

Dungeon Crawl Classics #30.5

Trek from the Vault

By Jason Little

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 9-11



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Introduction

Trek from the Vault is the thrilling sequel to *DCC #30 – Vault of the Dragon Kings*. The scenario is intended to be played as a continuation of *Vault of the Dragon Kings*, using the same four pre-generated characters the party used in the levels above. Otherwise, this adventure is best suited for a party of 4-6 characters around 10th level. All classes will find this a suitable challenge, worthy of those who braved the perils of the Vault in the first place. The characters can begin *Trek from the Vault* immediately after the resolution of the final encounter against the mad silver dragon Myrkjartan in the Pool of Dreams from *Vault of the Dragon Kings*, or this can be played as a standalone adventure.

Adventure Summary

The great Dragon King of the West, also known as the King of Acid, personified memories, holding grudges, the passage of time, persistence, irony, and the inevitability of decay. He was at odds with the other Dragon Kings on many issues, but held fast to his vows and threw his lot in with them during the great Rebellion.

But the King of Acid was not without his own secrets. Beneath the Vault, the King of the West had created a laboratory for him to conduct his experiments on necromantic constructs (as seen in Area 1-5: Sanctum of the King of the West in *Vault of the Dragon Kings*). The hidden laboratory was connected to a network of caverns twisting below the Vault. Over the long centuries, dragon ether and the distilled collective consciousnesses from Area 3-3: The End of Dreams and Area 3-4: Spirits from the Past seeped into the caverns, corrupting all within.

Now, with their original escape route cut off as the Vault collapses around them, the party must brave the horrors found in the caverns and locate the King of the West's hidden laboratory if they ever hope to find their way home.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
4-1	4	T C	Falling blocks 3 dragon wisps	9
4-2	5	T T	Yellow mold King of the North canopic jar	8
4-3	6	C	4 dragon wisps	10
4-4	6	C T	<i>Asurrek</i> , necromantic construct King of the West canopic jar	10
4-5	8	C T	Half dragon giant toad diseased water	11
4-6	9	C T	4 advanced skeletal lizardfolk King of the South canopic jar	8
4-7	10	C	Ironbiter swarm	8
4-8	11	C T T	Half-dragon giant darkmantle King of the East canopic jar <i>Empowered cloudkill</i> trap	10
4-9	12	C	8 elite ghosts	10

Scaling Information

Although meant for 10th-level adventurers, *Trek from the Vault* can be run for parties of levels as low as 9th and as high as 11th. Here is some advice for alterations to suit such groups:

Weaker Parties (characters below 10th level, or for fewer than 40 total character levels): Lower the save DCs from all traps, spells and effects by 1. Remove one dragon wisp from area 4-3 and two ghosts from area 4-9. Remove one HD from the giant half dragon toad in area 4-5 and one HD from the giant half dragon darkmantle in area 4-8.

Stronger Parties (characters above 10th level, or for more than 50 total character levels): Increase the save DCs for all traps, spells and effects by 2. Add one dragon wisp to areas 4-1 and 4-3. Add one or two ghosts to area 4-9. Increase the Search checks DCs to locate the magic items in area 4-9 by 2.

Background Story

Unbeknownst to the dragons living there, a secret network of tunnels exists below the Vault. Only the King of the West, the lord of acid, spite, and vengeance, knew of the tunnels, and guarded the secret fiercely, even from the other Dragon Kings. The King of the West instructed his most faithful minions to build a shrine within the tunnels, where he could work on his dark, brooding arts in peace.

The caverns lie almost directly beneath the *sphere of annihilation* in the End of Dreams in the Vault of the Dragon Kings, where the old dragons would go to die. During its construction, the architects and mages were certain that the process would carefully separate each dragon's essence and filter it to the great tank of dragon ether, to be distilled and then added to the Pool of Dreams.

But the process was not without its flaws. Despite their powerful enchantments and magic, the network of pipes and tubes connecting the tanks and the End of Dreams was not entirely sealed or safe. Faint traces of dragon essence seeped from the joints of the structure, filtering down into the caverns below. Eventually, this magical essence separated from its true purpose, and the collective consciousness of the Pool of Dreams became sentient. Its malign nature pervaded the caverns, killing the King of the West's minions and corrupting what little wildlife existed.

When the King of the West entered his secret lair and found the wrath exacted by the essence among his followers and his shrine, he sealed the shrine. Grudgingly, the King of the West decided it was time to tell the other Dragon Kings what had transpired, so together they could end this threat to the Vault they had all sworn to protect. However, before the King of the West could act, the red dragon Sunscratch led the great rebellion against the Dragon Kings. The King of the West's secret followed him to his grave.

A King's Secret - The Canopic Jars

The King of the West held another secret from his brethren, within his laboratory. Cautious and wary of Sunscratch from the start, the King of the West was taking steps to ensure the safety of the Dragon Kings and the Vault. Over the years, the King of the West had collected small fragments from each of the Kings – fingernails, hair, bandages bearing their blood, and other such items – and stored them in ornate dragon ivory canopic jars, one for each King.

These canopic jars held the key to their future, the King of the West believed, for once he truly mastered the means to create his necromantic constructs, he would use the canopic vessels to empower the reincarnation of the Dragon Kings to grant them immortality – a power that was ripped from them once the creator gods turned from the dragons to the mortal races of Aereth.

Over the years, the four canopic jars have been scattered through the tunnels by the King of the West's maddened servants and the other creatures deranged by the corrupting presence of the dragon essence pervading the cavern system. Unbeknownst even to the King of the West, these canopic jars further fuel the rage and corruption of the dragon spirits. In order to forever rid the caverns of their presence, the four canopic jars must be collected and destroyed.

Each canopic jar is two feet high and nine inches in diameter. They are carved from the ivory of a dragon related to the corresponding king. Enchanted with powerful magic, the canopic jars are incredibly resilient and difficult to destroy outright. The jars are ornately carved with masterful depictions of the Dragon Kings and the dragons they oversaw. A DC 25 Appraise or bardic knowledge check estimates the value of each canopic jar to be 8-10,000 gold; the complete set would fetch nearly 50,000 gold.

Each jar is trapped, as detailed in the individual area descriptions where the jar is found. The lids to the jars are sealed with a special wax mixed with the blood of the corresponding Dragon King. Only the Dragon Kings, or those bearing their bloodline, can open the jars without risking setting off the traps – and since the King of the West is the only Dragon King who knows of the canopic jars, he felt this lone safeguard was sufficient. Note, being dragon-blooded, as detailed in the original Vault of the Dragon Kings, is not sufficient to prevent the traps from activating.

The Trek From the Vault

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

After the long, arduous confrontation with Myrkjartan, the silver dragon possessed by the mad spirit of the evil red dragon Sunscratch, there is a thunderous crash as the whole Vault of the Dragon Kings shakes to its very foundations. With the destruction of the last of the Dragon Kings, and the spirit of Sunscratch, it appears that what magic remained to hold the Vault together is quickly fading.

Fissures race along the walls and large chunks of masonry and stonework crash and tumble to the ground. With an earsplitting roar, a large crack splits the base of the pool in two, and the Pool of Dreams swirls away into the depths. As the room falls to pieces around you, you notice that the crack at the base of the pool has exposed a tunnel system below the Vault of the Dragon Kings.

As you ponder what may lie within the tunnel, another crash explodes overhead, and you see the ceiling above the entrance to the Pool of Dreams collapse, sealing off the room. If you wish to leave the Vault of the Dragon Kings alive, you will need to find a new route.

