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DARK DECEIT ON BRIGHT SANDS

A One-Round D&D[®] LIVING GREYHAWK[™] Core Adventure

Version 2.0

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At the behest of Lady Karistyne, you are needed to travel into the Bright Desert. There are rumors of dragons afoot, and some things just don't add up. Some claim to have slain, others claim to have allied, while others still just scratch their heads. The only fact that is for certain is that the sinister sands have something to hide. A core adventure for APL 2-8 set in the Empire of the Bright Sands. Part four of the "Blight on Bright Sands" series.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a *Herald-Level* gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a *Herald-Level* GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your *Living Greyhawk* character. Second, players and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the *Dungeons & Dragons Rewards* program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2006.

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Players Read No Farther

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

Preparing for Play

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in *bold italics* provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this

sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a *Living Greyhawk* Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to *Living Greyhawk* games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round up to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

	Mundane Animals Effect on APL	# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
6	6	8	9	10	
7	7	9	10	11	

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being

played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

Living Greyhawk adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Core adventure, set in The Bright Desert. Characters native to The Bright Desert pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A character that does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check, the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook*.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Rise and Fall of Sulm

Two millennia ago, several Flan civilizations rose from barbarism in the arid grasslands that once carpeted the region. The greatest of these nations was Sulm.

At first a force for good, the Sulmites delved into ancient lore and declined as a people, embracing evil and conquest. One by one, the other kingdoms fell before Sulm's might until her last rival, Itar, was defeated in a cataclysmic battle.

In turn Sulm fell; not by the force of an external adversary but through the folly of its rulers. Sulm's last ruler, Shattados, called upon his dark gods to grant him a

gift to combat the rising tide of civil unrest sweeping Sulm's conquered dominions. Within a day, Sulm had fallen. Shattados' gift had come with a terrible curse that transformed his subjects into hideously deformed creatures sharing the characteristics of scorpions and humans.

Empire of the Bright Lands

Since the Greyhawk Wars, the Bright Lands have languished in the grip of Rary the Traitor and his infamous companion, Lord Robilar. Both gained almost unrivaled infamy when Rary sought to sabotage the Day of Great Signing by slaying the assembled ambassadors gathered to sign the Pact of Greyhawk. The Archmages Tenser and Otiluke discovered their former friend's treachery and were slain. Simultaneously, Lord Robilar struck at their towers, destroying their clones and looting their treasures. However, the planned attack on the signatories of the Pact of Greyhawk had failed. Realizing that their plans were foiled, Rary and Robilar fled to the Bright Desert.

Over the next several years, the pair brought the majority of the Bright Desert under their control. By 595 CY, only a few tribes of nomads and the stubbornly independent desert centaurs still resist Rary's rule.

Karistyne

Karistyne is a powerful paladin who, along with her adventuring companions, defends a fortress deep within the rugged hills of the Abbor-Alz. Karistyne is renowned for her hatred of evil dragons and is known to have slain several in her career.

She has learned that a powerful ancient blue dragon named Voltarmarun (or Volintakulus in Geoff and Sterich legends) has been lairing atop a local landmark named Dagger Rock. Recent rumors also tell that this dragon was slain by Lord Robilar in 590 CY.

Since then Karistyne has dispatched several groups of adventurers to ascertain the truth of these rumors. None have returned.

The Current Plot

Lady Karistyne has had one of her adventuring companions (Helena Stanmaer, a cleric of Fharlanghn) keeping watch on the infamous Dagger Rock within the Bright Desert. This is (or was) the home of a powerful blue dragon that could become an ally of Rary—if it is still alive. There is also a rumor that Robilar may have slain the dragon due to a disagreement over policies with his master, but confirmation is needed.

Helena was on a stakeout but is now needed for another task. The PCs are to take her place. According to the observation report, the presence of a dragon is unconfirmed, but if there is one, it's definitely injured. There are also reports of other unidentified creatures coming out at night from lower cave ranges, but the dragon cave is near the top of the peak.

So the PCs are to meet up with the paladin's agent within the southern part of the Dagger's Edge pass

through the Abhor-Altz Mountains. At this meeting, the PCs can learn what the lackey knows—at least, up to the point she left Dagger Rock.

What the lackey had been observing was the antics of the resident kobold servant's of the blue dragons that had inhabited the lair over the years. They have been using parts of their old master to make those around them think a dragon still lives there. More specifically, to make the creatures beneath Dagger Rock think the dragon is still there.

A pair of desert pixies (who live among the rocks around the mountain) spied upon the lackey and her minion during the time of the stakeout. They listened to the two humans talk and sated their curiosity with some poking around unnoticed.

The pixies had been pestering the kobolds for generations, foiling their traps and scarring off their prey during hunts. But this time, the pixies got the idea to sneak into cave and see if the humans were right, that the dragon truly was gone.

When the pixies did just that, they thought it would also be great fun to disable some of the traps that guard the path from the deep caves. They also lured up some of the creatures that lurk beneath. The pixies then led a war party of kobolds on a merry chase out of the tunnels and into the rocks. This hunt lasted some time.

During that time, creatures from the deep caves started to realize it was no longer dangerous to come up the trapped passage. Like a pestilence, the creatures invaded the kobold home. While the remaining kobold warriors, elite clerics, and dragon-gifted sorcerers put up a last-ditch struggle, the pixie-hunting war band had gotten lucky and captured one and killed the other.

By the time a call for help reached the small kobold war band, the majority of the population had already been dragged off, kicking and screaming, down into the depths of Dagger Rock, and into the bellies of the abhorrent creatures that lurk far beneath.

The kobolds that live here are not only the generational servants of the blue dragons that have laired here, but they also act as temple laymen and priests for a strange site dedicated to a god with less than definitive identification. This temple complex takes the form of a grand fresco hallway, a shrine and an ancient chamber dedicated to an ancient evil.

The PCs need to explore the nearly empty halls of the kobold protectors, rescue the imprisoned fey, study the paintings of the ages, and make their way into the chamber of evil to find what they don't yet know they need.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Introduction

The PCs are given a quest by Lady Karistyne to meet her agent in Knife's Edge Pass, then go to Dagger Rock and find out if a dragon lives there.

Encounter 1

The PCs meet with Helena Stanmaer and her apprentice. They can quiz her on what to expect when reaching Dagger Rock.

Encounter 2

The desert can be a dangerous place. Luckily for the PCs there are no random encounters this time around. Their only foe is nature. Appendix 4 has extra information on environmental hazards.

Encounter 3

Reaching Dagger Rock, the PCs can scout the stakeout post left for them as well as find the body of a dead desert pixie.

From there on, the PCs climb Dagger Rock, only to find someone has cleared the path for them.

Encounter 4

Inside Dagger Rock, the PCs find a colony of blue kobolds that have been wiped out, or at least all but a handful. Of course, those last few put up quite a drawn out battle.

Turns out that the kobolds were the servants of the blue dragons that have lived here over the ages, but very little is left of the treasure horde.

Drawn by dragons themselves, a hall is decorated with cryptic murals, and ends with a magically sealed door to which the Kobold Lord has the key.

Encounter 5

Small tunnels allow a handful of kobolds to hold off a large and powerful attacking force. Meanwhile, a female desert pixie awaits rescue.

Encounter 6

Zombie dragons and a well of negative energy capped with removable *walls of force* await the PCs. It's a tough fight, but resourceful PCs should figure out how to drop the undead dragons to their doom.

From the dragons, crystals are gained that operate the altar of information.

Encounter 7

This altar is trapped. It requires color-coded magical crystals to be placed into it in order to yield its prize.

That prize is cryptic instructions on how to destroy a powerful artifact.

Conclusion

It's time to collect some rewards.

If the PCs freed the desert sprite, she gives them a war banner stolen from Lord Robilar.

If the PCs return back to Lady Karistyne, she grants them a favor to be used later.

INTRODUCTION

Knife's Edge Pass cuts deep through the Abbor-Alz. At the north end is the Duchy of Urnst. At the south end is

the Bright Desert, domain of Rary, Arch-Mage, Tyrant and Traitor.

Lady Karistyne, mighty paladin of the Abbor-Alz, has charged you with finishing the investigation into a possible dragon problem at Dagger Rock. She seemed to have much on her mind and was rather short with her instructions.

“Meet my agent Helena Stanmaer in Knife’s Edge Pass. She walks the sands of the Bright and can tell you all that needs to be told”, commanded the most noble paladin.

Lady Karistyne does indeed desire that the PCs investigate the possibilities of a powerful dragon operating within the northern sands of the Bright Desert. But the reports she’s received from her agents in the field seems to contradict—or at least don’t confirm—what she suspects.

Some PCs may wish to have an extensive conversation with Lady Karistyne, but this is not possible as she dismisses them (or leaves herself) as she as a very pressing but secretive matter to attend to.

She does give the PCs a physical description her agent, Helena (see below) and directions to Dagger Pass.

Her agent, one Helena Stanmaer, journeymen cleric of Fharlanghn, is needed for a more urgent and secretive task and thus intends to meet the PCs at the southern end of Knife’s Edge Pass. Helena has all the information needed to brief the PCs on their mission.

It is night in Knife Edge and the PCs are not far from her campsite.

ENCOUNTER 1: A MEETING

The light of a campfire flickers against the steep walls of the mountain pass. The fire itself would act enough as a beacon to draw dangerous attention, but it’s the echo of song that really makes the presence known.

*“The trail is long and the road has no end.
What we seen now is just a bend.*

*Save your rations for when food is scarce,
as for now, eat from where we transverse.*

*Sand and dust, sleet and snow,
it is Fharlanghn who shows us where to go.*

*Come with me on road, route or way,
but never forget what we say this day.*

*The Dweller on the Horizon shall show us the way.
He rules the roads, forgot not what I say.*

*Our spring is green and our fall is brown,
but when winter comes we still remember the ground.*

*Despite the covering of snow, the summer ground,
sweet warm summer ground,*

*shall remain with us,
beneath our toes.*

*Grab your staff and walk with me.
Escort the souls and do not flee.*

*For when trouble comes do as Fharlanghn does.
Protect the journey with his love.*

*When time of war threatens his roads,
seek out his Morning Star on the Horizon,
and protect all things we rely on.*

*We’ve journeyed far but I know it won’t be long,
we’re almost there and we paid our fair
with Fharlanghn’s song.”*

The singing is coming from Helena Stanmaer, companion of Lady Karistyne and servant of Fharlanghn. She and her young apprentice are camped on high ground in a reasonably defensible position. Her lack of discretion might be mistaken for brazen contempt for the dangers of her surroundings, but she knows what she’s doing.

It won’t matter if the PCs sneak up on her or not. She is expecting them and using the singing as a way of letting them know she’s a friend. She has also been in this pass many times and fought hard with the more vicious of its denizens. But she knows the majority of them have some respect for the servants of roads and pathways, since those who live here must use such routes daily.

Once the PCs get close enough in the darkness to observe the camp, read or paraphrase the following:

Two humans sit around a fire among the rocks of the pass. The source of the singing is a human female. Her youthful male companion looks uneasy in the night, but the woman seems quite at ease.

It’s up to the PCs to make their presence known and approach her. She won’t leave the camp to go looking for them. If the PCs call out to her, she’ll stop singing and converse with them. While she would prefer to sit around the campfire while conducting business, she’s not above yelling to skittish PCs.

Through most of this encounter, her young apprentice stays silent, learning by example all he can. If drawn into the conversation, Helena gives him space to say what he wants to, but corrects him (if need be) later on how well he did.

Helena (and companion) has just come from the stakeout at Dagger Rock. She has been summoned back (via magic) to Lady Karistyne to be assigned to an important task that has just come up. Helena is here to give the PCs the briefing on peculiar and contradicting observations she has made during her time watching Dagger Rock.

Helena is a good soul, but she is usually reserved in personality. She rarely smiles, but frowns even less.

Except for when singing, she could easily be mistaken for callous or apathetic. She certainly does love the outdoors and seeing new sights. Her horizon walker specialties are Desert and Mountains.

“Greetings, my friends. I am Helena Stanmaer—humble servant of the Dweller on the Horizon. And this is Dal Gydarb, my apprentice. Lady Karistyne has made it known to me that I am to brief you on your mission ahead. Ask what you will of me.”

◆ **Helena Stanmaer:** female human Clr12 (Fharlanghn)

Appearance: Helena Stanmaer is a short, unassuming Oeridian woman with dark hair and a weathered countenance. She favors green and grey clothing, and carries a quarterstaff. Her face expresses little emotion, and to some she can seem like a gruff individual.

Character: Helena is taken with the wanderlust that grips so many of her faith. She uses Karistyne’s castle as a base of operation for her exploration of the Abbor-Alz and the Bright Desert. Helena and a small cadre of her brethren tend a small shrine within the castle’s gatehouse. She believes Karistyne to be an unwitting servant of the Dweller on the Horizon.

Helena is fascinated by shimmering horizons of the Bright Desert, viewing its harsh treatment of travelers as a challenge to explore its sands rather than a deterrent. She detests Rary the Traitor due solely to the fact that his dervishes and norkers have made the desert even more inhospitable than it once was.

The text below details some of the PCs’ likely questions, and Helena’s answers.

- **What is our mission?:** “We have strong reason to believe that a powerful blue dragon resides within a cave in the upper reaches of Dagger Rock within the Bright Desert. Though further evidence suggests not all is as it seems. That’s where you come in.”
- **Why don’t you do this?:** “I am being recalled to further serve Lady Karistyne on a new task. After you have been briefed, I shall *teleport* to her castle. For it appears Dagger Rock may not need someone of my skills after all.”
- **What’s up with Dagger Rock?:** “I have been observing the supposed dragon’s lair for several weeks. I have done so from a distance. Dragons can stay dormant in their lairs for some time, but even so, over the weeks, I did not see anything that confirms the presence of a powerful dragon.”
- **What are the clues?:** “During my time, I heard on several occasions the roar of a dragon from the cave mouth, and I could make out the slow flap of blue wings. But the roar sounded weak, less frightening than it should have been. As well, the dragon never took flight or fully exited the cover of the cave mouth.”

- **What about Firron?:** “The native guide whom you last escorted to Dagger Rock is with another group of adventurers scouting out a location deep within Rary’s* lands”.
- **Any physical proof that there is a dragon?:** “I can confirm that there was a dragon there not too long ago, within the last few years, perhaps even more recent. I’ve seen scale fragments, feed bones, burrowing marks and other minor spoor pointing to the habitation of a blue dragon.”
- **So why us?:** “I do not believe there is a fully grown dragon within that lair. Or if it is fully grown, I suspect it must be badly injured and sick. Its just not behaving like it should be. Since I am needed else where, you brave up-and-coming adventurers can verify my suspicions.”
- **What did this dragon ever do to you?:** “Blue dragons are pure evil. Given the chance, it would eat you and everyone you care about. Dagger Rock is in the northern reach of the Bright Desert, close to the lands of good. The dragon (if it lives) cannot be suffered to live. As well, we have heard rumors from our contacts with the Bright Lands that Rary* has plans for this dragon.”
- **What’s Rary got to do with it?:** “We have heard that the evil Archmage Rary* the Traitor, tyrant of the desert, is courting favor with a powerful dragon on the edge of his realm. This fits with the location of Dagger Rock. As well, we’ve heard a rumor that Lord Robilar* has run afoul of a great blue wyrm. The rumor further suggests that Robilar either slew or drove off the ally Rary wanted. We’re not sure why he would have done this.”
- **See any other dangers?:** “There are always dangers in the Bright Desert. Around Dagger Rock, I had a close encounter with a giant scorpion of unusual power and magical ability. I was able to drive it off, however. I also found kobold tracks around the rocks, but did not actively encounter any. I did hear something other than the sick dragon call. Something I never want to hear again.”
- **What did you hear?:** “It was an otherworldly moan. I know nearly all creatures of the desert and mountains. This sound I did not recognize. It came from under Dagger Rock. Something is down there, something not good. Don’t go down there; your souls are too valuable.”
- **Tell me about Dagger Rock:** “Dagger Rock is an anomaly, a small mountain in the midst of the Bright Desert. Nomads use it as a navigational aid, as it can be seen for miles around. It is known to have an extensive tunnel system and I have explored some minor parts in my younger days. Burial chambers of the ancients who came

before lie below the rock. The suspected dragon's lair is on the upper part of the peak. Beware your explorations—do not wonder aimlessly. The deep burial chambers are far too dangerous for you.”

