

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

VOL. 1



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS MONTHLY MAP COLLECTION

Inspiration and adventure, at your fingertips!

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- Designer:** Justin David Russell
- Development:** Justin David Russell
- Editing:** Justin David Russell
- Cover Design:** Justin David Russell
- Cover Illustration:** ‘The Bane of Osprey Cove,’ by Justin David Russell
- Layout:** Justin David Russell
- Interior Art:** Justin David Russell
- Fonts Used:** Helvetica and Sherwood

Content Creator’s Thanks

Thank you for your Patreon support. This supplement of all maps released in October, now in high resolution, is offered in sincere appreciation of those pledging at the \$3 tier. Thanks, again, and may this bring your gaming experience to a whole new level! As always, have fun and, GAME ON!



I would also like to thank Mythoard RPG Crate (www.mythoard.com) and Dice Fanatics (www.dicefanatics.com) for their partnership and support! Any new and existing patrons will receive one (1) FREE set of acrylic polyhedral dice, courtesy of Dice Fanatics. Are you looking for quality rpg loot delivered right to your door? Then visit Mythoard RPG Crate and feature one of my printed high-loot! Visit one or both of these Random Encounters sent you!

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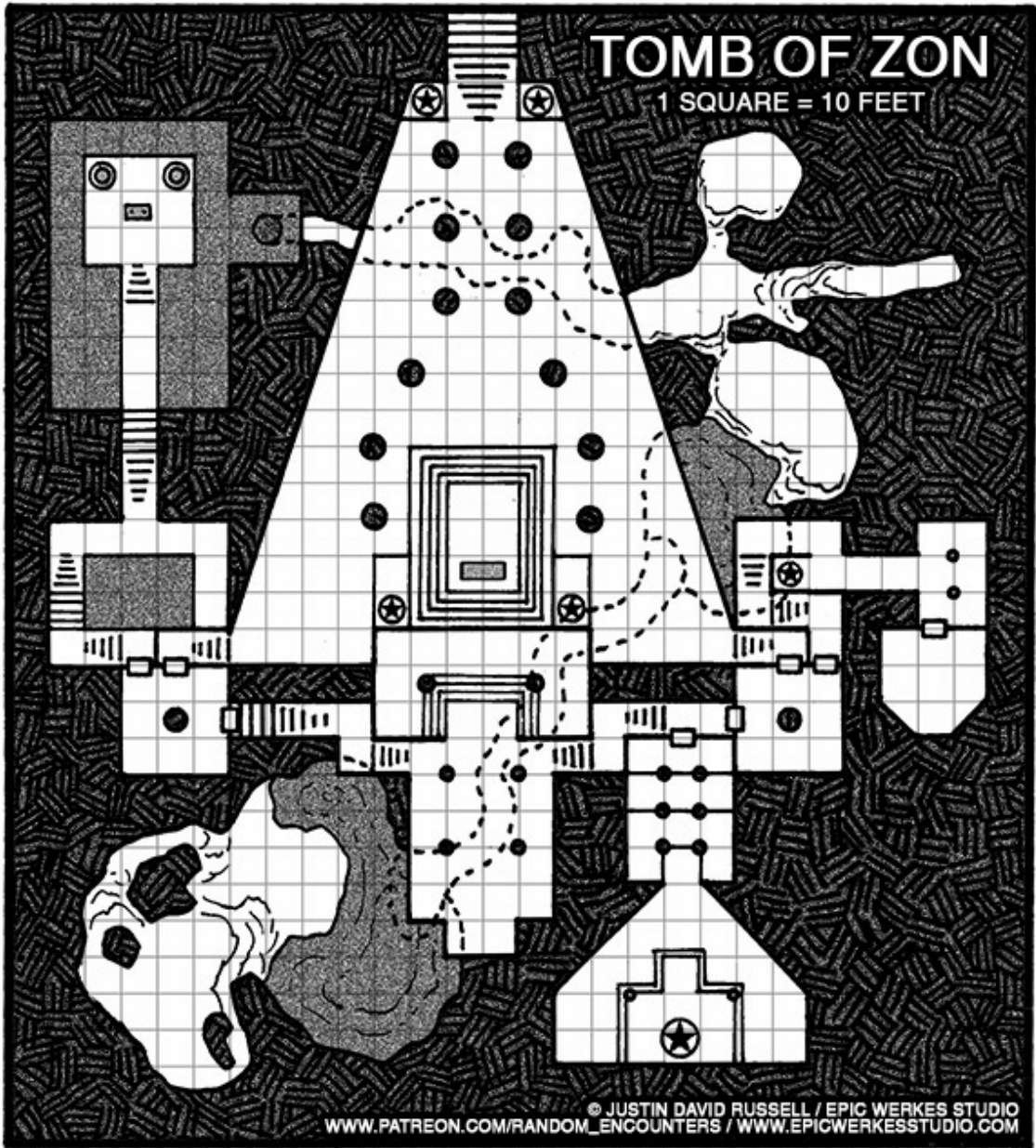
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Tomb of Zon	6
2. Bear Cave	8
3. A Way With Spiders	10
4. The Witch's House	12
5. The Princess Errant	14
6. The Shrine of the Keymaster	16
7. Halls of the Horned King	18
8. Cloud Princess's Tower	20
9. Lair of the Huntress	22
10. The Bone Hag's Den	24
11. The Fox & Rabbit Inn	26
12. The Elder Forest and Environs	28
13. Beggar's Crypt	30
14. The Secret of Ozok's Letter	32
15. A Murder of Crows	34
16. Well Shrine	36
17. The Drowned Tower of Rowan	38
18. Zaromon's Grimoire	40
19. The Faithful Familiar	42
20. The Wizard's Library	44
21. The Thief's Lament	46
22. The Lost Treasure	48
23. The Ogre	50
24. Morningstar Village	52
25. The Weary Knight Inn	54
26. A Battered Shield	56
27. The Wolf	58
28. A Moonlit Night	60
29. The Lonely Spirit	62
30. Forgotten Bouquet	64
31. The Mausoleum	66

Tomb of Zon

Long ago, in a time when the ancient Sun Pharaohs ruled the Tortured Lands in the service of Law, there was a priest of Chaos, Aswaten Zon, that troubled the lands with his Horde of the Black Sun. He built for himself a temple where he performed profane rights and summoned forth a black, blind cobra, Bestathis, from a primordial pool underneath the temple. The snake could be summoned to a chamber where sacrifices were tossed into a pit from a platform to the waiting mouth of the snake. Aswaten's army of darkness, undead warriors raised from the battlefields of the desert, were formidable and nigh unstoppable. Bestathis grew and grew in size, until she became so large, Aswaten could barely contain her. He finally threw his army against the might of the Sun Pharaohs, distracting them so he could perform a rite to darken the sky and block out the sun so Bestathis could grow to a greater size and swallow it.

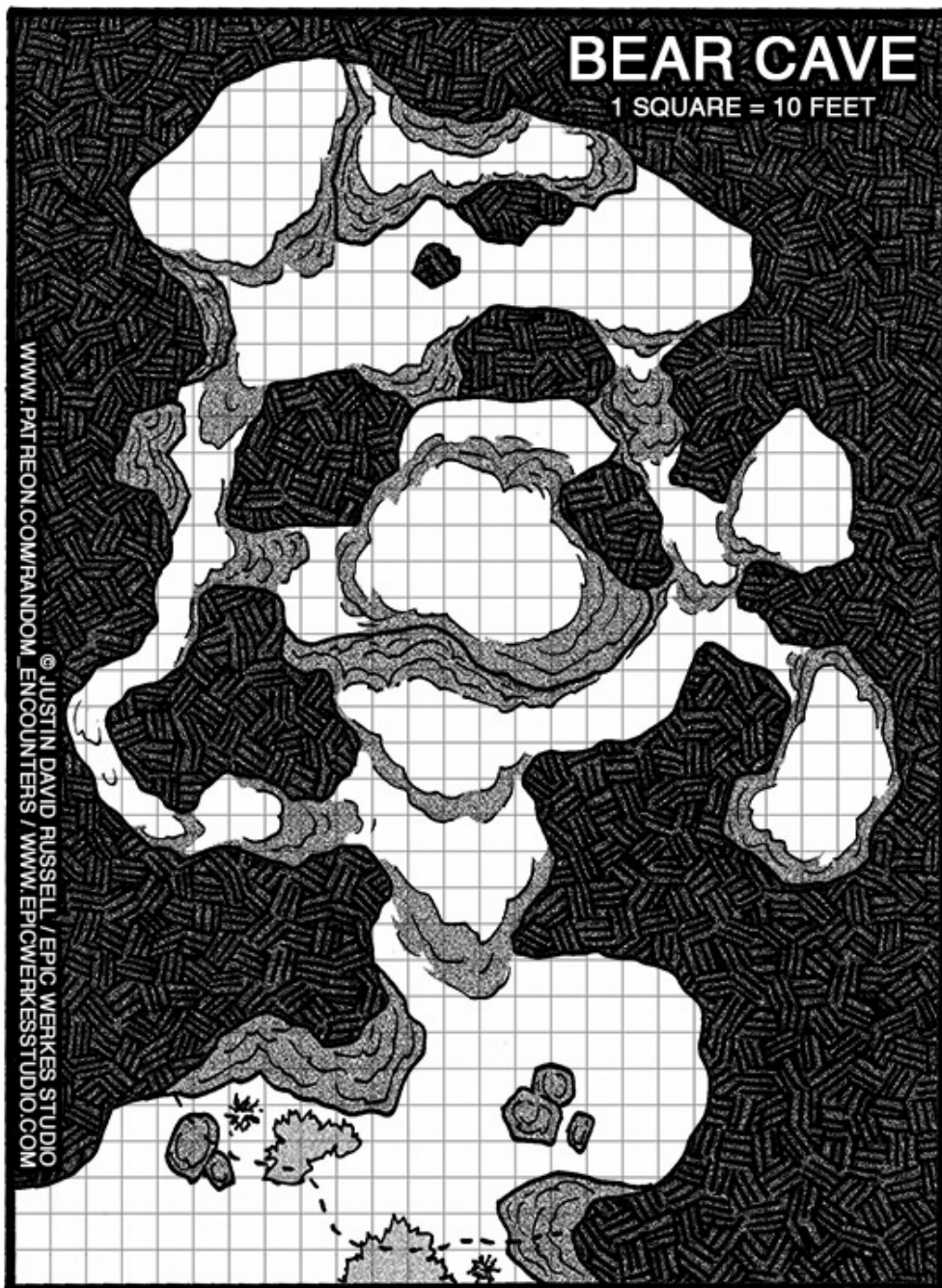
A legendary hero rose up against Aswaten and smote him down and routed the undead army with the Sword of the Sun Pharaohs. Bestathis was unable to remain under the bright light and crawled back to her home where she diminished in size without regular sacrifice and worship. Some say the few remaining members of the Black Sun buried their leader in their temple and sealed it under the sands. Lately, in the Tortured Lands, a structure has been seen where none was known to exist before. Nomads say it arose from the sands one day of its own accord. They also say that Aswaten Zon has returned, for they are the only remaining people in the world that still hold stories, passed down verbally, about the days of the Horde of the Black Sun.



Bear Cave

There is a cave in the foothills of the Towering Mountains that has received a great deal of use. Bandits, humanoids, monsters, and other more mundane beasts, have all called this cave system home. Its chambers tell many stories, and anyone visiting its cool depths may find their death at the hands or claws of some creature, or find great riches left behind by brigands. The entry is frequently used by travelers. Fire-pits and refuse from years of use riddle its dirt and stone floor. A central pit in the main chamber has served as a lair for monsters, specifically bears hibernating through the winter.

A particularly massive, surly, and murderous brown bear lives there now. Some say its hide is criss-crossed with years of scars left by challengers and unfortunate victims. After the last hard winter, the creature has awoken angry and hungry. Its normal meals are absent after it decimated and scared away the local animal population the previous year. It has extended its range to the farms and settlements at the edge of the hills...

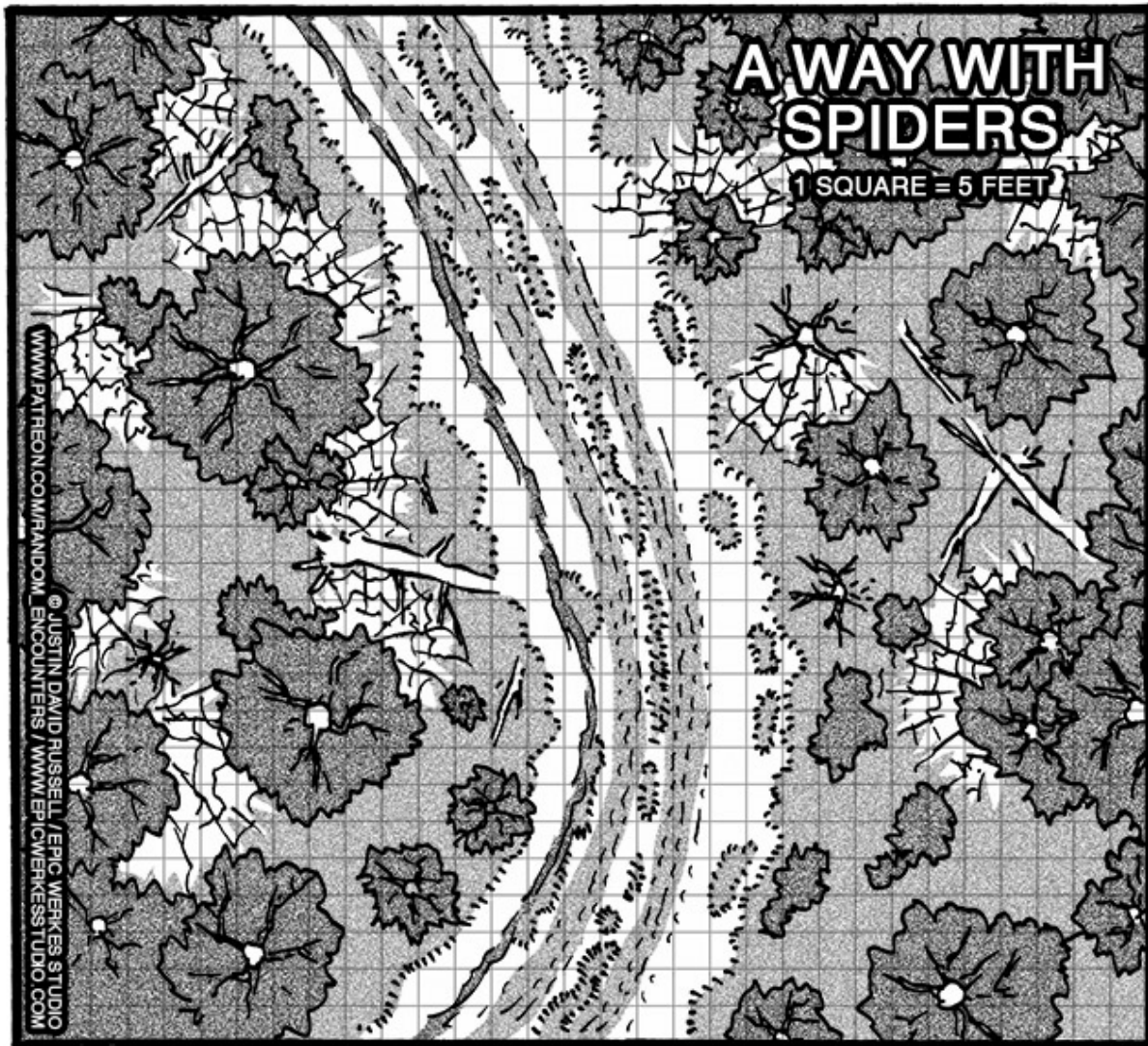


A Way With Spiders

You are walking along the darkened forest road, a cool, playful, late spring breeze ruffling your clothing. It is a welcome comfort, a reminder that the world is brighter than it looks, presently. Whatever evil has been lurking in these woods has emboldened unsavory monsters and caused the local traders to abandon the road for safer, more circuitous, routes. You have been hired by the local lord to investigate.

You are wrenched from your private musings by the sudden silence around you. The crunching of your feet on loose stones and dirt, and the clink of your own armour and weapons has become uncommonly loud in the absence of the usual animal life. No calling birds flit between the trees, no chattering squirrels shake the leaves as they bound recklessly through the branches, no shrieking of hawks or foxes, no sawing of insects.

Looking about, you realize a haze has begun to envelope the woods about you. Confused, you step closer to the mist that seems to hang in only select areas. Before you have a chance to react, and just as you recognize the mist for what it is, webs, the tree you have strayed close to erupt into activity. Several black, many-legged shapes the size of medium-sized dogs race along the webs and leap from the branches toward you. Spiders! But they are huge specimens of the type you are accustomed to seeing... You hope you can get to your weapons before the hungry predators reach you...



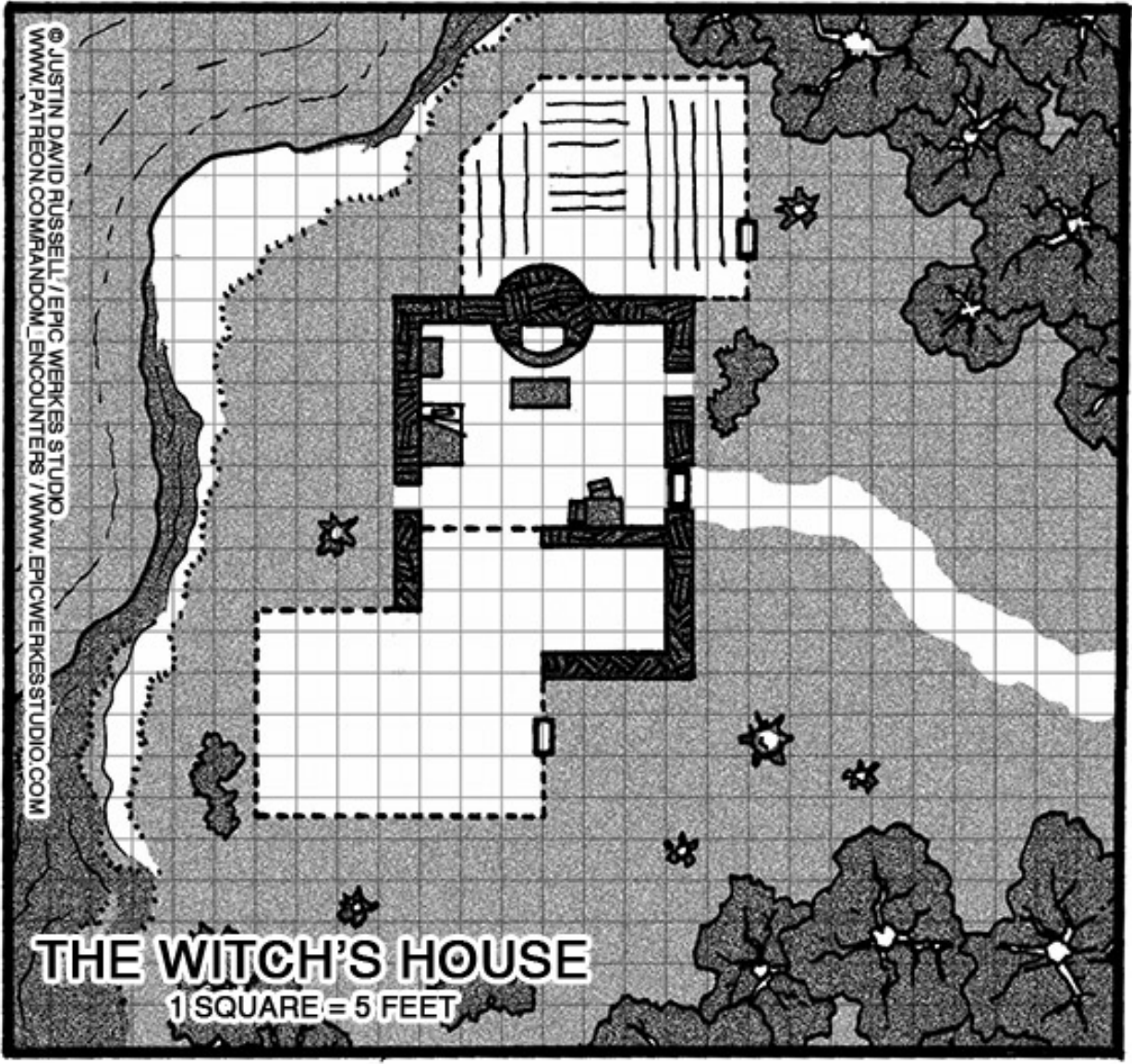
The Witch's House

The sun is setting on the forest as you wend your way through the lonely forest paths. The light is pink and fading faster with each tired step. The trees shiver in the autumn breeze and shower you with golden leaves. You've been lost for hours and you don't know what you will do when the day finally dies.

