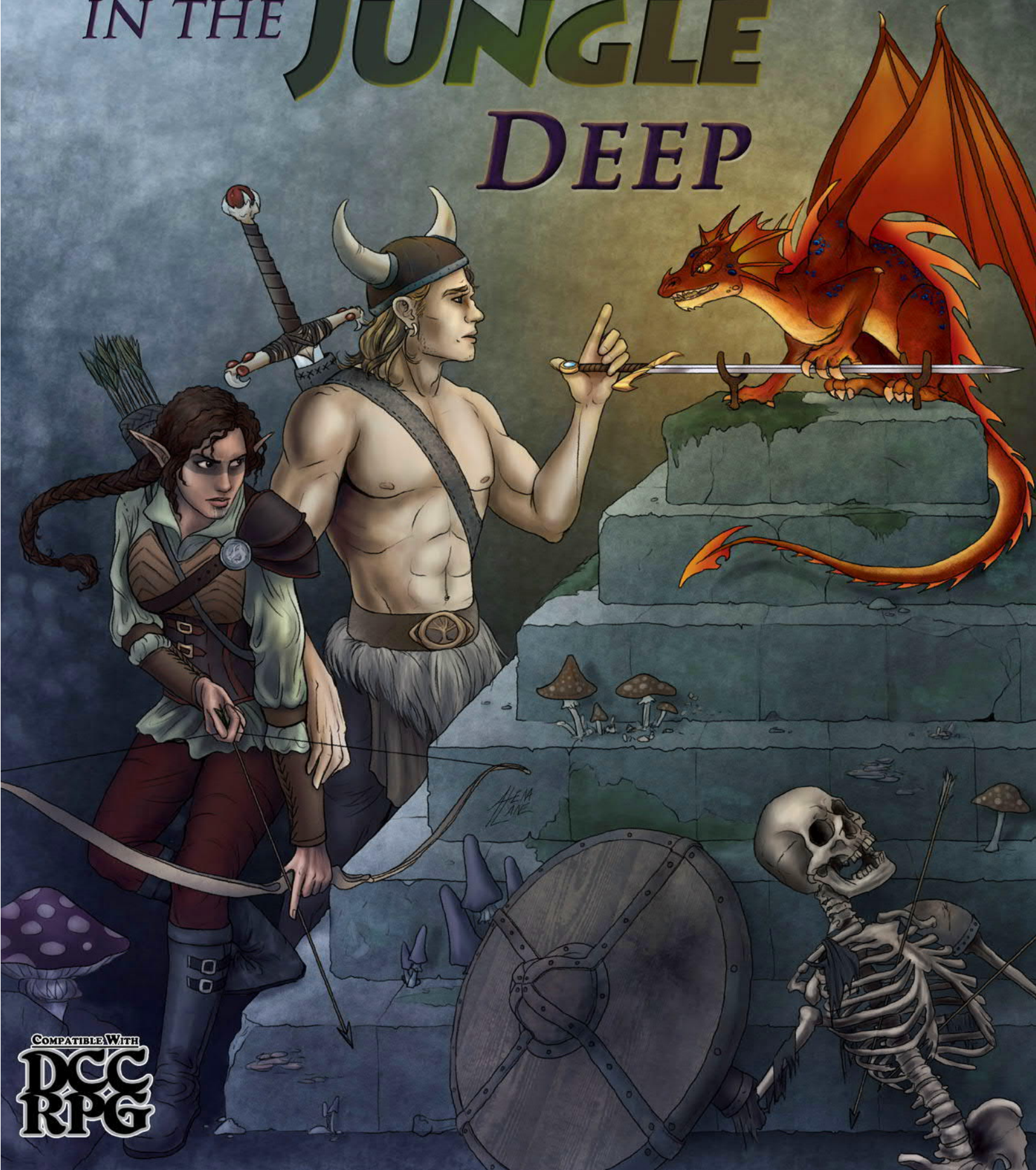


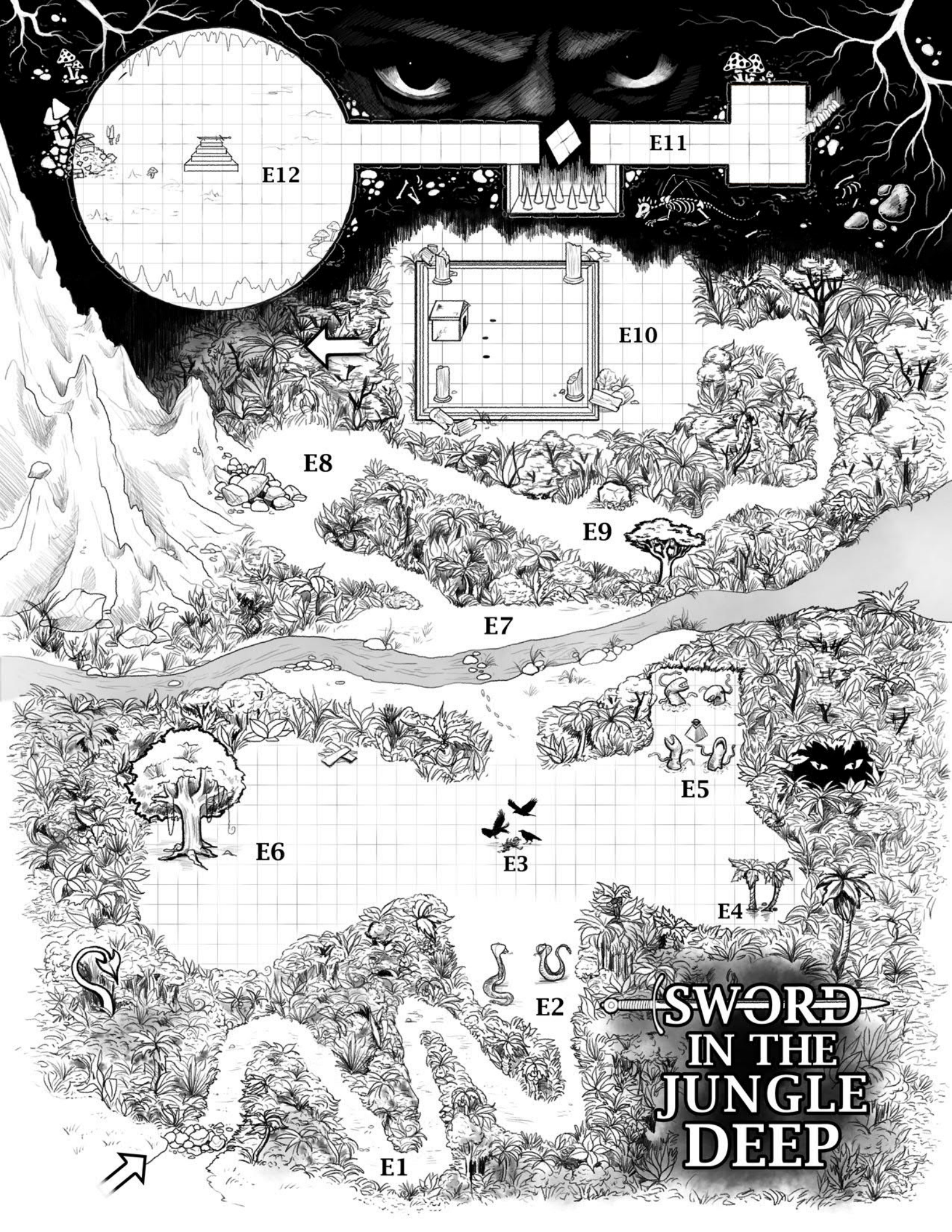
SWORD

IN THE JUNGLE DEEP

TKS #0: A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY FRANCISCO DUARTE



COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**



E12

E11

E10

E8

E9

E7

E5

E6

E3

E4

E2

E1

SWORD IN THE JUNGLE DEEP



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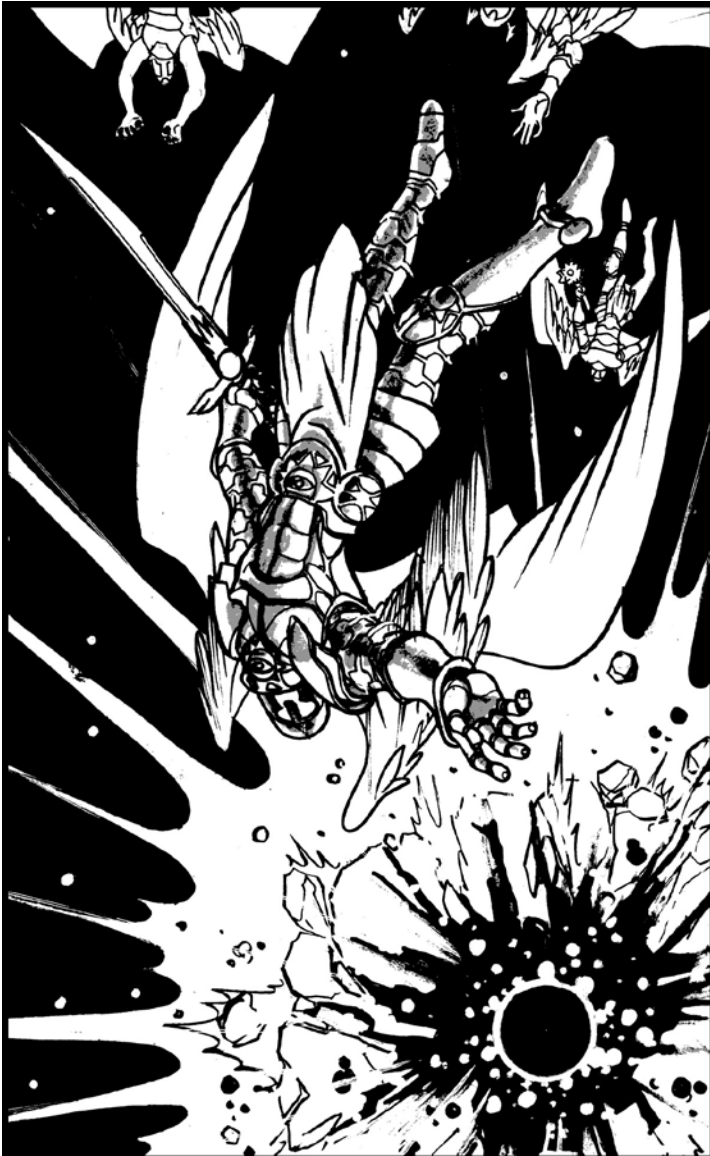
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INTRODUCTION

Sword in the Jungle Deep is a Dungeon Crawl Classics Role-Playing Game adventure designed as a funnel for 12-16 level 0 characters. During playtests this adventure has consistently killed more than half of the party, even managing a few total party kills. An encounter was included in the second half of the map where the players can find reinforcements in case they need them.

After making a deal with a corrupt member of the Casters' Crossing city guard, the party will find themselves wandering through a thick jungle rife with danger and ancient mysteries, following the trails left by older expeditions, fighting giant cobras and - if they are lucky - avoiding even bigger predators that lurk in the shadows amidst the trees. In a grand clearing they will face corrupted fusions of plant and arcane artifact, before returning to the narrow paths and the perils of the deep jungle. At the end there is an ancient crypt within which they will find an old magical weapon guarded by elemental guardians and a small pseudo-dragon.



BACKGROUND

In time unspoken, Angels waged war, meting out devastation upon dreadful planes of battle for ages beyond reckoning. Amid Empyrion heights did those same unleash mighty engines of war; towering elemental constructs did strive in violence, and did bring low lofty seats of pride and power.

The devastation wrought by these powers was so ruinous that the higher world was shattered into many shards, which rained like hail upon the lower planes. One such shard fell upon this mortal realm, rending land asunder and embedding itself into the surface.

Out of the lands of the icy north did winds of Arcane Power blow into the land and molded out of it a resplendent Crystal Ziggurat, a heavenly forge whose presence called to it the most virtuous souls among departed mortals, merging them with earthly materials to bring into existence whole new beings. These malakim (sing, malak) thus became their emissaries among the mortals, and the foot soldiers in the armies of the High Light within this realm.

Amidst the slivered ruins of their ancient realm, those who had rebelled against the powers that had forged them into existence lingered still, albeit lost, their strength dwindling as Tanabriel and her followers hunted them fiercely. In the time before the Fall, the leader of such rebels, the fallen daughter called Ethe'in, had been slain, her brilliant essence enclosed in a crypt deep in the irregular hills forming the spine of this Shard. Thus incapacitated, Ethe'in could not be awoken even after her silvery sword was retrieved by her followers in a flight of sacrifice and hopelessness.

