

TWR4

ZATAL - THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE

A 5TH EDITION MAZTICA ADVENTURE AND SOURCEBOOK

A LOCATION FOR ALL LEVELS,
AND AN ADVENTURE FOR LEVELS 9-12



ZATAL - THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE

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INTRODUCTION

Mount Zatal was once considered the center of the True World when the ever-expanding Empire of Nexal seemed unstoppable. Zaltec, the bloodthirsty Eater of Hearts, has manifested his power more than once in the rumblings of the mountain's fiery belly.

Zatal's significance is not that of a simple symbol, however, and there are secrets within the mountain that very few could even guess at. There are miles and miles of tunnel systems, mostly formed by the natural effects of lava, but others have been carved by intelligent hands. These tunnels hold entire societies of their own – many who have no contact with the world outside of the volcano.

Though it is not a “dungeon” in the traditional sense, the world existing just below the surface of Mount Zatal is ripe for discovery and adventure. The tunnels and chambers could be explored for months, with only a small percentage of the mountain's secrets ever being revealed.

TWR AND MAZTICA ALIVE!

The “Maztica Alive!” community has been in existence since 2014 and there are many products now associated with it. All of them can be found by following the link below.

<http://www.dmsguild.com/product/171534/TWC1-The-Maztica-Campaign-Guide>

The community, however, has recently started a new “phase” in its existence. The tag on products with this phase is “TWR” which stands for a “True World Resurrection.” This is an adventure path where the ending goal is to bring the mother goddess of the setting, Maztica herself, back to the world so long after her brutal murder. Though this adventure can be run independently, it is recommended that the players have at least gone through **TWR3 *The Door of Stars*** – otherwise, the DM might need to make some adjustments in the adventure.

So far, the following TWR products can be found on the ***Dungeon Masters Guild***.

TWR1	<i>The Sea Demon's Pearl</i>
TWR2	<i>The Maztican Ball Game</i>
TWR3-E	<i>The Lion and the Fox</i>
TWR3	<i>The Door of Stars</i>

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Zatal – The Mountain of Fire is intended to serve a number of purposes. First and foremost, there is an adventure that concludes the aforementioned adventure path. In future “Maztica Alive” products, history will assume that either the PCs or other adventurers are successful in resurrecting Maztica allowing her to once again become a full-fledged member of the True World pantheon. Only key encounters are detailed in this product and the DM is free to expand upon the adventure as he or she sees fit.

Zatal is also introduced as Maztica's answer to Faerun's Undermountain – a megadungeon with unlimited expansion capabilities. The Heart of Maztica and Zaltec himself may lie at its core, but there are thousands of mysteries found in its tunnels and caverns that not even the gods know about. Zatal is designed so that it can be its own campaign if the DM so desires.

HOW TO PLAY

The adventure portion of this book is not designed to run like a standard adventure. It is designed as a “sandbox” where the PCs can lead the adventure's direction. However, ***Zatal – The Mountain of Fire*** has key story based encounters which lead to the completion of the “TWR” adventure path. The DM may add encounters as he or she sees fit and may also remove others that aren't essential.

Note that there are new creatures found in this book which are given statistics at the adventure's conclusion. Other creatures can be found in the various bestiaries for Maztica Alive (***TWC5***, ***TWC6*** and ***TWC7***), in addition to the ***Monster Manual***, but most are reprinted here.

HISTORY OF ZATAL

Much like Zaltec's greatest pyramids, Mount Zatal has grown over the ages. The pyramids, however, grew because new architecture was placed atop the old in order to forever expand upwards. Zatal on the other hand, has grown from within. Like a boil or abscess, there is a poison deep in the core of the mountain which literally pumps its evil, life-corrupting magic forever outwards and upwards.

THE HEART OF MAZTICA

Maztica is both the name of the continent and of its inhabitant's deceased mother goddess – some say that the two are in fact one and the same. Though it is widely accepted that the goddess' husband Kukul created mankind, she was known as the true source of life and highly favored among the people for her role.

Her son Zaltec resented Maztica's popularity and though he did not seek the love she received, he sought an equitable level of fear. Zaltec, the Eater of Hearts and Bringer of War, wished to be exalted above all others. In order to accomplish this feat, he created and then gifted *hishna* magic to mankind. *Hishna* was a brand of magic which tapped into the inherent power of claws, fangs and talons and the resultant power allowed man to flourish and war in Zaltec's great name.

Disgusted at what her son had wrought and the resultant cost to life, Maztica created *pluma* magic. *Pluma* was an equivalent magic of feathers and life that she passed to her son Qotal, who then in turn passed it on to mankind.

Infuriated over the loss of worship, Zaltec approached his mother in a fit of rage and beheaded her with his great dark macuahuitl. The weapons fine edges shattered on impact, and its black obsidian tips lodged themselves deep within both the head and body of the goddess. Some elders have claimed that this was the original source of the existence of plumastone across the body (continent) of Maztica, and while that has yet to be proven, it is certain that a force known as the Darkfire (sometimes Darkfyre) was born that day.

Zaltec left his mother's corpse but took from her a still beating, corrupted heart from which he would occasionally feed. Instead of sating his hunger, Zaltec only sought more, and from that day forward, Zaltec yearned for a fresh flow with a far greater hunger than ever before.

Zaltec brought the Heart of Maztica to a valley in what is now known as the Valley of Nexal. He took it deep underground to a natural cavern where its veins naturally took root and flared with the corrupting force of darkfire. To this day, it beats an irregular beat that manifests as the rumblings of a semi-active volcano. Mount Zatal began to grow, quickly at first, but soon slowing to only a foot or so each year. Over thousands of years, Zatal's reddish-orange glow became the most prominent feature in the True World's horizon for many miles. In conjunction with the great city of Nexal, Mount Zatal eventually became the heart of an empire, and perhaps the whole of the True World itself.

Zaltec's involvement in the region was mostly kept secret, but the Bringer of War's brothers did not sit by entirely idly. The Lake of the Gods formed not long after the mountain dominated the valley, and it is the will of Zaltec's brothers manifested in the physical world.

THE VIPER OF ZATAL

The continent of Maztica had a history that existed long before even the gods arrived on Toril in their prehistoric forms and created the race of man that have come to dominate it. The creator races once graced these lands, first in the form of the serpentine sarrukh, then the amphibian batrachi and finally among the avian aeree. The sarrukh may have been long gone from the world upon mankind's arrival, but there were still remnants scattered in the darkest regions.

An individual sarrukh once known as Mixcoatl slept an age-long sleep in the very cavern to which Zaltec brought the Heart. Its darkfire energies (and the god's not inconsequential presence) woke the slumbering serpent and awed the ancient being. It is unknown what kind of deal was brokered on that day, but the sarrukh, now changed by the corrupted life

energy of the Heart, agreed to serve as its guardian forevermore. Mixcoatl assumed the name, "The Viper" and has secretly had a hand in a number of events that have been falsely attributed to Zaltec himself.

DAWN OF AN EMPIRE

Far to the north of Zatal, a people who actually referred to themselves as the Mazticans, lived in caves and communities in a dryer, less fertile land. Unbeknownst to the majority of mankind, Zaltec had decided that this unlikely group would be his chosen people. The Eater of Hearts manifested his image to a Maztican shaman named Tecco, and commanded him to lead his people south.

Zaltec chose Tecco knowing full well that the Mazticans would obey, as Tecco was known for his detailed and accurate visions. For his whole life, Zaltec had guided the shaman.

The Mazticans were many thousands strong and they eventually came to the Valley of Nexal, which at the time had three cities already established near the base of Mount Zatal and the shores of the Lake of the Gods.

The three cities were known as Tezat, Azatl, Zotil and when the Mazticans arrived, all three maintained a precarious balance of power. If one grew too powerful, the others would join forces to reestablish balance. The situation had remained under these circumstances for many decades.

The Mazticans initially served as a major boon for the city's inhabitants. They accepted menial work for the slightest of wages and only settled in waterlogged lands unwanted by the majority of the populace. Their knowledge of war was also known to be exceptional and the Mazticans were not greedy with their knowledge.

After a number of years, and a strategic betrayal, the Mazticans came to dominate Azatl, Zotil and Tezat. Within a few decades of their arrival, the newly declared Empire of Nexal spread beyond its valley, and the mixed inhabitants came to refer to themselves as Nexalans with great pride.

It wasn't long before Zaltec established his utter dominance as the primary god of the entire empire. Many sacrifices were made in his name,

and the flow of fresh hearts consistently fed the vile god. On one occasion, after the ascendance of a new emperor (known as a Revered Counselor), a paltry sacrifice of one-thousand hearts was offered – inciting Zaltec's anger. He awakened the Viper who had become attuned the corrupted life-magic of the Heart of Maztica and with its power, caused the eruption of the volcano. Many more lives were lost and Nexal was burned nearly to the ground.

The Empire of Nexal was undoubtedly the greatest human (*human* empire, as the scorpionfolk and creator races would attest) empire to ever grace the True World. Yet as powerful as they were, even they could not handle the coming of Cordell, the clergy of the foreign god Helm, and the Golden Legion. Wielding weapons and magic unseen before in the True World, the invading force of Faerunians and their native allies (consisting of Payit and more importantly the long established Kultakan enemies of the empire) decimated the Nexalan Empire and it took far less time than they could have ever imagined. The last of the Revered Counselors of Nexal, Naltecona, was slain, and the invaders trampled upon hundreds of years of history. Hoxitl, Zaltec's high priest, beseeched his god for deliverance and the Bringer of War responded by awakening the Viper once again. Those who were loyal to Zaltec voluntarily wore a symbol known as the Mark of the Viper, and together created the Viperhand Cult.

Through the god's will, interference from the foreign deities Helm and Lolth, and the terrible corrupting magic of the Darkfire, Zatal erupted with magical energies in an event known as the *Night of Wailing*. Survivors of the terrible night fled as the Lake of the Gods boiled, and the men of the Viperhand became orcs, ogres, trolls and new beings known as jagres who could change forms between ogre and displacer beast. Hoxitl became the grandest of them all, towering over even the most massive jagre.

Eventually men returned to the Valley of Nexal, but only the most vile and unwanted. Life in the heart of the once great empire became short for the children of Maztica and Kukul.

THE DESCENT

The True World has seen its share of upheavals in recent centuries, and the Night of Wailing should have been the worst. Alas, it would not be so. When the repercussions of Cordell's invasion and the creation of the Viperhand finally settled, what might have been considered a "new normal" was established. Faerunians became a somewhat common sight, particularly in the settlements of Helmsport-Ulatos, Trythosford, Tukan and a number of others. Mazticans managed to maintain their old ways and in some cases learned much from the invaders. They could certainly not have handled the Viperhand without the assistance of Cordell's Golden Legion, but that was hardly consolation for what had been done to their land and culture.

When all seemed normal, the sky one day began to shimmer and warp. Those who stared into its wavering form grew nauseous, but within moments the effect abruptly stopped. The sky, however, had changed from its normal bright blue to a steely gray – unlike any that had ever been seen before.

Clerics of the gods sought answers immediately from their deities but the only response they received from the gods was silence – cold, empty nothingness. They knew almost instantaneously that the gods had either abandoned them, or were somehow cut off from their prayers.

The repercussions of this event were of course felt across the True World, but in the Valley of Nexal, where the beasts ruled and mankind was reduced to an eternally fearful shadow of themselves, a new upheaval was set to occur. Hoxitl had begun to taste divinity himself, but he too could not hear the voice of his patron. Thinking his master displeased, Hoxitl organized a massive assault on the remaining human population of Nexal. Much like the Feathered Wars of old, every orc, ogre and troll was instructed to incapacitate instead of kill. Thousands of humans were captured and Hoxitl planned a truly grand sacrifice.

In lieu of the standard temple sacrifice, Hoxitl thought it would please his lord to perform the mass sacrifice upon Zatal's caldera. In a single

file, the thousands of slaves marched up the mountainside. Hoxitl made no secret of his intentions – once their hearts were removed and while the body remained semi-living, the offerings would be fed directly in the fires of Zatal!

Hoxitl did not understand that it was not only Zaltec who had grown silent, and the chosen of the myriad other deities had also grown panicked. Though typically somnolent in the depths of their own watery lairs in Zatal, the great rain dragons known as tlalocoatl awoke when they lost the constant hum of their watery lord Azul. As they awoke, they found thousands of men led by not more than a hundred of Zaltec's foul Viperhand near their demesnes. The tlalocoatl, confused by Azul's silence, attacked mercilessly, allowing the humans to escape into hidden tunnels in the mountain. Hoxitl lost his prize that day, but managed to singlehandedly slay an ancient rain dragon. Hoxitl, understanding the depths of his failure, chose to rip his own heart from his chest with his powerful claws and cast it into the bubbling lava. What was left of his retinue observed the great sacrifice and fell to their knees in reverence.

Though the gods were gone, the Heart of Maztica remained deep within the mountain – nurturing the Darkfire and tended to by the Viper. Its corrupting magic emanated once again through the mountain tunnels and slowly changed the escaped humans over the span of a generation. Nothing remains of mankind, though many thousands of grimlocks now roam the upper tunnels.

AZURE SKIES, AGAIN

For over a century the gods remained silent, and the True World changed in uncountable ways. Threats both new and old hardened its inhabitants, and mankind found new ways to defend themselves in the new world. Once again a "new normal" was established with entire generations never having seen the blue skies of Toril.

As it had once been, so it did return. The shimmering and warping began once again as it did a century past. The grey, steel sky slowly

changed to azure once again, and in the event known as the Sundering, the True World had found its way back to Toril.

Though they had long slept, the gods returned, and Zaltec was the first to awaken. The god shifted in the grand cavern beneath Zatal and the mountain rumbled.

The events following Zaltec's awakening immediately following the Sundering can be found in the novella **TWNI Azure Skies. This novella can be found elsewhere and can allow the reader to get a feel for Maztica as it now stands. The massive stone avatar of Zaltec depicted in the novel also appears at the conclusion of this adventure.*

THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs have completed **TWR3**, the adventure starts immediately after its conclusion. The druidess Malinalli can give the players the secret historical background of Zatal to an extent. She is one of only a few who knows the source of the Darkfire, but she doesn't know about the Viper or any of the other inhabitants of the mountain. She tasks her heroes with recovering the Heart of Maztica from the mountains depths and to do so she provides them a few items that can help.

If the PCs have not completed **TWR3**, they can still participate in the adventure - simply assume that another group managed to acquire the *Risa Stone* but perished in the process. Without the *Risa Stone*, Zaltec himself would physically attempt to prevent the resurrection (in the final encounter).

Malinalli provides each PCs with a *feather of fire resistance*. Worn somewhere on the body (typically in hair), these red feathers provide fire resistance without the necessity of attuning to the item, but only retain their magic for a month. They were crafted by plumaweavers in service to the goddess.

She also gives them a stone that grows warmer to the touch as the holder gets closer to the Heart of Maztica. The signals are easy to determine and the stone will unerringly lead the PCs through the miles upon miles of lava tubes and

tunnels in Zatal. The stone also has a single teleportation use that leads directly to the Sunstone in the House of Tezca desert. Once the PCs acquire the Heart, they are instructed to use the spell where she will be waiting to perform the resurrection of a goddess.

