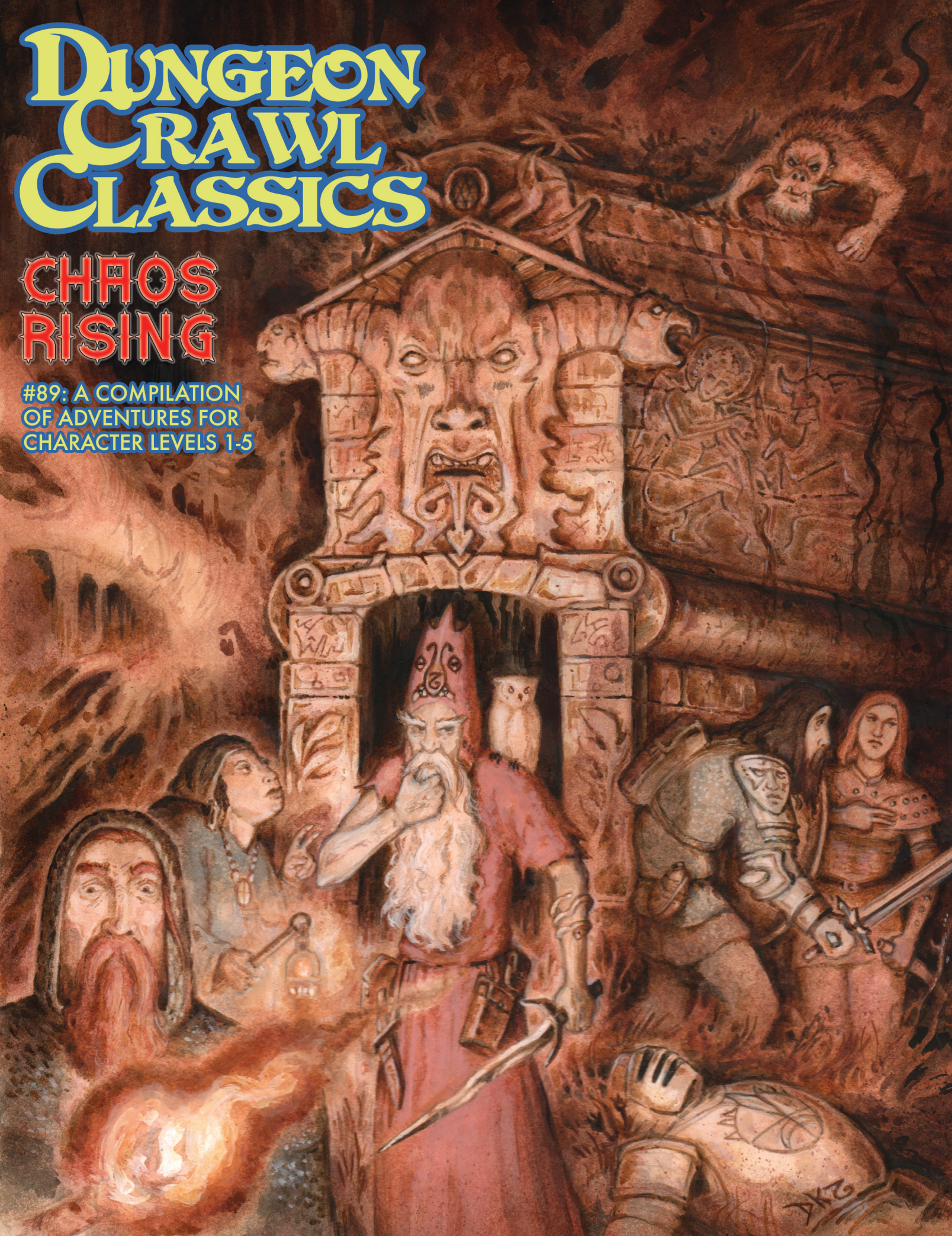


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

CHAOS RISING

#89: A COMPILATION
OF ADVENTURES FOR
CHARACTER LEVELS 1-5



ELZEMON AND THE BLOOD-DRINKING BOX

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



Seeking the favor of a powerful wizard, the party agrees to steal an artifact from a rival's sanctum. The wizard requires, however, that PCs "feed" the artifact lawful blood to imprison its contents. Both wizard and party are being manipulated by a bored, mischievous quasit who desperately wants a change in scenery. The characters unknowingly entertain the demon by surviving vomiting felines, sleepless nights, and horrific constructs as they volunteer blood for the quest, eventually facing a moral dilemma with life-threatening consequences.

This adventure is designed for 7-9 first level characters. Having at least one cleric and at least one lawfully aligned PC is recommended. A mix of alignments makes things more interesting, but isn't essential. The quest promises valuable rewards, while the PCs make a powerful enemy.

BACKGROUND



Elzemon the Quasit is a minor demon who enjoys mischief, the screams of the tortured, and causing physical, spiritual, and mental anguish to mortals. Currently, Elzemon serves the wizard Nekros the Grotesque, who bound him to guard and "feed" his prized artifact, Yarafad's Box. Nekros was not careful enough in the wording of Elzemon's binding, however, and the bored quasit has been able to convince Nekros' rival, Rhalabast of Many Eyes, to send some hapless adventures to obtain the Box. If they fail, Elzemon gets entertainment and possibly more lawful blood. If they succeed, Nekros' poorly worded binding of Elzemon is broken. Either way, the quasit wins. His role in this adventure is to invisibly torment the PCs with his Infernal Band of Deception, hampering them enough to fulfill his binding, but not too much to destroy them.

Elzemon the Quasit: Init +4; Atk claw +3 melee (1d6+2); AC 17; HD 5d8; hp 23; MV 35' (fly); Act 2d20; SP Invisible at will, Infernal Band of Deception (see below); SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5 (immune to Will effects unless true name is known); AL C.

Infernal Band of Deception: This magical ring has had many bearers, most notably Zengith the Claw. Elzemon won the ring in a bet that he could fool a cleric of Justicia to arrange some murders of Justicia's monks. The Infernal Band grants a *cantrip* corresponding to a spell check of 20, three times a day for chaotic PCs, once a day for neutral PCs, with spell failure and automatic minor corruption for lawful PCs. It also grants *phantasm* corresponding to a spell check of 20, once per day for demon or demon-bound PCs. One must know the Demonic language to mentally activate this last power.

Yarafad's Box is a cylindrical container, 3' in both height and diameter, designed to hold a human-sized creature (see area 4a). Made of some unidentifiable, lightweight material both metallic and slightly elastic, its outside is caged with a fine network of pipes radiating like spokes from a

central reservoir. When this reservoir is filled with blood from a living lawful being, the pipes create a "holy prison" that confines chaotic creatures, especially those that teleport or are incorporeal. The Box must be fed daily with 5 hp of lawful blood, otherwise its ability to block teleportation or incorporeal beings fails. Gurgling, sputtering noises occur when feeding is necessary. Currently the Box contains a shadow (see DCC RPG rulebook, page 425). The PCs have to transport it for 5 days, providing 25 hp of living lawful blood, or else the shadow escapes. In this adventure, the shadow is meant to stay imprisoned. Unless the PCs are both extremely well-equipped and lucky, the shadow would annihilate them.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Area | Type | Encounter |
|-------|------|--|
| 1 | P | Puzzle: "When the dead look to the sky" |
| 2 | C/T | 5 Tirgefrabs Weakened stairs |
| 3 | P/C | Mystic Bridge 3 Colossal Leeches |
| 4a | P | Yarafad's Box |
| 4b | P | Trapped secret door |
| 5 (3) | P/C | Mystic bridge Fangsight swarm Colossal leeches |
| 6 (2) | C | Tirgefrabs |
| 7 (1) | C | 8 minor servitors |
| Any | P/C | Elzemon |

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins with the PCs meeting the wizard Rhalabast of Many Eyes. The judge may determine how the meeting occurs, but possible hooks are wizards and elves seeking new spells, or the party needing sagely advice or information from his network of magical spies. Rhalabast is happy to help the PCs, but he requires service from them first.

The wizard stares at you, his fingers creating a temple over his nose as his thumbs cradle his bearded chin. After an uncomfortably long moment of silence, he says, "A rival of mine, Nekros the Grotesque, has something that I desire, and I want you to get it. Succeed, and I will bestow what you seek. You must go to the waterfall at Boulder Cliff. When the dead look to the sky, a way into the cliff will appear. Enter, and inside Nekros' sanctum you'll find a cylindrical box. Bring me this box unopened, and I'll hold up my part of the bargain. There is ... a complication. You'll need to provide the box a significant amount of living lawful blood to keep its contents inside. Under no circumstance should you let the box's prisoner escape. That would be a fatal error."

Boulder Cliff (area 1) is a three-day journey from their encounter with Rhalabhast. If they ask him what is inside the Box, he refuses to tell them, "for their own protection." If they ask about encountering Nekros, he assures them that Nekros is away from his Sanctum and will not return for weeks. If asked about "When the dead look to the sky," he says that it is the information he was given, but does not know what it means. The mere possession of the Box is desirable for any wizard, but Rhalabhast's true motivation is to obtain the shadow imprisoned within, study it, and possibly convert it to a familiar. Upon receiving the Box and shadow, Rhalabhast stays true to his word and rewards the PCs with information, one or two spells, or whatever was a big enough "carrot" to motivate the party. If the party has let the shadow escape, Rhalabhast will be very, very angry.

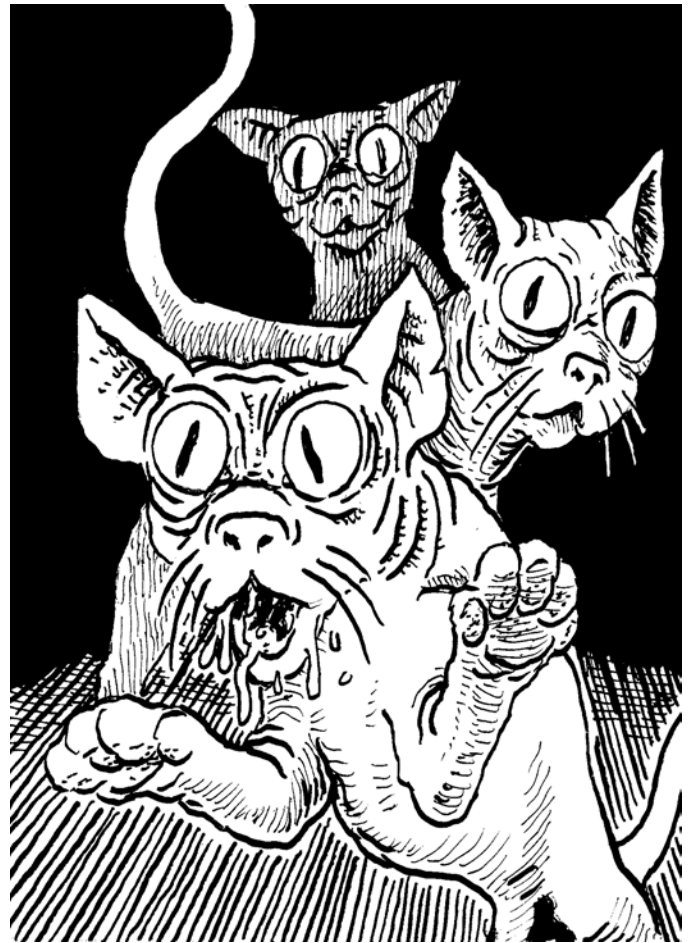
Area 1 – The Bear and the Waterfall: *The gargantuan stones of Boulder Cliff loom ahead, the shadows of cracks and crevasses seeming to form jagged faces. A waterfall plummets from above, feeding a dark pool from which a river continues its course. At the cliff's base, the sickly-sweet smell of death wafts from a bear's decaying corpse and the shredded remains of six failed hunters. The rotted weapons and armor suggest the melee is decades old, yet the bodies are somehow suspended in their decay.*

Following Rhalabhast's hint, the PCs must manipulate all bodies (including the bear!) so that they look at the sky. This causes a boulder in the cliff's base away from the river to rotate and reveal a passage (DC 15 Int check to find if the bodies are not manipulated). The corpses are cursed with a temporal rot; any appendage that touches them automatically rots (1 hp damage per round of contact), but returns to normal one hour later. Note that characters seeking the proverbial "passage behind the waterfall" end up disappointed and wet.

Area 2 – Downward Spiral: *The secret passage opens into an immense chamber whose opposite side is beyond your vision. You stand on a stony platform from which roughly hewn stairs descend spiraling along the chamber's curved wall. The stairs can comfortably fit three abreast, but there is no railing to prevent falling off the edge into the abyssal darkness.*

Clever PCs that choose to look up rather than down may spot a ledge 30' above them (DC 15 Int check to spot, DC 10 Str or Agi check to climb). Five tirgefrabs guard the stairway from here. It is a two-day journey descending the stairs to area 3. The tirgefrabs attack the PCs twice with hit-and-run tactics during their descent (once each day). If one is killed or they inflict 10 or more combined points of Strength and Stamina damage, then they flee. They favor attacking PCs who are not holding torches.

Tirgefrabs are man-sized, hairless, toothless, claw-less, emaciated-looking cats with bulbous black eyes. Despite their weakened appearance, they are excellent climbers, stealthy, and fast. They rely on projectile vomiting to conquer prey by draining Strength and Stamina. PCs reduced to 0 Strength are incapable of movement, while those reduced to 0 Stamina faint and remain unconscious. On a critical hit, rather than using Crit Table M, rule that tirge-



frab vomit enters the victim's mouth, causing the retching PC to be prone and helpless for 1d8 rounds. A cleric with a 3 HD lay-on-hands check heals 1d3 vomit damage.

Tirgefrabs (5): Init +4, Atk paw +2 melee (1d3) or vomit; AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP vomit +4 missile (1d3 Str + 1d3 Sta loss, 10' range, Crit causes 1d8 rounds helplessness); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; AL N.

After six hours of descent the PCs encounter a weakened portion of the stairs (DC 15 Int check to spot). Reflex saves are necessary based on PCs' positions: outer edge close to the wall (DC 5), center (DC 9), inner edge (DC 14). Those that fail fall to their deaths as the stairs collapse under any significant weight. A 20' long, 5' wide path remains along the wall.

Elzemon invisibly goads the PCs to annoyance, trying to weaken them with sleep deprivation. When PCs camp on the stairway after the first day of descent, Elzemon uses his Infernal Band of Deception twice to keep the party on edge and interrupt their sleep. Judges may use the Harassment Table below or come up with their own clever tortures. Note that Elzemon is too great an artist to repeat a specific harassment. Each PC must make a Will save (see below) to retain the benefits of a good night's rest (i.e. restoring 1 hp and/or 1 ability point (except for Luck), regaining lost spells, resetting deity disapproval, etc).

Harassment Table (d6)

- 1 Sinister chuckling that crescendos into hysterical laughter. (DC 15)
- 2 Sounds of children screaming for help. (DC 20)
- 3 A sleeping PC awakens taking 1d3 damage from a freezing chill. (DC 20)
- 4 The sound of a giant boulder tumbling down the stairs from above. (DC 20)
- 5 A deep voice repeatedly shouts, "Who invades my domain?" (DC 15)
- 6 A high cackling voice exclaims, "I see you!" The voice describes the party members in detail. (DC 15)

Area 3 – Mystic Bridge: *After days on the stairs, you descend onto the base of the cylindrical chamber. Self-illuminating with a dim pallid glow, the floor reveals itself to be a strange flat bridge leading from all sides to a tall guano mound in the center. The bridge spans a lake of sparkling golden liquid 10 feet below. Ripples on the surface betray motion underneath, and occasionally a creature's back emerges, its skin a shiny black-spotted swirling ochre green reminiscent of blown glass. A wretched odor akin to rotten eggs rises from the lake.*

The material and construction of the bridge are mystical in nature and unidentifiable. Wizards and elves recognizing the bridge as one of Nollonapia's Mystic Forms (DC 13 spell check to recognize) gain +3 to spell checks while on it. PCs must balance over a minimum of three narrow regions to reach the guano mound in the center (area 4). Judges are encouraged to make a PC handout from the map. Characters who fail a DC 13 Agility check fall into the lake. Elzemon invisibly tries to knock unguarded PCs from the narrow parts when crossing. If he succeeds with a claw attack then the victim must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall off the bridge. Note that characters stabilized via a rope, pole, linked arms, etc., are easier to hit (+2). Elzemon also severs ropes that support hanging PCs.

The lake is somewhat acidic; consequently, for every third round of exposure, PCs lose 1 hp, and metallic armor and weapons (except those made of mithril) lose 1 point AC bonus and maximum damage is reduced by 1, respectively. Immune to the lake's acidity, three colossal leeches (DCC RPG rulebook, page 420) guard Nekros' lair and attack any PC falling off the bridge.

Colossal Leeches (3): Init -2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 plus blood drain); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 10' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP blood drain (automatic 1d4 dmg per round after bite); SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will -4; AL N.

Area 4 – Guano Mound: *Having crossed the mystic bridge, you stand in front of a hemispherical mound of guano roughly 50' in diameter. Double doors, made of a hard glassy opaque material, lead inside.*

The doors are locked (DC 12 pick lock check to open). They may be bashed down with 30 points of bludgeoning dam-

age, but PCs take 1d6 damage from the doors' shards each attempt. PCs thinking they can burrow through the guano around the doors find an impenetrable stone structure underneath. If any are able to view the top of the mound (via climbing or some other means) they see that it is pocked with small holes. These holes lead to dormant fangsights (area 5) that do not respond until PCs exit with Yarafad's Box.

Area 4a – Yarafad's Box: *The doors open into a chamber shaped like a five-pointed star. A pentagram of inlaid silver adorns the obsidian floor with a pentagon stepped platform in the center. Atop the platform is an ivory white cylindrical container roughly 3 feet in height and diameter. Its outside is caged with a fine network of copper pipes radiating like spokes from a central open reservoir, which receives drips of blood from a pipe descending from the ceiling. This pipe follows the ceiling to a wall, attaching to a series of 16 metallic closets surrounding the room; these closets are also interconnected by pipes. The dripping slows while raspy labored breathing echoes in the chamber.*

When the PCs enter the mound, Elzemon leaves to call back the Servitors that he sent for more lawful blood (area 7), and does not appear again until area 6. PCs searching for the breathing find it emanating from one of the closets (all are unlocked):

The closet contains a man with small pipes emerging from his wrists, thighs, and neck. His exsanguinated body slumps in its chained restraints. With his dying breath, he raises his head to look at you and exclaims, "Bleed for the Box, or else it will escape!"

PCs opening other closets find bound exsanguinated corpses with pipes intact, although three appear to have been killed recently via claw wounds (Elzemon ensuring that PCs will need their own blood to feed Yarafad's Box). The man's clothes indicate he is a monk of Justicia (0-level). He dies before PCs can heal him. Merciful judges may allow the party to revive him if no lawful PCs exist to feed the Box. With his death, Yarafad's Box begins to make gurgling noises, and the party has 5 rounds to decide who will contribute lawful blood. The day's 5 hp may be given all at once or in increments. If at least 1 hp of lawful blood hasn't been put in the reservoir in 5 rounds' time, the shadow imprisoned within escapes and attacks. The Box weighs only 30 lbs, but its size makes it very cumbersome for a single PC to carry.

Shadow: Init +3 (able to always surprise); Atk debilitating touch +8 melee (1 Str); AC 17; HD 6d8; hp 27; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP stalk prey to guarantee surprise, incorporeal, immune to non-magical weapons, un-dead traits; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +8; AL N.

Area 4b – Nekros' Secret Study: *This small, somewhat Spartan chamber holds a bed, a desk, and two sets of shelves containing books, scrolls, mortar and pestle, alembic, retort, and miscellaneous alchemical substances. On top of the desk, amidst various pieces of parchment, rests a handled bucket, made completely of glass.*

Clever PCs noting that no wizard's accoutrements are present in area 4a may discover a trapped secret door leading

to this chamber (DC 15 find traps check to discover, DC 15 disable traps check to disable or take 1d10+4 fire damage). Searching one set of shelves reveals a scroll with a 1st-level wizard spell, written in the troglodyte language. The other set of shelves contains three vials of "processed" tirgefrab vomit, one two-foot long cylinder of solid lead (may be used as club), a large canine tooth (from a hell-hound), and a box of spores from a giant mushroom. Note that the tooth and spores are useful as potion ingredients for high level wizards. The processed tirgefrab vomit is poisonous if imbibed: DC 14 Fort save, 1d6 temporary Strength damage on successful saves; failure results in 1d4 permanent Strength damage. Strength permanently reduced to zero causes death.

The desk drawer contains two key pieces of parchment. The first details the mechanics of Yarafad's Box, specifically the need of 5 hp of lawful blood per day, as well as details of the blood-draining closet network that Nekros constructed. The second is a note suggesting advice on binding a quasit named "Elzemon" to service. It reveals that the quasit becomes visible if exposed to lead (taking 1d4 damage per round of exposure), and also notes that it is immune to Will effects unless its true name is spoken. While the lead cylinder is an effective club for exposing Elzemon, ingenious PCs could use the glass bucket to draw some of the lake's acid; judiciously applying the acid to the cylinder weakens it such that a course lead powder can be made. The lead club yields enough powder for 5 rounds worth of invisibility-dispelling quasit-harming missile attacks.

Area 5 – Fangsights Attack: *As you cross the bridge back toward the spiral stairway, a high-pitched screeching erupts from the sanctum. Swarming from the guano mound's peak, a cloud of pink, fleshy grapefruit-sized globs begins to race in your direction. Each orb flies with bat wings and is haphazardly covered with multiple types of eyes and fanged mouths, as if constructed randomly from various creatures.*

The fangsights attack PCs as they attempt to cross the first narrow portion of the bridge. If the swarm successfully bites a PC, then it coalesces around the victim trying to knock him prone. If a PC is on a narrow portion of the bridge when knocked prone, then he falls into the lake. Note that leeches are still present if not previously dealt with. The swarm is especially vulnerable to the lake's acid. The glass bucket from area 4b is useful here, as one bucket-full of lake "water" causes 2d10 damage to the swarm on a successful splash attack. PCs may also opt to lead the swarm into area 4a to avoid being knocked off of the bridge. With planning, the party can even trap the fangsights in area 4a by leading them in, then carefully withdrawing and closing the door. Finally, the fangsight swarm is a "perversion of nature" and is considered "unholy" (i.e., turn-able) to neutral clerics.

Fangsight Swarm: Init +5; Atk swarming bite +3 melee (1d6 + coalesce); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 22; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, coalesce (DC 12 Ref save or be knocked prone); SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will -1; AL C.

REGARDING THE STAIRS

The spiral stairway is intended to be a tension-inducing trek through darkness with no apparent end in sight. The diameter is so large that neither mundane light sources nor PC infravision can see across the spiral to the other side. In playtests, some players grew anxious during the descent, and attempted to deduce the stairway's length and how far they had descended. Here are some details that may help if players attempt such feats.

The map notes that the diameter is 550 feet, while one spiral descends 150 feet. Since the circumference of a circle is roughly 3.14 times the diameter, the distance around one spiral is 1,730 feet, or 0.328 miles. The slope or grade of the stairway is given by $180/3.14 \cdot \arctan(150/1730)$, which is roughly 5 degrees. This means that each individual stair is about 12 times as long as it is tall. Since the chamber is 15,000 feet deep with each spiral descending 150 feet, there must be 100 spirals from top to bottom. Thus the total length of the stairway is 32.8 miles, 100 times the length of one spiral. One can also think of the stairway as a right triangle with height 550 feet and hypotenuse 32.8 miles, which is "rolled" into a barber-pole of diameter 550 feet and height 15,000 feet.

DCC assumes 24 miles per day on flat land (DCC p. 308), so if the stairway were flat then the travel time would be roughly 1.4 days (32.8/24). However, people move more slowly on stairs, and while a 5 degree grade isn't that steep, it will slow PCs down by roughly 10% descending and 15% ascending. Allowing margin for fights, distractions, careful exploration, rests, etc., we round the travel time to 2 days for both descent and ascent.

Playtests have proven that some players will want to calculate the 32.8 miles associated with their two-day journey. For a medieval society, geometry and trigonometry are fair game, but force players to justify how PCs have such specialized knowledge. Prohibit players from using calculators, cell-phones, etc., to deduce the aforementioned dimensions. One playtester realized that the 5 degree grade was very shallow, and thought that he had enough rope to be lowered down to the next spiral; with 50 feet of rope and a torch, he couldn't even see the next spiral 150 feet below. Post-game, another playtester noted that 15,000 feet was roughly twice as deep as the deepest cave on Earth. How could a 15,000 foot shaft exist? Nekros employed a large earth elemental (DCC p. 412); earth elementals dig at the same rate an unarmored human walks, so a 15,000 foot shaft is an hour's worth of digging.



Area 6 – Upward Spiral: *The now-familiar roughly hewn stairs ascend from the mystic bridge, spiraling along the chamber's curved wall. As the last of you begins the climb, the floor's dim pallid glow fades to the abyssal darkness that will be your companion for the next two days.*

PCs must make the two-day journey up the staircase feeding living lawful blood to Yarafad's Box. After the first day of climbing, any remaining tirgefrabs resume hit-and-run tactics once per day while the party remains on the stairway. Elzemon returns whenever the PCs attempt an eight-hour rest to continue his sleep-depriving antics (see area 2), harassing the party twice during their sleep. If the party has kept the Box closed, Elzemon invisibly tries to convince PCs to open it, e.g., claiming to be a messenger from the party cleric's deity. He only pesters the party while they camp, otherwise spending his time outside with his servitors (area 7).

Area 7 – The Hunting Party Returns: *Boulder Cliff looms above and behind as you exit Nekros' Sanctum. Approaching along the river bank are eight miniature rotund humanoids, marching two wide and four deep, carrying a motionless human man on their shoulders. At first glance, the creatures seem too small to be a threat, but their sharp claws, teeth, barbs, and spines dispel such a notion. As a disembodied voice shouts, "Gorge on their flesh!" They drop the human body and rush hungrily to you.*

Elzemon orders his hunting party of minor servitors to attack, but does not take part in the combat. He fulfills his binding to Nekros by having the servitors try to kill the PCs, yet hopes that the party succeeds so that his binding is broken. Minor servitors are lesser forms of servitors (DCC RPG rulebook, page 425). These were ordered to assist Elzemon in guarding and feeding Yarafad's Box, and it was they who kidnapped all the victims found in area 4a. Al-

though these fearsome creatures fight to the death without morale checks, they can be turned by lawful and neutral clerics. They attempt to paralyze all party members first, after which they gnaw on the helpless PCs who witness a TPK little bite by little bite. Any lawful PCs are momentarily spared, only to give their lives to Yarafad's Box back in area 4a.

Minor Servitors (8): Init +3; Atk claw +3 melee (paralysis) or bite +1 melee (1d3); AC 15; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP paralysis (DC 13 Fort save, or paralyzed for 1d3 days), cantrip (spell check +4); SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; AL C.

