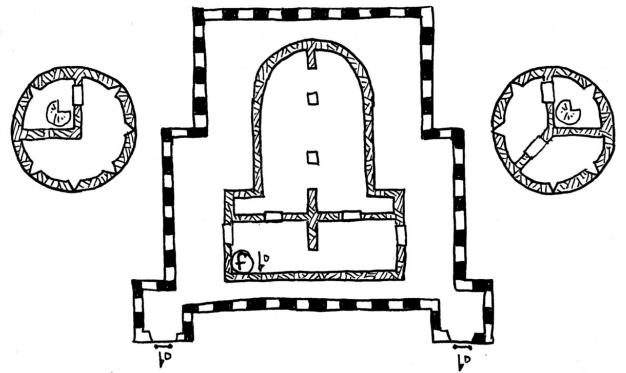
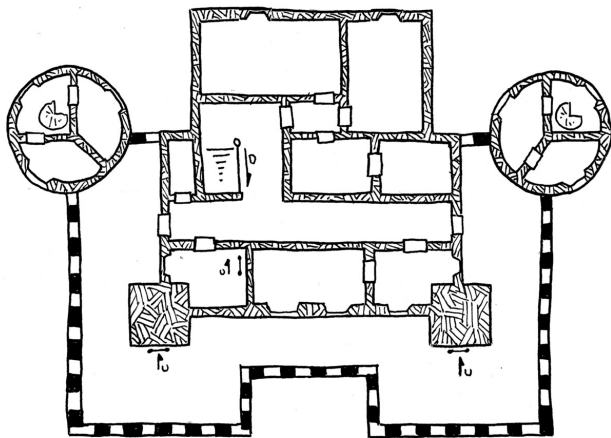


And here we have the upper level of both buildings of the Four Javelins Coaching Inn. With eight guest rooms and a sitting room upstairs, this is an inn with a lot of room and is probably a major money maker for the owner – of course requiring that it be set somewhere that it can expect to rent out a number of these rooms most nights. The west wing of the inn houses the senior staff of the inn (and the innkeeper's family), while the lesser staff live upstairs from the stables next door.

Greater Briar Keep



Briar Keep Detail

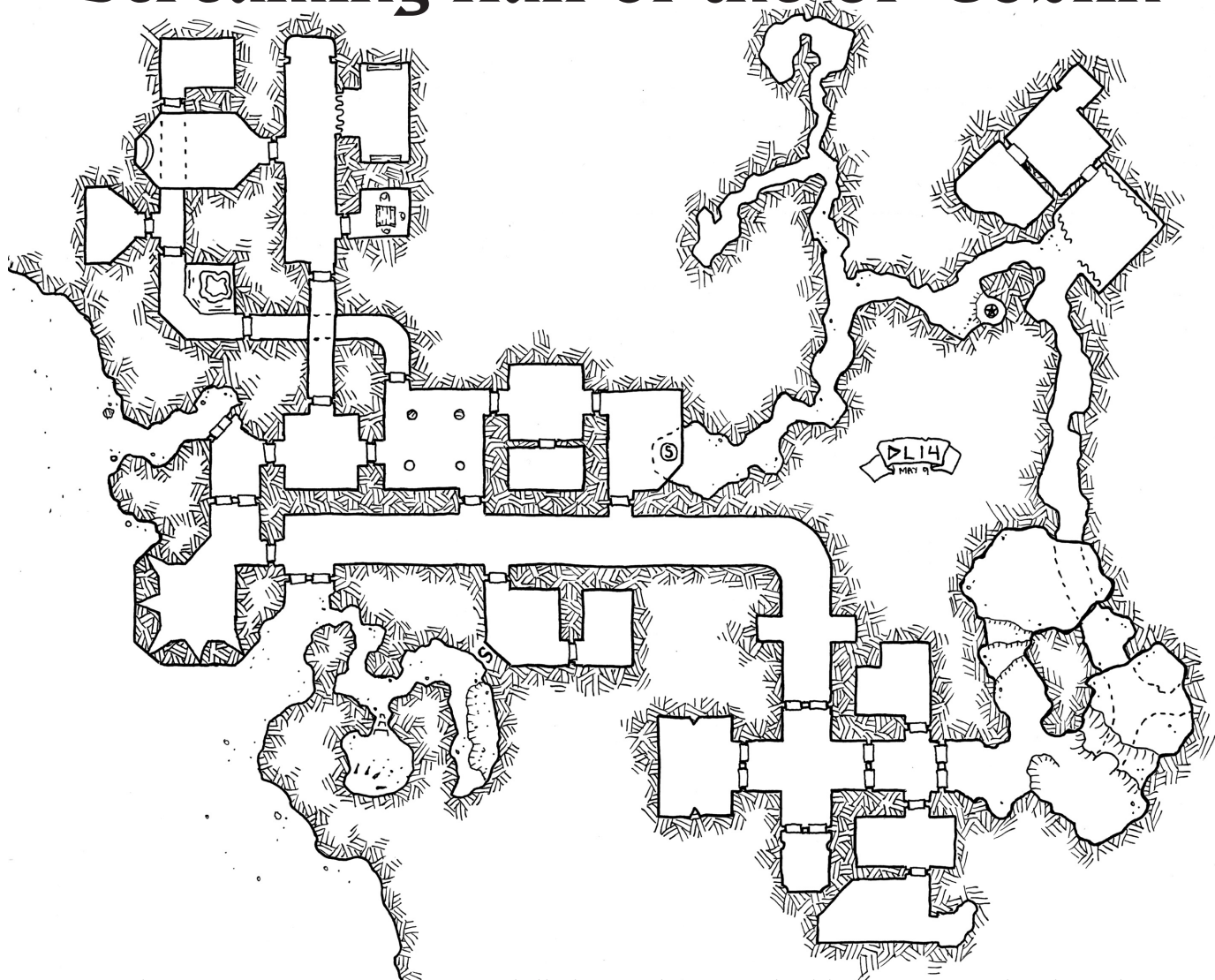


Briar Keep is a border fortress and small settlement that marks the northern boundary of the Satrapy where the Northlands begin. Built only a few generations ago, the keep is in excellent shape and is well maintained and houses a garrison of Satrapy forces. Unlike most settlements in the Satrapy, Briar Keep and it's environs are also home to a number of dwarves of the Greybeard clan and associated families.

On this page we have the detail maps of the keep structure proper - expanded over four levels. There could technically be a map of the fifth level, but it would just be the battlements on top of the two towers of the keep.

The map (probably not immediately obvious) is set up with the ground level in the lower left, the next level to the right, then the third level on the upper left and the top most level on the upper right. Not the most intuitive setup, but that's what you get when I just start drawing without thinking about things like this.

Screaming Hall of the Ur-Goblin



Once a meandering cave cut into the stony hills by a river, this dungeon was expanded upon by the industrious labour of untold goblins lead by a massive goblinoid with strange earth powers.

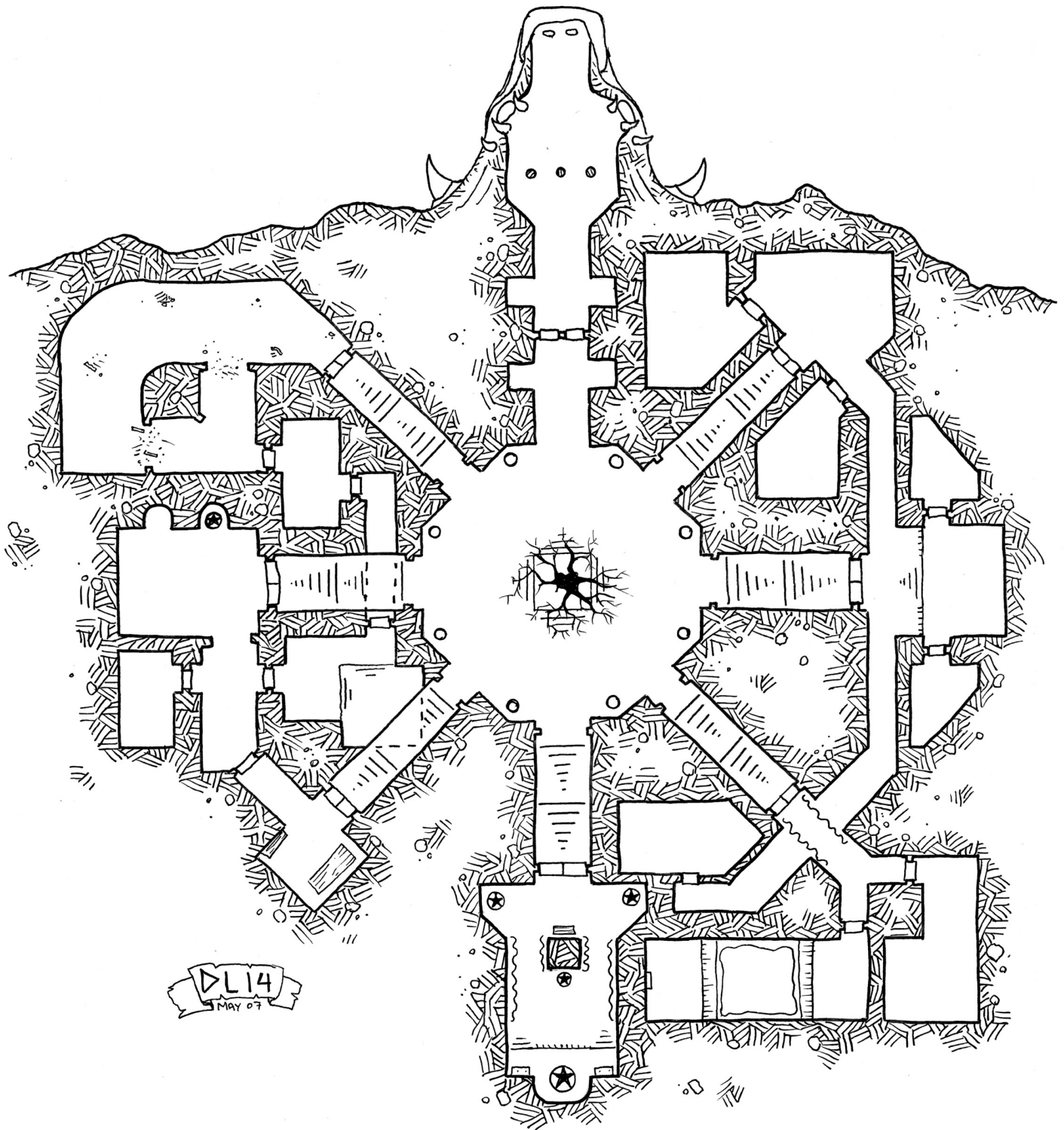
There is a missing stairwell or heavily sloped corridor right around where the two passages overlap near the entrance – originally it was designed with the curving passage being a sloped passage leading under the other dungeon sections and down to the small pool, a last reminder that this was once a natural cave wrought by water.

Crafted as the lair and fortress of Vrunek, and earth-bound Ur-Goblin who could be mistaken for a massive gargoyle, the outside of the structure is clearly marked by the worked mass of stone between the two cave entrances. The arrow slits on this central watch “tower” are decorated to seem like distended screaming faces with the slits as very tall vertical mouths.

The stone double doors on each side of the screaming tower are secured by ancient wizard locks that only allow entry to goblins and those who whisper praise to the foul titan of mud and stone.

While the original clan of Vrunek (and supposedly the ur-goblin himself) was wiped out during the war against the elves, other goblins have learned that the great doors keep them safe within the hold and several small groups of their kin have moved here over the ensuing decades – most eventually fall victim to each other, or to the “beast” that dwells in the dark recesses of the natural caves deep under the screaming halls. What this beast is remains to be seen – perhaps a pack of gargoyles remain from Vrunek’s unnatural armies, or even Vrunek himself survived, or one of his spawn failed the ur-goblin metamorphosis and lurks in the caves hungry for goblin flesh and any warm blood it can find.

Serzen's Seven Stairs



There are times when you want a dungeon that feels like it could really exist, that it was naturally occurring, or that someone took natural caves and “enhanced” them to make a dungeon. There are other times, however, where you just want over-the-top fantasy architecture.

Serzen's Seven Stairs is on the fantasy side of that spectrum — from the massive dragon-headed en-

trance into the dungeon proper to the central chamber complete with massive tree (or it might be a massive set of cracks in the floor where something slammed into the mountain ages ago) and seven staircases leading down to the lower levels. Rumour is that anyone who can descend each of the seven stairs and open the doors at the bottoms will either be struck dead or gain mystical powers over or against dragons. Of course the rumour is false.

Dolem's Spire

The original city of Dolem's Spire is between the two rivers leading into the bay. Walled and centred around a palace (now given over to barracks for the town guard and the mercenary force the town uses as an economic driver), the old town slowly expanded beyond the river banks to the north and east. Dolem's Fortress atop the spire is a much more recent addition to the town. Once a simple watch tower, the spire is now home to a plethora of towers and fortifications piercing into the sky like armoured fingers in defiance of the gods themselves. Lord Dolem watches down upon the city from the spire, reclusive and hostile to those who would attempt to visit or trade. Contact is usually through three advisers who have his ear and trust and who deal with outside agents and trade concerns (as well as the contracts for Dolem's mercenary forces). These three advisers are

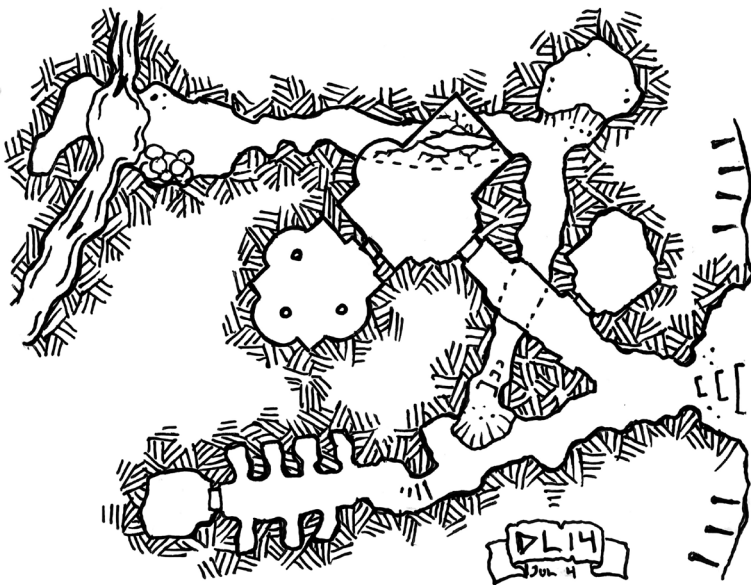
Lord Vellint – the classic image of the untrustworthy vizier who can be played to the hilt like Jafar from Disney's Aladdin. Except that he's completely loyal to Lord Dolem and only pretends to be independent of his Lord's wishes when it will improve his bargaining position ("Between you and I, Lord Dolem expressly forbids this kind of thing, but I'm sure we can make a deal if we keep it quiet and out of sight...")

Master Drunnought – the most surprising of the three advisers, master Drunnought is a middle-aged goblin who handles most of the mercenary contracts for the city. Occasionally he works with Lord Vellint when Lord Dolem and Drunnought agree to the need to keep a particular contract secret or seemingly "against the wishes of the Lord and Master".

Prince Dallex – the well-dressed young noble is the one most often absent from the court of Lord Dolem as he deals with outside trade deals and diplomacy. He also fully plans to betray his Lord, except that Lord Dolem is full aware of this and re-asserts his magical dominance over the prince whenever he returns to the city.

North of the spire itself is the "new town" that has grown up in the years since the spire was built. It in turn is centred around the Monastery of Iron Sands and the North Docks, the largest pier in the city and the associated warehouses.

Cranston's Crypt



There is a cave sunken into a gentle hillside to the south of Springhollow.

The cave has had the most easily accessed parts converted into a crypt of the Crampton family as well as a private chapel. Unfortunately for the Crampton's, construction of the chapel brought the floor to a level less than a half inch from the cave below it, and over the years the floor has collapsed with use, been plastered over, then collapsed again. Now the chapel lies dusty and unused, the crypts only visited when another venerated member of the family passes on. The caves are damp and mildewed because of a small underground stream that passes through the lowest mushroom-infested cave.

Dolem's Spire



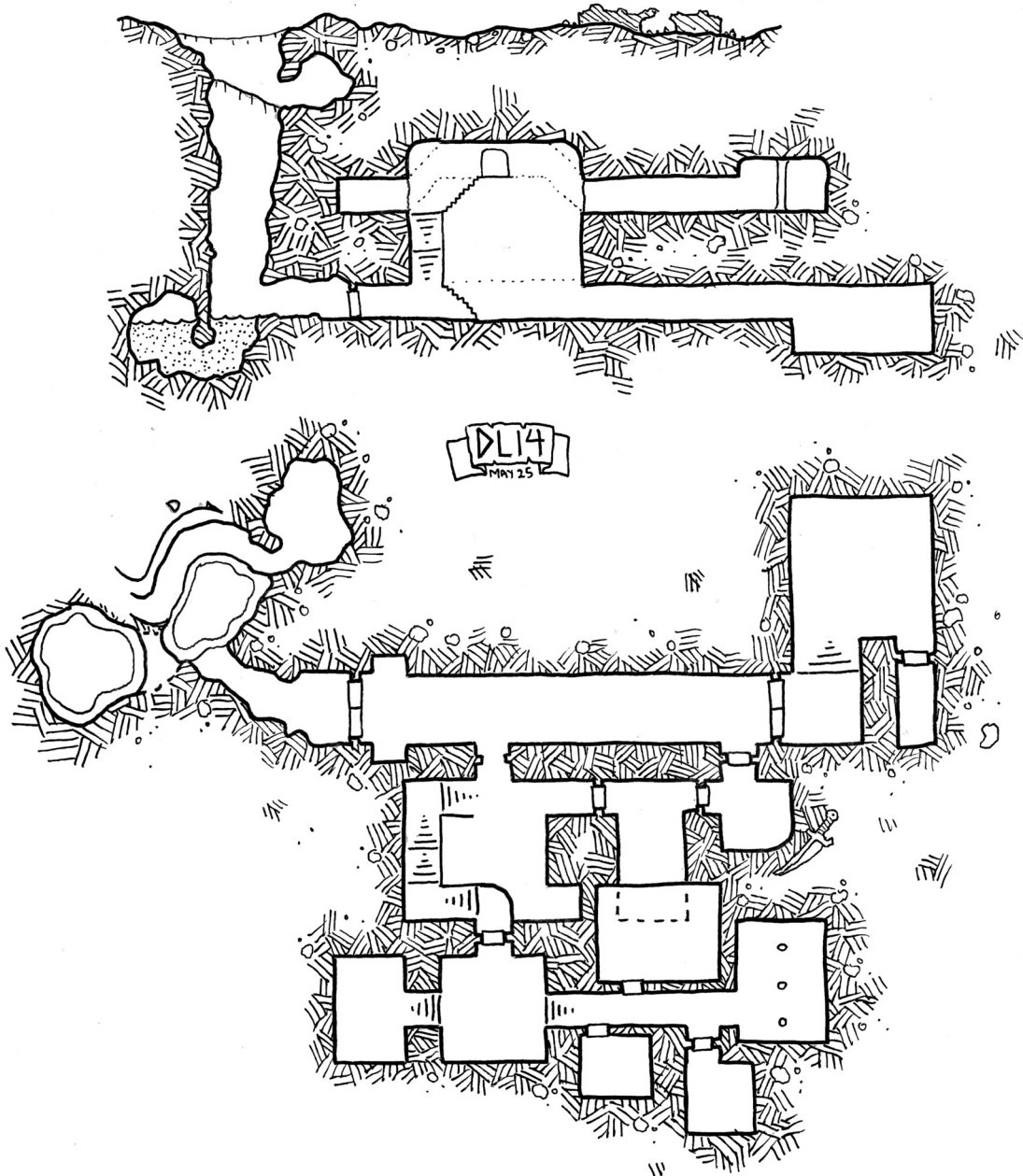
Chalk Hill



Along the north edge of the Havenwood is a minor trade road between Lord Thern's fortress and Perrol on the Mount. Along this road is a small community under the fiefdom of Lord Thern. Known purely by its geographic locale (the town on Chalk Hill), this small palisaded community sits on the hilltop overlooking the fields of turnips and wheat that surround it. The very centre of the town is a sturdy stone church, the only stone construction in town, that was built by Lord Thern's men in the last 15 years, presumably over an older place of worship.

