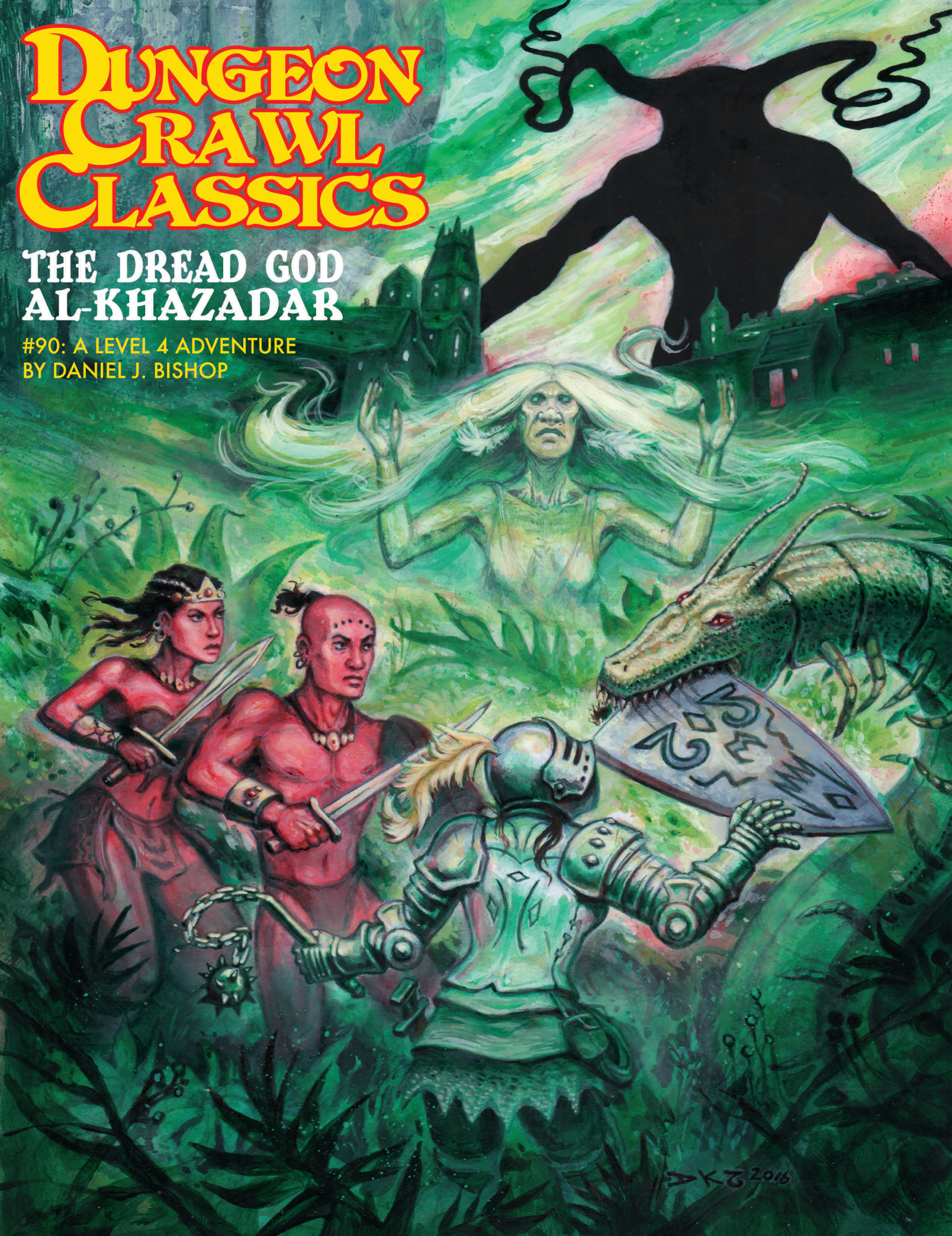


# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

## THE DREAD GOD AL-KHAZADAR

#90: A LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE  
BY DANIEL J. BISHOP



THE  
SMOKING  
MIRROR

THE  
DYING  
SEA

4

MADGOD'S RIFT

PLAINS OF  
URJIB

3



2

A PART  
OF  
MADKEEN

1 HEX = 2 MILES

BERZAL FOREST

LAKE  
URQUA

# THE DREAD GOD AL-KHAZADAR

A LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE

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# INTRODUCTION



now, O Beloved, that in those ancient days, when Punjar was no more than a village beside the great water, there fell a Shadow. This Shadow, Al-Khazadar, sought the souls of all within Punjar, and none could say him Nay. But there came to the Shadow a fishwife, wise in the ways of spirits, who bargained with Al-Khazadar. For with the far sight of a god, Al-Khazadar could see that the crude village had within it the seed of a thriving city, and that if he forbore to consume the meager souls before him now, a great feast would be spread before him generations hence. Thus it was that Punjar grew with a pestilence corrupting its heart, even from the first, and ever the looming Shadow of the Dread God Al-Khazadar's return.

— Jeren the Elder, *The Shadow Scrolls*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The setup for this adventure may be considered too railroad-y for some. I have tried to set up a situation, and then allow the players to determine how to deal with it. There is a lot of leeway for PC choices within the scenario but, in the end, dealing with the Dread God successfully is going to lead to the Cradle of Al-Khazadar. Some problems just don't have multiple solutions. I have done my best to ensure that player choices have a real effect on how the adventure plays out.

At its heart, The Dread God Al-Khazadar hinges on the players being forced to sacrifice one of their own in order to succeed, and how willing that would-be sacrifice is to die. There are no rules to help the players decide how to handle this. In my opinion, this is player agency at its finest. How do you deal with the unavoidable?

In most games I've run, the players are trying to move slowly and carefully, spending the time to heal and recover spells, while I am trying to offer some time pressure to keep them moving. In this adventure, it is the judge who attempts to delay the PCs, while the players try to move faster as soon as they understand the nature of their recurrent dreams. It makes for a fun change.

Finally, although guidance is given for encounters within Punjar itself, and dealing with the alien denizens of the distant world of Al-Khazadar's birth, Madkeen, ultimately these are only guidelines. These are areas where the judge should follow the players' lead, using those guidelines to flesh out whatever mad schemes the players may devise. If you find yourself at a loss, just ask, "What would Edgar Rice Burroughs do?"

I hope you have as much fun with it as we did.

— Daniel Bishop

# ADVENTURE SUMMARY



hundreds of years ago, the Madka traveled the galaxy in shining rockets. On many of the worlds they discovered, they were treated as gods. The Madka created gates allowing near-instantaneous transit from world to world. The Madka scientist-mage Al-Khazadar was not content to be thought a god, though – he wished to become one in truth. He created a device, the Cradle, to steal the power inherent in the planet Madkeen, creating a cancer that would, if unchecked, grow to consume the world. Little did Al-Khazadar care. He fled the world of his birth through a functioning Gate, seeking the souls of sapient beings in order to maintain his apotheosis.

Al-Khazadar came to Punjar when it was nothing more than a small fishing village. Convinced by the witch-wife, Marsulla, that Punjar did not yet have enough spiritual energy to sustain him, Al-Khazadar moved on to other worlds. But, before he did, the Dread God set his seal upon the growing village, so that all souls within it would belong to him upon his return.

Although parts of this adventure are written to take place in the city of Punjar, the judge can use any city with only slight modifications.

## PROLOGUE: DREAD GOD'S SHADOW



ehind you are the eastern gates of the city of Punjar. Before you, dark against the rising sun of dawn, looms the Dread God Al-Khazadar – a man-like shape with two great, backwards sweeping horns that dwindle into infinity, standing 40 feet high. There is no light where the Dread God stands. Instead, He appears to be made of shadow itself, a titanic man-shaped hole of blackness, without even the glimmer of stars for eyes. It is as though a hole in reality itself has come to destroy you. Roll for initiative!

The PCs first encounter the Dread God Al-Khazadar in their dreams, at the start of this adventure. The dream ends when the second PC falls. The purpose of this encounter is to establish the main threat without crippling the PCs or causing a TPK. Although there are no consequences to dying in the initial dream, this nightmare encounter is repeated each time the PCs attempt to gain a night's sleep, regardless of where they are, with ever-increasing consequences. The same dream is happening across the city of Punjar. The Dread God feeds upon fear and despair.

**Dread God Al-Khazadar:** Init +5; Atk touch +8 melee (2d10) or ray +8 ranged (2d8); AC 10; HD 10d8; hp 60; MV 50'; Act 2d20; SP not affected by magic, not harmed by weapons, recover damage, ray of darkness, create spawn; SV Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +20; AL C.

Al-Khazadar can shoot a ray of utter darkness and cold up to 120', striking with a +8 attack modifier for 2d8 damage. When encountered in these dreams, Al-Khazadar cannot be affected by any spell or magic, nor can any weapon cause



him lasting damage. In effect, at the end of each round, the Dread God recovers all damage taken. When a creature is reduced to 0 hp by Al-Khazadar's attacks, the flesh sloughs off of it, and it arises the next round as a matte black skeleton, which immediately attacks.

**Black skeleton:** Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3 plus 1d3 Strength); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP undead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C.

When the second PC falls, read or paraphrase the following:

*You awoke in a cold sweat. Three nights Punjar has been plagued by this nightmare – the foreboding gloom of an approaching god. In your dreams, you can feel that fleeing is useless, for the Shadow will touch you no matter how fast or far you run. The name of this god, Al-Khazadar, is whispered in alleys and taverns. This time, however, the dream is different, for before you woke, you heard the voice of an ancient woman whisper, "If you would be free of the Shadow, seek the Black Circle in the Smoke, for your answers are imprisoned therein." The Smoke is the oldest part of Punjar, a dense and partially ruined slum near the Plague Gate. With a little effort, you have learned that a mysterious dark passage opened along Dim Lane, and that the arch above it is marked with a soot-blackened circle.*

Everyone in Punjar is subject to the same dreams. The city panics as people try to deal with the end. Businesses are closed, and the only way for the PCs to obtain new equipment is to become looters. Some people attempt to flee while others commit crimes of passion, rage, or despair. All feeds the Dread God. The judge may use the following encounters anywhere within Punjar, as the PCs attempt to deal with the Shadow that has fallen here:

## SUBSEQUENT DREAMS

Each night (or each time the PCs decide to try to sleep), they encounter the Dread God in their dreams. Regardless of what occurs in the dream, they awake with all of their abilities intact. However, once the adventure has begun, these dreams can sap the strength of the PCs. Each time they awaken, each PC who dies in the dream must roll 1d7 and consult the following chart. Subtract the PC's Luck modifier, and add +1 for each previous time the PC has rolled on the chart. Effects are cumulative:

- 1-2 The PC takes no harm from the dream.
- 3-4 The PC takes no harm from the dream, but gets no benefit from rest. Wounds are not healed, spells are not regained, Luck is not restored, and disapproval has not reset.
- 5-6 Not only does the PC gain no benefit from rest, but he or she takes 1 point of damage to a random ability score (not including Luck).
- 7+ As 5-6, above, but the damage is 1d3.

0 or less The PC learns to manipulate the dreamscape. That PC no longer adds the modifier for rolling on this chart more than once.

