

THE UNDERCROFT

We must Expire in hopes of Resurrection to Life Again

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Editorial

Authors live! Hitler writes a children's book, scratches his name off and hides it among the others. Now children grow up blue and blond, unable to control their minds, the hidden taint in friendly balloons and curious caterpillars wormed itself inside and reprogrammed them into literary sleeper agents ready to steal our freedom. The swine! We never saw it coming. If only authors were dead.

But if authors were dead you wouldn't be able to find them, to sit at their side and learn all they had to say on art and beautiful things, on who is wrong and who is right, on what is allowed and what is ugly and what should be done about this and that. We would have only words and pictures on a page, if we can't fill in the periphery with context then how will we understand anything? If they don't tell us what to enjoy, how to correctly enjoy it, then how will we know? Who is right and who is mad? Whose ideas are poisonous and wrong? *Call to arms! Stop that! Help me!* We must slather ourselves in their selfish juices.

We need guidance! We're the 1930s, begging for cultural fascists and the night of long knives. Show us the way, lead us to progress, we march on Poland in the morning.

Or maybe we should just kill them ourselves.



SKINNED MOON DAUGHTER

A Basic Class For The Great North

by Benjamin Baugh

The Skinned Moon is rare, and red as fresh-butchered meat. It means hunger, a long winter, spoiled supplies, and the cold calculations counting mouths to rations. The Skinned Moon is not an omen to ignore, but despite the hunger it promises, the Skinned Moon also offers gifts. Of course, like all gifts of the Otherworld, what the Skinned Moon gives is not ease or safety, but wildness and power. Power to feed a hungry family, to ward the land from evil, or the power to seek revenge, to rule from a house built of fear. When the Skinned Moon shines, daughters are born with power.

A Skinned Moon Daughter does not feel the cold, and will wiggle constantly to be freed from her mother's amauti, crying and whining until she is uncovered. As a child, she will likely be neglectful of her kamik and parka, leaving them off when she runs about with the other children, and often losing them. She might learn to wear them if her parents beat her or take the pains to explain, but she doesn't understand what they are for. There is one season for the Skinned Moon Daughter, and it is always the Summer.

Until she grows to young womanhood, no living animal will touch her - not whale, seal, bear, or fox. She can spoil a hunt just by edging too near, and must walk because she panics the sled dogs and reindeer so badly. She is a poor fisher too, unless casting a long net or deep line. She must live mostly on the kindness of her family, and so often excels at craft to help make up for her poor hunting. At some point, when hunger bites deep, she will realize that she has the stomach of a wolf - the meat of a carcass, even bloated in Summer's brief warmth - smells as sweet and tastes as fine as fresh killed caribou. Skinned Moon Daughters who indulge too much in this practice find their teeth subtly sharpening, and their eyes throw back lamp light with the simmer of a night hunter. She begins to smell of offal. Other people begin to smell of food.

When the Skinned Moon Daughter first bleeds as a woman bleeds, she changes. Her dreams become all of eating and being eaten, and the spirits of her people are wary of her. She becomes wilder and less dutiful, prone to vanishing for days on end, alone out into the wilds. The Skinned Moon comes again then, and teaches her katajjaq throat singing, but instead of singing in duet with another woman, the Skinned Moon Daughter learns to sing duet with a beast.



She learns to strip off her clothes, to smear herself down with rendered fat or rub herself with seal blubber, and then sing until a hungry beast comes to her. Bear, wolf, ice eagle, great fox, orca, walrus, devil seal. Some hungry beast looking for meat instead finds the Daughter waiting, and when it moves to eat, it stops and sings instead. For a time, the Daughter and the beast stand, eye to eye, arms and limbs touching, and then the song ends, and the beast swallows the Skinned Moon Daughter down all in one gulp.

Oiled and slick, she slides in easily no matter how large the beast, and curls within it like a baby waiting to be born. Until the Moon makes a full turn, she and the beast are one. Her mind, her skill, the beast's strength and senses, speed, and endurance. The Daughter's Beast can speak in her voice, can hold any tools or weapons she knows the use of, can walk on two or four, but can also swim or run or fly as it's wont to do, can bite and claw, can track and see. The beast does not change shape, exactly. Or perhaps it does, but only as needed. The Daughter's Beast will always seem somewhat swollen at the middle. When the Moon returns to the place it was when the Daughter was swallowed, the beast becomes ill and vomits the daughter back into the world, and flees. Such beasts are left fatter and healthier than before the Daughter possessed them, but will never again come when the Skinned Moon song is sung.

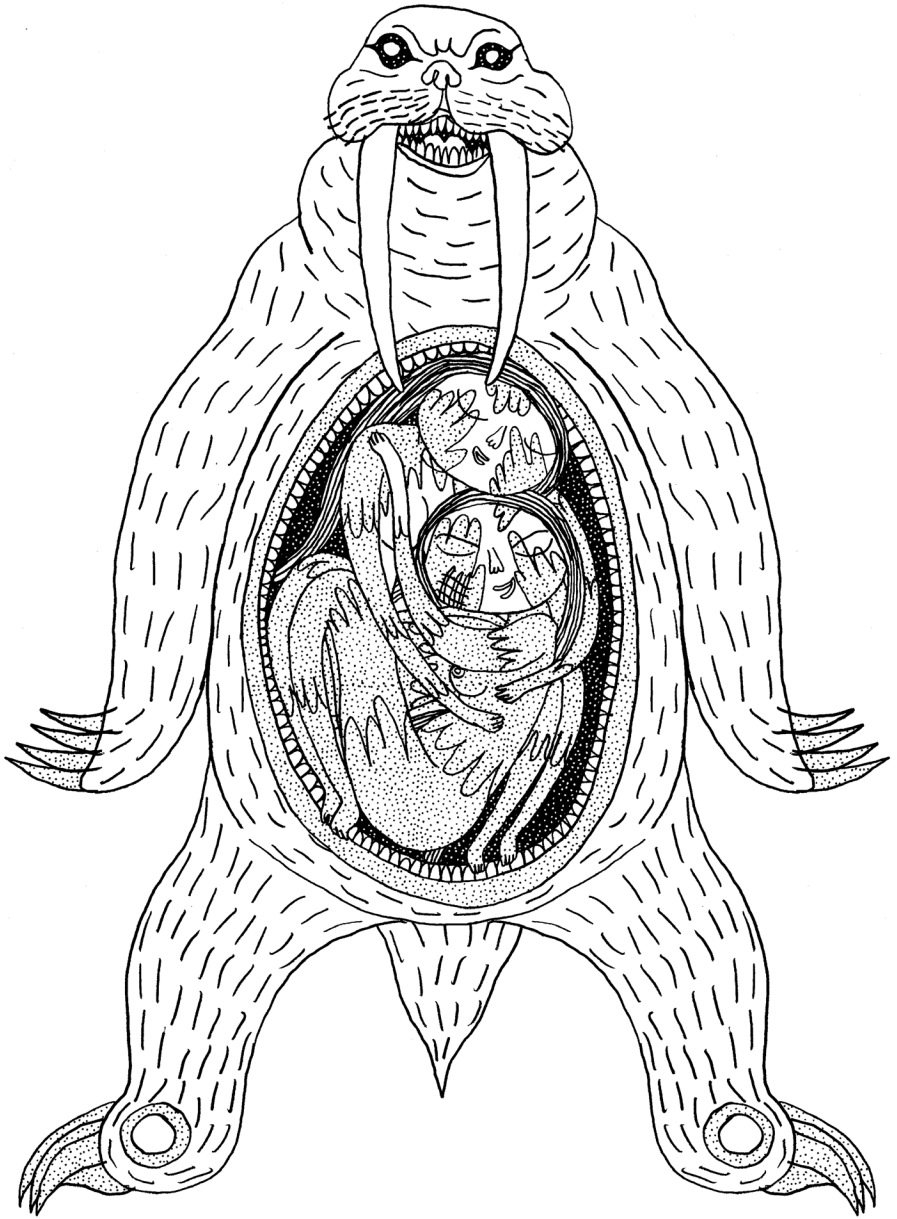
If her Beast is killed, the Skinned Moon Daughter will be trapped within, and unless she can somehow eat her way free, she will die there too. Sometimes far wanderers find skeletons out on the ice, bear bones with a small human skeleton curled within. If a hunter butchers a killed Beast, and cuts the Daughter free, then she is bound to marry the hunter, and serve as a faithful wife unless the hunter break taboo or violates the Skinned Moon's terms. The hunter must never raise voice to the Daughter, must never raise hand to the daughter, and must never refuse to lie with her when she feels her womb ache. Those who break faith with a Skinned Moon Daughter find how sharp her teeth can become.

If twins are born under the Skinned Moon, then they both carry the magic, and have an affinity for one another that is uncanny. Some twins finish sentences for one another, but the Skinned Moon Sisters can speak simultaneously in the same voice, can sing together, and can share the body of a beast of sufficient size combining their power to master larger and deadlier animals. If rescued from a beast corpse, only one of the sisters becomes the hunter's bride, but both come to share the tent. If the hunter ever mistakes the unmarried sister for their wife, then the bond is broken and the sisters will pick the hunter's bones clean of meat.

The Prime Requisites for the Skinned Moon Daughter character are Wisdom and Charisma. If both are 13 or greater, that grants a bonus of 5% earned experience. If both are greater, and one is at least 16 then a bonus of 10% earned experience is granted.

