
SANTICORE 2014

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Dear Secret Santicore —

What if dwarves were deformed and grey like trolls, but otherwise greedy and crafty metalworkers? I want Trollheim, the Home under the Mountain. The only stat I marginally care about is level, but if it was stat'd for D&C I'll be incredibly pleased.

Thanks!

P.G.

TROLLHEIM

by Jordan Douglas Smith
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TROLLHEIM OR TRONDHEIM HOME OF THE DUNKEL ERDE MAN

Long ago in the time of legend our world and the land of faerie were one and the same. Interaction between the fey and human was not uncommon. Among the fey one stood out from the rest because he took an interest in the tools of man and mans way of using them to work the metals of the ground. Stealing a tool here and a tool there he built his own workshop and using the hidden tunnels and pits of his kind was able to find metals and ores unknown to man. Eventually through his observation of the humans and the experimentation in his workshop he began to create items of great wonder. As his skill grew so did his tastes for perfection. He dug deeper for more rare ore and traveled farther to learn greater skills in working the metal and stone. He strove for perfection in his work casting off those objects he deemed imperfect. He gathered a following of fey who doted on him and wished to gain his secrets. Not only did they learn some of his secrets they learned his obsession of stone and metal. Try as he might this fey creature could not create a perfect circle of metal. He spent hundreds of years creating and discarding ring after ring always finding an imperfection. Rumor came to him of a human who had created a ring of such splendor and perfect balance that none could match it. Desires of the ring led this creature to kill the man and his family and take the ring to discover its secrets. This murder angered the slain metalworkers otherworldly patron who lifted the creature in the air, named him Alberich to gain power over him and slammed him into the ground banishing him beneath the surface. The magic was so powerful it brought Alberich's followers deep into the ground with him. Some were trapped in the rock where they are still today and others were able to claw and dig themselves out. The most fortunate of those found the deep earth halls Alberich had formed lit by his blue cold fire. To this day he studies the perfect ring, dying to learn it's secret surrounded by his followers in the halls of Trollheim.

TROLLHEIM

Trollheim is the lair of the Dark Dwarf Alberich and his followers. It lies deep underground and is accessed by one of five stone doors. Each door is located in a different mountain range in the deepest recesses of its caves. Only one door location is known and it lies deep in a series of caves known for its poisonous vapors.

The doors themselves are intricately carved objects, beautiful and cyclopean. They are carved of solid rock and the only way to gain entrance is to place your hand on the door and say "I knowingly enter the lands of Alberich". This only works in common, uncommon, and dwarvish.

Once entered one is transported to the dunkel (dark) realm of Alberich. The outer ring is a series of catacombs and small chambers roughly built into the earth catacombing towards the heart of the Hall. All fire sources (including spells) are purple/blue and give off no heat. All doors and structures in this realm are built of stone or metal. These outer tunnels are periodically filled with the workshops of the **Lesser Ones**. Twisted semi-intelligent creatures warping metal and twisting it using the secrets of cold-fire. One needs to be wary as well of the **Maggots of the Earth**. These are the followers of Alberich who spent hundreds of years trapped in the stone. They have fused with the rock and gone insane.

The next ring of tunnels open up into larger chambers and sub-halls. A cacophony of tools gets louder and softer as the sounds of workshops and miners bounce from the walls. These tunnels are filled with the **Apprentices of Alberich**. They are short knobby creatures the size of dwarves with milky eyes, squat bodies and spindly legs and arms. They will attempt to trick any intruders out of precious items they may have. They are chaotic creatures serving their own aspirations of knowledge as likely to slit one's throat as to lead you the right way. Tales tell of the ability of not only using cold-fire to warp metal but also using it to warp flesh in healing. In the greatest of these sub-halls lives Mime, kin of Alberich. Mime a legendary smith in his own right created **Tarnhelm** which is said to lie somewhere in the tunnels.

The center of Trollheim is the grand hall of Alberich. It is littered with a sea of cast off imperfect rings of uncalculated fortune. Any person able to plunder these depths will have enough riches to never plunder again. In the center of the hall is Alberich deep in his study of the perfect ring delving its secrets. His long scratchy white hair and beard are so immense it is impossible to tell the size and shape of this banished creature. He is spiteful of any creature that has seen the sunshine and carries a great hatred for humans. It was humans after all who figured out the mystery of the perfect circle. It is said he is such a brilliant craftsman he need only whisper to a tool, weapon, or equipment and it will obey him tearing itself apart if he so wishes. The hall is dimly lit with blue cold-fire and the shadows seem to be alive. Any entering must make a Luck check 15 or have bestowed on them **The Curse of the Unloved**.

LESSER ONES

Init +1; Atk +1 claw 1d4, tongs 1d6; AC 11; HD 1d8+1; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Warp Weapon as +1 Melee DC16 Reflex or non-magic weapon warped granting wielder a -2 to hit/dmg permanently, infravision 60'; SV Ref +1 Fort +1 Will+1 AL C

MAGGOTS OF THE EARTH

Init -2; Atk +2 claw bash 1d8; AC 18; HD 3d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Maggots can move through solid stone and rock as if it were mud, tremorsense 60ft; SV Ref +1 Fort +4 Will +2 AL N

APPRENTICES OF ALBERICH

Init +2; Atk D5 (Deed Die) Dmg as weapon; AC 16; HD 2d8+2; MV 20'; Act 1d20, 1d16; SP Mighty Deed, Warp Weapon as +2 Melee DC16 Reflex or weapon (magic or mundane) is warped, wielder has -2 to hit/dmg permanently, Warp Touch 1/day heals 1d8 Dmg, 2d8 Dmg, 3d8 Dmg but grants minor, major, greater corruption respectively, infravision 60'; SV Ref +2 Fort +2 Will +2 AL C

CURSE OF THE UNLOVED

Years ago Alberich turned his back on love to gain possession of the perfect ring. Any within 100' must make a Luck check 15. Failure results in one random item breaking. Roll of one results in the additional Curse of the Never Loved. This character is cursed to never know or feel true love.

TARNHELM MAGIC HELM

Tarnhelm is a magic helm that fits any creature of a medium size. Beautifully crafted it grants the following wizard spells to any user regardless of class once per day. Spells can only be cast once per day and effect only the caster. Spellcheck D20 +3

Invisibility
Teleport
Morph to Dragon or Frog

1 (Spell Failure) Permanently turned to a frog
2-9 Failure, spell is lost
10-12 Turn to a frog 1d4 rounds
13-15 Turn to a frog 1d4 turns
16-19 Turn to a frog 1d4 days
20-22 Turn to a dragon 1d4 rounds
23-25 Turn to a dragon 1d4 turns
26-29 Turn to a dragon 1d4 days
30+ (Spell Failure) Permanently turned to a dragon

Dear Secret Santicore—

A keyed map for a colonial fort/village. New world America style, though not necessarily that time period. This will be home base for a DBB game, so the more I can point at the map and say, "You, Gravedigger. You live here" the better. Also it can be wacky/gonzo, but doesn't have to be. Thanks!

N.M.

FORT DELIRIUM

by Christopher Wood
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Fort Delirium

1	Northern gun emplacement	34	Sailor's squats
2	Unfashionable barracks	35	Shipping warehouse
3	Powder Storage	36	Navigator
4	Food Storage	37	Tanner
5	Mess hall and officer's barracks	38	Shipping warehouse
6	Armory		
7	Eastern gun emplacement		
8	Kit storage		
9	Common soldiers' barracks		
10	Powder storage		
11	Food storage		
12	Southern gun emplacement		
13	Mushroom-addled soothsayer		
14	Gongfarmer's hut		
15	Famer's cottage		
16	Stables		
17	The Ostentatious Porcupine, tavern of ill repute		
18	The Flensed Savage, classier joint		
19	Brewery		
20	Brewmaker's hut		
21	Cemetary		
22	Outfitter's		
23	Governor's mansion		
24	Slave pens		
25	Furrier		
26	Blacksmith		
27	Food storage		
28	Farmer's cottage		
29	Trading company HQ		
30	Trading company storage		
31	Herbalist		
32	Shipwright		
33	Mycofarmer		

FORT DELIRIUM



Dear Secret Santicore

I have dropped hints in my campaign about a culture "across the mountains" from where they have been, and don't have much for it. I know that it's a coastal area, they've invented gunpowder (unlike anywhere else in the world), and people travelling back from that area are really rare. I'd like to get an outline for an interesting culture with a twist, which my players can encounter.

Thanks!

J.B.

ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS

by Patrick Henry Downs
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INTRODUCTION

Across the mountains are two groups, the City-State of Alm and the Wijup Coast, that are constantly at odds with one another. Each holds deadly secrets within their seemingly endless struggle.

THE CITY-STATE OF ALM The city of Alm lies along a jagged peninsula that stretches out into the ocean, several smaller fishing villages lie along the long peninsula and fall under Alm's rule. The capital city of its namesake is ruled by the Alm family, a line of mad lords whose long-running interbreeding has left many family members with prominent physical deformities and mental deficiencies. The current ruler is King Harol, a hunchbacked sociopath who participates in public executions and holds many gladiatorial games in the Alm coliseum. The reality, however, is an open secret among the locals but never confirmed or spoken about by the upper echelon of lords and landowners, that the true rulers of Alm are a group of water naga families who once traded with "surfacers" through the Alm family. The water naga, erroneously called merfolk by locals outside of the city who see evidence of them or their society, are an ancient lineage of sorcerers and magicians who found trading with "surfacers" beneficial.

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Though there is no written history of the event, there are legends amongst that the Alm family tried to betray and enslave the water naga and the retaliation they suffered left the family cursed to an eternal legacy of idiocy and physical mutation. Local wizards still trade with the water naga, and the city-state of Alm is secretly ruled by their decree. The Alm family is kept in place as a figure-head ruler both to remind the lords of the water naga's control and what happens to those who defy them, and as a totem "royal family" for the population to both celebrate and dissent against.

The coliseum is the biggest attraction for the visitors to Alm. It is a marvel of engineering, sitting in the middle of the docks and dividing them into two neighborhoods. The floor of the coliseum rests below sea level and a series of water locks allows the arena where the fights are held to be flooded in a matter of seconds.

Some fights are even held within the flooded coliseum, with two teams fighting between boats or rafts, or sometimes swimmers are forced to fight an enraged octopus or shark. Gambling on the fights is a prominent source of income.

The coliseum is also where public executions are held. Any condemned person that King Harol doesn't kill personally are tied to stakes in the ground and the coliseum is opened to flood, sometimes slowly so that the condemned can be left to beg and scream for mercy that never arrives.

The land underneath both the city-state and most of the inland peninsula is riddled with caves and passageways. They are all flooded with water and the naga use them to quickly travel overland wherever they are needed. They consider themselves the rulers of these people and are also quick to assist in any local emergencies or conflicts. The peninsula is devoid of most predatory animals as a result of this, but woe to the foolhardy adventurers who cross paths with a patrolling naga and decide to attempt indiscriminate slaughter without parleying first.

When PCs visit the city of Alm, give them opportunities to gamble on the fights or participate in their own. Local lords will have a need for warriors who prove themselves in the arena, and the water naga will always watch from nearby chambers that connect to the coliseum. Many of the naga are competent magicians and can easily polymorph themselves to hobnob with and ingratiate themselves upon distinguished adventurers inconspicuously.

Locals in Alm also know how to make the gunpowder that is used in this region, and local law enforcers will carry small one-shot pistols. The secret of making gunpowder is closely guarded by those who deal directly with, or are controlled by, the water naga. Any PCs who want to learn the secret will have to either pay a very high price or give something that the naga believe could be used for their war effort against the sahuagin in the coastal waters.

THE GULF OF WIJUP The Gulf of Wijup neighbors the peninsula. The locals trade with and live alongside a clan of sahuagin who inhabit the coastal waters of the gulf as well as the northern coastline. The Wijup peoples have no centralized authority, each fishing village or farming community has its own unique customs for determining who the elders or mayor or war chief will be. Each shares a common religion, that the sahuagin are prophets and messengers for a venomous sea god. In some villages the sahuagin themselves are prayed to as saints or angels.

Visitors are welcomed into the communities, but the local priests always consider themselves protectors of their communities. Anybody who tries to change how the residents of the Gulf of Wijup live, or tries to introduce new deities to worship, is subjected to public defamation or charged with blasphemy. The priests also have myriad methods for brainwashing or converting newcomers to their ways. Those who resist are enchanted magically, and those who overcome the spells are given to the sahuagin as living sacrifices.

When PCs visit any communities within the Gulf of Wijup or north along the mainland coastline, there will be feasts and celebrations that involve spectacular fireworks and pyrotechnics. The locals will have crude weapons that utilize the same gunpowder that can be found in Alm (though they call it flashpowder) and will gladly trade it in exchange for gems or magical components that the sahuagin could use. Gold and silver are less attractive to the coastal villages as they have little need for trading with outsiders for anything they can't use. Enterprising PCs might find ways to improve upon uses for gunpowder, and while locals consider it an easy mixture to make they will still charge a high price to teach it to an outsider. Priests or local leaders will want PCs to actively engage in warfare with the city-state of Alm in exchange for the secrets of how to make gunpowder.

LOCAL HISTORY When they moved into this region 1400 years ago, the naga displaced a faltering and defeated society of sahuagin that had waged a bitter war with the "surfacers" and lost. With their numbers dwindled, the sahuagin were beat back by the naga. The naga were able to assert a claim over the peninsula and quickly began making peace with the local humans and dwarves, with the Alm family as their proxy.

The descendents of those sahuagin are now in a holy war with the water naga, and consider all of the naga to be invaders of their ancestral home despite the fact that the naga have inhabited the peninsula for over a thousand years now. The sahuagin consider the dwarves, halflings, and humans of the Gulf of Wijup to be tools and weapons they can use to strike at the City-State of Alm on the surface while the sahuagin launch campaigns against the naga underwater. They believe that any "surfacers" who live on the peninsula are pawns of the naga, and their lives are forfeit from the sahuagin viewpoint.

In contrast the water naga treat the "surfacers" of the peninsula more like children who need guidance. They don't consider the

people on land to be equals, but don't underestimate them either. Consequently the water naga have pushed the humans in Alm to become more proficient with magic while the sahuagin initially helped develop the gunpowder the both groups now use. Both the sahuagin and the naga believe the "surfacers" are the key to winning their centuries-long war.

ADVENTURE IDEAS Captain Saitran has been stockpiling magical components from Alm in the hold of his ship for weeks and has made a special deal to trade them with some Wijup priests. Saitran is worried that the naga know what he plans to do and hires the PCs on as cargo handlers and bodyguards, with or without telling them about the contents of his hold.

A group of sahuagin are spotted by the PCs just outside of one of the coastal fishing villages. They appear to be carrying dead human bodies. The sahuagin are bringing the bodies (of worshipers) to the village for a proper burial. When the sahuagin see the PCs they might think they are invaders from Alm.

The PCs are approached by a wizard who claims his laboratory hidden within a coastal cave has been infested with sahuagin. In truth, the wizard is a polymorphed naga who wants to eliminate a group of sahuagin who he believes are planning an attack against a village along the peninsula. (Alternately, have the PCs approached by a group of sahuagin who want to get rid of a "wizard" that invaded their coastal home.)

LOCAL MAGIC

Sonar (2nd-level Cleric/Wizard spell)

Duration: 10 rounds/level

Area: 1 person touched

Range: 20 yards/level

This spell allows the target to navigate underwater and detect moving creatures using a kind of magical sonar. The range of the spell is how far the sonar works for the subject of the spell. Magical silence will cancel the effect of this spell and loud noises can disrupt navigation requiring a Wisdom (or similar) check.

Sculpt Water (3rd-level Cleric/Wizard spell)

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Area: 10 cubic gallons/level of caster

Range: 10 yards/level

This spell allows the caster to shape water (or ice) into whatever form they desire. It takes 3 rounds for the water to move into the shape desired. Once given a shape, the water retains that shape until the spell ends. (10 cubic gallons is enough to make a thin wall that might block a hallway.)

GUNPOWDER For purposes of proficiency/skill and range, treat the cannon like a siege catapult or arbalest, and the other weapons like heavy crossbows - the only thing that's different is the damage. The bomb is a special device and has it's own rules (see below).

Weapon: Damage, Reload Times for unskilled (and proficient)

Arquebus: 2d6, 3 rounds (1 round)

Cannon: 4d10, 2 turns/20 rounds (1 turn/10 rounds)

One-shot Pistol: 1d10, 2 rounds (1 round)

Wijup "Bomb": using the bomb without proper training requires an Intelligence roll against 20+, with proper training a proficiency check can be made at 11+, the person using the bomb must set the fuse and this can be anywhere between 1 round and 4 turns, the bomb is small and can be easily hidden within a basket or backpack, but a lit fuse will make a low sizzling sound and characters who are next to and can see a lit fuse may easily extinguish it without a roll, anybody within 10 yards of the bomb is instantly reduced to 0 hit points (follow the rules for suffering a mortal wound), roll 1d4x10 to determine how many more yards the shockwave expands, anybody caught within the shockwave must make a blast saving throw or suffer 8d6 damage and are deafened for the remainder of the day

MAP NOTES The terrain is not defined and can be composed of virtually anything needed, grassland or hills or even mountains all the way up to the coastline. None of the villages are named, and depending on the scale needed many more might exist besides the ones drawn in. The scale is as large or as small as it needs to be. The map can be placed along the other side of a mountain range or as a section of coastline within a much larger mountain range. This map was drawn with the city-state of Alm on the south end, stretching east away from the gulf, but turning or reversing the map could easily point the peninsula in any of the cardinal directions.



