

STONE DRAGON SOLSTICE

BY JASON MILLS



A FREE GM ADVENTURE
FOR TUNNELS & TROLLS™

TAVERNMASTER
LIBRARY

Stone Dragon Solstice

Or,

Some Assembly Required

**A TUNNELS AND TROLLS™
GM ADVENTURE**

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TavernMASTER
GAMES



Image created at www.wordle.net

I have used amazon's photos of a couple of products.
I hope they and the manufacturers won't mind,
as it can only increase their sales!

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GAMEMASTER'S INTRODUCTION

This adventure is built around certain physical gimmicks and therefore requires some preparation. The principal concern is the climax, in which the players are invited to reassemble a smashed statue of a dragon. Although this could be handled with saving rolls, it is much more fun to use an actual model dragon that comes in pieces. I used the one shown here, but you may find many other suitable models, of widely different designs, through online retailers or auction sites. It's important to assemble your dragon once yourself, to get an idea of how long it will take. A quarter-hour is ideal – and you'll need a timer or stopwatch. If it ticks loudly, so much the better!



You can enhance the game with sound effects at certain points, using the **Stone Dragon Sounds** MP3 files that can be downloaded for free from the [Tavernmaster Games page](#) on **DriveThruRPG**: you'll need a suitable MP3 player. One player will also be subjected to an annoying MP3 file during the dungeon's climax, and ideally headphones should be available for this. The other players will need to escape from shackles, and again this is rendered more fun with real objects: those little puzzles where you have to separate two twisty bits of steel are ideal, preferably a different one for each player.

Another cheap gimmick is a scroll that the players are likely to encounter (you can print it out from **Appendix 2**). Most of the time it is kept in a tube, and at a later time the contents of the scroll change. The sly GM will find an opportunity to swap one tube for another without the players noticing (one trick for doing so is described later), with the replacement tube containing a second version of the scroll. Any old tube will do, so long as it's long enough to contain the scroll, and so long as you can lay hands on two of them! Ideally the tubes should be black. A little rhyme needs to go on the outside: printing this on two mailing labels will enable you to mark both tubes in the same way, to enhance the deceit. The second version of the scroll will bear the instructions for assembling your dragon model. If you're comfortable with image handling, you can scan in the instructions and paste the image into the space on the scroll. If that's a bit too techie for you, you can simply attach the physical instructions to the printed scroll.

Similarly, the handout showing the tavern sign (**Appendix 2**) should ideally include an image of your dragon model, either scanned, photographed, or 'borrowed' from the internet for your personal and non-commercial use!

Illustrations, signs, scrolls and so forth are included in **Appendix 2** for easy printing and separation, so that they can be handed to the players. You might wish to withhold the name of the adventure until it arises at the end of the **Players' Introduction**. This, like all pieces of text shown in a gray box, is intended to be read directly to the players.

Here's a full kit of gimmickry. →

Note the netbook and iPod – two methods of playing MP3s, lest one should fail!



PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The **Stone Dragon Sounds - Intro** MP3 can be used here for a fun effect as you read out this introduction. Start the MP3 playing when you reach the * below and you should find that, reciting at a normal speed, the roar comes in at about the right time... Practice your timing beforehand for best effect.

It is almost midsummer and it's been a fine day for travelling. You've been making your way east from the Great Plain, over the foothills of the East Brahm Mountains, picking a path along cart-trails through the shaggy grass, on your way between hither and yon. But the farmer you met driving his cattle had some very eccentric ideas about distance. He told you that the next inn was "only a spit und a straid away". That was at midday, and it's now dusk, almost dark. There is still no sign of habitation and you are wearily considering sleeping out in the grassland.

The trail you are following has a fainter path here leading off to the north through wheatfields, and you have stopped to talk about your options – when * you become conscious of a faint but regular beating sound, like the wind's own heart. It grows louder – *Whuuff! Whuuff!* – and you turn to the south to find its source. Against the darkening sky you can vaguely make out a shape darker still – some huge creature flapping enormous wings in the night. As you stare, and as the thing gets closer, in the middle where its head must be there is suddenly an orange glow...

A moment later the dragon is overhead, and with a mighty roar a flood of searing flame bursts from its jaws! You throw yourselves flat in all directions. Fortunately the flames pass over you harmlessly, though their terrifying heat leaves you in no doubt as to this creature's power. But instead of charring you to cinders, the dragon sets alight a trail through the wheat, a burning line pointing due north. And with that, it is over: the dragon has no sooner arrived than it disappears upwards into the gloaming, leaving only an arrow of fire on the earth.

You now hear excited voices, and looking to the east, a little way from the junction you see an inn, its shutters now flung back from glowing windows so that those within could watch the show. Good-humoured chatter draws you towards the tavern, over whose door hangs a sign: *Ye Stone Dragonne Ynne.*

You have entered on the adventure of ***Stone Dragon Solstice!***

Reality Check!

Blue boxes like this contain notes from my actual game session. No plan survives contact with the enemy!

Reality Check!

I used a netbook to play my MP3s in a busy gaming hall. The sounds were audible, but were not heard at their best. If background noise may be an issue, try to use powered sound: a boombox or external speakers.

YE STONE DRAGONNE YNNE

The inn has two low floors beneath a thick thatched roof. Behind the inn is a yard, and beyond that an outbuilding. The inn is built largely of rugged stone – there is little in the way of timber in these grassy hills. The bar area has several large windows of sagging glass leaded in diamond shapes, revealing cheerful firelight within now that the shutters have been opened. The upper floor has only two or three tiny windows, presumably to conserve warmth.

The barn behind the yard has a half-dozen stalls for horses, whilst the rest of the space in there has been liberally spread with straw, and a few folded blankets have been piled up. This space is a makeshift dormitory for the solstice rush, with 'beds' at 5SP for the night – though there is precious little chance of sleep among the grunting and snoring of steeds and adventurers. You would probably want to keep one eye open anyway...

The tavern itself is snug, warm and busy. The ceiling, 'neath which lie drifts of pipesmoke, is scarcely above six feet, and with almost every table occupied, especially around the blazing hearth, it is awkward to navigate through the crowded bustle. A couple of country wenches shimmy around, depositing jugs of ale and collecting empties. Making their way to the bar, the delvers will be greeted by Amrach Wyllander, the landlord, a middle-aged fellow of entirely unmemorable appearance, who rarely smiles, never laughs, and yet is possessed of a shrewd and dry sense of humour. (For stats, see **Appendix 1**.)

"Good evening, gentlefolk," quoth he. "Now first things first, we're a long ways from anywhere much, so I'm sure as you must be thirsty. We 'as ale at 4 silver pieces and ale at 12 silver pieces. Which shall ye be wantin'?" If asked what the difference is, Wyllander will explain: "It's my observation, sirs and madams, that those patrons afflicted with a more demandin' and refined palate, they it is 'oo prefer the ale that comes at 12 silver pieces. I say nothing against the ale at 4 silver pieces; but there it is."

If the delvers order, Wyllander will require payment in advance: "A necessary practice, sirs and madams, there bein' many transients of ill character at this time o' year. Not meanin' to impute yer good selves, o' course! But you understand I mustn't play favourites." Having secured the silver, Wyllander will proceed to pour whatever ales were ordered from the same cask regardless of the price: he did not, after all, say there was anything different *except* the price... (Of course, the delvers will notice this only if they ordered both "types".)

A good supper can be had for 1GP and will restore 1 point of CON. (Coincidentally, the tiring journey has cost each delver 1 point of CON...) A bed in a twin room in the inn can be had for 3GP per night. A blanket spread in the barn is 5SP. "Solstice breakfast is 4.30 while 5 o'clock in the mornin'," Wyllander adds. If the delvers inquire as to why breakfast is so early, or why the inn is so full, or what he means about "this time o' year", Wyllander will simply nod his head towards a large sign near the bar, on which is told *Ye Legende of ye Stone Dragonne*. (See handout, **Appendix 2**.)

Indeed, as the minutes pass, the delvers can scarcely fail to recognise the character of the crowd. Although here and there a few bumpkins and yokels are grumpily gathered, smoking clay pipes and grumbling about "furriners" and "cityfolk", the bulk of the clientele are clearly adventurers: shifty bands of three, four or five chancers, going equipped. Swords and broadaxes lean against tables, pointy hats sway between layers of pipesmoke, and elaborate staves are laid across wizardly knees. Although the air is abuzz with conversation, it is noticeably confined to individual tables: the only communication between one group and another is in the way of sidelong glances and suspicious glares.

A KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL

The only table with any space is occupied by a sturdy red-cheeked farmer, who makes room affably enough. He doesn't initiate conversation, but will respond amiably. He is Calister Larridge and he has a wise head on his shoulders. If asked the right questions, the information he may volunteer is as follows:

Every midsummer's eve, dozens of adventurers meet at the Stone Dragon Ynne to try their luck. Early the following morning, midsummer's day, they hurry off into the hills, following the burnt marks left by the Queen of the Dragons. They find the place in the hills where the statue of the dragon stands and they wait for the rising sun, hoping to acquire power and riches. And then they generally wander back again, grumbling and empty-handed.

(This is as much as any of the locals know, though Larridge is a little more forthcoming about it. Other locals, if questioned, will be keen to also offer up this ominous tidbit though: "Folks as goes to see the dragon, them either comes back wi' nothin'... or them don't come back at all!")

After a few minutes, have the players make saving rolls on CHR. Larridge will focus his attention on whoever succeeds at the highest level (tie-break: highest CHR), and say: "I hopes ye folks don't take offence if we's a little suspicious o' strangers around here. People come an' go this time o' year, and who knows who ye can trust, eh? A lot comes o' trust, don't you think? A lot depends on it." With that, he fixes the delver with a beady stare, and then heaves himself up, saying, "Well, I'm just off to the privy." And he squeezes through the crowd and through a door beside the bar.

