

Chapter 9: To The Walls of Pax Tharkas

The heroes make a long day's march and are at the Sla-Mori at nightfall. Today, also, the Dragonarmy marches out of Pax Tharkas toward Qualinesti.

Dawn is just beginning to color the sky as Gilthanas leads the way through the aspenwood of Qualinesti. The trail descends gradually to the south. Soon the whisper of a rushing stream rises from nearby, as the path begins to follow a clear brook. The route grows steeper and steeper, and the water deepens and roars as it tumbles toward the sea with increasing force.

The aspens of Qualinesti blend with the tall pines of the lowlands, and by the time the sun is high, there are no signs of the silvery trees of the plateau. Dark and looming, the evergreens crowd the trail, making the brightly sunny day seem closed and dusky. The stream still roars, but the sound has become threatening, like some unspeakable thing in tireless pursuit.

Suddenly, the pines spread to reveal a clearing about 150 feet across. The grass has been churned into mud by a furious combat. The bodies of both men

and hobgoblins lie grotesquely in the places where death claimed them.

A groan sounds from the center of this carnage, and a battered human warrior rises from a pile of hobgoblins. His eyes appear glazed and unfocused as he turns his head about, finally looking at the trail where it enters the clearing. He struggles to stay on his feet, but gives up with another groan.

Suddenly a look of surprise crosses his face, and he points to the dense pine forest. "Look out! Dragon . . ." The effort proves too much, and he topples onto his back again.

92. Ambush

Immediately after this statement, 12 Baaz draconians rush from the pines to attack the party from all sides. If the heroes heed the wounded warrior's warning, they are not surprised by the ambush; otherwise, check normally with a 1d6.

The draconians attack savagely, fighting to the death. If the battle seems to be going in the heroes' favor, the wounded man climbs to his feet, joins the melee, and strikes a Baaz from behind after most of the draconians have been killed.

The wounded man is Eben Shatterstone (see Supplementary PC cards, page 114, 115). Eben wears clothes that once were very fine, but a lot of rough wear has tattered them somewhat. He has straight, jet-black hair, cut fairly short, and his face is ruggedly handsome. A faded red cape hangs from his shoulders, and his fine chain mail is rather tarnished. He also wears a scarlet hat.

Eben is completely self-serving, willing to do anything to win favor with those whom he sees as in power. Right now, this is the Dragon Highlord Verminaard, who has sent Eben to infiltrate the party and try to direct them to Pax Tharkas, where he is to betray them. Eben is not evil, nor will he risk his life for the Dragon Highlord, so if he does not have a chance to betray the party safely, he will not do so. If at all possible, Eben's mission should not be discovered. If it is, however, and the PCs turn on him, see to it that Eben meets an obscure death—that his body is lost.

Eben has blood upon his legs and arms. He graciously denies that he needs any magical healing and suggests that the magic should be saved for a later time. In fact, he is not wounded at all: he has staged the entire encounter so that he might join



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the group of heroes. He will attempt to betray the party later.

Eben thanks the PCs many times, and offers his aid wherever they might be bound. Gilthanas urges haste in continuing to Pax Tharkas, and if his opinion is sought, remarks that an extra swordsman always comes in handy.

Soon the pines give way to the open plain, and in the southern distance, Pax Tharkas sits wedged between mountains. By moving steadily, the party can see the Tharkadan walls by late afternoon.

93. The Hidden Valley

The sun has almost disappeared in the west; the important fortress of Pax Tharkas is nearer still. The tops of its two mighty towers rival the mountain peaks for control of the sky. Between the towers, a massive wall closes off all passage through the mountain gap. A single gate, 30 feet tall and 20 feet wide, seems to be the only entrance.

Suddenly, the massive gate swings open. Even before it finishes moving, column after column of armed troops march out. Rising clouds of dust soon obscure their exact numbers, but surely several thousand pass from the fortress onto the plains. The road they follow leads to Qualinesti.

"The Dragon Highlords' power," says Gilthanas grimly. "The time has come." The elven warrior points to a narrow vale leading into the mountains just east of Pax Tharkas. "Here lies the approach of the Sla-Mori. We must move carefully: this valley is sometimes not a safe place."

The elf refers to rumors of a band of trolls that has come down from the high mountains into the valley. He tells the PCs about this if they ask him. Urging haste, he then leads the party into the valley, to the secret gate of the Sla-Mori, or "hidden path."

A narrow trail climbs steeply from the plains into the wooded valley. Splashing with impartial cheer, a clear brook emerges from the cut in the mountains, as Gilthanas leads the party ever higher. Soon, the elf leaves the path and begins to pick his way through underbrush made especially dense by the falling of night.

94. Trolls

The trolls in this valley always place a guard to cover the approach from the plains. This troll alerts its partners, and the three monsters attack the rear of the party as it leaves the trail and begins to move toward the Sla-Mori. Check normally to see if the PCs are surprised.

The trolls try to kill two PCs and carry the bodies to their lair—a small cave on the opposite side of the valley, about 1,000 yards away. The cave is 30 feet wide, 50 feet deep, and ten feet high. It contains a collection of bones, worthless scraps of armor and weapons, a rusty key amid the rubbish at the back wall, a *shield + 1*, and a locked strongbox. The key opens the strongbox, which contains 257 sp and three gems, worth 150 stl, 100 stl, and 200 stl.

95. The Gate to Sla-Mori

Gilthanas leads the way along the base of a tall granite cliff for several hundred feet, halting at a slight niche in the wall. He takes a small, glowing gem from beneath his tunic and holds it forward with his right hand. Making a set of motions in the air, he chants an ancient series of incantations. Suddenly and silently, a tremendous stone block moves to the side.

Use the Sla-Mori map for the following encounters. The numbers of these and all further encounters are keyed to areas on maps.

96. The Ways of the Sla-Mori

A whiff of musty, dead air emerges as the huge block moves aside. The passage plunges directly into the heart of the mighty peak that guards the eastern flank of Pax Tharkas. A thick coat of dust layers the floor, and cobwebs hang loosely from the ceiling nearly 15 feet above. The tunnel is 20 feet wide and completely dark.

Despite the many birds and small animals in the nearby woods—all chattering noisily but a few moments ago—the area is now covered by a stunned silence, as though the mountain protests this break-in and the animals have paused in sympathy.

Gilthanas advances firmly into the tunnel. If the PCs falter, he pauses and urges them forward with a whisper. He knows this area only through lore—he has never traveled it—and the grim passage makes him uneasy.

The tunnel is obviously ancient. Whether it was carved by hand or created by the flowing of water is impossible to determine. Loose chunks of rock litter the floor, and the walls and ceilings are crumbling. The dust on the floor looks as if it has not been disturbed since the Cataclysm.

97. The Crossroads

A crossroads offers a choice of directions 120 feet into the mountain. The corridor continues straight ahead but it also branches to the right.

More significantly, the dust on the floors of the tunnels now shows the passage of many feet. The marks extend into both of the passages continuing into the mountain; only the corridor leading to the gate seems to have been untraveled before.

The tracks in the dust were made by a number of different types of creatures. Most of the tracks seem to be humanoid, although it is impossible to tell more. Most of the animal tracks are those of small, clawed creatures.



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The corridor continuing straight ahead has more tracks in it.

98. Hall of the Ancients

An eerie, gigantic hall has fallen into decay. Many tall columns rise to a lofty ceiling, others have fallen over and litter the center of the room like the felled vallonwood trees of Solace. From behind the rubble comes a chittering and scratching.

A huge, granite throne sits against the eastern wall, flanked by two large statues. The stone guardians are warriors three times the height of a man, each armed with a broad, granite sword.

Dwarfed by these images, the decayed remains of a man sit atop the throne. Gaunt, empty sockets and bared teeth stare from an ancient skull. A worn, once-regal cloak covers his body; a sheathed sword lies across his lap.

Further examination of the chamber reveals that the wall opposite the tunnel entrance has collapsed, apparently triggering the fall of the columns. A huge pile of rubble here is riddled with small tunnels and provides shelter for thousands of rats. The rodents are timid creatures, however, and represent no threat.

The double doors at the western end of the room are closed, but they swing open easily. They are made of bronze, now well-tarnished, and covered with a relief drawing of Pax Tharkas.

This is the burial chamber of Kith-Kanan, founder of Qualinesti. The elf prince and his dwarf comrades built the fortress of Pax Tharkas during the Age of Dreams. His tomb has been sealed further by the cataclysm, which has closed off access to Pax Tharkas proper. Your adventurers, of course, will have to find this out the hard way.

The sword across Kith-Kanan's lap represents one of the most potent weapons of his age: it is Wyrmslayer, a *two-handed sword* +3. If drawn from its scabbard, it gleams brightly with magical radiance.

99. The Closed Corridor

The corridor widens to 60 feet, still continuing forward. The air in the room is stale and musty; loose boulders and stones litter the floor, but apparently a wide path runs down the center of the corridor. This path is free of any speck of dust.

The far end of the corridor has been caved in by the Cataclysm. Boulders the size of houses are wedged together to form an impenetrable wall.

A giant slug has cleaned the path through the chamber. It lives off the refuse created by the rats in Kith-Kanan's tomb.

The slug is wedged amid the boulders at the far end of the room. It does not detect the heroes until they advance to within 60 feet. Then the monster slides forth and attacks, pursuing if necessary. The slug can turn around in a 20-foot-wide corridor; in any area narrower than this it must continue forward until it locates a wider space.

100. Chamber of Doom

The winding of the narrow tunnel finally ends in a dark chamber. The air is heavy and cold here, and a nameless sense of evil throbs somewhere within these slick, stony walls. A thick layer of dust covers the floor, as if the frightened creatures living in the tunnels know better than to come here.

Lurking in the northwestern alcove of the room is the source of this nameless evil: a wraith. This potent spirit begins to move forward as soon as it detects life in this room. Its attack is swift and merciless.

This undead creature is the evil remnant of a graverobber who broke into the Sla-Mori trying to plunder the tomb of Kith-Kanan. Forcing entrance through the gate, he became trapped inside. Nourished only by the force of his own evil, his mortal body perished and left only the sinister presence that now dwells in this room.

The wraith pursues trespassers. If the intended victims enter area 102, the zombies emerge and aid the wraith; if the PCs flee into the loop at 101, the wraith follows them before the sliding wall closes.

101. The Sliding Wall

In the area marked on the map is a sliding section of wall, constructed centuries ago as a trap for tomb robbers. The wall cannot be detected when open, as it is when the party first passes by.

When they reach the western section of the loop (marked with an X), the lead characters feel the floor sink slowly down one foot. There is no other perceptible effect unless a character is very near the sliding wall, which closes when the trigger is sprung. When closed, the sliding wall can be discovered as a secret door, and opened when pushed by combined Strength of 50 or greater. Up to three characters may push at once. The door cannot be opened from the outside.

102. Tomb of the Zombies

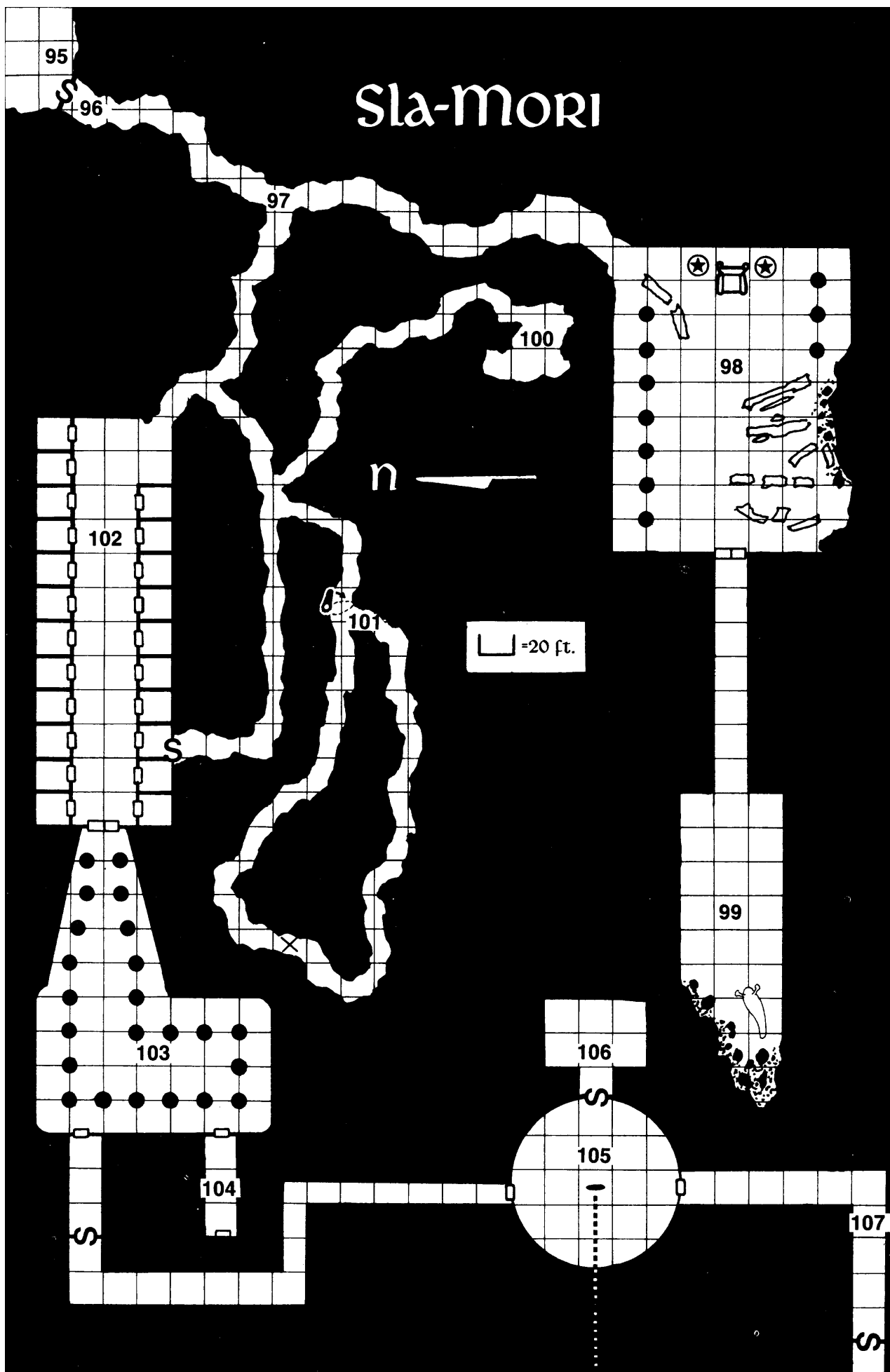
The tunnel breaks into the corner of an old hall, obviously constructed with care in some distant age. A wide center aisle stretches to the limits of sight, and a row of stone doors line each side.

Rats have passed over the dust on the floor throughout the Sla-Mori, but much less often in here than in most other areas. None of the tracks approach the doors, which are supported by huge iron hinges spiked right into the stone. Each door has an iron handle, but apparently no lock.

This is the tomb of Kith-Kanan's elite royal guard. Through a lifetime of valued service to their lord, these honored elves, dwarves, and men have earned the right to burial here.

In the centuries since, however, an evil perversion has corrupted the bodyguard, creating a band of 44 mindless zombies dedicated to only one task: kill all intruders!

Sla-MORI





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The undead lie on stone biers, two behind each door. They arise and attack when any of the following occur:

- * One of the tomb doors is opened.
- * A magical spell, rod, wand, etc. is used in the room (not including magical weapons used to shed light).
- * The double doors in the western end of the room are opened.
- * The wraith (from area 30) enters the room and commands the zombies to arise.

Coldly and silently, the zombies close in on the party and try to destroy them. Any that are turned by a cleric escape by the most convenient route, returning to their tombs if they can.

The double doors at the western end of the room are made of solid bronze. Like the doors to Kith-Kanan's tomb, they bear a raised outline of Pax Tharkas, done in considerable detail. This design adorns each side of the doors. They are unlocked, and open silently with a push.

103. Hall of Columns

This large chamber echoes softly with the sounds of any passage, no matter how quiet. Puffs of dust rise with each footfall on the floor—here again is an area that seems not to have known the passage of a living soul in decades.