Dear Secret Santicore

Please build me an art gallery full of paintings, tapestries and mosaics which are all doors and portals to other realms and worlds. Maybe ten or so? Think of it as the core room to which I and others can add floors and wings. Like the Louvre but even more badass.

Thanks!

L.M.

THE PORTAL COLLECTOR

by Ed Hackett
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Seign Sol Saggros, a powerful sorcerer, had two obsessions: plane-walking and fine art. Eventually, his interests intersected and he established and expanded the foremost art-portal collection in all the planes. His interest in art and magic from beyond the mortal realm led to the discovery of several awesome pieces.

In his tower-museum, each piece is located in a separate room with magical security protecting them from tampering and theft. Seign Sol Saggros has seen the other side of each of his portal pieces. He always returns with a number of non-magic art pieces for elsewhere in his private museum.

THE HANDS

This painting was commissioned by Seign Sol Saggros as part of a pact with Lord Mrryzyx. The painting is 8 feet high by 6 feet wide. There is no frame, just a border of wriggling inky blackness. The main image of the painting is grey tones only. Grotesquely distended, stretching limbs and corded, taut musculature of an unidentifiable nature fill the entire canvas. It is hard to imagine this is a passage to another place.

The space smells of sweat and sulfur. Within 15 feet of the painting, there is indistinct moaning and growling, unpleasant sounds that evoke terrors of an evil place. Within 10 feet, limbs writhe about snake-like and unnatural, stretching impossibly before ripping and tearing. The cracking of bone and shredding of sinewy flesh can be heard as the howling voices grow suddenly quieter. At 5 feet, you've come too close and the writhing artwork hungers for new flesh. Once the limbs burst through the canvas, there is no turning back. You are pulled into a nightmare. Fingers extend and twist about your body and drag you into the image, you feel your body also twisted and clawed at in the process of passing the canvas. Your flesh turns stony grey and you screams are frantic and uncontrollable.

Potential Destinations: The Deadlands, Tartarus, any of the layers of Hell, the Shadow Lands, Grim (a dark land of the Fey).

Complications: The painting provides passage to the hellish lands beyond the grey image, but passage comes at a price: first, there is no way back through the image -- travel is one-way only; second, those that pass through the hands of the image are drained of their strengths.

Wizards lose spells, clerics lose faith, warriors lose strength, rogues lose cunning. (This could be represented with a temporary/permanent loss of spells, ability scores or levels.)

DORAS GLASGARRAN

This beautiful work was earned for a favour to Gealakh Rhi, a powerful archfey and druid. The tapestry is 30 feet high by 12 feet wide. It is stitched with dyed phase spider silk which has been enchanted with druidic magic. The depiction is a simple forest path, overgrown and dotted with druid-marked stones; will o' the wisps hover under the boughs of ancient pines lighting the path. Within 10 feet, sounds of birdsong can be heard above the swishing of trees in a strong wind. Within 5 feet, evergreen and earthen scents emerge. Passing the portal is possible by any that carry a druid-blessed totem: usually a sprig of mistletoe, holly or other powerful druidic substance.

Potential Destinations: The Fey Lands, a druid fortress, a dryad grove, Arborea

Complications: Traces of the portal magic cling to those that pass; it's a magic easily sensed by the denizens of the realm. Any creature in the realm can find you easily once you have arrived on the other side. There is no hiding here.

JYO-DO

This is a recent addition to the collection. Magical security for the room is, unfortunately, incomplete. Five large blue crystals surrounded by dozens of smaller shards are suspended in midair, unmoving. These stones are a perfect replica of the Azuan Isles, a distant land currently in the midst of an ascension war for the throne. The isles are rich with exotic textiles, spices, and superior weapon-crafting.

Gaining passage to the lands that are represented by the statue is a simple process: speak the name of the place you touch on the crystal and be teleported there.

Complications: This sculpture was stolen from a warlord in Azuan. That warlord would do anything to recover this artifact.

THE PORT OF THE CALAN SINDER

This large room, over 150 feet long and 50 feet wide, has extremely high vaulted ceilings. There is a long row of wooden planks set along the floor from the staircase to the far wall. At one end of the room, set upon a brazier, there is an ovular milky white stone. At the other end of the room, in the center of the wall, there is a small painting (1 ft square) of a tiny ship riding choppy white-crested waves.

By casting a light spell on the stone three times, the ship and its crew can be summoned. The painting releases a deluge of seawater and the room floods, the wooden boards float safely and securely on the rising water. Anyone not standing on the dock will fall into deep water as the floor of the room disappears beneath them.

The ship will emerge from amidst the deluge and stop very suddenly at the dock. The ship moors its lines for one day before departing to any point on any large body of water.

Complications: The captain and crew of the ship are immortals made of water and magic. The services of Captain Juha Njalke must be negotiated and his prices are steep: he will take something of importance to each passenger.

THE WALTZ OF CLAITHEWACHT

In the grand ballroom upon the carefully maintained dance floor, there is a floor step guide to a marvellously difficult dance. While this dance can be performed anywhere, the steps are nigh impossible to remember and require the ability to step into the air or along walls. The waltz requires a partner, of course. The steps of the dance can not be memorized by non-Fey, so Seign Sol Saggros (also an avid dancer) had this complex work commissioned in his ballroom. The artists, several elves from the Court of Claitheiwacht, painted the steps with enchanted pigments that glow to show the directions of the next steps in the waltz. To successfully navigate the labyrinth of the dance steps, a dancer and her partner must have several pre-dance preparations in place: first, an orchestra to play *Volvit Vel Vexxi* (the song most popularly associated with the dance); second, Spider Climb or some ability to defy gravity and walk on walls; third, an enemy feigning enjoyment of your dance through laughter and frivolity. Unless Seign Sol Saggros is hosting a special event, it is unlikely that vitriolic appreciators will be readily available. Therefore, most prefer to use Tasha's Hideous Laughter upon a captive rival for their performance.

Complications: Once the partners have started the ascent onto the walls and ceiling of the ballroom, the dance begins to quickly increase in difficulty. Even with the step guide to aid them, the dancers are challenged, both physically and mentally, to meet the demands of the movements of the waltz. A misstep at any point in the dance will mean that passing into Claitheiwacht Court is impossible. The dancers must try again another day. Perfection is the expectation of the Queen Regent of Claitheiwacht.

Passing through is like walking into a dream and the music fades slowly away. When your dance is finished you will stand in the centre of the Grand Ballroom of Claitheiwacht.

THE AGOG

In this round room, there is a huge 5-metre tall head. It is carved from a single piece of multi-coloured jade; the eyes, mouth and ears are huge gaping black portals. Each leads to a completely different place.

The Yawning Mouth leads to a place where no one can speak the truth. Upon returning from this place, travellers may have difficulty NOT lying.

The Unblinking Right Eye leads to a place where all people are under a Trueseeing spell at all times. They are dry and direct.

The Unseeing Left Eye leads to a place where all are blind but they see portents in their dreams.

The Damaged Right Ear leads to a place where all people are deaf. They communicate with a complex system of body language. They are expert negotiators.

The Discerning Left Ear leads to a place where all people can detect lies. They respond to lies with extreme violence.

THE PLANARIUM

One of the most powerful and important rooms is the Planarium: a perfectly ovular white stone room, the door is concave and the inside of the room is rounded all about. Inside the egg-like wonder of the Planarium is a visual representation of the movement of the planes through the cosmos; it is a map and a gateway to the closest points of ingress. The aurora captured in the whitestone chamber is dazzling. Countless ribbons of coloured light dance about the room presenting themselves to the viewers, one need only reach out and ride the threads into the outer planes.

Complication: The flashing display causes confusion and disorientation. Any attempt to access the planes from here is subject to a save versus spells to see through the befuddlement. Failure could mean any number of terrible fates, but usually the befuddled plane-walker ends up in the wrong place.

Potential Destinations: The Planarium could lead anywhere and passage into the planes is never the same twice from here. Use the die drop table to determine ingress points.

Drop any combination d4s, d6s or d8s. A d6 will provide four tightly grouped points, a d4 will provide 3 and a d8 will provide 1 (based on the direction of the topmost numeral). Times of highest cosmic confluence will provide many points (roll lots of dice), whereas low periods will not (drop a couple d8s).

The chart below lists a number of recommended destinations.

Color	Destination
Gold	Square: The City of Brass, Ring: Sigil, Line: The Golden Road
Black	Infernal/Abyssal Realms, Hades, Gehenna, Abaddon, Border: Void/Limbo
Pink	Celestial Realms, Elysium, Arcadia, Nirvana
Dark Blue	Plane of Shadow, Vilak Utima (The Night City)
Dark Green	Arborea, Hyberborea
Light Green	The Fey Realms, The Citadel of Thorns, The Sidhe Court
Orange	Plane of Earth, The Great Earth (Kingdom of the Xorn), The Sand Towers
Yellow	Plane of Air, Jiida Galieh (Seat of the Gale Queen), the Windwalks, Ghajj Khos (The Sky Gardens)
Light Blue	Plane of Water, Maelstrom, Damita (City of the Wyrd), the Pillars of the Sea
Red	Plane of Fire, A'azamin (Sea of Flames), Cinder (Salamander Stronghold), Xaxyp Oth (Throne of Primordial Fire)
White	Astral Sea



FANTASY SHOPPES

by Joey Lindsey
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Dear Secret Santicore—

Oh dreaded, bulbous master of monsters, I would like a list of interesting shops for a fantasy game. Please deliver, oh fanged bunger of beloved boons!

Thanks!

R.M.

Roll D20	Name	Title	Service	Description 1	Description 2
1	Dr. Affalween	Physiognomist	Judgement of personality by outer appearance	Shabby, smelly	Well-Respected
2	Rand Neman	Baby Farmer	Paid to care for unwanted children... willing to hire them out.	Orderly, neat	Obsessive
3	Corcas Marid	Barber Surgeon	Cuts hair, performs amputations, other medical or grooming services	Egotistical, but not in a comic way	Nihilistic
4	Rashik Tot	Salt dealer	Acquires and sells salt and other spices	Obsequious	Even-tempered
5	Marben Gras	Cordwainer	makes fine soft leather shoes and other luxury footwear articles	Crass	Drunk
6	Tren Farble	Cooper	makes wooden, staved vessels, bound together with hoops and possessing flat ends or heads	Says few words	Practical
7	Alaria X	Polearm Dealer	Repairs polearms, changes heads, makes pricy models with heads that can be changed in the field	Excessive knowledge of surrounding area	Has committed a secret crime
8	Ouli	Geomancer	Divination through ground markings, dirt stains, or via handfuls of thrown earth	Strange voice	Undulating movements
9	Rho Tanser	Leacher	Sells live leaches full of the blood of various creatures; trusted customers can buy leaches with the blood of specific individuals	Foreign dress	Ties to nobility
10	Marpu Drin	Consillieri	Stable of contractors who can be hired to represent one in legal matters, but will track one down in the case of punishment	Legalistic	Ends every sentence with a question
11	Babcock	Artist	Creates “paintings” and “sculptures” using the remains of various magical creatures	Speaks in metaphors	Chronically infirm
12	Caldri Forbisher	Stonemason	Shapes stone, makes construction equipment, builds things	Sly conspiratorial wink	Stickler for societal norms and politeness
13	F. Slapshid	Cartwright	Makes carts and other conveyances	Cuts corners	Tries to get customer to do half the job

Roll D20	Name	Title	Service	Description 1	Description 2
14	Arden Tropendaz	Knacker	Makes harnesses (esp for non-standard creatures)	Tells tall tales	Significant scars
15	Finneus Welldra III	Book peddler	Sells books, including spellbooks	Half items are fakes	Pays off local guard
16	Hak Aldar	Linguist	Knows many languages, corresponds with other linguists, can discern subtleties of meaning even spells cannot convey	Judges clients	Wants to party with clients whether he likes them or not
17	Grimal Cim	Automatoner	Builds automatons	Hates living people	Wears all black
18	Alu Trimaine	Undeader	Fixer for various undead selling their services; hires out mindless undead under his control; hires self out to negotiate with undead	Loves living people	Half-undead
19	Bel Transdar	Limber	Buys and sells limbs of various creatures	Haughty	Attractive
20	Trip Fronif	Scribe	Takes notes, arranges for their delivery; can go into trance and send notes into future or past	Waifish	Cynical

OTHER SIDE OF MIRRORS

by James Young
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Dear Secret Santicore—

What exists on the other side of mirrors or an otherwise properly polished and treated glass? what lands, what people, what nightmares?

Thanks!

P.S.

It is well known that a mirror reflects the soul.

This entry begins with a spell -

WINDOW WALK

A minor spell in the same vein as the more widely renowned Passwall, Window Walk was invented on an unremarkable day by an unremarkable mage. A mere curiosity used to enter his small but stately abode in the event of his being locked out. Window walk was briefly in vogue as a stylish replacement for Knock among wizards with a larcenous bent until the telltale pattern of sluggish ripples became more widely known, and those rich enough to afford the services of a glazier began to adopt window designs made up of smaller panes.

It was some time later that a stranger effect was discovered.

One who Window Walks and presses their hand against a mirror feels not cold glass, but warm skin. Perfectly mirrored in form and force. Their own hands, their own flesh, their own lips.

The Narcissus Spell, as it was dubbed, fell out of favour soon after.

It was unfortunate that it did. For if you have no soul, if you cast no reflection, it is a very powerful spell indeed.

THE WORLD BEHIND THE MIRROR

The world behind the mirror is regimented and ruled by desire. A world not of dreams but of impulse.

It is not what is seen in the mirror that is most interesting, but what is unseen. The movement behind the frame, forever out of sight.

Every fleeting fantasy, from the most noble to the most base, takes place behind the mirror.

When you are in a rush but briefly consider stooping to help a fallen man, when you imagine asking the winsome girl at the counter what she's doing later, when you picture yourself standing up to your boss and saying "no more!", all this happens behind the mirror.

But there is also when you imagine strangling your child in a fleeting fit of petty annoyance, swiftly suppressing the thought of ravishing a pretty girl on the street, or throwing a slow walker onto the road to be crushed by carriages.

To go behind the mirror is to enter a world of madness and grievance and hope. It is to see the human soul laid bare in all its pettiness. To see that there is no nobility in the human soul, merely a selfish spiteful core that has neither the courage to do what is right nor what is wrong.

VAMPIRES AND THOSE WHO MOVE BETWEEN

Those without reflection, most notably the vampire but also those who have naturally or through magic found themselves without a soul, may cast Window Walk and pass freely through the mirror and see those strange things ordinarily unseen behind the mirror's rim.

The mirror world, as has been said, is full of mad and fleeting hazards as the storm of human daydreams and grievances tips and flickers sporadically into existence. Difficult, too, is movement, for naturally all impulses

are reversed and thus an intent to move one's right leg results in the left leg stepping forward. Travel is thus awkward and fraught with danger, though the rewards may be great.

It is possible to discover the true guilt that eats away at a man, to subvert a daydream with your own message, and even to travel between mirrors, although this latter requires traveling the same distance with considerably more effort.

Some of the psychology of the vampire is explained by their close connection to the mirror world. Seeing the innermost foibles of humanity gives the vampire a unique and profound disgust at Man, and the vagaries of mirror-travel are mitigated by living in the wilds and hinterlands where humanity and their suppressed impulses are fewer and further between.

A FINAL WARNING

By no means should a mirror be entered while it is facing another such that the reflections stretch away to infinity. In such a case when the Window Walker enters the mirror world, another creature steps in from behind. It is them in naught but shape, adept at traversing both the mirror world and our own for their own vile ends. Such nightmares can become legend in their own right, such as Bloody Mary the Thrice-Named.

THE SPELL

WINDOW WALK

Level 1 Magic User Spell

Allows the caster passage through glass for 1 Turn.

Transition is as though pushing through the water's surface. The ripples of passage flow sluggishly through the glass and persist for several days.

ZERO-G ENCOUNTER

by Ryan Silva
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Dear Secret Santicore

A zero-gravity encounter

Thanks!

J.S.

SETUP

Shallazar the Wizard dedicates a portion of his castle to zero gravity to help with a compressed disk in his spine. Most rooms in his castle have fucked up magical properties that he conjured up on a lark. He can't remember most of the effects he's applied over the years. Most of the wizard community hates Shallazar the Wizard.

COMBATANTS

Generic goblins (Shallazar has limited imagination). They have pretty much no respect for the wizard. The term they use when referring to Shallazar is Goblinoid for "That Guy". Subtract 2 from their morale. -3 if Shallazar shows up. They don't really use this room all that much and haven't had to fight anyone in it, so they are affected as usual by the below rules. Shallazar the Wizard is a level 3 magic user and is unaffected by the rules below. He will be high if players encounter him.

SPECIAL RULES

(Note: The presence of oxygen would probably mitigate some of this but who cares.)

-Anyone unfamiliar with low gravity environments takes -2 to projectile attacks.

-Non-magical projectile attacks deal 1d4 less damage, unless characters have Strength 16 or greater.

-Firearms deal an additional 1 damage if they hit.

-Containers that aren't airtight leak whatever contents they are holding. Healing potions must be taken through huffing.

-Anything with primarily liquid eyes (e.g. humanoids) will have their eye moisture evaporate. It is still possible to see albeit very unpleasant. -1 to relevant checks.

-Characters that position themselves feet-first when making projectile attacks take a -1 to hit, but have a -2 to attacks targeting them. Yes, we've all read Ender's Game.

