



DEAD GOD SALVAGE

Dead God Salvage is a Fifth Edition adventure designed for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1**. The party must explore the corpse of an ancient black dragon and foil its minions' efforts to resurrect it. This adventure takes place a few hours away from the town of Blackwater but can easily be placed in any campaign setting with a swamp.

BACKGROUND

The ancient black dragon Rylboss's corpse lies broken in the battlefield where she fought her brother Vagerand. However, she will not rest there much longer.

Rylboss had bound servants to her flesh and bone as a fail-safe. Upon her death, numerous undead rose, led by an octopus-like amalgamation of lizardfolk corpses. The amalgamation knew two things: how to resurrect its master and the rewards for doing so. It has finished constructing a portal to the afterlife inside Rylboss's corpse that will allow her to return and is about to activate it. When that happens, the region will become tied to the concept of death, making Blackwater uninhabitable within days.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters begin in Blackwater, where a local wizard hires them and a crotchety prospector to investigate what is causing a plague to radiate from the corpse of a recently slain ancient black dragon and harvest magical components from inside it. Upon arrival, they find that something has been creating rooms and tunnels in the dragon's corpse and begin to suspect that a gruesome creature is stalking them from within the walls. The characters eventually discover that the dragon's undead servants dug the tunnels to complete a ritual designed to resurrect their master. The adventure climaxes as the characters confront the amalgamation of lizardfolk

corpses that has been tailing them while attempting to destroy a portal to the afterlife before Rylboss returns.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The following plot hook provides a possible way for the characters to get involved in the adventure.

A local researcher named Inakius (N human male **commoner** with History +4 and Investigation +2) approaches the party and communicates the following:

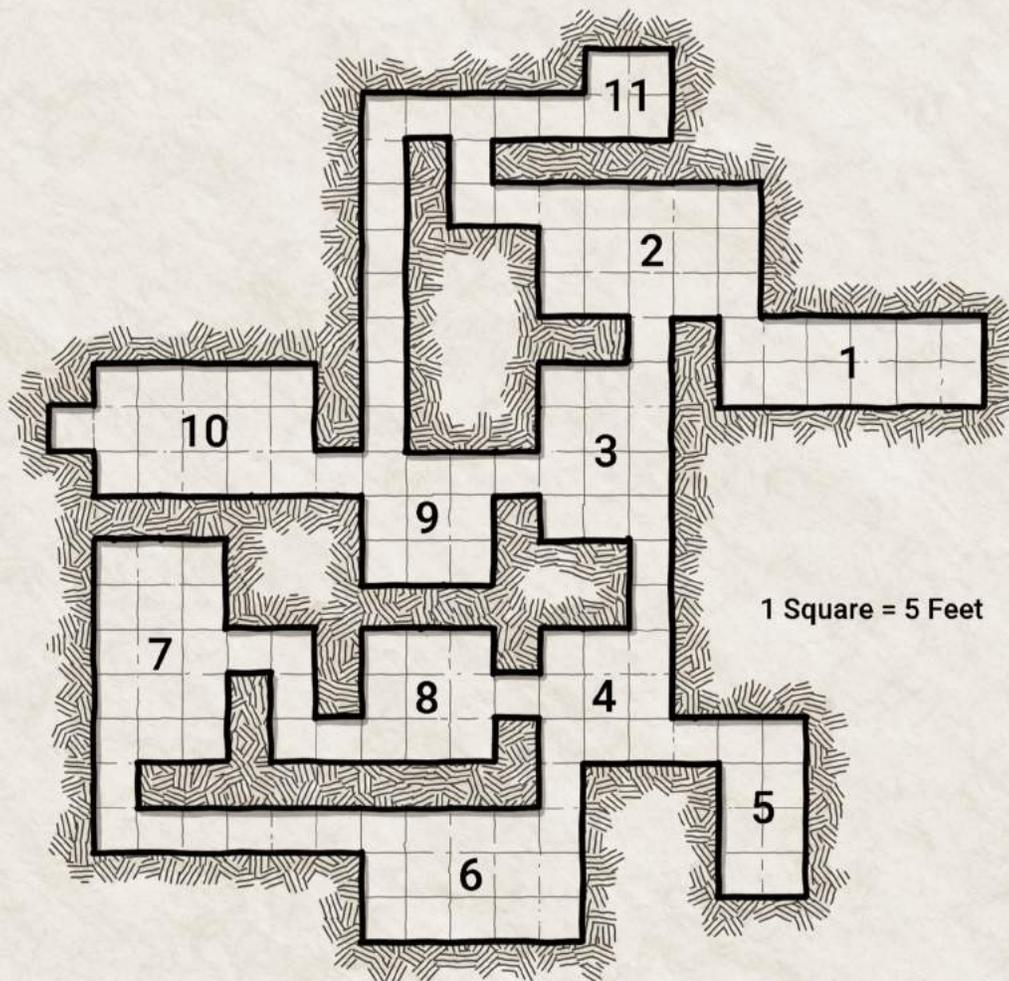
- Much of the plant life around the dragon's corpse died a few days after the battle. Over the last few weeks, the corruption has been spreading towards the town. Inakius would like the characters to investigate the corpse to see what is going on and stop the plague from spreading if possible.
- They have been trying to find people willing to go and scavenge the inside of Rylboss's corpse for weeks now.
- They are willing to pay the party 225 gp once they have stopped the plague's spread and retrieved the components. They will also allow the characters to keep whatever potions they extract from the dragon.

If the characters accept the offer, Inakius asks them to come to his house in an hour. There he introduces them to Qip (CN human male **commoner**), a crotchety old prospector who was down on his luck but sees the opportunity to salvage the dragon as a lucky break. Kill him whenever you see fit.

Inakius then provides the party with three flasks with barbed nozzles. He tells the characters and Qip that these will extract potions when attached to Rylboss's stomach, heart, or sorcerous core.

RYLBOSS'S CORPSE

The characters and their companion trudge through the swamp for five hours to reach the battlefield from Blackwater. While Rylboss's hide remains intact, the flesh



underneath has begun to rot and collapse, causing her corpse to deflate. The air reeks of death. Rylboss's skull lies broken, making the mouth accessible. Characters that circle the dragon looking for other entrances see that the sphincter is exposed, and characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notice a massive wound obscured by swamp water.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless otherwise noted, locations in Rylboss's corpse have the following features.

Ceilings. The ceilings throughout the corpse are 15 feet tall. They are carved flesh and supported by crudely carved bone beams.

Floors and Walls. The floors are carved flesh and are covered in a thin layer of rancid swamp water. The walls are carved flesh covered in mold and insects. Crudely carved bone columns inscribed with runes support the ceiling. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character can determine that the runes are related to conjuration. Characters with proficiency in Arcana who succeed on a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine that the dungeon acts as a gateway to the afterlife. The DC decreases by 2 for each room the characters have visited.

Illumination. While in the corpse, treat each area as having no light unless specified otherwise.

Atmosphere. The corpse reeks of death and is oppressively humid. The smell and mold spores are stifling.

Putrid Ichor. Any creature that ingests the putrid ichor coating the floors must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until it finishes a short or long

rest.

Flesh Beast. The **lizardfolk amalgamation** (see Appendix) is the leader of Rylboss's undead servants. The creature believes that Rylboss will reward it handsomely for resurrecting her and works tirelessly to do so.

If the characters return to a room that contained living creatures when the party first arrived, some of the creatures' limbs can be seen reaching out of the walls. Attempting to remove the limbs reveals that this is all that remains of them.

The lizardfolk amalgamation dragged the creatures into the walls and tore them apart (regardless of whether they were already dead). It takes the rest of their remains to area 6.

The amalgamation uses its Flesh Glide ability to collect bodies and stalk the characters safely. The characters should slowly become aware of the creature's presence throughout the adventure. Initially, only one character who has failed a save against the putrid ichor (see above) or one random character sees the creature. Ideally, this will leave the characters questioning whether a flesh creature is stalking them or if the corpse's hazards are causing them to hallucinate. Consider having a tentacle made of fingers and toes emerge to drag Qip or an enemy that has dropped to zero hit points through a wall mid-combat to confirm that the creature is real.