The adventure begins in the Valley of Nexal, a blasted land full of monsters and the dreaded Viperhand cult of beasts. While most of these encounters can be skipped by stealthy or cautious PCs, they are available should the players decide to explore.

VALLEY OF NEXAL

Four cities (including the capital, Nexal) once graced the Valley of Nexal but all but one lies in a state of ruin. The Beasts of the Viperhand survive in the region due mostly to a food source known as axayacatl supplemented with meat from captured humans and the small amounts of remaining game in the region. Axayacatl is a large water bug found by the millions in the now foul smelling Lake of the Gods. Orcs harvest the water bug with massive nets and pound the creatures into dough. They are often cooked in lime water and put into mayz husks before eating.

The valley itself was once quite fertile, but the eruption of the Night of Wailing ruined most of the agriculture (not that the beasts were prone to farming). Vegetation has returned, but the valley itself still looks as bleak as it did in the years following Zatal's eruption.

Below are descriptions of each city and additional features of the valley. The DM may expand on them if the PCs wish to explore further and entire adventures could be had within some of these sites. Exploring the Valley of Nexal is not truly necessary for the completion of the adventure.

AZATL

Azatl was once the center of the remaining human population of Nexal after the Night of Wailing. It was known to be a city of scoundrels – consisting of the dregs of society both native and foreign born. After the Spellplague, the

jaagre Hoxitl ordered the beasts of the Viperhand to surround the city as trolls and ogres captured the thousands of men and women. These folks were marched up the side of Zatal, their hearts meant as an offering to Zaltec.

Before the first sacrifice was performed, rampaging tlalocouatl inadvertently freed the humans. Many were killed by the rain dragons and the Viperhand, but thousands escaped into the tunnels of the volcano. The humans survived in the tunnels, never again to see the light of day even though they primarily remained in the uppermost caverns. Over time, the evil energies of the Darkfire transformed these men and women into the grimlocks that now inhabit Zatal.

Ironically, the immigration of these humans to Zatal displaced rat-like creatures of fire known as rylkar who then overran Azatl. Now the city is crawling with these fire rats, and not even the Viperhand finds any use in entering. Anything that could burn is now long gone, but there are rumored treasures that the rylkar have not yet destroyed.

Rylkar Nest

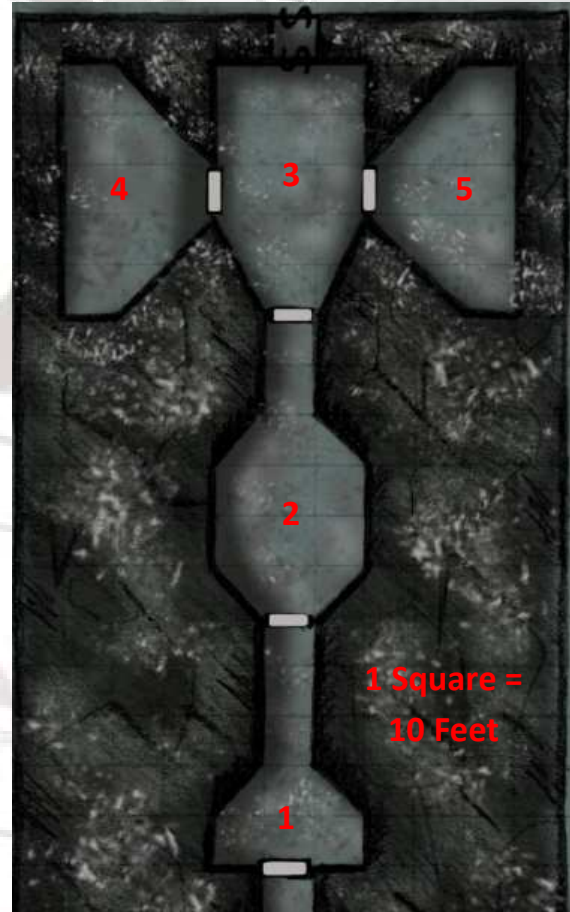
If the PCs enter the deserted city of Azatl, all that is left of the deserted homes is stone and adobe, where there was once straw, lime and clay as well. Most of the roofing is gone and what could once be found inside has rotted and become worthless.

If the PCs insist on searching the ruined residences, you should roll a 1d6. A result of 1 means they find 1d4 gold quills (5 gp each) that were left behind in a long ago raid.

On a roll of 2 or 3, they come upon a rylkar nest. Rylkar are mean spirited rat-like creatures that have been displaced from Zatal by the grimlocks.

The map provided details a typical rylkar infested ruin. In the provided example, the aboveground part of the home is a mess of mud and rotted thatch. In a corner of the home, the PCs may find a 3 foot square hole that leads into the darkness. Steps lead downwards about 10 feet into what was once a hidden temple to Qotal. The former resident was one of the few worshipers of the forbidden deity that could be found in Nexal, but he is long gone. The doors

are still in place, but easily broken off their hinges and 3 foot diameter holes can be found in the base of each which the rylkar use to travel from room to room.



Room 1. This area will begin to give PCs an indication of the foulness of what they are soon to find. The ground is soaked from recent rains that have flooded this part of the temple and the water is fouled and crawling with small vermin. Regular rats occasionally swim through the muck feasting on the worms and roaches. PCs who are foolish enough to attempt to drink any of the water must make a DC11 Constitution save or contract *sewer plague*. It takes 1d4 days for sewer plague's symptoms to manifest in an infected player. Symptoms include fatigue and cramps and the infected creature suffers one level of Exhaustion. It also only receives half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice and no hit points from finishing a Long Rest. At the end of each Long Rest, the player

must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they gain another level of Exhaustion and on a success they lose one level of Exhaustion. If Exhaustion is brought below 1, the player recovers from the disease.

Room 2. The horrid stench in this room is overwhelming, and bones are strewn everywhere. The room is also brimming in two **rylkar spawn swarms** that attempt to consume any who enter.

Room 3. This used to be the central chamber for rites to Qotal. A statue of a plumed dragon is smashed into pieces (by the rylkar harridan's bulk when it first found the temple). The room is as foul smelling as any of the others and if the PCs search the rubble, three **rylkar madclaws** smash through the door from Room 4 to the attack.

A DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check will locate a secret door behind where the statue once stood that leads to other areas within the city that were sympathetic to Qotal once long ago.

Room 4. This is the lair of the rylkar madclaws and if the PCs were attacked by its occupants in Room 3, there is only one remaining. This **rylkar madclaw** is barely alive, having been the runt of the four – it has recently been fed on by the others and it only barely clings to life as its entrails are spilled within the chamber. The rylkar here have collected a few baubles that they have kept hidden from the harridan, which hardly ever leaves its chamber anymore. In total, there are 13 pieces of jewelry made of bone, beads and pretty, but worthless stones. Only one, made of tiger eye and jade, is worth anything and could likely be sold for 250 gp.

Room 5. This is the chamber of a **rylkar harridan** and its two **rylkar tormentor** guards. Here it rolls in its own filth and will not even bother to attack until one of its tormentors is slain.

Once it is slain, the PCs may move its bulk and find the treasure which it lays upon. Doing so, however, exposes them to a particularly virulent strain of sewer plague which only requires contact with the harridan's body and a failed DC

15 Constitution save to contract (though subsequent recovery saves are still DC 11).

The treasure consists of 40 filthy gold quills (200 gp) a dozen assorted small gems in a rotted pouch worth 50 gp each, and a small hishna talisman in the shape of an eagle's claw which can cast *cure poison* once before becoming nonmagical.

TEZAT

Tezat has been a ruin for longer than any of the other cities. It is a smaller city than Azatl, and what is left of it has effectively become a holding pen for sacrifices to Zaltec. Five jagre overseers command dozens of trolls, ogres and hundreds of orcs who keep captives miserable, but at least alive. The only remaining structures are made of stone, and even those are only loosely held together. There are frequent escapes and rebellions, but the jagre are brutal in putting down organized resistance. There has not been a mass uprising in a decade.

The PCs may want to attempt to free slaves in Tezat, but spending too much time in the ruined city is most certain suicidal. Bands of roaming **Viperhand orcs** (1d8+1) led by **Viperhand trolls**, **Viperhand ogres**, or even one of the five **jagre** overseers is commonplace. If PCs lose a member of their party, a replacement could be found among the prisoners.

For every hour the PCs spend in Tezat, roll 1d6. A roll of 5 indicates one of these bands of creatures and a roll of 6 indicates a band with a prisoner in tow. Entering any of the dilapidated buildings also forces one of these rolls. There is little treasure to be found in this hellish prison.

ZOTIL

Zotil was destroyed by lava when Zatal erupted and has never been rebuilt or unburied. During and after the Spellplague, however, orcs that approached too closely began to disappear. Hoxitl would assign orcs who angered him to "guard" the Nexalan city as a particularly cruel form of punishment.

The humans of Zotil were killed almost instantly on the Night of Wailing when lava poured into its streets. The dead sat silently

until they were awakened and set free by the Spellplague. Now, a parasitic form of undead known as lacunae ghosts roam freely among the hardened black lava.

Orcs and Lacunae Ghosts

If the PCs approach or enter the blackened walkways of Zotil, describe the following scene to them.

The ground beneath your feet is smooth but uneven. You need to pay close attention to your every step in order to not break an ankle or leg. You are standing atop the remains of a city buried in lava and only the rare stone rooftop remains unburied.

From one of these forgotten ruins you hear the sounds of battle – a sound that soon turns to piteous wailing.

A regiment of five **Viperhand orcs** managed to anger Hoxitl greatly by allowing a captured jaguar knight from Kultaka to escape their clutches. As he surmised, the escape was intentional. This is because this particular band of Viperhand orcs is rather unlike most. They are the team of *öllamaliztli* (Maztican ball game) players that competed in *TWR2*. If the players participated in that tournament, they will certainly recognize these particular orcs, and the orcs will recognize them as well.

Hoxitl assigned the orcs (condemned?) to this “post” knowing they would not last long with the restless spirits that occupy the ruins.

If the PCs choose to get involved in the battle, the four remaining orcs (one has been slain) will redouble their efforts and assist the PCs. There are seven **lacunae ghosts** attacking the orcs and they will immediately turn on the more powerful PCs.

Once the battle is concluded, what the PCs do with the orcs is truly up to them. They could leave the orcs to their fate (and they certainly won’t make it another week as there are hundreds of lacunae ghosts in the city), slay the orcs or attempt to smuggle them out of the Valley of Nexal. The Kultakans, despite their longstanding hatred of the Viperhand, know these orcs, and might be sympathetic to their

plight. These particular Viperhand orcs are N in alignment and make steadfast allies.

NEXAL

There are close to 50,000 inhabitants in the Valley of Nexal (outside of Mount Zatal) and half of those live in the city of Nexal itself. In addition, Hoxitl, now a semi-divine being in his own right (and a CR25 creature), personally rules the city with an iron fist. Squadrons of Viperhand orcs patrol in and around the city and attack humanity on sight. If they can overwhelm their victims, they attack to capture for later sacrifice – but against a well-armed party, they will use lethal force.

Patrols are similar to those in Tezat, but triple the number of **Viperhand orcs** and every regiment is led by a **jagre** with a **Viperhand ogre** or **Viperhand troll** lieutenant. Also, encounters occur every hour on a roll of 3-6 on 1d6. There are never prisoners in tow, as human sacrifices are only allowed in the city upon their impending death.

MOUNT POPOL

Mount Popol would be considered a decent sized mountain elsewhere in the True World but in comparison to Mount Zatal it can almost easily be overlooked.

Mount Popol is not volcanically active, but it is currently home to a family of rare dragons known as “beljuril dragons” that have had their eyes set on inhabiting Mount Zatal for a long time now. Less than two years ago, the family attempted to occupy caves near the caldera of Zatal. They were summarily attacked by *tlaloatl* and chased back to Mount Popol. A young beljuril dragon was slain and now the dragons seek revenge. They are hostile to the orcs and other Viperhand creatures that approach Mount Popol, but have negotiated some form of *détente* with Hoxitl and have agreed to stay away from the cities. PCs that enter Mount Popol’s environs might be approached at first by an **adult beljuril dragon** (the patriarch) known as *Xiverstryx* – who is not necessarily violent. The family currently consists of two adult beljuril dragons, one young

beljuril dragon, and three wyrmling beljuril dragons.

The dragons live in caves found near the Cicada Springs near which a great aqueduct was once built during the reign of the Revered Counselor Axalt, father to Naltecona. The aqueduct now lies in ruins

GRASSHOPPER SPRING

Grasshopper Spring has somehow retained its purity despite the foulness found nearby in the Lake of the Gods. Were the beasts of the Viperhand to care whether they drank fouled or pure water, they would only gather it from this fresh source.

The spring originates somewhere deep underground and is maintained by a colony of chac. They deter orc patrols any opportunity they get but are also not known to be any friendlier to mankind. Encounters with the chac do not necessarily have to be hostile, but if the PCs wish to rest at the spring they should be prepared to perform some task for their hosts.

Recuperating with the chac is certainly a possibility if it is required by injured PCs. The chac will task the PCs with killing a **Maztican ahuitzotl** that inhabits the shallow east end of the spring and occasionally devours unsuspecting young chac. The Maztican ahuitzotl "collects" turquoise whenever it can get its claws on the stone, and has 625 gp worth of it in 8 chunks of various sizes.

LAKE OF THE GODS

The Lake of the Gods formed ages ago at the whim of Zaltec's brothers in order to keep an eye on his actions. It was a reminder to the Nexalans that Zaltec was not the only deity that demanded worship and recognition.

The lake once teemed with fish and served as a great source of food for the empire. A few years prior to Cordell's arrival – great portions of the lake erupted with steam, poisoning tens of thousands of fish. This was considered by the Revered Counselor Naltecona to be an omen of impending disaster, though the portion of the lake that had been consecrated to Qotal remained unchanged.

On the Night of Wailing, the lakes fouled once again, but refugees fled across it to escape the newly created beasts. Qotal himself was said to have assisted in this escape.

Today, most of the lake remains fouled and it no longer has the depth it once had. There are signs that life is returning and the occasional fish can be seen jumping out of the lake to capture *axayacatl* which can be found in the millions.

If the family of twelve **scrag** (trolls with the amphibious ability) that occupied the lake were destroyed, the fish would undoubtedly make a recovery in time.



Maztican Ahuitzotl

CORDOTL

Cordotl was once a town that had the potential to grow into yet a fifth city in the Valley of Nexal but, like the empire itself, it was destroyed during the Night of Wailing.

Cordotl is nominally abandoned and Hoxitl does not pay it any mind. It lies in the shadow of the dragons of Mount Popol, and an old trade road to Palul passes through its abandoned causeway – but only those in hiding are actually willing to call Cordotl home.

If the PCs enter Cordotl, they might encounter Elentepoc – a **jagre** outcast who worships Plutoq instead of Zaltec. Elentepoc lives in a large home shaped like a small ziggurat and it is guarded by four **jaguar stone guardians**.