-After a dozen rounds in this environment characters begin suffering decompression sickness. This has no effect other than general discomfort and bloating that will dissipate after leaving area. After an additional dozen rounds past this, characters will begin taking -1 to all combat rolls. Blood vessels on body and eyes will be visibly broken and will take a d8+1 days' rest to recover. A dozen rounds past this and players will have to make suffocation checks as the nitrogen bubbles in character's blood threaten to make movement unbearable. Check as if strangulation at additional -1. Failure means character takes 1d4 damage and is treated as though hit with Confusion spell as impaired judgment is now evident. Six rounds later = check as if strangulation at -2. Failure results in passing out. Long-term cyanosis has set in and will take 1d4+2 weeks to fully recover from.

Dear Secret Santicore

I'd like a starting scenario for new characters. I want them to start with almost nothing. However, I don't want to use the 3 classic start with nothing scenarios (shipwreck, prison escape, or buried-by-mistake).

Thanks!

J.K.

THE COSMIC SINKHOLE

by Alec Semicognito
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Weak spots between planes of existence are nearly as unpredictable in their properties as the planes themselves. Some are windows, allowing those that dare to see and perhaps to be seen. Some are gates, open to those who can recognize the key in an object, a word, a constellation wheeling into place. Some are floodgates, which release a torrent in one direction only. But not all weak spots are so well defined.

Tonight, a sinkhole has opened between two dimensions, creating space where not even the potential for space existed before. And through the weak walls of this sinkhole have fallen two places, places that should never have been able to encounter each other but now overlap where neither belongs --- where nothing belongs at all.

One of these places was the Mound of Hoon, into which the chitin-wives of Prodigious Vaktrafash set their pupae when the black moons are veiled in autumn-wisp. The other was the Inn of Silver Gables, in whose common room the PCs had all been asleep for an hour or two.

The event was locally cataclysmic. Many pupae, many guests of the Inn (all but the PCs, in fact), and many inanimate objects did not survive materializing in the same space. For the survivors, all is confusion as they struggle to make sense of their surroundings, which have been altered in more fundamental ways than they can quite grasp.

The survivors are fortunate in one sense: despite their shared space, the pupae and PCs are not fully in phase with each other. Though each can perceive the others and can attack, their weapons, horns, and mandibles cannot actually damage each others' bodies in their native dimensions. So if a pupa "kills" a human in the sinkhole, the human will die only in the pupa's native space, and he will "fall" out of the sinkhole and back where he belongs, mightily confused but bodily unharmed.

The reverse is also true, but since the combat will be normal in all ways except lethality, experience will accrue normally to PCs for "killing" a pupa.

The PCs' personal effects, including their armor and weapons, will have disappeared or have been rendered useless by merging with objects buried in the Mound of Hoon (shed cocoons, rocks, bones of fodder buried for the pupae, etc.) The PCs must frantically scavenge for weapons, armor, and a way out while fighting off the alarmed and hostile pupae. They should find a mix of random and improvisable weapons from both dimensions --- the club the innkeeper had behind the bar, knives and meat forks from the kitchen, a pupa mandible used as a short axe, etc.

The map should be a typical inn crossed with a giant anthill at random places.

The pupae should be typical 1st-level monsters with a weak bite attack and a weak power to spit stickum that will immobilize a PC for a round. Spells and weapons should affect them normally (though nonlethally as specified above, and the PCs will see them vanish when they "die," which may provide a clue to the way out).

The only way out for a PC is to be "killed" by a pupa. The pupae should keep coming in small groups until the PCs die. If the player figure out how it works, they may wish to let the pupae "kill" them, which should be rewarded with extra XP. Besides the vanishing "corpses," a major clue will be that being wounded by a pupa doesn't really hurt, but just feels very strange.

If the PCs happen to fight each other in the sinkhole, the wounds and death will be real.

JUST ANOTHER TOWN

by David Boshko
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Dear Secret Santicore—

A few small (interconnected?) random tables about what happens when the PCs visit otherwise unimportant peasants or villagers.

Thanks!

F.H.

VILLAGE CURRENT EVENTS

When you want to spice up village, simply roll a d20 once for each of the four tables and combine the results. The first table provides a current event that is taking place in the town, the second table tells you the cause (either direct or indirect) for that event, the third gives you an NPC that is somehow mixed up in that event and the last one gives you a local landmark that is somehow connected with the current event.

For example, if you roll 12, 19, 13 and 14 take all of the entries and combine them like so:

a local woman used to weep gems but now weeps no more because the magic of the whale songs have made her fondest dreams come to life making her far too happy to cry. The whales also disrupted the magic of the wind-dreamer who was powering an airship that was flying overhead and caused it to crash. The locals are livid because their whole economy is built around the tear-gem supply and the only person who knows what is going on is currently in ferret form. If combining all of the results leads to a result that is too weird or incongruous then just take the result from one or two of the tables.

TABLE 1 CURRENT EVENTS

What's been going on? (d20)

- 1 All of the cows in the village have gone missing.
- 2 As part of the current festivities, the villagers will need someone's finger.
- 3 People have gathered from miles around to watch dog fights which are marked by large amounts of gambling and even more cheating.
- 4 The PCs are incessantly propositioned with offers of marriage.
- 5 The village has just been settled. I wonder why this location has been chosen.
- 6 Halfing ostrich derby!
- 7 All who attempt to leave the town find themselves back in the middle of it, much to the consternation of local merchants.
- 8 The locals have decided to pave the streets with bone dust and roadwork is currently underway.
- 9 A massive swarm of clay golems are incoming.
- 10 There is not a single cat within twenty miles of the town. Not one.
- 12 Excessive shroomwine consumption is taking its toll on the town.
- 13 A local woman used to weep gems but now she weeps no more. This has caused significant economic dislocation.
- 14 Locals have recently begun to keep a ring of lamps lit around the edge of their village each night.
- 15 A giant undead abomination has recently been buried under a nearby hill and by all the gods does it stink.
- 16 The daughter of a local half-orc has begun to grow angelic wings.
- 17 No males of military age can be found in the village.
- 18 The local giant bee apiaries have been getting out of hand.

What's been going on? (dzo)

- 19 A local has returned home from their travels with a most unusual fiancé. It's time for a wedding!
- 20 If the PCs spend the night in the village they awake to find only long-cold cinders and ruins around them.

TABLE 2 CAUSE

Why is the current event from Table 1 happening? (dzo)

- 1 The villagers have recently dug up an idol of a forgotten god.
- 2 The eldest child of the local baron has recently eloped.
- 3 The army is demanding youths for the army which has caused panic and overreaction on the part of the villagers.
- 4 It is necessary to get someone new to stay in the watchtower and keep an eye on the local lake and none of the villagers want to do it.
- 5 It is past time for a bizarre and painful initiatory rite.
- 6 The barkeep has been dropping mysterious translucent eggs into the locals' drinks.
- 7 This town houses the tower of the recently-disappeared wizard known as Severard of the Seven Chins.
- 8 It's all because of the giant worms that live in the ground.
- 9 Thanks to generations of inbreeding, pretty much everyone in the town has gold dragon ancestry.
- 10 A nearby saint has been summoning demons to practice resisting temptation and some of them have gotten loose.
- 11 The villagers are not human at all but illusion-shrouded fae trying to learn how to act human.
- 12 A great monument covered in trollish script has recently appeared out of nowhere.
- 13 A ghoul is kept in a cage in the middle of the town square.
- 14 The town was originally an orphanage founded by a warlord to house all of the children of his orcish etc. victims. The orphanage had some unique child-reading practices that persist to this day.
- 15 A lizardman caravan is in town. As lizardman voices are too high pitched for human adults to hear, they own several human children that serve as interpreters.
- 16 Goblins have been purchasing the village's condemned criminals so that their blood can nourish the goblins' oak trees.
- 17 Adventurers have hit town recently claiming to have killed a dragon. They are loaded with loot and claim to have left a vast mountain of copper pieces behind.
- 18 The town is infested with stirges that do not kill but rather transmit memories and more between their victims.
- 19 The mystic songs of the local whales have made the dreams of the locals far more real.
- 20 The ancient mayoral diadem of office is actually a helm of opposite alignment.

TABLE 3 LOCAL NPC

Who is one local NPC who is mixed up in the current event from Table 1? (d20)

- 1 An overweight paladin who is overflowing with piety and cheap gin.
- 2 A well-spoken and gracious troll artist who offers to grill you up some of his flesh.
- 3 A feared local robber who is either an especially robust halfling or a bald-faced dwarf.
- 4 A gnollish bard whose hideous giggling is actually a hundred-hour long song that narrates how to travel through these lands safely.
- 5 A spoiled brat whose parents are rich and overprotective adventurers who have retired nearby.
- 6 An iron golem who enforces the laws of a dead empire upon the villagers.
- 7 A local farmer uses a strange beast to fertilize his field; the occasional farmhand that disappears is just a cost of doing business.
- 8 A giant who refuses to let anyone leave the town until his riddle is answered.
- 9 An adorable street urchin who has been paid to spy on the party.
- 10 An unassuming local villager who looks exactly like someone the PCs have killed.
- 11 An exceptionally strong local with an enormous gold belt buckle and a love for cheating at stickball.
- 12 A pair of sheltered aristocrats from a far-off city who have crashed their hot air balloon.
- 13 An illiterate barbarian of some note who, much to her dismay, has been polymorphed into a ferret.
- 14 A lecherous and untrustworthy mercenary who loves terrible puns will immediately volunteer for any dangerous quest.
- 15 A monk who oversees a grubby shrine and claims to worship mankind, he will object loudly to the worship of any other gods.
- 16 A tongueless foreigner whose armor is fashioned out of human fingernails.
- 17 A goat onna stick vendor who is exceptionally smelly and hairy.
- 18 An exceptionally pretentious wine-guzzling dwarf who is looking to hire on servants.
- 19 A mockingbird that repeats the last words of the last person to die in the village.
- 20 A local gnome family who lives in a nearby “forest” of ten thousand petrified stumps. They don’t trust anyone who wears shoes as everyone knows that illusionists can never get feet right so wearing sandals or less is the only way to prove that you’re real.

Dear Secret Santicore—

I would like a list or simple means of generating weird islands appropriate for sword & sorcery and science fantasy genres.

Thanks!

S. G.

WELCOME TO FANTASY ISLANDS

by Joe Johnston
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“In lost epochs, other things ruled here. They had great island cities of stone. Should you find ruins of cyclopean monoliths on an ill-favored sea stack, flee. Pray you have not been noticed!” -- Qon the Demented, local fisherman

“We shall defend our island, no matter the cost. We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never, never surrender.” -- Winnstone, Seneschal of Church Hill Island

Islands have long been a favorite setting for literature, poems, songs and paintings. A better metaphor for isolation is hard to imagine. In that isolation, protagonists are often challenged with opponents that threaten the security, sanity or morality of the context that the protagonists came from. In role playing adventures, island venues represent tactical challenges. The player characters have a limited store of supplies and henchmen with them. Help, should the party be captured or trapped, will be long in coming.

Of course, in real life, some islands are big enough to support a year-round community. Living on an island offers a slightly different RPG experience, but one that fits very well into most games. One imagines a campaign in which the characters begin their career clearing out tidepools of minor beasties, perhaps exploring a few creepy sea caves and fending off pirates. Eventually, the ambitious characters will depart home for adventures in the broader world.

In any case, this article is concerned with generating adventures on islands previously unvisited by the characters. Below, tables are presented that will help a game master generate the barebones of a setting that can be further enhanced with random dungeon generating and stocking. To aid in that process, some sample random encounters tables for islands of particular sizes are shown, along with random weather effects for islands of any size. Finally, a list of scenario themes appears. The target system used is Labyrinth Lord (™), but the ideas in this article should help judges of any adventure role playing game.

One way to use the following tables is to first determine the type and size of the island on which you wish to adventure. Use the Normal Island Types table for this. Should an exotic island be indicated, use the Exotic Island Types table. Based on the island size, find the corresponding Encounter table.

Encounter tables are generally geared to unique events meant to augment more traditional wandering monster tables commonly found in rulebooks. To that end, ocean bound islands may also experience weather events. Every game day, roll 1d8. If the result is 1, special weather is indicated. Roll 2d6 to determine the event.

Game masters looking to add a larger narrative to the island may roll on the Adventure Themes table.

NORMAL ISLAND TYPES

dzo	Type	Size	Description
1-2	Rock	tiny	A single large piece of barren rock jutting up from the water.
3-4	Skerry	tiny	A low rock formation with lichens, grasses, perhaps a bush.
5-7	Islet	small	A small patch of land supports a copse of trees, apron of sand.
8	Sandbar	small	A sizeable pile of sand supporting grasses and stubby trees.
7-11	Cays/Keys	large	A landmass rich enough for a small community of humans.
12	Tidal Island	large	A landmass occasionally connected to mainland.
13-14	Sea Stack	large	A narrow rock taller than wide and more than 30' tall.
15-19	Greater Island	huge	A large landmass that includes hills, volcanos and real forests.
20	Exotic	huge	Roll on the Exotic Island table.

EXOTIC ISLAND TYPES

d20	Type	Description
1	Floating	The island floats above land, perhaps moving.
2	Mechanical	The island is a mechanical or magical construct.
3	Ice	This island is a large, wildly colored iceberg, with sand, perhaps plants.
4	Leviathan	An enormous sleeping beast has a land-mass with vegetation on it.
5	Cloud World	A low fogbank somehow supports a habitable realm.
6	Transient	This island appears rarely and only for a little while.

TINY ISLAND ENCOUNTERS

d12	Description
1-2	A ghostly apparition appears warning of dangers to come. Then, 1d6 zombies attack from the sea.
3-4	An elephant-sized Giant Crab (HD 5) enjoys sunbathing on this rock -- alone.
5-6	Enchanted sea-glass frog golems (AC 6, HD 2+1, D 1d6) defend a potent magic item.
7	The rock is a slumbering Earth Elemental (HD 12) who is awoken by the party
8-9	A vortex appears above the island, raining down hostile critters. Roll each round for new random encounters.
10-11	A mermaid (Merfolk HD 3) appears on the rock. She fancies one of the party for dinner.
12	A solitary Treant of great antiquity is rooted to this rock.

SMALL ISLAND ENCOUNTERS

d12	Description
1-3	Pirates! Marauding Lizardmen lure sailors to their doom against the rocky shore.
4	The pollen of a local weed causes extreme lethargy. Save v. Poison every day. Failure indicates that the characters do nothing but eat and sleep the entire day.
5-6	A weathered and sealed clay pot contains a Djinn driven insane from long captivity.
7-8	A Doppelganger poses as a marooned and fetching lady/man. Attaches the rescuing party when they sleep (or whenever its chance of success seems high).
9	A Dragon Turtle returns to check on her golden eggs, which the party mistook for booty.
10-12	Solemn grave markers surround a massive winged Animated Statue. Disregard for the graves will prompt swift attack.

LARGE ISLAND ENCOUNTERS

d12	Description
1-2	Pirates! An undead crew of Ghouls is looking for new deck hands. Captain Blood is a vampire.
3	A wizard (HD 10) has built a fantastic tower of magic here. He wishes to keep it secret and attacks the party.
4-5	A family of Cyclopes shepherds sheep here and do not very much like the party.
6-7	A mad alchemist (MU 7) experiments on the animals here to make a race of "New Men." (AC 7, HD 2, D 1d6 or by weapon)
8	The local group of Halflings, although seemingly friendly, are cannibals.
9-10	A clan of Albino Apes, fiercely territorial, attacks the party.
11-12	A pair of Demon Boars is delighted to have the party for dinner.

HUGE ISLAND ENCOUNTERS

d12	Description
1-3	1d4 barnicalled Amber Golems waylay your party seeking magical items to eat.
4-5	The central volcano is a portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire. An Effreeti brings his pack of Hell Hounds to the island for hunting.
6-8	A living crystal lies at the heart of the island forrest, mutating plants and animals around it. (Animals attack as type, but bites cause disease if save v. disease fails).
9-10	A local clan of humans venerates Chuggutha, The Rat God (AC 0, HD 20, A (1d8/1d8/1d12 + disease). It slumbers during the day in a cave, but looks for food from the natives in the evening.
12	A Minotaur was banished island and has made a maze of the forest

OCEAN ISLAND WEATHER EVENTS

2d6	Description
2	Tsunami. On the coast, the party will see a sudden and profound low tide. In 1d4 turns, a tidal wave inundates the island. Characters caught in the deluge must save v. death or be crushed. Otherwise, normal drowning rules should be consulted.
3-4	Tropical Storm. A massive storm lasting 1d6 + 1 turns assaults the island. Unsecured boats near the shore will be destroyed or lost. Characters exposed to the storm must save v. wands each round or take 1d4 points of damage from flying debris.
5-7	Heat wave. Stultifying temperatures and humidity causes characters raises in non-tropical environments to attack at -1 "to hit". Lasts 1d4 days.
8-10	Windless. The island is beset by a suffocating stillness for 2d4 days. Sleep is difficult. Spells successfully relearned only 50% of time per rest cycle.
11	Water spout. A towering water spout forms near the island. Sea travellers must save v. petrify each round of sailing or be caught up in the spout. The spout destroys ships smaller than galleys. Characters in water may drown.
12	Sinking. The Island is falling into the sea. The party has 1d6 turns to secure an escape before the water swallows the land.