RESTRICTIONS: Skinned Moon Daughters use six-sided dice (d6) to determine their hit points. They may use light armours of hide and bone, but are often clothed in beastflesh so wear nothing typically. They may use light bows and one-handed and thrown weapons. They may not use shields. They may advance to a maximum of 10th level of experience. A Skinned Moon Daughter must have a minimum Constitution score of 9. Because of their strange preternatural aura, they may not have animals or intelligent beasts as followers.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Skinned Moon Daughters are immune to the cold, and indeed, hardly feel it. This includes magical cold, as from spells or monster attack. They may consume meat of any quality, age, or freshness without ill-effect, though an extended diet of carrion reduces their Charisma by d10 until a season eating only fresh meat passes. Skinned Moon Daughters speak the common tongue of the North, the language of the Moon, and of Spirits of hunger, the sky, and beasts.



Their greatest power is the ability to lure and physically possess animals with their Moon Singing.

Each night spent singing the Skinned Moon's song, check for a random encounter. If a creature is attracted to the Daughter's song, it must make a Save vs Spell or be overcome by the magic. It joins the Daughter in song, and when it ends, swallows the daughter. If it succeeds on the saving throw, then it reacts as its nature and hunger demand.

For one lunar month, or until the beast is killed, the Daughter remains safe inside it, in control of the shared flesh.

Use the beast's Armour Class, Hit Dice, Hit Points, Move, and any Attacks or Special Abilities or senses it possesses. Use the Daughter's Saving Throws, and languages.

If the animal they possess has more hit dice than they have levels of experience, then the Skinned Moon Daughter will sometimes have difficulty controlling the beast's instinctive actions. When she tries to force the beast to act against its nature - making a bear enter a tent, and sit in parley with an enemy for example - make a Morale check for the beast, and if successful, it balks and does not cooperate. If the Skinned Moon Daughter is Lawful, the beast cowers and refuses to act. If the Skinned Moon Daughter is Neutral, the beast flees until it feels safe. If the Skinned Moon Daughter is Chaotic, it attacks as its nature demands.

Sisters combine their levels when they share a beast, and so can master much more powerful animals.

If another player's character rescues a Daughter from the corpse of their beast body, then the complexities of the marriage arrangement might be explored in play if everyone is agreeable. Those married to a Skinned Moon Daughter gain some benefits - they become resistant to cold and cold-based attacks (half damage) if they are of a different

alignment to the Daughter, and if they are of the same alignment or change to become like the Daughter, they gain her full immunity and can also then feast on carrion meat as if it were fresh. If the marriage is broken, then either daughter or spouse's alignment will change - and can not be the same afterwards - and while the former spouse can still cut the Daughter from the body of a dead animal, they can never again be married - assuming the Daughter does not eat them.



Level	Title	Exp. Points	Hit Dice
1	Barefoot Maiden	0	1d6
2	Sweet Singer	4,000	2d6
3	Skinchanger	8,000	3d6
4	Welcome Stranger	16,000	4d6
5	Sly Inwalker	32,000	5d6
6	Beast Dreamer	64,000	6d6
7	Witcheye Woman	120,000	7d6
8	Widow Child	250,000	8d6
9	Cold Hand Matron	400,000	9d6
10	Hungry Beast Queen	600,000	9d6+2



IOI USES OF A HANGED MAN

by Barry Blatt

The gibbet was a metal cage in which dead criminals were displayed *pour encourager les autres*. They were pretty popular in England in the 16th and 17th century and were still used as late as 1832. The usual procedure was to hang the criminal first and then put the corpse in the closely fitting cage, but on occasion people were gibbeted alive and just left to hang and die of thirst and starvation.

This practise is a boon to sorcerers and witches; there a lot of useful magic in a hanged man.

Magic Item Lore In 17th Century England

There are no end of sources for recipes for magical potions and charms from old Greek and Roman sources like Pythagoras, Empedocles and Apollonius of Tyana, recycled by way of medieval and modern writers and through word of mouth among the witches. The trouble is no two sources agree on all the details involved in their manufacture.

For any given item there are 2-12 key phases of creation; more for more potent items, fewer for the less potent. The GM should determine the true method for each phase; prepare at least two options and roll d10. On a 1-3 the first option is correct, on 4-6 the second option is and on a 7-10 the step is in fact of no importance and reduce the potency of the final magic item by $-1/(\# \text{ of steps})$; a magic item that has no risk or difficulty in its creation has no power to affect reality. Thus a mandrake root has six steps to create; each step that turns out to be bogus reduces final potency by $1/6$. Always round down at the end of the process.

For each step invent a bad result for getting the stage wrong. This may be anything from a loss of potency in the final item through to risk of death or localised or even global natural disaster.

Now roll for the magic user researching the issue; for each 4d6 days working on the matter at 20sp a day in experiments, bribing demented witches with parsnip wine, cutting pages from library books with a razor blade, pulling scrabble letters out of a peasant's hat etc. the GM should secretly roll 1d10 for ONE of the steps in the process adding the PCs Wis bonus;

4 or under: They have a definite answer! (And it is wrong!)

5: They have both answers and cannot make up their minds which is right, they will have to guess

6: They are sure the step is irrelevant, or at least no one has mentioned it being important in their research

7+: They definitely know the right answer!

The PC will not know how many steps will need to be worked on, at least not at first. After the first period of research tell them a variable number of steps equal to (the true number -1d6) to (the true number +1d6), after the second +/-1d5 etc.

Use 2*: Dead Man's Hair

Also known as *muscus ex cranio humano*. Gibbeted bodies could hang about for months, even years, and eventually mould, fungi and moss would grow on the decaying corpse, though there is quite a supply of Irish skull moss from the many unburied bodies left laying around on the lush hills after the various battles and rebellions. There is an import duty of a shilling per skull for imports though, and it is generally just the skull itself that is imported to be ground up by apothecaries who are unaware of the value of the moss.

* (For Use 1 see the Expanding Universe blog at www.expanduniver.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/101-uses-of-hanged-man.html)

The polymath Francis Bacon wrote a pamphlet on the moss, the young natural philosopher Robert Boyle has a recipe or two and John Tradescant the antiquarian has a mossy skull from Ireland in his collection and has conducted experiments with it.

The base potency of the moss is 1d4 plus 1 per level of the former owner of the skull, plus 1 per four magic user levels of the magician harvesting and using it.

Tradescant and his skull

Step 1:

Harvesting the moss must be done with care.

A. Sterling silver scissors are the implement of choice, and can be bought for as little as ten shillings a pair, the parings may be dried over a moderate heat then ground in a coffee grinder;

OR

B. The moss must be shaved from the head with a rusty cut-throat razor, then washed in red wine to get rid of the soil and any mortified flesh, then ground in a pestle and mortar, though it has its uses raw.

The 'raw' moss will lose 1 potency per 1d3 days after harvesting, the dried and powdered version will lose 1/3 potency immediately, but will be will be good indefinitely thereafter. Using the wrong harvesting/drying method will reduce the potency by a third again.

Step 2:

The skull must be of one who died by violence; the spirits of such can be hard to deal with.

A. After taking the moss you must crack the skull with a hammer to

release the unquiet spirit within. Any further moss taken from this skull will have no special potency.

OR

B. You must utter a curse against the one who caused the death of the skull to appease the spirit; for Irish skulls cursing the name of Sir Humphrey Gilbert will usually suffice, for ones from gibbeted men the name of the hangman must be found and he must be cursed. Don't feel too bad about this victimisation of a public servant; hangmen get cursed a lot by the friends and relatives of those they execute anyway, they are probably immune to it.

If you get this wrong save vs Magic or the spirit of the unquiet dead will make your skull moss poisonous and do 1 damage per point of potency when used, 1d3 if they fail a save vs poison. This spoilage will not be apparent until the final potion is made.

Step 3:

To achieve its greatest effect the moss must be used thusly; (roll d1d10; 1-3 a, 4-6 b, 7-9 c, 10 d);

A. To cure nosebleeds the powder must be snorted up the nostrils, for other bleeding sprinkle the powder into the wound and sew it tight, or use a wad of the raw moss to staunch the wound. This will heal 1 HP of damage immediately, and double the rate of natural healing for (potency) days afterwards.

OR

B. Boyle's Method is to hold the raw moss in the left hand and concentrate upon drawing the blood back into the liver. Heals 1 damage per point of potency and stops all blood loss but can only be used upon oneself. Will remove the power to cast one level 1 spell from a magic user at random.

OR

C. Dr Goddard's Drops are made by mixing skull moss powder with brandy, succussing it seven times and distilling off the alcohol. The drops will cure depression, epilepsy, lack of energy and even sexual impotence; make a save vs poison with a bonus equal to the potency to gain relief from the symptom for twice the potency in hours. Charles II is a great fan of this preparation; after his reign they will be known as the King's Drops and used widely by the nobility of Europe.

OR

D. Chiffinch's Spike uses a pinch of the powder in a glass of alcoholic drink and a magic word equal to a level 3 spell to induce the drinker to spill their secrets. The target gets a save vs poison at +4, minus the potency of the moss. The magic word will require researching, but will take only a third of the time and cost if the magic user already has knowledge of the Suggestion spell.

An 'incorrect' use of the moss will still work, but the effective potency will be reduced by 1/3.

Buying it

Dried and powdered skull moss is available at a shilling per potency point in any well stocked apothecary shop in a major town in Britain such as London, Bristol, Norwich and Edinburgh and you have a 50% chance of finding it in the smaller towns as well.

Actual moss bearing skulls, usually from some forgotten Irish battlefield, can be had for ten shillings to a pound from the right seller in London, Liverpool, Bristol or Dublin, and dubious toerags in any tavern will retrieve one from the nearest gibbet for you for a suitable fee.