The passage gradually widens from the doors, but the true dimensions of the room are lost in darkness. A row of stately granite columns lines each wall. These are plain supports with no ornate carvings or unusual shapes, but they seem to have been constructed with great care. The fact that they have survived the Cataclysm intact indicates that their builders were accomplished engineers.

This chamber is the fruit of dwarven labors, designed as a fitting entryway to the resting place of Kith-Kanan's elite.

You should make careful note that the chambers from here to Pax

Tharkas (103-107 on the map) have not been traveled in over a century. The rats and other small creatures roaming the outer tunnels, as well as wandering monsters, never pass through the Tomb of Zombies into this area. Therefore, thick dust covers everything, and the adventurers have no encounters in these areas.

104. Trap

A single bronze door swings open easily into a short corridor that runs for 60 feet to another bronze door, identical to the first. Each door bears the inscription of a jeweled crown.

The dust in this corridor is very thick, and undisturbed by any tracks.

Dwarven engineers rigged the last 20 feet of the corridor as a trap for unwary trespassers. When any pressure is applied to the false door, either pushing or pulling, a 20-foot section of the floor drops away. All characters standing on it fall 20 feet into a pit and suffer 2d6 of damage.

105. Chain and Support

The long, dusty corridor finally passes through a bronze door into a large, circular room. Here, as in the corridors leading into the chamber, the dust on the floor is thick and unmarked. A curious feature of the room is the column in its center, which slants to one side and climbs far out of sight above.

A closer look shows you that the column is actually a massive chain, supported by a huge iron bracket sunk into the center of the floor. Each link is as long as a man, and the iron bands forming the links are nearly a foot thick. The bracket in the floor is 15 feet across and nearly three feet thick.

This chain is the final support mechanism for the heavy stone defenses that protect Pax Tharkas against attack from the north. If it is released, massive blocks of granite drop be-

hind the gate of the fortress, blocking any attempts to batter down the portal with even the most massive of rams.

The chain rises through the ceiling of the room, 100 feet above, in a narrow channel, to the Chamber of the Chain in Pax Tharkas (see area 131). Although the chain nearly fills the chute, a small individual (a kender or a human man child) could climb the chain and emerge into the chamber. Such an ascent would require thieving ability and a successful climb sheer surfaces roll.

106. Tharkadan Treasure Vaults

Having detected the secret door, locating the concealed latch is a simple matter. It releases with a soft click, and a section of the stone wall swings silently inward.

The room beyond is fairly large, and nearly filled with yellow, brick-like objects that glitter through a layer of dust.

Stacked 25 high, 25,000 gold ingots line the walls around the room. Each contains the equivalent of 1,000 gp of the metal. Gold was valued highly by the dwarves of Pax Tharkas in the Age of Dreams, but it is of little use to the current adventurers.

107. Gates to Pax Tharkas

Do not read this passage until the adventurers have discovered the secret door.

The wall seems to block the corridor is a secret door, apparently activated by a small catch near the ground. Beyond the portal is silence.

Finally your adventurers have reached the walls of Pax Tharkas itself. If they decide to advance, use the map of Pax Tharkas.

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The cut-away map displaying Pax Tharkas should be used for the following series of encounters. Note that the map does not show the entire fortress, only those areas the heroes are able to visit. This includes the ground floors of each of the two towers, as well as the underground level and second floor of the eastern tower. Also shown are the wall connecting the two towers and the holding bin for the tons of rock used to block the gate.

In area 133, immediately inside the doors to both the eastern and western towers, are two ropes attached to an alarm mechanism. If any members of the Dragon Highlord's army see the heroes and manage to pull one of these, the fortress is alerted. In this case, double the number of random encounter checks and double the number of creatures encountered in the fortress. Surprise is impossible after the defenders are alerted.

As the party enters the fortress, Gilthanas should mention that there is a gate-blocking mechanism within the walls. This can be used to seal the gates for a long period, and—if the party could activate it—would be useful in delaying pursuit by the Dragonarmy that just marched off to the north.

108. Cellar

Three tunnels lead from the secret door through a maze of crushed stone and broken timbers. The tunnels have been cleared from an area that was once totally caved in. A thin, undisturbed coat of dust covers the floor.

The tunnels all lead to a large cellar room, with rough and rocky walls to the east, but a finely crafted, smooth stone wall to the west. A large, wooden door stands near the center of the western wall.

To the heroes' left as they enter is a pile of wooden crates, nailed shut. These contain clothing, pots and pans, curtains, heavy coats, boots, and blankets. A character passing a Wisdom check can identify the items

as coming from Solace and Gateway.

Also in the large room is a deep well, capable of providing fresh water in times of siege or if the streams flowing from the mountains outside of the fortress should dry up.

109. Lower Guardroom

Listening to the door to this room reveals the rasping voices of dragonmen mingled with a woman's voice. The woman sounds upset. The door is solid, but not locked or stuck.

If the heroes open the door slowly and carefully, they can watch the following scene for a few moments. Of course, if they smash down the door,

the dragonmen move to fight at once.

A savage-looking dragonman hauls a young woman by the arm. He hurls her toward a door on the far side of the room, growling: "My lord Verminaard requires your presence! Who are you to refuse his noble calling?" The monster advances toward the girl, menacingly, while three other draconians watch, their faces twisted into hideous grins.

The Kapak draconian takes the girl from the room, unless interrupted by





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the heroes. If combat erupts while she is in the room, the girl runs to the southern end and crouches there until the fight is over.

If attacked suddenly, the Kapaks have no time to envenom their blades. If more than one of them is slain, survivors try to escape through the western door and alert the fortress.

Although Laurana is quite startled by her sudden rescue, she is spirited and courageous, and she quickly recovers her wits. She has been kept in area 112, but knows that 111 and 110 also contain some of the women from the north. The keys to all of these rooms are kept on the belt of one of the draconian guards.

If the PCs do not enter the room before Laurana is dragged out, she is taken before Verminaard. If not rescued by the heroes, she dies an "obscure death" and returns later in the saga.

110. Women's Prison #1

This cell holds 34 women from Solace, Gateway, and Haven. Rude straw mats line the walls, and several low chairs are scattered about. No other furniture or other accommodations are present.

Maritta the Seamstress is one of the prisoners in this room. She is generally regarded by the women as their leader and spokesperson. It is she who leads the group of ten women each evening up to the chamber on the ground floor (room 117) to feed and tend to the children. The youngsters are imprisoned there under the watchful eyes of the red dragon Flamestrike.

Also in this room is a battered Elistan, injured from a fall in the mines. Because of his influential position, the Dragon Highlords allow the women to tend him, when they would let most prisoners die unaided. Even so, Elistan is near death and needs magical healing.

If the PCs heal Elistan, he abandons his disbelief and embraces the true gods. He renounces his past beliefs and begins to worship Mishakal, or whichever of the true gods the PC priest who healed him worships.

111. Women's Prison #2

This chamber is the prison of more of the mothers from the northlands. Sixty women between the ages of 18 and 40 are locked up here, in much the same conditions as the women next door.

112. Maidens

This room holds 45 young women, between the ages of 12 and 20, who have not married or borne children. As in the other two rooms, the conditions are squalid and dirty.

The women from all of these cells react with quiet joy to the thought of rescue; this reaction, however, cools with the knowledge that the red dragon above still watches the children.

The women explain the situation to the heroes, including the procedure for tending the children every evening. The women also know that many other women are held on the bottom floor of the western tower. The men are forced to work in the mines, and are kept in a crude cave south of the fortress during those brief periods when they are not working.

The women also send a group of 12 up to the mines to feed the men every night. They wear heavy shawls and robes to protect against the autumn chill, and the guards pay little attention to those on either feeding mission. Thus, any characters concealed as these women would be able to move about the fortress fairly safely, as long as they could conceivably be on one of these feeding missions.

If the heroes do not think of this, Maritta suggests that armed men, disguised in women's robes, could enter the chamber where the children are kept and rescue them.

If the PCs decide to make a rescue attempt in this way, Maritta has the following advice about Flamestrike:

"You must try to pass the dragon quietly, as she sleeps very deeply. I don't think she would normally harm the children—in fact, she seems very fond of them—but do

not attack her, even if she should awaken. She is half mad, and there's no telling what she might do if aroused."

113. Chamber of the Aghar

A series of strange noises rise from behind this door: first, a loud crash, followed several seconds later by a dull thump, and then gales of raucous laughter. The laughter dies down slowly, and after a minute the pattern repeats.

The women have no idea what is in this room. The door is quite typical, and does not seem to be locked. In fact, it is not even stuck and opens to reveal the following:

A long timber is balanced on a boulder in the center of the room. At each end of the timber is a wide, dish-shaped container. Set on the ground by these containers is a pile of large stones and a tall wooden box. Huge mattresses of straw have been spread on the floor beyond either end of the timber. A dozen short, stocky creatures scurry frantically around the timber, shouting and cursing each other. They wear oversized tin helmets, and several wear swords in their belts. Because these swords are several inches longer than their legs, those creatures who wear them often get them tangled between their feet, sprawling headlong onto the floor.

Shortly a pattern emerges. One of these creatures (who by now are recognizable as Aghar gully dwarves) climbs into the dish at one end of the timber, dropping that end to the ground like a large see-saw. Three other Aghar climb onto the wooden box at the other end of the timber, where comrades have already raised three of the large stones. The Aghar on the boxes drop the stones together into the dish below them, dropping that end to the ground and catapulting the dwarf at the other

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end through the air, over the heads of the three on the box, and into the mattress of straw.

After each of these stunts, all the Aghar laugh uproariously, then run around crazily for a while until the process is ready to start again.

These Aghar are servants of the draconians, amusing themselves in their off-duty moments. If the PCs do not announce their presence, the dwarves do not notice them for 2d4 rounds.

When and if the Aghar discover the adventurers, they cease their game immediately and dive for cover behind the timber and stones. A minute later, several of the tin helmets peek out from behind this cover.

Finally, one of the sword-bearing gully dwarves swaggers forward. His face is hidden behind a bushy beard, and his tin helmet shadows his eyes. In fact, he can see very little; as he nears the party, he trips over his sword and falls headlong, his helmet rolling to the feet of the forward PCs. The dwarf rushes to snatch his helmet back, blustering about trespassers and uninvited guests.

This is Highklaht Drooth, leader of the Klahd Clan of the Aghar. Angrily he demands an explanation from the party; although what they are supposed to explain is unclear.

These 12 Aghar are no friends of the Dragon Highlords and only remain here because Pax Tharkas has been their clan home for centuries. Although suspicious and cranky, they will not betray the party, and may offer aid if approached with "appropriate honor."

The Aghar are quite familiar with the layout of the fortress, and even understand how the stonedrop mechanism to seal the gate operates. Their services must be purchased, however; rope, weapons, armor, food, clothing, or things that might work as toys can all be used for barter. Note that the Aghar are essentially cowardly, and do not voluntarily get involved in risky business.

The Aghar are aware that Sestun is

being held prisoner in area 120 for the crime of aiding the escape of a group of Fewmaster Toede's prisoners. If the heroes aid in his rescue, the Aghar are much more willing to take risks for the party.

114. Storage Room

The door to this room is locked.

Many rows of crates, boxes, and barrels line the walls of this large room. Several boxes containing iron nails are open nearby. All other containers are closed.

Stored here are 72 barrels of oil, 20 barrels of fresh water, 12 barrels of salt, 20 crates of nails, 140 boxes of grain, 43 crates of wool woven into 4' X 8' pieces (430 pieces total), 12 crates of leather in the same dimensions (60 pieces total), and 30 boxes of pots and pans.

If the oil is ignited, the contents of the room burn up in two turns. One turn after such a fire begins, the hallway outside fills with smoke. PCs in this area suffer 1d6 points of damage per round until they reach fresh air.

The smoke continues to spread at this rate, filling all adjacent areas each turn if no door blocks the way. Areas behind doors take two turns to fill with smoke. Those rooms adjacent to rooms filled with smoke fill on the following turn (or two, if a door blocks the way), and so on for 20 turns, when the fire extinguishes from lack of air.

115. Upper Hallway

This hallway is furnished with great care, creating an atmosphere of comfort and luxury. A plush purple carpet blankets the floor, and many tapestries of rich red and golden colors decorate the walls. Each of the several doors is made of dark-grained valenwood and has golden rivets, hinges, and latches.

At closer examination, however, the luxury begins to wear thin. Dark stains blot the carpet in many places, and a wide, muddy

trail mars the center of the floor. Some of the tapestries, depicting pastoral woodland scenes, have been defaced: charcoal has been used to add a beard and mustache to an elven princess, and long slashes ruin a scene of elves and dwarves in council.

This hallway connects most of the rooms on the first floor of the tower, and thus receives a lot of traffic. Double the usual number of random encounter checks while the party is in this area.

Standing outside the throne room (area 121) are two hobgoblin guards. They do not attack on sight but are very suspicious of any armed characters in the hallway and demand identification. If alarmed, they rush to get their comrades from area 119.

116. Reception Room

Much like the outer hallway, this room has the appearance of former luxury now fallen into decay. The carpet is slashed and spotted; many fine pieces of furniture are strewn across the dirty floor. Some fancy chairs have been splintered, apparently so their legs can be used as firewood, since a smoky blaze struggles in a huge fireplace.

A strong smell of ale hangs in the air, and a large keg lies on its side in the center of the room. Another keg sits in the center of the room. Another keg sits in the far corner, and around it crouch five draconians.

These Kapak draconians have been drinking. If they are disturbed, they react aggressively. They take time to venom their blades as they charge across the room.

If three draconians are killed, the remaining two realize that the PCs are tougher opponents than they thought, and they bolt for the other door. Once in the hallway, they raise a cry, alerting the fortress.



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117. Dining Room

For some reason, this elegant room escaped the destruction rampant throughout the rest of the fortress. A shiny table made of smooth vallenwood occupies the center of the room. It is surrounded by a dozen finely crafted chairs. An undamaged carpet, of the same rich purple found in the hallway, covers the floor.

Three golden chandeliers hang from the ceiling, each ablaze with dozens of candles. Many more candles flicker from sconces in the wall, bathing the room in bright and cheery light.

The table is set for four, with fine china and silver. A large platinum pitcher is placed in the center of the table; beads of moisture have collected on it. Four matching platinum goblets stand next to the pitcher.

The pitcher contains ice water. If a player asks about the length of the candles, inform him that no wax has dripped from them, so they have apparently been lighted very recently.

If the party remains in this room for two rounds, the gully dwarves from the kitchen enter, carrying trays of steaming food. (See area 118 for gully dwarves' reaction to the PCs.) Note that these Aghar are encountered in one place or the other, but not in both areas!

118. Kitchen

A long counter is covered with a wide variety of foodstuffs, and several ovens spew smoke into the air. Four Aghar run busily around the room, armed with pots, pans, and in one case, a large meat cleaver. Several inches of liquid—perhaps some kind of gravy—spread over the floor, and the gully dwarves are coated with all kinds of food.

As the door opens, two of the Aghar turn their attention toward it and collide headlong with each other, falling to the floor amid

great splashes and loud cursing. A third gully dwarf snarls: "Dinner ain't gonna be ready for hours if we can't get some privacy what to work in! Now get lost!" He moves forward, a heavy frying pan raised aggressively.

These Aghar are the official cooks for Verminaard, present lord of Pax Tharkas. While they are afraid of the Dragon Highlord, they are rude and unpleasant to everyone else.

If the heroes attack them, the gully dwarves turn and run.

If the heroes identify themselves as enemies of the Dragon Highlord, the gully dwarves become much friendlier, although they are still suspicious. They explain that they are preparing Verminaard's dinner, and that he is planning to entertain one of the women from downstairs as his guest. The meal consists of fresh bread, a fine haunch of venison, potatoes, and apples. These Aghar are actually not bad cooks, so the meal will be a good one.

The Aghar cooperate very little if the heroes ask for any kind of aid. In no case do the gully dwarves do anything (such as poison the meal) that might cost them their heads. They might provide secret aid, however, if they have very little chance of being caught.