Unless otherwise noted in the individual area descriptions, the caves beneath the vault are rough, unworked stone without illumination. The tunnels connecting the numbered areas are all considered difficult terrain. Each square of difficult terrain counts as 2 squares of movement. (Each diagonal move into a difficult terrain square counts as 3 squares.) You can't run or charge across difficult terrain.

Rough Stone Walls: 3 feet thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50.

Areas of the Map

Area 4-1 –The Long Fall (EL 9): When the characters are ready to explore the entrance to the caverns beneath the Pool of Dreams, read the following aloud:

The light from the chamber containing the Pool of Dreams shines down into the crack formed at the base of the pool. The fissure reveals a large tunnel leading further into the depths of the mountain. The tunnel is very steep – nearly a perfect vertical drop – which descends as far as you can see. The walls of the tunnel are rough and unworked.

The Vault of the Dragon Kings is collapsing around the party. Each round they remain in the chamber containing the Pool of Dreams, there is a 50% chance that large sections from the ceiling will collapse over the characters, showering them with a deadly rain of stone blocks.

Stone Blocks from Ceiling: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; Atk +15 melee (5d6 [18], stone blocks); Search DC 25; No Disable.

A DC 25 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or Survival check made near the rift found at the base of the Pool of

Dreams reveals that it is part of a natural cavern system, and that the tunnel itself appears solid and secure.

The rough-hewn edges of the tunnel require a DC 25 Climb check to descend unassisted. The tunnel extends vertically 50 feet before opening into a larger chamber, which has a 20-foot drop to the floor. This means the total distance from the opening at the base of the Pool of Dreams to the cavern floor is 70 feet. Once the tunnel reaches the chamber, a character can no longer simply climb along the walls of the tunnel – there is nothing left to brace against or climb along once it meets the chamber below.

While characters are descending into the tunnels below, the chance of being struck by debris decreases to 25% per round. However, keep in mind that characters that are climbing lose their Dexterity bonus to Armor Class.

Once a character with a light source or a means to see in the darkness has descended into the cavern, read the following aloud:

The vertical shaft from the Pool of Dreams opens into a section of a long corridor, slightly wider than the rest of the tunnel. The area below the shaft is 20 feet across. The tunnel tapers slightly to a width of 10 feet as it continues running east and west. The western section gently curves northward after 50 feet, while the eastern tunnel continues relatively straight for at least that far. Above you, the remains of the Pool of Dreams sloshes and drips down from the tunnel shaft, leaving the stone floor slick.

A faint vestige of the dragons' spirits haunt this section of tunnel. On a DC 25 Listen check, characters can hear a faint whispering echoing in the tunnel. If the characters make the skill check by 10 or more and understand Draconic, they recognize several distinct voices talking to each other:

...more come...into the depths...has the king returned?...shall we rend him?...he shall feel the pain we have endured...he should not have sought to bring about their return to immortality ...no matter, he is mortal now...let us show him just how mortal he has become.

With this, a soft glowing swirl of energy drifts upward from the floor. A DC 15 Spot check is required to notice the swirling, increased to DC 25 if the characters have a light source of torch intensity or greater.

Tactics: Characters failing their Spot checks against the rising mist of the dragon wisps are surprised for the first round of combat. The dragon wisps appear around the space marked X on the map. They begin combat by attacking the closest character, but will break off from their initial targets and refocus their attacks on any character that is able to damage them (ghost touch weapon, spells, turn undead, etc.) Otherwise, they are essentially mindless from their madness, and show no grasp of tactics. The dragon wisps fight to the death.



Dragon Wisps (3): CR 6; Small undead (incorporeal); HD 8d12; hp 61, 50, 45; Init +12; Spd fly 50 ft.; AC 21, touch 21, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk spectral bite +14 melee (2d8 [10] energy damage); SA Spectral bite; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, spell resistance 15, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +9; Str –, Dex 26, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Hide +19, Listen +14, Search +13, Spot +14; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon focus (bite).

SA – Spectral Bite (Su): The bite of a dragon wisp passes through (ignores) natural armor, armor, and shields, although deflection bonuses and force effects (such as *mage armor*) work normally against it. A successful bite attack inflicts 2d8 points of random energy damage. When a bite attack succeeds, roll 1d4 to determine what type of energy damage it inflicts – 1: acid, 2: cold, 3: electricity, 4: fire. (For tournament style play, simply go through all four elements in order each time a bite attack connects).

Scoring:

For each PC that falls down the tunnel: -50 points/character

Spotting the dragon wisps before they attack: +50 points

Per dragon wisp defeated: +100 points

Area 4-2 – A Mold-Shrouded Dead End (EL 8): When a party member who can see within the darkness of the caves reaches the curve leading south around this bend, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

The rough tunnel walls take a sharp turn to the south. After snaking southward another 30 feet, the tunnel quickly narrows. Within the space of another 10 feet, the tunnel is choked and cluttered with collapsed rock and debris. At first glance, the passage appears impassable, and a faint mist, tan and yellow, swirls along the floor at the end of the tunnel. The rocks and clutter are coated with a fine yellow film.

The yellow film and mist is actually a large patch of yellow mold, which covers the rocks and floor of this area, in the shaded sections indicated on the map. A DC 20 Survival or Knowledge (nature) check identifies the hazard.

Yellow Mold: If disturbed, a 5-foot square of this mold bursts forth with a cloud of poisonous spores. All within 10 feet of the mold must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or take 1d6 [3] points of Constitution damage. Another DC 18 Fortitude save is required 1 minute later – even by those who succeeded on the first save – to avoid taking 2d6 [6] points of Constitution damage. Fire destroys yellow mold, and sunlight renders it dormant.

The King of the North’s canopic jar is hidden among the debris, covered by a layer of yellow mold. A DC 30 Spot check reveals a sculpture within the rubble.

King of the North’s Canopic Jar: 1 inch thick; hardness 5; hp 100; Break DC 40. Immune to fire. Sonic attacks deal double damage. Moderate abjuration and enchantment.

Aftermath: If the party is able to recover the canopic jar, they can study it in more detail. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge check reveals the basic nature of the jar – it is an enchanted container designed to hold relics related to the person depicted in the carvings. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the canopic jar and its contents could be used as a focus for powerful divine magic, tied to either resurrection or necromantic rituals.

If the characters attempt to open the canopic jar, they risk setting off a *flame strike* trap unless they can somehow retrieve blood from the King of the North from area 2-7 of Vault of the Dragon Kings. If opened, the characters will find several strands of long, reddish hair, large nail clippings, and several long-dried scabs. Everything in the jar is very old and desiccated. A DC 30 Heal check reveals that these items are from a humanoid of Large size or larger.

Flame strike trap: magic device; mechanical trigger (opening jar); automatic reset (24 hours); spell effect (*flame strike*, 9th-level cleric, 9d6 [32] fire, DC 18 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 35 (carefully remove wax from lid). Note: If the trap is triggered within the patch of yellow mold, the flame strike does sufficient damage to destroy the mold.

Scoring:

For each PC that falls victim to the yellow mold: -50 points/character

Destroying the yellow mold: +100 points

Retrieving the King of the North's canopic jar: +200 points

Opening the jar and setting off the trap: -100 points

Area 4-3 – Angry Spirits (EL 10): If any of the PCs make a DC 25 Listen check as the characters approach this area from either tunnel, read the following aloud:

There is a steady dripping sound forming an erratic, staccato beat up ahead.

When the characters enter the area, read the following:

The narrow tunnel quickly opens up into a large chamber. The chamber is humid, and the walls and floor are slick with moisture. Water seeps into the chamber from a honeycomb of fine cracks in the ceiling overhead. A dozen small puddles dot the floor. Fine steam or mist rises from the puddles, obscuring your view of the entire chamber. From what you can see, however, the area appears to be thirty, perhaps forty feet wide in a rough circle.

