

FIRES OF ISKH



THE ARCANES LIBRARY

5TH
EDITION

FIRES OF ISKH

Fires of Iskh is a Dungeons & Dragons adventure designed for a group of four or five players of 20th-level characters. Combat cards for all monsters and special treasure are included.

This adventure is dedicated to the memory of Amy M. Volkerts, who bravely fought her own dragon.

BY KELSEY DIONNE



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SYNOPSIS

- The party begins the adventure in a city or stronghold of importance to them. Suddenly, an earthquake shakes the ground and a volcano appears over the site, raining destruction and fire.
- The players learn a planar incursion is happening, and they must travel across the planes to reach to the source of the issue — the volcano Iskh on the Elemental Plane of Fire.
- Inside the volcano, the players learn that a force of efreet have overrun what was once an azer stronghold. The efreet, lead by Pasha Baltazar, are trying to wake and control an ancient red dragon that slumbers in the volcano's caldera. The dragon's titanic stirrings are what's causing the incursion.
- The players must overcome Pasha Baltazar and then defeat the ancient red dragon, Talus-Mir, in order to end the incursion and save the Material Plane from destruction.

BACKGROUND

- Talus-Mir the Devourer has slumbered in the heart of Iskh for millennia. She chose to hibernate there after consuming her treasure horde so she could absorb its power.
- Pasha Baltazar, an embittered efreeti noble from the Ash Moon region, has uncovered the legend of Talus-Mir. He wishes to awaken her from her lethargic slumber and demand her loyalty in exchange for his gifts of azer-forged nourishment.
- The azers of Iskh, lead by a dynasty of kings, have forgotten the ancient evil that lurks in the volcano. They fell to Baltazar's surprise assault, and the pasha now forces them to forge magic items that he feeds to Talus-Mir. The diet of masterpiece magic items coaxes the dragon back to wakefulness.
- Talus-Mir is so powerful that her stirrings cause the volcano to erupt more violently than any time in memory. The bonds of reality itself bend, and Iskh bleeds into the Material Plane, bringing untold cataclysm.

A WORD TO THE GM

This adventure is meant to be run at a glance with **minimal preparation** and a **natural delivery**. This required re-thinking the normal adventure presentation a bit. Here's what you'll find included:

- Each encounter contained on one page.
- Bulleted lists. **Bolded** keywords.
- Hyperlinks to monsters and rules online for quick reference.
- Printable cards for each monster and PC so you can run encounters using a card stack. A short video walkthrough of this method can be found **here**.
- Short room and area descriptions. No paragraphs of droning flavor text — set the scene naturally and embellish as desired.
- Briefly explained non-encounter rooms. Again, embellish as desired!
- GM maps and player-safe digital maps for use with virtual tabletops.
- Printable cards for special treasure handouts.
- A short video walkthrough of the adventure can be found **here**.

PACING/TRANSITIONS

A dramatic question is presented with most scenes. Once that question has been answered, the tension of the scene is resolved. That's your cue to work toward the **transition** provided at the end the scene — even if that means summarizing the end of a clearly decided combat, or in the case of clever players, skipping combat altogether. Keep the game moving toward the next challenge!

Room descriptions that are usually long blocks of literary read-aloud text have been left short and informational in this adventure. Many Dungeon Masters prefer to paraphrase read-aloud text and set the scene based on what tone and level of detail his or her group finds engaging. Anything listed before the **Development** sections is safe to share however you prefer to do so.

FIRE IN THE SKY

The players begin in any large city or urban setting where numerous civilians are present. Ideally, some of the players' NPCs friends are threatened by the upcoming eruption.

Establish where the players are located and what they're doing before moving on to the following events:

THE ERUPTION

- Without warning, an **earthquake** violently shakes the ground. Each PC or group of PCs is subject to the effects of the *earthquake* spell, save DC 19. It lasts three rounds.
- After the earthquake, the flickering image of a titanic **volcano** fills the sky. Ash and spiraling storm clouds blot out the sun.
- Falling volcanic **debris** blasts the city. The effects of a *meteor swarm* spell strike any PC or group of PCs not in full cover (save DC 19).

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players and important NPCs survive the eruption?

DEVELOPMENT

- The fiery **volcano** remains above the city, appearing to become more solid over time.



- The city and populace sustain **heavy damage** from the catastrophe.
- Any PC with a passive Intelligence (Arcana) score of 20 or higher recognizes the event as an **incursion** of the Elemental Plane of Fire onto the Material Plane.
- A player proficient in Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) may make a DC 23 check to realize this is the super volcano **Iskh** from the Elemental Plane of Fire.
- Once every hour, 1d3 *meteor swarm* effects strike **random sections** of the city. This continues until the incursion ends.
- Shortly after the eruption, a bloodied **messenger** arrives summoning the players for immediate council with city leadership.
- Use one or more of the following **hooks** to introduce your players to the adventure:

APPEAL TO REWARD

The frantic council offers the players land titles in the surrounding region and **50,000 gp** worth of labor and material to build a castle if they can stop the catastrophic events.

APPEAL TO HEROISM

NPCs and civilians are in direct danger from the continuing *meteor swarms*. Even as the players deliberate, another strike may occur. The incursion must be stopped at its source to save the lives of everyone in its path.

APPEAL TO DISCOVERY

No living creature remembers a catastrophic event of this nature and magnitude. The incursion has planar ramifications and could be the source of great knowledge or power.

TRANSITION

The players must get to the Elemental Plane of Fire in order to actually enter the volcano (it phases in and out of the Material Plane during the eruption). Once they arrive at Iskh, move on to the *Warm Welcome* section.

WARM WELCOME

THE BASE OF ISKH

- A *gate* spell or alternate method brings the players to the base of the **volcano** Iskh.
- Iskh's open summit is at 9,000 feet. It periodically **erupts**, hurling lava and debris down its sides. A massive ash **cloud** shot with lightning boils out of the volcano's mouth.
- **Stairs** pocked with 30-foot deep craters rise to a series of landings. A **granite door** flanked by three tall **statues** sits at the top.
- Another narrow landing juts out of the volcano 500 feet up with a **bronze door** nestled into the rock.

Sidebar: The Elemental Plane of Fire

- Sheets of flame gout from the cracks between shifting lava plates; obsidian fields shimmer in the smoldering landscape. Erupting volcanos lash the sky, choking the ever-present sun behind a haze of smoke and ash.
- Fire effects are **bolstered**; any fire damage die rolls of 1 may be rerolled once. Water effects are **reduced**; any effect that conjures water creates half the normal quantity.

DEVELOPMENT

- The **granite door** at the top of the first set of stairs is barricaded. It can be forced open with a DC 22 Strength check.
- The **bronze door** on the landing 500 feet up is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell. The DC to open it with a Strength check or Dexterity check is 35 while the spell remains.
- Far down inside the volcano, a narrow **landing** flanked by two statues permits entrance into the upper level. The **adamantine door** is locked (DC 28 Dexterity check to open) and **trapped** with a *symbol of death* cast by Pasha Baltazar (opening the door triggers it). Players can find it with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.
- At the bottom of the crater, flying players could access Areas 19 and 20.

