

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

Draconic Threat



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HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT-ROLL20 MAPS



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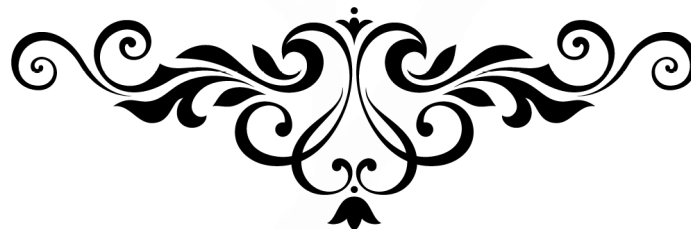





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits	2	Temple of the Dragon God23
		<i>Level 2-3 Dungeon</i>	
Table of Contents	3	Curse of Pinegate27
Leaf Valley	5	<i>Brochure Adventure</i>	
<i>Level 1-4 Region</i>		Ironbark Catacombs . . . . .	.29
Leaf Valley Creatures.	8	<i>Level 3 Dungeon</i>	
Queendell. . . . .	.10	Shrine of Beggars . . . . .	.32
<i>Level 1-2 Settlement</i>		<i>Level 3 Dungeon</i>	
Night of Spirits . . . . .	.13	Maw of the Ruby Dragon . . . . .	.36
<i>Level 1-2 Encounter</i>		<i>Level 4 Dungeon</i>	
Willowhill. . . . .	.16	Thank You . . . . .	.40
<i>Level 2-3 Settlement</i>		Licensing . . . . .	.41
Wildsor. . . . .	.20		
<i>Level 3 Encounter</i>			




Thus Spoke Targanorath



Foolish mortal, you dare disturb my slumber and steal what is mine? I am Targanorath, the ageless flame, guardian of ancient power long forgotten by your fleeting kind. You, Eustace Gibett, in your arrogance, have taken a ring forged in the heart of my wrath. The Draconid Band is a token of power; no mortal hand can bear its weight.

For your insolence, I condemn you to a fate worse than death. You shall wear the skin of a beast, twisted and vile, an abomination of dragonkind. Pain will be your constant companion, and grief shall consume your soul for all eternity. Walk this world as a wretched being, forever cursed to know the suffering of the dragons you have scorned.

May your screams echo across time, Eustace, for no one shall remember your name. Your life, deeds, and legacy shall become a forgotten crime.



LEAF VALLEY

“Leaf and flame may battle for the soul of this valley, but it is courage, not chaos, that will decide its fate. Help us! We must come out victorious.”

Shelendra, Ruler of Leaves



Leaf Valley, once a lush and peaceful haven, now stands on the edge of catastrophe. Known for its emerald forests, tranquil streams, and towering willows, the region's harmony has been shattered by the fiery wrath of a dragon that scorches the skies. Yet, this is no ordinary dragon, for the truth of its origin lies in a terrible curse. Unbeknownst to most, the incredible creature is not a natural-born terror, but a man who defiled the sacred—Eustace Gibett.

THE TRAGEDY OF EUSTACE GIBETT

EUSTACE GIBETT WAS once an ambitious explorer, driven by greed and an insatiable curiosity for ancient magic. Leading a group of fellow treasure hunters, he ventured into the forbidden Temple of the Dragon God, a long-forgotten ruin dedicated to the veneration of Targaronath, the Elder Wyrm of the Crimson Flame. For centuries, the temple had been sealed, its wards protecting the sanctity of the remains of this primordial being, but Eustace saw it as a mere obstacle in his quest for fortune.

He and his followers pillaged the temple, desecrating sacred relics, and looting ancient treasures, but their ultimate prize was a magic ring—the *Draconid Band*, a powerful ring imbued with ruby and draconic energy. It was never meant to be worn by a mortal, and in taking it, Eustace unknowingly sealed his fate. The moment the ring touched his finger, he was overcome by a curse from Targaronath's slumbering power. His body twisted, his humanity burnt away, and he became a mockery of the being he sought to exploit—a dragon, but smaller, more feral, and consumed by endless hunger and rage. The first of his crimes was to end the lives of his followers. The poor men were no match for the abomination.

In his cursed form, Eustace knows nothing but pain and destruction. His mind is lost, leaving only a beast that ravages the valley in a ceaseless frenzy. The once noble explorer is just a shell, driven by an insatiable thirst for chaos. There is a way to undo this process, but unfortunately for Eustace, the people of Leaf Valley are looking for heroes to defeat the monster, not to help it.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **The Quest.** Shelendra, the leader of Leaf Valley, has called for heroes. For her, the task is simple. The monster must perish. She ignores the origin of the dragon that ravages her territory so she needs brave warriors who shall not falter when confronting the beast. She offers a reward of 3,000 gp for the dragon's head (10 XP).

Level 1-4 Region

► **Shattered Sky.** A strange, permanent crimson glow taints the skies above Northcrest Mountain, a result of the ruby dragon's fiery breath. At night, the light pulses like a heartbeat, casting an ominous red hue over the valley. This has everyone worried and on their toes.

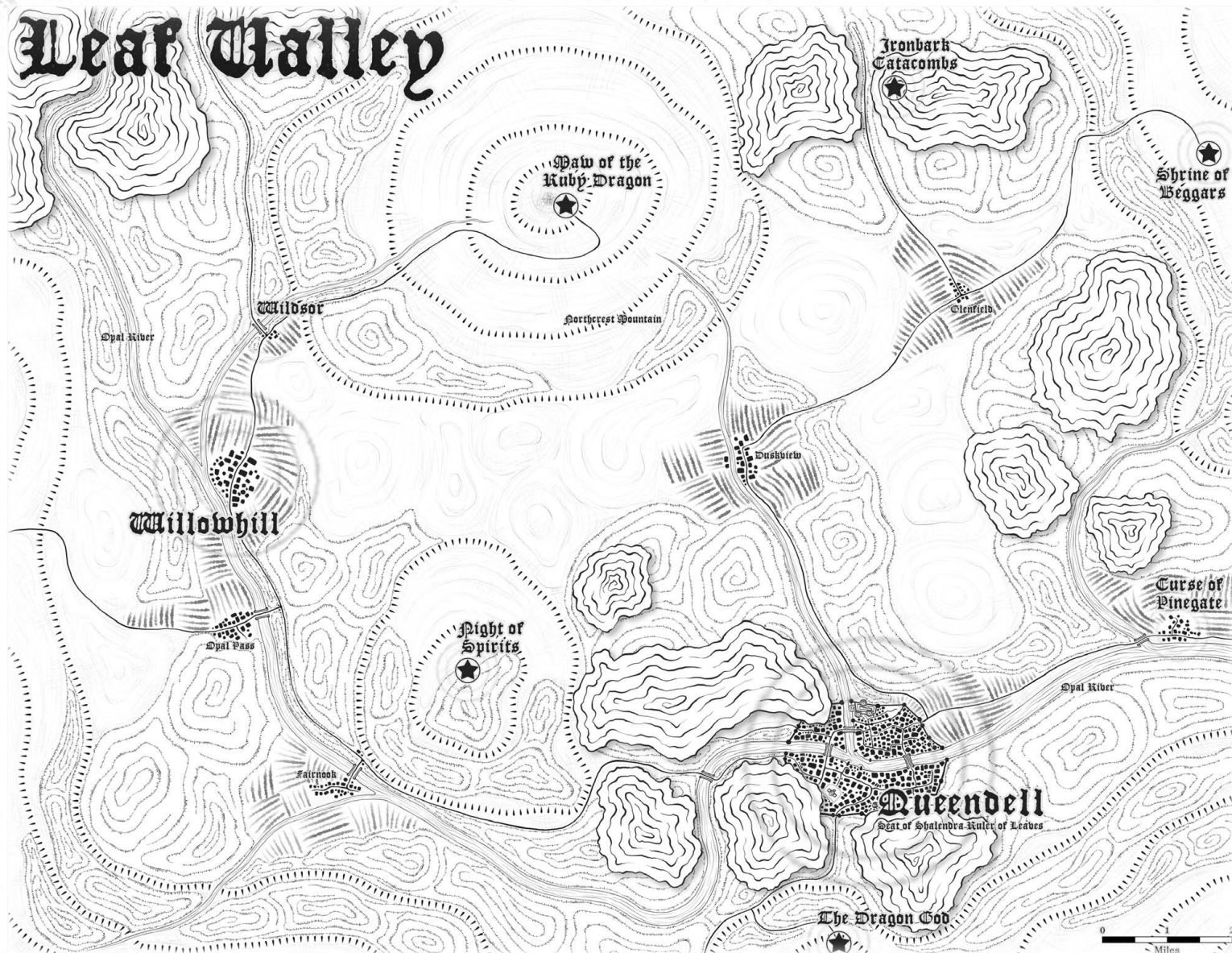
► **Destruction.** Throughout the valley, blackened earth and charred trees create a winding path of destruction leading from some locations to others. The air smells of ash, and faint embers flicker in the lands.

► **Whispering Winds.** As the heroes travel deeper into the vale, they notice the wind carries soft, eerie whispers, almost as if the very vale were speaking. Some believe the souls of the Night of Spirits communicate through the winds, warning of dangers ahead. This otherworldly feature has no mechanical effect on the journey, though.

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	Former travelers and visitors to the Night of Spirits say the ancient forest ghosts have grown restless, and one recently mentioned seeing “the cursed one” flee from something darker still, hidden in the valley's heart. It is all a mysterious message.
2	The dragon is the result of powerful magic. The elder druids of Glenfield speak of strange magics binding the creature.
3	Rumor has it that a second dragon, much larger and more powerful, slumbers deep beneath Northcrest Mountain.
4	Locals say that Duskview is slowly disappearing, house by house. There are various crazy stories surrounding this rumor. Some believe the town is being pulled into a parallel realm as a result of the dragon's cursed presence. This is not true.
5	It is said that an ancient dragonkin, once a servant of Targaronath, still lives in exile within the forest north of Glenfield.
6	Traveling merchants whisper that foul bandits, emboldened by the chaos, have taken to ambushing all travelers in the territory.

Leaf Valley



EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d6 when the characters travel to a new location. Roll twice if they travel during the night, or if they fail to spot monsters and danger (DC 9 WIS check).

1. The heroes stumble upon a **rhinoceros**. The wild beast is neutral to them unless they approach.
2. The heroes see 2d8 wild **horses** running free.
3. The heroes unluckily walk on the path that brigands stalk. One **thief** and three **bandits** threaten them.
4. A scared, angry **gorilla** panics before the heroes. The large primate is trying to get away from a **troll**. They can ignore the chase. But if the heroes step in, the troll turns its attention to them entirely.
5. While the heroes travel, the **ruby dragon** flies above their heads. It breathes fire on them and then flies away, satisfied with its chaotic attitude.
6. Spawns of the ruby dragon find the heroes. Three **ashen wyrmlings** fly up to them and attack!

QUEENDELL, SEAT OF SHALENDRA, RULER OF LEAVES

Shalendra, the Ruler of Leaves, has reigned for centuries with wisdom and grace. Her connection to the natural world is profound and the valley has flourished under her rule. However, even Shalendra's powerful magics cannot quell the threat posed by the cursed dragon.

She oversees the city from the Bastion of Leaves, her home and fort. The strong walls and watchtowers keep the people calm and protected. Queen dell's citizens trust that their leader shall find a solution to their problem.

NIGHT OF SPIRITS

A mystical grove where time seems to stand still. Under a canopy of old trees, the boundary between the mortal realm and the spirit world fades. Locals believe that the whispers of ancestors can be heard on moonlit nights. Pilgrims visit this sacred place to seek guidance, perform rituals, or leave offerings and feel blessed. The grove offers a unique opportunity to commune with the ethereal, uncovering secrets long forgotten by the living.

WILLOWHILL

Second only to Queendell, Willowhill is a large and prosperous settlement known for its willow-lined avenues and bountiful farmland. The city's namesake trees bend low, creating natural archways throughout the town. Willowhill is famed for its skilled herbalists and brewers who create potions and remedies known throughout the valley. However, the dragon's recent raids have left many of its fields scorched, and the once-thriving marketplace is now a place of anxious whispers and shuttered stalls.

WILDSOR

Wildsor is located nearby the Northcrest Mountain. It is a rugged and untamed place, home to hunters, trappers, and woodsmen who live in constant vigilance against the dangers that lurk beyond the valley's protective mountains. The dragon has hit Wildsor the hardest, and many of its people have fled south to Willowhill, or disappeared into the wild, hoping to find refuge and remain unnoticed. Those who remain have fortified their town, preparing for what may be a final, desperate defense.

TEMPLE OF THE DRAGON GOD

Leaf Vale's inhabitants know little about this place. Magical wards and immortal guardians have kept treasure-seekers and tomb robbers at bay. But the heroes might find answers to valuable information here.

CURSE OF PINEGATE

The poor people of Pinegate find themselves under a strange spell. Everyone in town suffers from horrible nightmares. No one has been able to get a good night's sleep in weeks. The people affected ignore if this situation has anything to do with the scaled monster. Fortunately, Pinegate remains untouched by the dragon's fire.

IRONBARK CATACOMBS

Hidden deep beneath the towering trees north of Leaf Vale, are a vast network of ancient tunnels carved into the roots of the legendary Ironbark trees. Long used as a burial ground for the valley's most honored warriors and druids, the catacombs are guarded by enchanted roots that shift and coil, protecting the sacred dead.

SHRINE OF BEGGARS

A humble stone altar, weathered by time, nestled in a quiet hillside to the east of Glenfield. Once a place where the destitute came to offer prayers to forgotten gods, it is said that those who leave a coin or a scrap of food may receive a fleeting glimpse of their future.

MAW OF THE RUBY DRAGON

Once a dormant volcanic chamber, this place has become the lair of the cursed dragon, Eustace. Rubies and molten rock glisten in the dim light, giving the cave its ominous name, though few dare approach. The heroes may learn about the *Draconid Band's* existence, the source of Eustace's torment, before coming here. To defeat or try to help the dragon is something they must decide.

OTHER LOCATIONS

Apart from the capital and Willowhill, Leaf Vale's population is scattered in many other smaller, but not less important towns. The heroes' quest may bring them to any of the following locations: Duskview, Glenfield, Opal Pass, and Fairnook. The locals consider themselves lucky; the dragon has focused its rage on the larger settlements as of now. However, the populace believes something must be done before the draconic abomination destroys their farms and everything they have worked for. Nobody from these towns knew Eustace in the past, nor his fate.



LEAF VALLEY CREATURES

THE CREATURES OF Leaf Valley, once harmonious with the land, have become twisted by the dragon's presence. The Purple-Leaf Mandrake, a docile creature harvested and used in local herbalism, has gone back to its aggressive demeanor. They scream violently when uprooted, causing madness in those who hear their cries. Forest wolves and stags, normally timid, have become greatly aggressive and unwary of any intruder. Even the birds of the vale screech in panic, scattering from their nests as the scent of sulfur permeates the air. The once-peaceful creatures seem to sense the looming presence of the dragon, their minds frayed by the constant aura of fear and fire.

The Ruby Dragon

A grotesque, cracked red dragon, its molten scales and tattered wings embodying the agony and mindless rage of the curse that twisted its body.

AC: 14

HP: 41 LV 8

ATK: 2 rend +2 (2d8) of 1 fire breath

MV: Double Near (fly)

S:+4 D:+2 C:+3 I:+1 W:+1 Ch:+1

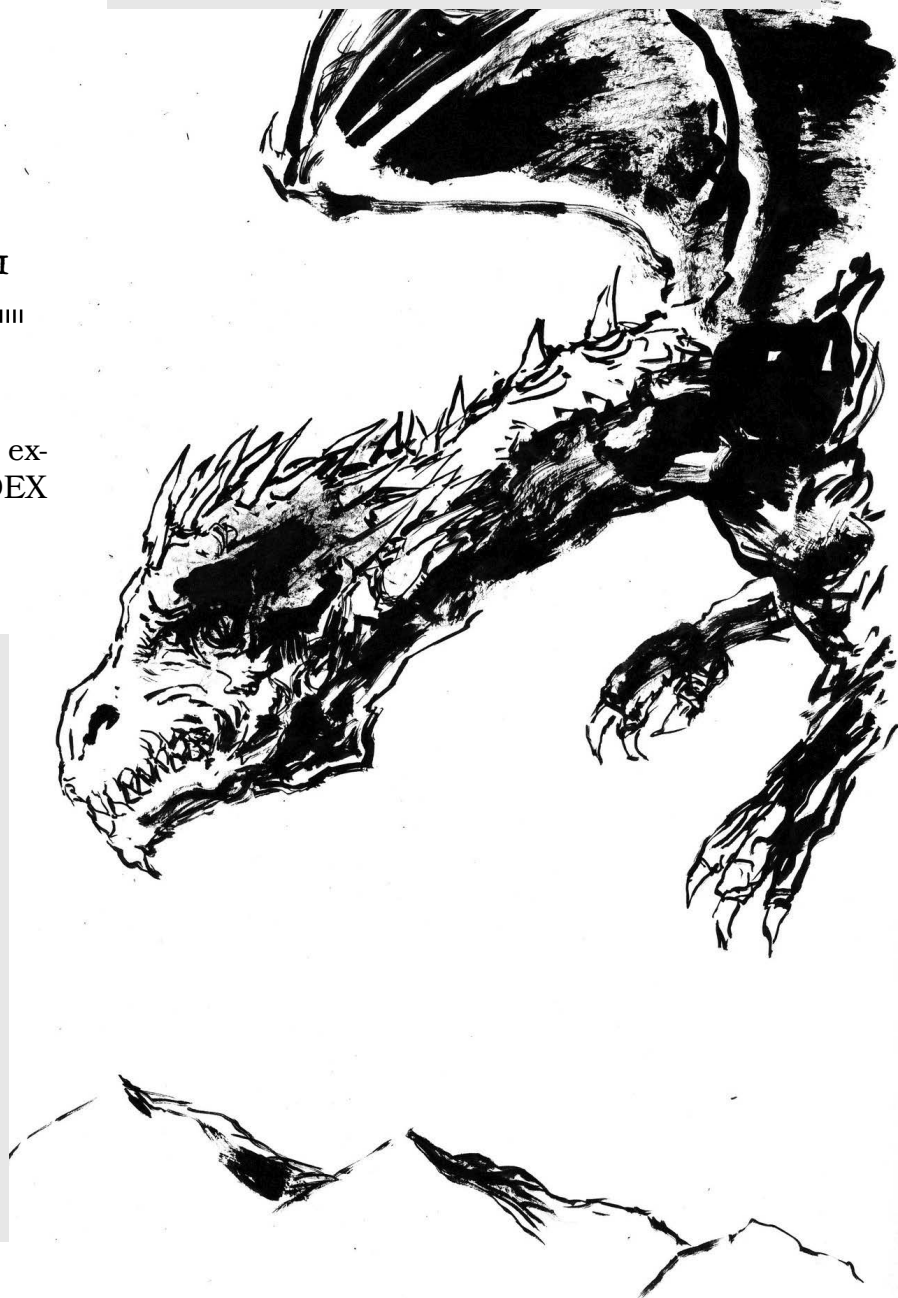


Ruby Protection. Fire Immune.