Forced into hiding by unrelenting persecution, and unwilling to see their leader's sword (her essence) fall into the hands of Tanabriel's Host, they separated the silvery blade from its deep-dark scabbard. Down to the south, deep below a scabrous crater left in the wake of the flagrant abuse of Angelic will, they hid the sword. The caldera of a sleeping volcano, raised by the titanic clash of quasi-immortal force, the very land and air became hostile to all life - an assurance that only those deemed worthy could claim the sacred weapon. A small army of dust guardians was left in the crypt hidden deep in that sunken monument to the folly of sentient beings.

Unbeknownst to them then, persecution would push them into corners far of that realm, forced away from the light of the sun as even their powerful forms could not withstand the relentlessness of their more numerous equals, supported by the malakim made into mortal image. As such events came to pass time itself castigated the Shard with equal malice. Weird grasslands, forests and marshes grew across what was once part of the highest of realms.

Abandoned and decaying from lack of Angelic direction, ancient artifacts that fell with the Shard corrupted the

lands, twisting the diverse multitude of life into entities of unrecognizable purpose and boundless savagery. Other creations from Angelic intent simply fell into the dark pit of madness, their purpose forgotten, preying on the unfortunate souls that cross their paths. In the crypt where the silvery sword rests the dust guardians whose numbers were legion decayed as well, one by one succumbing to the ravages of time and delinquent natures, 'til but two were left. Weakened, diminished, forever undying, sustained by the last of their mistresses' will, they slumbered in comatose anticipation

While angelic relics decayed, mortal men also found their way into the Shard, venturing at great cost to retrieve such treasure. Great as the gains were, further mysteries required further efforts. Settlements grew where merchants and adventurers alike could trade and recuperate before heading once more into the unknown wild. Among such settlements, one ascended to become the greatest, a walled city-state with a name known far and wide: Caster's Crossing.

Legends uncounted spread across the world, stories of treasure yet unearthed. Among them one stands, timorously whispered in dark alleys and darker lounges, of an artifact which might yet spell doom to Tanabriel and those who stand by her side. One relic, hidden deep in the jungles to the south, that has already lured many to their untimely demise...

The Malakim

Created from the souls of those deemed worthy by the Shardian Angels, the malakim have the appearance of human-like creatures, but with thinner builds. Their skins are like marble in its texture and variety of color, and from their shoulder blades sprout long and slender feathered wings, which they tend to keep folded. These wings vary in color, with white, black and red being the most common. Malakim also possess a very specific brand of magic, which involves complex illusions and psychic influence.

Having being created to serve Tanabriel's forces, the malakim still possess free will, and some turned their backs to their masters in order to explore the world or to forge their own paths, even finding their way to the city of Caster's Crossing, where they usually work as artists or sages.

