

# THE DEADLIEST GAME



© R M H - 0 9 ©



By The GM Tim

① AN ADVENTURE FOR 6TH LEVEL CHARACTERS ②

# THE DEADLIEST GAME

## *A Ravenloft: Mist Hunters Adventure*

Rumors tell of a jungle shrine in the domain of Valachan, and Alanik has asked you to brave the dangers within in search of the vestige that sleeps within an amber sarcophagus. While the jungle is the clearest danger, you'll have far deadlier things to contend with than beasts and plants.

The tenth adventure in the *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* series of adventures.

An adventure for 6th-level characters.



**CONTENT WARNING:** horror, gore, oppression (xenophobia, genocide, humanoid hunting, ritualistic murder, forced survival combat), death, abuse (forced amputation), environmental hazards (jungle), possible phobia triggers (insects, snakes, leeches).

Reference the [Mist Hunters' Safety Kit](#) article and *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* for tips and tools on running a safe and fun game.

## CREDITS

**Lead Designer:** Travis Woodall

**Designer:** The GM Tim

**Sensitivity Lead:** Ma'at Crook

**Sensitivity Consulting:** Angel Giuffria

**Editor:** Ashley Michaela "Navigator" Lawson

**Art Director and Graphic Design:** Stacey Allan

**Artists:** Zoltan Boros, Max Dunbar, Aaron Hübrich, Olly Lawson, Howard Lyon, Ilya Shkipin, Zack Stella, Marcello De Velazquez

**Cover Illustrators:** Zoltan Boros (inset illustration), CoupleOfKooks, Scott M. Fischer

All art provided by Wizards of the Coast and used with permission

**Campaign Narrative Design:** Chris Lindsay, Wes Schneider, Chris Tulach

**D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team:** Brandy Camel, Chris Lindsay, Chris Tulach

**D&D Adventurers League Administrators:** Ma'at Crook, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks, Toni Winslow-Brill, Travis Woodall, Bee Zelda

**Playtesters:** Costello Arbuckle, William Axford, Dan Beam, Jordan Bonnough, Travis Bonnough, Leo Courtney, Daniel Franco, Dan Harsh, Chris McGovern, Daniel Oliveira, Kai Olson, Alain Pham, Dave Rosser, James Schweiss, Jia Jian Tin, Connor Wallden

**Designer's Acknowledgements:** This adventure was written from the unceded land of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Sḷw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səl'ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) traditional territory. This adventure does its best to respectfully take cultural inspiration from the Quechua-speaking peoples of Ecuador and Peru.

**Special Thanks:** Marcello De Velazquez, Darren Bolton, Asher Klassen, Kai Olson, Hook & Chance Podcast, Sol Wollard

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, *Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

©2021 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.

# ADVENTURE PRIMER

Aaaahhh! Nature! It's all over me. GET IT OFF!

—Melman, *Madagascar*

This adventure can be played by **three to five 6th-level characters** and is optimized for **four 6th-level characters**.

*The Deadliest Game* occurs in the jungles of Valachan.

## BACKGROUND

**KABE WHIPPOORWILL** has discovered a clue that leads the characters to **VALACHAN**—a domain of survival horror and deadly trials. There, the characters must venture to **KIRU ISLAND**, seek out an **AMBER SARCOPHAGUS**, and recover the **VESTIGE** within. Upon arriving in Valachan, however, the characters are approached by the domain's **DARKLORD, CHAKUNA**, and forced to participating in a deadly contest of wilderness survival—the **TRIAL OF HEARTS**.

The characters must face the deadly jungles—full of **DEADLY BEASTS, MAN-EATING PLANTS**, and **TREACHEROUS HAZARDS**—between them and their quarry. The jungle isn't the most dangerous threat the characters face, however; they quickly learn they aren't the only people participating in the trial.

## OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **two parts** and takes **3 hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. "Extending Play" sidebars in the adventure provide guidance on how to expand the adventure to occupy a four-hour time slot. These estimations don't include time spent in pregame and postgame discussion:

**Call to Action: Welcome to the Jungle.** The adventure begins in medias res with the party fleeing pursuers in a dense jungle, then flashes back to Kabe informing the characters that they've heard rumor of a shrine on Kiru Island in the domain of Valachan.

**Part 1: We've Got Fun and Games.** The characters find themselves in the village of Oselo. Eventually, Chakuna arrives and declares the characters as trespassers in her domain—sentencing them to undertake the Trial of Hearts.

**Part 2: If You Want It, You're Gonna Bleed, but It's the Price to Pay.** In the Trial of Hearts, the characters must navigate the jungle as they travel to Kiru Island. Along the way, they face several threats, the greatest of which are the other teams undertaking the Trial.



## STORY AWARDS

At certain points in the adventure, you'll see this glyph along with an entry describing how the specified story award is earned or impacted by the story. Ignore the entry if it refers to a story award none of the characters have. If it refers to a story award the characters just earned, it provides information for you and the players.

## CHARACTERS HOOKS

The adventure picks up immediately after the events of RMH-08 *The Palace of Bones*. Having found (or lost) the Urn of Dreams, the characters are planning their next move in Alanik's chateau in Dementlieu.

## ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND FOLK HEROES

Characters with these backgrounds might be strangers to thick jungle biomes like those that make up Valachan, however, they know the dangers that lurk within. Having a better idea what to expect, these characters have **advantage** on Intelligence (Nature) checks. Conversely, they have **disadvantage** on initiative checks as they're distracted by every little movement, wondering what will jump out at the party next.

## VALACHANI CHARACTERS

After finally escaping Valachan, returning could be difficult and potentially traumatic. These characters know that, at best, they can hope for a bittersweet ending—heavy on the bitter. The jungle is out for blood. They know the party would be wise to minimize their time in Oselo and avoid making contact with Chakuna, lest they must undergo the Trial of Hearts. These characters also know even winning the trial doesn't always mean victory.



# CALL TO ACTION: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

Starting in medias res, the party is being chased through the jungle by a welcome party of werepanther hunters there to take them into custody. As the last character surrenders or falls, the scene flashes back to Alanik's chateau in Dementlieu.

Here, Kabe informs the characters that they've heard rumor of a shrine on Kiru Island in the domain of Valachan, inside which lies an amber sarcophagus. Alanik (who isn't present) has provided instructions that the characters are to venture to the domain, find the shrine, and return with the vestige contained within.

**Themes:** Run like hell, terror, don't get caught

## VALACHAN: DOMAIN OF THE HUNTER

**Darklord:** Chakuna

**Hallmarks:** Diabolical traps, hostile wilderness, survival games.

In the jungles of Valachan, survivors must guard their hearts lest something monstrous eat them. For some, that risk is worth the reward of the unusual plants and magical creatures this land is home to. But Valachan is fiercely protected by its Darklord, the devious and immortal hunter, Chakuna. She roams the jungles hunting dangerous beasts—and when she grows dissatisfied with that, she draws Humanoid quarry into a fatal contest.

Pitted against other conscripts in a game of cat and mouse, Chakuna's prey struggle to survive the deadly rain forest and one another, all while being pursued by the Darklord. Quicksand and other deadly hazards cover the terrain, and populations of stealthy werepanthers support the Darklord. But desperate outsiders might also find unlikely allies who oppose Chakuna and her horrific hunts.

For more information about this domain and the people who reside there, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

## CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

Allow each player a minute or so to introduce their character, describe their appearance and mannerisms, and establish the reason why they're working with Alanik and Kabe. Be sure to give everyone equal time in the spotlight and be prepared to gently stop players if they run on. Character introductions are crucially important for the players to understand who the other characters are, to build a basis for roleplaying opportunities, and for you as DM to learn more about the characters so you can create story elements that really speak to them.

Award inspiration (explaining what inspiration is and how it works) once everyone's had a turn.

## PROMOTED!

Impressed by the characters' investigation in previous adventures (or by their reputation, if this is their first *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* adventure), Alanik promotes the

characters to lead field operatives within the Ray Agency. While this means additional duties—such as searching for the urn—it also means opportunities for greater rewards and other possible benefits, firsts and foremost being the removal of the gp limit on nonmagical equipment that the characters have access to.

## OUTFITTING FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Before proceeding on this leg of their investigation, the characters decide what they brought with them on their journey:

**Mundane Equipment.** The Order of the Guardians has offered the characters access to its substantial resources to aid in their investigation. Each character has access to any mounts and nonmagical equipment from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the material components for any spell they have prepared (or known for casters who don't prepare spells). Following the characters' promotion, the gp limit on these acquisitions has been removed. The characters are still bound to the normal rules regarding carrying capacity and, at your discretion, may find themselves in a situation that precludes being able to haul around too much—while their resources are great, the Order discourages frivolous requests.

