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Steading of the Nergalites

AN UN-OFFICIAL, FAN-MADE ADVENTURE FOR DCC RPG

By Paul WOLFE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I started running UK5: The Eye of the Serpent using DCC rules late late one night after a few adult beverages. The players picked up their left-over caveman characters from *Frozen in Time*, and I converted the adventure on the fly. We made surprising progress into the early hours of the morning, and ended with the party standing at the base of the stairs to Area 16 — an abandoned dwarven steading. We didn't play that one again until a few months later, but once I knew we were going to play, I spent about 3 hours fleshing out the steading with a combination of things I was working on within the campaign, The Cult of Nergal, and something I wrote early on that included Qo, the Destroyer of Worlds (from *Tomb of Curses*).

The idea of the vertical dungeon has already seen publication (if you haven't got it, go pick up *The Vertical Halls* by Gabriel-Garcia Soto — seriously, stop reading this and go!). But, I thought a dungeon with a strong vertical component could be fun.

Playtesting went great. Several folks fell to their deaths, and a fairly strong feeling of mystery and dread surrounded their exploration.

There's another piece that I haven't finished whereby the characters pass either into the realm of Qo (Area 26) or to the Temple of Nergal (Area 22B). Maybe I'll get to it someday.

Anyway, since this is derivative of UK5, I'm releasing it for free. Enjoy!

— Paul Wolfe—<http://www.mysticbull.com>

INTRODUCTION

Before the fall of man, the Ambergate dwarves ruled much of the area from what is now Kharg Island. The succession of kings was broken, however, and the split was exploited by a prophet of Nergal called Agol Umberstone, who predicted further calamity unless the great god of the winter sun was appeased. Many sages believed that it was mere coincidence that the moon was struck in twain and, the resulting devastation took the sun from the sky for long periods of the year. Umberstone's followers were driven out of Ambergate, many believing that the prophet caused the cataclysm. The Nergalites traveled to the interior of the island, following Umberstone's prophecies.

Traveling into the Rukarik Mountains to the east, the Nergalites espied a small rocky island off the southern coast of Kharg. It was here that Umberstone bade half of his tribe to go and build a shining temple to Nergal.

The other half of the tribe stayed in the Rukarik and built a steading where the prophet directed the raising of a shrine, a massive statue of himself deep under the mountain. The Nergalites waited, for Umberstone claimed that when the shrine to himself was completed, the avatar of Nergal would appear and take the faithful to live within the Winter Sun's palace.

The steading was completed, near the pinnacle of Hardaway Mountain and standing at the window of a squat tower, the Nergalites could just see the shining temple on Ra Kag island.

Many years passed with no word from Nergal, and as the

statue of Agol Umberstone neared completion, the rituals to Nergal failed more often than not to bring the sun through the dark ashen clouds that blocked the sky.

One among the steading came to believe that Nergal himself was dead. Though the dwarf's name is not recorded (called the Dissenter), it is believed that he found a portal to another world beneath the steading of the Nergalites. His reveries allowed through servants of an entity called Qo, the Twin-Headed Snake and Destroyer of Worlds, confined to a prison realm for all eternity. These servants and the Dissenter quickly began converting Nergalites (willingly or otherwise) to the worship of Qo. The internecine destroyed the steading of the Nergalite dwarves and locked the Qo worshippers in a centuries-long transformation process, into the Children of Qo – horrifying reptilian humanoids.

Recently, Ransu Velo, a high priest trapped within Qo's world, has passed through the portal and into the ancient steading. He and a small number of Yan (serpent-men servants of Qo) are attempting to break through the portal to their mistress' prison realm from this side, thus freeing the destroyer goddess.

THE STEADING OF THE SERPENT CHILDREN

Finding the steading is no easy task: it built into one of the smaller peaks surrounding a high mountain valley and dominated by Rukarik Mountain. The steading overlooks both the valley to the south and the sea to the north. Those that have a supernatural patron or are servants of any god may be directed to the area, since the high priest of Qo and his Yan snake-things have recently breached

the portal between worlds. In addition, the “children” of Qo, the dwarven worshippers that dedicated themselves to the Twin-Headed Snake, are beginning to emerge from their centuries-long cocoons. Otherwise, rumors of the grand treasures found in the steading may draw any adventurer worth her salt to the dangers of Kharg Island and Rukarik Mountain.

Finally, if you run the conversion of UK5: The Eye of the Serpent, the characters are brought to the Rukarik Mountains in a random attack by rocs (Seriously. Read the module; it’s awesome). In their wanderings to return home, the party might find the stone stairway leading up to the steading of the Nergalites.