Your noses suddenly pick out a comforting, alluring scent on the wind. You look up to see something that amazes you this deep in the wilderness. Smoke. Hunger has long since clouded your senses, causing you to momentarily wonder if what you are experiencing is delusion. However, the gray strand that suddenly appears above the canopy ahead of you, coupled with the smell of what you can only guess is some kind of stew, overpowers your wariness and you push forward eagerly.

Heedless of the scratching briars, grasping trees, and painful stones, you stumble onto a well-worn path that should have given you pause here in the trackless forest. Before you, the path leads to a clearing near the banks of a small lake. A squat, pleasant-looking cottage of stone crouches near the water. A well-kept, thatched roof covers the building. From a stout chimney crawls a lazy ribbon of smoke that is occasionally ripped to tatters by intermittent, stiff breezes. A few livestock animals wander aimlessly in the gloaming within a small yard. Golden light seeps through crevices in a small wooden door, and around a fur curtain covering a window, merely holes in the stone building. A muffled, quavering, but welcoming, voice comes from inside the structure, beckoning you forward.

'Come, now, you weary travelers... I hear you outside of my house. You must be hungry...'



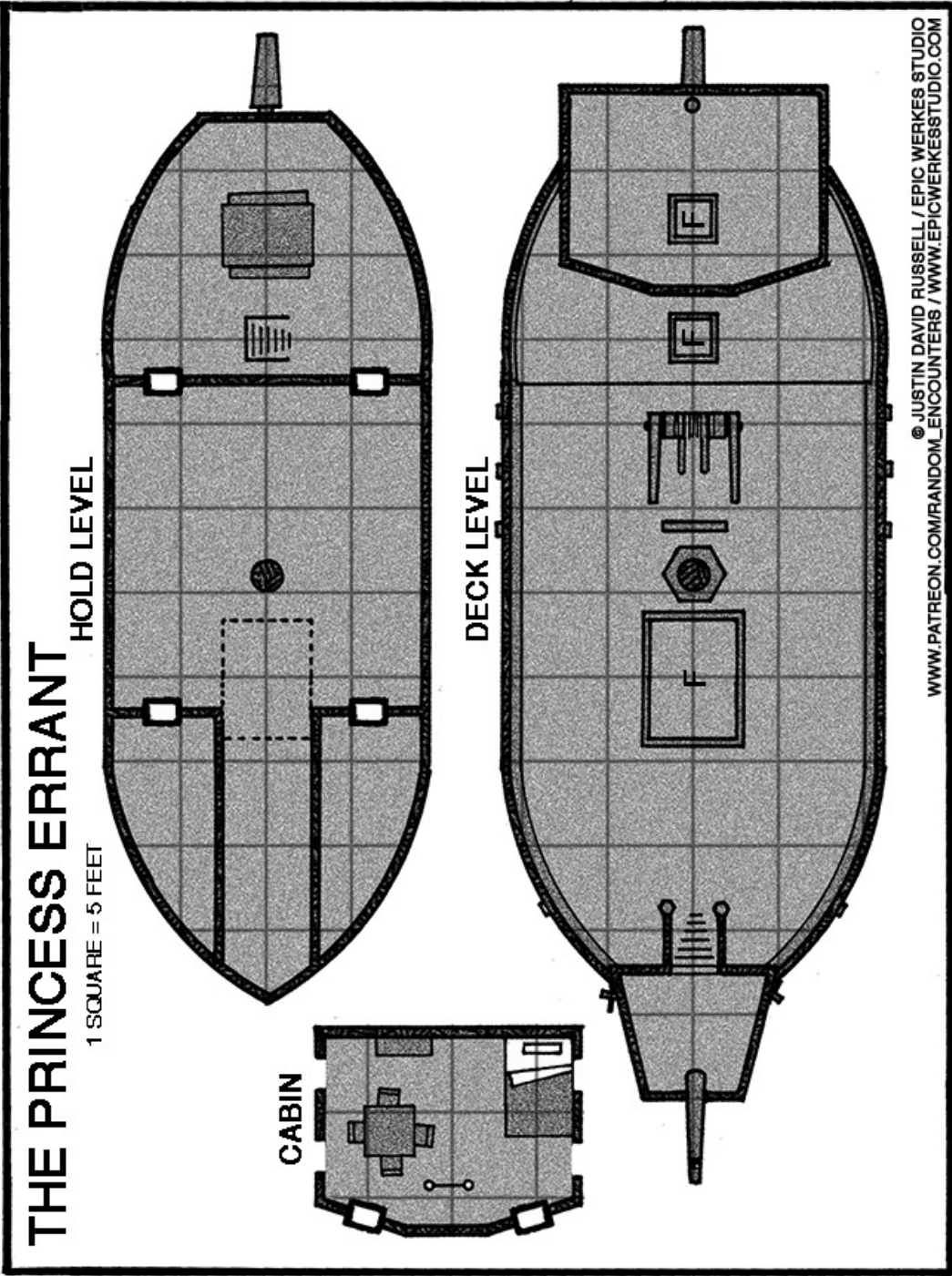
The Princess Errant

A small cog, the Princess Errant is a boat that was originally used as a cargo and warship during the Third Chaos Crusades. It was commissioned by the king of the eastern city-state, the Pearl City. Its captain was the Argent Princess, Catrain. She was an active force in the war against the Kingdom of Chaos. Her cog carried soldiers, led by her, to the shores of her enemy. There she led a campaign of great renown. Catrain died fighting the Chaos Lords. After the Crusades, her boat was retired to the dockyard of the Pearl City.

Many years later, the boat was stolen by a pirate, Roric Red Hand. Roric was a northman. He absconded with the ship as he was escaping the Pearl City authorities. He took the boat, fled into the night, and later restored the cog, streamlining it some and altering the hold space for his own needs. He decided to keep the ship's name. He felt it was ironic and would stick in the craw of the authorities of the Pearl City.

Roric Red Hand was eventually slain by his lover, the piratess, Dimia Silverlocks. Dimia admired the stories of the bravery of the Silver General and often considered herself similar in terms of having to frequently stand up to great odds. Dimia had a flag made featuring a beautiful woman's face, framed with blonde hair, a silver circlet upon her brow. She was slain by a group of heroes looking for an object of power the pirate had stolen from one of the coastal cities of the Southern Kingdoms.

Today, the Princess Errant is used by the group of heroes that liberated her. They have taken her on many adventures over many seas. The cog has carried great treasures in her hold over her long life, and she has borne many notable heroes and villains to their ultimate destinies.



The Shrine of the Keymaster

Your trek has carried you over the Gray Horns, through the Tortured Lands where mani-storied nomads roam the Desert of Fire and Famine, and finally to the Autumn Forest where it is always fall.

Deep in that golden wood, where a man's age accelerates until he enters his twilight years, but goes no further, you know there lies a secret shrine dedicated to the god of gateways, Mimizig the Keymaster. It is warded by an immortal sect of priests dedicated to its care.

You stand before the Autumn Forest, staring doubtfully at the seemingly unremarkable silken, silver strands in your hands. They tremble delicately in the breeze. The old wizard said the silk from the Spinner of Fate would challenge the temporal effects of the forest, if only for a limited duration. Even after having seen the otherworldly Spinner for yourselves, you still feel uncomfortable.

The wizard said he needed the breath of time for the potion he intended to make, and that it could only be found among the Gatekeepers at the Shrine of the Keymaster. Tightening your grip on the gossamer material in your hands and cursing the whims of wizards (but thankful of their deep pockets), you take a breath and plunge into the Autumn Forest...

THE SHRINE OF THE KEYMASTER

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



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Halls of the Horned King

Tucked away in the Towering Mountains lies the Valley of the Unicorn, the realm of the Horned King, Lotholdus. A unique, horse-shaped stone structure in the valley houses the magical halls of Lotholdus and his elven court.

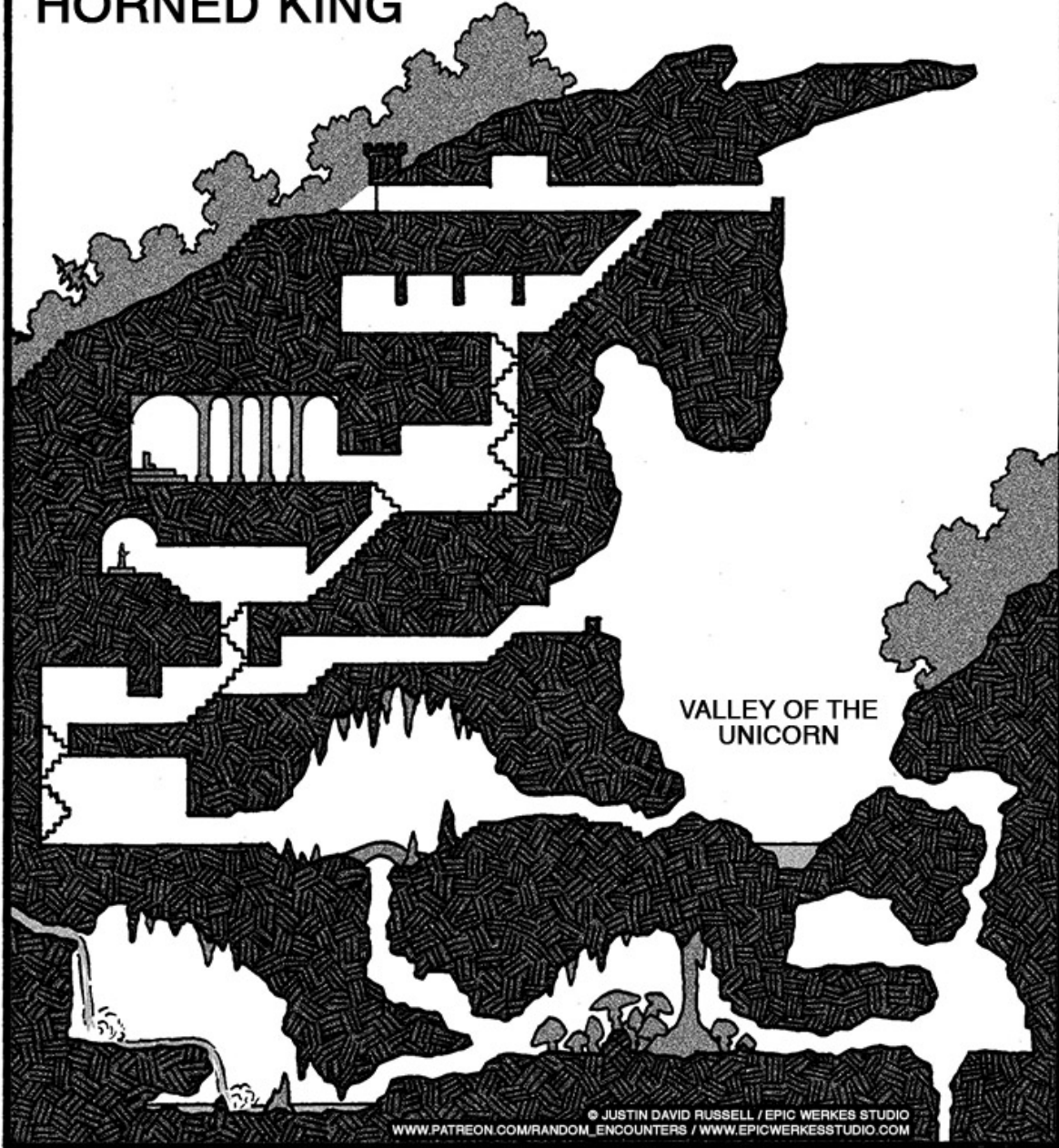
When the world was new and the gods young, the Horned King was a mighty servant of Law. He fought beside the gods of good in defense of the world when the greater powers of Chaos threatened it, in the days before Man woke with bleary eyes from its first slumber. Lotholdus was the first of the defenders of Law to enter the fray, the first of the gods' creations to raise his pearl sword in the unending struggle against the forces of Chaos.

After those earliest wars, the warrior retired his sword and established a peaceful existence in the mountains far from prying eyes. A small clan of elves stayed with him to protect his valley and take up arms if their lord required it.

Lotholdus is the king of the unicorns. His children with the goddess of Nature are the creatures of legend and myth. His offspring will come if their father ever calls for them. When not in his mortal guise, which is that of a fair elven man with long, platinum hair, bright armour, bearing a pearl sword, he takes the form of a unicorn. In this form, he wanders his realm, surveying all that he can, learning every rock and blade of grass.

A fortified entry with a narrow path and long stair leading to it can be found along the ridge behind the complex, along the 'neck' of the stone unicorn. A hidden entry can be found in the valley.

HALLS OF THE HORNED KING



Cloud Princess's Tower

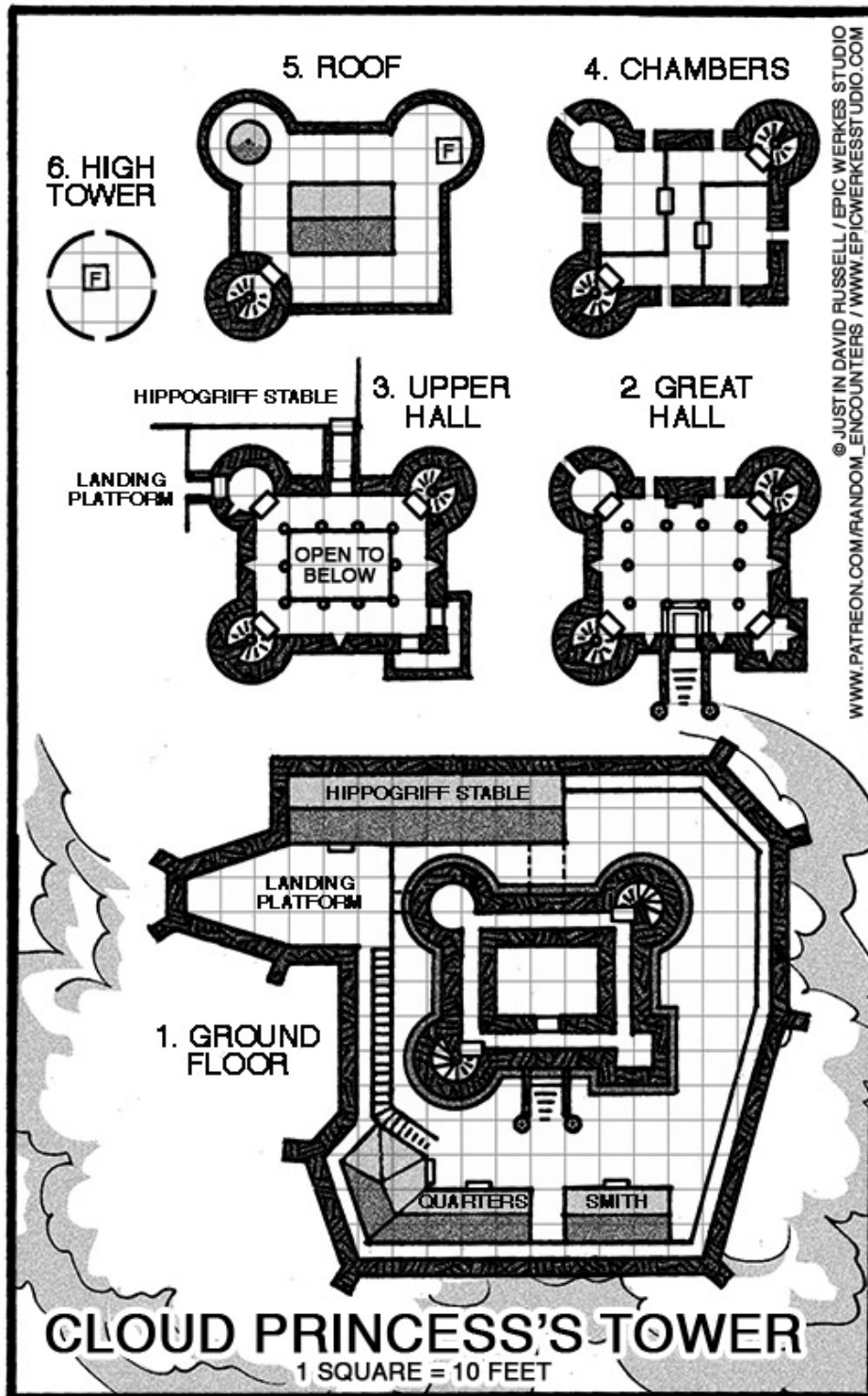
Nothing could have prepared you for the spectacle that now lies before you. A tower of some height, with round towers and snapping banners, surrounded by thick walls of stone draws nearer at a speed you have difficulty fathoming. Most astonishing of all is that the tower is perched on a cloud, high in the sky. But then you turn your gaze from the castle to the beasts that are bearing you toward your strange destination.

At first glance, you thought they were horses, for their bodies had a similar shape. But as they and their riders approached you, it quickly became clear they were not. Their front and head portions, as well as their large wings, were those of an eagle, while their rear legs and tail were those of a horse! You were told this beast was called a hippogriff.

The beasts wheel sharply, suddenly, then glide toward a landing platform. You and your escorts, a group of women wearing bright armour and wielding sharp swords and spears, dismount. You turn to find the person you came here to see waiting for you patiently by a thick wooden door leading into a high tower. The figure is a tall, beautiful woman with flaxen hair, her head crowned with a circlet of purest silver. Bright rings of mail make up the long tunic she wears. At her side is a thin, long blade in a tooled, bejeweled sheath. A look of passionless stone rests upon her features. Several other women take your mounts and lead them into a long building, a type of stables...

The Cloud Princess, Esme, is a fierce warrior woman living in a high, floating cloud tower. None are quite sure how she came by the place, or who built it for her, or what she is princess of, exactly. She has simply dwelt here as long as anyone remembers hearing the stories. She commands a deadly force of female warriors that ride hippogriffs through the skies. A hatchery is housed below the tower's stables where the unusual mounts are raised and initially trained.

Some say Esme is a servant of Law; others say she is a servant of Chaos; others yet claim she is a keeper of the The Balance. What is certain is that no one is truly sure what side she is on.



Lair of the Huntress

In the Desert Lands of Fire and Famine lies a fortress temple dedicated to the petty goddess, Alorostet. She is a fierce hunter and warrior. Alorostet has the head of a jet black cat and the unblemished body of an alluring young woman. She is strong and lithe, and enjoys the hunt. Her sandstone temple fortress temple fortress is carved from the very rocks of the sandstone canyon in which it is located. It is shaped like a reclining cat. The pupils of its eyes are huge, glittering citrine gemstones that provide sunlight for Alorostet's throne chamber. Her seat is set high up so that she can also cast her divining spells upon them.

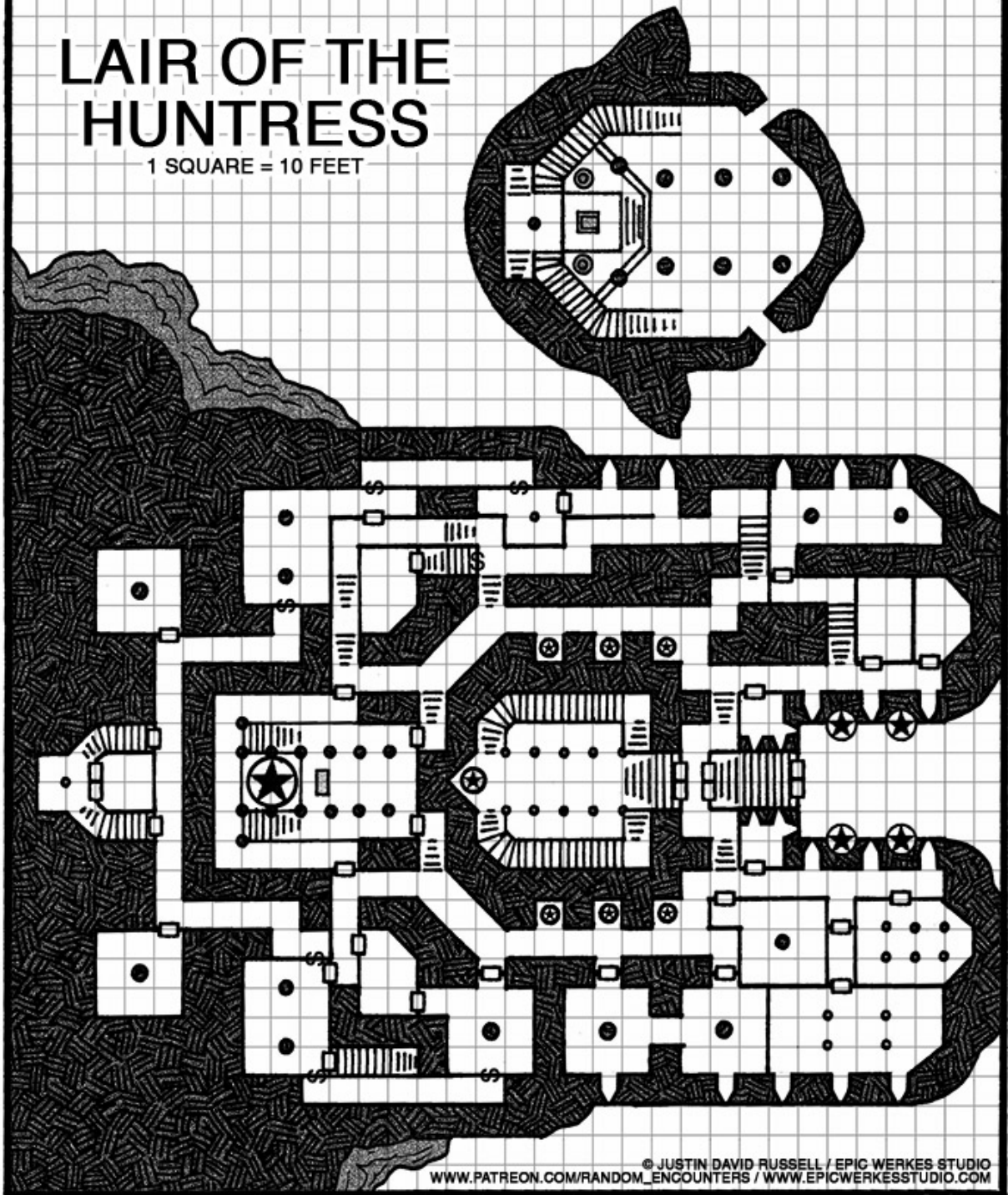
Alorostet's cultists wear black cat head dresses. They occupy and defend the complex from invaders (of which there are many in the land; Alorostet's sisters and brothers are many, and they contend with one another constantly). Jaguars and other large cats slink through the temple, as well. They serve as sentries, spies, and companions for Alorostet.

