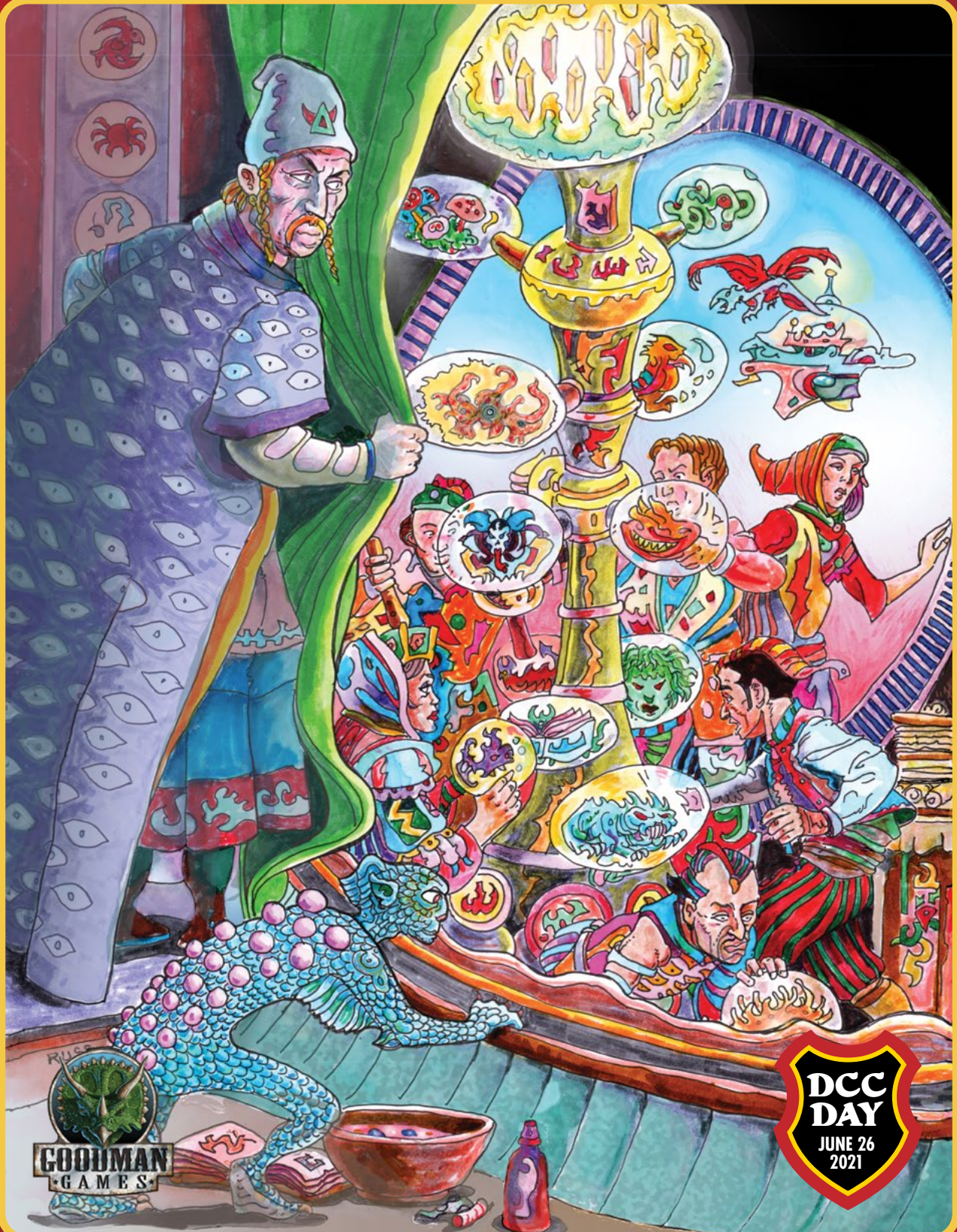


ADVENTURE PACK

DCC DAY 2021



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2021

ADVENTURE PACK

DCC DAY 2021



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the worlds of Dungeon Crawl Classics! This Adventure Pack commemorates our second annual DCC Day. DCC Day is our chance to say “thanks” to fans for their support, and by “thanks” what we really mean is, have a great game on us! Inside this free adventure pack, you will find three complete and playable adventures for the worlds of Dungeon Crawl Classics! We encourage you to run these adventures for your friends. Have fun, and help spread the word about what makes DCC RPG so much fun.

For **DCC RPG**, *Temple Siege* is a level 1 adventure where all the action takes place in a single room. It’s an atypical adventure full of surprises that will keep your players guessing.

For **DCC Dying Earth**, *Fathoms Below Witch Isle* is the first published adventure set in the world of Jack Vance’s *Dying Earth*. This level 1 adventure starts with the party traveling as passengers aboard an unusual ship driven by huge sailing worms. They must survive sea-demons, a shipwreck, and capture at the hands of the strange inhabitants of an underwater isle who seek to use them as sacrifices to a bizarre fiend who plagues their home.

For **Mutant Crawl Classics**, *The Neverwhen Rock* is a new level 0 funnel adventure. It is time for the primitive party members to undergo their “rite of passage,” which involves exploring unknown parts of their world and returning stronger and wiser (or with artifacts in hand). This adventure can also connect back to the MCC adventure in last year’s DCC Day Adventure Starter.

Plan your night of adventure. Thank you for supporting DCC RPG and DCC Day!



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DUNGEON
CRAWL
CLASSICS

TEMPLE SIEGE!

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE



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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventurers were running scared, NPCs were there to murder you, and the finale of every dungeon was the chaos lord on the 666th level? These are the good old days! *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG* adventures don't waste your time with humdrum scenarios, boilerplate campaign settings, or NPCs who want you to kill ten shadow cats. Each adventure is 100% good, solid *Dungeon Crawl Classics* with monsters you have never seen before, traps that spare the flesh but destroy the soul, and the secret portals that lead to a thousand insane worlds.

The adventure is for 5 to 6 1st-level PCs (Some playtesters found that the adventure provided plenty of challenge for 4 to 5 2nd-level PCs as well.) For optimal chances of survival, the PCs should have a lawful cleric in their party.

The PCs have ventured out onto the wild steppe in search of a treasure hidden in a humble forgotten temple. Little do they know that the fierce Zhokar bandits, led by the legendary Bodko the Chieftain, are also on the trail of the treasure. When Bodko's bandits arrive just after the PCs, they must defend their position in the temple, track down the hidden treasure, and finally confront Bodko after grappling with the unexpected choices poised by the treasure itself.

INSPIRATION

This adventure is inspired by the Cossack stories of Harold Lamb, who was one of the foundational inspirations for Robert E. Howard and other Appendix N writers. It draws particularly on the excellent tale *Changa Nor*, but this author heartily recommends all the stories in *Wolf of the Steppes*, published by University of Nebraska Press. You can read more about Lamb at goodman-games.com. Discover Harold Lamb for yourself today!



BACKGROUND

The Priests of Yoangyr once worshiped freely across the rocky steppes of this ziggurat-studded continent. Silent, disciplined and vengeful, this Lawful order was slowly overrun by the forces of Chaos, as well as the more mundane predations of banditry, greed and internal strife. Extinct for almost a century, their old temples still dot the rugged grasslands.

The Temple of the Broken Angels is one such abandoned fane. As the power of Yoangyr waned, the master of the temple knew that the Zhokar raiders would sooner or later ransack the temple, to say nothing of greedy adventurers from distant lands. So he secreted his greatest treasures, the Standard of Yoangyr and the Axe of the Hunter, under a flagstone in the temple floor.

RUMORS AND LEGENDS

Through the long travels across the steppe, the PCs have heard legends about the temple and its environs. Share this information with the PCs:

1. Yoangyr is a god of the Hunt, committed to honor, battle and law.
2. The Temple of the Broken Angels has been searched by many greedy adventurers but none have found the its priceless treasure.
3. The spirits of the ancient priests who made the temple will avenge themselves upon any who defile or deface it.
4. The dreaded bandit known as Bodko the Chieftain raids this area now. He is the son of the Devil Pazoz and he cannot be destroyed by blade, bow or magic.
5. Bodko's lieutenants, Ortho the Ox and Jimji the Shadow are as ruthless and evil as their chieftain.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Temple Siege! is a non-traditional adventure. Instead of exploring a dungeon room by room, the PCs will probably start and finish the adventure in one location. The encounters take place as the adversaries come at them in waves (see **Attacks and Adversaries** below). The success of the PCs depends on good tactics in repelling their attackers, discovering the items that assist the temple's defense and solving the puzzles that allow them to find the Standard of Yoangyr and the Axe of the Hunter.

The usual order of events within the adventure are as follows:

1. The PCs gain the temple and start exploring its confines. The judge should explain the general features of the temple and point out the murals on the walls, mentioning the writing on the northern wall. Give the PCs 2-3 exploratory actions each.
2. Bodko and his men surround the temple and threaten the PCs. Bodko sends Ortho the Ox and his men in the

first assault. See Wave 1. After (hopefully) repelling Ortho, give the PCs another 2-4 exploratory actions apiece.

3. The remaining Zhokars attack while Jimji the Shadow sneaks in via the massive horn (see Wave 2).
4. As long as they are making good progress, wait until the PCs find the treasure to trigger Wave 3. Build the tension with shouted threats and the gibbering of approaching demons. If the PCs are dragging their feet, Bodko attacks!

The above are the most likely guidelines for the adventure, but PCs surprise and frustrate even the most meticulous plans. When running this adventure, the judge must be flexible and let both the PCs and Bodko respond to the actions of their adversaries. During the session, time is fungible; when the PCs make a breakthrough or two, or if they are wasting time, hit them with the next attack.

FLEEING THE TEMPLE

Unconventional thinkers may seek to flee the temple, before or after finding the treasure. The PCs start the game with no mounts (unless the judge decides otherwise) and Bodko's men have superior horses; also, the Zhokars are born to shoot and fight in the saddle, while PCs generally will have a -1d penalty to cast spells or attack mounted adversaries. On foot, they are easy pickings for expert mounted warriors, who are capable of furious ride-by saber attacks at +2d. Beyond this, if the PCs can beat Bodko and his troops, so be it!

What if the PCs get stuck? The hawk-headed angels of Yoangyr hate Bodko and all Chaos. The judge can use them to give hints to PCs as they deem appropriate. The angels speak in unison, two vaguely feminine voices that sound far away but are perfectly audible.



PLAYER START— OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

Exhausted from your travels across the steppe, you approach the long rectangular temple set against the side of a mountain. Made of solid stone blocks, it appears to be a simple affair. The only windows are those of narrow stained glass high up on the structure's western wall. The open flared bell of a huge ivory horn, once used to call worshipers to Yoangyr's services, faces you from the roof of the structure, some thirty feet above the rocky ground. A single door beckons you from the front.

If the PCs do a careful check around the temple's exterior, they may find the secret door at area 5A with a DC 15 Intelligence check. Dwarves, thieves and elves are +1d on this check.

GENERAL FEATURES

The temple ceiling is 25 feet high with sturdy rafters and beams set about 18 feet off the ground. There are many holy objects in the temple (the altar, the font, the statues, etc.). A PC who desecrates them on holy ground loses 1 Luck point.

Area 1—The Main Entrance: *Once through the door, you find a large dusty room with crimson, gold, and teal sunlight slanting in from the windows above and behind you. The floor is composed of regular square flagstones, roughly five feet in length. Shattered pews, broken furnishings and the detritus of long-dead squatters and frustrated treasure-seekers litter the stone block floor. A large stone altar dominates the far side of the room, sitting on a raised dais with a short stair to either side. Two large hawk-headed angels stand facing you from either side of the altar. On the northern wall, two wooden doors face you. All the walls bear faded murals depicting scenes of Yoangyr's life. Despite the debris and dust, you feel a vague sense that you are not alone within this once-sacred space.*

In the northeastern corner of this room, a skeletal corpse lies still on its back.

Barricading the door from inside: The door has no lock. If the door is somehow barred, hatchet-wielding Zhokars destroy it in 3 rounds. Piling the smashed pews and detritus in front of the door delays entry for 1d2 rounds, but also gives the attackers cover from missile attacks (-2d) until they have pushed the debris aside.

Area 2—The Eastern Wall: *The eastern wall depicts the basic legend of the Hunting God: Yoangyr was abandoned by his father – the Sky God – and rescued by a hawk, who taught him to hunt and fly in the desolate highlands. Arriving among the people of the plains, with only an axe to his name, Yoangyr became a renowned hero of his people, hunting the legendary Silver Mammoth and slaying the Devil Boar of Kranosz.*

Area 3—The Northern Wall: *The northern wall depicts the benevolent Yoangyr, a tall stern-looking bearded man with a*

hawk on his shoulder, watching toiling peasants harvesting grain beneath a blazing sun. Some figures are blacked out and obscenities are scrawled onto the painting, as well as a mysterious quatrain of unreadable gibberish.

A skeletal corpse wearing ragged clothes lies still on its back in the Northeastern corner of the temple.

The skeletal corpse is that of the thief Pengaros, who left the cipher on the northern wall for his companions after he had determined where the treasure was likely hidden. He was slain by savage tribesmen, and his companions were captured before they could return and decipher his message. Pengaros's skull is caved in, but he still carries a rusted dagger (1d3 damage, -1d to hit), decrepit leather armor (+1 AC), and a few bits of chalk. Inside one of his pockets is a small scrap of paper which has the following message scrawled in Common: "ITS IN THE ANGELZ EYES."

The latter words allude to the key to the cipher that's scratched into the southern angel statue's eyes.

Give the players the following cipher from the northern wall:

YJGTG HKGT_ UWP OGGVU PQTVJGTP CNVCT GPF
YJGTG PKPG OGGVU UGXGP
CPF GCING NQQMU FQYP FGCF
VJGTG HKPF VJG OKIJV_ RQYGT JKF

Two symbols are scratched into the angel's eyes in area 6C: "C=" and "A". Replacing each letter of the ciphered quatrain with the letter 2 places earlier in the alphabet translates as follows:

WHERE FIERY SUN MEETS NORTHERN ALTAR END
WHERE NINE MEETS SEVEN
AND EAGLE LOOKS DOWN DEAD
THERE FIND THE MIGHTY POWER HID

Note: Since no letter is 2 spaces after Y, Pengaros used " _".