**Magical Equipment.** As they adventure, the characters “unlock” magic items for later use. The group begins this adventure with one copy of each of these unlocked items and then decides who'll use them. At the end of the adventure, each item is returned to the character who brought it with them. Magic items that are destroyed or that lose their magic, such as a quaffed *potion of healing* or an exploded *horn of blasting*, however, are removed from the character's investigation journal and are no longer unlocked; the character must find another one if they want to use it in a later adventure. The character who brought an unlocked item to the table has ultimate discretion in who gets to use it. They should, however, note that their investigations require teamwork and cooperation.

## EXAMPLE: OUTFITTING FOR INVESTIGATION

Peter's character, Gregov the Fighter, is preparing for their next adventure. He requisitions a greatsword, a longbow and some arrows, and a suit of plate armor. He's also heard rumors of werewolves, so he asks for a silvered dagger... just in case. In his previous adventures, Gregov unlocked a *horn of blasting* and a *potion of healing*. The group decides who should carry the horn and the potion. At the end of the adventure, both items are returned to Gregov. However, if a character uses the potion, or if the *horn of blasting* explodes during the adventure, Peter crosses it off the investigation journal where it was unlocked.

## ORDER OF THE GUARDIANS RING

Characters with this magical ring (more information can be found in the [Mist Hunters Safety Kit](#) article) can

obtain another dose of the anti-charm tonic from Alanik—provided the last dose they obtained has been used.

## HUNTER BECOMES PREY

The jungle is thick and impenetrable, making the characters' flight through it all the more difficult. Chakuna, detecting the characters' presence, has dispatched a band of werepanther hunters to capture the characters and bring them to Oselo alive. The werepanthers herd them into a hunting glade to capture them. Read or paraphrase:

Trees and vines whip at you as you rush through the jungle, reaching out as if by their own accord, forcing quick turns to avoid being snagged. It was only moments ago that the portal from Alanik's chateau faded, leaving Kabe warning that everything in Valachan wants you dead. They weren't kidding. As they finished pointing out the direction of Oselo, Kabe blanched and whispered "RUN," before disappearing into the bushes.

It's recommended this Call to Action be handled outside initiative with collaborative storytelling. Allow the players to describe their flight through the forest. The werepanthers intend to capture them and bring them to Chakuna in Oselo. Some characters may not want to be captured and instead arrive in Oselo on their own. In either case, let the players describe what happens next; player agency is incredibly important in building their trust. Be sure, however, to describe the intensity of the chase.

## AREA FEATURES

The hunting glade has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The glade is a small, rough-edged, 20-foot-square area awash with bones, making it difficult terrain. The jungle surrounding the glade is as thick as a wall. This is a hunting kill zone—things are herded here to be trapped.

**Lighting.** Dim light from the heavy tree coverage. Sunlight has a hard time piercing the canopy.

**Smells & Sounds.** Stuffy, warm air with a hint of rotting vegetation and notes of animal feces and rain. The sounds are cacophonous—birds, monkeys, and insects create a constant white noise.

## CREATURE INFORMATION

One werepanther hunter (use the **weretiger** stat block) per character surrounds the glade.

### RIGHT INTO THE THICK OF IT

This Call to Action can be jarring, yet has the potential to kick the adventure off with intensity. It also, however, can bog down what might be a timed event. If you'd prefer to run it as an encounter, set a 10-minute timer to add pressure to the situation and ensure the werepanthers appear to be attempting to capture the characters alive. You can do this by describing their weapons in a particular way (they're carrying nets or firing blunted arrows), or by forgoing weapons altogether and grappling characters while coordinating with their allies "Chakuna wants them alive. Sheath your claws, Kallan!"

## ALANIK'S CHATEAU

Flashing back to Alanik's chateau, the characters have been summoned here by Kabe Whippoorwill and review their assignment in Alanik's office.

**Themes:** Book clutter, the comforts of home

### DEMENTLIEU: DOMAIN OF DECADENT DELUSION

**Darklord:** Saida d'Honaire

**Hallmarks:** Masquerades, decadent aristocracy, social decay, illusions, impostor syndrome.

Every night brings another glittering affair in Dementlieu, whose citizens live glamorous and exciting lives. They enjoy the finest clothes, elegant jewels, grand ballrooms, and most extravagantly, the Grand Masquerade hosted by Duchess Saida d'Honaire every seventh day at her island estate. Everyone who is anyone attends the duchess's balls, and everyone who longs to be someone tries to wrangle an invitation or sneak in uninvited. But Duchess Saida's wrath upon those who dare to set foot where they don't belong is truly horrible—and inevitably fatal.

For more information about this domain and the people who reside there, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

## AREA FEATURES

Alanik's chateau has the following features:

**Furnishings.** Alanik lives with his husband Arthur in a sprawling two-story chateau in Dementlieu. Most of the second story is uninhabitable (in true Dementlieu fashion) and the once elegant furnishings are dulled with age. The spacious room has two walls lined with bookcases, a large cabinet rests against a third wall, and bench seats occupy the walls either side of the door. A large desk takes up the center of the room.

**Lighting.** The room is brightly lit by a combination of the chandelier overhead, sconces on the walls, and the desk lamp.

**Smells.** Leather, mint, and sandalwood.

## NPC INFORMATION

Alanik, having other matters to attend to, has trusted Kabe to provide the characters with the information they need to complete the next stage of their investigation.

An illusory amber sarcophagus rotates slowly in the air, its golden edges glinting in the magical light. A cone from the sarcophagus points down to a topographic map of a jungle shrine on the table. The iconography on the shrine walls depicts vines growing from humanoids and four-legged, tentacled beasts hunting humanoids. Valachan—where blood is always the demanded price.

Based on clues garnered from the Palace of Bones and the research Kabe has gathered, the sarcophagus—located on Kiru Island in the domain of Valachan—is the next target. Kabe is serious while discussing Valachan. There, everything wants you dead. Kabe can get the group through the Mists, however the magic of the Mists prevents them from



### RADAGA

*Human scholar of the Dark Powers*

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has pale skin and dark-red hair.

**What They Want.** Radaga is driven by her research into the domains of the Mist. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

**Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge.** She is angry and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She is champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.

### KABE WHIPPOORWILL

*Lightfoot halfling interdomain scout*

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). Alongside a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

**What They Want.** Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

**Mist Walker.** Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

using the portal directly to Oselo or Kiru Island. Kabe will get them as close as they can, then point the way to Oselo. Kabe won't be able to join the characters to the village as they have a mission of their own from Alanik.

Alanik instructed Kabe to transport the characters to Valachan. There, the characters must find the sarcophagus, and return the vestige within it to the chateau.

## RADAGA, DARK OUTFITTER

Before leaving, the characters are instructed to visit Radaga in the study (Alanik has given the scholar the use of a disused wing to further her studies). The room is dimly lit by a few tarnished sconces on the walls. A nearby desk is littered with tomes and papers and an unlit candelabra. The faint smell of candlewax and lemon furniture polish hangs in the air.

### NPC INFORMATION

The characters find Radaga sitting in a delicately carved chair staring out of a nearby window. Her flying crawling claw familiar sets a red, leather-wrapped decanter on a table near Radaga, after pouring its contents into a cobalt glass. The hand makes a clear gesture to the group, offering to pour them a glass too.

### ABI-TEOS'S MACHETE

Radaga has a special treat for the team, one she thinks can aid them in Valachan: *Abi-Teos's machete*—a particularly sharp (and devious) vorpal sword able to cut through flora like a hot knife through butter (see handout 1). It does demand a price, however: blood. As Radaga hands it to the character who wishes to wield it, she issues a curt warning, "Be careful with that, it's devilishly sharp."

## PARTING THE MISTS

Before departing, Kabe provides the characters with a mask covered with frayed silk and decorated with glass baubles—a familiar Mist talisman that will return them to Dementlieu upon completing their task.

The portal forms and, stepping through, the humidity hits you like a wall. The jungle is thick and very alive, yet has an aura of dread to it.

Roll on the Misty Visions table in appendix A then continue to part 1.

# PART 1: WE'VE GOT FUN AND GAMES

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

The characters emerged from the misty borders of Valachan, a mile or so away from Oselo. They were forcefully taken into custody and brought to the village to await Chakuna's arrival. The villagers have tended to their wounds with the medicines the jungle provides.