THE EYRIE

The steading of the Nergalites is an expansion of encounter area 16 (The Eyrie) found in the AD&D module UK5: The Eye of the Serpent. Pick up the module on RPGNow/Drivethru RPG today! Differences from that resource are detailed below. The dungeon behind the Eyrie is my own creation and starts on page 8.

AREA A: COURTYARD

Each round the party is in this area, roll a d10. This is the number of normal ravens that appear on the battlements of the tower (Area B). If anyone in the party touches the doors to Area B, the ravens attack as a swarm. Note: Each swarm contains 10 ravens — and there are 30 total normal-sized ravens in the tower — if the party has lingered long enough, they could have attracted up to three swarms of ravens. Continue adding ravens to the battlements each round, whether the party is engaged in combat or not.

Raven Swarm (3): Init +3; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 2d8; hp: 10 each.; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 10' x 10' space, half damage from non-area attacks; 10% chance of eye attack per round; SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL N.

Eye Attack: Each round, there is a 10% chance that a character damaged by the raven swarm is struck in the eye. This deals normal damage, but the character's eye is snatched out. Obviously, if this occurs twice, the character is blinded. Otherwise, the character suffers a -2 to all d20 rolls that rely on fine eyesight (ranged attacks beyond 20', lockpicking, trap detection, etc).

AREA B: LOWER ROOM

Locked Door (DC 12)

Trap (DC 12) — When the trap is sprung or disarmed, the western wall of the pit collapses onto a hidden stairway (this can be heard from above the closed pit if the trap is disarmed). This stairway leads to Area 1 of the Steading of the Nergalites.

AREA C: WATCHROOM

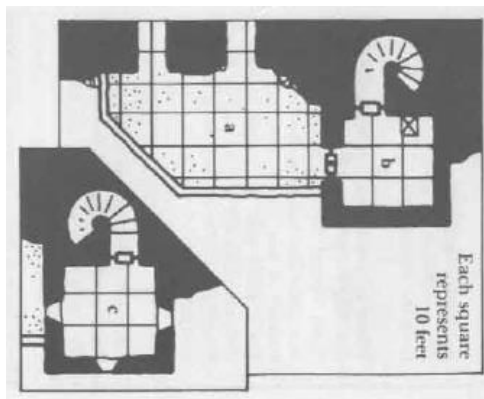
Any ravens that did not join the battle (or fled) in Area A are found here and comprise one swarm.

The giant raven is a transformed shaman of a tribe of men that accompanied the Nergalite dwarves on their pilgrimage. The creature protects the tower with its life, using its spells to best effect.

Giant Raven: Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp: 10; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP Spells; 10% chance of eye attack per round; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will -2; AL N.

Spells: Flame Tongue (1d4, Ranged, ignores armor, DC 10+damage for half); Daze (Lose 1d4 actions; DC 12); Fear (flee at best speed for 1d8 rounds; DC 12).

The Eyrice Map from UK5. Used without permission, but for illustration purposes. Please don't sue me.



STEADING OF THE NERGalITES

Map on Page 29

1 - ENTRY

This room contains a few rusty tools, a dwarven skeleton wearing a tarnished silver ring, and a rope that seems to be new. The open doorway to the south is draped with moss that is a mottled red-brown like rust.

- The moss is harmless -- food for the vermin.
- The ring is silver and marked with the symbol of Nergal – a rooster (10 gp)
- The rope (50') is supernatural -- woven from fibers of silvergrass and blessed by a priest of the dwarven god Urum. When binding a chaotic creature, the rope imparts a -8 to attempts to escape.

2 - UPPER WORKS

Piles of rotten wood dot this large room. There is the stink of something organic. The ceiling is covered with a faintly glowing plant-like substance and crawls with small beetles. The ceiling is 40' tall.

- Three of the piles hide large carnivorous beetles which charge out when the piles are disturbed. They do not attack, but flee up the walls to hang from the ceiling.
- The phosphorescent mold on the ceiling immediately exudes spores that smell like sweet flowers. Each round, the party must make a Fort save (DC 8+1 per round) or fall asleep. Once a

party member falls asleep, the three large beetles and two beetle swarms come down to devour the sleepers. A wet cloth over the face filters out the spores. A dry cloth adds +4 to the save.

- Within the piles of wood are corpses of the children of Qo. One of the corpses is a lower form, which the beetles won't eat, but is quite dead.

Large Beetles (3): Init: +1; Atk bite +2 (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp: 10; 8; 5; MV 30; Act 1d20; Special: Hide +4; Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N

Beetle Swarms (3): Init +5; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1); AC 11; HD 4d8; hp: 20, 15, 21; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL N.

3 - STAIRS DOWN

Stone stairway. The open side looks down into darkness.

4 - SHAFT

This open shaft falls away into darkness. Level 2 is 125' from Level 1.