Let the players digest that for a moment. Then, any delver making an L1SR on INT will notice that the farmer has left his coat folded on his stool, and a pouch like a coin-purse can be seen protruding beneath it. (If only one player succeeds in the roll, impart the information only to that person, and let him or her decide whether to inform the others or fly solo...) Coins can be felt through the fine leather, amid some kind of powder. Inside the purse are a few silver coins buried in a fine, non-magical rust-red powder that tastes foul, and that won't wash off any body part that it touches: stains will take months to fade, and trying to wipe the powder off will only smear the marks further. The coins are untarnished and can be eased out out the powder by fondling the pouch, but there is nothing special about them.

If the pouch has been disturbed at all when Larridge returns, or if he catches any delvers 'red-handed', he will mildly remark, "Oh, I left my sheep-dye out, did I? Lucky t'weren't nothing worse, eh?" Calister Larridge's manner will not change, but there will be no more useful information to be had from this quarter.

If the pouch is undisturbed (or is made to appear so: L3SR on DEX to put it back exactly right), then Larridge will aim a shrewd look at the delver he spoke to before, and when he leaves for home in a few minutes he will say to that person: "Care to share a pipe outside? I'm trying to cut down, so you'll be doing me a favour."

The farmer leads the delver outside and a little away from the tavern and its bustling yard. Once away from the crowd and standing in the warm summer night, Larridge puffs on his pipe and passes it across, speaking thus: "You cityfolks, ye know, you trade things, this and that, one o' these for three o' those. I'm sure we must be simple folks out in the country, but we does know the value o' things. Information, fer instance." Here he gives the delver a meaningful look. "Seems to me as even the least little bit o' information might turn out to be more important than ye expect. Like 'ow a bit o' grit on the stable floor might be the seed o' next year's crop, eh? Well now. If a feller, an 'umble feller like me, let's say, had a scrap o' information, what might 'e get for it, d'ye think? O' course, the problem is that the buyer wouldn't know what it was worth till later. So it would have to depend on trust, wouldn't it? This feller, let's say me, would have to give up his morsel of

Reality Check!

My players twigged that this was a test of trust and overegged the pudding by carrying Larridge's coat and pouch outside, to give them to him when he emerged from the privy! Odd behaviour, but undeniably blameless.

information in return for a promise of fair reward from the customer, let's say you, 'owever things turned out. People of honour can make such deals. D'ye be a person of honour, friend?"

Larridge peers at the delver piercingly, weighing him or her up. The delver will need an L2SR on CHR at this point. If s/he fails, you might allow them to waffle in order to win the farmer's trust, and then try the roll one more time. If the final outcome is failure, Larridge says: "Well, it's good to know that trustworthy folks is a-comin' through, and if I 'ears of such a scrap o' information, I'll be sure to let ye know of it." And then he nods goodnight and stalks off into the darkness, his way illuminated only by the dim glow of his pipe. (If physical threats are used against Larridge, he will offer up this – false – information: "The real Stone Dragon is twelve miles to the north, in the woods beside the lake, an' that's all I know." In point of fact there is not even a lake in that locale, but he hopes that the claim will serve to get the delvers well away.)

If the delver is successful in the roll, Larridge proceeds: "Mm. Well, my friend, I will tell you a thing, and make what use of it ye may. And I shall trust that if it bears fruit for thee and thy companions, then somethin' o' that fruit ye'll bring back here fer me, yes? Are we square?" He takes a long puff on his pipe, gathering his thoughts. "Well. A few years back there was one group o' adventurers what didn't return to the tavern 'ere. I takes note, y'see. But there was none as knew what had happened to 'em. And then one day I'm in the city, sellin' me wheat, an' I sees one o' that group. Only now 'e's in 'is own coach, dressed in golden silks, with rubies on 'is fingers. I catches 'is eye an' I sez, 'ow did ye come by yer good fortune then? Was it the Stone Dragon what done it? An' 'e just grins at me, like 'e's enjoyin' some big secret; an' finally 'e sez a thing, an' this is that thing that might be of use to you. 'E sez just this: Look in the eye of the shadow. That's all 'e has to say. An' that's all I have to say. So a good night to ye, and remember old Calister Larridge." And off he goes, into the night.

INTO THE HILLS

Those who take a room in the inn will sleep all right, but those in the barn will be lucky to get five minutes' kip, among the constant background noise of fidgets, snores, neighs, whinnies, mutterings and grunts. They must start the day D3 CON points and D3 SPD points down for lack of sleep, both of which will be recovered once they get a nap of a good few hours.

There is little prospect of oversleeping: while it is still dark, the adventurers and chancers filling the barn and the inn are up and about, sneaking around groggily, tripping over delvers' packs, stubbing their toes on anvils, knocking over heaps of horseshoes and so forth. In the tavern, the landlord has prepared industrial quantities of big tough bread rolls, filled with thick chutney and chunks of non-specific meat. One of these and an ale can be had for the special bargain price of 1GP. These foodstuffs are a bit suspect, but undeniably filling, and those who scoff one are protected from the first point of CON loss today (though they know it not).

In the dim twilight of the early morning, the inn's occupants slope off in groups, following the trail north between the black gouges burned in the wheat by the Queen of the Dragons. Although everyone is heading the same way, there is little in the way of camaraderie, and conversations are often as not conducted in whispers.

The trail, grassy but clear enough, leads up into the hills. After roving up and down the land for an hour or so, you arrive at an unusual spot, a secluded little bowl in the hillside, almost a pit. The land slopes steeply down into it from north and south. The eastern side is open to the horizon, with a grand view over the rolling landscape towards the distant white-tipped mountains. The western side is an exposed rock face, almost vertical, on which a magnificent mosaic has been constructed, slightly above ground level. It depicts a fanciful rising sun, its face and swirling beams picked out in gold-coloured tiles the size of a fingertip, against a dawn sky marked with blood-red tiles, grading through orange and yellow and into sky-blue as one's eye moves up the picture.

More notable still is the dragon standing in the bottom of this pit. It's a red marble statue, about 12 feet high, of a four-legged dragon rearing up and clawing the air, its tail coiled loosely around its legs and its wings pulled back as if about to beat down hard. It faces south, its long jaw opened wide to intimidate visitors with its fearsome teeth.

Scattered around the pit are 15 or 20 other adventurers, muttering in groups, running their hands over the mosaic, prodding at the statue and looking at the view. They cast suspicious glances at you, and at each other. One or two wizardly types seem to be even more tense and irritable than is normal for their kind – perhaps itching to cast *Oh There It Is*, but not wanting everyone else to see the outcome...

All this the delvers witness in the grey pre-dawn light. Allow them to poke about with everyone else: there is nothing to find that is not already visible. The pit is about 20 feet deep, 20 feet across at the bottom and 50 feet wide at the top. The mosaic is a semicircle of radius about 10 feet. Its tiles are pretty colours, but not valuable, and they are very firmly cemented to the rock.

Anyone making an L2SR on INT will wonder why it is that the dragon on the tavern's sign did not look much like this one. Anyone who examines the statue closely and makes an L1SR on INT will note that although the dragon is realistic, it is not so detailed as one might expect if a living creature had been petrified.

Reality Check!

There was a fluttering fairy in the party, Denora Goldenwing, and since the delvers had picked up Larridge's hint, she was able to discreetly check out the statue's eyes. She learned that they had tiny holes in them, but no more.

DAYBREAK!

When activity flags, bring on the sunrise! There's a blast of yellow light as the edge of the sun slices between the distant snowy peaks, its golden shafts filling this space, painting the adventurers gold and clasping the dragon as if it were encased in amber. The mosaic blazes with reflected glory, cut across by the dramatic shadow of the dragon in profile. (The GM is encouraged to Adopt The Pose, to illustrate the impressive effect. ☺) Instantly, many of the assembled adventurers ready for action, lifting their weapons as they surround the statue. A couple of archers atop the rock wall nock their arrows and aim at the beast's belly, while wizards commence mumbling, chanting and gesticulating in readiness. The sun rises a little further as everybody tenses, eyes fixed on the dragon or darting around, eager for whatever may come; until finally, after a few minutes, nothing at all happens...

IF!

- the delvers have been told to 'look in the eye of the shadow'; or,
- someone specifically states that s/he is watching the shadow; or,
- someone makes an L4SR on LK,

THEN one or more of our heroes will notice that *for a single second* during the sunrise the light is so aligned that it passes through the two pupils of the dragon's eyes and casts a golden beam onto the mosaic: a bright eye in the shadow itself. Then it is gone. An L1SR on INT will be needed to note exactly where the beam fell, ie. on which particular tile. And an L1SR on CHR will prevent the hapless delver yelping in excitement and pointing to the momentary spotlight...

(If *that* happens, the adventurers in the pit will erupt into ruckus, all madly throwing things at the mosaic, slapping it, sliding blades between the tiles and casting ineffectual spells, and doing much the same to the eyes of the dragon by clambering up it. The delvers should be made to fear for the safety of their secret, and perhaps have to fight to keep it; but the GM should contrive that none of the other adventurers saw what happened well enough, nor noted the exact spot where the light fell, so that eventually all these efforts come to nothing. The delver's yelp will ultimately be regarded as a false alarm, perhaps even an intentional diversion, and it will be some time before...)