THE DOCTOR

by Patrick Stuart

No ordinary scholar, you have left the university, academy or monastery in order to discover more about the world and put your theories to the test. While you are a medical expert, you are deeply learned in a variety of fields. You may have been banned from attending University because you are a woman or a Jew, or simply for promulgating radical theories. You may be a brilliant autodidact or savant. Whoever you are, you are a bold, forthright and courageous individual. While you never seek violence your studies and personal development have given you the capacity to defend yourself, perhaps with an exercise regimen or martial technique that you invented yourself. Your Attack Bonus, Hit Points, Saves and Levels advance like a Fighter.

Do No Harm. You cannot willingly do *lethal* damage to another self-aware humanoid. If any action of yours takes them below zero hit points you must save their life. If you break this rule you have a Dark Night Of The Soul and lose a level.

Encumbrance. None of your special class abilities work if you are encumbered. All negative effects and restraints gained through your class abilities remain in force.



You gain the following class abilities at character generation:

Healing

Out of combat, and in a calm, controlled environment, you can heal d4 basic trauma damage per turn (10 minutes). This can be stuff like splinting arms and stitching wounds, but also possibly replacing a bit of someone's broken skull with a coin.

Saving Lives

If in combat rounds for any reason (not just combat itself) you can heal and even restore to life individuals who might otherwise die.

You can attempt this on a living being that is at -4 hit points or below so long as you reach them by the round after the damage took place and there is enough of the body left to potentially sustain life.

This consists of a mutual roll-off with you against the DM. On both your turn and the DM's;

- You both roll a d10.
- You add your INT bonus.
- The DM adds the number of HP the target is under zero.

Every roll you win advances the patient to a higher stage. Every roll you lose allows them to slip back one stage.

Stage 1 - Stabilises & stops the bleeding.

Stage 2 - Searches wound & removes any foreign object.

Stage 3 - closes and stabilises. Restarts heart if necessary. The target now has 0 hit points but is conscious and can speak.

If a patient slips out of Stage 1 they return to their state before you reached them. If they were at -4hp or below then they die.

Most Learned

Once per game session for each level you can effectively cast 'Identify' on any item or localised process. This can be an object, disease or 'how it works' question.

This isn't magic. You are drawing upon the vast learning you are assumed to be engaged in pretty much continually. You retain this knowledge so if you find the same object, process or disease again you know what it is. For very complex illness or curses, working out what it is and how it is cured can be two, or more, separate things.

Control Hold

You are entirely adept at dealing with troublesome or irrational patients. You always count as being armed with a garrotte. This requires a successful attack from surprise or a successful grapple. On a hit, the target loses d6 hit points per round. You can 'pause' this damage at exactly zero hp.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

On reaching 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th level, you may roll a d6 on the table below and apply the closest available result

1. Intolerant Rationalist

You know some magic is real because you have evidence of that, you also know it's entirely explicable and rarely what it seems, or claims to be, more delusion and madness than meaningful knowledge.

The sooner everyone stops indulging in that claptrap, the better off everyone will be.

You gain a double save against any magical effect. This applies to positive effects as well.

BUT

Magic will not work for you. Not scrolls, spells or items of any kind.

In addition you tend to harangue those who speak imprecisely and inaccurately about "the occult", thereby making you rather tiresome to be around.

2. Dangerous Atheist

There may well be a prime mover of some kind but talk of an interventionist god, or gods, is nonsense and calumny. The claimed 'miracles' of these religions are trickery, delusion or misunderstood natural phenomena.

You are immune to non-physical Clerical or divine magic. I.e., if a divine rainstorm soaks everyone then you get soaked. But a Quest or Harm spell has no effect.

BUT

You cannot be healed by said magic. You wouldn't want to be anyway.

In addition you are dangerously outspoken about your views, utterly refuse to recant them no matter the circumstances and are something of a liability when dealing with the religious.

3. Master Surgeon

All 'good' or 'evil', whether it be in man or any other thinking being, flows from the mind, that is to say, the brain. Therefore, by altering the brain you may command morality itself. Whenever you have the time and money you can, and must, try to do brain surgery on subdued monsters and 'evil' people.

Brain Surgery requires the living but sedated body of a person or humanish monster and a carefully prepared antiseptic environment. Simply transforming a normal room in this way with boiled sheets and vinegar swabs costs 500sp in an urban environment. In a privileged rural environment like a castle or monastery it costs 1000sp and may be impossible.

If any local law enforcement, religious authority or peasant mob becomes aware of the planned surgery, they will almost certainly intervene to prevent such an abomination taking place.

Surgery requires an hour per HD of the individual being 'improved'. Each hour costs 50sp in materials. The subject must make a save each hour to avoid death. If they fail a save they go below zero by the same amount they failed by. You can attempt to resuscitate them with your SAVING LIVES power.

If they survive, the creature becomes a new, and perhaps quite horrific, retainer who must be maintained at a rate of one silver piece per day for each HD and special power they possess.

On waking the referee rolls a loyalty value for the creation on the retainer loyalty table. Deduct this number from the INT of the creature. The very loyal are also very dumb. Should the creature fail a loyalty test at any point it act according to its base nature.

If doubles are rolled then you have created a PERSONAL NEMESIS. The Referee must add d20 intelligence to the creature's base. If the total goes above 20 INT for every point above they must be given a strange other-natural power which may be selected by the Referee or rolled on the table in the 'Summon' Spell. The Nemesis will immediately attempt escape. Obsessed with their creator they will dog your steps on and off until one of you is destroyed

4. Charismatic Addict

You have a dangerous addiction. In any environment and situation when the referee thinks it reasonable, they may say that you need to score. You lose d100% of the money you have on you.

In addition, if carousing rules are in effect and the opportunity presents itself, you must carouse.

BUT

You always have drugs on you. If the PC's come into contact with a drug or druglike substance and its even slightly possible you could have bagged some behind the scenes then you can simply mention it and d4 doses will be present right there in your bag. This ability can be used once per drug.

5. Healer Of Minds

Your genius and experience has given you a deep insight into the minds of your fellow man. An insight the world is not yet ready to understand. You can heal people of madness's and mental effects, but this takes TIME and they must COMMIT TO THE TREATMENT.

Usually it takes an hour long intensive meeting once a week with the number of weeks equal to the level of the effect. The referee may ask the patient and Doctor to role-play out at least part of this treatment.

BUT

Your perception and sensitivity has lead you into behaviours and attitudes that the ignorant masses would mistake for madness. Roll a random Madness on whatever table the referee thinks best. You will refuse to have this insanity treated in any meaningful way. If it is ever cured, you lose your mind-healing ability.

6. Renowned

Your works are well known. It's quite possible that for many medical problems you literally wrote the book on it. Your name alone gains easy access to, and a degree of status within, any environment in which rational enquiry is valued.

BUT

As your theories and works become more popular, they arouse opposition as well as agreement. You have an Academic Enemy. This person levels as you do, has a team of roughly the same competence and ability as yours and has a belief system apparently similar yet in fact opposite to yours. They exist only to foil you and prove you wrong. They don't necessarily want to kill you, they just want you to admit that they are right. Which might involve you being very close to death.

EVERYONE IS AN ADVENTURER

by Daniel Sell

Follow these instructions. Classes are gone. Tear out those pages, eat them. Glue these in their place. Everyone is an adventurer now.

The Adventurer

All saving throws start at 16.

Experience and level progression works as Fighter.

Everyone starts with +1 attack modifier.

At level 1 the minimum HP regardless of roll is 3.

Each level, including 1st, you must pick either **fighting**, **learning**, or **cunning**. You do not need to record that you made this choice, just the results of your decision.

If you pick **fighting** you get +1 attack modifier, D8 HP and -1 Poison & Breath saves with an additional point lowered on any save you like (this may be used to double up on poison or breath).

If you pick **learning** you get 2 skill points, D6 HP, and 4 points deducted from saves of your choice.

If you pick **cunning** you get D6 HP, 2 points lost from saves of your choice and 3 random spells from any class or level. The precise method for randomising isn't important as long as it is random.

Casting spells

No more memorisation, you know all the spells you know and can cast them at your leisure.

Adventurers have a pool of magic points (MP) equal to their highest plus lowest attribute.

Example:

An imaginary character has stats with numbers, they look like this: 12, 8, 14, 13, 12, 10. The highest is 14, the lowest is 8, therefore this character has 22 MP

To cast a spell you must pay MP equal to the spell's level. Otherwise you may not cast it.

You recover 1MP per hour of restfulness. This can be sleeping or meditating or quietly fishing or so on. As long as the action is not particularly productive or stressful it probably counts.

If a spell would normally be unavailable to a magic user of your level (according to default *Lamentations* rules) it costs double MP to cast.

Example:

A level 4 character casting a level 3 spell (not normally available until level 5) would lose 6 MP upon casting it

If your caster level is ever important assume it is equal to your current level.

Learning spells

The only way to gain a new spell is levelling up. However if you have found a spell book, scroll or tutor of a particular spell then you may pick that particular spell instead of a single random choice. This represents you having spent time learning it and finally committing it to memory.

THE SICKNESS

by Luke Gearing

Once you are within its grips, pray your friends stay sober. The heady musk, that sex-stink; first it'll fill your head with soft pink light and set your desires aflame, body taugth like a wire aching for release (*oh please*). In this state, the awful tumours of the Sickness simply do not bother you – any sexual offering brought to you would be gladly accepted.

Not long after this, it'll swallow you whole. You'll lose control and be driven mad by desire, pure lust boiling through your veins as baser instincts override all thought. If you're lucky, you'll find another afflicted by the scent, and rut like animals there and then. If you are not, you will suckle the tumours and be lost forever, another carrier.