NOTE: The southern edge of Area 2 to Area 3 is open to the shaft — there is no wall.

5 - GUARD POST

A collapsed wooden bunk and two old chests are to one side. Both doors are rotted away (chunks attached to rusted hinges.) North door is rotted and flimsy. Near the eastern doorway are two human-sized gelatinous shells (think very large mermaid's purses). Littered with beetle corpses, including one large beetle corpse.

- North door is rusted shut and trapped. Door trap: The door is coated with a magical dust that, when broken open, causes blindness (DC 14 - Permanent, curable) and incapacitates the victim with choking (DC 12 -- Lose 1d3 STA per round, save at +1 each round; STA returns 1 per round). Affects a 20' radius to the north and south of the door. No effect if the door is opened otherwise.
- Chests contain rotted clothing, a fine steel hand-axe, 32 sp, and an evaporated potion of Strength (adding half water and half alcohol returns it to its regular strength. Anything else, and it's poison: DC 12 or lose 1d3 AGI per round until permanently paralyzed). Alchemist or similar can figure this out with a DC 15 INT check. The dusty remainder can be used as ingredients for a similar poison, but injected, rather than ingested (Alchemy DC 18).
- Gelatinous shells are thick, semi-transparent, but otherwise empty.

6 - NESTS

Eastern door is solid and rusted shut (DC 18). Attached to the walls and ceiling of the room are white translucent "bags" larger than a human and composed of a thick gelatinous substance.

- Three Children of Qo (base forms) are here hiding in cracks in the walls. They attack the three lowest Luck characters with their poisonous tentacle mouths.
- There are 14 cocoons (3 empty). 1 in 10 chance that a cocoon contains a viable base form. Otherwise, the cocoon gushes gelatinous, caustic fluid (1d3 damage

per round until washed off) if cut open.

- Secret Door opens if pushed.

The Children of Qo (base forms) emerge from their cocoons as gelatinous worm-like creatures with humanoid heads and a long tongue with a toothed mouth at the end. The creatures seek a safe hiding place in order to molt and are able to squeeze into small cracks, using their mouth tentacle to ambush prey.

Children of Qo, Base Forms (3): Init: -2; +2 melee mouth tentacle (1d3+poison); AC 10*; HD 2d6; hp: 6, 7, 10; MV 20; Act 1d20; Special: Poison (DC 12 or paralysis and 1d3 STR per round until dead); Hide +10, Fort -2, Ref -2, Will -2; AL C

NOTE: When completely concealed within a wall crack, the base form has an effective armor class of 18.

7 - ABANDONED SHRINE

This dusty room contains a 6' tall black iron statue of a rooster.

- Doors are sturdy, but rust-locked shut. DC 15 to break in (mighty deed applies).
- The iron statue weighs 400 lbs. Attempts to Patron Bond or otherwise cast a spell provided by Nergal are cast at +4 to the Spell Check when in this room.

8 - ELEVATOR SHAFT

This shaft drops off into darkness. A rusted pulley system that once supported an elevator is attached to the ceiling.

- Shaft drops 375' down to Level 4.

- The secret door into this room is an iron door (in perfect shape) covered over with thick plaster (DC 15 to find). DC 20 to bash it open.
- Two Children of Qo (low forms) lurk in the ceiling of the shaft. Any time spent here draws them, as they are hungry and need sustenance to molt.

The low forms of Qo's children appear as 5-8' tall humanoids composed of a translucent gelatinous material. They typically spend their time hiding, waiting to molt into the high forms, though they have voracious appetites (required to molt).

Children of Qo, low forms (2): Init: +0; +0 melee claws (1d2); +2 melee mouth tentacle (1d3+poison); AC 10; HD 3d6; hp 12, 11, 10; MV 30; Act 1d20; Special: Poison (DC 13 or paralysis and 1d3 STR per round until dead); Hide +8, Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

9 - SHATTERED STAIRS

The stone stairs are shattered here. There is a gap of about 25'.

- Visible from the stairs is the "head" of the unfinished memorial to Qo. The statue is 50' from the edge of the stairs and can easily be climbed by a thief (if it can be reached). Others, without climbing gear, need a DC 18 every 20' or so to attempt such a feat. The stone is limestone shot through with a clear greenish quartz, which detects as magical. Within 50' of the statue, all "enchantment" type spells receive a +4 to the Spell Check.
- Two Children of Qo (base forms) lurk under both sides of

the broken stairs. They emerge and attack once the party starts crossing. (hp: 9, 6). Note that they remain under the stairs, lashing out with their tentacle mouths. This gives them an AC 18. If the characters manage to devise some way to lean out (or hang down) to spot and fight them, their cover bonus is removed.

