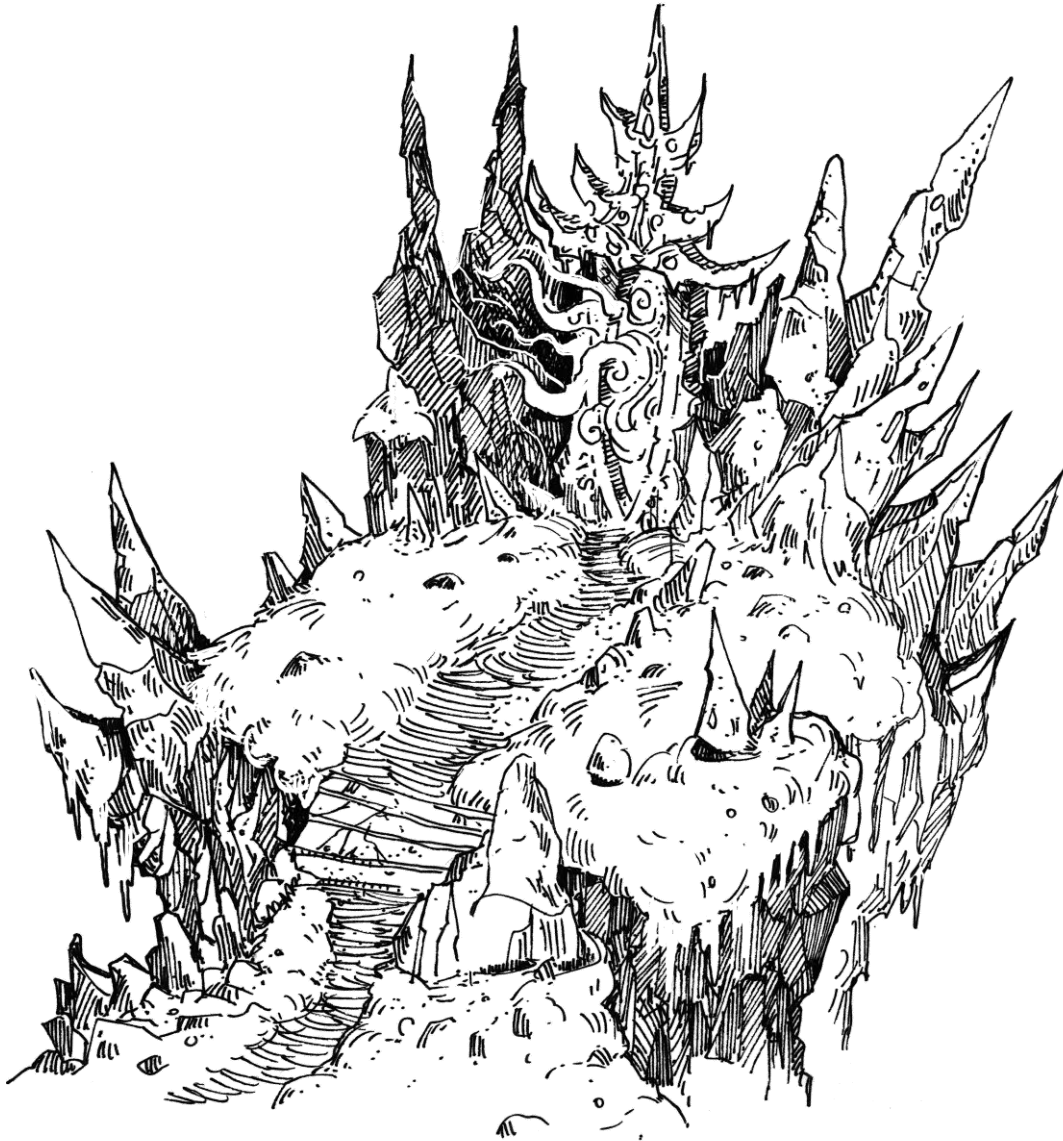




# ARK OF PHOBOS



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# Ark of Phobos

## *Rumours & Hooks:*

A family of wyverns have made their nest high in the *Ironhull Mountains*. It is breeding season, and *Ebon Whitmor*, an exotic wildlife dealer in *Port Argos*, is offering a handsome bounty for wyvern eggs.

A rare text from the *Lost Ages* refers to the *Ark of Phobos*, a once in 433 year planetary alignment that triggers a portal in the *Ironhull* ranges. The celestial conjunction is due to occur in the next week/month/season/year. It is said that the portal leads to the greatest prize known to man.

