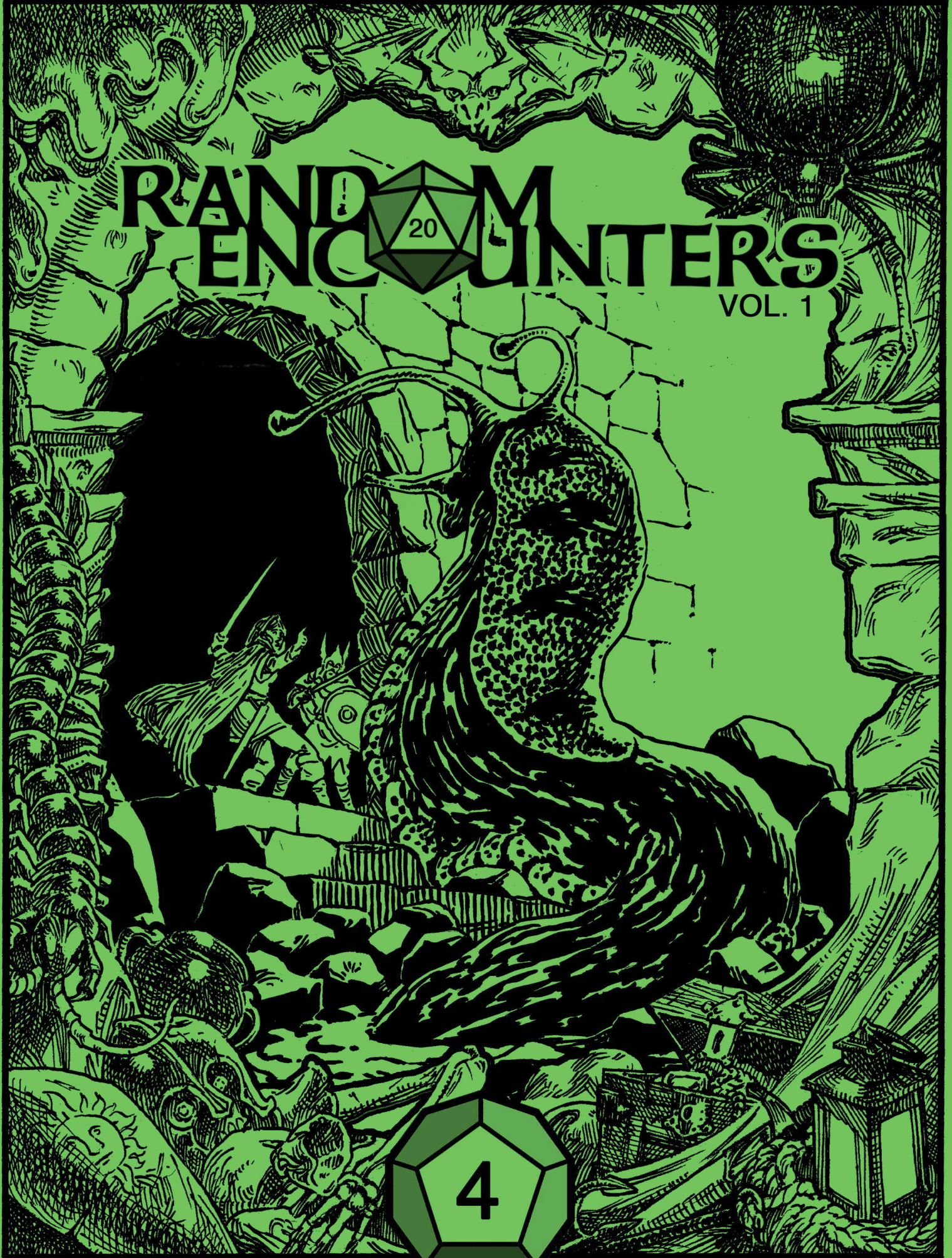


RANDOM ENCOUNTERS



VOL. 1



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS MONTHLY MAP COLLECTION

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Content Creator's Thanks

Thank you for your Patreon support. This supplement of all maps released in November, 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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Flight to the Hills

You have been conscripted by the local lord to aid him in the war that has spilled over into his lands. Goblins and evil men have conquered the town and burnt it to the ground, including the lord's own stronghold. It has been decided that the people will be led to the hill fortress of the Forest Princes, an ancient fortification left over from another age. It has been kept stocked with supplies and a garrison of soldiers and serves as an outpost and watch station near the region's northern border. Based on your reconnaissance, the goblins have been looting the razed town. The lord and the remaining townspeople managed to slip away into the hills the previous night, before the evil army arrived.

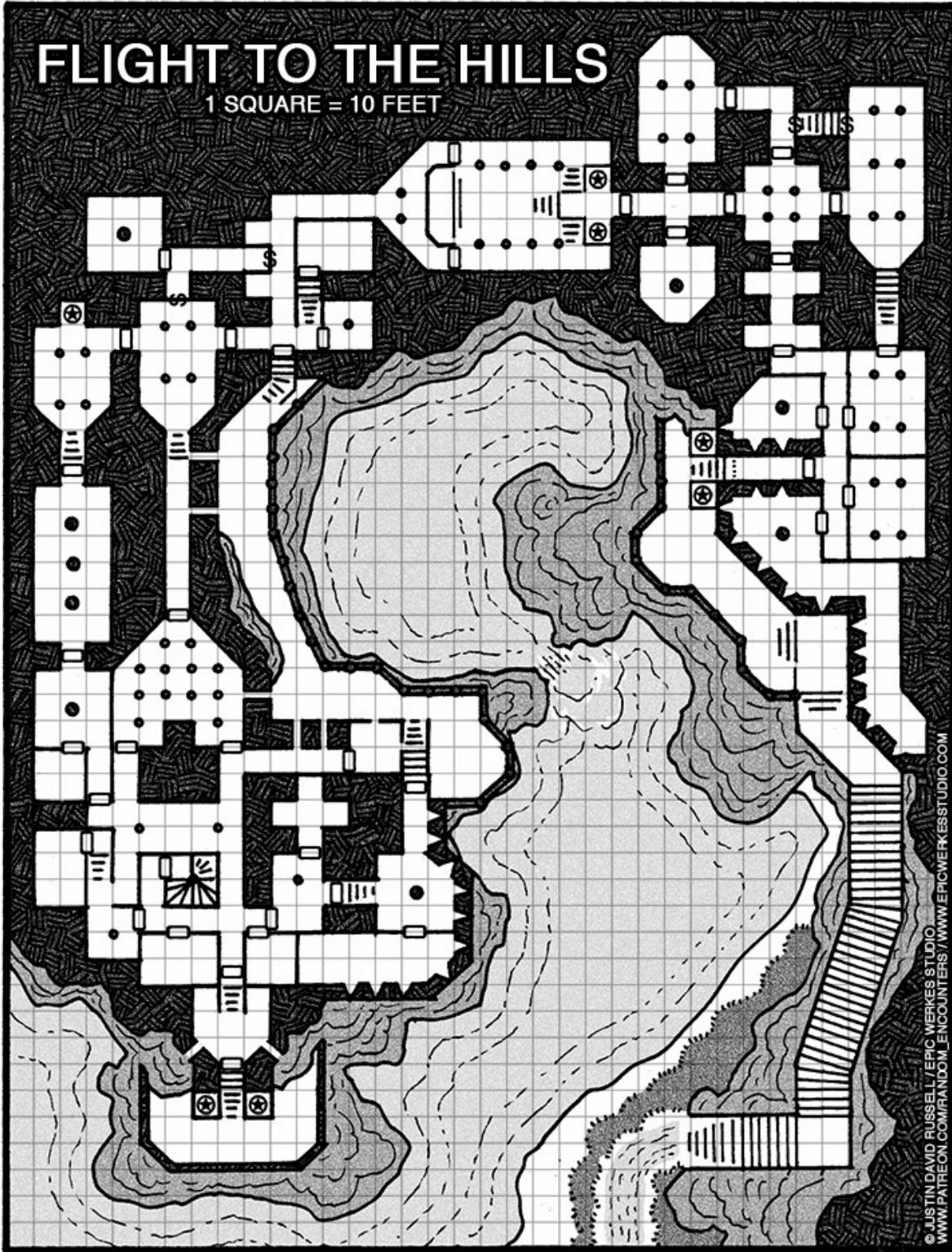
Your goal, as described to you by the constable, is to watch the rear of the fleeing refugees as they make their way to the hills. You have been directed to stay a day behind the main host. If enemies are sighted, you are to send the rider left with you to report what you have seen.

Details: The Hill Fortress was an ancient, elven ruin that was rebuilt and stocked to serve as a watchpoint and outpost for its new human masters. The stronghold was originally constructed in the high cliffs of a forested hill. It was abandoned for some reason long before the formation of the Southern Kingdoms. Colonnaded battlements wrap around a spring, the headwaters of the Rainbow Rill.

An interior stair leads down to a lower level of caves, storage rooms, and a long tunnel that leads out to a back door, in case the fortress falls. Archers man the battlements and arrow loops to rain deadly bow fire upon anyone approaching. A portcullis operated from one of the guard chambers flanking the entry can be lowered to stop invaders. A thick oak door barred from the opposite side serves as a second blockade against unwanted visitors.

FLIGHT TO THE HILLS

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



Derelict Shelter

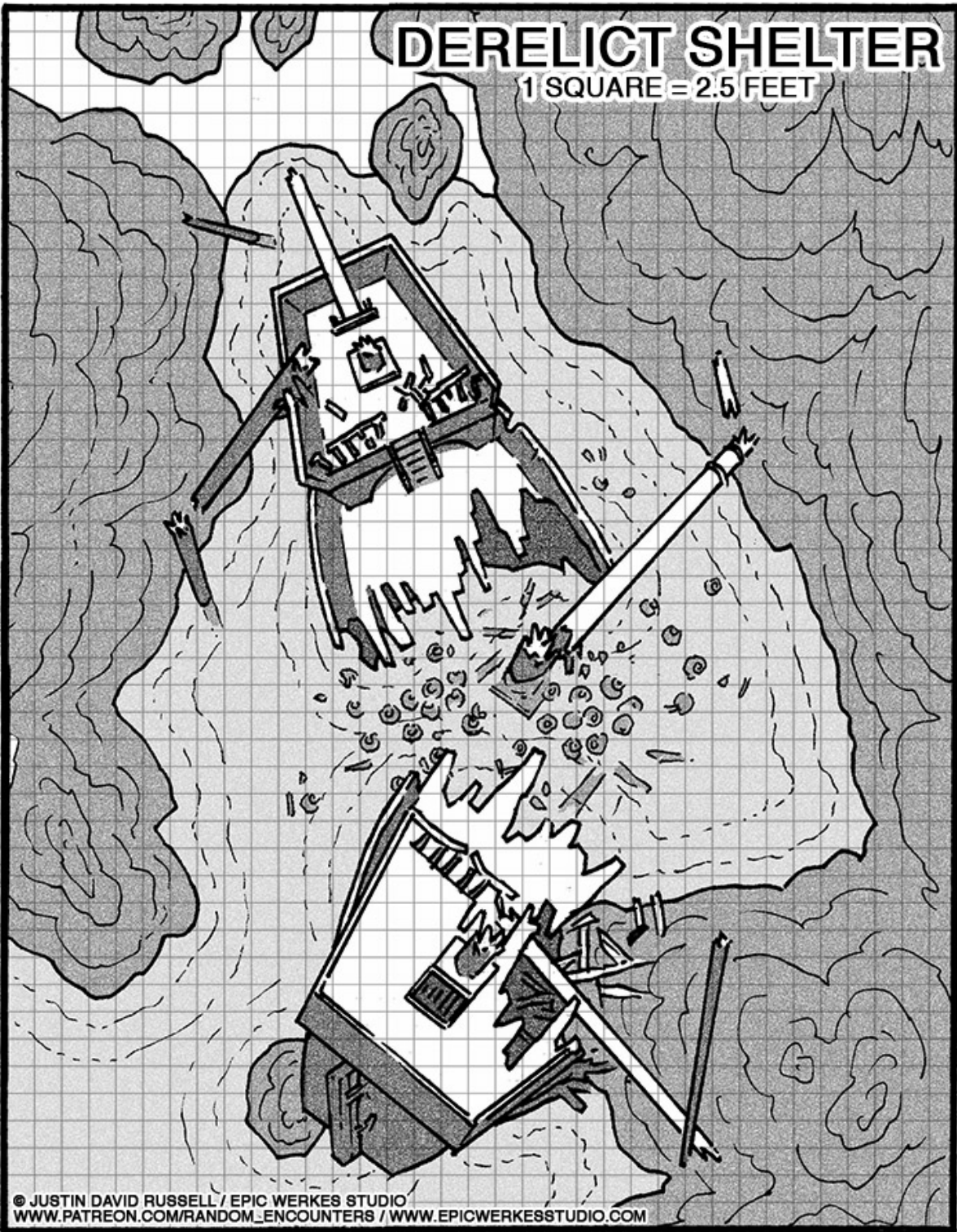
Several years ago, a merchant's cargo ship was thrown against the rocks of a small cove, and lost. Everyone aboard perished. Now, the ship sits abandoned. Its contents were mostly ceramic and oak vessels containing wine and ale.

A few months ago, a group of crab men took up residence in the bowels of the battered merchant ship. They aren't evil, but they have begun depleting the local fish population, hurting the fishermen in the nearby village. A fisherman was drowned after one of the humanoids became entangled in his net, capsizing his boat.

Recently, the local lord has put out a call for men and women of valour to convince the crab men to leave the area.

DERELICT SHELTER

1 SQUARE = 2.5 FEET



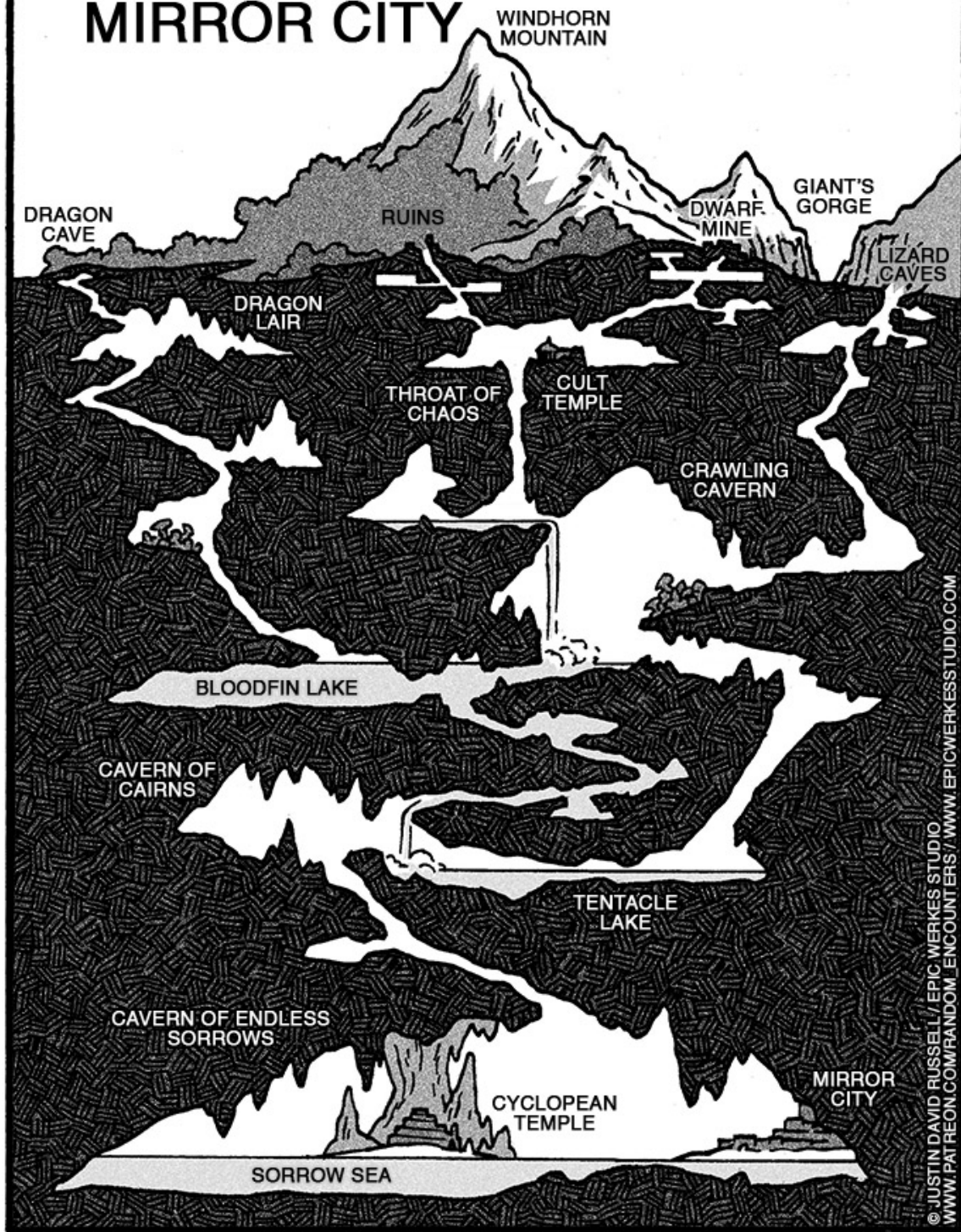
Descent to the Mirror City

One thousand years ago, among the foothills of the Windhorn Mountain, a group of elves delved deep beneath the earth following the lure of power whispered to them by an ancient being. The elven prince, Serencar, found pathways through the earth, and he led his people far below, until he stumbled upon the Cavern of Endless Souls. Therein lay the Cyclopean Temple, the dwelling place of a petty god of Chaos, Urizuk, one of the sons of the Beast Lord.

Serencar built a great city with his magic. He believed that mirrors were windows to the soul, so he surrounded himself and his people with them. The old elven settlement located above ground has fallen to ruin, but there are still secret paths that lead down into the darkness of the earth. There are many other entrances to the Under Realms scattered throughout the region, including a thriving dwarven iron mine, the caves of the lizard people, and a dragon's lair.

Lately, Urizuk has turned his designs upon the overworld. He now has an army to command as he chooses. He has sent his spies and priests up into the higher regions of the many caves in the area to ally with other groups of monsters and eliminate any challengers...

DESCENT TO THE MIRROR CITY



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Basilisk's Landing

The churning waters of the Basilisk's Teeth rage all around you, belying the peaceful, temperate weather. Your fear of being dashed into the visible rocks is only dwarfed by the fear of the invisible stone daggers that lurk just beneath the water's turbulent surface.

