



# CRY OF THE RED WYRM

*A Shadow of the Weird Wizard* Quest for Master Heroes



the same promises, go forth to find these treasures—and, in so doing, awaken an ancient and terrible evil. Can the heroes withstand the *Cry of the Red Wyrms*?

Some treasures are best left buried. Unfortunately, the promise of fabulous riches, magical power, and long-kept secrets draws adventurers from all over to locate an old tomb on the edge of nowhere.

The characters, enticed by

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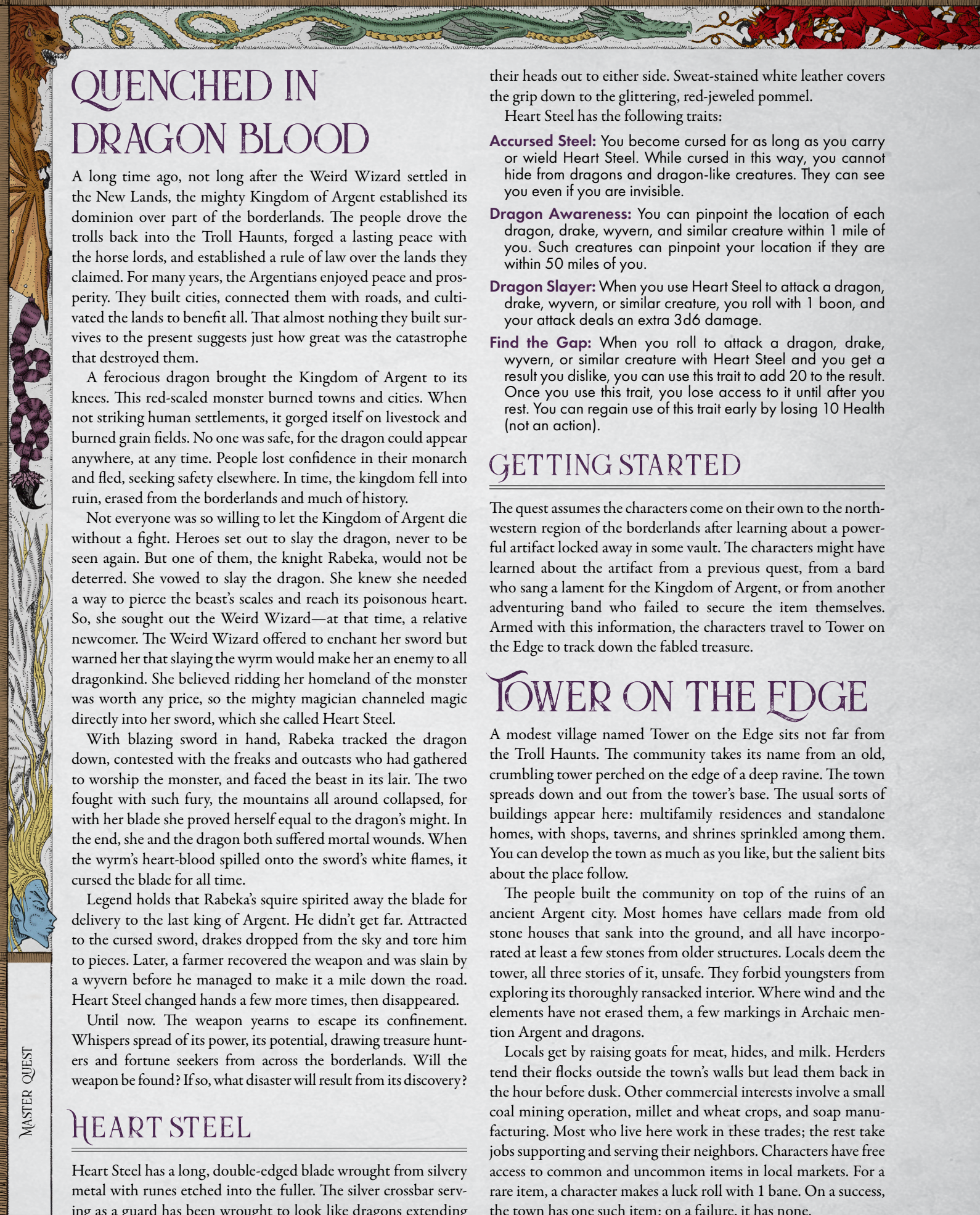
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# QUENCHED IN DRAGON BLOOD

