CAVERNS OF THE MERFOLK

AN UNDERWATER SETTLEMENT BY TRAVIS LEGGE



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An Underwater Settlement

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Introduction: The merfolk are mysterious amphibious humanoids with unique cultures and societies arrayed beneath the waves. **Caverns of the Merfolk** details a unique merfolk settlement that benefits from unusual magic practiced by the village seer. Through this magic, the merfolk of Dragon's Eye Cavern have developed tools for writing, crafting advanced tools, and even forging weapons. The seer's magic has also permitted limited trade with nearby surface communities. This book contains a detailed view of Dragon's Eye Cavern and the merfolk who dwell there, which can be used in any **Dungeons & Dragons** setting.

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Dragon's Eye Cavern

"Great attention gets paid to rainforests because of the diversity of life there. Diversity in the oceans is even greater."

– Sylvia Earle, Oceanographer

Dragon's Eye Cavern is a ready-made location for use in your **Dungeons & Dragons** campaign. This merfolk village can be set anywhere along the coastline of any D&D setting. Unlike most merfolk villages, Dragon's Eye Cavern has developed magical means to facilitate trade, commerce, and ease of visitation with nearby surface dwellers. Whether the inhabitants of this village are friend, foe, tense trading partner, or temporary allies of convenience, everything you need to incorporate this vibrant undersea locale into your **Dungeons & Dragons** campaign is included within these pages.

THE VILLAGE

The information here details the village of Dragon's Eye Cavern as it is today. Some historical and cultural information is provided within the descriptions of the areas of this underwater settlement, but much of the village's history, politics, and relationship with outsiders are left to the Dungeon Master to determine. Use this location as best fits your campaign.

General Features

All areas of Dragon's Eye Cavern have the following features unless otherwise noted in the room description:

Ceilings. The ceilings in each chamber are rough stone and 30 feet high with stalactites hanging from 5 to 15 feet from the ceiling at all points.

Floors. The floors are smooth, worked stone.

Light. Bioluminescent dragon eye coral on the walls and ceilings provide bright light throughout the complex. **Regional Effects.** Sound is muffled and unclear in the underwater cave. Any **Wisdom (Perception)** check that relies solely on hearing is made at disadvantage. Successfully understanding any spoken language other than Aquan in the area requires a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Insight)** check for each sentence spoken. Nonverbal languages such as thieves' cant are unaffected.

Spells requiring a verbal component also require a successful **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw in order to cast successfully. If the check is successful, the spell is cast. If failed, the spell fails, and the slot is wasted. Note that this check still applies to creatures who are amphibious, under the effects of runes of waterbreathing, or otherwise able to breathe underwater.

The water in each chamber can be made breathable by surface folk through the activation of runes of waterbreathing (see Appendix B: Magic Items) in each area. If these runes are not active, creatures who are unable to breathe underwater begin suffocating as described in chapter 8 of the **Player's Handbook**.



1. CAVE ENTRANCE AND MAIN THOROUGHFARE

A 20-foot wide cave mouth opens into a large chamber with 45-foot high ceilings. The floor gently ramps downward toward area 13. At the drop off to area 13 the ceiling is 75 feet from the ground. This area is a major thoroughfare and is often busy with **merfolk** traveling back and forth between the various districts of the cave. At the south end of the cave a 15 foot sheer cliff rises up to area 2. At any time of day or night 3d10 **merfolk** are found in this region.

2. GUARD OVERWATCH

This cliff too looks down over the main thoroughfare and serves as a central security post for the village. Six **merfolk guards** are posted here, watching the thoroughfares and tunnels from the high vantage. There is a large conch shell mounted on the wall here that can be blown in case of emergency. When the conch is blown, the alarm can be heard throughout the village.

3. HALLWAY

The walls of this hallway contained luminescent murals depicting the history of the Dragon's Eye Merfolk. Close inspection reveals that the murals are not painted, but rather crafted from carefully cultivated bioluminescent flora. The murals reveal a challenging past for the merfolk of the village, with hunting and gathering not always being sufficient to meet the settlement's needs. With the arrival of a seer, depicted with a glowing halo around their head, the villagers learned new skills and began to prosper.

4. THE SLAUGHTERED DOLPHIN

This corridor is the main dining and social hall of the village. Circular tables made from giant clamshells turned upside down and topped with flat stone are placed throughout the hall for the merfolk to enjoy a meal and conversation. The cuisine served at the Slaughtered Dolphin is a mix of fish, crustacean, seaweed, and rice. Meal prices are double those listed in the **Player's Handbook** Chapter 5. When closed for business, the inn's doors can be locked. A creature proficient with thieves' tools can pick these lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. The keys to these locks are carried by **Sharlyn Ahlorsath** (she/ her **triton veteran**), the owner of the Slaughtered Dolphin. A spare set of keys is also kept in the kitchen.

