

HOLLOW WORLD™

Official D&D® Game Adventure

NIGHTWAIL

by Allen Varney

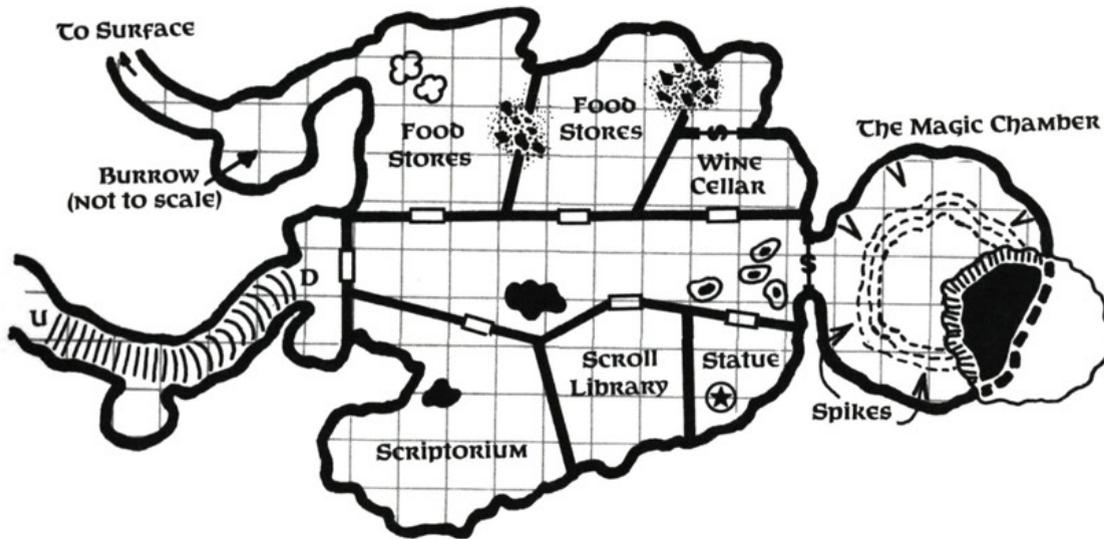


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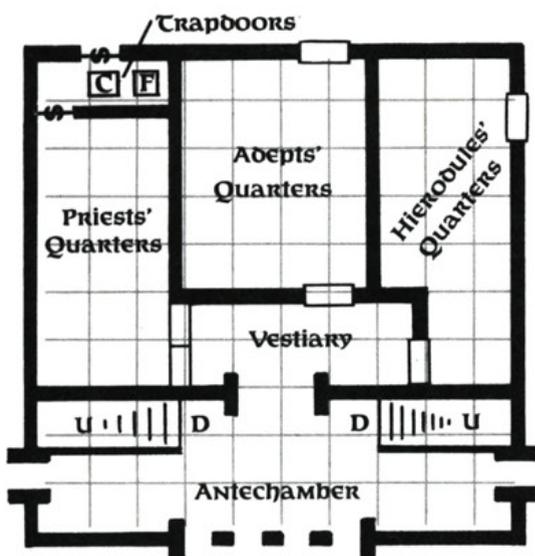
BARLEYCORN MONASTERY — UNDERGROUND (Chapter 4)

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet



GREAT PYRAMID OF ATZANTEOTL — SHRINE (Chapter 8)

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet



GROUND LEVEL

UPPER LEVEL

HOLLOW WORLD™

An Official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game Supplement

NIGHTWAIL

by Allen Varney

Part One of the *Blood Brethren* Trilogy

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Even in a world of wonder, people dream. Janissaries, their chain armor spattered with goblin blood, pull their scimitars from dead, hunched monstrosities and dream of new enemies, of brighter and more exotic evils. Silk banners dyed in nine colors hang from a castle parapet, snapping in the wind; the baron looks from these battlements upon his moat, home to hammerhead sharks—to sea turtles, with baronial arms carved on their shells—to octopi the size of warhorses—yet the baron dreams of new creatures in new seas.

Sages turn the leaves of manuscripts that tell of vanished kingdoms, now less than the dust, on every page. The scholars look up from their histories and gaze through tower windows to a sky where griffons wheel in battle drill, and the learned readers sigh over lost worlds they can never visit.

Homeland miracles grow tiresome, like a changeless gourmet menu served at every meal. Their witnesses long for richer tastes. They dream of exotic enchantments to make philosophers rethink notions of the possible, of curio-laden bazaars in unknown market squares where the rules of barter must be learned afresh, and of untracked beaches where waves in bottle-glass colors rush forward like invaders and then fall back.

They dream of knowing a world that cannot know them, a home defined by their own absence. For the taint of wonder is familiarity: the deadening knowledge that however marvelous our surroundings, however strange the native customs, despite it all we remain. . . ourselves. Our commonplace presence makes marvels commonplace.

So they dream more and better dreams, of far-off cities with sunlit towers. The dreamers carry a hunger within them, a craving for adventure that lies at their core like an unexplored hollow.

DM NOTES

Players intending to play in this adventure should stop reading here! Only the Dungeon Master should read the rest of this adventure.

. . . And read *all* of it before play! This first trilogy of adventures for the HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set offers an intricate scenario encompassing three 64-page modules. The three parts of the adventure can be played in any order, but it all begins with the introductory scenes in this module, *Nightwail*. The module can also work alone, but even so, you should master its storyline before play begins.

Using This Adventure

This trilogy, designed for the D&D® game (and also usable with the AD&D® game) works best for five to seven player characters (PCs) of levels 6-8 (average 7th). In addition to the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, D&D players need the *Basic*, *Expert*, and *Companion* Rules to play. If you're using

the D&D Known World setting, you may also want D&D Gazetteer 3, *The Principalities of Glantri*, and Gazetteer 10, *The Orcs of Thar*.

The other two modules in this trilogy are HWA2, *Nightrage*, and HWA3, *Nightstorm*. Though not absolutely necessary for play, they add new plotlines and depth to the conspiracy outlined here. After the outer-world sequence that begins this module, the player characters enter the HOLLOW WORLD™ setting, where they can pursue clues leading to any of the three modules. The order of play is entirely their (and your) choice. The suggested climax of the extended adventure appears at the end of the third module, *Nightstorm*.

The adventure as written fits easily into the Known World setting, but adapts easily to practically any existing campaign. (Note that the world of the campaign must be round, like a planet.) Adaptation requires three plot elements:

1. A powerful and prosperous nation or empire. In the Known World setting, the Principalities of Glantri makes a good choice.
2. A hostile barbarian tribe on the empire's borders or within striking distance; any uncivilized group that can cause the empire some trouble. This adventure uses the Known World's Queen Yazar and her goblins in the region of High Gobliny, in the Broken Lands.
3. A passage to the world inside. For plot reasons to be explained shortly, this can be literally anywhere you like. In the Known World setting, the passage used in this adventure lies beneath the Broken Lands. However, there are several passages in the Known World, making it easy to translate this part of the adventure to another location.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Each of the adventures in this trilogy details one aspect of a three-part conspiracy to corrupt the Hollow World. The three code-names for the parts of the scheme provide the titles of the modules.