The amalgamation can always be found in area 7. The following locations are keyed to the provided map of Rylboss's corpse.

1 - MOUTH

Rylboss's skull was ripped in half during the battle and the mush that was her brain coats her mouth. This mixture of rotting flesh and swamp water glistens on Rylboss's tongue.

Hazard: Slippery Tongue. Any creature who steps on the tongue must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) piercing damage as they slip and skewer themselves on Rylboss's teeth.

2 - LUNG

This chamber contains many withered branchlike structures. Strings hold pieces of cutlery, carved wood, and other small valuables aloft from the branches like an outlandish Christmas tree. A small gathering of kobolds sits in front of a lizardfolk wearing a scaly headdress. There is a shoddy coffin by the north wall.

Encounter: Gathering of the Unfaithful. The male lizardfolk named Chaulx addresses the characters and communicates the following:

- Chaulx and the four **kobolds** in this room deserted Rylboss when the situation looked dire, thinking they could live without the dragon's protection. The deserters assume that the swamp's corruption is some form of divine punishment and have attempted to appease their former master's spirit for over a week to no avail.
- The deserters will not allow the party to proceed further due to fear that scavenging the corpse will further anger Rylboss.
- They are running out of ideas and are desperate. The deserters are currently trying to mimic the funerals practiced in Blackwater to lay the spirit to rest forcibly. Corpses are usually just meat in their cultures, so they do not fully understand what to do. If the party can help them perform the funeral and exercise the spirit, they see no reason that the characters cannot scavenge the corpse as they cannot eat the whole thing.

The characters can help complete the "funeral" in a variety of ways. Three successes of any combination of the below checks are required to satisfy the deserters. If the party fails three checks before satisfying the deserters, the group becomes disgruntled, asks the characters to leave, and continues improvising the ritual. No character may make the same check twice.

- A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check to provide direction.
- A successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check to give speeches about the dragon.
- If a character proposes another idea, allow them to make the appropriate DC 10 check, but give them disadvantage if it's particularly outlandish.

If they succeed, the deserters allow the party to take the decorations and scavenge the corpse.

If the characters attempt to pass forcibly, the worshipers attack. The lizardfolk takes the front line and will try to block the characters from entering the room. The kobolds use their slings until forced into melee combat. They focus on a single target making sure to fire from a position where their target has the least cover. If there is only one such position, the kobolds take turns using it.

A kobold or lizardfolk will attempt to flee when reduced to a quarter of its hit points.

Treasure: Ceremonial Trash. The assortment of carvings, cutlery, and other trinkets is worth 21 gp in total.

If the characters return to this room, the flesh beast has cleared it out (see "General Features").

3 - HEART OBSERVATION

This chamber is 20 feet tall, and the ceiling is an exposed portion of the dragon's heart. The columns in this room thrust into the heart.

One character who has failed a putrid ichor (see "General Features") save or one random character sees the heart faintly beat once.

Hazard: Flesh Walls. As an action, a character can scale the walls and reach the heart by succeeding on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing the check causes them to make it 10 feet up the wall, lose their grip, and fall prone in the putrid ichor (see "General Features").

Treasure: Dragon Heart Elixir. Stabbing a flask into the heart as an action yields one *potion of greater healing*. The flask itself then becomes inert and cannot be used to extract another potion.

4 - RUNIC BONES

The undead carved this chamber from a single bone. Runes cover every surface, and skeletal hands coated in blood reach out of the walls holding flesh covered in glowing green mold.

The hands belong to two skeletons that can freely move through the dragon's bones and have 10 feet of tremorsense.

Encounter: Children of Bone. The two **skeletons** drop the moldy flesh when a character walks 10 feet into the room. Spores fill the chamber, the lights go out, and all living creatures inside the room must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for one minute as they wretch uncontrollably. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can make another Constitution saving throw. On a success, the effect ends on the creature. The skeletons then emerge from the walls, each wielding a bone shortsword. They fight to the death.