The seeping water is suffused with dragon ether from the chambers above in the Vault itself. Most of the dragon ether has evaporated away, but enough of the distilled essence is here that it has coalesced into more dragon wisps.

The slick floor in the chamber counts as difficult terrain. The steaming mists are not hot, but do obscure vision. Characters can see fine within 10 feet, but from 10 to 30 feet away, targets have partial concealment. Anything beyond 30 feet has total concealment.

Several larger puddles are indicated on the map. These puddles are much deeper than the others. Characters entering a space covered by one of these puddles must make a DC 10 Balance check or stumble and fall prone unless they are moving at half speed (that is, half the speed mandated by the difficult terrain modifiers) or taking the necessary precautions.

As in the entrance to the underground chambers, vengeful dragon wisps wait in this area. The wisps appear as a soft glowing swirl of energy drifting upward from the floor. A DC 30 Listen check allows characters to hear the gibbering and chatter of the wisps above the constant drumming of the precipitation. Characters so alerted gain a +5 circumstance bonus on their Spot checks to see the dragon wisps appear. A DC 20 Spot check is required to notice the swirling, increased to DC 30 if the characters have a light source of torch intensity or greater.

Tactics: Characters failing their Spot checks against the rising mist of the dragon wisps are surprised for the first round of combat. The dragon wisps appear on the spaces marked X on the map. They begin combat by attacking the closest character, but will break off from their initial

targets and refocus their attacks on any character that is able to damage them (*ghost touch* weapon, spells, turn undead, etc.) Otherwise, they are essentially mindless from their madness, and show no grasp of tactics. The dragon wisps fight to the death.

Dragon Wisps (4): CR 6; Small undead (incorporeal); HD 8d12; hp 62, 58, 48, 42; Init +12; Spd fly 50 ft.; AC 21, touch 21, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk spectral bite +14 melee (2d8 [10] energy damage); SA Spectral bite; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, spell resistance 15, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +9; Str –, Dex 26, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Hide +19, Listen +14, Search +13, Spot +14; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon focus (bite).

SA – Spectral Bite (Su): The bite of a dragon wisp passes through (ignores) natural armor, armor, and shields, although deflection bonuses and force effects (such as *mage armor*) work normally against it. A successful bite attack inflicts 2d8 points of random energy damage. When a bite attack succeeds, roll 1d4 to determine what type of energy damage it inflicts – 1: acid, 2: cold, 3: electricity, 4: fire. (For tournament style play, simply go through all four elements in order each time a bite attack connects).

Aftermath: The long rotted body of a former servant to the King of the West lies at the bottom of the puddle. A character falling in this puddle notices something unusual with a DC 20 Spot check. Otherwise, it requires a DC 30 Spot check to notice from casual observation or a DC 20 Search check if someone specifically searches that puddle.

A DC 25 Heal check indicates the remains are that of a lizardman, dead for several centuries. The remains are petrified and essentially fused into the stone floor of the chamber. However, two items remain intact in the puddle – a *ring of protection* +2 and a +2 *vermin bane dagger*.

Scoring:

For each PC surprised by the dragon wisps: -50 points/character

Per dragon wisp defeated: +100 points

Recovering the magic items from the puddle: +150 points

Area 4-4 – Restless Dead (EL 10): When the characters approach this area, read the following:

A sickly green glow emanates from the chamber ahead, accompanied by an acrid smell that burns your nostrils. The light is faint, but distinct, and shifting shadows dance along the walls of the tunnel leading into the chamber itself. An unsettling noise accompanies the ghostly glow. It reminds you of creaking, rusted hinges, or fingernails scraped along a piece of slate.

Once the party enters the room, read the following:

The chamber is roughly circular, nearly 60 feet in diameter. The walls and floor show deep scratches, as if enormous claws tried to rend the room. Then

you notice where the sickly green light is coming from – and the source of the deep scratches, as well. In the corner of the room sits a massive dragon, or at least, the remains of a massive dragon.

Scraps of long dead flesh and rotted, leathery skin are stretched taut over a rusted metal frame, and the gleam of metal shines through bits of bone from the creature's skull. The odd glow is coming from a long, cylindrical ivory jar encased within the creature's chest, shedding sickly green light through its rusted metal ribcage.

The remains of one of the King of the West's first (and partially failed) attempts at creating a necromantic construct lives in this chamber. It is the undead, withered, and maddened body of the King of the West's loyal bronze dragon Asurrek, tethered to a metal frame.

When Asurrek fell sick as a young dragon, the King first dabbled in the dark arts to save his pet. The procedure was far from perfect, as Asurrek lives in a wretched state of unending pain. Asurrek curses his condition and the King of the West. He knows some of what is going on, and about the canopic jars. The King of the West's canopic jar is actually secured in his chest cavity – he seeks to destroy it, but cannot reach it himself.

Let Asurrek make a Listen check against the characters' Move Silently checks, or a Spot check against their Hide checks, as appropriate. If Asurrek notices the characters, he first thinks they are agents of the King of the West sent to finally destroy him.

Tactics: Asurrek wants to inflict as much pain and damage on as many foes as possible. He has been robbed of many of his draconic abilities, but he is still a fearsome opponent. Asurrek focuses on smaller, more defenseless targets, trying to incapacitate or kill them before moving on to tougher opponents. He will position himself to use a full attack action as frequently as possible, mixing in his breath weapon whenever he can get more than two targets in the area of effect. Asurrek fights to his destruction.

Canopic Clues: During the battle, Asurrek lets slip some clues in his fury. When battle begins, he launches himself at his opponents, screaming in Draconic: *"So, the great King of the West sends more minions to reclaim his prize? I will destroy it before I let you take it back to him! Better, I will destroy you!"*

When reduced to 50% of his original hit points, Asurrek shouts the following in draconic:

You bear not the stink of accursed Gnarga on you – yet you wish to destroy me. So be it, but I shall not be easy prey. If you should destroy me, then destroy the last vestiges of the King of the West, as well. Rid me of this accursed canopic jar, and shatter the mad King's dark dreams of resurrection. Shatter them all!

Once reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, Asurrek reaches within his ribcage and tears at the canopic jar, triggering the *acid fog* trap.

Asurrek: Unique Juvenile Bronze Dragon Necromantic Construct; CR 10; Large construct; HD 15d10+30; hp

112; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (clumsy); AC 25 (-1 size, +16 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +9; Grp +19; Atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6 [13]); Full Atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6 (13) and 2 claws +13 melee (1d8+3 (8))); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon, rotting touch; SQ Construct traits, damage reduction 10/slash-ing, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, turn defiance; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 10, Con –, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack; Concentration +18, Diplomacy +1, Intimidate +17, Listen +18, Search +18, Sense Motive +18, Spot +18, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks).

SA – Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, 60-foot line, damage 8d6 [28] electricity, Reflex DC 17 half.

Rotting Touch (Su): Any living creature damaged by Asurrek must make a successful DC 17 Fortitude save or contract a disease called the foul rot (incubation period 1d4 [2] hours, damage 1d4 [3] Con and 1d4 [3] Dex). The disease acts and looks like advanced necrosis, blackening the flesh as tissue is destroyed by the accumulation of mild acids in the cell membranes.

