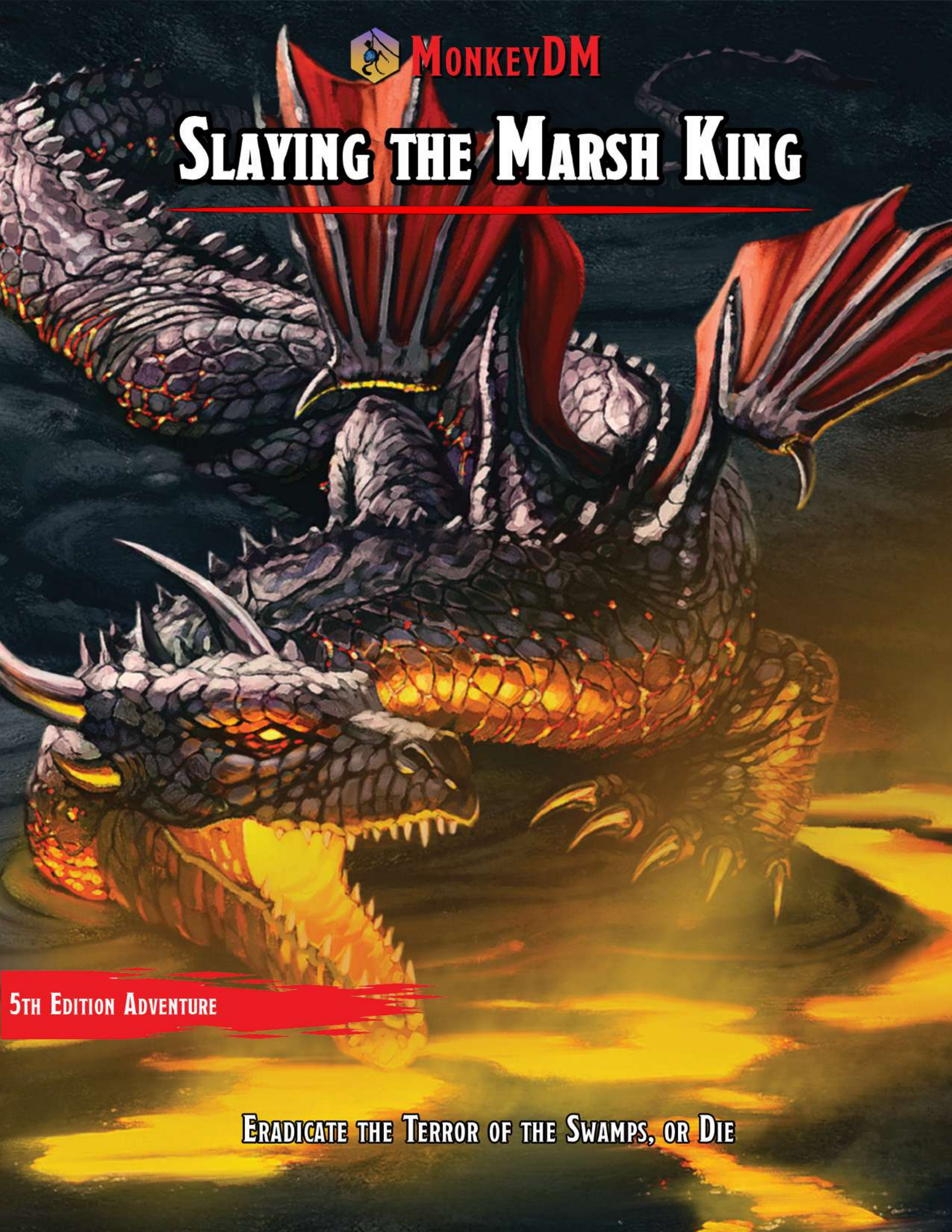




MONKEYDM

SLAYING THE MARSH KING



5TH EDITION ADVENTURE

ERADICATE THE TERROR OF THE SWAMPS, OR DIE

MONKEYDM

SLAYING THE MARSH KING

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Plot Hook

Written in a broken common and stained with mud, a letter arrives at the party's most common safehouse. It carries no seal whatsoever, but it is addressed to them. What could it hold and what can it lead to?

