

Tengri's Gift

A short LL-AEC Adventure Module for some low-level adventurers on the great steppes



Labyrinth Lord
Compatible Product

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Maps created by Christian Sturke 2012 with help from HexGIMP by The Isomage's House, <http://axiscity.hexamon.net/users/isomage/> and, of course, GIMP, <http://www.gimp.org/>
Centaur with bow based on Telecanter's Silhouettes, found on his blog <http://recedingrules.blogspot.de/>,
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Picture of the Wormmother made 2012 by Christian Sturke,
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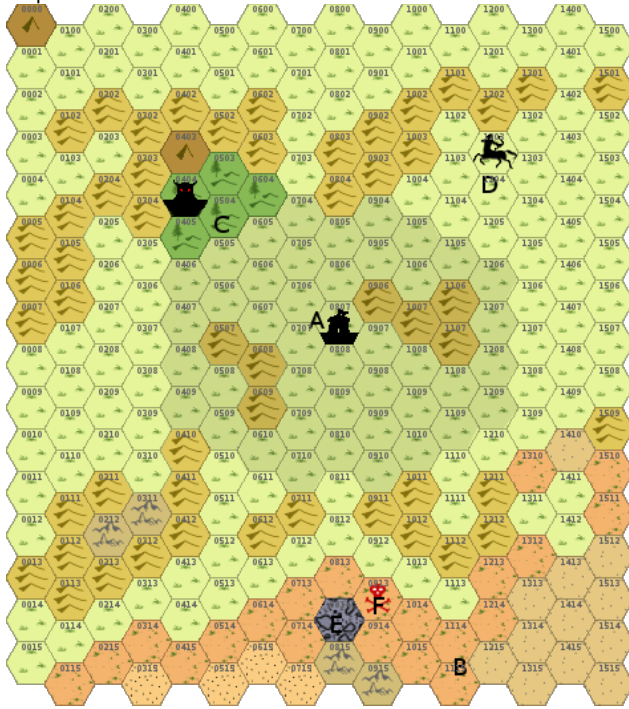
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When the PCs trek through the great open lands that are the home of the nomads, they will meet occasional small bands of herders and their makeshift villages of jurts. Sometimes, they will be met with suspicion, sometimes with hostility, sometimes with friendly hospitality. The last option isn't always the easiest, though...

Map:



One hex equals 5 miles.

Random encounters in the hills and plains:

- 1 – if in shaded hexes: patrol of 5 tribesman (20% chance that Qarader is with them, 5% chance Abgahadai), else as 2
- 2 – 1d6 centaurs (see Area D)
- 3 – 2d4 wolves
- 4 – 1 steppe bear (as black bear)
- 5 – 2d10 saiga antilopes (as goat)
- 6 – 2d6 nomad raiders of a different tribe

Random encounters in the desert:

- 1 – 1d4 mongolian gut worms (new monster)
- 2 – 1d6 ankhegs
- 3 – 2d4 wild dogs
- 4 – 1d3 giant owls
- 5 – 2d10 camels
- 6 – 2d6 nomad raiders of a different tribe

Beginning:

The PCs are supposed to travel at the northern edge of the great desert (Area B) to come across the autumn village (Area A) of the small naiman tribe under Thorog – Khan. The khan himself is absent, and he has left one of his more unruly underlings in care of his people, advised by an old priest. The PCs are invited to share their meal and stories, as the naiman people are, at the moment, more interested in trade and the looming hardships of the winter. In fact, they are here to trade wood from some spirits in a small mountain forest (Area C). But this is a job only the khan is allowed to do. Meanwhile they try to keep the centaurs (Area D) from raiding to much of their sheep...

The welcome:

The PCs will be welcomed to sit this night at the fire in the middle of the yurts and share stories and kumis. The Labyrinth Lord should read the descriptions of the major NPCs and should give the PC the opportunity to get to know them. The tension between Danzin and Abgahadai should be quite obvious.

The adventure begins:

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, a flare lights the starry night sky and a flaming shooting star will cross the heaven from north to south. With a flash of light it will drop to the ground somewhere behind the horizon. A few moments later a deep growling can be heard out of that direction.

The tribes people will all make the same sign to ward of evil spirits: They will clap their right hands on their left leg. PCs that

are observing the monks and Danzin may observe that none of them do this, but Badmasürüng's right hand twitches.