If the party is successful at killing or turning the servitors, then read the following to the players:

The same disembodied voice that commanded the attack says, "Well done. You have been not only entertaining but helpful. I think the cleric over there is fair payment. Perhaps we'll meet again. Farewell." The man that was dropped by the demonic creatures lies motionless near the river bank staring at you, and you get the feeling that he is still alive.

With the party's removal of Yarafad's Box, Elzemon is no longer bound to Nekros, and he happily flees to find more opportunities for mischief. The man the servitors dropped is Valbris, an Acolyte of Choranus (level 1 lawful cleric, hp 5). Four hours after rescue, his paralysis wears off. Valbris urges the party to deliver the Box to his temple. He offers one suit each of banded mail and half-plate armor (both human sized) from the temple armory, 50 gp per PC, as well as healing for the party while they travel with him to the temple. He does not heal them if they don't help him.

The PCs must decide whether to betray Rhalabast and give the Box to the temple of Choranus, or forgo Valbris' offer and stay true to Rhalabast's deal. Either decision results in a three-day journey during which the Box must continue to be fed. The judge must ensure that the party realizes their choice has consequences for their future. Rhalabast definitely seeks vengeance if betrayed, and Choranus does not forget being denied Yarafad's Box.

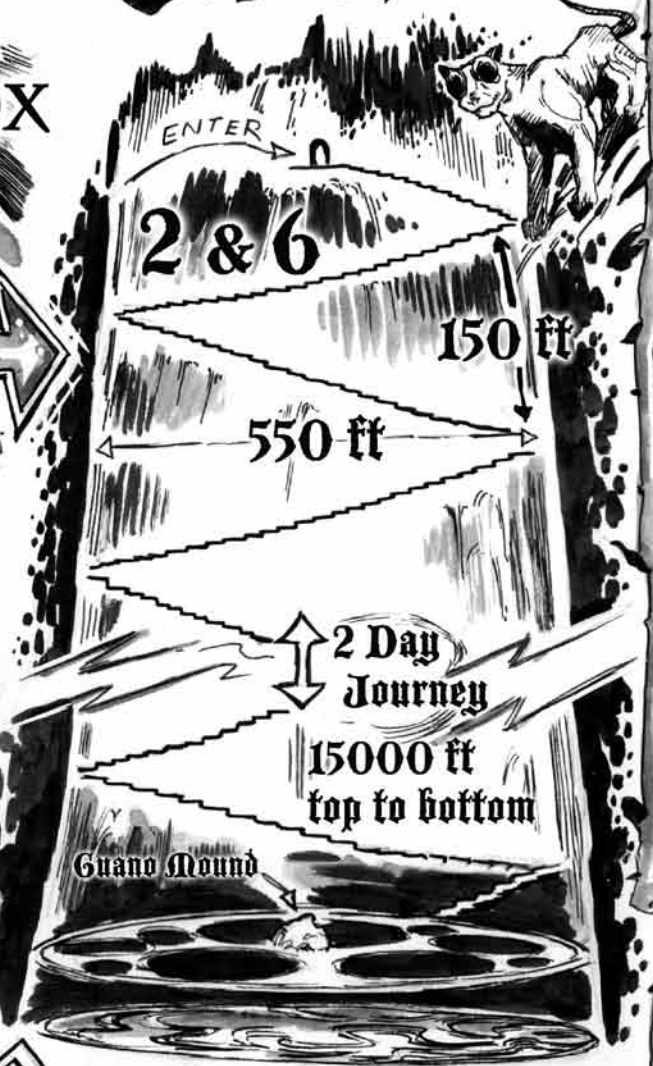
The judge should consider the alignments, deities, and patrons of the PCs, and bestow bonuses and penalties to Luck appropriately. For example, one may impose penalties on lawful characters who betray Rhalabast, unless they follow Choranus specifically. Chaotic characters should lose Luck if they yield the Box to Valbris. Neutral PCs have no moral obligation to help either side, although Luck bonuses should go to all PCs who stay true to Rhalabast, except for followers of Choranus; they should receive bonuses for siding with Valbris. Unless the party is morally united, a lively debate among the PCs is probable. Regardless of their decision, the PCs have a powerful enemy that affects their future fates.

ELZEMON AND THE BLOOD-DRINKING BOX



1 & 7

ENTER to area 2



Inside the Guano Mound

2014

THE IMPERISHABLE SORCERESS

A Level 1 Adventure

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BACKGROUND STORY

In ages past, before even the age of dinosaurs, what is now the Cleft Mountain was below the sea. The ancient Builders, highly intelligent creatures crossed between centipedes and sea scorpions, learned many secrets of magic and science. They carved the halls now known as Ivrian's Seat for themselves, and there they created imperishable bodies with which to survive long eons. Yet the bodies became traps for the minds they housed; damaged and undying, unable to move on to what mysteries lie beyond death, and unable to escape the collapse of their undersea domain.

Eventually the sorceress Ivrian the Unkind came here seeking the secret of perpetual youth and here she made her Seat of Power. Her research bore fruit; she was able to create an imperishable body for herself grown in great vats. She summoned demons to aid her, to protect her, and to guard the *star stone* she needed to transfer her body.

The semi-living alchemical waste from Ivrian's vats was sent through a grating into the depths of the mountain, where it awoke one of the Builders. The Builder sought to control Ivrian's body, and during the conflict she fell and cracked her skull upon hard stone.

Ivrian's spirit was bound to her Seat of Power. Her demons are still there, unreleased, and still performing their function. Nor can Ivrian release them herself, trapped as she is. She sent her mind ranging far over long aching years. At last, with the coins she once minted acting as her token and with a blood relation to strengthen the tie, she is able to reach out and draw help to her...

IVRIAN THE UNKIND

Ivrian the Unkind died in area 4-G while finishing her imperishable body. Both her original body and her imperishable body are located in this area.

The ghost of Ivrian the Unkind is located in area 4-B. Because Ivrian's Seat is located in area 4-B, her spirit is also trapped in that location.

Ivrian's ghost can inhabit the *star stone* located in area 4-K. If the *star stone* is brought within 30' of her ghost, Ivrian's ghost can enter it. If it is then brought into contact with her imperishable body, she can instantly transfer her consciousness to it.

Alternatively, the blooded PC (see below) can will himself to enter the *star stone* if he comes into direct contact with it (and he knows this when he comes into contact with it). If the *star stone* then comes into contact with his original body or Ivrian's imperishable body, he can transfer into that body. In either event, the character's untenanted body dies in 1d3 days unless re-inhabited.

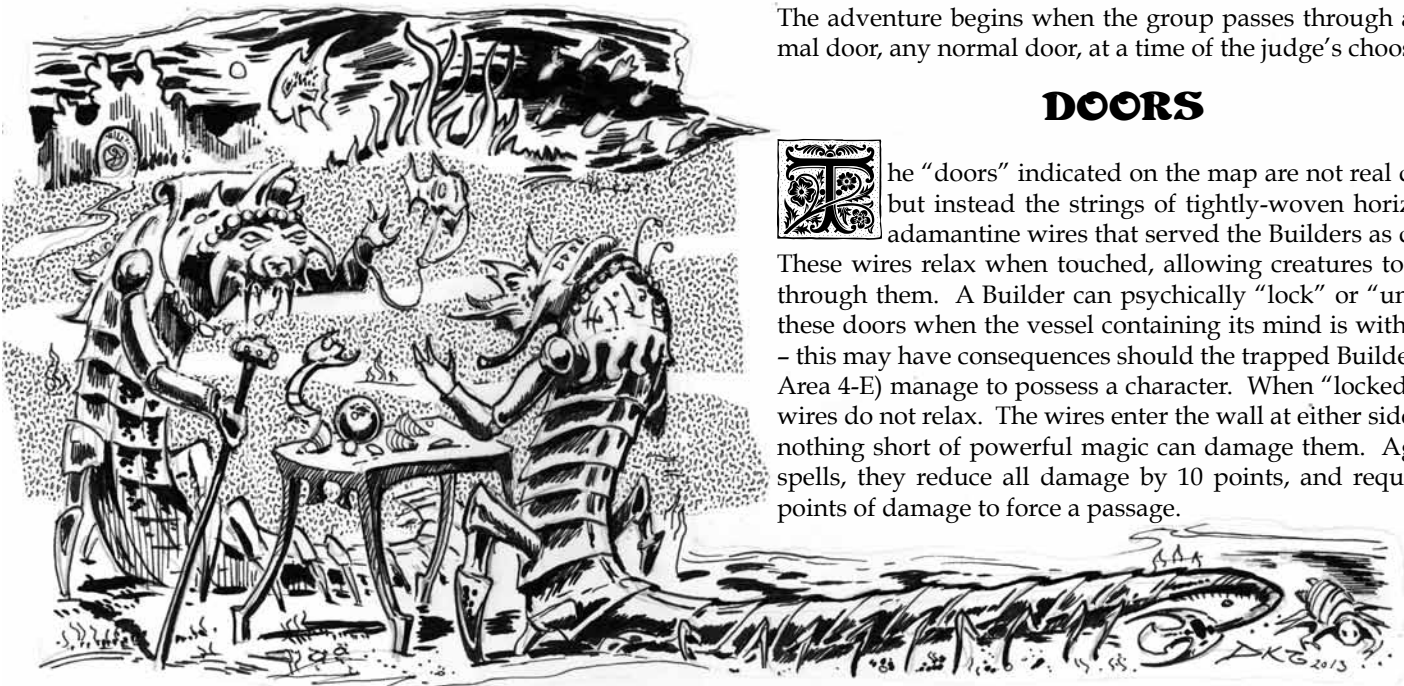
ADVENTURE HOOKS

In a previous adventure, the characters find a cache of ancient silver coins, blackened with time. Cleaning them, they discover the image of a beautiful woman who is vaguely repellent yet resembles one of the PCs. This PC, selected by the judge, is related to Ivrian the Unkind, and is hereafter referred to as the "blooded PC" because he carries her blood. On the reverse side of the coin are faded letters in an archaic script, which read: "Beauty Devours."

The adventure begins when the group passes through a normal door, any normal door, at a time of the judge's choosing.

DOORS

The "doors" indicated on the map are not real doors, but instead the strings of tightly-woven horizontal adamantite wires that served the Builders as doors. These wires relax when touched, allowing creatures to push through them. A Builder can psychically "lock" or "unlock" these doors when the vessel containing its mind is within 30' - this may have consequences should the trapped Builder (see Area 4-E) manage to possess a character. When "locked", the wires do not relax. The wires enter the wall at either side, and nothing short of powerful magic can damage them. Against spells, they reduce all damage by 10 points, and require 20 points of damage to force a passage.



SECRET DOORS



The secret doors on the map were created by Ivrian to protect her secrets. They are actually no more than wooden partitions, hinged at either side, and opening in the center like double doors. These partitions are painted to look like the walls – matte black, with “fossils” painted on in silver and glossy black hues. The paint has not been touched up in centuries, and has begun to peel. As a result, the secret doors are relatively easy to find (DC 5), and, once found, easy to open.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Area | Type | Encounter |
|------|--------|--|
| 2 | C | 24 Savage tribesmen |
| 3 | C | Cold stinger |
| 4-A | C | Predatory fish spirits |
| 4-B | R or C | The ghost of Ivrian the Unkind |
| 4-C | T | Natural gas trap |
| 4-E | C | 3 Ectoplasmic filaments |
| 4-G | C | 3 Ectoplasmic filaments Possibly the imperishable Ivrian the Unkind |
| 4-H | T | Gas traps |
| 4-K | C | Aagazzbagh the Golden |
| 5 | C | Waspmites (3) |

AREAS OF THE MAP

Area 1 – Starting Point: *As you pass through the door, you are startled to enter a frozen boreal country, where black trees huddle under white snow, hiding areas of deeper darkness beneath them. You find yourself halfway up a snow-bound mountain of black stone, which looks as though cleft by a giant’s axe. A rough trail before you winds up the mountain, and stretches behind you downward toward the stark wood. The doorway itself is gone. The sky overhead is overcast to the color of steel.*

As they pass through the doorway, the blooded PC hears a woman’s voice saying, “By Ivrian’s blood and Ivrian’s token, come forth.” This PC feels compelled to climb the mountain. If he travels away from it, he suffers a -1 penalty to Luck, and a -1 penalty to one other random ability score each day for three days. Thereafter, the lost ability points (but not the lost Luck) return at the rate of 1 point each day. PCs who do not brave the mountain may also be hunted by savages (see Area 2).

Because it is cold in this region, and the characters arrive unprepared, the judge may introduce additional penalties or complications.

Area 2 – Savage Tribesmen (two hours from Area 1): *The trail leads upward into the colder reaches of the mountain, where white snow is seen more than black stone. Ahead, near the edge of the treeline, a low stone cairn is built. Suddenly, from the trail behind you, you can hear the pursuing sound of primitive war calls and bloodthirsty ululations, as though from a horde of savages.*

This is a warband of two dozen savages of the Golden Stag tribe, worshippers of the demon Aagazzbagh, dark-haired men who paint their cold-inured naked bodies with gold dust and wear stag antlers in their headdress.

The savages appear in waves, starting 3 move actions away from the PCs. On the first round, 1d6 appear. On the second round 2d6, the third 3d6, and so on, until all 24 have appeared. Remember that each group of savages appears at the same starting point, so as the PCs move away, it takes new groups of savages longer to get within striking range. It is likely that the PCs attack with missile weapons and move while the savages use their actions to close, in which case the PCs will eventually become embroiled in melee combat.

If the PCs simply flee, they can reach safety with little or no risk. The cairn is 10 move actions away from the PCs, and the savages do not pursue beyond it, as they hold Cleft Mountain to be sacred.

They fall back from missile range if attacked by PCs beyond the cairn, lurking below the tree line in case the characters attempt to retreat. The threat of savages is intended as a reason to push the PCs forward, and to block retreat. The judge is encouraged to have the PCs hear ululations from further down the mountain, and from the forest below, when they camp each night.

Savages (24): Init -1; Atk stone axe +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d6-1; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL C.

Area 3 – Cold Stinger (four hours from Area 2): *You are now high up the mountain, and can see an expanse of cold boreal forest stretching far around you. To the east you can just make out a distant ice-locked sea. The entire world seems drained of color – black trees and stone, white snow, and sky the shade of light steel. Suddenly, out of a crack in the rock that looked like nothing more than a dark smudge, a white-furred creature like a nightmare cross between a scorpion and a centipede rushes toward you.*

This creature is a *cold stinger*, a degenerated descendent of the Builders who dwelt here when this mountain was below the sea. It attempts to paralyze a character and then drag it back into the crack where it dwells. If characters pursue it into the crack, it gains a +4 bonus to AC fighting therein, but if the judge so desires one or more replacement characters may already be paralyzed here, as well as a few birds and small mammals that might be used as food.

The paralysis of the cold stinger can be removed by even a small amount of alcohol, either imbibed or applied to the wound.

Cold Stinger: Init +2; Atk claw +1 melee (1d4) or sting +3 melee (1 + paralysis); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP paralysis (Fort DC 10 negates, 1d6 days or until touched by alcohol); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -4; AL N.

Area 4 – Ivrian’s Seat (one hour from Area 3): *Ahead, you can see a black opening in the stark white snow coating the mountainside. Ancient worn steps are cut into the rock leading up to it – a dark passage some 20 feet wide and vaulted to a height of only 8 feet.*

Characters examining the entrance can see that there were once doors attached here. The holes for the hinges remain, but hinges and doors are long gone.



Area 4-A – Great Hall: *Beyond the entrance is a long tunnel, a full 60 feet wide, but vaulted to a mere 15 feet in height. The ceiling, walls, and floor are made of black stone, decorated with black fossil impressions of ancient fish and enormous ammonite shells, visible only in the black stone by the silver reflections from your light.*

This hall is not level; it moves in a gentle arc, downward toward the middle, and then upward thereafter, limiting vision to no more than 100 feet even under ideal conditions. All hallways branching from this corridor are 20 feet wide and vault to 8 feet – they are designed for the convenience of Builders, not men.

The spirits of ancient fish inhabit the walls of the structure, and the characters may encounter their translucent shimmering shoals anywhere in the complex. Most of these fish are fingerlings, and can be used by the judge to create tension, reduce visibility, and enliven exploration. They can “swim” in the air at a speed of 50'. These fish are harmless, and cannot be harmed.

There are also three-foot long predatory fish whose spirits linger. Any time the characters are in this hall, there is a 1 in 6 chance of being attacked by 1d3-1 (minimum 1) each minute. The damage caused by the predatory fish is from the cold of their spirit forms rather than due to physical damage. Reduction to 0 hp makes the predatory fish flee, but they cannot actually be slain save by magic. The judge may have predatory fish spirits attack elsewhere at his discretion.

Note that these spirits may be turned by a Lawful or Neutral cleric.

Predatory Fish Spirit: Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3 cold); AC 8; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV swim through air 40'; Act 1d20; SP cannot be slain except by magic; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

Area 4-B – Ivrian's Seat of Power: *This large chamber is barrel-vaulted to a height of 15 feet. To the far west is a great seat of black stone. Seated upon it is the translucent figure of an achingly beautiful woman, with silver-white skin and hair as black as ink. With a start, you recognize her features from the silver coins you found in your previous adventure. Her face is smiling as she says, “I am Ivrian of Dalcia. I bid you welcome.”*

This is the ghost of Ivrian the Unkind. Sages might know that Dalcia is a kingdom that fell centuries ago, and an elf or wizard can feel occult power radiating from the black stone chair.

Ivrian's ghost recognizes the blooded character as related to her. She is well aware of her beauty, and uses it to her advantage, promising anything to get what she desires. Yet she has been trapped in her Seat of Power for ages, and is easily frustrated or angered.

What she would like the characters to do is recover the *star stone* from area 4-K, and bring it to her here. Once this is done, her spirit can enter the *star stone*, and, if the PCs put it in contact with the imperishable body at Area 4-G, she can enter it and live once more.

All of Ivrian's hopes reside with the characters. Only if they deny her outright does she attack them, and then only to hold one hostage against the actions of the others. Of course, a problem with this plan occurs once the *star stone* is delivered, for she cannot both hold a hostage and be contained therein. In any event, she cannot pass more than 30' beyond the chair.

Note that, while Ivrian can be turned by a Lawful or Neutral cleric, even if forced to flee she cannot pass more than 30' from her seat. She passes into the wall to hide for as long as the effect lasts.

She cautions the blooded PC not to touch the *star stone*, claiming that it will devour his soul due to his blood connection. This is not true; the blooded PC may make use of the *star stone* as can Ivrian, but it can only be used once. She tells the PCs that the blooded PC, through his connection to Ivrian, is more potent against the stone's guardian. The judge must keep in mind that Ivrian wants the PCs to succeed, and does what she can to help them, if they are willing to help her.

Ivrian's Seat of Power allows her to gain a +2 bonus to any spell check while seated upon it, but only once she is made flesh again. It also holds her spirit, so that it returns here if she dies within 100 miles of this place. If Ivrian's ghost is defeated, or she gains the imperishable body and travels more than 100 miles away, her Seat can be attuned to another after a ritual lasting 1 week.

To a dwarf or a character with an appropriate occupation, it is obvious that the area has been extended from its initial stonework, and was probably once much lower.

Ghost of Ivrian the Unkind: Init +2; Atk touch +6 melee (Fort DC 14 or paralyzed 1d6 hours) or telekinetically thrown object +3 missile fire (1d4 damage, 100' range); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp

15; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, immune to non-magical weapons, paralyzing touch, telekinesis, telepathy; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

Area 4-C – Kitchen: *This area is long and low, being vaulted to a height of 12 feet. This was obviously used as a combined kitchen and pantry. Crates, bags, and shelves of foodstuffs are piled in the western part of the room, preserved by the cold and dry air. To the east are wooden tables and a scorched black stone counter with a circular stone lid fitted tightly within its surface. A stone basin has a wooden catch over it, and a drain beneath. Various pots, pans, and cooking utensils are also present.*

Food can be scavenged here equivalent to 120 days of rations. The wooden catch over the stone basin leads to a reservoir of melt water, which can fill the basin with cold water. The stone counter was used as a cooking area, where a natural gas vent provided fuel for flame. If the stone lid is removed, the gas that has accumulated over the centuries enters the room, exploding on contact with flame within a 30' radius (2d6 damage, DC 10 Reflex save for half).

Area 4-D – Dining Hall: *This chamber is low, vaulted to a height of 12 feet. In the center of the chamber stands a black table of cold wood, covered by a white cloth. There are eight black wooden chairs around the table, but only one looks as though it has been used – the remains of a meal are still upon it, preserved by the cold, dry air.*

This is where Ivrian had her last meal. Nothing of interest remains here.

Area 4-E – Storeroom: *This low vaulted chamber is 40 feet wide and 50 feet deep. Within it are several vats and tubs filled with congealed and frozen materials that look like flesh, blood, and organs. In addition, there are black wooden shelves set along the eastern wall holding various pieces of alchemical glassware – alembics, flasks, jars, and so on. A black iron grate covers a drain in the center of the floor.*

This area contained stores for Ivrian's experiments, and the drain down which she poured her waste.

Examining the glassware uncovers two jars of **pseudo flesh**, a flesh-colored, putty-like substance that can be smeared on wounds to heal up to 1d12 points of damage. If a character dies and survives his body being recovered, an application of pseudo flesh can prevent the associated scarring and Stamina loss. Each jar contains 1d3+2 applications.

The grating is over a 6-inch square shaft that leads over 1,000' to the trapped imperishable body of a Builder. If the characters spend any amount of time investigating the objects in this room, the Builder sends three ectoplasmic filaments up through the grating. Each filament can reach any point in this room.

When a filament comes in contact with a character, time for everyone else effectively stops while the Builder attempts to gain control of the host body. The Builder drains 1d3 Personality unless the character succeeds in a DC 10 Will save. If the Builder can reduce the character's Personality to 0 before the character makes three successful saves, the Builder gains control over the body. If the character succeeds in making three saves first, he is forever immune to the domination of that Builder, and all drained Personality is restored. All of this takes less than a second.

During this contest, the character gains a vision of the Builder – a hideous amphibious cross between a giant centipede and a sea scorpion, silver in hue, whose undying body lies crushed and broken where it has lain for millennia beneath a huge chunk of black stone.

If the Builder gains control over a living body, it is unable to process the humanoid form at first, and must wait 1d3 rounds before it can take any action. Thereafter, it starts with a -10 penalty to initiative, which is reduced by 1 each round (i.e., -9 the second round, -8 the third round, and so on). The goal of the Builder is to survive and escape, and it promises anything to do so. However, it needs 1d5 minutes to access the language centers of its new brain and its understanding of humanoid motives is far from perfect. The Builder attacks with its victim's weapons, with a +3 bonus to attack rolls, and can access its victim's spells after 1d5 weeks.

Ectoplasmic filaments (3): Init +6; Atk ethereal touch +3 melee (possession); AC 5; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical attacks, possession (DC 10 Will save or 1d3 Personality; repeat until Personality hits 0 and target is possessed, or target succeeds in three saves and repels attack); SV Fort -4, Ref +4, Will +10; AL N.

Area 4-F – Sitting Room: *This square room is about 50 feet per side. The black stone walls are low, so that the room itself vaults to a height of a mere 12 feet. In the center of the room sits a comfortable-looking chair of black wood with white upholstery, a black footstool, a small chest, and a small table upon which a candle holder still contains an unlit candle.*

The candle holder is made of silver and is worth 20 sp. The chest contains several black-bound volumes of Ivrian's journal written in a cypher of her devising and are difficult to translate. The pictures, however, show the flensing of flesh from living women to feed her vats, revealing her casual cruelty, and one section clearly relates to bathing in human milk and blood to maintain a youthful appearance. Illustrations of a horse-headed demon with stag horns also appear, as do images of small, cruel-looking bee-like creatures.

These books, taken together and studied for a period of several months, may reveal the secret of 1d3 spells to the reader (selected by the judge). Despite their age, they are well preserved.

Area 4-G – The Workshop of Ivrian the Unkind: *The first thing you notice when you enter this room is the body of a naked young woman, lying upon a slab of black stone. You can see her breast rise and fall with her breathing, and the even breaths are visible in the cold air. All around her are vats with strange liquids in them – silver, black, and gold – most of these have long-cold burners beneath them. Grated drains at one time allowed excess fluid to spill into the darkness below. Not far from the first woman is another, fully clothed in a black dress, and with the same black hair and pale skin. This second woman has collapsed on the ground and is not breathing – although well-preserved by the cold, you can see that she has begun to mummify.*

The body on the slab is the imperishable body of Ivrian the Unkind, an artificial construct that resembles a younger version of the sorceress in every way. The body on the ground is Ivrian's; she fell when the imperishable Builder trapped below attempted to possess her, cracked her skull on the stone slab, and died. Characters who examine the body, or who met the

ghost of Ivrian in area 4-B, recognize the imperishable body as hers. Ivrian's dead body wears three bejeweled rings worth 30 gp each (silver with hematite stones).

Characters spending any time examining items in this room draw the attention of the Builder, who attacks using three ectoplasmic filaments (as in area 4-E). The imperishable body is immune to the Builder while unoccupied.

Ectoplasmic filaments (3): Init +6; Atk ethereal touch +3 melee (possession); AC 5; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical attacks, possession (DC 10 Will save or 1d3 Personality; repeat until Personality hits 0 and target is possessed, or target succeeds in three saves and repels attack); SV Fort -4, Ref +4, Will +10; AL N.

Transferring a Spirit to the Imperishable Body: Housing a spirit already trapped in the *star stone* (see area 4-K) in the imperishable body is simple – one merely has to bring stone and body into contact.

Characters housed in an imperishable body gain 4 extra hp per level. An imperishable body can take damage like normal, but damage does not prevent the body from surviving. Even if its head is severed, the head continues to live and think, and the body continues to breath. When the body is recovered – and even when it is not – no Luck check is required; the character is alive. However, the body *never* heals catastrophic damage of any kind, and damage to physical abilities that would normally heal is 50% likely to be permanent. Although the body does not die, it eventually becomes a trap for the being whose mind is caught within it. Whatever means the Builders had to repair these bodies is a secret lost to time.

Should the characters be so foolish as to place Ivrian in her imperishable body, she seeks to bend them to her will or destroy them before quitting this place forever. Given a chance, she recovers *Nightraker* from area 4-H as soon as possible, while pretending to be grateful and gracious. Ivrian certainly does not allow the PCs to keep anything that is hers if she can prevent it.

Her contest with the Builder was interrupted by her physical death, so the Builder can still attempt to possess her should she be placed in the imperishable body, which might at least make escape possible for the PCs.

The Imperishable Ivrian the Unkind: Init +2; Atk by weapon +2 melee; AC 12; HD 5d4+20; hp 32; MV 30'; Act 1d20 + 1d14; SP imperishable, spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

Spells known (spell check +7): (1st) *charm person, chill touch, comprehend languages, magic shield, runic alphabet (mortal)*; (2nd) *monster summoning, ray of enfeeblement*; (3rd) *demon summoning*.