Dolomite, cat-headed female statues flanking the entry come alive to attack unwanted visitors. Further defenses include arrow loops for shooting bows. Massive, decorative bronze doors open to a stairway leading down to another set of identical doors. A central chamber grants access up a spiraling stair to the head and Alorostet's throne room.

A stair in the temple complex leads down to secret tunnels that lead out into the desert, to other parts of the canyon, and to deeper realms...

LAIR OF THE HUNTRESS

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



The Bone Hag's Den

Stories of a terror that lives in the rocks in the hill have haunted your minds since your decision to investigate the truth in them. Townsfolk have whispered quietly around their cups at the tavern of a strange woman seen wandering the wilds. Some folk have disappeared, including straying children, then returned different than they were when they left. Livestock has also come up missing. Rumour is that those who wander at night after curfew become victims of the Bone Woman. They say she flays her victims alive, and steals their bones for her unfathomable purposes.

Shaking the myriad of horrors you might meet out in the hills from your minds, you focus upon the task at hand, which is to find the hill around which this woman has been seen. They say she lurks in the dark shadows of a small cave out of which flows a small stream.

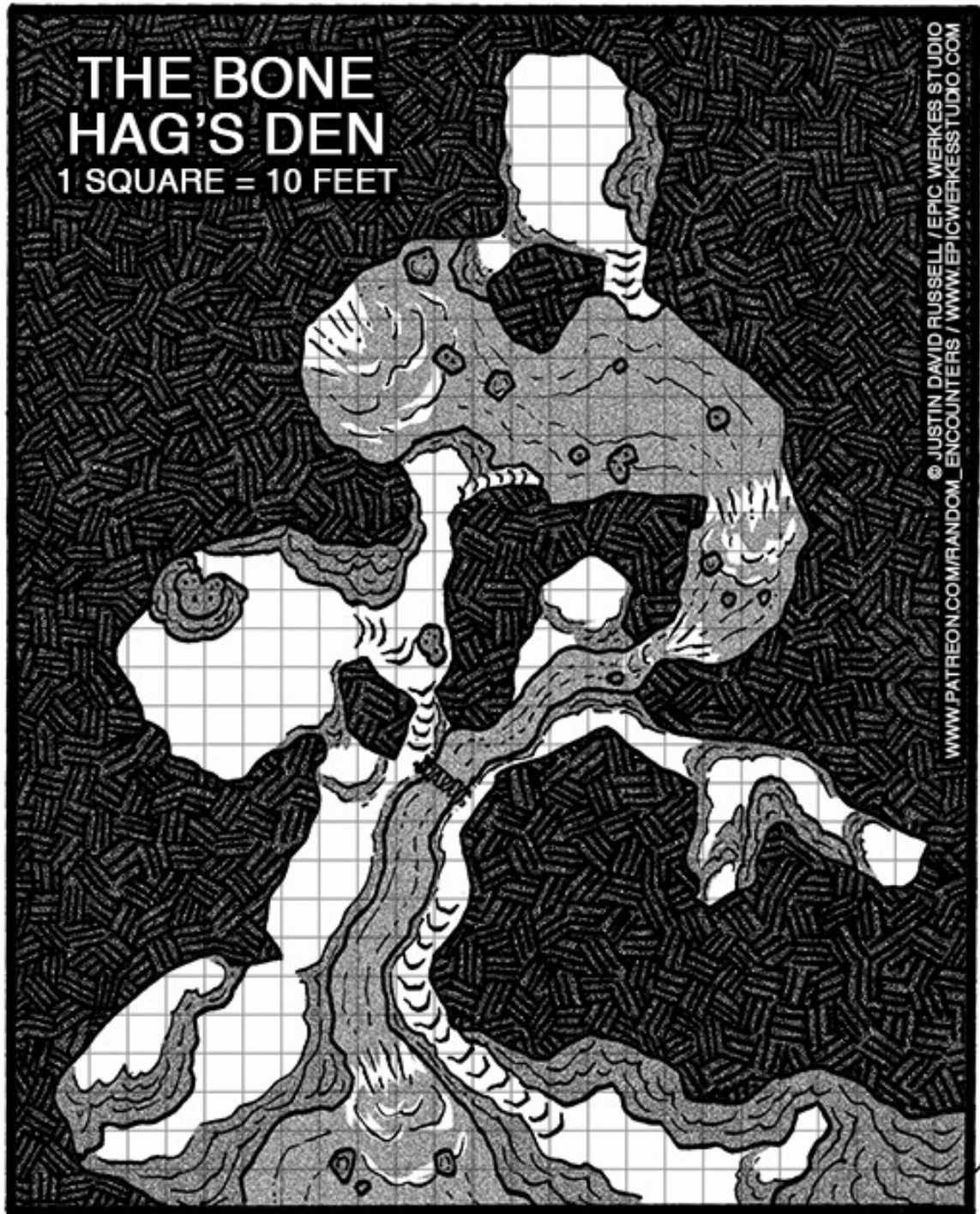
Swift water to your right gurgles playfully, invitingly, but the locals warned you not to drink from it. They say it is poisoned by the presence of the witch woman.

The world seems to grow visibly darker as you grow nearer your destination, despite the midday sun beaming through the sparse tree cover. Shadows seem to lean close to you, strangling your resolve.

A familiar smell, death, lingers on the breeze. Looking down at the stream, you also notice strange white and yellow sticks just under the water. You see they grow in number as you proceed. Finally, you notice that they choke the stream. They are not sticks at all, but bones! You see them now on the bank, as well. Bones of all shapes and sizes, belonging to all types of creatures, including humans...

Soon you spy the cave. A pile of jagged, fang-like rocks loom over a gaping hole in the rocks. You have the feeling that it has been waiting to devour you. It adds to the unnerving notion you have had almost the whole way here, that you are being watched. Flitting shadows at the corners of your vision have proven to be nothing when you turn to focus on them. But now, standing before the reeking cave entrance, you hear a sharp, cackling laugh. It sets your nerves on edge and makes you grit your teeth. It is akin to metal grating on metal, but it is coming from behind you, not in front...

The Bone Woman is a terrifying creature. She is a bag of weathered skin hung loosely on bird-like bones. She lives in the cave in the hills, where she subsists on the bones and flesh of those that stray too near her lair. The hag wanders her surroundings for herbs and other ingredients that grow wild. She makes poisons and foul magic with them. Her true purpose is to poison the town. Those that drink her poisoned water will become her slaves. There are already some in town, but they don't know they are pawns, yet, though they experience a strange kind of malaise. She controls her slaves when she needs to. Her plans have only just begun. She wants a group of strong heroes to approach her so she can capture and enslave them to do her bidding...



The Fox & Rabbit Inn

There is a toll bridge in the Southern Kingdoms. It is named after a popular children's story, 'The Fox and the Rabbit.' The story goes that one day a fox cornered a rabbit on his way home to his family. The rabbit pleaded to the fox to spare his life. 'Why should I?' said the fox. 'Because one day I will return the favour.' said the rabbit. 'But the winter is coming and you are fat. You will nourish me for a long time, rabbit.' replied the fox. 'Yes, but that is precisely why you should let me go. The winter is hard, and we all need help in such times.'

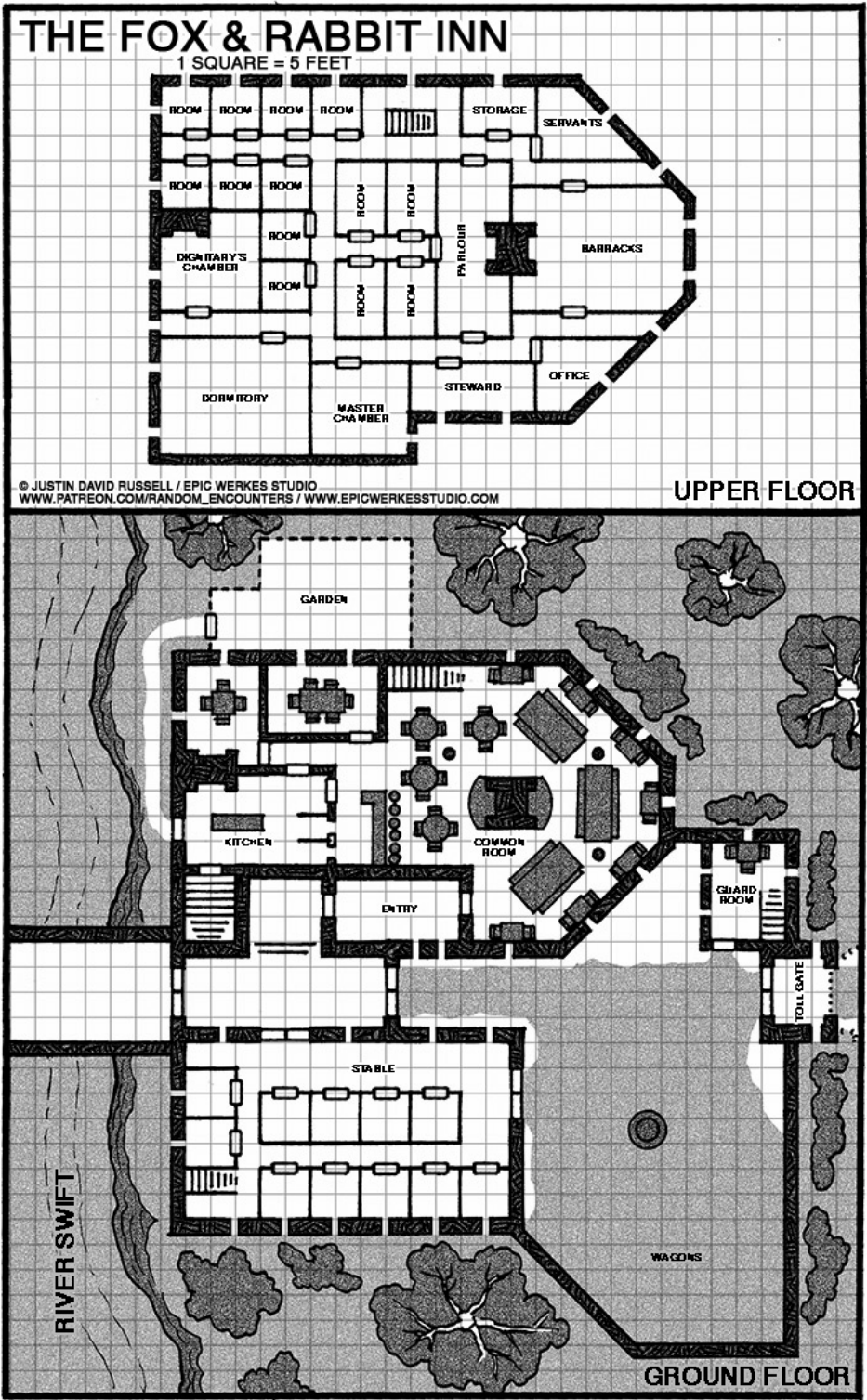
The fox had heard such pleas before, but something caused him to resist his typical urge to kill this rabbit. *Besides*, he thought, *there are plenty of rabbits here in the forest*. 'Very well, rabbit. You may go.' Thanking the fox profusely, the rabbit fled into the forest. Instantly doubting his judgment and cursing himself, the fox went looking for a new meal. He shortly found it.

Later, in the heart of winter, the fox left his den to find a scrap of food. To his dismay, he found himself trapped in a hunter's snare. Howling and screeching, the fox struggled vainly to free himself. It was then that he heard a voice. 'Fox, be still! I will free you.' Stopping his thrashing, the fox turned to regard the rabbit, bleary-eyed from sleep. 'Your wailing woke me. I came to see what all the commotion was about, and found you here. Be still. The hunter will be here shortly.' The rabbit used his sharp teeth to cut the snare line, freeing the fox. And the fox was happy he had spared the rabbit.

The Inn is part of a toll bridge. A small garrison of soldiers is stationed here to check and tax wagons and travelers before they pass over the River Swift.

The inn was here, first. The proprietor tells a tale of how a guardsman once spared a falsely-accused criminal, only to have the criminal save the guard when beset by bandits on the road. The criminal, in repayment for the kindness the guard had shown him, built the inn to shelter travelers and provide a place of safety on the road.

Only recently has the toll bridge become a regular feature here. The military presence is resented by most of the inn workers. However, it is still a busy road and busy establishment, despite the new tenants.



The Elder Forest & Environs

Located in the western portion of the Valley of Dawn is a forest couched between the Silvering Hills and the Towering Mountains. It is a beautiful and deadly region. A variety of trees can be found here, mostly firs, oaks, pines, and beeches, and junipers further up the mountain slopes. There are many other features in this small forest that challenge even the greatest of visitors. Druidstones dot the woodland, and creatures of Law, Chaos, and Neutrality coexist here. A bitter struggle exists between giants, lizard men, living trees, and the druids.

Angolob's Lair: Angolob is a particularly fat and ambitious giant chieftain living in a cave above the Wretched Cliffs. His ambitions are to conquer all of the Elder Forest.

Black Comb: The Black Comb is a jagged, low sloping mountain that serves as the home of a group of short, tough-skinned, voracious lizard men.

Giant's Thumb: A bluntly shaped mountain that juts up like a large thumb.

Goldenhill (Halflings): The easternmost reach of the forest is the home of the halflings of Goldenhill. Goldenhill is a small town comprised of a few smattering of farms, and a large burrow at the base of a tall, rocky, forested hill. The halflings here are mostly farmers, as well as sheep and goat herders. They trade with the druids and the city of Haven to the north west.

Griffon Horn: The Griffon Horn is a mani-ridged mountain named after the fierce creatures that hunt the White Feather River Valley.

Razork's Tooth: Razork was a man cursed with a type of transformative malady after he crossed a priest of the god of Chaos. He fled to the Elder Forest years ago to live where his murderous urges would not affect the people nearest him. He lives around the tooth-like mountain. He has an understanding with the druids. Razork promised to protect his portion of the forest if they would leave him be.

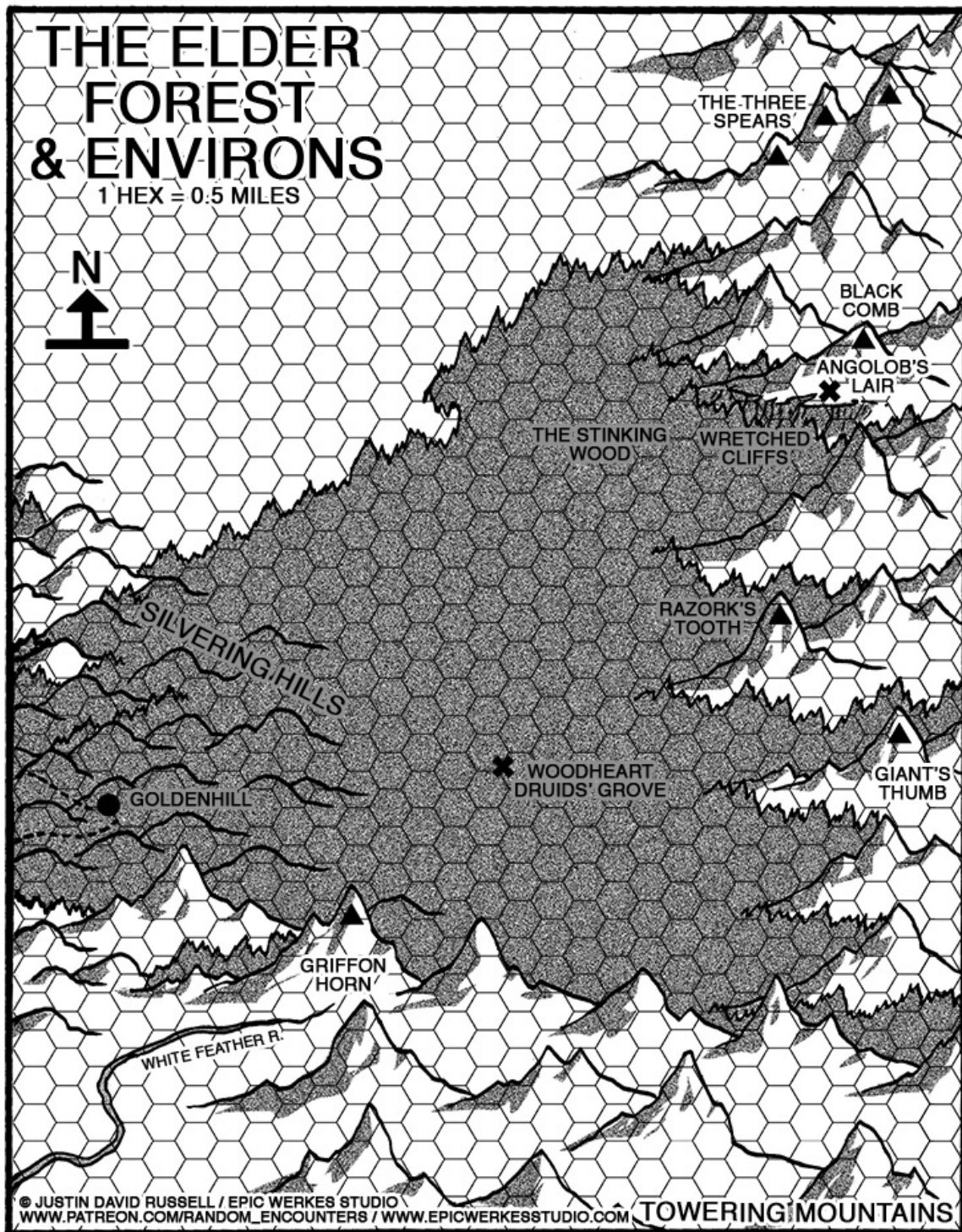
Silvering Hills: A forested extension of the Towering Mountains, the Silvering Hills are named after the large quantities of silver found within them.

The Stinking Wood: The Stinking Wood is a vile place marked by thinner tree cover. It is haunted by the grey-skinned lizard people, and giants. The forest's namesake is the strange musk the lizard people exude. Their stench permeates this portion of the Elder Forest.

The Three Spears: Three closely linked, steep, jagged peaks.

Towering Mountains: A massive chain of mountains that divides the Northern Realms (Barbarian Lands, Kingdom of Chaos, and Borderlands) from the Southern Kingdoms.

Woodheart Druids' Grove: A small collection of human druids protect the Elder Forest from this sacred grove. They are close allies with all the forest spirits and animals, including the halflings. A large circle of standing stones occupies the centre of their grove. Throughout the Elder Forest, especially here in the Woodheart, living trees help to protect their home from the giants and lizard-men in the north.



Wretched Cliffs: A steep, sheer cliff face that stretches for several miles east and west. Angolob's lair is near the eastern end. Harpies nest in the cliff face in caves. The giant chieftain fears them, but he also considers them a protection against intruders.

Beggars' Crypt

In the necropolis of the Pearl City, there are a series of infamous crypts belonging to a notable family. During a plague, the dead homeless were growing in number, polluting the beautifully-tended streets with their corpses and threatening the well-being of the as yet uninfected. At first, the bodies were burnt, but eventually, a different plan was devised.

A local merchant family discovered a strange pit while extending their crypts. No one knew how deep it went, or where it led. It was suggested that, rather than burning the bodies and breathing in the smoke and ash, the corpses of the afflicted dead vagrants should be dumped into this hole. The king was worried that, eventually, the hole would be filled with the bodies of the dead; then they would have another problem. But the pit showed no signs of filling; no smell of death ever wafted up from below. After the plague, the city's homeless were still disposed of down this pit. It was dubbed, the Beggar's Crypt, and became a source of controversy for years. The merchant family was a strong proponent for the disposal of the dispossessed in the pit. They had the king's ear, despite public outcry and popular opinion the method was barbaric and heartless, since there was no longer a reason to dispose of the bodies in such a way.

