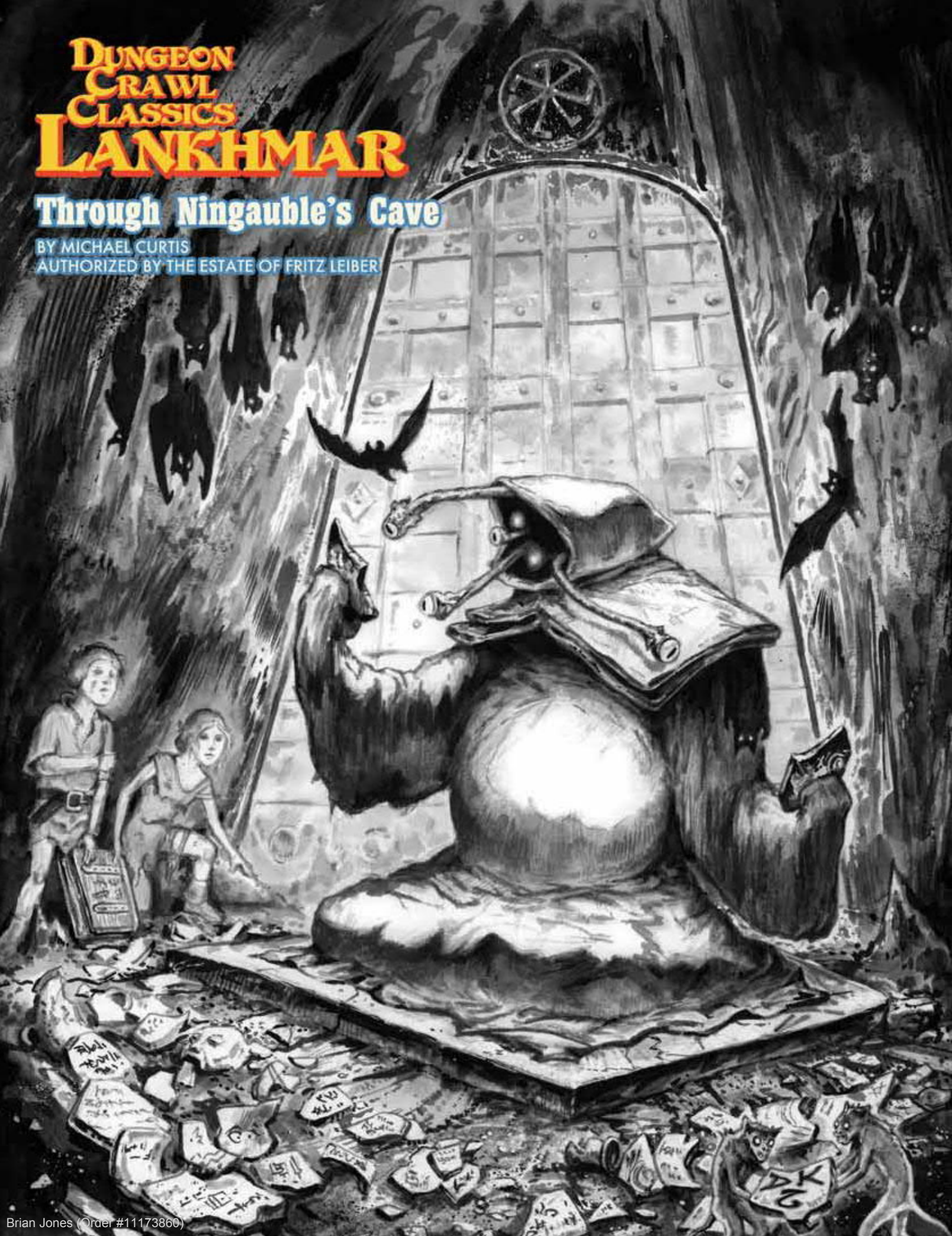


DUNGEON  
CRAWL  
CLASSICS  
**LANKHMAR**

**Through Ningauble's Cave**

BY MICHAEL CURTIS

AUTHORIZED BY THE ESTATE OF FRITZ LEIBER





Welcome to the first release in Goodman Games' new Lankmar line of supplements for *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG*. *Through Ningauble's Cave* is intended to introduce (or in many cases acquaint) the reader with the exciting world of Nehwon, the famous creation of legendary writer Fritz Leiber. Leiber's work was and remains some of the most influential writing in modern fantasy literature and we are proud and excited to have the opportunity to merge Leiber's fantastic tales with *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG*.

*Through Ningauble's Cave*, as the name suggests, details the curious home of the Nehwonian wizard Ningauble of the Seven Eyes—a fitting entry point into Leiber's world. In these pages, judges will learn some of Gossiper of the

God's numerous secrets and discover how the Bottomless Caves, in which he dwells, can be inserted into your DCC RPG campaign. With the presence of Ningauble's Cave established, it becomes a simple matter to move your campaign's PCs across world boundaries to either visit Nehwon temporarily or dwell there permanently. And with Ningauble's Cave touching many worlds, it also provides excellent means to connect your campaign with other far-flung locations across the cosmos.

This supplement is just the first of many Lankmar DCC RPG products. Themes, places, creatures, and magic introduced here will be expanded on in future releases. For now, consider this the initial sip of the heady vintage that Fritz Leiber and Harry Otto Fischer created more than eighty years ago.



## PART ONE: THE WIZARD AND HIS CAVE

Somewhere, there is a cave.

There are those who claim it exists beneath a mountain in the arid lands south of Ilthmar. Others believe it resides beyond the Lebanon Mountains, near the shores of the Dead Sea. Yet others—madmen and sages, mostly—postulate the cave exists in between worlds, a cavern on the boundaries of cosmoses. It is Ningauble's Cave.

At the heart of this mazy cavern squats *something*. In some ways it resembles a cloaked man, one who speaks with a lilting, flute-like voice, in tones rich and syrupy like a priest with a collection plate in hand. No one has seen his (its?) face, but those who seek the advice of this creature often glimpse the seven (or is it only six?) green eyes that consider the visiting supplicant from the dark confines the creature's cowl. This is Ningauble of the Seven Eyes.

### NINGAUBLE OF THE SEVEN EYES

Ningauble is one of the two most powerful sorcerers on Nehwon. Whether he is considered the foremost wizard or a close second depends entirely on whether you're asking the Gossiper of the Gods, himself, or his oft-times rival, Sheelba of the Eyeless Face.

His origins are unknown, although many legends and theories have accumulated around the wizard, gathering like the potsherds he regularly sifts through in his home. Ningauble has been called a demon, a creature from another world, a man twisted by sorcery, a riddle sent to confound humankind, and even a lingering representative of the Elder Gods, themselves.

From his general appearance, Ningauble seems humanoid, but this cannot be certain as his entire form is swaddled in thick, dark robes and cowled cloak. His belly (or whatever his midsection holds) is rotund, edging on obesity. Ningau-

ble handles objects with adroitness, but grips items with the folded cuffs of his robes so his fingers (or other digits) remain unseen.

Ningauble's name comes from the single (or perhaps better to say "multiple") bodily features visible outside of his robe-swathed form. Lurking in the depths of his cowl and peering out into the world are a number of green ocular orbs, each with a vertical cat-like iris and glowing with the dim radiance of fireflies. It is widely held that Ningauble possesses seven of these eyes, yet legend has it that only his most trusted agents have ever seen all seven at once. These eyes can extend some distance outside his cowl, allowing him to, as Ningauble's fond of saying, "look at a problem from all sides."

Ningauble bears more sobriquets than perhaps any other creature on Nehwon. He is known as the Gossiper of the Gods, Newsmonger, Snarer of Rumors, Midwife of Secrets, Schoolmaster of Falsehood, Many-Eyed One, and a hundred other names both flattering and insulting. Ningauble craves news as a leech needs blood, and his cavern is situated ideally to collect rumors and whispers as they spread from mouth-to-mouth (and world-to-world). Ningauble has a veritable army of spies under his command and is always eager to gain more agents, trusted servants he calls his "Gentles."

The Gossiper of the Gods is a loquacious creature, employing seven words when a single one will do, often to the ire of his sometimes ally and rival, Sheelba of the Eyeless Face. His multitude of ocular extremities also causes Ningauble to consider all sides to a conundrum, often causing him to delay immediate action. This tendency can unfortunately leave his agents dangling between the horns of dilemma while Ningauble debates on a course of action. The wizard, like many of his ilk, is driven by the search for knowledge and the accumulation of curiosities, and his greed for both often places his own ends above those who are assisting him.



Ningauble employs a number of sigils to mark his instructions and missives. The most common glyphs adorning his messages are that of a black, seven-fingered hand with an eye in the place of each digit's fingernail, a seal depicting seven entangled eyes, and a seven-armed clockwise swastika.