The clues' meanings are as follows:

- If one draws a straight line south from the Sun on the northern wall, and intersects it with a straight line drawn west from the northern edge of the altar, the lines intersect on the flagstone where the treasure is buried (area 9).
- This is also where the ninth flagstone from the north intersects the seventh from the east.
- There is an old eagle's nest in the rafters of the temple, directly over the flagstone. (See area 9A)

Area 4—The Western Wall: The western wall shows Yoangyr at the head of a horde of the steppes, fighting a legion of pale, one-eyed creatures, decapitating a three-horned crooked-clawed devil with a huntsman's axe. A hulking warrior at Yoangyr's left bears a blue standard emblazoned with a flaming orange hawk.

Area 5—The Southern Wall: The southern wall depicts Yoangyr, chasing a stag with bounding dogs beside him, against a

backdrop of mountains, one of which prominently displays a mysterious cave.

Area 5A—The Secret Door: A secret door is hidden in the southern wall, triggered by a catch within the cave mouth depicted in the background of Yoangyr's hunting scene. Cleverly crafted, it has a rusty latch but no lock. The door can be detected upon close inspection with a DC 15 Intelligence check. Dwarves, thieves and elves are +1d on this check.

Area 6—The Altar Area: The altar faces the entrance from a raised dais against the western wall. The altar is flanked in front by the statue of a hawk-headed angel on each side. The body of the roof's massive ivory horn descends down through the ceiling and the mouthpiece is accessible from behind the altar. The large stone altar is crudely crafted save for its polished marble top. Carved into the altar is the following motto:

*Pray to the provider for the pure water of blessings
Sound the horn of the hunt when evil is near*

The spirit of Yoangyr is still present in the temple. The first PC to make an offering on the altar (some valuable worth 1 gp or more) gains one Luck point and is instantly aware of the hidden compartment at the altar's base.

Otherwise, this compartment requires a DC 12 Find Trap check by a thief or DC 15 Intelligence check by anyone else. Due to their acute senses, elves roll a 1d24 on this check, as do dwarves if actively searching for strange stonework.

If discovered, a large drawer of rough wood camouflaged as stone can be pulled heavily out of the altar's base. Within is a huge, heavy crossbow, which can only be wielded by someone with a Strength of 13 or higher. The crossbow has double normal range and its bolts do 2d7 points of damage. It takes two rounds to re-load. There are ten long metal bolts in the drawer.

Area 6A—The Font: A bone-dry stone basin carved with a river and fish motif sits on a pedestal on the western side of the altar. When the basin is examined, the angels suddenly speak together with a strange hollow voice, though their hawk-beaks do not move. "This holy water may bless the weapons of the just."

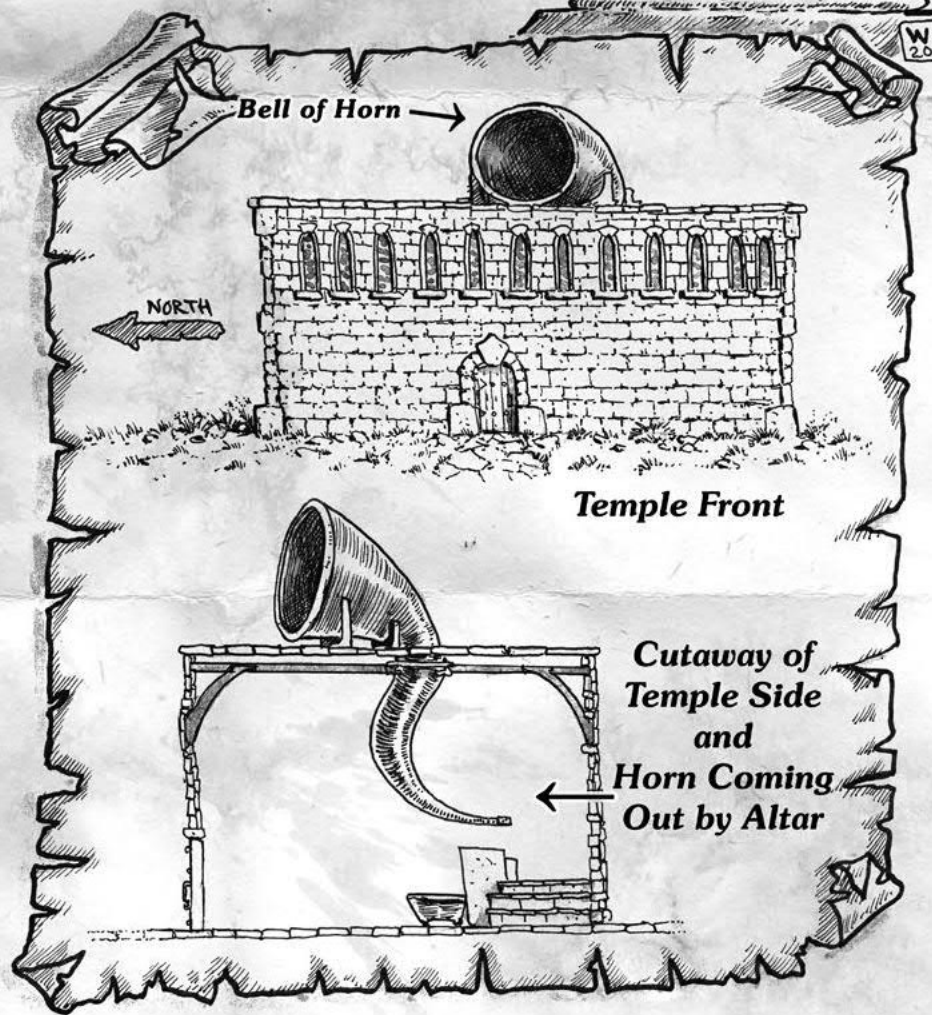
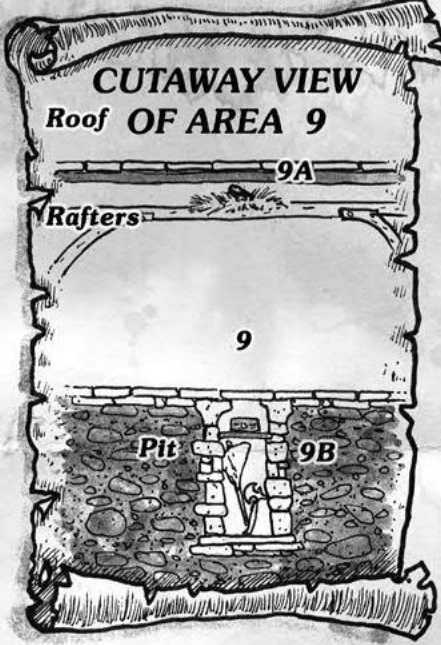
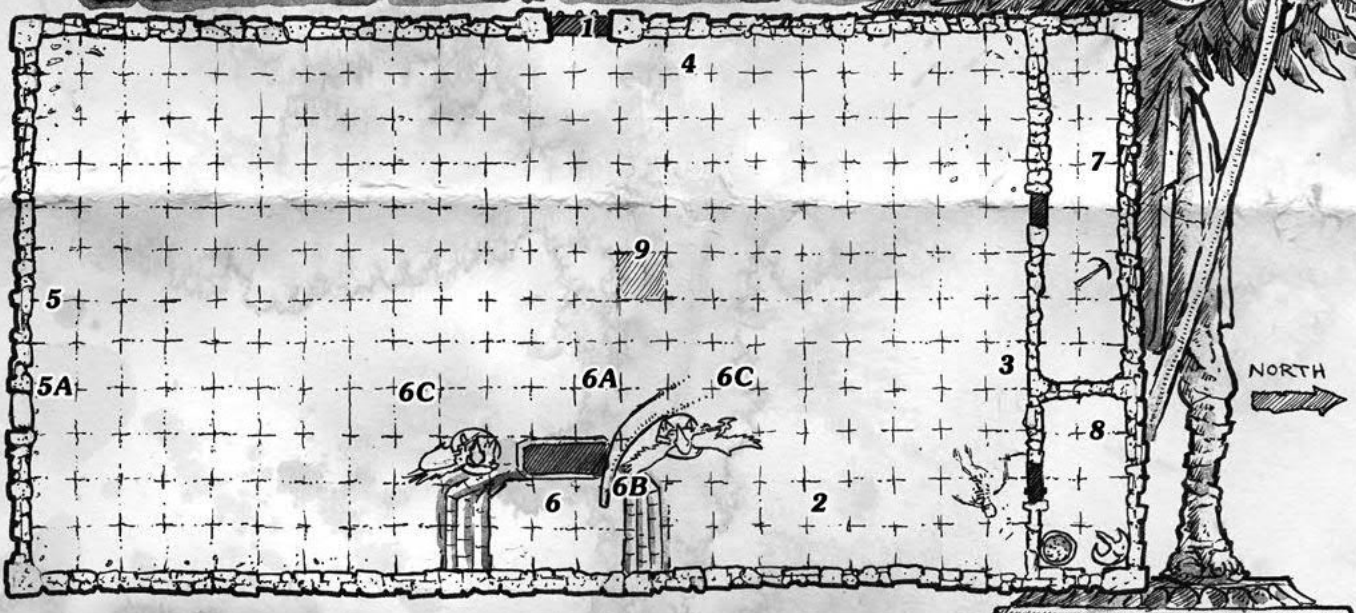
Praying to Yoangyr at the altar or over the basin causes it to miraculously fill one time with holy water. This water can be used to coat weapons to attack Bodko, or it can be applied to wounds to give the recipient 1 HD of healing. There is enough holy water for 2d3 +Luck modifier uses.

Area 6B—The Horn: The mighty horn seen atop the temple is set into the ceiling and its curved ivory body descends down to a valve near the altar. The horn is carved with elaborate renderings of reindeer, wolves, rabbits, hawks and bears. The behemoth that bore such a horn must have been larger than a house!

The horn can be used to shout messages at Bodko and his men outside the temple. Vigorous usage and cries for help can be heard up to five miles away depending on the weather and surrounding noise. Loud repeated use may summon sympathetic villagers, curious shepherds, wandering

TEMPLE SIEGE!

□ = 5 Feet



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monsters or even other groups of dangerous bandits, at the judge's discretion.

In addition, blowing the horn during a combat can call the favor of Yoangyr upon the party in the form of a *protection from evil* spell. Treat it as a spell check with a 1d20 and add in the blower's level and Personality modifier. This power can only be used once per encounter.

Area 6C—The Broken Angels: *The statues of two hawk-headed feminine angels stand on pedestals flanking the western corners of the altar. Both are roughly eight feet tall. The northern angel holds a hunter's axe in its right hand and is missing its left arm below the elbow. The southern angel has its left hand upraised, holding an old fashioned battle standard. The southern angel is missing its right wing.*

The southern angel has the carvings on its eyes that are referenced in the mural (see area 2). Otherwise, these statues are crude and unimpressive (until they speak!)

See also: The Broken Angels in Wave 3.

Area 7—Priests' Quarters: *This dark windowless cell has the smashed remnants of three bunks and the tattered remains of hymnbooks. An old pickaxe lays on the floor, abandoned by its owner many years ago.*

A diligent search uncovers 4 copper coins of antique stamp, depicting a hawk on one side and a bearded man's face on the other, as well as a red leather-bound pamphlet showing the operation of the liquid fire projector in area 8. It also shows the formulae to make more of the precious substance it requires. (This rare chemical mixture is left to the judge, possibly the subject of further adventures.)

There are also instructions and diagrams for the use of the Clockwork Cobra in the treasure shaft (area 9B). If carefully studied, the instructions confer +1d on a thief's disable trap check to master that exotic device.

Area 8—The Ordermaster's Quarters: *More debris and smashed furniture litter the floor of this dark, windowless room. Crouching on a pedestal in one blackened, soot-stained corner squats the sinister looking statuette of a dragon, about a foot high at its scaled shoulder and two feet long. The dragon's toothy maw is open, facing intruders. The body of the dragon is strangely intact as if its fierce visage deterred vandals. A large open barrel sits nearby.*

The dragon is a portable liquid fire projector, now filled with fuel for three remaining blasts. The barrel is filled with sand.

The priests left it armed as a trap and any handling or jostling of the item sprays a 5' wide and 10' long blast of flammable oil directly forward. Any torch (or other open flame) being held results in a 1d7 points of damage to everyone caught in the oil-blast, and PCs are set on fire for 1d4 points of damage each round until extinguished. Scooping sand onto the flames promptly extinguishes them. This trap can be found and disarmed by a thief with a DC 10 Disable Trap check. Mastery of the fire projector requires a DC 15 Intelligence check (or DC 15 Find Trap check from a thief). One turn's study of the documents from area 4 adds +2d to this check.

If its principles are mastered, the PC finds that the projector has a grip on the bottom and is surprisingly light. When a bellows at the back of the dragon is pumped, air pressure gathers in the dragon's belly, allowing oil to be streamed out of its mouth when a trigger between the dragon's forelegs is pressed. The dragon's mouth has a small hole in the bottom by which a torch or open flame can be raised, to project the oil out as shooting flames. This does 1d7 damage as noted above to all adversaries within the same area in front of the dragon's mouth (DC 13 Reflex save for half). After each usage of the liquid fire, one round is required to pump the air back in and pressurize the oil chamber.

Area 9—The Secret Flagstone: *The finely carved flagstone is about 5' by 5'. It looks like every other one that makes up the stone floor of the temple*

Only a searching dwarf (DC 5), a person of masonic background (DC 10) or a thief (DC 15 Find Trap check) can see that it's of later construction than all the other flagstones. There are no seams to indicate that it's movable and no mechanisms to open it. When the treasure was sunk into its hiding place beneath the floor, the new stone was laid atop it and sealed in place. 2-3 turns of mining work is required to dig out the seams and pry it up or 3-5 turns to break through the stone itself. (The abandoned pick in area 7 suffices for this purpose.) If the PCs have brought one or more picks, adjust the number of turns. The treasure beneath is described in area 9B.

