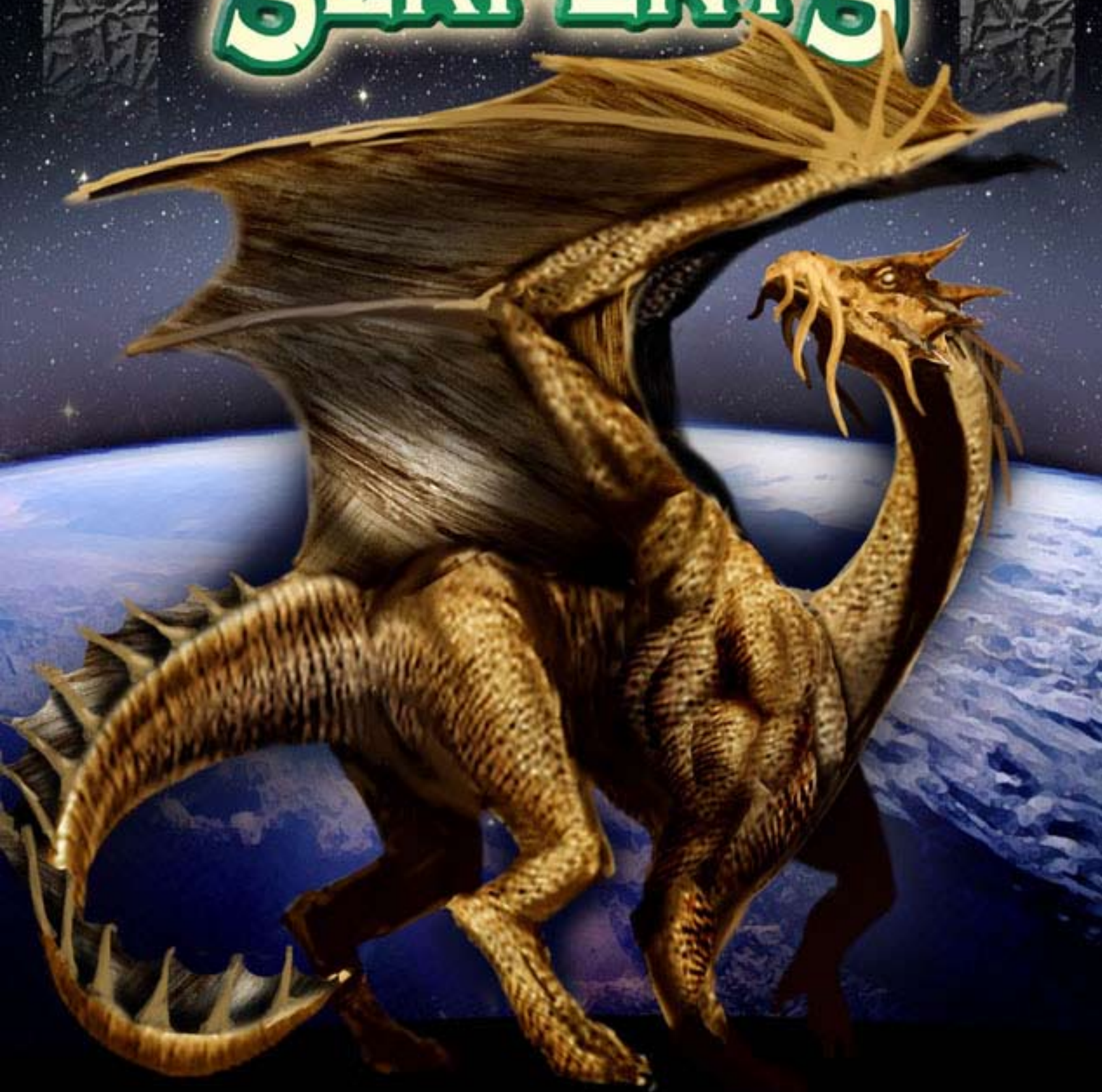


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SEVEN SERPENTS

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INTRODUCTION

HERE BE DRAGONS

Dragons are the definitive fantasy adventure monster, and while game rules can do a lot to make one dragon different from another, nothing is more memorable than a dragon with a unique personality. *Seven Serpents* provides you with an assortment of strange, peculiar, and exceptional wyrms to challenge, mystify, or support the protagonists of any fantasy roleplaying campaign. Each of the creatures and lairs in this book are yours now. Use them any way you like, and remember, when a dragon takes the stage, two things always follow it: adventure and heroes.

SECTION LAYOUT

Each of the dragon lairs in this book is presented in the same format. Here's what you'll find in each section.

AT A GLANCE

Look here for a quick overview of the dragon and the lair. You'll get a sense for the characters and setting of the entry, as well as how you can use it in your campaign.

PLACEMENT

Here you'll find important information on the lair's surroundings. Use this section to find the right spot for the lair in your campaign world.

INHABITANTS

This section provides character profiles and complete game statistics for the important inhabitants of each lair.

THE LAIR

This meaty section describes the lair itself, including important rooms, objects, traps, and other features. Scour this section carefully before your characters venture into the lair, so you'll be ready when they do.

SCENES

When you're ready to use a lair in your campaign, look here for ideas on how adventures might develop around the dragon or the lair.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Lastly, you'll find suggestions on modifying the lair for different styles of campaigns or adventures.

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THE DRAGON MOOT



AT A GLANCE

Every 300 hundred years, representatives from the different dragon breeds gather for one year at the Ur Tree to confer, a meeting known as the *Ukkin* or 'Folkmoot.' Once a towering, magical thing of beauty that stood five miles high, today the tree lies on its side, collapsed and half-buried under a lush tropical forest. It is the only neutral ground among dragon kind, where regardless of alignment, philosophy, or religion, the clan leaders put aside their conflicts to discuss larger matters at hand; if they can't, the powerful clan assigned the thankless task of protecting the tree puts them in their place. During the moot, the dragons consider their affairs of state and relations with the other races, and examine how noteworthy events (such as the coming of the humans' prophesied savior or the return of the elves' Summer King) affect dragon existence, if at all. But the tree is much more than a simple assembly ground or vast council chamber: according to some legends, Marduk — the father of dragonkind — lay down inside the tree's enormous trunk to die, and his moldering flesh gave way to the first of the great dragons. For as long as they can remember, the dragons have returned to this place to pay respect to his memory.

PLACEMENT

The remains of the Ur Tree lie in a remote and deadly jungle landscape. The tree's corpse is so massive that it resembles a large hill or small mountain. Its broken stumps are a taller than some of the trees that grow on its trunk, and it's thicker around at the base than some walled towns. It is disturbingly unnatural, despite its perfectly natural origins.

There are no noteworthy humanoid settlements nearby, for the land is already much too dangerous

even without the intermittent presence of the dragons. It's a primeval place — far older than anything in human or elven reckoning — and nature has had plenty of time to take its course. Today the site is obfuscated beneath layer after layer of dirt, rock, and tropical foliage.

Consider the following when using Dragon Moot in your campaign:

- Dragons value privacy above all else. As such, the tree should be in an exceptionally difficult-to-reach location. When adventurers do come across it, they should be the first ones in a very long time to do so. No one in recorded history has ever returned from the tree *and* documented its location (though rumors of its location persist in taverns, feast halls, and other places frequented by adventurers). If the characters are in a part of the world where it is highly improbable they would find the Ur Tree on their own, transport them there by other means: the sky ship they're traveling aboard gets blown off course, a teleport spell goes horribly awry, or a disgruntled dragon carries them there herself.
- A tree that once stood five miles high is pretty hard to picture in the mind's eye, as are the remnants of such a thing lying on a rainforest floor in the equivalent of South America. Remember, it comes from an age when trees typically stood that high, when giants stood half that height, and gods and goddesses commonly inhabited the protean lands of the world. Mortals were mere animals then. If the original tree was once awe-inspiring, the dead one is a profound and terrifying mystery. Play this up when the adventurers first encounter the Ur Tree, though subtly. Don't let on that it's a tree until they get deep inside and first see familiar rings and patterns on its petrified walls, or until the tree's ghost whispers to the party's druid, late at night.

INHABITANTS

KUSIG, SON OF KULIANNA

Wild Child

"Me, Kusig. You, dinner."

Kulianna Sarrayusa (KOO-lee-ah-nah sar-ah-YOO-sah), the Ur Tree's last active guardian, often said she knew from the beginning her only child would be an angry one, judging from the odd coloration of his prenatal shell. Whereas typical gold dragon eggs are a soft, supple gold color speckled with platinum spots, Kusig's (KOO-sigs) was a dirty, tarnished brass color slashed through with virulent green lacerations. His hatching wasn't an easy one; the shell refused to crack under his repeated, impatient blows. For two days straight, he worked against it, but it refused him his freedom. Of course, Kulianna could not interfere, for if the infant dragon was not fit enough to escape his own shell then he was certainly not fit for the world (a belief many dragons hold). When the shell buckled at long last, Kusig fell face forward into the wet mulch. His strangled cry was so bitter it wrenched his mother's heart.

Later, on his seventh birthday, she told him that she blamed his father for his difficult birth. Kusig was unusual; he came from parents of two different breeds, which is normally impossible. Yet the magic of the Ur Tree had made it possible. Kulianna often said Ferndrake Azantubari, Kusig's father, was a handsome specimen of a green dragon. His scales were a perfect shade of emerald, his regal bearing was worthy of a gold dragon, and his darkly handsome eyes sparkled with intelligence and wit uncharacteristic for a green dragon. Ferndrake never knew of Kulianna's pregnancy. When he left, Kulianna was sad but not especially disappointed. She always preferred a solitary life. She never wanted or required a mate.

SEVEN SERPENTS

Kusig, on the other hand, deeply resented his father, not because he'd abandoned them (it's not uncommon for dragons to abandon offspring) but because he'd made his son a disgusting half-breed. Kulianna never felt anything but love for her child, so this self-image certainly didn't come from her; Kusig came to his own conclusions. His hatching was just the first in a long chain of hardships he had to endure thanks, in his immature mind, to his father's awful blood. Kusig's body was gangly and awkward. His abnormal growth occurred in abrupt, painful spurts. Flying was especially trying for him; his wings never developed to the normal size for a dragon his age. Worse, Kusig was saddled with the acrid stench of burnt chlorine.

When Kusig was eight, his mother went hunting and never returned. It wasn't unusual for her leave him alone for a day or two, as few jungle creatures dare to meddle with a baby dragon. Besides, he was safe within the Ur Tree, which the jungle inhabitants were happy to avoid as long dragons lived inside it. Kusig became very afraid, though, after Kulianna had been gone for three days. For days, he hunkered down atop the tree, mewling or croaking out his fear, calling out for her, and hoping she'd return. At night, he buried himself under the bones in the God Teeth and hid from the shadows and the creatures he imagined lurking in every nook and cranny. After a week, Kusig's hunger became too much to bear.

Desperate, he flew into the Falcon Run to look for bats, but his constant wailing had already driven them off. He explored Tranquility Run, seeking the panther dame who lived there, but she was wiser than he and had already made a hasty departure. Finally, he left the tree to hunt in the jungle for the first time on his own. Without his mother accompanying him, he had no idea where to begin. Danger lurked behind every tree. Hobgoblin reavers hurled ballista bolts at him as he flew over their encampment, puncturing his left wing. A giant alligator caught him by surprise as he skimmed across the surface of a wide river looking for porpoises, and nearly ripped a hind leg off. Wounded, bloody, and quivering with fear, Kusig retreated to the Ur Tree to lick his wounds.

Weeks turned into months, with no sign of Kulianna. He eventually accepted that he was alone in the jungle, and ultimately learned to fend for himself. In his heart, he knew she was dead and would never return.

In the five years since, Kusig has lived by himself in the Ur Tree, irrationally believing his father murdered his mother. His anger, in general, seems to know no limits, but his hatred for his father is so visceral, so palpable, it threatens to consume him entirely. Fortunately, he's found something to take his mind off such unhealthy thoughts: two months ago, Kusig unexpectedly learned how to use his

THE MOOT GUARDIANS

Sarrayusa ("king-protector" in ancient Draconic) is the name of a gold dragon clan renowned for their wisdom, praised for their ability to keep the peace, and ever-honored by the disparate dragon factions for performing the holiest and loneliest of dragon duties. Its members are the most recent of the Ur Tree's protectors. Their mission is to keep the tree free of pests and thwart those who do it harm. In short, they are the tree's undisputed masters.

The one universal rule the other dragon clans respect is that which declares the Ur Tree to be sacred ground. This makes for a precarious situation even in the best of times, because the wonderful and powerful magic imbued in the Ur Tree is craved by the leaders of many dragon clans. Even the most chaotic dragons obey the guardians, though, for if any dragon were to wrest control of the tree away from the *Sarrayusa*, a war unlike any other would erupt — a war no dragon clan can afford.

innate magic to assume human form. Since then, he's become fascinated with the human species, spending every waking hour covertly observing the nearby *Milpupo* tribe. He especially enjoys mimicking their behavior and, to a limited extent, their customs.

In human form, a small lip plug taken from a dead *Milpupo* child adorns his mouth. He wears treated *bandibami* leaves in his ears, driven like spikes through his lobes. His rich, golden blond hair is dyed with the black sap of a *didi* tree to make him look



KUSIG, SON OF KULIANNA

Very Young Male Gold/Green Dragon Hybrid

CR 9; Large Dragon (Fire); HD 11d12+22; hp 130; Init +4; Spd 60 ft. (12 squares), Fly 200 ft. (poor), Swim 60 ft.; AC 19 (+10 natural, -1 size), touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +11; Grap +18; Atk +13 melee (2d6+3/crit x2, bite); Full Atk +13 melee (2d6+3, bite), +9 melee (1d8+3, 2 claws), +8 melee (1d6+3, 2 wings); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Spell-like Abilities; SQ Alternate Form, Blindsense, Hybrid Defenses, Immunities, Keen Senses, Vulnerabilities, Water Breathing; AL CN; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +13; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 20, Wis 22, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Escape Artist +14, Hide +10, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +19, Knowledge (nature) +19, Listen +22, Search +19, Spot +22, Survival +20.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (claw).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Breath Weapon (Su): Kusig may use one of the following three forms of breath weapon every 1d4 rounds: a cone of fire (Reflex save DC 18, 4d10 points of damage); a cone of weakening gas (Fortitude save DC 18, 2 points of temporary Strength damage); or a cone of corrosive (acid) gas (Reflex save DC 16, 4d6 points of damage).

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day — *polymorph self*.

Alternate Form (Su): Kusig can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day, though he only knows he's able to assume a human form, so far. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast

on himself as his caster level, except that he doesn't regain hit points for changing form and can only assume animal or humanoid forms. Kusig can remain in his animal or humanoid form until he chooses to assume a new one or return to his dragon form.

Blindsense (Ex): Kusig can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents he can't actually see still have total concealment against him.

Hybrid Defense (Ex): Kusig is immune to all spells, attacks, and damage that specifically affect gold or green dragons.

Immunities (Ex): Kusig has immunity to *sleep* and paralysis effects. He is also immune to acid and fire.

Keen Senses (Ex): Kusig sees four times as well a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. He also has Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Vulnerabilities (Ex): Kusig has the fire subtype and is vulnerable to cold. He takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from cold, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed or if the save is a success or failure.

Water Breathing (Ex): Kusig can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use his breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged (the cone of fire becomes a cone of superheated steam underwater).

Possessions: *Vest of escape*, *bag of tricks* (gray), 2 *potions of invisibility*, and *potion of speak with animals*.

more like the villagers. His skin, usually pale white, is stained with dark brown creosote.

In dragon form, Kusig presents an even stranger appearance. Primitive and childlike tattoos of

winged serpents, inked by his own hand, cover his hated green scales. Bright red and blue feathers, garish spots and stripes like those found on the backs of dart frogs, and painted “bloody gashes” cover his gold-colored scales. Hundreds of roc feathers affixed



NEW TEMPLATE: DRAGON HYBRID

Dragon hybrids are born when two different breeds of dragon mate. Under normal circumstances dragons can only reproduce with others of the same breed, but if the mating occurs on a site of great magical power, such as a dragon ley, interbreeding becomes possible. A hybrid dragon inherits characteristics from both of its parents.

Dragon hybrids are sterile and can never reproduce.

Creating a Dragon Hybrid

“Dragon Hybrid” is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature of the dragon type (referred to hereafter as the “base creature type”). When two different dragon breeds mate, the following rules determine which parent is used for the offspring’s base creature type:

- Metallic dragon blood is always dominant over chromatic dragon blood. When creating a hybrid between the two, the metallic parent’s type is used for the base creature type of the offspring.
- Chromatic dragon breeds mating with one another determine dominance by age: the older dragon is always dominant, so its type is used for the base creature type of the offspring.
- Metallic dragon breeds mating with one another determine dominance randomly: roll 1d6: on a result of 1-3, use the male parent’s type for the offspring’s base creature type, and on a result of 4-6 use the female parent’s.

A hybrid dragon uses all the base creature’s statistics and special abilities (as determined by the age category of the offspring) except as noted here.

Breath Weapon (Su): A dragon hybrid gains the breath weapon attacks of both parents. The rules for using these are the same as for all dragons (i.e. a breath weapon attack can be made only once every 1d4 rounds).

Breed Immunities: A dragon hybrid always gains the breed-specific immunities of both parents, regardless of dominance.

Hybrid Defense (Ex): Dragon hybrids are immune to all breed-specific spells, attacks, and damage that target either of their parental breeds. (For example, an enchanted sword designed to kill green dragons has no effect on a gold/green dragon hybrid.)

Special Abilities and Qualities: Upon reaching a new age category, a dragon hybrid chooses the special abilities and qualities for that age category from either one of its two parental breeds, but not both. If a special ability or quality has a cumulative rating (such as Damage Reduction or Spell Resistance), the dragon hybrid gains that ability at the next rating in the progression, rather than the rating for that level. For example, a dragon hybrid with dominant silver blood can only choose to gain DR 10/magic when it becomes a mature adult if it has previously selected DR 5/magic as a special quality.

Abilities: If the base creature is a chromatic dragon, modify it as follows: Str +8, Dex +0, Con +0, Int –2, Wis –4, Cha –4. If the base creature is a metallic dragon, modify it as follows: Str –4, Dex +0, Con –2, Int +4, Wis +6, Cha –2.

Challenge Rating: As base creature +2

to brass loops hang from his wing ridges. From a distance, Kusig could almost be mistaken for the feathered serpent he so desperately mimics.

Kusig is not insane. He's a victim of circumstance and bad breeding. The lack of proper socialization with either dragons or humans has given him a bestial personality. Life alone in a wild and deadly jungle hasn't prepared Kusig for his role as guardian of the Ur Tree. He barely remembers the tree's purpose or the duty he is expected to perform as the last surviving member of his clan. When the moot convenes in less than a year's time and the oldest, largest, and wisest dragon leaders arrive with their entourages in tow, poor, inept Kusig will be rudely awakened. It will be a miracle if he survives the first day of the yearlong moot.

THE LAIR

At the center of an untamed tropical paradise, a huge earth-covered mound rises gently from the jungle floor, up beyond the canopy. This natural mound formed over many millennia from the fallen trunk of the Ur Tree, which once rose five miles into the sky. Dirt, rock, and a thick blanket of weeds, moss, and ferns cover it, though parts of the trunk poke through here and there. What's left of the Ur Tree is approximately four miles long. More than half of its mile-high girth rests buried in the earth, sunken by its own tremendous weight. The region's natives — humanoid and animal alike — take great pains to avoid the "stone-wood mountain." They know all too well about the dragons dwelling there, and learned long ago to give the wyrms the privacy they desire. When dragons fly, the jungle falls deathly quiet.

The northwestern end of the tree was once a leafy crown. Stumps are all that remain of huge branches



NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: THE POWER OF THE UR TREE

The Ur Tree is in a way a gigantic artifact. Unfortunately, it is singularly unmanageable. Gods or epic level characters may have the power to move it, but it's not worth the effort. The tree's power can only be tapped into by dragons, and then only by the acting guardian. When a guardian clan dies out, the tree sends out a mental keening heard by every dragon on the planet, which does not stop until all the dragon leaders return to appoint a new clan as the guardian. Once they reach a consensus, the tree imprints the members of that clan with its magical might. From that point forward, that clan's members control the Ur Tree.

The tree guards against any politicking or undue influencing of the guardians. During the imprinting process, the guardians' minds and souls undergo dramatic metamorphoses. They become physically, mentally, and spiritually incapable of allying with non-guardian dragons for any purpose whatsoever. A guardian may not be the nicest or kindest dragon around (some guardians have downright vile), but the Ur Tree's well-being is always first and foremost in her mind. The tree does not compel unwilling guardians because there is no such thing. By becoming a guardian, a dragon allows his entire worldview to be redefined and, while his fundamental nature remains the same, he cannot possibly conceive of allowing harm to befall the tree. Neither can he be manipulated or controlled by the members of other clans.

The Ur Tree grants acting guardians the following powers:

- The tree functions like a deity in that it grants divine spells and benefits to guardians with cleric levels. The domains in the Ur Tree's portfolio are: Dragon, Peacekeeper, Animal, and Plant. Spells granted by the tree may be used wherever the guardian travels, regardless of her distance from the tree. Guardians pray and recovers spells like other clerics, though the tree is not strictly a deity in the traditional sense.
- The guardian may cast the following spells at will, as a 20th level cleric, within two miles of the Ur Tree. The effects of these spells apply only to dragons: *crushing hand*, *discern location*, *disjunction*, *energy drain*, *foresight*, *gate*, *greater dispelling*, *imprisonment* (see the Prison Cavern, below), *mass heal*, *teleportation circle*, *storm of vengeance*, *time stop*, and *wail of the banshee*.
- The guardian may inflict the *Mark of the Progenitor* upon a dragon. This costs 1,000 XP per HD possessed by the victim, with no saving throw to resist. The guardian must succeed at a melee touch attack against the target. When a dragon is so marked, powerful magic begins to unmake him, reducing him by one HD per month until he has only one HD remaining, at which time he becomes nothing but a Small flying lizard. No known magic can undo this reversion. If the guardian has sufficient XP to pay the price, she may inflict the mark at will.
- The guardian gains a +20 resistance bonus to saving throws against dragon Breath Weapons.
- The guardian gains a +20 sacred bonus to all reaction checks and Charisma-related skill checks when dealing with other dragons.

At any one time, only a single dragon may serve as the acting guardian of the Ur Tree. Other living members of the guardian clan do not gain the benefits of the Ur Tree's powers until the acting guardian either abdicates the position to a relative or dies. An inheriting guardian must tap into the tree's essence with his spirit to initiate the imprinting; this requires a Concentration check (DC 40) and a day of meditation. Until a new guardian successfully manages to tap into the tree's essence, it's power sits idle. If a guardian is more than four miles from the tree for more than 1 month per two HD of the guardian, his connection to the tree withers and he no longer gains benefits from it until he returns and taps in again.

that once fanned out over the land. The southeastern end was the tree's base. When it fell, the roots broke off, leaving behind five fat and gnarled fingers; along the length of the trunk are three similar stumps. A huge, knotty gall rises from the trunk just above the God Teeth. The tree's bark has become petrified over the ages and is now similar in consistency to marble, though it lacks the aesthetic quality that makes marble so valuable; its dirty gray-brown color and unbecoming warts, whorls, and knots aren't beautiful by humanoid standards. Two small rivers originate inside the tree. The larger of the two, the Silmur, exits through the tree's roots and is bone-chillingly cold. The smaller river, the Usumgal, spills into the jungle from a stump on the tree's northwestern side and is extremely hot, almost to the point of boiling. Steam from the river fills the jungle around that part of Ur Tree with a curious, humid fog.

Dragons believe they were given life by the death of the elder god Marduk. According to the throaty, droning songs of the dragon loremasters, Tiamat, the Primordial Queen of Heaven and Earth, and Marduk, the First King of Light, battled for many Ages for supremacy over the world. When Marduk slit her belly open after a brutal combat, Tiamat dealt him a mortal blow to the head. She retreated to her lair in the clouds to heal while he dragged himself into the husk of the already long-dead Ur Tree to die in peace. The tree absorbed some of his spiritual essence as it fled his physical shell, and became enchanted with a unique magic. Animals from the surrounding forest feasted upon his god-flesh. Many were changed by the meat they ate, but none so much as the *kish*. Nothing now recalls exactly what kind of creatures the *kish* were, but the transformations resulting from their feast on Marduk's flesh



NEW DOMAINS: DRAGON AND PEACEKEEPER

Dragon

Granted Power: You cast dragon spells at +1 caster level.

Dragon Domain Spells:

1. *Hypnotism*
2. *Obscure Object*
3. *Major Image*
4. *Legend Lore*
5. *False Vision*
6. *Permanent Image*
7. *Refuge*
8. *Discern Location*
9. *Shapechange*

Peacekeeper

Granted Powers: Your alignment is masked, as per an *undetectable alignment* spell. This is a permanent supernatural ability that is always active and cannot be dispelled.

Peacekeeper Domain Spells:

1. *Entangle*
2. *Snare*
3. *Glyph of Warding*
4. *Discern Lies*
5. *Mark of Justice*
6. *Greater Glyph of Warding*
7. *Power Word, Stun*
8. *Binding*
9. *Dominate Monster*

made the descendants of the kish into the world's first true dragons. Marduk's draconic grandchildren took revenge on Tiamat, slaying her and her husband Apsu, the Lord of the Oceans, in her lair. The dragons then carried her teeth back to the Ur Tree, where they honored Marduk's memory with them. That was the very first Dragon Moot, and ever since, for an untold number of centuries, dragons have returned to show their respect.

FALCON RUN

This part of the Ur Tree was originally its base and roots, so it rises higher out of the earth than the other end. Five stumps reach out from the exposed portion of the base, while a large, uneven hole eroded away in the center of the base gives way to a river. Cave mouths hundreds of feet in diameter pierce the stumps, allowing access to the tunnels that bore through them and converge in the central cavern commonly called Falcon Run.

The Run's winding, twisting nest of tunnels is a little over a mile in length. It is as black as pitch inside, and inhabited by all manner of crude nocturnal creatures: bats by the millions roost in the upper crevices, feeding on an unlimited supply of insects, while albino apes nest in hidden grottoes beside the river and feed on giant otters. Troll war parties erect dirt and stone forts near the river mouth, so they can be near the light of the sun they both adore and revile. Forests of tropical fungi cling to the walls and sprout from the floors, sometimes casting feeble bioluminescent light into the dark, while the tentacles of bloodthirsty plants strike out from side tunnels, threatening would-be transgressors with leafy doom.

Since Kulianna's disappearance, Kusig has not had the wherewithal to keep Falcon Run free of such vermin. Of late, this inattention has allowed a platoon of orcs no longer afraid of Kusig to successfully sneak in and build a settlement just downstream from the trolls.

THE WEIR

This is the largest cavern inside the great tree. It is approximately a third of a mile high, a mile in length, and just under a mile across. The dragons have modified it over the centuries to accommodate the various needs of their individual clans. Two lakes, which are fed by the Silmur River, give the aquatic dragons places to cavort. One contains salt-water and the other fresh water. Both are chilly, but not compared the river, which white dragons love bathing in. The river originates at a magical spring in a pillar at the cavern's western end. It is called the Well of Ion after the ancestor dragon that created it. Thick patches of super-heated sand occupy a portion of the cavern floor in the south, for the comfort of the red and blue dragons. The other breeds content themselves with the jungle outside, as much as its alien flora and fauna might disturb them. Thousands of caves and ledges line the walls, serving as nests and rookeries for visiting dragons.

A hole in the southern wall reveals the jungle outside. It sits two hundred meters higher than the surrounding canopy, easily letting in enough sunlight during the daytime hours to fully illuminate the Weir. A small tunnel in the north also gives dragons access from that side of the tree and provides a second source of light. Of course, when the dragons attend the moot, spells, mystic fire, elemental servants, and enslaved will o' wisps grant them light at all hours if they wish.

Unlike Falcon Run, few animals or sentient creatures ever attempt to colonize the Weir. Dragon scent permeates the air so strongly it creates an intense emotional and spiritual unease no creature can tolerate for very long.



A non-dragon creature with fewer than 10 HD must make a Will save (DC 30) every hour or run from the cavern in fear and not return for 24 hours. A non-dragon with more than 10 HD must make a Will save (DC 20) once per day, or suffer the same result. Each cumulative day spent in the Weir imposes a +5 bonus to the DC.

Even if a creature makes a successful saving throw, it suffers a -5 morale penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks for as long as it stays in the Weir.

The Weir is currently in awful condition. Kusig has let it fall into such disarray that it's beginning to resemble some twisted combination of curio shop, junkyard, and trash heap. Eccentric wind chimes hang from the ceiling, while even stranger pieces of art lay carelessly strewn about the cavern floor. Exuberant but amateurish paintings stain the walls. These are products of Kusig's adolescent attempts to discover himself. Other things, such as broken and forgotten toys, piles of discarded bones, and hardened middens litter the riverbanks, sometimes clogging its flow. The stench is bad enough to make a skunk retch.

THE GOD TEETH

Were it not for the occasional break in its walls, this cavern would be a perfect sphere. This is where Marduk laid down in his final moments, and it is here that the magic permeating the tree trunk is strongest. Even the oldest dragons feel humbled standing in this chamber. Dragon bones, hundreds of feet deep, make up the floor, generating a magical hot spot known as a "dragon ley." Many dragons come to the tree to die among the God Teeth, to let their bones lie with Marduk's. Thirty otherworldly teeth, each a hundred feet tall, rise majestically from the bone floor. Together with the tree itself, they are the oldest known dragon artifacts in existence. Hundreds of thick logs jut from the walls, forming perches for listeners while the highest-ranking clan leaders sit atop the teeth.

During the moot, the God Teeth see constant activity. At least once a day the clan leaders gather for a private meeting. Other times, lesser leaders and functionaries hold their own meetings. Once a month, throughout the moot, the Grand Council is held with every dragon at the moot in attendance, regardless of rank. Traditionally, the Sarrayusa guardian may attend any meeting she desires, though more often than not she lets the elders have



their privacy unless the meeting concerns something controversial, or if there is a high likelihood of trouble. The guardian is the highest social authority at the moot, but only as said authority pertains to keeping the peace. She has no standing or authority whatsoever as far as clan or worldly affairs are concerned. She is a sheriff and caretaker — nothing more, nothing less. As strange and unlikely as it may seem, every dragon obeys her laws without question. The guardian commands the Ur Tree, after all, and that makes her a terrifying force.

Kusig currently uses the cavern housing the God Teeth as his private quarters, taking comfort in the magic flowing through it. It is the one cavern in the tree free of his youthful slovenliness. He doesn't realize that he slumbers on a potent dragon ley.

DRAGON LEYS

When a dragon dies, the magic permeating his bones slowly accrues in the place where he finally lay, so long as his bones are not moved for at least one year. In most instances, this magic is not strong enough to be of much use, but if a group of dragons die in the same spot, the residual magic eventually becomes so potent that a non-dragon spellcaster can not only detect it, but even tap into it for her own advantage. These areas are generally known as dragon leys (or dragon veins). A minimum of 40 HD-worth of dragons must die and be left on a spot for a dragon ley to develop. The HD total may be reached all at once or slowly accrued over many centuries. A ley's size is equal to 10 square feet for every dragon that died there.

To tap into a dragon ley, a spellcaster must make a blood sacrifice, spilling life force on the ley as a gesture of gratitude and respect to the creatures that died there. This sacrifice primes the ley with the innate magic in the supplicant's blood. The specific powers granted by the ley depend upon how many Hit Dice of blood are spilled on it. Not all leys afford all powers, but the following are well-documented among dragon kind.

A sacrifice is required each time a power is activated. A sacrifice consists of a loss of hit points equal to the Hit Die type of the supplicant (for example, a wizard must lose 4 hit points to sacrifice one HD's worth of blood). Hit points lost in a sacrifice cannot be magically healed; they must be restored through natural healing. Unless otherwise noted, a power's duration is equal to one plus the supplicant's spellcasting ability modifier in hours.

Serpentine Majesty (Su): The spellcaster may cast spells at +1 caster level each time this sacrifice is made, to a maximum equal to his spellcasting ability modifier. *Cost:* 2 HD.

Mystic Finesse (Su): The spellcaster may "charge" a prepared spell with any meta-magic feat, whether he possesses that feat or not. Charging spells in this manner does not require the expenditure of a higher-level spell slot. *Cost:* 2 HD.

Forbidden Knowledge (Su): The spellcaster may prepare one spell he does not know. The spellcaster must meet all other requirements for casting the spell (ability score minimums, arcane or divine restrictions, etc.). The spell takes up one available spell slot of the appropriate level. *Cost:* 1 HD.

Draconic Portal (Su): The spellcaster is *teleported* to another dragon ley she knows as if by a *teleportation circle* cast by a 20th-level sorcerer. If she does not know of any other leys, she arrives at a random location. *Cost:* 4 HD.

Scaled Defenses (Su): The spellcaster's skin transforms into scaly dragonhide, conferring upon him a +3 natural AC bonus each time this sacrifice is made, to a maximum of +12. *Cost:* 1 HD.

Arcane Amnesty (Su): The spellcaster gains SR 5 each time this sacrifice is made, to a maximum of SR 20. This Spell Resistance score stacks with one other source of Spell Resistance. *Cost:* 2 HD

Heightened Immunities (Su): The spellcaster gains immunity to paralysis, *sleep* effects, and any two energy types of his choosing. This power may be gained multiple times with multiple sacrifices. *Cost:* 4 HD.

A dragon can also tap into dragon leys, but the magic of the ley has a different effect on him. For every 5 HD of blood sacrificed, a dragon temporarily gains all the related benefits of the next age category. This lasts for a number of minutes equal to the dragon's Constitution modifier. Hit points lost in a sacrifice cannot be magically healed; they must be restored through natural healing.

PATROL CAVERN

This is a smaller cavern on the northeastern side of the Ur Tree's trunk. Flights of dragons assigned to patrol the area during a moot use this cavern for feeding or resting. Hundreds of tons of animal (and humanoid) bones clutter the floor. About three thousand years ago, a black dragon necromancer named Beytore Frostwolf raised an army of undead here in preparation for an invasion of a rival's homeland. Although he and the army departed immediately, the deathly spiritual energy that filled the cavern during his visit has never faded.



The Patrol Cavern is saturated with negative energy, like that of a *desecrate* spell cast by a 20th-level cleric. Attempts to turn undead within this area suffer a -3 profane penalty. Undead in this area gain a +1 profane bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. Undead created within or summoned into a desecrated area gain one additional hit point per HD. This effect is permanent and can't be dispelled.

PRISON CAVERN

Another chamber on the northeastern side of the tree, the Prison Cavern is used for restricting dragons that have violated the sanctity of the moot. The most egregious transgressors are summarily banished; otherwise, offending dragons are placed in this cavern for a duration decided upon by the Sarrayusa guardian. A tall, crystalline shard floating in the middle of the cavern glows with a vivid purple light. The guardian (and only the guardian) can use it to inter a prisoner in the floor, view and communicate with a specific prisoner, or free a prisoner.



The magical effect of the crystal is nearly identical to an *imprisonment* spell cast by a 20th-level wizard, except time does pass for the creatures imprisoned. The crystal's magic can only affect creatures within the confines of the Ur Tree. Imprisoned creatures are interred beneath the Prison Cavern, even if

they are elsewhere when the crystal's power is used on them.

When the crystal releases an imprisoned creature, it returns him to the location from whence he was taken. If freed by a *freedom* spell, however, the prisoner appears inside the Prison Cavern.

As of yet, Kusig hasn't figured out how to control the crystal. He likes to use this place when consuming stolen *yuituri* juice — a vile, red nectar used by Milpupo shamans to induce vision quests. The drug doesn't have any spiritual effect on dragons like it does for humans, but Kusig enjoys the dizzying, vision-blurring impact of the juice. The purple light shed by the crystal enhances the *yuituri*'s narcotic effect.

GARDEN OF MARDUK

This large cavern is characterized by extreme heat and mugginess, resulting from the hot lake at the center of the space. It drains into the Usumgal River, which in turn pours into the jungle outside through a stump in the cavern's northern wall. A twisting earthen spire rises from the lake up to the ceiling many hundreds of feet above. It's made of grayish-black stone, broken by thin veins of piping hot magma, and illuminated by an artificial star placed at its peak. The starlight pulsates gently in a 12-hour cycle, during which its output ranges from blinding brilliance to absolute darkness. To dragon eyes, which are much more sensitive than animal and humanoid eyes, this mysterious natural monument is deeply moving on many levels. Dragons consider it a glorious symbolic representation of a dead god whose face they can never know.

The Garden contains flora not native to the region. Plants and trees from other parts of the world (and possibly from other worlds) grow here, imported each moot by the visiting dragons. Vegetation clings to every viable surface, turning the chamber into a jungle in miniature. Heady, alien odors thicken the air. Of all places in the Ur Tree, this is the one loved

most by flying lizards, and it is the one place in the tree they build their nests.



A character attempting an Herbalism (see *Occult Lore* from Atlas Games) or Craft (Herbalism) check while using materials harvested from the Garden of Marduk receives a +10 sacred bonus to her roll.