- **How do we get to Dagger Rock?:** “Dagger Rock is 60 miles southwest of the end of Knife’s Edge pass. You will be able to see the peak on the distant horizon.”
- **What do we do when we get there?:** “Explore the dragon’s lair and find out what you can. Confirm that a great wyrm is not present. Find out what it was that I was seeing. If there’s a treasure horde, its fair game on the condition that you bring back any strange items or information to Lady Karistyne. That last part is for your own safety. You’ll need to climb up a steep track to the cave mouth. It’s not terribly difficult, but don’t take any risks. You can leave your mounts in the area I was using as a base camp*. It should be safe for a few days of stay.”
- **What are our rewards?:** “Karistyne has a great many powerful friends who have offered in the past to make items of power for her. If you are successful she will call upon these favors.” [This will grant the PCs access to several magic items at the end of the adventure].
- **Weather?:** “Desert storms can appear without warning, localized to just a few miles. But I do not anticipate any of the major region-wide sandstorms for at least another two weeks.”
- **Do we get any special equipment?:** “Yes. I have for each of you a desert outfit, which you may keep and soil. In addition, I have one week’s worth of food and water for you.”
- **What’s that song mean?:** “Oh, that’s just one of the many songs of praise and teachings of The Dweller on the Horizon. It is called ‘Fharlanghn’s Song’. It teaches us to take the road less traveled, but always travel the road. But roads are much more than just cobbled paths laid down by men. As well, we should protect those who travel on his roads, as is our duty.”
- **What is ‘The Morning Star on the Horizon?:** “It is a relic of the Dweller on the Horizon. While the staff is our preferred gift from our divine patron, there have been times when the roads need to be patrolled in force. The Morning Star on the Horizon, and its lesser replica, was a gift handed down a long time ago, just for that purpose. It’s been lost for almost as long.”

Helena is happy to share all her information concerning Dagger Rock and her observations. The above statements are honest and reasonably accurate.

Some of the above statements have an asterisk (*) in them. Whenever these noted topics are mentioned, allow the PCs a DC 20 Sense Motive check to notice that young

Dal Gydarb wants to add something to the conversation, but is holding back.

Dal Gydarb observes the back and forth conversation between his journeymen mentor and the PCs, learning all he can. Being reserved, though, he has information he has yet to share with Helena on the grounds that it may be frivolous. As well, he holds a political and social view toward Rary’s Bright Land’s and those who run it. But if he speaks openly, he risks embarrassment.

Dal Gydarb

Appearance: Standing at 5 feet and 7 inches, this lad has yet to reach 18 years of age, yet his worn clothing and tanned and weathered skin show off a lifetime’s worth of travel. His black hair is long and tends to fall forward, obscuring his hazel eyes. Like his mistress, he wears a green tunic.

Character: Naive and trusting, Dal Gydarb nevertheless is devoted to his mistress and the road not yet trod. He is a good man, but lacking in any kind of worldly experience, although he is getting used to being around powerful individuals.

- **Do you have anything to add about the camp?:** “I’m not sure. It’s probably nothing, so I didn’t want to waste Journeymen Helena’s time with it, but I thought our baggage was being moved around during our stay. At first I figured I had mislaid a bag, only to find it in a spot I was sure I had looked already. It happened several times, with different bags and packs. I was afraid I was weak and succumbing to some trick of the desert or water shortage. Now I’m not so sure.”
- **Did anything go missing?:** “No, nothing. That was the first thing I checked. The pans were fine, the linen sack, the food seemed to be there, all the usual camp items were there.”
- **Did you see or hear anything?:** “One time, I thought a bag reappeared out of thin air, but it was out of the corner of my eye and the sand was blowing, so I can’t say for sure. As for hearing, I’m not quite used to the desert, so I heard lots of things during the night, so I’m not even going to try to discern ‘strange’ from ‘normal.’”
- **What about Rary?:** “I don’t understand all this talk about Rary being bad. He’s connecting the people of the desert and this means exchange of ideas and travel. Soon, I’ll bet he’ll need people to help build and maintain roads! And I hear he transported his tower from a far-off land—that’s just amazing!”
- **What about Robilar?:** “Lord Robilar has slain dragons and other nasty creatures. He’s even slain a giant blue dragon, single-handedly, I wish I could be like that some day ...”
- **You like Rary?:** “No disrespect intended to Journeymen Helena, but I think Rary is just the victim of whispers and jealousy.”

After Dal reveals this information, Helena gently scolds him, saying "Ok, now that is the kind of stuff you should be mentioning ...?"

All APLs

◆ **Journeyman Helena Stamaer:** Human Female (Suel-Oeridian) Clr 11/Hzwl 2 of Fharlanghn; NG; 54 hp.

◆ **Apprentice Dal Gydarb:** Human Male (Oeridian) Clr 2 of Fharlanghn; N; 15 hp.

Development: Once the characters have all the answers they desire, they are free to camp safely until morning. But once all the answers have been given, Helena *teleports* herself and her apprentice back to Lady Karistyne. Before she goes, she gives the characters directions on where to find Dagger Rock, her base camp, and the dragon's lair on the side of the mountain.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE BRIGHT LANDS

From your vantage point of the Abbor-Alz foothills, you can see the sands of the Bright Desert spread out like an ever-expanding cone. To the southeast, Dagger Rock can be barely made out on the horizon.

Dagger Rock is approximately 60 miles away across open desert. Your overland map at the end of the adventure shows Dagger Rock and the southern end of Knife's Edge pass (as well as many other features of the Bright Desert).

There are no random encounters for the PCs. The only threat to their health is themselves and failure to respect the terrain they must transverse.

Consult Appendices 4 and 5 for travel speeds and desert conditions to determine how well the PCs survive 60 miles of desert.

The dry rations given to the PCs are enough to feed six size Medium humanoids for seven days.

The water supply is a total of 84 gallons, enough to keep six medium sized humanoids hydrated in a Warm temperature environment for seven days. This is a total of 840 lbs. (including the waterskins). This breaks down to 10 lbs. per gallon.

During the day, the temperature is Hot. The exception to this is midday and two hours past that. For those three hours, the temperature rises to Severe. During the night, the temperature is cold.

See the Appendix for more information.

Development: With a week's worth of food and water, as well as the desert clothing offered to them, wise PCs should not have any serious trouble crossing the open desert. Without the threat of encountering the denizens of the deep desert, the only conditions that should be of concern are sand blindness and heat stroke.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE APPROACH

Dagger Rock juts out of the sand like a lone fang covered in decay. Over 3000 feet wide at its base, this single rock spire is surrounded by rocks and boulders on a sandy border. The mountain itself has several slanted and rough plateaus of elevation. The peak area has an obvious opening facing east.

Consult DM Maps for the Dagger Rock terrain and sub-encounter markers.

In this encounter, the PCs arrive at Dagger Rock. The first location they should head to is Helena's former base camp, which is detailed below. Other points of interest are the dead body of the desert pixie, the path leading up to the dragon's lair, the disabled kobold traps, and the entrance to the dragon's lair itself.

Improvised Shelter: The base camp is considered to be improvised shelter. This gives a +3 equipment modifier to base heat protection (see appendix on environmental conditions for details).

Encounter 3A: Base Camp

The east side of this boulder grouping gives a perfect vantage point to observe the mouth of the dragon's lair. It offers distance and safety. The small ring of boulders provides shelter from wind, sand and sun. Leather sheets are still in place providing partial shade and camouflage. There is room for six Large mounts to be squeezed in. Mounts still risk death from exposure if left unattended for too long.

It was here that Helena and Dal spent over two weeks staking out the entrance to the dragon's lair. Had they actually encountered a dragon, the plan was to *teleport* away.

The supplies are gone, but the basic housing is still intact. PCs needing a place to escape the worst parts of the elements can hide out here. The only thing needed is a water supply.

For those PCs wanting to investigate the claims made by Dal about an unseen force, they can comb the desert and search the rocks. There is little physical evidence of the presence of pixies left, since the wind shifts the sands. But, small trinkets (usually shiny ones) can be found hidden among the cracks of the boulders and shallowly buried in the sand.

Searching for a water source can also accidentally discover the hidden trinkets and the body of the desert pixie.

PCs succeeding at a DC 22 Search check can find the trinkets.

A DC 15 Wisdom check reveals that the items were purposefully hidden, but not so they could never be found.

A DC 15 Intelligence check reveals that a Small creature most likely did the hiding due to the small spaces used.

The trinkets have little value. They consist of metal drinking mugs, some coins, several polished bronze buttons, and part of a clerical ceremonial vestment of Fharlanghn (green).

Development: The characters now have a safe place to rest and recuperate while in the area. They could stay safe here for up to a week before monsters find them. This is also a safe place to leave mounts.

On the western side of this boulder grouping is the body of the male desert pixie. PCs searching the boulders find the body regardless of their Search skill (but it's the last item they find).

Encounter 3B: Not of the Body

Before you is the still body of a small humanoid with gossamer wings. His leg is wedged between two boulders as he hangs upside down. A silver locket hangs from his neck.

Just within the western perimeter of the boulders that the base camp is in, is the dead body of a male desert pixie. His back has a poisoned small size crossbow bolt in it and his leg is wedged between two boulders (having fallen down from the air).

This desert pixie's name was H'yon and he was the mate of Ky'quail (who is a currently a captive of the kobolds). In a way, his death is due to his own cockiness.

The exact cause of death was from exposure and hydration (suffered when he could not free his leg).

The events leading up to his death are as follows: He and Ky'quail had been poking around the base camp and observing the two humans. They overheard Helena's observations on the dragon's peculiar behavior.

Having been pestering the blue-skinned kobolds of Dagger Rock for many kobold generations, the two pixies decided to venture into the cave and really stir things up to amuse the two humans. Helena was leaving soon and the pixies wanted to give them a reason to stay (for the entertainment factor).

Thus the two pixies snuck into the dragon's lair and disabled the all-important traps that protect the lair from the dark creatures that live deep below. The pixies went so far as to lure a few of these denizens up toward the kobolds.

They knew it would be very entertaining to watch all Nine Hells break loose among the kobolds when the deep creatures came past the disabled traps and found no dragon there to turn them back.

During this slapstick spree of pixie-foolery, the unaware Helena packed up camp and left. The two pixies succeeded in bringing a few monsters into the kobold's lair. But in doing so, the pixies made their presence known. The powerful dragon-blooded kobold sorcerers used extended *glitterdust* spells on the pixies, and sent a crack team of hunters after them.

With the kobolds giving chase, recasting their *glitterdust* spells as needed, the pixies rushed down the mountain peak to the only allies they could think of: the two humans.

The two human's had already left, but it didn't matter, as the pixies never made it. With the support of the dragon-winged kobold sorcerer, the female pixie was captured. Not long after that, the male pixie was shot in the back with a critical hit from a poisoned crossbow bolt.

With his strength drained by poison, he dropped out of the air and his leg became wedged between two boulders. He lacked the strength to free himself. He was never captured because at that moment, a horn recalled the kobold hunting party. The deep denizens had amassed on the kobold lair and the fighting was quickly becoming desperate.

The battle under Dagger Rock was going badly, with many kobolds being dragged down into the depths of Dagger Rock. By the time the hunting party returned, there was nothing left.

So H'yon was left to die from the desert elements. His small pixie body lacks anything useful. He lost his bow and his special arrows, and he carries no wealth.

The only item of interest the pixie has is a silver locket about his neck. It is in the shape of a flat heart split in two.

On his locket is the female name Ky'quail (written in Sylvan).

It has grooves that match up with a near identical locket worn by Ky'quail.

This locket is of value as a keepsake to Ky'quail when the PCs meet up with her.

Development: The PCs should take the locket as it comes in handy later. The next step for the PCs is to ascend Dagger Rock to the cave near the peak. The path to do so is almost in a direct line with the body of the pixie and the base camp.

Encounter 3C: Ascension

Nearing the actual base of Dagger Rock, a 4-foot-high crude carving of an open dragon's mouth takes shape before you. A hidden winding trail starts just past the carving.

The start of the trail leading up Dagger Rock is approximately 1,600 feet west of the base camp. The base of the trail is marked by the crude carving of an open mouthed dragon. The carving is very old and worn by the elements. The carving is 4 feet in height and visible from the western side of the base camp boulders.

The carving marks the start of a path that safely winds up the mountain to the dragon's lair. It is designed for Small humanoids, but size Medium humanoids can use it well enough. Large creatures (such as an adult centaur) use the squeezing rules while on the path.

The carving radiates moderate illusion magic. It has a *permanency*-enhanced *magic mouth* spell cast on it. Passing through the carving, or even climbing around it (to get to the path) triggers the *magic mouth*. It speaks in a booming, draconic voice. If a PC understands Draconic, read the following translations.

“Approach, young supplicants. Pray at the foot of the Dragon of Entropy. Learn from the chromatic keepers the secret.”

As the PCs travel up the mountain, they come across two points where kobolds’ traps have been set off. This was done by the pixies as part of the spree of humor.

The first trap along the path was a spray of darts meant to hit several people at once. A trip wire triggered this. A long rock shard has been dropped on to the trip wire to set it off.

The second trap was a pressure-plate-activated gas trap. When activated, several glass containers smashed, creating a poisonous cloud. A rock has also been dropped to set this trap off.

The traps are harmless now and cannot be easily reset (and need more ammunition). The pixies flew over and dropped a rock on the triggers to set them off safely.

There is evidence that other traps have existed along this trail but have been used up or abandoned generations ago.

Development: The path is slow and winding, but it is not particularly dangerous and does not require a Climb check. It leads directly to the small plateau in front of the dragon’s lair. Four-legged creatures can safely use this path.

Encounter 2D: Mouth of the Lair

The trail ends at a flat plateau in the upper reaches of the peak. The rock is covered in many ancient gashes and burn marks. A large cave mouth reveals an equally large tunnel, sloping and winding into the heart of Dagger Rock.

Since before the rise of Sulm, this cave mouth has been the roosting perch for many a dragon. The cave is large enough for even a Colossal dragon to squeeze through.

For those looking for it, evidence is apparent of the rocks having been worn smooth as thick-skinned creatures have rubbed against the surfaces. Claw marks of various sizes are abundant too.

ENCOUNTER 4: HOME SWEET HOME

The winding tunnel eventually levels out and opens into a carved tunnel 20 feet wide. The tunnel stretches on past the darkness of the mountain’s interior.

This multi-segmented encounter is mapped out on DM Maps. There are two main sections to this encounter.

- The main walkways (with the remains of the kobold combats, the fresco’s, and the magical door).
- And the dragon’s nesting chamber and its few remaining goodies.

The kobold labyrinth and lair is described in Encounter 5.

