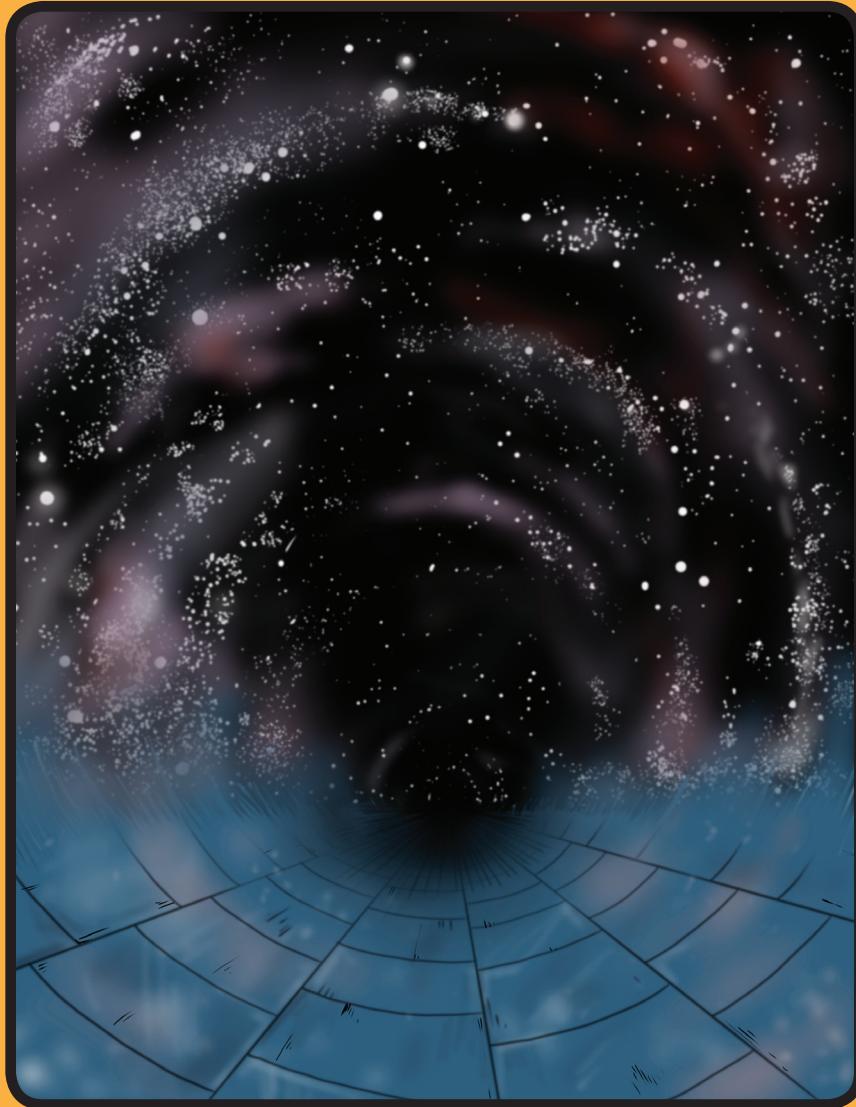


AL 1-5

PURPLE DUCK GAMES PRESENTS...

# THE STARS ARE FALLING

AN ADVENTURE COMPILATION FOR  
CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3



by Daniel J. Bishop,  
Paul Wolfe,  
& David Pryzbyla

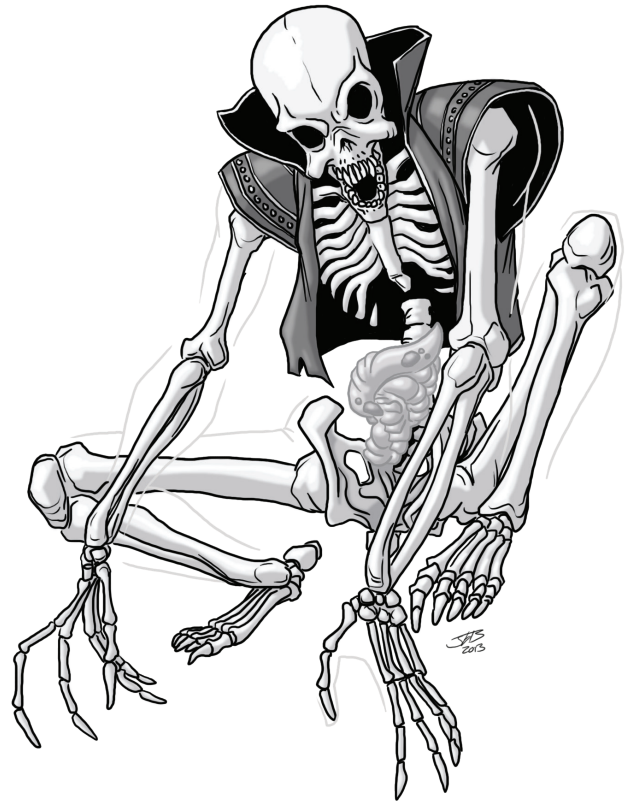
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# THE STARS ARE FALLING

## AN ADVENTURE COMPILATION FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3

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# The Stars Are Falling

## A Framework for using AL 1 to AL 5

Purple Duck Games' *Adventure Locales* are perfect for dropping into any ongoing campaign. With some slight alteration, they can also be used as a story arc, spanning five or six adventures running from 1st to 3rd level.

The general order for running these modules is:

- **AL 2: Sepulcher of the Mountain God** by Paul Wolfe (level 1; see p.3)
- **AL 1: Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror** by Daniel J. Bishop (level 2; see p.16)
- **AL 3: Through the Cotillion of Hours** by Daniel J. Bishop (any level; see p.26)
- **AL 4: The Way Station** by Dave Przbyla (level 3; see p. 40)
- **AL 3: Through the Cotillion of Hours** by Daniel J. Bishop (any level, optional; see p.26)
- **AL 5: Stars in the Darkness** by Daniel J. Bishop (level 3; see p.56)

## Overview

It has taken centuries for the Azure Dwarf to learn how to bind himself to Urstah the Star-Drinker, and to wake the dread monster upon the plane of reveries where it lay dreaming. With the creature's awakening, a whole minor constellation disappeared from the sky to assuage its hunger. This was taken as a sign by some for the advent of a new Age of Chaos. By others, it was a sign to leave their humble station, and take up a life of adventuring!

## 0-Level Funnel

The funnel in the *core rulebook* is a good option, because its introduction also deals with stellar phenomenon. Regardless of what funnel you use, ensure that the kick-off to adventure is the disappearance of a minor constellation. If you can tie events into the ancient Yuuto and Omeri described in *Sepulcher of the Mountain God*, all the better. Finally, the PCs should have an opportunity to learn of the existence of the Dwarven Kingdom of Upanesh from *The Waystation*, and be given motivation to seek its riches.

## Sepulcher of the Mountain God

Whether they discover the cavern looking for the way to Upanesh, or they are fleeing from a "random" encounter too powerful to face, the PCs discover the *Sepulcher of the Mountain God* while traversing the mountains. Use the following alterations to this adventure:

- When Alceon and the skull of Vyache are returned to their rightful place, another secret door opens in **Area 4** which winds down through the mountain's rock until it reaches the eastern entrance of the *Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror* map.
- In **Area 10**, a dead body can be found in one of the craymite nests. It carries a note that says "*Seek for the hidden shrine of Val'Kalru beyond the Temple of Ira. There Dallspero the Philosopher now dwells, and he may help you with your problem.*" The body also has a small bag with six red gems that a dwarf's nose cannot detect. These are vahomey crystals, as described in *The Way Station*.

## Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror

The characters should have sufficient XP to reach 2nd level by passing through the *Sepulcher of the Mountain God*. Now they are given a direct route leading down to another hidden temple complex of the ancient Omeri people. Use the following alterations to this adventure:

- The eastern entrance leads back toward the *Sepulcher of the Mountain God*, as described above.
- The books in **Area 11** contain references to the ancient peoples of this region, including the Omeri, the Yuuto, and the Upanesh dwarves from *Sepulcher of the Mountain God* and *The Way Station*. They also reference "a dwarf whose skin and beard are both blue, who hated the Upanesh and sought a coalition to bring about their downfall. For it is said that they withheld their knowledge of the ancient starherds from him, and of that being called Urstah, the Star-Drinker."
- In **Area 25**, change the special purpose of the Fellblade of Dallspero to "defeat the Azure dwarf".
- The western exit leads to a tunnel which, after a quarter mile, opens into a cavern which exits onto the mountainside. The opening is screened with brush and off the beaten track, but relatively close to a village of sheep herders where the PCs may recover.

## Through the Cotillion of Hours

While the players are recovering in the village, begin determining the first important stars that disappear, as described in *Stars in the Darkness*. This advent sends ripples through both the physical world and the plane of dreams, causing Somnos to invite the characters to his *Cotillion of Hours*. Use the following alterations to this adventure:

- The PCs do not need to be travelling anywhere to have the dream that starts the adventure.
- In **Area 2**, likely nemeses include a craymite, the mud demon, Bashkim, or the Avatar of Gelihedres from *Sepulcher of the Mountain God* or the nacreous horror or the hoardling from *Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror*.
- For **Area 12**, the judge should prepare notes on various PCs as they die in the funnel and beyond, as they may appear here as dream ghouls.
- Characters may discover that the Azure Dwarf is behind the disappearance of the stars at **Areas 6, 7, 10-B, or 12**. Assume that both the cat and the dream ghouls are aware of the Azure Dwarf, and that he has awakened Urstah, “an event that sends vibrations of dismay through all the worlds.”

## The Way Station

When the characters have sufficiently recovered, and a few more stars have disappeared, a shepherd discovers the entrance to *The Way Station*, and the PCs are encouraged to investigate. This will further cement the Azure Dwarf as a main nemesis, and help provide the PCs with the tools they need to defeat the Star-Drinker. Use the following alterations to this adventure:

- In **Area 14**, the *Book of Donations* lists, on the 16th of Fellos, 626, Bellwart the Azure Dwarf donated 140 gems shaped like cerulean teeth to see the records of the Sages of South March concerning the starherds, and that his request was denied.
- In **Area 16**, the vision of the end of Minoc Manshield includes the following, between the first and second paragraphs: *A dwarf can be seen in the distance, urging the evil creatures to destroy the hammer-wielding dwarf with maniacal glee. This dwarf appears to be entirely blue – hair, beard, skin, and even teeth.* And at the end of the description: *But the Azure Dwarf escapes, skipping back into darkness before the tunnel collapses.* The judge may wish to describe

some of the enemies besetting Minoc Manshield as craymites, from Sepulcher of the Mountain God, and include their bodies in the rubble.

- When a PC wielding *Stone Fist* agrees to attempt defeating Urstah and the Azure Dwarf, the second power of the hammer is unlocked. The third power is unlocked when the character actually faces Urstah and the Azure Dwarf.

## Through the Cotillion of Hours

Optionally, you may wish to have characters return to *Through the Cotillion of Hours* again at this point. First, it is unlikely that the group actually succeeded on the first go-through, as they would lack sufficient information to deal with all of the Cotillion’s puzzles. Secondly, the characters now have more information with which to ask questions or make requests of Somnos or those they encounter. Finally, the judge can allow the characters to pass through **Area 14** directly to the start of *Stars in the Darkness*.

- In Area 2, a vahomey or cacogen from **The Way Station** can now be used as the nemesis – or the judge may wish to have the nemesis appear as the Azure Dwarf himself!

## Stars in the Darkness

Finally, the characters confront the Azure Dwarf and Urstah the Star-Drinker. No changes need to be made to this adventure, but the judge may wish to extend the wandering encounters to 1d12, with 1-2 vahomey (*The Way Station*) appearing on a roll of 11, and 1d4 craymites (*Sepulcher of the Mountain God*) appearing on a roll of 12. This will help to make the final adventure in the series feel like part of the same continuity as the earlier adventures.

What does the party do after this? That’s up to the judge – but be certain that Purple Duck Games will continue to provide materials to help!

# Sepulcher of the Mountain God

A Level 1 Adventure Locale for 8-10 characters

## Background

In ancient days, two tribes dominated the land: the Yuuto and the Omeri. The Yuuto, a tribe of mountain people, were fierce and savage warriors – raging through the more civilized Omeri lands in a constant state of war and rapine. With them, the Yuuto brought their savage god, Ira (pronounced eer-AH). In these legendary times, the Omeri finally rose up against the Yuuto invaders, drove them back into their mountain homes, and then destroyed the Yuuto utterly. Worship of Ira, the Mountain God, survived into the modern age in the obscure mountain hamlets and backwater lowland villages of his other worshipers. In addition, Ira is the god of giants, deep dwelling dwarves, and other mountain dwelling humanoids.

Through the ages of man, Ira has ever been locked in a struggle with Gelihedres, the demonic god of the lower worlds. The King of Darkness, as he is called, counts the squirming masses of deep cave systems as his servants. Though the power of both gods has waned over the millennia, they are still locked in a cosmic struggle of Law over Chaos—of the deeper darkness over the stony roots of the majestic mountains.

More recently, the mountain village of Inira fell under the sword of raiders and bandits. The village's priest of Ira, Bashkim, lost his home, his wife and children. Consumed by the pain of his loss, Bashkim called out to his god for succor. The Mountain God offered him only stony silence. Bashkim immediately renounced his god and then sought out ways to hurt both Ira and his worshippers. In an ancient tomb, Bashkim discovered foul knowledge that, if properly used, would severely weakened the Mountain God's power. Though Bashkim took Gelihedres as a patron, he seeks merely to enact his own vengeance upon the Mountain God, whom he feels is directly responsible for the death of his family. He has come to the sepulcher, stolen the artifact Alceon and the

skull of Ira's legendary champion. Deep below the sepulcher, he prepares to enact his vengeance.

## For the Judge

Braving the hidden tomb of an ancient tribal king, the adventurers become embroiled in a quest directly from Ira, the Mountain God – find the Skull of Vyache and his magic club, Alceon, that were stolen by Bashkim and the twisted minions of Gelihedres.

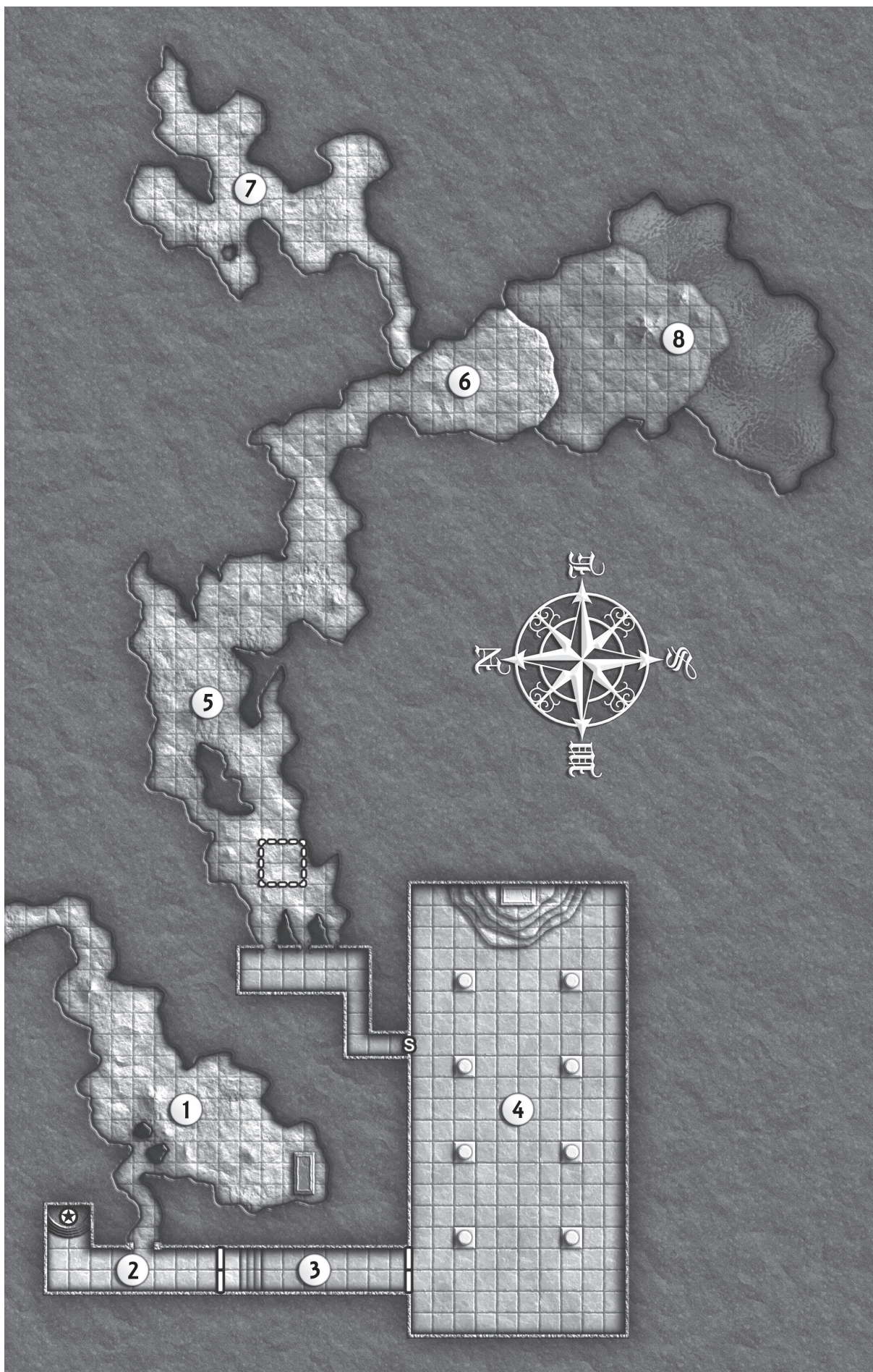
This adventure locale is meant to be a brief expedition dropped into an existing campaign. The powerful magic items and knowledge discovered within the sepulcher of the Mountain God may serve as a jumping off point for a larger campaign. Below are some suggested hooks to get the party moving toward the sepulcher:

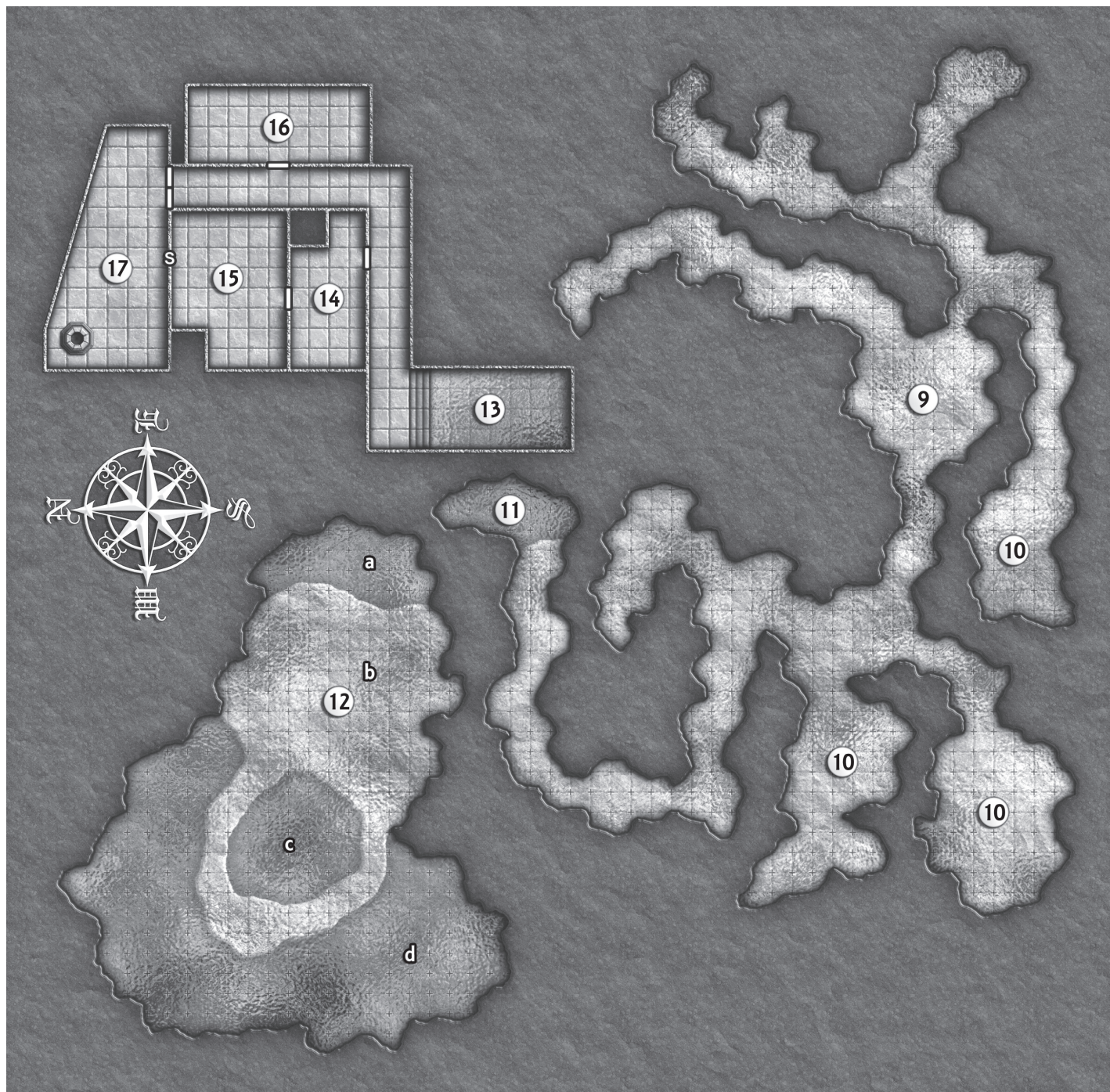
- The party cleric may be directed here by the clergy of his or her church or directly by the cleric's deity (possibly as a result of a Deity Disapproval roll) to investigate the increased activity of cultists to Gelihedres.
- Rumors about the legendary treasure of warrior, Aven-Kruz, or the legendary club of Vyache, Alceon, may draw warriors and thieves.
- An ill-fated adventurer met his demise in area 9 of the sepulcher. His disappearance could cause relatives and friends to hire adventurers to find out what happened to him.
- Wizards may uncover information about the ancient cosmic battle between Gelihedres and Ira. Histories concerning the Omeri and Yuuto may contain notes and/or clues about Aven-Kruz, Vyache and Alceon, or the buried shrine to Gelihedres (**areas 12 and 13**).

## General Layout

The Sepulcher of the Mountain God dungeon spans two maps. The upper area which contains the sepulcher and connected tunnels is found on page 5 of this adventure. The map of the lower levels which is home to the craymites and the temple of Gelihedres is found on page 6.

None of the areas described as natural cave possess any sources of light beyond the odd tuft of iridescent fungus. Adventurers who wish to see in the areas of natural stone will need to rely on infravision, torches or magical light sources.





## Area Descriptions

**Area 1 - Tomb of Aven-Kruz:** *A brush-choked cave mouth reveals a dry passage crowded with curtains and columns of flowstone. The passage opens to a wide natural cavern where a group of skeletal corpses lie in stately repose. A larger, decorated corpse lies on a black stone bier at the back of the chamber. Wind whistles strangely here, as if the cavern is breathing.*

The markings on the biers are Yuuto in origin; Aven-Kruz was a chieftain that united several Yuuto clans against Omeri invaders. In his later years, Aven-Kruz was

overthrown and spent his last days building and protecting the shrine to Ira (**area 2**). He and his servants died in this cave. If the characters come within 30 feet of the tribesmen or their chieftain, they will animate as undead and attack the characters assuming they are more Omeri invaders.

**Zombie Tribesmen (8):** Init +0; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4+2); AC 12; HD: 1d12; hp: 8 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP always attack last; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C)

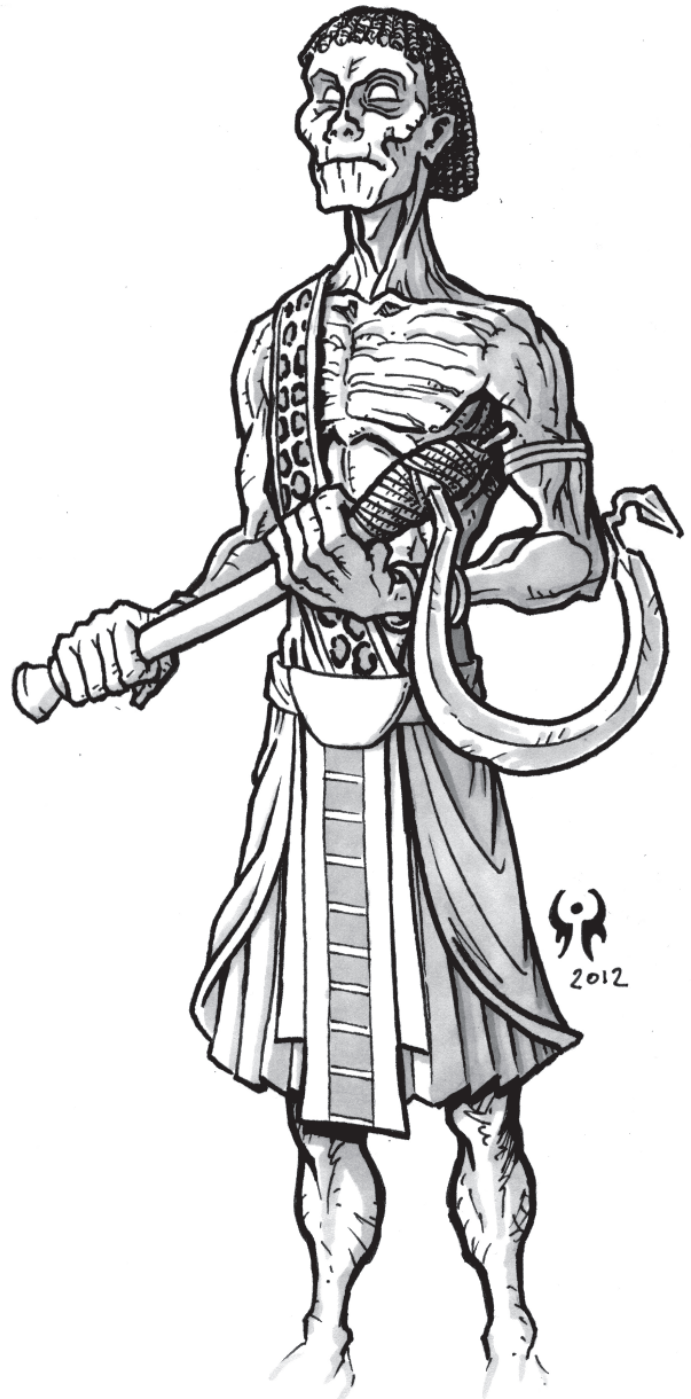
**Aven-Kruz, Feral Undead Chieftain:** Init +4; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4+1), bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 2d12; hp 13; MV 40'; Act 1d20, 1d14; SP Dread (Will DC 12); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0, AL C

*Dread:* The undead form of Aven-Kruz is hellish to behold – a skeletal form clad in tatters of its own skin, shrunken muscles and organs. His eyes burn with a demonic blue light. Those that fail the save flee the cave by the most direct route (even at the risk of taking attacks while withdrawing). If prevented from fleeing, the victim cowers – defending him or herself, but unable to do much more. The effect lasts for 1d5 rounds.

If the character dispatch the undead warriors and search the chieftain's bier they discover the following treasures of his ancient rule:

- A heavy steel mace has flanges plated with a silver alloy that is untouched by rust and age. Upon its handle is the symbol of a mountain with magma-like root extensions (a holy symbol of Ira the Mountain God) and along its shaft is the image of a wolf under an outstretched wing (the sigil of Aven-Kruz) [2-handed, 2d6 damage, requires STR 16 to wield]. (50 gp)
- A breastplate made of interlinked bones. The bones are large like that of a sabre-toothed cat or a mammoth. Although the armor feels sturdy the bones have begun to crack with age. [AC +3, light armor, shatters on a critical hit to wearer.] (25 gp).
- A cape made of multi-colored feathers. The cape was once magical, but the glamor has worn off over time. What little magic remains in the garment has kept it from rotten over the ages. The cloak is also useful in discovering the rites of the Mountain God (see area 2 for additional effects) (20 gp)
- A clay urn sits atop the bier. It is filled with a mixed assortment of triangular and square bronze coins. The coins are marked with images of Yuuto chieftans from ages long ago. (10 sp worth. To a collector or historian of Yuuto artifacts they may be worth as much as 80 gp)

A short passage into the sepulcher is concealed by flow-stone curtains and a collection of stalagmites. A concentrated search of the room reveals a narrow opening into the passage. Dwarves and elves notice the passage on a successful Luck check just by passing the area.



**Area 2 - Shrine of the Mountain:** *The dusty passage reveals a small chamber carved from the living rock. An obsidian and basalt shrine decorated with a crude hooded idol crowds the space. At the southern end of the passage is a door of blue-tinged metal.*

The idol (about three feet tall) and shrine are dedicated to the Mountain God, Ira (religious knowledge DC 12). Examining the shrine reveals a crude bowl carved into the flat surface of the stone block. The symbol of Ira (a mountain with magma-like roots) is carved into the bottom of the bowl. The symbol in the bowl is partially

obscured by flakes of dried blood. If the cape of multi-colored feathers (from area 1) is brought near the shrine, the holy symbol of Ira begins to pulse with a reddish-orange glow illuminating secret writing on the wall over the shrine. This writing outlines a binding ritual to the Mountain God known as the Chant of Stone (in the Yuuto language).

At the DM's option, the Chant of Stone could act as a Patron Bond spell for wizards and/or a benediction for clerics seeking to enter into Ira's service. It can be translated either by a *comprehend languages* or a *read magic* spell. Additionally, if a character speaks the dwarven language, he or she can make an Intelligence check DC 8 to determine the gist of the message, and how the ritual can be enacted.

Uttering the Chant of Stone over a quantity of blood in the bowl (4 hp worth) enchants the blood, which then may be painted over the metal door to open it (requires about 2 hp worth of blood). Additionally, anointing a worshipper or servant of Ira with the blood (1 hp worth) grants a +4 Stamina bonus for 1d4 days. This portion of the ritual functions once a year, though the enchanted blood can be kept in a sealed flask for up to a week.

The metal door foils all attempts to pass it by mundane means— even attempting to dig into the rock around the door eventually causes the digging tools to break. Flakes of blood can be detected on the lintel and jambs upon closer inspection. The enchanted blood from the ritual above is the only way to open the door short of other creative magical means.

**Area 3 - Unused Passage:** *This dusty passage slopes down to a set of bronze double doors with brass fittings. The doors depict a world-spanning mountain on which lounges a giant of horrific countenance. At the base of the mountain carving a man is depicted with a strange horned helmet raising an iron-shod club, as if in triumph. Two plain brass rings are secured to each door.*

Pulling the doors with any force causes them to fall forward, utterly crushing all within the 10 foot x20 foot space (Find DC 14, Damage: utterly crushed, Reflex DC 14 to avoid). Behind the bronze doors are plain unlocked wooden doors.

The bronze doors are attached to a set of iron chains. After several hours, the chains retract, drawing the doors

back into their upright position.

**Area 4 - Sepulcher of the Mountain:** *Stone pillars carved to look like bestial giants march off into the darkness. Moving into this large room, the light reveals a stone structure carved to look like a mountain. A robed figure reposes at its pinnacle. The face and shoulders of a foul giant is carved into the wall over the figure. The walls of the room, the pillars and the carving of the giant are striated with glittering veins of silver. The sepulcher is silent; ominously so.*

Of the eight pillars, the two closest to the altar are blank of all carvings and silver. If the bier, pillars, veins in the wall and/or statue are touched, four stone guardians step out of these blank pillars, and fight until destroyed. Once defeated, each stone guardian falls to dust. The guardians reform after an hour and continue to attack unless presented with the holy symbol of Ira. The stone guardians will not attack any creature anointed with blood from the Chant of Stone.

**Stone Guardians of Ira (4):** Init -2; Atk fist +4 melee 1d6+1; AC 13; HD 2d8+2, hp 11 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP immune to piercing/slashing attacks; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +0, AL N)

Stone Guardians of Ira appear to be misshapen giant-like beings composed of stone. Their arms are overly large and their bodies are decorated with tribal tattoos in reddish-brown of hematite.

Searching the room reveals the husks of three vaguely humanoid crustacean creatures. The creatures, known as craymites, have a hard exoskeleton covering their small frame. Their dark beady eyes sit high on their face and their mouths or mandibles are hidden by a mass of tendrils and antenna. These dead craymites were servants of Gelihedres.

The craymites raided the sepulcher for the artifacts of Ira with Bashkim and his cultists. The ex-priest of Ira enacted a ritual to avoid the curse, and then had his craymite minions steal the skull of Vyache. Although they avoided the curse, not all the craymites could avoid the crushing fists of the Stone Guardians.

At the top of the mountain altar lays the headless skeletal remains of Vyache. The skeleton is dressed in ancient robes marked with the symbols of a great mountain with magma roots. If characters disturb the remains, the party



## The Stone Guardians of Ira

suffers the Curse of the Mountain God (see right). The robe falls to dust where touched, though the skeleton clutches a golden-hued gemstone (75 gp) to its chest. Additionally, the skeleton wears a silver holy symbol of Ira.

The secret door in this room is behind a stone panel depicting Vyache defeating the hordes of Gelihedres – amorphous blobs shooting fire from their stalked eyes – with a large iron-shod club (Search DC15).

The secret passage beyond has been breached by the burrowing of the craymites. The back portion of this passage contains a second stone panel divided into various scenes depicting Vyache furthering the glory of Ira. In the center of the panel is a carved out space in the shape of a club. This is where Alceon, the magical club of Vyache, once rested before being stolen by the servants of Gelihedres.

## Curse of the Mountain God

Disturbing the priest's remains or touching the carving on the back wall opens a conduit to Ira's realm. A fiery reddish-orange light shines down on the carving, and though it is stationary, the carving appears to shift and move in the flickering fiery light. Everyone in the room must make a Will save (DC 20) or be prostrated with fear and awe. Those that fail the save are affected by the Mountain God's curse. The words of Ira are sent directly into the minds of the cursed and deals 1 point of Personality damage.

*"You have invaded my sanctum and defiled the final rest of Vyache, my most trusted champion. For this desecration, I now require reparations!"*

*There is a thundering sound of an erupting volcano.*

*"Beneath my temple lies the nest of Gelihedres, foul King of Darkness. His vile children have defiled my sanctum and stolen the skull of Vyache and his mighty weapon. Return both or you will never again find rest on the surface of my world!"*

*After delivering the curse, the fiery light dies.*

## Mechanically

The Curse of the Mountain God drains 1 Luck permanently every day from each character that is not actively pursuing the thieves of Alceon and the skull of Vyache. This Luck is not recovered normally by those of the Thief and Halfling classes. If the party recovers the stolen artifacts, the effects of the curse are reversed, as described below. The DM can decide what “actively pursuing” entails, but could include gathering supplies, recruiting, resting and the like. Should Alceon not be returned to its rightful place, the party suffers the Curse of the Mountain God permanently. As a character’s Luck approaches 0, he or she suffers ever more dangerous calamities, until the character is literally faced with random situations of painful death several times a day. This is a geas-like effect. If you as a Judge do not like this kind of mechanical penalty, simply leave the curse up to the player’s imagination.

## Returning to the Sepulcher

When the characters return Alceon and the skull of Vyache to their rightful places, the Curse of the Mountain God is reversed – the character gains a Luck point each day until reaching his or her maximum (at the time of the curse). Each Lawful or Neutral character also receives a blessing from the Mountain God. These can be personalized by the DM, or simply award each character +1 Luck. Depending on the results of the adventure, clerics that enter into Ira’s service may be given yet another quest that includes bearing Alceon for a short time. The magical club should only be awarded permanently to those of who demonstrate peerless and unquestioning service to the Mountain God.

**Area 5 - Digging:** Jagged passages burrowed through the rock open into a large natural passage. The air here is damp and cool.

This passage was partially dug by the craymites when they broke into Vyache’s tomb. They left a trap to deter pursuit. A hole in the ceiling is covered over with dried

mud and a tripwire is positioned across the width of the chamber. Anyone moving over the wire dumps tons of stone onto everyone within the 10 foot x 10 foot square marked on the map with dotted lines (Find Traps DC 12; Ref DC 12 for half damage; 3d6 damage).

**Area 6 - Cliff’s Edge:** *The passage ends at a sheer cliff. Tens of feet below, water reflects dully and the air is heavy, damp and cool.*

Here the passage collapsed into a sinkhole where water undermined the cavern. The floor of room 8 is 60 feet below and the cliff is damp and slippery (Climb DC15). Thirty feet up the northeastern wall of this chamber is a small passage that is difficult to spot from the floor (DC 22). Eight craymites wait in ambush here, leaping onto anyone near the cliff’s edge with the intention of knocking the victim over and then leaping down into the pool.

**Craymite (8):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee 1d6; AC 12; HD 2d6, hp 7 each; MV 20’, Leap 50’, Swim 20’; Act 1d20; SP Leaping attack; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1, AL C

*Leaping Attack:* When a craymite is able to leap with an attack, it gains a d3 Deed Die like that of a Warrior. This die adds its bonus to both the attack and damage rolls, and, if it comes up “3” on a successful hit, the character struck is bowled over and knocked prone.

A craymite is a creature about 3 foot tall that resembles a humanoid crawfish without claws (their legs end in small grasping claws that are ineffectual in combat). The creatures have strong back legs that allow them to leap great distances.

Craymites speak their own language (a form of Undercommon). Anyone that speaks Undercommon can make a DC 10 INT check to understand them well enough during questioning. Under duress they will brag that Gelihedres lives deep in the earth where he plots the demise of all those of the “light.” They do know that the “loud stick” is not currently in the King of Darkness’ hands, but is being held by a mutinous priest called “False.”

They can also lead party members to the shaft in area 7 that leads down to level 2.