Eventually, the populace became so violent over the Beggars' Crypt that the king had no other choice but to order the merchant family to seal up the portal to the pit. It was done, many years passed, and the Crypt was forgotten.

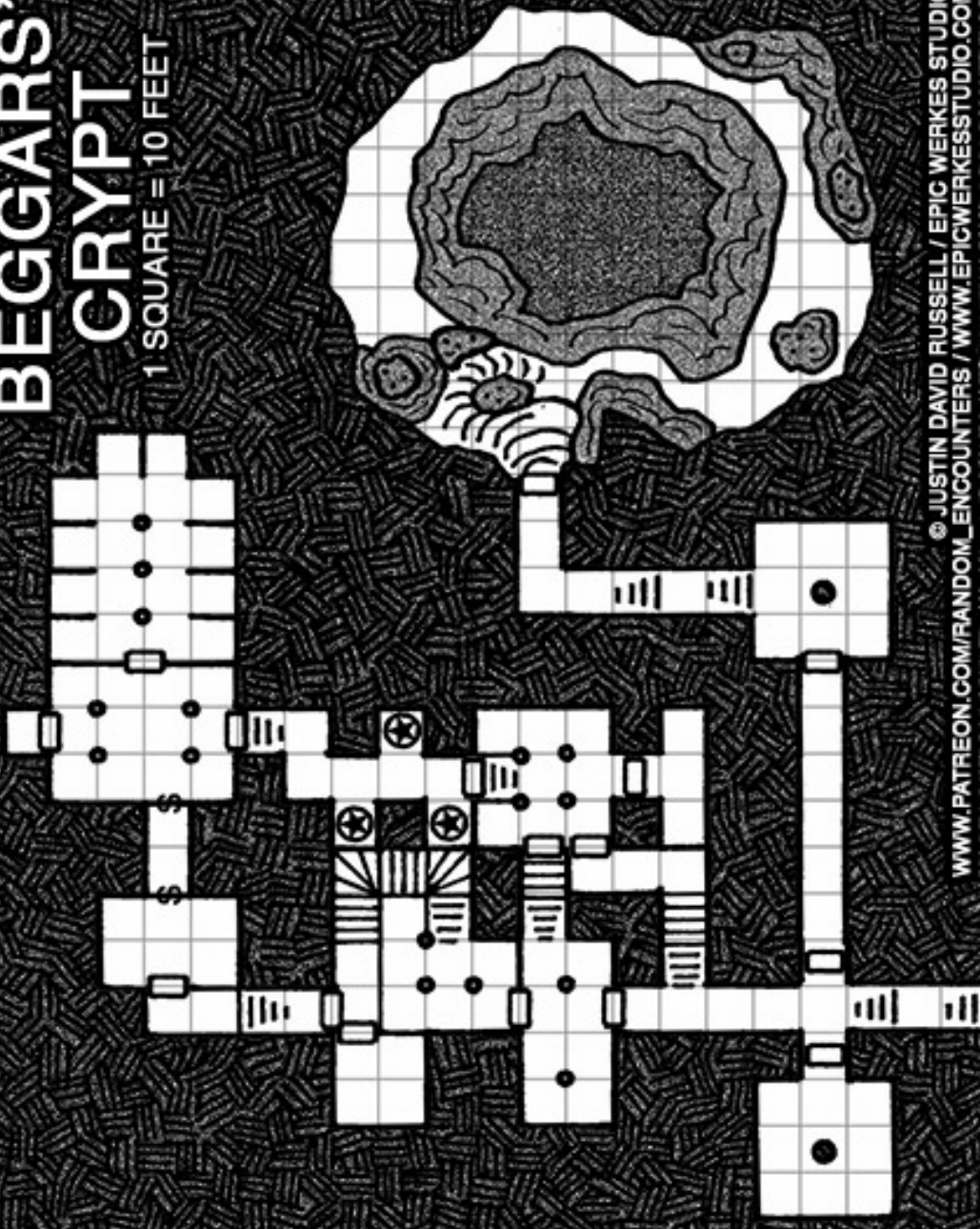
Over the years, the merchant family slowly became less and less prominent. Recently, one of the youngest members of the family has taken to visiting his ancestral crypts nightly. The young man has told a few people that he has answered a call, a voice that whispered to him from deep below the earth. He said it was hungry, that it has hungered for many years, and he must feed it...

The few he told simply disregarded this claim as the ravings of a madman from a dishonoured house. His odd behaviour has become a topic of speculation and gossip, however.

A rumour among the dispossessed and the alms-giving priests of Law claimed some of the homeless have disappeared without a trace. City officials have done nothing. They claimed the homeless disappear mysteriously all the time. A curious priest at the Temple of Law has taken the initiative and has begun to call for a group of mercenaries to investigate the disappearances.

BEGGARS' CRYPT

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



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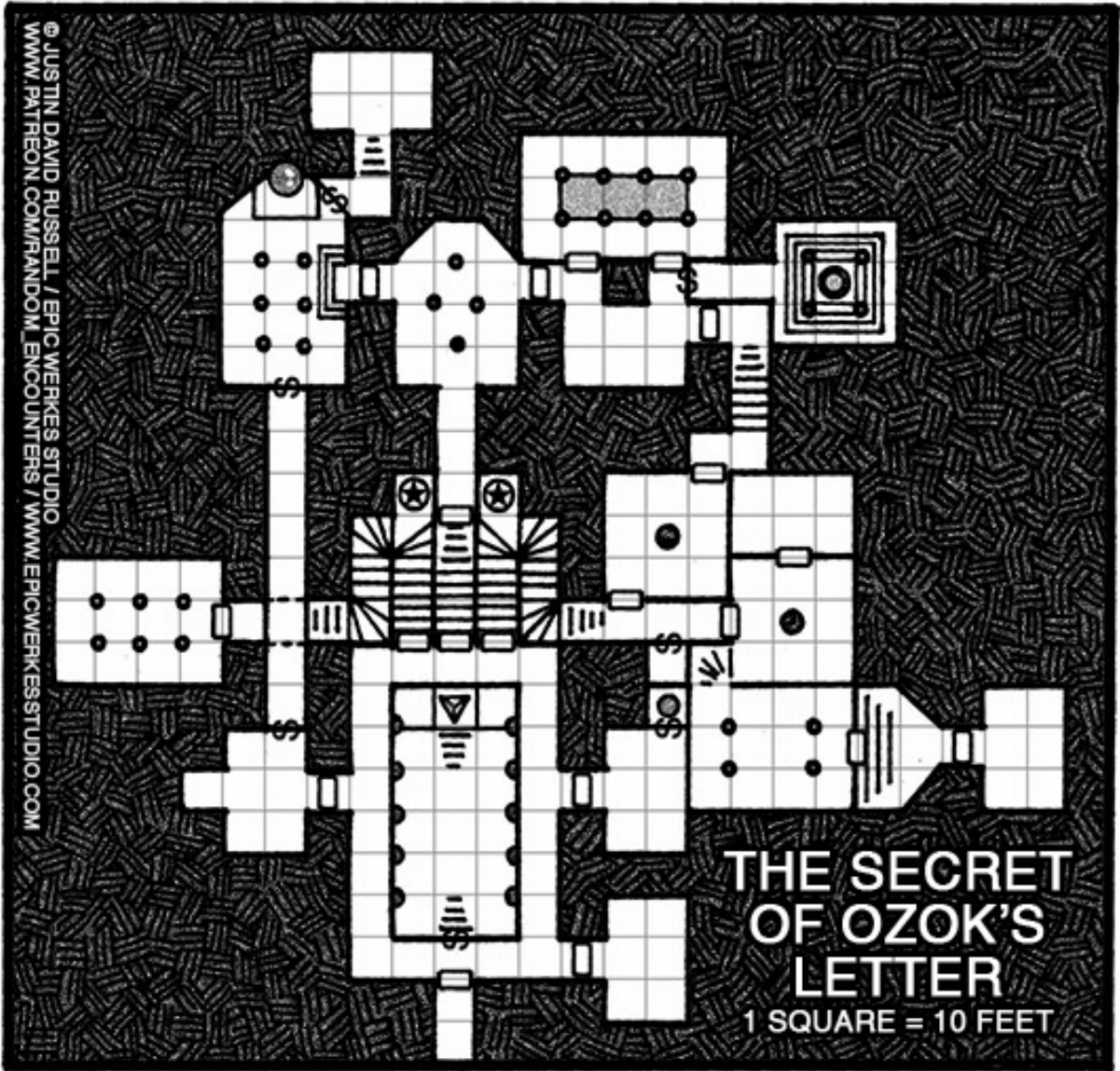
The Secret of Ozok's Letter

Ozok was once a wizard of great power. He had several apprentices over his lifetime. He was feared, respected, and adored more than any other contemporary sorcerer from the lowliest hedge wizard to the mightiest master magician. His power was coveted by powerful maguses; he was idolized by apprentices; none dared cross him. But more than his legacy of greatness was the legacy of his storehouse of carefully guarded magical treasures.

After Ozok's demise (none know exactly how he died; some say he yet lives, waiting to see how his death will be received by his peers), wizards of all stripes pulled their dusty noses from their thick books, donned their traveling robes and boots, crawled out of their lonely towers and caves, loaded their beasts of burden, and stepped upon the muddy roads in search of Ozok's true legacy. Many died in vain, many returned empty handed, and some were even driven mad in their quest for Ozok's magic.

Only one man knows anything of any note regarding the old wizard's treasures. Ozok's favourite apprentice discovered among a dragon's hoard a mysterious book full of spidery language none but a wizard could read. He found a loose, folded piece of parchment tucked between the last page and the book's hard back cover. It bore Ozok's rune, a strange map, and a cryptic message riddled with clues that the finder must follow to finally discover the old wizard's magical vault.

Ozok's apprentice has begun searching, discreetly, for a group of brave fools to guide him to the location of his master's secret. The man seems extremely worried about something. He says that time is of the essence, that others will be following his every move, and that great workings are afoot. Those that follow him must be willing to undertake a great and dangerous task that may lead those involved to the very ends of the earth... Will Ozok's apprentice find the secret vault in time, or will the forces that oppose him discover it first?



A Murder of Crows

The thunder of the waterfall is deafening. It overpowers your senses. The sheer rock face over which the massive outpouring of water plummets looms before you, a forbidding, impossible wall. The entry should be here, somewhere... The old merchant's map says the entrance to Black Corvund's sanctuary should be nearby. There are no other markings on the parchment to signify where you are to go once you reach the waterfall. Apparently, something scared the original explorers away. At least that was what the merchant claimed. No one had actually made it into Corvund's complex, nor had they seen an entry point. You seriously begin to second-guess yourselves as you stare at the impassive, towering limestone. The crashing water makes conversation all but impossible as you turn to discuss your options with one another.

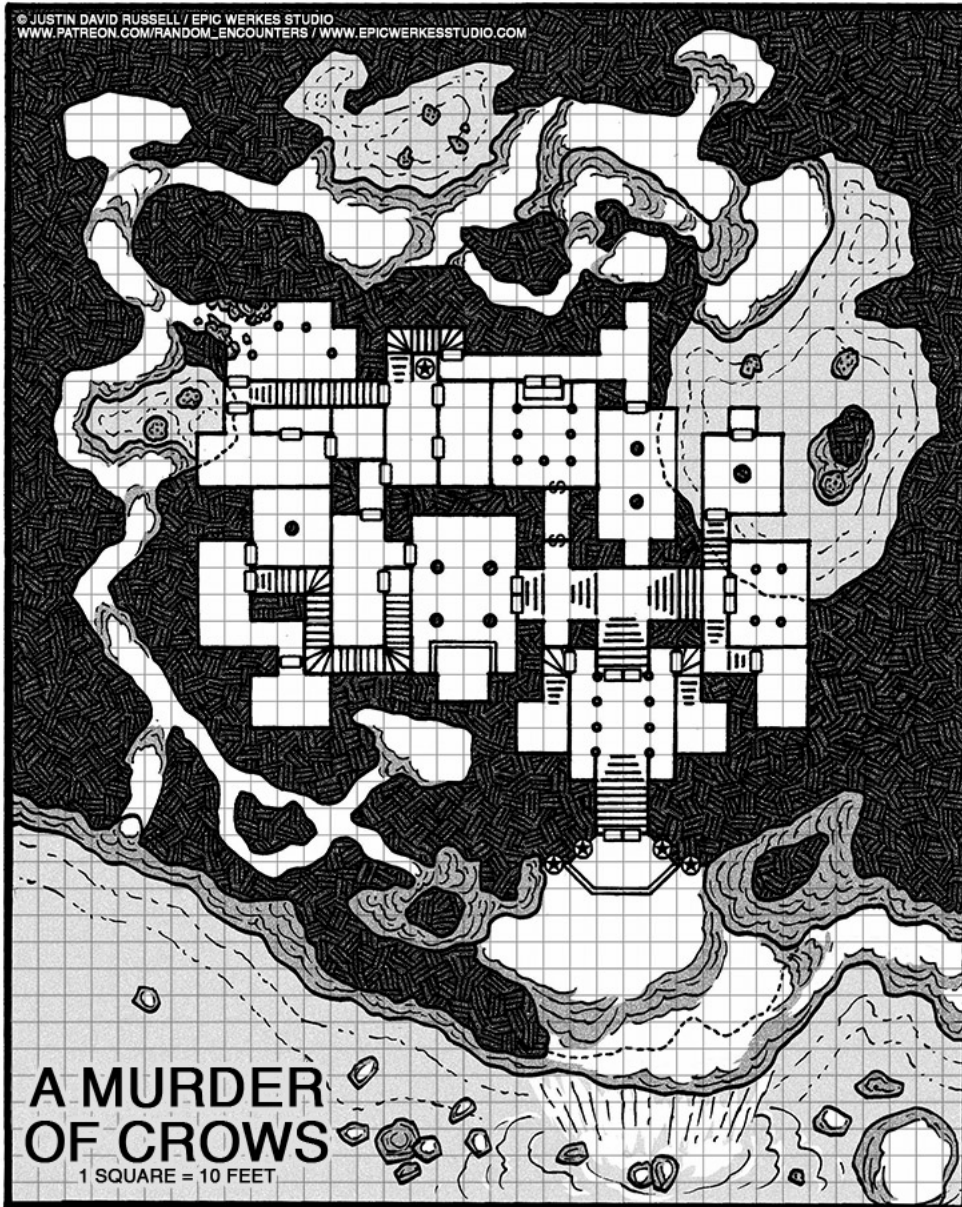
Shouting over the thunder, you decide that if it hadn't been for what the merchant told you about what scared the explorers away, you might not have considered visiting this far-flung location, or paying for the map. Apparently, at least according to the group that sold the merchant the story and the parchment, crows had attacked them. Not just any crows. They were reported to have been the size of men, and they bore weapons as men do. Such a tale might sound far-fetched to someone else, but in your travels, you have seen stranger things than crow-people. And then there was the man, the sorcerer, Black Corvund, himself, who was reported to have lived here years ago. He was known to have favoured crows. In fact, he was said to have worn a thick cloak of black feathers and was rumoured to have been able to change himself into a crow.

You don't have long to consider your options before a flashing black shape caught out of the corner of your vision causes you to turn as one. Despite having been warned of them, you were not quite prepared for the sight above you! A crow the size of a man, backlit against the sun, is flying fast in your direction! It has a short spear in its pale, human-like hands, large black wings sprout from its shoulders, and bird-like legs hang loosely from its torso as it flies. Its head is that of a crow. It's black, straight beak clacks eagerly. Its wide, dark eyes, and a multitude of dangling objects hanging from it, catch the light and glitter. It is dressed in tattered clothing. You see several more dark, winged shapes, dressed in mere rags, leap off from high up on the rock face. There must be a perch or cave up there somewhere...

The first crow man you saw squawks a deep, raucous call that is quickly ripped from its throat by the power of the waterfall. It banks and stops short over the lake and launches its spear at you!

Corvund, or Black Corvund, as he is known by many, was a powerful wizard. He lived in the wilds, far from the civilized world. He had a retinue of servants that he changed into bird-men. He ordered them to perform tasks for him, cleaning, building, cooking, and whatever else he might devise.

Corvund was unusually cruel to his crow servants. Eventually, they rebelled and killed their wizard master. The crow-men have been living in parts of the wizard's home and in a few of the caves beneath it, for many years. Other denizens have taken up residence in the caves, as well.



The entry to Corvund's home is hidden behind a waterfall. He did not build any stairs leading up to his complex from the outside, for when he left it, he always turned himself into a crow and flew away. There is a treacherous, spray-slick ledge that wends its way up part of the cliff face from the banks of the lake, but entry to it is hidden behind some rocks and vegetation, and it is not readily apparent. The ledge itself is so uneven that it is difficult to spot from the ground.

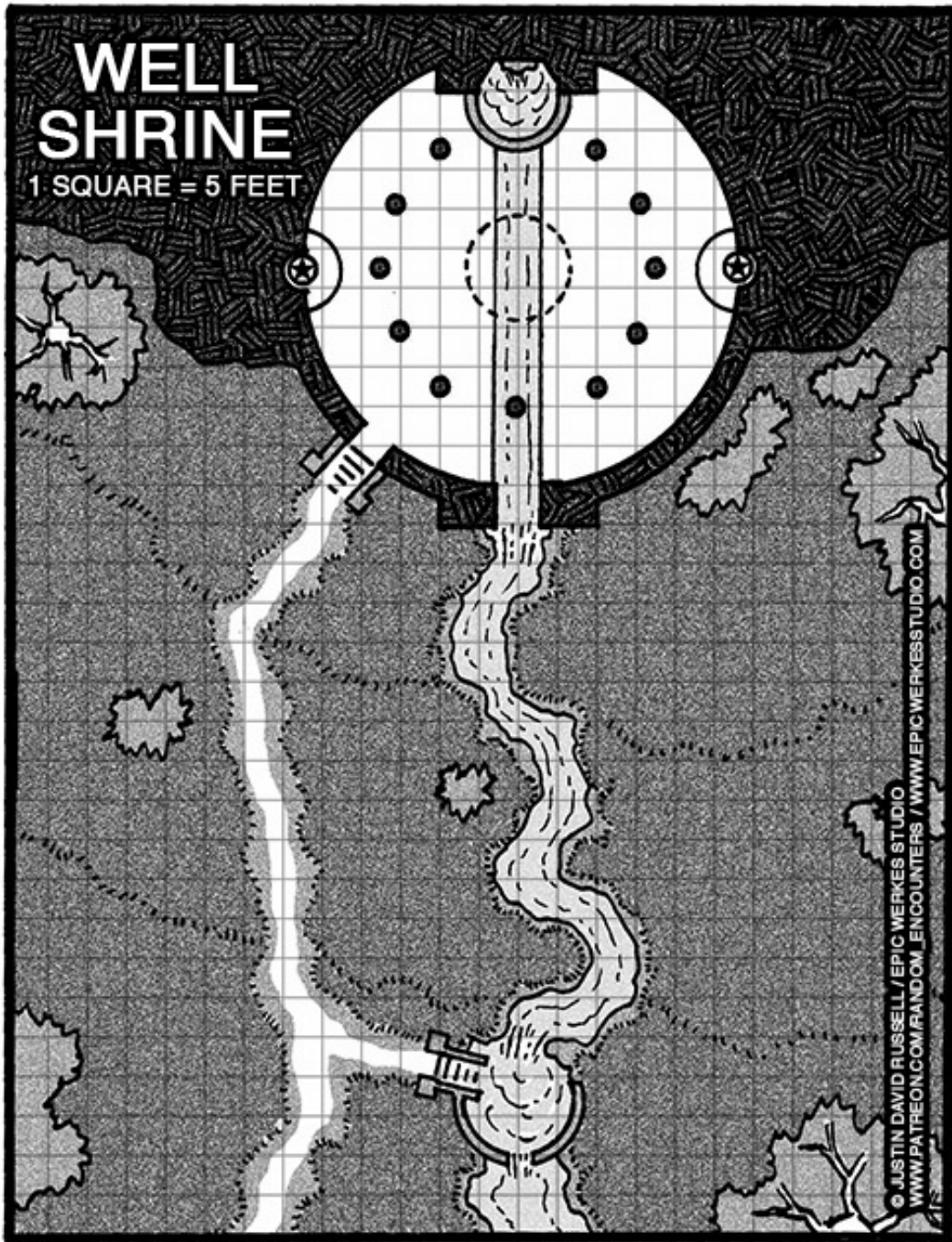
The crow-servants of Black Corvund are content to live their lives alone in their former master's home. For reasons that are obvious, they are not keen on visitors. Their leader styles himself the King of the Crows. The creatures are chaotic, or evil, in temperament, but they are reasonable and intelligent creatures. Despite being unable to speak Corvund's language, they were able to understand him.