- Making excessive noise when entering may alert the **efreet** in Areas 2 or 10.
- Each round the players remain outside Iskh, the **eruption** has a random effect. During combat, the effect happens on initiative count 20, losing all initiative ties.

ERUPTION EFFECT

D4	Detail
1	<i>Meteor swarm</i> centered on random PC
2	<i>Incendiary Cloud</i> oozes from the earth centered on a random creature. It disperses on initiative count 20
3	Earthquake; DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone
4	No harmful effect

COMBAT

- If the players ascend the first set of stairs, two **elder fire elementals** (*Appendix B*), materialize on the landings. They attack the nearest players.
- One round after the elder fire elementals appear, two statues on each side of the **granite door** animate into **fire giants**. They hurl rocks until they can join melee.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players safely get into Iskh?

Treasure

Each **fire giant** reverts to stone if defeated. They're chiseled with Ignan runes that say, "Once masters, now servants." Their eyes are fine rubies each worth **5,000 gp**.

TRANSITION

The **granite door** leads to Area 1 in *Enter The Stronghold*. The **bronze door** leads to Area 6 in *Home of the Azers*. The **adamantine door** leads to Area 9 in *Upper Halls*.

ENTER THE STRONGHOLD

Sidebar: Inside Iskh

- Explosions and quaking constantly rock the stronghold, shaking debris loose and splitting floor tiles. The **eruption** is ever-present.
- Occasionally, a pressurized geyser of magma or falling chunk of ceiling may assail the players. Make a **+9** attack roll to hit players for **55** (10d10) damage of appropriate types.
- Dexterity saving throws are DC 19 to stay standing during a **tremor**.
- Ambient **light** from lava or braziers lights every room.
- Unless otherwise noted, all **doors** are locked, bronze portals. They require a DC 25 Dexterity check to open with thieve's tools, or a DC 25 Strength check to force open.
- **Ceilings** are 40 feet high unless otherwise noted.



- The room's stone walls are carved in bas relief depicting flame-bearded dwarves tunneling and building inside the volcano.
- There are two bronze **doors** on opposite sides of the chamber.
- An open hall leads into another octagonal room with a large **statue** at the rear.

DEVELOPMENT

- A guard patrol of three **efreet** circle this chamber. They engage the players in combat as soon as they spot them. If they are **surprised** by the players, they are standing in front of each door on the lower level.
 - If the **efreet** have time to prepare, they each cast **invisibility** on themselves and **hide** along the edge of the upper balcony. Players with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 16 or higher notice them.

AREA 1: MURDER HOLES

- **Grates** cover the floor, bright rivers of **magma** coursing mere feet below. Shimmering heat waves fill the air.
- A bronze **door** sits at the end of the hall.

DEVELOPMENT

- **Murder holes** dot the carved granite ceiling. Players can spot them with a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.
- The murder holes are currently set to activate once a round while **weight** is on the grates. Doing so triggers a trap; with a mechanical thud, lava dumps over all the grates. Players on the **grates** must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) fire damage (half on a success).

AREA 2: ENTRANCE HALL

- A balcony **walkway** surrounds this octagonal chamber. Four sets of stairs lead up to it.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players defeat the guards?

COMBAT

- The **efreet** use their Hurl Flame attacks if they surprise the players. Then they use **wall of fire** to isolate and gang up on spellcasters in melee.
- They use **plane shift** to escape capture.

Treasure

The efreet do not carry anything of value, but each wears a war helm and a black sash embroidered with crescent moons.

TRANSITION

Move on to Areas 3-8 in the *Home of the Azers* section if the players continue exploring the middle level. Go to Area 9 in the *Upper Halls* if the players ascend the stairs in Area 2.

HOME OF THE AZERS

AREA 3: TEMPLE OF SULAIMON

- A granite **statue** of an azer in full battle gear, complete with magically burning hair and beard, towers over the hall. The statue has been **defaced** with dozens of deep cuts and slashes. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals these to be from the curved, sharp blade of a scimitar or scythe.
- A granite **tomb** sits below the statue. A carving in Ignan reads, “The sparks of Sulaimon burn now in his forge.”
- Two rows of iron **pews** are bolted to the floor facing the statue.

DEVELOPMENT

- Players with a passive Intelligence (Religion) score of 20 or higher recognize the **statue** as a deity named Sulaimon, the god of the azers.
- A **switch** in the base of the statue activates or deactivates the murder holes in Area 1.
- The **tomb** is magically sealed and can only be opened by uttering a sincere prayer of worship to Sulaimon. Inside are 12 ornate **urns** filled with powdered bronze; the remains of the deceased Kings of Iskh.

AREA 4: COMMON HALL

- A long, hammered iron **table** fills this hall.
- Small **alcoves** covered with chain-link curtains house iron barrels and crates full of rich ales and meads as well as brass mugs and high-quality brewing equipment.
 - A set of **stairs** leads down at the back of the room.

AREA 5: CENTRAL BARRACKS

- This circular chamber has a churning pool of **lava** at the center.
- Four **doors** lead in opposite directions.



DEVELOPMENT

- A good-aligned creature who dips a **weapon** into the pool and utters a prayer to Sulaimon gains the benefits of the *bless* spell (no concentration required) for one hour.

AREA 6: STAIRS TO THE LANDING

- The **stairs** here lead up to the bronze door and landing on the outside of Iskh.

AREA 7: MUSTERING CHAMBER

- This sturdy room is carved with **bas relief** of azers in battle against fire giants and efreet. Many of the azer carvings have been slashed and cut with marks similar to the defaced statue in Area 3.

DEVELOPMENT

- Two **efreet** hide here under the effects of a *major image* spell that paints them as a suspicious part of the bas relief. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the illusion.
- The **efreet** wear black sashes with crescent moon embroidery. They **attack** if discovered.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players overcome the efreet?

COMBAT

- The **efreet** hiss, “The Ash Moon rises!” and attack, *plane shifting* away to escape death.

AREA 8: STORAGE ROOM

- The door to this room is unlocked. Ransacked **chests** contain azer-sized remnants of ceremonial armor and warhammers.

TRANSITION

From Area 4, go to Area 18 in *Lower Halls*.

From Area 7, go to Area 15 in *Fiery Friends*.

From Area 6, go to the bronze door section in *Warm Welcome*.

UPPER HALLS

AREA 9: UPPER ENTRANCE HALL

- This upper **balcony** looks down into the octagonal hall below.
- Four **doors** lead in each direction out of the chamber. All doors except the trapped **adamantine door** that leads to the landing (see *Warm Welcome*) are unlocked.

DEVELOPMENT

- The **efreet** in Area 2 may notice the players.
- If the **efreet** in Area 10 detect the players in this area, they stage an ambush. All but Pasha Baltazar hide neck-deep in the lava and cast *major image*, disguising it all as stone floor.

AREA 10: THRONE ROOM

- This room shimmers with heat. A brass **throne** sits at the back, and an arched **bridge** passes two statues in the middle of the room.

DEVELOPMENT

- If the players surprise the **efreet** in this room, the **lava** river is visible. **Pasha Baltazar** sits in the throne, a manacled azer at his feet. An **efreeti** stands beside him, and two **efreet** are on either side of the bridge.
- When Pasha Baltazar sees the players, he smiles and brandishes his *vorpai scimitar* at the azer **captive**, Daegiss, saying he'll **kill** the azer unless the players leave.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players defeat or negotiate with the efreet and save Daegiss?