Encounter 4A: The Great Halls

The great halls form a rough “T” shape. They are always 20 feet wide and 20 feet high.

A great battle took place here not long ago. Horrible creatures from deep below, hungry for flesh and torment, swarmed up and overran the last-ditch defenses of the kobold defenders. They tried falling back to different defensive lines, even collapsing entrances, but in the end, some 100 kobolds of varying age and level were dragged kicking and screaming under Dagger Rock.

The only survivors were those out hunting the pixies at the time of the attack. Upon their return, they collapsed the tunnel section that the nightmarish creatures used to access the kobolds. It’s just a matter of time before the creatures dig out the collapsed area.

The Time Limit:

It takes five days for the unholy creatures that carried off the kobolds to dig through the collapse that blocks them in. If anything living (such as the PCs) is still in this lair at that time, it does not survive unless it escapes immediately.

Any PC listening at the collapsed rubble can hear the clawing and slow digging of the unspeakable aberrations below.

To represent this last battle, describe to the PCs scenes of small barricades broken in two, small spears and crossbows littering the ground, and small hide shields with deep claw marks. It’s important to note there are no bodies left—lots of blood and drag marks, but no bodies.

The direction of all this defensive activity clearly points to the freshly collapsed tunnel at the end of the great hall (near the dragon’s nesting chamber).

Near where the PCs first entered, is another smaller, collapsed tunnel. This was once the main entrance the kobolds used to enter their lair. It was purposely (and expertly) collapsed by the kobolds. This tunnel would take weeks to be properly excavated by normal means.

It is possible for PCs with enough magic to circumvent this obstacle. However, doing so draws the attention of the last defending kobolds, lying in wait on the other side, ready to crush the invaders.

The Walk of History

As marked on the map, the Walk of History is the second section of the Great Hall. At the far end of this hall section are the double doors that lead to Encounter 6. The doors are magically locked and reinforced, and require the right “key” to open.

If the PCs explore the Walk of History, kobolds attack them from the murder holes above. Once the PCs chase away or kill the kobolds, the PCs can more freely interpret the remains of the fresco.

The descriptions of the different scenes are described in “Handout 1” from west to east (though the pictures can switch wall sides, it’s not relevant to the story). Only the pictures that can be made out are

described, as many have been rubbed off by very large dragons coming in and out of the great hall.

The fresco (or what remains of it) tells a story. Part of this story is the proper order needed for placing the chromatic crystals into the altar in Encounter 7. Another part is the rise and fall of the area and how the Scorpion Crown brought about its defeat. Lastly, it suggests that this place holds the secret to undoing the crown.

Appendix 2 lists, picture by picture, the Knowledge checks the PCs can attempt to learn more about what the paintings mean.

The Murder Holes

In the middle of this hall section, disguised among the fresco, are murder holes perfect for kobold snipers with crossbows. These slits are on the walls and ceilings (as indicated on the map), but 20 feet above the ground.

The slits themselves are only one foot square in size. The slits in the walls are upright, and the slits located on the ceiling are of course flat with the ceiling.

Creatures: The following creatures are encountered here. These are the same creatures listed in Encounter 5. Any casualties here are carried over to that combat.

APL2 (EL 2)

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL4 (EL 4)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War5; hp 17; LE; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL6 (EL 6)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War8; hp 36; LE; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL8 (EL8)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War8; hp 44; LE; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

➤ **Centipede Swarm (2):** hp 31, 31; see *Monster Manual* page 238.

Note: These kobolds have a blue hue to their skin that is not normal to kobolds. This comes from the strong mixing of blood with the blue dragons that lair here.

Tactics: The kobolds from Encounter 5 harass the PCs with crossbow fire, enjoying their +4 cover bonus and possible concealment (for those PCs who can't see far enough in the dark).

Before attacking, the kobolds hide from view (a Hide check, with a +10 circumstance bonus for the superior cover) and attempt a surprise round.

The kobolds hold their sniping position until they start to take casualties. At APL 2, the kobolds retreat after one casualty. At APL 4 and above, the kobolds do not retreat until five kobolds have been killed (or otherwise incapacitated).

Retreating kobolds make an attempt to gather up any incapacitated kobolds, such as those blinded or stunned by magic, or those who are under the effects of non-lethal damage. These wounded kobolds take part in future attacks once they have recovered.

Once the kobolds have abandoned this position, they do not try to defend it again for another 24 hours (in theory, after they've rested).

At APL 8, the kobolds have large jars with centipede swarms in them. The kobolds themselves have a diet of these insects, so they secrete a pheromone that tricks the swarm into ignoring them as a target. The PCs have no such luck.

As an attack action, one kobold pours out the contents of the jar to the square directly below the murder hole he occupies (the jars can't be thrown—only dropped or poured—and are cushioned inside to protect the contents from falling damage). The swarm then acts at the beginning of the next initiative round (it takes that much time gets its bearings but it still threatens the square it's in).

If for some reason a swarm is released within the murder-hole compartment of the kobolds, the swarm takes one full turn to get the gist of the situation, then makes it way (climbing down the wall) toward the PCs, to attack as normal.

It is up to you—on behalf of the kobolds—to decide if the kobolds expend their swarm ammunition here, or reserve it for a possible tunnel fight (see Encounter 5).

The Doors

There are two doorways that lead off from the main hall. The larger one is a double door, 20 feet wide. It leads to the ritual chamber. It has symbols and a chain on it. It is magically locked and reinforced with ancient draconic magic. There are two keys that can open this door. This leads to Encounter 7.

The second door is only 5 feet wide but it has a similar design to that of the larger door. This leads to Encounter 8.

For further details on these doors, consult the relevant encounter they are a part of.

Encounter 4B: The Dragon's Den

A large, naturally-vaulted cavern opens up from the carved-stone hall. Smoothed indentations in the ground suggest one or more large creatures spent much time here. A huge pair of blue leathery wings sit attached to a cart with many ropes and pulleys. Several ornate but empty weapon racks line the back wall.

Located off the main hall, near the large collapsed tunnel, is the former den of many blue dragons (though rarely at the same time).

For now, little of that evil majesty remains. Even the body of the former master is less than spectacular. The only remaining portion of a once great wyrm, are its large (and tattered) wings.

The kobolds have done their best to preserve the wings and use rope and braces to move the wings in an act of puppetry. In combination with a wheeled sled, the wings can be dragged up to the surface opening (that overlooks the desert) and flapped.

Several kobold sorcerers (some of whom were half-dragons themselves) would mimic the noise. This act of trickery has so far fooled all those who might threaten this place.

This chamber has held a kingdom's wealth over the centuries. But over that same amount of time, it has been stolen and amassed anew many times.

The last horde to be kept here came mostly from Geoff, and it held more magic weapons than actual coinage wealth. Lord Robilar who stole the majority of the treasure horde. The kobolds stole several magical weapons and items, but all of that (save for what the remaining kobold lord has) was lost when the disgusting dwellers from the tombs attacked and dragged the kobolds away.

The far walls are lined with very old and ornate weapon racks. They have the imprints of several noble and old royal houses of Geoff and the surrounding regions. The racks have been treated with *oil of timelessness* to preserve them. The decorations on the racks depict the forging of many powerful magical weapons and the different victories they are accredited to.

The racks have been moved and are now being used to help hide a small tunnel entrance in the far wall. Along with some rock colored hides, the presence of the door is a secret the few remaining kobolds hope to keep. Unfortunately, the original kobolds were not so lucky.

The door is not difficult to find. But that is part of the kobolds' plan. They have a better chance funneling the attackers through the small corridors of the labyrinth than having the attacking doom bringers trying to get in through the walls.

↗ **Concealed Door Flap:** 1/2 in. thick; hardness 1; hp 5; AC 5; Break DC 5. Search DC 15.

Treasure: The set of ornate and historic hornwood weapons rack, commissioned to hold weapons entrusted to ancient Geoff heroes. Nobles in Geoff would pay good coin for the return of these otherwise powerless heirlooms. The racks can be disassembled for easier transport.

APL 2: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 4: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 6: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 8: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

Detect Magic Results: *Rack of Geoff* (faint transmutation).

ENCOUNTER 5: A FORTRESS DEEP AND MIGHTY

The caves ahead are little more than crevasses and glorified rat holes. These 3-foot-wide tunnels are welcoming to a gnome, but a tight fit for a human.

As shown on the your map, the majority of the kobold labyrinth is spaced for Small creatures. Even if the map doesn't show a full 5-foot square, assume that the square is five feet wide; the area is here is very unworked and full of trash and rubble. All corridors and chambers are as high as they are wide.

This tunnel section is not the actual living quarters of the kobolds. The kobolds and their families live in the more spacious rooms on the south section of the map. This labyrinth was for training and for defense.

The kobolds used these caves to good effect in their last desperate battle. The corridors have many examples of sprung (and inert) traps.

The living quarters of the tribe held approximately 100 individuals; a third were young. All bodies have been dragged away. What little valueless goods remain (such as crafts) is strewn about, as if they had been suddenly interrupted.

Squeezing Rules

Before play begins in this section the DM should consult the rules for squeezing found in the *Player's Handbook* on page 148.

Encounter 5A: A Diplomatic Mission

As noted on the map of the tunnels, there is an intersection that is best suited to a multi-pronged ambush made by the few in numbers kobolds.

The kobolds know their home very well. They've practiced as youths and played as hatchlings all the gnome-bashing games these bottlenecks are suited for. They also have the labyrinth memorized. When it comes time to fall back by squads, these kobolds know exactly where to go to set up a second, third, and fourth rear-guard position.

When the PCs reach the designated position, any surviving kobolds are waiting for them.

They have one thing on their minds: death to the invaders. They are the last of their special tribe, generational servants and blood-touched of dragons. This is a holy place to them. They do not allow defilers to take this place without a fight.

These blue kobolds do not speak Common. In addition, they're rather agitated at the moment and have yet to put together that the PCs are not in league with

either the tomb walkers or the human on the iron horse who killed their last master.

For that reason, the PCs must die. If all things remain equal in posture, the listed combat takes place. There is a small chance that things can be worked out. This is listed below.

Am I Blue?

These kobolds have no fear of death. What they do fear is an ending to all that their tribe has stood for over these many generations. They served dragon after dragon, and, through that service, touched the essence of their obscure dark god.

These kobolds are outcasts from the claws of Kurtulmak, but have been embraced by the shadowy talons of the Dragon of Entropy. Their last remaining leader is a direct descendent of the blue dragon lord that first brought them into service.

These kobolds are used to being bullied, and while this can have an almost Pavlovian effect on them, it must be done in Draconic. As well, they can be reasoned with to some extent, but it must be done in Draconic.

If a PC is speaking Draconic, he can try to intimidate the kobolds into giving up without a fight. Normally, to do this requires the ability to see the victim and threaten them in melee combat. However, such is the state of the surviving kobolds that the PCs need only be within 60 feet. If successful, the kobolds are shaken for 1 minute.

If the PCs want to try to negotiate with the kobolds, they can try to explain that they are not allied with the creeping doom of the depths, or with the dragon-slaying human lord.

If the PCs offer to let the kobolds leave (to live to fight another day) and keep their basic possession, then the kobolds can agree to that. The remaining kobold lord is even willing to offer his bow as an act of contrition (if asked for such by the PCs), but he does not part with his badge of rank as a kobold lord (his cloak and his key).

Likewise, the kobolds do not agree to give any information about their holy place. In their minds, they shall come back to it soon and take up their charge once again as they await a new dragon to come lord over them.

To win the kobolds over, the PCs must offer to let the kobolds leave, not want the kobold lord's cloak or key, and not demand information as part of the deal.

Should the PCs do all of the above negotiations (while speaking in Draconic), then the lead PC can attempt the following APL varying DCs. Note that the DC increases as the HD of the leader increases, as well is given a bonus at APL8 due to the centipede swarm "allies."

APL2: DC 13 Diplomacy check.

APL4: DC 15 Diplomacy check.

APL6: DC 17 Diplomacy check.

APL8: DC 20 Diplomacy check.

Removing the kobolds as a threat through diplomacy earns full XP rewards, though the treasure gained and AR access may be less.

APL2 (EL 2)

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL4 (EL 4)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War 5; hp 17; LE; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL6 (EL 6)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War 8; hp 36; LE; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

APL8 (EL8)

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War8; LE; 44 hp; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Kobold (8):** 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 161; replace sling attack with +3 ranged (1d6/19-20, Small crossbow).

➤ **Centipede Swarm (2):** hp 31, 31; see *Monster Manual* page 238.

Note: These kobolds have a blue hue to their skin that is not normal to kobolds. This comes from the strong mixing of blood with the blue dragons that lair here.

Tactics: The kobolds have set themselves up along the side tunnels of the primary ambush area. Several tunnels spoke out from a main junction, allowing the kobolds to fire from cover (the recesses of the walls and corners in the tunnels) with a line of sight to the same square.

The main tactic is to fire at the exposed PC as he makes his way through the ambush junction. This tactic varies depending on how many of the original kobolds are left.

It is up to you to place his remaining kobolds among the tunnels. Two kobolds per junction are ideal. This allows the kobolds to fire and fall back in tandem if the situation allows it.

The kobolds know they can't stay in one place and keep up the fire. This is why they have placed many loaded crossbows along the tunnels down which they plan to retreat.

After engaging the PCs, the kobolds fall back down their tunnels as needed, dropping their empty crossbows any picking up loaded ones.

Since these tunnels lead in circles, the groups can try to double back and keep the PCs in a crossfire. Or, at least, that is the theory.

The kobold lord (APL4+) is only slightly different. While his basic kobold minions use crossbows, he has a magical bow (stolen from the dragon's horde).

The kobold lord (like his father before him) wears purple robes and has about his neck the *Key of the Kobold Lord* (a purple crystal), as well as the key to the pixie cage.

All of the kobolds prefer to shoot from around corners or while leaning into recesses. Doing so gives them the usual cover bonus.

At APL8, the first action of the kobolds is to release the swarms from the jars. The swarms then fill up the tunnels the PCs are in.

The kobolds have large jars in which the centipede swarms are stored. The kobolds themselves have a diet of these insects, so they secrete a pheromone that tricks the swarm into ignoring them as a target. The PCs have no such luck.

The kobolds fight to the death (or until diplomacy convinces them to leave as per above).

Treasure: Loot the kobolds for full treasure.

APL 2: L: 30; C: 0; M: +1 *small longbow* (194 gp); *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp).

APL 4: L: 60; C: 0; M: +1 *shocking small longbow* (694 gp); *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp);

APL 6: L: 60; C: 0; M: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp), +1 *small chain shirt* (108 gp), +1 *shocking small longbow* (694 gp), +2 *gloves of Dexterity* (333 gp).

APL 8: L: 60; C: 0; M: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp), +1 *small chain shirt* (108 gp), +1 *shocking small longbow* (694 gp), +2 *gloves of Dexterity* (333 gp), +2 *amulet of health* (333 gp).

All APLs: L: key to pixie cage; M: *Key of the Kobold Lord* (0 gp).

Detect Magic Results: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (faint abjuration); *Key of the Kobold Lord* (moderate abjuration).

Development: Should the PCs work a deal out with the kobolds (as listed in the encounter) and the kobolds leave the dragon's lair safely, they hideout among the rocks and boulders that ring Dagger Rock. They fight from among these boulders but it's a far inferior position they enjoyed inside their tunnels.

After which, the PCs can possibly discover that they have no way of opening the giant rune-covered door. There are only three ways to open it: the purple key from the kobolds, the scorpion tattoo, or bashing it open.