Well Shrine

A common practice among the priests of Law is the consecration of natural springs. Often, a domed, corbeled ceiling is built over the water source. Shrines to gods of Law are built inside the dome. A hole in the ceiling lets in light and allows priests to star gaze and observe the sun, when necessary.

Such shrines can be found near temples or alone off of roadways. Travelers can stop within while on their journeys and pay their respects to the Lawful gods they serve. A bathing pool is usually, but not always, a feature of the well. It is frequently located further down the hill.

Water from the spring is routinely blessed by the priest(s) whose duty it is to tend the shrine. A sculpture is often carved (in bas-relief) out of stone and placed where the water issues from the earth.

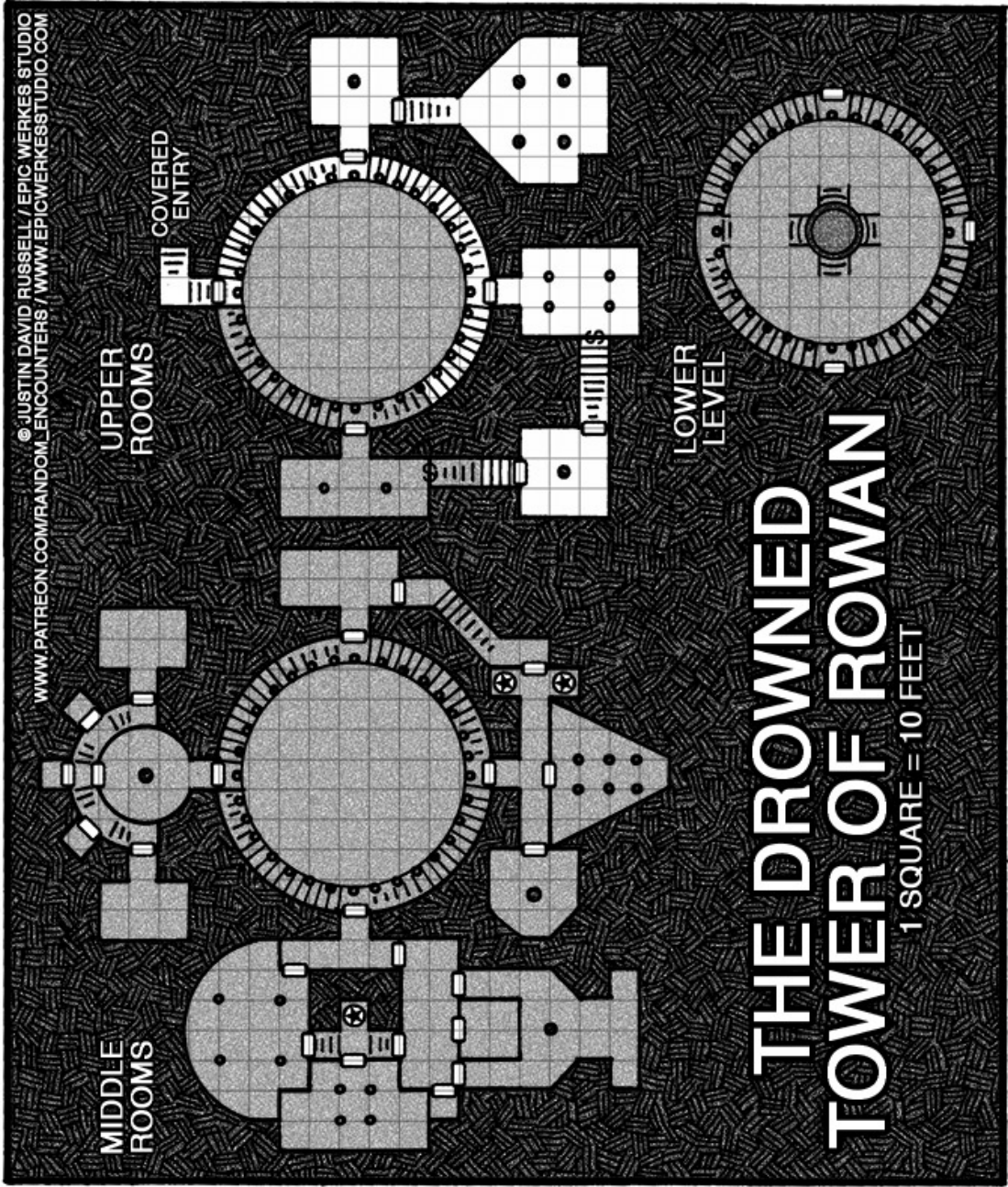


The Drowned Tower of Rowan

You approach a strange overgrown stairway of worked stone in the middle of a rocky limestone pavement. The stair disappears down into the earth. Just beyond it is a wide, circular opening in the stone. Looking down into the cavity, you see a deep hole filled with dark green water. The hole is cylindrical and man-made. It's built of the same stone that surrounds you, limestone. A spiraling stairway set into the wall of the stone cylinder leads down, until it disappears into the black-green liquid. Pillars and a low wall line the outer facing edge of the stairway. You guess the steps you saw earlier lead to the top of the spiral stair.

You know your mission. The wizard and sage, Rowan Thornmantle, told you that he had once had an apprentice and a tower, this tower, before his student, in an act that would change Rowan's life forever, drowned his home and everything in it. Apparently, the apprentice had tried to summon some sort of elemental being from the well at the bottom of the opening you see before you. Using a scroll he found among his master's library, the apprentice was able to somewhat succeed at his task. However, he was not strong enough to control the elemental. The creature lashed out, killing the apprentice. Water poured from the well, filling the tower. Rowan was able to save himself and some very important materials, but most of his belongings were lost.

Years later, Rowan has hired you all to investigate his tower, to bring him anything of interest. The pay is good, but the method by which you are to explore the tower escapes you. And who knows what mysteries lurk in that glass-like water...



Zaromon's Grimoire

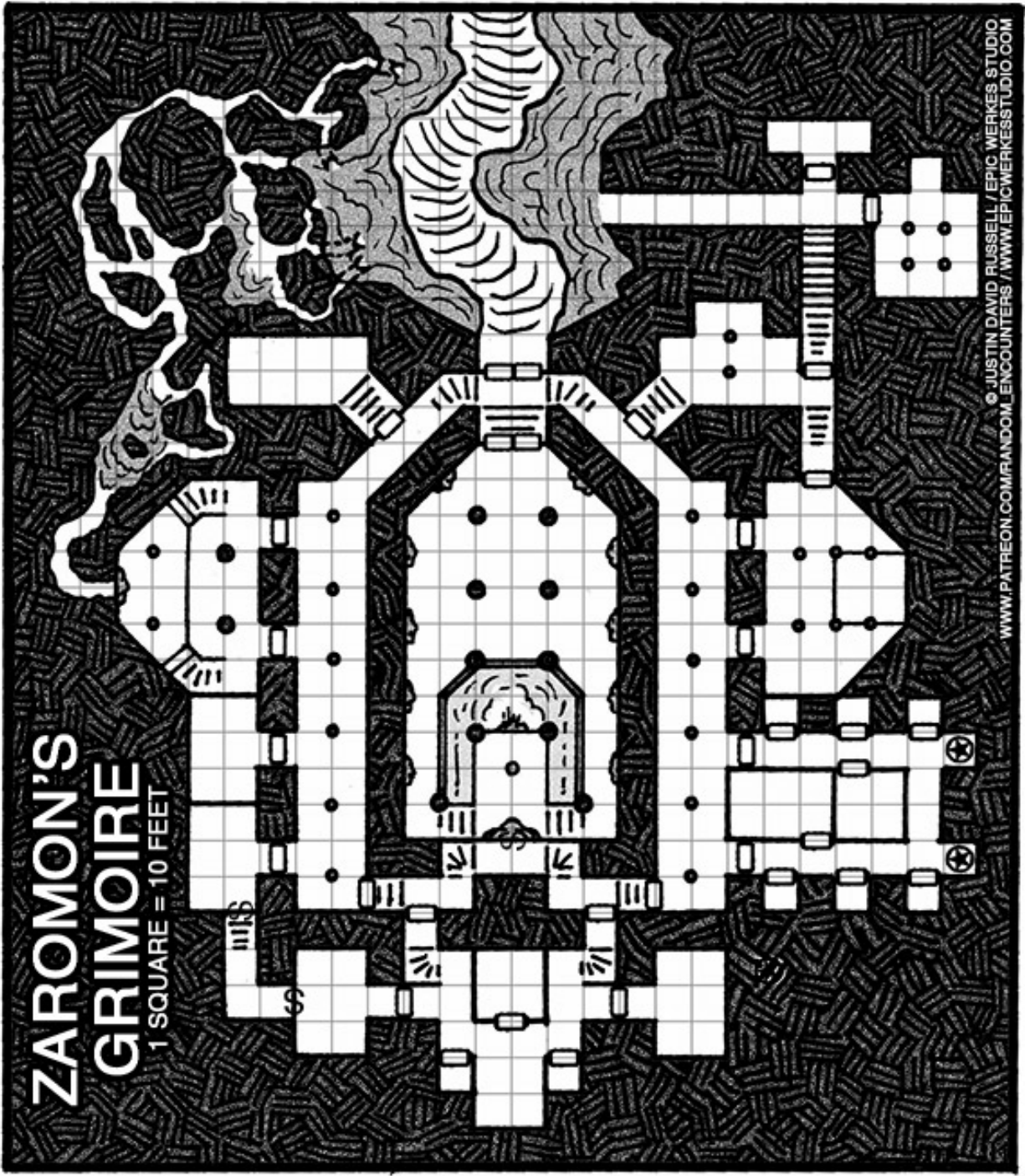
There are many books of power in the world, penned by priests, magicians, and sages. These sacred texts are storehouses of knowledge and wisdom borne of divine and demonic sources. One particular sage, Zaromon, Master of the Hungering Swarm, managed to gather together a particularly dark collection of pages over many years. Each one was penned over the course of a year, written in the blood of creatures Zaromon consumed. Once the book was complete, Zaromon was able to summon a horde of impish demons. They dwelled in the caves near the entry to the sage's lair, the Temple of the Hungering Swarm. Zaromon could summon them at will, though he risked them devouring him when he did.

Zaromon has used his power to extend his life beyond its normal bounds. He consumes the flesh of his victims to gain their life energy. He even gathers the life force from creatures his horde consumes.

The Temple of the Hungering Swarm is decorated with large, open-mouthed, demonic heads similar in appearance to the impish demons. One room, in particular, is used to summon them. The grimoire is kept on a high platform on a basalt pedestal in front of a jewel-studded demon head. Below it is a small fountain of water pouring forth from the pursed mouth of a grotesque.

A set of rough-hewn, well-hidden stairs lead down through a narrow canyon. They are rough so that inattentive comers may not immediately guess their purpose. Once down the winding stair, a decorative archway with large, bronze doors covered in esoteric symbols and horrible creatures bars entry. Those not given permission to enter are devoured alive by the imp-demons.

Zaromon still lives, though some say he is beginning to set his sights on the Southern Kingdoms. Some say that his temple is not populated by Men, but by unnamable, unspeakable horrors.



**ZAROMON'S
GRIMOIRE**
1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

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The Faithful Familiar

The heat is overwhelming as you push through the dry, sighing landscape of golden grass. Your armour, those of you that wear it, is beginning to suffocate you. Water has evaded you for hours. Your water skins are beginning to run low. In the distance, the Mountains of Mourning are blue and seem farther than is possible to reach before you all expire from exhaustion and thirst.

A sound and a violent disturbance of the grass to your left causes one of you to turn your head. You have heard that large cats haunt this region. The tribesmen to the east spoke of fierce lions that can sneak up on a man without so much as a rustle. Your group halts and draws their weapons, but a moment later, your breath escapes your lungs in a relieved rush of air. A white rabbit with dark ears, innocuous and out of place in this region, emerges from the grass at your feet and stares at you, a sparkle of intelligence in its beady black eyes.

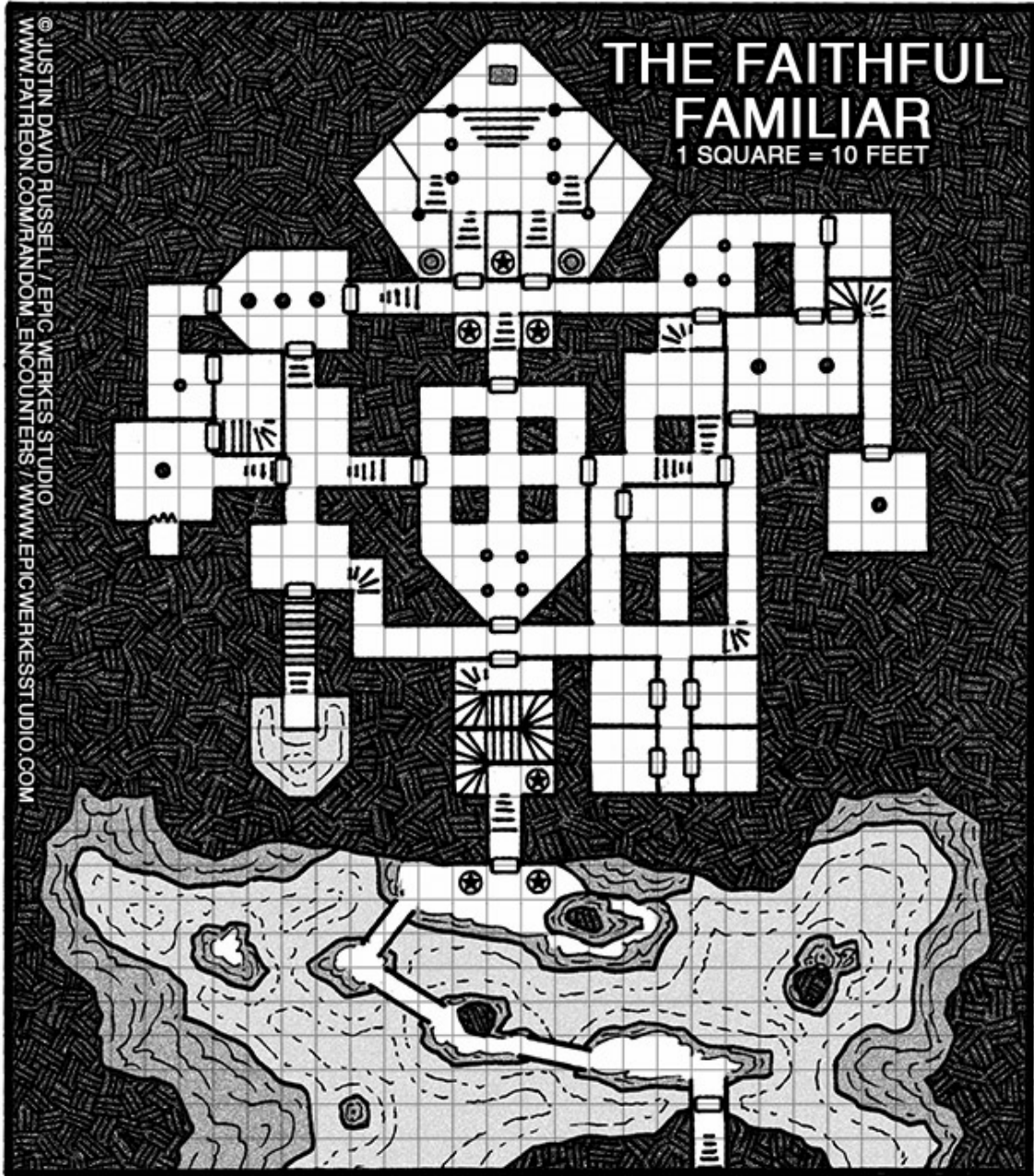
Not sure what to make of this sudden development, you begin to turn to each other questioningly, when the rabbit hops off in the direction of the mountains, but in a slightly more northerly direction than you had been traveling. You remain where you are, uncertain. A few moments later, the rabbit reappears. It hops off in the direction of the mountains again. Perhaps it knows where water is? It seems domesticated. You see no signs of habitation. Maybe its master is nearby and hurt? A lone wizard, or trader that ran afoul of bandits? The former makes more sense to you, given the odd intelligence the animal evinces. The rabbit definitely seems expectant. Shrugging, you follow the it.

The white animal leads you through the high grasses the rest of the day, all the way to the gray, looming Mountains of Mourning. You are amazed at how fast you made the trek. The heat is still oppressive, but the hope of water and shade, as well as a definite path and goal, even if it is unknown, bolsters your spirits.

The strange, white rabbit disappears into a cleft in the stone cliff ahead of you. By now, the sun is lowering, the air turning cool around you. Your sweat has dried on your bodies and a chill begins to creep into your bones, making the prospect of a camp and fire welcoming. If the rabbit leads you nowhere, perhaps you can eat it? Though you have found no water yet, you do still have a few drops between you.

Gathering your resolve, you forge ahead after the small animal. Not long after, you find a door-sized hole in the rough stone. The rabbit waits just within it. One you step in, the animal flees before you down a flight of well-worn, worked stone stairs. The stairwell is wide enough for two of you to stand abreast. Cool air breathes out at you from the darkness. You smell water. You plunge ahead, dismissing the odd tingling sensation of danger that pricks at your nerves and raises the hair on the backs of your necks. After only a few steps, you find yourselves in sudden blackness. After a moment of startled, whispered shouting, one of you lights a torch. The pitch-soaked cloth flares to life, filling the area around you with rancid smoke, sparks, and reddish light. Going back up the stairs, you find where there was once an opening in the stone, there is only a solid wall of rock, as if the portal had never been...

The white rabbit is Rundle, the companion of the dead wizard, Thorik the Mage of the Mountain. His home was built by earth elementals he summoned for the task. When Thorik died, wasting away from a disease that struck the Southern Kingdoms



100 years ago, he transferred his spirit to his white rabbit familiar, Rundle. He leads unwitting travelers to his home, where he then hopes one shows some aptitude with magic so that he might take over their body and continue his life as a young man. So far, no young magicians have been found. But, perhaps, today will prove different for Rundle and Thorik?

The Wizard's Library

You have been standing outside of the giant pillar of stone for hours. It's nearly unbelievable to you that, now that you have passed untold trials to be here, the wizard isn't home! You have passed through the under realms of the world, battled cultists, slept for weeks in lightless caverns, surviving on creatures best left to nightmares, and braved the still, massive lake that surrounds you now.

Drifting over the glassy water in your makeshift raft was nerve-wracking. Large ripples and light splashes haunted you on your journey. The sage you spoke to said that strange creatures live under the waters below the earth. He showed you some illuminations and sketches in books he had in his library. His knowledge helped you prepare for this trek, but he could not give you the information you truly required, a book that was last known to be in the possession of the reclusive wizard, Robald the Scholar.

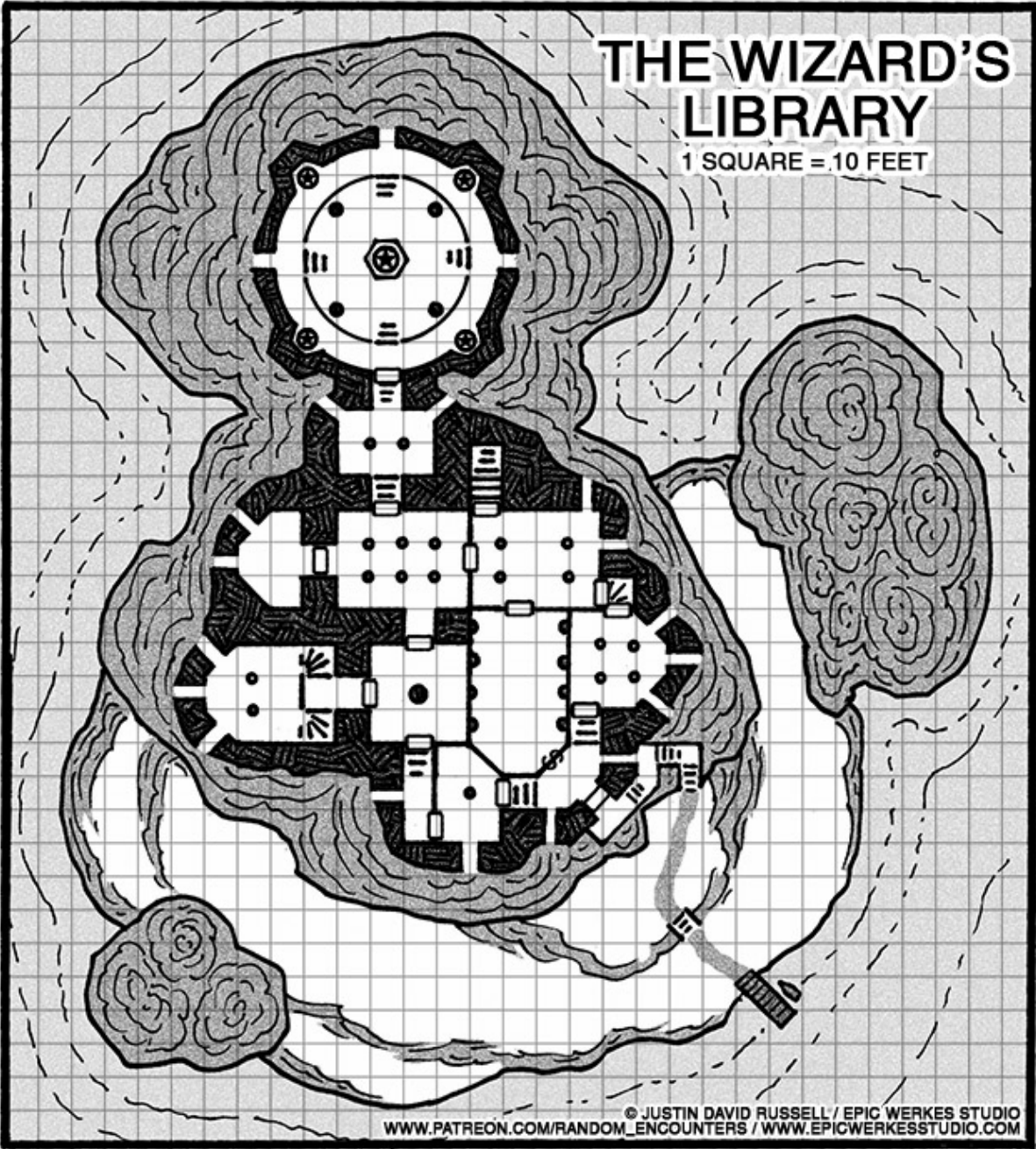
The quiet is punctuated periodically by the sloshing of life in the dark water. You look back occasionally, nervously, as you regard the thick wooden door before you. It won't budge. The windows carved out of the pillar show no obvious life within. A bronze knocker with a frog's face stares back at you with sightless, indifferent orbs. Your flickering torchlight glints off of the polished metal. For a second, you think that the head moved. Was it the eyes? No, you reason. It's just the dancing light playing tricks on you.