CHAPTER 1. SEEK THE SWAMPLAND

In which players try to uncover who has sought them out.

1.1. THE MUDDY LETTER

Read this:

'For adventurers such as you, getting correspondence is quite familiar. Whether it be the up-coming villains in search of a nemesis or the young admirers, plenty of people send you all types of packages, love-letters or the well-known hate-mail. A man by the name of Re'ddit is especially aggressive in his treatment of you, but... No matter what, no letter has ever compared itself with the one you've just received. Perfumed not with a likeable fragrance, but a mixture of bogwater and excrement, this letter, though a little rambling, is too authentic to be a little prank. After all, it's tied to a gigantic fish. So then... what the hell is it? One thing's for sure, you should reread it. But this time, with your noses pinched and a few casts of Prestidigitation, should you be able.'

The letter has the following written:

"Deer adventurpersons, Pleze help mi. I zimpl fisher suampborn. People my exile me. Too kind, they attac and no good zay I be. Me start fish, nevah stop. Dey be hunt, attac friendos. Bad. But no dey be troublin. Bigbirdblack, kill dem if dey not fiid. Helpz pleze! Moder and fader der. Dey ned helpz. Suamp niid iuo. Iv not come, me be zad. All suampborn deaded. Killllled. Helpz! Neims GUAR. GUAR fisher. Help repell bigblackbird end I fish gib. Hir first fish. Hope youz like.

GUAR fisher."

To begin, the party may decypher the letter by making a **DC 12 (Intelligence) Investigation check**. You can bypass the check if they manage to decipher the strange writing themselves. On a success, read to them the correctly written letter below.

"Dear adventurers,

Please help me. I am a simple swampborn fisherman. My people exiled me. I was too kind, they attacked and said I was no good. I started to fish and I never stopped. They hunt and attack my friends. They are bad. But now they're in trouble. A big, black, bird is killing them if they not feed it. Please help! My mother and father are there. They need help. The swamp needs you. If you don't come, I'll be sad. All swampborn will be dead, killed. Help! My name is Guar. Guar the fisher. Help me repel the big, black bird and I will give you fish. Here is a first fish. Hope you like it.

Guar the Fisherman."

Upon reading the translated letter, the player may make a **DC 13 (Intelligence) History check**. On a success, they will remember that in the nearby swamps there is a people known as the swampborn, elves that, overtime, turned froglike, with their skin turning light green, almost transparent. They slowly became more and more savage, their tongues elongated and their minds began to shift. No one knows exactly why, but that is their current state. If one were to guess, it is very likely this letter comes from their swamp, not too far off.

If all players fail the check, they may make a **DC 15 (Intelligence) Nature check** to study the smell and mud on the letter, along with the fish. On a success, they will deduce it is most certainly from the nearby swamp, so they should check there for a further lead.

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MAP 1: MUDDY SWAMP

There are also a few people that have mentioned that on the side of the swamp is a fisherman, who is quite odd, but worth talking to for fresh fish.

1.2. TRAVERSING THE TERRIBLE

With hints as to where this all might be coming from, the party should begin making their way towards the swamp.

GM NOTE: In order to immerse the party throughout their travel, describe the heat, smell and overall atmosphere of the swamps.

Frogs and insects are everywhere and the water is sludgy, undrinkable. Mud is everywhere, the surroundings are also veiled by fog and heavily obscured by mist. Any character investigating or asking about the surroundings may make a **DC 17 (Intelligence) Nature or Religion check**, on a success revealing that this is indeed a little too odd, a little too... foggy. Maybe the source of something greater infesting the area.

Travelling through, it is filled with mosquitos, insects, ravaging smells and other such difficulties, all of which bundle up into a deceitfully difficult situation. All characters must make a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** or suffer 1 point of exhaustion, as the smell and the insect bites are a little too much to handle for a full day's travel.

In addition, the party must choose one person to lead their expedition within the swamp. This person must make a **DC 15 (Wisdom) Survival check**. On a success, the travel goes at a good pace, without them slowing down at any point. On a failure, the party steps within a pool of sludge that reveals itself to be a **black pudding** which they must face.

