

THE DRAGON AND THE SPIRITS

By Elven Tower



TIER 3 ADVENTURE



**A HIGH LEVEL ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE
FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST RPG GAME**

THE DRAGON AND THE SPIRITS

*Stay away from the swamp, lest you summon
Avedximesh's wrath.*

Warden Eugilius

BACKGROUND LORE

People in the province know of the black dragon that lives in the swamp. It has lived there for a long time. Even the elders in nearby towns remember that people spoke of it since they were kids. From the reported size of the draconian creature from several sightings whenever it flies around its territory, knowledgeable scholars have determined it must be around 110 years old. The name of the dragon is Avedximesh but little else was known of it or its disposition toward humanoids.

For decades, the dragon has avoided the contact of other sentient creatures. People see Avedximesh fly around the swamp once or twice a week. The dragon appears to base its diet from food sources within the swamp, ignoring cattle farms, plantations, and human settlements that lie near the border of it. Despite the terrifying appearance of the creature when it flies at low altitudes, the locals think of it as an apex predator which has no interest in people or their designs.

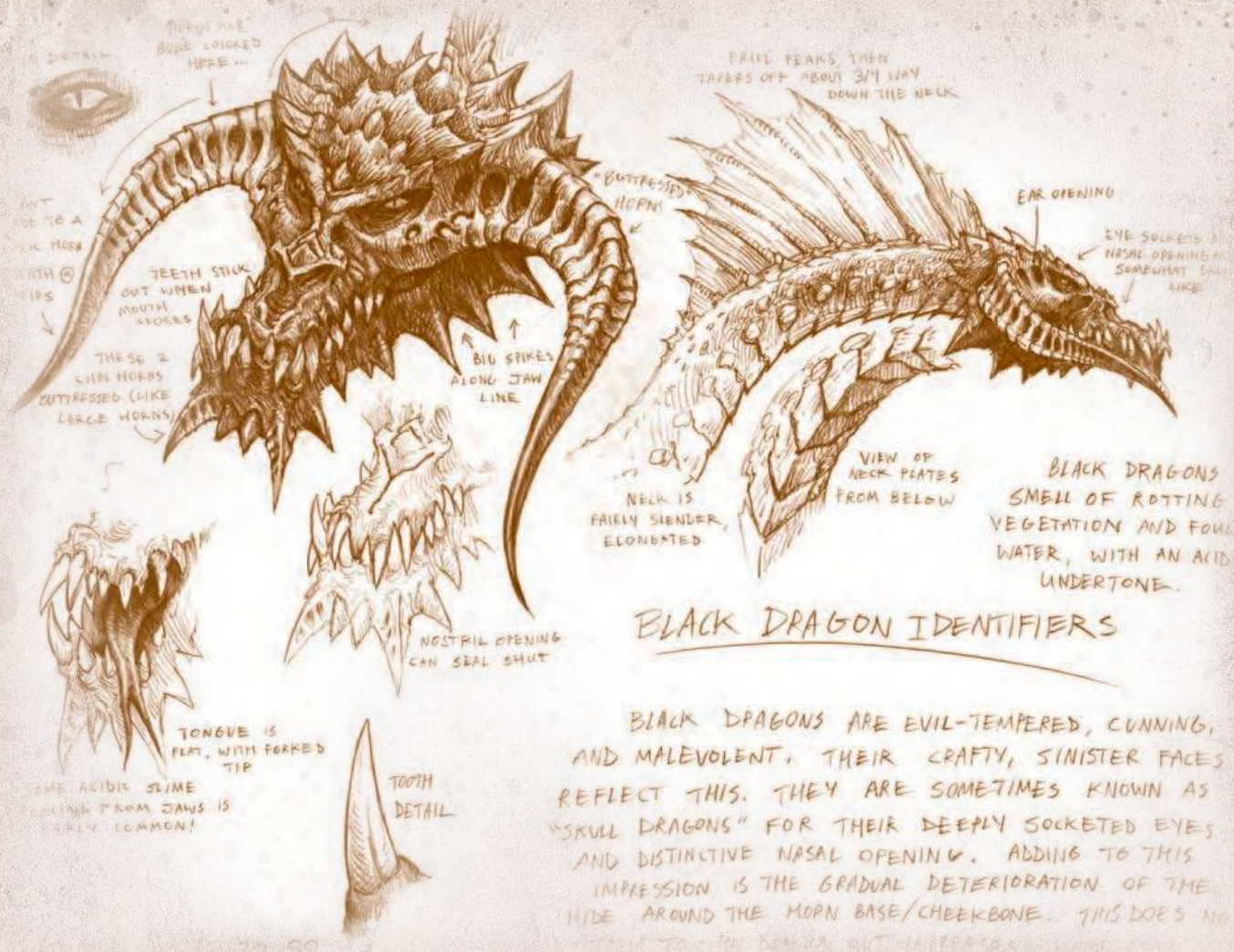
That is not to say that there were no problems near the area where Avedximesh lives. A medium-sized community of kobolds has grown their numbers during the past decade. As Avedximesh grows larger, more kobolds moved to the swamp from nearby lands. They follow the dragon's commands to the best of their abilities and appear to worship the dragon as if it were a religious figure. This relationship between the dragon and the kobolds is what now brings problems to the province because the kobolds form raid parties and attack travelers, merchants, and caravans. They pillage what they can and then retreat to the relative safety of the swamp. The kobolds bring any gold or shining materials back to Avedximesh as a tribute. The dragon welcomes such gifts and adds them to its growing hoard. The constant support, pampering, and gifts from the kobolds embolden Avedximesh and make its draconian ego grow.

