

The Gongfarmer's Almanac



The 2020 Gongfarmer's Almanac:

A Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG Zine

Written, Illustrated, Edited and Produced by
the DCC RPG Communities



Dark Trails - Yee-haw! #2

VOLUME 12 OF SIXTEEN BOOKLETS

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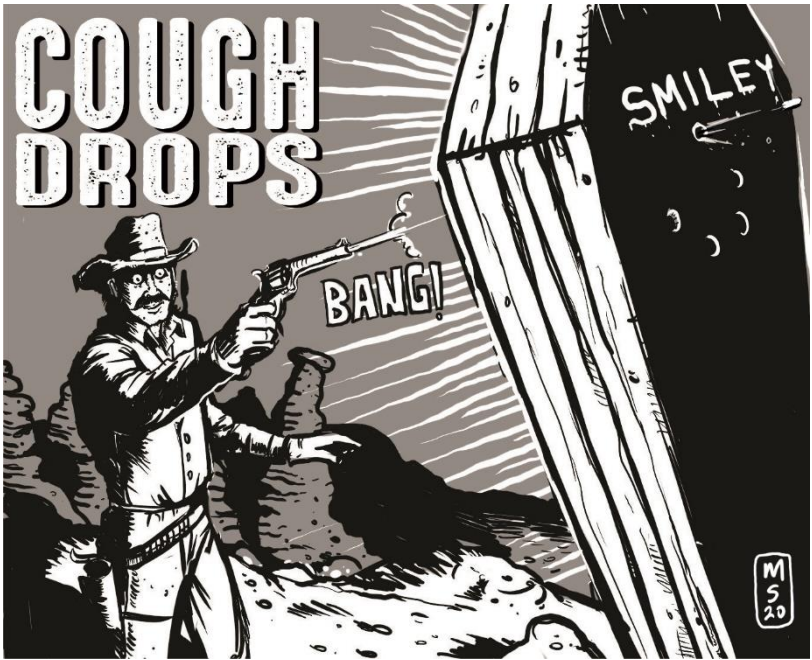
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**A Dark Trails Tale Told in the Charming Local
Dialect Spoken by the Worthy Citizens of the
Incorporated Town of Cripple Creek**

**By Stan Reed
Illustrated by Matt Sutton**

I was in town with Aunt Jess and she had to go into the shoe store so she gave me a stick of candy from Lantern's General Store and put me in front of Mr. Gordon St. John Hartzel Lemione's Medicine Show and Spiritual Revival Assembly and told me not to go nowheres until she got back. I know'd from experience that Aunt Jess can't get in and out of a shoe store quick, so I ate on my candy real slow while I watched the show. There sure are a lot of ailments out there and Mr. Gordon St. John Hartzel Lemione musta known them all. It is a scary world out there and I hope I don't get ill by any of them, but Mr. Gordon, he had a cure for 'bout all of them.

Ain't that good luck? He had elixirs, balms, poultices and even something brand new called "cough drops." It was truly amazing.

While the show was in the middle, Miss Donna - I mean Sheriff Taggart came in a-lookin' around but I guess she was satisfied, 'cause she turned to leave without sayin' anything.

Hi Sheriff Taggart I says and she says in that quiet voice of hers behind her tired lookin' eyes Howdy Weed, have you seen Smiley anywhereabouts today?

No ma'am I says. Well if you do will you tell him I'm a-lookin' for him? Yes ma'am I says.

The Spiritual Revival part came and went and still Aunt Jess had not come back for me so I went a-lookin' for her. On the way to Mr. LaSolier's shoe store I passed by the Mustang Saloon and there was not a lot of folks inside 'cause it was still day but there was some folks a-sittin' on the porch a-talkin' and one of them was boss Dooley, who was the man who Smiley rode fer.

Hello Mr. Dooley I says and he says Howdy Weed, what brings you out to town this day?

I says Aunt Jess is lookin' at shoes. Do you know where Smiley is? Miss Donna - I mean Sheriff Taggart is lookin' for him.

Mr. Dooley gets this big sad look on his face and says I am afraid I have news about Smiley that you may not want to hear.

Oh no, says I, what is it?

Well, he says, Smiley and I were out ridin' t'other day lookin' for some strays that run off from that herd of pintos we'd brought down from Miner's Canyon. Them stray ponies they run far and fast and we was not catchin' up with them at all but

Smiley had no trouble followin' them and once in a while he could see 'em cause, you know, that Smiley, he got good eyes. Late in the day it was ev'dent a storm was comin' and I asked Smiley what he thought we should do and he said that if it rained we would lose track of them pintos so he wanted to press on. Never was a man that cared so much about ponies as Smiley, I will say that.

Anyhow, it was just dark and we was near ol' Emerald, you know, thet ghost town where ever one upped and lit out one night and no one ever know'd what happened to them when them rain drops started fallin'.

At first I wanted to head back home. I rode in the rain before and it ain't so bad if you kin get warm at the end of the ride, but Smiley, he told me it warn't water in those raindrops but somethin' else. How he kin see such things I'll never know, but that boy got the best darn eyes I ever did see, 'cept maybe Joe Taggart.

So, he wanted to git out of the rain but I was not too pleased to be goin' into Emerald - who knows what ghosts was thereabout? Anyhow, Smiley was real nervous about thet rain so we rode and there was a place right on the edge of town called Hotel Calibogus. It was run down and abandoned for ten years or more, so we went on in and pulled our horses in after us just as thet rain really started a-comin'.

We put them horses in the saloon and we set our sleepin' rolls in the lobby. Once we broke up some old furniture and got a fire goin' in the fireplace it were not too bad. We ate a little bit and went on to sleep, Smiley worryin' that he might not pick up the trail of them pintos the next mornin'.

I'd been sleepin' right good when I felt somethin' pokin' me and heard Smiley whisperin' for me to git up. The rain had stopped and I was askin' him why the tarnation he was a-wakin' me up when he says shh thar is somethin' upstairs in this hotel. Thet woke me up sure enough. Ever since we had thet trouble with them crawlin' things in the dark that one time, I am allus nervous about noises in the night thet I don't know what they are.

Smiley got out his pistol and started sneakin' up the steps, and I come right after him, takin' a candle I found on the desk of the lobby and lightin' it from the embers in the fire.

Thet new Smith & Wesson? says Mr. Greene.
No his old one, thet Colt Patterson says Mr. Dooley. Anyhow, we is creepin' up along the hallway upstairs and we ain't findin' anythin' and about the time we is thinkin' we will go downstairs and git back to sleep, we hears somethin' agin'.

We is followin' the noise, and figger it is comin from higher up, so's we look around and find a way into the attic. Smiley is nervous and to tell the truth, so am I, but we cain't stay there all night if'n we don't know what is sneakin' around thet ol' hotel, so's we gots to find out. Might be a haint or who knows what.

A haint? says Mr. Roberts What's a haint?

You know says boss Dooley, a haint. A ghost.

Oh, a haint says Mr. Roberts.

Kin I finish tellin' my story please? says boss Dooley.

Anyways, we git up into that attic, and it is dark and thet candle ain't puttin' out too much light.

We's lookin' around up there the best we could without no luck and about to say whatever it was ain't there no more when sudden-like Smiley says look over there!

There was something a-glowin' back behind some boxes and such, and Smiley, wound tighter'n a banker's purse strings, crept on up. I don't mind sayin' I wanted nothin' to do with it but I didn't want to be left alone, either, so crept on up behind him.

We come around that last box and there it was, I ain't never seen the like. It was a pine coffin leanin' agin' a wall, and it was glowin' like a sickly moonlight, only green. I said time to git and Smiley took a step up and said look there is somebody's name on it. Smiley has always been a curious type but he never learned to read, so I had to step close enough to see what it said.



My gosh! Says I, Smiley that is yore name on thet coffin!
At just thet minnit the coffin shifted and the lid swung open.
Mr Dooley I says, you is scarin' me and I wanted to run but my
feet would not move. What was in it?

Smiley and me backed up a step, but it were empty. Then the darnedest thing happened. Thet coffin started to float in the air, and it was a-movin toward Smiley. We lit out of there like jackrabbits. We run downstairs, grabbed our horses and rode out of town fast as we could. After a minnit or two, we reined up and turned to look, and thet glowin' coffin was floatin' along the street, comin' straight at us!

Let me tell you, we turned them ponies and headed for the hills like you ain't never seen, but durned if thet coffin warn't chasin' after us.

We rode all night, and our horses were gittin' tired and thet coffin was gittin' closer and closer. The sky in the east was just startin' to git less dark and we shot down one side of a ravine, racin' acrost it. Thet coffin come over the lip and started down after us. I just raced up t' other side when Smiley's hoss Blocker stumbled and fell, throwin' ol' Smiley. I heard it and turned to see. Now Smiley's been ridin' range for a while, so he did not land hard and jumped right up, but ol' Blocker got back to his feet and took off.

It was horrible, havin' to watch and bein' too far away to do anythin'.

Thet coffin came at Smiley, closer and closer! Smiley pulled out thet Colt Patterson and started shootin', bang! Bang! Bang! Six times, but bullets weren't goin' to hurt it. When he run out of bullets, Smiley threw thet gun at it and started runnin'.

