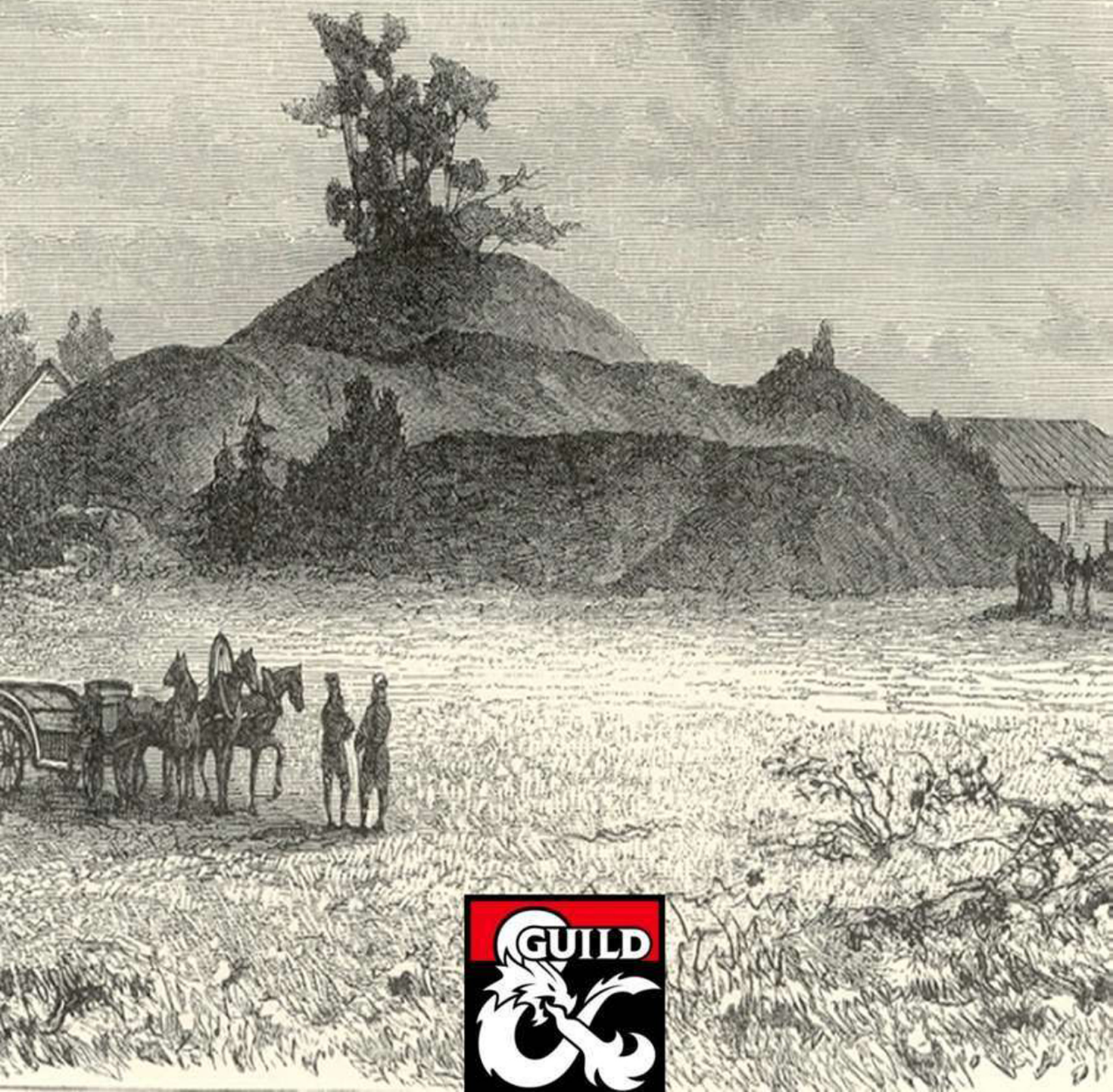


TOMB OF THE IRON KINGS

An Adventure for 3-5 1st-Level Characters



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Introduction: Millennia ago, the Iron Kings ruled the lands from the mountains to the sea, uniting the races of dwarves, elves, and men in common cause. The Iron Kings are gone now, broken roads and crumbling ruins all that remain of their once great civilization.