5 - RUNIC FLESH

When the characters enter this area, read, or paraphrase the following.

The southern wall shimmers with gold faintly illuminated by the glow of the purple mold covering this room. Besides the multitude of coins haphazardly jutting out of the wall, a circlet sculpted to resemble flames, two bracelets depicting linked dragons with ruby eyes, and a sapphire necklace can be seen dangling on meaty hangers. Uninjured lifeless rodents litter the floor, their heads submerged in ichor.

Rylboss's servants have been attempting to rebuild their master's hoard by scouring the battlefield. The rats disturbed the mold, were knocked out by the spores, and drowned in the ichor.

Hazard: Purple Mold. If a character walks 10 feet into the room, they disturb the mold. The spores disturb more mold causing a chain reaction. The entire room fills with spores, the lights go out, and any creature inside must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours. They then fall to the floor and begin to suffocate in putrid ichor (see "General Features"). Review the rules for suffocating in the core rulebook for players for details.

A blood-curdling cacophony of screams can be heard coming from area 7 as the lizardfolk amalgamation senses

that something is there. The characters have two rounds to leave the room before the amalgamation reaches them. If the characters are no longer there when it arrives, the creature returns to area 7 to finish its preparations.

Treasure: *A Shadow of What it Was.* The circlet is worth 50 gp, the necklace is worth 55 gp, the bracelets are worth 40 gp in total, and 25 gp worth of coins sticks out from the wall.

6 - CORPSE STORAGE

Mutilated animal and humanoid corpses fill the chamber. They all have glyphs inscribed into their flesh.

The undead did this to increase the area's connection to death, making it easier to open the portal.

Encounter: *Children of Flesh.* Two **zombies** are birthed from the walls when the characters walk 15 feet into the room. They fight to the death.

7 - DEAD MAN SWITCH

The runes on the bone columns in this room glow with a sickening black light. The north wall is a massive bone completely covered in runes and has a circular depression. An amalgamation of over a dozen lizardfolk impaled with numerous iron rivets hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room. It chants various incantations simultaneously.

Encounter: *Lizardfolk Amalgamation.* The **lizardfolk amalgamation** (see Appendix D) has all the corpses it needs and is not immediately hostile towards the characters unless they stole something from area 5 or attack.

If left unprovoked, the creature uses one of its mouths to address the characters while chanting various incantations with its other mouths. It compliments them for surviving long enough to get here, relays the information in the adventure's background section, and tells them that Rylboss would offer them positions of importance once resurrected since Vagerand killed most of her servants. The amalgamation does this because it believes that Rylboss will reward it for recruiting competent servants. If asked, the creature shows no remorse regarding the fate of the region.

If the characters accept, the ritual finishes, and Rylboss awakens. See this adventure's aftermath section for details on speaking with Rylboss.

If the characters provoke the amalgamation, it retreats into the walls and flanks the most lightly armored target. The amalgamation is determined to revive Rylboss and fights to the death.

The amalgamation finished its role in the ritual right before combat started. The depression in the north wall has begun to turn into a portal to the afterlife. Each round on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Rylboss's corpse stirs, and each character must succeed on a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone. If this continues for five rounds, Rylboss returns to her body. Destroying the portal before Rylboss returns ends the effect. The portal has 16 AC, 20 hit points, and immunity to psychic and poison damage.

Treasure: *Ten Man Piercings.* The amalgamation's corpse contains thirteen large, barbed rivets that function as *gauntlets of ogre power* when they are all jabbed into a creature's body. Inserting each rivet deals 4 (1d8) piercing damage and removing one deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

The portal contains the components Inakius asked the characters to retrieve.

8 - SORCEROUS CORE

A 5-foot-wide glowing black sphere held aloft by tendrils of flesh occupies the center of this room. It crackles with

power sporadically, causing the room's glyphs to flare up. Any creature that goes within 10 feet of the core feels physically drained.

