

# PALACE OF DRAKES



BY  
**DEREK  
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**LEVEL 7 ADVENTURE**

**IMMERSIVE 5E ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE  
FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST RPG GAME**



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# INTRODUCTION

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN PLAYING

**READ THE ADVENTURE** once or twice. Take notes of anything you would like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the game. Such notes include, but are not limited to, ways to role-play an NPC, combat tactics for a creature, or the locations of important things. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and maps.

- Have all the material and accessories you will use to aid you in running this adventure. Such as flashcards, a GM screen, minis, dice, and battle-maps.
- It is useful to have the player characters' names, race, class, armor class, and hit points in a separate and easy-to-see piece of paper or screen. It may also be important to note other things like backgrounds and personality traits.

## PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important task. The GM is the table's narrator and organizer for a good game. You must take care of the narrative and adjudicate the party's actions. You transform these words into a living thing.

Here are a few guidelines to help you make this happen:

**You have the Power.** You make the decisions about the adventure progress and how the group interacts with NPCs, creatures, and the setting's elements. You are encouraged to improvise and change things. Each group is different and they will all have different needs and things they enjoy and things they don't like.

**Give Them a Good Challenge.** You are the judge of your group's experience. Give them a well-balanced challenge to keep them engaged. A good challenge does not necessarily mean combat. Try to feel out what your group is more interested in and try to give them what they crave. A role-playing situation like a tough negotiation, an interrogation, or calling a favor may be as intense as a full-blown battle.

**Do not Stall.** If the game starts to slow down because the players are unsure of what to do, feel free to provide hints, clues, or a helping NPC to nudge your group in the right direction. Players can get frustrated if they are unable to react to the adventure due to the lack of necessary information. Hints and clues may present themselves as "ideas" or "thoughts" the characters have. An alternative method is to introduce an NPC who will provide a veiled suggestion to the characters directly and serve as the "GM's voice".

## CREATING AN ADVENTURING PARTY

This adventure does not rule out any combination of races, classes, or other features. There are no alignment requirements for this adventure but it is suggested that at least half the party is of good alignment. Otherwise, the incentives for finishing the adventure are curiosity and/or the promise of gold. Good or neutral alignment are recommended for new players.

If you are playing with a new batch of PCs, ask the players why their heroes are together and acting as a team. Each player may choose one or two options from the following list to justify why they are together. This will help the game go smoother from the beginning and it will give them a few cues on how to interact with each other.

- Two characters are childhood friends. They come from the same city or town
- One character saved another PC's life a year ago
- One character owes money to another
- Two or more characters are currently employed as mercenaries by the same guild
- Two characters of the same race are relatives (siblings, cousins, etc.)

This list is not exhaustive. Players are free to invent reasons why they already know each other.

As the GM, you are free to disregard this if your players are experienced enough. These instructions are designed to kick-start the game from the top and help new players get a hold of the group faster. A group of experienced players might get together and come up with reasons to work together on the fly with little to no difficulty.

## ABOUT LINEARITY AND PLAYER AGENCY

This adventure includes several approaches that the adventurers may take and several variants in the conclusions of each chapter. These options are not exhaustive but there is a limited amount of information or options a module can include. This adventure, as written, is somewhat linear but the intention is not to constrain players' creativity and options. We have included what we believe are the most likely courses of action in the adventure.

## ABOUT NOTATION

Some events or things described in this document express their odds of happening in this format: "1-in-6", "2-in-6" and so on. This means that the GM rolls a d6. Rolling the first number or less means success.

*There is a 2-in-6 chance of finding the hidden door.*

This means that a player or the GM rolls a 1d6, on a result of 2 or lower, the hidden door is found.

# ADVENTURE PRIMER



Terrorized shepherds bring their scared cattle to town out of fear of the ravenous drakes!

Town Watch Officer

## WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

**PALACE OF DRAKES** is a tier-2 adventure optimized for level 7 characters. The adventure focuses on getting to know the locals and their problems, climbing a dangerous mountainous region, and exploring an ancient, ruined, palace upon a cliff-top. This adventure can begin in any small-medium settlement close to a mountain range. The town's surrounding areas are used for farming and raising cattle. The drakes from the palace pose a terrible threat to the herds and the local economy.

**Forgotten Realms.** In the town of Triboar. In the mountains northwest of Westbridge, and west of Yartar.

**Eberron.** In Daskaran, Thrane. In the Starpeaks, near the border with Aundair, northwest of Flamekeep.

*Estimated Duration: 6 - 8 hours.*

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

**PEOPLE FROM ALL** over the region come to the Dead Cat's Tavern to show how strong they are in the hopes of gaining the favor of a powerful and influential patron. It is known that nobles, guilds, and even religious institutions keep an eye on the mercenaries that frequent the popular tavern. They call this competition the Fiery Crucible because of all the tales and stories of valiant warriors that come to prove themselves against their peers.

Several local heroes and knights can track their humble beginnings to the hand-in-hand competitions and fights in the Dead Cat's Tavern. However, Calamity has struck the land near the tavern, an opportunity for rising stars!

## A THREAT FROM THE RUINED PALACE

A large mountain range flanks the region and marks its northwestern border. It is an inhospitable place that seldom anyone traverses. A ruined palace on a cliff-top is the only visible man-made structure in the mountains. It is visible from some towns on clear days. The palace was a summer-house of a royal family that was dethroned by an invading force two hundred years ago. The bloodline is said to be broken. No heirs in sight. No competition for the current rulers. The new administration abandoned the palace and the underground paths that lead to it. It has since collapsed from lack of maintenance. A mockery of its former glory. A ruin shunned by the locals.

The mountainous terrain is the natural habitat of lesser draconic creatures known as drakes. The predatory monsters have been known to attack the herds in the region but they usually avoid them because the shepherds retaliate with their crossbows. It is a known danger, but a manageable one. At least it was until now.

For the past three weeks, the drakes in the area have increased in quantity and aggressiveness. The flock attacks in great numbers and feeds from the harmless herds of cows, goats, and sheep. The caretakers flee in panic when they see the drake flock approach. Now, the farmers have brought their herds to nearby towns and demand to be let in with all their animals to protect them.

The communities are at a loss about what to do. The herds are crucial for the town's survival through the crude winters that scour the land. Several groups of mercenaries have tried to stop the drakes but none have survived. It has all been a failure so far.



## THE FABLED ORB OF DRAGONKIND

**CONTRARY TO WHAT** most people know, the bloodline of the royal family of yore was kept. They hid for numerous generations. Some of the heirs have longed for the restoration of their house. Others wanted nothing more than to forget about their blood and name and lead a quiet life. But even they carried the secret knowledge of their origin and the claims of power that their bloodline possesses. According to their oral tradition and the family myths, they are the only ones capable of controlling a powerful magical artifact that was never found when the invaders took the land two hundred years ago. This artifact, the *Orb of Dragonkind*, is a weapon that could aid them in the restoration of their house and reputation.

The last heir to the royal line is a jaded man named Garlock, *Seventh of his Name, Heir to the Orb, and Rightful King of the Mountain*. Or so he was lead to believe by his caretakers and his zealous father. He knows the stories and claims about the *Orb of Dragonkind* so he decided to dedicate his life to seek it and be ready to use it. Garlock studied the arcane arts for two decades just so he could be able to handle the artifact's power. If the orb's power were true, he could use it to restore his family's power and summon other heirs, allies, and bannermen.

For years, Garlock has delved into ancient ruins tracking down the orb. Ruined castles, old, infested crypts, and destroyed battlements. And then he came to the ruined palace on the mountains. Garlock found the *Orb of Dragonkind* buried under the main hall. The jaded mage attuned his soul to the orb and issued a call to all draconic creatures in the area. There was no true dragon in the vicinities but scores of lesser drakes heeded the call. Garlock is temporarily satisfied with the power he wields now; the numerous drakes are powerful in numbers and ever obedient to his commands.

## ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of the chapters and how the adventure is most likely to play out:

**1. *Dead Cat's Tavern.*** The adventurers meet the locals at a popular tavern among sellswords and mercenaries. After mingling with them, they learn of the town's current predicament. An opportunity to earn gold and glory!

**2. *A Way Up through the Cliff.*** The adventurers must traverse the old underground paths that lead up to the ruined palace. There is evidence and information about the ancient royal family there, along with unforeseen perils.

**3. *The Palace of Drakes.*** The adventurers explore the remnants of the ancient structure, fight through numerous aggressive drakes, and track down Garlock, the royal heir, and the *Orb of Dragonkind*. A dangerous artifact.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

*Palace of Drakes* may begin with one or more of the following adventure hooks:

### A VALIANT QUEST

The adventurers learn of a quest worthy of the strongest warriors and heroes. Rumor has it that a region with many farming towns is in dire need of the strongest warriors and mages in the land. There is an open call for mercenaries and sellswords to meet at a local place, the Dead Cat's Tavern. It is common knowledge that the place is a hub for strongmen and warriors. The community of towns offers a reward of 4000 gold pieces.

### AN OLD ENEMY

The adventurers' old enemy, a nefarious mage named Garlock (change name if needed), was last seen in a middle-sized farming town near the mountains. The adventurers are told that the best place to ask for directions is a popular parlor named the Dead Cat's Tavern. It turns out that the evasive mage comes from a noble family line that ruled the land hundreds of years ago. The adventurers soon learn of the drakes' problem in the area and the sizable bounty contract to get rid of the drakes.

### AN ALCHEMIST'S REQUEST

A renowned alchemist named Arfur Silens summons the adventurers to commission them to acquire a rather rare alchemical catalyst. He explains that ingredients of draconic origin are quite precious to him and can be acquired without so much trouble by hunting down drakes, instead of true-blood dragons. Arfur Silens points to a ruined palace in the mountains near a farming settlement where a huge drake has been spotted. Silens requires blood, scales, and the heart of that particular drake.



# DEAD CAT'S TAVERN



Oh yes! Several sellswords went up the mountain this week, none of them returned...

Nalleri Pargu

**THE DEAD CAT'S** Tavern is a large two-story building with stone foundations and wooden beams and walls. It is located in the town's outskirts and surrounded by grassy hills and sparse trees. It owes its name to the stone pool and fountain near the entrance. A statue of a large pouncing feline sits on top of the fountain. The sculpture is not good and the cat has a strange facial expression. People said it looked like a dead cat and the name stuck. The owner thought the whole ordeal was funny. He never had the sculpture fixed or replaced.

Several large herds of goats, cows, and sheep surround the tavern at the moment. The shepherds, afraid of the predatory drakes, decided to come where lots of sellswords gather frequently. The tavern has been the focus of drake attacks for a few days. The cattle shall run out of pasture in the neighboring hills in the next few days.

## A PLACE FOR SELLSWORDS

**THE POPULAR TAVERN** was founded by Nalleri Pargu, a half-elf, and a retired adventurer. Nalleri was a famous folk hero back in the day. Some still claim he is an expert swordsman and fighter. Minstrels and bards sing about his deeds and write essays about his life.

Nalleri Pargu has had his share of adventures and decided to settle after losing a close friend on a dangerous quest. He came to the countryside, bought a large cabin, and settled down with his dream business: a large tavern for adventurers such as him. His reputation sure helped make the place a hub for up-and-rising heroes, adventurers, mercenaries, and criminals. During its thirty years of business, the Dead Cat's Tavern has seen the birth of plenty of heroes worthy of glory, legends, and songs.

## THE FIERY CRUCIBLE

**HEROES SHALL PROVE** their worth in the heat of battle, Narelli always says. Built into the Dead Cat's Tavern's main hall is a fighting/wrestling area where people perform feats of strength, try to best local warriors in combat, or teach fighting moves to enthusiastic students.

Narelli Pargu is proud of fostering a competitive scene that remains more or less contained and decent among participants. Most fighting encounters are performed in good faith and never to the death. But that does not mean that serious or even lethal injuries do not occur from time to time. It is part of the adventurer's life.

**Participation.** A fee of 10 gp allows a person to engage in the weekend tournament. All parties vote for one of three categories, armed combat, unarmed combat, or first-blood combat. These encounters can be resolved as normal 1v1 combats with the understanding that all damage is non-lethal and sparring is friendly. First-blood matches deal real damage but only once. There are sixteen participants per tournament with a price of 100 gp for the winner, who must win four matches in a row.

