

Shards of the Broken Sky ... the Dungeon of Dragons.

By ASH LAW

At the beginning of April 2014 I had my first development meeting with Rob Heinsoo for Shards of the Broken Sky. The book stood at 66,000 words, and it was a good point to stop and discuss things before I wrote more. Most of the book will probably stand as-is, but some bits definitely needed to be changed. Remove kobolds from here, add a sidebar there, that sort of thing.

One of the big things that needed revision was a dungeon themed around the lost tomb of the First Emperor, and after much discussion one part of the dungeon got jettisoned. The reason it got cut was that while awesome we couldn't see a way to fit it thematically into the revised imperial tomb as a level of the dungeon. It was still cool as a dungeon, and frankly I don't see enough Anglo-Saxon dragon-riddle dungeons. Rather than let it go to waste we talked about giving it to GMs through See Page XX, so here it is.

Rob says: *"It's a very odd dungeon, given that you will fight under your level, and then up to your level. Unless you are epic tier you are eventually supposed to run away, not a message that heroes find easy, but this will teach them."*

ASH says: *"... unless you are good at riddles and can trick your way past dragons."*

The Dungeon of Dragons

The Three (or perhaps a powerful sorcerer hoping to curry favor with them) have recently created a dungeon to feed them power. Five powerful dragons guard a legendary treasure, but it is a lure. Every death within the dungeon feeds more mystic power to The Three (one of The Three restocks it with new dragons, new treasure, and resets traps whenever adventurers succeed in getting part of the way in). The dungeon itself is alive, kept so by its 'rock dragon' heart at the center.

(Or... maybe it is not a recent thing. Maybe this dungeon has been wandering around for centuries, luring adventurers to their deaths. Maybe The Three have repurposed an existing living dungeon. Maybe The Three created or captured the dungeon back when they were The Five and it is only now resurfacing).

Each of the five dragons in the dungeon is magically bound there by the power of The Three, but may leave (with treasure) under one condition: each dragon has a riddle - those that fail to answer correctly are eaten by the dragons; those who answer correctly may pass safe from harm, and the dragon is freed from the binding spell (and takes its treasure with it).

The dungeon of dragons now wanders around the world, burrowing through the earth and surfacing in unexpected places. It lures adventurers to it by sending out dreams and portents.

The dungeon's monsters range from a level 2 huge dragon to a level 10 huge dragon. Lots of huge dragons. Each dragon has a separate treasure, so turning around mid-way and fleeing from a dragon is an acceptable tactic because the adventurers will still have got some treasure (though if fleeing the adventurers might drop some of it on the way out).

Riddle me this...

If the players know the answer to the riddles let them answer and pass. Give them three guesses per riddle, but no looking up the riddles on the internet. If the players can't guess let them make a single skill roll (DC 25+ the level of the dragon). If they fail with three guesses and a skill roll the dragon attacks without warning, otherwise it mockingly thanks them for freeing it and leaves with its treasure.

The dragons probably won't repeat their riddles, so ask the players to write down the words that you say.

