

# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

## NEON KNIGHTS

#94: A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE  
BY BRENDAN LASALLE



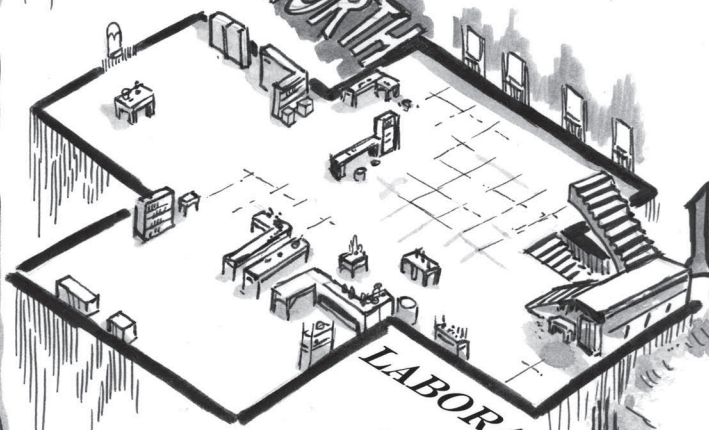
# VALHALLA TOWER

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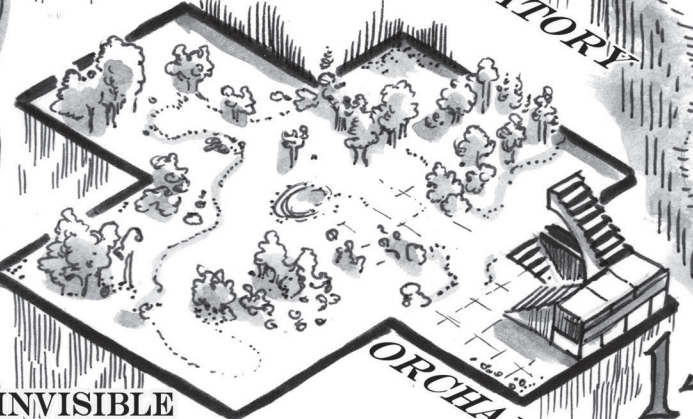
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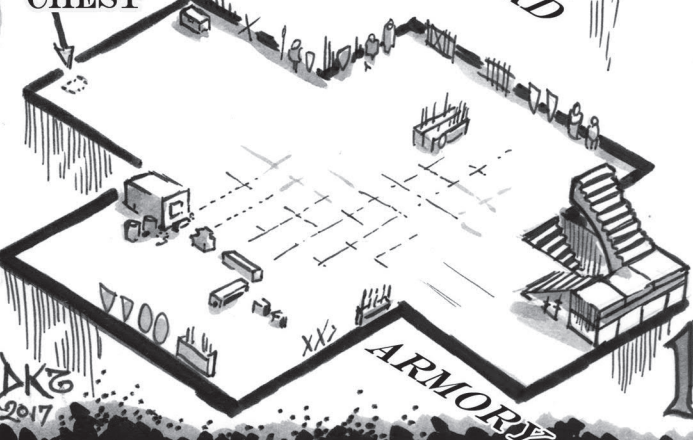
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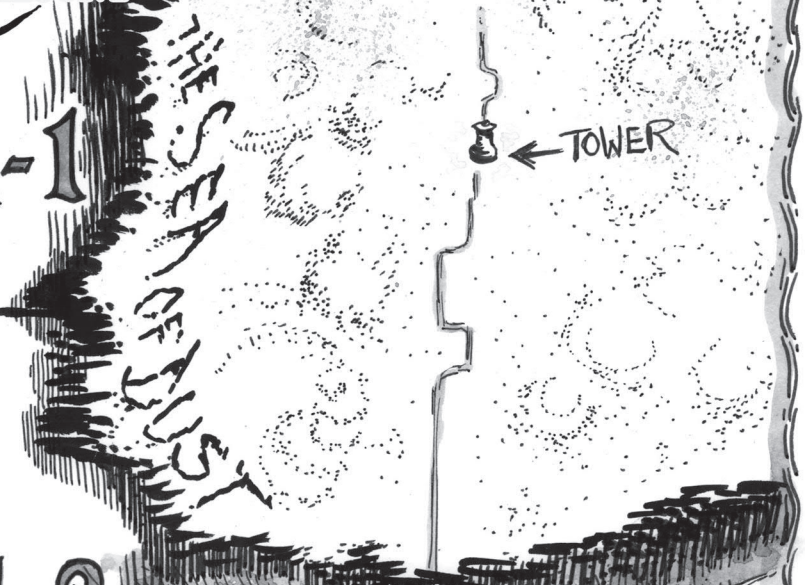
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INVISIBLE CHEST



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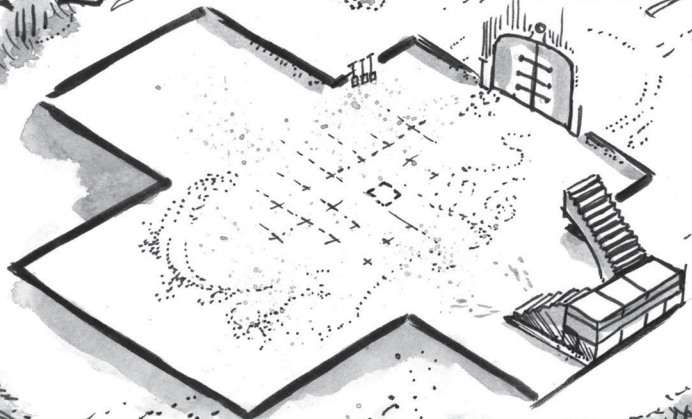
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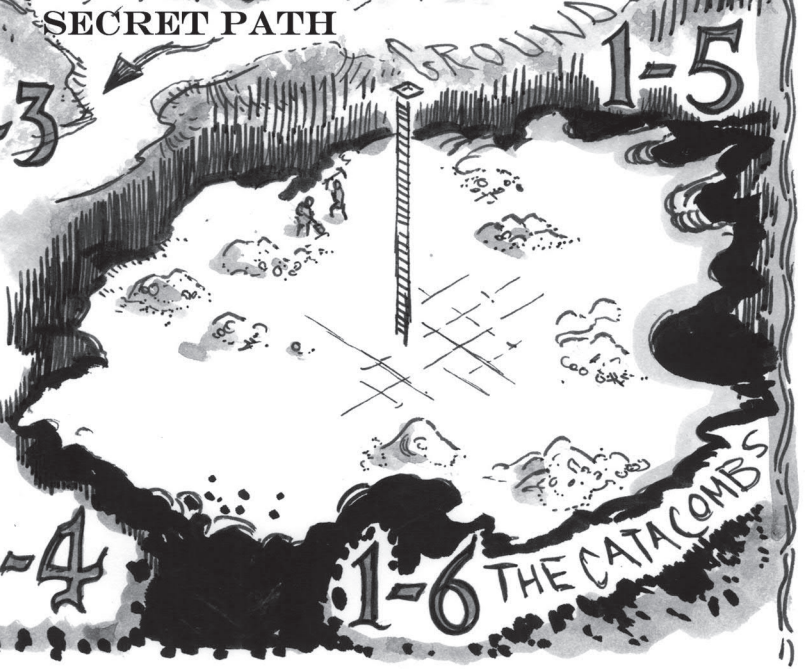
FALSE PATH