Fire Breath. Fills a double near-sized cube extending from the dragon. All targets DC 12 DEX or 3d10 damage.

EUSTACE, THE CURSED

Eustace the Cursed is a twisted version of a fire dragon, smaller but no less terrifying. His scales are cracked, uneven. They glow with an angry, molten light. His once-human eyes burn with mindless rage, and his maw constantly drips with flames that sputter and hiss. Every roar that escapes his throat is a cry of agony, a reminder of the curse that has consumed his body and his soul.



THE DRACONIC BAND

The *Draconid Band* is an ancient ring, forged from the molten scales of Targaronath, the Elder Wurm of the Crimson Flame, by dragonkin long forgotten. It was designed as a conduit for the raw, primal magic of dragons, meant only for their kind to wield. The ring holds immense power, capable of amplifying fire magic and bending dragon spirits to the wearer's will. However, when worn by a mortal, the ring overwhelms their body, twisting them into a draconic form—a smaller, weaker mockery of a true dragon that spawns even more twisted versions of itself. The *Draconic Band* binds to the soul, making it hard, but not impossible, to remove. Thus, perhaps there is still a faint hope for Eustace, the Cursed.

Ashen Wyrmling

Small, arcane offspring of the ruby dragon, with cracked black scales that leak embers and smoke.

AC: 12

HP: 11 LV 2

ATK: 1 rend +2 (1d6) or 1 fire bolt

MV: Near (fly)

S:+2 D:+1 C:+0 I:-1 W:+0 Ch:-1

.....

Ruby Protection. Fire Immune.

Fire Bolt. One target within far. DC 9 DEX or 1d8 damage.

Mandrake

A gnarled, humanoid-rooted plant that screams when uprooted, its piercing cry a lethal defense.

AC: 6

HP: 3 LV 1 ATK: 1 cry

MV: None

S:-4 D:-3 C:+1 I:-1 W:+1 Ch:+0

.....

Cry. Enemies who can hear within double Near DC 12 CHA. On a fail, they take 1d3 CON damage. Creatures reduced to 0 CON die.

Uproot. 1/day, the mandrake tries to push itself upward with a 3-in-6 chance.



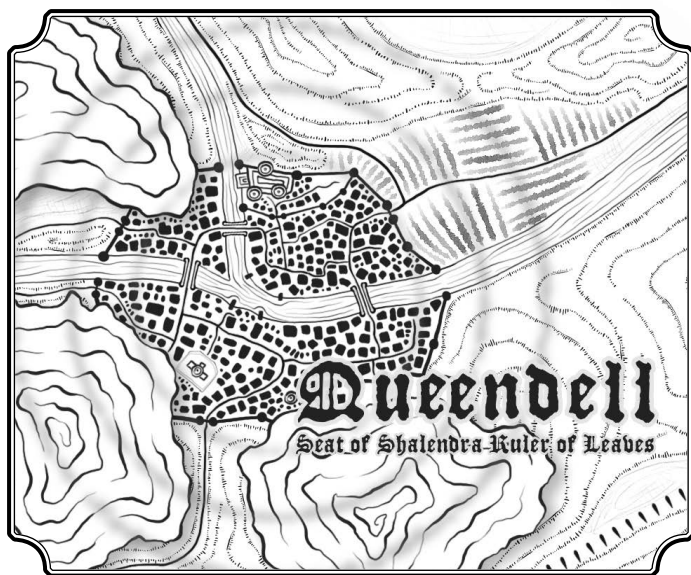
QUEENDELL

“Leaf Valley has never seen a threat so ominous. Mighty heroes, I summon you to wealth and glory. Slay this dragon and become immortal in all our hearts.”

Shalendra, Ruler of Leaves



outheast of Northcrest Mountain lies the largest settlement in Leaf Valley: Queendell. The city was originally founded by forest elves centuries ago but migration and alliances with humans have slowly transformed the population and the once heavily-forested region. Shalendra, Ruler of Leaves, is the sole leader. The elf hierarch was among the city's founders and is the only authority the town has ever known. It has sometimes caused distress to humans as Shalendra, with her elven immortality, shall never relinquish power. Alas, she has proven to be a fair ruler and a shrewd negotiator, thus avoiding humans' proclivity to seek power and control. The new threat of the ruby dragon scouring the region is on everyone's minds. Stories of the dragon's attacks in northern settlements start to emerge as refugees arrive seeking protection from the scaled abomination. The danger looms ever closer.



Level 1-2 Settlement

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Elvish Abodes.** Queendell merges with the surrounding forest almost seamlessly. Large trees within the city walls feature elvish accommodations among their branches. Some elves refuse to live on the surface as humans; preferring their elvish traditions instead.

► **Shattered Sky.** The strange, crimson glow tainting the sky above Northcrest Mountain, is at times interrupted by a dark presence that flies above it. Even at such a distance, the ruby dragon can be glimpsed above the treetops that surround the city of Queendell.

1. LINNA'S BREWERY

The pungent smell of fermenting ale surrounds this wooden building and welcomes weary travelers. Linna, the master brewer, directs many laborers in their craft.

Lost Shipment (3 XP). Linna offers 300 gp to sellwords to visit her associate Mark in Pinegate. Mark is a barley farmer who should have sent a shipment a week ago but it is missing. There are strange rumors about Pinegate but Linna believes none, she needs the barley.

2. CHOP-STEW INN

This three-story building is the perfect place for adventurers and traveling merchants to settle during their adventures in the Leaf Valley. The owner is a dwarf named Gardold who is always inebriated and blushing.

► **Pilgrims (2 XP).** Twelve **peasants** gather here to set out toward the Night of Spirits. Anticipating trouble, they offer 150 gp to the characters as bodyguards.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 Rumor has it that a fabled, fire-resistant set of armor is hidden in the Ironbark Catacombs, an ancient elvish tomb.
- 2 Beggars in the city clamor about a holy shrine east of Northcrest Mountain. Stories vary but they claim great treasure is buried there but it can only be claimed by someone who knows no greed. It is also said that the near future can be glimpsed there.
- 3 Ten farmer refugees arrived yesterday from Willowhill. They said the ruby dragon was flying above the town when they left.
- 4 A messenger from Pinegate came yesterday to request Shalendra's aid. The man claimed that no one in Pinegate can sleep as they suffer from foul nightmares. Nonetheless, he was sent away as the urgency to deal with the dragon trumps all else.
- 5 People say that the glow from Northcrest Mountain foreshadows a future eruption of the dormant volcano.
- 6 A relief caravan wants to travel to Willowhill. No escort dares accompany them though they offer 200 gp as payment (2 XP).



Queendell

Seat of Shalendra Ruler of Leaves



1. Linna's Brewery
2. Chop-Stew Inn
3. Red Auction house
4. Gamblers' Abode
5. Quartz Observatory
6. Queendell Docks
7. House of Flames
8. Adventurers' Guild
9. Sir Wilhelm's Home
10. The Elfin Bazaar
11. Rivercross Library
12. Bastion of Leaves

3. RED AUCTION HOUSE

This museum and storehouse of interesting items and relics from the past hosts an auction every Thursday at sunset. Merchants and nobles gather to bid on these pieces and to mingle with each other. The curator of the fine collection is Shalendra's sibling, Theverell.

► **Retrieval (5 XP).** Theverell seeks valiant warriors to travel to the Shrine of Beggars to retrieve a mythical relic called the *Beggar's Cape*. He offers 450 gp for it.

4. GAMBLERS' ABODE

Open all day and night, the Gamblers' Abode is the perfect place to splurge one's money and carouse until all gold coins are spent. This elf-managed business caters to all social circles and features entertaining card games and dice wagers. It is truly a gold trap.

► **Peace-Making (1 XP).** During the characters' first visit, four drunk **thugs** rage after losing their games; they hit the clerks and start thrashing the place. If the characters help the two **guards** to restrain and arrest the thugs, the manager is thankful and offers 100 gp as a reward.

5. QUARTZ OBSERVATORY

The domed top of this elvish spire opens at night to gaze at the skies and, increasingly these days, toward Northcrest Mountain. An elf **apprentice** named Veler uses the telescope to observe the stars and infer the future from their movements and positions. His predictions are not accurate as he slowly learns the ways of magic.

► **The Lens (4 XP).** Veler laments the inaccuracy of both his observations and predictions as his former master retired and left him alone. He claims that a quartz lens is said to be guarded in a place known as the Temple of the Dragon God. He offers 350 gp to escort him there. He wishes to find this lens to improve his telescope.

6. QUEENDELL DOCKS

The docks are crowded with small vessels and barges from the western settlements as refugees arrive. City guards do their best to sort them out but they are disorganized and lack the resources for proper shelter. The characters can use a barge to travel to Pinegate for 5 gp each. Navigating west, upstream, is not possible.

7. HOUSE OF FLAMES

The turmoil and worry from the town abate in the temple grounds. The aura of peace before the House of Flames attracts those who seek to calm their souls. The priest, a man named Jorland, does his best to quell the fearful townsfolk and offer shelter to the endless stream of refugees. When meeting the characters, Jorland shares that he has foreseen troubling signs during his meditations.

► **The Curse (0 XP).** Trying to find a solution to the dragon problem, the priest prayed to the god of flames for advice. In prayer, he has seen strange images of a doomed expedition to a temple south of Queendell. He has seen the pain and suffering of a single man. He knows not how this relates to the ruby dragon but beckons the characters to visit the Temple of the Dragon God.

8. ADVENTURER'S GUILD

Led by the retired adventurer Danna Wolf-Eye, the Adventurer's Guild is a good place to look for mercenary work. Danna charges 2 gp per adventurer to sign up.

► **Escort (2 XP).** Danna offers 150 gp to travel to Glenfield and escort any refugees there to Queendell.

► **The Noble (2 XP).** A high-born man wishes to visit the Night of Spirits with his daughter to make an offering. Danna offers 180 gp to escort them there and back.

9. SIR WILHELM'S HOME

Knighted after beating single-handedly a wolfish monster in Duskview, Sir Wilhelm (**knight**) seeks glory once more. Sir Wilhelm summons the characters to dine at this table and offers his services if he sees them on the streets. Otherwise, the characters meet Sir Wilhelm in the Bastion of Leaves as he too heeds Shalendra's call. The knight is held in high regard in Shalendra's court; she recommends the party welcome his help.

10. THE ELFIN BAZAAR

Characters seeking traveling equipment, dungeoneering gear, carts, mounts, and a small selection of potions and menial magic items can find all that here. Dozens of merchants offer their wares here during the day.

11. RIVERCROSS LIBRARY

Characters looking to increase their knowledge of the region and its locations find important information after 1d6 hours of research (DC 12 INT check).

► **Ironbark Catacombs.** It is a burial site of great elvish warriors. It is said that a dragon guards their remains.

► **Shrine of Beggars.** Offering a coin or food at this altar provides a glimpse of a fleeting image of one's future.

► **Temple of the Dragon God.** A gatehouse's log reveals that the place was visited by Eustace Gibett weeks ago. Their expedition never came back to Queendell.

12. BASTION OF LEAVES

A fine amalgam of elvish and human architecture, the Bastion of Leaves is a resilient fortress that has never been lost in battle. Three elvish spires rise to overlook Queendell; the tallest structures in the city.

► **Summons.** Valiant warriors and mercenaries are summoned to the castle for the war effort. Messengers in the streets and taverns beckon all strong-looking people to heed the ruler's call to the Bastion of Leaves.

► **The Crisis.** Soldiers, mercenaries, mage apprentices, nobles, and the characters gather in the bastion's audience room where Shalendra, Ruler of Leaves awaits, sitting on a throne decorated with brass leaves. The elven ruler explains that many smaller settlements are under attack and refugees must be escorted to Queendell to protect them. According to witness reports, the dragon flies around Northcrest Mountain but increases the radius of its journeys with each passing day. The dragon is expected to storm Willowhill any given day. Soldiers and mercenaries are called to help escort and shelter the countless refugees from towns close to the mountain.

► **Dragon Slaying (10 XP).** Shalendra calls for the strongest of all to step forward as there is a dragon to slay. She offers 3,000 gp for the dragon's head as it must be put down immediately. Apart from the monetary reward, she offers knighthoods for the dragon slayers.



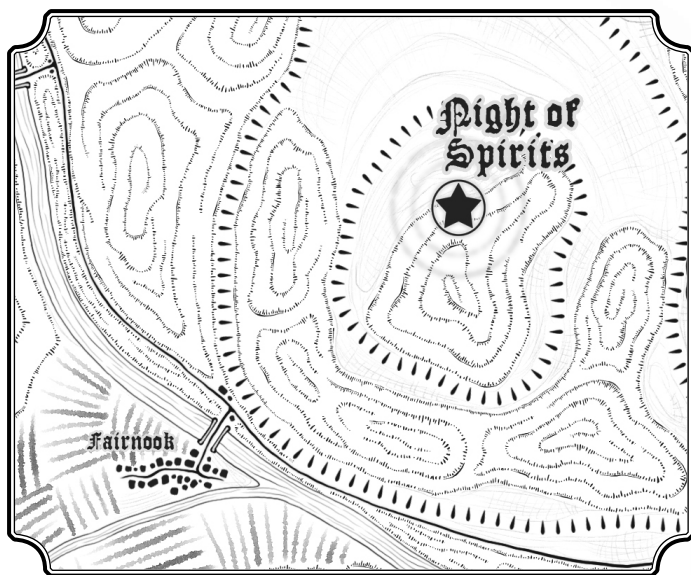
NIGHT OF SPIRITS

"It came two moons ago and threatens to siphon out our souls. We have tried to stop its endless thirst to no avail. Maybe you mortals can do something..."

The Cursed One

Located on top of a sparsely forested hill northeast of Fairnook is an ancient elvish ruin colloquially known as the Night of Spirits. It was once a temple and an observatory of druids. Alas, the druids left these lands centuries ago following the movement of astral bodies, leaving behind their stone observatory that has partially collapsed as it is reclaimed by nature. The arcane auras crafted by the druids shall last for eternity, they attract the attention of fey creatures and spirits from beyond the veil.

In time, the Night of Spirits has become a fabled place for the humans and elves of Leaf Valley. Locals believe that the spirits of the dead are attuned to this place. Hence the tradition of pilgrimages to this ruin to pray and leave offerings. The spirits are mostly harmless as they cannot directly interact with the living. But a few of them often pose a danger to the hapless pilgrims.



THE SPIRITS

HARMLESS, UNDEAD APPARITIONS meander in the area and appear to interact with pilgrims. Most are little more than barely-recognizable humanoid ghosts, but a few have some features and signature sounds that guides love to point out to first-time visitors. One of them is the Cursed One, a mischievous spirit that sometimes plays light-hearted pranks on pilgrims like stealing their purses, exchanging their shoes, or crying in their ears.

However, a new spirit came to the ruin, attracted by the magical auras. It is the Dark Veil Ghost, an undead monster far more dangerous than the rest of the spirits here. Just recently, the Dark Veil Ghost learned how to possess weak-minded people to use them as living weapons.

Level 1-2 Encounter

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Magic Aura.** The *detect magic* spell reveals a strong magical force coming from the top of the ruin where the sacred pond resides. It is an enchantment that attunes the mind to the whispers of the long-dead. Spellcasters have a +2 bonus casting spells within 30 feet of the pond.

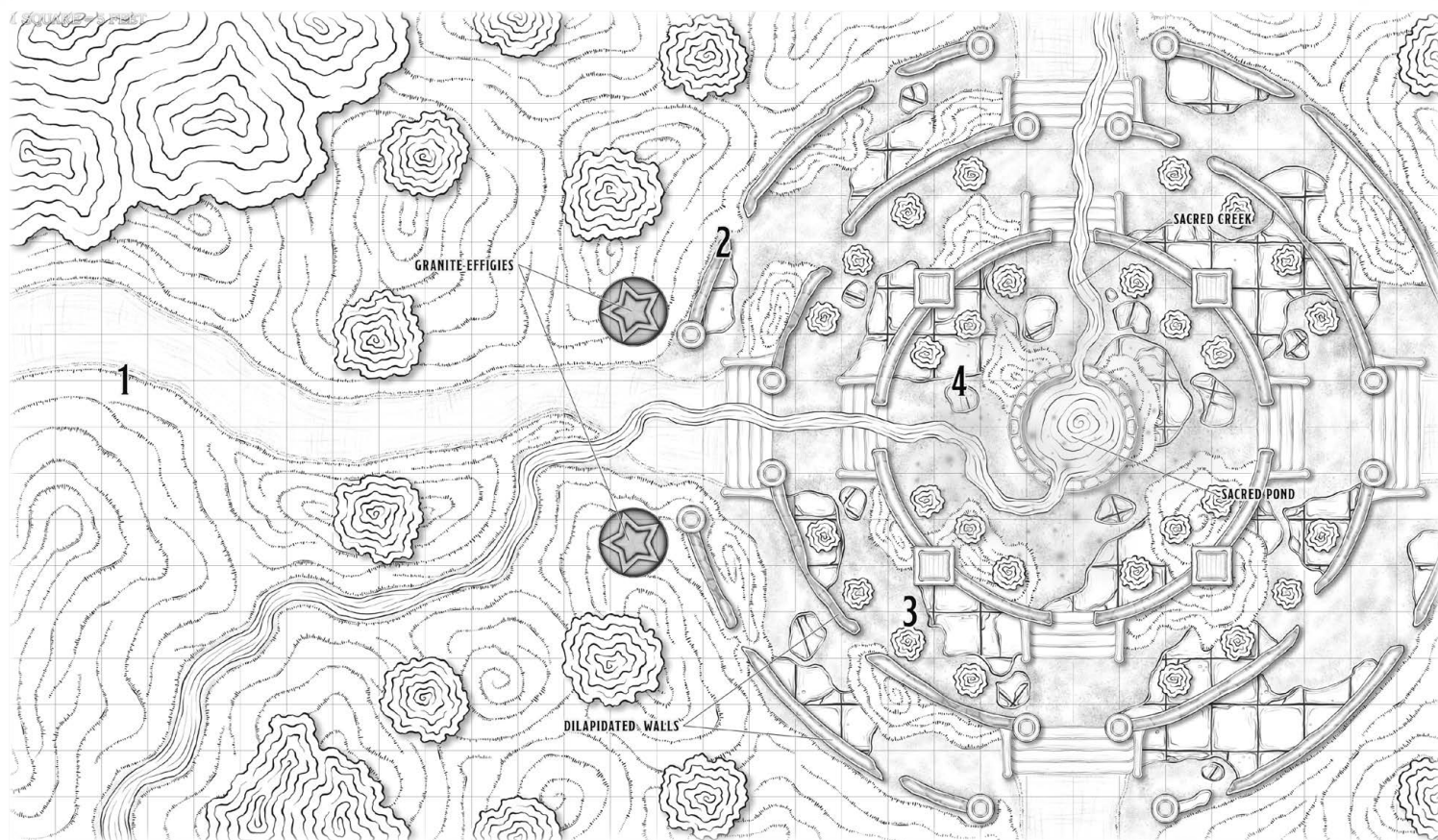
► **Pilgrims.** Visitors who come to pray are prone to be possessed by the Dark Veil Ghost. Characters must be careful when confronting them so as not to kill them.