If the PC's come looking for the kobolds to get the key, they must successfully track the kobolds, as the kobolds do not willingly come to the PCs, even if called forth to parley.

To help in this adventure, the PCs should gain the *Key of the Kobold* lord. If the party does not possess the scorpion tattoo gained in Gateway to the Bright Desert, then they need this key to open the magically sealed door in Encounter 6.

The key to the pixie cage is just that: a way to free the desert pixie in encounter 5B.

Encounter 5B: Dust of the Desert

This cavern is much larger than the tunnel system that leads into it. Little tables and crude chairs suggest this is a guardroom of sorts. Small weapons line the walls, waiting to be called to arms.

On the far side of the room is an alcove with a curved cage. Inside the cage, bound, gagged, and chained hand and foot with iron balls is a small, gossamer-winged female. She is unconscious.

This cavern is indeed a guardroom. Kobolds garrisoning the labyrinth waited here for enemies that rarely ever came. Occasionally, treasure thieves would flee into the kobold labyrinth with a dragon hot on their tails.

All of the remaining weapons and armor are of poor quality and all of Small size. They have very little value. Small crude chairs and tables are a testament to the amount of waiting the kobolds had to endure.

Under one of the tables is a small, clay jar the smells strongly of medicine. The jar is filled with a sticky salve, that when applied to a wound, heals 1d8 points of damage. The jar has enough salve for five applications. The jar's contents expire in five days.

As indicated on the map, there is an alcove that houses a birdcage-like prison. In the cage, bound and weighted down, is Ky'quil, the female desert pixie. Desert pixies are just like normal pixies, except they like rocks and deserts over forests and glades.

Currently, Ky'quil has 5 points of nonlethal damage, is bound and overloaded (the 20 lbs. weights have 6-inch chains), thus prohibiting her from flying away.

🔒 **Locked Cage:** 1 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 20; AC 5; Break DC 25; Key in Encounter 5A.

🦶 **Leg Manacles:** 1/2 in. thick; hardness 7; hp 10; AC 5; Break DC 21; No key present.

The Trap

As indicated on the map, the first square of the alcove (the one in front of the cage) has a trap in it. This trap is sensitive to weight in the square. If ten or more pounds makes contact with the floor in this square, the following trap is set off, affecting the one entering (or triggering) the square.

Trap: Dwarves can use the Search skill to locate difficult stonework traps just like rogues can. Anyone can search for traps whose DC to find them is 20 or less, and anyone can take 20 on a search for traps.

APL2

🦶 **Tripping Chain:** CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple traps (tripping and melee attack); Atk +15 melee touch (trip) and +15 melee (2d4+2, spiked chain); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 18.

Note: This trap is really one CR 1 trap that trips and a second CR 1 trap that attacks with a spiked chain. If the tripping attack succeeds, a +4 bonus applies to the spiked chain attack because the opponent is prone.

APL4

↗ **Tripping Chain (2):** CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple traps (tripping and melee attack); Atk +15 melee touch (trip) and +15/+15 melee (2d4+2, spiked chain); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 18.

Note: This trap is really one CR 1 trap that trips and a second doubled-up CR 1 trap that attacks with a spiked chain. If the tripping attack succeeds, a +4 bonus applies to the spiked chains' attack because the opponent is prone.

APL6

↗ **Advanced Tripping Chain (2):** CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple traps (tripping and melee attack); Atk +16 melee touch (trip) and +16/+16 melee (2d6+3, *large +1 spiked chain*); Search DC 17; Disable Device DC 24.

Note: This trap is really two CR 1 traps that trips and a second doubled-up CR 1 trap that attacks with spiked chains. If the tripping attack succeeds, a +4 bonus applies to the spiked chains' attack because the opponent is prone. Also, treat the trip attack as if from a Large opponent.

APL8

↗ **Advanced Tripping Chain (2):** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple traps (tripping and melee attack); Atk +16 melee touch (trip) and +16/+16 melee (2d6+3 +2d6 vs. Chaos Aligned, *large +1 keen spiked chain*); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 26.

Note: This trap is really two CR 1 traps that trips and a second doubled-up CR 1 trap that attacks with spiked chains. If the tripping attack succeeds, a +4 bonus applies to the spiked chain attack because the opponent is prone. Also, treat the trip attack as if from a Large opponent.

Talking to Ky'quil

Ky'quil is most happy to be set free. She needs her cell opened, her arms untied, her leg weights removed, and her blindfold taken off. Then, if it's not too much trouble, she'd like to be healed out of unconsciousness (5 nonlethal points).

Ky'quil speaks perfect Sylvan, but a very halting Common. The below text assumes she is speaking in Common. Keep her responses in this language short and stunted. If a PC does speak Sylvan, she's happy to converse in that language and turn the below responses into something more eloquent.

💎 **Ky'quil:** Female desert pixie (as per pixie); hp 3.

The following text lists some of the PCs' likely questions and Ky'quil's answers.

- **Who/what are you?:** "Name is Ky'quil. You call me desert pixie."
- **Where are you from?:** "Me live among sand and rocks. Me live here long time."

- **Why are you in the cage:** "Little, blue, mean ones capture me, chase off my mate. He come soon to rescue me!"
- **Why did the kobolds hunt you?:** "Little blue mean ones hate my kind. We play tricks on them for many generations. Then we play big trick to impress humans who wait among rocks"
- **What trick?:** "We know dragon dead, but little blue mean ones pretend he not dead. We set off traps; we destroy the defenses between them and the deep ones, those who pace their tombs. The dead follow us up to little blue mean ones."
- **How did you get captured:** "Mighty war band of little blue mean ones, led by newest chief of twelve. They have dragon-winged sorcerers and others. They use magic to foil our invisibility. Crossbow bolts and poison."
- **Where is your mate?:** "He get away, though little, blue, mean ones claim him dead. But they have no body."
- **Why no body, and the hunt called off?:** "Great horn blew, hunting party recalled. Little blue mean ones here fight battle with the tomb pacers. They lost. Hunting party return too late, or just late enough. Depends on point of view."
- **Are the undead coming back?:** "Yes, they very dangerous. They lead by men who not realize them dead. Powerful men. They hold rituals. Now a ritual time. They come back, within days. Come for survivors."
- **What about the dragon?:** "Always dragons here. Always will be. Last dragon killed by man on metal horse. We picked his banner. Little blue mean ones take dragon parts to fool the desert. Man on metal horse take treasure, many-many weapons of magic. Always dragons here. Some killed by kin, some killed in kind."
- **What can you tell us of history?:** "<shrugs> Passage of time. Not care much about it. Time before, time ahead. All same. Live for the moment. This place home to history, history of dragons, exiled dragons. Evil among evil dragons."
- **Have you seen this locket?:** "Yes! That is the locket of my beloved. I have one just like it around my neck. Little blue mean ones no take it, think it bad luck. Why do you have his locket?"
- **Is there a reward for giving you this locket?:** "...mourn my loss... treasure you shall be given. Rewards from our horde among the rocks. When it is time, seek me out among them and you may take what you will."
- **Is there a way to get to the undead?:** "Do not go there!!! It is certain doom. I will not curse you with the knowledge to venture there."
- **Know anything about the big magic door?:** "Little. Place of ritual for dark dragons. Opens

with magic key. The kobold lord wears the key about his neck. Purple crystal.”

- **How can we find you again?:** “Once I’ve returned to the rocks and boulders, simply call out my name loudly while pouring sand from your hands onto your head. I shall come to you.”
- **Is the pouring sand a magical ritual?:** “No, but it sure is funny to watch!”
- **Can you aid us?:** “I am not creature who takes to fighting well. But because you have aided me, should you need my limited abilities, be it feet, hands or wings, then I will aid you as long as you respect my well being.”

Treasure: Looting the trap.

APL 2: L: 30; C: 0; M: 0

APL 4: L: 50; C: 0; M: 0

APL 6: L: 0; C: 0; M: *large +1 spiked chain* (194 gp).

APL 8: L: 0; C: 0; M: *large +1 axiomatic spiked chain* (694 gp).

Development: It does not matter if the PCs hand over the locket or not, but it is important the PCs free Ky’quil the desert pixie in order for her to have an in-depth conversation with the PCs, as well as reward them at the end of the adventure.

If the PCs insist, she takes them out to the rocks right away and gives them their rewards instead of waiting till they are leaving (presumably at the end of the adventure).

If asked about what the rewards are, she just says they are trinkets liberated from passers-by.

ENCOUNTER 6: DEAD DRAGONS AWAKE

Before you a pair of double doors crafted of some type of grey-blue metal stand fully 20 feet high and 20 feet wide. Their surface is graven in silver with many arcane and mystical symbols. About the handles of the doors is hung a silver chain with links as thick as a baby’s fist. The chain has a master link with a curved recess.

Above the door, carved into a massive stone block, is a stylized representation of a five-headed dragon.

On one of the double doors, graven seemingly almost as an after thought in design, is a black-outlined drawing of a scorpion. It flicks slightly as your light moves.

Encounter 6A: The Doors

The doors are protected by an *arcane lock* spell cast at 14th level and are made of some type of gray-blue stone. The doors are also within the area of effect of a *dimensional lock* spell cast at 14th level.

Graven upon their surface can be seen silver runes and a magically inked scorpion picture. The following are the runes on the door followed by their meaning:



Warning/danger (treasure)



Danger/Dangerous/Deadly (elemental)



Thrall/prisoner (truth/sword)



Darkness (light)



Death (modified earth sign – exact meaning unclear)



Evil/evil prisoner (time)

A separate Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 19 + APL) for each symbol allows the PC to decipher the runes. Find below the meanings of the symbols. Bracketed meanings are what the PC will think the symbol means if they fail their Spellcraft check.

If *detect magic* is cast a Spellcraft check (DC 21) reveals that the doors radiate a strong aura of Abjuration magic

Scorpion Rune: This rune is different in design to the other runes, and magical in nature. It is most likely a personal or household pass-ward of some sort. The mark was inscribed on the doors some time after the other symbols were carved on the doors. It radiates faint necromancy and transmutation auras. At this stage, however, nothing more can be understood about it.

🗡️ **Portal of the Dragon:** 2 in. thick; hardness 20; hp 100; AC 5; Break DC 40; DC 36 Open Locks; Unlocks with key of kobold lord (purple crystal) or scorpion tattoo from *COR5-09 Gateway to the Bright Desert*.

Placing the purple crystal (the kobold lord’s key) into the master link of the silver chain opens the doors. A PC who wears the scorpion tattoo from *COR5-09 Gateway to the Bright Desert* can touch the scorpion drawing on the door and the doors open. The details of this tattoo are listed below.

🦂 **Sulm Tattoo:** The PC has been given a special scorpion-like tattoo by Danigar. It is not magical.

Development: The doors reveal a passageway (which is actually half of an enclosed bridge) that leads them onto DM’s Map 2 and into real danger.

Encounter 6B: Here There Were Dragons

Before you lies a tapered corridor. The corridor ends inside a giant sculptured mouth of a dragon. Ahead of you is a large round chamber. The floor of the chamber is thirty feet below you.

Twenty feet directly in front of you, at the same level, is a 20-foot-wide disc floating in the center of the chamber. The disc has a pedestal and odd arcane symbols and devices on it.

Thirty feet below the floating disc is a much larger circular design, comprised of five almost evenly spaced glowing sections. Each section is transparent, filtering the dark chasm below with a tint of either blue, green, red, white, or black.

Along the walls near each transparent colored sector, is a large, stone, sliding door. There are five doors in total.

Directly opposite the dragon's mouth (past the pedestal) is another carved dragon's mouth, seemingly identical to the one you are in.

This is a dark ritual room. Below the multi-colored, five-segmented, round wall of force is a 60-foot-deep shaft that ends in a deep well of liquid negative energy.

The floating platform with its arcane control panel is used to (among other things) activate and control the different color segments of the 'floor' of force. This area was heavily used in dark rituals.

Behind the stone doors are the guardians of this place. Zombie dragons with each color represented are waiting to issue forth and kill all who have awoken them. Normally, the true masters of this place would use their powers to bring forth the guardian undead, and remove from a keeping place in the head of each undead dragon, a colored crystal.

These crystals are made in the image of those depicted along the hall of history. The crystals, when used right, activate the altar in the next encounter.

Getting over to the floating disk is a minor challenge in and of itself, but one that resourceful PCs should meet well. Jump checks, magic, grappling hooks, flying pixies, and a whole host of other methods can (with a little effort) get ropes and PCs across the gap, even during the attacks of the zombie dragons.

The doors containing the undead dragons open one round after the PCs have entered above the glowing circle (or right after the box text). Once free, they lumber forth until they can charge (a flying charge if necessary).

The entire chamber is under the effect of a *dimensional lock* spell cast by a 14th level caster.

The Control Panel

In the middle of the chamber is a 10-foot disk with arcane controls on it. This control panel, if properly deciphered, has the potential to make this combat much less deadly.

A PC on the disk can spend a full round studying the symbols and controls. (This provokes attacks of opportunity). At the end of the full round, the PC has a

choice of which skill to use (but the players should not be told the DC).

Disable Device: DC 20—operational knowledge.

Knowledge (arcana): DC 15—operational knowledge, purpose of device.

Use Magic Device: DC 15—operational knowledge.

Intelligence check: DC 20—operational knowledge, purpose of device.

Operational Knowledge

"You have figured out that with some doing, specific energy sectors in the floor can be opened and closed, one at a time. The controls are complex and seem to change at times, thus backlash of energy is possible."

Purpose of Device

"This device controls the energy sectors to be opened and closed as per the color associated with it. This implies some kind of ritual in which objects or creatures are lowered into the pit (and then removed). Though far beyond your current understanding, these controls also effect and monitor the level of negative energy in the chasm below the energy circle as well as many other dark and trans-dimensional effects that would take months to learn."

Retry—A PC can retry any of the above checks above as per the methods listed.

Once a PC has operational knowledge of the control panel, he can attempt to use the most basic function of the pedestal.

Once per round as a full-round action, the PC can choose a listed skill to attempt to open or close one colored section of the floor of his choosing.

Disable Device: DC 15 +APL.

Knowledge Arcana: DC 12+APL

Use Magic Device: DC 12+APL

Intelligence check: DC 14 + ½ APL

At higher APLs the control panel is damaged and covered in dust and the detritus of ages, which makes understanding its function harder.

If the check is successful, the preselected color section opens or closes (changes state).

If the check fails by 5 or less, then the PC suffers an energy backlash (see chart below) and no sector is affected.

If the check fails by more than 5, then nothing happens.

A PC can retry each turn as per the listed method.

Backlash by sector color selected.

Red: 1d4 multiplied by APL of fire damage

Blue: 1d4 multiplied by APL of electricity damage

Green: 1d4 multiplied by APL of sonic damage

Black: 1d4 multiplied by APL of acid damage

White: 1d4 multiplied by APL of cold damage

Any monster or PC on a sector when it opens immediately must make a DC 15 + APL Reflex save (at

higher APLs the trap opens quicker) or fall into the well of negative energy, unless protected up by magic (such as a *flyspell*).

There are rough handholds along the edge of the well. Feather falling PCs are pulled toward these as part of the negative energy updraft. PCs either wait for rescue, or attempt a DC 25 Climb check to get up at least 30 feet of wall (the well is 60 feet to the surface of the negative energy). The liquid negative energy itself is 20 feet deep.

For every round exposed to the negative energy, a living creature takes 2d6 negative energy damage and one temporary negative level. These levels come back after an hour.

Finally, if one of the undead dragons falls into the negative energy, its body becomes trapped within the power of the negative energy. The zombie body of the dragon stops moving and is effectively out of the combat (requiring more rituals to reactivate it).