**Themes:** adventure, excitement, nervousness, fear

## OSELO

The village appears prosperous. There are trading centers, meeting halls, and large ponds near some of the huts. Although the characters are watched closely, and are prevented from leaving the village, the villagers are very hospitable toward them.

### AREA FEATURES

Oselo has the following features:

**Dimensions and Terrain.** The village has been cleared of jungle growth, though vines are making an unsuccessful effort to return. Several huts are scattered throughout the area, next to hand-dug ponds.

**Lighting.** Bright during the day. Dim firelight at night—the people of Oselo don't need fire to see at night, they keep it lit to ward off wild creatures.

**Huts.** Rectangular thatch roofs are interspersed with conic woven straw roofs. Both styles sit upon wood-walled houses. The walls aren't directly connected to the roof. While they're high enough for privacy, there's a gap between where the wall ends and the roof begins. All the houses sit on small legs, keeping them off the jungle floor.

**Ponds.** Outside some houses are large ponds measuring 15 feet long, 25 feet wide, and 20 feet deep. These stock ponds contain fresh water and fish for a close, convenient supply. Many of the houses contain caged birds for eggs, while small rodents similar to guinea pigs and large grubs provide a primary protein source, and potato-like tubers are brought in from the fields in the mountains.

**Be Your Own Anchor.** At night, everyone in the village transforms into a werepanther, to them it's perfectly normal. They keep their personalities, memories, and control even in hybrid form.

### WAKE-UP CALL

Characters brought in hooded and gagged are left with anyone who's unconscious. Everyone is unhooded or awakened by a group of Oselo healers and shamans wiping away salves, pastes, and flora from any wounds the characters received in their fight with the werepanthers. All wounds are completely healed. There are no scars, no major missing organs, and they're back at maximum hit points. The wonders of the jungle are vast and terrifying.

### NPC INFORMATION

The party is welcomed into the village. Everyone who lives here is gathered when the characters arrive. They swarm the characters and are curious about the appearance of those who come from the Mist.

#### VALACHANI: HUNTERS AND PREY

Dark of skin and dark haired, the denizens of Valachan stick to their village and the surrounding area. They're incredibly friendly to outsiders. They refer to everyone from Oselo as "Runa" ("the people"). The standard garb for the Runa is a small loincloth or thigh-length skirt, with different geometric patterns and made from the bark of a tree. Tropical feathers adorn different members of the village and, along with tattoos, denote different status in the village.

Newcomers bring a great deal of excitement. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 14 or higher deduce that the villagers' joy has an ulterior motive—while they are excited to hear stories from beyond the Mists, they're more pleased to see new contenders for the impending Trial of Hearts.

The villagers share their food in a great feast for the newcomers—asking stories of where the characters are from and the adventures they've had, while laughing at characters who are unfamiliar with Oselo customs. The group of characters is just in time to witness the Trial of Hearts—a regular occurrence in Oselo.

While they don't know about an amber sarcophagus, the Oselo know Kiru Island is southwest of the village, a good distance off the coast.

#### THE FEAST

The villagers eagerly share rumors about the jungle, as do the other teams—some to impress, some to intimidate. With a successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a villager shares a rumor about the Trial. Roll on the table below to determine what the characters learn. If the check fails, someone from Mist-Placed (see "The Opposition") can be heard mocking the character over the din. Valachani characters have advantage on the check.

## RUMORS HEARD

### d10 Rumor

- 1 Chakuna is known to change the rules of the Trial of Hearts if unsatisfied with its intensity.
- 2 If the blue-striped snake bites you, you might as well make your peace—there's no saving you.
- 3 The only thing more terrifying than a giant wasp is a zombie giant wasp.
- 4 A long-necked fanged beast lives in a bog.
- 5 Jungle oleander has wondrous healing properties; a rare find indeed. (This plant is encountered in RMH-10 *Scion of Darkness*. The rumor is false; the plant is poisonous.)
- 6 Some plants release clouds of nettles that shred your lungs from the inside.
- 7 Deep in the jungle are special trees that Chakuna grows to honor past competitors.
- 8 There's treasure in the cave where the jeweled beast dwells.
- 9 Flight over the jungle is the fastest way to die. The beasts above the canopy are ravenous.
- 10 The ocean surrounding Kiru Island is as alive as the jungle and will try to take you.

The feast is brilliant. Everything is roasted over an open fire and tastes divine. Beyond the rumors heard, the village folk are looking for stories about other realms.

The Mist-Placed feign the role of gracious guests during the feast, but they're really trying to learn the characters' flaws and weaknesses.

**Treasure.** If more than half the characters share a story about a previous adventure in a short dramatic way and successfully learn a rumor, an elderly, one-armed villager gives the team a plant-based antitoxin.

## THE OPPOSITION

In addition to the villagers, the characters can interact with the two other groups during the feast:

- Qispichiy (keh-SPEH-shee).** This group of dark brown-skinned warriors from Shuaran, the only other Valachani village, is led by Tlaco. She recognizes the characters as Mist-walking adventurers who may be able to help them in her quest to usurp Chakuna. The Shuaran view the Darklord of Valachan as a curse and a blight upon the Runa. Tlaco and her team try to befriend the characters. If the characters are friendly, the Qispichiy give a hint to one of the encounters in part 2.
- Tlaco (TE-le-kow) is an experienced inhabitant of the rain forest. This athletic hunter is always alert. She believes Chakuna goes too far in protecting her people.
  - Necalli (ne-KA-lee) is a lean and lithe Shuaran with a furious resolve, a square shield, and an atlatl (a spear-thrower). This reckless Shuaran warrior's only reservation is for the safety of his twin sister, Uetzcyotl.
  - Uetzcyotl (wetz-KAI-yok) is a charismatic acrobat with a talent for getting lost in a crowd. When challenges arise, Uetzcyotl is full of encouragement

for her team, usually met with an eyeroll from her twin brother Necalli.

- Ehecatl (e-HEH-kattle) is gaunt and tranquil. This gray-haired, two-spirited shaman is easily occupied—thoughtfully chewing gum or playing their serpent-shaped ocarina for the trees. Ehecatl is adept at curing most physical ailments.

**The Mist-Placed.** Made up of misfits and lost souls who involuntarily wound up in Valachan, this team is here to slay. They've been in Valachan long enough to have seen at least one Trial of Hearts, and recognize that they and the characters are the next contestants. The team was promised that winning the Trials meant their freedom from the domain. They're confident in their ability to best any competition.

- Nebhaer (Nii-BAR) is a steely-eyed half-elf who calls the Quivering Forest home. While pursuing a deer, he ran into the Mists. Chakuna admires his skill with a bow.
- Beauin (Bo-WEEN) is a fiery-haired human percussionist who hopes to petition Chakuna for the release of her sisters if successful. Chakuna acknowledges her cunning.
- Sergeant Beemo (BEE-mo) is a spacefaring giff soldier who was discovered by Oselo fishers after washing up on the Valachan shoreline.
- Klyff'kliff (CLIFF-cliff) is a thri-kreen barbarian who doesn't want to return to their home world. Chakuna senses great mental prowess in them.
- Seascutt (SEES-kut) is a fat human pirate who last remembers admiring a statue carved in Chakuna's likeness. The idol's curse transported the sea bandit to Valachan, where he now seeks to impress the Darklord.

## YOUR GENEROUS HOST

As the characters dine, Chakuna arrives.

A woman enters flanked by four werepanthers and a large displacer beast—her very presence demands respect as the feast grows still for a moment. She looks around the room with an expression of exhaustion, or perhaps annoyance, as her gaze rests on the newcomers. "I remember other outsiders that came in the guise of friendship. Prove your worth in the Trial. When you fail, your blood will feed the land—ensuring my people's survival."

Chakuna wastes little time with the characters. She may remind them of their "privileged" opportunity to compete in the Trials, rather than being killed outright and fed to the jungle for their trespasses. If asked about the shrine on Kiru Island, she smiles joylessly; they might find it on their own if they're lucky enough to win the race.

Chakuna has a particularly disdainful disposition toward Qispichiy and is mildly entertained by Mist-Placed. She leaves shortly after arriving, sampling a little of the food and having short conversations with a group of one-armed elders.





## CHAKUNA

### *Darklord of Valachan*

Chakuna's still-beating heart is hidden within the jungle, a sacrifice she made to save her people, the Oselo, from the genocide of the previous Darklord. But with the death of one Darklord, the jungle's demands for blood did not cease. So, as the new Darklord, Chakuna created the "just" and "fair" Trial of Hearts, a monthly, forced competition race through the treacherous jungle. Survivors arriving at the end of the trial might be rewarded with Chakuna's mercy.

