

the **ABCs** of **RPGs**  
**ACTIVITY BOOK**  
mazes, puzzles, coloring



Ivan Van Norman    Caleb Cleveland

# What We Learn From Roleplaying Games

Some people sit around a table. A few hours ago, someone might have eaten dinner there, but now it's something quite different. The table has been transformed into the birthplace of an entirely different world. It may just look like a table covered in stacks of rulebooks, strangely shaped dice, graph paper, and maybe miniature figurines of orcs and sorcerers, but it is far more than that. This is where the magic happens. This is where those people come together to create a shared story of adventure, excitement, and wonder. And they get to eat junk food and make jokes while they do it. Roleplaying games, or rpgs, are something really special. They're special in the kind of imaginative escape they offer, and special in the kinds of skills playing them can teach us. There are many different games, covering different genres and offering different approaches, but those are just details. Let's look at the very essence of the whole activity, and see why it's so vital, and what we—both kids and adults—can learn from it. Roleplaying games are a group activity. You do it with your friends, face to face. You talk, you ask questions, you reason... sometimes you argue. Many credit the hobby with providing them with their closest friendships. One of my favorite pieces of "fan-mail," hanging in my office for years, came from a guy who described himself as a friendless loner who came out of his shell and found a group of close friends thanks to D&D. The social aspect of rpgs literally changed his life. For the better. While all kinds of games and hobbies have their place-- the strength of roleplaying games is that unlike computer games, even multiplayer games, is that they are a social pastime. Even activities like reading or watching movies aren't as interactive and communal as rpgs, which encourage players not only to be imaginative, but to share their imaginations with each other. (To be clear, I'm not interested in putting down anyone's hobbies. I love reading, movies, and in fact, computer games. But I love rpgs as well, and I love them for the different experiences they offer.)

One of the first things you hear from a new player regarding an rpg is "there's no board." They're used to Scrabble or Risk, but a game played mainly in one's imagination-- that's a more difficult concept to swallow. Some, however, point out that while there's no board, there certainly are a lot of books. A game of books and charts. Sometimes you wonder how the hobby ever caught on at all. Yet I've heard from mothers who exclaim that they couldn't get their kids to sit down and read even the simplest books, but after starting to play rpgs, those same kids spend hours pouring over big thick books filled with difficult concepts, challenging vocabulary, and extensive math.

Playing an rpg is not a passive experience. It's participatory. Everyone around the table needs to join in on the shared creative enterprise. Roleplaying games challenge our imaginations, and compel us to envision places beyond those we are familiar with. Moreover, they ask us to put ourselves into the role of another, and make decisions regarding what this imaginary person does. It teaches us to see things from the perspective beyond our own. That kind of skill allows people to understand why other people do what they do. This is a life skill that

serves us all every day. We see all too little of it in the real world, to be sure. Of course, there are those who don't trust rpgs because they seem pretty weird. And they have got some pretty bad press in the past. Perhaps the most prevalent idea was that the games weaken our ability to see the difference between fantasy and reality. But my experience is exactly the opposite. Roleplayers, it's always seemed to me, have a better grasp of what's real and what isn't than many people. It's absurd to think that because a player slays a dragon in an rpg that he will then consider using a sword to solve his problems in real life. Do kids watching the *Wizard of Oz* really believe that a pair of red shoes can transport them home? Do those playing Angry Birds go on to believe that they should fling birds at pigs? It's pretty insulting, really, to suggest that anyone could believe something so ridiculous simply because of a game.

I believe the real problem that most people have with roleplaying games is that they don't understand them. I get asked a lot, "how do I show my parents that rpgs aren't going to warp my mind?" My answer is always the same. Just invite them to watch a game session, even for 20 minutes. They'll see that it's not a weird, mind-altering experience, but instead just a bunch of folks eating Cheetos, making silly jokes, rolling dice, and using their imaginations. Compared to what a group of teenagers could be doing in the basement, it's charmingly innocent, silly, and fun.

In fact, what those observing a game might actually see is people learning problem solving skills. Because what is a roleplaying game other than a series of problems that you have to solve using your own creativity and imagination? The Game Master asks the players time and again, "what do you do?" To succeed in the game, you have to come up with good answers to that question. Fearlessly approaching a problem, knowing that if you understand the whole situation you might just be able to think your way to a solution-- that's the kind of mindset we could all use, even if it's to solve an everyday hassle, and not to stop a mind flayer from eating your brain. That's another life skill that will prove invaluable in a variety of situations. Roleplaying games offer a unique opportunity for all concerned that simply can't be replaced by other pastimes. Introducing kids to them early—or even the general concepts behind them—is a fantastic thing to do. Through the ABCs of RPGs, you open up a whole new world of exciting exploits and imaginative journeys for children, so that they can be ready when the call to adventure comes. Personally, I started playing rpgs very early on, and I know that regardless of where my real life takes me, I'll be a roleplaying gamer for life. In fact, I may just start the first roleplaying game retirement home one day, where my friends and I can roll dice and fight orcs in a twilight years. I can think of no better way to fill that time than with excitement, imagination, and *Star Wars* references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monte Cook', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Monte Cook

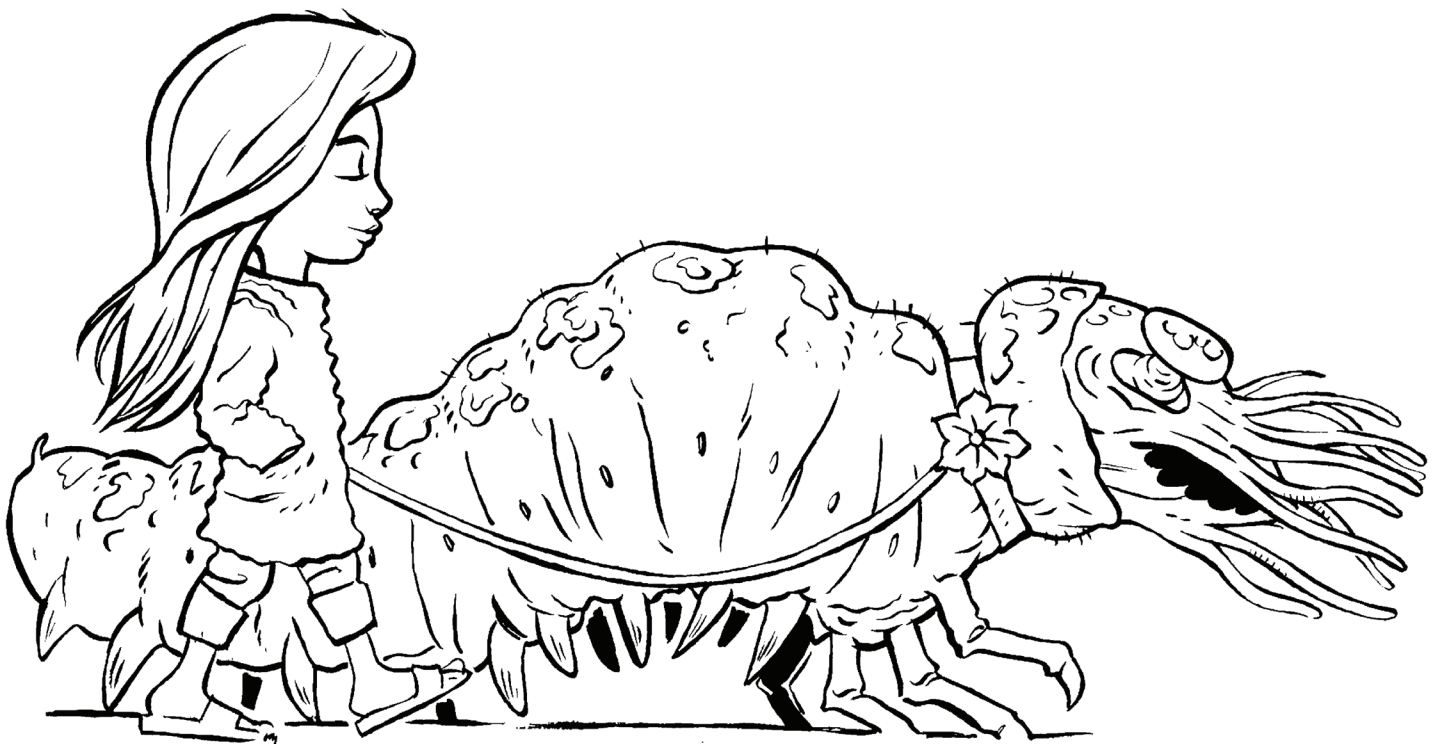
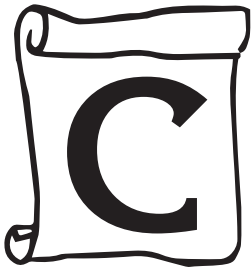
A





**B**





Color your own Dragon Mask! Have a grown-up help you cut it out first!



Frost giants can't get very far without legs. Draw some for him!