TRANQUILITY RUN

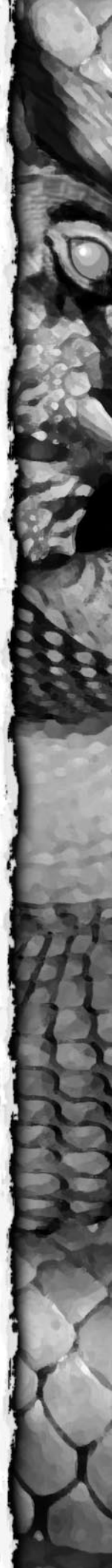
Like Falcon Run at the opposite end of the tree, winding tunnels that ultimately open onto the jungle outside permeate this end of the tree. However, unlike its southern counterpart, Tranquility Run is less convoluted and less confusing to navigate. Visiting dignitaries come to the tunnels to find privacy in any one of the secluded, fern-filled grottoes dug out of the walls. Others come here to watch the sunset from the tunnel mouths.

Few creatures live in Tranquility Run, mostly because the endless swarms of flying lizards drive other creatures away. A pack of ethereal marauders recently moved into the northernmost stump, however. They quickly learned to leave the flying lizards alone, and discovered easier and tastier prey in the other creatures that happen to wander into the tree (especially the big jungle cats). The marauders are not entirely familiar with dragons, and are not sure what to make of Kusig. Mostly, he scares them since in his natural form he looks a lot like a flying lizard.

SCENES

The Ur Tree is a big place for a small party of adventurers to explore, and can be a little daunting for a GM, too, at first. Use any of the following ideas to incorporate the lair into your stories.

- The adventurers discover a dragon ley in their homeland. After a little investigation, the party spellcasters figure out what it is and how to use some of its powers. If they take their chances and activate a draconic portal, they find themselves in the God Teeth of the Ur Tree. Kusig is asleep when they arrive, but he subconsciously senses their sudden arrival and awakens within minutes. He receives them none too kindly, believing they've come from one the outlying tribes to kill him or, worse, kidnap him (because that's what he would do, if he were in their sandals). If he's too much of a challenge for the PCs, have him chase them into Falcon Run. There they find a strange, pseudo-subterranean world inhabited by tropical versions of creatures the characters may only be somewhat familiar with. The orcs there begrudgingly take them in, being somewhat eager for news from the outside world. In exchange for stories and simple gifts, the orcs tell the characters all they know about the mysterious dragon and the Ur Tree. Kusig doesn't necessarily want to kill the characters, remember; being a child at heart, he's genuinely curious about them.
- The Ur Tree, despite being dead and petrified, apparently falls ill from a mysterious spiritual malaise. Overwhelming pain wracks Kusig to such an extent that he can't leave the God Teeth. His agonized cries reach inhabitants at both ends of the tree, and an orc shaman journeys out of Falcon Run into the wilderness in search of a cure for the tree and the dragon-child. When the PCs happen upon him (either in the jungle or in one of the many outlying tribal villages), he begs them for help. The infection stems from a titan secretly mining petrified bark from portions of the tree trunk, which he plans to use as construction material for a fortress. If the adventurers can talk him out of hacking the tree apart (or otherwise stop him), then both the tree and Kusig return to normal within two weeks.



- Ferndrake Azantubari, Kusig's itinerant father, approaches the PCs in human form, appearing as a handsome black man from a distant land who speaks Common with a musical lilt. He says his son is in grave danger and asks for the PCs' assistance in thwarting that danger. If the party agrees, he takes them to a dragon ley hidden in the countryside, and then magically transports them to the Ur Tree. Dragons from an evil faction recently discovered the tree's last surviving guardian is both a child and a sterile half-breed, but they don't want to kill him just yet. Instead, they're holding him hostage, leveraging the threat of his death against the other clans to get their petty demands fulfilled. If Kusig dies, the clan leaders must appoint a new guardian clan — an event the evil factions intend to stall indefinitely. They want total control of the tree and are willing to risk anything to get it, including all-out war. Ferndrake, allied with the PCs and a squad of warrior-dragons, wants to infiltrate the tree, rescue his son, and destroy those who took Kusig captive.
- A dragon imprisoned during the last moot for the assassination of a prominent clan leader died almost 200 years ago after Kulianna chose not to release him. His corpse is still interred in the Prison Cavern floor. Now, an evil bard has learned of a powerful magic item that was in the guilty dragon's possession. He desperately wants it. So, he hires the characters to carry an enchanted stone to the Prison Cavern, where the stone's magic frees the corpse of the imprisoned dragon. When the party discovers they've been sent to retrieve a potent and evil artifact, will they turn on their patron or uphold their end of the bargain and deliver his prize?

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

The Ur Tree and its history are a lot to deal with, especially if you already have an established back-

ground and culture for the dragons in your campaign world and that background differs considerably from the ideas presented here. Adapt the contents of this chapter to your needs; the Ur Tree has unlimited potential for adventure and intrigue. Rather than setting it in an undiscovered jungle, drop the Ur Tree in a central location of your campaign world and call it the World Tree. Place its broken shell atop a high mountain and surround it with competing legends and lore to increase the mystery inherent in its existence. If you don't want to use the dragon origin myth presented here, modify the tree's history. You could have the guardians serve the gods, instead of the tree itself, and be dedicated to protecting the tree until it is raised back to its former glory. Perhaps the God Teeth are artificial structures; prisons crafted by demigods to hold a group of titans that once sought to destroy the world.

In an epic-level campaign world, the tree could have once been the home of a unique sub-species of elves that spent their entire lives in, on, and around the Ur Tree. When the elves died, the tree died with them. Now, hundreds of thousands of years later, an unusual human city sits atop its remains. The tree's interior is sealed off because the strange magic within encourages nightmarish creatures to spawn in its darkness. Not all the elves who once inhabited the tree died in those ancient days, however; some escaped to a world where every tree grows as large the Ur Tree. Now, a group descended from those elves has returned to seek out the origins of their kind. When they find the tree defiled by the presence of offensive human buildings, they become outraged. They want to destroy the city and take the tree back to their world, but the creatures living inside the tree have plans of their own. This could spark an epic, three-sided war that changes the face of your campaign world!

Finally, there is no reason the moot has to be inside a gigantic tree. Take the basic layout of the place and shove it inside a mountain somewhere. Bury it in the depths where the dark elves dwell or set it in the middle of a dwarven empire that exists solely to serve the guardians.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BLUE RAT



AT A GLANCE

The genie Karim (kah-REEHM) built himself a fabulous palace in a desert. It was an oasis for travelers and a testament to his own wealth and power. Everything was going as planned until about a year ago, when an orphaned wyrmling blue dragon made its way inside the palace walls. The dragon befriended the dire rats living in the cisterns beneath the palace and soon became their leader.

Now led by the so-called “Blue Rat,” as she calls herself, the rats have grown from being a minor nuisance to being a genuine hazard. In recent weeks the dragon and her rats have befouled the palace’s food and water supply with their droppings, stolen clothing from Karim’s personal wardrobe, and even killed several servants.

Neither Karim nor any of the other palace inhabitants are aware that a dragon is behind their problems. They simply believe the resident dire rat pack has gotten out of hand in recent weeks, and want to hire a group of adventurers to come in and exterminate the creatures.

PLACEMENT

Karim’s palace is located atop a desert mesa within a short distance of one or more major cities. Since Karim claims to be a king, the desert should be either unclaimed by any other power, or claimed by a local ruler too weak to successfully challenge Karim’s claim of kingship.

If you don’t have a suitable desert region in your game, you can still make use of the palace. Either change the descriptions of the surrounding terrain to match your campaign setting, or assume Karim uses

spells to alter the region to his liking. If you decide to change the default terrain, consider making the dragon a different color to take the new terrain into account. For example, if you place the palace in a forest, it's reasonable to replace "the Blue Rat" with "the Green Rat."

INHABITANTS

Though over five hundred people live within the walls of Karim's palace, the two of greatest concern to adventurers are Karim himself and his unwelcome guest, the dragon called the Blue Rat.

THE BLUE RAT

Wyrmling Blue Dragon

CR 3; Small dragon (Earth); HD 6d12+6; hp 50; Init +0; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 100 ft (average), burrow 20 ft; AC 16 (+1 size, +5 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grap: +3; Atk: +8 (1d6+1, bite); Full Atk: +8 (1d6+1, bite) or +3 (1d4+1, 2 claws); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Breath Weapon; SQ Blindsight, Immunities, Incredible Influence, Keen Senses; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10

Skills: Disable Device +3, Escape Artist +9, Hide +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +3, Search +3, Spot +11, Swim +6

Feats: Alertness, Animal Upbringing, Flyby Attack

Languages: None (some broken Common and Draconic)

The Blue Rat avoids fighting unless she can minimize any risks to herself. She prefers to make hit-and-run attacks (such as flying in by surprise, striking with her Breath Weapon, and then quickly escaping). After such an ambush, she waits an hour or two before attacking again.

Breath Weapon (Su): Line of lightning, 40 feet long, every 1d4 rounds; damage 2d8, Reflex half DC 14.

Blindsense (Ex): Dragons can ascertain creatures by nonvisual means (mostly hearing and scent, but also by noticing vibrations and other environmental clues); this dragon's range is 30 feet.

Create/Destroy Water (Sp): 3/day — as *create water*, except the dragon can also destroy water, which automatically spoils liquids containing water. Magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed at a Will save (DC 13) or be ruined.

Immunities (Ex): Immune to electricity, sleep, paralysis.

Incredible Influence (Ex): The combination of her draconic charisma (which will one day become her frightful presence ability) and her animal upbringing give the Blue Rat the ability to control, rather than just persuade, her dire rat allies. She may control up to 12 Hit Dice of dire rats at one time, allowing for complex coordinated actions to be performed with precision timing. Subjects that wish to disobey a command from the Blue Rat must succeed at a DC 13 Will save.

Keen Senses (Ex): Dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

THE BLUE RAT

Orphaned Blue Dragon Wyrmling

“Squeak! Squeak I tell you!”

The Blue Rat’s family was slain by a party of adventurers shortly after her birth. Though she managed to escape, being an orphan has seriously hampered her mental and social development. Lost and alone, she wandered the desert as a scavenger until she came upon the genie’s palace. She flew over the palace’s walls, poked around inside, and managed to befriend the palace’s dire rats. Now she leads the palace’s resident rat pack and honestly believes she’s one of their kind. Although she has all the powers of a blue dragon and is able to speak a few words of her own language and the common tongue, the Blue Rat doesn’t know her dragon name or history; she’s the dragon equivalent of a child raised by wolves.

The Blue Rat is smart enough not to expose herself to the palace rat-hunters. She sends out other rats to do her bidding.

KARIM

Frustrated Genie

“My friends, you do not understand. These are no ordinary rats!”

Karim has everything even a genie could wish for: fame, fortune, and the admiration of friends and family. Yet, despite his best efforts, a lasting solution to his rat problem evades him. The dire rats have stolen his clothing, killed his servants, eaten several horses, left droppings in the palace grain supply, and made a mockery of his grand palace.

His obsession with solving the rat problem borders on mania, and this intensity comes across in his demeanor and speech. His praise for those who would cleanse his palace of the infestation is limitless, and a party who successfully ends the infestation finds itself with a patron and mentor for future adventures.



NEW FEAT: ANIMAL UPBRINGING

Prerequisites: This feat may only be taken during character creation.

Benefit: You were raised by a species of animal intelligence or less. This includes animals like wolves or rats, completely non-intelligent species such as oozes, and even mindless undead like skeletons.

You can communicate with creatures from your adoptive species as an extraordinary ability, using a combination of grunts, body language, and regular speech. This is a free action. This ability only works on creatures of the exact same type as your adoptive parents. For example, if you were raised by bears, you are unable to communicate with lions.

You gain a +4 bonus to Diplomacy checks when dealing with creatures of animal intelligence and are considered to have a Charisma score four points higher when dealing with your parental species.

You are illiterate at first level, as if a member of the barbarian class. To overcome illiteracy, you must spend skill points to re-learn your native languages, and must spend additional skill points to learn to read and write.

Special: The GM should review any adoptive parents suggested by a PC, and reject the choice if it has the potential to unbalance the campaign.



KARIM

Djinni

CR 10; Huge outsider (Air, Extraplanar, Good); HD 14d8+56; hp 119; Init +7; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 60 ft. (perfect); AC 23 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural, +6 *chain shirt* +2), touch 11, flat-footed 20; BAB +14; Grap +22; Atk +22 melee (1d10+12, slam) or +23 (1d6+9 and 1d6 cold/crit 18-20/x2, +1 *frost scimitar*) or +18 (1d8+4/crit 20/ x3 and 2d8 sonic, +1 *composite (+4 Str) thundering longbow*); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (1d10+12, slam) or +23/+18/+13 (1d6+9 and 1d6 cold/crit 18-20/x2, +1 *frost scimitar*) or +18/+13/+8 (1d8+4/crit 20/ x3 and 2d8 sonic, +1 *composite (+4 Str) thundering longbow*); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA Spell-like Abilities, Air Mastery, Whirlwind; SQ Immunity to Acid, *Plane Shift*, *Telepathy*; AL CG; SV Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 26, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15

Skills: Appraise +12, Concentration +14, Craft (gemcutting) +12, Craft (painting) +12, Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Perform +12, Search +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +12, Spot +12

Feats: Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Languages: Auran, Celestial, Common, Ignan

Karim gained most of his wealth through a protracted war with the efreeti, and is a highly skilled combatant. He typically begins a fight by activating his Whirlwind power, and uses it until his opponents are overcome. If faced with opponents who are not unduly affected by that power, he takes to the air and opens fire with his bow. If confronted with a flying opponent, he switches to his scimitar and engages in hand-to-hand combat instead. Karim is not too proud to retreat, and if reduced to 50% or less of his hit points, he *plane shifts* away at the first available opportunity.

Karim is not a noble djinni and cannot grant wishes.

Air Mastery (Ex): Airborne creatures suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to attack and damage rolls against a djinni.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/round-*invisibility* (self only); 1/day-*create food and water*, *create wine* (as *create water*, but wine instead), *major creation* (created vegetable matter is permanent), *persistent image* (DC 17), and *wind walk*. Once per day, a djinni can assume *gaseous form* (as the spell) for up to 1 hour. Caster level 20th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.



KARIM, CONTINUED

Plane Shift (Sp): A genie can enter any of the elemental planes, the Astral Plane, or the Material Plane. This ability transports the genie and up to six other creatures, provided they all link hands with the genie. It is otherwise similar to the spell of the same name.

Telepathy (Su): A genie can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Whirlwind (Su): The djinni can transform itself into a whirlwind once every 10 minutes and remain in that form for up to 7 rounds. In this form, it moves through the air or along the ground at its fly speed. The whirlwind is 5 feet wide at the base, up to 30 feet wide at the top and up to 50 feet tall. The djinni controls the exact height, but it must be at least 10 feet.

Large or smaller creatures might take damage when caught in the whirlwind and be lifted into the air. An affected creature must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) when it comes into contact with the whirlwind or take 3d6 points of damage. It must also succeed at a second Reflex save or be picked up bodily and held suspended in the powerful winds, automatically taking 1d8 points of damage each round. A creature that can fly is allowed a Reflex save (DC 20) each round to escape the whirlwind. The creature still takes damage but escapes if the save is successful. The save DC is Strength-based and includes a +3 racial adjustment.

Creatures trapped in the whirlwind cannot move except to go where the djinni carries them or to escape the whirlwind. Creatures caught in the whirlwind can otherwise act normally, but must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast a spell. Creatures caught in the whirlwind take a -4 penalty to Dexterity and a -2 penalty on attack rolls. The djinni can have only as many creatures trapped inside a whirlwind at one time as will fit inside the whirlwind's volume.

The djinni can eject any carried creatures whenever it wishes, depositing them in any square wherever the whirlwind happens to be.

If the whirlwind's base touches the ground, it creates a swirling cloud of debris. This cloud is centered on the djinni and has a diameter equal to half the whirlwind's height. The cloud obscures all vision, including Darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have one-half concealment, while those farther away have total concealment. Those caught in the cloud must succeed at a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast a spell.

Possessions: +1 mighty (+4) thundering long bow, 20 +1 arrows, +1 frost scimitar, +1 large shield, +2 chain shirt studded with 100 diamonds worth 100 gp each.

DIRE RATS

Pesky Scavengers

[Squeak, squeak, squeak!]

The dire rats that inhabit Karim's palace are no more dangerous than ordinary dire rats. However, with the Blue Rat as their leader, the pack shows a level of cunning the rats don't possess individually.

The dire rats absolutely adore the Blue Rat and the intelligence they glean from her. They treat her as if she was a goddess living amongst them, follow her every whim and desire, but only sacrifice their lives for her when absolutely necessary.

SUPPORTING CAST

Innocent Bystanders

"Help! Get it off me!"

There are over five hundred people who live and work at Karim's palace, including his four wives, a dozen children, guards, servants, and visitors.

THE LAIR

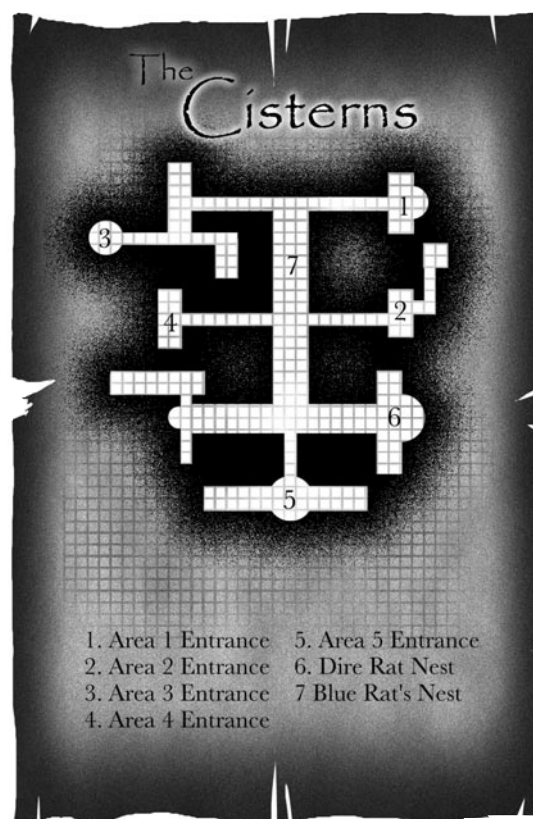
Karim's palace is a compound of large buildings built over a period of several years. The architectural style of the structures is not consistent, as Karim's taste in design has varied over the decades. Most buildings are made of fine stone such as marble or granite — those

made of lesser-quality stone are covered over with plaster. Virtually every surface of the palace is decorated in some way, either with carvings, paintings, or inlaid riches. Though the designs of the buildings vary, many feature columns, archways, and domes.

Note: Karim's palace is loosely based on Topkapi palace in Istanbul, though Karim's dwelling is both smaller and more fantastic.

CISTERNS

A complex network of cisterns runs underneath the entire palace. The cisterns are huge stone chambers



DIRE RATS (20)

There are approximately twenty dire rats living in the palace, though the Blue Rat cannot control more than a dozen at a time. Use the standard SRD rules

statistics for dire rats to represent these creatures, except that life in the cisterns has taught them to swim, and they have a Swim speed of 10 ft.

lined with columns. At various places, holes in the ceiling lead up to wells located in the palace above. The whole area radiates magic, and seems to literally reek of evil. These structures actually pre-date the construction of the palace, and were built by an ancient race of evil humanoids appropriate to your campaign setting, such as lizard-folk or orcs.

Entrances to the cisterns are marked on the map as corresponding to areas in the palace above. The inhabitants of the palace are aware of the cisterns, but believe the flooded tunnels are of little use to the rats. This isn't true, of course — centuries of accumulated debris combined with the Blue Rat's magical ability to destroy water have created numerous dry areas within the cistern complex.

Dire Rat Nests

This area, located within the underground cisterns, is the main lair for the dire rats. The rats have constructed a score or more of nests in this area from clothing, tapestries, paper, wood, and any other materials they can find. Some glittering bits of coins or gems can also be spotted scattered about in the filth.



Searching through the nests in this area requires ten minutes of time and a DC 10 Search check. On a success, searchers find an EL 1 treasure. This treasure technically belongs to the inhabitants of the castle, and rat-catchers will not be allowed to keep it, though they may get a small reward (possibly 10% of the actual value).



SUPPORTING CAST

The following individuals live in the palace:

Adept: 5 x 1st level, 1 x 3rd level. Several of these adepts staff the hospital in the first courtyard.

Aristocrat: 2 x 1st level, 1 x 2nd level. These aristocrats are all palace administrators.

Barbarian: 3 x 1st level, 1 x 2nd level.

Cleric: 7 x 1st level, 3 x 2nd level, 1 x 5th level. These clerics staff the two temples in the third courtyard, as well as the Pavilion of the Cloak.

Commoner: 401 x 1st level, 4 x 2nd level, 2 x 5th level, 1 x 10th level. The commoners cook, clean, sew, and perform a variety of other menial tasks.

Expert: 15 x 1st level, 4 x 2nd level, 2 x 5th level, 1 x 10th level

Fighter: 4 x 1st level, 2 x 3rd level, 1 x 6th level. The fighters are all eunuchs who either protect the harem or act as Karim's personal bodyguards.

Ranger: 1 x 1st level. The ranger works as a scout, and is rarely on the palace grounds.

Rogue: 4 x 1st level, 2 x 3rd level, 1 x 6th level. These rogues all blend in with the palace servants, and steal things whenever the opportunity presents itself. The increased security brought on by the rat problem has made life much harder for these rogues lately.

Warrior: 25 x 1st level, 2 x 2nd level, 1 x 5th level. These warriors live in the two barracks in the third courtyard, and work guarding buildings, manning watchtowers, and performing other tasks typical of a palace guard.

Wizard: 2 x 1st level, 1 x 3rd level. These wizards act as Karim's personal advisors.

Karim's Wives: Use standard SRD rules djinni statistics to represent Karim's four wives.

Karim's Children: Use standard SRD rules janni statistics to represent Karim's 12 children. Because his children were born on the material plane, they have a permanent link to it.

Visitors: At any given time, the palace has up to 100 visitors, and though most are 1st-level human commoners or aristocrats, they can be of any race, class, or level.

The GM should discard any generated item that is too large or too heavy for rats to drag down into the cisterns. Searchers must check for infection by filth fever, which has the stats given below.

The Blue Rat's Nest

This is where the Blue Rat nests. At the moment, it's simply a larger and cleaner version of the other rat nests. She has only a small amount of treasure, having distributed most of it to ensure the loyalty of her rat minions. As soon as she raids the mint, however, she will start her hoard with renewed interest.



Unlike the rats, the Blue Rat is meticulous about her hoard. Searching her nest produces a randomly determined EL 3 treasure. This treasure technically belongs to the inhabitants of the castle, and rat-catchers will not be allowed to keep it, though they may get a small reward (possibly 10% of the actual value).

THE OUTER GATE

Only a single approach allows access to the desert plateau and Karim's palace. A gatehouse with heavy wooden doors and an iron portcullis blocks access to the top of the plateau, but the gate is normally kept open to allow free travel. Two guards protect the gatehouse at all times, and a murder hole allows gate-defenders to pour flaming oil onto invaders.

THE FIRST COURT

The palace's first courtyard has no walls, and visitors should be careful not to step off the edge of the mesa to their deaths.

The main feature of the first court is the gardens, which provide food and water for the palace's inhabitants. Two circular fountains are connected to wells beneath the surface of the mesa, and each is equipped with four evenly spaced taps for distribution of fresh water to passersby.

North of the garden is the parade ground, where Karim's troops drill daily and where actual parades are occasionally held for the entertainment of his servants.

HOSPITAL

This hospital is staffed by two adepts who provide healing to all those who ask. The poor are treated free of charge, but wealthier visitors are expected to pay for healing services.

Karim and his family have their own healer, and never need to visit this place.

CHURCH

This structure is a church dedicated to whatever foreign god is appropriate to your campaign setting. It does not have many parishioners, but those who do come here tend to be very devout in their faith.



NEW DISEASE: FILTH FEVER

Filth fever is a necrotizing disease that enters the body through small wounds that come into contact with offal and contaminated water. Its stats are:

Infection
injury

DC
12

Incubation
1d3 days

Damage
1d3 Dex, 1d3 Con

BAKERY

This bakery produces basic food supplies for the palace workers. More opulent fare can only be had at the palace kitchens and confectionary. Most grain must be imported, but because it is shipped in such large quantities, the prices are quite reasonable.

This building is one of the Blue Rat's favorite places to forage for food; she's powerful enough to slay any peasant that gets in her way.

SMITHY

This smithy produces metal goods for servants and visitors alike. In general, you can find any metal items from the standard "Adventuring Gear" list here. They don't make weapons or armor, as that is the province of Karim's armory.

APARTMENTS

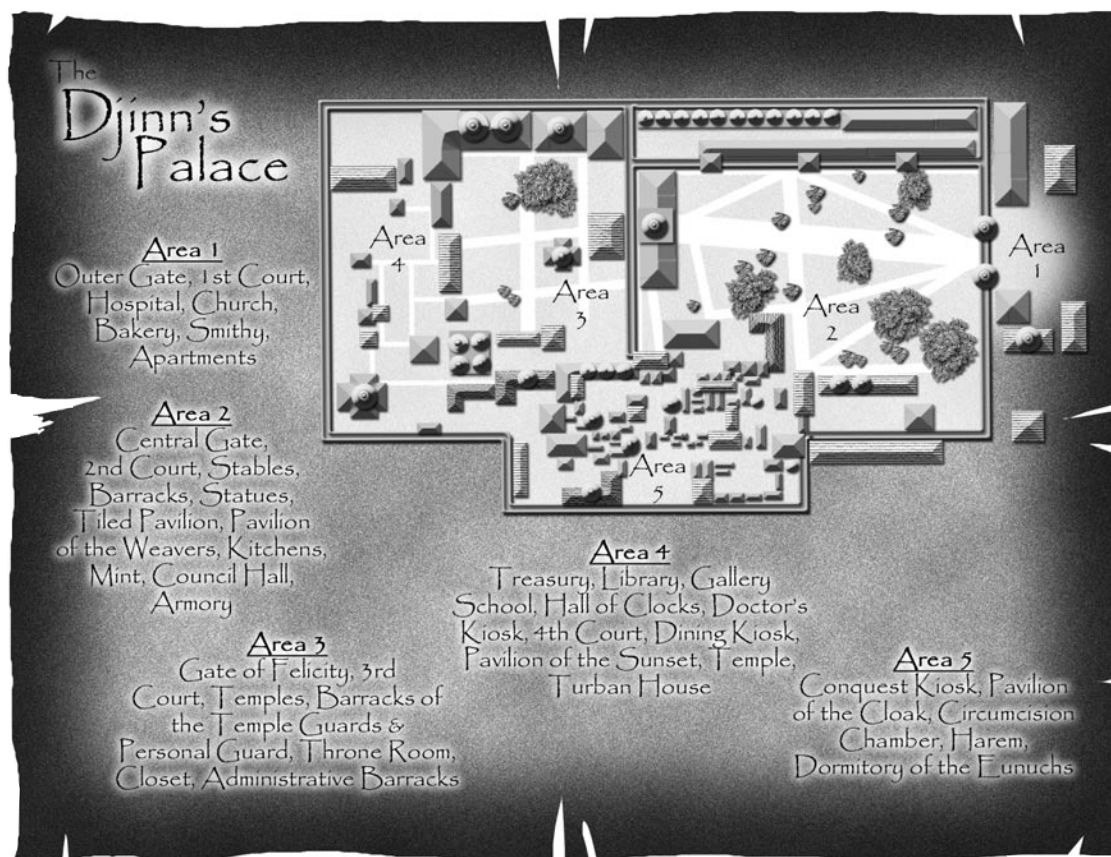
This tightly packed collection of buildings serves as housing for low-ranking palace workers and visitors. Over one hundred servants live here, and there is room to house an additional twenty visitors.

CENTRAL GATE

Dual guard towers, each of which supports a constant watch of five men, flank this large and imposing gate. Pikes jut from the ground in front of the towers, and though they're rarely used, each is intended to hold the severed head of a traitor for public display.

THE SECOND COURT

The second court is a large, grassy area, crisscrossed by cobblestone pathways. Numerous trees dot the courtyard, providing shade from the harsh desert sun.



STABLES

These stables can accommodate as many as fifty horses or camels, though at any given time they usually house no more than a dozen. The Blue Rat has developed a taste for horseflesh, and this has become one of her favorite places to get a “snack.” Of course, after losing three of his best horses, Karim now has at least two guards protecting this area at all times. The Blue Rat is aware of the increased guard, but hasn’t yet found a way to eliminate the guards without revealing herself.

BARRACKS

This building is the main guard barracks for the palace. It houses a contingent of 100 guards, with about twenty off duty and in the barracks at any given time. The accommodations are spartan, but the guards are well fed, well paid, and thankful they aren’t eunuchs.

STATUES

These are life-size stone statues of Karim, his four wives, and his twelve children. Karim paid a traveling wizard to enchant these statues, allowing the

genie to see and hear all that goes on nearby simply by speaking a command word. No one else is aware of the magic these statues possess, so Karim uses them to spy on his servants and advisors, in case any are potential traitors and thieves.

TILED PAVILION

This is a small facility for making ceramic goods. The staff here is constantly busy producing bowls, plates, and replacement tiles for the palace rooftops.

PAVILION OF THE

WEAVERS

A group of weavers works here producing clothes, tapestries, linens, and other goods for the palace inhabitants. Though the Blue Rat herself has no interest in this place, the other rats often come here to gather bits of cloth for their nests.



NEW MAGIC ITEM: GOSSIPING STATUE (17)

A *gossiping statue* is a life-sized stone replica of a living being. To even a trained observer, such a statue is so lifelike that it might be mistaken for the victim of a medusa’s gaze or a *flesh to stone* spell, but it is in fact mere stone. Each *gossiping statue* is keyed to a particular command phrase, which must be chiseled upon its surface. Such command phrases are usually written upon the soles of the statue’s feet, so as to hide the command from casual inspection.

When the command phrase is spoken, the statue activates a *clairaudience/clairvoyance* effect, allowing the person who spoke the command phrase to see and hear activities around the statue

as if he was actually there as long as he stays within 600 feet of the statue. The effect terminates when the command phrase is repeated. Only one person is able to use a *gossiping statue* at a time; if a second person speaks the command word, the effect is terminated for the first user.

Weak divination; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*; Price 9,000 gp; Weight 500 lb.



MINT

Since the palace is not under the authority of any near-by ruler, Karim has decided to mint his own coins. These coins include platinum *karims* (named for Karim), gold *sharas* (named for Karim's favored wife, Shara), silver *jarats* (named for Karim's heir Jarat), and copper *janas* (named for Karim's eldest daughter Jana).

Though this building might seem like a tempting target for adventurers, any local knows over eighty percent of the coins produced there are copper *janas*, and not worth risking one's life for. Despite the lack of high-value coins, the Blue Rat plans to raid this building soon, as a method of jump-starting her hoard.



Normally, there are two guards on duty at the mint. The doors are always locked with a good-quality lock (Open Locks DC 30), though at least five people who work at the mint have keys. People of the palace actual-

ly work here, so there are no dangerous traps protecting the stores of copper. At night, however, the coins are protected by an audible *alarm* spell (caster level 3rd).

THE KITCHENS

The large kitchens feed all the palace inhabitants. Low-ranking servants get only a single meal a day, while Karim and his family have five daily meals prepared for them, whether they eat them or not. The kitchen also has a separate confectionary, producing sweets of all sorts; specialties include halvah and yogurt dishes.

Most of the cookware used by the kitchen is produced in the ceramics shop or smithy, and includes cauldrons, coffee cups, pots, and water jugs made of ceramic, bronze, or even marble. The kitchen houses a collection of valuable imported porcelains from the East (worth a total of 8,100 gp), which are kept under strict watch.

The Blue Rat and her cronies make regular raids upon the kitchen, but are careful to avoid the guards watching the fine china.

COUNCIL HALL

This building is where the day-to-day administration of the palace is carried out, where trials are held, and where the dungeons await those convicted of crimes. There are five members in the palace council who perform these duties. Karim selects the council members from the ranks of the eunuchs, the clerics, the guards, the artisans, and his family. Decisions are made by majority vote, though Karim can overrule any of the council's decisions.

Karim has his own personal room in the council hall on the second floor. Karim's room looks down on the council chamber through an iron grate. Stairs from Karim's room lead up to a large tower that dominates the center of the building. This tower, called the Tower of Justice, is where Karim makes most of his personal appearances, and it is from here that royal decrees are announced so that all may hear them.

ARMORY

The armory has a ready supply of equipment for Karim's troops, including tents, scimitars, short bows, chain shirts, and small shields.

It also houses Karim's personal battle gear, including an enchanted scimitar, a diamond-studded chain shirt, and a bow that fires enchanted arrows. These items are kept in a locked room and protected by dangerous traps.



These items are described under Karim's entry in the Inhabitants section. They're kept in a room with an amazing-quality lock (Open Locks DC 40), and are protected with a poison gas trap.

THE GATE OF FELICITY

This gate leads to the third courtyard. Only Karim, his family, his personal guards, and those with direct invitations from Karim are allowed to pass through this gate. This gate is sometimes known as the "gate of the eunuchs" because Karim, despite his good-

hearted nature, sometimes orders his male servants castrated if they're to interact with his wives.

THE THIRD COURT

The third courtyard holds buildings, such as the royal treasury, to which public access is highly restricted. Unlike the first two courtyards, the third courtyard is mostly flagstone, with occasional patches of grass to relieve the monotony.

TEMPLES

These structures are temples to Karim's deity, the Desert Wind. Each temple has a pair of attendant clerics. All of Karim's personal servants, bodyguards, and advisors are required to attend services at these temples.



NEW TRAP: MORPHEUS VAPOR TRAP

Morpheus Vapor Cloud: CR 5; mechanical; miss; onset delay 2 rounds; poison (morpheus vapors, see below); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20); Market Price 9,000 gp



NEW POISON: MORPHEUS VAPORS

Type: Inhaled DC 20

Initial Damage: Paralysis (2d6 minutes)

Secondary Damage: Unconsciousness (1d3 hours)

Price: 500 gp

Morpheus vapors are created by boiling specially treated dust brought back from the underworld. Exposure to morpheus vapors causes temporary paralysis, and often prolonged unconsciousness.

BARRACKS OF THE TEMPLE GUARDS

These barracks house the guards who are responsible for protecting the temples and the Pavilion of the Cloak. The building can house up to ten guards at a high standard of living, though typically no more than two or three are found here at any given time.

BARRACKS OF THE PERSONAL GUARD

This barracks houses Karim's personal guard. The building has room to quarter twenty soldiers in relative comfort, though no more than ten are here at any given time.

THE THRONE ROOM

Though Karim rarely uses it, this structure holds his throne room and audience chamber. Karim is very busy and rarely sees visitors, so unless the guest or petitioner is a king or person of similar rank, she must be content with an audience with one of Karim's high-ranking advisors.

Though it normally sits empty, Karim's throne dominates the center of this large chamber — it's a sofa made of exotic hardwoods and covered with gold-spun cloth. The throne is worth 900 gp, but is immovable.

CLOSET

This large building was once used for training administrators and guards, but since the wardrobe of Karim and his harem grew too large to keep in the harem, this building has been turned into an enormous walk-in closet. Both floors of the structure are filled with robes, cloaks, blouses, shoes, and every imaginable item of clothing except for turbans (Karim's turban collection is so large it gets a building of its own). Most of the outfits are finely made, and some are quite valuable (worth up to 500 gp apiece), so the building is kept locked and guarded by a single soldier at all times. The rats have decided that the clothes in this building make exceptionally comfortable nest material, so they occasionally raid the place for scraps of fabric. The guard has already been disciplined for allowing this to happen, and has re-doubled his efforts to make sure nothing more is stolen.

ADMINISTRATORS BARRACKS

Running the palace and the surrounding land takes a number of skilled administrators, and this building contains both permanent living quarters for administrators who live in the palace and temporary ones for those who merely visit here.



NEW DEITY: THE DESERT WIND

The Desert Wind has two different aspects. The djinni worship the airy aspect of the Desert Wind, while the efreeti worship a fiery aspect. The Desert Wind is a harsh power, and asks much of his followers. Important rituals of the Desert Wind faith involve the circumcising of male children, fasting during the daytime in the hot summer months, and protecting the virtue of women by keeping them out of the public eye.

Alignment: Chaotic Good for wind aspect/
Lawful Evil for fire aspect

Typical Worshippers: Djinni, efreeti, janni, and those who live in the desert or serve genie-kind.

Symbol: A wind-fanned flame.

Domains: Air, Chaos, and Good for the wind aspect; Fire, Law, and Evil for the fire aspect.

TREASURY

This building is divided up into four separate rooms, which house Karim's personal treasures, as well as the palace tax collectors. The treasures are under the best possible guard, and the building is protected with numerous traps, some of which are quite lethal. Under no circumstances does Karim allow PCs in this building, which makes it a perfect place for the Blue Rat to sneak into through the cisterns. The Rat knows the place is generously trapped, however, and has not attempted to steal anything within ... yet.

Karim prizes emeralds above all other gems, and most of the treasures kept here are either emeralds, or items decorated with emeralds. Some notable

pieces include emerald pendants, coffee cups studded with emeralds, an emerald-studded turban, a dagger with a hilt of solid emerald, and a solid emerald sherbet set.