SQ – Turn Defiance (Ex): Asurrek is held together with dark energies and undead tissue, making him partially susceptible to turn attempts and divine energy, but not nearly to the extent of fully undead creatures. A character making a turning attempt rolls for the turn check and damage as usual. If the HD threshold from the turning check is high enough, the character inflicts damage to Asurrek if there are no other eligible undead targets closer to the character. The damage inflicted is equal to the total turning damage roll. Asurrek is allowed a Fortitude save (DC = Turn Check result) for half damage.

King of the West's Canopic Jar: 1 inch thick; hardness 5; hp 100; Break DC 40. Immune to acid. Sonic attacks deal double damage. Moderate abjuration and enchantment.

Aftermath: Once Asurrek is defeated, retrieving the King of the West's canopic jar from its rib cage requires a DC 30 Disable Device or Sleight of Hand check. Alternatively, the characters may try to pry open his metal rib cage, which requires a DC 28 Strength check.

If the party is able to recover the canopic jar, they can study it in more detail. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge check reveals the basic nature of the jar – it is an enchanted container designed to hold relics related to the person depicted in the carvings. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the canopic jar and its contents could be used as a focus for powerful divine magic, tied to either resurrection or necromantic rituals.

If the characters attempt to open the canopic jar, they risk setting off an *acid fog* trap unless they can somehow retrieve blood from the King of the West from area 3-7 of Vault of the Dragon Kings. If opened, the characters will find several strands of long, coppery hair, large nail clippings, and several long-dried scabs. Everything in the jar is very old and desiccated. A DC 30 Heal check reveals that these items are from a humanoid of Large size or larger.

Acid Fog Trap: magic device; mechanical trigger (opening jar); automatic reset (24 hours); spell effect (*acid fog*, 11th-level wizard, 2d6 [8]/round acid for 11 rounds); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31 (carefully remove wax seal from the lid).

Scoring:

Defeating Asurrek:	+300 points
Retrieving the King of the West's canopic jar:	+200 points
Opening the jar and setting off the trap:	-100 points

Area 4-5 – The Underground Pool (EL 11): When the group approaches to within 20 feet of this area, read the following aloud:

The tunnel opens into a much larger cavern ahead of you. At its narrowest point, the cavern stretches about 60 feet across. The chamber opens up wider to the southeast, to a width of nearly 100 feet, and extends almost twice that distance to the southeast. Another tunnel lies directly opposite the tunnel you're currently in.

The ceiling of the cavern is dotted with slick, slime-covered stalactites 40 feet overhead. The slime clinging to the stalactites glows softly red, blue, or purplish, washing the chamber in faint colored light.

The southeast portion of the cavern slopes downward several feet, where an enormous pool lies. Hazy motes of light – blue, yellow, and orange – flicker lazily above the surface of the pool. There is the faint buzz of insects, accompanied by the occasional splash, as a drip of slime from a stalactite overhead hits the pool, sending ripples along its murky surface.

At the farthest end of the pool to the southeast, you can barely make out the far shore, rising up from the pool, tapering off into a wide tunnel that leads south.

An enormous half-dragon toad, corrupted by the foul dragon ether, lurks partially submerged within the pool. The motes of light are harmless subterranean insects and bits of partially coalesced dragon wisp that pose no threat. An underwater passage near the southwest corner of the pool leads into a secret chamber, and some assorted treasures litter the slime-covered floor of the pool.

Environmental Hazards: The grade of the pool is gradual for the first 10 feet. At the 10-foot point, along the edges, the water is only 3 feet deep. It then plummets sharply to its full depth of 15 feet. The floor of the gradual grade along the edges of the pool is slick with slime and dross. Wading along the edges requires a DC 15 Balance check. Failure by more than 5 indicates falling prone in the water. Failure by more than 10 indicates falling along the drop-off, into the deeper section of the pool.

The floor along the deepest section of the pool is coated with a foot thick layer of slime. Characters in contact with the pool floor must make a DC 16 Reflex save or become entangled in the slime. In addition to the penalties applied

for being underwater, an entangled creature moves at half speed, cannot run or charge, and takes a -2 penalty on all attack rolls and a -4 penalty to Dexterity. An entangled character that attempts to cast a spell must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + the spell's level) or lose the spell. Characters entangled in the slime can attempt a new Reflex save each round.

The water is filthy and vile, and carries the disease blinding sickness. The pool counts as calm water (DC 10 for Swim checks) until combat ensues, at which point the bulk of the giant toad agitates the pool sufficiently to increase the difficulty to rough water (DC 15 for Swim checks). Any character failing a Swim check by 5 or more not only goes underwater, but must also make a Fortitude save to resist the effects of ingesting even a small amount of the vile water.

Blinding sickness: DC 16 Fortitude save; incubation 1d3 [2] days; 1d4 [3] Str/permanent blindness.

Tactics: With the flickering lights and rippling in the water, it will be incredibly difficult to spot the toad submerged under water. It requires a DC 40 Spot check to notice the giant toad from the main chamber, or only a DC 35 Spot check by characters along the gradual grade of the pool itself. The toad waits until a character is along the very edge of the pool within range of its tongue lash attack. It lashes to grapple a character and attempts to swallow it whole. If the initial tongue lash attack fails, the toad releases its breath weapon on the following round, then returns to lash any target still standing within range.

When the toad first attacks, it churns the water dramatically enough to force any characters along the ridge to immediately make a DC 10 Balance check or fall prone. The toad is single-minded – attack one creature, and try to kill and eat it. Being the top predator in the tunnels, the toad fights to the death.

Half-Dragon (white) Giant Toad: CR 11; Huge dragon (augmented animal); HD 16d10+112; hp 200; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +12; Grp +32; Atk bite +23 melee (4d6+12 [26]) or tongue +11 ranged (grapple); Full Atk bite +23 melee (4d6+12 [26]) and 2 claws +20 melee (1d8+6 [11]) and tongue +11 ranged (grapple); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. with tongue); SA Breath weapon, improved grab, leap, rake 1d8+6 [11], swallow whole; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 34, Dex 12, Con 24, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide +16, Jump +35, Spot +19, Swim +20; Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite).

SA – Breath Weapon (Su): 30-foot cone, once per day, damage 6d8 (27) cold, Reflex DC 25 half.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a half-dragon giant toad must hit with its tongue attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and reels its opponent in and bites in the same round gaining a +4 bonus on its attack roll to bite. A half-dragon giant toad's tongue can be

attacked. (Damage dealt to the tongue is not dealt to the toad itself.) If successful, the toad does not attempt a grapple against that opponent for the remainder of the combat. A half-dragon giant toad's tongue has an AC of 15.

Leap (Ex): A half-dragon giant toad can leap and make a single attack in the same round (treat this as a charge attack).

Rake (Ex): A half-dragon giant toad that leaps on an opponent can make two rake attacks (at full attack bonus). Damage is listed in the statistics block.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A half-dragon giant toad can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of a smaller size than itself by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4 [3] points of crushing damage plus 2 points of acid damage per round from the toad's stomach. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 10 points of damage to the stomach (AC 17). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

The half-dragon giant toad's gullet can hold 2 Large, 8 Medium or Small, 32 Tiny, 128 Diminutive, or 512 Fine or smaller opponents.

Aftermath: Several valuables can be found in the thick muck of the pool floor, in the sections marked A, B and C. While detect magic functions to locate items in the muck, the muck suppresses the magic auras enough that everything appears as a faint aura.

A – The remains of an unlucky lizardman commander lie stuck in the slime here. His skeleton is still wearing his +2 *light fortification splint mail*, and a +1 *frost elf bane morningstar* lies in his skeletal hand. If unaided by *detect magic*, these items require a DC 20 Search check to locate underwater.