NPC ALIGNMENTS

The NPCs presented throughout this section are not given an alignment. This is deliberately left to the Dungeon Master to determine, depending on the role they wish Dragon's Eye Cavern to fill in their campaign. A friendly trading partner would likely have mostly good alignments, whereas an enemy state may lend itself to more evil alignment. Use whatever suits your game best.

5. GUESTHOUSE

This area is the sole guest quarters at the Slaughtered Dolphin. Due to recent increases in trade with surface folks, the innkeeper is seeking new and innovative ways to modify the room for dry sleeping, so far with little luck.

6. KITCHEN

This is where the food served at the Slaughtered Dolphin is prepared and stored.

Treasure. This area contains food supplies and trade goods worth 100 gp. If the kitchen is completely raided there are enough supplies to create 2 sets of cook's utensils.

7. SHARLYN'S APARTMENT

This chamber is Shalryn's residence. The room contains a comfortable clamshell bed with a mattress made of living sponge. At the foot of the bed, Sharlyn keeps a locked chest, the key to which is on her person. Along the north wall is a dresser crafted from coral.

Treasure. A creature proficient with thieves' tools can pick the lock on the chest with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check. The chest contains 5 black pearls worth 500 gp each, a set of leatherworker's tools, a gold dragon comb with red garnets set as eyes valued at 750 gp, and a pole of angling.

8. Hunter's Row

The west end of this chamber opens into a large area where a limestone statue depicting three merfolk spearing a shark stands in the

center of the chamber before the east entrance to the Slaughtered Dolphin.

9. STAIRWELL TUNNEL

This tunnel leads down to the lower level of the village, sloping downward 60 feet over the course of its length. Stairs have been carved into the floor in recent months to accommodate visiting surface dwellers.



10. DURDONA'S HOME

This chamber is the home of **Durdona** (she/her **merfolk archdruid**) the village seer. Though the place looks to be largely overrun by underwater plants, in truth these are mostly cover for Durdona's personal guards, an **awakened coral** and a **dragon's eye kelpie**.

11. DURDONA'S WORKSHOP

This is where Durdona works her enchantments and rituals. This area is filled with various druidic tools and magical trinkets.

Treasure. Investigating this area uncovers 20 sprigs of mistletoe, 20 totems, 5 wooden staves, 20 yew wands, 2 sets of Alchemist's supplies, 2 sets of jeweler's tools, a set of weaver's tools, several art objects (a brass mug with jade inlay, bronze crown, large gold bracelet, gold bird cage with electrum filigree, gold ring set with bloodstones) worth 750 gp each and a chaotic neutral *sword of answering*

12. JEWELERS SHOP

This junction is the connection between the upper and lower halves of the cave network. It is also home to the Pearlescent Dream, a jewelry and trinket shop, run by **Alon** (he/him **merfolk spy**). Alon will pay 75% of the listed price for gemstones and jewels, and has jewelry for sale containing gemstones and jewels, as well as jewelry listed as art objects at a value up to 1,000 gp as listed in Chapter 7 of the **Dungeon Master's Guide**. In addition, Alon carries the following magic items, which he is willing to sell at the prices listed on the table below.

ltem	Base Price	Source
Amulet of Health	4,000 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Amulet of Proof against Detection and Location	400 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Bag of Holding	400 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Bowl of Commanding Water Elementals	4,000 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Brooch of Shielding	400 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Candle of the Deep	150 gp	Xanathar's Guide to Everything
Chime of Opening	4000 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Circlet of Human Perfection	600 gp	Waterdeep Dungeon of the Mad Mage
Clockwork Amulet	50 gp	Xanathar's Guide to Everything
Moodmark Paint	100 gp	Guildmasters' Guide to Ravnica
Pole of Angling	100 gp	Xanathar's Guide to Everything
Ring of Regeneration	20,000 gp	Dungeon Master's Guide
Spell Gem (Topaz)	60,000 gp	Out of the Abyss
Talking Doll	100 gp	Xanathar's Guide to Everything

Haggling. A character attempting to purchase any item from Alon can try to haggle to reduce the price. This requires the character to make a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** check. If the roll succeeds, the price is reduced by 25%. If the check fails by more than 10, however, Alon becomes annoyed and raises the asking price by 25%.

Attacking Alon or being caught attempting to rob the store immediately sends a silent alarm, which informs the **merfolk guards** in area 20, who send 4 **merfolk guards** to investigate. These guards arrive in 3 rounds.