Hazard: *Sorcerous Core.* Any creature that interacts with the core gains the Undead Fortitude feature until it finishes a long rest and must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage. Inakius didn't warn the characters because the core shouldn't be active.

Treasure: *Potion of Power.* Stabbing a flask into the sorcerous core as an action yields one *potion of hill giant strength*. The flask itself then becomes inert and cannot be used to extract another potion.

9 - COLLAPSED STOMACH

The bone pillars in this room appear to be holding up the remains of a much larger stomach. Flesh lies folded up on top of the supports. Water coming from area 11 has flooded the room. The water is 15 feet deep. A gore-covered crocodile rips away at the southern wall.

Encounter: *Hungry Croc.* The **crocodile** is distracted by its meal but will turn its attention to the characters unless they succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If multiple party members are attempting the same task, have them make a group check instead. The crocodile tries to flee when reduced to a quarter of its hit points.

Treasure: *Essence of the Dark Queen.* Stabbing a flask into the stomach wall as an action yields one *potion of acid resistance*. The flask itself then becomes inert and cannot be used to extract another potion.

If the characters return to this room, the flesh beast has cleared it out (see "General Features").

10 - RECTUM REMAINS

The sphincter has become saggy, and it is possible to crawl in without a check.

Hazard: *Brown Slide.* Any creature who enters the dragon by crawling through the sphincter must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or slip in refuse and be knocked prone, falling face-first into the putrid ichor (see "General Features").

The smell of dung almost overpowers the rotting flesh, making this room nearly unbearable. Giant turds lay on the ground, soaking in swamp water and fleshy ichor.

11 - MASSIVE WOUND

This chamber is empty save for a large nest made from mud and bone fragments. It belongs to the crocodile in area 9.

AFTERMATH

- If the party succeeds in destroying the portal and returns to Inakius with the components, they receive 225 gp and can keep whatever potions are left as agreed.
- If the party fails or chooses not to destroy the portal before Rylboss returns (treat her as an **ancient black dragon** except she is undead and doesn't require air food, drink, or sleep), she rises and flies for two hours, arriving at a private sanctum deep within the swamp. If the party is still inside, Rylboss does not notice until she commands her bodily servants to show themselves 24 hours later. The characters must succeed on a DC 16 group Dexterity (Stealth) check to leave the sanctum unnoticed. If they succeed, they escape unimpeded. If they fail or make themselves known, Rylboss lets them choose between the honor of being her minions and death. Vagerand killed almost all her servants, and she

sees the party's survival as evidence that they are capable. If the party accepts, she uses a *spell scroll* of *geas* on each character to ensure their loyalty. Rylboss spends most of her time scheming against Vagerand and uses a *crystal ball* to gather information. If the characters continue to prove they are competent, she is content to keep a low profile and act exclusively through them. Otherwise, she breaks ties and finds better minions.

- If the characters do not destroy the portal within a few hours of the ritual's completion, Blackwater and the surrounding land becomes tied to the concept of death by the end of the week. The tie initially only affects plant and animal life but will eventually kill any humanoids that do not flee. Also, the region becomes a hotbed of necromancers and other researchers by the end of the month. Ω

APPENDIX

LIZARDFOLK AMALGAMATION

Rylboss bound servants to her flesh and bone as a fail-safe. Upon her death, an octopus-like amalgamation of lizardfolk corpses rose. It knew two things: how to resurrect its master and the rewards for doing so. It has finished constructing a portal to the afterlife inside Rylboss's corpse that will allow her to return and is about to activate it.

LIZARDFOLK AMALGAMATION

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 52 (8d10 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Flesh Glide. The lizardfolk amalgamation can move through the dragon's flesh as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Corpse Collector. When the lizardfolk amalgamation reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the lizardfolk amalgamation can use a bonus action to pull the creature into the dragon's flesh. The creature begins to suffocate, and can move out of the wall as if it were difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the tentacle hits and the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the octopus can't use its tentacles on another target.



Credits

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