Your loud hails and repeated knocking have availed you naught, thus far. Frustrated, one of you stomps back down the stairway, resolving to take action. Plucking a small stone from the ground, you pause briefly to take aim, then send the stone arcing high into the air. It sails toward a dark window opening near the door. A tinkling crash signifies that the rock shattered the glass panes.

As soon as the glass breaks, those of you standing at the door witness a strange thing. The frog head jerks sharply up and a shrill voice issues from it, though the mouth remains tightly clamped on the large bronze ring.

'Ho! Who goes there? How dare you destroy my property while I am trying to ignore you! Go away! I have no time for solicitors, friends, or foes! As you can see, there are no lights in my windows. That is a clear sign that no one is home! Now, please be so kind as to leave an appropriate amount of gold coins at the door for the repair of my window panes, and be on your way!'

Details: The library of Robald is a large, round, domed structure built on top of a giant stalagmite. Its limestone blocks are dark, its dome made of fired clay shingles. The inside is separated into two levels. Marble statues, including a central figure of the goddess of beauty, strange artifacts, exotic tapestries, and walls lined with oaken shelves and vases full of scrolls and books occupy the space. Three tall, high, stained glass windows depict mythical figures.



The Thief's Lament

There is a popular story that floats around the dockyard taverns, called 'The Thief's Lament':

Seven hundred years ago, a human thief stole a set of prized artefacts, the Eyes of the Sea, from the central statue in the Shrine of the Slumbering Fish Demons. Unbeknownst to the thief, the Eyes would draw the hateful fish men to its power. The thief, by some miracle, managed to escape the wrath of a terrible storm at sea as he fled. However, he could not escape the fish men. They tracked the thief from the Southern Kingdoms, to the Pearl Coast, and finally to the Kingdom of Chaos. There the thief came to rest, finding a tavern in a forgotten portion of the dock ward of the Shattered City.

The thief tried many times to flee further inland, where he believed the fish men would not follow. But he found, as long as he possessed the Eyes, he could not stand to be far from the salty sea. He also found that, as time passed, his appearance began to change. He grew gills on his neck, just under his jaw, his eyes became larger and glassier, the webbing between his fingers and toes extended to the tips of his digits, and his skin sunk into the crevices of his anatomy, making him skeletal and frightening to behold.

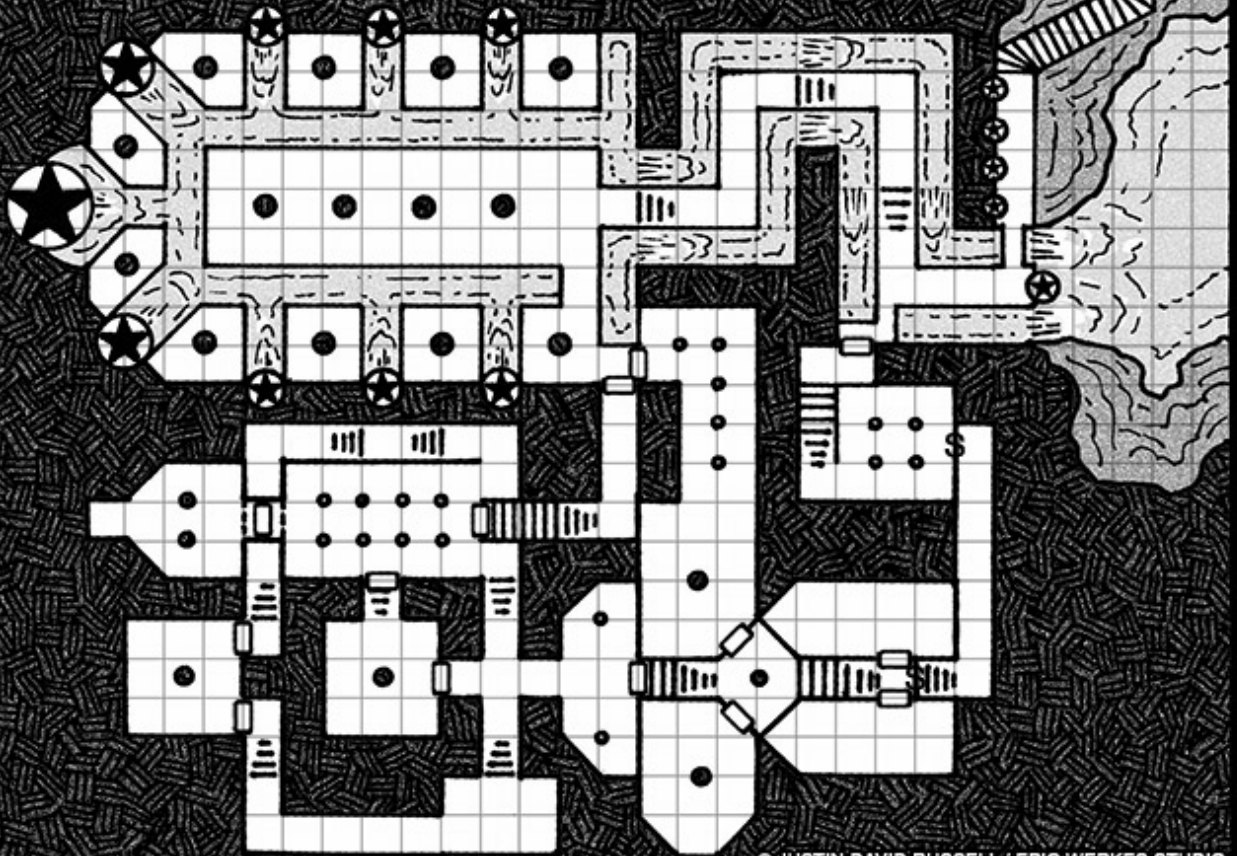
Several times the thief tried to part with the Eyes, but he could not. The misfortune they brought in their wake, and the unnerving feeling they gave off, dissuaded anyone from dealing with the thief. Eventually, his horrifying visage alone kept anyone from dealing with him, even though he had begun to understand and control the power of the Eyes.

He found that he would wander aimlessly, finding himself suddenly at the docks, staring at the sea. Finally, on a dark morning, a green bank of clouds rolling in from the sea, the thief found himself again at the water's edge. He saw the bobbing heads of the fish men as they waited in the surf. The thief no longer feared them, and he no longer wished to flee. He found that he felt a type of detached amusement at his situation. The last thing he thought, before the Eyes finally claimed his mind, and the sea swallowed him whole, was that he was finally home...

Details: The Eyes of the Sea are magical, oblong pearls the size of a meaty fist. They rest snugly in the sockets of the largest statue of one of the Nine Slumbering Sea Demons, powerful petty gods of the sea, in the Shrine of the Fish Demons. The cult of the Fish Demons extends further than the fish men, themselves. There are human, and half-human, members, all in various stages of transformation. It is said the Eyes can cause terrible storms at sea, and that they can command the fish men, themselves, if the mind of the bearer is strong enough. Some say that the Nine Sleeping Fish Demons are the statues themselves; that one day they will wake to lead their people and conquer the world.

THE THIEF'S LAMENT

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



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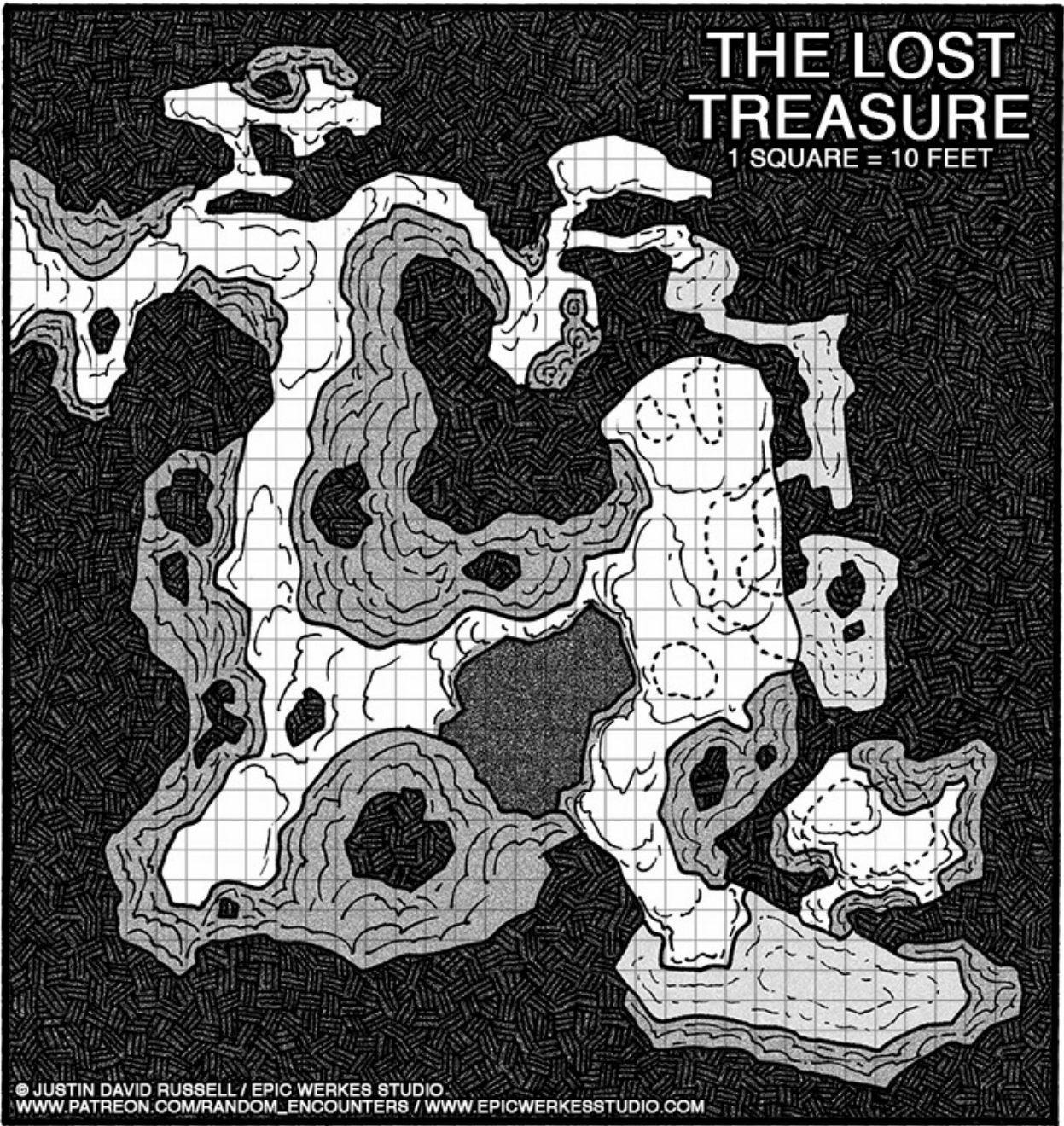
The Lost Treasure

Tyranith, the Plague, is a middle-aged dragon with royal blue scales. She has short wings for gliding and swimming, but she does not fly long distances. For many years, she has been a blight on the coastal lands of the Southern Kingdoms. She steals sheep and cattle, mostly, but has been known to attack merchant ships and seaside settlements.

Several heroes and villains have tried to kill Tyranith in their lifetimes, but none have succeeded. She takes great pride in this. She also takes pride in her hoard, which contains multitudes of coins, gems, and valuable jewelry. This she stores in the southeastern-most chamber in the bottom of a deep pool fed by an underground river that eventually leads to the sea. Tyranith sleeps in the chamber immediately north of her treasury pool. An opening in the ceiling of the cavern gives the dragon a back door exit from her lair. The south-western-most cavern is a storeroom for those treasures the dragon wishes to keep dry, such as her shelves, vases, and chests of books and scrolls.

Often, Tyranith ventures into human settlements in the guise of a beautiful, dark-haired woman. She is a skilled wizard and learned scholar. She has both sought out and been sought by men of learning all her life. As a lover of knowledge, wisdom, and magical power, the dragon has amassed many valuable treasures. Among them is the Sceptre of the Four Winds, a magical rod of gold, sapphires and citrine that was created by Erigan, a master wizard who studied the elements. His sceptre was used to control the winds so that he could pilot his magical flying ship, 'The Cloud Chaser.'

At one point, many years ago, Erigan was slain by a rival magician. The Sceptre of the Four Winds became a central focus for many wars as the Southern Kingdoms fought to control the powerful item. Eventually the sceptre was captured by the dragon on one of her raids. No one knew what happened to it after that, and it was eventually abandoned to legend and myth. Tyranith knows it is a part of her hoard, and she is very proud of her acquisition, as she envied the sceptre and Erigan's secrets for a long time. There are many other strange and wondrous items in Tyrnaith's hoard that have not seen the light of day in many, many years.



The Ogre

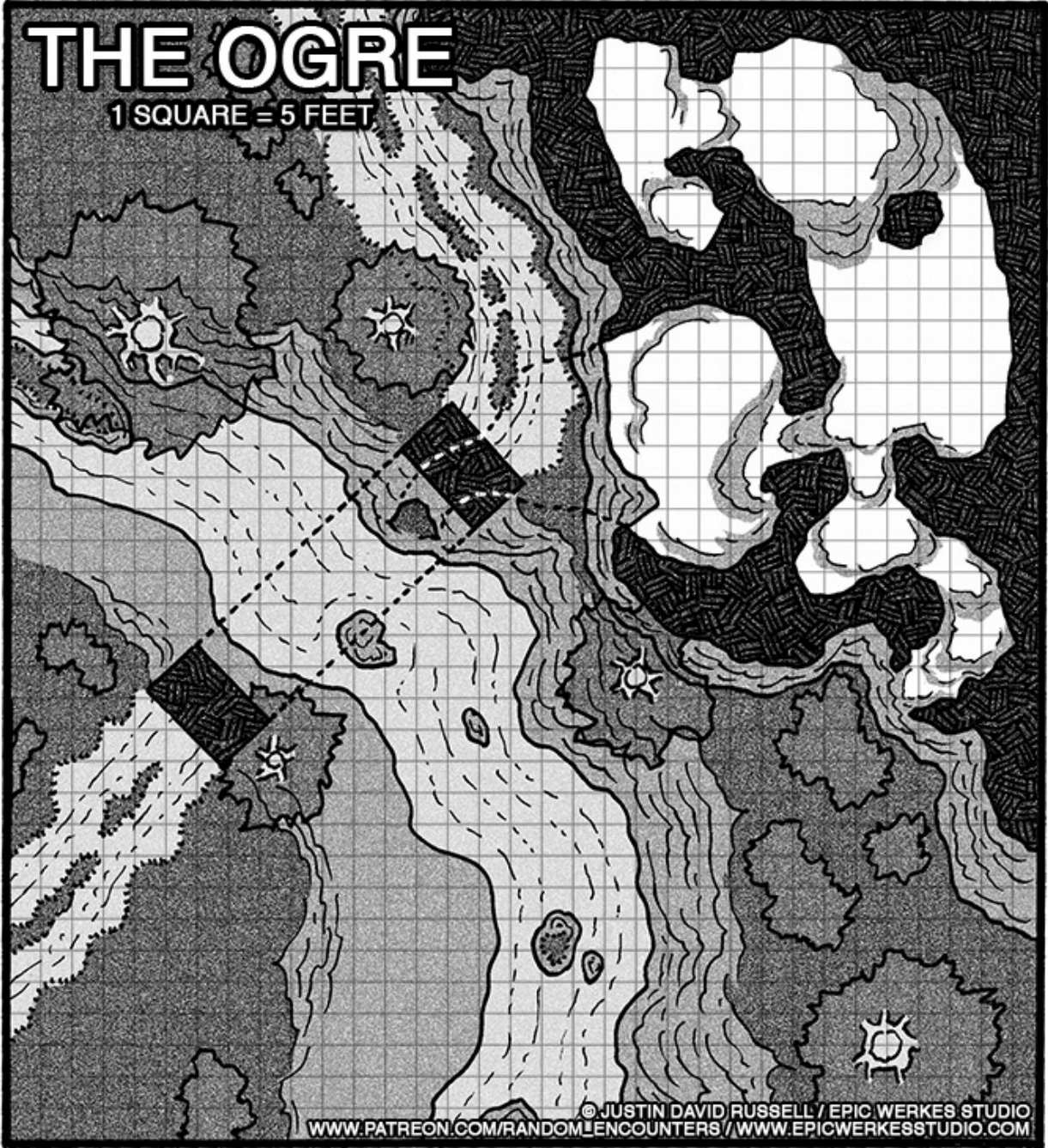
For all intents and purposes, the day is pleasant and bright with youthful spring burgeoning. You smile to yourselves as the wildlife, comfortable with the absence of regular travel on this stretch of road, fills the woodland around you. A bird slips through the forest canopy, a flash of lightning among the leaves. A squirrel rattles and chatters through the branches. Deer linger in a clearing to the north. Eventually, you hear the gurgling of a stream ahead.

The mossy stone bridge crossing the stream is an old but sturdy affair. It arcs up high over the water, then descends again toward the steep-sided opposite bank. You're nearly to the other side when you hear what sounds like stones sliding on stones, and the splashing of something heavy in the water beneath the bridge. A smell that nearly turns your stomachs suddenly assails your senses. Within seconds, a massive, fur-clad man grasps the lip of the bridge with gnarled fingers and hoists himself up nimbly ahead of you. He grunts and laughs through a tusked mouth full of sharp teeth.

'Oi! What, humans, elves, even a dwarf man!' The large being licks his thick lips with a massive tongue, slurping the saliva back into his mouth as he eyes you with beady, eager eyes. You realize how massive this creature is. He towers over the tallest of you by at least two feet. A small tree is clenched tightly in a large hand. The branches have been snapped off to leave nasty-looking, jagged spikes all over it. Sallow skin sags from the creature's warty face. His back is hunched; his knuckles nearly brush the stones at his feet.

You look at one another, unsure how to proceed. You don't have long to ponder whether to draw your weapons, or not, before the creature speaks brokenly around a booming, rolling laugh.

'You give food, or shiny things, or you,' he jabs a thick, dirty finger at one of your elven companions, 'come wif me for my lunch, or I smash all of you!'



Morningstar Village

Elves are renowned for their reclusive nature. They do not often allow others into their forest realms. But you have all been given permission to walk the forest paths while you are on your newest errand.

Your trek is unhurried along the cart trail, despite the weight of the King's order hanging on your shoulders. You have mentioned your desire to increase your speed several times, but your elf guide, stopping to drink from a stream, or to lean against a tree, or to watch flitting birds, or a beam of sun through the branches, simply laughs his tinkling laughter and begins singing to himself and returns to what he was doing. Your cart path eventually sidles up to a river running swift and strong in the direction you are traveling.