You see your destination, a tall, dark spire of stone looming out of the sea, just beyond a last line of sentinel rocks barring your way. With ragged determination, your ship's pilot guides your craft through the last, treacherous pathway through the Teeth. Your craft flies fast toward the tall island ahead. Your guide drops the sails and motions for you to grab the oars. Now you must avoid the cultists, themselves.

You were told that the gaping hole near the south side of the island would bring you to the basilisk's lair. You see it, a black, gaping mouth. No other ships are visible, though you know the likelihood of running afoul of one is high. Your chests tighten as your fingers close about your weapons in anticipation of what you know must lie within the cave opening.

As you raise your shields and cloaks in front of your eyes, as you were directed, you are immediately struck by a wave of death. The smell wraps around your senses, completely, nausea nearly drowning your already thin resolve.

A sudden, terrified shriek, followed by a heart-stopping, reptilian hiss, and the cumbersome sound of dragging chain causes some of you to lower your protection. You see the guide at the prow raising his arms to cover his face, turning away toward you, his mouth open in a scream of utter agony. He seems to be moving in slow motion. In the ambient light, you see the tan skin of his bare arms turning a dusty grey-brown. In an instant, his eyes cloud over, and his voice falls abruptly silent.

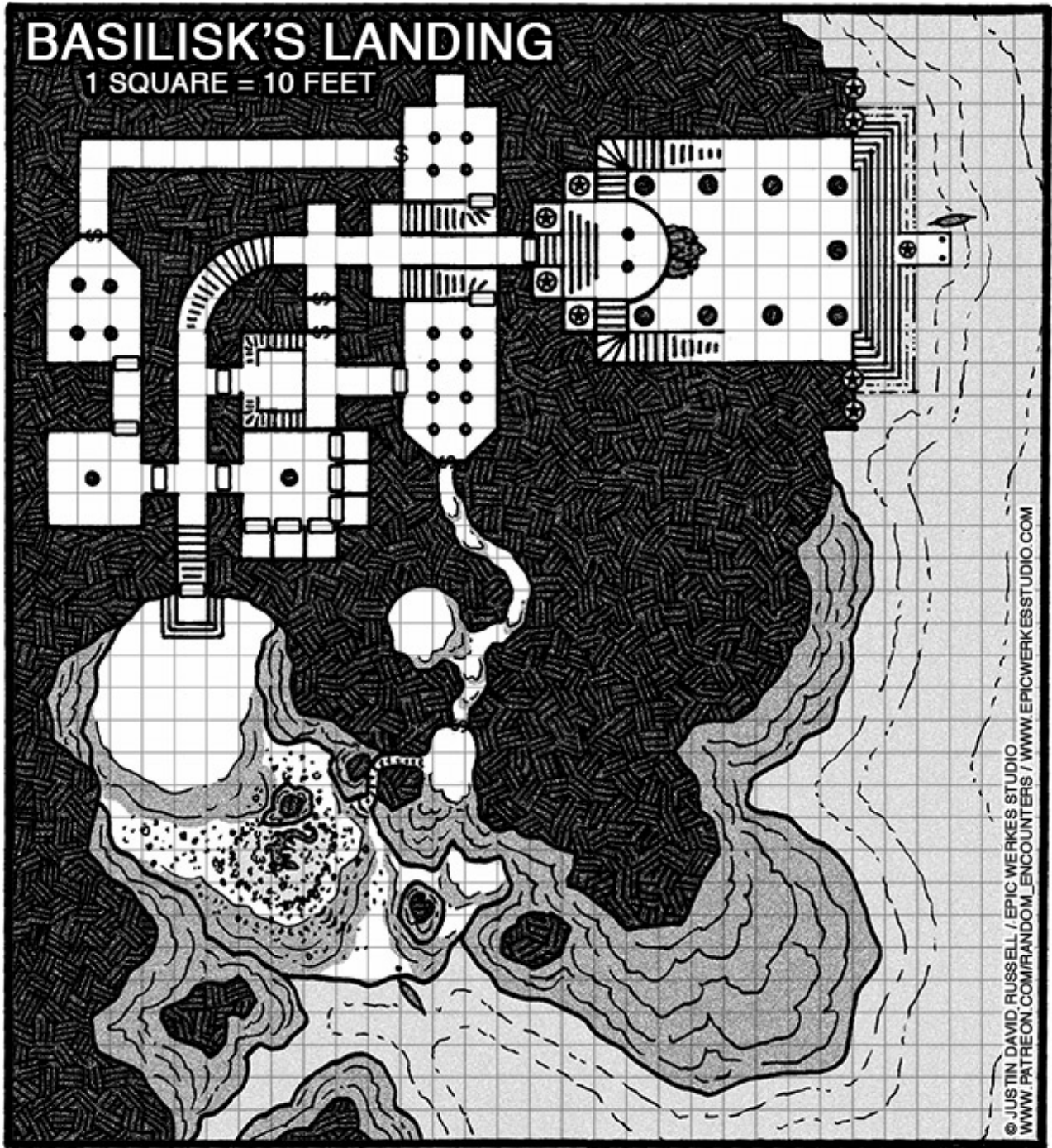
You only have a brief moment to take in the scene beyond the boat before the guide's now stone body crashes down into the centre of the craft. A massive lizard-like creature with more legs than it should have strains hard against a thick metal chain attached to a large collar around its neck. It is only tens of yards from you, above you on the sloped earth of the cavern floor. Its eyes flash an unearthly yellow, but they have not yet found your gaze. Littering the cavern floor are numerous, fragmented statues, broken, stone body parts mingling with yellowing bones. Your attention is violently diverted as one of you shouts a warning to the others just as the boat capsizes. Apparently, the statue of the guide fell on the boat, his new, stone weight enough to unbalance and break the craft. All of you soon find yourselves upended into the shallow water near the cavern's rocky shore!

Details: Off of the Coral Coast are a multitude of barren, jagged islands, the Basilisk's Teeth. They are deadly to ships, usually avoided by most merchant vessels. Very little grows on these inhospitable motes of stone. On one island, in particular, a deadly cult operates in relative isolation and secrecy. They are known as the Cult of the Basilisk.

Basilisk's Landing is one of the most sacred sites used by the cult. In a cave behind the temple, one of the deadly creatures is kept chained to a pillar of stone. Human offerings are brought before the monster, regularly. The heart of the creature's lair is a massive pile of bones and broken statuary, grim reminders of the fatal qualities the beast possesses. Some of the victims of the basilisk remain standing, their faces locked forever in petrified terror.

BASILISK'S LANDING

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



Phantom Mines

100 years ago, a devastating catastrophe struck the Mountains of Mourning. An earthquake rattled the peaks with a violence as yet unseen in all the years the dwarves had lived there. Many strongholds were destroyed. One badly damaged mine, in particular, was also visited by another tragedy.

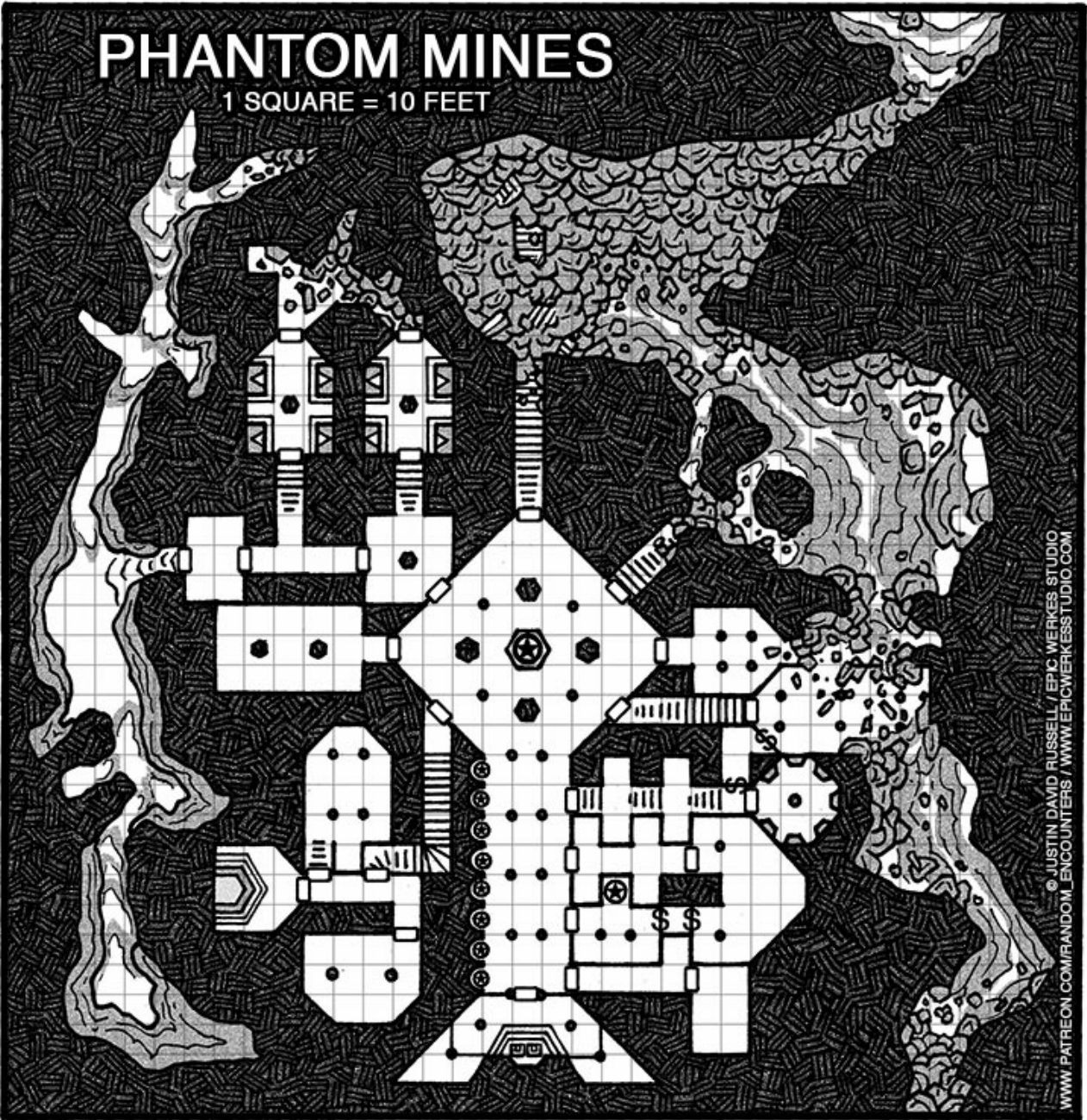
Wraiths are known to live in the mountains, hiding in crevices and caves far from the sun, brooding on their hate for the good and living. They are loathsome undead created by strong, negative emotions. When lust, greed, hate (particularly hate), or any other destructive feeling takes too great a hold on a being, they are doomed to become an embodiment of it in death. Wraiths feed on life energy, desiring nothing more than to dominate the living, and draw them into a suffering form of unlife with them.

When the earthquake struck, the dwarf lord in charge of the mine, Morg the Envious, was killed. He was a hateful and jealous creature that lusted after his brother's position as clan leader. He resented working the mine and made sure his fellow dwarves knew it. In fact, it was for this reason his father initially placed him there. He had picked his successor and knew his other son was a violently jealous and miserable creature. He didn't want Morg causing trouble at home. Morg's intense emotions twisted his heart and tied him to the world of mortals, to the mine itself. He quickly slew all that had not already died from the recent disaster. He changed them all to wraiths, ghosts, and other vile mockeries of life, building for himself a small kingdom of death that he could rule with hate and spite.

What the Lord Morg didn't know was that his brother and father had both died in the earthquake. In fact, much of the region his family ruled had been subject to great destruction.

The original entrance to the mine was completely destroyed, but a rift in the earth provides a few new entry points. Only one is safer than the others. The northern tunnel is a gentler slope leading down into the earth to a boulder-filled ruin of the main stair chamber. High cliffs and shifting stone make any other entry much more perilous.

There are many priceless treasures in the Mines of the Phantom Lord, but no one visiting them has ever returned to tell of it...



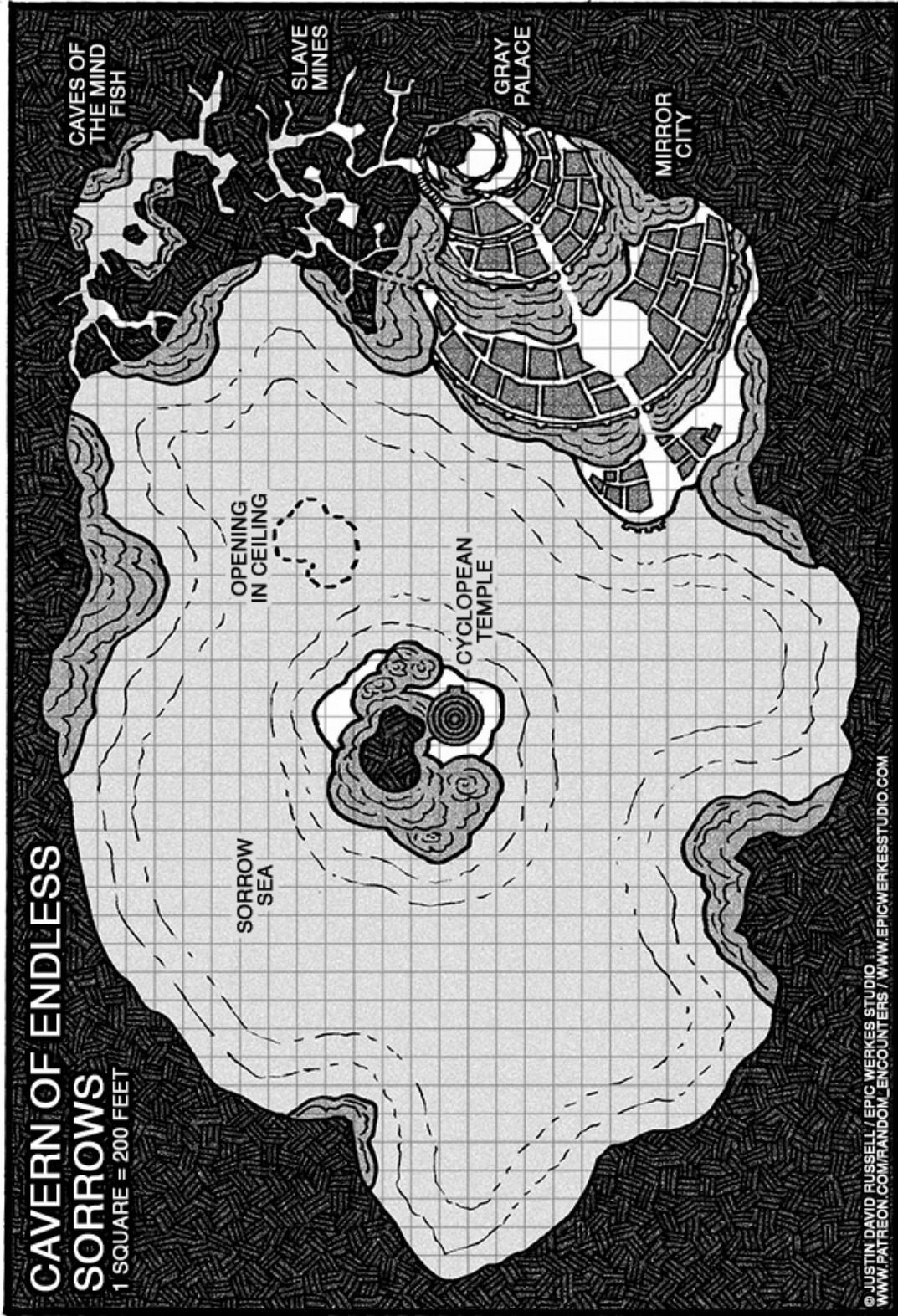
Cavern of Endless Sorrows

Deep beneath Windhorn Mountain, through many dangers and secret, lightless places, lies the Cavern of Endless Sorrows, home to the mysterious Mirror City and its elven masters. At the heart of the cavern is the massive Cyclopean Temple, the domain of Urizuk, a petty god of Chaos. It is Urizuk that compelled the elves of the Emerald Tree to dig beneath the earth and seek his lair.

The elves of the Mirror City built their large city under the direction of Serencar, a mad prophet and powerful magician. He used the weird mind fish and his own magic to enslave those living in the sunlit world his people had left behind. These slaves he forced to build his city, then sacrificed half of those that survived to Urizuk, when the project was finished. Those slaves that remained he twisted and warped into half-human parodies of their original shapes. These slaves now act as lowly guards and manual labour.

Serencar was obsessed with mirrors. He believed they were windows to the soul, that they could be used in many ways to harness and channel his power. Polished metal and glass cover many surfaces of Serencar's city. Some among the inhabitants of the Mirror City are rumoured to have been able to travel throughout the city, and beyond, simply by walking through mirrors.

Today, the King of the Mirror City is planing a terrible war against the overworlders. His gray-skinned kin and large numbers of slaves have been gathered to attack the over-world. They are working closely with the cultists living below the old elven ruins and the dragon lairing in the hills to the east. Catastrophe lurks just beyond the horizon, unless brave heroes can take up arms to defend their land from the evil elven menace.



Griffon Isle

You have heard many tales of the sea elves and their majestic mounts, the griffons. Other elves consider their marine cousins strange and uncouth.

The sea bucks and roils before you, churning the surf into froth. A storm is brewing far out on the ocean. You worry that the weather will get too rough to do what must be done to summon the elves. Turning to one another, one of you raises the carved and silver-inlaid conch horn to your lips, and blow. Nothing. No sound issues from the instrument. Turning the thing in your hands, you stare at it with frustration before blowing hard on it, again. Still nothing. The wind whips your cloaks and tears at your hair and clothing.

According to the text, blowing on the horn before a storm will call the sea elves. The fact the horn didn't make a sound makes you feel foolish. Perhaps the text had been wrong? It was an obscure note in a nearly forgotten historical account of the elves, after all. Apparently, the sea elves were not regarded well enough by others of their kind to make note of them. The sea elves themselves do not keep written records, at all. It is their meticulously detailed oral history that you seek.