## **IN THE SEPTINOCULAR ONE'S EMPLOY**

Most wizards pursue their goals in solitude, eschewing company for fear of their secrets being stolen or suffering betrayal at the hands of their servants. In light of this common sorcerous predilection, Ningauble of the Seven Eyes is atypical from his comrades-in-magic.

Driven by an insatiable hunger for lore, gossip, news, and tales, Ningauble employs a vast network of agents in countless worlds. These spies range from mighty heroes to grungy guttersnipes, but each serves their own purpose in Ningauble's intelligence gathering.

The Gossiper utilizes his urchin, bat, and other mundane operatives for the most part, but the wizard often requires the assistance of his most formidable agents, those who bear the heroic spark so rare in the cosmos. Ningauble refers to these special individuals as his "Gentles," addressing them as "Gentle Son" or "Gentle Daughter" when speaking. How one becomes one of Ningauble's "Gentles" is debatable. Some seek out his patronage with spells or by journeying to pledge their assistance in return for the wizard's favor, while others are simply adopted by Ningauble as his beloved agents—much to their chagrin and dismay. These unwilling Gentles soon find themselves stuck in their roles as the Gossiper is well-versed about all his spies' pasts and blackmail is not beneath him.

The Gentles are largely left to their own devices until Ningauble requires their services. At such times, the wizard dispatches a missive to them bearing instructions. These messages arrive via mundane but unusual means. In the past, Ningauble has dispatched orders by sending white doves, hawks, gale-blown pieces of papyrus, carrier bats, and his beloved urchins. He even once inscribed orders in black crayon on the Gray Mouser's sword, Scalpel!

Of course, his Gentles are often forced to seek out their "beloved father" for assistance in their own matters. Ningauble is never slow to impart his own tasks upon his agents in return for his aid.

## **THE BOTTOMLESS CAVE**

Ningauble's Cave stretches across worlds, its winding tunnels connecting and debouching into countless places both within Nehwon and other cosmic shores. For this reason, the world-spanning grotto is also known as the Bottomless Caves. With no more effort than it takes to traverse a rocky tunnel, a person can step from Nehwon to stride the sands of Earth or any other alien world—assuming Ningauble allows it, of course.

Ningauble's Cave appears to be a naturally-formed one, unremarkable from any other water- or magma-created subterranean network. Physically, it is only unusual in the sheer number of winding passages, tunnels, and caverns that comprise it. The exact number of these halls and thoroughfares are unknown to all except Ningauble.

The Bottomless Caves obey Ningauble's whim and can change as the wizard sees fit. Tunnels switch destinations or terminate in dead ends, landmarks appear and disappear, and visitors may encounter one another or pass each other by depending on Ning's desire for his agents to know one another. Ningauble can cause travelers to his demesne to quickly become lost or alter tunnels so that they arrive where and when their presence is most suitable for his schemes and plots.

Ningauble prefers his cave dark and his supplicants groping. Those who bring candles or torches into the cave find their lights often dim to unnaturally pale illumination or extinguish outright, depending on the wizard's mood. Progressing through the dark tunnels without the benefit of light is an unnerving experience. Aside from the normal fear expected when groping in the dark, the traveler feels the brush of gossamer wings too spectral to be those of a bat and the light touch of what could be cobwebs if they weren't so coarse. These may be the Caves' strange inhabitants (see below) or other, even weirder, forces at work.

## **A GLIMPSE WITHIN THE COWL**

Even Fafhrd and Gray Mouser, as reckless as they are, never dared to peer too closely inside Ningauble's shadowy hood. As literary characters, the two would never act in such a matter, but players and fictional figures are two entirely different species.

A player may decide that his character is brash, disrespectful, or stupid enough to attempt to glimpse Ningauble's true face. What's a judge to do in this situation? The answer is simple: Let him look.

Tell the player his PC stares into the shadowy hood and then everything goes black. Carry on with the rest of the encounter as normal. Later, inform the player his character awakens from a horrible nightmare filled with monstrous visions that he cannot quite recall. He wakes to find his body has aged 1d6 years and his hair has turned stark white or fallen out completely. His mind refuses to dredge up the memory of what he saw in Ningauble's cowl, so horrible or inhuman was the sight. Ningauble, himself, takes no offense at the PC's actions, but will mention the ill consequences of rash action the next time to two meet.

# THE LANDMARKS OF NINGAUBLE'S CAVE

Ningauble's cave is a twisting labyrinth filled with snaking passages that branch, cross, and reconnect in myriad ways, often changing in layout, pattern, and contents. As such, a visitor to the Bottomless Caves cannot overly rely on landmarks to find his way, but there are nevertheless some signposts that reappear often enough to be considered semi-permanent features of Ningauble's cavern. This section describes these features and their properties.

## The Trembling Bridge

A narrow arch of stone stretches through the air, connecting two distant ledges. The stone bridge is cracked in many places, its faults ranging in size from hairline fractures to gaping cracks large enough to insert a clenched fist into. Dust and the occasional fragment of stone sift down from the Bridge's underside to fall into the Pit of Ultimate Truth below.

The bridge shudders when stepped upon, the sound of creaking and cracking amplified by the high cavern ceiling above. To all witnessing this phenomenon, it appears the Trembling Bridge is mere moments from collapsing. Even a learned engineer, experienced spelunker, or dwarf visitor from another world is confident structural failure is imminent and anyone caught on the Bridge is doomed. Any creature wishing to cross the span must make a DC 14 Will save to force themselves across the Trembling Bridge.

Despite the Trembling Bridge's frail appearance, it is ageless and has yet to fail. Once an individual overcomes his fear and crosses the bridge, he need not make a Will save on subsequent trips. However, as with all parts of the Bottomless Caves, it's reasonable that Ningauble could drop the Trembling Bridge at a whim. Overconfidence in a wizard's realm is never recommended.

## Pit of Ultimate Truth

Beneath the Trembling Bridge is a massive chasm stretching more than three hundred feet from wall-to-wall and extending out of sight in either direction. The chasm is black as pitch, filled with a darkness so vast that it seems to absorb the light of any illumination source brought close to its crumbling edges. So gloomy is the Pit that the light of a thousand burning brands could not dissipate its darkness.

Any creature foolish enough to contemplate the blackness of the Pit wrestles with the abrupt comprehension of the futility of its life, actions, and deeds. Utter comprehension of the grim fact that Death awaits us all and Time erodes accomplishments pervades their spirit. This is the Ultimate Truth man strives to avoid. The gazer must make a DC 15 Will save or plunge into a deep depression. This state lasts for 1d3 days, during which time the afflicted individual suffers a -2 die penalty on all rolls.

An individual can be affected numerous times if foolish enough to peer into the Pit of Ultimate Truth multiple

times. A creature succumbing to the Ultimate Truth a second time becomes despondent and throws himself into the Pit unless prevented. This suicidal urge lasts for 1d3 days, but is only triggered by being in the presence of the Pit of Ultimate Truth.

## Pool of Consequences



A still pool rests in the bend of one of Ningauble's many tunnels, a shadowy pond fed by a single dripping stalactite overhead. The drops fall with excruciating delay, leaving the observer to ponder exactly how long it took to create the roughly 8' diameter pool beneath it. Aside from the ripples caused by the rare falling droplet, the pool does not move or display evidence of creatures living within its waters.

A traveler through the Bottomless Caves who peers into its dark waters overlong witnesses a singular vision, an image depicting themselves in unfortunate circumstances. The judge can either roll or choose the most appropriate entry for the PC from the following list:

### d10 Image Glimpsed in the Pool of Consequences

- 1 The PC lies bleeding and with broken limbs in a dirty city alley.
- 2 The PC is seen blasted by his own magic turned against him.
- 3 The PC is injured by a sprung trap.
- 4 The PC is seen caught in the midst of a burning room, frantically seeking escape.
- 5 The PC is witnessed walking into an ambush.
- 6 The PC struggles to remain afloat in a large volume of liquid.
- 7 The PC clutches his throat as his lips turn blue from asphyxiation or poison.
- 8 The PC lies pinned beneath a heavy stone or piece of statuary.
- 9 The PC stands behind stout iron bars as if in a prison cell or cage.
- 10 The PC is stabbed in the back by a dagger held by a hand that seems vaguely familiar, but otherwise remains unknown.

The witnessed vision is one that will come to pass as a consequence of the PC's actions or decisions. Once glimpsed, only the individual's death before the event occurs prevents the consequence from happening. As a result of staring into the Pool, the judge can automatically cause the event witnessed to occur at some point in the character's future, imposing the event regardless of die rolls or other circumstances. For example, a PC who looked into the Pool and rolled a "1" on the table above leaps across an alley to reach a nearby rooftop. Although he makes a successful ability check to clear the gap, the judge deems this to be the perfect time to invoke the Pool of Consequences and

declares the PC fails to reach the far edge of the alley and falls to the cobblestones below. There he lies bleeding and with broken limbs, causing the witnessed consequence to come to pass. The judge should never kill a PC outright as a result of staring into the Pool, but injury and discomfort is expected. There is no limit to how many times a PC can stare into the Pool—aside from common sense—but only one consequence can be hovering over a PC at any time. The judge can decide whether the first consequence or the most recent consequence will come to pass in the case of multiple glimpses.