## THE LOST ADVENTURERS

**SINCE THE DRAKES** started attacking the area, three groups have traveled to the ruined palace to destroy them. A day after the third group left, the largest drake ever spotted flew over the tavern and dropped the mangled body of a sorcerer, one of the mercenaries. No one else returned. That happened two days ago. Not a single adventurer has dared volunteer to climb the mountain since, to the dismay of the townsfolk and the embarrassment of the "strong" warriors' community.

## NALLERI PARGU

*Half-elf (age 79)*

Nalleri (**thug**), the half-elf retired adventurer, leads a simple, yet quite entertaining life by fostering the local community of rising mercenaries and fighting men. Many think of him as the leader of an adventurers' guild but he has no interest in that. Nalleri is disappointed in the sellswords for two things: failing to defeat the drakes, and refusing to attempt it anymore. He is a hypocrite because he could fight against the drakes too, but has become disinterested in helping others.

**Manner.** Nalleri loves to boast about his past deeds.

**Ambition.** Nalleri wants to take some of the credit for defeating the drakes, despite doing little about it.



## EXPEDITIONS AND RUMORS

**THE ADVENTURERS LEARN** of the 4000 gp bounty at the tavern. Many tried to claim the prize but lost their lives in the attempt. It is common knowledge that three parties (12 people) left during the last week. Many of the remaining sellswords claim they have no hope of success because the second group included three mercenaries of the highest reputation. They were regarded as equals to the likes of Shella. The rest of them are too afraid to act.

If the adventurers spend time talking to Nalleri, Shella, or other patrons at the Dead Cat's Tavern, they may hear the rumors. It is up to the GM to decide how many times to roll on this table. Ignore repeated results.



## SHELLA SILVERTOOTH

*Human (age 32)*

Shella (**berserker**) is a veteran warrior and a renowned folk hero in the area. Despite the current events and the failure of three adventuring parties, Shella is the only person in the Dead Cat's Tavern willing to go. She has tried to rally some of her peers to form a new party and climb to the ruined palace without success. Shella has a reputation for being an unruly person and difficult to work with. She has left many adventuring parties that could not handle her sudden fits and caprices.

**Manner.** Shella chews on herbs all day and spits them in a rather disgusting manner.

**Ambition.** Shella wants to kill the drakes at all costs.



- 1 The path to the palace is infested by monsters
- 2 The sorcerer's body featured deep acid burns
- 3 Shella is not a trustworthy companion, too impulsive
- 4 A hooded man passed through a few weeks back and asked for directions to the ruined palace
- 5 Nalleri Pargu is still a strong fighter, perhaps he could take it upon himself to rid the region from the drakes
- 6 Drakes are indigenous to the area but in lower numbers
- 7 There is a huge dark-scaled drake that surpasses all others in size and power. They call it the Drake Lord
- 8 The ruined palace belonged to a different royal family two hundred years ago. They were all hunted down



## GENERAL FEATURES

The following descriptions of areas A1 through A15 correspond to the Dead Cat's Tavern map.

**Doors.** All doors are made of a mix of pinewood and oakwood. The doors to areas A9, A11, and the trapdoor in A5 feature standard locks (DC 15 Thieves' Tools).

**Light.** The slim windows feature thick red drapes that obscure most rooms, even during the day. Sconces with oil lamps on the walls keep the place brightly lit.

**Smells and Sounds.** The sound of laughter and voices from the tavern's main hall is ever-present. There is no escape to the pungent smell of manure and animal noises from the current cattle herds outside.

**Constant Threat.** The large cattle herds that surround the tavern attract hungry drakes despite the presence of sellswords and mercenaries. An attack occurs every few hours. It happens at least once during the PCs' stay at the Dead Cat's Tavern. 1d4 **red-stripes drakes** and 1 **yellow-stripes drake** (see page 20) land next to the tavern building and attack people and cattle alike.

### A1. COURTYARD

The grounds outside the Dead Cat's Tavern are the current home of cattle and herders. They drink from the font and consume the grass. A wooden sign over the main oak doors portrays a dead cat bouncing.

**The Dead Cat Font.** A statue of a pouncing cat with a poor facial expression. It looks like a dead cat. The poor craftsmanship of the sculptor is evident.

### A2. DEAD CAT'S LOBBY

A cozy chamber with an expensive, hand-made, silk rug, two coaches, and a stone pedestal with a wooden sculpture (see below). The sound of laughter, conversations, and even music can be heard from here.

**The Dead Cat Carving.** A wooden carving of half a tiger. It was commissioned years after the font and requested to have the same poor expression. It was made by a good craftsman so the expression looks rather odd.

### A3. MAIN HALL

The tavern's main hall features multiple wooden tables and decorative embroidered banners on the walls. A fighting ring in the center dominates the chamber.

**The Fiery Crucible.** The fighting ring is formed by two circular silver inlaid lines on the floor. It is a rule that a participant loses the match by stepping outside of the outer ring. The inner ring is used in contests like first-blood matches. The white marble floor of the fighting grounds features a few cracks here and there.

### A4. HEARTH

The west end of the main hall features a large fireplace that connects to the one above in area A7. An expensive rug embroidered with a regional map of the empire lies before the fire. People come here to relax and think about their lives and what the future has in store for them.

**Time for Tales.** It is a local custom that retired adventurers and mercenaries come to the Dead Cat's Tavern hearths to share their experiences and tales of their deeds from their prime days. Nalleri Pargu loves to take part in this and attract the most attention to himself.

**Time for Dreams.** On the weekends, people pass around a smoking device with pipes and coals. The substance they smoke causes deep, vivid dreams.

### A5. THE BAR

A large, varnished, mahogany bar tended by the one and only Nalleri Pargu. The half-elf works the bar most of the time. He loves to share stories, gossip, and rumors of regional events and important personalities in town.

**Trapdoor.** A 5 by 5 feet section of the floor is a cleverly hidden trap door. Under it, a flight of stone stairs descends to the cellar's landing (area A12).

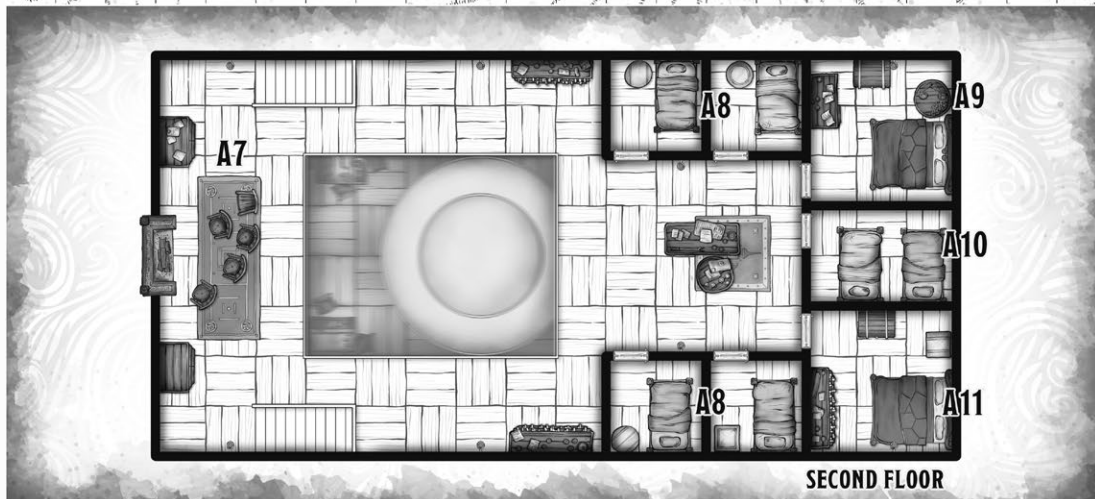
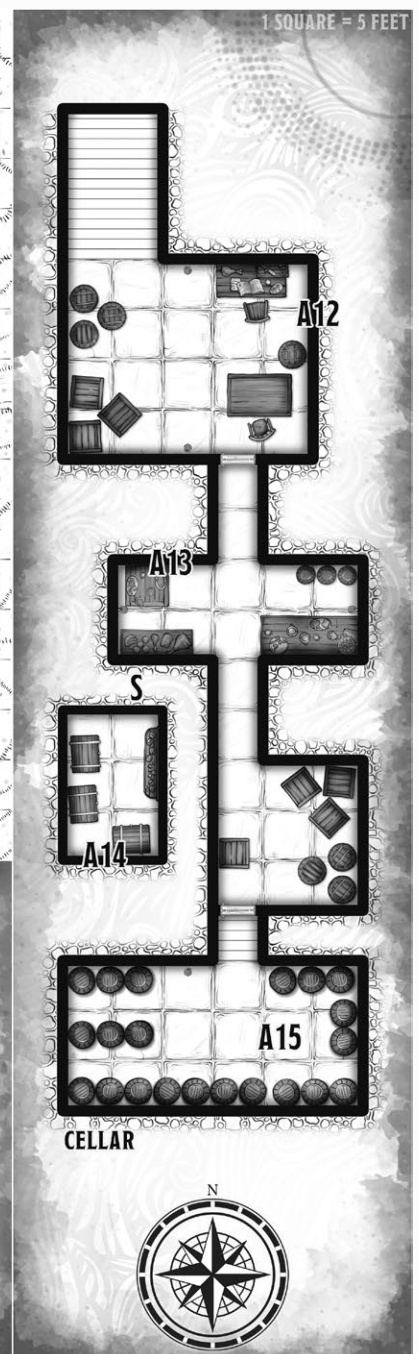
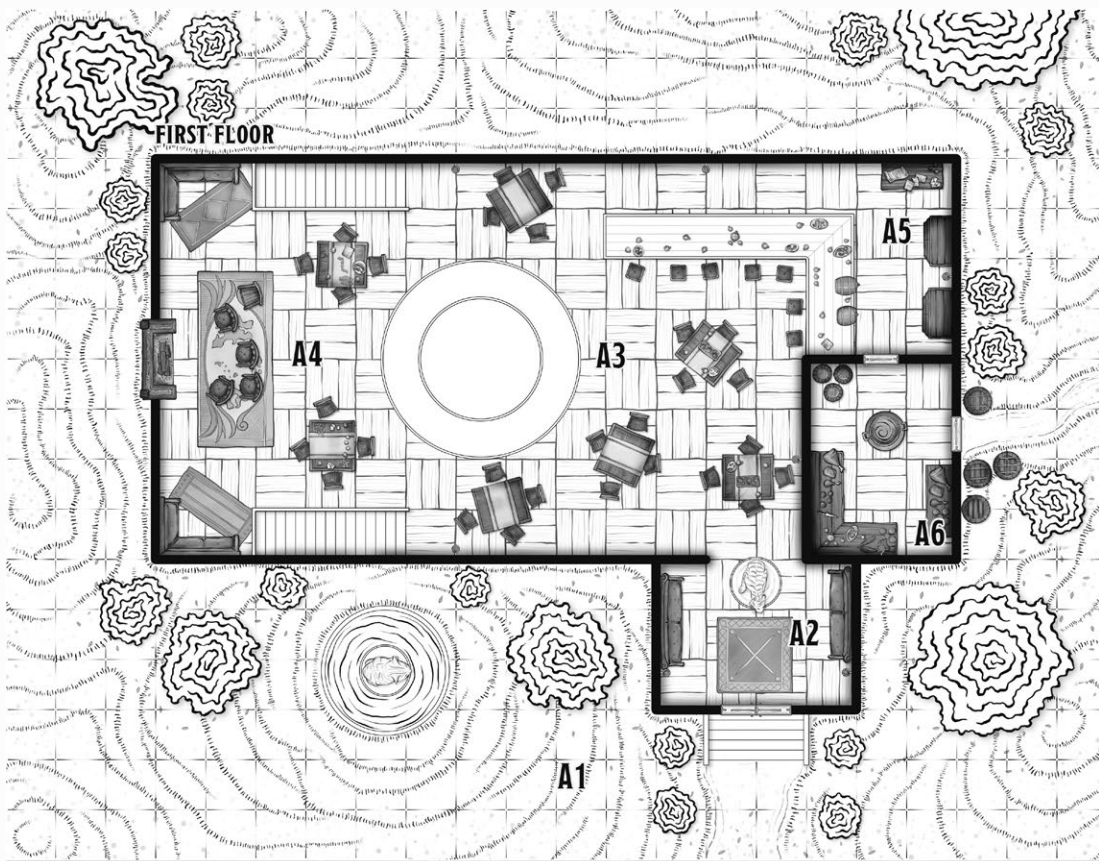
### A6. KITCHEN

The cooking at the Dead Cat's Tavern is managed by three people, Hollard, Diana, and Ticknou. The preparation tables and cauldron are in constant heavy use.