A long time ago, not long after the Weird Wizard settled in the New Lands, the mighty Kingdom of Argent established its dominion over part of the borderlands. The people drove the trolls back into the Troll Haunts, forged a lasting peace with the horse lords, and established a rule of law over the lands they claimed. For many years, the Argentians enjoyed peace and prosperity. They built cities, connected them with roads, and cultivated the lands to benefit all. That almost nothing they built survives to the present suggests just how great was the catastrophe that destroyed them.

A ferocious dragon brought the Kingdom of Argent to its knees. This red-scaled monster burned towns and cities. When not striking human settlements, it gorged itself on livestock and burned grain fields. No one was safe, for the dragon could appear anywhere, at any time. People lost confidence in their monarch and fled, seeking safety elsewhere. In time, the kingdom fell into ruin, erased from the borderlands and much of history.

Not everyone was so willing to let the Kingdom of Argent die without a fight. Heroes set out to slay the dragon, never to be seen again. But one of them, the knight Rabeka, would not be deterred. She vowed to slay the dragon. She knew she needed a way to pierce the beast's scales and reach its poisonous heart. So, she sought out the Weird Wizard—at that time, a relative newcomer. The Weird Wizard offered to enchant her sword but warned her that slaying the wyrm would make her an enemy to all dragonkind. She believed ridding her homeland of the monster was worth any price, so the mighty magician channeled magic directly into her sword, which she called Heart Steel.

With blazing sword in hand, Rabeka tracked the dragon down, contested with the freaks and outcasts who had gathered to worship the monster, and faced the beast in its lair. The two fought with such fury, the mountains all around collapsed, for with her blade she proved herself equal to the dragon's might. In the end, she and the dragon both suffered mortal wounds. When the wyrm's heart-blood spilled onto the sword's white flames, it cursed the blade for all time.

Legend holds that Rabeka's squire spirited away the blade for delivery to the last king of Argent. He didn't get far. Attracted to the cursed sword, drakes dropped from the sky and tore him to pieces. Later, a farmer recovered the weapon and was slain by a wyvern before he managed to make it a mile down the road. Heart Steel changed hands a few more times, then disappeared.

Until now. The weapon yearns to escape its confinement. Whispers spread of its power, its potential, drawing treasure hunters and fortune seekers from across the borderlands. Will the weapon be found? If so, what disaster will result from its discovery?

## HEART STEEL

Heart Steel has a long, double-edged blade wrought from silvery metal with runes etched into the fuller. The silver crossbar serving as a guard has been wrought to look like dragons extending

their heads out to either side. Sweat-stained white leather covers the grip down to the glittering, red-jeweled pommel.

Heart Steel has the following traits:

**Accursed Steel:** You become cursed for as long as you carry or wield Heart Steel. While cursed in this way, you cannot hide from dragons and dragon-like creatures. They can see you even if you are invisible.

**Dragon Awareness:** You can pinpoint the location of each dragon, drake, wyvern, and similar creature within 1 mile of you. Such creatures can pinpoint your location if they are within 50 miles of you.

**Dragon Slayer:** When you use Heart Steel to attack a dragon, drake, wyvern, or similar creature, you roll with 1 boon, and your attack deals an extra 3d6 damage.

**Find the Gap:** When you roll to attack a dragon, drake, wyvern, or similar creature with Heart Steel and you get a result you dislike, you can use this trait to add 20 to the result. Once you use this trait, you lose access to it until after you rest. You can regain use of this trait early by losing 10 Health (not an action).

## GETTING STARTED

The quest assumes the characters come on their own to the northwestern region of the borderlands after learning about a powerful artifact locked away in some vault. The characters might have learned about the artifact from a previous quest, from a bard who sang a lament for the Kingdom of Argent, or from another adventuring band who failed to secure the item themselves. Armed with this information, the characters travel to Tower on the Edge to track down the fabled treasure.