Pasha Baltazar of the Ash Moon, NE efreeti

"I can see this is a bit beyond your waterlogged minds to grasp."

- *Appearance.* Wears a bronze helm studded with rubies and black silks embroidered with crescent moons.
- *Does.* Moves languidly, in no hurry.
- *Secret.* Hates most nobles from the City of Brass for scorning his house as "impure."

COMBAT

- Baltazar uses a legendary action to **behead** Daegiss. He teleports to Area 19 on his turn.
- The **efreet** fight to the death.

TALKING TO DAEGISS

If the players rescue or revive Daegiss, he gratefully shares the following:

Daegiss, NG Iskhan war priest

"I'll die before I call an efreeti my master!"

- *Appearance.* Beard of white-hot fire.
- *Does.* Ends most phrases with, "If Sulaimon wills."
- *Secret.* Feared something lurked in the caldera, but never told anyone.

- King Magnar and the other azers were taken **captive** by an efreet force several days ago. The azers are in the dungeon downstairs.
- The efreet have been forcing the azers to craft magic items on the Forge of Sulaimon.
 - Daegiss thinks the eruption is due to some mighty force stirring in the volcano.

TRANSITION

Move to Area 11 in *Royal Chambers*, or Area 14 in *You Shall Not Pass*. If the players descend the stairs, go to Area 2 in *Enter The Stronghold*.

ROYAL CHAMBERS

AREA 11: CHAPEL LIBRARY

- Stone **shelves** line this study, housing hundreds of stone tablets and brass-bound books with metal leaf pages.
- An unlocked **door** sits opposite the entrance.

DEVELOPMENT

- Players who spend a short rest perusing the volumes gain **advantage** on one Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) check relating to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

AREA 12: CHAPEL OF SULAIMON

- A undamaged **statue** of Sulaimon working at his forge presides over the small chapel.

DEVELOPMENT

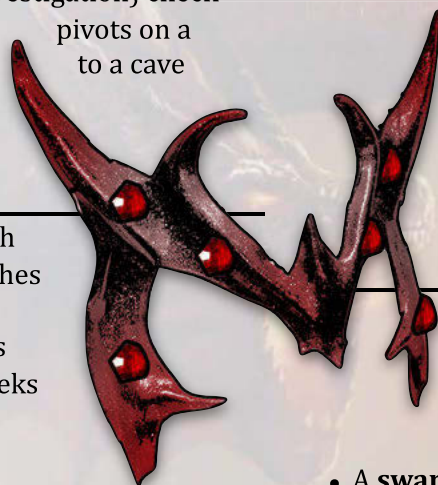
- Any evil creature who **touches** the statue must make a DC 18 Constitution save or take 22 (5d8) radiant damage (half on save).
- A DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the statue **pivots on a secret hinge**, opening system beyond.

AREA 13: MAZE

- A rough-hewn **maze** with 15-foot high walls stretches out beyond the door.
- A distant **rumble** echoes throughout it. The air reeks of sulfur.

DEVELOPMENT

- A roving **swarm of gorgons** charges endlessly through these tunnels. Their rumble draws closer and closer.
- Give each player a copy of the maze in *Appendix D* to share. Time them for exactly **30 seconds** as they navigate the maze.



pivots on a
to a cave

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players navigate the maze?

PASSING THE CHALLENGE

- If a player reaches the center of the maze before time is up, put the group on the map in the **center** of the tunnels.
- A churning pool of lava in an obsidian **bowl** dominates the cavern. It's inscribed with Ignan that reads, "The blood of Sulaimon blesses great works. Iskh shall not fall to the evil within."
- A **crown** of worked iron adorned with rubies floats on the lava pool.
- Any weapon dipped in the **lava** permanently gains the magical ability to deal an additional 10 (3d6) damage to any creature with the dragon type.

Treasure

- The iron crown is the *Crown of Iskh* (*Appendix C*). King Magnar hid it here before confronting the efreet invaders.

FAILING THE CHALLENGE

- If a player doesn't beat the maze before time is up, put the group on the map in a random tunnel and go to the **combat** section.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players survive or escape the gorgons?

COMBAT

- A **swarm of gorgons** (*Appendix B*) attacks from a random side.
- If the players survive or flee, give them another 30 seconds to navigate the maze. If they fail, a new **swarm of gorgons** attacks.

TRANSITION

The players return to Area 9 in *Upper Halls*.

YOU SHALL NOT PASS

AREA 14: CHASM

- A narrow **bridge** spans the two platforms in this room. A 60-foot **chasm** on either side ends in a roiling **river** of magma.
- A **balor** is **tethered** to the ground across the bridge by a short chain. Three **iron chests** sit behind him.

DEVELOPMENT

- The **balor**, named Heratheus, can't impede or harm anyone who wears the *Crown of Iskh* (Appendix C).
- The magical **chains** that bind him function as *Dimensional Shackles*. They can't be removed by the wearer. They limit Heratheus' movement to the edge of the platform and magically stop him from touching the **chests**.
- Heratheus tries to **barter** with players for his release. He knows a bit about what has happened in Iskh lately and swears the only thing he hates more than an azer is an efreeti.
- Heratheus will try to **twist** agreements but will honor their exact letter.



- Unless a **deal** has been struck, Heratheus will attack anyone who comes within range of his whip.
- Players in the **magma river** below take 99 (18d10) fire damage each round.

Heratheus, CE balor

"Release me and I will make you all-powerful!"

- *Appearance.* Coiled, jagged horns. Red-black skin limned with fire.
- *Does.* Stalks around the platform. Occasionally rushes to the end of his chain.
- *Secret.* Became entrapped by the azers after a failed deal with a noble efreeti in the City of Brass. Holds a furious grudge against all efreet.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players barter with or defeat Heratheus?

COMBAT

- Heratheus maneuvers so he can **hurl** strong melee combatants from the bridge with his whip.
- Heratheus **pulls** spellcasters into melee range with his whip.

Treasure

- The right chest contains 10,000 gp. The middle chest contains 200 pp and 2 rubies worth 5,000 gp each. The left chest contains a *Belt of Azerkind* (Appendix C), a *Horn of Blasting*, and an *Efreeti Bottle* with the 1,200-years missing former Sultan of the City of Brass, Malik the Blazing Sun, inside.

TRANSITION

The players return to Area 9 in *Upper Halls*.

FIERY FRIENDS

AREA 15: DUNGEON

- Eight barred **cells** line this hall. Inside all but two of them are manacled, groaning **Iskhan champions** (*Appendix B*) without armor or weapons.
- **King Magnar** occupies one of the cells closest to the stairs. He jumps up when the players enter and demands to know why they've trespassed in his people's domain.

King Magnar, LG Iskhan champion

"We'll melt yer chains of slavery to slag, efreeti."

- *Appearance.* Strong arms scarred by forging. Repeatedly broken nose.
- *Does.* Visibly fights to calm himself against his warrior rages.
- *Secret.* Fears he'll be a failure to his people and his forebears.