Area 4-H – Bedroom: Ivrian feared for her security while she slept, and both secret doors leading to this area are trapped. If simply opened, a glass rod embedded in the door breaks, releasing a cloud of white gas in a 10' radius. All within must make a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 points of Agility damage (time has weakened the poison, which once was lethal). A thief who finds the trap notes its presence across the seam where the doors open; one who disables it discovers a catch that slides it away from this gap. The glass rods are a foot above floor level, where they are not obvious.

This room contains a large bed of black wood, covered in white quilts. Several chests are placed along the east wall.

This was Ivrian's sleeping chamber, and within it she has hidden the magic runesword, *Nightraker*, a +2 Chaotic long sword with a 9 Intelligence. It is a demon-bane weapon, which increases the critical range against demons by 1, and which can send a demon back to its home plane with a successful hit unless it makes a DC 20 Will save. Its special purpose is to aid the ambitious, and whenever it drops a foe, it grants another attack on the nearest creature, be it friend or foe (the wielder may make a DC 15 Will save to resist). The sword is hidden beneath the mattress, but it calls the ambitious to it with its empathic communication – and it always calls thus to the ambitious, leading its wielder into a never-ended stream of conflict.

The chests contain Ivrian's clothing – black garments with white highlights. Searching the chest uncovers 2d12 pieces of jewelry, each worth 2d24 gp.

Area 4-I – Vault of the Builders: *The passage to this area slopes downward at a 20 degree angle. The passage leads to a ledge overlooking a large chamber filled with strangely shaped pieces of metal and stone, the use of which is a complete mystery. One item catches your eye – a large shell of hard black metal, some 30 feet in diameter, beneath which is what appears to be an enormous screw. A ramp leads up into a doorway in the object.*

This object is the "Adamantine Mole" – a device that, within, has three switches. If any of these switches is pressed, the door slides shut and the mole begins to vibrate. After a minute or two, it begins to drill into the stone floor, creating a tunnel at a rate of several miles each minute. It stops only when it encounters an open space – caverns, a new area of Builder tunnels, or even the hollow center of the planet! The "Adamantine Mole" offers the judge a method of conveying the PCs to another adventure location of his choosing.

If the judge desires, other objects in this room may be detailed.

The exit to the west is choked with rubble.

Area 4-J – Bridge and Chasm: *The tunnel ends where a huge chasm, at least 100 feet across and ten times as deep, has cleft the mountain. A rickety-looking rope-and-wood bridge leads across to another tunnel beyond.*

This bridge is ancient and unsafe. Moving warily, it can be crossed without difficulty, but characters engaged in combat upon it must make a DC 12 Reflex save or fall off the bridge. A DC 8 Reflex save may be made to avoid plunging to the character's doom, 1,000' below.

After characters cross the bridge the first time, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a waspmire from area 5 attacks (see area 5 for statistics). If slain, this reduces the number of waspires in Area 5 by one.

Area 4-K – Lair of the Guardian: *This large room seems almost like a temple, for the ceiling vaults to a height in excess of 30 feet. Despite another opening to the outside in the eastern wall, the air seems dark and oppressive. Far across the room, a swirl of gold, like motes of precious dust, forms in the air until it becomes the insubstantial shape of a scaled horse, horned with branching stag horns protruding from its brow. Viscous ichor drips from its mouth.*



HUGH AND FARRAH DISCOVER TELEPATHICALLY
THEY ARE DISTANT RELATIONS OF IVRIAN!
SHANA IS INSTANTLY SUSPICIOUS.....

This is the demon Aagazzbagh the Golden. Creatures struck by the demon's gore attack must make a Will save (DC 14) or take 1 point of temporary Strength damage. The venom of Aagazzbagh's poisonous bite does 1d4 hit points of damage unless a successful DC 18 Fort save is made. Even if the save is made, the victim takes 1d2 hp damage, and in either case, the damage inflicted cannot be healed by natural means.

Aagazzbagh is in possession of the *star stone*; an alien jewel of swirling black, white, and silver hues, which can easily be sold for 200 gp or more. It is attuned to Ivrian, and if brought within 30' of her ghost, she can enter into it. The blooded PC can *choose* to enter it (leaving his body untenanted) if it comes into direct contact with him. The PC's untenanted body dies in 1d3 days.

If the blooded PC presents himself boldly as being of Ivrian's blood, the demon grudgingly hands over the gem. If the characters have *Nightraker*, he begs them to use it to release him, even if he is bound to fight them to the best of his ability. Otherwise, he attempts to push them onto the bridge at area 4-J. He cannot leave this room.

Although demons may be turned by Lawful or Neutral clerics, Aagazzbagh cannot be forced to leave this room.

Aagazzbagh the Golden (Type II Demon): Init +1; Atk gore +8 melee (1d8+2) or bite +4 melee (1d2 + poison); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 25; MV 30' or fly 50'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, poison (1d4 hp, Fort DC 18 for 1d2 hp, cannot be healed naturally), ability score drain (DC 14); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

Area 5 – Demons of the Air: *Beyond the doorway, a path switches up a spire of the mountain, leading to some area above. Halfway to the top, three creatures fly down from above – things like evil-looking translucent silver and gold wasps with the faces of cruel but beautiful women.*

These creatures are waspmires, minor demons that attempt to dislodge the PCs from the mountain face. Their stings can cause sleep that lasts a mere 1d4 rounds, but is dangerous here, as an unaided character may fall 4d6 x 10' before coming to a halt. A character that is hit must make a Strength check or a Reflex save equal to the damage done in order to avoid falling.

These demons can be turned by Lawful or Neutral clerics.

Wasmires (3) (Type I Demon): Init +1; Atk sting +3 melee (1d8+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 10, 12, 14; MV 20' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, sleep (DC 10); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

Area 6 – The Ghost Spire: *The trail comes to an end atop a high, flat spire of stone. Here you can see a ring of black standing stones, inscribed with alien runes and topped by snow. To the west, two upright stones support a dark, snow-laden lintel. Between these stones you see, not the mountain or boreal wood below, but a shimmering haze like heat rising from the desert.*

The runes on the monoliths contain the secret of creating an imperishable body. It would take many months of study, and many experiments, to fully comprehend.

The shimmering haze is a gate to another location of the judge's choosing. Beyond is another adventure!

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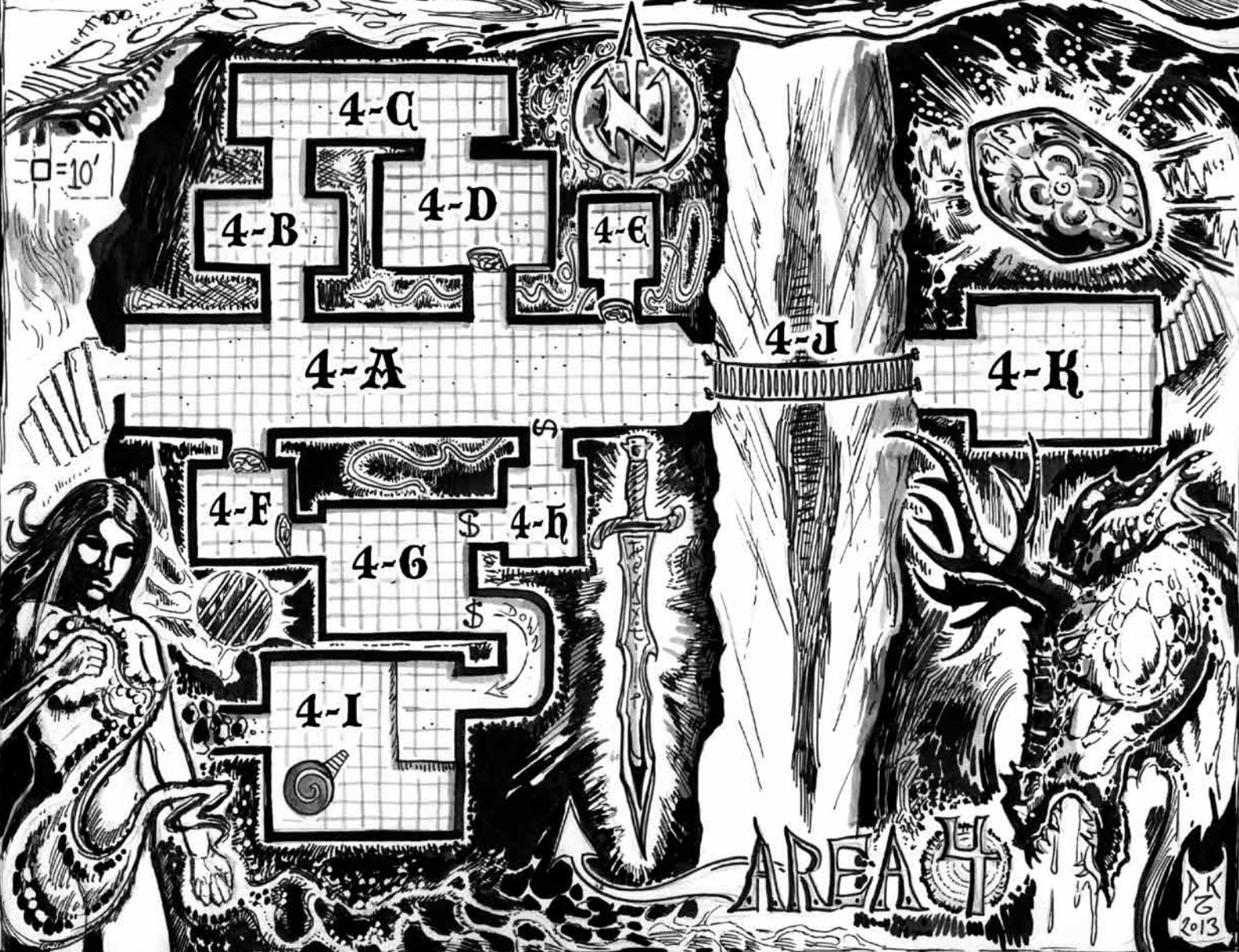
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DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

gopherio's gabbit

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY JOBE BITTMAN



GLIPKERIO'S GAMBIT

A Level 2 Adventure

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lipkerio's Gambit is an adventure based on the idea of a patron calling in favors. All wizards know they will be called on at some point to perform tasks in exchange for the great powers their patron's grant. The only question is when. Refusal means loss of power, expulsion or even bloody reprisals from a vengeful patron. The patron in this adventure can be reskinned with one that makes more sense for your group with a modicum of effort. In this adventure, the adventurers must scale Mount Tyche and ascend the Staircase of Fate to free the Temple of Destiny from occupation by an enemy power. The adventure is designed for a party of 2nd-level characters and can be completed in 1-2 sessions. Due to the hazardous terrain, the characters would be well-served by climbing gear and a retainer or two.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Gaining arcane power is like toying with a venomous serpent: a deadly game played only by the reckless and the insane. Great power is never granted; it must be seized with both hands until either the writhing viper is subdued, or the wielder is left convulsing and black-tongued on the ground. One such mad pursuer of power is the wizard, Glipkerio. Emboldened by his dark patron, Obitu-Que, Glipkerio has brazenly seized a temple of the Three Fates. The wizard has tapped the Fates' wellspring of power to fuel his own magical research. The unique energies of the temple have allowed Glipkerio to imbue an amulet with the power to control time itself. The wizard has stepped back in time to recruit a small army of his younger selves to his cause. Before long, he will be unstoppable.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Area | Type | Encounter |
|------|------|---------------------------|
| 1-1 | C | Magic-corrupted giant |
| 1-3 | C | 8 devilkin |
| 1-4 | C | 2 Glipkerio duplicates |
| | T | Icy bridge |
| 1-5 | C | 5 snow apes |
| 2-2 | T | Corpse Gate |
| 2-3 | C | 3 two-headed dogs |
| 2-4 | C | Many Glipkerio duplicates |

JUDGE'S NOTES

Glipkerio's Gambit employs an inverted plot. The final battle is actually fought in the first encounter (area 1-1A), when the adventurers kill the story's main villain, Glipkerio, in the form of a magic-corrupted giant, but that shouldn't become apparent until the adventurers subsequently defeat Glipkerio in the Temple of Destiny. The adventurers encounter Glipkerio's duplicates multiple times on the road to the temple.

The adventure begins in the small hamlet of Cragmere, which is located near the formidable Mount Tyche, atop which sits the temple of the Three Fates. The easiest way to get from Cragmere to the Temple of Destiny is to follow the road that winds around Mount Tyche, but not everyone likes to do things the easy way. Don't discourage players from climbing or using spells to travel to the temple.

The map of Mount Tyche is divided into elevations to accommodate characters who blaze their own trails. At each elevation, you should roll once on the Random Event table below and use the encounter area listed next to the elevation. Adventurers that stick to the road proceed along a linear path through the encounter areas, interspersed with random events. For adventurers that scale the mountainside, use your best judgment as to which encounters might be bypassed. The devilkin in area 1-3 can fly so they could steal items from the party and steer them into other encounter areas. The possessed snow apes in area 1-5 might throw ice down on the adventurers' heads. If the group falls, rather than take damage, they could fall into a snow bank in a bypassed encounter area. Don't make the players feel like they are being steered down a single path.



CLIMBING MOUNT TYCHE

There are many approaches to scaling Mount Tyche. The characters might tie themselves together and use iron spikes to belay up the mountain, choose to free climb individually, or even cast *enlarge* on the thief and climb on-board. For every hundred feet climbed, characters must make a DC 17 Agility check (unless otherwise specified) or fall. The elevations are divided into 200' sections, requiring 2 successful climb checks to reach the road at the next elevation. Roll on the "Random Events" table while climbing through an elevation and adjust the description to match the environment. Characters that are tied together roll climb checks individually. If more than 50% of the group fails, the entire group falls. Optionally, a character that succeeded in the climb check could stop the entire group from falling with a DC 20 Strength check, giving them time to make another climb check. Falling rules are detailed in DCC RPG (page 96). Alternatively, give falling characters a Luck check, success allows them to land undamaged in a snow bluff. Characters who tie their rope to spikes can only fall as far as their rope allows.

RANDOM EVENTS

Glipkerio has spread eerie manifestations of his power across the area to scare off intruders. While the party is climbing Mount Tyche, roll on the table at least once per elevation reached. Read the text to yourself first. Then, adjust it to fit with the party's current location. Reroll duplicate events. This adventure should be slightly different every time it is played.

d10 Random Event

- 1 Erosion has created a natural set of stairs that leads to a large abandoned nest. No climb check necessary. A search turns up 21 gp, 35 sp, and a silvered dagger inscribed with the name "Lady Blackbird." Pressing the pommel causes the blade to glow like a torch. The next elevation can be reached with a single DC 20 Strength check.
- 2 The phrase "Turn back now" has been chiseled on a rock wall in gigantic letters.
- 3 Dead birds rain from the sky, splatting to the ground around you with muted crunching sounds.
- 4 The air is filled with disembodied snickering, the screech of metal on metal, and eerie wind chimes. A large section of ice sheeting breaks off, triggering an avalanche. Climbers make DC 15 Strength check or fall (see Climbing section); others make DC 15 Agility check to avoid 3d3 damage.
- 5 Broken sticks are arranged to spell out a message, "Go back."
- 6 Frozen hands, severed at the elbow with fingers outstretched, are planted in a bank of snow.
- 7 The entire area is covered in crimson slush. A red trail leads further up the pass then disappears over a cliff.
- 8 The wind blows the rank odor of dead fish and sewage.
- 9 A thick hempen rope hangs here. A single DC 10 Strength check can be made to reach the next elevation.
- 10 A severed dwarf head is propped on a rock. As you approach, it rasps the same phrase over and over. "You-ooo go-ooo noooooow."

PLAYER START

Read or paraphrase the following:

It's another balmy night in Punjar. The sounds of the Night Market and reveling tavern-goers fill the air where Cheap Street intersects with High Street. Three silent women beckon from an alley and you follow as if in a trance. A delicate nimbus of white light surrounds them and you know instantly they can only be the Three Fates. "The Temple of Destiny has been corrupted. Something blocks our vision. We call on you as our champions to purge the forces of chaos from our shrine."

"We can shroud your approach as if you walked in fate's shadow," says one sister. "...But once you arrive you will be on your own," finishes another. The third sister steps forward. "We offer you this." She cuts off a piece of thread from her spinning wheel with golden shears. "Tying this string around your finger renders you invisible to the agents of chaos, but beware. Our power is undone by the number 7!"

The Fates answer questions as best they can. The Temple of Destiny is located at the frozen summit of Mount Tyche. The temple priests are not responding. The Fates encourage the characters to gather supplies at the Night Market and return when they are ready to depart.

All standard equipment is available for purchase. Additionally, three hirelings offer their services:

- Lucky, a ruffian with a hook hand and an eye patch. HP 3; -1 all saves.
- Harley, a red-bearded dwarf who boasts about "wrasslin' cows." HP 4; +2 to grappling.
- Goud, a cutpurse prone to sneaking off without a word. HP 3; -1 morale checks.

Once the adventure begins, the Fates cannot be invoked until the circle of magic powder is broken in the Temple of Destiny.

Magic thread: The Fates provide the characters with this magic thread. Tying this thread around a finger renders the wearer invisible to chaos-aligned creatures. The wearer cannot be targeted by attacks from chaotic beings. The wearer can attack without ending the invisibility. The thread's power lasts until any rolled die shows a number 7. If cut, the thread loses all its powers.

ASCENDING THE MOUNTAIN

Area 1-1A - The Hamlet of Cragmere: The adventurers depart in a trance-like state and travel until they reach Cragmere, the edge of the Three Fates' area of influence. The entire town is deserted. As the band explores the town, a cat-headed giant suddenly appears. The giant hisses venomously and attacks. When the beast is dispatched, a broken trinket is discovered.

Though you have never visited the temple, you have a clear vision of its location. For days upon nights, you hack through brush and ford rivers as you march toward your goal as if possessed, never needing sleep and never growing weary. A biting chill sets in as you climb the foothills of Mount Tyche, but still you press on toward the snow-covered peak. As you near the basin, you spot the tiny hamlet of Cragmere. The small outpost survives on trade with the temple. Your hypnotic state fades as you enter the town. The village is deathly silent.

The houses are locked, requiring a DC 10 pick lock check (or the characters can bash down a door or climb through a window). Searching turns up household items, warm clothes, rope and 1d20 copper pieces per house.

Once the characters start to leave the town, read:

You see a flash of orange light from the corner of your eye as an enormous figure appears ten feet in the air and slams to earth with a ground-shaking thud. The beast rises with its back to you, giving you a look at its hideous form. The giant stands at least twice the size of a human. Its body is covered in mismatched patches of black fur and green scales, and an oversized head. Where its right arm should be, there is a giant purple, suckered tentacle. Bloody gashes cover much of its body. The hulking brute turns and then you see its terrifying visage. Atop its shoulders rests a cat's head with wild green eyes. The deformed giant uproots a small tree and lofts it over its head while hissing malevolently.

Giant, magic-corrupted (11' tall, 1,000 lbs.): Init -3; Atk improvised club +7 melee (2d6+6) or hurled item +3 (1d6+4, range 40'); AC 15; HD 6d10; hp 36; MV 20'; Act 1d24; SP crit on 20-24, spell casting (spell check +1, caster level 0, spells known: *magic shield, magic missile*); SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

Treasure: A search of the giant turns up no valuables, but a broken half medallion on a chain is found near the corpse. The medallion is forged of black metal and engraved like the top half of a clock, showing the hours 9 through 3.

Area 1-1B – Mount Tyche: *The conifers thin out as you climb over a steep pitch, and then you get your first unobstructed view of Mount Tyche. The thick base tapers into a towering column of rock and ice. A spiraling road is carved into the rock leading to the top. A massive buttress dominates the eastern face, pockmarked with crags and handholds. The gravel trail continues into the basin and beyond to the western ridge before connecting to the spiral road.*

Area 1-2 – Fleeing Monks: *You see a group of robed figures on the path ahead. Most of the figures are limping. They wear singed and tattered robes.*

The characters have not been spotted, so they can attempt to hide. If approached, the group claims to be monks, and begs for healing. They are all duplicates of Gliplerio wounded in the future battle against the adventurers. One monk has a broken arm with a bone sticking out of the flesh. See DCC RPG (page 30) for details on healing broken limbs. The monks offer 1d6 copper, 1d10 silver and small gems (actually worthless colored glass) in exchange for aid. They try to dissuade the characters from traveling to the temple with tales of fire-breathing dragons. The duplicates disappear into an orange flash of light if attacked, or move on quickly if the characters aid them – all the while keeping their faces hidden.

Area 1-3 – Devilkin: *You feel an unholy presence, and look up to see a group of diminutive, obsidian creatures leering from a rocky ledge. The beasts grin, flashing rows of thin, dagger-like teeth, before outstretching their leathery bat wings and launching into the air.*

Clutches of devilkin roost at various spots along the winding path, drawn to this place by the demonic taint of Obitu-Que. The mischievous devils are compelled to steal items even if a few die in the process. The devilkin are adept larcenists, making pick pocket checks with a +5 bonus. Stealing treasure from adventurers during combat requires a DC 20 pick pocket check. Once a devilkin steals an item, the entire flock retreats further up the summit out of reach. The party can encounter

the devilkin multiple times in order to recover stolen items if necessary. Devilkin are most attracted to magic items, especially the Fates' magic thread. Devilkin are vulnerable to clerics' ability to turn unholy.

Devilkin (8): Init +1; Atk claw +1 melee (1d6), AC 14; HD 2d6; hp 6 each; MV 10' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP pickpocket +5; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area 1-4 – Ice Bridge: *The frozen path has collapsed ahead. The only way forward is a perilously thin ice bridge over a chasm. Frosty wind howls straight down the craggy mountainside, burning your face with tiny daggers of ice.*

Crossing the ice bridge requires a DC 15 Agility check. Climbing across the craggy mountainside requires a DC 10 Strength check and two move actions. Alternatively, a mighty deed of arms or a DC 20 Strength check can be used to leap across the 15' wide chasm.

When the first character makes it halfway across, cowered figures leap from behind rocks and attack. These are actually more duplicates of Gliplerio. They disappear in a blinding orange flash just before being slain.

Gliplerio (2): Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4) or flaming orb +0 missile fire (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spell casting (spell check +1: caster level 0, spells known: *enlarge, magic missile, magic shield*); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

Area 1-5 – Snow Apes: *Lanky brutes covered in matted, white fur lope across the path ahead on long arms. Surely these are the snow apes of legend. Five enormous red, ghostly eyes appear beyond them, floating in the snowy gloom. A guttural voice echoes and drifts on the wind. "Kill...kill...kill..." The snow apes turn their gaze on you. Their giant, saucer-like black eyes now smolder like hot coals giving off a demonic aura. The largest ape beats its chest and unleashes a war cry as a white plume of frozen breath bursts from its blue lips.*

As the road circles around, snow apes can be seen on the path ahead. The snow apes are under the influence of the demonic patron, Obitu-Que. They fly into a rage and attack, first ripping up large chunks of ice and hurling them, then rushing to attack the characters when they come close. A cleric can use the turn unholy ability to exorcise the evil spirits from an ape. A turned ape immediately stops attacking and flees to its hidden cave.

Hidden cave: The snow apes lair in a cave set high above the mountain path. The opening is situated just above a small rock ledge and covered in thick icicles. Any apes that fail morale checks scramble back to their cave without bothering to cover their tracks. Due to the ice, climbing up requires a DC 15 Agility check. The snow apes fight to the death in the cave to protect their meager possessions: a partially-eaten donkey carcass and a collection of shiny rocks hidden in a small niche. Mixed in the rock collection are 1d10 precious gems worth 20 gp each. A passage at the back of cavern leads into a sprawling network of caverns inhabited by snow apes, extending all the way to the other side of Mount Tyche. Populating this area is left as an exercise for the judge.

Snow apes (5): Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d6+4) or thrown ice +3 missile fire (1d4); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 20 each; MV 25' or climb 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will -1; AL C.

TEMPLE OF DESTINY



The Temple of Destiny stands at the summit of Mount Tyche in a demi-plane halfway between twilight and eternity. Adventurers who fly to or scale the peak without ascending the Staircase of Fate find only an empty expanse of frozen rock. Under closer scrutiny, the spectral outlines of the temple can be seen dimly, but they are completely insubstantial. The temple can only be reached by climbing the Fates' magical stairway starting from the bottom step.

Area 2-1 - Staircase of Fate: Freezing winds blast from the northeast, accompanied by a high-pitched whistling sound. Large steps covered in runes have been carved directly into the rock leading up, 22 in all. On your left is a craggy rock wall. To the right, certain death waits on the rock far below. You are nearly at the summit.

To reach the Temple of Destiny, the adventurers must mount the Staircase of Fate by touching the steps in the proper order. There are 22 steps in all. Shrewd players should remember the admonition of the Three Fates that their power is "undone by the number 7." The unspoken corollary is the number 3, the source of their power.

The Temple of Destiny exists in another time and place altogether. As the adventurers ascend the Staircase of Fate, they cross over to another universe. The proper way to climb the stairs is by only using steps that are divisible by 3 but not 7 (3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18). Each time the correct step is used, runes on that step glow with purple light, the air grows warmer, and the winds are less harsh as the adventurers are gradually transported to the new plane. Once the proper steps are activated, the runes' power remains active for 5 minutes. Characters can tread on any stair without having to re-complete the sequence though traps are still enabled. Return travel requires no special actions.

When a character places a foot on a wrong step without completing the entire sequence, all glowing runes immediately go dark and everyone immediately materializes on the icy stairs. They will need to start again. Touching a step divisible by 7 (i.e. 7, 14, or 21) causes additional calamity. A random trap springs, causing 1d6 damage (DC 10 Reflex save for half) to each character within 1 step of the trigger. (Trap manifestations (d5): 1 - spikes shoot up from below; 2 - giant burst of flame; 3 - rocks fall; 4 - darts fire from holes in wall; 5 - cloud of noxious gas.) The traps are undetectable as they exist in another plane of reality altogether, though they can still be triggered with a spell, pole or heavy rock.

Activating the proper steps can be tricky. Characters can jump over one step with DC 10 Agility check (+2 DC for each additional step). The craggy wall can be climbed with a DC10 Strength or Agility check for each 5 steps traversed. Each time a check fails, the character falls on a random step. Roll a d3 and add or subtract it to the character's current position to determine which stair is landed on. A lucky character might fall on the step they originally intended to land on.