Once they've passed through the black pudding and environment, they arrive within a cleaner portion. Read this:

'Weirdly enough, as you begin to walk further and further within the swamp, the vegetation begins to lessen and make way to a relatively clean portion of ground, where, although the grass is on the taller side, the trees and bushes retreat. It's not far off from the main path. And there, nestled in this small clearing, next to a small dock and a boat, a hut, with smoke coming off the top. You also see, as nearby the docks, three small boats, from which you can smell fish. You seem to be in the right place.'

The party now arrives on map 3. As they approach the house, however, a **giant crocodile**, alongside 2 **crocodiles**, who are its children, approach and attack, looking for their meal. The crocodiles will hide behind the giant one, attempting to stay alive as much as possible. If at low HP, they will retreat back into the water. The giant crocodile, on the other hand, will fight until death.

Once these are defeated, proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 1.3. HUT OF SMELLS

Read this:

'As you take down the crocodiles, you hear a distant sound from the house. A latch opens, then the door creaks, moving to a side. Out walks a frog-like looking elf, with large eyes and a gigantic mouth, out of which hangs a long tongue. He smiles, looking at all of you. "Adventurers! Apologise about Betty and childs. She always mean to new strangers." He approaches quickly and notices his pet crocodiles dead, to which he replies with a shrug, as he grabs them by the tail and begins dragging them inside. "Worry no. Crocodile meat good. Betty old anyway. Childs young, but worry no." And he begins guiding you inside his hut.

Inside the hut, he will introduce himself as Guar, the fisherman and will continue to speak in broken common. He will reiterate that which was said in the letter, while also saying that something is wrong with the village and he just wants his parents to be safe. He will ask the party to go there and will even join them, although he's not too good of a fighter himself. During this time, players may also take a short rest.

He'll say that he knows one person who still talks to him, his brother, Wurwur. They could talk to him and figure out what's wrong. And so, he asks them to embark on a boat and travel with him away. Proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2. THE SWAMP VILLAGE

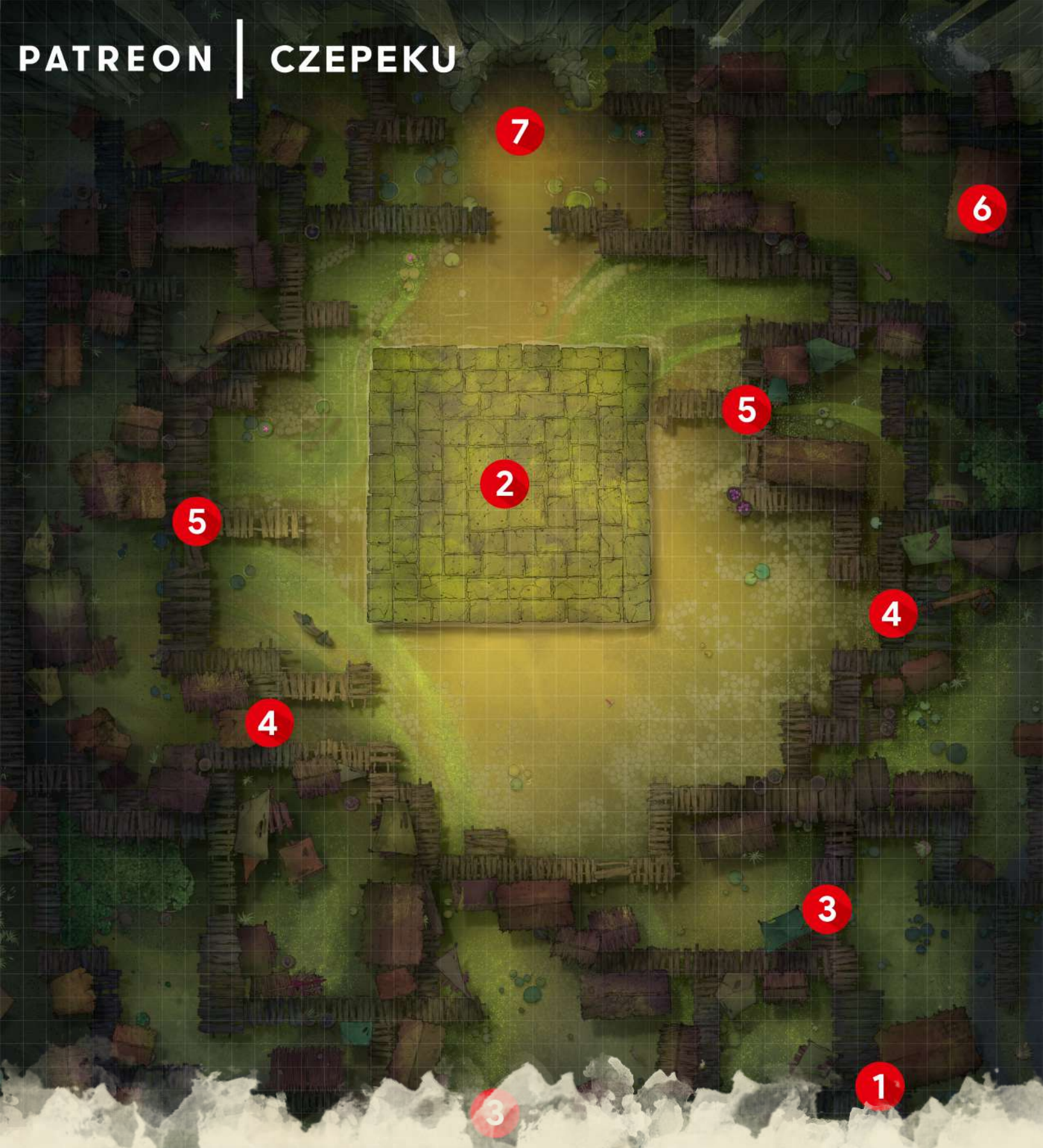
In which the party arrives at the swamp village and attempts to pass through a gauntlet.