AVEDXIMESH'S LAIR

The black dragon settled down and made its lair inside a strange ruined structure near the center of the swamp. The stone complex must have had a different purpose but Avedximesh ignores the details. Avedximesh believes the original builders were twice as tall as a human. The dragon came to this conclusion from the size of the stairs and tunnels. The first level of the structure resembles a crypt. Ten alcoves on the main hallway house what the dragon calls effigies. The effigies are large ovoid gold-plated slabs lying on the floor of the alcoves. Each of the effigies features the bas-relief of a face. The gold-plated visages have grimaces of pain, sadness, or other negative feelings.

The black dragon lived in this place for decades without knowing anything of the effigies. For Avedximesh, the gold faces were nothing but a nice entry hallway to its lair. He loves the gold on them. The structure has lower levels that Avedximesh has explored a few times. The second level is a crypt, similar to the surface level. Lower stories feature arcane libraries, living accommodations, and praying rooms. Those locations are so old that nothing legible remains. Many tunnels and chambers have caved in after millennia of disuse and the dragon has grown too large to explore some of the areas.

The black dragon found a magical item in one of those chambers, it is a wooden staff with a golden handle. The golden top has the shape of a head with two emeralds for eyes. Avedximesh deciphered that the staff could be used to interact with the different effigies on the first floor of its lair. When a creature holding the staff touches the staff head with any of the effigies, a subtle mental bond is created and shared among those in close proximity with the staff and whatever spirit inhabits the effigy. Avedximesh found he could converse with some of them. With others, he could receive gifts, or make offerings. The metal bond was too strong for some of the curious kobolds that accompanied Avedximesh everywhere it went. The obscure, ineffable entities inside the effigies carried such strength with the mental bond that some



kobolds dropped dead on the spot. Others cried in pain and misery. Avedximesh felt the overwhelming presence of the spirits from the stones but could withstand the mental onslaught.

Exchanging thoughts with the effigies became Avedximesh's new pastime. They have been trapped inside of the effigy seals for eons, waiting in the dark. Others begged for death and deliverance. Some made strange promises and offered power the dragon could only imagine. One of them, with a contorted visage of pain and terror (**Area G**), offered Avedximesh the ability to mold the magic weave to its own designs. The power of a spellcaster to bend the laws of nature with some magic words and somatic movements. It requested the souls of ten mortals in return.