MEDDLING MORTALS

Unfortunately even the darkest secrets sometimes come to the surface, seducing those who crave power. Czercic Tenveredín is an elven warmage who for many years had worked for the defense force of the walled city of Caster's Crossing. These men and women are known as the Rabum Amelatu, usually referred to as the Wallkeepers. Although their activities and past endeavours prior to

joining the force are scrutinized as much as possible, sometimes ambition and greed can overcome even the noblest minds - as with Czercic.

During his service, he ascended through the ranks and gathered copious amounts of information about many sensitive subjects. Although he always acted professionally among his peers, Czercic developed a lust for power. As he researched myth and legend he came across Shareeza, a malak woman who strayed away from her own people due to reasons so similar to Czercic's. She told him about the hidden crypt of the rebellious Angel Ethe'in and her powerful sword.

This knowledge made Czercic turn his back to the cult of Tanabriel, so prevalent among the inhabitants of Caster's Crossing, and develop a veneration towards the rebel Angel. He came to desire to find her crypt in the hopes that she will grant him great powers and even a place in her circle as a reward.

The warmage and the rebel malak formed a cult of their own and gathered followers. One day they found a lead about the hiding place of the Sword of Ethe'in, deep in the southern jungles known as the Erset La Tari. Using his influence among the Wallkeepers Czercic managed to commandeer a large group of Last Hopes - criminals who are offered impossible missions so they can clear they name should they survive them. His plan is to use the Last Hopes to overcome the perils of the wetlands and find the mystifying crypt, if it really exists. Unbeknownst to them, the PCs are actually the third group he will send into the jungle.

This is where the adventure begins...

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Encounter	Type	Description
E1	N	Collapsing Canyon; Lurking Atandi Beasts
E2	C	2 Shardian Grass Cobras
E5	C	4 Maneats
E6	L	Aural Tree
E9	T	Pit Trap
E10	C	4 Piles of Living Bones
E11	T	Mechanical Trap
E12	L	2 Dust Guardians; Lilithus, the Pseudodragon



PLAYER START

A week has gone by since you accepted the deal. Around you are the somber expressions of those with whom you share a cramped transport cage. Accused thieves, tax evaders, desperate debtors, dishonest merchants; no murderers - no one dangerous, no one violent. And you, just one more among the Last Hopes, yet another estranged soul caught on the wrong side of the law in the walled city of Caster's Crossing, dragged half-way across the region to find a pardon, to clear your name when (and if) you ever get back to town.

The carriages where you all sit tremble and crack as they are dragged over the muddy soil of the southern lands. The overgrowth scratches and gouges the wagons, kicking dirt into the cages. It's an unpleasant voyage to say the least. The intermittent tropical rain leaves your clothes wet and itchy, the scorching sun grazes your skin, and hunger pains make your stomach growl, but after several harrowing days you finally reach your destination.

The carriages come to a halt inside a dense muddy jungle. You are dragged away from the cages and brought before the caravan master. Tethered to wagon yokes, the hefty kerbelicht (KER-BEH-LEEGHT) snort and tear at the ground as they cast their eyes about frantically, evidently unwilling to remain here. The men pushing you forward seem only slightly less nervous.

Czercic is a tall elf, clad in light armor. He glances at you with merciless hazel eyes. Beside him is a lithe and sharply beautiful woman whose dark feathered wings curl from her back to provide some shade. Her gaze upon you, almost regretful, contrasts with Czercic's indifference.

The warmage turns to face you as his guards force each of you to your knees. "Enter the canyon and follow it to the crater valley beyond," he says. "Find what you can of the previous expedition and retrieve the artifact. We do not know what form it takes but you'll know what it is when you see it." His brow furrows, the first sign of real emotion. "Do this and you will be pardoned, as we have agreed. Do not and be executed as traitors as the law demands."

Having spoken these words he briskly turns away. Your meagre property is dropped at your feet and you quickly reclaim it. The guards push you towards a jungle path that leads to the towering walls of a slot canyon. Then you descend into the shoulder-wide canyon, slick and mossy limestone coating your gear as you push forward into...

THE JUNGLE

General Features: Hot, humid, verdant: a jungle.

The Crater: The crater "walls" are uneven, averaging 120 feet in height. They are unnatural looking, but not like city walls - certainly not man-made - rather, the rocky formations appear to have been pushed up out of the ground, as though some titanic child were playing in the earth. Adventurers attempting to traverse them directly will encounter slick limestone surfaces, irritating wildlife, and dangerous rockslides.

Wildlife: Flora and fauna have been corrupted by powerful artifacts, resulting in varying dangerous mutations. Consider creating or modifying your own "Shardian" creatures for additional adventures in "The Jungle of Er-set La Tari."

Atandi: Packs of Atandi stalk the party from amidst the trees for the duration. Any PC that strays from the group,

Atandi Beasts

Atandi: Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6+3); AC 15; HD 1d8+2; hp 7; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N.

Atandi are fierce jungle predators that may probe their prey to find the best opening to attack. Although they favor ambushes they are still fearsome fighters who, having wounded their prey, will stalk it to death. A typical atandi is 8' long snout to rump, with muscular bodies and long tails. Their skins are green and scaly, with gray armored plates on the back, like crocodiles, and their heads look like a mixture of wolf and alligator features, armed with 4 large canines. They are apex predators, their senses are keenly developed and they are difficult to deceive.

Atandi produce a wide array of sounds and vocalizations, the most common being a guttural snarling with a baritone timbre. When they strike, they make a loud low-pitched growling that makes other creature's bodies tremble, either by the sound itself or the terror it inspires. When they are confused they can make loud snorting sounds, attempting to provoke a reaction.



either running away or trailing too far behind, will be promptly attacked by the beasts (give 3 Luck checks to notice small signs, like the snapping of twitches, a soft threatening growl or a blur of movement through the corner of the eye). Any PCs venturing into the deep jungle will be promptly attacked by the beasts.

E1 - Outer Jungle Path: *As you push through the slot canyon, your shoulders and equipment rustling against the limestone that now surrounds your world, you are hit by a rush of wind that comes from behind you. A thunderous cracking sound reverberates across the canyon, followed by a loud rumble. Whipping your heads around you see the top of the canyon crashing down into the jungle and the path, snapping trees like twigs and sealing like a zipper. In mere moments the crushing walls will be on you!*

TLDR

- Canyon Collapses
- Path through Jungle is thick, dark, dreadful
- Atandi Beasts stalk the PCs

This path is actually the trail left by the flash floods that harass the jungle from time to time. This phenomenon is also what formed the preceding slot canyon, as the waters tend to flow through it before cascading into the jungle, dragging away the young trees in its path. Only quick-growing underbrush manages to survive here in-between floods, but even these plants are periodically decimated by them. The trail also zigzags through the jungle, so contrived that the entrance is out of sight after a short while. It is assumed that the party will take a hour or so to reach the next area.

E2 - Grass Trail: *As you proceed deeper into the woods you sense the ground gaining a noticeable downward slope, you feet slipping on the putrid mud. The dark forest still fills you with a sense of dread, but the snarling starts to draw farther as you move along. Then the trail suddenly gets wider, the underbrush you've been struggling against intertwining with hip-deep brown grass. The sun braises your skins remorselessly here and you notice you cannot see your feet among the dense vegetation as you shamle onward.*

TLDR

- Path widens to a wet grassy field
- 2 Mutant Grass Cobras attack

This area is where large accumulations of water tend to be more frequent, so the trees start to give way to a dense fen. The atandi still stalk the jungle, as they will do throughout the adventure, but here they start to get less active, only daring to attack if the players wander into the trees.