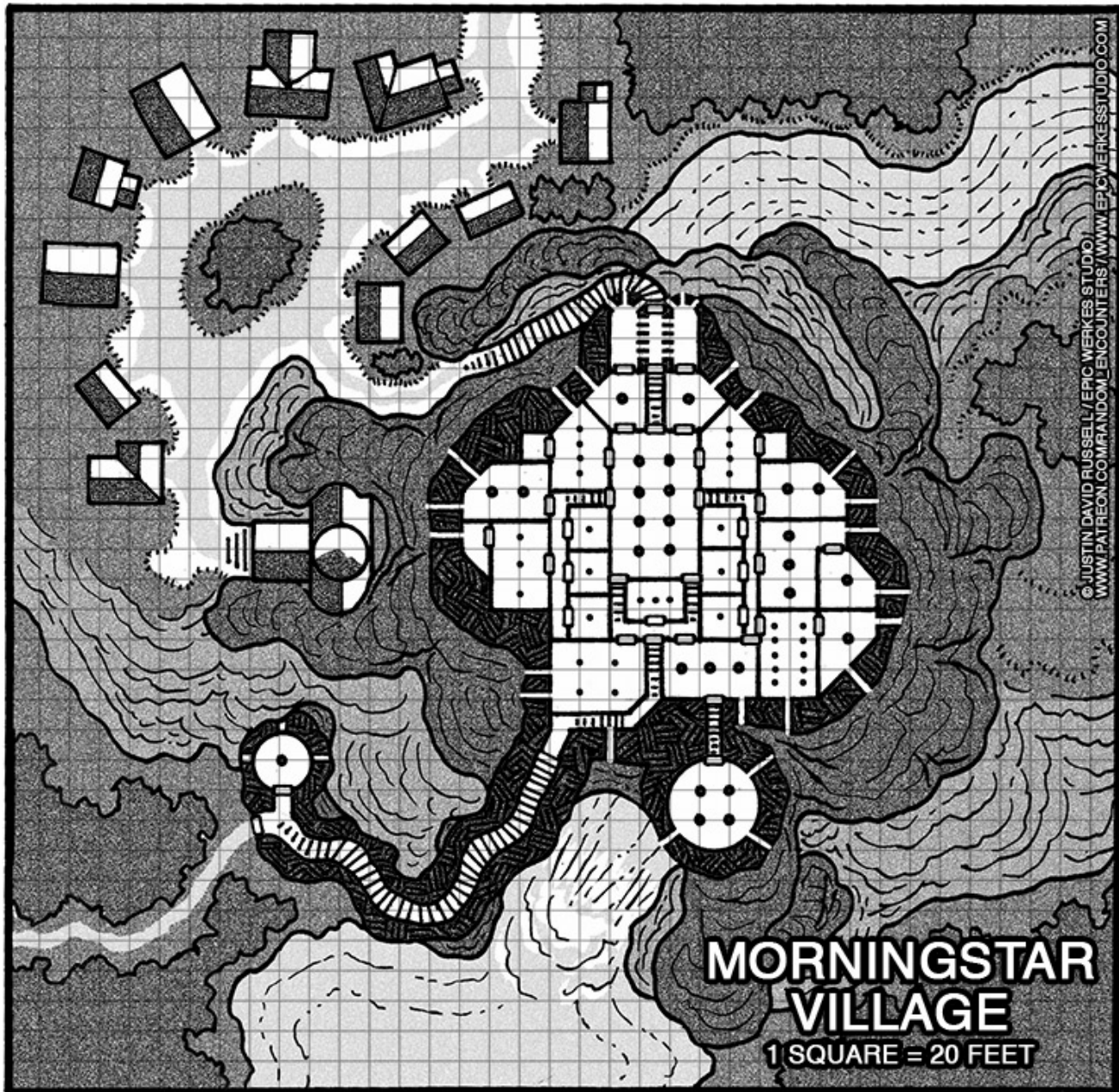
Finally, the elf turns to you and urges you to walk forward ahead of him. His eyes sparkle with amusement as you pass him. The pathway continues down a long hill, but through the trees you catch brief glimpses of a massive trunk. You can't believe what you are seeing. Large, curling branches hang down over the area, sheltering the area of thinning regular tree cover.

Then you see it, a huge tree. If it wasn't so large, you'd think it was a normal oak tree. Its gnarled roots cling to a rocky crag like a fist gripping a large stone. The river rushes forth, but disappears into a dark opening under an archway of natural stone and a tendril of root. Looking up into the tree's maze of branches, you see elven sentries with bows standing among the leaves. You feel distinctly unwelcome here, but glad that you can witness this marvel.

Turning around a bend in the pathway, you see the village sprawled at the foot of the tree, small, thatch-roofed homes of plaster and wood and stone. You see elves mingling and going about their business. Lilted song drifts on the wind with ribbons of smoke from stone chimneys. A small, natural archway in the tree's trunk high up over the village is reached by a stair cut from the rock the oak clings to. Sentries with spears stare impassively down upon you from their station under the arch.

Carts led by small, swift golden horses and strong mules bearing barrels, crates, chests, and other containers pass you by as you enter the village. Their elven drivers regard you with curious, laughing, almond eyes the colour of clear streams and spring grasses. You have entered the elven village, the home of the elf lord, Bryndon Morningstar.

The elves of the Great Forest are known for their tree manors. Their lords dwell in massive oak trees. One tree, in particular, clings to a stone crag. A river flows under it. The elves of Morningstar Village receive goods from up the river from human a settlement. They use the cart track to return the containers to their human owners, as well as bring goods to trade. Non-elves are not allowed here. The three-storied manor inside the tree is, through elven magic, formed out of a melding of stone and living wood.



The Weary Knight Inn

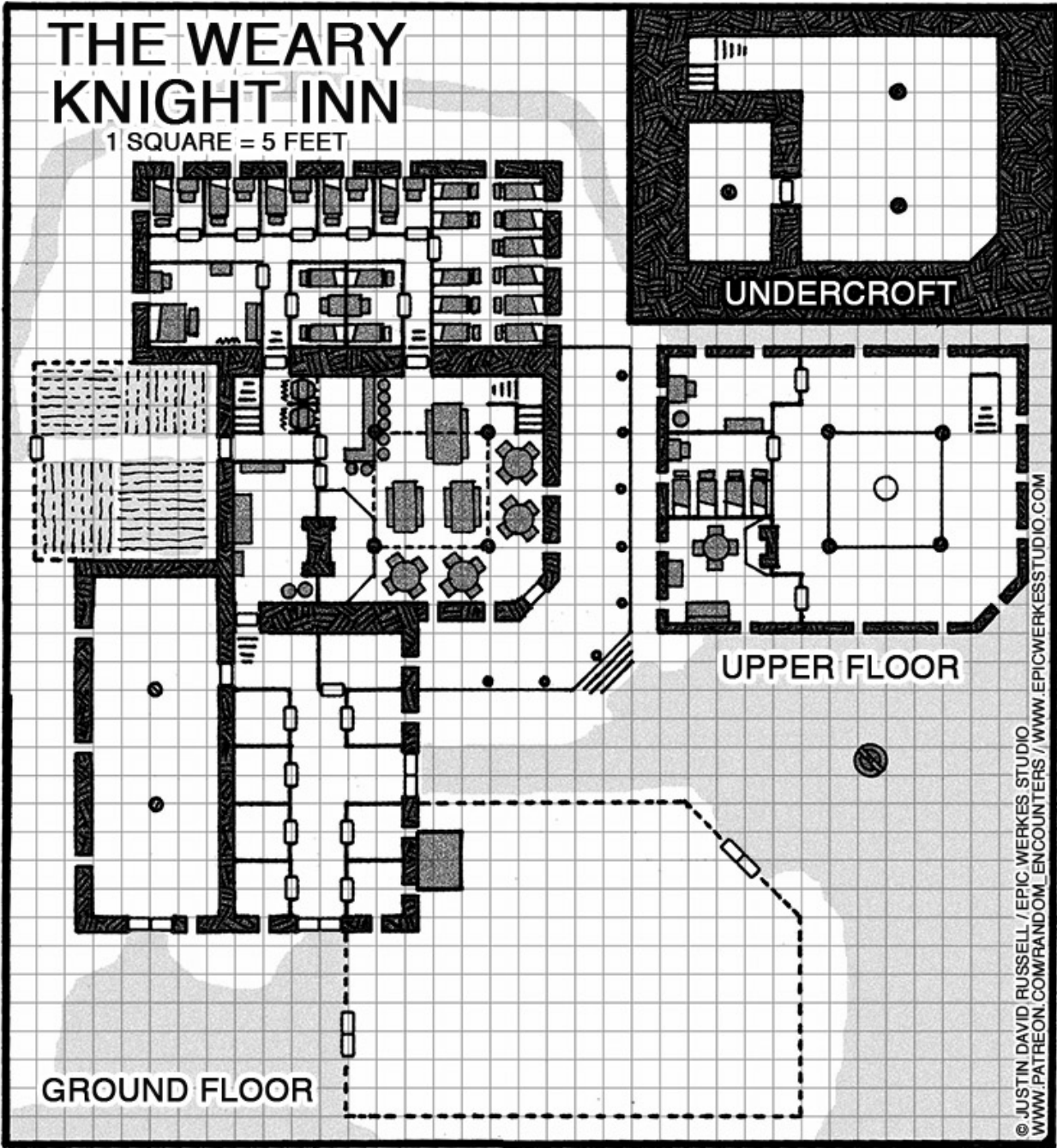
The Weary Knight is a large, stone and wood carriage inn located along the caravan road that runs through the Western Borderlands. It serves travelers making their way east to the Towering Mountains or west to the foundering Clericy, and the Slave Lands. A sign hangs from the middle post by the stairs leading up to the porch. On it is painted an armoured man walking down a dusty road.

It came into being after a mercenary of some repute, a warrior from the Clericy of the Golden Wyrms, decided that he had had enough of adventure and exploration. He built an inn in the middle of the Borderlands and settled down.

Morgan the Valorous, the inn's proprietor, was known for being a brave and virtuous man. Some say the Hierarch abused the man's love for his home country. Morgan, in fact, had slain the Hierarch of the Clericy after learning that most of the work he had done for him over the years had been in the service of evil. After discovering the priest was in fact an agent of Chaos, serving a black-scaled dragon of wicked temperament, Morgan campaigned against the man, rallying his country's downtrodden common folk against the priesthood. Morgan toppled the government. Rather than assume the mantle of king, the man took enough riches to establish his inn, and left quietly in the night. He was followed by his wife, Gloriana, and his three children. Morgan offered his services as a militiaman to the Marcher Lord of the Borderlands, if the need for his sword should arise.

Morgan is now an aged warrior, hoary headed, and kind. His sword and shield hang over the fireplace in the common room, well-cared for by the man and his family. Morgan's two youngest children have returned to the Clericy to help the foundering country survive the new world it has found itself in. The Slave lands threaten it from the south, and monsters ravage the lands to the west.

Morgan loves regaling patrons with tales of his many, many adventures. He works the bar where he can keep an ear out for news of his homeland. His wife and oldest daughter and her family help him run the inn.



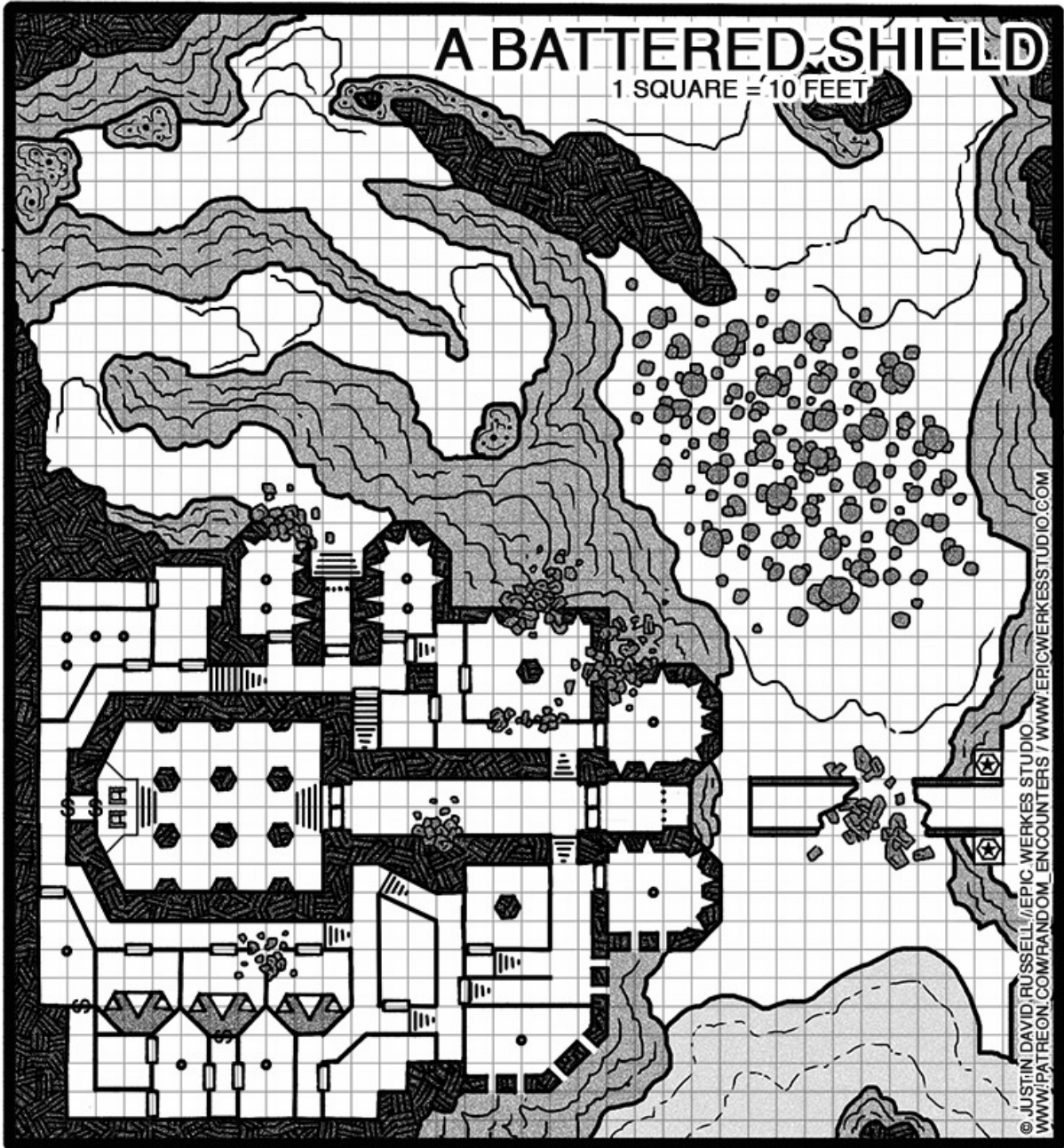
A Battered Shield

This weekend I traveled out of town. I didn't have my scanner, so I drew this map on the computer, in Photoshop, instead of with pen and ink on graph paper. I hope you all enjoy this offering!

Deep in the under realms below the surface of the earth are strong fortifications. Dwarves and monsters using these fortified structures are locked in bitter war with one another. Seldom do the races dwelling beneath the sun see these bloody contests.

One such stronghold was the ruin now known to the dwarves as the Battered Shield, Shieldhold. It stands at a strategic location near an underground lake and a living mushroom forest. Centuries earlier, goblinoids attacked the fortress, breaking its defenses and throwing down the dwarf leader and his clan. The dwarves had an extensive mine system below the stronghold, but they collapsed the earth above it so their enemies couldn't benefit from its rich veins of silver.

Today, the goblins that live in Shieldhold are slowly clearing the collapsed mine tunnels. A descendant of the dwarves that fled the dying keep years ago is looking to hire mercenary scouts to investigate the number and strength of the goblins. He wishes to retake his ancestors' stronghold and reestablish the mines there.



The Wolf

Walking through the Elder Forest has been a harrowing experience, filled with goblins, druids, and giants. Even griffons haunt the southern regions, near the mountain cliffs. You saw them occasionally, wheeling between the peaks, searching for wild deer and horses.

A story the druids gave you weighs heavily on your minds. Razork, they said, is a wild and dangerous man, if he can even still be called a man. They said he came to the forest twenty years ago, claiming that a curse of transformation had been put upon him by a priest of Chaos. He asked leave to dwell in a remote portion of the region of the Elder Forest so that he might live in isolation without fear of harming anyone or anything, other than the wild game and goblins that strayed into his territory.

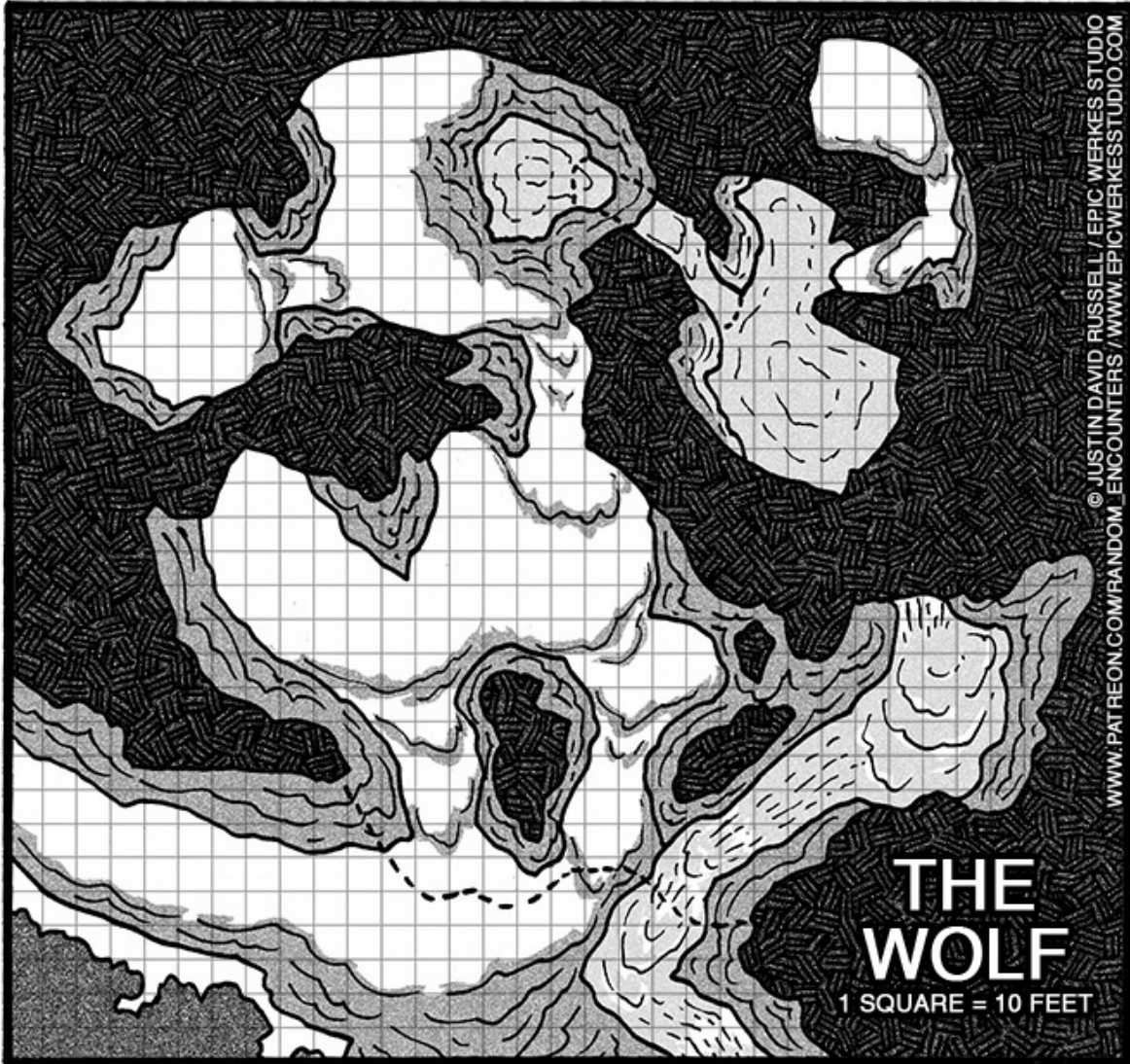
Recently, however, you came to learn that Razork was the only person to have encountered the Chaos priests of of the Forsaken Peak and lived. You believe that the man holds information about the High Priest that no one else knows. You are hoping you can offer him a trade in exchange for his help. The druids said Razork transforms into a savage animal unlike any that currently lives in the forest. A few years after he moved to the Elder Forest, they desired to speak with Razork, but the meeting was disastrous. Rather than the man, they found the animal. Two druids perished before they decided to leave the man be and never speak to him again.

You finally reached Razork's Tooth a few minutes ago. It is a barren, sparsely forested mountain that towers above you. You have felt uneasy, as if you were being watched, ever since your feet touched the slopes of the Tooth. A cave half way up the mountain, you were told, is Razork's lair. The eerie quiet and a strange, sudden weight of oppression signals that you may have reached your destination. The narrow stream plummeting down the side of the mountain near a black hole in the cliffs lends further credence to your suspicions. The druids told you the water's source would reveal the cave of the beast-man.

A bestial growl from the tall pines to your left brings your attention swiftly to a darker shadow amidst the dappled void beneath and between the trees. The mass shifts and separates itself from the deeper tree cover. What confronts you, half cloaked in darkness, is a lean, fur-clad man with a wild, grey-peppered beard, and long, thinning greasy hair.