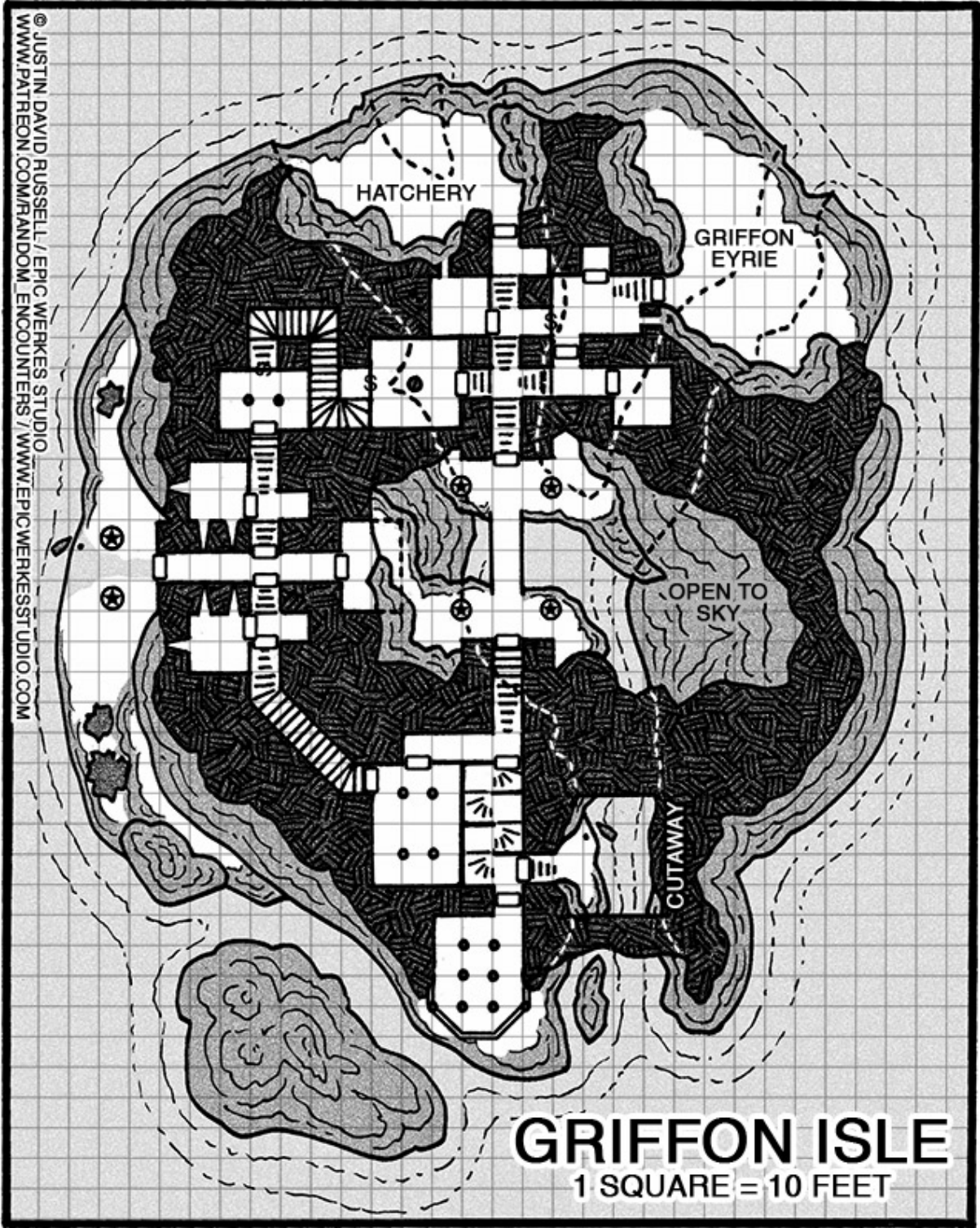
A streak of lightning lances across the sky, igniting the heavens and the darkening beach with white light for a brief moment. You notice three large shapes winging through the heavens over the water, riding the strengthening winds. *Griffons?* you muse. Have the elves arrived? But the horn made no sound!

The shapes grow bigger, details springing to life as they do. They are indeed griffons. Their sharp fore talons, massive wings, snapping beaks, wild, wide eyes, and tawny lion hindquarters are strange and frightening. Their savage presence sends shivers down your spines. Rigged with silver-studded tack and harness, the beasts screech and wail with eagerness and frustration at having to reign in their excitement. You can tell that they enjoy the winds that buffet and billow their plumage and fur. In kind, their riders, darkly-tanned elves in loose, bright tunics and sandals, their unbound, black hair flying, beam and laugh with fierce joy at the worsening weather. Rider and beast feed off of one another, sharing in their revelry over the maelstrom.

The beasts land at the behest of their handlers, gripping and tearing the ground as they do so. The mood of the elves, upon seeing you, worsens only slightly. They yell a greeting in their language. The inflection tells you they are inquiring after your purpose here. You imagine that you must be swift in your response. The griffons, nervously scratching the earth at their feet, eye you hungrily.

Details: Griffon Isle is an outpost of the sea elves. It is so named because the sea elves' unique mounts are raised and trained there. It is a ring of stone with a hollow centre. Caves underneath the small island surge with the ebb and flow of the sea. If needed, the island can be defended, but it is primarily a hatchery and training centre for the griffons.

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Temple of the King

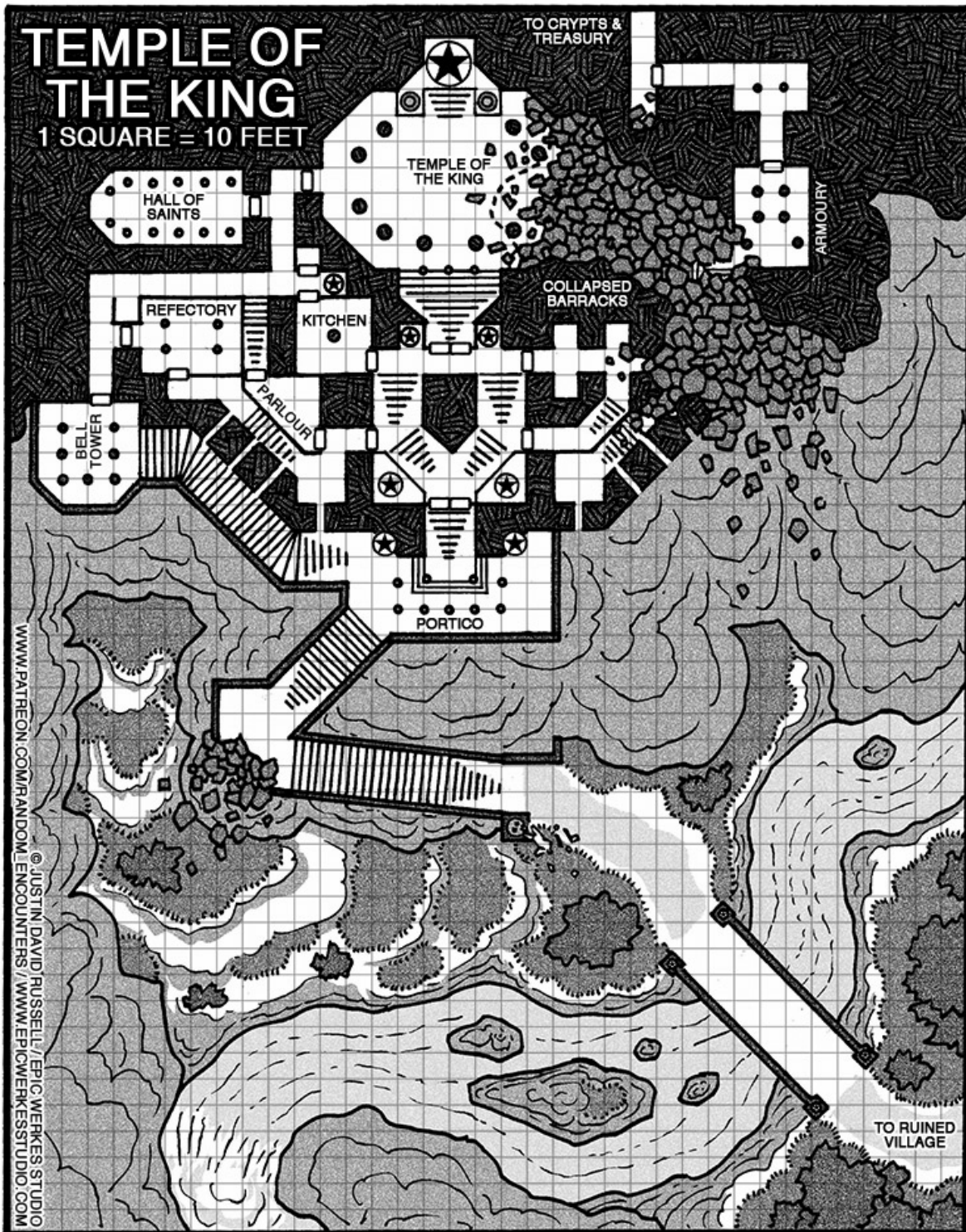
Shadows and ash choked the sky the day that Gazorak the Trembling Earth visited the Temple of the King. The wingless serpent broke the walls of the temple and destroyed the priests of Law that dwelt within. Gazorak's gluttony was greater than the temple priests could provide, but he decided the place was easily defensible. For this reason, and to spite the gods of Law, he stayed.

Squatting like a surly hen upon her eggs, Gazorak sat upon his wealth of treasure and bones. No man or monster has been able to challenge the lumbering behemoth. The dragon's scales are dark brown with a coppery sheen, and they are hard as iron plate armour.

The Temple of the King was an ancient bastion of Law. Its priests were devoted to the maintenance of the grounds. They lived there year round. After the temple fell, Gazorak employed a clan of goblins to do his bidding. They lived in the western rooms. Large spiders and other wild-life made the western chambers just as deadly as the goblin-controlled areas. The crypts and treasury lie deeper within. Gazorak cannot enter them, but he sent his minions to gather whatever treasures they might. However, they quickly returned with only a few valuables, and refused to go back, despite the dragon's threats.

Perhaps most sacred of all in the temple was the Great Black Bell, which was only rung in dire circumstances. Some say the bell rang frantically, futilely, when the dragon came. Today, it is dusty and lifeless. The bell tower is now web-choked, the home of a nest of large spiders.

The massive marble statue of one of the greatest of the Southern Kings, flanked by large braziers, depicted seated upon his marble throne in an alcove, loomed over all who entered, even the dragon. Angered by this, Gazorak struck and dislodged the king's head. It came to rest on the ground at the king's feet.



Village of Minothros

At first glance, one might be disarmed by the friendly, welcoming nature of the Village of Minothros. It is a small fishing and cattle herding settlement on the Forgotten Coast. A sleepy community, the village harbours a deadly secret.

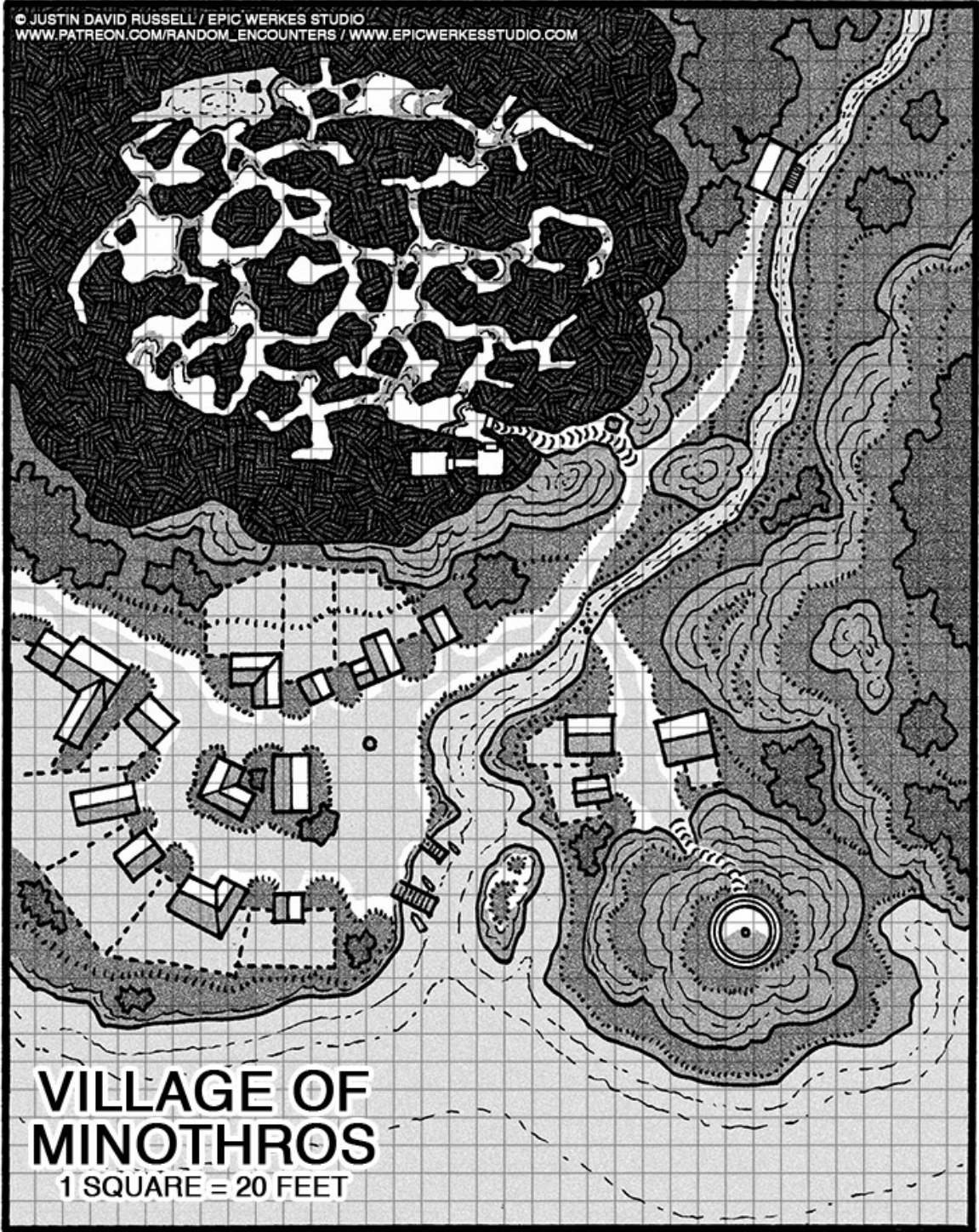
Rocky hills protect the settlement on several sides, but a narrow, lonely road leads west and north to the main trade road. The most notable feature is a marble, circular temple atop an outcropping of rock near the sea. Pillars support a domed roof. Under the dome is a massive, bronze statue of a man with a bull's head, a well-known depiction of one of the gods of Chaos.

The mystery of Minothros is rooted in the Labyrinth, a system of maze-like caves under the northern hill, called the Labyrinthine Hill, upon which local cattle are grazed. A creature lives in the caves, the minotaur, a being that is half bull and half human. Sacrifices are made to it regularly. Local young virgins and unwanted strangers are thrown over the high drop at the Labyrinth's entrance into the caves for the minotaur to feed on.

Visitors are lulled into a sense of false security, often invited to participate in the many festivities that take place in the village. The priests that run the community wear flowers in their hair, long, white robes, and large, bronze, pendants in the shape of bull heads about their necks.

When the minotaur is killed or dies of old age, a young female virgin from the town volunteers to be impregnated by a strong male bull during a ritual in which the priests slay the animal and offer the virgin its cooked heart to eat. Upon consuming the last bite, the bull god's blessing is given to the virgin. The act takes place at the temple at the feet of the bull statue. The young woman invariably dies during the birth of her monstrous offspring.

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The Well of Ambrosia

In the Lands of the Gilded Petal, an ancient story tells of a petty god, a snake woman, named Nagi, whose children became all the world's serpents, even the mighty dragons. Though her venom was said to be lethal to anyone that touched it, it was known that her blood had a curative effect, even granting immortality and the ability to speak to snakes. She gave quantities of her blood to her representatives on the physical world, the nagas. The blood was kept in special wells and guarded against misuse by humans and other mortals. Sometimes, a mortal could find one of these wells and convince the naga guarding it to give him some of the blood. However, if anyone bathed in or ingested the liquid, called ambrosia, outside of the sacred complexes that contained it, they would be instantly poisoned, and die.

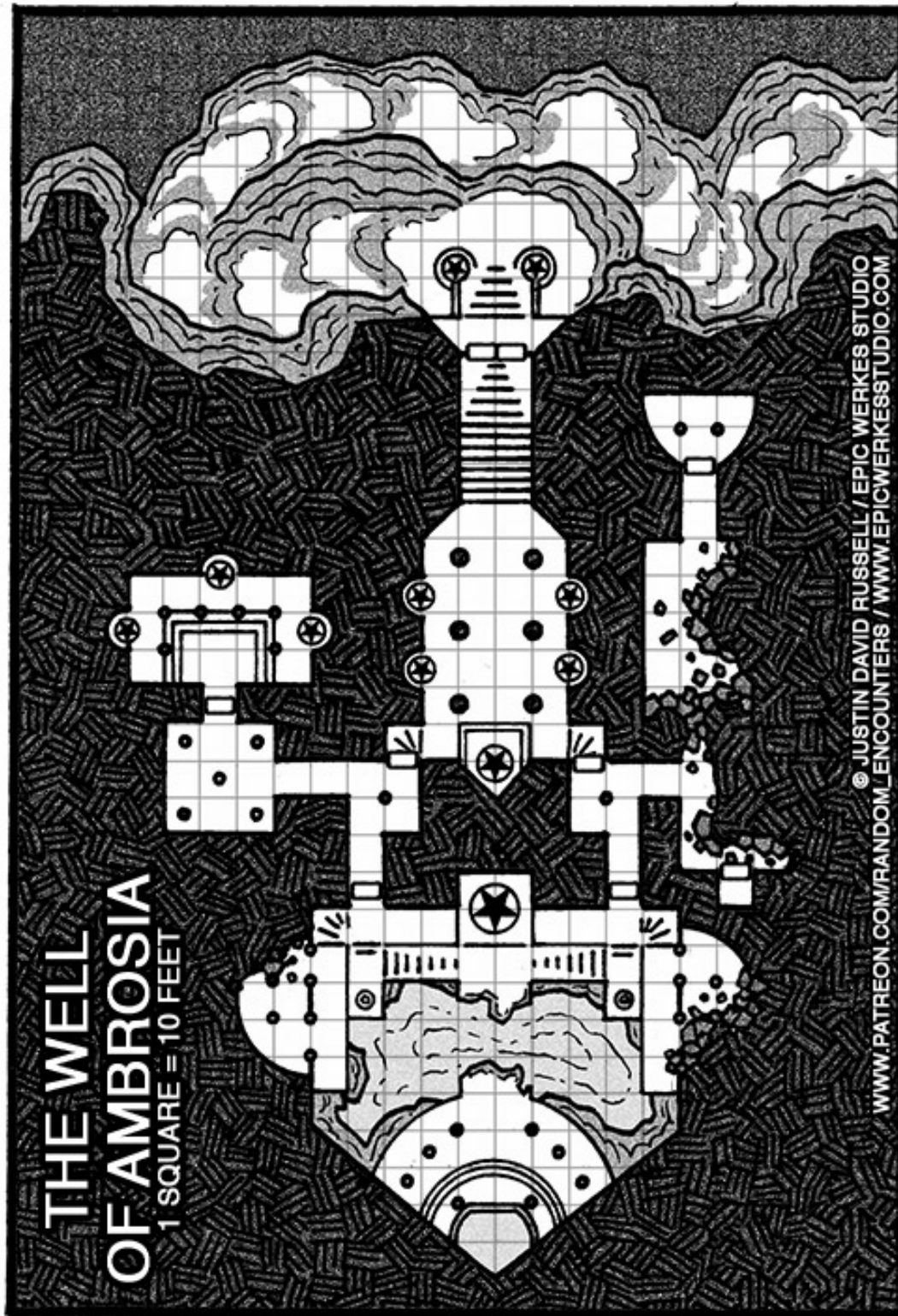
When Mankind came to be in the world, they were jealous of the long-lived elves and the patient, enduring dwarves. They sought ambrosia, violently, and with such single-minded determination that Nagi, herself, ordered her nagas to drain their sacred wells and return to her. One naga, however, did not wish to leave the world of Men, and remained. It was a wicked and cunning creature.

