

RETURN OF THE MAD HERMIT



A Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox adventure for
3-6 characters of 1st through 3rd level



WHITEBOX ONE•SHOTS

RETURN OF THE MAD HERMIT

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WhiteBox One-Shots is a line of short wilderness side treks, dungeon delves, and other brief encounters designed for compatibility with the *Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox* roleplaying game.

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RETURN OF THE MAD HERMIT

Only the bravest adventurers dare to enter Abbottsfolly Wood. The local villagers at the nearby keep tell of a crazed wizard who once dwelt there. Legends say the wizard could travel beyond the world of men, into the darkest reaches of the hidden worlds. Some say his evil magic lingers on and that the very trees whisper warnings on the night breeze. Can you find the wizard's lair and unlock his dark secrets or will you succumb to the power of the Master of Many Worlds?

Return of the Mad Hermit is a short *Swords and Wizardry WhiteBox* adventure designed for 3-6 characters of 1st-3rd levels (about 12 levels total), but is suitable for any OSR game. *Return of the Mad Hermit* is a dimension-hopping romp that contains a mixture of problem solving and dungeon crawling elements. A wide range of monsters and challenges are involved, so a variety of classes is recommended. The adventure can be "dropped in" to any outdoor wilderness setting whenever the characters make camp for the night.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In ages past, an adventuring wizard named Faloren of Marks roamed the land, fighting evil alongside holy warriors of the Church of Law and Order. Faloren became obsessed with the concept of other planes of existence and devoted his life to exploring the mysteries of the universe. He eventually retired with enough wealth to build a remote wizard's tower on the borderlands and continue his research. In time, he discovered how to open mystical doorways that allowed him to explore entirely new worlds.

To the villagers at the nearby keep, it seemed that the strange wizard had chosen to become a hermit. Before long, folk grew uneasy and began to whisper. After a number of bad omens, failed crops, and strange disappearances, the villagers

were certain that Faloren had been tainted by the evil he had once fought. They convinced a band of adventurers known as the Brighton Swords to bring the "dark wizard" Faloren to justice.

The Brighton Swords stormed the tower and a terrible battle was fought. The tower was razed, but the adventurers were slain. Faloren barely survived the encounter and fled deeper into the borderland forest where he hid in the bole of a hollowed oak tree. The villagers at the keep assumed he had been killed in the battle.

In time, Faloren resumed his research into planar travel and eventually opened doorways into small "pocket dimensions" of his own design. However, Faloren lacked the proper ingredients and resources to safely travel between worlds and with each crossing, his mind slowly became unhinged.

Faloren was recognized one day by a huntsman, and word spread among the nearby settlements that he still lived. The local priest led soldiers and a mob of able-bodied men into the woods in search of him. Faloren chose not to kill the misguided soldiers. Instead, he used an ancient spell to shift their life's essence into a thick stand of trees, and this forest later became known as Abbotsfolly Wood.

Paranoid and fearful that stronger enemies might come looking for him, Faloren poured his own life's essence into six brass chimes and hid them among his pocket dimensions. Faloren's madness continued to grow and he eventually lost all knowledge of magic. He became a sneak thief and mad hermit who roamed the countryside with various animal companions and preyed upon travelers. Legends say that Faloren was killed by a band of wandering adventurers and that afterwards, the local faeries took pity on him and laid his bones to rest inside the hollowed oak.

Countless years have past, and Faloren's spell has slowly begun to unravel. A lightning strike recently killed one of the enspelled trees, and one of its largest limbs fell to the ground, just waiting to be picked up by a band of weary adventurers. . .

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins as the characters make camp and gather fallen branches and limbs to use for firewood. As the campfire is lit, the characters suddenly smell the reek of burning flesh and hair, and see a human arm burning inside the firepit.

At the same time, the nearby trees shimmer and Faloren's spell partially wears off, revealing 1d6 disoriented soldiers.

The soldiers see the dead priest lying on the ground as well as his dismembered arm in the firepit and assume the worst.

Soldiers in Fight

The leader of the soldiers is named Sergeant Tomis Gordan. He shouts: "Monsters! Cannibals! Servants of the Dark Wizard, your end is nigh!"

Gordan and the soldiers are confused, fearful, and reluctant to attack. They brandish weapons and prepare to defend themselves, but their morale is low and they flee if one or more of their members are killed or incapacitated. If this happens, skip to **Soldiers in Flight**.

If the characters do not immediately attack, Gordan says: "Summon your wizard. Tell him to release his hold on the goodhearted men around you and surrender himself to our justice!"

Gordan and his soldiers can see the rest of their companions trapped inside the surrounding trees and are surprised if the characters claim they cannot. If the characters act in a non-hostile manner, Gordan reveals the information he knows from the **Adventure Background** and explains that he and his men have come to the forest to slay the dark wizard Faloren of Marks who some folk call the Master of Many Worlds.

If the Referee wishes to play up the strangeness of the encounter even further, there are a few clues that might help the characters realize that the events Gordan describes happened long ago. Gordan and his men speak with archaic accents and use unfamiliar slang. The city of Marks no longer exists and has been all but erased from history. Gordan himself provides dates, names, and locations that are entirely unfamiliar to the PCs.

If the characters agree to help, Gordan can point out the wizard's tree. He and his men agree to stand guard, but refuse to go inside. Gordan asks the characters to confront the wizard and force him to free the rest of his men.

Sergeant Tomis Gordan (1st-level fighter): AC: 5 [14] (chain mail); F1; hp 6; Attacks: spear (+1 Str), sword (+1 Str), dagger (+1 Str); Special: none; Move: 12; XP 15, 1d6 gp.

Soldiers: AC: 7 [12] (leather); HD 1; hp 3; Attacks: spear, hand axe, dagger; Special: none; Move: 12; XP 15, 1d6-2 gp.

Soldiers in Flight

If the characters attack Gordan and his soldiers, the trees shimmer and 1d6 more soldiers appear. These soldiers see their comrades being attacked and promptly flee. One runs headlong into the **Hermit Wizard's Tree** and knocks himself unconscious for 1d6 turns. The PCs clearly see the entrance to the hollow tree behind the displaced bush. This encounter was specifically designed to point the characters in the right direction.