Chakuna is tall and lithe with light-brown skin and bedraggled black hair. Her simple dress is tattered and stained with dark, old blood.

**What They Want.** She wants to remain the Darklord—believing others would abuse the power and responsibilities the position brings. She wants to protect the Oselo and is more than willing to do that at the expense of other Valachani and Mist-Placed travelers.

**Heartless Overlord.** While most Oselo would never wish the violence and death they experienced on anyone else, Chakuna rationalizes her role as Darklord. She makes compromises, but they're justified in her mind—her actions aren't atrocities. She believes she "isn't as evil" as Urik von Kharkov, the previous Darklord. The Trial of Hearts is "kind" compared to the mass murders he committed. The jungle is merciless, not her. She simply does what must be done.

Chakuna lays out the rules of the trial (give the players handout 2) as Qispichiy look at her defiantly and Mist-Placed stare menacingly at the characters' team.

## TRIAL OF HEARTS RULES

- The domain's borders are closed while the trial is underway.
- Once the trial begins, alliances between participating teams is forbidden.
- Teleportation and planar shifts of any kind are prohibited.
- Once in the jungle, contenders may kill one another for any reason.
- Teams must reach and hold the shrine at Kiru Island.
- The trial doesn't stop until Chakuna arrives at the shrine and acknowledges the winning team there.
- Failures are left to rot where they fall in the jungle.
- Violation of the rules is punishable by death.
- Winners will be escorted out of Valachan in safety.

## PART 2: IF YOU WANT IT, YOU'RE GONNA BLEED, BUT IT'S THE PRICE TO PAY

**Estimated Duration:** 120 minutes

**T**he Trial of Hearts begins, and the characters must navigate the jungles of Valachan as they travel to Kiru Island. Along the way, they face several threats, the greatest of which are the other teams undertaking the Trial.

**Themes:** fear, chase, terror, death

### THIS JUNGLE IS A KILLER

Chakuna has three teams competing in the Trial of Hearts. The Trial is deadly and rushed. There's little time to do more than run. The jungle seems to know this, and makes every effort to slow the teams down and make them pay through the different encounters. Due to the nature of the trials, the characters won't know if they're ahead of or behind the other teams. Placement of the characters' team is determined by the Hunter Score.

### AREA FEATURES

The jungle has the following general features:

**Terrain.** The jungle is incredibly thick and dauntingly lush. Because of the flora, all terrain is difficult. A creature attuned to *Abi-Teos's machete* is unaffected by this difficult terrain. The foliage grants anything more than 10 feet from any creature full cover. Chakuna, her werepanther guards, and her displacer beast ignore these restrictions.

**Lighting.** Gaps in the canopy provide brief moments of bright light, the jungle is otherwise dimly light.

**Something Out There.** At any given time, there are creatures or plants just waiting in the shadows of the canopy for something to draw close enough. There's constant movement in the periphery of a character's vision. In this jungle, where even the vines are trying to kill you, passive Perception is unreliable; too much is happening. Checks where the DC is a creature's passive Wisdom (Perception) score are made with advantage.

**I Flew? No, You Fell.** The trees grow thick above the jungle floor. A character who flies during their turn must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw at the end of their turn. On a failed save, the character takes 5 (1d10) slashing damage and is restrained 10 feet off the ground by the branches (escape DC 13). On a success, they take half as much damage and aren't restrained.

### TRIAL OF HEARTS

Few willingly choose the Trial of Hearts. The death rate is high and success is bitter. The morning after the feast, Chakuna's werepanthers lead the teams away from the village to the shell of an old, ruined castle the jungle is reclaiming—did that vine just move on its own? Many Oselo have gathered to watch the trial begin.

Chakuna unceremoniously waves her hand as if she were brushing crumbs off the air in front of her and the other two teams take off into the jungle in different directions. The Trial of Hearts has begun.

### HUNTER SCORE

The characters are in a race for survival. Frequently describe fresh tracks, blood splatter from a fight, an armor or a weapon scrap, or some other sign that competitors could be ahead.

This part of the adventure and much of RMH-10 *Scion of Darkness* uses a scoring system to depict the characters' ranking in the trials in comparison to Chakuna's pursuit and whether the team is ahead of or behind their competitors. Don't reveal the scores to the players; the teams don't generally know how they're faring until they either arrive on the shore or cross paths in the jungle. A score tracker is provided in appendix B.

Each encounter provides suggested scores based on character reaction to each encounter. Not all solutions can be accounted for. Use the following as a rough guide to apply to the encounters depending on gameplay, based on the characters' pace:

- Fast pace: +2
- Normal pace: +0
- Slow pace: -2

At the start of part 2, the characters' score is 0. If Mist-Placed managed to get any weaknesses out of someone on the team, the team starts at -1. If no one asked where Kiru Island is during their time in the village, the team has an additional -1. As they complete encounters, the modifier is added to their running tally. If the number drops to -3, Chakuna catches up with the team (see *Captured!*)—this can happen more than once. Each encounter has a section where Chakuna could encounter the team.

If at any point in the adventure the team reach 5 or higher, they receive the Ahead of the Game story award (see *Wrap-Up*).

### A. JUNGLE ENCOUNTERS

As the characters navigate the jungle, they inevitably come across different encounters during the Trial, all while keeping away from Chakuna and her hunters. Not to mention that the jungle also wants to kill them—maybe even more than she does.

Except A7. *Dragon's Rest*, these encounters are listed in geographic order. If you run this part in 2 hours, you should have time for two or three encounters, perhaps more if the players are clever in their problem solving. If the characters don't run afoul of Chakuna, remember to save time for D. *Qispichiy*.

Use what fits the team at the table best, or randomly as time permits (drop A7. Dragon's Rest, roll 3d6—rerolling duplicates—and play the corresponding numbered encounters). A random encounter table is provided in section B, if you need a brief combat rather than a full encounter.

The following encounters share these scoring conditions:

- -1 if a combat lasts 3 rounds or longer
- -1 if the party must stabilize a dying creature

#### EXPANDED PLAY

If you have time to run all the encounters, they're presented in geographical order, except A7. Dragon's Rest, which can be placed at your convenience.

### CAPTURED BY CHAKUNA!

If the party reaches -3 on their race tracker or violates the rules of the Trail of Hearts, trigger this encounter.

Chakuna emerges from the bush with casual malevolence, a hunting party of four werepanthers (weretigers) next to her! In her view, she gave the characters their best chance at survival and now their lives are at their ends. But she's willing to make them one "offer." Rather than kill them all, she believes the jungle would be satisfied if she took the arm of "just one" of them character and let them continue the trial. She holds out a vicious flint dagger, pointing at each person, asking "Will it be you?" The first character accepting the offer loses their right arm just below the shoulder. They take 5 (2d4) slashing damage and gain two levels of exhaustion. Finally, they gain the Captured by Chakuna story award.



### CAPTURED BY CHAKUNA

You are in pain, shock, and not yet accustomed to the loss of a limb. For the duration of this adventure and RMH-10 *The Scion of Darkness*, any attack rolls or ability checks made for a task that requires the use of two hands is made with disadvantage. With time, however, as an acquired amputee you heal, develop alternative ways to perform tasks, build strengths, and regain functionality.

In addition, as part of your character's development and advancement, consider the courage it takes to go through such pain and adversity and how that changes them. What new strengths do you develop? How do your problem-solving skills improve as you adapt? Are you more insightful about how people treat you? Has it affected your sense of humor?

Opportunities for recovery will present themselves in the future.

#### DEALING WITH AMPUTATION

Amputation can be traumatic—especially when it's due to the cruelty and evil acts of another. Before proceeding with this portion of the adventure, gauge your players' comfort level first; adjust as needed.

Don't dwell on describing the amputation itself, summarize the act as being cruel and painful. While Chakuna derives a modicum of satisfaction and righteousness from it, she removes the limb with surgical precision only possible by a powerful Darklord.

While the pain, shock, and injury bear an immediate penalty, assure the player that they adapt in time, and that healing (natural or magical) and a prosthesis become available in the future.



## A1. BRIDGE OF ANTS

**Scoring:** +1 run the crocs, -1 if the ants attack, -2 for falling in the ravine, -3 to go around

Bursting through the jungle, the trees and canopy open up at a 60-foot-high, 20-foot-wide river-carved canyon hundreds of feet long in both directions. The climb looks treacherous, and going around might take too long. Two four-legged winged creatures circle in the sky above.