D

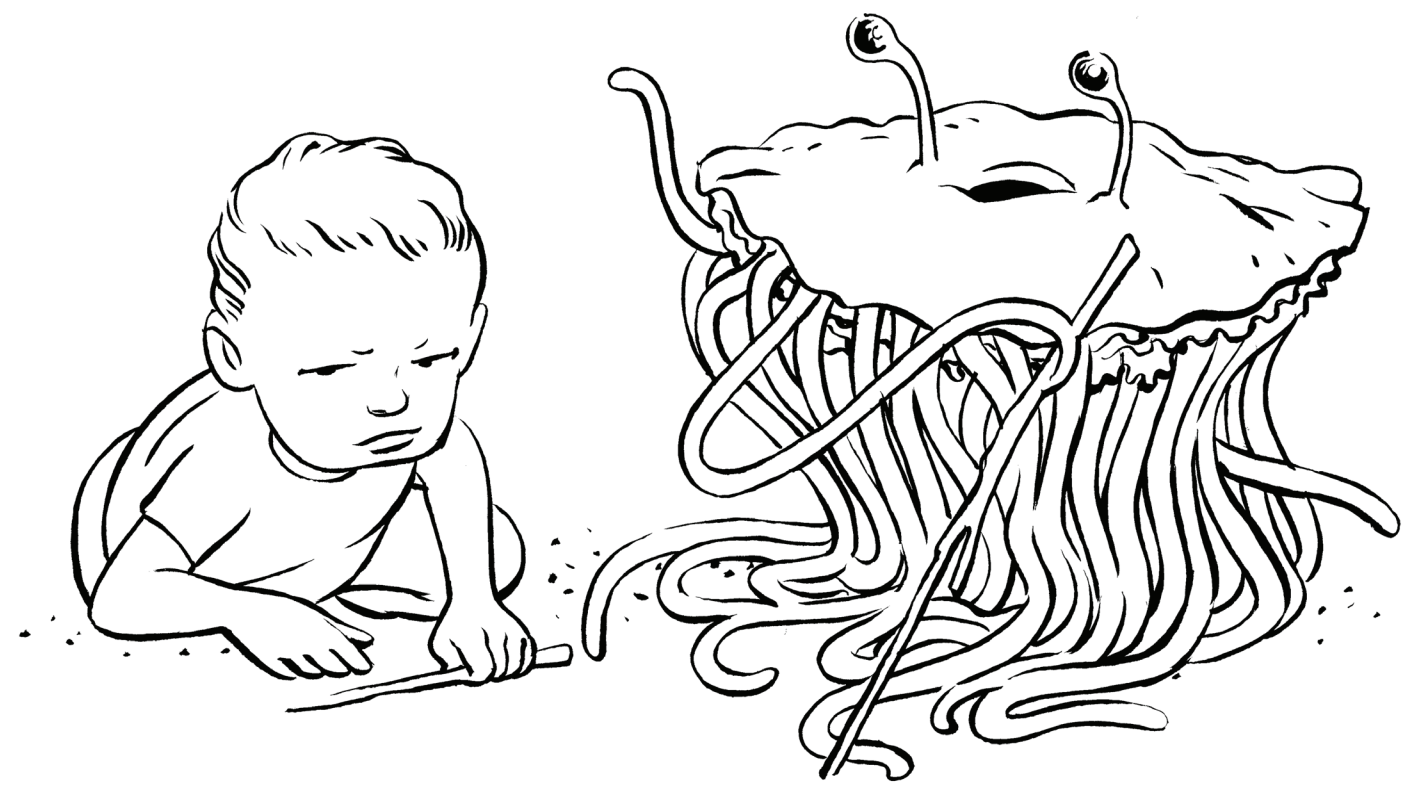




E



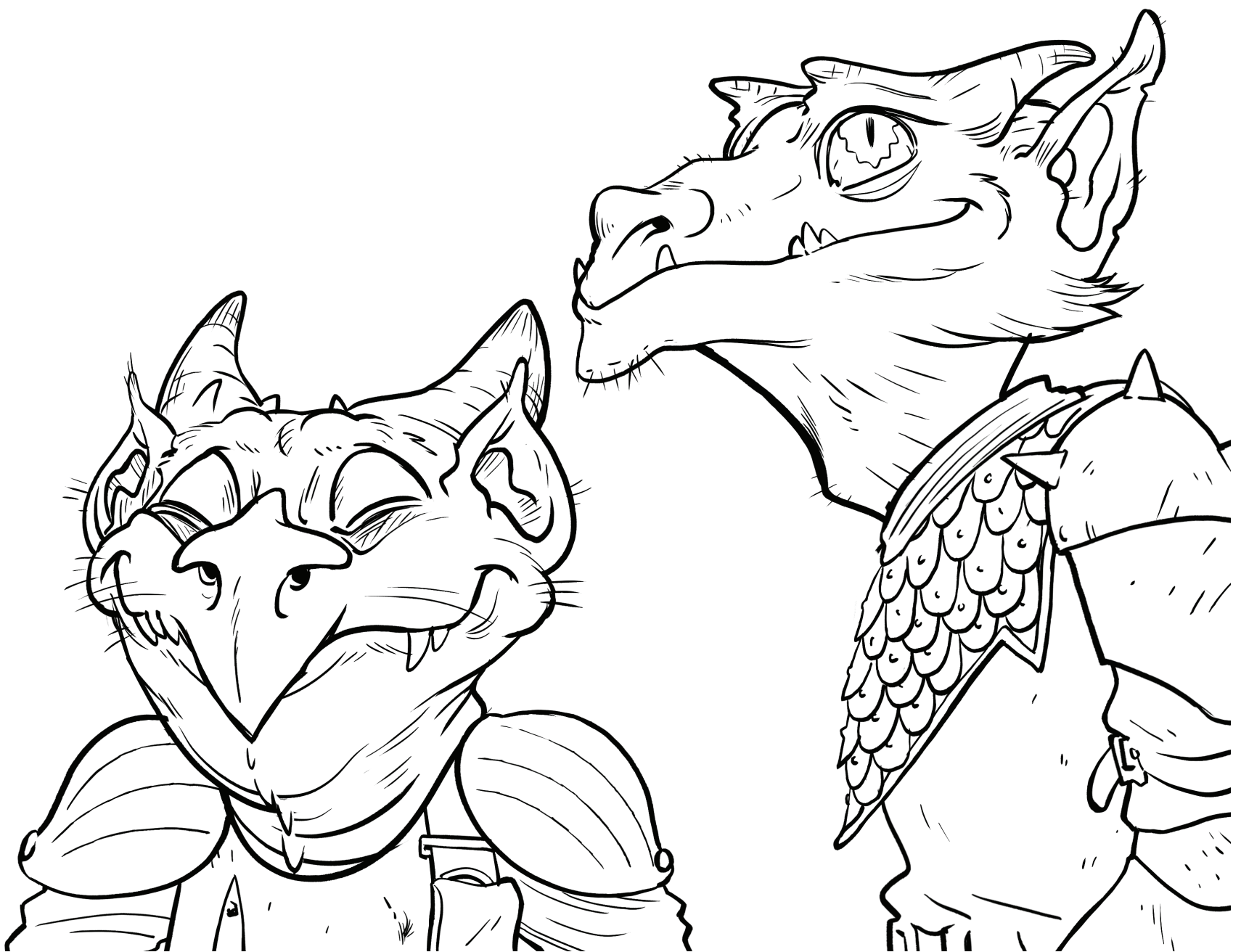
F



These kobolds seem pretty happy...



Why do you think it is? Maybe draw them some fancy hats or what they are thinking of!



G



H



I

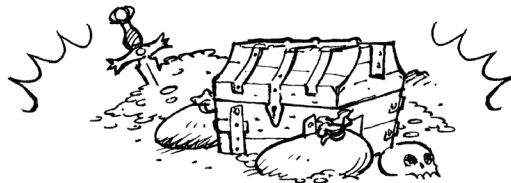
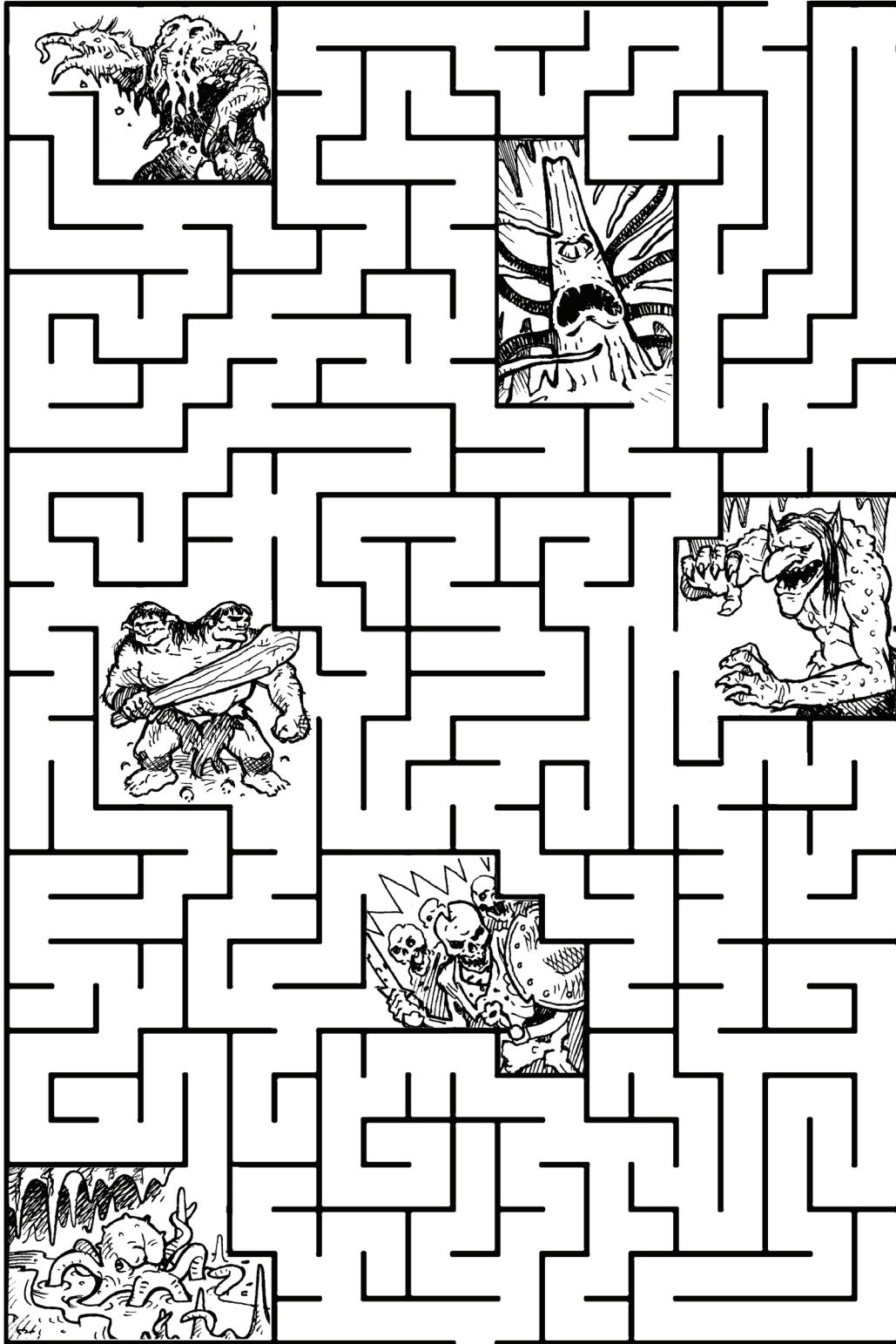