To comprehend the details of the conspiracy, be familiar with at least these sections of the HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set, all from *The Dungeon Master's Sourcebook*:

The effects of the *Spell of Preservation*, outlined in the History section;

the overview of the Hollow World's geography, at the beginning of the Atlas section;

the Atlas section entries for the Azca and the Schattenalfen (the Hollow World's Shadow Elves);

and, in the section about the Immortals, the abilities of the Hollow World's patron Immortals and the background about Thanatos and Asterius.

The Scheme

Thanatos, the ultimate Immortal of Entropy, has undertaken a massive, intricate scheme to corrupt both the outer world and the Hollow World. This

conspiracy involves three plans:

1. Neutralize the Hollow World's guardian Immortals while the scheme takes place.

Method: Thanatos lured the Immortals into the past, using a remarkably devious plan explained below. For the duration of his scheme (about a month), the Immortals technically do not exist in the Hollow World.

2. Dispel parts of the *World-Shield* that provides gravity and anti-magic protection to both worlds.

Method: Thanatos, using the Schattenalfen as his agents, has awakened the burrowers, or "great annelids," that once threatened the Hollow World. For more than a millennium, the mindless annelids have silently tunneled the world's crust, eating thousands of shafts through the miles-thick *World-Shield*. Once the *World-Shield* loses much of its integrity, it will weaken in spots. This would eventually create upheavals on both sides of the *Shield*.

(The annelids' extensive tunneling has even reached the outer world. Now, for the first time in history, inhabitants from above can enter the Hollow World by other ways besides the polar openings.)

3. Cause the central sun of the Hollow World, the gate to the Plane of Fire, to emit a different light, corrupting the Hollow World's *Spell of Preservation*—and, through the shafts in the anti-magical *World-Shield*, inflicting unpredictable effects on the outer world as well.

Method: In the guise of their patron Immortal Atzanteotl, Thanatos has duped the Azca into enacting ceremonies of awesome power. These ceremonies are creating and energizing a device called the *Smoking Mirror*, which orbits the Hollow World's central sun. The Azca believe the *Smoking Mirror* will bring a rain of fire and destroy all their enemies.

In fact, the *Mirror* alters the magical light that the sun produces. The sun's energy maintains the *Spell of Preservation*; corrupt it, and the *Spell* is corrupted as well.

The tainted magic will corrupt the *Spell of Preservation*, then spread outward through the shafts in the *World-Shield* and erupt into the outer world. Not even Thanatos is sure what will happen there—but it can't be good.

In this trilogy, the player characters make their way to the Hollow World, discover Thanatos' plot, and try to defeat it.

Thanatos Neutralizes the Immortals

All Immortals can magically send their awareness into the past. They require no magical item to do this. An Immortal can visit any historical period, spend indefinite time there, and then return to the exact time he or she left, so that his or her presence in the "present" continues without interruption.

However, because time travel stresses them greatly,

most Immortals typically use a trivial device to aid their return to the present. This minor item, a "bookmark in time," marks the exact moment of departure so that the travelling Immortal can find it more easily. The item is not necessary, just convenient.

The decoy: Working through third parties with his customary subtlety, Thanatos inspired almost all the active Immortals in the Known and Hollow Worlds to make a collective journey into the distant past. His pretext has no relevance to this adventure, since it is entirely false.

The Immortals set up their time marker and journeyed into the past. To allay suspicion, Thanatos created a simulacrum of himself to accompany them. Even so, the prudent Immortals left behind one young Immortal to stand watch: Asterius, of the Sphere of Thought, patron of trade and thievery.

The scheme: At the moment of the Immortals' departure, the real Thanatos (who remained in the present) cast powerful magic on the time marker to slow the passage of time around it. The time-travelling Immortals, suspecting nothing, would return to the marker's point in time, a heartbeat after their departure—but Thanatos's powerful spell lengthened that heartbeat until the marker actually indicated a return point one full month after the Immortals have left!

Asterius, the guardian, immediately attacked Thanatos, to no avail. The ultimate Entropy Immortal easily defeated and entrapped his junior rival.

By the time the Immortals return to their time marker, Thanatos intends that the world be quite interestingly corrupted.

How the PCs Become Involved

In the surface world, a longtime arrangement has kept peace for generations between one of the world's established nations (the Principalities of Glantri) and a barbarian kingdom on its borders (Queen Yazar's goblins in the Broken Lands). This arrangement, wherein the nation exchanges a caravan of trade goods for the barbarians' "hostage prince," is described in detail at the start of the first chapter.

This spring, the arrangement has gone awry with the disappearance of two goblin princes, Kano and Udan, and the valuable caravan. The goblins will invade unless their princes and the caravan are returned; Glantri won't pay further bribes. War threatens within the month. Glantri hires the PCs to locate the hostage princes and the caravan.

What Happened to the Caravan

One member of the caravan's entourage, treasury minister Irla Kaze, secretly worships Thanatos. In return for his gifts of power, she has betrayed both Glantri and the goblins.

Following her patron's commands, minister Kaze played upon the goblin princes' greed for power; she induced them to explore a ruined monastery near their travel route. There she led the caravan into an

underground trap. The trap allowed two long-imprisoned servants of Thanatos, the Blood Brethren, to gain control of the two princes. Then Kaze accompanied the controlled nobles and their caravan into the Hollow World.

Why Thanatos Wants The Princes

After a long search, Thanatos has only recently located his shapeshifted servants, the Brethren Koresh Teyd and Simm of the Grasping Dark. To gain freedom from their magical trap, the long-imprisoned spirits must regain their power. They can only do this through control of their original bodies (long dead) or those of their descendants. It happens that the two hostage princes, Kano and Udan, are among the nearest living descendants of Thanatos' trapped servants. (For more about this, see Chapter 1 and the Appendix.)

Once released, the Brethren (along with minister Kaze) become Thanatos's instruments of destruction in the Hollow World. In this way the subtle Thanatos need never betray his own Immortal presence, so he can evade vengeance from his rival Immortals. And by aiding Thanatos, the Brethren and Kaze can resume their quest for Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy.

Where They Are Now

Each of the three servants of Thanatos heads one of the three schemes Thanatos has set in motion (outlined above). Each servant supervises his plot in a different location and functions as the main villain of one of the three modules in this trilogy.

Prince Udan, now controlled by his ancestral familiar Koresh Teyd, supervises a volcanic prison camp of fire and earth elementals in the Nithian Empire. He produces the symbiotic creatures that control the great annelids, and he plans their continuing disintegration of the *World-Shield*. For various reasons this entails destruction of the breeding grounds of the feathered serpents, magical animals once sacred to the Azca. This part of the scheme is described in the second module of this series, *Nightrage*.

Treasury Minister Irla Kaze, now transformed into a multi-armed creature of destruction, rules a cult of assassins in Shahjapur, a Hollow World culture modeled on India during the Moghul period. Shahjapur is introduced and described in the third module in this series, *Nightstorm*. In the filthy and populous city of Dharsatra, the transfigured Kaze lurks in a floating monument called the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. Here she guards the time marker Thanatos used to postpone the Immortals' return to the present.

