PUZZLE MASTER

A selection of puzzles for the world's greatest roleplaying game



VOLUME 1

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Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the Puzzle Master series! The goal of these supplements is to provide you with tools to add excellent puzzle experiences to your Dungeons & Dragons games.

Contained in these pages are ten puzzles that are easy to drop individually into any game. Alternatively, if you would like to use all the puzzles together, the included adventure links everything in this book for a unique play experience. This book also contains helpful advice about how to run puzzles effectively. A good puzzle can be a rewarding experience for your party, though getting them right is often tricky. Make sure to pay attention to the hints, tips, and tricks provided for each puzzle.

Whatever the reason you are drawn to this book, we hope you enjoy and look forward to seeing you in the next issue!

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into two sections designed to let you use one or both however you like.

Puzzle Dungeon

The "Puzzle Dungeon" section ties all ten puzzles together into a single escape room-style dungeon. This dungeon introduces the meta-narrative of the Puzzle Master series and provides a unique D&D play experience.

There's a dungeon map and key provided for the Puzzle Dungeon. Each key location directs you when you need to turn to the appropriate puzzle in the puzzle appendix (see below). This dungeon is all about solving puzzles and doesn't include typical elements of combat, though it's possible that some combat will occur if a puzzle is solved incorrectly. That said, this dungeon is certainly not for every player or party. Some people love puzzles, but others absolutely can't stand them. If you intend to use this dungeon, make sure your players are interested in a session of puzzle-solving and be very clear about what kind of experience they are about to have. Managing expectations, especially for this kind of adventure, is key to ensuring that everyone has a good time.

Puzzle Appendix

The "Puzzle Appendix" section has ten puzzles and instructions on incorporating them into your games. These puzzles are easy to drop into any game or setting independent of one another. All necessary handouts are also provided in this section.

Each puzzle includes key information to help you get the best experience with running them. The puzzles are organized into the following sections.

Type of Puzzle. Each puzzle is categorized as logic, cryptic, riddles, pattern guessing, or mechanical. These tags help you figure out what kind of puzzles, in particular, your group might enjoy most.

Difficulty. Each puzzle is given a difficulty rating on a scale of 1 (easy) to 3 (hard). While each party is different, the rating gives you a general idea of how easily your group can solve the puzzle. This is particularly helpful when estimating how long a puzzle may take to solve.

Setup. The "Setup" section describes what the party sees when they first encounter a puzzle. This section usually includes essential clues, so read these carefully.

Puzzle. The "Puzzle" section breaks down the rules of solving the puzzle. This is the most important section to read and understand.

Solution. The "Solution" section reveals how to solve the puzzle.

Consequences. The "Consequences" section lists any damage or penalties that may befall the characters while attempting to solve the puzzle.

Hints. Each puzzle includes three hints of varying difficulties that you can give your players if they get stuck. It's incredibly important that you let your players know they can get hints from you at any time. Be creative with where these hints come from: the characters could get a tip from a friendly NPC, a key insight from a successful skill check, or find the answers carved on the wall. If you're playing the Puzzle Dungeon adventure, Toffee can give hints to the characters (see "Reception Room" in the "Puzzle Dungeon" section). Be generous with hints, or your group will get frustrated quickly.

Tips. Each puzzle has a sidebar labeled "Tips to Run This Puzzle," which includes various helpful hints to improve your experience as a DM. These hints vary, but all directly speak to the authors' experience while testing these puzzles.

Variations. The "Variations" section provide ideas about changing a puzzle to suit your needs better.

Using Hints

The most important thing you can do when running puzzles is be generous with hints. Each of the puzzles in this book has suggested hints to help navigate difficulties your players may encounter. You may notice these hints don't have associated ability checks and difficulty classes. This is done intentionally so you don't feel the urge to hide solutions behind certain rolls, and so the players don't get blocked by poor rolls. Your players should be able to get hints from you whenever they need them, without needing to succeed on a roll.

If you or your players want get hints through ability checks, do so with care. The following DCs are suggested for each of the hints provided:

SUGGESTED HINT DCS

Hint Level	Suggested Ability Check DC
Small Hint	DC 10
Medium Hint	DC 12
Big Hint	DC 15



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Puzzle Dungeon

This adventure can be used for any size party at any level, though it may be more satisfying for characters of 1st to 8th level. It requires the use of the D&D fifth edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Monster Manual*.

Background

An ancient copper dragon named Aenigma has grown bored of her usual routine. Seeking an exciting new project, Aenigma decided to put her vast wealth and resources into a brand new endeavor: building puzzle dungeons to test adventurers. With the help of her kobold minions, Aenigma has constructed the first of these dungeons and now needs adventuring groups to test it. The dragon is happy to offer rewards to anyone who bests her dungeon and provides her with valuable feedback to craft new challenges.

Your adventuring group has received an invitation to be one of the first parties to set foot in Aenigma's premiere puzzle dungeon.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into any campaign or setting. The dragon Aenigma has access to a great deal of magical power and could construct these pop-up dungeons in either remote or urban locations. Here are several hooks to get your party involved in this adventure:

- After completing a difficult quest, the party finds a mysterious invitation in their possession (see handout 11).
- While traveling through a town or city, the party hears gossip of a "Puzzle Dungeon" that has appeared somewhere in the sewers. Apparently, adventurers who go to this dungeon emerge with fantastic rewards.
- A retired adventurer received an invitation to the dungeon, but is seeking newer adventurers to investigate the location in her stead.
- The party encounters a chatty kobold relaxing after work in the local cavern. The kobold works as one of the Puzzle Dungeon assistants and is happy to give friendly adventurers an invitation.

Entering the Dungeon

Once the party decides to investigate the dungeon, the entrance is simple to find with some direction. The dungeon door can be located wherever suits your setting, but when found, read the following:

> The copper door before you looks out of place with its surroundings. The sturdy doorknocker on its surface is carved to look like the head of a dragon.

Tapping with the knocker causes the door to swing open, revealing a wall of copper-colored mist. Nothing can be seen beyond the magical barrier of the mist.

Stepping through the doorway into the mist is the only way to enter the puzzle dungeon. The door and the mist cannot be dispelled.

Reception Room

When the characters step through the mist, read the following aloud:

> You find yourself in a comfortable waiting room. The floor is covered with thick brown carpet, comfy chairs line the walls, and several potted plants brighten up the space. Across from you is a wooden desk manned by a smartly dressed copper kobold.

The copper kobold is named Toffee, and she is tasked with communicating the Puzzle Dungeon rules. Toffee is quite friendly, and loves her job. Once the party is ready to enter the dungeon, Toffee explains how the dungeon works:

"Welcome to Aenigma's premiere puzzle dungeon! We are so happy to have you! My name is Toffee and I'm here to ensure you have a fun and safe experience in the Puzzle Dungeon!

"I've got a few quick things to go over, then we'll get you on your way!

"Once you enter the puzzle dungeon, your goal is to escape. If you solve all the puzzles in the dungeon, a way out will appear and you'll get your prizes!

"If you get stuck at any point, I'm standing by to help. Just yell out "TOFFEE!" and I'll answer any questions you have. Please do keep in mind, whenever you ask me for a hint, that might affect your final score, but if you're really in a pickle I'm here with the answers.

"There are also a few rules in the dungeon we have to go over:

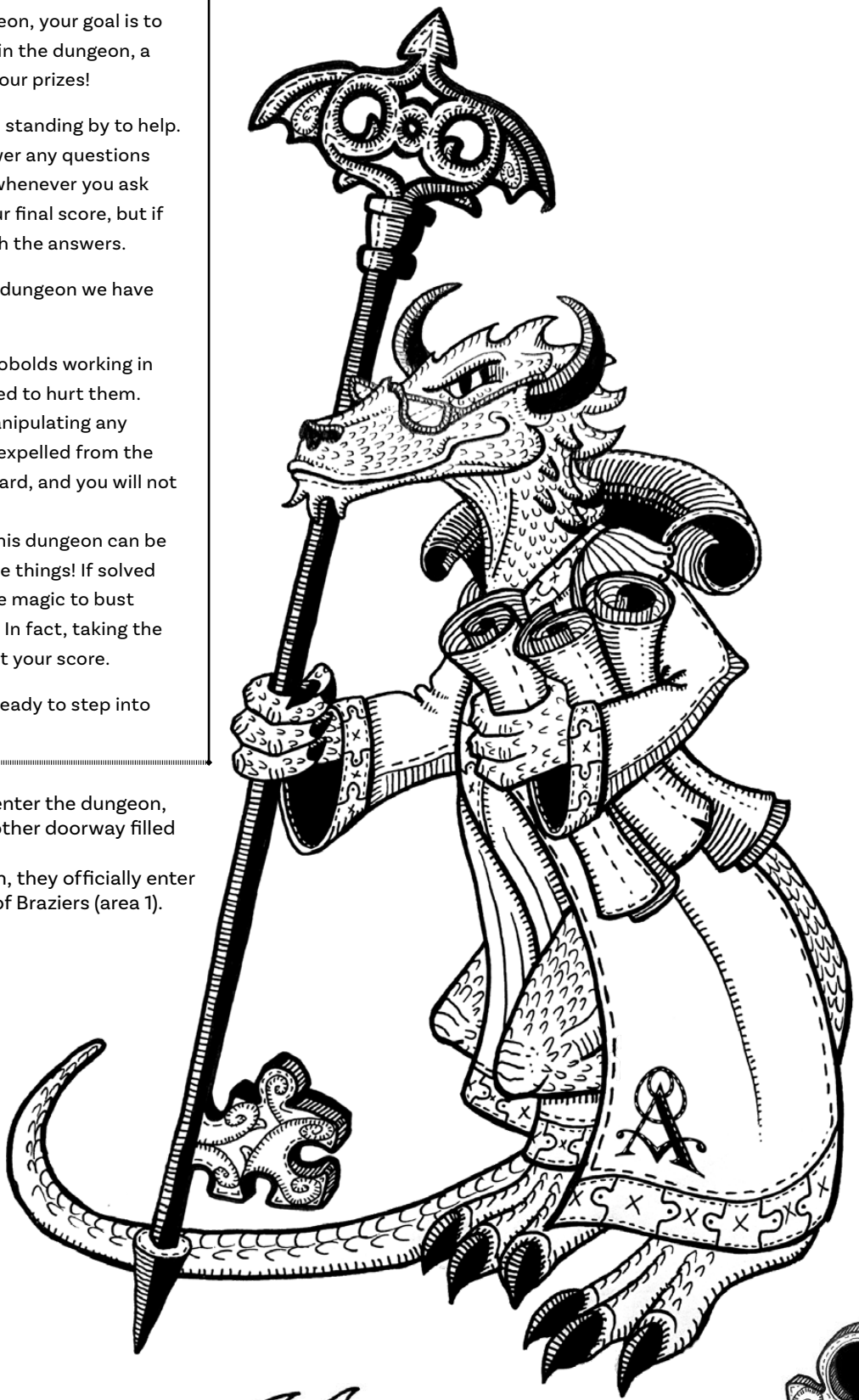
"Number one, there are several kobolds working in the dungeon and you are not allowed to hurt them. Attacking, injuring, or magically manipulating any kobolds will get you automatically expelled from the dungeon. You will not receive a reward, and you will not be invited back!

"Number two, all the puzzles in this dungeon can be solved with your wits, so don't force things! If solved correctly, you will never need to use magic to bust things open or attack immediately. In fact, taking the lazy way will often negatively affect your score.

"And that's all from me! Are you ready to step into the dungeon?"

Once the adventurers are ready to enter the dungeon, Toffee hits a hidden button and another doorway filled with copper mist appears.

When the characters step through, they officially enter the dungeon, appearing in the Hall of Braziers (area 1).



Dungeon Locations

The following locations are shown on the puzzle dungeon map in the Maps Appendix.

1. Hall of Braziers

> You appear in a large square room. Unlit copper braziers carved like dragons sit in each of the corners.
>
> The floor in the center of the room is inlaid with a silver pentacle. A podium stacked with stones stands beside the pentacle.
>
> The northern wall has a message scrawled in red writing. The eastern wall has a door made of panels of alternating gold and grey with eight keyholes. The southern and western walls have identical stone doors.
>
> What would you like to examine first?

This is the first room of the puzzle dungeon and contains four braziers that the party must light to successfully escape.

Braziers. Each of the four unlit copper braziers is magnificently carved in the likeness of the copper dragon Aenigma. Only the four special flames found in the dungeon can light them; all other fires, magical or otherwise, quickly burn out. Any of the flames can light any of the four braziers (but each color of flame can only be used once).

Pentacle. The silver pentacle and podium stacked with stones are part of Puzzle 1. If the party examines the pentacle or podium, turn to the "Puzzle 1: Runestone Grid" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions.

Message. The message scrawled on the northern wall is part of Puzzle 2. If the party examines the door, give them Handout 2-1, then turn to the "Puzzle 2: Cipher Doors" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions for the first puzzle. Note that the party may not be able to open this door until they get the cipher wheel from area 9.

Gold and Grey Door. The gold and grey paneled door on the eastern wall is part of Puzzle 3 if the party examines the door, flip to the "Puzzle 3: Alchemical Door" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions. Note that the party will not be able to open this door until they get the golden key from area 5.

Stone Doors. The doors on the western wall and the southern wall are both unlocked. The western door leads to area 4 and the southern door leads to area 2.

2. Organizations United

> This square room has a shining silver door on the south wall, framed by swirling script. Four offering bowls sit in each corner, with words carved in the wall above each one.

This room houses Puzzle 4. If the characters choose to examine this room, turn to the "Puzzle 4: Organizations United" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions.

Once opened, the silver door in the southern wall leads to area 3.

3. Chamber of Blue Flame

> This small chamber has a simple wooden table at its center. Atop the table is a copper candlestick supporting a taper candle alight with blue flame.

The only furniture in this room is the table with the blue flame candle, and there are no exits other than the door through which the characters entered. The candle's fire is magical: it is not hot and can't be put out by any means.

If the characters bring the candle with them, it can light one of the braziers in area 1.

4. Tiled Hallway

> The floor of this long hallway is covered in tiles bearing different symbols. At the far end of the hall is a door completely covered by a curtain of copper-colored energy.

This room contains Puzzle 5. If the characters choose to examine this room, turn to "Puzzle Five: Tile Chain" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions.

Once the puzzle is solved and the curtain of energy is dispersed, the door can be opened, leading to area 5.

5. Mirror Chest

> This small chamber is empty, except for a metal chest in one corner.

The chest itself is Puzzle 6. If the characters choose to examine the chest, turn to "Puzzle 6: Tangram Chest" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions.

Inside the chest is the gold key that can be used to solve Puzzle 3 (the grey and gold door) in area 1.

6. Sliding Password

> An austere hall stretches before you. At the very end is a door guarded by a swarthy kobold. Three other kobolds wait in a line in front of the guard. Once you enter, the group stirs into action.

This room is Puzzle 7. If the characters remain in the room, read the scenario instructions from "Puzzle 7: Sliding Passwords" in the Puzzle Appendix.

The guarded door leads to area 7.

7. Chamber of Green Flame

> This small chamber has a simple wooden table at its center. Atop the table is a copper candlestick supporting a taper candle alight with green flame.

The only furniture in this room is the table with the green flame candle, and there are no exits other than the door through which the characters entered. The candle's fire is magical: it is not hot and can't be put out by any means.