Area 9A—The Eagle's Nest: The long forgotten eagle's nest above the flagstone has one curious egg within. It appears to be formed of solid jade, with alien runes inscribed upon it. If sold, it yields 250 gp, but the seller of this sacred object is afflicted with the loss of 1d3 Luck. If a lawful character prays upon it sincerely within the temple and succeeds on a DC 15 Personality check, the egg hatches into an eagle Guardian familiar (see DCC RPG rulebook p. 316 for more details on familiars. In this case, the master of the familiar need not be a wizard or elf).

Area 9B—The Buried Treasure: *After picking away at the flagstone, you finally manage to unearth a prize! Beneath the flagstone is a small square compartment about 3' deep. Within is a plain iron lockbox about 2' by 2'.*

The venerable lock can be opened with a DC 12 Pick Lock check. There is a trap within the box. A successful DC 14 Find Trap check discovers that there is something coiled tightly within the box, but there is no way to disarm the trap (other than perhaps to cautiously open at a safe distance).

Clockwork Cobra Trap: A mechanical cobra springs to life and attacks 3 times when the box is opened; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4), plus poison (2d5, DC 12 Fort save for half).

The 4' long gleaming silver clockwork cobra is a mechanical trap devised by the ancient engineers of Metazothik. After attacking three times, the mechanism becomes inert. It has two doses of poison, which are effective within 2d3 rounds of getting bitten. An enterprising thief can make a DC 16 Find Trap check to master the device and possibly reuse it for their own purposes. (New poison is required if already

exhausted, and a DC 10 Handle Poison check is required to extract the cobra's poison or to refill it.)

Beneath the box is a thin false floor of wood disguised as stone. This can be hacked away with one blow of an axe or other metal weapon, revealing the true treasure below.

Sunk into a 10' deep stone shaft is the Standard of Yoangyr, a 4' square banner of hide hung with braids of gold, jewels, and baubles of silver and amber. The standard depicts a flaming orange hawk on a blue background. This priceless relic, attached to a 10' high sturdy wooden pole, was once carried alongside Yoangyr himself into battle against the Devil's horde (as depicted in the mural in area 4). The various baubles and precious stones that decorate it are worth 1000 gp.

Praying to Yoangyr in the presence of this holy object bestows +1 Luck on any PC or a bonus of 1d3+1 for a lawful character. Stripping its gems out or otherwise defiling it has the equivalent penalty to the PCs responsible for such blasphemy. See **Vengeance of The Broken Angels** at the end of Wave 3 for more details if the PCs desecrate the banner.

- While holding the standard, the bearer may turn unholy as a priest of the wielder's level; if wielded by a cleric, turning is +1d.

Also in the shaft is a wood-handled hunter's axe. There are flecks of rust and blood on the gray axe-blade, and numerous chips on the haft. Despite its humble appearance, this is

the Axe of the Hunter, the handle of which was carved from the Tree of Law at the center of Heaven itself. It was this weapon with which Yoangyr wounded the Devil's belly in their final battle. It has the following properties:

- Confers a bonus of +2 to attacks.
- The axe's damage die is d12.
- The axe is dedicated to protecting the order of Yoangyr, including its treasure. Once the battle with Bodko is done, its wielder must swear fealty to Yoangyr, or immediately drop it. Those who defy Yoangyr are struck from beyond by the god's fury for 2d7 points of damage.
- The axe is able to wound Bodko the Chieftain as a normal weapon.
- The axe bursts into flames in the hands of a chaotic character, doing 1d5 points of damage per round until dropped. The flames do no damage to the axe. Neutral characters can wield the axe but only against chaotic creatures and for one battle's duration.
- Anyone who desecrates the sacred standard by divesting it of its gold braids and treasure is unable to wield the axe.

When the standard is revealed, the broken angels speak: *"Leave here the sacred Standard of Yoangyr. Take the axe up if you serve honor and justice and do good works. Thus you may go with the Hunter's blessing."*



ATTACKS AND ADVERSARIES

WAVE 1:

Your exploration of the temple is interrupted by a shout from outside the building. Gazing through the door, you see a band of fierce Zhokar raiders, at least 12 men, in leather armor bearing bows, sabers and spears. They are all shaved bald, save for a long knotted braid that runs down from the back of their head. A loud deep voice bellows, "Ho there, in the temple! I, Bodko the supreme chieftain of the Zhokars, claim all treasures therein. If you surrender and bring the treasures out, you will leave with your lives. Otherwise, make peace with your gods and prepare to die!"

In the first wave, Ortho the Ox leads a gang of raiders. The Zhokar raiders are scarred veterans. They are expert horsemen, bowmen and swordsmen. They are wise in the way of the steppe and savage in their warfare. Like Ortho, they have never shown any mercy to their enemies and expect none.

Zhokar Raiders (5): Init +2; Atk saber +1 melee (1d7) or bow +2 missile fire (1d6, 30/60/90'); AC 12; HD 1d12; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

Ortho the Ox: Init +3 (d16 using two-handed weapon); Atk two-handed sword +3 melee (1d10+3); AC 14 (mail shirt); HD 3d12; hp 25; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP +5 to Strength checks, d16 initiative die for two-handed weapon; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; AL C.

Ortho is a towering 6'6" bully of large girth. He torments his own men, who hate and fear him. He's a murderer, thief and blasphemer many times over.

In Ortho's pouch, he has 42 gp, 20 sp, three loaded bone dice and a small leather bag containing 10 bronze figurines of Zhokar soldiers, along with 10 assorted oxen, goats, sheep and horses. Ortho plays with these when no one is looking. The entire collection is worth 10gp.

WAVE 2:

Jimji the Shadow leads the next attack. The Zhokar raiders go through the entrance in force. If required, he uses his sorcerous powers to unward the door. Then Jimji turns into his shadow-form and actually climbs up the temple exterior and then through the horn itself, squeezing out through the valve into the temple and (presumably) surprising the PCs from the altar. Dangling his silver pendant, he attacks with his hypnotism and if successful, orders the nearest PC to slay their companions.

Zhokar Raiders (5): Init +2; Atk saber +1 melee (1d7) or bow +2 missile fire (1d6, 30/60/90'); AC 12; HD 1d12; hp 6 each; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

Jimji the Shadow: Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 12; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP *Hypnotic Command*



- affects one target (DC14 Will save or snap into a trance under Jimji's command, range 10', duration 1d4 rounds), *Unbar Portal* (cancels *Ward Portal*), shadow form-malleable, rubbery substance; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

Jimji is a lean shadowy figure in a black skullcap, wielding a curved, shining dagger. His eyes glitter with malice and power even as the shifting shadows that cover his body look somehow unreal, as if he was more phantom than man.

A disgraced holy man from a distant land, Jimji fell in with Bodko when he found the Chieftain to be the only man who could match his own cruelty and esoteric interests. He fears no man save Bodko. He claims mastery of astrology and fortune telling, but these are just tricks of casting bones and reading entrails that he twists to suit his own purposes. If clearly overmatched, Jimji surrenders rather than die, but always seeks to escape or injure his captors at the earliest opportunity.

Jimji's shiny silver pendant is worth 40 gp. He also was born with 12 fingers; on each he wears a gold ring with a small gemstone worth 10gp. He carries 15 gp and 20 sp on his person.

WAVE 3

After the PCs have discovered the Axe of the Hunter, Bodko attacks. Bodko is close to his devil lord Pazoz and is informed about the secret door at area 5A. He may attack through this door, hoping to take defenders by surprise.

Assuming the PCs having dispatched his current gang of Zhokars, Bodko calls upon his father Pazoz to summon a band of terrifying devils. These inhuman marauders hate all life and obey Bodko to the death.

Gibberers (4): Init +2; Atk claw +2 melee (1d8); AC 13 (rubbery skin); HD 1d10; hp 7 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP *Gibbering*, DC 10 Will save or be afflicted with Chaos-fever; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

Gibberers are lank, sour-smelling creatures with sagging, rubbery skin and one yellow eye. They jabber constantly through their jagged-toothed mouth. They can neither speak nor understand any language, and they fight to the death. The judge should play up their inhuman jabbering and evil odor as the PCs slowly realize they are fighting the devils from the war-scene.

Chaos-Fever: Those hearing the gibbering of these foul creatures must make a DC 10 Willpower save; those failing this save are haunted by the impious mutterings forevermore. Within 1d3 days, their alignment switches one step toward chaotic (lawful characters become neutral, neutral characters become chaotic.)

Bodko the Chieftain: Init +5; Atk saber +5 melee (1d7+3) or pistol +3 missile fire (1d10, 30/50/70'); AC 14 (chain shirt); HD 4d12; hp 25; MV 25; Act 1d20; SP immune to physical and magical spells (see below), +3 to Strength checks; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +10; AL C.

Bodko the Chieftain is a squat and stout middle-aged man, bald save for the same back-knot as the other Zhokar raiders. Unlike most of his kind, he bears no scars or outright signs of the many battles he has fought. He is dressed in a chain shirt, hide leggings, and fights with a curved saber. A scion of the devil, Bodko has the following powers and weaknesses:

- He is utterly immune to physical harm and magical spells, with the exception of blessed weapons, including those with holy water as above.
- He can be turned.
- The Axe of the Hunter or other powerful artifacts of Lawful origin and purpose affect him normally.
- He can be overpowered with strength, captured, bound and so on. Treat Bodko as having an 18 Strength (+3 bonus). This is an important weakness and judges should reward creative tactics.
- He may suffocate, be drowned and so on, though being strangled by physical means (choking) is ineffectual.
- He is vulnerable to fire (though not from spells.)

Bodko is a legend in his own right. His carcass, easily recognizable anywhere in the steppes region, would bring a bounty of at least 250 gp from local authorities. Jimji's and Ortho's corpses would also be worth 100 gp each. Sorcerers and occultists would pay plenty for the chance to study Bodko, dead or alive.

Bodko's pistol is loaded and shoots a musket ball. (The range is 30/50/70). Once fired it takes two rounds to reload. Unless shown how to use it, this process of reloading must be deduced with a DC 12 Intelligence or Find Trap check. There is enough gunpowder for five more shots. Availability of this exotic substance is left to the judge's discretion.

On a leather thong Bodko wears a silver death's head amulet worth 80 gp. On his left hand he also bears a gold ring with a devil-face emerald worth 150 gp. He has 24 gp, and 70 sp on his person.

The assorted treasure in the horses' saddlebags is worth another 150 gp, including several weeks' rations, torches and water. The 13 horses themselves are high quality and worth 80 gp each, depending on a haggler's skill and the wealth of a prospective buyer. (Cash is rare and barter is common in the steppe.)

VENGEANCE OF THE BROKEN ANGELS

If the PCs desecrate or remove the standard, the angels attack the blasphemer(s). If the angels animate while Bodko is in the temple, the angels attack Bodko, perhaps leaving the PCs to escape with their lives.

Broken Angel Statues (2): Init +1; Atk pummel +3 melee (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 3d12; hp 20 each; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will N/A; AL L.

What if this adventure is too easy?

If the PCs make quick work of the whole force too easily, Bodko can call upon the power Pazoz to summon more Gibberers, or perhaps an even more fearsome devil!

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs manage to defeat Bodko, they are faced with the choice of plundering the temple or bearing away the relics therein in the service of Yoangyr the Hunter. Yoangyr is a god of honor and courage and supports PCs as long as they right wrongs, uphold their vows and make their deeds the stuff of legend. Yoangyr's support and the vanquishing of Bodko, are likely to draw the attention of Pazoz the Devil, who broods over his never-healing axe wound in a trembling castle of liquid platinum, deep in the lowest crevasse of Hell. PCs who dare to use the Axe of the Hunter in their adventures will certainly draw his ire sooner or later!



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DCC RPG

DCC DYING EARTH FATHOMS BELOW WITCH ISLE

A LEVEL 1
ADVENTURE

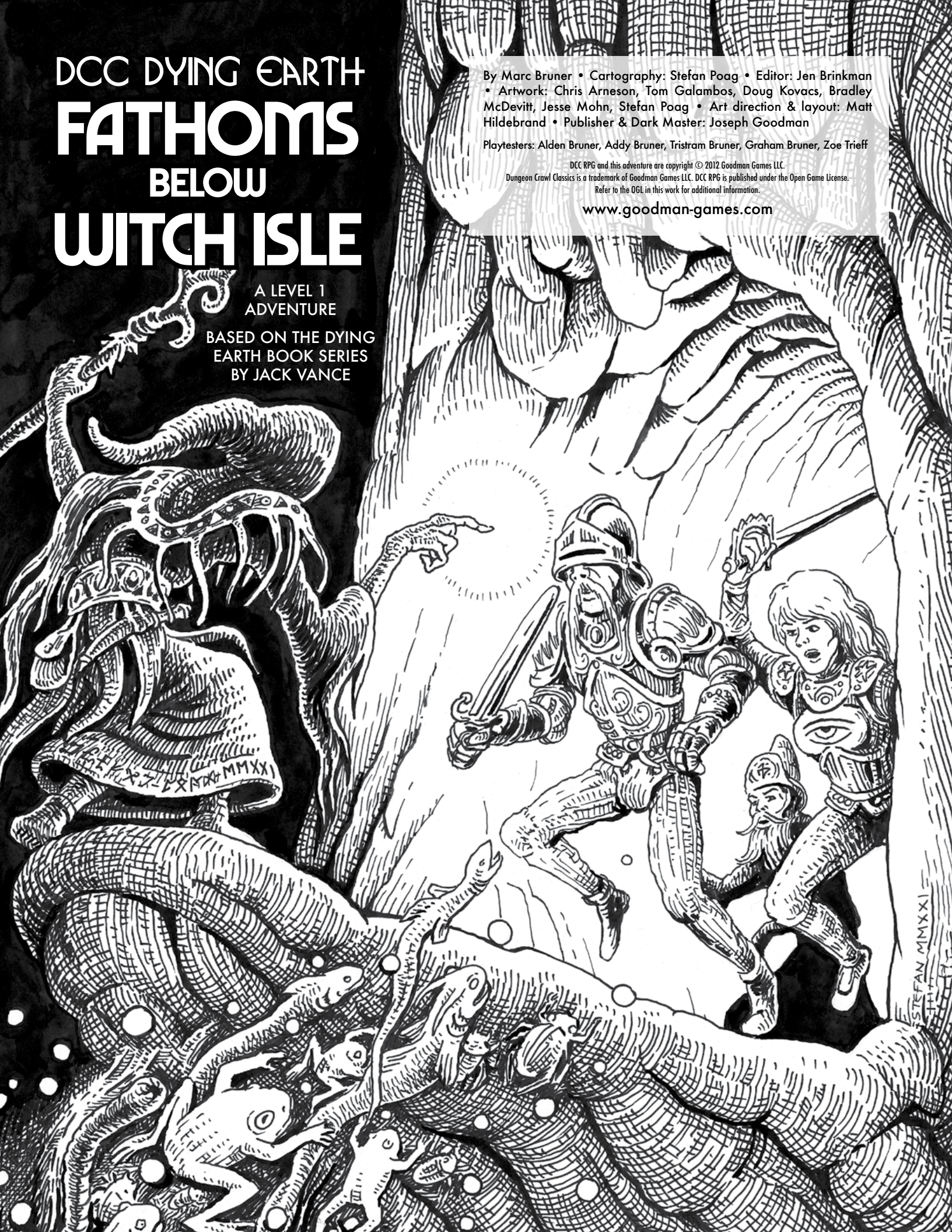
BASED ON THE DYING
EARTH BOOK SERIES
BY JACK VANCE

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STEFAN MMXXI

INTRODUCTION



Fathoms Below Witch Isle is a special adventure for DCC Day 2021 and is designed to introduce players and judges alike to the world of *Dungeon Crawl Classics Dying Earth*, the highly-anticipated new setting for the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG based on the works of Jack Vance. Although *Fathoms Below Witch Isle* is designed for use with the new PC classes and rules found in *DCC Dying Earth*, it may be enjoyed with the core DCC RPG rules without difficulty; simply use characters from the seven primary classes and disregard references to unfamiliar game mechanics.