Prince Kano, brother of Prince Udan, has also been controlled by his ancestral familiar, Simm of the Grasping Dark. Now he resides deep within the *Smoking Mirror*, a great magical device orbiting the Hollow World's central sun. This module describes his plot to corrupt the sun's light, a plot summarized immediately below.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This module begins the adventure. In the outer world, the player characters receive their assignment to locate the missing hostage prince. Their investigations on the surface lead them to the Hollow World. There the characters find clues that point to each of the three modules. The players can play the adventures in any order; their choice of clues to follow determines which module they play next.

The remainder of this module covers the Azca segment of the adventure. What follows is only one likely course of events involving the settings described.

Adventure Layout

The adventure's plot is described in a sequence of chapters, each keyed to a single setting or idea.

Chapter 1, *The Hostage Prince*: Describes the custom that has kept peace between two lands for generations; the current princes; and the caravan that vanished.

Chapter 2, *The Glantri House of Ministers*: At this hall in Glantri City the player characters begin the adventure with the mission to locate the hostage princes and their missing caravan.

Chapter 3, *Wizard's Road*: A description of the journey overland to the site of the caravan's disappearance.

Chapter 4, *Barleycorn Monastery*: The party's investigation leads to a ruined monastery, and then to a catacombs beneath it. But someone has been there before them: the missing princes and a treacherous minister who has released ancient evils to take over the princes. The trail of clues leads even further. . . .

Chapter 5, *Downward and Upward*: The player characters' encounters with Schattenalfen, a Great Annelid, and an earth elemental. A magically shortened journey leads them through the *World-Shield* and the world's inner crust.

Chapter 6, *Emergence*: Enter the Hollow World. Their initial encounter here gives clues that lead to the three modules of this trilogy.

Chapter 7, *The Valley of the Azca*: Here the player characters explore the Azcan homeland, encounter natives and gain clues, and journey to Chitlacan, the Azcan capital. They uncover the plot to corrupt the Hollow World's *Spell of Preservation*.

Chapter 8, *The Ceremonies of Atzanteotl*: Atop the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl, Prince Kano has enlisted evil King Mochtitlapac to enact several massive ceremonies. These drain the psychic energy of their victims. This energy powers the *Smoking Mirror*, which is corrupting the Hollow World's sun.

It's likely that the player characters witness at least one Azcan ceremony, either by infiltrating it in disguise or participating directly as prisoners.

Chapter 9, *Pyramid Games*: Hoping to find the caravan prisoners (a vain hope), or to escape the ceremony (a more feasible hope), the player characters journey through the labyrinth within the Great

Pyramid. They don't find the prisoners, who are currently in Shahjapur; but on the dungeon's lowest level the player characters gain a means of transport to the *Smoking Mirror*.

If they don't enter the pyramid's labyrinth, the player characters can still journey to the *Smoking Mirror*. . . in psychic form, as victims of the evil ceremony!

Chapter 10, *Riding to the Sun*: This discusses other ways the player characters can reach the central sun.

Chapter 11, *Within the Smoking Mirror*: The characters discover the devices that corrupt the sun's light, and they battle the controlled Prince Kano and his Brethren familiar, Simm of the Grasping Dark. If successful, the player characters can destroy this part of Thanatos' intricate plot.



Most of the chapters contain the following entries.

How They Get Here: Ways the player characters can reach this place, including a list of clues from other chapters that point here.

The Scene: General physical description.

Investigation: The paths the players can take to gather clues leading them further into the adventure.

Events: Occurrences that may happen while the player characters are present. Some are optional, some mandatory.

Where Next?: This entry summarizes the clues given in this chapter and the places they lead. Just as important, it summarizes the facts that you *must* convey to the players before the player characters leave this area.

Staging Hints: From time to time, the adventure offers notes on how to stage a scene—that is, how to pace it, create an appropriate mood, and produce certain dramatic effects. Use this advice to create a vivid, memorable adventure for the players.

Not every chapter has all of these entries; some chapters contain extra entries not listed here. Characters and events described in a chapter can appear in various orders, and your storyline may well depart from the default sequence this module assumes.

Any text in a box should be read aloud or summarized for the players. All other information is for you alone. Reveal it only in response to player character actions.

THACO: In statistic listings, this stands for "To Hit Armor Class 0." Subtract the target's AC from this number to get the roll needed to hit.

Ability checks: The adventure sometimes calls for player characters to make an ability check. Roll 1d20 and compare the result to the character's appropriate ability (Strength, Dexterity, etc.). If the roll is equal to or less than the ability score, the action succeeds. If the roll is greater than the ability score, the action fails.

Using the Adventure

To master *Nightwail's* unusual complexity, try the following steps:

1. Carefully read the "Adventure Overview" above.
2. Page through the chapters that follow. Get a sense of the scenario's settings, and read whatever looks interesting.
3. Browse the staging notes to learn how to develop the adventure's plotline. Check the appendix for information on the main villains, magic, and monsters.
4. Finally, go back and read everything in detail.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

If this is your players' first encounter with the Hollow World, *try to surprise them!*

If their characters haven't yet learned about the Hollow World, let alone visited it, try as much as possible to make their discovery a tremendous surprise, a "conceptual breakthrough" like those in classic fantasy stories. The PCs will be among the first Outer-World people to see the Hollow World in a very long time; they'll be surprised, and the players should be too!

Of course, sometimes circumstances prevent surprise. If your friends have seen you studying the HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set, or you happened to mention to them that you bought this adventure, then they'll be expecting a trip downward. But even then, sneaky options present themselves.

Tell the players, "I'm not ready to run those Hollow World adventures yet. Let's play this simple caravan rescue for this session, and I'll do one of those later." If you sound sincere enough, the players may not suspect anything until they're far into the adventure—when their PCs, with little notice, practically drop into the Hollow World.





For convenience, the adventure text refers to the Known World, the Principalities of Glantri, and Queen Yazar's goblin tribes in the Broken Lands. If you're adapting this adventure to another setting, substitute an appropriate empire and barbarian tribe.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE —

The player characters know the following facts, as public knowledge or gossip easily gleaned from informed citizens:

Each spring Glantri bribes Yazar's goblins with an annual caravan of treasure, food, and manufactured goods. In return, Queen Yazar sends a hostage to live well for one year in the House of Ministers in Glantri City. Through a diplomatic fiction the hostage, one of Yazar's many illegitimate offspring, is referred to as a "prince" of High Gobliny.

Each new spring, the hostage prince returns home

at the head of a new caravan of Glantrian supplies—the ransom Glantri pays the goblins for another year of peace. Queen Yazar sends a new (empty-handed) prince in his place. Often the new and old hostage princes meet on the journey.

Player characters who have travelled this area also know a bit about Yazar's goblins:

The Goblins

Yazar's goblins are squat, slope-browed, broad-shouldered, often bandy-legged savages. About 2,800 goblins, spread over a 2,700-square-mile area, make up the nation of High Gobliny in the Broken Lands. The goblins pay tribute to Queen Yazar, who administers strict and brutal justice.