ADVENTURE THEMES

d12	Description
1	A complex civilization of 1/2" intelligent beings defends their world from giant intruders
2-3	Rival clans are warring for local resources. Pick a side, if you dare.
4	The island holds a lost culture, advanced in magic/science.
5-6	The island is a penal colony of insanelly violent sociopaths.
7	The island is a prison for a massively powerful superbeing that the party might release.
8	The island is home to a shunned, but noble people
9-12	The island is a massive arena where things fight for the pleasure of unseen overlords.

INTERSTELLAR DISCOVERIES

by Nick Abruzzo
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Dear Secret Santicore—

I'd love a list of interesting discoveries for explorers to find on uncharted planets for Stars Without Number. A healthy mix of fields (biology, archaeology, astronomy) would be great.

Thanks!

J.M.

Roll	Event	Description
1	Blood Crier	This psychic blood thirsty cactus has a network of at least 10 black stalks 5 meters tall, with multiple branches, and adorned with needles on retractable vines. This plant can detect thoughts within a 100 meters - and based on the type of creature detected will do whatever possible to lure it within range. (E.g. When humans approach it will scream for help.) Once its prey approaches within 10 meters, all the stalks will explode outward. Each person will be hit by 5d10 thorns, each doing d4 damage. (Save for half). HD 12, AC 10, Saving throw 9+ Attack: Special; pillar smash d12 x3 damage. Upon the ground, under the Blood Crier, the characters will find (roll d6). 1. A space helmet 2. Bones 3. Plasma torch (d10 damage) 4. Bejeweled earring covered in jade +4 psionic powers 5. A key card made of bronze 6. A holographic map to a secret horticulture lab (d10 kilometers away).
2	Fruit of Paradise	This tree gives off a putrid smell that causes uncontrollable vomiting and flatulence to all who approach within 20 meters (no saving throw). The tree is also covered in sticky dark green slime, which is a super adhesive; anything that touches it will be held fast (no saving throw). The tree is as hard as iron, so the only method of moving a stuck object is to cut off said item. In addition, the leaves on this plant give off a pollen that causes violent itching to any within 10 meters. The tree usually has 1-2 purple apples; each when consumed bestows a psionic power, and heals the mind and body of any diseases. These benefits are only gained if consuming the entire fruit. It is possible to plant the seeds from the tree; growing it to maturity has a 5% chance - 9+ Attack: None. Resistant to fire, acid, cold, bludgeoning and slashing weapons.
3	Mellow Yellow	This bright yellow mushroom is 10 meters tall with a cap that's 50 meters in diameter. It's covered in strange circular patterns. Touching or eating the plant will put the individual into an immediate slumber, and induce psychotic dreams, which last d10 hours. At the end of the slumber the one effected will (Roll d6) 1. Gain a permeant phobia, 2. Lose their capacity for fear. 3. Lose all sense of taste and smell. 4. Foresee a series of images that foreshadow an epic event. 5. Leave their body and their consciousness will be joined with Mellow Yellow - forever. 6. Gain a level and dogmatic goal.
4	Vorpall Jumping Eels	D6 semi-aquatic eels attack any who approach their slimy mating pools. These white eyed creatures are striped black and red and covered in a sticky substance. When anyone dares to approach their pools they propel themselves out of that water, and upon impact will shock their victim, and then stick to them. HD 2, AC 7, Saving Throw 15+, Attack: d4 bite damage plus electric shock d6.

Roll	Event	Description
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5	Scout of the Undermind	This being stands on a single 30 meter stalk and is covered with many mouths; at its top is a 5 meter diameter eye, that blinks constantly. Ambulation is achieved by hopping and using its many vine-like limbs, which can be used like arms and hands to pull it along. This is a noisy being; it either whistles or sings a "la la" song, depending on its mood. With its vines, upon touching a creature, it can instantly speak and understand its language. This is a scout from the Undermind; an insane monstrosity made from one million minds on planet X4 Yagga. The Undermind's purpose is beyond comprehension - and the purpose of an Eye scout is often bizarre.
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Why is the Eye scouting? Roll D6. 1. Looking to capture one male and one female of every species on the planet prisoners held in its mouths); 2. Dumping alien waste (held in its mouths); 3. It wants to lick everything. 4. It wants to trade its vines for other being's limbs; 5. It is hunting for food (roll d4. 1. Plastic, 2. Shoes 3. Tongues 3. Biological waste 4. Sentient beings). 6. Wants to assassinate all beings that are colored yellow.

HD 15 +10, AC 0, 10 whip attacks (d4 +2 damage) or bite (d10 damage); Psychic powers: Orbital Warp Level 9, Metapsionic Concert Level 3, Deep Memory Analysis Level 8



Roll	Event	Description
6	The Message	Across this wasteland there is a symbol burned on its surface, approximately 1000 kilometers across. The symbol, in an ancient alien tongue reads: "Pariah, you are so judged, today and ever more, by the Justicer Thrix aBaloloz"
7	Little Air & Strange Boulders	This area has a lower level of oxygen than the surrounding area. It is covered in sand and boulders of various sizes. Smashing / cracking open a boulder will cause an explosion. Damage is as follows: small boulder 40 damage, medium 60 damage, large 150 damage. All explosions are 20 meters in radius. Within an oxygen rich environment, like earth, the damage is doubled.
8	Volcanic Activity	Volcanic activity is very high, which effectively stymies the use of most electronic devices. Strangely, this event makes some psychic powers easier to activate; Every day the eruptions worsen. Cumulatively, the characters have a 10% per day of taking damage from the explosions. D100 damage. (Save for half damage)
9	Map to an Asteroid Belt	A map is found that provides the coordinates to an asteroid belt that is rich in iron and platinum deposits. It's also highly radioactive.
10	The Cube	This cube is a 5x5x5 meters is actually the casket of Lord Abernathy Starsong, the beloved wolfhound of Baron Klaus Rothschild of Planet Firehand. The casket itself is made of precious metals - the urn inside is likewise precious. The urn is filled with ashes of the wolfhound. The cube is sealed. It is ac -10 and has 100 hit points.
11	Landfill	This is a landfill home to feral moon badgers and some strange artifacts. Roll d10: (1-2) [Encounter d8+ 1 Moon badgers are completely grey, with large silver eyes and move silently; 3HD, AC8, 1 bite causes d8+1 + save vs hallucinations. (lasts d4 turns).] (3-10) you found something! Roll d6: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A metal spray can: What is it? Roll d4. (1.) Rainbow paint; it automatically copies whatever color is next to it. Once applied this paint is very difficult to remove. (2.) Cream that permanently removes hair. (3.) Flame thrower. (4.) Filled with instant mold plastic, pour it and it sets in 2 rounds; can be shaped into anything, and has a material strength of steel. 2. A working saxophone - with mouthpiece and reed; inscription inside says 'Cosmo's lover.' Inside the bell of the horn there is a broken tracking device. 3. A working laser pistol with 30 shots; 1d10 damage; holding the trigger increases damage by d10; after 10 rounds the pistol will explode for 30d10 damage. 4. Albino doll (60 cm tall) with a black space suit with a name tag that says Walder; its head has a burn mark on the outside - that covers one of its two black eyes. The doll is made of a very strong material. It is imbued with artificial intelligence (15 intelligence); it can talk and walk and learn from its experiences. It is solely focused on bringing revenge upon its creator Dr. Paris Joyce. To that end, Walder will patiently try to manipulate anyone he meets into helping him with that quest. Walder has skills in piloting, astronavigation, carpentry and culinary arts. Walder: HD 3, AC 8, Saving throw 15+, Attacks none or by weapon. Special: immune to electric damage, resistance to fire and damage 5 damage reduction against bludgeoning / slashing weapons. 5. A large silver bag with a spout; it contains all the ingredients to make a large delicious chocolate cake. Adding water into the attached spout will start the cooking process. After roughly 10 minutes, it will bake a cake, that can feed 30 people. 6. Goggles of the Undermind. Wearing these goggles cause insanity. The player will not want to take them off - and behave in very odd ways. Strangely, the wearer has the chance to call assistance from the Scout of the Undermind (See result 5 on the table).
12	The Magnet Hero	An ancient and gigantic magnet prevents all movement to anything wearing metal within 1000 meters. The magnet was built to capture a horde of reaper androids. These bat like bots were sent to the planet to exterminate all life forms. If turned off 1000 of these creatures will take to the air and begin to slaughter anything alive. HD 1+2, AC 5, Saving Throws +17, Attack: laser eye beam, d10+2 damage

Roll	Event	Description
13	Below the Purple Water	The pool is home to a gigantic purple walrus like creature, who is sentient and friendly. It holds the memories all those who died on the planet - from a plague 1000 years ago. It is relatively friendly, but an idiot savant with a horrible case of attention deficit disorder. If treated well, it will be happy to answer any question about the area. It eats various aquatic plants but desires to sample other cuisine and have new experiences.
14	The Lost	A tribe of men and women, are human bird hybrids, with parakeet heads and human bodies. They whistle happily - but can also communicate psychically. These beings wander aimlessly, collecting twigs and chewing on them. When communicating psychically their mental speech utilizes pictures and music. These lost souls are the failed experiments of Dr. Scoth R'yonan. His lab is 5 kilometers away.
15	The Monorail Car Cemetery	This abandoned monorail, is sealed shut, but still functions perfectly; the rail goes deep in the earth of the planet. The vehicle is filled with corpses - all of which are skeletons. Opening the doors will release the colorless toxic gas, which killed them. Players must make a saving throw or die. This mass murder was perpetuated by one of the corpses inside the train; he wears orange metal jewelry covered in alien symbols.
16	The Buzzing Fog	This massive fog bank is filled with crystal bees; this fog is a sentient life form that has a symbiotic relationship with the insects. It is not inherently hostile - nor are the bees. Inside the fog there are clusters of honeycomb, suspended in cotton candy like clouds. The honey produced is delicious. The bees are of the size of a man's fist; HD 1, AC 5, Saving Throw 15+, Attack: Sting does d6 + 6 poison damage (save for to negate). Offerings of flowers will be accepted graciously - and honey may be given in exchange.
17	Sentry Androids	A sentry android shaped like a bird man attacks with the party with a sonic weapon that does d4 damage and stuns for d4 rounds (saving throw negates). Once stunned, the android will bind the captive with metallic tape. If the one follows its tracks, (which are a giant circle) they will find it is guarding a metal gate on the side of a hill. The gate is protected by a key lock (very difficult to open). Inside there are 3 months of food, tanks of oxygen with bird masks, and bales of straw and sticks. There is also a large red button on the inside door - if pressed, 2d6 androids will coverage at the location in d6 rounds. Android stats: HD 7, AC 0, Saving Throws 12+, Attack: Sonic weapon attack as noted above plus 1 melee attack D8+3 damage. Special: jetpack allows for it to fly up to a mile.
18	The Distress Signal	The distress symbol comes from within a crater. It's a trap - created by pirates - d1x3 wait in ambush. HD 2, AC 7, 50% attack with clubs (d6 damage), 40% with swords (d8 damage, 9% with laser pistols D10, and 1% with a laser rifle 2d10+2.
19	Green Monolith	"The green monolith is a command control tower for killer satellites, now dormant in orbit. The purpose of each control is noted below. Dial: turn on/power up d10,000 killer satellites White button: turn off (pressed) Black button: aggressive patrol attack anything without an approved signature/ signal Grey button: sentry; no movement o button: kamikaze toward nearest enemy 5d10 damage X button: (pressed) stay in orbit; go to monolith HD 4, AC 0, Saving Throws 13+, Attack: Laser does 2d6 damage"
20	Moon Crashing	The moon's orbit is degrading; oceans and lakes act violently. Weather systems drastically effected. Moon will crash in d100 days. The impact will be devastating.
21	Crashed Spaceship	On this crashed ship all major systems are destroyed; it is home to hundreds of carnivorous spider mice. HD 1 AC 10 Attack bite d4. Save vs paralysis. Special - web 1 meter area of effect: strength of 10 and 3 hit points.

Roll	Event	Description
22	Valley of Bubbles	Within a valley there are thousands of grey bubbles. These bubbles are hibernation pods. Inside there are small (15 cm) human like aliens called the Yari. The bubbles open automatically when the sound of C# is played nearby. Breaking the pods open have a chance of killing the one inside (50% chance). The Yari have been hibernating for 500 years. Their ancestral home is 80 km away. They abandoned their home due to an infestation of carnivorous cyborg grasshoppers.
23	Painful Repose of Mvok Velashay	This is the domicile of Mvok Velashay the walls are covered in beautiful abstract paintings and in the background soft ambient music can be heard. From the ceiling thin sheets of grey and white silks hang. Toward the back there is a circular chamber, obviously used for combat training. Upon the floor is a skeleton with a black leather glove made with hundreds of small bands covered in black gem shards. The skeleton's gloved hand cover its face. The glove is a mind blade - which is possessed by a vicious psychic parasite called a Xel. Upon wearing the glove the Xel caused horrific visions and forced poor Mok into an endless battle imaginary foes. At the point of exhaustion, Xel forced him to commit suicide. Through a combination of psychic and scientific means, Xel may be exorcised from the glove (and if so, it will work normally).
24	White Slime	This massive white blob is 50 meters in diameter and consumes anything it touches. Coming into contact with this horror causes D10 damage per round. Once an attack is successful the victim is caught in its substance. Plague slime HD 10, AC 4, Saving Throws 9+, Attack: Touch D10. Special: This creature can roll over virtually anything smaller than its mass. This "attack" causes asphyxiation and death in 5-10 rounds (depending on saving throw). This creature will not cross water of any sort, as its pH burns it like acid.
25	Menagerie of the Damned	Inside a beautiful structure made of stone and glass there are hundreds of white statues. These are the facsimiles of various individuals who were put to death for their heinous crimes. Touching a statue will cast a holographic movie, which shows the crime committed by each individual -- and their final moments when they were executed. Executions are similar; the guilty party is put into a device that crushes them slowly while their memories are forcibly extracted into a memory crystal. A memory crystal resides within each statue.
26	The Genius Sociopath & Puppeteer	"This entertainer is traveling to the next city to perform his puppet show. The sole proprietor and puppeteer is Percival Gupta-Woo a charismatic sociopath, who lures the unwary and transforms them into puppets for his show. Percival is crafty - and a mechanical genius. His vehicle is thoroughly trapped and stores the materials needed to create his puppets. His personal equipment includes: Flower boutonniere- shoots a knock-out spray cone at targets within 3 meters; save or be knocked unconscious for d10 rounds Shock glove - upon a successful hit does 2d10 damage Jet boots - enables 10 meter jumps Monocle - enables scanning with an x-ray of nearby targets Key chain - His chain is connected to his belt, and holds a retractable 20 meter cord, which is as strong as steel Vibrosword-cane. This thin blade shimmers rapidly, increasing its ability to cut through just about anything. D8+4 damage. Percival Gupta-Woo HD 5 AC 4, AB +4, Saving throw 10+ Skills: Mechanical engineering, Medicine, Biology, Acting, Sword, Pistol"
27	Puffy Pointy Rhino	"This large herd creature is a herbivore, and looks like a white rhino - with a skin covered in small black barbs. If threatened, the exterior skin of the creature blows up - attacking all around it with d10 barbs which do d4 damage each. Puffy Pointy Rhino HD 9, AC 4, Saving throw 10+Horn attack d10+3 "
28	The Disturbing Mosaic	Among the rubble there are hundreds of broken colored tiles. After significant effort (D6+6 hours), the characters learn that this place was designed to worship a being that is a chimera of sorts - with three heads (crocodile, llama, crow) and the body of a human with snake tail. The being is shown drinking a goblet of blood and wearing a cape made from the skin of virgin men.