As a side effect, the crystal contained within its head (for safe keeping) shoots out of the well, penetrating a sector of energy (if none are open) and lands on the floor near the wall (where the PCs can retrieve it).

Smashing the Controls

There is a not so subtle way to handle the controls. If the controls are broken, then all color sectors each have a 50% of changing their state immediately. After this, the controls can no longer be operated (thus no more changes in state for the color sectors).

Control Panel: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; AC 5; Break DC 20.

Map: Due to the limitations of 5-foot squares representing round and uneven objects, and because its important to know which side of a dividing line a PC or monster is on, ask the player to declare which side of a border he is on (or straddling) if a square is split. i.e., between the blue and green square, the PC would declare himself on the blue side or green side, or straddling both.

If a PC is straddling and the ground suddenly gives way on one side, allow a DC 10+APL Reflex save to jump to the safe side.

Creatures: The following creatures are encountered here:

APL2 (EL 5)

➤ **Wyrmling Black Dragon Zombies (2):** hp 74, 74; see Appendix 1.

APL4 (EL 7)

➤ **Wyrmling Black Dragon Zombies (4):** hp 74, 74, 74, 74; see Appendix 1.

APL6 (EL 9)

➤ **Very Young Black Dragon Zombies (4):** hp 128, 128, 128, 128; see Appendix 1.

APL8 (EL 11)

➤ **Young Black Dragon Zombies (5):** hp 183, 183, 183, 183, 183; see Appendix 1.

Tactics: The dragons have a dual purpose here. They act as guardians for the negative energy well and also as repositories of the crystals needed to activate the shrine. If commanded to by a cult member, the dragons would bow their heads and allow the colored crystal from each to be removed from inside the top of their heads (and be placed back when done).

But here, the dragons first move out of their holding pens and into the floor of the chamber. Then, as the opportunity arises, they attack the PCs. This may involve flying charges from below and above, or the undead dragons backing the PCs down the corridor.

If necessary, the undead dragons chase the PCs all around the complex, but the dragons do not leave the mouth of the cave. Once the PCs or any other living target is out of their sight for more than 10 minutes, the dragons attempt to return to their holding cells. The doors do not close by themselves, though, needing to be reset by a master, so the dragons attack again when the PCs come back into the room.

Treasure: Each undead dragon has a colored crystal in its head, the size of a man's fist. There is a red, blue, green, and white crystal. In the lower APLs the other crystals are embedded in the head of destroyed dragons that lie motionless in the pens.

ALL APLs: Red, Blue, Black, Green and White crystals (for use in Encounter 7).

Development: Once the PCs have collected all the crystals (either from the corpse-inhabited pens, or from peeling open the flesh from the head of defeated zombies), they can attempt to successfully complete the altar challenge of Encounter 7. If the PCs have not found the crystals allow them DC 12 Spot checks to notice something shining from within a dragon's corpse.

ENCOUNTER 7: THE PROPHECY

The focus of this chamber is a nondescript altar made of blue-gray stone. Around the center of the altar are colored sockets the size of a man's fist.

This altar (among other things) is the keeper of knowledge for a specific task. For reasons not to be disclosed here, the forces behind this temple, perhaps this place was created, to foil a plot by a dark god. Their reasoning is their own.

Inserting the five gems in the proper order produces a parchment scrawled with Draconic writing.

This writing vaguely and cryptically explains what is needed to destroy an evil artifact—the *Scorpion Crown*.

This parchment is Player Handout 2.

Trap: The altar is trapped in such a way that placing the crystals into the sockets in the wrong order triggers a trap (detailed below).

Every time a wrong crystal (even the same one) is placed in the wrong order or wrong socket, the trap is triggered.

The correct order (as hinted at in the Hall of History) is: red, blue, black, green, and white.

The spell effect fires toward the PC who triggered it. Area effect spells (such as the *lightning bolt* and the *fireball* spells) risk affecting those within the area of effect.

APL2

↪ **Melf's Acid Arrow Trap:** CR 3; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +2 ranged touch spell effect (*Melf's acid arrow*, 3rd-level wizard, 2d4 acid/round for 2 rounds); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27.

APL4

↪ **Lightning Bolt Trap:** CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 electricity, DC 14 Reflex save for half); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

APL6

↪ **Fireball Trap:** CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*Fireball*, 8th-level wizard, 8d6 fire, DC 14 Reflex save for half); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

APL8

↪ **Sonicball (as per fireball) Trap:** CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*Fireball [sonic substitution]*, 10th-level wizard, 10d6 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save for half); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Development: Once the five gems have been placed into the altar in the correct order, a parchment made of the skin of a gold dragon appears. It has cryptic words written in Draconic. This is an ancient prophecy kept here for millennia.

This parchment is Player Handout 2.

It should be noted on the AR that the character possesses this scroll (each PC can automatically have a copy).

CONCLUSION

By this point, the PCs should have collected up the mystical parchment that speaks of the unmaking of the *Scorpion Crown*.

To complete this adventure, the PCs need only travel back to the Lady Karistyne and show her the parchment and tell her scholars all they have learned.

Before leaving Dagger Rock, the PCs are stopped by Ky'quill the desert pixie (if they had not already sought her out). This is assuming of course the PCs successfully rescued her.

The little desert pixie offers you your rewards and says, "Thank you for all you have done. Should you ever

return and have need of me, you know where to find me."

See the reward section below for details.

With Dagger Rock investigated and no dragon present, Lady Karistyne will be happy to know that Dagger Rock seems to pose no threat.

If the PCs have recovered the mysterious parchment continue:

No doubt however she will be intrigued by the strange parchment you have found.

Either way, it looks like this will not be the last time your feet feel the hot touch of the Bright Desert.

From here, the PCs have an uneventful journey back to see Lady Karistyne. The PCs should have enough water remaining for the journey, and even if they don't, the desert pixie can lead them to enough water sources to supply them for the journey.

Upon reaching Lady Karistyne's castle, the paladin greets the PCs. Read the following:

"I congratulate you on your return. I know it was not an easy trek. Now let us see your risks have wrought?"

The section below details the PCs' probable report and Karistyne's replies. Roleplay here as time allows.

- **The dragon was a hoax!**: "There is no dragon at Dagger Rock? This is very interesting. You have done well."
- **There is a strange dragon cult there!**: "This is disturbing news. I have once heard of cults that must hide, even among their evil dragon ilk. This truly portends of deeper machinations. But of what, I do not know."
- **Where is Helena?**: "She is on a very dangerous and secret mission. I can not go into details on it."
- **I think her apprentice is a Rary lackey:** "Really? I shall investigate the matter. If it is true, it shall be dealt with through love and compassion."
- **The dragon was killed by a man on a metal horse.:** "A man on a metal horse ... That can only be one person in the Bright Desert: Lord Robilar, Rary's minion of darkness. A man who sees himself as a patron to adventure, but is just a bully and thug."
- **Is Rary involved in all this?:** "If there are agents of Rary investigating Dagger Rock, then Rary himself is not far behind. Rary is evil, but he is not stupid. If this is indeed the glimpse into a plot of Rary's, then he shall have his actions and feints planned out many moves in advance. His true motives need to be uncovered!"
- **We found a hall of pictures:** "I have sages who would find this information fascinating, but it

only disturbs my guts. This sounds like the works of evil, but evil to what ends? I do not like being kept in suspense. I shall have my sages take down all the details you can give and when their analysis is done, you shall be briefed”

- **We found this scroll:** “This scroll disturbs me even more, for I cannot tell its intent. I prefer my challenges to be either good or evil, light or dark. Shades of gray perplex me. Either way, I shall give this to my sages, and shall supply you with a full report so you may help me continue this quest among the Bright Desert”.
- **We have done well. Reward us!** “You indeed have done well and I shall reward you. But not only because of your bravery these past days, but for your heroics to come, I shall aid you in your future challenges with limited access to my supply of arms and armor, and perhaps some magic too.”

See ‘collecting rewards’ for the rewards mentioned by Lady Karistyne.

Collecting Rewards

Favor of Ky’quil

Ky’quil the desert pixie offers the PCs all she has, but it’s not much of interest. A left shoe, some green vestments, assorted coins, a tin mug, multitudes of buttons and other assorted trinkets.

The item of most interest is a banner with the crest of Lord Robilar, chief henchmen of Rary. She explains she pinched it from the metal horse riding man when he came and slew the dragon.

• **Karistyne’s Arms and Armor:** For reporting back to her castle with a job well done, Lady Karistyne grants the PCs access several different magical items.

The following are items that are granted for access on the AR. They are not gained as treasure for the GP cap.

The list is cumulative for APL.

APL 2: *+1 fortification, light full plate; mithral heavy shield ; darkwood buckler; +1 bane (dragon) longsword; +1 bane (dragon) longbow, composite (+2 Str); potion of shield of faith +4; scroll of holy sword ; scroll of restoration ; scroll of ice storm.*

APL 4: *ring of protection +2, potion of fly, +1 bashing mithral heavy shield; +2 chainmail; shatterspike.*

APL 6: *scroll of flame strike, scroll of dispel evil; scroll of undeath to death; scroll of chain lightning; Gloves of dexterity +4.*

APL 8: *amulet of natural armor +2, bracers of armor +3, stone horse, courser, periapt of wound closure.*

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 4A and/or 5A

Remove the kobold presence

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	120 XP
APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	240 XP

Encounter 5B: Dust of the Desert

Encounter and survive the trap

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	90 XP
APL 6	120 XP
APL 8	150 XP

Encounter 6B: Here there were dragons

Defeat the undead dragons

APL 2	150 XP
APL 4	210 XP
APL 6	270 XP
APL 8	330 XP

Encounter 7: Where the shrine don't shine

Retrieve the scroll from the trapped altar.

APL 2	90 XP
APL 4	120 XP
APL 6	150 XP
APL 8	180 XP

Story Award

Bring back information to Lady Karistyne.

APL 2	20 XP
APL 4	30 XP
APL 6	45 XP
APL 8	60 XP

Good roleplaying:

APL 2	70 XP
APL 4	100 XP
APL 6	135 XP
APL 8	165 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 2	450 XP
APL 4	675 XP
APL 6	900 XP
APL 8	1,250 XP

Treasure Summary

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information

about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spells to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate.

L = Looted gear from enemy

C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables

M = Magic Items (sell value)

Encounter 4B: The dragon's den

Treasure: The set of ornate and historic weapons rack, commissioned to hold weapons entrusted to ancient Geoff heroes. Nobles in Geoff would pay good coin for the return of these otherwise powerless heirlooms. The racks can be disassembled for easier transport.

APL 2: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 4: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 6: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

APL 8: Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 0 gp, Magic—*Rack of Geoff*(300 gp).

Encounter 5A: A Diplomatic Mission

Treasure: Loot the kobolds for full treasure.

APL 2: L: 30; C: 0; M: +1 *small longbow* (194 gp); *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp).

APL 4: L: 60; C: 0; M: +1 *shocking small longbow* (694 gp); *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp);

APL 6: L: 60; C: 0; M: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp), *+1 small chain shirt* (108 gp), *+1 shocking small longbow* (694 gp), *+2 Gloves of Dexterity* (333 gp).

APL 8: L: 60; C: 0; M: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle* (316 gp), *+1 small chain shirt* (108 gp), *+1 shocking small longbow* (694 gp), *+2 Gloves of Dexterity* (333 gp), *+2 amulet of health* (333 gp).

Encounter 5B: Dust of the desert

Treasure: Looting the trap.

APL 2: L: 30; C: 0; M: 0

APL 4: L: 50; C: 0; M: 0

APL 6: L: 0; C: 0; M: *large +1 spiked chain* (194 gp).

APL 8: L: 0; C: 0; M: *large +1 keen spiked chain* (694 gp).

Maximum Possible Treasure

APL 2: 400 gp

APL 4: 600 gp

APL 6: 800 gp

APL8: 1250 gp

Adventure Record Text

Cross out the following if it does not apply:

ALL APLs (if awarded)

☛ **Mystic Parchment:** This parchment is made from the skin of a gold dragon. Its cryptic writings tell of a crown that must be destroyed and what items and incantations are needed to unmake it.

☛ **Blue Dragonhide Mantle:** A dragon's hide can be rendered flexible enough to wear as a cloak. Grafting a dragonhide mantle requires as much hide as a suit of hide armor, and the mantle must be created to fit the wearer's size. A blue dragonhide mantle grants the wearer resistance 5 against a specific type of energy, as appropriate to the dragon (electricity for blue).

This resistance is treated as an extraordinary (and thus non-magical) feature of the mantle. It doesn't stack with any-other energy resistance (of the same type) possessed by the character. In addition, the wearer of a dragonhide mantle gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Intimidate checks against dragons.

Dragoncraft Price: 3,800 gp; Dragon Part: blue dragon hide; Skill: Craft (leatherworking); Weight: same as ordinary hide armor of appropriate size.

☛ **Banner of Robilar (Su):** This war-tattered banner displays the device of Lord Robilar. All sentient creatures of the Bright Desert Region opposed to the Empire of the Bright Lands within 60 feet of it must make a DC 12 Will save or become shaken. The banner must be flown (and visible) at the start of the battle to be effective. Charisma-based skill checks (except Intimidate) toward desert centaurs suffer a -10 circumstance penalty if the banner is visible.

Faint necromancy; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*; Price 4,000 gp.

☛ **Karistyne's Arms and Armor:** For reporting back to her castle with a job well done, Lady Karistyne grants the PCs access to several different magical items. This favor grants the PC Core access to the following items as long as he remains in the good graces of Karistyne. They are not gained as treasure for the GP cap. The list is cumulative.

APL 2: *+1 fortification, light full plate; mithral heavy shield; darkwood buckler; +1 bane (dragon) longsword; +1 bane (dragon) longbow, composite (+2 Str); potion of shield of faith +4.*

APL 4: *ring of protection +2; potion of fly; +1 bashing mithral heavy shield; +2 chainmail; shatterspike.*

APL 6: *scroll of flame strike, scroll of dispel evil; scroll of undeath to death; scroll of chain lightning; Gloves of dexterity +4.*

APL 8: *amulet of natural armor +2; bracers of armor +3; stone horse, courser; periapt of wound closure.*

Items Found During the Adventure

Cross off all items not found

APL 2

Blue Dragonhide Mantle (Adventure; 3,800 gp; See above and the *Draconomicon*)

Banner of Robilar (Core, 4,000 gp; See above)

APL 4 (all of APL 2 plus the following)

+1 shocking small longbow (Core; 8,330 gp CL 6th; *DMG*)

APL 6 (all of APL 2-4 plus the following)

+1 large spiked chain (Core; 2,650 gp CL 5th *DMG*)

APL 8 (all of APL 2-6 plus the following)

+1 large keen spiked chain (Core; 8, 650 gp; 6th; *DMG*)

APPENDIX 1: MONSTER AND NPC STATISTICS

APL 2

Encounter 6B: Here There Were

Dragons

➤ **Wyrmling Black Dragon Zombie (2):** CR 3; Tiny undead; HD 8d12+3; hp 74 (60); Init -1; Spd 60 ft. (can't run), fly 100 ft. (clumsy); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp -4; Atk +4 melee (1d3, bite); Space/Reach 2 1/2 ft./0 ft. (5 ft. with bite); SA -; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, single action only, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Single Action (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

Note: These zombie dragons have been previously injured. The corpses of these zombie dragons have been treated so that one appears as a blue dragon and the other appears as a red. It is obvious however that they are all zombies.