### A7. UPPER HEARTH

The two flights of stairs in area A4 lead to the upper section of the hearth's fireplace. The rug is of lesser quality. It is a quieter place to sit that features a great spot to watch the fighting events in the Fiery Crucible below.





## A8. SMALL ROOMS

The multitude of sellswords and warriors in the tavern sleep in town or have their own home. Two out of the four rooms are currently empty and available for rent (5 gp). Each room has a wooden frame bed and a table.

## A9. NALLERI PARGU'S ROOM

The room contains a double bed, a bookcase with literary classics, a side table, and a reinforced wooden chest. The tavern owner lives alone, he was married to a human woman that passed away ten years ago. The room still contains several of her personal effects. This gives the impression that a woman still lives here.

**Treasure.** An iron safe box under the bed contains 350 gp. The chest has a *+1 longsword* (see **Development**).

## A10. LARGE ROOM

The room contains two wooden frame beds, and a folding chair and table. It is a cozy but small room, currently available for rent (8 gp). The door lock malfunctions and can be bypassed by shaking the doorknob.

## A11. SHELLA'S ROOM

Shella, a renowned mercenary in the tavern is a permanent tenant at the Dead Cat's Tavern. Her chamber contains a double bed with fur linens, a side table, a wooden chest, and a desk with a folding chair. Shella's journal on the desk contains a record of her past deeds and a log of payments she has received from influential patrons.

**Treasure.** There are two medallions (250 gp) on the side table and 30 gp in assorted coinage.

## A12. CELLAR LANDING

The landing contains an assortment of wooden crates and barrels in disarray, Nalleri's working desk with the tavern's books and logs, and an empty desk that was moved from the tavern here temporarily.

**Tavern's Books.** There's an open book on the desk and five more in a drawer. Reading them to understand the current financial state of the tavern requires 8 hours of study and a DC 14 Intelligence check. On a success, it is revealed that while the tavern is profitable, Nalleri has incurred great debts to foster the community of sellswords and mercenaries in the area. Many are not even adventuring folk but actors. Nalleri may go bankrupt unless the community's reputation is restored.

## A13. LARDER

The kitchen's larder is well supplied with food and drinks to meet the tavern's current demand for at least 5 days.

## A14. SECRET ROOM

A movable wall in the larder leads to a secret passage to Nalleri's vault. It contains three chests and a shelf.

**Treasure.** The wooden chests contain 2,500 sp, 700 gp, and a bag of seven finely-cut emeralds (90 gp each).

## A15. WINE CELLAR

The room contains rows of solid oak wine barrels that age in darkness or dim light. Half of them have not reached maturity. Each mature barrel is worth 50 gp.

## DEVELOPMENT

**TRAVELERS MUST TRAVERSE** the old underground path to reach the Palace of Drakes. The adventurers may stay at the Dead Cat's Tavern for as long as they like but the frequent drake attacks and Shella's insistence prompt them to take action and climb the mountain to rid the region of the dangerous draconic creatures.

## DRAKES ON THE HUNT

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The adventurers are expected to help fend off drakes as they prey on the cattle around the tavern (see **General Features**). The encounter occurs at least once during their stay but may happen several times if they decide to stay at the tavern for the night or longer.

## SHELLA'S REQUEST

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The hot-tempered adventurer has tried to inspire people to climb the mountain for days. She is impulsive but not stupid. She offers her help as a warrior and a guide to the adventurers. She knows the way up to the palace.

## A GENEROUS OFFER

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When the adventurers are soon to leave, Nalleri Pargu makes a big show of offering his *+1 longsword* to them so that they can vanquish evil in the drake-infested ruin.

When the adventurers finally leave, they are sent off with sour smiles and vague words of encouragement. Most people believe they are wasting their lives.



# A WAY UP THROUGH THE CLIFF



I'd take Shella if I were you. Have you seen the way she destroys her opponents?

Nalleri Pargu

## THE OLD PATH

In town, almost no one knows about the heirs of the lost bloodline, the righteous protectors of the throne. Time has vanished their story and name from history. Garlock, now in possession of the magical orb, shall be the one who changes that unless someone stops him.

What Nalleri and Shella can tell the adventurers once they accept the job, is about the path through the mountains they must cross to reach the cliff top summit. Shella can do the job of a guide and lead the heroes there; she has already made a reconnaissance foray and knows the way well. This is another reason for her constant insistence on leaving the town soon.

The old path underneath the mountains that they talk about is a dangerous, critter-infested place. This is but the first challenge that the adventurers shall face. These caves took the lives of a few of the mercenaries that left the town in the past fifteen days. The dwellers of the obscure ruins are startled enough and will attack anything that moves (see **Exploring the Olden Caves**).

The old path takes the heroes through a series of chambers that were formerly part of the lost bloodline's kingdom. They're all in ruins; little to nothing can be salvaged from the formerly grandiose chambers and halls. However, if the adventurers take a moment to observe their surroundings, they might learn a thing or two about the lost bloodline that once ruled these lands. The adventurers might also discover the existence of the *Orb of Dragonkind*. Their curiosity shall be rewarded with important lore but at the cost of their precious time and their safety.

## EXPLORING THE OLDEN CAVES

The adventurers enter the mountain from an opening on its side. If Shella accompanies the group, they find it in no time. Otherwise, there is a 2-in-6 chance of encountering a pack of one **yellow-stripes drake** and one **red-stripes drake** if the adventurers aren't capable of tracking the footprints of the other mercenaries who came before (DC 14 Survival). Failure means they take too long and draw the attention of the drakes.

Some chambers of this place hold valuable secrets that the adventurers might make use of. To find them, however, they must spend time searching, digging, deciphering the remains of carvings, and inspecting everything that might end up leading to a clue.

When moving within the Old Path and exploring new locations, there is a 1-in-6 chance of encountering any of the creatures from the table. These odds increase to 2-in-6 for every time the adventurers decide to thoroughly inspect a room in search of clues or long-lost lore.

- 1 1 **cloak**er hides in the dark and ambushes the party
- 2 4 **hook horrors** protect their nests with fury
- 3 1 restless **ghost** attacks the living out of envy
- 4 1d2 **ochre jellies** slide through a crack on a wall
- 5 3 **xorns**. They leave if fed 200 gp worth of treasure each
- 6 1 **earth elemental** roams the ruined chambers
- 7 2 **yellow-stripes drakes** roam the wider caverns
- 8 2 **umber hulks** attempt to confuse and eat the party

## GENERAL FEATURES

The following features correspond to areas B1 through B11 shown in the map of this chapter.

**Switchback Stairs.** There are two sections in the dungeon that are a long set of switchback stairs. Each of them ascends 100 feet and leads to the next level.

**Secret Lore.** The whole place is in ruins. However, some of the chambers still contain details that can teach the adventurers about the ancient royal bloodline.

**Light.** Some areas of the dungeon have magical sconces with *continual flame* spells placed on them. The flame extinguishes in 1d6 minutes if removed from its place.

### B1. MOUNTAIN OPENING

The patches of green grass that cover the way up the mountain skirts stop by the dark opening

Several humanoid footprints go inside the mountain but none come out. Both floors and ceiling of the caves are covered in stalactites and stalagmites.

### B2. LARGE CAVE

Bones and sparse remains of body parts litter the area. Some of the mercenaries that came before met their end here. They were killed by the roper (see below).

**Is That A Stalactite?.** This chamber is a **roper** lair. The monster is accompanied by 1d8 **piercers**. They remain immobile and attempt to surprise the intruders and attack as many of them as possible.

**Weak Wall.** If the adventurers notice the cracked wall by the south of the cave (DC 14 Investigation), they find a cave that was blocked by rocks and rubble (area B3).

**Trap.** Failing to notice the weak spot on the ground (DC 15 Perception) may cause an adventurer to fall into a 50-foot-deep shaft and take 8d6 bludgeoning damage in the process (DC 16 Dexterity save for half damage).

### B3. BLOCKED CAVE

This secret room was once part of a larger chamber here. If the heroes find this place, they might notice faint carvings on some walls (DC 14 Perception). They show a family crest. It is formed by a scaled wing surrounding a white sphere. One of the adventurers might know that the crest belongs to the Karr family (DC 17 History). They are supposed to be the rightful heirs to the throne and rulers of the mountain. If Shella is present, she mentions that the Karrs were known for their great affinity for dragons and other draconic creatures.

### B4. STAIRS ACCESS

The humid, packed soil of the cave makes way for old, cracked, stone steps of a flight of stairs.

The light from the stairs can be faintly perceived when entering this area. This is the first set of stairs that ascend higher into the mountain (see **General Features**).

### B5. RUINED TEMPLE

The stone benches and the altar sit in complete silence under the light coming from the west.

This room is the best-preserved of the former underground chambers of the Karr family. There is a locked door to the northeast, more caverns to the south, and the next flight of stairs to the west.

**The Orb of Dragonkind.** If the adventurers take their time to inspect the walls and columns of this place, they discover carvings of winged creatures forming patterns. Those patterns form a sort of road all over the room. Several paths of dragons lead all to the same spot: the ceiling above the altar. There is a huge carving there. It shows a large sphere at its center, hovering above the hands of a cloaked individual. All the dragons converge at this point, and other larger dragons fly above the man in circles. If one of the adventurers is well-versed in history they know the name of the artifact, the *Orb of Dragonkind* (DC 19 History). It is said that whoever controls the orb, can command even the strongest of dragons. The orb is not something to be messed with.

### B6. SIDE CHAMBER

This door has been shut for centuries (DC 16 Strength). A stone coffin and a chest are inside. A symbol of a sphere surrounded by a wing was carved on both of them.

**Don't Disturb the Dead.** Meddling with either the coffin or the chest angers the spirit of the person resting here. A **wraith** emerges from the enclosure and attacks.

### B7. WEB CAVES

The walls and ceiling of these caves are covered in thick, sticky, light blue webs marked with small black spots. A wise adventurer might recognize the webs (DC 16 Nature) and point out they belong to a rare breed of spiders that can make ethereal jumps.

**Arachnid Ambush.** A family of three **phase spiders** lives in these caves. They attempt to conceal their presence until the opportunity to attack presents itself. They flee and attempt to jump to the Ethereal Plane indefinitely if reduced to half their hit points.



## B8. CAVE-IN AND TUNNEL

A cave-in destroyed a section of the northwest wall of the temple (area B5). It leads to a small cave. A horrible stench comes from there. The adventurers might know that stench belongs to troglodytes (DC 15 Nature). However, the troglodytes are not the reason they came here.

**Unnecessary Deviation.** The adventurers waste their time if they delve deeper inside these caves. 3d10 **troglodytes** prepare an aggressive welcome if they come.

## B9. CAVERN AND TUNNELS

The second flight of stairs takes to a large cavern with four other exits. The two tunnels north lead to uncharted territories. Both paths to the east lead to area B10.

**Unnecessary Deviation.** The adventurers waste their time if they travel further north. 3d10 **troglodytes** prepare an aggressive welcome if they come.

**Critters Lair.** The irregular caves to the east are infested with tiny insects. Any creature that traverses any of the two paths is attacked by three **swarms of spiders**.

## B10. UMBER HULK'S DEN

Bite-marked bones are scattered all around. A pair of mesmerizing eyes shine in the darkness

The adventurers stumble upon an **umber hulk's** lair when they come here. The monster tries to confuse them and attacks unleashing all its might upon one intruder at a time. The large insect monstrosity flees if it is reduced to half its hit points. It escapes by digging a tunnel.