A "single session" mini-adventure for 3-5 players

BY PAUL STE. MARIE
VERSION 2.0



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THE TOMB OF THE IRON KING

*Rest your shields, lean on stones,
listen and always remember, a king is
laid to rest here this day.*

—Dwarven Burial Prayer

Getting Started

The tomb is buried beneath a large circular mound located in any suitably remote area on the edge of civilization, such as a swamp or overgrown forest.

Recommended Party

The minimum recommended party for this adventure is one cleric or paladin, a fighter, and a rogue.

Hooks

The encounter begins at the entrance of the tomb. Here are some *hooks* to get the characters there.

Chance Encounter: While traveling, the characters are set upon by a terrible storm that forces them to seek shelter within a cleft in the rocks of a large hill a short distance from the road. Sheltering beneath the rocks, the characters soon discover the tomb's entrance at the back of the cleft.

Alternatively, the characters come upon the mound while hunting. An examination of the mound soon reveals a cleft in the rocks, between two large megalithic stones - the entrance to the tomb.

Tomb Raiders: One of the characters has discovered a map showing the layout of a burial mound. Notes scrawled upon the map hint of dangers and treasures to be found.

After several days of research, the character is convinced the map is of an infamous nearby burial mound widely feared and avoided by the commonfolk. Gathering a group of friends, the character heads off to explore the mound.

Give the players the map handout.

The Mound

The mound rises from the surrounding terrain, a gradual slope that climbs to a large circular plateau. On the western side of the mound, two large megalithic stones lean against one another, their tops barely visible above the edge of the plateau.

The mound's slope is easy to ascend, gnarled roots and clumps of grass providing numerous hand and footholds. The ground atop the mound is very stable, however, see "deadfall" below.

Cleft: The two leaning stones form a natural cave, the floor of which is a third stone, partially buried in the ground. Each of the stones is covered with patches of old moss.

Two narrow gaps at the back of the cleft are concealed by brush. An examination of the brush reveals that it was cut and intentionally placed over the gaps.

Runes: A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigate) check reveals ancient runes carved into the surface of the stones. Anyone that reads Draconic can decipher the runes with a DC 20 Intelligence check. The runes are a warning not to disturb the resting place of Bjorn the Fell-Handed, first of the Iron Kings.

Deadfall: Atop the mound, near the tops of the stones, there is a 10% chance of the ground giving way, dropping characters into the cleft below unless they make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. Characters who fail their saving throw each fall 10 feet and suffer 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall.

The Tomb

The tomb formed from fieldstones mortared together with wattle and daub and reinforced with magic. The floor is covered with flagstones, many cracked and broken, and debris lies scattered throughout the tomb, partially blocking access to some areas.

Common Features

Unless noted otherwise, all the areas of the tomb share the following features:

Ceiling: The ceilings are 15-feet high.

Doors: The doors are stone, made from thick granite slabs that slide into the wall.

Light: The tomb is illuminated with a dim green light emanating from torches placed throughout. Detect magic cast on the torches reveals a faint evocation aura.

The torches do not radiate heat, cannot set objects on fire, and, if removed from the wall, will continue to function normally. However, if removed from the tomb, the torches will burn out after one hour.

Rubble: The tomb's floor is littered with bits of mortar, stone, and other debris. For the most part, this rubble offers no hindrance; however, there are larger piles (indicated on the map) which do obstruct movement or block line of sight.

Ventilation: The tomb is well-ventilated, a constant supply of fresh air from the outside through the entrance and into the gallery and the passage leading to Area 3.

1. Entry

Two narrow gaps at the back of the cleft open into a 15-foot wide corridor dimly lit by a flickering green light emanating from torches along each wall. The corridor extends 30 feet before opening into a larger chamber. Roughly 25 feet from the entrance, a second, smaller corridor branches off to the right.

The cleft, and the openings at its rear, were formed when the megalithic arch framing the entrance collapsed, dislodging the large boulder that now divides the tomb's entrance. Each opening is wide enough for a Medium size creature to pass through.

Treasure: Just inside the entry are the skeletal remains of an adventurer, its clothing long since rotted away. Hidden among the remains is an ivory scroll case (2gp).

If the *Chance Encounter* hook was used, the scroll case will contain a map of the tomb (give the players the handout of the map). Otherwise, the case will be empty.

2. Gallery

The entry corridor opens into a great hall 25 feet wide and extending back 55 feet. Three crumbling pillars support a high vaulted ceiling some 25 feet high.