**Area 7 - Ambuscade:** *This passage is small, cramped and muddy. After twenty feet or so, it opens into several low*

*natural chambers stinking of dead fish.*

Craymites use this passage as a temporary lair when intruders are detected. Halflings can move through these passages at regular speed, dwarves at  $\frac{1}{2}$  speed. Humans and elves must crawl ( $\frac{1}{4}$  speed). Other than the eight craymites encountered above, this chamber contains mud nests and a few dead cave fish. The shaft in the back corner drops 180 feet to room 9 on level 2. A waterlogged rope is tied to a thick iron spike driven into the rock. The rope is 190 feet long and perfectly serviceable. The shaft is a natural crack in the stone, though of fairly regular width, and can be free-climbed by thieves or rope-climbed by anyone.

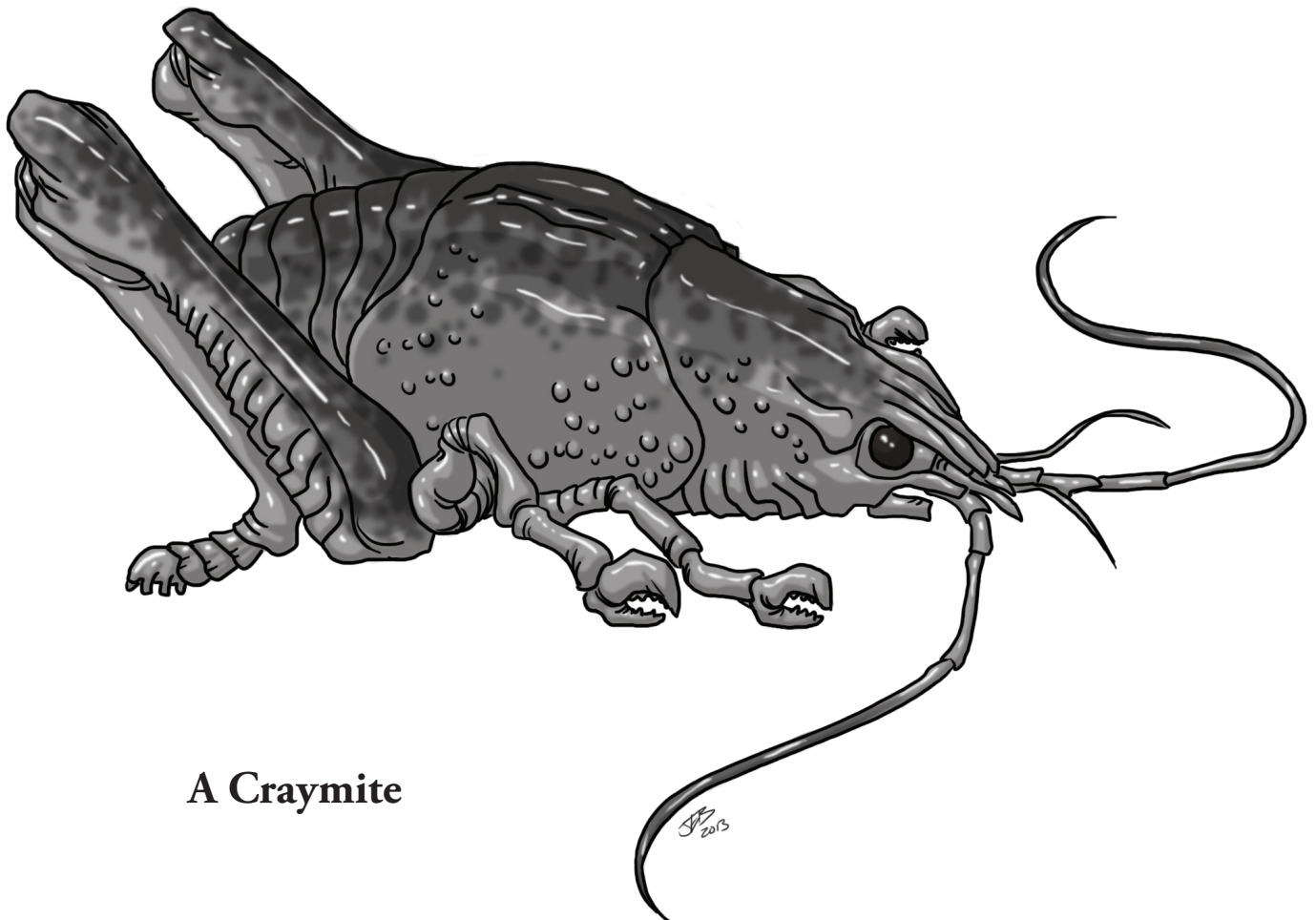
**Area 8 - Sinkhole:** *This chamber is very cold and damp. A large pool of water laps at the stone shore.*

A clear, cold pool of water dominates this room. It is the primary highway for Gelihedres' servants between the upper and lower worlds. Other than herds of scuttling cave crawfish and schools of blind fish, there is nothing else here. The water is deathly cold, however – anyone

staying submerged for more than a turn must make a Fort save DC 13 per round (+1 DC per round) or lose 1 Stamina. Unless the characters can breathe underwater, the path to the lower worlds are not reachable at this time. If the characters have the means and wish to explore the lower world that development is left up to the Judge.

## Warren of the Craymites

The flooded warren of the craymites can be reached by climbing down the shaft in area 7 (landing the characters in room 9). The darker grey areas are filled with cold water to a depth of 8 to 12 feet deep, while the lighter grey areas are filled with water to about 1 to 2 feet deep. In the lighter areas, movement is one-half speed for humans and elf characters and one-quarter speed for dwarf and halfling characters – running and charging are not possible. Deeper areas require everyone to swim – deeper water is also incredibly cold (see room 8 above). Fifteen craymites dwell in the warrens (areas 9-11), only rarely entering the holy chamber (12). While in their warrens, craymites' movement and combat abilities are unaffected by the water; they swim at 20 feet per round,



**A Craymite**

as well as use the craggy walls as perches to leap onto enemies.

**Craymite (up to 15):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee 1d6; AC 12; HD 2d6, hp 7 each; MV 20', Leap 50', Swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP Leaping attack; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1, AL C

*Leaping Attack:* When a craymite is able to leap with an attack, it gains a d3 Deed Die like that of a Warrior. This die adds its bonus to both the attack and damage rolls, and, if it comes up "3" on a successful hit, the character struck is bowled over and knocked prone.

**Area 9 - Bottom of the Well:** *The shaft ends about seven feet above a brackish and stinking body of water. This natural chamber is completely flooded and flooded passages branch off from it northeast, southeast and west. Two water-logged bodies float near the northeast passage.*

Any disturbance of the water has a 20% chance (cumulative) per round of attracting 1d5 craymites. The water is foul smelling and murky but otherwise harmless. Bashkim and his cultists (area 13-17) passed through here. They managed to fight their way through the craymites, though two of Bashkim's adherents fell. The corpses are clad only in loincloths, but their arms are covered in complex tattoos. Someone with religious knowledge can determine that these tattoos are ritual markings dedicated to Gelihedres (DC 15)

**Craymite (up 5 at a time):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee 1d6; AC 12; HD 2d6, hp 7 each; MV 20', Leap 50', Swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP Leaping attack; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1, AL C

*Leaping Attack:* When a craymite is able to leap with an attack, it gains a d3 Deed Die like that of a Warrior. This die adds its bonus to both the attack and damage rolls, and, if it comes up "3" on a successful hit, the character struck is bowled over and knocked prone.

Searching in this area uncovers 3d30 cp, 2d20 sp, and 2d10 gp per round (for 5 rounds). Additionally, a DC 15 Search reveals a hapless thief entrapped 8 feet up the southern wall. The rock formation can easily be broken away to reveal the thief's corpse nearly petrified alongside his ruined leather backpack which contains a small pouch of 12 gp, a rusted set of thieves' tools (checks at -1), spoiled rations, and a rotted rope. On the thief's belt is a rusted but serviceable dagger.

**Area 10 - Brood Chambers:** *The flooded natural passage widens into a dead-end chamber. Piles of mud, some in peaked "nests" and others in circular pens, poke up from the murky water.*

These chambers serve as living quarters and nurseries for the craymites. The chambers contain mud nests of crawfish, coral full of cave fish, and nursery ponds full of craymite spawn. At any given time there are 2d5 craymites here. As described in room 7, above, these craymites know of the rebel priest called False, and they know that he passed into the "Holy Chamber." If hard pressed, they can reveal the secret underwater passage to 13. Each of these chambers contain what little treasure the creatures have scavenged – 2d12 sp and 1d6 gp and 1d3 gems of 10-50 gp value each (30% chance).

**Craymite (up to 10):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee 1d6; AC 12; HD 2d6, hp 7 each; MV 20', Leap 50', Swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP Leaping attack; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1, AL C

*Leaping Attack:* When a craymite is able to leap with an attack, it gains a d3 Deed Die like that of a Warrior. This die adds its bonus to both the attack and damage rolls, and, if it comes up "3" on a successful hit, the character struck is bowled over and knocked prone.

**Area 11 - Passage of the Holy:** *This flooded passage ends in a dead end. At the far end, it appears that the water is much deeper and clearer than the rest of the warren.*

The passage drops off to a 30 feet deep pool. The chamber is unguarded, though the deeper water is brutally cold (see room 8). Fifteen feet under the water here is a passage to room 12. A second, hidden passage branches off to room 13 (Searching for this passage requires 1 full round, at least). In addition to the cold conditions, the swimmer must make a Strength check (DC 13) each round to swim through the passage (to 12 or 13). Reaching either chamber only takes 2 rounds, but each failed check adds a round to the swim. When the swimmer has been under water for three rounds, he or she must make a Stamina check DC 10 or begin to drown. Each round thereafter the Stamina DC increases by 2. A drowning character loses 1d6 Stamina per round. Lost Stamina recovers quickly once the swimmer can breathe again.

**Area 12 - The Holy Chamber:** *This dark vaulted chamber is flooded with cool, clear water. The main part of the chamber appears to be waist deep, but the water deepens on the far side of the room. Other than the lapping of the water, the room is silent.*

The holy chamber is revered by the craymites as a temple to Gelihedres. The eastern pool gives way to a shallow antechamber (12-b) facing a deep clear pool (12-c). The pool is circled by narrow walkway (Dex DC 14 to stay on this slippery surface) dropping off into the abyssal pool (12-d), that leads to Gelihedres hellish underwater sea.

**Area 12-a - The Entry Pool:** This leads to the underwater passage back to 11 (and the hidden branch to 13). Note: The mud demons will follow parties into 13, though they flee from anyone wielding Alceon.

**Area 12-b - The Antechamber:** The antechamber is a shallow area where the craymites gather to pay homage to their deity. The water here is only 1-2' deep. Disturbing the water here awakens the guardians of this chamber (see below).

**Area 12-c - The Central Pool:** The central deep pool covers a sculpture of Gelihedres – about 15 feet under water. Between the stalked eyes is a rusted iron plaque about 3 feet wide and 4 feet long inscribed with a benediction to Gelihedres. The body of a mud demon floats in this pool – killed by Bashkim and his minions.

**Purple Duck Note:** The benediction to the King of Darkness can be used as either a *Patron Bond* spell or as a clue to entering into Gelihedres' service. This is left up to the Judge.

**Area 12-d - The Abyssal Pool:** *The Abyssal Pool is unfathomably deep and cold.*

The abyssal pool is home to two mud demons, who are the guardians of the Holy Chamber. The mud demons will rise from the deep pool to attack any non-craymite creature that enters this area. Traditionally, they would also allow safe passage for other followers of Gelihedres but their encounter with Bashkim has altered their outlook on strangers, even strangers who worship the same patron.

**Mud Demon (2):** Init +3; Atk weapon +3 melee – lashing tentacles (1d8+2); AC 15; HD 3d8, hp: 14 each; MV 30, swim 40; Act 1d20/1d20; SP Eye blast (Ref DC 15 or blinded for 1d3 turns; -3 to save for those with infravision); 20% miss chance to those that succeed the save, unless they do not need sight to fight; half damage from non-silver weapons; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2, AL C

The mud demons of Gelihedres are 8 feet tall misshapen blobs composed of what appears to be living mud. Innumerable eyestalks rise from their headless torsos, each with a golden eye the size of a fist. They flow quickly over watery surfaces and use their two barbed tentacles to kill and capture prey. When destroyed, several of the eyes harden into clear yellow gems of varying quality like a citrine (2d4 gems 10-60 gp each)



**The Mud Demon**

**Purple Duck Note:** Characters may recognize these as similar to the gem held by the corpse of Vyache in room 4.

## Carved Chambers

This area was constructed by an older human cult to Gelihedres, but has long since been abandoned. It is now occupied by Bashkim and his adherents. The ex-priest of Ira seeks to destroy the Mountain God's hold on the underworld by a foul ritual involving the corpse of a giant's child plus Vyache's skull and magical club.

**Area 13 - Reflecting Pool:** *The passage opens into a worked stone chamber with a long stone pool. A passage exits the room from the northeast corner. Other than the smell of cold water, a faint sweet but pungent smell can also be detected.*

The walls of this room are plain, though on each is a carving of the holy symbol of Gelihedres – a cluster of eyestalks emerging from a sphere. A naphtha-based fire trap guards the exit from this room (Find Traps DC 13; Reflex DC 15; 1d8 damage + 1d4 damage per round for 3 rounds. Fire cannot be extinguished with water but a character that used an Action Die to make the save puts out the fire).

**Area 14 - Apartments:** *This room stinks of unwashed bodies and is crowded with sleeping mats and crude personal belongings. Twelve people rise from their positions around the room, their skins with carved in eldritch and vile symbols.*

The door to this chamber is locked. One of the cultists passes into room 15 to warn the acolytes. Amongst the personal junk the party can collect 2d20 cp, 3d8 sp, and a golden symbol of Gelihedres (40 gp). The skin carvings are similar to those on the corpses in room 9.

**Cultists (12):** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6+1), javelin +1 ranged (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d6, hp:4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Gang-up — +1 to hit per combatant over 2 on a single opponent; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0, AL C

**Area 15 - Holy Men:** *This room stinks of unwashed bodies and several beds line the back wall. A central fire pit fills the room with smoke, though a natural chimney seems to vent the majority of it. Six men in loincloths rise from various positions around the room, each with the vile symbol of*

*Gelihedres carved into his chest.*

Six acolytes of Gelihedres live here. If alerted, five will support the battle with spells, while one will open the secret door to warn Bashkim and his guards of the intruders. Among their belongings are 2d100 sp, 1d24 gp, and a small bag of 4d20 gems worth a total of 150 gp.

**Acolytes (6):** Init -1; Atk club +1 melee (1d4), or spell (Spell Check +2); AC 12; HD 2d8, hp 10 each; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP King's Embrace (see below); SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2, AL C – NOTE: Can be turned by clerics of Law. Spell check modifier equal to HD.

**King's Embrace:** (Spell Check DC 14) Upon a successful Spell Check, a muddy tentacle emerges from the carving on an acolyte's chest. This tentacle attacks at +2 (independent of the acolyte's normal attack) and wraps around the victim's throat causing 1d4 Stamina damage per round. The tentacle remains for 3d3 rounds. Each round the victim can attempt to escape by beating a DC 15 STR check.

**Area 16 - Empty Chamber:** *This room is bare and empty, though the symbols of Gelihedres dominate each wall.*

There is nothing in this room. At one time, this room was used as additional quarters for the acolytes of Gelihedres but as their numbers fell the acolytes decided to abandon this room and move into smaller quarters for protection.

**Area 17 - Ritual Room:** *A tall, dusky-skinned man with white hair stands over the beheaded body of a young giant. The corpse lies within a silver sigil carved into the stone floor and a human skull sits near the giant's severed neck. At its right hand lies a large wooden club adorned with dull iron spikes.*

Bashkim is deep in his ritual when alerted to the party's presence – crouched over the flayed body of a giant's child within an arcane circle. The skull is Vyache's and the club is Alceon. Bashkim will only interrupt the ritual if directly attacked – and if disrupted, he'll snatch up his prizes and dive into the well at the back of the room. The well falls hundreds of feet into the deep underworld. The guards immediately move to attack anyone in the room – but do not leave to pursue or engage the party elsewhere. Bashkim's concubine, Adalee, is a charmed priestess of Ira who has now so sullied her connection

to the god that she is essentially powerless. She fights to protect her master, but any sign that the party works for her former deity allows her a Will check (DC 18) – which breaks the charm.

**Adalee:** Init -2; Atk dagger -2 melee (1d4-1), AC: 11; HD 1d8, hp 4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -2, Will -4, AL N

**Guards (4):** Init +2; Atk spear +d3 melee (1d8+d3), or longsword +d3 melee (1d8+d3); AC: 16 ; HD 1d12, hp: 7 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Crit as Level 1 Fighter; Called Shot; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0, AL C

**Called Shot:** If one of the guards rolls a 3 on his Deed die, the opponent must make a FORT save DC = damage dealt, or be shaken for 1 round (-2 to all d20 rolls).

**Bashkim:** Init +3; Atk dagger +1 (1d4) or spells; AC: 14 ; HD 4d4, hp: 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20/1d14; SP spells; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3, AL C

**Spells:** (+6 spell check) – *Charm* (1 creature), *Decay* (as *Emirikol's Entropic Maelstrom*), *Invisibility* (self only), *Invoke Patron* (summons 2d4 craymites (14-17), 1 mud demon (18-25), or an avatar of Gelihedres (26+); *Featherfall*

**Purple Duck Note:** On a natural 1 Spell Check, the ground turns to mud under Bashkim and he is trapped and sinking – He grabs Alceon and the skull the next round and sinks below the surface two rounds later – off to the realm of his new master.

If Bashkim successfully summons an Avatar of Gelihedres, the corpse of the giant's child transforms into the Avatar. The Avatar attacks everyone in the room except for Bashkim.

**Avatar of Gelihedres:** Init +4; Atk tongue +6 melee (1d7 damage and dragged to its mouth) or bite +6 melee (4d6); AC 22; HD 6d8, hp 42; MV 50', swim 80'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP Eye blast (Ref DC 18 or blinded permanently — -6 to save for those with infravision); 20% miss chance to those that succeed the save, unless they do not need sight to fight; half damage from all non-silver weapons; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +10, AL C

The Avatar resembles a mud demon, though it is larger (20 feet tall) and lacks tentacles. Instead it shoots a barbed tongue from its wide mouth that latches onto victims. This tentacle has Strength of 18 and drags trapped victims into the Avatar's mouth the next round (automatic hit with a bite). If destroyed, the Avatar melts away leaving a fist-sized yellow citrine worth 400 gp. Bashkim and the acolytes do not have any treasure on them beyond their equipment and the magical two-handed club. Deep down, Bashkim knew that his path would only lead to his death.

**Alceon:** Called Ira's Fist, Alceon is a magical two-handed club +1 (1d10+1 damage). In the hands of a devotee of the Mountain God, the club can emit a powerful crack of thunder. All creatures of Chaos (including characters of the Chaotic alignment) within a 100' radius must make a Fortitude save DC 13. Those that pass the check fall prone, but are otherwise unharmed. Those that fail are deafened permanently and stunned for 1d4 rounds. This power can be used once per day.



**Alceon**

# Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror

A Level 2 Adventure Locale for 6-8 characters

## Background

In ages past, a cult worshipping the Chaos Lords Yvis and Balmug created a temple deep underground. There they trafficked with dark things from beyond this plane, calling forth a weird growth that dripped a strange nacreous fluid with the power to transform men. When they were driven forth by the forces of law, rumours were whispered of weird music, human sacrifices, strange hopping dances, and even stranger growths upon the cultists.

The scourged temple stood empty for a long time, lost to history, until Dellspero the Philosopher, a neutral wizard interested in artifice, learned rumours of the temple and of the strange fluid once found within it. Although the search took years, Dellspero was able to locate the temple. Within it he placed his workshop and made his home. He found a remnant of the dripping growth and nurtured it back to cancerous health, believing that the fluid it created could be bound into a blade that would turn its own power against chaos.

In this regard Dellspero was correct, and it became the Fellblade of Dellspero.

Such a creation offended the Chaos Lords, however, and they sent an earthquake in revenge. The temple cracked. Areas of it were buried in rubble, and a vast crack filled with the nacreous fluid opened beneath the wizard's feet. Dellspero fell into the fluid-filled rift. When he emerged, he was...changed. As a Nascent Piper, Dellspero took the bones of his apprentices and allies alike. Thus he began the accumulation of his hoard of bones, and the Chaos Lords were contented.

## For the Judge

This adventure is intended to be played on its own, or easily inserted into an ongoing campaign. You may wish to place this adventure in the characters' path if they

travel down a corridor that you have not yet detailed. As an alternative, they may have heard rumours of the Fellblade of Dellspero, and be actively seeking out Dellspero the Philosopher's workshop.

The adventure is designed to flow from east to west, so it is better to have the players begin at the eastern entrance. Although the Dancing Horror is not as effectively foreshadowed, the adventure can work from west to east as well.

Likewise, although the adventure is designed for Level 2 characters, the judge can increase or decrease the difficulty to suit his own group.

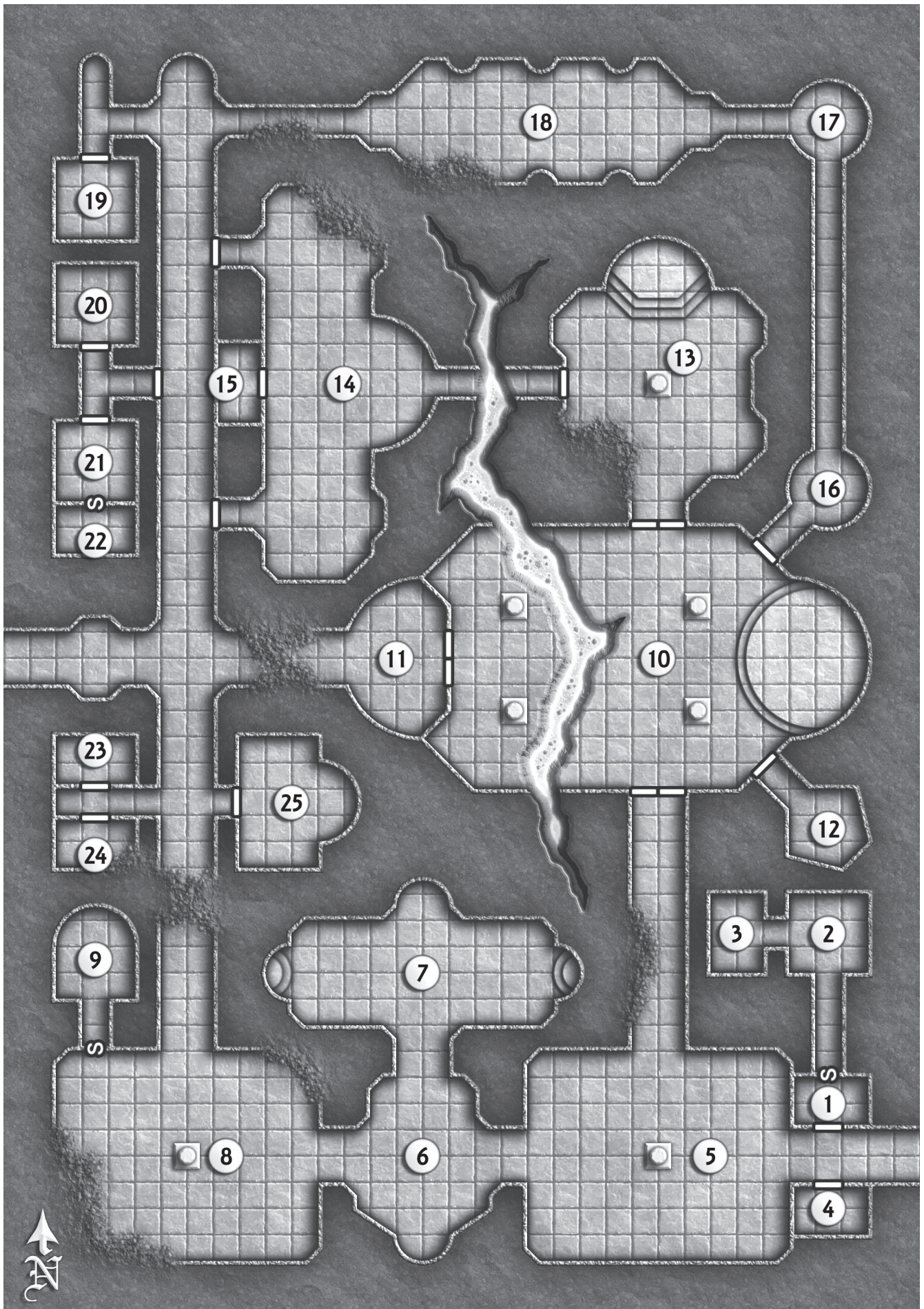
Because the area was a wizard's workshop, there are more magical items available here than in a typical Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure, and few treasures of a more common sort. This is actually in keeping with the advice in the rulebook: "A core concept of the DCC RPG is lack of predictability in the nature of foes encountered, both in their combat abilities and the treasure that is rewarded."

Most of the magic awarded here is single-use. Some requires additional work to determine how to use it or to learn command words (which places its availability in the hands of the judge). One item is extremely fragile when used. Only the Fellblade of Dellspero is a clearly useful magical treasure – and it has its own agenda! Finally, the judge can and should ensure that other spellcasters seek out anyone who displays magical wealth. That is the nature of the DCC universe!

## General Layout

The map shows several areas where rubble has fallen, in some cases blocking off passages. It takes 30 minutes of labour to clear a single five-foot square enough for a single character to pass through these areas, and there is a 1 in 7 chance every 5 minutes of work that a minor rockfall occurs, causing 1d4 points of damage to all within 15 feet. If a minor rockfall has occurred, the odds increase to 1 in 6 of a major rockfall per 5 minutes of work, resulting in 2d6 damage to all within 20 feet.

The Judge should feel free to describe minor (non-obstructive) rubble in any passage, indications of the quake that occurred here long ago.



## Area Descriptions

**Area 1 - Old Storeroom:** *Whatever was once kept in this dusty storeroom has long since fallen to dust. Cobwebs adorn the corners, as well as the partially collapsed wooden shelves. Only a tarnished brass candlestick remains on one of the far shelves.*

Pulling the candlestick causes the secret door catch to softly click open, which opens the door a crack, but actually opening the door requires about 10 minutes work clearing wooden debris out of the way.

**Area 2 - Scything Blade:** *The narrow passage leads into a smallish room, seemingly empty save for dust and old cobwebs. An archway exits through the centre of the left-hand wall.*

The archway is trapped with a pressure plate and a scything blade (Atk +4, 1d8 damage), but it is easily found and disarmed (DC 10 each). It can be bypassed by pressing a discoloured brick near the arch, which disarms the trap. There is a 1 in 6 chance of the trap being triggered each time a creature passes the arch, until it goes off.

**Area 3 - Alchemical Stores:** *This small room is filled with wooden shelves, many of which have collapsed, and shards of broken glass. There is a chemical smell in the air, which is vaguely disturbing. Near one corner, a golden-coloured balloon bobs near the ceiling.*

This was once an alchemical storeroom, although nothing now remains save the *Golden Balloon of Dallspero*: This is a golden coloured bladder of some unknown substance, extracted from some creature from another plane of existence. It floats freely, being lighter than air, and is anchored with a three-foot long twine string. The *golden balloon* holds the *breath of life*, which can be used once to restore any recently slain creature back to life, although it does not repair massive wounds (thus potentially creating something horrible). Any creature so restored permanently loses 1 point of Stamina. The *golden balloon* may then be filled with up to 1 cubic foot of any other gas or liquid the owner places within it.

The *golden balloon* is fragile, and is easily popped (AC 10, 1 hp). If popped, there is a thunderous noise, and the contents are spread over a 20-foot radius. This may

have some strange effects, if the Judge so desires. Any creature within 60 feet must make a Fortitude check (DC 10) or be deafened for 1d6 hours. The pieces of the popped balloon disappear, never to be found again.

Reference to the *golden balloon*, and what is within it, can be found in Area 11.

**Area 4 - Store Room:** *Beyond the door is a small room. Several wooden shelves once lined the walls, but they have collapsed from the passage of time.*

Searching this room uncovers two vials of a glittering, opalescent liquid. These are samples of the *nacreous fluid* found in Areas 7 and 10, and has the same properties. Brief contact causes a curious sensation, as though the liquid were attempting to bond flesh to bone. Prolonged contact or sipping the liquid causes 1d3 points of permanent Agility damage as flesh becomes bone, but increases Armour Class by +1. Actually drinking the liquid causes 2d6 points of permanent Agility damage as bones and flesh fuse (Fort save DC 15 for half), but Armour Class is increased by +2. This liquid can be used to attempt to restore victims of the Dancing Horror (see Area 10). Treat multiple sips as actually drinking the liquid.

**Area 5 - Boneless Leech-Rats:** *This is a larger room, supported by a central pillar. Bits of rock and masonry, fallen from the ceiling 20 feet overhead, are scattered across the broken slate tiles of the floor. A hissing comes from the dark corners, as several rat-like monsters pull themselves out of the darkness, each the size of a small dog. They flop and writhe like boneless worms, pulling themselves toward you seemingly by sheer force of will.*

There are 25 of these boneless leech-rats, creatures created by the combined effects of the Dancing Horror and the nacreous fluid found in Area 7. They flop and writhe bonelessly, but the flesh of their mouths has fused into a cartilaginous leech-like mouth, which can latch onto a victim and allow the creatures to feed. There are 8 leech-rats in the room when the characters first enter; thereafter waves of 2d6 leech-rats enter from the west every 1d5 rounds until all are slain.

**Boneless Leech-Rats (25):** Init -2; Atk bite +0 melee (1d2 + blood drain); AC 9; HD 1d4; HP 1 each; MV 20'; Act 1d16; SP blood drain (1d4 hit points,

automatic damage each round after successful hit until killed), half damage from bludgeoning weapons, infravision 30'; SV Fort -3, Ref -1, Will +0; AL C.

**Area 6 - Empty Chamber:** *This is an irregularly-shaped room. Apart from bits of fallen rubble and masonry along the floor, it appears to be empty.*

Searching characters find only rat droppings – but there is a strange opalescent sheen to the droppings.

**Area 7 - Shrine of the Nacreous God:** *The passage leads into a wide, narrow chamber vaulted to a height of about 20 feet. Alcoves to the right and left contain daises where strange and warped statues stand, a man to the right and a woman to the left, their flesh seemingly melted and rubbery, their faces nothing more than blank stone. Several small unlit yellow candles are before each statue; many have fallen, but some remain upright. Directly opposite the entrance is another alcove, where a pearly liquid drips steadily from a weird barnacle-like growth, forming a small puddle before disappearing into cracks in the floor.*

Clerics of any god will find this place disturbing; wizards and elves will sense its inherent power. Any spell cast here to summon or control extra-planar forces has a +4 bonus to the spell check, but it also has a 1 in 10 chance of summoning a Nascent Piper (see Area 10), which will form from the *nacreous fluid* dripping from the barnacle-like growth.

This *nacreous fluid* is the same as that found in Areas 4 and 10, and has the same properties (see Area 4 for details). Drinking the fluid here transformed the boneless rat victims of the Dancing Horror into the boneless leech-rats found in Areas 5 and 8.

The barnacle-like growth has AC 14 and takes 20 hit points of melee damage to destroy; it is immune to arrow fire and similar missiles. Destroying the growth stops the drip of *nacreous fluid*. However, each successful attack spatters that fluid, so that the attacker must make a DC 5 Reflex save or take 1d3 points of temporary Agility damage. This damage heals at a rate of 1 per minute after 1d5 minutes have passed (but there is no reason to let the players know that!). Lawful characters destroying this growth gain a permanent +1 bonus to Luck, and the removal of the growth will eventually cause the rift (see Area 10) to drain away.



## Boneless Leech Rats

There are three candles before the male statue. These are *candles of the silver flame*. They can burn for 10 minutes each, with a brilliant silver flame. So long as the candle burns, no chaotic creature from another plane (including the Dancing Horror or any Nascent Piper; see Area 10) can approach within 10 feet of the candle.

The five candles before the female statue are *candles of the dark flame*. These candles can burn for 10 minutes each. When set alight, their flame instantly becomes dark beyond human understanding of darkness, and a feeling of bleakness enters the souls of all living mortal creatures within 10 feet. These creatures must succeed in a Will save (DC 15) to take any action. The candle itself sheds no true light.

There is no way to tell the candles apart, unless the characters mark them or keep them separately.

**Area 8 - Enhanced Boneless Leech-Rats:** *The passage enters a large chamber, with a ceiling some 15 feet overhead supported by a single central pillar. The northeast and southwest corners have collapsed into mounds of rubble. More rubble is scattered throughout the room. There is another exit to the north.*

Five enhanced boneless leech-rats are hiding in this

room, hoping to catch unwary explorers. They are better at moving – humping and stretching like inch-worms – and are better able to attack.

**Enhanced Boneless Leech-Rats (5):** Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 + blood drain); AC 10; HD 1d6; HP 4, 5, 3, 3, 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP blood drain (1d4 hit points, automatic damage each round after successful hit until killed), half damage from bludgeoning weapons, infravision 30'; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C. Crit M/1d4.

The secret door to Area 9 is 5 feet above the floor, and is opened by pushing inward and sliding upward. The tunnel to Area 9 is a mere 3 feet high. Humans and elves must crawl to enter here. Dwarves may crouch or crawl, and halflings can walk merely by ducking their heads.

**Area 9 - Hidden Shrine:** *The passage leads into a small, narrow shrine, apparently dedicated to a skull and a pair of shin bones, which rest upon a dusty velvet pillow in the farthest part of the room. The skull is covered in weird spirals and sigils that glow with a faint blue light. This entire area is thick with cobwebs and dust.*

These are the *Skull and Shinbones of Val'Kalru*. The *shinbones* can be used by a chaotic cleric to turn unholy with a +2 bonus if both are held aloft and used as a holy symbol. A chaotic wizard who mediates upon the *skull* for at least one hour gains the ability to cast *scare* through the *skull* once per day. If the wizard can already cast *scare*, he gains a +4 bonus to his spell check so long as he uses the *skull* as a focus for the spell.

A single character who presents both *skull* and *shinbones* to the Dancing Horror is ignored by that creature so long as the character does not attack it. However, the Hoardling will have a +4 bonus to attack rolls and damage. See Area 10 for details. A lawful character who destroys both skull and shinbones gains a permanent +1 bonus to Luck.

**Area 10 - The Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror:** *The doors pull open to reveal a vast hall, at least 35 feet high, supported by four pillars. To the right, a circular dais is all but hidden under a pile of spilled bones – human, animal, and otherwise – that must have come from hundreds of creatures over decades*

*or longer. To the left, a set of double doors is marked with a strange glowing orange sigil – the mark of Dallspero the Philosopher, a wizard who disappeared from history centuries ago. Between you and the marked door, though, is a rift in the stone floor that runs the length of the room, splitting the walls north and south. A weird and shimmering opalescent light comes from this rift, reflecting off the ceiling, and lighting the room with swirls of nacreous colour.*

The *nacreous fluid* in the rift is 5 feet below floor level, and the fluid itself runs in the rift to a depth of 1d5+2 feet at any given point. This *nacreous fluid* is the same as that found in Areas 4 and 7, and has the same properties (see Area 4 for details). A normal character submerged in the fluid must make a DC 10 Will save or emerge as a Nascent Piper (see below). Even if the character succeeds, he suffers 1d6 points of permanent Agility damage each round, as bones and flesh fuse, until he has escaped the rift. The Dancing Horror and any Nascent Piper created are immune to these effects. Leaping over the chasm is a DC 10 to 15 task, depending upon where it is attempted.

After 1d7 rounds in the room, the characters begin to hear an eerie, toneless piping that seems to echo around the chamber. 1d4 rounds later, the Dancing Horror appears atop its bone hoard, in the far east part of the room. It was meditating and dreaming its strange dreams behind the bone hoard prior to this.

**Dancing Horror:** Init +2; Atk touch +4 melee (hold and bone theft); AC 14; HD 6d6; HP 22; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP dancing, leg regeneration, hold, bone theft, connection to victims, bone sense 120'; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +4; AL C. Crit M/d12.

The Dancing Horror looks like a faceless, vaguely man-shaped insect with opalescent skin, and long spindly limbs. Each hand and foot has six long fingers or toes. Its back is hunched with an enormous pocked hump with tumorous growths like weird white corals growing from it. The weird piping it makes comes from these growths.

The Horror hops, spins, and whirls rapidly as it moves, in a strange and graceful dance, both beautiful and repellent. The weird piping and dancing together fascinate creatures that can see the Dancing Horror; they must succeed in a DC 10 Will save to take any action. A

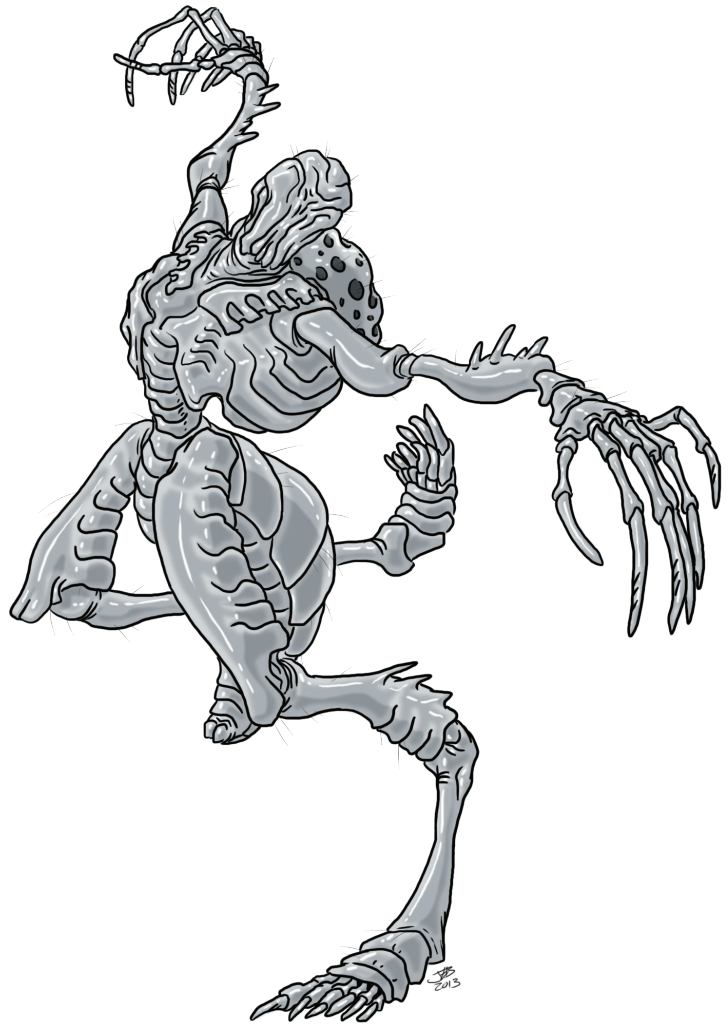
Mighty Deed of 3 can injure a leg enough to stop the Horror's dancing for 1 round. A Mighty Deed of 4+ severs a leg and stops the Horror from dancing until it uses its action to grow a new one, which folds out of its body with a repulsive squelching noise. A Mighty Deed to trip or otherwise halt the Horror allows the creature a Reflex save with a DC of 10 + the result of the Deed Die to avoid the special effect.