The town on Chalk Hill was inspired by the town of Corroc that is the heart of the adventure "A Thousand Dead Babies" by Zzarchov Kowolski. It doesn't match up 1:1 with the town in that adventure, but with a bit of wiggle it can certainly be used in its place.

The Sunken Maw



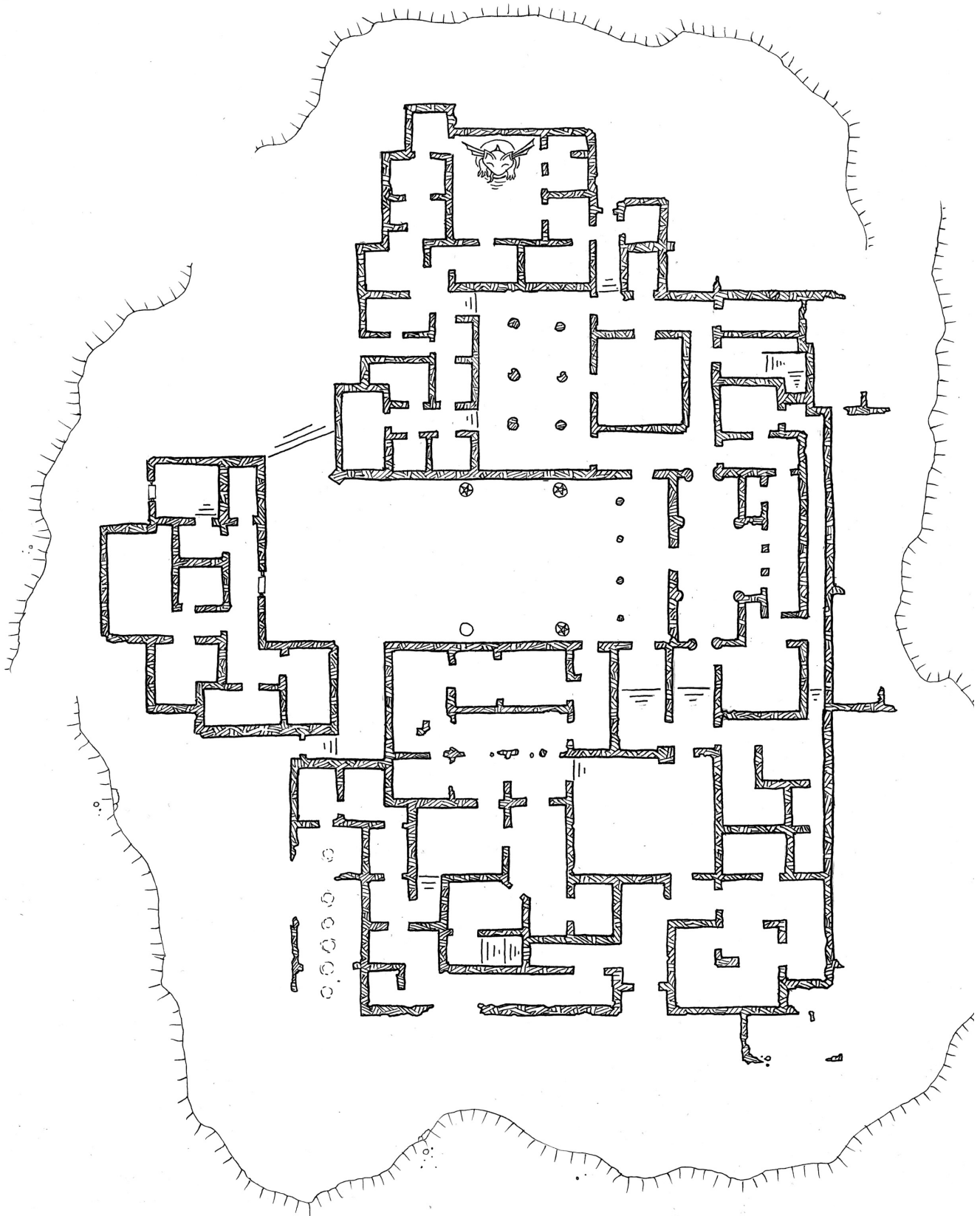
Far too many of my dungeons are easy to access. So why have they lain unplundered all these ages? The Sunken Maw is a bit trickier to get into than most. A nearly straight vertical drop leads to underground stone construction just above the water table. Rope and climbing gear will be the order of the day for lower-level groups, whereas the entry will be a lot easier (and thus less frightening) to those who come equipped with the magic of levitation or means of flight.

To complicate the matter, of course, we have nearby ruins which may contain untold horrors (who may be waiting when you come up from the maw)

and a harpy nest has been established just inside the entrance of the maw, with a narrow path along the edge of the maw to allow pedestrian access to the stinking nest of foul birds.

But it's the structures below that will of course draw the attention of adventurers in the first place. Originally built by elven sorcerers with imprisoned demons to transport them up and down the maw itself, the structure's name has been lost to the ages, but it still contains eldritch magics that were once common to the Kale empire thousands of years ago.

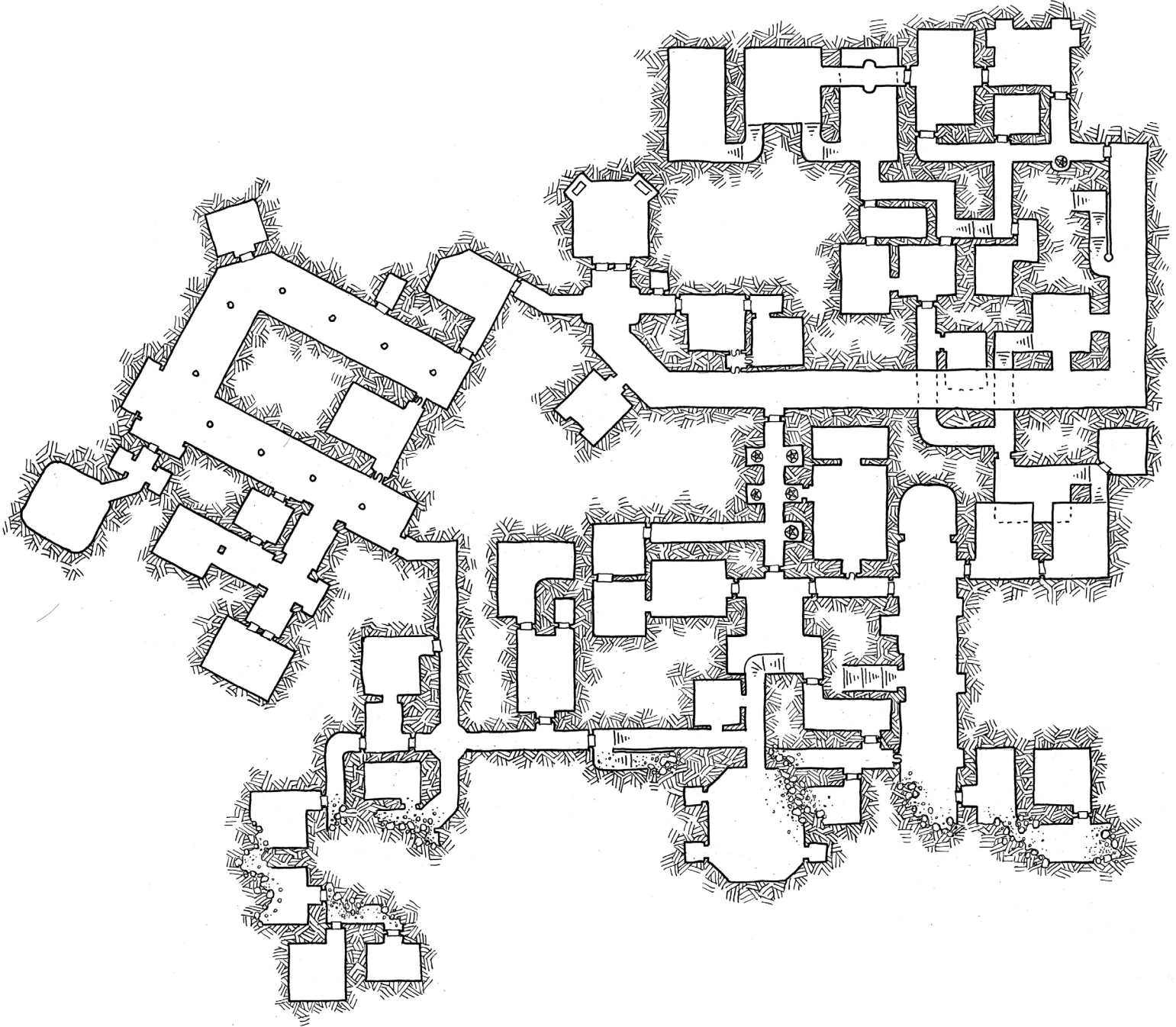
The Ruined Palace



This map was inspired by Minoan ruins courtesy of Wayne Rossi. He was looking for a set of ruins based on the Palace of Zakros. It was a lot of fun to take the Zakros floorplan and just go nuts with it to produce this confusing ruined monstrosity.

The layout has multiple elevations within the buildings, making the main courtyard and the areas around it about 4-8 feet higher than the rest of the construction.

Beneath the Ruined Palace



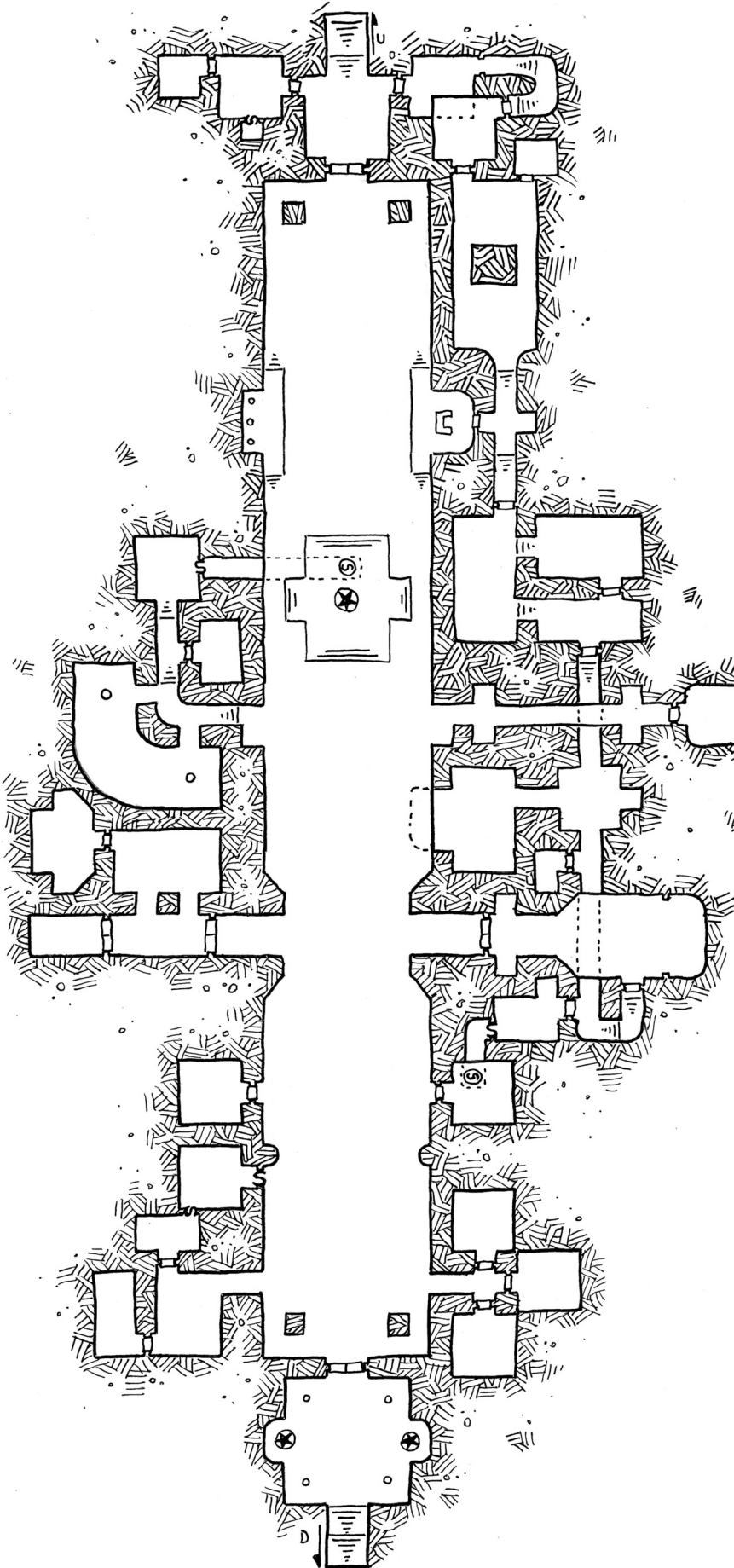
Initially the goal of this map was for a dungeon with 60 or slightly more encounter areas that would fit under the Minoan palace ruins.

I realized as I was drawing it that the way I draw maps, I just couldn't fit that many rooms onto a sheet of 5-quad graph paper. So I pulled out a second page... then I decided I wanted a section that was off the standard 90 & 45 degree angles of the graph paper as given...

In the end we have a map that spanned a full page and two little bits of graph paper.

I love collapsed areas. The implication is that this is part of a much larger underground structure prior to the collapse. These areas could be found from another entrance, or could be lost for all time (depending on what you want from the region as a DM).

The Hall of Gruthren the Excessive

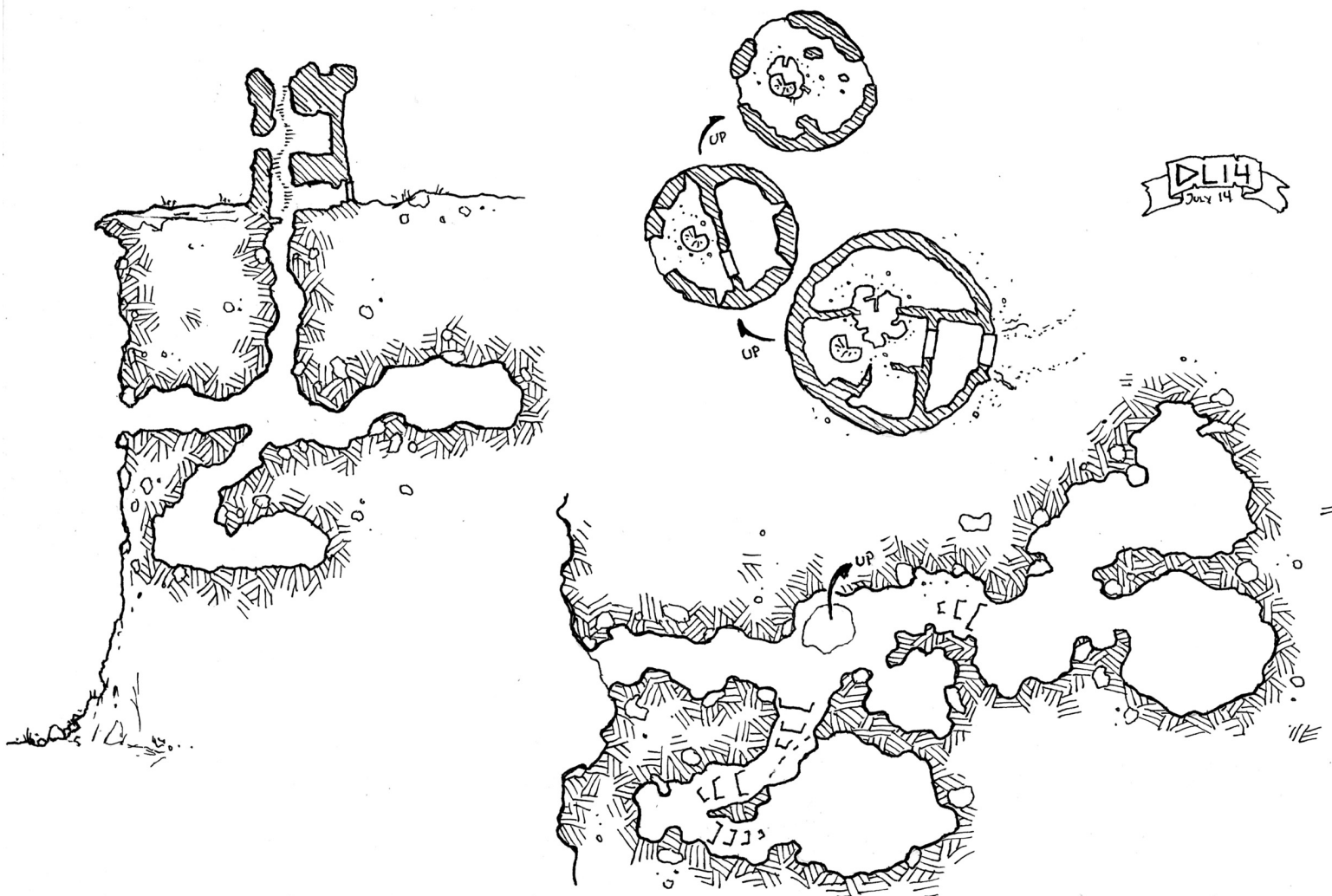


Gruthren the Excessive (also known as Gruthren Lord of All That Shines and is Buried, Gruthren the Obsessed, Gruthren Master of All Things Great and Small, Gruthren The Builder, Gruthren the Immense and Gruthren Of Too Many Titles) had this great hall constructed on level 3 of a local dungeon that he had cleared out by a team of mercenary adventurers. Purely so he would have something this insanely big for others to discover. Once the reconstruction of the level was complete, he abandoned the site and encouraged it's repopulation with various foul beasts by leaving behind a significant quantity of gold, gems, foodstuffs, and even some mighty magical treasures he had accumulated.

Sure enough, his plan worked, and foul beasts moved in from below and above, warring over control of the hall in the centre of the dungeon. Finally a potent mind controlling beast took residence here and used one of the magic statues left behind by Gruthren the Foolishly Brave as a magical link back to him, and drew him here to meet his doom.

Well, that's the story at least. Others say that Gruthren died choking on a chunk of overcooked mutton at the local whorehouse, and the stories of his luring back to the Great Hall was just to conceal how much treasure his advisors and staff took with them when they vacated his palace.

Imp Tower



I'm enjoy working in three dimensions with areas that are not easily accessible to the average adventurer, thus explaining why extraordinary adventurers are required as well as why these areas have not yet been plundered.

In the case of "Imp Tower", a decrepit stone tower sits over a hole that leads down to a cave, definitely home to something nasty with wings that the locals don't have the skills, manpower and bravado to take care of. Sure, someone could climb down the shaft exposed in the floor of the ruined tower, or up or down the cliff face to get to the cave, but the entire time they would be sitting ducks for the beasts that claim these caves as their home.