2.1. A BOAT RIDE

Now in the boat, the party must go through a decent boat ride, during which they have to hold on, as the waters are not the steadiest and Guar doesn't know how to best maneuver the boat. Each player must make a **DC 14 (Strength) Athletics check** to not fall off their boat, if they do, the water is infested with **2 swarms of quippers**, which they can quickly dispatch of before they get eaten.

Then, describe as the water slowly picks up, as they move in a downward motion, towards the lower part of the swamp. Now, they are fully within the rapids, leading to a constant shift in motion in speed, requiring even more attention. Have each party member roll a **DC 16 (Strength) Athletics check**, in order to stay in the boat. On a failure, they crash against the water, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage and being dragged along in the rapids. If you're playing with five or six players, don't be afraid to add another **giant crocodile** for them to get rid of, that'll chase their boat.

Quickly thereafter, they will arrive at the edge of the village.



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MAP 2: THE VILLAGE

GM NOTE: Guar should make clear they are to show no mercy to those defending the food gathering, as they are serving the big black bird and are most likely evil.

When they do, read this:

'As you get closer and closer to what Guar points out to the village, you see it as quite similar to the hut Guar has set up for himself, if only a little more rustic, built out of pelts and driftwood, all on small platforms, but you also hear constant noise, constant fearful shouts. It sounds like a large kerfuffle is going on in the village. Guar begins to row even faster and faster, and then he lets out a loud croak. Out of a different hut, out to the side of the village, you hear a similar croak, then he begins to row that way. Shortly thereafter, you are just outside of earshot of the kerfuffle, on the side of the village, tying the boat to the pier.'

Out of a small hut, Guar's brother, Wurwur, will come out panicking, holding on to a basket of food. He will quickly tell his brother that the big black bird angrily asked for even more food and now the entire village is attempting to gather all their food. There is one follower of the bird, Rigrog, who is the leader of this. Guar will explain that Rigrog is the one who exiled him, because he wanted to fight the bird instead of feed it. Wurwur and Guar will then embrace as brothers, before they agree to part. Guar will then say they have to stop Rigrog, no more bending the knee to the bird! Then, he puts the party back on the boat and rows them to the main village.

2.2. THE GAUNTLET

This encounter begins as the party reaches map 2. They arrive at area 1. Have them roll initiative. As they arrive there, **2 tribal warrior** guards will get ready to stop them, as Guar shouts "NO MORE FEED BLACKBIRD! WE COME FIGHT!"

For them to successfully complete the encounter, they must arrive at the stone platform (area 2), where the villagers are throwing piles of food.