Weapon cache: Amimej, first cleric of the Temple of Destiny, foresaw a time of great peril. Upon her passing, her fierce spirit was imbued into a magic two-handed sword to help protect the temple. The sword empathically communicates the desire to slay chaotic beings. The blade, forged from a strange blood-red



metal, was dubbed Mythender as it possessed the power to slay gods and demons. Is now the fated hour when the sword shall be found? Looking at the handout, you will see the following: F on step 3, A on Step 15, T on step 9, and E on step 12. Pressing the runes that spell the word FATE in order opens the hidden weapon cache under the 21st step. After each rune is pressed in the proper order, it glows with a green outline. The glowing continues independent of the purple stair runes being reset. If a character prays for guidance or appeals to higher powers, allow them this small hint. A rock tumbles down the stair and lands at the feet of the beseecher. A piece of paper tied around the rock reads, "It's the hour / That's never late / It will find you / If you wait". See DCC RPG Core Book, "Sword Magic" (page 366) for details on Mythender's banes and powers.

Mythender: two-handed sword +2; Int 9; empathy; Banes: chaotic beings, gods; Type II: cleave, armor-breaker, flame brand; AL L.

Area 2-2 - Corpse Gate: As you near the top of the stairs, the biting chill subsides and the heavens grow dark, revealing an alien sea of stars. Lit by torch sconces, you see the outer walls of the temple and a massive double-doored portal. The entire gate is upholstered with a patchwork of human skin, hair and faces. Countless dismembered arms and legs are nailed to the door, hanging limp. Where the keyhole should be, there is only a mouth stretched wide-open. The stink of rot and defecation rolls over you like crashing surf, threatening to buckle your knees.

Glipkerio sealed the temple entrance with an abominable, necromantic ritual. The butchered corpses of the villagers from Cragmere and the temple priests were stitched together and reanimated to create this foul portal.

Corpse Gate: The huge, flesh-covered double doors stand over

20 feet tall. As soon as anyone attempts to open the door, arms situated along the center grasp each other tightly to hold the door shut. The gate attempts to grab any characters within melee range. Grabbed creatures cannot move away from the wall. The gate has a +5 bonus to hit grabbed targets and the critical threat range is increased to 19-20 (crit table U) against the target. A grabbed creature can use an action die to escape with a Strength check (DC 15). Reducing the gate to 0 hit points or forcing the gate open disables the gate. The undead continue to gibber and moan in pain though they no longer attack or hold the door shut.

There are several approaches to opening the door.

- Any attempts to force the door open require a Strength check with a difficulty level equal to the corpse gate's remaining hit points. Using a device as a battering ram adds +3 to the check.
- The cleric's turn unholy ability is very effective against the gate. For each successful turn, the cleric has the choice of forcing the gate to release one grabbed target or causing 1d3 points of damage to it.
- The keyhole is directly connected to the necromantic energies of the gate. A thief can attempt to disable the door by picking the lock. Each successful lock-picking attempt causes 10 hp of damage to the corpse gate. A grabbed target suffers a -5 penalty to "pick lock" checks.

Corpse Gate: Init +2; Atk claw/bite/kick +1 melee (1d8) or throw skull -2 missile fire (1d4); AC 10; HD 4d12+5; hp 41; Act 3d20; SP grab +2 melee (see text); MV 0; SV Fort +2, Ref -2; Will -1; AL C.

Area 2-3 – Temple Grounds: *Beyond the gate, the temple grounds are brimming with brightly-colored tropical flower gardens and the incessant drone of cicadas and tree frogs. A cobbled path leads to a splashing fountain and beyond that an immaculate, white temple – the Temple of Destiny. Several smaller buildings huddle against the outer protective walls of the complex. The night air is hot, humid and thick with the scent of lush vegetation.*

The adventurers have a short time to explore the area outside the temple. If they tarry too long, add an encounter with the two-headed dogs from the temple entrance to spur the characters toward the adventure's conclusion.

Area 2-3 (A-E) – Outbuildings: There are 6 smaller structures arranged around the main temple: a kitchen(A) containing common cooking items, an administrative office(B) which holds a locked coffer containing 300 gold pieces (DC 15 pick lock check), two living quarters(C), a warehouse(D) stocked with food stuff and an outhouse(E) with a hidden stash of exotic pipe weed. Smoking the pipe weed confers +1 bonus to spell checks for 1 hour (3 uses). Stealing from the temple coffers displeases the Three Fates, but making use of other items does not.

Area 2-3F – Fountain: *A round fountain is situated in the plaza outside the temple. A spinning wheel carved in stone throws water high into the air.*

Drinking from the fountain magically restores 1d3 luck and 1d3 hit points once per week.

Area 2-3G – Temple entrance: *At the center of the garden, a gleaming, white marble rotunda thrusts majestically toward the heavens. Marble columns coated in creeper vines support the temple's vaulted dome. The droning crickets and bullfrogs suddenly stop and you hear muted barking, growling, and the clatter of claws on tile. A black-cowled figure throws open the temple's arched doorway as two-headed war dogs leap from the portal, bounding toward you. The canines are as solid and well-muscled as oxen. Wisps of smoke trail from their fanged snouts. The temple doors swing shut with a loud crack.*

After Gliplerio unleashes his dogs, he retreats to the temple to finish preparing his ambush. The two-headed dogs were personally bred by the evil wizard who imbued them with a unique breath weapon; a swirling cone of smoke (10' wide and 20' long) that glows with multicolored lights and can speed up and slow time. Targets caught in the blast must make a DC 12 Reflex save or the target's age changes by d20-10 years. It's up to the judge to determine what effect rapid age change has on a character.

The temple doors are closed, but unlocked. Characters who walk the perimeter of the temple find no other entrances. The creeper vines make it possible to climb on top of the temple with a DC 15 Agility check. There is a large skylight at the top of the dome directly over the giant statue of the Fates that grants full view of the temple from 140' above (area 2-4).

Two-headed dogs (3): Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d6+1) or breath weapon 2/day (DC 12 Ref or age d20-10 years); AC 14; HD 3d10; hp 14 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area 2-4 – Inside the Temple: The final confrontation with Gliplerio happens within the temple. When the adventurers enter the temple, read:

The heavy, marble doors swing open easily on well-oiled hinges. Inside, the temple consists of a single, high-ceilinged room lined with pews. Marble columns circle the vast chamber. A deep red carpet runs directly to the center where statues of three women tower to the ceiling.

When the adventurers approach the center of the temple, read:

The temple is eerily quiet save for the shuffling echoes of your own footsteps. At the temple's center, lit by four enormous iron braziers, a large round pedestal is topped by an enormous statuary depicting the Three Fates at their spinning wheel. A thick line of white powder circumscribes the entire base. Several tables covered in papers and books are arranged haphazardly near the base of the pedestal.

The silence is interrupted by a disembodied voice. "I know not what sorcery allowed you to reach me here, but I assure you, you will never leave. Fear the power of Gliplerio!" As the last phrase echoes, cowled men slowly reveal themselves from behind every pillar. The men pull back their hoods together, revealing the same face staring back from each man - some young, some old, but all look to be the same person. One of the men lobs a dart at you, stating Gliplerio's intention.

Once the adventurers reach the statues, the wizard springs his ambush. Each time a duplicate is killed, the dying man clutches an amulet on his chest and disappears in a burst of light only to reappear fully healed. When the band is about to strike down the last man, the final opponent grabs his amulet and is painfully transformed into an enormous cat-headed giant. The

amulet breaks in two. The giant disappears in an orange flash, leaving behind the other half of the broken medallion.

The combat rules of the final encounter are a little different than normal:

- Gliplerio starts out with a shared pool of 100 hit points. Each time a copy of Gliplerio takes damage, keep track of the total damage in addition to the damage of each duplicate. Whenever a duplicate is reduced to zero hit points with an attack, it disappears in a flash of orange light and reappears nearby with full health and all lost spells recovered. There are never more than 8 duplicates of Gliplerio active at one time: 4 young, 3 adult, and 1 elder. When the shared pool of hit points is exhausted, duplicates no longer reappear.
- Having many duplicates casting spells in close proximity diminishes their power, reducing their action die to d16. Rolling a natural 16 is considered a critical hit. This penalty only affects Gliplerio and his duplicates.
- If the party healed the broken arm of a fleeing monk in area 1-2, make sure to read this text after the first duplicate is reduced to 0 health: *The wizard falls backward to avoid your attack and his forearm snaps like a green twig on the marble floor, a bloody bone protruding from the dangling flesh. The wizard disappears in a flash of orange light, howling in pain. The wizard reappears with his arm healed.*

Refer to the Gliplerio Battle Tracker on page 12 when running this combat.

Gliplerio's duplicates have different levels of ability. The young duplicates are little more than acolytes. They can only cast a single spark of flames. The adult duplicates can cast spells as normal magic-users. By manipulating the threads of destiny, the elder Gliplerio can deflect attacks against him onto a random duplicate within 50'. For example, a sword just before connecting turns into a long thin ribbon that stretches across the room where the blade re-materializes and punctures a duplicate. Witnessing the effect is much like viewing a moving object through a glass of water.

Statuary: If someone spends an action to break the circle around the pedestal, the statuary of Fates gains a single free attack at the beginning of every round (lightning: +3 missile fire, 2d6 damage) and can respond to the *invoke patron* spell. The statues target those who have defiled their temple - Gliplerio duplicates.

Gliplerio, young (4): Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4) or -1 dart missile fire (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 3 each; SP harmful spell 1/day (range 50', 2 damage, DC 10 Will for half); MV 30'; Act 1d16; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +1; AL C.

Harmful spell: A minor fire spell with a 50' range that causes 2 damage (DC 10 Will save for half damage). The spell refreshes when a duplicate reappears.

Gliplerio (3): Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4) or flaming orb +0 missile fire (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP spell casting (spell check +1: caster level 0, spells known: *enlarge, magic missile, magic shield*); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

Gliplerio, elder (1): Init +2; Atk club +2 melee (1d4+2) or flaming orb +1 missile fire (1d10); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP deflection (see text), spell casting (spell check +3: caster level 1, spells known: *ray of enfeeblement, flaming hands, mirror image, strength, invoke patron*); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

CONCLUSION



After defeating Gliplerio, the Fates' power can be fully restored by removing the circle of powder. The Fates' statuary comes to life to congratulate the adventurers on their victory. Characters slain in the temple rise with 1 HP and a permanent loss of 1 Stamina. Followers of the Fates get a +10 bonus to their next *invoke patron* spell.

Among Gliplerio's effects, the adventurers find the following:

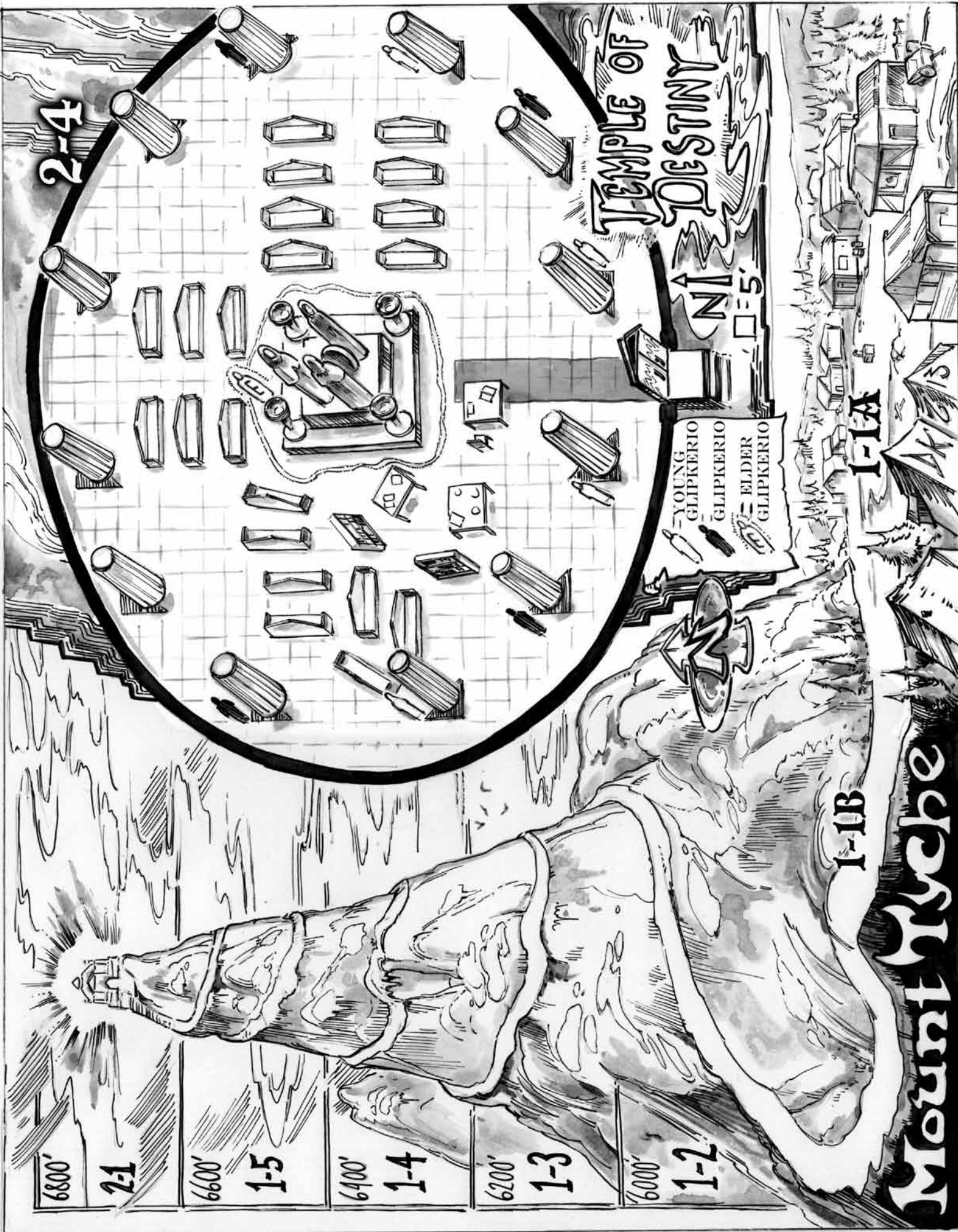
Broken Chronomantic Amulet. The amulet can be rejoined by the *mending* spell or a master jeweler (cost 300 gp), but its powers are greatly diminished. The wearer's consciousness can travel a few seconds back in time, allowing a reroll of one spell check per encounter. If the roll is 1, roll on the General Spell Misfire table. Each failure permanently increases the misfire range.

Coprolite Club +1: A foul bludgeon bestowed by Gliplerio's demonic patron, Obitu-Que. The shaft is wrapped with studded black leather bindings to make it easier to grip. On a critical hit, the target makes a DC 20 Fort save or takes additional poison damage (1d6) in addition to normal effects of a critical hit.

Magic tome: It contains one random level 2 spell per wizard/elf in party.

PLAYER HANDOUT





6800'

2-1

6600'

1-5

6400'

1-4

6200'

1-3

6000'

1-2

2-4

TEMPLE OF NIJESTINY

YOUNG GLIPKERIO
GLIPKERIO
ELDER GLIPKERIO

1-1B

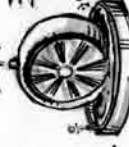
1-1A

Mount Myche



THE TEMPLE GROUNDS

2-30



2-31

2-32

2-33

2-34

2-35

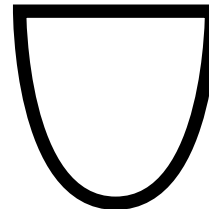
2-2

2-1

GLIPKERIO BATTLE TRACKER





Max Hit Points







Current Hit Points



GLIPKERIO, YOUNG

Glipkerio, young (4): Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4) or -1 dart missile fire (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 3 each; SP harmful spell 1/day (range 50', 2 damage, DC 10 Will for half); MV 30'; Act 1d16; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +1; AL C.

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harmful spell | |



| | |
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| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
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| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harmful spell | |

GLIPKERIO

Glipkerio (3): Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4) or flaming orb +0 missile fire (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP spell casting (spell check +1: caster level 0, spells known: *enlarge*, *magic missile*, *magic shield*); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.



| | |
|---|---|
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| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic missile | <input type="checkbox"/> Enlarge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic shield | |

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|---|---|
|  |  |
| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic missile | <input type="checkbox"/> Enlarge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic shield | |

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| Max HP | Current HP |
| Used Spells | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic missile | <input type="checkbox"/> Enlarge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magic shield | |

GLIPKERIO, ELDER

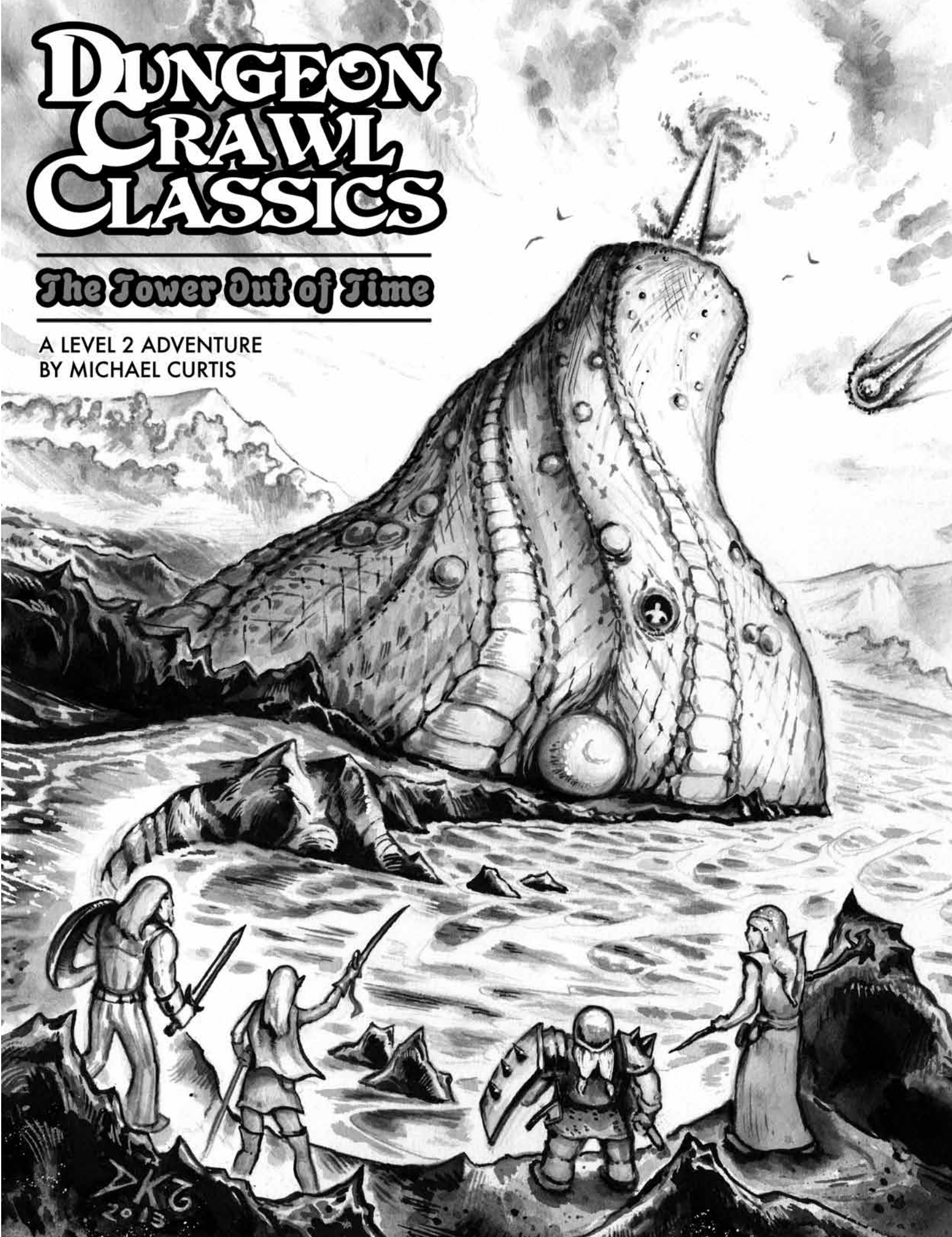
Glipkerio, elder (1): Init +2; Atk club +2 melee (1d4+2) or flaming orb +1 missile fire (1d10); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP deflection (see text), spell casting (spell check +3: caster level 1, spells known: *ray of enfeeblement*, *flaming hands*, *mirror image*, *strength*, *invoke patron*); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
|  |  | Used Spells | |
| Max HP | Current HP | <input type="checkbox"/> Ray of enfeeblement | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Flaming hands | <input type="checkbox"/> Invoke patron |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Mirror image | |

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

The Tower Out of Time

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY MICHAEL CURTIS



THE TOWER OUT OF TIME

A Level 2 Adventure

by Michael Curtis • Editor: Reverend Dak • Art/ Cartography: Doug Kovacs • Layout/ Art Direction: Joseph Goodman
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This adventure is intended for six 2nd level PCs. *The Tower Out of Time* can be run as part of Free RPG Day to introduce new players to the exciting possibilities of *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG or inserted into an ongoing campaign as a short interlude between greater adventures. If used as part of Free RPG Day, the judge should use the pre-generated 2nd level characters provided with this adventure packet.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



Eons ago, when the world was a primal, savage place, the empire of E'shernulus arose in the tropical swamps. This realm was the dominion of the serpent-men, who lorded over the primitive denizens of that ancient epoch. At the height of E'shernulus' grandeur, there arose the wizard, S'lissakk, a sorcerer of great renown. S'lissakk was captivated by the mysteries of the night sky and would spend his evenings atop his observatory gazing into the cosmic gulf with a mixture of wonder and frustration. Thoughts of what lay beyond the glittering stars filled his serpentine mind, and having accrued great victories on earth, he set about to plumb those depths to discover its wonders.

After years of experimentation, with both magic and engineering, S'lissakk succeeded in building a void-craft capable of transcending the chains of gravity to explore the outer dark. The serpent-sorcerer could not predict the duration of his cosmic journey, nor the conditions that he might discover upon his return. To safeguard his eventual homecoming, S'lissakk constructed a tower to guide him back from the stars once his explorations were complete.

S'lissakk equipped the beacon tower with a mystical engine enabling the structure to leap-frog through time, pausing occasionally at future epochs to anticipate his arrival. His apprentice, H'lisk, was tasked with the care-taking and operation of the tower, known as the Pharos of Scales. It would be the duty of H'lisk to pilot the beacon through the ages until the time of his master's re-entry.

With the necessary arrangements for his journey complete, S'lissakk departed the world and embarked on his expedition into the cosmic void. H'lisk, devoted to the end, bid farewell to his own time period and engaged the power sources of the Pharos of Scales, throwing the tower into the future to await the return of his master. The Pharos has traveled the time stream ever since, pausing from time to time in its journey to provide a sign post for S'lissakk's homecoming. Each of these interruptions saw no reply from S'lissakk's void-craft, but now, after nearly a million years of travel (but only weeks by H'lisk's reckoning), the Pharos has arrived at the time and place of S'lissakk's imminent arrival home. H'lisk awaits in the Pharos, anxious to greet his master and whatever cargo the serpent-mage acquired on his long trip into the outer dark.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE



The judge can introduce this adventure at any time and place of his choosing in the campaign, although placing the Pharos of Scales in a forest close to the PCs' current base of operations is suggested. The first hint of the events that follow comes in the form of a newly-discovered comet sighted in the night sky. PCs who are wizards, elves, clerics of sky deities, or have the astrologer occupation notice this vagabond star automatically. Other PCs likely learn of its arrival through market gossip, tavern tales, or happenstance. This new "bearded star," as it is referred to by astrologers and mystics, has been dubbed "Serbok" by its observers. The comet is white-green in coloration and bears a long, sinuous tale. A DC 10 Intelligence check recalls that "Serbok" is an old word meaning "serpent," and the name is apt considering its serpentine tail and coloration. Unknown to the masses at this point, the comet is no astronomical body, but S'lissakk's void-craft returning from the stars.

Serbok's appearance inspires numerous rumors of ill fortune ahead, as comets are wont to do. The judge can play up these rumors, creating encounters with half-crazed prophets in the town market or terrified villagers predicting plague, famine, or the births of monstrosities. However, it's the next consequence of S'lissakk's return that truly begins the adventure.

A few days after Serbok's appearance in the sky, another event has the populace uneasy. Woodcutters plying their trade in a nearby forest report a strange sight encountered near the verge of the wood. They report witnessing the sudden appearance of a great, dark lake within the woods, one which has never existed there before. Compounding this mystery is an odd tower that squats along the lake's shore. Although the woodcutters did not tarry long in the vicinity, they say that the tower had a decidedly leathery appearance, as if constructed from the hide of some monstrous reptile instead of stone and mortar. As the woodcutters fled the location, a burning ray of light erupted from the tower's apex to streak into the sky above. This incandescent ray remained observable even after the woodcutters exited the forest, steadily blazing away above the tree tops.

Depending on the distance between the woods and the PCs' base of operations, confirming the truth to the woodcutter's tale may be as easy as looking towards the forest. Even in daylight, the tower's beacon is bright enough to be seen from a distance of several miles and, after nightfall, the crimson ray is detectable from a distance of almost 75 miles, weather permitting.

The PCs may decide to investigate the lake and tower of their own accord or be approached by local officials to do the same. In the latter case, the local constabulary offers payment of 50 gp total and the pick of one item each from the inventory of confiscated items currently held by local law-enforcement officials (as determined by the judge). Payment is promised once the PCs investigate the lake and tower, and determine the purpose of their abrupt appearance.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Event | Type | Encounter |
|-------|------|---|
| 1-1 | C | 2 Green Spitters |
| 2-1 | C | 3 ape-men and 3 cerebraleeches |
| 3-2 | T | Rampway trap |
| 4-1 | C/T | H'lisk and 2 ape-men Serpent door trap |
| 4-2 | C | 2 giant trilobites |

THE PHAROS OF SCALES



The PCs arrive at the woods after an uneventful journey. Two anomalies are evident as the party approaches the forest. The first is the thick cluster of drab clouds that hang over the forest. These swirling thunderheads are present even if the sky is otherwise clear. The clouds are a product of the primal atmosphere surrounding the lake, which alters local weather patterns. The clouds hang ominously over the forest.

Secondly, the incandescent beam spoken of by the woodcutters is also visible if not noticeable before. The searing ray shines straight into the sky, parting the cloud cover above like a burning blade. With the beam to guide them, locating the tarn and tower is a simple task. The PCs encounter no threats as they journey through the forest and wood-wise adventurers notice that the woods seem unnaturally silent, as if local wildlife has vacated the vicinity.

Less than a mile beyond the edge of the woods lies the uncanny lake and tower. The judge should read or paraphrase the following upon the PCs' arrival at the lake.

The air grows warmer and more humid as you push your way through the last few yards of forest. Abruptly, as if parted with a great godly blade, the wood ends and you stand before a wide, dark lake. A rocky beach of jagged, glossy black stones surrounds the mysterious waters, bringing to mind shards of broken glass left behind by some titanic mishap. The water steams beneath the gray clouds above, throwing off spiraling tendrils of mist that half-occlude the ebony waters.

