

# THE VERTICAL HALLS

A DCC RPG LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE



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GABRIEL GARCIA-SOTO



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# THE VERTICAL HALLS

## A DCC RPG LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

*The Vertical Halls* is an adventure that takes the characters from the village of *Shadypass*, a village beset by a strange illness, to the very top of a crazed, yet long-dead, scholar's demesne. In a race against the clock, they must find a cure for this mysterious ailment.

The adventure is intended for a level 2 party, and can be finished in about two or three game sessions. Although located in *Shadypass* and the *Hungrymoon* mountains, it can take place in any milieu; any village by a mountain pass would do.

### Shadypass

*Shadypass* is a small settlement, the last one before the trail wanders crookedly into the *Hungrymoon* mountain range.

The village is a community made up of lumberjacks, miners, and small-time merchants who take advantage of its unique spot by offering supplies and provisions for the journey.

Due to its situation under the mountains' shadow, *Shadypass* doesn't get many hours of daylight. However, in its public square, unsurprisingly named Plaza of Shine, a peculiar occurrence takes place; every day, the plaza is illuminated until dusk because, somewhere on the nearby peaks, the sun is reflected on a bright surface. The surface is the stained glass window high atop the Vertical Halls and, although the neighbors know about the

ruins, they do not dare approach them because of their ill fame.

The only inn in the village, The Broken Mirror, can also be found at the plaza. It's the mandatory stop for those travelers, miners, and traders spending the night before tackling the pass.

Other public places of interest are the grocery and a small shrine of Ildavir, goddess of nature, which is run by the village midwife – a young, broad-hipped, and generously chested redheaded girl named Eufrozina.

### The Tindalos virus

A week ago, there was a tremor near *Shadypass*. Not long after, the first cases of a strange disease appeared – a disease that is becoming an epidemic as days go by. The illness is the Tindalos Virus, an ailment from another



dimension. Its symptoms are a high fever coupled with geometrical nightmares: lines and flat shapes that mutate and inflict anguish and unease. The virus was once restrained in a stained glass window, but the tremor caused tiny fissures on the glass that allowed it to escape to the closest enclave where it could reproduce and fester.

There are four stages to the disease:

- **First stage:** high temperature, geometrical nightmares, and exhaustion (temporary loss of 1 Strength point).
- **Second stage:** fever and delirium, geometrical shapes appear even during waking time (-1 Initiative checks, temporary loss of both 1 Strength and 1 Luck point).
- **Third stage:** high fever (up to 105.8° F / 41° C) and confusion (-1 Initiative checks, temporary loss of 1 Strength, Intelligence, and Luck point).

- **Fourth stage:** hyperpyrexia: fever rises beyond 107.6° F / 42° C, causing death.

Effects are cumulative, so a character on the third stage suffers the temporary loss of 3 Strength points, 2 Luck points, and 1 Intelligence point, and applies a -2 to his Initiative checks. Lost points are not recovered until the disease is completely cured.

The disease is automatically contracted, no roll needed or allowed; beings from this dimension haven't developed defenses against diseases from other planes. Once infected, the patient must make a DC 12 Fort save every morning; if failed, the disease will proceed to the next stage. Moreover, being as it is an extra-dimensional virus, medicine is unable to do anything against it, and clerical spells and abilities can only lessen the effects. (*Neutralize poison or disease* or the cleric's *Laying on hands* ability will improve the patient's condition just by one stage.)



Another way of alleviating the symptoms is spending some hours under the stained glass window's reflection in the Plaza of Shine. This discovery was made by chance, and right now it's the main way for the *Shadypassians* to keep the disease at bay, or at least avoid becoming a corpse.

There's only one known cure for the Tindalos Virus, and it can be found in the summoning room, amongst the notes (**Area 22**).

## Character hooks

Getting the characters involved in the adventure is very easy; you just need to place *Shadypass* in their way as it's the only place to stop on the way to the *Hungrymoon* range. The characters will become infected as soon as they enter the village, and they'll endure a long night full of nightmares and fever.

A short stroll around the Plaza of Shine will expose them to a bizarre image: ill villagers sitting on the benches, basking in the reflection's light. Apparently it's

the only thing they can do to feel better.

Next morning, if they have breakfast at The Broken Mirror (they don't have many places to choose from anyway), they'll witness a customer drop dead. He's hot to the touch, and further investigation will show that he had been scribbling geometric patterns on the table similar to the ones seen in the characters' nightmares. Asking around will uncover that the deceased was infected by the disease that is running rampant, and that he's the first one to die.

## A brief enquiry

The characters will be able to gather some information on the ailment by asking the neighbors about it. They'll get these answers in the process:

- The illness manifested itself for the first time a week ago, coinciding with a minor earth tremor.
- Eufrozina, the midwife, can't do anything against it.



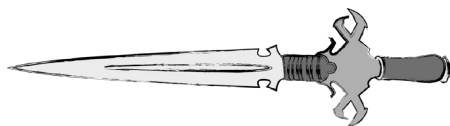
- As well as the fever, people affected by the virus suffer from nightmares.
- Some of the afflicted feel better when exposed to the reflection on the Plaza of Shine.
- The reflection that covers the Plaza shines from the ruins on top of the mountain peak. Groups of adventurers have delved into them in the past, but none returned.

All of these clues should be enough for the characters to suspect that the illness must be related to the ruins and that they'll need to explore them to find a cure and/or answers. Otherwise, Eufrozina will offer them a small reward to do so.

## The trip to the halls

It doesn't take much time to reach the ruins, a day's march will suffice. Any villager could guide them there, and he or she could even become part of the expedition if the salary is good enough.

Overland encounters are not recommended. They would drain the characters' resources before getting into the thick of the adventure.



# BACKGROUND

## The Geometrist

Nobody knows who the Geometrist was. Some say he was only a very inquisitive man, whereas others claim he was more than that – perhaps a demon or a being from another dimension. Now, he is just a dry corpse in a spider web. What is undeniable is that he was one of the most powerful thaumaturgists to have ever lived.

The Geometrist built his deme-sne in the *Hungrymoon* mountains, a place isolated and quiet enough to allow him to conduct his studies and weird experiments. Obsessed with geometry, his greatest achievement were “the Vertical Halls”, a huge vertical structure where gravity was adapted to his abhorrent design.

But his study of geometry wasn’t confined to architecture; he was also intrigued by the design of living creatures, and for years he toyed with the genesis of amalgams and similar horrors using the parts that ended up in his shredder, a trap he devised to dismember anyone who fell in it.

Unfortunately, the Geometrist’s existence came to an unexpected end one day when, while walking along the Vertical Halls, an earth tremor cracked the floor and destroyed the Hall’s gravitational effect. The thaumaturgist fell and landed in a giant spider

web. Dazed and unable to move, the enormous arachnids feasted on his fluids, and now his body lays there, part of a careful design. Exactly the way he would have liked it.

Time has proven that the area where the Halls are situated is very much prone to seismic activity, and a recent tremor chipped the stained glass window, thus freeing the Tindalos Virus from its interior.

## The Dauntless Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel

*- You may come in. It’s safe.*

*“The last words heard by the members of the Dauntless Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel.”*

A few years ago, adventurers from the Dauntless Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel got into the Geometrist’s lair with the intention of becoming immensely rich. Sadly, their enterprise came to an abrupt and violent end when they fell in a trap that quartered all of them except Bertoldo Virutas, the lively and incredibly lucky blue-eyed halfling in charge of trap detection and dangers in general. That wasn’t his finest day.

Without his partners’ help, Bertoldo became stranded and alone, incapable of retracing his steps and not daring to ascend up the mountain to a certain death.

Bertoldo stayed where he was, with the sole company of darkness, cold, and a young female choker who was hiding away from her suiters, which were in heat. And, well... loneliness is a bad advisor. After a few weeks, Bertoldo didn't look so ugly to her. And neither she did to him.

Bertoldo and the choker named "Cgggh" got very close in the darkness, and nowadays they are a happy couple.

Cgggh took her new male partner to the Vertical Halls ruins, where a choker community thrived thanks to their incredible agility and climbing skills. Imagine the halfling's surprise when he found out that his one-night stand was the leader's daughter. It didn't take Bertoldo too long to inherit the leadership after his father-in-law had an unfortunate and mortal accident.

Oh, and they had a child – gorgeous or horrible, depending on the mother's or the father's opinion.

Emboldened by the chokers' backing, Bertoldo tried his first and last attempt to get away from the Halls. This escape was frustrated when he ran into the abomination that the Geometrist assembled together with the Brotherhood remains, a chance encounter that proved that the abomination's parts kept their memories, and those memories were not fond of Bertoldo. Bertoldo made a hasty retreat, barely staying alive from the ordeal.

Since then Bertoldo sports an eye-patch, and the abomination a lovely blue eye.

Even now, the halfling is still utterly scared and remains hidden, a lowly regent of the Vertical Halls.

## Who's who in the Vertical Halls

Three factions with three divergent aims and goals coexist in the Vertical Halls: Bertoldo Virutas and his chokers, the abomination and amalgams, and the attercopus and his giant spiders. Note that none of them have been affected by the Tindalos Virus since it only infects humanoids.

### Bertoldo Virutas and Cgggh

The middle-aged halfling is a crafty, mean, and selfish being and, on top of that, the leader of a choker community. There's almost nothing left of the dashing young rogue of old. Now this one-eyed and humped oldie dressed in rags covers his uneven and bulky hump with a tattered cloak. His relationship with Cgghh is symbiotic, not in the least metaphorically speaking. The huge hump on his back is his wife, who lives coiled around his torso under his clothes and helps him to move around the Halls with her tentacles while holding on to his husband with her legs. After so much time together, they are almost one creature.