As described in the adventure each zombie dragon has a colored crystal hidden in its head. The color of the crystal is the same as the color of the dragon it is hidden in.

Encounter 5A: A Diplomatic Mission

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War 5; CR 2 Small humanoid (Reptilian) (3 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 5d8-5; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural, +4 chain shirt); Base Atk +5; Grp +1; Atk +7 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork small longsword) or +9 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork small longsword) or +9 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*) or +7/+7 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); SQ light sensitivity, darkvision 60 ft., Electricity Resist 5; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +7, Jump +7, Search +2, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Profession (miner) +2; Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Dazzled in bright sunlight or within the range of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle*, masterwork small chain shirt, +1 *shocking small longbow*, 20 arrows, masterwork small longsword, small dagger, small purple robes.

Encounter 6B: Here There Were Dragons

➤ **Wyrmling Black Dragon Zombie (4):** CR 3; Tiny undead; HD 8d12+3; hp 74; Init -1; Spd 60 ft. (can't run), fly 100 ft. (clumsy); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp -4; Atk +4 melee (1d3, bite); Space/Reach 2 1/2 ft./0 ft. (5 ft. with bite); SA -; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, single action only, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Single Action (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

Note: The corpses of these zombie dragons have been treated so that one appears as a blue dragon, one as a red dragon and one as a green dragon. The final dragon appears as its normal color. It is obvious however that they are all zombies.

As described in the adventure each zombie dragon has a colored crystal hidden in its head. The color of the crystal is the same as the color of the dragon it is hidden in.

Encounter 5A: A Diplomatic Mission

➤ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War 8; CR 5 Small Humanoid (Reptilian) (3 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 8d8; hp 36; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural, +5 *magic +1 chain shirt*); Base Atk +8; Grp +4; Atk +10 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +13 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*) or +11/+11/+6 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); SQ light sensitivity, darkvision 60 ft., Electricity Resist 5; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +10, Jump +10, Search +2, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Profession (miner) +2; Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Precise Shot.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Dazzled in bright sunlight or within the range of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle*, +1 *small chain shirt*, +1 *shocking small longbow*, +2 *Gloves of Dexterity*, 20 arrows, masterwork small longsword, small dagger, small purple robes.

Encounter 6B: Here There Were Dragons

➤ **Very Young Black Dragon Zombie (4):** CR 5; Small undead; HD 14d12+3; hp 128; Init -1; Spd 60 ft. (can't run), fly 100 ft. (clumsy); AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +4; Atk +8 melee (1d4+1, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA -; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, single action only, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 15, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Single Action (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

Note: The corpses of these zombie dragons have been treated so that one appears as a blue dragon, one as a red dragon and one as a green dragon. The final dragon appears as its normal color. It is obvious however that they are all zombies.

As described in the adventure each zombie dragon has a colored crystal hidden in its head. The color of the crystal is the same as the color of the dragon it is hidden in.

Encounter 5A: A Diplomatic Mission

☛ **Kobold Lord:** male kobold War 8; CR 5 Small Humanoid (Reptilian) (3 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 8d8+8; hp 44; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural, +5 *magic +1 chain shirt*); Base Atk +8; Grp +4; Atk +10 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +13 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*) or +11/+11/+6 ranged (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 electricity, +1 *small shocking longbow*); SQ light sensitivity, darkvision 60 ft., Electricity Resist 5; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +10, Jump +10, Search +2, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Profession (miner) +2; Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Precise Shot.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Dazzled in bright sunlight or within the range of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: *Blue Dragonhide Mantle*, +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *small shocking flaming longbow*, +2 *Gloves of Dexterity*, +2 *Amulet of Health*, 20 arrows, masterwork small longsword, small dagger, small purple robes.

Encounter 6B: Here There Were Dragons

☛ **Young Black Dragon Zombie (5):** CR 6; Medium undead; HD 20d12+3; hp 183; Init -1; Spd 60 ft. (can't run), fly 150 ft. (clumsy); AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +10; Grp +13; Atk +13 melee (1d6+3, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA -; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, single action only, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 17, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Single Action (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

Note: The corpses of these zombie dragons have been treated so that one appears as a blue dragon, one as a red dragon and one as a green dragon. The final two dragons appear as their normal color. It is obvious however that they are all zombies.

As described in the adventure each zombie dragon has a colored crystal hidden in its head. The color of the crystal is the same as the color of the dragon it is hidden in.

APPENDIX 2: KNOWLEDGE CHECKS FOR MURALS

The following is document lists for the DM several Knowledge checks that the PCs can attempt concerning the mural's investigated along the Hall of History. The checks are broken down by picture number that corresponds to Player Handout #1.

Some checks have multiple DCs and information. The information is accumulative for the highest DC beaten.

Picture 1

Knowledge (geography):

- DC 13: The basic outline (hills, coast, etc) match that of the modern Bright Desert region.
- DC 18: The lone peak mentioned in the text is indeed Dagger Rock.

Knowledge (history):

- DC 15: The crude boats and migrating Flan matches the assumed passage of the Flan people to this area some 2000+ years ago.
- DC 20: The Flan formed several kingdoms here that warred and that last to survive was Sulm.
- DC 25: Many Flan migrated to get away from oppressive and evil Ur-Flan.

Picture 2

Knowledge (geography):

- DC 18: These hills and mountains are the Abbor-Alz.

Intelligence check:

- DC 15: These drawings were not made by humans or demi-humans.

Knowledge (arcane):

- DC 13: These are the drawings and markings of a user of the Draconic language.
- DC 20: Dragons and kobolds were the primary creators of these murals.

Knowledge (arcane):

- DC 15: The red crystal is an *ioun stone*.
- DC 20: This *ioun stone* (and the others depicted in the murals) are large and probably specially connected to dragon users.
- DC 30: The powers of these draconic *ioun stones* vary drastically and are said to store the power of other dragons. Only a dragon can use these items.

Knowledge (local-core):

- DC 13: The Bright Lands are rumored to be a great source of *ioun stones*
- DC 17: Rary the Traitor seeks out all rumors of *ioun stone* deposits within the Bright Lands.
- DC 25: Rary has yet to find any powerful deposits of *ioun stone*.

Picture 3

Knowledge (religion):

- DC 10: This is a burial ceremony
- DC 12: This is a burial ceremony being performed by ancient worshipers.
- DC 16: Some of the bodies are incased in such a way to symbolically deny them access to an afterlife. Others are being buried with honor.

Knowledge (architecture):

- DC 10: These are tombs cut into a natural cave structure.
- DC 12: Some of the tombs were specifically built for burial and designed well for traps.
- DC 15: Many of the tombs are not built by the humans depicted and are being modified for their use.
- DC 20: Many of these tombs are built to keep people inside as much as people out.

Knowledge (dungeoneering):

- DC10: These natural cave network depicted suggests a very extensive and deep system with many layers.

Picture 4

Knowledge (nature):

- DC 10: These people are conducting typical harvest activities.
- DC 15: The centaurs depicted are the same species that now dwell in the Bright Desert.

Knowledge (nobility):

- DC10: The activities of the people are very structured and productive suggesting strong leadership.
- DC 12: The centaurs are clearly allied with the humans and not slaves or servants.

Picture 5

Knowledge (religion):

- DC12: The human with the scimitar is a follower of Beory.

Knowledge (nobility):

- DC 10: The woodcutters are servants to a local lord and work on his behalf.
- DC 12: This is territorial dispute. The centaurs and the wood cutters are being represented by the equivalent of nobles.

Picture 6

Knowledge (architecture):

- DC15: This is a very well designed and defended city.
- DC18: This is a capital city of an influential kingdom.

Picture 7

Knowledge (religion):

- DC12: Though there are some similarities, the five-headed dragon may be a religious depiction of Tiamat; however if it is then this is a totally unknown way of depicting her. The evil dragon god Tiamat is typically depicted has a 5-headed corporeal dragon with a head of each color. This representation has five heads, but a shadowy body and no color.
- DC16: What ever this five-headed dragon is, it's depicted as either a divine being or the herald of one.

Knowledge (geography):

- DC 18: The painting suggests geo-political borders have been crossed and conquered.

Knowledge (architecture):

- DC15: The buildings and structure designs are different area to area as well as fortifications. This suggests that other cultures have been conquered and occupied.

Knowledge (nobility):

- DC10: The man depicted is the king of this land.
- DC 15: This is a powerful kingdom with many nobles separated from a royal line.
- DC20: The depictions suggest that the king is in conflict with his nobles, preferring the council and company of his sages and priests.

Picture 8

Knowledge (local-core):

- DC10: This is the famed scorpion crown.
- DC15: It is said that the crown was a gift and curse from Tharizdun to the king of Sulm.
- DC16: Once put on by the sorcerer-king, all those of Sulm were cursed and turned to manscorpions.

Knowledge (arcane):

- DC 20: This is the artifact known as the Scorpion Crown. It is thought to have been crafted by Tharizdun. It is said to hold some of his essence within it.

Picture 9

Knowledge (nature):

- DC10: The depiction in the painting is exactly what the ecology of the first paintings would turn into if a sudden climate change happened.

Knowledge (local):

- DC12: The centaurs of the Bright Desert are reputed to hate manscorpions.

Picture 10

Knowledge (dungeoneering):

- DC10: The small lizard-like humanoids are typical kobolds.

Knowledge (arcane):

- DC20: The picture suggests that the proper crystals will trigger something on the altar, but the crystals need to be placed in the slots in a specific order.

Picture 11

Knowledge (dungeoneering):

- DC12: These are abnormal kobolds. There bigger then most, and they have blue skin.

Knowledge (arcane):

- DC15: These lizard-like humanoids have dragon blood mixing their genes.

Knowledge (nobility):

- DC15: The five blue humanoids are tribal chiefs and the purple crystals and robes are symbols of their office.

Bardic Knowledge:

- DC 20: The dark energy sword is of a design from the late-period Sulm Empire.
- DC 25: The hammer is a good weapon hailing from the early Itar kingdom.

Knowledge (nature):

- DC20: The specific kind of flower from this and surrounding regions is extinct, only drawings in books are left.

APPENDIX 3: TRAVELING IN THE BRIGHT LANDS

TRAVELING IN THE BRIGHT LANDS

Travelers in the Bright Lands face many perils. Chief among these are the harsh landscape and unforgiving climate.

Full rules for travel in the Bright Desert are included in the *Sandstorm* accessory. However, to facilitate play the basics of these rules are presented here.

During a typical day the desert goes through a radical series of temperature changes.

During daylight hours the temperature in the desert is generally in the hot temperature band. Around midday however, and for two hours afterwards, the temperatures climbs into the severe heat temperature band. At night, the temperatures swiftly plunge into the cold temperature band. Thus, travelers must be ready to combat a number of temperature-challenges.

Most intelligent beings avoid traveling around midday and the two hours directly afterwards, breaking their journey to get into some shade.

Distances and Travel Times

Travel through the sandy wastes of the Bright Desert is slow; the PCs speed being cut by half. Even when the PCs leave the Bright Desert and enter the Abbor-Alz they are unable to travel any faster. This means that the PCs inevitably spend several days traveling through the region.

The following tables list the modified movement rates of individuals and their mounts moving through the Bright Desert and the Abbor-Alz.

PC and NPC Movement Rates

	Speed		
	20 ft.	30 ft.	40 ft.
One Round			
Walk	10 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.
Hustle	20 ft.	30 ft.	40 ft.
Run (x3)	30 ft.	45 ft.	60 ft.
Run (x4)	40 ft.	60 ft.	80 ft.
One Minute			
Walk	100 ft.	150 ft.	200 ft.
Hustle	200 ft.	300 ft.	400 ft.
Run (x3)	300 ft.	450 ft.	600 ft.
Run (x4)	400 ft.	600 ft.	800 ft.
One Hour			
Walk	1 miles	1 ½ miles	2 miles
Hustle	2 miles	3 miles	4 miles
One Day			
Walk	8 miles	12 miles	16 miles

Mount Movement Rates

	Speed

	30 ft. ¹	40 ft. ²	50 ft. ³	60 ft. ⁴
One Round				
Walk	15 ft.	20 ft.	25 ft.	30 ft.
Hustle	30 ft.	40 ft.	50 ft.	60 ft.
Run (x3)	45 ft.	60 ft.	75 ft.	90 ft.
Run (x4)	60 ft.	80 ft.	100 ft.	120 ft.
One Minute				
Walk	150 ft.	200 ft.	250 ft.	300 ft.
Hustle	300 ft.	400 ft.	500 ft.	600 ft.
Run (x3)	450 ft.	600 ft.	750 ft.	900 ft.
Run (x4)	600 ft.	800 ft.	1,000 ft.	1,200 ft.
One Hour				
Walk	1 ½ miles	2 miles	2 ½ mile	3 miles
Hustle	3 miles	4 miles	5 miles	6 miles
One Day				
Walk	12 miles	16 miles	20 miles	24 miles

- 1: Donkey, mule
- 2: Riding dog, pony, war pony
- 3: Heavy horse, heavy warhorse
- 4: Light Horse, light warhorse

Outward Journey: When the adventure starts, the PCs are half way to their destination. They are sheltering in a valley roughly 10 miles inside the bounds of the Bright Lands. To reach Dagger Rock they must traverse another 35 miles of desert.

Example: A party whose base unmodified movement is 30 feet per round takes almost three days to reach Dagger Rock from their start point.

Homeward Bound: Dagger Rocks stands almost exactly due south of Karistyne Castle. If the PCs travel in a straight line from Dagger Rock to the castle they need to cross roughly 45 miles of desert before gaining the shelter of the Abbor-Alz. From there the PCs must travel 30 miles through the arid hills to reach their final goal.

Example: A party whose base unmodified movement is 30 feet per round takes almost six and one half days to travel from Dagger Rock to Karistyne Castle. Four of these are spent in the Bright Desert and another two and a half traveling through the Abbor-Alz.

Getting Lost

Traveling through the trackless wastes of the desert is a challenging proposition. Not only do the PCs have to contend with the severe temperatures but they must also guard against getting lost.

The chances of PCs getting lost is covered in detail in chapter 3 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. However, in brief:

Poor Visibility: If the PCs can see less than 60 feet due to poor visibility (such as darkness, a sandstorm etc.) then they must make a successful DC 15 Survival check to avoid getting lost. A character with at least 5

ranks in Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local – Core) gain a +2 bonus to this check.

Check Frequency: Make a check every hour or portion thereof.

Effect of Being Lost: Characters lost move in a randomly determined direction. Check for the direction they move every hour. This continues until the PCs either realize they are lost or blunder into an unmistakable landmark.

Recognizing Being Lost: Once per hour of travel each character may make a DC 15 Survival check to realize they are lost. The DC of this check increases by 1 for every hour of random travel. Obviously, some circumstance may obviate this check, such as seeing a prominent landmark.

Setting A New Course: Each character may make a DC 15 +2 per hour of random travel, Survival check to determine the correct direction. Of course, characters several characters could disagree on the right direction.

APPENDIX 4: WEATHER HAZARDS OF THE BRIGHT LANDS

Heat Dangers

For game purposes, air temperature falls into one of nine following temperature bands. Temperatures relevant to play in the Bright Desert are listed below.

Temperature Bands

–20° F to 0° F	Severe cold*
1° F to 40° F	Cold
41° F to 60° F	Moderate
61° F to 90° F	Warm
91° F to 110° F	Hot
111° F to 140° F	Severe heat

*Extremely rare temperature, not dealt with in detail here.