When the Dancing Horror successfully attacks an opponent, it holds fast, and can only be dislodged with an opposed Strength check (the Horror has a bonus of +6 for this purpose) or a Mighty Deed. A Warrior or Dwarf must have at least 4 on the Deed Die to dislodge the Horror; otherwise it is merely unable to do damage on its next action as it gains a firmer grip on its victim. On each action, including that of the initial attack, it can attempt to draw the bones forth from its victim's body. The initial attack only causes 1 point of Stamina damage, but each subsequent action causes 1d5 points of temporary Stamina damage. A character can make a Fort save (DC 10) for half damage (rounded down, so that it is possible for the Horror to do no damage), or a Will save (DC 15) to take no damage. Players should be told their options before deciding what save to roll. If a character reaches 0 Stamina, its skeleton is pulled from its body.

As soon as the first point of temporary Stamina damage is done to a victim, diaphanous tendrils of shimmering ectoplasm connect the head of the Horror to the heads of each character until the Horror is slain or all of their bones are extracted. A character who is reduced to 0 Stamina can still speak, but *his voice comes from the Dancing Horror*. Each character must make a DC 5 Will save or take 1 point of temporary Personality damage.

Although the Dancing Horror cannot see, it can sense bones within 120 feet, and knows whether or not the bones it senses are still encased in flesh. Characters reduced to 0 Personality are not slain, but join

in the Dancing Horror's dance, mimicking its hops, spins, and other motions, so long as it exists. Neither are characters reduced to 0 Stamina slain in this case, although they may well wish they were, for they are boneless creatures able to do little more than flop and slither at a speed of 20 feet per round when they are restored to 1 point of Stamina. The remainder of their lost Stamina



## Dancing Horror

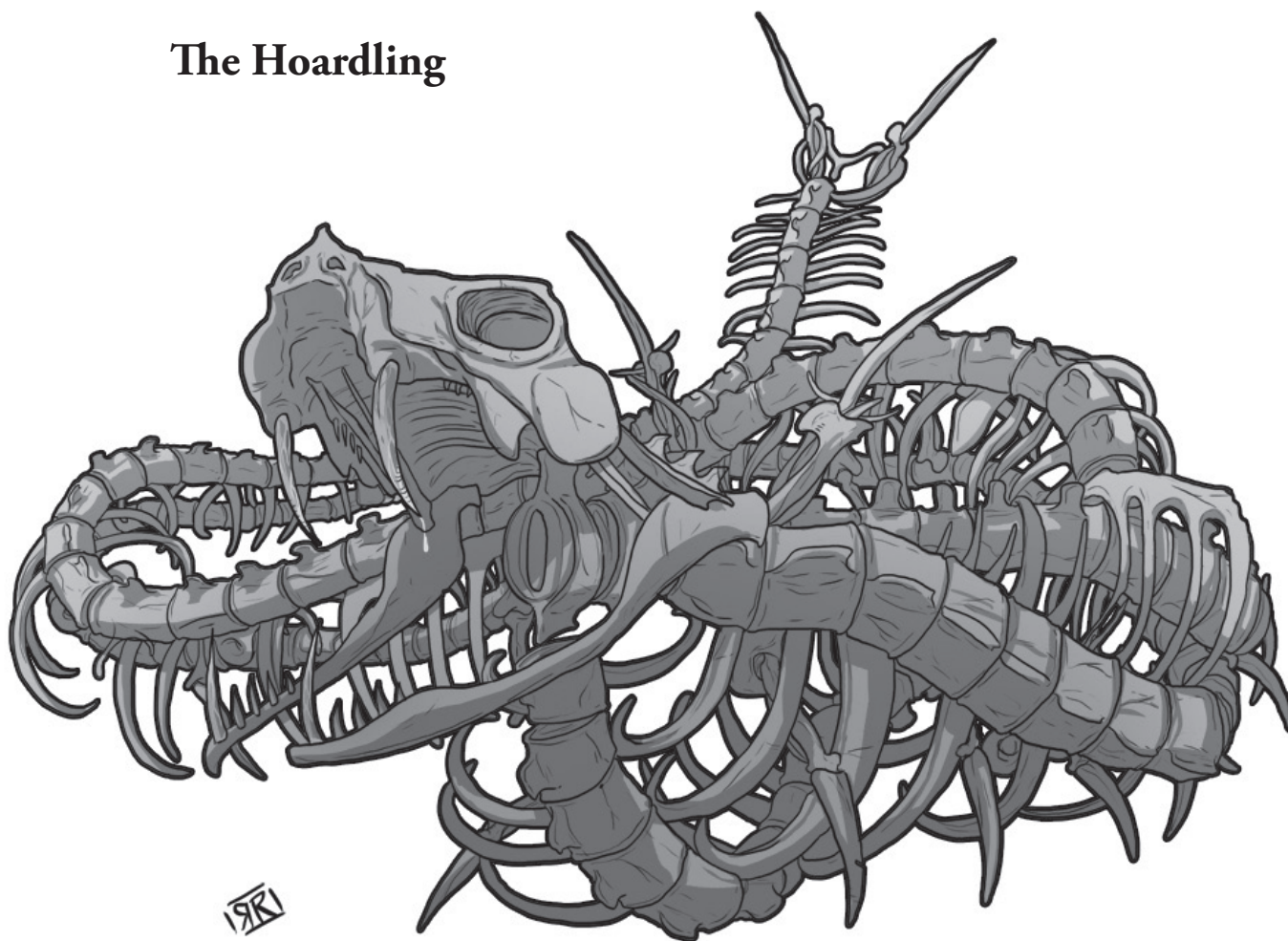
is lost forever, unless they can somehow be rejoined with their skeletons!

Note that the Dancing Horror only does hit point damage on a critical hit.

When the Dancing Horror is slain, it explodes into a shower of opalescent ichor. This ichor is attracted to exposed bones, and begins to flow toward them as though pulled by gravity. The coated bones take on an opalescent sheen. Ten minutes later, they begin to move on their own, slithering together over the course of the next 2d24 minutes to form the Hoardling.

Area 18, or the long hallway on the western edge of the map, are perfect places for the Hoardling to attack!

## The Hoardling



**Hoardling:** Init +4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6 + poison DC 15 Fort or 1d6 Agility) or bone spear +4 melee (1d4 + impale); AC 12; HD 8d6; HP 27; MV 50'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, infravision 80'; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C. Crit U/d12.

The Hoardling looks like an 80-foot long centipede, made of a conglomeration of bones. It walks on thousands of splintered ribs, leg bones, and arm bones. Its body mass is a twisting column of spines, pelvises, skulls, and the small bones of wrists and ankles. Its head is the skull of a gigantic serpent, and its fangs drip opalescent venom! Rising from its body behind its neck are two spears made of sharp, jointed bones. Two more bone spears are located at its rear end.

Any creature bitten by the Hoardling must make a DC 15 Fort save or begin to slow down (measured by a loss of Agility). Unlike normal ability damage, this Agility loss heals at a rate of 1 point per 10 minutes.

A creature struck by a bone spear is impaled, and the Hoardling can do automatic damage with any action die (an attack roll is still made to determine if a critical hit effect occurs). A character who makes a Strength check (DC 15) can end the impalement.

Characters that have their skeletons removed have three hopes of restoration:

- They can attempt to drink a vial's worth of the *nacreous fluid*, which allows a Fort save (DC 15) to grow a new skeleton over a period of 2d10 minutes. This is painful, and causes 1d6 damage. Failure causes the normal result: 2d6 points of permanent Agility damage and a permanent +2 bonus to AC.
- Complete submersion of both the character's skeleton and body in the *nacreous fluid* will merge them again if the character makes a DC 10 Willpower save. If successful, the character permanently loses 1 point of both Agility and Stamina. If the Will save is failed, the character instead emerges as a Nascent

Piper (see below).

- A cleric may beseech his god for divine aid (see pages 357-358 of the core rulebook), DC 18, to restore a single character.

A Nascent Piper appears exactly like the Dancing Horror, and has the same abilities. However, characters gain a +4 bonus to all saves vs. its special powers, and a Nascent Piper requires days to regenerate lost legs.

**Area 11 - Dallspero's Forge:** These doors are magically warded so as to require a DC 20 Strength check to open. Up to 4 characters can participate in the check.

*This room is set up as a forge, with a great iron anvil in the centre of the area. Various tools lay, rusting away where they were placed centuries ago. Other tools, destroyed by time, hang from pegs on the walls. A small shelf still contains a few mouldy books.*

The anvil has a minor enchantment on it that has prevented it from rusting, but it weighs 350 lbs. and is difficult to move.

Perusal of the books shows that they are all mouldy, and much of the writing has been effaced. Even flipping through them, however, will uncover a line that reads "... *my golden balloon, wherein I have stored the breath of life...*" (see Area 3). It also mentions the *Fellblade of Dallspero* ("*my greatest work at last complete!*"). A wizard who takes these books and spends time studying them can use them to learn *ward portal* and *sword magic*, although the Judge may require that the character seek out missing parts of the latter formula elsewhere.

**Area 12 - Empty Room:** *The passage leads to a small, pentagram-shaped room. Apart from dust and cobwebs, it appears to be empty.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 13 - Partially Collapsed Chapel:** *This area was a chapel. Its walls still contain muted bas-relief sculptures of insect-like men, and dancing pipers, but they have been damaged by time and the collapse of the south-western corner of the room. A dais at the far end of the room is now empty. A single pillar holds the ceiling up. The room has a melancholy feeling to it.*

There is nothing of interest here.

The jump DC to cross the rift to Area 14 is DC 5. The nacreous fluid in the rift there has the same properties as in Area 10.

**Area 14 - Dallspero's Living Quarters:** *This is a large and irregular area, which was obviously once a grand bedchamber. The remains of a great bed, woven tapestries and rugs, a desk, and a dressing set can be seen, although they have been damaged by time and masonry falling from the ceiling long ago.*

Three enhanced boneless leech-rats hide beneath the ruined bed.

**Enhanced Boneless Leech-Rats (3):** Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 + blood drain); AC 10; HD 1d6; HP 6, 3, 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP blood drain (1d4 hit points, automatic damage each round after successful hit until killed), half damage from bludgeoning weapons, infravision 30'; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C. Crit M/1d4.

Searching this room uncovers the following loot: a small jade statuette of a wood nymph worth 50 gp, a set of six horn spoons worth 2 cp each, a silver candelabra worth 15 gp, and a gold bracelet set with rubies worth 250 gp. In addition, a false back behind one of the desks drawers hides a small black velvet bag containing three *jet black marbles*. These marbles can each be crushed to create the effect of a *ropework* spell with a Spell Check of 18-19.

The jump DC to cross the rift to Area 13 is DC 5. The *nacreous fluid* in the rift there has the same properties as in Area 10.

**Area 15 - Closet:** *This small room contains the rotting remains of once-fine robes, dust, cobwebs, and nothing else.*

Searching uncovers two rotting small sacks containing 200 sp each.

**Area 16 - Empty Room:** *This round area has a high domed ceiling, some 20 feet up.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 17 - Biting Spiders:** *This round area has a high domed ceiling, some 20 feet up. It is thick with cobwebs.*

A narrow crack in the domed ceiling winds its way to the surface, allowing a group of 3 biting spiders to colonize this area. They are aggressive, but their poison is not very strong. Each is roughly the size of a human palm. They automatically gain free attacks with surprise, attacking from above with a +2 bonus to their initial attack rolls, if a group passes this way incautiously.

**Biting Spiders (3):** Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1 + poison DC 10 Fort or nauseated 1d4 rounds); AC 15; HD 1 hp each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison; SV Fort -4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N. Crit M/d4.

The spider's nausea causes a -2 penalty to every d20 roll while the venom is active, and the venom from multiple bites is cumulative.

**Area 18 - The Old Crypt:** *This long hall has niches on either side which were once used to hold human remains. Some dried bodies still line the walls on either side, having been pulled from their niches long ago. The area is thick with dust and cobwebs.*

The dried corpses are all boneless, having been dragged from their niches by the Dancing Horror. This area, or the long hallway to the west, are perfect locations to stage a battle with the Hoardling. See Area 10 for more details.

**Area 19 - Empty Room:** *The door opens into a small room. It appears to have been long deserted, containing only thick dust and bits of fallen masonry.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 20 - Empty Room:** *The door opens into a small room. It appears to have been long deserted, containing only thick dust and bits of fallen masonry.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 21 - Secret Door:** *The door opens into a small room. It appears to have been long deserted, containing only thick dust and bits of fallen masonry.*

The secret door is opened by tripping a hidden catch on

the floor. When the catch is tripped, the door slides up silently, revealing Area 22. However, seven of *Dallspero's Tin Soldiers* were left on guard within Area 22, and as soon as the door is opened, they leap out and attack! If characters are not being cautious as the secret door opens, there is a 3 in 6 chance that the soldiers will get surprise, as they are able to exit the secret door as soon as it has raised six inches.

**Dallspero's Tin Soldiers (7):** Init +7; Atk spear +2 melee (1 + slow); AC 16; HD 2 hp each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to critical hits and mind-affecting spells, resistant to non-magical weapons; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +8; AL N. Crit III/d4.

*Dallspero's tin soldiers* appear as 6-inch high soldiers made of tin and bearing spears. Each of these soldiers can be commanded to attack (or perform other tasks) by a creature who knows the proper command word. They have an effective Strength of 4 for physical labour, and can carry out instructions in an intelligent manner. They take half damage (rounded up) from non-magical weapons and attacks.

Any creature struck by one of *Dallspero's tin soldiers* takes a cumulative -2 penalty to his Initiative count that lasts for 1d6 minutes after the last successful attack. A creature whose Initiative count is brought below 0 by these attacks is slowed to immobility, allowing the *tin soldiers* to automatically hit with every attack.

**Area 22 - The Hidden Library:** *Beyond the secret door is a small room containing a shelf of dusty books marked with arcane symbols.*

There are ten books related to arcane theory here, and each is large and bulky. A wizard who studies them all may learn three first level spells of the Judge's choosing. Shoved under the lowest shelf is a long wooden box containing six more of *Dallspero's tin soldiers*. There are empty places in the box for fourteen more. Their command word has been lost to time, however (and may be the subject of a new quest of the Judge's devising).

**Area 23 - Empty Room:** *This door opens into a small room, empty now save for dust and old cobwebs.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 23 - Empty Room:** *This door opens into a small room, whose far left corner has collapsed. It is empty now save for rubble, dust, and old cobwebs.*

There is nothing of interest here.

**Area 25 - The Fellblade of Dellsparo:** *This room has an alcove in the far wall, which contains a stand for a single blade – a glittering two-handed sword whose blade gleams with an opalescent sheen. Three great opals adorn the sword's pommel and crossguard. Seven metal figures clutching spears, each 6 inches high, stand guard before the sword. The walls of this room are covered with bits or broken mirror, layered into a confusing mosaic that reflects everything within a thousandfold.*

Within the room, a magical *confusion* effect causes characters to make a Will save (DC 10) to take any action as they intend. On a failed save, a character may still act, but has a 50% chance of targeting a friendly figure rather than the intended target with any attack or spell. The metal figures are *Dallspero's tin soldiers* (see area 21). They are not affected by the *confusion* effect in this room. If targeted by ranged weapons or spells, all may take cover behind the sword stand, only attacking targets outside the chamber if their destruction seems likely otherwise.

**Dallspero's Tin Soldiers (7):** Init +7; Atk spear +2 melee (1 + slow); AC 16; HD 2 hp each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to critical hits and mind-affecting spells, resistant to non-magical weapons; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +8; AL N. Crit III/d4.

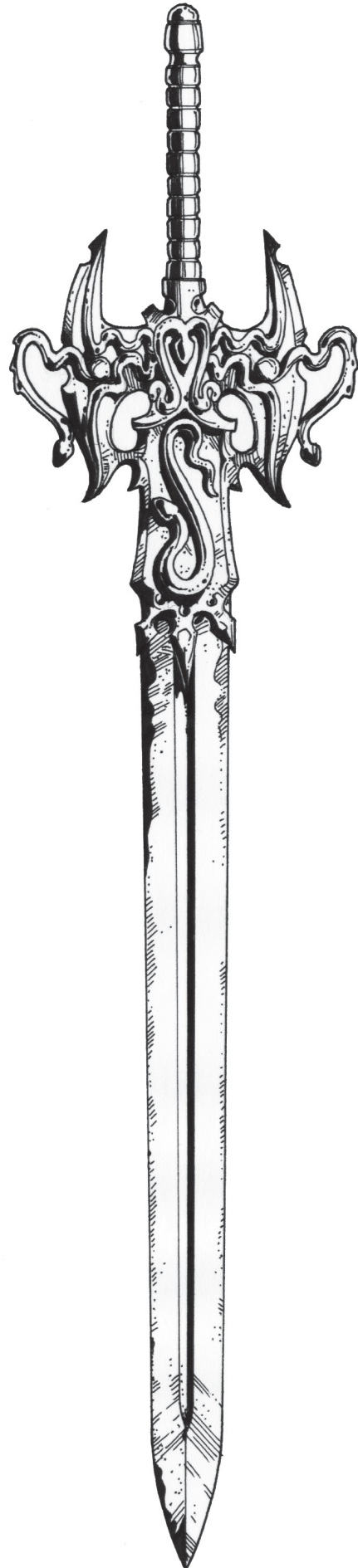
This sword is the *Fellblade of Dellsparo*, a lawful +1 two-handed sword with the following characteristics:

Intelligence 8 (Empathy)

**Special Purpose:** Jail the Guilty

Detect Water within a 40' radius

**Great Strength:** Wielder's Strength is increased by +4 while wielding the blade



# Through the Cotillion of Hours

An adventure locale for any number of characters for any level.

## Overview

Sooner or later, characters are going to want to quest to achieve some specific end – to raise a fallen comrade, to regain lost ability points, to discover a new spell, to find some new magic item...the possibilities are nearly endless. This scenario can occur at any time during the course of overland travel, and gives characters the opportunity to meet some of these goals.

In this adventure, sleeping characters are invited to the Cotillion of Somnos, the Dreaming God. If they can make their way past the entertainments at the Masked Ball, they can petition the Dreaming God to fulfill some request on their behalf. This scenario offers no material treasure – although most would agree that is treasure enough!

Although the adventure takes place in a dream world, it can have severe consequences for characters that are lost herein – they must make a Luck check, or their real bodies enter a coma, never to awaken without divine aid. Even if they are somehow awakened, they suffer a permanent point of Personality loss, as they forever yearn for the dream world they left. In addition, some creatures, although beings of dream, can cause real effects on the character's sleeping bodies or minds.

## Dream Analogues

Characters will encounter analogues of themselves in this adventure, warped by the fabric of dreamstuff. Each analogue has the same base statistics as the character it represents, but may be changed by the mask it wears or the area it is encountered in.

Not all areas have dream analogues. Where dream analogues are present, they wear random masks (as well as appropriate costumes). Each time the characters leave and re-enter a room that contains dream analogues, they create new dream analogues of themselves in that room, which are also wearing random masks. If some of

the group leaves a room, the new analogues either just appear when no one is looking (and, with dream logic, the judge mentions them only as they become relevant), or they enter through another doorway as the returning characters enter (50% chance of each). If all characters leave and return, the new analogues are just there. Eventually, encounter areas may become quite crowded! Bringing an analogue from one room to another does not create an analogue of the analogue, nor does it change the nature of the analogue from the previous room. If an analogue leaves the room and is not in the company of a character when it does so, it does not appear in the far room, but is removed from the scenario (along with anything it might have been carrying). If another of the same character's analogues later appears wearing the same mask, the judge may determine that some amount of continuity exists between the analogues. In any event, a specific analogue may be reached using a contact spirit spell, either within the dream world or otherwise.

If a character removes the mask of an analogue, allow the character to make a Luck check (DC 15 for his own analogue, DC 10 for the analogues of others, increase the DC by +4 if gender is reversed). If the character succeeds in this check, he "recognizes" the unmasked being as an analogue of the character represented. A character who recognizes his own analogue can command it with a DC 10 Personality check, effectively taking control of it. Each additional analogue commanded increases the DC by 2. If any check is failed, the analogues are all freed, and will attack the character immediately.

The judge is encouraged to prepare cheat sheets of each character's basic (and possibly modified) statistics ahead of time to make this easier. In addition, it is not necessary to always determine which analogues are present. When a character chooses to interact with an NPC, the NPC always happens to be that character's analogue. The judge can therefore choose to roll only when an actual interaction occurs.

Use the analogues to create role-playing opportunities. Unlike many adventures, splitting the party is actually useful when presenting Through the Cotillion of Hours; some analogues and situations are designed to help the judge split the group up between rooms. If the analogues don't get used strongly the first time you run this adventure, don't worry. Through the Cotillion of Hours is intended to be run several times over the course of a campaign, as the characters gain levels, until it is solved. It is, in effect, a recurrent dream.

D14 Mask Worn		Analogue Change
1	Cat	<b>Desire:</b> This analogue has the opposite gender of the character. The character finds himself strangely attracted to the analogue, and must make a Will save DC 10 to avoid her company, or to leave her company once in it.
2	Fox	<b>Cunning:</b> The analogue can pick pockets as a trained skill with a +4 bonus (on top of whatever bonus the character already has) against a DC equal to 10 + the character's Luck bonus. He knows the character's best items, and will attempt to retrieve it whenever the character speaks to the analogue. Failure is not noticed. If the analogue succeeds, he leaves the room. The item disappears only in the dream world; the character still has it when he awakens. However, if the item required a command word, the character can no longer remember it (although her companions may know, and be able to restore that knowledge).
3-4	Green Man	<b>Life:</b> Dancing with the analogue restores any character 1 die of healing equal to the character's Hit Die type or 1 point of ability damage; the analogue then leaves the room.
5	Harlequin	<b>Reversal:</b> The analogue has the opposite gender of the character. Each time the character dances with his analogue, their genders reverse. After the first dance, the harlequin analogue will leave the room, and the character will only notice after that her gender has changed. This only affects the dream world; the character is her normal gender when she awakens.
6	Jasmine Flowers	<b>Sweetness:</b> The analogue is Lawful, kind, and helpful. The analogue is willing to help the characters with advice or actual physical help. Once the analogue performs an important service (judge determines), it leaves the room.

7	Moon (Full)	<b>Birth:</b> If the character is male, the analogue is female. If the character is female, the analogue is also very pregnant.
8	Moon (Half)	<b>Change:</b> Each time the analogue is interacted with, roll 1d14. The analogue takes on the characteristics of a new mask, although her mask remains a half moon.
9	Night Sky	<b>Chaos:</b> The analogue is Chaotic. Each time the analogue is interacted with, roll on the Minor Corruption chart; the analogue takes on characteristics of the result.
10	Owl	<b>Wisdom:</b> If asked a question, this analogue always answers truly (although the answer may be cryptic, at the judge's discretion). The analogue then leaves the room.
11	Raven	<b>Prophecy:</b> When any character interacts with this analogue, it speaks a brief and cryptic prophesy. If interacted with by the character it is an analogue of, that character gains a permanent +1 bonus to Luck. The analogue's prophesies should be used by the judge to point characters towards, or supply hints and clues about, other adventures. Once the analogue has spoken to a character, it leaves the room.
12	Star	<b>Divinity:</b> This analogue always bests the character it represents in any opposed check.
13	Sun	<b>Masculinity:</b> If the character is female, the analogue is male. If the character is male, the analogue also has +4 Strength.
14	Weasel	<b>Treachery:</b> The analogue will attack his counterpart, attempting to slay him and take his place. If successful, when the characters awaken, the character is replaced by his dream analogue (who has the opposite alignment; or an equal chance of being Lawful or Chaotic if the character is Neutral). If the judge desires, the player may continue to play the character.

Use the analogues to create role-playing opportunities. Unlike many adventures, splitting the party is actually useful when presenting *Through the Cotillion of Hours*; some analogues and situations are designed to help the judge split the group up between rooms. If the analogues don't get used strongly the first time you run this adventure, don't worry. *Through the Cotillion of Hours* is intended to be run several times over the course of a campaign, as the characters gain levels, until it is solved. It is, in effect, a recurrent dream.

## Real Creatures

Some real creatures can enter the dream world bodily. Other creatures are “real” because they are made of dreamstuff, and are given independent existence. Characters can interact with real creatures normally, subject to the rules of the dream world. Creatures that are real are listed as such.

## Extras

Any creature in the dream world which is not real, or is not an analogue, is created by the mind of Somnos, the Dreaming God. As such it cannot actually be affected by the PCs. If attacked, these “extras” usually just fade away. They otherwise act and have abilities as described in the encounter area. Extras are often left as vague impressions; they have no real detail unless a character focuses on them.

## Time in the Dream World

There is a time limit on this adventure. The characters have until the thirteenth chime rings to reach the Dreaming God and make their requests. When the thirteenth chime rings, the characters wake up. If they have not made requests by then, they gain no further chance. Time in the dream world is not like real time, however. The passage of the “hours” is based upon events in the dream world. A long period of actual game time can pass without any chime ringing, or multiple chimes can ring in quick succession. There are even chances (in Areas 7 and 10) to un-ring a chime, rolling back the dream world's subjective time, and thus increase the odds of success.

The judge should keep strict track of how many chimes have rung. An easy way to do this is by rotating the face of a 12-sided die after the first chime has rung. Keeping this die in the open can create a sense of urgency as the



## An Analogue

number of chimes increases.

A chime rings every time a character or group of characters passes from one encounter area to another. Characters in the same area can time passing through exits so that they are able to reduce the number of chimes, merely by leaving through various exits at exactly the same time. In addition, one or more chimes ring in several encounter areas when specific conditions are met.

Finally, the strange, subjective time of the dream world affects the duration of spells cast here. Ignore the standard spell duration; instead roll 1d6 and consult the following chart. The judge may have to adjudicate strange spell durations, so that, for example, a *magic missile* that lasts until the next chime rings seems to move through the air like treacle, not striking its target until the end of its duration, or a fireball hangs in the air, burning like a rose of fire (and doing damage to anything that enters its area of effect).

1d6	Spell Duration
1	The spell is over before it is cast; no effect occurs.
2	The spell has an instantaneous duration.
3	The spell lasts until the caster leaves the current room.
4	The spell lasts until the next chime rings.
5	The spell lasts until 1d6 chimes ring.
6	The spell lasts so long as the caster remains in the dream world.

## The Dream World

The judge should remember that the characters are asleep and dreaming. As such, he can and should include images from past adventures whenever possible – including in snatches of overheard conversation, in details of mosaics or other decorations, and so on. The more dream-like and personal the judge can make the adventure, the better it will be received.

**Hit Point Loss and Death:** Hit points lost in the dream world do not cause corresponding damage in the real world unless otherwise noted. Unless otherwise noted, character slain in the dream world must make a Luck check, or their real bodies enter a coma, never to awaken without divine aid. Even if they are somehow awakened, they suffer a permanent point of Personality loss, as they forever yearn for the dream world they left. Characters who succeed in the Luck check awaken unrefreshed (i.e., without the normal healing benefits of sleep), but are otherwise unharmed, except for the effects of spellburn and Luck used.

**Spellburn and Patrons:** Spellburn is metaphysical, and carries over into the real world. The physical indications of spellburn may, or may not, carry over, depending upon how they are described. The judge should decide on a case-by-case basis. Certainly, any favours owed patrons due to actions in the dream world are still owed once the sleepers awaken.

**Luck:** Luck spent in the dream world is still spent in the waking world.

**XP:** The judge should consider not only the apparent difficulty and consequences of encounters when awarding XP, but also their real consequences. For example, there are no negative consequences in Area 2, although

the players may well believe that there are, so no (or few) XP should be awarded. The judge is otherwise encouraged to reward XP following the guidelines in the DCC rulebook.

## Reusing the Adventure

If the characters fail to reach Somnos before the 13<sup>th</sup> chime, the judge can re-use the adventure exactly as written, possibly after the characters have all gained a level. If the judge takes good notes, he can have some things remain exactly as the characters left them – including any spells with ongoing effects (such as the fireball described above).

If the judge chooses this option, he can have both uses of the scenario count toward how many times characters have entered Area 12 as well. From the point of view of the dream world, this is the same dream, although the characters have left it and come back. Such a viewpoint could be made explicit by interactions with various characters.

Once the characters have entered the dream world at least twice, the judge may consider moving rooms around, changing descriptions, and/or adding new elements. Even once the adventure is solved, and Somnos has been petitioned, the needs of one or more characters may still drive them to Somnos' Court. Indeed, there may come a time when Somnos summons them to do him a favour in return for those the Dreaming God has done the characters.

## Outside the Dream World

Characters who are awakened during the adventure find themselves back in their campsite. Their companions are asleep, and, so long as they remain in the dream world, they cannot be roused.

Just outside the light of their fire, the dream-beast of Somnos lurks, its eyes glittering green in the firelight. It is there to protect the sleeping guests of Somnos, and will growl low in its throat if they are disturbed in any way. It will fight to the death to protect them from molestation, but will not pursue those who flee unless they have slain a sleeping guest.

If the dream-beast, or a sleeper it is protecting, is killed, the murderer will discover himself face-to-face with the dream-beast each night. He will be pursued throughout

his dreams, and unable to gain any benefit from sleep (including healing). Each morning he awakes exhausted, until he has found a way to make amends to Somnos, has brokered the intervention of a more powerful deity, or has found some other means to remove this curse. The dream-beast appears like a night-dark cross between a bear and a crocodile, except that it is huge – nearly 30 feet long. If neither sleeper nor beast is disturbed, there is no evidence that it was actually there come the morning.

**Dream-beast of Somnos (1):** Init +0; Atk bite +8 melee (1d12) or claw +6 melee (2d8); AC 16; HD 10d8; HP 50; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP regenerate 2 hp/round, dream haunting; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +10; AL N.

## Adventure Start

*You have barely fallen asleep before you are startled awake. It seems that you have fallen asleep near a great jade palace, heretofore unseen. It is softly lit by muted lanterns, and revellers in fancy dress and masks of various sort are gathering on the well-manicured lawn. Peacocks strut and fan, and flamingos stand one-legged in a pond and nearby stream. Suddenly, brazen trumpets call, and a voice rings out, "Welcome guests, one and all, to the Cotillion of Somnos!" The revellers sweep towards a broad staircase that leads up into the palace.*

*One of the revellers, wearing a turquoise-studded mask fashioned to appear like a one-horned demon, looks in your direction. "Come, fellow guests!" she calls to you. "The Ball of Hours is about to begin!" She dances swiftly across the lawn toward the jade palace.*

Players will probably have some questions. If they suspect that they are dreaming, and look back, they can see their bodies lying in slumber behind them. Even the sentry (if a Player Character participating in this adventure) appears to have nodded off at his post. Nothing the characters can do at this point can awaken their real selves; they must either go forward, or sleep forever.

When they go toward the stairs, read or paraphrase the following:

*The wide steps lead upward to a double door, now thrown wide, its light streaming onto the lawn. One door is panelled in ivory, the other in horn. Before the gates stand two huge guardsmen with festive costumes but very serious-look-*

*ing halberds. The one to the right wears an azure mask that resembles a rhinoceros. The one to the left wears a lifelike mask that looks like a hornbill. As you approach, they cross their halberds before the gate.*

*"None may enter the Palace of Somnos this night without wearing a mask," declares the one on the right.*

*"Therefore, choose what mask you would wear," says the one on the left, and the bird eyes on his mask blink.*

Each character must choose a mask, and the player may choose anything the judge deems their characters might have knowledge of. As soon as the player chooses a mask, it appears in the character's hands, and cannot be changed later, save in Area 8. As soon as the characters don their masks, the guardsmen step aside, allowing them to enter.

If the characters refuse to choose masks, or demand to be wakened, they disappear from the dream world as their bodies wake up. It will be long before the Dreaming God Somnos invites them to another festival! Any characters that choose to don a mask and go on, however, may do so, climbing the wide stairs and entering the Cotillion of Hours.

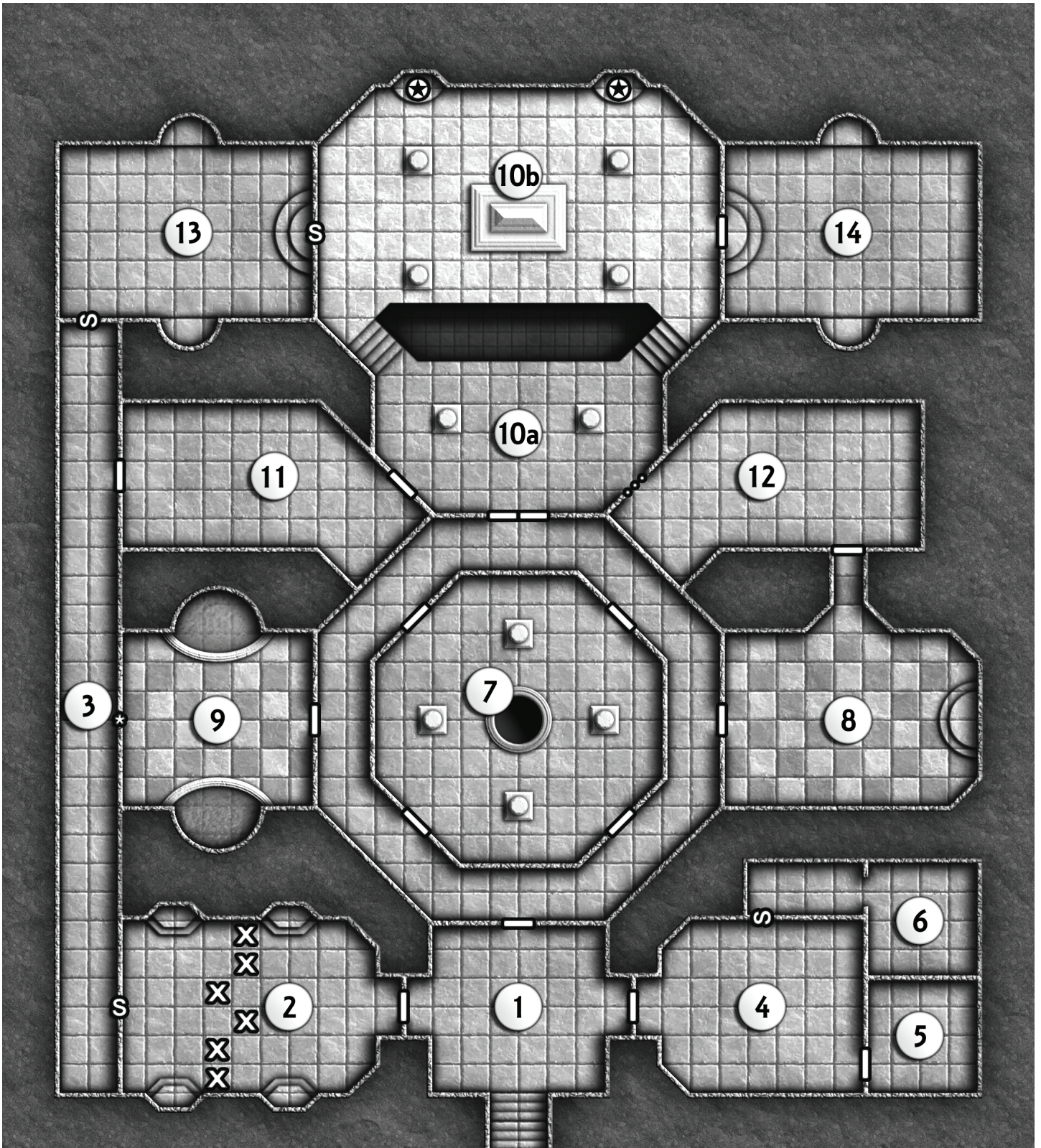
## Encounter Areas

**Area 1 - Beyond the Gates of Ivory and Horn:** *Beyond the gates of ivory and horn, a 10-foot wide staircase of polished coral and porphyry leads up into a chamber in which other masked guests are mingling. Flamingo-like creatures with azure feathers and spindly feathered arms distribute golden wine in silver cups. Three ornate doors lead from the chamber, left, right, and straight ahead.*

*As you look about, a soft but penetrating voice can be heard: "Somnos, the Dreaming God, has heard the petitions of your hearts, and has granted you this chance to come before Him and make your requests. You need but make your way to the chamber where Somnos slumbers, and ask of him what you would, before the thirteenth chime rings the end of this Grand Ball, this Cotillion of Hours."*

*To each of you, the voice sounds like that of your mother, or of some other loved one now far distant or gone. The Cotillion of Hours has begun.*

If the characters examine the doors, the western door



is carved with a face surrounded by vines and tendrils. Although they cannot identify the face, it seems vaguely familiar. Runes on this door read: Fear Nothing, And Pass Freely. The door to the east is carved with a radiant star shape, and runes which read Ask Freely, And Dream Deeply. The central door is carved with an image of a central fountain surrounded by peacocks. There are no runes on this door.