On the map, every number marks a checkpoint, where they'll fight a particular enemy. In addition, every 2 turns, **1d4+1 tribal warriors** will approach from the huts and attack them.

AREAS OF THE VILLAGE

1 - POINT OF ARRIVAL

The party arrives here and they are met by **2 tribal warriors**. The gauntlet starts immediately upon them entering combat with these two.

2 - THE FOOD PLATFORM

On the platform, Rigrog (**cult fanatic**)is guarding the food supply alongside 2 of his swampborn guards (**lizardfolk**). When the entire party reaches here, proceed to the next chapter. If only a portion of them arrive here, the gauntlet continues until all arrive.

GM NOTE: DO NOT kill Rigrog yet. He needs to be alive for the next chapter.

3 - FIRST CHECKPOINT

Upon reaching this checkpoint, players are attacked by **4 lizardfolk** in addition to the incoming tribal warriors.

4 - SECOND CHECKPOINT

Upon reaching this checkpoint, players are attacked by **1 swampborn spy** in addition to the incoming tribal warriors.

5 - THIRD CHECKPOINT

Upon reaching this checkpoint, players are attacked by **1 berserker** in addition to the incoming tribal warriors.

6 - GUAR'S PARENTS' HUT

This is Guar's Parents' Hut. Guar will rush in this direction at the end of the gauntlet. If followed there, the players will find him talking to his parents and hugging them, before they starting going away.

7 - TUNNEL

Read this:

'Through a small tunnel, rowboats move with food towards a distant, even denser lair of the swamp.'

Once the fight is over, the tribesmen on the row boats will jump off and begin swimming away, leaving the boats to the party.

2.3. LAST PUSH

Read this:

'You find yourself on a small stone platform, with the leader of the swampborn, Rigrog, breathing heavily, knee bent. He looks up at all of you and begins speaking in a broken common. "I... Not strong enough. But need not be. Bigblackbird strong enough. Said it make me... king!" He bows his head in sadness, as you see Guar approach from the back, getting close to the platform, yet staying away.'

If the party has arrived all at once and not yet fought Rigrog, then continue with a short battle, before Guar eventually approaches and speaks with him. If Rigrog has already fought and is at below half of his total hit points, then continue straight to the following paragraph.

Guar will approach Rigrog, asking him how he found this big black bird to make him king. Rigrog will say that he delved into the deepest parts of the swamp, whereupon he found it. It laid dormant, in a ooze-like liquid, almost in stasis. When he poked the ooze, it awoke. "Only bird not to come out of egg", he will say.

Read this:

'As Guar listens to this, he bows his head in sadness. "You stupid! If no egg, then no bird! You knew through tunnel forbidden. Law from elders. You broke, then said elders lied. Elders dead, bird freed, we served bird. You at fault." He then looks at all the food, then again back at Rigrog. "I repay favour now. You exiled. Like me was. Go, or I kill!"

After receiving this command, Rigrog will look around, before taking one of the rowboats and rowing into the tunnel, going towards the big black bird. Guar, being not too bright, won't notice that he might be warning his master. If the party does, then they can attempt to stop him. In any case, the rest of the adventure can proceed normally. However, if the party lets him go, he might be able to return in the future as a weak, yet determined, villain!

With the entire party gathered on the food platform and all the followers dead or wounded, all that remains is to push into the denser swamp, through the tunnel. If the party wishes to, they can choose to rest, as the tribespeople will not attack them in any way, considering them to be strong. If they do take a short rest, they will hear a large roar from beyond the tunnel. They can make a **DC 15 (Intelligence) Nature check** to identify the roar. On a success, they will realise it's not birdlike, but rather draconic.

With or without their rest, Guar joins them on a rowboat and takes them through the swamp. You may proceed to the next chapter.

GM NOTE: If the party seems to have had a harder time with the previous encounters or are low on healing, allow the party to find 2 *potions of healing* amongst the food, as well as a possible magic +1 weapon given to them by Guar.

CHAPTER 3. THE BIG BLACK BIRD

In which the party fight the "big black bird"

3.1. THE BIRD'S BOX

Read this:

'Once more on the boat alongside your guide, you find him to row stiller than before, with a clearer mind and a clearer goal. Knowing the beast that must be fought, it is certain to him and to you that you must be focused. You row forward as fast as you can, then, begin to make your way through dense foliage, dark, shallow waters and past the tunnel, into an outcropping of rock, about 10 feet above the rest, which has the sight of something... of ruins, of a past time.'