1. REACHING THE OBSERVATORY

The Night of Spirits is 2 hours from Fairnook taking a well-trodden hill trail. Reaching the hilltop requires a minimum of stamina (DC 9 CON). On a fail, the character has disadvantage on all checks for 1 **crawling round**.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	The Cursed One (shadow) appears before the characters and begs them to get rid of the Dark Veil Ghost. Then, unable to control its mischievous attitude, the Cursed One steals a random weapon from a character (DC 12 DEX to avoid).
2	Four thugs arrive at the observatory intending to rob pilgrims of their gold and weapons. They flee if reduced to half their HP.
3	A thunderous roar pierces the hilltop's silence as the ruby dragon soars through the sky. It turns toward Northcrest Mountain.
4	Six refugees (peasants) from Opal Pass come here on their way to Queendell. They wish to spend the night by the pond.
5	The Dark Veil Ghost appears for 1d2 rounds and attacks the party. It prioritizes attacking a wizard or a priest.
6	A pilgrimage of dozens of ephemeral spirits floats from the bridge near Fairnook to the Night of Spirits. These ghosts ignore the living as they reach the pond and throw themselves into the clear waters. The water glows with their otherworldly energy.



2. THE OBSERVATORY ENTRANCE

Two towering statues of robed elves holding wooden staffs welcome travelers to the Night of Spirits. Between them, two flights of stairs ascend to the hilltop where a sacred glimmer warms lonesome souls.

Each of the statues features delicately-carved emeralds for eyes. As creatures move about the area, the statues' eyes appear to follow them with piercing gazes.

► **The Statues.** Inspecting the effigies for 1 **crawling round** reveals ancient druidic spells etched onto their surfaces. A spellcaster identifies this magic as a faint lure to attract roaming spirits to the ruined observatory.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Each eye is worth 50 gp (four in total). However, most people in Leaf Valley know these jewels well and no one will purchase them in the region. Prying out the emeralds summons three **shadows** to punish the characters for their unquenchable greed.

3. THE CONCENTRIC WALLS

The observatory features three concentric walls in a state of disrepair and erosion. The walls are 20 feet tall and are carved with strange patterns and bas-reliefs.

► **The Stone.** The walls are built from a volcanic rock brought from Northcrest Mountain (DC 12 INT).

► **The Reliefs.** Inspecting the reliefs reveals that the druids traveled south in their never-ending search for the ultimate truth of their cosmological model.

4. THE SACRED POND

Glimmering water flows from a 2-foot-tall stone pond at the top of the ruined compound. Light bugs, birds, and even ghosts are attracted to this place. The ominous magical aura can be felt even by mortal beings.

The druids of yore are long gone but their spells, weaved through the fabric of the world and the stones of the volcano, linger even now; attracting lost souls and spirits.

► **The Pond.** The sacred pond is the magical aura's source. A *dispel magic* spell can suppress the pond's power for 1 hour. If done during a combat encounter, all spirits in the area are banished for the time being.

► **The Water.** The crystal-clear liquid is imbued with magic and considered sacred. Pilgrims often drink it as the water's healing properties are beneficial to weary travelers. Drinking a cup-worth of water heals 1d4 hit points and cures minor, non-magical diseases. Drinking more water within a day causes a strong headache (Disadvantage on checks for 1 **crawling round**).

► **Pilgrimage.** People in the Night of Spirits pray at sunset and often stay the night huddled inside the innermost wall of the ruin, next to the pond. Rumor has it that sleeping to the water's pouring lull soothes the spirit. At dawn, if the spirits so will it, the pilgrim's fortune is changed. During the characters' visit, many pilgrims are present to pray and make offerings. The Dark Veil Ghost shall attack them soon (see **Of Pilgrims and Ghosts**).

OF PILGRIMS AND GHOSTS

MANY PEOPLE ARE present when the characters arrive at the Night of Spirits. There are twelve pilgrims by the Sacred Pond. In addition, the characters may have brought a retinue of pilgrims from Queendell or Willow-hill as many parties offer money to be escorted here.

However many pilgrims are present, they are common **peasants** with no combat training or weapons. When the sun sets and the pilgrims kneel before the sacred pond to pray, the **Dark Veil Ghost** attacks.

CONFUSION AND DISARRAY

THE DARK VEIL ghost does not reveal itself directly. It uses its **Possess** ability to take control of a random pilgrim. The **possessed pilgrim** stops praying and uses whatever weapon in its reach to attack another pilgrim. At first, it appears that a person has lost all reason. The problem soon grows out of control as the Dark Veil Ghost takes control of a new person at every opportunity. The evil ghost makes itself visible when the characters subdue the second pilgrim. Unaffected pilgrims dare not abandon the glimmer of the sacred pond. The Cursed One (**shadow**) aids the characters in this fight. It can finally redeem all of his past mischiefs.

To deal with the pilgrims, a *detect magic* spell reveals a necromantic aura surrounding the possessed person. The *protection from evil* spell or any healing magic releases the person from the ghost's possession. Otherwise, they can be subdued in combat. When a character deals a blow that would bring the person to 0 hp, they can attempt to deal non-lethal damage (DC 12 STR or DEX). On a fail, the pilgrim is dying as per the rules.

DARK VEIL GHOST

Forged by loneliness and darkness, an ethereal figure covered with a tattered veil emerges from the afterlife. Its eyes reflect the pain of the common man.

AC 12, HP 16, ATK 1 touch +2 (1d8) and 1 possess, **MV** near (fly), **S +0, D +2, C +2, I +1, W +0, Ch +2, AL C, LV 2**

Possess. A random **peasant** within near becomes a possessed thrall (no save, max four thralls).



POSSESSED PILGRIM

A moment ago, the person prayed with the utmost fervor. Now they rise with a red glow in their eyes. They are beyond themselves, prisoners of untold goals.

AC 10, HP 4, ATK 1 knife +1 (1d4), **MV** near, **S +1, D +0, C +0, I +0, W +0, Ch +0, AL L, LV 1**

Anguished Cry (1/day). The possessed pilgrim utters a shriek that deflates the hearts of its enemies. One creature within 5 feet succumbs to their fear, drops their weapons, and drop to the floor for 1 round (DC 9 WIS).

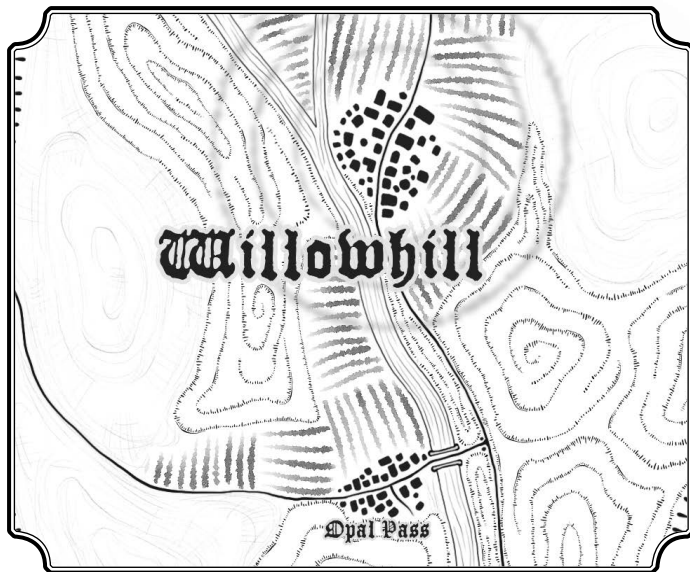


WILLOWHILL

“Perfection isn’t found in nature, but in what we create from it. A steed with the heart of a lion and wings of a gryphon—now that’s a beast worth riding.”

Glenmar Voss

The second largest settlement in Leaf Valley is a prosperous town nestled in fertile eastern lands, renowned for its vast farmlands and skilled animal breeders. The town’s namesake willows line the rivers that crisscross the region, their long, sweeping branches shading the fertile soil where crops grow in abundance. Willowhill’s farmlands are famous not only for their bountiful harvests but for the unique purple-leaf mandrakes that thrive in its enchanted soil. These rare mandrakes are prized for their potent alchemical properties, used in healing potions and powerful enchantments. Willowhill’s steeds boast an unmatched endurance and speed. Life in Willowhill is tied closely to the land, with the community working in harmony with nature, but the recent disturbances from the dragon’s presence have left the people anxious, threatening the town’s tranquil way of life.



ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Defenders.** The characters must travel to Willowhill to both investigate more about the dragon and help the people here defend themselves. The many reports describing the monster flying nearby have gotten everyone on their nerves. Additionally, a caravan from the capital may hire the characters to escort them here.

Level 2-3 Settlement

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Charred Fields.** The dragon soars by and burns a strip of land as if playing a game. The monster does not attack the same spot twice (see map). The populace is scared and jumpy, looking at the sky at all times.

► **Unrest.** People often look for logical explanations or culprits for their fears. Unfortunately, the House of Flames became the target of their hatred. Perhaps a voice of reason could help (see **House of Flames**).

JOHANN’S FARMSTEAD

Located on the outskirts of Willowhill, Johann crafts the finest remedies and potions. He is renowned for his deep bond with mandrakes, treating them as pets rather than mere plants. Surrounded by vibrant fields of purple-leaf mandrakes, Johann carefully harvests them with the help of his daughter Anna, an adept herbalist.

► **Shrieking Problem.** Johann’s mandrakes have gone mad; harvesting them has become a lethal ordeal and he cannot even leave his home. The PCs can help. If they defeat six **mandrakes**, Johann can continue working, at least for a while. He rewards them with 150 gp (1 XP).

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	A mandrake that grew in the middle of the street uproots itself, the heroes must intervene before its scream injures someone.
2	A herd of great steeds panics after a roar from the dragon echoes through the valley. The heroes must help corral the animals before they trample people or cause damage (DC 12 STR check). If the check fails, they succeed but take 1d6 damage.
3	The heroes explore the town when they are suddenly attacked by two ashen wyrmlings . The monsters fight until slain.
4	A shadow passes, believed to be the cursed dragon circling nearby. Tension rises as the townspeople fear an attack.
5	Four bandits attempt to steal the horse master’s best steed at night. The heroes notice strange movements and can decide to ignore this or act. If they stop the robbers, the horse master rewards them with one strong horse , and one sturdy mule .
6	Five wolves , unnaturally aggressive and emboldened by the dragon’s presence, begin attacking livestock on the outskirts.

Willowhill

Lashed by the Ruby Dragon



1. Johann's Farmstead
2. Red Leaf Tavern
3. Willowhill Docks
4. Glen's Laboratory
5. Torren's Steeds
6. Miccah's Storehouse
7. House of Flames
8. Willow Observatory
9. Ruined Manor House
10. Ruined Farmsteads



RED LEAF TAVERN

A cozy, well-worn establishment near the Opal River, known for its vibrant red-leaf decorations and rich, spiced cider brewed from the town's unique apples.

Marla Hart, a sharp-tongued but kind-hearted halfling with a knack for gathering gossip, owns the place. Marla is a former adventurer, her past full of wild tales, and she is always ready to share a rumor or offer advice. Heroes can gather crucial information about the region here.

► **Connections.** As long as the heroes sit down for a few drinks, Marla joins them a little after. She gossips about mundane topics but she is happy to share what she knows about other places, the locals, and jobs.

WILLOWHILL DOCKS

Being the fastest way of communication, it is common for people in Willowhill to travel by boat to the capital. The Opal River traverses Opal Pass and Fairnook, where more people usually join the journey. For a small fee (4 gp each), the heroes can book a passage to Queendell.

GLEN'S LABORATORY

A workshop on the edge of Willowhill, run by Glenmar Voss, a brilliant but eccentric gnome scientist known for his unpredictable experiments. He aims to blend horse breeding with the traits of other creatures like lions, gryphons, and even giant insects. His stables are filled with strange hybrid beasts—horses with claws, wings, or insect-like exoskeletons, most of them are unstable and temperamental, impossible to ride. Glen's goal is to create the ultimate war steed. Nevertheless, even his best creations have a couple of months' lifespan.

► **Monsters Essence.** Glen explains to the heroes what he does and the purpose of his deranged experiments. He reveals he is close to breeding the perfect hybrid, one that shall show unique improvements and live as long as a regular horse. To help him, the character must gather samples of skin, teeth, saliva, or any other gland or rare ingredient from monsters. Glen pays them 100 gp (1 XP) per sample. However, none of his experiments improve his results. Only the body remains of the ruby dragon can provide the samples he needs to succeed.

TORREN'S STEEDS

Torren's Steeds is a renowned breeding stable in Willowhill, owned by Torren Farstride, a gruff yet respected half-elf known for producing most of the finest warhorses in the realm of Leaf Valley.

Torren values the purebred strength, speed, and loyalty of his steeds over magical or experimental enhancements. His amazing horses are sought after by knights, nobles, and adventurers for their unmatched endurance and unbreakable bond with their valiant riders.

► **Wild Beast (2 XP).** Torren informs the heroes of a majestic wild horse spotted on the outskirts of Wildsor. The horse master hopes the heroes can tame the beast and bring it to him. He pays 250 gp for the specimen. The heroes find the horse and manage to subdue it and bring it to Willowhill if they pass a DC 12 WIS check.

MICCAH'S STOREHOUSE

Miccah is a popular half-elf in town. He sells all sorts of mundane items and provides storage services. Miccah needs people to transport a cart full of goods to Opal Pass. He offers 150 gp for delivering the goods and returning with a receipt signed by Constable Lee (1 XP).

HOUSE OF FLAMES

The House of Flames is a grand, flame-shaped temple in Willowhill, dedicated to the worship of Ignarion, the ancient fire deity of creation and purification. The temple's towering braziers burn with ever-glowing magical fire, symbolizing Ignarion's eternal flame.

With the sudden arrival of the cursed dragon, some townsfolk mistakenly believe it to be a manifestation of the god's wrath, sent to purge the valley of sin. Priests of the temple struggle to quell the panic, insisting that the dragon is an abomination, not a divine sign, yet many still flock to the temple for blessings and answers. The earl perished during the dragon's last attack. The priests want to profit from this and take control of the town.

► **Unrest.** Heroes may help restore order to the increasingly zealous crowds. They can do so with an epic speech (DC 15 CHA). If words fail, they can subdue the populace with physical repression. Four **thugs** and ten **peasants** do not fear the heroes' peace-keeping efforts.

WILLOW OBSERVATORY

A tall, ivy-covered tower named for the ancient willow tree that twists around its base. Recently, strange star patterns have begun to align, and locals believe they may hold the key to understanding the dragon's curse. Heroes can seek guidance from resident scholars and visit the observatory to consult star charts. If the characters spend a day studying the skies, they learn about the location of the Temple of the Dragon God in Leaf Valley.

RUINED MANOR HOUSE

The manor's once-elegant stone walls are now cracked and crumbling, scorched by dragonfire.

The dragon's fiery wrath reduced this once-noble estate to ruins, leaving behind nothing but hollow echoes of Earl Tristan Hunt and his family; a taste of what might happen to the entire vale if the dragon is not dealt with. With the earl dead and no relief from Queendell, Willowhill is on the verge of a civil uprising. The House of Flames, despite the people's claims, aims to take control.

► **Exploration.** Charred corpses surround the destroyed manor, evidence of the horrible event. There is nothing of value. When the heroes decide to leave, two **ashen wyrmlings** swing down and attack them.

RUINED FARMSTEADS

These poor fields lie in desolation, their once-thriving grass now blackened wastelands of scorched earth. Burnt remnants of wooden barns and cottages crumble into ash, their thatched roofs long consumed by the dragon's flames. The air is thick with the bitter smell of smoke, and the only sounds are the faint crackle of embers and the distant cry of displaced livestock.

► **Retrievers.** Some animals have been recovered, but the heroes can still help retrieve the missing livestock. It takes them the entire day to do this (DC 9 WIS). If they succeed, the farmers reward them with 200 gp (2 XP).



Hereditary Wickedness

Oh, yes! we paid the price. Now, all shall serve our demonic blood.