A human king, named Sarpa, desired to live forever. He spent his entire life trying to attain immortality by seeking the last remaining well of the nagas, but he was always disappointed. One day, his wife fell ill. She was with child, a boy, the soothsayers said; Sarpa's only heir after a life of many wives and daughters. He desired to save his queen and unborn child more than anything else. Sarpa prayed ardently to the gods. One day, the king awoke to find one of his men had found the possible location of the Last Well.

Overjoyed, Sarpa went, himself, to find the place. When he found it, he discovered the years had not been kind to the structure built to hold the Well, though the naga inside and the ambrosia were still present. Sarpa met the creature. It was old and tired, but it was also eager for another being to speak to. It told Sarpa it would give him the ambrosia, if he agreed to bathe in the honey-sweet, golden blood of the Well, to become immortal, and remain to keep the naga company. The naga also wished for many jewels and objects from Sarpa's treasury, riches he kept in the cold pool of water at the bottom of a narrow chasm in his lair. Thereafter, Sarpa was forbidden to ask about or look for information regarding his kingdom. The king agreed, knowing that his son would grow to eventually replace him. He also knew that his wife was strong-willed and capable of ruling and defending the throne in his absence.

Tragically, Sarpa did not know of the blood's poisoning effect, once removed from the well. After many years, he grew curious and love-lorn enough that he broke his word with the naga and discovered that his wife and child had both died, his kingdom had fallen to ruin, and his people had sworn fealty to another ruler. The naga bit Sarpa, killing him (for only the naga's poison can undo the immortality granted by the Well).

It is said the naga still lingers by the well, waiting for those that it might deceive with its cunning, or speak to out of loneliness. The Well, itself, has since lost its ability to grant immortality, but it still heals wounds and cures many diseases and ailments.



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Dragard Mine & Medusa's Prison

The streets within the walls of Dragard Mine are eerily quiet. Despite what you have been told, nothing could have prepared you for what you see before you now. Clouds hang, dark and heavy, above you, turning midday into late afternoon gloaming. Wind whistles between the buildings, hanging signs creak as they swing, listlessly.

The fact that you have not seen one living soul has filled your hearts with unease; doubly so, because, littering the streets and village square are dusty gray, lifelike statues of people in a variety of unusual poses. Several grab at their faces, or shield themselves with their arms and any objects they may have at hand. Soldiers hide behind their shields, their weapons raised, defensively, protecting common folk that kneel and cower behind them. There are even animals, some standing in their paddocks, some in aggressive poses, others lying, stiff-legged, on their sides. There are also people that look like they have fallen over. Several of these feature damaged body parts that litter the ground around them.

You wonder who the sculptor could have been. You have never seen such life-like work before. And why would the artist have chosen such a grotesque way to express themselves, in such a remote mining village? You passed this way to save some time, hoping to pick up supplies, and maybe get a good night's rest at the inn before continuing on to your destination. You were not expecting this mystery.

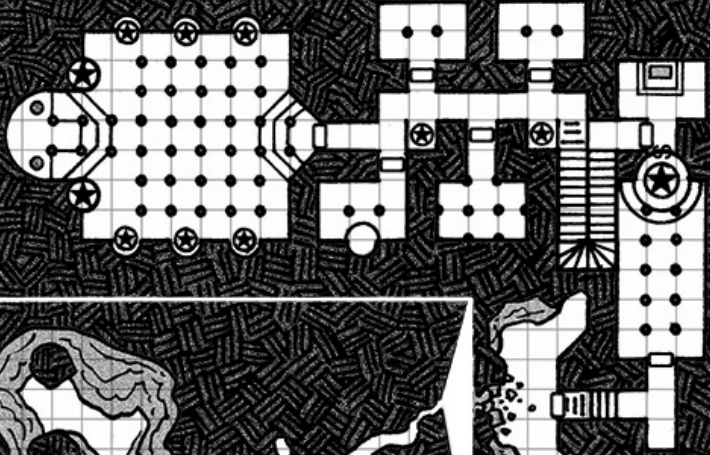
Details: Before Dragard was a gold mining operation for one of the Southern Kingdoms, it was a lucrative resource for an ancient people that occupied the land long ago. They worshipped a creature with devastating power. For many years, the chieftains of the ancient people sacrificed their own to the creature and made her beautiful treasures from the nearby mine. Eventually, the people became tired of the monster's demands, tired of living in fear and pain.

They rebelled against her, sealed her behind the halls she forced them to build. They did not kill her, for they still held a place of reverence for their former queen. When they were done, the chieftain ordered a long, pillared, decorative hall made so they could remember their history, and their mistake. When that chieftain died, his body was interred in a chamber hidden behind a statue of him in the hall. His tomb was then sealed. The people collapsed the mine and abandoned it, leaving only carvings to warn off visitors.

Eventually, the monster queen was forgotten. A new mine was opened after the old tunnels were rediscovered. However, continued mining revealed the sealed tomb and prison of the monster queen, releasing her upon the inhabitants of the small village.

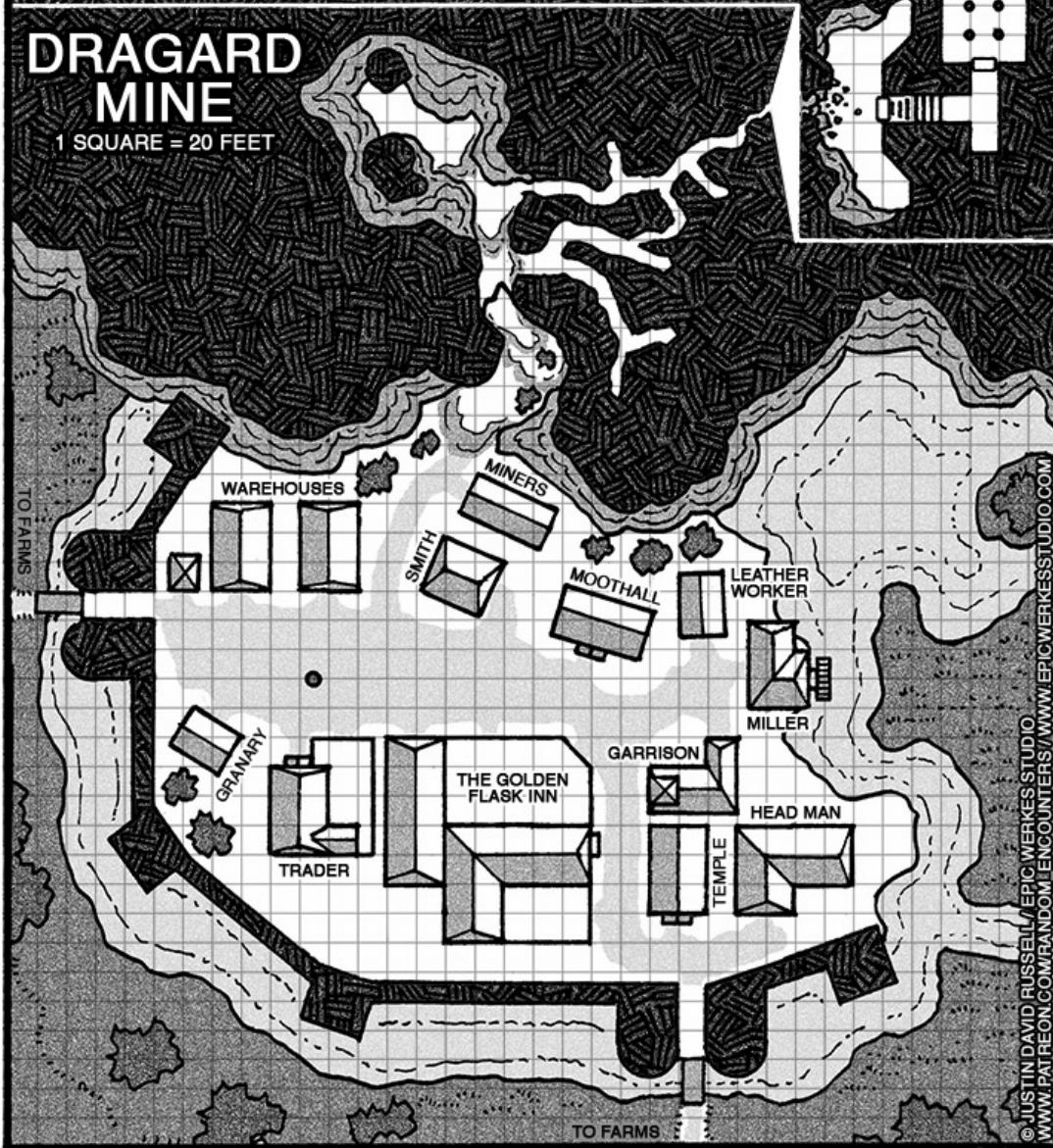
MEDUSA'S PRISON

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



DRAGARD MINE

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET



The Oracle

History: Located upon a craggy precipice is a ruined temple complex once occupied by the Oracle of the Cliffs. The Oracle was renowned for being able to enter into trances in which she could commune with the gods. A hole in the floor of the Oracle's chamber provided a narrow vent for the natural cavern the temple was built over. Once uncovered, the hole allowed spores from the large mushrooms below to waft up to intoxicate anyone breathing them in. The mushrooms induced hallucinations that the priestess could use to predict the future.

Unbeknownst to temple's occupants, the ground over the mushroom chamber was extremely unstable. One day, it collapsed, killing many. Thinking this was a sign from the gods, the temple was abandoned and never rebuilt.

Recent Happenings: Goblins have moved into the structure. They had trouble with the spores, initially, but slowly built up an immunity to (or at least, a strong tolerance for) them. The goblins eat the mushrooms, as well. They make a strange-tasting, thick soup with them.

One side effect of the spores is intense paranoia. The goblins have developed an extreme phobia of outsiders and initially riddled their home with traps of all kinds. One such trap collapsed the main entry to the temple upon the heads of an extremely unlucky band of mercenaries. Now, the only entrance point is a mostly concealed, narrow tunnel the goblins have no trouble navigating.

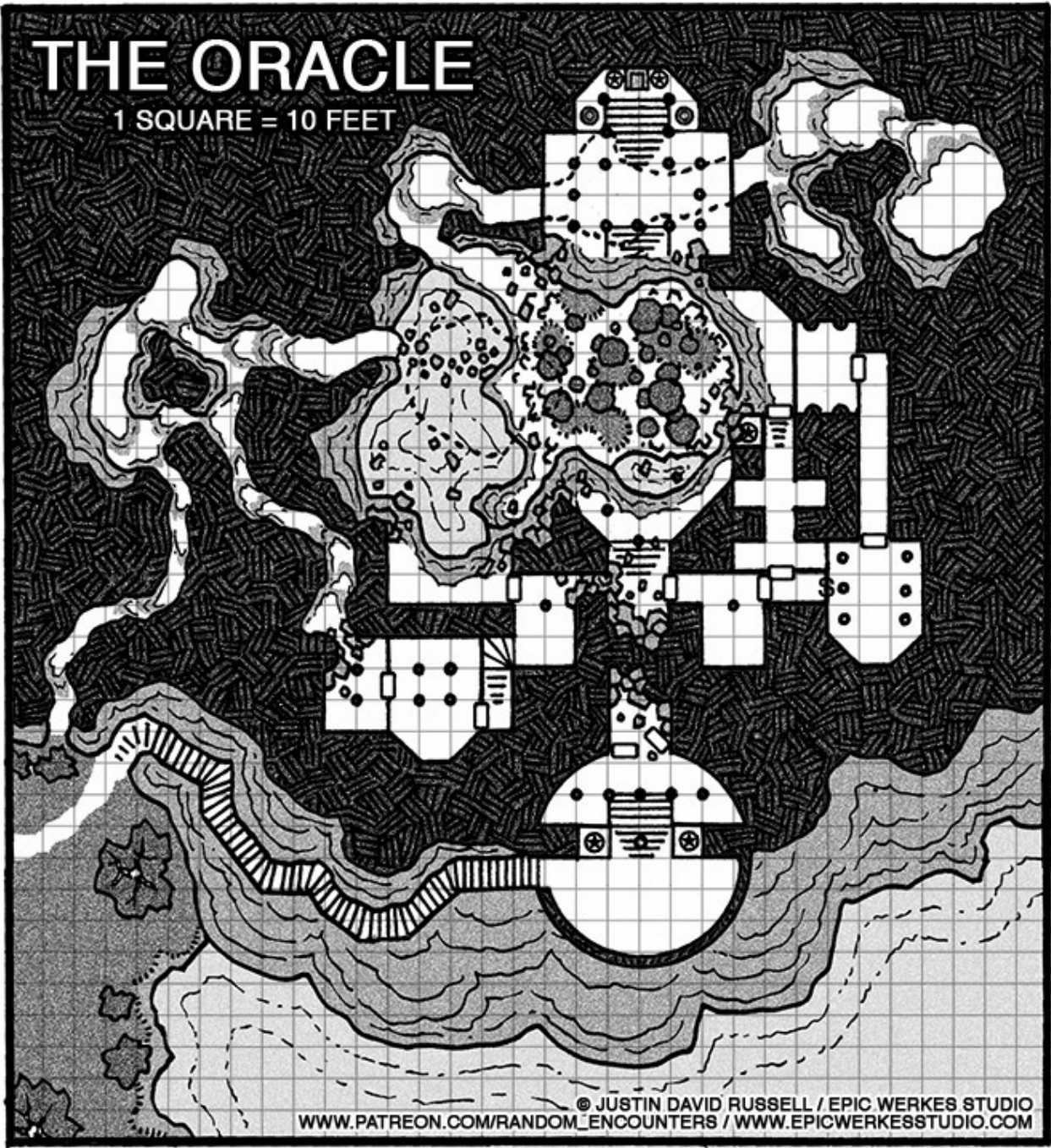
Traps of all kinds still fill the temple, but the goblins utilize a new tactic that relies on the influence of the mushroom spores upon unwanted visitors. They dress themselves in furs and feathers, making themselves look like animals of various types. The costumes intensify the hallucinations visitors feel when exposed to the intoxicating effects of the mushrooms. The goblins have relied upon this method of terrifying intruders for a long time.

Initially, the collapse of the floor crushed the mushrooms in the cavern below. Over time, they regrew over the heap of moss-covered, worked stone that fills the right side of the newly-created chamber.

A hole in the ceiling, created by a later collapse far above, has allowed rainwater to at times enter the chamber. When the room floods, the natural caves and tunnels act as a drainage system. The mushrooms occupy a high mound of rubble, allowing them to stay largely above the waterline, in those situations.

THE ORACLE

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



The Cursed Oasis

The desert swallowed you long ago. Your nomad guide confesses to you that he is himself lost in this wasteland of fire and sand. Your cloaks are bundled tight across your mouths and noses to prevent you inhaling the swirling sand. Dancing mirages tickle your hopes with tantalizing promises, but your guide assures you that such things are the desert's way of fooling the unwary and desperate. He told you not to listen to the alluring song of the dunes, unless death is what you seek.

A startled cry from the nomad brings your dry eyes from your sliding footfalls to regard the man curiously. He points straight ahead to a long line of darkness. You shrug noncommittally and continue trudging. You have seen this before, and it always proves a false promise. The nomad grasps one of you and jerks you around, hard. He points west, explaining that what you are seeing is real, not imagined or a trick of the desert. He says the dark line is a wadi, and that might signify an oasis, if you are lucky.