B – A slender bronzewood staff with brass bindings lies here. It is a *staff of fire* with 24 charges remaining. If unaided by *detect magic*, the staff requires a DC 25 Search check to locate underwater. Characters locating the bronzewood staff may attempt a free DC 30 Spot check to see if they notice the underwater tunnel leading to area 4-6.

C – One eyepiece from a set of *eyes of petrification* lies submerged here. By itself it is useless. The other piece of the set lies in area 4-6. If unaided by *detect magic*, the eyepiece requires a DC 30 Search check to locate underwater.

Scoring:

Defeating the half-dragon toad:	+300 points
For each of the four magic items recovered:	+50 points
For each character entangled in the muck on the pool floor:	-25 points
For each character diseased by the pool:	-25 points

Area 4-6 – A Hidden Lair (EL 8): The entrance to this area is 10 feet below the surface of the underground pool, along the western edge of the drop off. The tunnel leading into the hidden lair is covered with the same slime and sludge as the bottom of the pool. Someone swimming within 5 feet of the opening can attempt a DC 25 Spot check to notice the tunnel. Characters actively looking for an underwater path can find it with a DC 25 Search check if they're checking the lip of the pool right next to the drop off.

Once the party locates the tunnel leading to the hidden lair and swims through the water into the room itself, read the following aloud:

Once you break free of the film of murky water leading from the underwater tunnel, you find yourselves in a small cavern barely 40 feet across. The ceiling is jagged and only 5 feet overhead. The chamber is so cold that you can see your breath clinging to the air in front of you as you breathe.

The cavern is wreathed in pale blue and soft white light, emanating from an odd looking ivory jar wedged into a corner of the chamber where the floor and ceiling meet at a tight angle. Several skeletons, picked bare, huddle on either side of the jar.

The ivory jar is the King of the South's canopic jar. The skeletons belong to several of the King of the West's former lizardmen servants, who would steal away into this cavern to hatch plans to one day overthrow the King and break free from the Vault forever. However, the sudden and dramatic transformation of the giant dragon toad from area 4-5 kept them trapped in the chamber. Several of them tried to swim to safety, but were eaten by the toad – those remaining died when they tampered with the King of the South's canopic jar, setting off its trap.

Environmental Hazards: The low ceiling of this small cavern makes for a very cramped space. Any Large-size creatures are considered squeezed in any of the spaces in the cavern. Medium-size creatures suffer -2 to hit with any two-handed melee weapons, from lack of space to use them properly. Further, the cramped quarters force any creatures of Medium size or larger to incur a -2 penalty to all Reflex saves made within the chamber.

Tactics: The skeletons of the lizardmen are undead, and wait for any target to draw close enough to strike at from where they lie near the canopic jar. The skeletons are subject to the same environmental hazards as the characters. While lacking intelligence, on some level the skeletal lizardmen recall the canopic jar is dangerous. Once one of the skeletons has been defeated, a remaining skeleton will try to pull the canopic jar from the wall, automatically triggering the jar's *cone of cold* trap, possibly catching several characters in the cone with it. The skeletal lizardmen fight to the death.

Advanced Skeletal Lizardfolk (4): CR 4; Medium Undead; HD 6d12; hp 48, 45, 43; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+3 [7]); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d6+3 [7]); SQ Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, dark-

vision 60 ft., immunity to cold, turn resistance +1, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 18, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Improved Initiative.

Aftermath: The canopic jar is wedged into the corner quite tightly. It requires a DC 25 Sleight of Hand check to remove the jar without disturbing it. Failure by more than 5 triggers the trap protecting the jar (see trap description, below).

If the party is able to recover the canopic jar, they can study it in more detail. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge check reveals the basic nature of the jar – it is an enchanted container designed to hold relics related to the person depicted in the carvings. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the canopic jar and its contents could be used as a focus for powerful divine magic, tied to either resurrection or necromantic rituals.

If the characters attempt to open the canopic jar, they risk setting off a *cone of cold* trap unless they can somehow retrieve blood from the King of the South from area 3-4 of Vault of the Dragon Kings, or dip the jar in dragon ether. If opened, the characters will find several strands of long, silvery hair, large nail clippings, and several long-dried scabs. Everything in the jar is very old and desiccated. A DC 30 Heal check reveals that these items are from a humanoid of Large size or larger.

Cone of Cold Trap: magic device; mechanical trigger (tamper or break seal); automatic reset (24 hours); spell effect (*cone of cold*, 10th-level wizard, 10d6 [36] cold, DC 17 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29 (carefully remove wax seal).

Wedged into the corner behind the canopic jar is one lens for a set of *eyes of petrification*. By itself it is useless. The other piece of the set lies submerged within the underground pool in area 4-5. Finding the lens requires a DC 20 Search check.

Scoring:

Locating the hidden passage:	+100 points
Per skeletal lizardman defeated:	+50 points
Recovering the King of the South's canopic jar:	+200 points
Recovering the lens for the <i>eyes of petrification</i> :	+50 points
Bonus: Both <i>eyes of petrification</i> recovered:	+50 points
Defeating the skeletons before they trigger the <i>cone of cold</i> trap:	+50 points

Area 4-7 – The Swarm (EL 8): When the characters round the curve leading into the long hall of this area, read the following aloud:

The wide tunnel curves to the west as it leads away from the underground pool. Soon it leads almost due west, and the rough-hewn surfaces make way to reveal worked and polished stone. Faint traces of light from the far end of the tunnel, perhaps 100 feet away, shimmer off the polished surfaces.

In the distance, you hear the click-clack of stones tumbling along the floor of the tunnel.

The clicking noise that sounds like stone on stone is actually a swarm of insects called ironbiters noisily moving along the floor and wall of the tunnel. The swarm is located by the spaces marked “S” on the map. When a character closes to within 30 feet of the ironbiter swarm, a DC 30 Spot check will reveal a shimmer of light reflecting off the stone surfaces, as if the floor and walls are moving.

Once the oddity is spotted, a DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check reveals the odd sounds and sights as an ironbiter swarm.

Tactics: The ironbiter swarm is ravenous for any metal they can sink their mandibles into. The swarm moves toward the greatest source of metal or stone within 30 feet (such as the character clad in the heaviest metal armor). The swarm maneuvers to encompass as many metal-clad or metal-wielding targets as possible, heedless of any danger to itself. The swarm otherwise shows no intelligence or tactics. The swarm fights to the death.

Ironbiter Swarm: CR 8; Diminutive vermin (swarm); HD 12d8+12; hp 84; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +9; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk Swarm (3d6 [11] plus poison plus special); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA Destructive bite distraction; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 3, Dex 17, Con 12, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA – Destructive Bite (Ex): Ironbiter swarms chew through metal as easily as flesh. An ironbiter swarm automatically deals its swarm damage to metal armor and weapons as well as living targets. Characters may attempt a DC 17 Fortitude save to halve the damage inflicted to any attended magic armor or weapons.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with an ironbiter swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 [2] Str.

Aftermath: With a DC 15 Search check in the section of tunnel where the ironbiter swarm was first discovered, the party discovers that the swarm has chewed through the cavern wall to reveal a small vein of mithral.

Up to 30 pounds of mithral ore can be extracted from the wall. Each DC 30 Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (miner) check requires 20 minutes of work and extracts 2d6 (5) pounds of ore. Each pound of mithral ore is worth 250 gold.