In hard times Yazar gathers the goblins and leads them in an all-out assault on richer neighbors. They run for miles without tiring, brave extremes of temperature, fight fearlessly against superior opponents,

and slaughter unarmed victims. Though no political threat, the goblin invasions can devastate large regions of a kingdom.

Appearance: Adult male goblins tattoo the chalky tan skin of their faces, arms, and (sometimes) chests with elaborate pictures. These pictures show both tribal affiliation and status. Skulls, dragons, primitive symbols—the more tattoos a goblin has, the higher his tribal status. Females are rarely tattooed, though women sometimes achieve status as shamans or wakoni. Adult goblins wear badly-kept rabbit skins and footrags; young wear woven grass ponchos.

Goblin warrior: AC 6; HD 1-1; hp 4; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; MV 90' (30'); Save F1; ML 8; AL C; THAC0 19; XP 5. Average size 4' + 1d4 inches.

Queen Yazar: If you have GAZ 10, *The Orcs of Thar*, use Yazar's statistics on page 18 of the DM's booklet. If not, treat Queen Yazar as a 5 HD hobgoblin king (Basic Set DM's Rulebook, p. 31), but with the spellcasting abilities and saving throws of a 13th level magic-user. Str 9, Int 14, Wis 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Cha 16; AL C.

For the hostage princes' statistics, see "NPCs" in the Appendix.

Goblin Magic

The barbarians' magic is primitive and often violent. Spells usually locate or summon food, but tribal shamans reserve a spectacular effect called *waving lights* (magic-user 2nd level) just for ceremonies. The lights are bright shifting bands of red and orange. Each solstice these glowing ribbons illuminate the goblins' frenzied all-night dances.

DM Note: It is not general knowledge that goblin ancestors of Queen Yazar's family once attained much greater mastery of magic, centuries ago. Aided by Thanatos, the twin goblins who led the royal family developed weird and grotesque clerical magic. These two became known as the Blood Brethren.

Diligent investigation in ancient manuscripts, or discussion with elderly wizards, unearths mentions of the "Grasping Dark," a violent and especially ghastly form of magical murder. The sources, confused and obscure on this point, mention that the victim "is pulled down within himself and vanishes." The Brethren used this evil spell to great effect, gaining power over all the surrounding area. But, say the sources, their tribal subjects finally set upon and slew them.

This is only partly true. The Brethren escaped destruction—though they have been confined for two centuries. The player characters discover more about the Brethren, and witness the Grasping Dark, later in the adventure.

ABOUT THE CARAVAN

Reasonably well-travelled player characters know something about caravan trade in the campaign world. Caravans figure prominently in folktales and gossip, for they earn an exotic reputation. Typical caravans employ 600 to 1200 mounts (in this part of

the Known World, donkeys and mules) and 350 to 600 drivers and staff; carry ship-sized loads of valuable cargo over hundreds of miles, taking a month or more; and can carry dozens of passengers—travellers, bards, refugees, spies, and so on.

The caravan that delivers the annual payoff to Queen Yazar's goblins is so small that it hardly merits the name: ten wagonloads of goods, 20 horses, 15 drivers and staff, and one single passenger (the deputy treasury minister Irla Kaze). Each year it travels from the House of Ministers in Glantri City to the upper Plateau of Zyrd in High Gobliny—about 175 miles by the safest route. The trip takes about a week for the slow-moving caravan, and over three days even for a small party on horseback.

Cargo: The caravan this year held silk, glass, ceramics, some precious metal, spices, perfumes, ivory, tortoise shell, aromatic sandalwood, resins, honey, salt, dried fruit, furs and leathers, and a flock of six fine hunting falcons. Fifteen of the 20 horses were also meant as cargo; the five senior caravan staffers would ride the other five back to Glantri City. The 15 drivers, low-status workmen, would walk back under the staffers' protection.

The caravan's official leader was, as always, the hostage prince of the past year. This time that was Kano Arrow's-Whisper, eldest son of Queen Yazar.

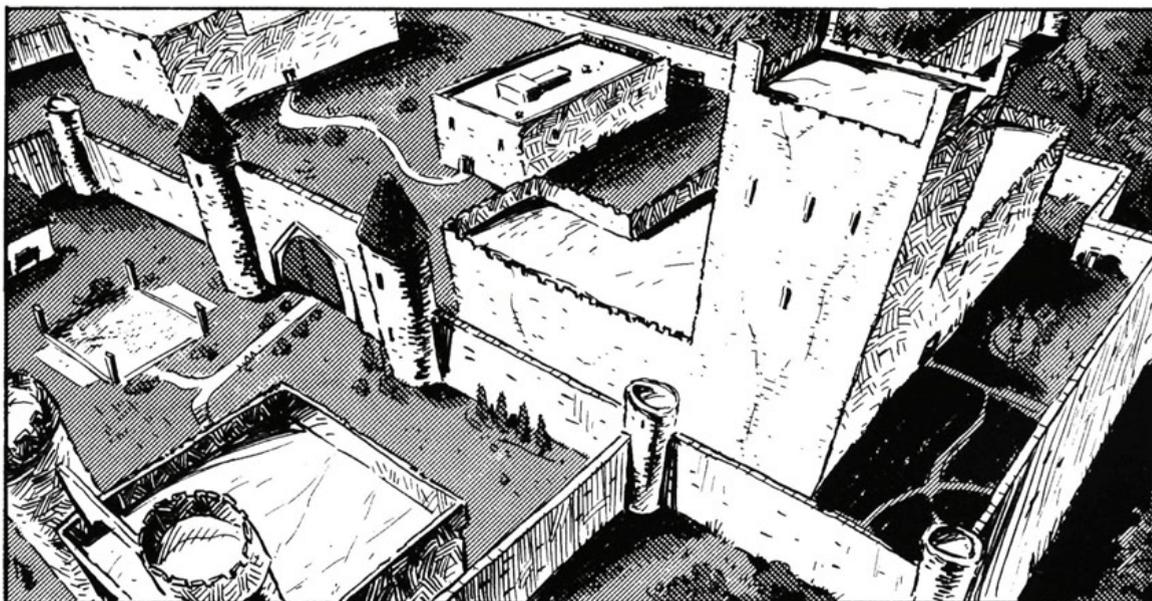
The caravan's fate: It set out from Glantri City eleven days ago and camped at the riverside village of Trintan on the second day. The next morning the caravan followed the Vesubian River south into the Broken Lands. No one saw it after that.

The trail disappears in the high mountains that mark the Plateau of Zyrd. This is not surprising, since tracking anything through those rocky mountains approaches impossibility. Magical scrying has produced no results, since the caravan carried protective wards for safety reasons.

Queen Yazar, never patient, dispatched a war messenger to Glantri City within a day after the caravan's expected arrival. When the messenger arrived two days ago, the House of Ministers had already sent out cavalry parties to search for the new hostage they were expecting—Udan Axe-Thrower, second son of Queen Yazar. Yazar had sent Udan out with a small party of warriors on the same day the caravan left Glantri City. Queen Yazar may not yet realize that Udan, too, has vanished. Or she simply may not care.