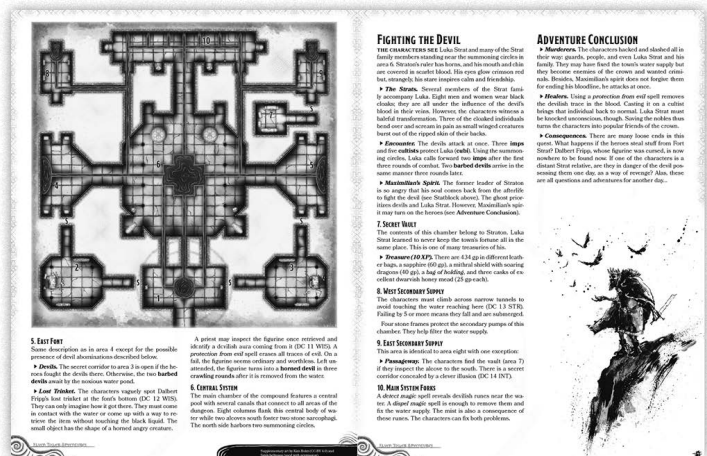
Featured Product



In Hereditary Wickedness, the characters visit Straton. A small thriving town ruled by the Strats, a family with a long history and a good relation with the crown. The characters ignore what they are about to witness. Maximilian Strat, the current ruler's predecessor, made a deal with a devil about a hundred years ago. He wished for his family to be strong and cunning, so the devil added a little of his blood to his. Today, all of the Strats foster a little devil's blood within their veins, and a devilish possession is about to occur.

This Shadowdark adventure brings the heroes to a town that is about to be taken over by devils. The characters experience strange phenomena in town and the villagers beg them to investigate Fort Strat and learn what is happening. Will the heroes cleanse the town or become victims too?

This adventure has been designed for Shadowdark RPG through their 3rd-party license. The system is meant to be accessible to OSR players and modern players alike. Adapting the material to 5e or other systems is a simple affair.



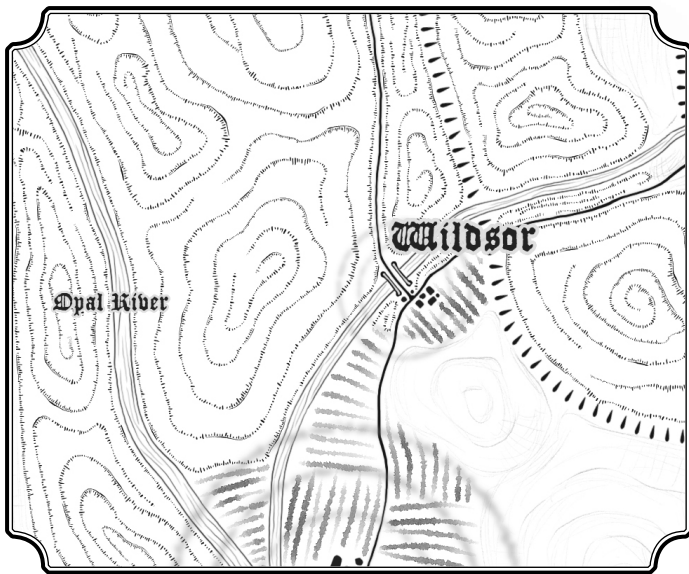
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WILDSOR

“I know we are fools... But I would rather be killed by the dragon than abandon my ancestors’ land. I was born here and in this god-forsaken land shall I perish.”

Gallen, Valiant Farmer

Being the closest settlement to Northcrest Mountain, Wildsor has been hit the hardest by the ruby dragon. Thirty-six people live in this small thorp by the bridge, surrounded by well-tilled farmlands. Alas, most of them have fled south to Willowhill in fear of the constant dragon attacks. The burnt scars of the dragon’s breath weapon scourge the surrounding land and the fields. Half the thorp’s wooden buildings were destroyed a few days ago when the dragon finally landed. In its pass, the mammoth creature laid waste in Wildsor. But surprisingly, a small group of farmers and herders refuse to leave. Their roots to these lands are so strong that they are unfazed by the dragon’s presence and already prepare for its next attack. They brought two siege scorpions from Queendell’s walls and rush to set them up. They lack the ability to properly operate them and yet, they soldier on to defend their town.



Level 3 Encounter

► **Danger.** Check for a **Random Event** every hour during the battle prep time (2-in-6 chance). The ruby dragon appears 2d4+1 hours after the characters’ arrival.

► **Ambiance.** The remaining locals work tirelessly to craft improvised weapons and prepare for battle. Their faces display the resolve of a man ready to die in peace.

► **Smells and Sounds.** The smell of charred fields and homes permeates the area. There is a 2-in-6 chance of hearing the faraway roars of the ruby dragon every hour.

THE DEFENSE EFFORT

WHEN THE CHARACTERS arrive at Wildsor, the locals are up to an impossible task: defend the thorp from the ruby dragon and slay it if possible. A few of them are optimistic about their odds but most have made peace with the possibility of this being their last day in this world.

The characters’ arrival bolsters their resolve, however. They are rejoiced to have the help of strong-looking mercenaries within their ranks. The townsfolk are brave but the characters’ actions are crucial to defending Wildsor.

1. ROAD TO WILLOWHILL

It takes a 1-hour ride to move from Wildsor to Willowhill. Most of the traffic in normal times is grain transports and cattle herders. Today, the road is empty except for a few Wildsor locals returning from Willowhill with bundles of scorpion bolts and farm implements.

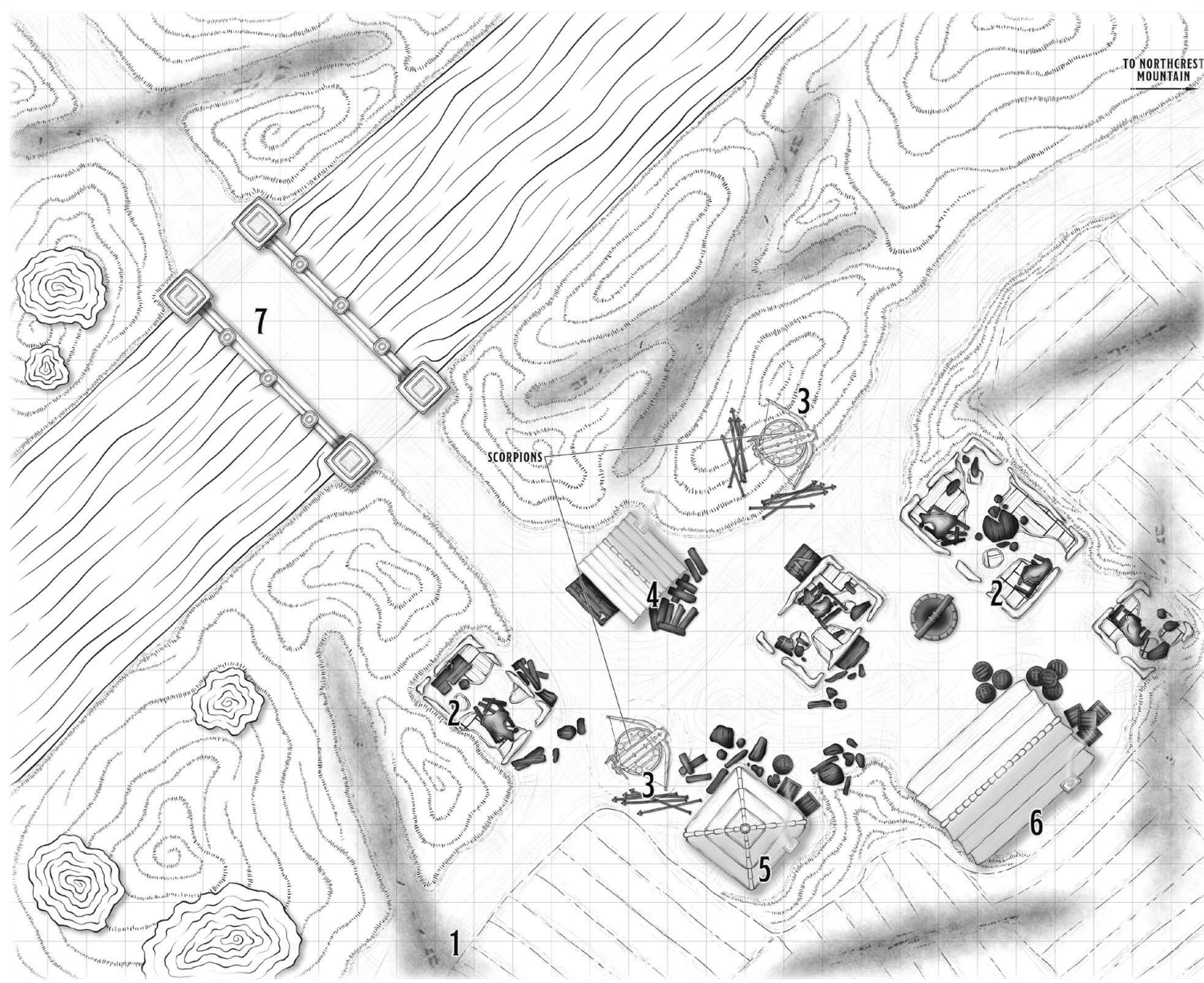
► **Ruffians.** Four **thugs** impede passage 1 mile south of Wildsor. They demand a payment of 5 gp per person. They fight if opposed but flee if reduced to half HP.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 The ruby dragon flies by at a high altitude, unreachable by the scorpions. Three **ashen wyrmlings** spawn along its path and drop toward Wildsor. If the scorpions are ready (see area 3), a single bolt is enough to destroy one ashen wyrm instantly.
- 2 Four **guards** from Queendell arrive in town. They beg the locals, on behalf of Shalendra, to abandon their efforts and flee south.
- 3 Three **mandrakes**, planted in the farmed fields, uproot themselves and crawl toward the water well. They are aggressive.
- 4 A scholar arrives from Northcrest Mountain; her name is Ashlyn. She claims to have witnessed signs that the magma chamber under Northcrest Mountain is becoming active. She thinks the ruby dragon brings forth this geological change.
- 5 An **apprentice** mage from Willowhill arrives in town. He offers his services to the characters as he wants to be an adventurer.
- 6 The land trembles for half a minute. Then, a plume of gray smoke emerges from Northcrest Mountain.



2. DESTROYED BUILDINGS

Half the town is in shambles, burnt and destroyed. Townsfolk carry bundles and crates from place to place, getting ready to defend what little is left.

Four edifices were destroyed during the dragon's last attack. Three of them belonged to farmers. One of them, Victor, remained in town to defend it. The others fled. The fourth and largest building belonged to Earl Jirden. Unfortunately, the earl perished during the attack. His family, high-borns but with little wealth and/or influence, promptly fled south to Queendell. The rugged locals regard them as lowly cowards and weak turncoats.

► **Strategy.** The ruined buildings provide good hiding spots for ranged attackers and low barriers that give advantage against the merciless dragon's fire.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** Inspecting the large, ruined building for 2 hours yields 30 gp, 48 sp, a set of chain mail armor, two longswords, and a silver dagger (15 gp).

3. SIEGE SCORPIONS

Two pairs of farmers attempt to set up the scorpions. Unaided, it takes them 6 hours to have them ready for combat. This is too long as the ruby dragon might attack earlier than that. Two characters can aid the farmers put the siege weapons together to accelerate the process. With the characters' help, the scorpions are ready in 3 hours (DC 12 INT check). On a critical failure, one scorpion is ruined until spare parts are brought from Queendell.

► **Scorpion.** A character and two peasants can operate one scorpion. DC 15 DEX to operate, per shot. On a success, the bolt impacts its target and deals 3d8 damage. It takes 1d3 rounds to reload the scorpion.

4. TOLL BOOTH

On normal days, a crown's representative charges 5 sp per traveler for crossing the bridge. The officer fled after the dragon's first attack. The toll booth is now used as a storage room for farm implements and weapons.

5. GALLEN'S HOME

Gallen is the first to welcome the characters to Wildsor upon their arrival. His two teenage sons stand by him trying to display the same bravery as Gallen's but it is apparent that the two lads are scared and insecure.

After the earl's death, the locals have relied on Gallen for confidence and support. Gallen (**peasant**), a potato farmer, has turned out to be a brave warrior willing to die for Wildsor. He wields a hay fork valiantly and plans to operate one of the scorpions unless a character volunteers. He believes they can defeat the dragon together.

6. GRAIN SILO AND STORAGE

Some non-combatant townsfolk work to set up hammocks and sleeping pads inside the silo for all that choose to remain in town. The characters are offered a spot to eat and sleep if they help defend the town.

► **Preparation.** This building is vulnerable to dragonfire due to the dry grain and flour sacks inside. Unless the characters intervene, it shall surely trigger a perilous explosion (see **Scourge of the Ruby Dragon**). The characters can spend 3 hours wetting the structure and removing some of the sacks to protect it from fire. The odds of the building catching fire are reduced to 2-in-6.

7. THE BRIDGE

The stone structure of the bridge proved impervious to the dragon's breath weapon. There are a few scorched marks near the easternmost pillars but the stone has not melted. When the dragon attacks (see **Scourge of the Ruby Dragon**), this bridge is its landing spot. Creatures standing on the bridge fall prone (DC 15 STR check).

SCOURGE OF THE RUBY DRAGON

THE CHARACTERS SHALL test their steel and resolve against the ruby dragon for the first time here. The dragon does not fight to the death here. After being reduced to half its HP it takes flight and flees to Northcrest Mountain. The characters can finally defeat it there.

The **ruby dragon** arrives at Wildsor 2d4+1 hours after the characters' arrival. Its mighty roar causes the world to tremble as it descends from the sky and uses its **Breath Weapon** ability as it flies by. Two **ashen wyrmlings** are left in its wake as the ruby dragon doubles back slowly to town. It takes 2d3 rounds for the dragon to return. There is a 3-in-6 chance that the dragon attempts a second pass with its **Breath Weapon** when it doubles back toward Wildsor but its wyrmlings are not spawned on the second fly-by. After this, the ruby dragon lands on the bridge, angered if it took any damage (area 7).

Apart from the characters, there are ten **peasants** in town willing to fight the dragon. They operate the scorpions or use forks and spades to fight the dragon.

► **The Silo.** If dragonfire reaches area 6, it explodes in a fiery conflagration after 1d3 rounds (5-in-6 chance). Creatures within 15 feet take 3d6 damage (DC 15 DEX).

► **The Mystery.** The ruby dragon fights with a ferocity unseen in creatures of its kind. The glow in its eyes signals to spellcasters that magic is at play. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of transformation magic concentrated on a ring the dragon wears: the *Draconic Band*.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** As the dragon flees, it drops a large red scale that can be worn as an *amulet of vitality*.



TEMPLE OF THE DRAGON GOD

“I feel no pity for those who dare steal from the gods and burn in their arrogance. Eustace is a foolish, non-consequential mortal; a leaf in the wind.”

Targaronath, the Crimson Flame

This majestic tomb is an ancient, crumbling sanctum built deep within the heart of a southern hill in Leaf Valley, long before the rise of mortal kingdoms. It was erected by dragonkin to honor Targaronath, the Elder Wyrm of the Crimson Flame, a primordial dragon who was given the status of a god by his kin. After he died in a legendary battle with otherworldly ancient forces, his remains were entombed within the temple, sealed by powerful wards to contain his lingering essence. The temple became a sacred site for dragonkind, with relics and treasures offered to honor Targaronath's memory. But with the dragonkin gone, or hidden, the temple fell into ruin over the centuries; its wards weaken and the knowledge of its existence fades into myth—this was true until Eustace Gibett disturbed the thousand-year-old dragon god's slumber, igniting the curse that now plagues the valley.

TO CONSIDER

THE HEROES' JOB is to rid Leaf Valley of the aggressive dragon burning their fields and lands. They may come to this temple seeking treasure or because they were paid to. Perhaps, they have heard enough rumors about the dragon and believe this temple holds the answers.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Explorers.** In a somewhat ironic fashion, the adventurers wish to quench their thirst for seeing new places and delve into uncharted territories, like Eustace. Unless they find someone to fund their expedition, exploring this temple must be paid out of their purse (0 XP).

Level 2-3 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Deadly. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

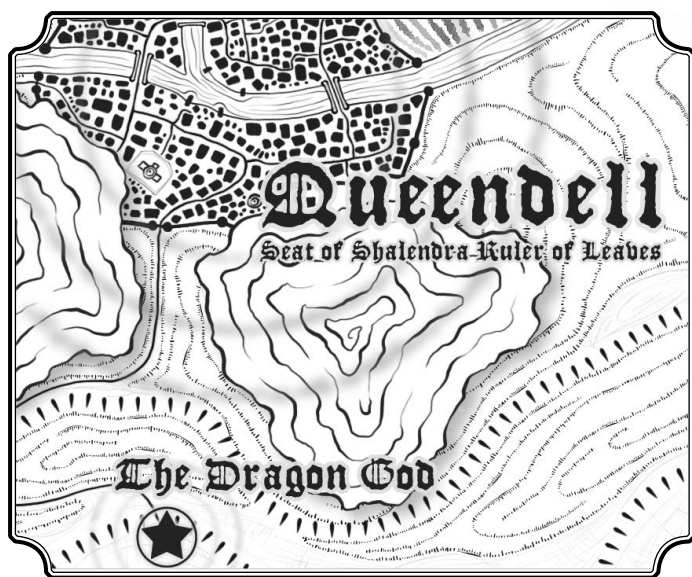
► **Traps.** When triggered, any device or trap described below magically resets its mechanism every hour.

► **Guardians.** The denizens of the dungeon are magically created. When defeated, they reform at dawn.

► **Light.** Most areas feature braziers with permanent fire. All denizens of the dungeon are **dark-adapted**.