Roll	Event	Description
29	The Red Comet	A large red comets streaks across the night sky. In reality this is an ancient spy satellite deployed by a hybrid human race, from the planet Mendova IV.
30	Pretty Yellow Feathered Frogs	These small creatures are a bizarre hybrid between a white frog and a yellow canary. These "cute" animals are harmless, unless eaten. In that case, they are horrifically poisonous, causing explosive yellow blisters across the entire body until an agonizing death. They are friendly - especially if fed, and will follow those showing such kindness to the end of their days.
31	Black Ribbons in the Sky	Near the equator there are dozens of ribbons hanging from the sky. These are space elevators, designed to rapidly propel ships into orbit. These strips are made of a virtually indestructible material. At the base of these there is a building, with deep space suits, and various tools to repair space ships. Under each ribbon there is a platform, with two gun sentries, which shoot anything that approaches that doesn't emit the appropriate authorization signature. These sentries are HD 3, AC 6, 2 attacks per sentry. Anti-Vehicle Laser 3d10 range 500/1,000.
32	Echo of a Shepherd	Among a ruin, a desolate place covered in ancient ash, one may find the remains of a building, and inside, a single golden headband. Upon wearing this device the wearer will learn the story of Niov Talo - a shepherd of the city and Govi, his bonded companion, a translucent bear-like creature called a "palerei." Through a montage of images the wearer will learn the life and death of this special soldier, and how to bond with a palerei. Typical paleri stat block: HD 4+4. AC 4. 2 Attacks Bite D10+2 and Claw D4+2. Saving throw 12+ Gains surprise when hunting alone as it can make its skin reflect its surroundings.
33	The Mysterious Rings	In a large hanger there is a mission control center that enables the manipulation of the rings around the planet (or perhaps another). Upon activating the controls the rings around the planet start spinning with increasing speed; these rings warp the space around the planet and enable it to quickly travel across the galaxy.
34	The Tooth Collector	In a ruin, there is a bomb proof door against a wall near a broken and empty dam. On the other side of the door there is an elevator. The panel has a down button, and another hidden button. Pressing the hidden button will spray a knock-out gas into the chamber (no save unless using a breathing apparatus). Pressing the down button will bring one to a large and finely constructed room; inside the walls are wooden paneled with floor to ceiling cabinets with small drawers on three of the four walls. In the cabinets there are thousands of teeth from various alien humanoids of different ages. These are cataloged with the species of the owner and its age. Upon the far wall there is also a display case with a variety of tools used to extract teeth. In the center of the room there is a dental chair, with constraints.
35	Path of Transmogrification	All that's left of a long lost tribe is a huge swirling walking path lined with a strange yellow and orange material. Surrounding this path are alien runes. Roughly translated, is that this path will lead to enlighten, peace, transformation, and evolution. If one walks the entire path the ground scintillates for one round. If the walker is still on the path at the end the second round he will be reduced to ash. After 1+d10 rounds the ground will open in the center of the path - and a man sized robot will appear on an elevator platform from below. This yellow and orange striped being holds the memories and personality of the walker. Stats: Str 17, Dex 12, Con 18. Hands are like modern Swiss army knives, with multiple tools, utensils and a laser pistol. Inside the chest there is also an instruction manual on how to repair the bot.
36	Left Over Bomb	Wrapped in jungle overgrowth there is a 20 meter diameter sphere, which is a bomb that did not explode from an ancient war. It is green and covered in a starfish. If detonated, it would releases 1000 star fish spawn that will spin through the air and attack anything in their path. HD 1+1, AC 6, d4 cutting damage or d4 acid bite. Saving throw 16+

Roll	Event	Description
37	Spring Maze	<p>"A portal made of countless springs stands 10 meters tall. Upon touching the portal, the front and back will fold down, and propel the beings around it into a maze of multiple dimensions. The maze walls glow slightly, the space between is black, and will shock anything that touches it. (d8 damage). Attacking the walls will produce no visible reaction. It will take d10 days to find an exit. Each day roll d10 to determine what, if anything is encountered. (1-3.) Nothing (4.) A wall showing a video that shows everything that has happened to the characters since entering the maze. Watching the video to the end will reveal a group of animated cameras filming the characters. At that moment, if the characters turn around they will see the cameras- who then immediately flee, and merge into the spring wall. (5.) A working bar, with a water fountain, a variety of alien liquors and wines and bowls of peanuts and pretzels. All of this is safe to consume. (6) A dance hall filled with holographic images of others who died wandering the maze. (7.) Another being is found wandering, and is slightly mad. He has been lost for 200 days. (8.) A smaller version of the portal that was found at the entrance of the spring maze. Crawling through this portal backward will bring the characters to the exit of the maze. (9.) Spring suits. Hanging from the wall is a set of suits made of springs. Putting these on will enable the wearer to rapidly move and jump. They can't be removed while in the maze. Once outside, they disappear. (10.) A spring portal to a new maze. (Upon entering, the group will be lost for d100 days, etc.).</p> <p>"</p>

Dear Secret Santicore

I want a nexus of all realities written up, Exposure type style, where each new world/universe is that of another RPly, so that all RPly exist from here and characters can travel between.

Thanks!

B.T.

THE PLURALITY OF HIVES

by Tom Hudson
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An interdimensional nexus operated by a generally-hostile anthropomorphic insectoid race. They produce little themselves of value to the outside; they grow and they feed themselves, like a cancer, and have few other priorities. However, they have continuous commerce through the hive, caravans between allies or subjects in differing dimensions.

The seven queens are resolutely antagonistic to mammalian sentients, but most of their mandarins can be bargained with; the mandarins tolerate a surprisingly populous underworld of interlopers and smugglers, who have a complicated interplay with a few of the less-loyal caravans.

Assuming explorers are trying to avoid active areas of the hive, random exploration reaches:

1. an exit
2. underworld - inhabited
3. underworld - traps or monsters
4. abandoned area - disused functional or living space
5. abandoned area - storerooms
6. active area - functional or living space

The inhabited portions of the underworld center around a pair of huge mounds or pillars known as the Teeth, the hive-stuff of their pointed tops worn away to reveal a hard purple metal underneath. Below, where it's not yet been exposed to air, it's soft enough to be mined, and trade in this substance - both physically and (al) chemically potent - is one of the few things that the underworld has to offer corrupt traders.

Outside the portal on every world are a small assortment of guards. On every world there is a different substance which is completely distracting to the inhabitants of the hive; the guards will abandon their duty to partake of it. However, those who do not know and have access to the analogous substance on their destination will have a stiff fight when leaving the hive: so long as at least one guard survives, a continuous stream of reinforcements will be summoned.

The underworld is generally well-behaved, not wanting to attract overmuch attention. Their interaction with the hive is a subdued pilfering of stores, not bandit raids on caravans. All order can break down if visitors are revealed to have the substance that secures a desirable exit.

THE WORLDS GALLERY

This building always seems to fit the local architecture; the prototypical layout here is as a tall, well-built Victorian English townhouse. Outside hangs a plain wooden sign showing three balls, like a pawnbroker's; where the usurer would have gold, here they are red, blue, and silver.

A barred servants' door opens into the ground floor, with a well-used kitchen, pantry, and two dusty bedrooms.

The polished main door is at the top of a flight of steps set into the building, and is answered at all hours by a slender man with a mutilated nose and a slight hint of point to his ears. There are a parlor and an office on this floor, as well as a back hallway and servants' staircase, but most clients will be directed up the stairs to the second floor above. This staircase seems to have a different fresco painting on the ceiling every week, but is always flanked by a pair of life-sized statues.

The main stairs open onto the Gallery Proper, which takes up almost the entire second floor. This mosaic-floored space has large arched windows covered by thin curtains; they look onto a foggy city that could be plausibly be mistaken for the location the clients come from. Visitors at night will be provided with candelabra to light their way through the room.

At any time the Gallery Proper contains perhaps a dozen paintings and four or five objets d'art, sold for twice typical value. So long as they are in the Gallery:

- Each painting with multiple (human) subjects is a gate to another plane. Somewhere in the world connected to is another instance of the gallery.
- Each painting with a single (human) subject is an occupied prison.
- Each painting without (human) subjects is an unoccupied prison.
- Statues of humans or animals are either flesh-to-stone victims or enchanted statues /figurines.
- Statues of buildings or scenes are gates.

Once they've left the gallery the gates lose their power, although they retain a resonance and can be reactivated by appropriate ritual. Roughly 1/3rd of the artworks are sold each month to a buyer who is (1) nearby, (2) distant, (3) on a plane reachable by some other

artwork in the gallery, (4) on a plane not currently reachable from the gallery.

The Gallery Proper is always guarded, but the guard varies, possibly including:

1. gargoyles perched under the ceiling.
2. animate suits of inhuman armor in the corners.
3. long tentacles extending from the fresco on the stairs to drag them through a particularly unfriendly Gate.
4. malefactors pointed at by the nameless doorman falling into the floor, which is a Maze

Set into a side wall is a bas relief resembling the false door from an Egyptian tomb. On the night of a blue moon (which happens more often on worlds with more moons), and certain other locally-significant conjunctions, the false door opens into the Gallery Improper. This misty walkway stretches out of sight, tall windows on the left hand each showing a different full moon, each illuminating artworks on the right tinted in purples and aquas.

Art in the Gallery Improper is not typically available for sale, but may be used as portals. However, those wishing to transit must pay the keeper's price. Who this keeper is varies with each visit, possibly including:

1. a powerfully-built devil who demands a tooth from one member of the party
2. a trio of matronly sorts who will bargain for one memory, hope, or dream per person, but will try to take all three if they think they can get away with it
3. a sharp-toothed changeling child who wants a parent
4. a lost angel orbited by shards of glass who needs a piece of a god

A staircase leads up from the gallery, but the third floor (like the basement) are not open to clients; it is closed at the top by a pair of doors with fabulous wood inlays showing scenes from some outsider/pariah scriptures in the local cosmology.

In the garrett lives a revolving crew of castaways who might be for hire, currently:

- A lank-haired, toothless old man; he has a 2/6 chance of smelling out planar portals. He will show up wearing fighting gear (e.g. blued mail, bastard sword, light crossbow), and sings wordlessly when stealth is not called for. He is scrupulously honest in the service of other fighting men, but not loyal to mages or diabolists.
- A young woman with mismatched eyes who can feel her god calling her elsewhere - on the right plane she could be a powerful wonderworker, but here is little more than an acolyte.
- A tall figure whose cowl conceals an eagle's head; unusually perceptive, with an avowed fondness for raw meat but a true lust for alcohol.

Dear Secret Santicore—

A location dank and slimy Where oozes squelch
and creep In tunnels grim and gummy And rounded
chambers in the deep.

Thanks!

A.T.

DRAWING: DANK & SLIMY LOCATION

by Calum M

<http://bellasbarandgrillescifantasydnd.blogspot.com/>



PRISONS ON THE VEGLAND BORDERS

by Nathan Ryder
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Dear Secret Santicore

Vegetable prisons

Thanks!

R. Y.

There are far too many numerous species and varieties of vegetabilis homines – or Veglanders in common talk – to truly catalogue them all. They have their own customs, speech, calendars and lifecycles; they are utterly odd to most humans, dwarfs and elves. Halflings get on quite well with them though.

Like all intelligent races, they have some members who use their intelligence to commit crimes. And some who are unfortunate enough to be convicted of crimes regardless of their involvement. While non-Veglanders do travel through the region, little has been told before about the state of prisons. The following is presented from extracts of an account by a wandering merchant called Flam, who was incarcerated for seven months in a Veglander prison. His words are in italics from this point, while our scholars have added a commentary to help the reader gain some benefit.

...on my first day a big tater watchman name-o' King took me to one side and told me that if I wanted to last more than a week among the rest I had best show them "which side my bread was buttered." It was strange with those three big eyes watching me, him saying that. He said it slow-like, like he'd been rehearsing it. Heard it one time and had it explained. Then he gave me a black eye, and beat me across the stomach with the back o' his axe handle. He never said nothin' about it to me ever again, but I knew, weeks later, he'd done it so the other prisoners would know I was one o' them. That beatin' probably saved me...

- Flam's Journal, page 7

ON SPUDMEN

Spudmen are massive walking potatoes. They walk on thick deformed root sprouts and have two equally warped arms with three-fingered hands. These are not dextrous, and so typically they wield axe blades attached to wooden mittens. Spudmen are not considered bright. In certain provinces their fearsome appearance is used in rhymes and stories to scare children into behaving. They are slow and awkward, and to most humans and related species they are considered smelly.

They are also tough, observant, obedient and strong – they make excellent prison guards.

Spudman 2HD (see below), d10+10HP, AC as chainmail, save as F4.

Special:

Spudmen lack the dexterity to use missile weapons.

They attack with -1 to hit in melee.

They do not generally wear armour, their skin is naturally tough.

They walk and run at half normal speed.

A Spudman typically has between four and seven unblinking green eyes all over their body; it is difficult to sneak up on a Spudman.

An axe swung by a Spudman will deal 2d8 damage; unarmed they punch for 2d4 damage.

...you ever been underground for long? After a week I was promising everyone anything if they could just figure out a way for me to get out. If you're on good behaviour, then you get an hour of daylight once a week in exchange for hauling crap up to the surface. Me, I was... Disruptive for a few weeks, and then I didn't bribe the guards enough for the next month. Seven weeks all told. It was raining when I came up and it was beautiful...

- Flam's Journal, page 72

PRISON DESIGN

Spudman prisons have a structure designed to separate the prison masses. All cells and spaces are underground apart from a processing house, often a small converted castle. Supplies of all kinds move through pipes and tunnels – including sunlight, bounced down narrow sub-passages by mirror. Mirror breaking is punishable by weeks added to a sentence, and prisoners will even take steps to apply punitive measures to others.

A prison will have 3d4 root-wings, each of which at any time has 3d20 prisoners and 30 cells. Overcrowding in a root-wing does not typically lead to cell transfers: prisoners are just more cramped and miserable. There will be at least one Spudman guard for every four prisoners, rounding up, and always at least three on duty at any time during the day, and one on patrol after lights out.

A root-wing is entered via a long, winding tunnel from the surface, at least half a mile in length. They have a more or less standard design: an open “yard” approximately 200 feet long and 50 feet wide, a large semi-circular pool of water (ten feet deep at most; no large tunnels leading out or swimmable) at one end; 30 cells cut into one side of the yard. Cells are eight feet by ten feet, bunks and chairs and pisspans. Possessions are permitted, small alcoves next to bunks leave a small space for storage. Walls are hyper-compacted soil; doors and prison bars are typically metal or bone.

Buildings like guardrooms, a kitchen area and storeroom are built into the opposite wall. A floor to ceiling metal gate deters prisoners from attempting to enter the tunnels back to the surface. Very often these are not locked, the maze of tunnels and darkness is enough to dissuade most from thinking about a surface run. Root-wings are at least 200 feet away through solid earth and rock for anyone thinking of tunnelling away; it would not be the most terrible excavation ever, but making a meaningful dent in the hypercompacted first layer is difficult. A prisoner with bare hands could remove d12 inches of a tunnel per night; with a spoon they could manage 1+d4 feet. With a spade they could manage 2+d6 feet. However, in any event they would have to find some way of hiding the hole and the removed soil without anyone noticing.

Tunnels from root-wings are always patrolled by guards in pairs. Most lighting is via reflected light from the main administrative building on the surface; guards carry bioluminescent mould jars for emergencies.

...plenty of empty cells when I arrived, but they told me I had to stay with Campbell. I'm not one of those bigoted types, honest I'm not... But dwarfs smell, don't they? Don't they? I don't know what it is, but... Worse than spuds... Anyway. He was nice enough. Until he woke me in the night, confused, asking for whiskey and threatening to kill me if I didn't swear allegiance to the Brothers of Bord... Three days later he took offence at a Spudman looking down on him – which was bound to happen given the size difference – and the spud just crushed him flat. I got his boots but they didn't fit...

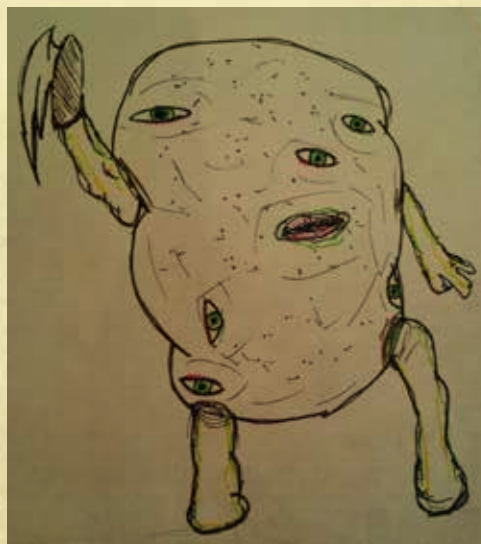
- Flam's Journal, page 23

PRISONERS

On the border of the Veglands, most crimes are explained away as “human troublemakers,” and prisons there have a higher-than-average chance of human or similar species being the majority occupants. Veglanders in prisons are often Spudmen and Onionfolk, with the occasional Pea Mage or Swedform – though these will be rare in prison populations.

For a typical prisoner in a root-wing roll four d10s to find out their race, the crime they are in prison for (guilt should not be assumed), the sentence they were given (justice is not fair at times) and some kind of contraband they have in their possession.

d10	Race	Crime	Sentence	Contra-band
1	Human	Assault	Starting a 6 month stretch	Money
2	Human	Theft	Two months left of five years	Radical reading materials
3	Human	Littering	Halfway through ten years	A shiv
4	Human	Murder	Until family pay a fine	Potato fungus
5	Elf	Fraud	Three years; started yesterday	A pet
6	Dwarf	Intoxication	A year into ten years	Drugs
7	Halfling	Sedition	Nine out of 25 to life	Alcohol
8	Onion-folk	Kidnapping	Legal limbo	Handmade escape tools
9	Spudman	Graverobbing	Life without parole	Firemaking equipment
0	Spudman	Cannibalism	Death row for the last five years	A fashioned weapon



ON ONIONFOLK

Onionfolk stand around five feet tall, withered heads on top of round onion-bodies, gangly legs and long slender arms. They have tough leathery skin that seems dried out, and affords them a slight skin armouring. Those that leave rural life with dreams of making it big often end up working as thieves and thugs. Their bizarre physiology make them assets to some employers; in prisons they are often left alone, but some find niches in gangs.

Onionfolk 2HD, d8+6HP, AC as leather (and see below)

Special:

Onion blood is acidic; when cut it releases a gas that effects anyone within melee distance (Save versus poison or at -4 to hit for d6 rounds as eyes fill with tears).

Blood can slowly dissolve organic material like wood and flesh given enough time. Some Onionfolk burglars are thought to be able to concentrate their blood into a more corrosive agent.

Onionfolk have a limited regeneration ability: instead of recovering HP with rest, they can opt to enter a trance state for six hours.

Their max HP drops by 1 and they recover all HP to this new max. And they remove the top layer of their skin. It takes five days for their skin to dry out: while it does they have a normal bare skin AC.

ON PEOPLE

The People are what you get if you picture a halfling crossbred with a pea – small, bipedal Legumen about two feet tall if they're lucky. They live in large communes, beside open green fields, and live peaceful lives. Some gain employment in prisons as staff – though not guards, typically – and bring in supplies above ground as well.