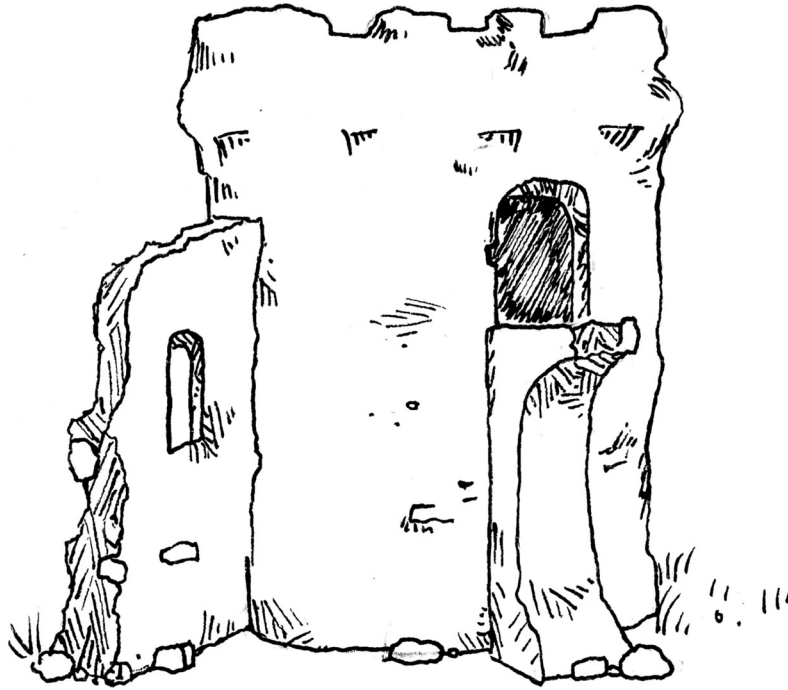
Conroy's Confusing Caves



This cluster of caves leads to an underground river and was probably carved out in part by surface waters joining the subterranean waterway at some point. Some attempts have been made by various groups to build up sections of the caves (always near the surface entrances), but the presence (imagined or real) of squamous monstrosities living and travelling through the murky black waters generally keep civilized species from living here for long.

In the largest natural cavern there is a post driven into a small raised section of stone. The post has definitely been used to hold prisoners or sacrifices of some kind in the past, and perhaps a new cult worshipping the misshapen toad-things said to live here have brought back the use of this sacrificial platform.

The Dreamer's Tower

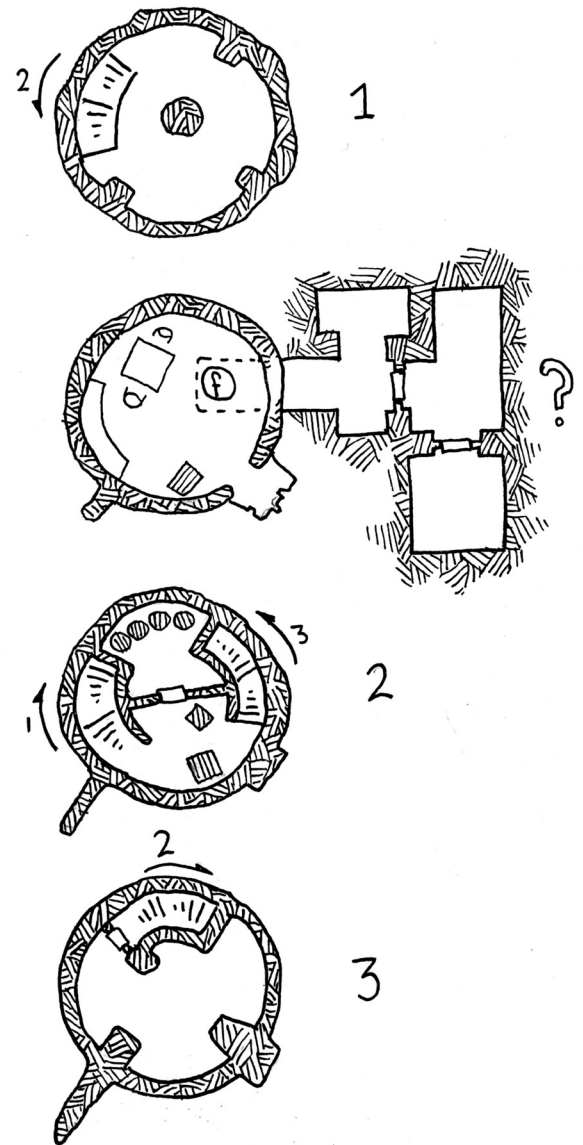


Along the island shore, no more than a few hours walk from Ravenson's Landing is another tower standing alone, jutting out above the sea. Made of a soft green stone, it appears to have been carved from soapstone or something similar and was evidently once part of a much larger construction. There are two entries into the tower, neither of which is very convenient. And one of which seems to make no sense whatsoever.

The obvious entry is the doorway 12 feet off the ground with the ruins of a bridge or similar structure jutting out from it. The other entrance is to climb to the top of the tower where there is a stairwell that descends down to the lower levels.

The problem is that these two entrances don't seem to go to the same tower.

Anyone entering through the doorway finds themselves in a circular chamber with no stairs up or down, but containing old metal bookshelves and chairs and a single trap door that leads to a set of three rooms that evidently lay outside of the area of the tower itself. Entry from the top of the tower presents the explorer with stairs that lead down,

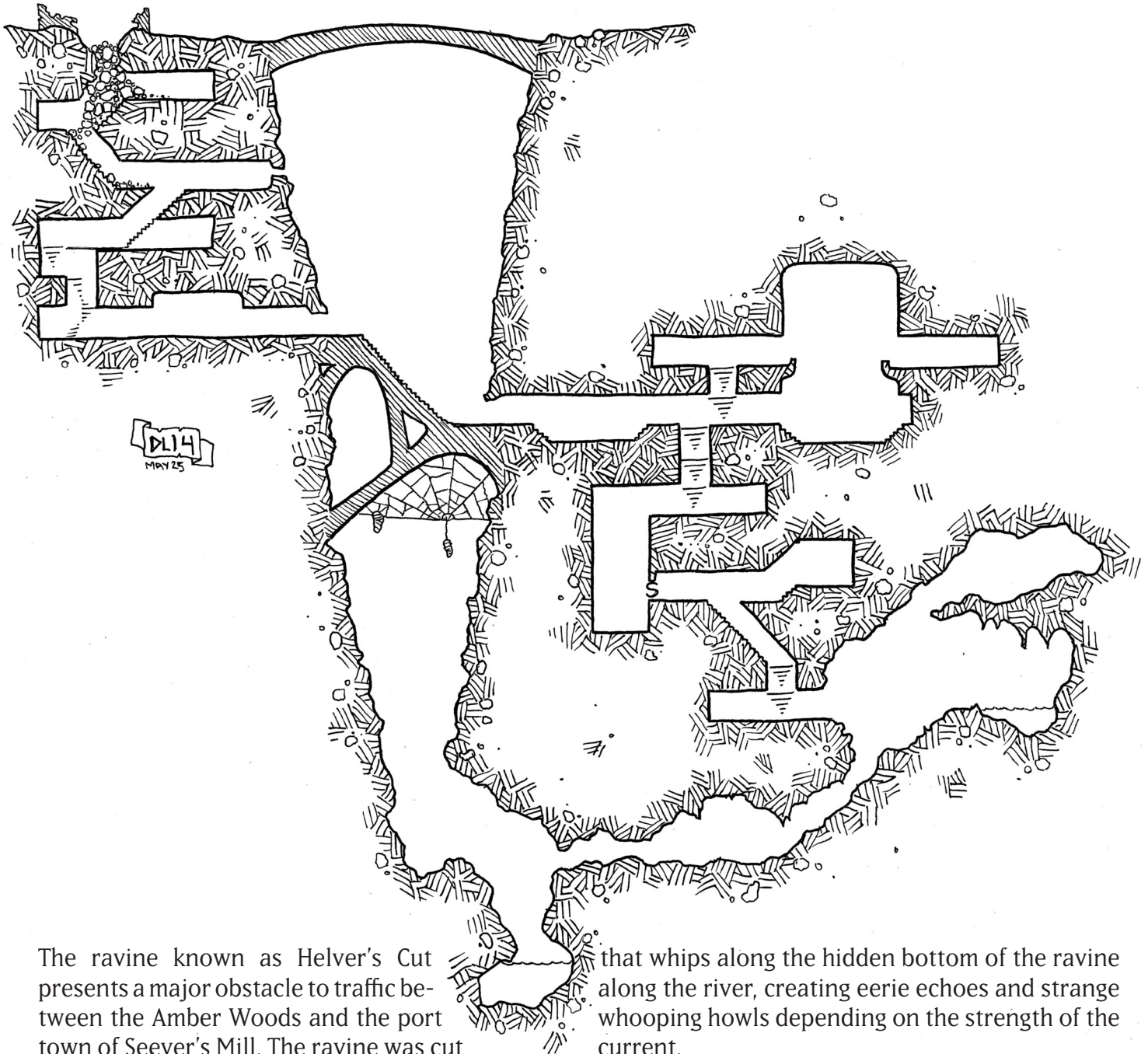


but not to the same chamber as the doorway – in fact it leads to two other tower levels completely bypassing the strange library.

The Dreamer sits in a globe of self-created energy, floating in the middle of the lowest chamber. He has been asleep for three thousand years and dreaming of a world without yellow dragons. Awakening him will bring back the yellow dragons (the true fruit of the yellow musk creeper), and their minion-armies of yellow-musk zombies.

And it takes him a three years, three months, three days and three hours of rest and tranquility to get back into his deep meditative state to return to those dreams. And before he does that, he's going to bust open his vow of silence and his vow of non-violence and fuck these jerks up who interrupted his sleep..

Howling Orc Bridge



The ravine known as Helver's Cut presents a major obstacle to traffic between the Amber Woods and the port town of Seever's Mill. The ravine was cut into the landscape by waters from the Black Mire running towards the ocean. Fortunately, few have need to cross the ravine, but for those that do the options are to circumnavigate it, or to cross at the Howling Orc Bridge.

The Howling Orc Bridge is the last visible remnant of a fortress that was built here and then razed during the great war. The surface ruins of the fortress are near the massive stone span that crosses the ravine. The bridge gets its name from the wind

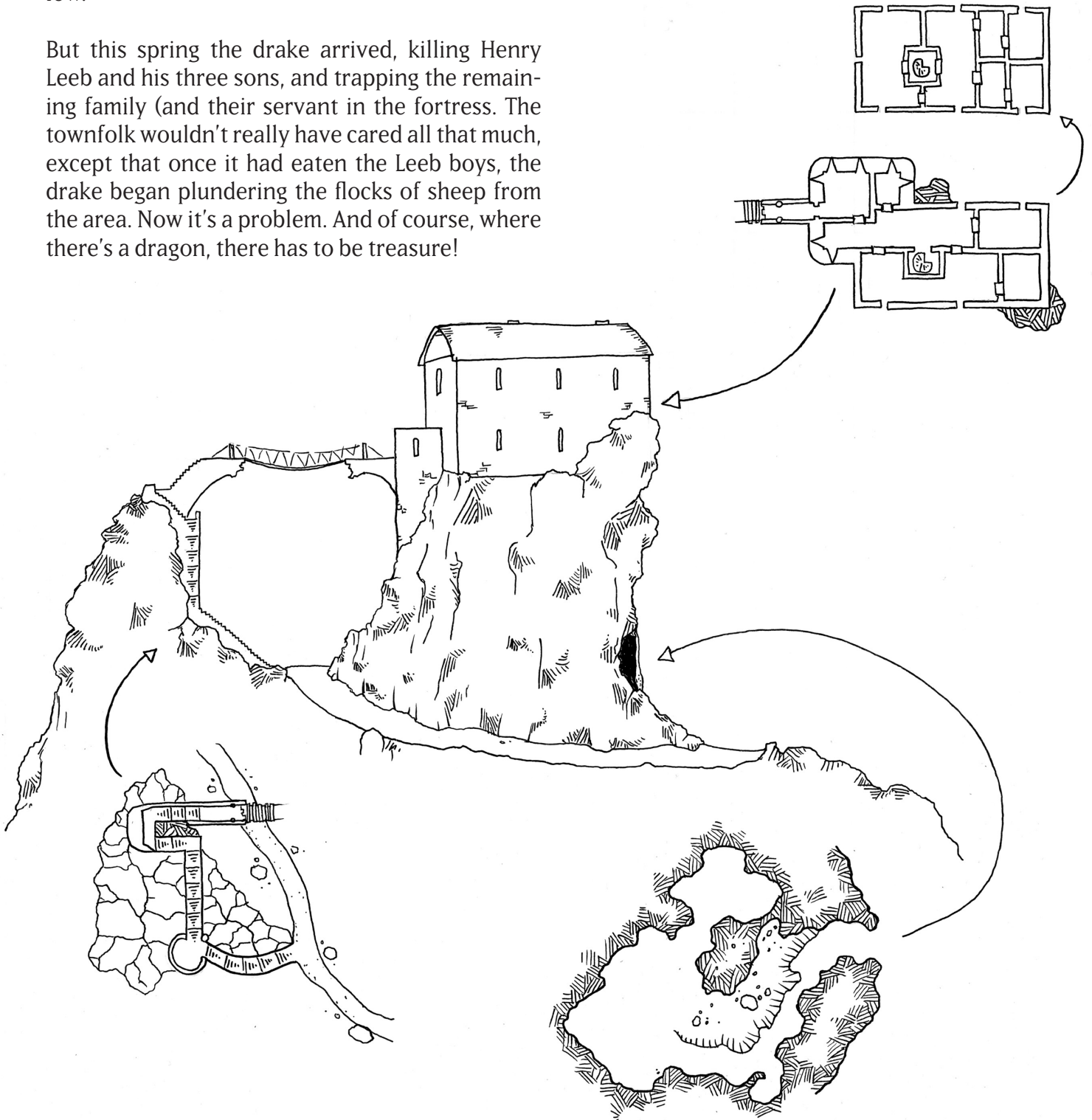
that whips along the hidden bottom of the ravine along the river, creating eerie echoes and strange whooping howls depending on the strength of the current.

A second bridge can be seen below the Howling Orc Bridge, a hundred feet further down into the ravine. Occasionally massive spiders can be seen on the lower bridge, setting webs for the birds and other animals foolish enough to fly through the ravine. The lower bridge also serves as a reminder that the old fortress was more than just a surface construction, and those that cross here posit that there must still be some way to access the old dungeons under the fortress.

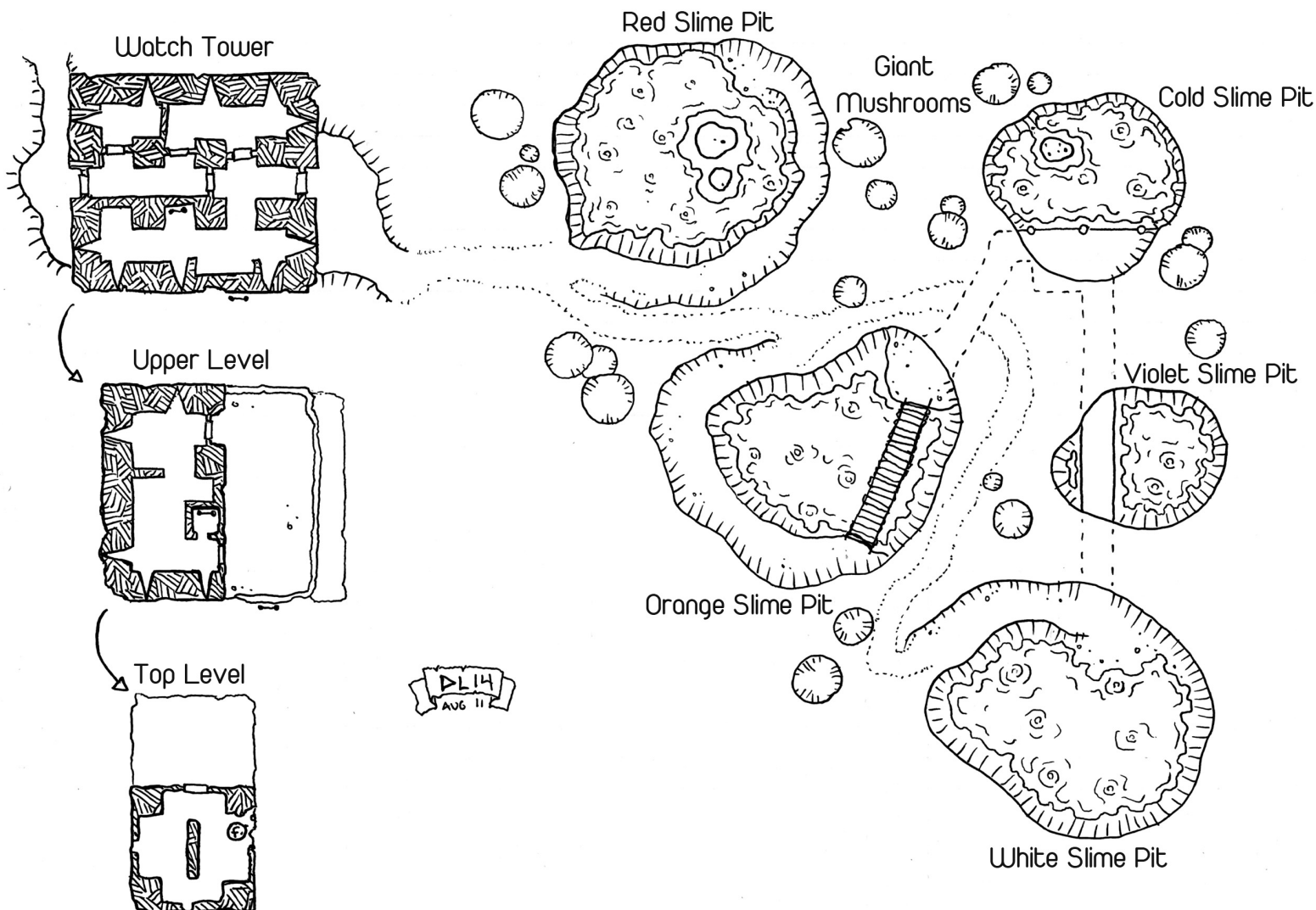
Leeb's Fortress

The Leeb family has long maintained their hereditary holdings on a small spire east of town. Although not a rich family, the fact that the holdings include a small fortress that overlooks the fields down in the valley has ensured that the family name is remembered and that they are treated far better than their economics would normally allow.

But this spring the drake arrived, killing Henry Leeb and his three sons, and trapping the remaining family (and their servant in the fortress. The townfolk wouldn't really have cared all that much, except that once it had eaten the Leeb boys, the drake began plundering the flocks of sheep from the area. Now it's a problem. And of course, where there's a dragon, there has to be treasure!



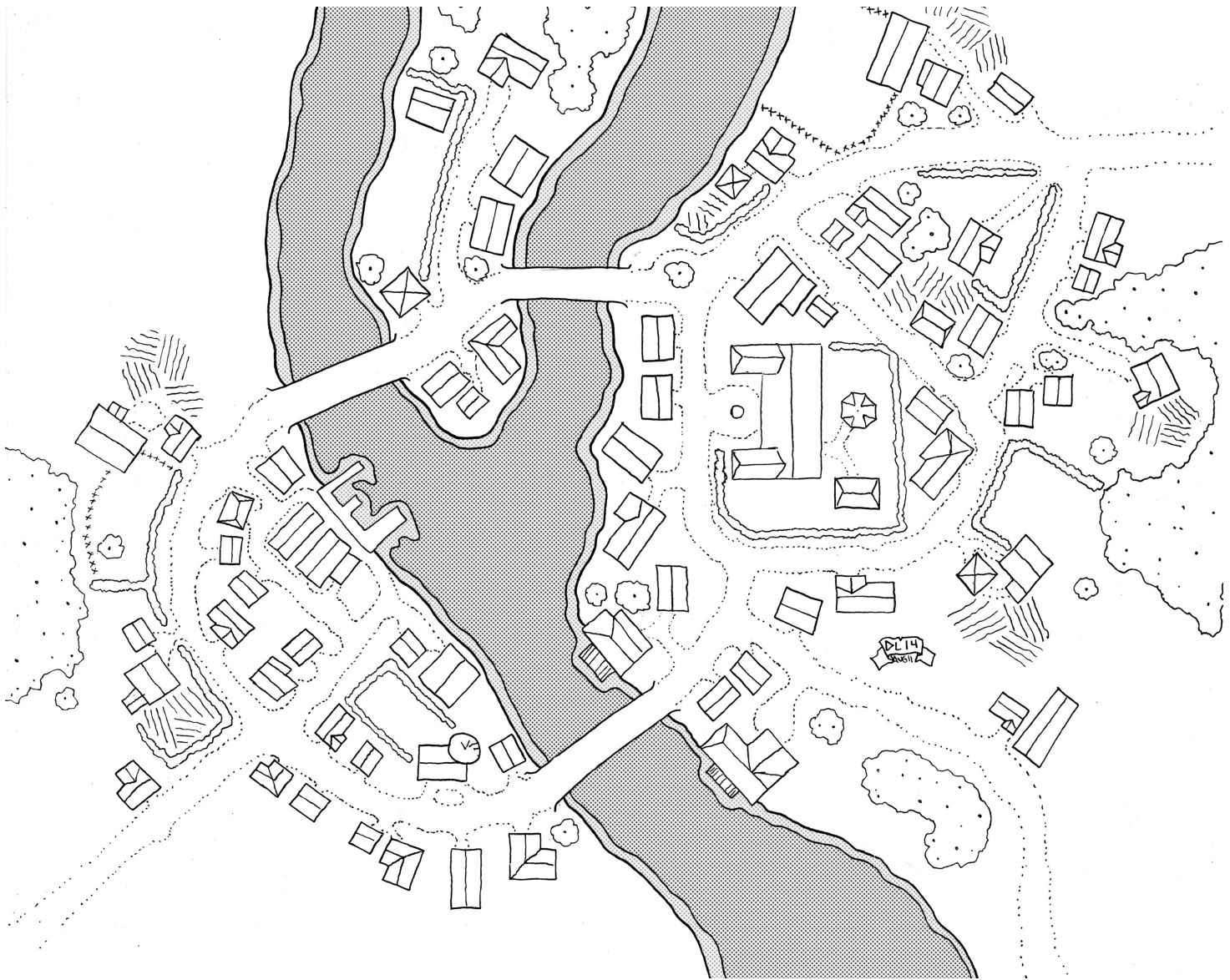
The Slime Pits of Vilnid the Master



Inspired by things fungal and nasty, as well as the evolution pits of the Invid, I drew up the Slime Pits of Vilnid and the associated watch structure (mostly a guard tower, but with a few “researchers” living there as well).