## TOWER ON THE EDGE

A modest village named Tower on the Edge sits not far from the Troll Haunts. The community takes its name from an old, crumbling tower perched on the edge of a deep ravine. The town spreads down and out from the tower's base. The usual sorts of buildings appear here: multifamily residences and standalone homes, with shops, taverns, and shrines sprinkled among them. You can develop the town as much as you like, but the salient bits about the place follow.

The people built the community on top of the ruins of an ancient Argent city. Most homes have cellars made from old stone houses that sank into the ground, and all have incorporated at least a few stones from older structures. Locals deem the tower, all three stories of it, unsafe. They forbid youngsters from exploring its thoroughly ransacked interior. Where wind and the elements have not erased them, a few markings in Archaic mention Argent and dragons.

Locals get by raising goats for meat, hides, and milk. Herders tend their flocks outside the town's walls but lead them back in the hour before dusk. Other commercial interests involve a small coal mining operation, millet and wheat crops, and soap manufacturing. Most who live here work in these trades; the rest take jobs supporting and serving their neighbors. Characters have free access to common and uncommon items in local markets. For a rare item, a character makes a luck roll with 1 bane. On a success, the town has one such item; on a failure, it has none.



## LOCAL COLOR

Folk around here consider education in anything but a trade a gross waste of time. Anything else people need to know they can learn from their parents or a priest. The one priest of Urbanus, Yuri, has had little luck getting a school going. He contents himself by sharing trivia with anyone who bothers to listen. Yuri does know a bit about local legends, as described below.

Locals favor loose clothing in light colors to help them tolerate the heat. Almost all wear scarves around their necks to pull up when the dust blows, which it does often. Jewelry and adornments tend to be simple, made from copper or bronze, and decorated with common stones.

Starting as indifferent when interacting with outsiders, people become friendly if given news about the surrounding lands. Common sayings and phrases include, “Well, I declare!” or “You won’t see me doing that,” and “I’ll buy that for a copper.” People express themselves with their hands and demonstrate their superstition by knocking on wood, touching a bit of iron worn around the neck, or brushing a knuckle against their brow.

## YURI THE CIVILIZER

The god called on Yuri, a devout priest of Urbanus, to spread wisdom and knowledge to the people of the borderlands. All zeal and excitement to begin with, the man has experienced several nasty setbacks including being kicked in the head by a horse, which put him into a two-week coma; contracting a terrible skin disease that only recently cleared up; and finding people not only disinterested in educating themselves but actually hostile to his efforts to light the candles in their minds.

The characters can find Yuri sitting by a pickle barrel in front of the general store. There, he swaps lies with a few retired herders over games of draughts played on top of the barrel. Every now and then, a child comes forward to pepper him with questions about the sky’s color, why some animals have four legs rather than two, and why it doesn’t rain here much. Yuri does his best to answer each question. During the evenings, the priest entertains the town children with his stories about the heroes of old.

Yuri knows all about the nearby treasure vault. He learned of it from an adventurer who tried to break inside and lost all her companions as a result. He can tell the characters where to find the entrance, but he warns them against meddling with the place, as it’s infested with traps. He can’t remember all the details, but he does warn the group: *Ignore the three doors and look for the hidden fourth.*

## THE DRAGON CULT

Anyone in the town can mention the Dragon Cult lurking in the western hills and can direct them to their haunt if needed. Folks consider them harmless—they come out of the wilderness to trade old coins for food. They have strange ways, though: They wear dragon masks and long red robes that drag on the ground. They talk little and seem unfriendly.

## INVOLVING THE DRAGON CULT

If you want to add a bit more complexity to the quest, consider having the cultists know all about Heart Steel. After they catch wind of the group’s efforts to recover the artifact, the cult takes steps to stop them. Since they’re unreasonable people with bad beliefs banging around in their heads, they attack first and talk only if captured. You can throw a dozen or so **flagellants** led by a **proselytizer** at the group.

Prisoners reveal the peril of recovering the artifact. If this information causes the characters to think twice about going after it, you can salvage the quest by having another group show up and make off with the blade. Then, the characters can deal with a rampaging dragon and a band of adventurers who have no idea what they found.