This adventure is intended as an introductory adventure for groups of three or four 1st-level PCs, but can easily be adapted for smaller or larger groups. *Fathoms Below Witch Isle* starts with the adventurers traveling as passengers aboard an unusual ship driven by huge sailing worms. They must survive sea-demons, a shipwreck, and capture at the hands of the strange inhabitants of an underwater isle who seek to use them as sacrifices to a bizarre fiend who plagues their home.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



The Northern Ocean has always held its share of dangers for vessels braving passage, from pirates to water shadows to the vast, becalmed stretches of tideless waters of latter-day Earth. It is an endeavor fraught with risk for even the most well-prepared. Ships and sojourners usually adhere to the same safe routes that keep their vessels away from the unknown stretches of ocean populated by strange – and often hostile – inhabitants.

Among those places is Witch Isle. In the second epoch of the Twenty-first Aeon, a shipwrecked sailor from the Old Dastric Empire discovered a cave on a remote island primarily known for its delicious salted coelenterates and the strange customs of its orange-skinned peoples. There, deep in a network of pyroduct tunnels, the sailor discovered the relics of a long-dead necrophage who had fled from the War of the Wizards and Witches aeons before. The sailor, whose original cognomen has been lost to the ages but is known as “Setebos” or “fiend” in the guttural native speech of the Thrasians, was slowly driven mad by the necrophage’s dark sorceries, and became ever more consumed by the discovery of yet more powerful magics. Setebos eventually entered

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CAPTAIN YSPRO, ship-master of the trading cog *Calealen*

ARCHEAE TICHENOR, law-reader of the Thrasians, a race of orange-skinned inhabitants of Witch Isle

SETEBOS, the mad witch-hermit whose magic rules over the strange underwater isle

Castillion Shorelanders, Thrasian Knights, Mooncalves, etc.

league with certain sub-world entities, and his magic grew to such might that he inverted the very isle itself to draw it closer to the underworld, sinking it and its inhabitants far beneath the sea.

Now, only legends remain of a cataclysmic eruption which sank the island, leaving a small barren patch of land surrounded by deadly reefs, and rumors of a curse that swallows whole those vessels traversing too near its waters.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The bloated red sun rises above the horizon, casting its dim wine-colored light over the vast and still waters of the Northern Ocean, which seem to spread endlessly in every direction. Since setting out of Saskervoy two days ago aboard the Calealen, a trading cog bound for Port Perdusz in the Land of the Falling Wall, you and your fellow passengers have endured a host of minor imprecations and the long, idle hours of a listless voyage. The now-familiar din of the ship fills the background – creaking timbers, rope sliding across wood smoothed by the passages of many voyages, and the occasional grunted conversation between the laconic crew – all punctuated by the sounds of the two enormous sailing worms lashed by braided cinctures to port and starboard sponsons. Seven feet in diameter and running the length of the hull, the worms propel the vessel forward with huge thrusts of their caudal flukes. The ship-master, Yspro, drives her crew and the worms with a stern hand, and, as you have come to learn much to your discomfiture, provides the bare minimum in the ways of comfort or attention to her passengers.

The PCs are passengers aboard the trading vessel, the *Calealen*, carrying several dozen casks of an aged, rich red Montrachio from the port of Saskervoy to Port Perdusz in the Land of the Falling Wall. The *Calealen* is a small ship that bobs in the water when empty but settles into stout buoyancy when filled with cargo. In addition to Captain Yspro, the small crew of Castillion Shorelanders includes a boatswain, two seamen, and the ship’s worminger, chief overseer of the two massive sailing worms lashed to the vessel’s outboard sponsons, which drive the ship through the usually-placid waters of the Northern Ocean. A single spare mast allows the ship to hoist a small sail when winds are favorable, allowing the worms to rest.

The worms tethered to the ship are both scarlet rose in color, the pairs of steering knobs located behind their single ocular bumps colored purple and yellow on the starboard and port worms, respectively. When baited with victuals, the worms propel the ship forward with massive thrusts of their caudal flukes. It is the worminger who must constantly see to the vitality of the worms, ensuring they are not impacted by disease or discomfort. Each day they must work to reapply unction to prevent the formation of impeding galls and use the tools of the worminger’s trade – brush, scraper, gouge, and reamer – to remove any signs of timp, fluke-mites, gangue, or pust, lest the worms become bloated and listless.



The PCs are housed in the small, cramped forward hold, strewn with hammocks and reeking of the smells of worm tinctures, ear-tonic, and bins and sacks of victual and pots of salve, toner, and unction—accommodations that the unscrupulous ticket agent in Saskervoy neglected to mention among the multiple pages of contracts required to secure passage. The viands are as plain as the quarters: coarse black bread and bowls of porridge, and, for an extra price, boiled leeks.

During the idle events of the third morning, judges should allow the players time to role-play and learn a bit about each character, especially if this is an introductory adventure. Players coming up with entertaining reasons for leaving the northern shores and risking passage across the vast ocean should be rewarded with a point of Luck (especially if they incorporate their starting animus).

The characters are also free to interact with the crew of the *Calealen*. Captain Yspro, a veteran of many passages, is acerbic in response to any inquiries about accommodations, and she suggests PCs take up any deficiency of appurtenances with the when they reach Port Perdusz, where they can file an official complaint with an adjunct office to be carried back to the ship's business owners in Saskervoy. The rest of the crew are preoccupied with assigned tasks and generally keep to themselves, but if they take any of the PCs as easy mark, they slyly engage them in a game of Skax—where they attempt to swindle the PCs, but claim great offense if they suspect a PC is cheating, even if it is honest luck. Any crewmates caught spending too much time with the passengers are reprimanded by the captain.

I A RISING STORM

Throughout the day, the seas are placid and calm. Captain Yspro keeps the worms at half-bait and orders the ship's small blue sail unfurled to catch the light breeze occasionally stirring from the north. As the scarlet sun descends past midday, however, black clouds are seen gathering in the east and the crew's mood turns pensive. By late afternoon, the captain's orders have taken on a sense of urgency as a dark tempest grows on the horizon, its roiling clouds pierced by charges of electricity. A PC observing the storm with a lens

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or scrying device and making a DC 12 Intelligence check realizes the charges arc *upwards* from the surface of the water. They are also able to make out several writhing dark shapes occasionally breaching the surface with long, fin-like crests decorating their heads.

With the growing storm, Yspro orders double bait for the worms, confidently telling the PCs that they can tack away and only suffer a slight delay. Despite the captain's reassurances, the storm continues to grow larger throughout the waning hours of the afternoon. PCs with a maritime background can ascertain from the ship's escalabra that, while the captain's measures are indeed the correct course of action, they are taking the ship from its planned southerly route into unfamiliar waters. Further observations are eventually obscured as the red sun sets behind the growing wall of clouds. As the mostly starless night falls, the captain again reassures the PCs, suggesting that they return to their quarters in the forward hold to get some sleep, promising to wake them long before the ship is in any danger.

II A LONG NIGHT

The storm is a product of Setebos' unnatural magic, calling up sea-demons from the depths of the sub-world to wreck passing vessels and bring their doomed sailors to his underwater realm. The crew, recognizing the situation as hopeless, plan to steal away in the ship's sole launch before dawn, hoping they can escape in the smaller vessel while the devils continue their pursuit of the *Calealen*. Any PC who is awake during the night (e.g., keeping watch) can detect the crew quietly lowering the launch with a DC 12 Intelligence check. Unless the PCs are quick to act, the crew slip away two rounds later. The desperate sailors attack anyone preventing their escape.

Captain Yspro: Init +2; Atk cutlass +2 melee (1d8+1); AC 12; HD 2d8+1; hp 14; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/d8.

Castillion Shorelanders (4): Init +0; Atk rigging knife +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/d6.

The crew of the *Calealen*, half-pirates themselves, are able

and determined fighters. In combat, they slash at opponents with short rigging knives, whereas Yspro bears a wide cutlass of the Old Kharai variety. All wear the typical costume of a Castillion Shorelander: a conical black hat and sturdy breeches laced at the waist with a thick cord of knotted rope, covered by a loose-fitting striped shirt of indigo blue and white, dyed the same dark blue of the ship's sail. Each wears a spigoted golden boss in their left cheek attached by a golden chain to their right ear (each worth 10 gold terces).

III RED SKY IN THE MORNING

Regardless of whether the PCs catch the crew in the act of escape, the wan red light of dawn reveals a dire situation for the now crewless vessel: the ship's worms, exhausted from overuse and left lashed to the hull untended, appear bilious in color with bloated fausicles, and are listless and unresponsive. As a result, the ship has been left to drift directionless for hours and is being driven by the storm's surge directly toward a set of jutting reefs, beyond which is a low patch of furze-covered earth barely rising above sea level. If the PCs do nothing, the storm overtakes the ship in mere minutes, dashing the vessel against the reef as the sea-demons attack.

Sea-demons (type I demons) (1 per PC): Init +4; Atk bite +5 melee (1d8+4) or suction-grasp +4 melee (special); AC 16; HD 4d10+2; hp 24 each; MV swim 60'; Act 1d20; SP suction grasp (upon successful attack, attaches to target, DC 20 Strength check to dislodge), demon traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C; Crit DN/d4.

Sea-demons are half-humanoid, half-fish creatures with sucker-tipped fingers and lamprey-like mouths. They ride the crests of the storm, grabbing any PCs cast into the water. Entities of the sub-world, sea-demons speak both sub-world and the language of the Twenty-first Aeon. They have infravision of 120' and can cast *darkness* with a +4 spell check. Due to their infernal nature, sea-demons only take half-damage from non-magical weapons and fire (magical or mundane).

During combat with the sea-demons, the tiny cog is tossed about like a cork as the waves crash into it, pitching the deck at wild angles. PCs standing unsecured on the deck or the outboard sponsons must make two DC 10 Agility checks each round—adjusting for armor check penalties—or be cast into the churning waters. The sea-demons attempt to grab any who fall into the water with their powerful suction and drag them beneath the surface to drown. Held PCs suffer 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and fall unconscious when their Stamina reaches 0; lost Stamina is restored immediately if they are removed from the water or reach the layer of animalcule-filled "air" surrounding the underwater isle (see below).

Uncontrolled, the ship will strike the reef after the fourth round of combat with the sea-demons, breaking apart and forcing any remaining PCs into a watery fate.

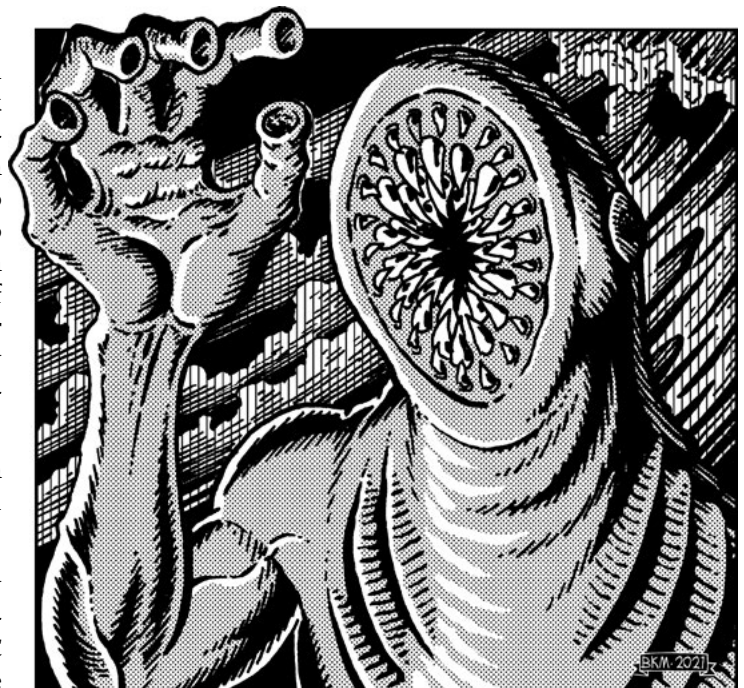
PCs may attempt to navigate the ship away from the reef by commanding the worms—but unless their condition is ameliorated, the worms are lethargic and unresponsive. A PC attempting to command the worms must first straddle the

worm and then carefully manipulate the delicate knobs extending from the worm's head to apply direction. Too much pressure or incorrect manipulation can cause the worm to dive deep under water or fling itself into the air. A PC attempting to command a bilious worm must succeed on a DC 12 Agility check in two consecutive rounds to properly guide the worm and avoid the reef. Treat the checks as unskilled (rolling a d10, or a d16 for vat-things) unless the PC has the worminger occupation. To make matters worse, separate checks must be made for each worm in the same round; otherwise, the boat spins helplessly in circles as one worm overpowers the other. Any roll of a natural 1 on this check results in the worm breaking its cinctures and swimming away with its hapless rider still straddled.