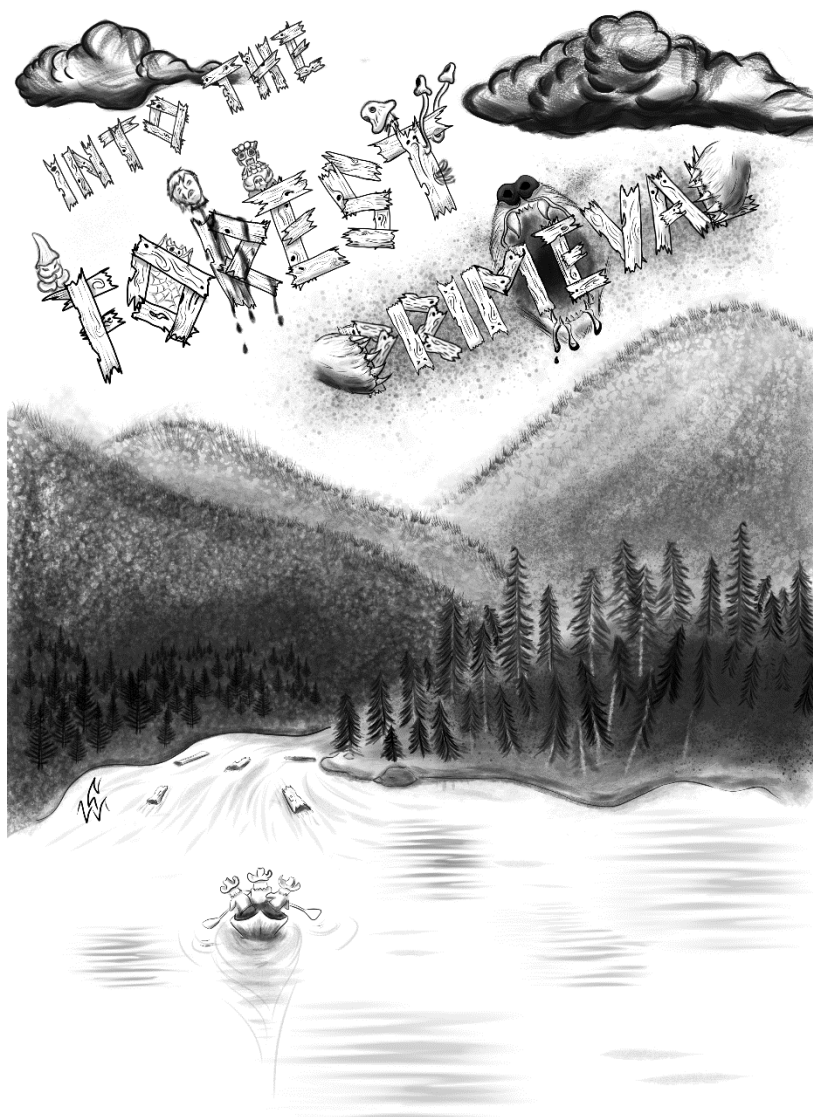
Pore ol' Smiley, he'd always been a good feller, but he could not outrun thet glowin' evil coffin. It got closer and closer, its lid open like some great big mouth that was goin' to swaller him whole. Smiley finally could not run anymore and he turned to face the thing.

Oh my gosh! Says I What happened?

Then, Smiley reached in his pocket and pulled out one a them
Mr. Gordon St. John Hartzel Lemione's Medicine Show cough
drops and the evil thing stopped dead in its tracks.

Why? I says, Why did they make it stop chasin' Smiley?

"Well, Weed, ever' one knows thet cough drops will stop yore
coffin'.



BY KEITH NELSON

A 1st-level Adventure for *Dark Trails RPG*

Illustrations by Lucas Haley & Clayton Williams
Cartography by Lucas Haley

The characters have been induced to investigate a logging camp where all of the loggers have disappeared. The time is 1866-1867. The camp is in the Midwest, off the Great Lakes, where timber is cut in the winter and rafts of logs are floated downstream in the spring to be collected in rafts and delivered to mills. This is the story of the fate of one such logging camp, under the shadow of the dark pine forests of the Great North Woods.

Characters may begin as a posse contracted by the camp owner to investigate reports of the camp missing transfers of supplies by the supply boat in the past week, or as lawmen, or as investigators from an adjacent logging camp. The purpose of the adventure is to find out what happened and investigate the loggers' disappearance. Does this mean there has been a timber war with another logging firm, did they get carried off by marauding First Nations hunters, did pirates (a feature of the Great Lakes) raid the camp for supplies, did disease carry them all away, or is there something more sinister at the heart of it?

The adventure takes place in a small area (perhaps a 20-30 mile radius) as a point-crawl, with random encounters. Including random encounters will slow the adventure significantly, perhaps necessitating several sessions to complete, but add an element of interest and flesh out the feel of the woods. The players may arrive to the adventure in multiple ways, although from the water by supply boat (then let off at the mouth of the river to go the 5-6 hours upstream by either trail or small boat) or from the trail from the adjacent logging camp (2 days journey) are most likely.

There is the potential for not one, but two, patrons within this adventure. I would encourage judges to consider allowing any character class to bond with these particular patrons, perhaps as with Lankhmar patrons.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS (1D20)

If travelling, roll 1d6 each day of travel; if a 1-2 is rolled, then there's an encounter. If standing watches at night, have each character roll a Luck check; roll an encounter for the first to fail (all others have no encounter).

- 1) Small teacup wolverine fury – Small pack of teacup wolverines (1-2 pound versions of wolverines) are squabbling over a moose carcass. Spotted at 100' distance if the unluckiest character makes a successful Luck check. On a failed Luck check, they are spotted at a 30' distance. The pack is small enough that it will dissolve into 4 individual animals if it takes 20 damage or more.

Teacup Wolverine (Fury): Init +3; Atk swarm +6 melee (3d4); AC 12; HD 6d8; hp 40; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; Path WTL.

Teacup Wolverine (Individual): Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3); AC 13; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; Path WTL.

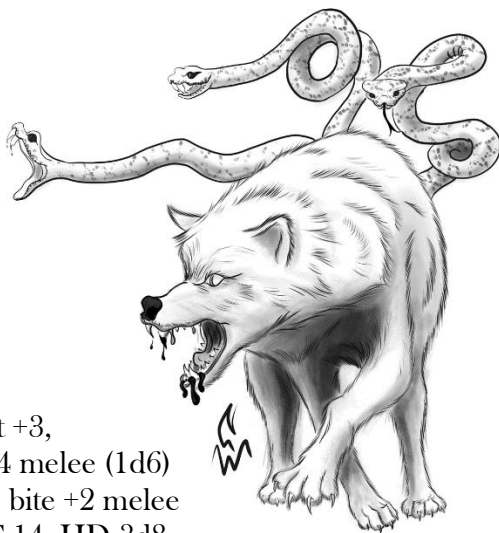
- 2) Splinter cat (there should be a ridge or hill nearby). This thick, muscular cousin to the mountain lion has a flattened head with a hard, bony forehead ridge. Found in wooded and mountainous areas, it is an ambush predator, but one that operates at a distance, preferring to attack prey on lower slopes. It moves in straight lines at extremely high speed, crashing into prey or into nearby trees, exploding them in clouds of flying deadly splinters. It takes no damage from this due to the immense hardness of its head and the durability and resistance of its iron-like pelt. The pelt is a shimmering greyish red in color, with short, thick hairs covering it.

The hairs are rock hard and the underlying pelt remarkably impervious to penetration, rapidly dulling or even turning aside even the sharpest blade. A coat made from splinter cat pelt, while not as effective as when on the cat itself, will serve the wearer as a form of armor (AC +2, -2 dmg from sharp weapons).



Splinter Cat: Init +6; Atk headbutt charge +8 melee (1d12 on charge + prone) or bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 5d8; hp 28; MV 80'; Act 1d20; SP knock opponent prone on successful headbutt charge attack. DC 12 Ref save within 15' radius to avoid splinters (1d8) if hits tree instead of target (50% chance); resistant to bullets and blades (-5 damage); SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +0; Path WTL.

- 3) Wolf pack (n=2d6) led by rattle-wolf. If the rattle-wolf is killed, the others will flee.



Rattle-wolf: Init +3,
Atk wolf bite +4 melee (1d6)
and rattlesnake bite +2 melee
(1+poison); AC 14, HD 3d8,
hp 15; MV 40'; Act 1d20 wolf bite & 2d14 rattlesnake
bites; SP rattlesnake poison (DC 15 Fort save or take
additional 1d2 hp of damage each round for 1d4 rounds);
SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Path WTL.

Wolf (See *DCC RPG core book*, p. 431. Path WTL)

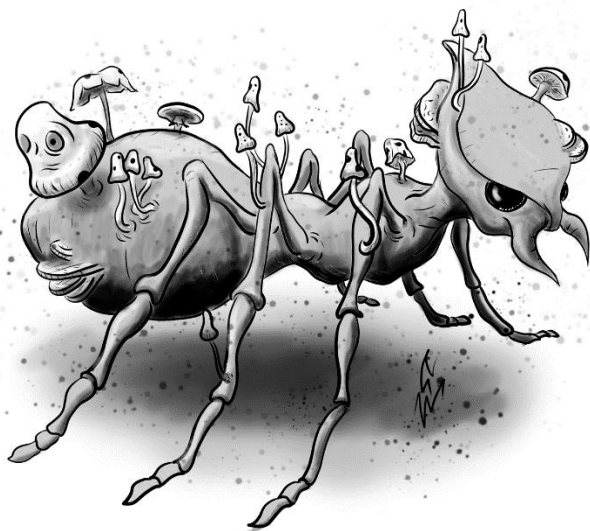
- 4) Flayed zombies – A small pack (1d3+1) of swift moving humanoid figures comes towards the party, leaving behind the humped carcass of an animal on the ground. These human shaped creations of the necromancer Itzli are fleet-footed figures of perpetually raw meat, with the skin missing across their whole bodies. The underlying flesh is hard and dense, pulled tight across the bones. The chest cavity has a gaping hole where their hearts have been wrenched out during the ritual that created them. They move in stuttering spurts of motion and many have their mouths sewn shut with long thorns. Those without mouths sewn shut have them open in a gaping infrasonic scream that blights anything in front of them.