Although most local fauna will try to avoid the party, the Shardian Grass Cobras that flourish here are another matter entirely. Corrupted by overexposure to elemental artifacts, these creatures are extremely aggressive and will attack as soon as they feel threatened. Roll for initiative (and follow the initiative order as the combat begins) - the player with the lower score will be the one to unwittingly trip on 2 of these creatures. They will promptly raise their heads above the grass, flashing their brightly colored hoods before attacking the party (not necessarily the player who rolled lower because the snakes will attack in whatever direction they are facing). They fight in a standing position, being treated as normal enemies even in the grass.



Shardian Grass Cobra (2): Init +6; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 12; HD 1d6+1; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spit poison (DC10 Ref save or 1d4 dmg); SV Fort -2, Ref +4, Will 0; AL C.

This cobra has a radiantly colored hood which shimmers in the noon-day sun. It will attempt to neutralize threats from a distance, spitting poison from a range of 20'. The poison is aggressive and sears the flesh but otherwise does normal damage.

E3 - Big Clearing: *After a while, the path you have been following widens even more, giving way to a wide clearing surrounded by the thick dark woodland around its edges. The soil is completely covered by the brown grass and you feel your feet sinking in muddy ankle-deep water. Right at the center of the clearing there are a pair of crows croaking as they fly in circles. To the east there is movement in the trees near the edge of the clearing. To the northeast there are some strange stumps set apart from the forest, with something in the middle of them reflecting the sunlight. To the west there is a big white tree. Finally, to the north, there is an opening in the line of trees that leads yet deeper into the jungle.*

TLDR

- Corpse with equipment in the center of the clearing
- Way out is straight ahead from the entrance
- Next three Encounters all within this clearing

This is the area where the waters tend to gather after flowing down the trail the party has been following. If a player should ask or make mention of it, he might notice that there is an unusual lack of animals in the area, except for the monkeys to the east and the crows in the center. The latter, circling a corpse hidden in the deep grass, will scatter if a player approaches the dead man - the body is relatively fresh, having bled to death just a few hours previous. He was a member of the previous group who survived an encounter with the cobras in E2 but died of his wounds here. If they decide to check his body, the PCs might recover a short sword and a set of hide armor, along with 20 cps.

E4 - The Two Monkeys: *Fifteen feet from the edge of the jungle you find a strange crooked tree. It looks sickly, the brown bark falling down, exposing the drying wood underneath. Among the dying leaves are two brown monkeys, producing loud chirping noises as they look at each other, apparently oblivious to your presence.*

TLDR

- There are two talking monkeys on a crooked tree. They will speak with the party if spoken to, but will flee if any member of the party becomes hostile or overly aggressive.

An underground stream of putrescence from a decaying artifact has been slowly killing these trees, giving them their sickly aspect.

The monkeys can talk, though if not bothered by the party, they will continue arguing in their own native tongue about their cache of gemstones (see below). The monkeys speak common, and depending on the manner in which the party approaches them, they may choose to share some information about what lies ahead for the characters, always in their own enigmatic allegories, referring to the crypt as the "pile of stones", and the piles of bones guarding it as the "old men". They can even share some details about the wider world, including the overall campaign, although always in the same indirect fashion. It should be noted that although they have first-hand knowledge about this jungle the information about the wider world has been shared by other magical enti-

ties and might be fragmentary or outright wrong, making this a good place to both further the plot or to provide additional challenges to the players. Keep in mind that in order to avoid too much confusion, the fake or wrong information must be relayed with hints about its uncertainty. The monkeys are also keeping a stash of gems for themselves, which they call the "bright stones", but will not share that information unless specified. This stash is hidden amidst the branches of the crown-like tree in E9.

If the players attempt to attack the monkeys they will leap into the jungle, disappearing among the trees.



E5 - The Maneats: *Here the clearing forms a semi-spherical recess into the jungle. Inside this recess are four stubby trees arranged in a vaguely square-shaped pattern. Their green surfaces are strangely wrinkled and from them snake several vine-like protrusions that disappear amidst the grass. In the center of the rough square formed by the trunks rises a pyramidal structure made of some strange crystalline material, almost translucent on the surface but growing more opaque underneath. The object is 4' tall and reflects the sunlight from certain angles.. On top of this structure there is a fist-sized red jewel emitting a glow that is noticeable even under such a bright sun.*

TLDR

- The 4 Maneat stubs attack if a PC gets within a 15' radius of any one of them. They stop attacking if satiated by ingesting prey.
- There is a crystalline pyramidal structure in the center of this space, surrounded by the Maneat.
- The Red Jewel is on the top of the structure.

The recess is 65' wide and 70' long. The stumpy trees are actually part of a Maneat, a massive carnivorous plant, and each is armed with with seemingly innocuous 15' long, vine-like prehensile appendages. Once an organism of about human size enters their range they will attack with the tentacles, the top of the trunks opening to reveal large mouths. As soon as the Maneat ingests d6 prey items it will proceed to digest them. The stumps will then stop moving, becoming dormant for an entire day unless attacked.

The Maneat Stumps

Maneat Stump (4): Init +2; Atk melee +3, tentacles; Dmg 1d4; AC 7; HD 5d10; hp 25; SP Swallow Whole (when an attack hits, the PC must perform DC10 Reflex save to take half damage and avoid being grabbed by the vines, in case of failure DC10 Fort save to release himself, if fail the Maneat devours the PC whole); Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; AL C.

The Maneat Stumps are the fleshy extremities of the Maneat creature, protruding from ground. They are vaguely cylindrical, with wrinkly brown bark and round tops, which open in the middle when they attack to reveal gaping maws. Long vine-like appendages growing unevenly over them are used to grab and bring any unlucky prey to these maws, and the stumps themselves are more flexible than they might seem at a first glance. Swallowed prey will fall through the stumps into the main body, hidden underground, where they will slowly asphyxiate and be digested. This swollen mass of plant flesh has also enfolded a few Angelic artifacts located just under the soil, which were the cause of its corruption, pushing the small pyramid with the red jewel to the surface as it grew and displaced the dirt around it.

The Maneat's stumps can be destroyed by the PCs' mundane weapons, although such feat requires considerable effort. Once stirred they will attempt to ingest any creature or object inside their range, including animals the PCs have with them or the mortal remains of other characters. Chopped down trees will also work. Fire (from an arrow or a thrown torch for example) can also startle one individual Maneat stump for one round, however making fire here is quite difficult due to the extreme dampness.

Furthermore, if a PC manages to avoid the attacks from the Maneat (from two stumps at least) he will find that the area around the structure in the center is actually out of the creature's range.

The crystalline pyramid is one of the many oddities that exist across the Shard, and it is only a part of a much larger artifact that is buried deep underground, the presence of which is responsible for the state of the local vegetation, as well as the twisting the Maneat into the creature it is today. The red jewel on top of it is one of the several power sources it contains. Due to the effects of the elements, it is now somewhat loose in its cradle and can be prized out relatively easily with a short blade should a character get close enough. Because of the influence of the artifact over the maneats, removing the red jewel from the structure will stun them, rendering them immobile for a whole minute, regardless of their attitude beforehand.

The red jewel has a bright red glow to it that can light dark places like a torch. If held by a wizard it can be used

to spellburn, using the jewel's energy reserves instead of the wizard's attribute scores. Because of the limited control casters have over this power the jewel has a limit of 15 points that can be burned before it dissipates into red mist. The jewel can also be used in E11 and E12.

E6 - Aural Tree: *You approach the white tree, realizing that it is even larger than you thought. The trunk is knotted and twisted, tumorous dark nodes meandering all over the bark. From this distance, the details remain hard to discern, as if the air around it is shimmering. Grey leaves form a lush canopy overhead, so wide and dense it blots out the sun, casting the bole and roots below in deep, gloomy shade even at midday. As you come closer you feel yourselves being drawn to this tree, something about it evoking in your minds dear childhood memories you thought forgotten.*

TLDR

- The Aural tree will try to absorb a PC that gets too close.
- There is a pile of wood that can be used by the players.
- There are items hidden amidst the grass.