Eight niches are evenly spaced along the walls: three filled with rubble and five that each hold a skeleton clad in rusting chain armor and holding a spear and shield. Rotting tapestries hang between the niches, whatever heraldry or scenes they once depicted faded away long ago.

The last 10 feet of floor rises in three broad steps to a dais stretching across the entire width of the hall. Two huge stone skulls stand atop pedestals in the rear corners of the dais. The eyes of the statues glow faintly with a reddish-green light.

This large hall was used for performing last rites over the dead before laying their bodies to rest in the crypt (area 5).

Ceiling: 25 feet.

Creatures: There are five **skeletons** in the niches along the walls (marked on the map). The skeletons wear armor scraps and carry shields (AC 15). They are armed with spears. The skeletons only animate and attack if one of the characters removes the gem the skull statue's eye socket (see below). Each skeleton starts with 13 hit points.

Door: One of the niches is a passage leading to a stone door that opens into the crypts (area 5). The door is flat, except for a large raised disk in its center that bears a strange rune. The door is locked and trapped.

The disk is a magical locking mechanism that disengages the lock and the trap when the passphrase "iron fathers" is spoken. A DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check disables the lock but doesn't disable the trap.

The **trap** (CR 1/2, 100 XP) is a weakened *glyph of warding* that deals 2d6 damage (save for none). A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigate) check reveals the trap. The trap can only be disarmed by saying the passphrase. If the trap is triggered, it automatically resets, the glyph of warding attacking the next creature to touch it without uttering the passphrase.

Casting *detect magic* on the door reveals an abjuration aura. Casting *dispel magic* on the door destroys the trap.

When the door is closed, the lock and trap automatically reset (even if they have been successfully disabled).

Statues: The skull statues represent the god of death. Carved from a single granite block, they are three times larger than a human skull and weigh approximately 2,600 pounds each. The pedestals upon which they stand, also made from granite, are 2 feet in diameter and 3 feet tall, each weighing 1,700 pounds.

Treasure: Each of the statues' "eyes" is a **red garnet** (100gp). The gems can easily be removed from their sockets with the tip of a dagger or some other similarly sharp object. However, if any of the gems are removed, the **skeletons** (see above) animate and attack. When checking for *surprise* on the first turn, treat each skeleton as if it were *hidden*.

The gems are nonmagical. The light described as emanating from them being nothing more than the reflection of the green torchlight off the facets of the gems.

3. Embalming Chamber

This 15-foot by 20-foot chamber is dominated by a large rectangular stone table in the center of the room. The tabletop is covered in large stains which seem darkest near a narrow groove etched along the tabletop's edge. The table is tilted at a slight angle.

Broken pottery lay scattered about the room, much of it gathered into an oblong mound covered with scraps of cloth and straw. Near the debris, a flagstone has been pried from the floor and a crude fireplace gouged from the earth below.

In an alcove set into the far wall, a door leads to another chamber.

This chamber was used for preparing bodies for burial.

Creatures: An old hermit (use the stats for a **commoner**) lives here with his pet **giant rat**. Both are *hiding* when the characters enter the room (their locations are marked on the map). They will not attack, attempting to remain hidden until the characters leave.

If attacked, the hermit fights with a bone club. He starts with 4 hit points, the giant rat with 7. If the hermit suffers any damage, he immediately surrenders, begging the characters for mercy. In exchange for his life, the hermit offers to tell the characters what he knows about the tomb, including the passphrase for the magical lock and trap protecting the door to the crypts (area 5) as well as the specter that haunts that area.

If asked to accompany the characters, the hermit declines. He is far too terrified of the specter to risk angering it by venturing deeper into the tomb.

Scribblings: Fortunately, if the characters kill the hermit, much of the information he gathered about the tomb has been scratched into the walls surrounding his "bed." Although hard to see in the dim light, a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigate) check reveals the scribblings. The scribblings, written in a mixture of

Common and Draconic, require no skill or ability check to read.

Treasure: The hermit has a few mundane personal items (5gp).

4. Storeroom

This small chamber is littered with debris, the remains of two wooden shelves, their contents - various embalming oils and herbs - scattered among broken tools and the fragments of canopic jars.

This small chamber was used as a storeroom for tools used for maintaining the tomb and preparing bodies for burial.