Bertoldo Virutas and Cghhh's stats are in **Area 20**.

### Bertoldo Jr

There are many theories about the chokers, and the bulk of them are related to the degeneration of little humanoids like gnomes, goblins, or halflings. This last case seems to be true,

given the success in crossing a halfling with a choker. The result is Bertoldo Jr., a dark- and slippery-skinned boy with gummy flesh covered with suckers and big feet. Bertoldo Jr. lives happy and at ease, completely integrated in the choker community, heir to the Vertical Halls.

Bertoldo Jr.'s stats are in **Area 19**.

## The chokers

After the tremor that caused the Halls to stop working, a small community of chokers from another part of the mountain took up residence in the ample and grim ceilings (the former walls) and pillars. They move around hanging upside down and live that way, which, as it turns out, is a bulletproof security measure. This allowed them to prosper even though Bertoldo, bent on breaking free, occasionally rallies them on deadly incur-sions resulting in the death of a handful. Against all odds, they continue to respect him and will follow his orders unless they're blatantly suicidal.

The chokers are degenerate humanoids, back-bent and scrawny, with gummy and hair-less skin, and extremely long and flexible limbs covered with tiny suction cups similar to tentacles. They have flat faces and an elongated cranium with bones that aren't fused together, allowing them to squeeze past narrow openings.

Thanks to their suction pads, they move easily using the ceilings and walls in the caves where they live, crouching for hours in lofty places while they wait in ambush for prey. It is then when they fall on them, choking said victim with their strong and long arms, after which they drag it to a dark and isolated spot to devour it in peace.

Chokers are somewhat intelligent and speak their own language composed of whispers and hisses. They tend to gather in communities or "nests" to protect themselves against the underdark perils.

You can check the chokers' stats out in **Area 17**.

## The abomination

The Geometrist concocted his masterpiece with the body parts from the Dashing Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel, reanimated through the application of a potent electrical shock. He then charged the abomination with guarding his lair and keeping interlopers and thieves away, a mission that it still carries on although its master died years ago. It also oversees the amalgams' work - cleaning and maintenance.

The abomination's amalgamated brain remembers every puny detail of its numerous deaths, and it blames Bertoldo for them, so it's eager to lay its malformed hands on the halfling and get the revenge it feels it deserves. It's already taken one of his blue eyes, by the way. Apart from the blue eye, the abomination has a long and silky blond mane, a gross double chin, two pointy ears, woman legs, as well as a voluptuous breast grafted on a well-muscled and broad black chest (that matches very well with its two strong black arms). Anyone reading the Brother-

hood's statutes will realize that those body parts were the Brotherhood members'.

The abomination's stats are in **Area 12**.

## The amalgams

Alchemists and sorcerers who lack the skills to create a flesh golem or a homunculus make do with the assistance of minor constructs like the amalgams. The Geometrist made quite a lot of them so they could take care of the Vertical Halls' maintenance. They are still carrying out his orders, and they have even learned to "repair" each other.

To create an amalgam, all you need is enough organic matter to build a humanoid body. This body is then animated with an uncommon embalming fluid derived from an obscure alchemical formula. The limbs and organs used come from a wide variety of creatures, as long as the result is vaguely humanoid. Hence, there aren't two amalgams that look the same; some have goat legs, while others have simian heads, or crab pincers, tentacles, and some of them even have racks or wings with which they can glide short distances. The creator's imagination is the only limit.

Amalgams have a very basic intelligence, almost animal, barely enough to follow precise orders. Their flesh is not particularly fresh, so they're always surrounded by the foul stench of carrion.

Their stats are in the **random encounters** section.

## The attercopus

Two's company, three's a crowd. The third party in the Vertical Halls is akin to some sort of missing link between humans and arachnids. Halfway between a human and a spider, the attercopus has a stocky body with an enormous belly and two thin and strong legs and arms divided into six articulations and seven parts. The head has six eyes and a set of mighty mandibles embedded in the mouth.

The eyes are primitive and very sensitive to light changes but with a very poor definition. This visual impairment is offset by the tactile hairs that spread over its back and the back of its arms, which help it sense airborne vibrations; they basically work like radar. Much like spiders, the attercopus secretes a silk that is used as an adhesive, means of transportation, and trap-building material.

The attercopus is a lonely predator that only relates briefly with other members of its species to procreate. They're ovoviparous; that is to say, they lay eggs that remain in the female's body until the embryo is fully developed. The hatching takes place before the birth, and the hatchlings eat their way out of their mother's body, which becomes their first meal.

Although the attercopus doesn't get on well with its equals, it does enjoy the company of all kinds of spiders. It is indeed on the *Hungrymoon* mountain face where such a community can be found, under the Vertical Halls. This community is made up of several giant spiders with an attercopus acting in a manner similar to a shepherd with his sheep.

There, the attercopus has spun a wide web spanning the abyss, a web that collects any creature unfortunate enough to fall from the Vertical Halls, as well as the odd bird. And, better to be safe than sorry, it trapped some sections of the Halls to propitiate those falls.

The attercopus stats are in **Area 15**.

## Features of the Vertical Halls

Both the Geometrist's laboratory and the Vertical Halls were constructed by digging into the mountain's rock. The geometry of the ceilings, floors, walls, doors, etc. is unnaturally perfect. The surfaces, although made with stone, have been polished to a shine, so they reflect the light. Corners and edges are so sharp that they can cut if care is not taken. However, none of this endured the passage of time and the earth tremors unscathed. The floors are coated with a layer of dust, the corners are choked

with spider webs, and cracks are everywhere; all of these upset the geometric harmony, almost in a sacrilegious way.

The doors are closed, but not locked (unless noted otherwise).

The vertical part of the Halls is constructed on the mountain face. The upper area is still roofed, while the lower area lost its cover during the tremor.

The Geometrist loved natural light. He devised a complicated system of pipes, mirrors, and prisms that originates and is controlled from the viewpoint (**Area 5**) used to light up all the rooms. The dust and the loose earth that now cover the surfaces filter the light, so it's got a ghoulish and ghostly tone.

## Random encounters and wandering creatures

The Vertical Halls are not a good place to take a walk. Only the amalgams can stroll around the first and second levels freely, but not on the vertical level. Roll 1d6 every time the characters spend more than 10 minutes in the same place; on a 1, a group of 1d3+1 amalgams taking care of their maintenance duties will show up. If they face hard opposition, one of them will run off to **Area 12** to alert the abomination.

**Amalgam:** *Init -1, Atk club +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 13; HD 1d8+2; Mv 30'; Act 1d20; Sp: Stench; Sv Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -2, AL N.*

*Stench: Amalgams smell of death, so any creature with a sense of smell will receive a -1d whenever they are within two meters of one of them.*

Moreover, strange geometric events can take place in the Halls at the Judge's whim or every time a spell is cast as a result of the arcane energies' interaction. Throw a 1d5 or pick at will:

3

### Perfect surface

The surface is perfect and very slippery, offering almost no friction or resistance. Anyone getting hit or moving more than 10' in the same round must make a DC 12 Ref save or fall to the ground.

1

### Fugue

This room or corridor seems to go on forever like it would in a nightmare. At first, one will feel scared, then light-headed, and finally spatial perception is scrambled since walls and objects seem to be closer or farther than they look. Whenever someone moves in the area, roll a 1d6. The result times 5 is the actual distance they moved in feet.

4

### Non-Euclidian space

This room's design is based on non-Euclidian geometry. Anyone moving around it will do so in a random direction (roll a 1d8 to determine).

5

### Space-time architecture

The Geometrist found a way to manipulate time as another geometric variable. When the characters reenter the room, they'll find it as it was before they entered it the first time (a broken object will be whole again, a dead creature will be alive, etc.).