## CENTAUR TROUBLES

For weeks, a centaur band has been stealing goats and raiding outlying farms. Locals claim they number anywhere from a handful to a few dozen. The centaurs all wear blood-soaked rags tied around their left arm. Several people have died in the attacks, while several more have vanished into the southern plains, carried off by the aggressive horse lords. The group can deal with these raiders if they like. Encounters with them should involve 10 to 15 **centaur hunters**.

## RUINED VAULT

A few hours travel by foot from Tower on the Edge brings the group to an outcropping. From there, they can see the rubble pile marking the entrance to Heart Steel’s resting place, about 100 yards away. Grass grows about a yard high around the place for almost a quarter mile. A few trees dot the landscape.

## GIANT TICKS

If the characters have talents or magic that enable them to spot hidden creatures, they detect the 12 **giant ticks** hidden in the grass. The giant ticks attack flesh-and-blood creatures that move through their territory.

Make the ticks’ Agility rolls in secret for unaware targets. If a giant tick gets a success on the roll to attach itself to an unaware target, the target remains oblivious until it leaves the area of the grass or begins to question why it’s losing Health at the end of each round.

## RUBBLE PILE

Large stones, varying in Size from 1/4 to 2, form a pile in a Size 5 space that reaches about 2 yards high at its highest point. Any character inspecting the pile notes a Size 1 gap between the rocks that leads to a cavity.

About a yard inside the cavity, the ground gives way under the group’s feet to grant access to **Location 1**.



## KEY LOCATIONS

Refer to the map for the arrangement of the dungeon's various locations.

### 1. ENTRANCE PIT

The rubble covers a pit 3 yards across that descends 5 yards to a rubble-strewn floor. Three closed doors of carved stone are set into the walls of the round pit at three o'clock (**Door C**), six o'clock (**Door B**), and 9 o'clock (**Door A**).

#### DOORS

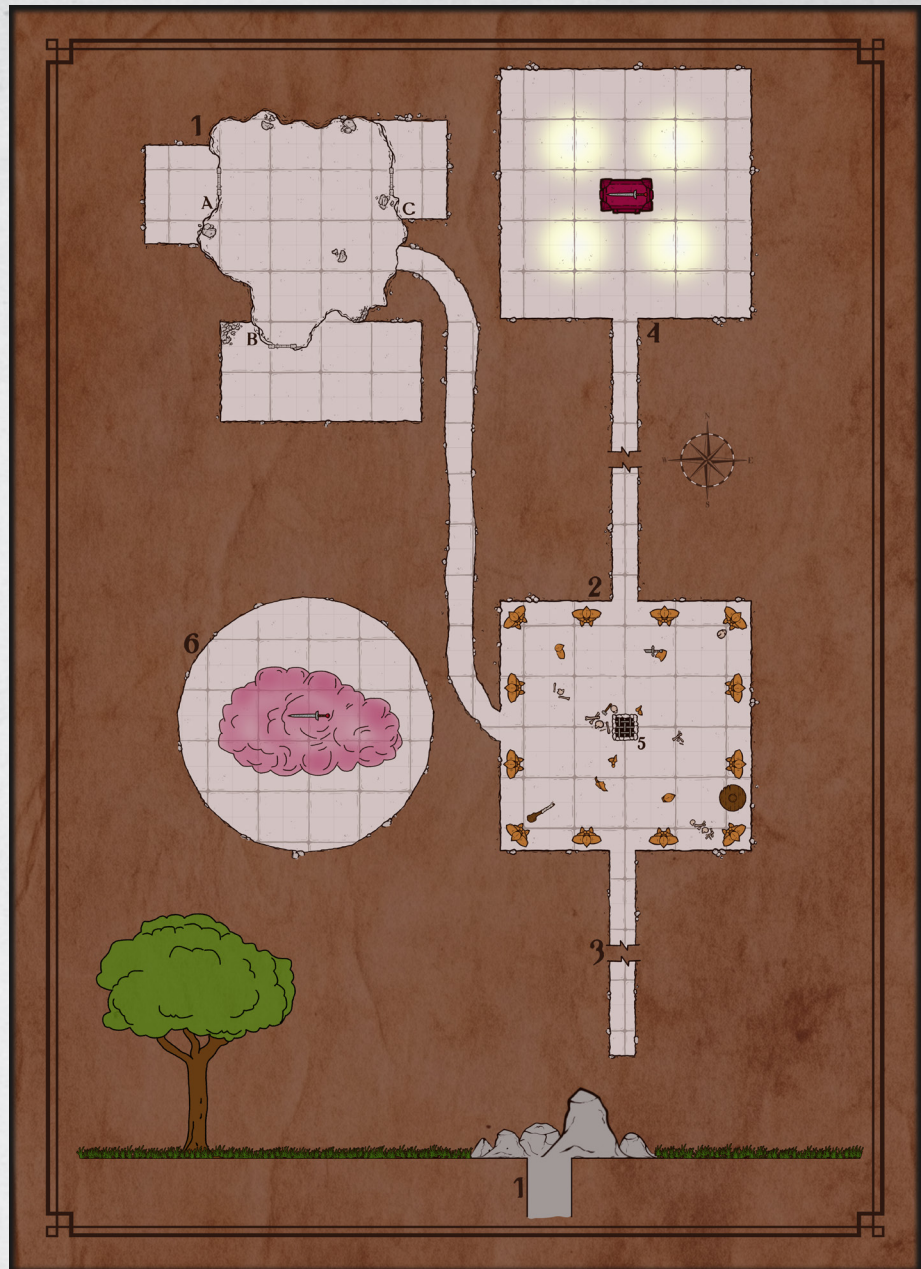
The three doors open onto small alcoves containing traps. The doors themselves have smooth surfaces and knobs in their centers for pulling.