Some players may attempt to simply avoid having their characters sleep. Allow a Fortitude save to avoid sleep (DC 10 + 2 per night without sleep). After the second night without sleep, the character suffers a -1d penalty on the dice chain to all rolls. This penalty increases by -1d per additional sleepless night, and resets if the character gets a night's sleep. However, the penalty returns if the character misses even a single subsequent night's sleep, beginning again at -1d.

Some players may turn on each other to avoid having to roll, and others may attempt to sacrifice themselves to determine strategically who dies (and therefore has to roll). These are valid choices, and may greatly affect the outcome of the final encounter.

- Soldiers of the Overlord protect a messenger proclaiming a great boon to any who can destroy or drive off the Dread God Al-Khazadar. Doom respects no rank, and even the Overlord is subject to this supernatural dread. "Whosoever can drive off or destroy the Dread God who threatens Punjar, let him present himself before the Overlord, and whatsoever boon he may ask shall be granted!" No one is admitted before the task is done.
- A priestess of Justicia attempts to give solace to a group of street urchins, but the Shadow is upon her as well, and, if the PCs engage her, she will demand of them, "Who is this Dread God? And why do our gods not protect us from Him?"

- A group of flagellants with striped, bloody backs profess that only those who seek forgiveness in the eyes of Al-Khazadar will be spared.
- Thieves steal openly from the weak (food, clothing items, etc.), and then simply do not care. They drop the stolen goods and let them be trampled into the pavement. They then do the same. If the PCs intervene, or the thieves target the PCs, use 2d6 bandits from page 432 of the DCC RPG rulebook. They are armed with clubs and daggers (1d4+1 damage) instead of scimitars and javelins.
- A doomsayer cries out, "The End is Near! Repent your sins and prepare your soul to be devoured!"
- A mob of 3d6+6 normal folk is (roll 1d4): (1) beating a looter to death, (2) seeking looters to beat, (3) looting a storefront, or (4) engaged in an orgy of violence.

**Mob member:** Init +0; Atk club +0 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL varies.

- Looters break into a business or home; 1 in 3 are defended, and a melee breaks out. If the PCs intervene, treat either side as mob members, above.
- Foreign merchants who arrived after the Dread God's Shadow fell will do or pay anything to get out of the city. There is an 80% chance that all of their goods within Punjar have already been lost. Otherwise, they can offer up to 2d12 x 100 gp for aid, but there is a 60% chance that this comes in the form of bulky trade goods.
- Bravos intent on dying before the Dread God arrives have taken to the streets, and embroil anyone who looks dangerous in combat. There are 1d6 in the group. Treat most as bandit heroes (see page 432 of the core rulebook); a solitary bravo is treated as a bandit captain (page 433).

## CHAPTER ONE: THE BLACK CIRCLE

**P**unjar is linked through "Nether Gates" – eldritch gates that link the city to other parts of Aereth, and even other worlds. In the wake of the Dread God's return, the Gate of the Black Circle, which has been closed since Al-Khazadar's first coming, opens up again. Even long-time inhabitants of Punjar may believe that the "Nether Gates" refer simply to Punjar's many gates and gatehouses, but the PCs may know more based on spell, rumor, divine portents, or patron instructions.

The Black Circle is an extra-dimensional space, extending some 110' below Punjar. Dwarves, miners, and other characters with experience underground will be well aware that the entire area should be flooded. It is instead as dry as a bone.



**Area 1 – The Black Circle:** *With some little effort, you have located an archway upon a half-ruined wall on the north side of Dim Lane. Above the arch is an engraved circle, blackened with soot. Beneath the arch is a Stygian darkness through which no light penetrates. Yet this truth burns within each of you, as though planted there by gods or magic: If you wish to uncover the secrets of the Dread God Al-Khazadar, this is where you must go.*

The Black Circle is primarily a maze, with rough walls of stone. No light works within, except as described below, although torches and lanterns retain their heat. Infravision does not work. Within the darkness, there is a continuous buzzing, which waxes and wanes, as though from swarms of large flies. Sometimes, PCs feel sticky webs across faces or hands, or feel the stick-legs of crawling insects, or the bite of tiny spiders. These are all phantasmal, being manifestations of Al-Khazadar's will.

Unless precautions are taken, the first person who first steps beyond the arch must make a DC 10 Reflex save or go tumbling down 20' of stairs for 2d5 damage. After a short landing, another DC 10 Reflex save must be made to avoid falling down 10' of stairs for 1d5 damage. Characters who take even basic precautions, such as probing ahead, can pass down these two sets of stairs safely.

Once characters have entered the "rings" of the maze, each ring toward the center is also 20' deeper than the previous, and the stairs between are very steep and narrow. Characters who take no precautions when entering these stairs from above must succeed in a DC 20 Reflex save or take 2d6 damage, with each "6" indicating a broken bone. Basic precautions, such as tapping ahead with a pole, reduce the DC of the Reflex save to 10. Climbing blindly up or down these steep, narrow stairs is difficult enough to require a DC 5 Strength, Agility, or climb walls check (whichever is better), with failure indicating a fall for 1d6 damage.

Once the PCs have passed into the Black Circle, the Nether Gate is re-sealed, and the steps leading outward can no longer be found.

In addition, there are several areas of the map where events are triggered. In playtests, the use of *second sight* helped avoid these.

**Area 1A – Black Dogs:** *Snarls echo in the darkness from either side. You hear claws on stone, sinews tense, and you can feel the hot breath of unseen creatures in the darkness.*

At each of these locations, the party is attacked by 3 feral black dogs. Because of the darkness, any successful attack has a 50% chance to miss (but the dogs are not so constrained!). They appear by magic, and when slain disappear with sulfurous fumes.

**Black dogs (3):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d5; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP attacks against dogs have a 50% miss chance due to darkness, see in dark, death throes; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 1B – Razor Hawk:** *There is a whirl of feathered wings in the darkness, and then something is upon you!*

The razor hawk has sharp metallic wings and a beak like a scimitar. Like the dogs, it can see the PCs despite the darkness, but any successful attack against it has a 50% chance to miss. Worse, if the attack does miss, the hawk's last target must succeed in a Luck check (1d20 under current Luck), or the attacking PC's attack must be re-rolled against that character (with no miss chance). If slain, the razor hawk simply disappears, and cannot be found.

**Razor hawk:** Init +4; Atk wings and beak +4 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 10' or fly 50'; Act 1d20; SP attacks against hawk have a 50% miss chance, Luck check to avoid striking last target if missed, see in dark, death throes; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 1C – Explosive Fog:** *As you grope forward in the dark, a light behind you illuminates the rough black stone. Although it is no brighter than soft moonlight, it seems to burn your eyes. A ball of white fog 10 feet in diameter rolls slowly down the curved passage behind you, from about 40 feet away.*

The fog moves 10' toward the PCs at the start of each round. When it comes into contact with metal (as little as an arrowhead suffices) it explodes, doing 4d6 damage at the point of contact, 3d6 to targets up to 10' away, 2d6 between 10' and 20', and 1d6 from 20' to 30' (in all cases, DC 15 Reflex save for half). When the fog is encountered, the PCs are moving down a curved passage to a dead end. A DC 20 Agility check would be needed to pass the fog without touching it, and armor check penalties apply.

The explosion is so bright that those who see it must succeed in a DC 10 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d3 turns. In the darkness, though, this result may not be immediately apparent.

**Area 1D – Bronze Horn:** *You hear a note, as though from a great bronze horn. It sounds as though it were far away from you, echoing and re-echoing among the peaks of a distant high mountain.*

This has no game effect, and serves merely to unnerve the characters.



**Area 2 – The Witch's Prophecy:** *As you reach the end of the steep stairway, you find yourself in a 20-foot diameter chamber, dimly lit, but bright enough to hurt eyes fresh from straining in the Stygian darkness. The walls, ceiling, and floor are of rough black stone. A raised circle of stone, 5 feet in diameter, centers the room. Upon this sits a naked woman, so ancient and sere that she seems little more than a skeleton. Her unkempt white hair surrounds her like a thin blanket. The nails of her fingers and toes are long and twisted, broken in places, but uncut for centuries. With a voice atrophied from long disuse, she whispers, "Welcome, champions, to my prison. At long last, I shall be free."*

This is Marsulla, the fishwife and witch who long ago bargained with Al-Khazadar. The Dread God placed her in this prison and made her undying, so long as Al-Khazadar should endure. Although she ages, she needs neither food nor drink. Not eating, she needs not eliminate. All that was once here, other than her body – clothing, pillows, food, waste – has long ago turned to dust.

The judge may use the following answers to typical questions, and extrapolate additional material therefrom:

**Q. Who are you?**

*A. I was once called Marsulla, when I was young and beautiful, so many centuries ago. A minor witch, then, on that day when Al-Khazadar first appeared. It was I who bargained with him then, mortgaging the future to save the present. He would have consumed us then, but I bid him wait. I saved my people, but I failed to save myself.*

**Q. How did you get here?**

*A. I was imprisoned here by Al-Khazadar, cursed to endure unending ages, until he is destroyed. All has fallen to dust in my*

prison, save myself. I would beg you to kill me now, but I cannot die so long as he endures. Nor can I leave this chamber. Therefore, you must bring him to an end.

**Q. Did you summon us?**

A. I have often spoken to the darkness in the ages of my imprisonment. Sometimes, the darkness has whispered back. I was able to send out a summons, and I was able to open the Gate into my prison long enough to allow you to enter. But you cannot retreat in that direction. I could not keep it open forever. The way is closed.

**Q. How can we get out of here?**

A. This round stone conceals a passage leading to the Gate that brought Al-Khazadar to this world. Move the stone, and you may travel to the world of his birth.

**Q. Who is Al-Khazadar? (Or, what is the world of his birth?)**

A. Long I have sought to answer that question, but the shadows will not say.

**Q. How can we defeat him?**

A. You must seek out the source of his power, for only there can you weaken him enough to defeat him. One of you must share in his power to make him mortal enough to slay. I warn you because I must – he who shares in the Dread God's power entwines the fate of Al-Khazadar with his own. The Dread God cannot be defeated without one of your deaths.

Marsulla asks to be killed in exchange for what she knows. However, the will of Al-Khazadar will not allow her to die. She survives whatever hideous wounds the PCs inflict, short of total immolation, and even in that case her spirit is tied visibly to this place.

Area 2 is 90' below street level. The 5'-diameter stone circle in the center of the room can be moved aside with a DC 25 Strength check (up to three characters may work together), revealing a shaft that extends 20' to the floor of another tunnel running northward. How the characters get down the shaft is up to them. Using the "hang and drop" method requires a DC 10 Agility check to avoid 1d6 damage; merely jumping requires a DC 15 Agility check to avoid 2d6 damage. In either case, any natural "6" indicates a broken bone.

**Area 3 – The Nether Gate:** Below the black stone, you discover a tunnel running 40 feet to the north, ending in a shimmering green curtain of light. The air feels charged with ancient magic, and you can feel the hairs standing up on the back of your neck.