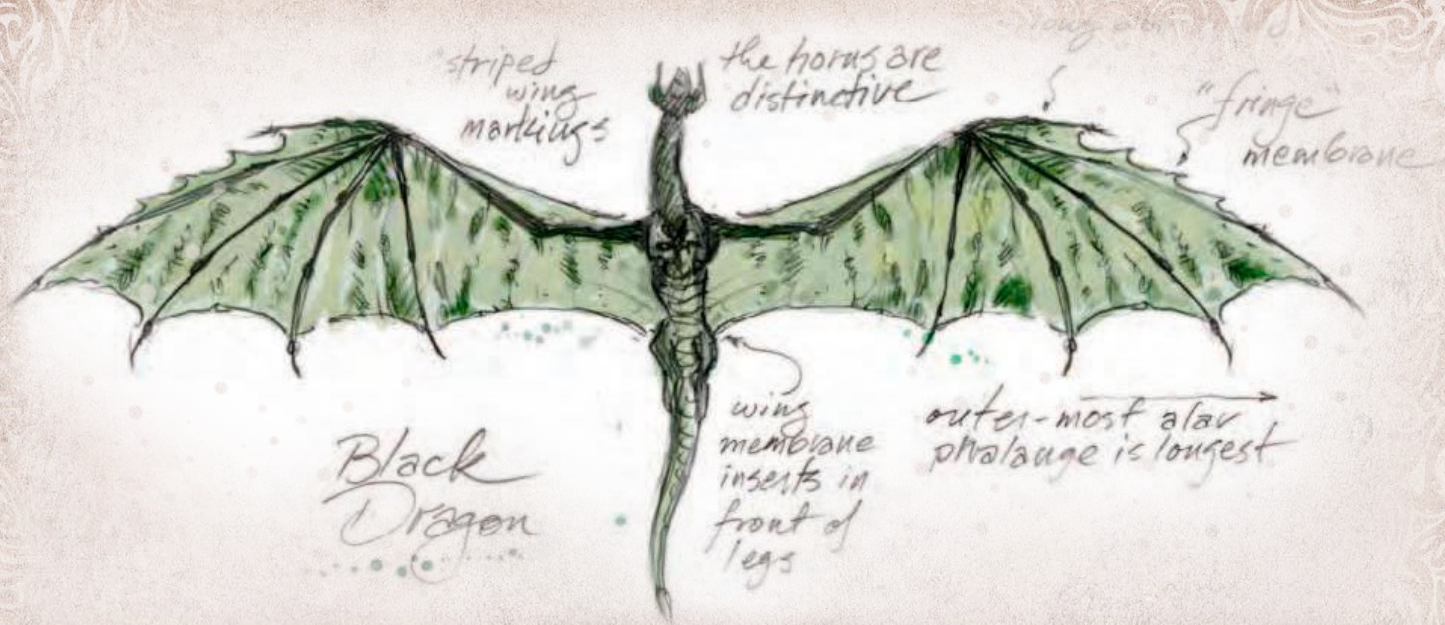
Avedximesh pondered for days if attacking the human settlers outside its territory would be a prudent idea. The lasting success of the kobold raid parties convinced Avedximesh that they could bring it people like they bring treasure. Most of the kobolds in the swamp do not live in the dragon lair. An attempt of human retaliation should not target it necessarily. With this in mind, Avedximesh ordered the kobolds to capture living humans to offer to the effigy.

ADVENTURE HOOK

It has been a few weeks since Avedximesh ordered its followers to capture people. Since then, twenty-five people have gone missing while traveling. Those missing are merchants, guards, and a few travelers. The number of missing people is large enough that nearby settlements entered in a state of alert. The local business has grown to a halt because merchants are afraid to travel near the swamp. The merchants, in turn, demand local nobility to find a solution to the growing aggressions from the reptilian people in the swamp.

Any sellswords, mercenaries, or adventurers in the area are summoned to a meeting with Lord Damoffil in the fortified manor at the center of the town. Lord Damoffil explains that the situation has reached a critical point. Without the constant trade of resources and grain, many settlements are certain to have a harsh winter in a few months. But worst of all, the lives of twenty-five people are on the line. No one knows whether those people survived the kobold attacks but there is reasonable hope that some of them may still be alive.

The room grows silent when Lord Damoffil explains that the kobolds live inside the black dragon's territory. They ignore if the dragon has anything to do with the



recent kobold behavior. But there is a possibility that confronting the kobolds enrages the dragon too. Many of the people summoned grab their things and abandon the room when they hear about the dragon. Lord Damoffil offers a personal reward of 200 gold coins plus any valuables the adventurers may retrieve from the kobolds.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Any kobolds in the swamp area retreat to Avedximesh's lair to fight underground. They also believe that no one would dare enter the dragon's home.