Too Dangerous For Me

If the PCs still decide not to investigate the hollow tree, the Referee might wish to revisit this adventure at a later date. One option is to have some of the monsters inside the pocket dimensions find their way into the characters' world. After a few attacks on surrounding farmhouses, the villagers at the nearby keep try to hire the PCs to track down and eliminate the threat, which should lead them right back to the tree.

Another option is to have an NPC adventuring party get slaughtered inside one of the pocket dimensions. The lone survivor returns with a *soul chime* and begs the PCs for their help. If the party declines, the NPC adventurer is later killed by the merchant Stevon Brill (see **Way Too Dangerous For Me**, below), but not before hiding the *soul chime* somewhere the characters can find it. If the party still refuses to investigate the problem, they might want to reevaluate their adventuring careers. . .

THE HERMIT WIZARD'S TREE

After the destruction of his tower, Faloren became a true hermit and took up residence inside a hollowed oak tree. The entrance to the tree is hidden by a bush. The furnishings have long since rotted away, except for the few items imbued with the magic Faloren used to cross into his pocket dimensions. These items only retain their magical ability while inside the tree.

a. Candlestick: A tarnished bronze candlestick sits on a shelf-like bole. If polished, the candlestick is worth 1 gp. Lighting the candle transports the characters to the **Sewer Lair**.

b. Rug: The skin of a mountain lion rests on the dirt floor. The mountain lion was once the hermit's only companion. The skin is worth only 5 gp, but may be turned into an impressive cloak. Touching the skin transports the characters to the **Jungle Pyramid**.

c. Fireplace: A natural fireplace has been carved into the tree's wood. A stack of firewood is already in place and flint and tinder can be found in a box to one side. Lighting the fire transports the characters to the **Volcanic Cave**.

d. Gemstones: Three small blue sapphires rest in a shallow depression near the hermit's bedding. Each gem is worth 25 gp. Touching the sapphires transports the characters to the **Troll Falls**.

e. Tapestry: A gold-embroidered tapestry depicting a wild boar hunt hangs on the wall. The tapestry is worth 300 gp. Touching the tapestry transports the characters to the **Forest Hunt**.

f. Skeleton: The hermit's skeleton lies on top of a nest made of feathers, sticks, and furs. A ring of *protection+1* can be seen on the skeleton's bony finger. Touching any of the bones transports the characters to the **Hermit's Crypt**.

g. Soul Chime: The top part of a brass wind chime and its clapper hangs from the ceiling in the center of the chamber. The piece is cast in the shape of stars, moons, and planets, and there appears to be hangers for six wind chimes.

This is Faloren's *soul chime* (see **New Magic Items**, pg. 12). Touching the piece causes the candlestick, rug, fireplace, gemstones, tapestry, and skeleton to glow.

The *soul chime* rods are hidden throughout the pocket dimensions. Each chime contains a piece of Faloren's life force. If attached and struck, the chimes resonate with a skull-splitting whine and Faloren is revived. (skip ahead to **Concluding the Adventure**).

POCKET DIMENSIONS

It won't take most PCs long to figure out how to proceed. Touching the rug, gemstones, tapestry, or skeleton instantly transports them to one of the pocket dimensions. As mentioned above, touching the top portion of the *soul chime* causes all of the items to glow. Any one of these effects should help point the PCs in the right direction if they get stumped.

When one of the portals is activated, all living creatures inside the tree are transported to the pocket dimension at the location marked with an "X" because magic. In order to return, one character must touch the *soul chime* hidden inside the dimension. Crossing dimensions produces a sense of motion sickness, but should have no long-term effects on the PCs. Once a *soul chime* is removed, the pocket dimension closes forever.

Way Too Dangerous For Me

The pocket dimensions are fraught with danger. After exploring one, the PCs may (in a very non-old school manner) decide not to brave the rest. If this happens, a merchant named Stevon Brill later attempts to buy any recovered *soul chimes* from the characters for 500 gp each. Brill is actually a power-hungry 6th-level magic-user seeking to revive Faloren so he can learn the secrets of interdimensional magic.

If the characters refuse to sell the chimes, Brill begins stalking the characters, hiring bandits to waylay them, thieves to steal the chimes, and eventually assassins to murder the PCs. Brill might even attack the characters himself. The Referee is free to create stats for Brill or replace him with a recurring villain of the Referee's own design.

Sewer Lair

The brick ceilings of these sewer tunnels are arched. Each tunnel is approximately 200' long and filled with waist-deep water. The side tunnels are 5' wide while the central tunnel is 15' wide. In the central tunnel, a narrow stone ledge crosses over the sludgy water. A slow current takes trash and debris towards the central altar.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located atop a stone dais. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Gatormen: Three gatormen prowl the sewer's murky waters. They stalk any who enter the sewer, but prefer to wait and ambush characters who wade or fall into the water. The largest gatorman's left eye has been replaced with a small ruby (75 gp).

Gatorman (3): AC: 5 [14]; HD 2+1; hp 9, 6, 5; Attacks: Bite (1d6+1); Special: stalk, hold breath; Move: 6/12 (swimming); XP 30.

c. Slippery Ledge: The ledge here is covered with slime. Anyone crossing it must make a saving throw in order to avoid falling into the water and dropping all items in hand. There is a 1 in 6 chance that any dropped item is lost forever.

d. Magic Weapon: A discarded *spear+1* lies beneath the water. It has a 1 in 6 chance of being found by anyone wading through this tunnel.

Jungle Pyramid

This ancient stepped pyramid is surrounded by trackless prehistoric jungle. The sky is dark and split by lightning and volcanoes can be seen in the distance. Characters who enter the jungle always find themselves back at the base of the pyramid. Characters who attempt to fly over the jungle are enveloped by storm clouds and eventually find themselves circling over the pyramid.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located on a stone dais atop the pyramid. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Large Lizards: Characters who enter the jungle are hunted by 1d6 large lizards because dinosaurs.