*Warning:* This location contains powerful monsters. If appropriate, remind players about party retreats (LFG p.45), rescues (LFG p.48) and hirelings (LFG p.35).

The *Ark of Phobos* is a portal hidden high atop a group of rock pillars in the *Ironhull* ranges. The path to the pillars is steep, challenging even for expert climbers, and high enough that clouds sometimes form below.

The purpose of the portal is left to the GM to determine. Perhaps it spawns demons, or aliens, or humans snatched from the midlands by strange masters before history began being recorded. Or perhaps the portal is a one way gate to another dimension, galaxy, or time.

In the absence of other ideas, the *Ark* leads to an alien maze, where gladiators from different worlds battle for survival and glory, all for the entertainment of some strange elder being or civilization.

Whatever the portal's purpose, the original guardians are long departed. The portal and bridges shown on the map on p.3 are preserved through ancient wards (see Area 3), though in some places the magic is beginning to weaken.

Over the centuries various creatures have called the pillars home, but currently they are the nesting ground for a flock of 2d4+1 wyverns.

## *Wyvern*

Armor Class: 17

Hit Dice: 13

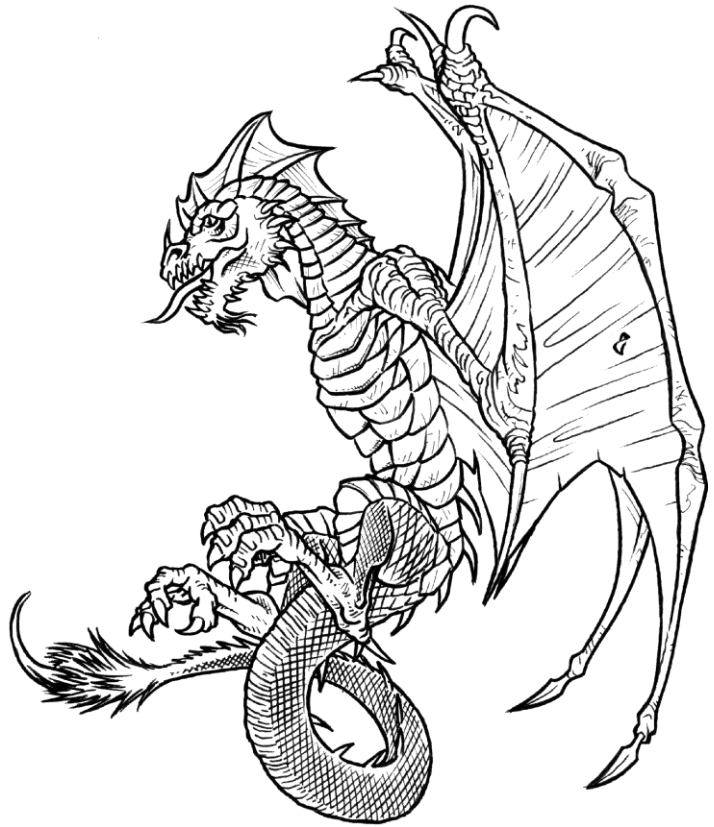
Attacks: Bite (2d8) and Sting (1d6+2 and poison)

Nat 19: the target is grabbed and may be carried away.