DEVELOPMENT

- If **Daegiss** is with the characters, King Magnar praises Sulaimon and treats the party as trusted friends.
- If Daegiss isn't with the party, they'll have to earn King Magnar's **trust** to get information from him.
- Players can find a **secret door** inside one of the cells with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It leads to Area 16.
- The adamantine **cell doors** can be opened with a DC 28 Strength check or a DC 25 Dexterity check. Baltazar has the **keys**.
- All the azers' **equipment** has been fed to Talus-Mir in the caldera.
- Pasha Baltazar has cast **symbol of death** on the door to Area 17. Opening the door



triggers it. Players can find the symbol with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

TALKING WITH KING MAGNAR

Magnar can share the following information:

- The azers of Iskh built this **stronghold** centuries ago after escaping efreet slavers.
- The **pasha** sneaked into Iskh with his force of efreet and took the azers by surprise. He captured them and has been forcing them to forge items on **The Forge of Sulaimon** that sits in the magma of the caldera.
- The forge infuses works made on it with powerful magic.
- Magnar believes the pasha has discovered and seeks to control an **ancient evil** that lurks in the volcano. He is likely bolstering this creature's power with the items the azers are forging.
- Obscure Iskhan **history** makes vague mention of "the evil within Iskh," though Magnar always thought it was a metaphor of some kind.
- If the players haven't rescued **Daegiss**, the azers will try to hatch a plan with the players to do so.

AREA 16: SECRET FORGE

- The walls of this rough-hewn **cave** glitter with volcanic glass. Two ancient **anvils** rest here, untouched in centuries.

DEVELOPMENT

- A **secret door** hides at the end of this passage. Players can find it with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It leads to Area 19.

TRANSITION

Go to Area 19 in *The Pasha's Offer* if the players move through the secret door. Players may also go to Area 17 in *Lower Halls* or up to Area 7 in *Home of the Azers*.

LOWER HALLS

AREA 17: CENTRAL CHAMBER

- This chamber is lit by four removable torches with *continual flame* spells cast on them.
- A carved depiction of Sulaimon at work in his celestial forge graces the huge **adamantine door** at the bottom of the chamber. It's unlocked.

DEVELOPMENT

- Pasha Baltazar has cast *symbol of death* on the doors leading to Areas 15 and 17. Opening the doors triggers them. Players can find the symbols with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.



AREA 18: STAIRS AND STORAGE

- Stairs in this circular chamber lead up.
- The **doors** to the two the adjoining rooms are unlocked. They're full of forge tools, goggles, gloves, and works-in-progress that hang from the wall **racks** and sit out on rune-carved tables.

DEVELOPMENT

- One of the items is a faulty set of *Iron Bands of Binding*. It attempts to **bind** any character who touches it, making an attack roll with a +11 bonus. It falls apart if it misses or after it is removed from a creature.

Treasure

- A player who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds *Goggles of Night* and matching *Gauntlets of Ogre Power* in the store rooms.

TRANSITION

If the players go from Area 17 through the adamantine door, move on to *The Pasha's Offer*. If they go up the stairs in Area 18, go to Area 4 in *Home of the Azers*.

THE PASHA'S OFFER

AREA 19: SULAIMON'S FORGE

- A cavernous **gallery** opens to a sea of boiling magma. Burning ash falls like snow onto the platform and stairs beyond the door.
- Two **statues** of frost giant heads with ice-rimmed lips bare their teeth at either side of the platform — enchanted metal quenchers for the mighty **Forge of Sulaimon** that rises out of the magma sea.
- A wide **passage** leads toward the open caldera.

DEVELOPMENT

- Pasha Baltazar has an **alarm** spell active on a 30-foot square at the center of the platform. If it triggers and he's not already here, he **teleports** onto the Forge of Sulaimon (he has a small chip of the forge he carved off with his **Vorpal Scimitar** to use for teleporting with 100% accuracy).
- If Baltazar is **already here**, he stands on the Forge of Sulaimon, admiring it.
- The players may be able to **surprise** Baltazar by entering through the **secret door** from Area 16. The door can be located with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

TALKING TO THE PASHA

- The pasha offers to treat the azers "fairly" as long as they continue to **forge** items for him.
- He admits the violent eruption and incursion are caused by the stirrings of an ancient dragon called **Talus-Mir**. He uncovered a lost tome in the City of Brass that said he could **wake** her from millennia of slumber by feeding her magic items. He believes (falsely) he can bring her to heel under his rulership.
- Baltazar can be convinced to **leave Iskh** if offered a **boon** that will give him a major advantage in his political ambitions in the

City of Brass. As any efreeti would, he takes the language of a deal with the most literal interpretation possible.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players negotiate with or defeat the pasha and his allies?

DEVELOPMENT

- If the players **refuse** to negotiate with the pasha, he sighs sadly and snaps his fingers.
- An **efreeti** who had cast **invisibility** on herself attacks from behind a statue.
- The **efreeti** is able to summon an **ash elemental** (see *Appendix B*) in place of a fire elemental.

COMBAT

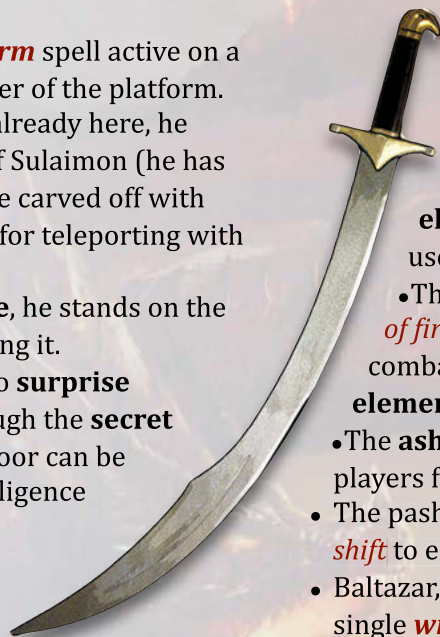
- Pasha Baltazar spends his first turn summoning an **ash elemental**. Then he hangs back and uses ranged attacks and spells.
- The **efreeti** hedges players in with **wall of fire**. She casts **reduce** on strong melee combatants and then summons an **ash elemental**.
- The **ash elementals** work to prevent players from reaching Pasha Baltazar.
- The pasha and **efreeti** use **teleport** or **plane shift** to escape if close to death.
- Baltazar, being an efreeti noble, can grant a single **wish** spell. He will do so reluctantly in exchange for his life.

Treasure

The pasha has a **Helm of Teleportation** with two charges remaining and a large **Vorpal Scimitar**. He also has an **Ring of Alarum** (*Appendix C*) and metal-leaf scrolls of **symbol** and **remove curse**.

TRANSITION

Move on the *Wrath of Talus-Mir* section or back to Area 17 in the *Lower Halls* section.



WRATH OF TALUS-MIR

AREA 20: CALDERA OF ISKH

- The air warps and bends with **heat waves**. The sky is invisible overhead, lost in the colossal plume of volcanic ash.
- A wide sea of churning **magma** fills the caldera, lapping at the feet of those who stand on the narrow islands.

DEVELOPMENT

- Any character in the **magma** takes 99 (18d10) fire damage each round.
- A player in the caldera who demands the evil in Iskh present itself can summon Talus-Mir from the depths of the magma.