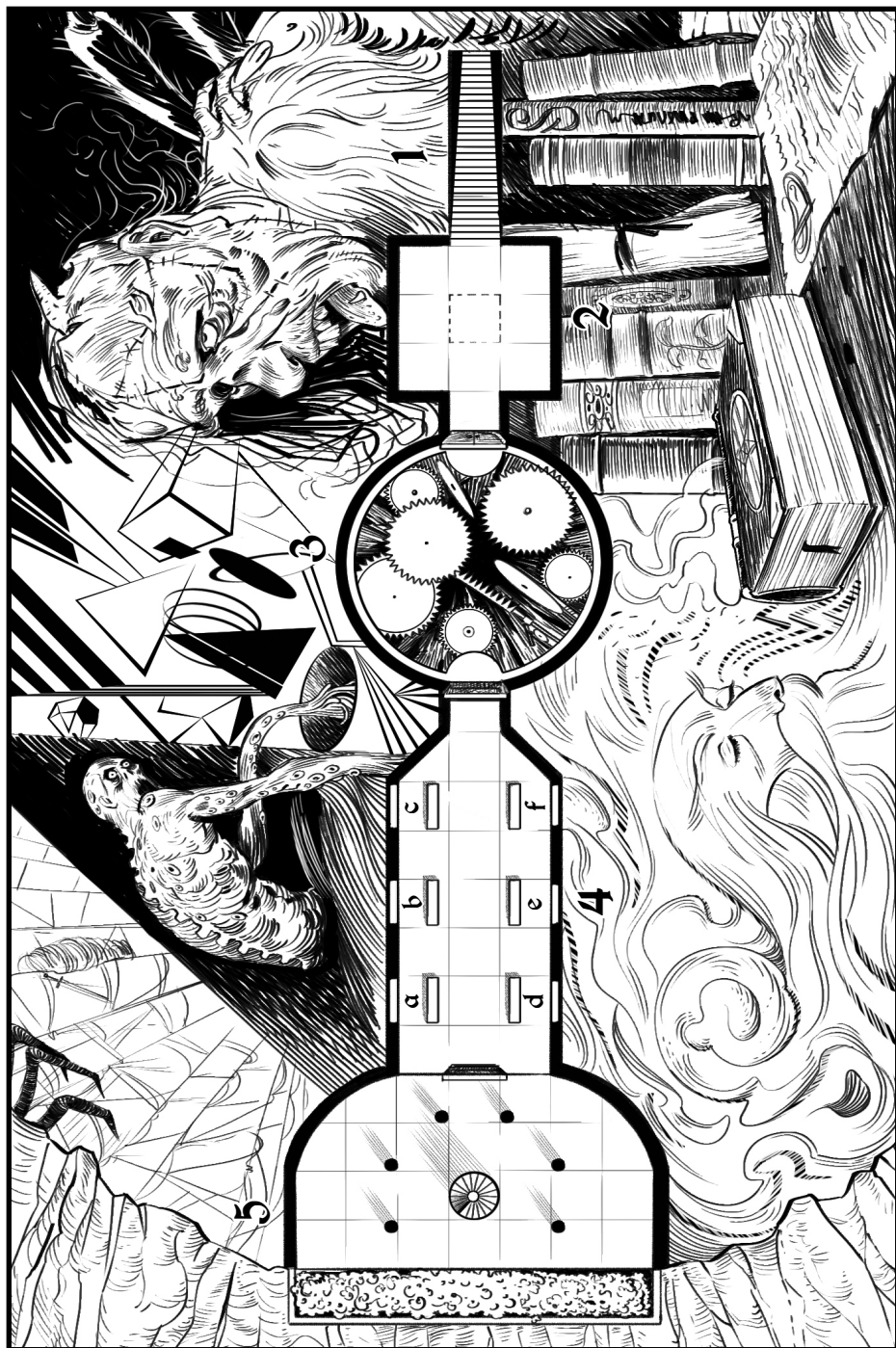
2

### Perfect edges

Edges in this room, on this pillar or door, etc. are so perfect that they cut like a knife. Everyone moving about this area must make a DC 12 Ref save or lose 1d3 HP to cuts.







# FIRST LEVEL

**1 Stairs:** This flight of stairs links the Vertical Halls with the outside. The steps lead to a polished wooden door decorated with geometric patterns that are geometrically perfect. The door isn't locked, but it is stuck (DC 10 Strength check to open).

**2 Foyer:** This room is a perfect cube. In the middle of the floor, there's a square trap door. It wasn't intended to be hidden, but it is now under a thick coat of dust. It's made of stone and very heavy; there's a lever to open it in **Area 6**. It was so masterfully crafted that it's impossible to slip a blade or a crowbar between the frame and the trap door. It would seem that there is no way to open it from this side, but enterprising players could surely come up with ideas on how to do it (like using a giant suction cup, the right spell, or some other bizarre idea).

**3 The mincer:** Here is the trap that ended the career of the Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel. As it had not been maintained, it could not rearm itself properly. Although the mechanism that moves the blades and saws works, the floor is stuck in the open position. The

exit is opposite the entrance, six meters further ahead. To get there, one can jump (an almost impossible feat, unless under magical help), fly, or walk along the narrow ledge (Agility check, DC 10). Failing means a six-meter fall down to **Area 7** (2d6 damage), plus the blades that quarter the bodies as they fall (2d4 attack +5 melee, 1d6 damage each).

**4 The picture gallery:** The Geometrist wasn't only a man of science, he was also a man of art – his knowledge about it was vast. This is the gallery where the best pictures from his personal collection are shown. He would look at them while sitting on the benches placed in front of the walls. There are six benches facing six big pictures and an intruder: a terrible aberration from the underdark, a hideous being similar to a thin manta ray called a "darkmoantle".

This creature is Bertoldo's agent, who managed to strike a deal with it. When he felt confident enough, he painted a landscape on the creature's back and hung it on top of one of the pictures, where it could spy and watch for interlopers, and prey on the weakest ones. The halfling did a great job, but an art connoisseur will notice

that the quality and craftsmanship are inferior to the rest of the collection. Doing this, however, would mean getting closer to the picture, probably ending that person's life in the process.

The darkmoantle has a strange ability: it can emit a low-pitched moan that causes various ill effects depending on the intensity. Unless the source is discovered, the pictures will seem to be the source of it. As soon as someone enters the room, the darkmoantle will try to get them to feel nervous and disgusted; when someone gets closer, it will increase the potency so he or she will be nauseous; and if someone discovers it, it will use the maximum effect to produce supernatural fear. Those affected by it will run away toward **Area 3**, probably falling into the mincer (Luck check to avoid).

The darkmoantle will not fight to the death, so if things go south, it will flee to **Area 17** to warn Bertoldo and the chokers.

**Darkmoantle:** Init +2, Atk Tail +3 melee (1d6+1 and envelop); AC 14; HD 3d8+3, 16 hp; Mv 10', 40' flying; Act 1d20; Sp: Envelop, infravision 60', moan, shadow manipulation; Sv Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4, AL C.

**Envelop:** The darkmoantle attacks with its thorny tail, then it envelops its victim with its body to bite its victim. If the attack hits, the victim is held as in a grapple (page 96, DCC RPG Core book). From then on, every round the darkmoantle is

grappling it automatically bites for 1d4 damage. The darkmoantle receives a +4 on its grappling checks.

**Shadow manipulation:** It can darken an area to hide itself (+4 to stealth/hide checks) or to blind an opponent (DC 13 Fort save or movement will be halved and attacks will be made at -4 for 1d6 minutes).

**Moan:** The darkmoantle can emit a low-pitched moan with various effects depending on the intensity. On the lowest, it causes disgust and unrest, addling the minds of those exposed to it for a long time (DC 13 Will save, on a fail -1 to Will saves). On the mid-level, it causes nausea and sickness (DC 13 Will save, -1d to all actions). Finally, the highest intensity causes fear if a DC 13 Will save is failed. Those affected will try to run away from it for 1d6+1 rounds. Anyone who makes a successful save will be unaffected by further effects, but those already affected will remain so (in other words, if a character makes his second save, he/she won't be affected by nausea or future effects, but he/she will still feel unrest).

These are the pictures that garnish the walls:

**α. Portrait of a disturbing man.** The man is a rich-looking person, probably a noble or a merchant, with angular features and eyes wide open that seem to follow the observer wherever he/she goes. Behind the man is a mirror, but he is not reflected in it.

**b. Landscape on a darkmoantle.** Bertoldo has painted a bucolic and nice landscape from his motherland on the darkmoantle's back. The picture shows a pink and orange sunset on the rolling hills where the halflings dwell. A river meanders through them and under a stone bridge. The real picture is under the darkmoantle: Marina. A rough sea. If one spends some time looking at it, it smells of brine.

**c. Still life.** There are some fruits and vegetables depicted in this picture. If one looks closely, a scorpion can be spotted amongst them.

**d. The glass window.** Shapes, lines, and colors form a strange geometric design with a hole in the middle. If one watches it for a while, the design seems to move in a similar way to the geometric nightmares caused by the Tindalos Virus. In the background, a crouching dog's outline can be barely discerned. If the right key is put in the hole, a portal to the Conjuraton room appears. The said key is the talisman that hangs around the dead Geometrist's neck (Area 15).

**e. Starry sky.** The stars on this night sky shine with a sic-

kly greenish brightness. The constellations shown do not match the ones on this hemisphere; maybe they do not even match any on this world.

**f. Nude.** A naked woman lying on a divan. Once one turns their head, her face cannot be recalled.

**Treasure:** Six invaluable pictures. An art connoisseur would offer as much as 10d10x10 gold pieces for each one, whereas an ignorant noble would offer 5 gp, if that much.

**5 The bay window:** This huge bay window faces the west. In the middle of the room is a spiral staircase that goes down to **Area 11**. There are also several glass circles under a thick layer of dust; through these, the natural light goes along conduits to other places in the Vertical Halls.

Behind the bay window is a big planter full of black flowers. The rain that falls down the mountain face waters these flowers. The Geometrist could not sleep well, so he used this variant of the poppy to brew an infusion, which he drank before going to bed. He also used them in a highly concentrated dosage to produce a drug called Liao. This drug allowed his mind to travel back in time (for further

information on the Liao drug, read **Area 22**). Anyone getting too close to the planter (for instance, if someone declares that he/she inspects it) will be ensnared by the poppy fragrance and risk falling asleep right there and then (DC 13 Fort save, a fail means that he/she will sleep tight for 4 hours unless someone else wakes him/her up; in that case, he/she will be groggy for that long, taking a -1 to Initiative and Agility rolls). This is not a recommended place to fall asleep: the *sleeping beauty* will fall to the web that the attercopus spun at the bottom of the moun-