## Staircase of Error

One of the many entrances to Ningauble's Audience Cave is reached by ascending the Staircase of Error, a towering flight of steps formed by a cluster of huge, rough-edged stones piled on atop the other.

Although difficult to discern in the darkness, each of these stones is a piece of ancient masonry from a long-fallen kingdom of old. The sole surviving evidence of these failed realms; the blocks hold inscribed images, carved messages, faded graffiti, and other evidence of the grave errors that led to the various realms' demises. A PC inspecting the blocks might find a bit of useful arcane knowledge, a scrap of pertinent historical lore, or the answer to some great riddle that perplexes him.

Ningauble's gentlings (see below) lair around the Staircase of Error in large numbers, their glowing eyes observing all who climb the steps to visit their master.

## The Great Gate

At the center of Ningauble's cave stands a massive door, iron-bound and rising more than 30' high. This grand valve is found in the wizard's Audience Cave—when it deigns to appear, that is. The Great Gate is inconsistent, its presence in the Audience Cave dependent on either Ningauble's or some other power's desire. There are visitors to Ningauble's cave who have never glimpsed the door, while others proclaim it is always present in the wizard's innermost sanctum. Yet others have seen it at certain times and noted its absence at others.

What resides beyond the Great Gate is the subject of much debate among those who have witnessed it. One popular theory is that it prohibits entrance to a world that even Ningauble cannot visit, perhaps the very highest of heavens or the deepest pit in Hell. Another tale recounts that it bars the way of certain eldest powers best left locked out of the universe. According to the rogue, the Gray Mouser, however, the Great Gate is simply the entrance to Ningauble's own quarters, a lavish palace the seemingly humble and poverty-beset wizard takes great pains to conceal. On certain days, the sound of muted music and the giggle of unseen courtesans can be heard beyond the Gate. Whether the Mouser has discerned the truth or if this is simply more grandstanding on the magical dabbler's part is known only to the Gods of Necessity (and the judge).



## The Audience Cave

Located in the heart of the twisting caves and tunnels is Ningauble's innermost sanctum and audience chamber. Visitors and supplicants seeking his sage council must find their way to this place to entreat the wizard for his advice and assistance. Finding the Audience Cave can be either a simple matter, a grueling ordeal, or utterly impossible. The Gossiper can situate his Cave wherever he desires in the Bottomless Caves and restrict or enable access to it as he wishes.




Ningauble's Audience Cave is a grand, cathedral-ceilinged cavern with numerous entrances. The soaring ceiling is thick with stalactites, although the cave floor, polished smooth by the tread of countless visitors' feet down the ages, is bare of stalagmites. Ancient spells keep the stalactites from falling (although the Gossiper warns that there are no spells that can't be broken). Ningauble's "throne" is simply a low wide stone positioned near the center of the cavern, situated before his fire pit which sometimes burns with emerald flames. Depending on the whims of the wizard—or whatever ineffable forces control the Bottomless Caves—the Great Gate may or may not be present.

Ningauble is most often encountered here, sifting through a mound of potsherds containing the scraps of knowledge and ancient legends of long-fallen (or paradoxically, yet to rise) empires or pawing through crumbling pages of parchment and papyrus brought to him by his agents. Ningauble is never alone within his Audience Cave; either his urchins or page-beasts (see below) stand in the shadows, ready to serve their master.

## TRAVELERS AND VISITORS IN NINGAUBLE'S CAVE

The PCs are not the only ones to visit the Arch-eavesdropper. A party traveling the winding tunnels of the Bottomless Caves sometimes meets or hears others venturing through the rocky arteries. These fellow visitors might be returning from conference with the wizard or engaged in tasks assigned by Ningauble. There is a 10% chance of encountering fellow visitors each time the party travels through the Bottomless Caves. This probability is reduced to 0% if Ningauble prefers to keep his agents from meeting one another.

### d20 Creature encountered

- 1 A solitary Mingol (or perhaps Mongol?) witch-doctor accompanied by his spotted dog.
- 2 A pair of silent Ghouls bearing lidded jars. 
- 3 A nervous-looking Egyptian mummy-smuggler.
- 4 A well-dressed envoy from the King of Kings accompanied by six armed and armored soldiers.
- 5 A beady-eyed Ilthmart priest of the Rat God with a rat riding on his shoulder and whispering in his ear.
- 6 A Greek scholar dressed in a toga and bearing a bundle of scrolls under one arm.
- 7 Three hairless travelers from the distant empire of Eevamareensee.
- 8 A hulking Mayan shaman dressed in feathers and obsidian. 
- 9 A slovenly-dressed mendicant from Tovilyis with hat in hand.
- 10 A leather-skinned witch from the Land of the Eight Cities, her hair and clothes reeking of pungent smokes.
- 11 A woad-painted Celt druid bearing staff and sword.
- 12 A white-garbed Snow Woman with a pinched face and angry eyes.
- 13 The rush of air and the sound of tinkling laughter (unseen visitors from Stardock?).
- 14 A one-eyed Viking seer carrying a pouch of rattling runes.
- 15 A pale fleshed sorcerer of Quarmall accompanied by curiously disfigured slave servants.
- 16 An ebony-skinned warlord from Klesh dressed in serpent-skin armor studded with rare jewels.
- 17 A quartet of silvery-skinned and -haired envoys from sunken Simorgya.
- 18 Fafhrd, alone and looking grim.
- 19 Fafhrd and Gray Mouser, engaged in a philosophical debate. 
- 20 Vagabond visitors hailing from even odder worlds. Suggestions include travelers from the Purple Planet, Shud-folk who wandered in from the Shudder Mountains, lost post-apocalyptic mutants, and other strangeness.

### ALTERNATE MEANS OF TRAVELING TO NEHWON

Although the Bottomless Caves is an ideal means to venture to and from Nehwon, not all judges might desire the party to travel via the Septinocular One's home. Those judges need only consult other of Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tales for inspiration.

Readers of *The Swords of Lankhmar* undoubtedly recall Karl Treuherz, the German explorer who visited Nehwon from a world simply known as Tomorrow. Treuherz traveled via his own time-space ship, indicating such means of trans-world journeying is possible in Nehwon. If the party knows of a similar device in their home world and manages to take command of that craft, they can visit Nehwon by that method. Frix, the refugee Queen of Arilia, also arrived in Nehwon aboard some form of vessel and became stranded when it wrecked. PCs hailing from Nehwon might salvage Frix's wreck, refurbish the craft, and depart for other worlds aboard it.

Gray Mouser and Fafhrd reportedly glimpsed ships in Salthaven's harbor on Rime Isle that appeared to hail from no known port on Nehwon. An inspection of the currency that changes hands in the harbor town also indicates that otherworldly visitors to the island are not unknown. A wise (or unlucky) captain could conceivably plot a course through strange waters or accidentally sail across world boundaries to arrive or depart Nehwon.

## OCCUPANTS OF THE CAVE

Aside from the Godfather of Mystification, himself, there are other entities dwelling in the Caves. Most are there to serve Ningauble, but some are less welcome denizens.

PCs are most likely to encounter Ningauble's urchins, either in the Audience Cave or as intermediaries when acting on the Multi-Eyed One's instructions. These servants are young human children dressed in rags and smeared with the dirt of street living. Easily overlooked and ignored, the urchins excel at accumulating the news and gossip Ningauble so dearly craves. Some skeptics have gone so far as to suggest Ningauble possesses no supernatural ability at divination or clairvoyance and his gathered intelligence comes entirely from the childish lips of these urchins.

Urchins have stats as Peasants (*DCC RPG* p. 434) plus the ability to appear and disappear when necessary. Ningauble's urchins often turn up in the most unlikely places bearing instructions for the wizard's Gentles—in the midst of pitched battle, atop lonely mountains, onboard ships in storm-wracked waters, etc. It's likely they utilize either the tunnels of the Bottomless Caves or Ning's sorcery to appear and disappear, but given the Gossiper's access to multiple worlds, one must consider the possibility that Ningauble's urchins are not actually children at all but something from an alien world with the power to duplicate the appearance of guttersnipes.

Also present in the Caves and less mundane to a visitor's eyes are Ningauble's gentlings. These strange creatures occupy the ecological niche normally reserved for rats and other rodents. Gentlings are small creatures resembling 1' long animated scraps of dark cloth—perhaps torn rags from Ningauble's cloak—that scurry about on unseen feet. They have yellow, intensely curious eyes that watch visitors from cavities, crevices, and ledges throughout the Caves, often in great numbers. They seem to especially congregate near the Staircase of Error. Although far more inquisitive than dangerous, if the PCs aggravate the gentlings or Ningauble desires, they can attack in a swarm. Use the Rat Swarm stats (*DCC RPG* p. 424), ignoring the disease special property in such instances. It is speculated that gentlings were once wizards themselves who pledged their services to Ningauble. Over time, magical corruption transformed them into gentlings and now they cannot leave the Bottomless Caves (see Part Three for more information on this possibility).