The curtain of light is one of Punjar's Nether Gates, an ancient way to traverse great distances quickly. Anything that touches the curtain is instantly transported to the Monolith (area 1) on Madkeen. When all the PCs are transported, continue with Chapter Two, below.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE SUNDERED WORLD



**Area 1 – Arrival Point:** You feel the power of the gate rip you apart. There is an aeons-long cold as you move bodiless between the stars. Ahead is a warm yellow sun, a world turning around it like a jewel hanging amid diamond-studded darkness. Your awareness is pulled toward a flaw in the gem, a shadowy scar upon the world, a dark cancer that draws you near. With effort you avoid falling directly into that trap, becoming embodied once more in a disorienting riot of color, scent, touch, and sound. You have fallen onto scarlet grass under enormous trees, their trunks each 100 feet or more in diameter, their crimson-leaved branches beginning 50 feet above you. A transit that seemed like ages must surely have taken mere seconds. Then you become aware of grunting squeals and screams.

The PCs arrive on a grassy sward 50' in diameter, atop a great stone monolith rising 20' from the surrounding jungle. Narrow stairways lead to the forest floor. The squeals and screams come from the northeast, about 100' away through the thick undergrowth. Should the PCs pause to listen, the screams stop, but the squeals continue, as well as thrashing noises in the undergrowth.

The stone monolith marks the location of one of the ancient gates of the Madka, although it no longer functions except as a reception point. The stones are carved with images of space ships and ancient astronauts, now hidden beneath thick flowering vines.





## A NEW WORLD

Madkeen is a somewhat smaller world than Aereth, causing the PCs to have unusual physical prowess. When making a roll relying on Strength, PCs gain a +2 bonus to their checks. This includes melee attack rolls and damage rolls. They gain this same bonus to Initiative and Reflex saves.

Wizard and elf spell checks are at -1d on the dice chain. Cleric spells are at -2d. These penalties are due to the influence of Al-Khazadar, and disappear if he is defeated. Future trips to Madkeen may actually see cleric spell checks at a +1d bonus for a while, as various gods struggle to fill the vacuum.

Assuming the PCs follow the noises, they will come upon the following scene:

*Pushing through the thick jungle growth, you come across an incredible sight – an enormous creature, like a gigantic pig crossed with a titanic lizard, paws and snuffles upon the ground. Its beady red eyes look up from behind a blue-green frill of hardened bone. In a low branch of one of the enormous trees crouch a man and a woman with red skin and golden eyes. They are muscular and fit, two handsome youths in the prime of their life. The lizard-like boar gives a grunting squeal, and slams its bony frill and head into the trunk of their tree, attempting to shake them to the ground. Thick ropes of saliva dangle from its jaws.*

The *vatta* is one of the most dangerous predators in the jungle – a nightmare cross between a protoceratopsian dinosaur and a carnivorous swine. It can charge a foe, striking with its bony head covering for double normal damage. If the *vatta* does more than 10 points of damage with its charge, the target must succeed in a DC 10 Reflex save or be knocked prone, taking an additional 2d8 points of damage from trampling.

**Vatta:** Init -2; Atk frill +2 melee (2d8) or bite +4 melee (1d8+2); AC 17; HD 8d8+16; hp 52; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP charge and trample; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +0; AL N.

The two young people in the trees are **Zardu** and **Zarya**, twin youths of the *Madka*. They appear much as do the humans of Aereth, but their skin is brick red, their thick hair is black, and their eyes are golden. Although initial communication is by halting gesture, the Madka are mildly telepathic, allowing them to quickly teach their language to the PCs. The judge should assume that the PCs are able to communicate effectively with the Madka by the time they reach the Tree City of Val-Alakar (see **area 2**) if they are able to roll under their Intelligence on 1d20. Otherwise, a new check may be made each day to learn the Madka tongue.

Zardu and Zarya serve three purposes: (1) they allow the judge to give the PCs information about Madkeen, and direct them to the Cradle of Al-Khazadar, (2) they may be used as replacement PCs if needed, and (3) they can be used as love interests if the players are so inclined.



**Zardu and Zarya:** Init +1; Atk by weapon +1d6+1 melee (by weapon +1d6) or by weapon +1d6+1 ranged (by weapon +1d6); AC 11; HD 4d12; hp 34 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Deed Die (d6), critical range of 19-20, birth auger (the bull, +1 to melee attacks, already factored in), +1 Atk bonus with short swords, mild telepathy; SV Fort +, Ref +1, Will +2; AL L. Str 12; Agl 13; Sta 10; Int 12; Per 16; Luck 7.

Zardu and Zarya are atavisms, throwbacks to a more vital age, before the coming of Al-Khazadar. Son and daughter of the *Pal-Omad* (or king) of Val-Alakar, they are respectively the *Otan* (prince) and *Utan* (princess) of Val-Alakar. Unlike most of their people, they are interested in more than a life of lazy indolence, awaiting the end of all things. They came into the jungle on *preths* – a kind of horse-like reptile, trained to bear riders – but these ran off when the *vatta* attacked. Zardu was thrown, and Zarya leapt to his defense. Although armed with short swords and slender lances, these are of little use against the *vatta*, and they are grateful for the PCs' rescue. They also have many questions, which they are unable to make intelligible at first, as it is clear that the PCs do not hail from Madkeen.

Once communications are established, Zardu and Zarya can tell the PCs the following:

*Madkeen was once a happy world. Our freeholders grew enough food for all. We had conquered disease and age. Our skies and our waters were clean. We had learned, though painstaking trials, to create machines that served us well, without despoiling either our basic humanity or our world.*

*Then came the scientist Al-Khazadar. With honeyed words he bent the ear of the Great Pal-Omad Markasha, that he might perform his experiments in the wastelands we knew as the Smoking Mirror, unseen by any eye save those of hand-picked slaves and boot-licks. This was a holy place in those days, the source of a gas which made our oracles see far and speak truth, fumed forth from deep within Madkeen.*

*Al-Khazadar brought great machines to the Smoking Mirror, and the Cradle of Al-Khazadar was formed. Amazed as you may be to hear it, all of Madkeen rejoiced, save a few holy men and scholars, for they thought much of the words of Al-Khazadar. But he used the machines to force the gas from the ground, causing great tremors and quakes, and he condensed the holy substance into a solid shadow, so that he alone could use all of its potential, and so doing he drew power from all the souls of Madkeen.*

*This forest is a bastion of life in a dying world, and who knows what strange forms may have developed elsewhere once Madkeen's very soul was sundered?*

How they react to the PCs depends, in part, on how much the PCs tell them. If they merely admit to seeking the Cradle of Al-Khazadar, the twins react with horror. It is a cursed place, and no one would willingly travel there. If the PCs share their intent to bring an end to Al-Khazadar's godhood, Zardu and Zarya will do anything in their power to help.

## LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Appendix N fiction and planetary romances are replete with protagonists falling in love with the first alien princess they meet. To simulate this, any character can declare another his or her *true love* at any time, although no character can have more than one true love.

When making rolls to defend or support one's true love, including daring rescue attempts, the character gains a +1d bonus to all die rolls. If one's true love is captured, or if one is separated for a long period from his or her true love (judge's determination), the character loses 1d3 points of Luck until reunited with his or her true love. If the character seems unconcerned about the fate of his or her true love, the judge may impose harsher (or permanent) penalties.

If two or more characters choose the same true love, only one gains the bonus (chosen by highest Luck, highest Personality, randomly, or otherwise as the judge desires). All others are instead *obsessed* and gain the +1d bonus only when working actively against their rival(s). Each day of being obsessed, a character may make a DC 15 Willpower save to shake the obsession. Being obsessed does not count as having a true love, and the character so affected can declare another true love later.

Specifically, the twins will suggest that the party “Return with us to our city, Val-Alakar. There, with the Council’s approval, you may obtain the use of one of the few remaining sky-sleds to cross the Plains of Urjib to the Smoking Mirror. It would be the fastest way, and the safest. The Plains of Urjib are home to the hideous reptile-men, the P’quoth.”

Zarya adds: “It will not be easy to sway the Council. But our father is Pal-Omad of Val-Alakar, and I am certain that he will do what he can.”

## A BRIEF LOOK AT MADKEEN

**Berzal Forest:** This is a jungle of massive trees and dense undergrowth. Humidity is high. Travel along a path is at half normal movement speed; travel away from paths is at one-quarter normal speed. Brightly-colored reptilian birds seem to call out with human tongues in unknown languages. There is an endless cadence of insects that seems even louder away from the forest floor, and spiky *quis-flies* draw blood.

**Dying Sea:** A lemon-yellow color, with brownish foam collecting upon the shore, the Dying Sea has become mildly acidic since the time of Al-Khazadar’s apotheosis. Immersion in the Dying Sea causes 1 point of damage every 10 minutes, but there are fish and other creatures which have adapted to the acidity.

**Lake Urqua:** This freshwater lake is still viable, and feeds the Patamar River, which supplies fresh water to the Tree City of Val-Alakar. The edges are a sedge-filled marsh. Predators and prey gather at the shores and in the shallows.

**Mad God’s Rift:** The largest of the fissures in the Smoking Mirror, this is the location of the Cradle of Al-Khazadar. The bottom has never been measured. A mile down, the Rift is filled with a silvery, mirror-like fog that obscures whatever lies below.

**Paramar River:** This sluggish river flows from Lake Urqua to the Dying Sea. The closer it gets to the sea, the more unhealthy it appears. From Lake Urqua to the Plains of Urjib, the river is known as the Upper Paramar; from the edge of the Berzal to the Dying Sea, it is the Lower Paramar.

**Plains of Urjib:** A vast plain of scrub, where the tribes of the fierce P’quoth rule supreme, the Plains of Urjib become less hospital the farther north one goes, until one reaches the Smoking Mirror. This was not always the case. Before the apotheosis of Al-Khazadar, this was a fertile area, and there was friendship between the P’quoth and the Madka. Many small rills run to the Lower Paramar on the eastern end of the plains, but the western end is drier and the plants are thornier.

**The Smoking Mirror:** Originally a plane where blue *sotama* gas seeped through the ground, offering visions of the universe to those who breathed in the fumes, the Smoking Mirror was a holy area. Al-Khazadar created machines which forced a chemical sludge of his invention into the ground. He was able to obtain enough pure liquid *sotama*

to achieve his apotheosis (and a small additional amount that would allow a PC to contest that apotheosis), but the damage to the Smoking Mirror was terrible. The plain was blackened and the ground turned to hard glass. Rifts and craters run through the land. The dark grey smoke that issues now from the Smoking Mirror is poisoned by the malice of the Dread God, who draws sustenance from the slow death of his birth-world.

## SOME CREATURES OF MADKEEN



he *vatta* may rule the jungles of Madkeen, but there are many other creatures on this world. The judge may use any of these creatures to generate additional encounters. This may be necessary if the PCs explore beyond the general parameters of this adventure, or return to Madkeen in the future.

**Anvar:** Init +0; Atk bite +3 melee (2d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; MV 30’ or dig 10’; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60’, sense vibrations, attack from below; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

A semi-reptilian saber-toothed mole, *anvars* live in small colonies beneath the Plains of Urjib. They can sense vibrations in the ground above their tunnels, and may attack from ambush, dragging their kills down below the plains, where they are used as fertilizer for fungal gardens. *Anvars* do not actually eat meat, but subsist on a bluish-gray fungus. A handful of this fungus, eaten fresh, heals 1 die of damage. The P’quoth know ways of storing the fungus to retain some of its healing properties, but this is lore that they do not share.