1. ENTRANCE

The main lair entrance comes out in a relatively dry area in the swamp. The entrance is partially covered by patches of grass, bushes, and greenery. The vegetation is not enough to miss the opening in the ground, however. When looking down, light from two torches on the wall is visible from the base of the opening. A group of 2d4 kobolds wait at the bottom of the stairs. They have orders to stop any unwanted visitors. If more than half of them fall in battle, the rest of them break ranks and run to the swamp or **Area 5**.

2. THE EFFIGY CRYPT

The origin of the effigy seals in Avedximesh's lair goes back several millennia to a different world. The original builders of what the black dragon now claims as its lair were from an extinct race that predates the giants of current times. Some scholars refer to them as titans. They were akin to storm giants but had access to a larger magic repository and technology beyond their current standards. This ancient race either went extinct or their progeny mixed down with lesser races and gave way to the different types of giants known in the present. The purpose of the underground complex is not apparent but the effigy seals appear to be a place of imprisonment. There are a few places on the walls where erosion has not erased the cuneiform runes that pervade the main

hallway. A successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check** or the use of a *comprehend languages* spell reveals that the people imprisoned behind the seals were titans at some point. The text reveals that their physical forms no longer exist. Only their life forces remain trapped in the interior of the gold-plated seals. No spell, magic, or technology available to humanoids is able to free the poor souls under the seals. For unknown crimes against their kin, they were sentenced to an eternity of isolation.

The only way to interact with any of the spirits is by holding the *staff of remembrance* and making it touch the surface of the seal. When this happens, all creatures within 10 feet of the staff must make a successful **DC 14 Charisma saving throw** or become **stunned** for a minute, or the duration of the communication. Creatures

GENERAL FEATURES

Avedximesh's Lair has two entrances. The main entrance is on the surface and partially hidden by bushes and greenery. The other entrance is an underwater canal that connects to the swamp and its lair (**Area 5**).

Terrain. Any square covered with gold coins from the hoard is difficult terrain. The stone tiles on the floor are in poor condition throughout the complex but are not considered difficult terrain.

Doors. The kobolds have some secret passages to move quickly around the lair. The three of them are hidden behind a fake wall section that they can move aside to pass. A passive **Perception score of 14 or higher** or a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals the location of the secret passages.

The Effigies. Ten effigies adorn the first level of the swamp complex. A *detect magic* spell reveals strong auras of abjuration magic coming from each of the effigy seals. The only way to interact with any of them is by using the magic staff in Avedximesh's lair.

Light. The kobolds change the torches on sconces throughout the lair.

Smells and Sounds. A pungent, ferrous smell pervades the lair. This odor comes from the effigies in the main hallway.

with 10 HP or less who fail the save die from psychic damage. The effigies offer gifts or deals. Only one person can deal with an effigy at a time. If an effigy bestows its gift to a person, it cannot do this again for 1 year.

A. FACE OF PAIN

Benefit. The beneficiary gains the use of the *blight* spell at will.

Cost/Consequence. Each casting causes the skin of the caster to become darker and the caster ages 1d8 years. This figure is five times larger for elves, dwarves, or other races with long lifespans.

“The way to inflict pain is mine to give. But the price is dear and the gift will push you away from your goals.”

B. VISAGE OF SOLITUDE

Benefit. The beneficiary becomes invisible and inaudible permanently.

Cost/Consequence. No one can see or hear the person anymore. A *see invisibility* spell reveals the person to the caster but nothing can make them audible again. A *wish* spell may remove either effect but not both.

“I can feel the longing in your heart to achieve solitude. I spent my living years shying away from others. Now I’ve done it for eternity. And you can join me too. You need only to accept my gift.”

C. PAIN OF SILENCE

Benefit. The beneficiary gains the use of the *silence* spell 3/day. This form of the spell ignores the verbal components.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary’s tongue disappears and it cannot speak anymore. If the beneficiary had access to spells with vocal components, they cannot cast those spells anymore. A *wish* or a *regeneration* spell may return the ability to speak.

No voice emerges from the effigy seal but it creates an empathic link that shares surface ideas. It feels as if the effigy is trying to gift you something. Upon closer inspection, you also feel it is hiding something. You only have to will your acceptance of this present.