If the characters bring the candle with them, it can light one of the braziers in area 1.

8. Basement Landing

> You appear in a large square room, identical to the dimensions of the hall of braziers you came from.
>
> There is nothing on the floor of this room, but a large cauldron is pushed against one wall. Beside the cauldron is a table loaded with jars and alchemical instruments.
>
> The western wall has a door marked with a sign that reads "Hall of Virtues." The eastern wall has a door bearing a carved message.
>
> What would you like to examine first?

This basement landing can be reached by stepping into the silver pentacle in area 1, but only after it has been activated by solving Puzzle 1.

Cauldron. The large cauldron and alchemical worktable are part of Puzzle 8. If the party examines the cauldron or table, turn to "Puzzle 8: Toil and Bubble" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions. If the puzzle is solved and the correct potion is brewed, drinking a sip of the potion teleports a creature back to area 1. The brewed potion provides more than enough doses for each character to make several trips.

Hall of Virtues. The door with the sign marked "Hall of Virtues" is unlocked and leads to area 9.

Message. The message carved on the eastern door is part of Puzzle 2. If the party examines the door give them Handout 2-1, then turn to the "Puzzle 2: Cipher Doors" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions for the second puzzle. Note that the party may not be able to decode the message on this door until they get the cipher wheel from area 9.

9. Hall of Virtues

> Several kobolds lounge about this room, which is filled with lush carpet and plump silk pillows. As you enter, the kobolds snap to attention, scurrying forward to speak.

This room houses Puzzle 9. If the characters choose to listen to what the kobolds have to say, turn to "Puzzle 9: Virtue Riddles" in the Puzzle Appendix and follow the instructions.

As a reward for completing the puzzle, the kobolds give the party a cipher wheel, shown in Handout 2-2. This cipher wheel can be used to solve the first part of Puzzle 2 in area 1, and the second part of Puzzle 2 in area 10.

10. Guard Room

> A massive creature formed of metal plates and gears starts to animate the moment the door is open. Its gigantic body takes up most of the room, but you catch a glimpse of a door behind it as the machine rolls forward.

The way to bypass this creature without a fight can be discovered by solving the message on the door, the second part of Puzzle 2. For instructions to solve the second part of , turn to "Puzzle 2: Cipher Doors" in the Puzzle Appendix. If all else fails, the guard creature uses the statistics of a **shield guardian**.

The door on the far side of the chamber leads to area 11.

11. Chamber of Yellow Flame

> This small chamber has a simple wooden table at its center. Atop the table is a copper candlestick supporting a taper candle alight with yellow flame.

The only furniture in this room is the table with the yellow flame candle, and there are no exits other than the door through which the characters entered. The candle's fire is magical: it is not hot and can't be put out by any means.

If the characters bring the candle with them, it can light one of the braziers in area 1.

12. The Lift

> This square room is empty save for a gilded door on one wall, and a lever on the opposite wall, located next to a red button. The center of the room is marked by a square indent.

This room houses Puzzle 10. If the characters choose to examine this room, turn to "Puzzle 10: The Lift" in the Puzzle Appendix.

With the proper key, the gilded door can be opened, leading to area 13.

13. Chamber of Red Flame

> This small chamber has a simple wooden table at its center. Atop the table is a copper candlestick supporting a taper candle alight with red flame.

The only furniture in this room is the table with the red flame candle, and there are no exits other than the door through which the characters entered. The candle's fire is magical: it is not hot and can't be put out by any means.

If the characters bring the candle with them, it can light one of the braziers in area 1.

Conclusion

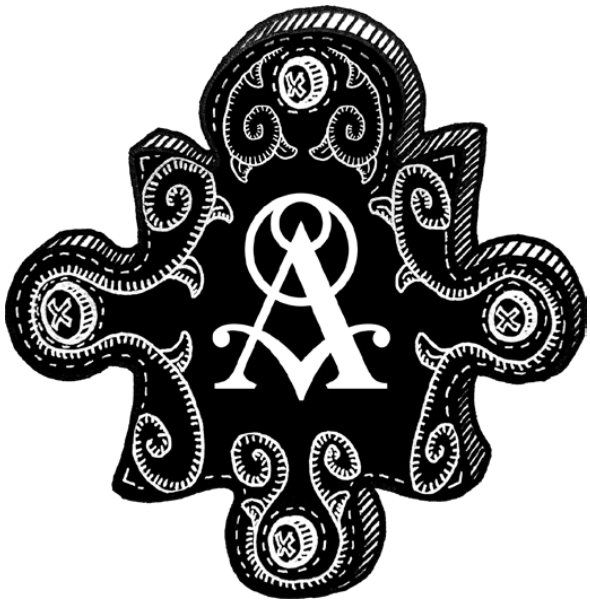
Once the final brazier is lit, read the following:

> The room shakes as the floor begins to rise upwards. The stone ceiling opens wide, allowing the platform of the floor to rise into a vast natural cavern.
>
> A huge copper dragon watches from across the way, and as the platform beneath your group comes to a halt, the magnificent creature spreads their wings dramatically.
>
> "Congratulations, brave souls, on defeating my puzzle dungeon! You were worthy challengers, and I already have so many ideas for my next dungeon. But first! As promised, here is your reward!"

This copper dragon is not actually Aenigma, but rather a *major illusion* of the dragon. Aenigma has already taken leave of this dungeon to construct another, but the treasure she offers is real enough.

At this point, the adventure is concluded, and you should give out rewards for completing the puzzle dungeon. If you would like to use the optional scoring system to determine the level of the reward, consult the tables below to determine the treasure. Otherwise, give the party a magic item they've wanted for a while, or something well suited to a particular member of the party. If you normally give your group experience points for completing social and exploration challenges, you may also wish to award XP for the puzzles they've solved.

Once the party picks up their treasure, they are teleported outside the entrance of the puzzle dungeon, and the door is gone.



POINT SCORING SYSTEM

Points Gained	Action Taken
+1	Completing a Puzzle by Asking for the Answer
+2	Completing a Puzzle Using a "Big" Hint
+3	Completing a Puzzle Using a "Medium" Hint
+4	Completing a Puzzle Using a "Small" Hint
+5	Completing a Puzzle Using No Hints
+10	Escaping the Puzzle Dungeon

REWARD SCORING TABLE

Total Points	Suggested Reward
+1	70 gp and 7 art objects worth 25 gp each
+2	70 gp, 7 art objects worth 25 gp, and a treasure from "Magic Item Table A" (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
+3	1,000 gp, 10 gems worth 50 gp each, and a treasure from "Magic Item Table A" (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
+4	2,000 gp, 10 gems worth 50 gp each, and a treasure from "Magic Item Table B" (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
+10	2,500 gp, 10 gems worth 50 gp each, and a treasure from "Magic Item Table F" (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*)

Puzzle Appendix



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Puzzle 1: Runestone Grid

Type of Puzzle: Logic

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters enter a chamber that has a silver pentacle inlaid on the floor. Next to the pentacle is a stone podium, the upper surface of which is engraved with sixteen indentations in a four-by-four grid. The runestone grid is a kind of magic circuit board that channels arcane energy to power the pentacle, which can teleport the characters to the next room.

Puzzle

On the podium are sixteen flat, circular runestones made of semiprecious gems. There are four types of stones in total, each inscribed with a common rune:

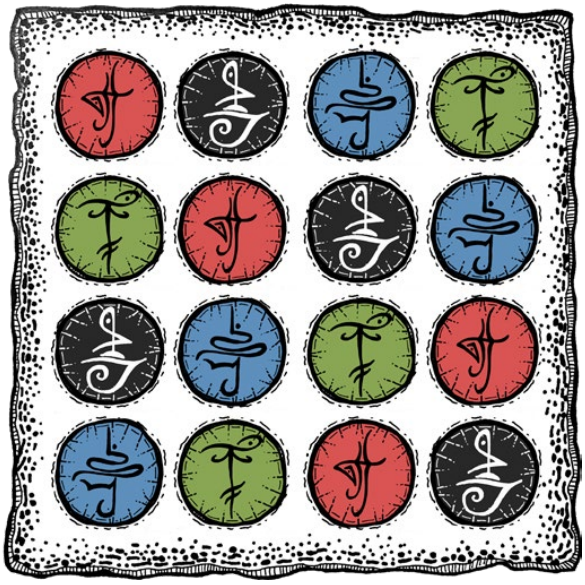
RUNESTONES TABLE

Gemstone	Color	Rune
Carnelian	Red	
Onyx	Black	
Lapis	Blue	
Malachite	Green	

There are four stones of each type. Ten of the stones have been inserted into indentations on the podium and six of the stones are loose (see handout 1). When the six loose stones are placed in the correct indentations, the silver pentacle begins to glow softly. A creature that steps on the pentacle is teleported to the next room.

Solution

Each row and column must contain each type of runestone exactly once. The correct pattern looks like this:



Consequences

A creature that places the six stones incorrectly must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 2d6 lightning damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** The stones already on the board should be kept in place. The loose stones must be placed on the board in the correct position to activate the pentacle.
- **Medium Hint.** Pay attention to the placement of the stones. Think about what is missing from the rows and columns.
- **Big Hint.** Each row and column must contain each type of runestone exactly once.

Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- If you are playing using a virtual tabletop, consider using different colored circles or just letters to represent the stones. Place your symbols on a grid and let your players move them around accordingly. If you don't have access to a virtual tabletop, you could also make a grid in a shared Google document and let your players fill in letters that way.
- Make sure your players let you know when they are moving stones on the grid, otherwise it becomes difficult to track who gets zapped for incorrect answers.

Variations

This is a basic pattern puzzle, somewhat similar to a sudoku puzzle. You can devise different patterns or make the challenge harder by increasing the size of the grid and the number and type of runestones.

In this version, the device is powering a teleportation circle, but the grid could be keyed to other items, from a simple door to a complex war machine.

Puzzle 2: Cipher Doors

Type of Puzzle: Cryptic

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters come to a dead end where they see a strange message: written on the wall in shaky crimson script is the command "Turn Back!" Beneath this phrase are six carved dots and a jumble of letters that reads "LIUMNVYYZ." Give the players handout 2-1 to illustrate what their characters see.

First Puzzle

The writing on the wall contains several hints about how to use a cipher wheel to figure out a password that will open the way forward. The characters will first need to collect the cipher wheel (see handout 2-2), which can be in a box next to the wall or in another other location of your choice.

First Solution

The phrase "turn back" combined with the six carved dots means the party needs to click the upper wheel of the cipher six letters back. Once correctly set, the players can use the cipher wheel to decode the seemingly random letters on the wall, which gets them the solution "roast beef."

Once they speak the phrase "roast beef" aloud, the wall melts away, revealing a passageway forward.

Second Puzzle

If you would like to employ the cipher a second time, the players encounter an unlocked door with another message that reads "Venture Forward!" Beneath this phrase are eleven carved dots and another jumble of letters: "NZXXLCOEZAWLJOPLO." Give the players handout 2-3 to illustrate what their characters see.

Beyond the unlocked door is a 50-foot-square chamber guarded by a gigantic metal construct (use **shield guardian** statistics if a fight breaks out). This construct rushes towards any creature who enters the room but does not pursue creatures beyond the door.

Second Solution

The phrase "venture forward" combined with the 11 carved dots means the party needs to click the upper wheel of the cipher eleven letters forward. Once correctly set, the players can use the cipher wheel to decode the seemingly random letters on the door, which gets them the solution "command to play dead."

If they say "play dead" within earshot of the construct in the room beyond, it deactivates and becomes harmless, allowing the party to pass.

Consequences

The first cipher puzzle doesn't have any punishing consequences. If they say the wrong password, the passage does not open.

The second puzzle can result in combat with the guardian if the correct passphrase isn't discovered. Don't track distances too harshly if the characters run into and out of the room several times—only hit them with a warning attack if they are overly aggressive or foolish.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** There are many clues on the door, but you probably need a key from somewhere else to decipher them.
- **Medium Hint.** Perhaps "turn back" is an instruction—maybe something else on the door tells you how much to turn back.
- **Big Hint.** This is a cipher puzzle, which means you have to click the wheel a certain number of spaces to figure out what the scrambled letters mean.

Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- You are likely to encounter a player who is determined to solve the puzzle even before they've found the cipher wheel. It's okay to tell the players that some puzzles need elements from other areas of the dungeon before they can be solved. Telling everyone that will prevent a lot of frustration.
- Cipher wheels are a little odd to use. If someone is trying hard and can't figure it out, explain how cipher wheels provide a key to translate one letter to another.
- Before characters go in, guns blazing against the giant guardian, remind them that this is a puzzle dungeon, and there is a way to solve the situation using brains instead of brawn.
- If you are running this adventure online, consider using a website that provides a cipher wheel (not all players may have access to a printer), such as this one.

Variations

It's easy to use a cipher wheel and a number of dots on the wall to make up your own passphrases. Just make sure the party has a clear hint about which direction to move the cipher wheel and how many spaces to do so.

You can change the guardian monster any other creature. The point is to make the monster scary enough that the party thinks solving the puzzle is worth it instead of rushing into a fight.

This puzzle can be placed on any door or passageway. Just be sure to stay away from putting on a "magical door" so your players don't get frustrated when a *knock* spell can't do the trick.

Puzzle 3: Alchemical Door

Type of Puzzle: Logic

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters encounter a square door with sixteen panels arranged in a four-by-four grid. Some of the panels are made of lead, while others are made of gold. There are four keyholes above the door and another four keyholes down the left side of the door. See handout 3 for a diagram, which you can also give to the players.

The story conceit is that a wizard has created this puzzle as an extra layer of security for an important door. The characters have a golden key that fits the locks, which they may have obtained in another location or found hanging on a chain next to the door. They must determine the wizard's passcode—that is, the correct sequence of locks to open the door.

Puzzle

When the key is inserted and turned in one of the locks above the grid (labeled A, B, C, D), all of the lead panels in the corresponding column permute into gold panels and vice versa. When the key is inserted and turned in one of the locks to the left of the grid (labeled 1, 2, 3, 4), the same transformation happens in the corresponding row.

The characters must determine the correct sequence of locks to use in order to turn the entire grid gold.

Solution

From the original state of the grid, the correct sequence of locks to turn is:

- Lock 2
- Lock A
- Lock D
- Lock 4

If the characters do not insert a key for 5 minutes, the grid resets to its original state.

Consequences

This puzzle does not have any consequences for failure. If not solved, the door simply does not open.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** You need to turn the door completely gold—matching the key—in order to pass through.
- **Medium Hint.** If you turn different locks in the correct sequence, you can flip them all to show gold.
- **Big Hint.** You should start with Lock 2.

Variations

This is a basic logic puzzle. You can create variant solutions by starting with a completely gold grid and then working your way backward, applying the locks and noting the new pattern.



Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- Keeping track of the grid can be challenging. One way to do this is to take a sheet of blank paper, cut it into sixteen equal squares, and write the word "gold" on one side and "lead" on the other side of each square (perhaps using two different colors of pen or pencil). You can then arrange the squares in the initial pattern and flip them over as required.
- If you are running your game online, consider creating the squares on the door as a grid. Use the paint tool to change the color of the squares as your players interact with them. If you don't have access to a virtual tabletop, you can make a grid in Microsoft Word, Photoshop, or a different program, and just share your screen with your players!