The other adventurers finally get fed up of waiting and prodding, and in threes and fours, with many a sulky backward glance, they give it up as a dead loss and head off back to the inn, now in broad daylight. OUR delvers, however, are surely going to hang back, if only because they know they're in a scenario. ☺

If they have any sense, the delvers will wait until the coast is clear.

- If they have noted the tile, a golden one 12 feet up the wall, they must find some way of reaching it.
- If the spotter failed the INT roll, s/he will still have noted the correct area of interest, and if they reach the patch then an L2SR on LK will locate the tile (one attempt per 10-minute turn – there are a lot of tiles...).
- If they did not even notice the eye in the shadow, hint them into searching thoroughly: if they investigate the dragon closely, they may spot the narrow shaft connecting the eyes and sight through it to the correct tile; or they may pore over the mosaic for ages, perhaps casting *Oh There It Is* hopefully (though even then the purple glow around the tile will be easy to miss). Improvise saving rolls appropriately, but ensure that the delvers spend

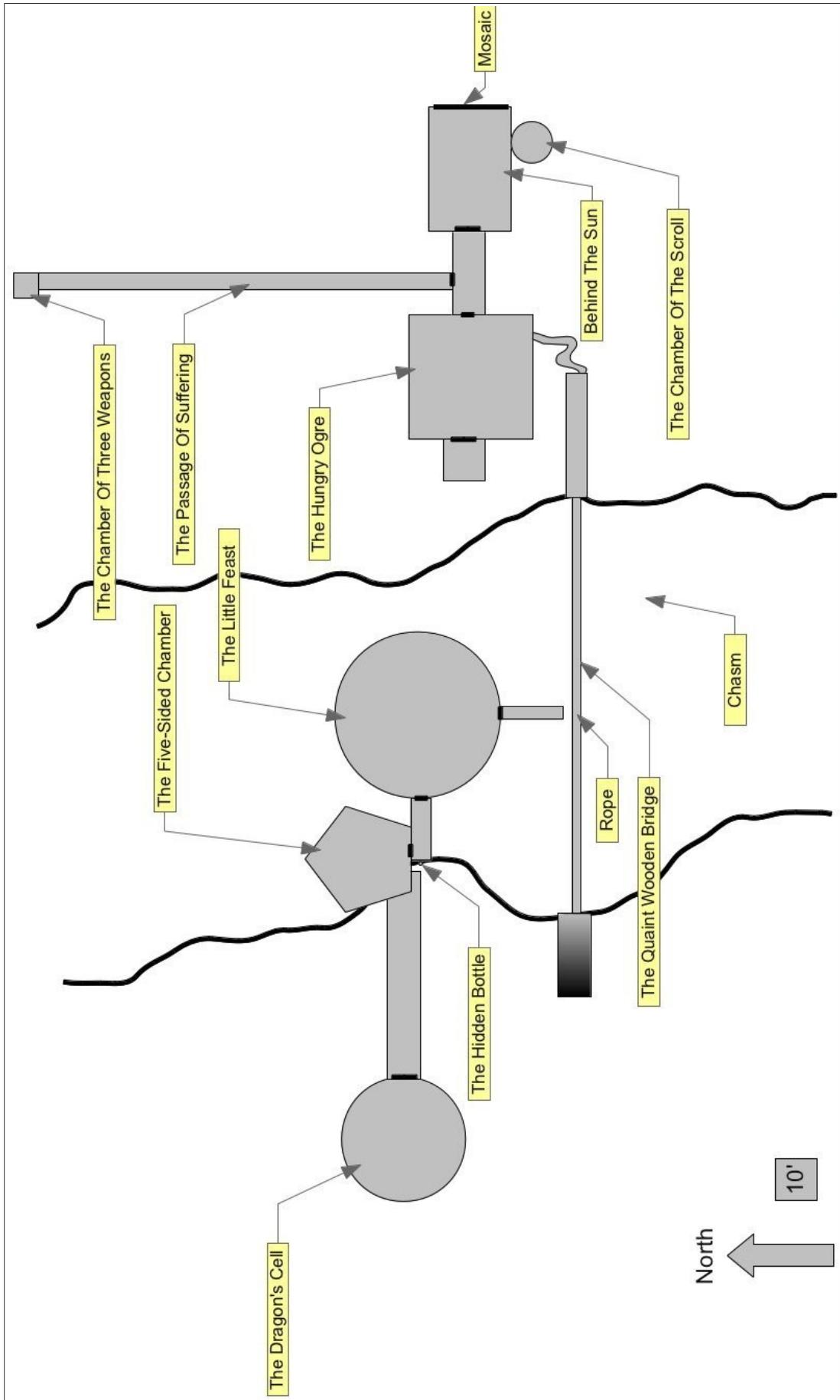
Reality Check!

The delvers yelped! However, Melbor Pentarion the Paragon had stationed himself atop the rockface, over the mosaic. He was eating a spare sandwich he'd brought from the inn, and he conspicuously dribbled some chutney onto the wrong tile, as if to mark it, thus drawing the rival adventurers off the scent!

some time searching, and when they reach Yilburn's Prison at the end of the adventure, give them less time for their work accordingly: the sun will already have begun its passage overhead.

Howbeit, the delvers will find their way to the critical tile, which naturally can be pressed to open a way into the hill. In fact, with a deep groan and a nerve-shuddering scraping noise, the entire mosaic swings about a central vertical axis, like a revolving door. It takes around 10 seconds to make a full revolution and lock back in place: count down to make the delvers scramble through in a panic... (There is nothing to prevent anyone trapped outside from pressing the tile again, but they may not be able to reach it without the assistance of those within, and the 'door' can't be opened from inside.)

MAP



BEHIND THE SUN

You might like to use the MP3 file called **Stone Dragon Sounds - Wizard** at the * below, for a fun effect.

The turning mosaic has brought you into a large dark cave, roughly rectangular, 10 feet high, 20 feet north to south and 30 feet east to west. Its outlines are dimly visible by the faint glow of ghoulish-green emanating from fungus on the walls, but you will need better illumination to navigate safely. Not far ahead there's a small rugged archway in the south wall, giving onto darkness, and there is a pair of huge double-doors in the west wall, of dark wood bound with iron. In the middle of the chamber is a round boulder tall as a man.

As you stand assessing your surroundings, with a sudden whoosh the translucent spectre of a wizard appears! He stands 9 feet tall in the centre of the room and the tip of his pointy hat disappears in the ceiling. Red light pours from him and fills the chamber. His old-fashioned robes are black and gold, his staff thick rosewood carved with intricate patterns, and he speaks through a shaggy black beard:

* "You have conquered your first trial," he intones. "Many more await you. The terrible power of the Stone Dragon is not lightly dispensed. Prove yourselves worthy of it!"

And with that, and another whoosh, he is gone, and you are plunged back into darkness.

The southern archway leads to **The Chamber of the Scroll**. The huge doors are locked and will not succumb to magic or force. Thoroughly searching the uneven, gravelly floor of this chamber will take 30 man-minutes, but will reveal nothing.

The key to the doors is under the boulder. For one person to move the boulder requires a successful saving roll on STR at level 8 (ie. 55). Each extra pair of hands reduces the level by one and increases by one the number of people who can try the roll; but all who are pushing must succeed at the same time. Thus, if 5 people push, they must all succeed at an L3SR on STR. They can try once every 2 minutes. (The GM may adjust the starting level if necessary: 2 + size of party is a good guideline.)

This may well be no easy task and could take some time, but it is the delvers' first lesson in the importance of teamwork...

Beneath the boulder is a small recess containing a pearwood box as big as one's foot, and inside that, pressed into a smooth bed of beeswax (be sure to use that phrase), is a small brass key that readily unlocks the heavy creaking doors.

If the delvers are sufficiently nose-y to look under the block of beeswax, it can be levered out with a knife. In the bottom of the box is embedded a brass plaque, engraved thus:

*The heart keeps its counsel inside each man's breast.
Such secrets concealed behind every chest!*

This is a little hint for the chamber of **The Hungry Ogre**. Remember to take note of whether the delvers retain the key, the box – and the beeswax. Who knows, they might prove useful later...

Beyond the doors is a dark passage, 8 feet wide and 20 feet long, ending in a door that leads to **The Hungry Ogre**. There is also a door on the north wall, halfway along: see **The Passage Of Suffering**.

Reality Check!

Convinced that they couldn't move the boulder, the delvers tried every imaginable thing first. The fairy in the party had no real chance of making STR SRs, so I decided the rock would move if 4 out of 6 pushers made their roll.

THE CHAMBER OF THE SCROLL

Beyond the archway is an unlit chamber, roughly hewn from the native stone in the form of a beehive. It's about 10 feet across and 14 feet high. A quick sweep around the walls with a torch is enough to establish that there are no other exits. The floor, though rough, is flat.

In the centre of this cell stands a boulder. It has been sliced off at a height of about 3 feet and the level surface is polished smooth as ice. Resting on this rustic plinth is a short rod of ebony, about 9 inches long.

Inscribed along the rod are these lines:

*The warmth of the sun melts secrets now frozen.
Who chooses this, that chooser is chosen.*

Closer examination shows that the rod is a hollow tube, and there seems to be a scroll rolled inside it. *Detect Magic* will establish enchantment upon the tube, but no spell will reveal more.

Touching this rod with anything other than bare skin will not move it a hair's breadth. Whoever touches the rod first *with* bare skin will find that it immediately sticks to his hand (or chin, or whatever). It cannot be removed (for now), and if the delver is daft enough to try to pull it off with his other hand, he will find that that one too is stuck and he is effectively handcuffed. This awkward object is likely to impede the delver's combat performance. However, other people will *not* stick to the fiendish tube; only the first person to touch it.