LIBRARY

The library contains a variety of books, scrolls, and even clay tablets written in a variety of languages and covering a multiplicity of subjects. Most of the manuscripts are either religious texts or commentaries on religious texts, but the library also holds works of poetry, fiction, philosophy, and science. The library also has an extensive collection of decorative calligraphic manuscripts.

TREASURY DEFENSES

The total value of Karim's treasure is approximately 50,000 gp, though getting any of it out of the treasury without being caught is a bit of a challenge.

The treasury building is always kept locked with a good-quality lock (Open Locks DC 30), and is patrolled by four guards at all times — two patrol inside, and two guard the exterior.

Two tax collectors work in the building, and they have keys to the door and know how to bypass the traps. Both are extremely loyal to Karim and would never willingly betray him.

The most valuable items in the treasury are kept in a glass case locked with an amazingly good-quality lock (Open Locks DC 40), and protected by a dangerous *life-trapping* trap.



NEW TRAP: LIFE-TRAPPING GLASS

Glass Case of Life Trapping: CR 10; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*imprisonment*, as per a *mirror of life trapping*, 17th-level wizard, DC 23 Will save negates); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34. Cost 200,000 gp.

Note: This trap is really nothing more than a *mirror of life trapping* that takes effect only when opened without the correct command word,

instead of making a gaze attack. Breaking the case sets off the trap but ruins the reset function; normally the glass case automatically shuts (and thereby resets) when a subject is drawn inside and imprisoned within the glass's extradimensional space. The case does not give up its prisoners if broken, only the correct command words or an excessive number of prisoners will free victims of this trap.



The books in the library provide a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge checks related to religion, poetry, fiction, philosophy, or science. Characters looking for arcane spells in the library will be disappointed, as Karim does not have any interest in the arcane arts.

GALLERY

As a way of displaying his patronage of the arts and sciences, Karim has turned this building into a small museum featuring miniature buildings, weapons, armor, and other objects, as well as paintings of all of Karim's direct ancestors going back ten generations. The miniatures in the gallery are exact replicas of the original items — the weapons and armor are even enchanted, albeit very small. The Blue Rat has no use for such items, but plans to eventually add them to her hoard anyway.



There are a half-dozen miniature suits of full-plate armor and a dozen miniature weapons in the gallery. These items are all size Diminutive or smaller, and all carry randomly determined minor enchantments. Because these items are so small, they are only worth at most a fourth of what the full-size item would be.

SCHOOL

This building is used as a school to train administrators and guards. It includes an indoor archery range, classrooms, a weapons practice room, and similar facilities.

HALL OF CLOCKS

To show his patronage of science and technology, Karim uses this structure to display items of exceptional craftsmanship, especially clocks and musical instruments. Karim is so fond of clocks that he keeps a personal clockmaker on retainer. Many of the clocks in this building are not only functional, but works of art decorated with gold and jewels. Their total value is approximately 5000 gp.

DOCTOR'S KIOSK

An open-air pavilion adorns the garden, and is connected by a wall to the doctor's kiosk. This tower houses Kassan (kah-SAHN) — Karim's personal physician and cleric — in luxury.

THE FOURTH COURT

The entire fourth courtyard is a gigantic and elaborate flower garden. Dozens of different types of flowers are planted here, and with the aid of magic, they remain in bloom all year long. The court is built on several different elevations, with the various levels of the courtyard connected by short staircases.

DINING KIOSK

This building is where Karim and his family eat dinner. The kiosk is nothing more than a domed roof supported by four pillars.

PAVILION OF THE SUNSET

This covered observation platform actually extends off the edge of the mesa into the open air, and provides a spectacular view of the surrounding desert. The official function of this pavilion is to break fast on days of worship, but Karim enjoys the view so much he comes here every night when there is a full moon.

TEMPLE

This is a temple dedicated to Karim's deity, the Desert Wind. It has no attendant clerics, and is just large enough that Karim has a place to stop and pray when he is in a pious mood.

TURBAN HOUSE

Like many of the other buildings in the palace, this structure is dedicated to housing one of Karim's collections. This particular building houses his collec-

tion of turbans. The rats have built nests within many of the turbans, though Karim doesn't know it yet.

CONQUEST KIOSK

This building does not serve any practical function; rather it is a commemoration of the day Karim's ancestors defeated a powerful army of efreeti. The building is covered in decorative ceramic tiles, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The structure is also equipped with a fireplace, and a brazier used for making coffee.

THE PAVILION OF THE CLOAK

Karim uses this pavilion to store a powerful artifact known as the *sacred cloak*. The pavilion is divided up into three separate rooms. The first room is simply a domed chamber where visitors can meditate and pray while waiting to be escorted to the Chamber of the Cloak. The second room is a chamber for Karim's personal priest, who occasionally shows the *sacred cloak* to interested visitors and expounds on genie lore. The door to the third room, which houses the cloak, is kept locked. Two guards protect the door at all times.

The Blue Rat has burrowed up into this chamber from below, and replaced the actual *sacred cloak* in the third chamber with a worthless duplicate. Not a single person has managed to detect the deception thus far. The Blue Rat often wears the *sacred cloak* to spoil attempts to divine his location.

CIRCUMCISION CHAMBER

This building is used for performing ritual circumcisions and for castrating would-be eunuchs. When a young boy (usually around the age of five or six) is circumcised, a small festival is held in this building both to help him forget the pain of the operation, and to remind him of the religious significance of the event. The festival includes a band, dancing, and small gifts. Conversely, when used for a castration, the new eunuch is simply given a few healing spells, and hauled off to the eunuch's dormitory.

HAREM

The harem is a complex of buildings that contains Karim's personal living quarters, as well as rooms for his four wives, twelve children, and seventy five assorted concubines and female servants. The rooms in the harem are all very small, but lavishly decorated.



NEW ARTIFACT: SACRED CLOAK

The *sacred cloak* is a bright blue cloak made from the finest giant spider silk. It was originally created by one of Karim's ancestors who grew tired of constantly answering a summons to a *ring of djinni calling* to which he was bound.

The *sacred cloak* provides whoever wears it with complete immunity to conjuration spells, immunity to any sort of magical scrying, and immunity to

any effect that detects, influences, or reads emotions or thoughts.

Even though it's an artifact, the *sacred cloak* is the creation of common djinn, and can easily be destroyed by a noble djinni.

Overpowering abjuration; CL 20; Weight 2 lb.

DORMITORY OF THE EUNUCHS

Eunuch guards protect those who live in the harem. These eunuchs have their own barracks, which must be bypassed to gain entrance to the harem from the second courtyard. The eunuchs' rooms are spartan compared to the rooms of the harem, but still far more luxurious than the barracks of common soldiers.

SCENES

The simplest way for PCs to get involved with the Blue Rat and Karim's palace is to fill the role of exterminators. Karim has dispatched agents to all of the nearby cities and villages, looking for adventurers willing to take care of the palace's rat problem. Under no circumstances do these messengers say anything about a dragon.

When the PCs visit the palace, they are carefully searched — both when entering, and when leaving. They are not allowed free run of the palace, which makes catching the rats even more difficult.

Furthermore, the Blue Rat prefers to work behind the scenes, and only the most cunning plans have a chance of forcing her out into the open.

When rat-catchers arrive in the palace, the rats quickly bring a warning to the Blue Rat. Once the Blue Rat realizes she is being hunted, she moves about constantly to avoid being cornered.

Several other scenarios could play themselves out at the palace, beyond simple rat hunting. Perhaps the Blue Rat goes on the offensive, stealing Karim's treasures, or possibly even kidnapping one or more of his children. In this case, it becomes imperative to retrieve the treasure or rescue Karim's child rather than wipe out the rat population. Indeed, if the dragon has secreted a treasure or a prisoner somewhere, capturing her alive may be the only way to ensure the safe return of her captive.

The PCs could arrive at the palace as guests, rather than as rat-catchers. The characters might be envoys of a nearby king, sent to ask the genie for assistance in fighting some great evil. In this case, they are sure to come bearing gifts, and the Blue Rat would like nothing more than additional treasure to bolster her hoard.

CAT AND MOUSE

When the PCs begin the rat hunt, select a starting position for the Blue Rat, and divide the palace rats up into five groups of four rats each (remembering that the Blue Rat can only control three groups at once). Assign each group of rats a starting area and number the groups from one to five.

For every ten minutes (or some other reasonable interval of time) the PCs spend searching, roll 1d6. On a result of 1 to 5, move that group of rats into

a random adjacent area. On a result of 6, move the Blue Rat into a random adjacent area.

If the PCs set up any sort of bait that might attract the rats or the dragon, there's a 50% chance the rats or the dragon are drawn in that direction instead of a random direction when they next move. If the rats or the dragon don't fall for the bait, move them away from the bait instead of in a random direction.



ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Make the rat hunt more challenging for higher-level characters by giving the Blue Rat a few draconic siblings. The palace's inhabitants won't be able to tell the difference between dragons and assume there is only a single dragon leading the rat pack, when in fact an entire clutch is at work.

For another interesting twist, have the Blue Rat become mutated by some ancient evil magic that lingers in the cisterns. This mutation could give her a number of unexpected abilities — perhaps she breathes fire instead of lightning, or maybe she becomes an agent of evil and acquires an appropriate template. What if the Blue Rat lays a clutch of eggs that are sired by a dire rat? Since rats mature more quickly than dragons, these half-dragon half-rats could grow to become almost as powerful as the Blue Rat herself!



THE BLUE RAT'S BROOD

Half-Dragon Dire Rat (Half-Dragon Template)

CR 3; Small Dragon (earth); HD 1d10+2; hp 7; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 10 ft.; AC 19 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural); Base Atk +0; Grap -1; Atk +5 melee (1d4+4/crit 20/x2, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4+4/crit 20/x2, bite), +3/+3 melee (1d3+2/crit 20/x2, claw); SA Breath Weapon, Disease; SQ Immunities, Enhanced Senses; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Multiattack(B)

Languages: Draconic (just a few simple words like “kill” and “food”)

These half-dragons aren't all that intelligent, and almost always begin combat with a Breath Weapon attack, followed by a vicious melee attack.

Breath Weapon (Su): Once per day, Line of lightning (5 ft. high, 5 ft. wide, 60 ft. long), 6d8 electricity damage, Reflex save DC 18 for half damage.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever-bite, Fortitude save (DC 12), incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity score and 1d3 temporary Constitution score.

Enhanced Senses (Ex): The Blue Rat's brood has Darkvision, Low-Light Vision, and the Scent ability.

Immunities (Ex): Immune to sleep, paralysis, and electricity.

Skills: Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Swim and Climb checks, and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even when rushed or threatened. Dire rats use their Dexterity modifier for Climb and Swim checks.

THE DARKNESS OF SPACE



AT A GLANCE

In ancient times, the chromatic dragons made war against the metallic dragons. Though the metallic dragons were more powerful than their evil counterparts, their numbers were few. To compensate for this, they created a race of constructs to aid them, a race of clockwork dragons in the image of the metallic dragons. Despite their physical power and magical abilities, the clockwork dragons lacked the spark of intelligence that would have made them truly useful allies. So it was that Petra, one of the greatest of the gold dragons, sacrificed her own heart to create the *wyrmstone*: a magical artifact that provided the clockwork dragons with minds and souls.

With the clockwork dragons at their side, the metallics began to turn the tide of the war to their favor. Then the unthinkable happened — the clockwork dragons turned on their metallic creators. As part of their rebellion, they created the *draconis perditoris* (drah-KOHN-iss per-dih-TOHR-iss), a dragon-slaying blade of unsurpassed power.

The metallic dragons, terrified of this new weapon, abandoned the war against the chromatics and devoted their energies to fighting their own creations. Eventually, they were able to capture the sword, drive it through the *wyrmstone*, and cause the clockwork dragons to revert back to mindless constructs.

The destruction of the *wyrmstone* would have destroyed the clockwork dragons and killed Petra, so she begged the other dragons to leave it intact. Thus, in that emotional moment, even though it might be a terrible mistake, the *wyrmstone* was not destroyed. Instead, it was hidden away in the most inaccessible place the dragons could imagine: the darkness of space. A vault, dubbed the Wyrmsstone Fortress, was constructed in the void above the sky, and the *wyrmstone* was secured at its heart. Numerous clockwork dragons were tasked with guarding the item for all eternity, and Petra herself volunteered to lair within. Since then, the *wyrmstone* has been dormant, waiting for the day when someone would free it from its prison.

PLACEMENT

The Wyrmsstone Fortress floats in the nothingness of space. Ideally, the fortress is in orbit around the PCs' home world, but it could be placed in orbit of another planet or possibly even adrift in deep space.

There are only a few different ways to reach the Wyrmsstone Fortress. The most common is through

teleportation magic. This presents quite a challenge, due to the planar "dead space" surrounding the fortress. Any attempt to teleport into the fortress is likely to result in permanent insanity.

The only safe way to reach the fortress is through a specially designed teleportation portal. This portal, crafted thousands of years ago, is able to circumvent the dead space. Place the other end of this portal anywhere you'd like in your campaign world, but it



A NOTE ON MECHANOMANCY

This chapter makes use of the Mechanomancy rules from the Coriolis adventure *Ascension of the Magdalene*. These rules are also available on-line at the Atlas Games web site at <http://www.atlas-games.com/penumbra>.

Though helpful, you don't need a copy of the Mechanomancy rules to run adventures in the Wyrmsstone Fortress – all the important information you need has been included here. Simply replace the Mechanomancy skill with Craft (Clockworks), ignore all mention of the Mechanomancy feat, and treat the clockwork dragons and Petra's mechanical heart as unique oddities in the history of your campaign setting.

If you're using the Mechanomancy rules, there are a couple of important points you need to be aware of.

- As a dragon, Petra is able to practice Mechanomancy while simultaneously retaining her arcane spellcasting abilities.
- The Mechanomancy skill now uses Intelligence as its key ability.
- When Petra sacrificed her heart to create the *wyrmsstone*, she gave up a millennium of memories. This drove her insane, but over the centuries she has slowly regained her mental capacity. Though her mental attributes have returned to normal, she still suffers from serious bouts of depression, which are aggravated by her isolation in the fortress.
- The clockwork dragons are powered by the *wyrmsstone*; they do not need winding and do not require major charges to activate.



NEW CRAFT SKILL: CLOCKWORKS

Use Craft (clockworks) to create wall clocks, grandfather clocks, clock towers, pocket watches, and even semi-magical creations like clockwork dragons. This skill subcategory uses the standard rules for the Craft skill.

Task	DC
Create grandfather clock	10
Create wall-mounted clock	15
Create pocket watch	20
Create wristwatch	25
Create clockwork creature	21

should be somewhere isolated, where it can't be discovered accidentally. The portal looks like an archway constructed of intertwined wires of brass, bronze, copper, silver, and gold. It either functions automatically or, if you prefer, when some long-lost activation spell is performed. Because the dragons took great pains to hide the existence of the fortress, copies of the activation spell will not be easy to find.

INHABITANTS

The only living inhabitant of the Wyrmsstone Fortress is Petra, the gold dragon. She is more than a match for any intruder. The fortress is also occupied by a number of non-sentient clockwork dragons. Some of Petra's friends used to visit, but that was long ago; she has not entertained a guest in over a century.

PETRA

Guardian of the Wyrmsstone

"No. I'm sorry. Destroying the wyrmsstone just isn't an option."

When the clockwork dragons were originally created, Petra offered up her heart to act as a focus for the enchantment needed to grant them sentience. Petra's heart became the *wyrmsstone*, and her body

received a clockwork heart in its place. The process made her effectively immortal, but also drove her mad. The other dragons were too busy with their war with the chromatics to notice.

After the clockwork dragons were neutralized, a council of the metallic elders decided the *wyrmsstone* must be destroyed. Without it, the clockwork dragons would be unable to function. So, too, would Petra's heart. She begged the other dragons to leave the *wyrmsstone* intact and, moved by her pleas, the council agreed. Now, centuries later, Petra exists for no reason other than to witness the passage of years, and her time spent in isolation has served only to aggravate her insanity. In her deep depression, she no longer cares about personal grooming, the condition of the fortress, or even the maintenance of the clockwork dragons.

Though Petra knows it would be wise to destroy the *wyrmsstone* and end her own life along with the threat of the clockwork dragons, she cannot bring herself to do it. She viciously attacks anyone who attempts to do so.

Surviving in the *wyrmsstone* fortress is difficult, but Petra makes due. Her *ioun stone* allows her to survive without air, she is naturally immune to fire, and her *ring of elemental resistance* protects her from the cold. Once a week, Petra uses her *rod of splendor* to create a feast for herself and, because dragons don't need to eat as often as other creatures, it's enough to live on.



PETRA

Great Wyrms Gold Dragon

CR 27; Colossal dragon (fire); HD 41d12+451; hp 707; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.; AC 42 (-8 size, +40 natural), touch 2, flat-footed 42; Base Atk +41; Grap +75; Atk +43 melee (4d8+18/19-20/x2, bite); Full Atk +43 (4d8+18/19-20/x2, bite), +38 (4d6+9, 2 claws), +38 (2d8+9, 2 wings), +38 (4d6+27, tail slap); Space/Reach 30 ft./20 ft. (30 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence, Spell-like Abilities, Spells, Tail Sweep; SQ Ageless, Alternate

Form, Blindsense, *Detect Gems*, DR 20/magic, Fire Subtype, Immunities, Keen Senses, *Luck Bonus*, SR 33, Water Breathing; AL LG; SV Fort +33, Ref +22, Will +33; Str 47, Dex 10, Con 33, Int 32, Wis 33, Cha 32 (36 with *rod of splendor*)

Skills: Bluff +55 (+57 with rod), Concentration +55, Diplomacy +55 (+57 with rod), Jump +62, Knowledge (arcana) +55, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +55, Knowledge (history) +55, Knowledge (nature) +55, Knowledge (nobility) +55, Knowledge



PETRA, CONTINUED

(the planes) +55, Knowledge (religion) +55, Listen +57, Mechanomancy +55, Search +55, Sense Motive +55, Spellcraft +55, Spot +57

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Leadership, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability, Silent Spell, Wingover.

Languages: Common, Draconic

When trouble arises, Petra is a combatant of exceptional skill. Whenever possible she uses her spells to gain advance warning of a conflict and blanket herself with protective magic beforehand. In combat she prefers to make use of her claws and teeth, as it's been her experience that those who challenge her sometimes come prepared with defenses against her Breath Weapons and spells. Since there is only a single pocket of air in the Wyrmsstone Fortress, she usually casts her spells with the Silent Spell feat. Similarly, since she cannot use her wings to fly without air, she makes use of the *fly* spell and the Jump skill to move about the fortress.

Breath Weapon (Su): Petra has two Breath Weapons. The first is a 70-ft. cone of fire, usable every 1d4 rounds (damage 24d10, Reflex save DC 41 for half damage). The second is a 70-ft. cone of weakening gas (deals 12 points of temporary Strength damage, Fortitude save DC 41 negates).

Crush (Ex): Petra can use her whole body to crush as many Medium or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 30 ft. by 30 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 41) are pinned and take 4d8+27 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, Petra must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Petra can unsettle foes with her mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever she attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 40 or fewer HD within a radius of 360 feet are subject to the effect. Will DC 41 negates.

Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to Petra's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the Frightful Presence of other dragons. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day — *polymorph self* and *bless*; 1/day — *geas/quest*, *sunburst*, *foresight*. Caster level 19th.

Spells: (6/9/9/9/8/8/7/5) Petra knows and casts arcane spells as a 19th-level sorcerer, and can also cast cleric spells and those from the Law, Luck, and Good domains as arcane spells. The DC to resist these spells is 21 (23 with *rod of splendor*) + spell level. She knows the following spells:

0 Level — *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *resistance*

1st Level — *mage armor*, *sanctuary*, *shield*, *shield of faith*, *true strike*

2nd Level — *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *endurance*, *mirror image*, *silent message* (see page 42)

3rd Level — *displacement*, *fly*, *haste*, *protection from energy*

4th Level — *detect scrying*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *minor globe of invulnerability*

5th Level — *plane shift*, *slay living*, *righteous might*, *true seeing*

6th Level — *harm*, *heal*, *greater dispelling*

7th Level — *destruction*, *greater scrying*, *teleport without error*

8th Level — *antimagic field*, *mind blank*, *screen*

9th Level — *wish*, *time stop*



PETRA, CONTINUED

Tail Sweep (Ex): As a standard action, Petra can sweep her tail through a 40-ft. radius half-circle extending from an intersection on the edge of the dragon's space in any direction. This attack deals 2d8+27 damage to Medium and smaller opponents, though a Reflex save (DC 41) is allowed for half damage.

Ageless (Ex): As long as the *wyrmstone* exists, Petra's clockwork heart prevents her from aging. If the *wyrmstone* is destroyed, Petra's clockwork heart stops, and she dies instantly.

Alternate Form (Su): A gold dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast on itself at its caster level, except that the dragon does not regain hit points for changing form and can only assume the form of an animal or humanoid. The dragon can remain in its animal or humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.

Blindsense (Ex): Petra can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents she can't actually see still have total concealment against her.

Damage Reduction: Petra has Damage Reduction 20/magic; she ignores the first 20 points of damage from any attack, unless that attack is made with a magic weapon. Her natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming Damage Reduction.

Detect Gems (Sp): Three times per day, Petra can use this divination ability, similar to *detect magic*, to find only gems. She can scan a 60-degree arc each round. Studying for one round reveals the presence or absence of gems, two rounds reveals the exact number of gems, and three rounds reveals the exact location, type, and value of gems in the arc.

Fire Subtype (Ex): Petra has immunity to fire, but she is vulnerable to cold, which means she takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from cold, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed, or if the save is a success or failure.

Immunities (Ex): All dragons have immunity to *sleep* and paralysis effects.

Keen Senses (Ex): Dragons can see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision (range 1200 feet).

Luck Bonus (Sp): Once per day Petra can touch one gem, usually embedded in her hide, and enspell it to bring good luck. As long as the dragon carries the gem, it and every good creature in a 120-ft. radius receives a +1 luck bonus as per a *stone of good luck*. If the dragon gives the gem to another creature, only the bearer gets the bonus. The enchantment lasts 1d3+36 hours, but ends if the gem is destroyed. This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Spell Resistance (Ex): Petra is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this dragon, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 33; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the dragon is still allowed a saving throw.

Water Breathing (Ex): This dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its Breath Weapons, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Possessions: *immovable rod* (x2), *iridescent spindle ioun stone* (sustains creature without air), *ring of major elemental resistance (cold)*, *ring of major elemental resistance (sonic)*, *rod of splendor* (factored into stats above), *staff of power* (47 charges).

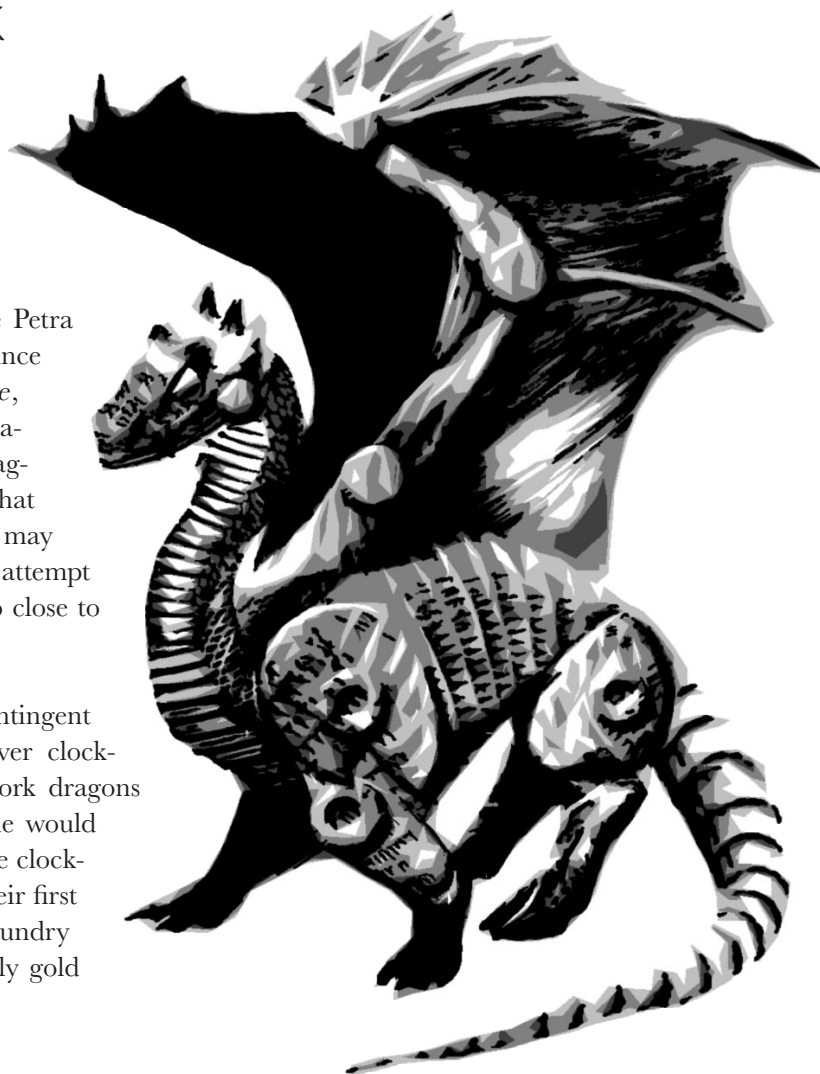
THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS

Mindless Constructs

[Buzz... click... whirr]

The clockwork dragons that serve Petra are completely unintelligent, and since Petra is the source of the *wyrmstone*, they obey her orders without hesitation. Generally, the clockwork dragons ignore any metallic dragons that visit the fortress, but humanoids may suffer an attack, especially if they attempt to fly off the platforms or walk too close to the *wyrmstone*.

The fortress contains a sizeable contingent of brass, bronze, copper, and silver clockworks. There are no gold clockwork dragons within the fortress, as Petra's pride would not allow it. If, for some reason, the clockworks are restored to sentience, their first order of business is to restart the foundry and begin production of the deadly gold clockworks.



NEW SPELL: SILENT MESSAGE

Transmutation [Language-Dependent]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets: One creature/level

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: No

You can mentally “speak” messages and receive telepathic replies. You point a finger at each creature to be included in the spell effect. When you think of a message, all of the targeted creatures who are within range can “hear” the message in

their minds as if it was spoken to them. 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal (or a thin sheet of lead), or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks the spell. The message, however, does not have to travel in a straight line. It can circumvent a barrier if there is an open path between you and the subject, and the path's entire length is within the spell's range. The creatures who receive the message can mentally “speak” a reply that you “hear” in your mind. The spell transmits the mental “sound” of the words, not the meaning. It doesn't transcend language barriers.



THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS

BRASS CLOCKWORK DRAGON (3) (MAJOR CLOCKWORK)

Huge Clockwork Construct

CR 15 (17 if sentient); Huge construct; HD 30d10+40; hp 205; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor), burrow 30 ft; AC 38 (–2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38; Base Atk +22, Grap +41, Atk +31 (2d8+11, bite); Full Atk +31 (2d8+11, bite), +26 (2d6+5, 2 claws), +26 (1d8+5, 2 wings), +26 (2d6+16, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence, Tail Sweep; SQ Construct, DR 12/–, Keen Senses, SR 27; AL N (NE if sentient); SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +13; Str 33, Dex 10, Con –, Int – (18 if sentient), Wis 19, Cha 18

Skills (if sentient): Bluff +48, Climb +44, Hide +25, Jump +44, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +48, Knowledge (history) +48, Listen +39, Mechanomancy +48, Search +48, Sense Motive +48, Spot +39.

Feats (if sentient): Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Wingover.

Languages (if sentient): Common, Draconic

Brass clockwork dragons appear to be brass dragons fashioned from real brass. They attack mindlessly if non-sentient. Sentient versions are flamboyant combatants, preferring to rely on their Breath Weapons.

Breath Weapon (Su): A brass clockwork dragon can discharge a 100-ft.-long jet of flame every 1d4 rounds (10d6 fire damage, Reflex save DC 31 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): A brass clockwork dragon can use its whole body to crush as many Medium or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 15 ft. by 15 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 31) are pinned and take 2d8+16 points of bludgeoning dam-

age. To maintain the pin, It must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A brass clockwork dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 29 or fewer HD within a radius of 300 feet are subject to the effect. Will save DC 29 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to the clockwork's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Clockworks ignore the Frightful Presence of other clockworks and dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless). Cannot heal damage, but may be repaired. A construct is immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less, and cannot be raised or resurrected. Constructs do not eat, sleep, or breathe.

Damage Reduction: A brass clockwork dragon is very durable. It has Damage Reduction 12/–; it ignores the first 12 points of damage from any attack.

Keen Senses (Ex): Clockwork dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A brass clockwork dragon is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this clockwork, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 27; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the clockwork is still allowed a saving throw.

THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS. CONTINUED

Treasure: Brass clockwork dragons can be melted down to extract 5,000 gp worth of brass. This material weighs 250 lbs.

BRONZE CLOCKWORK DRAGON (4) (MAJOR CLOCKWORK)

Gargantuan Clockwork Construct

CR 16 (18 if sentient); Gargantuan construct; HD 33d10+60; hp 241; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor); AC 36 (−4 size, +30 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 36; Base Atk +24, Grap +47, Atk +31 (4d6+11, bite); Full Atk +31 (4d6+11, bite), +26 (2d8+5, 2 claws), +26 (2d6+5, 2 wings), +26 (2d8+16, tail slap); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence, Tail Sweep; SQ Construct, DR 15/—, Immunities, Keen Senses, SR 28; AL N (NE if sentient); SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +17; Str 33, Dex 10, Con —, Int — (24 if sentient), Wis 25, Cha 24.

Skills (if sentient): Appraise +43, Climb +47, Diplomacy +51, Intimidate +43, Jump +47, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +51, Knowledge (history) +51, Knowledge (nature) +51, Listen +45, Mechanomancy +51, Search +51, Spot +45, Survival +43.

Feats (if sentient): Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Track, Wingover.

Languages (if sentient): Common, Draconic.

Bronze clockwork dragons appear to be bronze dragons made out of real bronze. They attack mindlessly if non-sentient. Sentient versions prefer to set ambushes and attack with stealth.

Breath Weapon (Su): A bronze clockwork dragon can discharge a 120-ft.-long line of lightning every 1d4 rounds (20d6 electricity damage, Reflex save DC 33 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): A bronze clockwork dragon can use its whole body to crush as many Medium or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 20 ft. by 20 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 33) are pinned and take 4d6+16 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, it must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A bronze clockwork dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 32 or fewer HD within a radius of 300 feet are subject to the effect. Will save DC 33 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to the clockwork's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Clockworks ignore the Frightful Presence of other clockworks and dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Tail Sweep (Ex): As a standard action, a bronze clockwork dragon can sweep its tail through a 30-ft.-radius half-circle extending from an intersection on the edge of the clockwork's space in any direction. This attack deals 2d6+16 damage to Small and smaller opponents, though a Reflex save (DC 33) is allowed for half damage.

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless). Cannot heal damage, but may be repaired. A construct is immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less, and cannot be raised or resurrected. Constructs do not eat, sleep, or breathe.

Damage Reduction: A bronze clockwork dragon is very durable. It has Damage Reduction 15/—; it ignores the first 15 points of damage from any attack.

THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS, CONTINUED

Immunities (Ex): A bronze clockwork dragon has immunity to electricity.

Keen Senses (Ex): Clockwork dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A bronze clockwork dragon is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this clockwork, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 28; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the clockwork is still allowed a saving throw.

Treasure: Bronze clockwork dragons can be melted down to extract 6,250 gp worth of bronze. This material weighs 250 lbs.

COPPER CLOCKWORK DRAGON (3) (MAJOR CLOCKWORK)

Huge Clockwork Construct

CR 16 (18 if sentient); Huge Construct; HD 33d10+40; hp 201; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor); AC 38 (–2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38; Base Atk +24, Grap +47, Atk +33 (4d6+11, bite); Full Atk +33 (4d6+11, bite), +28 (2d8+5, 2 claws), +28 (2d6+5, 2 wings), +28 (2d8+16, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence; SQ Construct, DR 12/–, Keen Senses, SR 28; AL N (NE if sentient); SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +15; Str 33, Dex 10, Con –, Int – (20 if sentient), Wis 21, Cha 20

Skills (if sentient): Appraise +41, Balance +36, Climb +47, Diplomacy +49, Jump +47, Knowledge (arcane) +49, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +49, Knowledge (history) +49, Listen +43, Mechanomancy +49, Search +49, Spot +43.

Feats (if sentient): Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Wingover.

Languages (if sentient): Common, Draconic.

Copper clockwork dragons appear to be copper dragons made out of actual copper. They attack mindlessly if non-sentient. Sentient versions prefer to leap down onto opponents from above.

Breath Weapon (Su): A copper clockwork dragon can discharge a 100-ft.-long stream of acid every 1d4 rounds (20d4 acid damage, Reflex save DC 32 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): A copper clockwork dragon can use its whole body to crush as many Small or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 15 ft. by 15 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 32) are pinned and take 2d8+16 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, it must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A copper clockwork dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 32 or fewer HD within a radius of 300 feet are subject to the effect. Will save DC 31 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to the clockwork's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Clockworks ignore the Frightful Presence of other clockworks and dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless). Cannot heal damage, but

THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS. CONTINUED

may be repaired. A construct is immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less, and cannot be raised or resurrected. Constructs do not eat, sleep, or breathe.

Damage Reduction: A copper clockwork dragon is very durable. It has Damage Reduction 12/—; it ignores the first 12 points of damage from any attack.

Immunities (Ex): A copper clockwork dragon has immunity to acid.

Keen Senses (Ex): Clockwork dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A copper clockwork dragon is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this clockwork, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 28; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the clockwork is still allowed a saving throw.

Spider Climb (Ex): A copper clockwork dragon can climb on stone surfaces as though using the *spider climb* spell.

Treasure: Copper clockwork dragons can be melted down to extract 8,333 gp worth of copper. This material weighs 250 lbs.

SILVER CLOCKWORK DRAGON (3) (MAJOR CLOCKWORK)

Gargantuan Clockwork Construct

CR 18 (20 if sentient); Gargantuan construct; HD 35d10+60; hp 252; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor); AC 39 (–4 size, +33 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 39; Base Atk +26, Grap +50, Atk +34 (4d6+12, bite); Full Atk +38 (4d6+12, bite), +29 (2d8+6, 2 claws), +29 (2d6+6, 2 wings), +29 (2d8+18, tail slap); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. bite); SA Breath

Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence, Tail Sweep; SQ Cloudwalking, Construct, DR 15/—, Immunities, Keen Senses, SR 29; AL N (NE if sentient); SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +19; Str 35, Dex 10, Con —, Int — (26 if sentient), Wis 27, Cha 26

Skills (if sentient): Balance +38, Bluff +52, Climb +50, Diplomacy +52, Intimidate +46, Jump +50, Knowledge (arcana) +52, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +52, Knowledge (history) +52, Knowledge (nature) +52, Knowledge (nobility) +52, Knowledge (religion) +52, Listen +48, Mechanomancy +52, Search +52, Sense Motive +52, Spot +48, Survival +46.

Feats (if sentient): Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Wingover.

Languages (if sentient): Common, Draconic.

Silver clockwork dragons appear to be dragons made of actual silver. They attack mindlessly if not sentient. Sentient versions prefer to remain in the air and attack with their Breath Weapons.

Breath Weapon (Su): A silver clockwork dragon can discharge a 60-ft. cone of cold every 1d4 rounds (20d8 cold damage, Reflex save DC 34 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): A silver clockwork dragon can use its whole body to crush as many Medium or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 20 ft. by 20 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 34) are pinned and take 4d6+18 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, it must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A silver clockwork dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 34 or fewer HD within a radius of 330 feet are subject to the effect. Will save DC 35 negates. Creatures who suc-

THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS, CONTINUED

ceed at the save are immune to the clockwork's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Clockworks ignore the Frightful Presence of other clockworks and dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Tail Sweep (Ex): As a standard action, a silver clockwork dragon can sweep its tail through a 30-ft.-radius half-circle extending from an intersection on the edge of the clockwork's space in any direction. This attack deals 2d6+18 damage to Small and smaller opponents, though a Reflex save (DC 34) is allowed for half damage.

Cloudwalking (Su): The dragon can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground. The ability functions continuously but can be negated or resumed at will.

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless). Cannot heal damage, but may be repaired. A construct is immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less, and cannot be raised or resurrected. Constructs do not eat, sleep, or breathe.

Damage Reduction: A silver clockwork dragon is very durable. It has Damage Reduction 15/—; it ignores the first 15 points of damage from any attack.

Immunities (Ex): A silver clockwork dragon has immunity to cold and acid.

Keen Senses (Ex): Clockwork dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A silver clockwork dragon is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this clockwork, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 29; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the clockwork is still allowed a saving throw.

Treasure: Silver clockwork dragons can be melted down to extract 12,500 gp worth of silver. This material weighs 250 lbs.