FIRES OF ZATAL

Mount Zatal was once growing at a rate that threatened to overtake the Lake of the Gods in only a century. This growth ceased on the day of the Blue Breath of Change. If the PCs do not destroy the Darkfire and take the Heart of Maztica from the mountain, this growth will begin again. Once the volcano fully destroys the lake, the beasts will no longer be able to survive in the valley and will need to push outwards, starting a full scale war with nations such as Pezelac and Kultaka. Though eventually this will lead to the destruction of the Viperhand, Pezelac will certainly fall, as will most of Payit. The Kultakans would hold their ground as they always have.

THE VOLCANO SURFACE

The surface of the mountain is steep and barren, but life still manages to find a way to thrive. Fire resistant scrubs form the ecological bottom rung and they are eaten by a variety of herbivorous small mammals. These are in turn consumed by larger predators - most commonly the fire lizards of Zatal. These distant relatives of the desert dwelling itzamti can be found in relative abundance and they are only typically aggressive if hungry or threatened.

There are dozens of caverns that pepper the surface but only six lead down into the depths of the mountain. Without Malinalli's heart stone, it might take the PCs days, if not weeks, to find the correct entrance. As it is, they should have a hostile encounter with a mated pair of **fire lizards of Zatal** that see the PCs as a threat to their nest of three eggs. The eggs are relatively easy to find near a river of slowly flowing lava. Without protection (fire resistance), approaching the eggs would cause 11 (2d10) fire damage and touching the eggs themselves would cause 4 (1d8) fire damage. The embryos inside the eggs will die if not kept sufficiently warm, but could be sold in cities such as Tukan or Helmsport for 250 gp each if the embryos still lived.

When the PCs find the entrance to the Fire Caves, they are attacked by a creature known as a **living lahar**. This creature typically feasts on grimlocks who wander too close to the entrance from below, but it will gladly dine on the tastier fare that the PCs represent.

Though one of Cordell's men once likened the tunnels under Zatal to be "Maztica's Undermountain" the layouts of both "mega-dungeons" are in fact quite different. Where most of Undermountain was created intentionally, the vast majority of Zatal was formed by natural lava tubes. They crisscross each under without any truly delineated levels and useable maps are impossible to come by. The movement of magma changes somewhat regularly and within a few years even the most accurate become obsolete.

Needless to say, there are hundreds of miles of these tunnels. The most stable of which tend to attract settlement. There are five "levels" of the volcanic underground but more than depth, this description is more accurately defined by its inhabitants. Level five is clearly the deepest part of the volcano, other than the vein of magma that leads into the unreachable depths of the world. The PCs will have encounters on each level, but the timing of those encounters is up to the DM. Even with the heart stone, it will take the PCs at least a week to find their way to the Heart of the Mountain, and the order given does not have to be followed linearly. If the DM has underground encounters of his or her own that they would like to include, refer to the general

descriptions of each level and find a proper placement.

Features of the Underlevels. The underground areas of Zatal are always hot, but in many places are dangerously so.

Fatigue. Characters that aren't at least resistant to fire become exhausted from the heat twice as fast as normal and must drink twice the amount of water to survive. The feathers provided by Malinalli offset this environmental danger. Caverns, rooms or tunnels on Level 2 do not have this feature.

Light. Cold chambers are pitch black, but those with magma radiate dim light within 30 feet of the magma itself.

Magma Breach. Hot lava flows throughout the mountain and is easily avoidable when seen. However, in some places, it flows just behind a thin crust or wall, and can come crashing through at any time. When in combat, roll a 1d6. On a result of 1, the battle is taking place in an unstable region and evocation spells have a 1% chance per point of damage of causing a breach. When a breach occurs, lava pours into the room causing 16 (3d10) fire damage to all within the chamber and then again at the start of each turn. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check can determine if any particular chamber is stable before it becomes a danger.

If the PCs are so foolish as to come into contact with magma otherwise in the adventure, refer to the following chart to determine the amount of fire damage dealt.

Contact	Fire Damage
Brief contact	5 (1d10)
Immersion of extremity	11 (2d10)
Wading	55 (10d10)
Full immersion	99 (18d10)

LEVEL 1 – THE FIRE CAVES

The Descent resulted in the occupation of the lava tunnels by thousands of humans and they either displaced or ate whatever occupied the livable caverns. Eventually, the food started to

run out and they delved deeper into the volcano. The humans could not overcome the firenewts or the powerful tlaloatl and it wasn't long before they started to turn on each other. Cannibalism became the only means of survival.

The evil sentience that powers the Darkfire sensed this degenerate evil and waves of dark energy pulsed into the outer chambers. The magic transformed every remaining cannibal into the blind grimlocks which they remain to this day.

The map provided represents a sample portion of the Fire Caves which are occupied primarily by one colony (one of many) of grimlocks. The DM may add other encounters of his own to the map or expand the Fire Caves to include additional sections of the DM's own design. The players will walk through over a mile of winding tunnels such as these before Level 2.

Cavern 1. Read the following out loud.

The air is as stifling and hot as it is elsewhere in the Fire Caves, but there doesn't seem to be much in the way of magma here. Stalagmites and stalactites decorate the cavern and in the center of the cave you see four incredibly foul-smelling undead gnawing on a bloated corpse.

Four **ghasts** attack the PCs.

Cavern 2. Read the following out loud.

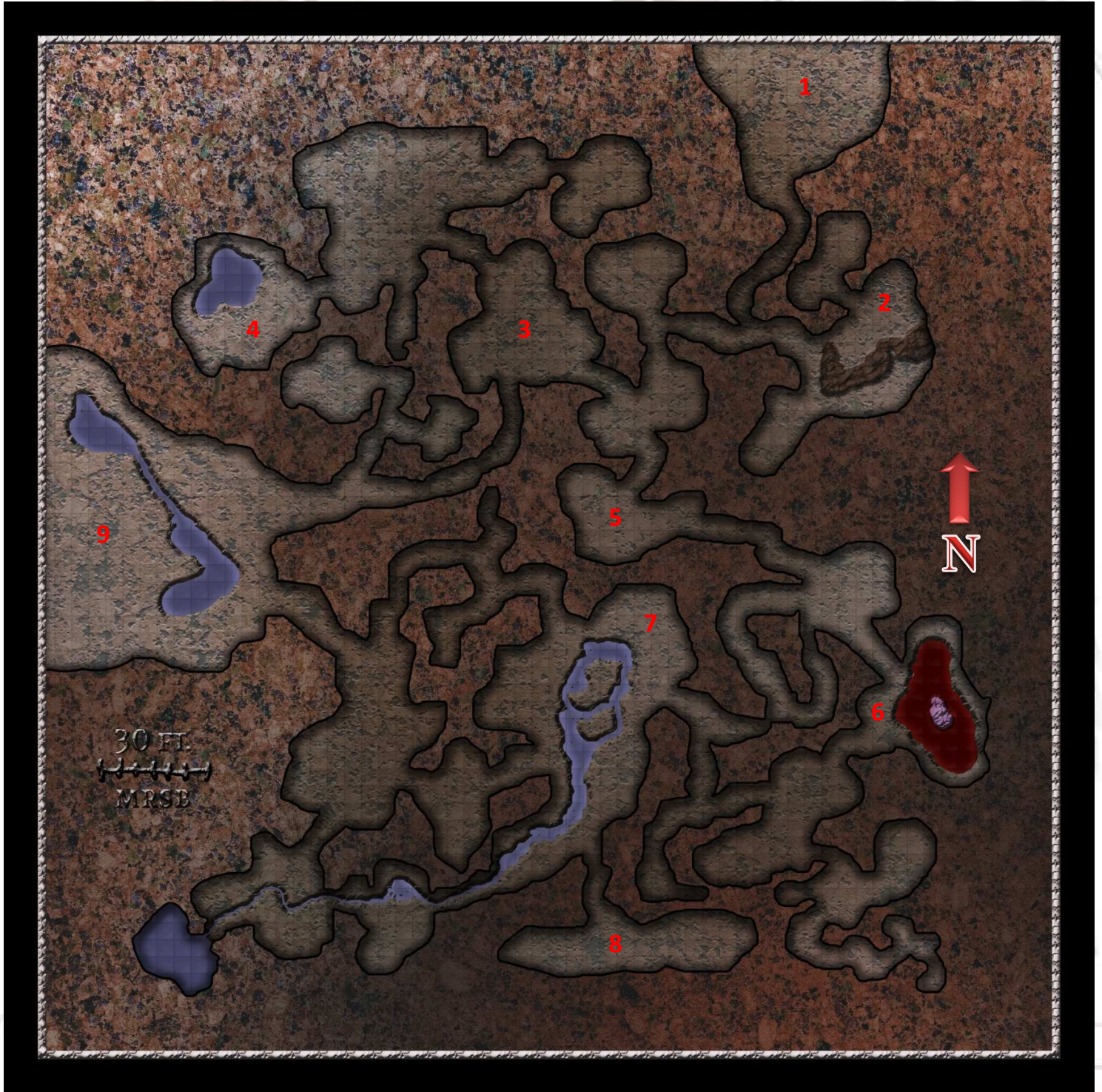
In your careers as adventurers you have seen untold horrors, and you are certainly no stranger to the undead. However, the creature you see before you awakens the same hesitance you experienced in your first battles.

In many ways it defies description, but you make out some sort of giant scorpion-like creature whose torso is that of an undead human. As it comes into focus, you realize that the torso is actually being regurgitated. As the newly formed undead hits the floor and rises to its feet, a second replaces it from the beast's belly.

From the shadows you notice more of the foul smelling undead approaching. The unholy beast and its minions attack.

This undead abomination is the aforementioned **hurachnid**. Undead scorpionfolk with a belly that is far larger on the inside than it is on the outside. It can regurgitate its past “meals” as ghosts who defend the hurachnid and bring it additional prey. The hurachnid has disgorged

three ghosts (including the one the PCs were able to witness) and will continue to do so as long as the PCs are occupied with its minions. Once all ghosts have been defeated it finally enters the fray personally.





Hurachnid

If the PCs defeat the hurachnid they can rip open its gullet at which point they find seven more bodies that should not fit in the small enclosure. The corpses are not animated and one has a beautiful set of perfectly cut diamond earrings worth 400 gp. The earrings are not a typical style for inhabitants of the True World.

Cavern 3. Read the following to the PCs.

As you move beyond the caverns of the strange undead scorpion abomination, you had expected the stench to abate. It has, but it has been replaced by one that is equally terrible.

Bones litter the stony floors in between stalagmites and stalactites and you recognize most of them as being human. There are three obviously blind humanoids enjoying a leg bone that still has a moccasin attached.

The three **grimlocks** are the first that the PCs will encounter in these caverns. They are

gluttonous and cannibalistic and will attack the PCs without fear. The moccasin is one of a pair and the other can be found amid the bones with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or DC12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. They are *moccasins of striding and springing* which behave exactly like *boots of striding and springing*.

Cavern 4. This is unfortunately the latrine and refuse pit for the entire community of grimlocks (though they are not terribly discerning). A vile pool of excrement and floating body parts pollutes what might have one time been a fresh underground spring. Seven **grimlocks** currently occupy this chamber and attack upon discovery.

Cavern 5. Five **grimlocks** guard a cave that is used as a larder of sorts for the cannibalistic creatures. Two human bodies, two desert dwarves and even a half dozen grimlock corpses are stacked atop each other, each in a variety of states of decay.

Cavern 6. In the grimlock caverns, this is the only one that actually contains some of the flowing magma that is so commonplace elsewhere in the tunnels. While the grimlocks do not like to waste potential food, the occasional dispute leads to the losing grimlock being tossed into the magma. Fifteen **grimlocks** are here now throwing a helpless and bound one into the fiery pit. There are also two **magma mephits** that the grimlocks generally avoid cavorting in the lava as well. The mephits will delight in the chaos of a battle and join in attempting to shove grimlocks and PCs alike into the magma.

Cavern 7. This is the main “community center” for the grimlocks if such a thing can be defined. Relatively fresh water forms a river that flows deeper into the tunnels before disappearing under the tunnel floor to the southwest.

PCs who follow the flowing water will need to be able to breathe water for at least six hours before they come upon the lair of an adult tlalocoatl. The rain dragon will not be happy to find intruders.

The water in these tunnels stays fresh because of the strong flow and it is currently occupied by twenty-five **grimlocks** who will rush the PCs with little in the way of tactics.

Cavern 8. The entrance to this cave is guarded by 8 **piercers** that disguise themselves among the dozens of stalactites on the ceiling. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will allow the PCs to catch a glimpse of some movement up above. The cave itself doubles as a nursery and treasury but all the grimlock young have recently been devoured by ghosts. The grimlocks have stationed two **grimlocks** as guards here that use their knowledge of the piercer’s locations and blindsight to avoid being hit.

Grimlocks no longer value treasure, but the belongings of their human ancestors can be found here. All in all, there is 225 gold quills (1.125 gp), 60 semiprecious stones (10 gp each) and a variety of differently sized chunks of jade and turquoise (15 in total worth 750 gp). There is also a book whose covers are made of black mica bound with a thick copper wire. This is a magical book called the *book of the earthstoker* that contains some very unique new spells found in the Appendix.

Cavern 9. This cavern starts at a higher elevation on its east end and gradually dips down the further west you go into the cavern (beyond the edge of the map). Beyond this point lies a mile or so of additional caves that become progressively moister. Eventually, they cool off completely as the PCs enter Level 2 of Zatal. Malinalli’s stone of the heart will continue to lead the PCs in the right direction.

LEVEL 2 – THE CHILDREN OF AZUL

Tlalocoatl occupy Mount Zatal in significant numbers because their deity Azul commands it. Azul, a brother god to Zalteco, has often allied with the Eater of Hearts. However, he also does not fully trust his brother and longs for a day where Zalteco ceases his meddling in the affairs of mankind. Azul bears some great guilt from a long past age that he does not speak of, even with his priests. This secret is said to be guarded somewhere within the mountain.

The caverns and chambers claimed by the tlalocoatl are known to be wholly different from the rest of the volcano’s interior. Cool mist and moist caverns exist wholly separate from the bubbling lava and boiling heat nearby. There are even lakes and rivers within the mountain; one is rumored to be made completely of molten gold!

The Blue Grotto is a small portion of the miles of tunnels and chambers in Level 2. It is the abode of two young and mean-spirited tlalocoatl known as Umeteotec and Umeteatl (along with their minions). The walls are coated in harmless blue algae and are lit by glowing worms which give the whole grotto a bluish glow. The effect would certainly be considered beautiful were it not for the hostile inhabitants.

Blue Grotto 1. The entrance to the Blue Grotto is completely submerged and the water elemental allies of the rain dragons keep the water continually churning and difficult to swim in. Submerged PCs need to make a DC 15 Strength (athletics) check to advance on their turn and even then, only one foot of movement is gained for every three spent (unless the PC has a swim speed. The submerged tunnel is 60 feet long before the PCs can surface.