D. THE TRICKERY

Benefit. The beneficiary gains the use of the *suggestion* spell 1/day.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary’s eyes become pitch black and cause a feeling of discomfort in others. Additionally, any suggestion made with the spell above is interpreted in the worst possible way.

“Do not listen to my companions here. All of them will trick you or lie to your face. But you can trust me. Do you wish you could influence others to do

your bidding? Such was my specialty in life but I cannot do it any longer.”

E. UNCONTROLLED LAZINESS

Benefit. The beneficiary may cast the *antipathy* spell 5 times in total.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary ages 2d10 years. This figure is five times larger for elves, dwarves, or other races with long lifespans.

“Leave me alone. I don’t have time to parley with you. Don’t you see that my time is important? Perhaps if you could learn how to cause such feelings in others you would leave me alone. But it has a great cost, will you pay it?”

F. FACE OF ANGER

Benefit. The beneficiary gains the use of the *fire hands* spell 3/day.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary’s arms burn bright from fingertips to elbows. These burn wounds never heal.

“The fire... I cannot stand it! Please, take it away. I want to feel the fresh wind again.”

G. ABANDONED SPIRITS

Benefit. The beneficiary gains wizard spellcasting levels according to the number of gifted souls.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary must offer 10 souls to achieve 1st level. Every subsequent level requires double the souls as before. 20 souls for level 2, 40 souls for level 3, and so on. 1280 souls are required to go from level 7 to 8. When a mortal being is offered to the effigy, it must make a successful **DC18 Charisma saving throw** or die. The body crumbles to dust and the soul is absorbed into the effigy seal. Souls captured this way cannot be recovered with anything short of a *wish* spell. A creature must be sentient and, at least, five years old to be considered for this use.

“Gift me mortal souls and I will give you the power to control the magical forces of the world. The more power you want; the more souls we need to boost your abilities.”

H. HATE AFTER TEARS

Benefit. The beneficiary reincarnates automatically upon death as per the *reincarnate* spell. This happens three times before the benefit expires.

Cost/Consequence. The beneficiary of this dark gift loses all of their teeth until it reincarnates for the third and final time.

“How many lives have you lived? Oh, I see... I can feel your lifeline. It’s the only one, and there will be no more for you. Unless you accept this gift, that is. I can offer you a sample of immortality.”

I. RESIGNATION TO SUFFERING

Benefit. Two **hellhounds** come forth from the fire and obey their new master.

Cost/Consequence. Sulfurous smoke emerges from the beneficiary's pores. The dark smoke and the smell accompanies them hereafter.