13. VILLAGE MARKET

This is a massive marketplace where the merfolk of Dragon's Eye Cavern sell their various wares. On any given day there are 20-30 shops open in simple stalls. Each shop is staffed by 1-2 **merfolk** and any time of day or night 3d10 **merfolk** are found shopping and

browsing in this region. The market is patrolled by 6 **merfolk guards** at all times, who travel in pairs. Any non-livestock item found in Chapter 5 of the **Player's Handbook** can be purchased here, and much of it is sold at the listed price. Anything made of metal, designed to make fire, or containing elements that would be spoilt by immersion underwater are 150% the listed price.

14. WAREHOUSE

This chamber rises 35 feet above the village market and is used as communal storage by the various shopkeepers who ply their trade in the marketplace. When a stall closes for the day, the owner takes their stock to a private chest in this chamber.

Treasure. In total, this space contains 25,000 gp worth of trade goods and adventuring supplies.

15. SOUTH ENTRANCE

This area is the southern entrance to the village and is watched over by two **merfolk guards**.

16. TUNNEL JUNCTION

This tunnel connects the main thoroughfare to Shell City. A narrow, 5-foot wide corridor offers a shortcut between the two areas but is rarely used by adult merfolk. Children and teens, however, frequently make use of this means of travel.

17. SHELL CITY

This area, named for the massive seashell construction used in the small living quarters here, is home to the majority of the lower-class population of the village. Those who are not exceptionally skilled hunters, have no real trade to speak of, and are not able to grasp magic generally make their home in this region. The merfolk who live here earn their living as manual laborers or guards. A depression in the north end of this section leads to an underwater passage out of the caverns and into the sea. To the northeast, a narrow tunnel leads down to area 18, the Lower Villa.

18. Lower Villa

This depression is where the poorest members of the village make their homes in lean-tos and makeshift shacks. They scrape by on whatever they can scrounge, beg, borrow, or earn as day laborers.



19. Lower Promenade

This tunnel runs through the stone beneath area 1, connecting area 12 to area 20. The walls, floor, and ceiling of this 10 x 10 roughhewn tunnel are lined with luminescent algae in a full spectrum of colors, giving the hallway the appearance of an impressionistic painting or an exceptionally vibrant sunset.

20. GUARDHOUSE

This is the armory where the village guard keeps weapons and armor. It is staffed by 6 **merfolk guards** at all times.

Treasure. In addition to the weapons and armor actively being worn and used by the guard, the guardhouse contains 10 tridents, 10 breastplates, and 10 shields.

21. LANDLORD'S LODGE

This is the residence of **Marlin** (he/him **merfolk**), the landlord of the Wave's Break Complex. Marlin is a handy and skilled, but somewhat gruff.

Treasure. Marlin keeps a set of thieves' tools and a set of tinker's tools in his apartment as well as four sets of common clothes and a cloak of many fashions.

22. PRIVATE APARTMENTS

This section contains two small private apartments, maintained by **Dar** (he/him merfolk salvager) and **Sishel** (she/her **merfolk salvager**), two of the most prominent hunters of the settlement.

23. COMMON LIVING

This is a common living space separated by woven seaweed curtains for privacy. 20 **merfolk** make their homes here.

24. CONCHA'S HOME

The home of **Concha** (she/her **merfolk**) the smith. A collection of sculptures and art objects are displayed along the walls of the chamber, many of which were crafted by the merfolk.

Treasure. The sculptures throughout this area depict all manner of sea life. Some are made from stone, some from worked metal, and some from coral. The various sculptures are worth a total of 7,500 gp. In addition to the art objects, there is an unlocked chest containing 3 sets of common clothing, 2 sets of fine clothing, and 5,000 gp in various gemstones and jewels.

25. THE COLDFORGE SMITHY

This 30-foot high chamber is used for crafting tools, shields, and weapons. It contains a stone forge and equipment for metalworking, stone carving, and leatherworking. The forge can be operated normally thanks to magical intervention by Durdona which leaves this chamber dry. Pipes worked into the cave wall serve as a chimney that leads the smoke from the forge up to the surface.

Appendix A: New Creatures

The following creatures are found in Dragon's Eye Cavern.

Awakened Coral

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor) Hit Points 59 (7d12 + 14) Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	6 (-2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Fire, Piercing.

Senses Passive Perception 10 **Languages** Any one language known by its creator

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

False Appearance. While the coral remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from normal coral.

Limited Amphibiousness. The coral can breathe air and water, but it needs to be submerged at least once every hour to avoid suffocating..

Actions

Scratch. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6+3) slashing damage.

DRAGON'S EYE KELPIE

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor) Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27) Speed 10 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
14(+2)	14(+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3.

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Fire, Piercing
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Exhaustion
Senses Blindsight 60 ft., Passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)
Amphibious. The kelpie can breathe air and water.
False Appearance. While the kelpie remains motionless in its true form, it is indistinguishable from normal seaweed.

Actions

Multiattack. The kelpie makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8+2) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 12).