The Bottomless Caves are unsurprisingly home to swarms of bats, but these are no ordinary animals. Each creature is absolutely loyal to Ningauble and act as his carrier pigeons, far-ranging eyes, warning system, and pets. The Gossiper often contacts his Gentles by means of message-bearing bat when his urchins are unsuited for the task or he merely needs to impart information without the need for reply. Ningauble's most loyal bats dwell amongst the folds of his voluminous cloak and nest in the darkness of his cowl.

Situated in the Caves ecosystem below the urchins but



above the gentlings are the page-beasts. These lemur-like creatures act as lesser servants to Ningauble, feeding his fire, collecting his papers and potsherds, and otherwise fulfilling mundane chores. Page-beasts are non-aggressive and possess semi-human intelligence. They cannot speak, but can purr and bark to express alarm or pleasure.

Lastly, some travelers in Ningauble's Cave simply go missing. Rather than banished by the whim of Ningauble, these vanished visitors fell afoul of things lurking in the dark. These creatures may be exiles from other worlds who wandered into the wrong cave or terrible watch creatures employed by the Gossiper to protect certain tunnels or caverns. A lucky sojourner through the Bottomless Caves will never encounter these unknown creatures, but if they do, their identity is left to the judge's imagination.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF STORIES

While the entire Fafhrd and Gray Mouser series of stories contains information of vital importance and usefulness to the judge embarking on a *Dungeon Crawl Classics* Lankhmar campaign, the following tales specifically have details regarding Ningauble's Cave and its weird master.

- Adept's Gambit* (1947)
- Bazaar of the Bizarre* (1963)
- The Swords of Lankhmar* (1968)
- The Wrong Branch* (1968)
- The Price of Pain Ease* (1970)
- The Circle Curse* (1970)
- The Curse of the Smalls and the Stars* (1983)





# PART TWO: THE WINDING WAYS OF NINGAUBLE'S CAVE



One must be cautious when traversing the myriad pathways of Ningauble's domicile. The rocky tunnels extend far beyond the boundaries of the Ilthmar Mountains, leading to far-flung locales on both the drifting bubble that is Nehwon and to worlds far beyond the ken of its inhabitants. Only the Gossiper of the Gods knows for certain where his tunnels terminate and this is the one subject that the normally loquacious wizard chooses not to elaborate upon.

The uncountable passages comprising Ningauble's cave provide the judge the means of introducing the world of Nehwon to his PCs. This introduction can be either planned (the party learns of the Bottomless Caves in their home world and seeks them out) or the result of accidentally stumbling down the wrong branch of a tunnel and falling under the power of Ningauble's sorcery. Regardless of intent, the party discovers themselves on Nehwon, visitors from another world (or another bubble in the cosmic seas, depending on one's acceptance of popular Nehwonian scholarship). They stumble out of a dark tunnel and emerge on Nehwon. The judge need only decide where he wishes to begin his campaign in that world and choose the appropriate egress. For while Ningauble's Cave is renowned for its connections to many different worlds, it also had multiple egresses within Nehwon, linking cities and regions separated by thousands of miles via strangely shorter subterranean tunnels. A traveler who knows the correct path can stride from Quarmall to Eevamarensee without ever glimpsing the sun. Ningauble's most trusted servants utilize these connections when dispatched on their master's errands.

As noted in the previous chapter, travel through the Bottomless Caves is not always easy. Even without the wizard's shifting of passages, the snaking tunnels and their twists and turns make becoming lost a simple occurrence. A visitor seeking to speak with the Gossiper of the Gods may choose the wrong tunnel and discovered himself not in the Audience Cave, but in a distant city. Likewise, a traveler from an alien world can emerge at a location in Nehwon without ever meeting the multi-eyed wizard, missing the Audience Cave entirely by choosing the wrong path or by Ningauble altering the Bottomless Caves' configuration to dump a traveler someplace to best serve the wizard's schemes.



## INTRODUCING NINGAUBLE AND THE BOTTOMLESS CAVES

Introducing Ningauble, the Bottomless Caves, and the world of Nehwon if the PCs aren't currently adventuring in it is a simple task. All that's needed is a cave. The location of the cave and the reason the PCs enter it is unimportant. They could be seeking shelter for a storm, hiding from foes, or venturing inside it to drive out the monsters they believe lair within. The Bottomless Caves have entrances everywhere and these adits can appear and disappear as Ningauble or the Caves desires.

If the PCs enter the cave intent on exploring it, they quickly discover the cave connects to the Bottomless caves. As they explore its passages, they might either chance upon the Audience Cave if the judge wishes them to meet Ningauble directly or bypass that location completely and ultimately exits at a location of the judge's choosing. Possible exits are provided below.

A party that has no intention of exploring, or finds themselves in a small, cramped cave, might also find themselves Nehwon-bound and Ningauble-employed, but it takes a bit more coercing. Ningauble always has his ears (assuming he has them) out for news and scraps of lore, and seeks new agents in his vast network of gossip collecting. A party of heroes might attract his attention, causing him and his Cave to make an appearance at the party's location.

In this event, the Gossiper speaks from the back of the cave, his eyes luminous and sinuous in the darkness. This occurs even if the PCs have previously established the limits of the cave and found nothing present at its far end. Ningauble speaks gently, dropping platitudes and praises upon the party before inquiring if they might perform a service. Attempts to close with the Gossiper might cause the wizard to slowly retreat further back into the cave—even exceeding the limits of the small space! Those who follow him soon find themselves in the Bottomless Caves and utterly dependent on Ningauble's power to allow them to depart.

If the party holds their ground and continues to parley with the Gossiper, he entreats them to perform a small task suitable only for the truest of heroes. In return he can provide magical assistance, patronage, the sought-after answers to questions, and similar rewards. All the party needs to do is accompany him on a short trip...

Before they know it, the PCs are standing in Nehwon with a wizard's task to perform. Possible tasks and where those chores might take the party are presented below.



## ENTRANCES AND EGRESSSES

This section enumerates many (but not all) places on Nehwon where the lesser tunnels of the Bottomless Caves emerge. A judge intent on moving his DCC RPG campaign to Nehwon for a while can choose one of the exits provided below for that world. Each contains a description of where the party emerges, a brief encounter to catch their interest, and adventure ideas to spur the judge's creativity. The judge is as always free to add more entrances and exits as needed, but shouldn't make things too convenient for the party. After all, heroes on Nehwon are defined by their ability to overcome adversity, so a little danger and difficulty is expected. For example, while it's likely that there is an egress from the Bottomless Caves located beneath Lankhmar City (to judge by the sudden appearance of one of Ningauble's urchins at Fafhrd's side during the Rat Plague), Ningauble never saw fit to reveal its presence to his most favored Gentle Son.

### EXIT 1: ILTHMAR AND THE SINKING LAND

This entrance is the one most familiar to readers acquainted with the stories of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. The tunnel ends in a cool, shadowy cave situated in the high foothills of the Ilthmar Mountains. Beyond the cave is barren brown land, arid and covered only by scraggly, desiccated vegetation and shimmering heat haze. A narrow track, hardly more than an ill-used animal path, winds down from the cave to the dry landscape below.

Far off towards the horizon a squat-towered city stands along the shores of a vast ocean. Depending on the time of the PCs' emergence from the wizard's cave, they may see a spit of land dividing the sea into two separate bodies of water, one gray-green and white-capped, the other blue-green and serene. This spit of land is the Sinking Land which rise and subside according to strange geological forces, periodically separating the Inner Sea and the Sea of the East.

From this cave, the party is in a prime location to travel to Lankhmar, but—especially if this is their first time in Nehwon—a trip to Ilthmar is in order to acquire mounts, book passage on a ship, gather information, or for other purposes.

#### Adventure Ideas



Ilthmar is the crossroads of Nehwon, being seated roughly equidistant from the Land of the Eight Cities, the Eastern

Lands, the Steppes, Lankhmar, and Quarmall. Sooner or later everything—people, gossip, and goods—passes through the city of the Rat God. As a result, Ilthmar makes the ideal launching off point for adventures taking the party to all corners of Nehwon. The following are just two potential adventures waiting to occur in Ilthmar:

- The Rat Temple is sending a special envoy to Lankhmar and is hiring sell-swords and bravos to protect the emissary and the mysterious covered relic he carries. The priest has business with certain rat-friendly nobles in the city and the denizens of Lankhmar Below. Over-curious PCs may find themselves arousing the ire of both the Rat God of Ilthmar and the rodents of Lankhmar Below. Adventurers who prove able to keep quiet may serve to further the alliance between the two groups. Ningauble may desire the relic for his own mystical reasons and dispatch the PCs to claim it.
- Perhaps because of a scuffle with the graft-seeking guards at the city's edge, the PCs run afoul of Ilthmar officials and find themselves clapped in irons. For their crimes, they're sentenced to be fed to the sharks in the harbor, a sacrifice to the Shark God. But as the filthy waters close over them, the party is abruptly rescued by another aquatic power that needs surface dwellers to carry out a scheme in Ilthmar. Possible rescuers-cum-employers include Simorgians and the Sea King and/or his brides.