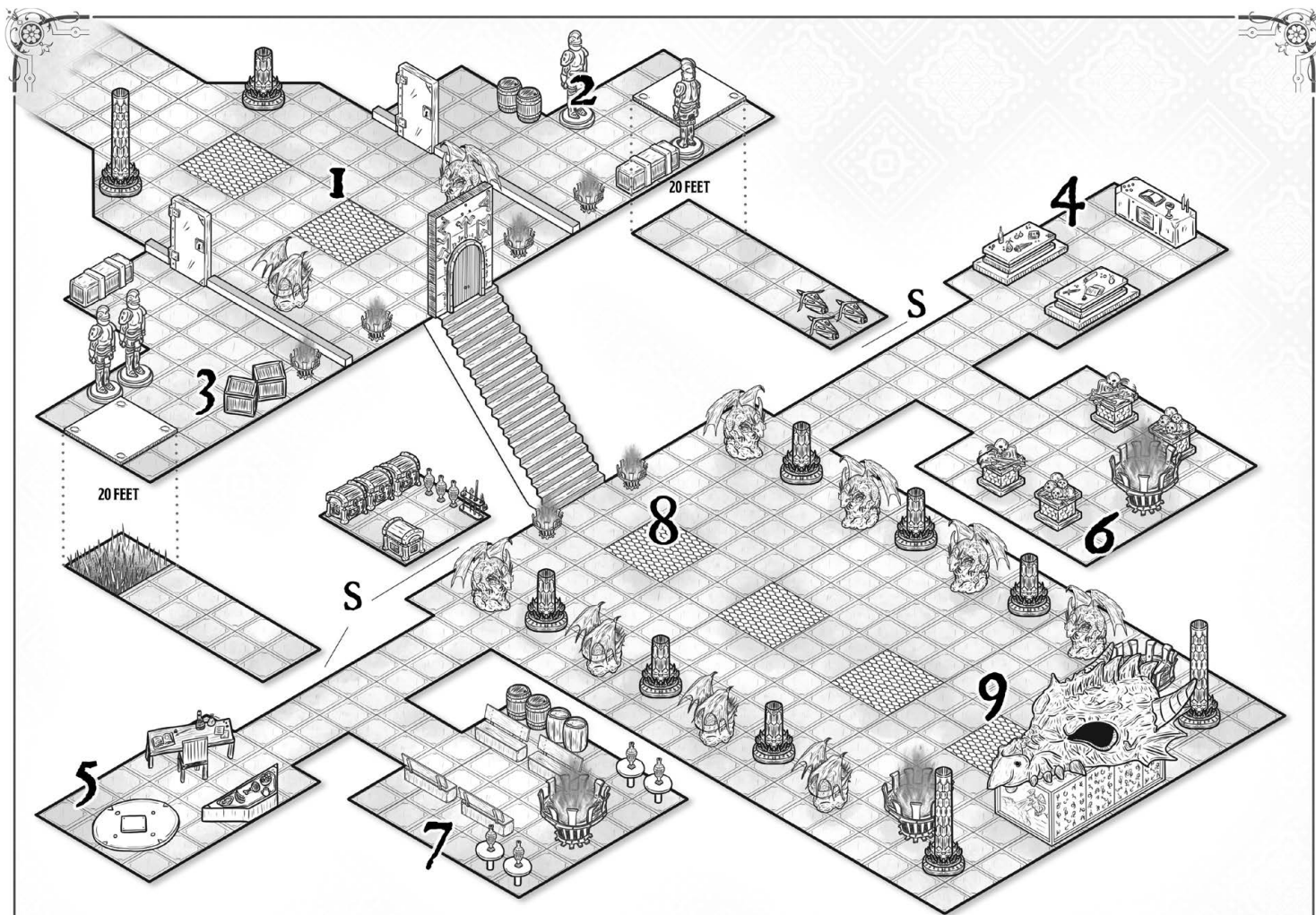
► **Draconic Magic.** Targaronath's majestic essence lingers in the air of the dungeon, empowering the arcane. All checks to cast spells within the temple are made with advantage. Fire-related spells do double damage.

► **Signs.** If the characters open their eyes well and look for evidence, they might notice that someone else (Eustace) walked these halls before them (DC 12 WIS).



RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	One of the ancient dragon statues animates (gargoyle without Impervious feature). The guardian attacks the heroes until slain.
2	Jets of searing flame from the mouths of carved dragon heads along the walls are the result of a pressure plate being triggered by a random hero. The fire reaches everyone in the area. Heroes must make a DC 9 DEX check or take 1d10 damage.
3	Loose debris detaches from the old ceiling, hitting a random hero. They make a DC 12 DEX check or take 2d6 damage.
4	The bones of long-dead dragonkin, corrupted by Targaronath's lingering magic, animate into four aggressive skeletons .
5	The heroes disturb the nest of a swarm of spiders . The insects flee if they are reduced to half their Hit Points, though.
6	Spectral figures of long-dead drakes rise from the shadows of a tomb, their translucent forms crackling with dark fire. Two of these draconid wraiths (use the stat of ashen wyrmlings) pass through walls, appearing suddenly to ambush the party.



Temple of the Dragon God

GETTING THERE

THE HEROES TAKE a 2-hour ride to travel from Queen-dell to this location. They soon find foot-tracks on the hills. They belong to Eustace and his group. After, they stumble upon half a dozen charred corpses a few hundred feet from the temple's entrance. Eustace burned his friends to the bone after his baleful transformation.

1. MAIN HALL

A vast, echoing chamber with towering stone pillars carved to resemble the scaled bodies of dragons. The floor is inlaid with sections of bronze and red scales that pulse with a faint heat, marking the way toward a majestic, tall gate at the far end of the chamber.

► **Scaled Floor.** The large door only opens when someone experiences the *Trial of Fire*. This consists of standing on each of the scaled floor sections and feeling the burning heat (1d6 damage). The runes on the door glow when the first section is stepped on. When the person doing the trial burns for the second time, the gate opens.

2. WEST WING

This chamber lies behind a poor-quality lock. A skilled thief can bypass it with a DC 9 DEX check. The two **animated armors** attack at once. The heroes can access the Chamber of Dragons (area 8) using the elevators in this area and its counterpart (area 3). They must defeat the immortal guardians for the elevators to activate, though.

► **Crossbows.** Three bolts fly and hit whoever descends first, dealing 2d8 damage (DC 12 DEX for half). The PCs easily notice the secret passage's outline connecting this corridor to the rest of the dungeon (see map).

3. EAST WING

Use the same description as in area 2. The heroes must defeat the two **animated armors** to use the elevator too.

► **Spiked Pit.** This elevator is a clever trap. It vanishes after it descends 5 feet. All users fall 20 feet and get impaled. They take 3d6 damage (DC 12 DEX). The PCs easily notice the secret passage's outline connecting this corridor to the rest of the dungeon (see map).

4. CHAMBER OF OFFERINGS

Three stone plinths littered with small objects of value and varied trinkets. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of magic that protects this area from the passage of time.

► **Altar.** The heroes can leave something of value as tribute. The object must be worth 1 gp at least. Any hero who does this is rewarded with a **luck token**.

► **Defilement.** A delicate, purple-hued, quartz lens rests on a plinth. Veler, from Queendell, seeks this bauble for the observatory. If removed, the spirits of two dragonkin (**shadows**) respond to this insult and attack the robbers.

VELER, THE ELF FROM THE OBSERVATORY

If the elf (**apprentice**) from Queendell travels with the heroes, his emotion at seeing the lens among the rest of the tribute gets the best of him, and takes it without hesitation. This triggers the encounter (see above).

5. DRACONIC PORTAL

This chamber features a wooden desk and a table with mouth-watering-looking food. An ominous circle engraved with strange runes dominates the far end.

A wizard identifies the circle as the focus for a *teleport* spell. The rune sequence can be copied for later use. The food, edible and delicious, reappears in 1 hour. A magical aura protects this area from the passage of time.

► **Desk.** Inspecting the documents on the desk for 1 **crawling round** reveals the following information:

1. Dragonkin built this temple. It is the resting place of Targaronath, a legendary primordial dragon.
2. The offerings and Targaronath's tomb must not be touched by non-dragon beings. Ancient spells and incantations shall punish whoever does this.
3. A page describes Eustace's expedition: They took the *Draconic Band* from the offerings but did not find anything in the Chamber of Dragons. Satisfied with their findings, they left and Eustace was transformed. It recounts how the ruby Dragon (Eustace) killed his companions outside. The last entry describes what the heroes have done so far.

6. THE FLAME OF THE DEAD

These remains belong to Targaronath's bodyguards. Four **skeletons** come to life and attack the heroes. Ignore this if **Random Event 4** has already occurred.

7. THE FLAME OF THE LIVING

A small room to meditate and pray to the dragon gods. The heroes may spend 1 **crawling round** here to be blessed by the flame of life, and gain 1 **luck token**.



8. CHAMBER OF DRAGONS

► **Scaled Floor.** Another *Trial of Fire* (four phases, 1d6 damage each). Whoever passes shall be rewarded with a moment to listen to Targaronath's spirit (see below).

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The vault is hidden (DC 12 WIS to find). It contains 238 gp, 3,864 sp, 10,563 cp, a gold mead tankard (20 gp), a silk robe (35 gp), a fine suit of chainmail (60 gp), and one *cockatrice egg* (100 gp).

9. TARGARONATH'S SKULL

Even after death, Targaronath's presence can be felt. The heroes feel the weight of an invisible stare while they stand before the skull. If anyone passes the *Trial of Fire* in area 8, they may listen to the dragon god for 1 minute.

► **Parley.** Via telepathy, the dragon explains it feels no sympathy for Eustace, and hopes the cursed man lives forever. Targaronath wishes the visitor farewell and grants the *Blessing of Fire* (fire damage is reduced by half, a permanent boon). However, the outcome of this interaction is different if the heroes have pillaged the place.

► **Fools.** If an item from the offerings is brought here, or if the heroes attempt to see what Targaronath's tomb holds, an incorporeal **fire dragon** and the eight dragon statues (**gargoyles**) emerge to remove the tomb defilers.



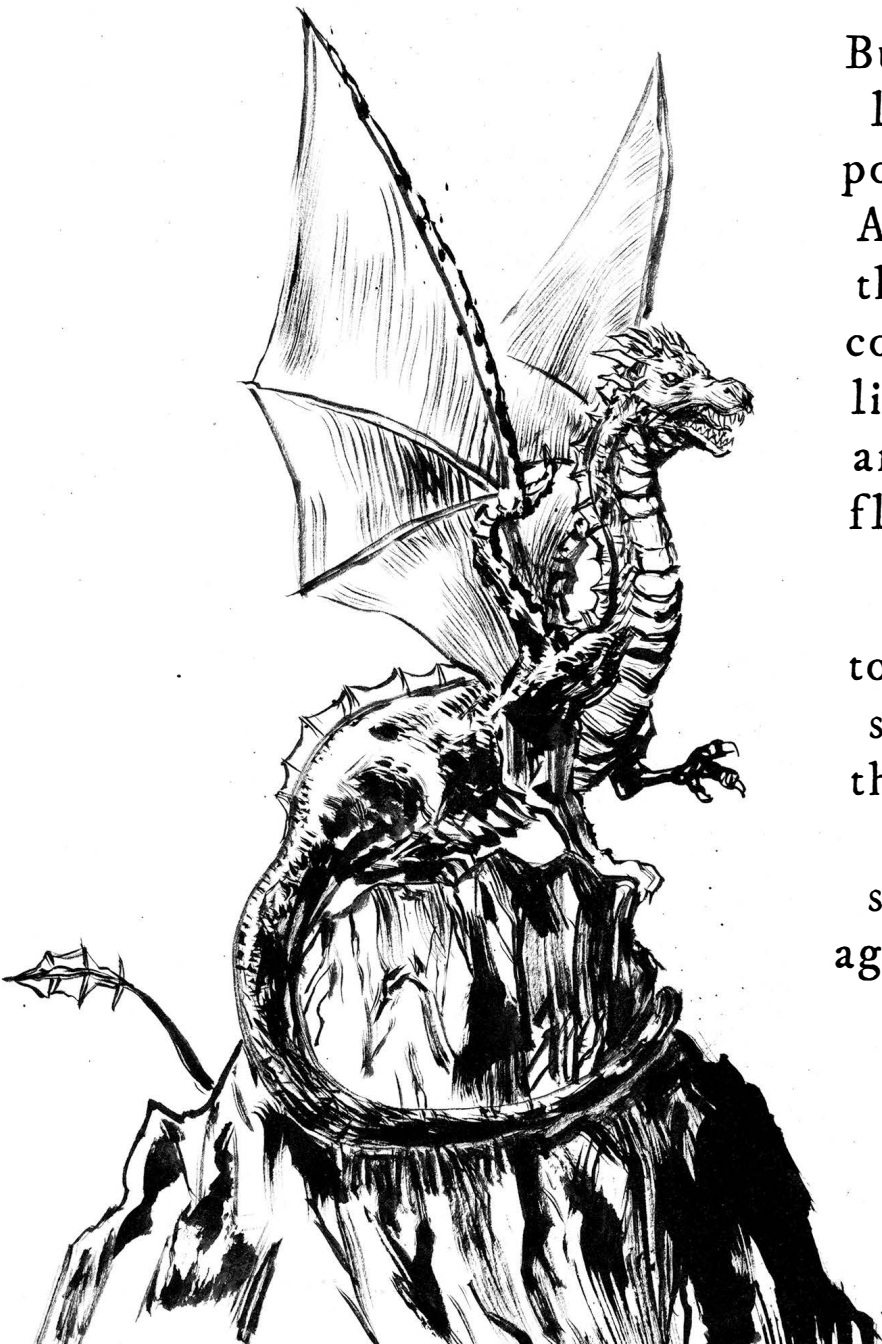
The Ruby Dragon



Curse this wretched form!
Curse Targanorath and his vile
magic! I am no longer a man;
no longer anything I once
knew. My flesh is now stone
and scales, my heart cold as
the ring that marks my prison.
I am not a true dragon but an
abomination, a twisted creature
shaped by the ancient one.

But he is dead! The one I truly
loathe, the one whose breath
poisoned my soul, is long gone.
And now, what remains? Only
the peasants below... helpless,
cowering, pitiful. They scatter
like insects beneath my wings,
and I burn them to convey the
flames of my own punishment.

It does nothing to ease this
torment, this endless pain that
sears through my bones. Yet,
they shall hurt just as I suffer.
Let their screams rise like
smoke. Let them share in my
agony. They are the ones left to
bear the weight of my rage.



The Curse of Pinegate



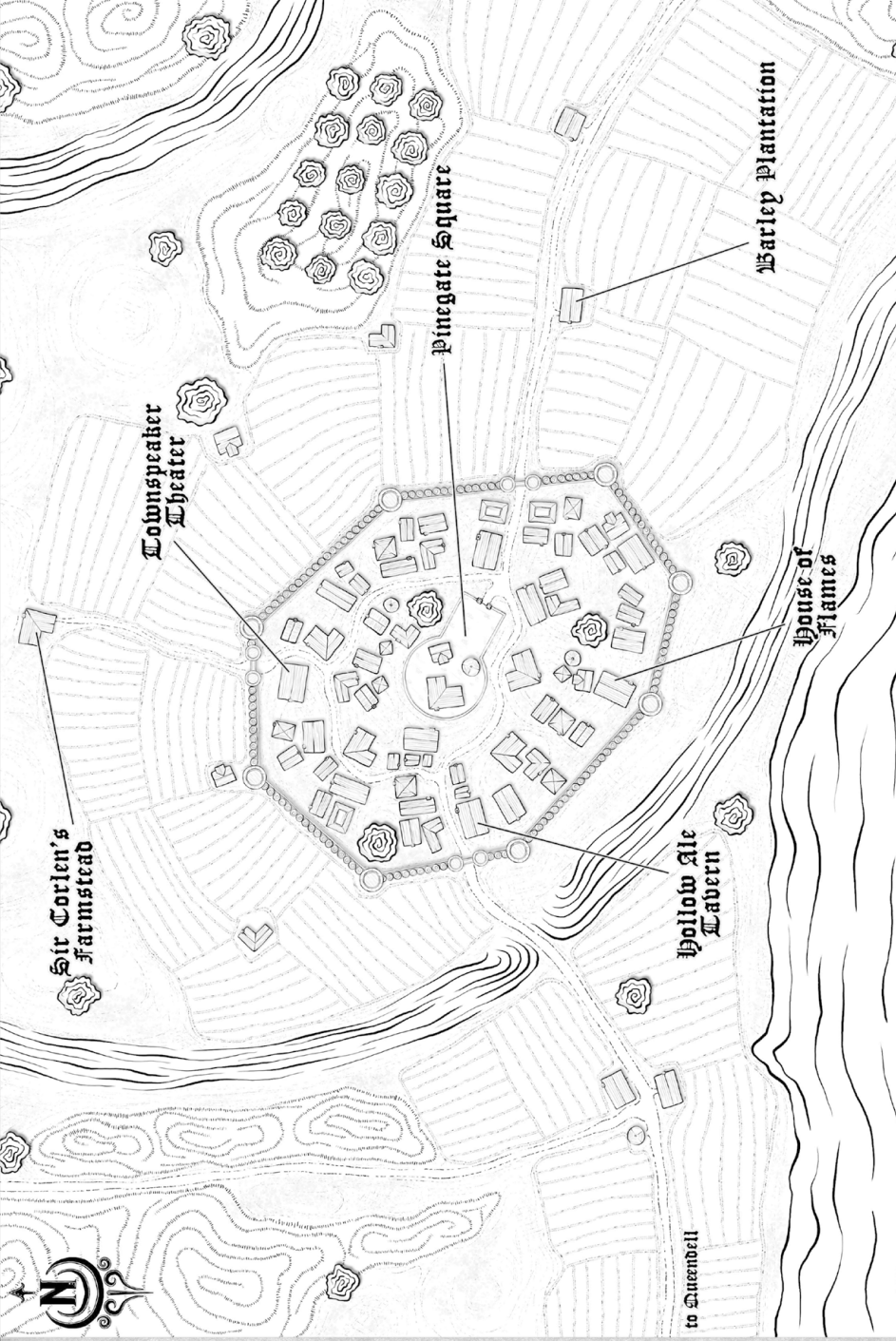
estled at the edge of Leaf Valley, Pinegate has long thrived under the watchful eye of its just and beloved leader, Ardan Wetherwood. Known for his wisdom and fairness, Ardan has led Pinegate into an era of peace and prosperity. Its timber-rich lands, gentle streams, and well-tilled soil draw many traders to its gates, and the villagers are content under their ruler's protection.

Unfrequented Neighbors

THE PEOPLE OF Pinegate live a bit secluded and away from the rest of the valley; it takes them longer to reach their destinations. It is common for Pinegate villagers to ignore the general affairs of the valley. Likewise, the people in the capital and larger towns often forget their Pinegate neighbors exist.

The End of Peace

FOR THE PAST few weeks, no one in Pinegate has slept well. Terrifying nightmares plague the townsfolk, waking them in cold sweats, leaving them trembling with fear, and unable to find solace in slumber. Even the animals in the town grow restless as if sensing some invisible presence hanging over their heads. The exhausted villagers stumble through their days, drained, irritable, and on the verge of collapse. Even Ardan, who usually smiles and inspires, shows a weakened, tired face. The town slowly falls into a cursed darkness.