Blue Grotto 2. Two **water elementals** work constantly keeping the waters of the Blue Grotto fresh and churning for the tlaloatl. They also make it incredibly difficult for grimlocks or other inhabitants of the volcano to enter the grotto.

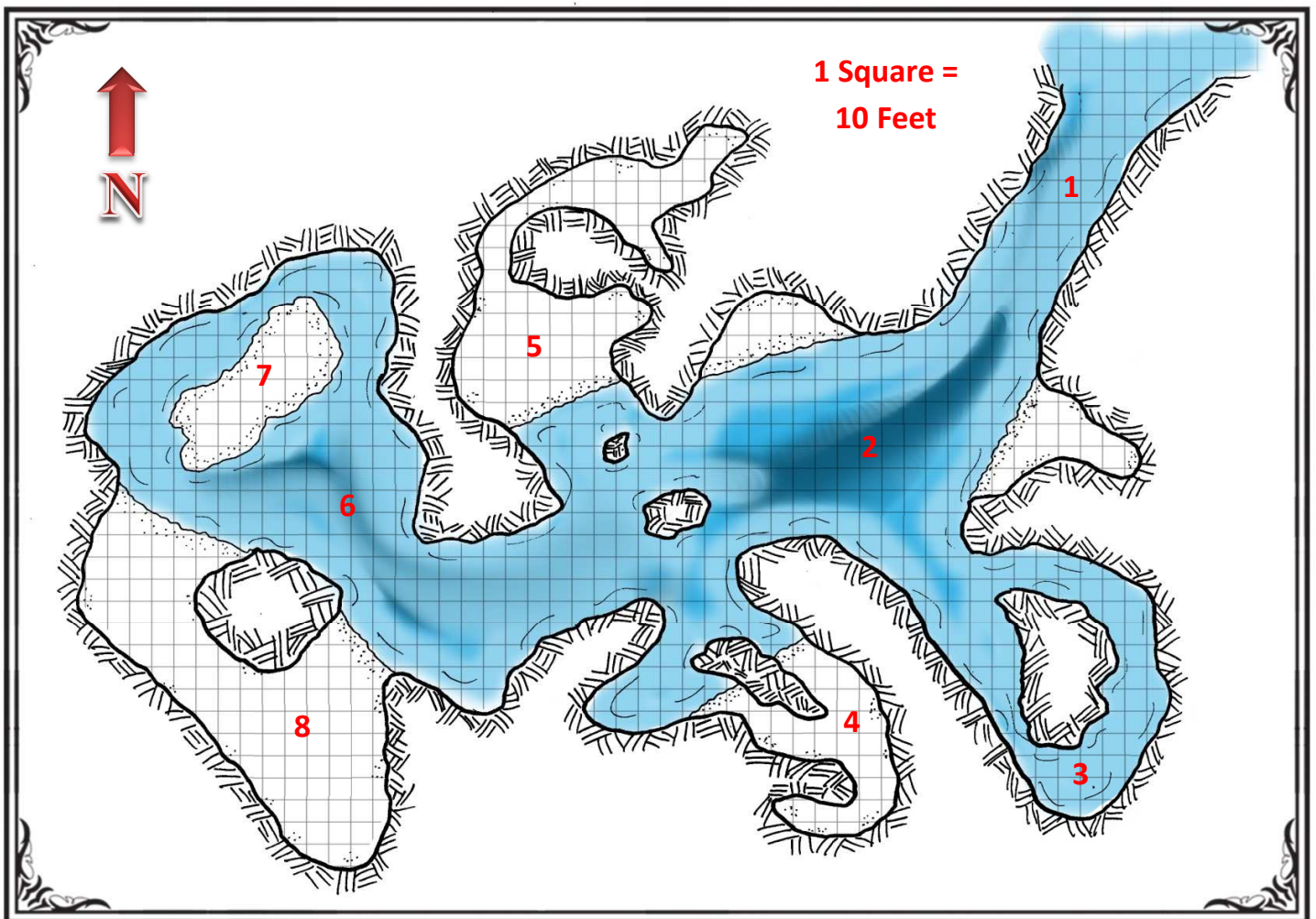
Blue Grotto 3. When the tlaloatl were only wyrmlings, they attempted their first magical summonings into the Plane of Water and found they could only call forth a few of the snakelike water weirds. The four **water weirds** have never been given the task of guarding the grotto and they can be avoided if the PCs aren't immediately hostile.

Floating in this area is a set of armor made of hishnahide (see *TWC1*, but also described here) *mariner's scale mail armor*. Hishnahide is magically transformed armor which is actually

made of hide (in this case a jaguar's) but has all the properties of the named armor type. The armor was accidentally knocked into the water by Umeteotec from the dragons' hoard and it floated here over time. The tlaloatls' will be infuriated if they see it in a PCs' possession and will attack the offending character first.

The water weirds will rise from the water surrounding PCs as they grab the armor, but will not immediately attack. The PCs can wholly ignore the curious elemental creatures if they desire.

Blue Grotto 4. The tlaloatl occasionally make forays into the outside world and intimidate water based creatures that they encounter. Generally, Umeteatl snatches up such creatures with his jaguar head and drags it back to the Blue Grotto to act at least as an unwilling guard.



Such is the case with the **chuul** and five **giant crabs** that inhabit this part of the Blue Grotto. The chuul attacks all who approach the area and the crabs attempt to pick off pieces of meat as the battle rages.

Blue Grotto 5. A **giant crocodile**, taken from the swamps of northern Kultaka and brought here wedges its mass in the rear portion of this cavern but hunts giant crabs that live in the soft mud of the shoreline. The ten **giant crabs** that remain stay hidden underground for fear of being eaten and will not be encountered unless the PCs actively try to dig them out.

Blue Grotto 6. The Blue Grotto opens up into an area where the water calms a bit and the rain dragons lair. Though they get along with each other, the tlaloatl do not coordinate their attacks well. Umeteotec inhabits the island at area 7, and Umeteatl inhabits the cavern at area 8. Whichever the PCs encounter first, the other dragon will arrive at the start of the second turn of battle.

Blue Grotto 7. Umeteotec lounges on the island in the northern portion of the Blue Grotto lake. He (both heads) is spoiled and completely detached from his god Azul, leading him to behave in a manner unlike most tlaloatl. It believes that one day Azul will seek to punish him so it is responsible for capturing and summoning as many guardians as it can. Upon discovery of the PCs, it will offer them the option of either serving, or dying.

Umeteatl, as the more “responsible” of the two, guards the treasure that belongs to the dragons and is loath to leave the hoard – but will do so when it senses its brother is in danger. The PCs will have to fight both **young rain dragons** after one turn of battle.

Blue Grotto 8. Umeteatl’s lair is carved with images of their history that are quite detailed. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (religion) allows the PCs to decipher their entire past. They show the two brothers as wyrmlings in service to Azul whom they thought abandoned them while Maztica was on Abeir. They stopped performing their duties and were actively hunted by other, more powerful rain dragons.

Eventually, they killed and ate all their remaining human allies (including the hands that carved the grotto walls) and have remained hidden in the grotto for over a decade.

The treasure the dragons have amassed is not extensive, but it contains some wondrous items that PCs might find useful. The tlaloatl have 60 gold quills (300 gp) and Amnian coins (1,500 cp, 350 sp, 200 gp, 45 pp) in addition to a ruined painting of Cordell whose gold frame could be sold or melted down for the equivalent of 200 gp, 6 chunks of jade (50 gp each) and 4 chunks of turquoise (50 gp each).

Magic items include a *gizzard of Enotepac*, *hishnacools*, and a large sealed clay jug that contains 7 doses of *octli of strength*. All these items can be found in **TWM8**, but are repeated in the Appendix for convenience.

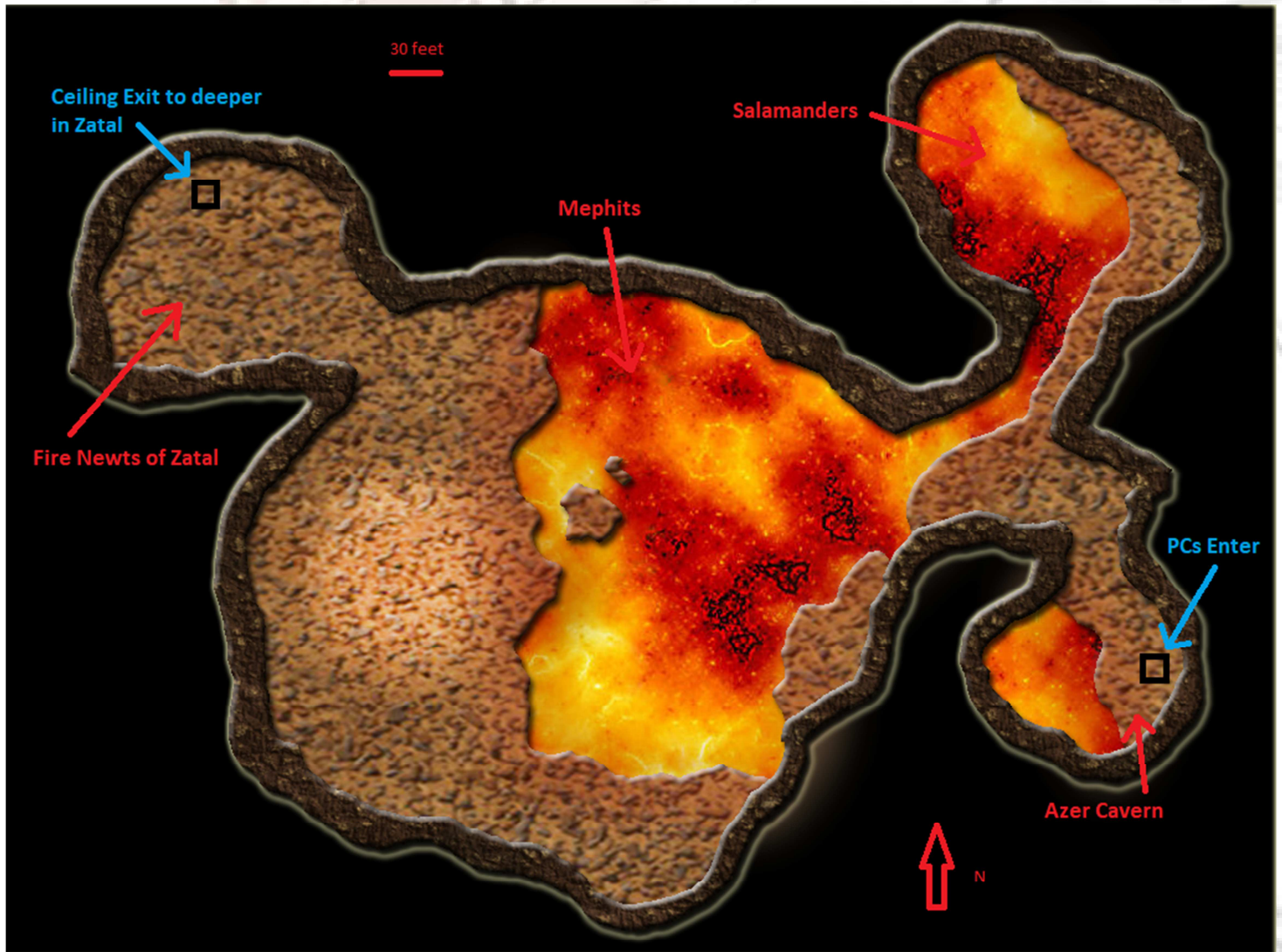
LEVEL 3 – THE FURY OF TEZCA

Though their forces can easily reach the surface (bypassing the tlaloatl and pushing through the grimlocks), a special breed of firenewt and their strider allies occupy what is considered the third level of Mount Zatal’s undertunnels.

These firenewts hate mankind, but have threats of their own to deal with within the mountain and rarely venture forth. This level is considered the largest of all and is generally pretty deep belowground. It is the most volcanically active level of them all and generally surrounds the massive tube that leads directly to the caldera. In addition to geography, Tezca himself also maintains magic that prevents the magma from completely filling the level and can drop the effect if he so chooses.

The firenewts worship Tezca and this angers their former patron Imix, the Prince of Evil Fire. Imix has encouraged magmin and salamanders to eliminate the disloyal lizard folk, but they maintain some protection from Tezca (including the magic that keeps the magma from filling their chambers). This war has been at a stalemate for centuries, and even when Tezca was silent on Abeir, the magic remained.

Other fire creatures occupy this level in great numbers, particularly magma mephits who greatly enjoy antagonizing the war and fomenting chaos.



One region that the PCs may (literally, since the entrance is in the ceiling) drop in on is the Cavern of Imix. Including its smaller side caves, the Cavern of Imix stretches almost 500 feet from end to end.

The caverns are a central location for a war that rages between three factions of fire creatures. The fire newts of Zatal, an incursion of salamanders that were dispatched by the Prince of Evil Fire Creatures Imix, and a small group of the dwarflike azer who cannot find their way back to their elemental home. All the while, a dozen lava mephits snipe at the weak or injured – adding to an already chaotic battle.

The PCs should enter the caverns from the SE cavern – it is the lowest part of the cavern ceiling at only a 10 ft drop. The cavern itself can reach as high as 60 feet elsewhere, particularly in the central chamber.

Unfortunately for PCs the only way through this area leads at least through the mephits and the fire newts, but if the PCs strike out on their own and engage in battle, the salamanders may attack as well.

The azer are not hostile to the PCs and see the added muscle that the group represents as a blessing from their own Prince, Zaaman Rul. The encounters that follow are designed for the DM to stage, but the PCs can participate in the outright war to follow, hopefully tipping the balance in favor of the azer.

