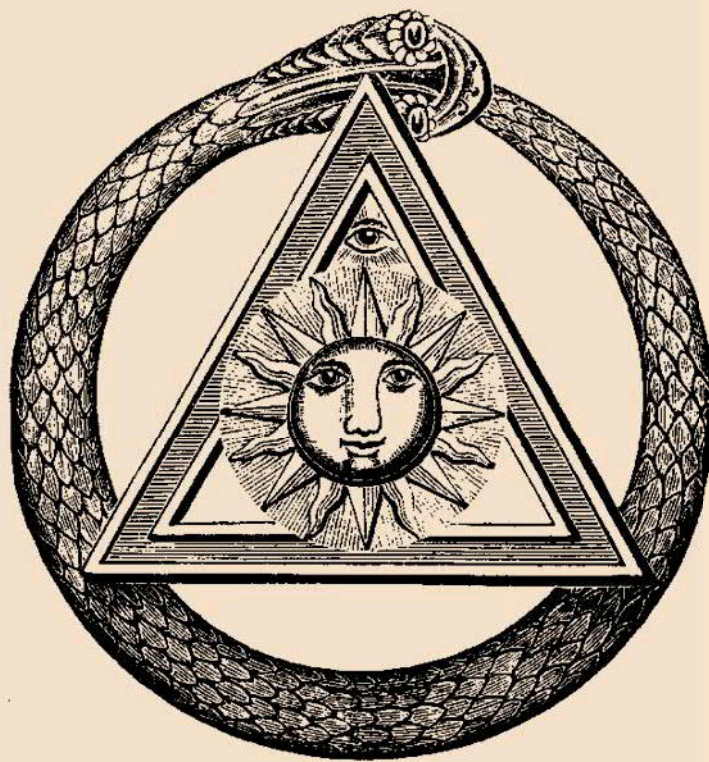


**BASEMENT ADVENTURE #3**  
**Pits & Perils**  
**THE SERPENTINE EGG**  
An Adventure for 3-5 Characters of 7-9th Level

by  
James & Robyn George



**D**ice  
House  
Rules



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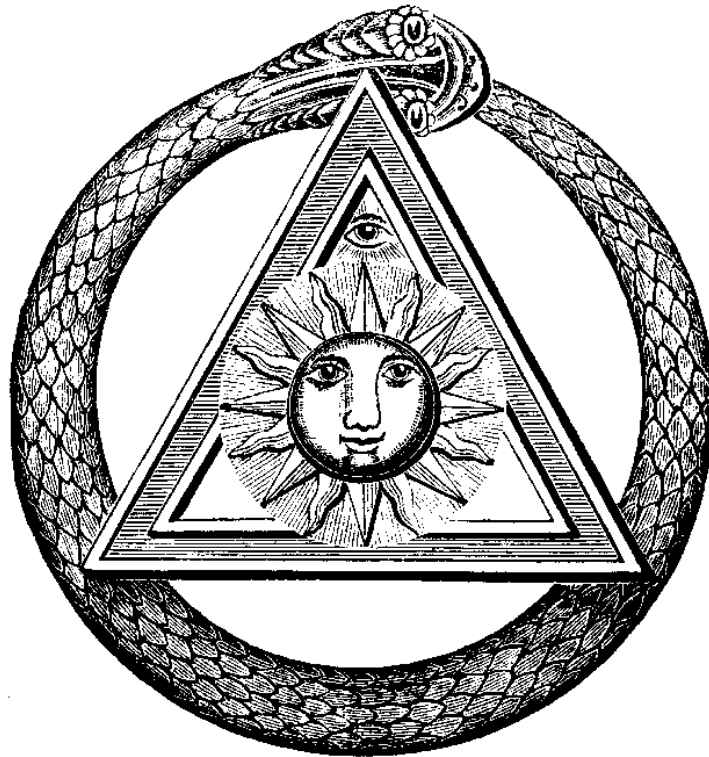
Pits & Perils

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the public domain and, where it applies,  
re-imagined by James S. George

This adventure is based on an  
early game in the authors' own campaign  
and has been re-imagined for  
use in anyone's setting, being expandable  
with just a little extra work!

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## INTRODUCTION

This volume is third in an ongoing series of Basement Adventures designed exclusively for Pits & Perils, so named because they imitate the homebrew look and feel of the earliest published scenarios; manually typed in someone's basement, Xeroxed off, stapled, and delivered through amateur channels, sometimes in Ziploc baggies back when the hobby was still new and ultimately the domain of the hobbyist.