Large Lizard (1d6): AC: 6 [11]; HD 2; hp 7; Attacks: Bite; Special: None; Move: 12; XP 30.

c. Pterodactyl: Characters who climb the pyramid are dive-bombed by two pterodactyls every round.

Pterodactyl (8): AC: 8 [11]; HD 1; hp 4, 3, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1; Attacks: Beak (1d6-1); Special: dive attack +1 to-hit; Move: 3/24 (flying); XP 15.

d. Sacrificial Knife: A curved, bloodstained knife lies next to the altar. The knife functions as a *dagger+1*, but is possessed by a spirit or demon, with effects to be determined later by the Referee.

Volcanic Cave

This large cave is filled with hot, bubbling lava and volcanic gases. A network of hardened mineral paths crosses the deadly lava. Anyone who falls into the lava automatically dies because old school. Any *soul chime* the PC was carrying floats to the surface and may be retrieved by the other characters.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located atop a stone dais. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Unstable Path: The path here is extremely thin. It can be detected by a dwarf's keen detection or by proper use of a 10' pole. Any character who crosses must make a saving throw or fall to their death in the lava below.

c. Lavafish: Characters who cross the paths here are attacked by a leaping lavafish. Any character struck must make a saving throw to avoid falling into the lava and dying.

Lavafish (5): AC: 8 [11]; HD 1/2; hp 2, 2, 1, 1, 1; Attacks: Bite (1d6-1); Special: heat; Move: 1/9 (swimming); XP 30

d. Lavafish God: This large demonic statue of a leering lavafish-man hybrid is barely visible through the haze of volcanic gases. The demon holds an offertory bowl in its webbed hands. If an offering is made, the offering disappears in flame as it is accepted by the demonic god. Roll 1d6 to determine the effect on the offering character (one effect per PC). These effects can only be removed by a *remove curse* spell.

1. *Scent of the Fish*: The character becomes a master fisherman and can catch fish with his bare hands from any waterway. However, the character exudes a fishy odor that attracts large predators (especially while underwater) and repels members of the opposite sex.
2. *Extra Lungs*: The character grows an extra pair of lungs and can hold his breath for twice as long as normal. However, these lungs are located inside the characters throat, and produce a bulge similar to that of a bullfrog when expanded. The sight of this unnatural mutation may cause a negative reaction in civilized society.
3. *Swimmer*: The character's hands and feet become webbed, allowing him to swim twice as fast as normal. The sight of this unnatural mutation may cause a negative reaction in civilized society.
4. *Inner Heat*: The character's blood burns with an inner fire. He takes 1/2 damage from fire-based attacks, but double damage from water- and cold-based attacks and can only endure cold weather or being submerged for a number of turns equal to his Constitution score before dying.
5. *Regeneration*: The character regenerates an extra 1d6-2 hit points per night. However, regenerated skin is slowly replaced by reddish, fish-like scales.
6. *Lavabreathing*: The character grows red gills and can swim and breathe under molten lava with no adverse effects. The character's clothing and weapons are not protected.

Troll Falls

This small pocket dimension consists of a cliff, pool, and three caves behind a waterfall. Characters who enter the surrounding forest always find their way back to the falls.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located inside the cave atop a stone dais. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Troll: A squat, tusked troll prowls the pool and the caves. The troll is very hungry and can be seen sifting through and gnawing on old bones. It attacks on sight, but can be distracted by thrown food. If the troll kills a PC, it stops to feast, ignoring

the rest of the party unless attacked. The troll is afraid of fire, and may be held at bay by open flames if the party is having a hard time defeating it (at the Referee's discretion).

Troll: AC: 4 [15]; HD 6+3; hp 22; Attacks: Claw; Special: regeneration; Move: 12; XP 800.

c. Gems: 3d6 small rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and garnets of various sizes glisten on the walls of the cave. If removed, each gem is worth 75 gp.

d. Potion: A clear *potion of healing* wrapped in a dirty cloth is hidden among the bones in the cave.

Forest Hunt

This tiny pocket dimension consists of a ring of fallen stone blocks inside a forest clearing. Characters who enter the surrounding forest always find their way back to the clearing.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located inside the ring of blocks atop a stone dais. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Wild Boar: 2 wild boars are rooting through the clearing. They attack on sight.

Wild Boar (2): AC: 7 [12]; HD 3+3; hp 14, 10; Attacks: Gore; Special: fights for 2 rounds after death; Move: 15; XP 120.

c. Magic Staff: A staff with the top carved in the shape of a dragon's eye leans against a large stone block. The staff acts as a *wand of detection* (traps and secret doors) with 6 charges.

d. Standing Stones: Twelve large standing stones surround the altar. Each stone contains a bas-relief carving of one of the following items: a candlestick, a crouching mountain lion, a fireplace, three small gems, a wild boar, a skull. These carvings represent the interdimensional magic items found inside the hermit's tree.

Hermit's Crypt

This crypt is located inside a small cemetery. The cemetery is surrounded by a 6' tall stacked stone wall and blanketed in perpetual night. The inscription above the crypt's doors reads: "Hear lies Faloren of Marks, Master of the Many Worlds."

Characters who attempt to leave the cemetery get disoriented in the darkness and always find their way back to the gates.

a. Altar: This stone altar is located inside the crypt atop a stone dais. A glowing *soul chime* is located on top of the altar.

b. Locked Crypt: The Hermit's Crypt is locked. The lock may be picked or the doors may be bashed open. If bashed open, one character chosen at random must make a saving throw or take 1d6-2 hit points damage from flying debris.

c. Wind Chimes: An assortment of wind chimes made of glass, brass, and wood hang from a dead tree in the center of the cemetery. Four benches surround the tree. The chimes produce an eerie sound, but have no other effect. They serve only as a clue to help point the PCs to the importance of the *soul chime*.

d. Zombies: 1d6 rounds after entering this pocket dimension, the characters are attacked by 6 zombies that burst forth from the graves and attack.

Zombie (6): AC: 8 [11]; HD 1; hp 4, 3, 3, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1; Attacks: Strike; Special: Immune to sleep and charm; Move: 6; XP 30.

e. Ghouls: This area is surrounded by a 3' tall wrought-iron fence. 1d6 rounds after the zombies attack, the characters are attacked by 2 ghouls that burst forth from the graves and attack.