Each of the pits has a massive pool containing tonnes of one of five different “interesting” slime molds. In addition, the area around the pits is nigh overrun with huge mushrooms that have sprung up from these slime mold infestations. Who knows how deep the rhizomes of the various slime molds have infiltrated the land around here, or what strange effects they will have in time...

The Town of Melad Crossings



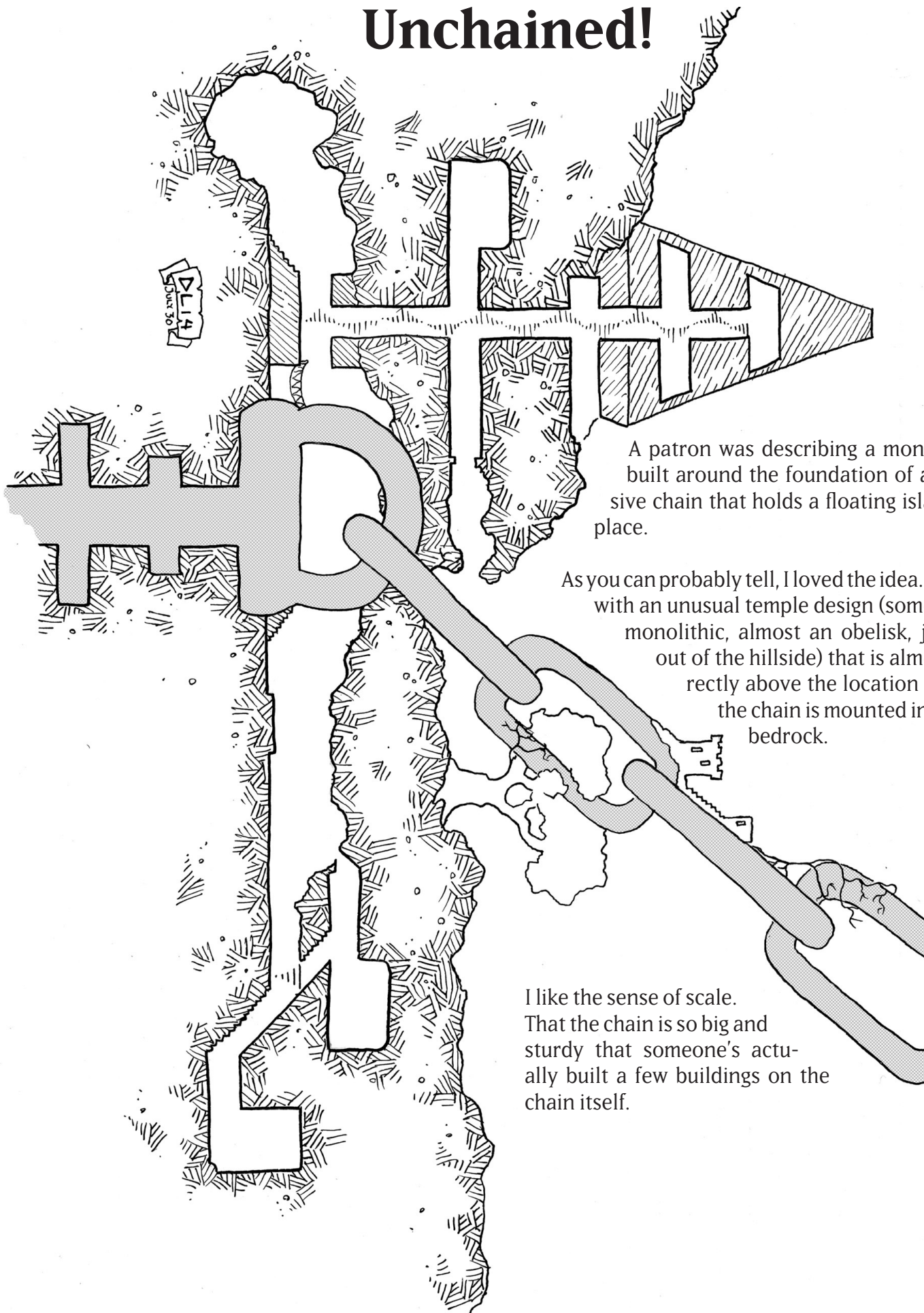
Foul things are afoot in the town of Melad Crossings. One of the two mills has stopped, the smell of death creeps by in the wind from many buildings, the streets are barren, and those who live are not likely to be out of doors except as is necessary.

The water along the west fork of the river is running milky white, and none of the fishermen are among the living, struck dead two weeks ago just as the river began to change. But that doesn't explain all the deaths — something else must be working it's

way through the townfolk... while the headsman says it is disease and begs for the church to send healers or paladins, others believe something far more sentient and sinister is behind the continued deaths.

Or, you know, it could just be a pleasant little town for your adventuring party to chill out at en route to their next adventure.

Unchained!

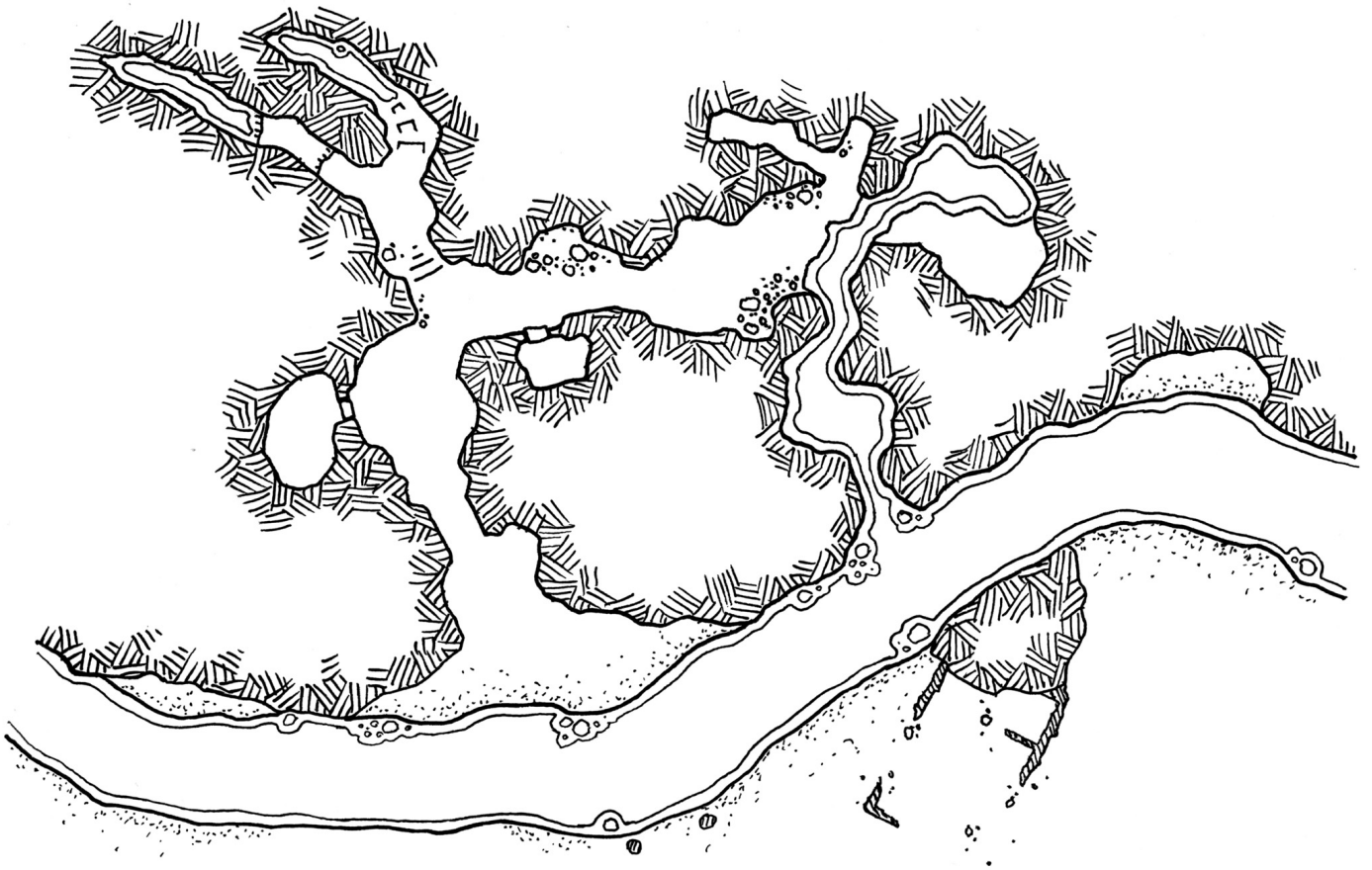


A patron was describing a monastery built around the foundation of a massive chain that holds a floating island in place.

As you can probably tell, I loved the idea. I went with an unusual temple design (something monolithic, almost an obelisk, jutting out of the hillside) that is almost directly above the location where the chain is mounted into the bedrock.

I like the sense of scale. That the chain is so big and sturdy that someone's actually built a few buildings on the chain itself.

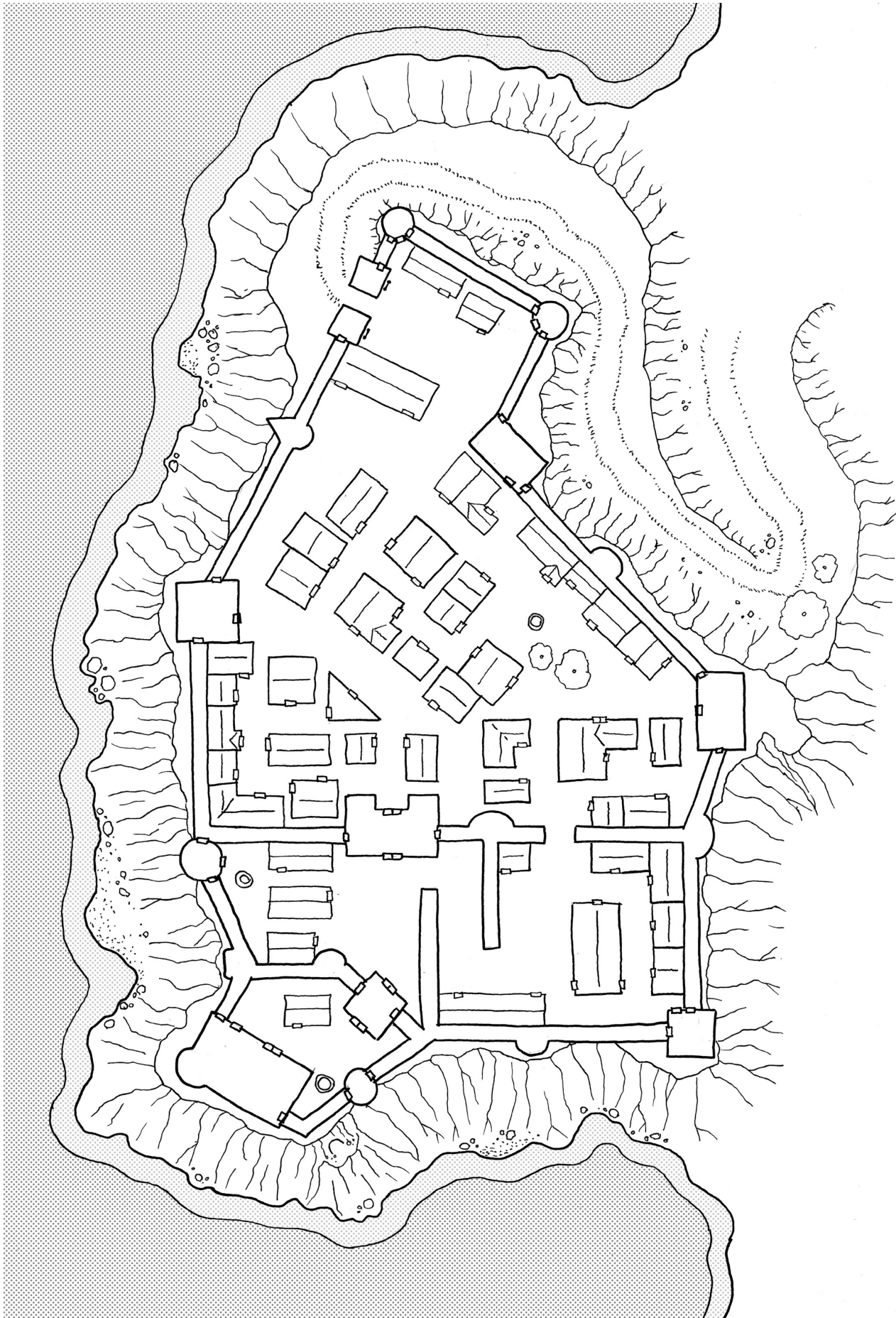
Cortland's Flooded Mines



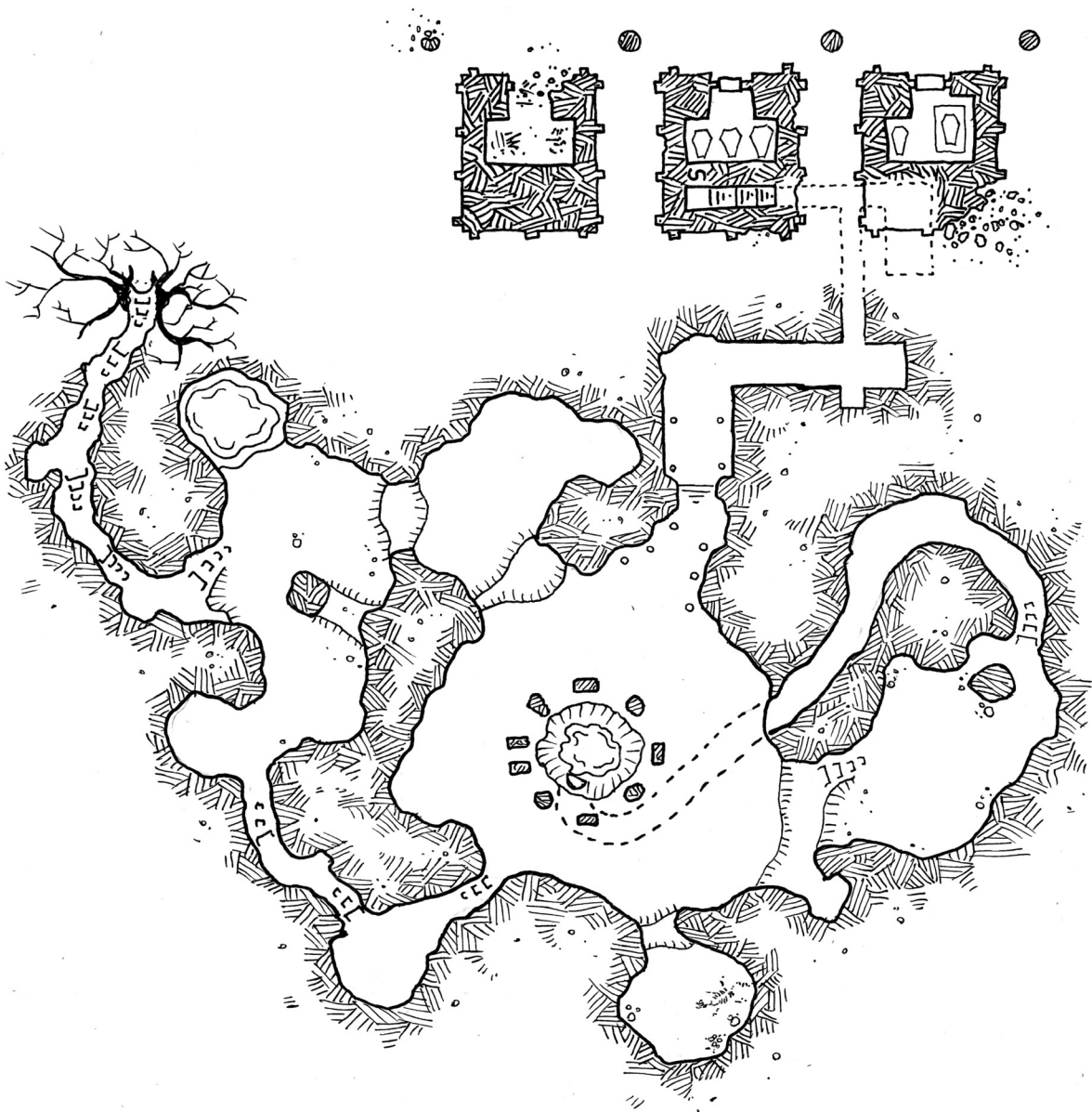
Not all mines are very extensive. In the case of Cortland's Mines, they were quite small. Mainly because they were started because a miner saw some silver exposed on a cliffside that had been eroded by a passing river. Not having the time or inclination to reroute the river, digging unfortunately resulted in some very wet and often flooded mines. Turns out there wasn't all that much silver there anyways.

The mines have been abandoned for some time now, and the bridge over the river is long gone (as is the old guard house and living quarters on this side of the river). But like in any good fantasy story, dark things tend to dwell in dark places, and these mines are no exception...