#### Sample Encounter: Welcome to Ilthmar! Now Pay Up!

*The roadway reaches a 20' wide, 20' deep dry moat crossed by a stone bridge. Beyond the bridge begins the city you saw from the mountain cave. Run-down buildings of brick and stone grow in number and density as one travels further towards the city center. Overhead, gulls and other sea birds coast gently above the squat towers that punctuate the skyline.*

*The stone bridge is curiously carved, decorated with repeating reliefs of a great rat or other rodent squatting on its rear legs with human-like paws held out as if in eager anticipation of gifts. Passage across the bridge is impeded by a sextet of soldiers clad in black-iron byrnies armed with halberd, sword, and alarm horn.*

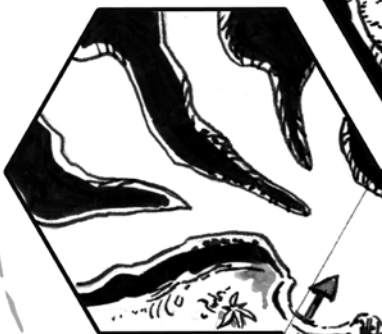
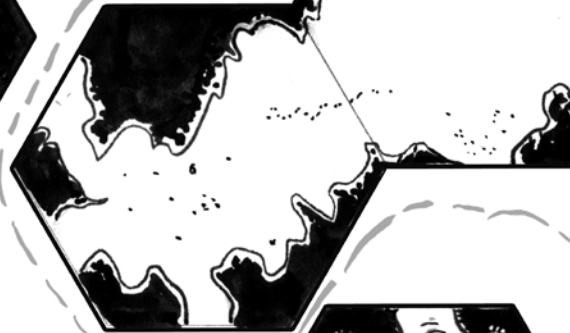
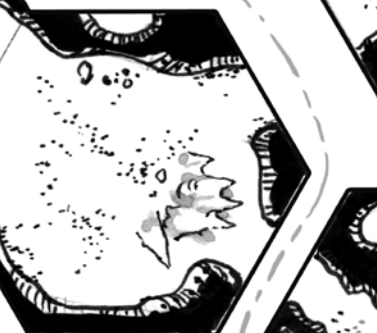
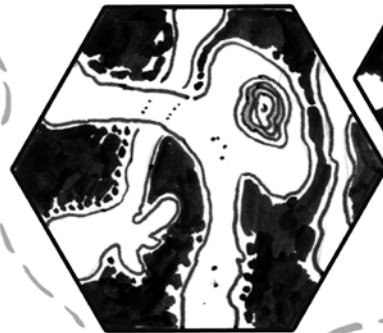
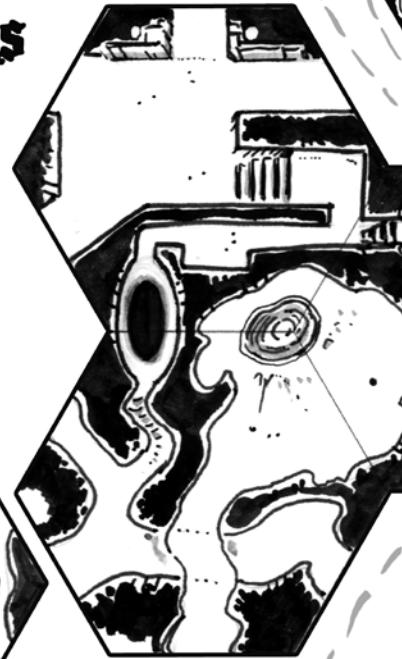
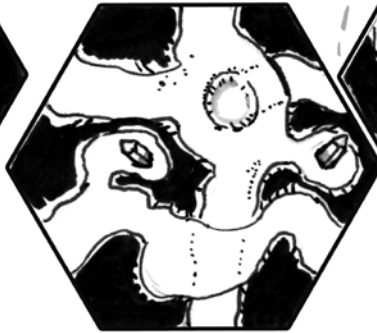
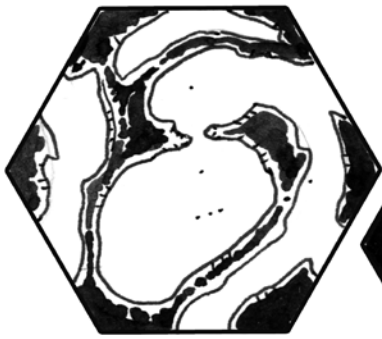
Three of the soldiers approach the party, pausing at the midpoint of the bridge. Two of the armed individuals cross their halberds, forming a tollgate across the bridge while the third addresses the party.

*"By the Rat and the Shark and by the Princes and their Dukes,*

### NINGAUBLE'S CAVE GEOMORPHS

The passages and caverns that make up the Bottomless Caves are ever changing. Only Ningauble's whim or his uncanny foresight can make sense of this labyrinth and where and when each exit leads. On the pages that follow are several sets of map sections—these are known as geomorphs. Instead of a standard map, these pieces can be interlocked like a puzzle to create an almost infinite number of twisted tunnels. Several versions of the important landmarks are included along with a number of intermediate passageways. Judges have permission to copy or print out these sections, cut out and place the pieces as they see fit, guaranteeing a different cave complex every time.

# The Pool of Consequences



# Cave Entrances

# The Staircase of Error

# The Pit of Ultimate Truth



# The Audience Cave

AKN

welcome to the grand city of Ilthmar. All are welcome within, but safety and security of our fair Ilthmar comes at cost. A toll needs paying before the crossing of bridges is done."

The speaker is Grandol, a mere sergeant-of-arms but a general of graft. He and his comrades are intent on shaking down the PC for as much money as they can. Grandol invents all manner of tolls and tariffs that must be paid before entrance is allowed. Some examples of entrance fees include "the weapon-bearer tariff," "the pedestrian traveler tax," "the failure to have the proper currency to pay the tariff tax," "the 'making me stand out in the hot sun too long debating this subject' tax," and anything else he (and the judge) can dream up.

PCs that pay the extortion are granted entry and allowed to cross the bridge. Those that refuse are denied entry as the guards clutch their weapons menacingly. If a fight erupts, use Man-at-Arms stats (DCC RPG p. 434) for the soldiers. They blow their alarm horns to summon 2d6 reinforcements from nearby barracks. Although they have no qualms killing the PCs, they do prefer to take captives if possible. Money is difficult to extort from corpses after all.

If the PCs refuse to pay and depart, but seek other means of entering the city, they are approached by Yugven, a dirty street urchin who asks if they want to know of a secret path into the city. He asks for a mere two copper coins (any world's or city's currency will do) in return. PCs who pay the much reduced toll are led into a brigand ambush just inside the city borders where a group of eight bandits (see DCC RPG p. 432) seek to slay them and steal all their belonging. Yugven vanishes moments before the ambush occurs. Should the party defeat the brigands, they discover the urchin's secret route does in fact enter Ilthmar and avoids the graft-inflated toll demanded by the guards.

## EXIT 2: THE SEA OF MONSTERS AND THE CITY OF GHOULS

This cave emerges in the hot, dusty heights of the Parched Mountains on the eastern coast of the Sea of Monsters. The tunnel exits the mountains atop a high ledge littered with vulture-gnawed bones and fallen scree. Below the lofty and narrow shelf, the mountains spill westward, revealing a foreboding vista. The arid mountains tumble down in an array of jagged brown and ochre stones, terminating at the shore of the Sea of Monsters. The titanic inland sea lies still on most days, its few waves created by the wakes of the great serpentine beasts that sport in its waters. Although beyond the eyesight of the recent arrivals, the City of Ghouls stands on the opposite shore, home to one of Nehwon's strangest races. Aside from the whistling mountain winds and the faint cry of hunting kestrels, the land is as quiet as a funeral hall.



## Adventure Ideas

There are multiple reasons heroes might need to visit the Sea of Monsters and the City of Ghouls. Some may be at the behest of Ningauble, while others are related to the constant need for adventurers to replenish their depleted purses. Here are two possibilities:

- Ningauble requires that a rare type of sea monster be located in the depths of the Sea of Monsters. Once found, the beast need slaying and its mighty, nine-chambered heart returned to the sorcerer for mystical purposes.
- One of the King of King's daughters was abducted by Ghoul raiders when her caravan was attacked en route to Sarheenmar. The Eastern Potentate is offering a reward beyond the reckoning of avarice to whoever rescues his child. Doing so requires the would-be rescuers to penetrate into the very heart of the City of Ghouls and liberate the princess before she is devoured.