TALUS-MIR RISES

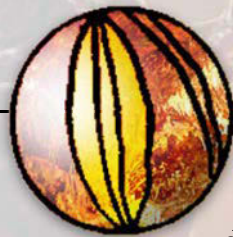
- Talus-Mir the Devourer **bursts** from the caldera with an explosion of magma. Players must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) fire damage (half on a save).
- She flaps her mighty wings, hovering just above the magma sea, and demands to know who awakens her. Then, she lets out a terrible scream. From above, two **young red dragons** plummet to join her in battle under her control.

DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the players defeat Talus-Mir?

COMBAT

- Talus-Mir, an **ancient red dragon**, opens with her fire breath and uses her legendary actions for wing and tail attacks. She fights to the death.
- The **young red dragons** first breathe fire. Next, they use the Attack action to **shove** players into the lava. They **abandon** Talus-Mir's command when close to death, fleeing to the mouth of the volcano.



LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing all initiative ties), Talus-Mir takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; she can't use the same effects two rounds in a row:

- A **spout** of magma erupts from a point on the ground Talus-Mir can see within 120 feet of her, creating a 60-foot-high, 5-foot-radius geyser. Each creature in the geyser's area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) fire damage (half on a save).
- Magic items fly toward Talus-Mir, pulled out of players' grasp by her immense hunger. Each player must choose a **magic item** to sacrifice to her. The items are destroyed as Talus-Mir consumes them.
- The fabric of reality briefly **buckles** in the presence of Talus-Mir's power. An *antimagic field* appears centered on a point within 120 feet of Talus-Mir. It disappears at the start of initiative count 20.
- Talus-Mir unleashes a scream, using the power of the *Orb of Dragonkind* to summon two **young red dragons** who are willingly under her control. She can't use this lair action if any previously summoned dragons are under her control.

Treasure

Talus-Mir's ravenous hunger and greed lead her to consume her entire horde thousands of years ago. The potent mixture of magical artifacts and rare metals made her, an already formidable dragon, into a monster of legend.

Upon Talus-Mir's death, the kernel of all her condensed power explodes from her body, unwilling to be lost at the bottom of Iskh's caldera. The glimmering *Orb of Dragonkind* floats upon the magma — a fell artifact that can only be destroyed with the weapon of a god.

TRANSITION

Move on to the *Aftermath* section.

AFTERMATH

ENDING THE INCURSION

- With the death of Talus-Mir, the **incursion** also ends. Iskh pulls back to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and the eruption effects end.

THE ISKHANS

- The azers of Iskh hail the players as honored heroes sent by Sulaimon. If the players recovered the *Crown of Iskh* and return it to the azers, King Magnar promises to **craft** each one of them any item of very rare rarity or lower. He completes one item each week.
- If the azers learn the players have **kept** the *Crown of Iskh*, they become hostile toward the party and won't assist them any further.

RETURNING HOME

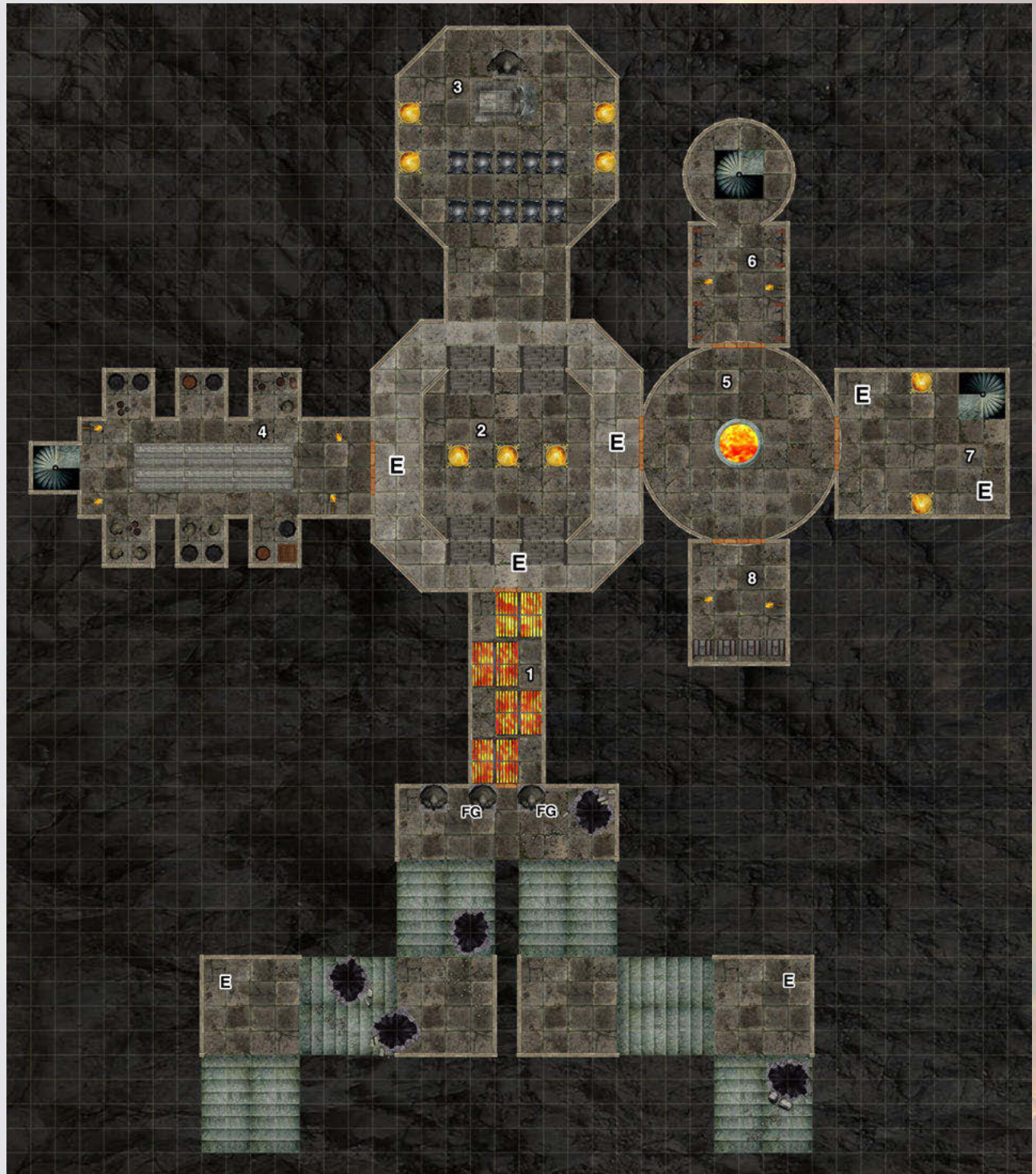
- When the players return to the Prime Material plane, the **council** (if the members are still alive after the incursion) make good on their promise to award them a land title and **50,000 gp** worth of building costs to construct a stronghold.