Flayed Zombies: Init +4; Atk claws +2 melee (1d4) and rib spears +1 missile fire (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP if mouth is open, all within 50' in front of it take 1d6 hp damage each round and are stunned, falling to the bottom of the initiative count and suffering -4 to all rolls for remainder of battle(DC 14 Fort save for half damage, ignoring stunned and only suffering -2 to all rolls while within range); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Path POD +2. *(1 in 4 chance each round of combat that one zombie will have their mouths tear open and their scream attack can activate)*



- 5) **Sporant foraging party.** Sporants are giant ants infected by the giant fungus (*Armillamycetes*) that inhabits the swamps. Foraging party will have 2-8 foragers and 1-3 warrior class ants. The forager sporants are approximately sheep or goat-sized, with the warrior sporants closer to the size of a horse.

Forager Sporant: Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 10; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP sprays spores from fungi growing from its body.. Those within a 5' radius suffer -2 to all rolls and must make a DC 12 Will save to avoid being linked to *Armillamycetes* (suffer permanent -2 on Will and Fort saves vs. *Armillamycetes*' spores; can be cured by *neutralize poison or disease*; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; Path WTL.



Warrior Sporant: Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8) and sting +2 melee (1d3+poison); AC 15; HD 4d8; hp 26; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP DC 10 Fort save or paralyzed by sting for 1d6 rounds; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; Path WTL.

- 6) **Dunhavenhooter** – This encounter occurs only when by a swamp. This low slung crocodile-like creature has a long, muscular tail and almost no head to speak of, featuring a single, wide nostril/mouth and small vestigial eyes. Its hide blends into the background as it lurks in ambush along trails and water edges near marshes and swamps, waiting for unsuspecting prey to wander within reach. It has a low cunning and acute senses that let it pick out with some accuracy the last in a line of passing prey, upon which it will unleash its large and muscular tail to batter into unconsciousness with a single heavy blow. Prey is then dragged back to its semi-aquatic lair before being battered into a fine molecular gas, which it inhales through the wide nostril. The lair features a fine cemented floor formed of the crushed bones of prey, along with various separated items of metal, which it turns into strange mosaics across the flooring.

Dunhavenhooter: Init +2; Atk tail bash +4 melee (1d6+knockout); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 16; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP +8 to hide. DC 14 Fort check to avoid being knocked out for 2d4x10 minutes by initial surprise attack; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; Path WTL.

- 7) **Fungal infected whitetails** – A small group of whitetail deer flee at your approach. A buck pauses and looks back at your group and you notice a tracery of white lines across his face. DC 15 Int check to notice a scattering of tiny mushrooms growing on his head, between the antlers. Armillamycetes (Area #8) is notified of the characters' presence and may send out foraging sporants to collect the party if it sees benefit.
- 8) **Pile of meat and bones from an animal** (judge's choice as to the species.) Heart and skin are missing. This is a victim of a skin stealer.

- 9) Signs of a giant bear (tracks, scratch marks 16-17 feet up in a tree, long tufts of fur stuck to 10' high branches, scat mounds the size of a bushel basket.)
- 10) Carpet Trapper - This flattened, sting-ray like animal is an ambush predator, lurking in wait on trails for passing animals to step on it and be engulfed and digested. Skin is chameleon-like (Opposed hide check with +10 modifier) and it exudes a glue-like substance that also digests trapped creatures as it wraps them up in its membranous body.

Carpet Trapper: Init +5; Atk engulf +4 melee (1d3 + special); AC 11; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP +10 to hide. Exuded glue immobilizes prey with DC 15 Str check to escape. Exuded digestive juices do additional 1d3 damage on the first round, increasing +1d each round target is immobilized; SV Fort +1, Ref -2, Will +1; Path WTL.

- 11) Deeply carved runes high on an old oak tree. DC 15 Int check from characters with an educated background or appropriate class to recognize these as Norse runes; it takes a DC 20 Int check to translate runes (ODIN TAKE THIS GIFT). Digging under the tree will reveal partial bones of several humans.
- 12) Grave cairn - This pile of rocks contains within it the remains of an ancient shaman. While the bones, body, and most grave goods are rotten, broken, and crumbling with age, a large hand-axe with a polished greenstone head remains pristine and whole. Painted symbols on the large rock slab covering the body show men with bows and spears, along with a man fighting with a green-glowing axe against a group of animals that stand on their hind legs and men with exaggerated beards wielding what are clearly swords, one of whom has a line of yellow-white coming from his hand. The axe does 1d8+1 damage, and does

double damage against shape-changers and skin-stealers. Each critical hit against a different foe causes a slow transformation into an animal by the wielder, akin to suffering patron taint (judge's discretion as to the animal traits obtained). The axe gives the wielder a minor geas; it wants to be wielded and the wielder cannot resist using it preferentially over other weapons when possible. A DC 15 Will save may be made after each critical hit transformation occurs to get rid of the geas once the transformation begins.

- 13) Small copse of black ash trees surrounding a low swampy hollow. A skeleton of a man in rusted mail armor (useless, falls apart upon retrieval) lies visible below the water. These trees have bark that is veined with white (mycelium from Armillamycetes, the Mycelial Master) and conveys information back to the master. The trees may drop spores on characters that linger (25% chance each round, increasing by 25% each round until a 100% drop is reached). If characters each fail a DC 10 Will save upon contact with the spores, the spores produce visions of Armillamycetes as a source of knowledge and power and rough directions to the swamp.
- 14) Abandoned and dilapidated small trapper's cabin. Walls have carved words in French warning of beasts that walk like men (*bêtes qui marchent comme des hommes*).

- 15) **Sacred cairn.** This stand of trees surrounds a small clearing that as the characters enter seems to welcome them...until they notice that there is no trail and they can't reach the surrounding woods to exit. There is a small cairn of carefully placed stones in the middle of the clearing. Pouring blood or whiskey on the cairn will open a route out of the clearing and grant a **Boon** to the character(s) doing so. However, any attack on or attempt at destroying the cairn will summon a vengeful spirit, appearing as a small metis man in a bright red cap, with antlers sprouting from his brow. The spirit will repeatedly attack the offending character(s) until it has wounded each at least once, increasing the ferocity and number of attacks each time it is wounded. If no defense or attacks are proffered, it will only cause 1 hit point of damage to each before letting the party leave (without any Boons).



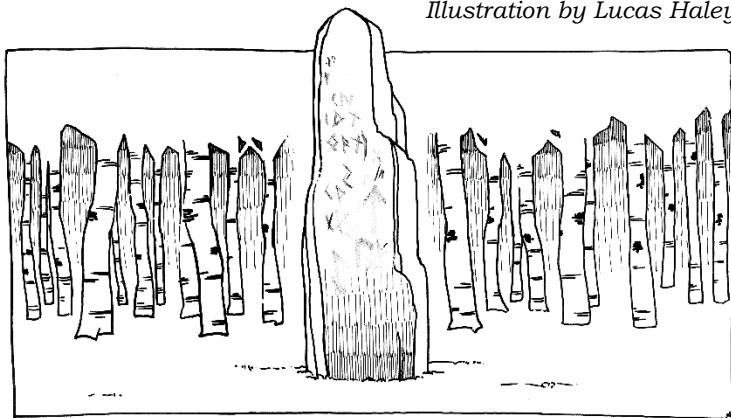
Metis Redcap: Init +6; Atk antlers +4 melee (1d4); AC 17; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 60'; Act 2d20; SP DC 12 Will save to avoid confusion for 1d4 rounds (-2 on all rolls); SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; Path WTL.

- 16) Trappers – two Metis men with large packs of furs, travelling to the lake and thence to trading post. They have tales of men that change into beasts and beasts that change into men, lightning that strikes the top of a hill out of a clear night sky (Bald Top), witches that fly through the night sky, dark places where lurk old gods, animals that have strange growths on their heads or necks and look at you with strange, almost human eyes. They claim this is an accursed land and seek only to leave it.
- 17) Pair of large black birds soar in the sky above. A successful DC 10 Ref save is required to avoid notice by them. They carry word of the group back to the Norse Bear Walker and will henceforth dog the party's steps, making any surprise on the bald knob (Area #6) difficult.
- 18) Skin stealers – These strange creatures seem as half human, half animal hybrids, flayed of every inch of skin, with dark, staring eyes. They seemingly exist only to attempt to replace their skin, catching and skinning a wide array of animals in an attempt to cover their raw, bloody bodies. The bodies of those caught and skinned are discarded, with the skin draped around the skin stealer. Thus, for a brief time, the stealer may change into and present themselves as the individual (or even animal) whose skin they wear, but it rapidly decays and turns loose and tattered on them, forcing them to hunt for another skin to cover themselves with. Skin changers may attack either with the sharpened bones of their fingers, which can paralyze prey with a potent venom or with the obsidian dagger they all seem to be able to call forth at will. Upon paralyzing a victim, they can cleanly skin them within a matter of minutes.

This pair of skin stealers are wearing tattered wolf-skins and running on all fours, though they prefer to stand when attacking. They will stalk the party at a distance and wait until they have become less watchful or are weakened before moving in to try and cut out one or two characters from the posse.

Skin Stealer: Init +2; Atk claw +1 melee (1 + venom) or obsidian dagger +3 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 15 Fort save or paralyzed for 2d4 minutes), able to easily mimic other creatures for 4d12 hours by donning the skin of a victim (DC 18 Int check to notice); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; Path POD +2.