SECRET PATH



GROUND

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1-6 THE CATACOMBS

# NEON KNIGHTS

## A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

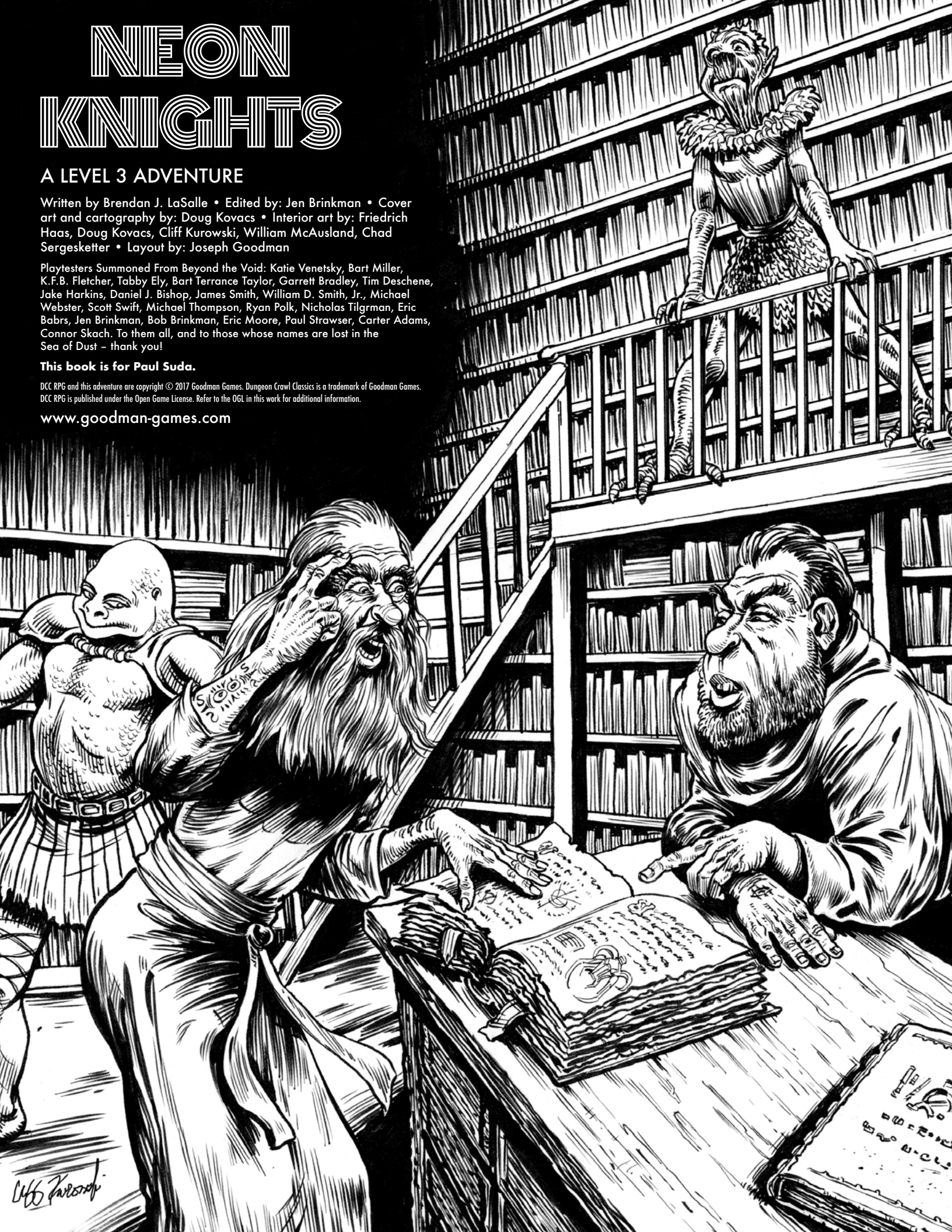
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**This book is for Paul Suda.**

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# INTRODUCTION

**R**emember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20<sup>th</sup> level? Those days are back! Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

*Neon Knights* is designed for a group of 3<sup>rd</sup>-level characters. At first it seems the PCs must simply break the strange siege surrounding their city. However, they soon find themselves transported to a far-off world and forced to defend a tyrannical wizard against invaders. Eventually, smart and resourceful players will realize that the two events are connected, and will work to end both events.

## BACKGROUND

**V**azhalo - wizard adventurer, master alchemist, sly and careful schemer with enough foresight to devise and execute extremely long-term plans - found himself dragged to the Purple Planet along with a group of adventurers that considered him a trusted ally. However, when they discovered a mighty artifact - the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* - the wizard instantly realized that he held the means to great power and wealth in his hand, and had zero inclination to share with his comrades. He used the power of the *Garand* to eliminate his former allies, and set out to reap the power of the dying world.

In his travels, Vazhalo discovered the Sea of Dust, and the wizard's tower at its center. After a few experiments, he discerned the power of the dust to protect from the harsh environment of the Purple Planet. He summoned a crop of heroes to slay the current occupiers of the tower (an inept wizard and his coterie, holed up here while they tried to escape to their home dimension) and made it his base of operations.

Vazhalo summoned heroes to strike out at rivals so he could collect their books and treasure, workmen to clean and move his possessions, and scholars and messengers to amuse him and keep him informed on the doings of his home dimension. Vazhalo could not return home without surrendering the *Garand*, and decided that he was fine staying in his little safe outpost on the Purple Planet, relying on heroes from his home dimension to defend him against the occasional threat.



While studying in the tower's library, Vazhalo found the *Ritual of the Canonicals*, which would allow a caster to turn hundreds of corpses into an undefeatable army. The wizard found the ancient spell intriguing, but of no real use, until the day one of his summoned

teams of workmen discovered the secret door to the kith graveyard underneath the tower. Suddenly he had the means to create an unbeatable army – an army that knew no fear, nor hunger, nor lack of discipline. There was not much on the Purple Planet worth the effort and expense of the month-long ritual it would take to summon his canonical army, but on his home world... there was power to be taken!

Vazhalo summoned sages and scholars from his home dimension, forcing them to reveal all they knew about places of power and magical treasure. Finally, he found one worthy of his efforts – a historian and arcane treasure hunter who had positive proof that the PCs' home city has hidden somewhere beneath it an artifact that would allow him to return to his home planet as a conquering god.

This information is false, but Vazhalo believes it, and he is about to destroy a mortal city on the strength of a cheap prevarication. His army in place, Vazhalo has only to choke the city off and let its inhabitants die of starvation. Then his troops can dig and search for the fictional secret talisman he believes will make him the equal of the gods.

But before his plan can come to fruition, his tower is attacked by kith raiders and he must summon heroes to defend him...

## NON-LINEAR ADVENTURE

There are many ways to run *Neon Knights*.

Judges can run this as a fairly straightforward adventure: the PCs are tasked with ending the siege of their home city, and in the midst of it they are summoned to defend Vazhalo's tower. Before they are sent back to their city, they notice a clue to their predicament. They return to their home world, investigate, and come back armed with the knowledge and edge they need to defeat Vazhalo and rescue their city. They find a way home, end the siege, and the adventure ends with the survivors being heroes of the realm.

Alternately, you can use this adventure as a side quest of a current campaign. Vazhalo occasionally summons the heroes to aid him – they could be summoned out of another quest, a dungeon exploration, or even from an ongoing battle! Eventually they find a way to turn the tables on Vazhalo, and perhaps discover his plan. Perhaps they have to journey to a different city the canonicals have surrounded in order to free it from their siege...or perhaps it is too late.

This could also be an alternate way for PCs to reach the Purple Planet, or any remote location that would serve your campaign. The tower could be anywhere

you want your Band to visit.

Depending on players' decisions, this adventure can go many different ways. It is improbable – but possible – that the PCs could defeat Vazhalo in the first encounter. The challenge then becomes exploring the tower, figuring out what needs to be done to end the siege, and to find a way home.

Of course, DCC players never do exactly what you want them to do. In playtests, PCs have lifted the entire tower through magic and flown it around the Purple Planet, slain one another in a desperate battle to own the Garand, even pledged their allegiance to Vazhalo and returned to their own world to lead the canonicals in pillaging the countryside for magic texts and trinkets... as always, when adjudicating Dungeon Crawl Classics, expect the unexpected!

## THE ARTIFACT

The *Garand of Unknown Xastro* is a powerful artifact. The base of the instrument is the stock of an M1 Garand rifle from some ancient and forgotten past. The Garand is etched with magical symbols and hung with three separate lines of beads, alien feathers, and three greenstone shards, strung on thick woven skins of seven ancient kith warlords. Without activated shards the artifact ceases to function.

If held by a creature with arcane sensitivity (a wizard or elf, or another creature capable of casting arcane spells), this individual automatically understands its power: to summon champions from another dimension the wielder is aware of. Vazhalo is originally from the same dimension as the PCs, so he can summon them (and others from their world).

Creatures summoned receive a curious side effect: their eyes flash with continuous tiny flares of pink light, like flashing neon. In addition, while they are under the thrall of the artifact, they leave trails of pink light in the air in their wake, lasting only a few seconds. When the PCs return home they stop trailing color as they move, but their eyes continuously flash pink. Only creatures who have been summoned by the power of the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* can spot the flashing pink around the eyes of their fellow victims; the effect is invisible to anyone else.

A successful *detect magic* spell detects the aura of the enchantment, which never fades, and a spell check result above 20 allows the caster to spot the flashing pink around the subject's eyes, although it does not reveal the origin of the affliction.

Holding the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* instantly makes the wielder aware of its powers. To wit:



One time per day, the wielder may summon up to seven creatures from a dimension other than the one the wielder currently inhabits (increase that number to the size of the adventuring party if there are more than seven PCs). The wielder must be aware of a dimension in order to summon creatures from it, so in the hands of an arcane spell user who has never traveled to another dimension, the artifact is useless.

Summoned beings hear mental commands that they are compelled to comply with, unless they resist (see below). Summoned beings have a maximum duration they can be summoned for, dependent on what they are summoned to do. The summoner may move, but if he casts a spell or otherwise attacks he loses his control over all summoned beings for that round, and they are free to act as they wish until he uses an action to regain control of his summoned heroes.