Huddled on the shore some hundred yards away is the weird tower you heard spoken of. Measuring 90' in height, the turret is unlike any you've seen before. Its asymmetrical walls lean and twist, giving it a slumped, melted appearance. The tower appears constructed from a hard, leathery substance, one with more commonalities to an animal's hide than stone and mortar. A number of small apertures line the walls, each covered with a thick, semi-opaque film, reminding you of blisters about to rupture. A much larger membrane-covered gap stands at the base of the tower, seeming to serve as a portal by which to enter.

A bloody beam of light shines directly upward from the tower's apex, disappearing into the sky above.

The Pharos is constructed of prehistoric reptile hide given structural integrity by forgotten serpent-man sorcery. A pattern of scales, many the size of large shields, decorates the tower's exterior. The hide is very resilient and even prolonged attacks with bladed weapons produce only minor scouring

of its scaly exterior. The Pharos can be climbed with a DC 15 climb sheer surfaces check. PCs scaling the tower arrive at area 5-1.

Several windows pierce the tower's sides. These windows begin 20' above the base and are placed without design or obvious pattern. Each window is protected by a thick organic membrane, like that of a blister or the tympanum of a frog. These semi-opaque coverings are also impervious to physical harm and edged weapons only scratch their surfaces. The windows allow some light to enter, but peering through them only allows the viewer to glimpse indistinct shapes and colors, and perhaps movement of creatures within if applicable.

The doorway at the Pharos' base is covered by a thin, permeable membrane. Pushing against it or stepping through the barrier causes it to part like a soap bubble. The membrane reforms once passed through, keeping the integrity of the tower's interior environment intact. Slashing weapons slice open the barrier, but it quickly repairs itself once the weapon is removed.

The surrounding lake is of prehistoric origin and it accompanies the Pharos on its travels through time. PCs examining its black waters discover it is bath-warm and contains a variety of odd fish—armored catfish, many-finned gars, and other long-extinct fish swim in the lake's waters. The lake is very murky and measures 30' deep at its center.

THE PHAROS INTERIOR



As noted above, entry into the Pharos of Scales is accomplished by stepping through the filmy membrane covering the tower's ground-level door. Doing so leads the PCs to area 1-1.

Area 1-1 – The Arboretum: *The air is rich and heady beyond the membrane-cover door. A riot of green plants bearing vibrant green, pink, and purple blossoms of tremendous size fills the space beyond. A trio of pools seemingly filled with a substance more plasma than liquid, burble and slurp, producing plate-sized bubbles and tendrils of mist that hide the chamber's leathery floor. A similarly scaly-looking ramp rises along one wall, terminating in an opening in the fleshy ceiling overhead.*

H'lisk and the other residents of the Pharos hail from a primordial time where the atmosphere was more robust and oxygenated. The vegetation and pools of primeval sludge provide

BEHIND THE SCENES

During one playtest, the organic nature of the Pharos of Scales had the party more worried than expected. The PCs were convinced that the tower itself was a living creature waiting to attack and kill them if they got too close. This led to a number of preventive attacks on the Pharos, hoping to goad it into revealing itself as a threat while the party was at a safe distance. Gazebo, anyone?

Although the players may have been incorrect about their assumption that the Pharos was about to spring to life and attack, they weren't wrong about it being a threat to life and limb—just not in the way they expected!

an environment more to their liking. As a safeguard against intruders, a pair of green spitters roam freely about this space.

Green Spitters (2): Init +4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6) or spit +2 ranged (20' range, poison); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 20, 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP poisonous spit (DC 11 Fort save or be paralyzed for 1d8 turns), camouflage (+10 to hide attempts); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; AL N.

Green spitters are a species of dinosaur that once ranged the ancient past. They may share a common ancestor with the dilophosaurus, as they closely resemble that beast, albeit at a slightly smaller scale. Measuring 9' from nose-to-tail, green spitters are bipedal with weak, truncated forearms. As their name suggests, they vary from olive green to deep emerald in coloration, making them difficult to spot in heavily vegetated environment. Green spitters attack their prey by incapacitating it with blinding, paralytic venom similar to a spitting cobra, and then tear their immobile quarry apart with razor-sharp teeth.

The green spitters are ambush predators and position themselves to attack the party from both the front and the rear. PCs in those positions must make an Intelligence check (DC 1d20+10) to avoid surprise. The green spitters use their venom against foes, aiming for their victim's faces. PCs not wearing helmets are more vulnerable to the venom attack. Treat their AC as 10 plus any modifiers due to Agility and shields. Helmet-wearing PCs gain the full benefits of their armor type. Combat with the dinosaurs alerts the occupants of 2-1 above to intruders in the Pharos.

The pools in this area are filled with a primordial soup, rich in amitotic fluids and rudimentary enzymes. The viscid matter is dense and measures 4' deep. Probing its depths uncovers a number of skeletons that bear a mixture of simian and human features. These are the remains of Antehumans who perished in feeding the beacon and were then dumped in the pools to nurture the primordial soup life. The fluid is mildly acidic, but only exposure to it for long periods inflicts harm on living flesh (1d4 damage per hour of immersion).

Area 2-1 – The Habitat: *The ramp debouches into a warm, humid space lit by dirty sunlight shining through membrane-covered windows. Several hammocks crafted from immense woven leaves hang along the walls. The floor bears a number of mats, similarly crafted from interlaced fronds. Bowls and gourds containing water, fruit and raw meat are arranged upon the mats beneath small clouds of buzzing flies. Three large apish creatures crouch here as if anticipating your arrival. Similar to gorillas, but bearing longer, matted hair, each of the brutes bears an odd protuberance at the back of its head. These gray-colored lumps resemble 2' long fleshy sacks that pulse obscenely with life.*

These ape creatures are antecedents to the modern gorilla and were used as slave labor by the serpent-men. Of low intelligence, each ape-servant is commanded by a cerebraleech, a parasitic invertebrate of immense mental capacity. The symbiotic relationship between servant and master makes them formidable opponents.

Ape-men (3): Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4+3); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 19, 16, 11; MV 20' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP +10 to hide checks in jungle terrain; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

Cerebraleech (3): Init +2; Atk mental blast +4 ranged (60' range, dmg special); AC 10; HD 2d8; hp 14, 11, 11; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP telepathy 90' range, mental blast (DC for attack is 10+ target's Personality modifier; target suffers 1d3 damage and must make a Will save vs. DC equal to the mental blast's attack roll to avoid being stunned for 1 round); SV Fort +2, Ref +3 (-2 if detached from ape-man host), Will +6; AL C.

On the first round of combat, one of the cerebraleeches uses its telepathy to warn H'lisk of the PCs' intrusion, while the other two direct their mental blasts at obvious spell-casters or the strongest-looking combatants in the party. Alerted to the party's presence, H'lisk activates the trap in 3-2 below. On subsequent rounds, the cerebraleeches alternate between commanding the ape-men to attack and continuing to blast the party with their psychic attacks. When using their mental blast, the cerebraleeches cannot command the ape-men to attack and the beasts stand unmoving while their masters' mental energies are otherwise occupied.

A PC can attack either the ape-men or their parasitic masters. Warriors and dwarves can target the cerebraleeches with a Mighty Deed of Arms vs. AC 10. Even if the deed die result is less than "3", but the attack roll is high enough to strike AC 12, the attack succeeds. Other classes attempting to make a "called shot" on the parasites must hit AC 12, as the cerebraleeches have the benefits of cover from the ape-men's bodies. Spells cast upon the ape-men that mentally control or incapacitate their targets (*charm person, paralysis, sleep, etc.*) are saved against using the cerebraleeches' Will save modifier, not that of the ape-men.

If a cerebraleech is killed before its ape-man host is, the simian creature is momentarily confused by the severing of the mental link and loses its action for the round. The following round, the uncontrolled beast lashes out in unrestrained anger at a random target and continues to attack potential targets until slain.

The bowls and gourds contain fresh water, raw fruit and uncooked meat. The meat is the flesh of Antehumans that died while powering the beacon. The flies are of an extinct, harmless species. A film-covered doorway in the western wall leads to 2-2. Hanging on the wall besides this door is a large iron key on a ring. It opens the pen in 2-2. Another upward-rising ramp exits the room through a gap in the ceiling above.

Area 2-2 – The Antehuman Pen: *The pungent stench of unwashed bodies and excrement assails your nostrils as you pass through the thin membrane into this dark chamber. The sound of frightened hoots and screams fill your ears. These cries come from a crowd of hairy anthropoids cowering beyond a barrier of metal bars that bisects the dim room.*

The anthropoids are Antehumans, precursors to humanity who lived during the time of the serpent-men's earthly reign. They appear a mixture of ape and man (equivalent to *homo habilis* on the evolutionary line) and stand 4' tall. They are unclothed, filthy, and terrified. H'lisk powers the Pharos' beacon with their lives and the Antehumans fear any creature entering this room, knowing it leads to the removal and utter disappearance of their number. The Antehumans' pen is locked, but the key in 2-1 opens the metal door to their cage.

Antehumans (12): Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (dmg 1d3) or punch (1d2); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL N.

The Antehumans possess slightly better than animal intelligence and do not have a language, making communication with them difficult. If freed, the group flees the Pharos, only to find themselves stranded in a world and time they don't understand. The future of these temporal castaways is left to the judge to determine.

If *charmed*, an Antehuman will accompany his new friend, but remember that the spell does not impart the ability to communicate with an enspelled target. *Comprehend languages* allows a PC to understand an Antehuman, but because of their limited intelligence and verbal development, communication is limited to single words such as "danger," "hungry," "frightened," etc. A friendly Antehuman can be equipped with rudimentary weapons such as clubs or spears, but will refuse armor and more complex weapons as they are beyond his primitive ken.

Area 3-1 - Salon: A circular table fashioned from smooth, dark wood and a chair of similar construction occupies the center of this area. A number of barrels and small boxes stand against the wall. Atop these containers are three wooden cages containing 1' long, unrecognizable rodents. An open archway shaped like two serpents meeting face-to-face, stands to one side, beyond which a ramp leading upwards is visible.

This is H'lisk's dining area. Two barrels contain water and a third holds fragrant wine unpalatable to human taste. The four boxes atop them hold a variety of oddly-curved eating utensils, pickled meats, small bags holding weird spices (20 gp total value), and delicate glass drinking vessels. The wooden cages contain eight rodents, extinct ancestors of the capybara which H'lisk dines on regularly. If freed, they scurry off unless captured or killed.

Extinct Rodents (8) Init -1; Atk bite -1 melee (dmg 1d2); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -3; AL N.

Moments after the PCs arrive in this area, a sibilant, hissing voice is heard in the air around them. It speaks in a stilted, archaic Common, "Who art thou and what is thy purpose in my domicile?" This is H'lisk, using an arcane feature of the Pharos to communicate with them. H'lisk warns the party to leave or face destruction, but emboldened by his master's immediate return, will continue to parley with the party if they question him. He reveals his identity and purpose, bragging that "mine master's arrival is nigh. He returns, his long journey into the outer dark complete! He brings untold wonders from beyond the reaches of night, upon which I and thou unworthies might soon glimpse in amazement and horror." The judge should tailor H'lisk's replies to questioning as he sees fit, but prolonged interrogation of the serpent-man should leave the party with the belief that something bad is headed towards their world very, very soon. Under no circumstances does H'lisk give the party permission to ascend higher in the Pharos and terminates conversation if the party becomes rude or bothersome.

Area 3-2 - Trapped Rampway: Beyond the ornamental archway is a rising ramp that winds 30' upwards along the tower's interior wall. Unlike the others you've ascended, this slope is enclosed on



both sides by fleshy, scaly walls, making it more corridor than open inclined plane. At the top of the ramp stands a metal door etched with intertwined serpents. It looks to be a formidable barrier between you and the upper levels of the tower.

The metal door is very solid and requires a DC 20 Strength check to break open. Up to three PCs can assist in breaching the door. Each additional PC adds either a +1 bonus to the Strength check or his Strength modifier, whichever is higher. A pair of small 2" long iron posts are set in the doorway, placed to appear as the protruding fangs of one of the serpent etchings along its face. These iron posts are electrical battery terminals that create a spark when the rampway's trap is activated (see below). The scaly walls are identical to the tower's exterior and cannot be hacked through to escape the trap.

The archway contains a concealed metal door housed overhead. A DC 15 Find trap check reveals its presence and a DC 15 Disable traps prevents it from falling when triggered. Raising the fallen door requires a DC 25 Strength check, and up to six PCs (three on either side of the door) can assist in the attempt as above. A pressure plate set halfway up the ramp (also noticed with a DC 15 Find trap check) causes the door to fall, trapping any PCs on the rampway inside. The plate is automatically triggered by any PC ascending the ramp if not noticed. When the door seals the rampway, a hissing sound is heard as the sealed corridor fills with hyper-oxygenated air. Three rounds later, an electrical spark arcs between the terminal posts in the upper door, causing the air to ignite in a fiery blast (2d6 dmg to all within the rampway; DC 12 Fort save for half damage). If H'lisk hears the trap detonate, he begins casting his defense spells as noted below.

The blast damages the upper doorway slightly, causing it to bow in noticeably. Breaking the door open after the fiery detonation requires only a DC 15 Strength check and multiple PCs can assist.

Area 4-1 - The Beacon: A grotesque wonder occupies this bright chamber. Three fleshy slabs stand at acute angles around a monstrous, bulbous mass that resembles an exotic jungle flower. Each slab bears a small, hairy anthropoid creature. Numerous crimson tubes extend from the horrible flower, greedily siphoning the life blood from these creatures. From the top of the flower shines a burning beam of light, extending upwards and out through a membrane-covered hole in the ceiling. Other oddities fill the room, but further observations are curtailed by the presence of a snake-skinned humanoid dressed in archaic robes and a pair of lumbering ape-men. The serpentine figure gestures and the simian beasts attack!

The scaly humanoid is H'lisk and the ape-men are his servants. All fight to the death to defeat the PCs.

H'lisk, Serpent-man sorcerer: Init +1; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4 + poison; DC 14 Fort save or painful spasms for 1d6 dmg) or sword +4 melee (1d6); AC 12 (plus *magic shield*); HD

1d10+2+4d4; hp 21; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+5 spell check modifier; *comprehend languages, detect magic, flaming hands, magic missile, magic shield, read magic, mirror image, shatter*), immune to *sleep* spells, hypnotic gaze 1/day; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L.

Ape-men (2): Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4+3); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 17, 14; MV 20' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP +10 to hide checks in jungle terrain; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

If the PCs trigger the trap in 3-2, H'lisk prepares for battle, casting *mirror image* and *magic shield* upon himself. Otherwise, these spells are the first ones cast while the ape-men engage the party. He then follows up with his ranged spells. H'lisk uses his hypnotic gaze on opponents that close with him, commanding them to abandon the fight and depart the tower. If his mind control fails, he *shatters* their weapons and armor if possible before using his magic, sword, and bite attack on his

| AREA 4-1 SERPENT DOOR PUZZLE - SEE HANDOUT A | | |
|--|--|---|
| Serpents facing away from the door | | No effect; door remains locked. |
| Serpents facing towards the door | | Arms trap. A sound similar to a bolt being thrown is heard, but the door becomes electrified. A PC touching the trapped door suffers 2d8 damage (DC 12 Fort save for half damage). A DC 15 Find trap check detects the trap. Trap cannot be disarmed except by arranging the tiles correctly. |
| Serpents arranged so each is facing the tail of the one next to it (clockwise-fashion) | | No effect; door remains locked. |
| Serpents arranged so each is facing the tail of the one next to it (counter-clockwise-fashion) | | Sound of a bolt being thrown; door is unlocked. |
| Any other arrangement | | No effect. |

assailants. H'lisk is immune to *sleep*, the result of a steady regimen of serpent-man drugs he's been using to remain awake while awaiting his master's return. See 4-2 for more details on this drug. H'lisk wears an electrum diadem decorated with a cobra's head containing a pair of bloodstone eyes (total value 100 gp) and bears a serpentine metal bracer on his left arm. The bracer is magical and allows the wearer to *charm* normal and giant serpents as per the spell (+3 spell check modifier) once per day.

On the inside of the door frame of this room's entrance is an iron lever. It arms and disarms the trap in 3-2. When the PCs enter the room, the lever is in the up (armed) position.

The beacon can be deactivated by removing the blood-sucking tubes from the Antehumans restrained on the slabs. Pulling the tubes free inflicts 1d6 points of damage on the creatures, perhaps slaying them in the process (each has 1d4 hp remaining). It takes 2 rounds to remove the numerous tubes from each subject, but doing so causes the burning beacon ray to dim. After all three Antehumans are disconnected from the beacon, the light is completely extinguished. The beacon itself can also be destroyed with edged weapons. Treat it as AC 12 and having 45 hit points. When reduced to zero hit points, the great organic lantern goes dark and the tubes can be removed from the Antehumans without injury.

A strange contraption consisting of fleshy, fluid-filled bladders and bellow-like devices with levers stands against the wall. This device is the Pharos' temporal transporter that moves the tower along the time stream. A DC 15 Intelligence check identifies the object as an arcane mechanism, but not its purpose. A PC attempting to operate the device, or who pierces any of the five fluid reservoirs causes the device to malfunction, inadvertently triggering a creeping rot that begins eating away at the Pharos' organic construction. Patchy, gray-green corruption appears throughout the Pharos, rotting the tower from top to bottom. This decay destroys the Pharos in one hour, turning the turret into a mass of stinking jelly that flows into the lake.

PCs (and other inhabitants) can flee the tower easily before its complete destruction, but the acidity of the rot destroys anything of value left behind.

A locked metal door stands in the southwestern wall. Show the players **Handout A** when they approach it. The metallic frame surrounding the door bears twelve 6" square plates, each one etched with an elongated serpent. Four tiles are placed in the lintel and four are on either side of the door. Inspection of the tiles reveals they can be spun, allowing the serpent on each to face either towards the door, away from it, looking up or looking down. Spinning the tiles to orient the serpents' facing produces different effects as indicated on the table on page 6. Lacking a keyhole, the door cannot be picked.

Area 4-2 – H'lisk's Chamber: *This uncomfortably warm room contains a simple pallet lacking bedclothes, a wardrobe fashioned from the great bole of a tree, and a stone table holding a number of thin metal sheets. A low-sided box filled with shredded woodchips lies across from the bed.*

H'lisk occasionally rests here, but it is more often occupied only by the serpent-man's pets, a pair of giant trilobites that nest amongst the woodchips. They emerge to investigate intruders and attack if not immediately thrown a scrap of food to appease their hunger.

Giant Trilobites (2): Init -3; Atk bite +3 melee (dmg 1d4); AC 16; HD 1d8+2; hp 8, 7; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +3; AL N.

The bed and box are empty of anything of interest or value. The tree-trunk wardrobe holds several robes and three clay vials atop a high shelf. Two of the vials are empty; the third contains a gummy resin that has a strong floral odor. This substance is a serpent-man drug that allows the user to function without sleep for up to a week at a time and renders him immune to magical *sleep*. It is specially designed to work with a serpent-man's physiology, but other species can benefit from the drug in a lesser manner. A non-serpent-man consuming

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sometimes it's worth suffering through the villain's monologue where he reveals his master plan now that the heroes are powerless to prevent it from coming to fruition (or so he believes). During playtesting, one party chose to let H'lisk ramble on and charged directly up the ramp to confront him before the serpent-man could prepare to repel them. In their haste, the party ran straight into the rampway trap! They survived, but were at a severe disadvantage from their wounds when confronting H'lisk in the final encounter.

The final battle with H'lisk appears to favor the party in simple numbers. Provided they've all survived this far, they outnumber H'lisk and his minions 2:1. But in the random world of DCC RPG, good and bad dice rolls can really make a difference. In one playtest, H'lisk blew his spell check roll for his *mirror image* spell, not once, but twice. He later made up for it with a massively successful *magic missile* that resulted in all six of the PCs taking damage. Thus are the swings and roundabouts of *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG*.

Originally, H'lisk was given a second d16 action die due to his use of the serpent-man drug regimen he is using to help even out the numerical imbalance between forces. However, during playtesting, that additional die (even if lower on the dice chain) caused the forces of evil to wipe the floor with the PCs! The final battle ended with H'lisk slain, but at the cost of all but one PC. The two ape-men were uninjured as the PCs wisely concentrated their efforts on H'lisk, and the surviving PC had to flee for his life.

If the PCs are careful and lucky enough to disarm/bypass the rampway trap, they'll have a greater chance of overcoming H'lisk and his allies, as the serpent-man will initially lack the advantages of his *mirror image* and *magic shield* spells.

the drug can remain awake for up to 48 hours without ill effect and gains a +4 bonus to saves vs. sleep during that time. There are two uses remaining in the vial. A metal coffer at the bottom of the wardrobe holds 15 unworked, semi-precious stones (5 gp value each). The dressing cabinet itself is worth 50 gp due to its odd construction, but weighs 300 lbs.

The metal sheets are inscribed with angled lettering. This writing is in the serpent-man language and contains the magical formulae for all of H'lisk's known spells.

Area 5-1 – Tower Roof: *A concave membranous dome occupies the center of the tower's flat room. A 10' diameter ray of searing blood-red light emerges from the dome to shine directly upwards into the clouds overhead, carving a hole through the thunderheads.*

The beacon's light is extremely intense and anyone foolish enough to attempt to peer down through the membrane-covered dome to the area below must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or be permanently blinded by the light. Even if the save is made, the beam is too bright to allow an observer to see through the semi-translucent covering. The membrane resists attempt to breach it as the tower's walls, but attempts to hew through it alert H'lisk of intruders.

S'LISSAKK'S ARRIVAL



Whenever one or more PCs depart the tower after their confrontation with H'lisk (which may be a result of the serpent-man's hypnotic gaze), read the following:

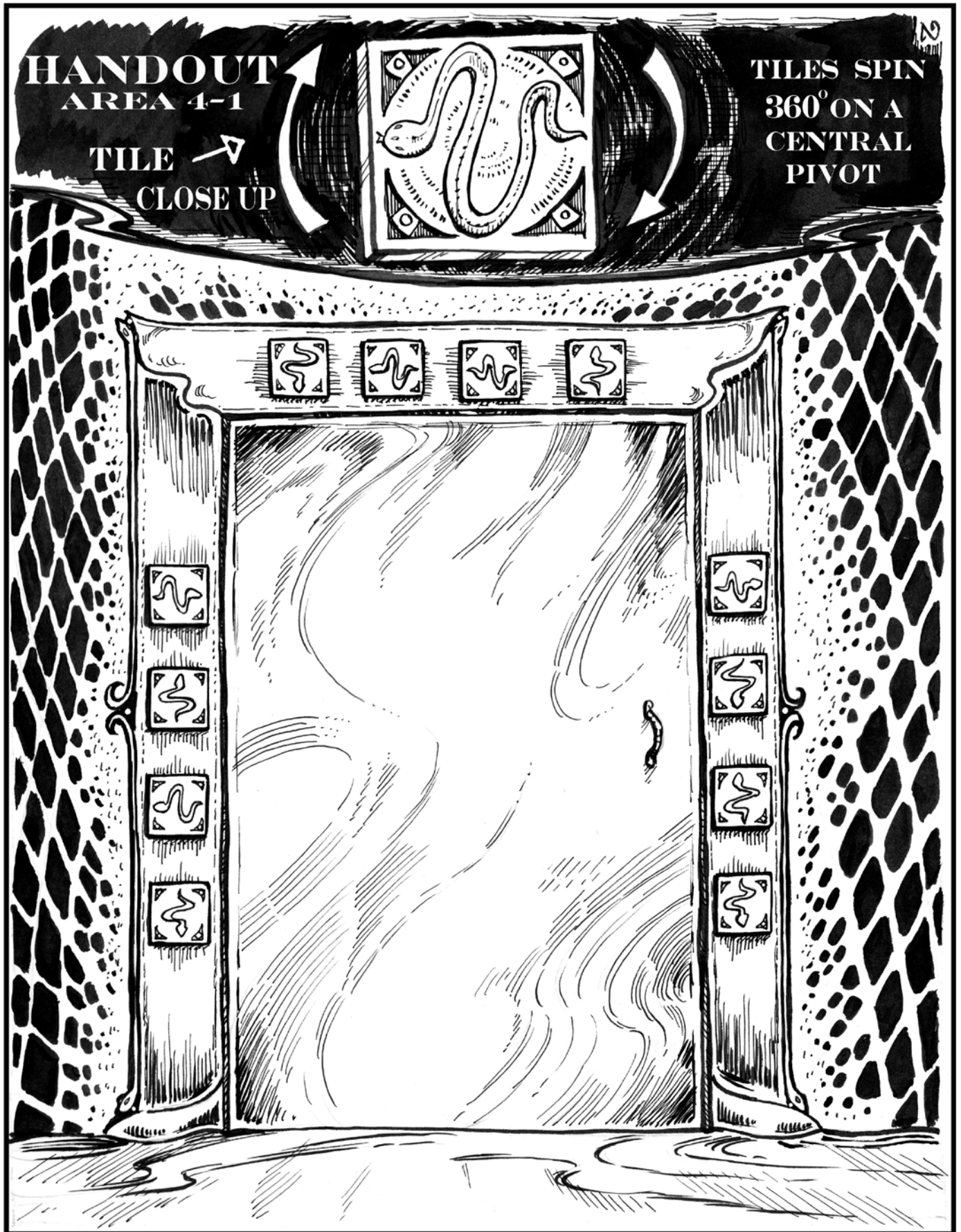
As you exit the weird tower, a roaring noise sounds in the heavens above. Looking skyward, you witness a burning orb streaking across the sky, its radiance making it visible even through the clouds overhead. A rumbling thunder accompanies the orb's rapid descent. It appears only moments away from striking the earth.

The burning object is S'lissakk's void-craft re-entering the atmosphere and it is only minutes away from landing. The craft's landing point depends on whether or not the Pharos' beacon is still functioning at this time. If the PCs have not extinguished the guiding light of the tower, the craft lands in the lake beside the tower, slowing abruptly at the last moment to splash down in the water, throwing up a cloud of hissing steam and rippling waves. It bobs the surface a moment later. The craft is a large, smoking, oval mass of charred vine-like vegetation, craggy igneous rock, and seared metal roughly the size of a small keep. It floats ominously on the lake's surface as if awaiting investigation.