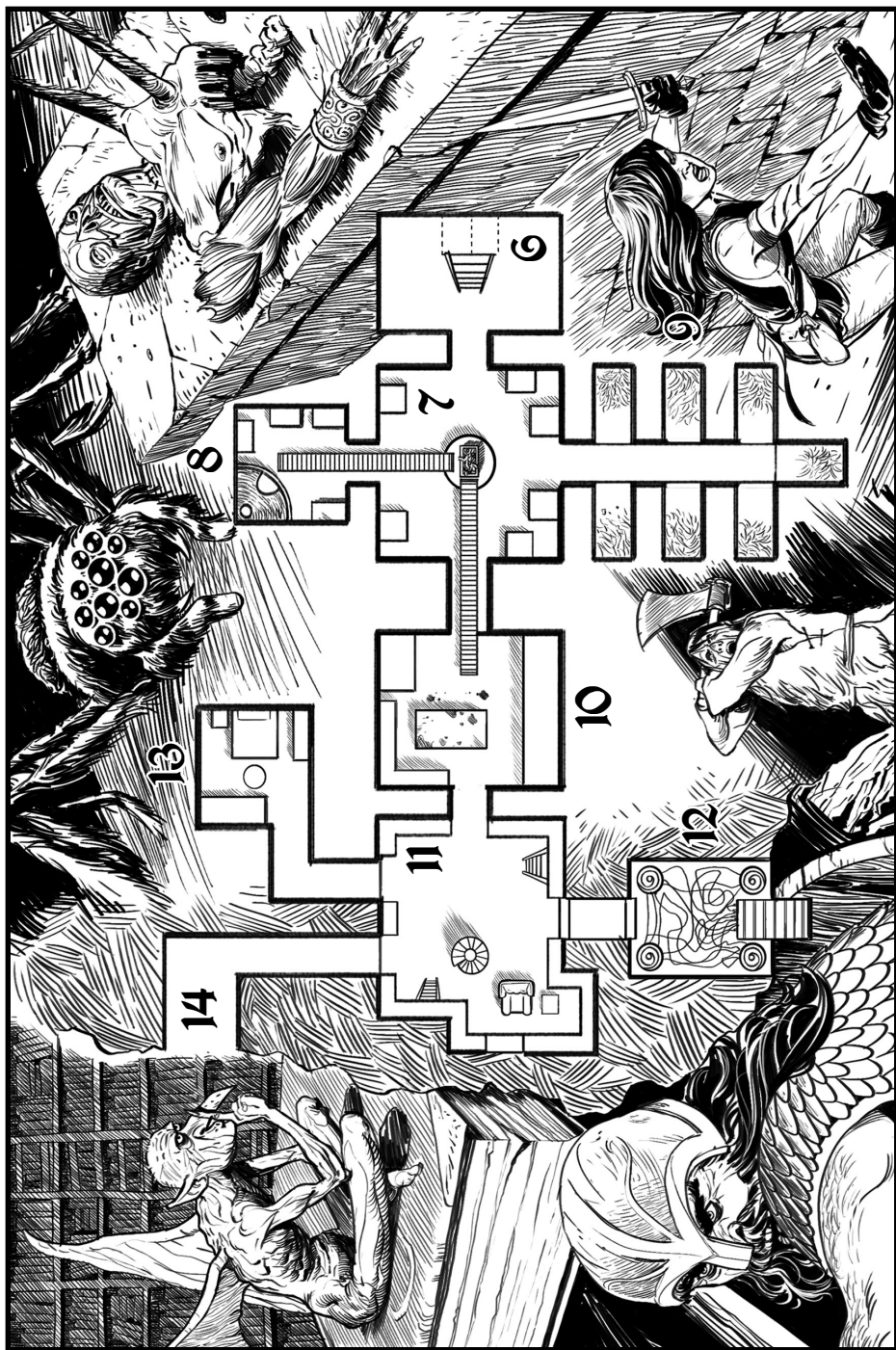
tain face (**Area 13**). To avoid this grim fate, the victim must take a Luck check (Luck score or less on a 1d20 roll).

**Treasure:** The black poppy is a very delicate and strange plant used to make a wide assortment of alchemical and pharmaceutical mixtures, as well as the unspeakable Liao drug. A dry flower can get as much as 25 gold pieces. If the plant is alive, the amount will be 250 gold pieces, but only the best botanists will be able to transplant it successfully. This is a process that requires patience, skill, and a pot made with an elf's skull.









# SECOND LEVEL

**6** **The trap door room:** In this dusty and moldy room is a ladder that leads to the heavy stone trap door in **Area 2** on the first level. There is also a lever by the ladder that opens the trap door. To close it, one just needs to pull the lever again. In theory, the trap door cannot be opened or closed from **Area 2**.

**7** **Sorting room:** The mincer's stone well (**Area 3**) was constructed as a funnel, so it narrows at the bottom until it is only one meter wide. This conduit chops up unwary intruders who fall into the trap, and then the pieces go through the funnel into a mine cart placed on a swivel platform.

The organs- and members-laden cart can move on the tracks either to the north (**Area 8**, the crematorium) or to the west (**Area 10**, the laboratory). The direction can be chosen with the help of the swivel platform, which can be unlocked using a lever next to it. After this, the amalgams sort the parts and put them in their corresponding containers: right arms, left arms, right legs, left legs, heads, bodies, and "assorted" (humanoids are not the only ones that fall in the trap).

There is a jarring collection of, well, jars on the walls: hundreds of them contain all manner of

organs floating in formaldehyde (eyes, lungs, hearts, kidneys... as well as some unrecognizable ones).

There are always two amalgams here waiting for new bits and pieces falling from above. They do not like intruders.

**Amalgam (2):** Init -1, Atk club +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 13; HD 1d8+2, 9 HP; Mv 30'; Act 1d20; Sp: Stench; Sv Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -2, AL N.

*Stench:* Amalgams smell of death, so any creature with a sense of smell will receive a -1d whenever they are within two meters of one of them.

**Treasure:** Any and every organ the player characters ever dreamed of.

**8** **Crematorium:** There is a powerful oven in this room where the amalgams throw anything they do not want or need. It is usually clothes, objects, failed experiments, and members too badly damaged by the mincer to be of any use.

There is a huge pile in front of the oven. Here goes everything that seems to be useful or valuable, like adventurer's gear, coins, weapons, and armor.

The oven is still in working condition thanks to the fire elemental that resides inside. The elemental could leave at any moment, but it does not because the place is cozy and it is well fed.

Unfortunately, nothing has been thrown in the oven for the last few days, and it is getting hungry. When the characters enter the room, it will patiently wait in the oven for something to be tossed in, but will quickly lose its patience. After 2d6 rounds, it will come out.

**Fire elemental:** *Init +4, Atk fiery touch +3 melee (1d6) or fire bolt +4 ranged (1d6, 40'); AC 15; HD 4d8, 19 HP; Mv 40'; Act 1d20; Sp: Fiery touch, vulnerable to cold and water, elemental; So Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2, AL N.*

*Fiery touch: Everything catches fire if touched by a fire elemental. A creature on fire must make a DC 16 Ref Save or take 1d6 damage every round until the fire is extinguished. To put it out, a DC 16 Ref Save must be made (+4 if drop and roll, +2 if helped by a good samaritan).*

*Fire elementals are immune to fire and heat, but cannot stand water. They take double damage from cold and water attacks.*

*Elemental: The fire elemental is a being from another plane of existence, so only magic weapons, spells, and otherworldly beings can damage it. Any other kind of damage will be halved.*

**Treasure:** Lots of weapons and armor of a wide range of quality and assorted adventurer's gear (rope, lanterns, etc.). Characters can try to find a specific object by going through the pile of junk during 10 minutes and making a Luck check modified by the object's value (-1 for every 10

gold coins). If they only spend a round and grab a random item, roll 1d24 and check the equipment table in the DCC RPG book. If they gather coins, they will be able to get a collection that totals 1d6 gold coins.

Furthermore, the first person to scan the pile will stumble upon a scroll case that contains the statutes of the Dauntless Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel. The document lists the share of spoils and the punishment in the case of betrayal. It is signed by Omar from the Hopeless Island, buccaneer and black-skinned slaver with an even blacker soul; Zaida, sister of Zoraida, and Omar's consort, a long-legged and golden-haired voluptuous tramp; Lorenzo the delicate, son of Arcadia, a slacker elf; Barrabás the nasty, bald-headed cabalist sworn to Bobugbubilz; and Bertoldo Virutas, a smuggler and cutpurse halfling hailing from the streets of Volkenroda. The document is worth nothing, but the case has protected it from harm for a long time.

**9 Cells:** It is in this cell complex where the amalgams take a break. The cells are very spartan; there is only a heap of straw to be used as a mattress.

There is an amalgam in each cell. The first and second ones are empty because their owners are on duty. The rest of the amalgams are resting on their

straw piles. If something unusual happens, the amalgams will get out of the cells to find out what is going on and to dispose of the intruders if need be.

There is a rat infestation problem at the moment, since rats are attracted to the amalgams' reeking smell. Any character wearing a rat pelt or showing the amalgams a dead rat will earn their respect. (It may sound strange, but weirder things happen all the time.) But if a character has a rat pet, can invoke rats, or something like that, the amalgams will panic and run away seeking the abomination's protection. If they cannot, they will get out through the trap door in **Area 2**. If worse comes to worse, they will leave the Vertical Halls, scattering in the *Hungrymoon* mountains until things get back to normal.

**Amalgam (5):** *Init -1, Atk club +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 13; HD*

*1d8+2, 9 HP; Mv 30'; Act 1d20; Sp: Stench; Sv Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -2, AL N.*

**Stench:** *Amalgams smell of death, so any creature with a sense of smell will receive a -1d whenever they are within two meters of one of them.*

**Treasure:** None. Amalgams do not care about material stuff.

**10 Laboratory:** Here the Geometrist would carry out his experiments involving living beings, dead beings, dead that were later alive again, undead, and...well, experiments.

There is an operating table in the middle of this room. The walls are covered with pharmaceutical, alchemical, and reactive compounds on shelves. On the south wall is an alchemical alembic on a table, whereas on the north wall is another table displaying medical equipment.





There are diagrams here and there, scattered all over the tables and hanging from the walls. These diagrams show the design of a monster made up of various parts, each of them from different bodies (male and female, human, elf, etc.). These diagrams are the schematics that the Geometrist used to make the abomination.