Climbing down the ravine requires a successful DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check made with disadvantage. A creature that falls into the ravine takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, manages to stop themselves on a vine, and can climb up the same side they fell.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

A crocodile is moving up the characters' side of the ravine 25 feet away, and not of its own accord. It's being moved up a line of ants—identifiable with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature). A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals the croc is dead and has ugly welts all over its body. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character realizes the welts are from something venomous. If the check fails by 5 or more, a swarm of giant ants (use the **swarm of scarabs** stat block) attacks from the edge of the ravine.

Three swarms of giant ants (use the **swarm of scarabs** stat block) are building a bridge across the ravine meeting in the middle with more ants from the other side. If provoked, a swarm attacks the closest creature. A new swarm joins the encounter every round until the team flees. The ants move more crocs up the ravine then across the bridge.

A successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) group check allows the characters to jump from croc to croc across the ravine. A failure provokes an opportunity attack from the ants—if the check fails by 5 or more, a character falls, this time they can climb up the side they're heading for.

If a creature tries to fly or jump across the ravine, the two **peryttons** circling above are ready to attack anything that invades their airspace.

**See No Evil.** If any characters get a grapple or a line across the ravine into the trees on the opposite side, a monkey (use the **giant ape** stat block) is waiting, hiding in the trees. As soon as someone swings on or climbs the rope, the monkey makes direct eye contact, smiles, then drops their side of the rope into the ravine. If the characters must save anyone on the rope, add an additional -1 to this encounter count.

**Chakuna.** If Chakuna and her displacer beasts catch the party here, she comes through the brush on one side and the displacer beasts come from the other. The ants form temporary platforms under her feet as she steps across the ravine.

## A2. JWELED BASILISK LAKE

**Scoring:** +1 lake route, -2 shore route, -2 for stealing the gems

Jeweled Basilisk Lake is a stunning reservoir lake filled from runoff from

the mountains that surround it. It extends three miles southwest, breaking the monotony of the vines and growth. Two canoes carved from trees sit next to a rudimentary dock, with humanoid figures sat in them; their lower halves, at least. Going along the shore might be safer but would add time, however, those are some strange statues...

### AREA FEATURES

The sky is bright, the lake calm. On average, the lake is 1,000 feet wide and varies in depth from 20 to 60 feet. Raging rapids to the southwest mark a draining river that quickly becomes the Mana Allin Mayu (encounter A3).

Small caves dot the heavily forested cliffs that form just beyond the shore and the rocky lake shore is relatively clear of flora for 5 to 10 feet, with rock outcroppings along the length of the shoreline. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the outcroppings aren't natural formations. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character identifies at least two petrified giant wasps and other creatures, most with pieces missing.

Two canoes built from single tree trunks have washed up next to the dock, as opposed to being moored there. The bottom halves of two bodies from an earlier trial are still on board. Paddles lay awkwardly inside the canoes. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Medicine) or Wisdom (Nature) check reveals the bodies were bitten in half by a snake. The canoes are in good condition and can carry two individuals each.

**The Jeweled Beast.** This large ornate stone statue has the crest of a rooster and the body of a serpent, resplendent in amazonite, emeralds, and opals. If the party took the shore, they come across this at the mouth of the river. If the party took the canoes, they find it on a small island about two miles from the dock. In front of the statue is a gem-filled chest with ancient Valachani writing on it. The runes say "Greed becomes death."

If anyone raids the statue, the team is stunned for an hour that feels like moments. Any character that looks up notices the sun is in a different spot than it was "moments" ago. The gems turn to mist when the characters return to Alanik's chateau in Dementlieu.



### CREATURE INFORMATION

In the clear sky, **giant wasps** are flying higher than is typical. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) suggests the wasps are avoiding the lake and the shores.

Along the shoreline route, three **basilisks** wait in ambush. Their goal is to petrify now and eat later.

If the characters take the lake route, once they're well out onto the lake, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notices a log floating in the water. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals it isn't a log, but a blue-striped snake. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character identifies five snakes in total; and they're zeroing in on the canoes. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the snakes as a **hydra**. To open combat, the hydra likes to tip the canoes. A successful DC 15 Strength saving throw keeps a canoe upright. Creatures in the water are generally the hydra's first target.

**Chakuna.** Should Chakuna find the party in this encounter, she steps from behind one of the rock outcroppings or from behind the jeweled statue. If the party took the canoes, she steps out from the trees when they beach.

### A3. MANA ALLIN MAYU

**Scoring:** +3 ride the falls, -2 climb down (+0 if combat lasts more than 1 round)

This incredibly powerful waterfall is the unofficial start of the Eirubamba River. From this vantage point, the party can make out the valley the river has carved, out to Sanguin Cove, at the horizon. There are two ways down: ride the river or climb. Near the cliff base, giant wasps have nested under an outcropping that keeps the water at bay.

#### AREA FEATURES

The waterfall is 100 feet high. If the characters go over it in the canoe, they each gain 1 level of exhaustion and must make a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check, taking 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed check, and half as much damage on a successful one.

The entire area is saturated with mist and water. Within minutes, everyone is drenched. The rocks are exceptionally slippery and treacherous. For every 10 feet of movement spent, a creature only moves 3 feet. The climb is treacherous. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check is required to begin the descent. Climbing these falls takes complete focus.

The noise of the falls is deafening (and drowns out the drone of giant wasp wings). The characters must yell within 5 feet of each other to be heard.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

The **giant wasps** know if they sting a creature going down the rock and paralyze it, the fall is likely to kill it, allowing the giant wasps to eat the corpse. They've done this before, and wait until creatures are 50 feet down the cliff before they attack, so it's easier to sow chaos. If the team is taking too long to start down the rope, two **displacer beasts** come out the tree line at the top of the waterfall.

**Chakuna.** If Chakuna is encountered at this location, she steps out from the jungle from the base of the falls. To add insult to injury, if there are any characters who fell down

the cliff face or failed their check going over the waterfall, she offers that character the deal. See "Captured!" below.

### TREASURE

Behind the base of the waterfall is a dead elf from a past trial. If the characters investigate, they find a *potion of greater healing* and a *spell scroll of lesser restoration* in their pack.

### A4. JUAN'S CREEK

**Scoring:** -1 to stop for Juan and the treasure

A creek trickles through the jungle. A glint of sunlight hits something small and light pink flitting through the water, a creature swimming around a mound of moss and gunk. This is Juan, an axolotl.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

If a character befriends Juan or makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, Juan climbs out the pond and clears away the gunk, revealing a scroll case with images of a dragon formed from gold scales. The characters can kill the little critter—a feat they find no challenge in—but if they do, they don't find its treasure.

The axolotl climbs up to the befriended character's shoulder. Juan is obsessed with eggs; they're so round and tasty, and fit perfectly into its mouth—no matter the size.

### TREASURE

If the axolotl is befriended, it submerges beneath the water and surfaces a moment later clutching a scroll case containing a *spell scroll of greater restoration* in its mouth.

### A5. GRUESOME GRAVEYARD

**Scoring:** +2 leave Tlaco, -1 if any character is restrained, -2 save Tlaco

Chakuna's beasts are getting closer, and they are ravenous. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Insight or Survival) score of 15 or higher realize the pack is herding them into this area. The trees thin out and change color from green to a rust red, and the ground feels softer: it's no longer vines and sticks underfoot, but mounds of corpses—a bog made of gore.

Tlaco is stuck in the gore, her head and the left side of her upper body reaching for anyone or anything to help. She's about 40 feet into the area and 15 feet away from the safe path, next to a mound. She calls to the party for aid. If she interacted with a party member in part 1, she refers to them by name.

### AREA FEATURES

This 80-foot-diameter area is filled with bodies belonging to all manner of Beasts and Humanoids, interspersed with pools of viscera and blood. Blood-red vine growth clears a path through the muck that looks traversable. The larger vines head deeper into the jungle, feeding some horrific plant.

The trees aren't as thick here, visibility is normal, though the canopy still blocks the open sky. Lighting is still dim. Several thin paths through the area give the party the option to run single file together or along their own paths, spread out 15 feet from each other at any given time. These



paths are normal terrain—everywhere else is difficult terrain as the gore is 10 feet deep.

A creature that doesn't move at least half its speed every turn begins to sink. The creature sinks  $1d4 + 1$  feet into the gore and is restrained. As long as the creature isn't completely submerged, it can escape by using its action and making a successful Strength check. The DC is 10 plus the number of feet the creature has sunk. An adjacent creature can pull the sinking creature out by using an action and making a successful Strength check. The DC is 5 plus the number of feet the creature has sunk into the gore. Until the creature is freed, it sinks  $1d4$  feet at the start of its turn, and begins suffocating when fully immersed.