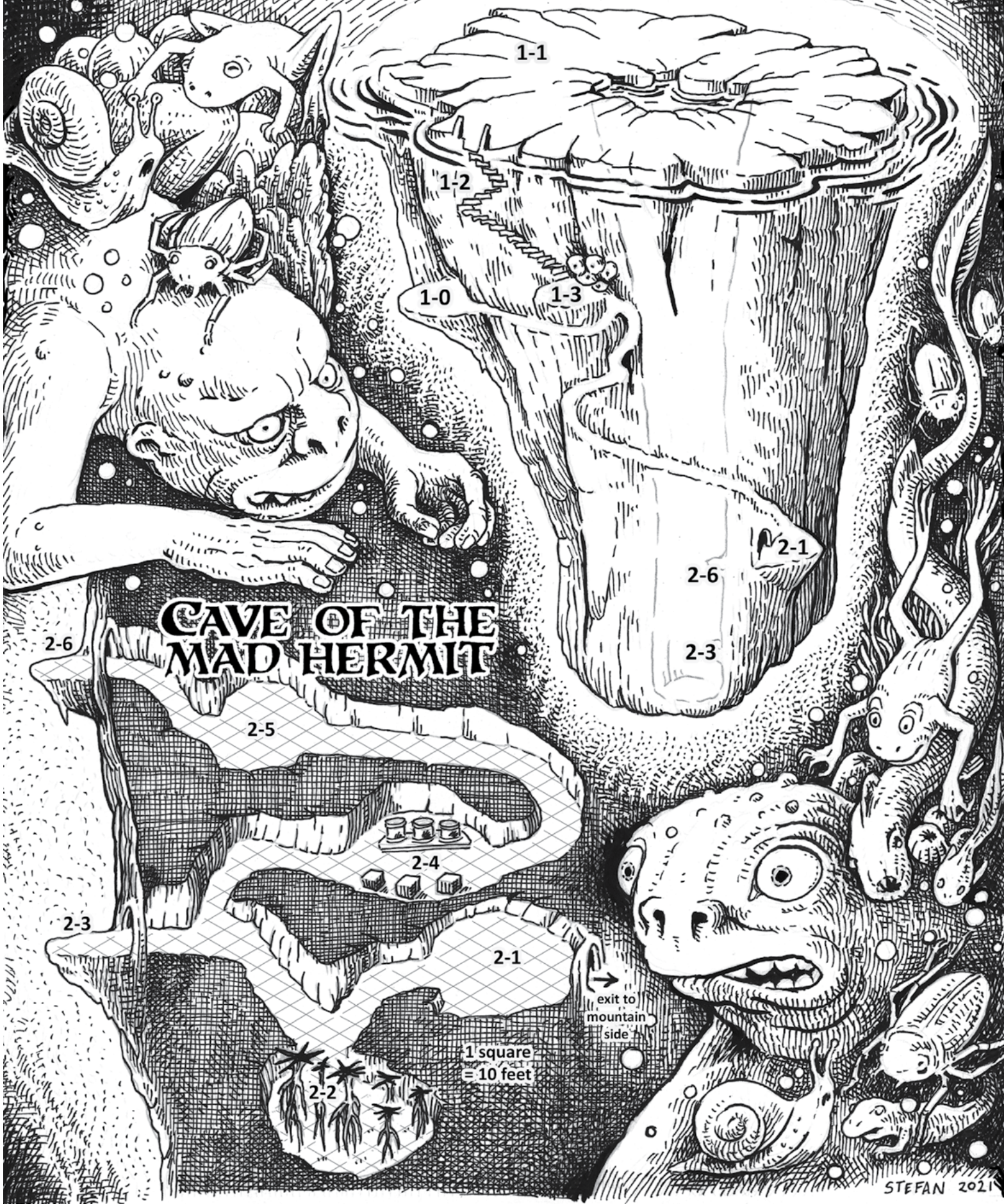
Treating the worms may improve their chances. In the forward cabin, among the personal possessions left by the ship's worminger is a bottle of Rouse's Tonic, which can temporarily revive the worms. If a half-gill of tonic is applied to a worm, only a single check is required to successfully steer the worm clear of the reef instead of two checks. Similarly, a witch's *transfer vitality* ability with a result of 2+ HD can revive one worm per use.

Also among the items in the worminger's care is a silver whistle used to command the worms to attention. Using the whistle grants a +1d bonus to the Agility checks to command the worms. Players may come up with other creative solutions to avoid being dashed upon the rocks, such as tossing the ship's cargo of wine to lighten the vessel or attempting to use the sail. Judges should reward player creativity with additional adjustments to any skill checks.

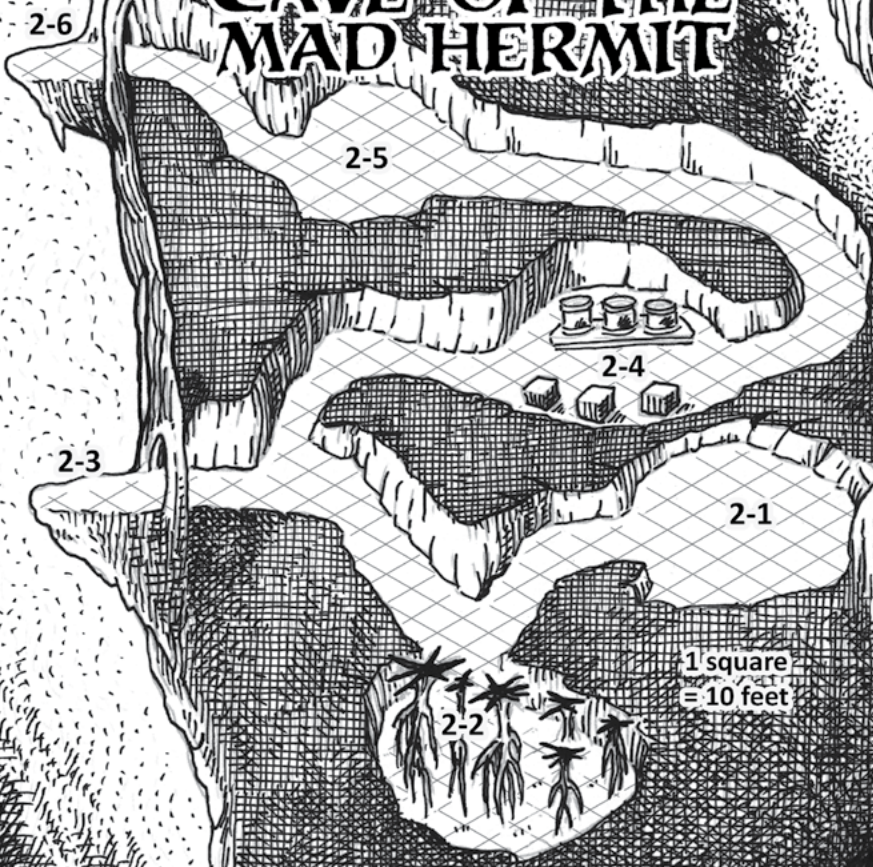
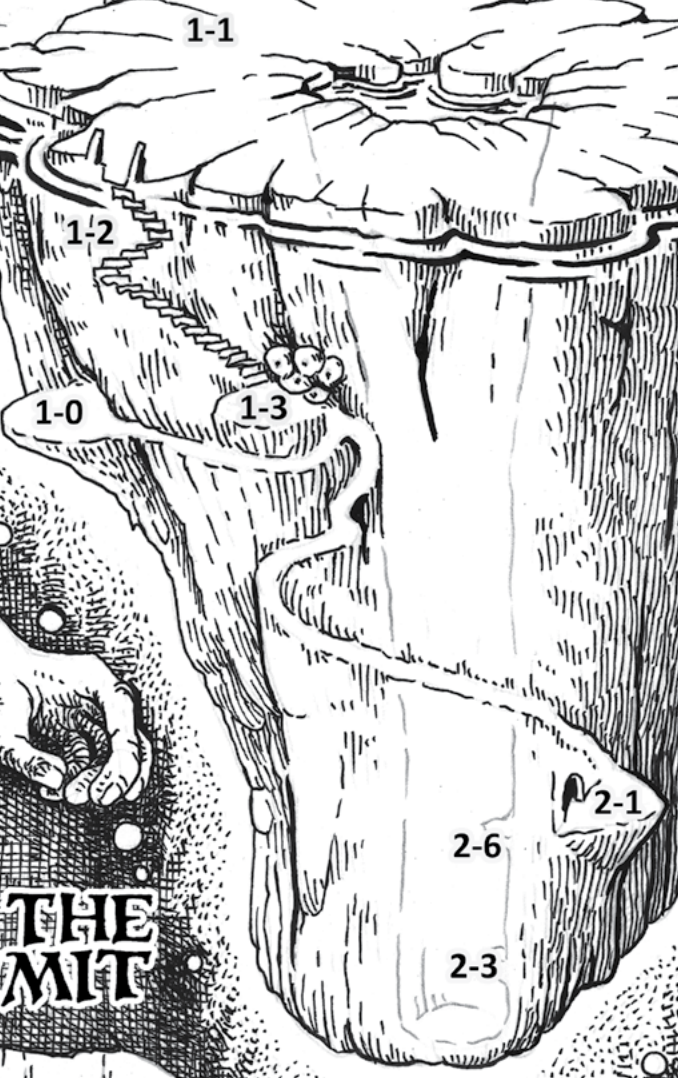
PCs who successfully guide the ship past the reef or otherwise escape the sea-demons are still driven by the storm toward the isle, where the ship is safely grounded on the rocky skerry at area 1-1. Shipwrecked PCs and those captured by the sea-demons come to in area 1-0, underneath the sea, with all equipment and weapons lost.



FATHOMS BELOW WITCH ISLE



CAVE OF THE MAD HERMIT



THE UNDERWATER ISLE

As a result of Setebos' magic, the original island that once rose hundreds of feet above the surface of the Northern Ocean has been completely inverted, plunging the entire isle and its inhabitants underwater. All that remains above the water is a low barren patch of scrubland which encircles a small blue lake.

The entire underwater isle is encased in a layer of animalcule-filled "air" created by Setebos that allows those within to breathe the water as if it were normal atmosphere. The protective bubble extends 10' from the surface of the underwater isle in every direction, beyond which the ocean's natural conditions return. As the surface of the isle remains inverted, navigating the island requires PCs to crawl along most surfaces, as if they were clinging to a wall or ceiling. The water within the protective bubble keeps the PCs buoyant, and while this method of navigation is not strenuous, all movement is halved unless aided by magic or some other means. PCs are also able to swim within the animalcule bubble at a movement rate of 10'.

Drowning: Characters who stray beyond the isle's barrier and leave the protective bubble immediately begin to drown, suffering 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and falling unconscious when their Stamina reaches 0. In addition, for every 100' below the surface they have travelled, the drowning damage die increases by +1d due to the increase in pressure (1d7 after 100', 1d8 after 200', 1d10 after 300', 1d12 after 400', etc.).

Any PC caught in open water for more than two rounds is attacked by the large carnivorous blue codorfin that swim among the surrounding reefs. Rumored to have been created by a half-mad magician long aeons ago (to the subsequent disadvantage of humanity), the 15'-long creatures resemble a hybrid of fish, lank-lizard, and bat, with a jutting double row of teeth used for latching onto prey and sawing through skin, muscle, and bone. Blue codorfin hunt in pairs, and are notable for their bioluminescent, platter-sized eyes.

Blue codorfin (2): Init +3; Atk bite +5 melee (2d6); AC 15; HD 4d8+3; hp 20, 21; MV swim 60'; Act 1d20; SP sawing attack (upon successful attack, automatic bite damage each round, DC 18 Strength check to escape), magical hybrid traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; AL N; Crit M/d10.

Blue codorfin are magical hybrids, a wizardly creation merging men with animals, monsters, and even demons. As magical hybrids, they have infravision of 60' and have an improved critical threat range of 19-20. In addition, their sorcerous legacy grants them a natural defense against magic: they have a 25% chance to resist all magic, regardless of level or caster, and gain a +8 on Will saves against spells that do affect them. (Vat-things receive a +1 bonus to any attacks made against the hybrid creatures due to their innate understanding of their protean quintessence.)

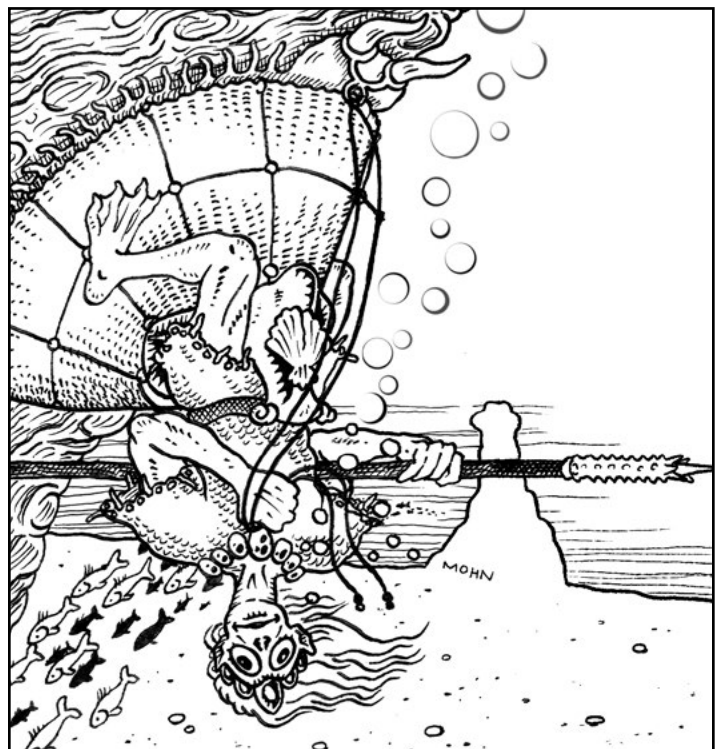
Area 1-0 - Shipwrecked Under the Ocean: Characters captured by the sea-demons find themselves cast onto an underwater shelf beneath the surface of the ocean. Read or paraphrase the following:

You are overcome by a sudden panic as your mouth fills with water before realizing with equal astonishment that you can breathe without difficulty. Glancing around, you see parts of the Calealen strewn around the strange underwater shelf along with a stone totem of an unfamiliar fish-like god, broken under the weight of the ship's keel. Before you can get your bearings, a group of a dozen orange-skinned humanoids with elongated limbs bearing barbed spears and wearing short kirtles comes into view. Each is mounted on a giant conical-shelled limpet that clings to the underwater shelf directly above.