These dwarves know that Sestun is imprisoned in area 120. If the heroes aid him, the gully dwarves will be much friendlier to them.

119. Guardroom

If the heroes listen at the door here, they hear loud laughter and argument within. The voices are not those of draconians.

Many chairs and benches of rude wooden construction are scattered about this room. Sitting or moving around the room are several dozen ugly guards, their grinning faces displaying yellowed tusks. Their skin is a ruddy yellow color, and they are all armed with swords and daggers.

This room is the duty quarters for 28 hobgoblin guards. They have been playing various gambling games, eating, or practicing with weapons. They rush to attack any intruders.

If the heroes enter the room and fight with the door closed, the fortress is not alerted. Otherwise, the alarms certainly go off. The hobgoblins fight to the death.

Hanging on a nail in the wall is a key that unlocks the cell next door (area 120). Scattered about the room, on tables and the floor as well as carried by individual hobgoblins, are 54 stl, 187 sp, and 327 bp.

120. Prison Cell

The door is heavy and barred and has a small hatch near the bottom. A massive lock protects the latch to the door as well as the hatch.

If the heroes pick the lock, or use the key found in area 119, read the following. Note that this door cannot be smashed in.

The large room contains only a single occupant: a dirty, unshaven, and very smelly gully dwarf. He looks up angrily from a straw mat on the stone floor, then seems surprised by the appearance of his visitors.

This is Sestun, the gully dwarf who freed the heroes from their cage in the slave caravan. Although he slipped away from the caravan, he was captured by a party of draconians as he moved southward. Now he is being held prisoner while Verminaard attempts to come up with a suitably vicious punishment.

As revealed by his actions in the caravan, Sestun is an Aghar of high courage and spirit. He despises the Dragon Highlord and hates their draconian and hobgoblin servants.

Sestun is willing to participate in anything that is likely to anger Verminaard; he knows that he has no future working for the Dragon Highlord. If he is offered a chance to escape, he will do so, causing as much trouble on the way out as pos-

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sible. When the slaves make their escape to the south, Sestun will tag along in the background.

If any PCs are captured in Pax Tharkas, they are disarmed and placed in this room. Their possessions are taken to Verminaard and placed behind his throne. In 2d6 hours, the Dragon Highlord calls the captives before him, asking them to betray their comrades and explain their purpose in Pax Tharkas. Refusal results in being fed to the red dragon Ember.

121. Verminaard's Throne Room

The massive double doors that lead into this room are unlocked and push open silently. If the heroes open them only slightly, they may hide and observe the discussion described here.

The PCs may also observe this discussion from the balcony (area 130) or through a crack in the wall of the chain room (area 131). Of course, if the party visits several of these places, they observe this scene only the first time they look into the throne room.

This huge, looming chamber was obviously the throne room for the elven and dwarven races that built the great fortress. Tall columns brace the ceiling, and a huge stone throne occupies a central spot.

Tall, silvery mirrors line the walls, creating the impression that the room is even larger than it really is. In the middle of the west wall, a pair of huge doors—easily 12 feet high by 20 feet wide—lead from the throne room.

A figure seated in the throne wears the hideous mask of a Dragon Highlord. His hoarse voice rasps from behind the grotesque covering, addressing a cringing figure before him:

"Toede, you miserable rodent, you have the gift of ruining the simplest plans! As if kidnapping the elf maiden wasn't bad enough . . . now thanks to your idiocy, your

incompetence, that priest has been allowed to live, bringing my opposite power back among men! Find them and slay them all . . . bring me their heads before the day is out!

"If that traitor that I planted among them does not do the job, then the task is on your shoulders. Hear me well, Toede: either your head or theirs will decorate my throne room tonight!"

The figure before the Dragon Highlord cringes even more, and begins to speak in a pathetic whine, "Your most worshipful lord, I offer my hopelessly inadequate apology. If I had known that the ones you seek were imprisoned in my caravan, I would have brought you their heads personally as I brought you the elf maid Laurana. If not for the treachery of one of the loathsome Aghar, they would even now be kneeling before you, prisoners to your tender mercies . . ."

"Enough!" roars the Dragon Highlord. "You have my warning, now go!" The voice lowers, heavy with menace. "And Toede, do not fail me again . . ."

Toede turns and scuttles for the doors, while two draconian guards pull them open to allow the Fewmaster quick exit. Of course, any intruders at the door are discovered at this time.

As Toede races for the door, Verminaard leans back in his throne and slowly surveys the room. If any heroes are watching from the door, the balcony, or the chain room, he sees them in the mirrors. He calls: "Ember!" and the red dragon immediately pushes through the double doors on the west wall. "Destroy them!" is Verminaard's next command.

There are six Kapak draconian guards in the throne room, as well as Verminaard (an 8th-level priest). The draconians enter the combat only if, for some reason, the dragon seems to have trouble making the kill. Verminaard stays out of range and watches the fight; if Ember suffers

half damage, the dragon flees through the double doors and up through the chimney, but not before he has stopped and let Verminaard mount. (Statistics for Ember and Verminaard can be found in the Combined Monster Statistics Chart and in the capsules, respectively.)

Verminaard's face is concealed behind the grotesque mask of a Dragon Highlord—a vicious visor that has a pair of wicked horns curving from the forehead. He wears shiny blue plate mail and a billowing blue cape. Standing well over six feet tall, Verminaard presents an imposing image of evil.

Verminaard is dedicated to the ruthless destruction of good in all its forms. No shred of conscience disturbs him in his quest for power. He controls all of the lands from the Seeker kingdoms south to Pax Tharkas. He is constantly striving to extend his power.

122. Verminaard's Quarters

Verminaard has taken over these three connecting rooms as living quarters. The doors are all polished vallenwood, and locked securely. Verminaard himself carries the only keys.

122a. Waiting Room

This room has kept its former splendor: The plush carpet on the floor is undamaged, and the chairs and couches are all richly upholstered. A small table sits in the center of the room, and a pair of crystal goblets and a crystal decanter filled with a golden liquid sparkle from atop the table.

A large tapestry covers the far wall. This is the only indication that the fortress has recently changed hands: it displays a huge, red dragon, jaws agape, spewing flames over a small village. Several large candelabra provide steady light for the chamber.



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122b. Private Dining Room

Half of this chamber is filled by a polished table of gleaming dark wood. A buffet with glass doors displays a priceless collection of china and silver. Light spills from a pair of golden chandeliers, each supporting many flickering candles.

A pair of tapestries has been added to the eastern and southern walls of this room. One shows a massive red dragon landing amid a troop of armored horsemen and wreaking gory havoc. The second shows a region of black mountains, heavy with mist and shadows, where a looming fortress rises up in the distance.

A small, locked drawer in the bottom of the hutch is trapped with a poison needle (successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer 15 points of damage). Within the drawer are four small bottles containing two potions of extra healing, a potion of gaseous form, and a potion of invisibility.

122c. Verminaard's Bedroom

This chamber seems to be a combination office and bedroom. A huge bed, lushly canopied and quilted, nearly fills the southern end. A large wooden closet sits next to it. Across the floor are spread rugs made from the skins of many of the large carnivores found throughout Kryn: brown bears, jaguars, panthers, wolves, and a tiger.

The other end of the room is taken up by a large desk, plain wooden chair, small table, and washbasin. Three tapestries, picturing scenes of dragon-wrought destruction, add a dark touch to the walls. Several smoky torches flicker in sconces. Several candles and a lamp sit on the desk, but they are unlit.

Spread upon the desk are many maps of this portion of Ansalon,

showing the gradual increase in lands controlled by the Dragon Highlord. On top of the pile is a map of Qualinesti, showing that peaceful land pierced by three great daggers: one each moving from the northeast and northwest, and one advancing straight from Pax Tharkas, just as the elves had reported.

Another sheet of paper diagrams the permanent defenses of Pax Tharkas, showing how the chain and stone mechanism (room 132) operates to block the massive gates.

The desk has one drawer, firmly locked and guarded with a dose of *sleep* gas. If the lock is picked without deactivating the trap, all in the room fall asleep for 2d6 turns, no saving throw. This drawer contains two sheets of rolled parchment, each a priest scroll. They contain these spells:

Scroll #1: *cure serious wounds, prayer, find traps*

Scroll #2: *light, augury, cure light wounds*

The closet contains several robes, a black cape, a pair of boots, and a suit of black plate mail.

123. Children's Playroom

This door is barred on the outside with a heavy wooden beam.

This large, open room has no furniture. Scattered about, however, are many small bits of wood and rags carelessly carved or sewn into dolls, wagons, balls, and other toys. A tall arch in the eastern wall leads into darkness, and next to the arch is a normal wooden door. A pair of huge doors in the southwestern corner apparently leads outside, since four windows in that same wall admit some cool, fresh air.

The double doors are held by a very heavy beam, requiring a total Strength of 25 to remove. There is a similar beam on the ground outside these doors that may be used to bar them and keep something (i.e., Flamestrike) inside. The door to room 124 is not

locked. If the fortress has been alerted, there are six Kapaks here. Use Random Encounter 4.

124. Storeroom

Many shelves line the walls of this small room. Stacked upon them are blankets, cloaks, tiny boots, and a number of toys similar to the ones strewn about the playroom.

The cloaks are all children's sizes.

125. Chamber of the Nursemaid

The arched tunnel enters another room, even larger than the playroom. No windows shed light into this area, but a soft, wheezing noise gives evidence of another presence here. Soon, the torchlight falls across a monstrous red tail, then massive crimson flanks that rise and fall with a slow, rhythmic pattern.

Now the great head appears: eyes closed, forked tongue extending from wicked jaws, and nostrils flaring ever so slightly with the slow breaths. This chamber is occupied by an ancient red dragon!

At first, Flamestrike looks every bit as awesome as is usual for her kind, but a closer look reveals that this dragon suffers some of the ill effects of age. Many of her teeth are blunted or broken (accounting for her lessened bite damage), while one of her eyes is cloudy and apparently blind. Long scars mark her weathered flanks, and she looks unusually slender, even scrawny.

Flamestrike lost her brood of young to an unknown enemy years ago, and this tragedy has deeply scarred her personality. She is a very careful guardian of the children, and would never harm one of them under any circumstance. She deals harshly with those she believes threaten "her" children. The only visitors she allows are the ten women who, once a day, arrive to feed and care for the youngsters.

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126. Food Storage and Preparation

On the right-hand wall of this room, several shelves are piled high with goods. To the left, a large oven and a pot-covered counter run along the wall. The small room is cluttered with food and utensils.

In this room the women prepare the food for the children. Barrels of salt pork, beans, salt, flour, lard, dried meat, and potatoes sit on the shelves.

127. Children's Room

This large room bustles with several hundred children, ranging in age from infant to about 12 years old. Their frightened, questioning faces stare at the doorway. Several of the older boys and girls stand protectively before the younger children, as if to spare them the sight of anything horrible.

Although fear and hardship have struck these youngsters unjustly, their spirit has not been broken. Courage and resolve shine in the faces of the older children, and the younger ones look to their older brothers and sisters with respect and pride. Not even the smallest baby is crying.

There are 180 children in this room. They will recognize and instantly respond to Maritta, if she is with the heroes. Otherwise, a very mature boy and girl advance to talk privately with the PCs, seeking information about them. The children will never consent to leave unless convinced that their parents will join them in freedom.

If the heroes begin to rescue the children, they file slowly and silently past the sleeping Flamestrike. The red dragon stirs in her sleep, but does not awaken until all but a few dozen of the children have passed—unless of course, a PC attacks or arouses her.

When the dragon wakes up, read the following:

The great red dragon slowly raises her head, muttering softly: "Maritta, you take all of my children together . . . is it not easier with a few at a time?" Blinking her one good eye, Flamestrike slowly looks around and sniffs the chamber. Suddenly, she screams with rage and springs to her feet!

"You cannot steal my children!"

Flamestrike tries to attack the heroes with teeth and claws. She will never use her breath weapon while the children are nearby!

If the heroes escape with the children to the outside, Flamestrike cannot follow them through the double doors. She will not emerge from the fortress until the moment described in "Escape from Pax Tharkas."

128. Upper Landing

The stairway emerges into a long, narrow room. Two silver-coated doors, embossed with an image of an elf and a dwarf holding a lute between them, lead to the left. The lure is an ancient symbol of peace in Krynn, so the artwork dates these doors to the period of elven and dwarven cooperation when Pax Tharkas was built.

The secret door operates by twisting a stone that is set into the door itself.

129. Gallery

This huge room is chilly, exposed to the autumn drafts by a number of slit windows along the curving walls. To the left, it follows the angle of the wall of the fortress out of sight.

The entire outer wall of the room is covered with paintings. The different styles and varying degrees of aging indicate that they were created over a long span of Krynn's history. The paintings show woodland scenes, rugged mountains, several views of Pax Tharkas, and portraits of various elves and dwarves, dressed in fine costume.

Nothing lives in this room, so the heroes may take their time here without being bothered. If they wish to examine the pictures closely, they will see that the oldest paintings are directly before them. They seemed to be organized chronologically, getting more recent as the viewer moves to the left.

Read the following if the party takes some time to look at the artwork.

The first paintings show a high mountain pass glittering in the light of the sun. Snowfields flash among the peaks, and thick forests cover the lower slopes. Many streams, frequently interrupted by ponds and waterfalls, wind into the lowlands.

A large band of sturdy dwarves labor in the pass, building a low stone wall across the opening. Now many elves appear, bearing huge logs on low wagons, and the wall takes on a familiar form. First the main wall of Pax Tharkas goes up, elves and dwarves working side by side in the monumental task. Then, even as two curtain walls rise on the slopes below the main wall, two mighty towers begin to inch their way into the sky.

After a few pictures displaying the various stages of construction, during which the seasons make the yearly cycle several times, the fortress assumes its current shape. Following this series are a number of portraits displaying various elves and dwarves, usually dressed in shiny plate mail and bearing gleaming weapons. A number of these paintings have been crudely defaced.

Then begins a series in which mighty dragons rage about the towers of Pax Tharkas. Acid, lightning, fire, and cold all rain down upon courageous defenders, driving them from the parapets to shelter within the solid walls. Soon, the mighty dragons land all over the fortress, and it seems that mighty Pax Tharkas has fallen.

But then new weapons appear. Long, slender, and gleaming like



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polished silver, these lances are carried by fighters of highest courage. Slowly, at a fearful cost, the dragons are driven from the towers and walls. Great gashes burrow into their scaly hides, as they begin to bleed and die. Finally, although the parapets are red with the defenders' blood, the skies are free of dragons, and it seems that peace has once again returned.

At this point, the course of history has carried halfway around the room. Several more portraits follow, this time displaying human leaders in historic poses; then the series ends.

Faded spots on the wall show that more paintings hung here at one time; a pile of blackened ashes at the far end of the room provides a clue to their fate.

130. Balcony

Many slender columns support a high ceiling. Twenty feet from the wall, the floor drops sharply into a deep pit—actually, two pits separated by a stone wall. The larger of these is well lit, and voices rise from inside it. The second, smaller pit is dark.

If the heroes advance into the lighted pit, read the scene described for area 121 (unless they have already witnessed Toede's interview with Verminaard from another vantage point, in which case room 121 is empty). If they look into the darkened pit, read the following:

Enough light filters over the wall and through the huge connecting doors to cast a faint glow on the bottom of this pit. Curled up there, alert eyes blinking warily here and there, is the serpentine form of a monstrous red dragon!

Any untoward noise from the PCs, or other signs of their presence, brings Ember flaming upward for the kill. Her statistics are listed in the Combined Monster Statistics Chart.

131. Chamber of the Chain

This cavernous room can be entered through the secret door in room 128, or (by a halfling) by climbing the chain that is anchored in the Slamori.

A thick layer of dust coats the floor of this vast chamber. Much rubble, in the form of boulders and small stones, lies strewn about. Running along the wall is a mighty chain, made of foot-thick steel bars bent into six-foot-long links and held taut by unimaginable force.

A thin trickle of light leaks through a crack in the wall, leading into a large room. Voices can be heard through the crack.

