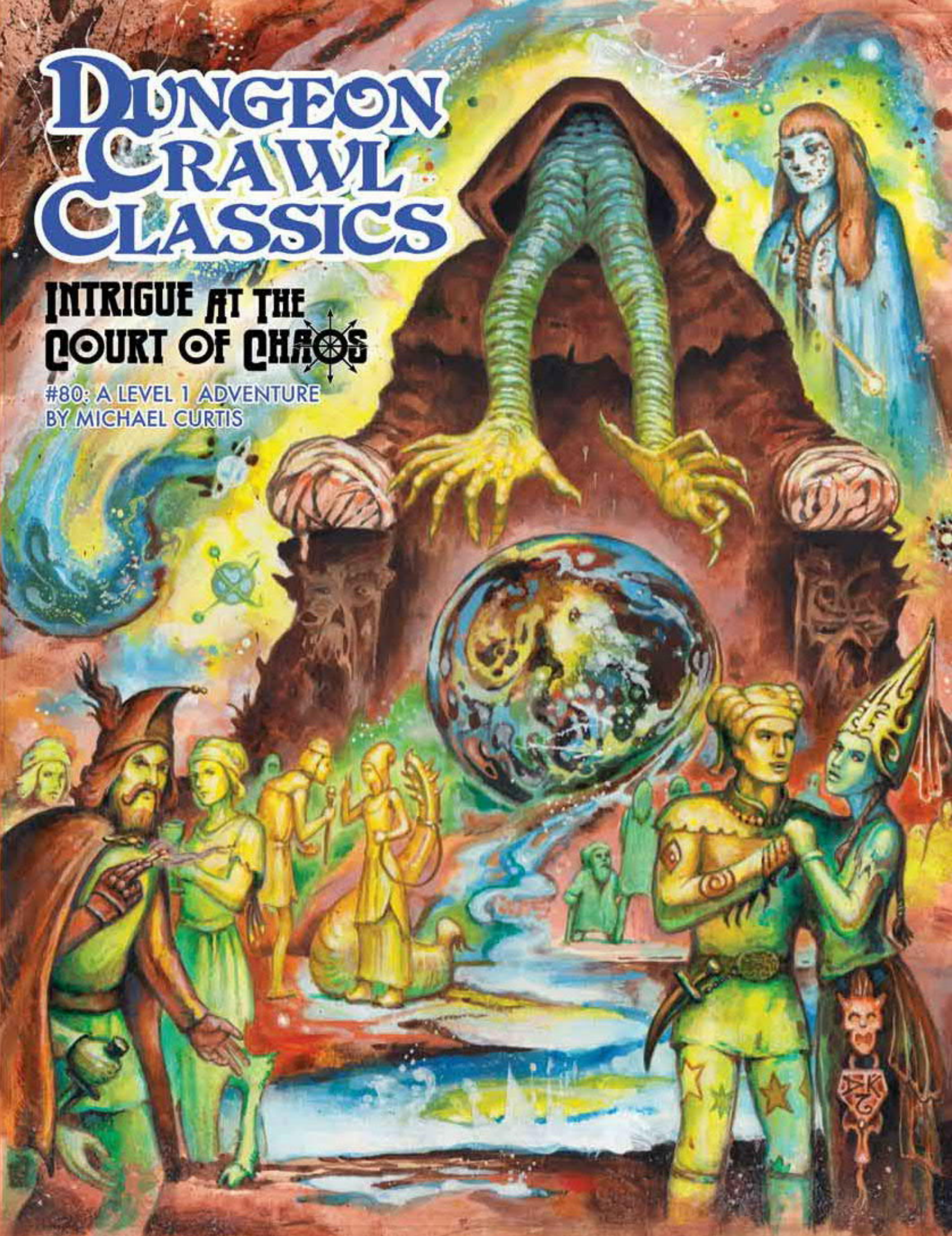


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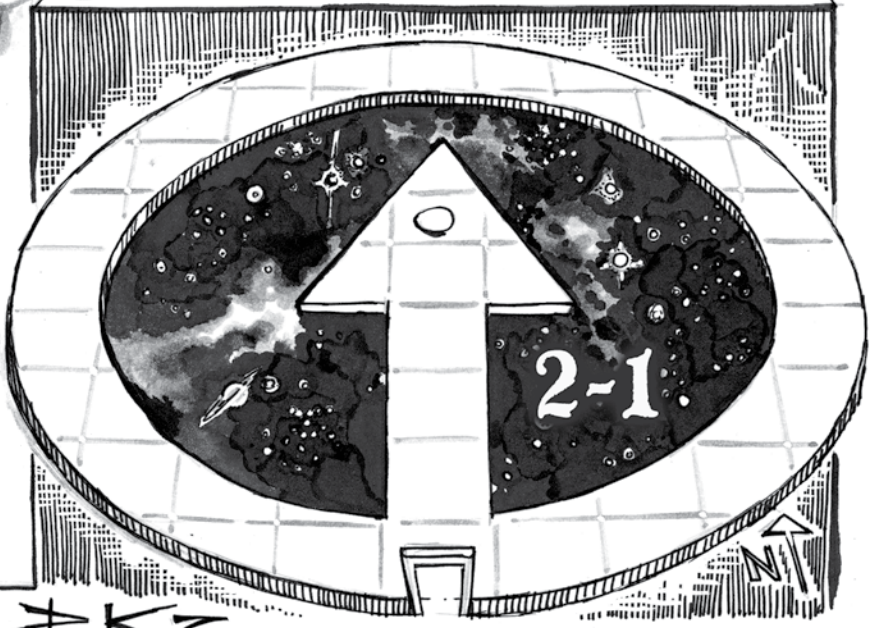
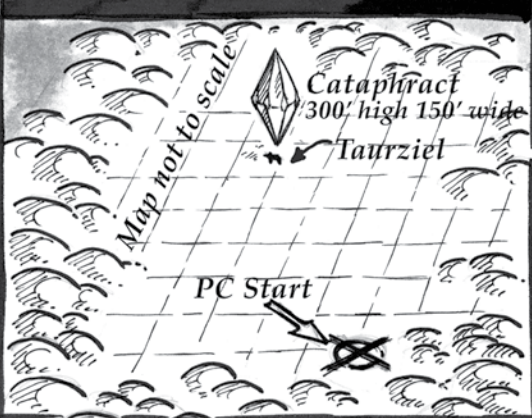
INTRIGUE AT THE COURT OF CHAOS

#80: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
BY MICHAEL CURTIS





THE CATAPHRACT EXTERIOR



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INTRIGUE AT THE COURT OF CHAOS



A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



Intrigue At the Court of Chaos is an adventure designed for six 1st-level characters. It assumes the PCs have completed the zero-level funnel and that the characters are acquainted with one another to some extent, making the conclusion of the adventure all the more poignant. This scenario can be played as a one-shot game, but doing so reduces the impact of the PCs choosing whether or not to betray one another during the adventure's final scenes.

Intrigue At the Court of Chaos embraces one of the fundamental differences that makes *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG* unique among other fantasy role-playing games: There's no need to wait for the PCs to become high-level heroes before embarking on adventures that span the cosmos! The PCs' enemies in this adventure are not mere goblins raiding farm communities, but extra-planar entities, some of whom have a direct hand in the struggle between the forces of Law, Chaos, and Neutrality. From its very beginning, *Intrigue At the Court of Chaos* has the PCs traveling the multiverse, visiting the Planes of Chaos and Law, and negotiating (and often battling) with the otherworldly beings that call these dimensions their homes. A far cry from just another fight with kobolds over a handful of copper pieces! In the course of their multi-planar adventure, the PCs have the opportunity to earn the gratitude of powerful beings... and perhaps the animosity, too, if they're not careful. However events unfold, *Intrigue At the Court of Chaos* is bound to be an adventure the players will remember – fondly or otherwise – from the early days of their adventurers' careers.



SOME WORDS OF CAUTION

Intrigue At the Court of Chaos is also different from other adventures in that it is designed to explicitly test the characters' loyalties to not only their gods and alignments, but each other as well. It's possible that one or more PCs choose to betray their fellows towards the adventure's finale. That is what the Host of Chaos is anticipating, after all. However, unlike situations where an "evil" character abruptly betrays his comrades without warning, *Intrigue At the Court of Chaos* builds an atmosphere of paranoia amongst the players early, giving them time to either prepare for traitors in their midst or to pour oil on troubled waters before the opportunity for a double-cross occurs.

PC betrayal is a touchy subject in role-playing games and is not suitable for all gaming groups. If you think the players' enjoyment of the game would be compromised by double-crossing within their ranks, perhaps it's best to shelve this adventure until a more suitable gaming group is found or to make sizable alterations to the adventure to ensure the PCs work together throughout it.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



Riasts and madmen teach that once there was nothing but the Void. From this vast emptiness sprang the Old Ones, who in turn fashioned Law and Chaos and the gods that serve those concepts. And while this is true, it is not the entire history.

Inscribed on crumbling obelisks buried in the sands and writ upon ice-entombed menhirs is another tale. It speaks of a time before the Void, a time when the multiverse was primordial chaos and inimical to life. In this maelstrom, effect preceded cause, nascent un-gods died prior to their births, and madness reigned supreme. It was the Old Ones who, born of this cosmic madhouse, eradicated this primal disorder, replacing it with the Void from which all life grew. But as in the wake of an extinguished blaze, tiny embers of the First Chaos lingered in the multiverse.

The first gods of Law dedicated themselves to collecting and imprisoning these sparks of First Chaos, fearful of what conflagrations they could kindle in the hands of their chaotic counterparts. One errant piece of primal disorder was placed at the heart of a divinely crafted embryo, a potent symbol of natural law, order, and the natural progression of life. This was known as the Yokeless Egg. The Scions of Law secreted the Egg away on a plane where the forces of Law were paramount and it would remain inaccessible to the Host of Chaos. It has lingered there ever since.

But the Scions of Law, concerned with progress and growth, and gazing constantly towards the future, are prone to forgetting the past. Over the eons, they've unremembered the Yokeless Egg and the guards and wards left to oversee it. And when the forces of Law stumble, the Host of Chaos is quick to benefit.



STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Unknown to the party, they have come to the attention of the Host of Chaos, and their suitability as agents to the cause of disorder agreed upon. All that remains is to “invite” the party to the Court of Chaos to charge them with their task and to plant the seeds of dissent amongst their ranks. To this end, the Herald of Chaos, the Tatterdemalion, is dispatched to the material plane to transport them to the Court.