**DOOR A:** A small stone peg extends from the top of the door to touch the frame above. When the door opens, the peg moves off the frame to trigger the magical trap. A creature that finds the peg can disarm it using a tool kit with a success on an Intellect roll.

If the door opens while the trap remains armed, the magic blows fire from the alcove, causing each creature and object within 2 yards of the door to lose 1d6 Health and creatures to make a luck roll. On a failure, the creature loses an additional 2d6 Health and catches fire (luck ends). Flammable objects automatically catch fire. The fire continues to rush out from the opening until the door closes; any creature that ends its turn within 2 yards of the open door suffers the trap's effects.

**DOOR B:** The bottom of the door appears serrated from the teeth carved into it. The teeth fit into grooves set into the floor. When anyone pulls open the door, the teeth vibrate against the grooves to make chanting sounds, which cause a **large horror** to appear inside the empty alcove. The horror is hostile and attacks any creatures it sees on its next available turn. A creature can break the grooves or teeth by dealing 10 damage or more to them. The trap produces one large horror at a time, no matter how many times the door opens or closes. If the group destroys the horror and closes the door, the trap resets.

**DOOR C:** Opening the door reveals a Size 1 space. The far wall holds a permanent symbol of death (as the Symbolism spell of the same name). Closing the door blocks the symbol's effects from reaching out into the pit.



#### CONCEALED OPENING

A permanent illusion of a stone wall conceals a square opening in the wall between Doors B and C. The illusion looks real but reveals itself to anyone who touches it. Beyond the illusion lies a square-cut shaft, 1 yard wide and 1 yard tall, that extends 10 yards until it reaches **Location 2**.

### 2. ETERNAL GUARDIANS

The passage ends in the center of a wall in a cube-shaped chamber. The room contains a dozen copper figures shaped like warriors carrying swords and shields. Copper scraps lie on the floor throughout, along with charred bones and burned equipment. A passage leads down from the center of the floor, while two more passages, identical in shape to the others, lead off to the north and south.



When a flesh-and-blood creature moves onto any solid surface in the room—floor, wall, or ceiling—a jolt of electricity passes from the surface into the creature. At the same time, the copper figures animate to become 12 **medium awakened objects** (Defense 12, swords instead of appendages). The creature who caused the animation makes a luck roll. On a failure, that creature takes 2d6 damage and becomes confused (luck ends). The awakened objects remain animated for as long as a flesh-and-blood creature stays in contact with a solid surface in this area and for 1 minute thereafter.