GOLD CLOCKWORK DRAGON (0) (MAJOR CLOCKWORK)

Colossal Clockwork Construct

CR 22 (24 if sentient); Colossal construct; HD 41d10+80; hp 305; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.; AC 42 (–8 size, +40 natural); Base Atk +31, Grap +65, Atk +41 (4d8+18, bite); Full Atk +41 (4d8+18, bite), +36 (4d6+9, 2 claws), +36 (2d8+9, 2 wings), +36 (4d6+27, tail slap); Space/Reach 30 ft./20 ft. (30 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence, Tail Sweep; SQ Construct, DR 20/—, Immunities, Keen Senses, SR 33; AL N (NE if sentient); SV Fort +22, Ref +22, Will +33; Str 47, Dex 10, Con —, Int — (32 if sentient), Wis 33, Cha 32

Skills (if sentient): Appraise +55, Balance +44, Bluff +55, Climb +62, Diplomacy +55, Intimidate +55, Jump +62, Knowledge (arcana) +55, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +55, Knowledge (history) +55, Knowledge (nature) +55, Knowledge (nobility) +55, Knowledge (the planes) +55, Knowledge (religion) +55, Listen +57, Mechanomancy +55, Search +55, Sense Motive +55, Spot +57, Survival +55.

Feats (if sentient): Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Mechanomancy, Power Attack, Snatch, Wingover.

Languages (if sentient): Common, Draconic.

THE CLOCKWORK DRAGONS. CONTINUED

Gold clockwork dragons appear to be dragons made of actual gold. These creatures are the masters of their kind. As soon as one has been constructed, it orders its kin into battle against the metallic dragons, preferably with the aid of the *draconis perditoris*.

Gold clockwork dragons attack mindlessly if not sentient. Sentient versions pretend to be friendly, then attack once an opponent lowers his guard.

Breath Weapon (Su): A gold clockwork dragon can discharge a 70-ft. cone of fire every 1d4 rounds (24d10 fire damage, Reflex save DC 41 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): A gold clockwork dragon can use its whole body to crush as many Large or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 30 ft. by 30 ft. Creatures that do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 41) are pinned and take 4d8+27 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, it must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A gold clockwork dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 40 or fewer HD within a radius of 360 feet are subject to the effect. Will save DC 41 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to the clockwork's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Clockworks ignore the Frightful Presence of other clockworks and dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Tail Sweep (Ex): As a standard action, a gold clockwork dragon can sweep its tail through a 40-ft.-radius half-circle extending from an intersection on the edge of the clockwork's space in any direction. This attack deals 2d8+27 damage to Medium and smaller opponents, though a Reflex save (DC 41) is allowed for half damage.

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects. Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless). Cannot heal damage, but may be repaired. A construct is immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less, and cannot be raised or resurrected. Constructs do not eat, sleep, or breathe.

Damage Reduction: A gold clockwork dragon is very durable. It has Damage Reduction 20/—; it ignores the first 15 points of damage from any attack.

Immunities (Ex): A gold clockwork dragon has immunity to fire.

Keen Senses (Ex): Clockwork dragons see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A gold clockwork dragon is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this clockwork, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 33; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the clockwork is still allowed a saving throw.

Treasure: Gold clockwork dragons can be melted down to extract 25,000 gp worth of gold. This material weighs 250 lbs.

THE LAIR

The Wyrmsstone Fortress is made up of large plates of adamantine floating in orbit above your campaign's home world. The plates are connected by staircases and bridges suspended in a manner not possible anywhere but the void of space.

The adamantine plates magically produce their own gravity, and generate a simulated sense of up and down. "Up" is toward the planet, so anyone looking overhead is treated to a stunning view of the spinning planet and the disturbing realization that the whole fortress is essentially upside down.

Despite the artificial gravity, anyone who stepping off the edge of a platform immediately goes adrift in space. The plates are engraved with phrases in the dragon language and inlaid with brass, bronze, cop-

per, gold, and silver. The phrases detail all the information contained in the At a Glance section, but, scattered about the fortress as they are, it can take a good deal of reading to learn all of the information.

ARRIVAL POINT

This is where travelers through the teleportation gate arrive. The gate here appears identical to the planet-side gate. A 120-foot-wide pressurized bubble of magically generated air surrounds the gate at all times. It was created to accommodate visiting dragons, though no dragon has visited Petra in more than a century, and has been outfitted as a living space for guests. It includes a magically-heated pile of sand for lounging, a magically-created pool of water for bathing, a small library stocked with books of interest to dragon-kind, and a small pile of treasure for dragons who miss their hoards.

NEW HAZARD: OUTER SPACE

Characters exposed to outer space must deal with a number of individual threats:

Limited Movement: Most normal means of movement are useless in space; even winged creatures are helpless without air for their wings to push against. Without magical or technological means of locomotion, creatures are doomed to drift helplessly in whatever direction they were last moving.

Planar Dead Space: The region of the Astral and Ethereal Planes corresponding to outer space is a planar "dead zone." Traveling through this oblivion is more than most mortal minds can handle. While it is possible to use spells like *teleport*, *etherialness*, and the like to cross a region of space, the traveler must succeed at a DC 40 Will save. On a failed save, the spell fails and the traveler is struck mad as if by a *feeblemind* spell.

Suffocation: A character unable to hold his breath or without a dedicated air supply is imme-

diately subject to the drowning rule. In addition, the character also suffers from decompression (see below) and extreme temperatures (see below).

Decompression: Even if a character has a supply of air, the lack of air pressure makes it impossible to survive without a sealed environment or magic. A character without these protections suffers 3d6 points of damage per round. In addition, the character also suffers from extreme temperatures (see below). Characters who do not need to breathe do not suffer from decompression.

Extreme Temperatures: Characters subject to the cold of space take 3d6 points of cold damage each round. If the character is exposed to a large source of radiation, such as the sun, he takes 3d6 points of fire damage per round instead.

Silence: Space is completely silent. Characters who do not have air to breathe are subject to the same effects as a *silence* spell, except the effects are nonmagical.

Two copper clockwork dragons are posted within the bubble, to act as servants for visiting dragons. The clockworks only follow the commands of dragons, but are not hostile towards non-dragon visitors.



The treasure hoard in the visitor's area includes 1,000 pp, 10,000 gp, 100,000 sp, and 1,000,000 cp.

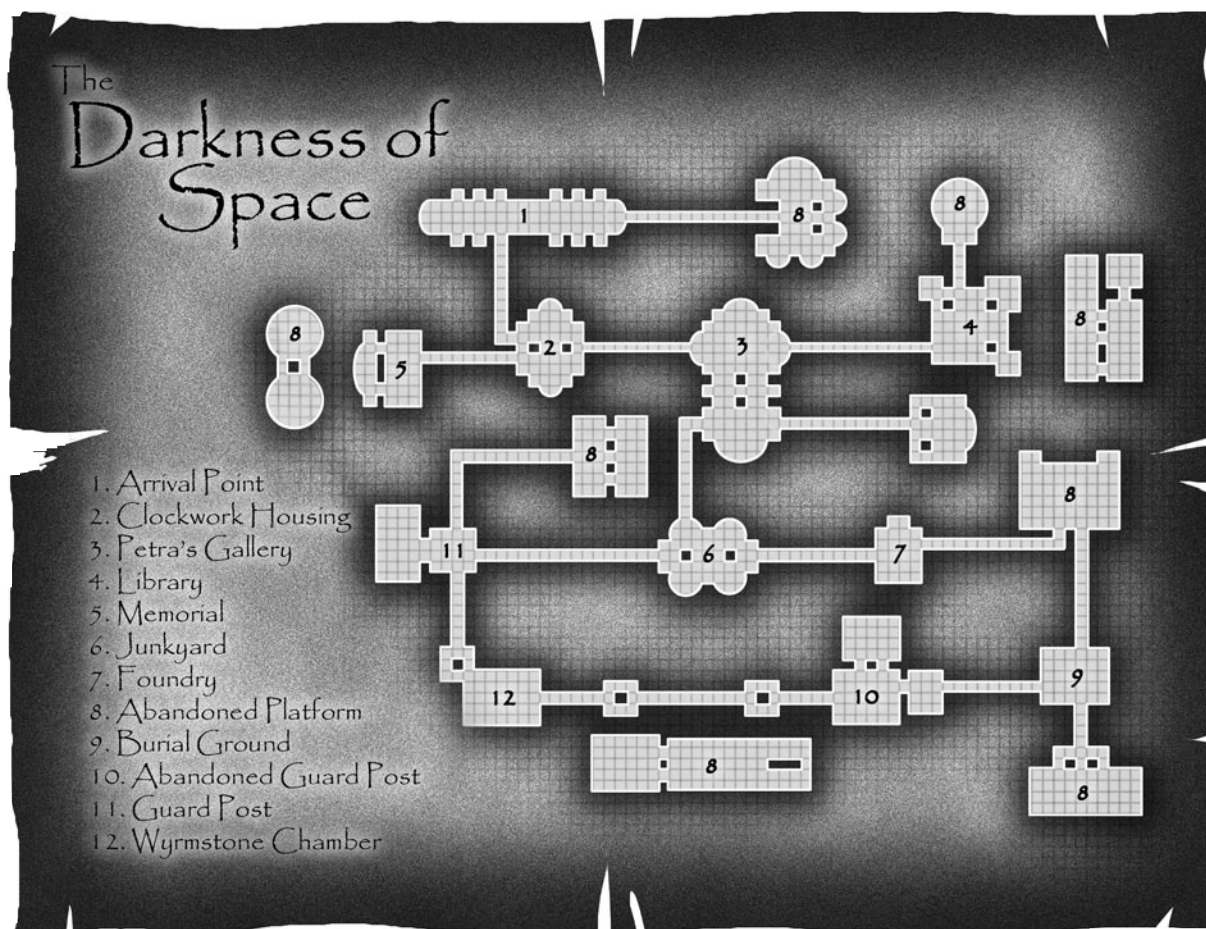
CLOCKWORK HOUSING

This platform houses the majority of Petra's clockwork dragon servants. The area is divided up into a number of adamantine "sheds," each designed to hold a clockwork dragon. Numerous wires, springs, gears, and tools lie scattered about the ground; Petra no longer bothers cleaning up after herself. These clockworks all appear to be dormant but are actually in a resting phase, and activate if anyone opens the sheds' doors or makes a racket.

The area currently holds three brass clockworks (one is functional, the other two are not), two bronze clockworks, one copper clockwork, and two silver clockworks. The non-functional brass clockworks are corroded and each one requires extensive repairs. Petra is capable of making the repairs, but lacks the motivation. Repairing the damaged clockworks requires considerable skill and spare parts (available in the junkyard), but earns Petra's sincere gratitude.



Repairing the damaged clockworks requires a full day of work and a DC 21 Mechanomancy check (use Craft (Clockworks) if you aren't using the Mechanomancy rules). No money needs to be spent on raw materials, as all the available parts can be found in the junkyard. The total value of the material needed for the repairs is 10,000 gp.



PETRA'S GALLERY

Unlike the other plates in the fortress, this area has walls put in place so Petra can use it as an art gallery. Petra is an avid art collector, and has an extensive collection of over 100 paintings. Many of these are thousands of years old, some are by famous artists, and all have been exceptionally well preserved by the surrounding vacuum.

Petra prefers to spend most of her time in this chamber, and keeps a large pile of magically heated rocks here as a nest.



The total value of Petra's art collection easily exceeds 100,000 gp. Transporting it all out of the fortress poses some difficulties however, since the paintings have a total weight over 500 pounds and exposure to air will damage some of them, causing the collection to lose about 20% of its value.

THE LIBRARY

This plate holds Petra's personal library. There are over one hundred bound volumes in her collection, most of which deal with transmutation magic, magical engineering, and the creation of golems. Since Petra feels no need to clean up after herself, the books still on her shelves are not in order, and others are piled on tables or even strewn about the floor. A bronze clockwork dragon remains here at all times, but doesn't bother to clean up or sort the books, either. Its main function is to act as a reference model when Petra is researching new methods of clockwork repair.

MEMORIAL

A huge onyx obelisk dominates this plate. Standing over one hundred feet tall and over twenty feet in diameter, the obelisk is covered with engravings in the dragon language. The engravings list the names of all the metallic dragons killed in the war against the chromatics, plus those slain in the war with the clockwork dragons. The list of dragons slain by the

clockworks is nearly as long as the list of casualties slain by the chromatics.

THE JUNKYARD

This area holds the remains of hundreds of clockwork dragons destroyed in the rebellion against the metallics. Petra asked that they be placed here as a source of spare parts for her servants, and the other metallics acquiesced. One bronze clockwork remains here at all times, both to aid Petra in retrieving specific parts and to keep potential intruders from looting the junkyard for precious metals. Of course, as Petra no longer bothers maintaining her servants, and no other being has visited the fortress in over a century, these functions have become unnecessary. Still, anyone except Petra attempting to remove parts from the junkyard will be viciously attacked.



There are approximately 50 destroyed clockwork dragons here of each type. Enterprising characters can extract an amount of precious metal from each wreck worth the values given in the clockwork dragon entries.

THE FOUNDRY

One of the reasons the clockwork dragons were so dangerous was that they were capable of reproducing themselves by building new "offspring." The technology they used to do this was placed in the Wyrmsstone Fortress to prevent anyone from constructing more of the metal creatures.

This plate is filled with the huge, imposing machinery used to create new clockwork dragons. It includes many items unfamiliar to the PCs, including conveyor belts, metal stamping devices, and even primitive steam engines. This assembly line is manned by untiring iron golems awaiting a supply of raw materials so that they may resume production on clockwork dragons. The golems only obey orders in the dragon language, and are incapable of comprehending any instructions that don't directly relate to the construction of new clockworks, though they will violently attack any creature that attempts to

damage the equipment or interfere with production once the line has been restarted.



There are 5 iron golems manning the assembly lines here. Use the standard SRD statistics for iron golems to represent these creatures.

ABANDONED PLATFORMS

Once, when Petra still had some individual initiative, she planned to use these empty platforms for the eventual expansion of the fortress. She has since abandoned those plans, and the platforms along with them. These adamantine plates float alongside the fortress, but are not connected by staircases or bridges. Instead, they are connected by metal cables, allowing them to float freely, but in a formation relative to each other.

BURIAL GROUND

A huge pile of rocks standing over twenty feet high and over thirty feet in diameter dominates this platform. Anyone stubborn enough to clear away the pile of rocks finds two dead dragons beneath: a

young adult silver dragon and a juvenile bronze dragon. These two dragons visited Petra more than one hundred years ago, not to chat, but to destroy the *wyrmstone*. When Petra tried to stop them, they attacked her, and she defended herself. She won, but was so stricken with grief that she gave her attackers a proper burial. The void of space has done an excellent job of preserving the bodies, and even a casual examination reveals how they were slain.



A DC 10 Heal check allows a character to determine that these dragons were slain by the claws and teeth of a larger dragon.

ABANDONED GUARD POST

At one time, this area was the main defense protecting the approach to the *wyrmstone*. Originally, two brass clockwork dragons stood guard here, but they have since fallen into disrepair, and are now awaiting maintenance in the clockwork housing area. The plate is otherwise completely featureless, and does not even include the engravings found throughout the rest of the fortress.



WYRMSTONE CHAMBER DEFENSES

The doors to this chamber have a hardness of 20 and 100 hit points each. Each door is locked with mechanisms of such complexity that a DC 40 Open Locks check to is required to open them. The locks work on a tumbler mechanism, no key exists, and only Petra knows the combination that opens them.

The lack of gravity presents a challenge in itself. A character without a magical or technological means of flight is adrift in this chamber, along the vector she was on when she entered, until she is stopped by some other force or obstacle.

Furthermore, the entire chamber is trapped with a magical discharge that releases blasts of acid, cold, lightning, and fire, each of which deal 5d6 damage to all within a 30-foot radius. Merely touching a door or the exterior wall is enough to trigger it.

Energy Blast Trap: CR 11; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset (immediate); no attack roll necessary; magical energy blast (20th-level wizard; 5d6 acid, 5d6 cold, 5d6 fire, 5d6 electricity; DC 20 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all within 30-foot area); Search 32; Disable Device DC 32.

GUARD POST

This is a second approach to the *wyrmstone*. Unlike the abandoned post that protects the main approach, this one is still defended. Currently, one silver clockwork dragon remains here at all times, and viciously attacks anyone approaching the chamber of the *wyrmstone*. Like the abandoned guard post, the plate that forms this guard post is featureless.

THE WYRMSTONE CHAMBER

Unlike the other parts of the fortress, this area is a box rather than a plate. It is sealed by heavily locked adamantine doors and protected with dangerous traps. Inside is a featureless chamber that lacks the artificial gravity found elsewhere in the fortress. Floating in the center of the chamber is the *wyrmstone* and, thrust into it, the *draconis perditoris*.

The Wyrmstone

The *wyrmstone* is a petrified dragon heart, but has no powers other than its ability to provide sentience and energy to the clockwork dragons. It is still an artifact, however, and very difficult to harm.



NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: THE WYRMSTONE

Removing the *draconis perditoris* from the *wyrmstone* requires a DC 30 Strength check. Characters may take 10 or 20 on this check, but cooperative checks are not permitted. Removing the sword from the *wyrmstone* causes all clockwork dragons to regain their Intelligence scores, skills, and feats, as described in the clockwork dragon stats.

Destroying the 200-lb. *wyrmstone* is not an easy task. It can only be harmed by the *draconis perditoris*, and is only destroyed when it fails a saving

throw against the sword's dragon-slaying effect. Any attack that does not destroy the *wyrmstone* attracts the attention of every clockwork dragon in the fortress. If a single attack against the *wyrmstone* inflicts 20 points of damage or more, the sword becomes embedded in the stone again, and the clockwork dragons return to their non-intelligent state.

Removing the sword from the *wyrmstone* restores sentience to the clockwork dragons here and throughout the universe. The *wyrmstone* can only be destroyed with *draconis perditoris*. Doing so permanently deactivates the entire race of clockwork dragons, and kills Petra. Needless to say, Petra does not willingly allow the *wyrmstone* to be destroyed.

Draconis Perditoris

This greatsword is a strange-looking weapon crafted by the clockworks to help them overthrow their dragon masters. Its origin is technological rather than magical; the blade is made of folded layers of copper, brass, bronze, silver, and gold, and has no markings or imperfections of any kind. The guard is a large gear made of adamantite, and the pommel is a sphere of pure platinum.

SCENES

Due to its isolation, the only people that find the Wyrmstone Fortress are those who know to look for it. Though the dragons made every effort to keep the

location of *draconis perditoris* and the Wyrmstone Fortress a secret, rumors and legends have leaked out over the centuries. The PCs may come across this knowledge in ancient songs, forgotten books of lore, and other less-than-reliable sources of information. Tales of the *draconis perditoris* are certainly enough to send any would-be dragon hunter scurrying for more information about the fortress. Uncovering this information could be an adventure in itself.

Another possibility is that the leaders of the metallic dragons have finally decided that the *wyrmstone* poses too great a risk to leave intact. In this scenario, they tell the PCs the location of the fortress and send them there with the express purpose of destroying the *wyrmstone*, the *draconis perditoris*, and Petra. Unless the PCs can somehow convince Petra that her death benefits dragon-kind, she fights intruders to the death.

A third option also exists: the PCs may be invited to the fortress by Petra herself! She may be looking for a method of destroying the *wyrmstone* without killing herself in the process, or searching for an artificer capable of repairing her clockwork servants. Or she may simply want company.

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: DRACONIS PERDITORIS

Draconis perditoris is a greatsword with a +4 non-magical enhancement bonus. This is fortunate, for the weapon takes advantage of its connection to planar dead space to radiate a non-magical *anti-magic field* that cannot be dispelled by any means, though this field is nullified while the sword is in contact with the *wyrmstone*. Any dragon struck by the sword must make a Fortitude save or suffer from disruption on a cellular level, dying instantly

and melting away into a pile of bubbling protoplasm. The DC for the save is $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the wielder's Hit Dice + the wielder's Charisma bonus.

The *draconis perditoris*, just like the clockwork dragons, is powered by the energies of the *wyrmstone*. Destroying the stone causes the sword to corrode into a scrap of useless junk.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Though the Wyrmsstone Fortress is described as floating through space, you could easily place it in a different, but similarly inhospitable, environment. The PCs may find it floating in the upper atmosphere, suspended at the bottom of the ocean, or possibly on one of the inner planes. It's important, however, that the fortress be isolated enough so that random travelers do not simply happen upon it, and that it be in an environment dangerous enough to discourage all but the most determined adventurers.

An interesting variation on this lair stems from the possibility that someone else has already freed the sword from the stone. In this case, the clockwork dragons have already conquered the entire fortress. If possible, they remove either the sword or the stone from the fortress and hide their vital prize somewhere else. An intrepid band of adventurers would then need to track down the missing item and assault the fortress so that both artifacts can be destroyed. As written, Petra is afraid of death, but not actually evil. In this scenario, it's possible that Petra's clockwork heart has corrupted her soul, and she has allied with her clockwork "children."



CHAPTER FOUR

SMOKE ON THE WATER



AT A GLANCE

Deep in the wild marshes of Blackmoon Bayou, there is a crude and peculiar mining camp. Professional diggers wouldn't consider the mine to be anything worth discussing, except for the 700-year old, twenty-ton red dragon sleeping in the middle of it and the unorthodox manner in which the camp operates. Four failed but good-intentioned wizards maintain the camp, using steam generated by the dragon's internal fire to power bizarre mining equipment. They don't realize they're aiding the dragon in his eventual escape. For his part, the dragon doesn't know what he'll do with them when he does finally awaken; he has a much bigger fish to fry than four puny humanoids.

PLACEMENT

The mining camp is set in a hot, fetid swamp notorious among the locals for being haunted and inhabited by all manner of reptilian creatures. In fact, the locals sometimes say with a little reverence and a lot of fear, tyrannical black dragons used to rule a vast empire of dark-hearted lizard-people from cobalt thrones erected in the heart of the bayou. This may have been the case a thousand years ago, before any civilized folk moved into the region, but these days adventurers in the swamp are more likely to encounter hungry dinosaurs, anti-social lizard folk, and a tropical disease or two. The flies are pretty bad, too, but they don't hold a candle to the Blackmoon's mosquitoes.

The mining camp doesn't necessarily need to be set in a swamp. Place it wherever you think is best for your campaign; the most important thing about the mine is the dragon at its center. Setting it in a swamp, however, gives the mine a certain remote atmosphere and sense of uncertain danger. Players may expect to find black dragons, rather than red, lurking in swamps; the simple contrast to their expectations makes the lair more intriguing.

This lair can be used with any adventurers from low to very high level. At lower levels, getting to the camp can be an adventure in itself: the swamp is a dirty, nasty place filled with all manner of reptilian monsters; diseases run rampant, transmitted by insects and the water itself; dinosaurs stalk anything warm-blooded; and gruesome undead monsters thrive in the rancid waters, along with the necromancers who give them unlife. Fortunately, the camp provides a welcome respite from danger once they do arrive. For high-level characters, swamp encounters are probably nothing more than a time-consuming distraction; the camp is probably their final destination, especially if they've heard rumors about the camp's dragon while on some other adventure.

INHABITANTS

The most important inhabitants of the camp are the wizards and the dragon.

THE WIZARDS

Twenty years ago, four young boys in four separate villages were taken from their families for the price of twenty coppers apiece. All but one of the households conducted the transaction without remorse, for they were poor as the dirt they broke their backs and hoes on and felt they could always have more children. The man who bought the boys was an old wizard named Gareth Belzidor, a gentle soul who was getting long in the tooth and needed someone to whom he could pass on his art. Never one for taking unnecessary chances, he acquired the four boys with the hope that at least one of them would show some signs of magical talent. They were: Falstaff, a grim, quiet fellow with a penchant for pulling the wings off flying creatures; Angus, who only ever dreamt of becoming a lute-plucking minstrel; Laudanum, named after his mum's favorite "therapeutic infu-



THE WIZARDS

FALSTAFF

1st-Level Human Wizard/7th-Level Expert

CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4 plus 7d6; hp 34; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +5; Grap +3; Atk +3 (1d6-1/x2, quarterstaff); Full Atk +3 (1d6-1/x2, quarterstaff) or +5 (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +11; Str 8, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +11, Bluff +15, Concentration +4, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (metalworking) +16, Diplomacy +15, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +14, Knowledge (geography) +10,

Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (geology) +16, Profession (miner) +9.

Feats: Iron Will, Leadership, Skill Focus (Knowledge [geology]), Skill Focus (Craft [metalworking]).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Sylvan, Terran

Human Traits (Ex): Humans gain one extra feat and four extra skill points at 1st level, plus one additional skill point at every other level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Falstaff is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and light armor but not shields. Armor of any type interferes



THE WIZARDS, CONTINUED

with a wizard's movements, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

Spells: (3/2) Falstaff casts spells as a 1st-level wizard. He knows the following spells, and typically prepares those marked with an asterisk. The DC to resist these spells is 13 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect magic*, *light**, *mending**, *resistance**

1st Level — *charm person**, *floating disk**

Possessions: Dagger, light crossbow, quarterstaff.

ANGUS

1st-Level Dwarf Wizard/5th-Level Expert

CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4+2 plus 5d6+10; hp 38; Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; Base Atk +3; Grap +3; Atk +3 (1d6/x2, quarterstaff); Full Atk +3 (1d6/crit x2, quarterstaff) or +2 ranged (1d4/19-20/x2, dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Stonecunning; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (musical instruments) +8, Craft (stonecraft) +9, Gather Information +9, Knowledge (engineering) +15, Knowledge (nature) +13, Knowledge (geology) +12, Perform (lute) +8, Profession (miner) +6, Search +10, Spot +4.

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (perform), Skill Focus (Knowledge [engineering]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [geology]).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Dwarvish, Draconic, Goblin

Stonecunning (Ex): Angus has a +2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework, such as sliding walls, stonework traps, new construction (even when built to match the old), unsafe stone surfaces, shaky stone ceilings, and the like. Something that isn't stone

but that is disguised as stone also counts as unusual stonework. If he merely comes within 10 feet of unusual stonework he can make a check as if he were actively searching, and he can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can. Angus can also intuit depth, sensing his approximate depth underground as naturally as a human can sense which way is up. He has a sixth sense about stonework, an innate ability that his race gets plenty of opportunity to practice and hone in its underground domain.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Angus is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and light armor but not shields. Armor of any type interferes with a wizard's movements, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

Spells: (3/2) Angus casts spells as a 1st-level wizard. He knows the following spells, and typically prepares those marked with an asterisk. The DC to resist these spells is 14 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect poison*, *ghost sound**, *open/close**, *ray of frost**

1st Level — *identify**, *shield**

Possessions: Dagger, quarterstaff.

LAUDANUM

1st-Level Human Wizard/4th-Level Expert

CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4+2 plus 4d6+8; hp 21; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; Base Atk +3; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/x2, quarterstaff); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/x2, quarterstaff) or +2 ranged (1d4+1/19-20/x2, dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Appraise +12, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (carpentry) +14, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (engineering) +14, Knowledge (geography) +12,

THE WIZARDS, CONTINUED

Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nature) +14, Profession (miner) +8.

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (craft), Skill Focus (Knowledge [engineering]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [nature]).

Languages: Aquan, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Sylvan

Human Traits (Ex): Humans gain one extra feat and four extra skill points at 1st level, plus one additional skill point at every other level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Laudanum is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and light armor but not shields. Armor of any type interferes with a wizard's movements, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

Spells: (3/2) Laudanum casts spells as a 1st-level wizard. He knows the following spells, and typically prepares those marked with an asterisk. The DC to resist these spells is 14 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect magic**, *mage hand**, *read magic**, *resistance*

1st Level — *endure elements**, *grease**

Possessions: Dagger, quarterstaff.

LAZENBY

1st-Level Half-Elf Sorcerer/4th-Level Expert

CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4 plus 4d6; hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3; Grap +4; Attack +4 melee (1d6+1/x2, quarterstaff); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/x2, quarterstaff) or +4 melee (1d6+1/crit x2, sickle) or +5 ranged (1d4+1/x2, sling); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Half-Elf Traits; AL CG; SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +2, Concentration +6, Craft (alchemy) +8, Craft (glassblowing) +6, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (geography) +4, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +5, Profession (miner) +6, Scry +8, Spellcraft +6.

Feats: Empower Spell, Heighten Spell, Skill Focus (Craft [alchemy]).

Languages: Common, Draconic

Half-Elf Traits (Ex): Half-elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. For all effects related to race, a half-elf is considered an elf. Half-elves receive a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Search, and Spot checks and a +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Lazenby is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and light armor but not shields. Armor of any type interferes with a wizard's movements, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

Spells: (5/4) Lazenby casts spells as a 1st-level sorcerer. He knows the following spells, and typically prepares those marked with an asterisk. The DC to resist these spells is 14 + the spell level.

0 Level — *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*

1st Level — *animate rope*, *magic aura*

Possessions: Quarterstaff, sickle, sling.

sion” and a real charmer with the ladies, even as a lad; and Lazenby, a quiet, lonely child afflicted with an almost paralyzing case of shyness. In the years that followed their adoption, the children learned much about the wizardly arts. Gareth was a disciplined, generous teacher, educating them first in the practical skills of everyday life, such as fowling, hammering out donkey shoes, and recognizing which butterflies provided the best relief for a stomach ache. As they grew older, the boys acquired a rounded intellectual pedigree. The only one of the group who shined as a potential spellcaster, though, was Lazenby. Magic coursed strongly in his veins. Gareth recognized this early on and encouraged it, but he never withheld affection, praise, or learning from his three other sons.

On the day the boys turned 16 (they all shared the same birthday after their adoption — Gareth’s birthday), their father rose from the table, patted Lazenby on the head, cleared his throat, and addressed them. “Well,” he mumbled, “I’m afraid I must go now. ‘Tis sooner than I’d hoped and later than I’d expected. You are fine sons. Know that I am proud of you all. Goodbye.” With that, he fell over dead.

Although the boys were saddened by his death, they’d been expecting it for years; Gareth had been positively ancient when he’d adopted them. Lazenby took his father’s death harder than the rest — not because his brothers loved Gareth any less than he, but because Lazenby thought his magical education was over for good. The boys spent the week following Gareth’s funeral discussing their options. It was apparent to them that none of them had what it took to become full-fledged wizards — not even Lazenby, whose dabbling in magic was never taken seriously by the other boys. The one thing they all agreed they had in their favor was their intelligence. Each was smarter than the average peasant, to be sure. They packed their belongings, sold the house to an herb-witch, and headed out into the world at large to find some purpose in life.

Three years passed. In that time, the four “wizards” traveled far but not wide, and not nearly as far as professional wandering types, like adventurers. They wore many hats in that time: blacksmith, carpenter,

stonemason, and even glassblower. In some places, they made fair incomes at their chosen trades; in others, they left considerably poorer than they’d arrived. While Falstaff, Angus, and Laudanum promptly let their mystic learning fall by the wayside, Lazenby continued to quietly pursue his. Wherever they stopped, he sought out a local spellcaster and begged for a quick lesson or two, exchanging manual labor or money for learning.

Then, one day, while the young men were taking an uncharted shortcut through Blackmoon Bayou (at Falstaff’s stubborn insistence), they made the discovery of a lifetime: an old red dragon caught in the throes of some mysterious magic (obviously caused by an unfortunate spike nailed clear through his head), binding him in chains of sleep. His body radiated incredible heat, slowly boiling away the marsh water into steam. The uncanny sight filled their minds with strange new thoughts. Divine inspiration came to them, showing them images of the tremendous wealth to be had at the poor creature’s expense. They concocted irrational plans to tap into a power they suspected was far greater than the magic that had failed them. That day, the four itinerant wizards found their focus.

For the past ten months, they’ve been working non-stop to build a collection of mechanical devices designed to harvest energy from the conversion of water into steam, using the heat from the dragon’s body as the catalyst. They believe this new-fangled energy will one day rival magic. The Bayou, they’ve discovered, is rich with silver. At first, they attributed it to corrosion of the silver spike in the dragon’s head, but a little digging around and a lot of research in far-away libraries convinced them it did indeed originate in the earth below. So they added mining equipment to their collection of toys, intending to use silver harvested from the swamp to finance further steam-driven inventions.

What they don’t know is that the dragon is using them. The four young wizards are advancing the dragon’s plan to escape the trap that holds him prisoner in the bayou.

THE DRAGON

Fifteen years ago, a worldly old dragon named Ytrimalik Firecoven embarrassed an obscure dwarf god of industry in a contest of wits, wherein he pitted his draconian magic against the deity's mechanical inventions. Shamed in the eyes of the other gods and, more importantly, his own people, the deity swore to have his revenge on the wyrm. The dragon was clever, though — much more so than the immortal dwarf anticipated. Firecoven was unafraid of the dwarf-god and sure his own magical strength was more than adequate to protect him from the god's steam-powered devices, clockwork apparatuses, and crude mathematical engines. Unfortunately for the dragon, the dwarf god got lucky in one of his

numerous attempts at revenge, and that was all he needed.

Firecoven was in Blackmoon Bayou feeding on the delectable peat lamprey indigenous to the region, when the god's rude mechanicals suddenly struck from out of nowhere, materializing all around him through clouds of ink-colored smoke. The dragon chuckled, a wicked sound that froze the creatures of the swamp dead in their tracks. As far as he was concerned, this was just another of the god's weak assassination attempts. While blasting the machines into embers, Firecoven was caught from behind by a wheeled golem that was nothing less than a marvel of engineering. It rolled up behind the dragon on silenced treads. An armor-plated armature attached



YTRIMALIK FIRECOVEN

Very Old Red Dragon

CR 20; Gargantuan dragon (fire); HD 31d12+217; hp 465; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 36 (−4 size, +30 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 36; Base Atk +31; Grap +54; Attack +38 melee (4d6+11, bite); Full Attack +38 melee (4d6+11, bite), +33 (2d8+5, 2 claws), +33 melee (2d6+16, tail slap); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Crush, Frightful Presence; Spell-like Abilities, Spells, Tail Sweep; SQ Blindsight, DR 15/magic, Keen Senses, *Locate Object*, SR 26; AL CE; SV Fort +24, Ref +17, Will +24; Str 32, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 28, Wis 24, Cha 26.

Skills: Appraise +20, Bluff +42, Concentration +41, Diplomacy +42, Escape Artist +34, Gather Information +20, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (arcana) +43, Knowledge (history) +43, Listen +41, Search +43, Sense Motive +41, Spot +41, Swim +31, Survival +41.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Enlarge Spell, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Maximize Spell, Power Attack, Silent Spell, Still Spell.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Goblin, Giant, Ignan, Infernal, Orc, Terran, Undercommon

Breath Weapon (Su): Firecoven has one form of Breath Weapon: a 60-ft. cone of fire (18d10 points of fire damage, Reflex save DC 33 for half damage).

Crush (Ex): Firecoven can use his whole body to crush as many Medium or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 20 ft. by 20 ft. Creatures who do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 33) are pinned and take 4d6+16 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, Firecoven must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Firecoven can unsettle foes with his mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever he attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 30 or fewer HD within a radius of 270 feet are subject to the effect. Will DC 30 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to Firecoven's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the Frightful Presence of other dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

to its back cocked into position, and the wicked silver spike mounted on its end gleamed. Just as Firecoven turned to meet the golem head-on, the arm cut loose and hammered into Firecoven with the force of an avalanche. His skull split. The spike pierced through the dense layers of dragon scales, bone, and brain matter, pinning his head to the ground below the marsh water where he stood. Firecoven was, at last, dead; and if he wasn't dead, he was in a unique hell.

That was good enough for the dwarf-god. His surviving mechanicals departed.

Over the ensuing years, Firecoven slipped in and out of a fugue-like consciousness. He let his thoughts drift across the landscape like the wind, sometimes influencing lesser creatures with his sorcery. Nightmares of the dwarf's machines haunted him,



YTRIMALIK FIRECOVEN. CONTINUED

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day — *suggestion*. Caster level 13th.

Spells: (6/8/8/8/8/7/5) Firecoven casts spells as a 13th-level sorcerer. He knows the following spells. The DC to resist these spells is 18 + the spell level.

0 Level — *dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, flare, light, mage hand, open/close, resistance*

1st Level — *comprehend languages, hold portal, message, obscuring mist, unseen servant*

2nd Level — *detect thoughts, hypnotic pattern, invisibility, see invisibility, whispering wind*

3rd Level — *clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fly, suggestion*

4th Level — *improved invisibility, lesser geas, polymorph self, scrying*

5th Level — *major creation, permanency, secret chest*

6th Level — *chain lightning, greater dispelling*

Tail Sweep (Ex): As a standard action, Firecoven can sweep his tail through a 30-ft.-radius half-circle extending from an intersection on the edge of the dragon's space in any direction. This attack deals 2d6+15 damage to Small and smaller opponents, though a Reflex save (DC 33) is allowed for half damage.

Blindsense (Ex): Firecoven can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents he can't actually see still have total concealment against him.

Damage Reduction: Firecoven has Damage Reduction 20/magic; he ignores the first 20 points of damage from any attack, unless that attack is made with a magic weapon. His natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming Damage Reduction.

Immunities (Ex): All dragons have immunity to *sleep* and paralysis effects.

Keen Senses (Ex): Firecoven sees four times as well a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. He also has Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Fire Subtype (Ex): Firecoven has immunity to fire, but he is vulnerable to cold, which means he takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from cold, regardless of whether a saving throw is allowed, or if the save is a success or failure.

Locate Object (Sp): Firecoven can use this ability as the spell of the same name up to 9 times per day.