Scoring:

Revealing nature of ironbiter swarm before it attacks:	+50 points
Defeating ironbiter swarm:	+200 points
Per item destroyed by the swarm:	-25 points
Discovering the vein of mithral ore:	+50 points

Area 4-8 – The King’s Secret Chambers (EL 10): As the players approach the end of the tunnel that leads into this chamber, read the following aloud:

The tunnel winds slightly northwest, before opening into a wide, ragged hole along the side of a much larger chamber to the west. The hole is ringed with a mass of crumbled stone blocks and a toppled marble statue. The soft white glow illuminating the smooth, polished stone of the long tunnel is coming from the chamber beyond.

The fallen statue, which would stand more than 10 feet tall, is that of a titanic figure, resplendent in ceremonial armor and wielding a massive spear in its gauntleted fists. An ornate helm obscures the statue’s face, but lends the figure a draconic look.

The floor of the chamber is made of large, white marble flagstones, which reflect the light. But the light only fills the bottom of the large chamber – 10 feet off the ground, inky darkness swirls and clouds your view of the ceiling or what may lay above. From the end of the tunnel, you can see the bottoms of three more massive statues along the walls of the chamber – one directly opposite the opening into the room 80 feet away, and two along the northern wall.

If the party met Hethvarag’s ghost in area 3-4 (Spirits from the Past), they recognize the toppled statue as that of the Dragon King of the South.

Once the party enters the chamber itself, read the following aloud:

The room is 80 feet east to west, and more than 100 feet north to south. Deep stone shelves are carved into the northern wall, between the two statues. A variety of large alchemical devices line the shelves – massive alembic, retorts, calcinators, mortars, and various other tools lie beneath a blanket of dust and spider webs.

In the center of the chamber is a large stone table and chair. The table is nearly six feet off the ground, and cluttered with all manner of papers, ink pots, writing implements, and a variety of other small tools and items. While it’s difficult to make out the contents from this vantage, you can see a large piece of canvas lies unrolled along the tabletop.

The southern end of the chamber tapers to a wall only 40 feet wide. Along the full width of the southern wall you see the bottoms of four massive steel panels covered with detailed engravings.

This is the King of the West’s retreat, where he worked his darker arts, developed the plans for his beloved necromantic constructs, and studied the rituals tied to the canopic jars. The inky blackness is the effect of a massive half-dragon darkmantle clinging to the ceiling of the room. The darkmantle is fixed to the ceiling, 40 feet overhead, directly above the stone table.

The King of the East’s canopic jar is here, on a ledge directly above his statue to the northeast. The four steel



panels along the south wall are actually all door segments leading to the south, and are mightily trapped. Obscured by the darkmantle’s darkness effect are four alcoves, one above each steel door, just large enough to hold one of the four canopic jars.

Tactics: The darkmantle is completely obscured by the darkness it generates. It waits until a character comes within 5 feet of the stone table below it, and then unleashes its breath weapon. The following round, it drops down and attacks the character nearest the stone table. When it drops from the ceiling, the radius of darkness falls with it, shrouding the lower half of the room in thick gloom. The darkmantle fights to the death.

Half-Dragon (red) Giant Darkmantle: CR 8; Large dragon (augmented magical beast); HD 10d12+50; hp 116; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +10; Grp +27; Atk slam +23 melee (1d8+13) or bite +22 melee (1d8+13); Full Atk slam +23 melee (1d8+13 [17]) and bite +20 melee (1d8+13 [17]); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon; improved darkness, improved grab, constrict 1d8+13 (14); SQ Blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., immune to fire, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 36, Dex 6, Con 21, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Hide +11, Listen +17, Spot +17; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (slam).

SA – Breath Weapon (Su): 30-foot cone, once per day, damage 6d8 [24] fire, Reflex DC 20 half.

Improved Darkness (Su): The half-dragon darkmantle emanates a permanent darkness effect, as the dark-

ness spell (caster level 5th) in a 40-foot radius around itself. If slain, the darkness effect dissipates immediately.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the half-dragon darkmantle must hit a Huge or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A half dragon darkmantle deals 1d8+13 (17) points of damage with a successful grapple check.

SQ – Blindsight (Ex): A darkmantle can “see” by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds the darkmantle.

Aftermath: Once the darkmantle is defeated, its aura of darkness dissipates, allowing the party to examine the rest of the room. A DC 20 Spot check reveals the ledges above the statues, and the King of the East's canopic jar above his corresponding statue.

If the party is able to recover the canopic jar, they can study it in more detail. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge check reveals the basic nature of the jar – it is an enchanted container designed to hold relics related to the person depicted in the carvings. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the canopic jar and its contents could be used as a focus for powerful divine magic, tied to either resurrection or necromantic rituals.

If the characters attempt to open the canopic jar, they risk setting off a *chain lightning* trap unless they can somehow retrieve blood from the King of the East from area 3-5 of Vault of the Dragon Kings, or dip the jar in dragon ether. If opened, the characters will find several strands of long, bronze hair, large nail clippings, and several long-dried scabs. Everything in the jar is very old and desiccated. A DC 30 Heal check reveals that these items are from a humanoid of Large size or larger.

Chain Lightning Trap: magic device; mechanical trigger (tamper or break seal); automatic reset (24 hours); spell effect (*chain lightning*, 11th-level wizard, 11d6 [36] electricity to target nearest center of trigger area plus 5d6 [20] electricity to each of up to eleven secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31 (carefully remove wax seal).

A Dark Ritual: The contents on top of the table include Large-size pens, inkpots and other writing implements, scroll cases, vellum, and pots of sand for drying. The pens and writing tools are considered masterwork and are wrought with silver and gold. The set is worth 500 gold.

The table also holds a map of the Vault of the Dragon Kings above, as well as the details to a bizarre, necromantic ritual similar to the divine spell *reincarnation* called *necromantic reconstruction*. The spell operates like *reincarnation* except that the target can only be reincarnated as a necromantic construct. The scrolls are written in Draconic. A character reading the scrolls or succeeding

on a DC 15 Decipher Script check can piece together information from the scrolls and tie the ritual detailed therein with the canopic jars found throughout the caverns. Handwritten notes on the sheets indicate that the King of the West had preparations made to enact the rituals for all four Dragon Kings.

The ritual requires 5,000 gold in material components, including hair and skin samples of the target to be reincarnated, and a metal framework to act as the body for the newly reincarnated being. The documents on the table provide enough information to constitute a scroll of *necromantic construction*. Performing the ritual takes 8 hours, drains 1,000 experience points from the caster, and is considered an evil act.

Exiting the Chamber: To open the doors from this chamber to Area 4-9, the characters must place the four canopic jars on the appropriate shelves on the doors to the south. The doors are highly polished steel doors detailed with precious metal, and match the doors to the Sanctums found on level one of the Vault of the Dragon Kings. From west to east, the doors are detailed with copper (King of the West), gold (King of the North), silver (King of the South) and bronze (King of the East).

Placing the wrong canopic jar on the wrong shelf, or trying to disable or open the doors through any other means, triggers a powerful *empowered cloudkill* trap.

Empowered Cloudkill Trap: CR 8; magic device; event trigger (wrong jars, tampering); automatic reset (1 hour); spell effect (*empowered cloudkill*, 11th-level wizard, 20-foot radius, 11 minutes duration, 3 HD or less, death; 4-6 HD DC 18 Fort save or death, succeed and suffer 1d4+2 [4] Con damage per round; 7+ HD 1d4+2 [4] Con damage per round, DC 18 Fort save for half); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

Scoring:	
Recovering the King of the East's canopic jar:	+200 points
Defeating the darkmantle:	+300 points
Opening the southern doors without triggering the trap:	+100 points
Discovering the King of the West's plans for the canopic jars:	+100 points
Destroying the <i>necromantic construction</i> ritual materials:	+100 points

Area 4-9 – The Entombed (EL 10): Once the door from area 4-8 opens into this hallway, read the following aloud:

With a shudder and low moan, the four wide metal doors retract into the ceiling. As the doors start to rise, the stench of decay and long-dead flesh rolls in from the next room. The source of the rank stench is obvious – dozens, perhaps hundreds, of bodies are pressed against the withdrawing doors.