#### CREATURE INFORMATION

Several **giant wasps** circling 40 feet overhead. If left unprovoked, one lands out of sight behind a mound of corpses 15 feet from the characters. The buzzing of its wings cuts short and then the cracking of a carapace is heard. The mound is a **zombie clot**. While the adventurers are helping Tlaco, or abandoning her, the mound rises up to attack as the wasp is consumed by it—its head becomes part of the swarm of zombie limbs. Two **swarms of zombie limbs** join it after the first round. These creatures don't sink into the mire. If the characters stop to help Tlaco, they're surprised by the zombie clot. The zombie clot uses Entombing Flesh until the last character is 20 feet away or all the characters leave the zone.

**Chakuna.** If the characters save Tlaco, as they escape the bog to the tree line, vines whip out and grab her feet—she gets pulled into the vines and brush screaming with hatred, fear, and fury, cursing Chakuna. Then she screams in pain, along with a sickening rip. In the silence that follows, Chakuna calmly steps out from where Tlaco got pulled in. Go to section C “Captured.”

#### A6. TREE OF HEROES

**Scoring:** +1 if the party ignores the situation, -1 for helping, -1 if someone falls in the pond

An aarakocra bound and gagged by vines hangs from a dead tree, while a tiefling grumbles in despair and frustration on the ground beneath him. A large patch of bright-green ground cover is interposed between the characters and the tree. Though not immediately apparent, this is a heavy growth of algae resting atop a small pond.

#### AREA FEATURES

The tree is 60 feet tall and stands 10 feet from the edge of the pool. The algae-covered pond is 30 feet in diameter, 20 feet deep, and virtually indiscernible from bright-green grass. A character investigating the green space must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check to realize it's stagnant, algae-covered water. Any creature immersed in the pool for the first time in a turn or that starts its turn immersed must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and contracts vine disease. Until the disease is cured, the target can't regain hit points except

by magical means, and the target's hit point maximum decreases by 4 (1d8) every 24 hours. If the target's hit point maximum drops to 0 as a result of this disease, the target dies as vines burst forth from their chest. On a successful save, the character takes half as much damage and isn't diseased.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

The aarakocra (suspended over the pond) and the tiefling (sat 10 feet away from it) are actually **podlings** created by the **bodytaker plant** that lies in wait beneath the surface of the pond. The podlings are emulating a pair of unfortunate souls the plant consumed. Either podling reveals that they were captured by werepanthers and forced to participate in the trials. While this isn't a lie, a successful Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the podlings are hiding something (that they were subsequently eaten by the plant). The bodytaker plant attacks any creature that moves within 5 feet of the water's edge. Until it leaves the pond, the foul water grants it half cover.

**Chakuna.** If she catches the characters here, the displacer beasts come in from four different directions and the bodytaker plant grows extra vines and tentacles to make the water a solid surface for Chakuna to stand on. If the plant is holding a character, Chakuna offers the deal to them (see "Captured!" below).

## A7. DRAGON'S REST

**Scoring:** -2 for the rest

The jungle feels more at ease here as the jungle thickness lightens a little to look more like a natural healthy jungle. In the centre of this area is the nondecaying corpse of a gold dragon. It surrounds a glade. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) suggests the dragon must have been taken when the Mists took Valachan, and used its magic to make a safe resting place—denying the jungle its prize.

## B. RANDOM ENCOUNTER

Use this table if you have spare time remaining or to increase another encounter's difficulty.

### MONSTER ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	Three <b>displacer beasts</b>
2	Two <b>swarms of zombie limbs</b>
3	Two <b>giant apes</b>
4	Two <b>basilisks</b>
5	Two <b>swarms of scarabs</b>
6	One <b>bodytaker plant</b>

## D. QISPICHIY

When the characters arrive at the rocky shores of Sangui Cove, add this final encounter if the characters eluded Chakuna's capture.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The rocky shore extends 25 feet from the tree line to the waters of Sangui Cove. The area is difficult terrain.

**Creature Information.** Three members of the Qispichiy team (archers) remain. Tlaco is absent and Ehecatl is missing an arm. Upon seeing the characters, they freeze—unsure of what to do next (particularly if the characters were kind to them in Oselo). Ehecatl is especially reluctant to attack the characters and makes no move to do so—even though they know Chakuna demands it of them. If permitted to leave, Qispichiy do so. If attacked, they flee into the forest.

**Treasure.** Ehecatl possesses a panther's claw. If the characters allow them to leave peacefully, they drop it on the ground and bow their head in thanks before vanishing into the jungle.

## WRAP-UP: I WANNA WATCH YOU BLEED

If the characters survive the jungle's dangers, as night falls, they find themselves at Sangui Cove on the southern shores of Valachan. In the distance, Kiru Island is shrouded in mist and framed by the setting sun. The characters have survived half the Trial of Hearts.

**Themes:** exhaustion, fearful, concerned

As stunning as the setting sun might be, it does nothing to quell the terror endured thus far. Kiru Island is barely visible, masked in a looming mist. The waters of Sangui Cove look as dark as blood as the last vestige of light slips beneath the horizon. The noise of the jungle reminds everyone that they're still being tracked by everything that moves. This is going to be a long, restless night.

If, at any point in the adventure, the characters' score was 5 or higher, they beat the other teams to the shoreline. They each receive the Ahead of the Game story award. The story continues in RMH-10 *Scion of Darkness*.



### AHEAD OF THE GAME

A character with this story award beat the other teams to the shores of Valachan.

## INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

Provide each player with a copy of the Investigation Journal (handout 2). Before the session is over, each player must choose which of the items found during the adventure they'd like to keep and line out others.

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure:

## CHAKUNA

*Darklord of Valachan*

Chakuna's still-beating heart is hidden within the jungle, a sacrifice she made to save her people, the Oselo, from the genocide of the previous Darklord. But with the death of one Darklord, the jungle's demands for blood did not cease. So, as the new Darklord, Chakuna created the "just" and "fair" Trial of Hearts, a monthly, forced competition race through the treacherous jungle. Survivors arriving at the end of the trial might be rewarded with Chakuna's mercy.

Chakuna is tall and lithe with light-brown skin and bedraggled black hair. Her simple dress is tattered and stained with dark, old blood.

**What They Want.** She wants to remain the Darklord—believing others would abuse the power and responsibilities the position brings. She wants to protect the Oselo and is more than willing to do that at the expense of other Valachani and Mist-Placed travelers.

**Heartless Overlord.** While most Oselo would never wish the violence and death they experienced on anyone else, Chakuna rationalizes her role as Darklord. She makes compromises, but they're justified in her mind—her actions aren't atrocities. She believes she "isn't as evil" as Urik von Kharkov, the previous Darklord. The Trial of Hearts is "kind" compared to the mass murders he committed. The jungle is merciless, not her. She simply does what must be done.

## KABE WHIPPOORWILL

*Lightfoot halfling interdomain scout*

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). Alongside a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

**What They Want.** Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

**Mist Walker.** Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

## RADAGA

*Human scholar of the Dark Powers*

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has pale skin and dark-red hair.

**What They Want.** Radaga is driven by her research into the domains of the Mist. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

**Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge.** She is angry and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She is champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.





# CREATURE STATISTICS

## ARCHER

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (studded leather armor)  
**Hit Points** 75 (10d8 + 30)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Perception +5  
**Senses** passive Perception 15  
**Languages** any one language (usually Common)  
**Challenge** 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Archer's Eye (3/Day).** As a bonus action, the archer can add 1d10 to its next attack or damage roll with a longbow or shortbow.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The archer makes two Longbow attacks.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

## BASILISK

Medium Monstrosity, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)  
**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9  
**Languages** —  
**Challenge** 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Petrifying Gaze.** If a creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the basilisk and the two of them can see each other, the basilisk can force the creature to make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw if the basilisk isn't incapacitated. On a failed save, the creature magically begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

A creature that isn't surprised can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, it can't see the basilisk until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If it looks at the basilisk in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

If the basilisk sees its reflection within 30 feet of it in bright light, it mistakes itself for a rival and targets itself with its gaze.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

## BODYTAKER PLANT

Huge Plant, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 92 (8d12 + 40)  
**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

**Damage Vulnerabilities** poison  
**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, frightened, prone  
**Senses** blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12  
**Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.  
**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

**Podling Link.** The plant can see through and communicate telepathically with any of its podlings within 10 miles of it.

**Rejuvenation.** When the plant dies, it returns to life in the place where it died 1d12 months later, unless the ground where it took root is sown with salt or soaked with poison.