## B11. EXIT

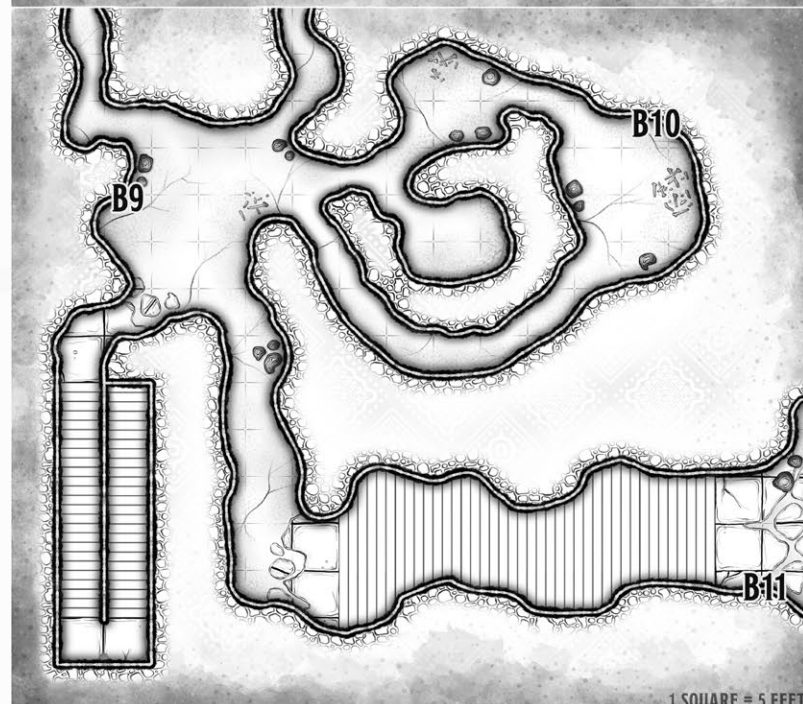
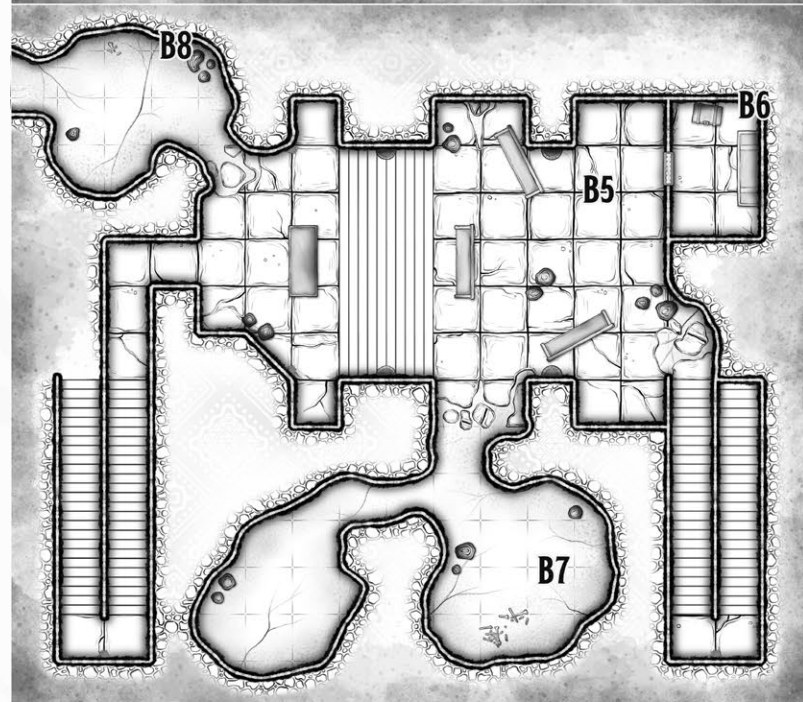
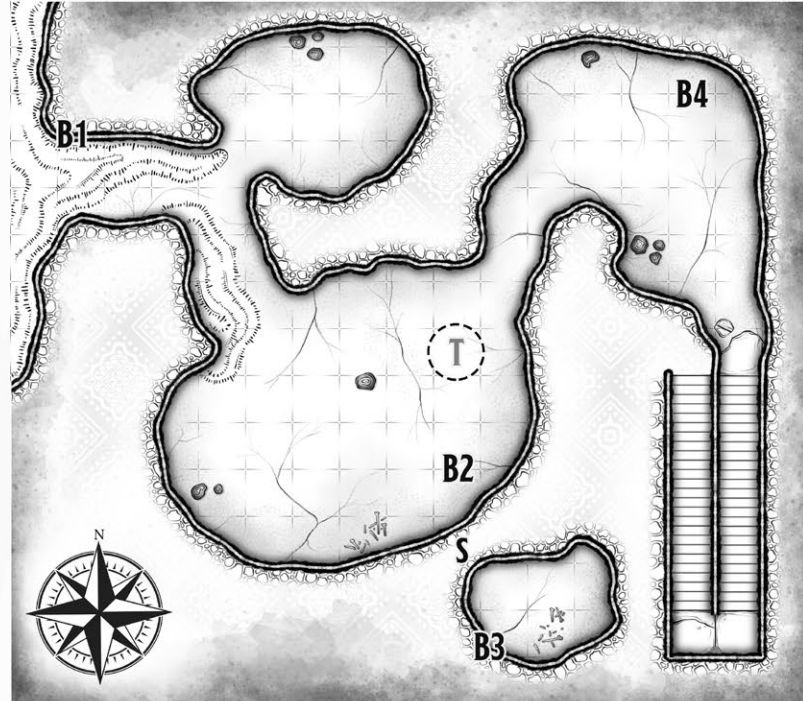
The last flight of stairs ascends 40 feet. The upper landing leads to another opening in the mountain, and to a narrow exposed path toward the Palace of Drakes.

## DEVELOPMENT

The adventurers must continue their journey toward the summit. They shall travel a narrow path to reach the Palace Bridge (area C1). If Shella is present she asks the group to hurry, there is no time to waste.

The more risks the adventurers take while traversing the Old Paths, the more information they can get. What the adventurers gather from the ruins shall help them make a plan. It helps to know what they're dealing with.

Garlock placed a silent *alarm* spell at the very threshold of the exit in area B11. When the adventurers cross it, he is warned about it. The rightful heir to the throne and king of the mountain shall greet them and show them what the *Orb of Dragonkind* can do.





# PALACE OF DRAKES



The power of my ancestors shall unleash  
destruction and pain upon the land!

Garlock

## THE PALACE AND FACTIONS

WITHIN THE RUINED palace, there are several factors at play that may affect the adventurers' actions. The balance of power between Garlock and the Drake Lord may shift to either side when the adventurers arrive.

### GARLOCK, SEVENTH OF HIS NAME

The royal bloodline heir, Garlock (**mage**), is in control of the *Orb of Dragonkind*. With its power, he can command all drakes in the area to do his bidding except for the Drake Lord. Garlock's current goal is to exert enough power to gain complete control of the drake creature.

### THE DRAKES

The flock of draconic creatures has moved to the ruined palace and nearby cliffs to nest. Their population is too large to sustain itself from available food sources, which is why they resort to attacking the herds near the towns. They obey Garlock's commands without hesitation.

### THE DRAKE LORD

The largest of drakes still resists the orb's commands half of the time. The Drake Lord (see page 20) resents Garlock for his numerous attempts of control and might lash out against him when the opportunity arises.

### THE SURVIVORS

Two adventurers from the third adventuring party managed to survive and are holed up in area C6. They have managed to fend off the drakes at the entrance so far. They are weak, malnourished, and dehydrated.

## EXPLORING THE PALACE

AFTER ABANDONING THE final stone staircase of the old underground path in area B11, the adventurers find themselves near the top of the cliffside. A narrow path continues up for six hundred feet and reaches the still-standing stone bridge in area C1.

When the adventurers reach the narrow path to area C1, read or paraphrase the following:

The mountain path has finally reached to cliff-top palace in ruins. The bridge, watchtowers, and ramparts still stand despite the passage of time but their state of disrepair is evident. Drakes fly past the ruined palace and cry at each other at all times.

The gatehouse door (area C2) rotted away decades ago. The adventurers may enter through the main door.

When moving around the Palace of Drakes and exploring new locations, there is a 2-in-6 chance of encountering any of the following creatures:

- 1d6 non-fighting drake infants, if distressed or attacked, the drake infants cry for their parents
- 1d3 **yellow-stripes drakes**
- 1d4 **red-stripes drakes**
- One of the survivors (**thug**) from area C6 on a quick foray to find some food and water
- The **Drake Lord** flies by the ruined palace and cries in draconic for all drakes to resist the orb's power
- Garlock walking around the ruined palace looking for a place to meditate without the *Orb of Dragonkind*

# GARLOCK, SEVENTH OF HIS NAME

Human (age 45)

Garlock (**mage**), *Seventh of his Name*, *Heir to the Orb*, and *Rightful King of the Mountain*, has finally reached the pinnacle of his life by unearthing the *Orb of Dragonkind*. Garlock is inebriated with the power at his command and may act impulsively out of lack of caution. His current obstacle is managing to control the Drake Lord's will. The large draconic creature remains resilient to the orb's power but hasn't attacked Garlock yet.

**Manner.** Garlock grabs his long cloak and envelops himself in it in a mysterious way when he talks.

**Ambition.** Garlock desires to retake his ancestors' land with the power of the *Orb of Dragonkind*.



## GENERAL FEATURES

**Decaying Structures.** All stone structures are in deplorable condition. When dealing damage to any standing wall section or ceiling, or applying too much weight on them, there is a 2-in-6 chance of causing a sudden collapse. Fast-reacting individuals may avoid falling stones for 5d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 14 Dex save).

**Light.** The *Orb of Dragonkind* floats at the center of area C7 and produces dim light within 30 feet of it.

**Smells and Sounds.** The stench of drakes' dropping and filth is overwhelming to all but the most resilient (DC 13 Constitution save or poisoned for 1 hour). The sounds of drakes issuing all kinds of cries and sounds in the distance cannot be escaped.

**Magical Aura.** The *Orb of Dragonkind* can be perceived by spells such as *detect magic* from a distance of 1 mile, regardless of material obstacles in the way.

### C1. PALACE BRIDGE

The narrow path climbs up to a white-stone, damaged bridge. It leads to the palace's gatehouse.

The bridge remains in place and appears to be stable but there is a real danger that it collapses if four or more people attempt to cross it at the same time. When a person attempts to cross the bridge when two more people are on it, the bridge shakes and a loud crack is heard, but it remains in place. After this, two people on the bridge cause it to collapse; all people on it fall down the cliffside one thousand feet to their deaths below.

### C2. GATE

A dilapidated gatehouse lies wide open; thick, rotten, and decaying wooden doors on the floor. The ancient royal family's crest is carved over the threshold, a dragon's wing around the moon.

The gate is wide open and has not had a working door for hundreds of years. A historian might know that the family crest belonged to the royal family that ruled the region more than two hundred years ago (DC 16 History). Their bloodline was slain back then and a new power took over the land. Most records from that time were burned in a pyre little after their defeat.

**Unexpected Vermin.** Exploring the inside of the gatehouse reveals an empty, ruined chamber. Closer inspection disturbs three **swarms of centipedes** in the area.

### C3. WALLS - RAMPARTS

The 20-foot-high stone walls have seen better days. They are eroded, cracked, and in a severe state of disrepair. The scratch marks of a large clawed creature scar some of the battlements.

Walking on the ramparts attracts the attention of the drakes soon. There is a 1-in-6 chance of attracting 1d4 **red-stripes drakes** and 1 **yellow-stripes drake** for every ten minutes of exploration on the ramparts.

By walking on the ramparts, the adventurers may access areas C5, C6, and C8 by jumping down from the ramparts into the mostly roofless structures. There is a chance to surprise Garlock by using this approach.

## C4. COURTYARD

The palace's courtyard is unkempt, overgrown, and covered in repugnant drake droppings. Three stone structures barely stand within the walls. Deep cracks defy the structural integrity of the mostly roofless constructions.