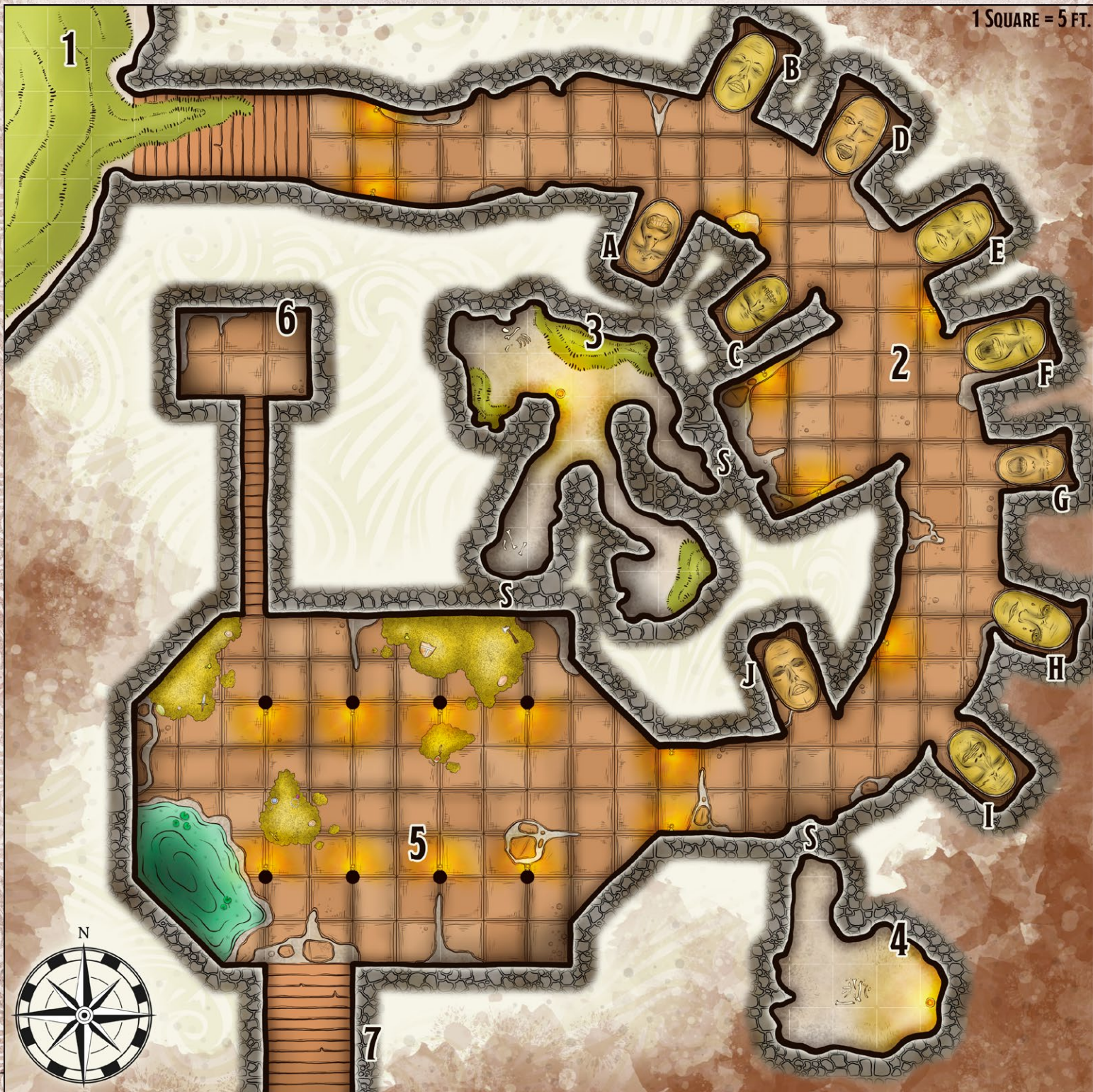
“I am the Hell Hound Whisperer. I have a special affinity for those foul beasts. See, they come to me when I so wish it. If you accept this gift I can share them with you, for as long as you take care of them”

J. CONSERVATION OF DEATH

Benefit. The beneficiary gains the use of *raise dead* 3 times in total. Creatures revived with this spell appear cadaverous and gaunt.

Cost/Consequence. As soon as this gift is received, the beneficiary's eyes glow a sickly yellow until the gift vanishes. The beneficiary gains the following permanent trait: "If I help someone, I expect payment in return."

“Hello traveler, you stand before the Soul Hungerer. I offer you complete control over death. A great power it is, but it has a price. And whenever you use it you’ll also collect the price to be paid.”



3. KOBOLD GARDENS

The kobolds use these narrow tunnels to move quickly from the main hallway with the effigy seals and the dragon's hoard room. A coal brazier shines bright in the middle of the room. The brazier provides the warmth and light needed to harvest fungi and other edibles. Three kobolds care for the fungi farms and harvest them whenever possible. There are 3 **kobolds** in this area managing the farms.

4. KOBOLD LAIR

A small permanent population of kobolds shares the lair with Avedximesh. At any given moment, there are 10 combatant kobolds and 15 non-combatants (females and younglings) in the lair. Once every three months, the females arrange eggs near the brazier in this room and get ready for a new generation of kobolds. Living in these quarters inside the dragon's lair is a privilege among the kobolds. The rest of the extended community live in underground tunnels and swamp trees. There are 1d6 **kobolds** in the room and 15 non-combatant ones. The non-combatant kobolds surrender if threatened, beg for their lives, and try to escape if possible.

5. AVEDXIMESH'S LAIR

A large chamber with two rows of pillars is the dragon's lair. A portion of the stone tiles by the end of the chamber has collapsed; a pond of brackish water is now in their place. Watergrass and water lilies float on the pond. The pond is connected through an underground tunnel to the swamp. Avedximesh uses this entrance to move in and out of its lair. Mounds of gold coins, art objects, gems, and weapons dot the floor of this chamber. Avedximesh takes pride in its treasure hoard and often sleeps on top of it.