The *inside* of the tube does not have this sticky property, and the scroll can be removed by a free hand, or poked out with a dagger. (Indeed, this could be done without lifting the rod from the plinth.) Unrolled, it bears across the top the single word:

YNSTRUCKTYNES

The rest of the page is blank. The bearer of the rod finds that his feet are fixed to the spot so long as the scroll is out of the tube: it must be carried around rolled, in its holder.

For clarity: it is the combination of rod and scroll in the hands of the Chosen under direct sunlight, that will loosen the rod and reveal the contents of the scroll. If any of those factors are not present, there will be no effect. If, for instance, the Chosen stands with the rod in sunlight but the scroll is not inside the rod, then nothing will happen; or if somebody else (say, a nuisance of a fairy) takes the scroll into sunlight, there will again be no effect – or perhaps just the vaguest hint of shapes on the page, to let the players know they're on the right track... This will all make more sense at **The Dragon's Cell**.

Reality Check!

Melbor Pentarion picked up the rod, and was daft enough to try to pull it away with his other hand. The player very gamely spent the next 3 or 4 hours holding a cardboard tube with both hands, even drinking his beer through a straw!

Reality Check!

The delvers tried rolling the smaller boulder from this chamber to smash through the doors in the large chamber. Interesting idea, but I decreed that the boulder only bounced off, as I wanted the players to find the box and its contents.

Reality Check!

Connecting bees with sunshine, the delvers melted beeswax and dripped it on the hands of the Chosen. Now his hands were sealed as well as stuck!

THE PASSAGE OF SUFFERING

On the door are words inlaid in letters of brass:

*Only the bold deserve noble tools.
They will not be won by cowards and fools.*

If, mindful of this decree, the delvers try the door...

The door opens with an ominous creak onto a dark passage, 4 feet wide. Torchlight shows it stretching into the distance, unlit, its floor grimy with dirt – or is it ashes? There seem to be niches or openings of some kind in the walls, roughly cut horizontal spaces at various heights. Vague and vaguely unpleasant rustling can be heard.

If the delvers head down this passage (and it does tilt ominously downward), they will soon discover that in each niche in the wall lies a corpse. Each has been burnt beyond recognition: black, dry, shrivelled flesh hangs from charred bones and eyeless sockets gape in the darkness. These hideous remains are disturbed by the passing delvers, and they begin to moan and groan. Some form words in their dry, dessicated throats: "The paaaiin!" "I am buuuurrrning!" "It is agony!" - etc. (You can use the MP3 file called **Stone Dragon Sounds - Passage** for effect here.) Jerky, brittle limbs reach for the delvers and tug limply at their clothes, and the sounds and contorted movements increase as they press on. Soot and ash drift from the corpses and begin to clog the air, which smells like the sodden embers of a rain-soaked bonfire.

These unfortunates are actually harmless. The dragon Yllburn in his cruelty used the power of his blue flame to not only burn his victims, but make them immortal so that they might suffer forever. The wizards placed them here only so that those who seek to wake the dragon will recognise that they are, literally, playing with fire.

However, the effect is deeply disturbing. Delvers must make 3 saving rolls on CHR to reach the end of the passage. If they fail any, they will turn back screaming and run out as fast as they can. The saving rolls are at level 4, but each delver can deduct from this level the number of companions with him, providing moral support; however, the roll is always at least level 1.

For instance, if 4 delvers set off down the passage, their first roll must be at level 1. If 1 delver fails and runs out, 3 remain, each therefore with 2 companions, so their next rolls must be at level 2. If 2 delvers fail and run out, the remaining delver has 0 companions and must make the final roll at level 4.

Only players who succeed in 3 successive CHR saving rolls get all the way to the end. However, if the delvers struggle, an L1SR on INT will give someone an idea: sing a hearty song! The level of the saving rolls can be reduced by 1 (though not below 1) if all the delvers in the passage sing a song together as they go. The GM will probably wish to add realism to the gaming session by making the *players* sing a chorus of something to gain the bonus... Perhaps *Follow The Yellow Brick Road*?

If more than one player makes that L1SR on INT, a second idea occurs to them, which is to plug one's ears to block out the maddening voices. Since this also blocks out the reassuring voices of one's companions, this trick is incompatible with the 'hearty song' trick. Plugging one's ears (and this needs to be done well) has the effect of fixing the level of the 3 CHR saving rolls at level 2, regardless of whether one is alone or accompanied. Thus deafened, a delver is little use to his companion and his presence does not reduce the level of their saving rolls.

At the end of the passage, 100 feet from the door, is **The Chamber of Three Weapons**.

THE CHAMBER OF THREE WEAPONS

The passage finally opens out into a little chamber 6 feet square, lit by a lantern dangling on a chain. Three weapons hang in easy reach on the facing wall: a golden axe, a sword of cobalt-blue and a burnished red trident. Above them are engraved letters that spell out:

ONE PAIR OF HANDS, ONE WEAPON.

Indeed, such is the enchantment on this chamber that after a delver lifts down one weapon, the others cannot be moved by his hand: each must be collected by its own delver. As soon as any is taken down from the wall, it begins to glow (yellow, blue or red, according to the weapon), and will not cease to do so until it passes from the delver's hands – perhaps at her death. Sold or given away, these weapons are ordinary: their magic works only for the adventurers who first take them. Each weapon also adjusts its size to what is appropriate for its owner, and is fixed at that size thereafter. Magic-users can wield these weapons, but they can't cast in the same round if they are using the trident or the axe. The sword, however, is so light and easy to handle that this is not a problem. Full details of the weapons are provided in **Appendix 2**, as handouts that can be given to the player to avoid bookkeeping delays.

No saving rolls are required on the return journey up **The Passage Of Suffering**, as the delvers lose nothing by pelting out while screaming madly, if such is their inclination...

Incidentally, I chose these weapons and colours because I happened to find toy glowing weapons for sale for Hallowe'en. Being able to hand the player the "actual" shining weapon adds to the fun, so you might want to look out for similar and perhaps adjust the types of weapon accordingly.

THE HUNGRY OGRE

The chamber is about 30 feet square and 15 feet high, lit by corner sconces. In here a mighty ogre 8 feet tall snarls on the end of a long, heavy chain, shackled at the ankle. Barely intelligent, this savage roars at you and beats his six-foot club on the rock floor. Sparks fly from the nailheads hammered into it and stone chips ping across the chamber. The club is chained to the ogre's wrist and he wears only a dirty black bearskin, draped Tarzan-like over his shoulder and around his waist. He prowls about the chamber, shaking his chains and growling in fury.

Against the southern wall is a plain chest. Behind the ogre to the west are strong double-doors 8 feet high, scratched and dented by the ogre's club. The doors have neither handles nor keyhole. Over the doors is a row of a dozen spikes, each of the first five bearing a torn-off humanoid head. The fifth head is long dead, perhaps a year or so, its taut darkened skin drawing the withered lips into a rictus grin beneath shrivelled eyes; whilst the preceding heads are successively more decayed, the first reduced to a grimy skull and lacking a jawbone. And above the heads, inlaid in large letters of brass, are these words:

*Only a death can open these doors,
That of the ogre, or of one of yours.*

Even Ogrish-speaking delvers will get no more than enraged monosyllables from this fiend: "Kill! Eat!" (In fairness, the fellow only gets a good meal once a year, so his monomania is forgivable...) His chain runs from a thick iron hoop in the floor north of the double-doors and is 15 feet long, giving him access to most but not all of the room.

The chest is actually just out of the ogre's reach, but don't tell the players this unless they think to enquire about it. Even then, they will require an L1SR on INT to be sure that it is in a safe spot: the ogre is ranging madly around the room, not obligingly measuring out distances for his audience. The chest is not locked and contains only a spare, clean black bearskin, size XXXXXXL. It's in fine condition and worth 50GP.

The ogre is a formidable but straightforward foe: he has an MR of 300 and 25 WIZ. There's no need to do the players any favours here, as they don't actually have to fight him. Should they defeat him – or should one of them be killed – the double-doors will swing open, revealing a chamber about 10 feet each way. Inside are the broken and chewed remains of five headless corpses. Most clothes, weapons, armour or items they once bore have been rendered useless by the ogre's fists and teeth, but persistent searching (50 man-minutes and a couple of L2SRs on LK) will turn up a little pouch of 30 sapphires, each worth 20GP, and a wooden whistle. This is **The Idle Shepherd**, and for half an hour after it is blown, all sheep within a mile will walk towards it. The chamber has no other exits.

Reality Check!

Rather unsportingly, my lot just stood back and kept firing arrows at the poor ogre. (Curse that Ranger!)

Should the delvers think to move the chest, they will readily discover a crawlway behind it, suitable for anyone up to the size of a fat elf. Any delver bigger than that, or burdened with heavy armour, may be subjected to DEX rolls, with a risk of getting stuck... Weapons longer than 6 feet cannot be negotiated around the corners. The crawlway wriggles to and fro for about 20 feet, before widening to become a regular passage 5 feet wide and running west. After 30 feet this ends at a startling dark chasm, over which stretches **The Quaint Wooden Bridge**.

THE QUAIN T WOODEN BRIDGE

At the tunnel's end, you are faced with a classic chasm, rising and descending into darkness. It is crossed by a remarkable bridge, a single plank of polished pine a hundred feet long and about two feet wide, cut from a tree's length. It still has bark all along its edges. A passage is visible in the rock wall at the far end of the bridge, dimly illuminated by what might be daylight, and soon curving out of sight. A rope hangs over the centre of the bridge, its end dangling four feet above the beam.

(The delvers will find that pulling on this rope has no obvious effect: it seems firmly attached far above.)