Temperatures in the hot band (or hotter) can be hazardous to unprepared characters. Characters can take damage from such extreme heat, a condition generally referred to as heatstroke. At lower temperatures, this starts off as nonlethal damage while the character is still conscious, but it becomes lethal damage to those already knocked unconscious by heatstroke (with no saving throw allowed). A character who takes any nonlethal damage from heatstroke is considered fatigued.

A character with the Survival skill can receive a bonus on saving throws against heat and dehydration damage, and can apply this bonus to other characters as well. See the skill description on page 83 of the *Player's Handbook*.

The levels of protection described here refer to a character's protective measures against heat (see Protection Against Heat below). The relevant heat bands are also described below.

Cold: Unprotected characters must make successful Fortitude saving throws each hour (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing furs, or other warm clothing or protected by an endure elements spell are considered protected against this level of cold.

Hot: Unprotected characters must make successful Fortitude saving throws each hour (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or any kind of armor take –4 penalties on their saves.

Characters whose protection against heat is at least level 1 or higher (such as with the Heat Endurance feat or carrying a parasol) are safe at this temperature range and need not make the save.

Severe Heat: Unprotected characters must make successful Fortitude saving throws once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or any kind of armor take –4 penalties on their saves.

In addition, those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell (which lasts as long as the character remains in the area of extreme heat).

A character must have protection level 3 or higher to be protected against extreme heat. Level 2 is considered partial protection, and such characters take damage and make saving throws once per hour instead of once per 10 minutes. Level 1 provides no protection.

Protection Against Heat

Few people venture into the waste without some form of protection against heat. Most travelers dress appropriately in flowing, light clothing or staying near shade and water. In addition Magical protection further improves the chance to survive hot, dry climates and other special devices and alchemical concoctions can aid desert travel.

A character's protection against heat dangers is described by level of protection, which ranges from 1 to 5 or more. Such levels of protection do not confer any special fire resistance—a red dragon's breath still does the same damage. However, equipment that provides a bonus on saving throws against heat dangers contributes its bonus whether it is complete, partial, or ineffective protection against that degree of heat. Thus, even though keepcool salve is not sufficient to offer even partial protection against extreme heat, a character with keepcool salve (described in *Sandstorm*) still adds the item's +1 circumstance bonus on saves against nonlethal damage dealt by an extremely hot environment.

To determine your protection level, begin with your base protection level as determined on the table below and then add any applicable equipment modifiers from the second table.

Table 1–2: Base Protection Level Against Heat

0	Creature with no heat adaptations
1	Creature with Heat Endurance feat
1	Nondesert cold-blooded animal or vermin
1	Monsters native to hot climates
2	Desert animal or vermin
2	Monsters native to waste terrain

Heat Endurance Feat: Creatures with the Heat Endurance feat.

Nondesert Cold-Blooded Animal or Vermin: Creatures native to temperate or warm climates with a variable body temperature that lets them function well in heat approaching that of human body temperature (such as insects, lizards, snakes, tortoises, and toads).

Monsters Native to Hot Climates: Creatures whose Environment entry includes a warm terrain.

Desert Animal or Vermin: Animals with variable body temperatures or special adaptation to hot environments, such as heat dissipation or water conservation (camels, scorpions, sidewinder snakes, and so on).

Monsters Native to Waste Terrain: Monsters normally found in regions of extreme heat (including natives of fire-dominant planes) belong in this group.

Endure Elements: Creatures currently protected by an *endure elements* spell or similar effect.

Equipment Modifier to Base Heat Protection

- 0 No special equipment
- +1 Armorbright
- +1 Desert outfit
- +1 Keepcool salve
- +2 Hydration suit
- +3 Improvised shelter

Armorbright: A special alchemical item described in *Sandstorm*.

Desert Outfit: A special clothing item described in *Sandstorm*.

Keepcool Salve: A special alchemical item described in *Sandstorm*.

Hydration suit: A special clothing item described in *Sandstorm*.

Improvised Shelter: This bonus applies to characters who are not attempting to travel, but instead stop and seek shelter by digging into the sand, erecting a tent or windbreak, tapping water from desert vegetation, or the like.

Resistance to Fire: A character with a spell or effect granting resistance to fire applies this resistance to both lethal and nonlethal damage from hot temperatures. For example, a creature with resistance to fire 5 subtracts 5 from the 1d6 points of lethal damage dealt per 10 minutes by extreme heat (and therefore might take 1 point of heat damage, if a 6 is rolled) and 5 from the 1d4 points of nonlethal damage dealt.

Treating Heatstroke

Nonlethal damage from heatstroke (including the accompanying fatigue) cannot be recovered until the

character gets cooled off—by reaching shade, surviving until nightfall, getting doused in water, being targeted by *endure elements*, or the equivalent. Once the character is cooled or reaches a cooler environment (a temperature band of fewer than 90 degrees), the character responds normally to healing that removes nonlethal damage. When the character recovers the nonlethal damage taken from heatstroke, the fatigue penalties also end.

Dehydration

As noted on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, a character must consume 1 gallon of water per day to avoid dehydration. In particularly hot environments (those above 90° F), characters need more water, requiring double the normal amount. The amount of water required to avoid dehydration increases by 1 gallon per heat band above hot (so 3 gallons in severe heat, 4 in extreme heat, and so on). Characters can go without water for 1 day + a number of hours equal to their Constitution scores. After this time, a character must make a successful Constitution check each hour (DC 10, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. In particularly hot environments (those above 90° F), the time a character can go without water before making Constitution checks is reduced, as described on the table below.

Dehydration Times

Temperature (Band)	Time Before First Con Check
91–110 (hot)	12 + Con hours
111–140 (severe heat)	6 + Con hours

Being Dehydrated

A lack of sufficient water introduces a new condition—dehydrated.

Dehydrated: Characters who have taken nonlethal damage from lack of water are considered dehydrated and become fatigued. In addition, if a dehydrated character would take nonlethal damage from hot conditions (such as those described in this book or on page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), that damage instead becomes lethal damage.

A character who falls unconscious from nonlethal damage due to thirst begins to take the same amount of lethal damage instead. Damage from thirst, whether lethal or nonlethal, cannot be recovered until the character has been treated (see below); not even magic that restores hit points heals this damage.

Treating Dehydration: A character who has taken nonlethal damage from lack of water must be treated with long-term care (see the Heal skill description on page 75 of the *Player's Handbook*) to recover. This requires 24 hours of care and double the normal amount of water required per day for the conditions

(for instance, 2 gallons of water for normal conditions). If the character has also taken lethal damage from lack of water or from a hot environment, add +5 to the Heal DC and double the time required to recover (to 48 hours). Once this Heal check has succeeded, the damage taken by the character can be restored through the normal means.

Alternatively, certain spells can be used to rehydrate a character in place of the recovery time, water, and Heal check. The *hydrate* spell (see *Sandstorm*) accomplishes this function, as does the *heal* spell.

Bright Blindness

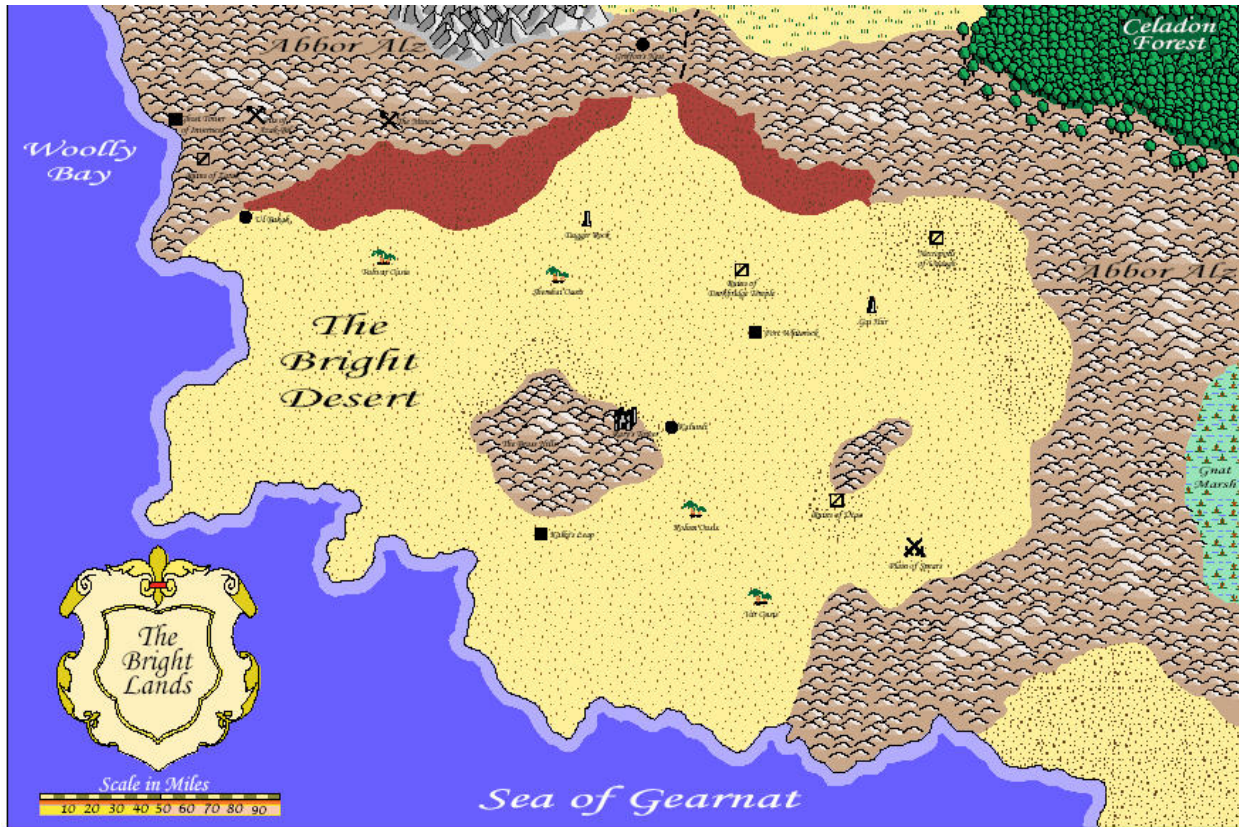
Bright Blindness is a condition that afflicts those traveling the white sands of the Bright Desert without adequate eye protection during the day. At first the vision of those afflicted becomes indistinct, with colored flashes and shapes appearing in their field of vision. Their eyes then begin to ache, becoming red and inflamed before finally the individual loses his vision for a number of days. Prolonged exposure can lead to permanent blindness.

Anyone traveling the white sands without protection must make a DC 15 Constitution check every four hours of travel. The DC of subsequent checks in a days travel increases by one. Failure means the character is temporarily blinded for 1d4 days.

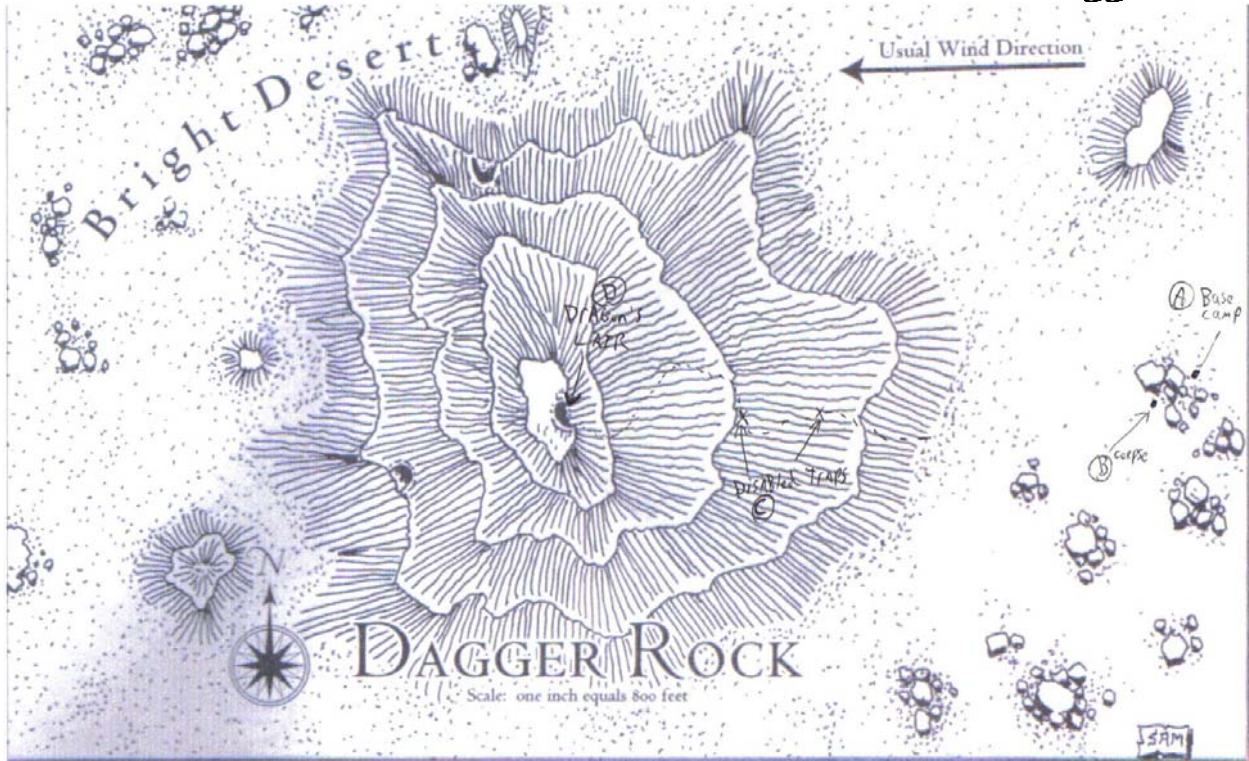
Characters suffering from Bright Blindness should also make these additional checks unless they have been completely blindfolded. If a character suffering from Bright Blindness fails a subsequent Constitution check their eyes are damaged beyond repair and they are permanently blinded.

A successful DC 15 Heal check and the complete blindfolding of the afflicted character's eyes halves the duration of the temporary blindness. *Remove blindness* removes both temporary and permanent Bright Blindness instantly.