FUTURE ADVENTURE HOOKS

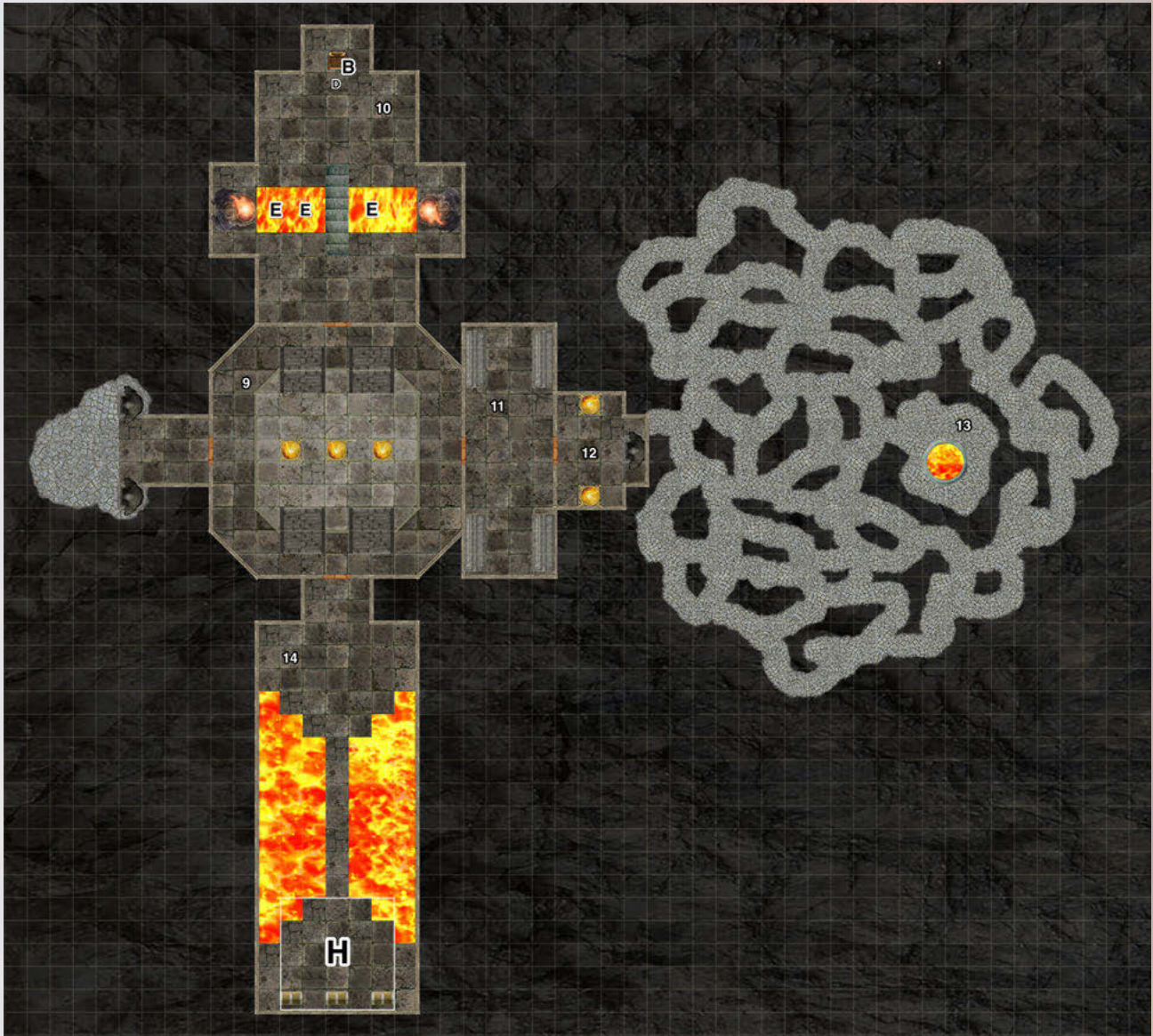
- The *Orb of Dragonkind*, an artifact of incredibly dangerous power, needs to be either **destroyed** or locked away forever.
- The **incursion** deposited other beings or locations into the Material Plane, or it pulled such things into the Elemental Plane of Fire.
- The **Sultan** of the City of Brass, who now knows of the players, requests to meet with them to discuss a matter of deep importance to his political machinations.
- Pasha **Baltazar** comes back to haunt the players or to collect on a promise they made.
- A short time after the players accept their new land and titles from the council, a hostile force threatens to **overrun** the area...