-

The growths have a single property which allows them to wreak such devastation – the secretion. The stink of a hundred whorehouses, bottled and mixed with decaying rose petals. Those who do not steel their mind against the intrusion find themselves aroused, suggestible, open to any offered sexual encounter, regardless of usual preferences.

This is simply the initial exposure – prolonged exposure reduces most into an animalistic sexual frenzy, wherein they will attempt to rut with the nearest member of their own species. Those already afflicted with the Sickness are permanently in this state, affected by the scent just as strongly.

If the secretion is ingested, the immediate reaction is a climatic, body-wide sexual release impossible to achieve under any normal conditions. These orgasms seemly serve two purposes – both encouraging further ingestion and reducing potential mental resistance to the persuasive nature of the Sickness.

Once ingested more than once, infection is certain. That individual is no more, lost to an oblivion of sexual frenzy and endless climaxes. Groups of these individuals will simply suckle at the growths of their fellows, entirely content to die of dehydration, soiled in their own sexual discharge. Lone individuals, however, seem to actively seek out and infect further individuals. This is believed to be a mechanism to ensure they can continue to experience the pleasure that has replaced all thought, memory and personality.

- Edwin Archibald Zwentz, Field Surgeon, Emperors Seventh Horse

Once infected, tumours become visible and begin secreting within 2 hours, and do not stop growing until the death of the host. Apart from the swollen, purple-black stretched flesh of the tumours, they also exhibit additional eyes, fingers, tongues and sexual organs – with no regard to the gender of the host.

If a host were somehow kept alive for long enough, the tumours would first bury the original body under their ever-expanding bulk. Then, they would form mouths and crude pseudopods. The tumour collective would then set about its purpose – all that is known is that it seeks depth.

Mature Form, The Sickness

HD - 12 (Host has 1HD, but is entirely hidden. Killing the host kills the organism)

AC - as leather

Move - as slime

Attack - Pseudopod Slam – 1d10 +10

Specials – Coated in the secretion, can spray it up to 10ft.

Secretion Mechanics

Roll under Wisdom upon initial contact with the scent of the secretion, and every 4 rounds thereafter. Failing to roll under Wisdom causes you to advance 1 stage. You move down 1 stage every 15 minutes without the scent.

Stage 0 – Standard.

Stage 1 – Aroused, suggestible, open to any offer of sex.

Stage 2 – Aggressively seek out sex with any near you.

The first ingestion of secretion allows a save-vs-poison. The second does not.



SEAN
POPPE

DEAD INSIDE

Alternate Classes For Lamentations Of The Flame Princess

by Edward Lockhart

Those that delve into deadly unreal ruins are not well. Their madness may lend them unusual strength, but more likely it will be their undoing.

{The following four classes are meant to replace all player character classes within Rules and Magic. The classes presented in Rules and Magic may or may not be extant in the campaign but are now NPC only. You can ask the referee if you must. It doesn't matter, you have only narrow choices.}

Though there are many things beyond humanity, all four classes remain (more or less) human.

Equipment & Overview

Fallen – Cursed but powerful, these fools believe they were once something more, something whole. They are delicate and strange. This world wears at them like a thorned path.

Starting Equipment

Sufficient Clothing

Knife or Club (1d4)

1 Candle

1d4 Silver

Pariah – Cast aside by their own peoples, set adrift in foreign lands, these unfortunate souls wander without peace.

Starting Equipment

Foreign Garb

Helmet (+1 AC) & Shield (+1AC)

Unique Weapon

2 torches

50' Rope

1 tool (hammer, mallet, spade, mattock, etc.)

Tent

1d6 Rations and Full Waterskin

1 Foreign Coin

Detached – Already half removed from the world, numbed from great pain and chemical dependence, these men and women march dead eyed and raving into dark places.

Starting Equipment

Filthy Clothes

Helmet (+1 AC)

Axe Handle, Mace, OR Flail (1d6)

Large amount of Favourite Drug

Large amount of Least Favourite Drug

3 torches

1 useful item (rope, mallet and spikes, lantern and oil, flask of water, etc.)

1d4 Silver

Partners in Crime– They cling to one another. Codependent and desperate, these pairings dance along a razor's edge.

Starting Equipment (split between them)

Sufficient Clothing

Helmet (+1 AC) & Shield (+1AC)

Weapon of Choice

Knife (1d4)

Full Waterskin

1 tool (hammer, mallet, spade, mattock, etc.)

4 Torches

1d4 Silver

The Detached

You have known too much: glimpsed cosmic perspectives, touched the river of time, or simply watched a loved one die in unearned brutality. You are now dead inside; this is not quite a metaphor.

Though you may yet smile or drink or seem merry, it won't touch your eyes. Certainly, many sad folk never leave the public house, find fights, or wantonly fuck, and sometimes you might too.

(Oh when you're lost in the reckless dissolution of wits via drug or drink, old fires can rekindle. A memory of joy forgotten might seem again possible. You may very well chase the dragon until you die again then waken with a sigh.)

Some Detached can't be still as though through movement alone, their bodies remain animate. Others tick like tensioning springs: silent, stiff, terse, waiting for a reason to explode. Others still are drunken tilting folly, still living only by slapstick happenstance. Each, being human, is his/her own terrible snowflake.

So when a desperate fool decides to dig around old witches' haunts for fairy silver or explore old ruins seeking sacrificial gold, detached folk often glom onto such escapades.

	XP	HP	Paralyse	Poison	Breath	Device	Magic
1	0	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
2	1,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
3	3,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
4	9,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
5	27,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
6	80,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
7	120,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
8	200,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
9	300,000	1d8	10	10	14	13	11
10	+100,000	+3	10	10	14	13	11

(Saving throws do not advance. Detached are frozen spectres of a living thing)

BAB – +2

Hit Dice – 1d8 (minimum 4HP)

Numb Fire – When intoxicated (requires loads of beer, mounds of cocaine, and/or whole bottles of laudanum) -1 to hit, takes half damage from physical sources (minimum of 1 damage).

Thoughtlessly Rash - Between fearlessness and the dim echo of a will to live, detached always act first in combat when not surprised.

Stone Hearts Pump No Blood - Complete immunity to emotion based and mind controlling magic.

Partners in Crime

Trouble has found them, again and again. Tireless, it will find them always. It bubbles off of each in stuttering waves. Grinning, they laugh recklessly into the abyss.

Sometimes lovers, sometimes brothers, sometimes parent and child, sometimes simply old friends: a strong bond links these two ne'er-do-wells. They look out for each other, and the whole rest of it can burn.

The twain of 'em are rarely out of earshot and work all too well together.

They've tried a little of this and dabbled at that, but mostly they know how to survive.

BAB - +1

Hit Dice – d6 (no minimum, it is what it is)

Dabbling – Two points each to distribute amongst these skills: stealth, bushcraft, climb, search, tinker, backstab, sleight of hand, rough medicine*.

In Sync – For any action(s) which sees both Partners in Crime working together, they may add their level to the roll(s).

Two – These are two persons each of whom can attack or take any other action each round.

Trouble Finds You – At each level, including the first, an NPC from the Partners' past will turn up to haunt them:

1. Former Lover, 2. Former Mark, 3. Former Victim, 4. Officer of the Law

	XP	HP	Paralyse	Poison	Breath	Device	Magic
1	0	1d8	18	18	18	18	18
2	2,500	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
3	5,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
4	10,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
5	30,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
6	80,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
7	100,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
8	220,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
9	320,000	1d8	*	*	*	*	*
10	+100,000	+3	*	*	*	*	*

Roll two separate sets of stats, one for each partner.

Upon Levelling Each Partner Gets:

+1 to BAB OR

+1 on Saving Throws OR

+1d6 HD.

Should a Partner in Crime find him/herself to be the sole survivor, Save vs Magic + Wisdom Modifier to avoid entering a suicidal state. At his/her next level, the bereaved must choose to become a Fighter or Specialist. Then live with that choice, until death comes ripping.

Fallen

It is a curse. Blessings do not exist. Born of a bad end, the circle will see itself completed.

The divine sears you from deep within your golden bones ... Once maybe you were an angel or a demon or even a godling, but now you are this.

Once you were mighty. Once you could see the spokes and gears of creation, now you are mortal, trapped by the very gears you once turned.

You were something more, something bigger, something complete. Now you are a shadow, a stain of clotted blood, a dim reflection of being. All you remember of before is a missing contentment and contempt for mortality.

Now you know hunger, pain, and toil. The indignity of illness and the spectre of death greet you like old friends.

Still, somehow your spark remains. You do not age, though you may appear old. In brief moments you may even remember some tiny fraction of the Truth.

Remembrances Of Voice – Command (as per spell) up to 1d6 beings 1/day.

Not quite here, not quite there – +1 AC, Requires only ½ typical caloric intake.

Dying Spark – May cast from wizard/clerical scrolls, wands, staves, etc. (via literal consumption, takes 1d6 rounds). See level chart, may cast each listed spell ONLY ONCE.

	XP	HP	Paralyse	Poison	Breath	Device	Magic
1	0	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
2	1,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
3	3,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
4	6,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
5	12,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
6	24,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
7	48,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
8	80,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
9*	100,000	1d4	16	12	16	12	10
10	+100,000	+2	16	12	16	12	10

(Saving throws do not advance. Fallen are chained within their wretched forms.)

*Beginning at level 9, the character must make a save vs spell at each new level or “revert” to their former state.

BAB - +1

Hit Dice – 1d4 (minimum 2HP)

One Time Spell:

Level 1 - Compel - Any living thing must obey a single command, issued in a non-compound sentence. If it cannot understand, it will be MADE to understand.

Level 2 - Renew – Render an object into pristine condition.