Summoned beings aren't zombie-like. They can fight with speed, tactics, and strategy. They also have a little leeway in their actions - they can take some actions that they are not implicitly commanded not to do, such as healing or otherwise logically supporting their companions, snatching small items, asking questions, or taking cover.

Note: **Summoned beings do not get a chance to resist the artifact wielder's commands unless they specify**

**that they are actively trying to resist.** For best results, do not hint to your players that they *should* say they are trying to resist. Instead, just tell them that they are compelled to go and do whatever it is they were summoned to do. Treat this aspect of the Garand's powers like a puzzle, and let players figure it out.

Summoned beings appear with the appropriate gear they own for the job they are summoned for, even if they didn't have it on their person at the time of summoning. Adventuring parties show up armed and armored, summoned stonemasons have their tools, etc.

Summoned beings disappear after a certain amount of time depending on what they were summoned to do, and once they disappear they cannot return for 24 hours.

- **7 Days of Free Will:** Creatures summoned are free to act as they wish, and disappear back to their own dimension after 7 days. Time works differently between the PCs' dimension and the realm of the Purple Planet - when they return, they find they have been gone for about 12 hours.
- **7 Turns of Non-Combat Labor:** Creatures summoned may attempt to resist once every turn. If they successfully resist they can act freely that turn, but must roll to resist again the next turn or be once

again in the thrall of the user. If creatures thusly summoned are suddenly put into a combat situation, they disappear after six more rounds, and may save to resist once per round. After 7 turns summoned creatures return to their own dimension. When they return, it is as if two minutes have passed.

- 7 rounds of combat: Creatures summoned may attempt to resist once every round. If they successfully resist they can act freely that round, but must roll to resist again the next round or be once again in the thrall of the user. After 7 rounds they return to their own dimension. When they return, it is as if they have only been gone for an instant – practically no time has passed.

The summoner has the option of ending the effect early, and sending his summoned heroes home.

The difficulty of resisting the power of the staff depends on what the PCs wish to do. Each player must declare what he intends his character to do before attempting his save.

- DC 13 Will save if they wish to do nothing. If successful they can simply stand where they are and not act as instructed.
- DC 15 Will save if they wish to do something other than what they were summoned to do. PCs who want to avoid combat, for example, and instead spend a round investigating their environment or stealing something, must roll a DC 15.
- DC 17 Will save if they wish to attack the wielder of the *Garand of Unknown Xastro*.

In the course of the adventure, the PCs will likely be summoned multiple times. The more often this happens to an individual, the easier it gets to resist the power of the Garand. For every time they are summoned after the first, individuals receive a cumulative +1 bonus on their Will save to resist the compulsion of the artifact. This bonus maxes out at +3.

If the summoned beings can force the wielder of the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* to drop it (or if they slay him), the power of the compulsion ends, and they are stranded in the dimension they were summoned to. An arcane caster can take control of the Garand and send creatures summoned by it back to their own dimension BUT they cannot send themselves home. Whoever activates the Garand remains behind.

It takes some getting used to the working of the staff. The first time a new user attempts to summon creatures it requires a DC 15 spell check to activate (spellburn allowed, just like casting a spell). A failure indicates

that the artifact ceases to function for 24 hours, and on a check resulting in a natural 1 it summons a terrible creature from some dark dimension, uncontrolled and unable to be dismissed, which instantly attacks the wielder and their allies (see **Rolled a 1 when Summoning Creature**, p. 18, for an example). After proximity and practice for a year, the check is automatic.

Only creatures with greater than six Hit Dice have a chance of resisting the summoning (DC 18 Will save). If they are successful they remain where they are after feeling a tremendous pull, and do not develop any of the side effects (i.e., no flashing pink eyes).

The Garand confers several other powers upon an arcane-attuned being who holds it. It grants a +2 AC vs. magical spells requiring an attack roll, a +3 bonus on Will saves vs. charm or compulsion effects, a +1 bonus to saves vs. other spells, and a +1 bonus on spell checks. It also grants extreme longevity: as long as it is within 10' of its possessor, their aging is slowed by a factor of 10.

The Garand also has negative side effects. After only one summoning, the user begins to see other humans as nothing but pawns and tools to bring greater power. After two summonings, the wielder's otherness grows acute – all clerics attempting to heal him treat him as from an opposing alignment, halflings may no longer grant that individual luck, and natural animals automatically react with suspicion and fear or aggression toward him. The wielder is on his way to becoming a monster – his Personality lowers by 1 point every year, and when it reaches 3 he becomes an NPC bent on total domination of all beings.

Destroying the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* grants the destroyer +1d5 Luck. If the wielder destroys the Garand, its destruction automatically removes all the negative effects of owning it.

The Garand is only the wooden stock of the rifle it once balanced, without the barrel or firing mechanism. The artifact cannot be used to fire bullets.

## THE SEA OF DUST

Vazhalo's tower sits on a tiny island in the Sea of Dust. The Sea of Dust was once a massive graveyard, a city of the dead where the ancient inhabitants of the Purple Planet interred their revered dead. Thousands of years later, when the geosynchronous moon caught fire and began to deteriorate, a massive chunk hit this place, and the combined dust of ten billion corpses and the shattered moon became the Sea of Dust. The tower itself was once a temple where the ancients would perform rituals to honor the dead before interment.

The Sea of Dust is a swirling mass of dust and inert gasses, the combined detritus of the burning moon and the motes of flesh of a thousand generations of indigenuous dead. Proximity to the sea has a strange side effect - visitors to the Purple Planet are protected from the toxic energy of the dying sun, and do not take the 1d3 points of Stamina damage most aliens suffer every day.

## **TRAVEL IN THE SEA OF DUST**

Despite appearances to the contrary, the grey atmosphere of the upper dust in the Sea of Dust is survivable. The upper dust is composed of the dead cells of the ancient race of the Purple Planet, combined with the ever-increasing concentration of the ashes of the moon which slowly but continuously drift down upon this area, creating a strange alchemical effect.

In the upper dust zone, it is possible to breathe, but extremely uncomfortable and claustrophobic. Visibility is reduced to 10' with a light source (0' without). Torches sputter and the dust can smother them at any time (Luck check for the torch bearer every 10 minutes for the torch to still be lit). Lanterns fare better, having no chance of accidentally going out.

The lower dust is standard desert sand and pure moon dust. It naturally sinks lower than the upper dust, and it can't be breathed. Anyone who goes 20' or lower into the Sea of Dust begins to asphyxiate.

If the PCs search the grounds around the southern side of the tower they may find the hidden staircase hacked into the stone. Following those stairs leads to a twisting, raised path that passes beneath the surface of the Sea of Dust, but not so low as to go beneath the breathable level. The path is 5' wide and treacherous, and falling off onto either side means the character quickly falls 60'-80' into the depths and utterly confusing darkness of the Sea of Dust, and begins to asphyxiate. This path can be used to travel all the way to the shore of the Sea of Dust (this is how the kith raiders made their way to the tower).

If the PCs search the grounds around the northern side of the tower, they also find a staircase hewn into rock that leads to a raised path underneath the dust. This path starts out like the southern path, but halfway through it descends beneath the 20' mark and becomes unbreathable.

## **NEON KNIGHTS OF THE PURPLE PLANET?**

You can run this adventure with or without the other Purple Planet adventures.

**Without:** The area beyond the Sea of Dust is a desolate, barren realm. The PCs find nothing but bones and rock and endless vistas of nothingness. PCs take 1d3 Stamina damage every day they stray more than a half mile from the Sea of Dust - the effects of the terrible weirdling sun. Their survival depends on returning to Vazhalo's tower and effecting their escape. Somewhere out there is the blighted savannah, the home of La and the Tempest Beast, but the PCs only find it if it works with your story. Alternately, Vazhalo's tower can be in any location you choose - some remote location of Aereth, on the far side of Mezar-Kul, or just outside of Scottsdale.

The greenstone shards are just alien gems that radiate power, and have alchemical uses. Wizards can burn them as a point of spellburn, an action which consumes the crystals.

**With:** The Sea of Dust is on the far side of the planet from the plateau where *Peril of the Purple Planet* takes place. The atmosphere of the Sea of Dust prevents the growing of fungi within 3 miles of it, but if the PCs make it that far they might find tiger mushrooms, providing them with the moon-milk that makes survival here possible. Now their troubles begin, as they must contend with death orms, strekleons, and the secretive kith cargo cult that dominates this remote area known as House Nepahlak. The clever and tenacious may survive the journey, and might even find their way to the plateau and escape the planet by finding a greenstone and activating the portal. But will this send them home, or to some other unknowably dark and fantastic location?





## THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

**T**he characters awake to find their city surrounded. As they look out, they see thousands of humanoids just outside their city.