Ghoul (2): AC 6 [13]; HD 2; hp 8, 6; Attacks: Claw; Special: immune to sleep and charm, touch causes paralysis for 3d6 turns; Move: 9; XP 60.

f. Angelic Statue: This statue of an angelic being (or a saint or religious figure of the Referee's choice) glows with a soft white light, illuminating the cemetery. The statue is surrounded by a low, 3' tall fence. No undead can enter inside the fence.

g. Undead Statue: This statue of an undead knight in cloven helm and rent armor stands atop a tall stone base. If the statue or base is touched, the character instantly becomes a zombie (no saving throw) and begins attacking his companions because the Referee needs a laugh too. Once the *soul chime* is recovered, the character returns to normal (even if killed as a "zombie").

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Faloren is returned to life, he is confused and disoriented. If attacked, Faloren flees to another dimension. If the characters explain what has happened, he gratefully rewards them with a *potion of displacement* (as per a *cloak of displacement* that lasts for 1d6 hours). Faloren removes the spell on the soldiers and villagers, then opens a portal into another dimension and flees before having to answer any more questions. He may return at a later date to offer advice, provide assistance, or even seek help, at the Referee's discretion.

If the soldiers and villagers are freed, they have a lot of catching up to do. Many will have a hard time adjusting to the changes in their surroundings and the loss of their loved ones. They may attempt to track down their descendants, they may petition the local rulers for new farmland, or they may even become bandits and begin preying on travelers. Over time, memories of their former lives become cloudy and dreamlike.

The Referee may wish to expand the dimension-hopping portion of the adventure even further. Perhaps there are eight *soul chimes* and pocket dimensions instead of six. Perhaps the Referee has prepared an entirely new adventure for the PCs to undertake inside one of the pocket dimensions. Or perhaps Faloren rewards the PCs with a magic item (of limited charges) that enables them to travel to entirely new worlds of the Referee's design.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The following new magic item is encountered in the *Return of the Mad Hermit*.

Soul Chime

The *soul chime* is a brass wind chime with six chimes. Each chime houses part of the life essence of the wizard Faloren of Marks. Faloren created the *soul chime* as a means of reviving himself if he was ever killed. The six chimes are hidden away in pocket dimensions that Faloren created for himself. If Faloren is revived, he likely creates a new *soul chime* and new pocket dimensions to hide the rods.

NEW MONSTERS

The following new monsters may be encountered in the *Return of the Mad Hermit*.

Gatormen

Armor Class: 5 [14]
Hit Dice: 2+1
Attacks: Bite (1d6+1)
Special: see below
Move: 6/12 (when swimming)
HDE/XP: 2/30

Gatormen are reptilian humanoids with long snouts and mouths full of sharp teeth. In combat they prefer to attack with a powerful bite. Gatormen can hold their breath underwater for several hours and have the uncanny ability to remain undetected when partially submerged.

Large Lizards

Armor Class: 6 [11]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: Bite
Special: None or poison
Move: 12
HDE/XP: 2/30

These large four-legged lizards are the size of a small pony. They are voracious eaters who hunt in packs of 2d6. They can be distracted with food. A few species of large lizard possess a venomous bite that forces an immediate saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the wound festers, the character's ability scores are reduced to 3, and the character dies within 1d6 days.

Lavafish

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 1/2
Attacks: Bite (1d6-1)
Special: Heat
Move: 1/9 (swimming)
HDE/XP: 2/30

Lavafish are thick, ugly red fish with mouths full of sharp teeth. Lavafish live in lava instead of water. They are capable of leaping into the air and attacking characters within 10' of a lava flow. Any character bitten by a lavafish must make a saving throw or take 1d6 hit points additional damage from the heat emanating from it. Any normal weapon that strikes a lavafish melts (metal) or catches fire (wood) and becomes unusable. Lavafish are immune to fire-based attacks, but take double damage from water- or cold-based attacks. Lavafish take 1d6 hit points damage from being doused with water (such as from a waterskin). Legends say that lavafish are the last descendants of a dying race of fish-man hybrids that once ruled parts of the world.

Pterodactyls

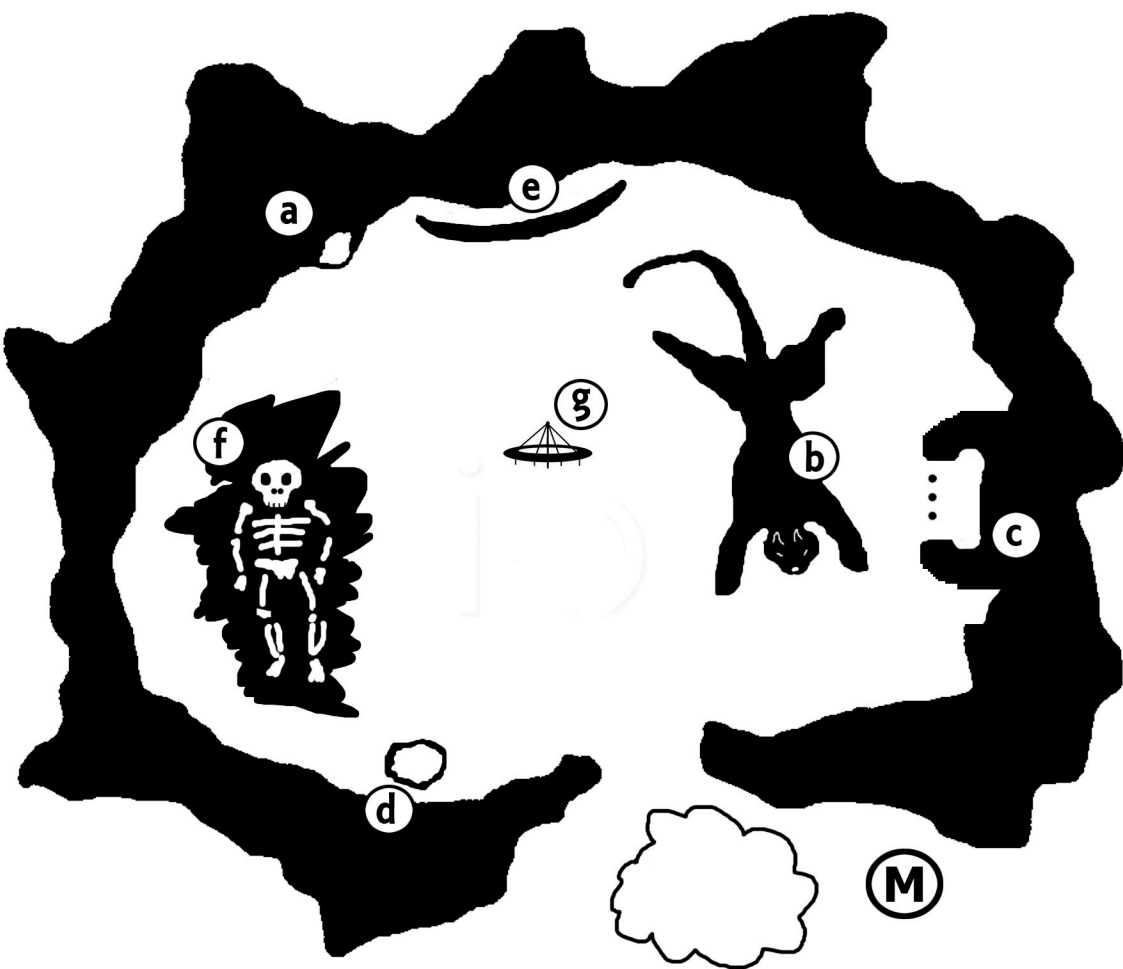
Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 1
Attacks: Beak (1d6-1)
Special: see below
Move: 3/24 (flying)
HDE/XP: 1/15