APPENDIX A: MAPS

LOWER HALLS



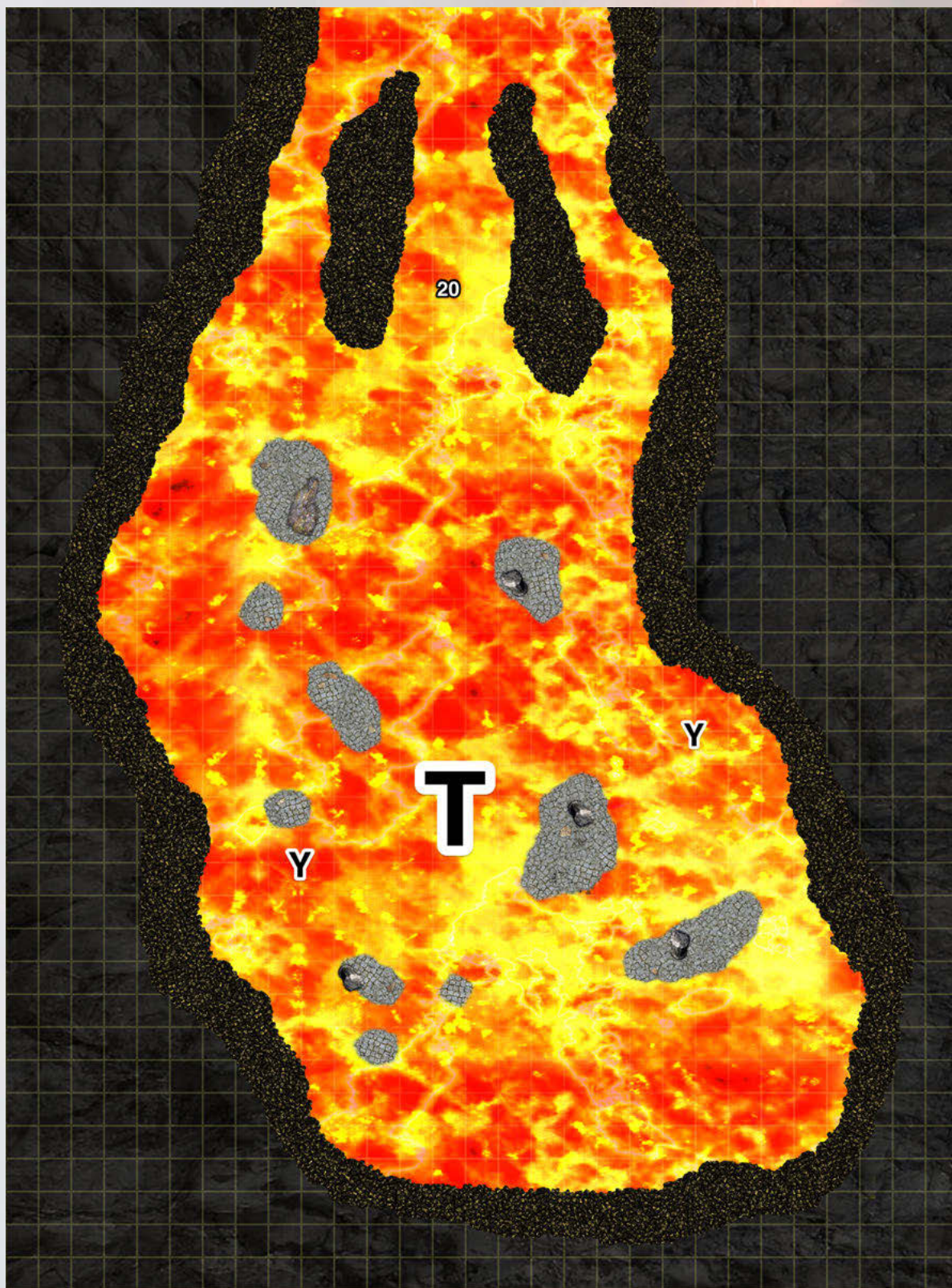
UPPER HALLS



DUNGEON LEVEL



CALDERA



APPENDIX B: NEW MONSTERS

Elementals

Elementals born on the Elemental Plane of Fire can grow larger with time or become twisted and infused with the properties of neighboring Inner Planes.

A Potent Mixture. Ash elementals can be found near the region of the Ash Moon, where burning volcanic storms from the Elemental Plane of Fire mix with howling gales on the border of the Elemental Plane of Air. These elementals are neither pure fire nor air, but rather a violent lashing together of the two primal forces. They appear as a swirling cloud of black debris lit internally with blazing sparks.

Older and Stronger. Fire elementals flourish and grow near the mighty volcanoes of a seismic chain called The Conduit on the Elemental Plane of Fire. These elementals have fed upon rich lava and firestorms over time, becoming more massive and destructive than their lesser brethren.

ASH ELEMENTAL

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)
Speed 0 ft., fly 90 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Auran, Ignan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Ash Form. The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. In addition, the elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks.

Blinding Cloud (Recharge 4-6). Each creature in the elemental's space must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 13 (2d8 + 4) fire damage and is blinded. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the first saving throw is successful, the target takes half damage and is not blinded.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) fire damage.

ELDER FIRE ELEMENTAL

Huge elemental, neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 183 (19d12 + 60)
Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Fire Form. The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) fire damage. In addition, the elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 11 (2d10) fire damage and catches fire; until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 11 (2d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Illumination. The elemental sheds bright light in a 60-foot radius and dim light in an additional 60 feet.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the elemental moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two touch attacks.

Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 11 (2d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Azers of Iskh

The azers of Iskh built their temple-fortress in the volcano many centuries ago after wresting freedom from the efreet and fire giant lords who enslaved their kind. Now a small but thriving azer community, they toil endlessly inside their home to build great works in honor of their god, Sulaimon.

The Forge of Sulaimon. The Iskhans built a glorious forge nestled in the heart of the volcano, and in doing so gained the favor of their god. The forge permits the azers to craft magic weapons of great potency. The Iskhans are pioneers of design and creativity at the forge, even among the already famous crafters of their race.

A Force In The Caldera. The ancient red dragon Talus-Mir called the magma sea of Iskh her home millennia before the azers settled the volcano. She has slumbered in the caldera for eons, hibernating until the time is ripe for her to awaken and bring about a new age of woe and destruction under her cruel rulership.

The Iskhans have protected the volcano in which Talus-Mir resides, unwittingly preventing any outside forces from awakening the dragon. In the current age, the memory of her is lost, except in the most obscure passages of the rarest tomes kept under lock and key...

ISKHAN CHAMPION

Medium elemental (azer), lawful good

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +6
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Ignan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Heated Body. A creature that touches the azer or hits it with a melee attack within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) fire damage.

Heated Weapons. When the azer hits with a metal melee weapon, it deals an extra 7 (2d6) fire damage (included in the attack).

Illumination. The azer sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The azer makes two warhammer attacks.

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

ISKHAN WAR PRIEST

Medium elemental (azer), lawful good

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 142 (19d8 + 57)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +7, Cha +5
Skills Insight +7, Religion +7
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Ignan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Heated Body. A creature that touches the azer or hits it with a melee attack within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) fire damage.

Heated Weapons. When the azer hits with a metal melee weapon, it deals an extra 7 (2d6) fire damage (included in the attack).

Illumination. The azer sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

Spellcasting. The war priest is a 8th-level spell caster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The war priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, mending, sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, guiding bolt, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *aid, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse*

4th level (2 slots): *banishment*

ACTIONS

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Pasha Baltazar of the Ash Moon

Of more obsidian complexion than other efreet, Baltazar's lineage hails from the Ash Moon region. He revels in his nobility, wearing black and gold silks and enchanted jewelry so marvelous that it could only be crafted by the master smiths of the azers. A powerful magus, Baltazar's natural arcane talents lend themselves to warding, turning aside, and rendering powerless.

Baltazar has been secretly expanding his circle of influence, enslaving isolated tribes of azers like the infamous efreet slavers of ages past. His plan is to unseat the noble families who seek to lower his house's standing for its "impure" origins.

Baltazar recently uncovered the long-lost secret of Talus-Mir in the volcano of Iskh, and he now seeks to awaken her. With the hubris only an efreeti slaver could muster, Baltazar believes he can bring Talus-Mir to heel under his rulership and leverage her might in a bid for power in the City of Brass.

The Ash Moon. Where the Elemental Plane of Fire borders the Elemental Plane of Air, hot winds whip volcanic debris into violent storms that can turn the very air into a burning nightscape. The sky is a constantly churning whirlwind that, even at the best of times, obscures the sun into a distant, weak corona referred to as the "ash moon."

Pasha Baltazar is the current patriarch of the House of the Ash Moon, a noble family that originated and grew powerful in its namesake region. Baltazar seeks ways to crush rival houses in the City of Brass who scorn the House of the Ash Moon for its "sullied flame."

Cloak and Scimitar. The dynastic families of the City of Brass constantly scheme and plot against each other for the Sultan's favor or the chance to take one step closer to the throne itself. Even an incremental change in the political web is often the hard-won work of centuries in the glimmering city.

PASHA BALTAZAR

Large elemental (efreeti), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 262 (21d10 + 147)

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

20 (+5) 16 (+3) 24 (+7) 16 (+3) 15 (+2) 20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +8, Wis +7, Cha +10

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Persuasion +10

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Ignan, Auran

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Elemental Demise. If the efreeti dies, its body disintegrates in a flash of fire and puff of smoke, leaving behind only equipment the efreeti was wearing or carrying.

Innate Spellcasting. Baltazar's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic, disguise self, sending*

3/day: *counterspell, confusion, dispel magic, dominate person, enlarge/reduce, tongues*

1/day each: *banishment, conjure elemental* (ash elemental only), *gaseous form, greater invisibility, major image, plane shift, wall of fire*

Wish. Baltazar may cast *wish* once a decade for a mortal.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Baltazar makes three Vorpal Scimitar attacks or uses Hurl Flame three times.

Vorpal Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage. If Baltazar rolls a 20 on his attack roll, he beheads the target.

Hurl Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (5d6) fire damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Baltazar can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Baltazar regains any spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Attack. Baltazar makes one Vorpal Scimitar attack or uses Hurl Flame.