The Aural Tree is an ancient elemental construct abandoned during the cataclysm caused by the Shard's fall to this world. It attracts living things towards it and absorbs them, gathering their flesh and organs to grow larger. If a PC stands at 45' or less from the tree and stares at it for more than 10 seconds, he will have to make a DC10 Will save or be overwhelmed by an irresistible desire to become one with the tree and will walk towards the tree to embrace the trunk. Once that happens, the PC's skin will begin to fuse with the bark, becoming part of the trunk, at which point the PC is effectively dead.

To the north of the Aural Tree lay a number of fallen trees that were uprooted and deposited there at some point in immemorial time by one or many of the numerous deluges that periodically scour the valley floor. They now rest at the edge of the jungle clearing, dried by the hot sun and roughly split from the ferocity of the torrents that rent them asunder. Although old, this wood is sturdy and can be used to deceive the Maneat in E5 and to make an impromptu bridge in E7.

Should the players decide to investigate the area south of the Aural Tree, have the PCs perform a DC10 Intelligence check. If successful, they will find a shield and a longsword hidden in the grass, dropped by a member of the previous group who dropped them when he was entranced by the Aural Tree. A second success in checking the area will yield a battleaxe, rusted with age and with the leather wrap on its grip rotted, but of such fine make that it is still sharp and can be easily cleaned up and repaired by a blacksmith, or by a character in the field with some basic tools and 1d4 rounds effort.

E7 - Murky Creek: *The ground around the opening in the line of trees is uneven, as if some gigantic force had overturned the mud, the grass here being dark-green and noticeably younger than in the rest of the clearing. The trees are also collapsed and crushed, their roots hanging in strange positions.*

You follow this path until you reach a place where the thick forest gives way to a wide creek. The thick brown ooze bubbles and roils sluggishly eastward, belying the ferocity of the torrent just below the surface, emitting a stench so foul even the air tastes rotten. Gazing at the reeking outflow, a splash and brief ripple in the surface of the toxic sludge draws your eye to the opposite bank as something stirs the effluvium from beneath, whereupon you note another path continues from the strand back into the jungle.

TLDR

- Stream of sludge blocks the way and kills anyone who falls into it.
- PCs can either jump across the stones linking both banks or make an impromptu bridge over them.

The trail was made some weeks ago by a colossal elemental construct as it wandered through the jungle. It reached the clearing, but upon finding nothing that interested it, it turned around and returned to its normal patrol deeper into the jungle, eventually turning to follow the creek to the northeast, and there are a few fallen trees along the riverbanks that attest its change of course.

The creek is quite deep, more so than it might seem at a first glance. The sludge that covers it is pouring from an ancient artifact that was damaged by the Fall and was corrupted by a demon that roamed the land long ago. Any direct contact with the awful liquid immediately burns any flesh it touches for 1d4 points of searing damage, and complete immersion is instantly lethal. Strange, nightmarish creatures lurk under the surface, feasting on what the sludge does not dissolve: any PC who falls into the creek will be promptly dragged under and never seen again. Characters looking for a way across will notice that the rocks dotting the surface go all the way to the opposite bank. While not an easy task, it is possible to leap from one rock to the other, however a PC will need to make a DC8 Reflex save or fall into the sludge.

Using the pieces of wood found near the Aural Tree, the party can make an impromptu bridge linking the rocks; although unstable, this would allow the PCs to pass through. A long pole or a long spear might also be used, either as a balance, or thrust into the bottom of the creek to aid leaping between the rocks. In both instances the Ref save is lessened to a DC4.

The trail on the other bank is very old, older than Czercic's expeditions, and was made during a previous attempt to reclaim the treasures of this valley. What remains of it is narrow and covered by the prodigious underbrush.

E8 - Deadfall: *The trail goes deeper into the jungle, forming a path covered in knee-deep underbrush, mostly ferns. As you move along you notice a now familiar snarling coming from the enveloping jungle, although always at a measured distance. Before long you emerge into a new clearing. This one was formed recently, with rocks scattered all over the area, along with the smashed trunks of several uprooted trees. Looking up, you noticed that a part of the crater's ridge has broken away. A*

rope is twisted and tangled in the debris and appears to be tied to the base of a fallen tree.

TLDR

- Should the party require it they will find reinforcements under the rocks and gravel.
- Atandi still stalk the party, behaving as described previously in section E1.

The collapse occurred when one of the previous expeditions ordered by Czercic tried a shortcut by attempting to rappel directly into the crater, their broken corpses scattered among the debris. Should the party choose to search the area and bodies, there is a salvageable backpack containing a waterskin, two unbroken spears, a lantern with oil, and flint & tinder. If the party is in need of reinforcements they can be found here, trapped beneath the rubble. These people have been here for a couple of days and are dehydrated and in distress, but should be able to move on after a short rest.

One or more Atandi from earlier in the adventure will still be following the party, but they should remain within the trees unless someone runs away or gets otherwise separated from the group.

E9 - Sinkhole: *The path you have been following gets narrower but still relatively easy to navigate, although some branches need to be cut in order to proceed. Still the canopy seems only to grow thicker, washing out the sunlight and blanketing even the midday jungle in a mantle of gloom. Although the air is stale and warm, you feel cold. Ragged snarling sounds from whatever it is that has been stalking you continue to issue from the jungle depths, but are now somewhat more distant than before, and seem to be largely stationary, as if observing you from afar.*

TLDR

- There is a sink hole where a PC may fall if any are advancing too hastily or incautiously.
- There is a big rock with items hidden in the underbrush around its base.
- There is a tree with a chest containing treasure hidden between its branches.

A sinkhole has formed a pit trap here that would normally be easily avoided but for the underbrush and darkness. If the party is advancing carefully they will spot it and avoid it - if not the characters will need to make a DC5 Ref save or fall (2d6 damage from the fall with one broken bone for each 6 rolled).

Looking down in the 20' deep sinkhole the PCs will notice the sides are overgrown with roots. There are mortal remains of several creatures inside, including some humanoid skeletons, still with some with still-serviceable equipment on them. Descending into the sinkhole (DC5 Agility check) the players might find: 1 hide armor, and 1 scale mail (both worn out, imparting a -1 penalty in their standard armor and AC bonus), 1 old but still serviceable short sword, 1 battleaxe, and 2 shields.

Should the characters decide to inspect the surroundings they will notice two interesting elements, previously

half-hidden in the duskiness of this part of the jungle. To the north is a big rock between two trees. It is half-covered in moss and fungi, with ferns growing all around its base. Should the players decide to investigate the underbrush around it they will find a shield, a hand axe and a steel helmet. Further investigation (DC10 Intelligence check) will reveal a worn backpack, unusable, but containing a dagger, 25 cp and a scroll with a spell of the GM's choosing.

To the south there is a strangely gnarled and knotty brown tree whose surface is covered with white lichen. The tree's leaf-laden branches spread outwards, giving the top of the tree a crown-like shape. This is the place described by the monkey earlier, if the party convinced them to divulge the location of their treasure, and is relatively easy to climb (DC5 Agility check). In the top of the trunk, right where the branches radiate outward from the bole, there is a small chest. Its is not locked and inside the PCs will find a set of precious gems worth 125 gp and a rough map (this can lead to treasure or any destination of GM's choosing).

The party continues traveling down the path for a while longer, eventually noticing that the way ahead is much brighter than the gloomy jungle around them: this is the end of the trail, leading to another clearing, roughly 150' on a side. It should still be day at this point in the adventure, although the sun will have already started to roll back from its highest point.