Combatants include the allied 10 **azer**, 12 **magma mephits** (who only attack when one side is weakened, but would greatly enjoy to pull unprotected PCs into the flames), the 10 **salamanders**, 1 **firenewt overlord**, 13 **firenewts of Zatal** and 5 **giant striders of Zatal**. If the PCs enter the main chamber with the azer, all combatants will appear from their

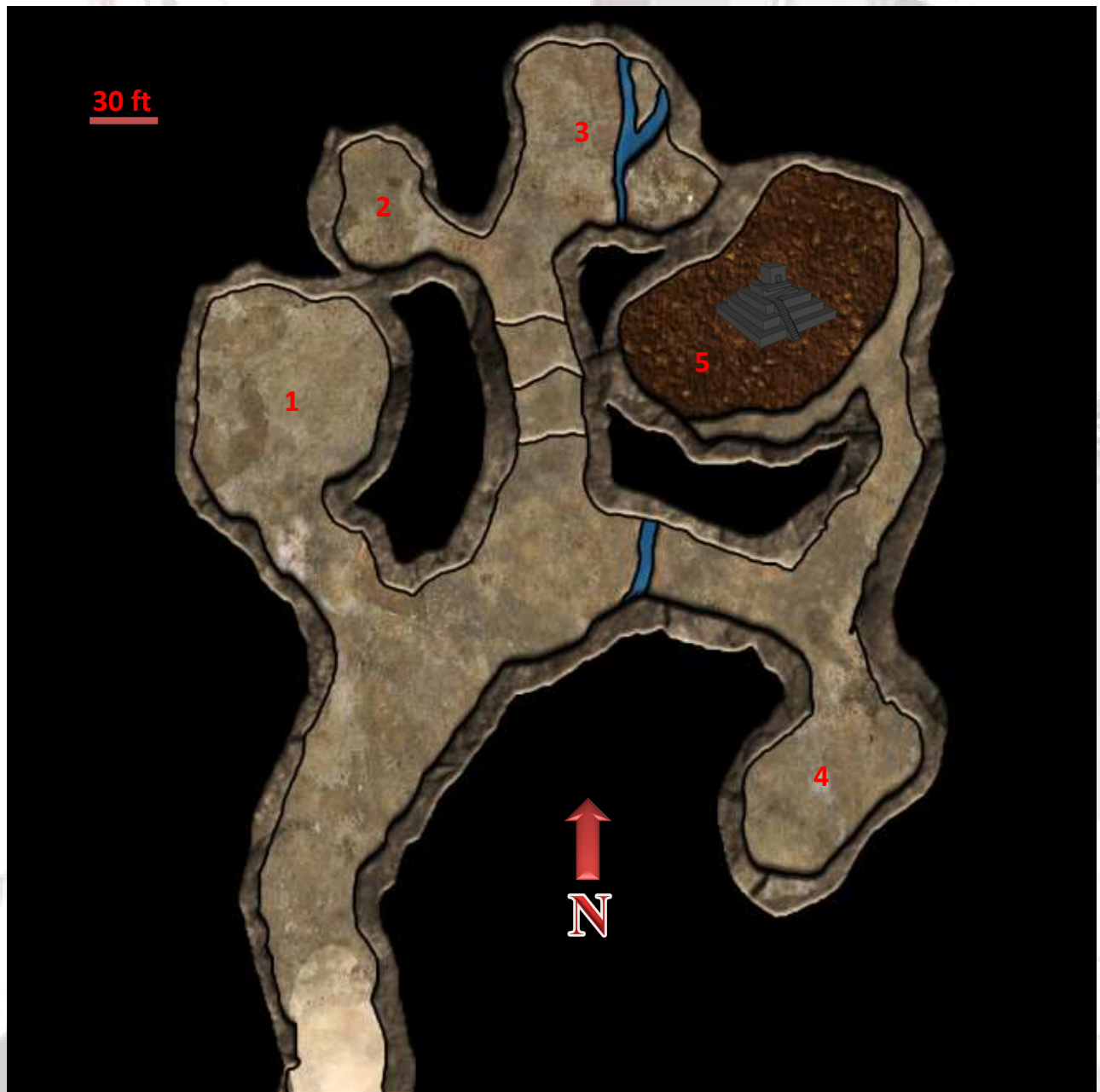
respective chambers and a massive battle will commence. The DM is encouraged to only give as many combatants to the PCs as the can handle – most will be fighting each other.

At the conclusion of the battle, and assuming that the PCs and azer have won, the azer will take over the cavern and fortify both entrances. The PCs are welcome to rest here at any point in this or future adventures in Zatal.

LEVEL 4 – THE FIST OF PLUTOQ

The fourth level lies below the mountain and is relatively even compared to those above.

Instead of lava tubes, natural caverns exist here in abundance and its appearance seems more like elsewhere in the Underdark than it does in the center of a volcano (yet it is still uncomfortably hot). Like Azul and Tezca, the



earthy Plutoq has also taken a many centuries long interest in his brother's activities and his creatures occupy this level in order to keep watch on happenings in the volcano.

The level is rife with elemental creatures of stone – including gargoyles, elementals, and xorn.

There is also said to be a cavern with a large stone ziggurat and temple to Plutoq. The temple atop the ziggurat is occupied by a couatl that has abandoned its worship of Qotal and now calls Plutoq his patron. Because of this, he has developed some new powers and an altered appearance. The environs of the temple is described below, along with an encounter with the strange couatl itself. The couatl's name is Macuilluztatl and he is of a very rare, if not unique subspecies known as a piedracouatl.

Plutoq's Ziggurat and Environs 1. Plutoq's influence in this region and the chemical rich atmosphere inherent in the volcano has caused the growth of some very large quartz crystals in this cavern. The crystals have in turn attracted two **xorn** who do not wish to lose their food source. The xorn attack any PCs who enter.

Significant chunks of crystal can be broken off the walls with a successful DC 12 Strength check but they are not very valuable. Each weights 1d6+1 lb and could only be sold for a single gold quill (5 gp). In addition, magma flows just beyond the cavern walls and each removed crystal requires the PC to check for a *magma breach* (pg. 13). The xorn inherently know which crystals to avoid.

Plutoq's Ziggurat and Environs 2. A **Maztican golem** created by the piedracouatl stands motionless in the center of this cavern behind a small copper bowl with 6 glittering red rubies inside. The piedracouatl keeps an eye on this chamber with his crystal ball and observes the PCs actions. He will not immediately assume they are hostile if they attempt to take the rubies but a display of powerful *hishna* magic will make him assume they are agents of Zaltec. The gems do belong to him, however, and if they destroy the golem (which animates once it or the bowl is touched) he will seek recompense of a magic item (any item, even a potion will do). He will also insist that the gems are returned,

unless the PCs assist him in the battle against the gargoyles (each is worth 200 gp).

Plutoq's Ziggurat and Environs 4. This large cavern has a large stream that runs through its length. It is fresh and is safe to drink from, but a swarm of blind carnivorous fish (treat as a **swarm of quippers**) attack any who place an extremity in the water or immerse themselves. In addition, a thirst of 24 **stirges** occupy the stalactites and attack if any blood is drawn or the PCs make enough noise to wake them. A DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check allows the PCs to notice the sleeping creatures on the ceiling.

Plutoq's Ziggurat and Environs 4. A half dozen **gargoyles** once served Macuilluztatl faithfully atop the ziggurat. Their cruelty always bothered the serpent and eventually he could no longer abide their torments of other creatures – even intruders. Macuilluztatl created stone guardians and golems to replace the gargoyles and eventually cast them out. The gargoyles desire revenge but are hesitant to attack on their own. The arrival of the PCs is just what they need to destroy their former patron. When the PCs enter this chamber read the following.

A human male, emaciated and pale, sits chained to a stone in the center of the cavern. Surrounding the human are five stone statues of terrible creatures that look like the dreaded *tzitzimitl*, but with wings. The statues do not move, and the man whimpers for you to “be silent, lest you wake the sleeping guardians.”

The human male is in fact one of the gargoyles wearing a *hat of disguise** and he will gladly allow the PCs to free him. The statues are the other gargoyles, but they will remain unmoving. The “human” points to a key that is just out of his reach that unlocks the shackles; though he continually implores them to remain silent.

The disguised gargoyle identifies himself as *Tecotecuani* and says he is a *Kultakan* that was captured by a “foul snake creature that lives in a hidden temple of evil.” The magical disguise and surrounding circumstances are quite convincing, requiring a DC 20 Wisdom

(Perception) check for the PCs to notice something is amiss.

He will beg them to arm him despite not being in any shape to fight. He also wants the PCs to attack the “snake creature to the north” on sight, but will not pursue this if the PCs grow suspicious of an overly eager former prisoner. He will beg the PCs not to attack the statues because of his fear and their “immense powers.”

**Note that Tecotecuani has had his wings destroyed and removed in a previous battle, allowing his shape as a human to become more convincing using the hat of disguise.*

Plutoq’s Ziggurat and Environs 5. When the PCs enter the cavern that contains the ziggurat, they will notice the structure immediately. It is well lit from inside and a great serpent stands in the temple doorway, as if waiting for the arrival of the PCs. If Tecotecuani is with the party, he implores them to attack before the “demon-snake” can use its magic.

How Macuilluztatl reacts to the PCs is dependent on their actions in area 2. If they did not take the rubies or destroy the golem, the stony couatl warns them not trust in their present company if Tecotecuani is with them or welcomes them to Plutoq’s Ziggurat if the gargoyle is not. If they took the rubies and/or destroyed the golem, he will not say anything but can be easily convinced that the PCs are non-hostile with a successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

He is far more suspicious if the PCs used any form of hishna magic against the golem, thinking that the PCs are an agent of Zaltec. It would then require a DC 18 check to turn him friendly. An untrusting couatl demands the PCs leave the environs (after compensation for the golem and a return of the gems). He will attack PCs that don’t comply, activating his 4 **stone guardian eagles** and his remaining **Maztican golem**. This will be a deadly battle with the **pedracouatl** even with the assistance of the other 5 **gargoyles** (from area 4), which will arrive on the start of the second turn of battle.

The gargoyles will turn on the PCs when the couatl is dead.

Assuming the couatl is friendly it telepathically warns them again about the disguised gargoyle,

just as the others flit into the cavern. This time – the pedracouatl and its guardians assist the PCs instead.

Once the battle is over, and assuming the PCs are victorious against the gargoyles, Macuilluztatl invites them into the temple of Plutoq for a meal and some conversation. The couatl politely answers any questions the PCs have and claims he has information that could help them if they seek the Heart of Maztica.

“The stone in your grasp might guide you to the heart of the goddess, but you must know what it has become. Zaltec has fed from it for centuries, and it has developed a life of its own. This life is not kind nor motherly like the goddess, but rather hateful and cruel. It is the source of the evil energy known as the Darkfire, and it will not be easily defeated.”

This should pique the PCs’ interest since Malinalli did not know of its current status – only how to find it. The stone serpent continues.

“And the Heart is not the only danger you shall face. Zaltec no longer resides in his chamber, but he has left an ancient guardian – one as old as the gods themselves in their current forms and from a time before man.

You will need to defeat this being, who calls himself the Viper, if you are even to challenge the Darkfire. I am here to observe, so I cannot help you directly, but I can offer this to your greatest warrior.”

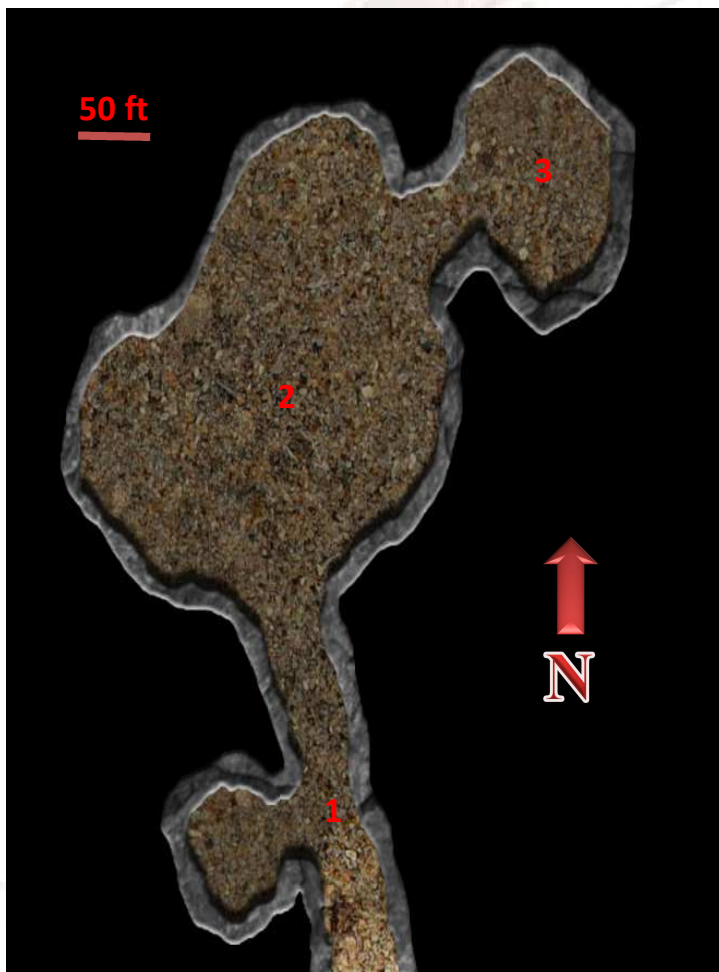
With that, the pedracouatl presents a glowing, obsidian studded spear known as a tepoztōpilli. He claims it is called *Onotlatlatzin*, and it’s great power could be used to harness lightning. Its greatest power of calling lightning, according to the couatl, will not be possible in the underground caverns, but its wielder will be immune to the Viper’s most deadly attack. The weapon is intelligent and its full description can be found both in *TWM8* and the Appendix. If the PCs are particularly charismatic (DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check), he may allow them to keep the rubies and forego his compensation for the golem as well.

The piedracouatl escorts the PCs beyond its ziggurat and points the PCs in a direction that makes the *stone of the heart* grow incredibly warm, almost hot, to the touch.

Less than a half mile from the ziggurat lies the grand entrance to the Heart of the Mountain.

LEVEL 5 – THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN

Deep below the mountain lies a massive cavern that is roughly shaped like the ventricles of a heart. This area is known as the Heart of the Mountain and in fact actually contains the corrupted, blackened heart of the goddess Maztica. It also holds a physical manifestation of the obscene force known as the Darkfire, the former sarrukh creature known as the Viper, and the currently unoccupied resting place of the deity Zaltec himself.



Heart 1. When the PCs enter the Heart of the Mountain read the following out loud to them.

You can feel the soul of the whole of the mountain in your skin and your bones as you enter what you know Malinalli and Macuillzatl both described as the “Heart of the Mountain.” It is difficult to explain, but it oozes hunger and transformation simultaneously. You can almost feel your fingers wriggling about themselves as if they want to warp into something... different.

Black flames pulse across the ceiling and occasionally flare out towards you, but they do not reach where you stand. This must be a manifestation of the infamous Darkfire – the power responsible for the Night of Wailing and source of much of the evil that has plagued the True World for ages now.

While the Darkfire might not be an immediate threat, perhaps the massive white serpent that slides into view is.

As anticipated, the serpent is none other than **The Viper**. It was once sarrukh, but centuries of exposure to the transformative energy of the Darkfire has made it what it is now. The Viper will attempt to spit forth lightning bolt after lightning bolt from its pale white mouth. The creature is a nightmare to behold and it will show no mercy.

The serpent slithered from its lair which contains the collected skulls of thousands of its victims, but it does not otherwise care for treasure. Four **swarms of poisonous snakes** weave in and out of the skulls. If the Viper is slain, the Darkfire flares causing 5 (1d10) necrotic damage to all living beings in the Heart of the Mountain. The Darkfire noticeably becomes more active. If the Darkfire manages to kill a PC, the dead PC is immediately resurrected and transformed into some terrible creature from the Monster Manual that is not otherwise common (or even known) within the True World. Possibilities include an **umber hulk**, a **gorgon**, or a **bulette**. Such PCs can only be changed to their true form using a *wish*, or divine intervention (such as Maztica’s blessing at the adventure’s conclusion). The creature will attack its former allies.

Heart 2. This is the chamber where the avatar of Zaltec awoke from its long slumber soon after Maztica returned to Toril. There are no stalagmites and it seems as if most of the stalactites have come crashing to the cavern floor, where the outline of a massive human-like form can be found in the stone.