Spell Resistance (Ex): Firecoven is resistant to spells and spell-like abilities. To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against this dragon, the caster must make a caster level check against DC 26; if the caster level check succeeds, the spell works normally, though the dragon is still allowed a saving throw.

Possessions: See "The Comatose Dragon."

and the dragon sometimes wondered if he was alive or dead.

Things changed after the wizards found him. Firecoven dipped into their thoughts like clear ponds, encouraging the wizards to unwittingly fulfill a far-fetched plan to free him. The wizards found inspiration for their mechanical devices in the strange imagery floating in their minds, and eventually found the skill and the coordination to build them.

Firecoven no longer has wings. They were cut off after Falstaff convinced his brothers that more room was needed for machinery. In truth, he just wanted the pleasure of cutting them off. The wings were then gifted to the local lizard folk tribe as a gesture of peace and cooperation. The lizard folk shaman believes he can use them to achieve some sort of mechanical flight.

The dragon's magic is still powerful, despite his near-comatose state. Though the young wizards think they're on to a new alternative to magic, they're wrong — it's innate dragon magic that keeps their inventions functioning. (If there is one thing Firecoven learned from the dwarf god, it's that magic outlasts technology.) To make matters worse for the wizards, the silver that could make them rich could also be their end. The silver they're mining is part of the divine trap that holds Firecoven in place; when enough of the silver is gone, the spike's power will be weak enough for the dragon to overcome it. It may take them awhile, but they'll eventually mine enough to let Firecoven crawl out of his coma. When he does, the dwarf god doesn't stand a chance. The dragon has had fifteen long years to plot his payback.

THE LAIR

The mining camp is built in a cul-de-sac on a small island in Blackmoon Bayou. The marsh around it is shallow: up to fifteen feet deep in a few areas, but around three feet deep in most areas. Naturally there are deep pitfalls, sinkholes, and critter burrows found

randomly throughout the water-soaked region. There are also dry areas jutting up from the water like islands. The heat, even without the dragon's furnace-like body, is unbearable at times. The humidity is twice as bad, so thick it feels asphyxiating. Then there's the all-pervasive stench of rot. Locals say it gets worse year after year.

The dragon lays curled at the center of the camp. To the casual observer, he appears to be sleeping. Waves of heat rise from his armored flesh, distorting the air. A cacophonous machine panoply surrounds him, supposedly harvesting the heat and marsh water, and transforming them into steam and raw energy. Unbeknownst to the wizards, this energy is actually magical; it originates with the dragon rather than with their confounding nest of technology.

FALSTAFF'S HOUSE

Of the four brothers, Falstaff has the most bizarre house. He's not an evil man, but he is seriously disturbed. One of his favorite pastimes is pulling the wings off flying things. His house's roof and walls are decorated with hundreds of preserved insect wings, bird wings, flying lizard wings, bat wings, and more. The inside of the house is an utter mess. A filthy, stained mattress lies bunched in one corner, and more wings and other animal body parts decorate the walls. Spare tools and equipment litter the floor. In another corner sits an abused wardrobe.

Last week, Falstaff erected a 6-foot-high wall between his and Laudanum's house in a fit of pique. He and his brother have been arguing incessantly about Falstaff's sick predilection for mutilating animals and he could no longer take his brother's sanctimonious, self-righteous preaching. One of these days, he intends to mount miniature, automated ballista atop the wall. Just in case.

LAUDANUM'S HOUSE

Unlike his brother Falstaff, Laudanum keeps an immaculate house. Everything in it has a proper place. There are no discarded tools, no machine



parts, nothing unseemly in the least. He has a large, canopied bed pressed up against the north wall just beneath the window there. Tiny braziers for burning insect-repelling incense are placed in strategic spots around the two-room building. On the other side of his bedroom wall is a small kitchen. Laudanum has been teaching himself the fine art of cooking for the past few weeks, and the progress he's made is remarkable. One can often find him here cooking up all kinds of fragrant, delightful dishes for his brothers' pleasure (including Falstaff, despite their arguments and that accursed wall he put up between their houses).

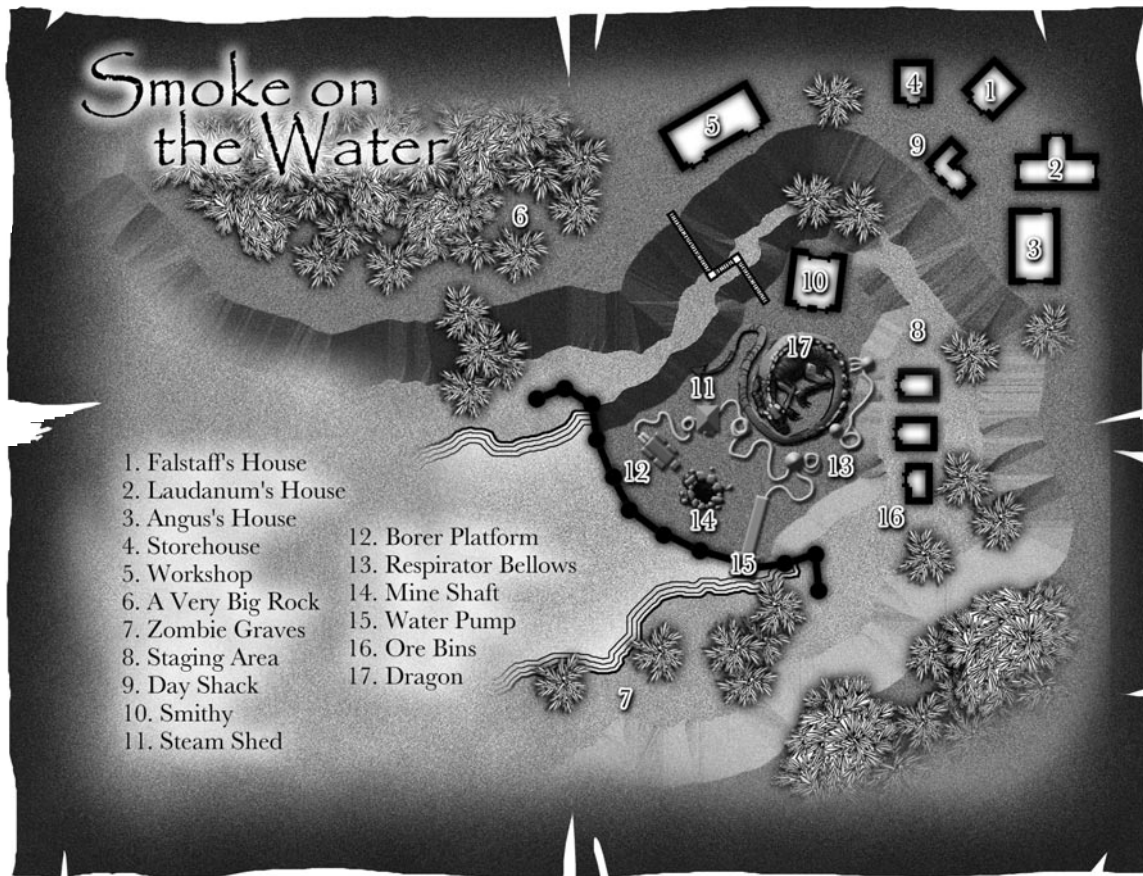
Adjacent to Laudanum's house is a reed-walled corral. Three doughty work ponies live in it. The swamp heat and humidity has been cruel to them over the months, and they all have some form of alopecia. The spotty, hairless patches distributed randomly around their bodies give them unusual mottled appearances. The air is thick with the stench of their urine and dung. Horse flies swarm around the corral in dizzying black clouds.

LAZENBY'S HOUSE

The largest of the wizards' houses, this T-shaped building is where Lazenby, the half-elf, resides. It's divided into three small rooms: a parlor, a bedroom, and an "alchemy." Since he infrequently receives visitors in the parlor, he uses it as a reading room. Bookcases line the parlor walls, bearing the heavy burden of imported knowledge. The swampy environment rapidly destroys books and scrolls, unfortunately, so fully two-thirds of the reading material in this room is in some stage of decay.

The bedroom is utilitarian, and its corners are filled with fungus-infested tomes. A very large chest for clothes sits at the foot of his bed. The gauzy canopy covering the bed is riddled with holes and rips.

Finally, there is the alchematory, as he calls it, where Lazenby conducts magical research, performs experiments, and comes close to blowing the whole camp to smithereens.





At any given time, 1d4 mundane objects (such as forks and cuckoo clocks) enchanted with the *magic aura* spell as cast by a 1st-level sorcerer may be found in the house. Lazenby's alchematory is a standard alchemy lab, conferring a +2 circumstance bonus to Craft (alchemy) checks made there.

ANGUS'S HOUSE

The dwarven brother owns this slightly dilapidated L-shaped structure. From inside come the discordant laments of Angus' lute. Like Lazenby's house, Angus' is divided into three parts: in this case, a bedroom, a parlor, and a workshop. The bedroom is furnished with a canopied bed, a wardrobe, and a writing table. On the table are ten blank pieces of moldy parchment, a sticky inkwell, and sixteen used and abused feather quills. Piles of waded up paper litter the floor here, most inscribed with half-hearted musical compositions — and all in A-minor, for some reason. In the parlor, there's a comfortable chair, a few insect-repelling braziers, and a wrought-iron music stand. The workshop is the heart and soul of the house; it's like a carpenter's shop dedicated to the fine art of crafting musical instruments.



A character using Angus's workshop to construct a musical instrument gains a +2 circumstance bonus to her Craft check. This bonus does not stack with bonuses for masterwork tools.

STOREHOUSE

This is the sturdiest of all the structures in the camp, with walls made from imported oak cured in creosote. Its heavy door is secured with an expensive lock, and the building is breached by no windows whatsoever. The wizards keep all their unprocessed ore here, until it can be transported back to the civilized world and sold to minters, jewelers, weapon- and armor-smiths, ore merchants, and other buyers. Ore brought up from the staging area is dumped into wooden barrels or, if it is too encrusted with secondary sediment and rocks, sifted first in wire-bot-

tomed trays. Each of the four wizards has keys to the door.

At any given time, the storehouse contains approximately one ton of unprocessed ore, worth about 1,000 gold pieces.



The storehouse walls are reinforced masonry, with the following statistics. Thickness: 1 ft.; Break DC: 45; Hardness: 8; HP: 180 per 10 ft. x 10 ft. section; Climb DC: 15.

The storehouse door has the following statistics. Type: stone; Thickness: 4 in.; Hardness: 8; HP: 60; Break DC (Stuck/Locked): 28/28. It has a good-quality lock (Open Lock DC 30).

WORKSHOP

This is where the majority of the mining equipment is made or assembled. It is a large, one-room structure filled with hundreds of pieces of disparate equipment, metalworking and stonecrafting tools, winches, cinches, slings, pulleys, and anything else the wizards need to make their mechanical devices. They also use the building as a general-purpose storehouse for food, miscellaneous gear, and other ordinary trade goods. Outside, along the east wall, they stack empty barrels and crates. A small forge and bellows on the workshop's south side is used for small blacksmithing tasks.



The workshop grants a +2 circumstance bonus on all skill checks related to engineering, stonecrafting, and metalworking (but not blacksmithing). This bonus does not stack with bonuses for masterwork tools.

A VERY BIG ROCK

This humongous boulder occupies a natural clearing uphill from the staging area. The wizards meet here to discuss business or to relax, especially when the heat and humidity of the swamp mixes with the supernatural heat shed by the dragon to such an awesome degree that it becomes impossible to meet

in the Day Shack. Ever since the local lizard folk and the wizards came to a peaceful accord, it is not uncommon to find a pair of scaly, reptilian lovers requiting their affection in the boulder's refreshing shade.

ZOMBIE GRAVES

Sometimes zombies in the swamp spontaneously crawl from their peaty graves to harass the living. They usually get eaten up by indiscriminating, pea-brained dinosaurs, but those that do survive have an uncanny knack for finding living people, such as the wizards in their camp. They're easily dispatched by the young men or their lizard folk friends, however. Lazenby has been burying slain zombies in shallow graves on the hill behind the staging area. His brothers think he's nuts, and don't know that he's keeping the zombies to experiment on. Lazenby hopes to augment his mystic self-study by uncovering the secrets of life and death from the zombies' desiccated remains.



Zombies don't rest in peace, and those buried in the hill are no exception. There is a 10% chance each day that enough pieces of zombie flesh buried in the hill gather together to form a whole, new Medium zombie. The risen zombie digs itself free and rampages until put down again.

STAGING AREA

This is the mining camp proper, where it all happens. It's a drained, shallow lake bed filled with tons of strange and improbable machinery. The most eye-catching feature of the area is undoubtedly the red dragon sleeping in the middle. Machines connect to his body. Steam billows out of the large shed behind him. Chugging, clanking, churning wheels and loudly hissing pneumatic tubes control and power a spiral-nosed borer from a high platform. Snakeskin-sheathed hoses draw water both from the mineshaft and the marsh just beyond the reed-wall that separates the staging area from the fetid swamp on the other side. The ground here is muddy and slippery

despite the oven-like temperatures radiating from the dragon.



The temperature within 30 ft. of the dragon is 35 degrees higher than the rest of the environment (unless the respirator bellows are running, in which case the temperature rises considerably higher). Any metal in the area becomes hot enough to inflict 2d4 points of fire damage per round to unprotected flesh.

Day Shack

This is the mine's *de facto* office. It stands high above the staging area on thick wooden stilts. A set of narrow stairs climbs up to the shack's door. It's here the wizards draft their plans for new machines and manage the camp. Sketches fill hundreds of pages of parchment, which hang from the walls and ceiling. A wide drafting table sits against the north wall, while stuffed cupboards and chests occupy the east and west walls. In the center of the room there is a dilapidated table surrounded by four creaky chairs.

Smithy

A spacious building placed on the southeastern side of the staging area, the smithy contains a very large forge and all the expected accoutrements required to manage it. Space for a woodpile has been carved out of the slope behind the smithy. The wizards build the largest pieces of their machines here. When they're not using it, lizard folk war-masters sometimes come here (with the wizards' blessing, of course) to forge their soldiers' weapons and armor, because it is so much better equipped than their own smithies.



A character using the smithy to forge weapons, armor, or other miscellaneous ironwork receives a +2 circumstance bonus to his Craft (blacksmithing) or Craft (metalworking) skill check. The smithy tools can also be used for glassblowing, granting a +2 bonus to Craft (glassblowing) skill checks.

Steam Shed

Probably the most important structure in the camp, this building is where all the heat harvested from the comatose dragon gets mysteriously transformed into the energy that drives the borer and other machines. It is packed to the walls with an improbable array of devices barely understood by the wizards. Lazenby, in particular, seems to have an atypical affinity for the steam-works, but if quizzed on specifics he cannot describe precisely how any of these devices function. The brothers build the machines based on their intuitions. Or so they believe. Really, it's the dragon's semi-conscious thoughts guiding them.



Everything in the steam shed radiates a strong aura of universal magic. An *iden-*

tify, *legend lore*, or other kind of identification spell cast on the machinery yields inconclusive information.

Borer Platform

Similar to the Day Shack, this platform stands on wooden legs above the rest of the camp. This gives anyone standing up here a decent view of the shaft, the dragon, and the machinery. It is from this position that the wizards use a confounding assortment of levers, buttons, and dials to guide the heavy, drill-faced boring device down below. The borer has a total of 150 feet of coiled hydraulic tubing linking it to the control device. This can be expanded in 25-foot increments with supplemental tubing.



MACHINE MAGIC

The “non-magical energy” the wizards say is generated by the machines in the steam shed is nothing of the sort. The power that inspires the wizards and fuels the machines comes from the strange combination of dwarven and dragon magic that's developed at the site over the years. Firecoven's suspended consciousness and the dwarf god's implanted magic have given each a power that neither expected.

The steam shed drains the sorcerous magic that Firecoven would typically have access to as a dragon. The dragon, despite his questionable state of consciousness, is still able to use spells on a daily basis, when he can muster the willpower. A great deal of his arcane might is drained off by the machines he needs to free him, however. The devices in the shed transform the magic into the fuel for the machines, which creates heat, which creates steam. By having the wizards maintain the machines, Firecoven is able to channel more and more of his arcane power through them to remove the magical pin that holds him in place.

Firecoven is able to appreciate the lesson he's learning about the dwarf god's magical machines

and their unique benefits, but won't let this education get in the way of vengeance against the stout deity.

- A successful Spellcraft check (DC 25) or Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30) and a careful examination of the machines in the shed reveals the truth: the machines are powered by a strange blend of arcane and divine magic.
- The effects of the machines in the area cannot be canceled out with *dispel magic*, but *greater dispelling* can render one of the machines non-functional with a successful caster level check versus caster level 17.
- Clerics of industrial gods, forge gods, or other types of artificers treat the area around the dragon out to 100 ft. as *hallowed* ground (if they are good or neutral) or *unhallowed* ground (if they are evil). The spell *obscuring mist* is also affixed to the area. This mist is part of the steam generated by the shed.



A character can attempt to guide the borer by making a successful Intelligence check (DC 15), thus allowing her to vaguely understand the platform's control panels. She must make an Intelligence check (DC 10) each subsequent round to get the device to do her bidding. On a failed roll, the borer stops dead in its tracks. If the character's Intelligence check doesn't beat at least DC 5, the borer takes off in a random direction.

A character struck by the boring device while the drill is running suffers 10d10 points of damage (Reflex save DC 17 for half). If the drill is shut down but the borer is not, a character struck by the device suffers 3d10 points of damage (Reflex save DC 15 for half).

The borer has an overland speed of 10 ft. and a burrowing speed of 5 ft. If the respirator bellows are active, the boring device's speed increases to an overland speed of 20 ft. and a burrowing speed of 5 ft. per round.

Respirator Bellows

The dragon breathes at a steady but barely noticeable rate. The wizards discovered shortly after they started this endeavor that they could generate higher temperatures by increasing his air intake. So, they built this bellow-driven armature, which massages the dragon's diaphragm and increases the rate at which he breathes. Turning the armature off restores the dragon's rate to normal, and significantly decreases his body temperature.



If the bellows are active, the dragon's body heat increase to temperatures dangerously above the ambient temperature of the environment. Untempered and non-magical metals start melting immediately, while wood and clothing spontaneously combusts. This heat extends out 20 ft. from the dragon.

Creatures within this area take 1d6 damage every round from burning clothing and flesh, plus 1d6 damage every round for inhaling the superheated air. Burning articles cannot be extinguished until removed from the superheated area.

In order to turn the respirator bellows off, a fly-wheel must be turned. This requires a Strength check (DC 20) as the armature assembly has a habit of rusting up every couple days unless vigilantly cleaned.

Mine Shaft

This is a 10-foot-wide, 65-foot-deep hole going straight down into the sodden, marshy earth. Its walls have a noticeable spiral groove in them. Beside the shaft's rim there is a belay rack outfitted with sturdy hemp ropes from which the wizards anchor themselves while descending into it to pluck ore from the shaft walls. Sometimes lizard folk volunteers help out with the mining chores. In return, they may keep as much silver as they can carry.

The ore is literally there for the taking. Every time the borer obliterates another 10-foot section of dirt, it reveals a treasure trove of silver nuggets just waiting to be yanked free. Experienced miners would quickly realize upon examination of the shaft that there is something most unnatural about it. The wizards are anything but experienced, though.



Scaling the mineshaft wall requires a Climb check (DC 23). If a character fails, he plummets the length of the shaft, taking damage normally upon impact.

Water Pump

The loudest piece of machinery in the staging area is the water pump. It pulls water from the mineshaft as well as the marsh on the other side of the wall, feeding it through a complex network of pipes to the steam shed. Excess water is poured back into the marsh.

Ore Bins

Raw silver ore pulled from the mine shaft gets dumped into these eight iron bins, where it sits until someone puts it in burlap sacks and moves it up to the storehouse. The bins are about waist high for a human (or chest high for a dwarf, as Angus often notes).



The middle bin has a secret compartment hidden in the bottom near one of the corners. With a DC 20 Search check, the compartment and the following are found: 45 gp, an *everburning torch*, a *feather token (anchor)* and a small cigar box full of dried insect wings and one pair of grimy bat wings.

COMATOSE DRAGON

Ytrimalik Firecoven's comatose form is the source of the wizards' power and wealth. His body generates an unbelievable amount of heat — more than is typical for red dragons of his size and age. Hundreds of

attached tubes, pipes, plates, and other mechanical tidbits connect to him in order to harvest said heat, and more importantly, his innate dragon magic.



Beneath the dragon, pressed deeply into the mud from his colossal weight, is a miniature chest made from wood taken from the Ur Tree (see Chapter One, "Dragon Moot"). This chest is a key that lets Firecoven retrieve a *secret chest* hidden in the Ethereal Plane in the same spot. It has been there for 15 years, and though the dragon doesn't remember its exact location anymore, he renews the spell every two months to ensure it isn't irretrievably lost.

The chest contains the following items: a *sylvan scimitar*, +2 *spiked chain*, +2 *chainmail*, *mask of the skull*, *horn of blasting*, and 3,500 gp.

EVERY SWAMP HAS A SILVER LINING

There is no indigenous silver below the marsh. The wizards are really mining ore placed into the ground by the dwarven god in preparation for his ambush of Firecoven. While the wizards are digging up a fortune, they're simultaneously destroying the power of the spike in Firecoven's head through sympathetic magic. The industrial god placed a massive deposit of silver into the ground to anchor Firecoven's magic spike and empower the magic of the artifact. So long as the silver lode remains, the spike holds Firecoven prisoner.

However, the silver's infusion of divine magic and the dragon's raw arcane power have been blended by the spike's magic and Firecoven's unexpected near-death state. Through the silver deposit, Firecoven is able to see some of the dwarf god's work in the world in a new light, and is using this new

insight to inspire the wizardly brothers to dig him free. Ironically, if the dwarven god hadn't created and placed that silver into the earth himself, it wouldn't have the god's natural essence for Firecoven to tap into and use with his ambient magic.

The dwarf god created a mass of silver in the ground to anchor the spike and keep the dragon in place for as long as possible. The total value of this silver is up to you, but it must be at least 31,000 gp. Once the wizards have brought up enough silver from the ground, so that less than 15,500 gp remains in the dirt around the dragon, Firecoven will get to his feet and look for food. Adjust the total worth of silver in the ground to control the pacing of the wizards' advance on freeing the dragon as necessary for your campaign. See the entry for the *silver spike* for more information.

SCENES

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the mining camp can be used for two different types of parties: 4th to 8th (low to mid level) or 18th level and above (high to epic level). The following are some suggested scenes for both levels of adventurers:

- *High Level:* The dwarf god returns. Firecoven, using spells to communicate, pleads with the characters to fend off the god and his platoon of mechanical soldiers long enough for the wizards to finish digging the shaft so he can be free of the spike once and for all. Hopefully, the wizards' efforts will be generously augmented by the PCs' magic; otherwise they will never make it in time.

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: SILVER SPIKE

This spike is thought to have originated with the formians, though not even the dwarven gods are sure about that. It is thought to have been designed for use in some godly prison or in an inter-planar railway. The dwarven god of industry first put it into mortal hands when he used it to get vengeance on his old nemesis, the dragon Firecoven.

The top of the 50-lb. *silver spike* bears a curious rune that means “unchanging” (Decipher Script DC 25 to translate). When activated by a *maul of the titans*, the spike generates a specialized anti-magic field 40 feet in diameter, centered on the spot where the spike was hammered in. This blocks all *transformation* magic and effects. It also disrupts *conjunction* magic, forcing any spellcaster to make two successful Concentration checks (DC 30) on 2 consecutive rounds before being able to cast spells of that type. Once the spike is activated by the maul, it remains active until struck a second time.

If the spike is inserted through an inanimate object, that object becomes forever immovable and gains Damage Reduction of 50/—. If forcibly inserted through a living creature, it inflicts 20d6 points of damage, and the creature must make a Will save (DC 40). If the creature succeeds, the

spike can be removed with no further ill-effects. On a failure, the creature enters stasis: it cannot move or be moved; its body ages at one-fifth its normal rate; and it becomes only vaguely aware of its surroundings. The creature can think clearly, communicate telepathically (if it has that ability), and cast spells if it makes a successful Concentration check (DC 40) first. A successful check allows the creature to behave and observe with clarity for one hour.

The spike blocks all scrying magic within a radius of 40 feet. It is impervious to damage, magical manipulation, and all destructive magic. However, it does have one unusual flaw: the spike requires a total mass of silver proportional to the size of the subject to be pinned for the spike to use as an anchor. The total value of this anchor must be at least 1,000 gp per HD of the pinned subject, but can be worth much more. The anchor doesn't have to be a single unit; a collection of silver baubles and coins will do. Once the spike is anchored, however, its power continues to work even if the anchor is reduced to half its necessary value. Once the anchor's mass has been reduced below half of its necessary value, the spike's spell is broken.

- *Low to Mid Level:* The lizard folk shaman who received the dragon's wings as a gift lost them in a bet to a rival orc shaman (who died the following day after leaping from a cliff with the wings crudely sewn to his back). Now, dissatisfied and unhappy, the shaman goads his people into demanding more from the wizards. The lizard folk chieftain, quite against his better judgment, tells them he would like 80% of the ore collected as a protection fee and tribute. Falstaff goes to the nearest human village and hires the PCs to help them sort out the misunderstanding.
- *High Level:* An evil wizard takes over the mine camp. He and his minions begin accelerating the spike's disintegration so the dragon can awaken that much faster. He does not do this out of any sense of altruism for the poor creature. Rather, he plans to use a custom-made collar to control Firecoven and make him do his bidding. Word of the wizard's plan reaches the PCs, and they know if they don't stop him, the whole region will suffer death and destruction on a scale unseen in centuries.
- *Low Level:* The swamp's wandering druid guardian discovers the wizards' plan, as well as the truth about the spike. He is unable to convince the wizards of their folly (because of the dragon's influence over them), so he turns to the adventurers. He asks them to either kill the wizards or get them to change their minds. As soon as the adventurers make the wizards' lives difficult, the wizards call in their lizard folk allies.
- *High Level:* As the wizards come closer to destroying the dwarf god's magic, the dragon's magic starts behaving unpredictably. One day, all the silver ore in camp coalesces into a troop of silver golems (identical to iron golems), which go on a rampage through the marshlands, then lay siege to the city closest to the camp. The adventurers are caught in the city when this happens, or caught in the mine camp. Regardless, the only way to stop the golems from spawning is to accelerate the silver's removal and then convince the awakened red dragon to aid them.
- *Low Level:* Falstaff, who always was the least stable of the brothers, is finally pushed over the edge by the dragon's interference in his thoughts. He sneaks out at night to infiltrate the homes of the swamp's human and lizard folk residents, murdering one a night by viciously ripping out their shoulder blades. Meanwhile, as the adventurers are crossing the swamp to get to another adventure, they stop at the mine camp to rest for the night. That's when Falstaff goes berserk and tries to murder everyone, including his brothers and the PCs.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

You could move the camp to a new environment rather easily, or have it inhabited and run exclusively by lizard folk, who consider the dragon to be their living god. On the other hand, the camp could be a very small dwarf temple devoted to their god of the forge, in which case the site is a monument to the victory of technology over the wilderness. Perhaps these dwarf cultists are trying to free Firecoven to get vengeance on the industrial god they once worshipped — or to get his attention.



CHAPTER FIVE

CLIFFSIDE



AT A GLANCE

Patina is a juvenile copper dragon with a reputation for helping those in need. She lives in a lair extending out from the side of a prominent cliff in a populated region of the countryside. Sadly, so many people sought her aid that she eventually took steps to actively discourage visitors. With the aid of a group of sprites and a friendly elven wizard, she remodeled her lair as a pair of giant rotating chambers. With this new design she can rotate her lair along a horizontal axis, allowing what was once a ceiling to spin into position as a wall, or even a floor. Patina climbs like a spider and her sprite friends fly, so they can easily move about the lair, but visitors without some magical means of movement must rely on ropes and other climbing gear if they hope to reach her inner sanctum. With the assistance of her allies, she has also protected the lair with a number of non-lethal traps and puzzles, to make sure that those who seek her out have exceptionally good reasons for doing so.

PLACEMENT

Patina's lair is built on the side of a cliff, so it should be placed in a mountain range or other area where long drops can be found. Since the sprites live in a forested area, the mountain range should be near a forest. Finally, because Patina always has people seeking her out for her aid, her lair must be located in a settled or even heavily populated area.

If you don't have an area that meets all these requirements in your campaign setting, you can easily make a few modifications to the lair. The easiest alteration to make is to the home of the sprites. Though normally they dwell in forests, it's a simple matter to have them reside in the mountains or some other

sort of terrain. This could lead to some interesting variations, such as desert- or swamp-dwelling sprites.

You could also move the lair from the side of a cliff to an underground location. This alteration allows you to place it under nearly any part of your setting, but does detract somewhat from the ambiance and you'll need to change the name of this lair.

Finally, you could move the lair away from a civilized area, provided there's still an easy method for annoying favor-seekers to reach the dragon; otherwise her

motivation simply vanishes. A teleportation portal could make an ideal solution in this case.

INHABITANTS

A number of different creatures live in Patina's lair. Patina, of course, is the main inhabitant, but she also has an alliance with two local sprite tribes. The Yellowfire pixie tribe assists in her crusades against

PATINA

Juvenile Copper Dragon

CR 8; Medium Dragon (Earth); HD 14d12+28; hp 124; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft (poor); AC 23 (+13 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +14; Grap +17; Atk +17 (1d8+3, bite); Full Atk +17 (1d8+3, bite), +12 (1d6+1, 2 claws), +12 (1d4+1, 2 wings); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Breath Weapon, Spells; SQ Blindsight, Immunities, Keen Senses, Spider Climb; AL CG; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +14, Craft (taxidermy) +8, Diplomacy +15, Jump +17, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Listen +15, Search +15, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +15, Spot +15

Feats: Hover, Flyby Attack, Power Attack, Cleave

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elf, Sylvan

Patina doesn't like to fight, but will when cornered or in the service of a just cause. Though her magical abilities are not fully developed, she enjoys casting spells that mislead and confuse her opponents.

Breath Weapon (Su): Line of acid, 60 feet long, every 1d4 rounds; damage 8d4, Reflex half DC 19. This dragon can use a cone of *slow* gas instead,

forcing subjects who fail a Will save to be slowed as the spell for 1d6+4 rounds.

Spells: (6/6) Patina knows and casts arcane spells as a 3rd-level sorcerer, plus cleric spells and those from the Chaos, Earth, and Trickery domains as arcane spells. The save DC to resist her spells is 12 + spell level. She knows the following spells:

0 Level — *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

1st Level — *change self*, *magic stone*, *protection from law*

Blindsight (Ex): Patina can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents she can't actually see still have total concealment against her.

Immunities (Ex): Patina is immune to acid, *sleep*, and paralysis effects.

Keen Senses (Ex): Patina can see four times as well as a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. She also has Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Spider Climb (Ex): Patina can climb on stone surfaces as though using the *spider climb* spell.

Possessions: Potion of *cure serious wounds* (x4)

evil, while the Grassjumper grig tribe tends to her housekeeping. In exchange, she protects them from dangerous monsters and acts as a sort of “tribal mascot.” In addition, Patina has developed a taste for monstrous spiders and raises them for food, so a few of those are within the lair. Finally, a roguish elven wizard with a love of architecture helps her maintain the various traps and enchantments that protect her lair.

PATINA

Eccentric Philanthropist

“So you want my help, eh? First, you must help me. Pull my finger!”

Patina is a juvenile copper dragon, both in terms of her age and her sense of humor. Her parents found her so difficult to deal with that they constructed her a lair of her own rather than put up with her constant practical jokes and rebellious attitude.

Patina’s rather odd sense of humor drives her to introduce herself with one of several different names. Most of these names are puns, including such ridiculousness as “Izap Uall” and “Owhata Snee Kiam.”

Patina loves protecting the weak and bringing down the powerful; nothing gets her attention like a story

about tyrannical authorities, unjust court decisions, and the like. Unfortunately, in the past she was a little too willing to help, and what began as an occasional request to bring a corrupt sheriff back into line quickly developed into a daily string of petitioners asking her to frighten off tax collectors, shelter people dodging militia duty, and perform other unethical tasks. As a result, she has gotten more particular about those she helps. With the assistance of her faerie friends, she has developed a number of different traps and tricks to make sure that only the most dedicated and serious folk get close enough to plead their case. The plan has worked well: in the last six months, fewer than a dozen people have braved the traps in her lair. Of those, only four were determined enough to finally reach her. She helped all four, and is quite pleased with the results, so far. (Except for the escaped spider that killed a visitor about three weeks ago.)

THE SPRITES

Bickering Faeries

“You want to speak to Patina do you? So sad for you! So sad for you! House help should never speak to the mistress!”

The two tribes of sprites that are allied with Patina do not always get along. Being the weaker of the two



NEW SKILL: CRAFT (TAXIDERMISTRY)

Use this skill to skin and stuff various sorts of creatures. The DC for the skill check depends on the type of creature, as shown below. In all other respects, taxidermy follows all the usual rules for the Craft skill.

CREATURE TYPE	DC	CREATURE TYPE	DC
Aberration	25	Fey	20
Animal	10	Giant	20
Beast	15	Humanoid	15
Construct	5	Magical Beast	20
Dragon	15	Monstrous Humanoid	20
Elemental	30	Ooze	30
		Outsider	25
		Plant	5
		Shapechanger	25
		Undead	10
		Vermin	5

racers, the grigs are somewhat resentful of the pixies' higher status and more prestigious job. Conversely, the pixies enjoy their heroic work and look down on the grigs as the "house help."

The Grassjumper grig tribe has approximately sixty members, while the Yellowfire pixie tribe has approximately fifty members. At any given time, about one-third of each tribe can be found in Patina's lair. The other members of the tribes live in the nearby forest, but in times of emergency they can be summoned to Patina's lair with relatively short notice.

All the faeries know how to bypass the various traps and puzzles blocking access to Patina's lair, but will not provide this information to visitors.



Use the standard statistics in the SRD to represent the grigs and pixies. Both creatures are found under the sprite entry.

SPIDERS

Mindless Arachnids

[Chitter, chitter, chitter]

Monstrous spiders rank among Patina's favorite foods, and she raises them like a human farmer might raise cattle or chickens. A stray spider sometimes escapes, and occasionally a sprite flies into a web, but generally they don't cause too many problems for her.

The grigs are responsible for catching insects and feeding them to the smallest of the spiders. The larger spiders dine on the smaller spiders. Patina generally eats the spiders when they reach about a human's size, but after one months-long absence for a quest, she returned home to discover one of the spiders had grown to the size of a horse. She considered devouring the creature anyway, but something about the spider's appearance endeared it to her, so she let it live and nicknamed it "Archie." Archie has since grown even larger.

Though the grigs' magical abilities have kept them out of Archie's jaws so far, it's only a matter of time before someone makes a mistake and gets eaten.

LUCIARATH

Magical Architect

"Hmmm, nothing a quick spell won't fix."

Luciarath (loo-see-AR-ath) is an elven wizard and rogue. He considers himself a "magical architect," and he specializes in the creation of traps and the casting of spells that alter doors, walls, and other parts of buildings.

Luciarath befriended the sprites many decades ago after defending them from a group of goblins intent on setting the nearby forest ablaze. When the sprites forged their alliance with Patina, Luciarath couldn't pass up the opportunity to put his skills to use in the modification of her lair. Though he maintains quarters in Patina's lair, he doesn't spend a lot of time there.



MONSTROUS SPIDERS (66)

Though their population constantly fluctuates due to reproduction and cannibalism, Patina generally has the following monstrous spiders available for her dining pleasure. Use the standard SRD rules statistics for all these creatures.

- 50 Tiny monstrous spiders
- 10 Small monstrous spiders
- 5 Medium monstrous spiders
- 1 Huge monstrous spider



LUCIARATH

7th-Level Elf Wizard/1st-Level Rogue

CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6 + 7d4; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grap +2; Atk +3 (1d6/x2, +1 *club*); Full Atk +3 (1d6/x2, +1 *club*) or +5 (1d4/19-20/x2, hand crossbow); Space/Reach 5ft./5ft.; SA Spells, Sneak Attack; SQ Elf Qualities; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +8; AL CG; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 11

Skills: Concentration +3, Craft (alchemy) +11, Craft (locksmithing) +11, Craft (stonemasonry) +11, Craft (traps) +11, Decipher Script +5, Escape Artist +3, Forgery +3, Gather Information +2, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +4, Search +5, Spellcraft +6, Spot +4, Use Rope +5

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Weapons and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan

Elf Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination, and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it. Elves receive Martial Weapon Proficiency in the longsword, rapier, longbow (and composite), and shortbow (and composite) as bonus feats. They also get a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Luciarath is proficient with all simple weapons, plus the hand crossbow, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, quarterstaff, rapier, shortbow, and short sword. He's proficient with light armor, but not with shields. Armor of any type interferes with a wizard's movements, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Luciarath's sneak attacks inflict +1d6 damage to a foe that he flanks or catches flat-footed.

Spells: (4/5/4/2/1) Luciarath knows and casts arcane spells as a 7th-level wizard. The DC to resist his spells is 12 + the spell level. He knows the following spells. Typically prepared spells are noted after the name of the spell by a multiplier such as (x1).