E10 - Crypt Entrance: *You are in yet another clearing. This one is rather wide, covered in the same type of hip-deep brown grass you have seen before, with ferns sprouting here and there. On the opposite side of the clearing, occupying roughly a quarter of the total area, you see a stone platform protruding from the grass, on each corner of which rises a column of the same solid stone. They seem to have been laid to support something above them, but*

there is nothing there nor ruins to account for it. The columns themselves seem to have suffered with the passing of untold eons as parts of them now lie either around or over the platform, broken into jagged debris. From where you are you can also see a small stone building on the farthest side of this platform.

TLDR

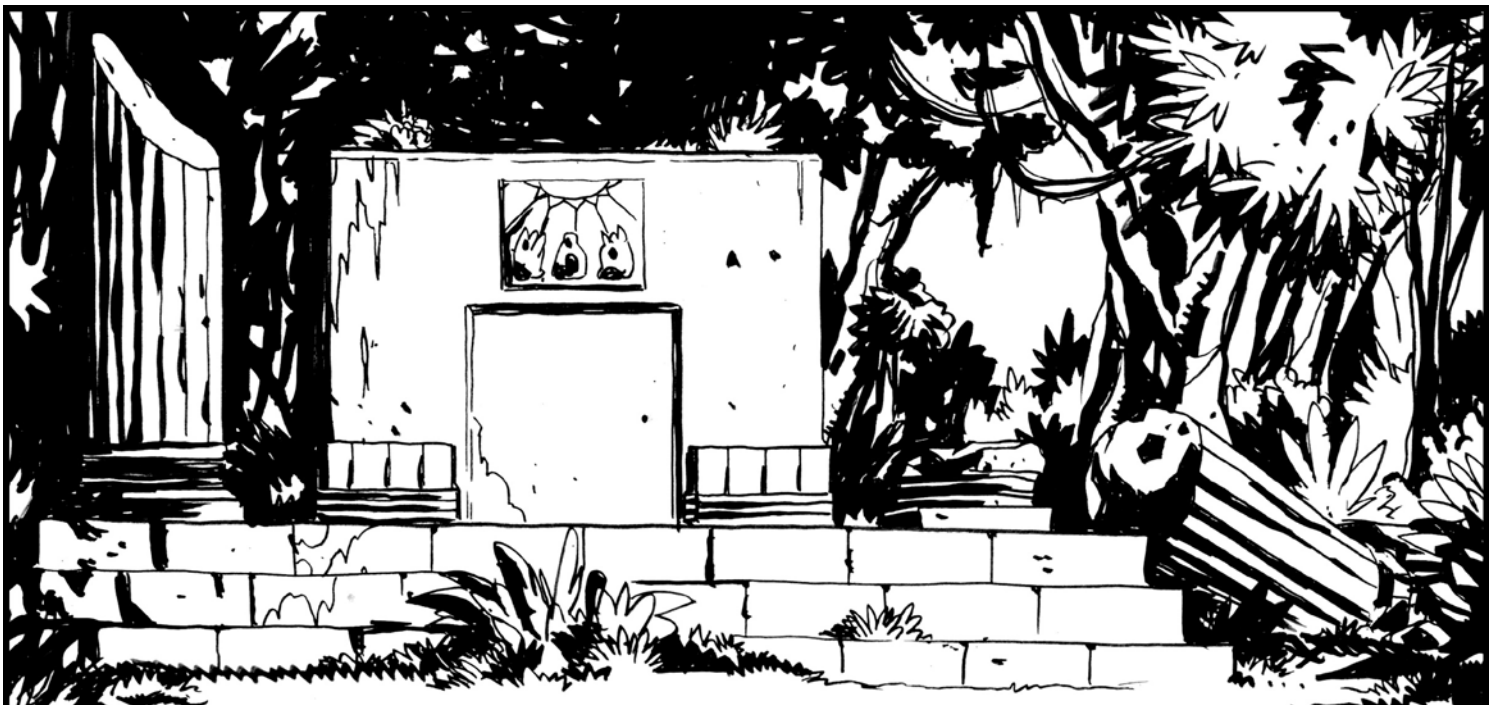
- There is a three-stepped stylobate with a column on each corner, with the crypt's entrance on the opposite end.
- Over the stylobate are 4 Piles of Living Bones that will attack as soon as 2 PCs climb onto it.
- A bas-relief over the door gives clues to solve the puzzle.
- The puzzle's solution to open the crypt requires three people to take a knee in front of the entrance.

This place is the entrance to the long abandoned crypt where the Silver Sword is hidden. There are no threats in most of the clearing. As the PCs get closer to the platform they might start to notice that there are inscriptions on the columns, bearing a style interspersed with pictographs. If they decide to check them closely, read the following:

On the stone columns you see arcane inscriptions, displaying a story woven in chants and pictographs. Monstrosities from faraway lands arrived with darkness at their heels, wreaking death and devastation. One after another villages and cities fell. Inhabitants were mercilessly slaughtered, devoured, even subjected to fates worse than death. Then a savior descended from the heavens, raising her sword high, exulting her army to fight the marauders. As light washed the darkness away the monsters fell, pushed back into the void that spawned them. Even so, the enemy were legion, and the work of the savior was far from over.

When the PCs get on the platform they will notice the piles of bones spread all over it. Most of these bones are too old and damaged to be recognizable, but there are a few human skulls among them. Once at least 2 PCs get to the platform the piles of bones will come alive and attack the players. These creatures are mindless.

The crypt entrance is a plain stone building, cubic in



Piles of Living Bones

Animated Bone Entity (4): Init -5; Atk jagged bones +0 melee (1d4); AC 8; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort 0, Ref -4, Will +1; AL C.

To defend their holy places the rebel Angels cast strange powers onto the land, imbuing them with the power to use bones to form guardians to attack any intruders. Such magic has a faint presence, being hard to detect even for magic users (DC15 Intelligence task), and once triggered it will coalesce into four different entities, that will gather random assortments of bones to form a vaguely humanoid physical form. The bones can come from all sorts of creatures, giving the entities a misshapen look, with body parts protruding from the wrong places (a human skull for a shoulder, an atandi paw for a leg, and so forth), sometimes broken and jagged. These guardians are mindless and will attack without fear or sense of preservation, producing only the sounds that the dried bones make when they clatter together or against the ground. Upon receiving some damage the enchantment loses consistency and the osseous matter falls onto the ground. It will take the defensive enchantment several hours to recover after all the Piles of Living Bones have been destroyed.

shape, 9' tall and wide. The straight and clean-cut gray walls contrast strikingly with the lavish columns. The front has a noticeable sliding slab that works as a door and above it is the only inscription on the entire structure. It represents a golden sun glowing faintly from an unknown source. Underneath it are three dark humanoid figures, seemingly shadows protruding from the stone. They are taking a knee in front of the sun, their heads held high as they gaze upon the golden circle.

Facing the doorway in a small, evenly spaced arc, are 3 concave depressions in the stonework which are 2" deep and distanced 3' from each other. These depressions function as pressure plates. For them to work 3 different PCs will have to kneel in front of the door, placing one knee on each different depression. Once they do this the mechanism will activate and the door will slide down, granting access to the crypt. It will remain open for 20 minutes before swiftly sliding back up.

E11 - Access Corridor: *Looking inside the stone building you notice it is hollow and as unremarkable inside as it is outside. Just beyond the door there is a staircase that descends into the bowels of the Earth. The sunlight pouring through the open door illuminates the first section of the stairs, but the rest are enveloped in darkness as they dive deeper still.*

TLDR

- The entry room is dark and its walls covered in reliefs.
- The trap is placed half-way through the corridor and is activated by being stepped on.
- Under the trap there is a pit with spikes.