Each turn that the PCs begin in this chamber, the Darkfire flares as it did when the Viper was slain (with all the accompanying effects). As the PCs turn the northeastern cavern, they see a sight which horrifies even the most stalwart PC.

Heart 3. Read the following description to the players as they peer into the cavern.

Deep in your chest, you can feel the beating of your heart and as you approach the third cavern, it becomes so loud that it drowns out all other sound.

As you peer around the entrance you realize it is not the sound of your own – but rather the massive, desiccated heart of a dead goddess.

What was once the heart of the goddess of life and the mother of the True World is now a corrupted, blackened monstrosity. It is the size of a small giant, but its tendrils – veins and arteries actually – hold it aloft from the cavern walls. The Darkfire pumps through those dry pathways rather than blood. The Heart of Maztica has become the Heart of Zatal and the soul of the corruption which infests these lands.

The heart reacts to your presence as if sentient and a number of the blue black tendrils pull from the wall. Darkfire flares as the tendrils slash at you like the whips of a giant slaver.

As described, this monstrosity is the **Heart of Maztica**, and it is both sentient and evil. Destroying the heart is difficult due to the fact that it continually draws power from the Darkfire itself, an energy which it created and feeds. As the PCs damage the heart with spells and weapons, they will not notice damage, but with each point of damage, the Darkfire that infuses the cavern will begin to lessen. As the PCs damage the heart the Darkfire's presence will visibly lessen until enough damage is done that the heart would be destroyed. When this occurs, the Darkfire will disappear in its entirety,

and the heart will shrink to the size of a normal human's and fall from the wall.

Once the heart is defeated, the PCs should secure it and use Malinalli's stone.

THE SUNSTONE

When the battle is over, and the PCs have secured the Heart of Maztica they can use the stone given to them by Malinalli to teleport to her presence instantaneously. She is deep in the desert of the House of Tezca in the Chical Hills and at the fabled lake known as the Sunstone.

Read the following to the PCs when they use Malinalli's magical stone.

A light flashes from the stone and suddenly the whole world glares brightly around you. You realize from the fresh air and warm sun that you are no longer under Zatal and it takes a moment for your eyes to adjust to your surroundings.

Before you sits a great lake - but there is no water to be found. Instead, liquid silver shines brightly in the midday sun. You can barely look upon it without shielding your eyes.

Before you even get a chance to wonder over your new surroundings a familiar voice says, "Welcome to the Sunstone."

Malinalli of Maztica stands beside you as if she were expecting you right at this moment in time. She is flanked by two desert dwarf women dressed in similar garb to the druidess. She introduces them as Citlalmina and Coszcatl and explains that they will be assisting Malinalli in the ritual.

Malinalli and the dwarves begin to set up for the ritual and if the PCs have participated in **TWR3 The Door of Stars**, they will recognize the altar that Malinalli pulls from a portable hole. Its shape as a reclining man makes it instantly recognizable as the Risa Stone from the land known as Mechica. She will explain to the PCs that it is an important part of the ritual.

When Malinalli is ready she tells the PCs the following.

“Hold in your hands the Heart of Maztica and grasp each other closely. Touch the silver of the lake - what very few know is actually the lifeblood of our goddess - spilled when her son so cruelly betrayed her. When you do so, you shall see the tonalli of our Mother in the spirit world of Maztlan. Ask her to return - with her heart in your hand she will follow.”

The Sunstone is indeed the blood of Maztica and all the pieces needed for her resurrection are together except for one - her soul. When a PC touches the silver lake under the conditions explained by Malinalli - all who are in contact with the PC are transported to the first realm of the Maztican afterlife. When the PCs arrive, read the following.

The first thing you notice is that you are surrounded by dozens, if not hundreds of skeletal creatures. They appear more curious than hostile, and you have a moment to notice that you are in a grand temple surrounded by a pyramid that stretches beyond what the eye can see. Before you can even address the strange beings, the temple starts to fade. Were those in fact the zizimime of which the elders speak?

When the temple and pyramid disappear, they are replaced by a lush island, surrounded on all sides by a vast sea. You see a number of great caves in the distance and the wispy white form of a motherly woman emerges. She moves towards you, bearing a smile on her face.

As the PCs will likely surmise, this is indeed the spirit of Maztica – spirits in general being known to Mazticans as tonalli. She will come before the PCs and smile, but she will not speak. She motions to the Heart and to her own chest, where the PCs may now notice there is a great cavity. When the PCs hand the Heart to the goddess-spirit they are transported back to the Sunstone where they see a miraculous sight.

Standing in the center of the silver lake is the pale spirit you encountered in the afterlife, but she is bigger...much bigger. Towering about 30 feet above the lake, you realize that almost half

of her “body” lies submerged. The goddess-spirit puts the heart into her chest and it grows and fuses into its old resting place.

The silver of the lake begins to flow upward, giving the spirit form and matter.

Suddenly, as if a mountain had crashed behind you, an explosion of dirt and force knock you forward. A primal growl booms from the dust and smoke. What appears to be a glowing black macuahuitl of titanic proportions swings through the cloud.

Zaltec cannot abide the resurrection of his mother and he is here, personally, to stop it. After a century of somnolence and recent unrelated battles, Zaltec’s avatar is greatly weakened, but the PCs must keep him occupied while Maztica’s own body reforms.

Read the following out loud.

The massive stone avatar ignores you and heads directly for Maztica, who seems helpless as she enters the realm of the living. He takes what can only be practice swings with his massive macuahuitl as he approaches her. You know you cannot stop the walking god in time, even if you could stop him. But then from behind, you hear the voice of the druidess call out to the Eater Of Hearts.

“Zaltec, it is here that you may have what you desire. You have feasted on the heart of the Mother for an eon; why not partake of the heart of her greatest servant as well?”

With that you see Malinalli lay back on the *Risa Stone*. It’s magic begins to glow as Malinalli and the two dwarves chant. In a sudden move, one dwarf plunges an obsidian dagger deep into Malinalli’s chest and begins to cut. Your look of horror is met by Malinalli’s smile.

“Do not be afraid my children, this is what must be done. I have long sought to return to my goddess, and now thanks to your actions, she will be there waiting for me.”

With her last words, Malinalli dies and the dwarf removes her heart and presents it to the

avatar of Zaltec. Torn between the goddess and the heart, Zaltec hesitates, finally turning towards Malinalli as the Risa Stone pulsates. Within moments, the avatar takes the heart, along with the two dwarves and swallows them all whole. He turns toward Maztica whose legs and hips are now solid as the godflesh slowly reforms. The difference this time, is that you stand between the statue and it's prize.

Malinalli's sacrifice has allowed the PCs an opportunity to slay the **avatar of Zaltec**, the Bringer of War and Eater of Hearts.

Even in its weakened state, the avatar of Zaltec is a CR 17 monster - a deadly encounter for the PCs. If the PCs are outmatched, remember that they have fought long and hard to get to this point. When all hope seems lost, the newly resurrected Maztica intervenes.

Though you realize your name will be spoken in legend, you begin to realize that this is not a battle you will walk away from. Zaltec is simply too powerful – mere mortals cannot stand against the mighty macuahuitl of Eater of Hearts.

The stone statue that is Zaltec stretches his macuahuitl to the sky and it crackles with a black energy that reminds you of the now extinct Darkfire. He winds up for a mighty swing as he turns towards you.

Then, like a mother taking a dangerous toy from her infant child – the goddess Maztica puts her now fully formed hands across the flat of the blade and snuffs out the black energy.

The PCs have now faced off against the Viper and the corrupted Heart of Maztica; the goddess could certainly help them against the avatar. Depending on their condition at this point, Maztica could either destroy the avatar of Zaltec outright or the PCs could continue to fight. In either case, the avatar's macuahuitl –its deadliest attack, no longer does additional necrotic damage.

When the avatar of Zaltec is defeated, read the following to the PCs.

The final blow is dealt to the great stone statue that is Zaltec and it begins to crack. The blood of a thousand-thousand sacrifices pours from its wounds like a fountain and begins to fill the crater that once held the silver blood of his mother.

In one final burst of black fire and blood, the avatar is no more. Zaltec is defeated, if not destroyed for evermore.

Zaltec is defeated and the massive form of the goddess smiles upon the PCs. At her side stands the tonalli of Malinalli, who also smiles at the PCs and floats towards them to speak.

“Rejoice, for you have the undying gratitude of the goddess who is mother to us all!” Though no boon could ever repay you for your deeds, Maztica herself has bid me grant you something wonderful!”

Maztica's reward is not of a monetary nature, but rather something the PC's will value as much, if not more.

To begin with, she cures any diseases, poisons or any other conditions the PCs are suffering from. She also returns PCs from the dead (and bring them to the current location), that might have been lost along the way – even those that had been transformed by the Darkfire.

Secondly, she gives each player a *blessing* of their choice. These blessings need to be chosen from page 228 of the DMG and include a ***Blessing of Health, Blessing of Protection, Blessing of Magic Resistance, Blessing of Understanding, Blessing of Weapon Enhancement or Blessing of Wound Closure.***

She may also grant a ***Blessing of Valhalla***, but this is more appropriately called the ***“Blessing of Maztlan”*** as the warriors hail from that spiritual realm of the True World (same statistics, but different appearance). If the DM desires, they may create a new blessing unique to the True World and one appropriate for a goddess of life.

When the blessing is granted, Malinalli gives them one final boon of transportation to anywhere in the True World in which they are familiar before both fade away into the ether.

APPENDIX

This appendix contains new magical items and monsters. Some are from other sources, but have been included here for convenience.

NEW MAGICAL ITEMS

GIZZARD OF ENOTEPEC (Source: TWM8)
Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This bladder like device can be worn like a small pouch or bag. As an action, an attuned owner it's can command it to miniaturize and store a full set of armor or clothing. From that point forward the wearer may switch their current armor or clothing with the set stored in the gizzard as a bonus action. This can be done once between short and long rests.

HISHNACOILS (Source: TWM8)
Wondrous item, rare

A *hishnacoil* is a 5 inch living ball of tiny snakes that intertwine and squirm incessantly.

You can use an action to speak a command word and throw the *hishnacoils* at a huge or smaller creature that you can see within 60 feet of you. If you make a successful ranged attack roll (using your Dexterity modifier plus your proficiency bonus), the coils unwind and grow wrapping around your target and restraining it. Six snake heads appear among the coils threatening and hissing at the restrained creature.

Once restrained the *hishnacoils* may automatically bite the creature for 2 (1d4) piercing damage and an additional 5 (2d4) poison damage as a bonus action on each of your turns. The *hishnacoils* only attack on your command and you may speak the command word again at any time to release the restrained creature. Once released, the *hishnacoils* returns to its original form.

A creature, including the one restrained, can use an action to make a DC 20 Strength check to break out of *hishnacoils*. On a success, the item is destroyed and the restrained creature is freed. If the check fails, any further attempts made by the creature automatically fail until 24 hours

have elapsed. Once the *hishnacoils* are used, they can't be used again until the next dawn.

OCTLI OF STRENGTH (Source: TWM8)
Potion, rare

Octli is an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of the agave plant. Octli of Strength is an enchanted version known to be both a blessing and a curse. It typically comes in sealed clay containers with 1d4 doses.

One dose of Octli of Strength gives its imbiber advantage on all Strength and Constitution based saving throw and skill checks and disadvantage on all Dexterity and Wisdom based saving throws and skill checks for 1 hour. It also functions as a potion of hill giant strength giving its drinker 21 Strength for the hour.

ONOTLATLATZIN (Source: TWM8)
Weapon (tepoztlōpilli), legendary (requires attunement)

Once owned by the legendary warrior Necalli*, *Onotlatlatzin* is a sentient spear that glows as if made of lightning when wielded in battle.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. It has the following additional properties.

Immunity. Whenever you wield *Onotlatlatzin*, you are immune to lightning damage and resistant to thunder damage.

Call Lightning (Recharge 6). As a bonus action, you may call lightning if you are under an open sky to infuse the spear with the ability to cause an extra 14 (4d6) damage when you strike a creature.

Sentience. *Onotlatlatzin* is a sentient lawful neutral weapon with an Intelligence of 13, a Wisdom of 10 and a Charisma of 17. It has hearing and darkvision out to range of 120 feet. The weapon can speak, read and understand Maztican.

Personality. *Onotlatlatzin* is bombastic and aggressive but is usually protective of its owner. It wants glory for itself and its name and believes that by properly serving its master, it will achieve these things. It loudly encourages its owner to take on challenges of increasing difficulty, but it is not suicidal. The only way to incur a conflict with the spear is to truly behave

cowardly – typically by fleeing from a far weaker foe.

BOOK OF THE EARTHSTOKER

(Source: *Dragon Magazine* 265)

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a member of the druid class)

The cover of this book is made of black mica and is bound with copper wire. Its pages are of pressed fire lizard scale and the entire book is utterly impervious to fire. Even full immersion in magma will hardly leave it warm.

Inscribed in a druidic dialect is the word “Earthstoker” on its cover.

The book of the earthstoker is a book of druidic rituals that can draw much of their power from the power inherent in a volcano. It also has some powers that make it invaluable to any who would explore the hidden chambers of Zatal or any volcano like it.

Any who touch the book (up to five medium sized creatures) have fire resistance. Once who is attuned to the book is immune to fire damage, and is capable of wading into magma without losing any movement. Essentially, the attuned user gains a “swim speed” of 30 ft (or higher, depending on their base speed), but only in lava.

An attuned owner can also detect the presence of magma within 200 ft. Because of this, they will always know if the walls of lava tubes or the crust atop a lava flow is safe for others.

Finally, the druid who attunes to the book may add the following spells to his or her spell list – each of which has the ritual tag.

VOLCANIC FOREWARNING

2nd-level divination (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 1 mile

Components: V, S, M (two lodestones rolled together like dice)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

This spell enables the caster to predict any forthcoming eruptions within 1d6 days of their arrival.

This spell only predicts eruptions from a natural source, not ones caused by magic or the actions of others.

VOLCANIC RENEWAL

3rd-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: 1 mile

Components: V, S, M (volcanic diamond dust worth 250 gp which is consumed in the casting)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell seeds land destroyed by lava with an amazing rate of growth and vitality. Minerals within the ground fertilize plant growth and attract the same fauna that once inhabited the decimated lands. Within a single year, the land will have returned to the natural state it existed in prior to its destruction.

SEISMIC TRIGGER

4th-level conjuration (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (two lodestones shaken in a tinderbox)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell only functions in an area that is volcanically active.

When cast, the druid calls upon magma in the earth to come forth from the ground from a location of their choosing within range. Each creature standing in a 20 foot sphere centered on that point must make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 8d6 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

This spell also has the side effect of lessening seismic activity in a region. Depending on the size of the future eruption (as determined by the DM) casting this spell, or multiple castings, might prevent the eruption from occurring.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for every two slot levels above 4th.

The *book of the earthstoker* also contains notes that identify a second volume. It names, but does not describe, the additional spells *lava tunnel*, *fire on the mountain*, *break the streets*, *pyroclastic surge* and *red skies warning*.

NEW MONSTERS

Creatures in the adventure are either updates of previous editions or are found in the TWC5, TWC6 or TWC7 bestiaries. Full write ups of updated creatures are included in this section followed by basic statistics for creatures from the bestiaries.

BELJURIL DRAGON

(Sources: *Dragon Magazine 265* and *Legacy of Io: Lost Dragon Bestiaries – Bonus Dragon Compilation 2*)

<http://www.dmsguild.com/product/224780/Bonus-Dragon-Compilation-Pack--Volume-2>

One of the most ancient creatures found in the cosmos, it is thought to have existed virtually unchanged for many thousands of years. Its exact origin is shrouded in mystery.

The beljuril dragon is a rare and little understood creature found most commonly in seismically active regions which are typically very remote, and always deep beneath the surface of lava flows or dormant volcanoes. Able to breathe in liquid magma and easily survive the infernal temperatures of Toril's mantle, the creatures come to the surface in search of gems. At birth, the beljuril dragon is a dark gray color, like thick smoke. Its scales at this stage are thicker and bulkier than a typical dragon wyrmling, as they must be able to tolerate the enormous heat and pressure in the heart of a newly-active volcano.

Adult dragons always bury their eggs in the ground under geological "hot spots," and its hatching corresponds with the first eruption of a fledgling volcano. As the creature ages, it sheds this thicker armor. This is notable because it means the dragon's Armor Class is actually higher as a wyrmling than it will be until it reaches adulthood. In its Young and Adult stages, the dark gray scales of its youth begin to separate, and the new scales below are bright orange, and glow with an inner fire, as if the creature were literally made of lava. In old age, these scales lose much of their luminescence and turn a dull gray-violet.

All About the Rock. The beljuril dragon is named for the unique gems, called beljurils,

which are mined in some parts of the Realms. Fist-sized, round, green gemstones, their most notable quality is their tendency to emit flashes of light at regular intervals. The origin of these gems has long been a mystery, and only in the last few centuries have they been discovered to be a product of the dragon's breath weapon.

Rarely (about 10% of the time) when a beljuril dragon uses its magma breath, the lava left behind hardens into a green gem – a beljuril – when it cools.

A BELJURIL DRAGON'S LAIR

Beljuril dragons are curious and playful. Their preference for inhospitable habitats means that they rarely encounter other intelligent creatures, and they are quick to investigate any sign of unexpected company. They do not particularly seek out combat, but will respond in kind to any aggressive actions against them. If roused to anger, they are as destructive and unforgiving as any other dragon, and have been known to leave an entire countryside in ruins after battle.

These creatures are found almost exclusively around volcanoes, soaking in the heat and seismic potential of the land around it.

Due to the nature of their habitat, they are not generally in need of traps, guards, or other elaborate means of defending their treasures. The dragon's lair is usually only large enough for the creature to comfortably swim about in its magma, though it may contain smaller side chambers for storing items (such as books or scrolls) that the dragon doesn't want to burn.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing all initiative ties) the dragon can use one of its Lair Action options. It can't do so while incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions. If surprised, the dragon can't use any Lair Action options until after its first turn in combat.

- The dragon causes a jet of lava to rise from the ground at a point it can see within 120ft. of it. The jet is a cylinder 5ft. in diameter, and up to 60ft. tall. Each creature in the area must make a

DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) fire damage on failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In addition, a creature that fails the save is splashed with lava that continues to burn until it cools, which takes 1 minute, or until removed or doused with a gallon or more of water (which takes an action). While burning, the lava deals 4 (1d8) fire damage at the start of each of the creature's turns.

- Volcanic gases form a cloud in a 20ft.

radius sphere centered on a point the dragon can see within 120ft. of it. The sphere spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. It lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round. Each creature that starts its turn in the cloud must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature is poisoned until the end of its turn. While poisoned in this way, the creature is also incapacitated.

- If the dragon is Young age or older, it

ANCIENT BELJURIL DRAGON

Gargantuan, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 388 (21d20 + 168)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	27 (+8)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +15, Wis +10, Cha +14

Skills Arcana +11, Athletics +16, Perception +10, Stealth +14

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan

Challenge 22 (41000 XP)

Psionics. The dragon's psionic ability is Intelligence (Save DC 23). It has 79 psi points, which it regains on a long rest. It knows the following psionic disciplines:

Talents: beacon

Disciplines: adaptive body, far hand, intellect fortress, matter agitation, psionic restoration

Innate Spellcasting. The ancient beljuril dragon's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 22). The ancient beljuril dragon can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *hellish rebuke*, *heat metal*, *shatter*

1/day each: *earthquake*, *immolation*, *Melf's minute meteors*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Ancient Beljuril Dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the Ancient Beljuril Dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the Ancient Beljuril Dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Ancient Beljuril Dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack; +16 to hit, reach 15ft., one target Hit: 20 (2d10 +9) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) fire damage

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack; +16 to hit, reach 10ft., one target Hit: 16 (2d6 +9) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack; +16 to hit, reach 20ft., one target Hit: 18 (2d8 +9) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5 Or 6). The dragon gathers elemental energy in preparation for its attack, setting its charge level to 1. At the end of each subsequent turn, the charge level increases by 1 again, to a maximum charge level of 3. As part of the same action on this turn, or as an action on subsequent turns, the dragon can release the stored energy. The effects of the attack depend on its charge level. If the dragon loses concentration (as if concentrating on a spell) while charging energy, its charge level resets to 0 and it must use this action to begin charging its attack again.

Level 1. The dragon exhales lava in a 90ft. cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking 88 (16d10) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. This ignites all nonmagical objects that are not being worn or carried.

Level 2. The dragon exhales fiery bolts into the sky which rain down in up to four points of the dragon's choice within 120ft. of it, each of which must be within 60ft. of all others. Each point is the center of a 10ft. spherical explosion. Each creature must make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

Level 3. The dragon exhales a fist-sized lozenge of magical energy that lands in an unoccupied space the dragon can see within 120ft. of it. It absorbs all heat, light, and vibration within 40ft. of it, and then detonates in a sphere with a 40ft. radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking 88 (16d10) fire damage on a failure, and half as much damage on a success. In addition, if there are any sources of heat, light, or sound in the area at the moment of detonation (e.g. a torch, a Daylight spell, a Bard playing music, etc.), the blast increases in potency by 1d10 for each such source of energy, (to a maximum of 20d10).

can use this action to duplicate the effect of the *conjure lesser elemental* spell, or the *conjure elemental* spell if it is of Adult age or older. The level at which the spell is cast equals the dragon's proficiency bonus. It cannot use this lair

action again until the spell's effect ends. It can conjure only creatures that have the earth element, fire element, or both (e.g. Magmins, Magma Mephits, Fire Snakes, etc.)

ADULT BELJURIL DRAGON

Huge dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 225 (18d12 + 108)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	10 (+0)	23 (+6)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +11, Wis +7, Cha +11

Skills Arcana +8, Athletics +12, Perception +7, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan

Challenge 15 (13000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The dragon's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (Save DC 19). It can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components:

3/day each: hellish rebuke, heat metal, shatter

1/day each: Melf's minute meteors

Psionics. The dragon's Psionic ability is Intelligence (Save DC 16). It has 58 Psi Points, which it regains on a long rest. It knows the following Psionic Disciplines:

Disciplines: adaptive body, intellect fortress, matter agitation, psionic restoration

Illumination. The dragon's body sheds dim light to a radius of 20ft.

ACTIONS

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the Adult Beljuril Dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the Adult Beljuril Dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Adult Beljuril Dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its Bite and two

with its Claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack; +12 to hit, reach 10ft., one target Hit: 18 (2d10 +7) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) fire damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack; +12 to hit, reach 10ft., one target Hit: 14 (2d6 +7) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack; +12 to hit, reach 15ft., one target Hit: 16 (2d8 +7) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5 Or 6). The dragon gathers elemental energy in preparation for its attack, setting its charge level to 1. At the end of each subsequent turn, the charge level increases by 1 again, to a maximum charge level of 3. As part of the same action on this turn, or as an action on subsequent turns, the dragon can release the stored energy. The effects of the attack depend on its charge level. If the dragon loses concentration (as if concentrating on a spell) while charging energy, its charge level resets to 0 and it must use this action to begin charging its attack again.

Level 1. The dragon exhales lava in a 60ft. cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. This ignites all nonmagical objects that are not being worn or carried.

Level 2. The dragon exhales fiery bolts into the sky which rain down in up to three points of the dragon's choice within 90ft. of it, each of which must be within 40ft. of all others. Each point is the center of a 10ft. spherical explosion. Each creature must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failure or half as much damage on a success.

Level 3. The dragon exhales a fist-sized lozenge of magical energy that lands in an unoccupied space the dragon can see within 90ft. of it. It absorbs all heat, light, and vibration within 30ft. of it, and then detonates in a sphere with a 30ft. radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) fire damage on a failure, and half as much on a success. In addition, if there are any sources of heat, light, or sound in the area at the moment of detonation (e.g. a torch, a daylight spell, a Bard playing music, etc.), the blast increases in potency by 1d10 for each such source of energy (to a maximum of 20d10).

YOUNG BELJURIL DRAGON

Large, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +5, Cha +9

Skills Arcana +5, Athletics +8, Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 120 ft., blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

Heated Body. A creature that touches the dragon or hits it with a melee attack while within 5ft. of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Illumination. The dragon's body sheds bright light to a radius of 20ft, and dim light a further 20ft.

Innate Spellcasting. The dragon's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (Save DC 17). It can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components:
3/day each: heat metal, shatter

Psionics. The dragon's Psionic ability is Intelligence (Save DC 14). It has 30 Psi Points, which it regains on a long rest. It knows the following Psionic Disciplines:
Disciplines: intellect fortress, matter agitation

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its Bite and two with its Claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack; +9 to hit, reach 10ft., one target Hit: 16 (2d10 +5) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) fire damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack; +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target Hit: 12 (2d6 +5) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5 Or 6). The dragon gathers elemental energy in preparation for its attack, setting its charge level to 1. At the end of each subsequent turn, the charge level increases by 1 again, to a maximum charge level of 3. As part of the same action on this turn, or as an action on subsequent turns, the dragon can release the stored energy. The effects of the attack depend on its charge level. If the dragon loses concentration (as if concentrating on a spell) while charging energy, its charge level resets to 0 and it must use this action to begin charging its attack again.

Level 1. The dragon exhales lava in a 30ft. cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. This ignites all nonmagical objects that are not being worn or carried.

Level 2. The dragon exhales fiery bolts into the sky which rain down in up to five points of the dragon's choice within 60ft. of it, each of which must be within 30ft. of all others. Each point is the center of a 10ft. spherical explosion. Each creature must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) fire damage on a failure or half as much damage on a success.

Level 3. The dragon exhales a fist-sized lozenge of magical energy that lands in an unoccupied space the dragon can see within 60ft. of it. It absorbs all heat, light, and vibration within 20ft. of it, and then detonates in a sphere with a 20ft. radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) fire damage on a failure, and half as much damage on a success. In addition, if there are any sources of heat, light, or sound in the area at the moment of detonation (e.g. a torch, a daylight spell, or a Bard playing music, etc.), the blast increases in potency by 1d10 for each such source of energy (to a maximum of 20d10).

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing a beljuril dragon's lair is warped by its magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- The dragon's presence increases the temperature of the earth deep below the surface, increasing volcanic activity in the affected area mudpots, solfataras, fumaroles, geysers, and other geological features become more common.
- Water sources within 1 mile of the dragon's lair are supernaturally warm and tainted with sulfur.
- The presence of the dragon causes increasingly wild seismic activity, culminating in a major earthquake, volcanic eruption, or other cataclysmic geological event.

BELJURIL DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +4, Wis +2, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +3, Athletics +5, Perception +2, Stealth +2

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 120 ft., blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Heated Body. A creature that touches the dragon or hits it with a melee attack while within 5ft. of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack; +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target Hit: 8 (1d10 +3) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5 Or 6). The dragon gathers elemental energy in preparation for its attack, setting its charge level to 1. At the end of each subsequent turn, the charge level increases by 1 again, to a maximum charge level of 3. As part of the same action on this turn, or as an action on subsequent turns, the dragon can release the stored energy. The effects of the attack depend on its charge level. If the dragon loses concentration (as if concentrating on a spell) while charging energy, its charge level resets to 0 and it must use this action to begin charging its attack again.

Level 1. The dragon exhales lava in a 15ft. cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. This ignites all nonmagical objects that are not being worn or carried.

Level 2. The dragon exhales fiery bolts into the sky which rain down in up to three points of the dragon's choice within 30ft. of it, each of which must be within 15ft. of all others. Each point is the center of a 5ft. spherical explosion. Each creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

Level 3. The dragon exhales a fist-sized lozenge of magical energy that lands in an unoccupied space the dragon can see within 30ft. of it. It absorbs all heat, light, and vibration within 10ft. of it, and then detonates in a sphere with a 10ft. radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) fire damage on a failure, and half as much damage on a success. In addition, if there are any sources of heat, light, or sound in the area at the moment of detonation (e.g. a torch, a Daylight spell, or a Bard playing music, etc.), the blast increases in potency by 1d10 for each such source of energy (to a maximum of 20d10).

LACUNAE GHOST

(Source: *Dragon Magazine* 265)

Lacunae ghosts are the undead that sometimes appear when an ash fall from a volcanic eruption leaves behind empty space from a living creature's dead body.

Negative Space. A lacunae ghost is not a ghost in the typical sense of the word, but is rather an undead parasite from the negative energy plane that attaches to the remnants of a soul in the negative space formed by a tragic volcanic ash fall. They tend to arrive in great numbers when the proper conditions are met. Lacunae ghosts can remain dormant for centuries when no living beings are nearby.

Ancestral Mercy. Part of the remaining spirit exists still within a lacunae ghost allowing it to fight off its homicidal urges in the presence of the ancestors of its own people. It can detect such bloodlines instantaneously and will not appear to such beings, nor will it attack unless it is itself attacked first. No other beings are afforded this mercy.

LACUNAE GHOST

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +4

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons or weapons made of obsidian, bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't obsidian

Senses passive Perception 12, tremorsense 60 ft.

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The lacunae ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Soul Draining Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (4d6+2) necrotic damage and the creature must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. If the creature succeeds it only feels a cold chill, but if it fails it has the paralyzed condition for 1 minute.

LIVING LAHAR

(Source: *Dragon Magazine* 265)

When volcanic activity melts snow or otherwise develops in tandem with large amounts of water, flows of black boiling mud travel down the mountainside killing or destroying all in its path. Occasionally, when subjected to regions of both magical power and evil, these natural events develop a cruel and dark sentience – becoming an ooze of homicidal intent.

LIVING LAHAR

Huge, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 142 (15d12 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities fire, acid, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

Amorphous. The living lahar can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Speed Increase. When moving downhill, a living lahar can move at 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Crush. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d12+4) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) fire damage. If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be caught up in the mass of the living lahar. An affected creature occupies the same space as the living lahar and is restrained. The living lahar can make attacks against a restrained creature as a bonus action each round until it uses this ability on another creature, the creature escapes by making a successful Strength save on its turn, or the living lahar dies.