### 3. TRAPPED DEAD END

The southern passage, exactly 1 yard wide and tall, extends 30 yards. Inspection exposes copper plates covering the walls, floor, and ceiling throughout. Light brought into the tunnel reveals a large chamber filled with treasure at the passage end. This room is an illusion; the corridor simply ends.

A 1-yard-square section of floor about 5 yards from the end of the passage activates a trap. A creature searching the floor can find the pressure plate. Using a tool kit, a creature can attempt to deactivate the trap by making an Intellect roll with 2 banes. On a critical failure, the creature activates the trap.

Otherwise, anyone moving onto the trap activates it: A loud hum sounds as magical electricity rushes down the passage. Each creature in contact with a surface loses 1d6 Health and makes a Strength roll with 1 bane. A creature squeezing into the corridor gets an automatic failure. On a failure, the creature loses an additional 5d6 Health.

Once the trap activates, the illusion of the treasure chamber disappears to reveal wire mesh covering a stone surface at the passage's end. The trap resets 1 hour later.

### 4. FALSE SWORD

Characters looking down the northern passage see light at the end. The passage, exactly 1 yard wide and tall, extends 30 yards. Inspection exposes copper plates covering the walls, floor, and ceiling throughout. The passage opens in the middle of a wall in a cube-shaped room, 10 yards on each side. The drop from the passage to the floor measures 4-1/2 yards.

Columns of light shine from white circles on the ceiling to illuminate circles of the same size on the floor. The columns form a ring, in the center of which stands a squared pedestal of red stone carved to depict screaming faces on each side. A fine sword rests atop the pedestal. The sword is a perfect replica of Heart Steel.

The false weapon carries a nasty curse: The hand of anyone who takes it up merges with the sword handle. The merging occurs even if the wielder wears a glove or gauntlet. The wielder becomes cursed. While cursed in this way, the creature makes all rolls to attack with 2 banes, and attacks with this weapon deal half damage. The victim of the curse comes to understand they must make charitable contributions to free themselves from it. Once the character donates 100 gp to people who genuinely need it, the curse ends and the sword vanishes to vex someone else in a place of your choosing.

## 5. DEEP SHAFT

The hole in the floor at the center of **Location 2**—square-shaped and 1 yard on each side—descends 20 yards and ends at a grate formed from 1-inch-diameter metal bars. A few bones lay atop the grate; **Location 6** waits under it.

Toxic grease makes the shaft's walls too slippery to climb. A flesh-and-blood creature that makes skin contact with the grease loses 1d6 Health and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature is also vulnerable and weakened. Normal attempts to overcome the poisoned affliction fail; magic can end it, though.

The bones covering the grate belonged to people who succumbed to the toxic grease. The grate has been set into the stone walls; it has Health 20 and immunity to damage from ordinary sources. A creature with a Strength 15 or higher can attempt to rip the grate free with a success on a Strength roll with 3 banes.

## 6. HEART STEEL VAULT

The grate blocks access to a spherical chamber with a 30-yard diameter. In the center, Heart Steel floats in a magical pink cloud that sheds dim light. Magic in the room causes “down” to be on whatever surface a person stands. So, one can clamber out of the hole and then walk across the room's wall to any position desired.

The unusual gravity loses its strength more than 3 yards from the sphere's surface. A creature that jumps “up” beyond this distance falls to the other side of the sphere, taking damage on landing as normal. Such a fall invariably requires the creature to pass into the pink cloud, at which point it makes a Will roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature becomes stunned for 1 minute.

Heart Steel ignores any attempt to move it using an object such as a rope or pole. It can be removed only by taking it by hand. When this happens, the room's magic ends, dropping everyone on a surface to land at the bottom of this room.