**Area 2 - The Dance of Nightmares:** *In the chamber beyond this door, masked couples dance to lively music provided by fish-like and amphibian musicians. These musicians stand on four daises, two to the north and two to the south, built into separate niches. Their violins and flutes create an energetic tune that elicits hopping steps and quick darts from the dancers. Overhead hang baskets of orchids, each paler and more delicate than the last. The far wall is a curtain of orchids, roses, and sweetly-scented flowering vines.*

When characters reach any square marked with an “X” (or, roughly halfway across the room if not using miniatures), the aspect of the room transforms:

*Without warning, you find your feet sinking into the floor, your movements become slow and heavy as in a nightmare. The flowers in the hanging baskets writhe, the orchids forming fleshy sucking mouth-like apertures; the dangling roots bursting forth in thorny groping tangles. Tendrils part amid the greenery on the far wall, revealing a daemonic face carved in relief, whose huge black mouth gapes hungrily. Like living ropes, the long vines reach towards you.*

The mouth sucks air into it, creating strong winds that pull at the characters, while the vines (unaffected by the dream wind) attempt to pull characters into the gaping maw. If attacked, the vines multiply more rapidly than they are destroyed.

The judge should personalize the daemonic face to represent an arch-nemesis or difficult foe of the characters, either living or dead. Once this event is triggered, the judge may have the other dancers fade away, or be sucked into the portal. Whatever dancers are sucked into the portal do not appear in Area 3 on the other side. Each round the characters remain in the room, they must succeed in a DC 10 Reflexes save to avoid being pulled into and through the daemonic face’s mouth. The character’s Luck modifier is used in reverse on this save: a Luck bonus is a penalty to the save, while a Luck penalty is a bonus. This is because the mouth is actu-

ally the secret door represented on the map, and being sucked through is lucky. All characters being sucked through on the same round is double lucky, as it only triggers a single chime. Characters who resist run the risk of missing the Infinite Passage (Area 3), becoming separated from party members who pass through the portal, or causing additional chimes to ring as they pass through the portal at different times.

Characters who correctly interpret the runes on the chamber door may simply surrender themselves.

**Area 3 - The Infinite Passage:** The description of this area assumes characters are entering from Areas 2 or 11; if they are entering from Area 14, the description will need to be modified.

*This area is a long passage with a floor of beaten gold and walls of burnished bronze. It seems to stretch infinitely away from you, to the right and left.*

There are never any dream analogues in this area. If a dream analogue enters with a PC, the analogue simply disappears.

Characters that choose to travel in either direction will discover that it goes on forever. Moreover, if they turn around and head in the other direction, the place that they started from has receded infinitely beyond sight. The secret passage can be traversed, but there is a trick to it.

Characters that travel in one direction consistently until a chime rings, and then turn around, discover that they have arrived at the next significant stop in the corridor. The significant stops are (1) south wall, (2) spyhole into Area 9, (3) door into Area 11, and (4) north wall and secret door. If all characters are in the infinite passage, the judge can simply describe the passage of time and have the chimes ring.

Thus, a character that enters through the secret door from Area 2 can travel north for one chime, turn south, and find himself at the south wall. A character who travels south from the same secret door for one chime, then turns north, finds himself at the spyhole to Area 9. Characters that begin at the south wall, walk north for one chime, and then turn around find themselves facing an infinite hallway. If they turn around again, though, they discover that they are at the north wall. Likewise,

characters beginning at the north wall can head south for one chime, turn around twice, and reach the south wall.

**The Spyhole:** A character can look through a hole in this wall and see Area 9. If no PCs are in the room, the hall is dark and silent. If a PC is in the room, a character watching from Area 3 can pull him into the Infinite Passage merely by willing it. There is no save. Dream analogues and extras cannot be pulled into Area 3. A character looking through the spyhole will know this automatically.

**The Northern Secret Door:** When searched for, a DC 10 Personality check makes the secret door simply appear in the wall, as though it were a door made of amber sheets bound with iron and rare woods. Once passed through, the door disappears again.

**Area 4 - The Hall of Sweeter Dreams:** *The door opens onto an opulent chamber of alabaster walls, airily-carved into pleasing forms representing long-forgotten pleasures that cannot quite be brought to mind. Cushions and pillows are strewn about the marble floor, some occupied by dreamers and others by languid lovers whose soft cries of passion fill the air as with distant music.*

Dream analogues in this room are always of an appropriate gender for an intimate liaison, and will languorously beckon their primaries on. Such a liaison costs the character(s) involved a chime. Once the first chime has rung, though, the character must make a Will save to depart before a second chime rings. If he fails, he must make a Will save to depart before the first chime. This save begins at DC 10, but raises by 2 for each chime that rings after the first save.

The secret door is a panel marked with a radiant blue star; any character looking for the star will notice it automatically. The panel pushes open easily when touched.

**Area 5 - The Cloakroom of Forgetfulness:** *This room is filled with racks of hanging cloaks, coats, and other garments of costly make and antique fashion. The smell of the hanging clothing reminds you of the forgotten joys of childhood – the tobacco smell of a father’s pipe, perhaps, or the tart smell of sour apple tarts from a street vendor’s cart.*

There are no dream analogues or extras here, unless the characters bring them.

Characters that enter this room become lost in thoughts and memories. Even slaves and orphans have some memories of sharp joy, buried perhaps, but brought to the surface by this room. A character must succeed in a DC 15 Will save to leave this room. After the first save is failed, the character is allowed one attempt per chime, until he either succeeds or awakens. Each save after the first allows a +2 bonus on the roll.

Sample memories include any of the following. The judge may roll, or may devise memories of his own that match the character in question.

D12	Memory
1	The sight of a doe in a sun-dappled clearing, long minutes before it is startled and springs away.
2	A doll made of rags that you once slept with, and then forgot. It was called “Bearwan”.
3	Feeding ducks with your sisters. Both you and your older sister stinting your younger sister on bread crumbs to feed the ducks with.
4	Letting a mouse escape from a cat, because it was so tiny and frightened, but being too late. Leaving it to die because you didn’t want to kill the injured mouse yourself.
5	Milking cows in a sweet-smelling barn, the air so hot it prickled your skin.
6	The taste of a campfire-broiled dove after a long day helping collect firewood.
7	Your father saying “Well done” for the first time.
8	A girl with raven-coloured ringlets that you once knew, but were always too afraid to speak to, and whose name you can no longer recall.
9	A childhood playmate, long forgotten, and long left behind, but whose name or nickname you can still remember – this may now be the name of the character’s familiar, horse, child, etc.
10	Skating on a pond, wearing skates made of cow bones. Later that year, a neighbouring boy went through the ice and drowned, and your parents wouldn’t let you go again.
11	Your first taste of honey fresh from the honeycomb, stolen from your uncle’s hives.

12	The feel of your grandmother's soft-wrinkled fingertips, soothing on your forehead when you were fevered.
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**These Aren't My Memories:** Some players will insist that their characters have no such recollections of childhood. That's okay. They still experience the memories suggested herein, but, once they have made a successful Will save (or have failed and awakened), they recognize that the memories are not really theirs. Perhaps the cloakroom manufactured them out of whole cloth. Perhaps they shared memories from their companions. Or perhaps they are the memories they would have had, in an alternate lifetime. Who can say?

**Area 6 - The Oracle of Deeper Dreaming:** *The hallway leads into a chamber, its center lit by a floating blue star of many points, whose shining rays do not illuminate the walls or corners. Unconscious figures in masks and robes lie on the marble floor under the star, their eyes moving and limbs twitching with their dreams. The knowledge comes unbidden to you all: This is the Oracle of Deeper Dreaming. You may ask a question, if you will, but doing so will send you into a deeper dream than the Cotillion of Hours, and your companions will not be able to wake you.*

Anyone who asks a question of the Oracle instantly falls asleep and cannot be awakened by any mortal means – they dream within a dream. Those who do so will only wake at the end of the adventure, unless they appear in Somnos' chamber first.

The Oracle offers a chance to “win” the scenario while “losing”: it can offer the answer to any one question in the form of a dream, but that dream will encompass the remaining time of the adventure. For example, a wizard might ask to learn a single spell, and dream enough to do so, but he will not then come before Somnos in Area 13.

A character who asks how to come before Somnos will do so; but the judge should determine whether other characters wish to consult the Oracle before revealing this. Such a character appears in Area 13 after the 12<sup>th</sup> chime rings.

**Area 7. The Fountain of the Cats:** *This great octagonal chamber is open to the night sky. A low wall of polished jasper subdivides the area between a terrace of marble and sardonyx and a jasmine-scented garden with a turquoise*

*fountain at its center. Four half-doors allow access from one area to the other. The garden is filled with jasmine, lavender, lilies, roses, and night-blooming moonflowers. Four statues on basalt plinths grace the garden: a cat to the north, an owl to the south, to the east a night heron, and to the west a great bat. The costumed guests seem content to make polite small talk along the terraced walk. The moon shines full and bright overhead, turning all to silver and black.*

Examining the doors between terrace and fountain reveals something scratched into the southeast door: “I dreamed in this place – Rand. Cart.” From the inner area, a similar graffiti can be found on the northwest door: “Here passed I en route to Unknown Kad., RC, 1927.” If a character passes through these doors to respectively enter and exit the fountain area, no chimes ring.

If any character enters the inner area, a cat appears from nowhere on the edge of the fountain, as though it had leaped from on high. In fact, the cat has just appeared from the dark side of the moon, where it was meeting cousins and litter-kin, and is merely pausing in this dream on its way back to the waking world. If addressed politely, it will not reveal its name – what cat ever did? – but will offer the following: “Mouse and moth; hare and frog. Name each to each, and turn time back.” It then leaps down from the fountain's edge and disappears back into waking lands.

If a character touches the cat statue and says “Mouse”, the bat and says “Moth”, the owl and says “Hare”, and the heron and says “Frog”, they will hear the strange sound of a chime ringing backwards, and gain an “hour” in pursuit of their quest. This will only work once. If a character returns to this room, another cat will be here – it has a vague and menacing strangeness about it, as though it were something else captured in feline form. Characters should not be able to tell exactly what is strange about it, but each will feel it. This is a “cat” from another plane or world within the campaign milieu's solar system (Saturn, perhaps). If addressed by characters, it will attack. Otherwise, after a short period, it will also disappear, in pursuit of the terrestrial cat that was here earlier. If this second “cat” is slain, a chime also rings backwards, giving the characters more time. Both cats are real within the dream world.

**Cat (1):** Init +6; Atk bite +0 melee (1); AC 13; HD 1 hp; HP 1; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP low-light vision, disappear from dream world as action with DC 15 Will save; SV Fort -2, Ref +6, Will +0; AL N.

**Alien Cat (1):** Init +6; Atk bite +2 melee (1d2) or claw +4 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d4; HP 8; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP low-light vision, phase through blows (50% miss chance, always phases through first attack), disappear from dream world as action with DC 15 Will save; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

**Area 8 - The Grand Ballroom:** *Beyond the door is a room filled with music and masked figures engaged in a complex and stately dance. They move in couples and quartets, changing partners frequently, and their steps take them across all of the amber and ebony blocks of the ballroom floor. The vaulted ceiling is covered with mosaics of red flamingos, while murals on the wall depict horned horses and great aurochs the colour of ivory. Another passage leads off to the north.*

Reaching the passage to the north is difficult; characters much match the steps of the grand ball to do so. It takes 6 successful steps to get across the room, and each step requires a DC 10 Agility check to perform properly. Failure places the character in a bad position, requiring an additional 1d3 steps to reach the passage. A character whose background reasonably includes dance rolls 1d20 on these checks; all others roll 1d10. For every 10 steps taken, a chime rings.

If a character enters this room alone, he will notice after 1d6 rounds that he is completely naked, except for his mask. His equipment and clothing will not return when he leaves this room. This does not affect his real equipment outside of the dream world.

#### **Area 9 - The Dance of the Goat-Footed Musicians:**

*The door leads to a square dancing room, the floor of which is made of alternating blocks of ebony wood and burnished teak. Portraits of sleeping men, women, and creatures adorn the walls. In raised boxes to the left and right, goat-footed musicians pipe a whirling skirl of music. The dancers step lively to the song, the men with swords drawn, and the women dancing ever-faster between the flashing blades.*

Crossing this dance floor is not easy. For every square that is to be crossed, a character must succeed in a Reflex save or take 1d4 points of damage from a flash-

ing blade. The save DC starts at 10, and increases by +2 for each square traversed. Remaining in a single square prevents the DC from increasing, but the character must still make a save each round or suffer damage. A warrior or dwarf may attempt a Deed to match swordplay, obviating the need for that (or a different) character to make saves for 1 round; the DC still increases as normal, however.

If a character has a dream analogue wearing a weasel mask in this room, the DC for that character is increased by +2, and damage is 1d6. If the judge has not rolled already, this is a 1 in 20 chance.

Although the musicians are extras, a character can attempt to attack them to halt the music (AC 15, hp 6 each), but if a musician is slain or the music stops, all extras and dream analogues become colourless and slowly fade from view. Whoever slays a musician awakens from the dream world 1d6 rounds later, when the room's occupants have disappeared.

The spyhole (see Area 3) is through the snoring mouth of a sleeping giant; the portrait identifies this giant as Grumbletump (see Area 12). Other portraits of sleeping figures include those of the unicorn Malicas, the Princess Snowdrop, Count Copper of Lesser Britain, and the troll Illthrogg the Mighty. Portrait titles cannot be read from afar; a character must cross seven squares to read the title on the giant's portrait, and then cross seven squares to return. A character can cross up to six squares in a single round, but must stop moving whenever damaged or take 3d6 more points of damage from the whirling blades. The character may resume moving in the next round.

**Area 10-A - The Waltz of Years:** The double-doors that lead into this room from the south are locked. They can be opened by the silver key from Area 12, or by a DC 25 open locks check.

*Dancers waltz here without aid of music. Their masked faces and costumes fail to hide the disparity of their ages, varying from infancy to the hoariest of old ages. They appear from the east as newborn babes, already knowing their steps, and dance to the west, where they break apart and blow away into bones, then dust. Two sets of stairs lead upward, east and west, to a higher level whereupon a great pagoda sits, made of jade and stone, within which is a couch, upon which a dimly visible being rests. Could this be Somnos, the Dreaming God?*

Characters entering this room from the west and proceeding west are safe; those who go the opposite direction must make a Willpower save or suffer 1d5 points of Personality damage as he hears the Music of Time stripping his years away. The Willpower save DC is equal to 10 + the character's level. The first time a character does this, a chime sounds backward (see Area 7).

The eastern stairway is inlaid with arabesques of horn; the western with a pattern of ivory. A character that progresses up the eastern stairway enters Area 13. A character that passes up the western stairway wakes up.

**Area 10-B - Where Somnos Lies Dreaming:** *This is a large area, whose ceiling seems to disappear into infinity. On daises on the far wall, two statues represent Sweet Dreams and Nightmares in forms that are unique to each of you, representing that which you desire and that which you fear. Four infinitely tall pillars surround a great jade pagoda chased with gold. Within the pagoda is a couch, upon which a figure lies dreaming. A voice speaks in your minds: "Guests of the Dreaming God, step forth and speak your wills."*

The figure on the couch is Somnos. The Dreaming God can take on a number of appearances. Roll 1d7 and consult the chart below. The judge may have Somnos appear the same to all PCs, or different to each, as he desires.

D7	Appearance
1	A small child.
2	A giant with handsome features, 1d14+10 feet tall.
3	A beautiful woman surrounded by roses.
4	A demonic being with a single eye, and a single horn in the centre of its forehead.
5	A childhood toy, such as a rag doll or stuffed bear.
6	A unicorn with a silver horn and hoofs.
7	The character's mother, young again, with the character as a babe suckling on her dreaming breast.

The judge should consider the requests made. If a character should be so foolish as to make an outlandish request ("Overthrow the Kingdom of Lemuria!"), he will be blasted by the Dreaming God. Blasted characters simply cease to exist, and are no longer present when the

other characters awaken. Only the action of another god can restore these characters.

A character whose request is for his companions to be present uses up his ability to make a request, but can thereby summon any companions who are yet dreaming in the Palace of Somnos. Characters who have been awakened or lost are not restored in this way.

Most normal requests (up to and including the restoration of a slain, but not a blasted, companion) are not fulfilled immediately, but the character has a dream which supplies requested information 1d7 nights later, or which tells the requestor what must be done to make the request come true.

For instance, a character desiring the command word to a magic item might have a dream in which the command word is the name of a loved one. Likewise, a character who wishes a slain companion restored might have a dream that she dredged his body from the Moon Pool in the City of Prophecy under the full moon, and by travelling to that place by the next full moon, discovers the renewed form of her companion alive in the pool. As an extreme example, a character might be told in a dream to go to a city bridge at a particular time. Going there, he meets another traveller who speaks to him, and tells him a dream which accurately describes the character's own home, and, in the dream, the traveller dug beneath the character's garden only to discover what the character had requested.

The judge can become very creative in terms of these dreams, and should consider using them as hooks to further adventures.

**Area 11. Pallid Reflections:** *The walls of this hallway are covered with distorted mirrors, reflecting all within as warped images of themselves. The masked and costumed revellers seem to be unaware that their reflections are monstrous.*

If the characters seek out their own reflections (and asking about them is sufficient), monstrous versions of themselves step out of the mirrors and attack. For each character, 1 pallid reflection attacks per character level attained. Extras and dream analogues become reflections as long as a reflection is present outside of the mirrors. When the reflections are slain, they again become reflections, and the dream analogues and extras return. The

pallid reflections appear to be bestial images of the characters involved, with a faded translucent sepia colour.

**Pallid Reflections (1 per Character Level):** Init +4; Atk bite, claw, or weapon +4 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; HP 8 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP None; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 12 - The Banquet of Hours:** *Within this chamber, a great feast is ongoing. Tables festooned with flowers and greenery hold exotic foods – the smoking hearts of albino peacocks, broiled unicorn livers, stewed dragon's tail, fruits from distant lands, and salads garnished with rare herbs and pixie wings. The air is full of scents, both sweet and savoury. The feast is led by an almost skeletally thin man with a balding head. A silver key hangs from an adamantine chain around his neck.*

Any character who partakes of the feast here gains a permanent +1 bonus to Luck (which remains outside the dream world), but causes a chime to ring. Only a single chime will ring, regardless of how many characters eat, or how much.

Characters can look into Area 10 through adamantine

bars.

The Master of the Feast carries the silver key that can open the double doors into Area 10. He will cede this key if the characters can answer him a riddle: "What is the name of the giant who sleeps?" The answer can be found in Area 9. The Master of the Feast is an extra, and simply fades away if attacked, taking the silver key with him.

If the characters enter this chamber a third time, they discover that a quartet of dream ghouls picking at the scraps of the feast. These appear to be skeletons sheathed in translucent yellow flesh, through which bones, muscles, organs, and half-digested food (including a human foot) can be seen. The dream ghouls dress in worn and out-dated finery stolen from graves. If the judge is so inclined, the gelid features of the ghouls resemble those of PCs who died in earlier adventures.

Feeding from the table scraps as they are, the ghouls so not necessarily pose a threat to the characters; indeed, it is possible for the players to gain news of the lands of the dead from them. The dream ghouls are knowledgeable about the dream lands, as well as about graves, who has passed on, and what has happened to them beyond



**Pallid Reflections**

death. If the characters seek some ancient tomb, or some spell that was known only to a dead and buried sorcerer, the ghouls may be able to help.

Woe to the characters who attack them, though, for the ghouls are powerful foes in the dream world, and any damage they do to the characters' dreaming selves is done also to their corporeal bodies. If a dream ghoul devours a character's dream-self, that character's body actually disappears from the real world as it is consumed. Finally, should the characters enter a fifth time, the scraps are all gone, and the ghouls automatically attack.

**Dream Ghouls (4):** Init +2; Atk bite +6 melee (1d6 + paralyzation) or claw +2 melee (1d5); AC 14; HD 4d8; HP 18, 22, 12, 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP undead traits, paralyzation (Will DC 14 or be paralyzed for 1d6 chimes), infravision 100'; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 13 - The Secret Courtyard:** *This courtyard is cold and dark, and swept by chill winds. Two alcoves, to the right and the left, adorn the room. The southern alcove is decorated with a mosaic of ivory, while the northern alcove is decorated with a mosaic of horn. At the centre of the east wall, steps lead up to an image of a jade face, like a green face of a demon, its mouth open wide to reveal a blackness darker than night. The mouth is large enough for a man to crawl through.*

The demon's mouth is the key to the secret door; a character who reaches within will discover a switch that causes the whole demon's face to pivot, allowing access to Area 10b.

Characters that enter either alcove awaken. Those who enter the southern alcove lose 1 point of Luck, while those who enter the northern alcove gain 1 point of Luck.

**Area 14 - Beyond the Walls of Sleep:** If the judge desires the characters to have further adventures in the dream world, this door can be opened. If not, this door is locked, and the lock cannot be picked.

*Steps lead down from this door into a warm, light room that smells of apple blossoms and summer rain. A pleasant breeze blows through this place. To the left, there is an alcove decorated with inlaid mosaics of carved horn. To the right, there is a similar alcove decorated with patterns*

*of carved ivory. The walls are covered with murals of lost seasons, lingering desires, and just-visible monsters from childhood nightmares.*

These alcoves are dream-gates, which can lead characters to further adventures in various dream worlds. The Gate of Ivory (south) is the conduit from which misleading dreams flow. The Gate of Horn (north) leads to and from the true dreamlands. In practice, the judge may run any adventure as though it took place in a dream world through either Gate.

## Somnos, the Dreaming God

The Dreaming God takes an interest in mortal affairs. In addition to the events of *Through the Cotillion of Hours*, Somnos communicates through dreams, and delights in the fancies of sleeping mortals. He can send both terrifying nightmares and pleasant visions which make the world seem cold and colourless in comparison. He is also sometimes a supernatural patron to wizards.

Somnos is described here using the simple entry format used in the *Core Rulebook*. This listing includes only the results of an invoke patron spell check, without example spells or taint descriptions.



Invoke Patron check results	
12-13	Somnos weaves layers of dream-stuff around the caster, improving his Armour Class by +2, and making even a successful hit 25% likely to strike where a figment of the caster is manifesting rather than at his true location. If this occurs, the caster still takes half damage through his psychic-dream connection to the figment. This lasts for 1d3+CL rounds.
14-17	The caster appears more dangerous, more dashing, and in every way more imposing in the minds of all who view him. In effect, the caster is swathed in images of his own dream-self. Any who hear him speak must succeed in a DC 10 Will save or be compelled to obey. Creatures must understand the caster, and cannot be made to carry out obviously suicidal commands or orders that are completely against their nature. This effect lasts for 1d3+CL minutes.
18-19	Somnos grants the caster the power to induce sleep, but it is a strong power, and may rebound upon the wielder. Once each round, for the next 2d6+CL rounds, the caster may designate a target within 100', which must make a DC 20 Will save or fall into a deep slumber. This is a deep, but natural, slumber, and a creature may be wakened in any way that it could normally be awakened. It will otherwise sleep deeply for 1d6 hours, and lightly for 1d3 hours thereafter. If the creature succeeds on its save, though, the power rebounds on the caster, who must make a DC 10 Will save or fall asleep for 1d6 minutes.
20-23	The Dreaming God swathes the caster in a deep enchanted slumber, during which no enemy creature may locate or harm him. During this sleep, the caster has the opportunity to consult with Somnos, who is willing to give brief answers to questions asked by the caster. The enchanted slumber lasts for 2d6 hours, and for each hour of sleep, the caster may ask one question that can be answered with a short sentence or phrase. When the caster awakens, he feels refreshed, and has the normal benefits of a good night's sleep (i.e., spells lost are restored, and normal healing has taken place). This does not prevent him from gaining the benefits of another night's sleep when appropriate, even within the same 24-hour span.
24-27	Somnos causes the Gates of Ivory and Horn to appear before the caster, so that he and up to 2d6+CL allied creatures may enter the dreamlands in physical form. It is possible to pass through the dreamlands to any spot on any plane where sleeping creatures dream, but the farther the travellers would wish to go, the more subjective time it takes, and the more encounters the characters may suffer in the dreamlands. The prospective judge should consider devising a full adventure to account for any such travels, or adapt an adventure with genre-bending or other usual elements for this purpose. The actual transit time is 1d6 hours, no matter how short or how far a distance the characters travel.
28-29	1d3 dream analogues of the caster and his allies (within 50') manifest in the real world, ready to aid the characters they are modelled from. These analogues remain for 2d4 x 10 minutes. If the caster or any of his allies are slain, the player may take over any surviving analogue, which then becomes "real" within the physical world, while the slain "real" character becomes a dream and fades away (with any equipment). Likewise, if an analogue is slain, or at the end of the duration, analogues and their equipment fade away back into dreamstuff. There can never be more than one of any character, or more than one of any of that character's equipment, remaining when the dream fades.
30-31	All enemy figures within 100' of the caster must make a DC 20 Will save, or collapse into an enchanted, nightmare-ridden sleep that lasts 1d3 hours. These creatures are impervious to all mortal harm – as guests of the dreams of Somnos, they are protected by the Dreaming God. However, they cannot be awakened by any means until their dreams come to an end, and at that time each creature must succeed in a DC 15 Fort save or it will never awaken again. It is slain by the force of its nightmares!
32+	The Dreaming God enfolds the caster and his allies (within 50'), taking them bodily through the dreamlands, to arrive anywhere on any plane that the caster desires, so long as sleeping creatures dream in that place. Transport is instantaneous and safe.

# The Way Station

An Adventure Locale for 4-8, 3rd level characters.

## Background

A thousand years ago, the dwarven kingdom of Upanesh controlled a vast underground realm. The Upanesh were an inventive and industrious people that excavated mines and constructed subterranean cities. The dwarves always dedicated such building projects to Upan, their lawful god of craftsmanship, justice, and order.

An extensive tunnel network connected the centers of Upanesh civilization. Within the tunnels, enchanted vehicles resembling mining carts transported people and goods. The rail cars ran on regular schedules and swiftly carried the dwarves to the furthest reaches of their domains. Every stop in the tunnel network possessed a facility called a Way Station. Passengers and cargo would gather at Way Stations to await the next rail car heading toward the desired destination.

Although the Upanesh aggressively developed underground, the land above remained a beautiful and wild place mostly untouched by the axe or shovel. Yet the dwarves could not ignore the surface; underground facilities require entrances and ventilation. The Upanesh marked these above ground locations with pyramidal steles emblazoned with the symbols of Upan: the hammer, the compass, and the chisel.

The enchantments that animated the rails cars did not come cheap, and it is a measure of Upanesh wealth and hubris that such wonders became an everyday fact of life. Outsiders grew jealous of Upanesh power, and the dwarves made enemies regardless of how well they tried to keep the peace. But the rail cars could transport troops as well as civilians, which gave the Upanesh military a substantial advantage whenever the kingdom was threatened.

Eventually a host of earthly and supernatural powers collaborated to seize the Upanesh treasures. The invaders exploited the weak points of the tunnel system, and launched attacks on the Way Stations. The Upanesh defeated these enemies after many years, but were left fragmented. The dwarves never regained their cohesion and strength, and afterwards only existed as isolated city-states.

The Way Station at South March was assaulted late in the war. The hero Minoc Manshield was inspecting the town's defenses when the attack was launched and quickly evaluated the situation. He rushed to defend the Way Station while rail workers and travelers boarded rail cars and fled the fighting. Once his charges were safe, Minoc hurled his magical warhammer Stone Fist at the tunnel ceiling, sealing the tunnel and preventing the invaders from following the civilians.

Minoc, Stone Fist, and most of his foes were buried under tons of rock. A handful of enemy creatures endured the subsequent centuries sealed inside the Way Station. A few luckless rail workers also remained, transformed into automatons blindly seeking the destruction of any sapient being within the Way Station.

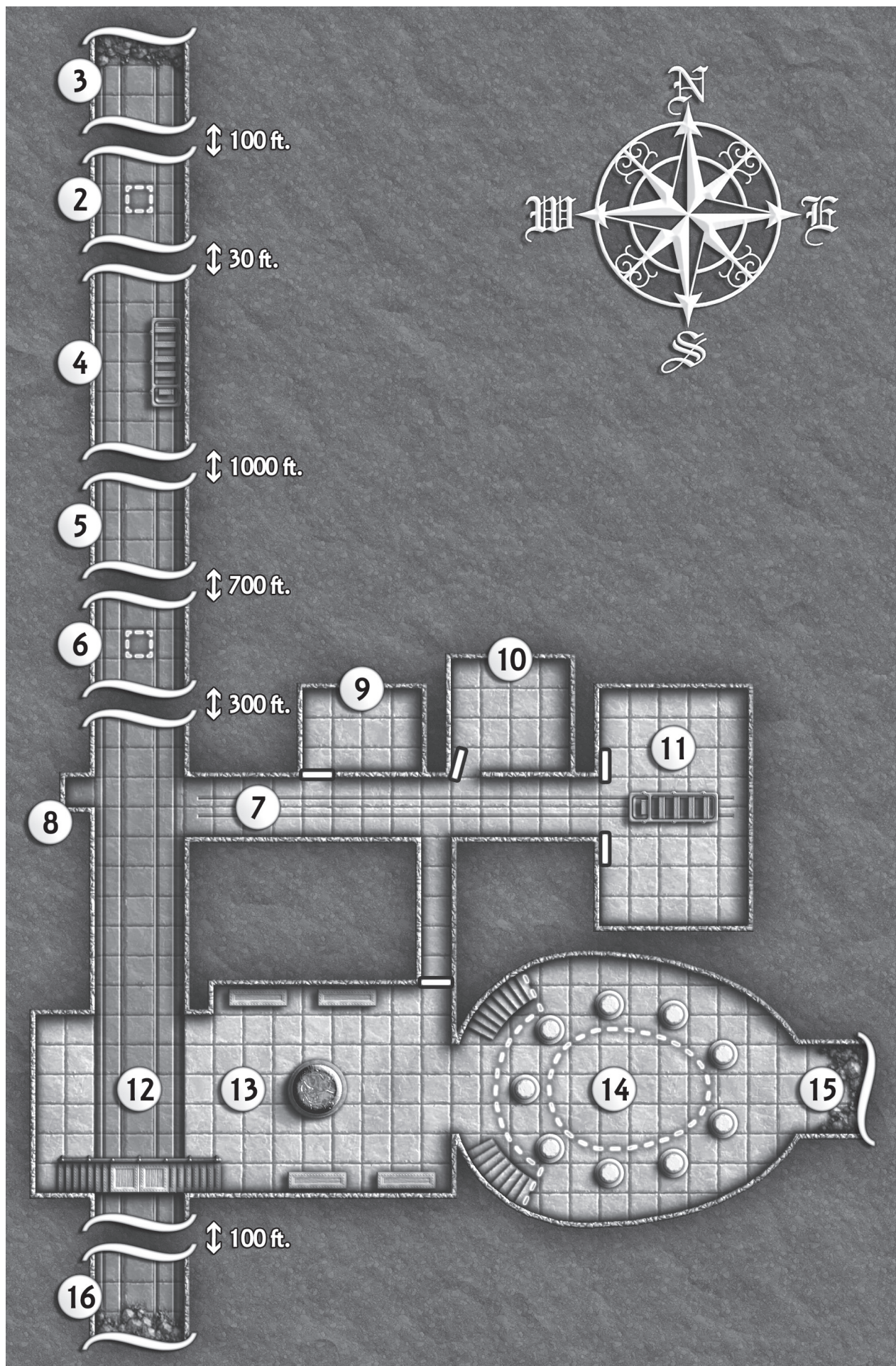
## For the Judge

The adventure begins when the characters enter an Upanesh ventilation shaft. The shaft leads to a rail tunnel and can easily be placed in a wilderness or near an inhabited area where the shaft might have gone unnoticed for a time. The tunnel leads to the Way Station where Minoc Manshield died.

Adventurers could encounter the ventilation shaft on their own and naturally desire to investigate the mystery. A farmer could stumble upon the shaft and contact the characters about the mystery. Perhaps small animals have disappeared down the shaft and villagers are persuaded the hole must lead to some nether realm; frantic peasants then implore the brave adventurers to investigate and save their village from demonic conquest!

Atmosphere is an important part of this adventure. Once the characters are underground, they should feel cut off from the surface, for it will not be easy to quickly climb out. The darkness, blocked tunnels, and abandoned rooms should hint at danger and an ancient disaster. Emphasize these aspects. Mention the oddly flickering shadows that dance at the edges of the adventurers' light sources. Describe patches of fungus and pools of water in a way that promotes character fear.

Even though the same monster type appears in multiple areas, each occurrence might have slightly different statistics. For example, the omophage in area 4 is slightly more powerful than the omophages in area 2.



Upan wants Stone Fist to be found and wielded in his service. The god will help adventurers locate the war-hammer but can only act through the remnants of his mortal influence, such as the corpses of his worshippers or objects consecrated in his name. Manifestations of Upan's desire occur in areas 14 and 16.

Finally, the Upanesh left behind valuables as they fought, fled, or died. Certain areas ask the judge to randomly generate items by rolling 1d24 on the treasure table. Some items are unique and probably should not appear more than once (see page 4).

## General Layout

The Way Station and rail tunnels are less damp than would be expected for underground facilities. Some water collects upon the floors and patches of fungus dot the walls, but these are not pervasive and should not affect movement or exploration. Most metal objects have a coating of rust and the wooden doors have absorbed moisture and weakened with age.

All areas are carved from rock. The ceilings in the rail tunnel and throughout most of the Way Station are 15 high, the standard for Upanesh construction; the only exceptions are the gallery and the passenger platform. No areas contain natural light and the adventurers must provide illumination. All monsters either have no eyes or do not require light to see.

The adventure area has three discrete sections. First, the ventilation shaft that extends from the surface to the rail tunnel. Second, the rail tunnel that leads from the shaft to the Way Station. Third, the Way Station proper that holds the aftermath of Minoc's battle.

## Encounter Areas

**Area 1 - Marker Steles and Ventilation Shaft:** *Weeds and brush obscure four squat pyramids of stone. The pyramids are about 4 feet high and have been placed at the corners of a square measuring approximately 50 feet on a side. The faces of the pyramids are all carved with identical designs: a hammer, a compass, and a chisel arranged in a triangle.*

Anyone searching the area enclosed by the steles easily finds a 3-foot square shaft at the center of the square. The shaft descends about fifty vertical feet at a steep angle before reaching the ceiling of the rail tunnel.

The walls of the shaft were originally smooth but have become cracked in the centuries since the attack on the Way Station (Str or Dex to climb, DC 15).

If a character fails the climb check, he will build up speed as he tumbles down the shaft. He can attempt to arrest his motion with a DC 15 Agility or Strength check; otherwise, the character will exit the shaft and fall the final 15 feet to the tunnel floor for 2d6 points of damage.

A sage with historical knowledge has a 60% chance of recognizing the steles and the designs carved on them as being representative of the ancient dwarven Upanesh civilization. The sage would also know that the Upanesh were renowned for their wealth and building expertise, and that the civilization was crippled after a long war. Dwarves will recognize the steles and carvings to be of dwarven origin with a DC 10 Intelligence check.

Ventilation shafts were placed approximately every 1800 feet, or every 2 Lankers in Upanesh units.

**Area 2 - Rail Tunnel:** *The tunnel is a 15-foot square with rounded corners that extends into darkness in both directions. Two pairs of grooves have been carved into the floor and run parallel to the tunnel walls. The grooves comprising each pair are about 3 feet apart.*

Each pair of grooves accepts the wheels of a rail car.

Two omophages cling to the ceiling near the shaft. The mold creatures feed on the occasional animals or livestock that fall through the shaft. Each of these omophages is about 10 feet in diameter.

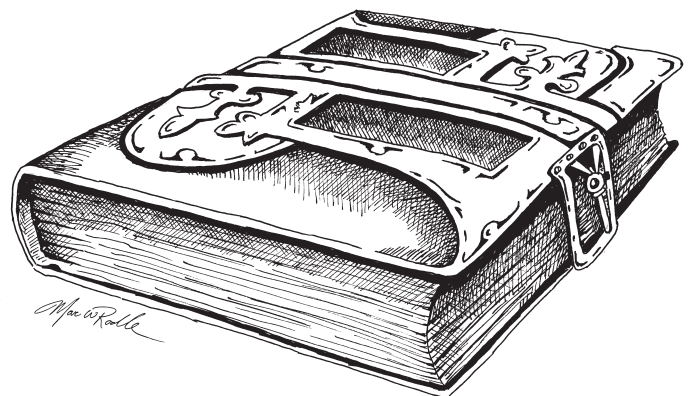
**Omophage (2):** Init +0; Atk acidic touch +3 melee (1d4); AC 18; HD 4d8+12; hp 34, 30; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP envelopment, immune to acid, immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire (double damage from fire-based attacks); SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AL N.

**Envelopment:** An omophage attached to a ceiling or wall will attempt to drop upon a target that passes beneath it. Landing on a slow moving or stationary target requires a successful attack at +0 against AC 10; faster moving or evasive targets will have correspondingly higher ACs. If the omophage lands on the target, the victim is enveloped and considered grappled. Due

# Treasure Table

d24 Treasures	
1-4	1d8 gold coins. The coins bear the profile of a male dwarf on one side and a hammer on the opposite side; below the hammer are the words "Preserve the Law" in archaic dwarven. A sage with historical knowledge has a 40% chance of recognizing the coins as artifacts of the ancient dwarven Upanesh civilization and might pay up to ten times face value for the coins.
5-10	1d10 silver coins. The coins bear an image of a rail car on one side and crossed hammers upon the reverse. A sage with historical knowledge has a 40% chance of recognizing the coins as artifacts of the ancient dwarven Upanesh civilization and might pay up to ten times face value for the coins.
11	Gold ring worth 100 gp. The ring appears plain and well worn, but when examined closely in good light faint lines are visible etched in the metal, forming a beautiful curving design.
12	Silver hairpin worth 20 gp. The pin is about 4 inches long, with the handle shaped as a small rose.
13-15	Cloak clasp. These clasps fastened a cloak near the neck and were generally formed of two pieces joined by a hook or chain. Most Upanesh wore cloaks and thus the clasps were common in a variety of designs. Roll 1d6 and consult the following list.
d6 Further Details	
1	Two gold eagles facing away from each other and joined by a hook (worth 120 gp).
2	Silver hammers joined by a thick chain (worth 50 gp).
3	Bronze oak leaves joined by a longer chain; a third and smaller oak leaf dangles from the center of the chain (worth 10 gp).
4	Silver disks with the enamel image of a tree in the center, joined by two hooks (worth 150 gp).