If a player looks through the crack into the throne room, describe the situation there as in area 121 (unless this incident has already taken place, in which case area 121 is empty). Remember that the mirrors enable Verminaard to catch sight of the eavesdropper eventually, at which time he will send Ember up to breathe fire into the crack.

Although an intelligent hero can avoid the fire by moving to the side, the chain turns bright red, then white from the heat of the blast. Finally, it stretches, snaps, and releases the stone blocking mechanism, sealing the mighty gates for at least a month.

A stairway in the northwestern corner of the room climbs to the next level of the tower. Six more levels can be found this way, but all the rooms are dusty and empty.

132. Gate-Blocking Mechanism

A narrow stone walkway, covered with dust, leads through the length of the Tharkadan wall high above the ground. To the right, ten feet below you, are scattered piles of massive granite. To the left, the mighty chain stretches across the darkness. Many chains, only slightly smaller, lead from this massive chain underneath the

walkway, apparently connecting somehow with the stone blocks on the right.

At the far end of the walkway (marked "A" on the map), a large screw and winch mechanism can be used to release the chain. This requires a combined Strength of 40 to operate, and takes 3d6 rounds to activate.

When the rocks fall, the crashing shakes the foundations of the entire fortress. Anyone in area 133 is killed outright by tons of stone. Area 132 fills with so much dust that movement and vision are impossible for 1d6 rounds.

133. The Great Wall

This area is basically a large corridor that runs the length of the Tharkadan wall. Massive winches operate the mighty gates, requiring a Strength of 80 to move. Even then it takes two turns to open or close a gate. The northern gate is slightly open (a six-foot-wide crack), while the southern gate is shut.

134. Western Hallway

The double doors leading from 133 into this area stand open.

The walls of this hallway are dirty and bare, and the floor is covered with mud. Several broken chairs and a small table, only two of its four legs intact, are the only furniture. The double doors in the northern wall and a single iron door in the western wall are all closed. The double doors look as if they have been hacked with a blade of some kind.

The iron door is locked; the double doors are not. Listening at the iron door reveals low sounds of conversation and occasional laughter.

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135. Western Guardroom

Several ugly guards sit at a table in the center of this long room, playing some kind of gambling game. Two more of the guards are grappling—apparently in practice—at the far end of the room, while another two, swords drawn, rush toward the door!

The eight hobgoblins in this room are charged with guarding the women held in area 136. Seven attack any intruders, fighting to the death, while one slips out the back door and tries to get help from the monsters in area 137.

If the escaping hobgoblin is not intercepted, five rounds after the heroes enter this room, they are attacked from behind by the seven Baaz draconians and six hobgoblins from room 137.

Scattered on the table are 23 stl, 15 sp, and 2 pp. One hobgoblin carries keys that open the doors to this room and room 136, as well as a pouch containing a 300-stl ruby.

136. Large Prison

The single door to this room (from 135) is made of iron and is solidly locked. It cannot be smashed open.

A cavernous chamber stretches far off into darkness, but the number of people crowded into it makes the room seem small. Sitting, standing, or lying down, several hundred women turn their attention listlessly toward the door.

Those nearby leap to their feet in surprise; a wave of excitement spreads through the room like a spring breeze. All of the women rush toward the door. A thousand questions fill the air, but no one waits for answers.

In this room are 287 captive plainswomen. The PCs receive many frantic questions about the children, followed by queries such as "Who are you?" and "Where did you come from?" Since it is likely that some

alarms have sounded by this time, the PCs run risks by stopping to answer many of these questions.

Any attempts to smash open the double doors leading outside suffer a -2 penalty to the roll.

137. Monster Mess Hall

If the heroes have already battled the monsters from this room because the guards from 135 have summoned them, read only the first paragraph of this description.

This room is dimly lit by a number of flickering fireplaces, and the air is gray with smoke. Many long tables and benches sit in the shadows, and the stench of foul food and cheap ale fills the air.

Suddenly, scraping sounds of movement erupt from the darkness, followed by gruff challenges and the whisper of swords being drawn. A bench falls over with a crash, and shadowy figures lunge out of the darkness. Blades upraised, the troops of the Dragon Highlord charge!

The seven Baaz and six hobgoblins attack desperately, fighting to the death if necessary. If any of them make it through the door, they try to sound an alarm and alert the fortress.

The stairway in the northern part of the room climbs to the second floor, which is a huge, empty room that the draconians once used as a barracks. The former residents were the troops that the party saw marching to the north toward Qualinesti.

A stairway leads from the second to the third, fourth, and fifth floors. Each of these was used as a barracks; each contains 1d20 Kapak draconians that somehow were left behind when the army moved out. Treat these as random encounters (see Random Encounter 4 or 2 1). Nothing of value can be found on any of these upper floors.

138. Western Supply Room

This is a well-stocked supply room. Many sturdy shelves line

the walls, and a wide aisle runs down the center of the room. Three sets of doors give access to the room, and the shelves cover the rest of the wall space.

Stacked on the shelves are hundreds of suits of leather armor, a similar number of shields, rows of heavy boots, cloaks, and capes, and a number of sealed wooden crates and barrels.

The sealed wooden crates contain a mysterious smoked meat (wild dog). The barrels contain oil. If a fire starts here, it spreads with the same smoky effects described in area 114.

139. Kitchen

This room resembles a large military kitchen that has been ravaged by a tornado. Stale food covers the floor and counters, ashes from the ovens are spread around, and pots and pans lie overturned, spilling sticky garbage over the rest of the mess.

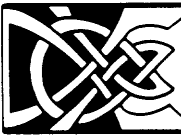
This kitchen served the draconian hordes while they were stationed in the fortress. After cooking the last meal before the army moved out, the hobgoblin servants simply left things as they were.

A deep well, four feet in diameter, sinks through the floor in the northern end of the room. The water is 20 feet below, and it is quite drinkable. This well can be used to support the garrison in times of siege.

140. Armory

The double doors to this room are made of thick timbers and are solidly locked. Any character trying to smash them suffers a -2 penalty to his open doors roll.

Row after row of wooden racks cover this room. Although most of these racks are empty, a few chipped swords, broken spears, and rusty daggers show that this is an armory. Many thousands of



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weapons could easily be stored here, if the racks were filled.

If the players try to gather some weapons here, they find that most of those remaining are unusable. They will, however, be able to pick up 23 short swords, eight long swords, 108 spear heads (no shafts), and 60 daggers. All of these are somewhat rusty, but may be cleaned up and used.

The Tharkadan Mines

Areas 141-143 are not in the fortress proper, but have been excavated from the mountainsides south of Pax Tharkas. They represent an important part of the Dragon Highlords' operations in the region.

If the heroes leave Pax Tharkas to the south, read the following passage:

A narrow mountain valley winds steeply down to the south. In the eastern wall of this valley are the mouths of two large caves. From these caves, several narrow and treacherous trails wind up the slope to a gaping scar on the mountainside, two hundred feet above.

A band of dull red streaks the rocky surface of the scar, while hundreds of human-like figures toil to scrape the rock away and reveal more of the rusty red material. This is the fabled Tharkadan iron mine.

If the heroes talk to the miners before they rescue the children, either disguised as women or by sneaking up here at night, they discover that the miners are slaves and that the slaves are very lightly guarded (since the children are held under the watchful eyes of Flamestrike, the Dragon Highlord has very little fear that the miners will escape).

Indeed, no prisoner is willing to join any risky undertaking without assurances that the women and children are safe.

141. Smelter and Mill

This deep cavern has a huge entrance, about 80 feet wide and 20 feet high. Acrid, sulphurous smoke billows in the chamber and drifts out to the valley. Gully dwarves scramble to and fro in their usual hectic fashion, although there seems to be a bit more organization than usual.

Many of the Aghar use huge hammers to smash red rock into gravel. Every few minutes, another batch of rock falls through a hole in the ceiling, and the Aghar attack it fiercely. Other Aghar carry the pulverized rock across the cave, to huge vats that sit atop smoky fires.

Great bellows feed air to these fires, while gully dwarves pile on coal. The sulphurous smoke belches from the vats in great, yellow clouds. Although the Aghar work furiously, there is no sign of draconians or other masters.

This is the processing plant for the iron ore that the slaves mine on the Tharkadan slopes. Although the gully dwarves are unsupervised, they do not stop working for anything short of a cave-in; they have been threatened with death if they do not produce a high quota of iron.

142. Slave Quarters

This huge cave is deserted now, but the floor is virtually covered with dirty straw pallets. Several fire scars dot the interior, and some rotten wooden buckets leak dirty water onto the floor. Any unfortunate souls that live here put up with hardship indeed.

This is home for all the male prisoners from the north. They are at the mines for 16-18 hours a day. There is nothing of value in this cave.

143. Mines

Hundreds of swearing, muscular men toil across this great strip of mountainside, raising picks or pushing shovels to scrape a rusty red ore from the earth. Several dozen draconians are scattered about the area, but they seem to take little interest in their prisoners. After all, with their women and children safely locked in mighty Pax Tharkas, these men can ill afford any thoughts of escape!

When they have collected a great pile of ore, the slaves drag it on pallets across the mountainside to a hole directly above the smelting cavern. Other slaves shovel the ore into the hole, where it lands among the gully dwarves below.

There are 310 men working here. If the slaves see their loved ones brought from Pax Tharkas, they turn on their guards and slay them easily. Running down the narrow trail to the bottom, they soon rejoin their families and begin rejoicing. Despite the pleas of PCs, the people insist on locating those closest to them, a process that takes 15 or 20 minutes.

Epilogue: Escape from Pax Tharkas

If the heroes have rescued the women and children, Flamestrike is battering against the barred doors, the men rush down from the mines, and the thousands of troops that marched out of the fortress to the north are rushing back to answer the alarms. The mass of people, around 800 of them, should be collected on the southern side of the great fortress.

At this time, read the following passage:

Suddenly, with a splintering crash, the double doors holding Flamestrike fly outward. The great beast slithers out of the tower toward the crowd of prisoners.

"My children! You shall not have my children!" Her voice is shrill and strained. "Leave me my children!" she demands, lumbering down the gradual slope.

Now another great crimson shape appears, flying. Bellowing a challenge, a second huge red dragon lands on the mighty Tharkadan wall. On its back is the imposing figure of the Dragon Highlord Verminaard, still concealed by the fearsome mask. His voice booms through the valley.

"This is the final insult! I have tolerated your impudence far too long. . . slaves are cheap and plentiful. Now you pay for your foolish daring!" As the people scream and turn to flee down the valley, his evil voice picks up more power: "Now, I destroy you! I *destroy your wives! I destroy your children!*"

As Ember leaps from the wall, Flamestrike pauses in her advance. Confusion shakes her as she looks from the children to the great engine of death above her. Suddenly, her dim eyes take on clear focus as she makes a decision.

Curling her long neck upward, Flamestrike sends forth a horrifying spout of fire, straight at the flying dragon and the Dragon Highlord. With a scream, Verminaard vanishes in the glowing cloud, and his dragon-steed bellows in pain. Quickly, the two

dragons lock in a fearsome melee, thrashing their mighty bodies across the valley and bringing boulders tumbling from the mountainsides.

If the heroes take advantage of this diversion, they can lead the band down the valley and out of sight of the fortress while the two dragons struggle. Verminaard barely survives the fight, and it takes 12 hours before he sends his army after the escapees. If the heroes have succeeded in dropping the gate-blocking mechanism, it is four days before he can send an army.

If the heroes make good their escape at this time, read to them from the following passage:

The autumn sun disappears behind a mountain ridge, as 800 people huddle among a cheery grove of tall pines. Tired and hungry, they are nonetheless happy for their nearly miraculous escape.

This small side valley should provide shelter for the night from any draconians that have been sent on the hunt. No doubt fresh problems will arise tomorrow, but for now the plainsmen are safe.

The biting chill of the wind brings warnings of the winter that is soon to come. The wilderness yields little food, but many mouths need to be fed. The great silver moon rises and the stars blink into sight.

The heroes may easily locate skilled teachers among the rescued prisoners. This enables all fighters, mages, and thieves to gain one level of experience immediately. Multi-classed characters advance in the class that requires the least number of experience points.

Priests who have learned of Mishakal or another of the good True Gods of Krynn may gain one level by meditating and praying to their deity.





The Refugees of Pax Tharkas



Much of this adventure involves leading 800 refugees (not counting leaders, PCs, and named NPCs) through the wilderness to safety. Use the following rules to run the refugee population.

Movement

The entire refugee population moving as a group can travel one hex per hour on the Abanasinia Wilderness map. The refugees have carts and supplies that slow down their movement. If the refugees panic (during a draconian attack, for example), they can flee at a rate of 18 for up to 20 rounds. Panicked refugees automatically lose all supplies and wagons. If the refugees decide to abandon all supplies and leave behind the weak and sick, they can move two hexes per hour.

Regardless of movement rate, the refugees can travel no more than 12 hexes per day.

Supply

In their rush to escape the mines of Pax Tharkas, the refugees plundered what they could. There is one wagon for every 20 refugees (40 wagons total). The wagons contain enough food to feed all the refugees for two days, and they also carry enough blankets for everyone. Keep track of the total food supply. Each wagon lost means 20 hungry and cold refugees.

Attrition

The refugees were starved and beaten in Pax Tharkas, and the cruel weather and conditions of their escape has weakened them further. It is likely that some of them will die before they reach safety. Attrition primarily affects the weak and ill, rather than the few remaining fighters among the refugees. Keep track of losses in the refugee population.

Consult Table 1 for conditions that cause attrition.

Table 1: Refugee Attrition

Circumstance	Chance	Attrition
Each night in the open without cover	80%	2d10
Each day in camp without moving	60%	1d10
Each day without food	20%	1d10
Panic or rout	100%	4d20

Each time that a circumstance occurs that might cause attrition, roll percentile dice. If the result is less than or equal to the chance of attrition, roll for attrition as listed. Deduct losses from the total refugee population, taking only 10% of any attrition losses from the fighters. Spread losses evenly among the five refugee camps (see "Politics"), unless common sense says that one camp should suffer most or all of the attrition.

Combat

The refugees are far from combat ready. Only 10% of the men (80 total) have combat experience, and only half of these have weapons. Treat these as 1st-level fighters. Keep track of the fighters separately from the main refugee population.

The following system is used to resolve mass combat involving refugee fighters. Use normal combat rules for smaller melees. All combat involving PCs or named NPCs uses normal combat rules.

For mass combat, compare Total Refugee Strength and Total Attack Strength. The Total Refugee Strength is the sum of the remaining refugee fighters, plus 5 for every PC or named NPC present and fighting. The Total Attack Strength is the total number of attackers.

Roll percentile dice. If the result is greater than the Total Refugee Strength, the refugees panic and flee. (See "Attrition" for the effects of flight. All wagons and supplies carried by panicking refugees are lost, regardless of the outcome of the battle.)

Next, determine the Combat Modifier for each side, using Table 2.

Table 2: Combat Modifiers

Circumstance	Modifier
Terrain Advantage	+20
Surprise	+10
Defending	+20
Outnumbered by 50% or more	-10 for each 50%
Magic Use	+20 per caster
Unarmed Fighter	-1 each

All modifiers are cumulative. Use common sense when judging whether a modifier applies.

Each side rolls percentile dice and adds their Combat Modifier to the roll. Consult Table 3 for casualties.

Table 3: Combat Losses

Modified Roll	Losses	Result
100 or more	4d20	Enemy panics
80-99	3d20	Enemy retreats
60-79	1d20	Continue Battle
40-59	1d10	Continue Battle
20-39	1d6	Continue Battle
10-19	1d4	You retreat
9 or less	0	You panic

All losses are taken from NPC fighters. Civilians become combat casualties only if all refugee fighters are killed. Player characters, henchmen, and named NPCs can be killed only in individual melee. Repeat this process until one side is destroyed, surrenders, retreats, panics, or withdraws. Unarmed fighters can acquire weapons from dead enemies.

Politics

Because the heroes liberated the refugees from Pax Tharkas, they automatically have a leadership role in the refugee community. However, politics is part of the human condition, and there are other leaders who also play a role.

From the time of the escape from Pax Tharkas until the refugees first make camp, the heroes are completely in charge. The refugees do whatever the players wish.