Puzzle 4: Organizations United

Type of Puzzle: Riddles

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters come to a 20-foot-square chamber with an 8-foot-high, locked, silvered door on the north wall. The door has no keyhole and is immune to all damage. Emblazoned on the door are the letters "HOZE" across its center. Beneath the letters is this message, contained in handout 4-1:

> When the organizations of the Sword Coast unite,
> a wizard's fingers can open the door.

An empty bowl engraved with the words, "Place our sign within," is affixed to the wall in each corner of the room. A unique message is carved into the wall above each bowl. Handouts 4-2 through 4-5 have copies of each message to give to the players. The carving in the northeast corner reads:

> Tyrants beware!
> Our spies observe.
> Power, you must share,
> Or get what you deserve.
> Hope in our lungs,
> Our cause is just.
> When our strings are strung,
> Corruption's chains rust.

The carving in the southeast corner reads:

> Nature is our light:
> Forests, mountains, and plains.
> The evil we fight,
> Threatens earth with rot stains.
> We balance the wild,
> And help travelers survive.
> Each of us, nature's child—
> That's where we thrive.

The carving in the southwest corner reads:

> With the gods at our back,
> We keep evil in check.
> When it rises, attack,
> Leaving nary a speck.
> We ride where no one dares go,
> Into pure darkness, as the sole light.
> These are the places where wickedness grows—
> But evil can't stand our radiant smite!

The carving in the northwest corner reads:

> Power is wealth,
> And rules must be broken.
> Our strength is stealth,
> And lies sweetly spoken.
> We call ourselves snakes:
> We know what we are.
> It's the world that we'll take,
> And rule from shadows afar.

Puzzle

Each of the bowls corresponds to a different organization known throughout the Sword Coast. A character who reads a poem knows the organization it describes with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (History) check (or if the player knows, so does their character). A character who belongs to the organization has advantage on the check:

- The northeast corner carving refers to the Harpers. Their symbol is a harp contained in a crescent moon.
- The southeast corner carving refers to the Emerald Enclave. Their symbol is a stag's head.
- The southwest corner carving refers to the Order of the Gauntlet. Their symbol is a gauntlet holding a sword.
- The northwest corner carving refers to the Zhentarim. Their symbol is a flying snake biting a coin.

WHERE IS THE LORDS' ALLIANCE?

You may notice that only four of the five major organizations in appendix C of the *D&D Basic Rules* are mentioned in this puzzle. By leaving out the Lords' Alliance, the puzzle becomes a little more challenging, as the characters may mix it up with one of the other organizations. You can make the room pentagonal and add a fifth bowl that includes the Lords' Alliance if you wish, or you can incorporate the organization's absence from this puzzle into the dungeon's story. Perhaps the Lords' Alliance snubbed the dungeon's designer, who now refuses to recognize the organization. In this scenario, harmful effects and monsters in the dungeon target characters that belong to the Lords' Alliance.

Solution

To open the door, the characters must complete the following tasks:

- They must put one item representing the corresponding organization's symbol into each bowl. This does not need to be the entire symbol and can be an illusory or fake piece of the symbol. For example, a harp, the illusion of a small moon, or moonlight created by the *moonbeam* spell count for the Harper bowl, and an antler, a piece of deerskin clothing, or a child's toy stuffed elk count for the Emerald enclave bowl. After a bowl accepts an offering, the first letter the organization's name glows blue in "HOZE" on the door.
- Once every letter in "HOZE" glows blue, only then can the door be opened and only then by a character who uses the *mage hand* spell to open it. If no character knows the spell, allow any character who is a spellcaster to open their door with their own hand.

Consequences

Correct items can be removed from the bowls after being placed inside without consequence. However, if a bowl is damaged or an item that does not correspond to a bowl's organization is placed in it, one creature per character is magically conjured into the chamber and attacks the party, fighting to the death:

- The northeast bowl summons animated steel crescent moons, which use the **flying sword** stat block.
- The southeast bowl summons **elks**.
- The southwest bowl summons gauntlet-wearing **crawling claws**.
- The northwest bowl summons **flying snakes**.

Each creature's remains can be used to activate its corresponding bowl.

If a creature tries to open the door before it's unlocked or without the use of a *mage hand* spell (or a spellcaster's hand), the door absorbs some of the creature's life force. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- Small Hint. Each poem is a riddle that helps you understand what to put in the bowls.
- Medium Hint. Each poem describes a powerful organization of the Sword Coast. If the players still don't understand, give them appendix C of the D&D Basic Rules.
- Big Hint. After proper offerings are placed in the bowl, the door must be opened by a true mage hand.

TIPS TO RUN THIS PUZZLE

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- If you can, introduce the organizations to the story before running this puzzle. If you can't, consider having each organization reach out to one of the characters to offer them membership via messenger or spell at the beginning of the session.
- If the players are frustrated, allow their characters to make Intelligence checks to know the answers.
- Have a copy of appendix C of the *D&D Basic Rules* ready for the players to review.
- Print out one copy of each handout in this puzzle per player so they don't have to share.

Variations

You can write your own riddles make this puzzle about gods, countries, creatures, or any other category you dream up instead of organizations. You could also change the spell needed to open the door, but make sure it's one a character can cast.

You can place this chamber in any dungeon set in the Forgotten Realms, or you could alter each poem to match different organizations in another setting. You may also want to change the creatures summoned by the bowls to be thematically appropriate.



Puzzle 5: Tile Chain

Type of Puzzle: Pattern Guessing

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters enter a long hallway that is covered by 5 ft. square tiles. At the end of the hallway is a door, completely blocked by a transparent copper-colored energy wall. The tiles on the floor depict different creatures (see handout 5).

Puzzle

To disperse the energy covering the door, the players must walk the correct path through the tiles. Make sure to give the players handout 5, so they can point out their path. Note that the players cannot step diagonally onto the tiles to correctly solve the puzzle.

TIPS TO RUN THIS PUZZLE

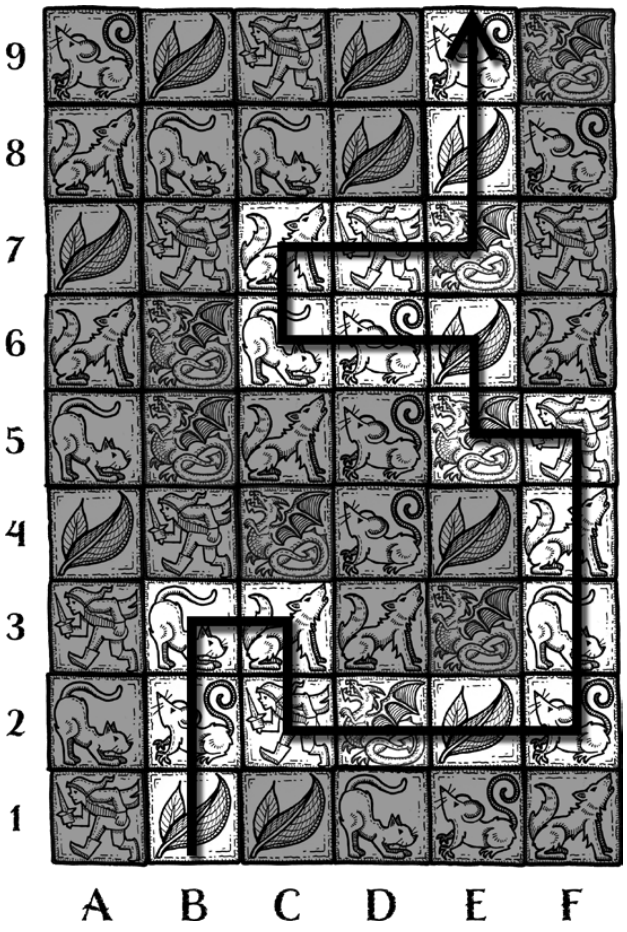
Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- Make sure the image of the hallway is large enough that everyone can effectively see the symbols on the tiles.
- Encourage just one character to step on the tiles at a time to reduce chaos.
- Let the players feel clever and teleport to the far side of the tiled hall as much as they would like. The energy blocking the door can only be dispersed by walking the correct path.
- If the players are having trouble figuring out that the creatures go in a certain order, remind them that they are in a dungeon made by a powerful dragon with a sense of humor.

Solution

The correct path is a humorous take on the natural order or food chain, so the order goes: leaf, mouse, cat, wolf, human, and ends with a dragon. The characters must step on the tiles in only this order walking through the food chain, repeating it until they reach the other side of the hall. Once one creature has correctly walked the path, the energy blocking the door drops, and it becomes safe to step on any of the tiles.

The correct path to follow to solve the puzzle is:



Consequences

A creature that steps on an incorrect tile must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw as acid sprays from tiny holes in the ceiling. A creature takes 2d6 acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** The tiles seem to depict creatures. There must be a logical way to organize them.
- **Medium Hint.** The tiles depict increasingly bigger creatures, so maybe start with the leaf and work up from there.
- **Big Hint.** You know mice eat plants, cats eat mice, wolves eat cats, humans slay wolves, and dragons have certainly slain mortals. Stepping with that in mind is likely the way to solve this puzzle.

Variations

You can place any symbols you like on the tiles, as long as they have a clear ascending or descending order for the players to figure out. You could also make the tiles cover a larger area, have multiple paths to trace, or other, simultaneous dangers that create time pressure or raise the stakes.

Puzzle 6: Tangram Chest

Type of Puzzle: Mechanical Puzzle

Difficulty:



Setup

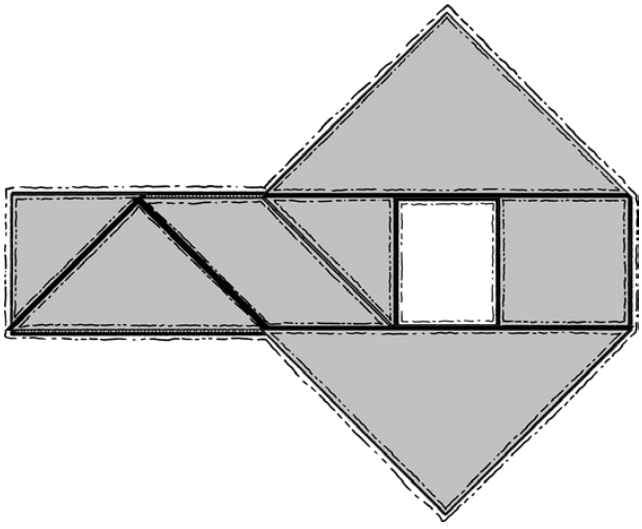
The characters find a chest with no visible lid, lock, or any other obvious way to open it. Set into the flat top of the chest is a rectangular mirror.

Puzzle

The chest cannot be opened with force or magic. To open the chest, the characters must first break the mirror on top. The mirror cracks into seven distinct pieces (see handout 6-1), revealing a carved outline of a shape underneath the mirror (see handout 6-2).

Solution

The seven shards of the mirror must be arranged to fill the outline, which forms the shape of a key. All of the pieces in Handout 6-1 must be used, and they must all fit within the outline in handout 6-2. Once the characters have correctly placed the pieces, the chest unlocks, revealing a treasure within. The correct arrangement looks like this:



Consequences

There are no consequences for assembling the mirror shards incorrectly. However, if the characters try to open the chest by incinerating it with fireballs (or other destructive magic) instead of approaching the chest as a puzzle, the chest and its treasure can be incinerated at your discretion.

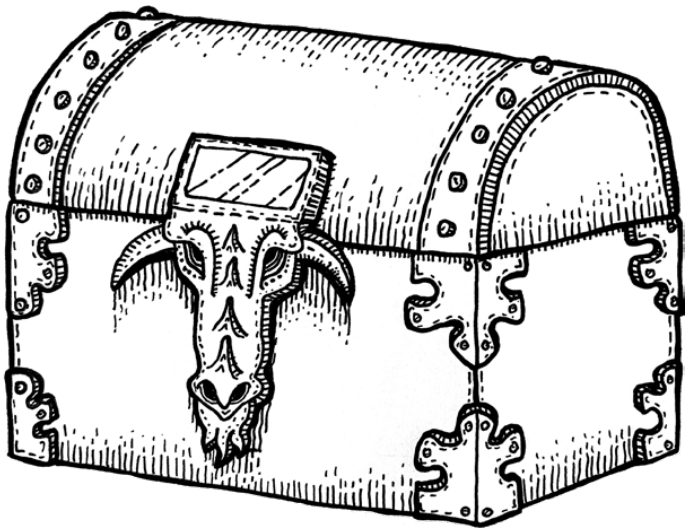
Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** The mirror is the only oddity here. Perhaps changing it in some way will let you know what to do.
- **Medium Hint.** When broken, the mirror pieces shatter into very specifically sized shapes, almost like puzzle pieces.
- **Big Hint.** Use the broken mirror shards to correctly fill in the design revealed underneath. There's a way to make them fit precisely in the lines.

Variations

Tangrams are a popular spatial reasoning puzzle. As long as you keep the same standard-sized pieces, you can make your own shape outlines or select a shape from the many options available online.



Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- The most challenging piece of this puzzle can be getting the players to figure out they need to break the mirror. If your party is struggling, consider allowing characters with high passive Perception or Investigation to notice that the mirror hides something underneath. The mirror might also unintentionally break if the characters try attacking the chest or target it with a spell that deals damage.
- If you're playing in person, make sure to cut out the tangram pieces before your game starts.
- If you're running this adventure online, consider using a website where your players can each try to assemble the tangram simultaneously. Mathigon is one such website.

Puzzle 7: Sliding Passwords

Type of Puzzle: Pattern Guessing

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters enter an austere, many-sided chamber. A **ghost** with wispy, transparent armor stands guard by a heavy door on the opposite side.

Puzzle

As the characters watch, an ephemeral old man materializes and approaches the door. The guard says, "owlbear," the man responds, "roper," and the guard lets him through the door.

A ghostly old lady comes next. The guard says, "merrow," the lady responds, "worg," and the guards lets her pass. Finally, a translucent young girl appears and makes her approach. The guard says, "harpy," the girl says, "yeti," and the guard lets her through.

If the party goes to the door, the guard blocks their way and says, "ettercap."

Solution

The correct response is any monster whose name starts with the last letter of the monster that the guard said. Since the guard said, "ettercap," any monster starting with "p" can be spoken. For example, "peryton" and "piercer" would both work. With a correct response, the characters are let through; otherwise, the guard either refuses entry or attacks, at your discretion.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** The password is somehow related to the word spoken by the guard.
- **Medium Hint.** The specific letters that make up the password are relevant.
- **Big Hint.** You'll have to come up with an appropriate monster name to solve the puzzle. The monster name just before yours sets the pattern for what your monster name has to be.