5	Pewter hinges joined at the center (worth 2 gp).
6	Silver wings joined by a short chain (worth 75 gp).
16	Blue diamond earring mounted in a silver setting (worth 750 gp).
17	Brass belt buckle with a geometric design worked into the surface (worth 3 gp).
18-19	Single die. Rail workers often played dice games to pass the time. The dice had eight sides and originally came in pairs but the second die was lost. Roll 1d3 and consult the following list.
d3 Further Details	
1	Bone die yellowed with age (worth 5 sp).
2	Amber die with black enamel pips (worth 50 gp).
3	Oversized silver die (worth 75 gp).
20	Man's bracelet composed of heavy silver links (worth 150 gp).
21	Wide choker composed of fine silver links (worth 250 gp).
22-23	Pitted steel ruler about 2 feet long and marked in unknown units. A sage with historical knowledge has a 20% chance of recognizing the units as Upanesh and might pay up to 5 gp for the ruler.
24	Gold necklace with a heart-shaped locket of gold; inside the locket is a faded portrait of a dwarf woman (worth 400 gp).



to its great size and weight, the omophage receives a +8 bonus to grapple humanoid foes attempting to escape the envelopment. Once a target has been enveloped, the omophage immediately begins secreting acid. Each round in contact with the omophage causes the victim 1d6+2 acid damage. This acid is so strong that the target will take 1d4 damage for 3 rounds after the omophage is removed, unless the acid is somehow neutralized or washed off.

Omophages are large mold growths that inhabit dark areas and caverns. A bleached-out gray in color, they resemble irregularly shaped disks, and mature specimens can reach fifteen feet in diameter and one foot thick. Omophages sense their surroundings through air currents and vibrations.

The omophage moves slowly and usually must surprise prey. It can crawl across both vertical and horizontal surfaces, and will attempt to position itself on a ceiling or wall so that it can fall upon and envelop passersby. The omophage then secretes a corrosive acid that kills the victim unless the omophage is somehow thrown off. The omophage takes a few days to absorb its kill before crawling to another ambush location.

**Area 3 - Blocked Tunnel:** *A wall of rock blocks the tunnel, suggesting that the ceiling just beyond must have collapsed.*

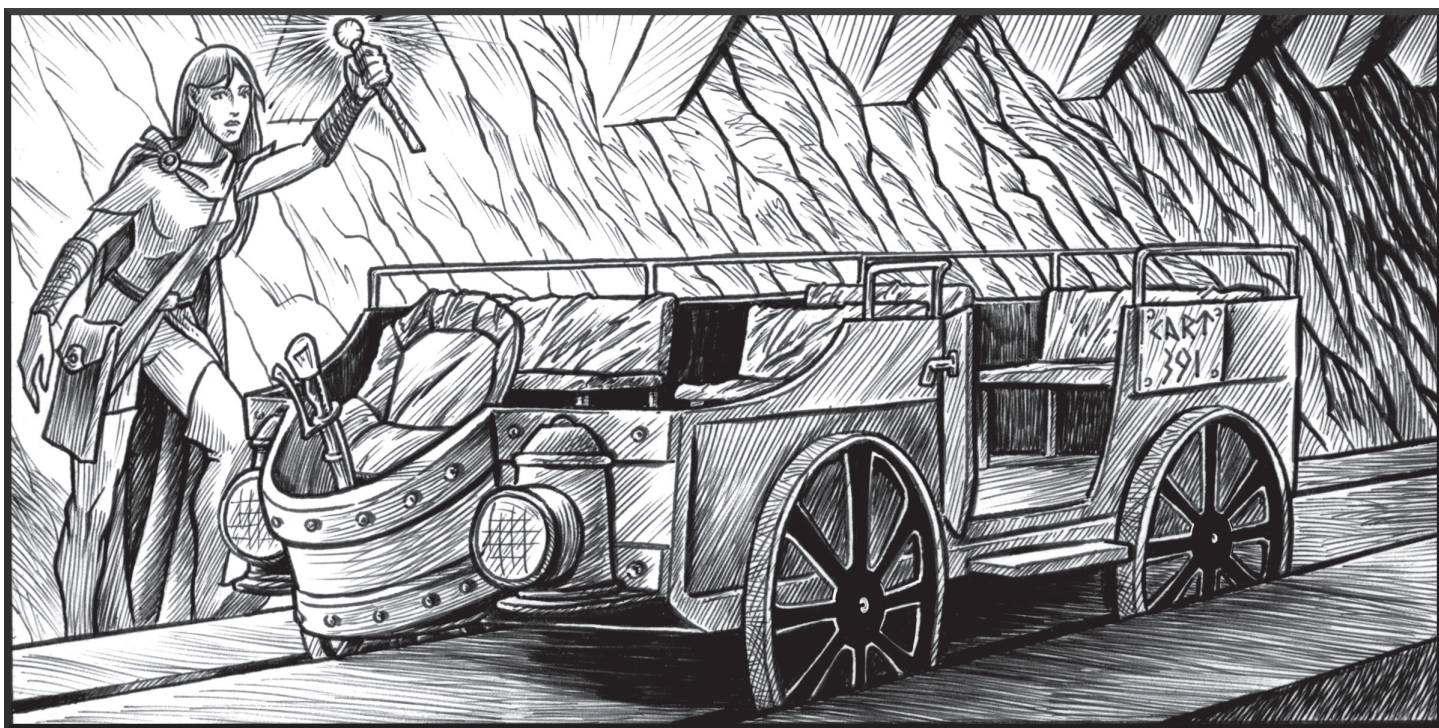
The rubble blocking the tunnel is unstable. If the characters attempt to clear a path through the blockage, rocks shift and grind ominously. There is a 50% chance that a layer of debris will detach and roll over anyone within 10 feet. The minor avalanche causes 2d6 points of damage, with a DC 12 Ref save for half damage.

Even if the danger of a rockslide does not deter the adventurers, there is probably too much rubble to remove within the time frame of the adventure. A large work crew would require at least a week to clear a path.

A 10-foot diameter omophage is attached to the ceiling about halfway between the ventilation shaft and the blocked tunnel. If the adventurers do not notice this omophage, it will move toward the shaft as they explore the rest of the Way Station and attempt to ambush them when they leave.

**Omophage (1):** Init +0; Atk acidic touch +3 melee (1d4); AC 18; HD 4d8+12; hp 32; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP envelopment, immune to acid, immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire (double damage from fire-based attacks); SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AL N.

**Envelopment:** An omophage attached to a ceiling or wall will attempt to drop upon a target that passes beneath it. Landing on a slow moving or stationary target requires a successful attack at +0 against AC 10; faster moving or evasive targets will have correspond-



ingly higher ACs. If the omophage lands on the target, the victim is enveloped and considered grappled. Due to its great size and weight, the omophage receives a +8 bonus to grapple humanoid foes attempting to escape the envelopment. Once a target has been enveloped, the omophage immediately begins secreting acid.

Each round in contact with the omophage causes the victim 1d6+2 acid damage. This acid is so strong that the target will take 1d4 damage for 3 rounds after the omophage is removed, unless the acid is somehow neutralized or washed off.

**Area 4 - Rail Car:** *A rusty metal cart on two sets of metal wheels sits astride the left set of grooves. The wheels fit perfectly into the grooves. The cart itself is about 15 feet long, 5 feet wide and 3 feet tall, and contains a number of metal benches positioned much like the seats in a rowboat. Rotted upholstery still clings to the tops of the benches. A metal lever rises from the floor beside a chair centered in the far end of the cart.*

This is an Upanesh rail car designed for eight dwarven passengers plus a driver. The driver sits in the single seat at the front and uses the lever to manage the car's speed. Pushing the lever forward causes the car to move forward, while pulling back on the lever reverses the motion. The car does not have a separate brake.

Once a rail car has been placed in the grooves, it is almost impossible to remove without specialized tools or an accident that forces a moving car to jump out of the grooves. The tunnel and grooves were constructed to tight tolerances and the side of the car is only about a foot from the tunnel wall.

One item from the treasure table was dropped on the floor of the rail car by one of its last passengers (Int check to spot, DC 10).

About 1800 feet before area 12, a sign hangs from the ceiling. Five feet wide and 3 feet tall, the rusted metal bears faded white words in archaic dwarven script: "SOUTH MARCH 2 LANKERS". About 900 feet before area 12, another sign reads "SOUTH MARCH 1 LANKER". Finally, about 450 feet before area 12, a third sign reads "SOUTH MARCH 1/2 LANKER". When the rail system was active, the signs were illuminated; the Way Station would have been illuminated as well.

If the rail car strikes the rocks blocking the tunnel at area 16, it will pitch forward, throwing all occupants onto the rocks (DC 15 Ref save or 3d6 damage). This will also attract the vhomeys in area 16. The vhomey is described in area 14.

A single omophage has attached itself to the ceiling about 400 feet past the rail car. This omophage has survived for many years and reached the maximum size for its type, about fifteen feet in diameter.

If the characters use the rail car, the omophage will attempt to drop into the moving car (attack at +0 against AC 14). This could easily extinguish torches or lanterns and lead to an exciting fight in the dark in a moving vehicle. Embedded within the omophage are small objects it picked up while moving through the rail tunnel: a fire opal (worth 300 gp) and a small piece of jade carved into the figure of a fat dwarf (worth 100 gp).

**Omophage (1):** Init +1; Atk acidic touch +4 melee (1d4); AC 18; HD 5d8+15; hp 44; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP envelopment, immune to acid, immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire (double damage from fire-based attacks); SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +7; AL N.

**Envelopment:** An omophage attached to a ceiling or wall will attempt to drop upon a target that passes beneath it. Landing on a slow moving or stationary target requires a successful attack at +0 against AC 10; faster moving or evasive targets will have correspondingly higher ACs. If the omophage lands on the target, the victim is enveloped and considered grappled. Due to its great size and weight, the omophage receives a +8 bonus to grapple humanoid foes attempting to escape the envelopment. Once a target has been enveloped, the omophage immediately begins secreting acid. Each round in contact with the omophage causes the victim 1d6+2 acid damage. This acid is so strong that the target will take 1d4 damage for 3 rounds after the omophage is removed, unless the acid is somehow neutralized or washed off.

**Area 5. Dwarf Body:** *A small humanoid corpse rests against the wall of the tunnel, skin gray and shriveled. The body wears no clothing, which must have rotted centuries ago.*

A vahomey serving the invaders sucked the life from this rail worker as he fled the Way Station. Without bodily fluids, the corpse mummified and its skin now matches the color of the tunnel walls. The vahomey is described in area 14.

The body is more likely to be noticed if the characters are on foot (Int check to spot, DC 10) than riding in the rail car (Int check to spot, DC 15). It wears a platinum ring with a geometric design etched on the surface (worth 150 gp). The ring easily slides off the desiccated finger.

**Area 6. Second Ventilation Shaft:** *A 3-foot square shaft carved into the ceiling rises at a steep angle toward the surface.*

Identical to the shaft the adventurers used to enter the rail tunnel, this shaft ascends about fifty vertical feet at a steep angle to reach the surface. However, no steles remain to mark the shaft, and the exit is choked with thorny bushes. The last few feet of the shaft near the surface have crumbled under the insistent pressure of the plants, and the walls are only held in place by roots. If the roots were cut away, a portion of the walls would collapse and tumble down the shaft into the rail tunnel.

**Area 7 - Maintenance Corridor:** *A smaller corridor branches from the main tunnel. The floor of this new corridor is about 3 feet above the floor of the main tunnel, but slopes down to meet the main tunnel where they join. One pair of grooves has been carved into the floor of the smaller corridor. The grooves end at the bottom of the slope.*

When the Way Station functioned, rail cars were regularly rotated out of service for maintenance. A winch system pulled the cars from the grooves in the rail tunnel into the grooves of the maintenance corridor, and then the cars were driven to the repair bay at the end of the corridor.

Omophages have often crawled over the winch mechanism while wandering the Way Station, reducing it to heaps of brittle iron. Two shapeless mounds of iron occupy the floor of the maintenance corridor near the rail tunnel.

Two small red crystals rest at the bottom of one groove, the remains of vahomeys slain by Minoc Mansfield. Although these crystals resemble gems they are not actually

gems. Dwarves will not be able to smell them. Neither thieves nor sages will be able to classify them as a known type of gem. For more information, see the vahomey description in area 14.

An item from the treasure table might be found here.

**Area 8 - Maintenance Shelter:** *A small alcove has been carved into the tunnel wall.*

The Upanesh were a careful people, meticulously arranging rail car schedules and maintenance protocols. Still, accidents did happen, and the Upanesh tried to build a tolerance for mishap into their transportation system. If a rail car approached while rail workers were winching a car into the maintenance corridor, the dwarves would duck into this alcove to avoid being crushed.

The rail workers drew a large hammer of Upan on the shelter's rear wall in white chalk. They would often touch the hammer for good luck before pulling a rail car out of the grooves. The design was smudged by many hands and has faded with time (Int check to spot, DC 13).

**Area 9 - Storage Room:** *Odd bits of metal and rotted wood are scattered about this otherwise empty room.*

The wooden door of this room is closed but unlocked.

Before the Way Station attack, the maintenance equipment stored here was sent to other Upanesh cities deemed closer to the "front". A search might reveal a wheel, nuts, and bolts. All of these items would be rusted and of no obvious value.

**Area 10 - Excavation Tools:** *Metal shelves and hooks line the walls of this room, holding a variety of rusted pickaxes, sledgehammers, shovels, hammers, and other tools that would probably be useful in working stone. A number of wheelbarrows are arranged in rows at the center of the room.*

The wooden door of this room is open.

Although the metal heads have a coating of rust and most of the wooden handles have rotted, many of these tools are serviceable. The heads could easily be cleaned of rust and fitted to new handles. The workmanship is of a high quality and would be prized by laborers. If these heavy tools could be transported to the surface, the right

buyer might pay well for them (1-5 gp per item).

An item from the treasure table might be found here.

**Area 11 - Repair Bay:** *The grooves in the corridor floor lead into this room and end near the rear wall. A metal cart rests in the grooves at the center of the room, identical to the cart discovered earlier. Wrenches, hammers, and pliers are scattered on the floor about the cart, as if they were tossed away in a hurry. Chains and hooks dangle from metal rails that crisscross the ceiling. All metal surfaces bear a coating of rust.*

The metal double doors of this room are fully open. These doors are mounted on metal tracks inside the room and are designed to slide open and shut. The area of contact between the doors and the tracks has rusted, freezing the doors in place. With proper tools the doors could be unstuck in 1 turn. Forcing each door free would be more difficult (Strength, DC 17).

After being winched into the maintenance tunnel, rail cars were driven into the repair bay for overhaul or repair. If extra space was needed, hooks at the end of chains were attached to metal loops built into each rail car. Then the car would be hoisted out of the grooves and set to one side. The rail car currently in the repair bay no longer functions, but the hand tools are of very high quality and would be valuable if the right buyer were found (1-2 gp per item).

One of the last workers hung a silver bracelet (worth 400 gp) from a hook on the wall for safekeeping while he repaired the rail car. Three green garnets are spaced about the outside circumference of the bracelet and the words “Kierkin My Love” are inscribed in archaic dwarven upon the inside. An item from the treasure table might also be found in the room.

Four cacogens wander around the rail car, occasionally reaching for tools and failing to pick them up. When the characters approach the doorway, the cacogens move to attack. Because cacogens lack intelligence, if the metal doors are somehow closed they will be unable to leave the room

**Cacogen (4):** Init +2; Atk blindness +2 (see below) or fist +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+6; hp 21 each; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP blindness, hammer fist, immune to mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +6, Ref +2,

Will +2; AL C.

**Blindness:** The cacogen's eyes flare red and project an eerie crimson glow over the target's face. The target must make a Fort save against the cacogen's attack roll or be blinded for 1d4 rounds, suffering a -8 penalty to attack rolls and able to move only in a random direction at half speed.

**Hammer Fist:** After a cacogen is damaged in combat, it experiences a vivid flashback of past days working stone and metal. Its fists transform from hammers into sledgehammers that deal devastating blows. Add a +2 bonus to the attack and damage rolls for the cacogen's fists. This effect lasts for the rest of the battle. Some Upanesh rail workers were unable to escape the way station. Many of these were slain, but a few were transformed by the magic unleashed during the battle. Their existence has been arrested between life and death, permanently fixing them in a sort of mindless un-life where they do not decay. Cacogens are not undead, although they may easily be mistaken for such. Omophages and vahomeys will not prey on cacogens.



A cacogen's clothing likewise resists decay, and the creatures have worn the same dirty overalls and worn boots for centuries. The debased rail workers carry no tools, but in combat their hands change into iron hammers. They retain instincts related to their former lives, and wander the same rooms and corridors in which they worked. Sometimes their actions appear purposeful, yet this is merely ancient muscle memory bereft of intelligence.

**Area 12 - Passenger Platform:** *The ceiling in this area is much higher than the rest of the tunnel. A rusty metal bridge with low railings crosses the tunnel about 15 feet above the floor, joining the rooms on either side. The floors of these rooms are about 3 feet above the tunnel floor.*

Passengers waited here for the scheduled rail cars. Normally the rail cars in one pair of grooves traveled in one direction while the rail cars in the other pair of grooves traveled in the opposite direction. The bridge allowed the passengers to access the desired direction of travel without the risk of walking across the grooves. The rail cars are the same height as the platforms, so that passengers merely had to step down into the car and find a seat. The ceiling in this area is 25 feet high.

Identical signs are attached to each side of the bridge. Five feet wide and 3 feet tall, the rusted metal bears faded white words in archaic dwarven script: "SOUTH MARCH".

Two items from the treasure table might be found here.

Two cacogens climbed the stairs to the metal platform but were unable to figure out how to walk back down. When the characters approach, the cacogens become agitated and finally find a way down the stairs to attack the characters. A 10-foot diameter omophage is also attached to the ceiling near the platform, ready to drop on anything living that passes underneath.

**Cacogen (2):** Init +4; Atk blindness +3 (see below) or fist +4 melee (1d8); AC 17; HD 4d8+8; hp 29 each; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP blindness, hammer fist, immune to mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3; AL C.

**Blindness:** The cacogen's eyes flare red and project an eerie crimson glow over the target's face. The target must make a Fort save against the cacogen's attack roll

or be blinded for 1d4 rounds, suffering a -8 penalty to attack rolls and able to move only in a random direction at half speed.

**Hammer Fist:** After a cacogen is damaged in combat, it experiences a vivid flashback of past days working stone and metal. Its fists transform from hammers into sledgehammers that deal devastating blows. Add a +3 bonus to the attack and damage rolls for the cacogen's fists. This effect lasts for the rest of the battle.

**Omophage (1):** Init +0; Atk acidic touch +3 melee (1d4); AC 18; HD 4d8+12; hp 32; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP envelopment, immune to acid, immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire (double damage from fire-based attacks); SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AL N.

**Envelopment:** An omophage attached to a ceiling or wall will attempt to drop upon a target that passes beneath it. Landing on a slow moving or stationary target requires a successful attack at +0 against AC 10; faster moving or evasive targets will have correspondingly higher ACs. If the omophage lands on the target, the victim is enveloped and considered grappled. Due to its great size and weight, the omophage receives a +8 bonus to grapple humanoid foes attempting to escape the envelopment. Once a target has been enveloped, the omophage immediately begins secreting acid. Each round in contact with the omophage causes the victim 1d6+2 acid damage. This acid is so strong that the target will take 1d4 damage for 3 rounds after the omophage is removed, unless the acid is somehow neutralized or washed off.

**Area 13 - Waiting Area:** *The floor of this large room is covered in thousands of square tiles perhaps two inches on a side. The tiles form a mosaic of geometric patterns in blue, green, yellow, red, and white. None are cracked or broken, and the colors remain vivid. Scattered rocks, pieces of metal, and rotted organic debris barely detract from the beauty and craftsmanship of the design.*

*Rusted metal benches are fastened to the walls. A thick column of some translucent black crystal runs from ceiling to floor at the center of the room. Many lines of white text have been carved into the cylinder. At the top and bottom of the column, hammers, compasses, and chisels alternate around the circumference.*

The door leading to the maintenance corridor is shut but

unlocked.

Passengers sat on the benches while they waited for rail cars to arrive or depart. The column commemorates a battle fought by the Upanesh decades before the Way Station was built. The script is an archaic version of the dwarven tongue and celebrates the fallen warriors with the following dedication, repeated three times about the circumference of the column.

Weep Not For Those Who Fell  
In Life: They Were The Strength Of Stone  
In Passing: They Gave Their Last  
Breath To Preserve The Law  
In Eternity: Their Spirits Soar Forever  
Free From The Bond

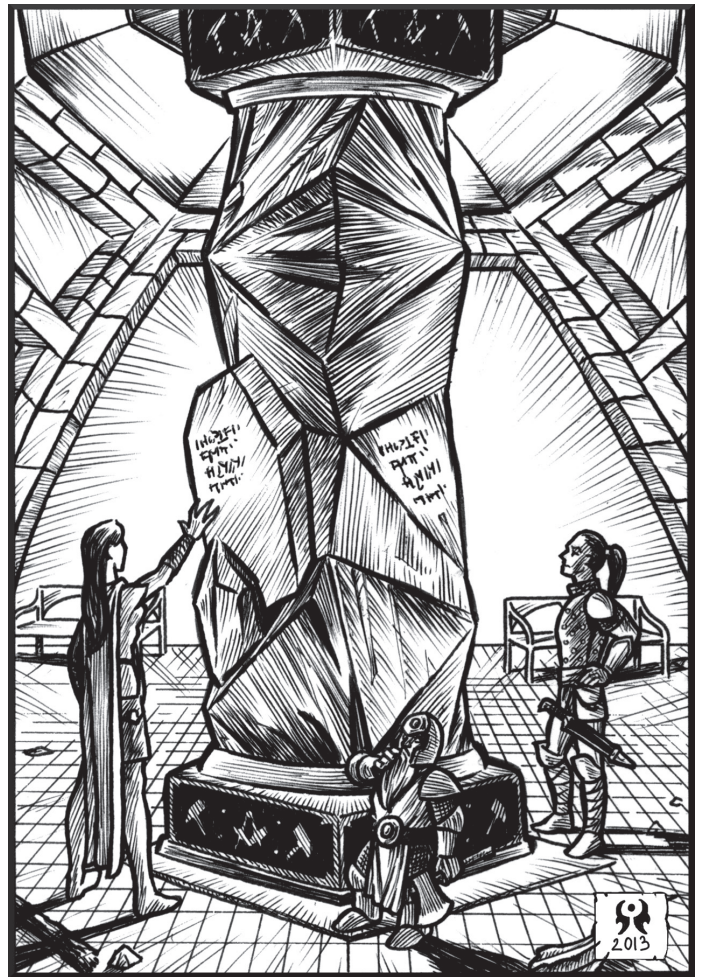
A sage with historical knowledge has a 60% chance of recognizing the dedication and symbols as being representative of the ancient dwarven Upanesh civilization. The sage would also know that the Upanesh were renowned for their wealth and magical expertise, and that the civilization was crippled after a long war. Dwarves will recognize the symbols to be of dwarven origin with a DC 10 Intelligence check.

A map of the rail system was carved in the wall above the benches on the North side of the room. The map was originally about 8 feet wide and four feet high, but was partially destroyed during the attack. Now it only shows the nearby locations Kre Krall and Asterke Mine, and the distances between those places. The distances are in the Upanesh units of Lankers; one Lanker is approximately 900 feet. A sage with historical knowledge has a 20% chance of properly converting them to common measurements of distance.

Two items from the treasure table might be found here.

**Area 14 - Gallery:** *This oval room rises to a height of at least 30 feet. Metal stairs on either side of the doorway climb to metal balconies supported by stone columns. Rocks ranging in size from pebbles to small boulders are strewn over the floor. The floor's surface resembles a sparkling blue pottery glaze and must have been very beautiful, but is now cracked and gouged.*

The gallery added a touch of spacious beauty to the Way Station. Upanesh from South March would often visit the gallery to meet or take lunch even if they had no

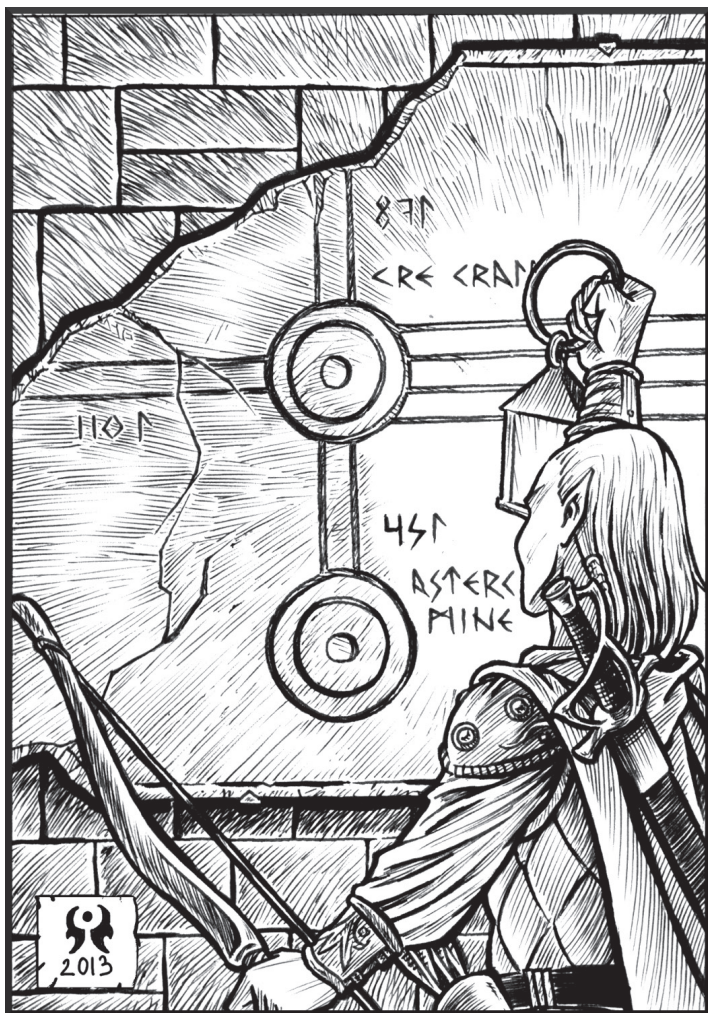


need of the rail cars. Rusted tables and chairs of various sizes were once arranged appealingly on the balconies, but most were overturned or crushed during the assault. The balconies are about 15 feet above the floor.

Three items from the treasure table might be found here.

When the Way Station was attacked, the dwarves in the gallery fled or were slain. The corpses of the latter decayed long ago, with one exception. A cleric of Upan sitting on the balcony was struck by flying rock, fell to the edge of the balcony, and watched her people die while her own life faded. Before her vision finally clouded, she saw Minoc Manshield take charge of the defense and died firm in her belief that Upan was just.

The cleric's faith was so strong that an aura of holiness remains a thousand years after her death. Upan rendered her body incorruptible and it has not decayed. Orophages and cacogens will not touch the body. Indeed, a sweet odor emanates from the corpse, so soothing that anyone who nears the body feels at peace and is healed



1d4+2 points of damage; this can only affect a character once.

If the corpse is disturbed in any way, the cleric's last breath leaves her body with an audible exhalation. Upan then transforms the moving air into words.

The body utters a faint sigh and the scent of flowers briefly fills the air. The sigh becomes words that sound whispered yet are somehow easy to hear. "Retrieve the fist. Uncover the fist." The voice is male, which seems odd coming from the mouth of a dead woman.

The cleric's name was Telise Serin. Her features are relaxed in repose. She wears vestments of a deep blue, with the hammer, compass, and chisel of Upan embroidered on the sleeves in white thread. Around her neck hangs a platinum medallion in the shape of a compass, studded with diamonds and rubies (worth 1500 gp). Removing the medallion may well gain the attention and displeasure of Upan. Beneath the body, and within the folds of the vestments, rests the Book of Donations (worth 200 gp in materials, up to 300 gp to a sage).

**Book of Donations:** The clerics of Upan made everything solid and strong, including their record books. Telise Serin maintained one such book as part of her temple duties. The Book of Donations is a thick ledger the height of a dwarf's forearm and two palms wide. The tome has a platinum cover and fifty vellum pages. Time has dulled the sheen of polished platinum without obscuring the design etched upon it: the hammer, compass, and chisel of Upan are arranged in a triangle with one symbol at each vertex.

The pages are filled with neat rows and columns of impeccable dwarven script detailing donations to the temple and the accompanying requests for construction works or prayers. Most of the writing has faded or smeared after contact with Telise's blood, so that very few entries remain legible. The last legible entries are near the end of the book.

**Date:** 1st of Dura, 628

**Donor:** Utchin Mahar

**Amount:** 250 Gold Chrisos

**Purpose:** Construction of a colonnaded cavern at the end of Matachin Way

**Date:** 12th of Janos, 628

**Donor:** Naijhe Shenyaning

**Amount:** 175 Silver Asimi

**Purpose:** Upkeep of the family shrine in NE sector of South March, at the junction of Tailing Road and Henane

**Date:** 9th of Winterlong, 628

**Donor:** Emalia Seutorin

**Amount:** 325 Silver Asimi

**Purpose:** Ornamental carvings for the storefront of a woodworker's shop along Miner's Way

**Date:** 27th of Fello, 629

**Donor:** Falya Tinea

**Amount:** 25 Silver Asimi

**Purpose:** Prayers for the miners trapped in the Asterke Mine tunnel collapse

**Date:** 10th of Janos, 629

**Donor:** Minoc Manshield

**Amount:** 30 Gold Chrisos

**Purpose:** Two days of prayer for aid in fortifying Kre Krall

Four vahomeys drift about the gallery and will attack adventurers that enter the room. The cleric's body is anathema to vahomeys, and the creatures will not approach closer than 10 feet.

**Vahomey (4):** Init +3; Atk mist tendril +6 melee (essence drain); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 18, 16, 16, 14; MV fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP essence drain, immune to critical hits, insubstantial; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +6; AL C.

**Essence Drain:** When a vahomey makes a successful attack, the mist tendril becomes attached to the target and immediately causes 1d4 damage points. Once the tendril is attached, it causes 1d4 damage points each round and cannot be removed until the vahomey is slain. The vahomey can apply one-half of the damage points (rounded down) to heal itself. As the victim approaches 0 hit points, his skin begins to shrivel and he appears to shrink; this effect vanishes if the victim is healed.

**Insubstantial:** The physical form of the vahomey is so tenuous that weapons often pass through without causing damage. Any weapon attack that successfully hits the vahomey only has a 50% of actually causing damage. The insubstantiality of the vahomey also makes it difficult to see in poor illumination. In dim light, it appears as a smudge or wavering in the field of vision (Int check to spot, DC 10).

Vahomeys are formless, translucent mists about the size of a dwarf, created by the Chaos Lord Garelethezan to serve as its eyes and ears. As befits servants of the Whisperer Upon the Winds, vahomeys move with only the barest rustling of the air. When vahomeys attack, the mists whirl into activity, and a wispy tendril reaches into the depths of the vahomey's victim. The tendril then taps into the vitality of the victim, and slowly drains the life force. Vahomeys do not fear dissolution, and will usually fight until destroyed.

When a vahomey is wounded, although the tendril will not detach, the mists shrink back, and some survivors report seeing a beating heart floating in the air. When the creature has been destroyed, the mists dissipate, leaving behind a small red crystal. Although these crystals resemble gems they are not actually gems. Dwarves will not be able to smell them. Neither thieves nor sages will be able to classify them as a known type of gem.

Each day that a person holds a vahomey crystal there is a cumulative 1% chance that Garelethezan will notice and investigate the demise of its servant. This will likely involve other minions being sent to observe and then reclaim the crystal. Whether the adventurer survives the retrieval will be of little consequence to Garelethezan. Some wizards would prize these crystals as receptacles of necromantic energies, but such dabbling will attract the attention of Garelethezan if the experiment fails.

**Garelethezan:** Also known as the Whisperer Upon the Winds, Chaos Lord Garelethezan inhabits the interstices between places, planes, and dimensions. It is master of all that travels upon the winds or similar currents, from noxious odors to vile secrets. Garelethezan craves information that others do not wish to reveal. It watches and waits and sends insubstantial servants to observe and sometimes participate in the advance of chaos and the theft of precious knowledge.



Although Garelethezan appears as a shifting dark mass of varying size, few of its servants realize this. The Whisperer shares little knowledge, especially about itself. Garelethezan expects its followers to breach secret, secure, and protected places, and to extract that which someone does not want others to know or possess. Thieves, spymasters, and even lesser supernatural creatures all find reason to invoke the name of the Whisperer. To bond with Garelethezan, a caster must enter a vault, a queen's bedchamber, or other forbidden location and speak aloud his deepest secret.

**Area 15 - Tunnel to South March:** *Massive boulders clog a wide tunnel from floor to ceiling. The way appears impassable without substantial magic or laborious work to clear the debris.*

The invaders sealed this tunnel to prevent the Upanesh from escaping the Way Station. Many of the rocks rolled into the gallery, crushing Upanesh and damaging the beautiful floor. The invaders expected to chase down and kill the trapped Upanesh who, with the exception of Minoc Manshield, were not warriors. An organized team of laborers could probably open a path within a few days, allowing adventurers access to the ruins of South March.

**Area 16 - Resting Place of Minoc Manshield:** *A sloping mound of rocks blocks the tunnel. The ceiling above the mound is blackened and gouged, as if some great force blasted the tunnel. Most of these rocks are much smaller than those obstructing the other tunnels. Fragments of bone and pieces of metal are interspersed amongst the rocks.*

Here Minoc Manshield made his last stand. Once the last civilian rail car had left the Way Station, he drew his enemies away from the platform and into the tunnel, expecting and embracing his fate. Surrounded by vahomeys and the warriors of many races, Minoc pointed his warhammer Stone Fist at the ceiling and called forth lightning, burying himself and the invaders.

Beneath the rubble, Minoc's remains are intermingled with those of his enemies. Amongst the crushed bones and battered metal, no bits of Minoc can be identified, but his magical weapon, Stone Fist, can be recovered. Although Stone Fist contains neither gems nor gold, a dwarf will naturally feel an affinity with the powerful dwarven magic and may smell the warhammer within 40'; the dwarf will not understand what he senses, just that something beckons that is sacred to his race.

When someone nears Minoc's remains, Upan reaches out to the Stone Fist and moves the hammer. If this does not attract the adventurer's attention, Upan will do it again.

*Creaking and grating sounds emanate from the rocks. The surface vibrates and a cloud of dust rises into the air. Pebbles bounce down the pile. After a few seconds, the movement ceases and the rocks are still.*

The adventurers can reach Stone Fist by spending an hour clearing the rocks. During that hour, they uncover numerous bones, as well as dented and rusted armor and weapons. They may also find three items from the treasure table and vahomey crystals (1d6).

Overall, the tunnel blockage here is not substantial, and a group of adventurers could reach the other side after a few hours of work. Clearing enough rock to allow rail car passage would require a couple of days.

However, once the adventurers have moved the first rocks, a group of vahomeys drifts from the ceiling and attempts to surprise them. These vahomeys sense that a weapon inimical to their kind rests nearby, and they will attempt to prevent it from being recovered.

**Vahomey (3):** Init +4; Atk mist tendril +7 melee (essence drain); AC 15; HD 3d10; hp 22, 20, 18; MV fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP essence drain, immune to critical hits, insubstantial; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +7; AL C.

**Essence Drain:** When a vahomey makes a successful attack, the mist tendril becomes attached to the target and immediately causes 1d4 damage points. Once the tendril is attached, it causes 1d4 damage points each round and cannot be removed until the vahomey is slain. The vahomey can apply one-half of the damage points (rounded down) to heal itself. As the victim approaches 0 hit points, his skin begins to shrivel and he appears to shrink; this effect vanishes if the victim is healed.

**Insubstantial:** The physical form of the vahomey is so tenuous that weapons often pass through without causing damage. Any weapon attack that successfully hits the vahomey only has a 50% of actually causing damage. The insubstantiality of the vahomey also makes it difficult to see in poor illumination. In dim light, it appears as a smudge or wavering in the field of

vision (Int check to spot, DC 10).

If the characters recover Stone Fist, they will have a powerful and priceless magic item. However, Upan will demand service of anyone wielding the weapon. Until Upan has chosen a new wielder, the first time a person holds the warhammer he will see the following vision. He will understand that the vision describes the final moments of Minoc Manshield, the last wielder of the warhammer.

*A barrel-chested dwarf stands in a tunnel identical to the one you are in now, except that there is no wall of rubble. His chainmail, warhammer, and long, braided beard are coated with blood and other foul substances. Pale light emanates from his warhammer as he swings it in mighty arcs, felling one man, then another, and finally a wavering creature of wispy fog. Now his enemies surround him, pressing close, and you sense that his end is near.*

*The dwarf's foes are a shadowy mass ready to overwhelm him. Then he raises the warhammer above his head and his enemies shrink back, granting him a little space. He shouts in a booming voice that echoes from the tunnel walls, "As I shall never leave this place, neither shall you! You will rot in here forever! Upan, aid your servant!" Jagged lightning arcs from the hammer to the ceiling, shattering the rock and burying the combatants.*

**Stone Fist:** Stone Fist is a finely crafted stone warhammer. The hammer, compass, and chisel of Upan adorn the stone handle, and four initials have been carved into the warhammer's head: PG, JF, TF, and MM. These initials represent the dwarven warriors that have wielded the weapon. Upan chose each wielder and the initials were etched into the stone by the god.