Dreifer's Fortress



Three Hillside Tombs



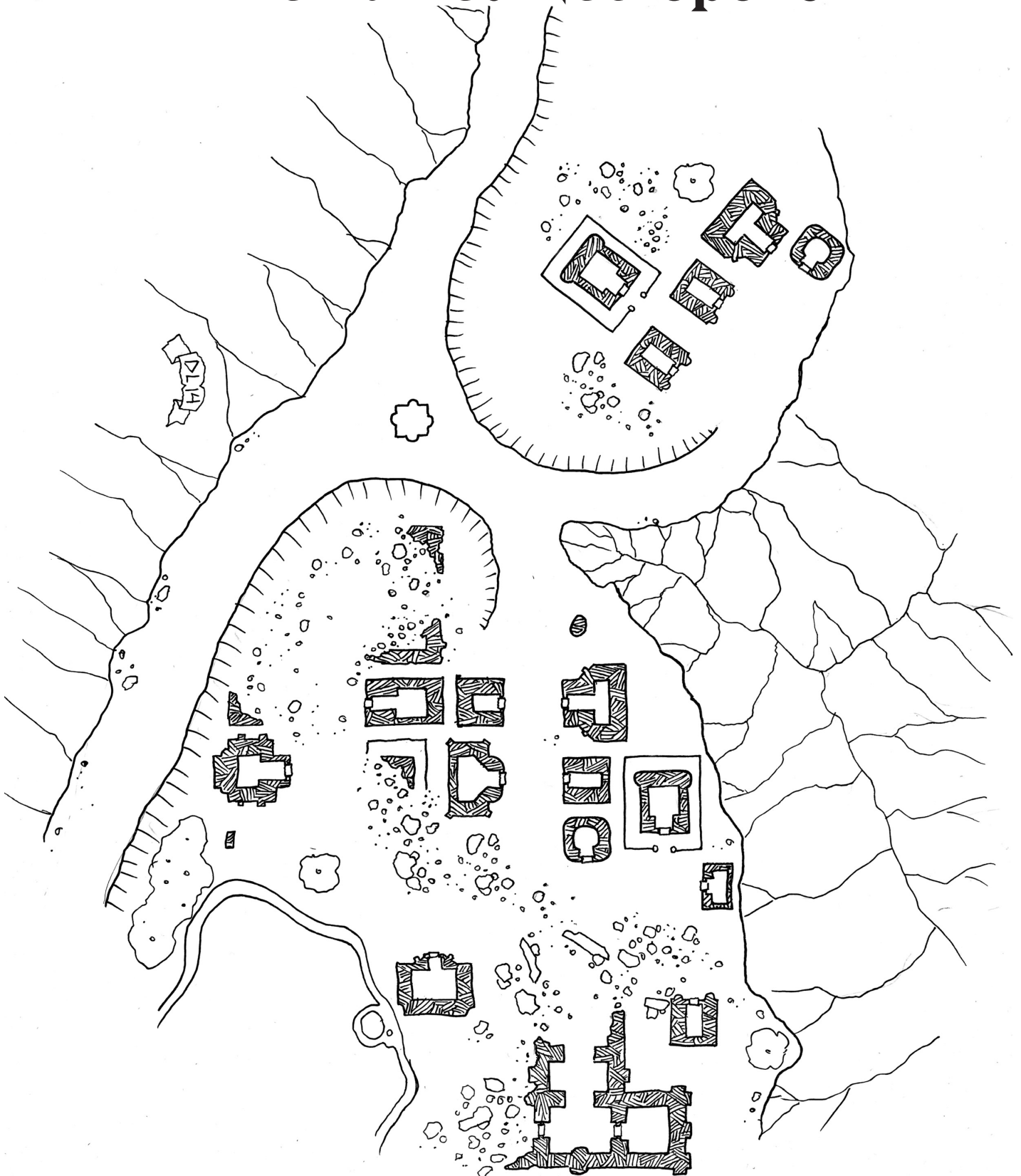
About a 25 minute walk west of the Burren Estate (home until recently of a massive and ancient wyrm most foul) are three family tombs against the backdrop of rolling hills and ancient oaks.

Without care and maintenance these last hundred years, the tombs are not in the best of shape, but if there is any place the wyrm may not have looted during his century-long stay, it may be the smaller

crypts of the family. Except these crypts actually hide something else – a cave containing a small lake and some standing stones (site of ancient sacrifices?) is hidden in these hills and linked to the crypts.

An alternate access to this cave is a small concealed cave hidden among the roots of a mighty oak tree near the crypts.

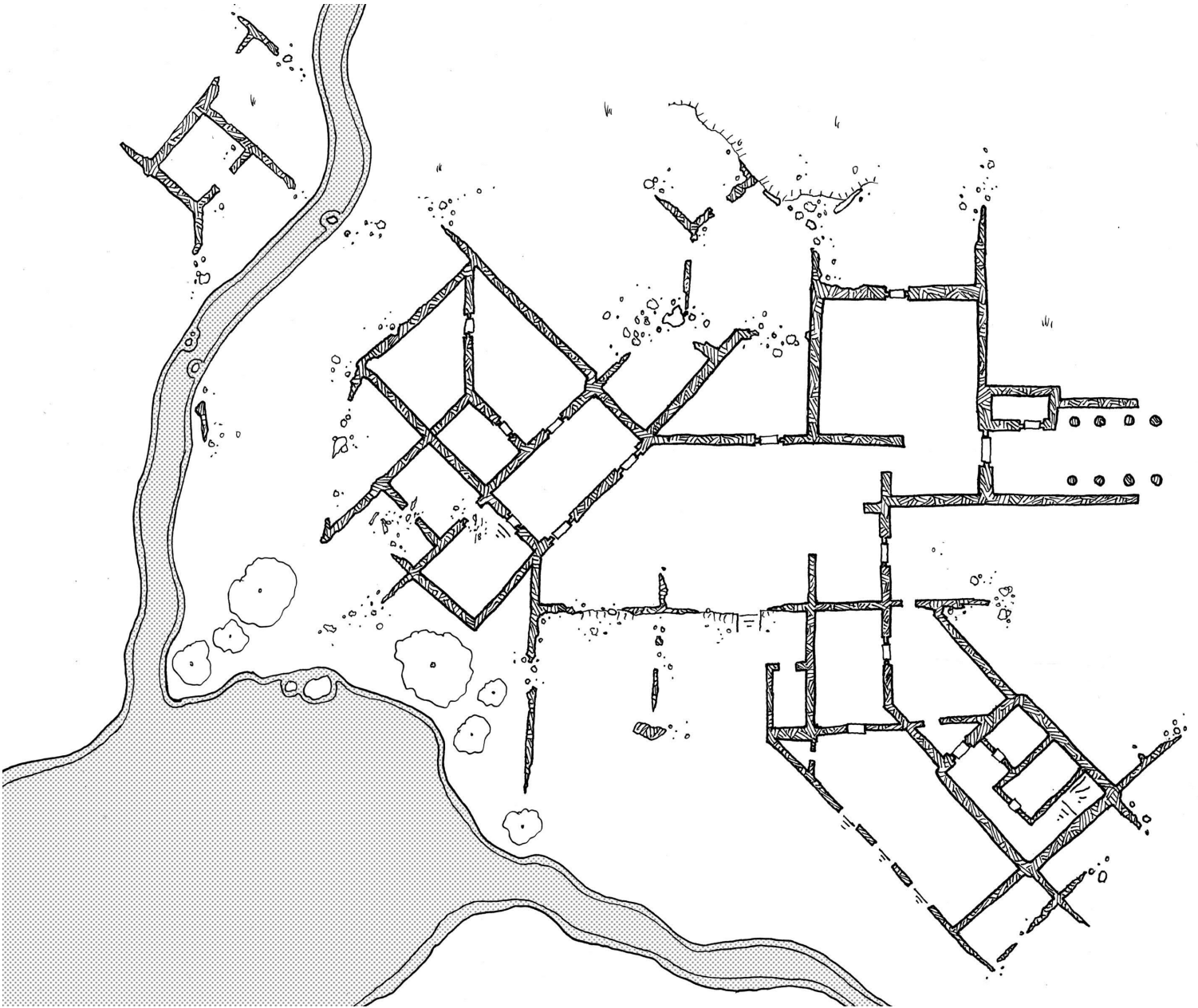
The Ruined Necropolis



Further from the Burren Estate, along the same path as the three hillside tombs, is the small family necropolis that was used by the now-dead fell wyrm as a nest for a pair portion of his time at the estate.

Ruined by the wyrm's mass and claws as he sought out comfortable nesting space among the black rocks in this sunny little mountain valley, the crypts of the necropolis may still hide treasures of the Burren family that the dragon didn't loot.

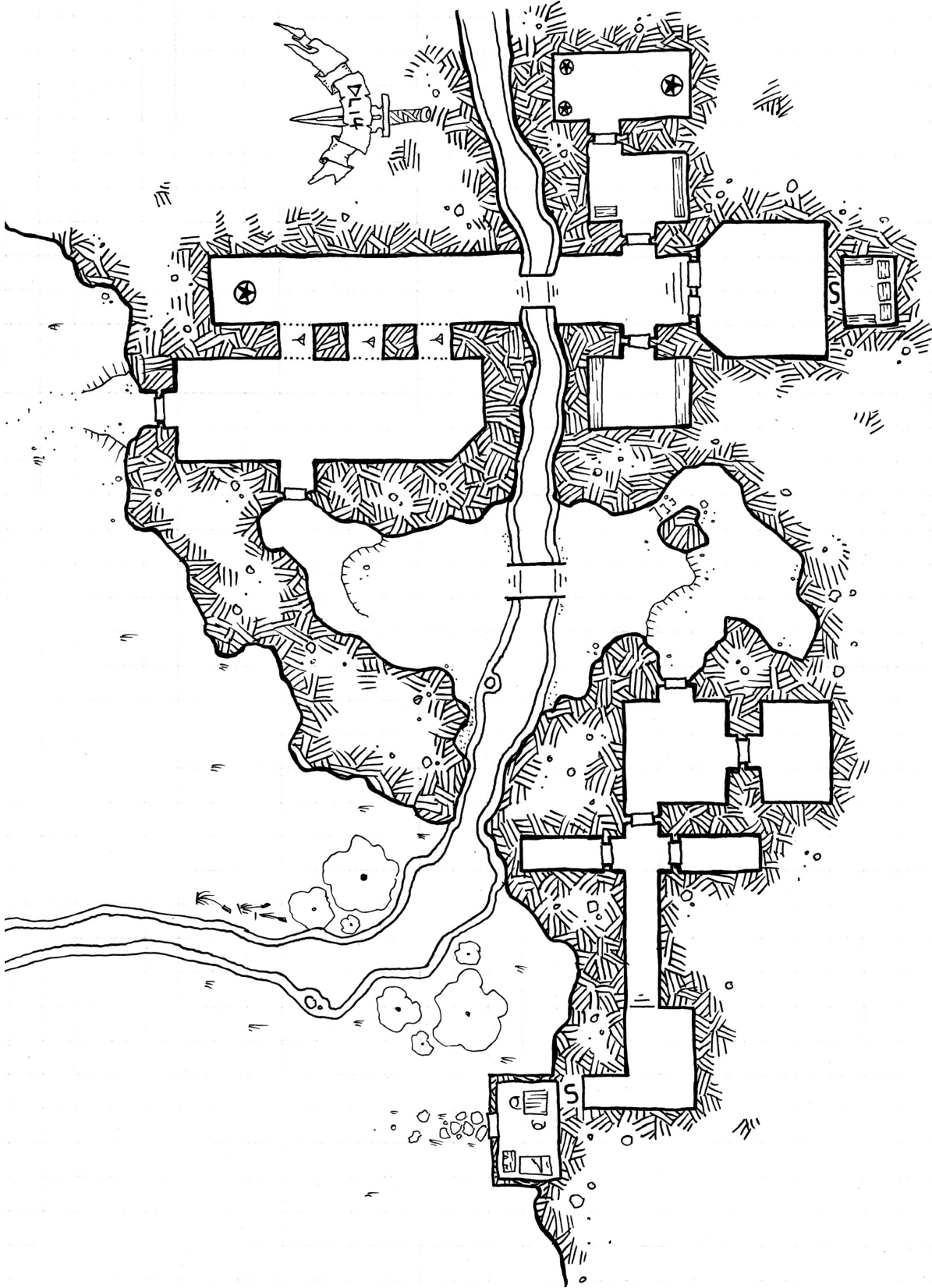
Burren Estate Ruins



At the heart of the Burren Estate are the ruins of the structures that were here centuries before the modern estate. These old buildings were supposedly built in cooperation between the earliest members of the Burren line and the elves who still maintained their empire in that era. The old estate structures were already abandoned and in rough shape prior to the arrival of the great wyrm that ate the remaining Burrens and took over the estate.

While the wyrm was in charge he would only make occasional passes by the old estate buildings — spending most of his time in the necropolis and the main estate buildings. This allowed other creatures either foolhardy or stupid enough to risk living in the feeding grounds of a dragon to move into the ruins.

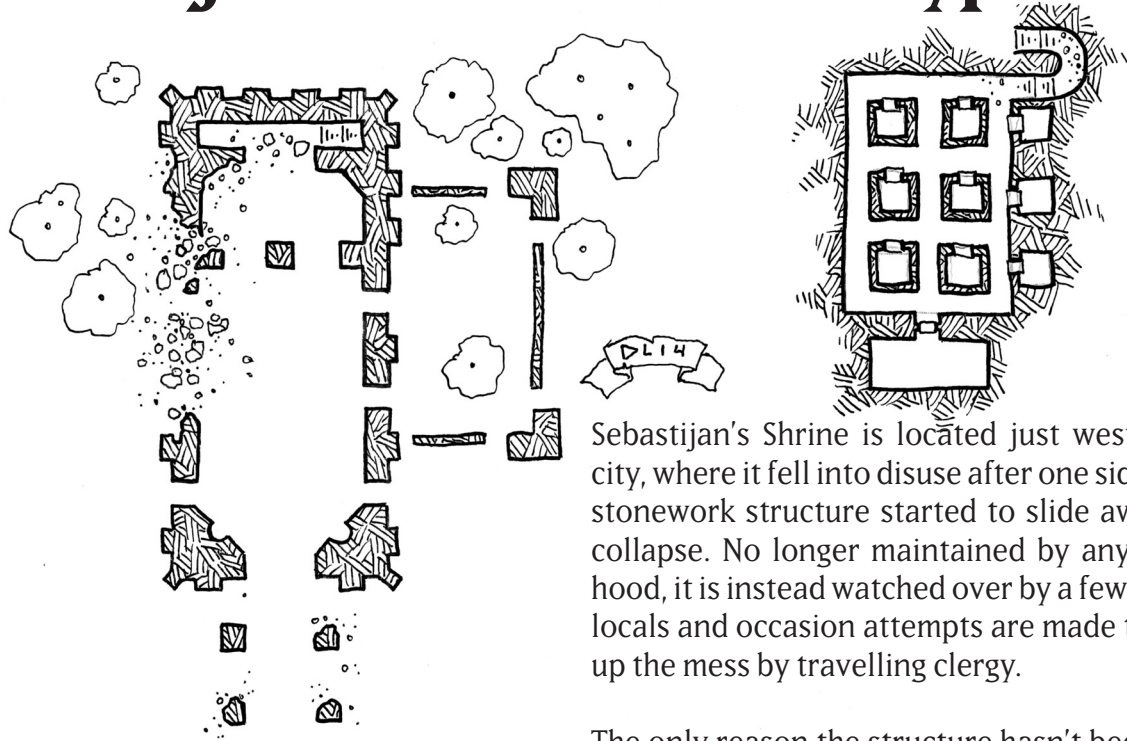
Dwarven Shrine at Mount Thorrien



At the base of Mount Thorrien is a shrine to one of the dwarven patrons of the great war – a water deity that helped guide the dwarven earthships to this realm to engage in the war against the Kale. The clan that built this shrine, along with most

of the dwarves of Mount Thorrien, were among the clans who managed to maintain their fleet of earthships through the war and then departed in them when the fighting was over.

Sebastijan's Shrine and Crypts



Sebastijan's Shrine is located just west of the city, where it fell into disuse after one side of the stonework structure started to slide away and collapse. No longer maintained by any priesthood, it is instead watched over by a few faithful locals and occasion attempts are made to clean up the mess by travelling clergy.

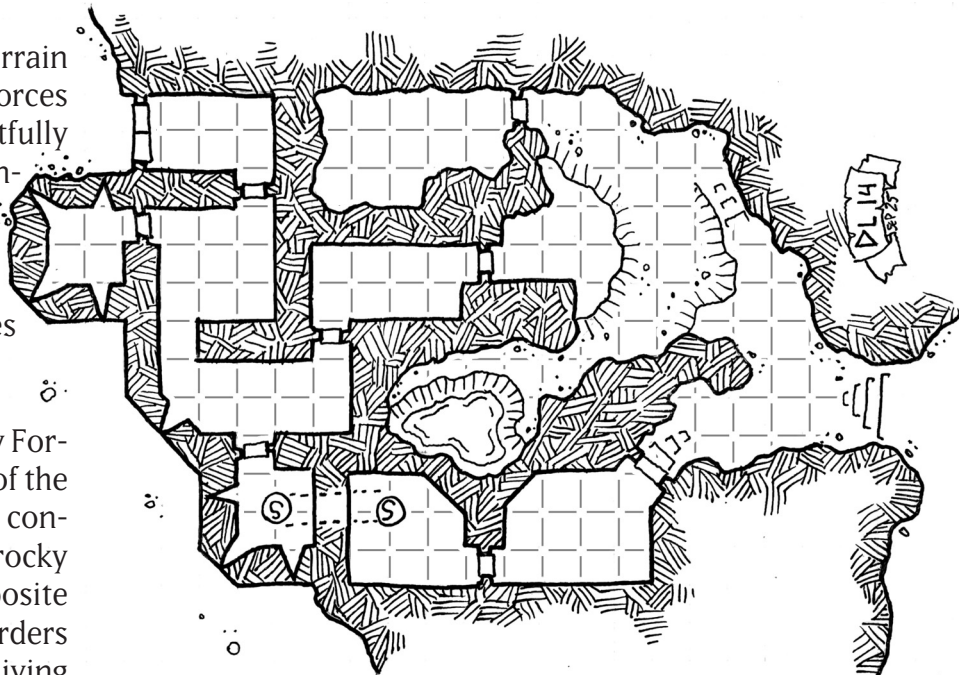
The only reason the structure hasn't been completely abandoned is the crypts below it, which include the resting places of many early faithful supplicants to Saint Sebastijan including a few important persons from the foundation of the nearby city and a gnoll prince who fought bravely along with his mercenary tribe against the elves.

Habddar's Fortress

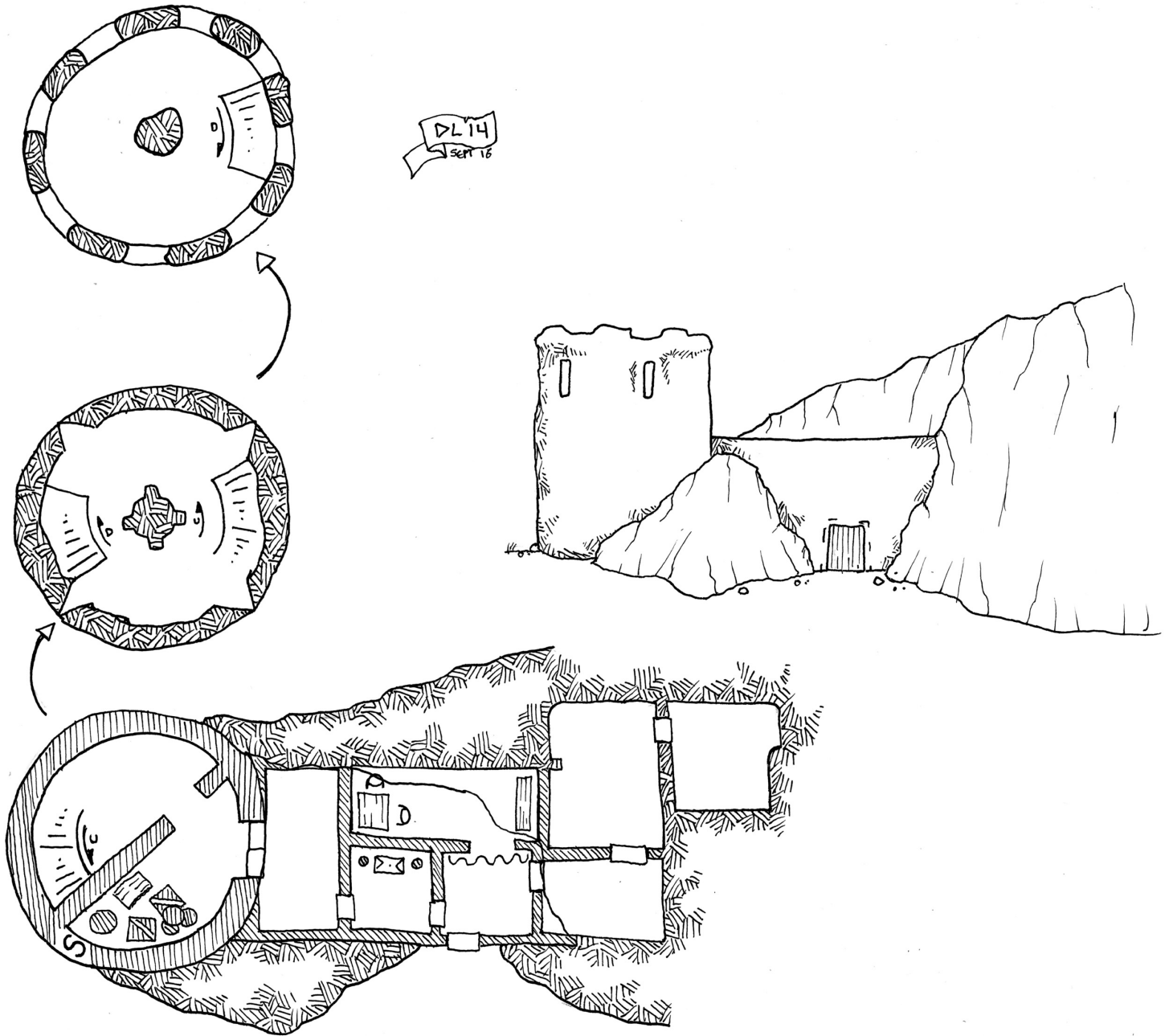
Rocky hills overlook the poor farming lands along the eastern coastline of the Empire. Most people live by fishing and herding in these lands because of the difficulty of cropping here.