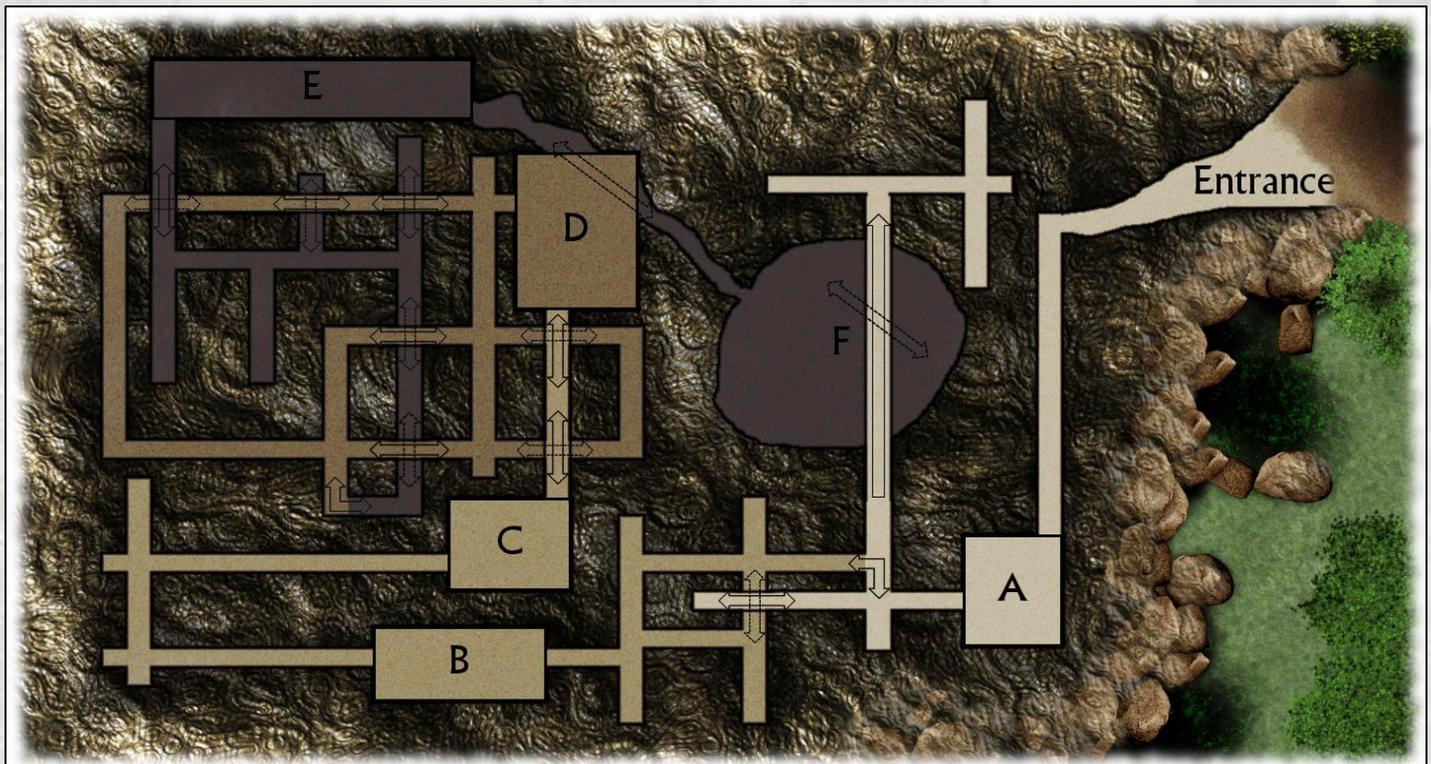
Releasing the dragons

Answering a riddle is a good thing because it allows adventurers to proceed without a fight. However, answering a riddle also frees the dragon who is then able to leave the dungeon and lay waste to the surrounding countryside (and takes its treasure out of the dungeon with it). Adventurers who free the dragons store up trouble for themselves in the future. That cozy tavern in that quaint village that they visited on their way here? Destroyed. That friendly sage in that forest tower? Dead. That patron of theirs? Angry.

Tricking the dragons

The adventurers might try sneaking past a sleeping dragon, fooling a dragon somehow, or otherwise using trickery and cunning to get past a dragon. Let them. However, each trick will only work once and once only, if they sneak past the first dragon the second will be too vigilant for them to try. If they want to get through the whole dungeon using trickery then they will have to think of five very cunning plans.

The dungeon is a series of unevenly sloped corridors, with regular traps. We leave these traps up to the imagination of the GM (page 319 of the core 13TH AGE rules will help you out here). The traps are not the focus of the dungeon - the five dragons are. Similarly there might be other monsters in the dungeon (dragon-worshipping kobolds who have found a crack somewhere to slip into the dungeon spring to mind), but they are not the main attraction so don't feel the need to put in extra monsters if you don't want to... there is more than enough here already with five dragons and a draconic dungeon heart.



Dashed arrows indicate a passageway or an area that runs underneath another, solid arrows indicate that the passageway runs on top of another. There are no vertical links between passageways, but enterprising adventurers who figure out where one passageway overlays another might try to dig through; GMs should allow that to work once and once only, after that the living dungeon will take counter-measures to such attacks upon its structure (perhaps by spawning creatures out of the walls of a nearby corridor). As adventurers progress the stone of the halls and corridors grows darker (generally darker areas are deeper than lighter areas).