0 Level — *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic* (x1), *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand* (x1), *mending*, *open/close* (x2), *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*

1st Level — *alarm*, *detect secret doors*, *floating disk*, *hold portal*, *mage armor*, *magic aura*, *magic missile*, *spider climb* (x1), *undetectable aura*, *unseen servant*

2nd Level — *arcane lock* (x2), *continual flame*, *magic mouth* (x1), *obscure object*, *trap* (x1)

3rd Level — *dispel magic* (x1), *fireball*, *fly* (x1), *illusory script*, *nondetection*, *shrink item*

4th Level — *secure shelter*, *illusory wall*, *improved invisibility* (x1)

Possessions: hand crossbow, 20 bolts, +1 *club*, potion of *fly*, scroll of *guards and wards*, cloak of *resistance* +2, amulet of *natural armor* +1, 43 gp.

Whenever someone attempts to bypass the various traps and puzzles that block access to Patina's sanctum, Luciarath lurks around invisibly and attempts to hinder their progress, especially by countering any climbing or flying magic that may be in use.

THE LAIR

Originally created by her parents, Patina's lair was later modified by Luciarath to keep out intruders while creating minimal disruption for Patina and her faerie friends.

The lair is made out of three large stone boxes stacked end on end. Two of these boxes rotate around a horizontal axis, so at any time one of four different surfaces can act as the box's floor.

The first stone box is simply an entry chamber. The second stone box houses a number of rooms equipped with trapped puzzle doors. Each time one of these puzzle doors is opened, the entire box rapidly rotates counterclockwise by three faces. Those inside the box and unable to cling to a wall or fly are thrown about, eventually coming to rest on the new floor.

The third stone box houses Patina's sanctum. It rises slightly when the lower box rotates, but does not rotate in unison. Patina has a lever in her sanctum that she can use to rotate it when she wishes.

As there is only a single door leading from the second box to the third box, the two must be aligned to allow passage between the two parts of her lair.

All furnishings in the lair are bolted down, and some rooms have furniture on as many as four different surfaces. Each chamber is lit by at least one continually burning magical torch. Like the furniture, these torches are bolted in place.

OUTSIDE THE LAIR

The three boxes of Patina's lair extend from the side of a cliff and hang approximately one hundred feet above the ground. This makes reaching the entrance to her lair a challenge in itself. A trapdoor leading into the lair is visible in the floor of the first and bottom-most box. Since Patina doesn't want things to be easy for would-be visitors, there are no ladders or any other devices present for reaching the entrance to the lair.

ENTRANCE CHAMBER

This stationary stone chamber appears to be some sort of sitting room, decorated with comfortable chairs, low tables, and throw rugs. Bookshelves line two of the walls and hold several popular titles in various languages.

Ominously, words are carved into the remaining walls in the same languages as the books, warning off potential visitors. The text reads:

Take heed, all who seek the help of Patina the copper dragon. She does not provide aid to those who are unworthy. If you wish to seek an audience with her, you must pass five tests. These tests will challenge your mind, body, and spirit. So be warned, and advance if you dare.

Unlike the rest of the lair, this room never rotates.

⊗ ROTATING THE LAIR

Whenever one of the boxes rotates, all creatures inside that are unable to *spider climb* or fly are thrown against the walls, suffering 3d6 damage. Those who are able to cling to furnishings, hang

from ropes, or are otherwise secured can make a DC 15 Reflex save for half damage. Characters trained in the Tumble skill can reduce the damage as if it was from three separate 10-foot-high falls.

PUZZLE ROOM 1

This room looks like a mage's research chamber. Wooden tables holding various items of alchemical equipment are scattered about the chamber, on the walls and ceiling as well as the floor. Searching through the drawers in these tables allows characters to find many common spell components.

A stone platform juts from one of the surfaces of this chamber, allowing access to a heavy bronze door with seven switches on it. The switches are each of a different color. They are in order from top to bottom: Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red. Next to the door is a brass placard with writing engraved into it. The writing reads, in the common tongue: "IF I WAS TO TEAR A _ _ _ FROM YOUR CHEST, THE RESULTS WOULD BE QUITE _ _ _ _."

When thrown in the correct sequence, spelling words, the switches open the door. Each switch corresponds to a letter of the alphabet that matches the first letter of the name of the color: V (violet), I (indigo), B (blue), G (green), Y (yellow), O (orange), and R (red).

Multiple words are required to open the door. After each correctly completed word, a bell sounds, and the levers reset. If an incorrect lever is pulled, a buzzer sounds, and the door unleashes a blast of stunning color at whoever is directly in front of it. (See "The Blinding Light") This isn't dangerous in and of itself, but an unconscious character falls off the platform, which could be hazardous, depending on how the room is oriented at the time. The levers then reset, and the party must begin the entire sequence over from the first word.

To determine the correct pattern, the party must obtain clues from the writing on the placard. The missing words are *RIB* and *GORY*. Thus to open the door, the levers must be thrown in this order: first red, then indigo, then blue. The bell then sounds and the levers reset, after which the party must throw the green, orange, red, and yellow levers, which sounds a second bell, resets the levers again, and opens the door. As soon as the door opens, this section of the lair immediately rotates. Ten minutes later, the door slams shut and the entire mechanism resets, though the door can be opened easily from the other side.



DOOR 1: THE BLINDING LIGHT

Color Spray Trap: CR 1; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*color spray*, 1st-level wizard, DC 13 Will save negates); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 21.

If the PCs are unable to deduce the correct solution to the puzzle, they may be able to pick the lock (Open Locks DC 20), which triggers the trap. Attempts to destroy the door may succeed, but automatically trigger the trap. The door has a Hardness of 7, 50 hit points, and a break DC of 25.

If characters get stuck trying to bypass the door, allow them to make DC 10 Intelligence checks for a hint. For every 5 points by which the character beats the DC, grant another hint. Multiple characters can put their heads together and make cooperative skill checks to get better hints. Give the hints out in order.

Hints

1. The puzzle has something to do with the spectrum.
2. The levers correspond to the missing letters on the placard.
3. The names of the colors correspond to the missing letters on the placard.
4. Each lever is assigned a letter based on the first letter of its color. For example, the red lever represents the letter R.
5. If someone tore a rib from your chest, the results would be quite gory.

PUZZLE ROOM 2

This is a featureless stone room. A stone platform juts from one of the surfaces of this chamber, allowing access to a heavy bronze door with seven switches on it. The switches are each of a different color. They are, in order from top to bottom: Orange, Indigo, Yellow, Violet, Green, Red, Blue. Next to the door is a brass placard with writing engraved into it. The writing reads in the common tongue “EVE NODD PRIME”.

When thrown in the correct pattern to indicate numbers, the switches open the door. Each switch corresponds to a number that matches its place in the spectrum. The correspondence is Red (1), Orange (2), Yellow (3), Green (4), Blue (5), Indigo (6), and Violet (7).

Multiple sequences of numbers are required to open the door. After each correctly completed sequence, a bell sounds, and the switches reset. If an incorrect switch is flipped, a buzzer sounds, and the door unleashes a blast of darkness at the character directly in front of it. (See “The Darkness”) A character who can’t see has a good chance of falling off the platform, which could be dangerous, depending on the orientation of

the room. The switch then resets, and the party must begin the entire sequence over from the first word.

To determine the correct pattern, the party must obtain clues from the writing on the placard. The plaque, which read “EVEN ODD PRIME” before the dragon decided that clue was too easy, indicates that the even-numbered switches must be flipped first, then the odd-numbered switches, then the prime-numbered switches. In addition, the switches must be flipped in order from the lowest-numbered to the highest-numbered. Thus, to open the door, the switches must be thrown first in this order: Orange, Green, Indigo. Then the bell sounds and the switches reset, after which the party must throw the Red, Yellow, Blue, and Violet switches, in that order, to ring a second bell and reset the switches again. The final sequence is: Red, Orange, Yellow, Blue, and Violet. When the final sequence is completed, a third bell sounds, the levers reset a final time, and the door opens. As soon as the door opens, this part of the lair immediately rotates. Ten minutes later, the door slams shut and the entire mechanism resets. This door can be opened easily from the other side, however.

 DOOR 2: THE DARKNESS

Darkness Trap: CR: 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*darkness*, 4th-level wizard); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 26.

If the PCs cannot deduce the correct sequence, they may be able to pick the lock on the door (Open Locks DC 25), but this triggers the trap. Attempts to destroy the door may succeed, but automatically trigger the trap. The door has a Hardness of 8, 55 hit points, and a break DC of 26.

If characters get stuck trying to bypass the door, allow them to make DC 10 Intelligence checks for a hint. For every 5 points by which the character beats the DC, grant another hint. Multiple characters can put their heads together and make cooperative skill checks to get better hints. Give the hints out in order.

Hints

1. The puzzle has something to do with the spectrum.
2. The levers correspond to the clue on the placard.
3. The letters on the placard are not spaced correctly.
4. Each lever represents a number that corresponds to its order in the spectrum. The red lever represents the number 1, the orange lever represents the number 2, and so on.
5. The placard should read EVEN ODD PRIME
6. You need to pull all the even levers, then all the odd levers, then all the prime-numbered levers.

LUCIARATH'S ROOM

The central area in the first part of the lair holds Luciarath's room. Though he doesn't spend much time here, he feels an inexplicable need to be close to his traps, and wanted his quarters to be near them. His room contains a bed, dresser, chairs, and footlocker. All these items are bolted down, of course, and the bed and chairs include harnesses, since Luciarath is incapable of flight except when under the effect of a spell.

Luciarath keeps his spellbook here, locked in his footlocker, as well as a spare change of clothes. Numerous trap diagrams and schematics have been tacked to virtually every square inch of wall space. Observant characters may be able to glean clues to disarming the traps or opening the locked doors by studying these diagrams.



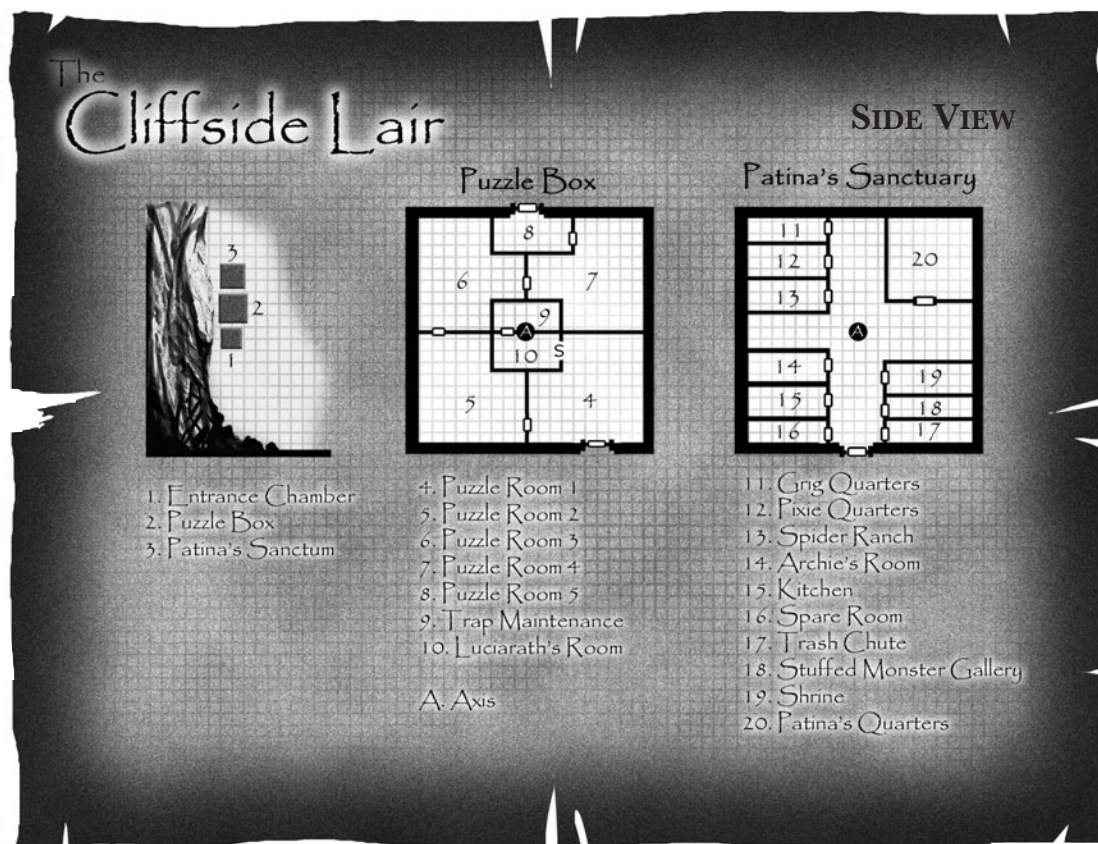
Locating any of the secret doors that lead into Luciarath's room requires a DC 25 Search check. The doors are also locked

with a good-quality lock (Open Lock DC 30). Luciarath's footlocker is locked with an average quality lock (Open Lock DC 25).

Examining Luciarath's schematics for at least thirty minutes provide a character with a +2 circumstance bonus to Disable Device, Open Lock, and Search checks made to bypass the obstacles in the five puzzle rooms.

TRAP MAINTENANCE CHAMBER

This chamber is Luciarath's work area, and holds a large workbench and wooden storage chests bolted to the floor, walls, and ceiling. These chests contain cogs, gears, magical components, and other devices needed to keep the traps in the various puzzle rooms in working order.



PUZZLE ROOM 3

This room looks like a bedroom or barracks of some sort, but with beds on two walls and the ceiling, as well. A stone platform juts from one of the surfaces in this room, allowing access to a bronze door. The door is set with color-coded switches, similar to those found in the previous two chambers. The switches are, in order from top to bottom: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Violet, and Indigo. The switches are set horizontally into the door and are all currently facing to the left.

A stream of acid pours forth from an iron dragon face set into the door, and could splash down onto creatures entering the chamber, depending on its orienta-

tion. The door leading into this room is coated with an acid-resistant material, so regardless of the orientation of the walls, it is not harmed by the acid.

A mounted brass plaque set a few feet from the door reads, in the common tongue: *My enemies, from the weak to the mighty.*

To open the door, the switches must be thrown in a pattern that corresponds to the various types of chromatic dragons, starting with the weakest and moving up to the most powerful. The correct order is: all switches on (white dragon), all switches off (black dragon), green switch on (green dragon), blue switch on (blue dragon), and red switch on (red dragon). As soon as the correct sequence



DOOR 3: THE DRAGON DOOR

Freezing Ray Trap: CR 1; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 11 Reflex save half damage; blast of cold (2d4, nonlethal cold damage); multiple targets (5-ft.-wide, 30-ft.-long line); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 26; Open Locks DC 30.

Caustic Acid Trap: CR 1; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 12 Reflex save half damage; stream of acid (4d4, nonlethal acid damage); multiple targets (5-ft.-wide, 30-ft.-long line); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 26; Open Locks DC 30.

Caustic Gas Trap: CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 13 Reflex save half damage; corroding cloud (4d6, nonlethal cold damage); multiple targets (15-ft. cone); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 27; Open Locks DC 30.

Lightning Bolt Trap: CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 14 Reflex save half damage; arc of lightning (4d8, nonlethal cold damage); multiple targets (5-ft.-wide, 30-ft.-long line); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 27; Open Locks DC 30.

Jet of Flame Trap: CR 1; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 15 Reflex save half damage; blast of flame (4d10, nonlethal cold damage); multiple targets (15-ft. cone); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 28; Open Locks DC 30.

Negative Energy Trap: CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +3 ranged touch; spell effect (*enervation*, 7th-level wizard); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 29; Open Locks DC 30.

There are six separate traps on the dragon door, and five separate locks. Each trap must be detected and disarmed separately, and unless the characters get the levers in the correct sequence, each lock must be picked separately as well. A wizard friend of Patina's faerie allies specially designed all the traps so they do not kill. Unfortunately, the negative energy trap is still capable of causing death if it drains a target of all his levels. Patina means to get this fixed, but has yet to contact the wizard about altering the spell.

Attempts to destroy the door may succeed, but automatically trigger the trap. The door has a Hardness of 9, 60 hit points, and a break DC of 28.

If characters get stuck trying to bypass the door, allow them to make DC 10 Intelligence checks for a hint. For every 5 points by which the character beats the DC, grant another hint. Multiple characters can put their heads together and make cooperative skill checks to get better hints. Give the hints out in order.

Hints

1. The puzzle has something to do with the spectrum.
2. Each lever corresponds to a chromatic dragon color.
3. You need to pull the levers in order of dragon color from weakest to most powerful.
4. The order of colors should be white, black, green, blue, and red. The only problem is there is no white or black switch.
5. Black must be no levers; white must be all the levers.

is thrown, a bell sounds, the door opens, and this section of the lair immediately rotates. Ten minutes later, the door slams shut and the entire mechanism resets. This door can be opened easily from the other side.

When all the switches are thrown, the door emits a freezing ray. When none of the switches are thrown, the door releases a spray of caustic acid. When the green switch is thrown, the door releases a cloud of caustic gas. When the blue switch is thrown, it fires a lightning bolt. When the red switch is thrown, it releases a jet of flame. If an incorrect switch is thrown, the door releases a beam of negative energy, a buzzer sounds, and the switches reset. There is no way to throw the switches without standing in the path of the traps. (See “The Dragon Door”)

PUZZLE ROOM 4

This is a featureless stone room. A stone platform juts from one of the surfaces in the chamber, allowing access to a heavy bronze door. Like in the other rooms,

there are seven levers on the door. Running from top to bottom, they are: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Violet, and Indigo. Nearby is an inscribed brass plaque, which reads in the common tongue: *Only those who are pure of spirit may pass through this door.*

The door has a pull handle, and appears to be locked. If anyone attempts to throw any of the levers, a flash of white light fills the area around the door, injuring and possibly blinding any evil creatures. The trap resets automatically.

The correct action is to walk *through* the door without trying to open it, but such an action only works for good creatures. (See “The Pure in Spirit”) Evil beings find passage through the door impossible.

Since this door doesn’t actually open, passing through it doesn’t cause this portion of the lair to rotate. The door can be unlocked and opened from the other side with ease, so only one character can let the others in.

TRAP 4: THE PURE IN SPIRIT

Holy Smite Trap: CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*holy smite*, 7th-level cleric, DC 16 Will save partial; multiple targets (20-ft. radius burst); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 29.

If the characters are unable to get the door to open, they may be able to pick the lock (Open Locks DC 40), though this triggers the trap. Attempts to destroy the door may succeed, but automatically trigger the trap. The door has a Hardness of 10, 70 hit points, and a break DC of 28.

Good-aligned creatures can simply walk through the door. Such a character may bring one neutral character along with him. Touching the door doesn’t reveal that passage through the door is possible; the creature must approach the door with the intention of walking through it.

If characters get stuck trying to bypass the door, allow them to make DC 10 Intelligence checks for a hint. For every 5 points by which the character beats the DC, grant another hint. Multiple characters can put their heads together and make cooperative skill checks to get better hints. Give the hints out in order.

Hints

1. Obviously only good beings can bypass this trap.
2. The levers don’t appear to be connected to any sort of locking mechanism.
3. If the levers don’t do anything, there must be some other way to bypass the trap.
4. You need to pass through the portal, not open it.

PUZZLE ROOM 5

This chamber is decorated like a cave. The stony walls are rough and unfinished, and the room bristles with short stalagmites and stalactites. Oddly, some of these stone spikes extend from two walls as well as the floor and the ceiling. A stone platform juts out from one of the surfaces of this room, allowing access to a copper door. This door doesn't have any levers or switches. Instead it is engraved with the following message in the common tongue: *"Show me my name to gain access to my lair."*

In order to bypass this puzzle, the characters need to tarnish the copper so it develops a patina. One way to accomplish this is to collect some of the acid that streams out of the dragon door in Puzzle Room 3, and splash it on the door, causing the copper to oxidize and turn green. The door then unlocks and the copper magically heals itself over a period of one hour, after which the door locks again. The door is not locked from the other side, so people can easily leave Patina's lair.

Once this door opens, this portion of the lair immediately rotates. This impresses Patina sufficiently that she rotates her chamber around to line up with the top of this stone box. If this door is not facing upward, however, it either opens up to face the cliffside or open air. For this door to face upward, the lair must have undergone a number of rotations evenly

divisible by four. Ten minutes later, the door slams shut and the entire mechanism resets, though it can be opened easily from the other side.

GRIG LIVING QUARTERS

This large chamber is where Patina's grig allies live. The walls of the chamber have tiny shafts cut into them, allowing sunlight to enter and the grigs to come and go as they please. Hooks line the walls of the chamber and hold suspended beds, tables, chairs, chests, and other pieces of furniture.

At any given time, there are a dozen or so grigs flitting about the chamber. When not working, they spend most of their time here, sleeping, relaxing, and gossiping. No pixie ever stoops so low as to enter this room.

PIXIE LIVING QUARTERS

This chamber acts as a barracks for Patina's pixie allies. Every surface of this room has furniture bolted to it, including beds, footlockers, tables, chairs, dressers, and other simple but well-made items.

When not out on quests, this is where the pixies spend most of their time sleeping, practicing weapon drills, or relating tales of their exploits. No grigs are allowed to enter this room.



DOOR 5: THE COPPER DOOR

Unlike the other doors, this one is not trapped, but bypassing the lock requires a DC 40 Open Locks check. Attempts to destroy the door may succeed. The door has a Hardness of 12, 75 hit points, and a break DC of 30.

If characters get stuck trying to bypass the door, allow them to make DC 10 Intelligence checks for a hint. For every 5 points by which the character beats the DC, grant another hint. Multiple characters can put their heads together and make cooperative skill checks to get better hints. Give the hints out in order.

Hints

1. You seem to remember that the sign in the first room said the dragon's name is Patina.
2. The dragon is a copper dragon; the door is also made of copper.
3. Patina is the name of a greenish coating that appears on copper after being exposed to the elements.
4. You need to somehow rust the copper door – acid should do the trick.

SPIDER RANCH

Patina keeps a well-stocked larder full of spiders in these spherical rooms. Webs cling to the walls, expanding out in all directions, and monstrous spiders of various species scurry about on them. The larger spiders eat the smaller spiders or any other creatures they can catch, so visitors in these rooms should watch where they step.

ARCHIE'S ROOM

To keep him from eating all of the other spiders, Patina moved Archie to a room of his own. The grigs are absolutely terrified of Archie, and never enter this chamber. Instead, they throw in a few of the larger spiders, slam the door shut, and run away.

Archie's lair is covered with thick webbing, and Archie remains at the center of his web at all times, simply awaiting the opportunity to escape or snare a meal better than spiders.

KITCHEN

The sprites aren't interested in eating monstrous spiders, so this room is where the grigs prepare the food for themselves, the pixies, and any visitors that Patina may receive. The kitchen is well stocked, but only with vegetarian foods. The sprites are particularly fond of spiced fruits and mushroom dishes.

TRASH CHUTE

This area is where Patina and her sprite allies leave their trash. It is a hole that opens into a long stone tube, and eventually empties out of the cliffside into a large trash heap at the base of the cliff. Enterprising parties may be able to use this trash chute to gain covert access into and out of the dragon's lair. Of course, Patina has considered this, and an illusionary wall designed to mimic the cliffside conceals the chute's mouth.



For a character to penetrate the illusion, he must be near the chute and make a DC 13 Will save.

SPARE ROOM

This empty chamber is currently used for storage and filled with boxes, crates, and other containers holding a variety of household goods. The body of a human male lies here — a few weeks ago, he attempted to brave Patina's traps and puzzles, but was killed by an escaped spider. The sprites managed to recapture the spider, but they have no idea that there is a body in here, hidden away behind a couple of barrels and wrapped in webbing.

STUFFED MONSTER GALLERY

This smallish chamber is Patina's trophy room, and houses the stuffed and mounted bodies of some of her defeated opponents. The most notable monsters



on display include an ogre mage, a rakshasa, and (her greatest triumph) a devourer. Other creatures in the collection include the usual assortment of kobolds, goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, and bugbears. The continuously burning torches in the room cast long shadows from the creatures, and the flickering torchlight makes them look almost alive.



Patina has done an excellent job of stuffing these monsters, and those entering the room must make a DC 10 Spot check or mistake the stuffed trophies for living, breathing, specimens. The creatures are revealed as false after a single attack or spell is directed against them, but such an attack probably draws the attention of the lair's living inhabitants.

SHRINE TO THE DRAGON GOD

This chamber houses a shrine made of a silvery metal, which at first glance appears to be silver or platinum, but is nothing more than well-polished steel. Engravings in the walls, floor, and ceiling of the room clearly mark it as a shrine dedicated to the god of good dragons. The dust of crushed gems on the altar is all that remains of items offered up as sacrifices to the dragon god. A large platinum hammer on a chain is attached to the altar, and dust from the gems can be seen caked on the hammer's striking surface.



The hammer is made of platinum and obviously valuable. It radiates faint magic and is an enchanted weapon. The chain attaching the hammer to the altar has a Hardness of 10, 15 hit points, and a break DC of 25. Unfortunately, taking the hammer from this chamber incurs the wrath of the dragon god and causes the character carrying it to be subject to effects mimicking a *bestow curse* spell. There is no saving throw against this effect.

PATINA'S LIVING QUARTERS

This large room is Patina's sleeping chamber. She does not spend much time here, as she much prefers going out and fighting evil over sitting around and doing nothing, but she does make a point to stop by as often as possible to check up on Luciarath and her faerie allies.

Patina's hoard is sprawled out on the floor (or wall, or ceiling) in a chaotic fashion. The only other items of note in the room are a half-dozen half-eaten monstrous spider carcasses that she has yet to take to the trash chute, and the lever that rotates this section of the fortress. The lever is made of dull iron, and is set into a recessed area in one wall. There is no mechanism of any sort protecting the lever — it can be used by anyone.



NEW MINOR ARTIFACT: PLATINUM HAMMER

This +2 *light hammer* is made of platinum and was specially designed for smashing valuables such as gems. If used to smash a gem worth at least 100 gp as a sacrifice to the dragon god, the deity grants good luck to the character smashing the gem. This provides a +1 luck bonus to all ability checks, skill

checks, and saving throws. The good luck lasts for 1d3+12 hours for every 100gp value of the gem destroyed.

Faint evocation; CL 12th; Weight 2 lbs.

Patina keeps the following items in her treasure hoard:

13,596 sp

1,319 gp

220 pp

A flagon, made from polished horn and decorated with gold (75 gp)

A toy soldier made from bronze (10 gp)

A golden bottle stopper (100 gp)

An ivory scroll tube with golden end-caps (15 gp)



She also has a *ring of jumping* and *ring of feather falling* that she sometimes loans to humanoids who need to return to the lair at a later date.

SCENES

Since Patina has a reputation for helping those in trouble, the most likely reason for PCs to seek her out is to request her help. She's a very powerful creature and could provide a great deal of assistance in dealing with troublesome villains.

There are other reasons why PCs might seek out Patina's lair. A few weeks ago, for example, a petitioner that came to her for help was slain by an escaped monstrous spider. Perhaps that poor soul's family wants the PCs to find out why he never returned from the dragon's lair. Once the dead petitioner has been found, the PCs must bring the body back for a proper burial. For a variation on this idea that works with morally gray characters, assume the petitioner's family knows he died; now they want the PCs to get revenge on their behalf by slaying some friend of the dragon's. What if the characters are sent on this revenge-fueled quest without being told the truth; what if they think the dragon they'll find inside the cliff-side lair is evil?

Another unusual adventure option begins with the PCs being contacted by representatives of the local faerie population. These faeries are unhappy with the current state of affairs between the grigs and pixies in Patina's service and want the PCs to mediate. The party must go into the lair and somehow restore the shattered relations between the two groups. One possible solution would be to convince Patina that the grigs and the pixies should share housekeeping and questing duties.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Patina uses her lair as a base from which she can launch her crusades against evil. What would happen, though, if Patina was slain in one of her battles and the sprites kept up the appearance of the lair to convince others that she was still alive? They might do this to keep the dragon's reputation alive and discourage potential attackers and looters from overwhelming the grieving sprites.

In her battles against evil, Patina has made many enemies. It possible one of her foes could mount an attack against the fortress and capture her. The fortress's normal inhabitants could be replaced with evil creatures. A good choice would be phase spiders motivated to reach the lair and free their arachnid brethren from the clutches of the "ravenous spider-eating dragon."

For a real change, the lair could be moved into an arctic region, the cliffside could become a glacier, and Patina could be replaced with a white dragon. Since white dragons can climb on walls and ceilings made of ice, this frigid villain could move around in the lair just as easily of Patina. The sprites could be her slaves, or they could be replaced with other sorts of small flying monsters, such as ice mephits or vargouilles.

CHAPTER SIX

TITHE BEND



AT A GLANCE

Long ago, in the time of legends, on a small island in the bend of a great and fast-flowing river, there was a beautiful temple. It had been built by a devout and holy order to honor their strict and vengeful god. One day, when the worshippers of the temple had taken their god's favor for granted, and the temple clerics had grown lax and lazy in their observations, the god made his displeasure known. He threw down a bolt of divine fire and smote the temple, blasting it and the island into the river.

The ruins cluttered the bend in the river, creating a shallow rocky reef, and what remained of the island was cloaked in unearthly fog, even in the midst of summer. Sailors, being a superstitious lot, invented myths about the shoals — myths that spread to ports up and down the river. Eventually, myths gave way to customs, and it became the belief of the common folk that unless a tithe was paid honor the god of the ruined temple, he would do to traveling boats what he had done to his lax worshippers.

Over centuries, the god and his temple were forgotten, but the tradition of Tithe Bend endured.

Now Tithe Bend has become the home of a black dragon called Dunstitz. Small for a dragon, he was the runt of the nest. Not one to believe in superstition, Dunstitz saw the tradition of the tithe as a way to collect a hoard with little or no risk to himself. He resides in the ruined temple, claims the coins paid by passing sailors, and sinks the occasional boat to lend credence to the legends of peril on the river. Today it's true that sailors who don't pay the price may perish at Tithe Bend.

PLACEMENT

Tithe Bend is best located on a deep-water bend in a fast-flowing river with heavy commercial shipping traffic between two major ports. Despite the dangers of travel through the bend, it should be the best option to folk needing to traverse the region. Perhaps land routes require detours over great distances to avoid impassable terrain, or maybe political concerns have caused excessive taxing on the nearby roads. It could be that hostile creatures in the woods or mountains around Tithe Bend prey upon travelers with such frequency that the rumored dangers of the river route are preferable to the peril of the high-ways.

To encourage PCs to explore the river's watery depths, it's best to place the river in a temperate area. By setting the sunken temple and other underwater hazards at the mouth of a large bay or lake, Tithe Bend can become the introduction to a whole series of underwater adventures. Consider, too, how the history of the temple fits into the region where you place the river; this could be one of many temples in the area ruined by a single, angry god.

INHABITANTS

Two very different creatures live at Tithe Bend: Dunstitz and Tillan.

DUNSTITZ

Frail and undersized physically since his hatching, but driven by full-bodied dragon instincts, Dunstitz realized that he'd have to rely on cunning rather than brute force if he was to acquire the hoard he so desperately craved. Other dragons built lairs and seized wealth through might and fearsome forays into the civilized lands, but Dunstitz knew he would

be seen as a target by would-be dragon-slayers and other dragons if he tried to openly gather a hoard. So he hid from the world at large and looked for ways to get a hoard of his own.

Although his body was stunted, his survival instincts were not, so Dunstitz stayed off land and honed his skills in the water. For many years he made his home in deep lakes and rivers, keeping out of sight and considering his options. In the water, his weaknesses became strengths; his small size gave him maneuverability, his dark hide hid him in the dim depths, and his frailty never came into play when he stayed beneath the surface and waited out his enemies. Over time, Dunstitz became a proficient swimmer, more skilled than most of his kind, but a poor flyer.

Dunstitz moved from place to place, trying not to build a reputation that would attract adventurers, until he heard of the legend of Tithe Bend. It sounded ideal: a treacherous stretch of water where frightened simpletons gave money away. He sought the place out immediately. When he arrived, he explored the area and found the sunken temple surrounded by a small fortune in coins and gems scattered on the riverbed. He knew then that Tithe Bend would be his home.

For a century and a half, Dunstitz has hidden among the ruins at Tithe Bend, collecting coins as they fall through the murky waters. While he's matured into an adult dragon, his body is still weak for his kind, so he avoids drawing attention to himself. He keeps his hoard to himself in his lair amid the ruins of the temple.

Dunstitz's main fear is that the sailors who travel the river will grow bold or lazy, stop believing the superstitions, and cease paying the tithe. To keep the legend alive, he swims alongside boats that don't pay the tithe and breathes acid onto their hulls. Sailors who man such ill-fated ships are allowed to escape and perpetuate the myth, unless they catch sight of Dunstitz; he doesn't let anyone bring word of a dragon back to the river ports. The last thing Dunstitz wants is to have to defend his lair.



DUNSTITZ

Black Dragon**Mature Adult Huge Dragon (Water)**

CR 13; Large dragon (water); HD 22d12+22; hp 170; Init +4; Speed 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.; AC 29 (–2 size, +21 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 29; Base Attack/Grapple +22/+30; Attack +25 (2d6+4, bite); Full Attack +25 (2d6+4, bite), +20 (1d8+4, 2 claws), +20 (1d6+2, 2 wings), +21 (1d8+6, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. bite); SA Breath Weapon, Frightful Presence, Spell-like Abilities, Spells; SQ Blindsense, DR 10/magic, Immunities, Keen Senses, Runt, SR 21, Water Breathing; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +13, Will +18; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +28, Bluff +26, Hide +21, Knowledge (local) +28, Listen +28, Move Silently +25, Search +28, Spot +28, Swim +32.

Feats: Blind-fight, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (tail slap), Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Swim), Swim-By Attack, Weapon Focus (tail slap).

Languages: Aquan, Common, Draconic.

Breath Weapon (Su): Dunstitz can spit forth a 100-ft.-long line of acid every 1d4 rounds (14d4 acid damage, Reflex save DC 26 for half damage).

Corrupt Water (Sp): Once per day, Dunstitz can stagnate 10 cubic feet of water, making it become still, foul, and unable to support animal life. This ability spoils liquids containing water. Magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will save (DC 22) or become fouled. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 210 feet.

Darkness (Sp): 3/day — *darkness*, with 50-ft. radius. Caster level 5th.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Dunstitz can unsettle foes with his mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever he attacks, charges, or swims

by. Creatures with 21 or fewer HD within a radius of 210 feet are subject to the effect. Will DC 22 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to Dunstitz's Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the Frightful Presence of other dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Spells: (6/7/5) Dunstitz casts spells as a 5th-level sorcerer. The DC to resist these spells is 11 + the spell level. He knows the following spells.

0 Level — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *read magic*.

1st Level — *alarm*, *shield*, *silent image*, *true strike*.

2nd Level — *magic mouth*, *hypnotic pattern*.

Blindsense (Ex): Dunstitz can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents he can't actually see still have total concealment against him. Dunstitz is allowed to re-roll a failed miss chance due to his Blind-Fight feat.

Immunities (Ex): All dragons have immunity to *sleep* and *paralysis* effects. Dunstitz also has immunity to acid.

Keen Senses (Ex): Dunstitz sees four times as well a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. He also has Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Runt (Ex): Dunstitz is unusually small for a black dragon. He is one size category smaller than he should be for a dragon of his age. All effects derived from his size use his actual size category, while effects derived from his age use his actual age category.

Water Breathing (Ex): A black dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and still use its Breath Weapon, spells and other abilities while submerged.

Possessions: See "Dunstitz's Possessions," below.

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Occasionally Dunstitz sinks ships carrying powerful magic items, even if they've paid the tithe. Likewise, ships with disinteresting cargo are sometimes allowed through unharmed, even if they don't pay the tithe. Dunstitz knows that if too many ships sink this way, sailors will eventually discover him or find another trade route, so he keeps his attacks to a minimum.



About thirty years ago, Dunstitz found a *crystal ball* in the wreckage of a sunken ship. Since then, he's been using it to keep an eye on passing ships, to see if crews are paying the tithe or not, and to see if a ship is carrying any powerful magic items onboard.

At first, scrying didn't work very well, because Dunstitz had no familiarity with the crews floating by above. All that changed when Tillan arrived.

Tillan is a river pilot who makes his living steering ships through Tithe Bend. Dunstitz has found that by focusing his scrying on Tillan, he can inspect any ship Tillan pilots. Tillan's steady employment means Dunstitz rarely needs to leave his lair when there is a ship on the surface.

Dunstitz's relationship with Tillan is entirely one-sided, as he ensures the pilot has no opportunity to see him. At first, Dunstitz was concerned that Tillan would pose a threat to him, but the pilot actively encourages captains to pay the tithe so their boats won't be lost. Dunstitz has even allowed Tillan to build a home on the riverbank, something Tillan would have been unlikely to do if he'd known how close he was to a dragon's lair.

Dunstitz prefers to fight foes underwater, if he must engage in combat, and does anything he can to keep the combat in the water. The fact that most creatures have limited vision and speed underwater gives him a great advantage, which he feels he needs. When he does fight, Dunstitz uses spells and the local terrain to disorient and separate his foes, followed by quick-moving attacks to finish them off. If possible, Dunstitz attempts to eliminate the biggest threats first. To him, that means spellcasters. Fighters have poor mobility and range underwater, so Dunstitz avoids confronting them as long as possible. He saves his breath weapon to use in the event that an enemy tries to run off for help; no one's ever outrun Dunstitz's acid spray.