The famed Upanesh wizard Helkun-Dorn carved Stone Fist and dedicated his work to Upan. The god rewarded Helkun-Dorn for his diligent service, but was offended by the wizard's pride and instead offered the weapon to chosen warriors. Each warrior that carried Stone Fist added to its legend and its powers.

Puchu Goldeyes wielded Stone Fist for many decades. She was renowned for the strength and accuracy of her blows, which was reflected in the weapon received by Jarl Falbok. Jarl's faith both figuratively and literally illuminated those around him, and this also became a part of Stone Fist. Upan instructed Jarl to pass the warhammer

to his son Trae. The latter wielded Stone Fist in the battle memorialized on a column in the South March Way Station; he taught the enemies of Upan to fear Stone Fist more than any other weapon

Minoc Manshield was the last warrior to hold Stone Fist. He called forth lightning as he died defending Upanesh civilians at the South March Way Station. The final initials, MM, appeared on the warhammer immediately after his sacrifice.

Any person that wishes to wield Stone Fist will instinctively understand that certain deeds must be performed to prove devotion to Upan. Each deed unlocks a particular power. Until the first deed is completed, Stone Fist is just an ordinary warhammer; the other deeds need not be completed in any particular order. After performing a deed to Upan's satisfaction, the wielder gains use of the corresponding power.

Should the wielder ever displease Upan, the god may revoke any or all of the powers. If the transgressions were not too great, the wielder may regain the lost powers by proper acts of penance.

**Deed:** The wielder must publicly swear allegiance to Upan. This does not require a patron bond.

**Power:** Stone Fist is now a Lawful warhammer with a +1 bonus to both attack and damage.

**Deed:** The wielder must uphold the law at great personal risk and exhibit public piety in the service of Upan.

**Power:** Stone Fist will now shed light in a 20' radius at will.

**Deed:** The wielder must defend the equivalent of a village of Upanesh or their descendants against an enemy that seeks to destroy them.

**Power:** Against chaotic creatures, the wielder receives an additional +1 bonus to both attack and damage.

**Deed:** The wielder must find a descendant of Minoc Manshield, relate the story of the hero's death, and then build a fitting monument to his sacrifice.

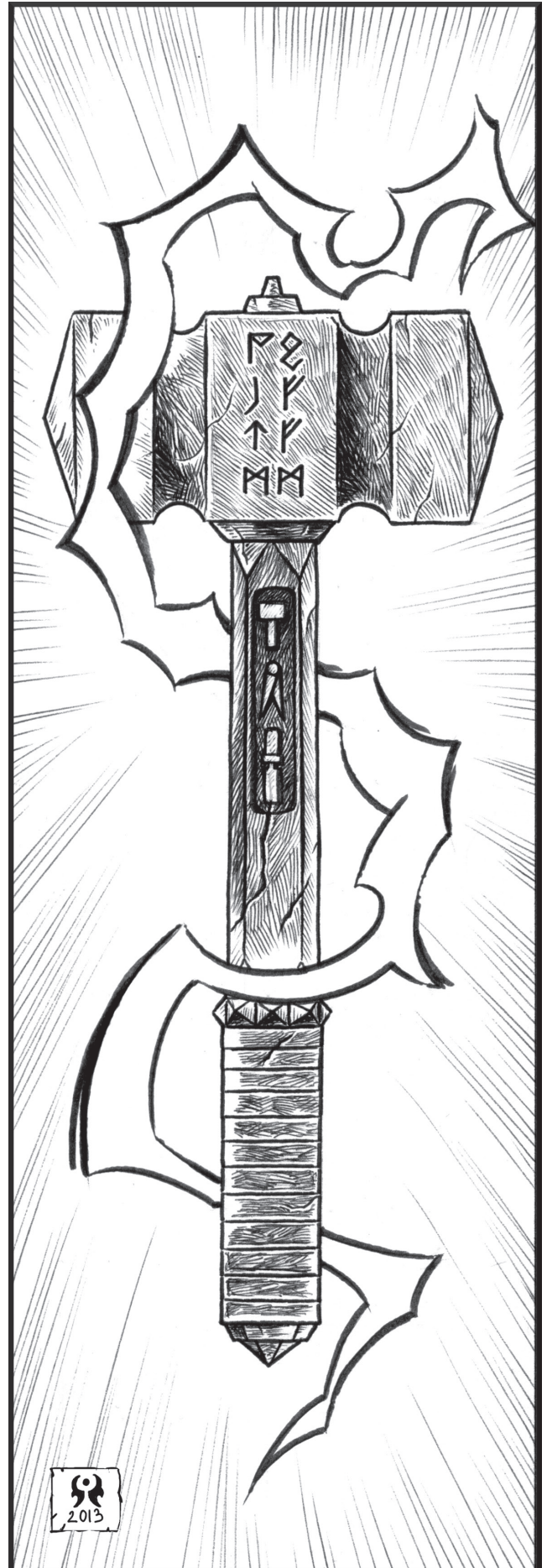
**Power:** Once per day, the wielder can invoke the wrath of Upan. The wielder points Stone Fist at a spot within 100'. Electricity arcs from the warhammer and explodes at that point, causing 10d6 dam-

age. All creatures within 20' of the explosion take 6d6 damage.

**Upan:** A lawful god of craftsmanship, justice, and order, Upan's most dedicated worshippers lived in the ancient dwarven kingdom of Upanesh. The dwarves' underground cites and subterranean transport systems were marvels of the known world. The Upanesh dedicated every new construction to Upan, and often adorned their works with the symbols of Upan: the hammer, the compass, and the chisel.

Upan is not well known in the present age and the god hungers for worshippers. Although Upan would immediately make strong demands of new adherents, he will not hesitate to offer boons to those who serve him faithfully. The god desires the descendants of the Upanesh to worship him once more, especially those that survive in the remnants of Kre Krall, the birthplace of Minoc Manshield. The dwarves have forgotten the old ways, and must reaffirm their oaths to Upan.

Perhaps more important, Upan is a proud god and remembers the wrongs of a thousand years ago as if they happened yesterday. Many enemies remain unpunished, such as Garelethezan and its servants.



# Stars in the Darkness

An adventure locale for 4 to 8, 3rd level characters.

## Background

Aeons ago, the ancestors of elves were starherds – shepherds who aided the stars and guided them on their courses. For there were creatures in the heavens that were inimical to the stars, which fed on them, and which sought to increase Chaos by ending the order of the night skies. One such creature was Ustah the Star-Drinker, a form of living black hole.

The world of Urstah and the starherds was not “real” in the way we think of our world today; it was a conceptual space that could intersect many realities. From one of these realities came Bellwart, the Azure Dwarf. Discovering the remnants of the starherds and their starhounds (now devolved into the monstrous Mormurg and celestial harriers), he subjugated them with a drug called *meargmelu*, and then used them to feed the Star-Drinker in a mad quest for power.

The Star-Drinker consumes stars. When minor stars disappear, few notice save astrologers and gods. When major stars disappear they take the Luck of worlds with them. In *Stars in the Darkness*, as the PC’s Luck begins to suffer, portents and signs point to a cavern on a tropical island. There the PCs must go if they would rescue their lucky stars, and restore their Luck, before Urstah drinks the essence of those stars, and the character’s Luck is gone forever.

The Azure Dwarf is connected to the Star-Drinker with a mystical umbilicus, that allows him to partake of the power Urstah gains from draining stars. Eventually, he seeks to use this power to return to his own reality, gaining control over first his Family House, and then his entire world.

## Staging the Adventure

The judge may use the introduction below, or may play out events leading to this adventure over the course of other unrelated adventures. The author recommends the latter course. Begin by having the adventurers first

hear about a star disappearing. An appropriate occupation, such as astrologer or navigator, will note that a star is missing from a known constellation. These are minor stars, at first, and of little direct importance to terrestrial life. That will change.

About three months before the adventure is to begin, important stars – stars that affect character Luck – begin to disappear. Once each month, roll 1d30 and compare the result to **Table 1-2: Luck Score**, on page 19 of the *core rulebook*. Any character with the birth augur indicated gains a permanent –2 penalty to Luck until their related star is freed. If the character is a Thief or Halfling, this Luck cannot be recovered as is normal for those classes. Only when the related star is again in the heavens will this Luck be restored. This does not prevent characters from gaining other Luck bonuses, however. Every month, another important star disappears, and another character may be affected.

At the beginning of this adventure, a minimum of three stars affecting Luck are trapped within the caves. They are held in Area 19. Several other lesser stars are trapped as well. The judge is given a description for the star related to each birth augur, and should decide exactly which of these areas holds which important star. If the PCs take too long in their investigations, other stars may well be captured, and one or more of the important stars may be slain.

It is important that the PCs be affected by the disappearing stars – nothing motivates players so much as their characters being affected – so the judge may choose to reroll any results indicating birth augurs that don’t relate to any of his PCs. If a player feels “picked on” because his birth augur is affected, how much happier he will feel when his star is released and he gets the rewards thereof! Changes in Luck are discussed on pages 360-361 of the *core rulebook*. Thoroughly prepared judges will read this section and soak up its spirit, but this is not necessary to run this adventure.

Once the players are firmly aware that their lucky stars are disappearing, the judge can begin to leave clues that lead the PCs to the adventure proper. The actions of Urstah the Star-Drinker is of great concern to many supernatural beings, and it is completely appropriate to have patrons or gods intercede to send the PCs to the adventure start.

## Conceptual Space

This adventure takes place in a “conceptual space” – a region that, while real in some ways, may not be real in others. The fiction of Appendix N is replete with conceptual spaces, such as the Elfland of Lord Dunsany or some of the regions in which Elric adventures in the stories of Michael Moorcock. In fiction, it is common that conceptual spaces require travel to reach, but are also very easy to return from. This is the assumption that the background and conclusion of this adventure make.

If the judge desires, however, a conceptual space can be entered through a dream, by falling asleep near a carnelian cube, by passing through a gate, or by other means. The judge can narrate Luck loss having begun some time ago, and start the players at the cave entrance. In order to capitalize on the “drop in” nature of the AL series, the judge may even forego having had Luck loss occur at all, have it occur just as the adventure begins, during the adventure as important stars are captured.

## Describing Important Stars

The judge may use the following descriptions for the Luck-affecting stars in this adventure. Terrestrial names for stars are used in this adventure, and, whenever possible, they were chosen because of some apt folkloric, mythical, or fictional signifier. This allows the judge to either replace a star name with a similar star in his own campaign milieu, or to use the terrestrial equivalent as desired.

## When a Star is Released

Releasing a lesser star grants 1 point of temporary Luck, which must be used in this adventure or it will be lost. The judge determines which PC gains this reward, either because that PC directly released the star, or based upon his judgement as to which PC needs it the most. Characters so rewarded will feel this as a temporary blessing, and should be informed about the inherent time limit to using this Luck.

When a greater, or “Lucky” star is released, any character with the associated birth augur instantly regains the 2 points of Luck lost when the star was captured, and an additional permanent +1 to Luck, for a total of three points. In addition, all PCs associated with the star’s release gain a permanent +1 bonus to Luck, and this stacks with the bonuses for characters with associated birth augurs.

Whenever any star is released – whether lesser or greater – any wounds it acquired are instantly healed, and it transforms into a transcendent sphere of its most strongly associated hue. In general, the star then streaks directly out of the caverns by the shortest possible route, back to the heavens (but see Area 19a).

## When a Star is Slain

Although the goal of this adventure is to free the captured stars as much as it is to defeat the Star-Drinker, stars may die. It takes a great many lesser stars to materially affect Luck on this plane of existence. If the star is a lesser star, there is no immediate effect. Indeed, it may well be assumed that Urstah has already slain many lesser stars after his awakening, in the months before the PCs arrive to contest with the Star-Drinker.

If a greater star is slain, the birth augur associated with that star no longer has any force on this plane. In addition, any characters associated with that birth augur immediately and permanently lose 4 points of Luck. If the Star-Drinker is in turn defeated, the judge may determine that another star takes over for the slain greater star...but this should take 3d30 years at a minimum, during which time no modifiers for that birth augur are in effect, but any character so unfortunate as to roll that augur loses 4 points of Luck instead.

If the judge so desires, affected characters may undertake a quest to rid the slain star’s influence on their lives.

Once the characters have started the adventure, the judge should assume that a star is slain each night that the characters withdraw to rest (either within the caverns or outside). Roll 1d5: on a roll of “1”, a greater star is slain. Otherwise, a lesser star is slain. Either way, this close to the seat of the Star-Drinker, the characters should “feel” the death of the star. Each character must make a Will save (DC 10 for a lesser star, or DC 15 for a greater), or this experience prevents them from recovering any of the normal benefits of resting. The only exception is divine disapproval, which is reset if a lesser star is slain, but not if a greater is slain, regardless of the save result.

#	Birth Augur	Lucky Star	Description
1	Harsh winter	Polaris	A large glowing man with two glowing stones in orbit about his brow. Polaris dresses in white robes, and his skin is white with pale yellow highlights, not unlike the colour of old bone.
2	The bull	Elnath	Shaped like a glowing blue-white minotaur, Elnath exudes a sense of power, even when he is broken and chained. In captivity, his horns are broken, but released they are long and sharp. He can speak with a loud and echoing voice.
3	Fortunate date	Deneb	A winged giant, whose feathers glow with a blue-white radiance too bright for mortal eyes to dwell on long. Deneb is somewhat dimmed in captivity, and his wings are broken. He has a feathered tail like that of a hen.
4	Raised by wolves	Alpha Lupi	Formed like a glowing giant wolf, Alpha Lupi is blue-white in hue. He makes both canine sounds and human speech, growling at those who threaten him, and howling with joy when released.
5	Conceived on horseback	Menkent	A large centaur with broad shoulders, Menkent glows softly with an orange hue. He is warlike and fierce in his speech, but both of his forelegs have been broken.
6	Born on the battlefield	Betelguese	Appearing as a vast warrior, over 20 feet tall, who radiates hot red light too bright to look at directly, the mere presence of Betelguese cause space to warp so as to allow his frame to fit within an area. Ceilings and walls seem to recede to make room for the giant star, snapping back to their correct proportions when he no longer fills a space. He is bleeding hot bright blood from many wounds.
7	Path of the bear	Alioth	A huge, strong, burly bear of a man which glows with an inconstant light, Alioth wears a torc of jade. His colour fluctuates also, from white to yellow to blue, with strange lines of different hues crossing his countenance periodically. Alioth is magnetic, drawing metal toward him within a 15' radius with a Strength of 16.
8	Hawkeye	Kaus Borealis	An orange giant of a man with a hawk-like nose and a broken bow. Kaus Borealis is morose about his captivity. The bow is part of him (which is why it was not taken), and is restored when he is released.
9	Pack hunter	Sirius	Sirius appears as a large, blue man whose radiance is so great that anyone who looks at him for more than a moment must make a Fort save (DC 20) or be blinded for 2d6 minutes. If a character makes the save, he notes a twin to the star, like a shadow hovering behind him, which seems almost to be a dog on its hind legs.
10	Born under the loom	Vega	A 7' tall woman with glowing blue-white skin and hair, Vega is bright enough to prevent mortals from looking at her long, even cloaked in her shroud of dust.
11	Fox's cunning	Alcor	This star appears as a cool, faintly glowing whitish-orange halfling with a fox's head. It requires an Intelligence of Luck check (DC 15) to note him at first, but once seen, the viewer gets the impression that he is larger and stronger than his appearance on this plane suggests. He pines for his brother, Mizar, and will beg the PCs to rescue Mizar also if that star is captured.
12	Four-leafed clover	Marfark	Appearing as a whitish-red dwarf, the colour of clover, who glows with a faint luminosity, his right arm has been broken at the elbow (this heals when he is released).

13	Seventh son	Alcyone	This star takes the form of a blue-white kingfisher-like bird, glowing with brightness equal to torchlight. Her wings are broken until released, and she sings a song of sorrow for the company of her six sisters.
14	The raging storm	Etamin	A glowing orange giant, Etamin has either the eyes of a dragon within a stormy face, or a dragon's head that seems to breathe dark vapours. This changes when people are not looking.
15	Righteous heart	Altair	This star appears to be a glowing white giant, 10' tall, with the wings of an eagle. When captured, the wings are broken. The giant is out of shape, with an oblate belly significantly larger than his size would suggest. He speaks of needing to return to his bride, Arhian.
16	Survived the plague	Tegmen	In outward appearance woman with a crab-like exoskeleton, Tegmen glows with a yellowish-white light. Any who peers at her closely sees that her shell and skin are covered with small pock-marks – plague scars from long ages ago.
17	Lucky sign	Aldebaran	This brightly luminescent red-orange giant has skin like a jewel aflame. He will speak about shepherding a race of merchants across vast reaches, and of watching over “the One who lives by a lake on a world circling a dark star near at hand to my abode in the heavens”. He is worried about what this creature may do if not watched, but refuses to speak the name of that One.
18	Guardian angel	Spica	A bright blue angelic woman, 10' tall, Spica has had her wings broken. She is so luminous that it hurts to look at her for long, and character's eyes carry after-images.
19	Survived a spider bite	Sargas	Appearing as a white-yellow giant who glows brightly, Sargas seems calm and serene, despite having every bone in his body broken.
20	Struck by lightning	Arrakis	This star appears as two beings, male and female, a glowing yellow-golden in hue, wrapped close together in a tight and intricate dance. Their chains and their broken limbs make them stumble, lightening crackling from their feet with every misstep.
21	Lived through famine	Mizar	This star appears as a yellow-skinned man dressed in rich yellow clothing, with a belt strapped tight about his waist. He glows with luminosity equal to candlelight. He laments the loss of his brother, Alcor, and will beg the PCs to rescue that star also, if Alcor is also captured.
22	Resisted temptation	Hamal	A red giant, 12' tall, with a ram's head, Hamal's long spiralling horns are broken off while he is in captivity. This star glows but faintly.
23	Charmed house	Antares	Appearing as a 15' tall giant, reddish of skin and wearing crimson robes and crown of bright scarlet metal shaped like a scorpion, Antares refers to himself as the Bright King of the Demon Warriors.
24	Speed of the cobra	Navi	A blue-white woman, 12' tall, with a pronounced middle that makes her appear pregnant, Navi fluctuates in luminosity from less than a candle to more than a torch. She will speak with pride of her children, the serpent-swift Mossirg.
25	Bountiful harvest	Minelava	A 12' tall woman with orange-red skin and tawny hair, Minelava's once-modest dress has been torn by the raking claws of the cosmic harriers. Although it is clear that she has been wounded, she does not seem much hurt.
26	Warrior's arm	Bellatrix	Wild and powerful Bellatrix has light, blue-white skin and electric blue hair. She stands at 8' tall, and still maintains a strong warrior's calm despite her capture and injuries. She refers to herself as an Amazon.

27	Unholy house	Algol	A hideous 10'-tall ogre, with two faces upon the same head, Algol glows with a hot blue light. One of his faces is red; the other blue, and both are daemonic. When one face shows, the other is concealed behind him. His head can rotate freely to expose either face. He refers to himself as the "Father of Gnomes".
28	The Broken Star	Keid	This dwarfish star shines with a faint white light. There are signs of machine implants in its body, and it speaks with a great consideration of logic, and disdain for emotionalism. Close examination shows that it is in several pieces, with wiring and gears holding it together. This is not damage from capture; this is the Broken Star's normal state.
29	Birdsong	Alpha Pavonis	An 8' tall woman dressed in peacock-like plumage of brilliant white and blue hues, Alpha Pavonis burns with a bright light. She will mention her "companion", but say little about this entity. Indeed, she will not even convey that companion's gender.
30	Wild child	Rana	A wild-looking orange-red man-boy, this star glows with about the same luminosity as a torch. His human speech is limited, but he can speak the languages of many animals.

## Star Statistics

If needed, use the following statistics for stars in this adventure:

**Lesser star:** Init +2; Atk variable (1d6); AC 15; HD 2d8+4; MV 30' or fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP transformation, 25% immunity to non-magical attacks; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; AL N.

**Greater (lucky) star:** Init +4; Atk variable (1d8+3); AC 20; HD 4d8+8; MV 30' or fly 60'; Act 2d20; SP transformation, 50% immunity to non-magical attacks; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +8; AL N.

## The Mormurg

The Mormurg are the degenerate descendants of the starherds, and cousins of the elves. They are 10 feet tall, covered with a shaggy white fur, and their eyes glow with a pale green light from simian faces. They have superior infravision, but dislike bright light, fighting at a -2 penalty to attack rolls even in torchlight, and at -4 in full daylight. Instead of a nose, each has a wide, deep hole in the centre of its face, which looks like a ragged pink wound. Their mouths are filled with tiny sharp teeth.

Their bones have become mostly a lattice of thin wires, making them incredibly flexible and able to absorb half of any damage from bludgeoning weapons. As a result of this bone structure, they can also squeeze through and into surprisingly small places. The starherds took no

damage from heat or cold; the degenerate Mormurg take normal damage from heat, but suffer only half damage from cold. The wings on their backs are still bird-like, covered with bedraggled off-white feathers. Because they have lost the art of preening their wings properly, the Mormurg can only fly for three rounds before landing, although they can glide downward for longer distances.

The Mormurg have degenerated intellectually as well. Much of what they do now is instinctual, and they are easily controlled by a dominating will. Although they will use weapons, they are no longer capable of producing them. Their only form of communication consists of gibbering, and chattering noises that sound like the high-pitched squeaks and piping of bats. Their diet consists of *meargmelu* and whatever meat they can gather.

Still, they are clearly related to elves. Their ears are pointed, their skin is pale, and there is something delicate and elfin barely discernible in the makeup of their faces. They take an extra 1 point of damage from attacks with iron or steel weapons, and shun those metals when they can. They are affected by *meargmelu* as though they were elves. Lawful clerics may Turn the Mormurg.

**Mormurg:** Init +1; Atk by weapon +5 melee (by weapon) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; MV 30' or fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight

spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will –2; AL C.

**Purple Duck Note:** *When the Mormurg are encountered, describe the effects of bludgeoning or iron weapons as they are used, then tell the players the mechanical effects. You can make the players responsible for tracking the effects of various weapons against these creatures.*

## Meargmelu

Appearing to be reddish or rust-coloured grain, *meargmelu* is barley mixed with blood and a highly addictive, psychotropic fungus. It is not just eaten by the Mormurg – elven tyrants and certain beings from Elfland have used it to control Elven Courts, and cruel elvish masters have bound slaves and harems with the power of *meargmelu*. Any elf that sees it will recognize it instantly, and will know what it is capable of. If a group contains no elves, the judge may allow a wizard or a character with an appropriate occupation to identify the substance with a DC 15 Intelligence check.

Should a non-elf consume even a taste of *meargmelu*, he must make a DC 20 Will save or consume all that is available. If anyone tries to prevent him from doing this – even close friends and loved ones – he will react with deadly force. Thereafter, he will shun all contact with his own species; indeed, he cannot stand to be within 30 feet of a non-elf unless he makes a DC 15 Will save. If this save is failed, roll 1d6: (1-3) the character flees, (4-5) the character attacks with deadly force, (6) the character flees for 1d6 rounds, and then returns to attack with deadly force. On the other hand, he desires to be near and please elves. If an elf gives him any non-suicidal command, he must make a DC 20 Will save or obey instantly and completely. If the command is suicidal, the DC is only 10. If the elf offers *meargmelu* as an incentive, there is a –4 penalty to the save.

In addition, *meargmelu* erodes the personalities of non-elves and elves alike. The first time *meargmelu* is consumed, the creature consuming it takes 1 point of Personality damage. Thereafter, consuming *meargmelu* causes 1d3 Personality and Intelligence damage, reducing a creature to a minimum Personality of 3 and Intelligence of 5. While this damage heals normally, the addict is drawn to consume more of the *meargmelu* during this time if it can. He who supplies the substance can create pliable and willing slaves, and by controlling how often the *meargmelu* is made available, he can greatly influence

the degree of intellectual prowess and self-perception that creature has.

Breaking a *meargmelu* addiction is difficult. If an addict fails to consume *meargmelu* within a week, he takes 1d3 Stamina damage as his body goes into withdrawal. Thereafter, every three days, he takes another 1d3 points of Stamina damage. The addict must make a DC 10 Fort save every three days of withdrawal, after the first week. He must make three in a row to break the addiction, if he survives that long. If the addict tastes *meargmelu* again during this period, he must start over, and the DC raises by 2. The DC can rise indefinitely, if the addict continues to fail at withdrawal.

There is one other way to break *meargmelu* addiction – a non-addicted elf can use the addict's blood to fuel spellburn. The elf must take at least 5 points of spellburn, all of which are paid for by the addict. This completely removes the *meargmelu* taint from the addict, who recovers lost Personality and Intelligence at a rate of 1 point per day, in addition to normal ability damage healing.

The addict's soul or spirit becomes symbiotically entwined with the elf's, however, so that they will forever after know each other's emotional states, and cannot willingly harm the other, even under charm or compulsion, or even for that other's own good. If they are compatible, there is a good chance that they will become lovers – perhaps even each other's true love. The judge should use his discretion, the desires of his players, and their level of maturity as a guide. Liaisons of this sort, and great loves, are the meat and drink of many Appendix N stories, but not every player or group wishes to deal with these issues.

## The Second Party

The stars affect not only our plane of existence, but many others where the stars are the same. As a conceptual space, the caverns where Ustah the Star-Drinker has made its abode abuts upon many of these planes. Therefore, a small second party of adventurers from a far plane has also made its way here, to stop their Luck from being devoured. If the judge desires, their map may show caverns that do not seem to exist now, and show blank walls where there are now passages. These beings call themselves the Praexi, and their world is called Praxius.

The Praexi appear like humans, and are treated as hu-

mans, except for the following:

- They have luminous magenta skin and deep purple hair streaked with violet.
- Their eyes are golden, and, they have the ability to see in the dark using infravision to a range of 30’.
- Each Praexi is born with an inborn affinity to a single spell, and can cast it as a wizard (even if it is a clerical spell). The Praexi gains no bonus for class or ability scores to this spell, but instead gains a bonus equal to character level minus 4. Corruption and patron taint do not apply for this single spell; a natural “1” is treated as “Lost. Failure”. Mercurial magic **does** apply, however, and unless the caster is also a wizard, the spell check is made with 1d10.

Because the Praexi can all cast spells, they are horrified when they learn that some of the PCs cannot. It will take some time before they can give up all feelings of pity for the horribly disabled PCs!

The second party can be used to offer added muscle, to allow a point of misunderstanding (including potential conflict), or to replace fallen characters. Because these characters have unique traits, a player who ends up keeping one gains an extra bonus for playing through the module.

**Purple Duck Note:** *Linear adventures are boring. Players need the freedom to choose paths other than the “right” path. In some cases, this leads to additional danger. In other cases, this leads toward additional opportunity. Sometimes, side paths lead to both.*

*If there is an encounter you particularly like in this module, which does not get used, don’t be afraid to add it to an adventure of your own! All modules, once played, can be cannibalized for the unused parts. This not only allows you to use cool encounters that the PCs avoided, but it increases the value of your investment in purchasing adventures.*

*Likewise, you can always bring back monsters and opponents you or your players particularly enjoyed.*

## Introduction

*For months, stars have been disappearing from the sky, and with them, Luck has been draining from your world. Portents from the gods themselves, and the advice of patrons, has led you here, to a great hill on the tropical Ronti Islands, overlooking a crystal blue sea. From the top of the hill, an enormous tree grows, turning and twisting as it soars into the heavens like a giant’s beanstalk.*

*Nesting in the tree above you are frightening creatures – like a combination of a featherless hawk and a great reptile, leather-winged, raptor-beaked, sharp-clawed, and sail-backed. Their screeching and jostling, even during the daylight hours when they seem most quiet, is loud and disconcerting. There are dozens of the creatures, and each is as large as a house.*

*Between huge roots, each thicker than a large man’s chest, a cavern entrance nearly 70 feet across slopes downward into darkness. Vines, moss, and flowering lianas obscure the cave from a distance, but it is easy to spot up close. The flowers growing up the tree and over the cave entrance do not look healthy – they are black and shiny as buttons, shaped like small cups, and smell like rotting meat. Flies buzz thickly about them.*

This is the Celestial Tree; even viewing it draws the characters into a conceptual space, for it is not visible from even a mile away. The creatures nesting in the tree are **cosmic harriers**, beings controlled by the Mormurg servants to harvest the stars that Urstah consumes.

Each night after the adventure begins, the cosmic harriers are sent to capture another star for Urstah to consume. There is a 75% chance of success each night, and, if the cosmic harriers are successful, there is a 10% chance that another greater (lucky star) is affected. If a star is captured, anyone viewing the night sky sees a shooting star that seems to land in the vicinity of the Celestial Tree. If a lucky star is captured, the shooting star is especially bright. In addition, there is a cumulative 5% chance that a lucky star already captured is devoured each night, with the effects described above. Roll randomly to determine which lucky star is devoured. The cumulative 5% chance “resets” to 5% for the next night when this happens.

This adventure assumes that the characters will attempt their assault on the caverns when the sun is bright in the sky. At this time, the Mormurg, the cosmic harriers,

and the Star-Drinker are far less active than they are at night. If the players decide to make a raid during hours of darkness, they should meet a cosmic harrier on the way to the Celestial Tree. If they persist, they will be attacked by 1d5 of the cosmic harriers when they reach the Tree, and there is a 50% chance of encountering 1d4 Mormurg as well.

If the party survives this and presses forward, they will discover everything more active than it is described herein, and there will be a constant danger of encountering patrols between areas, and in areas the characters have already “cleared”. There is a good chance that a general alarm will be sounded, and that Urstah the Star-Drinker will rouse, sending waves of its dark thoughts through the cave system, calling the characters down to be devoured.

The judge will have to modify the descriptions of areas, largely to account for this increased activity. A night-time assault – unless the characters flee! – is likely to end in a TPK. Even if the party flees, it will encounter 1d3 cosmic harriers sent to pursue them as they make their way down the hillside in the dark. If even one of these is killed, the other two veer off. After two attempts at a night time raid, the Mormurg’s vigilance is high for 1d7 days before they again relax their guard.

**Cosmic harriers (1d5 or more):** Init -4; Atk bite +12 melee (2d12+12) or claw +10 melee (1d8+8); AC 18; HD 15d12+30; hp 125 each; MV 50’ or fly 80’; Act 3d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 10 points; SV Fort +12, Ref - 4, Will +8; AL N.

**Mormurg (1d4 or more):** Init +1; Atk by weapon +5 melee (by weapon) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 15 each; MV 30’ or fly 20’; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60’, half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C.

### Wandering Encounters

During daylight hours, there is a 1 in 7 chance of a wandering encounter every 10 minutes. At night, the change is 1 in 5 every 5 minutes (or higher, if the complex is roused). When a wandering encounter is indi-



cated, roll 1d10 and consult the following table.

1d10	Map One
1	1d3–1 Mormurg
2-4	1 wooden bowl of <i>meargmelu</i>
5	1 Very young cosmic harrier
6	1d3 Fey cat-things
7	1d5 Fey hounds
8	1 Large Tree spider
9	1 Mansoon Viper
10	The second party

**1d3–1 Mormurg:** If on Map One, a pair of Mormurg will always be rivals. There is a 4 in 5 chance that they are actively antagonistic to each other; otherwise, the one with fewer hit points is subservient, hiding in shadows, and waiting for opportunity. On Map Two, the Mormurg work together due to the controlling presence of the Azure Dwarf, and will be armed with bronze-tipped spears.

**Mormurg:** Init +1; Atk spear +5 melee or ranged (1d8+3) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 15 each; MV 30’ or fly

20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C.

**1 Wooden Bowl of *Meargmelu*:** A wooden bowl filled with *meargmelu* is set out nearby, to feed the Mormurg. This is the work of the Azure Dwarf. See page 6 for information on *meargmelu*.

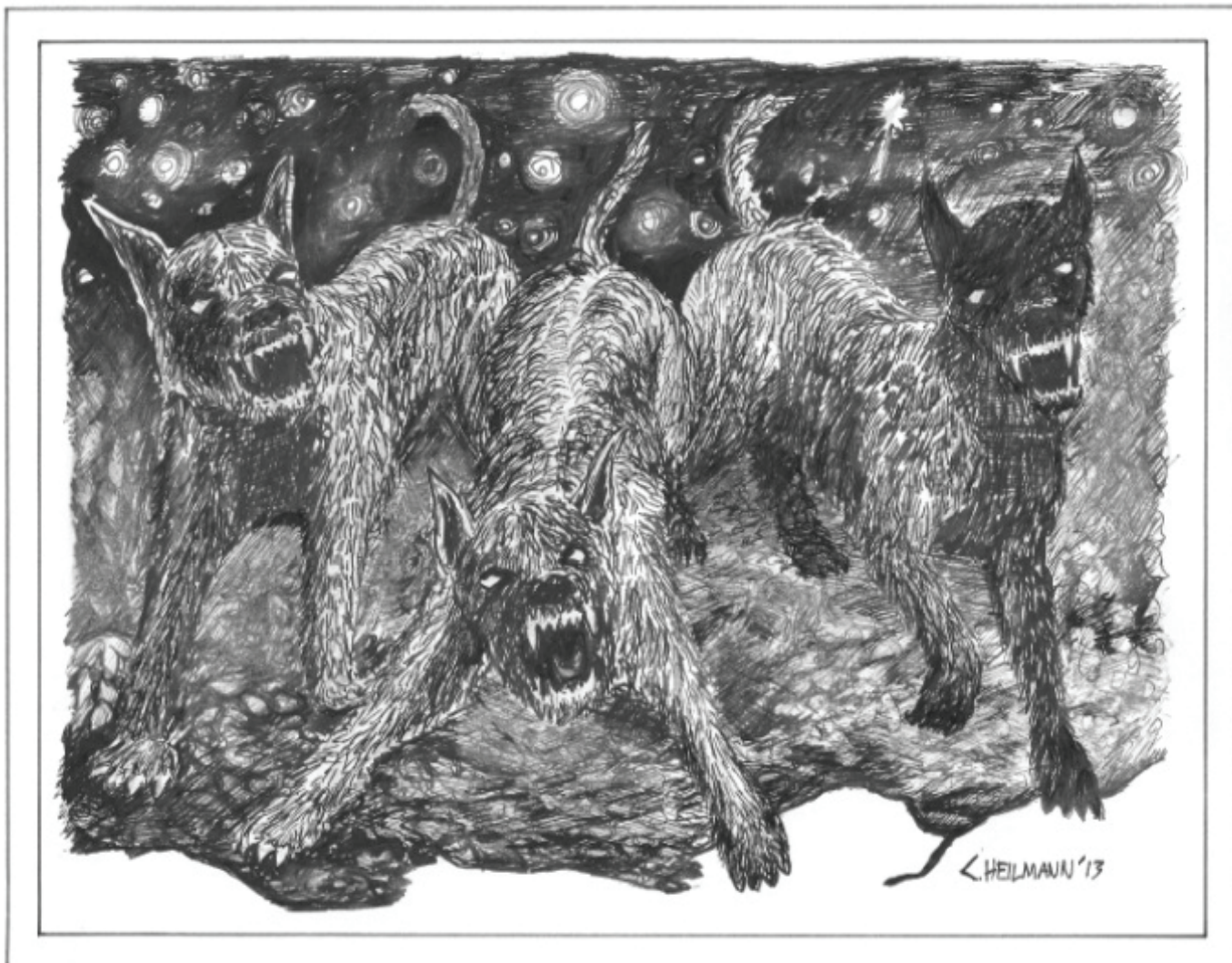
**1 Very Young Cosmic Harrier:** This is a very young cosmic harrier, only about 5 feet long from muzzle to tail tip. It attacks ferociously, and to the death. The very young cosmic harrier reduces all damage from non-magical weapons by 3 points, and is immune to both fire- and cold-based attacks.

**Very young cosmic harrier:** Init +0; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6) or claw +4 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 2d12+10; hp 22; MV 30' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 3

points; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

**1d3 Fey Cat-Things:** These appear to be skeletally thin, hairless cats with pinkish skins, although their green eyes are alight with cunning and malice. They have the special ability of splitting their move, so that they can attack mid-move. The cat-things avoid attacking unless they outnumber prey, but once an encounter with them occurs, they do not go away. Rather, they slink just beyond the range of the lights, and when more are encountered, their numbers increase. When the prey they are stalking is outnumbered, or engaged with more dangerous foes, they dart in to bite with needle-sharp fangs, and then dart away. Fey cat-things take +2 damage from any attack with an iron weapon.

**Fey cat-thing:** Init +7; Atk bite +1 melee (1); AC 16; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP attack while moving, iron vulnerability, infravision 30'; SV Fort +0. Ref +5, Will +3; AL C.



**1d5 Fey Hounds:** These man-sized hounds have very short white fur and red eyes. There is something disconcerting about their manner and movements, which makes them seem like humans walking on all fours. A fey hound can attempt a gaze attack with its action, causing a creature meeting its gaze to become so horrified that it can take no action until a Will save (DC 15) is made. A victim of this attack may attempt to save each round. When this attack is first used, success is automatic; thereafter, the potential victim may make a DC 10 Reflex save to avert his gaze. Slain fey hounds disappear whenever no one is looking at them. These creatures may be Turned by Lawful clerics.

**Fey hound:** Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 8 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP horrifying gaze, infravision 60'; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

**1 Large Tree Spider:** This is a spider native to the Ronti islands – a reddish-brown hairy thing about the size of a dinner plate, with orange stripes on its legs. Its weak poison (Fort DC 8) causes illness (a –1 penalty to Strength and Agility for 1d3 days), and multiple poisonings have a cumulative effect. If the tree spider is damaged but not slain outright, it releases a cloud of irritating hairs in a 5' radius (Ref DC 12 or 1d3 points of random physical ability point damage – roll for each point with equal chances of Strength, Agility, and Stamina being affected). They have a 4 in 6 chance of attacking with surprise.