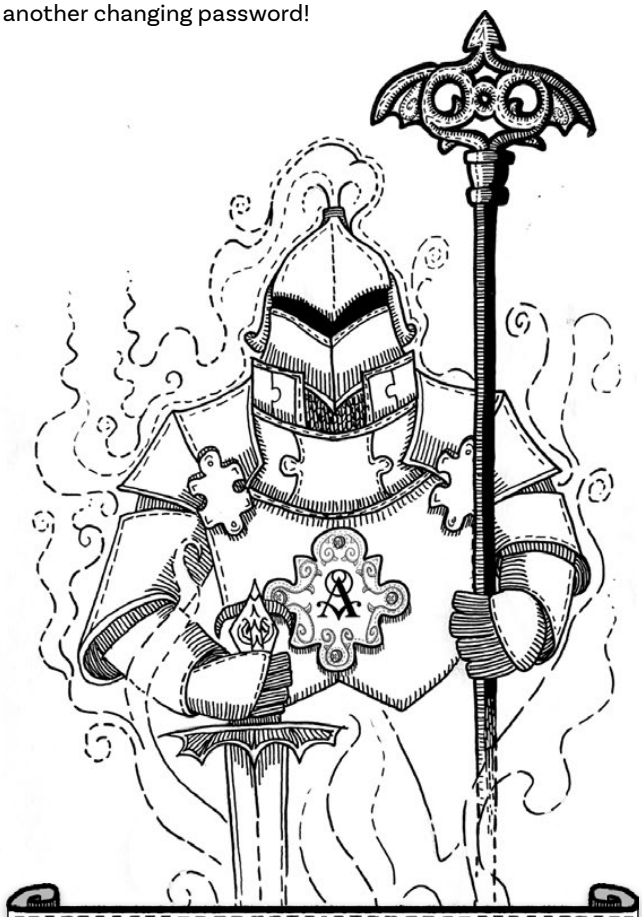
Variations

In this puzzle, the players are given a challenge word and must give the correct response word. Based on the examples they overhear, the players must deduce the relationship between challenge and response. Variants of this puzzle can use other relationships between the words. For example, the challenger might say a word and the responder must answer with the number of letters in that word.

If you place this puzzle in your campaign, think about the kind of person who would use such a setup—whoever wants this door guarded believes a dynamic password is more secure than an unchanging password. This would make sense at the entrance to an exclusive club on a busy city street, for example, with many people likely to overhear the password as it is given.

If you want to discourage higher-level characters from simply fighting their way through, you could increase the number of ghostly guards, or choose a slightly more powerful creature such as a revenant or wraith.

Further Puzzling. This puzzle is similar to the "Members Only" puzzle in chapter 4 of *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*. If your players enjoy these password puzzles, you could follow this one up with the slightly more challenging password door in *Tasha's*—perhaps the secret club has an exclusive meeting room which requires yet another changing password!



Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- If you have new players, they may not be familiar with enough monsters to play this game easily. If a player gets the prompt, but can't come up with a monster, tell them a monster their character would know.
- Feel free to have more visitors show up and exchange passwords with the guards to give the party more examples of the pattern.

Puzzle 8: Toil and Bubble

Type of Puzzle: Logic

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters enter a chamber with a wooden bench covered in alchemical equipment: beakers, glass rods, a mortar and pestle, and a small cauldron. Glass vials in a wooden stand contain a variety of ingredients, from the mundane—dried thyme, powdered charcoal, iron shavings—to the exotic—dragon's blood, myconid spores, and expired goodberry extract.

The chamber's exit is blocked by a *wall of force*.

Puzzle

There is a single scrap of paper on the table, burnt and torn around the edges. It has the following text on it, which is replicated for the players on handout 8:

> Dearest Sophia,
>
> Here is the recipe for the Potion of Passage you were interested in. This potion requires four ingredients: elderberry, minotaur horn, safflower leaves, and pixie liver. For the potion to brew properly, all must be placed into a cauldron of boiling water in the correct order. Before going into the cauldron, one of the ingredients must be ground, one chopped, one bruised, and one shredded.
>
> I cannot recall all the steps, but I do remember the following:
>
> 1. The elderberry goes into the cauldron right after the minotaur horn.
>
> 2. The first ingredient into the cauldron is either the pixie liver or the ground ingredient.
>
> 3. The elderberry must be bruised.
>
> 4. The safflower leaves go into the cauldron right before the chopped ingredient.
>
> 5. The minotaur horn goes into the cauldron first.
>
> Much love,
> Mother

Solution

To correctly prepare the potion, the characters must add the ingredients in this order:

1. Ground minotaur horn
2. Bruised elderberry
3. Shredded safflower leaves
4. Chopped pixie liver

There is enough potion in the cauldron for the whole party. A creature that drinks the correct potion can pass through the *wall of force* and exit the chamber.

Consequences

If the potion is prepared incorrectly, it becomes a *potion of poison*.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** Each ingredient goes into the cauldron only once, and puzzling through all five steps gives you the exact order they must be placed in.
- **Medium Hint.** The first ingredient is ground minotaur horn, because instruction 5 says that the minotaur horn goes in the cauldron first, and instruction 4 says that the first ingredient is either pixie liver or the ground ingredient.
- **Big Hint.** The second ingredient is bruised elderberry, because instruction 3 says that the elderberry must be bruised, and instruction 1 says that it goes in the cauldron right after the minotaur horn.

Tips to Run This Puzzle

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- Make it very clear to the players that this potion will brew enough liquid for everyone in the party, otherwise some players may get obsessed with hiding the solution or the potion from each other.

Variations

This is a basic logic puzzle and they are quite easy to prepare (search "how to create a logic grid puzzle" online for instructions). You can add your own wonderful and bizarre ingredients, such as worg eyes, ent root, and chimera talons!

In this version, the potion prepared is a special one that allows the characters to exit the chamber. You can also swap it for any potion in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or *D&D Basic Rules*, such as a *potion of flying* or a *potion of speed* that will help the characters during an upcoming boss fight.

Puzzle 9: Virtue Riddles

Type of Puzzle: Riddles

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters enter a comfortable lounge chamber. Sitting on a collection of comfy pillows are a group of three kobolds. Once the players enter, the kobolds spring to attention to propose their game..

TIPS TO RUN THIS PUZZLE

Riddles are a famously challenging part of D&D. Some players love them, others love the idea of them but have a terrible time solving them, and many people are terrified of them.

To run riddle challenges effectively:

- Make sure everyone feels like they can work together to solve each riddle.
- Never single out a player to answer alone, and don't force quiet players to participate.
- If the players struggle, remind them often that you have hints to give, if they want them.
- If the players are frustrated, allow their characters to make Intelligence checks to know the answers.

Puzzle

When the characters enter the room, one of the kobolds comes forward and proclaims, "You've finally made it! … Okay, here's the deal!" The kobold recites the following:

> "We have three riddles and a clue to give,
> Answer two outta three, and maybe you'll live!
> Be careful, 'cause you each get one guess.
> So, think really hard, and you can progress!"

In summary, the rules of this competition are as follows:

- The players must correctly answer two of the three riddles posed by the kobolds to win their clue or treasure (the reward is up to you).
- The party is only allowed as many guesses as there are members in the party (so a party of four characters can try to answer each riddle four times). Make sure to emphasize that the players can work together to solve the riddles: **do not force individual players to solve the riddles alone**.

When the players are ready to begin, a different kobold steps forward to present each riddle. You can read one riddle and pause for the party to solve it, and then move on to the next. Or, you can ask the party if they would like to hear all three and choose which two they want to solve.

Handouts 9-1 through 9-3 contain copies of the riddles to give to the players.

> O virtue of virtues,
> Through trial and strife,
> Tempering both judgment and might.
> I wait and weigh everything within my sight.

The answer to this riddle is: Patience.

> A soldier's burden I commonly am,
> A commandment even to kings.
> Beyond pleasure and joy, above all I sit,
> A call to action or a sacred writ.

The answer to this riddle is: Duty.

> When the fittest do contend,
> And bold winners seek an end,
> They look upon their fallen foe
> And withhold their closing blow.

The answer to this riddle is: Mercy.

When two of the three riddles are successfully answered, the kobolds all moan and sigh, but share key information with the players or hand over their treasure.

Consequences

While there are no damaging consequences for failing to solve this puzzle, not answering the riddles correctly means the party will miss out on a helpful clue or special treasure.

If you have given the creatures who deliver the riddles something required to progress (like a key), make sure you have a backup plan for how the party can obtain the reward. Perhaps they now have to bribe the kobolds with treasure, or challenge them to some other kind of competition.

Variations

There are many wonderful riddles available online for you to use instead of the ones presented here. It's generally very helpful to give your riddles a theme to help prevent the players from feeling lost and frustrated. You can also change the creature giving the riddle challenge; just make sure that whatever creature you choose is one that inspires your players to talk rather than initiate combat.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** This room was called "The Hall of Virtues." Perhaps that has something to do with all the answers.
- **Medium Hint.** For the first riddle, you vaguely remember an expression that goes 'blank is a virtue,' if only you can remember that saying….
- **Medium Hint.** For the second riddle, several words reference obligations, like a burden, commandment, and writ.
- **Big Hint.** All of the answers to these riddles are virtues you want in a good ruler or anyone who might have to make judgments.

Puzzle 10: The Lift

Type of Puzzle: Logic

Difficulty:



Setup

The characters come to a 20-foot-cubic chamber with an 8-foot-high, gilded door on the north wall and a 10-foot-square, locked trapdoor in the center of the floor. The doors have no keyholes and are immune to all damage.

A lever sticks out of the south wall, with its handle pointing up. When pulled, it immediately returns to the up position. A 3-inch-wide, red button is built into the wall next to the lever. Above it, this poem is carved into the wall:

> Seven floors down, the iron guard fumes,
>
> Between three liquids, two burning, but one spells its doom.
>
> There's also a skeleton, shiny coins, and cool air,
>
> You'll need two of three, and the third for the spare.
>
> The gilded door's lock is hungry for bone,
>
> Formed into a key of cooled fire-stone.
>
> The key's mold sits in the lifting floor,
>
> Where the guardian stands: just bone, stone, and no more.
>
> One liquid washes all else down the drain,
>
> Leaving only the key and a guardian slain.
>
> The coins are a prize, if you clear the way,
>
> But you've only one chance, or they'll melt away.
>
> If you fail, we refill the zones,
>
> But we're low on skeletons, so we'll need your bones.
>
> To move the lift car, just pump the lever
>
> Once for each floor, bottom to top—nothing too clever.
>
> Hit the red button to open lift doors—
>
> Figure it out, and the key prize is yours.
>
> Then move north through the door of gold!
>
> More adventure awaits the clever and bold.

Handout 10-1 has a copy of the poem to give to the players. A fresco painted next to the poem looks like the image contained in handout 10-2. The diagram below has a labeled version of the puzzle for your use as the Dungeon Master.

Puzzle

The fresco represents the levels of the dungeon immediately beneath the characters' feet. Allow the characters to make the following ability checks to see what their characters know. Characters proficient with painter's supplies have advantage on these checks:

- A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check knows the blue liquid depicted in the fresco is water and the red liquid depicted in the fresco is lava.
- A character who is proficient with alchemist's tools or who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence check knows the green liquid depicted in the fresco is acid.
- A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check knows the figure depicted in the lift car at the bottom of the fresco is an **iron golem** and knows the iron golem's damage immunities.

The players may figure out the above information based on the poem and fresco without making an ability check.

Working the Lift. The iron golem sits inside the iron lift car, on level 1. The bottom of the lift floor has a small mold made for creating a key.

- If a creature pumps the lever once then pushes the button, the car moves to level 1, which is its starting location.
- If a creature pumps the lever twice then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 2, a shaft filled with cold water that slopes toward the lift. If the car doors are opened on this level, the water rushes in. If the car is filled with lava from level 3, the water cools the lava, turning it to stone. Some of this stone settles in the key mold, and the rest fills the car.
- If a creature pumps the lever three times then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 3, which is filled with lava. If the car doors are opened on this level, the lava rushes in, destroying any skeleton or coins inside (though the golem is immune to fire damage, so it remains unharmed). If the car is filled with water from level 2, the water cools the lava, turning it to stone. This stone settles in the key mold, and the rest fills the car.
- If a creature pumps the lever four times then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 4, a shaft sloped toward the lift that contains coins worth a total of 2,000 gp. If the car doors are opened on this level, the coins slide in. If the car contains lava from level 3 or acid from level 5, the coins are instantly destroyed.
- If a creature pumps the lever five times then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 5, which is filled with acid. If the car doors are opened on this level, the acid rushes in, destroying the golem and any bones or coins inside. The acid also destroys any stone within, except for stone inside the key mold.
- If a creature pumps the lever six times then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 6, which contains a human skeleton. If the car doors are opened on this level, the skeleton slides in. If the car contains lava from level 3 or acid from level 5, the skeleton is destroyed.

- If a creature pumps the lever seven times then pushes the button, the car arrives at level 7, a shaft sloped away from the lift that drains the car of any coins or acid, lava, or water it contains. Stone, the skeleton, and the golem remain inside the car.
- If a creature pumps the level eight or more times then pushes the button, the car pushes up through the trap door to the same level as the characters and all sides of it open as its contents come out. See "Consequences" for more information.

Solution

The following solution to the puzzle is the most ideal, though some other outcomes result in the characters creating the proper key—they just may have to face a golem or wave of acid to retrieve it.

- The characters get the skeleton from level 6 in the car.
- The characters get the lava from level 3 in the car to melt the skeleton in the lava. (This step could be switched with the previous one.)
- The characters get the water from level 2 in the car to cool the lava-skeleton mix as stone in the mold.
- The characters get the acid from level 5 in the car to destroy the golem and wash away the excess stone, leaving only the stone in the mold.
- The characters empty the acid from the car on level 7.
- The characters get the coins from level 4 in the car.
- The characters send the car to level 8, where they are, and claim the proper key and the coins.

Consequences

There are several ways this puzzle may turn out.

- If the characters send the lift up to their level with liquid lava or acid within, each creature standing on the floor of the chamber must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Creatures that fail take 22 (4d10) fire damage if liquid lava is on the car and 22 (4d10) acid damage if acid is on the car. Creatures that succeed take half as much damage.
- If the characters send the car up to their level with the iron golem inside, it emerges and attacks, fighting until destroyed. If the golem is sent up with stone created from cooled lava, it uses its action to break the stone during the first round of combat (though any stone in the key mold remains).
- If the characters send up the lift car with a block of stone made from cooled lava and no golem to break it, they must start over (see "Starting Over," below).
- If the characters create a key in the mold that is made of stone formed from cooled lava that was used to destroy the skeleton, a keyhole suddenly appears on the gilded door and the key the characters created can be retrieved from the mold and used to unlock the door. If the key crafted does not have both components, or has an extra component, such as liquefied coins that were destroyed by the lava before it was cooled, the characters must start over (see "Starting Over" below), after defeating the golem if it also rose with the key.

Starting Over. If the characters must start the puzzle again, the voice of Aenigma echoes through the chamber, saying, "No. That won't do at all! Let's try again." At your discretion, the dragon may also tell the characters why they failed or give them a hint (see "Difficulty and Hints," below).

The lift car goes back to its original position on level 1 and a new golem appears on it. The water, lava, and acid reappear on levels 2, 3, and 5 respectively. Level 7 is emptied of any liquid it contains. The coins do not reappear on level 4, but remain if they were not moved. If the skeleton on level 6 was destroyed, the dragon's voice says, "I just need a bone from each of you! I've got the rest covered." Each character takes 16 (3d10) necrotic damage as a bone is removed from their bodies and used to make a new skeleton for the level.

Hints

If the party is struggling to solve this puzzle, you can give them any of the following hints, one at a time. These hints can come from anywhere, so be creative!