**Treasure:** Very valuable medical equipment. A quack would gladly pay up to 40 gold coins for it. There are also plenty of potions, jars, and alchemical essences. The potions are not magical but pharmacological and alchemical. They cannot be identified by magical means; to do so, a laboratory and either pharmacology, herbology, or alchemy skills are needed, as well as a DC 15 Intelligence check.

Every time a character tries one of the compounds out, choose one of the following results or roll 1d6 and let Lady Luck decide:

1

### **Analgesic**

Anyone drinking this compound will feel better after a few minutes. Any pain from wounds or diseases will be lessened, so any penalties suffered because of them will be suppressed for 4 hours. After said period of time, the penalties and aches will be back.

2

### **Anesthetic**

Anyone imbibing this fluid will be anaesthetized and fall to the floor. In this condition, one cannot feel his or her body, but will be able to hear and see what is going on around him or her, and of course will remember everything done to him or her in such a sorry plight. The fluid will take effect after 1d6 minutes and last for 1d6 hours.

3

### **Disinfectant**

This fluid disinfects wounds. When it is applied to an open wound, it prevents infection and fosters healing. But do not be fooled: it stings like hell. Moreover, it is flammable and smells strongly of alcohol. If used correctly, hit points will be recovered at a double rate after a good night's rest.

4

### **Preservative**

This fluid is used to preserve organic tissues from putrefaction and the passage of time. Anyone drinking this will suffer from horrendous stomach cramps after 1d6x10 minutes, will throw up, and be in a weakened state (-1d to all actions) until after resting for at least 8 hours.

## Acid

This will do 1d4 hit points of damage during 1d6 rounds when (or if) applied. It is obviously lethal if imbibed.

## Anxiolytic

Anyone who tries out this compound will be extremely relaxed after 1d6x10 minutes for the next 4 hours. He or she will not get upset for any reason whatsoever. No fear will be felt, but also the much-needed survival instinct will be gone; this means that under some circumstances where fleeing would be a good idea, the subject will remain impassible.

## 11

**Library:** This is the Geometrist's personal library. It is a room chock-full of books on shelves that cover all the walls. There are wheeled ladders to reach the top shelves, although they might be in a very poor condition due to the lack of maintenance and the ravages of time.

On the south wall is a fireplace and in front of it is a reading armchair and a tea table. They are both under a light pipe.

There is a two-inch-thick layer of dust on the floor. Any air current (caused by walking, opening doors, etc.) will stir the dust lead-

ing to the formation of annoying dust clouds. These clouds will obscure vision and irritate the eyes and throat, and could kill an allergic person.

The library is home to a dust mephit called Isbin, a wizened and withered-looking winged imp. Isbin was invoked and bound by the Geometrist to work as a librarian. After many decades acting as such, Isbin grew fond of reading. Given that the Geometrist has been dead for quite a while, Isbin has had time to read every single book in the library, and it will now do anything to read something new. The adventurers will be allowed to walk through the library and even peruse the books or take one with them provided they bring a new book to Isbin. If they do not, they can walk through the library if they do it quietly. Under no circumstances will Isbin allow a ruckus or the theft (or loan!) of a book. Isbin's connection to the elemental plane of air enables it to make books and paper fly, and to attack with them as if they were razors. Moreover, it can flap its wings to cause the formation of dust clouds.

**Isbin, dust mephit:** Init +4, Atk claw +2 melee (1d4) or bite +1 melee (1d3); AC 16; HD 1d8+4, 11 HP; Mv 10', 40' Flying; Act 1d20; Sp: Cantrip spell (spell check +4), paper twister (15' diameter cloud, Sv Ref DC 15, 1d4 dmg and stunned 1d3 rounds if failed), dust cloud (20' diameter cloud, Sv Fort DC 14, -4 to

attack rolls and half *Mv* if failed); *Sv* Fort +2, *Ref* +4, *Will* +3, *AL* L.

Isbin has never been outside the library, but it knows the Geometrist and can convey basic info on him.

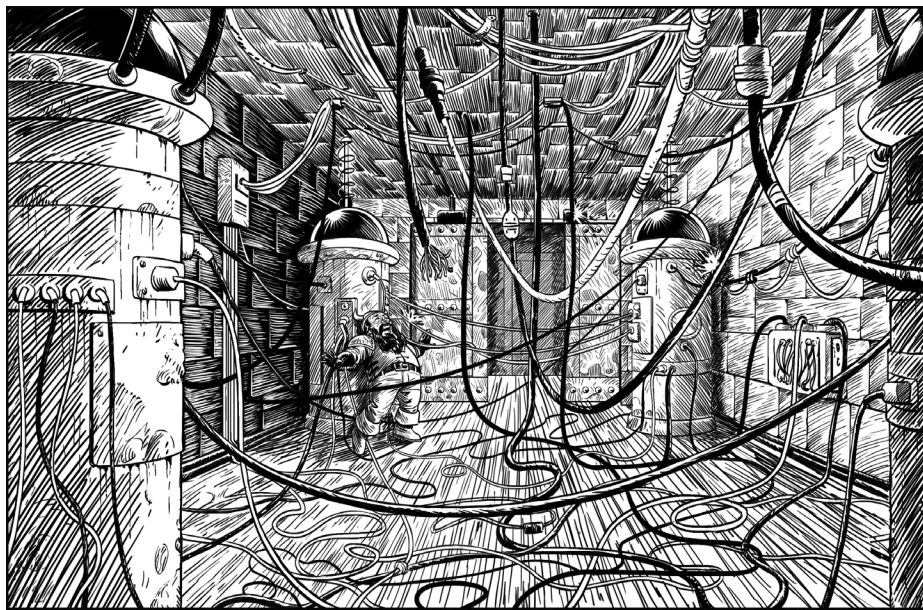
**Treasure:** Thousands of books, culture everywhere – is there a bigger treasure than that? Yep, but not here. The books could be sold for a good price if taken to the right buyer (2d10 gold pieces per book).

Furthermore, a character with Intelligence 10 or more who browses through the books for a while and succeeds on a Luck check (a roll equal to or less than his/her Luck score) will bump into a copy of “Writing and Engraving Basics for Sigils, Glyphs, and Other Symbols” by Niclas Praetorius, which teaches the details of the level one spell *Ru-*

*nic alphabet, mortal*. It works as a scroll would, but the whole book must be read before the spell can be cast or transcribed into another book; reading it takes 2d3+2 hours. If more than one character passes the Luck check, the successive books will be very valuable but not magical. A scholar would pay up to 1d100 gold pieces for each of them.

**12 Electricity generator:** The two heavy sliding doors leading to this room isolate it from noise and electricity, just in case. Between them is an airtight foyer, so if one of them is open, the other will not move at all.

The energy required to alter the Vertical Halls’ gravity comes from the electricity generator placed at the back of the room,



where a waterfall moves a gigantic dynamo. There are cables dangling all around the room and scattered all over the floor; some of them connect the generator with four accumulators (one in each corner), while others go through the stone walls. Moving around the room while avoiding a fall or an electrical shock is hard. A character can move half his/her speed with no further consequences; if he/she wants to move faster, a DC 13 Ref Save is required (1d6 electrical damage on a fail).

**Creatures:** Here is where the abomination (the creature made with the Brotherhood of the Tempered Steel's parts) usually spends its time. Electricity nurtures and strengthens it, so it has chosen this place, amidst a pile of cables, to plot its revenge. The abomination was created to attack any intruder it encounters, but it is willing to fight its nature to negotiate with those who promise to bring it Bertoldo's hide or who can help it to catch him. It knows everything about the portal in **Area 4**: where it is, how to activate it, where it leads (the Geometrist's study), and the current whereabouts of the medallion (**Area 15**).

**Abomination:** Init +2, Atk fist +d5+1 melee (1d6+1d5+1); AC 14; HD 6d10, 34 HP; Mo 30'; Act 2d20; Sp: Accumulator, Bertoldo's eye (infravision 30'), thief's legs (Hide in shadows +5, Move silently +7), wizard's brain (Ekim's mystical mask,

Ventriloquism, Ropework, Spell check +4), warrior's arm (deed dice, +d5); Sv Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +6, AL N.

The abomination has warrior, thief, and wizard skills. For further details, check the DCC RPG book.

**Accumulator:** Electrical damage regenerates the abomination as many hit points as inflicted with the attack.

The abomination will use its *Ropework* spell to animate the cables; they will deliver an electrical shock attack to its enemies and a comforting hit point bump to itself.

**Treasure:** Those cheeky ones willing to plunder the wiring will be rewarded with a huge amount of copper that can be sold as-is or melted into ingots. There are around 50 kilograms of copper (1 kilo of copper equals 1 gold coin).

**13 Bedroom:** In the Geometrist's bedroom, everything is geometric: the bed is square, the headboard is rectangular, the rug is a circle... everything is spotlessly clean and neatly arranged. In the wardrobe, the clothes are carefully folded and arranged. The pajama is under the pillow. On the bedside table is a book by Viktor Siebenhaar, "Treaty on Weird Diseases, Deadly Epidemics, and Other Fatal Ailments". The Geometrist has added a note, written in a tidy script: "Tindalos Virus" is listed on the chapter devoted to extra-dimensional maladies.

It seems as if the Geometrist is not dead and could show up at any moment. An amalgam takes care of this room, cleaning and tidying up the bedroom every day, thus following the last order it received from the Geometrist before he disappeared. There is a 1-4 chance in 1d6 for it to turn up in the bedroom carrying a clean set of sheets while the adventurers are there.