- A. The Hall of Frost
- B. The Hall of Fire
- C. The Hall of Winds

- D. The Hall of Darkness
- E. The Hall of Death
- F. The Hall of Swords

A: The Hall of Frost

This hall is covered in ice, and against the far wall blocking the other door [door leads to area B] is a white dragon. It opens an eye and speaks...

"I have been trapped here by magic, and forced to serve. If you know the answer to my riddle I must let you through. If you cannot answer truly then I may do with you as I wish, and I ardently wish to kill you. My four siblings lie beyond the door that I guard, and I warn you that their riddles are tougher than mine and they will not accept answers from whoever has already solved a riddle. Are you ready to hear my riddle, so I may kill you when you answer falsely? The next word from your mouth must be the answer to my riddle, or I shall take great pleasure in slaying you."

The dragon guards a pile of diamonds, worth 500 GP

Riddle:

*I'm by nature solitary, scarred by spear
and wounded by sword, weary of battle.
I frequently see the face of war, and fight
hateful enemies; yet I hold no hope
of help being brought to me in the battle,
before I'm eventually done to death.
In the stronghold of the city sharp-edged swords,
skillfully forged in the flame by smiths
bite deeply into me. I can but await
a more fearsome encounter; it is not for me
to discover in the city any of those doctors
who heal grievous wounds with roots and herbs.
The scars from sword wounds gape wider and wider
death blows are dealt to me by day and by night.*

Answer:

Shield

Gmork the Bonechiller

The dragon's teeth have turned into glittering ice over its centuries of confinement.

Huge level 2 wrecker [Dragon]

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: fire

Chill bite +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)— 8 cold damage

Natural 16+: Gmork can make an *ice breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] C: Ice Breath +7 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—7 cold damage

Natural 16+: Target is stuck (easy save ends, unless Gmork is staggered and then hard save ends)

Resist Cold 12+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack or it only deals ½ damage.

Escalator: Dragons add the escalation die to their attacks rolls.

Flight: This dragon can fly, though the confines of the hall means that it can not fly far.

Nastier Specials

Freezing Aura: When Gmork becomes staggered the escalation die 'freezes' at its current number

AC 18

PD 16 HP 108

MD 12

B: The Hall of Fire

This hall has a half-melted appearance and the stone is hot to the touch. A red dragon stands with its back to the far door [leads to area C]. Pyros sits upon a nest made of charred bones; among the bones can be seen rubies (875 GP worth).

Riddle:

*Here's a warrior of curious origin.
She's created, gleaming, by two dumb creatures
for the benefit of all. Foe bears her against foe
to inflict harm. Women often fetter her,
strong as she is. If maidens and men
care for her with due consideration
and feed her frequently, she'll faithfully obey them
and serve them well. Men succour her for the warmth
she offers in return; but this warrior will savage
anyone who permits her to become too proud.*

Answer:

Fire

Pyros, Burner of Kings

Pyro's eyes burnt out of their sockets eons ago, now it sees the world through two orbs of fire.

Huge level 4 wrecker [Dragon]

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: cold

Burning claws +9 vs. AC (2 attacks, against different enemies if possible)— 18 damage, and 3 ongoing fire damage

Miss: All ongoing fire damage goes up by 3.

C: Focused breath +9 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)— 21 ongoing fire damage

Miss: All ongoing fire damage goes up by 3.

Resist Fire 12+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack or it only deals ½ damage.

Escalator: Dragons add the escalation die to their attacks rolls.

Flight: This dragon can fly, though the confines of the hall means that it can not fly far.

Nastier Specials

Aura of flame: Creatures engaged with Pyros at the end of their turn increase the amount of fire damage they are taking by 3.

AC 20

PD 18 HP 162

MD 14

C: The Hall of Winds

This bare hall has iron bands around its walls, and the air smells of storms. A blue dragon bars the way to the door [leads to area D]. Sapphires glint in the sand that the dragon sleeps upon (1250 GP worth).

Riddle:

*Favoured by men, I am found far and wide,
taken from woods and the heights of the town,
From high and from low. during each day
bees brought me through the bright sky
skillfully home to a shelter. Soon after that
I was taken by men and bathed in a tub.
Now I blind them and chasten them, and cast
a young man at once to the ground,
and sometimes an old one too.
He who struggles against my strength,
he who dares grapple with me, discovers immediately
that he will hit the hard floor with his back
if he persists with such stupidity.
Deprived of his strength and strangely loquacious,
he's a fool, who rules neither his mind
nor his hands nor his feet.
Now ask me, my friends,
who knocks young men stupid,
and as his slave binds them
in broad waking daylight?
Yes ask me my name.*

Answer:

Mead.