Drowning Hypnosis. The kelpie chooses one humanoid it can see within 150 feet of it. If the target can see the kelpie, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed while the kelpie maintains concentration, up to 10 minutes (as if concentrating on a spell).

The charmed target is incapacitated, and instead of holding its breath underwater, it tries to breathe normally and immediately runs out of breath, unless it can breathe water.

If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away from the kelpie, the target must move on its turn toward the kelpie by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks.

Before moving into damaging terrain, such as lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than the kelpie or drowning, the target can repeat the saving throw. A charmed target can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If the saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to this kelpie's hypnosis for the next 24 hours.

MERFOLK

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 11 Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2) Speed 10 ft., swim 40

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
10(+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +2

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Aquan and any one language (usually Common) Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Amphibious. The merfolk can breathe air and water.

Actions

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) piercing damage, or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Merfolk Archdruid

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (Hide Armor, Shield) Hit Points 132 (24d8 + 24) Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA		
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)		
Saving Throws INT +5, WIS +9 Skills Medicine +9, Nature +5, Perception +9 Senses Passive Perception 19 Languages Aquan, Druidic plus any two languages Challenge 12 (8,400 XP) Amphibious. The merfolk can breathe air and water.							
Spellcasting. The merfolk archdruid is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared:							
Cantrips (at will): <i>druidcraft, mending, mold earth, shape water</i>							
1st level (4 slots): animal friendship, create or destroy water, cure wounds, speak with animals							
2nd level	(3 slots): a ation	nimal mes	ssenger, be	east sense	, lesser		

- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, speak with plants, water breathing*
- 4th level (3 slots): polymorph, stone shape, stoneskin, watery sphere
- 5th level (3 slots): commune with nature, mass cure wounds, tree stride
- 6th level (1 slot): heal, heroes' feast, move earth
- 7th level (1 slot): regenerate
- 8th level (1 slot): tsunami
- 9th level (1 slot): shapechange

Actions

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) piercing damage, or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Change Shape (2/Day). The archdruid magically polymorphs into a beast or elemental with a challenge rating of 6 or less and can remain in this form for up to 9 hours. The archdruid can choose whether its equipment falls to the ground, melds with its new form, or is worn by the new form. The archdruid reverts to its true form if it dies or falls unconscious. The archdruid can revert to its true form using a bonus action on its turn.

While in a new form, the archdruid retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, and Dexterity are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any special senses, proficiencies, traits, actions, and reactions (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that it lacks. It can cast its spells with verbal or somatic components in its new form.

The new form's attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistances and immunity to nonmagical attacks.

Merfolk Guard

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (Breastplate, Shield) Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2) Speed 10 ft., swim 40

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Aquan and any one language (usually Common) Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Amphibious. The merfolk can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Merfolk Salvager

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 12 Hit Points 22 (4d8+4) Speed 10 ft., swim 40

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA		
12(+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)		
Saving Throws DEX +4, INT +2							
Skills Athletics +3, Perception +2, Stealth +4							

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Aquan, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The merfolk can breathe air and water.

Actions

Multiattack. The salvager makes two attacks with its coral rapier.

Coral Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage.

Inject Toxin (2/Day). Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage, and the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

Merfolk Spy

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 12 Hit Points 27 (6d8) Speed 10 ft., swim 40

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12(+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 16

Languages Aquan and any two languages

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The merfolk can breathe air and water.

- **Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.
- **Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The spy makes two melee attacks.

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) piercing damage, or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Hand Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

TRITON VETERAN

Medium humanoid (merfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (Breastplate, Shield) Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18) Speed 30 ft., swim 30

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
17(+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Aquan and any one language (usually Common) Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Amphibious. The triton can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The triton's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 10, +2 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells:

1/day: fog cloud, gust of wind, wall of water.

- *Emissary of the Sea.* The triton can communicate simple ideas with beasts that can breathe water. They can understand the meaning of the triton's words, though the triton has no special ability to understand them in return.
- *Guardians of the Depths.* The triton has resistance to cold damage and ignores any of the drawbacks caused by a deep, underwater environment.

Actions

Multiattack. The veteran makes two melee attacks.

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage, or 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Heavy Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items are found in Dragon's Eye Cavern.

RUNE OF WATERBREATHING

Wondrous Item, rare

This magical rune must be carved into a permanent, immobile fixture such as a wall, floor, or ceiling. It may then be activated by touching the rune and speaking the command word. When activated, the rune grants the effect of the water breathing spell to all creatures within 120 feet of the rune. Creatures who leave the affected area no longer benefit from the rune's magic. Once activated, a rune of waterbreathing remains active until deactivated by touching the rune and speaking the command word.

If the rune is destroyed or defaced by dealing 4 or more hit points of damage to the surface where it is carved, its magic ceases to function.

Appendix C: Map