**Amalgam:** *Init -1, Atk club +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 13; HD 1d8+2, 9 HP; Mv 30'; Act 1d20; Sp: Stench; Sv Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -2, AL N.*

*Stench: Amalgams smell of death, so any creature with a sense of smell will receive a -1d whenever they are within two meters of one of them.*

This room has an eerie effect over the people in it: nobody will bear any kind of disarray or disorder. This makes any search much harder; it takes ten times the normal amount of time to go through the room's contents. On top of that, after the search, everybody conducting it will be compelled to leave everything as it was at the beginning (DC 12 Will Save to take anything away from the room or to leave a mess).

**Treasure:** Three sets of excellent bed sheets, 106 gold pieces in total. One of the dressing gowns is made of silk (14 gold coins).

**14 Access to the Vertical Halls:** This dusty hallway leads to the vertical area. The thick layer of dust and dirt clearly shows that there is a gravity alteration going on, since it first covers the floor, it then goes up the north wall, and it finally blankets the ceiling. This means that it is possible to walk on the walls and ceiling of the western part of the corridor, up to the Vertical Halls.

There are two giant spiders skulking on the mountain face under the corridor exit. They usually stay there preying for victims. The spiders will enter the corridor as soon as they hear footsteps or noises coming from it.

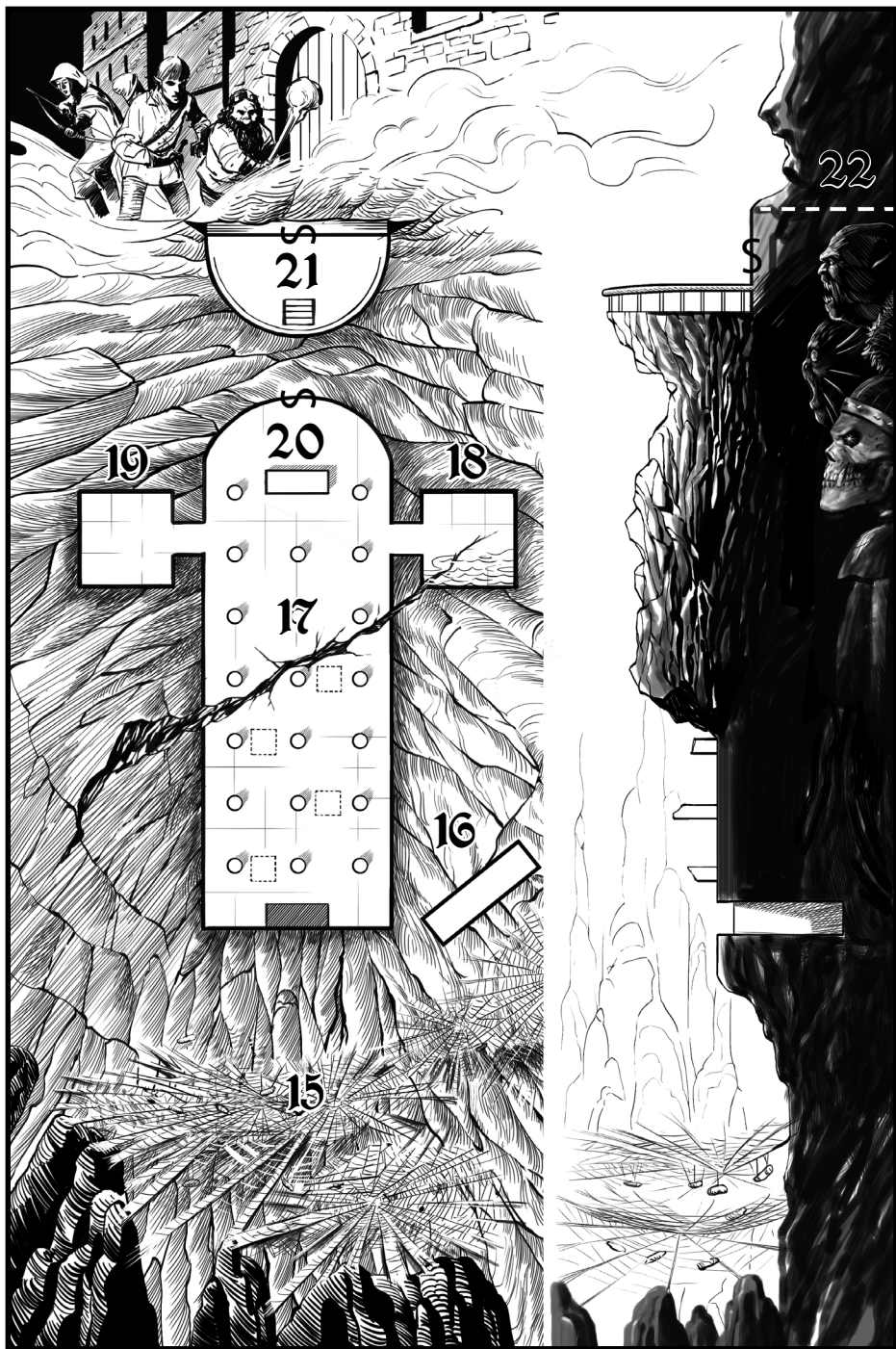
**Giant spider (2):** *Init +1, Atk mandible +2 melee (1d8 and poison); AC 14; HD 3d8, 16 HP; Mv 30', 20' climbing; Act 1d20; Sp: Web, poison, infravision 60'; Sv Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -2, AL N.*

*Web: Like the attercopus, but the DC to break free is 12.*

*Poison: DC 12 Fort Save or temporary paralysis. The victim will not be able to move, speak, or take any action for 1d6 minutes.*

Remember that, due to the altered gravity and the climbing capacity of the spiders, combat can take place not only on the floor but also on the walls and ceiling. *Enter the Matrix.*





# VERTICAL LEVEL

Gravity has been altered in the Vertical Halls, so it is indeed possible to walk on the mountain face; there is just one simple rule – there must always be some part of the person (a foot, a hand, the ass, anything...) touching the “floor”. If at any moment that one rule is broken, gravity as we all know it will reassert its authority, pulling the careless hiker to the spider webs. This fact turns the attercopus’ traps very deadly, whereas otherwise they would be puerile and laughable.

The altered gravity does not work beyond the crack on the mountain face; the tremor damaged the machinery in that area. From the crack onward then, one must climb, fly, or something similar.

15

**Spiders’ lair:** Several giant spiders have spun a huge web some meters under the Vertical Halls; they took advantage of the stone protrusions on the mountain face.

An attercopus is leading the spider community and has placed some traps in the Vertical Halls to make sure that once in a while somebody or something falls in the web; they are usually careless adventurers or the odd choker. As soon as there is prey on the web, the spiders paralyze the victim with their poisonous

bite (unless said victim is dead from the fall), and then they knit a cocoon around it. The encapsulated package will hang for a while before it is sucked dry.

**Attercopus:** Init +3, Atk *two claws +6 melee (1d4+1) or bite (1d8 and poison)*; AC 15; HD 5d8, 23 HP; Mv 30’, 30’ climbing; Act 1d20 or 2d16; Sp: Web, poison, infravision 60’; Sv Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1, AL N.

**Web:** The attercopus secretes a strong adhesive silk with which it can move, make traps, or just simply spin a web. Anyone touching it will become stuck fast and will only be able to break free after a DC 14 Strength or Agility check. Anybody not stuck to it could burn it (this will cause damage to those stuck to it) or rip it with a sharp blade (AC 16, 5 HP to set free one target). If a blunt weapon is used, it will get stuck as well. When attacking someone trapped in a spider web, there is a 10% chance of getting trapped as well.

**Poison:** DC 13 Fort save, temporary loss of 1d4 Stamina points for 1d6 rounds. If the Stamina score drops to 0, the victim is dead.

The attercopus will always be found with a merry group of giant spiders (at least 4, Judge’s discretion), spider swarms, and hairy spiders as big as a fist. The smaller spiders will not make any difference in a fight; they are there to spice up the scene.



**Giant spider (4 to 6):** Init +1, Atk mandible +2 melee (1d8 and poison); AC 14; HD 3d8, 16 HP; Mv 30', 20' climbing; Act 1d20; Sp: Web, poison, infravision 60'; Sv Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -2, AL N.

*Web:* Like the attercopus, but the DC to break free is 12.

*Poison:* DC 12 Fort Save or temporary paralysis. The victim will not be able to move, speak, or take any action for 1d6 minutes.

Right in the middle of this natural geometric wonder (the huge spider web) lies the frail and wilted corpse of the Geometrist. If anyone approaches the body, it will rise up, scaring the bejesus out of everybody. The Geometrist's corpse is now a husk; thousands of tiny spiders live in his dry body. They can move it like an undead would, thanks to their hive mind.

The husk can move freely in the spider webs. It will try to catch a poor soul and then open its mouth on his or her face to barf hundreds of tiny spiders on him or her. The spiderlings will try to get into the victim's body through any orifice and set up shop. This is not, by any means, a nice experience. When a husk is hit with a slashing or puncturing weapon, some spiders will "bleed" from the wound. Immediately after that, others will close the gash with the spider web they secrete. This means that a husk is very resilient to normal or magical weapons, which deal only half damage to

it. On the other hand, it is extremely vulnerable to fire (in any form), which will deal double damage to it. When the husk takes enough damage to make it "die", the spiders will scatter and try to find a cranny where to lay low until the danger is over.

**Husk:** Init +1, Atk two claws +3 melee (1d3 and spider barf); AC 12; HD 3d8+3, 17 HP; Mv 30'; Act 1d20 or 2d16; Sp: Spider barf, regeneration; Sv Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0, AL N.

*Regeneration:* The husk heals 3 hit points at the beginning of each round, unless it was damaged with fire in the previous round.