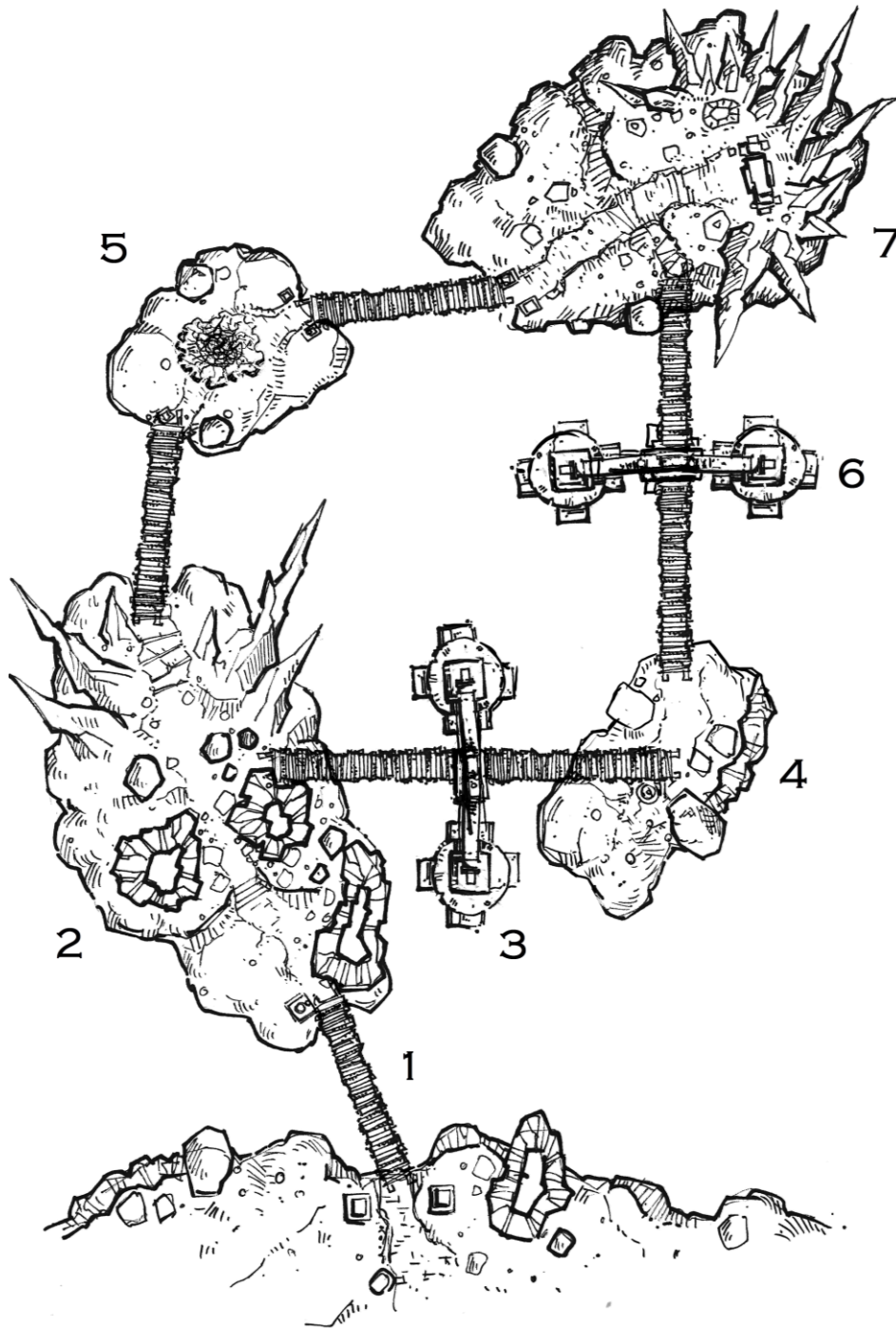
S:22 D:16 C:20 I:3 P: 15 W:14 Ch:7

*Luck:* 13

Move: 90 ft



Wyverns *Cause Injuries* on critical hits and have a 10 ft reach. A wyvern's stinger carries a potent poison causing 1d4 Str loss (*Luck* (Con) save for half). An adventurer has a 20% chance of harvesting 1d4 doses of poison from a dead wyvern.



### Area 1 - Entry Bridge

This 30 ft by 5 ft wooden bridge with guide ropes swings in the wind, and appears to be in excellent condition. The drop to the mountains below is  $2d100+50$  ft (as it is for all the pillar locations).

Two 6 ft tall square columns stand to either side of the bridge, carved out of the local slate and

heavily weathered. Set into them are the words of a dead language. An adventurer familiar with *Old Ramoran* might deduce the meaning of the script with an Int (General Knowledge) check at disadvantage: *Many aspirants enter, one aspirant leaves.*

A party crossing the bridge has a 50% chance of drawing the attention of the wyverns in Area 5, or

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on patrol in the skies high above. This chance increases to 75% or more if any of the party are wearing shiny, heavy armour such as platemail. An adventurer who scans the skies or listens for danger might hear (Perc (Detection) check) a strange rasping and flapping noise from Area 5, or notice what appear to be oddly shaped birds (with tails and long necks!) wheeling overhead.

If the party is spotted, the overhead wyverns will watch the party for a short time, hoping they might split up before attacking. The wyverns in Area 5 will immediately launch into the air with a screeching roar, rising up over Area 2 before swooping down to attack. The curious reptiles target shiny metal warriors before others where possible. If they get the chance they will fly up into the air with such characters before dropping them onto the rocks to crack open their hard shells. Note aerial combatants gain special advantages (LFG p.82).