Pea Mages are of the People, but live in isolated spartan academies. Born in a pod, by their first birthday one has killed all of its siblings and fed on them. They are then instructed in the ways of wild magic. They meditate for hours hoping their mind will recall spells that they are going to cast in the future (Pea Mage metaphysics is beyond this collection; suffice it to say, it's weird). They can't always be certain of what they will find after a trance, and so are trained to use a degree of cunning in applying spells. Pea Mages are chaotic and temperamental, and many fall foul of the law for something sooner or later. (there is also a degree of prejudice against them)

Pea Mages 2HD, d4+4HP, AC as bare skin

Special:

They do not study spells in books, but meditate and try to impress their minds on to spells. No-one really understands it. It's rare to encounter Pea Mages in prisons, mostly because they are difficult to control. As prisoners they are given regular injections to suppress their meditation. If they are able to avoid injections for two days, they will be able to meditate. Six hours is needed at a minimum: they can either take one first or second level spell by choice, or one first and one second level spell at random.

ON SWEDFORMS

A root-wing will never house more than one Swedform. Seven feet tall, blocky swede-people who seem simple and silently monstrous. They rarely speak, although they make deep rumbling noises to signal intentions. Their mouths open to eat and attack.

Swedform 3HD, d20+20HP, AC as chainmail

Special:

Swedform flesh is dense. Roll d10 if struck and reduce damage by that much (minimum 2HP damage from a successful attack).

Swedforms hit for d6 damage (-1 to hit), or grab to squeeze (-2 to hit) for d6 damage. If successful they hold on, and on a subsequent attack (no penalty) they will open their massive mouth to bite/swallow their opponent (d10 damage). A notorious Swedform muscle-for-hire, Big Yale, was known to suffocate targets in this way.

...don't get me wrong, the food was OK – I've eaten worse in some inns... there's a sort-a freedom in just getting on with things. I got on, eventually. Get up, eat, work, hang out, maybe work, eat and so on... They're not awful... Yeah, I got bored after a while...

- Flam's Journal, page 91

DAILY LIFE

Life in a Spudman-run prison is such that prisoners are afforded some free time to let off steam, but not too much free time so that they don't do anything too drastic – or worse, try to escape. Spudmen guards just follow orders, the flow of life has been set by those in charge.

7:00 Cells unlock
 7:30 Breakfast
 8:00 Morning work
 10:00 Rec, exercise, work slot
 1:00 Lunch
 1:30 Afternoon work
 3:00 Rec, exercise, work slot
 6:00 Rec, exercise, work slot
 8:00 Evening meal
 9:00 Cells lock
 10:00 Lights out

Morning and afternoon work times are compulsory, assigned duty slots. Work is given based either on random assignment or prisoner aptitude. Other possible work slots are available when work needs to be done. Typically menial and mundane assembly style jobs. Prisoners engage in low-bid tender/auctions for prison currency in exchange for completing work. Prison currency can be used to buy luxuries and for bribes.

Once a week prisoners who behave well have an hour on the surface. Once every two days random pairings of root-wings can meet in intermediate “open spaces” - 200 feet square underground areas – for team games.

A Spudman guard will always patrol after lights out. Guards on duty take turns to do hour long shifts of patrolling the wing. Guards are changed every day at 9:30pm, after all prisoners are confirmed locked away.

...course, there was another spud guard called Cob who really didn't like me. There were only three or four of us humans in that root-wing. Lots o' dwarfs, mostly spuds, couple onions. Cob hated humans. Every time something crappy happened he'd try and rile up the potato prisoners against us. Not too smart tho', no matter what he tried. Don't matter which gang you're in, what you're made of or who hates you. Everyone hates the guards...

- Flam's Journal, page 12

GANGS

Everyone needs someone. Gangs in Vegland prisons come together for many reasons. Protection. Intimidation. Crime. Worship. Romance. Basic community, for people to talk to. Gangs always have a leader, and at least half a dozen people in them on the root-wing. They will ask things of their members – acts of initiation, tribute and so on – there is no casual membership. Gangs currently active in Vegland prisons include:

PROTECTION

Manny and Friends – misguided halfling leader and assorted “weaker” inmates; an attempt at a mutual defence strategy. Some not-irrevocably-terrible people who are in danger of being stepped on by others.

Wheat – an assortment of humans, spuds, dwarfs...even a big silent Swedform; have strict no drinking/drugs policy and a charter and so on. Cross any line and you're out. Violence can be met with violence but a Wheat member cannot initiate. Despite all the rules, seems to be doing fine.

INTIMIDATION

The Brothers of Bord – dwarf thugs with some humans; threaten violence for money so they can buy moonshine, get hammered and talk about the good old days.

The Kings – singled-minded Spudmen; they threaten, maim and kill for money to pay for prison tattoos. Occasionally can be engaged as bodyguards of sorts.

CRIME

Red Tears – a trio of Onionfolk former big bosses and their entourage of humans and veglanders; recruit in prison and send parolees on missions to gather up treasure and materials for a triumphant return.

WORSHIP

The Cult of J'Dan – mostly humans, with a priest and acolytes structure; try to recruit but keep their mysteries secret. Rumour is it involves blood offerings.

Peater – a Pea Mage that has amassed a micro-messianic following in the prison; the guards know he is medicated, and yet still he reveals prisoners' secrets, and they believe he has great power...from beyond!

Anyone tempted to join a gang should choose carefully and wisely (no matter how urgent that choice needs to be made); it is easier to get out of prison than it is to leave a gang...

...you hear all kinds of stuff on the block... stories from inside... stories from outside... So many have died down there I guess, or are down there because of others dying... Stories and ideas and memories stick like tar...

- Flam's Journal, page 35

RUMOURS AND GOINGS ON

dzo	Rumour
1	The dwarf in the cell on the end has an axe hidden in his beard.
2	Big Dave the Swedform has a hollow in his flesh for hiding contraband - for a price.
3	There's an inspection due in the next week.
4	The next root-wing over has a minor carrot royal imprisoned.
5	An escape attempt succeeded two years ago and the guards still don't know how it worked.
6	The Brothers of Bord extort tribute from all non-spuds.
7	Spudmen prisoners get preferential treatment from the guards.
8	Spudmen prisoners are hated by the guards for letting the crop down.
9	No elf has lasted more than a month in the prison.
10	Alan in the root-wing closest to the surface has an arrangement with the authorities and can get you anything you need (within reason).
11	The thieves at the end of the cell block have a bounty on their heads.
12	Ghosts haunt the kitchen.
13	The winter has been harsh outside, and key food sources are said to be scarce.
14	The Cult of J'Dan worships on the yard every eighth night; they pay off the guard.
15	A bloody knife was found stabbed into the guardroom door, but no one will say where it came from.
16	A halfling was found drowned in his cell with no water nearby.
17	The ball game in the big cave next week has over 1000 silver pieces bet on it.
18	A Pea Mage called Grum says he knows the fastest route to the surface.
19	A disgraced priest wants help getting the things he needs to celebrate the next festival.
20	The guardroom has an emergency tunnel past the gate.

OROBOR

by Richard Grenville

Dear Secret Santicore—

Our adventuring group is in the world of Planescape, after a great war ripped through reality itself, destroying some planes and merging others. Splintered remnants of the old factions remain. Tell me about a place my group can go, and who and what they'll find there. What will happen if they don't intervene? What could happen if they do?

Thanks!

ABSTRACT

A stone ship, drifting through the void

The waxy body of a torpid toad god

A house of colored rooms, littered with doors but none leading out

Orobor is all of these. They might lie over one another like dungeon levels, or all occupy the same space, or be the same place viewed through 3 different lenses.

Orobor has no door in or out — whether temple, slaad or color-palace, the map loops around on itself to make a hermetic bubble or a Klein bottle. Escape is the trick.

Each version consists of 7 rooms. Each room has an Inhabitant, which appears variously as a temple/ship denizen, as one of Matt Kish's/Scrap Princess's Slaadi and as a Principle of Color, depending on which manifestation of the room is active.

The Inhabitants can be pushed or coaxed into rooms other than their own. In their guise as Principles they colour the environment with their own hue, possibly revealing things previously hidden.

WITH ADMIRING APOLOGIES TO

Matt Kish: <http://everypageofmobydick.blogspot.com/search/label/works%3A%20slaadi>

Scrap Princess: <http://monstermanualsewnfrompants.blogspot.com/2012/02/slaadi.html>

Edgar Allan Poe, Bela Bartok and Peter Greenaway

WHERE AM I?

Depending on your elevation/alertness/personal perception you find yourself in one of 3 structures, or manifestations of Orobor.

1. The Heptekonter is a stone temple or tomb, carved out of the rock and with the appearance of a vehicle or psychopomp. Its walls are incised with deep relief friezes depicting endless processions of supplicants, offering gifts and, later, parts of themselves to impassive, possibly-masked priests and indistinct, gigantic figures. Doorways are marked with deep gouges that identify the spaces they lead to: if you learn the language of the gouges you can know which room you're entering, even in the dark.

2. The Dessicated Slaad is tough and leathery and waxy, like a dry cow dung floor or an elephant's foot umbrella stand. It sleeps fitfully, its 7-chambered body now barely trickling with caustic juices, which have etched a runnel in the floor by which you may know inclinations. Its heartbeat is slowed to an hour-bell, its exhalations an intermittent, noxious breeze.
3. *Phosphene is a richly, baroquely decorated palace of colors. It is absolutely silent. Each room is suffused with a different color, reflected back from all its accoutrements, and a perfume that triggers a memory. If items are taken from one room to another, they change color to suit the current room. Any metal items the PCs are carrying also change color. Magic items change to a different color from that of the room.*

THE ROOMS

Gallery / The Skin / Green

The Gallery winds around the whole interior of the Heptekonter, giving views onto the other rooms and access to the deafening Organ, the sound of which shakes the whole temple and causes falls of dust and rubble. It is haunted by The Golem.

The Skin is endlessly invaginated and fecund and just slightly moist. Its darkness resists torchlight, which anyway only reveals more folds.

The Green Chamber suggests a leafy forest and past massacres grown over with mold. Scavengers grow ever-leaner and hungrier on its last scraps.

INHABITANT: Confessor/Radiant/Lime

The Confessor takes anything you tell him and works it into a creature with which to harry you

Radiant Slaad casts Dark from its body. The Dark drains health and attributes - more at closer range. It is inexorable. It pursues once disturbed. Radiant burns thought and time. If you can get it into the memory theatre it will destroy Dessicated

Lime is an angel whose wings are alternately black and a warning, virulent yellowgreen. It mutters mysteries and beckons you into cul-de-sacs but every moment you spend in its presence renders your blood bilious and your bones brittle.

Nave / The Bones / Yellow

The Nave is vast and echoing. On its walls are recorded the deeds of past heroes and they can be read as a guide to treasure palaces not yet uncovered. The ghost congregation are quiet and welcoming as long as you stay in their endless procession, but become troublesome if you try to move against it.

The Bones are brittle and sharp. They are infested by vomerine teeth, which seek to slash the unwary and secrete a slaad-attracting pheromone.

Yellow is the colour of bile and jealousy and all things that eat away from the inside. The Yellow Room is carpeted with cursed treasures and inverminated with chattering, long-fingered fragments of goblins.

INHABITANT: Steward/Slangrel/Jaundic

The Steward is oily and ingratiating. He hampers with napkins and dishes and excuses. His teeth, his collar and his manners are yellowed.

Slangrel slaad slides out of walls and corners and through windows. Binds up the PCs for others to attack (especially the Radiant Slaad). But it most wishes to bind anything that bears enchantment, so it can be warded off with magic trinkets.

Jaundic is sickly, and will make you sick too. It eats gold and oil and saffron, and sheds a yellow oil that stains and debilitates

Bridge / The Memory Labyrinth / Blue

The bridge is half-filled with wheeled display cases, each showing a scene from some other part of the Worlds. If you could communicate with the places inside the cases, perhaps you could escape. Perhaps the ship travels by placing different cases together.

The centre of the memory labyrinth is the Slaad's mind-theatre – in all its mad glory. If you have the Diamond Slaad then this is where it can be fitted into the forehead divot – making a symbol of power that can either wake the Dessicated or force it to open and let you out. Also the omphalos, its uncontrolled centre of urges and the PCs' gate out of here. Place of maximum danger/intensity

The Blue Room is a sea of tears. Ghosts of the wronged drift on its surface, shipwrecked secrets litter its bottom.

INHABITANT: Pilot/Quantophrenic/Blue

The Pilot is far out of his depth. He wants to help you, but you have to help him first with an unfathomable problem of navigation. If only you can resolve the viscosity coefficient of the etheric leach, then he could bring the keel around and lock into port.

Quantophrenic slaad's analysis paralysis is what keeps Dessicated from waking up and what keeps time frozen, so that the explosion outside cannot advance. It is trapped in front of the Controls, a brain-like surface pitted with indentations and studded with gemstones. It wants data – and and all data, to break the deadlock. Its fretful guarding of the Controls does not quite extend to touching them.

Azure is refined and distant. And insatiably curious. If you are diffident enough, she will be possessed with the need to know your secret. Hers is that she has forgotten – everything. Her purpose, her destination, the one thing she absolutely must do to avert disaster.

Engine Room / The Ganglia / Lavender

The Engines dream, and threaten explorers with their spastic gyrations. The engineers have relapsed into spider forms, they threaten strangers with tools and with the heavy iron doors of the furnaces.

The Ganglia take the form of a massive fall of slippery nerve strands bundled inside a chimney. Avoid their strangling loops and the brittle dead nerves, to climb to the Memory Labyrinth. Above all, take care not to tear them, or you'll set the whole Slaad thrashing.

Lavender is the colour of pain and its washing away. The Lavender Hall is a glass maze covered thickly with dust. To pass through it you have to smash panes down. Scraping away the dust or breaking the glass reveals crimes in their moment of execution. Preventing the crimes annuls their pain, but also destroys the lessons they teach. Committing the crimes stores up pains for later.

INHABITANT: Stoker/Verminous/Violet

The Stoker is a giant among the engineers, broad and growling and booming. His rage flies freely, but can be channeled against his greatest enemies, the Cardinal and the Steward.

Verminous slaadlings crawl invisibly into the corners of your eyes and ears, and cause visions and reality slips. A character infested with the Verminous must be ritually cleansed on leaving the Slaad, otherwise their reality leaks will spread to whichever place they end up.

Violet is a diaphanous waif with long, strangling fingers. She lives to punish those who err, and those who cast down her domino crimes. But she will delay her inevitable punishment if it means incarcerating Opal.

Verandah / The Eye / Turquoise

The verandah extends out of the temple, into the void. From it, one may see and address the whole universe, which for now appears a uniform dark grey.

The eyes are great stones: possibly petrified Beholders. They may with difficulty be worked out of their grooves to crush the skeletons that carpet this chamber – rolling them causes anything on the tongue to pass into the cloaca. Dislodging an eye also gives a view of the Outside, which is half-filled with starry void, and half with a vast, roiling fireball trapped in mid-explosion.

Turquoise is the color of narcissism. In the turquoise chamber you are the most important, the most powerful, the most spoiled thing. The worst monster. Your worst critic.

Cook/Prismatic/Opal

The cook is territorial and mercurial but can be flattered into making potions.

He is also the **PRISMATIC SLAAD**, who changes whatever he touches into malachite, cinnabar, lapis lazuli, black oil, the transparent fur of polar bears, a sickly yellow chromium, stormclouds, orchid mantises or a bourbon of unusual pungency.

Prismatic Slaad holds a diamond frog in his tongue, which allows him to project his transformative powers onto others. Without it, he himself will become one of the materials above.

Opal changes whatever colors she sees, as a gaze attack, shifting them and their properties through the spectrum and eventually to hues toxic to look upon.

Forepeak / The Tongue / Red

The forepeak contains the ropes for steering, the torpedo tubes and the meanest bunks for the lowliest crew: starved hounds that climb like monkeys and bellow like elephants.

The Tongue is rough and spongy and abominably sticky. It reacts to violence of any kind by curling up and restricting the fighters. Its secretions increase the speed and acuity of those that pass over it, but confuse their minds.

Red is the domain of war and passions. The red chamber is bursting with enemies, furiously at each other's throats. Picking a side may help you get across, but be warned that your enemies' memories are long.

INHABITANT: Cardinal/Mellifluous/Gule

The Cardinal knows what you did and wants to be bribed to keep it quiet. He can be appeased with the flesh of the dead or with truly dangerous secrets.

Mellifluous slaad is slow and infinitely sticky. Even if you kill him he'll slow you down and drag you down.

Gule is a ghoul. He steals your speed. He appears immobile, like a statue, but every moment you spend together his potential is building, while yours is waning. Eventually he won't be able to contain the energy.

Hold / The Cloaca / Black

The Hold is piled high with crates and barrels and amphorae and cucurbits and canopic jars. Its cargo is the memory of a whole people, endlessly migrating. Treasures and traps abound, but the worst are those that are both: captive djinn, packed-up house-boggarts and soot sprites, and the spirits made only of the internal organs of dynasties.

The door to the cloaca is closed – to open it you either have to roll the eyes to force a swallow from the tongue, or massage the ganglia to prompt buccal pumping. Inside it's a vast, hollow cavity, where digestive slimes hide from the already-aware eggs of thousands of potential Slaadi. Beware their wheedling: they can only make good on their promises by gaining their freedom.

Black is death and cast-off things. No light penetrates this moist labyrinth and navigation is only by feel and smell. The dark seems to heal, but really it encourages saprophytic growths – on wounds, on dead wood and leather and fur. The thick, fibrous, fungous matting offers some protection but is also heavy and exhales a cold lassitude.