The party’s initial encounter with the Tatterdemalion can occur in any location where diverse forms of entertainment occur: a tavern, inn, marketplace, festival, etc. Regardless of the place where the PCs encounter the Tatterdemalion, the invitation is not one they can decline.

Once the PCs are present at the meeting site, read the following:

A wooden puppet theatre has been erected here, its sides decorated with garishly colorful streaks of paint. A scrim of thin, pale cloth hangs behind the theatre’s proscenium, backlit by an unseen lantern. Standing before the theatre is a young, tow-headed lad dressed in ragged garb. Strips of faded, colored cloth are tied about his limbs and torso, giving him the appearance of a maypole left standing long into winter. An eager smile brightens his narrow face like a rising horned moon. In a voice surprisingly resonant for his thin frame, the youth addresses the audience.

“Lords and ladies, misses and sirrahs, gaze upon a tale seldom heard even in the courts and manors of your betters. I bring you the story of daring deeds in far-off places, of great treasures long forgotten, and of benevolent despots eager to reward hired heroes. A tale whose origins lie in a time before time.”

With a deep bow, the ragged youth steps to one side, granting you a clear view of the stage. Silhouetted figures appear against the scrim, brought to life by a mixture of light, shadow, and unseen puppeteers. The shadowy actors are grotesque in form, bearing misshapen torsos, and an overabundance of limbs, but nevertheless possessing a strange regality. The silhouettes appear to be holding an audience as a prelude to the story waiting to be told.

As you gaze upon the shadow puppets, an odd disquiet afflicts you. Your eyes swim with disorientation. You find yourself growing light in body and then suddenly experience a falling sensation as if tumbling towards the theatre’s arch. A bright, mocking laughter rings in your ears before all goes black. The last words you hear are the youth’s as he concludes his introduction.

“My friends, I give you the Court of Chaos...”

All PCs present when the Tatterdemalion begins his narration are transported to the Court of Chaos, no resistance possible. Yes, it’s a cheap trick, but they’ll have many opportunities to exercise free will during the adventure.

The Yokeless Egg has been discovered by Chaos, and they covet the potential encased within its azure shell. Law waxes in the cosmos and unleashing a spark of the First Chaos would tip the pendulum back in disorder’s favor. However, even forgotten, the wards defending the Egg prevent the Host, and those sworn to them, from breaching the celestial vault containing the vessel. Mortal agents, possessing free will to serve either Law or Chaos (or neither), are required to act as their agents. Unfortunately for the PCs, the Host has chosen them as their proxies. Dispatching their envoy of unrest to the mortal plane, the adventurers are about to find themselves invited to serve the Court of Chaos... whether they wish to or not.

Unlike their Lawful brethren, the Host of Chaos is satisfied with tiny victories and know that small seeds planted in fertile soil grow into tall trees that throw long shadows. While acquiring the Yokeless Egg is highly desired by the Court, the Host will accept sowing discord within the party. The breaking of friendships and the shattering of trusts does much to help push the cosmic balance back in Chaos’ favor. Even if the Egg remains beyond their reach, unless the party chooses to uphold their allegiances to one another and to Law and the Balance, Chaos has already won a victory. The adventurers, despite their intentions, may well serve the Court of Chaos before the adventure ends.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
Plane of Law	C	Taurziel the Lawful Ox
1-2	C	1-3 Primeval clay-born slime
1-4	T	Illuminated dancers
1-6	C	4 Law lions
2-1	C	Perfect reflections
Event 4	C	3 Prism sentinels
Event 4	C	2-4 Chaos demons



INTRIGUE AT THE COURT OF CHAOS



The PCs are transported to the Court of Chaos by the Tatterdemalion, and here they are charged with the recovery of the Yokeless Egg. It is also during the following events that the seeds of discord and paranoia are planted.

MEMBERS OF THE COURT

There are eight entities present in the Court who are important to the adventure. The judge is encouraged to create other guests as necessary, but only these eight are described. In addition to their names, titles, and physical descriptions, suggestions as to which PCs they choose to approach privately in the matter of the Yokeless Egg and what they offer in return for service are provided. Note that if the judge is running *Intrigue At the Court of Chaos* for more than six players, he may need to create additional Hosts so that each PC targeted for a visitation by one of the members of the Court in Event 2 is visited by a different Host. Use the provided Hosts as inspiration and place their thrones where desired in the Court.

The Tatterdemalion, Herald of Chaos: The Tatterdemalion is eternally youthful with a physical form comely regardless of one's concept of beauty. His manner is cheerful; his face open and attentive beneath his blond hair. His green eyes are bright and youthful, but there's a glint of madness amongst the exuberance. He's Peter Pan come from a Neverland where the Lost Boys have all gone cannibal. The Tatterdemalion plays the role of "good cop" in this adventure; stepping in to support the PCs in a deferential manner toward his lords should the party forget they are dealing with unpredictable gods. Although he acts friendly, his allegiance lies steadfastly to the Host and nothing the PCs do can make him betray that trust. During Event 2, the Tatterdemalion makes no private offers to the PCs.

Noohl, The Prince of Ruins: Noohl appears as a three-armed humanoid dressed in battered armor, his face obscured by a great horned helm. A cape sewn from human faces hangs from his broad shoulders. Noohl prefers to treat with warriors and dwarves, but tolerates halflings and thuggish thieves as well. When dealing with individual PCs in Event 2, he offers magical weapons and armor, the locations of lost treasures in ruined cities, and/or a rank in the Army of Chaos.

Klarvgorok, The Merciless Gaze: Klarvgorok resembles nothing more than a tremendous blood-shot and dual-lobed eyeball perched almost comically on a pair of bird-like legs. He never blinks and sees beyond time and space. In Event 2, Klarvgorok treats with thieves and clerics, offering up divine secrets, the ability to see through walls and containers, the gift of infravision, and divination devices capable of uncovering even the most secret of information.

Dzzhali, The Strangled Bride: Dzzhali's physical appearance is that of a beautiful humanoid female, two weeks dead. Her flesh is corrupting with decay, maggots play in her hair and empty eye sockets, and her fingernails are long claws. She is dressed in a rotting wedding dress and a hank

of coarse rope is wrapped around her bruised and chaffed neck. In Event 2, Dzzhali prefers to treat with women over men, but also favors elves, halflings, and any PC who has suffered from ill-fated affairs of the heart.

Magog, The Beast: Magog's physical form is dressed in blood-stained sackcloth robes and his misshapen hands are wrapped in bloody rags. His head is covered by the cowl of his robes, showing a black pit where his face should be. The only hints at his physical appearance are a pair of rough and wrinkled trunks that emerge from his hood and end in seven-fingered hands. In event 2, Magog has no preferences to whom he approaches, and the judge may elect any PC as his chosen agent. Magog offers treasures, magical items that encourage strength and ferocity, permanent increases in physical attributes, and/or the servitude of monstrous beasts.

Hekanhoda, Lord of Grotesques: Hekanhoda is afflicted with every deformity known to man (and some unknown). His limbs are ill-proportioned, his back is hunched, his eyes milky with cataracts. He bears too many fingers on one hand and too few on another, and drags a clubfoot when striding the planes. Hekanhoda dresses in courtly robes of red, purple, and yellow that accentuate rather than obscure his deformities. In Event 2, Hekanhoda treats with wizards and elves (especially those suffering from corruption), offering magical objects, grimoires of spells, patronage, and/or familiars and demonic servants in exchange for the Yokeless Egg.

The Chiaroscuro Envoy, Ambassador of the Balance: The Chiaroscuro Envoy seems human—plainly so. He blends into crowds as the eye seems unwilling to acknowledge his presence. He dresses in simple, but well-tailored courtly dress of gray coloration. His skin is a balanced mix of light and shadow patches. In Event 2, the Chiaroscuro Envoy approaches neutrally-aligned PCs who rebuke the Host's private offers, asking them to deliver the Egg into his keeping so that the Balance can best choose its fate (and by extension, that of the multiverse). The Ambassador will not offer riches and rewards, simply pointing out that neither Law nor Chaos can be entrusted with the Egg. Given the circumstances, presenting the Chiaroscuro Envoy with the Yokeless Egg in Event 4 is the closest thing to victory the PCs can achieve in the course of the adventure.

Lexaliah, Spy at the Court of Chaos (Mixed into the crowd; no set position): Lexaliah's skin is glimmering brass in hue, although its gleam is diminished by soot stains, ugly bruises, and welts. Her skin tone combined with her silver hair, now scraggly and dirty, identifies her as hailing from no world known by the party. She dresses in a tattered shift and goes barefoot over the obsidian floor of the Court. Lexaliah harbors a deep secret: she is the agent of the forces of Law, placed within the Court to counter the Host's schemes whenever possible. She acts in this capacity during Event 2, offering the party an alternative to presenting the Yokeless Egg to the Host. Lexaliah plays a dangerous game, but is an unsurpassed actress who so far has remained beyond suspicion as she plays her role of abused servant to the Court.

EVENT 1: INTRODUCING THE COURT OF CHAOS



The party regains consciousness lying upon a cracked floor of obsidian. Lurid colors illuminate the area and an atmosphere of foreboding is prevalent even as they regain their senses. When they look about them, they witness the following:

Your strange journey has cast you upon a great, misshapen six-pointed star formed of darkest obsidian. Above you, the sky spins in a kaleidoscope of nauseous color. Whirls of putrid green, sinister red, depressing blues, and dirty yellow twirl like scrapes of clouds caught in a cyclone. The platform beneath you forms an island adrift on a hellish ocean. Churning waters of blood topped with pink breakers stretch on for as far as your eyes dare gaze. Off in the distance, the ruined spires of antediluvian cities rise above the surface of the gory sea. From time to time, the wreckage of ancient galleys breaks the waves, thrown about by demonic eddies. Amongst the froth of the tide, you spy rotting faces, screaming with eternal agony.

At five of the star-shaped platform's points are thrones fashioned from bone, skin, and less identifiable substances. Sitting in each is a nightmare made flesh. Titanic figures adorned with unholy finery and bearing horrible guises stare down at you with expressions that – amongst the more human of those faces – convey a witch's brew of malice, curiosity, and amusement. Standing at the sixth point is a small humanoid figure. Dressed in courtly garb of ashen hue and standing a mere 15' tall compared to the other giants, he observes you placidly. Scattered around the platform itself are groups of lesser creatures, some misshapen and monstrous, others almost painful in their beauty. The attire of both courtiers and slaves is seen amongst them.

