

# THE SAVAGE CAVES



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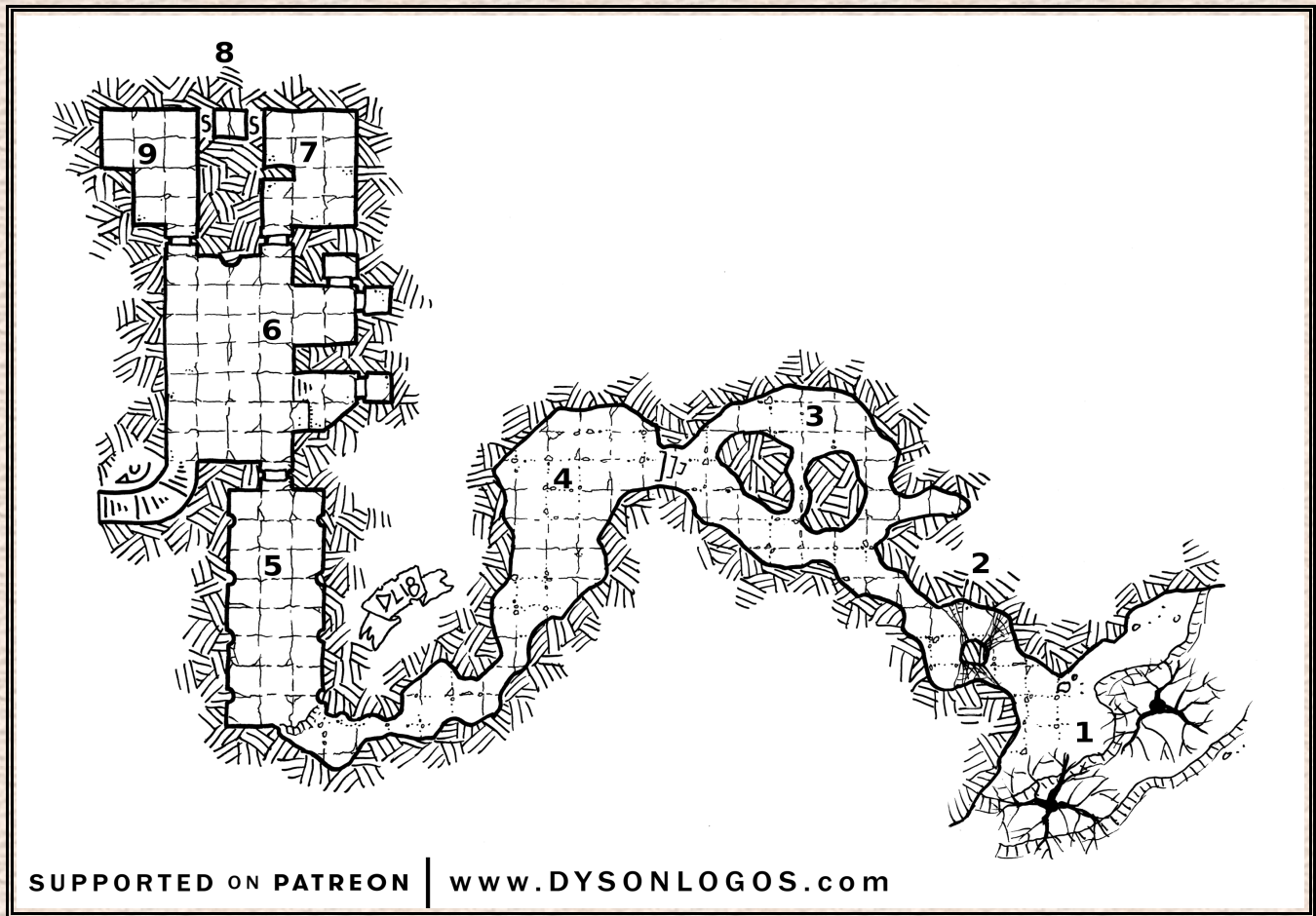
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The Saurguard were a group of draconic warriors, tasked with scouting and holding the Wilderness at bay. Their headquarters and group temple was referred to as The Haunt, a stout manor-house underlain by a cave system where the warriors held their rites, meditated, and secreted away their most treasured relics.

However, rumors of treasonous dealings between the Saurguard and the Wilderness reached the Ring Forts, and an uprising rose against the formerly incorruptible guards. It was never clear if the rumors were based on truth or false leads, but tension in the realm was high with signs of motion within the Wilderness, and the now-discredited Guard was killed or scattered, their manor burned and razed to the ground.

The ruins of the Haunt have remained abandoned, visited by only a few curious or hardy souls. Final condemnation or exoneration of the Saurguard has never been determined. Likewise, although the manor ruins and underlying chapel were looted, several artifacts and relics of the Saurguard were never found.



**1) Cavern Entrance:** The cavern is framed by two dead oaks, sacred to the Saurguard. Although they were not burned by the fire that destroyed the manor-house, the trees died soon after the razing, as if poisoned by the destruction of the temple-residence.