Abgahadai will jump out of his crouch, surprisingly agile for a man of his age, and will declare: „When the star falls, Tengri gives to his people! We will go there in the morning and will see, what was given to us. No one“, he says with a somewhat obvious side glance at Danzin, „can deny, what there is plain to see! We are fortunate to live in this time! Now, I'll have to prepare and appease the lesser spirits, that they won't harm us out of jealousy! As soon as the morning sun rises, we will ride to the south and take, what's rightfully ours!“. Most of the people cheer to his words, while Qarader is unsure if he should object. Danzin mumbles something like „We'll see...“ and departs as well, accompanied by his two monks.

Behind the scenes:

Danzin will now go to sleep, and Dorji and Badmasürüng will secretly sneak out of the yurt, Dorji plans to plant a small buddha statue at the fallen star – to shame Abgahadai and claim divine intervention by their own god and bullies Badmasürüng to help him, even though the younger monk is not overly convinced, that the Buddha would be o.k. with such trickery. Sorghaghtani will secretly listen to them arguing, and learn of their plan. Normally, she would go to her grandfather for help, but he is in deep trance and dealing with spirits, so she doesn't dare to disturb him. She would rather die than ask the cruel Qarader (who would kill both monks without remorse, and probably even Danzin (just to be sure), and bring shame over their tribe) and she can't do anything on her own. So she chooses to ask the strangers for help.

Enter the PCs:

About an hour later after the star has fallen, either a strong looking female PC or the most handsome male one still awake, will get a message from Sorghaghtani. It says „Meet me at the hill in the West!“

She will tell this PC of the treachery of Dorji, and will try to stress how dangerous an open conflict could be for possible bystanders – a veiled threat, but if this addressed, she will apologize. All she can offer is her thanks and that of her grandfather, but she wants the PC to stop the monks preferably without bloodshed. If the PCs are more of the murder hobo variant she will offer her most prized possession (see her yurt 5, below), as long as the PC swear no one of her tribe will ever know it came from her.

The Chase:

The two monks will have a little headstart, but they don't expect to be followed. If the PCs start fast enough, without fussing too much around, it is possible that they will be able to reach the monks. As soon as the monks realize they are being followed, they will try to outride their followers. The Labyrinth Lord could use following rules for the chase over the silent grasslands gleaming in silvery moonlight:

Every round, a participant rolls a d6, and then chooses if he wants to throw another die. If this second die shows a higher number than the first, both are added to the score. If the second die shows the same number, it is added but once, and if it is lower, nothing is added.

Every participant can, once in the chase, choose to add a +1 modifier to one second roll before the roll; native steppe nomads (or riders of Rohan etc.) get a +2 modifier (Badmasürüng gets this bonus). Some special stunts could add to the second roll as well.

Ponies, donkeys, or heavy horses use a d4 on both rolls. Exceptionally fast horses could use a d8, but only on the first roll.

As soon as at least 50 points are reached with a throw of both die, the chase is won. Even if the 50 points are reached with the first die, the second has to be thrown.

Dorji and Badmasürüng each start with a 15 point headstart. If both of them reach 50 points before the PCs, they are lost in the darkness, and the adventure continues at the impact site (Area E), or when the PCs reunite with the nomad tribe on it's way to that place.

Catched:

If the PCs catch up with Dorji alone, he will challenge one martial PC to a duel. If this is not accepted, he will attack and try to down a PC spellcaster before trying to jump back onto horseback and flee again. If it is accepted, he will not pull his punches and do mortal damage unless the PC insist on duelling without bloodshed.

If Badmasürüng is caught as well, he will try to sneak away, while Dorji is fighting, if Dorji had a chance to give him the small Buddha statuette. In this case, Badmasürüng will become a wormmother (see below).

If only Badmasürüng is caught, he will try to talk to the PCs and generally mislead them, so that Dorji has a chance to reach the impact site (Area E) unhindered.

The gift:

When the PC finally arrive at Area E, they will detect soon that something went wrong.

If the PCs only come second to this place, it will probably already have taken over the body of whomever touched the sphere first, usually Dorji. He killed Badmasürüng and went east to find shelter in the caves (see below). Badmasürüng's corpse, horribly mutilated, will lurch nearer as a zombie to attack the PCs.

If, on the other hand, the PCs come first, or they stopped Dorji and Badmasürüng from coming here and reach this place together with the rest of the tribe, there is a queasy feeling and the sphere still sparks from time to time. If someone good aligned touches the sphere, a successful save vs. magic means that the PC „only“ suffers 3d8 damage. Any neutral or evil character will turn within 1d6 minutes into a wormmother without a save.