Standing near you is the youth in tattered motley, his rags whipping about in the screams of the damned that is the wind in this place. He bows to you, one foot behind the other in courtly grandeur. "Sirrahs (and m'ladies)," he says with an endearing smile, "Welcome! Allow me to present my masters, the Host of Chaos."

Sitting on the thrones are Noohl, Hekanhoda, Magog, Dzzhali, and Klarvgorok. The figure in gray is the Chiaroscuro Envoy. Lexaliah, although unnoticed by the party, is mixed in among the gruesome and beautiful slaves and courtiers present at the Court.

A pregnant pause follows the Tatterdemalion's introduction as he awaits the PCs to respond obsequiously to his masters, and the party would be well-advised to do so. Each member of the Court is a titan; even sitting they tower 30' above the party and a palpable aura of power and malevolence exudes from each. When the Host speaks, it is with the force of tectonic plates colliding. Those who gaze upon them quickly realize that to do so overlong would result in madness.

Once the party comprehends who they're in the presence of and respond appropriately (subtly encouraged by the Tatterdemalion if necessary), the Host addresses them directly.

"You have been summoned before the Court of Chaos, an honor given to few mortals. Circumstances in the multiverse require the participation of its lesser creatures and the Court has decided you will serve our aims to this end. You are charged with the recovery of a potent artifact of eld, known as the Yokeless Egg. Should you succeed in returning this object to the Court, know that your services will be well rewarded. The Host of Chaos offers a small boon in return and a token of our esteem suitable for small mortal hearts and minds. Do you accept this charge?"

The PCs will have questions regarding the Yokeless Egg, the reason for the Host's desiring it, their intentions, and why they should agree to assist Chaos. Use the below to answer their inquiries and to guide the judge's replies when role-playing the members of the Court.

Why should we help? "Should you not, you will spend eternity as our guests. [Pointing to one of the screaming faces in the gory ocean] The sea always has room for more. Threats aside, however, you'll find the Host of Chaos is very generous when rendered service by lesser beings."

What is the Yokeless Egg? "A spark of primordial Chaos left behind by the tempest of disorder that was the cosmos before life was less than a distant dream. It is our birthright and Chaos always claims its own."

Where is the Egg? "Housed in a repository known as the Cataphract, situated on the Plane of Law and undoubtedly defended by all manner of sentinels and safeguards."

What do you intend to do with the Egg? "What any sensible being does when finding an egg: crack it open. The slumbering ember within, once released, will be a small step in combating Law's overzealous grip on the multiverse. Law has waxed too powerful over the eons and we mean to swing the balance back in our favor."

You mean to plunge the universe into Chaos? "Eventually, but even the Yokeless Egg lacks such power. We merely seek to erode Law's progress and regain an even footing in the long race between us and our staid counterparts."

How can you be sure we won't betray you once we have the Egg? "Simple avarice usually suffices amongst you mortals. Acquire the Egg and not only will we return you to your natural plane, but you go with gifts and the goodwill of the Court of Chaos. Cross us and know that no power in the multiverse will spare you from our retribution."

Why don't you steal it yourselves if you're so powerful? "We are the antithesis of our cousins, as they are to us. Neither we nor our pledged agents can survive long on the planes of Law. In this matter, we must rely on mortal servants with souls as yet undevoted wholly to one side or the other. You mortals' curious and most delightful gift of free will makes you immune to the wards that prevent us from acting directly."



But I am a devoted servant of Law (or Neutrality)! “[Chuckling] Are you? Are you truly? How quaint is the concept of devotion in you mortals. We assure you that you know little of what true servitude means. Even those of you who pray to the gods of Law are no more than afterthoughts in the schemes of the Cosmic. Tell us: Do your gods always answer your prayers? Have you never cried their names and found them unresponsive, even when in the most desperate of straits? What you mortals call ‘faith’ is nothing more than lighting a candle against the eternal darkness of the multiverse. And candles can be snuffed out or—even better—replaced by more dependable illumination.”

Why us? Why not choose more powerful agents to help you? “Your inexperience is to our benefit. As you are not yet heroes, you are beneath the notice of our Lawful counterparts. You’ve accomplished no great deeds to draw their attentions and your allegiances, no matter how much you believe otherwise, are still in flux. Consider this an opportunity to not only make your presence known in the Great Game of the Balance, but as a chance to reconsider who you are best serving.”

What are the rewards you speak of? “Firstly, we will consider ourselves owing you a small debt of gratitude. Should the time come that you require the assistance of the most powerful forces in the cosmos, we shall attend to that need and consider our debt repaid. Secondly, since the desires of mortals are little things to the minds of the Host, you shall each receive a small gesture of our thanks in the form of a stone that warps fortune in your favor, one of the few Chaos Stones remaining in the multiverse.”

After the party’s questions are answered, the Host addresses them a final time:

“We understand discord and confusion like no other beings in the multiverse. We know your mortal minds reel from the task set before you. As we are not wholly unkind in our affections, we generously grant you the opportunity to discuss among yourselves the offer we extend. You shall have time to debate the benefits of serving us and to contemplate the consequences of refusal. [Pointing to one of the smaller spires protruding from the ocean of blood around you] You have until the waves cover the Tower of Ylleryn the Mad once more, a full night by your reckoning. After that time, we shall summon you once more to demand an answer. Until then, you are our guests and no harm shall come unto you. You have our pledge on that. Our Herald shall see you to your quarters. Decide wisely.”

With that, an oval of puce fire ignites on the platform. Beyond the burning portal is an opulent room equal to that of a fine inn. Thick rugs line the floor, the walls are polished mahogany, and a welcoming fire burns in a massive hearth. A large table surrounded by a number of chairs equal to the party’s membership occupies the middle of the room. Doors, one for each party member, exit the room and lead to exquisite, albeit windowless, bedchambers. The Tatterdemonion ushers them into the common room, summoning up a banquet of food and drink with a gesture for the party’s pleasure. All their favorite meals and potables are present in the feast. After the party is settled, he bows grandly, repeats the Host’s advice that they decide wisely their course of action, and departs, taking the burning oval door with him. The party is effectively imprisoned until summoned again.

Give the party time to debate the merits and drawbacks of serving the Host, but realistically, unless they choose to martyr themselves for their beliefs, they have little choice but to agree—if temporarily—to accept the Host’s demands.

The judge should pay attention to each character's position on the matter. The PC's attitudes will be useful during Event 2 when role-playing the members of the Court during their secret visits to the party and to guide who each PC might be visited by.

PCs who display an eagerness to assist the Court or argue to capitulate to their demands, if only for the party's own return to their home plane, will be visited by one of the Host, depending on their race, class, or gender as detailed

in the Host's descriptions and the player handouts.

PCs that show no strong opposition to the Court's demands, argue to try to play the Host against one another, or suggest stealing and denying the Court the Yokeless Egg entirely are visited by the Chiaroscuro Envoy.

PCs strongly opposed to agreeing to the Host's demands on moral or alignment grounds will be contacted by Lexaliah during Event 2, either privately (or if all the PCs feel this way) in public.

EVENT 2: TEMPTATION

No matter how long they debate whether or not to serve the Court, it's likely the party has time to kill before the Host calls upon them. The PCs are free to pass this interval in whatever way they desire. The comfortable bedchambers attached to the common room are one option, but the (rightly) paranoid PCs may not drop their guard to sleep.

Unknown to the party, the Host is working against one another in the matter of the Egg. Each desires it for their own and suspects the rest of the Court intends to make a grab for it once it is acquired. Treachery is business as usual for the Host. The Court suspects at least one of the PCs is amicable to betraying his companions, but even if they all resist, they know that by visiting the party members in private, they encourage discord amongst the party's ranks and thereby advance the ultimate agenda of Chaos.

Each PC is visited privately by a member of the Court before they are summoned to audience. Sleeping PCs are visited in a dream, while wakeful PCs have a moment of apparent hallucination during which they see one of the Host appear to them. These hallucinatory visits occur simultaneously and are near instantaneous in duration, regardless of how long each meeting takes in "real time." With all the PCs distracted at the same time, the characters won't notice one another in a strange state as they occur. The players, on the other hand, are all too aware that something is happening and, in the wake of their own visits by the Host, are likely to suspect what happened to the others. Given the offers they each experienced, a certain measure of paranoia will be present amongst the players from now until the adventure concludes. This is intended.

To play out this event, take each player in turn out of the room to where the other players cannot overhear their private visitation. Inform the player that their character suddenly finds themselves back in the Court, alone except for the presence of whichever entity (one of the Host or the Ambassador of the Balance) chose to negotiate with them. The entity strikes them an offer: Upon returning to the Court with the Yokeless Egg, the PC must deliver it to them directly. Under no circumstances should they allow it to fall into the possession of another member of the Court. If they do this, the PC will receive an additional reward for their service. Suggested rewards offered by each Host are

provided in their descriptions and on the player handouts. These rewards may seem overpowered, but it is unlikely that more than one (if any) PC will profit from obtaining them by the adventure's conclusion.

The court member assures them that, with the Egg in their possession, they can protect the PC from retribution at the hands of the rest of the Court. If the PC agrees, the court member assures they've made the proper choice. A PC that refuses the offer is reminded that Chaos has a long memory and particularly enjoys sowing catastrophe in the path of those who rebuff them. If the PC still refuses, he is abruptly dismissed and the visit ends.

The success of this event lies in the hands of the judge. His goal is not necessarily to get the party working at cross-purposes, but to cultivate feelings of paranoia in the players. Hopefully, by the time this encounter ends, none of the PCs will know for certain if they can trust one another throughout the rest of the adventure.

In order to ensure a proper sense of paranoia, the judge may wish to use two techniques during the visitations. First, choose one player, presumably one who is already mistrusted by the party or one who has expressed no strong feelings either way about serving the Court. Take the player out of the room as indicated, but instead of role-playing a visit with one of the Court, discuss something unconnected to the session underway. This can be anything from a character-related question ("What do you think about [another character's name]?") to a topic that has nothing to do with the game at all ("You want to come by next Sunday and watch the game?"). Whatever you ask them, keep them away from the table for several minutes before returning to the game. This tactic will not only have the player wondering what all the subterfuge is about—especially since you're taking each player aside—but also makes him suspect in the eyes of the rest of the group. No matter how well he argues that he's made no side deals—likely convincingly because it's true—the other players can't know for certain.