The courtyard is a dangerous place to traverse during the current occupation of Garlock and the drakes. Several kinds of drakes and their infants often frolic or sleep in the palace grounds, especially now that the survivors in area C6 are starting to risk quick forays to find food or water. Each time the adventurers traverse this area, they trigger an encounter with 1d4 **red-stripes drake** and 1d2 **yellow-stripes drake**. The drakes fly over the palace grounds, turn around, land 3d10 feet away from the adventurers, and attack.

**Shella.** The seasoned adventurer has been in the ruined palace before and knows the three destroyed buildings. She claims that drakes are common in the area but not in such great numbers. Some kind of force or prey must have attracted them to one of the palace buildings.

## C5. RUINED HALL

The walls and roof have partially collapsed within the precarious structure. Nature has started to reclaim the area; vegetation covers some corners.

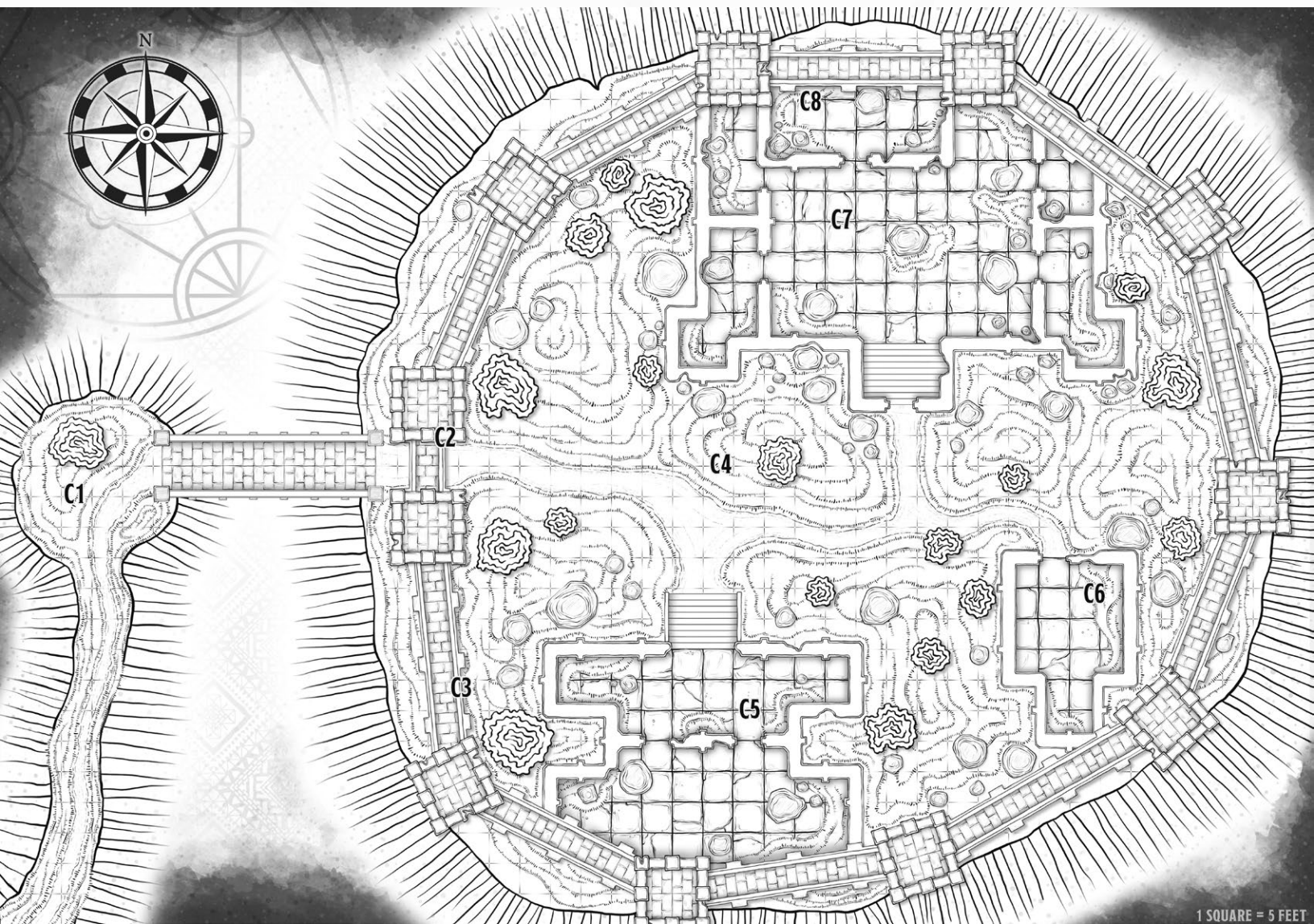
The royal guest wing barely stands. The place collapses if three or more drakes land on it. Dealing 4d6 bludgeoning damage to all inside (DC 15 Dexterity save).

**Drake Eggs.** There are four drake eggs on a nest in the chamber. Approaching the nest within 15 feet causes 1d4 **red-stripes drakes** to come to protect the eggs.

## C6. RUINED TOWER

The small building still retains most of its roofing. A single hole on the roof is too small for drakes to cross. The two famished and dehydrated adventurers inside the building, Ashiro and Ginnara (**thugs**) have managed to fend off drakes at the door for several days. They are at half HP and have two levels of exhaustion.

**Unlikely Allies.** Ashiro and Ginnara may join the adventurers on their quest if they are given water and food, especially if Shella is with the group.



## C7. RUINED PALACE

The palace's main hall is roofless and dilapidated. Debris, broken beams, and drake droppings litter and stain the cracked and broken marble floors. A 20-inches-thick, green, glowing, carved sphere floats in the center of the room, slowly rotating.

The *Orb of Dragonkind* cannot be moved or manipulated without first killing Garlock (**mage**) and breaking his attunement to it. The heir to the throne is here, studying the orb to gain insight on how to influence the Drake Lord. He is guarded by two **yellow-stripes drakes**. Garlock is talkative but won't suffer fools. He makes a case for his claim to the throne and attacks intruders.

## C8. A HOARD WORTHY OF HEROES

There is a makeshift personal camp that has been used recently. The glint of gold and precious stones shines through a hole on the ground, a secret vault.

Garlock sleeps here in poor conditions. He unearthed an old family vault that survived unscathed to this day.

**Surprise.** Approaching area C7 from here allows the adventurers to surprise Garlock as he studies the orb.

**Treasure.** The vault contains 8700 sp, 3600 gp, silver jewelry (1500 gp), and a golden brooch (150 gp).

## THE LORD OF DRAKES

**THE FINAL CONFRONTATION** in the Palace of Drakes is not scripted to go in any particular way. The **Drake Lord** is a different kind of breed, far superior to the other drakes that are endemic to the region. The Drake Lord is larger and more powerful, closer to the true-blood dragons, and thus, more resilient to the *Orb of Dragonkind*. Over the past few weeks, the Drake Lord has been under Garlock's control many times but only for short periods. It has shaken off the orb's influence every time. The Drake Lord has developed deep hate for the mage. The Drake Lord joins the final confrontation at any time. Garlock is its target but it attacks all non-drake beings.

If Garlock dies and the adventurers wish to retrieve the Orb of Dragonkind, the drake lord speaks in Draconic:

As lesser beings, it is normal you'd do my bidding. The mage is no more and the orb holds no power over me, nor my kin anymore. Nevertheless, none of you could ever resist the temptation of true power. I shall end your lives before that wretched artifact gets a hold of you!

The Drake Lord attacks the adventurers but attempts to flee with the orb if reduced to half its hit points.

## ORB OF DRAGONKIND

*Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)*

**THE ORB IS** an etched crystal sphere about 10 inches in diameter. When attuned to a user, it grows to about 20 inches in diameter and becomes immovable in mid-air.

Attuning to the orb requires a DC 16 Charisma check. On a successful check, you control the orb for as long as you remain attuned to it. On a fail, you become charmed by the orb and cannot voluntarily end your attunement to it. The orb casts *suggestion* on you at will (save DC 18), urging you to work toward its evil desires.

► **Call Dragons.** You can use an action to issue a telepathic call that extends for 40 miles. Dragons and lesser draconic creatures in range feel compelled to come to the orb as soon as possible. Lesser draconic creatures, like drakes, must obey the orb's user. More powerful draconic creatures and true-blood dragons can be influenced as if by a *suggestion* spell (save DC 18), for up to 8 hours. This property can only be used once per hour.

► **Destroying the Orb.** Seemingly fragile, the orb is impervious to most damage. It can only be destroyed by a +3 magic weapon or a *disintegrate* or stronger spell.





## CONCLUSION

**THE ADVENTURERS' ACTIONS** in the Palace of Drakes cause varied outcomes at the adventure's conclusion.

### GARDOCK'S FATE

Killing Gardock immediately ends his attunement to the *Orb of Dragonkind*. This causes all drakes in the area to leave for the mountains to their lairs. A small number of drakes remain in the area but they do not pose a threat to the farmlands in the region.

If Gardock is arrested or manages to escape somehow, he retains the orb's power, despite the artifact remaining in the ruined palace in area C7. He uses the orb's power to regain strength or break himself free from prison. He becomes a recurring villain with enormous power.

### THE DRAKES

The lesser drakes in the area are not sentient enough to understand their predicament. If Gardock's attunement is broken, all drakes return to their instinctual behaviors. If it lives, the Drake Lord leaves for its lair at the top of the highest mountain peak with the fabled orb. It may return as a recurring villain controlling a flock of drakes.

If the adventurers slay it, they may collect the components as per the hook: **An Alchemist's Request**.

### A GLORIOUS RETURN

The adventurer's return at the Dead Cat's Tavern is worthy of heroes! They are worshiped as saviors and given the title of Drake-Slayers. Their names are known throughout the region; their presence always welcome.

If Shella survives the adventure, she gets the same treatment and earns everyone's respect. If Ashiro and Gin-nara make it back, they are treated as heroes too but they announce their retirement from adventuring lives.

### NARELLI'S CLAIM

The tavern owner is jealous of the adventurers and tries to spin their victory in a way to take some of the credit. He tries to convince people that the adventurers' deeds were only possible thanks to the magic sword he lent them. The reaction to these claims is lukewarm at best.

### THE ORB OF DRAGONKIND

If Gardock lives, the orb cannot be moved or used, only destroyed. If the attunement is broken by slaying Gardock, anyone in the party may attempt to attune to the orb. Success in the Charisma saves grants them the power that Gardock had, and the hate of true-blood dragons in the area. Failure means the adventurer is a slave to the orb and must heed its evil commands. Either way, the orb's usage attracts the attention of higher powers.



## RED-STRIPES DRAKE

Large drake, chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**HP** 27 (5d8 + 5)

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Stealth +4

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Understands Draconic but can't speak

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage, plus 3 (1d6) acid damage.

**Acid Spit.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) acid damage.

### Reactions

**Acid Glands.** A creature that makes a melee attack against the yellow-stripes drake, receives 10 (3d6) acid damage as it spits acid through a pair of glands under its chin. The drake then can move half its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

## YELLOW-STRIPES DRAKE

Large drake, chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**HP** 53 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

**Skills** Stealth +3

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Understands Draconic but can't speak

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Fury.** When the drake loses half its hit points, it can move its full speed and attack a creature of its choice within range.

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 8 (2d10 + 2) piercing damage.

**Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6).** The drake breathes fire from its mouth in a 20 ft. cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## THE DRAKE LORD

Large drake, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**HP** 126 (15d10 + 45)

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +3

**Skills** Perception +6, Stealth +5

**Damage Immunities** fire, acid

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., p. Perception 16

**Languages** Draconic

**Challenge** 8 (2,900 XP)

**Fury.** When the drake loses half its hit points, it can move its full speed and attack a creature of its choice within range.

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If the drake fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The drake makes three attacks: one with its bite, and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage, and 3 (1d6) acid damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Acid-Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6).** The drake breathes acidic flames from its mouth in a 30 ft. cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (5d6) fire damage and 16 (5d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the drake's choice that is within 120 feet of the drake and aware of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to this ability for the next 24 hours.