**Large tree spider:** Init +3; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus poison); AC 10; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison, surprise, hair cloud; SV Fort –2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

**1 Mansoon Viper:** A purplish-brown snake with a pattern of emerald green diamonds along its back, the mansoon viper is feared for its venom. The average specimen is 7' long. Left alone, they are harmless, but they are bad-tempered and strike at any provocation. With a successful strike, a Fort save (DC 20) must be attempted. With a success, 1d3 Stamina damage is taken. A failure results in 2d4 Stamina damage, instant paralysis, and death in 2d3 minutes if the poison is not somehow counteracted.

**Mansoon viper:** Init +5; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3 plus poison); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 8; MV 25'; Act 1d20;

SP poison; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; N.

**The Second Party:** This is the second party, described above. Once encountered, it is unlikely to be encountered again (depending upon game events). See Appendix 1 for full statistics of the second party (including distributable character sheets).

## Encounter Areas

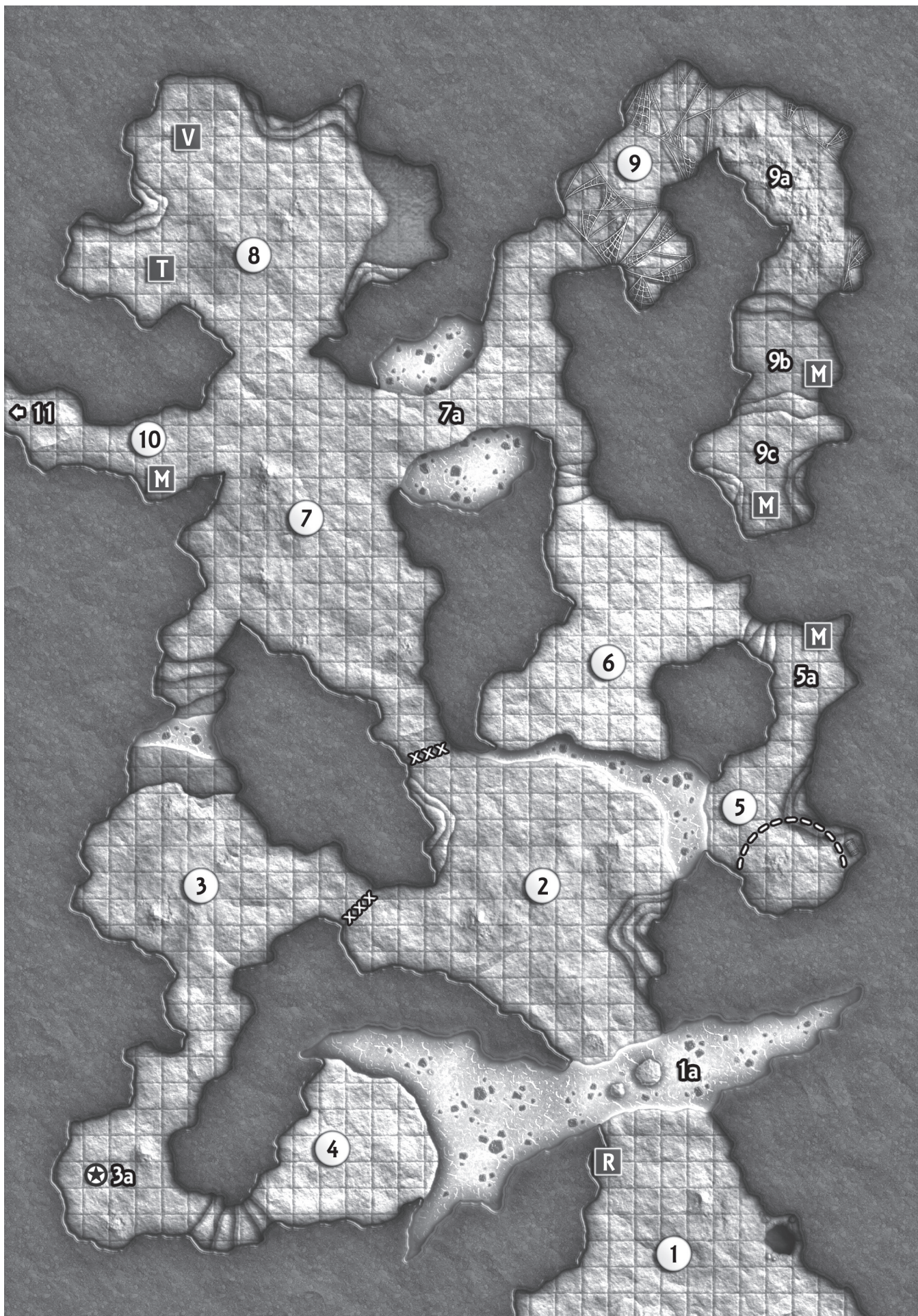
### *Caverns of the Cosmic Rifts (Map 1)*

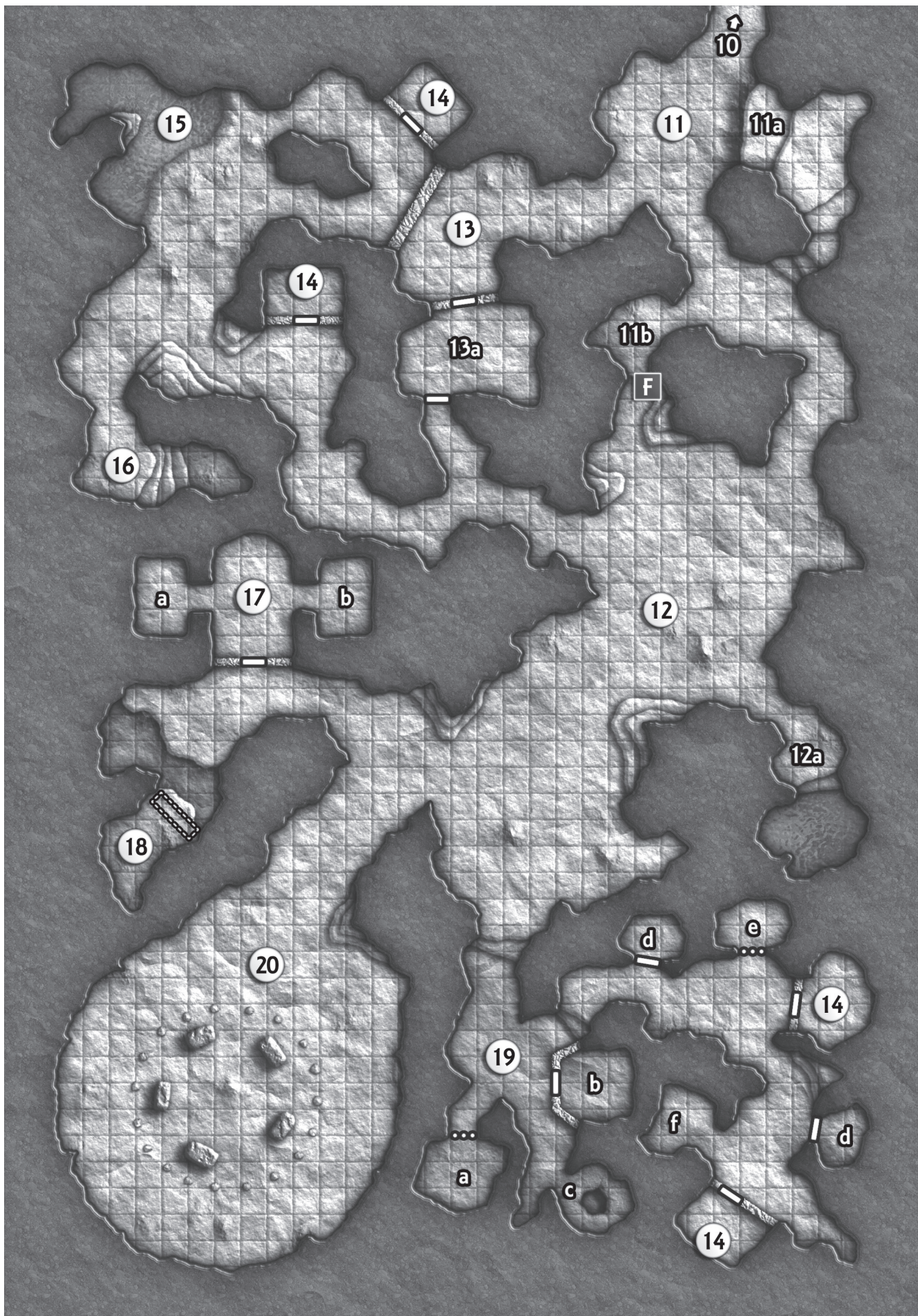
**Area 1 - Entranceway:** *The wide cavern mouth narrows somewhat as it descends into the warm darkness, but it is still fully 20' wide by the time it is 40' deep. The vines and greenery that partially concealed the cavern entrance give way to a stony floor. It is somewhat cooler in the cavern than without, but the air is still thick and humid. Ahead, occasional flickers of light from a cleft in the floor dimly light the more distant part of the cave.*

The cavern is 40 feet high at the entrance, and, although the ceiling is uneven, it slopes downward to an average of 20 feet high at Area 1a. Entering the cave, characters feel a wave of supernatural dread that quickly abates. This is worse for elves than for all other characters; they must make a Will save (DC 25) or collapse in terror for 1d6 minutes. Any elf that so collapses experiences the following vision:

*The veils of time part, and you see through vast aeons into the distant past, long before the rise of men. Great and beautiful elves with golden skin and soaring wings take to the skies. With them, enormous creatures, half reptile and half bat-winged hound, help guide the stars on their courses. There are predators here too, protoplasmic aberrations of enormous size and malevolent intellect, that seek out the stars one by one. While the stars remain, the angelic starherds are long gone, and it may be the degenerate descendants of their starhounds hang from the branches of the Great Tree above you.*

*The predators alone remain unchanged. These things are impossible to see clearly – their mere presence seems to absorb the light – but what glimpses you gain will haunt you when you look up at the night sky for the rest of your life... and perhaps longer, for who knows what memories may remain in the dark halls beyond death? The predators dwell in the darkness between stars. But they need not stay there.*





This vision is true; the Mormurg are the ruined descendants of the starherds, just as the cosmic harriers are descended from the starhounds. They now serve the forces they once protected the stars from.

The area marked “R” on the map shows where a long, animated **root** of the Celestial Tree has broken into the cavern. It is set here as a guard; it will attack creatures when they attempt to cross Area 1a. It is otherwise motionless. The root is about 20 feet long and 6 inches in diameter, so that a character hugging the eastern wall could conceivably be safe from it. It is greyish-brown, so that it easily blends into the cavern walls. Unless they are examined closely, or the party is otherwise cautious, the root gains surprise. It does not attack elves, even if attacked by them.

On a successful attack, the root wraps itself around a character; thereafter doing automatic damage each round. It can wrap up to 4 characters in this way, and still attack (although not wrap) another. If the root scores a critical hit, it knocks the character into the rift at Area 1a, unless the character succeeds in a Strength check or Reflexes save to avoid it (DC 20). This is *instead of*, not in *addition to*, normal critical hit effects.

**Root:** Init +4; Atk grab +4 melee (1d5); AC 14; HD 5d8+20; hp 40; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP surprise, constriction, hold multiple characters, knock into rift; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

**Area 1a. - Stellar Rift:** *The cave is rent here by a spectacular rift, some 10 to 15 feet across, with a large open cave beyond. Lightning flashes in the depths, although there is no noise. Looking down, you can see stars glimmering in the darkness far below. Between you and the stars, vast pitted stones tumble endlessly through space, occasionally striking each with a force that should be deafening, but there is no sound. Lightning flashes between clouds of glowing gases, but there is no thunder. As rocks tumble through where the rift walls should be, you realize that, after a thin crust of stone, there are no walls. The field of jumbled stones, nebular gas, and stars seems to go on forever.*

The Mormurg can no longer survive the vacuum of space (although the cosmic harriers can), and thus fly to cross this chasm. The characters may attempt to cross however they like – leaping the chasm is a man’s deed (DC 10), as is climbing across using the wall. Characters attempting to use a rope have an extra danger – even

brief contact with the stellar reaches causes 1d4 points of cold damage. A character that does not specifically attempt to keep entirely clear of the chasm is likely to slip in at least once, and it is impossible to avoid doing so 1d3 times if the rope is at floor level.

Any character that actually enters the rift takes 2d8 points from cold and 1d8 points from the vacuum each round. The space inside the rift is effectively infinite; a fallen character drifts away at a rate of 10 feet per round. If a rope is thrown to him, he might survive – it takes a round to throw or retrieve a rope, and the effects of the space require luck to succeed. The thrower or the lost character must make a DC 15 Luck check to grab the rope, and the character can then be pulled back at a rate of 30 feet per round.

**Area 2 - Roosting Cavern:** *Beyond the rift, the cavern opens out until it is some 50 feet across. It is lit by the lightning from the rift behind you, and from a similar rift to the northeast and to the north. The northern rift is a bare crack, no more than 5 feet wide at its widest point – the cavern continues into shadow beyond. To the west and northwest, shadowy passages run out of the cave. Heavy growths or violet fungus grow along the walls between the passages and into the corridors.*

Area 5 is not visible until characters reach the centre of this room; an outcropping of flowstone blocks direct view of the rift there as well.

The ceiling peaks at a height of 80 feet overhead, and in its highest reaches consist of the wood of the Celestial Tree instead of stone. Three juvenile cosmic harriers – each about 8 feet in length – roost among the folds of the wooden ceiling. They will not awaken unless the PCs make excessive noise, or unless they are summoned by one of the Mormurg. If awakened, they grumble and snarl for 1d5 rounds before swooping to investigate. The odds are very good that the characters will not have a light source that can reveal them. If the characters remain quiet for this period, there is a 25% chance that they will go back to sleep.

Leaping the rift to Area 6 is child’s play (DC 5), but Area 5 is elevated 5 feet higher than Area 2, and leaping this rift is a real feat of derring-do (DC 15). A character who burns Luck to make this leap catches the far edge, taking 1d4 points of cold damage each round until he can pull himself up with a DC 10 Strength check. These

rifts are otherwise like that at Area 1a...in fact, all of the rifts are linked, so a lost character might be seen floating in a later rift.

The areas marked “XXX” in the western and northwestern passages indicate an invisible barrier of supernatural dread; it requires a Will save (DC 10) to pass through. A check must be made each time the character tries, from either direction. Failure means that the character cannot pass until 5 minutes have passed since the last attempt. Feel free to roll saves, but they mean nothing – not even a natural “20” is effective until the time has passed. Elves are unaffected by these barriers; they must roll, but even a natural “1” rolled by an elf succeeds. When the players realize that elves are immune, there is no further reason to roll. The Mormurg are also immune, but the cosmic harriers are not.

The violet fungi is edible – it tastes a bit like crisp water chestnuts – and is very good boiled for about 30-60 seconds. There is a lot of it. Scraping it away will uncover flowstone going toward the northwest passage, or wood elsewhere. Beneath the flowstone the wall is also wood – the filled space between Areas 2, 3, and 7 is actually a thick root of the Celestial Tree!

**Juvenile cosmic harriers (3):** Init -2; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8) or claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 4d12+10; hp 41, 43, 26; MV 40' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 5 points; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

**Area 3 - Cavern of the Overhanging Roots:** *This cavern is roughly 30 feet in diameter, with a low wooden ceiling from which dangle thousands of rootlets, some so long that they penetrate into the stone floor. The wooden ceiling continues down to the southeastern portion of the wall, which is part of one enormous root of the colossal tree above you.*

The passage to the north descends 20 feet in a sheer drop (Climb DC 10); beyond this is a rift 5 feet across, similar to that in Area 1a. It is DC 5 to jump this rift. Any character who falls in will need to survive 10 rounds before there is any chance of rescue, as he disappears almost immediately, drifting northward. After 10 rounds, he appears at Area 7a, where he spends 5 rounds drifting below the stone bridge, from south to north. After that, he will be seen no more. Beyond the rift, the passage clambers back upward in a series of three cliffs, of 5 foot, 10 foot, and 5 foot heights. Climbing is DC 12.

**Area 3a. - Memorial of the Starherds:** *This cavern is maybe 25 feet in diameter, with another passage leading out to your left. The area is 20 feet tall. A 15 foot tall statue stands near the area's centre. Although it is worn as though by centuries, you still discern a beautiful, winged elf-like creature standing with one arm upraised, facing the east, with a coronet of stars carved around her brow. Time has erased or blurred her features, though, so that her garments seem shaggy and her face oddly simian. Before the statue is a stone bowl containing reddish coloured grain.*

This was a statue of one of the starherds. Time has worked on it much as degenerate “evolution” has created the Mormurg from their original forms. The stone bowl contains an offering – about two cups of *meargmelu* (see page 9). The offering was placed by the Mormurg, not the Azure Dwarf.

**Area 4. - Observatory:** *The passage to this cavern leads upward to what seems almost a cosmic observatory – from here you can see an array of stars, singularly, in spiral- or flower-shaped groups, clusters, and spread out into constellations both familiar and strange. Even the smallest cluster contains more stars than grains of sand on a beach, and the individual stars range from bright points of blue, red, or yellow light to millions upon millions of stars spread out like dust motes in the air.*

The starherds once watched the stars from this observatory, seeking out dangers to ordered creation. The Mormurg do not comprehend the purpose of this region now, and tend to go no farther than Area 3a. A careful, quiet party can hide here if need be – there will be no random encounters unless the characters do something to draw attention to themselves.

Any spell that draws on the stars (which the judge may determine based on character occupation, such as astrologer, the spell itself, mercurial magic effects, and manifestation) can be cast here with a +4 bonus to the spell check.

**Area 5 - Invisible Guardian:** *This area of caves seems to be shaped roughly like a kidney bean, with shelves of flowstone running along the centre of the eastern wall. The area to the north is made of wood – a thick root of the colossal tree from which other rootlets dangle in a massed profusion, amid clustered growths of violet flower-shaped fungi. To the west is a rift filled with stars, jumbled stones that tumble slowly past, and bright splashes of nebulae far in the distance. The cavern beyond is lower than this one.*

The violet fungi is the same as that in Area 2 – edible and potentially tasty if cooked. The area it grows on (the space bordered by Areas 2, 5, 5a, and 6) is one of the thick roots of the Celestial Tree.

Area 2 is 5 feet below Area 5. Between is a rift, the same as described in Area 1a. Leaping from Area 5 to Area 6 requires a Strength or Agility Check. Merely getting to Area 5 is child's play (DC 5), but landing on your feet and ready for action is harder (DC 10).

In ages past, the starherds placed weapons here for their own use – they are in a chest hidden by the curve of the chamber. Characters that wander beyond the radius marked on the map with a dotted line can see the chest – but they are also within the range of an invisible guardian set here by the starherds. This guardian is shaped vaguely like a 15-foot tall humanoid tiger, possessing a 10-foot long prehensile tongue. Its tongue is equipped with a bone needle that can be used to inject a paralyzing poison into those entwined by it, on the second and subsequent rounds of entanglement. Escaping the tongue is a DC 15 task (using Strength or Agility). The paralyzing poison requires a DC 14 Fort save, or the victim is immobilized for 1d6 x 10 minutes. Because the guardian is invisible, any attack against it has a 50% chance of missing regardless of the die roll.

The creature is supernatural and does not need to eat. Unfortunately for the adventurers, though, it relishes eating, and will consume its victims if given a chance. It cannot attack any creature outside the dotted lines marked on the map, making it vulnerable to missile weapons and spells once its existence is discovered. The creature cannot attack an elf that has not attacked it first.

The chest is made of wood that is petrified and is harder than steel. The chest is very heavy and bulky. It is banded with bronze, and locked with an inset bronze lock (DC 15). Within are three bronze *tungol* – star-shaped weapons, like throwing stars with a one-foot diameter. They can be thrown up to 60 feet, doing 1d8 damage. If it hits nothing, the throwing star always returns to the wielder's hand, so long as the thrower has not moved during the round, and can be caught with a DC 10 Reflex save. Tungol (singular and plural) are considered magical, but offer no bonus to hit. No class is automatically proficient with this weapon, but with practice, a warrior, thief, or elf may become so. Urstah the Star-Drinker takes 3d8 points of damage from any

hit with a tungol.

**Invisible guardian:** Init +0; Atk prehensile tongue +3 melee (1d3) or tongue dart +4 melee (0 plus paralysis) or bite +0 melee (1d5) or claw +2 melee (1d3); AC 15; HD 5d8+5; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP entangle, paralysis, invisibility; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

**Area 5a. - Hidden Mormurg:** The area to the west here is a portion of a great root. The natural steps from Area 6 lead upward shallowly, so that this area is 5 feet above Area 6.

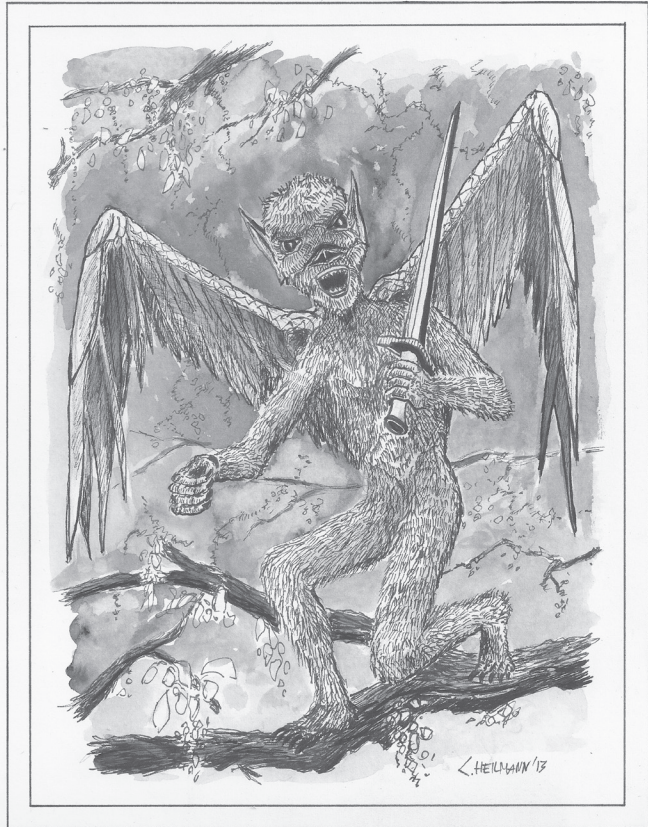
In the area marked "M", there is a low crack in the rock wall, at ground level and about a foot high, which will not be noticed by casual inspection. If a character spends any time looking around this area, though, it will be noted. Within hides a Mormurg that has recently eaten *meargmelu*. If the crack is investigated, it hisses and chitters, and pulls back into the darkness. If the crack is overlooked, it comes out after 1d5 rounds to attack whatever creatures have passed.

**Mormurg (1):** Init +1; Atk claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 26; MV 30' or fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C.

**Area 6. - Large Cavern:** *This is a large, irregular cavern with a ceiling whose height varies from 10 to 30 feet. Roots dangle from the ceiling, and part of the eastern wall is made of the enormous root of the colossal tree, which is covered with a sort of violet fungi.*

Leaping the rift to Area 2 is child's play (DC 5). This rift is otherwise the same as the one at Area 1a. The eastern passage goes upward 5 feet via natural stone stairs. The northern way goes down 5 feet and then back up a like distance. Traversing either of these passages is simple, and no roll is required. The violet fungi is the same edible substance as in Area 2.

# The Mormurg



Entering the rift has the same effects as at Area 1a, except that anyone falling into the rift will fall away, fading from view over 2d6 rounds, never to be seen again. If the characters spend any time here, a relatively small cosmic harrier – only 20 feet long – flies out of the rift after 1d5 rounds. It is carrying a lesser star as prey, and cannot use its bite attack, but it will attempt to knock characters into the rift with its wings (Reflex or Strength DC 10 to avoid on a successful wing buffet attack).

The easiest way for the PCs to deal with the cosmic harrier is to run. It can pursue them into Area 7, but is too large to pursue them elsewhere in the cave complex.

The lesser star appears as a glowing yellow humanoid female. If rescued, she will thank the PCs, bestowing 1d3 points of temporary Luck to each (temporary Luck can be spent like any Luck, but cannot be rejuvenated by Thieves and Halflings; if not spent during this adventure, though, it is lost). She does this by blowing a kiss to them, which sends glittering motes of starlight that sparkle around them before fading. She then leaps into the rift, turning into a glowing yellow star as she does so. She does not wait to converse with the PCs, and does not give her name.

**Area 7. - Great Cavern:** *This is a large cavern, whose roof peaks at a height of more than 50 feet overhead. The entire area is dimly lit from the northeast – by flickering lights of blue, green, and indigo. Although the walls are hidden in flickering shadows, it is an easy matter to see that the ceiling is jagged with stalactites, some of which are over three feet long. Many have begun to create mounded stalagmites on the cavern floor below them. The southeast wall is made of the thick roots of the colossal tree above you, and is coated with a growth of violet-coloured fungi. Dripping water can be heard from the north.*

The light comes from the cosmic rift at Area 7a. Although there are several other passages leading into or out of this cavern, they cannot be seen from farther than 20 feet away, unless an exceptional light source is used. The passage to Area 3 is described in Area 3; from the north, the challenges must be taken in reverse.

**Area 7a. - Bridge over Infinity:** *Here a high arch of stone forms a natural bridge over a chasm filled with colour – a bright explosion of reds, greens, indigos, and blues formed by an expanding region of interstellar gas far below. Stars, nebulae, and galaxies are visible whirling against the coruscating lights of infinity, an aurora of cosmic splendour that makes you and your world seem very small indeed.*

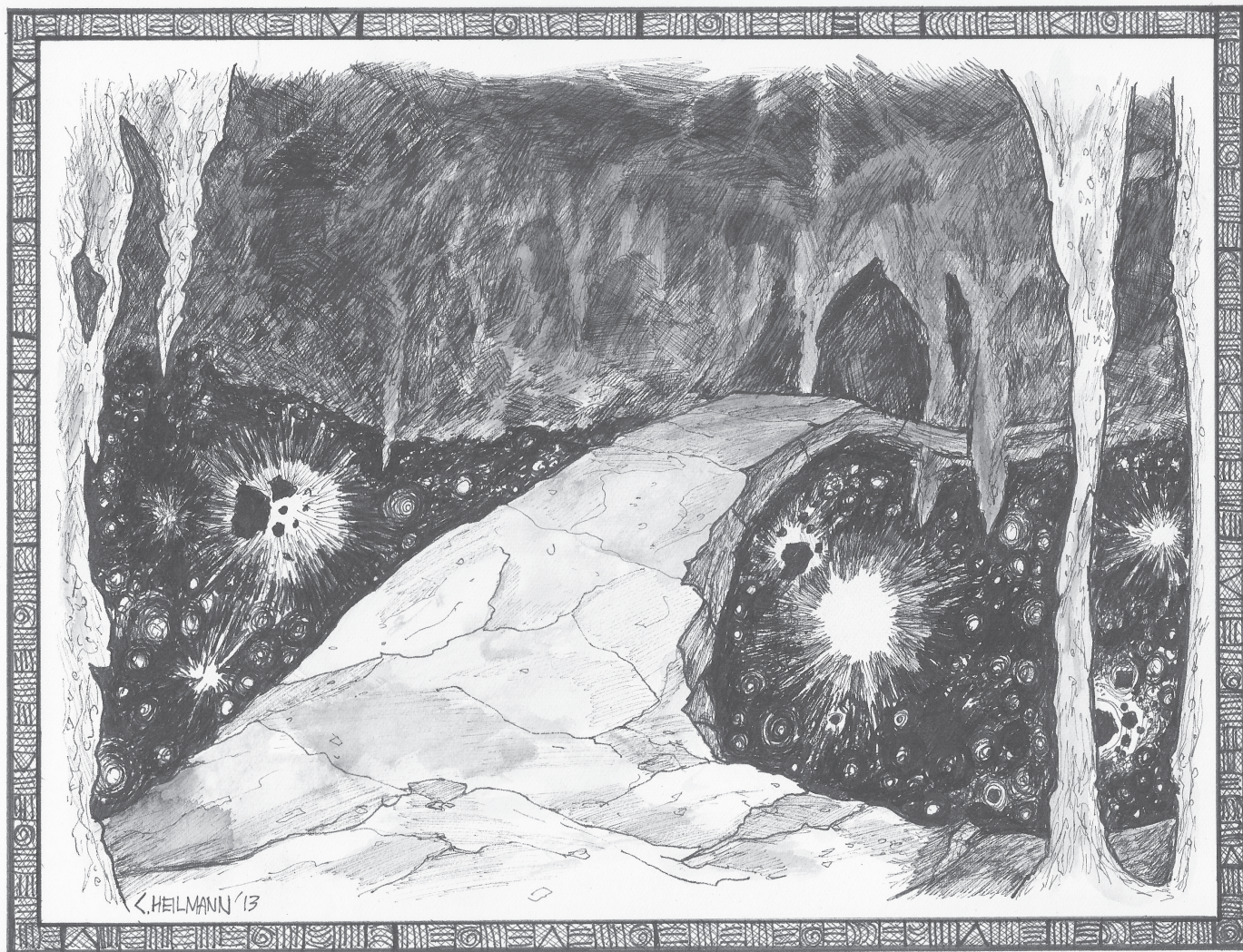
**Cosmic harrier (1):** Init –4; Atk bite +8 melee (1d12) or claw +6 melee (1d8) or wing buffet +4 melee (1d5); AC 18; HD 7d12+30; hp 80; MV 40' or fly 60'; Act 3d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 10 points, knock into rift with wing buffet; SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +4; AL N.

**Area 8. - Chamber of the Pool:** *This is a large natural cavern – too large to be encompassed by the light of a single torch. To the east, a pool of black water is fed by dripping water from above. To the west, several wooden trays are arranged in rows. The ceiling is uneven, varying in height from a mere 20 feet to 30 feet or more.*

The water in the pool is cool, but not cold, and is 3d4 feet deep at any given point. The water is safe to drink, but has a slightly metallic taste from minerals that have seeped into it. The Mormurg drink from here.

The wooden trays are located near the area marked “T” on the map. These trays all contain grain upon which a reddish fungus is growing. The fungus looks brain-like and alien. The fungus is creating *meargmelu* from barley, and each tray is in a different stage of completion,

## The Bridge Over Infinity



from barely infested grains to a tray in which the fungus has begun to crumble into a dry powder that would be sifted out from the now-reddish grain. The fungus in its own form is highly poisonous (Fort DC 20 or take 1d6 temporary Strength and Stamina, roll again each minute until successful – at which time whatever fungus remaining in the system is vomited up). An elf will recognize the substance with a DC 7 Intelligence check (although few elves have actually seen it being produced); a wizard or character with an appropriate occupation needs to make a DC 20 Intelligence check.

Suggestion for “V”; Standing at “V” on the map, not noticeably from more than 10 feet away, is a vessel or vase made of **astertine** (see area 13), but with slightly lighter bands running through it. It is a *vessel of provision*, used by Bellwart to obtain mundane supplies, such as the barley used to make *meargmelu*. Each individual can, once per day, state his request, reach in, and receive 1 pound of a non-magical organic substance. Creative

characters who figure this out might benefit greatly! The vessel weighs several tons, and cannot be moved.

**Area 9 - Hall of the Spinners:** *This passageway is blocked by thick cobwebs criss-crossing between walls, ceiling, and floor. The webs are a dull, greyish red in colour. Crawling along the webs, and apparently generating them, are tiny worm-like creatures which are of a similar hue.*

There are thousands of the worm-like web-spinners within the web. Snatching them, or smashing them, has no effect apart from making nearby spinners crawl away as fast as they can. Individually, they are easy to kill. Close examination notes that the webs eject from sphincters at their nether end, while their mouths appear to have a ring of tiny, lamprey-like teeth.

The webs in the corridor cannot be burned, but they can easily be pushed through for the first 5 feet. The next 5 feet require a DC 10 Strength check to push through,

5 feet after that require a DC 15 Strength check to push through, and the final 5 feet require another DC 10 Strength check. A character can continue to make attempts so long as he does not fail by 5 or more; failing by 5 or more indicates that the character is stuck, and cannot get free without help of some sort. Freeing a stuck character on the first round generally requires a Strength check with a DC 5 over that required to push through the same area; it gets harder after the first round (see below).

Spinner-worms drop on characters as they push through, but, unless they get stuck the worms are easily brushed off. Although they bite, the bites do no real damage (apart from indicating the real danger). As soon as a character is stuck, though, spinner worms begin to drop on him by the hundreds, biting with their lamprey-like mouths and winding him tighter with their web-silk. Each round after the first, the DC to free a character increases by 1. Thus, after 6 rounds of entanglement, freeing a character in the first 5 feet where a check is called for requires a DC 20 Strength check (or equivalent). After 1d3 rounds of being so trapped, the cumulative effects of the spinner's bites cause 1 hit point of damage per round. After 1d6 rounds, a trapped character begins to take 1 point of temporary Stamina damage per minute.

An area can be cleared of spinner worms only by an area-effect attack, and it need only do minimal damage to everything in its area. A torch is ineffective in this regard – although it will shrivel those spinners its flame touches, there are far too many to clear an area in this way.

Area

**Area 9a. - The Spinner Queen:** *A ghastly sight waits beyond the thicker webs! In a wider area of passage, shrouded by fragments of blood-red webs, squats a horrible thing like a spider mixed with a gigantic red cutworm, with a stinger at the end of its bulbous abdomen, and rows of sharp teeth at the end of its long, worm-like head and neck. The creature is perhaps 10 feet long from teeth to stinger. A constant stream of the tiny grey-red worm-like creatures you just encountered falls from its abdomen, just below its stinger, at a rate of perhaps half a dozen every ten seconds.*

This creature is the source of the spinner worms in **Area 9**. The spinner queen attacks with bite, stinger, and its sharpened forelegs. Each of these attacks has a special effect if it hits.

The spinner queen's bite attack latches on and begins to bore into her target. Each round, on her action, she automatically does damage – 1d3 on the first round, 1d4 on the second, 1d5 on the third, and so, up the dice chain. She can be detached with a DC 20 Strength check, or after her death (but see below).

A stinger hit injects 1d3 eggs into the victim's bloodstream. It takes 2d6 minutes for the eggs to reach the victim's brain, at which time he must succeed in a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 points of Personality damage per egg. If the character's Personality is reduced to 3 or less, he will seek to find some dark, quiet space, in which he is transformed into a new spinner queen over the course of 1d5 weeks. This is treated as a disease to resolve attempts at clerical healing. If the character is closely monitored, and forced into direct sunlight for at least three hours a day until his Personality has completely recovered, the eggs will shrivel and die. In addition, each time the stinger hits, 1d3 of the spinner worms fall on the character and immediately begin biting. This does no actual damage, but may concern the target enough to cause him to lose actions clearing off the worms. 1d6 + Agility modifier worms can be removed per action die spent doing so.

The queen's sharpened forelegs have a 1 in 7 chance to knock an opponent prone with a successful hit; there is no save against this effect.

When the spinner queen is killed, she is devoured from within and without by her progeny, which wrap her up and devour her body in a feeding frenzy that lasts 1d6 x 10 minutes. During this time, the worms grow rapidly as they devour the queen and each other. At the end of this period, there remains a motionless grey-red silk cocoon. The new queen growing within (from the largest, and last surviving, worm) bursts out 1d6 hours later.

**Spinner queen:** Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d3) or stinger +4 melee (1d5) or sharpened foreleg +6 melee (1d7); AC 18; HD 6d10+20; hp 46; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP latch and bore, inject eggs, knock prone; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +8; AL C.

**Area 9b - Leftovers:** Reaching this area requires the characters to clamber up two stone "steps", each of which is no more than 4 feet high. The "M" on the map indicates a Mormurg, wrapped in a greyish-red cocoon, and drained of all blood. Although hideous, it

## Spinner Queen



is not dangerous. Two stone “steps”, the first 3 feet high, and the second 5 feet high, must be clambered up to reach area 9c.

**Area 9c - Mummified Mormurg:** This area ends where a Mormurg has been hideously mummified by the spinner queen. Although it is still wrapped in webbing, the webbing is more of a shroud than a cocoon. This creature has become un-dead, and, if disturbed, attacks with a hunger for blood! On a successful claw attack, it can entangle a creature in its web-shroud (Reflex DC 15 avoids, a creature can spend an action to break free with a DC 10 Strength check). Only one creature can be entangled at a time. If it succeeds with a bite attack, it latches on, causing an automatic 1d3 points of Stamina damage each round. As it drains Stamina, its flesh fills out and swells, its victim’s blood replacing that which was lost to the spinner queen. If it manages to drain a total of 10 points of Stamina, it is sated. It falls back with a great groan, and its spirit departs its body.

**Un-dead Mormurg:** Init +3; Atk claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d12+3; hp 32; MV 30’ or fly 20’; Act 1d20; SP web-shroud, latch, infravision 60’, half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +2; AL C.

**Area 10. - Passage to the Larder:** *An empty stone bowl lies discarded in the corridor.*

In the area marked “M”, there is a dark crack in the ceiling, about one foot high, by three feet wide, which will not be noticed by casual inspection. If a character spends any time looking around this area, though, it will be noted. Within hides a Mormurg that has eaten *meargmelu*, and is returning to an active state. If it hears creatures pass, it will slither out of the crack after the last one has passed, and attack the creatures from the rear.

**Mormurg (1):** Init +1; Atk claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; MV 30' or fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C.

## *Larder of the Star-Drinker (Map 2)*

**Area 11 - Entry to the Larders:** *The corridor terminates in a cave, perhaps 30 feet in diameter. From the far wall, two passages exit; one to the northeast, the other roughly to the southeast. The room reaches a height of 30 feet or so, although the exiting passages are only half this height.*

The passage at 11a is not immediately obvious, hidden over the heads of characters passing this way. A pair of very young cosmic harriers crouches in the shadows here. They will attack from behind, when the adventurers move to leave this area. Unless discovered, or the PCs take precautions, they automatically gain surprise.