- **Small Hint.** The coins are a bit of a distraction. They would be nice to claim, but aren't the only part of the puzzle.
- **Medium Hint.** Some how the skeleton and lava must come together and get made into a stone key without some other substance getting into the mix.
- **Big Hint.** The acid can wash away any excess stone and likely even the guardian.

TIPS TO RUN THIS PUZZLE

Here are some helpful hints to run this puzzle effectively:

- If you're playing in person, print one poem handout and one fresco handout per player so they don't need to share.
- When the elevator moves, describe it making a mechanical creaking or whirring noise. If the elevator moves up, the noise gets louder and closer to the players. If it moves down, the noise moves further away. Describe the amount of time the noise is active, giving the players a sense of how far the elevator has traveled.
- Encourage the players to track where they think the elevator is by marking up their fresco handouts.

Variations

You can make the puzzle less challenging by numbering the levels on the players' copy of the fresco. Or, for a much easier puzzle, hand the characters a labeled version of the fresco, which tells them the exact substance on each level. You could also increase the number of correct solutions by replacing the golem with a creature immune to fire damage, such as a **flameskull**.

Incorporating This Puzzle

This puzzle can be placed into any dungeon you see fit. Level 1 of the lift should be on the bottom floor of a dungeon, so the placement of the lift makes sense, and the guardian can be adjusted to suit the level of the characters.

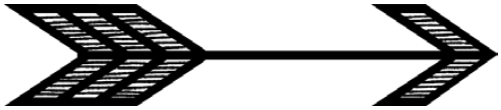
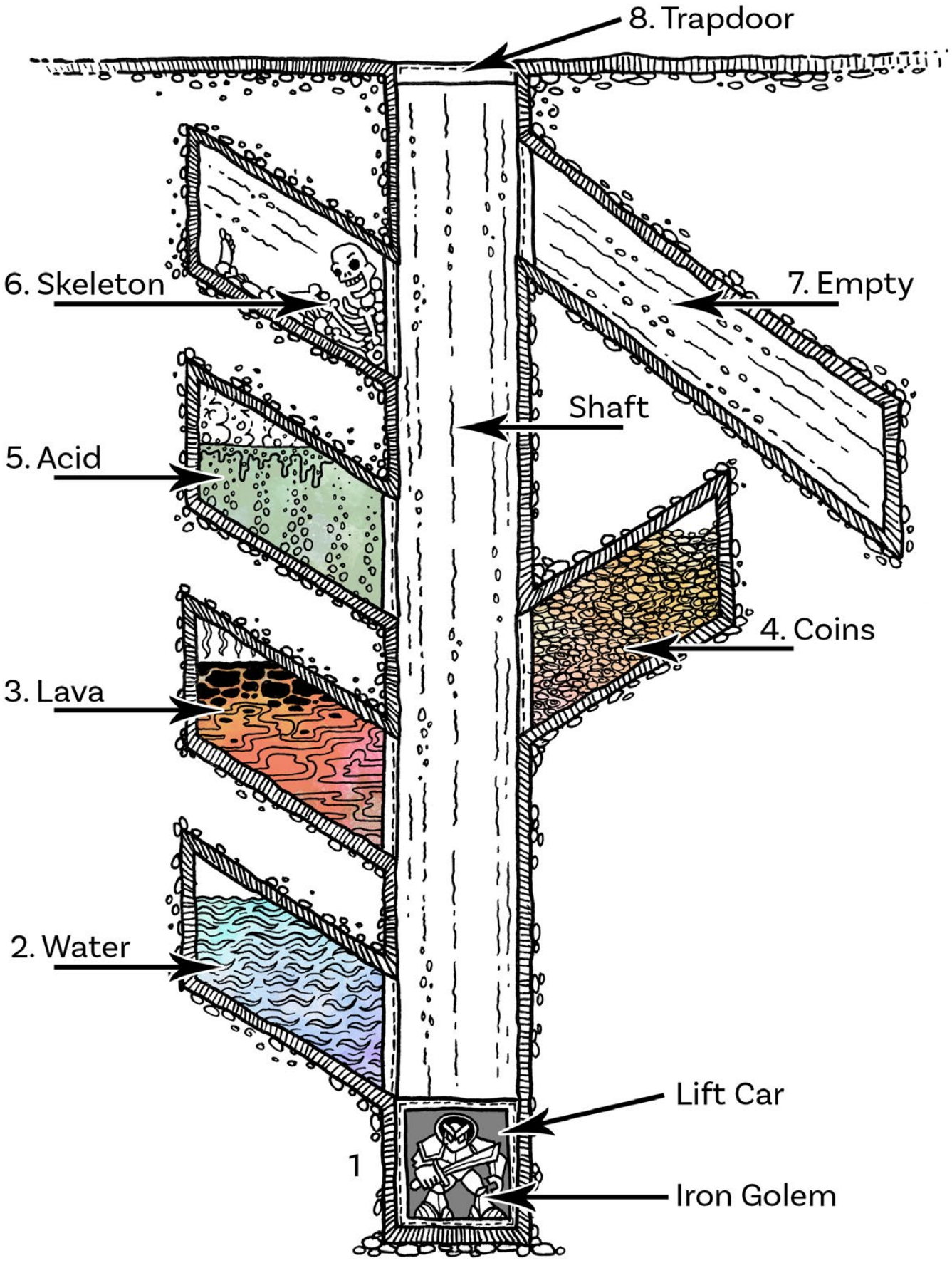
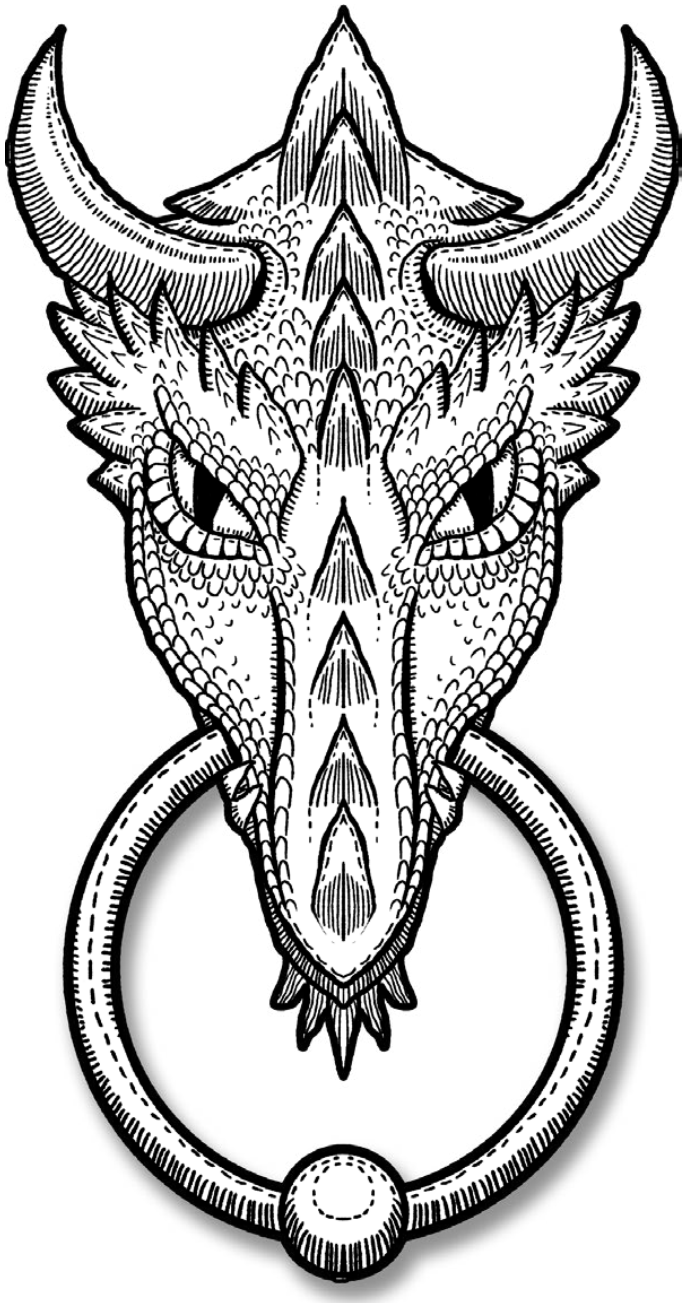
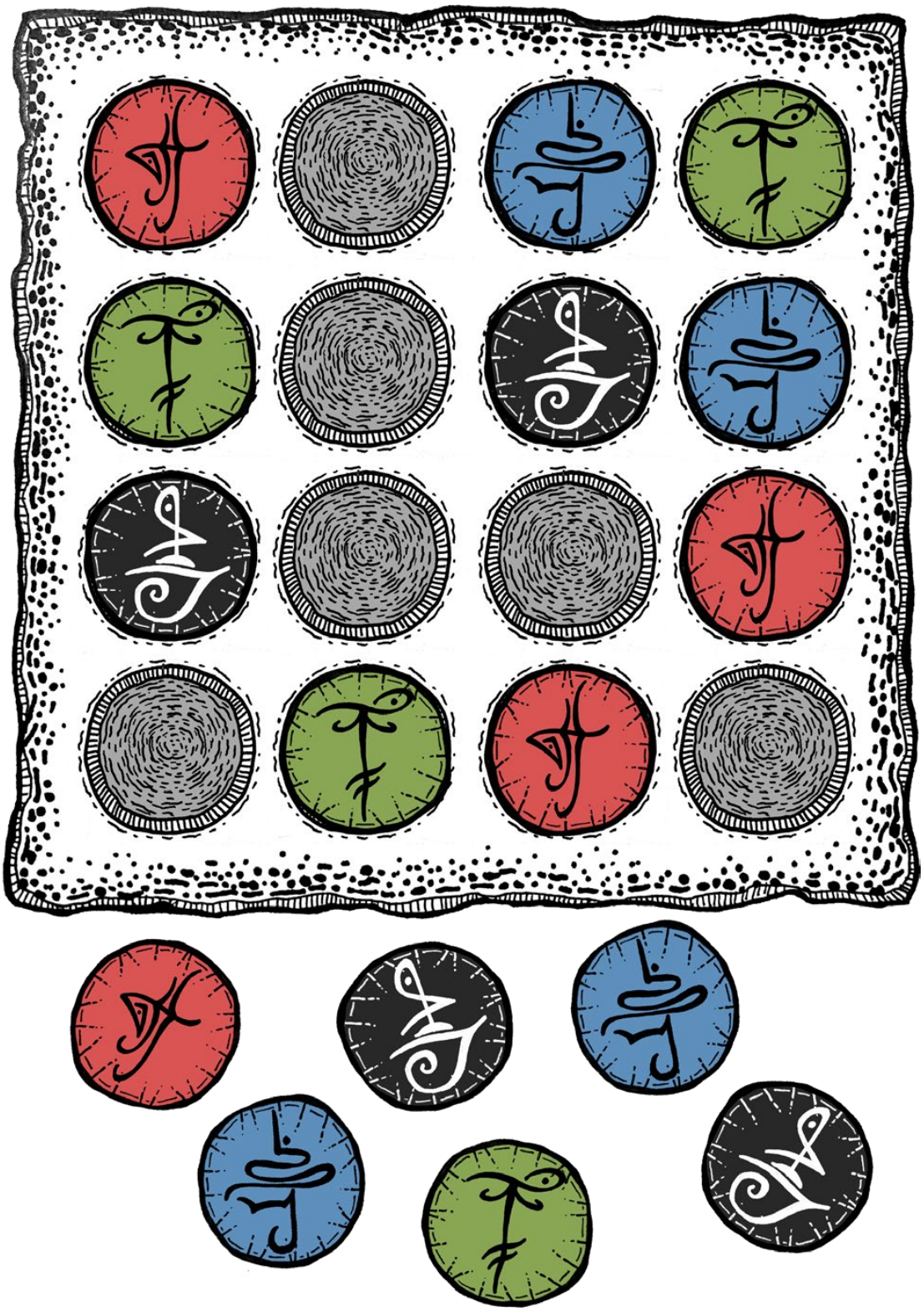