What is being done: The Glantrian ministers doubled the search effort. Yet the Broken Lands are large and dangerous. Foot soldiers can survive only in large, cumbersome units, making the search too slow. Meanwhile, Yazar's goblins are beginning war chants. They want not just the missing princes, whom Queen Yazar barely thinks twice about, but the caravan of loot—and Glantri is not willing to send another. Within a month at most, they will invade.

The rulers of Glantri have given their orders: Send out the word for hardy adventurers who can search the Broken Lands quickly. Anyone who can locate the princes and the caravan will earn a substantial reward.



The goblin “prince” Kano found little welcome in the House of Ministers in Glantri City. After they receive their mission at the start of this section, player characters who ask around have no trouble finding people with strong opinions about Kano. Investigation in this section produces several clues and an important lead.

ters, and visiting ambassadors live here—including Deputy Treasury Minister Irila Kaze and, for the past year, hostage Prince Kano.

HOW THEY GET HERE

The call goes out throughout the Principalities of Glantri and its neighbors: Crisis! The word on the street is that there’s a diplomatic crisis with the barbarians in the Broken Lands. And Glantri is offering major rewards to “the greatest adventurers of the land” if they can accomplish an urgent mission.

Since you’re among the greatest adventurers in the land—at least you think so—at least you *hope* you are—you’ve all journeyed to Glantri City, the capital, to hear the offer.

Note that this introduction sounds rather. . . typical. This helps lull unsuspecting players, who shouldn’t hear anything about the Hollow World until their characters are about to enter it!

If the player characters want to procure supplies or look around Glantri City before going to the scene below, run optional encounters or even mini-adventures using GAZ 3, *The Principalities of Glantri*. Then go on with this adventure.

If you’re using this module with another campaign setting: Substitute another major city and kingdom for Glantri.

THE SCENE

As described in GAZ 3, the House of Ministers holds the upper echelons of Glantri’s widespread bureaucracy, as well as the treasury. But it’s more than an office building: Selected clan rulers, minis-

Glantri—where the miraculous is customary, and even required for office-holders. Magical energies surge through this city like the water that fills its canals. . . sometimes literally: As you ride a gondola to the House of Ministers in the early afternoon, you feel a sudden wind, unusually fresh, and laced with the odors of cinnamon and freshly-cut grass.

After the wind passes, an elderly woman leans out of an upper-story window alongside the canal. “Sorry!” she cries for everyone to hear. “Missed a bit on me perfumery cantrip. Won’t happen again!”

Soon your gondola docks at the House of Ministers, a huge, solid building. Nothing short of an earthquake could move it, and in that way it resembles the bureaucrats who work inside. The walls are stone slabs, as blue as the ink on a duplicate purchase voucher.

You don’t see any doors. Instead, a man in a plain blue military outfit stands next to a gold rectangle painted on the wall at ground level.

The rectangle is a magical door like all external doors in the building (which houses the Glantrian Treasury). When the doorkeeper speaks the daily password (today it’s “intraparietes”), the stone becomes insubstantial, permitting anyone to pass through until the other password (today, “nonparietes”) is spoken from either side. Those caught in transit when the word is spoken are placed harmlessly outside the building.

The doorkeeper is a low-ranking Glantrian soldier named Ferdinand, a distant and low-born relative of Prinz Jaggar von Drachenfels, Count of Ritterburg. Jaggar wangled this doorkeeping job for his distant cousin, hoping it would lead to advancement. So far, Ferdinand has merely reveled in the minor power

this office grants. He may regard the player characters with suspicion and perhaps even demand that they prove their fitness to attend the briefing: "No sense wasting both your time and ours, after all."

If players are new to your group or playing new characters, this entry offers an opportunity for the player characters to introduce themselves to one another, demonstrate their abilities, and get a feel for their characters. After they demonstrate their prowess or otherwise persuade Ferdinand to admit them, the characters enter the central auditorium of the House of Ministers.

EVENTS

The Briefing

In a great hall crowded with adventurers and would-be adventurers—wrinkled veterans, mercenaries with tasteless tattoos, strapping rogues and roguish striplings, and the player characters—a minister addresses the crowd.

Lord Harald of Haaskinz, Archduke of Westheath, High Master of Water-Elementals, and ceremonial Deputy Minister of the Interior, is a confused, prematurely elderly man with gray hair (thinning), a long waist (thickening), and a withered, diseased left arm. (See GAZ 3, p. 26.) Deputy Minister Sir Harald describes, in a high voice with the barest hint of a lisp, the following:

1. The ferocious goblins of Queen Yazar; the hostage prince arrangement that has secured peace with them every spring for over sixty years; and Prince Kano Arrow's-Whisper, the outgoing hostage prince. "Of course we were honored to host His, uh, Highness," says Sir Harald in a dry and unpleasant tone. He won't mention the fictitious nature of Kano's "princely" status unless directly asked.
2. This year's caravan headed by Prince Kano; its size and approximate contents; the route and length of its journey; and Deputy Treasury Minister Irla Kaze, who accompanied it—"to aid the Prince in the important work of guiding the caravan." If someone infers from this that Kano was too stupid to guide it himself, Sir Harald hesitates a long moment before correcting this.
3. The expected arrival of Prince Udan Axe-Thrower, who was journeying here by the same route, and could well be expected to meet the departing Prince Kano and the caravan on the way.
4. The disappearance of all parties, as described above; the ensuing diplomatic arguments; and the large and imminent danger to the border regions of this nation if the princes and caravan aren't found. "The army and militia are searching even now," says Sir Harald, "without success." He can give the reasons cited in the previous section. "Should any party here locate the princes and the caravan, we are

prepared to pay an honorarium of one tenth of the caravan's value to that party. This equals the approximate sum of 15,000 gold coins. If you find them within five days, we offer an additional 2,500 gold coins."

Adjust the reward value to suit the campaign standard. The younger adventurers whistle, screech, or faint. More seasoned ones rub their chins in thought. The player characters, the most experienced party here, may shrug, but they should be willing to keep listening.

Talking With Sir Harald

Deputy Minister Sir Harald answers questions from the assembly. Handle all the player characters' questions truthfully. Intersperse other questions from the rest of the audience, to cover facts omitted above or to provide comedy relief. (One young man asks, "Are the goblin women good-looking?") You can establish some of these questioners as individuals worthy of the player characters' attention, in the event they need to hire mercenaries or specialists.

Sir Harald describes Prince Kano as "sort of a hulking young goblin with lots of black hair and, how to put it, a boisterous attitude." He describes Irla Kaze as "a fine woman of respectable years, white hair, thin, no nonsense about her. Shrewd in magic. A solid citizen, really."

Sir Harald offers no leads for investigation; he doesn't have the foggiest idea what to do, or he'd do it himself.

The minister has no authority to offer advance funding for any adventurer's expedition, and he wouldn't want to even if he could. Should the player characters approach him privately and politely, this could change. If the characters are well known in Glantri City or have noble friends in the House of Ministers, the flustered Sir Harald bustles off with their requests for advance funds. "Have to check this through with the upper powers," he says.