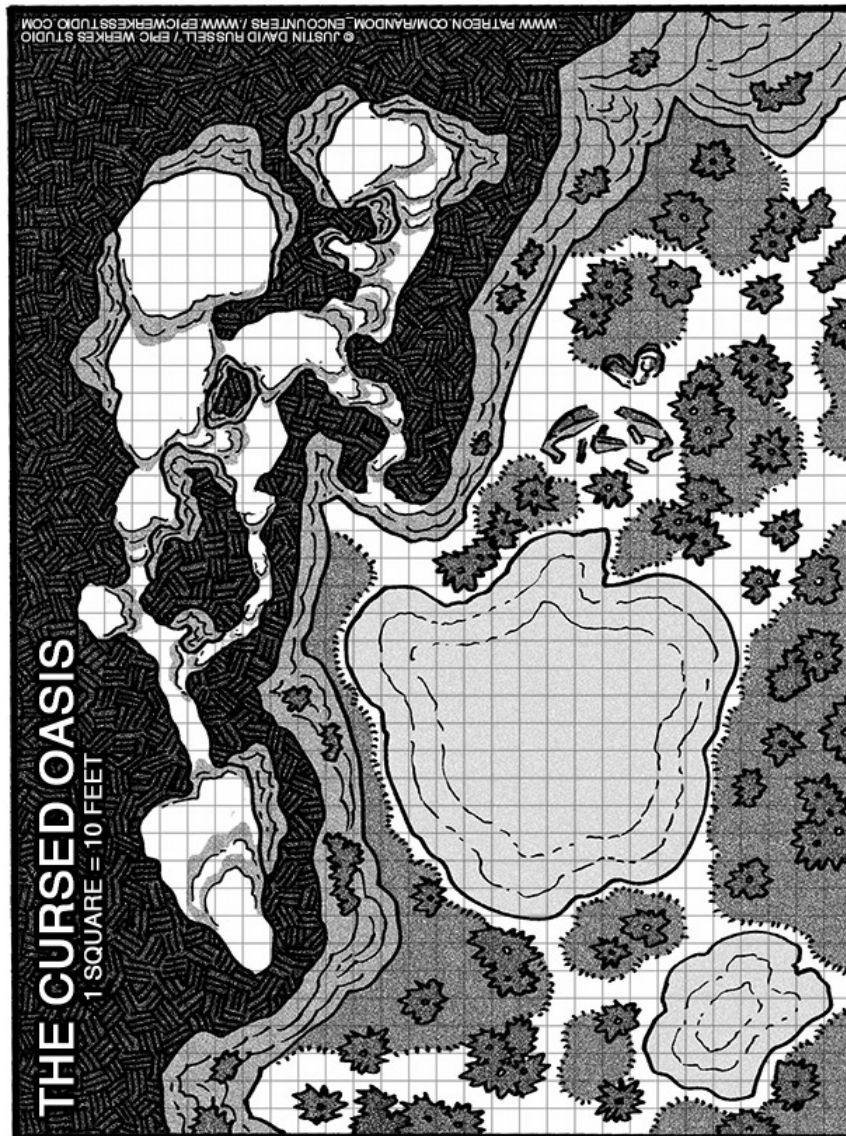
Emboldened by this news, you redouble your efforts. All thoughts of what you might encounter in the valley are replaced by desperate thirst and a strong desire to find shelter. Palm trees soon sprout all over the area further ahead. The glint of reflected light quickens your hearts and makes you drool unconsciously at the thought of water.

You close on what has proven to be small pools clustered in a wide, flat valley between the steep sides of a deep ravine. Your hopes are replaced by uncertainty, however. A sickening scent lingers on the dry wind. Your guide slows and places a dark hand on the hilt of a short, curved dagger tucked into the sash belt at his waist.

You see, upon closer inspection, that the trees surrounding the water are sagging and wilted. The brush is full of rotting leaves, and the grasses are yellow and brown in death. Sun-bleached bones belonging to whole animals, some still covered in parchment skin, lie all over. The pools are black, stinking, stagnant, and vile. Any thoughts of obtaining anything useful from them are dashed, though some of you are tempted by your thirst.

A pall settles over your group. You feel as if you are being watched, but no obvious threat presents itself. The guide hails you again, pointing to an object protruding from the sand by the cliffs. A sand-worn, u-shaped boat lies half-buried. Broken parts of it litter the ground nearby. You don't have long to contemplate the strange object before you see a blur of motion pass through your periphery. Turning, you see... your guide! He has thrown down his weapons and is now fleeing back the way you came, screaming madly in his language, language you don't understand.

Looking past the broken craft, you notice a bright glint. Walking closer, you see, half covered in sand, a kind of container that has broken open. It seems to be made of wood and gold! Glass or gemstones (or both) are attached to it, as well. A beautiful, strong depiction of a woman is fashioned upon what you figure to be the lid. The bottom is a deep, hollow box of wood and gold. Why would your guide be scared of such a remarkable object? You wonder, briefly, how much it would fetch from the right buyer. If nothing else, it could be melted down... assuming you survive long enough to sell it, and you can find a way to move it.



The scent of death suddenly grows stronger, washing over all of you like a wave that nearly brings you to your knees. Something stirs on the nearby cliff face. Expecting to see the guide returning to face his fears, you are surprised to see a nearly skeletal figure wrapped in strips of dirty cloth staring mutely down upon you. A fear so great you find you cannot even flee settles upon your hearts. You barely have a time to blink before the emaciated figure descends, reaching lazily in your direction...

Details:

The boat was a funeral barge that carried the body of Queen Anoshotep. A severe flood deposited it in its present position. The flood drowned the attendant priests. Anoshotep's sarcophagus was broken open in the chaos, disturbing her remains. Given a new life by broken tradition and incomplete burial, the mummy crawled through the sands to the cliff. There, Anoshotep dug her way into some nearby caverns. Anything living near Anoshotep rots and dies away.

Dead City of Raazendol

Your enemy, you learned recently, is the dreaded Ruby King, Kazarth, a being of great and ancient power. His minions and allies have chased you across the length and breadth of the world, harrying you at every turn. Your quests have finally carried you here, across the Sea of Shimmering Scales, to the rocky coast of Thoom (pron. 'DOOM'). Your approach to the Ruby King's city, Raazendol, was not by sea, however. You were unable to make landfall in the city. Instead, you passed over the land, from the Western Wastes to the Valley of the Damned.

Strange shapes and sudden movements linger at the edges of your vision, but nothing is there when you turn to see what it is. The Valley is devoid of life. Skeletal trees and brush haunt the dusty landscape. The husks of long-abandoned steadings come and go as you proceed.

Undead began appearing after half an hour of travel. Skeletons of fallen warriors roam the Valley, attacking any living being they see. They rise up seemingly from everywhere, a pulsating, ruby glow emanating from their hollow sockets. Eventually, you see the city, starting with the ruins of a sprawling community outside the walls. It rises up high into the saddle between a pair of mountains. The crumbling black walls perch on precipices of rock, and the Ruby King's Castle looms like a hunched gargoyle in the northeast portion of the city's highest level. Sickly looking black-green clouds hover over the area.

Details: Raazendol was once a powerful centre of learning, a beacon of scholarship. However, its last wizard king, Kazarth, was a sorcerer of great power. His lust to acquire as much magic as possible led to him bargaining with many beings of Neutral, Lawful and Chaotic natures, all more powerful than himself. The wizard wished to extend his lifetime so that he might attain even greater knowledge.

Through many grim experiments, the wizard created a ruby-jeweled crown that gave him the immortality he craved. However, it was not what he expected. His mind and power were intact, but his body began to decay around him. No amount of bargaining could save Kazarth's mortal form. He was, however, able to syphon the life from other living things in order to briefly reverse the decay of his body.

A force of Law allied itself against Kazarth to try and stop him from destroying all of his subjects, but the wizard's sorcery was mightier. As the Lawful soldiers died, Kazarth was able to raise them to fight for him. Finally, someone stole Kazarth's crown. Once stolen, it was hidden away so that a suitable means to destroy it could be devised. Kazarth's soul was trapped within the crown. The city of Raazendol, ravaged by war, was forsaken.

Many years later, Kazarth's crown was stolen and spirited away to his ruined valley and city. There, the wizard began to plot his ultimate revenge against those that had imprisoned him for so long...



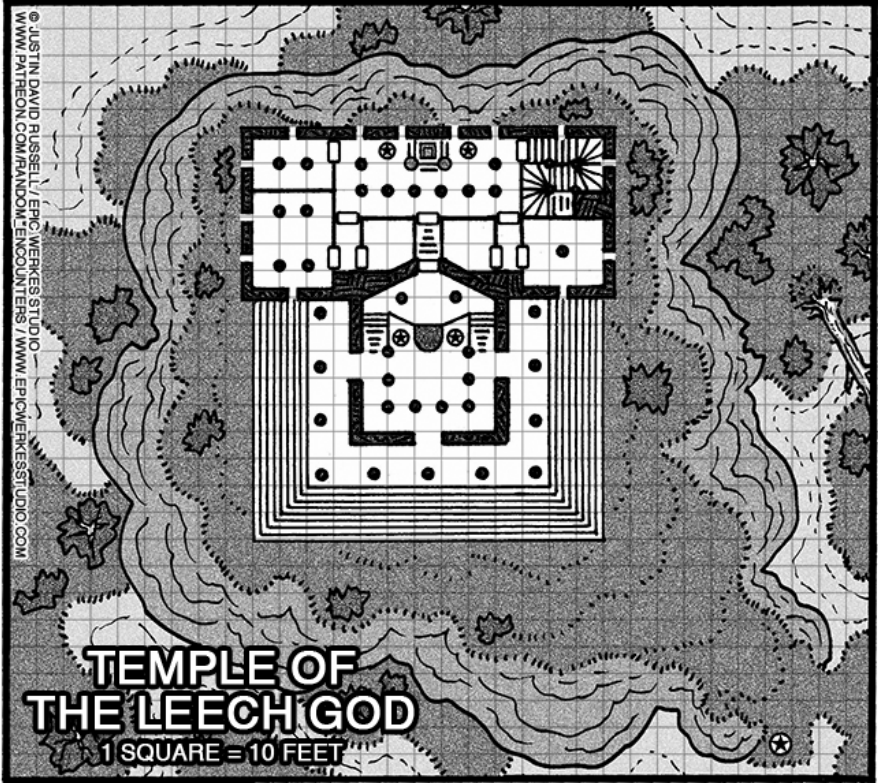
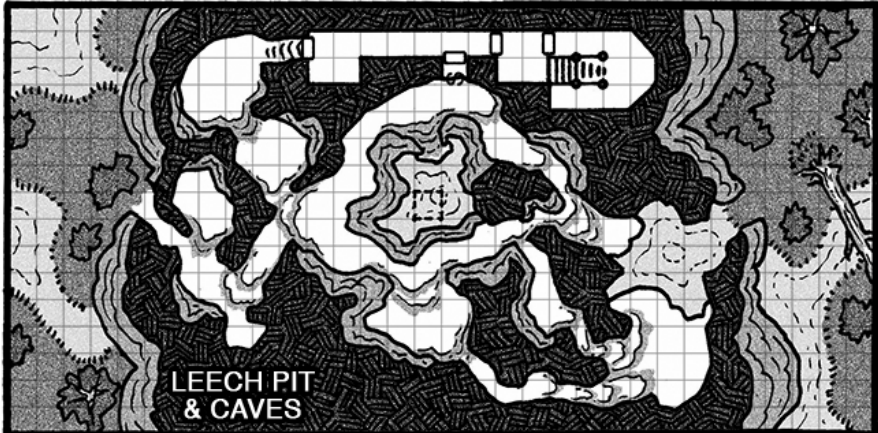
Temple of the Leech God

Hook: Thirty years ago, deep in the Blood Marsh, a cult appeared. They dressed in black robes and wore leeches upon their bodies, gathering blood for their thirsty god, Grong the Blood Lord. They appeared in local settlements, looking for converts and supplies. Disgusted by the aggressive and revolting cultists, most of the villages and towns pushed the followers of Grong from their lands. Soon, the cult began stealing livestock and goods, then local villagers and travelers began disappearing.

The Marsh Road causeway became a dangerous stretch of road to traverse. Few dared enter the deep, misty wetlands filled with monsters, notably the giant leeches known to inhabit the place. Many people have already mysteriously vanished, the disappearances blamed on the Leech Cult. The Duke has become enraged. He is looking for a few worthy mercenaries to enter the wetlands and deal with the problem.

Details: Grong's Temple perches on a rock outcropping in the Blood Marsh. It's black marble edifice matches the dark and forbidding surroundings. Cultists worship in the front chamber, standing between the columns as their priests throw human and animal victims down the large, spike-lined hole in the floor to the leech pits below.

The high priest's audience chamber and the priests' living quarters are located behind the temple worship area. A stairway spirals down to the leech pit and caves. Grong's statue depicts a giant leech with a human head featuring a circular mouth ringed with sharp teeth. The sacrificial opening in the temple floor is a depiction of Grong's face with a wide open mouth. The pit is lined with iron 'teeth' to prick the victims in order to draw blood for the giant leeches below.



The Tower of Asrig

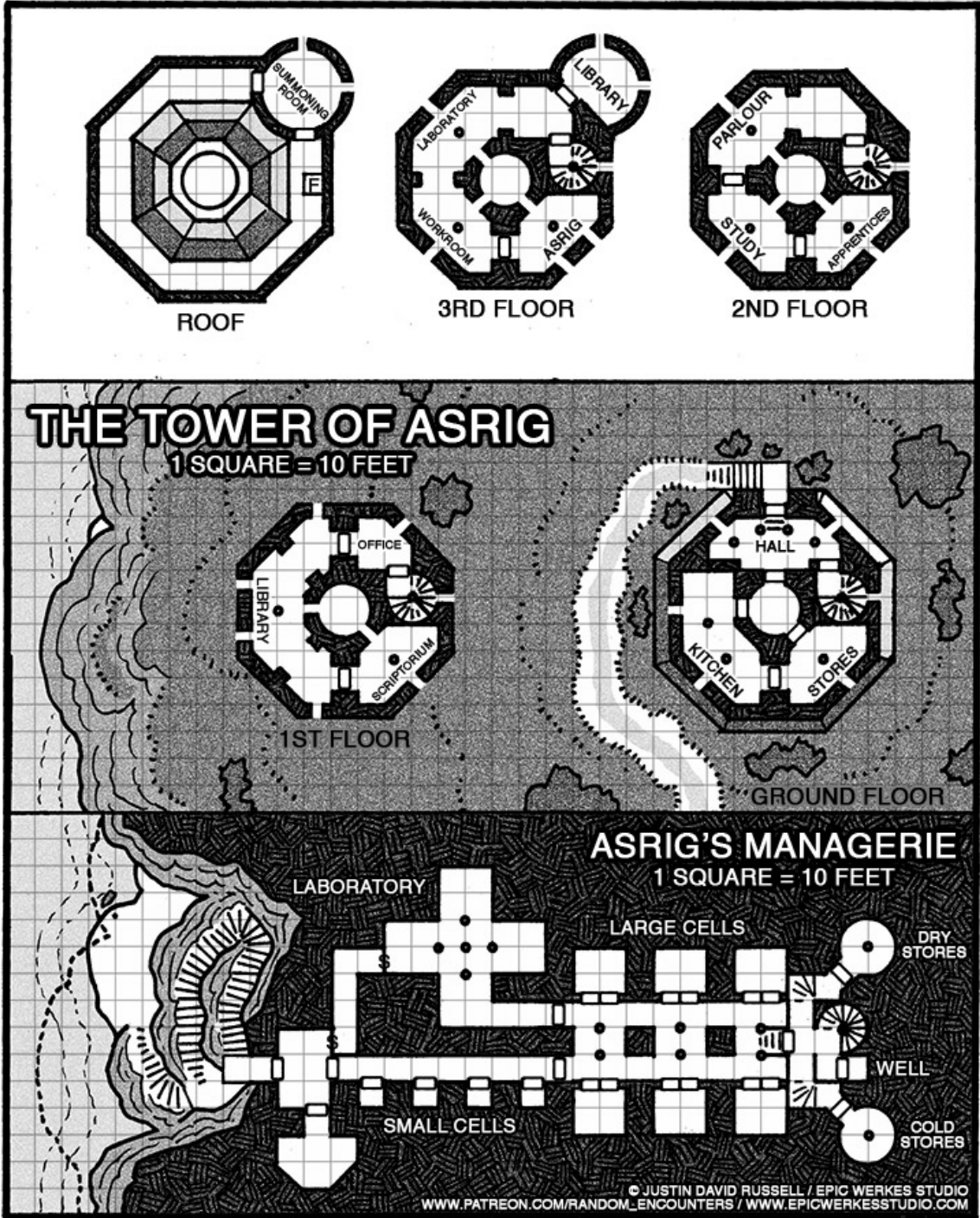
The Hook: The logging village of Deep Lake (named for the large body of water of the same name), has recently been terrorized by strange and unusual creatures. A spider that appears and vanishes before it can be struck, and a savage bear-like creature with a beak and feathers, are just two of the beings rumoured to have been encountered over the past month. The Lord Forester investigating the incidents disappeared shortly after delving into the wilderness. Many believe that Asrig, the strange wizard on the cliffs, has something to do with the situation, but no one is brave enough to visit his tower.

King Reginald III has issued a call for mercenaries to investigate the forester's disappearance and Asrig's abode. The wide tower is nearly 5 miles northeast of the village. It perches upon the cliffs overlooking the Deep Lake. On clear days, it can just be made out. Over the past month, no lights have been noticed in the windows. Anyone interested is to meet with Havard, Deep Lake's steward.

Details: Asrig was a wizard well known among his peers for his obsession with transformative magic. He spent his life seeking ways to magically combine different creatures. Beneath his tower are a series of cells to hold his creations. Protections and wards keep strong and powerful beings from escaping his dungeon.

A few weeks ago, one of Asrig's experiments escaped. An insect-like creature he thought he had imbued with an iron-strong exoskeleton turned out to have been gifted with the ability to disintegrate metal. The creature freed itself and several more of Asrig's experiments, one a dog-sized spider with the power to teleport from one place to another in the blink of an eye. The creatures attacked and killed Asrig when he returned to his laboratory.

Several of the animals managed to make it up into the tower, killing all but one of the wizard's apprentices. Some escaped into the wild, notably the spider and the bird-bear, but many are still contained within Asrig's tower, where they have laired in several rooms. There are still some mundane and magical creations that remain in their cells. About half of them have perished over a month of being neglected. However, half still cling to life.



Castle Firebrand

Hook: Castle Firebrand is a border fortification built high upon a towering spire of dark granite near an inactive volcano in the region known as the Fire Marches. The volcano hasn't been roused in many centuries. A narrow ridge leads east to mountain paths, while a fortified bridge protects the southern entry. A dry river of basalt surrounds the castle on three sides.

The castle's master is the Marcher Warden, Sir Olrek. He is a brave and noble warrior that constantly defends the region against giants and other monsters. His grandfather fought in the last Chaos Crusades. The castle, itself, is a kind of supply post and checkpoint for those traveling through the Fire Horn Mountains.

Recently, there has been a disturbance from the deepest lava tubes and caves beneath the castle's undercroft. Something has caused lava to spill forth from several places. Strange men made of magma have begun to attack the inhabitants from the many caves and lava tubes beneath the structure. The Marcher Warden does not know what could possibly be causing this activity. Small volcanos spew lazy tendrils of lava from their vents south of the castle.

Sir Olrek has put out a call to arms to encourage any of bold and noble heart to venture into the caves of the Lava Men to investigate the happenings and deal with the problem.

Details: In truth, what has roused the lava men is a force of dark dwarves that live in the deeper caverns below even the lowest portions of the castle. The dwarves summoned the elementals in hopes that the lava men will take the place without having to waste any of their own soldiers.