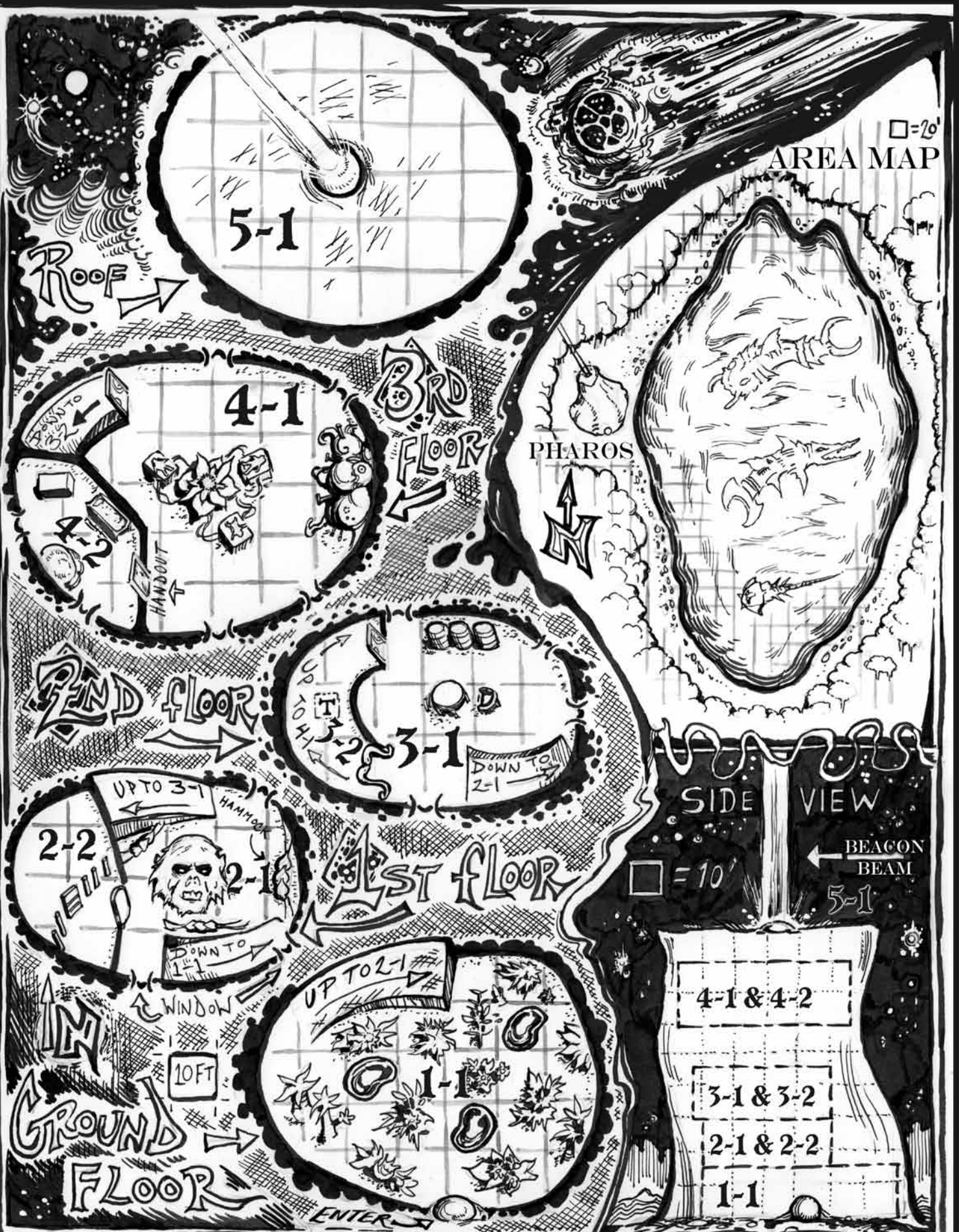
If the PCs have destroyed or deactivated the Pharos' beacon, the craft loses its illuminated guide path and comes to rest some distance away from the tower. Its exact landing place is left to the judge's discretion, and depending on the judge's desires (and whether or not he possesses a cruel streak), the craft might land somewhere else in the forest, in nearby mountains, or perhaps even on the very town the PCs' departed from to investigate the Pharos! Regardless of its arrival place, its mysteries and dangers beg investigation and PCs unmotivated to locate and explore the craft on their own are likely to be hired to do so by local authorities.

The interior of S'lissakk's craft and its contents are left to the judge's devising for now, but may be detailed in a future adventure by Goodman Games. For the moment, assuming the PCs have defeated H'lisk and his minions, the party is triumphant and the mysteries of the Pharos of Scales are solved. More adventures await them and, if this is the players' first exposure to *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG*, a new and exciting world of roleplaying remains to be enjoyed!

HANDOUT A



□ = 20'
AREA MAP



THE JEWELER THAT DEALT IN STARDUST

A Level 3 Adventure

Writer: Harley Stroh • Playtesters: Dave Brown, Rae Brown, Patrick Carmichael, Michael Crane, Doug Keester, Kate Zaynard, Mark Zaynard; (Gary Con 2012) Tavis Allison, Chad Cartwright, Rick Hull, Jeffery Klingbeil, Ryan Peel, Christy Powell, Robin Powers

*"Tis no crime to steal from a thief."
-Unknown Punjaran Bravo*

At its heart, this is a heist adventure. As such, it can be played by a party composed entirely of thieves. However, if things go awry—as they should, in any good heist—the respective skills of the wizard, warrior, and cleric will be in high demand. The adventure rewards intelligent, cautious, clever play—but the inverse is often just as much fun.

Students of Appendix N will surely notice references to key works. Judges are encouraged to read *Tower of the Elephant*, by Robert E. Howard, and Fritz Leiber's *Lean Times in Lankhmar* prior to running the adventure.

BACKGROUND

The fences of Punjar are infamous for their cunning and greed, and Boss Ogo is no exception. Operating under the guise of a jeweler, Ogo does a brisk trade in stolen goods, enjoying the protection of a gang of bravos and thugs.

But even the wary eye of a gang boss is no promise of surety in Punjar's deadly environs. For the last month, no one has seen or heard from Ogo. The jeweler's door is barred, his shutters locked, and no smoke escapes the shop's chimney. Like ravens circling a stinking carcass, the bravos and pinch thieves of the Souk smell a fortune for the taking.

All that is required is a band of rogues audacious enough to cross Boss Ogo, skilled enough to survive his house of traps, and lucky enough to make it out alive.

BOSS OGO

Unbeknownst to his band, Boss Ogo yet lives—after a fashion. Nearly two months ago he fenced a gem stolen from a travelling sorcerer. Though appearing as a simple, rough amethyst, the crystal can serve as a portal and beacon to the beings of the outer dark.

In his amateur study of the crystal, Ogo has undergone a conversion, believing that his role in this life is to usher Ygiiz, the Spider-Mother, into this realm. For the last month, he has spent every waking hour studying the crystal, seeking to activate its powers.

And at last, Boss Ogo has succeeded. The fence and jeweler has opened a portal to the space between the stars, luring agents of Ygiiz with his own soul and the souls of his gang members.

In the Boss' inexplicable absence, his second in command—one Sarzuk the Devil—has taken over leadership of the gang. Sarzuk has posted guards to watch over the shop, and is ready to mobilize the surviving gang members at the first sign of rogues in the house.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Area | Type | Encounter |
|-------|------|--|
| Start | C | 2 rogues |
| 1-1 | C | 3 Spiders of Ygiiz |
| 1-2 | T | Poison needle trap Pit trap |
| 1-3 | T | Canary floor |
| 2-2 | C/P | 1 or more shadows |
| 2-3 | C/P | Boss Ogo 4 or more Spiders of Ygiiz |
| 3-2 | P | False trap |
| | T | Triple blade trap |
| 3-3 | T | Spear trap |
| | T | Falling block trap |
| | T | Sleeping gas trap |

A SURPLUS OF SPIDERS

In the course of the adventure, the PCs are likely to encounter both natural spiders and the Spiders of Ygiiz. The first are perfectly benign and pose no threat to the PCs. The Spiders of Ygiiz, however, are extraplanar creatures that hunger for the flesh of the living. To avoid confusion, instances of the Spiders of Ygiiz are always capitalized.

JUDGE'S NOTES

The adventure is nominally set in the decadent city of Punjar, where Cheap Street intersects Dowager Alley. For those not playing in the Known Realms, judges are encouraged to set the adventure in any major city of their choice.

Key to the adventure is impressing upon the players the furtive nature of their mission. A stray ray of candlelight, an unhooded lantern, an accidental crash, or the clash of blades can all easily draw unwanted attention.



Except where noted, there is no light within the shop, and the interior of the shop is as silent as the grave. For the most part, the only light will be the glimmer of the characters' candles reflecting off gewgaws, and the only sound will be the pad of their own footsteps. The read-aloud text presumes that the PCs carry torches or candles.

Finally, the second and third floors sport high ceilings (9' and 15', respectively) befitting Ogo's extraordinary success as a fence. Thieves will find ample room to both climb and hide amid the wooden beams, and warriors will always have a handy chandelier nearby for their dramatic Deeds of Arms.

PLAYER START

A band of torchbearers passes the shop of Ogo the Jeweler, where Cheap Street intersects Dowager Alley. Their brands sputter and spit in the darkness as the cold rain courses off the tile roof, pouring down into the street and draining into a nearby sewer. You flex your fingers to ward off the chill, silently thankful for a night without moon or stars.

As the last of the torchbearers pass out of sight, you nod to your companions. It is time.

Show the players Handout A, and allow them to form a plan on how best to assault Ogo's shop. A brief summary of the most common means and the PCs' likelihood of success follows.

The Great Door: The main entrance to the shop is a large wooden door covered in hammered copper that has tarnished to a green patina. The door is secured with stout iron hinges and is—as thieves quickly learn—barred from the inside. The door can be broken down with 10 minutes of hard work by anyone with an axe or with a DC 20 Str check. The door is easily unbarred and opened from the inside (area 1-2).

Windows: The shop's windows are shuttered and locked (pick lock, DC 10). To a rogue's dismay, however, the windows are all *also* bricked over from the inside, offering no means of entering the shop. To avoid confusion, these windows are not shown on the judge's map.

Only one widow affords a means of egress. The slim rose window, set high in the south-facing eave, has not been bricked over. The stained glass window depicts a single flaming eye, a testament to Ogo's mystic aspirations. The window can be reached with a DC 15 climb check or roped down to from above. The window is set in place and must be broken in or removed.

Sewers: A grate set in the center of the street offers access to the sewers beneath the shop. The grate is easily removed, leading to area B-A below.

Garden: Scaling the house wall is a simple affair for trained second-story men (climb, DC 10). See area 1-1 for the strange scene awaiting the PCs.

Chimney: Rogues ascending to the peak of the roof (climb, DC 15) discover that the chimney has been warded against intruders. The top of the chimney is channeled through three narrow clay pipes, each barred with iron.

However, once the PCs are *within* the shop, the fireplace chim-

ney offers an efficient (if sooty) means of passing between floors. The chimney is narrow, however. Humans in metal armor are unable to squeeze through the floors, as are all but the slimmest of dwarves.

Sarzuk's Rogues: Hidden to all but the most cautious of PCs, a pair of rogues lurks atop a nearby rooftop. Agents of Sarzuk the Devil, the pair have been tasked with ensuring that no one—especially not any thieves—disturbs Ogo's shop.

Brutish break-in techniques (as adjudicated by the judge) alert the rogues. The pair has a small, trained blackbird kept in a hooded cage. At the first sight of trouble, the pair releases the bird. Keep informal track of time once the bird is released. Once Sarzuk and his thugs arrive, he sends six of his men in to flush out the PCs, while waiting outside with the rest of his band. The rogues sent after the PCs conform to the stats below.

Sarzuk and his band of bravos arrive at the scene 1d20+20 minutes after the bird is released. See **Epilogue: Cheap Street Brawlers** below for details on this confrontation.

Rogues (2): Init +2; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dart +3 missile fire (1d4); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 6 each, 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area B-A – Cheap Street Sewer: *The stench of sewage is nearly overwhelming, causing your companions to gag, even as it chokes your sputtering torches. Rats squeal at the invaders of their realm, watching with beady eyes. The clay sewers run in either direction, extending beyond the reach of your torchlight.*

A secret door is hidden beneath plaster in the east wall of the sewer. Dwarves immediately recognize the change of texture from the clay sewer pipe, but others must deduce the location of the secret door from its relation to the shop or by careful searching.

If the thin layer plaster is chipped away, the PCs discover thin wooden lath. Breaking through the lath permits entry to area B-B.

Area B-B – Anchor of Ygiiz: *The long, narrow basement is seemingly overrun with spiders. Webs hang on the low ceilings and walls. Tiny black spiders scurry about, crackling underfoot.*

In the flickering light you spy the forms of three men hanging from the ceiling. Each is wrapped in a shroud of webs, with only their mouths exposed. A constant stream of spiders courses in and out of the helpless, gaping mouths.

The spiders are natural and pose no danger to the PCs and are simply drawn by the power sources anchoring the Spiders of Ygiiz to the material plane.

A close inspection of the webbed forms reveals that, despite the constant swarm of spiders crawling in and out of the open mouths, the bodies are still alive. If the PCs cut the webs away, they discover that the bodies are wrapped in soiled cotton bandages inscribed with dozens of repeating runes. Wizards and clerics inspecting the runes immediately associate them with the worship of Ygiiz, a being from the outer darkness.

Thieves succeeding on a DC 13 read languages check (alternately, wizards or clerics succeeding on a DC 15 Int check) translate the runes to the following:

*one soul to entice and bind
to the mighty mother of all crawlers
I dedicate thee*

The runes are repeated for the length of the cotton bandages.

The bodies serve as anchors for the Spiders in area 1-1; slaying the hanging bodies (requiring only a single, deliberate strike) sends the Spiders of Ygiiz shrieking back to the outer dark.

The bodies were once rogues in the service of Ogo. PCs brazen enough to search the bodies discover that each of the bodies carries 1d24 cp, 1d14 sp, and 1d5 gp.

The third rogue has an enchanted mithril dagger hidden in his boot. The smith's mark on the pommel indicates that the blade was forged by the famed elven smith, Eluniver Eluchil. The dagger is perfectly balanced, granting bonuses to ranged attacks: a +1 to hit and critical threat range of 19-20 on all ranged strikes.

Area B-C – Iron Oubliette: *The narrow pen is composed of iron bars reaching to the ceiling. A vertical chute rises through the stone above.*

PCs falling through the pit trap in area 1-2 plummet into this caged pen. The pen is narrow and tall, like a standing coffin composed of iron bars. The gate is locked, requiring a DC 10 pick lock check to open, or a DC 20 Str check to burst. If more than one PC falls into the pit trap, the pen's confines are even tighter, limiting movement and penalizing any Pick Lock or Strength checks by -1 for each additional character trapped.

As soon as a PC falls into the pit, the spiders in area B-B swarm towards the cage. The spiders do their best to spin webs around the victim, binding him within the iron cage as an offering to Ygiiz. They pose no real threat, but the PCs need not know this.

Area 1-1 – The Garden Path: *The walled garden is thick with webs. The silvery tendrils float in the pale moonlight, hanging from the lone, skeletal tree and down upon the garden. Despite the rain, thousands of small black spiders swarm over the webs, black stars in a silken sky. A lone crow flaps weakly, trapped amid the webs.*

The swarms of spiders and their webs are utterly natural and pose no threat to the PCs. The spiders are attracted to the weird, otherworldly presence of the Spiders of Ygiiz. The Spiders of Ygiiz lurk beneath the eaves of the shop roof, all but invisible in the near-darkness.

Among the first beings drawn through Ogo's starry portal, the Spiders are not arachnids in the true sense. Spiders most resemble enormous six-legged ticks, the size of large hounds. The Spiders are perfectly black, so dark that they reflect no light whatsoever, appearing as only the absence of any color, as if reality itself had been cut away in the Spider's form.

The Spiders wait for the PCs to enter the darkened garden before attacking—springing through the air and bearing their victims to the ground. The touch of the Spiders is as cold as the void, searing targets with frostbite.

A successful attack by a Spider of Ygiiz indicates the PC is grappled, granting the Spider +4 to hit on subsequent attacks. A PC can escape a Spider's freezing mandibles with a DC 15 Str check or by dealing a Spider 5 or more points of damage in a single round.

On a successful second attack, a Spider tears freezing chunks out of its victim, permitting the natural spiders in the garden

to swarm into the wound, eager to please their extraplanar allies (no attack needed).

On the third round a PC is pinned, a Spider of Ygiiz makes a final attack attempt, crushing the spiders infesting the wound, releasing a flood of toxins (DC 13 Fort save or unconsciousness). The target cannot be roused by allies from the toxic coma and only awakens with a successful DC 15 Fort save. The target may make one attempt per round, but after three failed checks, the PC dies.

The door leading from the garden into the shop is locked but not trapped (pick lock, DC 15).

Spiders of Ygiiz (3): Init +1; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 18 each; MV 35' or leap 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

Area 1-2 – Ogo's House of the Tarnished Jewel: *A long, worn counter runs the length of the dusty shop. Behind the counter stands a row of safe box drawers, certainly the holding place for Ogo's inestimable fortune!*

Contrary to hopeful rumors, most of Ogo's legendary riches were sold weeks ago to fund his obsession with Ygiiz. The objects that remain are largely worthless, though this is difficult to determine in the darkness.

The wall behind the counter is lined with safe boxes. Some stand open and dusty, while others are locked and trapped. Astute PCs may avoid many of the traps and distractions by correctly deducing that the shop was ransacked weeks ago. Avaricious PCs determined to loot the safe boxes will have little to show for their efforts.

Safe Box A: The drawer stands ajar and empty, save for dust and cobwebs. A dusty blade extends from an open, once-hidden panel. The blade is encrusted with dried poison that now poses no danger.

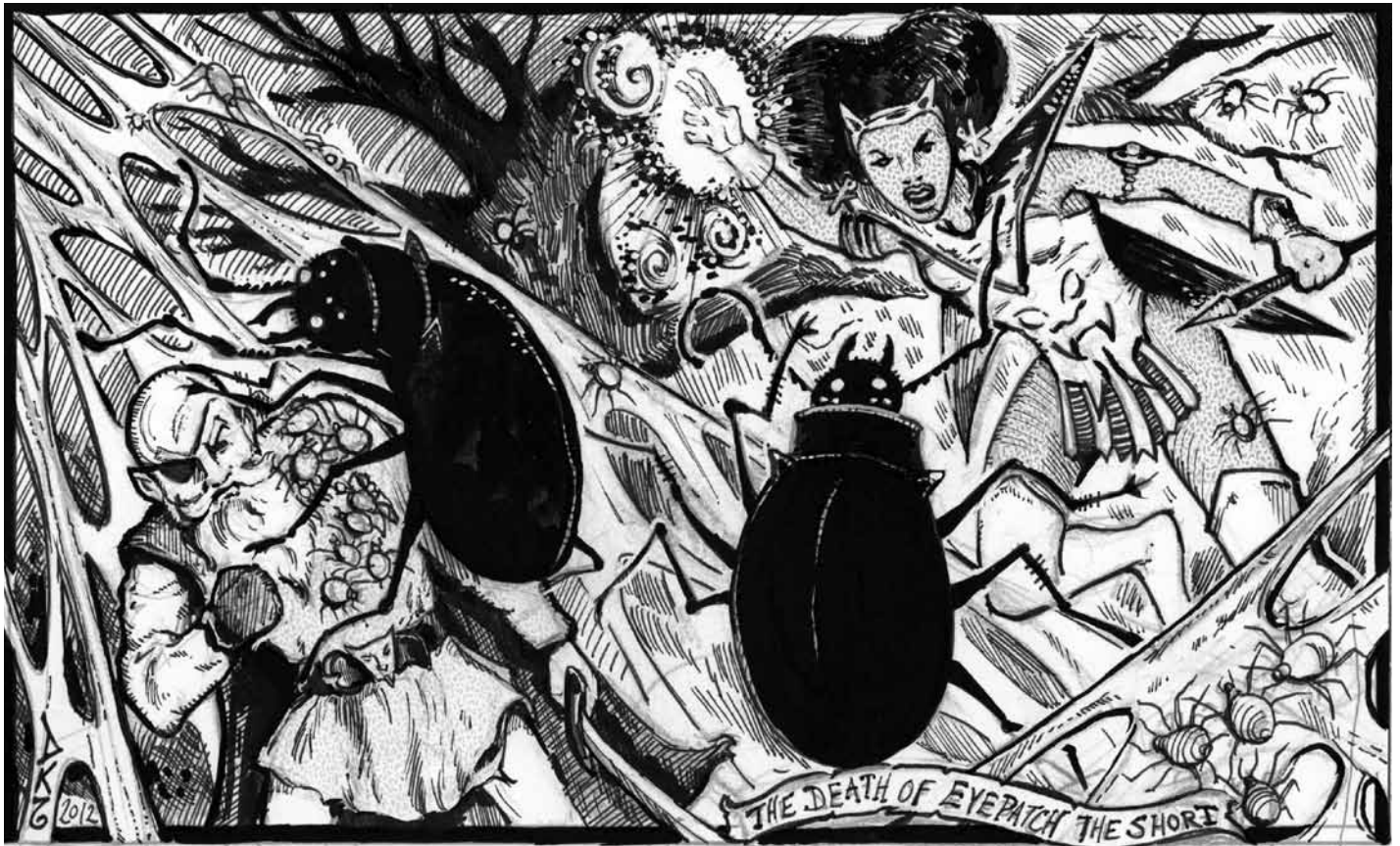
Safe Box B: The safe box is locked (pick lock, DC 15) and trapped (find/disable trap, DC 10) with a poisoned needle. Any failed attempt to open the lock or disarm the trap triggers the needle (Atk +5, dmg 1d3 plus poison: DC 12 Fort save or -3 Agility). A velvet pouch rests inside the safe box, holding 10 gems. The perfectly faceted gems appear to be worth 100 gp each but are in fact made of paste.

Safe Box C: The drawer stands open. The safe box is empty.

Safe Box D: The drawer is unlocked but trapped (find/disable trap, DC 15). If the drawer is disturbed, a pit trap opens in the floor, dropping all within 5 feet of the drawer into area B-C in the basement below (DC 20 Ref save or 2d6 falling damage).

Safe Box E: The safe box is open and not trapped. Inside the drawer is a silver necklace set with rubies. The rubies are all paste, but the necklace appears to be worth some 500 gp until the false rubies are identified. The silver in the necklace can fetch 5 gp.

Safe Box F: The safe box is open and not trapped. A panel conceals a hidden compartment in the base of the drawer. The remnants of the fence's fortune lie inside atop a velvet pillow: 3 rubies (worth 50 gp each), 4 diamonds (worth 100 gp each), and a jewel-encrusted dagger forged in the shape of a serpent (worth 150 gp).



Area 1-3 – The Speaking Hall: The floor of this area is sprung so that any weight causes the floor to shriek horribly, alerting the entire house. The floors can be avoided by scaling the walls (climb, DC 13).

While the PCs won't know this, there is nothing living within the shop to respond to the alarm. However, the judge can use the floors to alert the PCs if Sarzuk's bravos pursue the PCs into the shop.

Area 1-4 – Kitchen: *The filthy kitchen is overrun with dust and cobwebs. A large table stands in the center of the chamber, opposite a fireplace. An iron cauldron hangs in the fireplace above dead embers.*

The chimney set in the south wall of the kitchen rises through the second and third floor. With a DC 10 climb check a PC can ascend to the next floor.

Area 1-5 – Storeroom: *The small storeroom is stacked high with barrels, crates, and casks. A coat of thick dust hangs over all.*

A trapdoor rests in the northeast corner of the chamber, concealed beneath an empty crate. Lifted, the trap door reveals a ladder descending to area B-B.

Area 2-1 – Study: *Mounds of tomes, weird librams, and discarded scrolls litter the floor of this chamber. Loose sheaves, torn from their spines, are cast about as if by a madman. It seems as if not a single volume has survived the violence.*

Boss Ogo amassed a considerable library in his quest for esoteric wisdom. Sadly—as any wizard or cleric can attest—the library is entirely worthless superstition and self-affirming drivel.

However, true knowledge is easily mistaken for twaddle. If a wizard or elf searches through the library, there is a slim chance (Luck check, DC 15) that the caster discovers the material necessary to learn a spell of the judge's choice.

Area 2-2 – Shadow Play: *A lone crimson candle burns in the center of the barren room, resting atop the horned skull of some weird goat-demon circumscribed by a magic circle carved into the floor. The light seems unusually stark here, the shadows unusually sharp.*

Boss Ogo placed the candle as defense against mortal intruders. If anyone steps foot into the flickering light, the candle causes his shadow to animate. While the shadow remains attached to the PC's form, the shadow lashes out, attacking nearby PCs, or—failing that—the PC itself.

The shadow attacks as its PC, with identical weapons and damage. The PC has no control over the shadow once it is animated; even if a PC casts aside his weapons, the shadow can continue to attack with any weapons it was "born" with. The shadows cannot use magic and continue to attack until their masters are slain.

Once a shadow is animated, retreating back into darkness only releases the shadow to move about freely. The shadows can only be harmed by magical weapons, magic, or by the faith of clerics.

If the candle is extinguished, the shadows cease to exist. However, the magic circle encircling the skull repulses all living creatures and *most* non-magical weapons. To extinguish the candle, a PC must either make a ranged attack against AC 10 with a magical weapon, or AC 20 with a non-magical weapon, or deal the candle 5 or more points of damage from a focused spell.

Finally, if the PCs are somehow able to flood the entire chamber with uniform light (i.e., if no shadows can be cast, whatsoever) any animated shadows are temporarily banished, returning after 1d3 rounds.

If the PCs somehow recover the goat-demon skull, they hear a rattling within its cranium cavity. If the skull is smashed,



the PCs discover a faceted piece of amber; trapped within the amber is a creature resembling a fly.

Wizards and clerics instantly recognize the gem as the phylactery of a minor demon. Possessing the *demonic amber* permits the PC to attempt a Personality check to command lesser demons (type I, DC 15; type II, DC 20), at the judge's discretion.

Shadow: Init as PC; Atk as PC; AC 15; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV as PC; Act as PC; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

Area 2-3 - Chamber of Stardust: *This chamber is cast in shadows so deep that even the light of your torches seems diminished. In the center of the chamber sits a large violet crystal glowing with an inner light. Above the crystal swirls a strange column of spiraling stars, nebulae, and galaxies cast in miniature.*

The door to this chamber is locked (pick locks, DC 15, or Str check, DC 20). A haphazard pile of discarded furniture stands in the southeast corner of the room. Finally, the walls, ceiling and floor are covered by hundreds of thousands of small black spiders—literally a shifting tapestry of arachnids.

Boss Ogo stands directly behind the crystal, one hand touching the stone, though the bulk of his frame is not immediately visible. Four Spiders of Ygiiz are feeding from his body. Ogo only becomes visible when the fuliginous extraplanar ticks detach from his body, revealing him bit by bit.

Boss Ogo is haggard and gaunt, shrouded in drifting veils of cobwebs as spiders course over his skeletal frame. But his eyes are aflame with the madness of divine knowledge. On his silent command, the fell Spiders of Ygiiz move immediately to attack the PCs.