*Spider barf:* If the husk hits with its claw attacks, it will automatically grapple its prey and vomit hundreds of spiders on the victim's face. The victim will be nauseous for 1d6 rounds (-1d penalty) and must take a DC 13 Fort Save or become infested. An infested being loses 1d3 points of Stamina every day and will become a husk when the Stamina drops to zero. A competent healer or herbalist could be able to concoct a strong purge to fix the problem. From then on, the lost Stamina would be recovered at a rate of 1 point per day.

The husk is not an undead creature, but it can be turned by a neutral-aligned cleric. It is immune to critical hits, disease, and poisons; it is not affected by Sleep, Charm, or Hold spells, as well as any mind attacks.

**Treasure:** The talisman hanging from the Geometrist's neck

is the key that opens the portal (Area 4, one of the pictures in the Gallery) leading to the Conjuraton room (Area 22).

Moreover, it is fairly easy to find some trinket or other amongst the dry corpses of some long-gone adventurers. Every 10 minutes tinkering with the remains will uncover 1d10 gold

pieces. If a Luck check is successful, the lucky prospector will find jewelry (rings, necklaces, pendants, etc.) worth up to 1d10x10 gold pieces.

Note: This is an excellent place to find a replacement for a fallen adventurer – a still-living victim of the spiders wrapped up in silk.

## Giant spider

Although not common, there are indeed arachnid aberrations bigger than the garden-variety spiders, some of them big as a dog or a fat calf. There are also legends about even greater specimens, huge as an elephant, and capable of devouring a whole city should they decide to make it its home.

*Giant spider: Init +1, Atk mandible +2 melee (1d8 and poison); AC 14; HD 3d8; Mv 30', 20' climbing; Act 1d20; Sp: Web, poison, infravision 60'; Sv Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -2, AL N.*

*Web: Like the attercopus, but the DC to break free is 12.*

*Poison: There are as many kinds of poison as there are of spiders. Usually, the Fort saving throw to resist the poison's effect is DC 12, but more powerful poisons translate into a higher DC. Throw 1d6 to find out the poison's effect or choose one yourself from the following table:*

1. Pain, dizziness, vomiting. Temporary loss of 1d4 points of Stamina.
2. Spasms and limb stiffness. Temporary loss of 1d4 points of Agility.
3. Temporary paralysis. The victim is unable to move, speak, or attempt any action for 1d6 minutes.
4. Instead of delivering a poison with its chelicerae, this spider spits forth jets of a highly corrosive substance that can completely melt a person. This spit is a 20' long and 10' wide cone that the spider can use 2 times per day for 1d4 damage points for 1d4 rounds (Reflex DC 12 save for half damage only).
5. Slow and painful death. Temporary loss of 1d4 Stamina points each round for 1d6 rounds. If the Stamina score reaches 0, the victim dies.
6. Sudden death. Save or die!

**Low Hall:** When the tremor took place, the low hall's vaulted ceilings collapsed, leaving all this area bare; it also created a ravine that divides the Halls. This is, luckily, the vertical zone where one can walk as if it were a horizontal surface. Said surface is now dotted with broken pillars and bound by ruined walls. Walking around here is an unnatural experience; it is common to feel dizziness or even vertigo, a risk that may mean tripping and falling down the mountain wall.

Moreover, the attercopus has laid some traps around in this area. These traps are very simple: a thin wire stretched between two pillars, ankle-high. They are easy to avoid (one just needs to

be careful so as not to trip over), but somewhat difficult to spot (a DC 15 Perception check is needed to do so). As said before, tripping over or falling down the wall will take the victim to the spider webs below the Halls (**Area 15**).

This is probably the place where the adventurers would be able to spot both the chokers and the spiders for the first time. The chokers prefer to stick to the shadows, but sometimes the odd choker can be seen for a second, only to scurry away immediately after that, headed for the upper hall (**Area 17**).

If you are feeling playful, the attercopus could be hiding behind a pillar, waiting for the characters to pass by. It will then push one of them, laughing out



loud. You can check out the attercopus stats in **Area 15**.

**17** **Upper Hall:** As soon as the ravine that divides the Halls is crossed, gravity returns to its normal state. This area has a vaulted ceiling, making it look like a dark and humid cave.

This hall is the turf of Bertoldo Virutas and his chokers. Although the chokers are natural born climbers, they have implemented some handholds here and there to ease their trips from and to other parts of the Halls. This will, of course, be a huge help for the adventurers (the handholds grant a +2 bonus to climb checks).

The chokers will not allow anybody to disturb the peace of their community, so they will try to capture any intruders and bring them to their king. If the characters are too violent or harsh, it will be Bertoldo Virutas himself who will show up to calm things down a bit. The halfling is no fool; if he thinks that the adventurers have a good killing potential, he will be open to negotiations: in exchange for the abomination's head, he will grant free passage through his hall.

The choker's community is made up of 15-20 healthy adults who will defend their home from adventurers, mercenaries, and psychopaths in general. There are also many children and old ones, if only to add some detail to the scene.

**Choker (15-20):** Init +4, Atk tentacle +3 melee (1d4 and choke); AC 15; HD 3d8, 16 HP; Mv 20', 20' climbing; Act 1d20; Sp: Choke, camouflage, infravision 60'; Sv Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0, AL N.

*Camouflage:* Chokers tend to hide in narrow crevices and crannies, in caves and grottoes, where they can lay motionless for hours at a time (+10 bonus to hide checks).

*Choke:* Any creature hit by a tentacle must take a contested Strength check. The choker's arms (covered in suction pads, long, and flexible) grant it a +8 bonus to this check. If the choker wins, it will start choking its victim (big surprise), inflicting 1d4 damage per round until the victim dies or breaks free. A choker so engaged cannot attack anybody else, whereas the victim can but with a -4 modifier. A grappled creature cannot talk or use magic. To break free, the grappled creature must take an action and succeed on a contested Strength check (remember that chokers get a +8 modifier).

Chokers are not suicidal. If things go south (10 or more casualties) they will try to escape down the mountain face and hide until things calm down.

**18** **Blue room:** This is a cubical room – a perfect cube. The walls show a mural painting depicting a brutal fight between a score of huge and vicious cyclops. The cyclops' eyes are blue crystals, although some are missing because of the passage of time and the chokers' actions.

Temperature here is lower than in the rest of the Halls, and it shows.

The crack through this room brings forth a spring of water. The water current has flooded the lower part of the room. The water level is waist-high. It is here where the chokers come to drink, so it is highly probable (1-4 on 1d6) to stumble upon one of them. If a choker hears someone approaching, it will hide in the ceiling to indulge in its favorite pastime: choking creatures that bend to drink.

**Choker:** *Init +4, Atk tentacle +3 melee (1d4 and choke); AC 15; HD 3d8, 16 HP; Mv 20', 20' climbing; Act 1d20; Sp: Choke, camouflage, infravision 60'; Sv Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0, AL N.*

*Camouflage:* Chokers tend to hide in narrow crevices and crannies, in caves and grottoes, where they can lay motionless for hours at a time (+10 bonus to hide checks).

*Choke:* Any creature hit by a tentacle must take a contested Strength check. The choker's arms (covered in suction pads, long, and flexible) grant it a +8 bonus to this check. If the choker wins, it will start choking (big surprise) its victim, inflicting 1d4 damage per round until the victim dies or breaks free. A choker so engaged cannot attack anybody else, whereas the victim can but with a -4 modifier. A grappled creature cannot talk or use magic. To break free, the grappled creature must take an action and succeed on a contested Strength check (remember that chokers get a +8 modifier).

**Treasure:** The cyclops' eyes are circular blue crystals, easily pried out of their sockets. One just needs a dagger or other pointy object to extract them. There are 5 in total, and each of them can be sold for 25 gold pieces.

**19 Red room:** This room is almost a copy of the previous one, but in this case the cyclops on the mural painting have red-colored eyes. Temperature here is higher than in the rest of the Halls, and it shows.

This is the room where Bertoldo's son dwells. He does not allow anybody to come in here. In one of the corners, there is a stinky straw mattress; the floor is covered with rubbish, a wild assortment of stuff previously owned by now long-deceased adventurers or made with dead animals and dirty clothes. This is, after all, the room of a teenager.

Bertoldo Jr. is fed up of living under the shadow of his father. He is ready to form an alliance with the characters to kill his father; he will then replace him as the new king of the chokers. Furthermore, because of his high hormone levels, he is very horny and will try to pick up any female adventurers. If his advances are accepted (even if just to manipulate him), his mother Cgggh will severely disapprove of it (she will either think that the adventurer is not good enough for his son or that she is a tart).

**Bertoldo Jr:** *Init +1, Atk two stilettoes +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 2d6+2, 9 HP; Mv 20', 20' climbing; Act 1d20 or 2d16; Sp: Hide in shadows +6, sneak silently +5, infravision 40', Lucky charm (Luck 10); Sv Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2, AL C.*

*Lucky charm: It works like the halfling's ability.*

*Equipment: Handcrafted hide armor (could be sold for 45 gold pieces), 2 sharp stilettoes (1d4 damage, +1 to crit rolls, but also +1 to fumble rolls).*

**Treasure:** There is a hidden leather sack inside Bertoldo Jr.'s pillow, full of coins (they sum up to 23 gold pieces) and a yellow zirconite (30 gold pieces). The cyclops' eyes are circular red crystals, easily pried out of their sockets. One just needs a dagger or other pointy object to extract them. There are 6 in total, and each of them can be sold for 25 gold pieces.

**20 Apse and altar:** Bertoldo has put his throne here on the marble altar. The throne is made of giant spiders' parts; Bertoldo even has a crown (intended for special occasions) made with the mandibles of a particularly huge spider. It is here where Bertoldo grants his audiences and administers justice when the need arises. A common punishment entails pushing the bound criminal from the altar; if the fall does not kill it, the spiders surely will (**Area 15**).