Zzart Storm-Curse

Lightning crackles in this creature's veins instead of blood.

Huge level 6 wrecker [Dragon]

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: force

Thunder claws +11 vs. AC (1d3 attacks against nearby enemies)— 18 thunder damage

Natural 16+ (but see storm-breath's miss condition): Zzart can make a storm-breath attack as a quick action at the end of its turn.

[Special trigger] C: Storm-breath +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)— 18 lightning damage

Miss: Decrease the trigger for storm-breath by a cumulative 2 (1 miss = triggers on 14+, 2 misses = triggers on 12+, 3 misses = triggers on 10+) to a minimum of a natural 10+.

Resist Lightning and Thunder 12+: When a lightning or thunder attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack or it only deals ½ damage.

Escalator: Dragons add the escalation die to their attacks rolls.

Flight: This dragon can fly, though the confines of the hall means that it can not fly far.

Nastier Specials

Building storm: Once per fight Zzart makes a storm-breath attack as a free action when hit with a metal melee weapon.

AC 22

PD 20 HP 270

MD 16

D: The Hall of Darkness

This hall is full of a black smoke that roils on the floor. A black dragon sits in front of the door [leads to area E]. The dragon has gouged a pit for itself, and the pit is lined with coins of stygian metal (worth 2500 GP).

Riddle:

*The dank earth, wondrously cold,
first delivered me from her womb.
I know in my mind I wasn't made
from wool, skillfully fashioned with skeins.
Neither warp nor weft wind about me,
no thread thrums for me in the thrashing loom,
nor does a shuttle rattle for me,
nor does the weaver's rod bang and beat me.
Silkworms didn't spin with their strange craft for me,
those strange creatures that embroider cloth of gold.
Yet men will affirm all over this earth
that I am an excellent garment.
O wise man, weigh your words
well, and say what I be.*

Answer:

Chainmail shirt

Toxinus Foe-Eater

Acrid fumes leak from cracks in the black dragon's skin.

Huge/Triple level 8 wrecker [Dragon]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: thunder

Barbed tail +13 vs. AC— 60 damage.

Natural 11+: As a free action Toxinus may make another *barbed tail* attack against a nearby enemy. Toxinus may keep making extra attacks until he fails to roll a natural 11+ or all nearby enemies have been attacked.

C: Caustic breath +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)— 60 acid damage and ongoing 10 poison damage.

Resist Acid 12+: When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack or it only deals ½ damage.

Escalator: Dragons add the escalation die to their attacks rolls.

Flight: This dragon can fly, though the confines of the hall means that it can not fly far.

Nastier Specials

Acidic blood: Enemies that hit with a melee attack become vulnerable to acid until the end of the fight.

AC 24

PD 22 HP 432

MD 18

E: The Hall of Death

This green dragon that sits in this hall eyes the adventurers with a smirk, sure that they will fail its test. A door is behind the dragon, leading deeper into the dungeon [area F]. The dragon sits atop a huge pile of uncut emeralds (worth 1000 GP per adventurer).

Riddle:

*Wob's my name if you work it out;
I'm a fair creature fashioned for battle
When I bend and shoot my deadly shaft
from my stomach, I desire only to send
that poison as far away as possible.
When my lord, who devised this torment for me,
releases my limbs, I become longer
and, bent upon slaughter, spit out
that deadly poison I swallowed before.
No man's parted easily from the object
I describe; if he's struck by what flies
from my stomach, he pays for its poison
with his strength - speedy atonement for his life
I'll serve no master when unstrung, only when
I'm cunningly nocked. Now guess my name.*

Answer:

Bow.

Verdis Death-Speaker

Poison drips from the slick underbelly of the green dragon.

Huge level 10 wrecker [Dragon]

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: psychic

Venomous Bite +15 vs. AC— 100 poison damage, and 35 ongoing poison damage

Natural even roll: The target is weakened (easy save ends). If the save is failed it becomes a standard save, if that roll is failed it becomes a hard save, if that roll is failed the target begins making last gasp saves. If the last gasp saves are failed the target falls into a coma.