Note that these adventures employ material from all the official supplements, and the referee is encouraged to use them. However, they are just as free to make substitutions, etc.

As always, this scenario is just a guide to get started with!

## BACKGROUND

Something strange is happening in the world. Savants of the Astral College, a powerful guild of magicians, have been experiencing psychic messages and, sometimes, terrifying visions as an unknown presence reaches out for help. Worse still, these disembodied messages threaten to disrupt the flow of magic and tear the very fabric of reality itself, bringing chaos and destruction beyond all imagining.

Luckily, the savants of the College have labored to produce a special crystal capable of locating the source of this distress and safely teleporting an entire party there, although given the mystery, this is a one-way proposition! To make matters worse, they have insufficient manpower to spare and feel that only an experienced and diverse group has any chance of success, and the odds are slim.

Having earned a reputation for bravery, the College has sent agents abroad to summon the party and invite them to hear their desperate proposition: namely, travel to the source of the distress, resolve their troubles, and safely return. They will be paid 6,000 GP and offered whatever equipment they may need, plus a bonus for recovering artifacts for addition to the College's already impressive archives. A daunting challenge indeed, but the survival of the world is at stake...



## THE ASTRAL COLLEGE

Understanding that magic could be a danger if misused and fearing persecution from the nobility, the Astral College was founded as a means of organizing magicians and holding them to principled standards of professional conduct. However, it also seeks to build and leverage its considerable political influence to protect its interests, and this has led to intrigue between the church(es) and noble houses.

Even so, it mostly works as intended and serves mainly as a guild to support itself through tithes and membership dues, but also as a center of magical research, and part of this means being on guard for magical threats to the kingdoms. So when the College's savants began receiving psychic messages from an unknown source, the potential threat was taken seriously, and its arch-mages became involved.

Needless to say, the College has ample resources to recruit and compensate the party for their efforts, and here the game begins.

## COLLEGE HALL

The party is brought to COLLEGE HALL, given time to rest, and then summoned to a private council to discuss the situation. Until they depart on their mission, they will be quartered in the guest wing and given whatever reasonable equipment (per the basic list) they need to undertake their quest, including mounts and rations, where necessary.

## THE SANCTUM LIBRARIUM

Obviously, any higher-level magicians in this setting will already be familiar with the College and may even be acting members. If not, every effort will be made to recruit them, and one enticement is access to a massive library, the SANCTUM LIBRARIUM, where any member can roll once per month to receive a magical BOON:

2d6	RESULT
2-6	Add +10% to all earned experience*
7-8	Locate potion (savant) or scroll (magician)
9-12	Roll spell/psychic-related dice at +1*

\*Bonuses apply to the next adventure only

Membership dues are 10% of all treasure won, calculated annually, or service of equal value, and indeed, some magicians dedicate their entire lives to such service and work as scribes, etc. Alternately, one can donate any permanent magic item to stand against dues, per the referee, consistent with the needs of the College and the item being offered.



## THE COUNCIL OF MAGI

Once the party is settled, they will be taken to a secret council of ranking arch-magi. These will explain that the savants of the College are receiving what appears to be psychic distress signals, usually, visions of a great stone egg coupled with intangible feelings of despair and a sense of imprisonment. These seem to be centered on a nearby field just a day's journey from the College.

Thanks to a combined effort, the savants have crafted a psychically attuned crystal capable of teleporting the entire party to the source of distress, although this is only a one-way trip! This proposition is clearly fraught with risk, but there is a terrible possibility that should these messages become more desperate, they threaten to block all magic, rending the fabric of reality and destroying everything!

Armed with this knowledge, and with assurances that return will be possible once the summons is answered, the party has (or should) agree to make the trip. And a prize of 6,000 GP also helps...

The following ranking members lead the council:

THELINGUS MAGMERUM is a kindly, but shrewd, old man who fits the classical image of a sorcerer. He is quite alarmed at the prospect of a psychic power blotting out magic (a sort of static interference), but likewise seeks any knowledge of who or what is causing this phenomenon, going so far as to offer an additional bonus of 4,000 GP if tangible artifacts can be safely brought back.

WYNONA YLYANA is the College's ARCH-PROPHET or savant. She appears impossibly old and wise and seems to read the characters before actually speaking to them. As prophetess, she empathizes with those sending the distress signal as fellow psychics, which they clearly are, and only wants them to be assisted, although she also fears for the fate of the world, supporting the additional reward for any captured artifacts.