For his part, Ogo does little more in combat than howl out at the PCs in madness. So long as he maintains contact with the crystal, Ogo is able to direct the natural spiders, causing them to swarm at his command. This is always accompanied by declarations of the PCs as heathens to be sacrificed to Ygiiz, the Spider-Mother. Ogo can target one PC a round, causing thousands of spiders to swarm over the PC (no attack needed).

A swarmed PC suffers a -4 penalty to any skill checks, including attacks and spell checks. Ogo must concentrate on the target to maintain the swarm. If he breaks concentration, the swarm dissipates after 1d3 rounds. The swarm dissipates immediately if the PC spends an action sweeping the spiders from his body.

Alternately, instead of directing the spiders, Ogo can attempt to summon an additional Spider through the crystal. On a successful DC 20 Will save, Ogo succeeds in drawing an additional Spider through the portal.

The Spiders are anchored to this plane by Boss Ogo's soul. Therefore, if Ogo is slain, the Spiders are cast back into the outer dark. However, so long as the crystal remains active, Ogo cannot be slain—Ygiiz feeds life force back through the

crystal, keeping the gang boss clinging to life.

In order to break the crystal's hold on Ogo, PCs must separate him from the crystal. This can be accomplished with a Mighty Deed of Arms (bearing the gang boss away or—more directly—severing his arm). Alternately, a daring (or foolhardy) character can attempt to wrest mastery of the crystal from Ogo. A PC can attempt to upset Ogo's control by touching the crystal and making a contested Will save against the gang boss. If the PC wins the save, Ogo's connection is broken. The PC may choose to close the portal, or far more foolishly, attempt to control the crystal (see below).

If the PC fails the save, he must attempt a second DC 18 Will save or be dominated by Ogo and forced to turn his blades and magic against his former allies. The PC can attempt to break the domination once per round (Will save, DC 18).

Finally, the crystal can also be destroyed. The first 25 points of damage cause cracks to spider-web through the crystal. Once the crystal has taken 25 or more points of damage, any subsequent attack risks destroying the crystal. Roll 1d20; a result of 15 or better (modified by the attacking PC's Luck) indicates the crystal has been destroyed, severing Ogo's connection to Ygiiz and banishing the Spiders back to the outer darkness.

In the wake of the shattered crystal, PCs can collect 1d5 handfuls of the stardust of Ygiiz (see area 3-4 for details on this new magic item).

The Crystal of the Outer Dark: The amethyst-like crystal acts as a focal point for a vast collection of galaxies and distant worlds, serving as both a beacon and portal to beings that exist in the frozen darkness between the stars.

Little good can come of the crystal's dark potential. Bending the crystal to one's will requires absolute mental and emotional mastery, anything less invites instant madness and domination. A character attempting to actively use the crystal (as opposed to simply unseating Ogo) must succeed on a DC 20 Will save; the judge should roll the check in secret.

On a failed save, the PC is dominated by a being of the judge's choosing. Henceforth, the PC is merely a shell, acting at the whim of an unknowable being. Should the PC be somehow freed from the crystal's icy embrace, he is forever shorn of his sanity.

Boss Ogo: Init -1; Atk none; AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 8 (infinite while connected to crystal); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to charm or domination, summon Spiders of Ygiiz, command spiders; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +6; AL C.

Spiders of Ygiiz (4): Init +1; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 18 each; MV 35' or leap 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

Area 3-1 - Safehouse: *A number of simple cots rest against the sloping walls of the attic. A rough table sits near the back of a brick chimney beside a stout door reinforced with iron and a narrow set of stairs, descending into darkness.*

Before his conversion, Boss Ogo would hide rogues from authorities (and rival gangs) here, in the shop's attic. The safehouse hasn't seen use in months, and there is little here to interest the PCs.

If the rose window on the south wall is broken or otherwise removed, it allows access to and from the outside.

Area 3-2 – Office of the Fence: *A large, polished desk occupies the back of the chamber. The desk is home to several balance scales of increasing sizes and weights.*

The door to this chamber is locked (pick lock, DC 15). Any attempt to search for traps indicates that the stout door is trapped with a scything blade; this is, in fact, a false trap. A DC 15 find trap check reveals as much, though lesser thieves may be stymied by their failed attempts to disarm a trap that doesn't exist.

This office is where Boss Ogo would conduct his work as a fence. The scales' weights are all slightly off, as would behoove a thief of thieves. Accurate weights are concealed within the desk, along with a brace of six silvered throwing darts, a fighting dagger, and a key ring holding four keys (copper, silver, gold, and electrum, respectively). Characters thinking to inspect the keys note that the copper key is worn, whereas the other keys are unscratched.

A secret door is hidden in the north wall of the office, behind false wooden paneling. Removing the paneling reveals a keyhole. The secret door can be opened with the copper key, but if any other key is tried (or if the lock is unsuccessfully picked) a trio of blades stabs up from the floor: DC 15 Ref save or 1d6+3 damage. The blades withdraw after striking, so that the trap can be triggered multiple times. The trap is easily disarmed with a DC 13 disable trap check.

With suitable climb checks (DC 10), the chimney allows access to the lower floors.

Area 3-3 – Fool's Gold: *The hidden door opens to a long, narrow hall. Opposite you stand three doors, each reinforced with iron and covered in hammered bronze. A simple keyhole stands in the center of each door.*

Each of the three doors is false and trapped, intended to lure would-be-thieves to their doom. Any attempt to unlock the doors triggers the associated trap. Characters thinking to inspect the faces of the locks to look for scratches note that none of the keyholes bear any sign of wear.

Northwest Door: This door is protected by a trap firing spears from the western wall (DC 13 Ref save or 1d8 dmg). A total of four spears are fired; check for each PC in the hall until all the spears have found a target or each PC has made a save.

Center Door: This door is protected by a series of large stone blocks that fall from the ceiling, targeting anyone standing in the hall (DC 15 Ref save or 1d5 dmg).

Northeast Door: This door is protected by a fragile vial of *sleeping gas* hidden within the lock. The gas is sufficient to fill the entire hall (DC 12 Fort save or sleep for 1d5 rounds).

The true vault is hidden behind a secret door in the east wall. While the door itself is masterfully built and well hidden to sight or touch, its simple keyhole is plainly visible, though easily overlooked.

The secret door can either be picked (pick lock, DC 17) or opened with the copper key. If any other key is used, or if the attempt to pick the lock fails, all three of the hall's traps are triggered in quick succession (first spears, then *sleeping gas*, and finally the falling blocks).

Area 3-4 – Ogo's Vault: *The narrow vault is lined with shelves. Sadly, nearly every shelf stands barren, save for a thick coat of dust, a few spare stacks of coins, and a scattering of jewels.*

A quick inspection of the vault reveals the last of Ogo's once-legendary hoard:

- 1d100 gp arrayed in stacks of 10
- 2d4x25 sp in bags of 25
- 1d24 pp scattered about on the floor
- 1d5 opals worth 10 gp each
- 1d14 emeralds worth 25 gp each
- A single ruby worth 5d100 gp
- A black velvet pouch containing three handfuls of the stardust of Ygiiz

The bulk of the treasure is mundane, save for the handfuls of stardust. Adventurers opening the pouch discover small granular crystals resembling quartz that glow with a faint, sickly light. Unlike natural crystals, the stardust is malleable in the following ways, with the following effects:

First, the stardust crystals are easily—and curiously—absorbed by living flesh. Firm, deliberate pressure is all that is required to force a handful of crystals beneath the skin. The crystals' properties immediately take effect. First, the PC's skin takes on a paler hue, and violet flecks appear within the PC's cornea. Second the PC must attempt a DC 15 Fort save; on a successful check, the PC gains 1d3 points to his Luck stat. On a failed check, the PC suffers 1d5 points of damage per level. The bonus to one's Luck can only be earned once, but an adventurer must make a Fort save each time a handful of crystals are pressed beneath his skin. If less than a handful is used, the crystals are absorbed but have no effect. Regardless of whether the Fort save was successful or not, any PC imbued with stardust can be instantly and forever monitored by Ygiiz.

Secondly, multiple handfuls of smaller crystals can be forced together to form a single large crystal: a Crystal of the Outer Dark. Once joined, the crystal can only be reduced back to stardust by violent force (see area 2-3). The larger crystal can be used as a focus, permitting PCs to contact the being known as Ygiiz, the Spider-Mother.

EPILOGUE: THE CHEAP STREET BRAWLERS

As the PCs exit the shop, they are confronted by Sarzuk and the remainder of Ogo's gang. Sarzuk is a brute, all too happy to negotiate with the blade of a sword. He offers the PCs one opportunity to surrender all their loot.

If the PCs hesitate, Sarzuk gives a whistle. Bravos pour in from all sides.

Despite their formidable numbers and overpowering greed, Sarzuk and his bravos are not warriors. If Sarzuk or more than half the bravos fall in battle, the rest flee into the night, vowing revenge.

Sarzuk the Devil: Init +5; Atk longsword +6 melee (1d8+3) or javelin +7 missile fire (1d6); AC 17; HD 3d8; hp 16; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

Bravos (2 for every surviving PC): Init +2; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dart +3 missile fire (1d4); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.



THE JEWELER THAT DEALT IN STARDUST

1 FOOT = 1 FOOT



1-1

1-3

1-2

1-4

1-5

FIRST FLOOR

CHEAP STREET

DANGER ALLEY

BASEMENT

SECOND FLOOR

3-4

3-3

3-2

3-1

2-1

2-3

2-2

THIRD FLOOR

UP TO
1-5

B-C

B-B

B-A

TRANSFORM

THE UNDULATING CORRUPTION

A Level 5 Adventure

By Michael Curtis • Playtesters: David Key, Kurt Knoll, Mark Kellenberger, Jack Simonson • Art: Brad McDevitt



The Undulating Corruption is a short adventure designed for four 5th-level characters. At least one party member should be a wizard suffering from corruption. The adventure is intended to be played in a single session. The adventure can be located in any hilly area off the beaten path but should be close to a major town or city.

BACKGROUND



Long ago, an eclectic cult called into the outer dark and drew a creature of Chaos down to earth. Although their intent in summoning this agent of misfortune was nefarious, the cultists discovered that the great beast, which they named the Night Worm, served another purpose: the cleansing of debilitating corruption that plagued many of their numbers. The creature they bound to their cause feasted on corruption, removing the malignant taint from the physical form.

The cult flourished for many years, free to delve into the blackest arts without fear of being consumed completely. Their success was ultimately their undoing. Alerted by the cult's threat, the forces of Law waged war upon the cult and ultimately tracked them to their secret shrine, the Crucible of the Worm, and eradicated the sect in bloody battle. When the fight ended, the forces of order found the Night Worm bound in sorcerous chains, an easy foe to conquer. But before they could slay the beast, wizards amongst them stayed the killing blow. This beast could be made to serve Law, they argued, by removing the same corruption that endangered even wizards of goodly intent. The argument raged for days, but the wizards of Law ultimately prevailed, and the shrine was left intact and under their control.

Although their intent was pure, the wizards, as they are wont to, decided to use the Night Worm to their own benefit, making its unique gift available only to those sorcerers willing to pay for that honor. The shrine's cabal grew greedy and fractious and ultimately corrupted by a moral force that even the Worm could not counter. Eventually, the Worm's wizardly guardians turned upon one another. As each sought to become sole master of the shrine, they destroyed all who knew its secrets and then battled one another. In the end, there were no survivors, and the shrine of the Worm was forgotten. With no one to feed it and still restrained by occult binding, the Night Worm grew hungry in the dark, waiting for the time it could sup once more on corruption and misery.

Despite the attempts to occlude the Crucible's existence, rumors persisted amongst the practitioners of magic and those who seek unguarded fortunes in forgotten delves. Recently, these tales, along with clues to the Crucible's whereabouts, reached two groups: a band of brash tomb raiders and the PCs. Both seek to find the shrine and the wonders purported to lie within.

GETTING STARTED



Through whatever channels the judge desires, the PCs discover the existence of the Crucible of the Worm. They might uncover a moldering scroll that promises that the site can remove even the foulest corruption from a wizard or hear an old song describing the same from the lips of a madman. Regardless of the manner in which the judge introduces the Crucible, it is important that the party knows the shrine can cure sorcerous corruption—especially to the group's wizard, who at this level of experience is likely to be suffering from at least one debilitating taint. How the Crucible achieves such a cleansing should remain a mystery, however. The PCs will discover that soon enough.

The exact location of the Crucible is up to the judge, but for reasons that will soon be apparent, it should be located within a day's travel from a major settlement that is not the party's current base of operation. A sample map of the territory around the Crucible is included with this adventure for the judge's convenience but can be customized to fit his campaign world. It is assumed the PCs embark on horseback, and distances provided on the map reflect mounted travel-times. If the PCs venture to the Crucible on foot, the judge should rescale the distances to accommodate the travel times mentioned in the adventure's text. The party should journey to the shrine from a direction other than that which the Night Worm travels once free. This will place them in a better position to pursue the creature when they reach the Crucible.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Event | Type | Encounter |
|-------|------|----------------------------------|
| 1-1 | C | 4 corruption sludges |
| 1-2 | C | 2 corrupted giant catfish |
| 1-4 | C | The Night Worm & blood-spawn |
| 1-5 | C | Unlimited number of degenaphages |



AREAS OF THE MAP

Area 1-1 – The Worm Unleashed: *You've travelled through the rocky hills for several hours, guided by the scraps of lore you've uncovered regarding the Crucible of the Worm. The sky above has grown leaden and the air is still as if holding its breath in anticipation of the storm to come. The landscape before you is similarly grim: nothing but grey knolls and decrepit scrub grass for as far as the eye can see.*

Suddenly, a thunderous explosion rings out, echoing in the craggy hills. Yet this is no thunderclap! It seems to originate from a distance ahead of you. Looking forward, you see a plume of smoke or dust rising from beyond a hilltop some miles away. A moment later, the air is split again by a titanic roar, as if the land itself was giving birth to something that should not be.

If the party attempts to discern what is happening ahead, the hills block their view, and they have no choice but to approach. Due to the uneven terrain, it takes an hour to reach the site of the Crucible regardless if the PCs are walking or on horseback. Halfway to their goal, the party smells an odor of filth and primordial foulness. As they crest the final hill, they see the following:

The bowl-shaped dell before you has been wrenched by unimaginable forces. The hollow is littered with massive stone blocks cast about like children's toys. A gaping crater emitting a mephitic stench mars the ground, and a haze of dust discolors the air. A wide trail of viscous black matter leads from the crater's edge into the nearby hills. Several amorphous globs of inky slime crawl about the dell, leaving similar

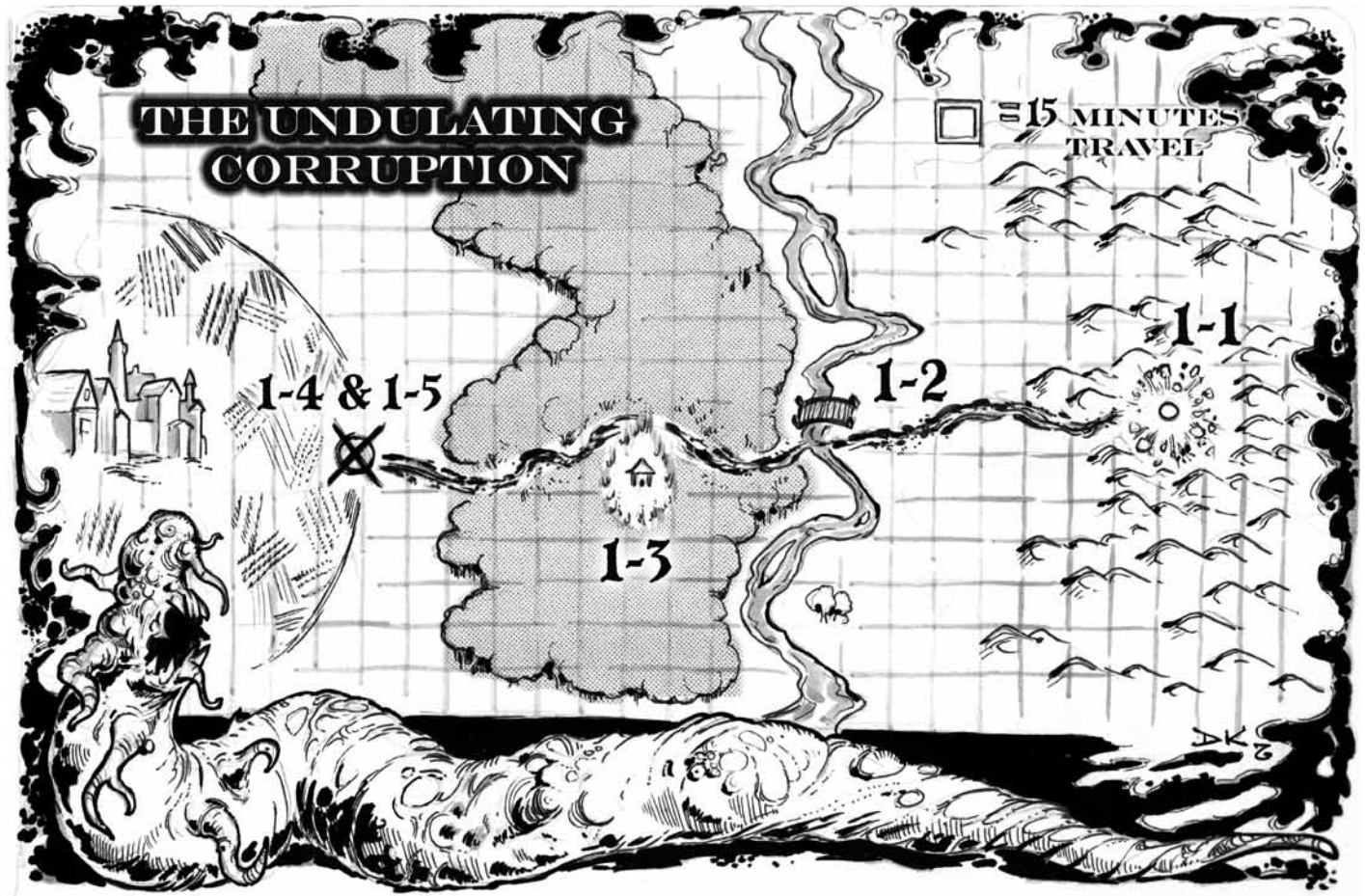
black trails in their wake. From behind a nearby stone extends a pair of flailing arms accompanied by a scream of utter pain and terror.

The black blobs are corruption sludges, semi-sentient excrement produced by the Night Worm. Three sludges turn their attentions to the party while the fourth, currently out of view behind the stone slab, continues to devour its victim.

Corruption Sludges (4): Init -8; Atk pseudopod +6 melee (1d5 plus 1d6 acid); AC 12; HD 4d8; hp 25, 21, 19, and 16; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons, acidic touch does 1d6 damage, rapid reproduction (every 5 hit points of damage inflicted by the sludge increases its size by 5' x 5' and adds 5 new hit points); SV Fort +8, Ref -4, Will -6; AL C.

Zobol Gnark, the Sole Survivor: Any PC who looks behind the stone block sees the fourth sludge dissolving a bearded, swarthy-looking human male dressed in leather armor. Despite slashing at the creature with a broken short sword, the corruption sludge has eaten his legs away and is working its way up his torso. He is Zobol Gnark, the sole survivor of the expedition that unleashed the Night Worm. If rescued before he is completely dissolved, he gasps out his tale.

Zobol and four others heard of the Crucible and came seeking treasure. They knew nothing of the Night Worm and its purported powers. Entering the shrine, they found it empty until they reached the central chamber. There they discovered the Night Worm, a gargantuan, ebony creature resembling a hybrid of monstrous grub and flatworm. The beast seemed to be restrained by stone pylons carved with strange symbols.





One of Zobol's companions, thinking there might be treasure concealed beneath the pylons, upset a plinth and unwittingly freed the Night Worm. It broke loose and began tearing the shrine to pieces. Zobol's companions were devoured (and were in fact the sludges the party just battled), but the thief escaped from the shrine only to be knocked senseless when the Worm exploded from the Crucible. He awoke to find the corruption sludge devouring his legs.

Zobol begs for death; he feels himself changing within. He is beyond the help of restorative magics, and even if he is healed of all his wounds (including having his legs restored), he undergoes the transformation into a corruption sludge two turns later.

Searching the Area: Examining the dell reveals several details. First, the smoking crater is 20 feet deep and seems to be a collapsed tunnel. Unless preternatural means are employed, there is no way to excavate the tunnel and gain access to the now-ruined and empty Crucible beyond. Should the PCs manage this feat, the contents and layout of the Crucible are left to the judge to design.

Secondly, one of the large stone blocks bears inscriptions. There are several images that detail a gnarled, monstrous-looking humanoid dressed in wizard's robes standing before a massive creature that resembles Zobol's description of the Night Worm. In a series of images, the corrupted wizard is consumed by the beast and is shown within the monster, casting spells against odd leech-like things that crowd around him. In successive pictures, the wizard becomes less inhuman-seeming. In the final image, he is excreted from the Night Worm and stands naked but free of corruption's taint.

One final detail of the hollow is blatantly obvious. A 20-foot-wide, viscous black trail, like that of a slug, leads out of the

dell and off to the west (or whatever other direction is appropriate), heading towards the nearest large settlement. The PCs' horses shy away from the substance when approaching it and require a DC 5 Personality check to be forced to cross the vile stuff. Any living creature touching the black matter must make a DC 5 Fort save or contract a minor corruption taint 1d3 hours later. The judge should keep the consequences of a failed save secret until such time.

Next steps: It's clear that whatever lies in the path of the Worm is in grave danger, and the beast itself is the key to removing corruption's taint. If the party's wizard wishes to be cleansed, the PCs have no choice but to follow it. Doing so leads to area 1-2.

Note on magical pursuit: It is possible that the PCs have means to fly, allowing them to avoid most of the encounters between them and the Night Worm. If the judge wishes to run a truncated session, he should allow them to take to the air and head directly after the creature. They encounter the Night Worm much sooner, and the judge should choose an appropriate location to stage the final battle. Having the party reach the Worm around the time it arrives at Izdrel's hut (area 1-3) is one possible suggestion. Areas 1-4 and 1-5 then play out as detailed below, with their descriptions altered to fit the setting.

If the judge would rather the party play out the adventure as written, he can use the Worm's trail as a roadblock. Under this option, the Night Worm's corruptive aura lingers in its wake, a result of the slime left behind. Any spells cast to speed the party's pursuit work normally at first but rapidly begin to fail as the party continues their chase. Flying characters lose altitude and land, and *hasted* PCs feel their speed evaporate long before it should, thus forcing the party to continue the chase at more normal speeds.

Area 1-2 – A Fearful River Crossing: Pursuit of the great worm is an easy task. The creature has left a 20-foot-wide trail of evil-smelling slime in its wake. This substance is clearly dangerous. Most vegetation covered by the slime is dead and desiccated, but even worse are the few hardy plants that survive. Occasionally, you pass a patch of grass or a scrub bush that has no place in this world. Transformed by the slime, this plant life assumes an alien cast, sprouting uncanny flowers that ooze phosphorescent sap or bear weeping mouths that gibber in indecipherable tongues.

An hour after departing the site of the Crucible, the hills give way to flatter ground. Following the slug-like trail for another hour brings you in sight of the sole landmark in this otherwise barren plain. In the distance, you see a narrow river blocking your path. A wide stand of trees grows on the far shore and a narrow bridge crosses the water. Even from here, you can see the slime trail enter the river just south of the bridge and continue into the trees on the opposite side. A clear path of splintered trees marks the place where the Worm entered the woods.

The river is 80 feet wide and 15 feet deep at its center. The wooden bridge that spans it is wide enough for two PCs to cross at once on foot or one at a time on horseback.

When the Night Worm crossed the river, it devoured and excreted a number of large catfish as it went. Two specimens survived, albeit in a transformed state. Now, wracked by corruption, they lie in wait for the next meal to cross the bridge or to ford the river.

Corrupted Catfish (2): Init +2; Atk bite +6 melee (2d8+2) or barbels +4 melee (1d6 plus poison); AC 15; HD 8d8+5; hp 45, 40; MV 20' or swim 40'; Act 1d20; SP poison barbels (DC 15 Fort; 1d6 damage on successful save, 3d6 damage if failed), electrical burst (once every 3 rounds, 5d4 electrical damage to all within 15' radius; DC 15 Ref save for half damage); SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

If the party crosses the bridge, one of the 10-foot-long catfish bursts from the river as the second PC or group of PCs reaches the middle of the span. It emerges from underneath the bridge, shattering the wooden boards and forcing all PCs within 10 feet of the bridge's center to make a DC 12 Ref save or be knocked into the water. As it does so, the second transmuted catfish rises out of the water on stubby, unnatural legs at the far end of the bridge to eat anyone trying to reach the opposite shore. The catfish are maddened by their transformation and fight until dead.

PCs falling into the river must make Strength checks to remain afloat or swim to shore: DC 5 for unarmored characters, DC 10 for lightly armored characters, and DC 15 for heavily armored characters. Characters choosing to battle the catfish while swimming must make a DC 10 Strength check to remain above water and attack. A failed result on either check means the PC sinks beneath the surface. A submerged PC without an air source can hold his breath for as many rounds as his Stamina score. If he engages in actions while submerged, this duration is halved. Once this time limit expires, the PC begins drowning and must make a DC 10 Fort save each round or take 1d4 points of damage. The save DC increases by 1 each round after the first. A drowning PC can take no action and must be rescued by another character. Characters in the water lose their Agility modifier to their AC.

Area 1-3 – The Protected Hermitage: *The noxious trail leads through a forest turned nightmare. Splintered trees drenched in the slimy residue litter the forest floor, and the air is filled with the pain-wracked cries of animals exposed to the ooze's strange mutagenic powers. Terrible, misshapen creatures lurk in the underbrush only to disappear as you draw near.*

After an hour of travel, a silvery light pierces the gloomy woods ahead. Edging closer, you see a small clearing before you. Within it stands a hut of stone and thatch, simple and unpretentious. Surrounding the structure is a ring of shining silver fire the height of a man. The slick, black trail skirts the clearing, creating a path of destruction, but leaving the hut untouched. In the doorway of the building is slumped a human male dressed in homespun robes. He looks exhausted. The man raises his weary face to you as he notices your arrival.

The man is Izdrel Norne, an anchorite cleric (3rd level) of Ulesh. Not long ago, the Night Worm came upon Izdrel's home and would have destroyed it had the cleric not called upon the divine aid of Ulesh to save him. The god erected a barrier of righteous fire around Izdrel's hut, protecting his charge but leaving the cleric spent. The barrier is fading as the PCs reach his home.

Izdrel tiredly welcomes the party and questions them anxiously regarding the Night Worm. He recounts his own encounter and praises his god for his salvation. He can accurately describe the monster and his near-brush with death, but he

knows nothing else about the Worm other than it is obviously a force of pure chaos and a threat to whatever stands in its path.