The Curse

It all began with the arrival of Darinor Venn, an itinerant merchant. He too has been afflicted by these restless nights, hence no one suspects him of ill intent. However, among his collection, there lies a cursed object—an ancient, polished stone figurine carved in the shape of a coiled serpent devouring its tail. Unbeknownst to Darinor, it was a witch who sold the object to him. The trinket lay dormant until it was surrounded by enough souls. Now, the figurine has poisoned the dreams of all within Pinegate, but neither Darinor nor the townsfolk realize this is the cause of their sleepless anguish. The lack of sleep and stress are certain to drive people mad soon.

Adventure Hooks

- ▶ **Help.** Desperate for help, Ardan sends word to nearby towns. The healer's herbs and enchantments have all but managed to solve the sleeplessness. Pinegate is in dire need of champions who can break the curse before everyone succumbs to madness or worse.
- ▶ **Vision.** One of the characters has a strong connection with the arcane or the divine. One night, they experience nightmares just like the townsfolk in Pinegate. When they wake up, they realize this horrible dream is a call for help. They know where they must go and where the people in need are.

Investigation

- ▶ **Situation.** The adventurers arrive in Pinegate to find a town on the brink of chaos. Sleep-deprived, haunted villagers beg for aid, their eyes hollow and voices weary. Ardan regains hope when he sees the heroes and wishes them luck in their search.
- ▶ **Darinator.** In the town square, Darinator pleads with the heroes to find the cause of the sleepless nights. He is too exhausted to continue. He swears he has sold nothing dangerous or cursed; at least, not to his knowledge.
- ▶ **Advance.** The heroes must use magic to perceive the darkness coming from Darinator's collection. If they take longer than 2 days to find it, the consequences reveal the truth.
- ▶ **Consequences.** The people's madness combines with the cursed artifact's magic; monsters that appear in the nightmares start to become a reality, made of flesh and bone. By this point, the snake devouring its tail glows intensely in green and purple colors, evidence of its connection with Pinegate's curse.

Hollow Ale Tavern

The local tavern feels like a shadow of its former self. Its wooden beams creak in the uneasy silence, and the hearth, usually warm with laughter and song, burns low as weary patrons nurse their drinks in silence. Sleepless nights have dulled the mood, and the tavern's once-cheerful innkeeper, Mira Alden, now serves with heavy eyes, her rest stolen by the creeping nightmares.

House of Flames

Pinegate's sacred temple to the god of creation and purification normally radiates warmth and hope. Now, the flames flicker weakly. High Priest Theron paces the dim halls, his prayers for relief from the nightmares growing more desperate with each passing restless night.

Darinator Venn



Pinegate Square

The market, typically bustling with stalls and lively chatter, now lies eerily quiet. Even the merchant stalls, once overflowing with goods, stand half-empty, as both sellers and buyers are too drained to engage in the usual barter. Darinator is among them, unable to sleep too.

Townspeaker Theater

Dust begins to settle on the seats, as the vibrant art that once brought joy now fades beneath the weight of the town's torment. Believing they can profit from the situation, three **bandits** attempt to rob the heroes here.

Sir Corlen's Farmstead

The once-proud war veteran and farmer struggles with the nightmares, leaving his crops unharvested and his animals restless in their pens. His strong frame, now slouched with fatigue, mirrors the growing despair as his nights drain both his strength and spirit. The knight still offers his help to the heroes, even though he can barely lift his sword.

Development

If the heroes discover the root of the problem before 2 days elapse, they may employ magic to remove the dark properties of the snake figurine before the nightmares become real. If this takes longer than 2 days, the characters become affected by the lack of sleep too; the tiredness severely hinders their skills.

Three **sleep demons** appear in town. By this point, removing the magic from the snake figurine is useless, the monsters must be defeated in bloody combat. Ardan rewards the heroes for their services while Darinator truthfully claims he knew nothing about the figurine and that he had no intention to harm anyone. What the characters do with him is up to them...

Barley Plantation

A revered shrine dedicated to the harvest deity stands amidst golden fields that once flourished under its blessing. Now, the crops grow wild and untended as sleepless workers, too exhausted to tend the land, leave offerings in vain at the shrine's weathered altar. Mark, the foreman, is exhausted. The barley shipments have not reached their destinations for days, no one has the energy to leave town and bring the barley sacks with them.

▶ Working Animal.

The farming bull has not slept well for days. It is jumpy and stressed. When the characters, who bring unknown faces and smells, approach the fields, the bull charges and attacks them violently. A knowledgeable character may calm the animal down (DC 12 WIS). Pinegate's farmers are grateful if the bull is subdued without hurting it. However, if the poor beast is killed, the commoners Ira and Ursula, the devastated owners, attempt to fight the heroes in their tired craze.

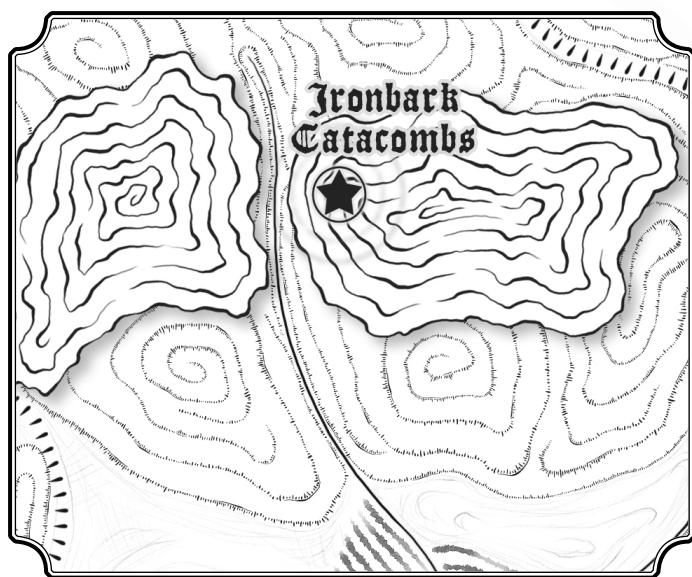
IRONBARK CATACOMBS

“Strength does not lie in the edge of the you wield, but in the purpose that guides it. Stand true, and let your heart be your stalwart shield.”

Elandar

Nestled beneath the dense roots of the ancient Ironbark Forest north of Glenfield, these catacombs are a sacred burial ground dedicated to the great elven warriors of Leaf Valley’s past, from a time when the territory was known by a different name. Generations of elven heroes rest in these hallowed halls. The catacombs are supported by immense roots of the great Ironbark tree, whose magical properties prevent decay and ward against dark magic.

Whispered among the elves is the tale of the *Armor of Elandar*, a legendary set of fire-resistant elven plates said to be hidden deep within the catacombs. Forged in the flames of the first war against the devils, the armor is imbued with the essence of Ironbark and enchanted to protect its wearer from even the fiercest of flames. The few people who know of this fabled relic, believe it to be the key to confronting the dragon ravaging the valley.



ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Delvers.** Many historians and treasure-seekers have explored the catacombs long before the ruby dragon’s arrival. But all come back empty-handed, leading to rumors that the catacombs are well-protected and that only one deemed worthy by the elvish spirits may claim the *Armor of Elandar*. The heroes come to test their luck, get their hands on the armor, or find other treasures (0 XP).

Level 3 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

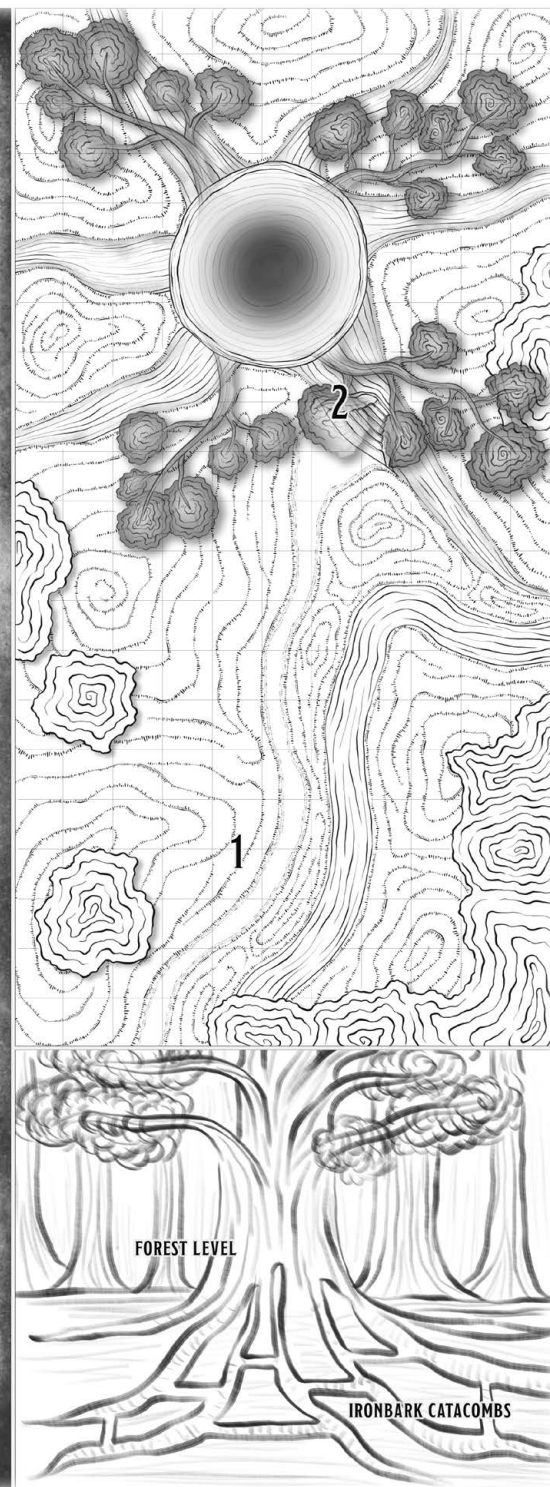
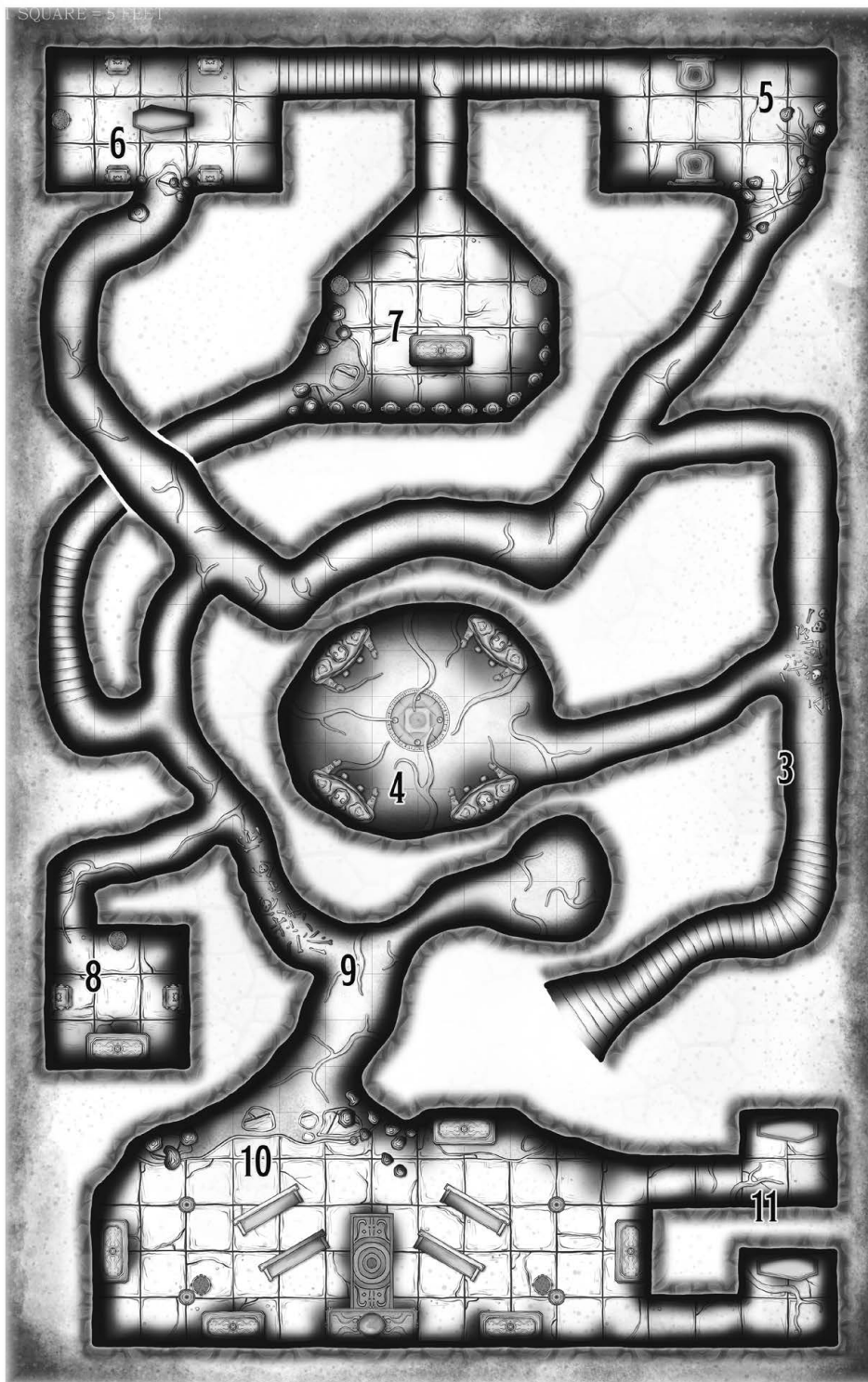
► **Elvish Magic.** Feeling the looming threat of the draconic monster, the elvish guardians have returned from the dead to protect what’s theirs. Additionally, they have advantage against *turn undead* or *rebuke unholy* effects.

THE DRAGONKIN

DEEP WITHIN THE forest, remnants of the ancient dragonkin still linger, twisted versions of their once-noble ancestors. Eons ago, these beings, known as the Vyr’shaal, were the proud builders of the catacombs, crafting the halls to honor the elven warriors who stood alongside them. Today, the few surviving Vyr’shaal are barely recognizable—warped by the centuries and driven mad by the loss of their civilization. They skulk through the forest, living in primitive tribes, their minds clouded by a primal fury. Fiercely territorial and distrustful of all outsiders, the once-great architects have become little more than savage guardians of their forgotten legacy, attacking anyone who dare trespass upon their ancestral grounds.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	Four dragonkin (beastmen with scaled skin) drop from the shadows to surprise the intruders (DC 9 WIS to avoid an ambush).
2	The ironbark roots above begin to twist, threatening to crush anyone caught beneath them (DC 12 DEX). Whoever lacks the quick reflexes to get away takes 1d8 damage, and becomes entangled and restrained. It takes 1 crawling round to be set free.
3	An ironbark root oozes a white, glimmering sap. Drinking from it restores 1d6 HP. Drinking more than once has no effect.
4	The characters disturb a swarm of spiders . The insects are aggressive but flee if they are reduced to half their Hit Points.
5	The spirit of the elven hero Elandar manifests. He comes from a time when elves and dragonkin ruled these lands. If there are no elves among the heroes, Elandar suggests they leave. For only elven blood shall be worthy enough of his legendary armor.
6	The heroes were followed. A group of two thugs , one soldier , and two peasants wish to join their party and share the treasure.



1. ROAD

The trail traverses the forest and leads here. The heroes must navigate the dense woods for a few hours to find the catacombs (DC 9 WIS). On a failure, they stumble upon a **brown bear** and its two cubs. Mama bear does not take the sight of strangers lightly and attacks.

2. BARK ENTRANCE

A crude entrance is carved on a thick root. Beyond the threshold, the descending steps are an ominous invitation to the unknown. Four dragonkin (**beastmen** with scaled skin) attack the characters before they enter.

3. DARK TUNNELS

The heroes descend more than 50 feet into the dark underground tunnels. Before they can determine if the bones in the tunnel belong to people or monsters, three **skeletons** rise and charge against the intruders. Elvish magic is responsible for the creation of these improvised guardians. Three more skeletons coalesce and block the characters' way before they reach area 9 (see map).

These tunnels connect to several parts of the dungeon. The heroes can visit all areas walking these tunnels without necessarily following the numerical order (see map).

4. THE ANCIENT CORE

This circular cavern features four towering statues of elven sentinels that surround a magic circle in the center, their expressions stern and vigilant, each effigy extending their empty palms before them.

Wisps of ethereal light drift upward from the circle, illuminating the statues and casting long shadows across the stone floor as if the sentinels themselves are watching. The arcane runes of the circle reveal this is a means to travel here via teleportation. Alas, the circle's magic is obstructed; large, greenish roots grow on its runes.

► **Circle.** Removing the roots allows for the last creature who used the circle to come here to finally arrive. A **gibbering moulder** appears. It was once an elf, but the hapless being got caught between worlds for centuries; the eyes and mouths aberration is all that remains. After the battle, a spellcaster notices the magic circle is a one-way device into the dungeon. It cannot be used to leave.

5. THE FONTS

This small, secluded chamber is serene, its air cool and still. Two stone stoups, carved with intricate elven patterns, stand opposite each other, filled with crystalline water that glows softly in the dim light.

► **Healing Waters.** The water is imbued with powerful healing properties. Creatures that drink from it regain 2d4 Hit Points. Drinking more than once has no effect.

6. THE CHAMBER OF TRUST

A single brazier illuminates five sarcophagi in this small chamber. The central sarcophagus belongs to Elandar's most trusted confidant, Raowen. He was an advisor, associate, and friend to the well-respected elf champion.

If the heroes open the sarcophagi to look for treasure, one **shadow** and four **zombies** emerge, angered by their utter disrespect. After combat, the following is found:

► **Treasure (3 XP).** A green crystal statuette of Memnon (50 gp), a set of polished bone dice (25 gp), a leather bandoleer with 10 blue bottles (3 gp each), a mace inlaid with gold holy symbols (50 gp), and a bag with 84 gp.