**Very young cosmic harriers (2):** Init +0; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6) or claw +4 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 2d12+10; hp 17, 24; MV 30' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 3 points; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

**Area 11a. - Broken Passage:** Reaching this passage from Area 11 requires a climb check against DC 10. If the very young cosmic harriers are still present when this is attempted (see Area 11), they attack creatures as they come over the stone lip into Area 11a. The opening of the passage is 12' from the floor of Area 11, and rises in a natural series of 2'-high stone "steps" from the passage between Areas 11 and 12.

**Area 11b. - Living Flowstone:** The flowstone at the area marked "F" on the map is actually a primordial ooze made of living stone. It can only move slowly, but acts as a guardian in this passage. The Mormug feed the ooze under the screeched commands of the Azure Dwarf (see Area 20).

Because it is used to being fed, the ooze does not attack until creatures have passed 5' beyond it – until then it is still expecting meat to be dropped! Once it attacks, characters can dissuade it from continuing its attack by

dropping 2 days of rations, or by sacrificing an animal to the flowstone's hunger. Otherwise, the ooze presses the attack until destroyed.

The living flowstone can attack with pseudopods that reach up to 5' away. Its hard exterior reduces damage by 5 points, unless the weapon is bludgeoning or magical. After the first two rounds of combat, it spreads its base in a thin layer, increasing its initial 5' diameter by 10' each round for three rounds. The area that it covers becomes difficult to walk in, as the ooze cements feet to the floor – a DC 10 Strength check is required to move, and the character can move at only half speed even if successful. A creature that falls prone requires a DC 15 Strength check to rise, and rising uses both move and action. After the third round, creatures in this area begin to take 1d3 points of damage each round, as digestive acids consume them from the feet up.

Of course, clever characters will just run away – the ooze does not pursue.

**Living flowstone:** Init -6; Atk pseudopod +4 melee (2d5); AC 14; HD 10d12+40; hp 136; MV 5' or climb 2'; Act 2d20; SP spread, cement to floor, detect living creatures 100' radius, DR 5/magical or bludgeoning; SV Fort +12, Ref -8; Will +0; AL N.

**Area 12. - Ambush Hall:** *The passage emerges into an enormous cavern, whose ceiling is at least 80' overhead, glittering with glowing blue-white lights as though from a starry night. These lights are too dim to provide any real illumination – the full extent of this cavern is impossible to discern. You can hear the sound of water dripping somewhere in the darkness. From far away, you can hear a sound like the wind blowing through skeletal trees on an autumn night.*

The ceiling hangs with millions of phosphorescent worms, each dangling from a silken thread. Their diverse heights give the "star field" created by their glowing bodies a sense of depth. These threads hang from a ceiling that varies between 60' and 100' – ample room for flying creatures to manoeuvre.

Within the northwestern end of the cavern, a group consisting of 8 Mormug and two juvenile cosmic harriers has been stationed to ambush any interlopers approaching the Star Drinker (Area 20). As soon as they see torches, the cosmic harriers wing silently aloft, to

attack the group from above. Any character watching the “star field” may detect their dark shadows blotting out the lights as they fly with a Luck check, negating the surprise they would otherwise gain. Once the harriers engage, the Mormurg come out of the darkness to join the fray. No quarter will be given or asked; they fight to the death.

**Juvenile cosmic harriers (2):** Init –2; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8) or claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 4d12+10; hp 19, 29; MV 40’ or fly 60’; Act 1d20; SP immune to heat and cold, non-magical damage reduced by 5 points; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

**Mormurg (8):** Init +1; Atk bronze-tipped spear +5 melee or ranged (1d8+3) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 20, 12, 10, 22, 18, 16, 15, 17; MV 30’ or fly 20’; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60’, half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will –2; AL C.

**Area 12a. - Pool of the Oracle:** *The sound of dripping water emanates from this passageway. After maybe 20 to 25 feet of stone passage, you can see ahead of you a pool of black water, some 5 feet below the level of the passage. The drip of water from a shaft over the pool causes ripples in what almost seems like a night sky. What causes the images on the dark water is uncertain – perhaps something too far up the shaft for you to see. The passage terminates here, and natural steps seem to lead down into the pool.*

Not everything in these caverns has been corrupted by Urstah the Star Drinker; this pool still radiates a strong Lawful aura. Tree spiders, monsoon vipers, and the second party may be encountered in this passage, but none of the other creatures will enter here.

A Lawful or Neutral character who drinks of this pool will gain the benefit of up to 3 dice of healing once in his lifetime. A Lawful cleric will find his Disapproval rating reset to “1” and an additional boon, and a Lawful wizard or elf will regain the use of any spells lost during the adventure. These affects also only occur once in a lifetime, and the character drinking will know this. Conversely, a Chaotic creature drinking here takes 1d5+1 damage, and must make a DC 10 Will save or take 1d3 points of Personality damage. This happens each and every time the Chaotic creature drinks.

Finally, any character who drinks of the pool, regardless of alignment, will know that the pool is oracular, and can answer questions about the region this adventure takes place in. However, for each question asked, the asker must permanently sacrifice a point of Luck. Temporary Luck from rescuing a lesser star can be used for this purpose.

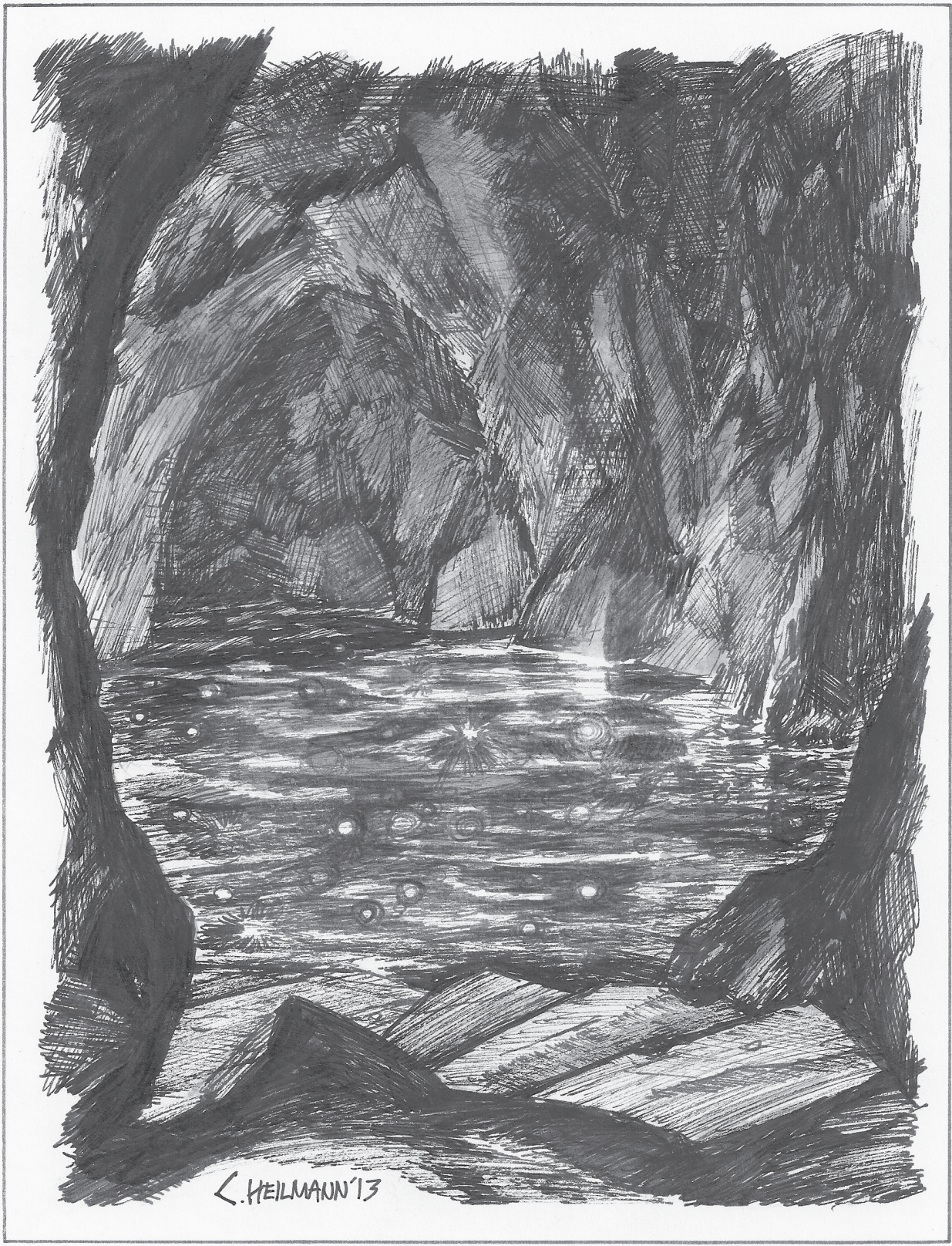
Some players will inevitably attempt to abuse this opportunity. “What do these twelve magic items do?” If a player, knowing the rules, attempts this, the judge is encouraged to reply, item by item, and take one point of Luck for each item. Likewise, “Where does the second party come from?” is one question, but “What are their names?” is not.

**Area 13. - Artificial Wall:** *As you enter this cavern, you immediately notice the presence of an artificial wall crossing the northern part of this cave. Whatever the substance is, it is so dark that it seems to make your own lights dimmer, and it reflects nothing whatsoever. It is as though shadow were coalesced to make a barrier.*

Every artificial wall in this cavern is made of the same material – **astertine**, a metal made from the cores of burned out stars. It is harder than steel, but causes elves no discomfort. It is impervious to all physical damage, and is impervious to any spell below 5<sup>th</sup> level. Stars chained or barred by it lose their powers, and cannot free themselves.

**Area 13a. - Azure Dwarf’s Quarters:** The doors to this area are not locked, but they are trapped. The handle to each door is a large iron ring. Anyone touching this ring takes 2d5 damage from an electrical jolt. The trap cannot be disarmed from outside the room (as the wires connecting it to the primitive battery, below, are inside the room, connected to the bolts connecting the ring to the door), but it can be bypassed by using some non-conductive material to pull the handle open.

*The door opens to a roughly 25-foot by 15-foot natural cavern. Within are a rough cot, sized for a creature perhaps four feet tall, a heap of rough burlap sacks, a pile of red-stained wooden bowls, and a locked wooden chest with iron bands. In the northern half of the room is a large stone vat filled with acrid smelling liquid and copper coils. Flexible wires run from this vat to the two doors giving entrance to*



Pool of the Oracle

*the room – one to the east and one to the west.*

There are 12 sacks, each filled with 5 lbs of *meargmelu* (see page 9), used by the Azure Dwarf to control the Mormurg. The wooden bowls (15) are used to disperse the material, and are stained by the reddish fungus used to create the addictive grain.

The chest is locked with an inset iron lock (DC 15) and is iron-banded. Within are a small fortune of gemstones in various shades of blue – there are 1,250 gems, each valued at 1d7 gp. Examination of the gems shows that they have been cut to resemble teeth. These were stolen from the statue of the many-mouthed Sloorugh in Bellwart's home reality, although the PCs are unlikely to discover this on their own.

The vat to the north is a primitive form of arcane battery. Any character coming into contact with the thick bare wires takes 2d7 points of damage unless using a non-conductive insulator. The acid itself causes 1d5 damage when touched – it can only be safely transported in a stone, metal, or glass container. It will quickly eat through other materials (including wood or ceramics), very likely damaging any character carrying it (and/or that character's equipment) when it has eaten through whatever is holding it. There are about three gallons of acid in this vat. The stone vat itself is too heavy to move.

**Area 14. - Stellar Prisons:** Each of these spaces has a locked (DC 10) *astertine* door (see Area 13). There is a 3 in 5 chance that any such space will imprison a lesser star when it is first checked. A lesser star appears as a softly glowing humanoid form. Roll 1d7 to determine colour: 1-3, yellow; 4-5, white; 6, red; or 7, blue. Once released, a star quickly transforms into a sphere of light, and streaks out of the caverns and into the night sky.

Releasing a lesser star grants 1 point of temporary Luck, which must be used in this adventure or it will be lost. The judge determines which PC gains this reward, either because that PC directly released the star, or based upon his judgement as to which PC needs it the most. Characters so rewarded will feel this as a temporary blessing, and should be informed about the inherent time limit to using this Luck.

If the judge has decided to include more than five greater (or "Lucky") stars to be imprisoned, he may have the remainder imprisoned in some of these places.

**Area 15. - Blind Crabs:** *The floor of this cavern is composed of loosely packed stones, ranging in size from that of a halfling's fist to the size of a human head. There is a pool of fresh water to the northeast, which must be connected to some subterranean stream, for it is moving, and bits of flotsam have collected on the shore – branches, bits of bone, and similar debris. Picking over the flotsam are a few bone-white crabs, about the size of a human hand.*

This area is home to thousands of blind crabs, which feed on whatever debris is washed up by the pool. When the cavern is first entered, most of them are hidden within and beneath the rocks, but if an injured creature comes this way, and blood drips on the ground, they erupt singly, then in the dozens, hundreds, then thousands. Throwing down a carcass, or having a meal, will result in the same frenzy. The crabs are blind, so invisibility is of no aid here.

There is no way that these swarms can be fought off, short of some magic that affects the entire region. The swarms attack wounded crabs as well as any other creature, and wounded crabs are quickly shredded by their cohorts, squealing with pain and anguish, their voices sounding almost human.

On the first round a wounded creature is in this area, a few crabs are seen. These are clearly blind, with long antennae-like feelers and white shells. Each is only about the size of a human hand. On the second round, already wounded creatures take 1 hp of damage. On the third round, already wounded creatures take 1d3 hp damage, and all others take 1 hp of damage. Thereafter, the crabs do 1d5 damage per round to all creatures in the area. Once this has occurred, fleeing creatures still take 1d3-1 hp damage each round until they get all the crabs off them with a DC 10 Reflex save.

A body abandoned here will be stripped to the bone. The creature takes 1d3 points of Strength, Agility, and Stamina damage each round as the crabs feast. If any of these stats are reduced to 0, the body cannot be checked to see if it is dead; it is forever dead, and no amount of Luck will change that. If all are reduced to 0, the body is reduced to bones.

These crabs have found a way through the cracks in conceptual space, and come from other dimensions, times, and even nightmares. The judge may determine that their bodily fluids have some arcane use to spellcasters.

**Area 16. - Passage Into Deeper Darkness:** *The passage ends in a series of steep cliffs, which disappear into darkness.*

There are four cliffs here, each 40 feet deep, for a total depth of 160 feet. If the judge wishes to expand the adventure, he may include additional caverns beyond. Otherwise, the passage comes to a dead end at the base of the cliffs.

**Area 17. - Fane of the Starherds:** The door to this chamber is made of *astertine* (see Area 13), the image of a beautiful elven couple crafted into its surface. Both figures sport a pair of angelic-looking feathered wings. Their images are unchanged by the passing centuries, and seem both wise and stern. The door is not locked.

*When this door is opened, the darkness peels back a little. Although there is little light within the chamber beyond, you find that you can see into it as though there was full daylight. The space is clearly of worked stone, 15 feet wide and 25 feet deep, coming to a rounded end in the last 10 feet. Two five-foot wide passageways exit the room, to the north and south. The room vaults to a height of 25 feet. When the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:*

*At the far end of the room rests a dais of striated green marble, upon which stands a statue fully 20 feet high. It appears elf-like, neither precisely male nor female, but strangely possessing the qualities of both. It is carved with a pair of great feathered wings held close to its body. One hand is raised in benediction. The statue did not just appear; it was always here. You cannot explain how you missed it before.*

Every Lawful or Neutral character entering this place for the first time gains an immediate three dice of healing, to their maximum hit points. In addition, elves entering this place regain all lost spells for the day, the first time it is applicable (i.e., this benefit occurs the first time an elf enters the area with one or more spells lost). Lawful clerics immediately recognize the holy aura of this place, and gain a +2 bonus to spell checks and Lay on Hands results while in this area.

Chaotic creatures entering take an immediate 1d5 points of Personality damage, as their psyches are battered by the might of the Lawful hermaphroditic Deity of the starherds. They take an additional 1d3 points of Personality damage each minute they remain. A char-

acter whose Personality reaches 0 in this manner must choose to immediately convert to a Lawful alignment, or be blasted into unconsciousness so long as the creature remains in Area 17. In either event, the Personality damage is healed when this choice is made; otherwise, it heals normally once the character is removed from this room. Note that a Chaotic elf can both regain lost spells and take Personality damage here.

This area is undisturbed by the Mormurg and the Azure Dwarf, who greatly fear it. There will be no wandering encounters here.

If both Areas 17a and 17b are entered, and not despoiled, the character doing so will discover a silver ring upon his finger when returning to Area 17. This ring is shaped to appear like a fine mesh of shooting stars, and appears on the left small finger. It cannot be removed short of removing the finger; at which point it melts away like frost on a warm day. This is true even if the character dies; the ring cannot be passed on to another.

Each *ring of the starherds* has the following effects:

- The wearer gains a +1d3 bonus to a random ability score, which lasts as long as the ring is worn.
- Damage done to the increased ability score heals at twice the normal rate. Unless the ability score raised is Luck, even permanent damage to, or reduction of, that ability score heals at the rate of 1 point each month.
- Damage done against the character by cold or vacuum is reduced by 5 points per die, so long as the ring is worn.
- Celestial harriers will not attack the wearer of such a ring.

**Area 17a. - Crypt of the Father:** *Just ahead, this hallway passes into a room 15 feet wide and 10 feet deep, carved from the living stone. Dominating this room is a slab of gold-veined green marble, 13 feet long and 8 feet wide. Upon the slab rests the body of an enormous elf, 12 feet tall with white-feathered wings, dressed with a white robe and sandals. A crown of gold, shaped like a twining ring of shooting stars, adorns his flaxen-haired brow. So perfectly preserved is the body that it would not surprise you if he began breathing, or arose from the slab, yet the dust here is the thick undisturbed accumulation of millennia.*

Here rests the Father of the Starherds, in his millenni-



**Fane of the Starherds**

um-long sleep, which is so deep as to resemble death to all but magical inspection. He cannot be woken by any mortal means.

With much labour, 600 gp worth of gold can be scraped from the marble (although this would take several days or effort). The crown is of very fine workmanship, and is worth 1,200 gp. Woe to whosoever should despoil this tomb, though! A great rumbling sounds through the earth upon the commencement of any looting, and the would-be thief is struck by a paralyzing supernatural awe that holds him in thrall for 1d5 minutes. Thereafter, the transgressor shrinks at a rate of 1d6 inches every ten minutes, until the curse is removed or he disappears entirely. The victim of this curse loses 1 point of Strength and Stamina for every full 12 inches lost.

The curse can be removed by returning the crown and destroying Urstah the Star-Drinker before the cursed character disappears forever. Even if the curse is lifted, the lost height is not regained.

**Area 17b. - Crypt of the Mother:** *Just ahead, the hallway passes into a room 15 feet wide and 10 feet deep, carved from the living stone. In the centre of the room is a slab of gold-veined green marble, 13 feet long and 8 feet wide. Upon the slab rests the body of an achingly beautiful female elf, 12 feet tall, with skin the colour of burnt mahogany and long wavy hair the colour of ink. She has two feathered wings, like those of a raven, close by her sides. She is clad in a white robe and sandals. She wears a headdress like a silver net jewelled with emeralds and diamonds at every place where the wire mesh meets. Her body is perfectly preserved, but the dust of ages is thick in this chamber.*

Here rests the Mother of the Starherds, in a sleep so deep as to resemble death. Like the Father, she cannot be awoken by any mortal means.

As with Area 17a. up to 600 gp worth of gold can be scraped from the marble with much work and time. the headdress is worth 1,200 gp, but carries an attendant curse. A noise like thunder cracks through the air, and there is a smell of ozone. The victim of the curse begins to grow 1d6 inches every 10 minutes thereafter. For each full foot grown, the character gains 1 point of Strength and Stamina, but loses 1d3 points of Intelligence and Personality, until he is nothing more than a ravening beast.

The curse can be removed by returning the headdress and destroying Urstah the Star-Drinker before either Intelligence or Personality drop to 2 or lower. Even if the curse is lifted, its effects are merely halted, not undone.

**Area 18. - All That Glitters:** *A deep chasm, just over 5 feet wide and perhaps 30 feet deep yawns before you. On the far side, after perhaps 5 feet the ground begins to slope downward, but you can see the glitter of many golden things piled up beyond. As you gaze across the chasm, you hear an ugly voice chanting blasphemies that echo up from the caverns to the south.*

This is a trap for the unwary. It is a DC 5 check to leap the chasm, but anyone who does so encounters a force field (indicated by dotted lines) and must succeed in a DC 15 Reflex save or fall into the chasm for 3d6 damage and the potential of broken bones (see the **core rulebook**, page 96, for details). Climbing up or down the chasm on either side requires a DC 10 check.

The force field reduces any damage done to it by 10 points, and can be brought down by 30 points of damage. Whenever hit by a melee weapon, the character hitting the force field must make a Reflex save equal to the damage done before this reduction, or fall into the chasm. There is simply very little room upon the ledge.

Beyond the force field rests a hoard consisting of many dozens of golden treasures – plates, cups, rings, coins, crowns, bars, etc.; characters who succeed in bringing down the force field can take as much golden treasure as they can carry, at a value of 2d10 gp per pound so carried. Of course, the more the characters take, the harder it is to get back across the chasm....depending upon how burdened the characters are, the judge should reduce the die used to leap or cross the chasm one to three steps down the dice chain.

Wasting time in this way can net the characters a rich treasure, but it is likely to be their death. Not only may they have difficulty obtaining and carting off the gold, but the time wasted provides the gives the Azure Dwarf an opportunity to get further along in his ritual to manifest Urstah the Star-Drinker on this plane. For every full minute the PCs spend here, the manifestation of Urstah in Area 20 gains 5 hit points, to a maximum of 50 bonus hit points. If Urstah gains 50 hit points, Astoc is sacrificed (see Area 20 for details). The chanting voice can easily be followed to Area 20, so provide your players

clear evidence that something is afoot!

**Area 19. - Stellar Prisons:** This area contains the prisons of various stars, including four of the greater stars selected by the judge. All artificial walls and doors are made of *astertine* (see Area 13), and all doors are locked (DC 10 to open).

When a greater, or “Lucky” star is released, any character with the associated birth augur instantly regains the 2 points of Luck lost when the star was captured, and an additional permanent +1 to Luck, for a total of three points. In addition, all PCs associated with the star’s release gain a permanent +1 bonus to Luck, and this stacks with the bonuses for characters with associated birth augurs.

This area is protected by a dread guardian, which lairs in Area f, below, but which will be attracted to any loud noises anywhere in Area 19. This creature looks like a furless and emaciated, eight-legged tiger, with alabaster skin stripped with red. The creature’s head resembles that of a spider, save the upward-sweeping pointed ears and eyes of an elf. Its eight paws are like short, stubby-fingered hands.

The creature’s jaws slaver with a thick reddish poison, looking vaguely like clotted blood. This poison requires a DC 22 Fort save to resist. Even a successful save results in 1d4 points of temporary Stamina damage, but a failure results in an *additional* 1d4 points of *permanent* Stamina damage.

In addition, the guardian has spinnerets located near its anus, and it can wrap a downed foe in strong sticky threads even while attacking – using its back paws/hands to complete the task. This prevents it from moving, but does not use one of its actions.

If the creature successfully bites, it can attempt to wind threads around its victim, who is allowed a DC 10 Reflex save to fend the creature off. Unless the creature succeeds in a DC 20 Strength check, the guardian can continue to attempt to wrap the character in its thread. Each failed Reflex save causes the victim to lose 1d5 points of effective Agility. When the victim reaches 0 Agility, it is fully wound up and helpless. It takes 1d5 rounds to cut a victim free from these threads; this restores all Agility lost to being wound up by the guardian.

The dread guardian takes +1 damage from iron and steel weapons.

**Dread guardian:** Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 plus poison); AC 12; HD 6d8+18; hp 49; MV 40’; Act 2d20; SP poison, wrap victims, iron vulnerability; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; AL C.

**a. Fallux:** A man-like figure with a blue-white aura equal to candlelight can be seen through the bars of this prison cell. This star is Fallux, twin of Astoc (see Area 20). If released, it will attack immediately, although its only goal is to escape this area and free its twin. See Area 20. No Luck is gained from releasing Fallux, although characters may be glad for his presence when facing the Star Drinker.

**Fallux:** Init +2; Atk buffet +3 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 4d8+8; hp 17; MV 30’ or fly 30’; Act 1d20; SP transformation, 25% immunity to non-magical attacks; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; AL N.

**b. Important Star:** A greater star, chosen by the judge, is imprisoned here. This star is also chained to the wall, with an *astertine* chain (DC 15 to unlock).

**c. Doorway to Forever:** *This round room is 15 feet in diameter, with a 5-foot diameter hole in the centre of the floor, descending into darkness.* This apparent oubliette is a bottomless pit.

**d. Important Star:** Each of these chambers contains an imprisoned greater star, chosen by the judge.

**e. Important Star:** A greater star, chosen by the judge, is imprisoned here. Because the door is made of bars of *astertine*, the star can be seen.

**f. Den of the Guardian:** This area contains straw, old bones, a bowl with murky water, and a bowl containing meat mixed with of *meargmelu* (see page 9). This is where the dread guardian rests when not patrolling the remainder of the prison.

**Area 20. - Circle of the Star-Drinker:** The climactic encounter to this adventure is complex, so ensure that you review it prior to running the game. There are four ways this encounter can be altered by prior actions:

- If the PCs have freed Fallux in Area 19a, and followed him immediately, the encounter is largely unchanged, but Fallux speeds toward his twin sister, Astoc, in an attempt to free her. He is engaged first by Mormurg, and then by the Azure Dwarf.
- If the PCs have freed Fallux in Area 19a, but hesitated before following him for up to 10 minutes, three Mormurg lie dead, and Fallux is engaged with the Azure Dwarf. In this case, there are only five rounds before Urstah the Star-Drinker manifests.
- If the PCs have freed Fallux, but then proceeded to Area 18, and spent time there, or freed Fallux, but spent more than 10 minutes in following him to Area 20, both Fallux and Astoc are dead. Urstah manifests three rounds after the PCs arrive, and may be more powerful than he would otherwise have been (see Area 18).
- If the PCs have not freed Fallux, but have spent time in Area 18, Urstah may be far more powerful when manifested (see Area 18). In addition, the PCs have only three rounds before Astoc is slain and Urstah manifests.

*Loud chanting echoes from the wide corridor leading to this large cavern. Before you is an area at least 60 feet in diameter. It to be a towering shaft in the solid rock, for far above you, you can see the stars shining in a black and cloudless sky. The ground in this chamber rises like a hill, crested by a ring of five huge standing stones, each covered with weird sigils that seem to shift and move with the chanted words. Surrounding these squats a wider circle of nineteen smaller stones of green marble shot with gold.*

*Arranged around the outer ring are a dozen of the tall, shaggy winged ape-things that you have encountered previously. In the very centre of the ring is an even larger specimen of the winged creatures, perhaps 15 feet tall, a hunched and wrinkled blue dwarf riding upon its back. The dwarf chants, and the winged creatures reply.*

*Chained in the centre of the circle, before the dwarf and its horrid steed, lies a beautiful woman, glowing with a soft blue-white hue. The dwarf bears a great lance of black metal in its hands – it is clear that when the chanting reaches its crescendo, the woman will be sacrificed!*

The woman is the star, Astoc, twin sister to Fallux. She is bound in **astertine** chains (see Area 13), which can be opened with a DC 10 open locks check. If Fallux has been released (see Area 19a), he will seek to do every-

thing in his power to save and release Astoc. He cannot, however, open the lock without the keys, which are on the Azure Dwarf's great iron key ring, worn on his belt.

Note that if the characters dawdled in Area 18, Astoc may already be dead. In this case, the characters will arrive in time to see the Azure Dwarf spear her twin brother, Fallux, with his black iron lance. Fallux falls dead, to lie near his sister Astoc. The next part of the encounter is then automatically triggered.

Otherwise, the characters have 10 rounds before the Azure Dwarf plunges his lance into Astoc, and Urstah the Star-Drinker manifests itself in the stone circle. Even if Astoc is saved, however, the Star-Drinker manifests when the chanting ceases.

Bellwart, the Azure Dwarf, is connected to Urstah the Star-Drinker by an umbilicus of shadow-stuff, even before the Star-Drinker manifests. As a result, he regenerates 5 hp each round, even if he is dropped below 0 hp. Even if he is decapitated, his body will seek out his head, and his head will continue to mouth the words of the ritual. Bellwart is not a dwarf of this plane, however, and once Urstah has manifested, he can begin to cast spells.

***It is important for the judge to remember that Bellwart cannot be ultimately defeated until this umbilicus is severed!***

The umbilicus is invisible, and cannot be severed until Urstah manifests. Once Urstah has manifested, it can be seen as a tendril of smoky darkness, leading from the Azure Dwarf's forehead to the writhing darkness in the central ring of stones. At this point, it can be severed by a successful Mighty Deed of 4+ against the Azure Dwarf, or by an attack against the umbilicus itself, which must hit AC 20 and do 10 points of damage or more. If a spell is attempted, it must be targeted at the umbilicus for it to be affected, and the umbilicus gains a +5 bonus to any save allowed (instead of, rather than in addition to, the Azure Dwarf's bonuses).

If the Dwarf's umbilicus is severed, Urstah instantly loses half its current hit points, and the shadows convulse and wail. This should not be possible before Urstah has manifested, but if the players invent an extremely clever way to do so, it will prevent Urstah from manifesting.

When the Azure Dwarf is brought to 0 hp after the umbilicus is severed, he explodes in a ball of blinding blue light. Urstah takes 3d12 damage from this, and all others must succeed in a DC 10 Fort save or be blinded for 1d3 rounds. On a natural “1”, blindness lasts 1d3 minutes instead. The Dwarf is not actually slain, but is banished from this plane.

If the Azure Dwarf rolls a natural “1” on a spell check, he turns into hazy blue light, and is drawn wailing into Urstah. The wails and cries seem to echo throughout the chamber as long as the Star-Drinker remains. Again, this does not actually destroy the Dwarf, but banishes him from this plane. His wails are real and ongoing in the prison he now inhabits, and are channelled through his dark patron, Urstah.

When Urstah manifests, read or paraphrase the following:

*There is a shock as though the very air is being ripped apart. Within the stone circle, darkness deeper than night spreads, ribbons of un-light snaking from it like writhing tendrils of shadow. You can feel the dark force of its miasmic thoughts beating down on you, its hunger to consume all the stars, all light, all life within this universe and all other universes. This is Urstah the Star-Drinker, the living embodiment of the death of the stars. Heat, light, and hope flee from the room merely by its appearance.*

The Star-Drinker fills the entire central ring of stones. When he manifests, any creature therein not fastened to the ground is hurled 1d6 x 5 feet out of the ring, with normal damage as if falling the same distance (Reflex DC 12 for half), and with the same chance of suffering a broken bone. Any character who suffers a broken bone may spend a point of Luck to avert this outcome (but not the associated hit point damage).

A creature trapped in the stone ring, or that enters the stone ring once the Star-Drinker has manifested, is utterly destroyed – Urstah the Star-Drinker is the conceptual embodiment of a black hole.

Once Urstah has manifested, every creature in this area takes 1d5 points of cold damage each round. Characters wearing **rings of the starherds** are immune to this damage, as is the Azure Dwarf. The Mormurg take half damage, rounded down. Any creature that takes the full 5 points of damage must make a DC 10 Will save or lose

its next action due to crushing despair. Once an action is lost, the save must be made each round to take an action, until the Star-Drinker is defeated.

Anything dropped automatically “falls” toward the Star-Drinker, as though it were the centre of gravity for this room. As a result of this, any missile attack in the room suffers a –5 penalty unless directed at Urstah (in which case, it has a +5 bonus). Strangely, this affects nothing already touching the ground, so that a falling creature simply falls. Any creature that jumps, though, also moved 1d5 x 5’ closer to the stone ring....possibly being carried within and obliterated.

Any creature struck by one of the Star-Drinker’s tendrils takes automatic damage each round. Further, he is pulled toward the stone circle at a rate of 5’ per round. The character can resist being moved with a DC 30 Strength check, and gains a +4 bonus to this check for every 5’ he is from the stone circle. The DC and bonus represent the effects of Urstah’s “gravity”, which is stronger the closer a creature gets to him. The tendril can be severed by any successful Mighty Deed, or by 5 hp damage, but the damage from an attack that severs a tendril does not subtract from Urstah’s actual hit points, and Urstah has a potentially infinite number of tendrils.

Three rounds after the Star-Drinker manifests, a shadowy umbilicus of smoky darkness extends from Urstah to any dead creature in the room. The next round, they rise as un-dead. These un-dead are connected to Urstah by lesser umbilici, which can be severed by a single attack doing 5 hp against AC 15, or by a Mighty Deed. An un-dead creature powered by Urstah in this manner gains one more round of animation, and then crumbles into a fine dust. Severing an umbilicus in this manner causes the Star-Drinker 5 hp damage. The un-dead creatures regenerate 1 hp each round so long as the umbilicus remains attached. Dead Mormurg are animated as servants of darkness, while characters are animated as stellar ghouls (see below). Urstah can animate any creature that dies in this chamber in the same manner, taking three rounds to generate an umbilicus, and 1 round to animate the creature. However, each creature can only be animated once.

A PC reduced to 0 hit points can effectively be “rolled over” by Urstah’s questing umbilicus, and must make a Luck check to either be dead (and animated as un-dead) or living (and brought back to 1 hp by fighting

off Urstah's umbilicus, with all of the normal effects as outlined on page 93 of the *core rulebook*).

Servants of darkness appear exactly as the Mormurg, but their movements are jerky, like those of a marionette. They do 1d5 points of cold damage, in addition to their normal damage, with every successful attack.

The skin of stellar ghouls turns pitch black, and their eyes become shining sparks like distant stars. A stellar ghoul attacks by biting, and each successful attack causes its victim to be partially transformed into star-stuff. This causes the character to glow softly with a colour chosen by the judge, emitting a light equal to candlelight. In addition, the character takes 1d3 points of temporary Strength damage per bite (no save). If the character's Strength reaches 0, he is rendered incorporeal until his Strength damage is healed. An incorporeal character within the vicinity of the Star-Drinker is automatically drawn toward it at a rate of 10 feet per round, with no save, and is destroyed if he enters the stone ring. This temporary Strength damage heals at a rate of 1 point per 10 minutes.

**Mormurg (12):** Init +1; Atk bronze-tipped spear +5 melee or ranged (1d8+3) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+3; hp 19, 12, 17, 16, 16, 13, 9, 17, 12, 11, 23, 21; MV 30' or fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, limited flight, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C.

**Bellwart, the Azure Dwarf:** Init +2; Atk iron lance +3 melee (1d12+2); AC 12; HD 4d6+4; hp 19; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 30', immunity to cold, regeneration, spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +5; AL C.

Spells (cast with +4 bonus to spell checks): magic missile (p. 144-5), magic shield (p. 146), ray of enfeeblement (p. 190).

**Bellwart's "steed":** Init +0; Atk claw +5 melee (1d5) or bite +3 melee (1d7); AC 15; HD 5d8+5; hp 37; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', half damage from bludgeoning weapons, half damage from cold, iron vulnerability, light vulnerability, squeeze in tight spaces; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will -4; AL C.

**Urstah, the Star Drinker:** Init -4; Atk tendril +3 melee (1d3 plus 1d5 cold); AC 18; HD 10d10; hp 40; MV 0; Act 3d20; SP blindsight 200', cold and despair, reach, automatic damage, pull, gravity effects, obliteration, dark umbilici, create un-dead; SV Fort +12, Ref -10, Will +20; AL C.

**Servant of darkness:** Init -2; Atk claw +5 melee (1d4 plus 1d5 cold); AC 16; HD 3d12; hp 18 each; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP sense living 60', cold, half damage from bludgeoning weapons, immunity to cold, iron vulnerability; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +0; AL C.

**Stellar ghoul:** Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d3 plus 1d3 temporary Strength damage); AC 18; HD 1d12; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, star-stuff transformation; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

## Aftermath

*As your last attack is driven home, the darkness that is the Star-Drinker simply disappears, evaporating in less time than it takes to blink. A light blazes forth from the stone circle, momentarily blinding you with visions of stars swirling in a vast cosmic dance too great for your minds to hold. Then the vision disappears, as though a far distant portal were closed, and the entire cavern begins to shake. Enormous roots of the Cosmic Tree, five, ten, or even 15 feet wide, thrust down into the cavern, bringing all to ruin. There is no way to escape the cataclysmic collapse. Within seconds, you are buried alive.*

*But all is not lost. Bones are not crushed. The rocks pile around you, causing you no harm, as though you were protected by the hands of your gods or patrons. At last, all is silent.*

*Pushing up through the loose rock and soil, you find yourselves miraculously transported to a small hill not far from your home. Instead of the beanstalk-like Celestial Tree that once loomed over the hill, there is a small sapling.*

*As you rise, you discover a tiny creature lying beneath you. It is dark purple-black, and looks something like a cross between a spider and an octopus with thousands of fungi-like tentacles. As you crush it beneath your boot heel, you know for certain that Urstah the Star-Drinker is no more.*

Any star that was captured but not released is restored.

Players with related birth augurs regain the lost 2 points of Luck, and their birth augurs are once more in effect, but they gain no other special benefits. Any Praexi being run as a PC remains with the other PCs; the others return to Praxius.

Finally, the next time any PC involved in this adventure is reduced to 0 hp, he is bathed in a soft, star-like glow. Such a character, if recovered in time, is always alive, and if recovered or healed does not lose any ability points as a result. This special “thank you” from the stars only occurs once per each character, however. Once it is used, the normal death and dying rules are back in force.

The judge should also remember that Bellwart is *not* dead – given time and opportunity, he will find other allies and return to plague the PCs. Revenge against those who defeated him will be as important to him as the subjugation of his Family House and his home world.

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