Treasure: Scattered among the debris is a **Potion of Healing** - dropped here long ago by another adventurer while exploring the tomb.

5. Crypts

The door slides inward on wailing hinges, the smell of decay momentarily overwhelming your senses. Recovering quickly from a fit of retching, you see a wall of darkness before you. The air is incredibly cold, your exhaled breath fogging your vision.

Once the characters pass through the door and establish a light source (either magical or darkvision), read the following:

A narrow corridor, extending back some 60 feet from the entry, stands before you. Five alcoves line each wall, most likely containing the belongings and the remains of those entombed within them.

Moldering tapestries, their scenes long faded away, hang from the walls.

At the far end of the corridor stands a door.

Burial Vaults: The burial vaults house the remains of Bjorn the Fell-Handed's ten bodyguards, each buried in a plain stone sarcophagus.

Ceiling: 20 feet.

Creatures: The crypt (and the vault beyond) is haunted by a **specter**, the spirit of Bjorn the Fell-handed, the first Iron King. The specter is a cunning opponent, remaining *hidden* within its crypt (marked on the map) until one of the characters draws near, at which point it leaps out to attack. The specter begins with 22 hit points.

In addition to its normal abilities, the specter can, as an action, raise the remains of a guard as a **skeleton**. The specter can do this action 10 times. The skeletons wear armor scraps and carry a shield (AC 15). They are armed with longswords and each begins with 13 hit points. The skeletons will begin attacking on the turn after they are raised. If the specter is slain, the skeletons continue to fight on until they too are destroyed.

The specter is cursed to haunt the tomb forever, reforming in 2d6 days if slain. Only by destroying its remains (see Area 6), can the specter be permanently destroyed.

Door: This heavy stone door leads to the Vault of the Iron King (Area 6). The door is not locked, although it is jammed, requiring a combined strength of 20 to force open. Only two characters can push the door at the same time.

Runes chronicling the life and deeds of Bjorn the Fell-Handed have been inscribed into the stone. Anyone that can read Draconic can read the inscription.

Light: The crypt is shrouded in an unnatural darkness - counts as *heavily obscured* - that drains away light. Nonmagical light sources are extinguished immediately and magical light sources only cast dim light. Permanent magical light sources left within the darkness will be drained of all magical energy in an hour.

Some Dramatic Flare

To add dramatic flair, I described the specter's movement as it bursting apart into black shards which reformed seconds later where ever the specter had moved to.

6. Vault of the Iron King

Within, an ornate sarcophagus rests in the center of a small chamber. Broken urns line the walls, silver and copper coins and other finery strewn among the shards of pottery

This sarcophagus houses the mummified remains of Bjorn the Fell-Handed.

Ceiling: 20 feet.

Creatures: If the specter is slain, it reforms here. The specter can only be fully destroyed by burning its remains - which are fully consumed at the end of the next turn after being set ablaze - or by casting a *bleed* spell upon them.

The specter fights furiously to prevent its remains being destroyed, focusing all its attacks upon anyone attacking (or within 5 ft. of) its sarcophagus.

Light: The vault is shrouded in the same supernatural darkness as the Crypt (Area 5).

Treasure: The vault houses several broken canopic jars as well as several personal items that once belonged to Bjorn. Although age has deteriorated many of the items, a few choice pieces remain: four moonstones and one bloodstone (each gem worth 50gp), an ornate breastplate (200gp), a pair of ivory dice (25gp), a gold signet ring bearing a symbol of a griffon (50gp), two brass goblets (each worth 25gp), and a **masterwork tool kit**.

In addition, scattered among the broken urns are 800cp, 450sp, and 50gp.

Appendix: Magic Items

Masterwork Tool Kit

Tool Kit (any but not vehicles), Uncommon

Although not truly magical, a masterwork tool allows you to double your proficiency bonus when making an ability check using it.

Credits

Inspired by an original concept "Tomb of the Child Kings" by Dyson Logos.

Map Cartography:

"Tomb of the Child Kings" © Dyson Logos, used with permission.