LEVEL 2

10 - CLOSE HALLWAY

This narrow hallway is littered with reptilian skins, apparently shed from humanoid creatures.

- From the stairs, the door is wooden and iron-bound. It is rusted shut. Breaking through this door (DC 15) alerts the High Forms in Area 11 (DC 13, -1 per attempt; With a natural 20 on the check, the door pops open without a sound).

11 - WORKSHOP

Rusted stone working tools and bones amid piles of rotting wood. An organic-chemical stench.

- Two Children of Qo (high forms) lair here, though they can be encountered elsewhere. The creatures are not very cooperative outside of their little "clan" and so do not necessarily alert any others nearby.

The high forms of the children are tall, sinuous humanoids with snake-like lower bodies and horrifying monstrous faces. They subsist on various vermin that have infiltrated the steading and on the lower and base forms of their own kind.

Children of Qo, high forms (2): Init: +2; +3 melee claws (1d4); +2 melee bite (1d3+poison); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp: 11; 16; MV 30; Act 2d16; Special: Poison (DC 13 or 1d3 STR per round until dead); Hide +4; Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C

12 - THE LOCKED ROOM

Rusted and rotting weapons on ramshackle weapons racks. Thick dust lies on everything.

- The door to this room is iron-bound wood, rusted completely shut. On the back side of the door is an iron gate, likewise rusted shut (DC 22 to bust through both).
- The secret door is visible from the north side, but almost undetectable from the south (DC 16). And is locked and trapped. Four iron spears spring down from the lintel of the door striking the first person through the door (Reflex DC 13 or take four attacks at +4 -- 1d8+1 each; Detect DC 14).
- Weapon racks fall to splinters when touched. Several good steel weapons (dagger, handaxe and short sword) can be found among the flotsam. All are rusty, but were once magical. Though the magic has faded, the weapons remain in good repair and only need to be cleaned.

13 - SECRET ROOM

A confined space thick with dust.

- Both secret doors are magically locked and trapped (and both doors are stone, in good repair with oiled hinges, etc.).
- The western door has an invisible rune carved into the stone that flashes bright yellow when the door is

opened. Those in a 30' radius from the door are blinded for 1d3 turns (50% miss chance, all vision-related skills are at -10).

- The eastern door has an invisible rune carved into the stone that changes to void black when the door is opened without the key. Both secret doors slam shut (Reflex DC 12 or 2d6 damage; natural 1 trapped between door and frame -- 2d6 per round). The room fills with a choking poisoned gas (DC 15 -- 1d6 STA per round), that is also lightly caustic (1d3 damage per round). A Fortitude save must be made each round (DC 8+1 per round) or the victim falls unconscious from lack of oxygen. The gas remains in the room for 2d3 turns.

14 - TREASURY

A wide space stacked with boxes of various sizes, all under a thick layer of dust.

- Heavy wooden door with attached iron gate. Both are rusted shut (DC 22 to break).
- Iron and stone boxes are stacked in this room. Both must be broken open (DC 20).
- The room is guarded by the ghost of the ancient treasurer, a dwarven moneylender, who attacks if the boxes are disturbed. The ghost has no combat statistics, though it can be turned as an 11 HD creature. Holy Smite (Turn Unholy) damage actually drives the ghost away (it retreats into the phlogiston pathways for a year and a day per point of damage). Clerics of Nergal receive a +4 to the Turn attempt. The ghost moves to the character with the lowest Luck and attempts

possession (Will DC 18). Once possessed, the ghost attacks with that character's abilities. If this character is killed, it jumps to the next character in the next round.

STONE BOXES

1. 35,000 cp, a silver dagger, pair of black leather gloves with silver "coins" depicting a rooster. (The gloves are detailed in the Magic Items section)
2. 23,000 sp, a golden statuette of a rooster (350 gp), three scrolls. (These are detailed in the Magic Items section).
3. 9,000 gp, a Neolithic bone spear with a flint head, a steel helmet marked with a silver device of the rooster (both of these are detailed in the Magic Items section).

IRON BOXES

1. 25 silver ingots (150 gp each)
2. 25 gold ingots (350 gp each)
3. 5 platinum ingots (1,000 gp each)
4. (small box, lined with velvet): 3 potions

15 - BARRACKS

Dwarven skeletons ritually mounted to the walls. Piles of rotten wood, cloth and metal gathered into nests. Stench of organic-chemical smell (now familiar).

- The door is in good repair and opens easily, if a little noisily (-4 to sneak attempts).
- Four **Children of Qo (high forms)** lair here, though they may be encountered elsewhere, depending on party actions (hp: 12, 13, 16, 10)

16 - EMPTY

Piles of rotted wood and cloth mixed in with bones and rusted metal.