However, it does provide for the kind of terrain that is easily defended against invading forces – making this area one of the more frightfully “independent” regions under Imperial control. Many caves pepper the rocky hills, and fortresses and watchtowers sprung up along the hillsides during the generations of conflict between man and dwarves and the collapsing empire of the elves.

Habddar's Fortress, also known as the Grey Fortress or Habddar's Grey Fortress (because of the particularly light grey stone used in the construction) sits on the edge of one of these rocky hills, and connects to the caves on the opposite face of the hill that have been used by herders and farmers as long as people remember living in the region.



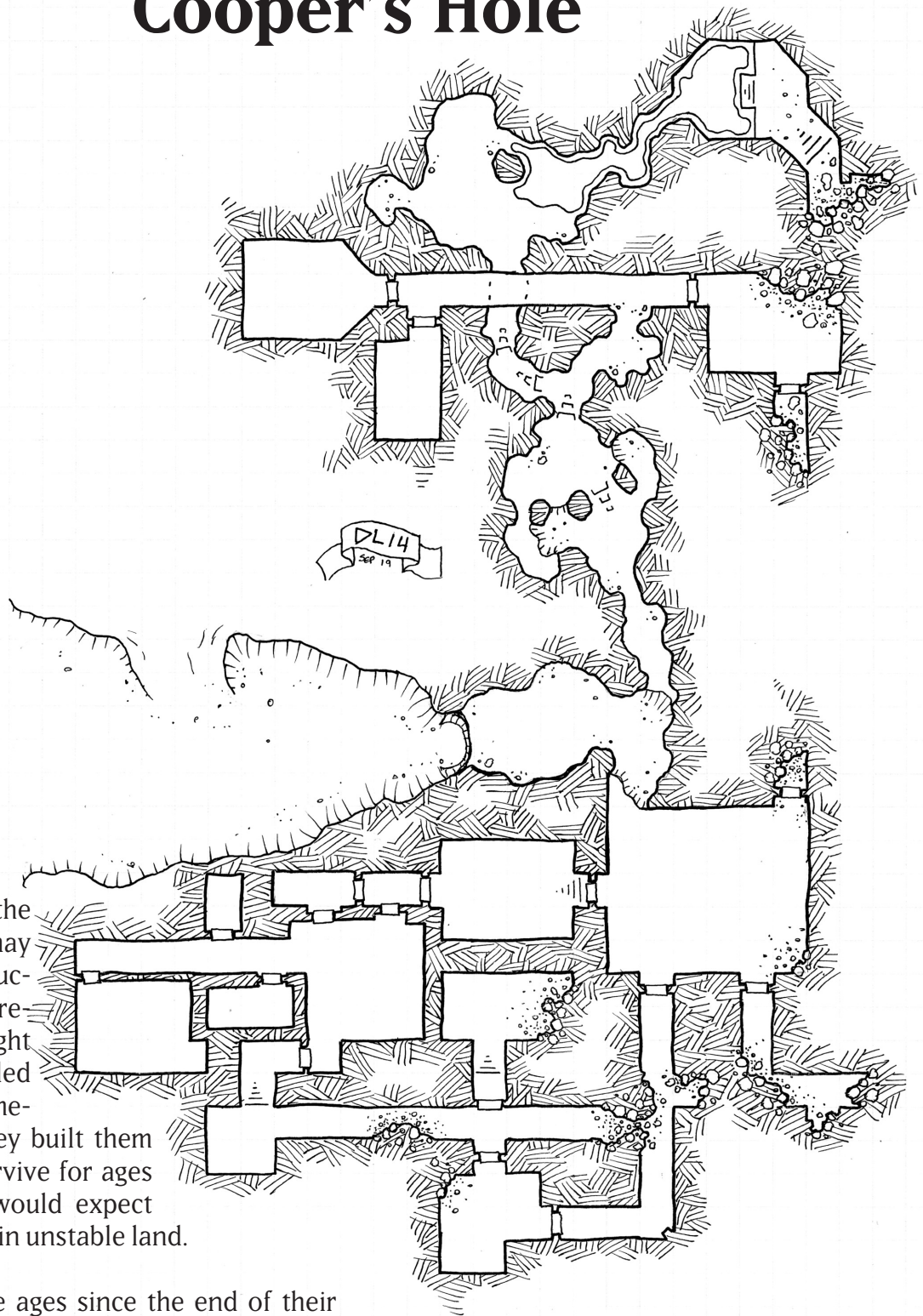
The Butcher's Tower



This old tower and associated structure were built into an outcropping of rock that had traditionally been used as a watch point for the nearby town for generations. As the town found itself existing in safer and safer climes over the years, the tower changed hands and purposes several times, including a few decades as the town's butcher shop.

Now it is once again used as a watch tower and base of operations for the local bandit warlord. From here he can keep an eye on the shell of the old town and the few families that still eke out a living there. Some families call the tower by its traditional name of Hubert's Tower, but the common name of The Butcher's Tower seems even more appropriate under current management.

Cooper's Hole



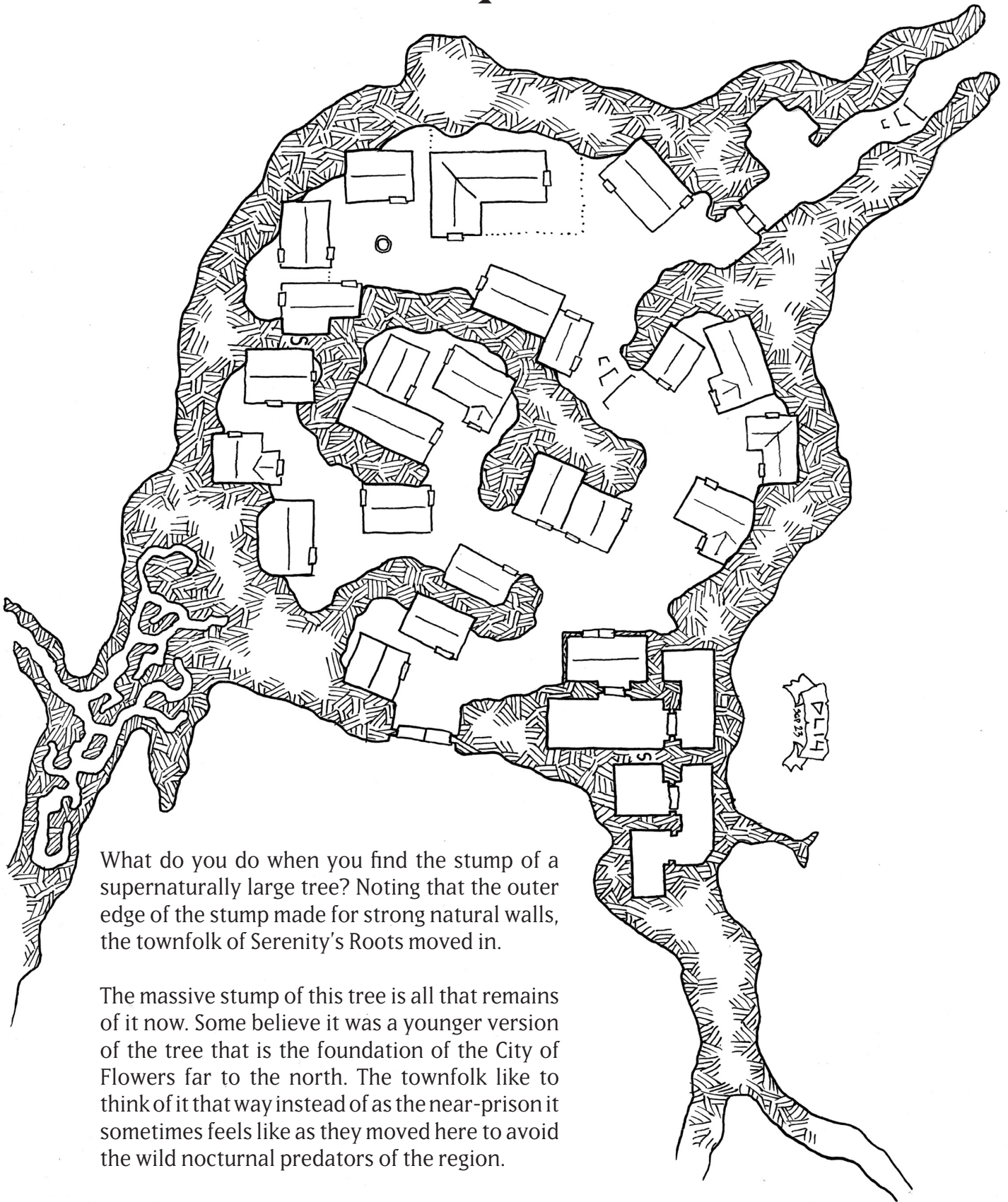
We don't know why the ancients built so many underground structures (perhaps to remain out of the sight of the elves who ruled the lands) – and something about how they built them enabled them to survive for ages beyond what you would expect for stone structures in unstable land.

Regardless, over the ages since the end of their civilization, their ruins have been discovered by countless miners, diggers, spelunkers and treasure hunters.

This particular set of ruins is partially collapsed and now links to a cave that is home to far too many bats for entry to be a sanitary or safe choice. But behind all that guano there's a fairly intact set of ancient ruins, along with the odd artifacts that

usually come with such. Occasionally a small artifact makes its way to the front of the cave with all the comings and goings of the bats, and maybe it will be enough to get the attention of some adventurers with the right equipment or magic to get past all that crap and the gasses it produces to find the ruins beyond.

Serenity's Roots

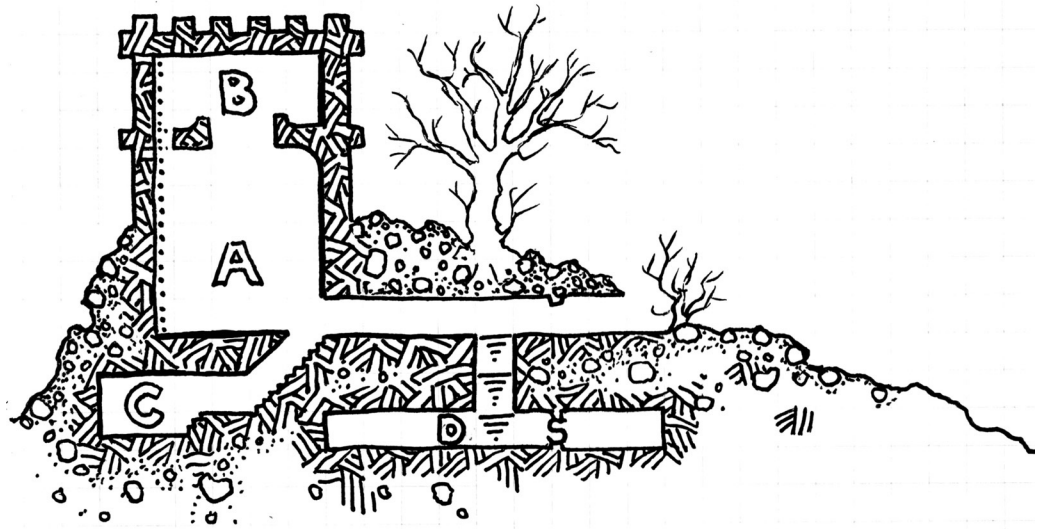


What do you do when you find the stump of a supernaturally large tree? Noting that the outer edge of the stump made for strong natural walls, the townfolk of Serenity's Roots moved in.

The massive stump of this tree is all that remains of it now. Some believe it was a younger version of the tree that is the foundation of the City of Flowers far to the north. The townfolk like to think of it that way instead of as the near-prison it sometimes feels like as they moved here to avoid the wild nocturnal predators of the region.

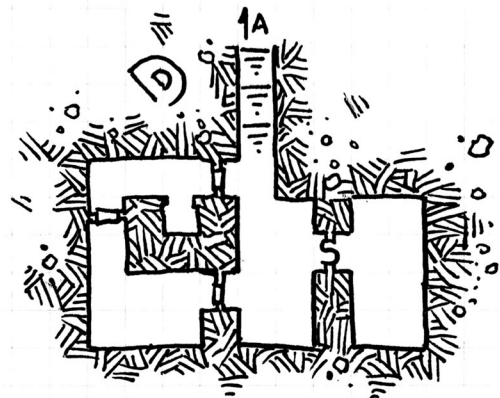
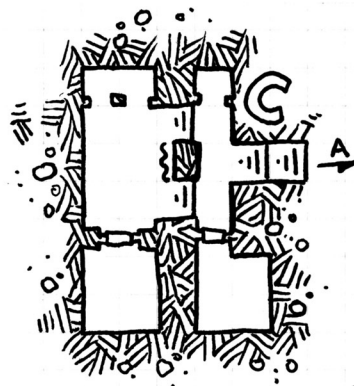
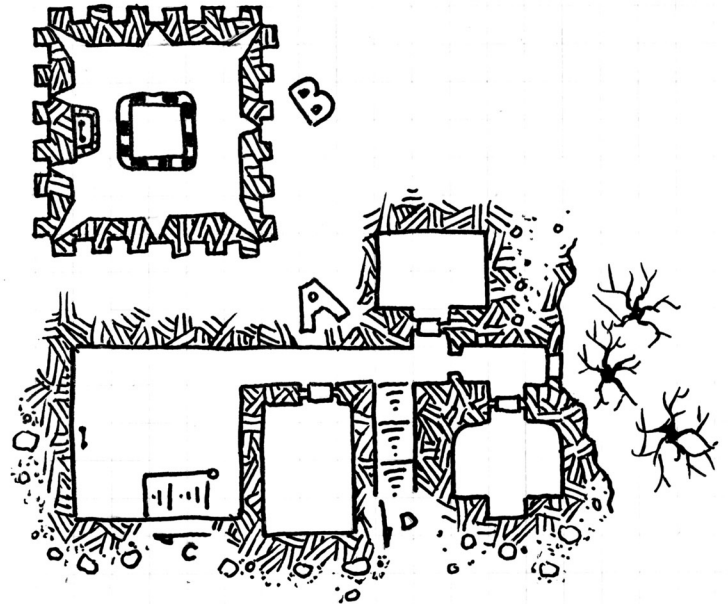
Alternately, it can be used as a map of a small wild elf village or similar structure.

Specter's Tower

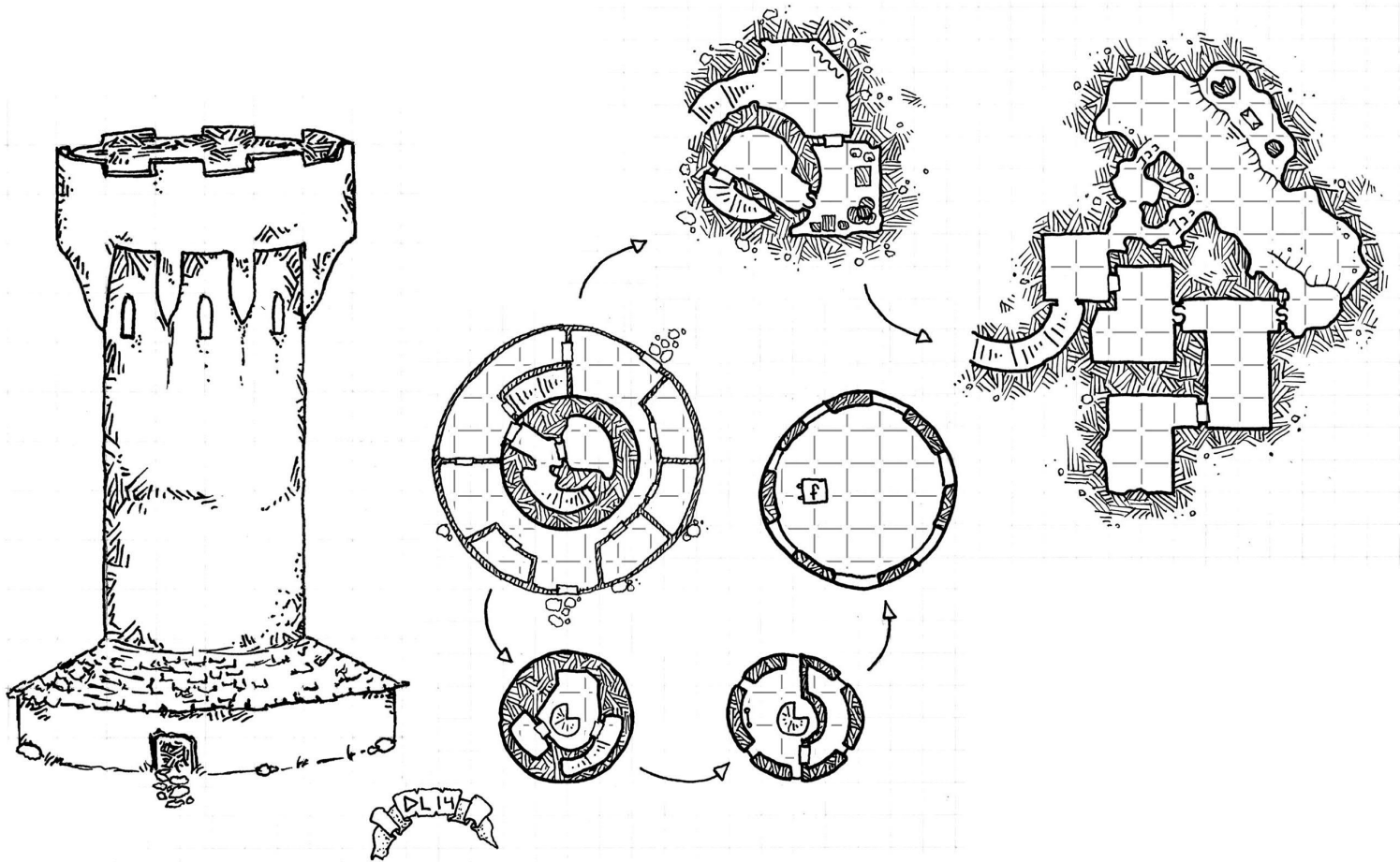


I like towers, I particularly like them when the entrance isn't completely obvious. This reminds me of a fort at a park I used to play in as a kid – you had to walk down a long concrete pipe (basically a sewer main pipe) under a hill to get to the tower in the wooden fort.

There are two ways into this tower, either the tunnel in through the hillside, or you have to climb the sheer sides of the stone construction in order to access the ladder that leads up to the roof from the tower below.