Darkness shrouds the bottom half of the staircase, but it is not completely inscrutable. Characters with infravision will be able to see where they are going. A torch or a equivalent source of light should otherwise provide enough illumination. If there is no method to see in the dark available the players will need to succeed in a DC10 Agility check or fall down the stairs for 45', with the possibility of a DC10 Ref save to allow them to stop the fall half-way through.

The staircase ends in a small cubic room, roughly 8' wide.

After descending the stairs you emerge in a cramped and unbelievably hot room, your voices echoing amidst the stone walls. On the opposite wall there is an exit, rectangular and as tall and wide as a man, which leads to a long hallway of featureless gray stone. A faint light from the opposite end glitters over the white opal forms of a pair of Malakim statues (humanoids with wings) which flank the far doorway.

If the PCs touch the wall in the first room denote that they feel indentations all over the walls. Should any PC have a way to see these details read the following description:

The room you are in is covered in intricate reliefs similar to those you have seen in the columns outside. Characters of a strange ancient language share the space with many different pictographs. Here too monsters ravage the land but there is no-one to face them anymore. No army of the just, no hero, only void pushing back the light, and beyond, oblivion at the hands of a large winged humanoid.

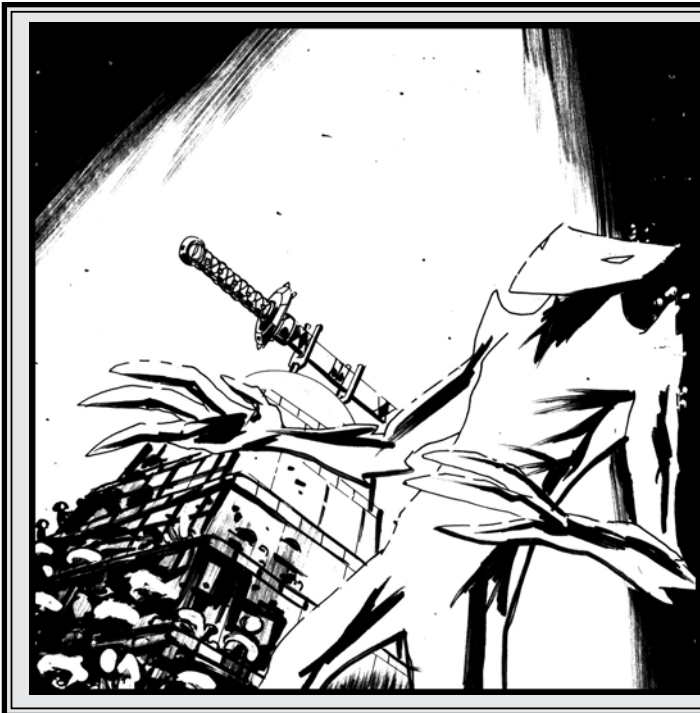
Over the doorway that leads to the corridor there is another set of pictures, larger and more intricate compared to the others. Here there is a hint of light beyond a bottomless pit, a beacon that illuminates the horizon. Over the pit you see a man walking on air, holding a shining jewel in his hands.

The hallway is made of large stone slabs. The PCs might notice that these slabs are so well put together they cannot even put a blade between them, sharp as it might be.

The mechanism is simple, consisting of a slab of stone hinged on a central pivot, such that a creature stepping on the far edge will be unceremoniously plunged into the pit below. A counterweight on the opposite side will rotate back into place immediately afterwards.

The pit is 30' deep with smooth stone walls, and a set of spikes at the bottom which add 1d6 damage to the fall. The mechanism is very ancient and has started to decay, thus it rotates somewhat slowly, allowing the PCs an opportunity to jump out of harm's way. The PC at the head of the group will need to succeed a DC12 Ref save or fall down into the pit as the trap springs under his feet. If he succeeds on the roll he will manage to leap to the other side of the hallway. The PCs that come after him, because they already know about the trap, will need to pass on a DC5 Reflex save in order to avoid the trap.

There is a second trap near the corridor's exit. This one is a magical barrier that will be activated as soon as a sentient creature passes between the Malakim statues. Once



Dust Guardians

Dust Guardian (2): Init +5; Atk elemental claws +2 melee (dmg 1d6+2); AC 12; HD 1d10+1; hp 6; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP, resistance to magical weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref -4, Will +1; AL L.

Dust Guardians are low-tier elementals used by powerful casters to defend important locations. Though simple-minded, they can and will coordinate tactics to meet their task.

The ethereal matter that forms their angular bodies visually resembles luminescent white powder, and is constantly shifting in a way that can be dazzling to some mortals. The fingers on both the hands and feet of Dust Guardians are pointy, sharp like knives and able to cut through even the best steel, serving as dreadful weapons. Their heads are triangular, with the narrow edge pointing forward, the eyes being two simple yellow slits.

activated, it will release a psychic field through the entire corridor, catching any creature present inside it. Once subjected to this field, a creature will need to succeed in a DC10 Will save. Failure will mean that the field overpowers the creature's mind, turning her into a servant to the will of the spell. Creatures turned this way will become foes to the remaining PCs, and will attempt to kill them to the man. If they succeed in eradicating the party they will then proceed to drop the bodies into the pit before throwing themselves into it.

Because the corridor is imbued with raw Angelic power, it is also prepared to recognize its presence. If any member of the party carries the red jewel (found in E5) into the corridor the second trap will not activate, allowing the group to pass unharmed.

Alternatively, destroying one or both of the statues before passing between them will disarm the trap.

E12 - The Inner Sanctum: *You enter a vast circular room, the 10' tall walls supporting a massive dome. In the center of this dome there is hole through which a beam of light descends, bathing an altar placed directly underneath. This altar is a 6' tall stepped pyramid on top of which rests an immaculate silvery sword. The light also reveals the vines and fungi growing all across the floor, over the wall, and even along the ceiling. On the opposite side of the room you also notice a pile of small objects that reflect the light in delicate pastel hues.*

Something else gleams amidst the shadows. Two creatures stand in the middle of the room, one on each side of the altar. These entities are humanoid in shape, their bodies ethereal as if made of some strange luminescent powder, and their fingers are angular, the tips as sharp as knives. They are now advancing, slowly but steadily, towards you.

TLDR

- Stepped altar in the center of the room with the Silver Sword on the top.
- There is a hole in the ceiling, right over the altar.
- Two Dust Guardians defend the altar.
- Lilithus the Pseudodragon will enter the room after the PCs start facing the guardians.
- Lilithus' treasure is piled near the farthest wall.
- Touching the Silver Sword will open the way out.

The creatures are Dust Guardians and they were left here by the Angels who built this crypt to defend it from intruders. There were many more in the past but only two remain, their simple minds still clinging on to their mission. They will attack the PCs but are slow, which might give some leeway to the party to act and plan their actions.

Somewhere during this encounter, while the players are distracted by the immediate threat, Lilithus will enter the room, crawling through the hole in the ceiling and observing the situation play out until noticed. When a PC notices her, read the following:

Looking up you see a strange cat-sized creature grappled to the ceiling, the claws in her four paws piercing the stone. Even in the dim light of this place you notice its skin its covered in vibrant red and yellow scales, the bat-like wings folded over its back whilst the long tail waves gently. The head is elongated but smooth in shape, with two big yellow eyes and small horns in the back. It looks curiously at you and your plight and as it notices you staring back it opens its mouth. A high-pitched female voice emanates from its throat as it says, "What a pickle you're in, ain't that so?"