If Abgahadai is here, he will recognize the signs of a powerful evil spirit contained within that sphere, and Danzin will confirm this, much to his astonishment. The two together will then banish the spirit and find some similarities in each other, if not in belief, then in outlook...

The caves:

If the wormmother escaped, the PC could follow its tracks quite easily to the caves. See Area F for the great finale.

If not, there will probably be no reason that the PCs will enter the caverns. Though the Labyrinth Lord could take the description under Area F and reconstruct the situation without the incursion of the wormmother – just to place two low level bandits and a few more rats in it, and to subtract all gut worms and zombies, would be sufficient.

Map Areas

Area A: The village

1 The Khans yurt. At the moment just his shy secondary wife resides here, he has taken his favourite with him to the Kha-Kahns court.

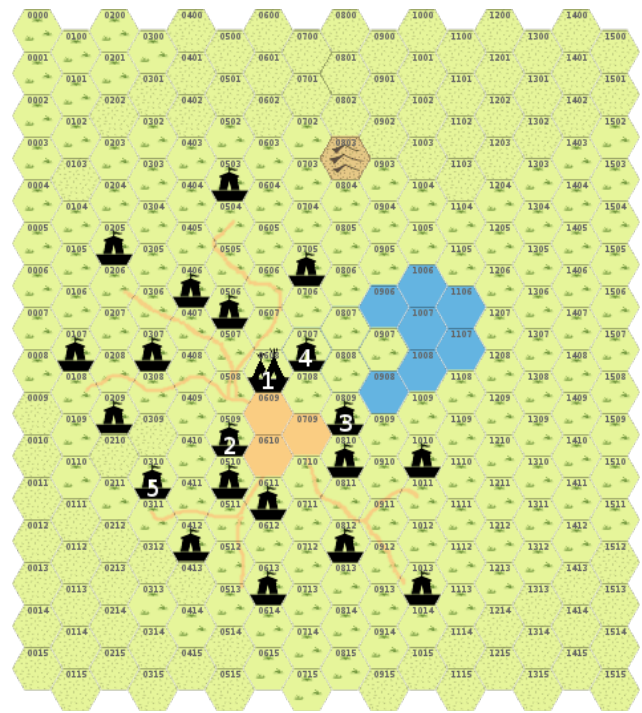
2 Abgahadai's yurt. He keeps a roll of silk (35 gp) as his only treasure, however the yurt is full with „magical“ trinkets, that are essentially worthless to the untrained (everyone else's) eye.

3 Qarader's Yurt. He lives here with his docile woman. He owns a stack of 200 sp and three gems, worth 50gp each, kept in a gourd.

4 Danzin's tent. Danzin and his two monks have built here a small, mobile shrine to the buddha. They keep offerings of ca. 2000 cp in a wooden strongbox, to be used to built a stationary shrine sometime in the future.

5 Sorghaghtani's yurt. Here yurt is very similar to her grandfather's, but somewhat tidier. Sorghaghtani hides an silken courtesan's dress (250 gp) in her locker.

Unmarked yurts are home to 1-2 nomads (if more than one, they will be father and son, or brothers) and their families. Many men are away with the Khan, so there is a 25% chance that only woman and children will be in them.



NPC Rooster:

Abgahadai, 5th level cleric of Tengri, N, AC: 8 (leather armour)

HP: 23, D: Mace +1 1d6+1, ThAC0: 17, WIS 14 Spells: 1.

Command, Cure light wounds*2, Detect Evil, Detect Magic, Purify Food and Drink 2. Bless, Snake Charm 3. Prayer

Abgahadai is the spiritual leader of this group. Normally, he is a wise, fair judging man with a good insight into the character of men, but since Danzin was invited by Thorgor - Khan to live with them, he is concerned and annoyed by the impression made by this „strange and pompous know-it-all charlatan“ on quite a few of his people. He is the grandfather of Sorghaghtani and very protective of her.

Sorghaghtani, 1st level female Magic-user, NG, AC: 9 (DEX), HP: 3, D: Dagger 1d4 -1, ThAC0: 20, DEX 13, INT 16 Spells learned: 1. Message, Spellbook: Allure, Burning Hands, Read Magic, Shield



Sorghaghtani is considered a shaman just like her grandfather (even though she was trained by her dead aunt) and as such has a lot more freedom than normal women of the tribe. She is an idealist, and only sees the best in almost everyone, but hates Qarader's flaws, and is not shy to oppose him. She tries to mediate the tensions between the two priests by observing them and intervening before harsh words can be spoken aloud. She would even make a good replacement-PC.