Illustration by Lucas Haley



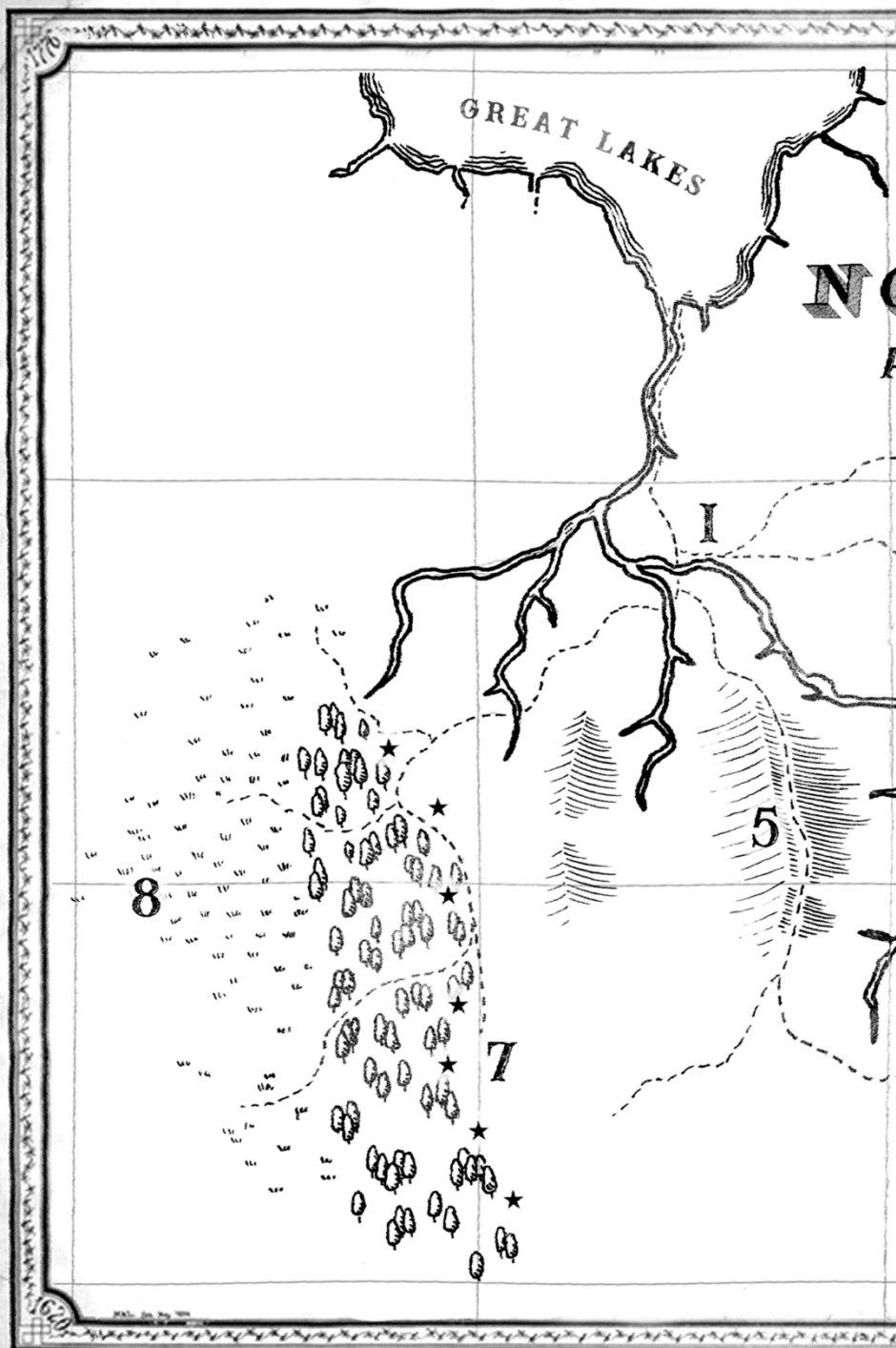
- 19) Norse Rune stone – This tan stone has deeply incised runes and images that are heavily weathered. If translated, the runes tell of an expedition by Harald the Spear and his Vikings in search of treasure and lands. It also tells of a fight between Harald and the bear-sark shaman Bjarni and the destruction of Harald by “foul magics”. This stone was placed to commemorate the fight and inter Harald. The images are of men fighting a giant bear and other men. The bear is surrounded by a glowing aura.

Under the stone is the burial mound of Harald. He is now a draugr, accompanied by 4 of his men that also fell in the fight, and will fight to protect his grave hoard (gold and silver worth \$500, or \$1000 to a museum out east). He wears rotted mail, but fights with an unruined and noticeably well-made spear. If Harald is fought in single combat or a calavera or sin-eater speaks with him, he may bargain for the destruction of Bjarni and then laying him and his men to rest, handing over his spear to the posse to allow Bjarni to be slain.

Harald (Draugr): Init +3; Atk Harald's spear +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 5d8; hp 32; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, takes half damage from non-magical weapons, must be burnt or will return and stalk the grave robbers; SV Fort +4 Ref +1, Will +5; Path POD +2; Harald's spear (+1 to hit/+2 damage, gives the bearer the power to leap up to 30' horizontally or 10' vertically, induces the wielder to attack divine representatives (including revelators) when wielded in anger, having been imbued with Harald's last thoughts (DC 10 Will save to resist)).

Viking Draugr: Init +1; Atk sword +2 melee (1d8); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; takes half damage from non-magical weapons; must be burnt or will return and stalk the grave robbers; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +4; Path POD +2.

- 20) The trees close in around the characters. They feel the baleful eye of an alien, inhuman presence focus on them. The pressure builds as the very air darkens around them. All members of the posse must make a DC 12 Will save or run blindly in fear for the next 1d4 minutes to escape the malevolent presence. Those passing the save feel the intense desire to exit the area as soon as possible and must make another Will save each successive round they stay in the approximately 100' diameter area.



1876

MAP OF
NORTH MICHIGAN
AND THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONS

2

TO JEPPSON

3

4

BEING A TRUE AND ACCURATE DESCRIPTION
OF THE WILDERNESS IN THE WISCONSIN TERRITORY

AS COMMISSIONED BY THE

NORTHWEST GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

1844

6

★CRUCIFIED SCREAMING ZOMBIES

1885

28/4

POINTS OF INTEREST

Pointcrawl essentials for this adventure: (1) every main point in the adventure should be approximately a solid 6-10 hour trek through first-growth northern forest and swamp; (2) glacial moraines are common features of the landscape, providing low ridges that need to be traversed; (3) the season is set to be early spring, with mud and cold, which also implies short days at this Northern latitude.

Area 1 - The Logging Camp: This cluster of 3 buildings and a corral with a shed for oxen is silent as the posse approaches. Nothing moves. Doors are open to the buildings and the gate to the corral swings wide.

- In the buildings (2 bunkhouses and a mess hall/cookhouse), food and drink are left out half-eaten on tables and there's the bitter stench of burnt coffee coming from a pot on the stove in the cookhouse. The fires are out.
- Some boots and coats still rest undisturbed in the bunkhouses.
- Logging crew of 20 men, a foreman, and a cook are gone.
- Tracking check: DC10 to identify both booted and bare footprints in the mud between the shacks; DC 15 to note direction (to the southerly trail).
- Runic scratches on doors of all buildings. Seen if examined, otherwise Luck check of lowest Luck character to notice.
- Area of trampled dark black mud in the corral is where a maddened ox trampled one of the flayed zombies. Bone shards deep in the mud are human (DC 12 Int check; +2 for appropriate background).

- In the curtained off bunk space of the foreman, characters will find a ledger detailing timber amounts, containing a poorly scrawled map (Player Handout #1).

Area 2 - Trapper's Cabin: About a half-mile off a small track is a rudimentary clearing with a dilapidated cabin in it. The trees around the cabin are festooned with stretched and drying animal skins and there are bones and rotted carcasses scattered through the woods around it (of note for judges is that bear paws look similar to human hands when skeletonized...). Those entering the clearing are greeted by a quavering voice telling them to "Hold it right there, durn ye!"

- The trapper is one of a pair that set up in these woods over the winter. His partner disappeared 2 weeks ago (taken by the skin stealers and currently hanging from a tree at the edge of the blighted area) and he's been stalked by strange humanoid figures ever since. He's going on 3 days with no sleep and, unless handled very carefully, is likely to start shooting.

Trapper: Init +2; Atk rifle +1 missile fire (1d14); AC 11 (19 when hidden in cabin); HD 2d8; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -2; Path WTL.

- He's trapped the approaches to the cabin with 6 well-hidden bear traps. Luck check to avoid (those with Hexes will hit one), unless looking for traps directly (DC 12 Int check to identify). Traps do 1d6 damage and reduce initiative by -2 and movement rate by 5' for the next week.
- He is certainly likely to end up shot, but his impressions of strange men that hunt the woods, occasionally running on all fours like wolves or cougars, have been jotted in a small notebook, along with his running tally of furs.

- If the posse refrains from shooting him and gains his trust, he can let them know about not just the skin stealers, but also about a giant bear that stalks the woods. He knows nothing about the disappearances at the lumber camp. He can tell you that his partner was missing 3 fingers on his right hand and will offer you a small bale of ermine skins (worth \$100) for word of him. The missing three fingers will be recognizable on the first of the tree-hanging flayed zombies.

Area 3 - Jeppeson Farmstead: This small valley contains a cluster of three houses, with several large barns, a white-painted chapel, and smaller outbuildings. The fields are currently unplowed, but with the coming of spring, planting will soon begin, and winter crops are coming up now.