The average *anvar* is about 7 feet long, but individuals encountered upon the plains can be as small as 3’ or as long as 12’. Among the P’quoth it is said that mutated *anvars* dwell in tunnels below the Smoking Mirror, but this may be nothing more than a story to frighten the young.

A typical encounter is with 3d6 *anvars* working together. An encounter may begin when creatures break through the upper surface of *anvar* tunnels (30% chance of 1d6 *anvars* being present, otherwise 3d6 will arrive from their tunnels after 3d6 rounds; if *anvars* are present, they automatically surprise). Other encounters begin with an ambush from below, where the *anvars* burst out of barely-covered tunnels as creatures pass. In this case, if the *anvars* gain surprise (5 in 6 chance), any creature targeted in the first round must succeed in a DC 10 Reflex save or be knocked prone. A lone *anvar* encountered on the surface is typically male, and seeks to avoid the encounter.

**Corrodile:** Init +0; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8 plus poison and latch); AC 18; HD 5d8+10; MV 30’ or swim 40’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.

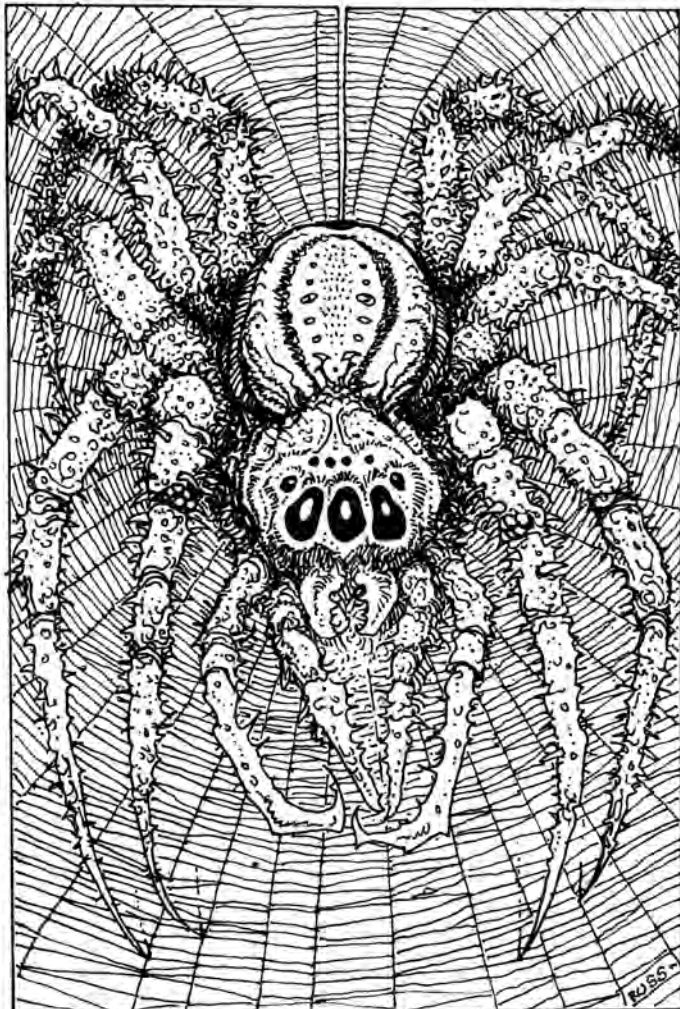
A predator found in the area of Lake Urqua and the Upper Paramar, a *corrodile* is a 15-foot-long cross between a centipede and an alligator. *Corrodiles* are equally at home on land and in water, but they must keep their scaled carapaces damp, and thus do not travel far from a large body of water.

The *corrodile's* bite is mildly poisonous (DC 15 Fortitude save or take 1d3 temporary Strength damage, 1 point of temporary Strength damage on a successful save, Strength returns with 5 minutes of rest). A successful bite allows the creature to latch on, and it will not release prey unless slain or it fails a DC 10 Willpower save for morale when at half hit points. The creature attempts to drag prey to water, ignoring all other attacks, moving 10' per round unless an opposed Strength check against a +5 bonus succeeds. A foe dragged into water risks drowning.

Thankfully, these monsters are extremely rare, and almost always solitary.

**Mayag:** Init +0; Atk bite -2 melee (1 plus poison); AC 15; HD 1 hp; MV 10' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP poison, web, easily frightened; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -2; AL N.

The ten-legged spider-lizard of the Berzal treetops, the *mayag* is the source of the silk from which Madka garments and ropes are woven. They only average about 2' long, but their venom is very potent (DC 15 Fortitude save or die, 1d4 Strength damage on a success). Webs can measure as much as 60' across, with colonies of 5d4 *mayag* tending a single web. A creature that falls into a *mayag* web requires a DC 10 Strength check to get free, and can make one check each round. *Mayag* are mottled yellow and red in hue, with three prominent eyes and six lesser eyespots. They are easily frightened by violently shaking their webs while making a loud noise, forcing a DC 10 Willpower save to avoid fleeing into the underbrush. The Madka use this technique to obtain silk from active webs.



**Ontothere:** Init +0; Atk head smash +3 melee (2d6+8) or kick +5 melee (1d6+8); AC 15; HD 15d10+30; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from most weapons, knockback with head smash, knock prone with kick, trample; SV Fort +12, Ref -5, Will +0; AL N.

This enormous albino reptile stands over 20' high, is up to 28' long, and weighs approximately 20 tons. It has three great horns arising from its snout at the end of its long neck. The *ontothere* is a herbivore, domesticated by the P'quoth as beasts of burden. This limits the speed of the P'quoth hordes, as the huge reptile must spend at least six hours a day grazing to maintain peak condition.

An *ontothere* can attack by smashing with its great head, or by kicking with its pad-like feet. Characters struck by the head smash must succeed in a DC 15 Reflex save or be knocked 1d6 x 5', taking appropriate falling damage (if any). Successful kicks force a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone, and, should this fail, a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid being trampled for 4d6 damage. *Ontotheres* are so large that they take half damage from weapons, unless they are area-effect, energy weapons, or exceptionally large.

**Preth:** Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4) or claw +2 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 3d6; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP maul rider; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

The "dragon horse" of Madkeen, *preth* are used by both Madka and P'quoth. They are shades of green, blue, and red, with stripes or patterns similar to horses. Because of a double row of spines down their backs, they cannot be ridden without a saddle. High-spirited *preth*, such as those trained for battle, have been known to turn on and maul untrained riders (DC 5 Personality check at the first difficult point during the ride; any successful attack masters the beast). *Preth* are carnivores, and thus expensive to keep.

Wild *preth* are found both within the Berzal Forest and on the Plains of Urjib. Although they are few in numbers, the plains *preth* can act in groups of 2d4 members.

**Vuthmal swarm:** Init +1; Atk swarming bite +0 melee (1); AC 12; HD 4d8; MV fly 30'; Act special; SP swarm traits; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -4; AL N.

This is a common prey animal, something between a squirrel and the archeopteryx, a smallish lizard-like mammal that can fly with feathered wings. Individually, they can be slain with any successful attack against AC 12. The statistics above can be used in the rare event of a swarm. *Vuthmal* are cowardly, and their swarms typically target the helpless, injured, and dying. Their feathers and scales are bright and many-hued, so that they are called the "jeweled *vuthmal*" by poets of Madkeen.

**Zug:** Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3 plus poison) or claw +4 melee (1d6+1) or sting +3 melee (1d5 plus poison); AC 16; HD 3d8; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP camouflage, venom, divide Action Die for claws; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.



The spider-scorpion of the Smoking Mirror, grown *zugs* are 4' long in the body, with great forward claws, and a scorpion-like sting that can reach an opponent up to 5' away, so long as the *zug* faces whatever it would sting. With a hard carapace made of an obsidian-like material, it can hide in the Smoking Mirror with a 1 in 4 chance of achieving surprise. Its venom, found in both bite and sting, does 1d3 points of Stamina damage and requires a DC 10 Fortitude save or 1 point is permanent. If desired, it can use one of its Action Dice to make two claw attacks, each with 1d16. The *zug* has twelve legs, including its claws.

## MADKA AND P'QUOTH

**T**he Madka appear humanoid, with brick red skin, golden eyes, and dark glossy hair. They are not native to Madkeen. Their original home, the First World, was destroyed by the corsair world, Annax, which swallowed the First World many millennia ago. Those Madka who could escaped through interstellar gates to other worlds. The Madka are mildly telepathic, which aids PCs in learning their language. It is they who named this planet "Madkeen".

The P'quoth have an admixture of reptilian and mammalian traits, appearing like lizard men with human faces and bearing live young. They paint or scar their scales to indicate different tribes. When the Madka refugees first came to Madkeen, the P'quoth welcomed them and aided them through the first difficult years. The Madka have not always repaid this help kindly. Al-Khazadar's apotheosis was the final straw, creating an environmental catastrophe

that is slowly unraveling the world. The P'quoth call this world Paqua, and hold themselves as divinely-appointed guardians thereof.

A state of war now exists between the Madka and the P'quoth. The Madka fear the P'quoth and call them savages. The P'quoth blame the Madka for deeply wounding their world. The PCs may be able to alter this.

**Area 2 - Tree City of Val-Alakar:** By choice, Zardu and Zarya will return to Val-Alakar by jungle paths. This is a 10-mile journey. It could be reduced by 2 miles if they passed into part of the Plains of Urjib, but this will not come up unless the PCs specifically ask about a shorter route. The twins are afraid of the P'quoth raiders on the plains.

*As you move through the jungle, you become aware of lights twinkling above you, like stars come down to roost in the colossal trees. Soon, men and women mounted on large, dragon-like horses emerge from the gathering darkness. They greet Zardu and Zarya with glad cries. Swift talk passes between the newcomers and those you rescued, too fast to follow, and then one of the mounted women turns to you and says, "Be made welcome."*

*There are hidden doors in some of the trees, and these give way to polished ramps, spiraling ever upwards through the living wood. High atop the trees are platforms, houses and palaces built on wide branches, and chambers cut into the trunk with care to leave the trees unharmed. Zardu says, "We must go to our father, and to our own quarters." Zarya adds, "But we will come to you tomorrow."*

*You are given lavish quarters and food - spicy chunks of meat and unknown vegetables - and then left to sleep.*

In the morning it is clear that the Tree-City is huge. It could easily house half a million people, although the Madka here number only a few thousand now. They are dwindling, despite their longevity drugs, due to the malign influence of Al-Khazadar.

The scientist-mages of the Madka discovered a drug centuries ago, which resists disease and the aging of living tissue. The result of this is that the Madka, regardless of their true age, all appear healthy and in the prime of youth. They are indolent however, seeking any distraction from the collapse of their people and their world's environment. Thus, there are countless plays, performances, and games, hunts for *mayag* silk, parties and dances, but little else besides those actions (such as food production) needed to survive.

Val-Alakar is ruled by the Pal-Omad Zorgon, the father of the twins, and the Pal-Amad (queen) Valya, their mother. Important matters are decided with the aid of a Council, rather than through royal decree, and herein will lie the PCs' chief dilemma. Since the time of Al-Khazadar, the Council has been dominated by two factions – those who follow the House Ocrat and those who follow the House Ican. Both factions claim to seek the greater good for Val-Alakar, but any idea proposed or embraced by either side is immediately opposed by the other. The Council has been deadlocked for centuries, and the city stagnates.