## THE DRAGON AWAKENS

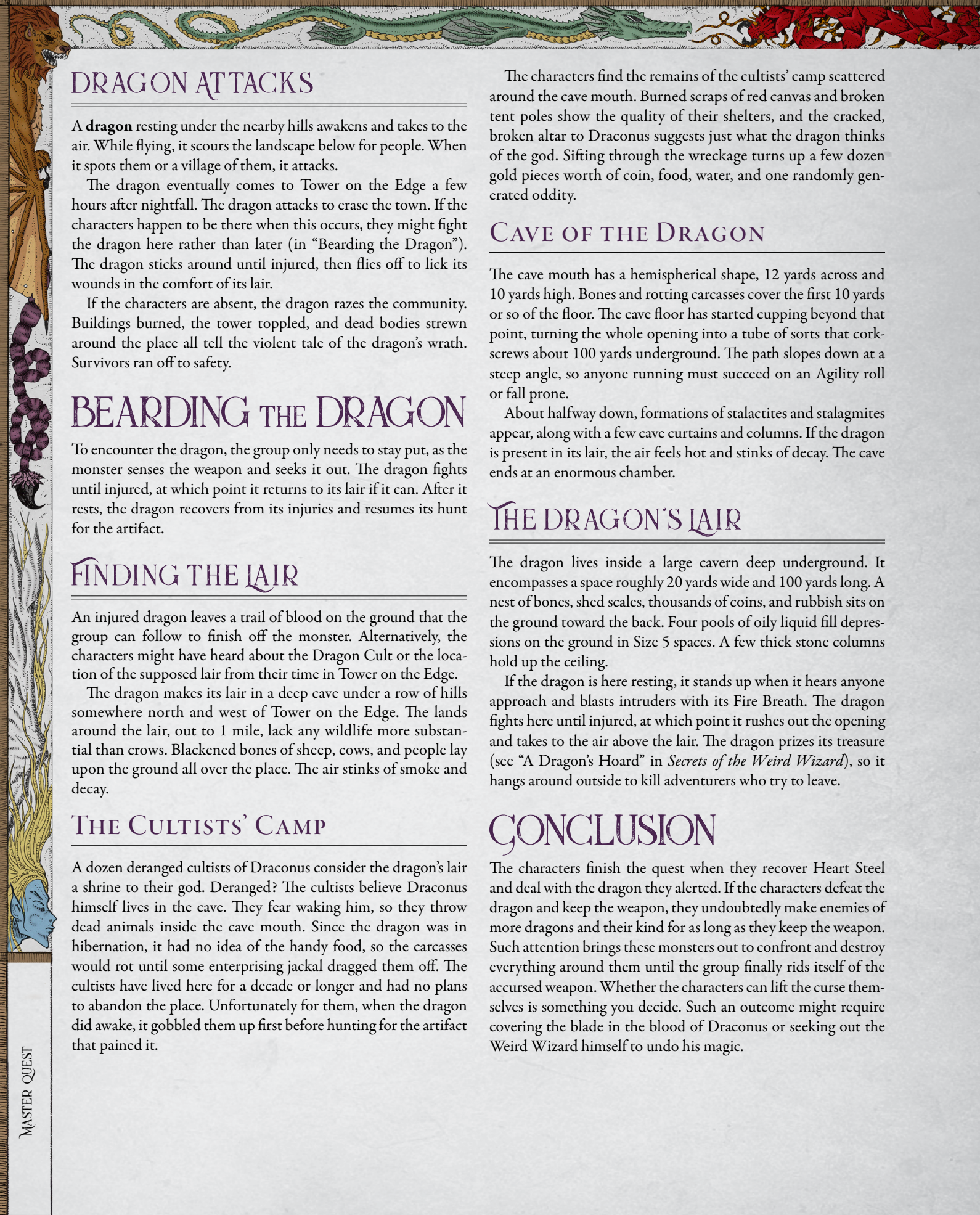
Heart Steel alerts all dragons and dragon-like creatures within 50 miles to its new wielder in the form of a sudden painful shock strong enough to wake them. Such creatures that move to within 50 miles of the blade experience a similar sensation. Affected creatures can feel Heart Steel in their minds—the discomfort strengthens the closer they come to it.

With the sword liberated, several unhappy events occur.

## RUDE WELCOME

A flock of 8 **drakes** circle in the air over the ruins and drop down to attack the characters as they emerge. The discomfort caused by the blade fills the creatures with incandescent rage sufficient to prevent them from retreating. The drakes fight to the death.