THELINGUS (M/L/INT) AK: 1 (staff) LL: 15 (14 HP) ME: 50° SP: 16

The arch-mage knows the following spells: Bolt (lightning), Call, Fade, Foil, Hole, Jinx, Mask, Rise, Ruin, Ruse, Stun, Urge, and Ward

WYNONA (Ms/L/INT/WIS) AK: 1 (staff) LL: 15 (14 HP) ME: 50° SP: --

As a savant, Wynona has no spell points, but is able to perform all psychic abilities without saving dice. Given their positions, the referee should assume both have access to a wide array of magical items, noting that they prefer negotiation over direct combat in most situations.

Where applicable, the following applies:

Lawful (L)	Strength (STR)	Wisdom (WIS)
Neutral (N)	Dexterity (DEX)	Constitution (CON)
Chaotic (C)	Intelligence (INT)	Charisma (CHA)

#### SECRET OF THE EGG

The psychic distress signal originates from an otherworldly source, specifically, a stranded extraterrestrial vessel buried underground and home to a psychically gifted reptilian race (the OVULAK).

Being a curious race, the Ovulak visited the campaign world to collect specimens of indigenous life, but were totally unprepared for the powerful magic that permeated everything. Among the captured life forms was a COCKATRICE, which escaped and turned the entire vessel, and all inhabitants, to magical stone! This happened because their ship (called the EGG) is actually a living organism capable of surviving the rigors of deep space and having a bond with its masters.

While the Egg is alive, the Ovulak have both machines and robots not affected by the cockatrice, and the latter will target intruders to the vessel, being programmed to eradicate all threats on sight...

#### NAVIGATING THE EGG

Since the Egg is a living thing, no doors are found, and rooms are accessed through membranous (15' diameter) round portals, now frozen in their current state. Among the non-living artifacts on the ship are metallic cylinders containing alien writing (vital clues for the players to decipher) and devices meant to aid psychic contact.

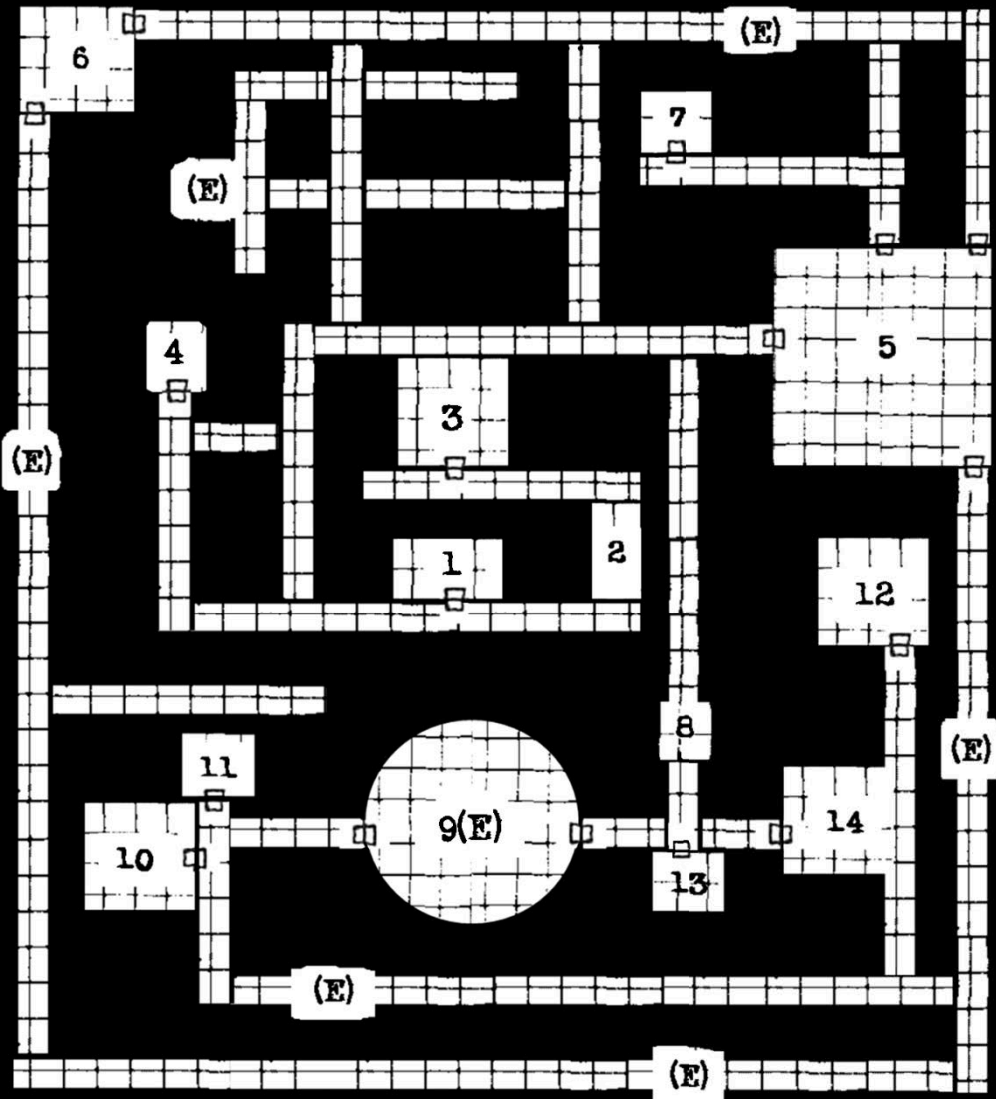
Note that the Egg is (apparently) abandoned, and the referee should reinforce a sense of lonely isolation. Even so, combat encounters exist, and these can be supplemented by random incidents rolled whenever a party lingers in an area marked (E) for more than 1 turn:

2d6	NAME	ATTACKS	LEVEL	MOVE	NUMBER	SIZE
2-6	Robot	1	5 (6 HP)	20'	1-2	M
7-9	Specimen*	--	--	--	--	--
10-11	Voider#	1(*)	3 (5 HP)	50'	2-4	M
12	Warmonger	4(*)	7 (12 HP)	30'	1	H

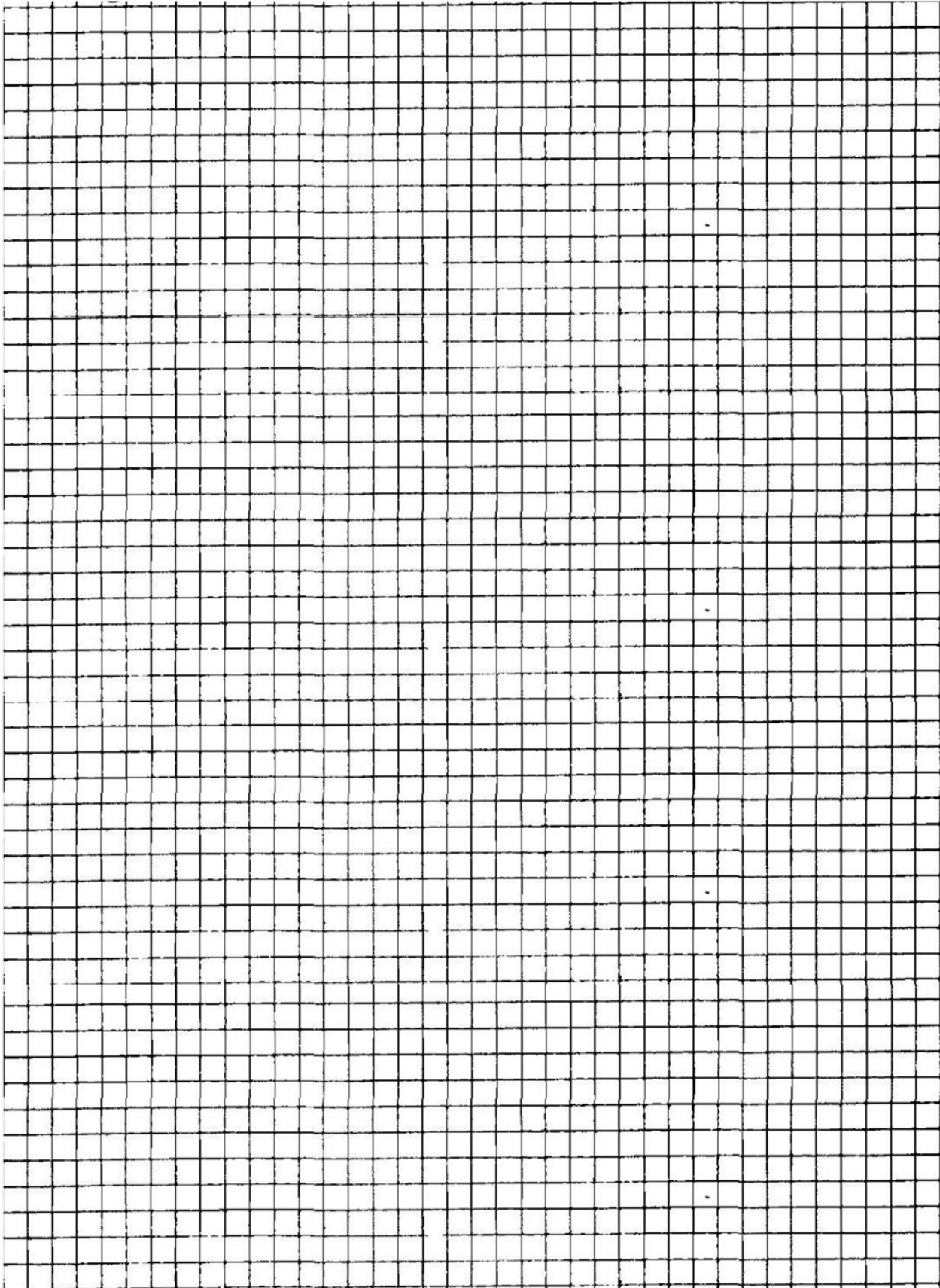
\*Any surviving specimen from the lockdown (area 5)