The two men the PCs must convince to sway the Council are the Dej Omar-al of House Ican and the Dej Al-Demnos of House Ocrat. Dej is a rank that once meant war-chief, and now means nothing more than a leader. Both men are much of the same kind – tall, strong, and confident that their side is right. The Dej of each house will promise to consider any proposal, but they do little more than waste time. Unless swayed by magic or by a credible offer of truly great power, all they do is waste time. They will ask for days to consider matters, and those days will turn to weeks, months, and years. Facing the Dread God each night, the PCs simply do not have the time.

Clever players will come up with other means to deal with the Council, including assassinating one or both of its leaders. In most cases, violence that obviously leads back to the PCs should not be rewarded, but cleverness should be. The two key things to remember are:

1. The PCs are the stars of the show – reasonable plans should have a chance to succeed. If a player gives a good argument before the Council, the judge should feel free to reward him with success. Because the Madka are deadlocked right now, there is no reason that deadlock must be lasting. The PCs are agents of change.
2. The clock is ticking. Every time the PCs rest, they encounter the Dread God Al-Khazadar again in their dreams, and these dreams begin to cause the PCs ever-greater problems as the adventure goes on. Delay is deadly, but if the players don't take action, the judge should allow them to delay.

The Pal-Omad will offer them the use of *preths* to ride to the Mad God's Rift, but Zardu and Zarya insist that they cannot get past the P'quoth. Their daring plan is to simply *steal* a sky-sled. They can arrange to drug the guards, but it must be done by night and it will take a day to prepare. Of course, the PCs might not wait this long, and might attempt to take the sky-sled by stealth or force themselves.

**Average Madka:** Init +0; Atk makeshift weapon +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP mild telepathy; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

**Madka guard:** Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP mild telepathy; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

**Madka Councilor:** Init +0; Atk makeshift weapon +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 3d6; hp 11 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP mild telepathy, command; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; AL N.

These politicians can command other Madka to fight for them as needed. In addition, their telepathic powers are so exercised that they can command a PC to surrender, and the PC must make a DC 10 Willpower save or comply. The effect lasts 1d10 minutes. Surrendering PCs are captured and taken before the Pal-Omad or the Council, and are not slain out-of-hand.

## THE MADKA LONGEVITY DRUG

It is possible for PCs to receive the Madka longevity drug. This allows both a +1d bonus on the dice chain *and* a +4 bonus to all saves to resist disease. It also slows natural aging to 1/100th normal rate after a creature reaches maturity. Interactions with magical aging will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis, but magical aging effects are generally reduced by half.

The longevity drug must be tailored to each individual, a process that takes 1d3 days. The Madka can create doses for 1d5 specific individuals during this time.

## THE SKY-SLED

There are fewer than a dozen sky-sleds in Val-Alakar which are still in operational shape. These are kept in hangars hollowed out from the great trunks, near the top of the city. Although nominally watched by four armed guards at all times, the guards are poor watchmen, easily distracted or duped.

A sky-sled is a 25-foot long sleek-looking machine built of bronze with ebony and scarlet wood trim. The controls are simple enough – one lever to control forward motion speed, another to control altitude, and a wheel to control direction. A sky-sled can carry up to 10 passengers moving at a maximum speed of 40 miles per hour. It is said to be held aloft by "theta radiation", although no Madka alive can explain exactly what theta radiation is. A sky-sled makes a gentle humming noise when activated.



UNA THE FIRST  
DECIDES SHE  
WILL STAY AMONG  
THE MADKA IN HOPE  
OF MAKING CONVERIS  
WHILE HUGH  
CONSIDERS  
A NEW  
MEMBER  
OF THE  
BAND.



**Area 3 – P'quoth Raiders:** The description assumes that the PCs have obtained the sky-sled. If not, adjust the encounter as needed.

*Below you on the plain you can see a vast horde – some two thousand creatures moving toward the east. Several of these are enormous white-scaled reptiles with long necks and three horns on their snouts. Outriders on preths, the dragon-horses of Madkeen, call out and point at your sky-sled as it passes through the sky. The riders, the masters of the great albino reptiles, and those who trudge over the plain on foot, are all reptile-men. As they stare up at your passage, you can see their faces – as human as your own. Suddenly, bursts of white light stab upward from the ground. You are being fired upon by some sort of beam, emitted by rod-like devices held by half a dozen P'quoth.*

Six of the P'quoth raiders are armed with ancient uradium rifles. These fire bolts of white energy doing 2d6 damage, to a range of 100/1,000/5,000 feet. Uradium rifles are fired by mental impulses, and the Madka cannot use them. If a PC attempts it, they can roll a DC 15 Luck check to succeed. If one PC can fire the weapon, any other PC of the same race has a +1d bonus to her Luck check.

On a natural attack roll of "1", the character must roll another die. If that die also comes up "1", the uradium rifle ceases to function. The first time a "1" comes up, roll 1d12. Each subsequent incident, roll one die lower on the dice chain up to 1d3.

Six P'quoth are able to fire their uradium rifles three times each while the sky-sled is in range. One attack for each requires a roll of 15 on a d20, and each gains two attacks requiring a 14 on 1d16 (taking into account range penalties and attack modifiers). If one or more lucky shots strikes the sky-sled, they damage. If Zarya or Zardu is aboard, they

can repair the sky-sled enough to get to the Mad God's Rift. Trailing smoke, the sky-sled begins to loose altitude. Although they will move more slowly on the ground, the P'quoth mark the direction of the damaged vehicle, and follow it north. Without repairs, the sky-sled can only go 12 minus damage done (2d6 per strike) miles. If total damage is greater than 12, the ship crash lands after going 2d100 yards, and all aboard take 3d6 damage with each natural "6" indicating a broken bone.

Should the PCs be on foot, or riding *preths*, this encounter may go entirely differently. Taking on the entire P'quoth horde is suicidal, but PCs who surrender or are defeated are not slain. They are taken to Pal-Omad Turgga of the Tarkan Horde, and questioned roughly. Once more, the PCs have an opportunity to be agents of change on Madkeen – the P'quoth have no love for Al-Khazadar, and would be happy to see the Dread God destroyed. The PCs need merely convince the Pal-Omad that they can do so to go with Turgga's blessing, and the rank of Dej in the Tarkan Horde. PCs on foot may be given *preths*.

Unlike the Madka, the P'quoth are quick to make decisions where the PCs are concerned.

**P'quoth (2,000):** Init +0; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+1) or claw +0 melee (1d3+1) or uradium rifle +1 ranged (2d6); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

**Preth (200):** Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4) or claw +2 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 12 each; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP Maul rider; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

**Ontothere (20):** Init +0; Atk head smash +3 melee (2d6+8) or kick +5 melee (1d6+8); AC 15; HD 15d10+30; hp 110 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from most weapons, knockback with head smash, knock prone with kick, trample; SV Fort +12, Ref -5, Will +0; AL N.

**Area 4 – The Mad God's Rift:** The Smoking Mirror is an area of blighted black ground, fused into dark glass, like a cancer spreading into the plains. The plain is broken by rifts and crevasses from which dark grey smoke pours, creating a condition not unlike thick fog. On a ledge within the largest of these rifts, you can see a small stone building among the drifting smokes. Perhaps half a dozen of the reptilian P'quoth emerge from the structure, one holding an uradium rifle.

Originally a plane where blue *sotama* gas seeped through the ground, offering visions of the universe to those who breathed in the fumes, the Smoking Mirror was a holy area. Al-Khazadar created machines which forced a chemical sludge of his invention into the ground. He was able to obtain enough pure liquid *sotama* to achieve his apotheosis (and a small additional amount that would allow a PC to contest that apotheosis), but the damage to the Smoking Mirror was terrible. The plain was blackened and the ground turned to hard glass. Rifts and craters run through the land. The dark grey smoke that issues now from the Smoking Mirror is poisoned by the malice of the Dread God, who draws sustenance from the slow death of his birth-world.



# CHAPTER THREE: THE CRADLE OF AL-KHAZADAR



The upper area is guarded by a group of P'quoth, seven of which issue out to investigate movement nearby. These P'quoth, chosen to represent different tribes of the Firstborn, are painted or scarred to show their different affiliations. It is forbidden for outsiders to enter the Cradle of Al-Khazadar – not because the P'quoth revere the Dread God, but because they fear meddling could make matters worse. They do not trust the Madka.

Six P'quoth close with the characters, while the seventh employs an uradium rifle.

**P'quoth (7):** Init +0; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+1) or claw +0 melee (1d3+1) or uradium rifle +1 ranged (2d6); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

Neither Zarya nor Zardu will willingly enter the building, unless being controlled as a PC. They may attempt to repair the sky-sled, if present, to allow some method of escape back to Val-Alakar. The Madka assume that the PCs will need to return to their point of arrival in order to go back to their home world. The players should be encouraged in this assumption. Especially if the “true love” option is being used, this makes the choice in **area 2-16** more difficult.

**Area 1-1 – Entry:** A ledge of greasy black stone leads down into the mist-shrouded abyss, allowing entry into the Cradle of Al-Khazadar. Ahead, the entry gapes where ancient doors have been torn away – fully 20 feet wide and 15 feet high.

Three P'quoth lurk within **area 1-2**. If the PCs do not call out the password as they travel down the ledge, the P'quoth charge when they reach the entrance, attempting to push them over the ledge to their deaths. A charging P'quoth gains +2 to hit, but -2 to AC, until his next turn. any character struck must make an opposed Strength check (the P'quoth have a +1 bonus) or be pushed from the ledge. The crevasse is well over 200' deep, but kindhearted judges may allow a Luck check to strike a ledge a mere 1d6+2 x 10' down (normal falling damage applies).

**P'quoth (3):** Init +0; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+1) or claw +0 melee (1d3+1); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', charge; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

**Area 1-2 – P'quoth Camp:** Beyond the archway is a cool chamber of black stone, which appears to be the camping ground of a dozen creatures, judging from the pallets and blankets lining the east and west walls. a fire of dried dung smolders in the center of the hall, giving little warmth. More dung is piled nearby. A few spears are leaning up against the southwest corner.

There are 12 pallets here, indicating the total number of P'quoth in the complex. Unless characters are quiet, they will alert the remaining P'quoth in **area 1-4**, who will attempt to ambush the PCs. There are 7 well-made spears against the wall. There is a foul smell to the north, coming from **areas 1-3** and **1-4**.

**Area 1-3 – Latrine:** This smaller chamber has clearly been used as a latrine. Dung is spread across much of the floor, freshest to the north, and drier to the south.

This is the source of the dried dung used by the P'quoth in **area 1-2**.

**Area 1-4 – Food Stores:** Various unidentifiable creatures hang from the ceiling here on iron hooks. They are at different stages of decomposition, from the relatively fresh to bodies which would crawl with flies and maggots back home. The stench is overpowering.

Like some reptiles, the P'quoth eat decomposing meat, and this is a storehouse for food. Two P'quoth are here. If they have heard the PCs (which is likely), they stand to the north of the doorway, ready to surprise characters as they enter this room. If the PCs do not enter, they attempt to surprise the PCs from behind as they pass down the stairs towards **area 1-5**.

**P'quoth (2):** Init +0; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+1) or claw +0 melee (1d3+1); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', surprise; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.