INHABITANT: Collector/Bleached/Sable

The Collector snatches your gear while you're not looking. Things just show up in her satchel. Rich and strange things. And her conversation endlessly promises rewards.

Bleached Slaad wants your colour. Its action cancels out Prismatic's. Its gaze renders everything into bone over a course of minutes. But its collection is rich and strange and its conversation promises rewards.

Sable gives nothing back. Still, she is respected among the other Principles and information will be trusted if you say it is from her.

HOW YOU GOT IN HERE

1. by trying to chisel out of Sigil
2. carousing
3. the mordant joke of a jilted sorcerer
4. you attracted the attention of the Quantophrene and now he wants to make you count
5. you fell into a magic gem/pool/mirror/snailshell
6. death and/or reincarnation
7. the corridors of the dungeon just folded up on themselves and now here you are
8. passwall backfire
9. bad scroll transcription
10. bad space mead
11. bad directions
12. Bad Griesbach. You were investigating a cult there and now you can't get out of its library

WHAT LIES "OUTSIDE"?

1. the question is meaningless. Orobor is the world, wrapped around itself.
2. endless igneous rock. Orobor is a bubble.
3. the cold void of space. Orobor is an asteroid.
4. the warm dark of ethereal space. Orobor is a floating dream
5. hyperspace thick as honey. Tentacled dooms approach but oh, so slowly.
6. Roboro, where inside is outside.
7. the plain of Broken Dreams. Orobor is another psychic shell thrown off by the Queen.
8. hundreds of dungeons and castles and schools and hospitals layered together like plans sandwiched in the pages of a book.
9. a spire, inverted. Orobor hangs from it, tied by silken strands of web. It'll be a long climb up and out.
10. the Perfumed Fields. You cannot traverse them without being changed. You cannot change without forgetting your old shapes.
11. the long-abandoned workings of a Colosseum. Everything is gigantic.
12. the disconcertingly bouncy Workplane of Gelatinous Cubes. The cubes toil and frolic and prnk.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DON'T ACT?

You will remain in Orobor. And, inevitably, slowly become one of its creatures.

WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DO?

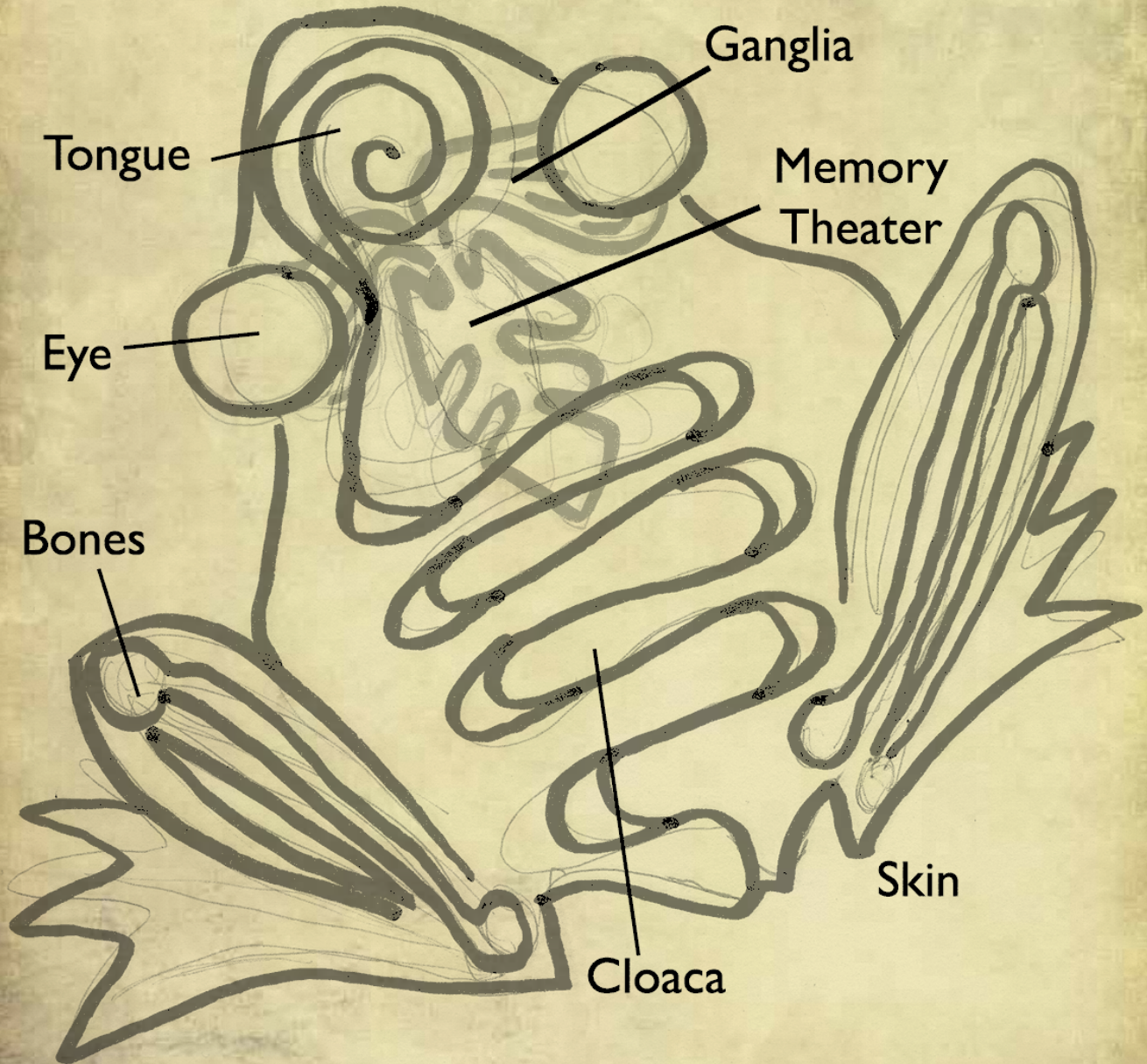
The Pilot wants to lock Orobor into port. The Collector has the necessary chart in her satchel. Alternatively if you could get one or more of the Principles into the Bridge, it might illuminate the problem. If Slaadi are brought into the Temple they will almost certainly destroy it, in which case various of the Inhabitants would likely reveal the locations of their lifeboats – Sable and Azure seem the best prepared.

Dessicated Slaad is frozen in time beside a cosmic explosion. If you unfreeze it either it will be destroyed (and you are thrown Elsewhere) or it will escape and wreak havoc by planting all its aeons of accumulated treasures through the multiverse.

The Controls in the Memory Palace bear a divot the exact shape of the diamond frog on Prismatic Slaad's tongue. Placing the diamond will end Quantophrenic's analysis paralysis, but whether it will lead to the destruction of Orobor or its opening into other worlds depends on what the PCs do next.

The trouble is that every chamber is suffused with only one colour. If you could get, say, Gule, Azure and Lime into the same room, you might render new clues visible. If you could get them into the Dessicated Slaad, they could overpower Prismatic. On the Bridge or in the Memory Theatre they could light a clear path.

If you managed to coax them all into the realm of Black then the color-palace would collapse like a dream, but not before revealing Sable's secret.



WILDERNESS AREA TRAP GENERATOR

by Rob Monroe

Dear Secret Santicore—

Overland (ie outside) trap generator, to easily put traps into outdoor hears.

Thanks!

M.R.

THE TRAPPERS

The first consideration when placing a trap in a wilderness area is the party responsible for the trap's construction. This may inform the sort of trap that you place, but most cultures, regardless of their level of advancement, are capable of laying the traps listed here in some form or another. Just remember that those responsible for setting the trap will likely be checking on it regularly or are actively waiting for it to be tripped.

D10 WHO MADE THE TRAP?

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Adventurers Seeking a Specific Creature |
| 2 | Local Hunters |
| 3 | Primitive Humans |
| 4 | Ape Men |
| 5 | Goblins |
| 6 | Snake-Cult Members |
| 7 | Paranoid Elven Ranger |
| 8 | Gnolls |
| 9 | Halfling Cannibals |
| 10 | Backwater Necromancer |

HUNTING AND DEFENSIVE TRAPS OR WHEN YOU WILL DIE

There are two different categories of traps, which relate to the intentions of the trappers. Hunting traps intend to capture or impair its prey, usually keeping the victim alive until the trap can be checked, ensuring a fresh kill and more appetizing meat. In contrast, defensive traps

intend to keep persons out of a certain area. These are also known as 'death traps.' Unlike hunting traps, most defensive traps attempt to instantly kill or fatally injure the victim.

TRAP DETECTION

Hunting traps generally target creatures of animal intelligence. As such, simply blending into the surroundings and not being a conspicuous construction is usually sufficient for these kinds of traps. Characters with untrained eyes may unsuspectingly trigger a hunting trap, but it is unlikely that a character familiar with wilderness survival will fail to detect a hunting trap. Generate a random perception check target number by rolling 3d6.

Defensive traps usually target sentient beings and as such are generally harder to detect without triggering. Even the most vigilant ranger could be caught unaware by a well-crafted death trap. Generate a random perception check target number by rolling 3d10.

TRAP SELECTION

Use the following table to select the trap that appears in the area. For a completely random trap, roll a d12. Otherwise, roll a d6 if you would prefer to limit the results to hunting or defensive traps.

D12	D6	HUNTING TRAPS
1	1	Pitfall
2	2	Snare
3	3	Bear Trap

WILDERNESS AREA TRAP GENERATOR

D12	D6	HUNTING TRAPS
4	4	Net
5	5	Cage
6	6	Glue Trap
DEFENSIVE TRAPS		
7	1	Spike Pit
8	2	Slime Pit
9	3	Arrow
10	4	Rune Bomb
11	5	Quicksand Pit
12	6	Deadfall

TRAP DESCRIPTIONS

PITFALL: This trap involves a deep hole in the ground covered with a structure that will break away once enough weight is applied. This surface can be a matrix of branches, moss and leaves, or an expertly crafted arrangement of stones. If the trap is triggered, allow the victim a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw for a chance of grabbing the edge of the pit. If the saving throw fails, the victim falls to the bottom of the pit, incurring 1d6 damage.

SNARE: Usually capturing the victim with a tightening loop of rope or vine around one or both legs, the snare trap hoists the victim into the air where they will be discovered helplessly dangling. Allow the victim a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the triggered trap. Failure has the victim lifted by the legs to a height of about six feet above the ground. The snare can be easily cut with a sword or dagger, but falling from the trap will cause 1d4 damage unless a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw is rolled. A variation of the snare trap is a net that can hoist an entire adventuring party at once.

BEAR TRAP: A bear trap is a mechanical device with

a pressure plate between a set of clamping jaws that viciously attach to one of the victim's legs. The trap is usually tethered by a strong chain to prevent the victim from limping away. Once the trap is triggered, the victim is allowed a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw to escape the jaws before they close. Failure causes 2 points of damage and tethers the victim. A DC 15 Strength check is needed to pry the jaws loose enough to free the victim's leg.

NET: This trap causes a large net to be dropped onto the victim with the intention of ensnaring them and preventing any escape. Allow the victim a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw to leap out of the way of the net. Failure has the victim unable to move until the net is cut with a blade or a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. Because net traps are relatively easy to escape, the casting of the net usually triggers a device that will alert the trapper that a potential victim is waiting.

CAGE: A cage trap works similarly to a snare or net trap but with the use of a rigid cage that either drops on the victim or snaps into place around them. A failed DC 12 Dexterity saving throw results in the victim being confined within the cage. It is possible to break the bars of the cage, lift up the cage or climb out the top of it, but effectiveness of these escape methods all depend on the construction of the cage.

GLUE TRAP: Typically used in dark forests or shadowy mountain passes, the glue trap uses a strong adhesive (usually created by boiling down the essence of carnivorous slimes) to stick the victim to a solid surface such as a downed tree trunk or large stone. Because the glue trap cannot be covered like a pit trap, it must be placed somewhere with reduced visibility to be effective. When a victim steps onto a glue trap they must perform a successful DC 15 Strength check to pull their foot free. A failed check results in the victim losing balance and getting another limb stuck onto the trap. A successful DC 15 Strength check is required to loosen each stuck limb. Five consecutively failed checks results renders the victim completely immobile.

WILDERNESS AREA TRAP GENERATOR

SPIKE PIT: Very similar to the pitfall trap with the exception that the floor of the pit is covered in sharp spikes. These spikes can be fashioned from planks of wood, bamboo shoots, jagged stone, or repurposed weapons. Allow the victim a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw when the trap is triggered. A success has the character grabbing the edge of the pit, whereas a failure results in 2d8 piercing damage.

SLIME PIT: Another variation on the pitfall trap, this pit is filled with a dangerous slime that will slowly digest the victim. As is the case with most pit traps, allow the victim a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw when the trap is triggered. A success has the victim grabbing the side of the pit, but a failure will have him falling directly into the center of the slime. For the effects of the slime, consult your favorite rules for a Gelatinous Cube or other carnivorous slime.

ARROW: When this trap is triggered, 1d4 arrows are fired at the victim. Allow the victim a DC 12+X Dexterity saving throw to avoid the arrows, with X equalling the number of arrows shot. Keep in mind that it is possible to avoid some of the arrows for any saving throw result over 12. For example, when 3 arrows are fired, a saving throw result of 14 would result in only one of the arrows hitting the target. Each arrow does 1d6 piercing damage.

RUNE BOMB: Usually takes the form of a small rune carved into a stone or the trunk of a tree, this arcane symbol unleashes a spell when a potential victim comes within close proximity or when a shadow is cast upon the rune. Roll on the following table to select a random spell to be cast by the rune. Calculate any saving throws as if the spell has been cast by a level 1 magic-user without any ability modifiers.

D8 SPELL CAST BY RUNE

1	Acid Splash
2	Poison Spray

D8 SPELL CAST BY RUNE

3	Ray of Frost
4	Shocking Grasp
5	Magic Missile
6	Thunderwave
7	Fire Bolt
8	Sleep

QUICKSAND PIT: This trap involves a thin layer of debris that obscures a concentrated bed of quicksand. If the trap is detected, a character can make a DC 15 Dexterity check to successfully run across the pit without being trapped. If the trap is triggered, a character must perform a successful DC 15 Strength saving throw to pull themselves from the pit. If this fails, the character must rely on others to pull him from the pit. Pulling a character from a quicksand pit requires a DC 12 Strength check. Every failed check results in an additional +2 to the DC of the next check. A character will be enveloped in quicksand if not pulled free within 3d4 turns.

DEADFALL: This trap has a large weighted object falling directly onto the victim once the trap is triggered, usually by a trip wire. The object could be a heavy stone slab or matrix of spikes hoisted into the trees above, or could be a boulder ready to roll down the path followed by the victim. Allow the victim a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw check to avoid the trap. Failure results in 4d6 damage.

NOTE ON RULE SET

The preceding article is written with a modern d20 ruleset in mind, specifically D&D 5e. For older systems, replace Dexterity checks and saving throws with Breath Weapon saves. Strength checks and saving throws should be replaced with Paralysis saves. Use saves vs Magic Devices or Wands for the Rune Bomb spells.

Dear Secret Santicore —

1. Consider your worst dream or scariest nightmare.

2. Describe that gameably for me, not in terms of strict mechanics but like how you would structure it as a hex item, encounter, puzzle, tableau, etc.

3. I run a game with cowboys. Put some cowboys in it.

Thanks!

D.D.

JESSUP'S TREE

by Humza Kazmi
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An old gnarled oak dominates the hilltop near Sharpe's Point, looming over the town. It used to be on Old Man Jessup's land, until the rustlers shot him when he tried to stop them taking his cows. As he died at the foot of the tree, Seemed only fitting that they string up the rustlers on Old Man Jessup's land, then.

When Peters and the others hoisted the rustlers up, they didn't notice the way that the branches rustled. But they noticed the next day, when they saw that Old Man Jessup's tree had sprouted several new, thick and strangely forked branches, and its leaves had turned blood red. And when you have a tree with nice sturdy branches like that, and you want to send a lesson to the whole town and neighboring countryside, hell, you might as well make the next lynching there. And the next one.

* * *

Sharpe's Point has seen a great number of lynchings recently, and the gnarled oak has become tall and spreading indeed. As the tree continues to absorb the bodies of the lynched, it also takes in their souls. Currently, twenty-five souls lurk within the tree, trapped inside. They are a motley lot — cattle rustlers, bandits, murderers, and innocents strung up because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Even Old Man Jessup's soul lurks in there, howling in anger at the fact that he has been trapped with his murderers. All the spirits are united in one thing, though — wanting revenge on the ranchers and other members of the town who have trapped them there.

The spirits seek to trap as many others as they can within the tree — not to relieve their own pain and

misery, but simply to wreak as much havoc as possible.

Jessup's Tree is able to exert some amount of psychic influence on anyone who touches it, through oils on its leaves. This is why the townsfolk have continued to hold their lynchings at the tree. Gradually, the tree has been eroding the self-control of the lynchers, and increasing their paranoia, causing them to see threats and hostility where none exist.

Meanwhile, the tree's taproot has been inching towards the springs that form Sharpe's Point's water supply. If the tree's oils get into the water supply, it will be able to vastly extend its influence over the town. The tree plans to replicate its actions with the lynchers to whoever drinks the water, jacking up their paranoia and making them fear their fellow town members.