J



Help the adventurers  
navigate the dungeon!



# Word Search

B E N S N X V P V E C H A R A C T E R C  
Y M Q M U L C D J D D X O J I W N M F K  
Q J O A D J L C R O G U E B C L N D L K  
H Z Y T I R E T X E D E O U Y E I D E P  
P X C P N I R L W V C Z C Y B P L E F C  
Y E P D Z U I S C C H S N W K S B D Z Y  
J W U O P A C W A A Y K B R H I O T N K  
L R C R D T Y Y L L X N C S N D G G L W  
D C L U Q R E V I T A I T I N I W Z R E  
I I Q H H P A Z C H L N O C H V J E O O  
N D U L O A A Z L E E J I J S A Y C M B  
N R T R L R I Q I C R G R E O K O X L I  
M A R Y D T O R N W A C B T W I R W X D  
J G B M B Y Y E O D Z V O T B S X K D C  
D O A F M B I C L M Z K H Z C T D O H L  
L N L Y B R P W I O R F I Q U U W X N A  
E O R L E E B H I G P A I G E X A D Y S  
A M B P N R F U W K A P H R U Q R O Q S  
P M X I X Z Q B C H Q M Y W Z A F P E Q  
F E B E G C Y C L O P S M U B Y R F R Z

CLASS

DISPEL

ELF

DWARF

GOBLIN

PARTY

EXPERIENCE