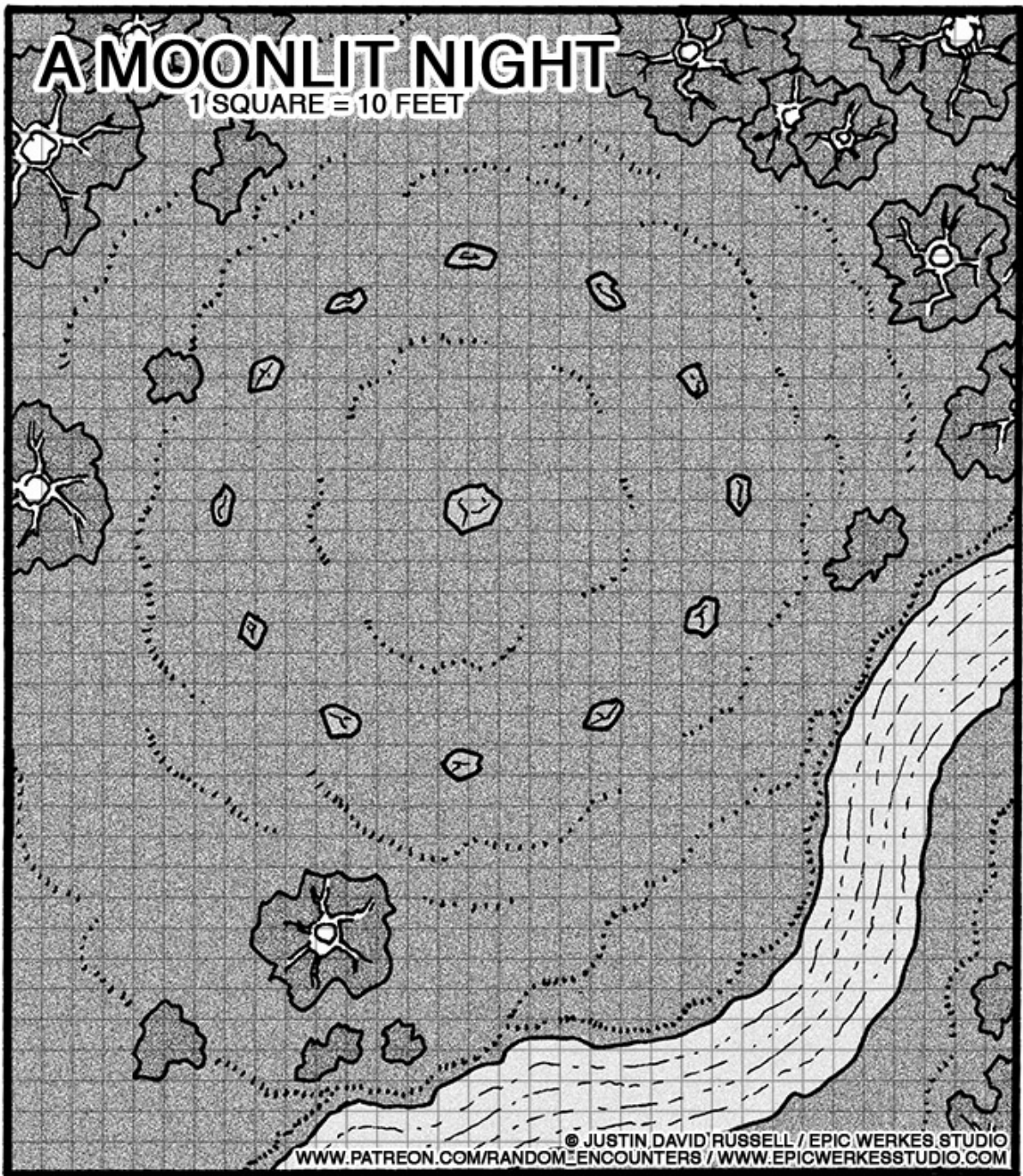
'Why do you come here, strangers? You are not druids. Any who come here seek only their deaths.' The words are a low rumble, a warning, you realize, more than most might get here in this place.

A stiff breeze sighs through the needles of the trees, parting the branches to bathe the area the man occupies in full daylight. His seamed face is haggard and leathery. His sunken eyes lack the spark of life, and a bow, knocked with an arrow currently pointed at the earth, is gripped loosely in his hands. You know you should answer Razork swiftly. He seems to you to be a tightly coiled snake, ready to strike at a moment's notice. Perhaps the druids were wrong about him? Maybe he is not a monster at all, but a wild man cloaked in mystery?



A Moonlit Night

There are tales of groups of elves that dance under the fullness of the moon in circles of magical stones. Some say that one might easily sneak up on the elves on such nights, for they are less observant, less careful about being discovered as they revel under the silvery lunar radiance. But woe to those that interrupt such dances, for elves consider these vulnerable moments, and treat interlopers harshly...

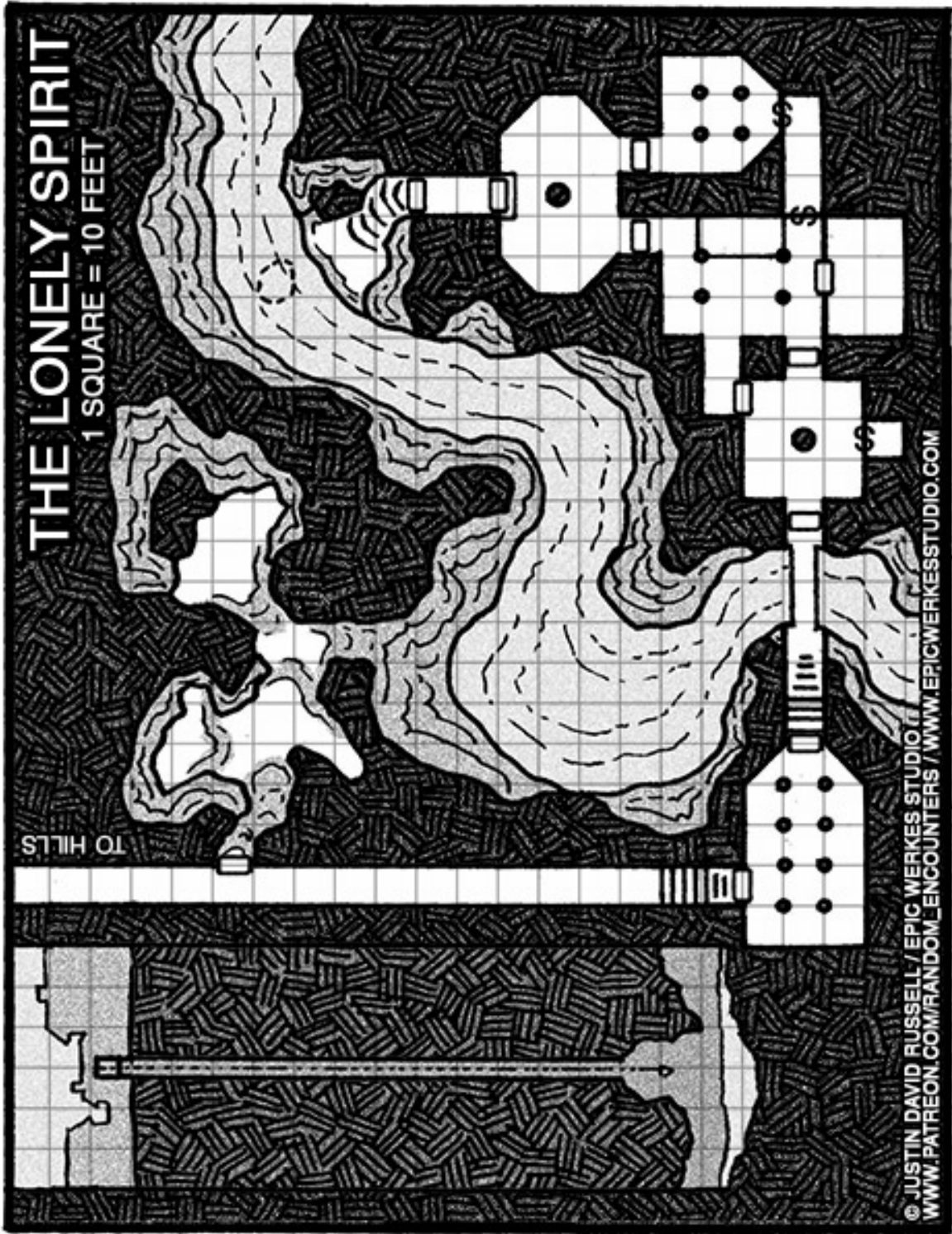


The Lonely Spirit

A rumour in town states that a young woman's spirit can be seen lingering around the local well. Local gossip says she beckons to those that see her, then she climbs up onto the well's lip, and leaps into the opening. Some say she can only be seen at midnight, while others say early in the morning before the gloaming light of dawn.

Far down at the bottom of the well is a swift stream. Tucked into a crevice near the stream is a series of rooms. They are the work rooms and living chambers of Cedric, an ambitious magician that has taken up residence beneath the town to avoid being bothered by locals.

Cedric does experiments on dead bodies. Recently, however, he has taken the life of the local innkeeper's daughter and seeks to animate her body. Her restless spirit has taken to haunting the town's well and market space, attempting to draw attention to her plight so that her body can be found and her soul put to rest.

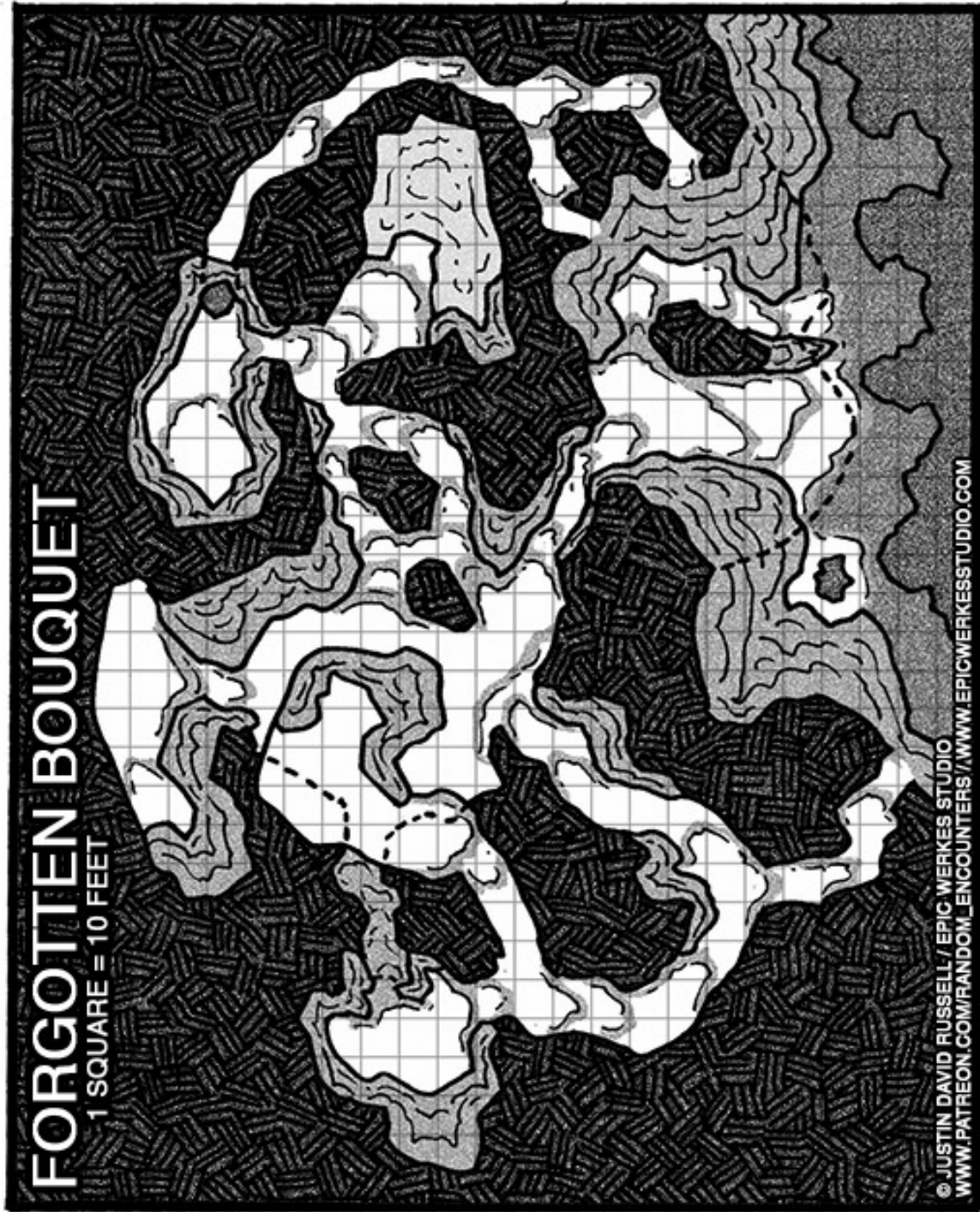


The Forgotten Bouquet

Long ago, there was a scourge that plagued the Borderlands. A humanoid salamander-like monster that exuded a terrible odour raided the Marcher Lord's Keep incessantly during the days when the fortress was first being constructed. The first Marcher Lord, Leofrik the Valourous, spent many years trying to defeat the creatures, but he could not figure out where their lair was located. Finally, he found it. Taking his bravest retainers, Leofrik went forth into the hills and burned the creatures out of their den. As far as anyone knew, this was the end of the monstrous attacks on the Keep.

Ever since then, the phrase, 'Stinks like a salamander,' became synonymous with something bad, something that cannot be trusted, in reference to the strange odour that would easily give away the location and presence of the evil monsters. The caves of the salamanders have since been abandoned and all-but forgotten.

Today, the salamanders have returned. A tribe of the creatures, led by a strong, intelligent warrior leader or chieftain, has been pooling their resources to attack the Keep again. Unfortunately, years of relative peace has lulled the Borderland communities into a false sense of security. Many had forgotten the creatures existed, at all. So, when the they marched, the horrible scent the creatures exuded did not warn the locals of the danger. Though the phrase remained, no one remembered the smell. For this reason, the first attacks were particularly devastating. Local farmers have since gathered inside the Keep while the present Marcher Lord looks for mercenaries to hunt down and take care of this newfound problem...



The Mausoleum

In the Necropolis of the Emirate of the Moon City, there is located a mausoleum belonging to a forgotten line of princes known for their domestic cruelty and tactical prowess. They served their gods of Chaos well and almost brought the Moon City to ruin several times over many generations.

Chiefest of the former line of Emirs was the Emira, Kamora, known as the Princess of the Pale Moon. She was strange and very fair, unlike the majority of her people. She was weak and suffered from several physical ailments. Her clammy, white skin was likened to the pale, cool colour of the moon. Her eyes were pink, a symptom of her albinism.

Kamora was angered by her fragility. She was intelligent and witty and wished ardently to join the other children in their playful games, and later to join her soldiers on the field of battle. Her father and mother, however, was unwilling to allow their daughter to partake in that kind of activity. As a consequence, Kamora began studying from books of ancient power, looking for ways to gain mastery over her body and mind. Over time, she stumbled upon the works of a long-dead necromancer, the magician Harun the Unscrupulous.

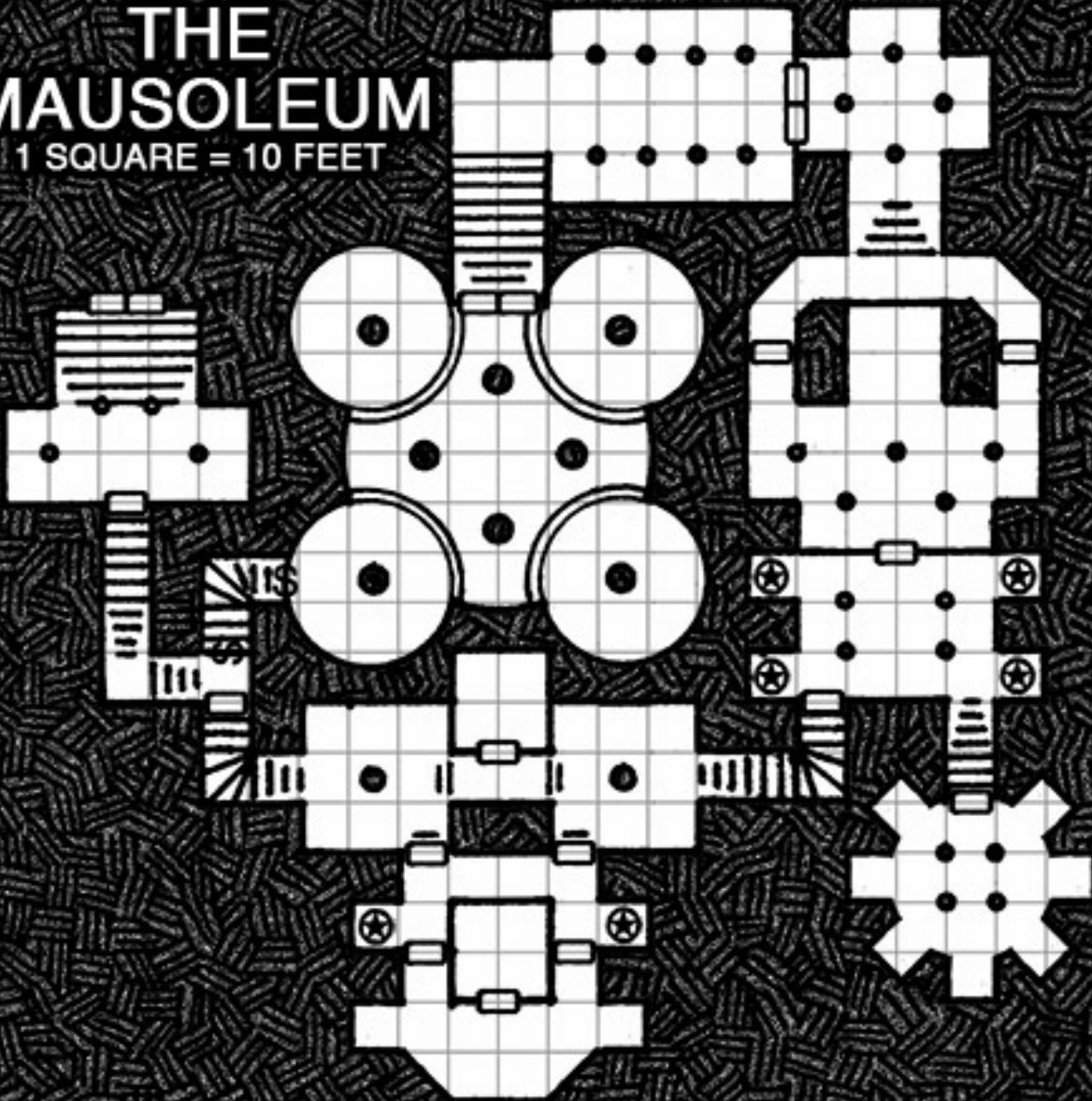
By this time, Kamora's parents were dead. They perished from a wasting disease that struck the region a few years earlier. Strangely, Kamora failed to contract the deadly malady, despite her predisposition for sickness. Harun's grimoire was a terrifying volume that was kept amongst the dusty tomes and crumbling scrolls in the library of the Moon Scribes. From it, Kamora managed to learn how to summon Chaos demons. She summoned them to her, learning how to harness their power. She was successful and managed to overcome her physical detriments with the otherworldly powers at her disposal.

Unfortunately, Kamora's activities drew the attention of the local priests of Law. Her unlikeable nature and strange appearance made her feared among the common folk. Finally Kamora's reign came to an abrupt end during her middle years when her servants led a rebellion against her. They claimed she had been using them for strange, unholy experiments to extend her life and power. They trapped her and shot her with arrows. The light left her body and her spirit was claimed by the demons she had spent her adult life controlling. Her body, despite the many wounds she suffered, refused to decompose. Greatly afraid, the priests sealed her corpse in a sanctified tomb in the bowels of her family's mausoleum. Great doors of solid silver were constructed to trap the demons within the tomb. Eight large columns were carved out of pure white alabaster in the likenesses of the Eight Great Prophets, four placed centrally in four side chambers, while four supported the main chamber, all facing the sepulchre containing Kamora's body. Traditionally, the bodies of the dead were burned, but the priests did not want to destroy the Emira's remains, lest they release the demons within her.

Over the centuries, the Moon Priests of Law living in the city did their best to suppress information about Kamora so that, today, her specially sealed family tomb and its history were forgotten by the populace at large.

THE MAUSOLEUM

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



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Want help finding inspiration for your next adventure? Are you a busy GM looking for a quick map? Do you want unique locations to spice up your random encounter tables? Then you've come to the right place! Random Encounters provides creative solutions for gamers. It specifically caters to the Old School Renaissance, but the maps and descriptions found in this book can be used for any fantasy role playing system.

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