The delvers can tackle this however they like. The beam is resting on something at each end, and if they look carefully (and not otherwise), they will see that it is also supported at the centre of its span by a thin spire of dark stone. They would struggle to traverse the bridge in any formation but single file. The GM will need to ascertain clearly exactly how the delvers are crossing – one at a time, or evenly spaced, or what.

When the first delver nears the far end, the soft plaster block on which that end rests crumbles into the abyss, causing the beam to tip downwards. This releases the wedge that was jammed under the other end, so that that too falls away. The delvers are now standing on a polished see-saw, poised on the rock pillar at the middle. (A V-shaped cut crossing under the middle of the beam helps to stop it sliding off the pillar.) If some among the players are quick-thinking, they may make efforts to balance the bridge by spreading themselves to either side. You might let them scamper about for a few frantic moments, clinging to the beam and finding a stable formation that keeps the wobbly thing steady-ish. (Think *The Italian Job*...) Then they need to think themselves out of this.

If anyone steps (or leaps) off an end of the bridge, saving himself, the resulting imbalance will likely consign his companions to the pit. If one character happens to be on one side, the rest on the other, she will need to stand much further from the centre than they. The high-school physics to remember here is that the product of the load and the distance from the fulcrum must be equal on both sides. For instance, 3 delvers 15 feet from the centre ($3 \times 15 = 45$) can be balanced by 1 delver 45 feet from the centre ($1 \times 45 = 45$) on the other side. (Assuming the laden delvers are each around the same weight...) If you're feeling ambitious, you could simulate their situation using miniatures blu-tacked to a ruler, but you'd be entering a world of pain if you tried to make it balance...

The cleanest solution to their problem is for all the delvers to edge in towards the centre *ever so carefully*, the more distant ones moving faster than those closer to the middle. From there they can gently take hold of the dangling rope one at a time and climb up it. Fifty feet above, it dangles from the chasm's ceiling beside a wall of rock breached by a passage 4 feet wide and heading north, onto whose floor the climber can cautiously step. The climb to that point requires 3 successful L1 SRs on STR and 3 on DEX: each attempted roll consumes one minute of effort, although only a fumble leads to a fall; other fails just mean time lost while the climber struggles.

The tempting passage on the far side of the bridge only curves into a dead end, in which a shaft as thick as a fist extends 30 feet through rock to the hillside, allowing meagre daylight to enter.

Reality Check!

The delvers became obsessed with finding sunlight, thinking it would release the Chosen. Melbor straddled the bridge and shuffled along it with one end of a 100' rope hooked to his belt. When the bridge tilted, the delvers at the other end steadied it with their feet. Melbor was able to get off, but the rope now held him back, and with his hands stuck to the scroll he couldn't unhook it. So the delvers let go of their end and he rotated, winding it around his body – stranded in a dead end! Naturally the daylight (not direct sunlight) proved useless.

Should a delver fall from the beam (the GM can decide on the fly just how stupid their behaviour has to be to make this happen...), she will plummet without cease into a dark fog that will quickly render them unconscious. They might later be found asleep in the **The Five-Sided Chamber**.

The passage to which the delvers will hopefully have climbed is 3 feet wide. It runs north for 15 feet and ends in a door, beyond which awaits...

Reality Check!

Denora flew across to her stranded friend and dragged his scroll through the narrow shaft out onto the hillside, where she was able to expose it to sunlight. Since she was not the Chosen, nor had the rod, only the vaguest suggestion of shapes appeared; and back she went.

Reality Check!

My paranoid delvers largely avoided stepping onto the bridge and eventually secured it with pitons driven beneath. (Curse that fairy!)

THE LITTLE FEAST

This high round chamber is around 40 feet across, with another door in the western wall. The room is a curious sight. On white threads hanging from the stone roof high above are dozens of flat, coloured dragon shapes, in no obvious pattern. Each dragon is about 3 inches long and they dangle about 5 feet above the floor, gently twirling. There are yellow, red, green, blue, silver, gold, black and white ones.

Closer examination will reveal that these dragons appear to be cookies, each suspended by a thread that passes through its eye. They are clearly enchanted, and an *Omnipotent Eye* spell would reveal only that they are intended to have an improving effect on those who eat them (although of course the delvers will not know if this applies to all the cookies or just the one on which the spell was cast...). The magic is ineffective if the cookie is eaten still on the string!

It's a simple matter to yank one off its thread (pulling on a thread has no unexpected effects), but anyone making an L1SR on INT will notice that half a second later all other cookies of the same colour disappear! The plucked cookie quickly begins to soften and crumble in the delver's hand, and if she wishes to eat it she must make an L1SR on SPD. If she fails, there is no ill effect, but too much of the cookie has crumbled away for its magic to work. If she succeeds, however, the cookie will add one or more points to a Prime Attribute, as tabulated on the next page. If the Attribute's current level is below normal, both the permanent and temporary values are increased. (Eg. If 1 is added to CON and the delver's CON is normally 18 but presently 14, the outcome is that permanent CON becomes 19 and present CON 15.)

For each colour of cookie, the first one plucked will cause any others of that colour *still hanging* to disappear half a second later. The cookies are so arranged that no one could reach more than one of the same colour from one spot. Should the delvers think of spreading themselves out and each pulling off one cookie of the same colour at the same moment, the first delver will get his cookie no problem, but the others must make an L1SR on SPD to yank theirs away quickly enough. (If need be, use dice to determine which player got lucky.) All those with cookies will then need another L1SR on SPD to eat them in time.

Of course, nothing prevents a greedy delver from scurrying around the room and scoffing the first of each colour before anyone else interferes...

The cookies, incidentally, are sweet and moist, with currants and raisins. Very nice!

Colour	Quantity	Effect
Yellow	8	Adds 1 to CON
Red	7	Adds 1 to CHR
Green	6	Adds 1 to WIZ
Blue	5	Adds 2 to STR
Silver	4	Adds D6 to delver's choice of Prime Attribute
Gold	3	Adds to delver's choice of Prime Attribute the difference between her lowest and highest Attribute. (However, can't choose to add it to the lowest or highest.)
Black	2	If only one delver eats a black cookie, he may swap any two Prime Attributes. If two delvers eat one, the lowest Attribute of each delver takes the value of the highest Attribute of the other. (Conceivably that could lower one delver's Attribute, but that's the way the cookie crumbles...)
White	1	From now on, the delver's Prime Attributes are each increased by 2D6 for 6 hours each time he consumes an entire melon. (This takes half an hour – the skin is hard to munch...) Costs and availability of melons will vary from place to place, and the effect is not cumulative.

Miserly delvers are free to yank down the 36 threads, typically 10 feet long, to save for wrapping parcels...

The western door leads to a passage 5 feet wide and 15 feet long. In the north wall at the far end is another door. Outside that door the delvers might find **The Hidden Bottle**, whilst the door itself leads to **The Five-Sided Chamber**.

Reality Check!

My mind boggled as I watched the delvers eat only one of each colour of cookie, never once considering that they might grab several at once! What a waste! Oh, the humanity!

THE HIDDEN BOTTLE

Commonly wizards cast *Detect Magic* when they reach a door. Anyone doing so here should roll an L1SR on LK. If successful, then as well as any magic exuding from beyond the door, they also detect a little localised thrum of enchantment from the rock wall to the left (that is, the western end of the passage). An *Oh There It Is* spell or a successful L2SR on DEX (one attempt per 2 minutes of searching, with only room for one person to feel around the patch of wall) will locate a protrusion that can be twisted. Doing so makes a panel of stone as big as a book hinge open, swinging to the right to reveal a niche in which stands an unusual bottle.

This little bottle, an inch and a half high, once housed “*ye teares of gryffynnes*”, as indicated by a little plaque (see **Appendix 2**). No trace of the precious liquid remains, for the bottle stood long open at some point in its history; but the vessel itself is still of some worth. An *Omnipotent Eye* spell will reveal that it and its stopper are indestructible. Whatever is placed within it may as well be in its own universe, for the bottle is proof against heat, radiation, sound, magic, bludgeons, psychics, hard stares, you name it. To a trader in enchanted objects, this might be worth, ooh, 200-300GP.

Should the delvers prise up the polished marble plaque, which is glued down, they will find nothing but smooth stone; but some words have been scraped on the bottom of the plaque itself (see **Appendix 2**): “Yt ys not always wyse to looke beneath.” This non-committal advice may or may not be helpful beyond the door... Howbeit, the plaque is a nice souvenir and would go well as a pendant. Because of its unique provenance, it's worth 20GP.

THE FIVE-SIDED CHAMBER

The chamber is in the shape of a pentagon and you are entering in the middle of the south wall. It is about 20 feet across and is well-lit by a high cartwheel chandelier. There are no other doors visible – no ordinary doors anyway; but a few feet out from each corner of the room is a trapdoor in the floor. Each is hinged at its outermost edge, and each has a flat hasp extending from its inner, opening edge towards the centre of the room. To either side of where each hasp lies there is an iron loop embedded in the stone; and through all these loops a thick rope runs, tying them together and forming an inner pentagon. The rope appears to have no ends: it is a continuous loop. By holding down the hasps, the rope effectively locks all five trapdoors.

Each of the trapdoors has a little brass plaque attached at its centre, and you can see that there are words engraved upon them.