One of the creatures, wearing bone-linked chain mail over broad shoulders and strong muscular arms, steps forward and says, "Hail, strangers! I am Tinchenor, Archeae and law-reader of the Thrasian people, on whose land you now find yourselves deposited. Normally, the circumstances of your arrival would require us, by the precepts of our religion, to offer you refreshment and clean garments of the finest woven sea-lace, along with many days of feasting on the finest salted urchins and fattened coelenterates, but your vessel has landed upon one of our sacred totems. By the law and custom, we must take you back to our village to be detained until you can be fed to our eel-stock. Come, we will ascend the nearby cliff face to our village, where we must make preparations for the ritual dismemberment."

If the party does not resist, the Thrasians escort the PCs to their village in area 1-3.

Outnumbered, the PCs may attempt to convince the Thrasians to let them go. Persuading the Thrasians to abandon their firmly-held precepts requires a DC 15 Personality check. (Wayfarers may choose to add their rhetorical deed



die to the check with the chance that the attempt backfires.) If successful, Tinchenor replies that, while the PCs' fate has been set by the precepts of their dogmatic god-entity, Dagot, perhaps there is a way to make amends...

The curse: Tinchenor proceeds to tell the party of a fiend, the mad hermit, who lives in a cave further below the mountain shelf, is said to worship a dark moon that cannot be seen, and performs rituals when its shadow passes over the sun. This fiend, known locally as Setebos, makes escape from the isle impossible, as he has placed a curse on all who enter his domain. The Thrasians have been unsuccessful in displacing the fiend and they chafe under his dominion. The party's assistance may offset the offense caused in their arrival.

Thrasian knights (11): Init +1; Atk barbed spear +2 melee (1d8+1); AC 13; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 15' (underwater) or 30' (mounted); Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL varies; Crit III/d6.

Tinchenor has the same stats as a Thrasian knight, but his bone-linked chain mail gives him AC 16.

Area 1-1 – The Barren Heath: If the PCs successfully avoided wrecking or being captured by the sea-demons, they are washed up onto the barren heath, which is all that remains of the isle above the surface of the water. Read or paraphrase the following:

You climb out of the water onto a barren patch of land more than a thousand feet across, the only vegetation a meager covering of low, burr-filled furze. In the middle of the isle is a clear blue pool, perhaps fifty feet in diameter. Further down the beach, a pair of foot-high stone markers stand near the edge of the waterline.

The markers on the nearby shore indicate the start of a grand staircase that leads down into the depths of the ocean (see area 1-2).

Exploring the clear blue pool, PCs find that it appears bottomless. The roughly circular shaft extends for thousands of feet below the surface. The pool is not encased in the isle's protective bubble, requiring anyone exploring the shaft to find a means to breathe or begin drowning (see above). In addition, the shaft is infested with wire-worms: small, thin annelids that pierce and burrow into victims with their wire-like forms. They attack any creature entering the water.

Wire-worms (swarm): Init +0; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1 plus burrow); AC 9; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV swim 30'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 15' x 15' space, half damage from non-area attacks, burrow (DC 10 Fort save or become infected; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will -2; AL N; Crit M/d8).

Targets struck by a wire worm swarm must make a DC 10 Fort save or be infected by the burrowing worms, which immediately begin to tunnel their way through flesh and arteries, causing 1 additional point of damage per round until removed. Removing a wire-worm infection requires cauterizing the infected area with 3 or more points of fire damage or a *transfer vitality* result of 2+ HD.

Area 1-2 – Grand Stairway: *Beyond the plain stone markers you see the outline of what looks to be the top of a set of*

stairs plunging into the ocean. Strangely, the stairs appear to lead directly underneath the shoreline, as if following the underside of risers instead of the top of the steps.

The stairs descend 500' to the edge of the Thrasian village at area 1-3. Originally carved into the side of the mountain at the center of the island, they now climb down the slope of the underwater isle in a series of alternating switchbacks. After the first 100' of descent, the surface light disappears and sconces with heatless flames burn with a green light, providing sources of pale illumination every 20'. As the stairs are now oriented in reverse, PCs can "climb" down the stairs using their hands or by swimming immediately below the stairway. PCs stepping onto the stairs find they can breathe comfortably while on the stairs themselves, but as soon as they step off to either side, they begin drowning (see above).

Area 1-3 – Thrasian Village: *Clinging to the underside of the cliff face amidst a forest of alien-looking dendrons are dozens of gourd-shaped mud huts of varying sizes, each with a single, small circular opening and an intricately carved wooden totem of a fish-like god placed beside them. Inside the patchwork of dwellings is a clearing, home to a large pen constructed of the bleached bones of some massive undersea creature*

The Thrasian village consists of a few dozen mud huts attached directly to the cliff face. Each hut is decorated with coral growths and an intricately carved totem of the god-entity, Dagot, made from various rare materials deposited by underwater currents: jade, tirrorch, gauze difono, skeel, purple trunk, camfer, and a dozen others. A PC examining a statue estimates their worth to relic collectors as at least 50 gold terces each.

If the party enters the village as prisoners, they are led to the center of the village and placed in the bleached-bone pen and guarded at all times by two knights, both of whom pass the time drinking from a bladder-like jug filled with a semi-gaseous substance. The lock securing the pen is not complex (DC 12 Pick Lock check, applying rules for untrained thief skill checks), but PCs escaping from the prison are shortly discovered and set after by the limpet-mounted knights (see area 1-0 for stats), who only end their pursuit once the PCs reach the surface.

PCs descending to the village via the grand stairway are greeted warmly by the Thrasians, who share what knowledge they have of the fiend that inhabits the isle and his curse (see area 1-0). Friendliness is abandoned if any of the totems are disturbed—they swiftly move to imprison the PCs, as above, for violating their religious icons.

THE CAVE OF THE MAD HERMIT

General Features: The underwater caves are filled with massive pillars and a confusing maze of pyroduct tubes. Small irregular stones are embedded in the walls throughout, their frosty blue light providing faint illumination. As the rest of the isle, features within the cave are inverted from their original orientation.



Area 2-1 - Cave Entrance: *The path to the cave leads several hundred feet further “up” the mountain, past outgrowths of algae, flowering water amanita, and pulsing sea-anemones. The mouth of the cave opens into the side of the mountain, a strange luminescent glow coming from within.*

If escorted by the Thrasians, the knights do not approach the entrance, instead forcing the PCs inside and blocking their exit.

Within the cave, the strange glow seems to shift and move in a hypnotizing fashion. The source of this light is a gleft, a type of quasi-imp in Setebos’ thrall that drains the quintessence from living creatures—often leaving them apathetic to the point of paralysis. Setebos has commanded the gleft to captivate creatures that enter the cave and lead them into the grove of submerged parasite trees in area 2-2, allowing them to feed off the stolen anima until the bodies are required for his rituals.

Gleft: Init +6; Atk steal quintessence (special); AC 16; HD 3d8+2; hp 20; MV fly 40’ (underwater); Act 1d20; SP mesmerize, steal quintessence (DC 15 vs. lowest save or lose 1d3 points from a random ability score; ability points can be recovered through normal recovery, but creatures reduced to 0 in any ability score are slain, completely drained of their quintessence); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C; Crit M/d8.

Glefts appear as shimmering orbs of light, disguising their true homunculoid form, which can only be seen with spells such as *detect magic* or *detect invisible*. PCs inside the cave must make a DC 12 Will save or become mesmerized by the shifting colors and lights for 1d4 turns. Mesmerized PCs follow the gleft deeper into the cave and toward area 2-2.

If reduced below half its hit points, the gleft retreats to area 2-6 and will be present during any encounter with Setebos.

Area 2-2 - Submerged Copsewood: *The tunnel opens into a large chamber filled with an underwater forest. Encased*



within the submerged tree trunks rising from the floor are dozens of pale forms.

The gleft leads mesmerized PCs into the submerged forest, where they are to be fully drained of their quintessence and slowly encased by the parasite copsewood over a period of several days. Trapped PCs can be easily freed by their companions if they are rescued in the first day of being encased, otherwise an encased PC may attempt to break free with a DC 10 Strength check, which they can attempt once per hour, adding 5 to the DC for each hour after the first.

Area 2-3 - Observation Ledge: A platform extends 15' into the column of water that runs to the surface of the island (area 1-1). "Below" them, the PCs see another similar ledge 100' further down (area 2-6). The animalcule bubble does not extend into the water column, and characters attempting to swim to the other ledge suffer drowning rules as above. Due to the extreme pressure at this depth, the Stamina loss from drowning is 1d14 per round.

Area 2-4 - Moon-Calf Pens: *Beyond the open doorway, you see a workbench with a dozen slowly-revolving glass canisters containing proto-human creatures in various stages of fetal growth. A vat filled with an oxygen-rich algae stew is connected by copper pipes to the canisters. Set next to the opposite wall are five open pens, each containing a deformed monstrosity that rises to attack as you enter the cave.*

In this chamber, Setebos curates and grows half-human

monstrosities as his servants and menial assistants. Several of the proto-humans rise and attack as the PCs enter.

Moon-calves (5): Init +2; Atk fist +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 2d8+2; hp 12 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP regenerative plasm (when attacked by a slashing or piercing weapon, heals half the damage from such blows at the start of their next round); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C; Crit III/d8.

Area 2-5 - Setebos' Chambers: Above the entrance to Setebos' chambers is a metal rod fixed high on the door frame. Unless the doorway is specifically searched (DC 15 Find Trap or Intelligence check) before entering, PCs crossing the threshold trigger the rod, which spins in a shower of glowing white sparks. Any creature within 5' is caught in the shower for 2d6 damage and must make a DC 15 Reflex save or ignite, taking an additional 1d6 damage each round until the flames are out. The sparks are made of a metallic substance that burns even underwater, making them difficult to extinguish. Each round, a lit target can attempt another DC 15 Reflex save to sufficiently suffocate the burning sparks. The rod stops spinning 2 rounds after activation unless creatures remain in the doorway. The rod can be prevented from further activation with a DC 12 Disable Trap check.

Beyond the doorway are Setebos' quarters. While sparsely appointed, the room writhes with life as numerous snails, toads and water-beetles crawl on every surface. Various coral-encrusted objects are collected on the only table, including flasks of costly essences and relics of long-dead empires

(worth 100 terces in total). A careful search of the cave floor beneath the living carpet of creatures reveals a small watertight chest. The lock is trapped (DC 12 Find/Disable Trap checks to detect and disarm); opening the chest without disabling the trap releases a poisoned go-thither dart (DC 15 Ref save or take 1d4 damage, then DC 10 Fort save or suffer 1d4 temporary Stamina loss). Inside are several tomes containing Setebos' ledgers recorded in an almost indecipherable crab-like scrawl. With study, the arcane spells *water breathing* and *The Inside Out and Over*, as originally scribed by Yasbane the Obviator, can be gleaned (see *DCC DE: Primer of Practical Magic* for spell provenance rules).

Area 2-6 – Ritual Circle of the Dark Moon: *Extending from the cliff-face into a column of open water is a 20-foot rock ledge lit by a blazing green fire. In the center of the ledge next to a dais of stone is a cowed and bent figure. As you watch, the figure holds aloft a wooden staff and begins weaving and reeling in a grotesque underwater dance. As he does so, adumbrated dark shadows can be seen flickering in and out of the light of the strange green flames.*

Each month, Setebos conducts a ritual to the now missing moon, reaffirming his pact to the sub-world entities he serves. Left undisturbed, his hold over the isle and the surrounding waters will continue unabated.



Similar to area 2-3, Setebos' ritual platform extends into the column of water that leads to the surface. Unless the PCs approach the platform from the column of water, Setebos is aware of the PCs and cannot be surprised.

Setebos, the Mad Hermit of Witch Isle: Init -1; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4+1) or silver concentrate +2 missile fire (20' cone, DC 15 Fort save or 1d6 damage and -2d penalty to next action); AC 13; HD 4d6+2; hp 17; MV crawl 30' (any surface); Act 2d20; SP curse (+4 spell check), control ebbs and flows; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +6; AL N; Crit I/d10.

As a result of years of demonic taint, Setebos' form has been twisted and bent. He appears as a twisted, hunched figure covered in seaweed robes and his eyes have been turned into solid pearl-like spheres.

During combat, Setebos uses his curse to invoke a host of toads, sea-beetles, and eels to alight upon a single target. Targets of the curse receive a Will save versus his spell check result. With failure, the victim is engulfed by the sea-vermin for 1d4 rounds, preventing any actions while they desperately claw at the creatures. Setebos can also direct the ebbs and flows of the surrounding waters, forcing targets into the unprotected column of water beyond the platform (DC 12 Ref save to resist; due to the extreme pressures at this depth, Stamina loss due to drowning is 1d16 per round).

Setebos carries a staff that is key to his power. Without it, he loses the ability to cast curses and command the gleft and his moon-calf servants. If broken, any remaining attendants immediately turn against him. While holding the staff, Setebos can use it to spray a mist of silver concentrate in a 20' cone, resulting in dismal agony for any creature caught within its effects.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Setebos cannot complete his ritual, whether through defeat or because his staff is broken, the isle begins to quake as the magic that was holding Witch Isle together begins to unravel. Unless the PCs escape, they are caught in the upheaval as the entire underwater mountain begins to invert, rising above the ocean in catastrophic lurches. Judges are encouraged to allow the players to describe their escape, rewarding PC actions with Luck checks to help determine their fate, whether chancing upon one the *Calealen's* sailing worms or using Setebos' magic itself to protect themselves against the ensuing cataclysm. Those not crushed by falling rocks or entombed beneath the quickly metamorphizing crust are swept up by the massive waves from the resulting displacement and washed miles into the open ocean to continue their adventures in the Dying Earth.

This is just a sampling of the adventures awaiting judges and players alike in the fantastic world of DCC Dying Earth. Keep an eye on Kickstarter for details on the forthcoming boxed set and the opportunity to be one of the first to experience Jack Vance's fabulous creations first-hand!