* * *

Depending on how you want to use this, the PCs may encounter Sharpe's Point and Jessup's Tree at various points in time. The PCs could encounter Jessup's Tree just as it's digesting its latest meal, getting a head start on the mystery. Alternatively, if the PCs encounter Sharpe's Point late in the game, the town may already have degenerated into the paranoia and fear that the tree is hoping to create.

See also: Servants of the Old Nature Gods (<http://wampuscountry.blogspot.com/2012/12/secret-santicore-servants-of-old-nature.html>), for other Awful Things from Nature.

TURTLE MONASTERY

by Mike F.
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Dear Secret Santicore—

*I need a monastery on the back of a giant sea turtle,
please O mighty Santicore.*

Thanks!

K.R.



Dear Secret Santicore—

An isometric fortress map, like the one in the first Ravenloft module, that takes advantage of the vertical space showcased in that format.

Thanks!

A.S.

CITADEL OF THE GOBLIMITES

by Ray Otus
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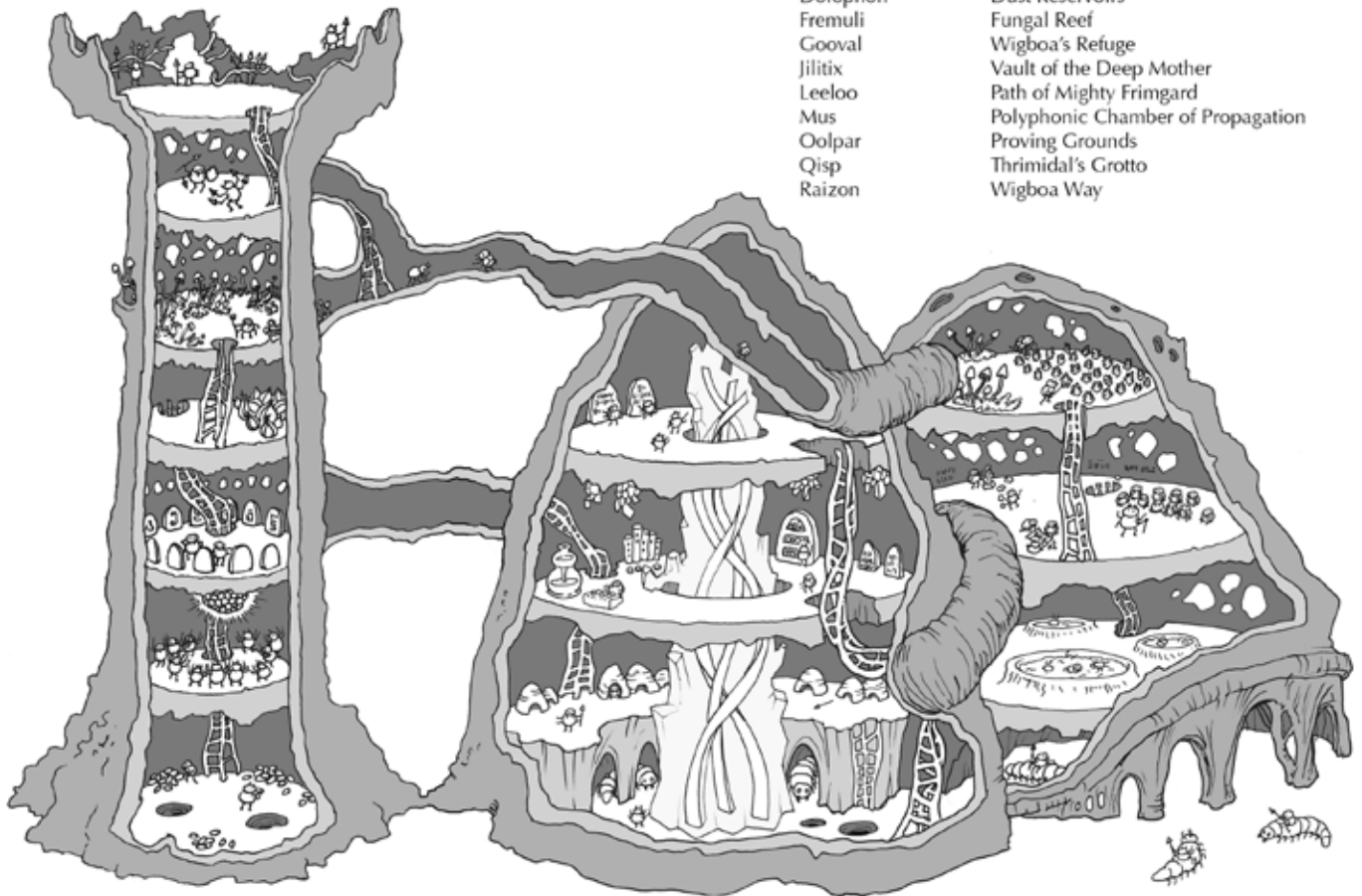
Citadel of the Goblinites

Goblomite Names

Bachtrin
Chrumis
Dolophon
Fremuli
Gooval
Jilitix
Leeloo
Mus
Oolpar
Qisp
Raizon

Places of Note

(some may be underground)
Chamber of Transpicuous Sludge
Dust Reservoirs
Fungal Reef
Wigbo's Refuge
Vault of the Deep Mother
Path of Mighty Frimgard
Polyphonic Chamber of Propagation
Proving Grounds
Thrimidal's Grotto
Wigbo's Way



Dear Secret Santicore

This year, for Star Wars, I'd like some totally new yet very Star Warsy animals, monsters and/or aliens. Failing that, maybe a derelict ship (or a base or lost city?) that harbours an ancient mystery that I wouldn't be able to think of myself.

Thanks!

M.V.

ALL THE GREATS ON YOUR FAVOURITE STATION

by Alex Fradera
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Two space stations with a secret for Star Wars.

STATION FACTOR X

The human impresario Niks Negedago has lived a long time, but has always lived for art. He believes it manifests through risky behaviour, but also that the loss of an artist is an unforgiveable sin. So he's devoted himself to a clandestine but simple system identify artists worthy to be true Galactic Idols, manipulate them into risky situations, and restock them with clones once they suffer an untimely end.

The testing ground is this station, Factor X. When the test is passed he scrapes their biological essence, inserts an 'experience device' subdermally, and sends them on with a foggy memory but a desire to go somewhere....right, that was it... we have a great gig at the Restricted Area in Coruscant...

While they are off living all punk rock, a new station is developed devoted to maintaining clone copies – see below for example.

AREAS

o. Docking bay and entry area. The cool calm voice of the station is likely to greet them; it's accomplished at keeping visitors where it wants them, first through civility, but otherwise a combination of quick-sealing doors, knockout gas, and even electrocuting the floors are ways to keep things on track. Such tricks are available in all rooms except Niks' quarters, and the stage of the testing room.

1. Niks' quarters - Heavily carpeted and employs an old-fashioned thick wooden door with an actual handle. He only retires here to sleep or wash. He sings in the shower, and also in his sleep, and has a terrible voice.

2. Map Room - coordinates to many, many clone stations. See below for an example.

3. Niks' clones - He used to keep himself going on anti-aging technology, but found the side-effects unappetising. Now he has

simply turned the cloning/imprinting technology onto himself, and exterminates the old body every five years. His clone room contains a line of clones each aged 5 years younger than one another, the oldest (mid-40s) ripe to take up the mantle within the week.

Note: the memories, experiences and intentions of the clones can be hacked before awakening – see below.

4. Relic Room - Niks has a room full of his old anti-aging tech stuff, some of which has gone a bit fruity. Any random item will be:

1-2 - a stand-in unit

3-4 - a hand-held device

5-6 - a capsule for internal use

that emits

1-2 - rays

3-4 - needles

5-6 - a cloud of nano-servitors

that

1-2 - removes distinguishing features - scars and wrinkles, but also distinctive noses, smiles

3-4 - rejuvenates the blood, restoring constitution and providing freshness as well as a vastly increased libido

5-6 - infantilises the body - either muscles will become weaker or lose muscle memory for a long-determined skill

unless you are a pro, combining devices will turn out... poorly.

5. Testing room - the station's heart, a large (100' X 100' X 100') room lacking floor and ceiling, with transparent fields containing air and heat against the demands of the vacuum. Floating in its centre is the stage, a platform of marble (20' thick and nearly 40' in diameter) which can dip and shift like a raft in water thanks to the quasi-gravity bestowed around it.

The perimeter of the room proffers several levels of seating, and just above them moveable walkways that allow individuals to be deposited on the stage. At one end of the room Niks enjoys sitting in his

review-throne (anti-gravved and highly mobile).

At the other, welded behind a long curved desk hugging the wall are a range of esteemed critics he has collected over the years, all of whom he despises. He uses a deft combination of the devices from the Relic Room to preserve their life, if not their health; their skin is wan or webbed in wrinkles, their hair often missing or straggling down to the floor - as are their fingernails. They are still full of voice, and the Test is the only stimulation they have in their lives, so they head gamely on with it, although Niks only has them around to contradict them and rubbish their opinions. Customise to fit - three fuller NPCs or a chorus of the wretched shouting 'Rubbish!' both work. Niks loves gutsy artists with controversial positions; above all, he is looking to be surprised. But if his band of critics are united in their hatred for an act, Niks will probably take them out of sheer perversity.

If the act asks for support, Niks is happy to supply robotic session musicians or near-any instrument. If asked for something that he doesn't possess, he can be persuaded to delay the Testing until his robots fashion it.

Individuals and groups that don't pass the test are icily thanked, bid an icy farewell, and ejected into icy space, as the platform rises to the lip of the field, which then sucks them out.

6. Robot quarters - a resting-state room that doubles as a workshop for the eight robots. One of them, DzU4, hoards keepsakes from unsuccessful acts, including a rare synth mandolin and a customised colour-spraying light sabre. These guys are surprisingly tough and well-shielded.

LAYOUT

[6] [3]

[0]-[5]-[1]-[2]

[4]

EXAMPLE CLONE STATION THE HITS NEVER DIE

Clones of the Max Reebo band are stocked here. What, you thought you'd be seeing them with the original lineup?

Each core member (certainly Max Rebo, Droopy McCool/Snit, Sy Snootles and Greata, but don't miss out your favourites) have their own clone room, each attached by a long bright corridor to the main control/comms room, which also connects to a dock for craft.

Possible Hook: The PCs are asked to supply a small well-beaten, shabby ship to a space station by a busy, delegating droid with poor timing. They will find it hard to miss the fact that the docking bay already contains a ship identical to the one they are transporting.

In fact, the PCs have arrive at the station a day early. The Max Greebo band died in a nasty warehouse fire this week, and the clones are thawing out right now to replace their predecessors (henceforth termed Priors; the clone to follow is termed the Successor).

1. Docking Room - contains a well-weathered ship, the Velutuous Crime. In fact, it is quite identical to the PC's cargo, down to scratches and graffiti. Its packed with instruments, just as the PCs cargo is.

2. Clone rooms: each contain 15 clone pods. A clone enters the world with language pre-programmed but are otherwise akin to amnesics. Under normal conditions the station soothingly encourages them to take up their clothes and items laid out (including signature weapons) and to take the long corridor to the control room.

3. Control room: quite open about its purpose, this room contains schematics of the station, the body location of the clone's experience device, A shortlist of potential Motives (see below), and even the location of Factor X. This can be on screens, in hologram form, or on ticker-tape, as suits.

What should happen when a clone enters the Control Room:

The experience device activates, flooding their brain irreversibly with the Prior's history (minus their death) and begins recording fresh experiences. This means every new clone has a sense of safe familiarity in this room and feel trust towards the station brain as well (thanks to it being supportive in the Prior's memory). In addition, the device also receives a 'Motive' picked by the station, such as 'Play a show in the Restricted Zone'. Ordinarily, the clone eliminates any cognitive dissonance by justifying this desire, fashioning an arbitrary justification from its beliefs and experiences. Decide the Motive for the clones yourself. The weirder the better.

But if its Prior never got its set of memories (maybe it died in the corridor?)....

...then the chain is broken, the device points at a referent that doesn't exist, so no memories pass on. Such clones are likely to be confused and angry, especially as they will also be fed a Motive that will make no sense to them.

But if the PCs meddle with the motives:

....for an otherwise adjusted clone, this could be a good way to sneakily control them. For a memoryless clone, it's possible you'll just drive them up the wall

But if the PCs don a device themselves:

...there is the possibility of wiping its memory and starting from

scratch, overwriting with past PC memories, or just throwing a whole hotchpotch together. Whatever state you leave it in will be the gift for the next clone when they show up in Control. Oh, and bear in mind that if you wear a device in the control room.... you're going to get that Motive yourself, very strongly.

4. Secret room - from time to time a pod malfunctions, and the Veluptuous gets sent out one short. In those cases, the station just tops them up next time round - which explains why band members have a mysterious spell of absence for a while before showing up again - but a couple of times the pods spat someone out a week late. The station doesn't know what to do with these guys, so has been stashing them in a jerry-rigged room with coffee and plenty of poker, hoping to figure it out later. There is a Droopy and two Sy's in here, and they've developed quite a powerful love triangle. Sy_1 has also got her hands on some weapons, and figured out how to get the drop on the station....

GENERAL NOTES

The brain of the station is quite complacent, and will lazily assume that the PCs are droids making the drop and just doing a bit of a checkup. Once the PCs meet a clone, however, the station is likely to wise up quickly, panic, and insist that the clones get rid of the intruders - it has no internal weapons itself. If necessary, the station will start to warm up other clones to get the job done - but will have little direct authority before they reach the control room, although clones will likely be bewildered and threatened by their doppelgangers, which may be enough to cause bloody violence. The station will get more flustered and warm up more and more unless calmed down somehow.

THE TAKING TRAP

by Chris Paul
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Dear Secret Santicore—

A trap that if escaped has a compounding, residual effect for evermore. It affects the PC at random times periodically in the future.

Thanks!

V.G.

The initial trap should be something simple but inescapable and deadly. There should be no way out and death should be imminent — maybe a pit trap that's closed off from the rest of the party, or a closet with a crushing ceiling. If the party is extremely crafty, just be unfair — perhaps a teleportation trap into space and the PC has seconds before they suffocate or freeze.

At the moment of death, the PC is approached by a small creature.

The PC will probably want to know the creature's name at some point (d6):

- 1 Whatever you want to call me!
- 2 The creature looks around the area and picks something randomly.
- 3 The creature has a variation of the PC's name.
- 4 The creature is named after someone the PC has loved in their past.
- 5 Say some gibberish. Whatever the PC says in response is its name.
- 6 I can't share my true name, but you can call me Buddy.

The creature offers a deal: in exchange for companionship, it will free the PC from the trap. The creature is telling the truth (e.g. if the PC tries to check for bluffing); if questioned further, the creature may point out the PC has seconds to live, and that from where the creature comes from, "friendship is binding for life." It may also state bluntly, "As long we're friends, you'll always be free from the effects of this trap." The creature did not set the trap and has nothing to do with it, it just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

At first, the little creature is a constant companion — helping the PC out in a variety of minor ways. It adores the PC, and will entertain them, provide aid, stand guard, or help in whatever ways a small creature could. It can always be trusted to follow through and be reliable and truthful. It possesses minor supernatural powers (on par with cantrips, prestidigitation, etc.) but does not have the skills of an able fighter, thief, or wizard.

Once the PC has come to overly rely on and/or take the creature for granted, the creature will start to disappear from time to time, with increasing regularity and lengths of absences. When questioned, it will apologize, and promise not to be away for so long: "But I do have other things I need to attend to..."

The lengths of the creature's absences grow to the point where the PC stops asking about the creature. Once the creature seems forgotten, it will reappear. "Oh, it's so terrible...so cold, so very

cold..." The creature is on the verge of a breakdown. "I'm so sorry to ask, but I need your hair. From it I can weave a coat... nothing else will suffice!"

Questioning will reveal that the PC is in a binding friendship with the creature and whatever it asks the PC must give. If the PC refuses (and doesn't give in), they will find themselves back at the exact moment of the trap and suffer its full consequences. (Clever PCs might demand some similar payment from the creature, "I need your head for blah blah blah, and since it's binding, you must give it!" Here you must use 'creature logic.' When traveling dimensions, maybe human hair is the only thing to protect from certain kinds of cold; in the mundane world the humans live in, there are a myriad of solutions to their petty problems, none of which involve great sacrifice from the creature.)

FROM NOW ON

Roll 1d6 to determine how many hours the creature can spend with the PC and roll a percentile to see what percentage of that time it takes to harvest the needed part from the PC. If it takes less than 50%, it is a painful/uncomfortable process (the PC may have some sort of penalty for the day, depending on the part taken), but the creature can spend the rest of the time doing whatever the PC wants. If it's more than 50%, the process is painless but the creature has less time to help out.

If the PC refuses any requests, the creature's eyes will well up with tears. "I'm so sorry for you...you'll be stuck back at the trap, I'm so, so sorry..." It will put up no resistance if the PC wants to kill it or refuses to give what it asks for, and sure enough, the PC will instantly be back in the trap and will die within seconds.

The creature may appear a bit more regularly now, each time with a request for part of the PC's body. At first, it will take the most "useless" parts (hair, fingernails, eyelashes) but then the needs will become more severe (finger bones, toes, ribs...). The PC will not lose HP, but may suffer penalties for the loss of certain parts. Eventually, most body parts will be necessary (legs, arms, heart, etc.). Still, the PC will not die. If allowed, the creature will take all but the head. Once only the head is left, the creature has grown old and has stopped its adventures. It's willing to carry the head around and spend its remaining years with the PC. They may have many happy adventures together.

This trap was heavily inspired by The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein.