



DRAGON'S FOOT

HM4

Pop Goes the Weasel



An adventure for 4-6 characters of level 1

By Todd Hughes

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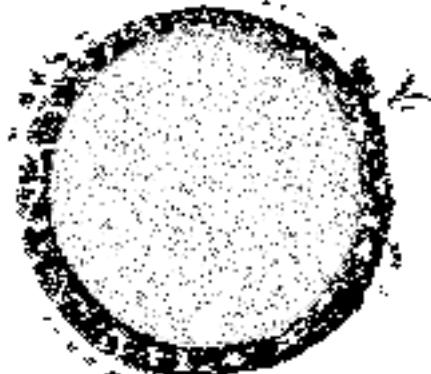
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Pop Goes the Meazel

Background

This module is designed for four to six players of novice or intermediate skill using characters of first level. It is assumed that the party has very few or no magical items available at the start of the adventure, but access to non-magical equipment is unrestricted.

The adventure takes place in and around the village of Rashtan, a newly bustling settlement that borders on the Lonely Wood. It is surrounded by farmland, which is well served by a generally temperate climate. Most of the inhabitants are humans, with the remainder being demi-humans.



Village of Rashtan

More detailed information regarding the settlement can be found in supplement **HS1-The Village of Rashtan**

Location Key

- 1 – Wayfarer's Place Inn & Tavern
- 2 – Jord's Forge
- 3 – Minter's Marvelous Maps and Things
- 4 – Sheriff's Station
- 5 – Silo's General Store
- 6 – Allister's Arms
- 7 – Temple of Mielikki
- 8 – Caleb's Combat Training Center
- 9 – City Hall
- 10 – Temple of Odin
- 11 – Weary Traveler Inn & Tavern
- 12 – Estate of Winston Willrock
- 13 – Common Well
- 14 – Pottery Palace
- 15 – Tori's Threads
- 16 – The Shoe Box
- 17 – Glabels Grand Jewelry
- 18 – Two Sisters Bakery
- 29 – Rolling Wheels Carts
- 20 – The Solid Stone
- 21 – Holland Leathers
- 22 – The Sink Hole
- 23 – Park

Introduction

At the local inn, the party overhears the complaints of several patrons about the disappearance of their personal belongings. Everything from copper coins to small pieces of jewelry has been going missing. They will also see the sheriff posting a 25 gp reward poster for any information that leads to the arrest of the thief.

The players should also become aware of the mysterious disappearance of Wally Westler, one of the local sharecroppers. Wally rode his mule into the village to have a drink at the Sink Hole like he does every night, and normally returns home within a few hours, but last night he failed to return. This morning his wife Vera came into town to find him, and along the way came across Wally's mule standing just outside of town.

Later in the day the sheriff will post a 50 gp reward poster for any information in finding Wally. If asked, the sheriff will reveal what he found out about the disappearance.

"Wally was at the Sink Hole last night, he spent about an hour there having a couple of drinks, and several witnesses said he then left. He mounted his mule and started off down the street. At some point between the tavern and his home he disappeared. This is the second person to disappear this month. Two weeks ago a carpenter that had come in from another city looking for work

disappeared. He owed some money to the inn, so I thought he had just run off to get out of paying his debt, but now I'm not so sure."

DM Information

The thefts and the disappearances are the work of a meazel that has a lair connected to the common well. The creature sneaks out at night and breaks into homes, shops, and rooms, stealing small objects, in particular anything made of gold. The recent disappearances were also the meazel's work; it killed both men and took their bodies back to its lair to feed.

Should the PCs take up the investigation they will find that one of the inn's patrons, Jacoby Darth, wishes to join them. They may have noticed Jacoby around the inn and he will seem friendly enough. In truth he works for Janos Featherwind and is part of his network of thieves. Janos is concerned about someone operating in his territory and wants to find out who it is, so Jacoby has been tasked with tagging along with the PCs to try and discover as much information as he can. He will not attempt to steal from anyone in the group, and will for the most part try and stay out of the front lines whenever possible.

Jacoby Darth, Level 2 Human Thief: AC 5; HP 10; Align: N
S 13, I 12, W 12, D 17, C 13, CH 14
Short Sword, Sling, 12 Bullets, Leather Armor, Thieves Tools

The Investigation

Discovering that some creature has a lair with an entrance within the common well can be as difficult or simple as the DM prefers. There will be clues as to the truth detailed here, but it is up to the DM to decide how difficult it will be for the PCs to discern them.

Key Places for Investigation

The Sink Hole – This cheap dive bar is the home to local lowlifes, and those looking for the cheapest drink in town. Typical patrons are very standoffish and do not take kindly to strangers. The bar is run by Boris “one-ear”, a surly man who does not like people snooping around his customers. Whilst the reception will be cold here, several people, including Boris, will assert if questioned that they saw Wally mount his mule and ride off on the night he disappeared.

Weary Traveler Inn & Tavern – Owned by Janos Featherwind; there are several patrons here who have had objects or coins stolen from their rooms over the last week. Janos is furious over the thefts (not only is it hurting his legitimate business, but it is encroaching on his illegal dealings as well). Over the last two days Janos has hired extra guards to serve as watchmen, and since doing so there have been no further robberies. Janos has heard that there have been no incidents of theft at the Wayfarer’s Place and believes that the owner there, Korec, is involved somehow.

Wayfarer’s Place Inn & Tavern – Unlike the Weary Traveler, guests here have not had any items stolen (this inn is too far from the meazel’s lair). Korec, the owner, will speak freely with the PCs, but he does not have any information helpful to the investigation.

Caleb’s Combat Center - This is the closest shop to the well, and Caleb the owner sleeps in a room in back. If the PCs happen to his shop and speak with him about the disappearances he will tell them:

“Last night I heard something strange. It sounded like a yell but it ended very quickly. I went out and had a look around, but I saw nothing and no one on the street.”

If pressed for further information he will say that he thinks the noise came from the east and that is all he knows. If the PCs do not visit his shop, they may run into Caleb in the evening at one of the taverns where he will relay his story.

City Hall – The only people the characters will be able to speak with at city hall are the secretary and the janitor. The secretary will know nothing, but Reese the janitor will tell the PCs that every night he is the last to leave, and always goes to the village well to fill his water skin. Three nights ago he heard strange noises coming from the well, a sort of scratching sound.

The Well – Down in the well, just above water level, is the entrance to the meazel's lair. The creature found the small tunnel complex while traveling underground only to become trapped there. It began digging towards faint sounds of activity and broke through into the well. A character with the ability to track has a 20% chance of finding what appear to be drag marks leading to the well's edge mixed in amongst all of the other normal tracks.

No one else at any of the other locations in town has any more useful information.

Other Clues

If the characters try and track Wally's mule from The Sink Hole, a character able to identify tracks will have a 30% chance to discern its trail. If successful they will find the mule went at a normal pace until about fifteen feet past the well, it then seems to have shuffled its hooves before moving off in a random direction.

If the characters remain at the well during the night they will likely hear a scratching noise coming from down below in the darkness. If they shine a light down the well, they will simply see a quick flash of movement. They should not encounter the meazel above ground.

The Lair

The only way into the meazel's lair is down the well. After the first ten feet the walls turn from brick to packed soil. Twenty feet down, and a mere three feet above the water level, is a five foot opening in the wall of the well. The tunnels beyond are wet, muddy, and tightly confined, with water dripping down from the ceiling.

Whilst in the tunnels movement for anyone over four feet in height will be reduced to 3", and those four feet and under will be reduced to 5". In addition, only thrusting weapons may be used, as there is no room to swing slashing or crushing weapons. Also, the water and mud on the tunnel floor make it impossible to move quietly on account of the splashing, negating any chance of surprise. Furthermore, the water dripping from the ceiling and the general dampness makes keeping a torch lit difficult; therefore each round there is a 10% chance that any such light source will be extinguished.

The entire underground complex is crawling with rats, except in the osquip lair; these rodents will not attack the PCs but their presence should be presented as quite unnerving.

Area #1 Giant Rats Nest

The tunnel opens into a bigger area that looks to have been eroded over time. It rises to seven feet in height, allowing you to stand straight. Along the floor and piled in the corner are a number of broken sticks and tree roots, mixed with paper and other pieces of garbage.

A family of giant rats has taken up residence in this area. They live amongst the garbage, and if the PCs begin moving it around the rats will attack.

Because of the tight confines it is impossible to use a non thrusting weapon where the space required is greater than 2'. Even those non-thrusting weapons with a space required of 2' or less receive a -1 to hit.

6 Giant Rats (AC: 7 HD: $\frac{1}{2}$ HP: 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3 A/DAM:1/1-2+special) (MM)

Piled in a corner beneath the nest are 25 sp.

Area #2 Frog Pond

The tunnel takes a steep decline and the muddy floor makes it difficult to keep your footing. You emerge into a small cavern with a ten foot high ceiling, knee deep in a pool of muddy water.

This cavern is home to a giant frog that lies just below the water's surface. The frog is ravenous and will eat anything that wanders into his cave (typically giant rats and centipedes), greedily attacking any intruding PCs. Because of the size of the cavern there are no weapon restrictions in this area.

Giant Frog (AC: 7 HD: 3 HP: 20 A/DAM: 1/2-8+special) (MM)

Area #3 Giant Centipedes

This room appears rockier and dryer than the tunnels you have been moving through. Like everywhere else there are at least a dozen rats moving around the room, but they are revealed to be not the only inhabitants when you notice four gigantic centipedes moving directly towards you!

4 Giant Centipedes (AC: 9 HD: $\frac{1}{4}$ HP: 1, 2, 1, 1 A/DAM: 1/special) (MM)

Area #4 Osquip Lair

The tunnel opens into a wide area where the dripping water seems to have somewhat subsided. The area also seems to be devoid of rats.

This is the lair of an osquip, which accesses the chamber by means of five separately concealed tunnel entrances that open into this room. While its tunnel network is too small for a man to use, the osquip moves through them quickly, and once the party enters it has a 2 in 6 chance of surprising them, rushing from one of its tunnels to attack.

Osquip (AC: 7 HD: 3+1 HP: 18 A/DAM: 1/2-12) (FF)

Area #4a Osquip Tunnels

These are the tunnels used by the osquip; it is a network of numerous narrow passages that interconnect and eventually lead to the surface. They are too tight for even a halfling to crawl through.

Area #5 Meazel's Lair

The awful smell of death permeates this cavern; on the floor is the half eaten remains of a human male, a few feet away sits a pile of bones that have been picked clean.

This is the meazel's lair, and where it drags its victims to devour. The creature will have heard the party coming and do its best to hide in the shadows at the back of the room, and avoid discovery until they leave.

The meazel gained access to this series of caverns by crawling through a small tunnel from deeper in the earth, but upon emerging the passage collapsed behind it trapping the meazel here.

If the party shines a light on the meazel or in some way discovers its presence, it will let out a shrill cry and attack, clawing at the PCs with one hand, whilst in the other wielding a shiny steel dagger (dagger +1) stolen from the surface world.

Meazel (AC: 8 HD: 4 HP: 26 A/DAM: 2/2-5, 1-4) (FF)

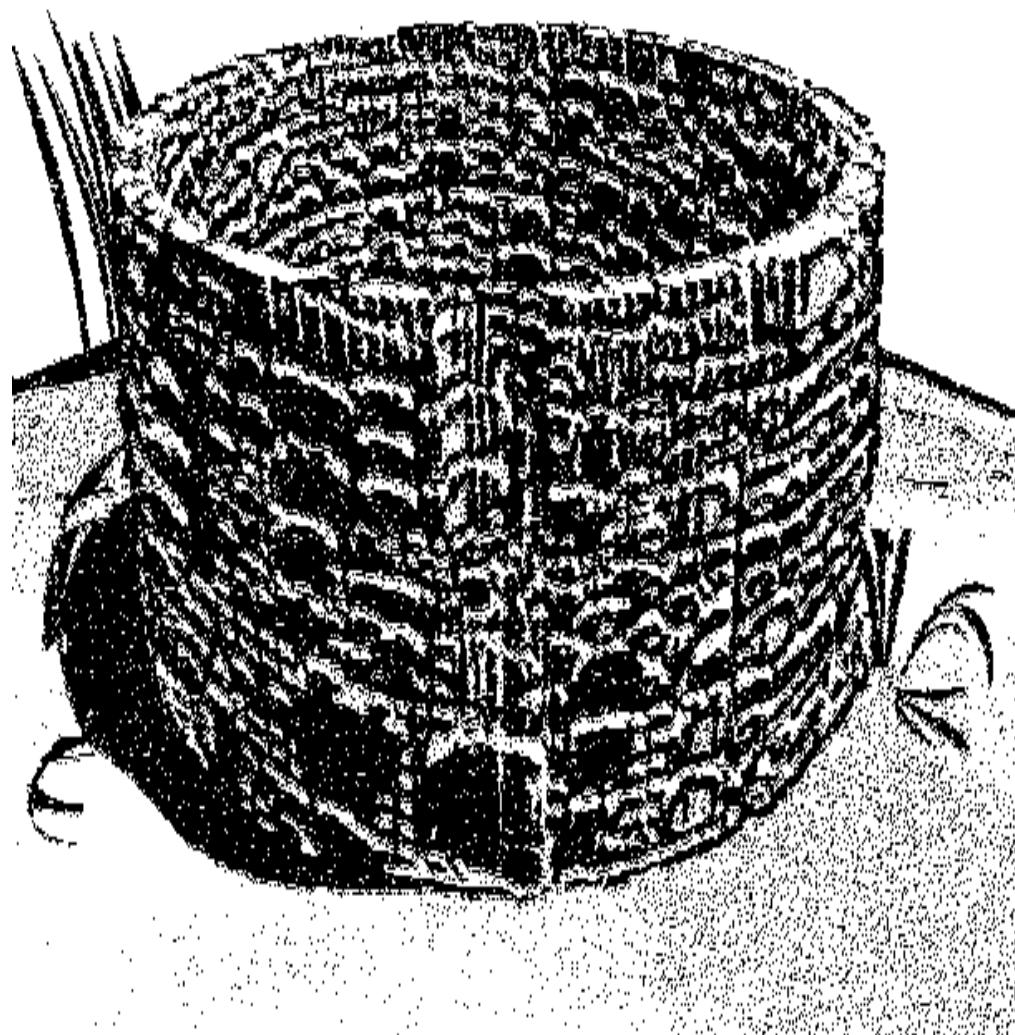
There is a small sack in one corner of the room containing the treasure the meazel has stolen: 50 cp, 40 sp, 100 gp, a plain gold ring (*ring of water walking*), a silver necklace (40 gp), a silver cloak clasp (20 gp). Hidden amongst the bones of the victims is a small pearl (100 gp) and a bloodstone (25 gp).

Area #5a Collapsed Tunnel

This was the tunnel the meazel used to climb towards the surface from the underdark below.

Conclusion

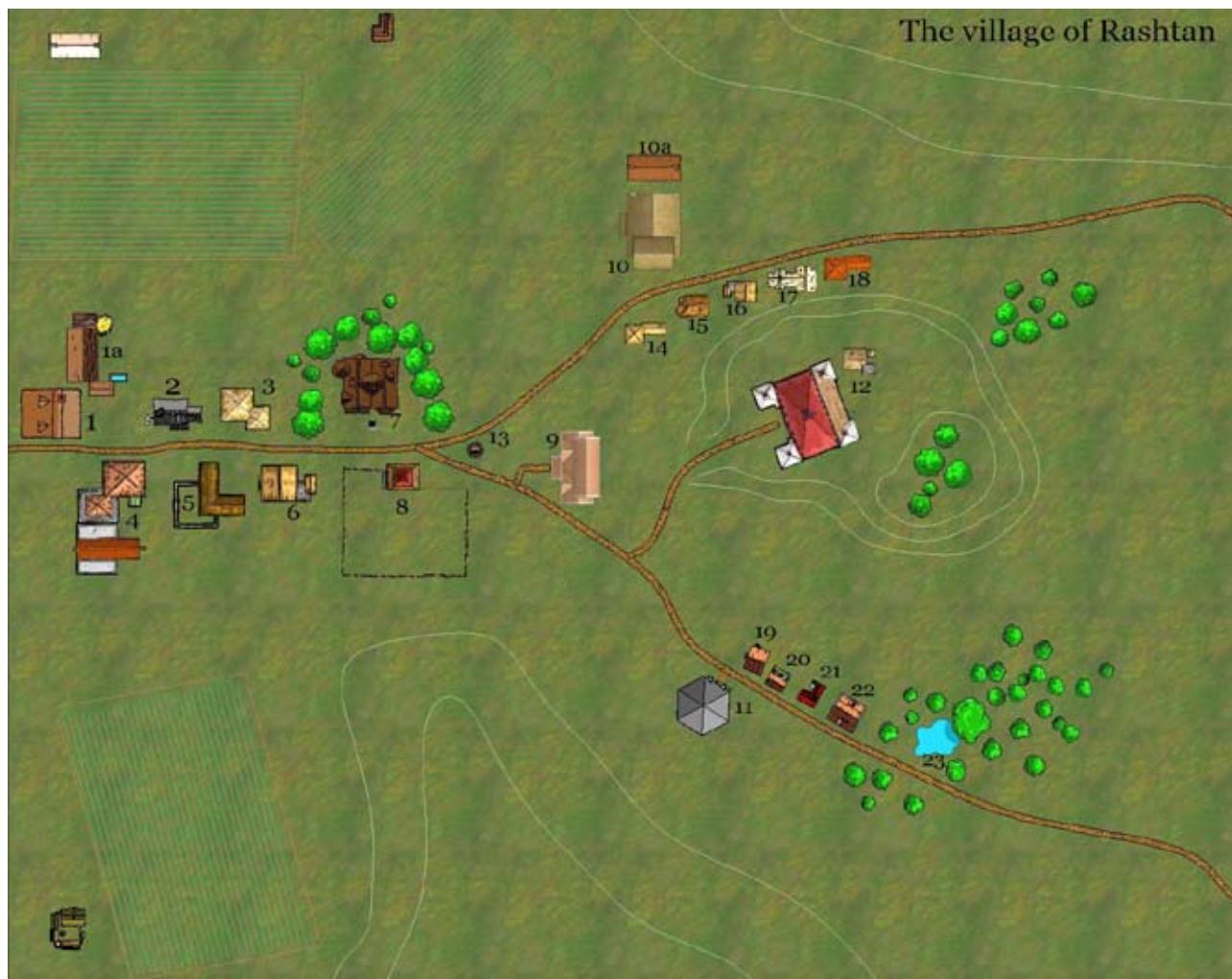
It should be obvious that the remains are those of Wally Westler, and the PCs will be entitled to the 50 gp reward for determining his fate. If they return any of the recovered items they will receive the additional 25 gp reward for finding the thief, but not if they keep the items for themselves, in which case the hunt for the thief will still be on!