The second tactic is to have a Court member tell a character that one or more of his fellows have pledged themselves to another one of the Host. This doesn't have to be true, but the player has no way of knowing that. Obviously, this technique won't work on the first PC taken aside, but once two or three have been spoken to privately, it works like a

charm. The Court member suggests that if the PC wants to ensure his own survival, he best come to his own agreement with his visitor. The Court member can protect the PC from the violence that is likely to ensue once the treachery is revealed. Again, whether the player agrees to serve the Court member or not, this technique sows distrust amongst the players and heightens paranoia in the group. The player might suspect the entity was lying, but won't know for certain until the adventure concludes.

After all the PCs have enjoyed a visit and awoken, they receive one more visit. Shortly before their summoning by the Court, the burning portal opens. A bedraggled and abused servant enters to remove the remains of their meal and provide bowls and ewers of water for their ablutions. This is Lexaliah, the secret servant of Law. She performs her tasks, all the while glancing at the PCs as if taking a measure of them. Ultimately, she approaches one of the PCs who has expressed the most opposition to accepting the Court's demands. If all the PCs are opposed and have rebuffed the offers of the Host, she speaks to them openly. Otherwise, she attempts to make her plea to one privately, using whatever guile necessary to get him alone in his bedchambers.

Lexaliah whispers to the PC(s) of her true purpose at the Court and beseeches them to accept the Host's command to retrieve the Egg. Once they acquire it and return to the Court, they must deliver it to her and not the Host. If the party does so, not only will they thwart Chaos' plans, but she will break her cover and extract the PCs from the Court of Chaos, returning them to their proper plane of existence.

Lexaliah explains that, due to the countermeasures in place

by the Court, she cannot warn the Scions of Law about the impending theft. She admits, however, that even if she could, she believes that many of the Scions have grown complacent in their watch over Chaos. Law's great strides in the multiverse over the eons make them prone to forgetting that the past can return to haunt them. Even she was unaware of the existence of the Egg until its location was discovered by the Host. If the PCs breach the Cataphract, it will stir the Scions to step up their watch against Chaos and rededicate themselves to protecting certain powerful objects under their control. So long as Law doesn't lose the Egg for good, she sees the PCs' intended theft as serving Law in the long run. Lexaliah assures the party that the Scions will be honor-bound to repay the PCs for their service, even when done in such a roundabout fashion. She cannot offer any details about what they will encounter inside the Cataphract, but states that they will likely face trials whose success depends on their understanding and adherence to the tenets of Law. If they keep lawful virtues in mind, they should be able to recover the Yokeless Egg.

Having made her offer, Lexaliah finishes her chores and departs through the portal. The party has a few moments to reflect on this new twist before the Tatterdemalion arrives to conduct them to audience.

It is likely that the PCs may perceive Lexaliah's revelations as another scheme by the Court, which is understandable given the climate of paranoia they're under. The judge should not attempt to sway them in any direction, leaving them free to decide their ultimate course of action—as a group or separately.

EVENT 3: DEPARTURE



Moments after the PCs either come to a decision or decide to shelve the debate for later, the burning door reappears with the Tatterdemalion. He informs the party the Host demands their presence immediately and that he hopes they've come to an accord about the task set before them. Ushering them through the flaming oval, the party is once again before the Court.

The Host wastes no time demanding an answer. If the PCs refuse the Court, they are presented a single chance to reconsider before the Host fulfills their promise of casting the uncooperative party into the bloody waves with a wave of their hand. The PCs perish.

Hopefully, the PCs agree to the Host's demands, much to the delight of the Court. The Court calls for their servants—misshapen things mostly, but Lexaliah is amongst the throng—who arrive bearing weapons of ebony hue, one for each party member of the type they most often wield. The Host explains that these are chaos weapons, capable of slaying any guardian the party encounters on the Plane

of Law. Mortal-forged weapons will be of little use. These weapons only function on the other planes, and dissipate into black smoke if brought back to the material plane. Reiterating the party's goal a final time, the Host explains that they will find a single flower awaiting them at the point of their arrival. This tiny fragment of Chaos will return the party back to the Court when plucked. Return with the Yokeless Egg and they will be rewarded as promised.

If during the final audience with the Court, the PCs mention they've been approached secretly by one or more of the Host, perhaps hoping to foster trouble amongst their employers to some end, their revelation is strongly dismissed by the Hosts. Although they expect (and are guilty of) such behavior, they don't intend to let the party know that...just yet, anyway.

Now properly equipped and instructed, the Host bids them good fortune, reminds them that the cost of failing the Court is high, and, with a handclap that sounds like a thunderbolt, the party is transported to the Plane of Law.



THE PLANE OF LAW



Read the following upon the party's arrival on the Plane of Law:

The maddening vista of the Court of Chaos vanishes in a cloud of ebon smoke reeking of the pungent odor of decay. The vapor clears just as abruptly, leaving you standing on a hill of emerald grass beneath a shining sun. Each blade of green is exquisitely manicured, more fitting for a lord's garden than a wild meadow. Around you, the grass stretches as far as the horizon, which bisects the earth and sky with razor-straight precision. Only a few distant copses of idyllic trees growing in perfect harmony with the landscape break the carpet of pristine green. A pure golden sun rides high in a perfect azure sky, untouched by clouds.

With your unobstructed view of the land around you, you swiftly notice the perfection of nearly everything your eyes light upon. Each tree grows straight and tall, its branches and leaves all paragons of order and correctness. No blade of grass bears the slightest tint of yellow; no small stone is jagged and chipped. A single blemish is present in the flawlessness around you: At your feet grows a solitary rose, its eight crooked petals discolored by rot; its vibrant red faded to a smoky pink. A squirming worm gnaws at the heart of the rose's blossom. This can only be the flower that will ensure your return to the Court of Chaos.

Below your hilltop vista, high above a perfectly circular bowl surrounded by faultless knolls, is the tremendous form of a gleaming, flawless diamond. The mountainous lozenge hangs in the air like a raindrop halted in mid-fall, the bottommost tip suspended a short distance above the immaculate grass. This can only be the Cataphract you seek. The large recumbent form of some great beast rests directly beneath it.

The diamond is the Cataphract and lies a quarter-mile away from the party. It measures 500' feet in height and nearly 300' wide at its midsection. The bottom tip of the diamond-shaped vault hangs 100' above the ground. Strangely, despite the sun and lack of clouds, the Cataphract casts no shadow to break up the idyllic landscape. It's as if the sunlight passes cleanly through it.

The creature beneath the Cataphract is a large ox, its head resting on the grass. Easily the size of three mundane bovines, the great ox's horns curve in gracefully, perfect semi-circles 10' in height. It takes no notice of the party until they close within 100', at which time it slowly rises to its feet, as if with great effort, and addresses the adventurers (see below).

TAURZIEL THE LAWFUL OX

Taurziel is one of the Elder oxen, created by the gods long ago as the templates from which all earthly oxen are patterned. Eons ago, Taurziel erred in a manner that incurred the ire of the gods of Law (even he can no longer remember what his trespass was), and was tasked to guard the entrance to the Cataphract until he was dismissed from his charge. To both bind him to his duty and to ensure that he could be dismissed when the time was right by lesser

functionaries if necessary, the Scions inscribed runes that both bind and free the Elder ox on the back of his great horns, places that make it impossible for Taurziel to see and thereby free himself.

Taurziel is very, very old and very, very, very tired. He wishes nothing more than to be discharged from his duty, absolved from his sin, and allowed to go on to whatever awaits him next. Despite his wishes, he must continue to guard the entrance to the Cataphract to the best of his ability by the runes placed upon him. He hopes the adventurers are agents of the Scions come to free him, but is prepared to fight them should they try to enter the Cataphract.

As the PCs approach, Taurziel stands, revealing his full size: 10' tall at the shoulder and 30' long. His eyes are cloudy with age and his pelt is mangy and dull. Taurziel addresses the party in a low, exhausted voice:

"Seldom do I see wayfarers abroad in this place. Have you come, my lords, bearing the words of my masters, or is it the Cataphract and that which lies within that brings you to my watch-place? Be warned, that if your hearts harbor malice and larcenous deeds are your aims, you'll find me unshirking in my duty to oppose you. Speak, my lords, and may your words be favorable to my ears."

The PCs may attack Taurziel outright or attempt to deceive the beast into believing they are rightful agents of the Scions. Although hopeful he is about to be relieved of his duty, the ox is nevertheless wary of liars and unless the party comes up with a convincing story, it is unlikely they'll deceive Taurziel for long. This delay might be enough time, however, to notice and decipher the runes upon his horns, granting them a means to bypass the guardian.

If the party doesn't immediately attack Taurziel, anyone paying attention to the ox can make a DC 10 Intelligence check to notice the runes inscribed on the back of his horns. The runes are written in Lawful, understandable to anyone fluent in that language, who casts *comprehend languages* successfully, or who succeeds on a DC 15 Read languages skill check. The runes read:

Taurziel, first-born of Oxen, guardian of the Cataphract by the writ of Law. Oath-bound, charged not to tarry nor depart, until the final concordance or granted manumission. Orothbarn, thrice-spoken.

No matter how clever the party's efforts to deceive Taurziel are, he eventually smells the stink of their Chaos weapons that identifies them as agents of the Court. He detects the weapons 1d3 rounds after meeting the party if their lies are poor or 1d5+1 rounds if they are plausible enough to distract him. Upon detection, he cries out, *"Deceivers! Stinkers of Chaos! Oh, my heart is torn by lies and false hopes! Now, you pay the price for dashing my dreams!"* and attacks.

Taurziel the Lawful Ox: Init +2; Atk gore +4 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical or non-chaotic weapons; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +4; AL L.

The party can attempt to dismiss Taurziel either during battle or beforehand by speaking the word “Orothbarn” three times. Doing so allows the speaker to make a DC 12 spell check to dispel Taurziel’s bondage and free him from his task. Clerics, wizards, and elves make their spell checks normally; other classes roll 1d10 as per the rules on p. 106 of the DCC RPG rulebook. Spellburning is not allowed, but the spending of Luck modifies the die roll as normal. Lawful PCs gain a +2 bonus to their spell check, while Chaotic characters suffer a -2 penalty. Neutral PCs make no adjustment.