Pterodactyls are small, winged dinosaurs with elongated heads and sharp teeth. Pterodactyls are hunters and scavengers. They dive bomb prey that attracts their attention, receiving +1 to-hit, but can only attack in this manner every third round (as they have to fly back up to attack position).

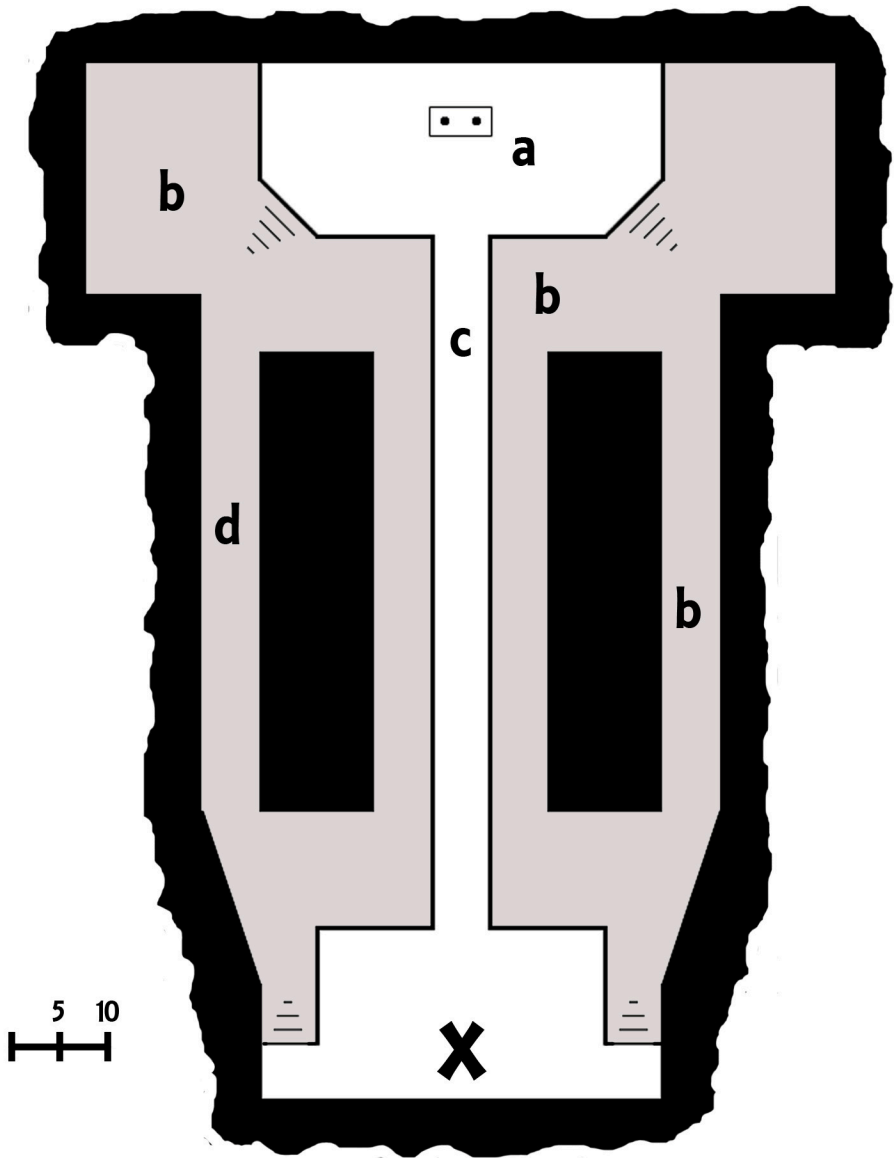
Wild Boar

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 3+3
Attacks: Gore
Special: Continues attacking 2 rounds after death
Move: 15
HDE/XP: 4/120

Wild boars are aggressive pigs that live in forested areas. There is a 5 in 6 chance they attack on sight and continue fighting for 2 rounds after being reduced to 0 hit points.