RYLKAR

(Source: *Monster Manual 5 Edition* 3.5)

The appearance of a rylkar is in many ways similar to a common or giant rat, but they are in far more vile and disgusting creatures. Rylkar are a corruption born of fire and filth.

Infestation of Corruption. Rylkar have a society of sorts with the lowly and loathsome rylkarspawn at the bottom rung. Rylkarspawn swarm together and devour anything that lies in their path. Above the rylkarspawn are the workers and battle fodder known as the madclaws. Pale furred with blood red eyes, the madclaws must work together to prevent themselves from being devoured by the queen's guards known as tormentors. Even the powerful tormentors however, fall prey to the whim of the blind colony queen - known only as the harridan. Every colony has only one harridan, though occasionally tormentors and madclaws detect potential in an individual rylkarspawn and flee the colony to form another with the nascent queen.

Born of Fire. Harridan are the only rylkar capable of reproduction and do so only when they come into contact with fire. They use the fire's inherent elemental energy to spawn hundreds of rylkarspawn which will grow and devour each other until only the strongest (future madclaws and tormentors) survive.

Hivemind. Any rylkar within ten miles of their harridan is in constant communication with the rest of its colony through a hive mind where the harridan commands all below her.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing a rylkar harridan and its many offspring is corrupted by the colony's foul presence.

- Foodstuffs and drink brought within ten feet of the harridan spoils and becomes poisonous – inflicting 4 (1d8) poison damage on those who eat or drink it.
- Standing water becomes fouled in an ever increasing radius of 20 feet per day. Plants that aren't eaten by spawn wither and die and animals flee or are eaten.

If the colony is destroyed or dispersed by slaying its harridan, the effects fade over 1d10 days. Plants that have withered need to regrow naturally, however.

RYLKAR HARRIDAN

Huge, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (13d12 + 52)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +3

Skills Perception +5

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 15

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 7 (2900 XP)

Regeneration. A rylkar harridan regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If the harridan takes fire or acid damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn. The harridan only dies if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 27 (4d10+5) piercing damage. and if the target is a creature, it must make a DC 15 Constitution save or contract Sewer Plague

REACTIONS

Spawn Swarm (3/Day). If a rylkar harridan takes more than 5 points of fire damage in a turn, it spawns a rylkarspawn swarm in an adjacent square.

RYLKARSPAWN SWARM

Medium, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 88 (16d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Swarm. The rylkarspawn swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. The swarm can move through any opening small enough for a Tiny creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Terror Musk. Any creature that starts its turn in a rylkarspawn swarm's space must make a DC 13 Constitution save or gain the Frightened condition.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 18 (4d6+4) piercing damage and the creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or contract Sewer Plague.

RYLKAR TORMENTOR

Medium, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Hate Shriek. A rylkar tormentor can emit a scream which incites hatred in all rylkar madclaws within 30 feet, giving them a advantage on attack rolls for 1 minute.

Multiattack. The rylkar tormentor makes 3 attacks; two with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6+2) piercing damage and if the target is a creature it must make a DC 13 Constitution save or contract Sewer Plague.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage.

RYLKAR MADCLAW

Small, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (15d6 + 15)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Fire Healing. If an attack deals the madclaw at least 5 fire damage, the madclaw does not take any damage and heals 5 hit points instead.

ACTIONS

Mad Shriek (1/Day). The rylkar madclaw can emit a horrible shriek. All creatures except rylkar within a 30 foot radius must make a DC Wisdom saving throw or suffer the effects of a confusion spell for their next turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 10 (3d6) piercing damage and if the target is a creature, it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or contract Sewer Plague.

THE VIPER

(Source: *New Creature*)

The Viper is the pale white serpent that was once sarrukh – but gave up much of its original form to become the guardian of the Heart of Maztica for its deity Zaltec. It no longer remembers its true name, but relishes its position and power. As one of Zaltec’s most prized servants, the Viper’s likeness has become the symbol of the entire cult of the Viperhand and

THE VIPER

Huge monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 195 (17d12 + 85)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +4, Cha +3

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +8

Damage Immunities lightning

Damage Resistances necrotic

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 13 (10000 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Viper makes two attacks: one with its bite and one to constrict.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 23 (3d10+7) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) lightning damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* 29 (4d10+7) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 18) if the Viper isn’t already constricting a creature, and the target is restrained until this grapple ends.

Lightning Breath (Recharge 5-6). The Viper exhales a line of lightning that is 30 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 82 (15d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

the beasts that they have become.

THE HEART OF MAZTICA

(Source: *New Creature*)

The corrupted Heart of Maztica is an oversized blue-black organ held aloft by dozens of rubbery vein-like tendrils. The Darkfire of its cavern visibly suffuses the heart and pumps both ways between what must be veins and arteries. There are far more of either than found in most known anatomies.

Heart of a Goddess. The Heart of Maztica literally is the physical organ of the metaphysical mother goddess of the True World. It was taken from her corpse soon after Zaltec beheaded the goddess with his blackened and massive macuahuitl. Since that day, Zaltec has gained power from it by biting off human sized chunks when he hungers. The Heart takes time to regenerate its power and form. At this point in time, it has fully recovered from Zaltec’s last time partaking of its power.

Source of the Darkfire. As the Heart itself is corrupted, so is the power of life associated with the goddess to whom it once belonged. The Darkfire originated with the Heart, but now, through its tendril-like veins and arteries, the Darkfire suffuses the very mountain of Zatal itself. To destroy the Heart is to destroy this very power. The Darkfire manifests in a myriad of ways but always somehow transforms its victims or absorbs their life force should they prove resistant. The Heart itself cannot be damaged as the Darkfire drains itself in its stead. To defeat the corruption in the Heart, the Darkfire must be fully drained of all its remaining power.

AVATAR OF ZALTEC

(Source: *New Creature*)

Zaltec has had a number of setbacks recently and is hardly at his full power. This avatar is a manifestation of what he can spare at the time being. As a great walking statue, Zaltec is impervious to many forms of harm, and his massive macuahuitl bears what remains of the power of the Darkfire.

HEART OF MAZTICA

Huge undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d12 + 68)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Int +4, Wis +4, Cha +4

Skills Perception +7

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, psychic

Damage Resistances acid

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 17

Languages -

Challenge 12 (8400 XP)

Regeneration. The Heart of Maztica regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the Heart of Maztica takes radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Heart of Maztica's next turn. The Heart of Maztica dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Immobile And Indestructible. The Heart of Maztica is completely immobile, but it cannot be attacked by either spell or weapon from outside a radius of 15 feet. The magic of the cavern's Darkfire deflects all such attacks and absorbs them into itself.

ACTIONS

Arteries. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 22 (4d8+4) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) acid damage.

Multiattack. The Heart of Maztica makes 2 attacks; one with its veins and one with its arteries.

Veins. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.

Hit: 22 (4d8+4) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

AVATAR OF ZALTEC

Gargantuan fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 232 (15d20 + 75)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Skills Perception +10

Damage Immunities necrotic, fire, poison, psychic

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 20

Languages understands all but does not speak

Challenge 17 (18000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Avatar of Zaltec has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapon. The Avatar of Zaltec's weapon attacks is magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Avatar of Zaltec makes two dark macuahuitl attacks.

Dark Macuahuitl. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 37 (5d12+5) slashing damage plus 16 (3d10) necrotic damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 6). The Avatar of Zaltec exhales fiery breathe in a 25-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

PIEDRACOUATL

(Source: New Creature)

The piedracouatl is an extremely rare type of couatl that has pledged its servitude to the god Plutoq and has been transformed through centuries of service to the stony deity. Its statistics are the same as the couatl found on page 43 of the **Monster Manual**, with the following changes.

- Scales become stone-like and if they remain still, they are indistinguishable from a statue.
- Alignment lawful neutral
- Dexterity becomes 16 (was 20)
- Constitution becomes 19 (was 17)
- AC becomes 18 (loses 2 from Dexterity, but gains in natural armor)
- Resistant to fire damage
- No longer resistant to radiant damage

- New Spell List for Innate Spellcasting
 - At Will: *detect evil and good, detect magic, detect thoughts*
 - 3/day each: *command, create food and water, protection from evil and good, protection from poison, sanctuary, shield*
 - 1/day each: *dispel magic, dream, scrying*

VIPERHAND BEAST

(Source: *New Creature*)

Viperhand beasts consist of orcs, trolls, and ogres. They receive the following ability.

Fanaticism. In the presence of a jagre or cleric of Zaltec, a Viperhand beast enters a state of bloodlust and becomes frenzied. They gain advantage on all attack and damage rolls, but suffer disadvantage on defense. They also become immune to the *frightened* condition.

There are other creatures in the cult of the Viperhand (such as the dreaded jagre) but they do not receive the changes that follow.

FIRE LIZARD OF ZATAL

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities fire

Damage Vulnerabilities cold effects do normal damage to a fire lizard, but it acts as if slowed.

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Combustion Gaze. If a fire lizard of Zatal starts its turn within 30 feet of a creature and it can see the creature, the fire lizard can force the creature to make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw if the fire lizard isn't incapacitated. On a failed save, the creature takes 14 (4d6) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+2) piercing damage.

STONE GUARDIAN

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft. (jaguar and serpent), fly 60 ft. (eagle)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't plumastone

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft. passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

False Appearance. While the stone guardian remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an inanimate

statue.

Stone Glide (Jaguar). The jaguar stone guardian can burrow through the nonmagical stone walls of the temples that they guard. The jaguar stone guardian does not disturb the material that it passes through.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stone guardian makes two attacks, one claw and sonic scream (eagle), two claws (jaguar) or one bite and one constriction (serpent).

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (4d6+1) slashing damage.

Sonic Scream. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) thunder damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (3d8+1) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until the grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the stone guardian cannot constrict another target.

FIRENEWT, ZATAL

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (ichcahuipilli armor, chīmalli shield)

Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities fire

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. A firenewt can attack twice with its itztopilli.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The firenewt exhales fire with a 5 foot range that can target one creature. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the target takes 14 (4d6) fire damage or half damage on a successful save.

Itztopilli (Axe). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) slashing damage.

FIRENEWT, DEATHFLAME

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (ichcahuipilli armor, chīmalli shield)

Hit Points 123 (13d8 + 65)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +3, Cha +3

Skills Intimidation +6, Perception +6

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Draconic, Abyssal, Common

Challenge 9 (5000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The deathflame has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The deathflame can make three itztopilli attacks.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The firenewt exhales a cloud of dark flames with a 5 foot range that can target one creature. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the target takes 36 (11d6) necrotic damage or half damage on a successful save.

Itztopilli (Axe). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) slashing damage, plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage

Hellfire Orb (1/Day). The deathflame hurls a magical ball of fire that explodes at a point it can see within 120 feet of it. Each creature in a 20-foot radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. The sphere spreads around corners. A creature takes 28 (8d6) fire and 28 (8d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

FIRENEWT, OVERLORD

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (ichcahuipilli armor, chīmalli shield)

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +3, Cha +3

Skills Intimidation +6

Damage Immunities fire

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Draconic, Common

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The overlord can attack three times with its itztopilli.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The firenewt exhales fire with a 5 foot range that can target one creature. The creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the target takes 21 (6d6) fire damage or half damage on a successful save.

Itztopilli (Axe). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage.

FIRENEWT, FLAME SERVANT

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (ichcahuipilli armor, chīmalli shield)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities fire

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Draconic

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The firenewt, flame servant is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The firenewt, flame servant has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *bane, create or destroy water* (destroy only), *inflict wounds*

2nd level (3 slots): *continual flame, silence*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The flame servant can attack two times with its itztopilli.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The firenewt exhales fire with a 5 foot range that can target one creature. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the target takes 21 (6d6) fire damage or half damage on a successful save.

Itztopilli (Axe). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) slashing damage.

HURACHNID

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d10 + 40)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +3

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 90 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Abyssal, Common, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hurachnid attacks with both of its pincers and its sting or disgorge.

Disgorge (Recharge 5-6). A hurachnid can forgo attacking by disgorging a corpse that it once consumed from which the front half of its body is now comprised of. Once disgorged, the crab-like pincers fall off the corpse and the body animates as a ghost under the hurachnid's control. It is instantaneously replaced with a new body. The hurachnid's belly is larger on the inside than on the outside, and it effectively holds an unlimited number of corpses.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d8+3) bludgeoning damage.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution save or become paralyzed for 1 minute.

GIANT STRIDER

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 42 (5d10 + 15)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities fire

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Fire Healing. Any time a giant strider would take damage from a fire attack, it instead heals that amount, up to 8 hp per attack. The giant strider cannot have more than its maximum amount of hp.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage.

Fireball (Recharge 6). The giant strider can release a fireball from tiny ducts near their eyes which can strike any point within 60 feet of the giant strider and explodes in a sphere with a 10 foot radius. Any creature caught in the blast must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 7 (2d6) fire damage. A successful save results in half damage.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage.

YOUNG RAIN DRAGON

Large dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armour)

Hit Points 119 (14d10+42)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover), swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6, Int +2

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities cold, lightning

Conditions Immunities prone

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Draconic, Payit

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Amphibious. The dragon can breathe air and water.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon uses both of its bite attacks once.

Snake Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) poison damage on a failed save, or no damage on a successful one.

Jaguar Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5-6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.

Steam Breath. The dragon exhales scalding hot steam in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 40 (9d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Being underwater doesn't grant resistance against this damage. The area is obscured by heavy fog until the end of the dragon's next turn or until the fog is dispersed by strong wind. The dragon's vision is not obscured by the fog.

Ice Breath. The dragon exhales ice shards in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) cold damage plus 19 (4d8) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

AHUIZOTL

Huge monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armour Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 138 (12d12+60)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +5, Cha +4

Skills Perception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Draconic

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Ambiguous. The ahuizotl can breathe air and water.

Actions

Multiattack. The ahuizotl makes two melee attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 39 (6d10+6) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the ahuizotl can't bite another target.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 28 (4d10+6) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the ahuizotl. **Hit:** 17 (2d10+6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Summon Breath Weird (3/Day). The ahuizotl spits out a stream of water. The water turns into a breath weird and appears in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the ahuizotl. The breath weird defends the ahuizotl for 1 minute or until it is destroyed, at which point it turns into a harmless puddle of water. The ahuizotl can't dismiss the breath weird and the breath weird stays even if the ahuizotl is destroyed.

JAGRE

Huge humanoid (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armour Class 14

Hit Points 149 (13d12+65)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in beast form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +5

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Maztican, Payit

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Shapechanger. The jagre can use its action to polymorph into a Huge displacer beast, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its speed, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is transformed too.

Avoidance (Beast Form Only). If the jagre is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Displacement (Beast Form Only). The jagre projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while the jagre is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The jagre has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The jagre makes two melee attacks.

Macuahuitl (Humanoid Form Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 22 (4d8+5) slashing damage.

Bite (Beast Form Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 15 (3d6+5) piercing damage.