A successful spell check stops Taurziel’s attacks immediately (if combat is underway). Beams of golden sun descend to surround the great ox and a look of peace appears on his weary face. He speaks to the party, thanking them for ending his charge. Although they might be servants of Chaos, he says, they’ve done him a great service this day. He hopes they reconsider their task as there are mightier guardians than he awaiting them. Taurziel disappears, drifting away in the sunbeams like motes of dust.

Freeing Taurziel, although kinder than slaying him, has repercussions later on. The Scions may have forgotten the Cataphract and the Egg, but severing the bond that tied the ox to his duty creates vibrations felt by the forces of Law. The Scions are now aware something is amiss and dispatch prism sentinels to investigate. The PCs encounter these investigators when they leave the Cataphract (see below). Killing Taurziel goes unremarked by the forces of Law for reasons even sages can’t explain.

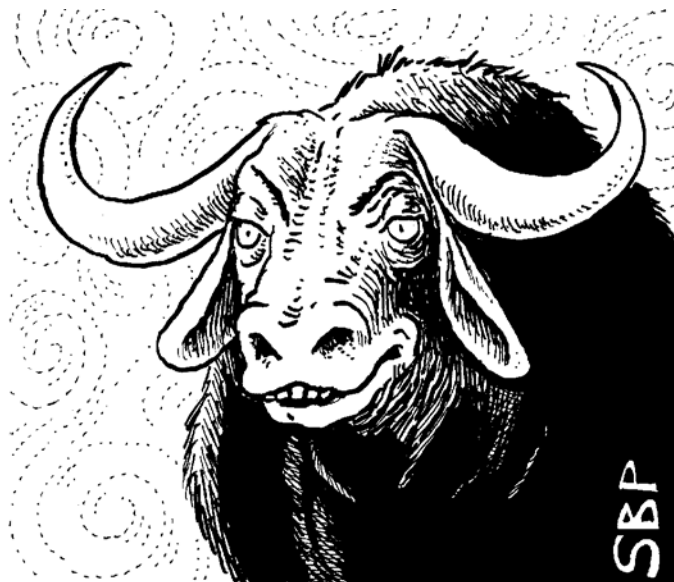
When Taurziel is overcome, a stairway of shining silver light appears, flowing down from the bottom tip of the Cataphract to the ground below. Ascending these stairs brings the party into area 1-1 of the Cataphract.

THE CATAPHRACT

Area 1-1—The Trial Doors: *The shimmering stairs rise up to end in a pentagonal chamber. Soft, silvery light from an unseen source bathes the room in artificial moonlight. The room is fashioned from pink marble veined with white striations that glitter in the mystical glow. Above you, the chamber soars, terminating in a sea of celestial light 100’ overhead. Each wall of the room holds a single door wrought from gleaming gold, their faces inscribed with elegant runes.*

Each of the five doors leads to a trial that must be overcome to reach the chamber holding the Yolkless Egg. After each is successfully completed, the shimmering staircase extends an additional 20’ from the floor, allowing the PCs to climb higher and ultimately reach the chamber’s roof. Upon completing the fifth trial, the last section of the stairs manifests, and a sixth golden door appears at the top of the staircase. This portal leads to area 2-1 and requires the key from area 1-6 to open.

The five doors at ground level are each 8’ wide by 12’ tall. Each bears a single word upon its face, written in the Lawful tongue. Anyone fluent in that language, or successfully using a *comprehend languages* spell, or making a DC 12 Read



Language check, deciphers the words to read:

- “Creation” (door to 1-2)
- “Construction” (door to 1-3)
- “Enlightenment” (door to 1-4)
- “Sacrifice” (door to 1-5)
- “Judgment” (door to 1-6)

Each door opens easily and automatically transports every living creature in area 1-1 to the trial beyond it, regardless of their position in this room. Only one door may be opened at a time; attempts to open multiple doors simultaneously fail. The doors leading to the trials shut behind the party once the trial begins and remain sealed until the test is complete. Only successfully passing the test can return the PCs back to this central area. Passing a trial “deactivates” the door and it no longer opens. The trials may be undertaken in any order the party chooses, and the PCs may rest in this area in between tests without danger unless the judge wishes to introduce additional threats and/or time limits to further challenge the party.

Area 1-2—Creation: *In an eye-blink, you find yourselves in a room of darkness. A column of light illuminates a single object within: a chest-sized, cradle-shaped container of glass. In the bed of the “cradle” is a small portion of lumpy material. This substance is gray and lifeless, but tiny motes of light sparkle within it.*

A voice speaks in the darkness, old and severe. It speaks directly to each of you, speaking in the tongue of your birth, “At the beginning of Time, the gods brought life to the world. Behold the last piece of divine matter from which the Eternals wrought their creation. Embrace your inner divine spark and walk in the footsteps of the gods, or await the end of their creation within these walls.”

This trial challenges the PCs’ understanding of the importance of creation as one of the central tenets of Law. The test requires them to craft a symbol of life from the primordial clay within the cradle. This is easier than it sounds, and failure has potentially lethal consequences.



The divine clay is warm and feels potent, even wholesome to the touch. There is enough matter to make three attempts at fashioning an emblem of life.

There are two ways to resolve this trial. The first is purely mechanical. Once the PCs suggest molding the clay into a form, ask what they intend to mold. If the shape is indicative of life or creation (a planet, a baby, an egg, the double helix of DNA, etc.), the PC shaping the clay makes a DC 10 check using Agility or Intelligence, whichever is higher. Characters with the occupations of dwarven stonemason, elven artisan, or similar background gain a +2 bonus to their roll. A successful check indicates the clay takes the desired shape and assumes true life. The PC has achieved an act once known only to the gods. The party enjoys a momentary glimpse of their creation ascending into the column of light before they are whisked back to area 1-1. They have passed this trial.

The second method to run this encounter gets the players' hands dirty—literally. When the PCs undergo this trial, present them with a lump of modeling clay and ask them to mold it into whatever shape their characters intend to form. Give them a few moments to deliberate who will do the molding and what they wish to fashion, then let them do so. To speed play and to keep the rest of the players from sitting idly by while one of them works, impart a strict time limit on their molding (anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes is fair). At the end of this period, stop them and evaluate the finished product. If they've successfully created an object that fairly represents an emblem of life, the trial is passed and they are returned to area 1-1 as above.

Judges can combine both methods to resolve this trial. Give the players the clay and allow them to mold it. Once finished, have the character (not the player) who molded the clay make the DC 10 check, granting bonuses based on their aesthetic success of the modeling clay form (anywhere from +0 to +5). Be fair when awarding the bonus; this is a role-playing game, not an art contest, and the players should be rewarded for their enthusiasm more than actual artistic talent.

Failing the check or crafting something inappropriate causes the clay to melt in their hands, falling to the floor. A moment later, a spark of life ripples through the improperly fashioned primordial clay, spawning a primeval slime that attacks its maker.

Primeval Clay-born Slime: Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 5', climb 5'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons; sticky (PCs touching the slime must make a DC 15 Str check to pull away; stuck characters suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls and dragged along by the slime); immune to non-magical or non-chaotic weapons; SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6; AL L.

After defeating the slime, the PCs observe another portion of clay appear in the cradle. The amount is slightly less than previously present, hinting they have a limited number of attempts remaining to pass this trial. If they fail again and defeat the resulting primeval slime, only a small portion of primordial clay appears, just enough for one last attempt. Should they fail yet again, the PCs remain imprisoned in this chamber until the end of time (or, at the judge's choos-



ing, until agents of the Scions of Law come to collect them. Use the results of losing the battle in area 2-1 as a possible consequence of being captured by the Scions).

Area 1-3—Construction: *A moment of disorientation afflicts you and then you find yourself in a massive space defined by walls of solid iron and burnished rivets. The iron floor beneath you bears no rust or wear. The chamber, lit by a glow from sources unseen, measures nearly 300' long and 150' wide. Midway across the room, a 100' long gap bisects the chamber. Wisps of clouds rise from the hole in the floor. On the far side of the chamber is another doorway, identical to the one that brought you here. Standing between you and the break in the floor are six delicate stands fashioned from crystal. Atop each is a fluted glass of liquid.*

This test requires the party to bring many diverse parts together to form a stronger whole. Each of the glasses contains a potent juice pressed from divine fruit. The judge should describe each liquid's color using the terms below. Stating the liquid is "red," "orange," "green," or "violet" is likely to tip the players off to the solution to this test. The liquids are, in order from left to right, tangerine, azure, gold, plum, crimson, and emerald. The liquids only exit the glasses if physically drunk; attempts to pour out the juice or transfer it to other vessels cause the liquid to remain within the glasses, even defying gravity to do so.

Passing this trial requires one or more PCs to consume the liquids in order. Once done, their eyes weep rainbow tears, which swiftly grow in size and coagulate to create a rainbow bridge across the gap in the floor. The rainbow bridge is solid and the PCs can cross to the door beyond. Opening

that door transports the PCs back to area 1-1. They have passed the trial.

The correct order in which to drink the liquids is crimson, tangerine, gold, emerald, azure, and plum, corresponding to the hues of the rainbow. Note that there is no indigo-colored liquid here and this is no oversight. The gods of Law simply don't adhere to the mortal distinction between indigo and violet in rainbows and this absence also further obfuscates the correct solution to the trial.

If the PCs begin sampling liquids out of order, strange results may occur. Each time a liquid is consumed out of sequence, the drinker must make a DC 8 Fort save or suffer the effects detailed below for that colored elixir.

The liquids and their properties if consumed out of order are:

- **Tangerine:** The drinker becomes pregnant, regardless of gender. The supercharged pregnancy comes to term in 3d12 hours, resulting in a healthy baby of the same race and sex as its "mother." The details of delivery in the case of a pregnant male are left to judge to decide. The author only suggests it be a memorable occasion.
- **Crimson:** The drinker's blood is fortified—dangerously so. The drinker's veins expand, his flesh swells, and bloodstained tears seep from his eyes. Unless bloodletting occurs within four rounds, the drinker's veins rupture and his skin cracks, bathing their body in blood. The PC suffers 1d6 points of damage from the event.
- **Azure:** The drinker's eyes turn an unearthly blue and glow softly. His eyesight becomes extremely sensitive

AREA 1-5 SACRIFICE VALUE TABLE

Health	+1 per hit point
Physical/Mental Ability	+2 per point
Minor Class Ability (Infravision, Stealth, sword & board, Thief skill, etc.)	+1 per ability
Spell/Major Class Ability (Mighty Deed of Arms, Good Luck Charm, Spellburn, etc.)	+5 per ability/spell
Life (allowing one's self to be devoured by the beast)	+20

to bright lights and captivating beauty. The PC gains the ability to see in dim light as if daylight, but suffers a -1 penalty to attacks, saves, and checks in bright light. The PC must also make a DC 5 Will save anytime he observes a sight of pure, unblemished wonder or be transfixed for 1d5 minutes or until his revelry is interrupted. This transformation is permanent barring restorative magics or miracles.