#Being ethereal, these were unaffected by the cockatrice

Assume a 1-3 in 1d6 chance, although these can be assigned as needed...



**THE SERPENTINE EGG**



## LEVEL 1: THE UPPER DECK

The party will find themselves in a small stone chamber that should initially be described as an ordinary dungeon. Over time, however, the referee should introduce increasingly alien elements, including what looks to be screens and strange dials on the walls, now turned to stone through some unknown means. Smart players, especially sci-fi fans, will quickly identify this as a spaceship, although for realism, the referee should limit their descriptions to medieval terms...

1 - Unbeknownst to the party, this chamber is a teleportation hub intended for small landing parties to the surface. The referee should describe a detailed "statue" depicting a pair of reptilian humanoids, possibly some previously unknown deities (?) worshipped by a forgotten cult from ages past. Both are standing, and wise characters (or those who bother to ask) may detect a hint of surprise in their otherwise alien features, although this is debatable.

Entrants will appear on a slightly raised and circular dais (the teleportation device), although the walls here are otherwise smooth and devoid of markings beyond the aforementioned alien "statues".

2 - This lengthy passage was formerly a decontamination chamber, complete with stone pipes and nozzles the referee should try to describe in low-tech terms. Here, returning parties would be cleansed of any microbial infestations before entering the ship to report their findings and deliver specimens to the lockdown in area 5, below.

A pair of ROBOTS (best described as golems) are stationed here and immediately target any intruders. Being non-living, they avoided the magic that turned the rest of the ship to stone, something thoughtful players may pick up on. These are designed to look much like their alien makers, i.e., slender reptilian humanoids:

AK: 1 (claws/laser) LL: 5/+1 (7 HP) ME: 20' (--) SE: M/+0

The robots attack with powerful "claws" and a head-mounted laser effective to a range of 60', but with a minimum of 20', meaning they fire these first before closing in for melee (+1 damage as a golem), being programmed accordingly. They fight to the end.

Although provisionally described as golems (or automatons), defeated specimens reveal complex wiring beyond the clockwork-style gears typical of similar constructs. Each has a small and still-intact optical device that, when looked through, translates any foreign writing by means of a special protocol (treat as a permanent Read spell), although this is left to the players to discover on their own, perhaps with a few small hints.

The optical device (OCULON) is non-functional outside the Egg and fits easily in the palm of a character's hand.

3 - Here the walls hold unusual runes (alien writing) that can be understood by means of an oculon that translate to read: INFORMATION STORAGE or something similar. Indeed, there are multiple recesses containing shiny (1' long) cylinders along each one. These are adorned with a fine script translatable by means of the oculon, although with limited results owing to the technological concepts involved:

CYLINDER #1: The Egg responds strangely here...

CYLINDER #2: Search party has returned...

CYLINDER #3: Unable to stop the strange contagion...

Optionally, and to heighten the tension and offer clues, any party returning with the reader (from area 4, below) will experience whatever visions the adventure so requires, and this is left to the referee and their players, who can affect the outcome with their actions.