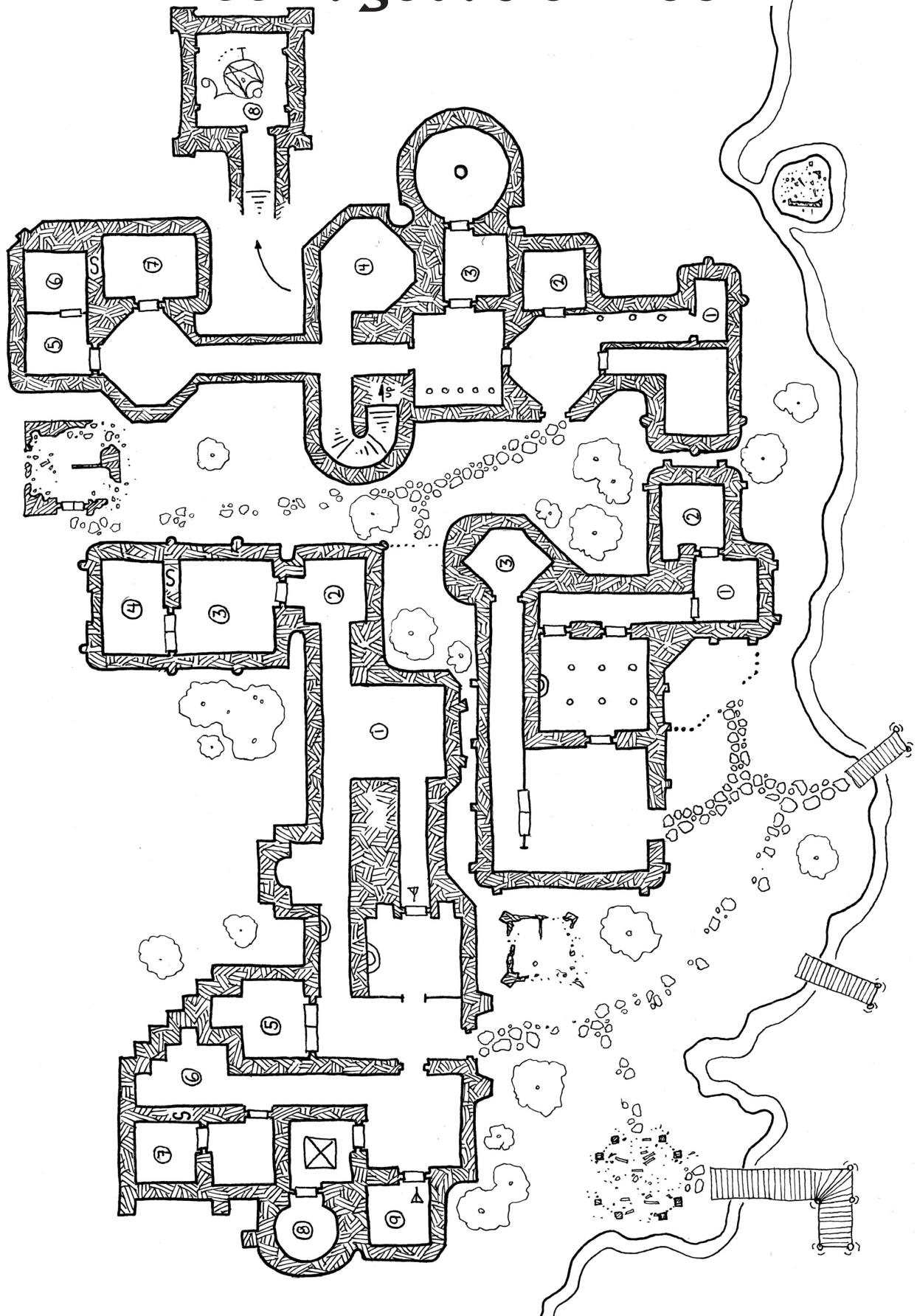
Wolf Tower



The Wolves are a secretive warrior-cult typically pictured fighting with “long knives” (short swords) in both hands. They operate within military forces, tribal warrior bands, city guards and wherever career warriors are to be found. Membership numbers rise and fall, and many members are unaware of religious implications of their “band of brothers” until they are initiated into the higher orders. The “true membership” (those who understand that they are a religious group and who have been involved in at least two rituals involving the Dire Wolf, their god) numbers around a thousand at any one time.

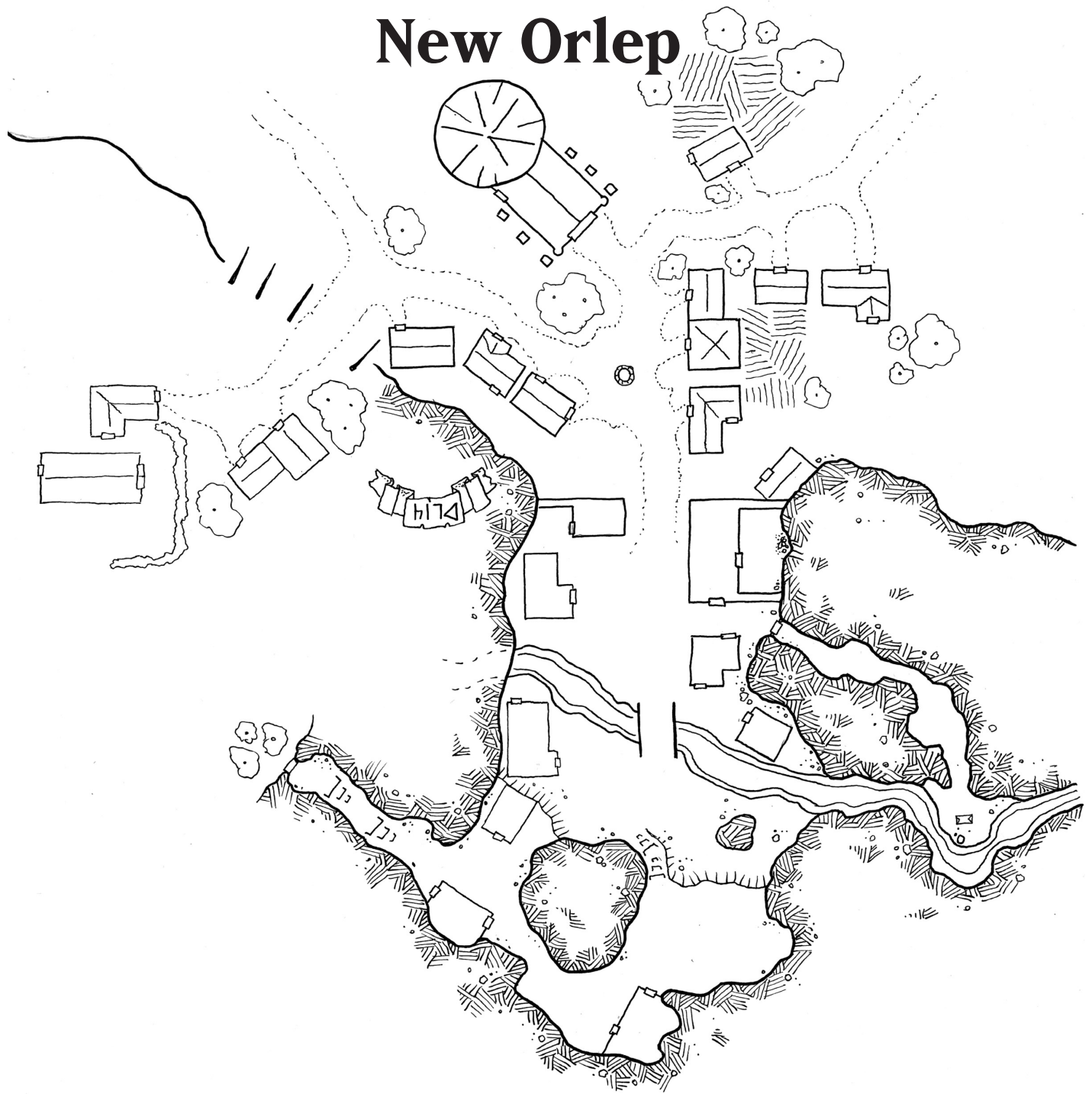
The heart of the organization is Wolf Tower, a small fortified tower in the middle of the territory of an otherwise nomadic hunting tribe. While the tower itself is fairly unremarkable, there is a secret chamber beneath the tower that was once the den of a mighty dire wolf and her pups that is used to this day to commune with the spirit of the great Dire Wolf.

Three Pagodas of Doom



This map was generated in the process of playing Kabuki Kaiser's "Mad Monks of Kwantoom" solo campaign generation system. I heartily recommend it to anyone interested in procedural dungeon generation.

New Orlep



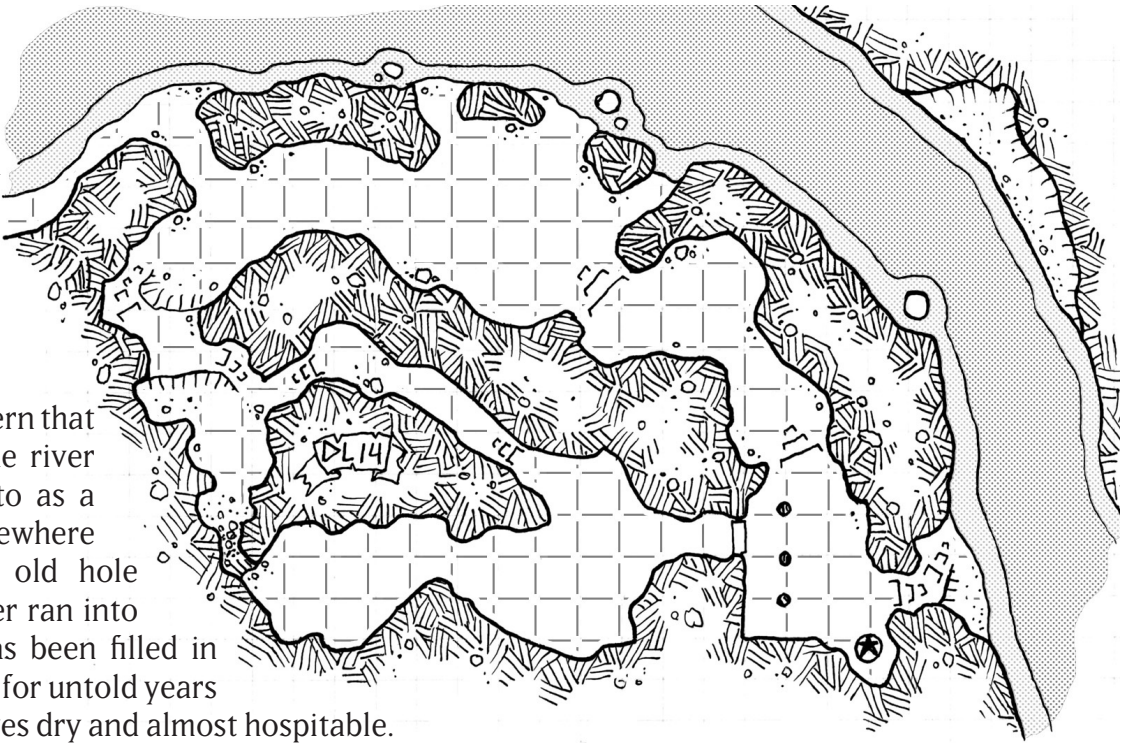
Old Orlep was founded not too far from OgreMouth cavern... When war came the old village was destroyed and the people of Orlep moved into the cave along with their remaining foodstuffs. In time they built up a new village here – New Orlep is built directly around the cave with a few houses inside the cave proper.

There are two entrances into OgreMouth – the entrance in the middle of the town which is partially walled off and beyond which there are more houses, and the entrance on the hill, hidden by trees and reinforced with a locked door.

Also of note is the side cavern to the left of the main cave that leads to the river. Sitting here in the middle of the river is an altar, around which the secret cultists of Orlep gather once a week in order to keep the foul spirit of the OgreMouth Cave at bay through a series of rituals passed down through the years from those who first had to live in the cave. The rituals are kept secret because the inner circle initiates of the faith don't want to scare away the people of New Orlep, who would likely panic and move away if they knew what terrors await should the rituals fail.

The Ten Crown River Caves

The mysterious Ten Crown River Caves are a set of five entrances cut into the limestone walls of the Ten Crown River by another watercourse that no longer travels this way. Four of the openings are into a single cavern that runs adjacent to the river (typically referred to as a "gallery" cave). Somewhere deep inside is an old hole where the prior river ran into the caves, but it has been filled in with dirt and rubble for untold years now, leaving the caves dry and almost hospitable.

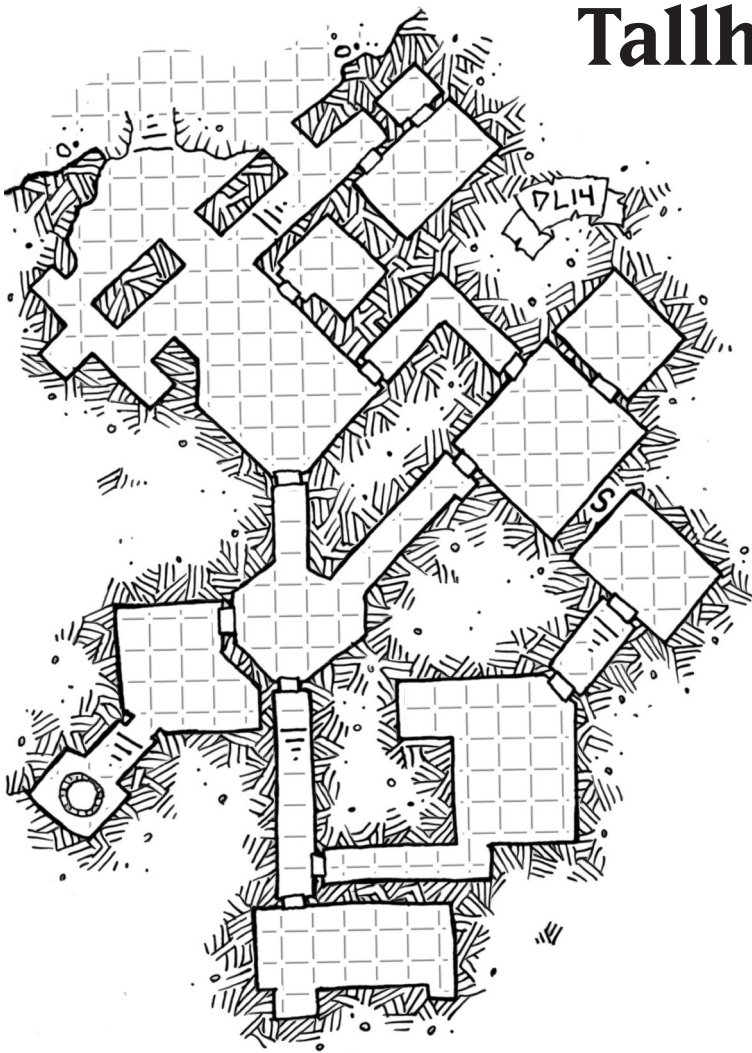


Tallhorn's Retreat

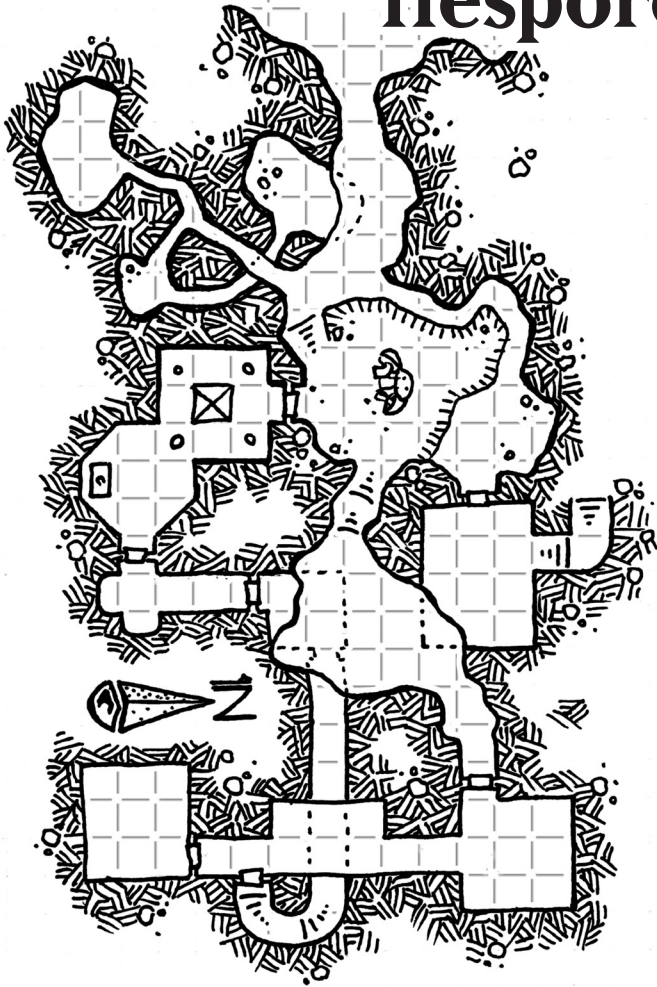
The forest of the Beastmen is well known as a place where those who serve fell gods travel to prove themselves against one another for the attention of their dark lords. One constant in the forest is of course the Beastmen, and the westernmost part of the forest is the stomping grounds of Tallhorn's Herd, a savage group of centaurs, minotaurs and beastmen lead by the Tallhorn – the mightiest of their kin.

What makes this herd more permanent than the other herds and tribes in the forest is Tallhorn's Retreat, a shrine / crypt / temple / fortress cut into a rocky outcropping in their territory.

While lacking in easy access and egress points besides the front door, this structure provides shelter and a sign of the favour of the gods through the various shrines that have been built and desecrated over the years.



Hesporous Cave



One of several fairly well known entrances into the catacombs beneath Triumph Mesa, Hesporous Cave is home to a xenophobic clan of dwarves who seem to have given up on most of what people expect from their kin. They are unkempt and dirty, put no time into mining and crafts, and instead worship some dark entity of unknown origin.

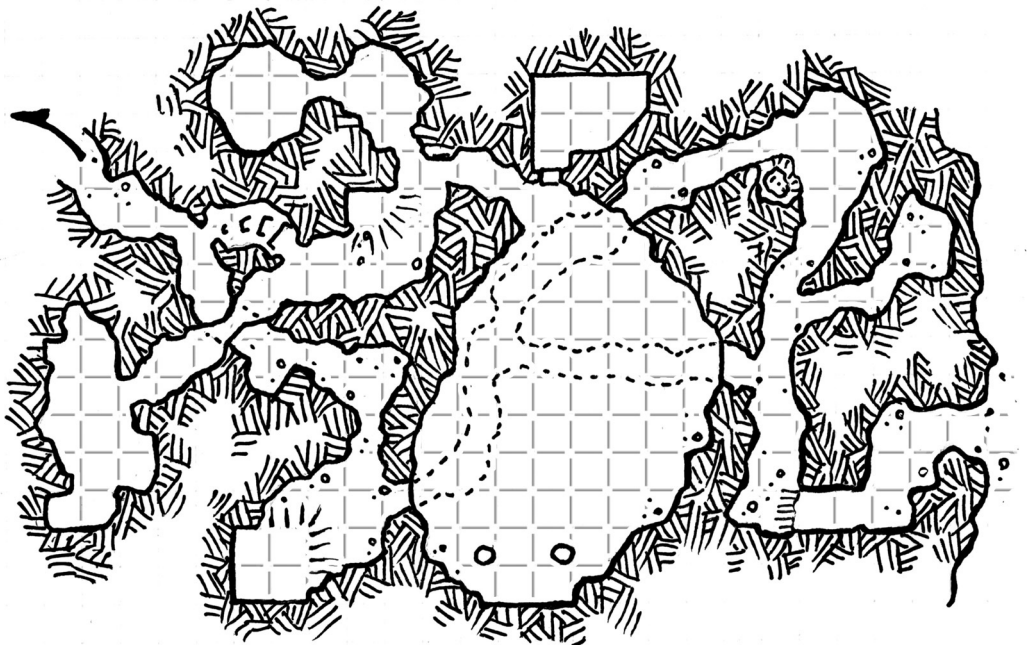
However, if you can deal with them (or sneak past them), access to the depths below is fairly simple. Those who have negotiated passage in the past typically ignore the dwarves as they use the ledge above the dwarven mushroom farm to access the deeper passages.