When the adventurers arrive, the **adult black dragon** is accompanied by 3d6 **kobolds** and 4 **kobold priests** (use the **priest** statblock but keep the *sunlight sensitivity* and *pack tactics* features from the kobold. The *divine eminence* feature causes poison damage instead of radiant damage). Due to the recent offerings to the effigy of abandoned spirits (**Area G**), Avedximesh is a level 3 wizard (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks) with the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *firebolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*
 1st level (3 slots): *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*
 2nd level (3 slots): *misty step*, *suggestion*

Avedximesh takes the unrequested visit as a sign of utter disrespect. The black dragon does not wish to negotiate or discuss the current situation and attacks on sight. The kobolds are emboldened by their master's resolve and attack too.

Avedximesh's sense of self-preservation is strong. If the battle turns against it, the black dragon uses *misty step* to retreat to the pond and make an exit to the swamp. The dragon can remain at the bottom of the dark waters of the swamp indefinitely and wait out the situation.

TREASURE

The *staff of remembrance* and a written report (in draconic) on its functioning and some experiments by Avedximesh is on top of a gold coin mound by the west wall. From it, the adventurers can learn that many of the missing travelers have perished to the effigy of abandoned spirits. The report also reveals how to interact with the effigies. The rest of the treasure is comprised of thousands of coins of different materials, art objects, jewelry, gems, rare tomes, and other valuables. The collective value of the hoard is 9890 gp.

6. PRISONER ROOM

Out of the twenty-five people kidnapped so far, only three remain in the prisoner room. The rest of them (22), plus 21 kobolds were offered to the effigy of abandoned spirits (**Area G**). Their bodies vanished into dust and their souls were used as currency to pay for Avedximesh's new magic powers.

7. LOWER TEMPLE ENTRANCE

A flight of stairs descends into the uncharted depths of the titans' complex. Avedximesh has traveled many of the tunnels and chambers below many times but is now bored of them. Many of the tunnels have collapsed over the years and the rest appear to be unstable.

The contents, exploration, or adventures that may span in the lower levels of the titans' structure are not within the scope of this written module and left to the DM's discretion.

DEVELOPMENT

Lord Damoffil thanks the adventurers for teaching a lesson to the kobold population and for showing the black dragon that human settlements will not accept their recent behavior. Lord Damoffil regrets the fact that so many lives were lost but thanks the adventurers for rescuing the three survivors and making the roads safe again. He pays them the agreed-upon figure and sends the adventurers on their way.

If Avedximesh managed to escape from the lair alive, it waits at the bottom of the swamp for weeks before returning to its lair. When the dragon returns, the kobolds have moved away from the swamp and it has no followers now. The dragon's pride is hurt and it feels an uncontrollable rage against the adventurers. Avedximesh decides to lay low for a while to concoct a plan to seek revenge.