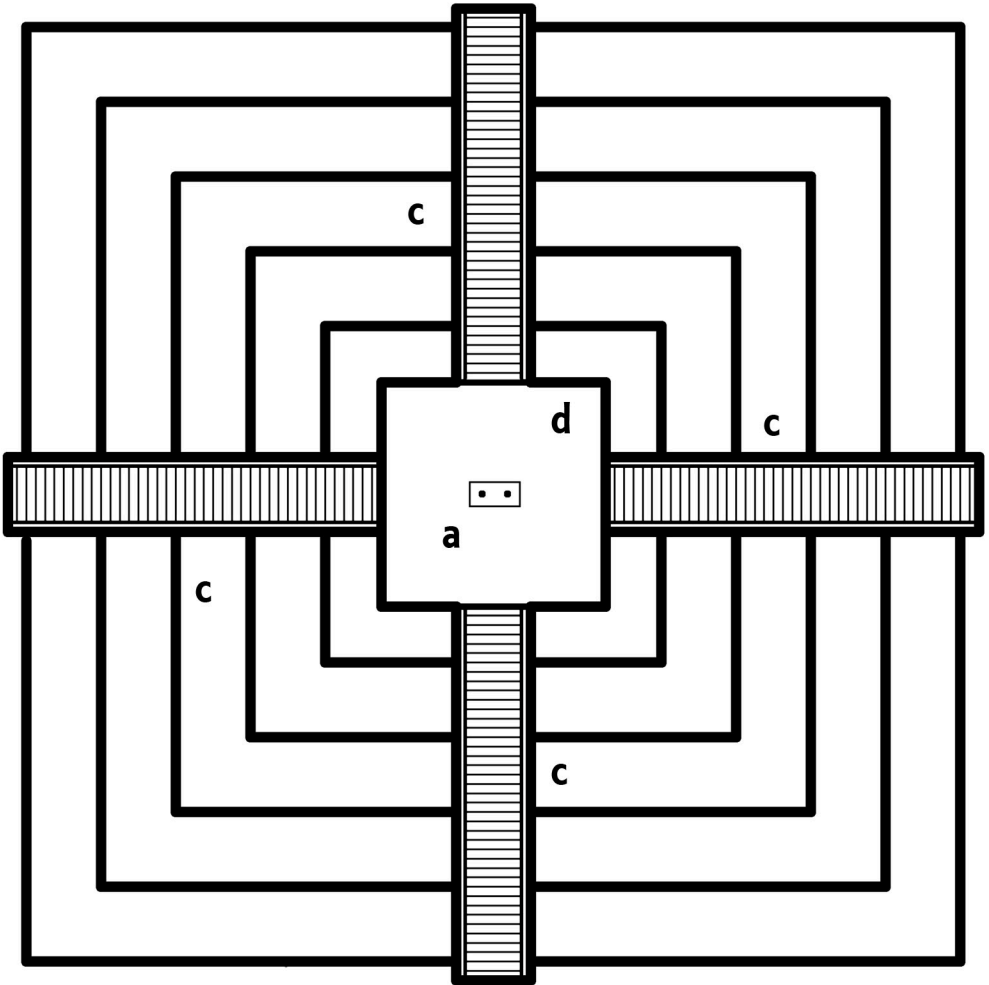
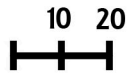
THE HERMIT WIZARD'S TREE



SEWER LAIR[®] (M)

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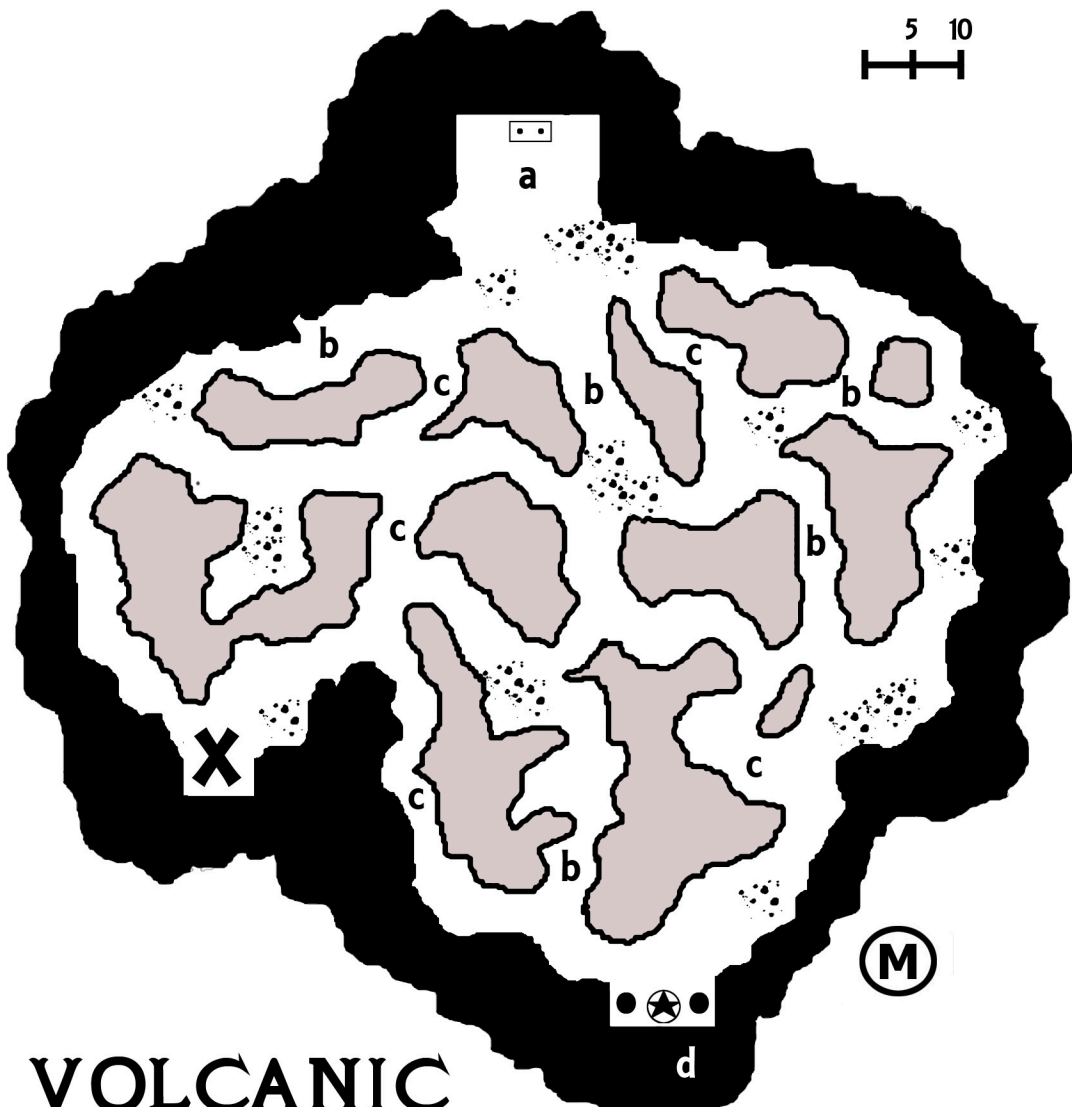