Dunstitz uses his Darkness ability to keep enemy spellcasters from spotting him. His keen senses allows him to target them with his Breath Weapon or a Swim-by Attack, so he attempts to eliminate them quickly, before they can bring their spells to bear.

When using Swim-by Attack, Dunstitz's preferred attack is his tail slap, which delivers a devastating blow without affecting his movement.

While normally Dunstitz only attacks persons investigating the river if they see him or find his hoard, any characters who bring powerful magic items or especially desirable treasure down into the river are asking for trouble. Dunstitz takes the opportunity to expand his hoard by killing and looting intruders, even if they pose no threat.



NEW FEAT: SWIM-BY ATTACK (GENERAL)

The creature can attack while swimming past its target.

Prerequisite: Swim speed.

Benefit: When swimming, the creature can take a move action and another standard action at any

point during the move. The creature cannot take a second move action during a round when it makes a swim-by attack.

Normal: Without this feat, the creature takes a partial action either before or after its swim move.

TILLAN

Twelve years ago, Tillan lost his only brother to a ship that sank at Tithe Bend. After his brother's funeral, he came to Tithe Bend to pay his respects and learned the legend of the bend from the river captain who brought him there. Tillan decided to dedicate his life to learning the dangers of the bend and ensuring no more lives were needlessly lost in that stretch of water. He studied the currents and safe courses through the tumbled stones, and eventually offered his services to river captains as a ship's pilot.

In the years that he has plied his trade on the river, Tillan has seen an undeniable correlation between ships sinking and captains too proud to pay the tithe. While Tillan charges only a few gold coins for his services, he presses the captain of every vessel to pay a reasonable tithe to the river. Tillan uses any argument he can think of to convince captains, even going so far as to retell the difficult tale of the loss of his brother. Should a captain refuse to pay the tithe, Tillan returns his fee and makes for the riverbank;

from there he watches the ship make its way around the bend, and prays for the crew's safe passage.

In addition to his expert piloting skills, Tillan is a skilled tracker. Tithe Bend is many days' walk from the nearest major settlement, so Tillan lives off what his hunting and fishing skills bring him. He cures what he catches to make rations that keep him through winter, and trades with passing travelers. When he is not hunting or piloting, Tillan can often be found swimming in the river. He enjoys the feeling of floating through the currents, and swims back and forth across the river most days. Thus, he's intimately familiar with the river and its safest paths. Shallow dives have shown him what jutting rocks and sandbars lie just beneath the surface, but he has no idea that far below, in the dark water, a dragon watches his every move.

As Tillan spends most of his time alone, he is always eager for company. His cabin isn't big enough to accommodate guests, but the land immediately surrounding it has been cleared, and he welcomes campers. There are many things Tillan can't pro-

TILLAN

9th-Level Half-Elf Expert

CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 9d6+9; hp 51; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor), touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Attack +6; Grapple +7; Atk +8 (1d4+2/17-20/x2, +1 *keen dagger*) or +7 (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +8/+3 (1d4+2/17-20/x3, +1 *keen dagger*) or +8/+3 (1d8/x3, longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SQ Half-elf Traits; AL LG; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +18, Profession (pilot) +15, Search +3, Sense Motive +9, Spot +18, Survival +15, Swim +13, Use Rope +8.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Track

Languages: Common, Elven, Halfling

Half-elfen Traits (Ex): Half-elves have immunity to *sleep* effects, gain a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. For all effects related to race, a half-elf is considered an elf. Half-elves gain a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Search and Spot checks, and a +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Tillan is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and longbows, and with light armor but not shields.

Possessions: Longbow, +1 *keen dagger*, leather armor.

duce for himself, such as salt and arrows, and he is always willing to trade cured meat or fish, or even purchase the things he needs from anyone willing to sell. He frequently trades with the crews he guides through the bend, and has a good relationship with most of the sailors that travel this route on a regular basis. While he has no interest in luxuries, he never passes up an opportunity to trade for hard-to-get items.

Though it was sorrow and loss that brought Tillan to Tithe Bend, he is happy with his life here and he feels it has purpose, so he won't be easily tempted away from the river. He knows a thing or two about local history, he knows about the temple that it's said fell into the water, but he doesn't imagine that any evil creature has taken up residence there. If someone tries to convince him there is a dragon in the river, he'll be highly skeptical; he has lived here for over a decade without seeing any sign of it, after all.

If he's convinced that a dragon is living in the river, Tillan eventually comes to blame the dragon for the death of his brother, and offers any aid and information that he can to help slay the beast. He won't go into combat with Dunstitz unless forced to defend himself, however; not only would Tillan's death do nothing to make the river safer, he's very aware that he stands no chance against a dragon, even with a sword and a party of would-be heroes on his side.

In the unlikely situation that he is brought face-to-face with Dunstitz, the dragon says he just collects the tithe and takes it to the temple where he lives. He denies ever sinking ships. Since Tillan has seen no evidence to the contrary in over 10 years of living here, and because he knows little to nothing about the nature of an evil wyrm, Tillan believes Dunstitz' story.

THE LAIR

To the casual observer, Tithe Bend doesn't appear to be anything out of the ordinary. It's a wide bend on a large river, and its treacherousness and surround-

ing superstitions aren't uncommon among commoners and sailing folk. Apart from the bend itself, the only objects of interest on the surface are Tillan's hut and the pilot markers, which let ships know when they are approaching an area where a pilot is available.

The terrain around Tithe Bend is uneven and rocky, with dense woodlands, making portage of cargo across the land almost impossible. The only well traveled paths in the area go from Tillan's cabin to the pilot markers and the river itself. Located on the inside shore of the bend is the mooring point for Tillan's small rowboat, which he uses for fishing and to check the bend after any severe weather; sometimes the rocky banks of the bend collapse during a storm, and he needs to stay abreast of these changes in the terrain.

Tillan is very familiar with the thick fog that sometimes covers the bend, making it almost impossible for anyone who doesn't know the river as well as Tillan to pilot a ship through. He doesn't know where this comes from, or how it develops under conditions when fog should not be possible. Sometimes he's even accused of being responsible for it himself! When that happens, Tillan offers to return his fee and leave the captain to look after the boat himself.



The fog is caused by Dunstitz using *fog bank* to obscure vision when he wants to sink a ship. He also uses it when he feels the tithe that has been paid is not adequate, hoping to get the captain to throw more tithe over the side. He more often uses the second tactic, as he knows that sinking too many ships will cause problems.

TILLAN'S CABIN

After deciding to settle next to the river and help ships pilot through the bend safely, Tillan built himself a small wooden cabin. This single-story cabin been constructed from logs and mud daub, and has a roof of wooden shingles. Located near the hut is a small drying shed for curing meat and fish.

Tillan has cleared the area around his hut, and offers it as a camping space for anyone staying in the area. If the PCs make use of this area as a camp site, Tillan asks to join them for some company. He does not often get visitors who stay long, and he is pleased for any company he can get. He's very interested in characters that tell him they are planning on exploring the depths of the river, and answers any questions he can about it, though he really only knows the river's surface and shallows.

THE PILOT MARKERS

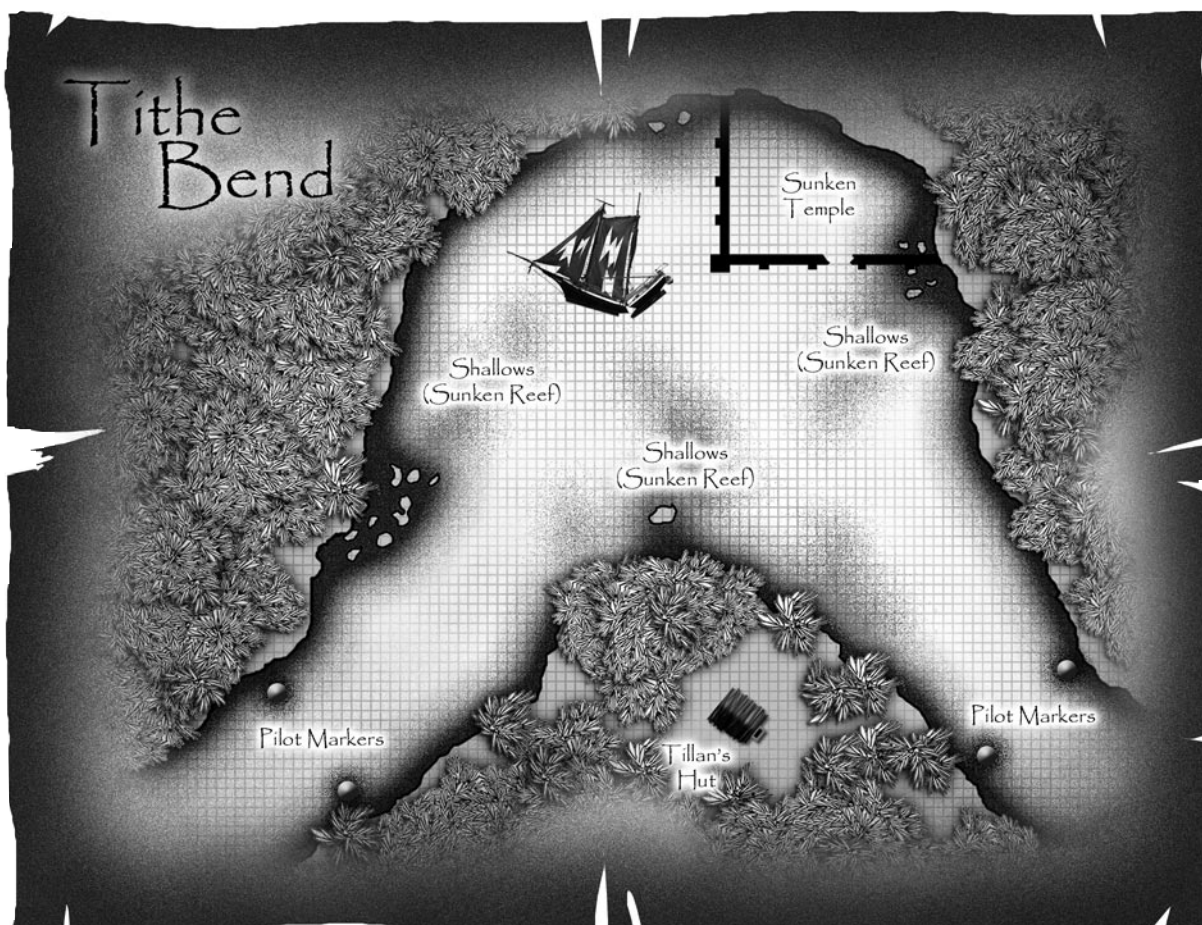
As a ship approaches the bend, from either direction, the crew sees a wooden marker on the shore indicating there is a pilot available for the stretch of river ahead. These markers have incidentally become a symbol warning of tricky or dangerous terrain — the sort best navigated by a familiar hand. A ship stops and rings its bell at this marker to call

for the services of the local pilot. If Tillan hears a ship's bell from the direction of one of the markers, he stops whatever he's doing and heads towards the ship to offer his services.

Tillan charges a fee based on his estimation of a ship's cargo and overall worth. When in doubt, he severely under-charges. He'd rather go on eating dried fish for the rest of his days than have a ship go under in the bend because his rates were unreasonable.

THE RIVER BED

The river bed through the bend varies in depth from between 15 feet to 85 feet deep, and is filled with tall piles of rock from the collapse of the island so long ago. There are frequent drops, cracks and crevices, and ledges that a swimming character could get lost in. Some parts of the river pass underneath rocky outcroppings that prevent a character from being



able to swim directly up to reach the surface. The depth of the waterway is unusual; the swollen body of the river at the bend is almost like a small lake.

Exploration of the river bed is difficult and slow. Visibility is limited underwater, and the lake is deep enough that very little daylight gets down to its bottom, so other forms of light are needed to explore the depths. There are plenty of distractions in the water to confuse or startle explorers; fish of many different sizes and varieties swim in the river, and masses of strange weeds grow on the river's steep and rocky bed.

There are quite a few shipwrecks scattered along the river bed. Most of these are many years old and, though recognizable as the remains of ships, anything that could be considered valuable has long since been taken by Dunstutz, or rotted away. These wrecks are another hazard with which Tillan must stay familiar; many are just fragile, mossy scraps of hulls, but others are jagged clusters of solid timber jutting like nails just beneath the surface, ready to stick in the foot of any passing boat.

While exploring these shipwrecks, characters might notice deep, slashed wounds in the broken hulls, suggesting the river is home to something both large and fierce.



All ground along the river bank is difficult terrain, due to the rocks that litter the river bed. Any character trying to move more than one-half her normal movement rate must make a Balance check (DC 15) or fall prone onto the jagged rocks for 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Characters who fail this check by 5 or more suffer normal, lethal damage.

Characters swimming through the rocks and wrecks of the river bed must make Escape Artist checks (DC 15) or slash themselves on splintered timbers and sharp rocks for 1d6 nonlethal damage. Characters who fail this check by 5 or more suffer normal, lethal damage.

It is here, outside the temple, that Dunstutz attacks anyone he considers to be a threat to

himself or his hoard. He uses his dark hide and the poor visibility in the river to sneak up on his prey; in this familiar stretch of the river, he gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks. His favorite tactic is to approach a lone target at full speed and attack with his tail while swimming past; with his long reach, targets are often unable to counterattack, even when they do see him coming. His excellent swimming ability and knowledge of the dark terrain beneath the bend make him immune to the dangers of sharp rocks and debris. Dunstutz uses his nimbleness and the river's difficult terrain to break up groups and eliminate enemies one by one.

THE WRECK OF THE MERRYWEATHER

A few months ago, a ship called the *Merryweather* traveled through Tithe Bend, and although the captain did pay the tithe, Dunstutz detected an item of great power onboard and gave in to his greed. He sank the *Merryweather*.



Dunstutz found that the escutcheon of the *Merryweather* was responsible for the magical emanation from the ship. After the ship had settled to the bottom of the lake, he ripped out the ship's stern to get the nameplate back to his hoard.

As it was the last ship to sink in Tithe Bend, the *Merryweather* is the largest and most complete of the shipwrecks strewn across the river's bend; thus it's also the easiest to find. Tillan, if asked, tells the characters the approximate location of the wreckage by showing them the spot on the surface where it disappeared.

Characters swimming towards the wreck of the *Merryweather* notice a strange taste in the water. The *Merryweather* carried a large cargo of rice in canvas sacks; the rice has since swollen and burst out of the sacks. Within fifty or so feet of the wreckage, depending on the current, the water is foul with the

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taste of rotten rice. Fortunately, this makes the wreckage easy to find even in the muddy darkness of the river.

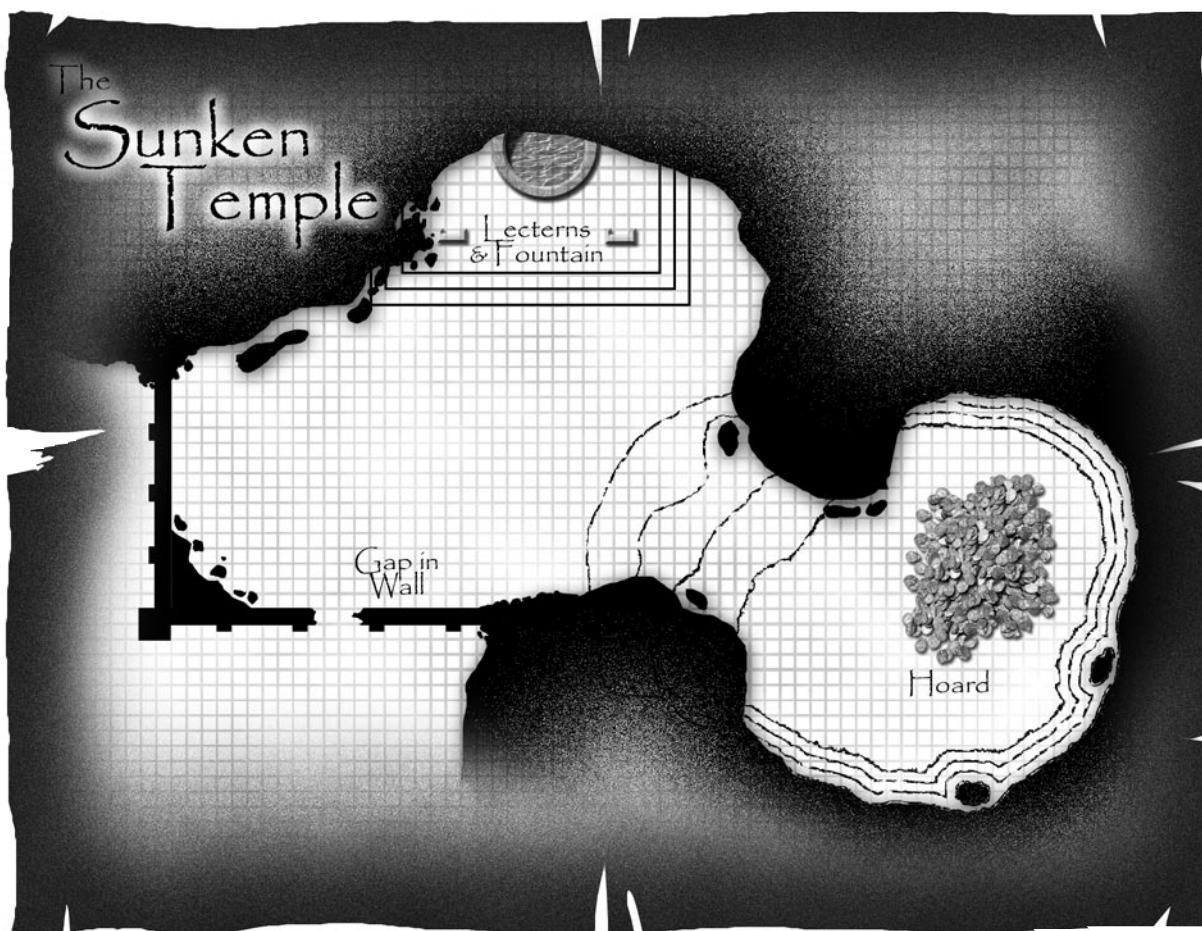
 Any character closely examining the hull of the *Merryweather* and succeeding at a Search check (DC 20), has a chance to see that the hull was not torn open on rocks, but was somehow dissolved — burned even below the waterline. Where Dunstitz ripped the escutcheon off the stern of the *Merryweather*, it's easy to determine that something large and sharp tore off a section of the hull; characters must get close enough to the stern to see this damage (Spot check DC 12) and make a Search check (DC 15) to notice the different kind of damage to that part of the ship.

Any character swimming into the wreck of the *Merryweather* must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or become nauseated for 1d3 rounds by the

spoiled rice-water. Nauseated characters gag, losing their held breath, and possibly begin to drown.

There is very little inside the *Merryweather* to find, other than the swollen corpses of two sailors who drowned when the boat sank, now floating amid the rice sacks. At one end of the cargo hold is a small room where the captain kept the ship's manifest and books. The only thing not ruined in this room is a locked chest.

 Opening the chest is difficult as the lock has started to rust. To open the lock, a character must succeed at an Open Locks check (DC 25); the chest has 10 hit points and a Hardness of 5. Inside the chest is 700 gp, 5 rubies worth 150 gp each, and a potion of *barkskin*, and two potions of *water breathing*.



THE SUNKEN TEMPLE

Ages ago, when the temple was first built, it was a place of tranquility and peace. Its worshipers tended the river and looked after the surrounding area. Although the temple stood on the small island in the center of the river bend, most of the worshipers lived on the banks of the river, and swam to the temple for daily worship.

The temple was almost completely destroyed in the torrent of divine fire that blasted it, and what little remained sank into the depths of the river and was lost to the surface forever. Only a small part of the temple is still recognizable — spared, perhaps, through the judgment of the temple's forgotten god. The bluestone walls that are still standing are deco-

rated with fading murals and mosaics, but years of erosion have softened the details and blurred the images. The rest of the temple has been reduced to rubble, ruined columns, and hunks of precariously balanced stone.

When Dunstiz first arrived, there was no way something as large as he could get into the remains of the temple, but through a small opening he could see there was a chamber inside. Over several weeks, he carefully used his acid breath to burn a larger opening through the rubble. The only passage now large enough for anything bigger than a halfling to get through is the 20-foot-wide hole Dunstiz dissolved in the rock on the southern side of the ruin. Anyone examining the hole finds it easy to guess how it was made; the stone has been softened, burnt, and chewed on by something with large claws and jaws.

Just outside, below the opening, a large mass of underwater weeds grow. Hiding itself in these harmless weeds is a squid weed plant, which attacks any character that passes within its reach. Dunstiz is too large for the squid weed to grab, but it still tries. He leaves it alone because he feels it's a good defense for his lair.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE



The inside of the ruin resembles a large cave more than it does the inside of a building. The floor has fallen in and lies in pieces about 20 feet below the entrance. The sunken roof of the chamber is between 40 and 60 feet above the floor. Only a few sections of the floor are still level, at the back of the cave where the remains of a stone fountain stand between two lecterns, which face the fountain. The rest of the floor is covered with rubble, clogged with weeds, and broken into frequent pits of various depths.

Flanking the fountain are *lecterns of casting*, which were used by the temple clerics in the casting of spells needed in holy rituals.



 NEW MONSTER: SQUID WEED
Large Plant (Aquatic)**Hit Dice:** 5d8 + 20 (42 hp)**Initiative:** -3 (Dex)**Speed:** 5 ft., swim 10 ft.**AC:** 16 (-1 size, -3 Dex, +10 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 16.**Base Attack/Grapple:** +3/+11**Attack:** Slam +6 melee (1d6+4, vine)**Full Attack:** 3 slams +6 melee (1d6+4, vine)**Space/Reach:** 10 ft. / 10 ft.**Special Attack:** Improved grab, Constrict, Ink Cloud**Special Qualities:** Blindsight, DR 5/slashing, Plant Qualities**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +1**Abilities:** Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 6.**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate and cold aquatic**Organization:** Solitary or bed (2-5)**Challenge Rating:** 4**Treasure:** None**Alignment:** Always neutral**Advancement:** 5-8 HD (Large), 9-14 HD (Huge)**Level Adjustment:** —

Squid weed is a large underwater plant that resembles a large mass of common seaweed. Its rubbery skin varies in color from dark red to purple and black. The plant is made up of a central body and three feathery vines covered in a mass of small, colorful growths that attract prey. Squid weed grows naturally in beds of ordinary seaweed, but sometimes migrates in search of food and fertilizer.

This fierce and indiscriminate plant attacks anything that comes within reach. Squid weed constricts and immobilizes prey until it's dead, then settles itself on the corpse and takes root. If squid weed loses more than half its hit points, it releases its ink cloud to confuse or distract prey, then either flees or redoubles its efforts.

A squid weed that grows to Huge size gains an additional vine.

Constrict (Ex): Squid weed deals 1d6+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the squid weed must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with a vine attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Ink Cloud (Ex): Squid weed can release a cloud of black ink into a 10-foot cubic area once per hour as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment, which the plant uses to change position or confound prey. All vision within the cloud is obscured. Further, the cloud poisons all water in its area, rendering it unsuitable for normal or magical respiration; no creature can breathe within the area for 12 rounds, even if it can normally breathe water. A *water breathing* spell is useless within the area.

All items within the cloud that are capable of being dyed are stained dark blue by the ink.

Blindsight (Ex): The squid weed has no visual organs but can ascertain all foes within 30 feet using sound, scent, and vibration.

Plant Traits: Plants have immunity to poison, *sleep* effects, paralysis, *polymorph*, and stunning, as well as immunity to mind-affecting effects of all sorts. Plants are not subject to critical hits. A plant eats and breathes, but does not sleep.

One of the lecterns is inscribed with the spell *fog bank*, but the other was damaged in the temple's collapse and has lost its power. A spellcaster who studies the intact lectern can learn the spell and add it to his spell list using normal methods. A cleric or druid can do this easily, but a wizard may find transcribing the spell into her spellbook poses some difficulties underwater.

Dunstitz uses the lectern to cast *fog bank* on a point he can see through the opening to the river bed. This causes the water at the surface to emit the bend's famously thick fog, and makes the passage through the bend even more dangerous.

On one of the walls near the fountain features a mural depicting the temple before it was thrown into the river. The image is of a tall majestic building with a columned entrance standing on an island only slightly larger than the temple itself. The entire entrance to the temple seems to be blocked by a wall of water.

Dunstitz's Possessions

Dunstitz has made his lair inside the ruins of the temple, and stores his hoard in the eastern section where the floor is the lowest. This provides the best concealment from intruders passing through the entrance to

NEW MAGIC ITEM: LECTERN OF CASTING

A *lectern of casting* is a table-top stone podium with a scroll carved into its face. A character using a *lectern of casting* must meet all the requirements of the spells carved into a *lectern of casting* as if they were scrolls, plus the character must pay all material and XP costs for the spell when it is cast, rather than when it is inscribed. The spell does not vanish from the lectern when it is cast, so it can be used repeatedly, up to three times a day.

Moving a *lectern of casting* is tricky; if the lectern's scroll is cracked or chipped in any way, its magic is

lost. Most lecterns are created where they will be used, and never moved.

A *lectern of casting* can contain one spell of up to 5th level.

Faint universal magic; CL 12th; Craft Wonderous Item, Scribe Scroll; Price 1,000 gp (0 level), 2,000 gp (1st level), 5,000 gp (2nd level), 10,000 gp (3rd level), 17,500 gp (4th level), 25,000 gp (5th level); Weight 200 lbs.



NEW SPELL: FOG BANK

Conjuration (Creation)

Level: Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Effect: Fog spreads in 40-ft. radius per level, 40 ft. high

Duration: 10 min./level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *fog cloud* except as noted here.

If targeted on a moving object, such as a boat, the *fog bank* moves with the object. A moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses the fog in 8 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the mist in 4 rounds.

If spell is cast underwater, the fog bank is created at the water's surface, if it is within range.

the temple, as the view from the entrance to this section is blocked by rubble.



A Spot check (DC 30) or a Search check (DC 20) is necessary to notice the dragon's treasure amid the silt and rubble.

Dunstitz's hoard contains 10,460 gp in coins and 7,011 gp in gems and objects, including four matching silver goblets worth 1,250 gp each. The dragon's magical items include a *+1 quarterstaff*, a *+2 defending heavy mace*, a *ring of animal friendship*, a *wand of knock* with 31 charges, a *crystal ball* and the *escutcheon of the Merryweather*.

SCENES

The simplest way to introduce characters to Tithe Bend is to have them come looking for the *Merryweather*. Perhaps the PCs are hired by the man who owned the ship and sent to the bend to retrieve the escutcheon from the sunken wreckage. He knows not just anyone can retrieve a heavy object from the bottom of a deep and infamous river, but thinks skilled adventurers should be able to do it. He offers them 5,000 gp if they return the escutcheon to him.

Here are other ways to use Tithe Bend in your campaign.

A SINKING FEELING

The characters charter passage on a river boat, unaware that the captain is in significant financial trouble. When they pass through the bend, the captain chooses not to pay the tithe. Knowing his crew is deeply superstitious, and that Tillan will not pilot ships for captains that refuse to pay, he drops a handful of small stones overboard instead.

Dunstitz notices the stones and decides it is time to remind people why the tithe must be paid. He swims alongside the boat and uses his acid breath to disintegrate a section of the hull and sink the boat. He waits for the ship to slip halfway beneath the surface, then loots it.

In the rush to leave the sinking ship, the PCs catch a glimpse of Dunstitz in the water — perhaps nothing more than a claw snatching at treasures in the cargo hold. If Dunstitz doesn't know he's been spotted, the PCs may become the leaders of a mission to find and slay the beast of Tithe Bend. If Dunstitz does know he's been spotted, the PCs become his primary targets. Either way, they're involved with Dunstitz.

THERE BE MONSTERS

While the characters are spending time in town, they hear an old sailor talking about his days on a ship that was sunk by a monster. He says the ship was laden with gold and jewels, and that as the ship was going down he saw a huge fish with sharp teeth

NEW MINOR ARTIFACT: THE ESCUTCHEON OF THE MERRYWEATHER

This large brass nameplate is embossed with the name *Merryweather*. The powerful Transmutation magic in this item will only work if the escutcheon is affixed to the stern of a vessel, not merely brought on board. While affixed, the escutcheon gives the vessel advantages over other boats: in normal wind conditions, the vessel travels +50% faster than its normal top speed. The boat

can sail into any normal current, allowing it to travel against the flow of water as if the river was steady. Strong wind conditions and currents still effect the boat, but any Profession (sailor) checks to deal with wind and weather effects enjoy a +5 bonus.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Weight 45 lbs

chewing the boat apart. His tales are later echoed by street preachers claiming a demon lives in the dark waters of the river, a demon sent by the land's forgotten god to test the mettle of modern faith. "All our misfortune," the preacher says, "is the wrath of an angry god! By facing the obstacles he puts before us, by proving that we are not lazy or complacent, we shall prove ourselves worthy of his return!" Debates are held in the port-side pubs; is the beast a guardian of the site or a challenge to be overcome? Is there even a beast in the river at all?

In time, the port is divided by religious differences and fear. The solution to the town's troubles is somewhere in the river. Who will go and find out the true nature of the demon of Tithe Bend? Will the mission be one of exploration, or will it be a mob's crusade?

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

This encounter is best changed by altering the relationships between the characters. What if Dunstiz

actively seeks out a party of adventurers to explore some tunnels he has discovered underneath the sunken temple? He can't go himself because he's too large to fit into the tunnels. Perhaps Dunstiz uses magic to convince Tillan that the god of the sunken temple wants sacred artifacts that were lost when the temple sank returned to the surface. Tillan believes it and seeks out a group of adventurers to explore the depths with him. Dunstiz's then traps the characters and forces them to explore the catacombs for him. Dunstiz could even be honest with the PCs, and offer them a half share of any treasure that they can recover; he claims his half as a finder's fee. Are the PCs greedy enough to ally themselves with an evil dragon? How will the townspeople react when they inevitably find out?

For a real twist, have Tillan knowingly work with Dunstiz. Perhaps the black dragon has lied to Tillan, told him that his brother is the dragon's captive deep in the river. "Only if you fetch me more boats," says Dunstiz, "will I let your brother go." Could Tillan be evil himself? Maybe Tillan believes the dragon is an avatar of the temple's lost god, sent to guide Tillan and the people of the river cities into a new religion — a religion that worships Dunstiz as a demigod.

THE LAST DRAGON RIDER



AT A GLANCE

For more than seven generations, Talis Hall stood as a proud beacon of light in a desolate mountain landscape. The many generations of dukes who ruled from its silver-plated halls were famous for being kind and just, and for the contingent of dragon-riding knights who served them with unfaltering love and loyalty. The *Covenant of the Scale*, an artifact given to the Hall by a dragon patriarch, sealed this alliance between dragon and man. Dragons and knights together upheld the principles of piety, virtue, and honor, as partners and friends rather than as masters and servants. They donated their services to anyone in need who stood for similar ideals, without question and never for compensation. The world was a better place for their efforts.

Thirty years ago, everything changed. One of their own — the duke's daughter Elfriede — went on a psychotic rampage and slaughtered all the dragon-riders and their mounts except for one, her father's mount Stropanthus. The vampire lord who goaded her into this madness stole the *Covenant* from the Hall's sacred reliquary. Today, the artifact remains missing and Elfriede lies in the cold fog between life and death. Stropanthus yearns for revenge, but not against her, for he could never blame her for what happened. No, he wants the undead creature that masterminded the destruction of the ancient legacy of Talis Hall.

PLACEMENT

Although not extremely remote or isolated, Talis Hall should be set far enough away from regular civilization that it's a challenge to get there. It sits in the midst of a steep and rugged mountain range that is not easy to cross or traverse. Roads are far between,

and the few that do exist are often too dangerous for ordinary travelers. The Hall was once home to over thirty silver dragons, and its location reflects that. It's cold. It's damp. It's high enough that low-lying clouds easily obfuscate it. The closest village is almost a full day away on horseback. In short, it is in a hostile but not inaccessible location.

- The Scale Road is the safest route to the Hall. Before the knights were murdered, their regular patrols ensured highwaymen and wild animals left travelers alone. Today, even though there's little reason for someone to go to the Hall, cut-throats and thieves still ply their bloody trade on the road, living off the coaches that come upon it by accident. With the noticeable absence of dragon patrols, animals have returned to the area, making the journey that much more dangerous. More troublesome creatures have returned as well, such as harpies, rocs, and griffons. Local villagers know to leave the road well enough alone.
- Because the Hall is so far off the beaten path, getting a party of adventurers up to it may be problematic. The residents of Hartshorn eagerly speak of the Hall if questioned about it, giving the characters an inkling of its tragic history and hinting ominously of a great evil lurking up there. Another lure to adventure can be Björn Skellir, the village grocer, who sends his girls up the mountain once a month with supplies for the Hall's sole resident. Often times he cannot find anyone to escort and protect them from raiders and wild animals. Finally, if the adventurers are headed to another location, a driver in a caravan they meet *en route* could unwittingly give them the wrong directions so that they end up on the Scale Road instead.
- You certainly don't need to place the Hall as it is described in this chapter; it can go wherever you want. Remember that it was (and continues to be) a silver dragon lair. Silver dragons love heights and clouds. If you change the Hall's environment, its history should provide all the reason you need for the presence of dragons, regardless of its geographical location. Talis Hall was also designed by its founder to take advantage of its isolation. Getting to it should present a small challenge for the characters no matter where it ultimately goes.



HARTSHORN

Size: Village

Power Center: Conventional

Alignment: Chaotic Good

GP Limit: 262 gp

Ready Cash: 8,515 gp

Population: 652 adults (70% human, 12% dwarf, 8% halfling, 5% elf, 3% gnome, 2% other), 200 children (90% human, 5% dwarf, 5% other)

Authority Figures: Nidhoggur Gillstone, 5th-Level Aristocrat/5th-Level Paladin (mayor); Sister Tabitha Leaf, 9th-Level Druid (Abbess of the Woodland Monastery); Theodosian Niebelung, 12th-Level Vampire Rogue/3rd-Level Aristocrat (Merchant's Guild Alderman); Björn Skellir, 3rd-Level Expert (green grocer and leader of the Citizen's Watch); Franco Balzac, 7th-Level Bard (devilish ladies man).

Hartshorn is the closest village to Talis Hall, approximately 6 miles down hill from it and situated at the base of the mountain upon which the Hall sits.

INHABITANTS

STROPANTHUS

Loyal Companion

"Come, my friends. Let us drink merrily tonight, for tomorrow promises to be a dark day."

Stropanthus the silver dragon is the last of the Detlieb family. Until thirty years ago, he'd served his entire life as Duke Konrad Detlieb's mount and was close friends with his daughter and fellow knight, Elfriede. During his time at Talis Hall, he participated in many battles, helped save three cities from

wanton destruction in the midst of war, and rescued his fair share of damsels in distress. Sadly, nothing could have prepared him for the tragedy that left him the last surviving member of his line.

The week it happened, the duke and all the dragon-riders except Elfriede and Lady Robyn Hammett departed to escort a contingent of dwarf lords to a meeting with the rulers of a drow kingdom. The meeting was to take place in a distant land known for its depressing flatness and lack of anything remotely resembling a mountain. The trip was surprisingly uneventful, as the drow representatives failed to show up. So the dragon-riders returned home. Elfriede welcomed them back warmly. The duke called for a toast, as was his habit, to celebrate the completion of another mission (such as it was) and



STROPANTHUS

Adult Silver Dragon

CR 14; Huge dragon (cold); HD 22d12+110; hp 311; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., Fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 29 (−2 size, +21 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +22; Grap +38; Attack +28 (2d8+8, bite); Full Atk +28 (2d8+8, bite), +24 (2d6+4, 2 claws), or +23 (1d8+4, 2 wings), or +23 (2d6+12, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. bite); SA Alternate Form, Breath Weapon, Crush, Spell-like Abilities, Spells; SQ Blindsight, Cloudwalking, DR 5/magic, Keen Senses, SR 22; AL LG; SV Fort +18, Ref +13, Will +16; Str 26, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 22.

Skills: Appraise +20, Diplomacy +31, Gather Information +31, Intimidate +31, Jump +29, Knowledge (geography) +20, Knowledge (history) +20, Knowledge (religion) +30, Listen +28, Ride +15, Search +30, Spot +25.

Feats: Brew Potion, Cleave, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven

Breath Weapon (Su): Stropanthus has two forms of Breath Weapon: a 50-ft. cone of cold (12d8 cold damage, Reflex save DC 26 for half damage), and a 50-ft. cone of paralyzing gas (Fortitude save DC 26 or be paralyzed for 1d6+6 rounds). He can make a breath weapon attack every 1d4 rounds.

Crush (Ex): Stropanthus can use his whole body to crush as many Small or smaller creatures as can fit in an area 15 ft. by 15 ft. Creatures who do not succeed on a Reflex save (DC 26) are pinned and take 2d8+12 points of bludgeoning damage. To maintain the pin, Stropanthus must win an ordinary grapple attack each round.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Stropanthus can unsettle foes with his mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever he attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures with 21 or fewer HD within a radius of 180 feet are subject to the effect. Will DC 27 negates. Creatures who succeed at the save are immune to Stropanthus' Frightful Presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the Frightful Presence of other dragons. Frightful Presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

the riders' safe return home. She served them and the dragons heavy goblets of the Hall's best wine. With one exception, none suspected that she had laced the drink with deadly poison.