Here, Guar stops and says he is too afraid to continue. Passing forward, they see carved stones of intricate design, but definitely not swampborn. They may make a **DC 18 (Intelligence) History check** to notice it, realising that this seems to be close to ancient, incredibly old and is an altar of sorts. As they continue passing, they can make a **DC 20 (Intelligence) Investigation check** to look for clues in the carved rock. On a success, they find a rock that says, in Draconic: "To protect the dark prince, scaled-son of the bringer of night, until he is befit to rule this world" The party also finds plenty of already-triggered tripwires, which they can deduce were found by Rigrog. Finally, the party arrives on map 3.

When there, read this:

'You look around at this ruin, and feel a sense of weariness... You look around, yet find no big black bird. But surely... it's here. You just have to... find it. Or wait for it to come! You stop for a second and listen. Then, you watch as out of one of the eyes of the large skull on the ground emerges a young black dragon, with a large smile on its face. "So... You adventurers. You've come to ruin my fun! These imbeciles were easy pickings and you have come to take them away from me. SO BE IT! You will die in their wake!" Roll initiative.'

The party must now fight a **young black dragon** in its lair. After it is defeated, proceed to the next chapter.

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MAP 3: THE BIRD'S LAIR



3.2. NO DRAGON NO CRY

With the dragon defeated (hopefully), the party can explore the ruin in more detail. It might hide more than they originally thought.

AREAS OF THE DRAGON'S LAIR

1 - OLD BONES

Read this:

'You find before you a pile of bones that looks unlike anything of the immediate vicinity, not just that, you also notice that this pile of bones looks moderately old.'

The players may make a **DC 16 (Intelligence) History check** to discern the bone's age, realising they are at least a few hundred years old.

GM NOTE: If you've played more MonkeyDM adventures, then the Almendrud Academy of Archeology might have interest in these, buying them for 1000 gold!

2 - FALLEN PILLAR

Read this:

'Akin to the walls up to this lair, this crooked, broken pillar, has faint carvings, alongside writings in what you think is Draconic.'

If any of the players speak draconic, they may read the writings, which say. "The dark prince will rise, as once did the dark king, and such he will drain the swamps, bringing about a new age of dragons!"

With a **DC 22 (Intelligence) Religion check**, the party can discern that this lair, alongside the dragon inside it, were very likely part of the Cult of the Black Dragon, once ruled by an ancient black dragon, known as the Dark King.

GM NOTE: If you're playing this adventure as part of a campaign, feel more than welcome to have a necromancer raise the Dark King in the future for an epic high-level encounter!

3 - GOLDEN COIN

Read this:

'As part of this gigantic skull, its forehead seems to be adorned by a massive, golden circle, a coin of sorts, with simple carvings and a great shine to it.'

The coin can be examined with a **DC 18 (Intelligence) Arcana check**. On a success, it can be identified as a light-drainer. Whenever something shines on it, it dissipates the light, providing the darkness needed for a black dragon. The *light* and *daylight* spells are dispelled if cast within 5 feet of it. Also, any spell that deals radiant damage on a target within 10 feet of it deals no damage.

GM NOTE: If you are playing this adventure with 5-6 players, consider adding this effect to the fight with the dragon! This will make it a fair bit harder, if you have any paladins or clerics within the party.

After exploring the areas to their liking, the party may return to the village and tell Guar that the beast is no more and they are free to return to their ways. In exchange, the villagers thank Guar and make him their new chief, while also giving the party a treasure chest they dug out of the water once, which has 5000 gold inside. Lucky catch, eh?

GM NOTE: If you're a fan of the extended MonkeyDM universe, why not include a *soul coin* among the treasure?

With thankfulness and the "big black bird" dead, the adventure is successful and the party never needs to smell the swamp ever again!

Art by Jacob e blackmon



THANK YOU !

A big thank you to all of those who follow and support me, without you I couldn't have brought this project to life.

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And now onto the next project...

Cheers !

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A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ALL MY PATRONS !