Level 3 - Bring Servant – As per summon spell but control is automatic.

Level 4 - Word of Undoing – Remove from existence any single creature or object.

Level 5 - Calamity – Render apocalyptic devastation unto a 100 mile radius. Form decided by caster.

Level 6 - Transmutation – Turn ANY one object or creature into another object or creature.

Level 7 - Invigorate – Bring back to perfect health any living or newly dead creature.

Level 8 - Demand an Audience – Force ANY entity to hold a 10 minute audience with you. Both you and the creature will be unable to harm one another. The audience is held in a pocket dimension of infinite empty space. Both parties are transported there and unable to leave for the duration.

Level 9 - Stop – The motion of ANY single object is ceased by will of the caster.

Level 10 - Reincarnation – Bring self or another sentient back as a randomly determined thing.

Pariah

You come from somewhere else. No longer do you have a home or a family. You are cut off from your people. Cast unto the breakers of foreign shores, you desperately tread water and fight against an undertow perpetual.

Someday you will drown in strange waters. For today, you simply try to breathe.

Long ago you would have perished were you not malleable. Were your wits duller, your bones would already moulder far from your ancestors.

You speak this new tongue but will never be welcome, forever held between two worlds. In liminality, pariahs often find companionship amongst other outcasts.

To return home is to die ignobly. To remain away is a slower version of the same.

Foreign Ways – you may add your level to one the following: (Choose NOW and Forever) Knowledge of a Specific Topic (i.e. normal 1/6 skill becomes $1 + \text{level}/6$ skill) OR When Fighting with a rare and Very specific weapon add level to damage rolls.

Quick Study – You learn new customs and new climes easily enough. See Bushcraft and Language skills on XP chart.

Serendipitous Delivery – Add the difference between your current HP and your maximum HP to all saving throws.

(Example: Having 4 out of 6 total HP, nets a +2 bonus to all saving throws.)

	XP	HP	Paralyse	Poison	Breath	Device	Magic
1	0	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
2	1,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
3	3,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
4	6,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
5	12,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
6	24,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
7	48,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
8	80,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
9	100,000	1d6	16	12	16	12	10
10	+100,000	+3	16	12	16	12	10

	Bushcraft	Languages
1	2/6	5/6
2	3/6	5/6
3	3/6	5/6
4	4/6	5/6
5	4/6	6/6
6	5/6	6/6
7	5/6	6/6
8	6/6	6/6: 1/6 read magical languages
9	6/6	6/6: 2/6 read magical languages
10	6/6	6/6: 3/6 read magical languages

(Pariah saving throws do not change with levels.)

BAB - +1

Hit Dice - 1d6 (min 3HP)

COCKDICKTASTROPHE

(Or, Simply, Cock Monster)

by Chris Lawson

The Cockdicktastrophe is a legendary monster, glimpsed by a few but never truly encountered. That is what you should tell your players, at least. The truth is that some people have encountered it but they died so no one has told the story to other people! You have to really hammer this home, so whenever the PCs ask people in town about it make sure they say this at some point in addition to whatever you want to tell them:

“... but no one’s ever seen it. At least, no one who was alive after seeing it has seen it. I mean they saw it, but they’re not alive any more so they didn’t talk about it, to me at least”.

After multiple NPCs have delivered this line the players should feel confident in their understanding of the situation. Sometimes players need help to identify what they feel, so don’t be afraid to lightly touch each players hand and say to them *“you are confident now”*.

The monster's lair can be wherever you would put a cave. Hills are good for caves. Mountains are good for caves but are scarier so don't scare your players away. Plains are OK for caves but then you have to put the cave entrance in the ground and then it's hard to see that the cave mouth looks like a vagina, which is important, which you'll know if you keep reading, or you would already know if you read ahead and then jumped back to read this part afterwards. When the PCs approach the cave, describe it like this:

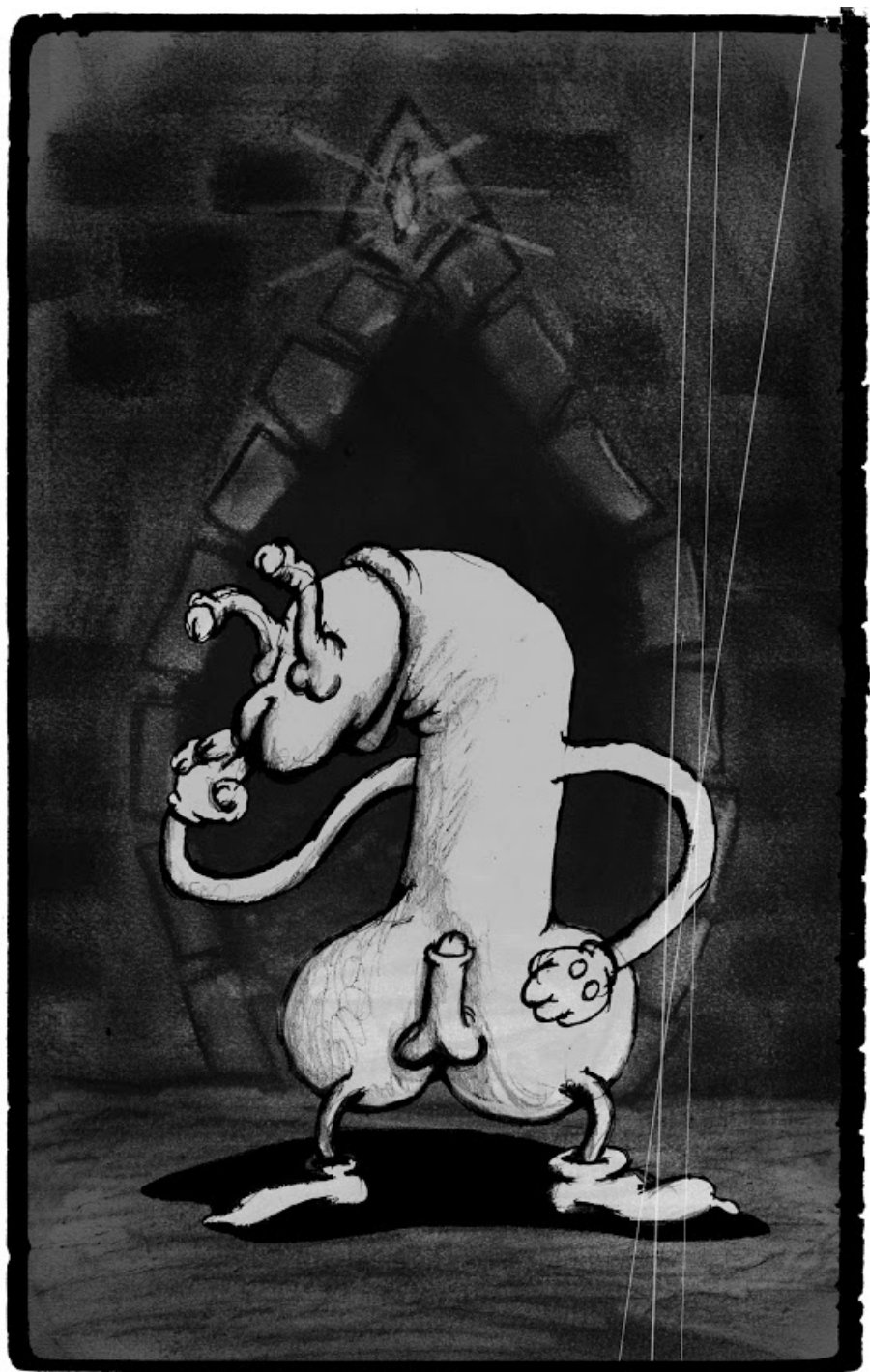
"The cave mouth looks like an open vagina. The polished stone walls glisten in the sun or moon with a supernatural wetness. Above the cave there is a huge phallus in the shape of a clitoris. Or is it the other way around? Make a search check".

Whatever the outcome of the check, tell your players that it's not the other way around and that they were right the first time. When they enter the cave, play some wet sucking noises from Youtube. Tell them that it feels like the cave mouth is sexually aroused by their entry. It sighs and moans loudly. These noises can be made by Youtube also.

The air is humid and sexy. But not like arousing-sexy, it's just like, there is sex happening here.

They are now in the outer chamber. There is a single wooden door. When they notice the door, read the following text without stopping:

"You open the door and step inside. Inside is the Cock Monster. The monster has its arms in front of its crotch but it exposes itself to you in delight. What it exposes is a penis. The monster itself has a throbbing veiny penis head for a head and it nods at you knowingly. You get the feeling that it's somehow throbbing at you. It raises its rubbery arms and points at you with its cock hands. Each finger is a dick, and each becomes aroused as they are pointed at you in turn. It makes sure you notice and acknowledge each one. It will wait.



You spin to retreat the way you came. The door is dicks now. Dicks pounded down to a rectangular board, dried and cured, and nailed together with dozens of other dicks to form a door. It slams shut, blood spurting from the dicks due to the force. One of the dicks comes (cums) into the door frame. The cum spreads quickly in the vagina that is the space between the door and the door frame. It dries hard. You probably can't go that way any more.

You will have to fight your way out. You draw your weapon - but you find yourself tugging on your own dick. This means your dick is where you normally keep your weapon's handle or hilt. If you didn't have a dick before you have one now, because of the cock monster's dick magic. You grope your crotch with your other hand, hoping to discover you are simply mistaken and that your dick or genital of choice is safely where you put it earlier. You are temporarily relieved to feel the contour of your usual genitals. But soon you realize you actually have two cocks there now. They squirm against your touch, not of your will. Your weapon's flesh-hilt bends around to seize your hand and forces you to stroke it. The weapon cracks its scabbard from the inside like a chick bursting through its egg. It spills onto the floor and unravels towards the cock monster. The hilt has fused with your hand so now it's your responsibility. This action is so psionically powerful that you were telepathically aware of it happening a moment ago, which is why you thought you were tugging on your own dick earlier, at the beginning of this paragraph that I am reading to you.