### Sample Encounter: Cannibal Ghoul Ambush

*The sounds of clashing arms and battle cries rings through the air. In a dry, dusty gulch hemmed in by dull stone walls, a most curious battle is underway. A skeleton stands with its back to one of the gully's rocky walls, a double-bitted war axe clasped in its boney hands. Facing him in a semi-circular formation are yet more skeletons armed with falchions and serrated-bladed knives. The teeth of the skeletons menacing the axe-wielding one are sharpened into spiky, ferocious needles. Several other skeletons lie unmoving on the ground, their forms arrayed as if slain by violence.*

The warring creatures are not skeletons, but members of the weird Nehwon race of Ghouls. The flesh and internal organs of Ghouls are completely transparent, with only their bones visible to the naked eye. The PCs have stumbled across an ambush in process. While all Ghouls are cannibals who feast on the flesh of Men, the ones with sharpened teeth are guilty of the most heinous of Ghoulish crimes: the consumption of Ghoul flesh. These monsters were driven from the City of Ghouls and now live as bandits and murderous villains in the Parched Mountains. They have just ambushed a party of Ghouls from the City and only a single one of that group remains.

Dragaashagla is the axe-wielding Ghoul facing off against the six cannibal bandits before him. He fully expects to die but intends to sell his life at as high a price as he can.

If the party intercedes on Dragaashagla's behalf, he joins their side, battling the cannibals. Assuming he survives the fight, he offers his gratitude. Dragaashagla is proud, edging on haughty, but is also honorable and acknowledges that he owes the party a debt for saving his life. Dragaashagla can provide information about the surrounding area, the City of Ghouls, the Sea of Monsters, and similar topics, and can serve as a means to enter the City of Ghouls if the party needs to venture there. However, while Dragaashagla will not eat the PCs, he cannot protect them from his fellows' appetites.



Dragaashagla adventures with the party until he feels he has repaid his debt. After such time, he returns to the City of Ghouls and has no qualms about devouring the PCs should they ever meet again.

**Nehwon Ghouls (6):** Init +2; Atk sword +2 melee (1d8+3) or dagger +2 melee (1d4+3); AC 12; HD 3d8+2; hp 16 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP ferocious (+1 to all melee damage), no flesh (-2 to ranged attacks and +2 to melee attacks against ghoul); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C.

**Dragaashagla, Defending Ghoul (1):** Init +1; Atk battle-axe +2 melee (1d10+3) or short bow +1 ranged (1d6; range 50/100/150); AC 12; HD 4d8+2; hp 21; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP ferocious (+1 to all melee damage), no flesh (-2 to ranged attacks and +2 to melee attacks against ghoul); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Ghouls appear as skeletons, their flesh, internal organs, and even blood being transparent. Their skeletal appearance makes directing damaging melee attacks against them easier, but impedes ranged attacks. Ghouls are cannibals and consider it their sacred duty to transform the opaque flesh of other creatures into crystal clear purity by digesting it. They are ferocious fighters and greatly feared by all in Nehwon.

## EXIT 3: OOL HRUSP OF THE LAND OF THE EIGHT CITIES

Situated on the northern coast of the Inner Sea and at the western extent of the Land of Eight Cities is the city of Ool Hrusp. Ool Hrusp is famed for its ruler, Lithquill, also known by the sobriquet of "The Mad Duke." Duke Lithquill is a debase man who glories in gladiatorial combats—both staged and real. Itinerant adventurers visiting Ool Hrusp might easily find themselves fighting for the Mad Duke's pleasure, but whether as paid employees or enslaved gladiators depends on if they find themselves in Lithquill's good graces or not.

The Ool Hrusp connection to Ningauble's cave emerges in a cleft in a rocky outcropping located to the northwest of the city. The stony protrusion stands in the midst of a broad forest clearing a short distance from the outskirts of Ool Hrusp. The forest gives way to pasture land not far from the cave mouth, and visitors reaching the verge of the woodlands see the walled city of Ool Hrusp hugging the Inner Sea shore with rustic majesty. Visible above the walls of the city is the Mad Duke's palace and arena. Ships departing and arriving at Ool Hrusp's breakwater-protected harbor can be seen at sea beyond the city. The pastures to the north and east of the city are dotted with herds of cattle grazing in the meadows where forests once stood. The occasional scrawny vineyard breaks up the meadow monotony.

### Adventure Ideas

Ool Hrusp, while civilized, is still part of the relatively young realm of the Land of the Eight Cities. It has both the comforts of society and the hazards and opportunities of the frontier, making it an ideal place to visit for heroes.

Ningauble may have a task for his Gentles in Ool Hrusp, and the Gossiper is never one to eschew the opportunity to acquire the latest scuttlebutt from the Forest Land. Here are two possible scenarios for adventures in Ool Hrusp:

- Ool Hrusp's harbor patrol is stretched thin by an increase of Sea Mingol pirates plying the waters around the city. The ferocious buccaneers even dared a direct assault on the city and were only forced back by the slimmest of margins. While the Mad Duke cares little about such matters, the Harbormaster and City General are offering bounties on Sea Mingol heads and ships.
- The Mad Duke possesses a curio or person of great interest to Ningauble and the wizard wants the party to acquire it. He instructs the PCs to seek out employment in Lithquill's arena and find a way to gain the item or individual. PCs of races unknown in Nehwon such as dwarves or halflings, find themselves greatly desired as gladiators by the Mad Duke, aiding in the successful accomplishment of this mission.

### Sample Encounter: Behemoth!

*You cross the wide pastures on your way to the coastal city of Ool Hrusp. The smell of cattle and fresh-mowed hay is thick in the air and the sun warm on your skin. As you pass near a herd of cattle, you are startled by a deep rumbling bellow and loud honking. Your heads snap in the direction of the sound and your jaws drop in wonder at what you see: a massive, wrinkled-skin beast with long sharp tusks charges the cattle, sending them stampeding directly toward you!*

The tusked creature is a behemoth, one of the great carnivores of Nehwon. This creature has wandered out of the forests in search of an easy meal of beef and its attack has spooked the cattle.

The herd moves at a speed of 40', easily outrunning the party. Allow each PC to make a Luck check. If successful, there is an object nearby (a fence, tree, large stone, etc.) they can reach to escape the herd. Those failing their Luck check must make a DC 20 Reflex save or be trampled for 3d10 points of damage.

The behemoth continues to chase the herd, bringing down one of the cows a short distance from the party. Any sudden move by the PCs attracts its attention and there is a 50% chance it decides to dine on the characters instead of the cow. If that's the case, it rushes to attack.

If the PCs successfully slay the behemoth, their accomplishment is witnessed by ranchers attracted by the stampede. Word soon spreads through Ool Hrusp of their deed and the Mad Duke decides that such formidable warriors would make a fitting addition to his gladiatorial stable. The Duke doesn't accept "no" as an answer. Working for the Duke could be beneficial if they're in Ool Hrusp on Ningauble's orders, but less so if other purposes bring them here.

**Behemoth (1):** Init -2; Atk bite +3 melee (2d10+5) or tusks +5 melee (1d8+5); AC 15; HD 10d10+10; hp 60; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP none; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +2; AL N.

## EXIT 4: RIME ISLE

Located in the Frozen Sea some days' sailing to the west of the jagged peninsulas known as "The Claws" sits a secret land. Birthed from the sea floor by the twin volcanos that dominate its landscape, this hidden port is the fabled Rime Isle, the one spot of civilization in the frigid sea. Rime Isle is a barren island bearing two settlements, Salthaven and Cold Harbor, vast moors holding little besides heather, gorse, and ancient, lichen-covered standing stones, and the active volcanic peaks of Mount Darkfire and Mount Hellfire.

Despite its lonely location and penchant for secrecy, Rime Isle does not lack for visitors. Sea Mingols come to purchase fish, junks from Klesh purchase salt to bring back to their jungle homeland, and even weirder traders from strange shores moor in Salthaven harbor to conduct business.

Rime Isle is inhabited by a sober and mercantile-minded people, a race long removed from their piratical ancestors. Gods are not worshiped on Rime Isle, not from a lack of belief in them, but rather eschewed as having an undue influence over the important task of making money.

The entrance to Ningauble's Cave on Rime Isle is located beneath Mount Darkfire, the volcanic peak situated nearest to Salthaven. The tunnel snakes through the hot bowels of the mountain, the air thick with mephitic stink of molten rock and sulfur. The tunnel debouches upon the gleaming glacier that clings to Darkfire's side, revealing a shining field of ice that fades to a moor of heather and grass running southeast to the borders of Salthaven.