Stropanthus sensed not all was right. Elfriede wasn't herself that evening. While the others drank deeply to the duke's heart-felt cheer, he feigned his taste. The drug felled the men and other dragons in seconds. Seeing her old friend still standing, Elfriede leapt at him, poisoned dagger drawn, fangs bared. Stropanthus realized then, in a moment of cold, pro-

found shock, that the Elfriede he once knew and loved was dead – a vampire had claimed her in their absence. Locked in a battle he didn't want, he pleaded with her to stop. She ignored him, bloodlust driving her beyond reason. They fought through the night until, just before the sun came up, the dragon staked her through the heart with her own lance. She wasn't truly dead, that much he knew, but what he didn't know what to do with her. He couldn't bring himself to destroy her body because he hoped to find a cure for her. How and when she became infected greatly confused him at first. It was only



STROPANTHUS, CONTINUED

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day — *polymorph self*, *fog cloud*; 2/day — *feather fall*. Caster level 7th.

Spells: (6/8/8/5) Stropanthus casts spells as a 7th-level sorcerer. He can also cast spells from the Air, Good, Law, and Sun domains as arcane spells. The DC to resist his spells is 16 + the spell level. He knows the following spells:

0 Level — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1st Level — *alarm*, *identify*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*, *unseen servant*

2nd Level — *alter self*, *bull's strength*, *see invisibility*

3rd Level — *dispel magic*, *haste*

Alternate Form (Su): A silver dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast on itself at its caster level, except that the dragon does not regain hit points for changing form and can only assume the form of an animal or humanoid. The dragon can remain in its animal or humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.

Blindsense (Ex): Stropanthus can pinpoint creatures within a range of 60 feet. Opponents he can't actually see still have total concealment against him.

Cloudwalking (Su): Stropanthus can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground. The ability functions continuously but can be negated or resumed at will.

Cold Subtype (Ex): Stropanthus has immunity to cold, but vulnerability to fire, which means he takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from fire, regardless of whether a save is allowed, or if the save is a success or a failure.

Damage Reduction: Stropanthus has Damage Reduction 5/magic; he ignores the first 5 points of damage from any attack, unless that attack is made with a magic weapon. His natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming Damage Reduction.

Immunities (Ex): All dragons have immunity to *sleep* and paralysis effects. Stropanthus also has immunity to cold and acid effects.

Keen Senses (Ex): Stropanthus sees four times as well a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. He also has Darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

later when he learned the *Covenant of the Scale* had been stolen that the pieces suddenly fell into place. Elfriede was the only person “alive” who knew the thief’s identity, so Stropanthus had another reason to keep her from true death. With no small degree of reverence, he carried his friend’s prone, bloodied body to the Reliquary and placed her upon the stone altar, driving the lance in deep so it couldn’t come loose. Then he built a funeral pyre in the courtyard to send his beloved comrades into the afterlife properly. The pyres of dead knights and dragons illuminated the twilight sky that night, and grief streaked his face with sooty tears.

Stropanthus has lived in Talis Hall ever since, alone and disconsolate, spending most of his time in human form. He entertains visitors, including those who arrive unexpectedly and unannounced. If asked, he tells them he is the last of the dragon-riding knights. Thoughts of avenging the knights’ murders and the *Covenant’s* theft consume him. This makes him eager to speak with adventurers, especially if they seem capable. Because he has the remainder of the duke’s wealth, as well as the money in his fellows’ and his own hoard, at his disposal, he will generously reward anyone who can bring him the master vampire’s head, the *Covenant*, or both — especially both. If there is one thing that characterizes Stropanthus above all else, it is his incredible loyalty to those he considers his friends. While he shows no mercy to his enemies, he is exceptionally lenient and forgiving of his companions.

ELFRIEDE DETLIEB

Black-Hearted Traitor

“Look at me when I’m killing you, you bastard!”

The duke’s daughter was never a great beauty, nor did she have an affable personality. Most people found her downright surly. All her life she watched as her father heaped praise on the knights serving him, yet he barely acknowledged her own accomplishments. This, more than anything else, contributed to her dour, bitter demeanor. When Elfriede turned 14, she requested to be his squire. He instead assigned

her to Sir Gordon Brightlance, an ancient, doddering old fool of a knight who should have been dead a century ago and who almost never left the hall anymore. When she took first place in a sword tourney in the village, the duke gruffly congratulated her, then ordered the hall cooks to prepare a grand meal to celebrate Stropanthus’ victory in the aerial combat trials. She never blamed the other knights and dragons for her father’s disturbing lack of attention to her. She was much too savvy for that, even as a youth. Rather, she turned her anger and bitterness inward. Pleasing her father was all she ever cared about. Each time she failed, she swallowed her frustration, burying it deeper inside her heart, but that just made her more malcontent. As she grew older, it became evident that no one wanted to be around her — not even her own dragon. Stropanthus, oddly enough, genuinely enjoyed her company. He took a real shining to her and refused to let her sour disposition drive him away. In time, she returned his friendship despite herself.

One day all the riders and their mounts left to escort a contingent of dwarf lords to an important council of war in far-away lands. Elfriede and one other rider remained behind to watch over the Hall. The night following their departure, she was in town buying supplies when she tripped on a tree root and literally fell into the arms of the debonair and handsome Theodosian Niebelung. He immediately charmed Elfriede. His eyes were beautiful; his golden hair was perfect; and when he smiled, she felt her knees buckle. While the dragon-riders were away, she spent her nights with him. In was not long before he seduced her completely.

What she didn’t know at first was that Niebelung was a vampire. His seduction of her was calculated; he was driven by a deadly ulterior motive. Even if she had known, it wouldn’t have made much difference; Elfriede was utterly smitten. Her fate was sealed from the moment she laid eyes upon him. Niebelung’s honeyed words held her fast. His sweet promises forged a bond of love inside her, an altogether alien and unfamiliar feeling. The magnitude of his charisma turned her against Stropanthus, the other dragons, and their riders. He said he could make her a queen among her own people. She would



be regal, beautiful, and dangerous. All he required, he whispered as he embraced her, was an invitation to Talis Hall. Against her better judgment, Elfriede succumbed, eager to please him, needing his approval in any way she could get it.

The next night, after the other dragon-rider retired to the barracks, she opened the main gates. Niebelung and twelve disciples waited outside. Elfriede greeted her lover, formally inviting him and

his brood into her home. They rushed in, first to the stables, where they slew the two sleeping dragons, then to the barracks where they made short work of the sleeping knight. Niebelung strode into the Reliquary to claim the *Covenant* for himself. His bride-to-be waited expectantly outside. The vampires ignored her. Elfriede realized then that she had been used. She screamed at Niebelung. He had promised her beauty and eternal life, but all he had delivered were death and destruction. The vampire



ELFRIEDE DETLIEB

Vampire, 12th-Level Human Ex-Paladin

CR 14; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 12d12; hp 78; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25 (+1 Dex, +6 natural, +8 full plate armor), touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +12; Grap +16; Attack +16 (1d8+4/19-20/x2, longsword) or +16 (1d6+4/x3, halfspear) or +16 (1d8+4, morningstar), or +16 (1d6+4, slam); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4/19-20/x2, longsword) or +16/+11/+6 (1d6+4/x3, halfspear) or +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4, morningstar), or +16/+11/+6 (1d6+4, slam); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Blood Drain, Children of the Night, Create Spawn, Dominate, Energy Drain; SQ Alternate Form, DR 10/magic and silver, Fast Healing, Gaseous Form, Resistance to Cold 10 and Electricity 10, Spider Climb, Turn Resistance +4, Undead Traits; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff, +11, Diplomacy +18, Handle Animal +13, Heal +13, Hide +11, Listen +13, Knowledge (religion) +12, Move Silently +11, Ride +18, Search +10, Sense Motive +11, Spot +13

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge.

Blood Drain (Ex): Elfriede can suck blood from a living victim with her fangs by making a successful grapple check. If she pins the foe, she drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent

Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each successful attack, she gains 5 temporary hit points.

Children of the Night (Su): Elfriede commands the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 4d8 dire rats, a swarm of 10d10 bats, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve her for up to 1 hour.

Create Spawn (Su): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Elfriede's Energy Drain attack rises as a vampire spawn 1d4 days after burial. If she instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or less, he returns as a spawn if he had 4 or fewer HD and as a vampire if he had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under her command and remains enslaved until her death.

Dominate (Su): Elfriede can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that she must take a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone she targets must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or fall instantly under her influence as though by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. This ability has a range of 30 feet.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by Elfriede's slam attack suffer 2 negative levels. For each negative level she bestows, Elfriede gains 5

paused at the gates, turning slowly to face her. "Very well," he said. With a feral smile, he ripped out her throat. Though he took great pleasure in draining her blood, the prospect of further tormenting her amused him even more. He let her drink his blood, ensuring she would not die that night nor on any other for a very long time to come.

Elfriede lay in the courtyard, sightless eyes staring at the sparkling night sky, her body wracked by the

agony of undeath as Niebelung's blood slowly transformed her into a monster.

Her revenge against her father and his men, while short-lived, was bittersweet. If it hadn't been for Stropanthus she might even be active today. But her best and only friend was her undoing. She remains trapped in the painful state between undeath and true death inside the Reliquary. A small part of her is aware of everything going on in

ELFRIEDE DETLIEB, CONTINUED

temporary hit points. She can use this ability once per round.

Alternate Form (Su): Elfriede can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer, except that she can assume only one of the forms listed here. She can remain in that form until she assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Fast Healing (Ex): Elfriede heals 5 points of damage each round so long as she has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, she automatically assumes Gaseous Form and attempts to escape. She must reach her home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (She can travel up to nine miles in 2 hours.) Once in her coffin, she rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, Elfriede can assume *gaseous form* at will, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer, but can remain gaseous indefinitely. She has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Human Traits (Ex): Humans gain one extra feat and four extra skill points at first level, plus one additional skill point at every other level.

Paladin Abilities: Because Elfriede is now a creature of pure evil she can no longer be considered a

paladin. As such, she may not use any paladin abilities nor cast paladin spells.

Resistances (Ex): Elfriede ignores the first ten points of cold and electricity damage dealt to her in each instance.

Spider Climb (Ex): Elfriede can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Turn Resistance (Ex): Treat Elfriede as though she had 4 additional Hit Dice when conducting turning attempts against her.

Undead Traits (Ex): Undead have Darkvision out to 60 feet, immunity to all mind-affecting effects, and immunity to poison, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, and death effects. Undead are not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability drain, or energy drain, and are immune to damage to physical ability scores, as well as fatigue and exhaustion effects. Undead do not heal naturally, but can be healed with negative energy; the fast healing ability is an exception. Undead have immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude save, unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless. Undead are not at risk from massive damage, but are destroyed immediately when reduced to zero hit points or less. Undead do not eat, breathe, or sleep.

Possessions: Full plate, halfspear, longsword, morningstar, tower shield.

and around the Hall. That part of her is able to feel her vampire lord out there, just at the periphery of her awareness.

Soon, all will be made well again. Soon, Stropanthus and she, the last dragon-rider, will take to the skies once more.

THE LAIR

Talis Hall occupies an isolated mountain outcrop; getting to it can be trying. The thin road winding up the mountainside is often washed out during the spring months, when the floods run high, and laden with meters of snow during the winter months. When the roads are clear, carriages and horses still have difficulty navigating the more treacherous segments, where the roads overlook deep chasms or cross through valleys prone to avalanches.

The Hall has been in place for as long as anyone can remember. The Detlieb family didn't always own the land, but no one remembers when they didn't. Some stories claim the founding duke made his home so far away from the rest of the kingdom because he could no longer stand his fellow royals stopping by under pretenses when all they wanted was to get his support for whatever political movement was in vogue. The duke, ever a practical Detlieb, sold his lands for a ridiculously high sum to a foppish dandy, and claimed right of dominion over an unwanted province high in the mountains, where he built Talis Hall. Or so the story goes.

Talis acquired notoriety seven generations ago when Konrad Detlieb's great-grandfather, Wilhelm, brought the silver dragons into his service. They've been the Detlieb family's indentured servants ever since, serving as warrior-mounts for the duke's knights. It was a debt gladly incurred after Wilhelm and his men saved the dragon clan from certain death. The dragons' mortal enemies, a family of demon-worshipping cloud-giants, launched a surprise attack against the silver dragon stronghold early one morning, backed by an army of infernal

creatures. If the duke and his knights had not been there that day on a diplomatic mission, the dragons would have surely been wiped out. Their clan leader placed the surviving dragons in the Detlieb service for the next thousand years. As a symbolic gesture of their commitment, he also gave the duke a sacred artifact: the *Covenant of the Scale*.

THE SCALE ROAD

This is the only road in this region that climbs into the mountains and goes to Talis Hall. It's called the Scale Road in honor of the dragon mounts that served the Hall. Every half-mile along its length, way markers emblazoned with the Detlieb crest celebrate the family's rule. In the past, these meant something; these days, they're seen as unfulfilled promises. The silver markers are tarnished now that no one is left to care for them. Thieves try to steal them, and many succeed, but it is rumored Stropanthus kills anyone he thinks guilty of such an offense.

SAINT CULHAIN AND THE SILVER KNIGHTS

Twin rows of beautiful elm trees and lichen-encrusted granite statues line the road where it enters the Detlieb demesne. The statues depict famous dragon-riders and dukes of the past. The final statue, the one belonging to the last duke, is missing its head. Waiting at the end of the road where it opens into the main courtyard is a majestic, towering statue of a proud silver dragon — Saint Culhain, who sent his children to the Detlieb's service. The statue's base is 40 feet in diameter, while the statue itself stands 80 feet high. Black, tarnished silver gilds it. A secret door in the base leads to the Reliquary. The ground around the statue is scorched charcoal-black from the funeral pyre three decades ago.



A character who makes a successful Search check (DC 30) notices the faint outline of the door that opens into the Reliquary, which is built inside the statue's

base. It is securely locked (Open Lock DC 30). Stropanthus has the key to the room.

The Reliquary

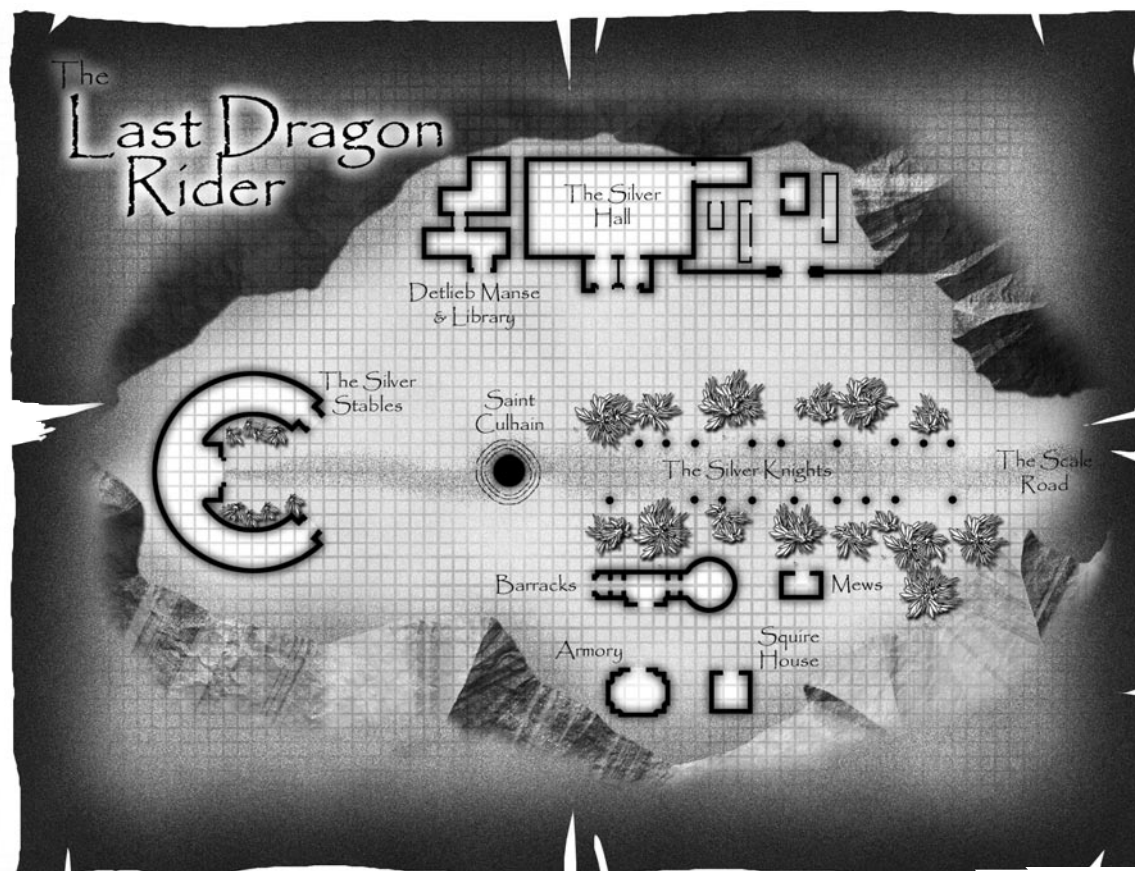
Built into the base of the statue of Saint Culhain, this circular room once housed the sacred artifact known as the *Covenant of the Scale*. The floor is level for 10 feet before it gradually slopes downward. The center of the room is exactly 10 feet in diameter. A large silver-plated altar squats in the middle of the chamber. Sconces cling to the walls in 10-foot intervals. The words spoken by Saint Culhain when he bestowed the *Covenant* upon the Detliebs are carved into the floor in the elegant runes of the Old Speech. Carved into the ceiling are more modern words written only two generations ago by a dragon-riding priest, blessing the room with divine magic.



The Reliquary is under the effect of a permanent *hallow* spell. There is no secondary spell bound to it, however, as too much

time has passed since the last blessing was performed here.

A broken dragon-rider's lance pins Elfriede Detlieb's body to the top of the altar. Her eyes are open, casting their dead gaze at nothing. Her fanged mouth gapes open in chilling, silent scream. Wicked-looking claws grow from her fingertips. Her skin is drawn taught across her bones, stretched and cracked like tanned hide. Black stains run from under her body down the sides of the altar: blood thirty-years dry. The stench of decay thickens the air. Despite the magic wards against evil, Elfriede is far from dead. As a vampire, the room's holy magic burns her to the depths of her soul. On the other hand, her profane nature allows her to resist the final lure of death, regenerating her flesh just enough to keep her alive (as alive as any undead gets). A kind of torpor claims her mind. If someone removes the lance and feeds her a small quantity of blood, she quickly regains her strength. This is not a good thing for any character to do. Elfriede has spent the last three decades fully cognizant of both her condition and her surround-



ings. She may have been mad, all those long, interminable years ago when Niebelung turned her, but now she sets an all-new standard for insanity.



The *Covenant of the Scale* is not in Stropanthus' possession, but it is still in the region. Theodosian Niebelung, a vampire merchant lord living in the village of Hartshorn, still has it, but doesn't understand how to use it.

THE BARRACKS

Thirty Talis Hall knights used to live here. It is a humble, granite brick building, unadorned save for the gargoyles on the corners. When a visitor once asked the duke how such noble and proud soldiers as his knights could tolerate such meager accommodations, he laughed and said, "Any man or woman whose best friend is a silver dragon doesn't need garish displays of status to be content." The knights seemed to have agreed with that sentiment, for their



NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: COVENANT OF THE SCALE

At first glance, the *Covenant of the Scale* is nothing more than a breast scale taken from a silver dragon. Its dimensions are 4 ft. x 2 ft., it weighs 100 lbs, and it is made from the purest silver. Nothing can tarnish it, except evil. Periodically during its extensive history, straps have been affixed to its concave side, allowing its owner to wield it as a shield, but it is much more than a piece of armor. The scale is an incarnate bond of trust between silver dragons and its owner. This artifact is one of the few things that can bring the disparate silver dragon clans together in unity. The *Covenant* works only for the person or dragon that owns the *Covenant's* matching ring. The ring bears the heraldic crest of the silver dragon patriarch.

The 40-lb. *Covenant of the Scale* grants its owner the following benefits:

- The wielder gains immunity to silver dragon breath weapons.
- When wielded as a shield, the owner can cast *sunburst* as a 20th-level druid a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier.
- When wielded as a shield, the owner can cast *true strike* on himself a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier.
- The wielder may cast the *regenerate* spell as a 20th-level cleric a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier. This benefit only affects silver dragons within one mile of the artifact.
- A silver dragon must obey the scale's owner or suffer the effects of the *geas/quest* spell as cast by a 20th-level cleric.



THEODOSIAN NIEBELUNG

**Vampire, 12th-Level Human Rogue/
3rd-Level Aristocrat**

CR 16; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 15d12; hp 92; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+4 Dex, +6 natural, +2 leather armor), touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +11; Grap +17; Atk +17 (1d6+6/19-20/x2, short sword) or +17 (1d6+6, slam) or +17 (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); Full Atk +17/+12/+7 (1d6+6/19-20/x2, short sword) or +17/+12/+7 (1d6+6, slam) or +17/+12/+7 (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); Space/Reach 5ft./5 ft.; SA Blood Drain, Children of the Night, Create Spawn, Crippling Strike, Dominate, Energy Drain, Sneak Attack +6d6; SQ Alternate Form, DR 10/magic and silver, Evasion, Fast Healing, Gaseous Form, Improved Uncanny Dodge, Resistance to Cold 10 and Electricity 10, Spider Climb, Trapfinding, Turn Resistance +4, Undead Traits; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +15, Will +10; Str 22, Dex 23, Con –, Int 19, Wis 12, Cha 20.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Skills: Appraise +17, Balance +21, Bluff +28, Disguise +18, Escape Artist +21, Forgery +12, Gather Information +18, Hide +29, Innuendo +10, Intimidate +15, Jump +21, Listen +19, Move Silently +29, Open Lock +18, Profession +18, Search +19, Spot +15.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack.

Blood Drain (Ex): Niebelung can suck blood from a living victim with his fangs by making a successful grapple check. If he pins his foe, he drains its blood, inflicting 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each successful attack, Niebelung gains 5 hit points.

Crippling Strike: When Niebelung damages an opponent with a Sneak Attack, the target also takes 1 point of Strength damage.

Children of the Night (Su): Niebelung commands the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 4d8 dire rats, a swarm of 10d10 bats, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve him for up to 1 hour.

Create Spawn (Su): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Niebelung's Energy Drain attack rises as a vampire spawn 1d4 days after burial. If he instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or less, she returns as a spawn if she had 4 or fewer HD and as a vampire if she had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under his command and remains enslaved until his death.

Dominate (Su): Niebelung can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that he must take a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone he targets must succeed at a Will save (DC 21) or fall instantly under his influence as though by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. This ability has a range of 30 feet.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by Niebelung's slam attack suffer 2 negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, Niebelung gains 5 temporary hit points. He can use this ability once per round.

Sneak Attack: Niebelung deals an additional 6d6 damage to any opponent that is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC (even if the target has no Dexterity bonus), such as a target he flanks or catches flat-footed. Ranged attacks only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Alternate Form (Su): Niebelung can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a stan-

THEODOSIAN NIEBELUNG, CONTINUED

dard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer, except that he can assume only one of the forms listed here. He can remain in that form until he assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Damage Reduction (Su): A vampire has Damage Reduction 10/silver and magic. A vampire's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming Damage Reduction.

Evasion (Ex): When exposed to any effect that normally allows a Reflex save for half damage, Niebelung takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used when wearing light armor or no armor.

Fast Healing (Ex): Niebelung heals 5 points of damage each round so long as he has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, he automatically assumes Gaseous Form and attempts to escape. He must reach his home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (He can travel up to nine miles in 2 hours.) Once in his coffin, he rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, Niebelung can assume *gaseous form*, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer, but can remain gaseous indefinitely. He has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability in this form.

Human Traits (Ex): Humans gain one extra feat and four extra skill points at first level, plus one additional skill point at every other level.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Niebelung retains his Dexterity bonus to AC even when caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attack-

er. He loses his Dexterity bonus if immobilized. Niebelung can no longer be flanked; another rogue cannot Sneak Attack Niebelung by flanking him unless she has four more rogue levels than he does.

Resistances (Ex): Niebelung ignores the first ten points of cold and electricity damage dealt to him in a single strike.

Spider Climb (Ex): Niebelung can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Trapfinding: Rogues can use the Search skill to locate traps when the DC is higher than 20. Rogues can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps.

Turn Resistance (Ex): Treat Niebelung as though he had 4 additional Hit Dice when conducting turning attempts against him.

Undead Traits (Ex): Undead have Darkvision out to 60 feet, immunity to all mind-affecting effects, and immunity to poison, *sleep* effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, and death effects. Undead are not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability drain, or energy drain, and are immune to damage to physical ability scores, as well as fatigue and exhaustion effects. Undead do not heal naturally, but can be healed with negative energy; the fast healing ability is an exception. Undead have immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude save, unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless. Undead are not at risk from massive damage, but are destroyed immediately when reduced to zero hit points or less. Undead do not eat, breathe, or sleep.

Possessions: Dagger, leather armor, light crossbow, short sword.

rooms inside the barracks are indeed small. Simple, rough-hewn furniture and inexpensive accoutrements are a further testament to their modesty.

Today the building is abandoned. It's a two-story structure with a high roof held aloft by thick oaken beams. At some point, a circular feast room was added to the building. Its architectural style differs a great deal from the original barracks. Inside, the contrast is remarkable. It looks like a northern mead hall, complete with sturdy wooden tables, benches, beams, and pillars. Fur tapestries hang from the walls, and a great, round fire pit dominates the center of the room. Carved into the central beam are these words: *Wulfgar Halforsson raised this roof before heroically drinking the godless sons of whores to whom it is dedicated under the table. May the gods spit in their eyes.* The knights often gathered here to drink ale, tell stories, sing songs, and simply enjoy each other's company. Their meals they usually took with the duke in the Silver Hall.



In the space between the central beam and the ceiling — a dirty, filthy place infested with decades of rat droppings — one may find, with a successful Search check (DC 23), a +2 *adamantine greataxe*. A unique curse enchants it: removing the axe from its resting place summons the shade of Wulfgar Halforsson, a 12th-level barbarian. He is not a true ghost, but a simulacrum with all the powers and abilities he had in life. He knows he's dead; he takes great pride in the fact, and exists solely to kill or be killed. For each person he slays, he knows his soul is well-rewarded in the afterlife. Wulfgar stays in the room until defeated or until the character who summoned him departs.

Neither the barbarian nor the axe can leave the boundaries of the mead hall. Only a deity can break the enchantment placed on the weapon. For Wulgar, use generic statistics for a 12th-level barbarian NPC. Except for the axe, characters may keep any treasure on his person, assuming, of course, they slay him first.

THE MEWS

To a dragon-rider, one of the few true joys of life, aside from flying through the skies astride a majestic dragon, was hawking. This building was devoted to that noble art. All manner of raptors lived here at one time: goshawks, nighthawks, spar-hawks, kestrels, merlins, tiercels, tan geddises, armored falcons, peak falcons, and, though they weren't proper hunting birds (or birds), the occasional flying lizard. Jesses, hoods, gauntlets, and leashes were stored on shelves built into the north wall. The tables in the south were filled with all kinds of hawking and leatherworking tools. Coops lined the east wall, and a large fireplace surrounded by comfortable wooden, leather-covered stools occupied the west wall.



A shrieker fungus colony grows in a gap beneath the floorboards of the sitting area by the fireplace. If something treads on the floor above them, they start shrieking loudly. This ruckus summons a griffon pride in 3d4 rounds, hungry for an easy meal. Use the standard SRD statistics for these monsters.

THE ARMORY

The Armory sits across the bailey from the Barracks. It is a fat, squat building marked by the huge twin smokestacks emerging from its roof. For generations, a family of master blacksmiths lived and worked here, forging beautifully etched, silver-plated armor for the knights, lightweight but extremely damage-resistant barding for the dragons, and weapons of amazing, sometimes magical, quality. When the vampires invaded, the evil creatures chained the smith's family members to anvils and threw them over the cliff. The blacksmith they forged into a new blade for their master. Stropanthus has given away the vast majority of weapons and armor left behind in the Armory and Barracks to worthy visitors over the years. The rest he moved into the Reliquary with the rest of his hoard.

There is a three-sided corral beside the Armory that is filled with old, heavily weathered wood once intended to fuel the forge fires. Behind the building,

close to the cliff, are scattered, broken bellows, fans, pumps, and other tools of the trade.

THE SQUIRE HOUSE

Every knight needs a squire, and the Talis Hall knights were no exception, despite their humility regarding material wealth. The building where the squires lived is three stories high, with an excellent view of the mountains. Like the barracks, it is made from granite and decorated with gargoyles. There are no individual rooms on the second and third floors; the squires lived together in a large dormitory room. The first floor contains a small kitchen, a wardrobe chamber, and a common room. Like the knights, the squires ate in the duke's presence in the Silver Hall.

The squires were pitched from the cliff along with the blacksmith's family. Only one of them survived the fall. He ended up in a village, 300 miles to the west, where he lives to this day. The memory of that night haunts him; he's too afraid to return to the squire's life.

THE SILVER HALL

The second-largest of the Talis Hall buildings, the Silver Hall is the physical manifestation of everything the Detlieb dukes and their knights stood for, until it all came to a bloody halt three decades ago. Strong, smooth-hewn granite comprises its walls. Silver-plated tiles cover the roof, making it shine on rare sunny days. A dome rises from the middle, filled with colorful stained glass windows; the panes depict the victory of the Detlieb knights over the giants.

Inside the Hall, a humble throne sits at the back along the northern wall. In the Hall's middle, directly beneath the dome, is a huge round table large enough for 100 men and women to sit around comfortably. In its heyday, the Hall hosted knights, dragons, and many important guests from the outlying duchies and kingdoms. Large alcoves in the east and west walls, complete with plush velvet cushions and small dining tables, afforded a modicum of privacy to those who required it. Bronze braziers were

placed all around the room, shedding both heat and light when filled with warm coals. Tapestries and banners hung from the ceiling, though today they are moth-eaten. A door in the east wall leads to a grand kitchen, which in turn opens on a private courtyard for residences of the cook and her assistants, as well as the Hall's horse stables. A wide gate in the private courtyard's outer wall allows entry from the main bailey. Doors in the Hall's west wall lead to the duke's private residence and the Talis library.

It is commonly thought that Duke Konrad Detlieb never sat upon his throne in the Silver Hall, preferring instead to sit with his men and women at the table. Some stories even suggest he let the knights' squires sit at the table. Today, a brooding, grim-faced Stropanthus occupies the throne whenever he entertains visitors. If he eats with them, he does not deign to sit at the table.

THE DETLIEB MANSE

A large mansion once fit for a king, this was where the duke, his daughter, and their personal servants resided. Today it is Stropanthus' home. Where once it contained valuable treasures and heirlooms passed down through the generations, the house's rooms are now in utter disarray. Niebelung's disciples stole most of the treasure, and the dragon gave the rest away, either to the villagers in times of need, or to visiting adventurers in return for services rendered. Suffice it to say, there is little of value left inside this once-impressive house. He keeps a few sentimental pieces locked safe in the Reliquary. The Detlieb Manse is terribly dilapidated, a victim of weather, scavengers, the occasional robber, and the dragon's frequent tantrums. Stropanthus sleeps in Elfriede's old chambers, and rats claim the rest.

THE LIBRARY

At one time, this building contained a number of precious books, tomes, and scrolls collected from the world over. Few libraries have as extensive a collection of books about dragons as Talis Hall had. The

library has three floors — balconies, really — open in the center to give a view of the floors below. Bookcases line the walls, broken occasionally by candelabras. Not much is left of the library but decaying bookshelves, dust, and vermin. Stropanthus sold the sum of Talis Hall's knowledge years ago to a wizard's university a continent away.

The southeast corner of the second floor was inadvertently blasted out by dragonfire years ago when Stropanthus and a red dragon fought in the bailey outside. Decades of wind and water flying in through the hole have transformed that entire side of the building into a precarious and rotten hazard.



A character must make a Balance check (DC 20) to keep his footing in the difficult terrain of the library. Falls from the second or third floor deal 2d6 or 3d6 points of damage, respectively.

THE SILVER STABLES

Informally called the Stables, this beautiful building was never anything of the sort. It was home for thirty silver dragons — a palatial mansion that was the envy of many visiting lords and ladies. The walls of this building, unlike any of its neighbors, are made from imported marble. Similar to the Silver Hall, the roof shingles here are plated with silver. The building is approximately forty feet high, and has one subterranean basement level. The rooms, while big enough to accommodate adult dragons, were regularly subdivided into smaller sections. The dragons enjoyed living in their humanoid bodies, and made the most out of their human-style accommodations. Where the knights lived austere, the dragons lived like emperors. Expensive tapestries and oil paintings decorated the walls, which were painted with the finest dyes and frescoed in the styles of distant lands. Rose- and teakwood furniture was the order of the day, covered in velvet and padded with the finest goose-down cushions and bear- or seal-skin blankets. Then there were the hoards: the silver dragons kept their hoards in secure vaults beneath their apartments.

The building is no longer so glorious. Now it's just a hollow shell. Elfriede, in fit of rage, set fire to most of the rooms, and Stropanthus later sold anything that survived. Villagers in Hartshorn believe the vaults are still filled with treasure, despite Stropanthus's persistent denials. That hasn't kept looters from trying to find and penetrate the vaults. One thing goads black-hearted and kindly curious souls alike: Stropanthus keeps the vaults locked to this day. Why lock them if they are empty?



The thirty vaults beneath the Stables are built from steel-reinforced hewn stone (Thickness: 3 ft.; Break DC: 60; Hardness: 10; Hit Points: 580). Each has a masterwork lock (Open Locks DC 40). The vaults are also enchanted: tampering with the walls, doors, or locks activates a *plane shift* spell (Will save DC 24 to resist) that banishes the offender to a neutral plane.

Stropanthus does everything in his power to make life hard for characters who persist in probing the vaults. Ultimately, however, it's up to you to decide what the proper treasure is for these vaults in your campaign. If you like, the Talis Hall dragons may keep the bulk of their wealth in another secret location, with these vaults serving as decoys. Perhaps each vault is completely devoid of valuables, except for a magical gateway keyed to the dragon who made it. Only the proper dragon can pass through such a portal, though eventually the characters could discover the means to bypass a gate's restrictions and embark on a new adventure. Or maybe Stropanthus has disposed of the hoards as he did Talis Hall's other treasures.

SCENES

Characters might come to Talis Hall for any of the following reasons.

- A twice-removed relative of the Detlieb family hears rumors that Elfriede is not dead, and that Stropanthus is the one who murdered the dragon-riders. He hires the characters to rescue Elfriede from her captor, and offers to double the reward if the adventurers can bring back proof of the dragon's death. (The relative is looking for an angle to legally claim the Detlieb duchy; to do so, he must show a legitimate transfer of power from a Detlieb heir to himself.)
- Stropanthus begs the adventurers to help him recover the *Covenant of the Scale*. Until he does, no silver dragon will regard him as a brother again. He wants more than anything to restore the Detlieb family and the dragon-riding knights. If he cannot, his clan will be dishonored forever.
- The villagers in Hartshorn speak darkly of an insane dragon living in the mountains. A wealthy Merchant Guild alderman, Thomas Niebelung, wants the adventurers to slay it. If they do, he promises them ownership of the dragon's hoard in exchange for the key hanging from the wicked creature's neck. Niebelung doesn't tell the adventurers, but he thinks the silver key unlocks the secret power of the *Covenant of the Scale* already in his possession.
- The adventurers, traveling within 10 miles of Hartshorn or Talis Hall, hear Elfriede in their dreams. She whispers tales of a vampire who turned on her, then murdered her family. Now she lies buried under a statue in the Hall's main bailey, she says, guarded by the vampire's dragon minion. If the adventurers agree to help her, she implores them to kill Theodosian Niebelung first, and restore her lost humanity.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

One major change you can make to Talis Hall is to put Elfriede in charge and have Stropanthus live in destitute exile. In this variation, Elfriede and Niebelung have been at odds for years. While he is indeed her master and she must do as he bids, she is a very clever woman, and often finds ways to circumvent his authority. He still cannot use the *Covenant of the Scale* because he doesn't have the key, but neither does Elfriede. It's in Stropanthus's hands, of course, and there is no way he'll give it up to either vampire without a fight. Elfriede hires adventurers and mercenaries to go after the "renegade dragon," while Niebelung does what he can to track Stropanthus down himself.

In a darker version of the story, Stropanthus kills Elfriede on the night of her betrayal, then falls into a black depression. Years pass before a group of charitable nuns comes upon the all-but-abandoned hall and renovates it. They turn Talis Hall into a lunatic asylum called The Sisters of Merciful Fate and Stropanthus, mired in human form, is the first patient. He is still there to this day, convinced he is not a dragon. Theodosian Niebelung is one of the hospital's benefactors, though not out of any altruistic sense; he seeks the key, unaware that it's in Stropanthus's possession. Meanwhile, the head nun has had terrible premonitions of a battle between silver dragons and demonic cloud giants on the Hall's land. In her dreams, they battle for a silver scale imbued with unimaginable power.

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