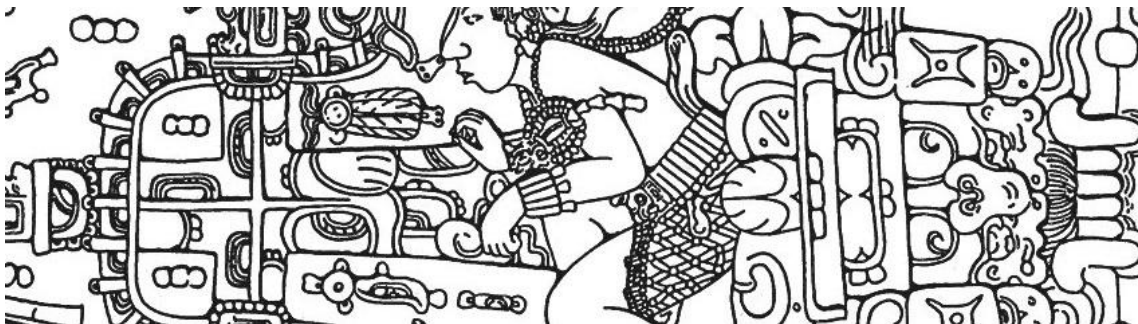
4 - This small chamber was the living quarters of the librarian, a slender reptilian humanoid now turned to stone and caught in its final pose, rising from what appears to be a desk. This holds a peculiar helmet-like item that can be pried loose with little effort and may be worn by anyone, including magicians. There are two rather conspicuous slots above the eyes where the oculons can be fitted to activate the device's true use as a psionic reading apparatus.

Once assembled, this artifact (known simply as the READER) allows the wearer to handle any cylinder and receive telepathic images related to its contents. This is a more efficient means of translation, although anyone lacking the intelligence ability must roll saving dice with every use or suffer a debilitating headache that imposes -1 to all dice for several turns thereafter (usually 1d6). Clever referees can hint at this function by giving limited visions after touching anything...

The cylinders from 3, above, can be telepathically examined with more dramatic results as per the following:

CYLINDER #1: A colorful egg-shaped object is seen floating through a black sea of stars, and the user gets a feeling of cosmic vastness that requires saving dice to avoid 1d6 hits from the stress.

CYLINDER #2: The user receives a vision of oddly clothed reptilian humanoids, identical to the "statues" previously seen, exploring a forest landscape easily recognizable as the surface recently left behind.



CYLINDER #3: Several of the reptilian humanoids are seen as stone statues, each wearing expressions of surprise, while a small and shadowy thing moves just beyond the user's peripheral vision.

The above visions relate to the secret of the Egg; the capture and subsequent escape of a cockatrice. Note that once fully assembled, the reader can no longer decipher written text.

Once again, the Egg (being a living thing) and its crew were turned to stone, whereas any technological artifacts remained intact...

5 - The lockdown is a sealed area meant to hold living specimens in cryogenic sleep, and the referee should impart a sense of wonder as the party stumbles into a scene of utter strangeness. It is stocked with mounted glass cylinders of varying sizes containing life forms taken by the reptilians for eventual study, all of them in a state of suspended animation until their vessels are breached or broken.

At the center of this squats a massive (12' tall) and vaguely humanoid construct (another robot) with 6 arms ending in articulated claws designed to handle captured specimens. Once the party spends a full turn here (more than enough time to explore their surroundings), this will activate and attempt to subdue them, treating each as captured specimens per its programming. It is also incredibly strong:

AK: 6 (pincers/\*) LL: 6/+2 (18 HP) ME: 30' (--) SE: L/(\*)

Being both a robot and large, the COLLECTOR scores +2 damage, although only dealing physical harm every other round. Otherwise, any successful hit delivers a chemical agent that requires saving dice to avoid a deep cryogenic sleep. When this happens, the collector envelopes their victim in a polymer casing (glass) and places them on a nearby shelf.

Searching the chamber turns up 2d6 needles (syringes) used to slowly revive specimens. As a precaution, it takes an additional 1d6 turns for affected targets to reorient themselves, moving but 10' per round and suffering a penalty of -1 to all dice until the agent leaves the system...

Optionally, and to keep things challenging, destroying the collector generates an explosion dealing 2d6 damage in a 30' radius and releasing alien gasses that revive any sleeping life forms within this range, including characters and 1d6 angry and disoriented specimens taken from the surface for study. These are always hostile to a party, but suffer penalties per the above rules (-1 to all dice).

The referee can roll (or choose) one or more enemies from the following, ignoring duplicate results as needed:

2d6	NAME (NUMBER)	ATTACKS	LEVEL	MOVE	SIZE
2-3	Gargoyle (1)	3	3 (8 HP)	30'	M/+0
4	Gremlin (2)	1	2 (5 HP)	30'	S/+0
5-6	Hellhound (1)	3	4 (7 HP)	40'	M/+0
7	Hydra (1)	5	5 (12 HP)	50'	L/+1
8-9	Tarasque (1)	8	9 (16 HP)	40'	H/+2
10	Troll (1)	1	6 (14 HP)	30'	L/+1
11-12	Wild man (1d6)*	1	2 (3 HP)	50'	M/+0

\*Can be subdued and subsequently reasoned with

Enemies will either flee into the Egg (1-4 in 1d6) or stand their ground and attack the characters (a 5-6 in 1d6 chance) on sight.