When the refugees make their first camp, they begin to select their own leaders: the Council of Freedom. The



The Refugees of Pax Tharkas



draconians enslaved community leaders as well as regular folk. Now, those people are again asserting their authority.

The Council, once established, divides the refugees into five camps, each with one representative. The PCs are appointed Advisors to the Council, but they have no votes. Laurana, whose political and diplomatic skills are very strong, should be the PCs' primary liaison to the Council.

The Council members and their camps are as follows:

Elistan, leader of the Believers. He is actively friendly to the PCs, and votes according to their wishes 70% of the time. He and Laurana work closely together on matters concerning the party.

Locar, leader of the Seekers. Locar hates Elistan, who was once a Seeker, for his new faith. Locar wants to take control of all the camps, preferring to lead than follow. He is actively unfriendly to the PCs, and votes according to their wishes only 10% of the time. He works to undermine the PCs' role at all times. If the PCs try to kill him or remove him by force, Briar and Brookland both turn against the heroes.

Briar, leader of the Plainsmen. He is neutral to the PCs, except for Goldmoon and Riverwind, both plainsmen. He is basically a good but suspicious man. Locar can influence him on complex matters. He votes according to the PCs' wishes 30% of the time, but is more cooperative on matters that are simple, straightforward, and easily explained. Political persuasion used on Briar tends to backfire.

Brookland, leader of the Woodfolk. He is friendly to elves and half-elves and can be swayed by Laurana. He is a good man who seeks only the safety of his people. He votes according to the PCs' wishes 40% of the time, but he cannot be stampeded into a vote without consideration.

Eben Shatterstone, leader of the Free Peoples. As a secret agent of Verminaard, he plays a complicated game. Publicly, he is friendly to the heroes and supports them. Privately, he is allied with Locar to discredit the heroes and take control of the refugee movement. He is very charismatic and is working to sway Briar and Brookland to the side of Locar. To keep on everyone's good side, he always votes last and votes with the majority. If he is forced to break a tie, he votes according to the PCs' wishes 50% of the time. If the PCs should suspect Eben, try to kill him, or exile him, he heads for Verminaard and does not reappear until later in the adventure.

The voting tendencies of the Council members are meant to be advisory only. Not even Locar will vote against a plan to gather food or to build shelters for the sick. However, if the decision to be made is even slightly controversial, political intrigue comes into play.

The Council must vote on any decision affecting all five camps. Each leader is responsible for running his own camp, and decisions by that leader are final. (Locar, for example, can refuse to allow PCs access to his camp.)

The voting tendencies of the Council, and the reactions of any individual leader, are modified based on the political rating of the PCs. Consult Table 4, in the next column.

All political rating modifiers are cumulative. In addition, add or subtract up to 10 points based on your judgment of the PCs' proposal. To determine the Council's decision, add the cumulative political reaction modifier to each Council member's base chance to vote as the PCs wish, and roll percentile dice. If the result is less than or equal to the modified chance, the Council member votes in favor of the PCs' proposal.

Do not let these rules get in the way of common sense! The political intrigue and goals of each Council member can make for very entertaining role-playing. Encourage the players to act out the situations, and play

the parts of the Council members yourself. Encourage role-playing and active participation rather than just rolling dice.

Table 4: Political Rating

(Base Political Rating = 40)

Modifier	Circumstance
- 5	Each vote taken
- 5	Each day in wilderness
- 5	Each time refugees must break camp and move
- 1 0	Each combat
- 1	Each refugee death
- 2 0	Each day without food
- 5 0	PCs use violence against any Council member
+ 1 0	Each 800 food units found by PCs
+ 2 0	Refugees reach Encounter Area 21
+ Reaction Adjustment	Charisma of character trying to persuade the Council

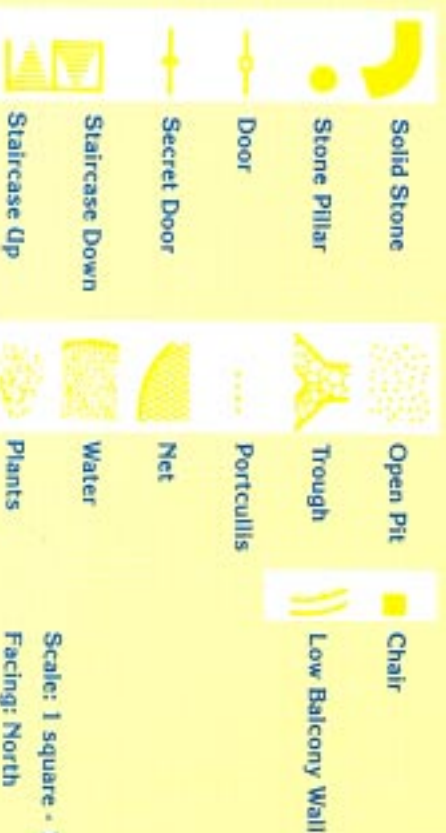
Experience Points

In addition to normal experience points for combat and treasure, each PC receives 10 additional experience points for each refugee still alive at the end of this adventure.



The Kingdom of Thorbarðin

City Block Key



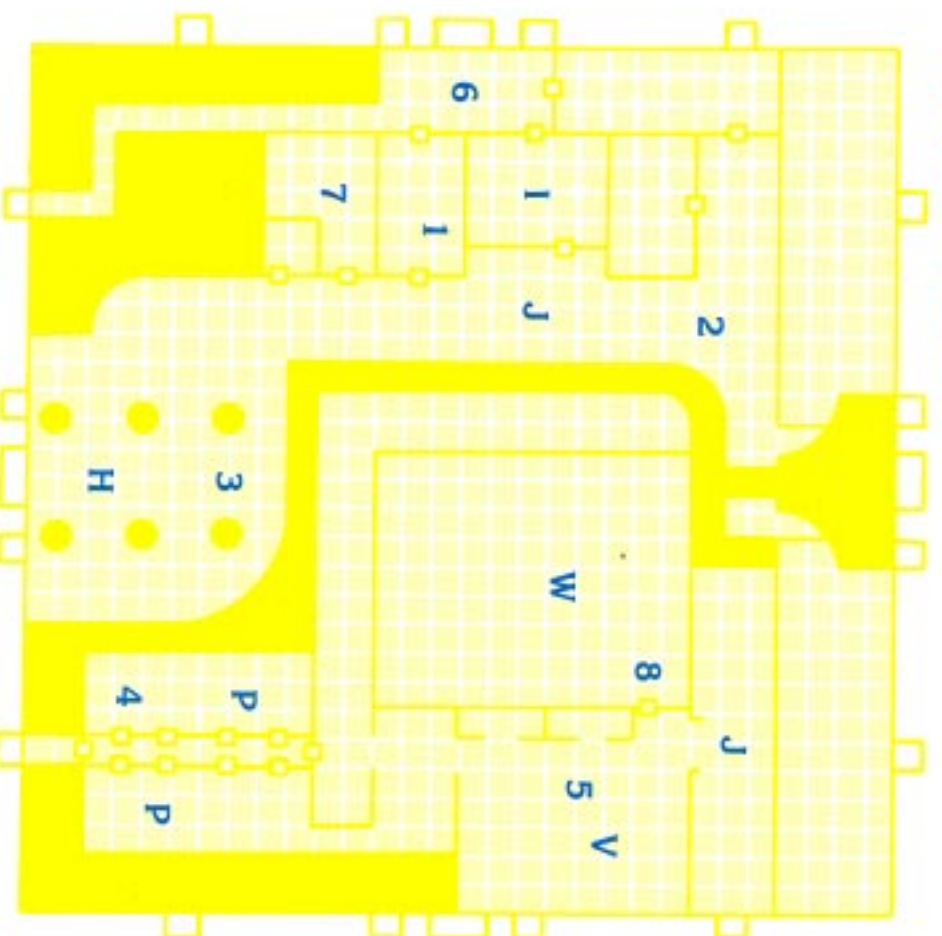
Scale: 1 square = 10 feet
 Facing: North



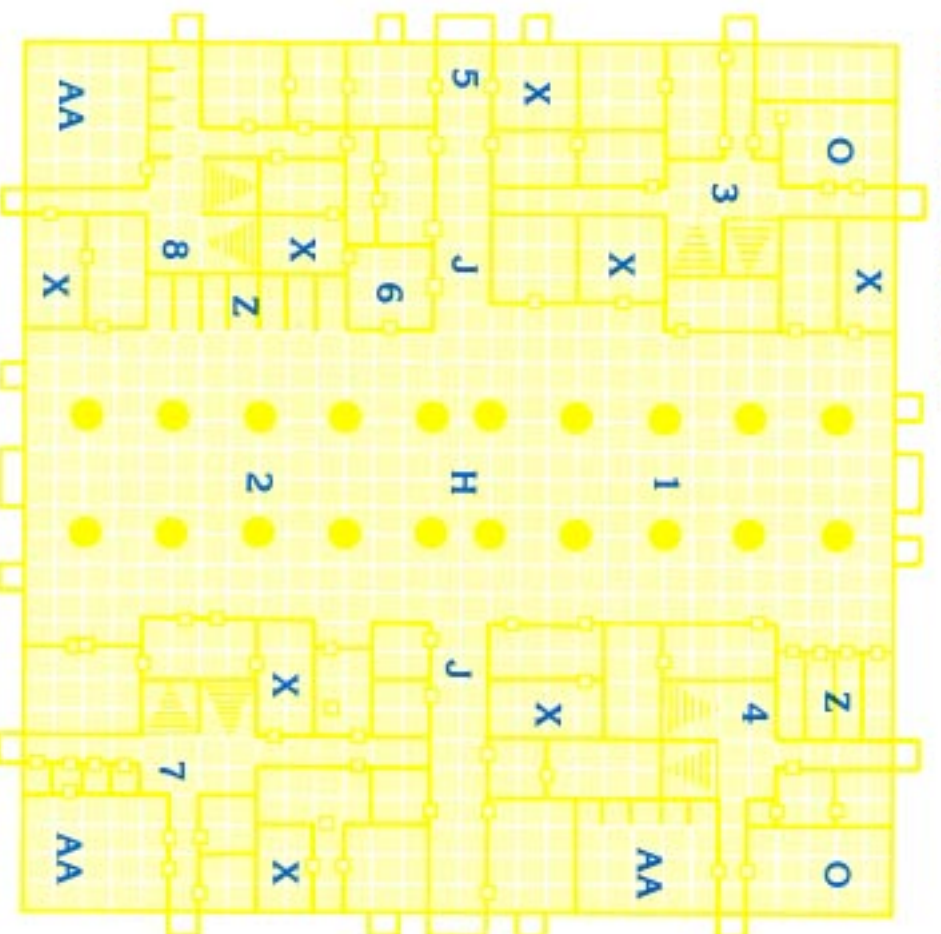
Room Key

A Court	I Guard Quarters	Q Pathway	Y Soldiers' Stations
B Courtyard	J Hallway	R Plants	Z Stalls
C Display Rooms	K Harbor	S Pond	AA Store Rooms
D Docks	L Homes	T Prison Cells	BB Transport Machinery
E Drawbridge	M Intersection	U Promenade	CC Transport Shaft

1. Gatehouse



2. Great Hall

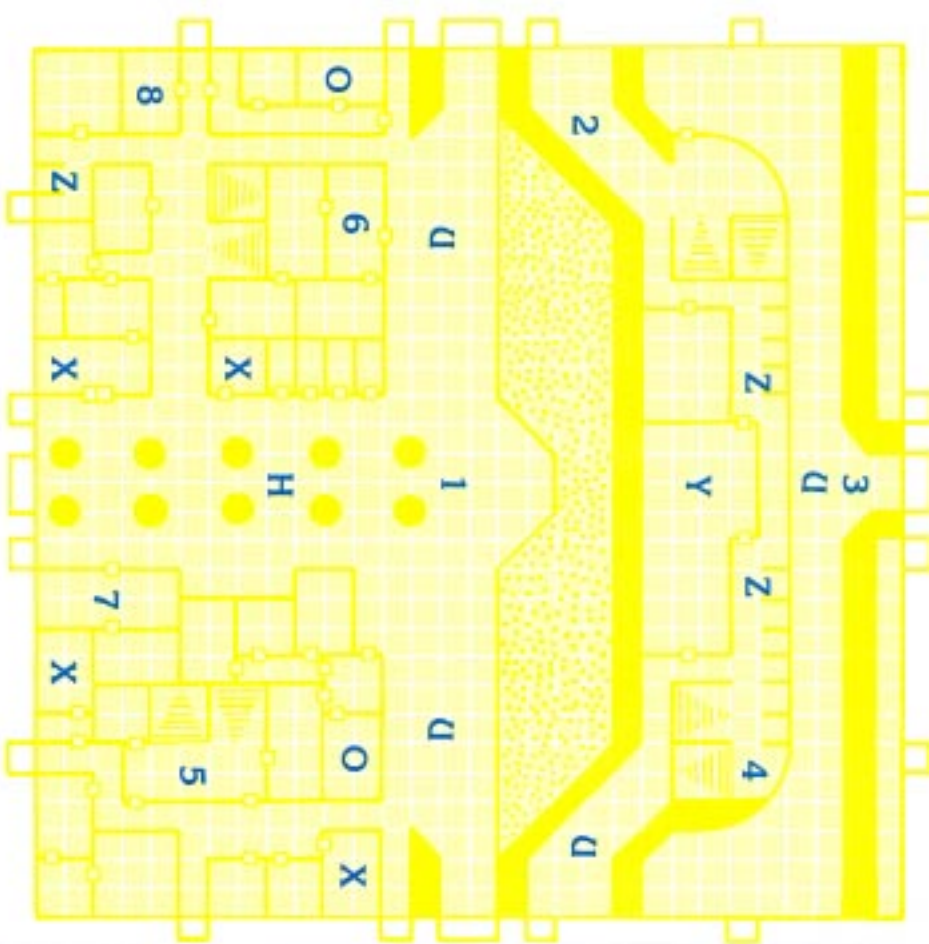
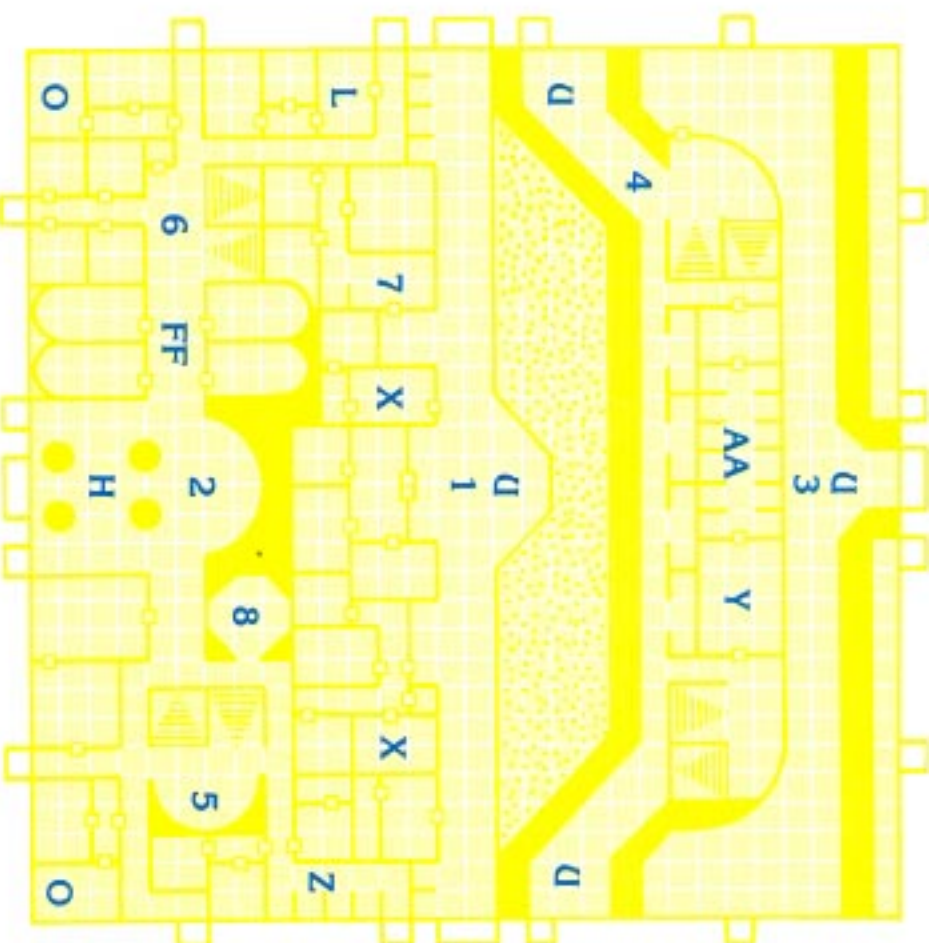