- That's it!

17 - SHAFT

Similar to 4.

- The doors are locked and in good repair (DC 15).
- The shaft descends 125' to Level 4: 24.
- Two **Yan Snake-Things** patrol the shaft. There is a cumulative 10% chance per round of them being present. They silently climb the shaft (+8 to sneaking) and attack if the party is here and makes noise.

Go's most numerous servants are humanoid snakemen of vile disposition. The fierce fire of intelligence burns in their otherwise cold, reptilian eyes. The poison of the yan causes a fugue-like state, that enables the victim to be led around without resistance or awareness. This state lasts for 3d4 turns.

Yan Snake-Things (2): Init +4; +4 bite melee (1d4+poison); +4 spear melee or ranged (1d8+2) AC 17; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP: Poisonous bite (Fugue-like state; compliant; DC 14); SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +2; AL C.

18 - RUINED CELLS

Rotting piles of wood amid broken bricks, cloth, bones, rusted metal and other flotsam.

- Searching through the mess, party makes 1 Luck check per turn to discover a rusted iron key. This key opens the secret door to 12, bypassing the spear trap, though the

corrosion must be cleaned off before it will fit the lock properly. NOTE: If not cleaned, the door unlocks but the trap does not disarm.

19— STORAGE

Collapsed wooden shelves. Heavy layer of dust.

- The secret doors (DC 14) are easily pushed open.
- Rooting through the mess turns up a dried-up potion of healing (1 hit die; must add holy water -- DC 13 Fortitude or spend 1 turn nauseous -- -4 to attacks and checks) and a silver key. This key opens the secret doors to/from Area 13, bypassing the traps.

20 — BROKEN STAIRS

The stairs end here. Otherwise, it's 125' down to the floor. The statue of Qo (21) is only 8' from the edge of the stairs.

21 — THE STATUE

A roughly carved, free standing statue of Qo occupies much of the space from Level 2 to Level 4.

- The statue is formed from a white limestone-like rock shot through with greenish quartz-like stone. The statue was once that of the Prophet, but the cultists began re-carving it into a likeness of Qo.
- The statue can be climbed by those skilled in such things (DC 12)
- About 75' below level 3, there is an iron hatch set on the south side of the statue. This hatch leads to a crawlspace (humans must remove bulky armor) and a shaft with iron ladder down to the floor of level 4.

22) THE FLOOR

The floor of the shaft is littered with the fallen stone of the stairway, husks of snake things, dead beetles and bones of dead dwarves. The floor is dominated by the base of the unfinished statue of Qo.

A) The priest sometimes sleeps in a snake husk hanging from the unfinished statue of Qo. There's a 10% chance that the priest is sleeping, otherwise, he's 70% in area 26 or 20% in either area 25 or 23.

Rooting through the priest's "home" reveals the following:

- A bone key (see Area 25)
- An iron staff with a steel pike at one end (acts as a spear, cannot be thrown). The head is that of a two-headed snake and is a relic of Qo (imparts +1 to Spell Checks when calling upon the Destroyer of Worlds).
- A bag of golden baubles (figurines of creatures completely unknown and anathema to those of Lawful or Neutral alignment). There are 20 figurines here for a total value of 1000 gp. These are used as sacrifices to Qo when the priest needs a boost. They are not consecrated to a particular god, but due to their Chaotic nature, Lawful and Neutral characters must spend double the time preparing such a sacrifice. Each imparts a +1 to one Spell Check if sacrificed (or offsets 1 Disapproval point).

B) A faint carving of Nergal is here (DC 15), about head height on the statue of Qo. If the iron wand (area 26) is pressed to this carving, a portal opens in the base of the statue. Stepping through leads to the Temple of Nergal on

Ra Kag Island (forthcoming)

23) ANTECHAMBER

This room is cluttered with cast off snake skins and stinks of occupation.

- **3 Yan Snake-things.** If those in Area 17 have not been encountered, they join the fight in 1d6 rounds.

24) BOTTOM OF THE SHAFT

Cluttered with broken and rotted wood, rope and metal (the elevator). Stink of occupation.

- **2 Yan Snake-things** (Area 17) patrol the elevator shaft.
- The double doors are unlocked.

25) TEMPLE OF QO

Wide space dominated by a 20' tall jade statue of a two-headed snake coiling upon itself. (Could be occupied – see below). Long shallow pool with thick greenish dust in the bottom.