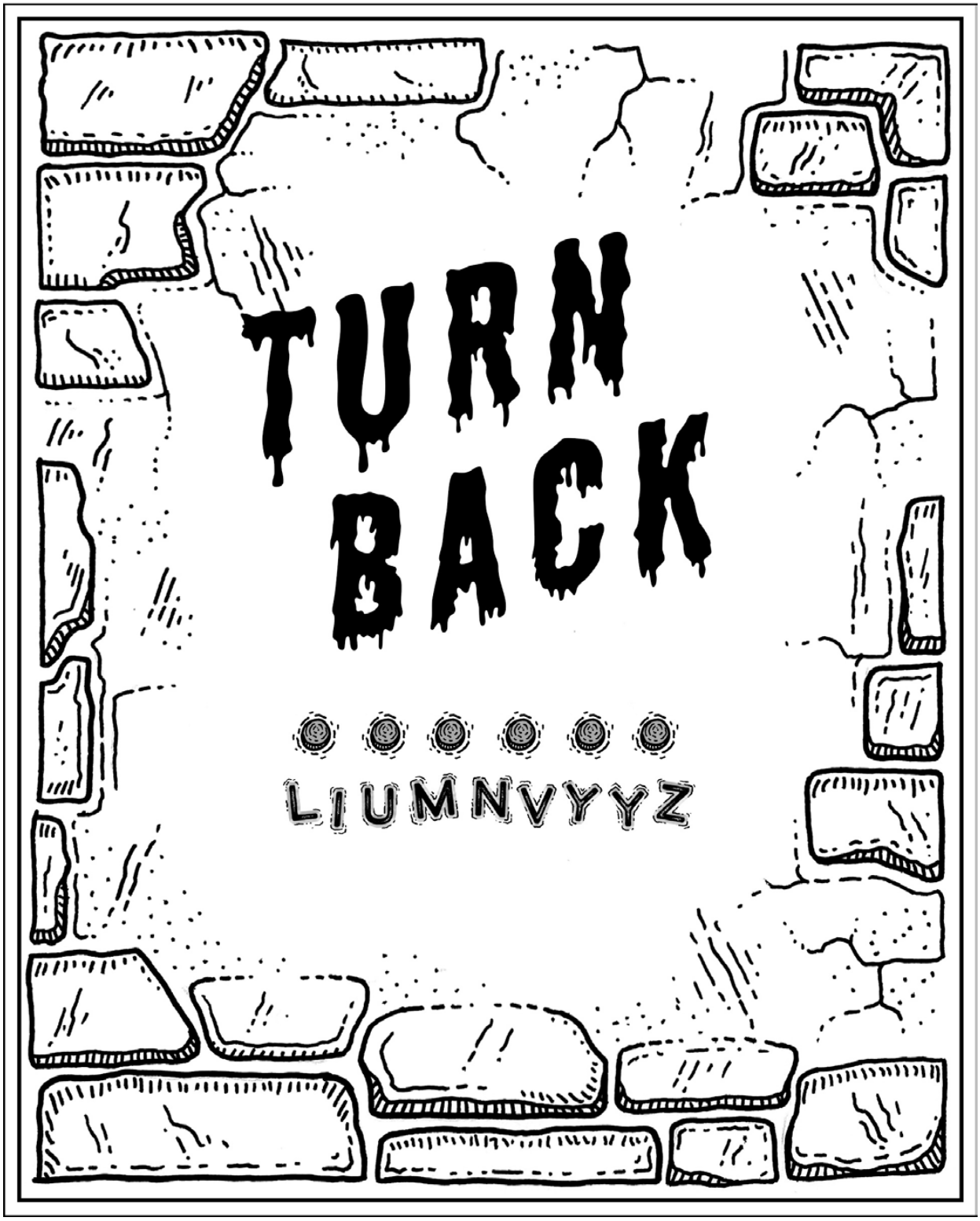
Diagram with Key

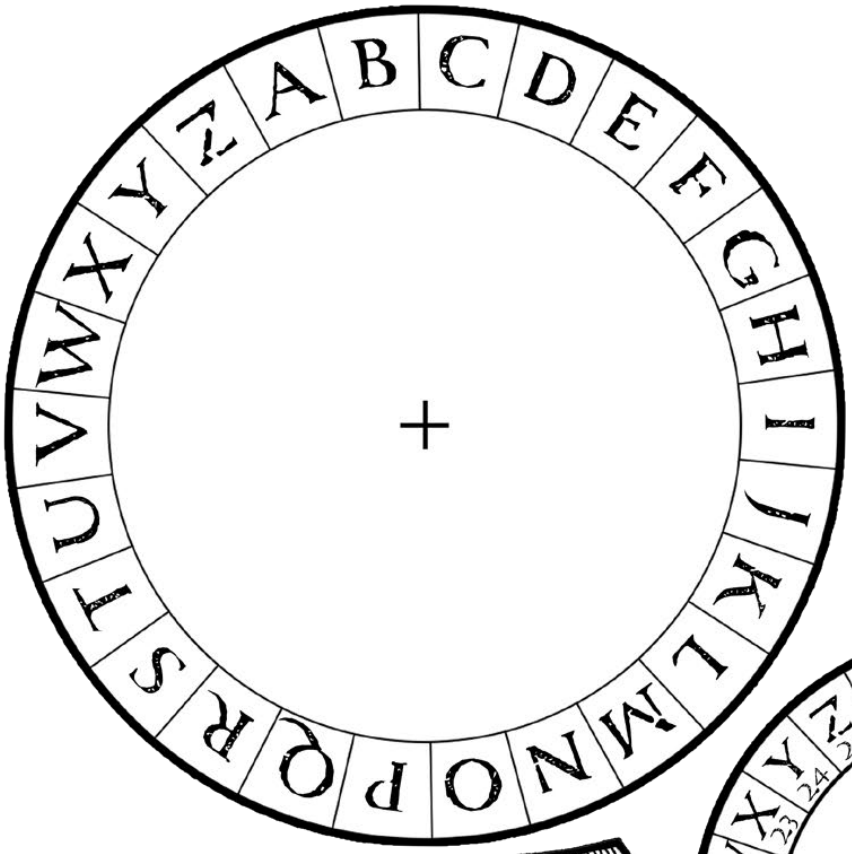


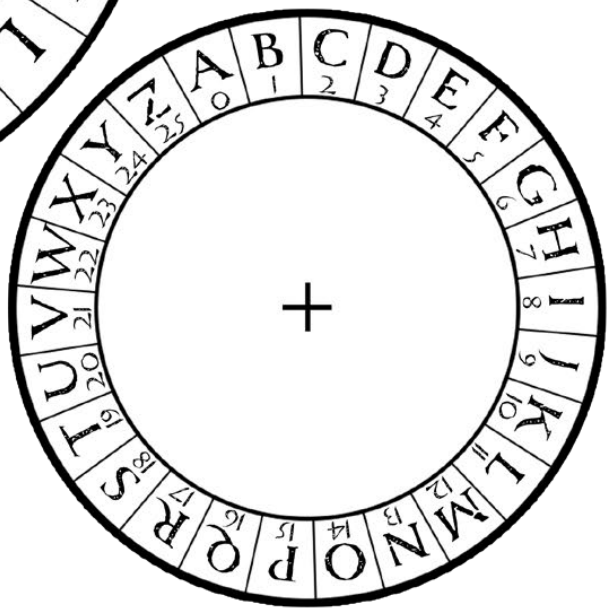
Handouts Appendix






TURN
BACK
LIUMNVYYZ



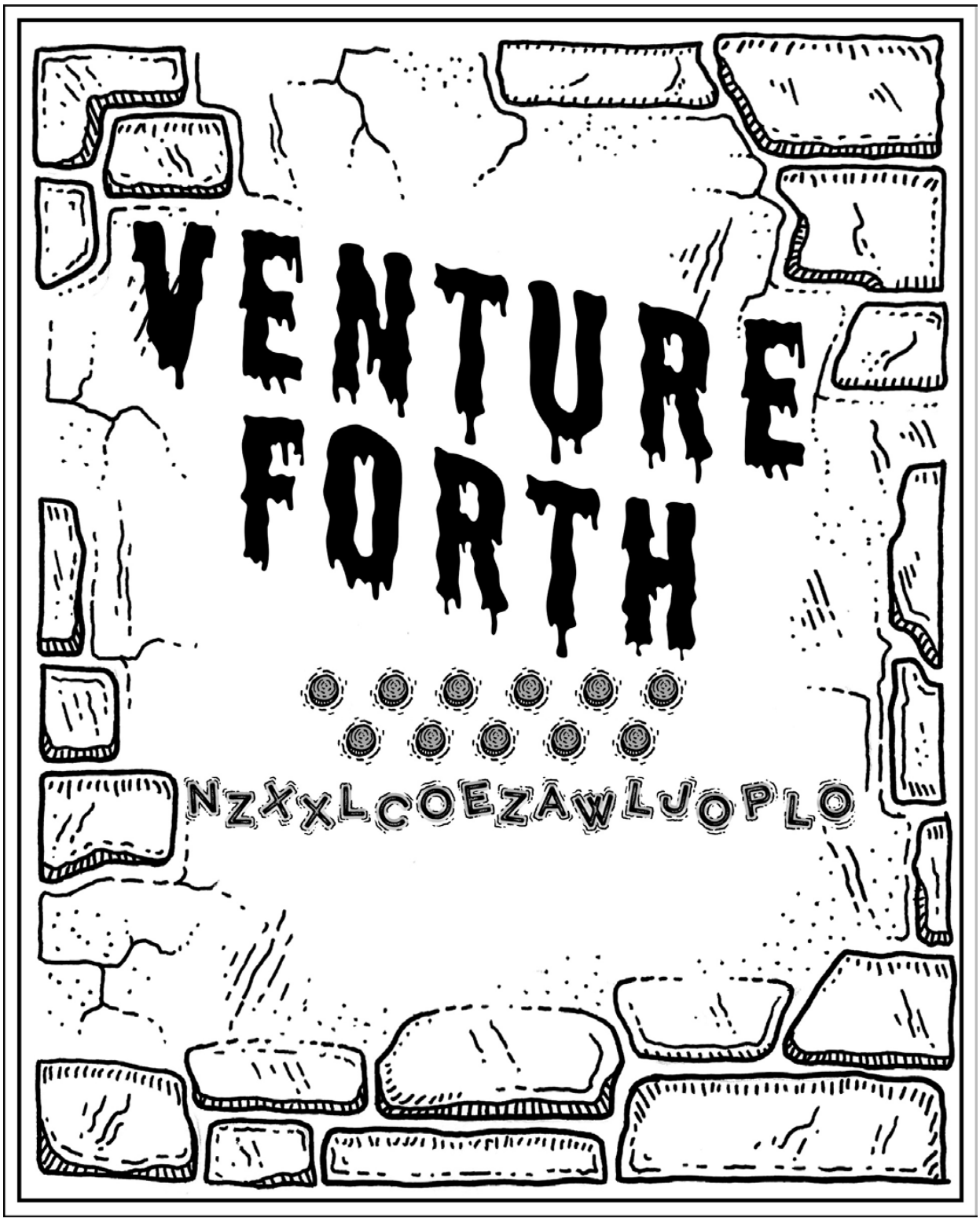


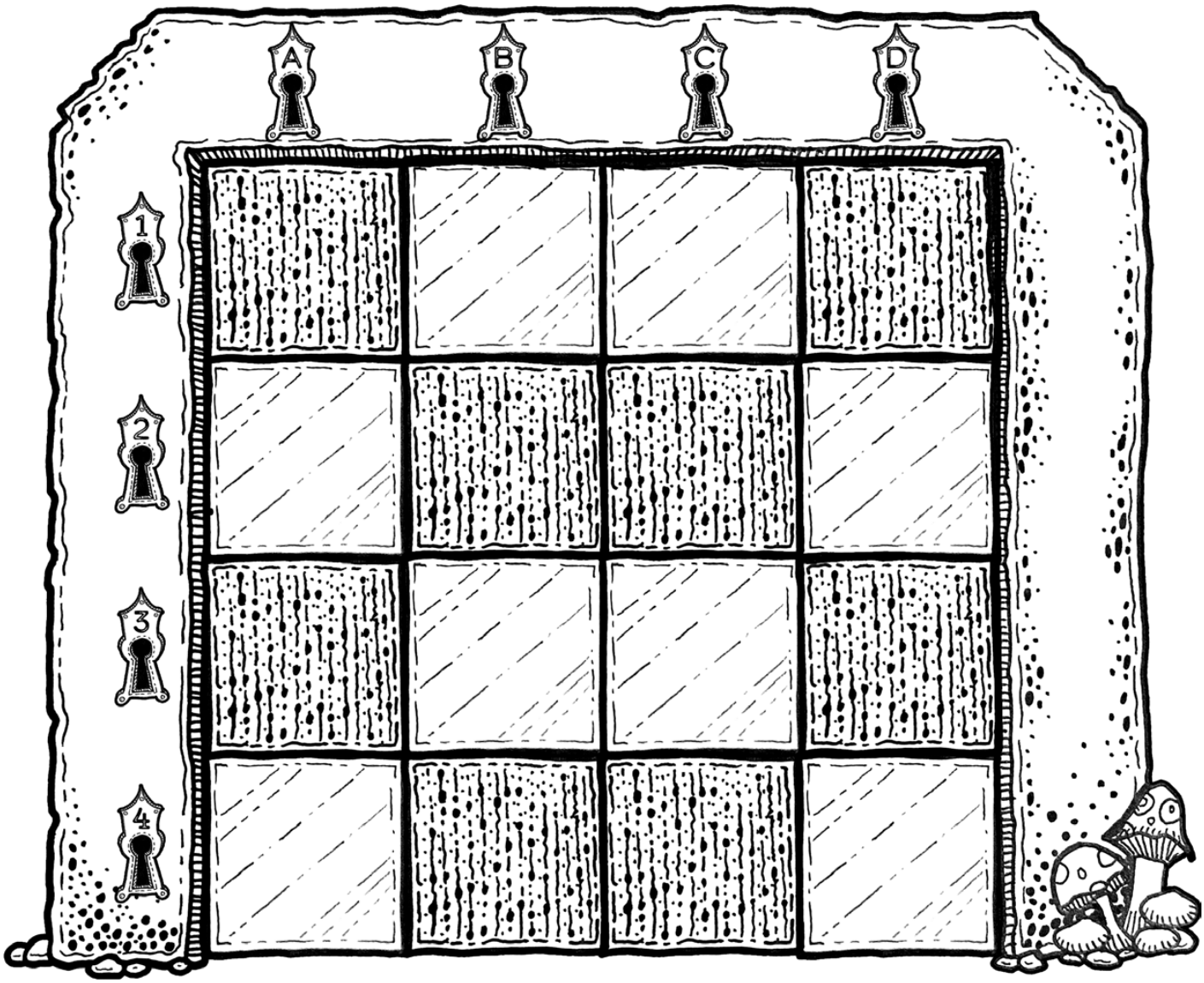
Assembly:

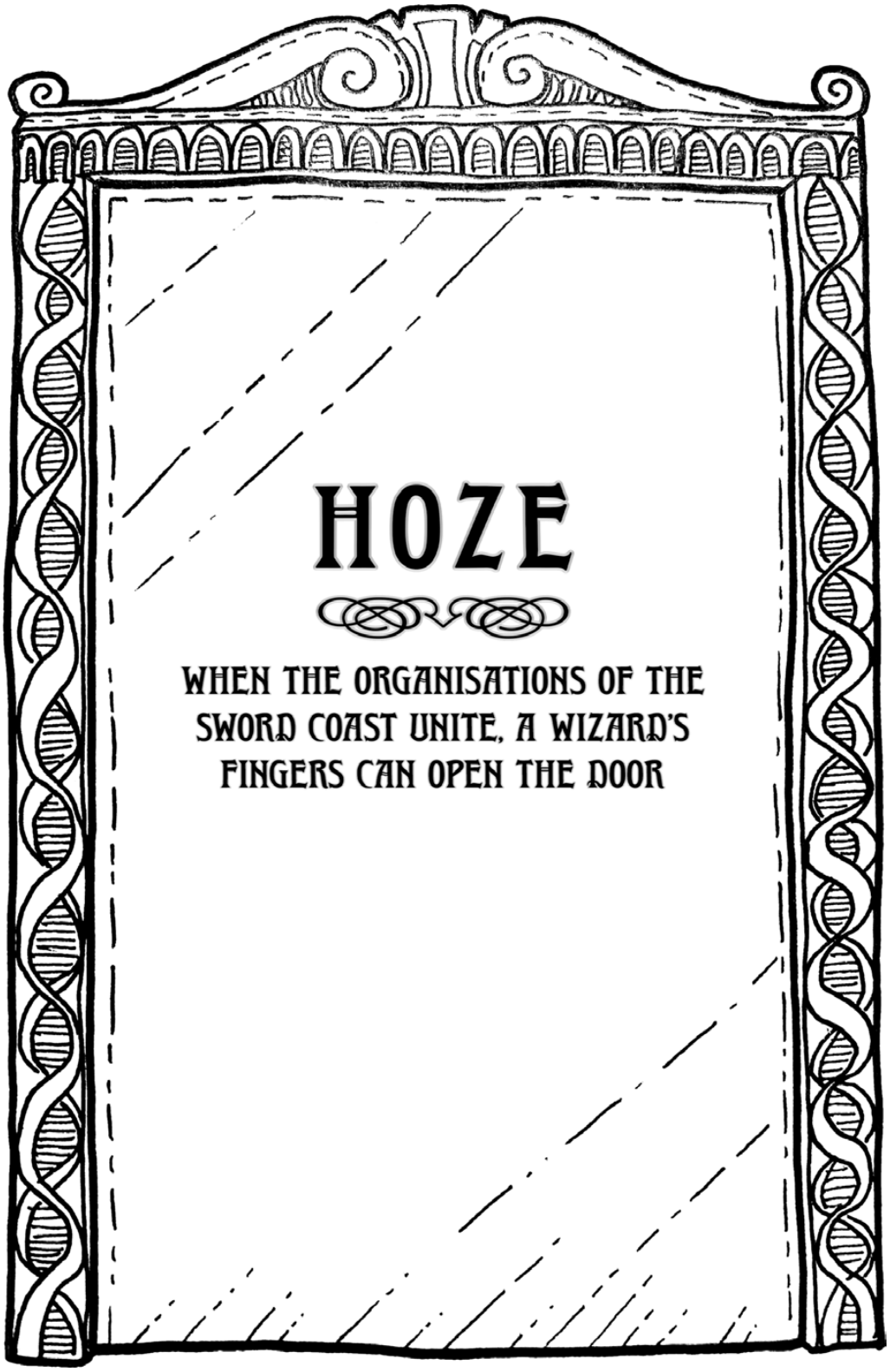
1. Cut out both disks (glue the disks to cardstock for a more durable wheel).
2. Pierce holes in the center of each disk.
3. Place the small disk atop the larger disk, and insert a paper fastener or a piece of knotted string through the holes.