5. Kings Wall I



6. Kings Wall II

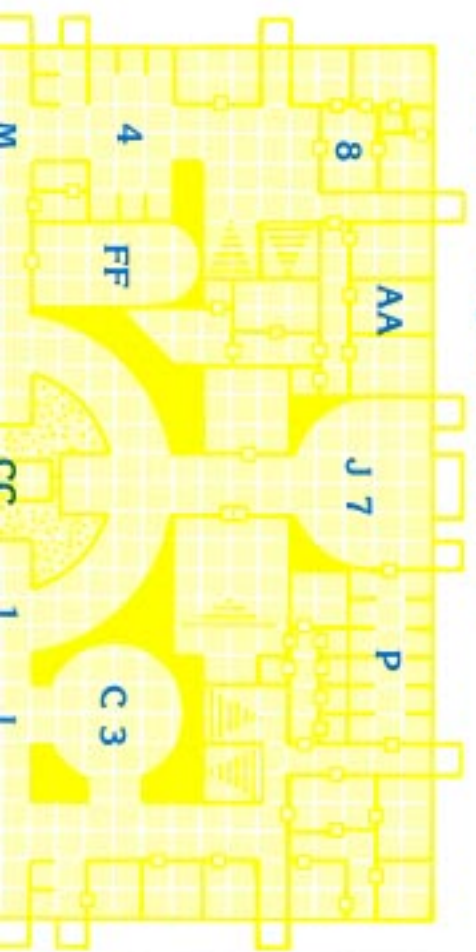


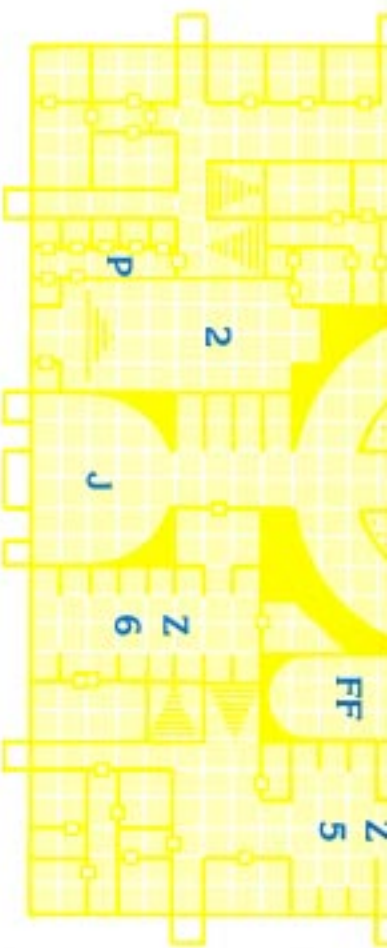


9. Residence

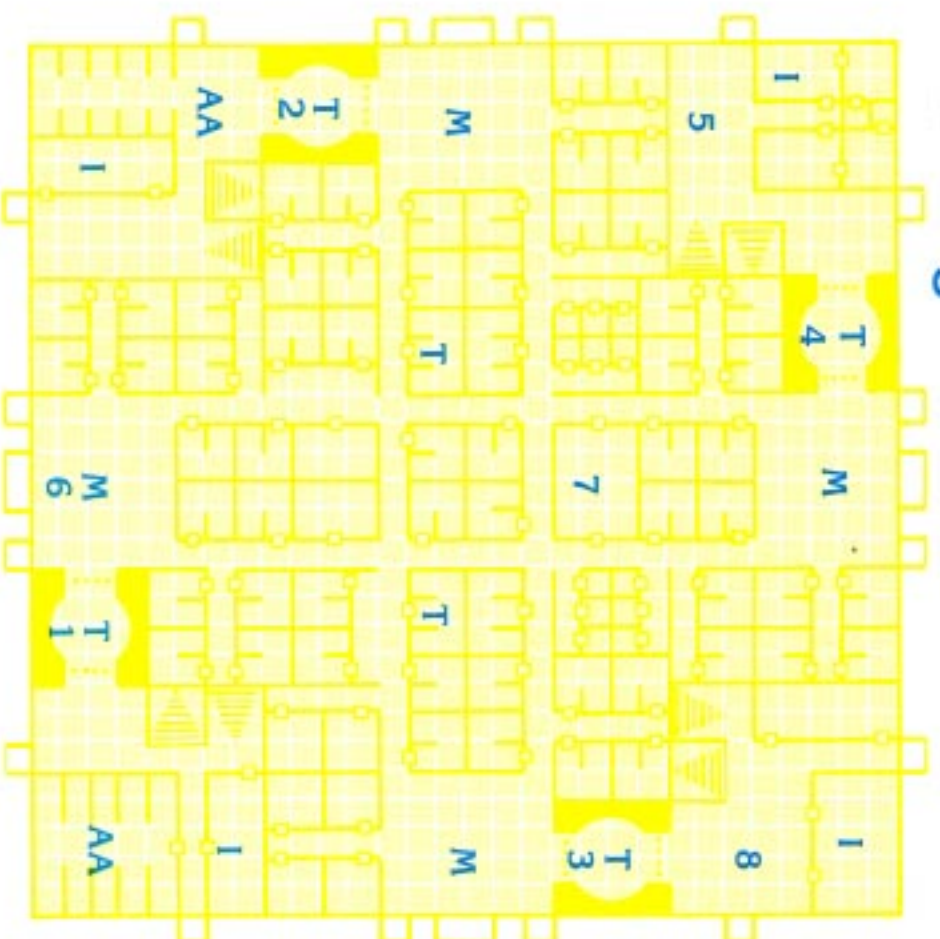


10. Transport Shaft

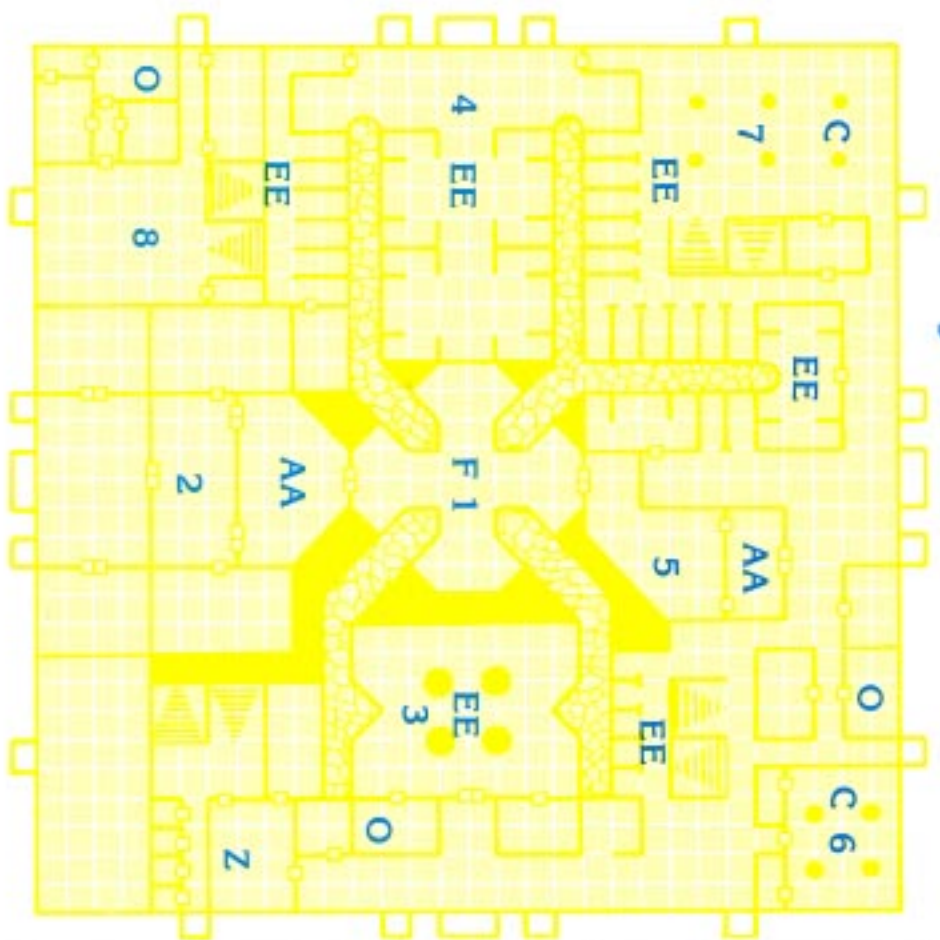




13. Dungeon

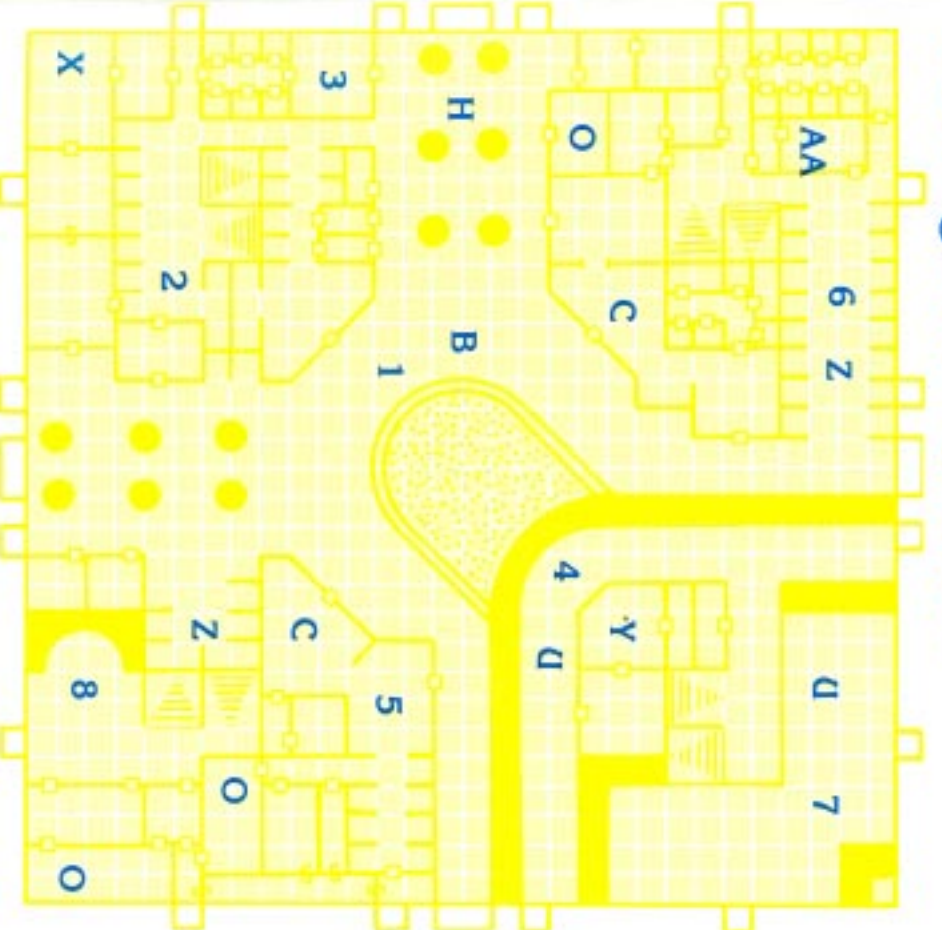


14. Smithy





3. Kings Wall Corner I



4. Kings Wall Gate

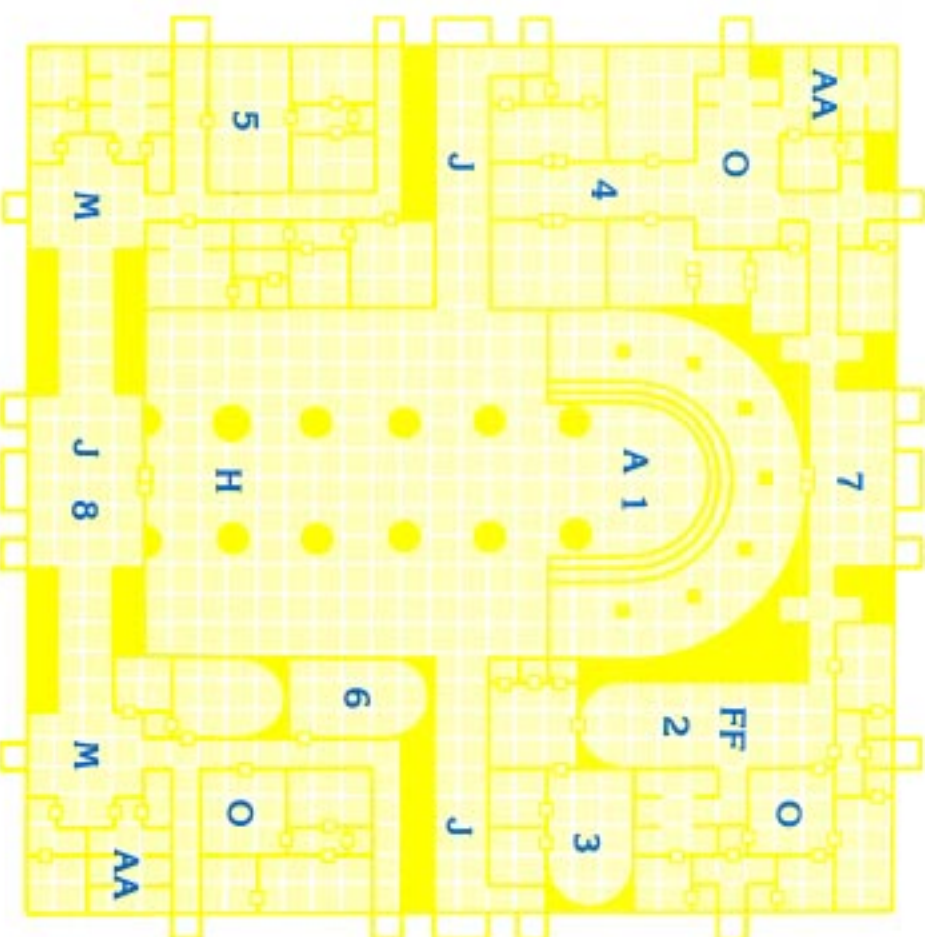
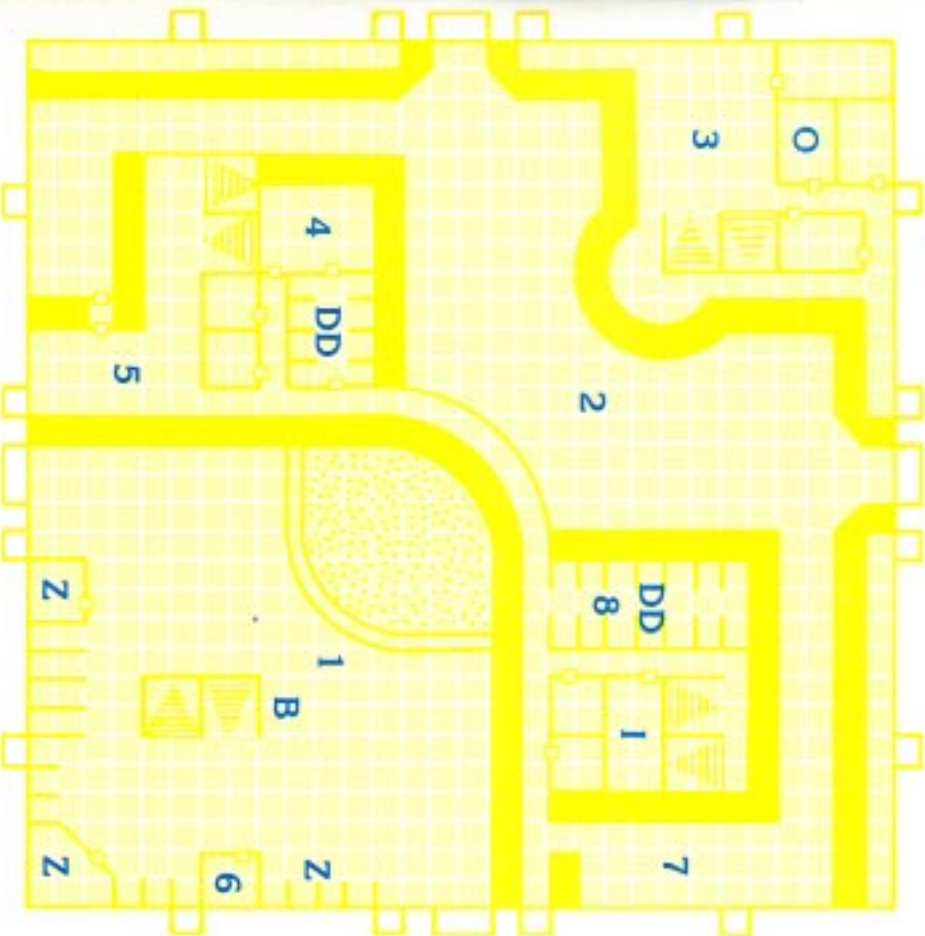