- **Gold:** The drinker "sweats" sunlight from their skin whenever engaged in moderate or severe exertion (fighting, running, physical labor, etc.). The light is bright enough to illuminate a 10' diameter around the character, but attacks directed at the PC gain a +2 bonus to hit and all stealth attempts suffer a 1 die penalty.
- **Emerald:** The drinker grows in size, sprouting like a weed to stand 12' tall. Unfortunately, his bones and muscles experience no greater density to support the new size. The drinker loses 1 point of both Strength and Agility permanently. His body is wracked with aches and pains constantly, and accouterments such as clothes and armor must be specifically tailored for him.
- **Plum:** The drinker is afflicted with severe melancholy and self-doubt. He suffers a -2 penalty on all rolls until he regains his self-confidence. Self-confidence is restored by achieving a critical success on any attack, saving throw, spell check, ability check, or skill check.

The gap in the floor is an endless chasm clouded in white mists. Anything falling into the gap falls between the planes and is lost forever.

Area 1-4—Enlightenment: *You stand upon the highly-polished marble floor of a grand hall. Ten glittering stone pillars support a vaulted ceiling adorned with painted images of pastoral life. The hall is lit brightly by flambeaux affixed to the pillars and bearing ivory tapers. The strains of music drift through the air, hauntingly beautiful in the unoccupied chamber. Interwoven between the notes, you detect a strong feminine voice speaking in your native tongue. "There is an absence in this oasis of perfection," the voice says. "If thou art a true champion of Law, take steps – however dire – to address this absence. Through its presence you shall pass your trial."*

This trial tests the PCs' ability to recognize the presence of disorder and their willingness to correct that state—even if doing so results in less pleasant conditions. The secret to passing this trial is noticing that, despite the bright flames

of the candelabras, nothing in the hall casts a shadow. To pass this test, all the candles in the room must be extinguished and either relit by the PCs or the party must provide light sources of their own.

Moments after the voice speaks, translucent dancers of great beauty appear in the hall, engaging in complex courtly rounds. They ignore the PCs entirely, but their dance brings them closer and closer to the adventurers until two rounds after their appearance, the dancers begin colliding with the party members, buffeting them with all-too-solid blows and collisions. Starting on the third round after the dancers appear, the PC with the lowest Luck is "attacked" by the dancers (slam +2 melee; 1d3). Each subsequent round, an additional PC is endangered by the dancers (thus two PCs "attacked" on round four; three on round five, etc.) until all the party is threatened. The party cannot harm the dancers in any way; attacks both magical and mundane pass without effect through their transparent bodies. Only extinguishing the flambeaux reduces the number of dancers. For each candelabra snuffed out, one less PC is struck each round until all are out of danger.

The candles can be extinguished by any normal means (water, smothering, high winds, etc.). The PCs can attempt more unorthodox methods of snuffing the candles such as shooting the wicks off distant candles with an arrow (requiring a Mighty Deed of Arms against an AC 15, for example) at the judge's discretion. There are a total of 10 flambeaux and a PC can extinguish one he is adjacent to in a single round. Once all the flambeaux are doused, the dancers vanish and the room is plunged into darkness.

When relit with flint & steel, a *cantrip* or *flaming hands* spell, or by another means, the candelabras throw normal light, and shadows are now present. These shadows slowly crawl across the floor to form a pool of blackness that resembles a doorway. Stepping into that pool completes the trial and returns the party to area 1-1.

Area 1-5—Sacrifice: *The door opens not unto a chamber, but a scene of carnage, one you're immediately dropped into the midst of. You stand in the center of a small village under an overcast sky. Panicked citizens flee in terror and screams of pain fill the air. Before you is a churning horror, a formless monstrosity the size of a cathedral! This demonic thing lashes out with dripping tendrils, shoveling a screaming villager into one of its hundred mouths. Buildings collapse as the beast roils over them, heading in your direction.*

A voice, quiet and childlike, speaks softly, yet is somehow heard amidst the violence. "From mighty hero to simple goodwife, those who walk the path of righteousness must give of themselves at times for another's salvation, paying that price with body, talent, art, and sometimes, even one's life."

This trial is about self-sacrifice and the party must willingly surrender aspects of themselves to pass. The monstrosity before them cannot be injured by any means, magical or mundane, and will continue to devour villagers and bear down on the party until destroyed. It arrives at the PCs' location in four rounds, even if they attempt to flee.

Injuring the monster is accomplished by voluntarily surrendering part of oneself, be it physical or mental attributes, health, class abilities, magic, or one's life. This is a metaphysical sacrifice; the PC need only reach deep into himself and choose what to surrender. Sacrifices have variable worth depending on their severity, and the party must sacrifice a total of 25 points to slay the beast and pass this trial. (See sidebar.)

The concept of sacrificing their health, abilities, racial abilities, or class abilities is not likely to be obvious at first, and the judge should observe the party carefully as they consider their options. If any character gets close to the idea and suggests the party has to give up something to defeat the Beast, inform the player he or she feels a tingle as if their very soul was suddenly enervated and awaiting action. A character openly pondering giving up part of himself hears the same quiet, childlike voice whisper "Would you do so of your own free will?" If the PC agrees, the voice directly asks what the character is willing to part with, steering the character towards what he might surrender, but not the effectiveness of the potential sacrifice or sacrificial total required to defeat the Beast.

The PCs can surrender one aspect of themselves each round and all sacrifice values are cumulative. The beast can be destroyed either by each of the party giving up a little, or a single PC sacrificing a lot. Any sacrifice made by a PC is lost until they exit the Plane of Law, after which it returns instantly. The sole exception is if a PC gives up his life willingly. The beast devours him and the judge should collect the sacrificing player's character sheet as though the PC was slain. Don't tell the party, but the PC will be discovered asleep in area 1-1 after this trial is passed. Be sure to award the player an extra experience point for his action.

Each time a PC sacrifices a portion of themselves, wounds appear on the Beast and it roars in pain. The manifesting wounds are proportionate to the sacrifice's value given above. A small sacrifice results in minor wounds, while more substantial surrendering inflicts grievous damage to the Beast's body.

The Beast has these stats for combat purposes: Init +0, AC 20, Atk tendril +3 melee (1d6 dmg); Act 1d20; SP cannot be injured by weapons or magic. Once a total of 25 sacrifice points are accrued, it collapses into a steaming pile of goo, taking the village with it, and the PCs find themselves back in 1-1, the trial completed.

Area 1-6—Judgment: *Before you stands a balance scale of immense construction. Its central pillar, its beam, and the chains leading to its two pans are translucent, formed from glowing golden light. Only its two weighing pans appear of solid construction, fashioned from burnished gold and lying flat upon the floor. The great scales soar five times the height of a man, nearly brushing the ceiling of this room. Thirty-five feet above the rightmost weighing pan is an azure key, the size of a wand. Between you and the scales is a quartet of silver-furred lions with golden manes. They growl softly but threateningly at your arrival.*

This trial measures the PCs' hearts as well as their true alignments. Gaining the key and overcoming the guardians in this room passes the trial.

The scale measures 60' in length and stands 30' tall. The scale's weighing pans are 10' in diameter. No masses (the weights used to counterbalance an object being weighted) are present. The scale, imbued with the power of Law, accurately measures the truth of any statement made by a creature standing on its pans. PCs who've led good, law-abiding lives will be able to raise the weighing pans enough to reach the key. But first, they must get past the law lions.

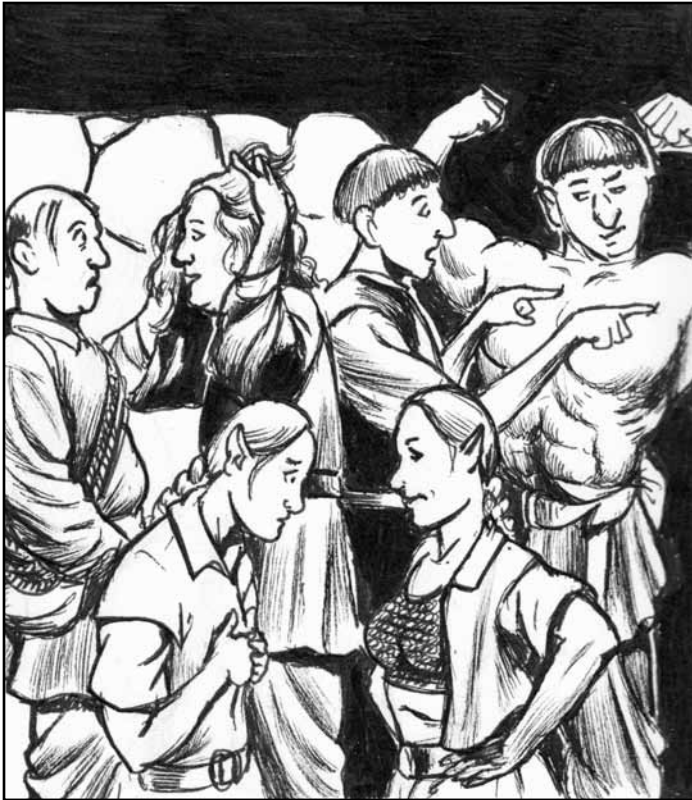
The four law lions sniff the air upon the PCs' arrival, determining their alignments with celestial senses. They ignore lawful PCs initially, are 50% likely to either ignore or attack each neutral PC present, and automatically attack chaotic ones. If the law lions ignore the entire party, they can approach the scales without incident. Otherwise they must fight the guardians.

Law Lions (4): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 10, 9, 8, 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP paralyzing roar (affects 1 target, DC 8 Fort save or immobilized for 1d4 rounds); immune to non-magical or non-chaotic weapons; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; AL L.