The characters are on a race against time. As the volcanism increases in the area, the air begins to turn more and more unsafe as sulfurous gasses turn the air into poison and the water supply turns to acid. Will the characters be able to face the dwarves and the lava men in order to save the beleaguered fortification?



Beneath Castle Firebrand

This map is the companion piece to yesterday's map, 'Firebrand Castle.' Pale-skinned dwarves with large, bulbous eyes have begun attacking from the undercroft.

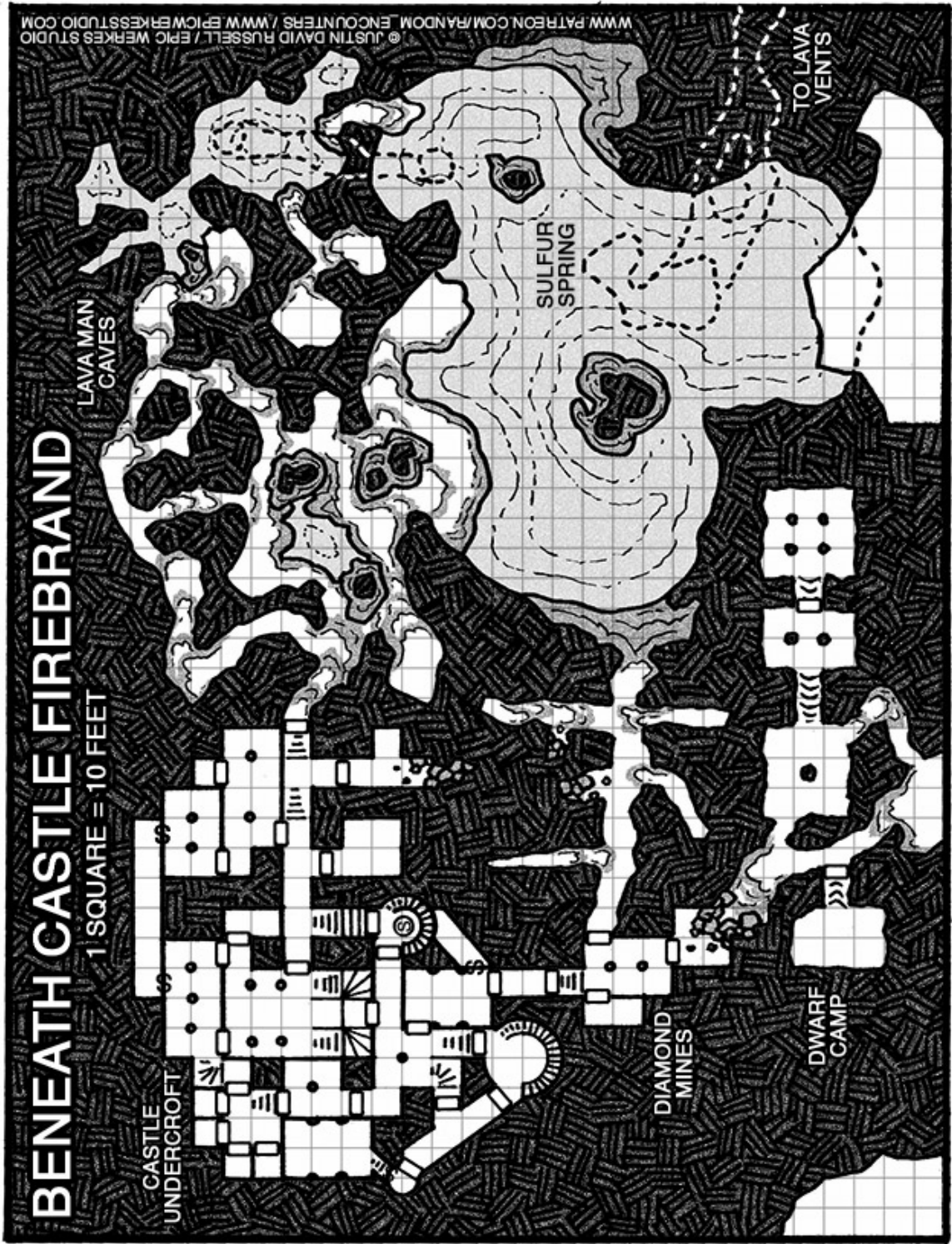
Diamond Mines: The mines of Firebrand Castle are a precious resource. Before the dwarves attacked, it was heavily used. A large portion of the mine was collapsed to try and stop the enemy before they moved too far in.

Dwarf Camp: The dark dwarves have established a few chambers after tunneling here from deeper realms. They built rough-hewn living and storage chambers in the south. The dwarves managed to dig into the finished rooms used for the diamond mines. Their leader was instructed by the dark dwarf king to take Firebrand castle and reopen the diamond mines.

Firebrand Castle Undercroft: The undercroft of Firebrand castle is a storage area and crypt. It is also used as a dungeon for those breaking serious laws in the settlement.

Lava Man Caves: Unable to enter the sulfurous water without harming themselves, the lava men have taken to living in the caves.

Sulfur Spring: Beneath Castle Firebrand are a series of natural caves and tunnels. There is a large chamber filled with a pool fed by nearby lava vents. Before the lava men and the dark dwarves arrived, many of the castle's inhabitants used the spring to bathe. Now that the lava men have been roused, the spring is unbearably hot and bubbles constantly. The castle's inhabitants have tried to bar the eastern door to keep the poison gas from escaping, with only marginal success.



Maze Tombs of Andorak

You have been wandering the City of Andorak for most of the day. All that remains of the legendary city are overgrown streets, and walls rendered low by time and disuse. No one has walked these streets in over 600 years. The forest has reclaimed most of the place. Its design is maze-like, confusing. You are beginning to think the people that lived here were mad.

What you know of the city is limited to rumours and the scraps you found amidst the ancient library's scrolls. It mentioned a people that held the passage from life to death in high reverence.

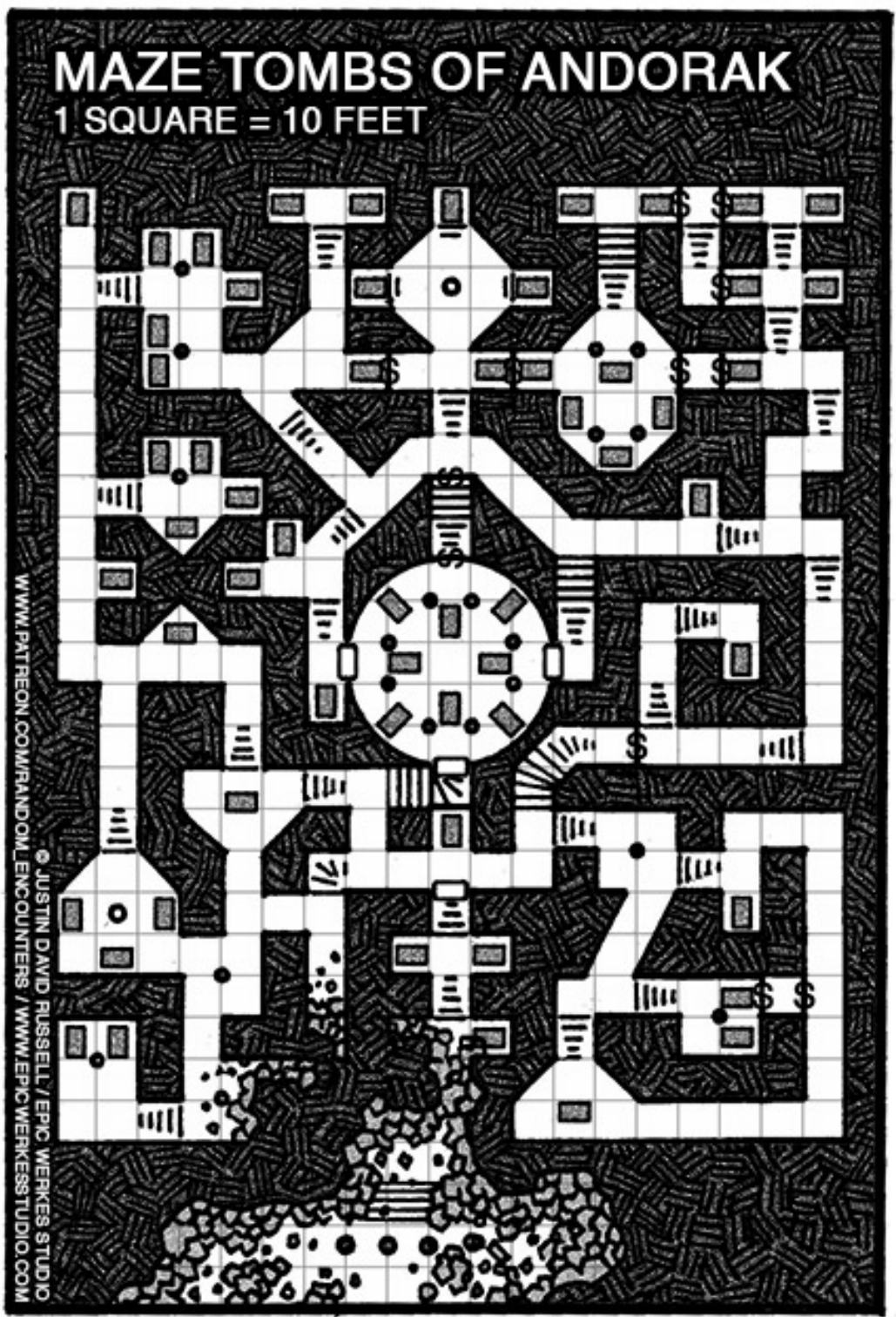
You are pulled from your musings by an odd sight on the ground. You realize that you have stepped into a trail of what looks like glistening mucous that leads east through the ruins. Following it, you are amazed to see the mucous leads into a portion of the city that has been built into the cliff face bordering its northeast side. You remember reading that Andorak's tombs were often dug out of stone and contained traps to deter robbers. You regard a gaping hole and the ruin of one particular facade that has mostly collapsed, nearly blocking the entrance to the tomb. You see the slime trail continues up a flight of stairs, over the rubble, and into darkness...

Details: Andorak's people were worshippers of death. They thought the afterlife was a great journey fraught with danger, lessons, and mystery. To reflect this, they put their dead in labyrinthine crypts carved from stone. It was thought the act of wandering the halls of the spirits of the dead would help facilitate an easier transition between the two worlds.

After Andorak's fall, Nature reclaimed much of the city. The irrigation systems the people devised fell to ruin, returning the land the settlement occupied to wetlands. Many creatures came to live in Andorak, including giant slugs. The voracious creatures laired in the maze tombs. Clever engineers ensured anyone entering them can expect to find the place riddled with traps.

MAZE TOMBS OF ANDORAK

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



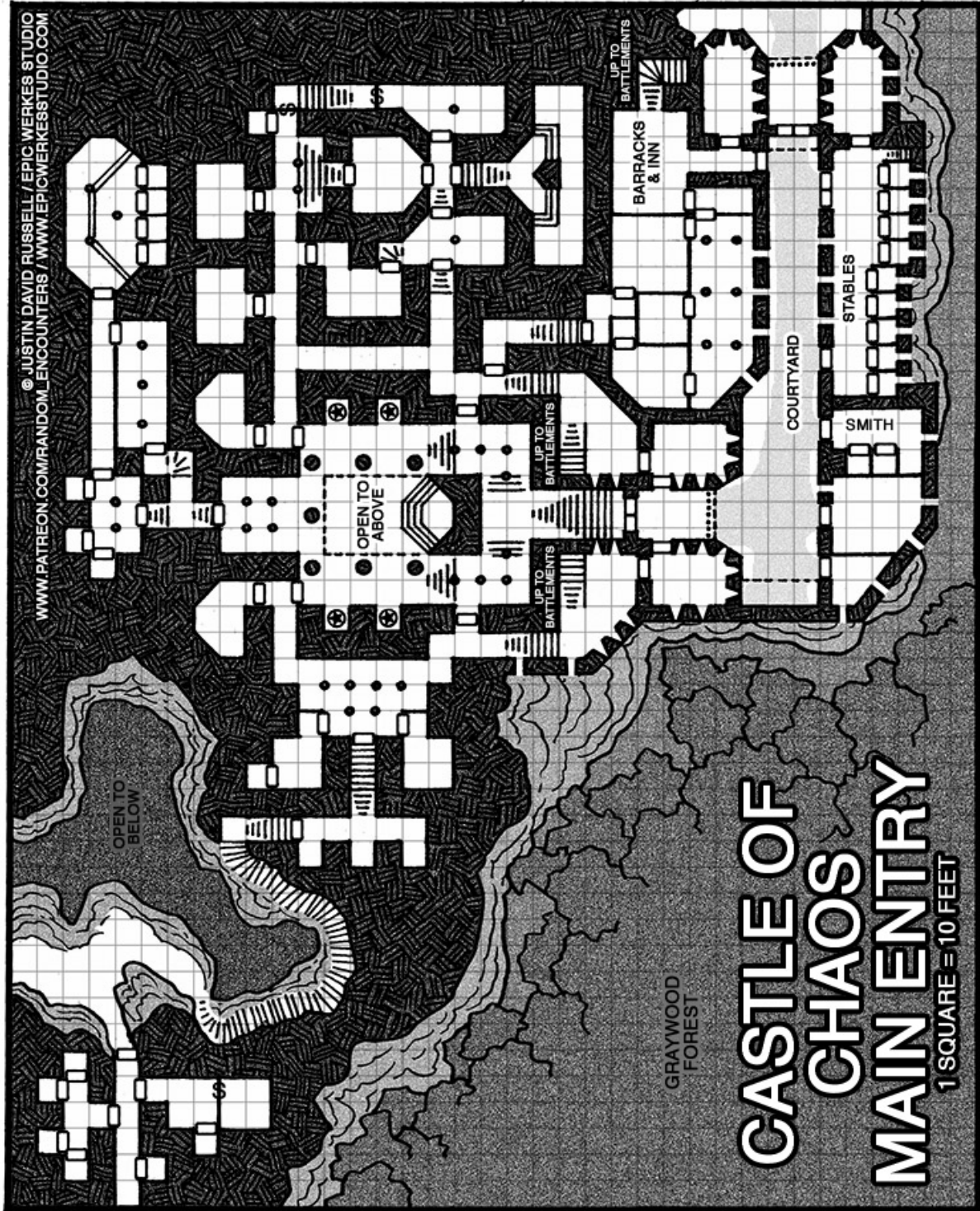
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Castle of Chaos: Main Entry

For those of you patiently awaiting my posts from the last few days, wait no longer! Behold! The Castle of Chaos!

Castle of Chaos is the ambitious start to a huge megadungeon project I and DM Dave are collaborating on. There will be several other maps that can be linked to this one to create a single, sprawling complex. In all, there will be 6 levels comprised of various smaller maps. When I am done with each level, I will join the maps and send them to DM Dave to fill with monsters and adventure for your amusement! The entire project is titled, 'The Secret of Forsaken Mountain.'

A large, covert mining operation has been made in an effort to discover the secret of Forsaken Mountain. The King of Chaos has sent his agents to reveal the truth of the mysterious mountain so they can use it against the people of Lantern Falls and any other enemy that may present itself, namely the Southern Kingdoms. The castle's main entry is a collection of enclosed buildings topped with battlements that can be used in case of invasion. A garrison of soldiers is stationed at the inn just inside the main gates.

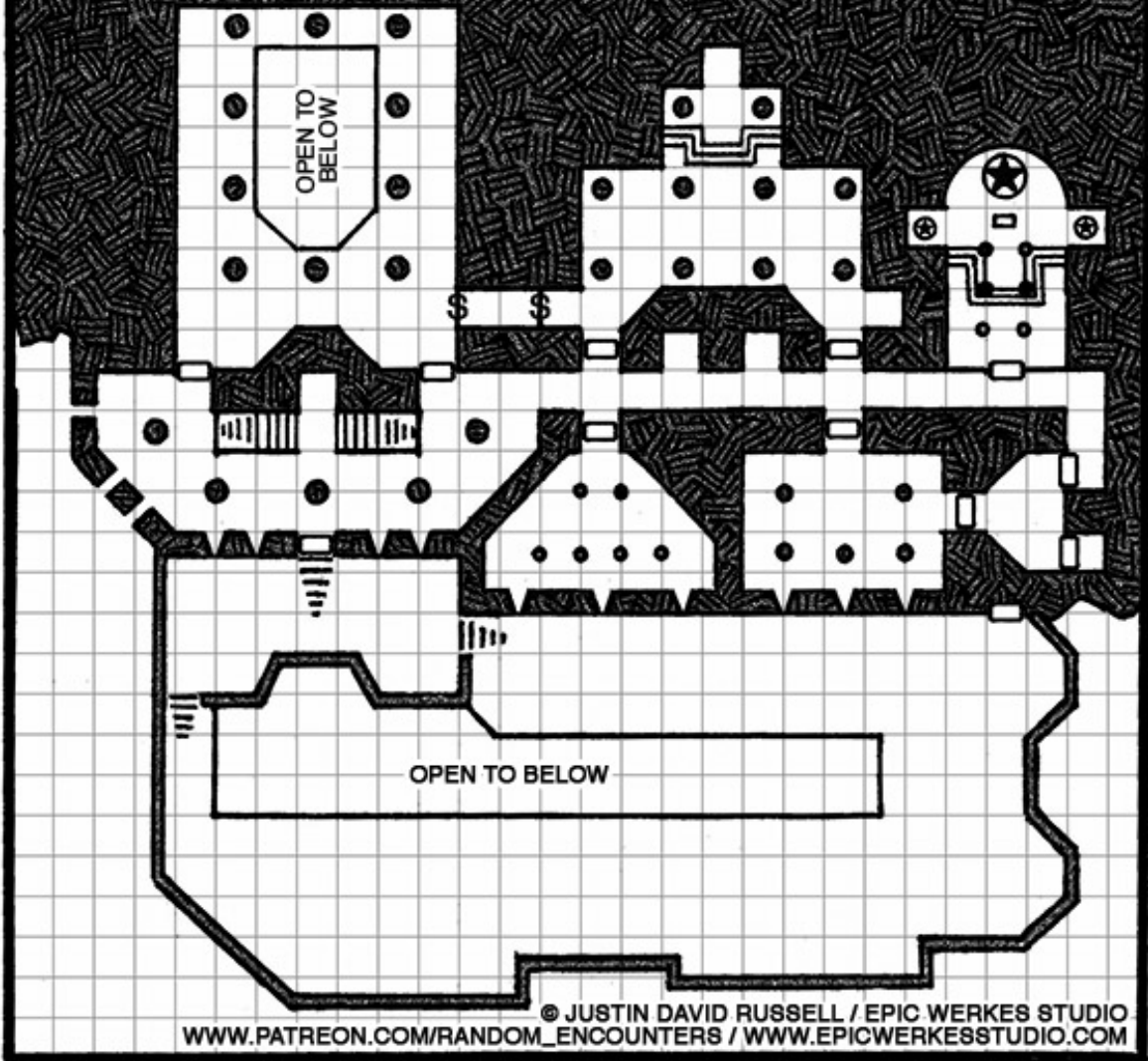


Castle of Chaos: Battlements

This map is a companion piece to the Castle of Chaos map. These are the battlements and upper rooms belonging to the guard forces.