### Adventure Ideas

Few captains can plot a course to Rime Isle. Despite their mercantile ambitions, the Rime Islanders cherish their privacy and security, and prefer to remain a fable to most of Nehwon's inhabitants. Those who do locate Rime Isle discover it to be a drab, money-minded place, but that doesn't preclude it from possessing mysteries worth investigating.

Rime Island becomes the home to Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser following the events of "The Frost Monstreme." From that point on, the Twain can be found in Salthaven cohabiting with their lady-loves, Afreyt and Cif, and commanding their cadre of loyal fighter-thieves and Northern berserkers. It is also the brief home of the two exiled Norse deities Odin and Loki. The judge must decide if the PCs arrive on Rime Isle prior to the events of "The Frost Monstreme" and "Rime Isle," as the timeline could impact the adventure ideas provided here:

- There are ship captains who would pay great sums to learn the location of Rime Isle. A party that successfully sails back to civilized lands could plot their course and sell the route to interested parties. Accomplishing this is easier said than done, however. Besides explaining their sudden appearance to the suspicious Rime Islanders, they'd have to acquire a ship and find their way to the eastern continent of Nehwon, dodging Sea Mingol pirates, angry Simorgyans, northern raiders, sea monsters, storms, and other challenges along the way.

- Ningauble is angry with his strayed Gentle Son, Fafhrd, and seeks to know what the great northern lout is up to. He tasks his most recent agents (the PCs) with journeying to Rime Isle, locating Fafhrd, and spying upon him. And, should the opportunity arise, kidnapping the barbarian and bringing him back to Ningauble for a stern talking to. This adventure plot allows the party to rub shoulders with one of Leiber's most famous characters without him taking the spotlight away from them.

### Sample Encounter: The Call of a Forgotten God

The moors north of Salthaven bear rings of tall, lichen-covered standing stones left untouched from the days when the Rimelanders venerated their piratical gods. Now an atheistic folk, the money-minded residents of the Isle care only for hard cash and fresh fish. Unknown to them, a fragment of their ecclesiastical past still lingers in the old stones.

*A ring of old tapering stones, now lichen-coated and pitted by wind and ice, stands amongst the heather of the moors. As you get closer to the stones, a voice no louder than a whisper, yet still audible over the sound of the chill breeze, drifts through the air. "Strangers," the voice speaks, "I would have words with you. Attend me."*

If the PCs approach the stones, they glimpse the dim figure of a pale woman with white hair streaked with black. She stands regal, but her silvery-white robes appear as tattered finery. Most unsettling is that she is translucent, the stones visible through her form.

She declares herself "that which remains of Rin the Moonrunner, once favored by those below" while indicating Salthaven with a transparent arm. The PCs feel a constant, but feeble power flowing out of Rin like the heat of a dying fire.

Rin speaks little of herself, comporting herself like a queen. She requests, nearly demands, that the party perform a small service for her, promising a large reward of lost treasures if they acquiesce. All that is required of them is carrying a small carved stone to the harbor of Salthaven and throwing the carving into the sea. The carving on the luminous white rock depicts a strange ship with graceful, nearly unearthly lines and rigging.

If the PCs agree and carry out the task, throwing the stone into the cold waters produces a massive waterspout that erupts in the harbor. Atop the spout is a white vessel identical to that depicted on the stone. A crew of ghostly sailors, the piratical ancestors of the Rime Islanders, crews the ship and is eager for plunder. The pirates are comprised of semi-solid moonlight and are difficult to dispatch.

The pirates embark on a campaign of violent plunder, raiding the homes of Salthaven and slaying its inhabitants. The moon-born sailors seek booty to haul to the standing stones where Rin the Moonrunner's power lingers. If successful in their looting, this demonstration of veneration causes Rin to become fully substantial. Now enervated, she seeks to



reclaim her former position of venerated goddess on Rime Isle. The PCs may decide to fight to stop the moonlight pirates or join forces with them, hoping to claim an even larger reward from the returned goddess of old.

**Moonlight Ghost Pirates (20):** Init +2; Atk cutlass +4 melee (1d8); AC 13; HD 2d6+2; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP moonlight flicker (50% chance of avoiding non-magical attacks); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

## EXIT 5: QUARMALL

Located south of the Mountains of Hunger and near the eastern edge of the Outer Sea is the vast hive city known as Quarmall. Quarmall is a subterranean city excavated beneath Quarmall Keep, the sole portion of the city standing above ground. Beneath the castle are numerous underground chambers, tunnels, and halls stacked one atop the next. Those born into the eternal gloom of Quarmall live out their lives in darkness, breathing air pumped in from above by the massive ventilation fans driven by strange, specially-bred slaves.

The tunnel connecting Ningauble's cave with Quarmall ends at a man-sized door of petrified wood. The stone-like portal rests on bronze hinges discolored by verdigris. Pushing open the solid door reveals a black corridor, dusty and still. The walls and floor are smoothly polished, but a carpet of dirt and curtains of cobwebs prove it has been ages since man (or other creatures) have walked the corridor's length.

### Adventure Ideas

Quarmall is a dangerous place, an underground world rife with intrigues, odd cultural practices and taboos, and merciless inhabitants. It is the closest thing Nehwon has to the fabled "megadungeons" of other fantasy worlds. However, unlike those subterranean complexes, the dangers lurking in Quarmall are (mostly) human.

Ningauble has demonstrated great curiosity about Quarmall ever since meeting one of its escaped slaves. His inquiries to Eeack, the Overlord of Rats and Scaa, a Methuselah of cockroach-dom, answered many of his questions, but he continues to maintain an interest in the city, perhaps one spurred by his own subterranean domicile. The Midwife of Secrets might command his agents to visit Quarmall to discover more information, especially investigating age-old mysteries or locations hidden in its deepest recesses. Here are two possibilities for adventure in Quarmall:

- Ningauble desires an ancient treasure seized by Quarmall in the distant past when their empire stretched across the surface of Nehwon. This particular treasure is located in a dusty, long-overlooked treasure chamber deep in the Lower Levels. The party must locate the relic's resting place and obtain it all while dodging armed guards, mad escaped prisoners, and other things that have been breeding in the depths of the subterranean city.
- The party stumbles upon a palace coup in the making. If their visit occurs prior to "The Lords of Quarmall"



they might find themselves drawn into the schemes of Gwaay and/or Hasjarl, the current Lord Quarmal's sons. A party arriving after the events of that story might discover a band of rebellious residents who desire to oust the current noble regime. The party can either work to help or to hinder this scheme, earning rewards or punishment based on its success or failure.

### Sample Encounter: Stalked in the Underworld

*The silence in these forgotten corridors is deafening. What little sound you make seems swallowed up by the dark and dust that fills every niche of the halls. So it is surprising to hear the faint noise of a scuffed foot on smooth stone behind you. The noise is immediately followed by what almost sounds like a hushed whisper of rebuke.*

The PCs have walked into the territory of the Escaped, slaves who fled bondage and managed to hide in the deepest of the Lower Levels of Quarmall, hoping they'd be forgotten or overlooked. Driven mad by the abuse they suffered as slaves and by the loneliness of their solitude, the Escaped defend their territory with cunning violence.

The noise alerting the party is intentional. The Escaped desire to draw the PC's attention to the rear of the group while the other four murderous former slaves stealthily approaches the group from the other direction, striking with surprise and great brutality.

If an Escaped is captured alive and interrogated, the party learns much about their current location, including the means to ascend to higher levels or the location of forgotten wonders and horrors left behind in the deepest of Quarmall's levels.

**The Escaped (6):** Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6) or shiv +1 melee (1d4+1); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 11 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Stealthy (+10 to rolls to avoid detection); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N or C.

The Escaped are pale, gaunt humans possessing eyes bright with madness. Former slaves of Quarmall, they escaped their fetters and dwell mostly forgotten in the bowels of the city. The Escaped are largely madmen and skulking assassins who seek to exact revenge on the others in Quarmall for the atrocities they endured during servitude. Despite the occasional murder they commit, the Lord of Quarmall allows the Escaped to persist, using their presence as a source of entertainment. He occasionally organizes hunts for Quarmall's nobility, chasing down the Escaped as an amusement.

# PART THREE: NINGAUBLE AS A DCC RPG PATRON

**N**ingauble is unlike many of the supernatural or quasi-supernatural entities in Nehwon in that he actively seeks out potential agents for patronage. Any individual whom the Gossiper of the Gods can employ in his schemes might be considered for employment as one of his Gentles. This is especially true if the person in question bears the spark of heroism. Ningauble acts as patron for not only less powerful wizards but warriors and thieves as well.

If the PC is a wizard or acts in concert with one to obtain Ningauble's patronage, use the below table when casting *invoke patron* as per the DCC RPG rules. Future installments of the Dungeon Crawl Classics Lankmar series will include new rules for non-spellcasters seeking patronage and the benefits and consequences of doing so.