**Area 1-5 – Entryway:** *The stairs and passage lead downward to a square stone chamber with a single door to the west, made of beaten bronze. Upon it is the image of a man with a bulbous helmet, pointing toward the center of the room. You can hear the deep thrumming of some enormous machine coming from the ground below you.*

The image actually points toward the east wall, where there is a secret door. Careful examination of the walls shows that there is a small star engraved on a brick near the secret door – pressing this causes a section of wall to slide downward into the floor with a rumble. After 5 minutes, the wall section slides back upward. The sound of machine thrumming is louder as the characters approach the stairways down to the second level.

The door to the west leads the unwary into two traps. Beyond the first door is 20' of corridor ending in another bronze door. As with the first door, this is engraved with another figure pointing back the way the PCs came.

No P'quoth will venture beyond this chamber for any reason, unless being used as a replacement PC.

**Area 1-6 – Poison Dart Trap:** A pressure plate is set into the corner, causing 5 poisoned darts to fire from holes in the end of this corridor. Each dart makes a ranged attack (+3 to hit, 1 damage), but the poison coating the darts has grown weak over the ages (DC 14 Fortitude save or 1d3 Strength damage from pain and muscle cramps). The darts can only target those who have passed the corner. The pressure plate can be located with a DC 10 find traps check, and disabled at DC 15.

**Area 1-7 – Cryogenic Gas Trap:** A pressure plate is set into the corner, causing a hyper-cold cryogenic gas to spray from nozzles at the end of the corridor, which sprays out, covering the last 30' of the corridor. All in this area take 1d6 damage and 1d3 Agility damage (DC 13 Fortitude save to avoid the Agility damage). On a natural "1" on this save, the character enters a state of suspended animation for 1d3 days (immune to dream effects from the Dread God, but does not heal either). This state can be removed by a reversed *sleep* or *fire resistance* spell, *cure paralysis*, restore vitality, 4 HD of clerical healing, or a successful request for divine aid (15+). The pressure plate can be located with a DC 10 find traps check, and disabled at DC 15.

## SECOND LEVEL

**Area 2-1 – The Chamber of Life:** *Masses of roots have broken through the north of this 30-foot square chamber, obscuring runes carved upon that wall. The air in here seems healthy and vital, and you feel stronger merely for breathing it.*

Any injured character entering this chamber gains 2d3 hp healing. Each character can only gain this boon once.

Brushing aside the vines, the party can make out the runes, which read "In the passage between Life and Death all answers are found" in a cipher devised by Al-Khazadar. The group may employ *comprehend languages* or a DC 10 read

languages check to decipher the writing. Alternatively, a character who speaks the tongue of serpent-men or dragons may make a DC 15 Intelligence check to understand the writing (at +4 if he speaks both). This text refers to the secret door at area 2-6.

Three of these roots have quickened into supernatural life, and are now hellroots. Hellroots fasten onto their victims with a successful attack, doing an automatic 1d3 damage each round they are attached. In addition, the victim must make a DC 10 Willpower save or suffer 1d3 points of temporary Personality damage. If Personality reaches 2 or less, the victim ceases to struggle, allowing the hellroot to drain its blood and soul. A DC 15 Strength check detaches the hellroot, causing the victim an additional 1d3 damage. When slain, hellroots shriek with human voices. They can reach anywhere in this chamber.

**Hellroots (3):** Init +2; Atk tendril +0 melee (1d3); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 13 each; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP constrict, temporary Personality damage; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 2-2 – False Door:** This bronze door is set into the wall. If pulled to open, it releases a stone block that drops with a +10 bonus to hit, doing 3d6 damage on a successful strike. A thief may find the trap with a DC 10 check, but cannot reach the mechanism to disable it. If the find traps check is 15 or higher, the thief will also know that this is a false door.

**Area 2-3 – The Chamber of Death:** *This 30-foot-square chamber is cold and dry. The dusty air makes your skin look pale, and even iron thews seem shrunken and weak. Human-like skulls are set in niches along the walls, so ancient that many are no more than fragments.*

Characters suffer 1d3 hp damage and 1 point of temporary Strength damage for every minute spent in this chamber. There is nothing of value here.

**Area 2-4 – Chamber of Bones:** *This chamber is 30 feet wide and 20 feet deep. Its walls are carved with niches filled with ancient moldering bones. There are no skulls here; this must be the remaining bones of those whose skulls adorn the previous chamber. As in that chamber, most of the bones have been reduced to fragments by the passage of time.*

These, along with the skulls in area 2-3, are the remains of P'quoth.

**Area 2-5 – False Tomb:** The bronze door is locked (DC 15 open locks check) and the lock is trapped with a poisoned needle (DC 12 find trap, DC 10 disable traps; 2d5 damage, DC 15 Fort save or be paralyzed and die in 1d3 rounds).

*Beyond the door is a burial chamber, 30 feet wide and 20 feet deep, heaped high with many items of gold and jade. There are great hoops and plates of the precious metal, jade statuettes, and necklaces made of turquoise and amber beads scattered about upon shallow vessels of red-fired clay. A stone sarcophagus is centered upon the back wall – it is carved with an image of a helmeted man bearing a strange backpack, reclining upon a bent couch.*

This chamber was devised to “reward” would-be looters and prevent them from passing further into the Cradle of Al-Khazadar. There is a wealth of treasure here – 125 golden plates (50 gp each, weighing 40 lbs each), 200 golden hoops 3 inches in diameter (each worth 2 gp), 25 jade statuettes (of various figures – warriors, nymphs, and deities) worth 200 gp and weighing 50 lbs each, and 100 necklaces of turquoise and amber, each worth 25 gp, but bulky enough that 10 would fill a backpack.

Opening the sarcophagus requires a DC 18 Strength check (up to three characters may work together), and reveals fragments of a Madka skeleton, 75 amber beads worth 1 sp each, 2 jade earplugs worth 15 gp each, and a gold ring shaped like a feathered serpent with 2 chips of turquoise for eyes worth 125 gp.

**Area 2-6 – Secret Door:** Examining the eastern wall reveals a small star shape carved on a stone. Pressing this stone causes the secret door in the west wall to slide into the floor with a loud grinding noise. After 5 minutes, the secret door grinds closed.

**Area 2-7 – Spiders and Snakes:** Three sets of stairs, with interspersed landings, take this passage far below the surface of the Smoking Mirror. As the characters go deeper, the machine thrumming gets louder, until it sounds like a low pulse vibrating the stones. Cracks and fissures in various places create holes large enough to allow dirt and stone to have fallen into the passage. Fist-sized reptilian spiders spin thick webs across the hall; these are harmless, but at one point as they push through the webs, the party startles a waste viper, which strikes and then attempts to escape into the wall. It has a 3 in 5 chance of gaining surprise.

A waste viper is a three-foot long, slender snake, with dull grey scales and 12 vestigial legs. Its venom does 1d4 Stamina damage, and unless a DC 16 Fortitude save is successful, this damage is permanent (otherwise it heals normally).

**Waste viper:** Init +4; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus poison); AC 8; HD 2 hp; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison, surprise; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

**Area 2-8 – Entry to the Lower Region:** *The hallway comes to an end in a chamber with an archway in the northwest corner, from which you can see stairs going upward to the west, and another passage leading out through the center of the south wall. This area appears to have been cut from the living rock, for you can see no seams in the stone walls. This room is lit, its ceiling giving off a warm white glow.*

Characters who examine the area discover it is free of dust and cobwebs, as six androids service the areas between **area 2-8** and **area 2-13**. Likewise, all of these areas, including the corridors, are lit by voltronic crystals worked into the ceiling. Removing a portion of the ceiling results in a non-magical light source that sheds soft light in a 15' radius and lasts practically forever.

These androids appear like normal Madka, except that they are completely bald, without eyebrows or eyelashes. Three



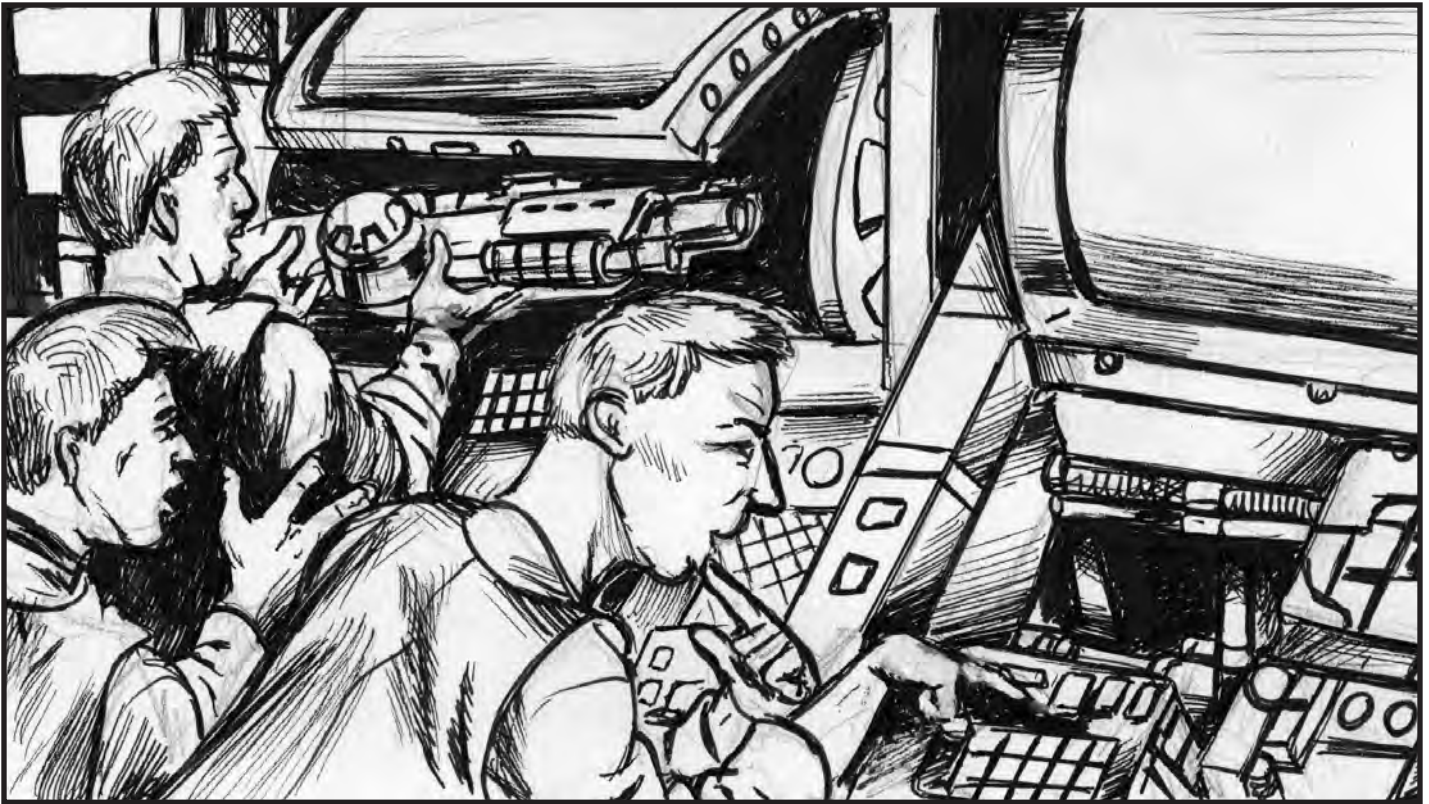
appear to be female, and three male, but otherwise they have identical features. The androids speak the language of the Madka.