7. Kings Wall Corner II

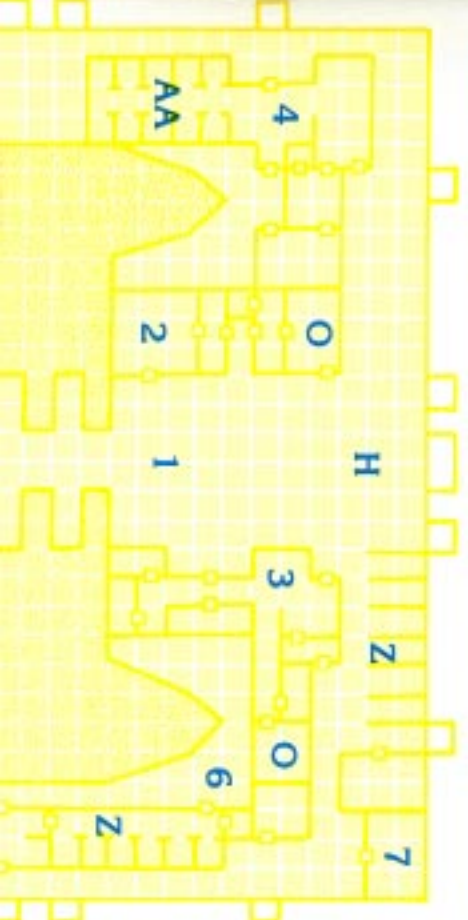


8. Court of Thanes

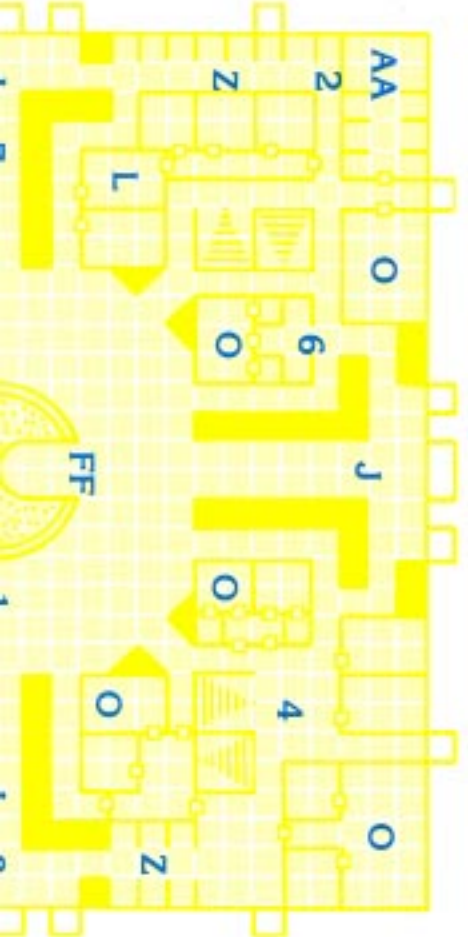


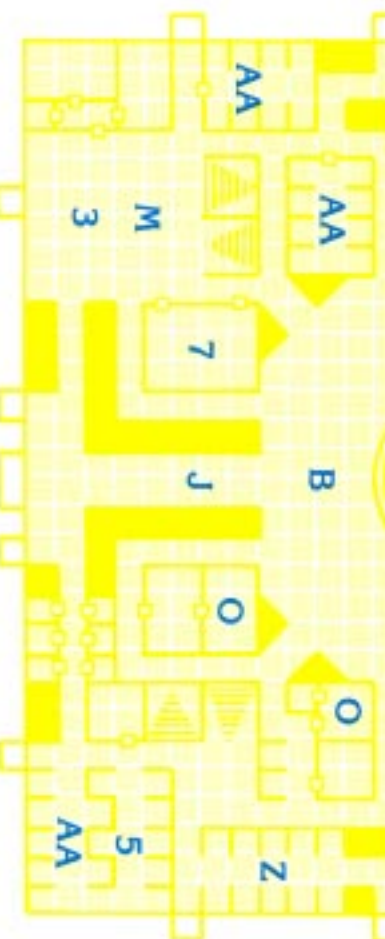
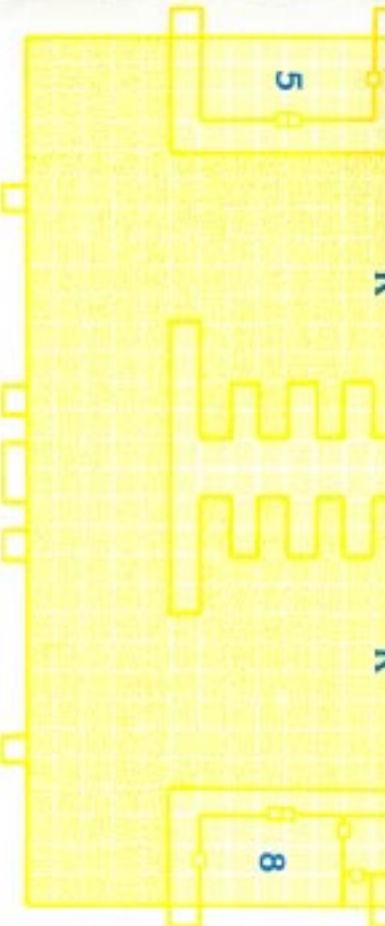


11. Wharf

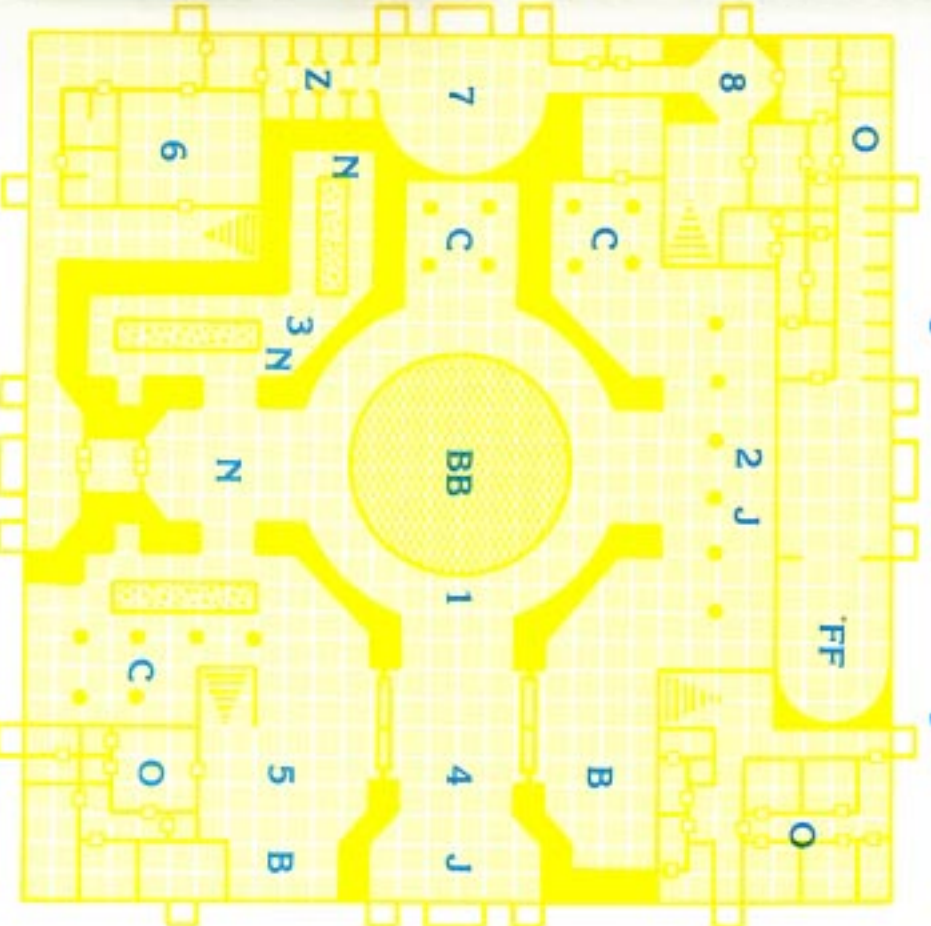


12. Great Temple

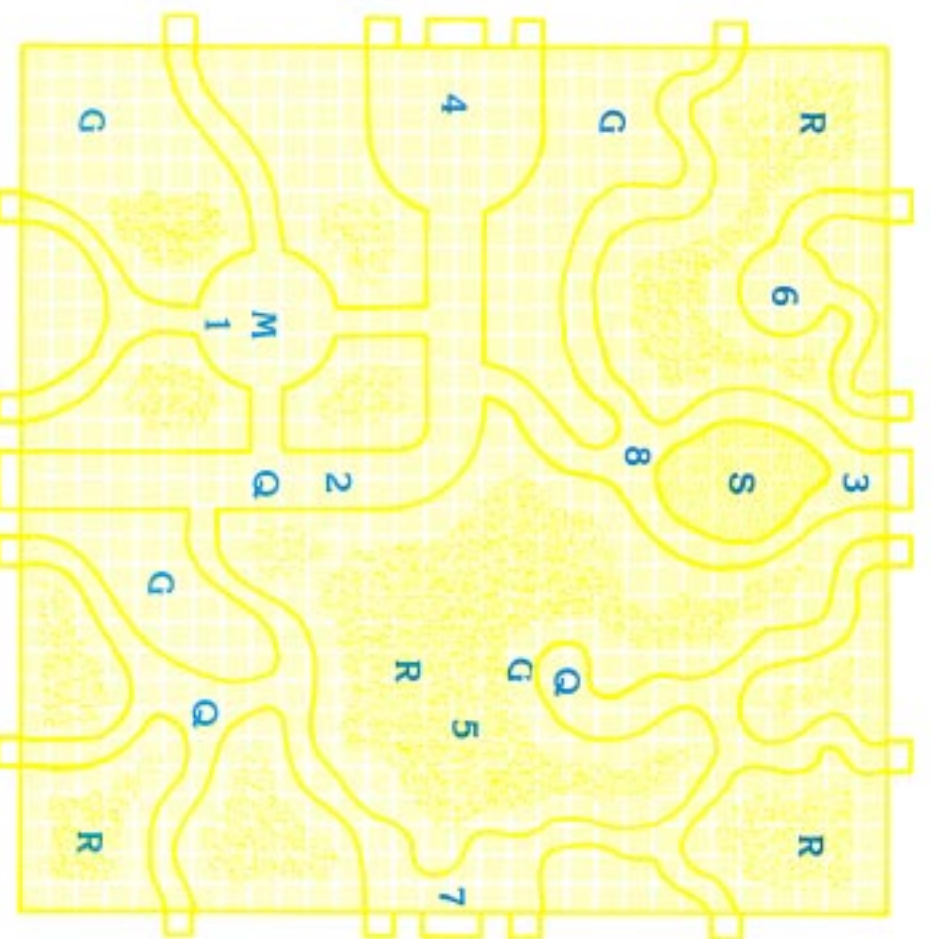




15. Transport Machinery



16. Gardens



Derkin's Tomb



Key to Deeken's Terms

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet



DETAIL OF 272

TRAP EFFECTS

All traps are triggered by a tripwire or by walking past them or onto them.

Red: Damage = 1d6.

Save vs. Death to avoid.

Black: Damage = 1d10.

When activated, arms snapping.

Devourer: Check to pass or pass

to right or left of wedge-shaped blade.

Flame: Damage = 2d6.

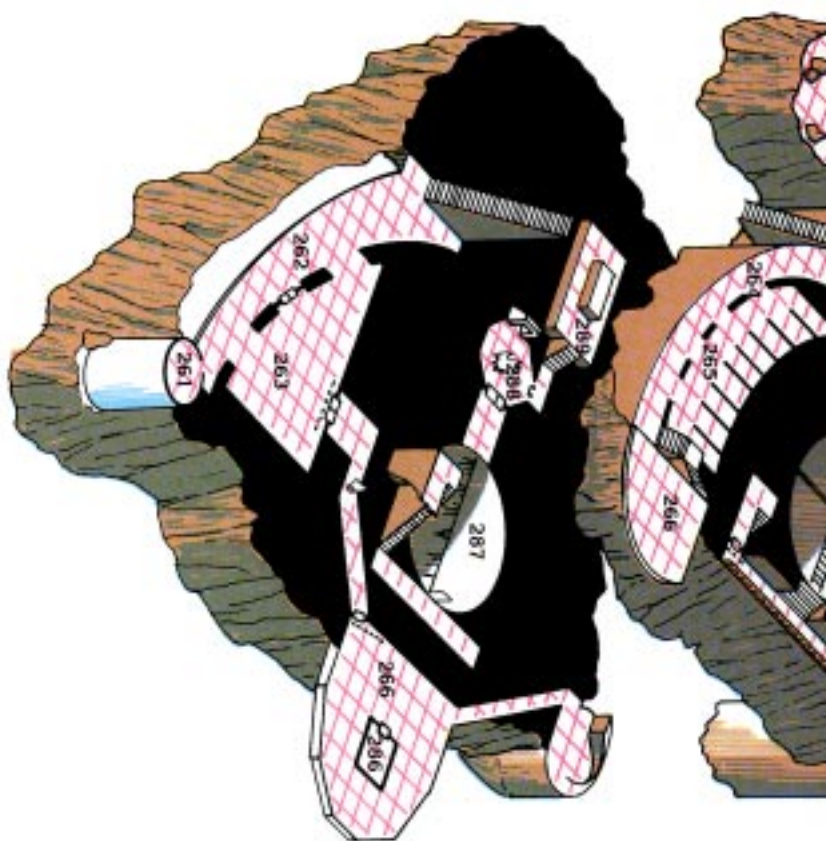
if turned out in some way.