Behind the throne is a straw mattress where the royal cou-

ple sleeps. Under it, beyond a well-concealed small trap door, the halfling hoards the riches he has gathered after a lifetime of adventures; a cache of coins and jewels he expects to take with him on the day he leaves this goddamned place.

Above the altar is a vaulted ceiling with a mural painting on it: a strange tangle of red and blue lines and shapes. If a character places two of the crystals found in both **Areas 18** and **19** (a red one and a blue one) on his/her eyes, a three-dimensional image will suddenly appear: a Vertical Halls vanishing point perspective, as if the Halls went on for some more meters up to a door. Someone looking through the crystals will be able to open the door (it is real); there is a set of stairs behind it leading to the stained glass window (**Area 21**).

**Bertoldo and Cggh:** *Init +3, Atk short sword (1d6) +3 melee and 2 tentacles +3 melee (1d4 and choke); AC 15; HD 5d6, 21 HP; Mv 20', 20' climbing; Act 1d20 or 3d16; Sp: Hide in shadows +8, sneak silently +8, infravision 60', Lucky charm (Luck 12), choke, my better half; Sv Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2, AL N.*

*Lucky charm: It works like the halfling's ability.*

*Choke: Like the chokers' ability.*

*My better half: If Bertoldo fails a saving throw that takes him out (i.e. a spell of Sleep or Hypnosis) Cggh will take control of the couple and will try to escape to a safe place.*

*Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, and a pendant made with a dry tongue and ear; it allows the bearer to understand and speak aklo, the language of the chokers, the darkmoantle, and many other nasty creatures of the underdark. It was a present from his late father-in-law, one he later regretted giving to him.*

**Treasure:** Bertoldo's stash is worth 1200 silver pieces, a crown worth 400 gold pieces (with inlaid gold and precious stones), and a nickel silver cutlery for 8 people worth 100 gold pieces.

**21 The stained glass window:** At the stairs' end, one will find the Geometrist's masterpiece, a wide terrace bound by a balcony hanging over the void; the soaring views of the valley are breathtaking. Opposite the balcony is an impressive lively-colored and geometrical stained glass window set on the mountain wall. The light reflected on it bathes the Plaza of Shine down in the valley in *Shadypass*. Said reflection alleviates the symptoms of the Tindalos Virus' infected patients.

The stained glass window blocks the passage to the conjuring room. Its design is not purely ornamental – its main purpose is to keep a hound of Tindalos captive inside it. The Geometrist found the hound during one of his scientific investigations; when he was done with it, he put it in here. This hound is the virus' carrier, a virus it brought from its home dimension.

The stained glass window is nearly intact despite the tremor; nearly, because some tiny cracks did form, through which the Tindalos Virus passed. If the glass is shattered, the hound will be set free; it will certainly indulge in its urges, which could be summed up as eating humanoids.

The hounds of Tindalos are immortal creatures that inhabit time vertexes. Its physical appearance is unknown, because those who face them do not usually live to tell the tale. It is said that they look like a scrawny and huge hunting dog, a sick-looking greyhound with a long and hollow proboscis or tongue used to drain its victims' body fluids; it also se-



cretes a strange blue-hued pus through it.

**Hound of Tindalos:** *Init +4, Atk bite +6 melee (1d12+2) or two claws +6 melee (1d6+1); AC 16; HD 6d8, 28 HP; Mv 40'; Act 1d20 or 2d16; Sp: Angular move, infravision 60', blue pus, death knell; Sv Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5, AL N.*

*Angular move:* A hound of Tindalos can move through space and time by entering an angle that must be of 120° or less. It must be a fixed angle, so nothing like those formed by a crease on a small thing or a piece of cloth. It emerges from such angles like a thick cloud of smoke; its dreaded head comes first, followed by its body. The hound of Tindalos usually retreats moving like this every time it takes damage.

*Blue pus:* These beings are coated with a layer of blue pus. When a victim is harmed by a hound of Tindalos, some drops of this gooey pus sticks to the wound. This pus is very abrasive (1d4 damage per round). It can be washed away with a wet piece of cloth or a towel, or by dipping the wound in water. An attack that hits the hound of Tindalos also risks being coated in the blue pus. The attacker must take a DC 12 Ref save to avoid it.

*Death knell:* Every time the hound of Tindalos damages someone and that attack brings the hit point total to zero or less, it will behead its victim. This will kill the victim instantly and will bar any chance of resurrection.

The hound of Tindalos is sick and weakened after many years

of captivity, so it will vanish after killing someone. It is up to the judge whether this banishment is forever or not – it could reappear at a later (or previous!) time.

**22** **Conjuring room:** There are two ways of getting into this room, either through the portal in the picture gallery (**Area 4**) or the stained glass window (**Area 21**). Smashing the stained glass window from within also frees the hound of Tindalos.

This is the room used by the Geometrist to summon creatures from another planes and dimensions. The floor, walls, and ceiling are traced with arcane symbols and summoning circles engraved or painted with chalks of different colors, wax, blood, and charcoal.

There are stacks of scrolls full of formulae and designs scattered all over a wooden table. One of them (the prototype for the stained glass window) holds the key for the virus' cure. A person with at least Intelligence 10 who spends some minutes perusing through the pile of scrolls can find it. The cure entails drawing a pattern (with angles wider than 120°) on the floor; the sick then must step into it. When they step out of it, the virus will be trapped inside of the pattern, because it is unable to break free of the angles. The adventurers who wish to bring the cure to



*Shadypass* just need to draw the pattern there and ask the townsfolk to walk through it. This pattern can also be used to keep a hound of Tindalos outside (or inside) of it.

If the players decide to fool around with other summoning formulae, let them do so. A demon will appear; follow the rules in the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* book.

**Treasure:** Scrolls and handwritten notes by the Geometrist. They could be sold in academic and arcane circles for a steep sum (1d10x100 gold pieces); this kind of knowledge, however, should probably be kept secret. After a couple of months of study, translation, and transcription, they could be used to brew the Liao drug (provided the ingredients for it, like the black poppy from **Area 5**, are at hand). This substance projects the mind of the user to the past, through his/her ancestors. The right dose must be taken or one could go way too far in the past, before life appeared on the planet. This will draw the attention of the hounds of Tindalos; a hunt through time and space will ensue.

Using the Liao drug could be the beginning of a new adventure. If all the adventurers take the same dose at the same time, their minds will be projected to their ancestors, in the same "spot" in the past.

## Failure is an option

If the characters fail to obtain a cure, they will die and *Shadypass* with them, as simple as that. The townsfolk will succumb to the Tindalos Virus, and the village will turn into a ghost town. The virus will then disappear after such a quarantine, since there will be no hosts left.

Back in the Halls, the amalgams will take care of fixing any mess that could have taken place during the characters' incursion. Bertoldo and the abomination (if both are still alive) will carry on with their cold-war feud until another band of adventurers help one of them to get rid of its rival. If the abomination is destroyed, Bertoldo will fetch his stuff and will leave the Halls; his son will take his place as the new king of the chokers. Same scenario if Bertoldo dies.

The Geometrist's secrets will sooner or later draw the attention of scholars and arcane students. It is even possible that the Geometrist avoided his own death, either through the use of the Liao drug or through the use of a mathematical phylactery (an equation that can bring him back to life by taking over the mind of the one who can solve it).

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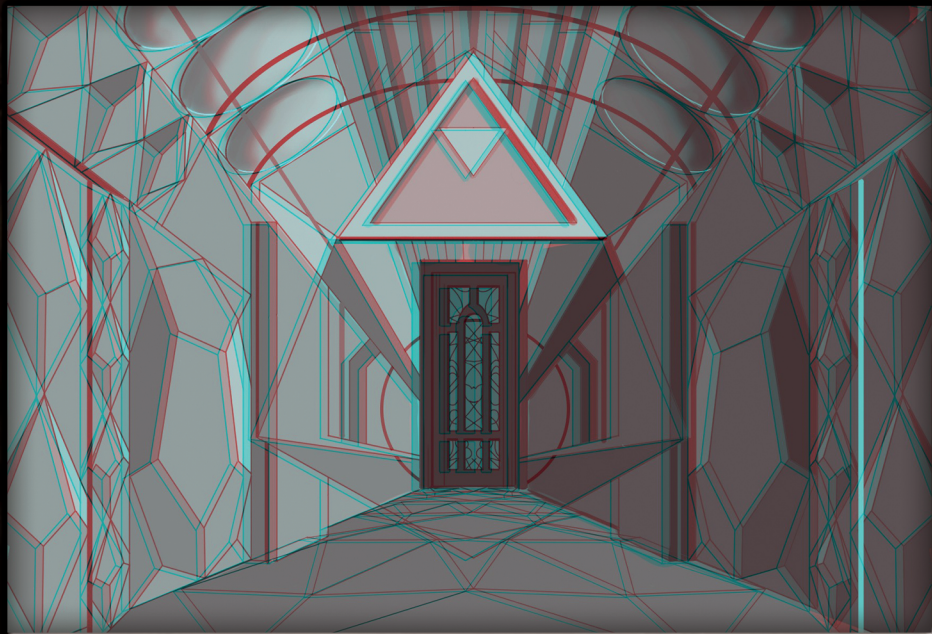
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# THE VERTICAL HALLS



A week ago, there was a tremor near Shadypass. Not long after, the first cases of a strange disease appeared – a disease that is becoming an epidemic as days go by.

The Vertical Halls is an adventure intended for a level 2 party that takes the characters from the village of Shadypass to the very top of a crazed, yet long-dead, scholar's demesne. In a race against the clock, they must find a cure for this mysterious ailment.



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