**Unusual Nature.** The plant doesn't require sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The plant makes three Vine Lash attacks.

**Vine Lash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. The plant has four vines, each of which can grapple one target.

**Entrapping Pod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature grappled by the plant. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) acid damage, and the target is pulled into the plant's space and enveloped by the pod, and the grapple ends. While enveloped, the target is restrained, and it has total cover against attacks and effects originating outside the pod. The enveloped target must also immediately succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned by the plant's sapping enzymes until it is removed from the pod or the plant dies. The enveloped target doesn't require air and gains 1 level of exhaustion for each hour it spends in the pod. If the target dies while enveloped, it immediately emerges from the pod as a living podling, wearing or carrying all of the original creature's equipment.

As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the bodytaker plant that is outside the pod can open the pod and pull the target free with a successful DC 15 Strength check. If the plant dies, the target is no longer restrained and can escape from the pod by spending 10 feet of movement, exiting prone. The plant has one pod, which can envelop one creature at a time.



## DISPLACER BEAST

Large Monstrosity, Typically Lawful Evil

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 85 (10d10 + 30)  
**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Avoidance.** If the displacer beast 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.** The displacer beast 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 displacer beast is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The displacer beast makes two Tentacle attacks.

**Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

## GIANT APE

Huge Beast, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 12  
**Hit Points** 157 (15d12 + 60)  
**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Athletics +9 Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +3

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The ape makes two Fist attacks.

**Fist.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 50/100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (7d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

## GIANT WASP

Medium Beast, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

### ACTIONS

**Sting.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.

*Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

## HYDRA

Huge Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

**Hold Breath.** The hydra can hold its breath for 1 hour.

**Multiple Heads.** The hydra has five heads. While it has more than one head, the hydra has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Whenever the hydra takes 25 or more damage in a single turn, one of its heads dies. If all its heads die, the hydra dies.

At the end of its turn, it grows two heads for each of its heads that died since its last turn, unless it has taken fire damage since its last turn. The hydra regains 10 hit points for each head regrown in this way.

**Reactive Heads.** For each head the hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

**Wakeful.** While the hydra sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The hydra makes as many Bite attacks as it has heads.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.





## PERYTON

Medium Monstrosity, Typically Chaotic Evil

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +5

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** understands Common and Elvish but can't speak

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Dive Attack.** If the peryton is flying and dives at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a melee weapon attack, the attack deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage to the target.

**Flyby.** The peryton doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Keen Sight and Smell.** The peryton has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The peryton makes one Gore attack and one Talon attack.

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

**Talons.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage.

## PODLING

Medium Plant, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8 + 8)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Deep Speech, the languages the creature knew in life

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Semblance of Life.** The podling is a physical copy of a creature digested by a bodytaker plant. The podling has the digested creature's memories and behaves like that creature, but with occasional lapses. An observer familiar with the digested creature can recognize the discrepancies with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check, or automatically if the podling does something in direct contradiction to the digested creature's established beliefs or behavior. The podling melts into a slurry when it dies, when the bodytaker plant that created it dies, or when the bodytaker plant dismisses it (no action required).

**Unusual Nature.** The podling doesn't require sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

## SWARM OF SCARABS

Medium Swarm of Tiny Beasts, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 27 (5d8 + 5)

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Skeletonize.** If the swarm starts its turn in the same space as a dead creature that is Large or smaller, the corpse is destroyed, leaving behind only equipment and bones (or exoskeleton).

**Spider Climb.** The swarm can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

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

### ACTIONS

**Ravenous Bites.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) piercing damage, or 7 (2d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. If the target is a creature, scarabs burrow into its body, and the creature takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns. Any creature can use an action to kill or remove the scarabs with fire or a weapon that deals piercing damage, causing 1 damage of the appropriate type to the target. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by the swarm's piercing damage dies.

## SWARM OF ZOMBIE LIMBS

Medium Swarm of Tiny Undead, Typically Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 10 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

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

**Unusual Nature.** The swarm doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The swarm makes one Undead Mass attack and one Grasping Limbs attack.

**Undead Mass.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Grasping Limbs.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be restrained. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns taking 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed save. The creature is freed if it succeeds on this saving throw, the swarm moves out of the creature's space, or the swarm dies.

## WERETIGER

Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger), Typically Neutral

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 120 (16d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft., 40 ft. in tiger form

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common (can't speak in tiger form)

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Shapechanger.** The weretiger can use its action to polymorph into a tiger-humanoid hybrid or into a tiger, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The weretiger has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pounce (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only).** If the weretiger moves at least 15 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the weretiger can make one Bite attack against it as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only).** In humanoid form, the weretiger makes two Scimitar attacks or two Longbow attacks. In hybrid form, it can attack like a humanoid or make two Claw attacks.

**Bite (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a Humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with weretiger lycanthropy.

**Claw (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Scimitar (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Longbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

## ZOMBIE CLOT

Huge Undead, Typically Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 104 (11d12 + 33)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Con +6

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +3

**Deathly Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the zombie must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) poison damage and be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Unusual Nature.** The zombie doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The zombie makes two Slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

**Flesh Entomb (Recharge 5—6).** The zombie flings a detached clump of corpses at a creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or take 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it becomes entombed in dead flesh.

A creature entombed in the dead flesh is restrained, has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dead flesh, and takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can be freed if the dead flesh is destroyed. The dead flesh is a Large object with AC 10, 25 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

# HANDOUT 1: ABI-TEOS'S MACHETE

## ABI-TEOS'S MACHETE

---

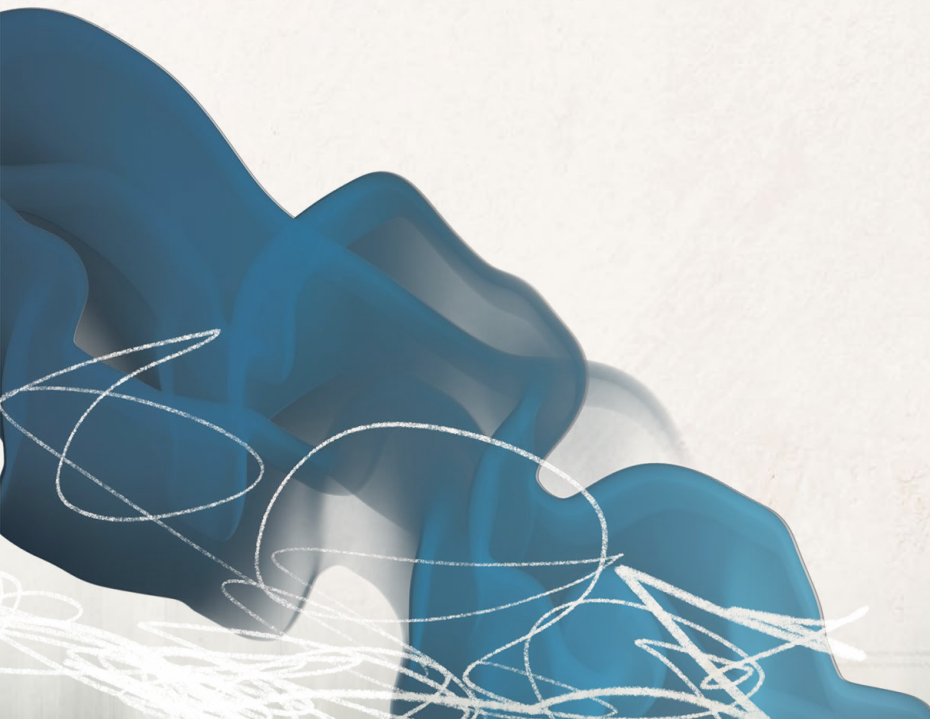
*Weapon (Scimitar), Legendary (Requires Attunement)*

The 17-inch blade of this tool-weapon appears deceptively dull and chipped, its hilt is carved azabache (a mystical stone believed to ward off malevolent spirits), and its handle is carved with a disturbing depiction of writhing, bloated leeches. The bohika (shaman) after which the weapon is named used it to wantonly cut down selva and conduct excessive ritual sacrifice to their patron. A lock of unmarred blonde hair dangles from the pommel, its significance lost to time. If the blade is held at the right angle in light, a scrawled phrase appears on the hilt: “*A mi, volpal*” which translates from its indigenous tongue as “A blade for me.”

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, the weapon ignores resistance to slashing damage and deals an extra 2d8 slashing damage to plants and Plant creatures.