Sir Harald returns—eventually, after the player characters have finished their investigation here—with a token sum of 500 gold pieces. (This does not count toward the characters' XP totals!) He also has a pile of forms, vouchers, and receipts that all player characters must sign or mark. Otherwise they don't get the money.

If they talk to him privately, Sir Harald also issues the characters a set of green silk ribbons. "Tie one of those on your sleeve or, well, wherever, and you'll have free passage about the place." With these ribbons the player characters can ask questions in the House of Ministers, and the guards won't bother them.

Lord Harald of Haaskinz, Deputy Minister of the Interior: AC 9; 25th level M; hp 37; #AT 1; Dmg by spell; MV 120' (40'); Save M25; Str 14, Int 17, Wis 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Cha 11; AL L; THAC0 11. Spells (number per level): 7/7/6/6/5/5/4/4/3.

INVESTIGATION

The large ministerial hall, and the city around it, offer many sources of information. This subsection lists some people and places the characters can visit. Role-play all these encounters, rather than simply passing along the listed information. Improvise further sources and clues as the situation dictates.

Competent investigation in this section should unearth two clues: Prince Kano admired his deadly ancestors and had heard of the mysterious Grasping Dark; and Minister Irila Kaze behaved suspiciously before she left with the caravan. Lucky or diligent characters can uncover more clues, including a likely destination for the wayward caravan.

Archives

The dusty, history-shrouded Official Archives fills two basements under the House of Ministers. This voluminous collection holds tax records (guarded), deeds of property ownership (locked in trapped chests), and, tucked away in an open side room, historical records (not guarded).

If the characters ask her, the Official Archivist, a dowdy but friendly woman named Benna Herstan (3rd level magic-user), can tell them that Minister Irila Kaze visited this section of the archives often in the last year. Sometimes she brought Prince Kano with her, but (Benna sniffs here) "His Highness didn't have much use for books." She can guide the player characters to the section that interested Kaze, a massive collection of 100-year-old scrolls penned by explorers in the Broken Lands.

Clues: For each hour spent searching the Archives, a player character can make an Intelligence check. Success means the character spots a set of scrolls that look slightly less dusty than the rest. These scrolls relate the history of the Brethren, as explained in the previous chapter and the appendix. The history stresses the Brethren's ferocity, cruelty, and above all, the fear inspired by the dread Grasping Dark. However, the nature of this attack is left unspecified.

The scrolls contain several inaccuracies, notably about the Brethren's fate: "The malignant creatures at last succumbed to their own fiendish appetite for power, turned on one another, and destroyed themselves. Their former thralls, glad of these tidings, entrusted the bodies to some kindly monks for hiding, that none could ever resurrect their foul peril." In fact, the Brethren never turned on one another—though they may, in the Hollow World—and they did not die, but were only trapped.

The scrolls do not refer to the "kindly monks" in detail, nor do they report the Brethren's presumed resting place. However, a second successful Intelligence check after another hour of search reveals another relevant clue.

A tattered scroll tells of obscure religious beliefs in Glantrian history. One section compare minor cult figures with "Lord Jamion of Barleycorn Monastery, whose strange residence among the monsters of the

Broken Lands is told below." However, the end of this scroll has been torn away and cannot be found. Benna Herstan, the librarian, can verify that the scroll was intact when last she saw it. (Minister Kaze tore away the part telling of Barleycorn Monastery's location.)

The Bureaucracy

Among copious numbers of civil servants in the House of Ministers, the following officials can help the player characters in their search for information. They are all available, with ease or difficulty, in the House or elsewhere in Glantri City.

To expedite the investigation, consider bringing all these sources together with the player characters at a gathering. Perhaps an ambassador is hosting a gala masque ball (poor form during this diplomatic crisis, but this may be part of the ambassador's point); or a high-level summit of the Glantrian rulers may attract these people as participants or watchers. Take this as an opportunity for role-playing and even political intrigue.

Alchemist and Healer

Since clerics are outlawed in Glantri, medicine relies heavily on magical *healing potions* and on traditional first aid. Alchemists, licensed by the Great School of Magic, provide both.

Location: The high tower of the House of Ministers.

Name: Tenebras Illuminaurum.

Description: Obsessed old man, more than a little crazy, with chemical stains all over his canvas smock. A blue star tattooed on his forehead indicates he is officially licensed to practice. "Oh, er, what? Potions, did you say? Something to keep the hair on your head, ma'am?"

Accessibility: Always in his lab, trying to build a better homunculus.

Information: Tenebras knows that Irila Kaze knew more about magic and alchemy than she let on. Kaze asked him to grow a specific homunculus; she paid for it, then killed it on the spot and told him to grind up its brain. If asked whether this could be a spell component, Tenebras falls into fuddled thought. Much later, perhaps as the player characters are ready to leave the House of Ministers, he rushes up and announces, "Oak-in-Acorn! Powder that shrinks you! Yes, yes, very bad stuff." For details of this item, see the appendix.

Alchemist: Tenebras has reached the Fourth Circle of Alchemists (see GAZ 3, p. 70). AC 9; 20th level MU; hp 31; #AT 1; Dmg by spell; MV 120' (40'); Save M20; AL L; THAC0 13. Spells (number per level): 6/5/5/5/4/4/3/2.

Ambassadors

The three ambassadors here are drawn from GAZ 3, *The Principalities of Glantri*, p. 31.

Location: Three classy townhouses in the Nobles' Quarter (#19-21 on p. 41 in GAZ 3).

Names: Sire Galladin, Lord Ambassador of Alf-

heim; Sir Sergei Tonescu, Lord Ambassador of Karamaikos; Lady Scrutina Diaura, Lady Ambassador of Darokin.

Description: Galladin is an honest middle-aged elf, dapper and white-haired. Torenescu is a fat black-haired lout with a shady past and corrupt present. Lady Scrutina is a shrewd but miserly old lady.

Accessibility: Sharply limited, unless the player characters have noble or diplomatic status. Sometimes encountered at gambling houses or chambers of Glantri's Sisters of the Private Houses.

Information: The ambassadors know of, and diplomatically avoid sneering at, Kano's loutish behavior. One had a pet cat; Kano ate it.

Ambassadors: AC 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 or by weapon; MV 120' (40'). Galladin is an 8th level elf, AL N, 28 hp, THAC0 15; Torenescu is a Chaotic 4th level fighter, 18 hp, THAC0 17; and Lady Scrutina is a Neutral 4th level fighter, also 18 hp, THAC0 17.

Equerry

Location: Members of the magocracy acquire horses, or arrange to stable their own, at a small, clean stable (an office; really) just west of Tower-bridge Plaza near the Merchants' Consortium tower. City stables are located a mile south of the city on the Wizards' Road.

Name: Linus Lorin.

Description: A thin, good-natured teenager with a gap-toothed grin and ceaseless admiration for all magic-users.

Accessibility: Regular schedule; happy to talk to anybody, especially about horses.

Information: Before the caravan left, Kaze gathered hairs from its horses used in caravan, as though collecting spell components. (She added these to the *powder of oak-in-acorn*, the shrinking powder she used at Barleycorn Monastery.)

Equerry: 0-level normal human.