Artwork:

Libris Mortis - Spider (Guild Creators Resource Pack) © Wizards of the Coast, used with permission

Playtesting:

NCSU Encore Program D&D Clubs (Coventry, Newport City, Troy)

The Old Dawgs (Byron Ward, Chad Casey, Craig Ste. Marie, and Mike Davis)



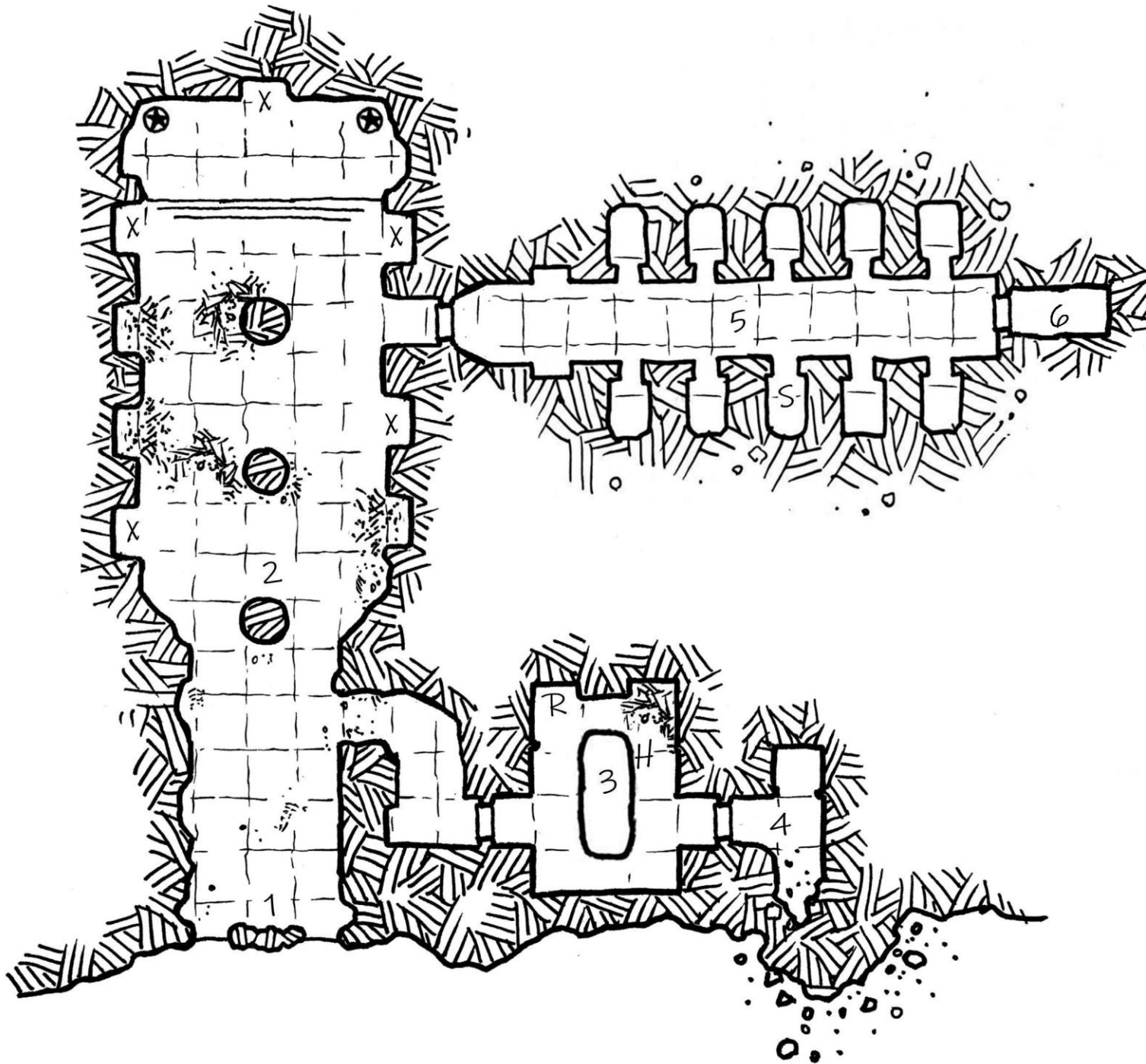
Changelog

Version 2.0

- Changed module title.
- Added a description of the mound exterior,
- Modified the skull statues in the Gallery (Area 2).
- Added missing CR and XP notation for the trap in the Gallery (Area 2).
- Minor modifications to the Crypts (Area 5).
- Added a new area (Vault of the Iron King - Area 6).
- Increased the number of skeletons the specter can raise by one.