The androids move around this area in groups of 1-3 as the judge determines, and are not automatically hostile. If one is attacked, it begins to emit a loud pulsing noise that swiftly draws the other androids to it; they will then attack until destroyed or the party retreats beyond their range. Otherwise, the androids can be made to supply food and drink, or perform other tasks if the party is able to communicate with them. The judge should imply that the androids are living beings, and, unless combat occurs, it should be difficult to determine that they are not.

The machine thrumming is louder to the northwest, and increases in volume as one approaches **area 2-14**.

**Androids (6):** Init -2; Atk sword +2 melee (1d8) or wand +4 missile fire (range 60', 1d4+2); AC 18; HD 3d8+12; hp 25 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', immune to mind-altering spells, heal 2 hp per round; SV Fort +5, Ref -2, Will +6; AL N. (See core rulebook, page 394.)

**Area 2-9 – Living Chamber:** *The passage enters a room replete with well-made and comfortable-looking chairs, foot rests, and low couches. The far wall appears to be an enormous aquarium, from floor to ceiling and from wall to wall, but containing such fish as have never been seen in your world. It is impossible to determine how far back the aquarium goes. Upon one table is a circular playing board with red, green, and yellow pieces.*



Characters may rest here, and the androids sometimes play *qui'rot*, a board game that shares some of the features of checkers and go.

The “aquarium” is a holographic projection; the wall feels like stone if touched. The creatures within (a cross between a blue starfish and a manta ray; elongated sea-horse-like fish with shark-like teeth; large shelled mollusks with twelve octopus-like arms; red-and-yellow striped eels with lamprey mouths; flatfish with outer boney carapaces and spiny fins that can be used to walk on the aquarium bottom) seem to react to the PCs actions if they approach the “glass”, but this is just a part of the holographic programming. The holographic unit can be changed by the androids to display other programs upon request.

The secret door is opened by transponders within the androids’ craniums, and it is difficult to discover (DC 20 search check) otherwise. The androids do not grant others access to the area beyond, and will fight to prevent anyone from passing the secret door. PCs may be able to open it through magic, or by defeating the androids while the door is open. Any android can use an Action Die to cause the door to close (or open).

**Area 2-10 – Mess Hall:** *This room contains several tables and chairs of an unknown silvery red metal, all neatly arranged. There is a door of the same metal to the far left, and a red button set into the wall to the right of the passage leading into the room.*

This was used as a mess hall when Al-Khazadar still had Madka working upon the ruined lower levels of this site. The button summons an android (if any remain), who will at first attempt to take orders, and then simply bring a meal if the PCs cannot communicate with it. The meals are spicy,

but tasty, including a cold green soup, leaves stuffed with meat and something akin to rice, and fish broiled in a green and brown sauce.

**Area 2-11 – Sleeping Chamber:** *This room is 30 feet wide and 20 feet deep, with walls made of the same red metal as the chairs and tables in the previous room. The walls are marked with grooves in geometric designs. Otherwise, the room appears to be empty.*

Examination of the designs on the walls reveals that they conceal cunningly designed beds, which can be folded or pulled out as desired, turning as much or as little of the room into sleeping areas as needed. All of the beds are clean and tidy, despite not having been used for ages, because of the androids.

**Area 2-12 – Fabrication Chamber:** *This room is filled with empty glass-fronted cabinets – some large enough to hold a human being. In front of each cabinet is a board containing about three dozen buttons with unknown symbols marked upon them.*

These cabinets are fabricators, machines used by the androids to create and dispose of all sorts of materials, including food, plates, cutlery, replacement parts for furnishings, and even for parts to repair themselves. If materials are placed within the cabinet, and any button(s) are pressed, the material is disintegrated. Living creatures are destroyed, with no saving throw.

If the PCs are able to understand the symbols on the buttons (requiring *comprehend languages*), they can make requests for whatever they wish here, so long as they can describe it in terms their characters would know. The cabinets cannot create actual living beings, and will create a 1d3 HD

primeval slime instead (see below, and core rulebook, pp. 423-424). If characters mash random buttons in hopes of being rewarded, roll 1d14 (modified by Luck) and consult the chart below. There is a further -1 penalty to the die roll each time randomly mashing buttons has already been attempted.

## D14

## Result

**0 or less** The machine overloads. It begins to hum and spark violently. Roll initiative, with the machine having a +4 bonus. On its initiative count, it explodes, causing 3d6 damage to all within 30' (DC 10 Ref save for half).

**1-2** A pinkish primeval slime is created that rapidly reproduces. For every 5 hp it inflicts, it grows another 5' x 5' and gains 5 hp.

**Primeval slime:** Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8 per 5' square; hp 5; MV 5', climb 5'; Act 1d20 per 5' square; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons, rapid reproduction; SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6; AL N.

**3-4** A mass of fused copper, iron, and plastic weighing 2d4 pounds is created.

**5** Complete meals for 1d3, but the food is clearly decayed, and any foolish enough to partake therefrom must succeed in a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 points of Stamina damage.

**6** Complete meals for 1d3, with no special qualities.

**7** A random piece of equipment is created (roll 1d24 on Table 3-4, p. 73 of the core rulebook).

**8** A superior (non-magical) short sword is created, whose red metal blade does 1d7 damage.

**9** 1d5 pills are created. Roll 1d7, modified by Luck, to determine type when consumed: (0 or less) poison (1d3 Strength damage, DC 15 Fort save or also take 2d6 hp damage); (1-2) faulty anti-aging drug that ages consumer by 2d7 years; (3-4) placebo (no apparent effects); (5-6) supplement that ends all current poison or disease effects, and grants a +4 bonus to Fort save s for 1d5 months; (7+) anti-aging drug that halts aging for 2d100 years.

**10** A complete meal is created, with nutritional supplements that heal 1d3 hp and 1 point of ability score damage from whoever eats it.

**11** A longsword of reddish metal is created.

**12** A suit of hardened plastic armor is created, sized for whatever creature pushed the buttons. It has a +5 AC bonus, a -2 check penalty, does not affect speed, and has a d8 fumble die.

**13** A superior (non-magical) longsword is created, whose red metal blade does 1d10 damage.

**14+** A uradium rifle is created that can automatically be used by all species within the chamber. It must fail twice (see **area 3**, page 14) before it ceases to function.

The fabricators are all linked together; if one is damaged or removed, they all cease to function. After being used three times, the entire group powers down for 1d5 hours.

**Area 2-13 – Empty Chamber:** *The stairs lead upward to a room that extends to the right, to a total width of about 30 feet. There is an archway to the north, although whatever once lay beyond is blocked by fallen rubble, as though the area were deliberately caved in. A passage continues out of the far wall, opposite the stairs, ending in another door of silvery-red metal after 20 feet. The humming noise that you could hear below is louder here.*

There used to be various devices of arcane science installed in this room, and examination of the walls reveals bare wiring extending a few inches from the walls here and there. There is a 1 in 5 chance that any wire touched can still deliver a shock. If it can, there is a 1 in 3 chance that there is still enough power to deliver 1d5 damage.

**Area 2-14 – Balcony and Manchine:** *Beyond the door is a room 20 feet wide and 30 feet deep, the far left corner of which is a balcony looking over a larger space, with stairs to the left going down into that space. The humming, vibrating noise that you have been following is much louder here, and seems to be coming from below.*

When the party approaches the balcony, read the following:

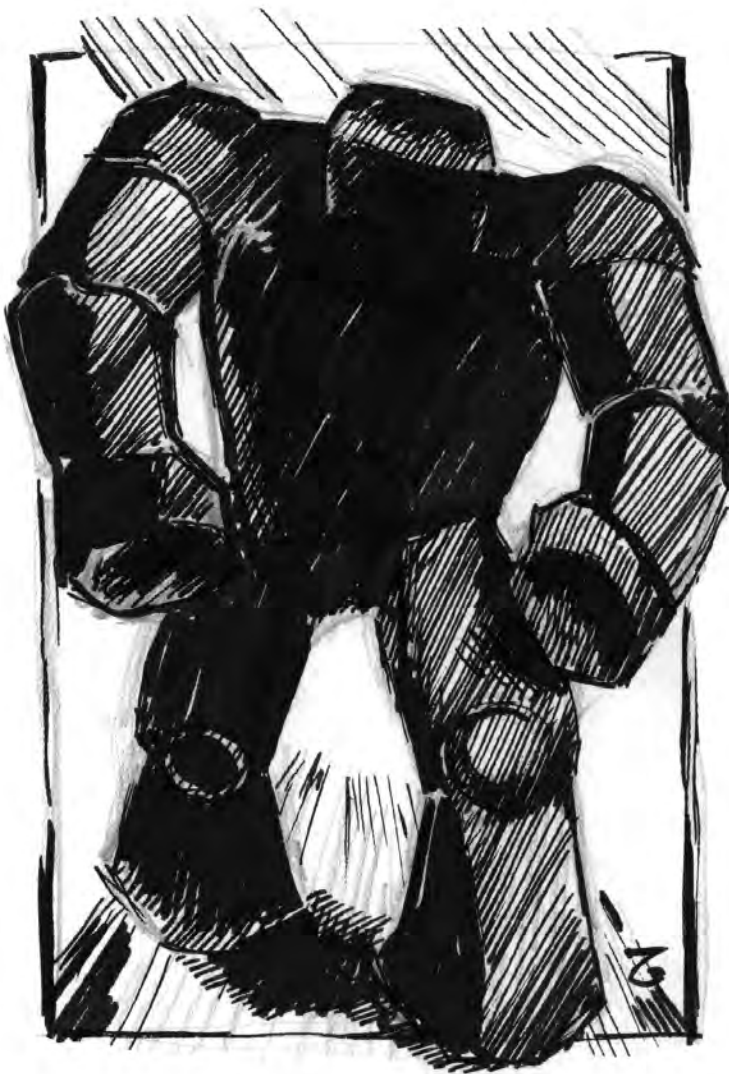
*Below is a chamber some 40 feet square, and rising to a height of 40 feet, the room that you are in extending out into its space. You can see a single passage leading westward, in the southwest corner of the room. Standing before this passage is the source of the vibrating hum – a 12 foot tall manlike form made entirely of matte black metal!*

This being is a manchine, placed here by Al-Khazadar upon his ascension to godhood. Its sole purpose is to prevent beings from reaching **area 2-16**, the Cradle of Al-Khazadar. It will fight until destroyed to do so, and any remaining androids are summoned by it as soon as any creature attacks it, or descends the stairs to the chamber floor. It takes 1d5 rounds for each remaining android to arrive.

The manchine has no discernible anatomy, and is immune to the special effects of most critical hits. It is immune to mind-affecting magic, poison, disease, or anything else that targets biology specifically. It senses the aura of living things, and does not need to see, rendering *invisibility* or *darkness* useless. It uses 1d4 on Table G for critical hits. When the manchine is reduced to 0 hp, it begins to hum and vibrate. The humming and vibrating increase in intensity each round as though the manchine were about to explode.