## *Invoke Patron* check results:

- 12-13 Ningauble assists his servant with a modicum of useful advice. The Gossiper's communique appears in a manner appropriate for Ningauble, arriving attached to an arrow falling from the sky, affixed to an ebon bat, or hand-delivered by one of his urchin underlings. The message contains a brief (for Ningauble) suggestion about the best course of action leading to beneficial results for the servant. Possibilities include the location and identities of potential allies, the resting place of a useful object or knowledge, or even just a reiteration of common sense ("It is perhaps best if you flee this fight and hope to reengage when factors are better inclined in your favor.").
- 14-17 Ningauble provides his servant – and only his servant – with a mundane tool or service beneficial to the crisis at hand. The object or assistance appears suddenly, manifesting in a subtle yet mysterious way. Possible wizardly assistance includes a horse kitted out for travel, a guide willing to lead the caster to safe ground, or simply a coil of rope to cross a chasm or climb a cliff. The object or individual remains until it serves its purpose to the caster, then vanishes.
- 18-19 Ningauble grants the caster a brief flash of insight gleaned from the Gossiper's massive collection of lore and cosmic gossip. This knowledge grants the caster a +2d bonus on a single action attempted in the next hour. The knowledge fades once applied or after the hour elapses.
- 20-23 As above, but the caster can apply the +2d bonus to a number of actions equal to his CL over the course of the next hour. He loses the benefit of this imparted knowledge after the hour elapses whether he uses it or not.
- 24-27 Ningauble loans the caster a useful magical object from his collection of oddities. The object is always applicable to the task or problem facing the caster. It provides one magical benefit determined by the judge, then disappears or is collected by one of the wizard's agents once the caster has overcome his difficulties or accomplished his task. Sample magical objects and their level of power and usefulness for this result include the *blindfold of true seeing* and the *cloak of invisibility*.
- 28-29 Ningauble extends a portion of his wizardly power to the caster. The next spell the caster invokes automatically succeeds as if the caster had rolled the third most powerful spell check result on the spell's spell check table. For example, if the caster casts *lightning bolt*, it manifests as if the caster rolled a spell check of 32-33, the third highest spell check result for that spell. This imparted wizardly power vanishes once the caster makes his next spell check or an hour passes.
- 30-31 Ningauble assists his servant by casting a single spell useful to the caster at that moment, as determined by the judge. This spell manifests anywhere the caster can see and takes effect as if Ningauble had rolled the second most powerful spell check result for that spell. For example, if the caster needed to swim down to the sunken land of Simorgya and successfully invoked Ningauble at this level of effect, the judge might determine Ningauble casts *water breathing* on his agent. The spell would manifest as if Ningauble rolled a spell check of 34-35, the second highest result on the spell's spell check table. For purposes of CL, treat Ningauble as a 10<sup>th</sup> level wizard.
- 32+ A cave mouth appears at the caster's location. This entrance connects to Ningauble's cavern, but only remains in existence for two rounds. Anyone entering the cave usually arrives at the foot of the Staircase of Error. However, should Ningauble have need of the caster's services elsewhere, he might appear at an entirely different location in either Nehwon or another world. The caster may soon discover he escaped one problem to land square in the middle of another not of his choosing.



# PATRON TAINT

Ningable prefers his agents hail and hearty, but there are unfortunate side effects of tying oneself to the Gossiper of the Gods. Powers that even he cannot comprehend enforce consequences for meddling with eldritch energy. Some sorcerers of lesser rank believe Ningable was himself once a mortal man and his current form—whatever it might be—is the consequence of his lust for sorcerous knowledge. And as a common adage in Lankhmar goes, “Over time, a servant resembles his master.” Let Ningable’s agents be forewarned.

When a patron taint is indicated, roll 1d6 on the table below. When a caster has acquired all six taints at all levels of effect, there is no need to continue rolling anymore. At that judge’s discretion, a caster who accumulates all variations of patron taint becomes a *gentling* (see above), and dwells permanently in the Bottomless Caves with his master.

## d6 Result

- 1 The caster’s flesh become sensitive to sunlight and he must keep it covered to avoid breaking out in an itchy rash. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster suffers a -1d penalty on all rolls whenever his skin is exposed to natural light. If the result is rolled a third time, the caster suffers 1d4 points of damage for each minute or part thereof his flesh is exposed to sunlight.
- 2 The caster’s eyes acquire vertical pupils like those of a cat. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster’s irises become vivid yellow in color and glow softly in darkness. If rolled a third time, his eyes protrude 4” from their sockets on tendril-like cords. This disconcerting appearance imparts a permanent -2 loss to the caster’s Personality score.
- 3 The caster develops a lust for news and gossip, striving to learn the latest developments in whatever location he currently resides in. If rolled a second time, the caster must actively seek out details of the latest current events or ribald tales each day. Failing to do so imparts a -2 penalty on spell checks as the caster finds it difficult to concentrate. If the result is rolled a third time, the caster must spend 1d3 hours every day as soon as he awakens seeking out gossip and news, trolling taverns and bribing those in the know for details. If the caster does not spend the indi-



cated time acquiring gossip, he suffers a -1d penalty to all spell checks until he completes his gossip-hunting.

4 The caster's connection to Nehwon (or his home world if different) becomes tenuous, causing him to sprinkle his speech with alien words from utterly unknown languages (French, Spanish, Japanese, Galactic Basic, etc.). If the result is rolled a second time, the caster has a 25% chance of momentarily fading out of existence in his home world during times of stress (judge's discretion). The caster vanishes for 1d10 minutes, reappearing at his last location once that time elapses. If the result is rolled a third time, the caster vanishes utterly, permanently banished from his home world. Where he appears is left to the judge to determine. The closest the caster can ever return to his native land is Ningauble's cave or similar locations that exist on the cusp of world boundaries.



5 The caster shrinks in size, losing 1' of his height but otherwise remaining physically unchanged. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster shrinks to half his original size, and permanently loses 2 points of Strength and Stamina. If the result is rolled a third time, he diminishes to a mere 1' in size and suffers an additional -4 loss to Strength and Agility.

6 The caster's flesh acquires a sooty gray coloration. If this result is rolled a second time, his skin begins to sag and droop, forming hanging wattles of flesh. These wattles impede the caster's movement, reducing his speed by -5'. If the result is rolled a third time, the caster's flesh becomes amorphous, resembling a robe of skin covering his body, a fleshy robe similar to Ningauble's own swaddled form.

## SPELLBURN

Ningauble of the Seven Eyes can be relied upon to assist those who act as his proxies—provided their efforts advance the Gossiper of the God's schemes and they're Gentles in good standing. When a caster utilizes spellburn, roll 1d4 and consult the table below or build off suggestions to create an event specific to your Lankhmar campaign.

### d4 Spellburn Result

- 1 The voice of Ningauble manifests in the caster's ear, giving him a long-winded instructional lecture on the proper methods and esoteric techniques necessary to correctly amplify his spellcasting. This mind-numbing lecture physically exhausts the caster, resulting in stat loss.
- 2 Ningauble agrees to share his power with the caster, increasing the spellburn modifier by a random 1d7 points. However, the caster must agree to give Ningauble a half-share of the next cache of useful scholarly lore, magical knowledge, or curious treasure he discovers. A caster failing to honor this agreement discovers the next 1d7 spells that he casts automatically misfire, thwarted by the Septinocular One's meddling of magical fields.
- 3 The caster's spell goes off accompanied by the sudden eruption of 1d7 magical bats bursting from the wizard's chest. The abrupt genesis of these fluttering creatures causes the caster to suffer the stat loss of the spellburn.
- 4 The caster's manipulation of magical forces combined with his connection to the Many-Eyed One potentially invokes the time/space shifting properties of the Bottomless Caves. Roll d% and if the result is equal to or less than the number of points spellburned, the caster is suddenly whisked away and deposited in a new location. This location is likely to be Ningauble's cave, but could also potentially be anywhere on Nehwon or any alien shore the judge desires. The means of returning home are left to the judge to detail and the caster to deduce.

## CONCLUSION



We hope you've enjoyed this initial look into the fantastic world of Fritz Leiber's Nehwon. This is just the first release in Goodman Games' line of Lankhmar supplements for the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* Roleplaying Game. Future releases will continue to focus on bringing Lankhmar and the world of Nehwon to life in your DCC RPG campaign. Skulk down the foggy streets of Lankhmar with stolen jewels and bloodied blade in hand! Plumb the depths of Quarmall while avoiding its sorcerous Lords! Set sail across the Inner Sea, dodging dragons and pirates and servants of sunken Simorgya! And expect new rules for adapting DCC RPG for the fabulous world of Fritz Leiber! Look for the complete Lankhmar line later this year!





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Writer: Michael Curtis

Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak

Artist: Doug Kovacs

Layout: Joseph Goodman

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