6 - This small chamber likewise features alien writing on the walls, something that can be interpreted using an oculon or by dismantling the reader to extract them. Doing so reveals this to be the ARMORY, being stocked with an assortment of items, some familiar (and obviously taken from the surface) and others impossibly strange:

A wooden chest containing 1,000 GP, 500 SP, and a gem worth 750 GP, the latter set in a choker of elven craft

One polymer (glass) cylinder holding a BAG OF TRICKS (the reptilians were aware of its strange power and sought to isolate any danger)

A ragged sack holding 2 POTIONS OF HEALING, 1 POTION OF INSIGHT, and a SCROLL OF KNOW in a bejeweled case worth 100 GP

Some 1d6 STUN RIFLES, each 3' long, are found here. These produce the equivalent of a 1st level Stun spell, and players will need to experiment, describing exactly what they are doing and succeeding only when they locate the pump-action lever on its underside that activates the firing mechanism. Each use requires 1d6 rounds to recharge.

Note that stun rifles are intended for living targets, but have a chance of disrupting robots (1-2 in 1d6) and producing a similar effect.



7 - Unlike the rest of the level, this small chamber appears to be furnished with reclining couches inexplicably made of stone, although otherwise comfortable. This can serve as a place to rest, barring intrusion by wandering enemies and the like. If undisturbed, clerics and magicians can recover lost power here and damage can be healed should provisions hold out that long...

From this point forward, those employing the reader, and anyone possessing the wisdom ability, will feel a growing sense of some higher intelligence calling out in a voice of despair. No words are spoken, however, just pure emotion. This is coupled with the sensation of being watched by a thousand invisible eyes, noting that savants may experience fleeting visions of the Egg and its reptilian crew.

8 - The walls here are illuminated by what appears to be a green fluorescent algae in long polymer (glass) tubes running parallel to the ground. This terminates at a high arch flanked on both sides by two massive (6' high) cylinders (similar to those in the lockdown), each holding something obviously powerful within. These are VOIDERS kept in stasis and activated when intruders come within 10'.

The cylinders open to release their charges, who attack immediately and without the limitations imposed upon other specimens in the lockdown, being engineered for this purpose.

AK: 1 (bite) LL: 3/+1 (7 HP) ME: 50' (--) SE: M/+0

Note that the walls of the Egg, being psychically attuned, are always opaque to these otherwise ethereal creatures and that any captured stun rifles are effective against them. Spells and/or spell effects from magical items inflict regular damage, as do physical blows from ethereal characters, although such attackers remain subject to the above-stated restrictions on ethereal movement within the Egg.

Just beyond the archway is a human corpse turned to stone, but clearly dead long before (doubtless at the hands of the hounds). This has an exquisite AMBER FIGURINE and an ARROW OF SEEKING in a quiver of rusted arrows beyond a grasping hand. There is nothing else of value.

9 - The floor of this large circular chamber is a clear polymer that reveals what appears to be a sprawling hive of rounded cubicles peopled with reptilian humanoids, all made of stone and frozen in the act of various tasks. This is the remainder of the Egg, to include the primary living quarters of the reptilians as seen from far above.

Note that the polymer cannot be broken or otherwise breached, and that doing so would be a bad idea, as the living quarters are easily 50' below!

10 - An impressive star chart (something immediately recognizable to magicians and anyone with the proper skills) dominates the westernmost wall behind a pair of stone reptilians locked in positions of obvious surprise and looking down at a pair of cylinders. These carry the same alien writing and can be deciphered in the customary way:

CYLINDER #1: Strange energy permeates this world...

CYLINDER #2: Brought a contagion...petrification...antidote from local sample... administer to the Lens of the Eye...

Deciphering either of these by means of the reader reveals a vision of living reptilians turning to stone, while the second shows the Lens, although no further suggestion is offered. Otherwise, characters see the lab from area 12, below, coupled with a sense of great urgency.

Note that the Lens of the Eye refers to area 9, above, this being the central node of the ship, and that spells and potions are useless, being much weaker than the alien solution.

11 - This smallish storage chamber contains scattered debris, mainly cylinders and other useless effects, although the party should be given a turn or so to see for themselves. To the rear of this area is a badly disoriented COCKATRICE that comes out charging at the nearest character and turning their unlucky victims into magical stone:

AK: 1 (bite/\*) LL: 2/+0 (6 HP) ME: 20' (--) SE: S/+0

There is nothing else of interest or value to be found here.