Danzin, 3rd level cleric of Buddha, LN, AC: 5 (scale mail and DEX) HP: 16, D: Light Hammer +1 of *samyag-danḍana* 1d4 +1 Subdual, double normal damage against evil persons and spirits, ThAC0: 19, DEX 13 WIS 13 Spells: 1. Protection from Evil, Remove Fear, Sanctuary 2. Holy Chant

Danzin is on a mission to spread word of the noble eightfold path to the nomads, sent by his lama. He is a bit frustrated by not having been invited into a bigger (and more influential) tribe and that the few converts, that he has gained, are still keeping the „superstitious nonsense“ of their religious customs, but in concordance with his faith, he is trying to be patient and keep up his calm.

Dorji, 2nd level Monk, LE, AC 9 (Monk) HP: 11, D: 1d4+1 (Unarmed), ThAC0: , STR 13, DEX 18, WIS 15, PL 28%,FRT 27%, MS 37%, CW87%, HS27%, HN 1-2

While Dorji was sent as a bodyguard to Danzin, his ambitions are much higher. He is determined to „help“ Danzi to reach the council of the Kha-khan – fast! He has no problem breaking the laws of the „barbarians“, as he sees himself (and Danzin) as superior. He has mixed feelings about Badmasürüng, feeling somewhat affectionate, despite him being a barbarian by birth, but is not above using him to his ends.

Badmasürüng, 1st level Monk, LN, AC 10 HP: 7 D: 1d4 (Unarmed), ThAC0: 20, STR 14, DEX 16, WIS 15, CHA 7, PL 23%, FRT 24%, MS 33%, CW 88%, HS 23%, HN 1-2

The young, newly ordained monk came as a child into the cloister of Danzin. He feels strangely torn, living among people just as his own feels right, and many „superstitions“ he still shares, though he thought them to be forgotten. He is obedient to both Danzi and Dorji, and has not much self respect.

Qarader, 3rd level Fighter, NE, AC 3 (scale mail +1 and shield +1)



HP: 19, D: Sword 1d8+1, Bow 1d6 ThAC0: 18, STR: 15

Qarader is a self-loving tyrant, but he's intelligent enough to recognize that the choice of the khan to leave him in charge supervised by Abgahadai is a test of his abilities to suppress this motions. He is trying, but this leaves him a little bit cranky, and he will use the slightest offense to demand retribution – preferably in coin or magic. He will order his men to kill without remorse, though, if he thinks that such a deed will be the right way to impress his khan. He does not dare to oppose Abgahadai, however.

20 Warriors, 1st level

Fighters, mostly LN, AC 6 (Studded Leather and Shield) HP: 6, D: Sword 1d8 or Bow 1d6, ThAC0: 19

52 Women and children, 0-Level humans, 234 Sheep, 34 Horses, 13 Dogs (for eating)

Area B: The desert

These part of the desert is more rocky than other parts. The steppes fade gradually into fields of gravel with almost no vegetation.

Area C: The grey old forest.

This forest is home to a bunch of spirits. They will whisper in eerie voices to everyone, who travels their land and try to scare them off. If that does not work, they will leave the intruders alone, as long as these don't harm the trees. Then they will attack by hurling dead wood and branches around. This will do 1d6 damage to everyone in the forest every round. People somehow protected by magic have a save every round to turn the attention of the spirits away. Unless they rise their anger anew, of course. The spirits' lair is located in hex 0404, place your favourite OPD here and somehow tie it to the spirits of the forest.

Area D: The centaur camp

In hex 1203 the centaurs of the steppe have their cooking fires. They are not overly aggressive, and as long as the players have not livestock of any sort but horses with them, will normally ignore them. Livestock other than horses will be hunted as if it were fair game. The centaurs are not dumb (Well, most of them aren't), it's just their way of living. They are expert marksmen and skilled in shooting their bows in full sprint, just like the human tribes of the steppes.

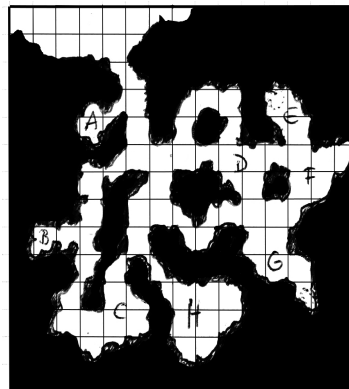
Area E: The impact site

The meteor has torn a gash about 30ft. wide and 360 ft. long into the rocky, barren soil of the desert. and the southern side, still glowing, lies an oblongeze sphere of half-melted metal. The "gift" of Tengri is indeed a test - and a deadly as is. An evil spirit was cast out of heaven - and it will spread misery and death in the area, if it is allowed to live.