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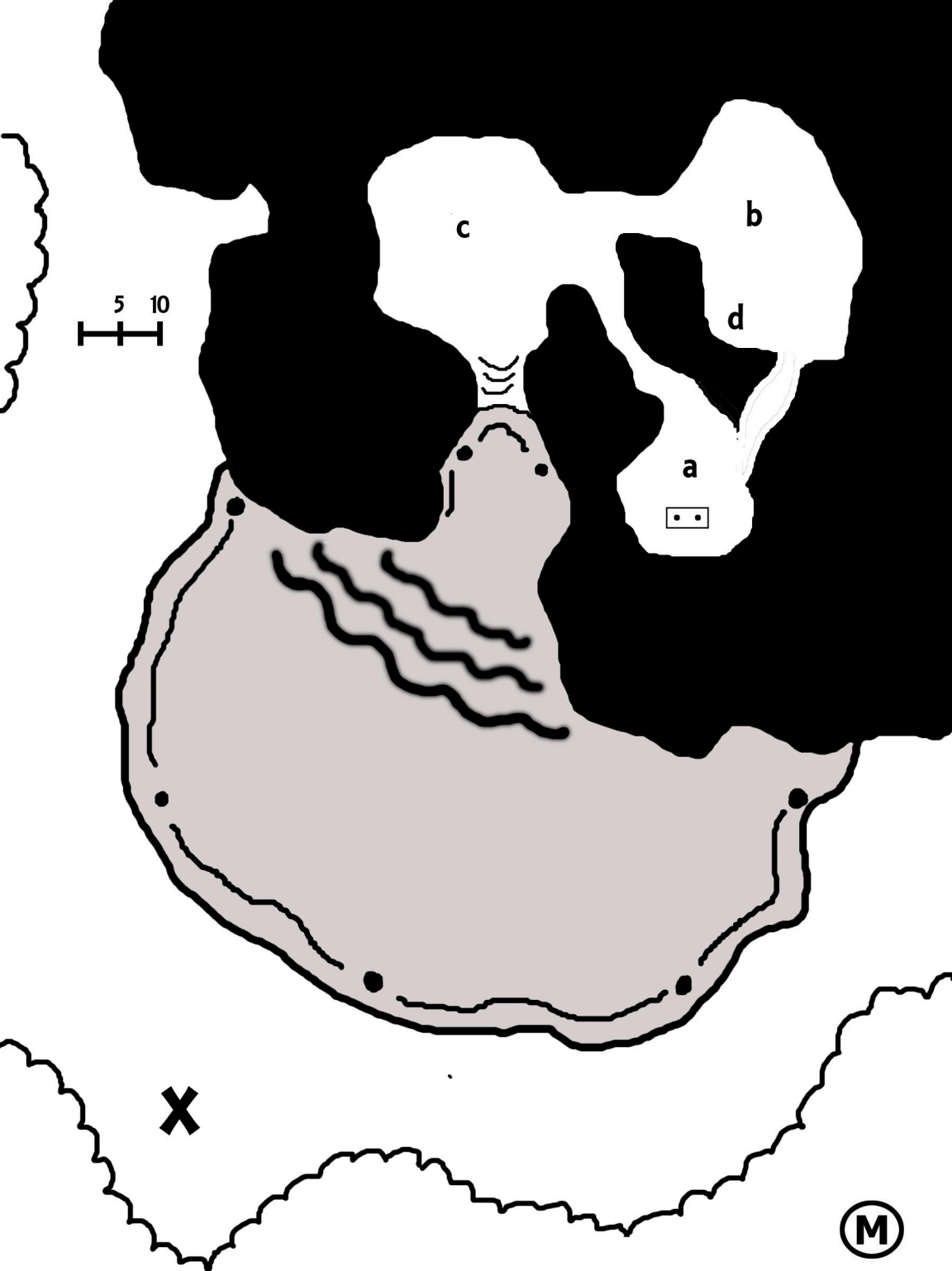
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JUNGLE PYRAMID