Clockwise from the north, the plaques on the trapdoors read as follows:

<i>What purpose befits this powerful ball? Surely a sphere has no point at all!</i>	North
<i>When best friends grow savage and fight The bark can be worse than the bite.</i>	North-east
<i>Under the ground They who are lost Can sometimes be found But not without cost.</i>	South-east
<i>Some care more for mischief than life. We find a way forward through strife.</i>	South-west
<i>An army that fights Would slumber instead. The poor little mites Want only their bed.</i>	North-west

Detect Magic will discover magical vibes hither and yon: you can decide whether to require the delvers to cast one per trapdoor or allow one spell to cover the whole room; though be aware that the magic beneath the north trapdoor is 15 feet down. Those vibes are positive and *Cosmic*, but there are worryingly unpleasant vibes from the north-east and south-west trapdoors (*Metabolic* and *Combat* respectively), and a faint whiff of neutral *Metabolic* magic from the south-east trapdoor.

Much will depend on how (or indeed if!) the delvers open the trapdoors. If they simply cut the rope (which is about 35 feet long), foes will emerge at once from the north-east and south-west trapdoor, forcing them open and attacking immediately. The delvers might instead choose to stand on some traps, or tug on the ends of the severed rope, to hold the doors down; or they might choose to break through a trapdoor. As GM, you will need to be fast on your feet here, so be sure to digest the following information in advance!

North trapdoor

Beneath this door is a 10-foot shaft down through solid rock, and beneath that, empty air. In fact the shaft pierces a thin part of the roof of the black chasm in which the delvers recently played see-saw. There are firm iron rungs in the wall of the shaft, so a delver may descend with ease, if a little nervously. A pillar of rugged rock reaches up from the dark depths, terminating 5 feet below the bottom of the shaft. The top is about a foot square, and sitting unsecured thereon, barely visible in the light from the room above, is a golden ball. It is this ball whose magic the party's wizards may have smelt.

The delvers will have to find their own way of retrieving this item, which might easily be knocked into the abyss. (Warmed beeswax on a long pole might be sticky enough to pick it up – if anyone happens to have any...) The ball is actually a thin shell of glass, through whose translucent surface golden light can be seen roiling in slow turmoil. This is the **Globe of the Waiting Sun**. An *Omnipotent Eye* will reveal that when this ball is thrown to the ground and smashed, the sun is halted in its course across the sky for one minute. A powerful yet peculiar novelty...

Reality Check!

Curse that fairy!

North-east trapdoor

As soon as this door is 'unlocked' it is violently shoved open from beneath, and a huge ravening slaving hound bounds up from the tiny space below. He attacks the delvers at once. His MR is 150, with 15 WIZ, and he will fight to the death. (Like the ogre, he is very hungry...) He wears a steel-studded collar of red leather, the **Dogbreath Dogcollar**. This gives his already rancid breath an evil stench. Once in each combat round a random delver will catch this foul gust full in the face and suffer 1D6 damage direct from CON. This collar can only be taken off when its wearer is dead. It can be worn by people too, but at a cost of 8 from CHR...

There is little in the dog's little chamber but bones and unmentionable waste products. However, a good rummage will turn up **The Ring of Contentment**, an item (presently rather dirty) whose magic is so faint that a wizard can detect it only within inches. It's a plain brass ring with tiny rubies embedded on top, forming a smiley face, and it makes its wearer just a little more cheerful than they would otherwise be (thereby adding 1 to CHR). It's worth about 30GP.

South-east trapdoor

If any delvers fell into the chasm, they will be found in this little cell, barely conscious and pale as a sheet. They will now have no equipment, weapons, armour, jewellery, and so on: only their clothes remain to them.

If no delvers fell, then in here instead is a desiccated shrunken corpse, an unfortunate adventurer from a previous year. Except that, regardless of appearances, she is not quite dead. (Or he. Roll a D6 to decide.) The enchantment on this cell keeps occupants alive indefinitely, regardless of any wishes they might have to the contrary...

In either case, a delver who touches a 'person' in this cell – perhaps to help them climb out – will at once be drained of half his CON, permanent and current, and this life-force will rush into the inmate, so that her CON, permanent and current, now matches that of her benefactor. If the inmate was of this party, he or she is essentially back to normal – perhaps even healthier, albeit impoverished and ill-equipped. If the inmate was the shrivelled corpse-like person, her personality has been completely destroyed by the prolonged confinement and decay. The delver has essentially acquired a zombie slave, able to follow only the simplest of instructions and liable to get things wrong, but unswervingly obedient. Doesn't eat much either. See **Appendix 1** for stats.

Reality Check!

The delvers acquired a zombie slave and, with their usual paranoia, killed it at once...

South-west trapdoor

As soon as this trapdoor is unroped, 6 chubby green imps, 2 feet tall, flutter out on stubby wings, chortling raucously and letting the trapdoor bang shut behind them. These imps are bonkers. They are loop-de-loop, they are nutty as fruitbats. They immediately begin casting *Take That You Fiend!* spells at random targets, including not only the delvers but each other (and possibly any dogs, zombies or bees that might happen to be in the room). Only someone carrying the **Trident of Premature Death** is safe from being targeted. (The more targets, the safer the delvers, so as it happens, as far as the imps go, the delvers would benefit from opening all trapdoors at once!)

Each imp casts one *TTYF* each combat round, making no effort to defend himself apart from flapping about – which reduces an attacker's combat score by a factor of one-third. (They can't stay aloft for more than two or three seconds at a time.) They will continue casting as long as they have WIZ to do so, regardless of their target's *kremm* resistance, and will then use up what is left with pointless *Will-o-Wisp* and *Sparkle* spells! Stats for the imps are in **Appendix 1**.

Reality Check!

In my session the imps pretty much killed each other, with very little help from the delvers!

Once these bloomin' pests have been dealt with, the delvers may have time to examine the shaft below, which has iron rungs down the side. It descends 10 feet into the eastern end of a passage that is 8 feet wide. The passage runs west for 50 feet and ends in a pair of bronze doors. These doors bear a bas-relief of a fearsome dragon's head glaring furiously at the delvers. However, they are neither locked nor magical, and they open into **The Dragon's Cell**.

North-west trapdoor

When this door is lifted 144 angry bees fly out and begin stinging anyone and everyone in the room (including imps, hounds and zombies...). Each person in the room takes 1D6 from CON in every combat round – though on the up side the same number of bees are now stingerless. (After 72 stings have been inflicted, reduce the rate of damage to 1D3 per person per round, to reflect the prevalence of feeble bees.) A delver might choose to spend a combat round swatting bees, in which case she should make a saving roll on DEX. The level at which she succeeds is the number of D6 she may roll to see how many bees she squashed; so if she managed an L3SR on DEX, for instance, she will have killed 3D6 bees. The bees will keep up their onslaught until their 144 stings are used up, after which they will merely be a bothersome nuisance.

Reality Check!

Orphinian Vobositor the elven Combat Mage ingeniously cast Unlucky Bees here! I rolled 2D100 to see how many bees were in 'his' swarm and decided that half would sting the other swarm, and half be stung by them. This knocked out 76 brave insects on each side...

However! If some bright spark happens to offer the bees a bed of nice soft beeswax, they will buzz straight to it and settle down for a nap.

Attached to the underside of the trapdoor is a gooey little honeycomb. Anyone eating this whole will have his CON restored to full – not through magic, but simply because of its concentrated energy content. Note that this will not reverse the effects of any life-force drain that might have occurred at the south-east trapdoor: only current CON is raised.

Reality Check!

The players imagined a spurious bee/sunlight theme to the dungeon, what with these bees and the beeswax and the (coincidentally) 'beehive-shaped Chamber of the Scroll'. Much brainpower was wasted on the non-existent ramifications... 'Isn't honey harvested sunlight?' - Etc.

THE DRAGON'S CELL

The chamber before you is round, about 30 feet across and 20 feet high. At a dozen or more places around the walls there are piles of chains. The ceiling is breached by a shaft 20 feet wide, through which faint distant daylight falls to dimly illuminate the centre of the chamber, where large lumps of rubble are strewn. You can see no other exits.

Nothing unusual happens in this chamber until all the delvers have entered. A moment later a few things happen in quick succession. The sun commences its passage across that part of the sky visible through the steeply-angled shaft, hundreds of feet above, and the space below the shaft is suddenly filled with a cylinder of sunlight. The 'Chosen', he who carries the ebony rod with its scroll, is compelled to step into this light and hold forth the rod vertically so that the sunshine passes through it. The rod responds by glowing intensely for a moment with its own light.

Reality Check!

Hard work getting the twitchy delvers to even go in the room!

Even as this happens, the long chains fly out from their places and each remaining delver is instantly shackled about the ankle. The chains then pull back through holes in the floor, dragging the delvers and leaving them attached to only a couple of feet of slack. The shackles cause a burning, searing pain, and the delvers can think of nothing but ridding themselves of the chains: they cannot at this time help or hinder the Chosen or each other.

Now the Chosen removes the scroll from the ebony rod – which at last he is able to let go of – and discovers that the *YNSTRUKTYNES* now depict a plan for reassembling the rubble into a Stone Dragon. Urgent hectoring voices fill his head, and he has no choice but to obey and begin to rebuild the dragon. Correctly connected, the pieces of rubble simply stick together.

As GM, you can maximise the fun in all this with the appropriate gimmicks. As the sunlight arrives, set ticking a prominent and preferably noisy timer – a stopwatch or ticking alarm clock, for instance. Allow as much time as is reasonable to assemble your dragon model – bearing in mind that other players may be helping (or getting in the way) in the later stages, and that a little extra time for the pay-off is desirable – see below. That said, you don't want to allow so much time that the tension flags. (For my session I set the timer for 20 minutes.)

You need to swap the "ebony rod" at this point. I suggest taking it from the player to illustrate the 'glowing' effect. Rummage around under the table or in your GM's bag or whatever, and produce the rod with a torch inside it, shining its light out of the end. The more feeble the effect, the funnier! But of course you will have switched rods while inserting the torch, so when you return the rod to the player and require him to look at the scroll, your audience will be astonished to find that assembly instructions are now present! (You might want to withhold starting the timer till this fiddly business is concluded.)

Now give the pieces of your model to the Chosen player and stick a pair of headphones on him, through which you can play the extremely annoying **Stone Dragon Sounds - Chant** MP3 file to embody the voices (of long-dead wizards) in his head. The file runs for 25 minutes, so you should be well covered. Let 'the Chosen' set about building the dragon and leave him to simmer.

Meanwhile, dispense to each of the other players a twisty metal puzzle, explaining that these represent the shackles on their ankles, and they can take no other action until they have separated the pieces, thereby freeing themselves. Note that players with more than one character should be given more than one puzzle to solve...

It so happens that each shackle has a keyhole in it. Inserting the key that the delvers found under the boulder will release the shackle; but the key melds to the metal and cannot be removed, so this is only of use to one adventurer.

Delvers who free themselves from their shackles can help others do so (that is, the player can take a turn with another player's particularly exasperating puzzle). After that, or instead, they might choose to help or hinder the Chosen as he builds.

In the ideal case, the Chosen will complete the Stone Dragon – clambering around on it, as it is some 10 feet high – with time to spare, whereupon the voices in his head at last grow silent.

At the * below, you might like to play the MP3 file called **Stone Dragon Sounds - Yllburn**.

Once completed, the Stone Dragon is transformed in the midsummer light to living flesh once more. He flaps his mighty wings and triumphantly roars a great gout of blue flame up the shaft above him. Then he addresses the Chosen with a deep, angry growl:

* "Groundling, a foul enchantment binds me to serve you while the solstice sun fills this cell. What is in reach of my flame is in reach of my power. These other fools I hear not. What are your wishes?"

The Chosen delver (only) may then voice any number of wishes, one at a time. Naturally, the GM is encouraged to interpret these as perversely as possible, and to quibble endlessly. Players may discuss, but only the finalised words of the Chosen are heeded. The wishes are fulfilled by the power of the Stone Dragon's blue flame, so only things within this cell can be affected: it's no good wishing for a barrel of gold to appear in your home, for instance, or for your long-lost love to be brought to your side. But if you have always wanted 1000 WIZ, now is the time to ask; whereupon Yllburn will engulf you in cold, terrifying, yet (on this occasion) harmless flames that will accomplish your desire. Other delvers might also be targeted, although "Break those shackles!" might be a bit of a waste of precious time...

When the time is up and the sun passes out of sight, the chamber dims suddenly. Yllburn roars again and beats his wings so hard that they crack like a whip. Through a final blast of flame he shoots up the shaft to freedom, and if delvers are quick they will see him join Deepclaw his Queen high above, before they wheel off beyond sight. A day from now Yllburn must return, and will turn to stone once more as he plummets through the shaft, shattering into rubble again, to lie in ruins for another year or more.

Of course, the Chosen may not complete the task in time. It would be churlish to have brought the delvers this far and deny them reward, so I suggest the following compromise: Yllburn animates anyway in the closing moments of the sun's passage, and the parts of his body so far rebuilt (the 'sub-assemblies') flop and wriggle together until he is fully formed. If there were only two pieces at that point, he has time to grant three wishes; if three pieces, two wishes; and if more than three, well, he is compelled always to fulfil at least one wish. However, these last-minute wishes must be pulled from the Chosen in a quickfire manner: he has not left time for proper consideration. Indeed, one minute is probably over-generous: the Stone Dragon is chomping at the bit, desperate to enjoy his one day of freedom, and might turn on the delvers if he is forced to delay...

Another contingency is the smashing of the **Globe of the Waiting Sun**. This is probably the only time it would be of the slightest use to anyone...

After all this (hopefully frantic) ruckus is over, the delvers still need to get out. They have leisure to notice that there are iron rungs leading up the steep shaft. Of course, that is 20 feet overhead, so they still have a problem to solve. Possibly casting up a loop of rope might help – if only there were somewhere they could find about 35 feet of rope...

Reality Check!

After about 20 minutes, Melbor the Chosen (with help from Orphinian Vobositor and Denora Goldenwing) completed the dragon and fumbled through a few vague wishes about a good life and riches. Finally he had Yllburn teleport the party to Ye Stone Dragon Ynne, along with a sack of emeralds...

THE DAY IS DONE

After a tiring climb you emerge high in the hills – so high that you can see **Ye Stone Dragonne Ynne** far below and several miles away. It is up to you if you choose to return there for the night; but as you begin the long stroll down the hillside you can see two dark specks swooping across the face of the sun; and you can't help reflecting that, as country taverns go, this one was certainly worth the visit...

THE END

If the delvers owe a debt of gratitude to Calister Larridge, they should get extra AP for paying it – depending on what they offer up. The delvers may well have come out pretty well for a day's work, so there's probably no need to go overboard with AP; but teamwork was the name of the game here, and should be rewarded.

Reality Check!

Calister Larridge was quite chuffed with his new whistle...



APPENDIX 1: NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Name: AMRACH WYLLANDER, L2 Male Human Citizen (tavernkeep) ; **Age:** 49
Height: 5 feet 9 inches; **Weight:** 120 pounds
Hair: Brown; **Eyes:** Brown; **Demeanour:** Calm and dry
STR: 14 **CON:** 14 **DEX:** 14 **SPD:** 9
INT: 16 **WIZ:** 13 **LK:** 21 **CHR:** 16 **Combat Adds:** +13
Weapons: Dirk (2D6+1; 10-yard range); baton (2).
Armor: None.
Weight Possible: 1400 WU; **Weight Carried:** 100 WU.
Wealth: 71 GP and 52 SP in strong deep pockets.
Talents: Character judgement INT+4, Mental arithmetic INT+5.
Languages: Common, with transactional Elvish, Dwarvish, Hobb.

Name: CALISTER LARRIDGE, L1 Male Human Citizen (farmer) ; **Age:** 56
Height: 5 feet 8 inches; **Weight:** 130 pounds
Hair: Brown; **Eyes:** Blue; **Demeanour:** Friendly but reserved
STR: 16 **CON:** 15 **DEX:** 14 **SPD:** 12
INT: 18 **WIZ:** 8 **LK:** 14 **CHR:** 15 **Combat Adds:** +8
Weapons: Small sickle (2+4), sax (2+5).
Armor: None.
Weight Possible: 1600 WU; **Weight Carried:** 100 WU.
Wealth: 12 GP and 30 SP.
Talents: Hold forth CHR+6.
Languages: Common.

Name: IP, DIP, EENIE, MEANIE, MINIE & Mo, each L2 Fe/Male(?) Imp Wizard ; **Age:** 1
Height: 2 feet; **Weight:** 15 pounds
Hair: None; **Eyes:** Yellow; **Demeanour:** Crazed
STR: 7 **CON:** 13 **DEX:** 22 **SPD:** 16
INT: 10 **WIZ:** 18 **LK:** 14 **CHR:** 11 **Combat Adds:** +14
Weapons: Little claws (1+2).
Armor: Rubbery skin (3).
Weight Possible: 700 WU; **Weight Carried:** 0 WU.
Spells: Take That You Fiend, Will-o-Wisp, Sparkle.
Talents: Mad cackle CHR+5, Lithography DEX+3.
Languages: Impish.
Special Abilities: Can flap up about 4 feet in the air for 2-3 seconds on rubbish wings. Effect is to reduce opponent's combat score by a third.

Name: DECAYED TRAPDOOR PRISONER, L1 Fe/Male(?) Human(?) Warrior(?) ; **Age:** ?
Height: 5 feet 8 inches; **Weight:** 80 pounds
Hair: Straggly; **Eyes:** Shrunken; **Demeanour:** Biddable
STR: 16 **CON:** * **DEX:** 12 **SPD:** 12
INT: 3 **WIZ:** 27 **LK:** 10 **CHR:** 0 **Combat Adds:** +8
Weapons: Overgrown fingernails on claw-like hands (1+3).
Armor: None.
Other Equipment: Rags & tatters.
Weight Possible: 1600 WU; **Weight Carried:** 30 WU.
Talents: Shamble SPD+6.
Languages: Common, barely.

APPENDIX 2: PLAYER HANDOUTS

These handouts should be printed out and cut up, ready to give to the players at the appropriate points in the adventure.

Here is a tavern sign for *Ye Stone Dragonne Ynne*. Float a picture of your own dragon over the white space. (The picture becomes relevant at the **Into The Hills** section.)



And here is the version I used, in case you happen to acquire the same model of dragon:



Here is *Ye Legende of ye Stone Dragonne*, as painted on a board in the tavern.

Ye Legende of ye Stone Dragonne

Centuries ago, blue-back'd Yllburn was Kyng of ye Dragonnes, & turquoyse-wyngéd Deepclaw ye Queen. They rul'd ye skyes yn joye & glorye. But mankynde was movyng overe ye lande, farmyng & buyldyng, & Yllburn was anger'd by theyr presumptyon. Sometymes he would swoop upon theyr settlements & set flame to theyr barns & houses; yet they were too many & too far spread for hym to destroy them all. Deepclaw sooth'd hym, for ye skyes were styll theirs; but Yllburn's hatred for ye groundlyngs grew.

Yn tyme, Yllburn came to hear of ye wyzards of menne. He snort'd yn contempt at theyr paltry tryckes; but he learn'd that they had for many yeares been collectyng ye teares of gryffynnes, & knew that thys potent lyquyd held great magyck. Fortune favour'd ye dragonne, for one daye he fell upon a caravanne & set ye carts ablaze. Clawyng through ye wreckage yn search of survyvors to burn, he came uponne a myghty chest, & when he smash'd yt open he found ye flask of gryffynnes' teares that ye wyzards had been transportyng.

Yllburn drank down ye tears & roar'd; for from that moment hys flames were blue & almost lymytless yn theyr powere. He began to ravage ye lande, to ryd yt once & for all of ye ynfestatyon of humanyty.

But he had underestymat'd hys enemy. Ye wyzards of mankynde unyt'd agaynst hym & brought hym to ye ground yn theyr cyrcle, moments from destructyon; & terryble was hys rage as he struggl'd yn theyr enchantments. Then yt was that Deepclaw fell from ye skyes & plead'd wyth ye wyzards. To mayntayn peace wyth ye dragonnes, ye wyzards made a meagre concessyon: Yllburn would not be annyhylat'd, but turn'd to stone, & myght, bound by condytyons, return to lyfe for one daye yn ye year, under ye mydsummer sunne. Even yn thys, hys freedome would depende eech tyme on ye goodwyll & yngenuyty of ye human kyndreds, ye more to gall hym; & he must for a tyme put hys powere at ye servyce of hys lyberator.

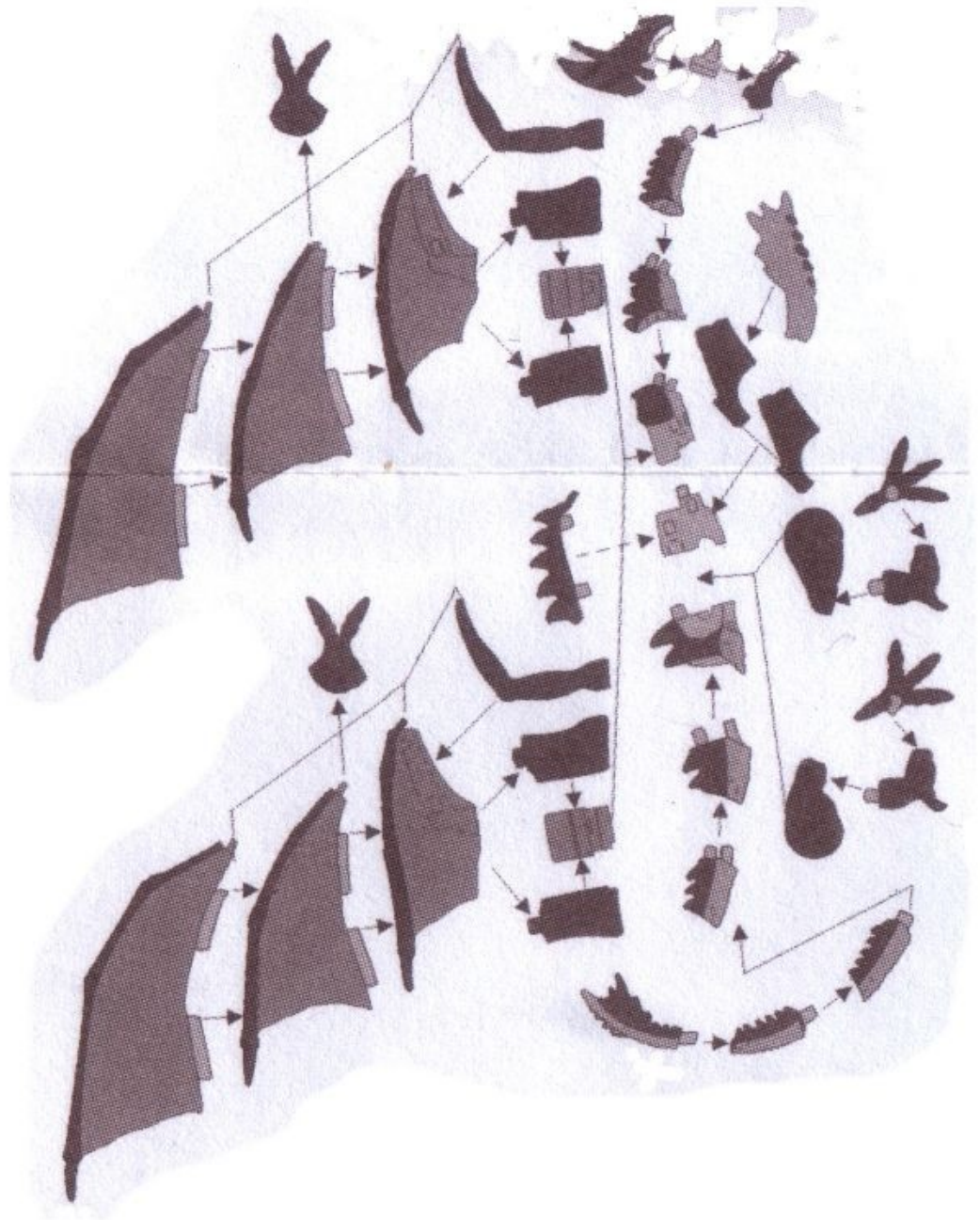
Though Yllburn yn hys wrath refus'd these & any other terms of bondage, Deepclaw sorrowfully acquyesc'd to ye bargayne, that her beloved myght be sav'd; whereuponne ye wyzards carry'd oute theyr sentence & transform'd ye Kyng of ye Dragonnes ynto a statue. So yt ys that eech mydsummer, Deepclaw hys mate soars desperately overe ye lande, dryvyng ye groundlyngs north to try theyr skyll yn ye pryson of ye Stone Dragonne, so that she myght fly wyth her beloved for one more daye.

Use this page as the original scroll (after trimming off this text), and copy it to a word-processor or graphics package so that you can add your model's assembly instructions for the later version.

YNSSTRUDCKTYNES

In case you happen to end up with the same model as me, here's the second version of my scroll:

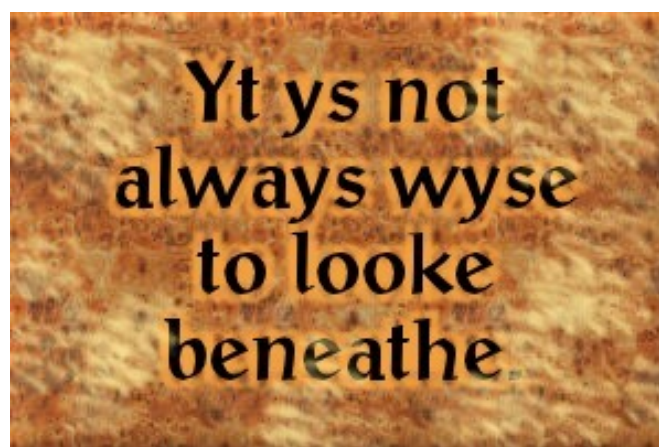
YNSSTRUDCKTYNES



This is **The Hidden Bottle** that contained **Ye teares of gryffynnes**:



And here is the gluey underside of the plaque:



These are the weapons to be found in **The Chamber of Three Weapons**.

The Trident of Premature Death scores 4+4 and is a two-handed weapon. It is 5 feet long, burnished red, and weighs 70WU. If the wielder succeeds in scoring damage against his opponent's CON or MR, then he must make a saving roll on LK. If he succeeds at level 1, one prong of the fork drew blood and the foe will die in one day. If he makes the roll at level 2, two prongs broke the skin and the foe will die in one hour. If he makes it at level 3 or above, all three prongs were fed and the foe will die in one combat round. (Failing the roll altogether merely means that the trident scored 'blunt' damage.) This effect only applies to one foe in any given round. The trident also commands the respect of imps, devils and demons, who will not and cannot harm the bearer.

This somewhat holy golden axe scores an impressive 12+10. It is a two-handed weapon, 4 feet long and weighing 100WU. It has the curious property that it cannot take a life. No matter how much damage is inflicted on an opponent, even if other combatants contribute, so long as the axe is involved the foe's CON or MR will not fall below 1. It also causes any foe on whom it inflicts CON or MR damage to immediately abandon his gods and religion and take up those of the wielder – so zealously, in fact, that he will later seek to convert everyone he encounters (which has the effect of deducting 5 from the zealot's CHR). For this reason the weapon is known as the **Axe of the Apostles**...

The Sword of Pure Cool Blue is not made of metal, but of the *idea* of metal. It does not 'see' ordinary metal, nor stone, and passes straight through them. Consequently this weapon will not parry metal weapons – but nor will *they* parry *it*, so the net effect is much the same as normal combat. However, the opponent's metal armour and shield are of no defensive use whatsoever, so any damage scored with this weapon is taken straight from CON or MR in such cases. (Wooden, fabric or leather armour remains effective.) It's also useful for assassinating someone through a wall... The sword scores 6+3 and is a two-handed weapon 5 feet long ; but it weighs only 10WU and is so easy to handle that wizards can cast spells at the same time.

Trapdoor rhymes in **The Five-Sided Chamber**:

*What purpose befits this powerful ball?
Surely a sphere has no point at all!*

North

*When best friends grow savage and fight
The bark can be worse than the bite.*

North-east

*Under the ground
They who are lost
Can sometimes be found
But not without cost.*

South-east

*Some care more for mischief than life.
We find a way forward through strife.*

South-west

*An army that fights
Would slumber instead.
The poor little mites
Want only their bed.*

North-west

Stone Dragon Solstice
enjoyed its world premiere session at
Beer & Pretzels
in Burton on Trent, UK, 3rd November 2012,
an event hosted by [Spirit Games](#).



My thanks to the bold adventurers!



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