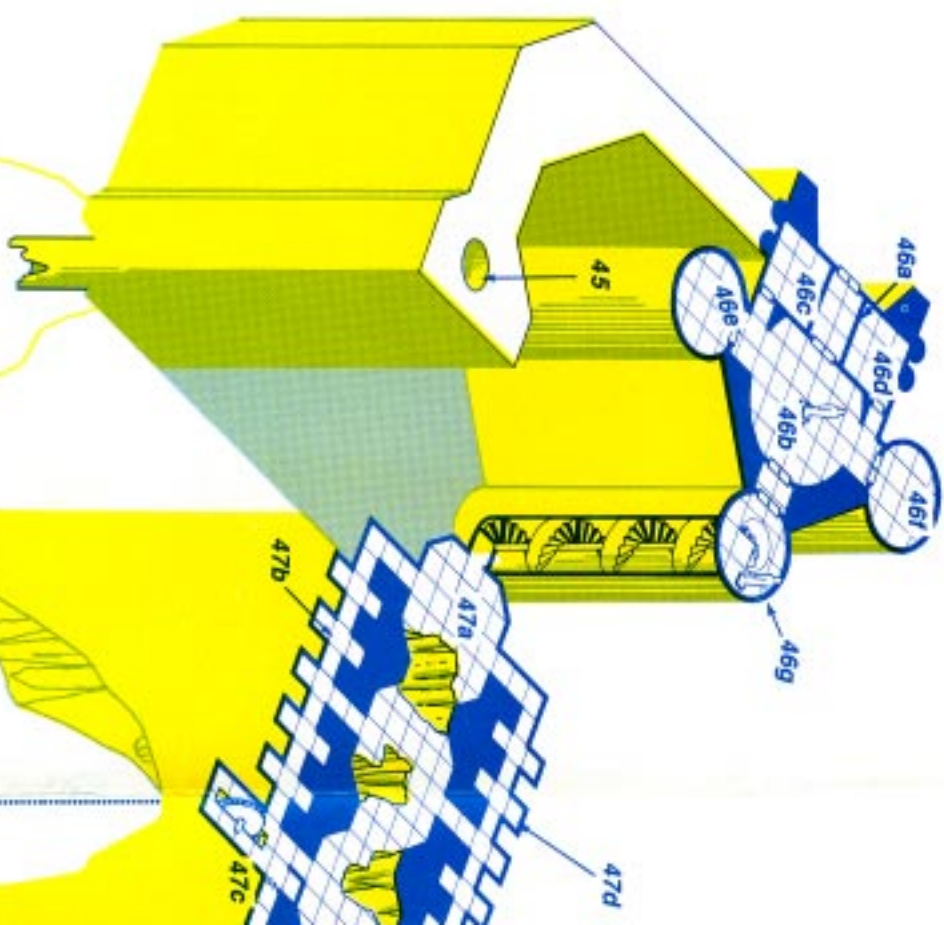
Ice Field: Damage = 1d6.

Save vs. Spell or crushed to ice.

Spiked Pit: Damage = 1d6.

if deep, trapdoor traps them.

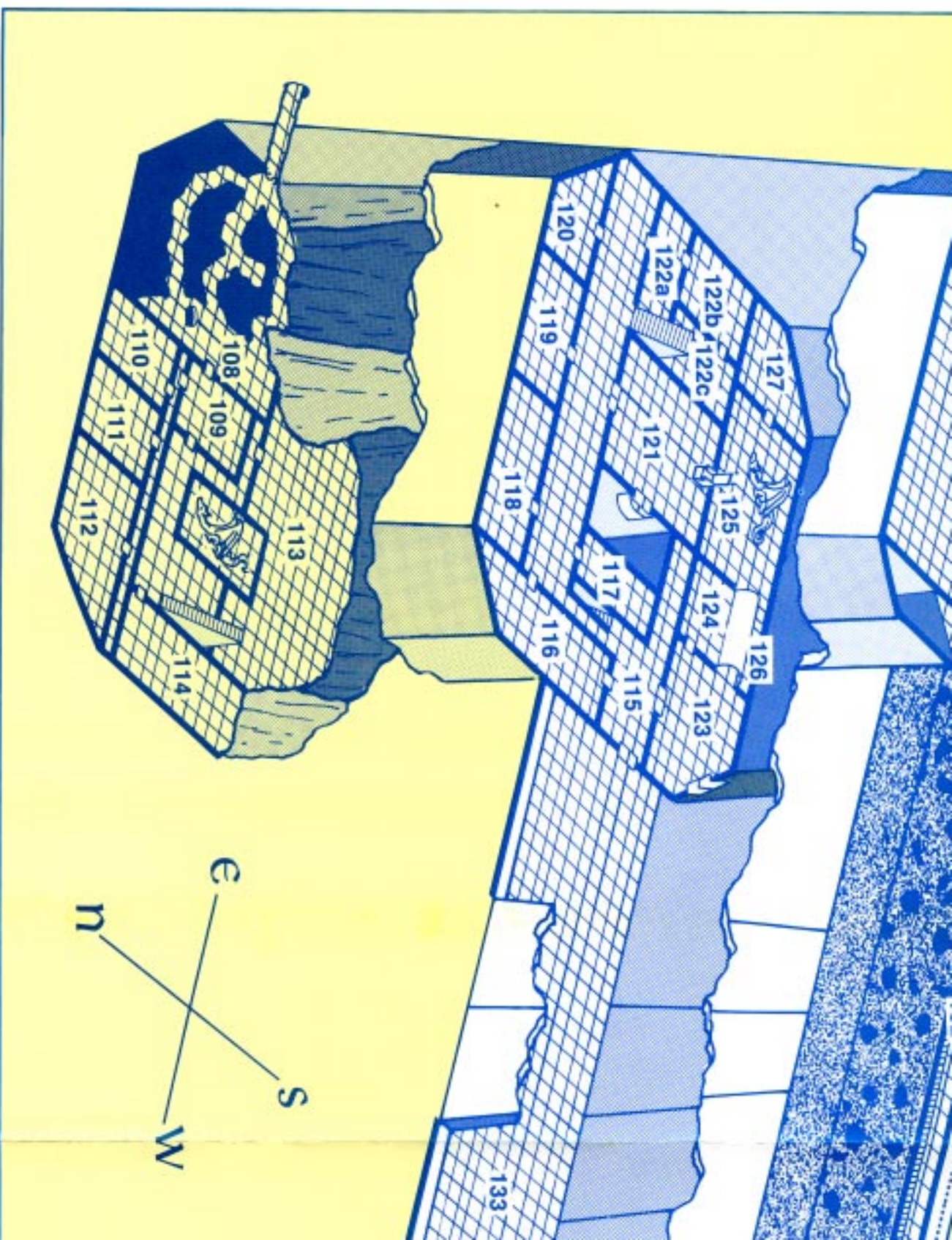




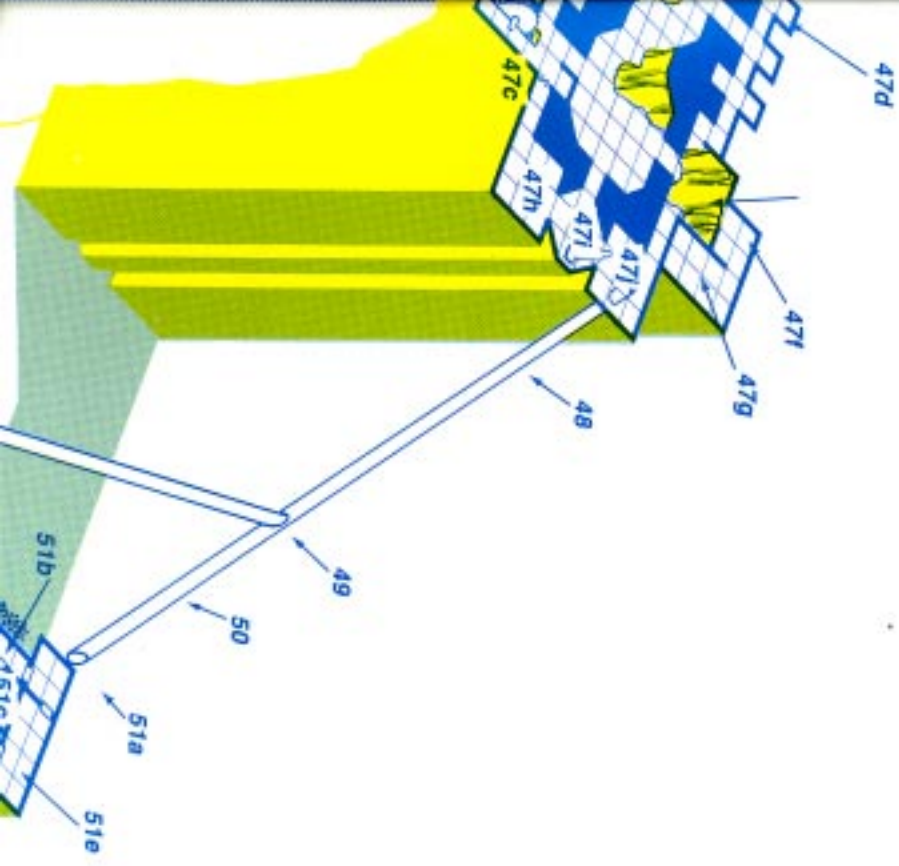


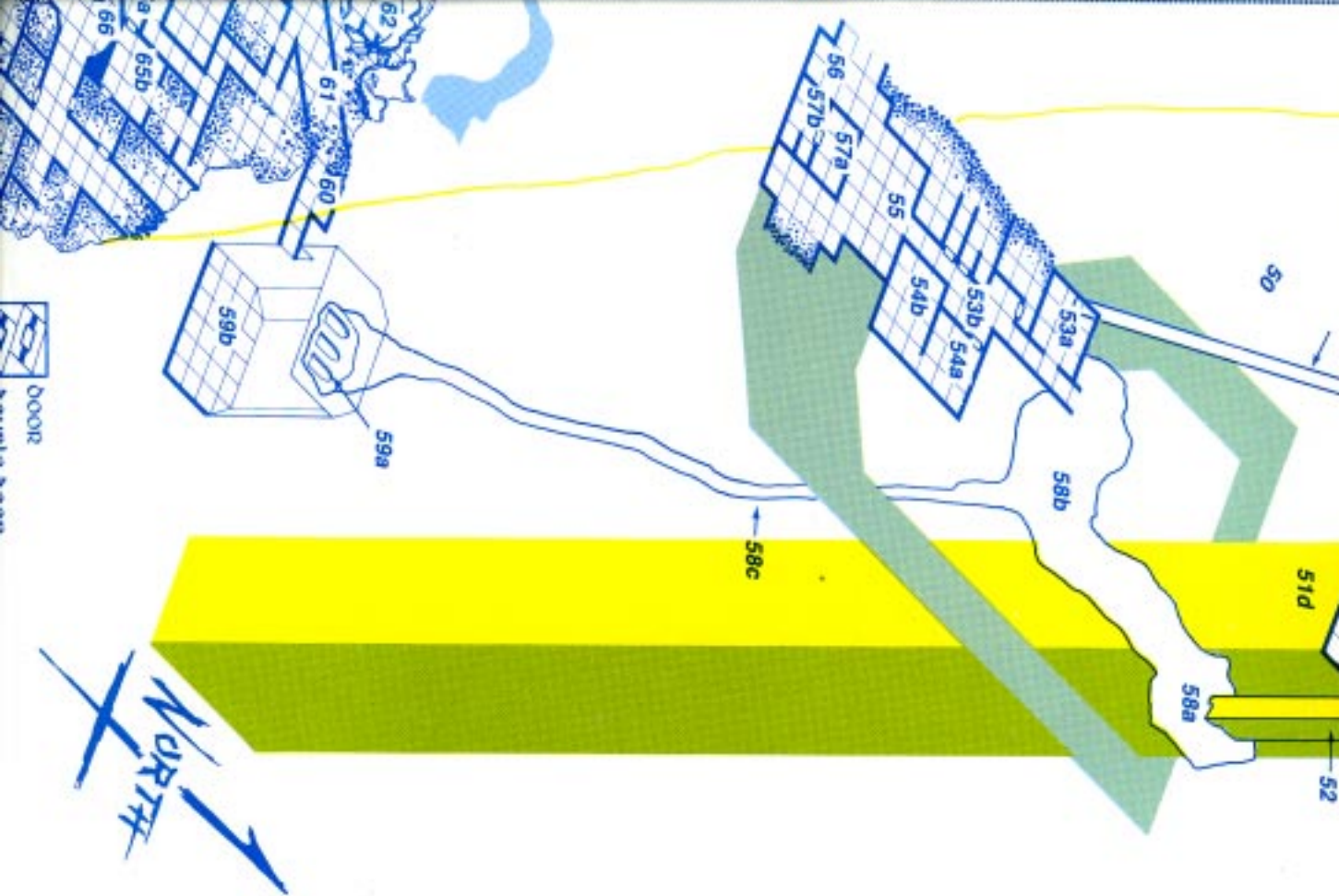


pax thar



Cavern of Xak Tsaroth



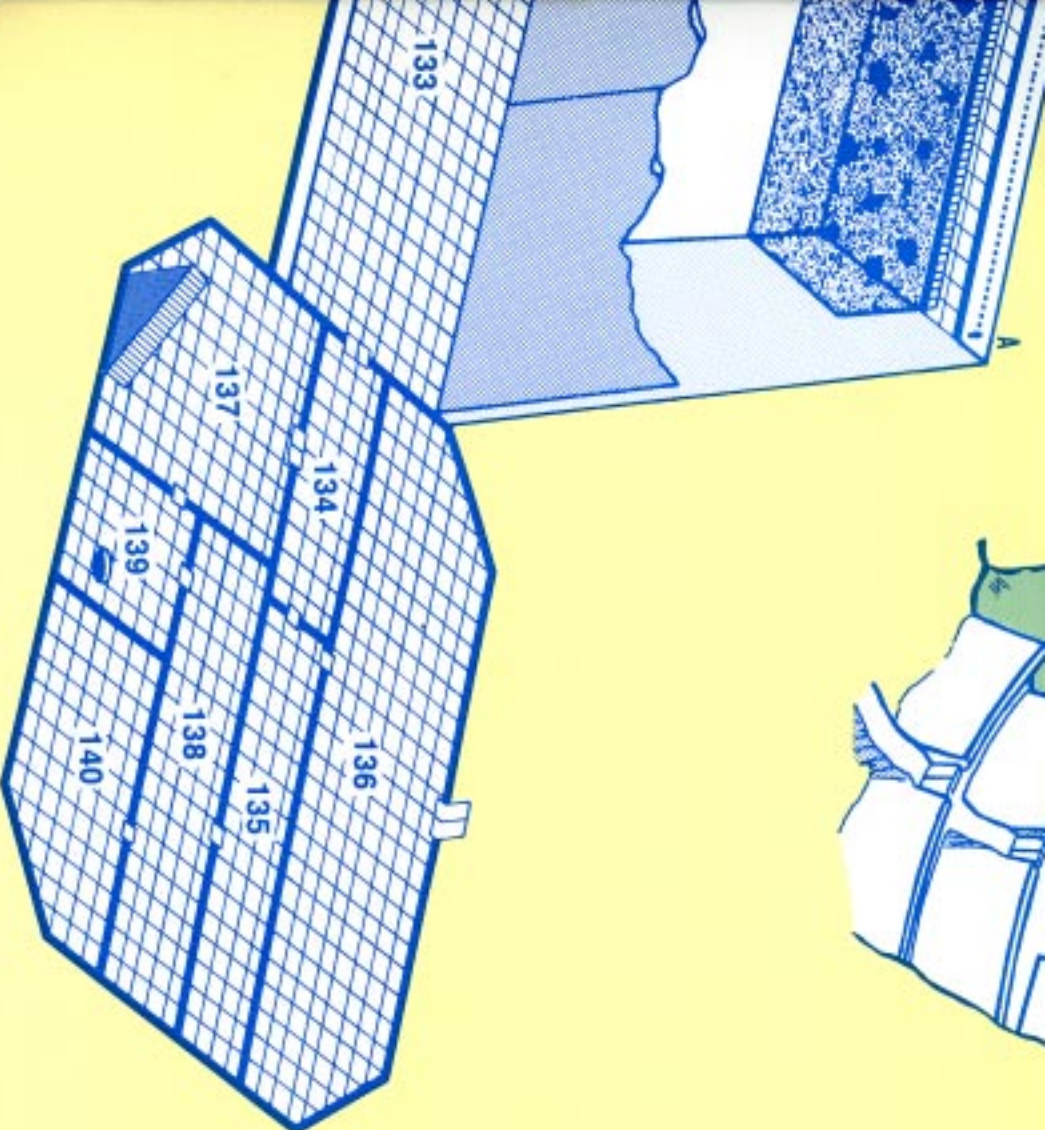




door
double door
secret door
water
rubble
chain
statue
spiral stairs

arkas





	Door
	Secret Door
	Column
	Fallen Column
	Giant Slug
	Rubble
	Chain
	Closing Wall
	Trap
	Railing
	10 ft.