Lilithus the Pseudodragon

Lilithus: Init +5; Atk claws +4 melee (1d8), bite +4 melee (1d12); AC 12; HD 3d12; hp 9; MV walking 30', flying 60'; Act 1d20; SP, can cause an earthquake per day, smoke breath (no damage, obscures vision, lingers for 1d6 rounds), spells (magic missile, force manipulation, phantasm); SV Fort +0, Ref -4, Will +1; AL L

Lilithus is something especially rare in the Shard – a pseudodragon. Only 20 years old, she arrived at the crypt through the hole in the ceiling when she was but a palm-sized kit, looking for a place to hide and grow as she fed on small prey. Although the dust guardians are bound to defend the sword her nature and lack of interest of any sort in the artifact made them tolerate her presence for the most part. Although she saw the crypt as her new lair, Lilithus didn't mind the presence of the elementals and their warm light in her nights.

Her form is similar to that of a cat, with long and thin arms and legs and a slender but muscular body. The head is round, with a short muzzle. Inside her mouth are two rows of needle-like teeth, and her bite is deceptively strong, her teeth being able to perforate bone. Lilithus' eyes are golden, with vertical slits like those of a cat's. From the back of her head protrude small horns and two long and slender ears. The tail is long, ending in a diamond-shaped vane. The wings are similar to those of a bat's, projecting from her back. All of her body is covered in small red and yellow scales, with phosphorescent blue patches over her back.

Due to her youth and large reserves of energy Lilithus has an impish personality, enjoying playing with her prey before killing it. Loquacious and prideful, she is willing to converse extensively about her own feats if properly encouraged. But she is also fickle and can turn on a dime if annoyed, going as far as killing and eating her interlocutors.

The secrets of the jungle are not unknown to her and Lilithus might even babble on about those - what other dangers might wait for the PCs and even what they should do when facing them. In spite of all of this she sees the sword as a simple lump of metal and does not give it too much thought. She will know next to nothing about it or its powers and the transportation enchantment on the altar.

Lilithus also enjoys collecting shiny objects and has gathered a sizable collection during her time in the jungle. The pile of rocks stacked against the opposite wall is actually Lilithus' collection of precious stones - gold lumps, gems and jewels (worth 1250 gp in total). At the moment she is not hungry and her desire for bright and shining objects will overcome her hunting instincts. Thus she can be parlayed with. Any money and gems the PCs have with them may compel her to spare the party (DC10 Personality check), but that is not guaranteed. On the other hand the Red Jewel will clearly catch her attention and she will gladly trade it against the party's lives.

The party can fight the dragon otherwise, but while victory is possible it will be costly. Although small in size she is a ferocious fighter. Consider using Lilithus to further your own machinations in your campaign.

When a player approaches the altar (read aloud):

As you approach the altar you realize this sword is elegant in design. The handle is 8" long, straight and sports a disk-shaped guard; it is made of some leather-like material, brown in color with sand-colored stripes. Moreover the blade itself is 2' long, slightly curved, with the edge on the longer side. It is made of a silvery metal that truly does not look like anything you know - not steel or bronze, neither glass nor crystal, not even pottery, bone, or wood. It glows with a dim blue hue that was washed out by the sunlight descending through the hole in the ceiling. As you look at it you feel an urge to touch it, a foreboding sensation of power, as if you were in the presence of something comparable to a god.

Without the scabbard the sword is incomplete; it will be referred to as the Silver Sword until it becomes whole again. When the first character touches this weapon his spirit immediately becomes intertwined with the sword's. From this point on he will be referred to as the Swordbound and will be overwhelmed with a desire to fulfill the Silver Sword's purposes (DC15 Will save to ignore such desires - needs to be repeated every time the Swordbound attempts to do so).

When the sword is taken from the altar the structure will be enveloped in a tower of bright blue light connecting it to the hole in ceiling, directly above. Any character or creature caught within this pillar of light will be pushed upwards, emerging through the hole into the jungle. While the pillar is active the enchantment pushing the players upward will also prevent them from falling down, working very much like an invisible floor from the character's perspective. The pillar will remain active for 5 minutes (or any amount of time convenient for the entire party to leave the Inner Sanctum) and then it will vanish. As it does so any object or creature that falls in the hole will fall normally through it (90' fall).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE



As the adventure comes to a close read the following to the players:

You find yourselves back in the jungle, near the hole that leads to the forsaken room from which you have retrieved the Silver Sword. Around you the damp darkness of the woodlands extends in every direction, the hot rottenness of its air assailing your senses as it hasn't done in a few hours. The sun still glows in the sky, but now borders the horizon - there is not much daylight left. Sinister as the situation might seem you know there must be a way out of the jungle. The warmage Czercic Tenveredín the man who sent you into this nightmarish adventure, is certainly waiting for you to return and give him what he sent you to find. You also know the city of Caster's Crossing, that shining jewel of civilization amidst the wild lands of the Shard, is somewhere to the north, though you cannot pinpoint how far. Perhaps there's where your next adventure awaits you - to the north, always to the north...

The Silver Sword

Sword of Ethe'in - without Scabbard: Empathetic magical sword; Int 6; dmg 1d10; AL L.

The Silver Sword also has the following abilities (Lore check DC10 to know it is a powerful artifact, DC15 to associate the sword with the Angels, DC20 to know of a connection to Ethe'in):

Shed light: within 20' radius at will.

Holy Brand: does 1d4 additional damage against Tanabriel and any of her followers.

Regeneration: while wielding this sword the Swordbound will regenerate at a rate of 1 hp per round.

Purpose: To defeat Tanabriel and all of her followers. Malakim are considered ambiguous because the sword doesn't know of their existence and some of them are rebellious themselves. This later aspect should also be dealt under the Judge's discretion.

Long ago, during the war that destroyed her people's world, Ethe'in forged this powerful weapon. It exists to serve its master and creator and will do everything in its power to rejoin her. In the hands of its proper owner it is a force to be reckoned with, a powerful weapon that can pierce holes in the very fabric of reality. A mortal, though, falls short of unlocking its true power. Even so the Silver Sword remains a respectable tool.

It should be noted that the Silver Sword does not speak. It is a purely empathetic artifact, that tinges the Swordbearer's emotions and thoughts with its own in order to make him do what it needs. Sometimes the bearer might not even know these thoughts and emotions are not his own and simply act on them notwithstanding.

The connection between the Silver Sword and the bearer is also very deep and symbiotic. The Swordbearer will know where the sword is at any given time, even if they are distanced by many miles. He will also know where the Scabbard is, being able to feel if it is close by or not. This very awareness is also what is guiding him north, towards Caster's Crossing. Because the sword needs the bearer to fulfill its goals it will do what it can to keep him alive. There is another side to this reality in that if separated from the sword for some reason (distances greater than 30') the Swordbound will start losing 1 hp per day. These hp cannot be recovered in a normal fashion until he is reunited with the sword. If the Swordbound dies then the next person to touch the sword will assume his role. Keep this in mind if the party manages to lose the sword (you can create an NPC to take hold of it and further the plot). Also remember that because the sword does not truly belong to the Swordbound he might incur a luck penalty.

SWORD IN THE JUNGLE DEEP

A battlefield of magical gloom...

Long ago Angels waged war on the lands south of the famed city of Caster's Crossing. In the wake of their awesome power grew a jungle of dreadful perils and treacherous hunters, known by the locals as Erset La Tari. The treasures and ancient relics hidden among the dark shadowy trees have been coveted by adventurers and profiteers for millennia, and now it will be your turn to attempt to uncover them.

Thrown into the wetlands by the devise of a mysterious Elven Warmage, you will need to best the horrors lurking at every corner. Will you be able to overcome the fierce jungle predators? Or the tainted artifacts blocking your way? And what will you do once you are finally face-to-face with the sword in the jungle deep and its fearsome guardian?

Sword in the Jungle Deep is an introductory adventure for a party of level 0 characters, meant to challenge both new and experienced players. This stand-alone adventure can also be used to start your own epic campaign in the exciting and dangerous fantasy realm of Caster's Crossing.