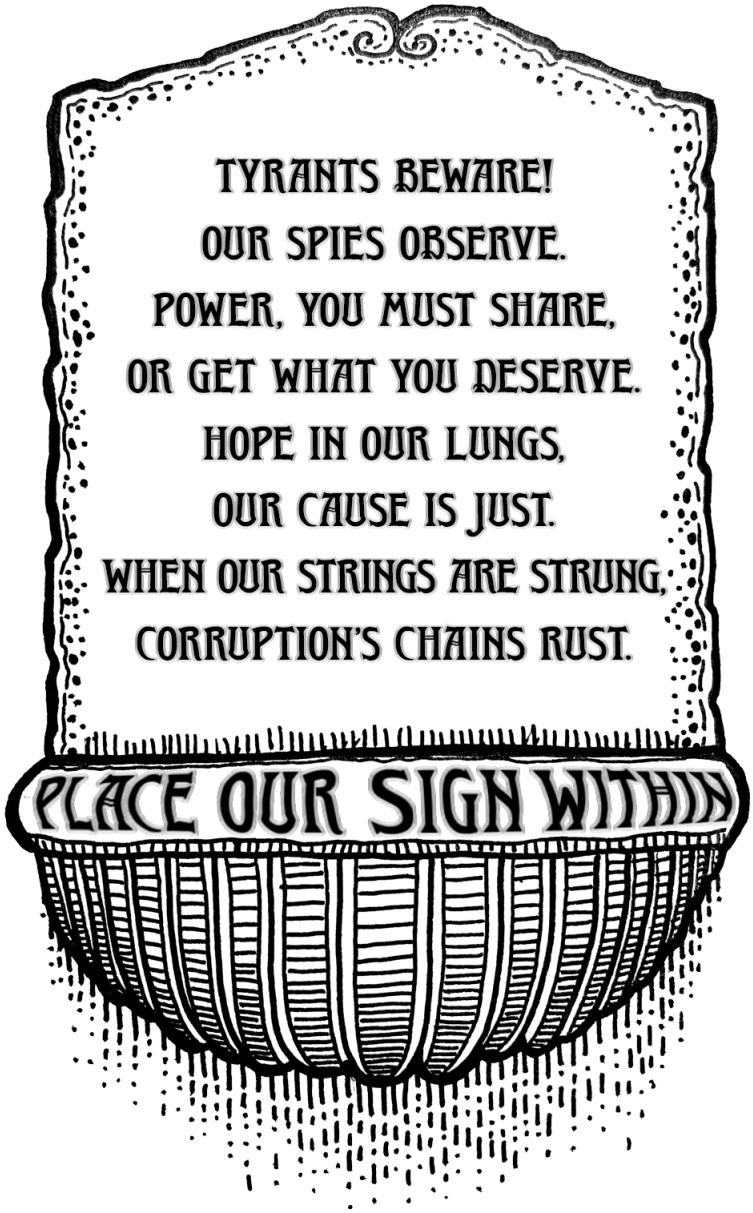
Use:

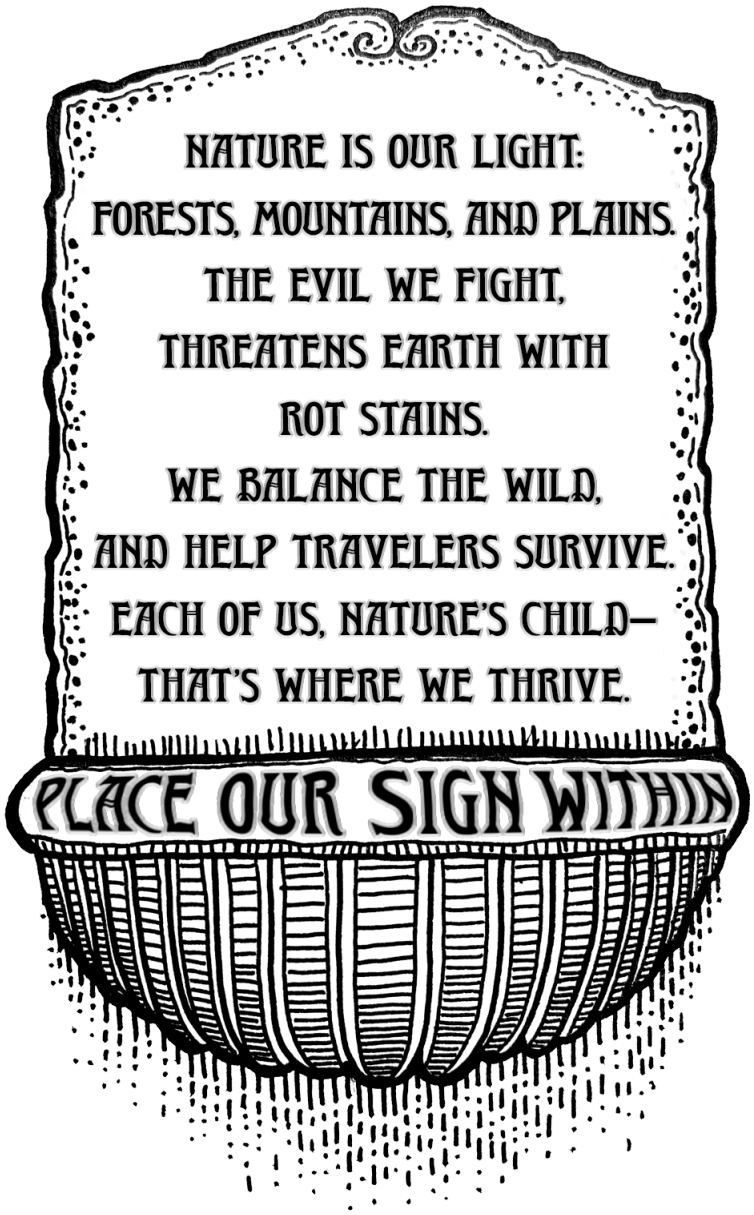
Take your wheel and align it so there's the same letter on the top and the bottom circle. Now move the smaller (bottom) circle for a key number of times — you'll know how many times based on the clues given. Look at the encrypted letter from the paper on a smaller circle and write down the corresponding letter on the big circle above it. When you finish with all the letters, you will know your message!


VENTURE
FORTH
NZXXLCOEZAWLJOPLO


A
B
C
D
1
2
3
4

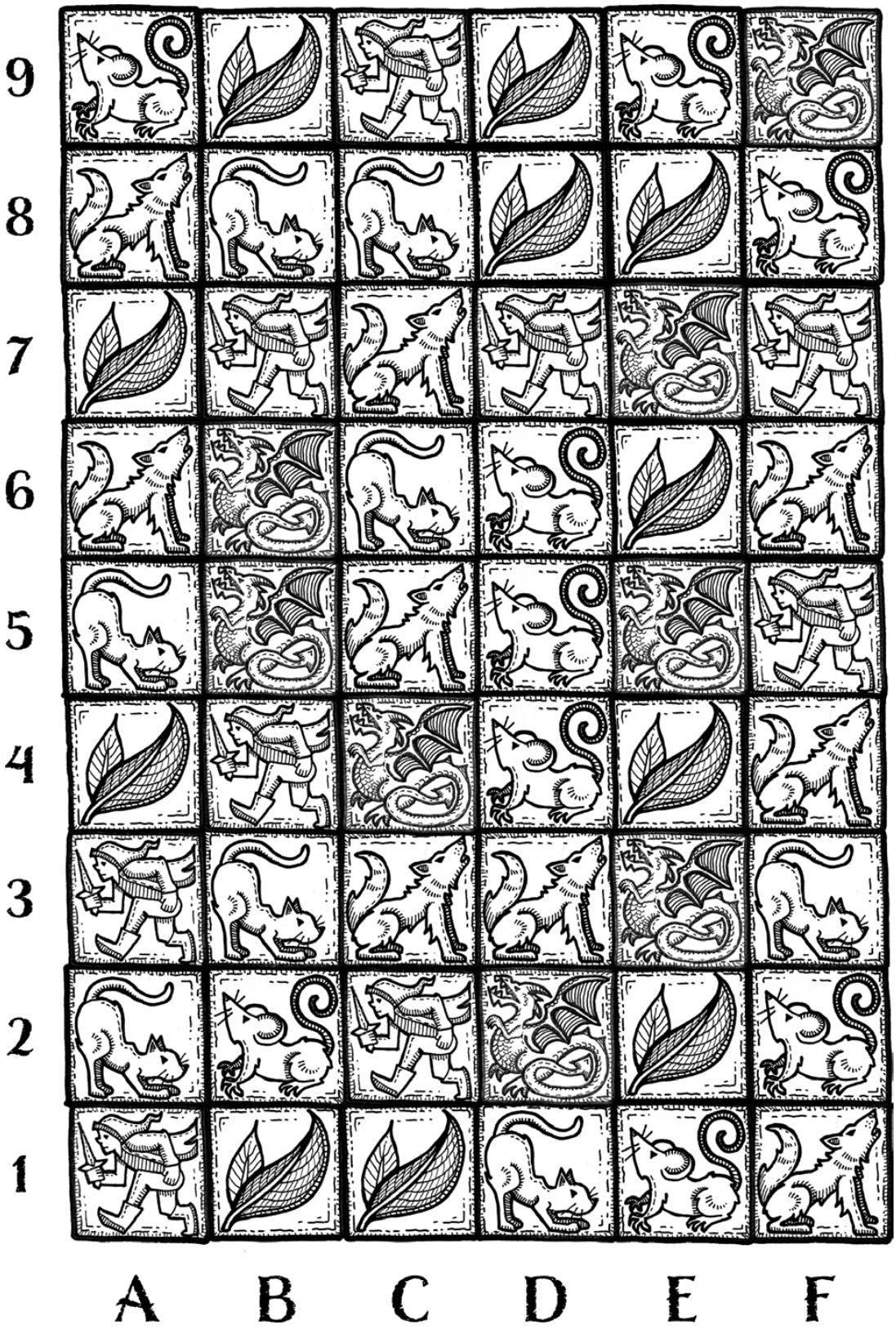

HOZE
WHEN THE ORGANISATIONS OF THE SWORD COAST UNITE, A WIZARD'S FINGERS CAN OPEN THE DOOR

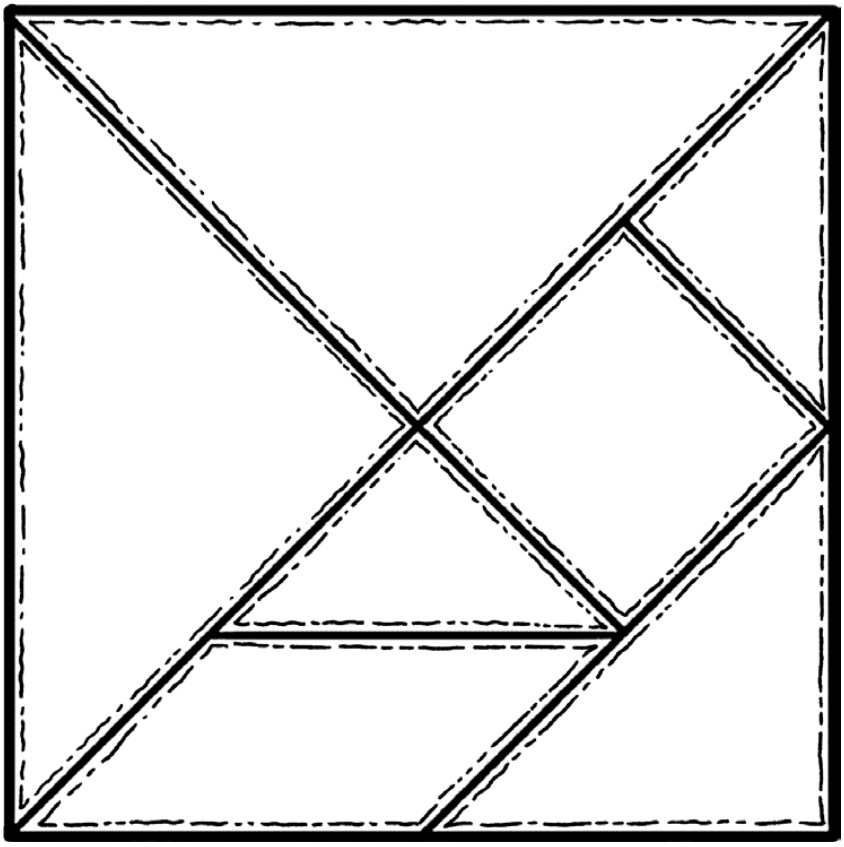

TYRANTS BEWARE!
OUR SPIES OBSERVE.
POWER, YOU MUST SHARE,
OR GET WHAT YOU DESERVE.
HOPE IN OUR LUNGS,
OUR CAUSE IS JUST.
WHEN OUR STRINGS ARE STRUNG,
CORRUPTION'S CHAINS RUST.
PLACE OUR SIGN WITHIN