C: Psychedelic breath +15 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)— target is confused (save ends), every time the save is failed the target takes 40 poison damage.

Resist Poison 12+: When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack or it only deals ½ damage.

Escalator: Dragons add the escalation die to their attacks rolls.

Flight: This dragon can fly, though the confines of the hall means that it cannot fly far.

Nastier Specials

Toxic terrain: Enemies that roll a 1 on an attack roll ingest some of the poison dripping from Verdis, and gain a cumulative -2 to their saving rolls.

AC 26

PD 24 HP 600

MD 20

F: The Hall of Swords

This roughly circular rock chamber lies deep within the earth. In the center of it is a huge pile of gold surrounding a rock outcropping. Into the rock outcropping are thrust five swords that glow with magic.

Any character who approaches the center of the chamber awakens the heart of the dungeon. The rock outcropping and gold coins are in fact the body of a coiled dragon-shaped beast, the gold 'coins' are its back-scales (and are not gold, though may be valuable as spell components for a ritual – but I leave that up to the GM). This is the living heart of the dungeon of dragons, and as is appropriate is shaped like a dragon.

The Dungeon Heart

Its roar shakes the very foundations of the earth

Huge/Triple level 10 wrecker [Construct]

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: magic weapons

Stamp and stomp +15 vs. AC (up to 4 attacks against different enemies)—90 damage

Crushing bite +15 vs. AC—180 damage

Stone hide: When a non-magical melee weapon strikes the dragon roll a d10. On a 1 the weapon breaks and the attacker is at -1 to hit until they grab a new weapon. Every time the dragon's hide fails to break a weapon reduce the dice type rolled for *stone hide* (d10>d8>d6>d4>d3).

Flight?: Nope! This thing is made of rock. No way is it flying.

Pulling a sword out of its back...

The rock dragon has five swords in its back. Each sword pulled out allows it to regain 70 HP, but gives the wielder a magic weapon with which to fight it. To avoid over-complicating the fight treat each sword as a +3 to hit and damage magic sword until after the fight is over and the wielder can assess its true abilities. Getting onto the creature's back is a DC 30 skill roll, and pulling the sword out requires a DC 25 strength-based skill roll.

AC 26

PD 24 HP 650

MD 20

The Five Legendary Dragon Slaying Swords

Default Bonus: Attacks and damage when using the weapon: +1 (adventurer), +2 (champion), +3 (epic). Increase the bonus by 1 when fighting dragons, kobolds, and dragon-worshipping creatures.

Quirk: Hunt and slay dragons.

Annihilator (sword): *The cutting edge of the bronze blade is blackened as though with soot, and smoke pours from the metal.* Deals fire damage. As a free action; one ally per fight may be granted the ability to deal fire damage with a weapon. If the wielder of the weapon chooses not to fight with it but is still carrying it they gain no benefit, but may instead cause fire damage with another weapon when the escalation die is 3+.

Extinguisher (sword): *The blade of extinguisher is of clear almost-invisible ice, chill vapor pours off it.* Deals cold damage. The wielder gains resist fire 12+ OR increases their fire resistance by 2 if they already resist fire at 12+ or better.

Eradicator (sword): *Eradicator's grip is bound in the skin of five blue dragons. The sword has no blade until the user wills it so, and then a gently humming blade of glowing force appears.* Deals force damage. This weapon may also be used as an implement/symbol/etc by those that would benefit from such.

Terminator (sword): *The steel of the blade appears to have moving thunder clouds trapped within it; the sword makes a booming sound when it hits.* Deals thunder damage. **Recharge 16+:** When the wielder is reduced to 0 HP or fewer they may immediately make a save; if they save they may spend a recovery.