- The double doors to this room are magically locked and can only be bypassed with the bone key (area 22) or a Knock spell (DC 18).
- The statue weighs 500 lbs. and is priceless, though few would purchase such an evil artifact. Each 10lb chunk of the statue is worth 1,000 gp, however, defiling the statue brings the ire of Qo, as desired by the Judge.
- Roll 1d30 -- 25 or higher, and Ransu is performing a ritual here to bring more Yan snake-things through the portal in Area 26. In attendance are the **Yan** in Areas 23 and

24, as well as 2d6 **High Forms**. The ritual consumes the attention of the group, so sneaky parties could enter and take up positions of surprise (DC 18 for the bad guys to notice).

- **Ransu Velo, priest of Qo**, is often here (70% in Area 26, 20% Area 25, 10% Area 22). If not distracted by the ritual, he is alerted when the doors to this chamber are opened (regardless of where he is) and arrives in 1d4 rounds.
- The dust in the pool can be made into healing potions (5 total) when combined with pure alcohol. Heals 2 Hit Die, but anyone drinking a potion must make a Fortitude DC 12 or have their soul dedicated to Qo.
- Upon the walls of the Temple of Qo, one of the Dissident's followers carved the following in dwarven runes. The runes are hidden (Luck check to notice):

This is the last testament of the dwarves of the Steading of the Winter Sun. The Dissenter has fallen to the blades of the False Prophet and his doomed minions. The False Prophet has succumbed to the calling of the Snake Goddess. The Dissenter sealed the portal to keep the Demon trapped in her realm. I have found that this seal is not eternal and may be subverted. The Eye of the Serpent must be found or hell will reign beneath the Winter Sun of Nergal and all will die. At the base of their blasphemous statue is the way marked with Nergal's rune of passage and opened with the iron rod of the Winter Sun. Here the eye is kept safe against our enemies.

Ransu Velo (Great Despair Priest of Qo) Init +2; Atk +8 multiple serpent-headed strikes melee (1d4 each+poison); AC 15; HD 6d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP: Charm of the Destroyer (Spell Check +6), Transformative Poison (DC 15); SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +8; AL C.

Ransu Velo is a horror that was once a man. The Despair Priest attacks his opponents with a flurry of serpent strikes (2d3 hit on every successful attack). The poison of Qo's high priest causes painful lesions to appear on the victim's skin (1d3 Agility damage per day for 1d6 days – with 5 dice of clerical healing required to neutralize). These lesions allow the poison of the Twin-Headed Snake to transform the victim into a gelatinous servant; additionally, the victim is more susceptible to Velo's charm of the destroyer spell (-4 to Will saves).

He carries an iron wand once dedicated to Nergal, however, the wand is without power, other than to open a portal to the Temple of Nergal (see 22B). With the right rituals and sacrifices of the Relics of Nergal, the portal to Qo's prison realm (Area 26) will blow open allowing free passage of her servants and the Destroyer of Worlds herself.

Charm of the Destroyer: On a Spell Check result of 12-15, one victim must make a Will save (DC=Spell Check) or be completely under the control of the Despair Priest for 2d3 hours. Velo can charm one more humanoid per result of 16 or more. On results of 24 or above, the charm is permanent if the save is failed.

26) THE PORTAL

Wide, dark room. Stinks of dead things and swamp. A slow, wet fetid draft emits from the north wall where a black portal sits glimmering gold around the edges.

- The secret door to this room is bypassed with the bone key (as above).

- The portal is impassible without various rituals unknown.
- Ransu is usually here in reverie with his goddess and seeking a way to fully open the portal to her prison realm (and thus free her).

MAGIC ITEMS

Several magical relics may be found in the ruins of Nergal's shrine. All are found in Area 14.

JOURNALS OF THE DISSENTER

The journals of the Dissenter are a record of the founding of the cult of Qo within the dwarven steading in the Hardaway Mountains, the cult's conflict with the Nergalites and their prophet Agol Umberstone, and the successful opening of a one-way portal from the realm of the Twin-Headed Snake. Within the text of the journals, which are written in an ancient form of dwarven, a wizard may spend 1 day per spell level to understand the following spells. Once understood, the spells can be written into a spell book or cast directly from the journals with a standard spell check.

- Shield of the Destroyer (Magic Shield)
- The Dissenter's Horn (Animal Summoning – all animals summoned are reptilian in nature).
- The Light on the Orb – (Locate Object – specifically locates the Orb of the Prison Keepers – an object believed to be necessary to freeing Qo from her prison realm).
- Nullifying Field (Dispel Magic)
- Wave of the Hand (Dispel Magic)
- Dissenter's Quake (Transmute Earth)
- Breath of the North (Control Ice)
- Dissenter's Duplication (Replication)
- The Ancient Circle (Magic Bulwark)

ANGEL OF THE WINTER SUN (TEXT IN AMBER)

Within a bone and leather case rests an ancient text scratched into a small pelka leaf preserved in amber. The case is carved in symbols warning against using the text found within. Unless a spellcaster has some sort of magnification, the scroll is difficult to read and use (-2 to spell checks), however a Read Magic spell cast at the 20-23 range allows the text to be interpreted without penalty. Clerics who read the text immediately determine that the spell *Remove Curse* can be cast from this relic. The spell is cast at +2 to the spell check. The text, when read, is a short scripture concerning the being Cuth, avatar and servant of Nergal. The Angel of the Morning Sun is said to dwell in the city of Cuthah at the delta of the rivers Urmec and Thar. No indication where these places are in relation to the material world is given.