*The humanoids are wrapped in filthy rags; you can't see their faces for the multiple layers of dirty fabric they have wrapped around their heads like cowls. They stand stock still and silent. At a glance, it seems that one in 100 holds a tall banner aloft – a ragged thing with a single strange symbol, hand-drawn but not sloppy. The rest all carry a single weapon – it is a length of heavy chain with a sharp-pointed hook on the end. They stand, eerily silent and motionless.*

These creatures are the canonicals, former kith of the Purple Planet, rendered down and transformed with a grisly ritual, rededicated to this ancient and now discredited power of Law and forced into the service of a wizard.

**Canonicals (10,000):** Init +1; Atk chain & hook +3 melee (1d6+1); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP hive mind, resistant to sleep and charm effects, immune to fear, vulnerable to fire, supported life; SV Fort + 2, Ref -1, Will +4; AL L.

Canonicals aren't true un-dead – they are constructed

beings made from corpses and infused with the power of ancient Law, perverted for this purpose by a dark ritual. They are a hive mind comprising one massive organism that wishes to subjugate and assimilate all creatures it encounters, thereby putting an end to free thought and choice. What any canonical perceives, all perceive, so the canonicals act in perfect concert, making them an almost unbeatable fighting force.

Canonicals resist sleep and charm effects at double their normal save (total +8). They take double damage from fire. Canonicals have no need to sleep, eat, or drink, and as long as one can breathe, the rest can survive without air no matter how far the others are away. They are utterly immune to fear. They can be turned by a chaotic cleric.

On the first day of the siege, the city's conventional forces (regular army, militia, mercenary companies, town guards, etc.) organize an attack. They are defeated within a day – the canonicals, acting with one mind, can outflank the most disciplined fighting companies, outmaneuver the best strategists, and outfight individual champions. Once the battle is over, the surviving canonicals carefully burn their dead, then return to

their formation, surrounding the city.

The canonicals allow no one to leave or enter the city, and destroy travelers who venture too close. Three times a day, a small party of canonicals rush into the city, corner a group of unfortunates, slay them, and then return to their place in the formation, taking with them any bodies that remain.

## INVOLVING THE PCS

A person in authority (the local king, warlord, high priest, or similar) invites the PCs to a meeting. Their only guards are scarred, aged veterans – all the young warriors died in their fruitless assault against the canonicals. The authority figure describes their current situation: surrounded by unknown silent humanoids with an uncanny ability to work in perfect unison without ever communicating, cut off from the outside world and starving.

# PART I: SUMMONED TO THE TOWER

**Area 1-1 – The Top of Vazhalo’s Tower:** The first time they are summoned, the PCs appear in the direct center of the room, in a defensive half-circle in front of Vazhalo. Before them is an archway that leads to a balcony under the open sky.

*You all experience a flash of pink. You seem to float for time unknowable in a space where there is no sensation save the brilliant pink light, which is everywhere. Suddenly the pink light fades, your ears pop, and the air feels very different – smoky and dusty, and somehow thick in your lungs. You look at your hands...when you move them you leave a trail of pink light in their wake that fades after a few seconds.*

*You find yourselves in an opulent place lit by bright candles in wall sconces, with rich furnishings and fine rugs. The walls are covered in eye-catching items – trophy weapons, strange objects d’art, a huge gong covered in magical symbols, and the head of some great beast. Off to your right is a stairway going down. Behind you is a luxurious living chamber, with a four-poster bed and an intricately-carved armoire. Ahead is an archway, beyond which is an outdoor space. There you see a group of humanoids – beast men, the likes of which you have never seen before, bristling with weapons. There is a balcony beyond them with a 3’ barrier wall, and you see two grappling hooks braced on the wall’s edge.*

*Standing to your side is a white-haired human in fringed green robes. He holds an item over his head – a length of shaped wood, carved with magic symbols and hung with feathers and fetishes.*

*You look at your companions – they too are trailing pink light*

The authority figure in question asks for the adventurers’ help. They offer whatever they can – gold, advantageous marriages, land and income, full pardons, etc. – to secure the PCs’ aid.

Assuming they agree to terms, the authority figure thanks the party and begins discussing tactics – they believe they have spotted a pattern in the daily attacks of the shrouded army. They turn to retrieve a map of the city, when there is a flash of pink, and all the PCs are summoned to another world.

## SPECIFICS, PLEASE!

The specifics of this section have been intentionally left vague, to make this adventure easier to set within an extant campaign. If you are running this adventure as a one-shot, see **Neon Knights as a Stand Alone Adventure** on page 18 for a more fleshed-out setting.

*as they move, and their eyes glow with pulsing flares of pink light. You hear a voice in your head: DEFEND ME AND MY TOWER FROM THESE CREATURES. DON’T LET THEM HARM ANY OF MY POSSESSIONS.*

The beast men are a kith raiding party of House Nepahlak, here to collect books and artifacts in order to (they believe) attract the Ascended Master known as Great Kasalak to come and aid them in their war against their enemies. Their mission is to steal everything they can get their claws on and escape back down the southern pass across the Sea of Dust. This mission is a holy quest for the raiders, and they are willing to put their lives on the line in its execution.

Since the PCs have been summoned for combat, they stay for exactly 7 rounds before they disappear back to their home dimension.

On their first round, two of the kith run down the stairs to the level below, as their reconnaissance team told them that that’s where the good stuff is. The rest mercilessly attack the PCs, led by their leader, the dread warrior-poet Slint. Also in the first round, the last two kith come over the stone wall at the edge of the balcony – if the PCs can somehow cut the ropes or otherwise remove the hooks before the kith act, they can drop two of them down to their deaths.

Once the two kith run down stairs, Vazhalo issues a mental command to at least one of the party members: FOLLOW THEM! STOP THEM! DEFEND MY POSSESSIONS!

It is possible that the PCs return to their home dimen-

sion before they defeat all the invaders, and unless circumstances change greatly, they will certainly return home before they can fully explore the tower.

The room has several sections. The sleeping area has a huge four-poster bed; under the mattress is a steel beaker with a slow magical healing draught that restores 1d12 hit points over an hour. The armoire is filled with expensive clothes, boots, and jewelry (worth up to 100 gp in the PCs' dimension).

The weapons on the wall include a kith short sword, a ceremonial battle fork from some unknown race, and a dwarf-forged silver dagger from the PCs' home world.

The "candles" in the wall sconces are actually wooden dowels with an enchantment that makes them glow like bright candles without putting off any heat.

The bronze gong hanging on the wall is the key to dispelling the power of the canonicals. Sounding it within 60' of any individual kith separates them from the hive mind – they helplessly convulse for a full minute, then fall inert. The gong weighs 50 pounds and is covered in tiny etched magical symbols.

PCs who make it out to the balcony instantly note the burning moon that hangs overhead. If they get close enough to the railing around the balcony, they can see down into the Sea of Dust, which sends occasional plumes of dust into the air. The tower is 120' tall, and from the vantage point all the PCs can see is swirling dust in all directions.

**Kith Raiders (11):** Init +1; Atk machete +2 melee (1d5+1) or dagger +2 melee (1d4+1) or javelin +1 missile fire (1d6+1); AC 12; HD 1d12+2; hp 8 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; AL N.

The kith are savage beast men, over 6' tall with bestial faces, white fur, broad shoulders, and a stooped appearance. They have camouflaged themselves with dirt all over their bodies for the raid, hiding their dyed fur and tattoos. They wear piecemeal armor and carry a machete, two daggers, and four javelins each, along with three large sacks, 100' of rope, grapples, and sacred stones that they wear in pouches around their ankles in the House Nepahlak fashion.

**Slint, Kith Warrior-Poet:** Init +3; Atk short sword +1d4+2 melee (1d6+deed die+2) or dagger +1d4+2 melee (1d4+deed die+2) or javelin +1d4+1 missile fire (1d6+deed die+2); AC 15; HD 2d12+4; hp 21; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP d4 deed die; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Slint is a feared warrior, famed as much for his artful verse as his battle prowess. He is the equivalent of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-level warrior with a d4 deed die. He refuses to deign to

camouflage himself like the rest, proudly showing off his violet tattoos and ritual scarification. He has a short sword, two daggers, one javelin, and a pouch of sacred stones that includes one greenstone shard.

**Vazhalo, 4<sup>th</sup>-level wizard:** Init +1; Atk +1 dagger of Chaos +1 melee (1d4, 1d6 vs. lawful targets); AC 16 (18 vs. spells); HD 4d4+4; hp 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will+3 (+5 vs. charm/compulsion effects); AL C.

Spells (+7 spell check): *cantrip*, *charm person* (no range), *magic missile* (must dedicate the soul of his target to the dark power he stole the spell from), *ward portal* (fear & loathing), *detect magic*, *monster summoning* (wind whirls around him), *mirror image* (worms of the earth).