Provided the PCs assert their desire to destroy the Night Worm, Izdrel is willing to assist them. However, calling upon the divine assistance of Ulesh has left him spent, and he is suffering a disapproval range of 1-11 on further spell checks. He is therefore loath to cast spells unless the PCs are in truly dire straits. As a cleric of the god of peace, he is also unwilling to take up arms against the Night Worm unless the party can convince him with an impassioned plea and a successful DC 20 Personality check. If Izdrel accompanies the party, he has the stats of a Friar on p. 433 of the DCC RPG rule book.

Despite these limitations, Izdrel is willing to gift the party with three curative potions that restore health in a way similar to the cleric's **lay on hands** ability. Each potion provides the drinker with 4 dice of health or cures injuries removed by that same number of dice or less. He also has a small jar of oil that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls against unholy creatures (the Night Worm certainly qualifies) when smeared upon a single weapon. This power lasts for a single battle, and he warns the party of this limited duration. After providing them with these items, he wishes them luck and extends an offer to visit him again in more pleasant times.

After another hour's travel through the woods, the party reaches the western edge of the forest and their ultimate confrontation with the Night Worm.

Area 1-4 – The Night Worm: *The stench of decay and corruption grows stronger as you reach the edge of the woods. As you cross the threshold to the fields beyond, a flash of lightning sets the sky aflame and the crash of thunder splits the air. A moment later, the first drops of rain begin to fall, increasing in intensity with each passing minute.*

Looking to the west, you see a flat, broad plain dotted with farmers' crofts and fieldstone walls. Far off in the distance but growing dimmer as the rain strengthens, you catch a glimpse of tall rooftops and slender spires that mark a large settlement. You only have a moment to take in that view before your eyes are swiftly drawn to the immense monstrosity making its way across the farmlands.

Surging across the fields is a night-black horror. The size of a tower, the beast resembles a blasphemous mix of grub and worm. Tiny limbs dangle from its upper body as a long, flat tail propels it over the ground. The monstrous worm lacks a defined head; instead, a wide sucker-like mouth ringed by myriad eyes crowns its body. Slick slime flows from its flesh, and its entire body pulsates like a boil about to rupture.

This encounter can be scaled to accommodate exceptionally strong or extremely unlucky PCs. If the party is having too easy of a time (unlikely, but possible), feel free to ratchet up the tension by causing the storm to increase, causing penalties to ranged attacks or turning the ground into a morass of mud that slows movement and requires Agility checks or Ref saves to navigate. Likewise, if the party is in danger of being overwhelmed by corruption spawn or needs help battling the Night Worm, a squad of soldiers dispatched from the town or a band of terrified but resolute farmers can arrive to aid the heroes.





The Night Worm continues its inexorable drive towards the city unless the PCs intervene. Any wound doing 10 or more points of damage attracts its attention but also creates a blood-spawned corruption beast (see below). After the party draws its attention, the Night Worm fights them until either it or the party is slain. It automatically senses the presence of corruption amongst the party and targets a tainted wizard or elf first, seeking to devour them. If the corrupted spellcaster willingly accepts the attack or the Worm rolls an 18-20 on its attack roll, the PC is swallowed whole and proceeds to area 1-5 below. The Night Worm then turns its attacks on any non-corrupted PC.

The Night Worm: Init -1; Atk bite +10 melee (1d20) or tail slap +10 melee (1d20); AC 24; HD 15d8; hp 90; MV 60'; Act 2d20; SP blood spawns monsters, swallow whole on 18-20, corruption aura; SV Fort +15, Ref +15, Will +15; AL C.

The Night Worm swallows man-sized or smaller creatures alive on a roll of 18-20. Swallowed creatures take no damage from the attack but face other dangers as detailed in area 1-5. It attacks primarily with its bite and can bite twice using both its action dice if two PCs are within 20 feet of one another. The Worm uses its tail slap attack against party members seeking to flank it, but in doing so can only make a single bite attack that round.

Corruption aura: Due to its chaotic nature, an aura of energy 30 feet in diameter surrounds the Worm, visible only with a *detect magic* or *detect invisibility* spell. This field affects magic targeted against it, counteracting the effectiveness of Lawful idol magic and warping imperfectly cast wizard spells. Lawful clerics suffer a -4 penalty to any spells cast within the corruption aura. Any failed wizardly spell checks against the Night Worm cast within the aura automatically result in corruption

for the caster. Determine the effects of that corruption as normal for the spell.

Blood-spawned monsters: The Night Worm's blood has the power to create atrocious forms of corrupt life when spilled onto the earth. Spawned creatures burst from the ground one round after a sizable quantity of blood is shed. Each time a slashing weapon inflicts 10 or more points of damage in a single strike, a blood-spawned corruption beast is birthed. Piercing and bludgeoning weapons do not shed sufficient blood to produce such a creature. The unpredictable power of chaos grants each corruption beast a random power. The judge rolls to determine that ability when the corruption beast is created.

Blood-spawned Corruption Beast (up to 4): Init -1; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8) or claws +5 melee (1d6+2); AC 16; HD 3d8; hp 15 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP corruption power; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

d6 Corruption Power

- 1 Spits caustic bile (DC 15 Ref save or suffer 2d6 acidic damage)
- 2 Eyes throw a *scorching ray* (+0 to spell check roll, ignoring misfire, corruption, or lost results)
- 3 Bite causes magical leprosy (DC 15 Fort save or lose 2 hit points per round until magically cured)
- 4 Essence drain (all damage inflicted is gained as hit points)
- 5 Digestive slime (physical contact with the creature requires a DC 15 Fort save or temporary loss of 1d4 Stamina as flesh dissolves)
- 6 Corruption taint (DC 15 Fort save or gain a random corruption taint from Table 5-3: Minor Corruption; this can be removed by the Night Worm as below)

This 5-foot-tall, loathsome beast is a blend of insect and mammal. Its head is that of a deformed mole with a pair of menacing mandibles jutting from its jaws. Patchy, matted fur erupts from gaps in a glossy black carapace. Four insectile limbs support the creature's ungainly body and a pair of rat-like arms tipped in serrated claws strike out at its foes.

The Night Worm fights until slain. However, killing the beast while fellow party members remain within it may doom them. See area 1-5 for details on what occurs if the Worm dies with allies inside its extradimensional stomach.

Area 1-5 - Inside the Worm: This event occurs after a PC is swallowed by the Night Worm.

The world goes black as the Night Worm's titanic mouth closes around you. With a sickening slurp, you find yourself tumbling down its odiferous gullet. You have only a moment to curse Fate for ending your life this way.

But your journey down the Worm's throat ends unexpectedly. You land abruptly on a spongy, expanse of grey-pink matter. Looking about, you see you stand in a seemingly endless space filled with pallid light and a swirling black mist that stinks of decay. A moment later, a howling din fills the air as numerous leech-like things with snapping mouths swarm through the air towards you.

A swallowed character has emerged in an extradimensional space that serves as the Night Worm's "stomach." The creatures approaching them are degenaphages, twisted things that serve as the Worm's digestive system and the means through which a wizard or elf can divest himself of corruption's taint.

To do so, the spellcaster must establish a supernatural channel with one or more of the degenaphages. This requires the wizard to cast a spell targeting one of the creatures. Any spell may be used. If the spell check is successful, rather than taking effect normally, the spell creates a glistening black umbilical cord connecting the caster and the degenaphage. More than one umbilicus can be formed at a time if the PC is capable of casting multiple spells in a round. A failed spell indicates the connection is not established, but the caster may try again. If the spell fails and results in the wizard gaining corruption, he is swarmed by 1d4 beasts drawn by this sudden influx of tainted energy. They physically assault the wizard, biting his flesh for 1d3 points of damage per creature for a single round. Any spell lost due to a spell check is temporarily removed from the caster's repertoire of spells as normal.

With the mystical umbilicus in place, the degenaphage begins siphoning away the caster's corruption, requiring the spellcaster to make a DC 15 Fort save. The caster adds a bonus to this roll equal to the level of the spell cast to make the connection (e.g., successfully casting *fireball* grants the wizard a +3 to his saving throw). If the save is successful, the beast "eats" one form of corruption affecting the wizard, and the player can erase it from his character sheet. The corruption consumed can be determined randomly, or, at the judge's discretion, be dependent on the power of the spell used to establish the umbilicus. If a 1st-level spell was used, the spellcaster loses a minor corruption taint, a major corruption taint with a 2nd-level spell, and a greater corruption if a 3rd-level spell was cast to create the umbilicus. The degenaphages eat only corruption; patron taint cannot be removed by this means.

Should the save fail, the PC suffers damage equal to 1d6 + the spell's level, as the beast takes some of the caster's life force in lieu of corruption. On a roll of a natural 1, the caster suffers damage and *also* permanently loses the ability to cast the spell used to make the connection, although it can be relearned the next time the wizard gains a new spell choice.

Character death: A spellcaster who dies while inside the Night Worm's "stomach" is lost forever barring divine intervention.

Non-spellcasters: It is possible that a PC without corruption is consumed by the Night Worm. That character is in danger of contracting corruption if attacked by the degenaphages. Although these creatures are attracted by corruption-bearing PCs, they swarm around any living creature inside the Worm. Each round while in the stomach, 1d3 degenaphages attack each non-spellcaster present.

Degenaphage (infinite; each round, 1d4 attack each spellcaster and 1d3 attack each other character): Init +3; Atk bite +5 melee (1d3 or corruption); AC 17; HD 1d10; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP bite corrupts non-spellcasters; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Degenaphage corruption for non-spellcasters: A non-wizard/non-elf PC bitten by a degenaphage must make a DC 10 Fort save or gain a random form of corruption. Roll a d6: (1-3) minor

corruption (Table 5-3); (4-5) major corruption (Table 5-4); (6) greater corruption trait (Table 5-5). This save is modified by Luck, and the judge should re-roll results not applicable to a non-spellcasting character. After three successful Fort saves, which need not be consecutive, the degenaphages deem the PC an unsuitable meal. They create an exit within the extradimensional space, and the PC is excreted back into the world.

If a non-spellcasting PC gains corruption while inside the worm with a spellcaster, the wizard can attempt to create a connection between that character and one of the beasts, allowing that trait to be consumed and the afflicted PC cleansed. The process is the same as for a spellcaster, but the wizard suffers a -3 to his spell check due to the difficulty of creating an umbilicus between someone other than himself.

Escaping from the Night Worm: Once a spellcaster is free of corruption or he decides he no longer wants to continue the process, he must make a DC 13 Will save to impose his will upon the extradimensional space and force an egress to appear. If successful, a jagged tear appears in the air before him, and he and any other PCs present are expelled from the Night Worm back into the world. On a failed save, he takes 1d3 points of temporary ability damage (determine which ability is affected randomly), but he can try again. However, each time the save is failed, the DC increases by one. Should the DC ever rise so high as to make it impossible for the caster to successfully save, he is permanently lost in the Night Worm's gut.

Slaying the Night Worm: If the Night Worm is slain while a character remains inside the beast's gut, he has one chance to escape certain doom. He must make a DC 13 Will save as above, but if he fails, the extradimensional space collapses before he can escape, and he is lost between the planes forever (or until his allies discover a means to locate him, which can be an adventure on its own). If multiple PCs remain in the Night Worm when it dies, any one of them making a successful save will allow the entire group to escape.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE



hen the Night Worm is slain, it topples to the ground with a mighty crash, knocking the PCs off their feet. Any remaining corruption beasts continue to fight until killed, but once the last is defeated, the PCs are victorious. With luck, one or more PCs have been cleansed of some or all of their corruption. Unfortunately, with the Night Worm vanquished, they cannot use this method to remove corruption's taint again. Other avenues must be found when the black touch of sorcery begins to erode their beings once again.

No monetary awards are provided in this scenario. If the judge wishes to award the party with some recompense for their troubles, he can have the leaders of the saved town or Izdrel reward them with coin and jewels for their heroics. Izdrel is also able to use restorative magics to heal injured party member after a day has passed and his disapproval range returns to normal.

If the judge wishes to elaborate on the events of this adventure, and the PCs are willing, further adventures may await them in the now-buried Crucible of the Worm. Or Izdrel may have need of their services tracking down and destroying creatures in the forest that were transformed by exposure to the Night Worm's corruption excretions.



THE INFERNAL CRUCIBLE OF SEZREKAN THE MAD

A level 5 DCC RPG adventure

By Harley Stroh • Art by Friedrich Haas • Map by Doug Kovacs

INTRODUCTION



This adventure is designed for 4 to 8 5th-level characters. If this is your first exposure to DCC RPG, you can roll up 5th-level characters and use this scenario as a contrast to a preceding one to get a sense of low-level versus high-level play.

BACKGROUND



Famous in the darker cycles of lore and legendry, Sezrekan the Mad was a notorious sage, diabolist, and warlock bent on a quest for immortality. His perilous quest played out over several hundred years, and none can say whether the Old One achieved deification or lost his soul vying with infernal powers.

Sezrekan's pursuit of lost secrets and forbidden lore spanned the face of Aereth. In these far-flung cities and crumbling ruins, the wizard-sage created simple workshops and foundries to aid in his research. Here, amid frothing retorts and forbidden scrolls, the aging warlock plumbed the mysteries of life, death, and time. Every new discovery opened another line of inquiry, leading Sezrekan to abandon the workshop for another city or ruin, never to return.

An untold number of his abandoned workshops remain undiscovered to this day. One such laboratory is hidden in the ancient city of Punjar.

JUDGING NOTES



The *Infernal Crucible of Sezrekan the Mad* presents the adventurers with both a crafty villain and a deadly battle, but the most dangerous challenge is also the most subtle: Escaping Elzemon's trap requires that at least one foe is left alive. Adventurers given to scorched-earth style expeditions will be the instruments of their own demise. If the PCs slay both Elzemon and Sezrekan's Ape, they are left with a gruesome dilemma: Which of their own to leave behind? How the PCs go about making this decision may reveal more about true character than the players care to admit.

The adventure is located in sprawling, decadent Punjar. Specifically, the workshop is hidden in the sub-basement of a decaying manor in Smoke – the worst of Old Punjar's wards – where Dim Lane intersects the Shiv. Here, hidden among the crumbling tenements and foul night smokes, Sezrekan was free to pursue his mad experiments without fear of interruption.

Though nominally set in Punjar, the adventure can be easily placed in nearly any location. The PCs can discover the hidden portal in the floor of a musty tomb, in the cellar of their favorite pub or chapel, or even in a forgotten gallery of their own keep.

Elzemon the Forgotten: Unfortunately for those seeking to plunder the wizard's secrets, Sezrekan was notorious amid the infernal hierarchies for summoning demons and devils, and then simply refusing (or forgetting) to release them. One such being, a minor demon named Elzemon, remains imprisoned in this workshop to this day. And in a desperate bid for its own freedom, the demon has transformed the workshop into an elaborate trap.

Elzemon has free reign within the various areas of the laboratory, but cannot escape the complex until the sand in the hourglass (area 1-1) runs out. He begins the adventure in area 1-2 and is quickly drawn to any disturbance.

The demon's downfall is its delight in tormenting mortals. The pot-bellied demon follows the PCs through the chambers, invisible, doing its very best to egg the PCs into wasting precious minutes.

Elzemon the Quasit: Init +4; Atk claw +3 melee (dmg 1d6+2); AC 17; HP 23; MV 35' (fly); Act 2d20; SP Invisible at will; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5; Immune to Will-effects unless true name is known; AL C.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

| Area | Type | Encounter |
|------|------|----------------|
| 1-1 | P | Puzzle |
| 1-2 | C | 10 Glyph Worms |
| 1-3 | P/C | Sezrekan's Ape |
| Any | P/C | Elzemon |

PLAYER INTRODUCTION



The adventure begins with the discovery – either by assiduous research or by accident – of the entrance to the workshop: a portal set into the floor. Read or paraphrase the following:

Eagerly you scrape away the mud to reveal a circular portal of dull gray metal set into the floor. Set into the center of the portal is a silver bas-relief depicting a two-legged serpent biting its own tail. Above the serpent, cast in gold, is a crown.

The portal is roughly 3 feet in diameter, though attempts at precise measurement hint its diameter to be the value of pi. The portal is cast of lead to foil scrying and inter-dimensional travel. Wizards and thieves examining the portal are overcome by a powerful sense that something terrible lurks behind the lead portal.

The portal is three inches deep and can easily be pried free of the floor, revealing a narrow spiral staircase descending into darkness. The value of the raw silver is 15 gp; the value of the gold is 25 gp.

START

THE INFERNAL CRUCIBLE OF SEZREKAN THE MAD



◇ = 5'



AREAS OF THE MAP

Area 1-1 – The Magic Circle: *A thick coat of dust covers the floor, obscuring what appears to be a magic circle, carved in runes, circumscribing the entire chamber. Stone faces of tormented demons ring the ceiling, and a pit set into the center of the chamber pulses with a hellish crimson light. Beside the pit rests a tall golden hourglass.*

Inspection by cautious wizards reveals that the magic circle prevents the escape of demons. However, just inside the circle of runes is a pentagram, drawn in blood and hidden by dust, that traps any living creature entering the chamber. The pentagram was cast by the demon Elzemon. These two thaumaturgic inscriptions interact in strange, unpredictable ways.

The instant a PC crosses over the runes, read or paraphrase the following:

A thunderous crack echoes through the chamber and electric blue waves of tormented faces cascade through the air, revealing a sinister pentagram scrawled in blood across the floor of the chamber. The hourglass rotates in its base, and the sound of maniacal laughter echoes faintly from below.

No magic shy of a deific patron or infernal power can wrest the PCs from Elzemon's trap. From this moment forward, it is impossible to leave the chamber, save for the pit down.

Sezrekan's golden hourglass stands nearly three feet in height and weighs roughly 30 lbs. A minor relic discarded by the Old One, the hourglass keeps perfectly precise time of any duration, and grants a +2 bonus to spell checks for spells taking one turn or longer to cast. Destroying the hourglass has no effect other than to eliminate the PCs' means of tracking time.

The pit is 50' deep and runs to area 1-2. Given the opportunity, Elzemon flies up from area 1-2, eager for the chance to push a PC into the pit or cut an unattended rope.

Wizard, sages, or lucky thieves pausing to study the interaction between the magic circle and the pentagram can deduce the following principles:

- So long as the thaumaturgic inscriptions remain intact, no creature can be summoned into the crucible.
- At the end of the hour, both the magic circle and the Elzemon's pentagram part for an instant, permitting escape.
- No matter how many exit, at least one living creature must remain inside the circle.

One final principle applies that can only be inferred: The last creature left within the circle is trapped there for all eternity.

Area 1-2 – The Infernal Crucible: *The pit opens into a cluttered octagonal chamber. A sinister, crimson light emanates from web-laden globes that hang from the ceiling, casting a charnel glow over the chamber's contents.*

A large granite table dominates the chamber. It is laden with glass retorts and a series of skulls, ranging in size from a field mouse to that of a tusked giant. An open tome rests on a stand beside the table.

The walls are covered in sheets of hammered copper, stained with vile liquids and scored by acid. The top of each sheet is attached to a chain and counter weights that run to the ceiling and then descending to hang just above the stone table.

There are seven skulls in all: field mouse, monkey, goat, half-ling, elf, human, ogre, and the giant. The cranium of each skull is sawn open, and the interior cavity is set with platinum spacers to accommodate a smaller brain.

The tome is open to a dusty page with a simple passage:

*a curse upon thieves that dare
to gaze upon the works
of mighty Sezrekan*

Beneath the passage is a large glyph inked in red and black. The quickest inspection of the page activates the glyph. It flashes brightly (Ref save, DC 15, or be blinded for 1d3 rounds), and then animates into inky black worms. With horrifying speed, the worms begin to consume every written word within the chamber.

In the first round, the glyph worms consume the tome. In the second and third round, they squiggle behind the copper sheets covering the walls and consume all the tomes and sheaves. On the fourth round, they move on to the PCs, and on the fifth round, the worms consume any spellbooks, maps, tomes, or scrolls in the PCs' possession. The glyphs die in writhing agony on the 8th round.

Glyph Worm (10): Init +2; Atk –; Dmg –; AC 15; HP 1; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SA consume written words; SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will immune; AL N.

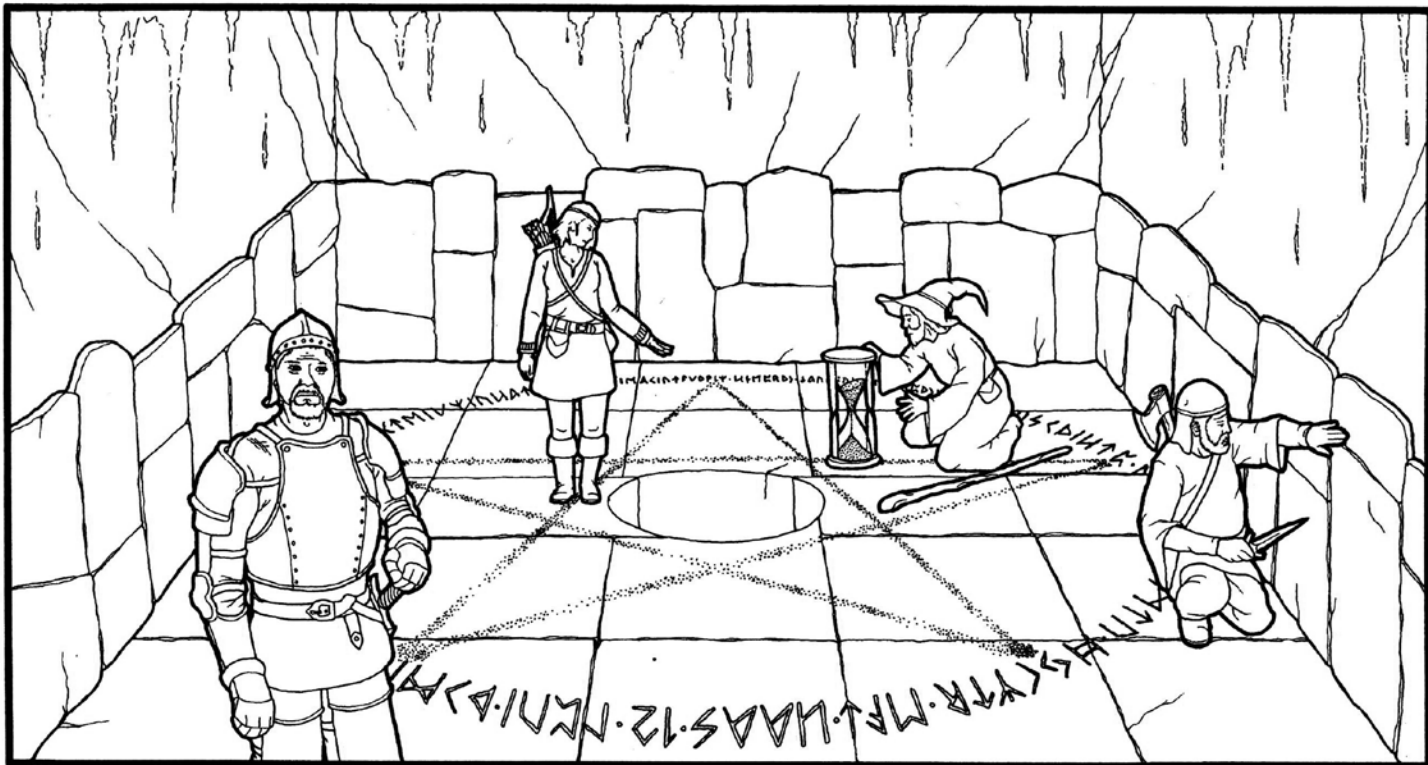
The copper sheets hanging on the walls function as primitive blast shields, protecting the valuables behind them from any explosions that might take place in the main chamber. Pulling on any one of the five hanging chains raises the corresponding metal sheets, revealing five sets of shelves:

The **first set of shelves** is heavy with the weight of time-blackened tomes, stacks of rolled vellum, and sheaves of worn parchment – Sezrekan's discarded research. If collected and studied by a wizard or sage, they yield 1d5 spells (to be determined by the judge or rolled randomly). The shelf also contains a scroll that holds the true name of Elzemon and details the demon's weakness: striking the demon with lead renders it visible and inflicts 1d4 points of damage per round of contact.

The **second set of shelves** is laden with retorts, strange flasks, and vials stoppered with wax. They once contained elixirs, potions, and concoctions resulting from the Old One's experiments. Time has reduced most of these mixtures to poison. Sages and wizards succeeding on a DC 13 Intelligence check can identify 1d5 vials of strong acids and bases; thieves succeeding on a DC 20 Handle Poison check can identify a similar number of poisons (efficacy to be determined by the judge).

The **third and fourth sets of shelves** are empty.

The **fifth set of shelves** is laden with the raw materials vital to Sezrekan's studies. Four coffers rest on the shelves. Inside the coffers are 10 silver bars (worth 30 gp each), 5 gold bars (worth 100 gp each), 2 platinum bars (worth 500 gp each), and a nondescript pouch containing lead dust shot through with flecks of adamantine (worth 1,000 gp).



Area 1-3 – The Chamber of the Ape: *Water drips in thin rivulets down the walls of this chamber, pooling on the floor. A trio of large clay vessels, each nearly 4' in height, stands against one wall. Beside the strange jars rest a trio of iron rods.*

At the far end of the chamber is heavy iron gate.

The gate is secured with a massive lock that is easily picked (DC 15). Inside the cell is the body of an enormous ape atop wooden planks. Unmoving and unresponsive, the ape is Sezrekan's unfortunate attempt to transplant a human mind into the body of an animal. Branded onto the ape's shaven scalp is the mark of Sezrekan.

The egg-like vessels are primitive batteries. The top of each jar is sealed with clay and pierced by a hole matching the width of the iron rods. If each of the three rods is inserted into a corresponding vessel, the circuit is completed, initiating a rapid series of events:

Arcs of electricity fan into the chamber, striking any PC standing in the pooled water. PCs in the water take 1d4 points of damage per round and must succeed on a DC 17 Fort save to make any actions. The semi-paralysis ends with the destruction of at least one of the vessels (AC 10, hp 10) or by escaping

the pool. Other PCs can pull their paralyzed companions from the water, but if they step into the pool, they are also caught by the arcing current.

The current is sufficient to shock Sezrekan's Ape back to life. One round after awakening, it tears the iron gate free of its moorings and casts the twisted wreckage aside. On the third round, it proceeds to do the same with the PCs.

Due to its rage and Sezrekan's mind-altering magics, the ape is immune to the paralysis effect, as well as to any *charm*, *sleep* or mind-altering effect permitting a Will save.

Finally, if the PCs are loathe to experiment with the rods and vessels, an invisible Elzemon closes the circuit for them, waiting for the opportunity to paralyze the greatest number of PCs.

Sezrekan's Ape: Init +2; Atk fists +5 melee (dmg 1d12); AC 15; HP 65; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SA Rend for additional 1d16 dmg on natural 18 or 19; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will Immune; AL C.

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