- If the posse approaches openly, several men (3 in the 40-50 year old range, and several others in their late teens to early twenties) come out on the porch of the largest, most central house, while women shoo kids into the other houses. They are welcoming, but have rifles or shotguns close at hand.
- The older men are Nehemiah, Ezekiel, and Uriah Jeppesen, a set of brothers and a cousin. The younger men aren't introduced (feel free to assign biblical names) but are peripheral to any discussions. There are 3 older women who are introduced as Mrs. Jeppesen and clearly are each separately linked to one of the men.
- Nehemiah is the patriarch and spiritual leader of this small group of settlers. Following the Seven Days of Night, he had a vision of the coming apocalypse and took his family and followers into the wilderness to form a new society. He espouses a conflation of taming the wilderness for the greater glory of God and reveling in God's creations here away from the sin and debauchery of the

soon to be destroyed civilized world. Oh, and polygamy, though this is not spoken of directly.

- They will have some news of strange animals (the rattle-wolf, splinter cats, and the like), but claim that God protects them and their flocks. Apparently some rituals brought over from the old country are part of that, but they are unclear on the details, as those are done by Nehemiah and one of the younger women (Sarah), and Nehemiah brushes it off as “doing God’s work”.
- If treated with any common courtesies, they will offer the posse dinner and a place to sleep. Dinner will be accompanied by a long grace and only the older men (referred to as either Mr. Jeppesen or, rarely, as Elder by the younger men and women), the 3 Mrs. Jeppesens, and a handful of the younger men will be in attendance. Several younger women will serve (Rebecca, Sarah, Esther, etc.) the meal. Rebecca will try to catch the eye of one of the male members of the posse. These are the younger wives of the three older men.
- Two of the younger wives (Rebecca and Sarah) are being oppressed by the older wife (Mrs. Nehemiah Jeppesen), under the pretext that they are barren. In desperation, they have turned to an older power they found on the ridge above the farm, but have balked at providing the final human sacrifice they think they need, until now, when a band of strangers has arrived as if from providence’s hand.

Rebecca will contrive to catch one party member's interest, then cast a small charm of silence and sleep upon the party prior to luring out that character. Her gaze and touch are hypnotic, producing a compulsion to obey her suggestions (DC 18 Will save to ignore). The character will be led outside through the light snow to join Sarah, who is waiting for them. Then they will travel across the field and up a small hidden path to the site on the ridge (Area #4).

The remaining characters should roll a Luck check to notice the one character is gone. It will be at least 10-15 minutes from the time the first character was lured out. Making their way out of the house is easy, as the charm still protects their movement.

The bare footprints of the women and those of the character can be tracked easily across the fields and up the ancient path to the ridge.

- Note that the women are acting alone in this, but the judge should feel free to make the posse feel as though the whole Jeppesen clan could be against them.

Area 4 - Norse Standing Stone in Clearing: An almost perfectly round 60' clearing surrounded by tall ash trees carved with Norse runes (some recent, some decades or more old), with a single oak tree at one point of the circle. In the center of the clearing, surrounded by bare earth, is a Viking standing stone carved with runes and a central image of a ship laden with men and a giant bear. A carved image of a one-eyed man surrounded by stylized ravens (Odin) is at the peak of the 7' tall dark grey stone.

The two women are here with the one abducted character. The character is being led to or is leaning against the rune stone. Rebecca is standing 10' back from the stone, reading out loud from a large leather bound book. Sarah is standing by the character at the stone, one hand on their shoulder, the other by her side. They both wear simple white dresses similar to nightshirts and are barefoot, despite the cold. She encourages the captive character to relax using *hypnotism*.



Illustration by Lucas Haley

Rebecca: Init +2; Atk punch +3 melee (1d2) or spell; AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 20; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+3 spell check): *call Odin's ravens*, *hypnotism* (DC 18 Will save to resist), *call lightning* (2d6 hp dmg, DC 12 Ref save for half), *blood shield* (AC +4, reduce all damage by 5, lasts for 1d4+3 rounds); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3; Path POD +1.

Sarah: Init +2; Atk knife +3 melee (1d4+1) or spell; AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV 30';

Act 1d20; SP spells (+3 spell check): *call Odin's ravens*, *hypnotism* (DC 18 Will save to resist), *blood shield* (AC+4, reduce all damage by 5, lasts for 1d4+3 rounds); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; Path POD +1.

- The ritual they are performing will commence with the character against the stone being bound to it by bonds of red light (DC 15 Str check to escape if the character passes the Will save). Rebecca chants a series of phrases that commingle Latin, Norse, and English. The characters can hear short snippets "Blood of the lamb....," "the burnt incense rises....," etc.

- If the ritual isn't interrupted, Sarah will produce a small obsidian knife from her robes and begin cutting a series of runes into the bare chest of the bound character at the stone. This causes 1 hp of damage each round. On the third round after the ritual begins, the knife will be plunged into the character's chest (2d6 damage) and their heart excised (instant death) as the ritual reaches its conclusion. Spilling of the blood on the stone results in a flare of red light from the stone that stuns everyone within 100' for 2d4 rounds (Will save to resist) and magically summons Bjarni the Norse bearwalker shaman (Area #6), along with 2 of Odin's ravens in 2 rounds. They know the party is there. Let it play out from that point on...
- Interruption of the ceremony results in Rebecca changing her chant to summon Odin's ravens and Sarah using the blood of the character to create a *blood shield* around her and the rock. The character at the rock can now freely struggle to escape (DC 15 Str check). Other characters touching the rock are now bound to it as well. All characters touching the rock lose 1 hp each round as blood is drawn out of their body and into the rock.

Odin's ravens: This spell calls forth 2d4 giant black ravens made of smoke and ash that can attack or protect the caster.

Odin's Raven: Init +4; Atk claws +3 melee (1d3) and beak +3 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 60'; Act 2d20; SP half damage from non-magical weapons (magic effects from character classes count as magical weapon damage), can block attacks against others as an action (provides one target +3 AC and the same reduction in any damage for the round); SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +4; Path WTL.

- If Sarah and Rebecca are killed (as Sarah dies, she weakly says “Sister?” As Rebecca dies, she screams “Odin avenge us!”), their blood drains into the runestone as well, and it glows a blackish-red. Clouds gather overhead.
- Within 1d6 rounds after the two women are defeated, a lightning bolt comes down from the clouds above, meets a column of red light coming up from the runestone and explodes in a burst across the clearing. Those at the rock take 1d6 electric damage, those in the clearing take 1d4 electric damage, with damage increased by +1d for each person who bled out into the rock (DC 12 Ref save for half damage).
- The leather book is an old family bible, written in Latin, Norse, and English. There is a family tree in the front that stretches back several hundred years. Only adult men’s names and those of any children are listed, unless it is exposed to heat, when women’s names appear superimposed in the tree. There are no specific spells, it’s just a focus for rituals.
- In and around the clearing are signs of a giant bear, as fresh as 2-3 days ago. See Random Encounter #9. There is no scat found, however.

Area 5 - Prehistoric Sacred Grove: This stand of trees surrounds a small clearing that as the characters enter seems to welcome them into an area of sun and relative warmth...until they notice that there is no trail in front or behind them and they can't reach the surrounding woods to exit. Their boot laces become untied or even tied together, packs become undone and spill out their contents, and guns fall from holsters. A blurred skittering of brown spindly limbs can perhaps be seen at the periphery of their vision. Skirling, whistling, chittering laughter echoes from the trees, although the exact location is not discernable. Propitiating the spirits with offerings of food, whiskey, or blood are all possible routes out of the grove.

- a) Attacks on the wood sprites can be made if the character first passes a DC 15 Int check to see them prior to each attack roll. They will scatter if one is hurt, but then the trees and bushes will lash out at the characters leaving, for only blood (1 hit point of damage per trapped person) will open the way out of the grove.

Wood Sprites: Init +6; Atk +2 fists (1d2 + confusion); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 150'; Act 1d20; SP DC 12 Will save to avoid confusion for 1d4 rounds (-2 on all rolls); SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; Path WTL.

- b) If the spirits are propitiated, a trickster patron (GFA 2019, Volume 6, p. 11-15) will take notice and appear to the character who gave them the offering (whiskey is preferred over blood which is preferred over food). The patron will appear as a talking coyote and will drop a small beaded leather bag of bright yellow pollen in front of the chosen character, telling them to use it to call upon them. They then fade back into the woods, slowly turning into a 9' tall coyote headed man as they disappear. If the character "uses the pollen" in any way, the trickster patron grants them a Boon, or, if the character is an occultist, will consider it an invocation of their patronage and offer to create a patron bond.

Area 6 - Bald Top: A hill with a sparsely wooded top. At the peak is a slab of fossil coral (Petoskey stone) used as a sacrificial altar, with a runestone at the head and foot of it. A skeletal face surrounded by radiating lines is carved into the polished altar, which is stained with blood. On one side of the hill, easily found if the characters are scouting the area, is a cave with four chambers. An extremely well-hidden exit comes out of one of the chambers, exiting in a tangle of brambles (this is used by Bjarni). The cause of the blight and the missing loggers can be found here.

- a) The cave complex has an entrance into a common fireplace area. The fire is out, but there are ashes in the pit. The walls of this complex are generally compacted dirt and rock, with an earthen floor. The walls of smoothed natural rock are painted with pictographs and runes depicting humans fighting an array of animals that walk on two legs, led by a giant bear. These shade into more linear Norse runes and into Aztec depictions of blood-spattered skeletons, sacrifice, and Mictlantecuhtli (the god of the dead and the underworld). Three exits lead from this chamber.
 - 1. The first exit leads to a large abattoir-like room, with an earthen floor soaked with blood and a reeking pile of stripped bones in one corner. Two long tables are carved into one wall, and bear an array of stone and crude copper implements, as well as earthen jars and reed baskets full of dried viscera and flesh.

The other wall has a low shelf approximately 3' wide and 10' long, which serves as a resting spot for the flayed zombies created here. A 2' wide tunnel leads up at a steep angle out of the ceiling over the shelf, to a hole near one of the runestones on the hill. Two flayed zombies lurk in the tunnel and will attack if disturbed or will slip out and attack the posse from behind.