Tomb of the Iron King

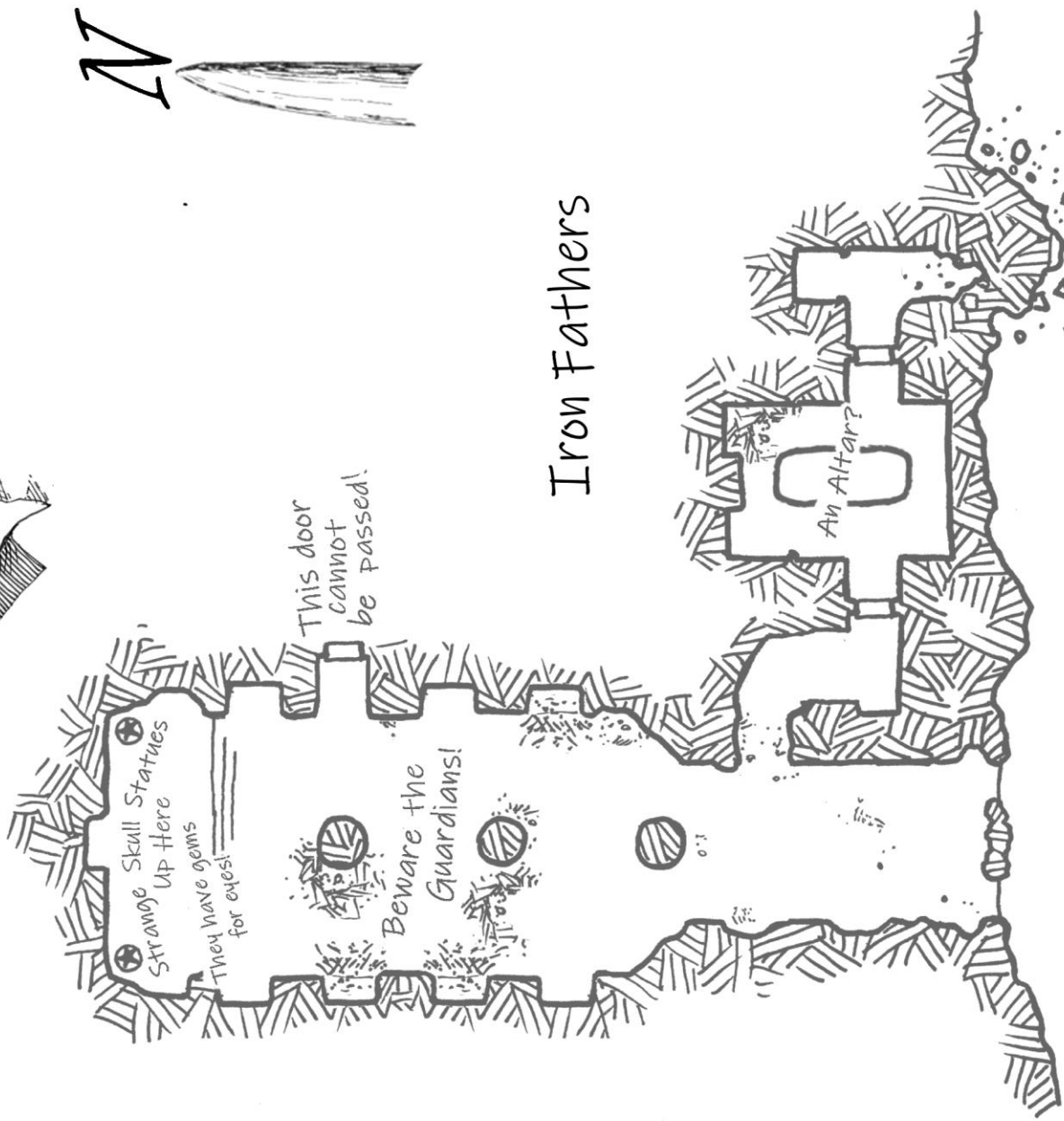
1 square = 5 feet



- ⊗ = Statue
- H = Hermit
- R = Giant Rat
- S = Specter
- X = Skeleton



Iron Fathers



Strange Skull Statues
Up here

They have gems
for eyes!

This door
cannot
be passed!

Beware the
Guardians!

An Altar?

Magic
Lights
The Way!

Cartography (C) Dyson Logos