## DRAGON ATTACKS

A **dragon** resting under the nearby hills awakens and takes to the air. While flying, it scours the landscape below for people. When it spots them or a village of them, it attacks.

The dragon eventually comes to Tower on the Edge a few hours after nightfall. The dragon attacks to erase the town. If the characters happen to be there when this occurs, they might fight the dragon here rather than later (in “Bearding the Dragon”). The dragon sticks around until injured, then flies off to lick its wounds in the comfort of its lair.

If the characters are absent, the dragon razes the community. Buildings burned, the tower toppled, and dead bodies strewn around the place all tell the violent tale of the dragon’s wrath. Survivors ran off to safety.

## BEARDING THE DRAGON

To encounter the dragon, the group only needs to stay put, as the monster senses the weapon and seeks it out. The dragon fights until injured, at which point it returns to its lair if it can. After it rests, the dragon recovers from its injuries and resumes its hunt for the artifact.

## FINDING THE LAIR

An injured dragon leaves a trail of blood on the ground that the group can follow to finish off the monster. Alternatively, the characters might have heard about the Dragon Cult or the location of the supposed lair from their time in Tower on the Edge.

The dragon makes its lair in a deep cave under a row of hills somewhere north and west of Tower on the Edge. The lands around the lair, out to 1 mile, lack any wildlife more substantial than crows. Blackened bones of sheep, cows, and people lay upon the ground all over the place. The air stinks of smoke and decay.

## THE CULTISTS’ CAMP

A dozen deranged cultists of Draconus consider the dragon’s lair a shrine to their god. Deranged? The cultists believe Draconus himself lives in the cave. They fear waking him, so they throw dead animals inside the cave mouth. Since the dragon was in hibernation, it had no idea of the handy food, so the carcasses would rot until some enterprising jackal dragged them off. The cultists have lived here for a decade or longer and had no plans to abandon the place. Unfortunately for them, when the dragon did awake, it gobbled them up first before hunting for the artifact that pained it.

The characters find the remains of the cultists’ camp scattered around the cave mouth. Burned scraps of red canvas and broken tent poles show the quality of their shelters, and the cracked, broken altar to Draconus suggests just what the dragon thinks of the god. Sifting through the wreckage turns up a few dozen gold pieces worth of coin, food, water, and one randomly generated oddity.

## CAVE OF THE DRAGON

The cave mouth has a hemispherical shape, 12 yards across and 10 yards high. Bones and rotting carcasses cover the first 10 yards or so of the floor. The cave floor has started cupping beyond that point, turning the whole opening into a tube of sorts that corkscrews about 100 yards underground. The path slopes down at a steep angle, so anyone running must succeed on an Agility roll or fall prone.

About halfway down, formations of stalactites and stalagmites appear, along with a few cave curtains and columns. If the dragon is present in its lair, the air feels hot and stinks of decay. The cave ends at an enormous chamber.

## THE DRAGON’S LAIR

The dragon lives inside a large cavern deep underground. It encompasses a space roughly 20 yards wide and 100 yards long. A nest of bones, shed scales, thousands of coins, and rubbish sits on the ground toward the back. Four pools of oily liquid fill depressions on the ground in Size 5 spaces. A few thick stone columns hold up the ceiling.

If the dragon is here resting, it stands up when it hears anyone approach and blasts intruders with its Fire Breath. The dragon fights here until injured, at which point it rushes out the opening and takes to the air above the lair. The dragon prizes its treasure (see “A Dragon’s Hoard” in *Secrets of the Weird Wizard*), so it hangs around outside to kill adventurers who try to leave.

## CONCLUSION

The characters finish the quest when they recover Heart Steel and deal with the dragon they alerted. If the characters defeat the dragon and keep the weapon, they undoubtedly make enemies of more dragons and their kind for as long as they keep the weapon. Such attention brings these monsters out to confront and destroy everything around them until the group finally rids itself of the accursed weapon. Whether the characters can lift the curse themselves is something you decide. Such an outcome might require covering the blade in the blood of Draconus or seeking out the Weird Wizard himself to undo his magic.