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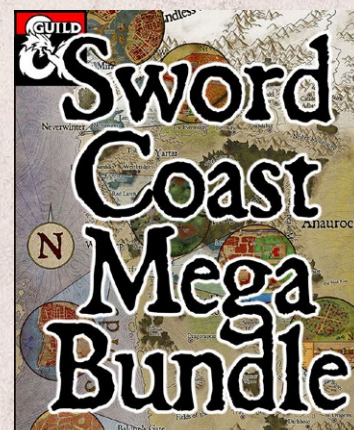
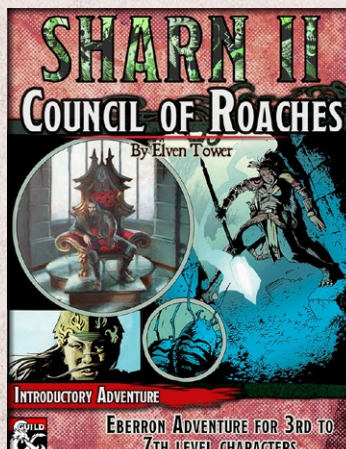
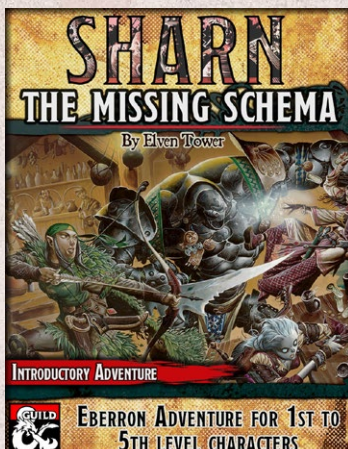
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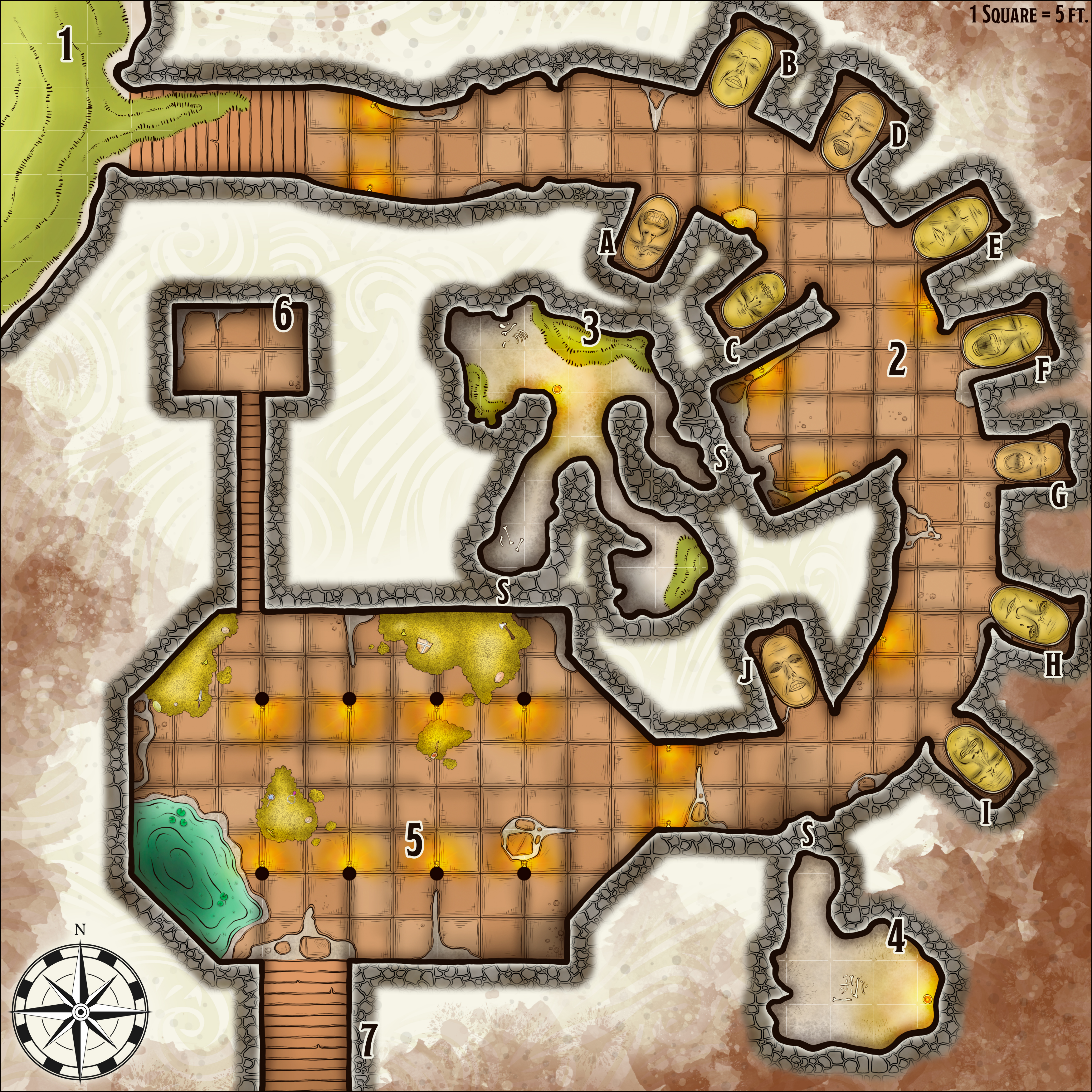
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