Vazhalo is a white-haired man in his late 40s. His years of possessing the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* have turned him cold and inhumane, but he was always a backstabbing schemer. He carries a +1 dagger of Chaos which does 1d6 vs. lawful targets, has a magical ward cast upon him which gives him a +4 bonus to armor class and renders him immune to poison, and possesses the *Garand* (bonuses factored into stat block). Magical accidents over the years have given him some physical quirks: he is cold-blooded like a reptile and has bone-white hair, webbed fingers and toes, and permanently foul breath. Statistics: Str 7, Agi 15, Sta 13, Int 16, Per 6, Luck 14.

**Area 1-2 – Laboratory:** This is a laboratory and workroom. There is a bookshelf filled with ancient books, shelves lined with glass jars, and two tables – a wooden trestle table cluttered with fancy glassware, and a slab stone table with a mostly-vivisected humanoid on it. There are glowing candles set at regular intervals high in the walls. The stairway continues down to the next level.

If the PCs have chased the kith downstairs, they find them in the process of shoveling items their sacks – one is after books, the other the glass jars.

The figure on the table is one of the canonicals. Vazhalo separated this one from the hive mind in order to open it and examine it. Its chain & hook weapon lies on the table next to it, alongside a journal containing Vazhalo's notes on the construct's anatomy and metaphysiology, written in the common tongue. If a PC gets an opportunity to read that book, they learn much about the nature of the canonicals, including the fact that it takes the ritual gong to dispel their power.

The trestle table holds an amazing array of highest quality glassware for alchemical experimentation. The glassware is delicate and intricate, and access to the complete set adds +1 to any alchemy-related task it is used to perform. On the PCs' world it would be worth



mundane histories and geologies, but two are extremely noteworthy. One is *Vazhalo's Black Grimoire*, containing all the spells he knows plus *make potion*.

The other is an ancient and decrepit tome full of strange ritual magic. It requires a *read magic* spell to comprehend, and successful casting and study shows that of all the ritual fragments contained within two rituals are complete enough to attempt: one creates a magical glow like a bright candle that lasts for a year and a day without producing heat or consuming fuel (used to create the magical candles throughout the tower); the other is the *Ritual of the Canonicals*, the spell used to create the army besieging the PCs home city. The second ritual takes a year to prepare and a month to cast, and requires dozens of rare and expensive ingredients, plus 13 points of spellburn and enough salt-preserved corpses to kit out an army. With one hour of study, a spellcaster reading this tome can discover that the ritual requires a creation focus in bronze covered in careful symbols, which can be used to dispel the army - in this case, the gong on the wall in area 1-1.

**Area 1-3 — Orchard:** *As you descend the staircase, you discern a scent like a working farm. When you reach the next level you see that the floor is actually covered in dense green plant life. Looking around, you see that there are more than a dozen trees in this place, all loaded with alien flowers. Their limbs hang low with globes of many colors, possibly some kind of fruit. The walls are dotted with plants that seem to either cling to the walls or grow from the stone itself. Against one wall lean garden tools - a spade, hedge trimmers, limb saws, and a stack of wicker collection baskets. Suspended from the ceiling are several glowing green globes hanging from rods some 20' above, all full of a green liquid, like slightly scummy pond water. The globes give off a soft green glow. You see what were likely once windows on the east and west walls, but they have been bricked up with a different color stone and fully sealed. The stairs continue down from this level.*

Vazhalo found this indoor orchard when he took over the tower, and this is primarily how he feeds himself. PCs with agricultural knowledge will note that many varieties of fruit grow on the trees, side by side on the same limbs. Each of the 23 trees is a hybrid product of limb-grafting and bioengineering, and they produce random varieties of fruit in unpredictable growth cycles.

The floor here is actually 2' thick with dirt, with a huge network of roots growing underfoot. The room is a complete biosystem; it is often steamy and occasionally rains.

The nine globes hanging above each contain brackish water, alien algae, and a single greenstone shard,

up to 500 gp to a master alchemist.

The jars mostly contain samples of fungi and plants. One holds a small figure, a 6"-tall blue-skinned winged figure, wearing nothing but a shift of autumn leaves and tiny combat boots. She pounds on the inside of the jar to get the PCs' attention - she wants them to free her. This is a La, a fairy of the blighted savannah, a native of this world who is desperate to escape and rejoin her tribe. She is frail and small, but magical, and if freed she kisses her rescuer, granting them +1 Luck (permanent) before flying off. If attacked, La has an AC 16, 1 hit point, a 60' flying movement rate, and no means of fighting back.

The book shelf has more than 100 volumes. Two are printed books of the ancients of the Purple Planet, written in their unfathomable language: one is a technical manual for troubleshooting issues for a particular year of a particular brand of hovercar; the other is the work of a scientist who claimed that the sun was in its early death throes, foretelling the doom of their entire race.

The other books are from the PCs' dimension, mostly

which when combined give off a light that allows the strange plants here to live. If the globes are destroyed or the greenstone shards removed, the plants in this room wither and fade, with individual trees dying in 8-14 days.

The trees give enough fruit per week to sustain 1d5+1 humanoids. However, the first time any off-worlders try one, they must make a Luck check. On a failure, they are allergic to the alien protein and grow sick with chills and suffer explosive gastrointestinal issues for 1d3 hours after sampling a piece, leaving them incapacitated for the duration.

Hidden in the crook of one of the trees is a ring with four keys, one of which opens the lock of the chest in area 1-4.

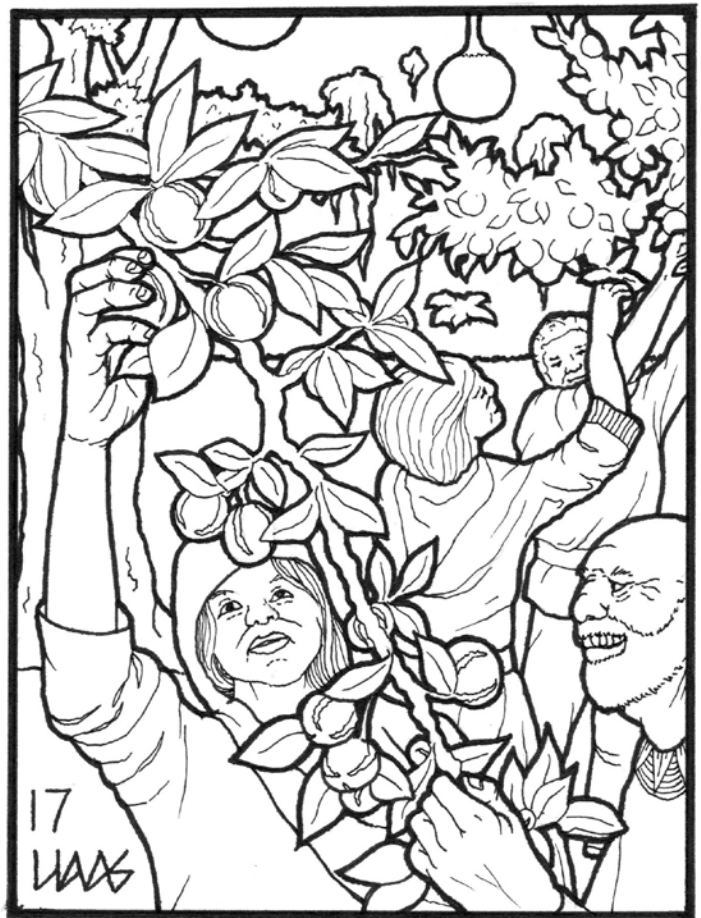
**Area 1-4 — Armory:** *The stairs lead down into another large chamber, this one loaded with weapons. You see dozens of spears and shields stacked and leaning about the room. There is a tall lidded wooden crate in one corner. Part of the room seems to be an ancient repair shop, with a neglected anvil and forge in one corner. The stairs continue downward.*

An earlier occupant of the tower used this area to help keep their fighting force equipped. There are 21 spears, 17 short swords, 40 ornate hide shields, and a single helmet, shaped for the distinctive kith head shape.

The wooden crate holds 15 of the chain & hook weapons the canonicals use, and one of their ragged banners. Characters with a background in religion can make an Intelligence roll (DC 18) to recognize it as representing an ancient and elemental power of Law, one synonymous with subjugation, conformity, and the oppression of war.

In one out-of-the-way corner is a permanently invisible chest, secured with a difficult lock (DC 17 Pick Lock check), and magically trapped. If the chest is opened without immediately speaking the password first ("Diamond Star Halo"), a summoned radiation fiend, in the form of a giant glowing green owl, appears and immediately attacks. It fights to the death. If slain, it disappears into a shower of green fragments, possibly infecting the PCs with radiation poisoning (see below). The creature automatically disappears one turn after it appears, even if it is subdued or otherwise nullified.

Inside the chest is 3,000 gp from the PCs' home city, 588 electrum pieces from an alien world (hole in the middle, covered in strange symbols, the entire hoard worth approximately 275 gp if melted down or more to a collector), 4 greenstone shards, and a holy purple diadem that grants neutral clerics a +2 bonus to *lay on hands* checks.



**Radiation Fiend (1):** Init +4; Atk talons +4 melee (1d6+3) or radiation blast +3 missile fire (1d6 plus sickness); AC 15; HD 4d10 +4; MV fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP radiation blast, death detonation; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL N.

The radiation fiend is a fey byproduct of the terrible energies that are destroying this world. This one was bound to the chest by Vazhalo's patron as part of a complicated service bargain. The creature flies with impossible maneuverability, turning an unlimited number of times on its move action with laser precision. They can look like almost anything - this one manifests as a man-sized green owl. Druids (neutral/nature clerics) can turn radiation fiends.

The creature can unleash a radiation blast from its eyes every 1d5 rounds. Creatures struck take 1d6 damage and must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or take 1d3 Stamina damage as their body erupts in terrible feverish pustules. When slain, the radiation fiend explodes, showering everyone within 20' in sickly green sparks - all must make a DC 11 Fortitude save or be inflicted with a slow-acting wasting disease, which lies dormant for 1d6 years, then inflicts 1 point of Stamina damage every day, incurable by normal means, until they drop below Sta 3 and die.



**Area 1-5 — Ground Floor:** You go around the switch-back of the stairs and see that the stairs descend into soil – it is as if this level of the tower is completely covered in deep dust. There are no lights in this area.

Given a light source, the PCs see that this level seems to be the ground floor, which is entirely covered in dust. On the north wall is an exit marked by two huge double doors, triple-barred with thick beams.

There are six long-handled shovels leaning against one wall.

It takes two strong men to lift the beams off their braces to allow the doors to swing out. If they are opened, the PCs find themselves at the base of the tower. The ragged edge of land that the tower sits on is only about 30' from the edge of the tower on all sides.

If the PCs just pick a random spot in the floor and try digging, have them attempt a Luck roll – if successful, they find the trapdoor that leads below. Opening the trap door shows a vast dark space beneath the tower and a rope ladder leading down.

**Area 1-6 —The Catacombs:** The ladder goes down 60' to the floor of the cavern below. The air is close and rich with the smell of salt and cinnamon. There are no light sources here other than what the PCs bring.

*Reaching the bottom of the ladder, you see that you are in a vast cavern. Thousands of small holes are dug into the walls. Piles of earth and bones are stacked in several places. You see two humanoids here, digging at a spot in the wall – one swings a pick, the other works a shovel. They are completely wrapped in filthy rags.*

This was once a kith graveyard, filled with thousands of bodies. Vazhalo discovered the place and summoned workers to come and dig them out, allowing him to assemble his army. Now there are less than 10% of the original bodies remaining, but the fiendish wizard means to have every last one.

The two creatures are canonicals, a second group apart from the siege army. They are here searching for more bodies, and unable to break away from their ordained task, so they continue to dig and search, even if attacked and slain.

# PART II: RETURNED



he PCs return to their home dimension, and they have some time before Vazhalo decides to summon them again. Their actions in their city under siege can go in many directions, but some key possibilities shall be discussed.

## IMMEDIATELY UPON THEIR RETURN

After seven rounds of combat, the summoned adventurers are returned to exactly where they left off. They still have their weapons and armor, still have any item they managed to snatch up from Vazhalo's tower, and still have any wounds they sustained in the fight. They also still have the flash of pink around their eyes, but only people who were summoned by the Garand can see the pink. The bodies of any PCs who died in the tower are returned as well.

The sudden change in their appearance and positions is certain to bring up questions with the authority figure who had invited the PCs to this meeting, who is likewise in very nearly the same position they were in when the PCs were snatched away (less than a second has passed).

Confusion addressed, the authority figure reiterates their desire for the PCs' aid in breaking the siege, and they conclude any unfinished negotiations before taking their leave.

While leaving the place of the meeting, the PCs have quite a shock - one of the old veteran guards has the same flash of pink around the eyes that they do! If he is questioned, he is shocked to see that they have also been to that "weird, otherly place," like he was so many years ago.

The soldier's story: His name is Tem Deschene, a soldier who survived many battles. One day in his youth he and a number of men from his battalion were snatched away from the battlefield in a flash of pink, and forced by a wizard to slay another wizard on the top of a strange tower. Then they were returned to the same spot, with flashing pink eyes that only they, the summoned, could see. One of Tem's companions was so shocked that he dropped his guard and was slain by an enemy soldier. Years later, Tem was snatched up again - this time to fight some terrible worm out in the forest. He was with some of the same companions from his battalion, but there were others there who were strangers to him. Many died. Years after that fight he was only brought back to the strange world one more time - he and the survivors of the last battle and a few unknowns were brought to the tower and

forced to haul furniture up the stairs. Deschene is most indignant about this last violation, as he is a lifelong soldier who considers "teamster" work beneath him (and the huge armoire smashed two fingers on his left hand, which did not heal properly and still pain him on rainy days).

If pressed, he remembers that he once saw another person in the city with the flash of pink around their eyes: a woman with three stars tattooed behind her right ear. The PCs can make a Luck check to recognize her (thieves who fail it can also make a DC 15 Int check) - she is a sometimes adventurer, burglar, and pickpocket known as Katcal.

If the PCs ask about doing research in town, in the hopes of finding more out about the artifact or the place they were summoned to, any wizard or elf among them knows that the best esoteric library in the city belongs to the wizard bookbinder, Mishka Rudd.

In any case, the PCs are summoned again the next day to fight a new threat to the tower. They have little over 18 hours to do whatever it is they mean to do before they are once again snatched away to that far-off world.

## KATCAL

The PCs can find Katcal by asking a few reliable underworld contacts - she spends most of her days in a seedy tavern on the south side of town. Sure enough, her eyes flash pink.

Katcal is startled to see others with the same pink flash in their eyes as herself. If they approach her aggressively she attempts to flee, but if they approach cautiously and respectfully (better still, bearing gifts), she tells them all she knows about the place while revealing as little about herself as possible.

Four years ago Katcal was working a job ("Just a job! Girl got a right to earn coin, wot?") when the flash of pink brought her to a far-off world. She found herself outside a tower at night with a white-haired wizard. She felt compelled to sneak inside and scout the place out. She was doing fairly well - she counted a dozen men, most likely adventurers, looking really hungry and strung out - when she was discovered. The group attacked her, she ran, and suddenly she found herself back home and back on the job with no time passed, but she suddenly had her sword, crossbow, and armor on person, which somehow ruined what she was up to, forcing her to flee. ("It hadn't ben that sorta job. Oi, none o' your business what sort it were!")

The wizard summoned Katcal one more time along



with a group of others she had never met before, all flashing pink, and forced them to fight some kind of flying clockwork man. This time she was determined not to do what the white-haired bastard said, and even resisted his commands for a moment – she admits that she ran from the fight for a round and even stole something from his tower, but tells them that she doesn't have it any more. She was compelled to return and fight, but she thinks she could have held off even longer if she hadn't been stinking drunk when he'd summoned her.

The item she stole was a greenstone shard, and she sold it to Mishka Rudd a year ago.

**Katcal, 3<sup>rd</sup>-level thief:** Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 16; HD 3d6+4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP thief skills; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Katcal is a medium dark-haired woman with an almost supernaturally honest face, the primary reason she hasn't yet been hanged. On the job, Katcal wears leather armor, carries two daggers, masterwork thieves' tools, and any other equipment that seems appropriate. She has a number of disguises and props she uses to aid her pocket picking, including a fake arm in a sling, a fake baby, and a mask that makes it look like she has the pox. Statistics: Str 9, Agi 16, Sta 9, Int 13, Per 14, Luck 13.

## MISHKA RUDD

Mishka Rudd is a wizard and amateur scholar, a book binder and ink monger, who buys and sells interesting tomes from his shop in the city. He can always be found there, either in the shop during working hours or in his apartment above his shop otherwise.

Rudd drives an extremely hard bargain but always keeps his word once a deal is struck. He is happy to tell the PCs that yes, he bought a greenstone shard a year ago, and he destroyed it while experimenting with it.

If he is asked about any books he might have that pertain to the strange world, he insists on hearing the PCs' entire story – he wants details. If the PCs mention the burning moon it jars his memory and puts him in mind of *Deadward Jale's Journal*. If the PCs describe the pink flashes and being summoned, it puts him in mind of another book in his collection, an unnamed manuscript he calls the red-stained notebook.

Rudd agrees to share information with the PCs only if they tell him everything that happened there without reservation, and they promise him first look at any artifacts – especially books – that they might bring back from this alien world. Bargain struck, he shares the two books with the PCs.



*Deadward Jales' Journal* is the story of the personal account of Deadward Jales, a priest of Law with a literary bent. He kept careful records of all his adventures and he tells the story of being drawn to a foreign planet under strange stars by some strange steel artifact. He was there for several days before his company contrived to find a way home. He specifically mentions the burning moon and the Sea of Dust, but did not encounter the tower of Vazhalo.

The red-stained notebook is a tome of protections and counterspells, mostly in tatters and its cover splashed with blood. It is written in the language of dragons, which Rudd can read, and among other things within it mentions the *Garand of Unknown Xastro*. It talks about a counter charm against its compulsive effects, which involves tattooing an ancient symbol of Chaos on the subject with a special blend of ink.

If they ask, Rudd offers to help tattoo the members of the party with this protective rune. It is in his interest that the siege ends, and he would very much like the PCs to defeat Vazhalo and return with any books he might have in the tower.

Tattooing the party takes hours. Just before the last member of the party is about to get their tattoo, the pink flash carries them all off to the tower. (If the players have not specified the order in which the PCs get their tattoos, have the PCs each make a Luck roll, and note who fails it by the most or succeeds by the least – they were the last in line.)

Each PC with the magic tattoo gains a +1 bonus to their Will save to resist the compelling power of the Garand.

**Mishka Rudd, 2<sup>nd</sup>-level wizard:** Init +1; Atk staff -1 melee (1d4-2); AC 11; HD 2d4; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will+2; AL L.

Spells (+4 spell check): *comprehend languages*, *detect magic* (roll 2d10 for spell check), *magic shield*, *read magic* (roll 1d24), *invoke patron*, *patron bond*.

Rudd usually goes unarmed, relying on the city guard to keep him safe. He is bald and short for a human, with an extremely long beard he constantly plays with. He speaks draconic, elven, and two human foreign languages, in addition to common. Statistics: Str 6, Agi 15, Sta 11, Int 17, Per 14, Luck 8.

## PART III: SUMMONED AGAIN



The PCs are summoned once again – either right before the last person in their party receives their tattoo, or at some other time during their investigation when you are ready to bring them to the next part of the story.

The PCs experience the pink fugue and time displacement, and then find themselves standing in the tower, once again ready to battle.

*You find yourselves back on the balcony of the tower – the wizard once again stands behind you, holding the strange staff, faintly glowing pink, high in the air. A terrible thunderstorm rages overhead, and lightning continuously flashes in the distance, growing ever closer. A creature is on the edge of the balcony, about to attack. It seems to be a living storm cloud, bigger than a house, with six huge insect-like legs protruding from the nebulous cloud that is its body. Eyes like red skies stare down from its otherwise featureless face.*

*DESTROY THIS BEAST, is the mental command you receive. DO NOT LET IT HARM MY PERSON OR MY POSSESSIONS.*

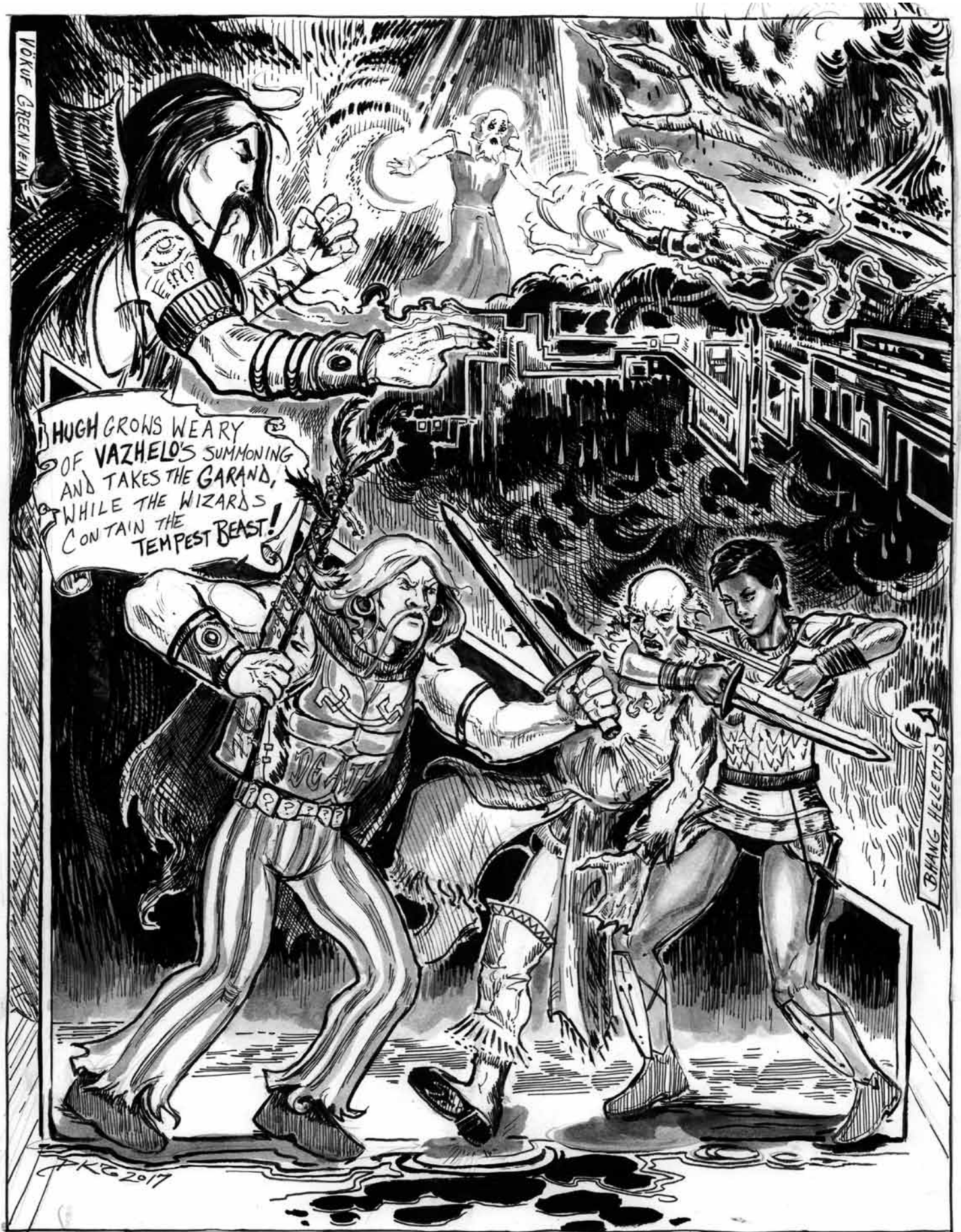
The creature is a tempest beast. It has come to rescue La, the fairy creature held in Vazhalo's laboratory, perhaps now freed by the PCs. It considers itself the ordained protector of the blighted savannah and La one of its subjects. It cannot speak, but it can blast images and symbols into stone with its lightning claw, and if it needs to communicate it attempts to do so through pictures.

It fights the PCs, trying to get past them so it can get to the wizard. If they attempt to communicate, it spends one attack zapping a picture of the imprisoned La into the stone floor.

If the PCs manage to attack and kill Vazhalo before the battle ends, the tempest beast takes his body and demands La. If the party produces her, or otherwise communicates that she has been freed, it simply leaves, taking the storm with it. If they produce her dead body, it fights them all to the death, possibly hanging back and attacking the tower for days with a storm so intense it eventually topples.

If the players do not defeat the tempest beast or Vazhalo after seven combat rounds, they are once again sent back to their home world.

**Tempest Beast (1):** Init -1; Atk lightning claw +7 melee (1d16+2 plus stun); AC 15; HD 6d10; hp 58; MV fly



45'; Act 1d20; SP storm summoning, stunning attack, charged defense; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +7; AL L.

The tempest beast is a sentient weather pattern, an expression of the primal forces of nature and creation. This one has claimed the blighted savannah as its protectorate, and it considers the strange fay that live there its charges.

The creature attacks by forming a claw of lightning and striking opponents with it, reaching up to 30'

away with this electrified limb. Opponents stuck by the lightning claw must make a DC 13 Fort save or be stunned for 1d3 rounds.

Creatures striking it with a melee weapon made of metal take 1d6 points of electrical damage per successful blow against the creature.

The tempest beast disrupts weather patterns wherever it goes. Given time and concentration, it can create huge storms that can go on for as long as it likes.

## PART IV: IF . . . THEN

In conclusion:

**If the PCs take control of the Garand**, then they have the means to escape...mostly. Whoever has the staff can send his companions home, but he himself will be left behind. Alternately, they could use the Garand to summon a spellcaster, give him free will, then ask him to return them home. This means, of course, that that caster is then stuck on the Purple Planet and in possession of the Garand. The obvious candidate is Rudd – if he is summoned and given free will, he could possibly be persuaded to stay behind and send the party home. This would be a careful negotiation on his part – he would love to stay for a while and explore the tower's library, but he means to return home at some point. Also, he will try to negotiate money or favors for his time and effort, and at some point he means to summon the party's wizard or elf to send him home, if there is no other obvious solution.

**If the PCs attack Vazhalo, and he escapes with the Garand**, he attempts to flee – he might summon a monster to fly him away, or run down to area 1-5 and summon a monster to lift the triple bars so he can escape outside that way. He knows of the stairway to the south, and he will use that to cross the Sea of Dust if it means life or death. He might escape down to the catacombs, then *ward portal* the trap door and hide down there for a day, and have the two remaining canonicals defend him if need be. Regardless, he means to return and take his tower back 24 hours later, and to make it happen he summons a party of adventurers to fight the PCs (roll 7 random appropriately leveled characters or generate them via [www.purplesorcer.com](http://www.purplesorcer.com) – anything goes).

**If the PCs don't manage to break the charm of the Garand and simply fight and destroy the tempest beast for Vazhalo**, they go back to their world and at some point are summoned again for some other task. This could be fighting against more kith of House Nepahlak, rival wizards, adventuring groups,

or any of the many dangers of the Purple Planet. If they have useful non-combat skills, they might be summoned for 7 turns of non-combat labor – particularly if one is a stonemason, an alchemist, or a cartographer – to perform some mundane task for him. If they are summoned again and they manage to break the charm and attack, they need to destroy him or it will be the last time he summons them and he will have his army attack and destroy the city.

**If Vazhalo escapes without the Garand**, he flees to the desert and most likely dies there. Depending on his estimation of the strength of the party, he might come back and attempt *monster summoning*, burning everything he has and bringing in the most horrendous creatures he can manage, but if that doesn't work he is pretty much finished. He runs out into the desert and is never seen again.

**If the PCs attack Vazhalo without defeating him**, they are in for some trouble. Vazhalo will not summon them again. He sends his army into the city, specifically to destroy the party. There are thousands of them working together with one mind...the PCs might save the city by fleeing and drawing the canonicals away – but how will it end for them?

**If you are feeling generous and everything else has failed**, then you might give the PCs one more chance – somehow they discover a one-time ritual to send them back to the tower, or they talk one of their patrons into transporting them back (and won't whatever cosmic entity they entreat be expecting something dear in return!), or find some other way back. This is the PCs' last chance to take the tower back – if they fail this time, Vazhalo will make destroying them his main priority. It's war, and it continues until one or both sides are utterly destroyed.

**If the PCs return home with the mystical gong**, then they have won the day. Striking the gong within 60' of the canonicals destroys them, as above, and the siege is broken as they run about clanging their gong

at the army while it tries to flee. The PCs are heroes of the realm, famous and respected, and great things are showered upon them! But if Vazhalo lives he will have his revenge. . .

## **NEON KNIGHTS AS A STAND ALONE ADVENTURE**

If you want to run this game as a one-shot you can run it as it was in its convention setting:

The PCs begin in Estrella, the City of Lanterns. Estrella is the southernmost city on Marduke's Island. An ancient and forgotten race of intelligent creatures, sometimes referred to in whispers as the Quiet Masters, built the city, and in the age of the PCs' lifetimes the knowledge of how they could create such architectural and engineering miracles is long lost and forgotten. Not even the most well-read of sages knows how the Ancient Ones created their towering city, seemingly etched with acid from one single colossal stone. The unwallled city has towers as high as nineteen stories with stone bridges connecting buildings fifty feet in the air, a huge open air market ringed by a grove of stone statues of enormous catalpa trees, and a six-acre waterfront dock that seems to be grown from strangely-branching cyclopean stone rather than carved or built.

The city is hung with permanent, ever-burning lanterns that give off no heat, only a strange bluish-white light that shines like strange moonbeams. None today understand how the lamps were made, or how they shine forever. One can disassemble them and find the odd cloth bundles within their hanging clear globes all the way to the mix of crystals, copper dust, and feldspar chips within, but once dissected the lanterns never work again – without it ever having been clear how they worked in the first place.

At some time in the distant past, the Quiet Masters disappeared from the earth, and human civilization came to inhabit the island. For thousands of years the island was held by a line of ancient kings and warlords, until some hundred years ago when a massive army of humanoids and their monster allies came, forcing the population of humans, elves, dwarves, and halflings to flee to the mainland.

Two generations ago mankind struck back, bringing armies across the water to fight for their ancient homeland. The fight continued for decades, and hard-won victory finally came during the time of the current population's parents. People of the PCs' generation are the first to be born and raised on what has been rechristened Marduke's Island.

The authority figure that organizes the meeting is Baron Featherstone, a veteran of the wars that retook Marduke's Island. He offers the PCs the friendship of his house (no small thing!), plus promises to make them all members of the aristocracy by securing advantageous marriages for them. They get land, which brings them a steady income of rent and the profit from agricultural products.

Rudd's shop is called Superior Ink and Book Sales, and is located in the center of town, near the marketplace.

The tavern Katcal haunts is the Dog and Envoy, a seedy spot near the docks. Its sign shows a dog clamped on the ankle of a very upset man attempting to deliver a scroll.

## **RUNNING NEON KNIGHTS AS PART OF A CAMPAIGN**

The PCs could simply be occasionally summoned by Vazhalo to fight, without any idea that there is a siege taking place in some other part of the world. You could have these encounters happen extremely infrequently, over weeks or months or years, slowly building up to a final confrontation. The PCs could find their own way to Vazhalo's tower and come and let him know how they feel about being summoned without so much as a by-your-leave. This could also be the gateway into or out of the Purple Planet.

## **ROLLED A 1 WHEN SUMMONING CREATURE**

When characters may try to use the *Garand of Unknown Xastro* to try to summon creatures, they may fail and create disaster for themselves. Below is an example monster that you can use for a roll of a natural 1. Feel free to furnish your own creatures instead of or beyond this.

**Life Stealer from Beyond Time:** Init +4; Atk whip limb + 7 melee (special); AC 17; HD 8d10+8; hp 64; MV 15'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP impossible form, rip away time, stranger in a strange land; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +6; AL N.

The Life Stealer from Beyond Time is not of any recorded dimension – it is an alien intelligence beyond our reckoning, whose logic and thought processes are so different from our own as to be incomprehensible. To a being from our known dimension, the Life Stealer appears to be a 12'-tall freak of proportion. Its lumpy form is rubbery and corpulent, with an undulating girth that seems to swivel about independently from its nine limbs, which it can use for locomotion

or manipulating items. Its limbs start off fat and bulky but become infinitesimally thin and long at the ends, giving them the appearance of whipping tiny threads about its body. Its color and scent is like nothing in our universe – so bizarre that any two beings attempting to describe the creature will have entirely different ideas of what it was like; one will say it was purple and smelled like the ocean, one will say it was greenish-yellow and smelled like rotting flesh. Neither and both are correct.

*Impossible Form:* The creature moves erratically and impossibly, swapping its limbs so it sometimes uses all nine for locomotion, and sometimes it sits on its bulk and uses all nine to manipulate objects, and every combination in between. It seems to flip over and whirl about constantly, but then will become utterly still, like a painting of itself.

Every round in combat, opponents not from the Life Stealer's dimension who can see the creature must make a DC 7 Will save or spend their entire action staring in mesmerized horror. On a result of 1, the onlooker goes temporarily insane (effects up to the judge), which lasts for 1d24 hours.

*Rip Away Time:* On a successful melee attack, the Life Stealer from Beyond Time rips away some of the targets beings' physical manifestation in time. Creatures struck must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or have 1d12 years of their lives ripped away. They will retain all of their memories and skills, but if they are too young they may not be able to carry out their skills or fight in combat (they could become toddlers or infants). Judg-

es must rule on the physical effects of this highly variable power; however, being reverse-aged by even one year heals all wounds.

Multiple hits could force a creature to disappear entirely. If this happens, the cosmic time matrix rights itself by having that individual or creature born again to different parents in as many years as the attack gives it time debt: i.e., a human reduced to -3 years will be reborn 3 years later, and barring circumstances that prevent it from doing so, will grow to be an adult with the same physical characteristics as it previously had as an adult, retaining all of the memories of its previous life.

The judge will have to rule on the effects of this attack on creatures or objects other than standard humanoids – wooden doors could become living trees, undead beings could be brought back to life, food might become (temporarily) living portions of the creatures they once were.

*Stranger in a Strange Land:* The Life Stealer From Beyond Time is from a place utterly alien from our own. Indeed, its physical manifestation on the plane of existence it is summoned to is nothing like its real form in its home dimension. It is curious and bewildered by its new confining existence. It instinctively destroys the being who summoned it, then ceases aggression and explores its new space. If it is attacked, it responds in kind, but it will not pursue fleeing combatants. If destroyed, it disappears utterly, leaving no physical trace of its existence, and 24 hours later any being with Intelligence of less than 18 has a difficult time even remembering what it looked like.

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**The city calls upon its heroes to defeat this unnatural menace. The heroes gather to ponder the question: how do you defeat an impregnable foe?**

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