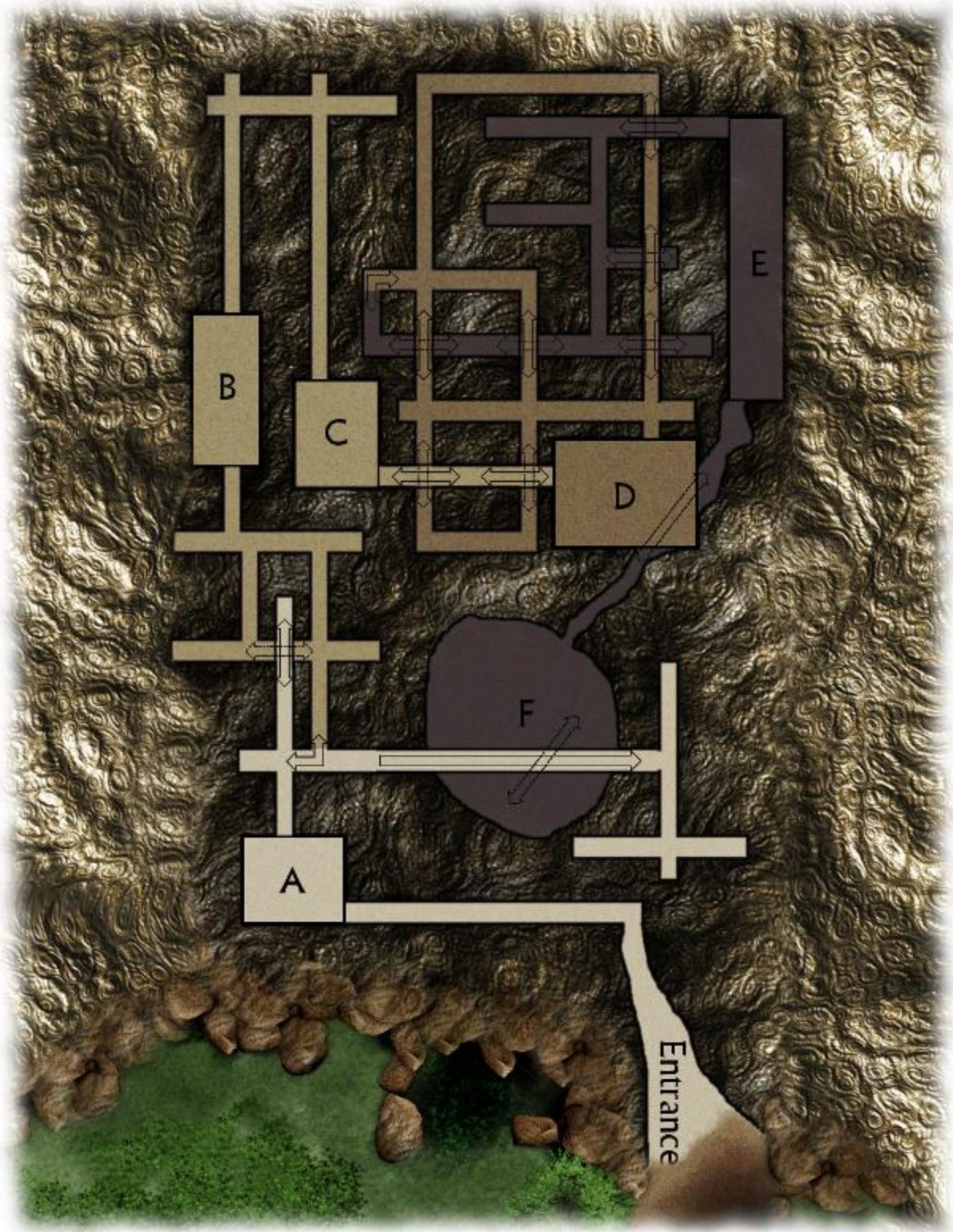
Obliterator (sword): *The sword's blade is forged from elemental shadow.* Deals psychic damage. Characters who can already shadow-walk add the sword's attack bonus to their roll to shadow-walk. **Recharge 11+:** The wielder may shadow-walk as per the rogue ability.

Further adventures

If the adventurers answered some or all of the riddles then they have freed evil dragons and loosed them upon the surface world. How the adventurers deal with this can form the basis of further adventures.

If the adventurers killed or freed some of the dragons but did not kill the dungeon-heart itself; then the dungeon of dragons will be restocked by one of The Three (or at least their agents will do so on their behalf). If the adventurers just stick around long enough they can waylay the agents of The Three, stealing the treasure as it is being conveyed to the dungeon. However, this will attract the attention of The Three who may well then send monstrous foes after the adventurers.

When the adventurers get to area F of the dungeon they will have to return to the surface. If they have snuck past dragons on the way down then they will now have to face them on the way back. Alternately there may be a hidden exit from the Hall of Swords, a passageway that leads to further thrilling adventures.



B

C

D

E

F

A

Entrance