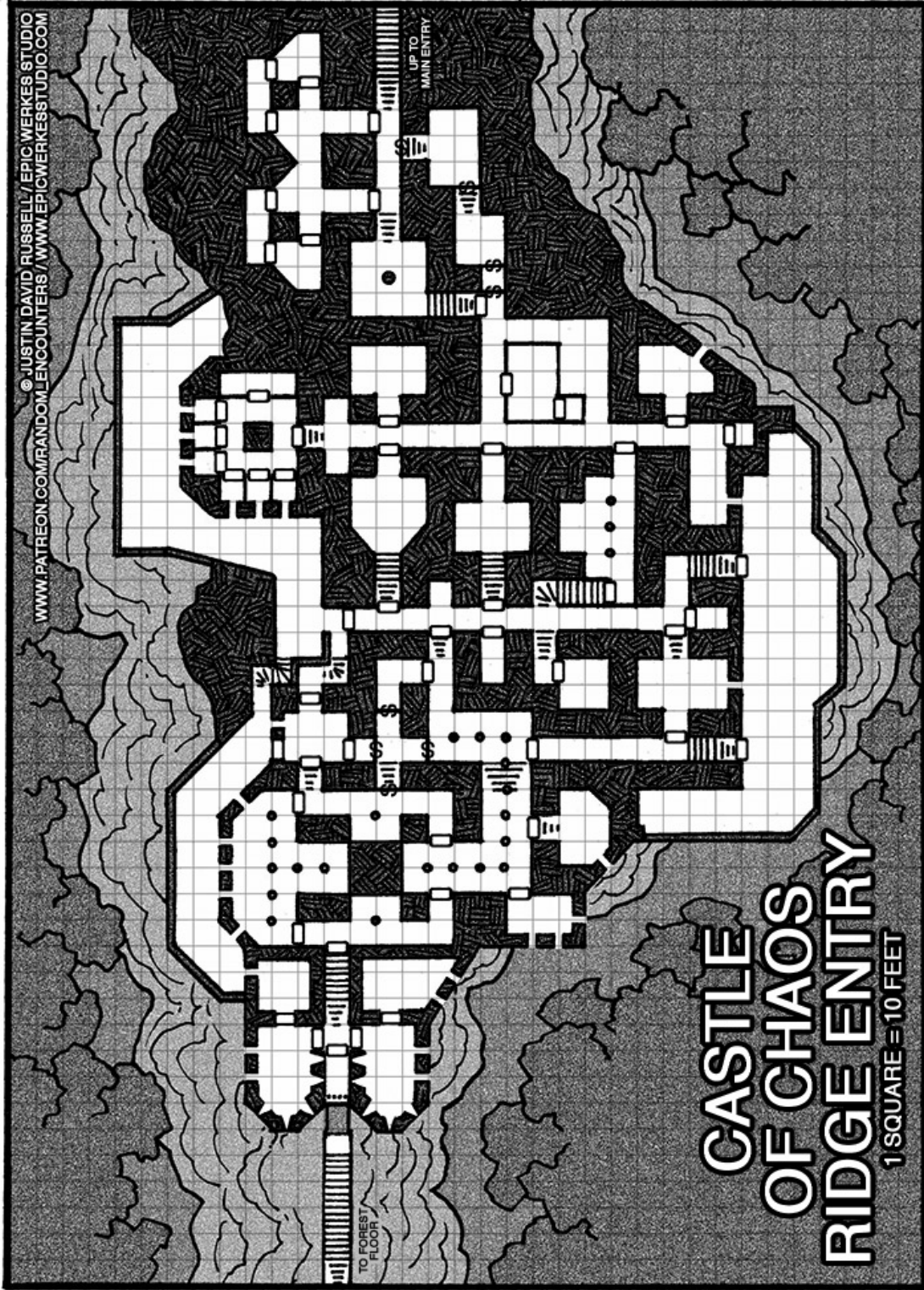
CASTLE OF CHAOS BATTLEMENTS

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



Castle of Chaos: Ridge Entry

The second major installment for the first level of the Forsaken Peak megadungeon, the Ridge Entry. One of the arms of the mountain extends far into the forest below the peak. A pathway follows the ridge down the mountain. It serves as a rear entry that leads down to the forest floor, then northeast to the barbarian lands.



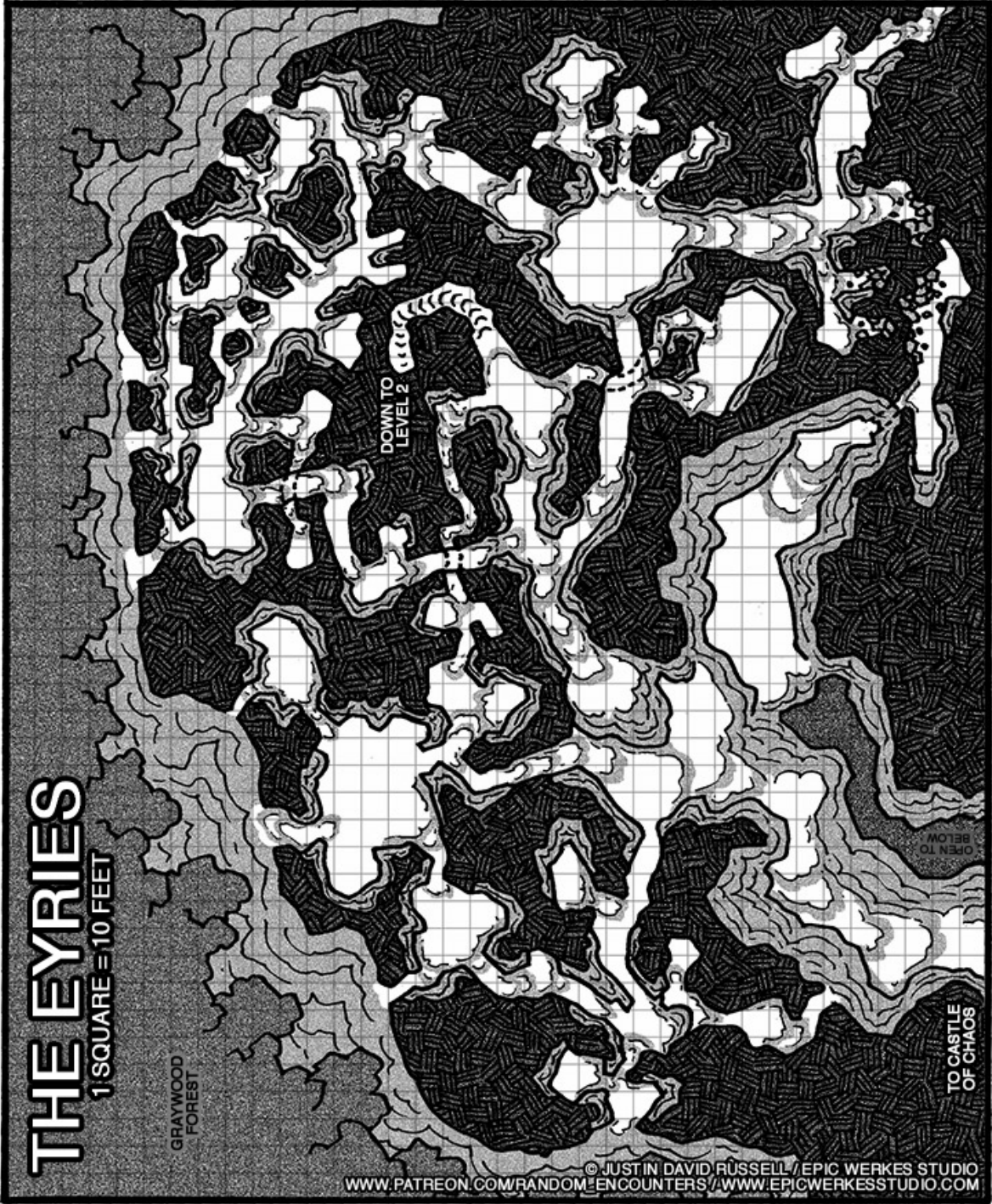
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CASTLE OF CHAOS RIDGE ENTRY

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

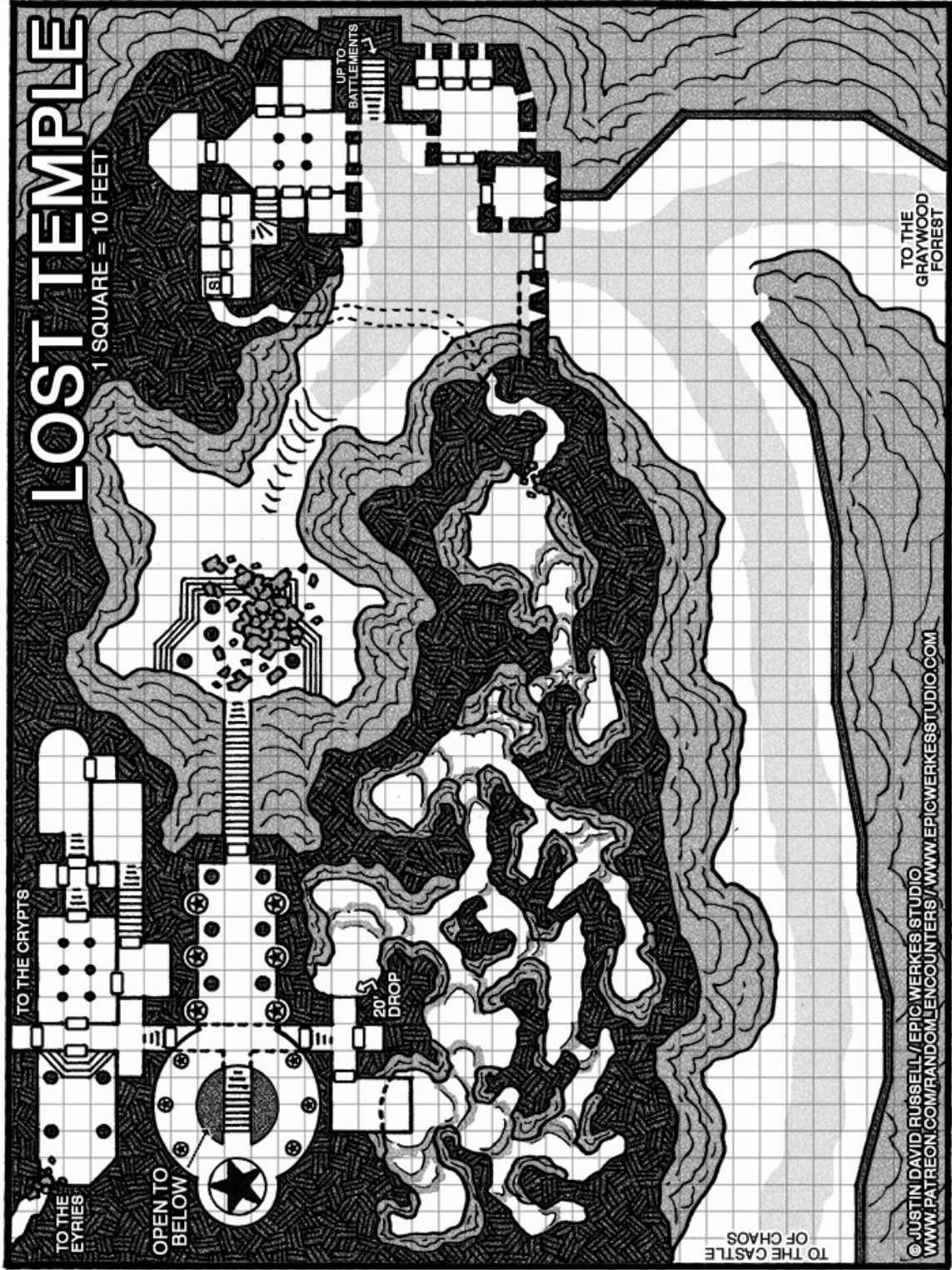
The Eyries

North of the Castle of Chaos, on the other side of Forsaken Peak, are the Eyries, a group of caves that house a variety of nasty creatures. Chaos Men do not venture into these caves, unless they are in the southernmost chamber that bridges the eastern and western areas of the Castle. The larger caverns in the northwest belong to a fell, wicked monster, known to the Chaos Men as the Master of the Peak. Occasionally, offerings are made to it to keep it placated while excavations are performed on the eastern arm of the mountain.



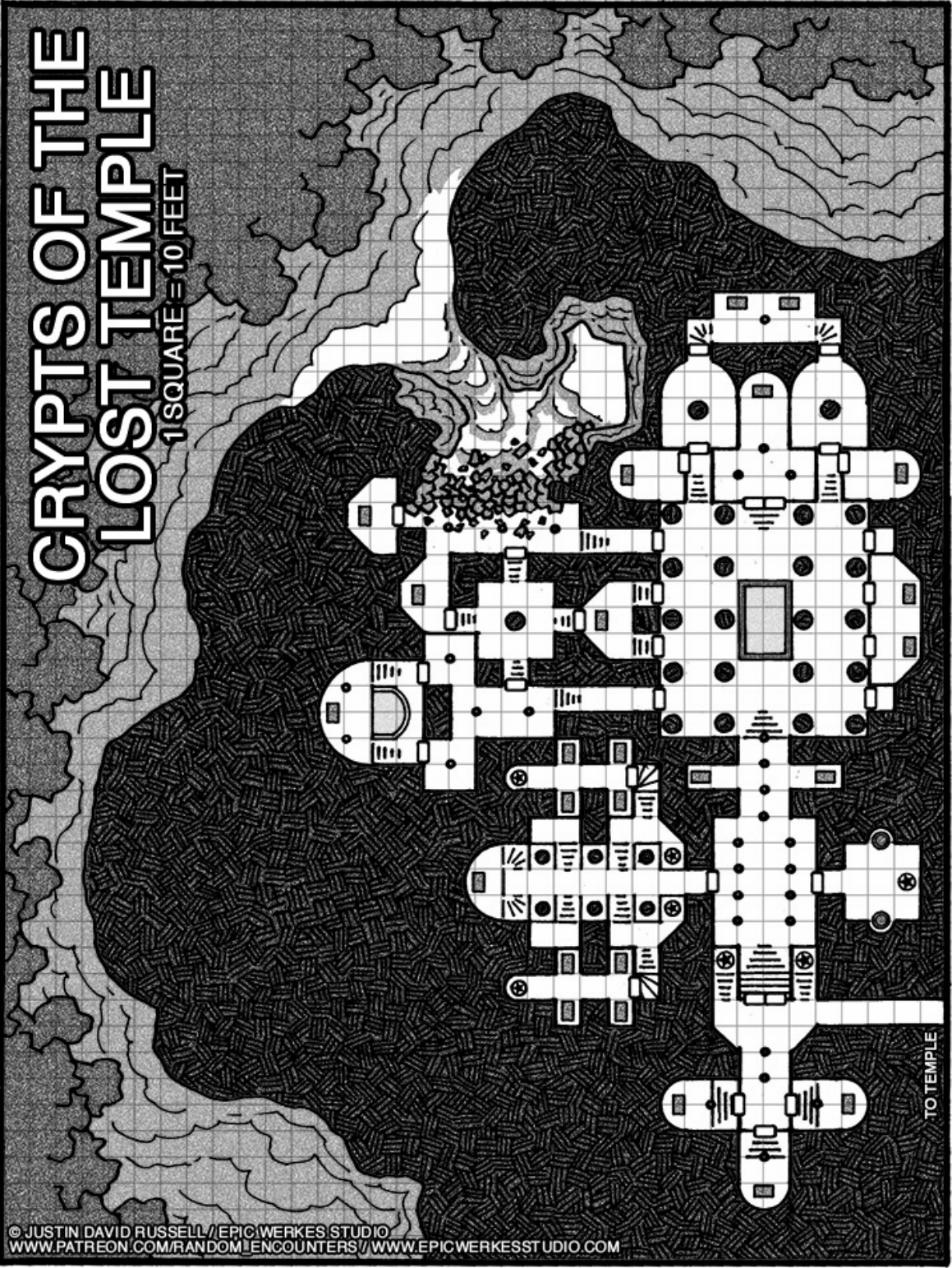
The Lost Temple

To the north and east of the Castle of Chaos is the reason for the presence of the Chaosmen on Forsaken Peak. The ruined temple they discovered houses a small complex and caves devoted to a petty god of Chaos. The King of Chaos believes the temple's mysteries will turn the tide for his people. A fortified camp was built to protect the temple and excavation site. As yet, the Chaosmen have discovered only cryptic writings on the front entry door, but they have not yet figured out how to enter...



Crypts of the Lost Temple

On the north side of Forsaken Peak are the mysterious crypts of the Lost Temple. As yet, the Chaosmen have not breached it. It contains the bodies of the slug priests that ran the temple many centuries ago. A portion of the complex near a large cave collapsed years ago, exposing one of the chambers to the elements.