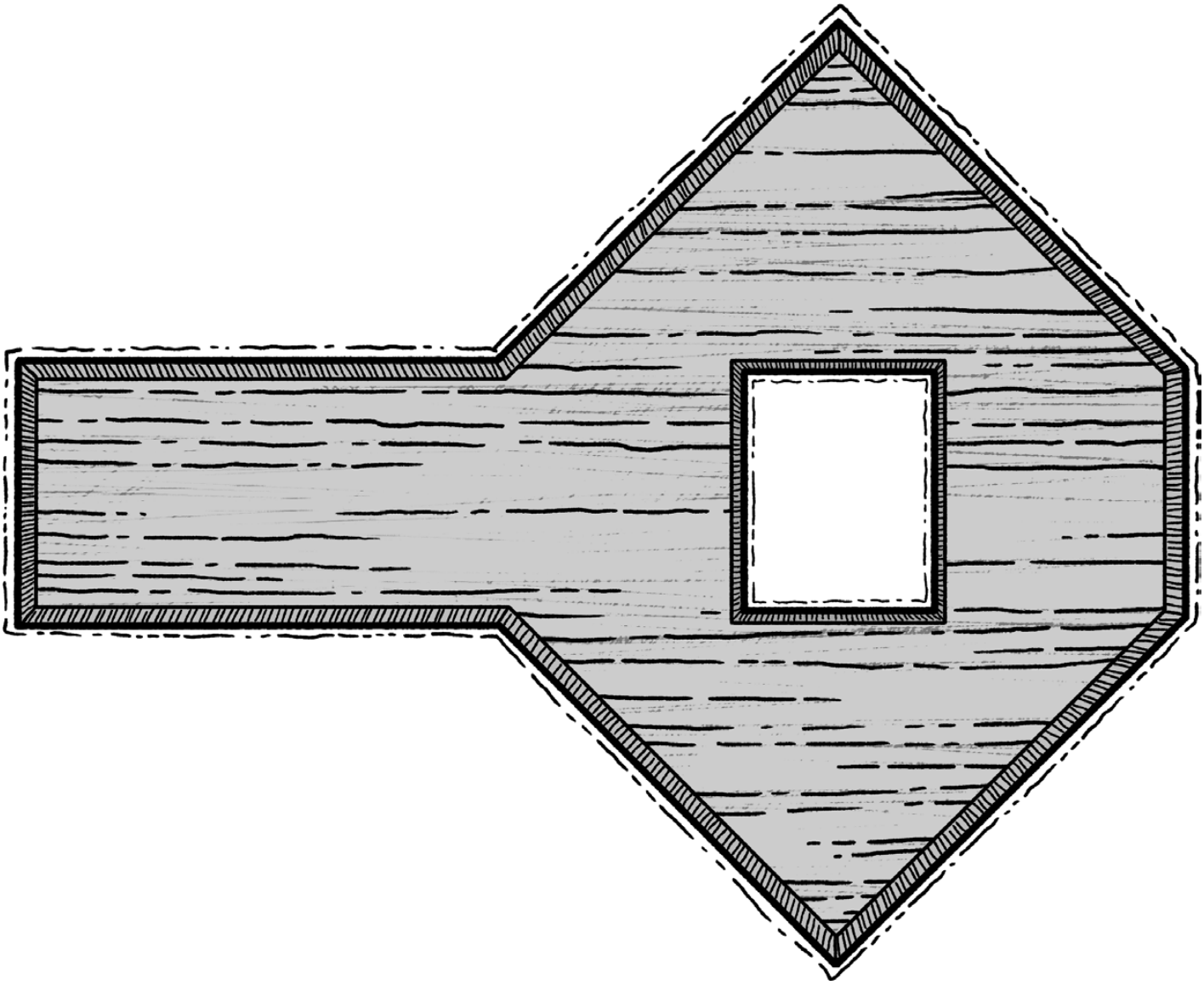

NATURE IS OUR LIGHT:
FORESTS, MOUNTAINS, AND PLAINS.
THE EVIL WE FIGHT,
THREATENS EARTH WITH
ROT STAINS.
WE BALANCE THE WILD,
AND HELP TRAVELERS SURVIVE.
EACH OF US, NATURE'S CHILD—
THAT'S WHERE WE THRIVE.
PLACE OUR SIGN WITHIN


With the gods at our back,
we keep evil in check.
When it rises, attack,
leaving nary a speck.
We ride out where
no one dares go,
into pure darkness,
as the sole light.
These are the places where
wickedness grows—
but evil can't stand
our radiant smite!
Place our sign within


POWER IS WEALTH,
AND RULES MUST BE BROKEN.
OUR STRENGTH IS STEALTH,
AND LIES SWEETLY SPOKEN.
WE CALL OURSELVES SNAKES:
WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE.
IT'S THE WORLD THAT WE'LL TAKE,
AND RULE FROM SHADOWS AFAR.
PLACE OUR SIGN WITHIN


9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
A B C D E F





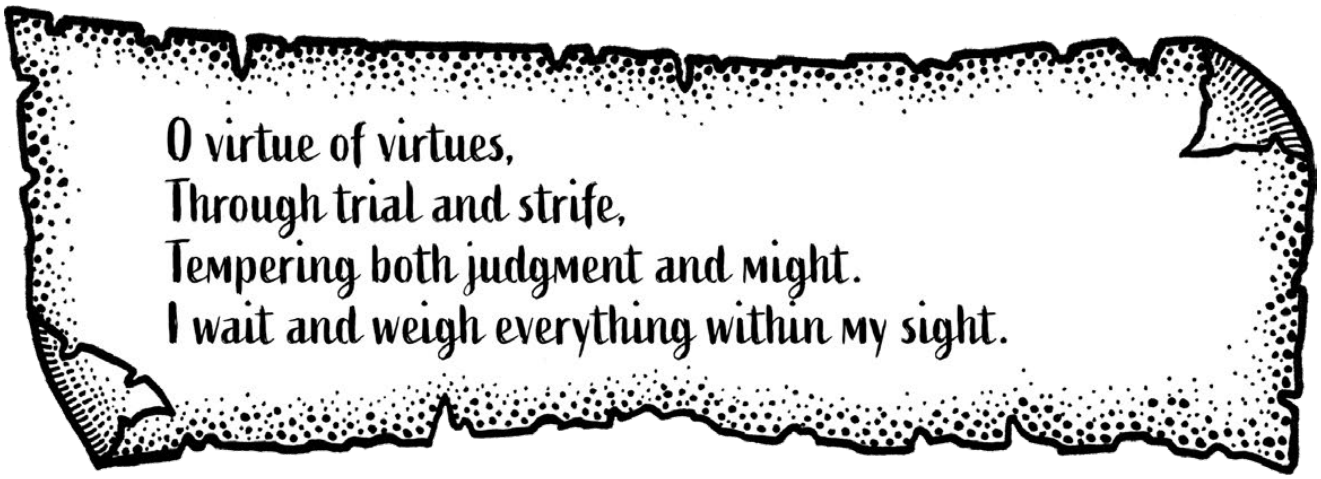
Dearest Sophia,

Here is the recipe for the Potion of Passage you were interested in. This potion requires four ingredients: elderberry, minotaur horn, safflower leaves, and pixie liver. For the potion to brew properly, all must be placed into a cauldron of boiling water in the correct order. Before going into the cauldron, one of the ingredients must be ground, one chopped, one bruised, and one shredded.

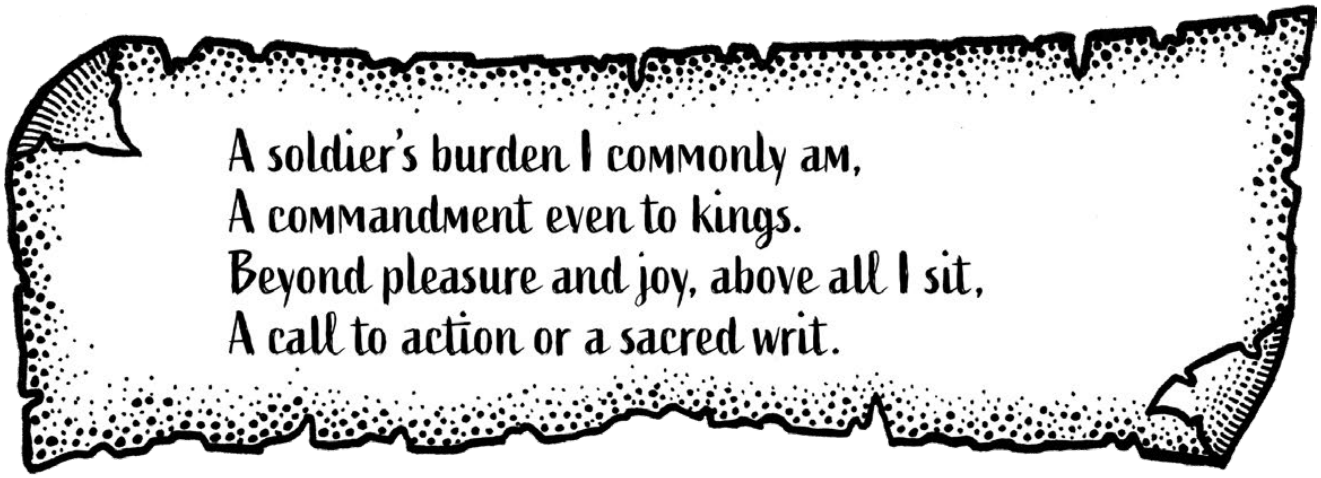
I cannot recall all the steps, but I do remember the following:

1. *The elderberry goes into the cauldron right after the minotaur horn.*
2. *The first ingredient into the cauldron is either the pixie liver or the ground ingredient.*
3. *The elderberry must be bruised.*
4. *The safflower leaves go into the cauldron right before the chopped ingredient.*
5. *The minotaur horn goes into the cauldron first.*

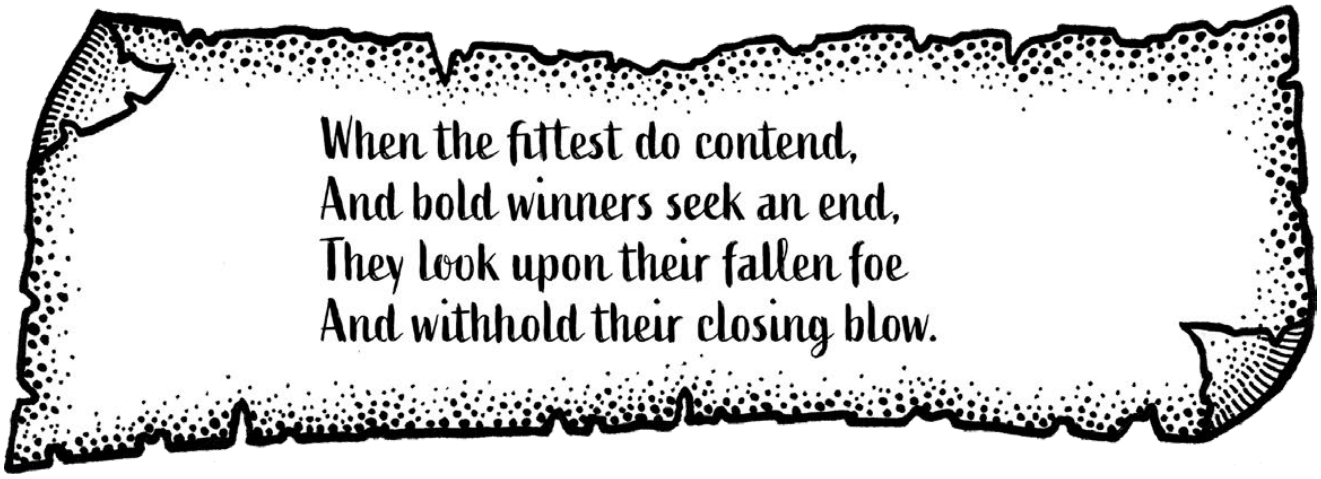
Much love,
Mother


O virtue of virtues,
Through trial and strife,
Tempering both judgment and might.
I wait and weigh everything within my sight.

9-1

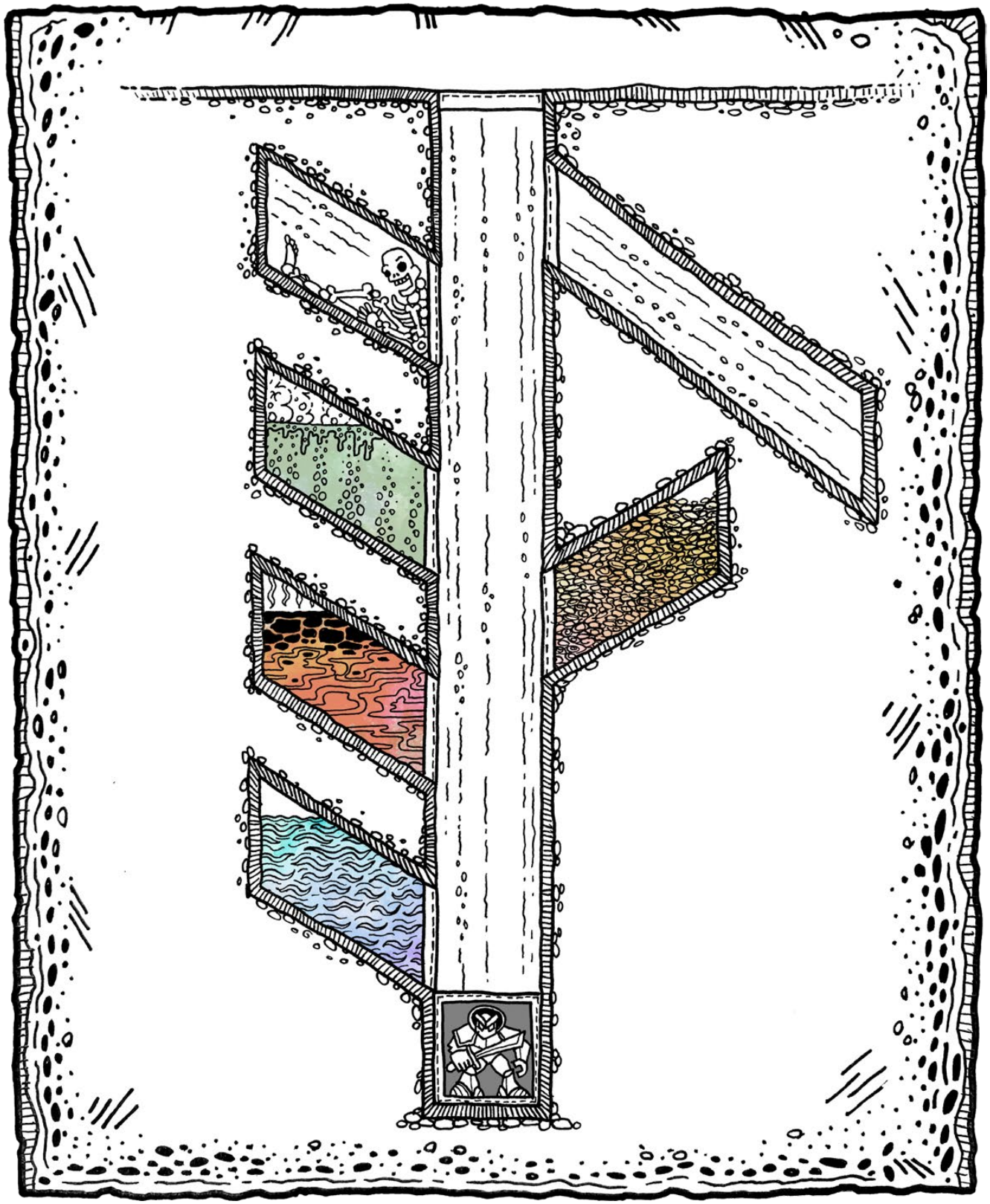

A soldier's burden I commonly am,
A commandment even to kings.
Beyond pleasure and joy, above all I sit,
A call to action or a sacred writ.

9-2


When the fittest do contend,
And bold winners seek an end,
They look upon their fallen foe
And withhold their closing blow.

9-3

Seven floors down, the iron guard fumes,
Between three liquids, two burning,
but one spells its doom.
There's also a skeleton, shiny coins, and cool air,
You'll need two of three,
and the third for the spare.
The gilded door's lock is hungry for bone,
Formed into a key of cooled fire-stone.
The key's mold sits in the lifting floor,
Where the guardian stands:
just bone, stone, and no more.
One liquid washes all else down the drain,
Leaving only the key and a guardian slain.
The coins are a prize, if you clear the way,
But you've only one chance,
or they'll melt away.
If you fail, we refill the zones,
But we're low on skeletons,
so we'll need your bones.
To move the lift car, just pump the lever
Once for each floor, bottom to top—
nothing too clever.
Hit the red button to open lift doors—
Figure it out, and the key prize is yours.
Then move north through the door of gold!
More adventure awaits the clever and bold.



Dear Creature,

Congratulations! You have been selected to test my flagship dungeon of mystery! All you need to do is follow the directions provided, present this invitation at the door, then enter to win exclusive rewards.

This is the first of many such puzzle dungeons I intend to create, and it would be my absolute pleasure to receive your invaluable consumer feedback.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Fondly yours,
Puzzle Master Aenigma



Maps Appendix