The cock monster's cock slithers along the ground towards your hand/weapon-dick. They touch and appear to sniff each other. The cock monster's cock opens wide, revealing a constellation of irregular calcium studs set against the deep space of veins and the dark red puddle of light shining through thin layers of skin. Your hand/weapon-dick coils up and springs forward into the cock monster's cock abyss. An impossible length of limp cock slack is picked up and propelled into the apparently infinite tract of the cock monster's inner cock, beyond its open dick slit. "There is probably euclidean geography in its dick", you think. Finally the cock monster's cock snaps shut and twists on your hand/weapon-dick. The monster says "This is called 'docking'.", but you can't understand it because it doesn't have a tongue in its dick-head's mouth, just another cock.

You realize you can not fight it with conventional weapons. Your mind scrambles for a solution. You recall your time spent in the nearby town near this cave. A warty black-market gynaecologist warned you about something like this. "Look out for dicks", he had said while he was shitting on some rats. He gave you a metal ring, about a foot in diameter with spikes lining the inside. If you don't remember this happening, its because the cock monster's magic was making you forget but you remember it now in the heat of battle.

With your remaining hand you unclip the spiked ring. You leap upon the cock monster and end up straddling its face, with both your legs on its shoulders, like a reverse piggy-back. You bring the spiked ring down on its head, ripping its flesh. It quivers in delight even though its all ripped up and bloody. The dicks in its eyes grab your double cock package and your two dicks are drawn into its eye sockets. You furiously bring the ring up and down, up and down its shaft face, shredding it to pieces. It only moans louder. It fucks your dicks with its eye sockets and won't let go. It bucks, and you think it's trying to throw you off but it's actually trying to pound your dicks harder, for your benefit. You somehow know that you are racing it for an orgasm, and that the first to blow will lose and die. It's so pleasurable that you understand why no one has left to tell this tale. You have to get this monster off before it gets you off! Make a save vs. magic".

(DON'T READ THIS PART OUT LOUD: whatever the result, keep reading! Just make your eyes roll and dart around all over the place and your players will think you're making this up on the fly).

"Ok, so this means... You pound on the monster with the spiked ring, which you now realize is called a spiked cock-ring, and the monster's head is now just a bare fleshy knob. You are proud of your progress but you suddenly realize you are really close to orgasming! You let go of the cock-ring and grab the monster's fleshy knob face and put your mouth on its mangled tip. You suck on its gore and bite down at the same time, realizing suddenly that it is a mix of pain and pleasure that will defeat this monster. It moans so hard. It ejaculates all of its insides with such force that you are thrown off its body and into the ceiling. Luckily your two dicks pull out of the monster's eyes

just in time and you don't climax. You take 1 hp damage.

The monster lets out a cum-gurgling death cry. It becomes entirely flaccid and falls to the ground like a house coat. You step on it to see if there's anything still there (like in Star Wars episode 4 when Vader steps on Obi-Wan's robes) and you're satisfied. You find 3d6 gems worth 2d6 sp each.

As you are about to leave, you feel the undeniable urge to crawl into the cock monster's skin and do all the things that it was doing before you got here. This is because you swallowed some of its cum when it came all over you. There is no save, because you've already crawled into its skin and its taking you over. You become dicks. Time to roll up a new PC!"

If there's more than one PC, preface the boxed text with *"The following happens to each of you separately"* and make sure to mention that there are as many cock monsters in the cave as there are PCs while they are investigating in town.

NINE SUMMITS AND THE MATTER OF BIRTH

by Ezra Claverie

*“O fleeting joyes
Of Paradise, deare bought with lasting woes!
Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay
To mould me Man, did I sollicite thee
From darkness to promote me, or here place
In this delicious Garden? as my Will
Concurd not to my being, it were but right
And equal to reduce me to my dust,
Desirous to resigne, and render back
All I receav’d, unable to performe
Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold
The good I sought not.”*

--John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 10, lines 741-752

Overview

For generations the Elves’ Principal Trading Company has exercised de facto rule over the Sea People who dwell on the great tropical island of Nine Summits. Once a wilderness of montane jungle, Nine Summits now brings forth crops sold across the Metropole, from tea and candlenuts to witches’ nutmeg, cloud-forest vanilla, and the vaunted Fourth Summit saffron, the “Breath of Amber” that tints the wedding-feasts of landed families.

Soon, however, disaster will come to Nine Summits: an astronomical conjunction will bring about the season of an alien Generative Authority that manifests in monstrous births. During this season, the Authority will influence expectant mothers on Nine Summits, causing the premature birth of creatures that recapitulate human phylogeny; most such offspring will immediately gave half-birth to still larger monstrosities.

For the Referee: Using Nine Summits

The humans who call themselves the Sea People resemble pre-modern Polynesians. They live in a patriarchal society organized into matrilineal clans, subsisting by agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing. What few metal tools they have, they bought from Elven merchant adventurers, who resemble early modern Europeans.

The Referee has many options for how to scale and deploy this scenario, either as an episode in a larger campaign or as a one-off catastrophe. This text assumes nothing about number of players or the power of their characters. The Referee shall decide both how soon the astronomical conjunction occurs and how long it lasts, depending on his or her plans for Nine Summits as a setting.

When the season of the Generative Authority begins, rumours of monstrous births will ripple through the villages of Nine Summits, leaving fear in their wake. Chiefs may order the detention (or worse) of foreigners, obviously pregnant women, or suspected witches; they may organize war parties to seize enemies from rival villages. Accused or accusers may riot. The Principal Trading Company may deploy imported or indigenous soldiers to defend plantations or ports.

On the other hand, some village chiefs may seek the aid of outside experts, especially those lettered in Elvish astronomy and thaumaturgy. Others may hire foreign mercenaries to help them enforce unpopular emergency edicts. (See “*In Eaning Time*,” below.)

A History and a Prehistory

Nearly a thousand years ago, the Elves overthrew the indigenous Theocracy that ruled Nine Summits, not by force but by stoking resentment against that Theocracy among the Twelve Clans of Sea People on the neighbouring islands. The Twelve Clans had long refused to trade or intermarry with the people of Nine Summits because of the Theocracy's ritual sacrifice of newborn infants, a custom the Twelve Clans regarded as bestial, and for which many refused even to speak that island's name. Infanticide kept the population of Nine Summits far smaller than such an island might support using the agricultural methods of the Sea People. Only fear of the Theocracy's potent war-priests kept the Twelve Clans from conquering the island, casting down the Theocrats, and putting the land to decent cultivation.

Neither the Principal Trading Company of the Elves nor the Twelve Clans of the Sea People realize that the Theocracy of Nine Summits merely continued, in debased form, practices that terror long ago forced upon the people the island. According to the creation stories of the Theocracy, in the First Times, an alien Being grafted upon Nine Summits a demonic Generative Authority; as long as human beings dwelt there, this Generative Authority would cause pregnant women to bring forth monstrous children unless the Sea People appeased it through infant sacrifice.

The priests of the Twelve Clans had rituals for dealing with malformed infants and for consoling clan and village over such misfortunes, but they had none to deal with malformed births so colossal that they destroyed birthing bed, longhouse, village and all. In the hope of propitiating the power responsible, the Theocracy ritually sacrificed one healthy infant in five and punished any who would shelter infants chosen for that fate.

Although the Theocracy's sacrifices kept the population low and themselves in power, they actually did nothing to appease the Generative Authority, which has no aims except those given it by its

creator, and which only intrudes into the material universe during certain astronomical conditions. Those conditions recur in a cycle so long that none living know their period. The Twelve Clans, having no written history, recall the aberrations caused by the Authority only in the myths of a Theocracy they crushed nine centuries ago.

The Referee shall decide how much the player characters may learn about the Generative Authority. The oral epics, aristocratic genealogies, navigational mnemonics, and even planting songs of the Twelve Clans may contain clues about the astronomical conditions that obtained when the previous conjunction happened, as well as how soon it will recur. So might ancient petroglyphs, ritual platforms, and stele aligned to the stars' old positions. Arcane or banned Elvish books may chronicle the Elven Principality's first contacts with the Theocracy. At the Referee's discretion, spells of divination may allow insight into the workings of the Generative Authority.

The Circle of Unbirth

The Theocracy survives on Nine Summits in the secret antinatalist cult that calls itself the Circle of Unbirth. The Circle regards life as an unhappy accident and therefore seeks to prevent conception and birth. As a matter of doctrine, they do not seek to cause death, for Existence brings death to all flesh; in fact, many who join the cult do so out of pity for the suffering of others, whether humans, beasts, or the ghosts of ancestors. The Circle abstains from eating the flesh of animals, and many abjure harm even to plants, consuming only those leaves and fruits that fall in due season.

The priesthood of the Twelve Clans considers the Circle of Unbirth witches and therefore places upon them the strongest taboo, interdicting their ritual practices (see below) on pain of death. Most of those practices interfere only symbolically with the life of the Twelve Clans, but their supernatural interference can cause grievous mischief. (In game terms, treat full initiates to the Circle as clerics or as anti-druids.)

1. **Solemnities of the Remainder:** This ritual requires human afterbirth. The Twelve Clans consider this substance holy and thus taboo for non-priests to handle, so the Circle can obtain it only by illicit trade or theft.