2. The second exit leads to a squared off room paneled and floored in slabs of polished blackish-green stone with entrapped fossils. This room has a pallet in one corner, an altar of greenstone in the middle, and workbenches filled with embalming and preserving materials. A smoking fire pit contains the remnants of several burnt hearts. A large painted relief of Mictlantecuhтли is present on one wall.

A flayed zombie is curled up under the relief in the pose of the crouching idols from Area #7. 3d4 jade ornaments may be found here, worth \$30-50 each in the right hands.

3. The third exit leads to an earthen chamber with a pile of furs mounded to one side. There is a fire pit here as well, though it seems not to have been used recently. Skulls are inset into the walls, including human, horse, bear, wolf, and other, stranger (and quite possibly unnatural) animals. An ancient wooden chest is against the opposite wall and contains a well-preserved coat of mail, an axe, a sword, and silver and gold torcs and armbands (worth \$200 if sold immediately or up to \$500 if sold to a collector or museum back east). A crude leather map showing several landmarks around a drawing of a longship and with runes written at the bottom is also rolled up in the chest (this shows the place where Harald's longship and treasure was left...Bjarni has no interest in it at this time).

There is a crack deeper into this chamber that leads to the outside, exiting in a bramble bush.

- b) Other than the zombies noted in the first and second rooms, unless the posse is very stealthy, they will have been seen and the complex will be deserted. Everything is waiting at the top of the hill for their arrival....
- c) The top of the hill - The sky darkens and the wind picks up as the posse leaves the shelter of the trees. Lightning flashes from cloud to cloud. Flayed zombies (6 total, two packs of three members each) and the two skin-stealers range through the woods, pushing the posse uphill if necessary.
 - 1. Itzli is a skeletal, leathery figure wearing a ceremonial cape of bird feathers and a mask of human bones across his face and chest. A necklace of round, glistening objects (eyeballs) hangs around his neck. He laughs softly as he gestures the posse forward and invites them to leave one of their group for the gods, so that the rest may go free. He's lying, but wants to see if they would sacrifice one person willingly.
 - 2. Bjarni looms in the background, a giant of a man covered in blond hair under a bearskin cloak. If closely observed (DC 15 Int check), it can be seen that his arms are bear-like, with massive clawed paws instead of hands. The two skin stealers and 1d8 flayed zombies press in from the woods or circle around the altar, keeping their distance until fighting begins.
 - 3. If fighting starts, Itzli is protected from any damage from the first three physical attacks by a magic shield that surges up in front of him, emanating from a beaded amulet at his throat. He casts spells as his primary attack, with a long obsidian knife as his secondary choice. Bjarni shifts into bear form and attacks in melee. The skin stealers lurk about

the outskirts and attempt to pick off stragglers. The flayed zombies move to protect Itzli by attacking those attacking him.

4. Killing Itzli will destroy the flayed zombies and cause the skin stealers to flee. Bjarni will either fight until he “dies” or retreat if he sees it going poorly. If he “dies”, he will revive in the next several days and retreat into the wilderness to tend his wounds, vowing revenge on those who failed to provide him a true death.

d) Background:

1. Bjarni, the Norse bearwalker shaman, is a shambling giant of a man, hairy and scarred, with the arms, paws and chest of a bear (though he can transform fully into a cave bear form). He has lived in the northwoods for hundreds of years now, cursed to live as a half-human, half bear hybrid monstrosity after betraying his leader, Harald. He once travelled widely, but over the past hundred years or so, has curtailed his travels, avoiding the encroaching civilization. Before this, however, he found a dessicated corpse of a necromancer-lich claiming to be an ancient Aztec priest (Itzli) who promised him he could remove the curse. The past several decades have been spent in futile experiments working on this. As a result, more than one skin stealer and loup-garou has been released into the wilds of the north woods. Itzli has recently promised Bjarni that the power to be gained from Armillamycetes would be sufficient to break the curse, so they have devised a way to weaken the fungus and destroy it, hopefully harnessing its power as they do.

2. Itzli wants power enough to return to the southern lands and confront his enemies. Stealing Armillamycetes' power (through the small greenstone idols found in Area #7) will do that. He doesn't care about Bjarni, but is using him to amplify his power.
3. Bjarni wants to die. He won't, but he can be beaten until he retreats. If he can be convinced that Itzli might be lying to him, then he will lash out at all around in berserk fury for 1d4 rounds before retreating into the woods. If the group has found the greenstone axe (Random Encounter #12) or the spear of Harald (Random Encounter #19), those can be used to kill Bjarni permanently. The spear releases him to the beyond, but the axe destroys him completely.
4. Recently they raided the logging camp for bodies to transform into flayed zombies. These, along with the occasional trapper, or First Nations hunters, provided the bodies they used to create and expand Area #7.



Illustration by Lucas Haley

Bjarni, Cursed Norse Bearwalker Shaman of Odin: Init +6; Atk claws +6 melee (1d6+2) and bite +6 melee (1d8+2); AC 14; HD 6d8; hp 36; MV 40'; Act 3d20; SP transform between cave-bear and bear-man form. In bear-man form, only has claw attacks, can call on Odin's ravens (Area #4); SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3; Path POD +1.

Itzli, Aztec Necromancer-lich:

Init +4; Atk spells or obsidian dagger +2 melee (1d6+1); AC 12; HD 6d6; hp 30; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, takes half damage from physical attacks, amulet of defense (provides *magic shield* at spell result 24-27 for 1d6 rounds 3x/day), spells (+7 spell check): *drain life* (drain 1d6 points Strength from target up to 30' away and gain 1d6 hp as a result; Will save vs. spell check result to resist), *chill touch*, *Ekim's mystical mask*, *necrotic ray* (as *scorching ray*), *animate dead*, *darkness*; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Path POD +1d; obsidian dagger +1.

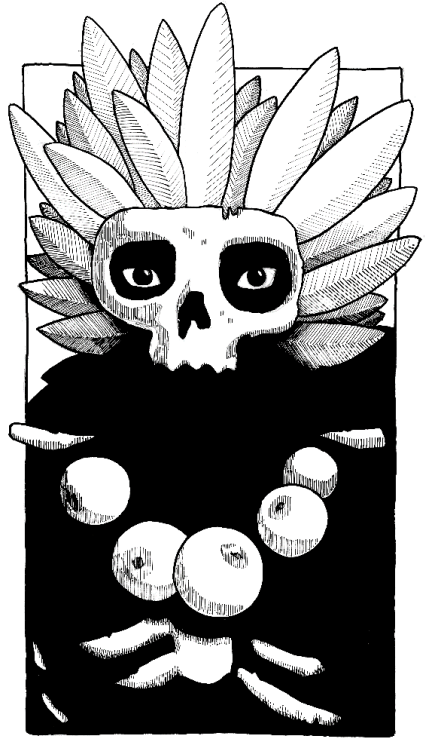


Illustration by Lucas Haley

Skin Stealer (2): Init +2; Atk claw +1 melee (1 + venom) or obsidian dagger +3 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 15 Fort save or paralyzed for 2d4 minutes), able to easily mimic other creatures for 4d12 hours by donning the skin of a victim (DC 18 Intelligence check to notice); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; Path POD +2.

Flayed Zombies (4d2): Init +4; Atk claws +2 melee (1d4) and rib spears +1 missile fire (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP if mouth is open, all within 50' in front of it take 1d6 damage each round and are stunned, falling to the bottom of the initiative count for remainder of battle (DC 14 Fort save to take half damage, ignoring stunned and only suffering at -2 to all rolls while within range); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Path POD +2. *(1 in 4 chance each round of combat that one zombie will have their mouths tear open and their scream attack can activate)*

Area 7 - Blighted Land: There is an elongated area of ashen, grey land with crumbling plants overlaying a sodden layer of dead grey soil. This area does not look clearly burned when examined up close. Scattered along the Eastern edge of this area are rare ancient oak trees with flayed zombies (once trappers or loggers) hanging from the lowest branches from skeins of their own intestines and tendons. They move slightly despite there being no breeze. The gaping mouths of the zombies emit an infrasonic scream that blights all in front of them. The zombies hanging here all have one eye torn out and signs of their lips having been sewn shut previously.

- Each character must make a Luck check in order to not walk in front of the first flayed zombie encountered (those with Hexes may incur penalties or outright fail at the judge's discretion). Those failing the Luck check will be struck by the infrasonic scream and feel their bones heating from within while their skin withers and flakes away.
- At the base of the tree is buried a small greenstone idol of a crouching man with a skull-head. Touching this does nothing, but removing it or breaking it alerts the necromancer-lich, Itzli, to a disturbance, which intensifies the zombie activity in this area and that around Area #6.

- Once Itzli is alerted to the presence of the characters, the flayed zombies will be more active and will twist and turn to try and zero in on the posse, even dropping to the ground on the second round of combat (scream attack can be made by a prone flayed zombie, but they always act last in initiative).