INITIATIVE

CYCLOPS

LIZARDMAN

ARMOR

CHARACTER

CLERIC

DRUID

ROGUE

WIZARD

BARD

DEXTERITY

DRAGON

MAGIC

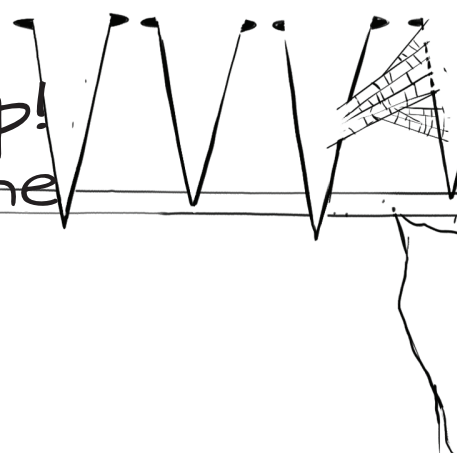
K

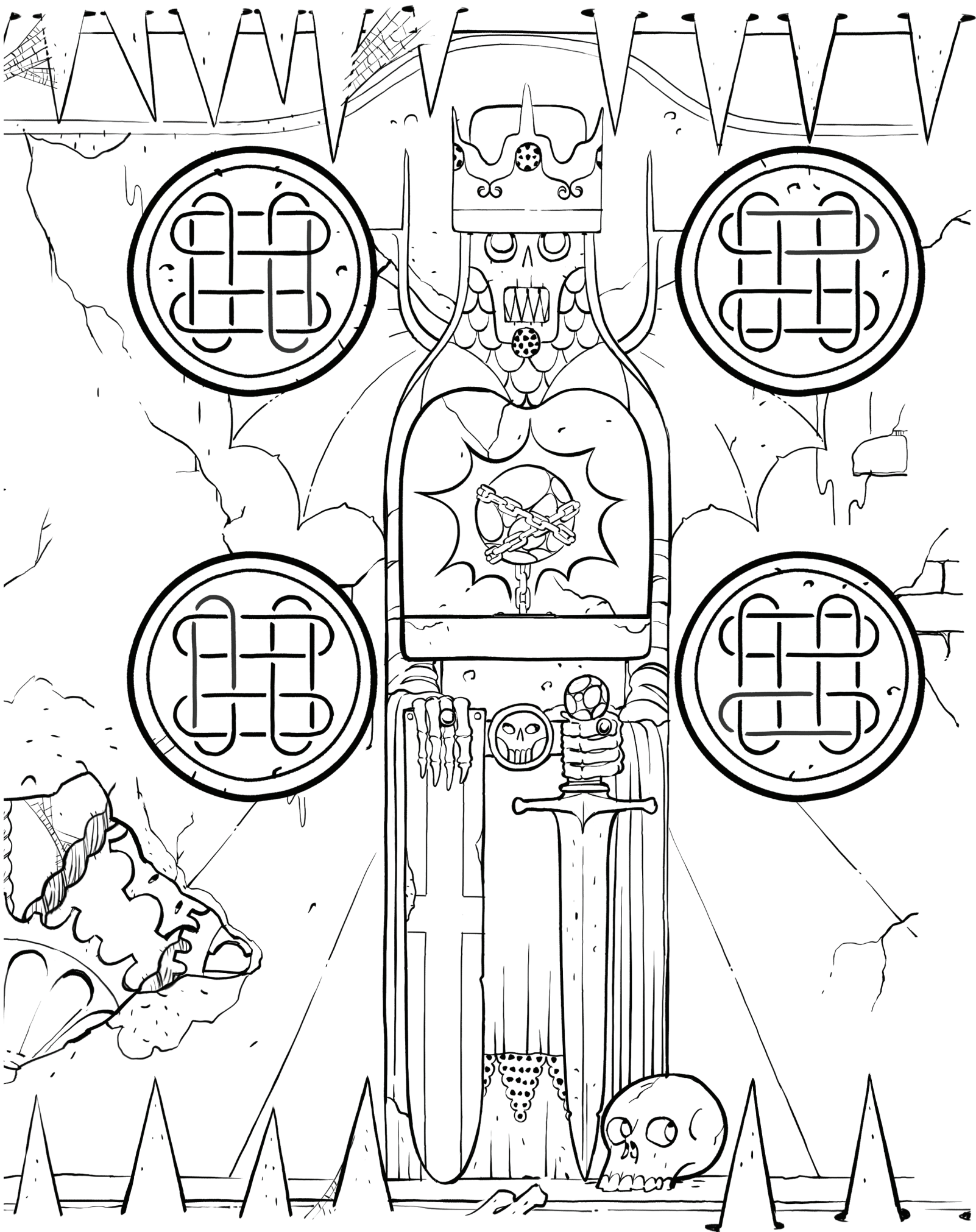




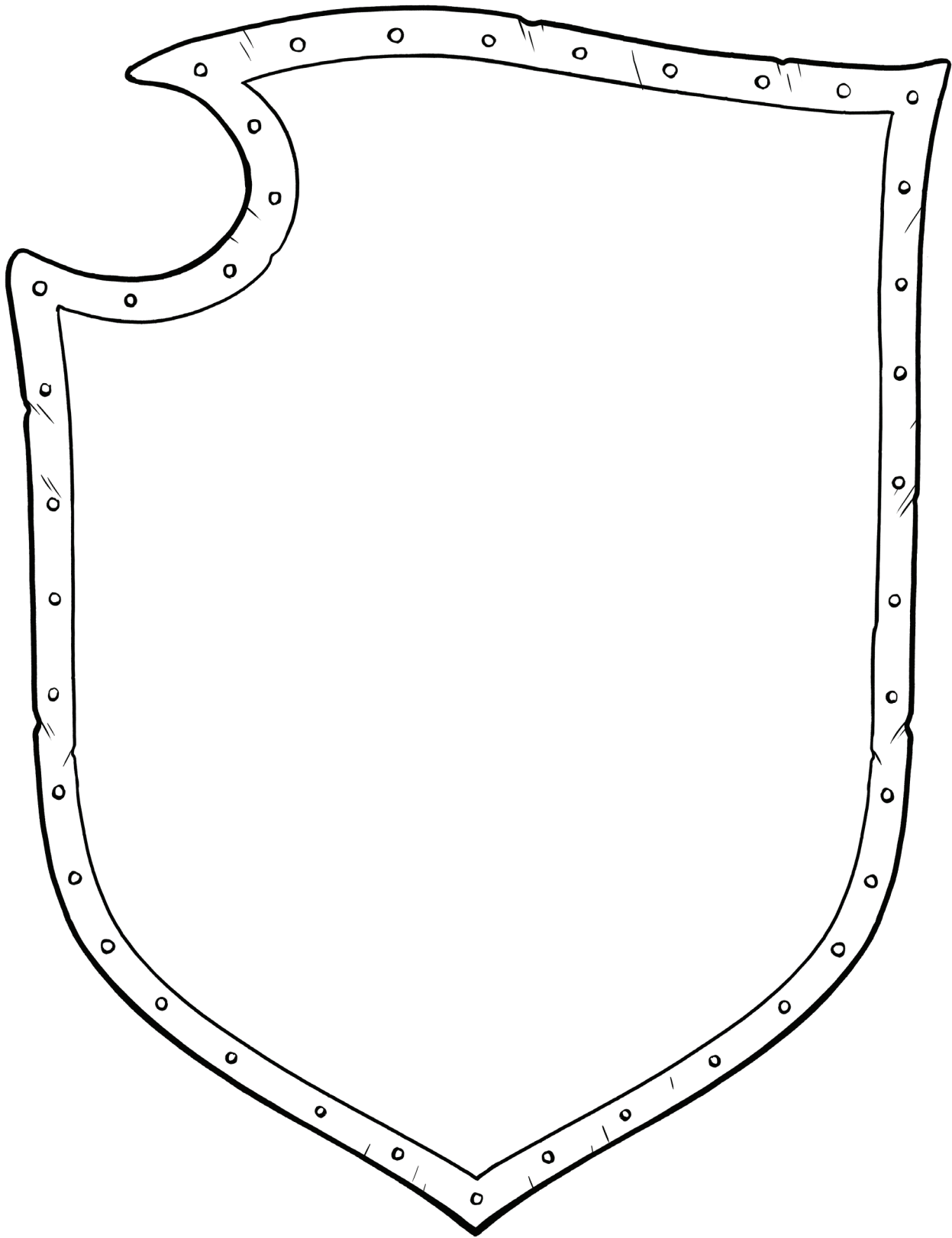
L

Help the Rogue disarm the trap!  
Find the matching symbol on the  
other page.





You can't be a great knight without a  
coat of arms



What is in your coat of arms?



M



The Liche's lifeforce is hidden  
inside a unsuspecting Object,  
...what is it?



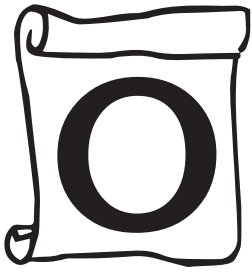
N



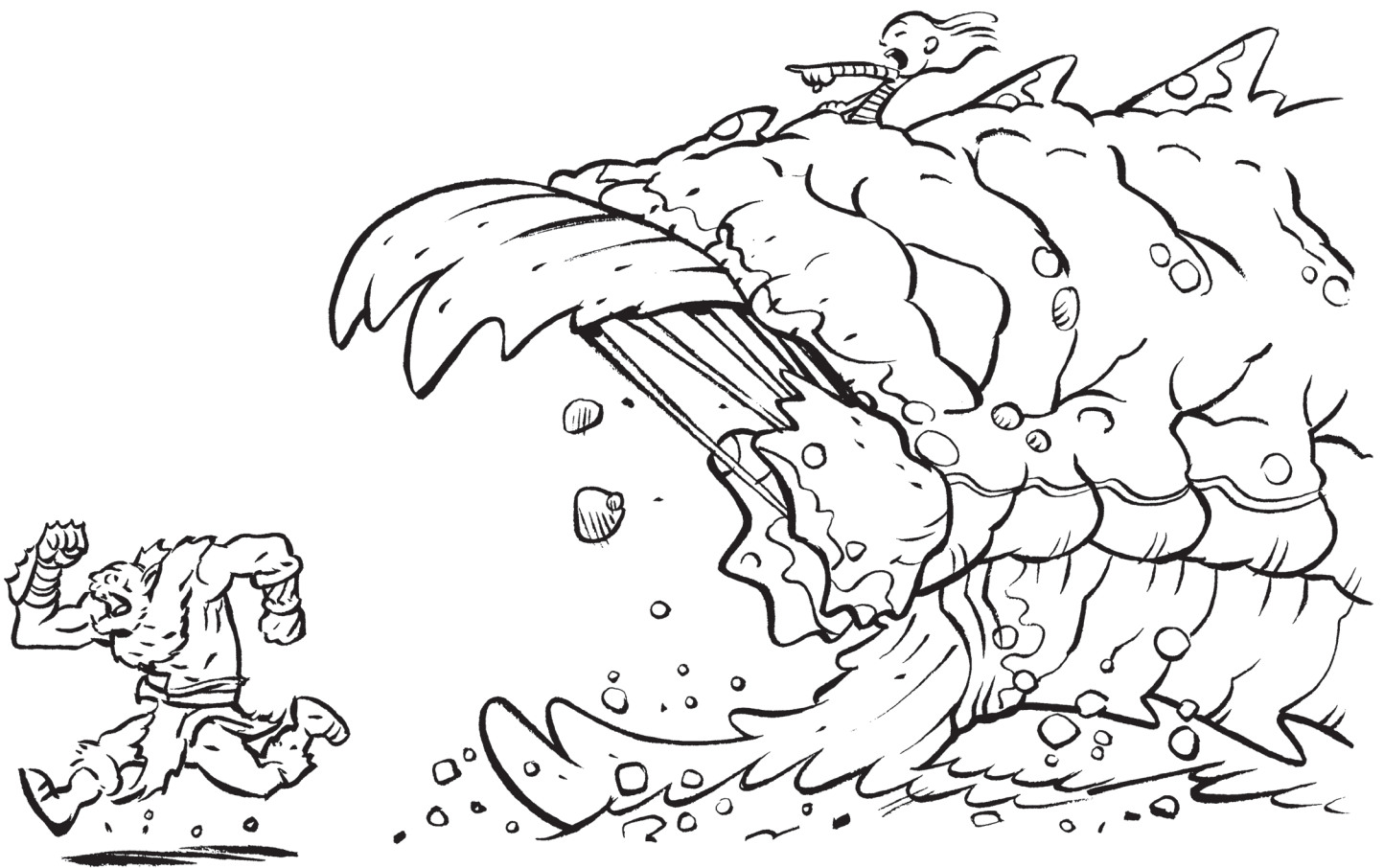


Draw the Dragon's  
Breath Weapon!





P

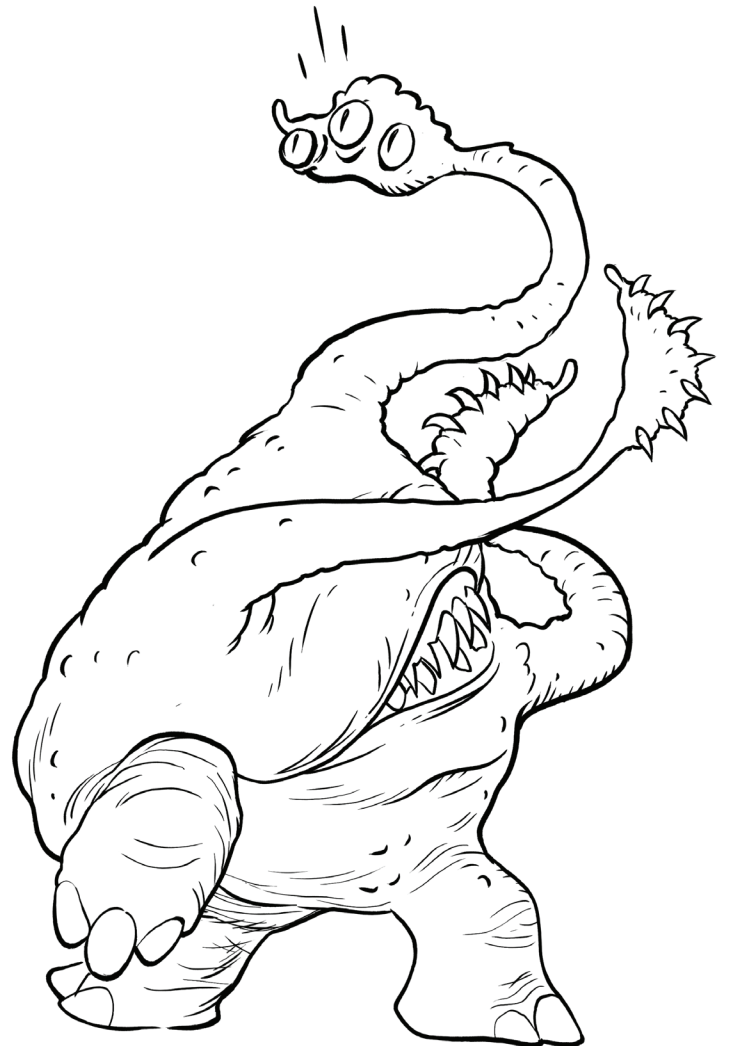


Q





Something has grossed out the Neo-Otyugh, what is it?



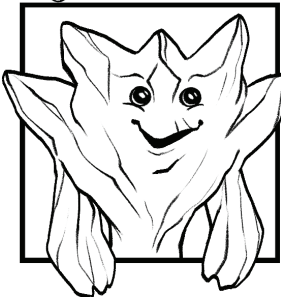
Connect the dots to finish the picture of Vex and Vax!



Draw the Tattoos on  
Grog the Barbarian!



Percy needs help matching the baby animals to their names, can you help him?



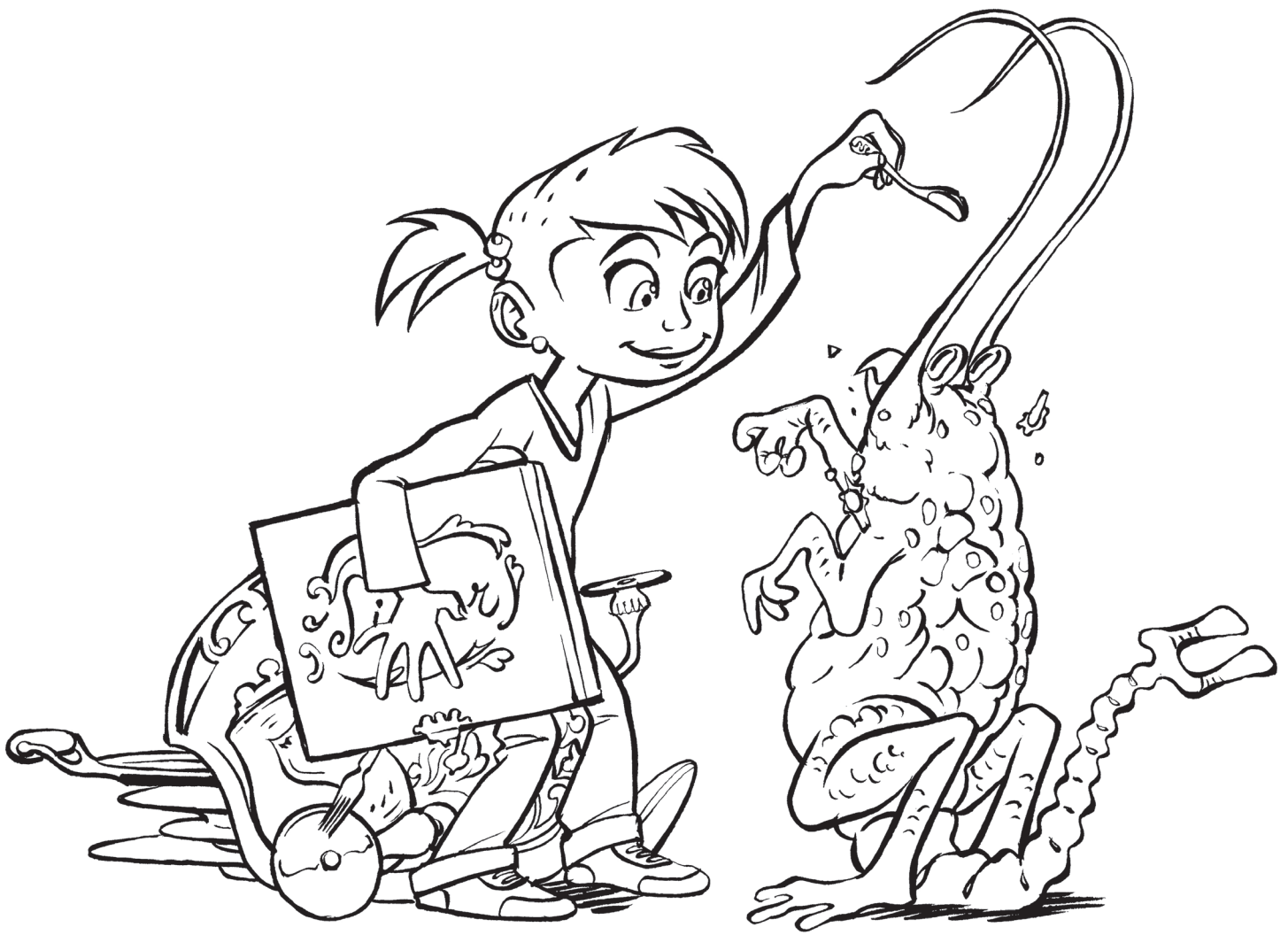
**Owlbear**

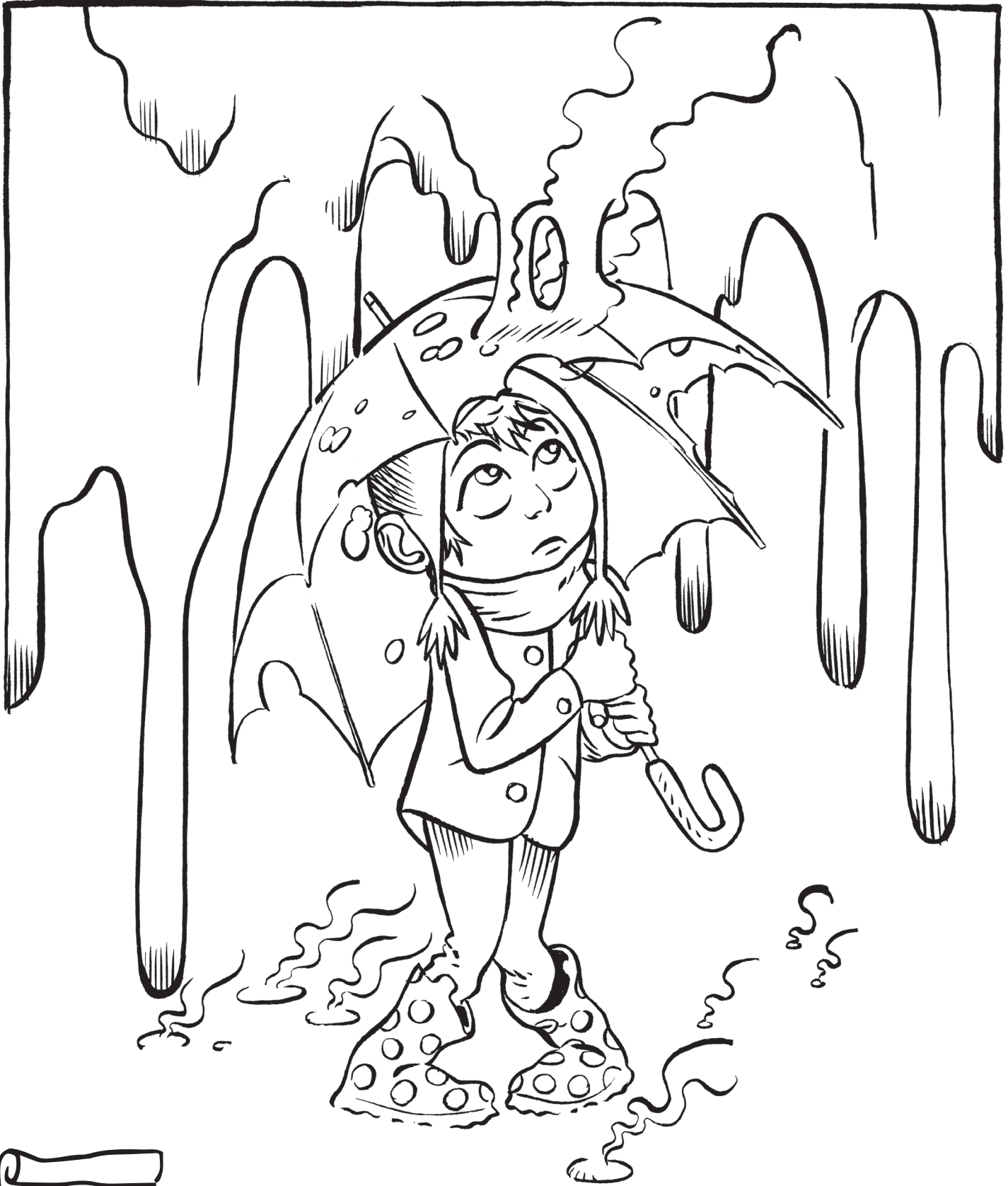
**Dragon**

**Rakshasa**

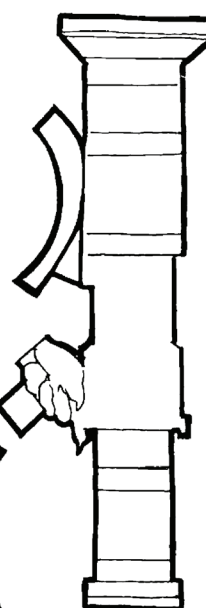
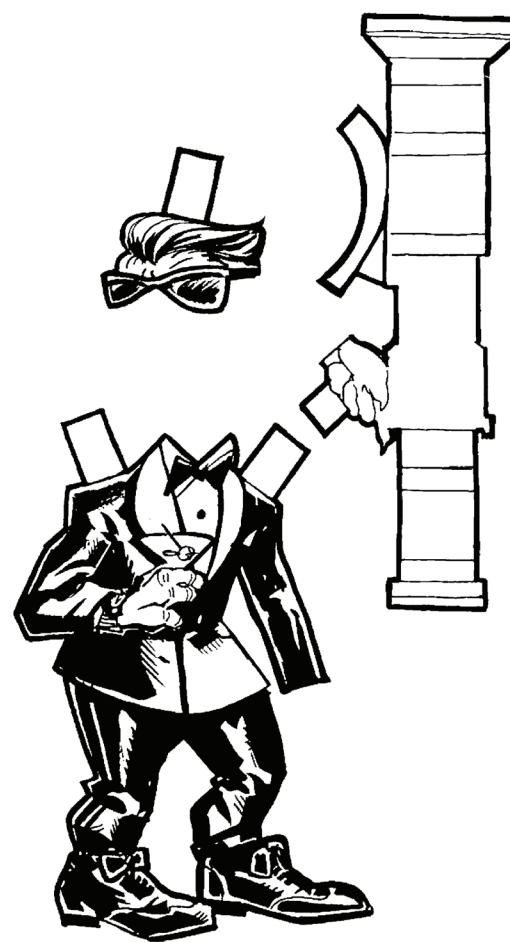
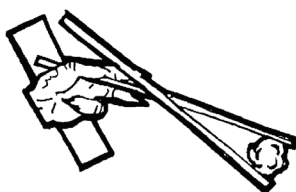
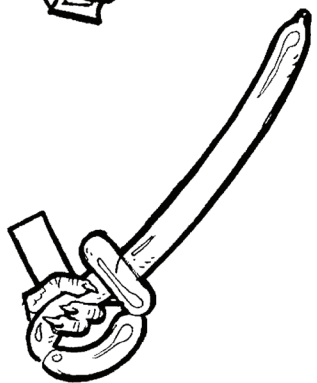
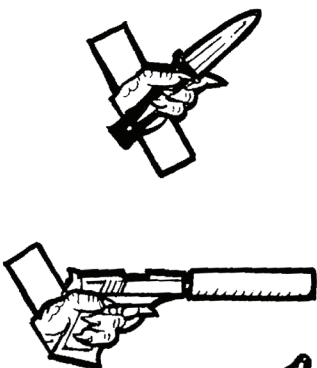
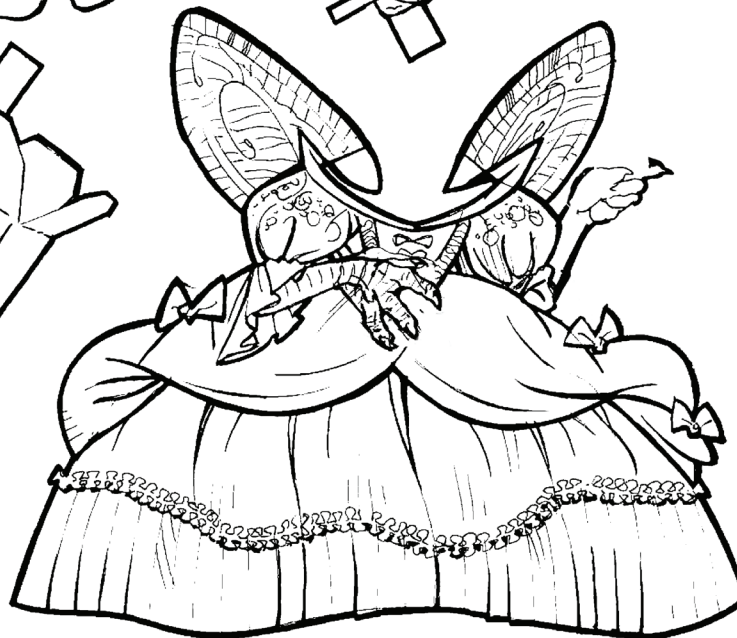
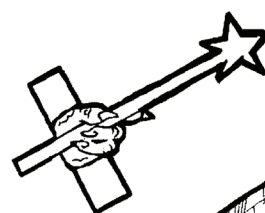
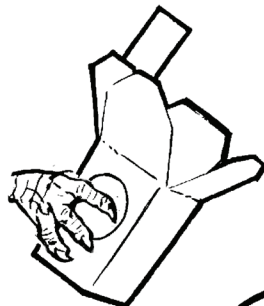
**Elementalite**

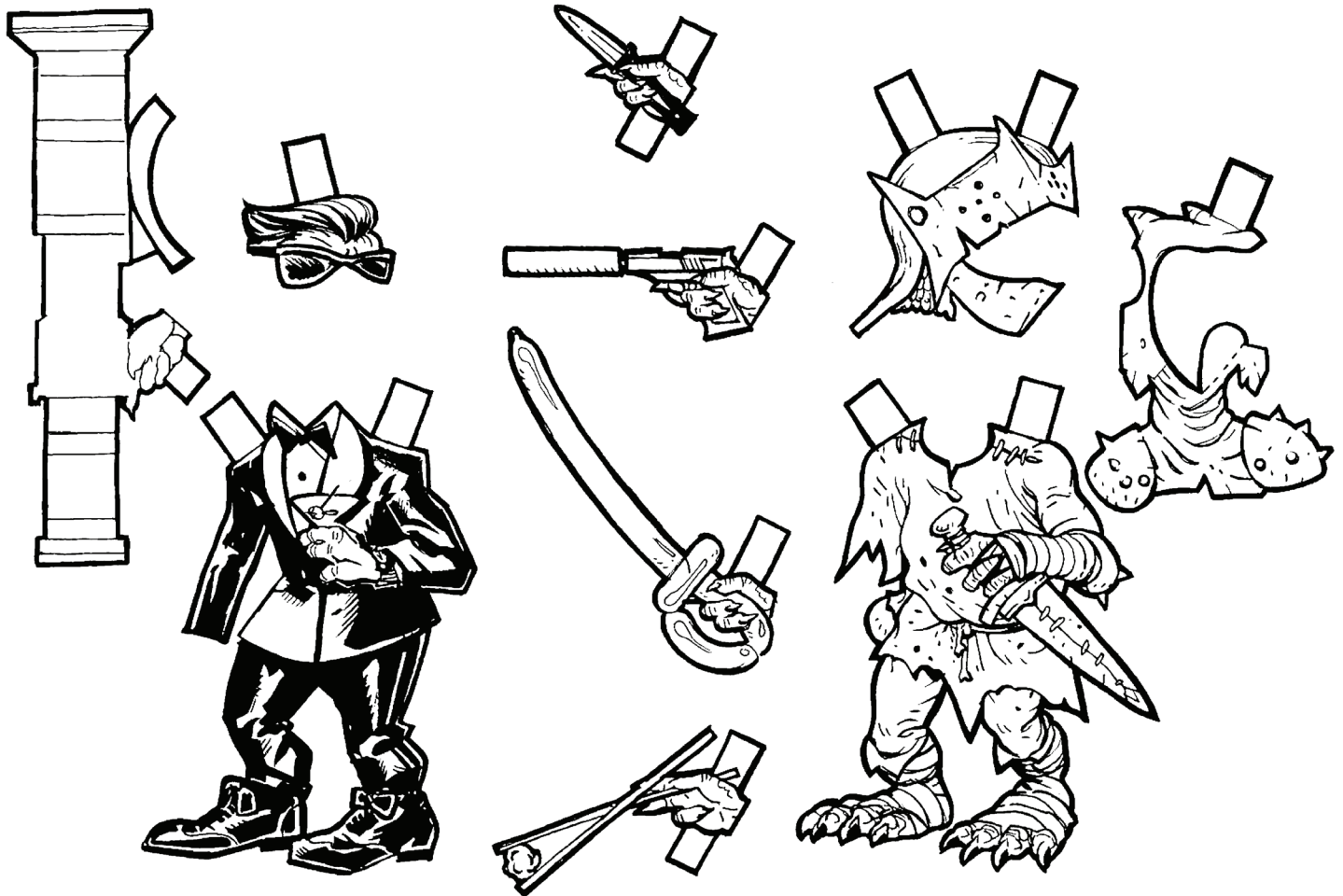
R





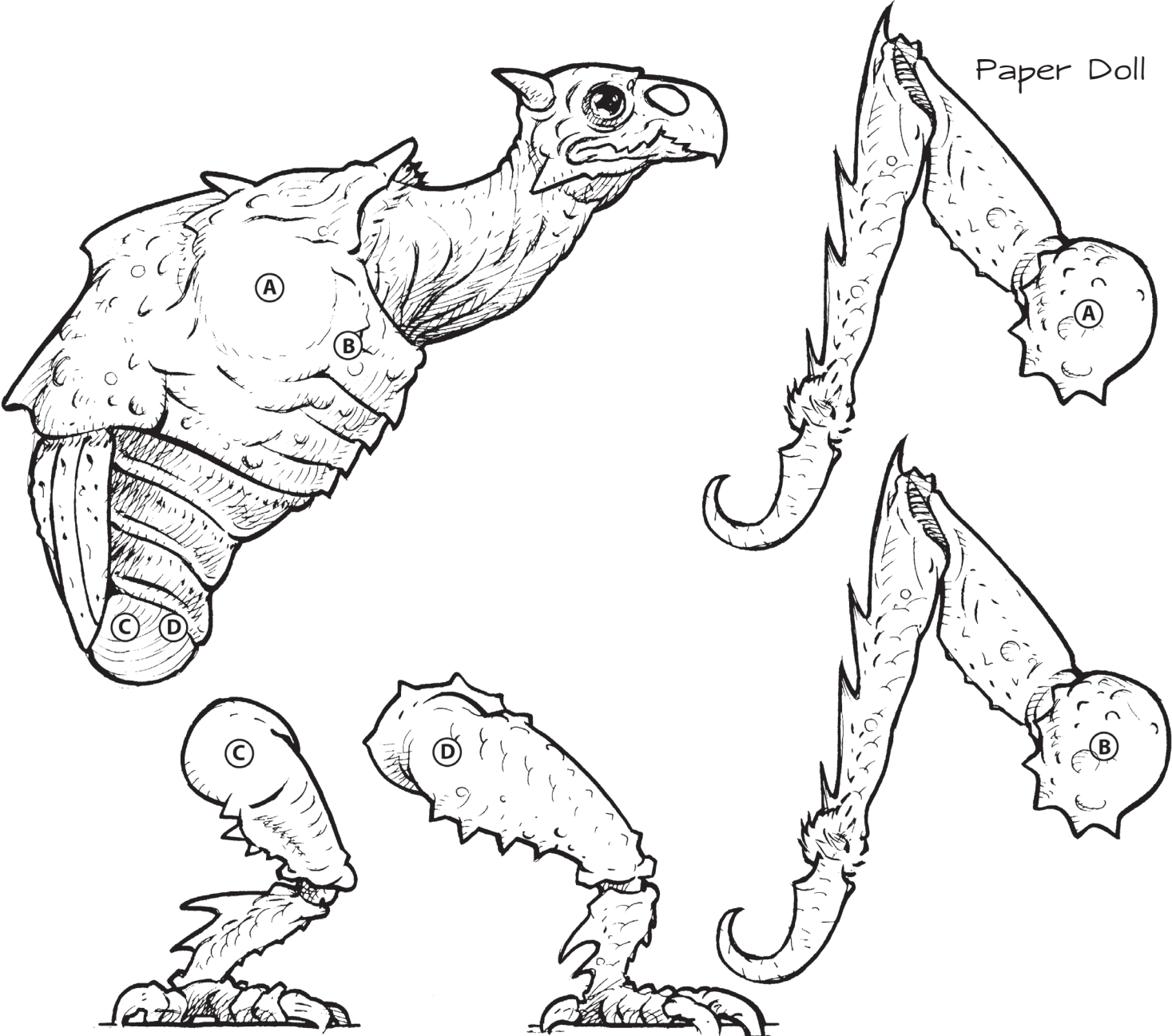
S

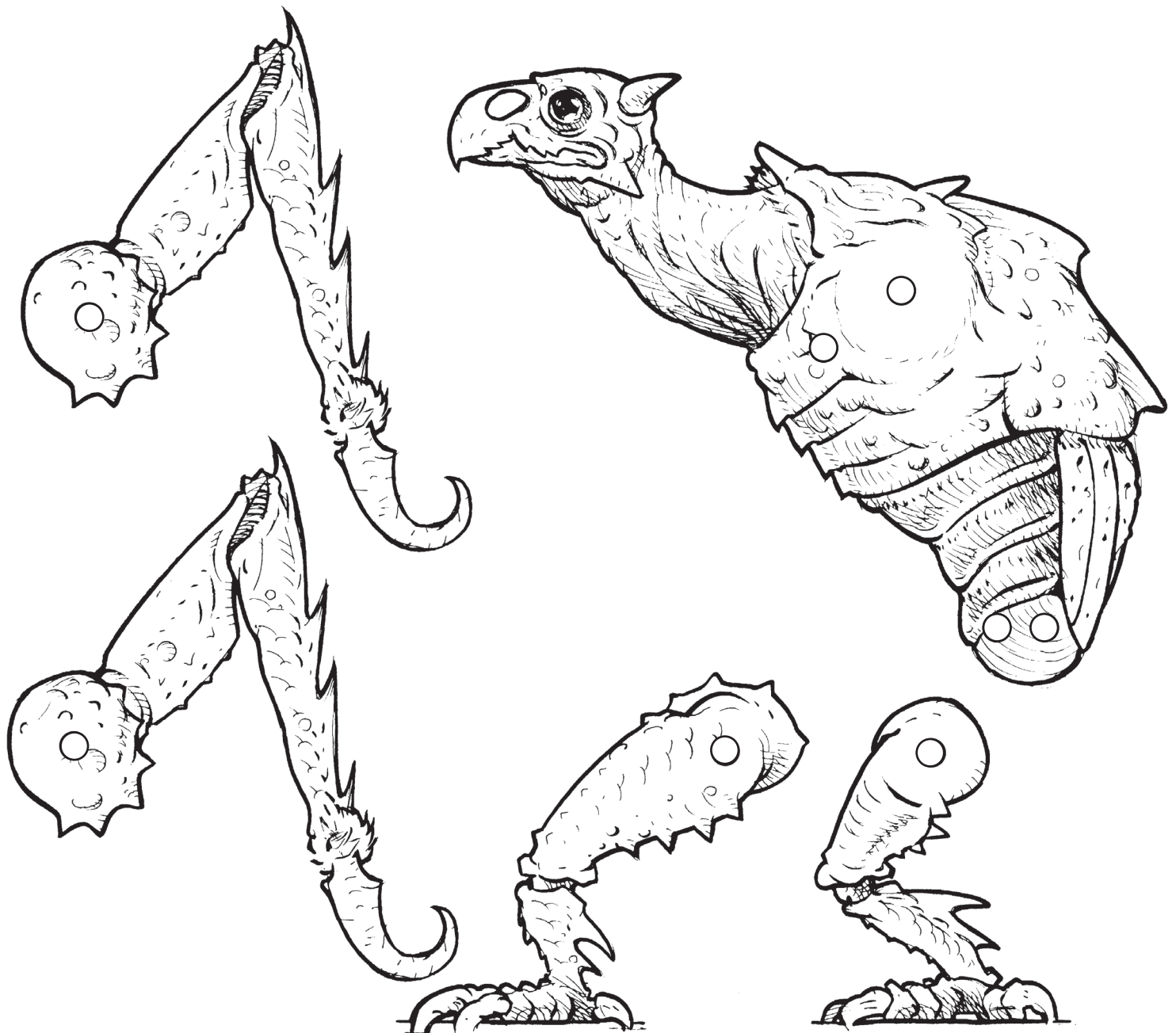




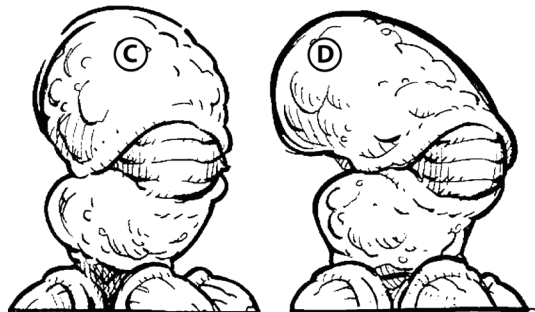
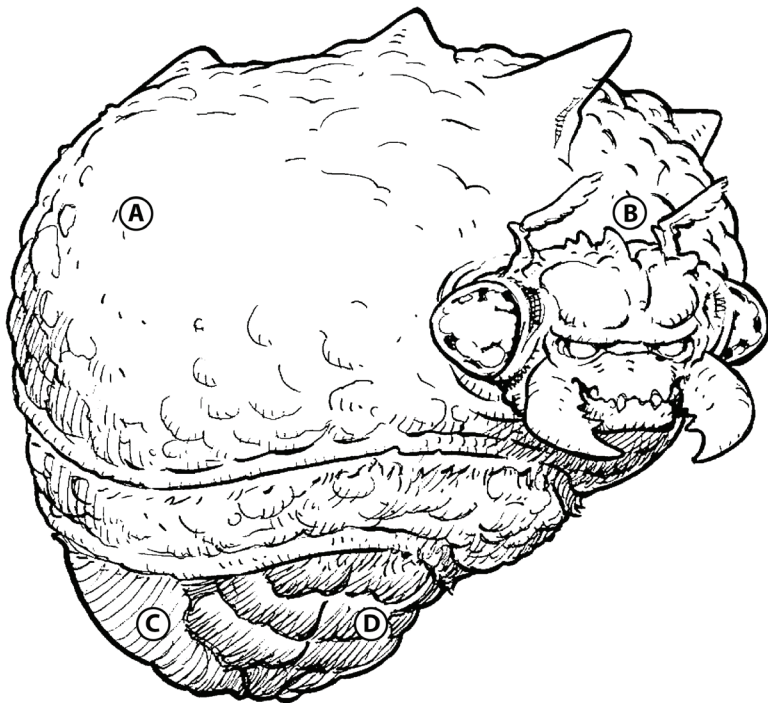


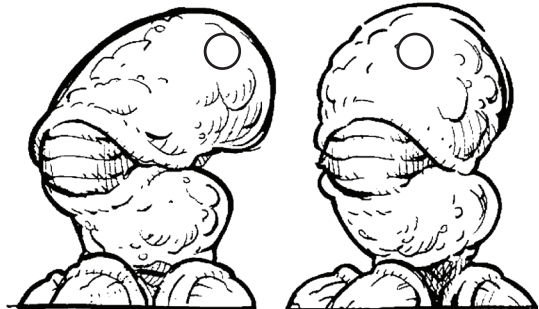
Paper Doll





Make your own Uber-Hulking Monster.  
Assemble your giant using materials  
from home!