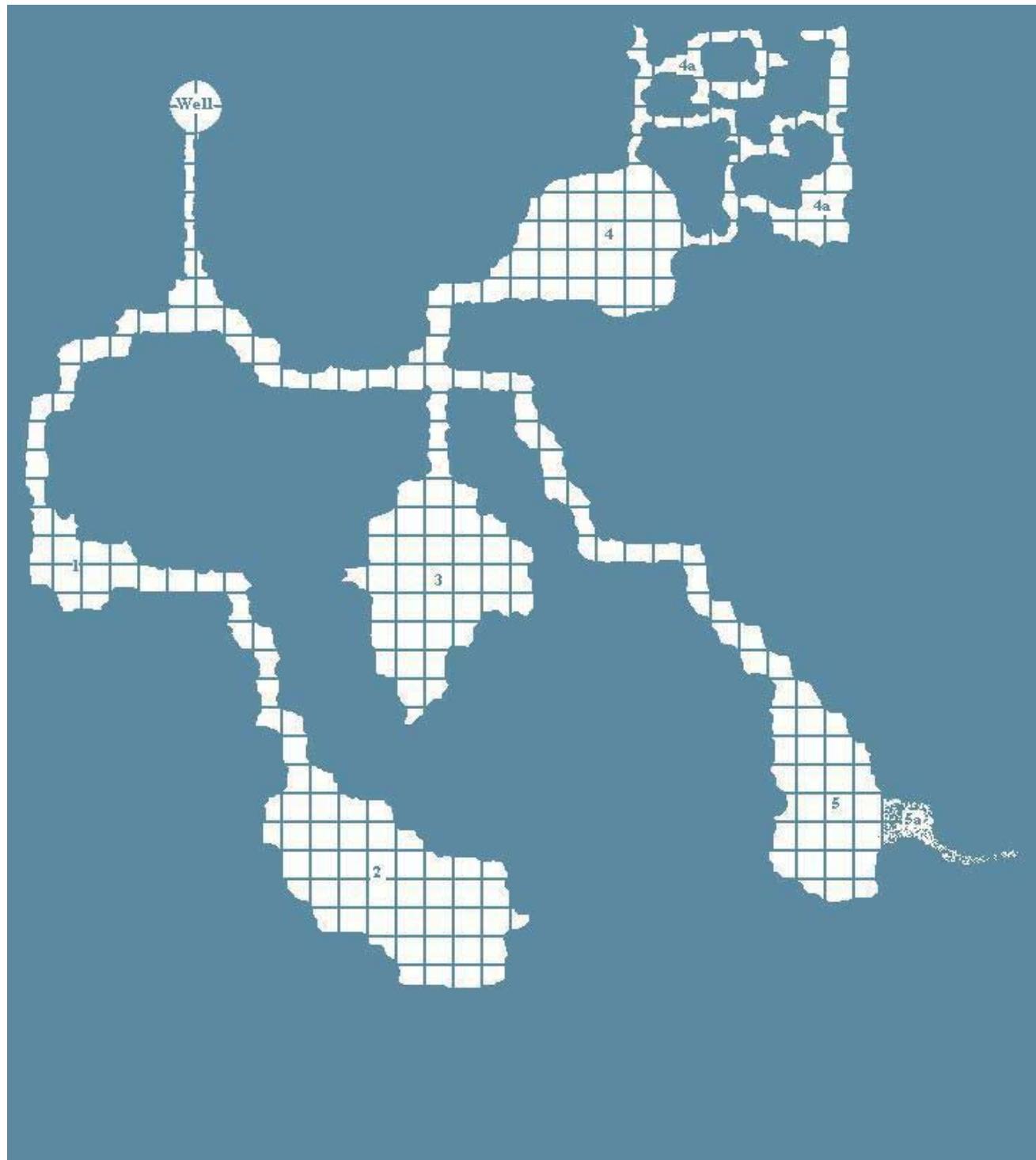
APPENDIX

Maps

Rashtan



Meazel Lair



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