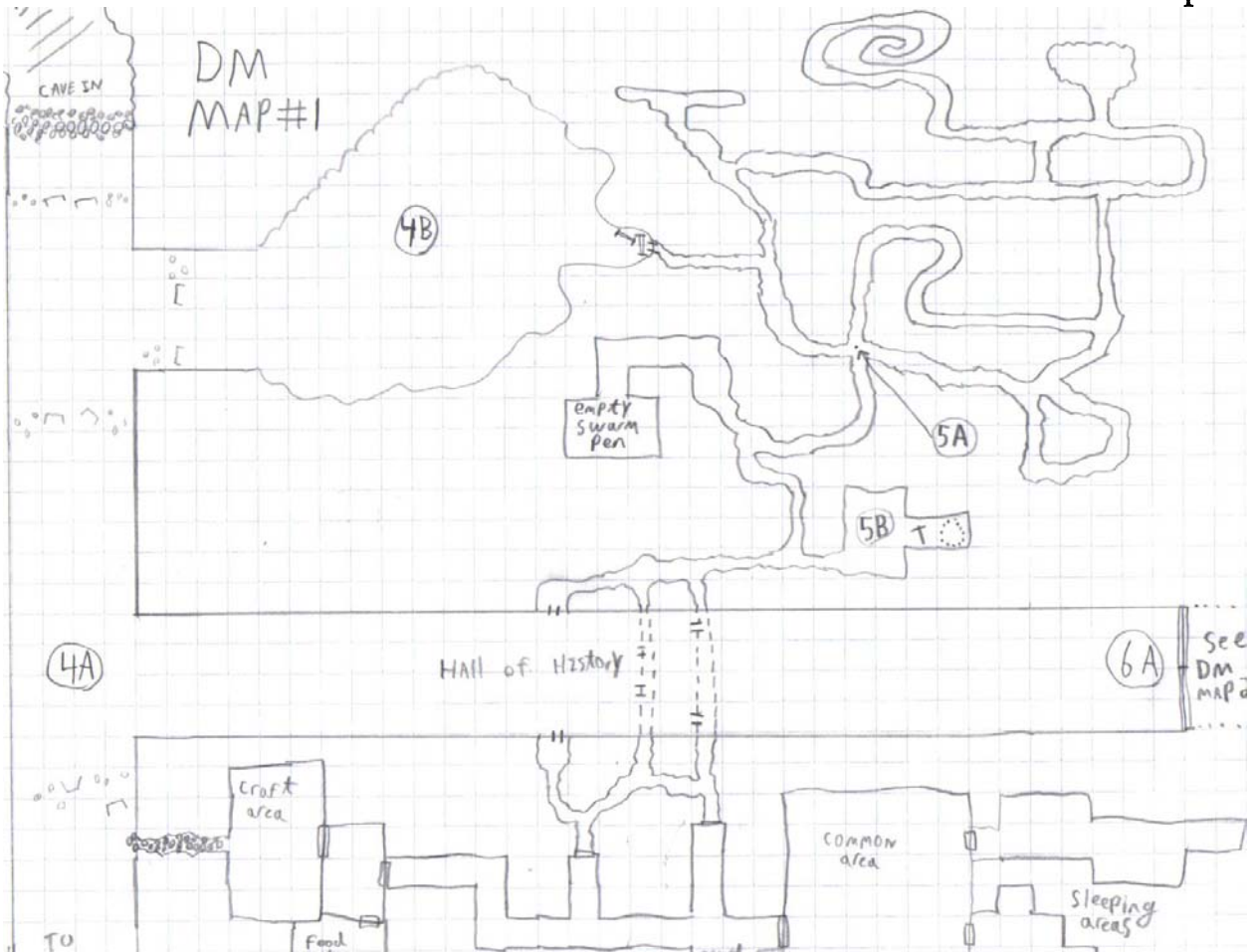
Overland Map



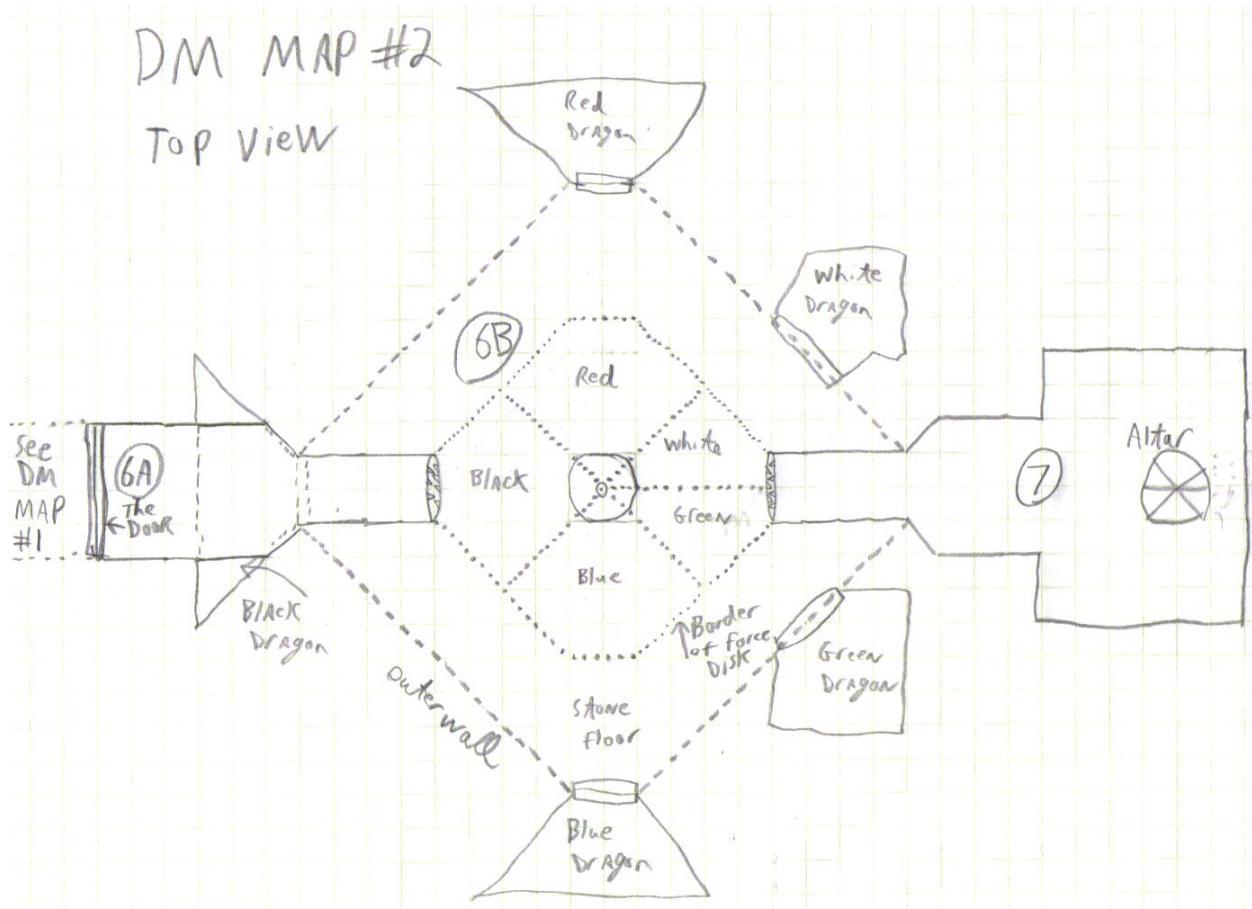
Dagger Rock



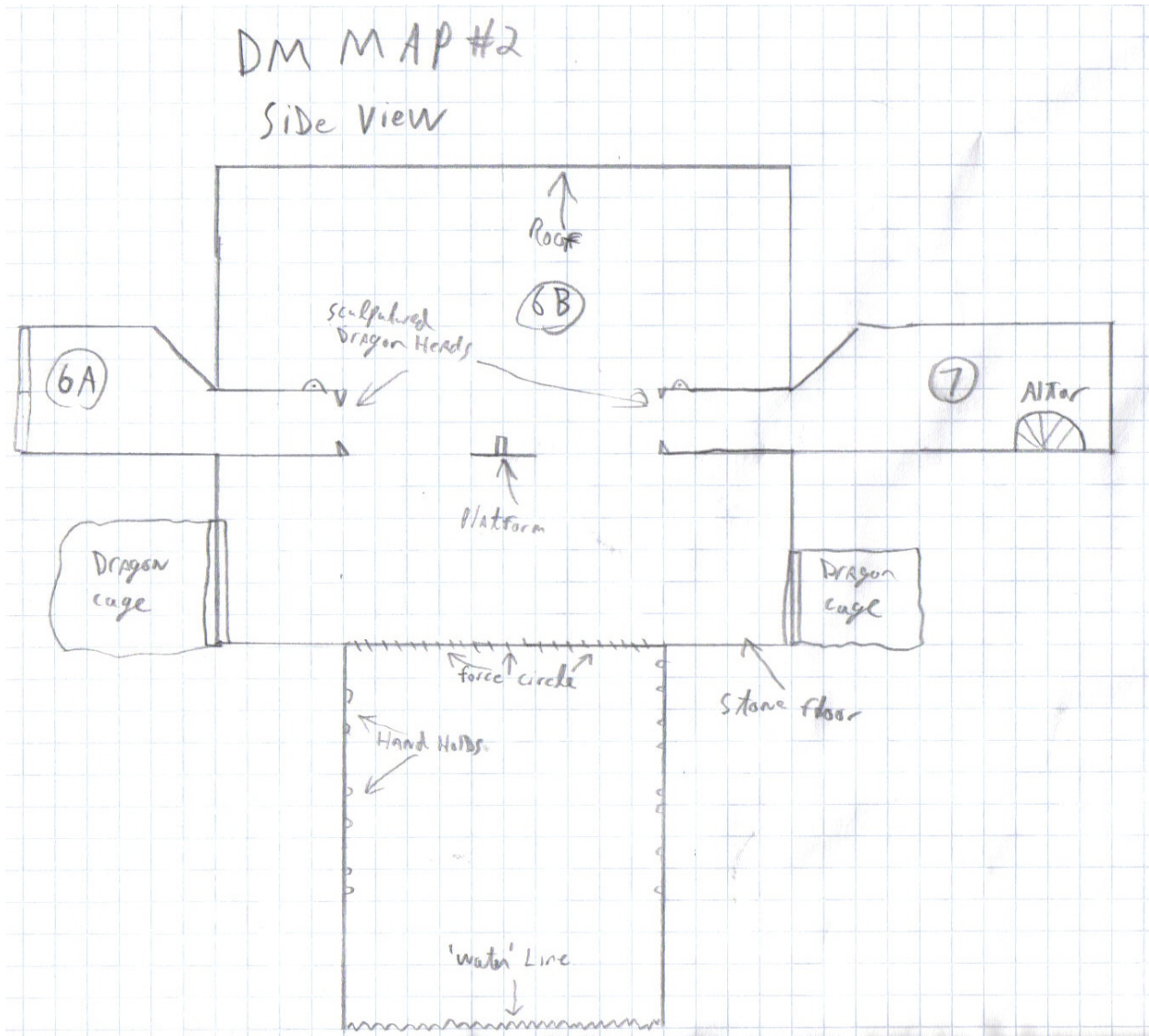
The Kobold Complex



Top View of the Zombie Dragon Chamber



Side View of the Zombie Dragon Chamber



HANDOUT 1

The following is a description, in order from west to east, how the different elaborately painted scenes that decorate the walls and ceilings of the 20-foot wide and 20-foot high hall. This list only details those paintings that can still be made out. Many have been eroded away, beyond interpretation.

Picture 1

This picture shows an arid land. Hills and an ocean shore form a frame around sluggish rivers, forlorn stands of pine trees and dusty plains. A lone peak stands away from the hills rising from the midst of a plain. A gray cloud hangs over the lone mountain.

The shoreline shows depictions of crude ships and the hills show humans on horseback. The depictions suggest travel into the arid land from outside of the picture frame.

Picture 2

This picture shows a gigantic red dragon atop a great cliff among many jagged hills in a chain. Below the dragon are lines and lines of crudely drawn humans. The humans are leading packhorses and dragging sleds of cargo. Soldiers, men, women, elderly and children are shown, be it crudely.

The dragon has a red crystal the size of a man's head, floating near its own head.

Picture 3

This picture shows a blue dragon sitting atop a lone mountain peak set in the midst of an arid plain. A dark cloud with lightning hovers above. Its eyes stare down at a procession of humans carrying bodies on stretchers. More humans are lowering bodies into caves and shafts in the base of the lone mountain. The humans seem to be of Flannish descent.

The dragon has a blue crystal the size of a man's head, floating near its own head.

Picture 4

This picture shows a group of humans conducting acts of agriculture and irrigation. A river is being dammed irrigation trenches dug. In one scene, several centaurs assist the farmers with the construction of a small bridge. With ridiculous perspective, a very large black dragon hides not far away behind a single small tree. Its 'hands' rub together in an almost conspirator gesture.

The dragon has a black crystal the size of a man's head, floating near its own head.

Picture 5

This picture shows Flan felling pine trees. In one scene, a human wielding a scimitar and bearing a round green circle on his tunic, is attempting to mediate a dispute between a group of the woodcutters and several angry centaurs. With more outrageous perspective, a massive

green dragon hides nearby with only a few bushes to conceal him.

The dragon has a green crystal the size of a man's head, floating near its own head.

Picture 6

This picture shows landscape similar to the previous pictures. Children play and adults hold gatherings. A walled city with several spiraling towers takes up a prominent position in the picture. A fog has covered the city, and in one block where housing should be, a white dragon sits motionless among the human passersby, its eyes ever watchful.

The dragon has a white crystal the size of a man's head, floating near its own head.

Picture 7

This picture shows the lone mountain peak with storm clouds above it. The mountain is shattered. About its feet lies a vast debris field of rock and stone.

All five dragons from the previous pictures are gathered about the top ledges, near a large cave mouth.

Floating in the air before the dragons, dwarfing them in size, is a five-headed dragon made of shadow. It is not black like the black dragon, or white like the white dragon, but more similar to the smoky depiction of the storm clouds.

In the background, a human kingdom with towns and cities stretch across the paintings width. At first glance all seems to be happy, but a closer look reveals many depictions of soldiers and executions. A royal-looking figure and dark-clothed counselors or priests assist him as he presides over a mass slaughter of peasants within a large city.

Picture 8

The majority of this picture is of an ornate crown. The centerpiece of the crown is shaped like a scorpion. The crown rests in the palm of a giant shadowy hand, as if reaching down from the heavens. The rest of the painting is filled with various kinds of scorpions. Many of these scorpions have the head, arms and torso of a humanoid.

Picture 9

This is similar to picture 1 with its border of hills and oceans, but the interior of the land is depicted as a harsh desert, filled with scorpions and creatures that are half-scorpion/half-human. In several scenes, these 'man-scorpions' are shown fighting bitterly with groups of centaurs.

Picture 10

This picture shows the five chromatic dragons gathered in a temple chamber around an altar. Small lizard-like humanoids run about their feet carrying out a variety of menial tasks. The altar has five slots placed about it. All

the slots save one have been filled with the colored crystal normally depicted about the heads of the given dragons. In this scene, the white dragon is holding on to its white crystal and bringing it toward the empty slot.

Picture 11

This last picture shows hundreds of the small lizard-like humanoids from the previous picture, but now all of these creatures have a distinctive blue hue to their skin. Many are draped in blue or purple robes. Five of the largest humanoids have purple crystals set into amulets about their necks. Standing in front of some kind of altar, is a blue-hued human of Flan descent. He is shirtless and on his chest is the picture of a scorpion. In his right hand is a sword that crackles with dark energy. In his left is a hammer that burns with holy light. The altar is covered in the crushed petals of a flower. He has a notably sad look in his eyes.

HANDOUT 2

This is an ancient scroll written in Draconic upon parchment made from the skin of a gold dragon.

“A time will come to pass when evil will once again hold sway over the land. Three stars and crescent Luna will mark it.

Be it known those who write these words shall not live to meet those who carry the words. Only the worthy shall carry forth these words at the pre-ordained time.

There shall come a time when a gift will be granted to man. A dark crown with a dark gift will be wrought.

A curse shall befall the land and it shall wither like skin stretched across a rock. The poison of men shall scurry under the harsh sun. Only the shadow within the crown can restore the parched land.

For all, the crown must be destroyed.

<A sprawl of arcane incantations are here>

“Seek out a living thing of Sulmi protected by the sleeping tower.

Seek out a Sulmite weapon of unholy wrath; forgotten in faded Utaa.

Seek out an Itarian weapon of holy glow, lying in drowned sennerae.

Seek out the purest star metal and the prison of souls; locked within the herald of great sorrow.

Seek out the crown, bring it forth and unmake it.

The unmaking must happen. The unmaking must be. The unmaking shall bring salvation.”

At the seat of darkness will be the ending.

<more sprawling arcane incantations and ritual diagrams>