**2) Webbed Passageway:** Thirty feet into the cavern is home to three **giant black widow spiders** (one adult: HD 3; AC 6[13]; Atk bite (1d6+poison); Move 6 (In web 12); Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; Special: Venom. + two adolescents: HD 2; AC 6[13]; Atk bite (1d6+poison, save as +2); Move 6 (In web 12); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/600; Special: Venom.). Part of the web is fresh, with evidence of recent burning. Wrapped in the webs are several desiccated bat corpses, and those of two doomed adventurers: an elf (93 gp, two garnets (100 gp ea), scrolls of *levitate*, *phantasmal force*), and a warrior (plate mail, 200 gp). Buried among the detritus below the webs is a *+1 mace*. In the elf's belt pouch are several scraps of paper, one of which has scrawled "*Say, 'prius dracones'.*"

**3) Outer Cavern:** The cavern bisects and twists past the entrance. The floor is sandy, the air musty. Past the cavern is a set of rough stone steps with a lightning bolt cut into the lowest step. If individuals crossing the steps do not recite "*prius dracones*" they will receive an electric shock (1d8 damage).

**4) Inner Cavern:** Beyond the steps opens a second cavern. A few remaining broken items are scattered here. Fragments of armor and broken weapons are trampled into the sand. There is nothing of value here, most everything has been well picked over.

**5) Antechamber:** The cavern opens to the first of several finished rooms - the entry into the chapel complex of the Saurguard. False columns carved from the bedrock line the walls. Hanging between the columns or broken and trampled on the floor are paintings recording the Guard's service to the Kingdom in keeping the Wilderness at bay. Of note is a painting recording the Guard joining with King Samyn two generations ago, depicting the Guard captain and king shaking hands.

On the ceiling are three starving **vampire bats** (HD1-1; AC 8[11]; Atk bite (2d6); Move 4 (Fly 18); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; Special: Sucks blood.), survivors of the spiders' predations. The bats are desperate and will attack indiscriminately.

**6) Chapel:** This a rectangular room has two alcoves built into the east wall. The room was the main chapel of the Guard, used for their particular religious worship and rites. A defaced bas-relief of the God-Dragon is mounted on the north wall between two doors. A set of stairs climbs from the southeast corner of the room to the location of the former manor-house. The stairs have been blocked by debris. It is possible that investigators may find the stairs during surface searches, requiring 1d6+6 turns to clear and excavate.

Off the alcoves are three small 'cells' used for periods of meditation by members of the Guard prior to promotions or other significant events.

The southeast cell is empty but for ash and dust.

Secreted in the eastern cell are a few minor treasures of the Guard: Six gold-plated drinking horns (100 gp ea), and a heavy hematite decanter (250 gp), formerly used for rituals.

Hidden in the northern alcove is a renegade **Dragonborn scout**, Dogar Castesaad (3<sup>rd</sup> level Fighter: 20 hp; AC3[16]; Atk: falchion (one-handed: 1d8+1/two-handed: 1d10+1); Move 12; Save 12; AL L; CL/XP 4/120; Special: "Brass" heritage – breathe fire 1/day in a 5'x30' line for 2d6 dmg, save for half). She was absent during the purge, and has been guilt-ridden at her perceived dereliction of duty. Castesaad crept back to the chapel, searching for the group's relics, but was not privy to information on their secure location. She is obsessed with locating the relics, clearing the Guard's reputation, and adding the names of her dead brothers and sisters in arms to the Roll of the Dead (see 8, below). If she is discovered, there is a 40% chance that she will reflexively attack those she perceives as desecrating the sacred space (Alternatively, -2 reaction roll using 2d6). If she takes damage equivalent to 3/4 of her hit points,

she will surrender, pleading for her life and personal mission of honor.

**7) Reliquary:** The northwestern room held the Guard's reliquary, with artifacts and relics of the Guards history. The room has been looted and nothing of value remains. Access to a secret room (9, below) is via a pivoting panel of the stone wall.

**8) Priest's Chamber:** The northeastern chamber is the former residence of the Saurguard's priest, Caerdhall Krixuuth. Some broken furniture and vestments moulder here. A shelf at the northwest corner of the room has a pair of miraculously unbroken figurines, a Dragonborn and a human royal. Inspection will find that they are affixed to the shelf, and rotating them so that they appear to be shaking hands will reveal the secret room (9, below).

**9) Secret Room:** Between Rooms 7 and 8 is a secret room, hiding the most sacred relics of the Guard. Held in the room is a heavy book with mica pages holding the history and rites of the Guard, in their

worship and honor of the sacred God-Dragons. Wrapped in sheepskin is a platinum idol of the God Dragon (1000 gp). There is also a large scroll tube of blackened wood. Opening the tube will reveal a heavy scroll of thinly hammered metal, the Guard's Roll of the Dead. Any non-Dragonborn bearing these items will be cursed to receive a -3 to reaction rolls from draconic creatures, and save at -3 vs breath weapons.

There is also a ledger recording the Saurguard's forays into the Wilderness and communications with factions beyond the borders. The documents will be sufficient to clear the name of the Saurguard; however, the current political narrative relies on demonizing the Guard in the face of incursions by the Wilderness. Bearing or revealing the ledger could be hazardous to one's health...

Likewise, the presence of Dogar Castesaad, if she is either captured alive or convinces the party of her good will, may likewise put the group in quite a pickle...

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