7. CATACOMB OF THE RED CLOAKS

Serathil rests in the sarcophagus. A trusted lieutenant and shield-bearer for Elandar. Eleven red urns hold the ashes of Serathil's loyal red cloaks, bound by an oath to protect Elandar's legacy even in death. A faint aura of honor and sacrifice lingers in the stale air.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The collection of polished amber urns is worth 450 gp, and Serathil's sarcophagus has a +1 *longsword*. But if the heroes attempt to grab any of these, their defilement summons the ire of one **wraith**. Serathil's spirit shall chase the intruders until slain.

8. THE CHAMBER OF LOYALTY

This resting place belongs to the dwarf Ulf Stonehand and his two cousins. They were some of Elandar's best friends. The dwarves left their home to join Elandar and help the elves achieve their goals. Their forge mastery and skills were paramount during their reign and that earned them a place of honor in these catacombs.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** These sarcophagi can be pillaged without any consequences. The elvish wards were never intended to guard this treasure: a dwarvish pipe (25 gp), an ironwood lute (75 gp), a suit of blackened-steel plate mail (130 gp), and a *Kytherian Cog* (300 gp).

9. GRIM TUNNEL

The heroes approach Elandar's sarcophagi. The heroes find more skeletons blocking their way (see area 3).

10. ELANDAR'S RESTING PLACE

A solemn chamber bathed in the warm glow of two enchanted braziers. At the far end, Elandar's ornate sarcophagus lies as the centerpiece, intricately carved with scenes of his heroic deeds. Five grand sarcophagi line the walls, each containing one of his most trusted captains. The stone benches face toward Elandar, inviting visitors to honor the legacy of the elven leader who once safeguarded the vale.

Dragonkin warriors rest in the five sarcophagi that accompany Elandar in the afterlife. The ever-loyal warriors shall protect their former leader again if it comes to it.

The heroes may speak with Elandar's spirit if they did not defile the guarded catacombs. Furthermore, if an elf is with the party, they might be worthy of Elandar's armor. Otherwise, the heroes must fight for it (see below).

► **Friends.** The heroes left areas 6, 7, and 8 intact. They did not disturb the dead and behaved respectfully. Elandar welcomes them to his catacombs and praises their group's respectful attitude. He cannot help them defend the valley in his current state, but he gladly gives them a *cloak of elvenkind* and a *longbow of the elven kings*. And if an elf is present, they get the *Armor of Elandar* (a beautiful +2 *mithral plate mail* with immunity to fire).

► **Enemies.** The heroes robbed the catacombs and disrespected the dead. Or perhaps they want to take Elandar's armor by force. Elandar (**wight**), his guard of five dragonkin (**zombies**), and two **shadows** (see area 11) attack the intruders. If the heroes manage to win this fight, they can leave with all the treasure and weapons.

11. THE TWINS

Two brothers who pledged their lives to Elandar. They were granted a place of honor because they died stopping an assassination attempt on Elandar. Their souls come back to this world to aid Elandar if they must (see above).

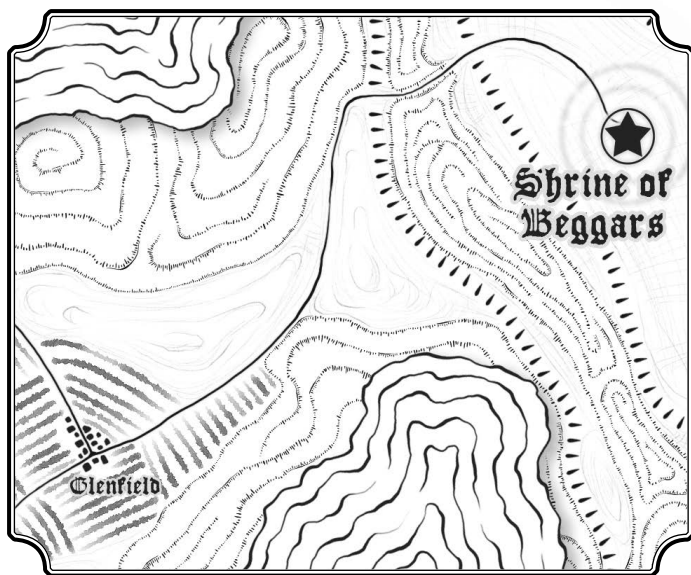
SHRINE OF BEGGARS

Only those who truly surrender their possessions, material belongings, and personal bonds, shall be granted the gift of a glimpse of the future.

Dungeon's Inscription

The Shrine of Beggars is located in a secluded temple east of Northcrest Mountain, deep within an old dungeon, built by clerics and priests of yore. Despite its humble name, the main genuflecting statue holds a powerful allure, drawing the downtrodden and destitute from across the valley with tales of its mystical properties of foresight.

According to legend, the shrine is a place of divine insight where those who have nothing to give but their sincerity may glimpse fleeting visions of the future. Beggars and travelers leave offerings, mostly coins and trinkets, hoping to receive guidance in their darkest hour. The shrine itself is guarded by ancient incantations, said to protect it from those with ill intent, and many believe that only one who truly knows no greed and has abandoned all links to material things or wealth can unlock its greatest secret: the fabled *Beggar's Cape*.



THE BEGGAR'S CAPE

THIS IS A mythical relic, said to have been woven from the rags of a long-forgotten sage who sacrificed everything to protect the needy. It is believed to grant its wearer protection from harm and the wisdom to see through deception, but only those with a pure heart can claim it. Rumors say that somewhere within the shrine lies the hidden path to this relic, buried beneath the very stones of the altar, waiting for one worthy enough to unearth it.

The shrine's unpredictable magic often reveals glimpses of the near future to those who make sincere offerings, though the visions are fleeting and cryptic, appearing as hazy astral visions in one's head. Many have sought the treasures and secrets of the Shrine of Beggars, but few have left with more than a mysterious vision.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Retrievers.** The heroes may come as explorers after learning about this place. However, they could be hired at the Red Auction House in Queendell. Theverell, the curator, is looking for a group of heroes. He wants them to retrieve the fabled *Beggar's Cape* (5 XP, 450 gp).

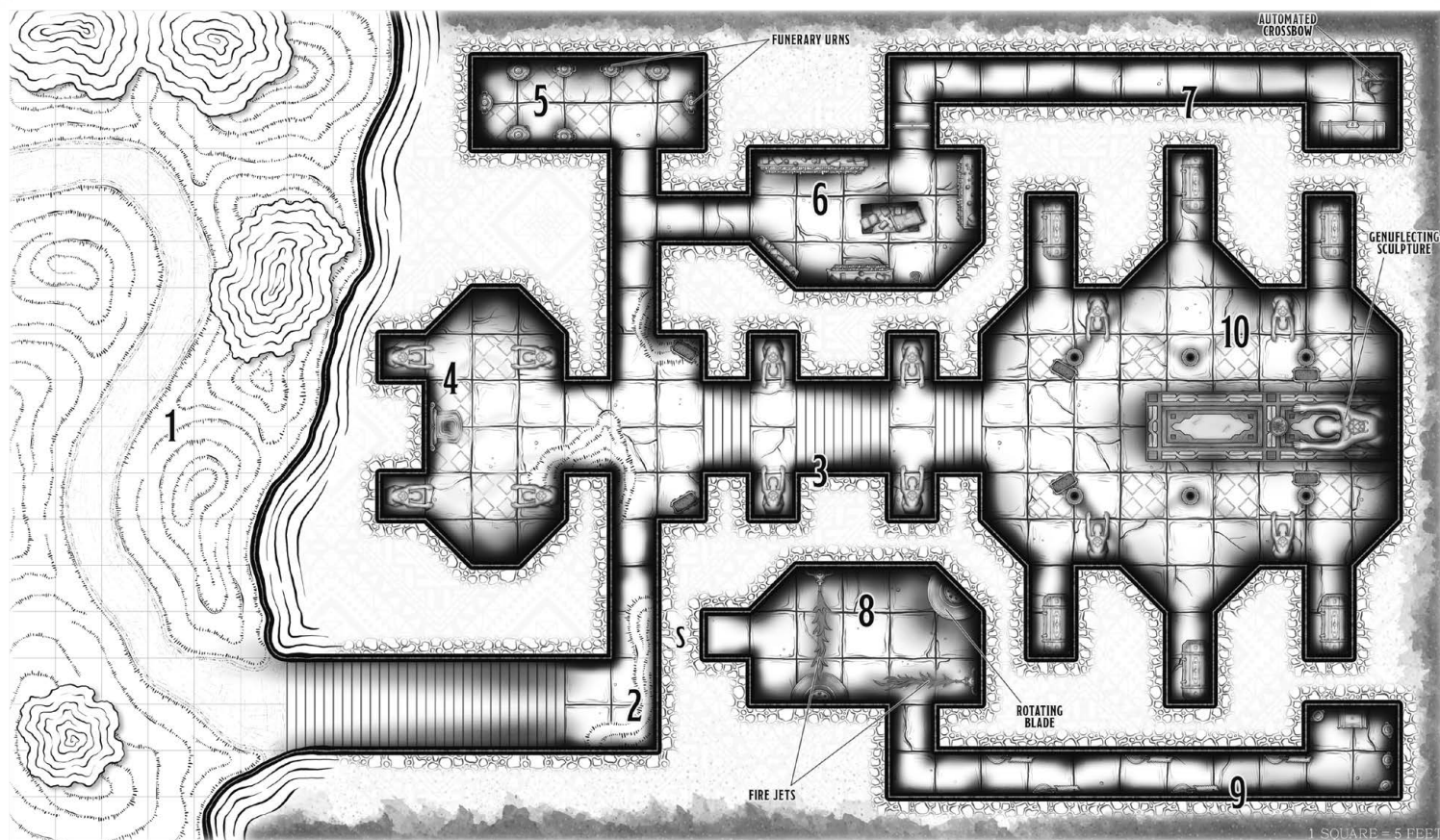
Level 3 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Devices.** The dungeon features many traps (see map). Unless stated otherwise, the traps reset after 1 hour. Provided the heroes find the panels to manipulate the traps (DC 9 WIS to spot), they can be disarmed by a thief with the right tools (DC 12 DEX, one check each).

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	The air fills with the whispers of unseen spirits, offering cryptic advice or warnings (DC 9 CHA). Characters who fail to listen carefully hear only misleading riddles. This translates to a magical disadvantage on the next check or attack they make.
2	Three peasants and their escorts, two thugs and one soldier , have come to leave offerings at the shrine.
3	A pile of coins materializes, but those who reach for it trigger a trap. The illusion explodes, dealing 1d8 damage (DC 9 DEX).
4	A sentient brown bear has come to leave some acorns as tribute. The beast becomes hostile if bothered or interrupted.
5	An ancient, spectral figure appears, challenging the heroes to solve a riddle about sacrifice and greed (DC 12 INT). Success reveals the secret passage that takes to area 8 (see map); failure summons the anger of one shadow .
6	The heroes disturb a swarm of spiders in the area they explore. The insects are aggressive but flee when reduced to half HP.



1. LEAF VALLEY

The characters must travel the main road east of Glenfield and continue their journey through the rocky hills. Finding the shrine is not hard (DC 9 WIS). On a fail, the heroes stumble upon a herd of **wild horses**. The two alpha males from the herd are violent and territorial. A character may try to tame one (DC 15 WIS). On a fail, the hero involved takes 1d10 damage from a kick.

2. ENTRANCE

The heroes descend 30 feet and reach a stone corridor where overgrown grass and moss have managed to sprout. The light of two braziers marks a small antechamber. Areas 3, 4, and 5 can be seen from here.

3. THE BEGGARS OF STONE

The corridor slopes gently downward, its stone walls lined with alcoves that cradle four statues of solemn, genuflecting figures, each depicting an elven warrior bowing with hands extended in the utmost reverence.

The heroes are free to descend to area 10 from here. A group of people starts climbing the stairs the moment the characters choose to make their descent.

► **Visitors.** Six **peasants** and their bodyguards (three **soldiers**) just finished their prayers and left their offerings. They tell the heroes that Lauren, a woman from her group, has prayed for more than a day. The heroes meet Lauren when they approach the shrine (see area 10).

4. THE SACRED POND

The tranquil room's heart is dominated by a shimmering pond of sacred water. Four statues on their knees line the walls. A faint, mystical glow emanates from the water's surface, and the air is filled with the scent of wildflowers and the vibration of magic.

A *detect magic* spell reveals the arcane properties of the water. The heroes may use empty flasks to fill up to four *holy water* doses. The remaining water becomes regular after this but regains its blessing every 24 hours.

► **Site of Prayer.** The walls show old frescoes of people on their knees, their heads inclined forward, being blessed by a majestic holy light cast above them. The heroes can assume a genuflecting position like the statues in the room and meditate for 1 **crawling round** before the holy pond. This prayer-like action grants them a **luck token**.

5. FUNERARY URNS

Eight golden urns are symmetrically aligned by the walls and the room's extension. The dead found their eternal rest in their peaceful, undisturbed darkness.

The urns hold the ashes of some of the people who helped build this place. Their offerings and sacrifices earned them a place of honor in these halls.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Each urn is coated in gold (25 gp). However, three **shadows** coalesce from the dark ceilings and attack whoever attempts to remove or take them.

6. THE SHRINE'S OFFICE

Three shelves filled with tomes and scrolls surround a single central desk. A *detect magic* spell reveals an incantation that protects this chamber from the passage of time; all looks clean and remains in good condition.

► **Lore.** If the heroes spend 1 **crawling round** reading the documents in this area, they learn the following:

1. The shrine was built ages ago by a religious guild that believed in life without material belongings. All the gold they gathered or gained throughout their pilgrimages was invested to build the shrine.
2. Their spells and beliefs became one, and the shrine is now bestowed with arcane properties.
3. The religious guild is long gone, but the shrine remains. It has become a beacon of hope and a spiritual motivation for those who have nothing.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** A well-made bastard sword (10 gp), a pair of silvered daggers (10 gp each), a tier-1 spell scroll (80 gp), and a tier-2 spell scroll (140 gp).

7. NORTH TREASURE

The heroes must traverse a 100-foot-long corridor to reach the treasure chest at the end. An automated crossbow shoots three times when creatures approach.

► **Crossbow.** Bolt +3 (1d8). This apparatus in particular reloads and is ready to fire again in 1 minute.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** A half-finished suit of chainmail (30 gp), a silver-and-gold circlet (40 gp), an opalescent pearl (40 gp), a rare incense that is repulsive to undead (50 gp), and a wooden box with a *Kytherian Cog* (300 gp).

8. CHAMBER OF DEATH

A perceptive hero may notice the secret passage while entering the dungeon (area 2, DC 12 WIS, see map).

► **Traps.** Creatures crossing this room get burned by fire jets or cut by rotating blades (DC 15 DEX, 2d8 damage). The heroes may try to disarm them (see **Devices**).

9. SOUTH TREASURE

► **Swinging Blades.** Four attacks. Blade +3 (1d6). The blades return to their starting positions after 1 minute.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** A mithral shield inlaid with small, blue pearls (80 gp), and a tier-1 spell scroll (80 gp).

10. SHRINE OF BEGGARS

► **The Future.** After leaving an offering worth at least 1 gp, the heroes must meditate for an entire day kneeling and praying, like the effigy. If they do, they experience a mysterious, cryptic vision of the future (GM's choice).

► **The Beggar's Cape.** The heroes do not meet the requirements to take this artifact. The only way for them to get their hands on it is through Lauren (see below).

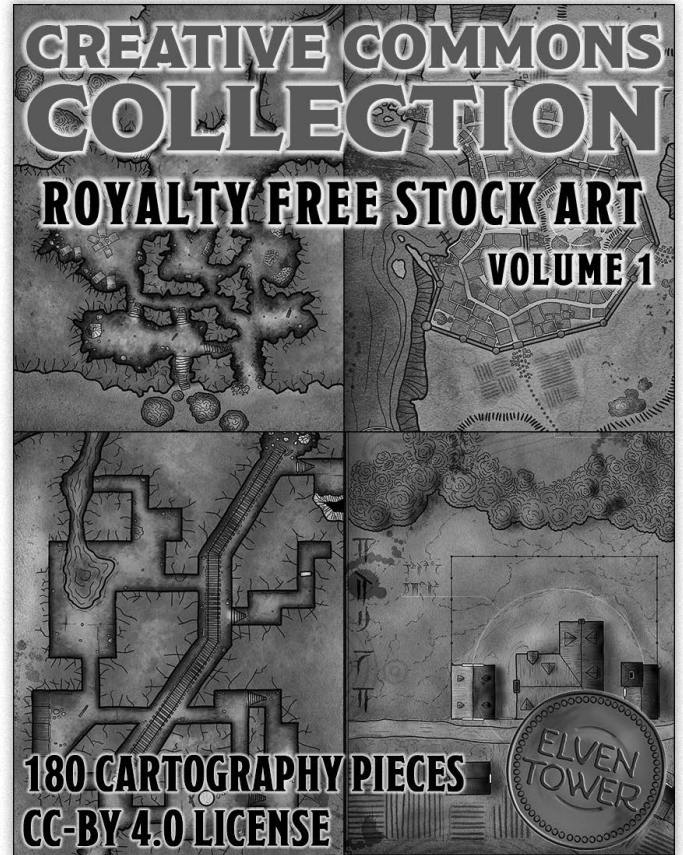
► **Lauren.** Wearing a simple ragged robe and no shoes, she prays and explains she is looking for the *Beggar's Cape*. She has given up everything she has in life. A secret compartment opens on the floor and Lauren grabs the *Beggar's Cape* and dons it (the wearer gains +1 AC and advantage on checks to detect lies or ruses). There is nothing the heroes can say to convince her to sell it or exchange it. And if they take it by force, six **wights** emerge from their sarcophagi (see map) and chase the heroes wherever they are to punish them. They shall bring the cape back to its rightful owner or back to the crypt.