Official Interpreter

Location: Technically an upper-story minor office, actually itinerant; walks the halls of the House of Ministers, trying to make connections.

Name: Denniar Nelvin Nogin.

Description: Young, gangly; very short brown hair and rodent-like features; pleasant, slick manner in contrast to his looks. Low-status wizard with many pendants, rings, and lenses that translate languages; high-turnover position considered a rung on the ladder of advancement. Nogin is trying for the Hall of Magistrates, the lobbyists' guild.

Accessibility: Talkative if you can track him down.

Information: Sometime student of exotic cultures; knows all about the Brethren, if player characters think to ask him. He can also provide exposition about Yazar's goblins and hostage-prince arrangement, if necessary.

Interpreter: AC 9; 4th level MU; hp 10; #AT 1; Dmg by spell; MV 120' (40'); Save M4; AL N; THAC0 19. Spells (number per level): 2/2.

Provisioner

Location: A large, bustling office in a main hallway on the ground floor of the House of Ministers.

Name: Rollan Padiar.

Description: Large young man with short black hair, round face, doughy build. Talks quickly and in complete sentences, trying to tell everything asked before anyone can ask follow-up questions.

Accessibility: Player characters probably encounter this minor bureaucrat first when they visit the Provisioners, where all magocracy officials procure needed supplies. Low-level public servant, but knows everything going on in the office—including all relevant clues.

Information: Knows locations of Minister Kaze's dwelling, since he had to order frequent deliveries of strange magical components there. Kaze ordered more of these for the caravan—Padiar has no idea what they would be for (they're for *powder of oak-in-acorn*). Minister and Kano also asked for more provisions than the journey should require—"a margin for safety," they said. Caravan could easily still be surviving on the provisions it carried.

Provisioner: Use the Interpreter's statistics, above.

Scribe of the Chamber

Location: A small but well-placed office in the House of Ministers.

Name: Terinna Kollrahb.

Description: Harried and low-status bureaucrat wearing cheap but clean robes; short black hair simply styled; alert, mouse-like expression. Member of Glantri's Scribes Association, but behind in dues payments.

Accessibility: Easy to find, but reluctant to talk about "official matters." Bribable for 50+ gp.

Information: Knew Kaze well. Can talk about her eccentricities, especially her love of the liquor Treesblood. For a good (60+ gp) bribe, says that Kaze commanded more magical power than she let on, and made headway in spell research on *powder of oak-in-acorn*. Knows Kaze studied the distant realm of Sind, and admired some Immortals in their complicated pantheon.

Scribe of the Chamber: Use the Interpreter's statistics, above.

Friends of Prince Kano

Though few if any orcs inhabit Glantri, some residents follow what one could call orcish life-styles. These thugs and lowlives dwell on the West Side, with blackjacks in their sashes and *amulets vs. ESP* around their necks. They won't talk to adventurers unless they're friends of friends, or perhaps fellow members in the Fellowship of the Pouch (the Glantrian Thieves' Guild). Bribes (5-20 gp) are mandatory.

The ruffians describe Prince Kano—"yer ever-lovin' Highness, as we 're callin' 'im"—as an adventurous rogue, proud of his ancestry. Kano haunted the bars here and in the Port Quarter, drinking ale and whiskey, until he fell in with "that lily-white

uptowner”—Irida Kaze, though the informants don’t know her name. Then he frequented her quarters—“an’ her so old an’ wrinkly, and sartinly not ’is type, if ye take me!”

Not all informants know the same things. A few heard Kano talking of Broken Lands history, particularly the *grasping dark* spell. The thugs here found that fascinating; they can give a heavily colored and distorted version of the description in the “New Magic” appendix.

Minister Kaze’s Quarters

Many lower-rank ministers reside in the tower of the House of Ministers. But since they’re all wizards, the security around their dwellings resembles that of a typical wizard’s tower. So the characters probably have little chance to sneak in. However, should they persuade a minister to let them investigate Kaze’s quarters, they find a typical suite of rooms, comfortable but not spacious or lavish.

Everything important here—spellbooks, of course, but also routine keepsakes, clothing, and artworks—is gone. Given the security here, Kaze must have removed them herself. This is peculiar, because she was only supposed to be gone for a couple of weeks.

A large whitewood rolltop desk stands in one corner. The papers here are routine, bordering on trash—receipts, old messages, etc.

Even now, more than a week after her departure, some cabinets in these quarters smell of Treesblood, the peculiar liquor that Kaze doted on. The player characters can learn about Treesblood from tavern bartenders (below) or the Scribe of the Chamber, above. The odor of Treesblood trails Kaze elsewhere in this adventure.

Nothing else of interest is in the room.

Prince Kano’s Quarters

After Kano left, a squadron of cleaning staff descended on the room and cleaned it out utterly. The player characters find no clues here.

However, aggressive player characters can talk to the cleaning people. One recalls finding broken bottles that smelled of Treesblood, the exotic liquor that Kaze drinks—and player characters who talk to Kano’s friends learn that Kano hated Treesblood, so the bottles weren’t his.

Taverns Nearby

Prince Kano frequented these. In Glantri City, likely tavern locations on the city map in GAZ 3 include Boatman’s Tavern (Port Quarter, #51); the buildings near the Gondoliers’ Landing Port (Middle Class Quarter, #57); squalid little hovels in the West End (West Side, #67); and the Gambling House (West Side, #70). Roleplay these encounters, distributing the following rumors and clues:

1. Local gossip says the caravan had plenty of magical items. Eyewitness accounts tell of a funny-ecrue

“explosion” by Baron’s Gate, in the staging area where the caravan assembled. The explosion, high overhead, sent forth bright blue and green tendrils of light that smelled like spearmint, and everyone touched by the light got indigestion. This was attributed at the time to a misfire by a practicing young wizard nearby. (This is true; a nine-year-old boy who lives near Baron’s Gate will shamefacedly admit he was practicing a *fire ball* spell. This is a red-herring, a false clue.)

2. Some patrons remember Prince Kano as a high-spirited drinking buddy. He often cursed Glantrian customs, called rival goblin tribes in the Broken Lands “pansies,” and talked admiringly about the Blood Brethren, his savage ancestors. Kano usually ended each night’s drinking spree with a drunken gondola ride, when he would lob stones at any dog or housepet he saw in a villa window.

3. At an upscale tavern, such as the Gambling House, one bartender is a thin, wise, low-level mage named Sendrian Leddo. He often took orders for and delivered a particular kind of exotic liquor to Minister Kaze’s chambers—a strong Darokinian brandy called “Treesblood,” distilled on the borders of Alfheim.

Leddo formed only a dim impression of Minister Kaze. He says she dunned sharp and showed a dry wit. “Must have been quite the drinker, though,” says Leddo, “since she went through so much of the stuff”—perhaps a gallon every month.

One interesting clue: Minister Kaze paid off her account in full with her last order, before it was due, and she cancelled further deliveries. “Must have known she was going away,” says Leddo, if he learns Kaze went with the caravan. But if the player characters ask for dates, Leddo names a time over a month ago, long before the caravan’s personnel were named.

WHERE NEXT?