### Legendary Actions

**Legendary Actions.** The drake can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The drake regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

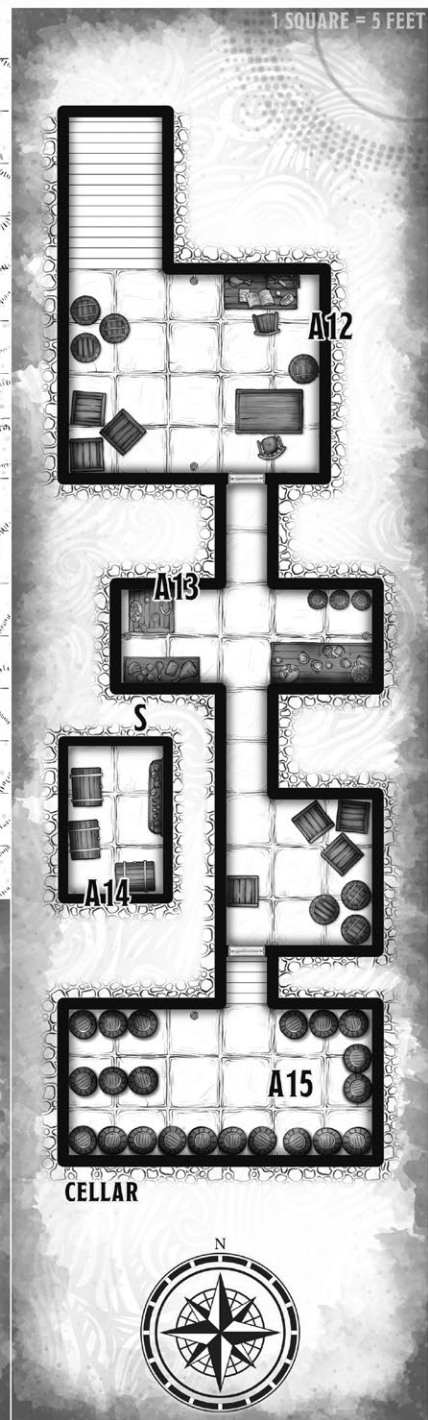
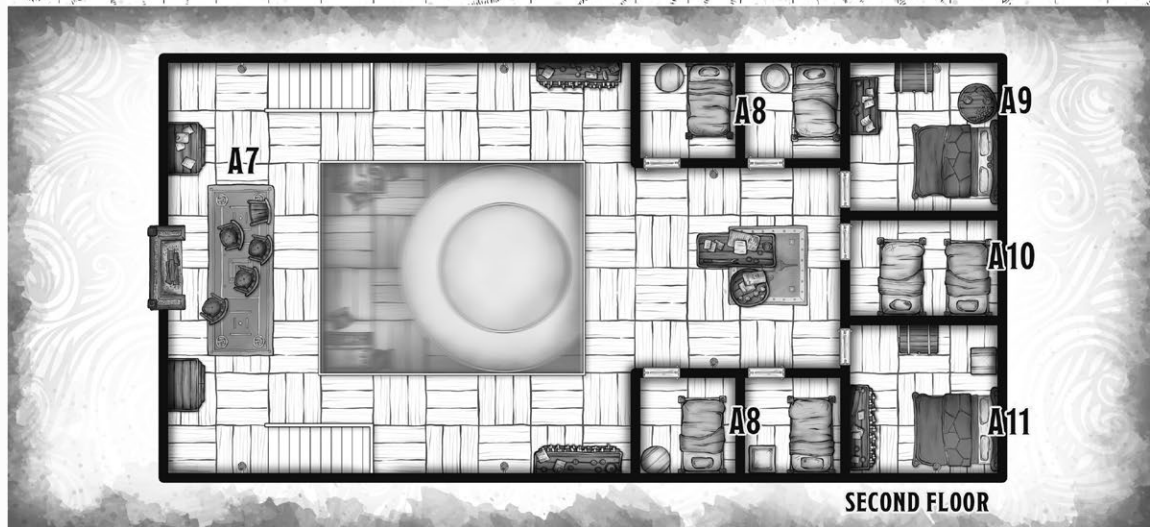
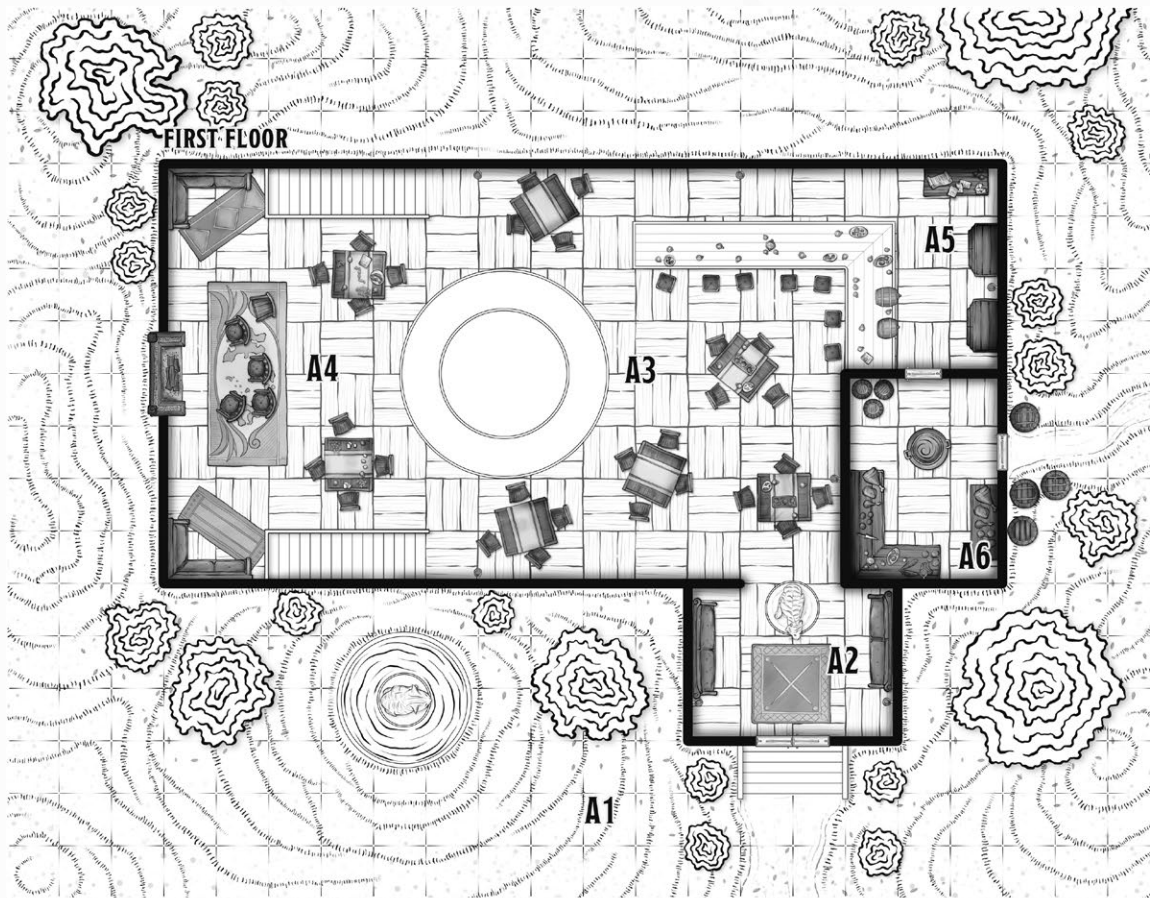
**Detect.** The drake makes a Perception check.

**Claw Attack.** The drake makes a claw attack.

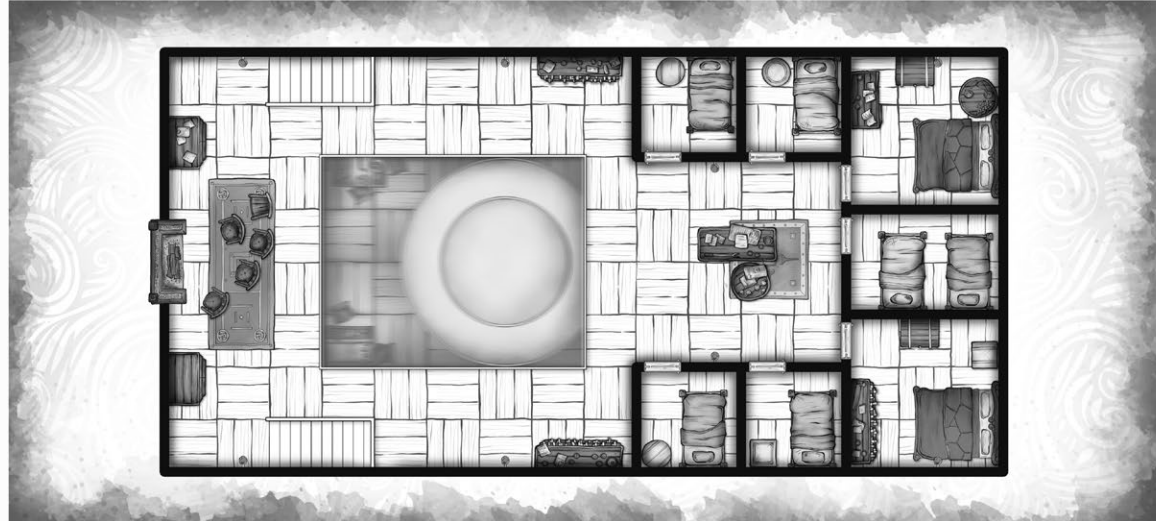
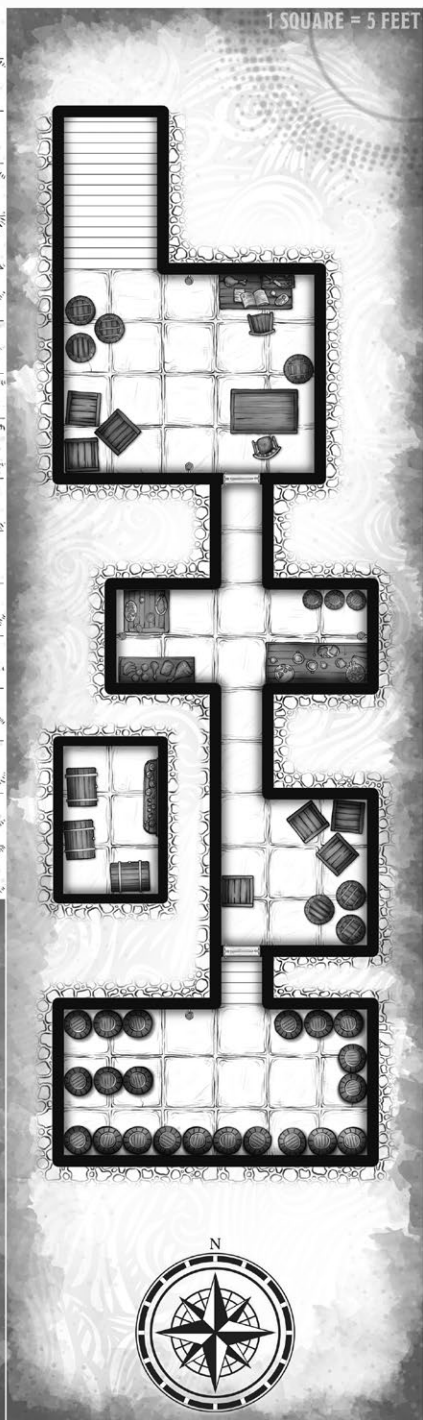
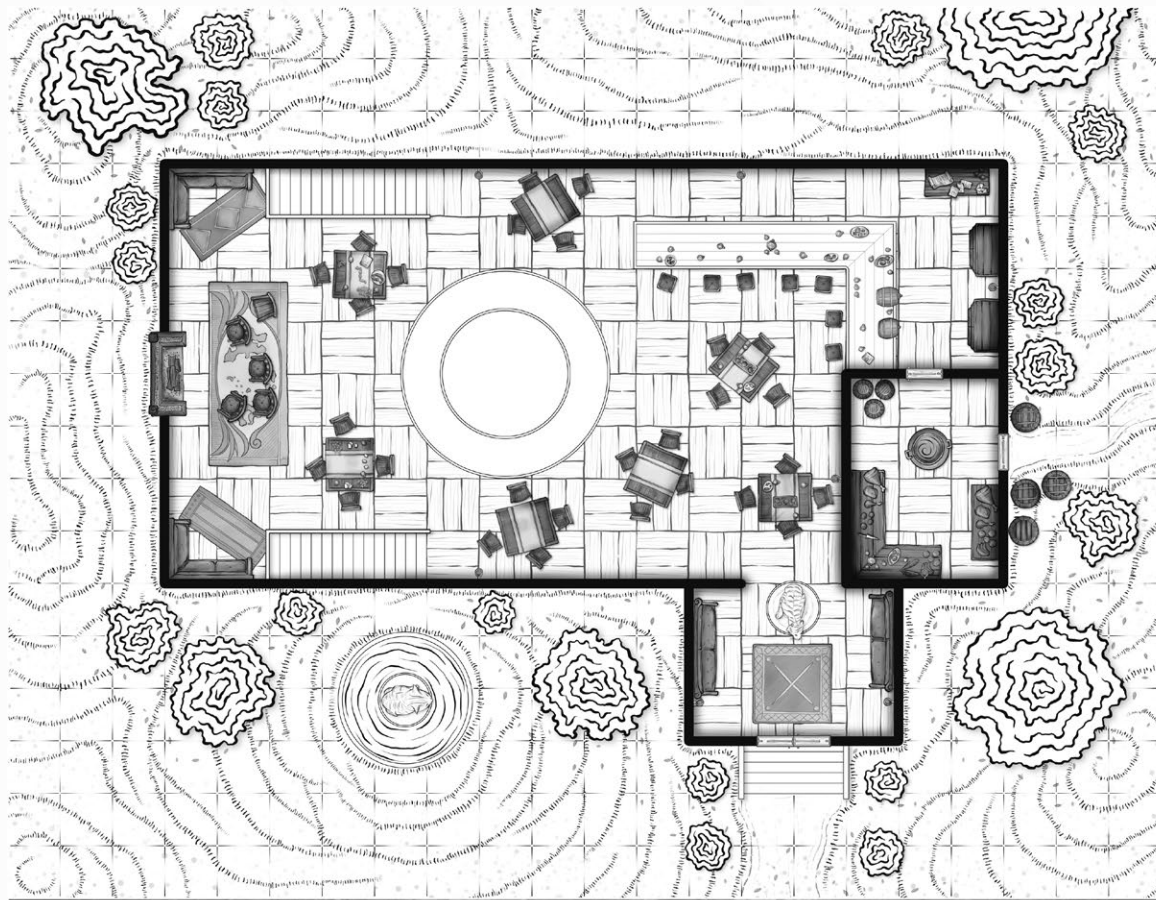
**Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions).** The drake beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the drake must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The drake can then fly up to half its flying speed.