### Area 2 – Western Junction

This 70 ft by 40 ft landing has a number of small rocky outcroppings to hide behind, and a collection of 30 ft sharp spires on the northern side. Wooden bridges with guide ropes are located at the northern, eastern and southern ends.

If this area is searched, there is a 50% chance of finding the crumbling remains of half a skeleton with 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136).

### Area 3 – Southern Towers

These twin towers are 15 ft wide and of variable height (2d100+50 ft, equal to the drop), carved from slate. They are studded with embrasure arrow slits on each facing. The towers are connected to the bridge by a covered platform, which leads to the broken remains of a wooden door (the only access).

The primary purpose of the towers is to act as an anchor for the magic wards maintaining the site, and each tower has a 1d6 unique runes stamped upon the interior for this purpose. The wards preserve the bridges and portal, but not the towers themselves. If the runes are dispelled, the ward ends, exposing the bridges and portal to ordinary damage and deterioration.

The tower interiors are a series of small rooms linked by a circular staircase, dimly lit by sunlight filtering through the arrow slits. The order of monks that originally controlled the site died long ago, and various denizens have moved in and out since. Most of the original furniture and goods have rotted or otherwise been destroyed, but a thorough search of a tower has a 50% chance of generating 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136).

If the party explores a tower interior, roll 1d6:

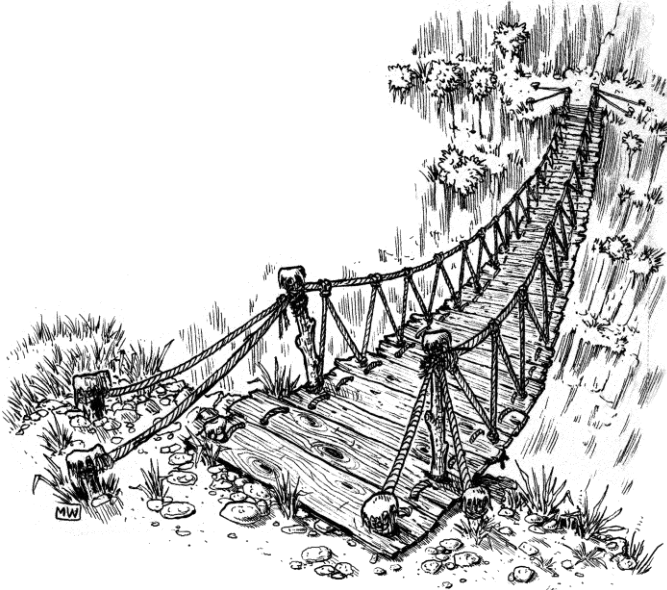
- (1) 2d6 pods of *Green Slime* (LFG p.112) have formed in the rafters and dark corners of this tower, eager to spread dark emerald pustulence to new flesh.
- (2) A necromancer by the name of *Shuddulc* occupied this tower for a time, conducting blasphemous experiments far from prying eyes. 3d10 beastmen zombies (LFG p.131) remain, standing sentry over his old haunt. If the undead are defeated, 1d4 scrolls (LFG p.152) can be found hidden behind the remains of a rotten bookcase (Shuddulc left in a hurry, unable to retrieve them).
- (3) One floor of this tower is so deteriorated (care of a black pudding) that it falls apart if more than one person walks on it. A cursory inspection of the flooring reveals the dangerous level of rot and disrepair. If the floor drops, a *Luck* (Dex) save is required to avoid falling and being covered in rubble (6d6 damage).
- (4) A *Phase Spider* (LFG p.125) has made a home here, scavenging food from the wyverns and snatching random beastmen or barbarians. If the spider detects the party first, it will phase away, stalking the humans from another dimension before attacking at an opportune moment.
- (5) A *Black Pudding* (LFG p.101) lairs at the basement of this tower, which extends below ground, free from the sunlight. It emerges at night to feed on local creatures. Signs of the monster's passing are evident; the entry door and entire



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floor sections have been completely dissolved. If things go badly, it flees through an arrow slit.

- (6) A *Gelatinous Cube* (LFG p.108) is exploring this tower, looking for food. If it detects the party first, it takes up a position in one of the darker stairwells, hoping to surprise a character as they round the bend.



#### Area 4 - Eastern Junction

This 35 ft by 20 ft landing is mostly bare, although there are a few large boulders to hide behind. Wooden bridges with guide ropes are located at the western and northern ends.