ALLEGORY OF THE SEVEN ELVEN MAIDENS (INCOMPLETE)

This scroll is written in the elven language in ink derived from crushed emeralds and squid ink. It tells a story of the Seven Elven Maidens, fabled queens of ancient elven clans that emerged from the earth and lead their people across the world. One of the queens, Genovefa the Bright Wind, led her people through the wilderness where they met an old man. The man taught Genovefa's clan the secrets of the Winter Sun, and they became converts to the purpose of Nergal.

Elves that read this allegory must make a Will save (DC 16) or have the Patron Bond spell for Nergal cast upon them automatically. The spell casting automatically burns 10 points of spell burn from the reader and is cast at a +10 to the check (total of +20). If a natural 1 is rolled on the

forced spell check, the spell resulted is 32+ and the victim suffers both Major Corruption and Patron Taint (Nergal). In any case, the elf receives Patron Bond (Nergal) and Invoke Patron (Nergal), as free spells.

Other spellcasters that read the scroll (even with Read Magic) detect no spells within the text.

AGA-KRUL (FEARLESS ALLY) – SPEAR +1

Krul, huntsman and warrior of great prowess took up with the Nergalite dwarves, leading with him his clan of fierce warriors and acting as bodyguard to Agol Umberstone, the prophet of Nergal. Together they traveled to the interior of Kharg Island and built a fine temple to the Winter Sun. From there, Krul and his clan traveled with the Nergalites to the mountains where the dwarves built a steading and shrine to Nergal.

When the Dissenter freed the serpent children of Qo and forced conversions upon the Nergalites, Krul stood with his master and the faithful few wielding his great bone spear against the vile children of the Destroyer of Worlds. It is said that Krul's spear killed the Dissenter and allowed a small group of loyal Nergalites to escape from the dwarven steading while both Krul and the prophet were martyred.

Aga-Krul is a 10' long spear with a bone shaft and a bronze head carved with dwarven runes glorifying the hunt and battle. Due to the many supernatural creatures killed by its original owner, the spear has taken on a strange intelligence and burns with a vengeful purpose. In the hands of any character, the combatant receives a +1 to attack and damage. If the bearer is fighting a "giant" sized creature, including humanoid giants or larger

versions of otherwise normal creatures (such as giant spiders, mammoths, and the like) the spear inflicts an additional 1d3 damage. The spear itself communicates to the bearer with mental tugs, half-remembered dreams and, occasionally, more direct methods. These mental pushes allow the bearer to determine whether a given entity is of the Lawful alignment, and a potential ally.

Aga-Krul seeks to avenge its original bearer against the lingering spirit of the Dissenter. The first convert to worship of Qo among the Nergalites was slain by Krul, but its spirit was granted a new form which currently resides in the old temple to Nergal on the island in Wroten Lake. Should the bearer face this demon, Aga-Krul may be thrown with an unerring strike (+20 to the first attack) and deal 2d6 damage, plus the wielder's Strength bonus. The spear immediately returns to the bearer's hand. In addition, if the Dissenter is struck by Aga-Krul, one of its special abilities (randomly determined) is neutralized for 24 hours.