Area F: The caves

These caves where the shelter for a handfull giant desert rats and some bandits lairing here, fugitives from more civilized lands (unbeknownst to the nomads). The gut worms killed the bandits (and some rats, too) and the evil poison of the spirit, that Dorji (or a PC?) changed into, raised them as undead.

A Three Mongolian gut worms lair here in the filth of a former rat's nest. HP 13, 11, 10



B One of the bandits was killed by Dorji's poison. Zombie, HP 9

He wears a sash of sustenance (same as the ring).

C This is the lair of the last giant rats. They are all agitated and will attack at the slightest provocation. 8 giant rats, HP 4, 3, 4, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3

A long forgotten chest is buried under their filthy nest, that contains a *potion of longivety* and 2000 cc.

D Four gut worms are eating a rat from the inside out here. If the PC's sneak by the strangely shifting and moving swollen rat corpse, they can probably avoid detection.

E There is a hole in the ceiling, that is an exit of the caves. Some skill at climbing or gear is all it takes... down is easier, and the sandy floor weakens falling damage to 1d3.

F One of the Bandits was almost all eaten up by acid from the gut worms, when Dorji bit him. He turned into a Rolling Zombie Head (HP 3).

G This exit is much more accessible and can be very easily climbed in both directions.

H This the place Dorji chose to rest. He will be here, accompanied by 3d6 mongolian gut worms. He is mad beyond reasoning, but if Danzi is with the PCs (Or a Buddhist PC cleric, that impressed him somehow beforehand) he will be stunned for 1d4 rounds as the still human part of him struggles with the evil spirit within... The gut worms will have no qualms about attacking, however.

The Labyrinth Lord can handle this module as a scripted adventure that takes place exactly as written.

It is possible, though, to use this scenes to happen in a sandbox style; no matter how and if the PCs are involved. 2 days after the PC enter this area, the star will fall (witch should be seen by the PCs at watch, at least)... Depending at what point the PCs come involved, they could be even the first at the impact site... with exceptionally bad luck they could even be at the impact site right when the impact happens. The Labyrinth Lord probably shouldn't kill them this way, though, as the hex should be big enough for just a few points of damage from fallen debris...

If the wormmother is not killed, there will be a steep rise in the gut worm population, until Dorjin (or whoever) is finally killed.

New Monsters

Mongolian Gut Worm

No. Enc.: 1d4 (2d4)
Alignment: Neutral (evil)
Movement: 120' (40')
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 2+2
Attacks: 1 (bite) or 1 (acid spittle)
Damage: 1d4 or 1d8
Save: F2
Morale: 11
Hoard Class: None
XP: 59

Mongolian gut worms are snake like beings, that resemble the intestines of bovines. They can bite and cling on, doing damage every round automatically until they are hit with a weapon, or they can spit acid to a range of up to 30ft.

(If you are using the „Creatures of the Steppe“ from Save vs. Dragon, this one is a smaller offshoot of the crimson death worm with different abilities. Possibly there are wormmothers that produce the more dangerous version in that document...)

Rolling Zombie Head

No. Enc.: 1d4 (2d4)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 60' (20')
Armor Class: 8
Hit Dice: 1d4 hp
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: 1d3
Save: F1
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: None
XP: 6

Rolling Zombie Heads are minor undead created by chance, or by whimsical necromancers. They are undead heads that roll surprisingly nimble around on the floor, and even sometimes jump into the air by jaw flapping to bite at their foes. They are turned as skeletons, and have all the normal immunities of undead.



Wormmother

No. Enc.: 1 (1)
Alignment: Neutral (evil)
Movement: 60' (20')
Armor Class: 2
Hit Dice: 8+8
Attacks: 3 (2 claws, 1 bite)
Damage: 1d6/1d6/1d3 + Poison
Save: F9
Morale: 11
Hoard Class:
XP: 1840

The wormmother is a human (female or male) infected with supernatural evil from beyond the heavens.

The infected being undergoes a horrifying transformation; its stomach bloats in a horrifying resemblance of pregnancy, while its other features start to emaciate to an almost mummy-like state. Then it begins to give birth to Mongolian gut worms at an alarming rate. In combat every 1d6 rounds a new worm falls out of the womb of the monster. Beings killed by the necromantic poison of a wormmother's bite rise as zombies after 1d4 hours. While the wormmother has no control over them, they won't attack gut worms or wormmothers.