The western bridge is fine, but the magic preserving the northern bridge has begun to falter. Anyone inspecting the bridge notices some of the planks are rotten, and the guide ropes are frayed on the far side. For each person crossing this bridge at the same time, there is a cumulative 20% chance it snaps. Falling characters require a *Luck* (Dex) save to grab onto the bridge or leap to safety. Those that hold onto the bridge are swung hard into the mountain side, causing 2d4 damage, and require a *Luck* (Con) save to maintain their grip.

#### Area 5 - Wyvern Nest

In the centre of this 30 ft by 20 ft landing is 15 ft wyvern nest, cluttered with branches, bones, and

crushed rock. Wooden bridges with guide ropes are located at the southern and eastern ends.

At least 1 wyvern is always present here, keeping watch over 1d3 eggs in the nest. Any potential meals are attacked on sight. Threatening the egg may or may not keep the wyverns at bay, assuming the message can be conveyed in a way they understand (a Cha (Wilderness Lore) check is required).

Various animal and humanoid bones are scattered here, and there is a 30% chance of 1 x Valuables (LFG p.147) tucked away in a rotting pouch. If the wyvern eggs are secured, they would fetch at least 1,000 gp each (possibly much more for the right buyer).

#### Area 6 - Eastern Towers

These towers are the same as Area 3. At the bottom of one tower is a 6 ft x 4 ft, indestructible adamantite tablet, set into the wall and inscribed with hundreds of names (all of which are completely foreign, from cultures beyond this world). The tablet is only half full, and records those gladiators who prevailed in the portal maze since the creation of this Ark. If the PCs enter the portal, defeat the maze, and win their freedom, their names will be the first humans ever inscribed on the *Lexicon of Phobos*.

#### Area 7 - Portal

This 45 ft by 35ft landing has a collection of 30 ft sharp spires on the eastern side. Wooden bridges with guide ropes are located at the southern and western ends.

The obvious centrepiece is an obsidian archway topped with nasty looking spikes; the magic portal known as the Ark of Phobos.

If the adventurers arrive during the stellar conjunction, the portal is active, displaying a mirrored surface. Any adventurer that allows their reflection to be cast in the mirror is targeted by the (one way) portal, which lashes out with clutching tendrils of stardust and inky space. A *Luck* (Dex) save at disadvantage is required to avoid being dragged through the gate to wherever it leads.

If the adventurers arrive at a time proximate to the conjunction (the precise time frame is left to the GM to determine), the portal is waking, but functions unpredictably. At this time, the archway appears mundane but for the occasional flicker of a mirror like sheen. The portal is mostly harmless, however if a *Dark & Dangerous Magic* effect occurs in the vicinity, instead of rolling on the usual DDM table, roll 1d4 below:

- (1) An enraged random<sup>1</sup> Cthulhu-like or Demonic monster controlled by the GM appears within close range (1d4 x 5 ft). It vanishes after 1d4 minutes.
- (2) 1d3 grasping stardust tentacles burst from the portal for 1d4 rounds, each seeking to drag adventurers into the gate.
- (3) All adventurers in the area must make a *Luck* (Will) save at -2 or suffer a severe madness (*"I am the chosen one, the guardian of the portal. None shall pass as long as I draw breath!"*)

- (4) The portal makes a hideous groaning noise before imploding, vanishing in the wink of an eye. Any adventurers in the vicinity must make a *Luck* (Will) save or be sucked into the implosion, their atoms irrevocably scattered across space and time. The crater that remains begins to crack, then the whole pillar crumbles apart in 2d4 rounds.

If the adventurers arrive at another time, the portal is completely dormant. Unless the wards have been dispelled (see Area 3), the gate cannot be damaged and is not subject to deterioration. There is no treasure in this location.

### Aftermath

The Ark of Phobos has existed largely undisturbed for centuries. If the party enters the portal, the GM decides where it takes them and the adventures that follow. Alternatively, if the GM decides the portal spews forth monsters of some kind, there might be larger ramifications for the local region. If the wards inside the interior of the four towers are dispelled, or the towers themselves destroyed, the Ark becomes susceptible to damage. In that case, if the party doesn't destroy the portal, the wyverns certainly will (by design or accident).



<sup>1</sup> Roll 1d4; 1 = *Infernal Minotaur*; 2 = *Gibbering Terror*; 3 = *Grey Ooze*, 4 = *Invisible Stalker*.

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