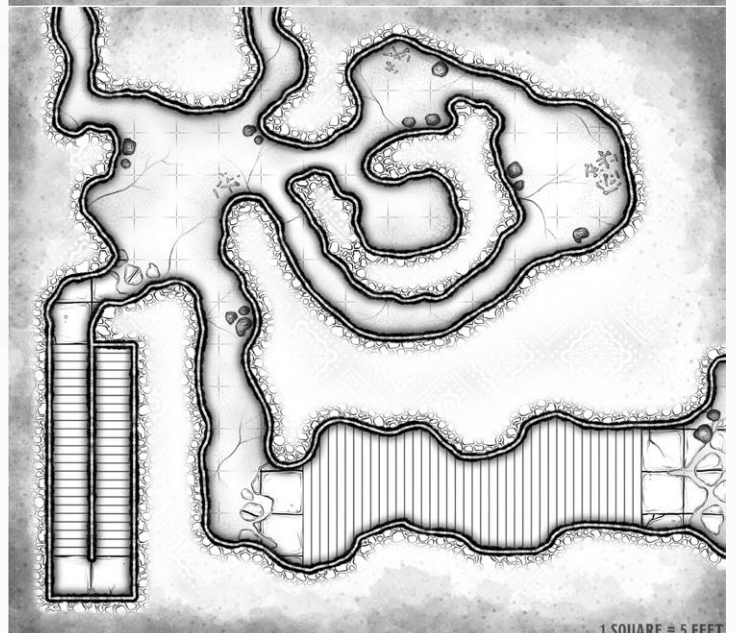
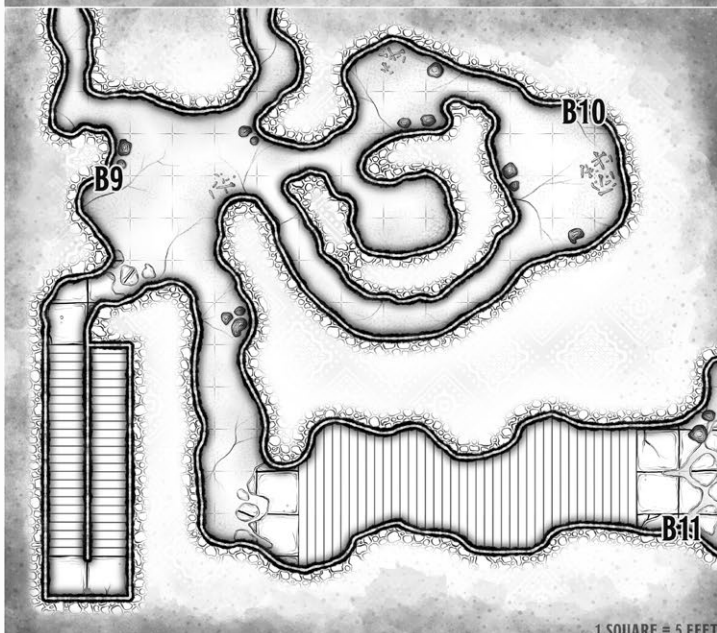
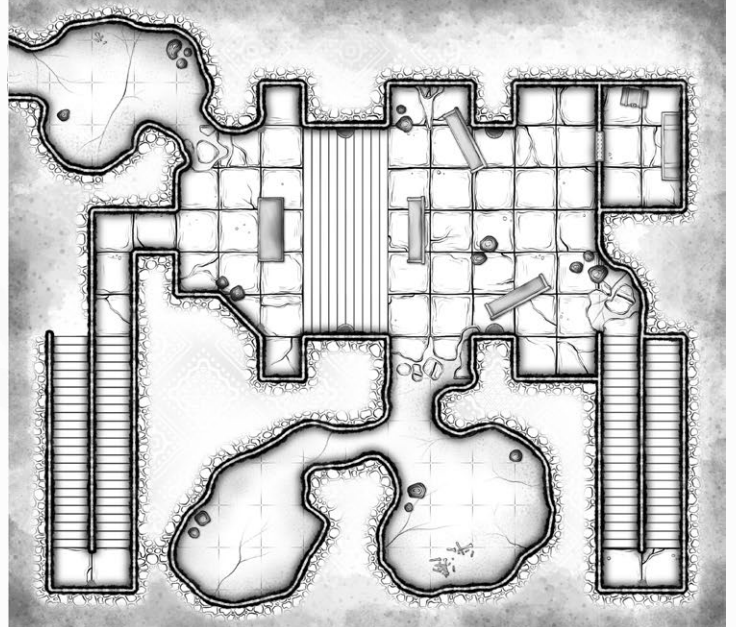
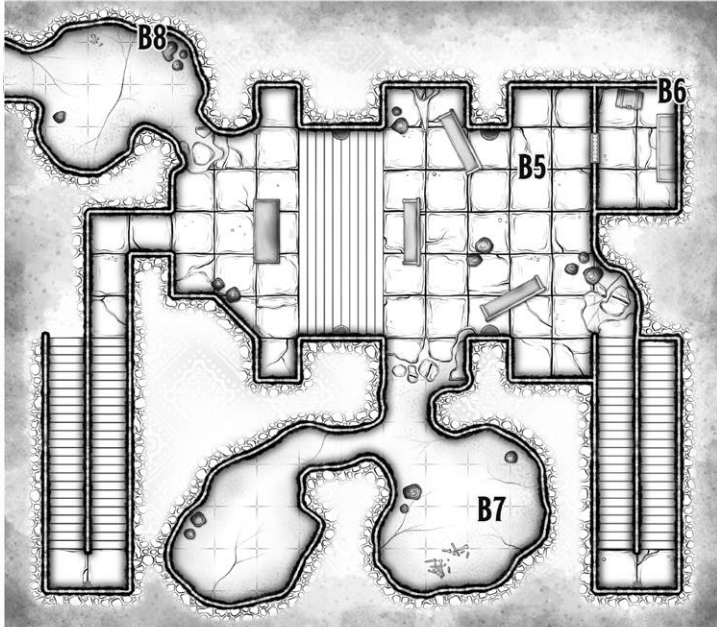
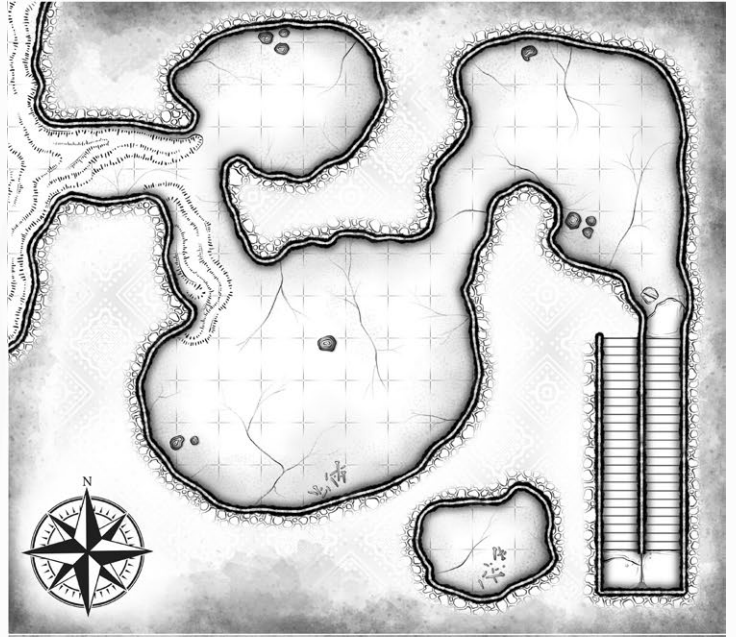
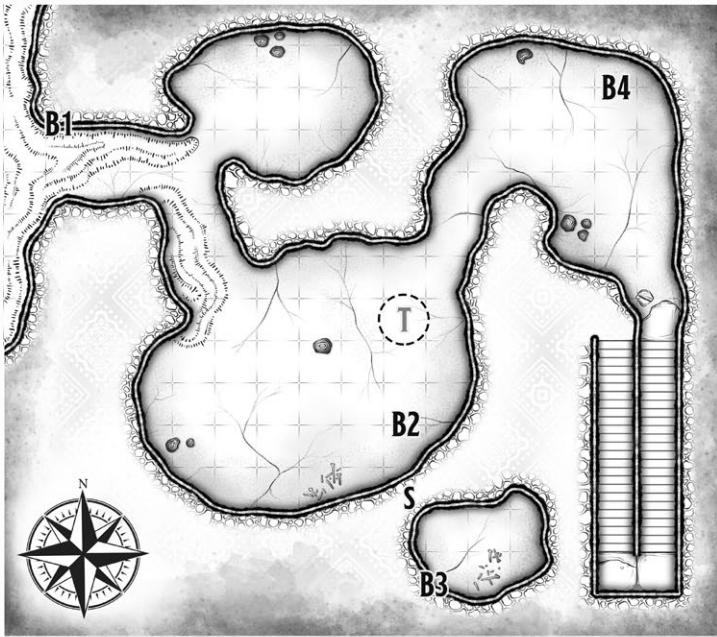
# APPENDIX - MAPS