The Solemnities of the Remainder ritually convert the placenta and other material remaining from a live human birth into that of a stillbirth, relic of the Most Fortunate of the Conceived. The Circle then divides this consecrated substance and scatters it for the birds, ants, fish, and so on.
2. **Sacrament of the Nonborn:** In this ceremony, the Circle takes alcohol enemas to celebrate a miscarriage or stillbirth, ritually condoling the mother's house while celebrating the Most Fortunate of the Conceived for the mercy of premature cessation.
3. **Sacrament of the Unnascent:** In this ceremony, the Circle takes hallucinogenic enemas to celebrate the perfection of the Blessed Infinities, those beings never conceived.
4. **Liturgy in Execration:** The Circle ritually curses the Earth itself as the unburied and unburiable carrion left by a dead star. A whispered antiphon condoles the Void.
5. **Liturgy in Commiseration:** This ritual laments with the Universe the misfortune of its birth, which stained the eternal perfection of the Void. Participants curse the Earth as meconium vented by wailing newborn stars.
6. **Nascence of Wisdom:** The Circle buries a postulant in a shallow grave, then exhumes him or her into the wisdom of opposition to the creation of life. (After this initiation, members of the circle may learn spells.)
7. **Feast of Refusal:** An experienced male initiate takes sedatives and then undergoes castration. The Circle then prepares the flesh into a parody of some dish eaten by the Twelve Clans (e.g. *keke*



THE REVELS
of
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pua'a, lū moa, manapua, 'ota 'ika, palusami, pokē, sapasui, or even a full *ahima'a, hāngi, or lovo*). By night, they arrange this food on the ground in some lonely place, most often in the shape of a stylized human figure or the Elvish verb root meaning “to refuse,” leaving it to be consumed by animals. (To assume a position of formal authority in the Circle, a male must undergo this ritual.)

8. **Feast of Denial:** An experienced female initiate takes sedatives and then undergoes mastectomy. The Circle then prepares the flesh as in the Feast of Refusal, above. (To assume a position of formal authority in the Circle, a female must undergo this ritual.)
9. **Reverence of the Cessation:** Celebrants bathe in ashes and whisper prayers to celebrate the menopause of member of the Circle. She imbibes drugs and then carves a stylized skull on her belly. (Only women who have gone through this ritual may occupy positions of senior leadership in the Circle.)
10. **Song of Cooling:** The Circle gathers to sing a Song that causes its target, man or woman, to lose any and all sexual desire for the opposite sex for one year. The Circle must know the target's name and have some piece of the target, however small: hair, nail parings, urine, and so on. Provided the Circle has this object as its focus, they can direct the Song against the target from any distance, even without knowing the target's location. (Treat as a Curse. For every three initiates assisting the caster, penalize the target's Saving Throw by two.)
11. **Song of Quieting:** This Song causes its target, typically one half of a married couple, one year of infertility. (The same conditions for casting obtain as with the Song of Cooling, but the caster requires the help of at least six initiates.)
12. **Song of Peace:** This Song painlessly kills a fetus, resulting in miscarriage or stillbirth. The Circle must know the mother's name and have some piece of the mother: hair, nail parings, urine, and

so on. (Otherwise, the same conditions for casting obtain as with the Song of Cooling, but the caster requires the help of at least nine initiates. The fetus and the mother each get a Saving Throw; if either succeeds, the Song fails.)

The Circle of Unbirth may have whatever other rituals, unique spells, lore, iconography, shibboleths, and so on that the Referee desires.

In Eaning Time

Consider the following as starting points for player characters' actions on Nine Summits.

1. A chief hires foreign adventurers to visit ruins taboo to the Twelve Clans, in the hope of finding clues regarding the coming astronomical conjunction.
2. After two monstrous births in a large village (possibly on the route back from the ruins in #1, above), violence erupts along clan lines. Mobs now surround longhouses where pregnant women hide, their kin defending.

A wealthy farmer seeks the help of outsiders to smuggle his pregnant daughter to safety at his sister's remote farm. A shortcut takes the party through a wilderness reputedly home to dangerous beasts, whereas well-traveled paths will put the party in the way of war parties, frightened mobs, drunken Elven mercenaries, or witch-finders.

3. An agent of the Principal Trading Company hires the player characters to escort a Sea Person comprador or an Elven merchant from the highlands to the coast. The party must choose among three beaten paths or a trek through forested mountains; in the wilderness dwell dangerous beasts and pregnant women seeking refuge.

First Path: In this village, a gigantic, monstrous birth rampaged yesterday. Remaining villagers meet outsiders with desperation or suspicion.

Second Path: During the party's transit of this valley, unrest comes. Players must roll to determine its nature.

- d[X] for the number of incidents (die size determined by Referee).
- d[Y] for nature of each incident. For example:
 1. request for aid
 2. riot
 3. mass exodus
 4. mobilization of warriors to arrest outsiders
 5. mobilization of warriors to slay monstrous birth in village
 6. mob attempts to kill comprador/merchant
 7. monstrous birth ahead of party
 8. monstrous birth behind party

Third Path: In this village, the Circle of Unbirth has declared itself openly: the chief, his wife, and several influential householders have revealed themselves as initiates. They and fellow cultists now hold hostage children from two households, proposing exchange for the pregnant women of those households, dead or alive. d[X] hours after the party's arrival in the village, one of the pregnant women gives birth to a monster.

Being and Authority

A twenty-seven-dimensional Being, eternal by the standards of the material universe, created the Generative Authority as a means of interacting with and observing biological life. The emergence of complex phenomena from simpler phenomena in a plane of such crude stuff as baryonic matter fascinates the Being. However, it has not troubled to understand the principles of thermodynamics or even temporal causality that govern such life, leaving that to the Authority.

When the Sun, Planets, and the Galaxy's disc of dark matter align favourably, the Authority causes bizarre propagations of life, and it has caused them, in various locations, since prokaryotes first scummed the rocks of the primordial seas. Millennia ago, the Authority batted on the Sea People of Nine Summits (having shifted its attention from a population of mantis shrimp inhabiting a bay on the far side of the world).

The Authority causes women in their third trimester to go into labour, often prematurely, delivering children that recapitulate the phylogeny of humans far back into their chordate ancestry. Through free-associative zoöplasty, the Authority grafts onto the aborning child material from its vast library of animal DNA and life patterns, then causes that material to grow. In its enthusiasm for generating life, the Authority makes these births much larger and more robust, physically and metabolically, than the matter and energy available in the child's environment would normally allow.

Moreover, the Authority causes most such offspring to give half-birth to chains of increasingly larger bodies. Since chordates have a wide variety of genital tracts, the Authority, in an effort to streamline its work process, uses the organism's mouth as the standard means of egress for each new birth. The Authority's limited awareness of events on the Earth means that it has not yet realized that each subsequent birth only half-emerges from the distended mouth of its parent, remaining grafted together as a single organism.

Whether male or female, the first birth in the chimeric chain appears normal, until the newborn child's mouth stretches preternaturally wide, as a python's does when it swallows prey much larger than its head. Then, this first child half-disgorges a much larger one, which may, in turn, half-disgorge another, again independent of the sex of the second birth in the chain (for the Generative Authority disregards such minutiae). The brain of the last such birth in the chimeric chain controls the flesh of the entire zoön (i.e. group organism), while the final zoöid trails its predecessor forms like a prehensile tail studded with paws, flippers, and tiny hands.

Parturition: Midwifing the Births

The Referee has latitude in determining the severity of the Authority's effects during its season. He or she might simply decide that $d[X]$ villages experience $d[Y]$ monstrous births each during a time period of $[Z]$, then generate those births using the two tables below, Size and Type. However, to determine the effects of the Authority in greater detail, the Referee might consider other parameters.

- **Population:** the population of Sea People on Nine Summits
- **Rate of pregnancy:** the percentage of the total population now pregnant
- **Rate of monstrous birth:** the rate at which currently pregnant women spontaneously deliver monstrous births during each **increment** of the Authority's activity (see below)

The population will depend on the Referee's preference for his or her own campaign setting. A standard rate of pregnancy sees 1% currently pregnant, while a high rate sees 5%. The Referee must also decide how frequently monstrous births occur among women in their third trimester. Does every such woman stand a 100% chance of delivering a monster during the season of the Generative Authority? Must she succeed in a daily Saving Throw to avoid this, possibly modified by the use of medicine or magic? The Referee shall decide.

Whatever degree of detail the Referee chooses, he or she should consider dividing the season of the Authority's activity into two or more **increments** as a means of gradually intensifying the Authority's effects during its season. To generate the Size of the monstrosity In the first increment, roll $d(X)$ for Size; in the second, $[d(X) + 1]$ or $2d(X)$; and so on.

Note that each Size number doubles the mass of the previous result. Therefore, large dice pools risk ecological, geological, tectonic, and even gravitational consequences. (See the table below for Size values up to thirty.)

During the season of the Authority's activity, spells of conjuration and summoning allow wizards to bring forth, deliberately, monstrous births from pregnant women in their third trimester. A creature brought forth in this manner has Hit Dice equalling those of a being the caster might have called up according to the spell's guidelines, with a corresponding Size number from the chart below. The caster may then attempt to control the monstrosity accordingly.

Of Teratology

To determine the properties of a monstrous birth, first roll for Size. This number indicates three things.

- The number of times the final zoön doubles the birth weight of a healthy infant
- The number of animal types in the chimeric chain (with the first always human)
- The number of game rounds the chimeric chain takes to unfold to full size

If we take two kilograms as a healthy birth weight for a Sea Person infant, then a roll of five for Size will indicate the following.