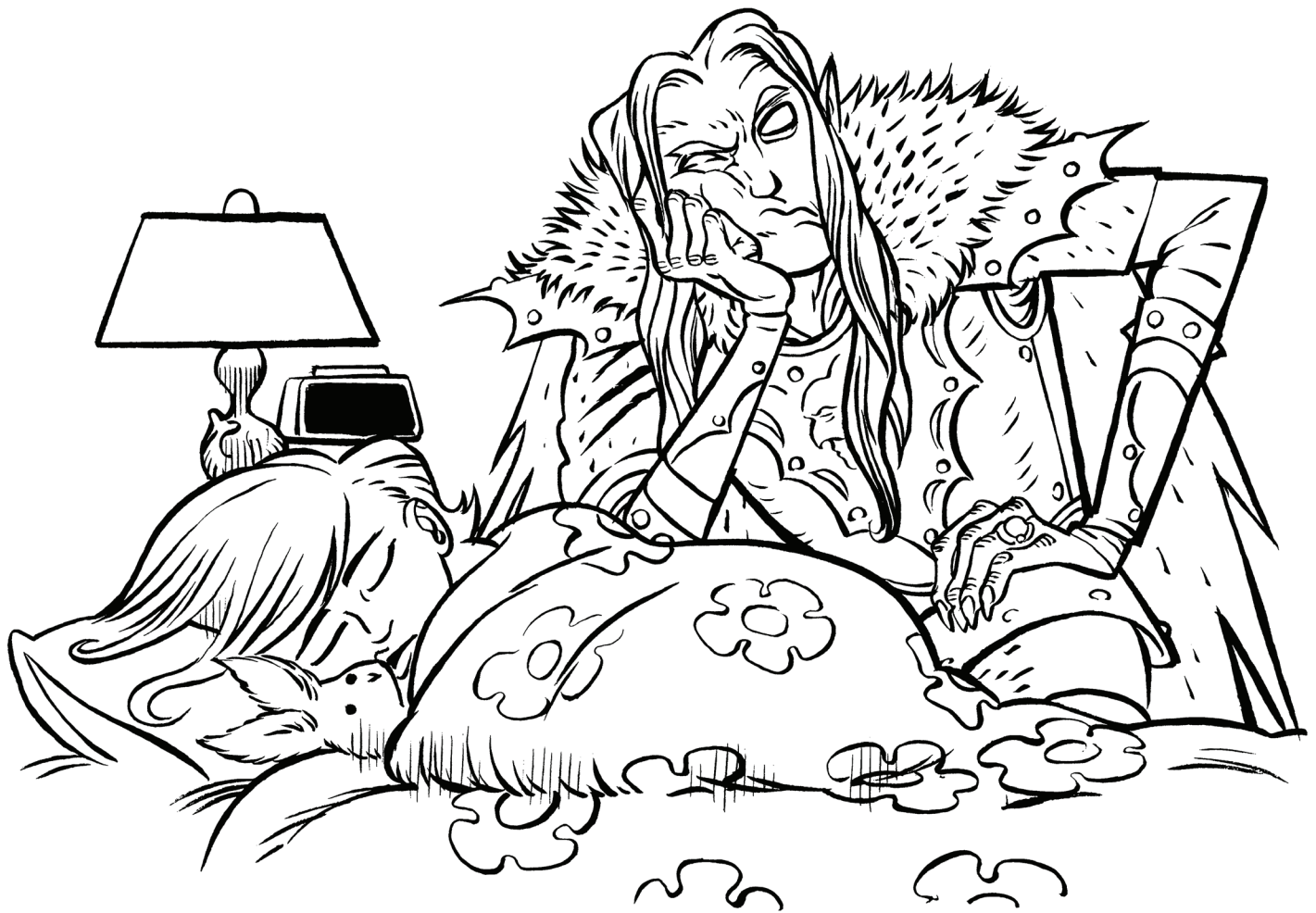
T



U



V

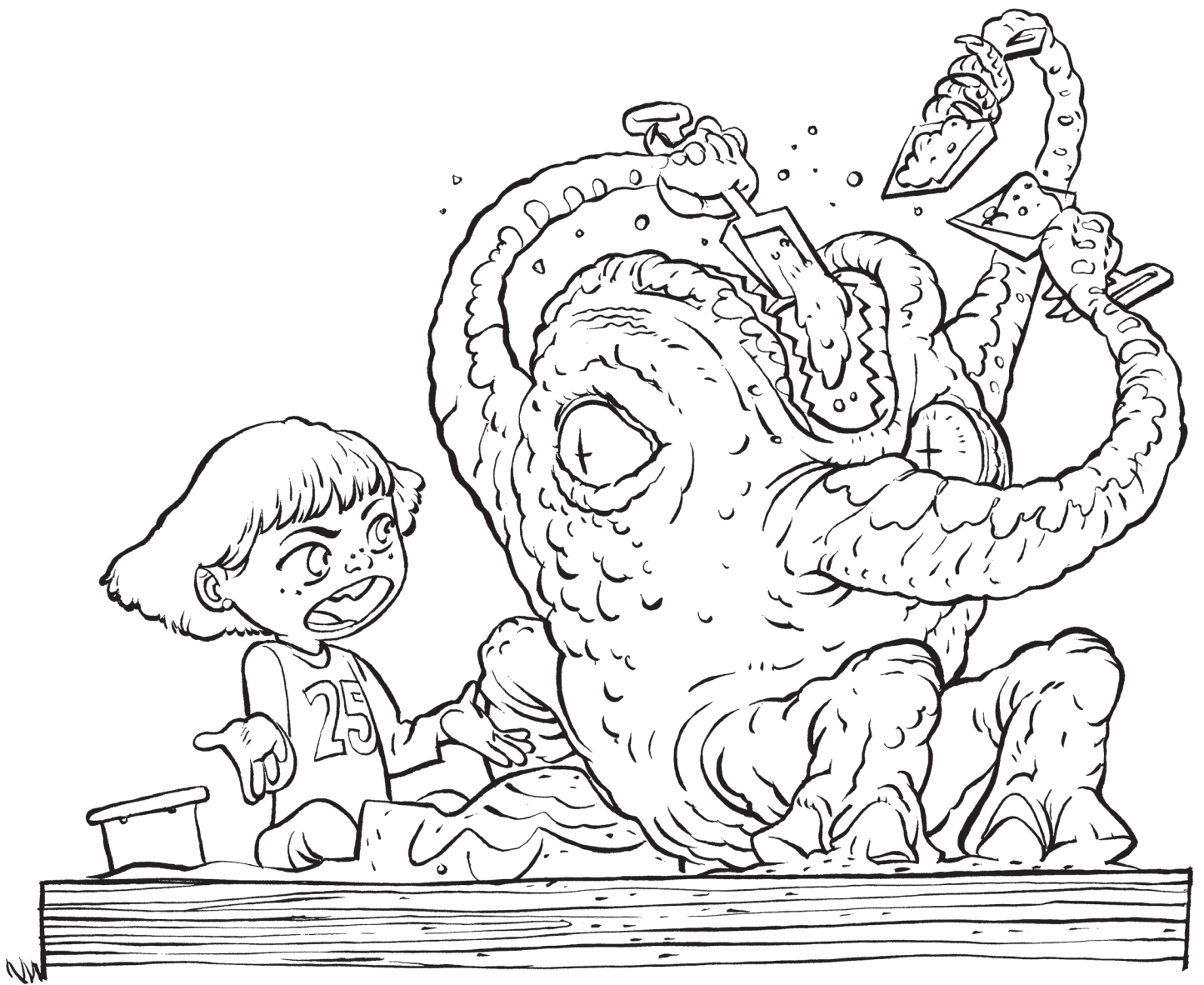


W





X

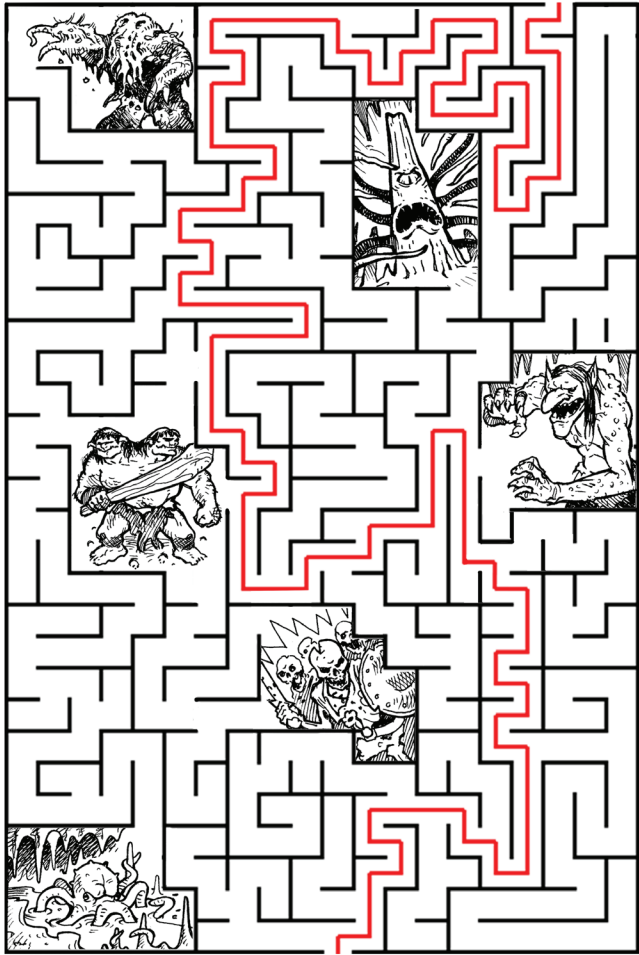


Y





# Solutions



B E N S N X V P V E **C H A R A C T E R** C  
 Y M Q M U L **C** D J D D X O J I W N M **F** K  
 Q J O A D J L **C R O G U E** B C L N D L K  
 H Z **Y T I R E T X E D** E O U Y **E I D E** P  
 P X C P N I R L W V C Z C Y B P L E F C  
 Y E P D Z U I S C C H S N W K S **B** D Z Y  
 J W U O P A C W A A Y K B R H I O T N K  
 L R C R **D** T Y Y L L X N C S N **D** G G L W  
**D** C L U Q **R E V I T A I T I N I** W Z R E  
 I I Q H H P A Z C H L N O C H V J E O O  
 N D U L O A A Z L E E J I J S A Y C M B  
 N R T R L R I Q I C R G R E O K O X L I  
 M A R Y D T O R N W A C B T W I R W X D  
 J G B M B Y E O D Z V O T B S X K D **C**  
 D O A F M B I C L M Z K H Z C T **D** O H L  
 L N L Y B R P W I O R F I Q U U W X N A  
 E O R L E E B H I G P A I G E X A D Y S  
 A M B P N R F U W K A P H R U Q R O Q S  
 P M X I X Z Q B C H Q M Y W Z A F P E Q  
 F E B E G **C Y C L O P S** M U B Y R F R Z