## GM MAP



**PC MAP**

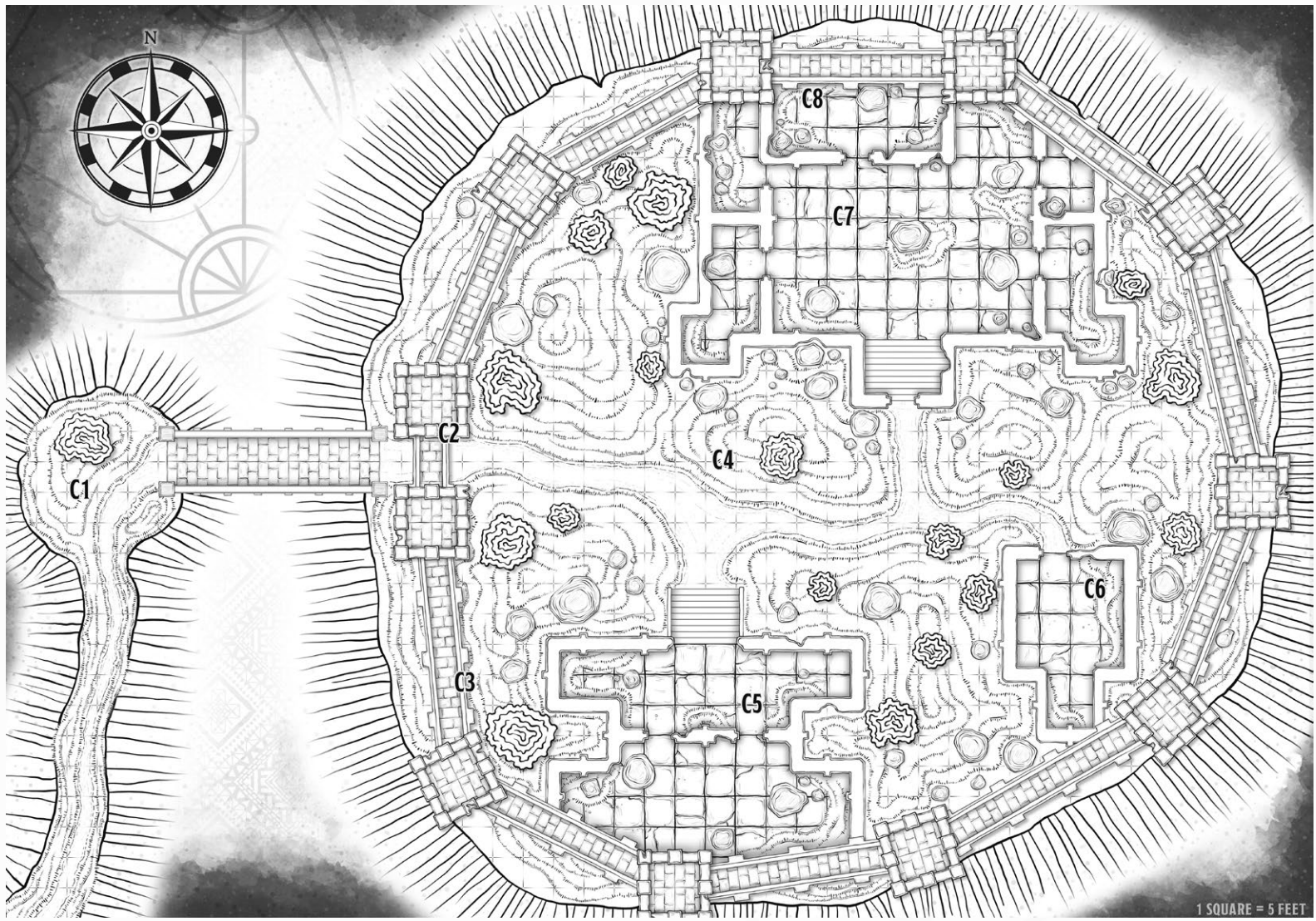


1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

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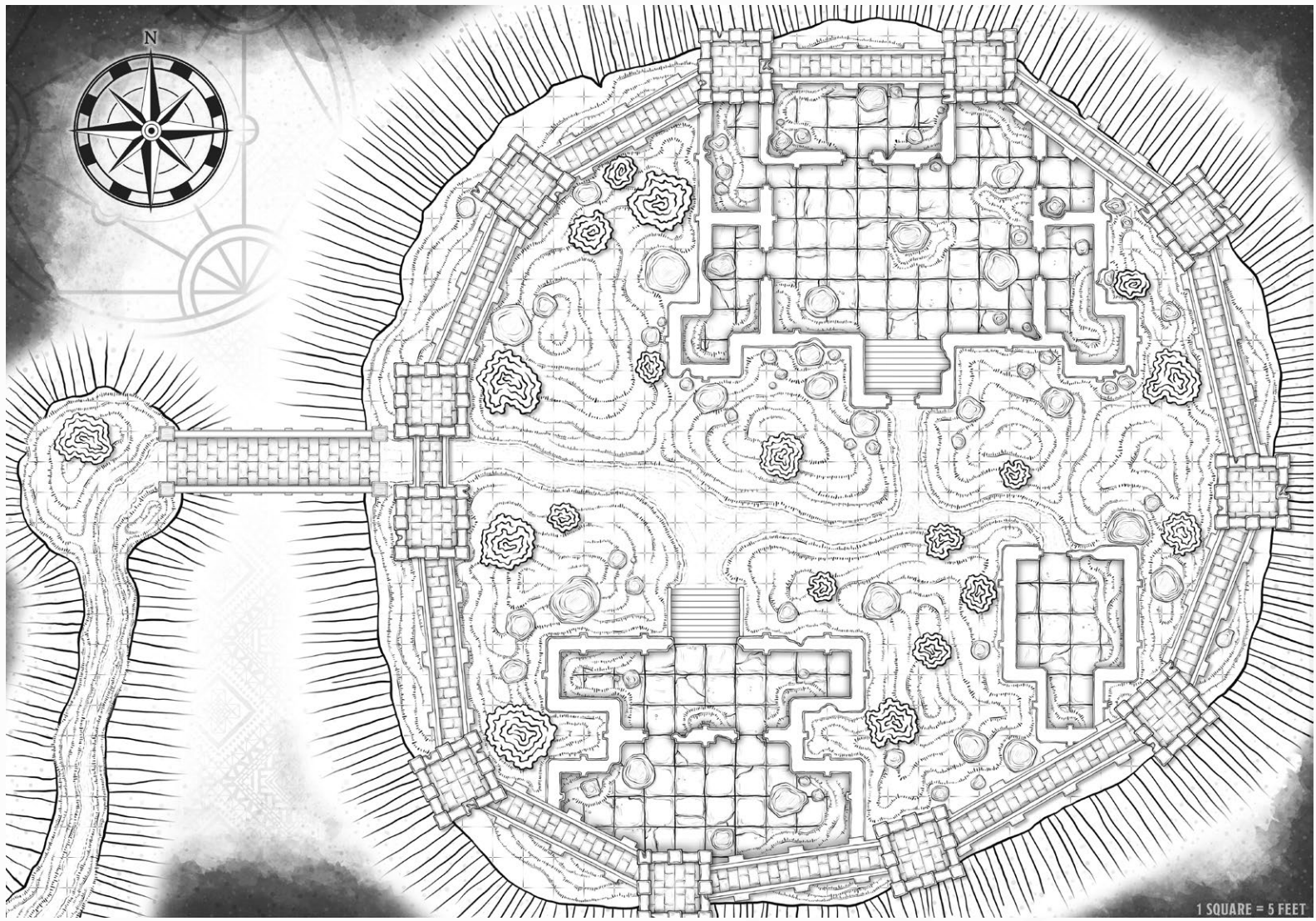






# GM MAP

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

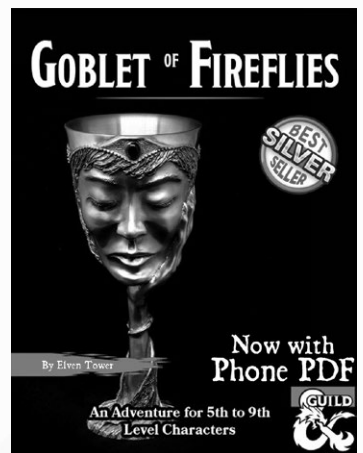
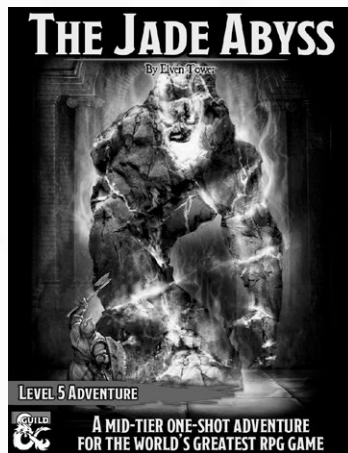
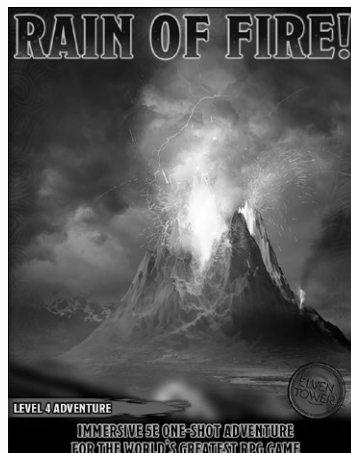
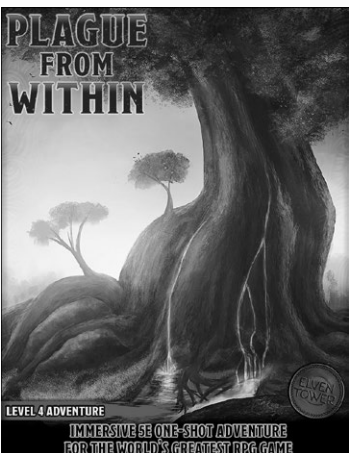
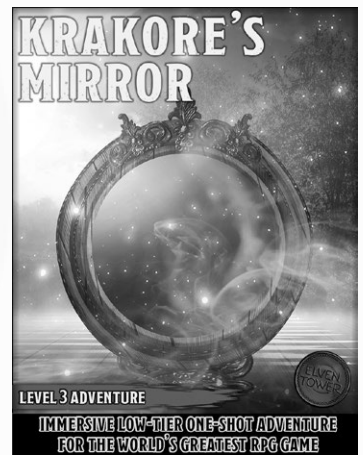
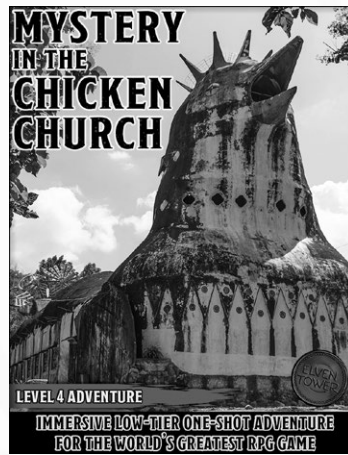
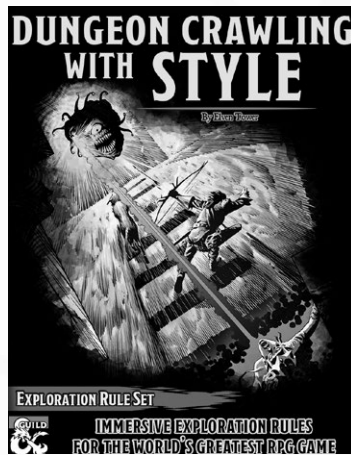
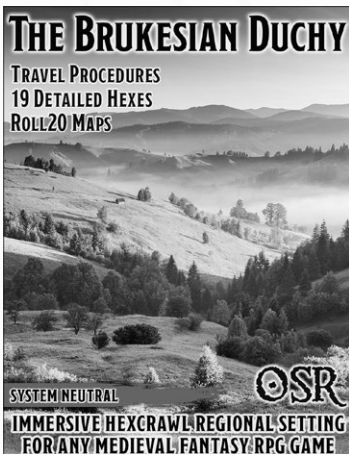


# PC MAP

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