- Five different animal types (i.e. one human followed by four non-human zoöids)
- Four doublings of mass (for a total weight of 32 kilograms)

At a Size number of six, the zoön or chimeric chain has one Hit Die. Each Size number above that adds another die.

Size Number	Mass of zoön (in kilograms)
2	4
3	8
4	16
5	32: ½ Hit Die
6	64: 1 Hit Die

Size Number	Mass of zoön (in kilograms)
7	128: 2 HD
8	256: 3 HD
9	512: 4 HD
10	1,024: 5 HD
11	2,048: 6 HD
12	4,096: 7 HD (the weight of an African elephant, <i>Loxodonta africana</i>)
13	8,192: 8 HD
14	16,384: 9 HD
15	32,768: 10 HD
16	65,536: 11 HD
17	131,072: 12 HD (heavier than <i>Dreadnoughtus schrani</i> , one of the largest sauropod dinosaurs)
18	262,144: 13 HD (heavier than the largest whale, <i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>)
19	524,288: 14 HD
20	1,048,576: 15 HD
21	2,097,152: 16 HD
22	4,194,304: 17 HD
23	8,388,608: 18 HD
24	16,777,216: 19 HD
25	33,554,432: 20 HD
26	67,108,864: 21 HD (heavier than the RMS <i>Titanic</i>)
27	134,217,728: 22 HD
28	268,436,456: 23 HD
29	536,870,912: 24 HD (this nears the deadweight tonnage of the <i>Seawise Giant</i> , largest ship ever built)
30	1,073,741,824: 25 HD

The Size number also indicates the number of different types of creature present in the chimeric chain. For each step in size, roll d6 to determine animal category, then d12 to determine more specifically the type. The Authority may bring forth recently extinct species, especially among taxa closer to humans.

1. Invertebrate Chordates and Invertebrate Deuterostomes

1. doliolid (e.g. *Dolioletta gegenbauri*)
2. pyrosome (e.g. *Pyrosoma spinosum*)
3. salp (e.g. *Thetys vagina*)
4. amphioxus (e.g. *Branchiostoma lanceolatum*)
5. acorn worn (e.g. *Yoda purpurata*)
6. xenoturbellid (e.g. *Xenoturbella monstrosa*)
7. benthopelagic holothurian (e.g. *Enypniastes eximia*)
8. benthic holothurian (e.g. *Thelenota anana*)
9. starfish (e.g. *Acanthaster planci*)
10. brittle star (e.g. *Ophiothela danae*)
11. crinoid (e.g. *Naumachocrinus hawaiiensis*)
12. urchin (e.g. *Heterocentrotus mamillatus*)

2. Fishes

1. hagfish (e.g. *Eptatretus stoutii*)
2. lamprey (e.g. *Entosphenus tridentatus*)
3. carpet shark (e.g. *Orectolobus leptolineatus*)
4. requiem shark (e.g. *Carcharhinus longimanus*)
5. ray (e.g. *Aetobatus narinari*)
6. skate (e.g. *Amblyraja hyperborea*)
7. moray eel (e.g. *Gymnothorax meleagris*)
8. sculpin (e.g. *Rhamphocottus richardsonii*)
9. coelacanth (e.g. *Latimeria menadoensis*)
10. lungfish (e.g. *Protopterus aethiopicus*)
11. carp (e.g. *Ctenopharyngodon idella*)
12. catfish (e.g. *Pangasianodon gigas*)

4. Reptiles

1. boa (e.g. *Bolyeria multocarinata*)
2. elapid (e.g. *Aipysurus foliosquama*)
3. tentacle snake (e.g. *Erpeton tentaculatum*)
4. gecko (e.g. *Hoplodactylus delcourti*)
5. monitor (e.g. *Megalania prisca*)
6. skink (e.g. *Emoia nativitatis*)
7. meiolanid (e.g. *Meiolania damelipi*)
8. tortoise (e.g. *Cylindraspis inepta*)
9. mekosuchine crocodile (e.g. *Quinkana fortirostrum*)
10. saltwater crocodile (e.g. *Crocodylus porosus*)
11. gharial (e.g. *Gavialis gangeticus*)
12. tuatara (e.g. *Sphenodon punctatus*)

5. Birds

1. cormorant (e.g. *Phalacrocorax perspicillatus*)
2. falcon (e.g. *Falco duboisi*)
3. honeyeater (e.g. *Chaetoptila angustipluma*)
4. ibis (e.g. *Threskiornis solitaries*)
5. merganser (e.g. *Mergus australis*)
6. owl (e.g. *Sceloglaux albifacies*)
7. penguin (e.g. *Eudyptes chathamensis*)
8. lapwing (e.g. *Vanellus macropterus*)
9. parrot (e.g. *Cyanoramphus ulietanus*)
10. dodo (e.g. *Raphus cucullatus*)
11. elephant bird (e.g. *Aepyornis maximus*)
12. moa (e.g. *Dinornis novaezealandiae*)

6. Mammals

1. echidna (e.g. *Zaglossus attenboroughi*)
2. bilby (e.g. *Macrotis leucura*)
3. possum (e.g. *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*)
4. kangaroo (e.g. *Procoptodon goliath*)
5. wallaby (e.g. *Onychogalea lunata*)
6. wombat (e.g. *Diprotodon optatum*)
7. thylacine (e.g. *Thylacinus cynocephalus*)
8. marsupial lion (e.g. *Thylacoleo carnifex*)
9. Sea Person

A zoön has the preternatural vitality given it by the Authority, which frees the creature from the need to breathe or to oxygenate its gills. Moreover, the Authority's power allows the zoön to defy the laws of mechanics that would ordinarily prevent animals of great bulk from moving about on land under their own power. Thus cartilaginous and even invertebrate zoa may sway higher than the tallest longhouses of the Twelve Clans.

However, this borrowed vitality soon runs out: after d100 minutes, the creature will shudder, spend 2d6 rounds convulsing, and then die. In death, the zoöids (i.e. the zoön's animal components) exhibit all the normal properties of their respective kinds of flesh, attracting scavengers as they begin to decay.

Monster Island: Giant Zoa All-Out Attack

After the birth of its final zoöid, a zoön mewls (or hisses, or silently gapes) its birth agony, lashing out at creatures and objects nearby. In the case of a large Size number, the birth of a chimeric chain in an enclosed space may also endanger bystanders by virtue of its bulk.

Assume a zoön has an Armour Class two steps better than a human being. If the final zoöid in the chain has tough scales, spines, or the like, give the zoön a still better Armour Class.

As its primary attack, a zoön will bite. As its secondary attack, it will lash or constrict using its prehensile body. For the primary attack, use the damage progression below, starting with d3 for a zoön having less than one half a Hit Die. The secondary attack causes damage two steps below the primary.

- ½ HD: d4
- 1 HD: d6
- 2 HD: d6+1
- 3 HD: d8
- 4 HD: d8+1
- 5 HD: d10
- 6 HD: d10+1
- 7 HD: d12
- 8 HD: d12+1
- 9 HD: 2d6+2
- 10 HD: 2d8+2
- 11 HD: 2d10+2
- 12 HD: 2d12+2

Above twelve Hit Dice, the creature's attack rolls affect an area of a size to be determined by the Referee. The creature makes a single attack roll against that area, and the attack kills all who fail the relevant Saving Throw. Those who succeed lose half of their current Hit Points.

At the Referee's discretion, the final zoöid's forelimbs may offer further means of aggression or special abilities (e.g. digging, flight, reach, and so on). Only the final zoöid has a functional mouth, although many of the preceding zoöids may have functional eyes and forelimbs, depending on their animal types. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the final zoöid, its mouth may give it special abilities (e.g. amputation, blood drain, envenomation, and so on), again at the Referee's discretion.

The vitality that the Authority lends the monster allows it to regenerate one Hit Die's worth of Hit Points per round.



At twelve Hit Dice and above, only long, piercing weapons like whale lances can affect the zoön's Hit Points. At fourteen Hit Dice and above, no weapon small enough for a single human to wield can hurt the monster, and siege engines become necessary.

The Referee must judge the effectiveness of magic and spells used against a zoön based on relevant circumstances.

After Birth: Requiem

The scale of this disaster depends greatly on the Referee's control of its parameters. The author urges the Referee to set those parameters publicly, before the players. For example: "In each of [X] increments of time, I will roll d[Y] in the open to determine the number of unspecified weird events in this locale, as well as d[Z] to determine their scale." This commits the Referee to the fatality of a certain quantity of dice, yet it keeps the players in suspense, for they need not know the nature of those "weird events" nor see the Size table.

If the Referee sets only a two or three intervals and uses small dice pools, then posterity may record this season of the Generative Authority as a time blighted by a monstrosities quickly destroyed. Such an evil season may prove either the making or the undoing of various factions on Nine Summits, indigenous or Elven. The Circle of Unbirth may gain new followers or sympathy among the priesthood of the Twelve Clans; alternately, the Twelve may drive them further underground or even extirpate them.

However, if the referee sets more intervals and uses larger dice pools, then posterity may record a different story. Gargantuan monstrosities may destroy crop terraces and dikes, or raze entire villages; births of sufficient Size may cause landslides, destructive waves, earthquakes, and worse.

Furthermore, although the power of the Generative Authority allows the zoa to support their own bulk while they live, that power ceases

upon death. Therefore, from their bones may flow tsunamis of flesh. In an inversion of proper burial, carrion might bury the earth—valleys, plains, whole provinces—under flood basalts of corruption, beneath a sky black with scavenger birds and flies. When the eaters of the dead can gorge no more, how long until such carcasses decay into the rich, black soils on which Nine Summits built its fame?

Recommended Reading and Viewing

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