Flayed Zombies (4d2): Init +4; Atk claws +2 melee (1d4) and rib spears +1 missile fire (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP if mouth is open, all within 50' in front of it take 1d6 damage each round and are stunned, falling to the bottom of the initiative count for remainder of battle (DC 14 Fort save to take half damage, ignoring stunned and only suffering at -2 to all rolls while within range); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Path POD +2. *(1 in 4 chance each round of combat that one zombie will have their mouths tear open and their scream attack can activate)*

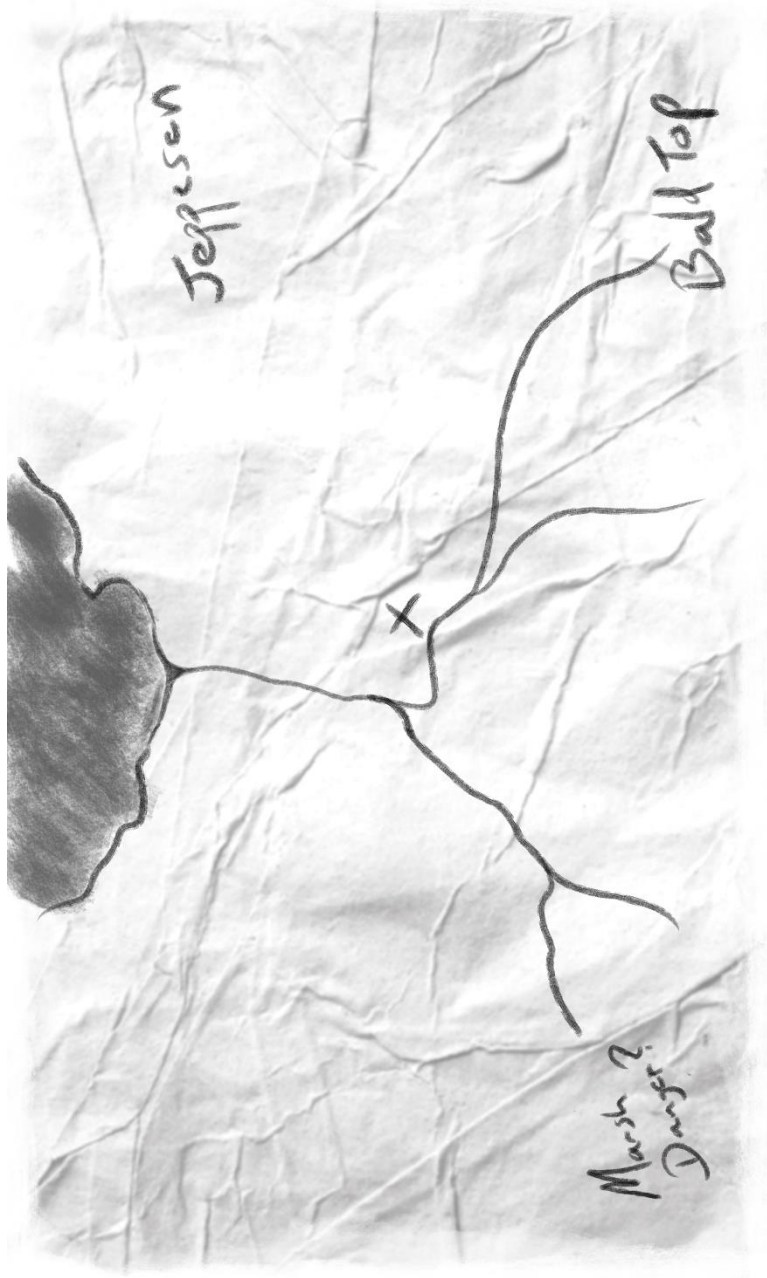
Area 8 - Conifer and Mixed Hardwood Swamp: This area is the domain of Armillamycetes, the Mycelial Master, an advanced fungal organism of great age and power. Animals in its sway spread throughout the area, with growths of fungi emerging from their heads or necks. Mushrooms of various sizes are everywhere, growing in size and number as the center of its domain is approached. It uses trees and plants as well for sentinels and can appear throughout its domain.

Armillamycetes wages slow war against the Norse shaman & necromancer-lich. This is a potential patron for occultist characters (See GFA 2020).

- e) The posse should encounter some of Armillamycetes' infected beasts within an hour or so of entering the swamp. There are several options listed on the random encounter tables, or judges can make their own options.

- f) The presence of abundant large mushrooms and overall fecundity of the swamp despite the early season should be noted.
- g) Armillamycetes will appear to the posse at some time before they leave its domain. The appearance will be as a benevolent and trusted type of person for each of the characters. It will attempt to induce characters to work with it against the necromancer-lich, offering them its assistance. Those accepting will be given a mycelial ball that will sink into their skin, tendrils racing up their arms before fading away. A DC 12 Will save may be made to resist the bonding with Armillamycetes. Those bonding with it receive a benefit, depending upon their class. Any occultists gain Armillamycetes as a patron and are marked with a small patch of mycelial growth hidden inconspicuously on their torso. Any other class which accepts the bonding gains a Boon, but does not receive any mark or other benefit.
- h) Occultists bonded to Armillamycetes may also receive a 1st-level patron spell upon eliminating the necromancer-lich and bearwalker shaman from Area #6, particularly if they then report that the area is dangerous and of little economic worth to the timber company.

PLAYER HANDOUT





ARMILLAMYCETES

*The Mycelial Master, a
Transdimensional Fungal Patron*

Written By Keith Nelson

Illustrated by Dennis Stanley

Armillamycetes is an underground, transdimensional fungal network. This ancient, millennia-old fungus has developed a consciousness and has long-term goals of slowly spreading the fungal domain across space and time into alternate dimensions.

It functions by spreading its mycelial threads throughout an environment, learning all it can from the infected network of plants and animals before slowly breaking down, absorbing, or transforming all life within the area. However, it generally operates on an almost glacial time-scale, usually content to slowly take over and transform the world into a fungal paradise. Individual dimensional aspects of this patron function almost autonomously and with different urgency, with some functioning as aggressive colonizers and others seemingly content to spread their influence more subtly and amass knowledge.

Adherents of this patron are infected with a small rhizome of specialized fungus that allows them to connect with the vast alien intelligence and utilize its power. In turn, it often requests/demands actions from them that hasten or hinder decay, depending on the benefit to itself or potential hindrance to its rivals. Sacrifices of compost may be commingled with blood or even sapient beings that it absorbs and uses for fungal-driven puppets.

Armillamycetes can manifest as an avatar, which appears as a mass of rhizomes and fungi rising out of the ground or infected living beings that coalesce into a version of the creature(s) to which it appears. It will often appear as a figure of religious significance or authority.

The powers of this patron revolve around decay and information transfer. Patron spells include one calling forth spores/rhizomes/mushroom men to attack an opponent, one promoting decay, and one allowing collection or transmission of information from the surrounding plants and fungi, albeit with the concomitant decay of the plants involved.

INVOKE PATRON CHECK RESULTS

- 12-13 Armillamycetes sends the caster a burst of information from another part of its network. The caster gains insight into a specific situation that will occur in the next 1d4 rounds and may reroll a single die result during this time.
- 14-17 Release the spores! Bursting out of the caster's skin, millions of microscopic spores form a yellowish cloud around them that affects all within a 10' radius (except the caster). Affected targets must succeed at a DC 14 Fort save or be incapacitated with asthmatic wheezing (movement is limited to a maximum of at 10' per round) and take 1d4 hp of damage each round they remain in the cloud. Once out of the spore cloud, recovery takes 1d3 rounds, during which these individuals are still incapacitated. Those making the save are at -2 to all rolls while in the cloud and for one round after leaving it. The spore cloud lasts for 1d6 rounds.
- 18-19 Protect the flesh. The skin of the caster erupts with tough-capped toadstools, shelf-fungi, and mushrooms, forming an armor coat that repels attacks and fire. The caster gains +4 to AC and takes half damage from fire attacks. The effect lasts 1d6+CL rounds.
- 20-23 Mycelial attraction. Shooting out of the earth up to 40' away in a 10' radius are thin white filaments that bind attackers to the ground (DC 15 Ref save to avoid being bound). At the end of the round, bound individuals take 1d3 hp of damage as the fungi begin to break down their flesh. Effect lasts 2d6+CL rounds. A DC 15 Strength check may be attempted to escape each round.

Targets must make an additional Ref save for each 10' of movement through the affected area in order to avoid being bound.

- 24-27 Escape into the embrace of the earth. The caster and 2d4 other adjacent creatures (both allies and foes may be affected) are enveloped in a dense mat of fungi that spring forth from the ground, enveloping them and pulling them into the suddenly soft soil (even if it was previously wood or stone). They are transported through the earth and then ejected 3d4 miles away. All but the caster are disoriented (-1d to all actions) for 1d3 rounds upon being ejected.
- 28-29 Decay feeds the earth. A pale yellow light shines out of the caster's eyes and mouth. Everything within 30' that they gaze upon must make a DC 15 Fort save or begin to deliquesce, taking 2d4 hp of damage each round and half that amount (rounded down) in temporary Stamina damage each round. Those saving take half damage and lose no Stamina. The effect lasts for 1d4+CL rounds.
- 30-31 2d4 mushroom men (shrooman stats from the *DCC RPG core book*, p. 426) burst forth to protect and serve the caster. They remain for 1d8+CL rounds.
- 32+ Call forth the rot. The ground beneath the caster's feet, the plants, the animals, the people that surround them, all burst forth with a riot of fungal growths, affecting all in a 20' radius around the caster, expanding 10' each round. Accelerated decay sets in as the fungi break down everything they touch. All within the area of effect take 1d6 hp of ongoing damage each round once afflicted (DC 12 Fort save for half damage). Three successful DC 12 Fort saves are necessary to reject the fungi and stop taking damage. The effects last for 2d6 rounds.

PATRON TAINT: ARMILLAMYCETES

When patron taint is indicated for Armillamycetes, roll 1d4 on the table below. When a caster has acquired all four taints at all levels of effect, there is no need to continue rolling any more.