When you attack a creature that has at least one head with this weapon and roll a 20 on the attack roll, you cut off one of the creature's heads. The creature dies if it can't survive without the lost head. A creature is immune to this effect if it is immune to slashing damage, doesn't have or need a head, has legendary actions, or the DM decides the creature is too big for its head to be cut off with this weapon. Such a creature takes an extra 6d8 slashing damage from the hit.

**Curse.** Whenever you deal damage with *Abi-Teos's machete*, you take 1d6 necrotic damage as the weapon drains your blood. If you roll a 1 on an attack roll made with the weapon, the leeches carved into the handle animate and crawl down your throat—infesting you with throat leeches (a disease). You must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion that can only be removed by succeeding on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw upon completing a long rest. If the saving throw fails, you gain another level of exhaustion. If a successful saving throw reduces your exhaustion level below 1, you recover from the disease.



# HANDOUT 2: TRIAL OF HEARTS RULES

- The domain's borders are closed while the trial is underway.
- Once the trial begins, alliances between participating teams is forbidden.
- Teleportation and planar shifts of any kind are prohibited.
- Once in the jungle, contenders may kill one another for any reason.
- Teams must reach and hold the shrine at Kiru Island.
- The trial doesn't stop until Chakuna arrives at the shrine and acknowledges the winning team there.
- Failures are left to rot where they fall in the jungle.
- Violation of the rules is punishable by death.
- Winners will be escorted out of Valachan in safety.





# HANDOUT 3: INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

My friends,

While we expected challenges, I did not expect Chakuna to conscript you into the Trial of Hearts. I am sorry I couldn't better prepare you for that. I am pleased you have survived thus far.

As you have not yet reached the island or the shrine, the hardest part of the trial is not over. I have no doubt you'll persevere over any who get in your way. Do not give up hope, I have complete faith in your ability to succeed in your mission.

I'm incredibly proud of you.

Yours in reason,

Alanik Ray

PS: The item you found along the way is safe and sound at my chateau should you have need of it in future.

Choose one item from the list below by checking the box next to it.

- Panther's claw\*
- Potion of greater healing
- Spell scroll of lesser restoration
- Spell scroll of greater restoration

\*A panther's claw functions as a dagger of blindsight which is found in *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage*. This dagger is fashioned from the claw of an immense panther, set into a hilt of polished bone wrapped in glossy, black fur. A creature attuned to the dagger gains a penchant for consuming raw, bloody meat.

## STORY AWARDS

- Ahead of the Game
- Captured by Chakuna

# APPENDIX A: MISTY VISIONS

This adventure begins with the characters traversing the horrors awaiting in the misty borders of the Domains of Dread. When instructed, roll on the table below. If time permits, roll once for each character. Otherwise, roll once for the entire group. These effects end when the character leaves the domain.

## MISTY VISIONS

d20	Vision	Effect
1	Dark, malevolent shadows flit around you, moving within the mists just beyond your sight.	You have disadvantage on initiative checks.
2	Thick, thorny vines erupt from the ground and grasp at your limbs—threatening to pull you into the clammy ground.	You have disadvantage on checks made to escape a grapple or end the restrained condition.
3	You hear the screams of friends and family crying out in fear and agony, but can't find them, despite your best efforts.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.
4	The ground becomes wet with black, sticky mud (or is it blood?)—at first ankle-deep, then up to the knees . . .	You must spend an extra foot of movement for each foot spent moving through difficult terrain.
5	Countless clawed skeletons swarm you, clawing at your flesh and clothing.	You gain vulnerability to slashing damage.
6	You bump into a stone grave marker. Examining it closer, you see your own name engraved in its surface.	You have disadvantage on death saving throws.
7	The stench of rotting flesh fills your nostrils. Glancing at yourself, you see dark spots of decay covering your flesh.	You gain vulnerability to necrotic damage.
8	After a moment's distraction, and looking back, you find yourself in the Mists alone until you arrive at your destination.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to notice hidden creatures and objects.
9	You see a small child in the Mists ahead of you—coaxing you deeper into the mists. After finally catching up with them, you find nothing but a cornhusk doll.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks.
10	The Mists turn into a thick, noxious miasma that burns your eyes and throat—threatening to suffocate you.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against poison.
11	Your deepest fear manifests before your eyes.	If you fail a saving throw against being frightened, you're also blinded until the end of your next turn.
12	A bone-chilling wind fills the area—driving the warmth from you and sending your body into tremors.	You have disadvantage on Dexterity checks made to accomplish tasks that require fine motor skills.
13	The Mists coalesce into a tall, dense hedge maze that seems to go on forever, and you pass the same landmarks repeatedly.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate or to discern your location.
14	You encounter a group of terrified adventurers who attack you with a rusted dagger before fleeing back into the Mists.	You take slashing damage equal to a roll of your largest Hit Die.
15	An incorporeal undead creature manifests in front of you and passes through you—driving your strength away.	You have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks.
16	One of your teeth loosens and falls out. One by one, more fall out and crumble away into fine, white powder.	The anxiety caused by the vision imposes disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to positively influence people.
17	You run from beastly shadows in the night. Your heart pounds at every snarl, hiss, and howl, feeling their breath on your heels as they catch up.	Your memories of the vision give you disadvantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to positively influence animals.
18	Everything around you withers and decays before your eyes.	If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll made with a nonmagical weapon, the weapon breaks and becomes unusable.
19	You find yourself in a library behind your closest loved ones as they turn to you, all faceless. You open nearby books to find the answers to help them, but all their pages are blank.	You have disadvantage on Intelligence (History) checks involving the recollection of lore.
20	You breathe and your lungs fill with the Mists. It flows through your body, weighing you down and weakening you.	You have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration on spells.

# APPENDIX B: HUNTER SCORE TRACKER



# APPENDIX C: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To run this adventure as a DM, you must have three, four, or five players, each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see the "Adventure Primer" section at the start of the adventure).

## NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

Information about the Adventurers League, including finding places to play, organizing events, and a list of supporting resources and documents, can be found here: [https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal\\_general](https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal_general)

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running it, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use during combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendixes and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running the adventure, such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battle maps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception) score; and anything the adventure specifies as notable (such as backgrounds and story awards).

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a player or ran as a DM, but they can do so only once with a specific character. Ensure each player has their character sheet (if not, get one from the organizer)

## PREPARING THE CHARACTERS

The adventure is designed to be played with characters of a specific level; characters of a different level should be modified accordingly. If necessary, the characters should be afforded the time needed to adjust their characters to suit.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they can't, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Characters that died during a previous adventure return to life, free of any conditions, curses, or other effects that would remove them from play—such as vampirism or lycanthropy. They keep any story awards they have, as any spells they might have copied during their adventures.

During the Call to Action, the characters are likely to review their available magic items among themselves and determine who is carrying what. Make sure they have a few moments to outfit one another.

### NEW PLAYERS? NO PROBLEM!

With starter adventures like this one, it's possible you might have players new to D&D, or new to fifth edition D&D. As the DM, it's up to you to ensure these players have fun with the game, and that they learn the basics of how to play. At this level, having fun is more important than learning every rule exactly right. Be gentle with new players who make mistakes. Make sure to keep your players smiling and rolling dice. Be positive and enthusiastic when describing the action, and you'll notice the players will quickly follow suit.

If you're a new DM, then welcome—and thank you! New DMs are the lifeblood of the D&D community. To help you run your game, some adventures include sidebars like this one that provide an explanation of the game's rules as they're used in the adventure.

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, assess the **party strength** by consulting the table below.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
Three characters	Weak
Four characters	Average
Five characters	Strong

### SAFETY TOOLS

Safety tools help ensure players aren't pushed beyond their comfort levels. These tools let your players know you want them to have a positive experience. Some common safety tools are provided below, each with a summary of how they work. An [article about one such safety kit](#) is provided to help with further information. Ensure that you discuss these tools with your players before the game:

- **Code of Conduct.** This is a group agreement for play. It outlines desired and prohibited behaviors, confidential reporting, and possible consequences.
- **Pregame and Postgame Discussions.** Use time before the game to explain content warnings, set boundaries, and collaborate on a safety plan. Then decompress and discuss improvements at the end of the game.
- **Be Welcoming.** Welcome and encourage respectful and open conversations about issues as they arise. Show that you're listening by avoiding defensive responses.
- **Confidentiality.** Provide contact information for private and confidential conversations between players and DM. Only disclose another player's name if that player gave unpressured permission for you to do so.
- **Safety Tools.** Learn about the safety tools that TTRPG community members have created and compiled. A broad range of such safety tools are available for you and your players online, or you can get more information by reaching out to your event organizer or [community@dndadventurersleague.org](mailto:community@dndadventurersleague.org).