**Manchine:** Init +4; Atk fist +5 melee (1d6+4); AC 16; HD 8d12; hp 50; MV 40'; Act 4d20; SP no discernible anatomy, immune to mind-affecting and biology-affecting, sense living things, crits as giant; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Using Mighty Deeds or magic, the PCs may be able to push the manchine 20' down the corridor and over the broken edge of the bridge, seemingly destroying it.



After 2d3 rounds, it appears through the smoke at a distance of  $1d3+2 \times 10'$  behind the party, wreathed in a halo of blue sparks and venting thick green fluid from its damaged areas. Anyone in melee range of the manchine automatically takes 1d3 damage from the sparks each round. When the damaged manchine is reduced to 0 hp, it falls off the bridge, exploding 30' down (1d6 damage to all PCs, DC 5 Reflex save negates).

**Damaged manchine:** Init +0; Atk fist +3 melee (1d6+3); AC 14; HD 6d12; hp 40; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP no discernible anatomy, immune to mind-affecting and biology-affecting, sense living things, crits as giant, sparking, death throes; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

**Area 2-16 – Gate to Madkeen:** *The bridge ends at the far side of the chasm, the path entering a hemispherical room with a 25 foot radius. Opposite the entrance is a basin of reddish-black metal.*

Within the tub is a thin trickle of brilliant blue liquid – the last of the liquid sotama Al-Khazadar's machines ripped from the planet's interior. There is only enough for one character to successfully drink. If the players attempt to dole it out, it affects only the first drinker, or, if they drink together, one randomly determined PC. Hand this player **Handout A**.

If the player chooses to oppose the Dread God, move on to Chapter Four. Otherwise the players will have to resolve the outcome themselves. If the PC joined to Al-Khazadar wins, the Dread God transports him instantly to any point in the universe as soon as the last of the other PCs falls. If the joined PC is slain, Al-Khazadar is also slain, but the PCs are marooned on Madkeen.

**Area 2-15 – Bridge over the Abyss:** *The passage leads to a great smoke-filled chasm – you cannot see either how far across it reaches, nor how deep, nor how far to the left or right. It is open to the sky over 100' above you. A 10-foot-wide bridge of stone leads over the abyss, but after 10 feet, the bridge is broken, leaving a 10 foot gap to be crossed to reach the rest of the bridge. The surface of the bridge is slightly convex, making the footing less sure, and there is no rail. It appears to hang unsupported in the air. The machine thrumming comes loudly from the deep – somewhere below, the age-old machines of Al-Khazadar are still working, spreading ruin from this place to the rest of Madkeen.*

At the gap in the bridge, the abyss is a mere 100' deep (10d6 falling damage); near the center, it is 5 miles deep. Any who falls therein is likely to be destroyed, and while *feather fall* may save a life, unless the PC has the means to reach the bridge again, she is lost in a netherworld of strange beings and caverns at the bottom of the chasm, to survive as best she may, and to discover her own way to freedom.

The bridge is just over 2 miles long, taking 1 hour to traverse (assuming a reasonably cautious walking speed). A character can leap the gap by making a DC 10 Strength or Agility check (penalties for armor and encumbrance apply).

Twenty minutes after the PCs have begun to cross the bridge; the damaged manchine can be heard humming and sparking behind the party. The vibrations shake the bridge.

## PLAYER HANDOUT A

Read quietly and then return to the judge:

You can sense he was getting older. The longevity drugs were failing him. But such great force of will! His genius must not fail! He could eat the hopes, lives and dreams of others, and he would live forever... But then he is aware of you, even as you are aware of him. Your fates are intertwined. If the Dread God Al-Khazadar falls, so too shall you.

You have a choice:

- Join forces with Al-Khazadar. Your alignment instantly becomes Chaotic and you gain two levels immediately, but you must slay your companions before leaving this place, or you will lose what you have gained.
- Oppose Al-Khazadar. You and those with you will be transported instantly to where the Dread God now stands outside the gates of Punjar. It will be possible to kill Al-Khazadar, but you will sacrifice yourself in doing so.

No one may help you with this choice, which must be made now.

# CHAPTER FOUR: THE HOUR OF DOOM

**Y**ou find yourselves instantly before the eastern gates of Punjar, facing the Dread God Al-Khazadar – but now you can see a mortal form within the emptiness, a shrunken old man hiding within the monstrously tall shadow. Surrounded by a 40-foot tall nimbus of absolute darkness, it is Al-Khazadar who now faces you with dread written upon his face!

The Dread God is not as potent now as he was in the PC's dreams, but he is still a formidable challenge. Al-Khazadar can shoot a ray of utter darkness and cold up to 120', striking with a +8 attack modifier for 2d8 damage. When a creature is reduced to 0 hp by Al-Khazadar's attacks, the flesh sloughs off of it, and it arises the next round as a matte black skeleton, which immediately attacks. Worse, when Al-Khazadar falls, the PC whose fate is joined to his likewise dies. No Luck check is allowed to avert this fate (but see the Epilogue, below).

**Dread God Al-Khazadar:** Init +5; Atk touch +8 melee (2d10) or ray +8 ranged (2d8); AC 10; HD 10d8; hp 60; MV 50'; Act 2d20; SP ray of darkness, create spawn, fate intertwined PC dies; SV Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +20; AL C.

**Black skeleton:** Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3 plus 1d3 Strength); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP undead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C.

## EPILOGUE

**I**n the weeks and months following the Dread God's fall, Punjar returns to normal. The PCs are hailed as heroes, feted, and given free lodgings and provisions for months after the adventure is concluded. The Overlord grants them an audience and a boon of

their choosing (within reason); eventually, he sees the PCs' popularity as a threat, and devises suitable tasks that may do away with them. This may be the start of a political campaign which sees the PCs take control of Punjar itself.

What happened to Zarya and Zardu? Were they able to repair the sky-sled and escape the P'quoth horde? How did the fall of Al-Khazadar change Madkeen? Will the planet now recover, or is there more to do? Only a tiny fraction of the world appears in this adventure, and much remains to explore. Characters with a love interest may desire to seek answers to these questions. Perhaps another lost gate will give them such a chance. Out there somewhere, too, is a world that devours other planets.

When some of the aftermath has resolved itself, conclude the adventure with the following:

*Something stirs in one of Punjar's dark alleyways. Slowly, a body is drawn together from the very air, dirt, and breath of the city. (Sacrificed PC) draws a breath, restored by the arcane Powers which watch over the Tarnished Jewel. Somewhere else, though, at that same instant an old man reforms, a god no longer. The fate of these two is intertwined, to oppose each other from incarnation to incarnation, until the end of Time itself. They will meet again, in this life, or in another.*

The PC who sacrificed himself gains a permanent +1 bonus to each ability score (to a maximum of 18). When in Punjar, he gains 10 bonus hit points. Damage is taken from these bonus hit points first, and they are renewed each day, so long as the PC is within the city. These bonus hit points vanish as soon as the PC passes the city gates – they represent the arcane forces of Punjar itself working to the character's advantage.



# THE BLACK CIRCLE



1  
= 10 FEET

SIDEVIEW  
ELEVATION  
CUTAWAY

Allen  
2015



Mmm  
2015

□ = 10 FT

# LEVEL 1



# THE CRADLE OF AL-KHAZADAR

THE

OF

2-16

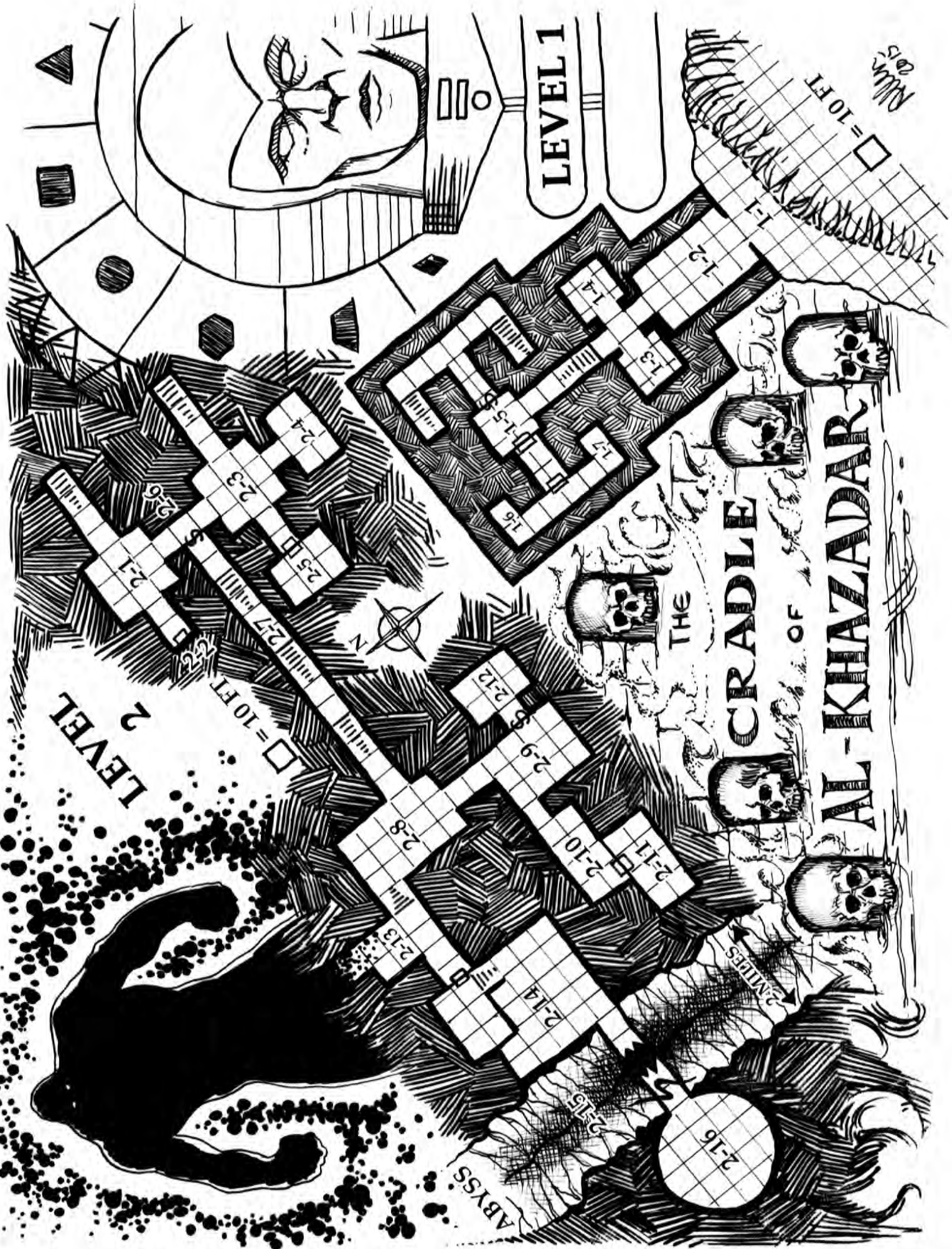
2-16

ABYSS



□ = 10 FT

# LEVEL 2



# PLAYER HANDOUT A

**Read quietly and then return to the judge:**

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**No one may help you with this choice, which must be made now.**

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