RELICS OF THE WINTER SUN

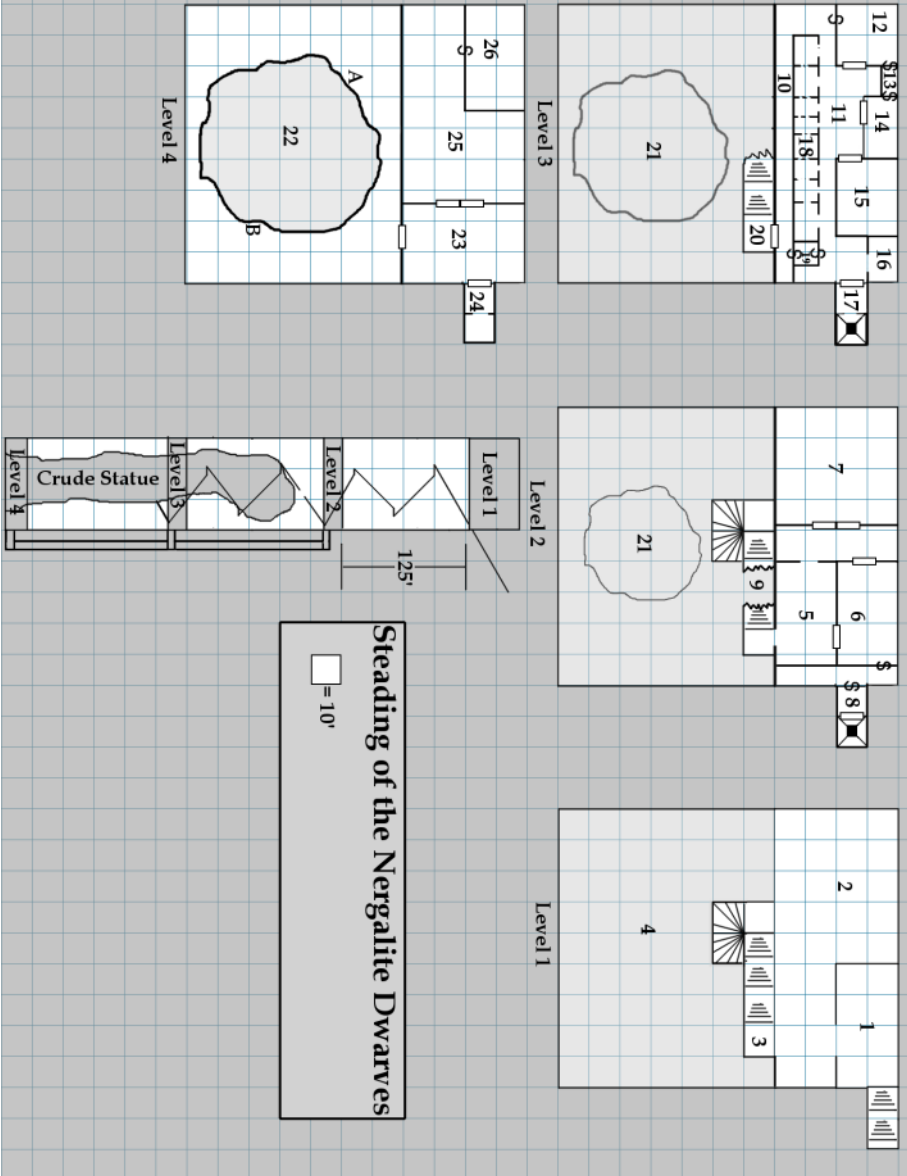
Found within the treasury of the Nergalite dwarves are three relics to Nergal once used by Agol Umberstone to lead his people into the wilderness. These relics consist of a steel helmet and a pair of black leather gloves, all marked with silver rooster devices, and a small golden statuette of a fighting rooster.

The relics function for a cleric of Nergal or a wizard/elf bound as a servant. The power of the relics depends on Nergal's Patron Bond Spell Check results. The affected relic must be present and worn during the Patron Bond ritual.

NOTE: Results are iterative, thus if a 20 is rolled, all of the previous results are gained, in addition to results 20-24.

Patron Bond Result	Helmet	Gloves	Statuette
1	Additional Patron Taint; Relics reject the current bearer for all time.		
2-11	Relics reject the current bearer until a second Patron Bond with Nergal is performed; No further effects.		
12-13	Bearer receives the ability to turn entities unholy to Nergal as a cleric of current level.		
14-17	The wearer receives a +2 to saves against sound-based attacks	When holding an ingestible poison, the silver discs on the gloves tarnish.	The bearer may ask 1 weal/woe question once per day if 150gp value is sacrificed to Nergal (each instance)
18-19	Turn Unholy Checks +1		
20-23	The wearer receives +2 to saves against vision-based attacks	Ingestible poisons are neutralized when held.	The bearer receives a prophetic vision once per day when a question is asked and if 250gp value is sacrificed to Nergal.
24+	No further effects until Nergal restored fully to the world.		

STEADING OF THE NERGalITES



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Death in the Deeps!

IN THE STEADING OF THE NERGALITES

The ancient shrine of Nergal, God of the White Sun, lies under Rurarik Mountain, a dead testament to the division within the dwarven outcasts' devotion to the Nergalite prophet, Agol Umberstone. When the Dissenter gathered his own believers around the banners of Qo, the Twin-Headed Snake and Destroyer of Worlds, his Nergalite brethren converted or died at their hands. Now, ages later, the devotees to Qo are starting to stir in their cocoons, ready to emerge in their new forms and their new purpose to free the Destroyer from her eons-long prison!

Steading of the Nergalites is an adventure intended for 3-5 DCC RPG characters levels 1-2.