12 - The writing on the wall translates to LABORATORY, although this should be obvious to anyone, as two long tables filled with beakers and other alchemical implements reveals its purpose. A MEDICAL ROBOT is stationed in one corner, and this can be activated by use of the reader to heal (by injection) 1d6+1 hits per character or Cure a single ill.



Note that if the party has the reader, they may "converse" with the medical robot and use it to RESURRECT a single slain character, although doing so negates further healing from this source.

Several earthly artifacts lay scattered across one table, including a leather sack with 1,200 SP, a MAGIC HELMET, and the ALIEN ANTIDOTE, kept in a polymer vial and easily opened.

Pouring the full antidote into the Lens reverses the effect within a single round. The Egg lurches violently such that saving dice are required to remain standing, after which any properly attuned character feels a surge of relief coursing through them. The walls and floor of the Egg remain hard and metallic, but their color changes, and the stone reptilians seen below revive and start to move about freely.

Note that the dwellers of the upper deck are immediately aware of the intruders and will flee from any party, being capable of passing through walls by some unknown (psychic) means and putting themselves beyond all communication or violence unless cornered in the lockdown, which is primarily mechanical. Even then, they come armed with stun rifles that recharge each round in their hands alone:

AK: 1 (claws/rifle/\*) LL: 2/+0 (4 HP) ME: 40' (--) SE: M/+0

Note that any robots or previously released enemies will continue to attack until the party reaches the brainchamber in 14, below.

13 - This area serves as a warehouse and contains many large silver containers that cannot be opened through any known means and contain a payload important enough to be guarded by a WARMONGER:

AK: 4 (claws/laser/\*) LL: 7/+2 (14 HP) ME: 30' (--) SE: H/+2

This combat robot first attacks with a mounted laser that delivers an automatic 3d6 damage divided between all targets in front of it and within its maximum range of 30'. Thereafter, it employs its 4 mechanical arms to deadly effect, noting that these have a reach of 20', giving it considerable range within the smaller room. This can move easily over any fallen debris using its versatile tractor-like wheels.

14 - The BRAINCHAMBER has another star chart and, if entered before restoring the Egg, radiates the same despair. Once the Egg is restored, however (and the cockatrice is defeated), the reptilians appear to the characters in holographic form, answer any questions, and then offer to teleport the party back to the surface. Of course, the characters may wish to remain and explore distant planets, and an ambitious referee can expand the Egg accordingly. The sky is quite literally the limit!

## EPILOGUE AND AFTERMATH

The party is teleported to the surface, where a massive egg-shaped starship hovers above the ground, shimmering with many lights before launching suddenly skyward...

Thelingus is visibly relieved that the party has returned safely and reveals that the reptilians (identified as Ovulaks) have gifted him with a cylinder to be deciphered by Wynona and her savants, a prize of great worth that satisfies the contract in full.

## ORIGINAL ENEMIES

This adventure introduces several new enemies, including an alien outsider race that requires more attention. These are described in the text and in greater detail below:

NAME	ATTACKS	LEVEL	MOVE	SIDE	SIZE	NUMBER	TREASURE
Collector	6(*)	6	30'	N	L	1	--
Ovulak	1	2	40'	L	M	2-12	--
Warmonger	4(*)	7	30'	N	H	1-2	(*)

COLLECTOR robots are large (12' tall) and easily as strong as a giant, being designed to subdue and catalogue living specimens of varying sizes for later study. Because they are large and specially enhanced, they deliver +2 damage, but normally only strike to kill targets every other combat round, alternately using a cryogenic suspension that requires saving dice to avoid being put into deep sleep and encased in a specially made cylinder that is hard to break without magic.

Recovering from cryogenic sleep requires 1d6 turns during which the victim moves 10' and rolls all dice at -1. Some (1-2 in 1d6) explode when destroyed for 2d6 damage within a 30' radius.

OVULAKS are reptilian humanoids from a distant star system. They are naturally telepathic within 1 mile and employ a technology based on a mix of regular science and the psychic manipulation of genetics, exploring the universe in gigantic EGGS which are themselves alive and feed upon a living world and even the stuff of deep space. They can move easily through these Eggs, going so far as to rearrange their molecules to pass freely across the membranous walls beyond all pursuit.

Common Ovulak ROBOTS follow the rules, but WARMONGERS are built for outright warfare. The latter move on tractor-like wheels over all terrain and employ a laser (30' range) first that deals 3d6 damage divided between all targets in front of it and within range, closing to fight using four articulated "claws" that have an impressive reach of 20' each.

# REFeree's NOTES

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