Lizardman and reptilian corpses in varying stages of decay and decomposition are tangled in a morbid knot. As the doors continue to move toward the ceil-

ing, they can no longer support the mass of bodies, and several of the corpses begin to tumble into the room.

The mass of corpses fills the entire width of the entrance into the hall beyond, and reaches nearly halfway up the 15-foot ceiling. A faint wind, chill and brisk, beckons from the east.

This long hallway was once the entrance into the King of the West's secret chamber. Now it is the only exit remaining. The hallway is filled with the interred remains of the countless workers the King of the West forced to build this lair. The King of the West then triggered the *cloudkill* trap while testing the doors to his laboratory, slaying the workers to keep its location – and existence – a secret from the other kings.

The stench is emanating from a horde of ghosts littered among the bodies further down the hallway. The stench grows stronger the further down the hallway the characters proceed.

Environmental Hazard: The mass of corpses is effectively the floor of the hallway now. It is considered difficult terrain. However, moving faster than half speed requires a DC 10 Balance check. Failure means no additional progress is made, while failure by more than 5 results in the character falling prone. Further, Large-size or larger creatures are considered squeezed when navigating through the hallway.

Once the party has reached the midway point of the hall, indicated by the shaded section on the map, the tangle of corpses conceals a group of eight lizardmen that have returned from the grave as ghosts.

Tactics: Once a character comes within 10 feet of the ghosts' location, they must attempt a saving throw against the ghosts' stench. A DC 25 Spot check or Knowledge (religion) check is required to notice anything out of the ordinary about the section of corpses containing the undead.

If any characters are sickened by their stench, the ghosts immediately attack. Otherwise, as soon as more than one character is within 10 feet of the ghosts, they attack. The ghosts are all considered prone at the beginning of combat. The ghosts focus on taking down any obviously draconic or reptilian characters, and are savvy enough to move into flanking positions to improve their odds, but otherwise show no target preference. The ghosts fight until they are destroyed or turned.

Elite Ghosts (8): CR 4; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 38 each; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +7; Atk bite +7 melee (1d8+5 [10] plus paralysis); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d8+5 [10] plus paralysis) and 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+2 [4] plus paralysis); SA Ghoul fever, paralysis, stench; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 20, Con –, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +11, Hide +10, Jump +11, Move Silently +10, Spot +9; Multiattack, Toughness.

SA – Ghoul Fever (Su): Disease - bite, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 [2] Con and 1d3 Dex [2].

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a ghost's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 (3) rounds. Even elves can be affected by this paralysis.

Stench (Ex): The stink of death and corruption surrounding these creatures is overwhelming. Living creatures within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6+4 (6) minutes. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same ghost's stench for 24 hours. A delay poison or neutralize poison spell removes the effect from a sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws.

Aftermath: There is nothing of value in the hallway. Following the hallway to its end point reveals a wide set of metal doors. The doors lead outside, opening along the southern face of the great mountainside within a small copse of trees. The door is not locked, but is secured by the press of dead bodies at its base and sealed in a rime of ice from the elements outside.

Once the bodies have been sufficiently cleared from inside, a DC 30 Strength check is required to pry the doors open. For every 10 points of fire damage inflicted on the doors to help melt away the ice, reduce the DC by 1. When the doors are finally opened, a quick search of the surrounding area and a DC 20 Survival check reveals that the party is only a few hundred feet away from the entrance to the Vault of the Dragon Kings and area 1-1.

A DC 10 Intelligence or Wisdom check reveals that spatially this distance is impossible, given the distance and depth of the entranceway, Valley of the Fallen, and the Vault itself. Despite this seeming impossibility, the party has successfully navigated their way through the caverns beneath the Pool of Dreams and escaped from the Vault.

Scoring:

Per ghost defeated:	+50 points
Noticing the ghosts before combat begins:	+50 points
Exiting the hallway and fleeing the caverns:	+100 points

Appendix: New Monsters

DRAGON WISP

Small Undead (incorporeal)

Hit Dice:	8d12 (52 hp)
Initiative:	+12
Speed:	Fly 50 ft. (perfect) (10 squares)
Armor Class:	21 (+1 size, +8 Dex, +2 deflection), touch 21, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple:	+4/–
Attack:	Spectral bite +14 melee (2d8 energy damage - see below)
Full Attack:	Spectral bite +14 melee (2d8 energy damage - see below)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spectral bite
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, spell resistance 15, undead traits
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +9
Abilities:	Str –, Dex 26, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14
Skills:	Hide +19, Listen +14, Search +13, Spot +14
Feats:	Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon focus (bite)
Environment:	Underground
Organization:	Pair, or swirl (3-4)
Challenge Rating:	6
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	9-16 HD (Small)

Dragon wisps are translucent wisps of spectral color, faint traces of draconic spirits that swirl in vaguely dragon-like shapes. Dragon wisps shift between a spectrum of colors matching the chromatic dragons - red, blue, green, white and black. A dragon wisp's body is a loose gaseous form roughly two feet across, and creates shadowy illumination. Dragon wisps speak Draconic.

COMBAT

Dragon wisps are dangerous in combat. They shift and phase through materials to chase down opponents, and are relentless in their attacks. In melee, they attack with a spectral bite, which act as a melee touch attack and randomly inflict electrical, fire, cold or acid damage.

Spectral Bite (Su): The bite of a dragon wisp passes through (ignores) natural armor, armor, and shields, although deflection bonuses and force effects (such as *mage armor*) work normally against it. A successful bite attack inflicts 2d8 points of random energy damage. When a bite attack succeeds, roll 1d4 to determine what type of energy damage it inflicts – 1: acid, 2: cold, 3: electricity, 4: fire.

IRONBITER SWARM

Diminutive Vermin (Swarm)

Hit Dice:	12d8+12 (66 hp)
Initiative:	+3
Speed:	20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.
Armor Class:	17 (+4 size, +3 Dex), touch 17, flat-footed 14
BAB/Grapple:	+9/–
Attack:	Swarm (3d6 plus poison plus special)
Full Attack:	Swarm (3d6 plus poison plus special)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks:	Destructive bite, distraction, poison
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft., vermin traits
Saves:	Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 3, Dex 17, Con 12, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2
Skills:	Climb +11, Spot +4
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite) ^B
Environment:	Underground
Organization:	Solitary, raid (2-4 swarms), or invasion (7-12 swarms)
Challenge Rating:	8
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always neutral
Advancement:	None
Level Adjustment:	–

An individual ironbiter beetle is roughly four inches long, with a dull, metallic carapace and razor-sharp mandibles.