- 1 A crop of mushrooms begin to grow in the moist folds of the caster's body. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster suffers a -1 permanent point of Agility loss. If this result is rolled a third time, the mushrooms may be plucked and shared with others to provide a nourishing meal (heals 1 hp of damage upon ingesting. Provides CL number of meals. Those eating the fungi are linked with and susceptible to Armillamycetes' suggestions).
- 2 A web of mycelium spreads across the skin of the caster's back and torso, like a thin tracery of white to yellowish tattoos. If this result is rolled a second time, the web spreads across the arms and hands of the caster. If this result is rolled a third time, the mycelium spreads across the face, resulting in a -1 permanent point of Personality loss.
- 3 The caster develops spore production, coming out of their facial and head hair, manifesting as abundant yellowish-white dander, resulting in a -1 permanent point of Personality loss. If this result is rolled a second time, this spreads around them in a faint cloud, resulting in -1 on melee attacks against the caster, but an additional -1 permanent point of Personality loss. If this result is rolled a third time, the caster can control the spore production, shooting them out once per encounter (1d16 Action Die, 20' range, -1d4 on all rolls for the target for 1d3 rounds).

- 4 The skin of the caster becomes pale white and slightly spongy. If this result is rolled a second time, it becomes permanently pallid, spongy, and porous, with the caster avoiding bright light (-1 to all rolls when in sunlight). If this result is rolled a third time, the skin and underlying flesh is fully transformed into a mushroom-like appearance and consistency; the caster suffers -2 to all rolls in sunlight, but gains a +2 AC versus bludgeoning attacks.

MYCELIAL TRANSMISSION

Level: 1 (Armillamycetes)

Range: Varies

Duration: Varies

Casting time: 1 round

Save: Varies

General: The caster reaches out and connects into the fungal mycelial network that runs through the earth, using it to gather or transmit information across great distances. At higher levels, the caster can transfer themselves and others along the mycelial networks throughout the world or even multiverse.

Manifestation: Roll 1d4: (1) Thin white mycelial threads burst forth from the skin of the caster, extending into the ground in a roiling mass; (2) The caster is surrounded by a mass of puffballs that grow up from the ground to surround them and then burst into a cloud of spores that disperse as the spell is completed; (3) A cloud of blue spores gouts forth from the caster's mouth, coating the ground around them in a 5' radius; (4) The ground for 10' around the caster is covered in a rapid growth of fungi that then deliquesce into a mass of slime molds that seep into the ground.

1 Lost, failure, and patron taint.

2-11 Lost. Failure.

- 12-14 The caster extends mycelia deep into the earth, tapping into the knowledge of the trees, plants, and fungi that surround them. They gain the ability to sense movement and “see” within a 20’ radius area up to 400’ away. Effect lasts for 1d4+CL rounds. Trees and plants around the caster and in the visualized area wither and begin to die, being colonized by numerous fungi over the course of the next hour.
- 15-18 The caster reaches out to the network of fungi that lie beneath the surface of the world and gains a burst of information from other parts of the network. They gain insight into events that may occur in the next 2d4 minutes and may reroll two individual dice roll results during this time. The surrounding plants in a 20’ radius are rapidly overcome by waves of fungal growth each time the dice are rerolled.
- 19-23 The caster taps into the information travelling between plants along the mycelial network. They gain vast insight into the world around them and may ask three questions of the flora and fungi within a 100 mile range. The questions will be answered as truthfully as possible (albeit not necessarily clearly). Armillamycetes spreads its influence further within the world.
- 24-27 The caster becomes one with the underground mycelia and can use them to transport through the earth nearly instantaneously up to 50’ away. This can be done once per round for 1d4+CL rounds. The affected ground becomes a stew of decaying organic matter and surrounding plants are rapidly rotted away from within.

- 28-31 The caster merges with the mycelia, disappearing into the ground and dragging along up to 8 other creatures (DC 15 Will save to resist). They are all transported up to 100xCL miles away, but the journey takes 1d12 hours, regardless of distance. The 20' radius area they left is overcome with fungal growth during the time they are travelling.
- 32+ The caster fuses with the great fungal web between worlds and can use it to transport themselves and up to 8+CL other creatures anywhere in the world or between worlds (DC 18 Will save to resist). A destination must be stated upon casting the spell. The journey will take 1d12 days, regardless of distance. Unless the caster has previously been there and has a clear picture of the desired location, those transported may be deposited anywhere by the network. The region that they leave is overcome with fungal growth during the time they spend travelling, creating a new nexus for Armillamycetes' power in the worlds.

FUNGAL AID

Level: 2 (Armillamycetes)

Range: Varies

Duration: Varies

Casting time: 1 round

Save: Varies

General: The caster calls upon Armillamycetes to aid them through its powers of fungal growth. The aid could consist of healing, protection, summoned creatures, control of opponents, or even, at the highest spellcheck result, a permanently bonded champion of Armillamycetes.

Manifestation: See individual results below.

- 1 Lost, failure, and patron taint.
- 2-12 Lost. Failure.
- 13-15 The caster is coated in a layer of tough fungal plates and matted mycelia that serves as armor. The fungi come forth from the caster's body and provide +6 AC and the caster takes only one-fourth damage (rounded up) from any attacks. The protection lasts until 25 points of damage are absorbed (i.e., caster takes 8 damage), then the coating falls off, leaving the caster spent and they take 1 hp of damage in the final process of the armor coming off.
- 16-18 A crop of 2d6+CL brightly colored mushrooms burst forth from the body of the caster. They can be eaten to heal 1d4 hp of damage per mushroom. Ingestion requires a Will save (at -1 for each mushroom previously eaten) or the eater has minor hallucinations for 2d4 hours (-1 to all rolls for each mushroom ingested). A lower spell result may be chosen if desired.
- 19-22 1d4+CL mushroom men (shrooman stats from *DCC RPG core book*, p. 426) emerge from the ground to protect and serve the caster. They remain for 1d6+CL rounds. A lower spell result may be chosen if desired.
- 23-26 The caster calls forth a white web of mycelia from the ground to grasp and hold opponents (Ref save equal to spell check result initially and each subsequent round while within the area of effect to avoid). Held opponents take 1d4+CL hp of damage each round. The effect encompasses a 30' diameter area up to 100' distant. Held opponents may make a DC 16 Strength check each round to escape. Effect

lasts 2d6+CL rounds. Caster is unaffected by the mycelia. A lower spell result may be chosen if desired.

- 27-29 The caster may infect others with fungi, turning them into their “zombies”. An area 20’ in diameter and up to 50’ distance from the caster is showered with blue-green fungal spores. 1+CL targets within the area must make Will saves equal to the spell check result or come under the influence of the caster as if under a *charm person* spell (effect level 24-27 under the spell description in the core *DCC RPG core book*).
- 30-32 A primeval ooze (*DCC RPG core book*, p. 423) appears 10’ in the air, covering a 30’ radius around a point within eyesight that the caster designates. It drops on all in the affected area (Ref save equal to the spell check result to avoid). The caster may control it to some degree for 2d4+CL rounds and it will not affect the caster, though all others are subject to it. The ooze is permanently called into being.
- 33+ The caster summons forth a shrooman champion who serves as a permanent servitor, rising up from the ground as a rapidly growing mushroom that grows legs and steps forth to serve the caster. This shrooman has the following stats (Init -2; Atk batter +5 melee (3d4); AC 18; HD 5d8+6; MV 30’; Act 2d20; SP *fungal cloud*, half damage from bludgeoning weapons and fire, infravision 100’; SV Fort +10, Ref -1, Will +5; AL N). The shrooman is highly driven to protect the caster and will interpose its body to take damage intended for the caster once per round, giving up an attack to do so.

CALL DECAY

Level: 3 (Armillamycetes)

Range: Varies

Duration: Varies

Casting time: 1 round

Save: Varies

General: The caster calls upon Armillamycetes to manifest a host of decay-inducing fungi and slime molds that affect a single target or area.

Manifestation: See individual results below.

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| 1 | Lost, failure, and patron taint. |
| 2-13 | Lost. Failure. |
| 14-17 | The caster calls upon the decay-inducing capabilities of fungi to induce rot and dissolution in a single target. They must touch the target (ignoring armor) to transmit the decay, manifesting as a rapidly spreading layer of small toadstools covering the target. The fungal infection causes decay in a single target, with living organisms taking 3d6 damage (Fort save equal to the spell check result for half damage) and other material being rotted or broken by the fungal enzymes (up to 1 cubic foot of wood/bone/leather, or 1 sq ft of 1 inch thick stone, or 6 cubic inches of metal can be affected). |
| 18-20 | The caster projects a puffball of fungus at a target up to 40' away, making a ranged attack that ignores armor. The fungal infection acts as in the previous result (14-17). |

- 21-24 The caster unleashes a wave of fungi and slimes at targets in a cone-shaped area in front of them, with a 5' wide apex and a 30' long and 30' wide final area of effect. The fungal infection rots all organic matter and living organisms in that range, causing 3d6 damage for CL rounds (Fort save equal to the spell check result for half damage).
- 25-28 The caster is surrounded by an expanding zone of fungal rot and decay manifesting as a carpet of toadstools, slime molds, and mushrooms that spreads to a 50' radius around them. All within the zone are affected, each taking 4d6+CL hp of damage for CL rounds (Fort save equal to the spell check result for half damage). The caster is unaffected.
- 29-31 The caster can choose 1d4+CL targets within eyesight and afflict them with decay. Affected targets erupt with an array of fungi and slimes as they decay from within, taking 4d6 hp of damage and 1d6 damage to one physical ability (judge's call) immediately, and ongoing 2d6 hp +1d4 physical ability damage for 1d4+CL rounds (Fort save equal to the spell check result for half damage). This can be cured with a *neutralize disease* or *remove curse* spell.
- 32+ The caster creates a wasteland of rot and decay, populated only by the fungi and slime molds of Armillamycetes. As in the 25-28 result, the change begins as a 50' radius effect around the caster, causing the same effects and expanding by 50' every minute for the next 10 minutes. Over the course of the next 48 hours, the rot will spread to encompass a 20 mile radius around the caster, forming a blighted swamp populated only by the fungal minions of Armillamycetes.

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