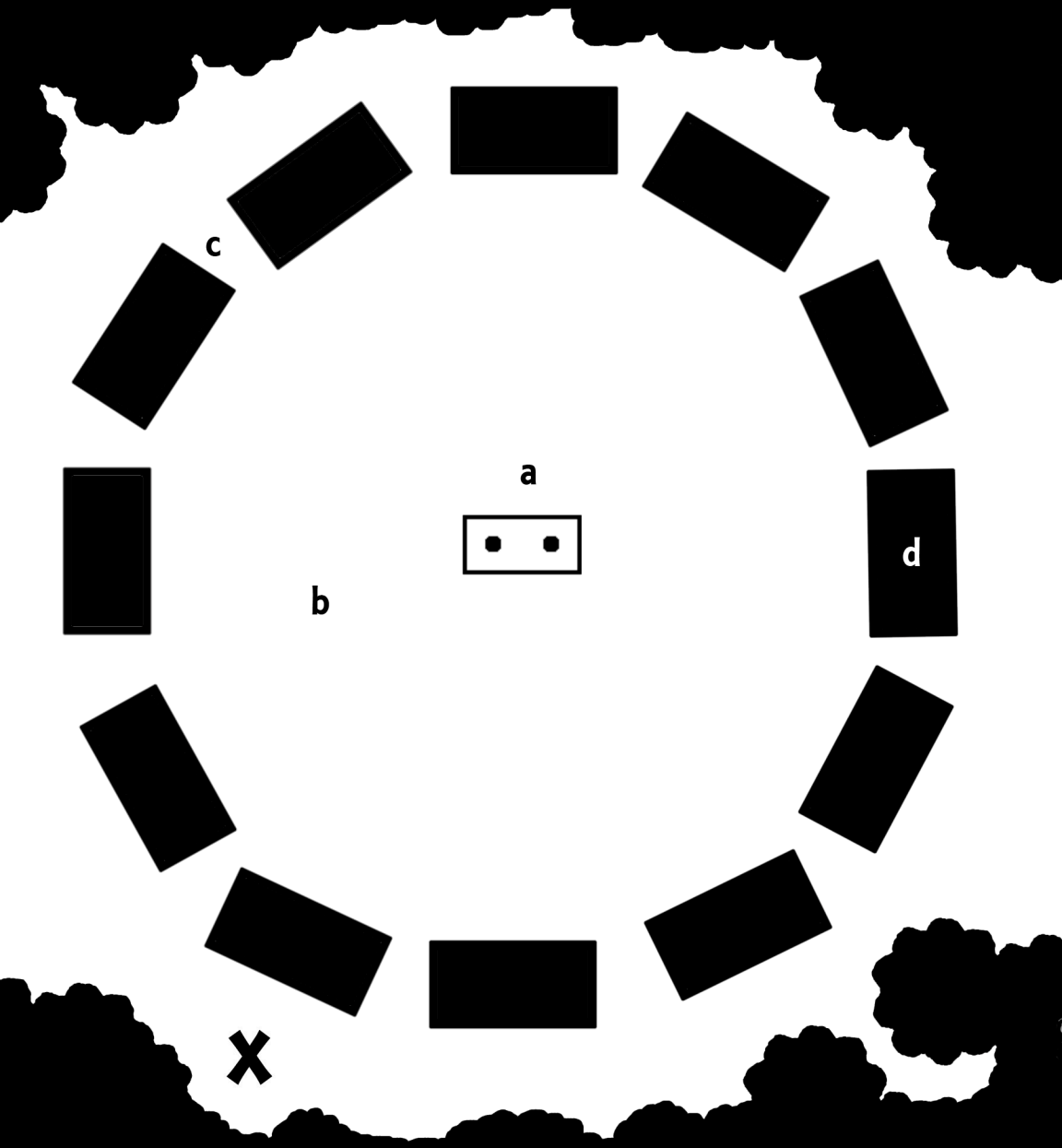
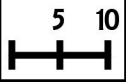




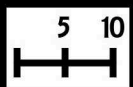
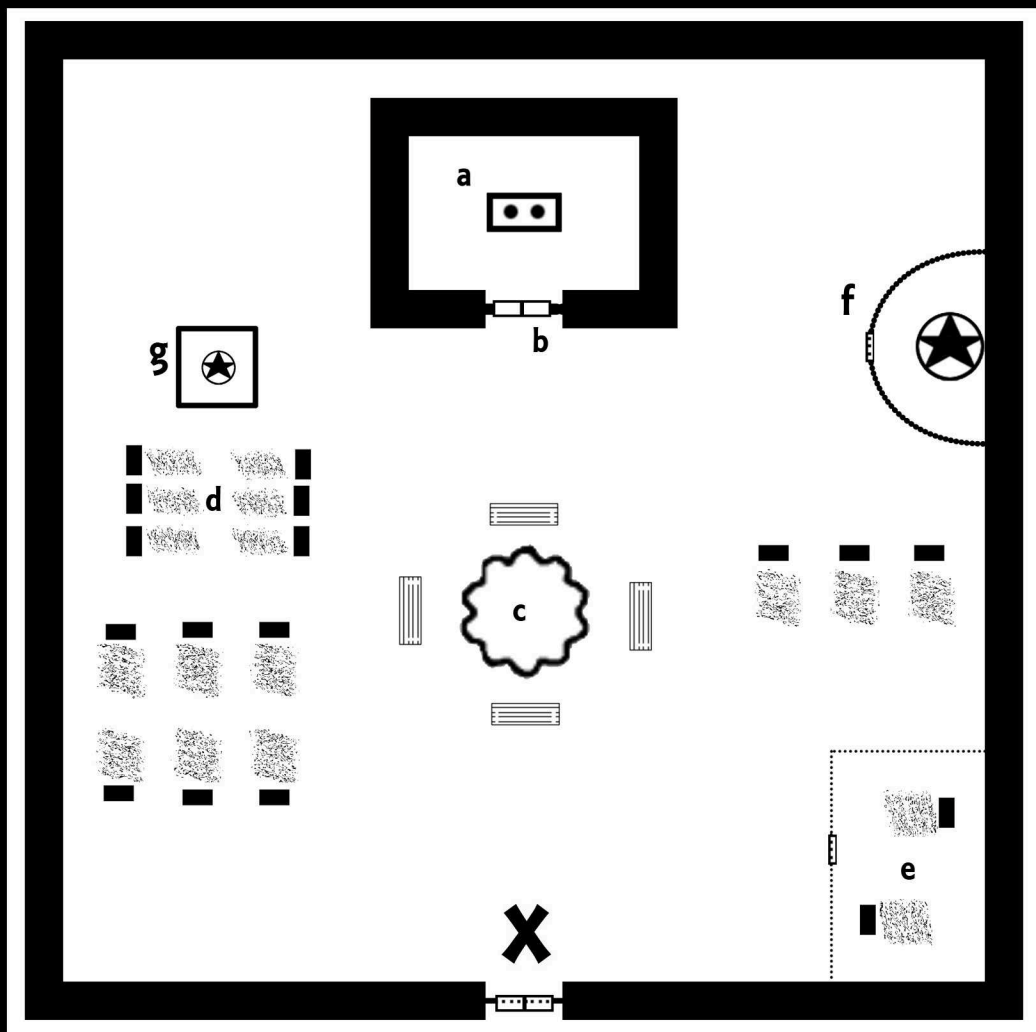
VOLCANIC CAVE



TROLL FALLS



FOREST HUNT



HERMIT'S CRYPT

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