And the dwarves grumpily ignore them also.

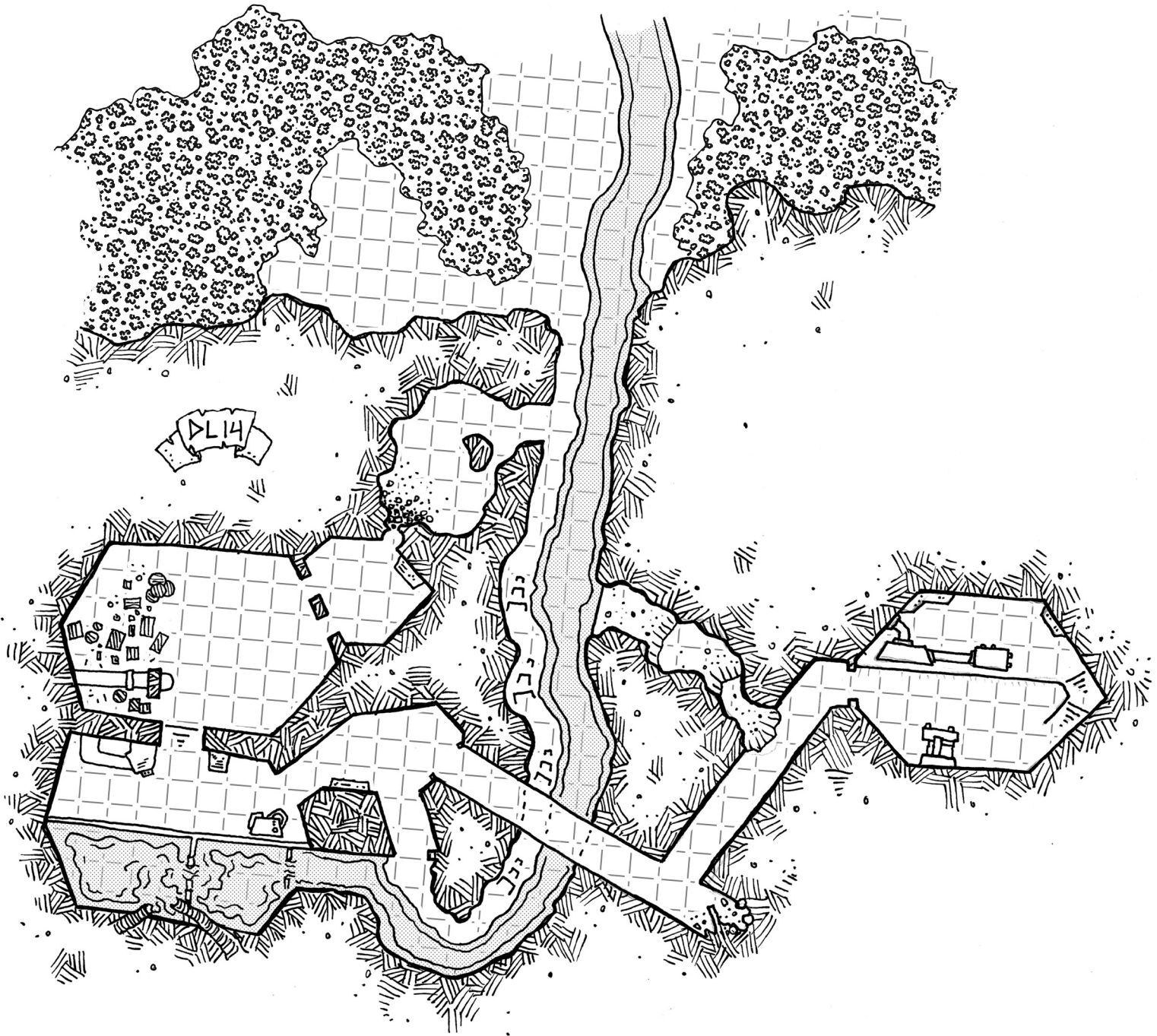
Of course, these “fallen” dwarves are not always trustworthy. For the next five days or so after someone has passed through to the lower regions, they will post sentries to watch for their return. If they appear to have suffered badly in their descent and are returning injured and missing a few party members, the dwarves will fall upon them with cannibalistic fervor.

Cepheus' Gallery

Another one of the caves leading into the catacombs beneath Triumph Mesa, this one is named after it's primary resident, the boneless lich known as Cepheus. Cepheus is an undead monstrosity of immense size, resembling a bloated and unearthly octopus more than anything else. It resides within the large cavern, immersed in the study of other realms that it accesses via a 4 foot diameter crystal ball that it caresses in its massive rotting tentacles. Most travellers have the good sense to bypass this cavern completely on their way down, but some have sought out and spoken with the foul beast and a rare few have left Cepheus' gallery with knowledge and secrets previously unknown to man and elf alike.



The Coolant Processing Facility



The goblin trail leads to this cave, and presumably within they are holding the missing dwarf and fighter – maybe as prisoners, maybe just as food.

But the origin of the cave isn't geological in nature. This cave is part of the old coolant processing facility that was part of the nearby space elevator (the city of Winterspire is built into the foundation of that same elevator, this is one of 16 sub-spires that supported the original construction).

This is actually a reimagining of an encounter map from a starter set adventure. The goal was to change up the basic feel of the game - to make it less classic fantasy and to throw in a bit of distant post-apocalyptic feel to the setting in an attempt to keep away from the classic Tolkien tropes of D&D as a whole.

Cliffstable on Kerstal

Town names are not easy to make up and avoid having them be silly, or just too “medieval fantasy” feeling (Javelin Hill, Hawskford, Granite Pass). So welcome to Cliffstable on Kerstal – a small city that has gradually grown up where the Brown Goblin River meets the Kerstal.

The original name of the settlement goes back to when a single horse breeder maintained a stable on the raised cliff area in the south-eastern shore. Travellers and traders would come by the Cliff Stables to acquire excellent and affordable horses. While there is still a small horse trade in the region, the city is more of an agricultural and trading community in the current era.

There are two open-air markets in the city – Hillside Market in the north within the walls of the city proper (which often has a very festival-type atmosphere and sells all sorts of handcrafts, foods and treats) and Citadel Market on the cliff itself which deals more in livestock, grains, and larger trade goods.

This map was the result of waiting for two different medical appointments in one day. It was drawn in one of my little (4" x 6") dollar store mapping books using a Sakura Micron 005 pen. It's very very small and appears on the left significantly larger than originally drawn.

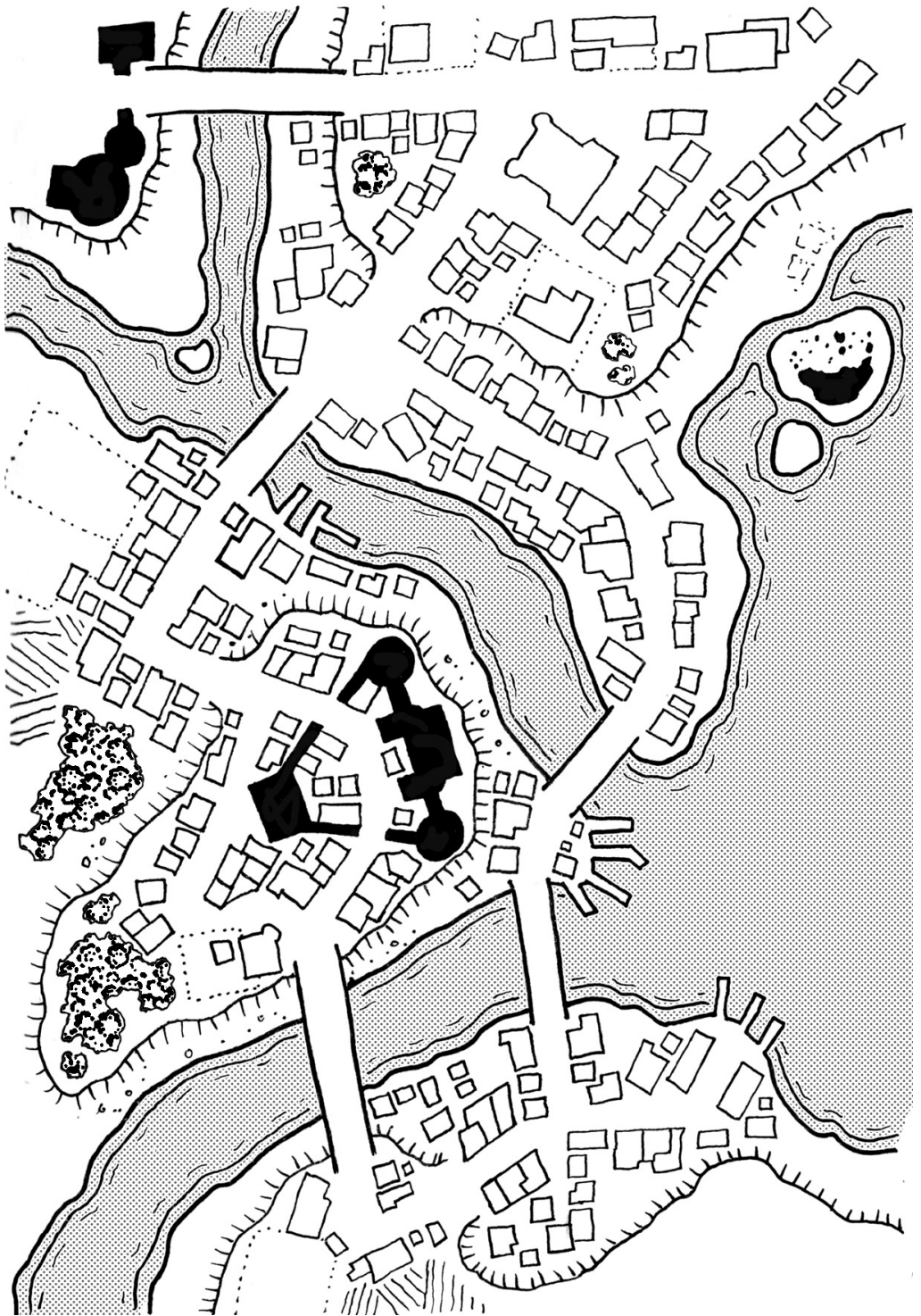


New Cresthill

Along the rough eastern coast of the land is the bridged town of New Cresthill. Built up around a small fortress overlooking two river access points to the Grey Sea, New Cresthill is known for the multiple bridges that connect the various sections and elevations of the town.

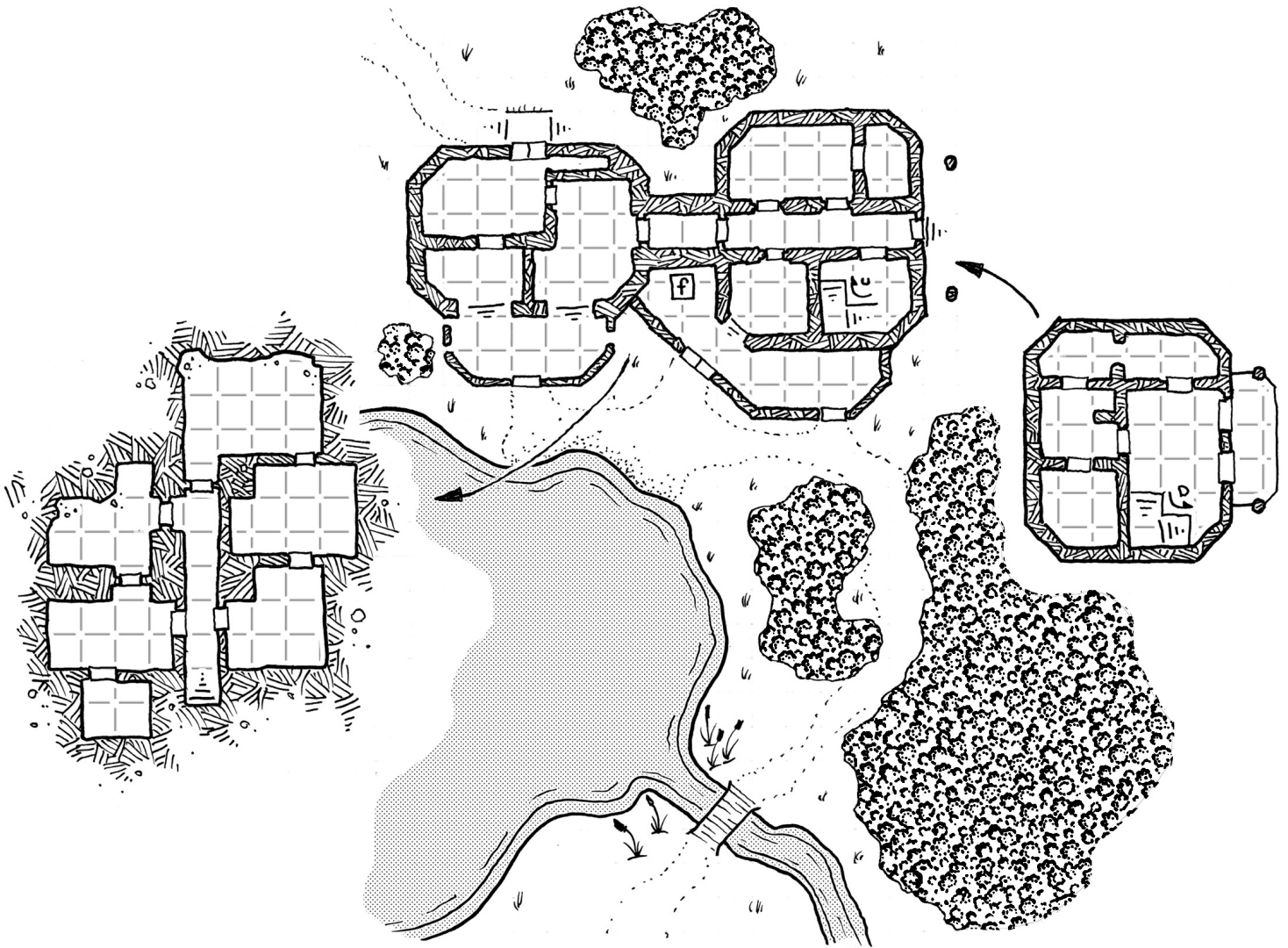
New Cresthill is “ruled” by a council of the five “established houses” of the town – each household having one vote in urban affairs. However, no matter how much they like to think otherwise, the reality is that the town is still beholden to the Earl of Everren who’s father built the original fortress on the hilltop that remains one of the central parts of town. While the council pretends autonomy, they make sure that no resolution or decision will cause too much conflict with the House of Everren.

The town is primarily centred around the Everren Fortress on the central promontory and the city hall to the north (with the Cresthill open-air market just downhill to the south of the city hall). Several small farming and fishing communities exist along the coast nearby that regularly trade goods and food with the New Cresthill families.



Like the map of Cliffstable, this map is reproduced here significantly larger than the original drawing (making every squiggly line and mistake far more visible).

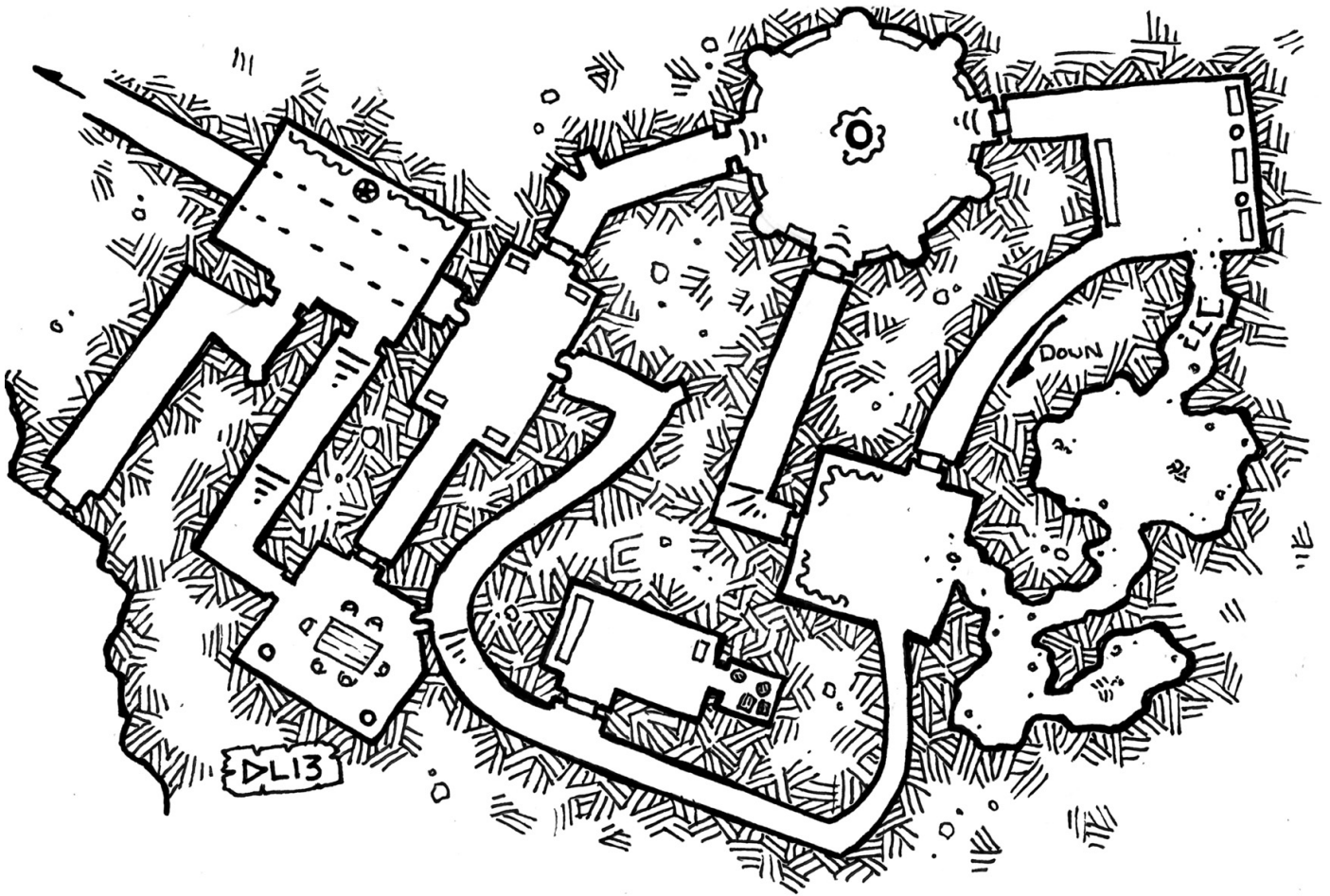
Tramur's Lakehouse



The old stone structure at the end of the lake by Devil's Creek has been quiet but not abandoned for a few years now and the town folk know to keep their distance. Once the lakehouse of Viscount Tramur, it is now home to strange and somewhat disturbing demonic Kabuki infestation. The white-faced demons maintain the grounds immediately around the lakehouse and are said to grab anyone coming too close and forcing them to watch their endless plays... and then something even more foul perhaps, as no one has yet returned.

Sure, the white-faced Kabuki demons might actually be a team of hobgoblins with a penchant for makeup and scary stories, but either way, they have managed to cow the locals and thus to live in some semblance of peace out here. And perhaps their disguise and performance skills are honed enough that they could pass themselves off as not-so-local farmers when they come into town to re-supply...

Maker's Hall



I like secret doors. I admit it. It's a problem of mine according to some, but I like to see it as a feature, not a bug. I try to make sure the secret doors don't prevent major parts of the dungeon from being explored, but instead provide alternate routes and escapes.

Maker's Hall is a nice smaller dungeon environment with less than a dozen encounter areas, and three secret doors.

Three! Three Secret Doors! Mwah-ha-ha!

That said, only one leads somewhere that cannot be reached without finding it, and that would appear to be either another dungeon level (in which case I recommend a treasure map to show where the door is), or an escape tunnel. Of the other two, one will be painfully obvious when explored from the other side, and the last isn't really important anyways, it's just there to provide alternate routings through the dungeon.