Law lions are 8' long felines with silver fur and great golden manes. They fiercely oppose Chaos, mistrust Neutrality, and serve the forces of Law dutifully. Law lions never harm lawful creatures unless attacked first, even then resorting to their roar attack to incapacitate them rather than kill. They battle all other creatures with sharp fangs.

Any PC standing on one of the weighing pans hears a noble-sounding male voice speak in their heads: *"Only he who hath led a goodly and lawful life shall ascend in the end. If thou wishes to rise above all others, speak truthfully of your deeds in life. Recount your virtuous acts and be judged. You have 30 heartbeats to prove your merit."*

The PC has 30 seconds to declare as many good or lawful deeds they've performed in life. Each truthful statement raises both pans 5'. Any false, evil, or unlawful deed spoken during the 30 seconds has no effect on the pans. A total of six or more true acts recounted by the PC lifts the pans 30', leaving the rightmost one 5' beneath the key (which opens the door leading to area 2-1), allowing them to retrieve it. The pans remain in position for one minute (six rounds) before sinking back to the floor, possibly allowing another attempt to raise them by a different character. When running



marble flecked with spotless white. A wide walkway circles the perimeter of this 90' wide room. Directly before you is a bridge extending from the encircling causeway to a triangular platform hanging unsupported above a gulf of sultry, star-studded night. A number of figures stand atop the platform, surrounding a crystal plinth. Floating above the plinth is a large egg of cerulean blue.

The star-studded void below the walkway and triangular platform is a yawning chasm resembling the night sky. It falls into the gulfs between time and space; anything plummeting into it is lost.

The figures are perfect reflections, celestial guardians that replicate those they challenge. There are a number of perfect reflections present equal to the total number of PCs, and each one is an idealized duplicate of one of them. These duplicates are identical to the party with one major exception: they appear better than the character they mimic. The party's doubles look healthier, stronger, more attractive, and more confident than their twins. PCs suffering from corruption find none of their afflictions in their duplicates' forms. In effect, the perfect reflections are everything the PCs could have been, had fate been kinder to them.

The reflections challenge the PCs upon entrance, asking in pleasant, but wary tones their purpose here. Any demands for the Egg are met by asking the party to show their sigil of the Scions. Lacking these, they must depart. The reflections will not allow the PCs to approach the Egg under any circumstances and meet such attempts with force, fighting to the last to defend the Egg.

The judge must acquire copies of the PCs' character sheets to run this battle, preferably beforehand. Create each party member's reflection on a spare character sheet or index card making the following modifications:

- Reflections gain an additional +1 bonus to their AC and attack, damage, spell check, saving throws, and initiative rolls above and beyond the modifiers possessed by their PC counterparts (if a PC normally has a +1 to attack, his reflection has +2 to its rolls, for example).
- Reflections have greater hit points than their PC counterparts. Increase each reflections' hit point total by 1/2 its class's Hit Die. A wizard's reflection has two more hp than its counterpart, while a warrior's reflection gains six hp.
- Equipment, spells, armor, and weapons are identical to the PCs'.

Refer to these duplicate sheets when conducting combat.

This encounter may be a tough fight for the PCs, given the reflections' advantages. Tactical thinking, good rolls, and lucky breaks all will help the party defeat the reflections. Mighty Deeds of Arms (such as shoving a reflection off the platform and into the endless gulf below) and well-cast spells that immobilize the enemy can turn the tide of battle. The PCs have two things to their advantage, however. The reflections don't spend Luck or spellburn during the

this trial, the judge should have another player keep track of time so he can concentrate on the player being judged.

Players put on the spot may ad-lib deeds their character never performed in play, saying they saved a playmate from harm in youth, always honor their parents' birthdays, or other such statements. The judge is encouraged to treat these as true for this trial. Not only does it help promote a successful resolution to the test, but also develops the PC's history more. Wise judges will take note of these deeds and incorporate them into the campaign when possible, such as having the rescued playmate lend assistance to the PC in the future to repay the debt. Judges should award creativity, not punish the players for it.

Each PC can attempt to be judged only once. If they fail to ascend the 30' or more required to reach the key, they can attempt to leap the remaining distance with a Strength check. The DC for this check is 5 for every 5' in height the PC must jump to reach the key. Only physical contact can move the key; lassoing it with a rope and similar methods fail to dislodge it. A PC could climb a rope suspended by the key to grab it, but touching it frees it, dropping them to the floor below. Once the key is in a PC's possession, the trial is competed and the party returns to area 1-1.

Area 2-1—The Chamber of the Egg: The PCs must complete all five trials and acquire the key in 1-6 to reach the final room. Once done, a door appears at the top of the staircase. This door is opened with the azure key. Beyond it is the following:

The celestial door swings open to the music of the spheres, dulcet tones of unearthly instruments announcing your entrance. The chamber before you is a massive dome fashioned from bright blue

fight. They already have an edge on the party and doing so makes this tough fight even tougher. Secondly, all damage inflicted by the reflections is illusionary, although wounds feel very real to the injured party. A PC "slain" by his injuries is knocked unconscious and awakens after the battle if the PCs are triumphant.

The judge has two options for conducting the battle. He can either play it out as normal with him controlling the reflections or, more interestingly, assign each of the players one of the reflections and allow the players to run the battle themselves. With paranoia running rife and possibly one or more PCs intent on betraying the others, this method should result in a memorable battle. Each player decides both the actions of his own character and that of the reflection assigned to him. If this method is chosen, don't allow the players to run their own PC's reflection. Instead provide them with that of another player's character. Inform the players they must run the reflections to the best of their ability and with the intent to defeat the party, but explain that spending Luck and spellburning is not allowed. If at any time the judge feels the players are taking it easy on one another, he can take the offending player's reflection back under his control and run it

for the duration of the combat.

If the party loses the battle (i.e. they are all "slain"), they awaken imprisoned by the Scions of Law where they will be questioned about their assault on the Cataphract. By explaining the circumstances leading to their intended theft, the party can win a reprieve from their captors, but this pardon doesn't come freely. The Scions have their own tasks that need attending and the party would make for good agents in the battle between Law and Chaos. The judge should create a new adventure the PCs must accomplish in order to win their freedom.

Once the reflections are defeated, they shatter like mirrors and vanish, leaving the PCs to claim the Yokeless Egg. The Egg is twice the size of an ostrich's egg, bright blue in color, and feels both hot and cold when touched. Anyone putting their ear to it hears an erratic mixture of buzzing, murmuring, and screaming. It is indestructible while on the Plane of Law, and attempts to crack or smash it fail. Depending on any private dealings the PCs might have made, contesting for possession of the Egg may be fierce amongst the party and the levels of paranoia grow higher. Allow these to play out as they will.

EVENT 4: RETURN TO THE COURT OF CHAOS



If the PCs killed Taurziel, returning to their arrival point and plucking the rose is, in theory, easily accomplished. However, it's possible that one or more of the PCs decide to betray their fellows before returning to the Court. They might attempt to gain possession of the Egg and return to the rose ahead of the group, stranding them on the Plane of Law. Allow this gambit to play out, adjudicating the PCs' actions as normal and resolving any combats, chases, etc. that result.

If the party dismissed Taurziel, a final threat stands between them and the rose. As they depart the Cataphract, they see three crystalline shapes streaking out of the clear sky like quartz comets. These objects are headed directly towards the party. They are prism sentinels.

Prism Sentinels (3): Init -1; Atk slam +2 melee (1d6+1); AC 14; HD 2d10; hp 12, 11, 5; MV 20' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP take half damage from ray attacks, bludgeoning weapons inflict x2 damage; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; AL L.

Prism sentinels are 8' tall crystalline humanoids comprised of multifaceted clear quartz. Though slow on land, they fly swiftly to pursue those trying to escape them. Prism sentinels attack with slamming blows. Ray attacks refract within their bodies, reducing damage, but they are very susceptible to blunt attacks.

The prism sentinels attempt to prevent the PCs from fleeing the Plane. Possessing animal intelligence, they can't be bargained with and ignore attempts to communicate with them. They pursue the party until either slain or the Egg is

abandoned. Should the party drop the Egg, they collect it and streak off back into the sky. The party will have some explaining to do to the Host.

Again, one or more party member might choose to use the confusion of the fight with the watchdogs to flee with the Egg. One prism sentinel pursues PC(s) running from the fight, as might their comrades, and the judge must resolve such escape attempts impartially.

Plucking the rose immediately returns the PC picking the flower and all other party members within 20' of him to the Court of Chaos. Those outside of this area are stranded on the Plane of Law, where they will eventually encounter divine agents sent by the Scions of Law. Stranded PCs are brought before the Scions for questioning and may be able to secure a pardon as detailed in area 2-1. Chances are they'll also be looking for payback from the one(s) who left them behind. The judge should concoct a new adventure that allows the PCs to both earn their freedom and seek revenge on their former comrade.

Upon picking the rose, read the following:

The pristine beauty of the Plane of Law vanishes in a cloud of rank, putrid pollen as you pluck the rose from the earth. Once again you feel a sense of vertigo as you plummet through the planes, landing hard on the obsidian floor of the Court of Chaos. The Host sits atop their thrones, looking down at you with ill-concealed avarice. One of their number laughs in anticipation. A query rings out like an explosion: "DO YOU HAVE IT?!"

The characters return to the Court to find all of the Host and the Chiaroscuro Envoy in attendance. Careful observation also reveals Lexaliah watching from the shadows cast by the broken stele. Every pair of eyes is riveted on the party and expectation hangs heavy in the air. What happens next depends on the party's actions. Several possible scenarios and their outcomes are provided below.

The party gives the Egg to the Court as a whole rather than an individual member—The Court congratulates the party on their success as a horrible minion of Chaos appears to claim the Egg, departing with the ovum to places unknown. The Court has gained a small advantage in the contest between Law and Chaos. As a reward for their success, the party receives the following:

1) Each PC can call upon the assistance of the Court in the future as if they had a *patron bond* spell cast upon them with a spell check result of 18-19 as per the spell description on p. 149 of the DCC RPG rulebook. Non-wizard spellcasters enjoy the benefits detailed in the "When Cast on Other" column; wizards and elves gain the benefits of the "When Cast on Self" column.

2) Chaotic PCs gain +2 Luck. At the judge's discretion, non-Chaotic PCs gain +1 Luck even though they acted against their alignments. This represents the Host of Chaos stepping in to provide minor assistance at some point in the future when the PC requires it.