COMBAT

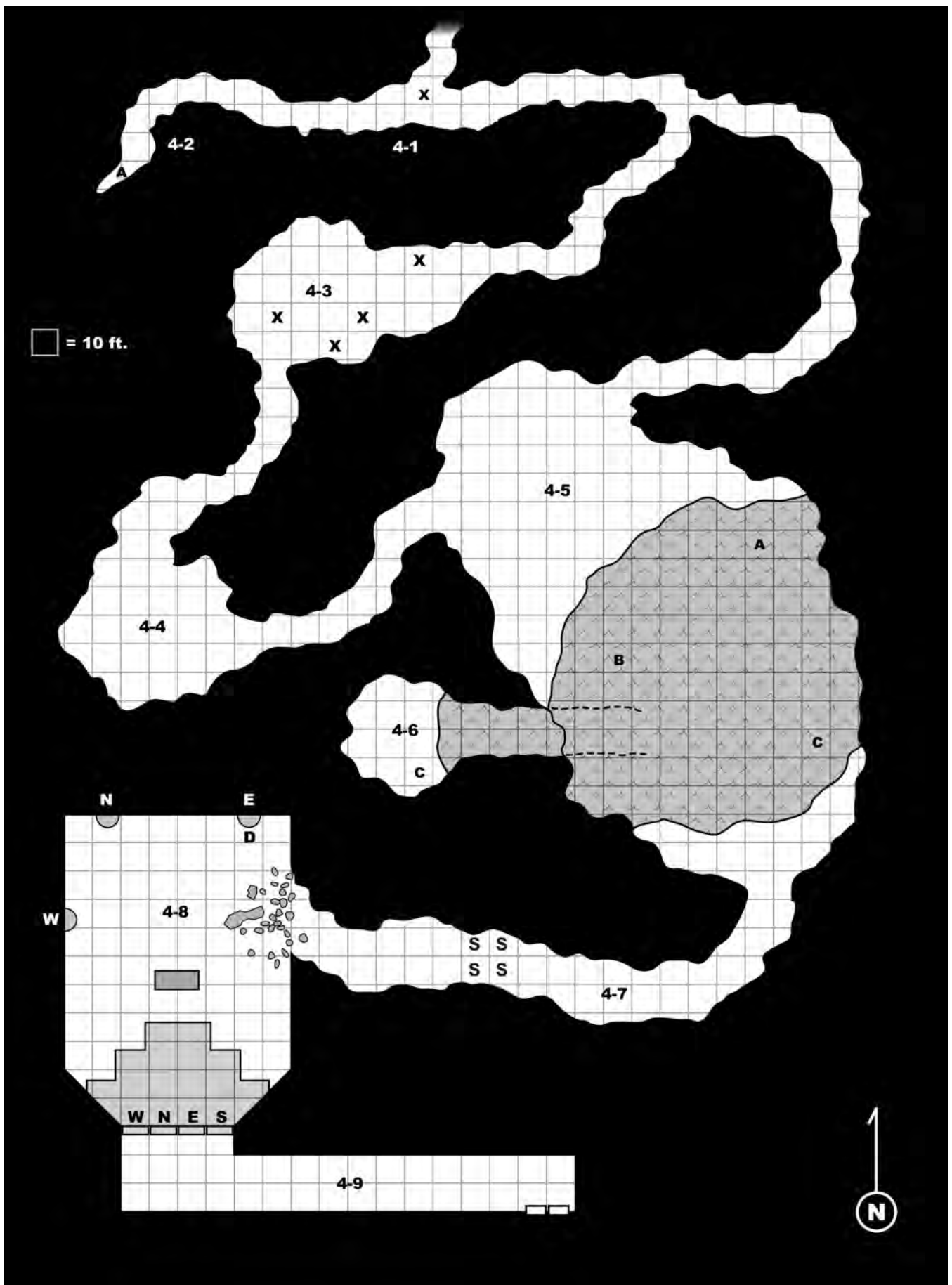
An ironbiter swarm seeks to consume metal along with any other prey it encounters. A swarm deals 3d6 points of damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Destructive Bite (Ex): Ironbiter swarms chew through metal as easily as flesh. An ironbiter swarm automatically deals its swarm damage to metal armor and weapons as well as living targets. Characters may attempt a DC 17 Fortitude save to halve the damage inflicted to any attended magic armor or weapons. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with an ironbiter swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 (2) Str. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills: An ironbiter swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, and uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb checks. An ironbiter swarm can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.



NOVICE

VETERAN

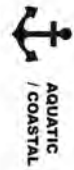
LEVEL	#	ADVENTURE								
Varies	DCC #46	Book of Treasure Maps	✓							
	DCC #0	Legends are Made, not Born						✓		
0	DCC #35A	Halls of the Minotaur						✓		
	DCC #2	Lost Vault of Tsathzar Rho								✓
	DCC #29	The Adventure Begins	✓	✓	✓	✓				
1	DCC #39	Ruins of Castle Churo								
	DCC #51	Castle Whiterock								
	WFF #0	Temple of Blood					✓			
1-3	WFF #1	Rumble in the Wizard's Tower					✓			
	DCC #1	Idylls of the Rat King						✓		
	DCC #24	Legend of the Ripper				✓	✓			
2	DCC #28	Into the Wilds						✓		
	DCC #41	Lost Arrows of Aristemis					✓			
	DCC #44	Dreaming Caverns of the Duergar					✓			
	DCC #45	Malice of the Medusa			✓		✓			
	DCC #51.5	Sinister Secret of Whiterock								
1-13	DCC #14	Dungeon Interludes								
2	DCC #11	The Dragonfiend Pact						✓		
	DCC #31	The Transmuter's Last Touch								
2-3	WFF #2	Against the Iron Giant					✓			
	DCC #42	Secret of the Stonearm					✓			
3-5	DCC #3	The Mysterious Tower								
	DCC #36	Talons of the Horned King		✓						
4-6	DCC #43	Curse of the Barrens		✓						
	DCC #17	Legacy of the Savage Kings						✓		✓
	DCC #26	The Scaly God						✓		
5-7	DCC #27	Revenge of the Rat King					✓			
	DCC #35B	Thief Lord's Vault					✓			
	DCC #37	The Slithering Overlord						✓		
	DCC #48	The Adventure Continues	✓		✓	✓				
6-7	DCC #7	Secret of Smuggler's Cove	✓							
	DCC #23	The Sunken Ziggurat								
6-8	DCC #49	Palace in the Wastes			✓		✓		✓	
	DCC #10	The Sunless Garden								✓
7-8	DCC #16	Curse of the Emerald Cobra					✓			
	DCC #20	Shadows in Freeport					✓	✓	✓	
	DCC #34	Cage of Delirium					✓			
	DCC #47	The Genie's Tears			✓		✓	✓	✓	
	DCC #5	Aerie of the Crow God					✓		✓	
7-9	DCC #8	Mysteries of the Drow					✓			
	DCC #19	The Volcano Caves					✓			
8-10	DCC #38	Escape from the Forest of Lanterns					✓			
	DCC #40	Devil in the Mists	✓				✓			
	DCC #50	Vault of the Iron Overlord					✓			
	DCC #6	Temple of the Dragon Cult								✓
9-11	JG #3	The Dark Tower								
	DCC #12	The Blackguard's Revenge		✓						
10	DCC #25	Dread Crypt of Srihoz								
	DCC #30	Vault of the Dragon Kings		✓			✓		✓	
10-12	DCC #4	Bloody Jack's Gold	✓							
	JG #1	Thieves of Fortress Badabaskor								
11-13	DCC #12.5	The Iron Crypt of the Heretics		✓			✓	✓		
	DCC #18	Citadel of the Demon Prince								
12-14	DCC #21	Assault on Stormbringer Castle						✓		
	JG #2	Citadel of Fire								
14-15	DCC #15	Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen			✓		✓	✓		
	DCC #22	The Stormbringer Juggernaut	✓				✓	✓		
15	DCC #32	Golden Palace of Zahadran			✓		✓	✓		
	DCC #13	Crypt of the Devil Lich					✓	✓	✓	
21-24	DCC #33	Belly of the Great Beast					✓		✓	

Current as of September 2007, up through DCC #51.5



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