MUTANT CRAWL CLASSICS **THE NEVERWHEN ROCK**



A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE FOR MCC RPG

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STEFAN
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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when post-apocalyptic adventures were full of super-science, murderous robots that were there to be mastered, and the finale of every underground adventure was setting the fusion power plant to overload? Those days are back. Mutant Crawl Classics adventures take place in an ambiguous time period after a great disaster has ravaged the world, and it's up to you and your mutant tribesmen to go out into the hothouse jungles and radioactive deserts of Terra A.D. and collect the artifacts of the Ancient Ones in order to attain great power and savage glory.

This adventure is designed for 16 to 24 0-level Mutant Crawl Classics characters, but it is equally suitable as a Dungeon Crawl Classics funnel. It is time for the primitive party members to undergo their "rite of passage," which involves exploring unknown parts of their world and returning stronger and wiser (or with artifacts in hand).

BACKGROUND

The unnamed and unknowable time-space vehicle of the Space Wizard has crash-landed into a cliff face located in the hothouse jungles near a local tribal village. So violent was the crash, the ship's emergency safety mechanisms were engaged and these systems transmatted the Space Wizard to safety, dropping him off in a far-flung time zone. He cannot be reunited with his beloved ship until such time as a few repairs are made—repairs that now depend upon recruiting the best and brightest of the local inhabitants. The semi-sentient vehicle thus begins to telepathically reach out in search of those ready and able to serve. In order to effect repairs, it requires certain items that can only be found at the time-space coordinates that it is still capable of reaching.

Three time flights are required to repair the ship, and to complete the adventure. The adventure is meant to be used by judges wishing to displace their party in time or space (whether continuing with another MCC RPG adventure, or to *Ruins of Future Past*, or someplace altogether different).

CONNECTIONS THROUGH TIME

The Neverwhen Rock gives judges the opportunity to allow the PCs to harness time travel. While the adventure does stand alone, it can be run in conjunction with last year's DCC Day 2020 Adventure Pack release, *Ruins of the Future Past* – making for a longer funnel/level 1 storyline. To connect the two adventures, simply have the door of the space wizard's timeship close as soon the final repair has been completed. The ship then dematerializes and flies through the vortex, encountering a warpstorm before coming to rest in the Collapsing Storeroom (area 1-1) of *Ruins*.

PLAYER START

Last night was an auspicious night. Your tribal shaman, Peter – son of Davi, awakened from his slumbers with word that his dreams had been touched by the words of the Ancient Ones. They told him of a strange rock at the edge of the jungle, a mighty boulder that houses a cave unlike any have ever seen. Therein lies a quest to aid the spirits of the Ancients – one that will gain the blessings of the spirits and that will bring prosperity to the village. The spirits told Peter this is a dangerous task and will require members of the tribe who are young and resilient. The shaman promised to send aid immediately.

This quest, called for by the ancient spirits themselves, is to be your rite of passage for the tribe. To become an adult, you must aid the spirits, complete the quest, and return home. The journey across the jungle will take several days and you are urged to leave immediately. Your families say tearful farewells while pushing your spears into your hands. "Make us all proud."

THE JUNGLE JOURNEY

The journey through the jungle takes three days and is ripe for potential encounters as the party travels through the jungle. Because of the hostile nature of the jungles en route to the cliff, check once each day and once each evening. Encounters occur on a roll of 1 on 1d5.

DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS

Noxa (6): Init +1; Atk tendrils +1 melee (1); AC 12; HD 1d8+2; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP hypnotic voice (DC 12 Will save or paralyzed for 1 round); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; AL L.

Born of an irradiated moss that grew over ancient statuary, the noxa appear as toga-clad, wholly gold humans with curly hair. In reality they are combinations of vines and mosses that work in union as a colony creature with a highly advanced hive-mind within each individual. These plant creatures seek to slay and devour all intelligent life they come across. They can be driven off by fire, of which they have a primal dread (though they have no actual vulnerability).

Arcam (1): Init +0; Atk claws +4 melee (1d30); AC 16; HD 5d8; hp 22; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

The remnants of a once-mighty race of giant mutant crabs that arose after the Great Disaster, the Arcam are now fearsome scavengers that roam the land in search of their next meal. Fortunately, these creatures are solitary by nature. Moving through the jungle is difficult for them due to their enormity (40' wide) but they are powerful enough to knock smaller trees aside and their claws are able to sever vines and snap even the greatest of trees. If pursuing a fleeing target, their movement is reduced by half due to the need to cut a path rather than picking their way through openings in the greenery.

NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTERS

Hisslings (5): Init +2; Atk claw +1 melee (1d4) or beamer +2 missile fire (1d8); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

These strange, three-eyed reptile men have only recently started appearing in the jungle after emerging from subterranean caverns where they have slumbered for millennia. Clad in clothing of durable woven fiber, their unknown weapons are greatly feared. Captured beamers are of use to those who can understand them (requiring an Artifact check), but they are made for the three-fingered hands of the hissings. Creatures with more (or less) digits are at a -1 penalty to use the devices. Hissings are not innately aggressive and are willing to parlay with the party for goods or directions to a village where they may trade. If attacked by an overwhelming force, they attempt to flee—and return the next night with double their numbers.

Beamer: TL 4, CM 3; range 40'; 1d8 damage; Power: C-Cell (10).



Solon: Init +5; Atk claw +4 melee (1d10+2) and fist +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 3d10+3; hp 28; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP mental blast (DC 14 Will save or stunned for 1d3 rounds); SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +7; AL L.

This creature was once the greatest of ancient scientists. As his body began to die, he built himself a new one using the parts available, and has continued to replace parts as they become damaged or wear out. Currently his body is that of a mountain gorilla, his right hand replaced by the claw of a young arcam, and his brain is housed in a transparent plastel dome with mounted antenna for projecting his mental attacks. Solon seeks dominion over all, and will pressure the party for directions to their village. If the information is given, he leaves the party in peace and later uses his abilities in an attempt to kill the village's shaman to usurp the place of power.

ATOP THE CLIFF

Looking down from the edge of the jungle, you see a group of figures in the distance, emerging from a cave mouth in a strange boulder. They seem to look in your direction, holding their hands up in greeting.

This is actually the party seeing themselves as they emerge from the darkened time-ship and into the bright light of day.

They hold their hands before them to shield their eyes, easily taken for waving at a distance. The judge is encouraged to revisit this moment at the end of the adventure, if the survivors return.

THE STRANGE BOULDER

You manage to find your way to the boulder of the shaman's vision. The boulder is easily 10' tall and is unlike all other stone in the area. It looks to have been placed here by the hand of some unknown giant, and this is certainly the work of the spirits. You shudder slightly at the thought of the power needed to casually move such a stone. The oddest feature of the rock—the most mysterious—is the yawning cave mouth that seems to stretch deeper than possible. Could this be a passageway into the underworld, the heavens, or both?

There is no sign of the strangers you sighted before descending the cliff face. There is likewise no sign that a number of people were here, but the winds on the dry plain may have obscured any real tracks.

INSIDE THE TIMESHIP

The tunnel into the boulder is longer than you would think possible. Filled with swirling mists, you lose track of exactly how far you travel, but when the passageway opens up into a dimly-lit cave, you are certain that you have traveled several minutes. The walls of the cave are covered with a pattern of triangles, and a central pillar rises from the floor, covered with strange devices of the Ancients that give off light.

As you take in your surroundings, a strange-looking man shimmers into being (DC 8 Will save or faint for 1d3 rounds). Clad in shining leather hides with some strange shell covering his head and most of his face, the bearded figure shines and twinkles. You can see through him! Slowly he raises a pipe to his mouth, taking a deep puff before blowing smoke rings into the air...which abruptly vanish about three feet from the figure. The figure speaks but the voice comes from all around you. You hear a series of unintelligible words, and you cannot place the language. The figure frowns and tries again. This time the words are no longer alien, although "understandable" may be an overstatement.

"Warning, systems critical. Camouflage-Cloaking Circuit damaged. Requires 10 ccs Hg 80 for repair.

"Warning, systems critical. Neuro-Gel Packs damaged. Requires 1,000 ccs mega-simian cerebrospinal fluid to affect repairs.

"Warning, systems critical. Main Power Stack nearly exhausted. Requires 1,000 grams Pm 61 to restart power regeneration system.

"Prepare for first emergency jump. Coordinates locked. Dimensional dampeners active. Engaging chrono-temporal drive systems..."

The items needed are 10 ccs of mercury, 1 liter of giant ape spinal fluid, and 1 kilo of promethium. The time-ship can ill afford to be patient, requiring these repairs as quickly as possible. The time the characters spent traveling to the ship has left the repairs in a critical state and the onboard AI is a bit snippy. It certainly had hoped for more advanced assistance than it has received.

FACTORING ARMAGEDDON

The Landing: *A great groaning, as if the death throes of some gigantic beast, fills the air. You feel your stomach lurch suddenly, making you queasy. Then, as suddenly as it began, the sound ends, taking the strange feelings with it. The strange doorway into the magical cave opens, but it reveals a strange landscape, a place unknown to you. Dark vapors fill the air, with wispy tendrils curling into the hut and assailing your senses. From around you, the voice of the Ancient One echoes, "Mer-cur-y, got it? Silver metal water. Do not drink it, do not touch it...do you understand? Just bring it back here."*

The PCs may linger in the time-ship as long as they would like, but the judge may add to the sense of urgency with the voice returning to nettle them further. The computer systems are straining to speak to a level understood by the primitive party and, if further pressed, will launch into tangential 8th dimensional physics by way of explanation. With no obvious exits save the one, it shouldn't take long for the party to begin their exploration of the outside.

The Clearing: *You stand in the ruins of what must be the greatest city of the Ancients ever. The heavy smoke obscures much of your vision but, through the haze, you can see giant spires stretching up towards the sky...where there is no Sky Arc. Fluttering bits of thin, crinkling material blow by, carried by the ill-scented breeze. The foul smoke burns at your senses and you feel that it is weakening you. Your time here must be short.*

When the PCs step out of the time-ship they are immediately enveloped in a thick, foul-smelling fog. The pollution is so strong that those who fail a DC 10 Fort save are 1 die down on the dice chain until out of the smog. Peering through the fog, the PCs can make out ancient ruins, once-mighty towers that have crumbled and broken. Trash is everywhere, blowing plastic bags, piles of old plastic items of some sort or another...but everything—whether broken, melted, or pristine—is made of plastic.

Pools of mercury are plentiful here, so no matter which direction the party travels, they will find one in 2 turns. During their travels, once per turn, the judge should check for random encounters (a roll of 1 on 1d7) with plasticines (see sidebar).

The Pool: *A breeze clears the smog around you for a moment and reveals a large silvery pool. Certainly this must be what the angry voice was referring to. It is easily wider than the huts of your village, and the surface ripples as if some large fish lurks below. The air here smells clean, with no sign of the smoke or taint of the ruins around you.*

The mercury vapor is colorless and odorless, and liquid mercury is only absorbed slowly through contact. While the PCs may be concerned about touching the pool, the real danger lies in standing near it and inhaling the fumes. Characters at the pool's edge must make a DC 12 Fort save each round or permanently lose one point of Stamina. Characters with a Stamina reduced to 0 fall dead.

PLASTICINES

While their larger plastic cousin, the enetsen, is intelligent, the plasticines have only a rudimentary animal intelligence. These 3'-long creatures are snakelike and colored grey or brown with darker splotches. They have no visible sensory organs, only an oversized maw with razor-sharp teeth.

Plasticines (2d3): Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2); AC 11; HD 1d4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP plastic, immune to blunt weapons, vulnerable to fire (double damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Plastic: Because these creatures are made of living plastic, they are capable of altering their form. If grabbed, a plasticine will form an additional mouth at the point of contact and begin biting its captor.

Finding a plastic container with which to carry the mercury is a simple matter. All forms of plastic items are scattered about: broken globes of plastic; spade-like items made of plastic; even representations of what may be the Ancient Ones that are hollow can be broken and used.

Within the pool of mercury lies the enetsen. This formless plastic horror will emerge the moment someone disturbs the surface of the mercury. Unlike its smaller cousins, the enetsen is highly intelligent and filled with a formidable cunning. Able to sense the location of the characters, even through the pooled mercury, the enetsen waits until a character is bending over to gather the liquid before striking from beneath. Unless characters have specifically taken steps to protect themselves from a sudden attack from the pool, the party will be caught by surprise and unable to act in the first round. If reduced below 5 hit points, the enetsen will submerge back into the pool to recover.

Enetsen: Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d8) or tentacle +2 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 6d8; hp 27; MV 20', swim 20'; Act 2d20; SP plastic, immune to blunt weapons, vulnerable to fire (double damage); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Plastic: Because this creature is made of living plastic, it is capable of altering its form. The enetsen can extend its body to form a number of tentacles, which it may use to smash its foes. Additionally, the enetsen may imbue those tentacles with mouths.

The Return: *Upon returning to the strange cave, the voice of the ancient AI rings out again, sounding bemused. "I guess you aren't totally useless after all." A portion of the central pillar opens and a small bowl extends. "Well, put her there fella...good boy....good boy!"*

When the mercury is poured into the container, it withdraws back into the column and the flickering of the lights steadies (though they are still dim). The voice of the time-ship then warns of "Chrono-temporal dislocation in 5-4-3..."

THE LOST LAND

The Landing: *Once again, the strange cave is filled with the rasping, groaning sound of the spirits of the Ancients as they express their displeasure. The discomfort you felt last time has lessened, as if you are adapting to these strange affairs. With a hum, the doorway opens out into a cave overlooking a jungle below. The air is humid and warm, with a coppery tang of what smells like blood. You almost feel like you may have returned home. The voice comes again, "Whoops. Well, I could've told you that would happen eventually. Alright, a liter of cerebrospinal fluid...back-bone juice." A compartment opens and a large jug emerges. "Fill'er up."*

The time-ship is within a cave in a cliff face overlooking a primordial jungle. The cave is just above the treetops so allows for a fairly clear view. The source of the scent of blood is obvious, as a pool is trickling out from beneath the time-ship. It appears to have landed on someone.