3) Each PC is granted a Chaos Stone. This stone resembles a badly flawed spinel of deep crimson, seemingly worth a mere 10 gp. The stone has a more potent value, however. Each chaos stone allows its owner to call upon Chaos to benefit him in a minor way. This manifests by allowing the PC to either re-roll a die for any purpose, taking the better result, or to increase a die about to be rolled by a single step on the dice chain. A chaos stone can be used three times, growing more flawed each time its power is invoked. It shatters after the third use.

After rewarding them, the Host kindly transports them back to the party's home plane, but not before hinting that the Court may have uses for them in the future...

One or more PCs attempts to give the Egg to the Court member they agreed to serve—Pandemonium erupts in the Court as each member of the Host acts to either prevent the PC from fulfilling his pact or claim the Egg for their own. The Court members who bargained with the PC(s) shout for their agents to bring the Egg to them while others of the Host summon up demons to stop them. Multiple chaos demons appear in the Court, fighting both among themselves as they contest for the masters and engaging the PC(s) attempting to deliver the Egg. The Court members do not intervene directly, allowing their agents to act on their behalf, but continue to curse, threaten, and encourage the participants as the melee rages. The PC(s) attempting to reach his master must fight or evade two chaos demons to reach his goal. The remaining party is also attacked by two demons. These demons attempt to delay or destroy the party and must be defeated before they are free to act to stop their traitorous friend.

Type I Chaos Demons (2 or more): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8); AC 13; HD 2d8+2; hp 11, 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits; half-damage from non-magical weapons and fire; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

The chaos demons have varying appearances based on their masters and the judge can use the following descriptions to bring the entropic fiends to life.

- Noohl's demonic agents are hulking brutes with armor plates cruelly piercing their flesh and held in place with gore-stained bandages. Their heads are a horrific amalgam of bloody wounds and horned helmets.
- Klarvgorok's servants are ogre-sized masses of eyes given humanoid shape. The eyes weep caustic tears that sizzle when they strike the floor beneath them.
- Dzzhali's demons resemble decaying, attractive human males dressed in soiled, torn wedding finery. Their eyes are solid white and their mouths hold a thicket of twisted fangs.
- Magog's agents are pitch black, rotted ribbons of funeral shrouds that flutter and scream as they swoop down on their enemies.
- Hekanhoda's servants resemble squat, horrifically ugly dwarves deformed with hunchbacks and club feet. They scramble about on oversized hands with too many digits and constantly jabber obscene nonsense.

If one of the PCs reaches his sworn master with the Egg, it'll be raised high and the melee ends. Chuckling with pleasure, that Host member vanishes from the Court, taking the Egg and the PC who provided it along with them. The PC is brought to the Host's private sanctum on the Plane of Chaos (a horrific place at best). There, the PC not only receives the rewards listed above, but any other payment negotiated during the private audience with his employer. The Court member transports the PC back to his home plane, again hinting that he/she/it may have use for them again in the future.

Back at the Court, the remaining Host regards their fellow Court member's coup with a mixture of aggravation and admiration. They appreciate a good betrayal, after all. The Host lightly chastises the remaining PCs for failing, and withholds their promised rewards for succeeding. Nevertheless, the Host promises to return the party to their home dimension. Before doing so, they inquire if the party is interested in receiving the Host's aid in tracking down the traitorous comrade to seek revenge. While the results of accepting this assistance and its ramifications on the course of the campaign are beyond the scope of this adventure, it's safe to surmise that things are about to get very interesting in the life of the betrayer.

The PCs give the Egg to the Chiaroscuro Envoy—The Host summons three chaos demons (see above) to prevent this and the party must fight their way past them to reach the Ambassador. Use the demon stats provided above. The Host cannot directly harm the Envoy as he is a guest, and

can only intervene to stop the party. If they reach the Ambassador, he claims the Egg for the Balance and takes the party under his protection, ending any combat. The Chiaroscuro Envoy informs the Court that the fate of the Egg will be debated amongst those entities that serve the Balance, and depending on their decision, it may be returned to the Scions of Law, gifted to the Court, or kept by the Balance. He departs the Court, taking the PCs with him and returning them to their home plane. For aiding Neutrality, the party finds themselves in the good graces of the Balance. Neutral PCs gain +2 Luck for their service. Non-neutral PCs gain +1 Luck even though they acted against their alignments. This represents the Balance stepping in to provide minor assistance at some point in the future when the PC requires it. No other reward is forthcoming, but the Egg has been taken out of the cosmic war for the time being and the universal status quo preserved. The Ambassador thanks the party for their service, leaving them to their own designs.

The PCs give the Egg to Lexaliah – The agent of Law steps from behind the throng, transforming into a glowing figure of light wearing a diadem of gleaming stones. The Court erupts in commotion as their enemy is revealed and chaos demons pop into existence, summoned by the Host. The Host themselves stand up, towering over the battlefield as they hurl infernal fire at Lexaliah, who conjures a divine shield to fend off these attacks. The PCs must fight their way past or avoid four chaos demons (use stats above) standing in their path to reach Lexaliah with the Egg.

Upon reaching Lexaliah, she claims the Egg and transports herself and the party back to their home plane as the last of the Host's fire rains down around them. Back in the material world, Lexaliah congratulates them for their actions, stating that their successful theft will undoubtedly stir the Scions from their complacency and rally them to maintain a more vigilant watch over the forces of Chaos. In return for their actions, the party finds themselves in the good graces of Law. Lawful PCs gain +2 Luck for their service. Non-Lawful PCs gain +1 Luck even though they acted against their alignments. This represents Lexaliah stepping in to provide minor assistance at some point in the future when the PC requires it. In addition, if they desire, Lexaliah will act as their patron, providing the benefits described under the rewards granted for giving the Egg to the Court.

The PCs deny all parties the Egg – Should the PCs decide to destroy the Egg, perhaps by smashing it on the floor of the Court (now surrounded by its natural element, the Yo-keless Egg will shatter, unlike on the Plane of Law where the power of that ethos kept it intact) or casting it into the storm-wracked sea surrounding it, the Egg fractures, unleashing the First Chaos within. The Host and Lexaliah scream in anger, deprived of their prize while the Ambassador looks on placidly. The First Chaos manifests as a cloud of roiling fire and smoke, and the Court shudders as if gripped by an earthquake. Several of the Host are thrown to their knees as their thrones topple and the faces in the sea pause their screaming to gape at the maelstrom.

The air around the Court tears like a rotted tapestry and the

PCs get a momentary vision of their home plane amongst the tatters. If they wish to escape the anger of the Court, they must dive through the hole between the planes to tumble back to their native dimension. As they fall through the hole, the last sounds they hear are the Host screaming they'll have the PCs' souls for this insult.

Destroying the Egg leaves the party unrewarded, except perhaps for knowing they've denied the potent artifact to all parties and the cosmos will continue along as it did before they were shanghaied into servitude. It will be some time before the Court deals with the First Chaos running amok on their plane, during which time the Scions of Law, alerted to the loss of the Egg, are shaken from their complacency and prepare to counteract whatever new schemes the Court will attempt once they contain and assimilate the primal Chaos.

If judge wishes to provide the party with some reward, grant each PC +2 Luck for their efforts. Someone is looking out for them, but the party can't be sure who or what that someone is. Determining the identity of this benefactor is an adventure unto itself. And don't forget that the Court of Chaos has vowed revenge as well. Life won't be dull for the PCs in the game sessions ahead...

Instructions for player handouts on following pages: Photocopy and score along dashed line. Fold over and tape. Judge should display the image of the NPC to players while referencing the role playing notes on reverse. See page 5 for more info.

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PLAYER HANDOUT:

NOOHL

Noohl bargains with warriors and dwarves, and possibly halflings and thug-gish thieves. Suggested rewards offered by Noohl are magical arms and armor such as the *Hellion's Mail* (demon-scale +3 half-plate that protects against fire), the *Sword of Chaos* (a +4 longsword that inflicts double damage against agents of Law), and the *Vortex Helm* (summons a tornado of razors against one's enemies; 4d6 damage to 30' diameter area; DC 15 Fort save for ½ damage). He also offers a rank in the Army of Chaos with 10 Type I demonic reavers to command, and the location of the *Mogrey Stone*, a dead potentate's diamond believed to be the largest ever found.



PLAYER HANDOUT:

KLARVGOROK

Bargains with thieves and clerics. Suggested rewards offered by Klarvgorok include the ability to peer into the abodes of the gods once per month, the *Codex of the Apostate* (scrolls containing 1d6 divine prayers of each spell level), the *Glass Eye of the Witch Queen* (grants the holder infravision, x-ray vision, and the ability to see magical auras and invisible creatures), and the *Astrolabe of Avarice* (infallibly guides the owner to a lost or undiscovered treasure hoard).



PLAYER HANDOUT:

DZZHALI

Bargains with women over men if possible, but also favors elves, halflings, and any PC who has suffered from ill-fated affairs of the heart. Suggested rewards include guaranteed revenge on (or reconciliation with) a former lover, the *Shredded Heart* (artifact that grants the user complete domination over any intelligent creature; functions as *charm person* with +15 to spell check), the *Mask of Tears* (enchanted mask that grants +6 AC and allows the wearer to pass through solid barriers), and a Type II succubi willing to perform any whim of its master.



PLAYER HANDOUT:

MAGOG

No preferences for potential agents; judge may elect any PC. Suggested rewards include the PC's weight in rare jewels, the *Girdle of the Behemoth* (+4 bonus to Strength and Stamina, and AC equal to full plate), the *Berserker's Cloak* (grants rage that doubles the wearer's hit points and grants an additional action die each round), magical amplification of all the PC's physical ability scores by +2, and a small dragon to serve as a mount and bodyguard.



PLAYER HANDOUT:

HEKANHODA

Bargains with wizards and elves (especially those suffering from corruption). Suggested rewards include becoming a patron of the PC as if having achieved a spell check of 32+ on *patron bond*, the *Grimoire of Endless Night* (contains 1d6 wizard spells of each spell level), the *Stave of Ekim* (enchanted staff that grants a +6 to all spell checks), the eradication of any existing corruption, and a unique Chaos familiar with the ability to transform into a Type II demon once per day.

THE CATAPHRACT

20' = 1-3

Tangerine
Azure
Gold
Plum
Crimson
Emerald

unless
= 10' otherwise noted

1-2

CONSTRUCTION

1-1

1-4

1-6

JUDGMENT

SACRIFICE

1-5

scale not applicable where distance is meaningless

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