CRYPTS OF THE LOST TEMPLE

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

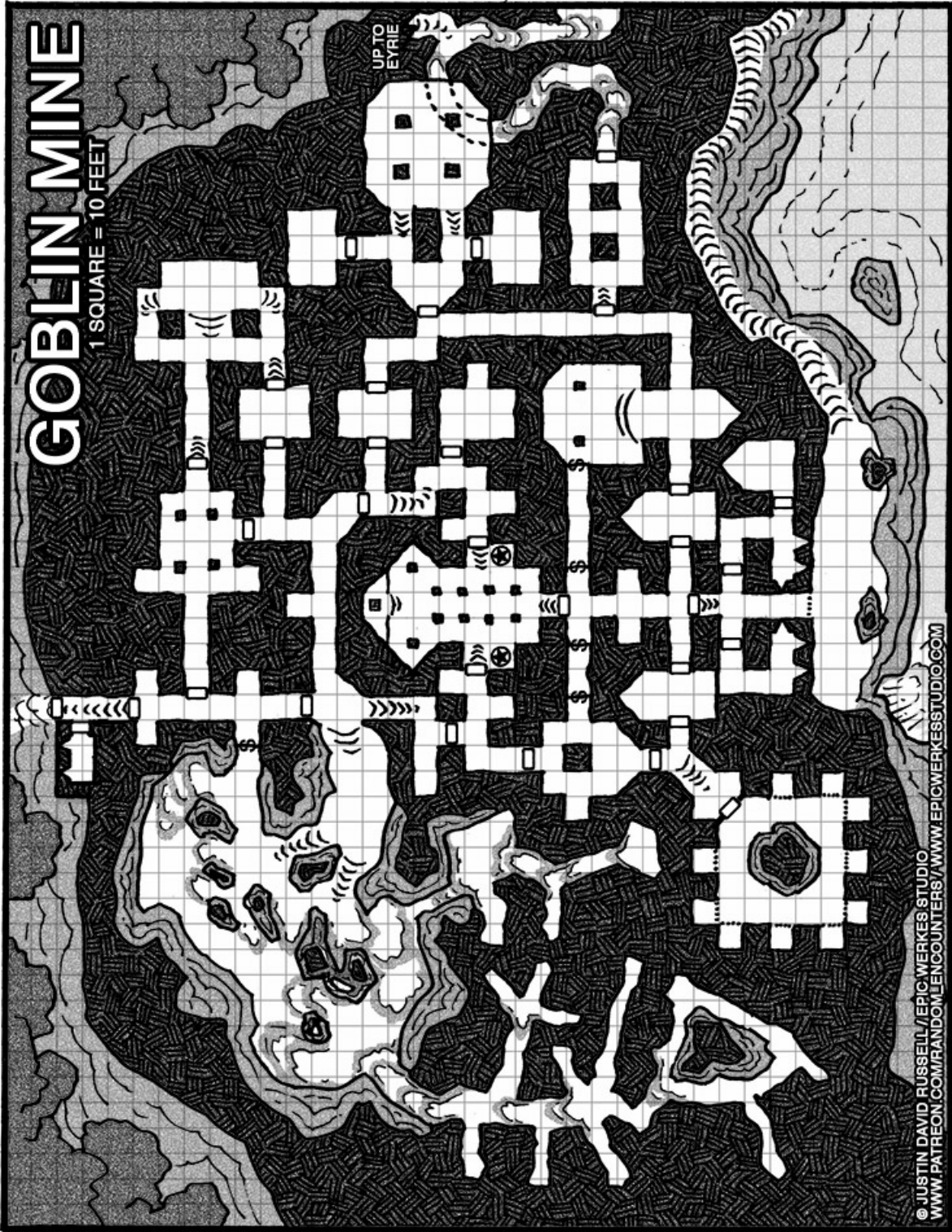
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TO TEMPLE

Goblin Mine

Below the first level of the Forsaken Peak is a large, central, water-filled cavern around which are several smaller caves and tunnels inhabited by a myriad of denizens. In the northern caves are goblins. They serve the aging dragon, Orithranx, who lives on one of the isolated islands in the underground lake. The goblins have hewn their home, crudely, from the very mountain.

Slaves work the mines and serve the goblins as food. The Chaosmen are eager to ally themselves with the goblins, but the chaotic creatures have not yet committed. The dragon believes it can harness the power of Gorgolog, the sleeping slug god imprisoned in the roots of the Forsaken Peak.



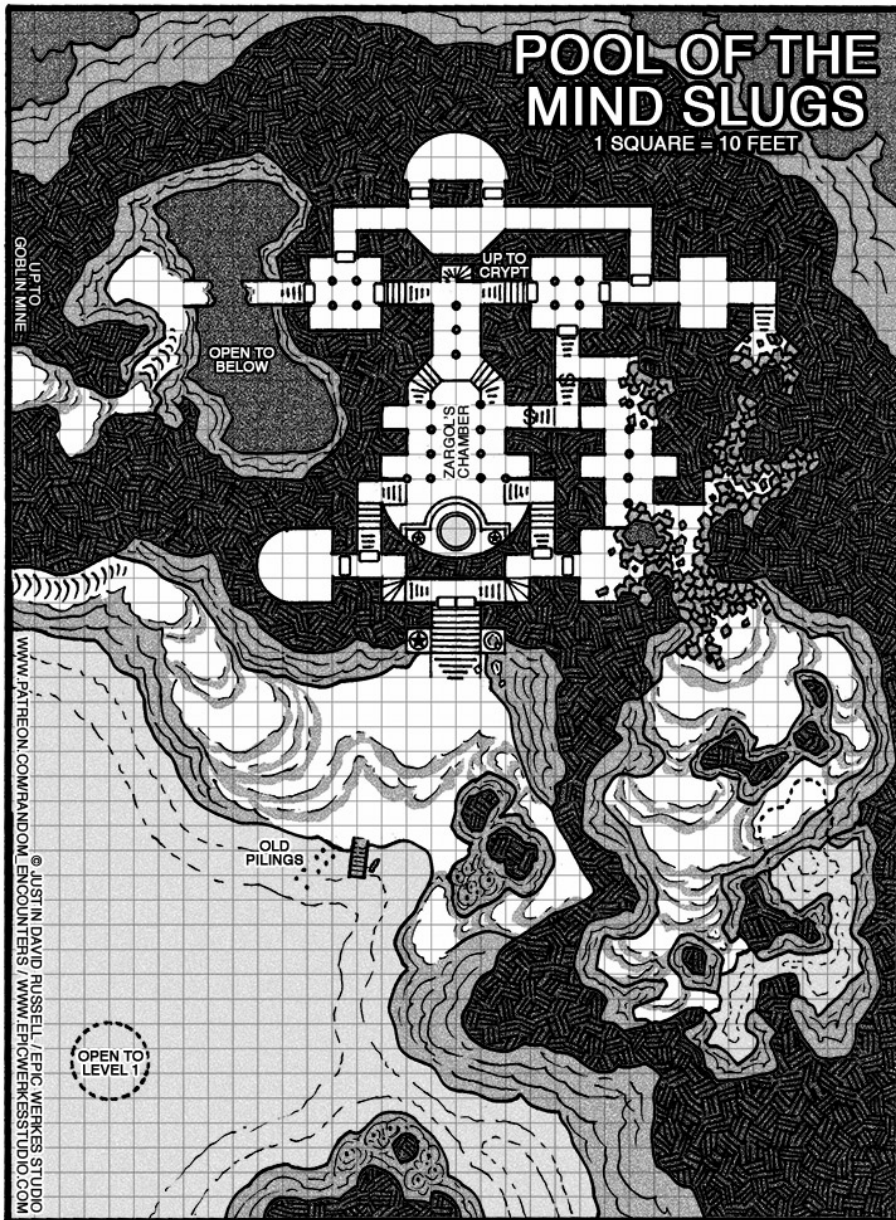
Pool of the Mind Slugs

East of the goblin mine in the second level of Forsaken Peak is an old complex that once belonged to the priests of Gorgolog. It is the lower portion of the Lost Temple above. The slug demon, Zargol the Overlord, master of the Temple of Gorgolog, presided over the cult here. After the elves of the Silverleaf sealed Gorgolog away, Zargol and the priests abandoned their holdings and fled to the Slug Marsh, where they maintain their cult. Though some of the complex has collapsed, much remains intact, including the pool chamber in which Zargol would moisten himself and take audience. Zargol was often covered in small slugs that lived in the pool. The slugs were used to control other creatures.

Mind slugs are small, only about 1-2 inches long. They are a sickly brownish pink, but otherwise look no different than common specimens of their kind. These slugs, however, will seek an orifice of any living creature, usually while the victim lay sleeping, and crawl inside. The creature wends its way to the brain, where it secretes a slime that causes the victim to be very susceptible to suggestion. Mind slugs are often given specific instructions, then introduced to the host. Slugs are a part of Zargol. He and the cult priests can scry on those bearing the parasite.

The unfortunate aspect of the brain slug is that its slime eventually dissolves the host's brain. It eats what it can until this happens. After a host dies, the slug crawls out of the nearest orifice and seeks a new host or new instruction from a priest.

The goblins built a new dock and boat by which they can visit Orithranx, when the need arises. They do not venture into the slug temple. The bridge that connected the structure to the mine complex once led to tunnels used by the cult, but the bridge was destroyed when the cult was originally defeated, decades earlier. The pit the bridge spanned opens to another level.



Ruined Dwarven Outpost

South west of the goblin caves, on the second level of the Forsaken Peak, lies a ruined outpost once occupied by dark dwarves. The dwarves built it long ago. The outpost predates even Gorgoloth's time in the mountain. The dwarves marched from the fortress to fight some long-forgotten conflict deep under the earth, and never returned.

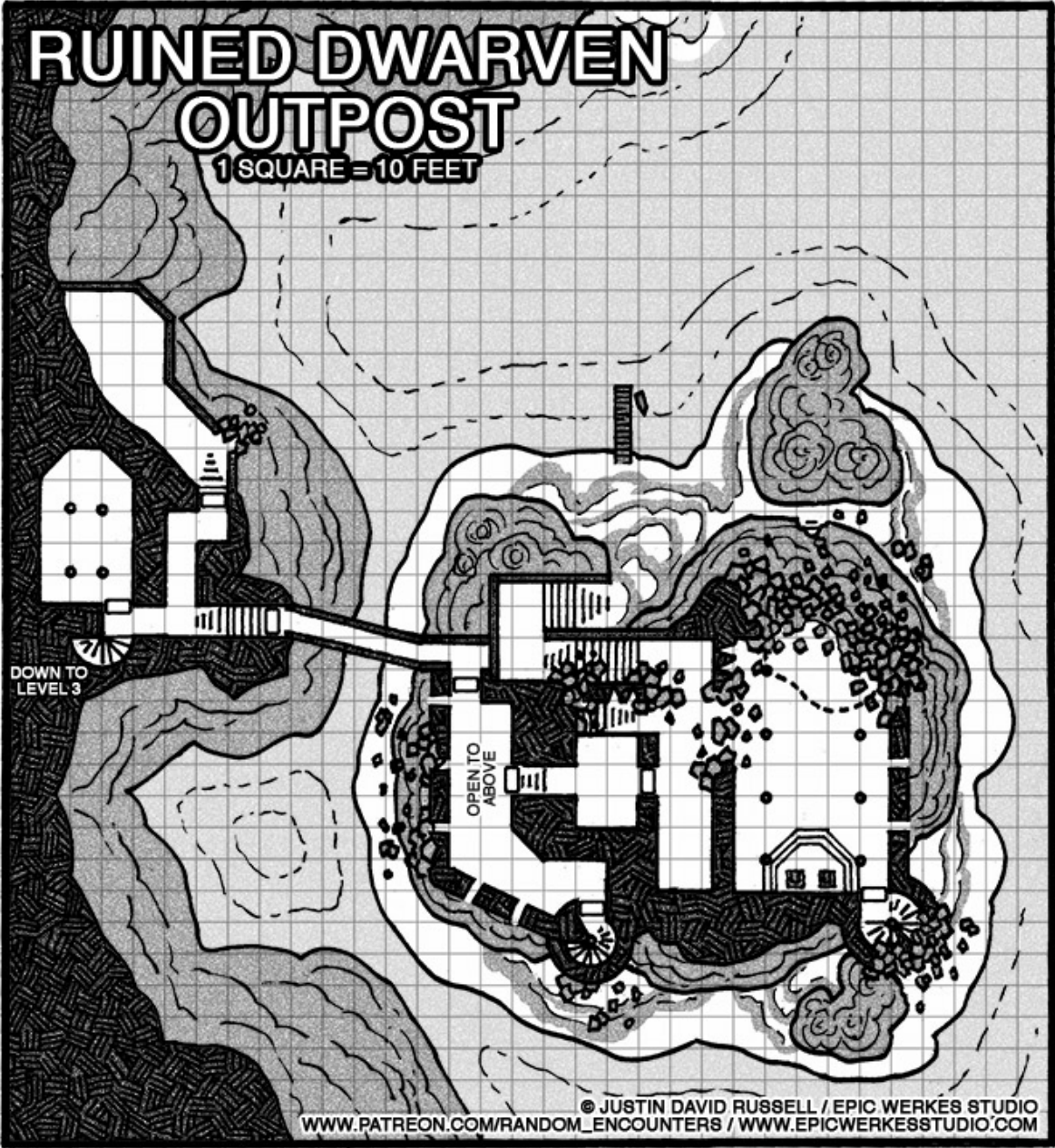
One hundred years after Gorgoloth was imprisoned, the aged dragon, Orithranx, came to the Forsaken Peak. He had lived a life full of death and fire and glorious treasure, respectable in the eyes of any dragon. In his time, he was a terror to all that met him. Eventually, Orithranx grew old and tired, only venturing forth when his hunger grew too great.

Not long after, Orithranx was forced from his lair by mercenaries paid by a king to rid the lands of him. In his prime, Orithranx would have easily done away with his challengers, but he had grown slow, proud, and old. His wings weren't as sound, his tail was no longer a flash of deadly lightning, his sharp teeth were broken and rotting, and his talons were dull. In many places his scales were missing. Despite these infirmities, the dragon was able to kill several of his attackers. Orithranx was subdued, in the end, however, and opted to flee, alive, rather than die or suffer slavery at the hands of some wizard.

Broken, unable to fly, and half the dragon he had been in his youth, Orithranx found a hole to crawl into, far to the north, away from the hurtful swords, spells and arrows of Men, elves, and dwarves. The dragon wormed his way into a cave in the side of Forsaken Peak and took up residence there in the abandoned outpost of the dark dwarves. He found some treasures there, treasures he quickly piled in the main hall that served as his lair.

Many years later, goblins moved into the caves to the north. The dragon saw in the goblins an opportunity to gain for himself guards and spies. Cowardly by nature, the goblins were easily intimidated into serving the elderly wurm. Orithranx grew to rely on his minions for food, treasure, and news of the outside world.

The creature is now a sad specimen of his species, but the tale of his glorious life is written on the scars covering his hide. Each missing scale and broken fang was a hard-won battle Orithranx walked away from, victorious. Though he is less-than formidable, physically, his breath is just as deadly.

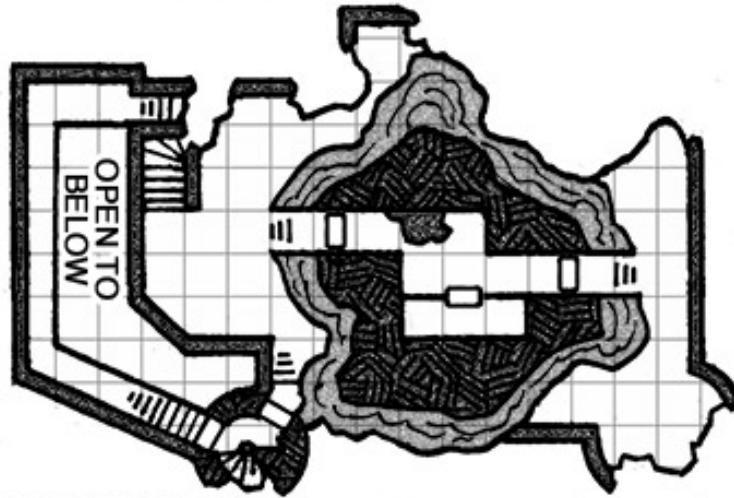


Ruined Outpost Levels

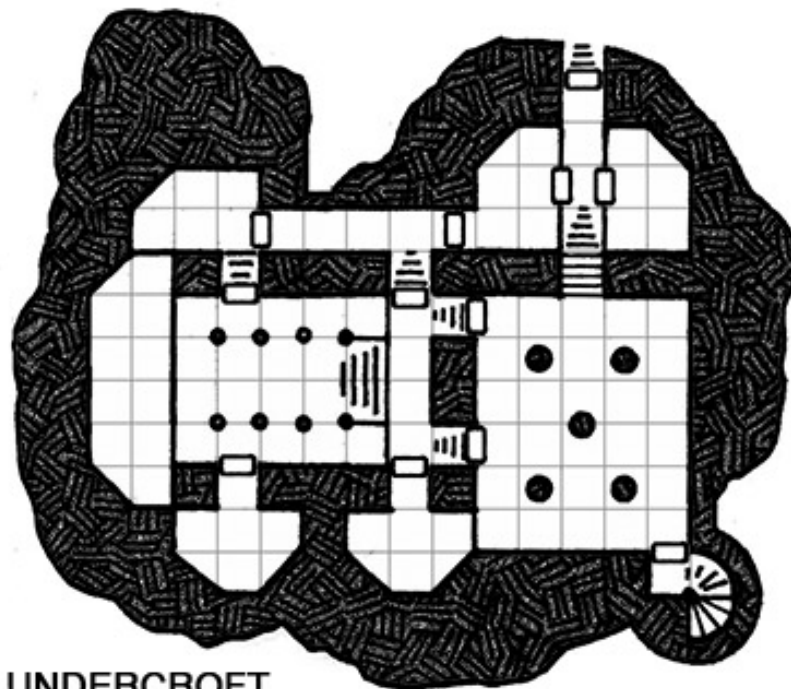
The ruins of the dwarven outpost is comprised of three levels: main level, undercroft, and battlements. There are some goblin caretakers that live in the outpost. They tend to Orithranx, bringing him food and caring for his health. The dragon is too big to access other areas of the fortress. He resides in the Great Hall, while his goblin servants occupy the lower levels and battlements.

RUINED OUTPOST

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



BATTELEMENTS



UNDERCROFT

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The Front Gate

During the days when the dark dwarves were active in the outpost, they built a gatehouse just to the south of it to further protect them from the forces of Law, especially the elves of the Silverleaf Forest. After the dwarves left, the gatehouse fell to ruin. When Orithranx came to the Peak, he entered by way of this gate.

A tunnel leading in from the south west side of Forsaken Peak opens into a large cavern. A stair leading to the gate hugs the western wall high over the cavern floor. The stair is crumbling badly and offers only treacherous footing. Half of the cave floor is covered in water, while the other half boasts a large mushroom forest. Large beetles live among the massive fungi and attack any comers. Watery tunnels lead off to the caves to the east. Today, the Front Gate is home to large, hungry spiders. Thick webbing fills the ruins.



THE FRONT GATE

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

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Please enjoy this offering. Have fun and, as always, GAME ON!