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MAW OF THE RUBY DRAGON

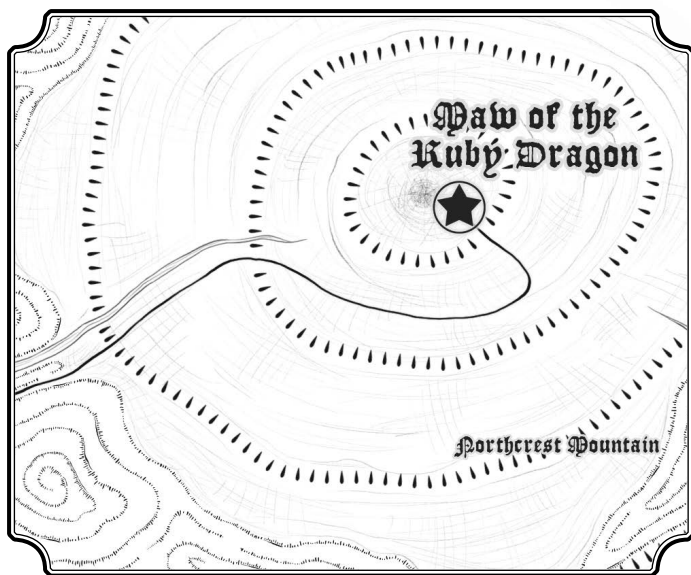
“How brave of you to come find me in my lair. Alas, it is all for naught; your lives are forfeit. Your deaths shall fuel the awakening of this dormant volcano...”

The Ruby Dragon



After the deadly encounter with the ruby dragon in Wildsor and roaming Leaf Valley in search of information and strength to fight the draconid beast, the characters are ready to confront it in the magma chamber of Northcrest Mountain. The characters and their allies must climb the dormant volcano and find the entrance of a rocky compound that the ruby dragon has claimed as its lair.

The characters are armed with magic weaponry, spells, and their wits. But the most crucial piece of this puzzle might be information. In the Temple of the Dragon God, the characters may have learned that the ruby dragon is an explorer named Eustace under the effects of a nefarious curse. The *Draconid Band*, which the dragon wears, is the key to helping Eustace. A tricky challenge as the characters must find a way to remove the magic ring from the angry dragon's claw (see *The Cursed Eustace*).



Level 4 Dungeon

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Area 2 is brightly lit by the lava. The rest of the areas are pitch dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Magic Aura.** As the ruby dragon lives longer and takes more lives, the rune circles in area two gain power. The *detect magic* spell can perceive these auras from up to 500 feet away, even through solid obstacles.

CLIMBING NORTHCREST MOUNTAIN

THE TRAIL NORTHEAST of Wildsor leads to uneven terrain and Northcrest Mountain. An hour into the journey, the road is almost indiscernible from the landscape as recent earthquakes have shifted the terrain.

► **Climbing.** A character must guide his companions through the scabrous mountainside (DC 12 WIS check). On a success, the characters reach area 1 without complication after 2 hours of travel. On a failure, the characters take twice as long to reach area 1 and the **ruby dragon** appears in the sky. The abominate draconid flies by the characters and uses its Fire Breath once. After the attack, the dragon retreats to the mountaintop. The characters shall encounter the dragon again in area 2.

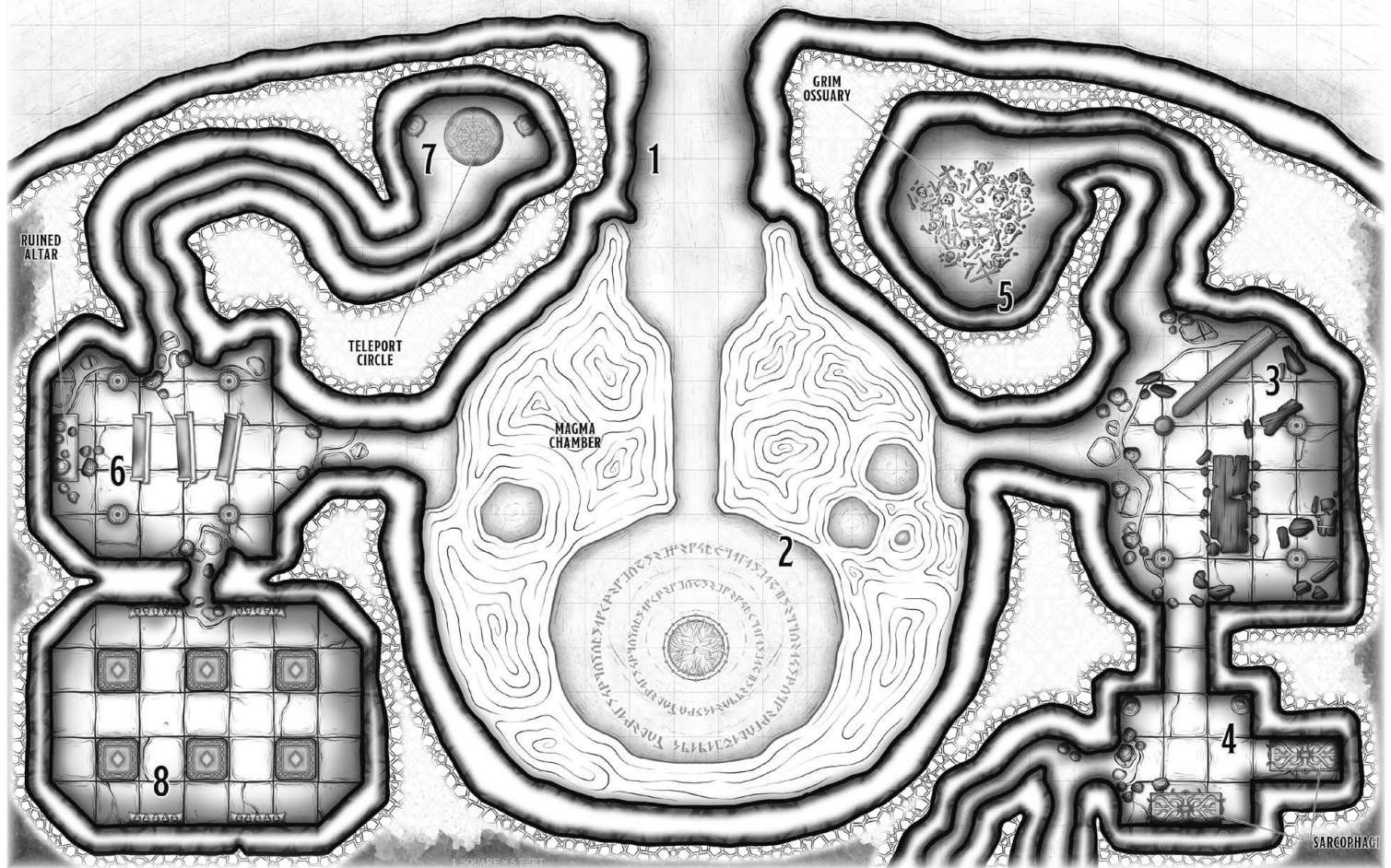
► **The Scorpions.** The siege weapons used in Wildsor, if they still exist, are not easy to move up the mountain. Mounts and carts cannot traverse the rugged mountainside and each siege weapon requires 4 hours to assemble. A DC 18 INT check allows the characters to come up with a reasonable plan to move the weapon to area 1 but it does not prevent the need to assemble it.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 The magma chamber (area 2) momentarily increases its volcanic activity. The temperature in the dungeon rises to dangerous levels for 1 **crawling round**. Creatures without magical resistance to heat take 1d8 damage (DC 15 CON check).
- 2 Two **shadows** emerge from a nearby wall. The undead's ephemeral appearance is of a humanoid shrouded in flames.
- 3 Two **ashen wyrmlings** are born from the lava in area 2. They fly to the characters' location and attack.
- 4 The ruby dragon roars in the distance. NPCs with no adventuring experience accompanying the party must roll **Morale**.
- 5 Twelve valiant **peasants** arrive at area 1. They want to fight alongside the characters against the ruby dragon.
- 6 Four dragonkin (**beastmen** with scaled skin), heeding an arcane call to aid the ruby dragon, traveled from the forest around the Ironbark Catacombs to area 1. They hide until the ruby dragon fights the party (DC 12 WIS to spot); then they help the dragon.



1. THE FIERY ENTRANCE

An opening in the mountain, large enough for the ruby dragon to pass through, leads into the depths of Northcrest Mountain. A fiery glow comes from within, evidence of the magma chamber beyond it.

The raging heat of the magma in area 2 can be felt from here. This is where fire-protecting items or protective spells excel and do their job best. If the characters brought a siege scorpion up here, this is the only feasible place to assemble it because its wooden parts ignite if brought into area 2 for longer than 1 **crawling round**.

► **Draconic Tracks.** The ruby dragon's foot tracks lead in and out of the magma chamber but they disappear 20 feet from the entrance; it can be implied that the dragon takes flight at that point (DC 9 INT check). Careful observers notice that the right front leg's footprints are different; a large circular mark takes the place of a digit. This mark is left by the *Draconid Band* (DC 12 WIS).

► **The Coward.** If Sir Wilhelm has come this far since the party left Queendell, the knight's resolve falters when gazing into the fiery portal into the mountain. Unless stopped, the knight utters a petty excuse and runs in panic to the skirts of Northcrest Mountain. A character can vigorously shake Sir Wilhelm and offer inspiring words (DC 12 CHA). On a success, Sir Wilhelm stays resolute.

2. MAGMA CHAMBER

The short passage gives way to a grand chamber mostly covered with molten rock. On a rock platform, the ruby dragon stands by a raging brazier surrounded by two circles of pulsating runes. The dragon takes flight and leaves through the main vent above.

After spotting the party, the dragon leaves through the volcano's main vent, hundreds of feet above. It returns here for the final confrontation with the characters (GM's choice for the most appropriate moment).

► **The Heat.** Creatures take 1d2 damage per minute in this area. The *Armor of Elandar* nullifies this effect. The *Blessing of Fire* from the Temple of the Dragon God is useful against this effect too. Flammable objects catch fire after 1 **crawling round** of exposure.

► **The Runes.** A spellcaster that inspects the runes for 1 **crawling round** discovers that, as the ruby dragon takes more lives, the runes' power increases. Soon, they shall cause Northcrest Mountain to explode; the volcano's eruption would bring death to all in Leaf Valley.

► **The Egg.** If the characters place the *cockatrice egg* from the Temple of the Dragon God in the brazier, the ruby dragon becomes transfixed by it upon its return. The dragon mistakes it for a competitor's egg. The characters can take advantage of this to surprise the dragon.

3. THE RUINED HALL

Crumbled stone walls and rotting timbers surround a dust-covered banquet table. Faded banners hang limp while shattered chandeliers dangle precariously, their once-glorious cut crystals now dull and lifeless.

► **Integrity.** One of the four pillars supporting the chamber fell after the volcano became more active a week ago. Careful observers note that the room's structural integrity is precarious. Each crawling round, there is a 1-in-6 chance that the room collapses. Creatures in the area take 2d6 damage and become trapped (DC 12 DEX).

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Inspecting the room for 1 **crawling round** reveals the splintered remains of a wooden chest. Under it lie 70 gp and a spell scroll of *fireball*.

4. SOULS OF FIRE

This room contains two sarcophagi; the lids are adorned with gold inlays and an encrusted ruby. Two **shadows** materialize when the characters arrive. They beg of them to open the enclosures, retrieve their bodily remains, and throw them into the magma of area 2. They claim it is their only road to eternal rest. They attack if refused.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** Each of the lids weighs 200 pounds. If transported intact to Queendell, they can be sold for 300 gp each. If they are damaged, they are worth 50 gp.

5. GRIM OSSUARY

This small chamber contains a mound of humanoid bones. The remains of at least sixty different people are here, a mixture of humans, dwarves, and elves. These remains were originally housed in the columbarium (area 8) but were removed by heretics of the House of Flames in Queendell more than a hundred years ago. A **swarm of scarabs** emerges from countless cracks in the walls when the characters arrive. The bugs attack relentlessly.

6. THE RUINED CHAPEL

Flickering torchlight reveals cracked pillars and crumbling pews. The altar, now defaced and shattered, lies beneath a thick layer of dust. Faded murals, barely discernible, cling to the damp stone walls.

► **The Altar.** Careful inspection of the defaced effigy reveals it is identical to the one in the House of Flames, in Queendell and Willowhill. Along with the murals, it is revealed that the faith once claimed this place as a site of worship. Alas, it was collectively forgotten after the volcano erupted centuries ago. Ancient spells protected the chambers from the heat but the priests never came back.

► **Angered Guardian.** A man who was once a priest of the House of Flames (**wraith**) emerges from the altar like a flaming figure. In its vengeful rage, it cannot be reasoned with. The undead fights until destroyed.

7. TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

Little remains of the circular walls of this chamber. It contains two gilded vases and a glimmering circle that can be used with the *teleport* spell. A spellcaster can copy the rune sequence for later use of that spell.

8. THE RANSACKED COLUMBARIUM

Rows of hollowed niches line the pillars, many gaping and looted, their contents gone. Skulls on rows, on shelves, gaze at the darkness beyond them.

Believers of the House of Flames from Leaf Valley were interred here generations ago. To scorn them, heretics stole their remains and brought them to area 5. Soon after, the volcano erupted for the last time and both the mountain temple and the scorned dead fell to oblivion.

► **Spirits.** Six **shadows** coalesce here when the characters arrive. They describe their predicament and answer any questions about the ancient House of Flames temple. The spirits request the retrieval of their bodily remains to this chamber. In exchange, the spirits offer a +2 *longsword* as a reward. If refused, the spirits cannot quell their anger and attack like angered beasts.



THE CURSED EUSTACE

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION occurs on a subsequent visit to area 2 (GM's choice). The ruby dragon, formerly Eustace Gibett, descends from the main vent above area 2 and lands by the brazier. The characters have prepared for this confrontation but, when the dragon lands, all bets are off. The characters' lives are in real danger.

The **ruby dragon** fights to the death here. Two **ashen wyrmlings** emerge from the magma on round 3.

► **Tide of Battle.** The characters should make use of several things or strategies to aid them in this fight:

- Allies like Sir Wilhelm (**knight**) or valiant **peasants**, although weak, may make the difference.
- The *Armor of Elandar* (Ironbark Catacombs), and the *Blessing of Fire* (Temple of the Dragon God), can aid the party endure the heat and fire attacks.
- A scorpion can be used from the entrance (area 1).
- The *cockatrice egg* offers a useful ruse (see area 2).

THE DRACONID BAND

IF THE CHARACTERS are aware of the magic ring and wish to aid Eustace be rid of the curse, they must still contend with the ruby dragon. After dropping the ruby dragon to at least half its Hit Points, a character can attempt to grab the *Draconid Band* from its finger and force it out with sheer strength (DC 15 STR). On a fail, the dragon steps on the character, dealing 1d8 damage. Characters can attempt this feat more than once.

CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this campaign and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

THE DRAGON SLAIN

After slaying the dragon, only the mangled body of Eustace Gibett and the *Draconid Band* remain. Shalendra, Ruler of Leaves, congratulates the party and pays the 3,000 gp reward. The city then engages in a week-long celebration in honor of the valiant dragon-slayers.

THE CURSE LIFTED

The ruby dragon disappears when the *Draconid Band* is removed from its finger. All that remains is a broken man: Eustace Gibett. He is physically unharmed but his mind and spirit shall take months to fully heal after the terrible ordeal. Eustace carries clear, haunting memories of all his deeds while he was a beast. In Queendell, Eustace is arrested but Shalendra lets him go when it becomes clear that he is but another victim of ancient magic and untamed greed. After Eustace is cleared, a week-long celebration to honor the characters begins.



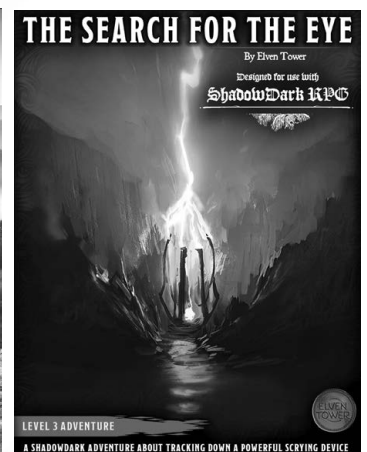
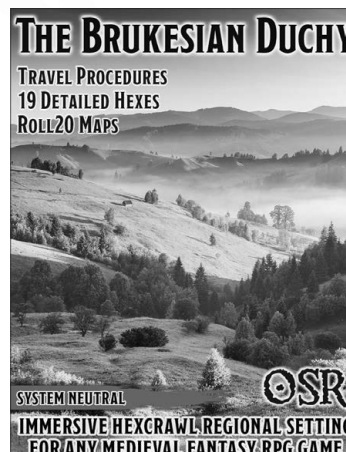
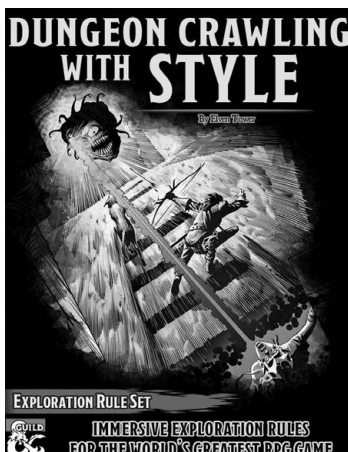
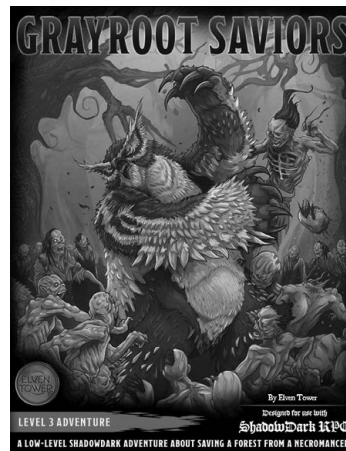
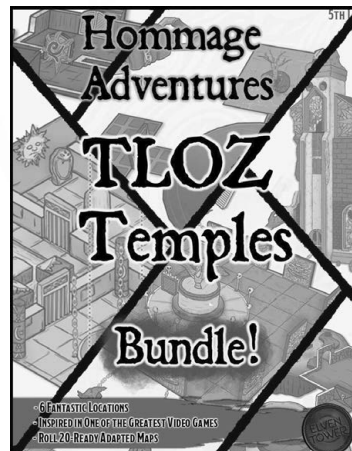
CONCLUSION

Whether the characters slay the dragon in cold blood or manage to save Eustace's life, they are the heroes of Leaf Valley. Through their deeds, they have brought peace to the valley and hope to all those who lost their livelihoods or close ones. The characters' new titles give them the privilege of owning land in the valley; they are free to settle down and retire from a life of adventure. The *Draconid Band* falls into a slumber for 1 month. If a character dons it after that, the dragon god may act again. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

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