From either the cave mouth or the mountaintop, the PCs will be able to see a disturbance in the jungle: something large moving through the trees. As they watch, a massive hand reaches up over the trees and the bestial roar of an ape echoes through the air. The party should make the connection that giant apes are a great source of spinal fluid, and make their way into the jungle.

En Route: *There is a rustling in the underbrush in front of you and a strange creature pulls itself out of the bushes, obviously wounded. The creature is reptilian in nature, its humanoid body looking like that of a lightly-colored crocodile. Its head is ovoid and topped with a leathery sagittal crest. Large, black eyes look towards you as it pulls a spear from behind it and uses it in an attempt to stand. The creature is badly wounded, one of its legs bent at an unnatural angle.*

This reptoid is a member of a local tribe, the hunters of which are currently stalking and preparing to attack the giant ape. While primitive, he is still intelligent and, if offered aid (via gestures and good deeds), he will gladly accompany the party and introduce them to his people (who will). If attacked, he will fight for his life.

Reptoid: Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+2) or claw +2 melee (1d4+2); AC 12; HD 1d8+2; hit points 3; MV 20' (reduced by injury); Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C

The Clearing: *Ahead of you is a large jungle clearing that appears recently made. Trees have been smashed to the ground, brush has been uprooted and tossed aside, and in the center of the clearing is a 20-foot tall ape. He pushes himself upright for a moment, pounds his chest several times and then slams his fists to the ground. The world shakes beneath your feet.*

Lurking nearby is a group of reptoid hunters. If the PCs have brought the wounded reptoid with them, he signals them so the two groups can work together, and his people gratefully accept the party's aid in bringing down the ape. If the injured reptoid is not with the party (or worse – if the party is carrying the reptoid's spear), the group will seek to exterminate the party prior to their combat with the gargantua. After the battle is over (should the party work with the

reptoids), one reptoid issues a strange warbling call that is answered from the distance. The reptoid is calling its tribe to relocate to the site of this latest food source. The reptoids have no use for the spinal fluid and allow the party to collect it without argument. There is just enough fluid in the gargantua to fill the jug.

Reptoids (7): Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8+2) or claw +2 melee (1d4+2); AC 12; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Gargantua: Init +1; Atk bite +6 melee (1d6+5) or slam +8 melee (1d8+5); AC 15; HD 8d8+10; hp 46; MV 40' or climb 30'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +6; AL C.

The Return: *Upon returning to the strange cave, the voice of the Ancient One greets you, with perhaps a touch of enthusiasm in its voice. "Good job." The compartment opens again, with space for the jug to be returned. "Chances of survivability have greatly improved due to your efforts."*

When the jug is placed into the compartment, the hatch closes and a mechanical slurping sound is heard. The lights in the time-ship cease flickering altogether, brightening to bring an end to the gloominess inside. A thrumming sound picks up and carries through the room, softly vibrating through the walls and floor. The voice of the time-ship warns of lower power, and, "Engaging secondary turbine for chrono-temporal dislocation in 5-4-3..."

DRAGON'S LAIR

The Landing: *The bizarre noises are quieter this time, and it takes less time than before for the doorway to open. Your exit is into a tiny, dark room lined with small ledges that are covered in objects of varying sizes and colors. The voice cuts in again, starting with what could easily be mistaken as a sigh, "Here we are, third stop for the temporal system repairs. We require a kilo of promethium. The people who have it are rather loath to let go of it." The air shimmers and a strange, complex box ripples into being. "This device is a radiation detector. It will let you know which direction to travel, and where the promethium is." The voice pauses, then, "Good luck."*

Area 1-1 — Janitor's Closet: The time-ship has landed in a tightly-packed janitorial closet. The shelves here are covered with a number of objects for the PCs to discover. Artifact checks are required to gain understanding of each of these items, some of which can be used as weapons:

Cleaning Solvent: TL 4, CM 2; 1d6 acid damage; 2 uses.

Cement Resurfacing Mop: TL 4, CM 2; 1d8 damage.

Room Deodorizer: TL 4, CM 2; 20' radius, as grenade; 1d12 damage.

Light rods: TL 4, CM 2; glows brightly for 1d4 hours.

Xaja Cleaning-Bot: TL 4, CM 2; malfunctioning: if tampered with, the cleaning-bot powers up and attacks, seeing all organic matter as stains to erase.

Xaja Cleaning-Bot: Init +4; Atk scrubber-arm +0 melee (1d4) or cleanser spray +0 ranged (1d5); AC 14; HD 1d10; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +5; AI recog 5.



Area 1-2 — The Hallway: *The doorway opens into some sort of giant burrow. The walls and floor seem to have been smoothly dug from some alien stone while Ancient-made devices shed light from above onto the reflective, perfectly-smooth surfaces. The softest sounds echo here and the damp air carries a metallic tang. The tunnel leads away from you in both directions.*

The detector points the party to the right, taking them towards the launch bay door (area 1-4).

On the opposite end of the hallway is an elevator door, which requires a key card to open. Although there is no need to leave this floor, if the judge wishes to allow further exploration, key cards may be found on the guards located in area 1-3.

Area 1-3 — Break Room: *This room contains a table and six chairs, simple in design save for the off-putting white material from which they are made. Additionally, a large rectangular box, running floor to ceiling, hums in one corner. A long handle runs the height of the box, bisected three quarters of the way up. A strange bowl built into a stone ledge rests against one wall, a strange rod protruding from above. Two clean-shaved men dressed in blue sit at the table, leaping to their feet and shouting in a strange language as they see you.*

Guards (2): Init +1; Atk fist +2 melee (1d6) or stunner +2 ranged (DC 12 Fort save or stunned for 1 turn); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 7; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

The guards immediately attempt to subdue the characters, at a loss for how they could have gained access to this area. If the entire party is stunned (resulting in a TPK), the judge

is encouraged to describe the stark world that the characters are exposed to as they are hauled away, confined by the military, and experimented upon. The guards' stunners are biometrically locked and will not work for anyone else.

Area 1-4 — Launch Bay: *The ceiling of the chamber towers eighty feet above you, a massive white pillar taking up most of the room. Brightly-colored vines snake from the metallic walls and connect, lamprey-like, to the pillar all along its height. Rungs, also metal, ascend the side of the chamber to what might be a narrow platform near the ceiling. The detector points upwards, to the top of the tapered pillar.*

The interplanetary missile in the launch bay carries a promethium-fuse nuclear warhead payload: enough radioactive material to lay an entire world to waste. This is, of course, the payload the characters need to obtain, and it will not be simple.

Climbing the ladder to the platform requires 4 rounds. Opening the missile requires an Artifact check (TL 5, CM 6). Failure results in a massive shock and a successful DC 12 Ref save must be made or the character on the platform plummets to the floor below. The platform above is just wide enough for one person; two people may not pass one another.

Once the warhead is open, the detector's readings go off the chart.

In your mind you hear a man's voice, "Behold, I am the destroyer of worlds...or a fill-up for a gas tank." The object itself is made up of interlocking octagons, each bearing the holy symbol of the Ancient Ones for The Glow on its surface.

The symbols are radiation warnings. For each round a person carries the payload (and for everyone within 10'), a successful DC 15 Fort save must be made or they suffer 1d3 points of damage from the radiation leaking from the warhead.

The quickest route back to the timeship will require 7 rounds. Of course, nothing is ever that easy. The staff in the launch room (area 1-5) have been watching events unfold in horror. They will move to engage the party as they re-enter the hallway. Dressed in business attire, these tie-clad technicians are under the sway of the Guardian AI, an enemy of the Space Wizard (see area 1-5). They will fight to the death.

Technicians (6): Init +0; Atk ballpoint pen +1 melee (1d4) or fist +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP dying blow; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL L.

Dying blow: Because of their bond to the Guardian AI, Colonel Ramset, the technicians are capable of being reanimated after death. This state lasts for a single round and is often used by the Guardian for a surprise finishing attack.

Area 1-5 — Launch Room: *This room is lined with solid-looking tables that sprout strange windows and glitter with many colors. A number of chairs emerge from the floor like some sort of fungal growths. A large window on the wall shows what appears to be a face made up of cascading green numbers. A tall man turns and regards you. Surely he is one of the Ancient Ones, for he is regal in his tight-fitting black suit and tie. In one hand he holds a*

small artifact, which he waves casually around as he speaks to you.

“Let me introduce myself. I am Colonel Ramset. You have traveled far and lost many of your number on a fool’s errand. The one you aid is no friend of your people. Let me send you home to your primitive village, to your people, to your loved ones, and forget all this madness.”

If the characters have already investigated area 1-4, this room is otherwise empty. If they have not, the 6 technicians from area 1-4 will be present. All are sworn servants of Col. Ramset and under his direct hypnotic control.

Should the party agree as a whole to take the colonel’s offer, they are immediately directed to step into a nearby storage locker which contains another version of the magic cavern they arrived in. After a short time, accompanied by the same groaning sounds previously heard, the door opens and they find themselves stepping out of the trunk of a tree just outside their village. All is well, and they are back home. Their tribal shaman receives no further visions, and whether or not they are considered adults who have successfully passed their rite of passage (and become level 1 characters) depends upon the story they tell. Wisdom has its rewards.

If the PCs refuse Colonel Ramset’s offer, or engage in any questioning, the colonel quickly grows impatient and either attacks or orders his men (if present) to attack the party. Col. Ramset cannot be killed, but if the battle begins to go against him or he takes any damage, he receives a free action and steps with inhuman nimbleness into the storage locker. The PCs see the locker fade away and vanish with the same noises heard inside the magic cave.

Technicians (6) (if not encounter in area 1-4): Init +0; Atk ballpoint pen +1 melee (1d4) or fist +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30’; SP dying blow; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL L.

Dying blow: Because of their bond to the Guardian AI, Colonel Ramset, the technicians are capable of being reanimated after death. This state lasts for a single round and is often used by the Guardian for a surprise finishing attack.

Colonel Ramset: Init +10; Atk +10 Molecular Compressor (DC 18 Reflex save or target shrinks to sub-atomic size and enters the microverse); AC 18; HD 10d6; hit points 75; MV 60’; Act d20+10; SP mutation check +2 *Mind Control*, regenerative immortality (cannot be killed); Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +20; AI recog automatic.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Should the PC prevail and return to the timeship, it launches for a final time and returns them to their tropical post-apocalyptic home, exactly where they started. As the PCs exit the giant boulder, read the following.

Emerging from the cave entrance of the strange boulder, you are momentarily blinded by the early morning sun. As you raise your hands to shield your eyes. As you squint and gaze down into the tropical valley, far away you see a mixed group of tribesmen from your clan, who wave greetings up to you on the cliff side. With a start, you recognize the group as your earlier selves, just setting out on this mission.

Wise players will decline the invitation to meet with their earlier selves and thereby disrupt their own timeline, choosing instead to call it a win and return to their village by a circuitous route. Should the party decide to go meet themselves, the results may be unexpected.

You approach and greet your younger, still innocent-looking selves, who recognize you as well. When the first of you reach out to clasp hands with your doppelganger, there is a visible electric spark at the first touch. In an explosion of ultraviolet light and tachyons, you and your friends find yourself tumbling through a vortex of polychromatic globules, as you fall ever-onward down the infinite corridors of time.

Having caused a time paradox, the PCs are shunted through the time vortex to their next adventure. That adventure can be anytime or anywhere, including the level 1 module, *Ruins of Future Past*.

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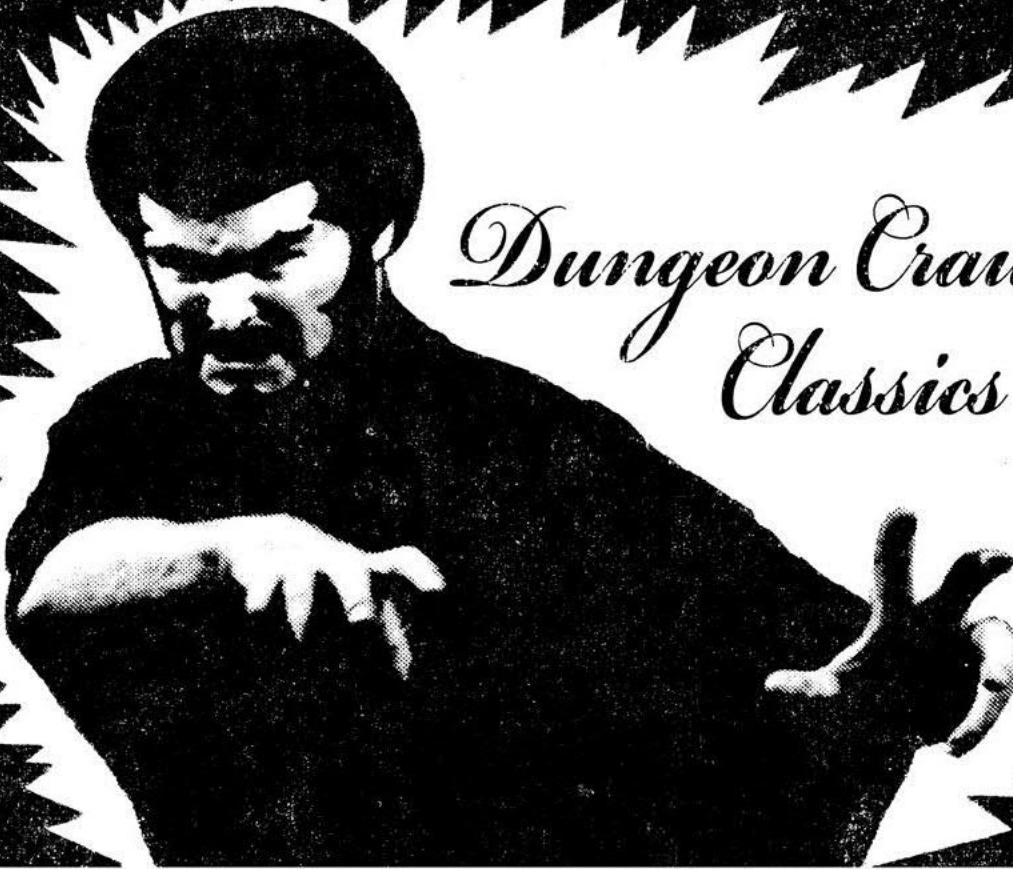
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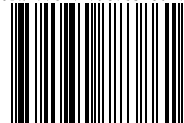
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