Call The Ash Winds (Costs 2 Actions). A vortex of swirling ash and obsidian shards surrounds Baltazar. Each creature within 10 feet of Baltazar must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the creature's next turn.

Obsidian Eye (Costs 2 Actions). Baltazar casts *dominate person* or *confusion*.

Swarm of Gorgons

Many centuries ago, the Iskhan azers crafted a mighty herd of gorgons on the Forge of Sulaimon to protect the caverns inside the twisting belly of the volcano. These gorgons thunder tirelessly through the tunnels of Iskh, grinding to dust all but the azers who dare trespass in their stomping grounds.

SWARM OF GORGONS

Gargantuan swarm of Large monstrosities, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 380 (40d10 + 160)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages —

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Large gorgon. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Trampling Charge. If the swarm of gorgons moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the swarm of gorgons can make one attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm of gorgons makes two gore attacks and two hooves attacks.

Gore. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. Hit: 31 (4d12 + 5) piercing damage or 18 (2d12 + 5) piercing if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

Hooves. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. Hit: 27 (4d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage or 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

Petrifying Breath (Recharge 5-6). The swarm of gorgons exhales petrifying gas in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a target begins to turn to stone and is restrained. The restrained target must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends on the target. On a failure, the target is petrified until freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.



APPENDIX C: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

BELT OF AZERKIND

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this belt, you gain the following benefits:

- Your Constitution score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to interact with azers.

In addition, while attuned to this belt, you have a 50 percent chance each day at dawn of growing a full fire beard, or your beard turns into a fire beard if you already have one.

If you aren't an azer, you get the following additional benefits while wearing the belt:

- You have resistance to fire damage.
- You can speak, read, and write Ignan.

RING OF ALARUM

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, you can cast the *alarm* spell at will.



CROWN OF ISKH

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

The *Crown of Iskh* is the royal corona worn by the King of Iskh. Fashioned to give the wearer a draconic likeness, its ruby-studded prongs reach past the brow and down the jaw.

The first Iskhan kings forged the crown to help keep the violence of Iskh — and the dragon that lives inside it — in check. Its true purpose has been lost to the ages, but its ability to grant dominion over the volcano and those inside it remains.

Calm the Fury. If the volcano Iskh is erupting and you are on the same plane, you may force the volcano to return to a dormant state for eight hours. Once this ability is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Bend the Knee. You may cast *dominate monster* (save DC 17). Once this ability is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

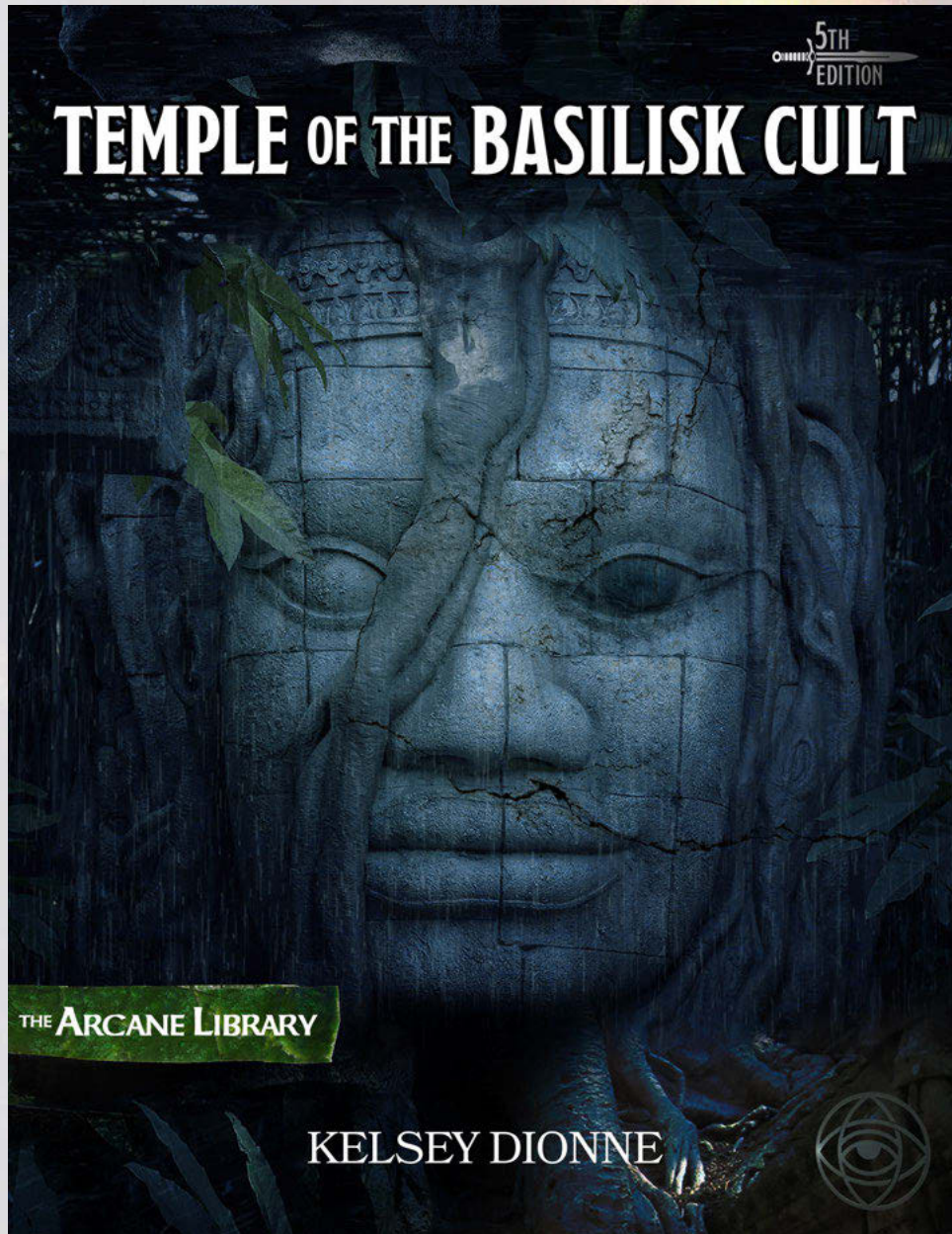
APPENDIX D: HANDOUTS

MAZE



THE ARCANES LIBRARY

If you **join The Arcane Library**, you'll get a FREE copy of *Temple of the Basilisk Cult*, a first-level adventure set in the jungle!



Acknowledgements

Special thanks to John from www.5thsrd.org for permission to link to his site. Thank you to www.pyromancers.com for the wonderful online mapmaking software. Very many thanks to **The Angry GM** for wisdom, especially about pacing and structure. My most heartfelt gratitude to **Jessee Egan** for phenomenal art direction and design.

Thank you so much to my intrepid playtesters, **Lauren Jones**, **Patrick Felix**, and **Andrew Huemmer**. Their characters were definitely harmed in the making of this adventure.

Finally, my deep appreciation to the incredible cast of **Lauren Bilanko**, **Liza Cortright**, **Marcy Harris**, **Joy Hill**, and **Samantha Cooper** for playing a live adaptation of this adventure at **Twenty Sided Store** for the **Extra Life** foundation.

Credits

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