If the player characters don’t care to investigate before they leave, fair enough; they may regret this later, but the adventure can continue without these clues.

Should they pursue diligent investigation, make sure they learn of the Brethren and of Kano’s admiration for them. Also, the player characters should know that Kano associated with Irida Kaze, and that Kaze displayed suspicious behavior before the caravan left. (However, no Glantrian minister will heed these suspicions. Kaze was a trusted member of the magocracy, above reproach!)

The characters may also know the name Barleycorn Monastery, the shrinking powder *oak-in-acorn*, and the liquor Treesblood. With these clues, set them on the path to the Broken Lands: the Wizards’ Road.



HOW THEY GET HERE

If they lack transport, the characters can rent horses cheaply (90% of standard cost) from the Glantrian Municipal Stables just outside the capital city.

Glantri's desperate ministers give all search parties a map showing the northern reaches of the country and the caravan's route. Its solid red line gives way to a questioning dotted line in the Broken Lands, for travel routes here change with the seasons.

The route: The ministers assume the caravan forded the Vesubia River about 15 miles south of Trintan and followed the established trail about 40 miles southeast. Then it was supposed to recross the river around Trollhattan, heading northeast toward the Plateau of Zyrd. (You can follow the route using the various Gazetteer maps, or the first D&D® Trail Map, TM1, *The Western Countries*.)

In fact, the caravan did take this route. However, Irila Kaze used magic to conceal its tracks. Below the Plateau of Zyrd, the caravan angled slightly east, then due north to the lower tip of the Plateau. Here, on a freestanding rock mesa hundreds of feet tall, stand the ruins of Barleycorn Monastery—and the imprisoned Brethren. (See Chapter 4.)

THE SCENE

The Wizards' Road, a hard-packed earthen road, starts nearly 50 feet wide as it runs south from Glan-

tri's capital. It follows the great Isoile and Vesubia Rivers; but as the river's course widens downstream toward the foothills of the Broken Lands, the road narrows. In some spots further south it may run no more than 20 feet wide, hardly room enough for two large carts to pass abreast.

On maps the road between Glantri and the southern border stretches straight, but on the journey it winds in gradual curves. The Isoile's heavily wooded banks and hilly environs keep travellers on the alert, for they can seldom tell what's coming around the bend before it's on them.

EVENT

The Dream

At the first night's camp, one or more player characters experience an enigmatic dream—the first of many in this adventure.

In the dream, the characters are standing at the bottom of a huge bowl made of tan stone. The sides of the bowl are etched with bizarre hieroglyphics; overhead, a blinding light shines down. From gray mist beyond the bowl, a foul-looking black ooze (much like a black pudding) seeps over the edge and into the bowl. It gurgles and bubbles. The player characters cannot evade the ooze or get out of the bowl.

As it touches the player character's feet, the ooze turns into black glass, trapping them. Flowers spring

up around their feet. The stems turn into clinging vines; as the vines rise, writhing, to cover their bodies, the player characters feel exhilarated with desire. For what, they cannot say—because the dreamers wake up.

DM Note: The dream's stone bowl resembles the ruins of Atacalpa, the player characters' arrival point in the Hollow World in Chapter 6. The black glass and flowers show up in Chapter 11.

A sending from Asterius, the trapped Immortal? Technically it is impossible for Asterius, who is inside the Hollow World, to send dreams through the anti-magical *World-Shield*. Treat it as an unexplained, ominous foreshadowing of the type often seen in adventure stories. More dreams follow once the characters reach the Hollow World; some dreams provide clues, either important or misleading or both.

INVESTIGATION

Taverns and Wayside Inns

Barkeepers along the Wizards' Road are fed up to here with patrols asking about the caravan. In tired, singsong voices they repeat all they know: that the caravan passed this point safely such-and-so many days ago; no, nobody in the bar observed anything unusual; no, they don't know what happened to it. Are the player characters going to stand all day asking questions, or will they buy a round of ales?

The player characters, like the Glantrian army patrols and other investigators, can narrow the caravan's disappearance to the stretch south of Trintan, 80 miles south of Glantri City. But then, they knew this already. (They also learn this at Fort Monteleone and other government outposts on their route.)

Worthwhile clues come from a more subtle approach. If the player characters lounge around a tavern without making pests of themselves, they can strike up casual conversations with the patrons. Conversation leads from the hostage princes to goblins in general—to the Broken Lands—to its strange history and folklore—to an elderly gent's dim recollection:

"Yeh, I think o' those Broken Lands as yer big boiling cauldron—like 'at kettle on'er fire there. Folks in that place get the skin boiled off'er their bones if they ain't kerrful. An' likeways, there's folks what go in on'er own, voluntary—t'see if they can stand th' heat, if y'see what I say.

"Like, I recollect my grandma tellin' me 'bout monks who lived out there. Monks! Human as you an' me, or leastways me. They lived out'n those forsaken mountains, growin' barley for bread an' preachin' t' the monsters. Even kept some o' them monsters upright an' behaved for, oh, long time.

"But like I'm sayin', that's a cauldron there, boil yer flesh after a time. Monsters finally got 'em. Never heard no more about 'em myself, an' been dragon's years now. Nossir, I dunno where this place was s'posed t'be at."

Clerical Spells—Gone!

A few days into the journey, clerics discover on arising in the morning that they have not received all their spells—nothing above 2nd level, in fact. Throughout the world, *clerics and paladins who serve any Immortal (except Thanatos) lack any spell higher than 2nd level!*

Thanatos has set his huge scheme into motion. The other Immortals have journeyed into the past, and he has delayed their return. Until they do, months from now, they cannot grant spells to their followers. Clerics and paladins must survive on the low-level magic that arises from their purity of spirit. Only Thanatos remains to provide magic to those who serve him—notably the Brethren.

The lack of spells creates panic through the Known World, but the player characters should be isolated from much of this. Otherwise, they may easily get sidetracked from their search for the caravan.

Optionally, you can say druidic spells of all levels remain intact, on the grounds that these spells arise from the druids' communion with nature.

In Chapter 6 the player characters encounter the captive Immortal, Asterius. That chapter suggests an optional way to allow player character clerics (only) to get higher-level spells. Until that point, observe the effect the lack of spells has on the party's clerics, so you can decide whether to grant the spells then.

ENTERING THE BROKEN LANDS

The road narrows; the grass gradually thins and dies out; gray clouds reach from the south. You see starved-looking rodents lapping at puddles in roadside ditches. A moist, hot wind blows toward you from brown foothills ahead. It feels like something large is breathing on you.

A wooden signpost by the road once must have held a warning. But most of the sign has been chewed away, as though by locusts or saw-worms; you can't read it. Still, as you pass, a spell activates: the signpost screams, in what sounds like ten different languages, "Danger! Go back!"

Civic-minded Glantrians have cast a conventional *magic mouth* spell on the post. The languages include most of those that the player characters speak.

Staging notes: The Broken Lands sequence should stress the terrain's devastation. No trees grow here; the rivers run brown with silt; mountains rise steep on their north faces, but slope down gently on the south—like broken calderas of overlapping blast craters.

Weather here is unpleasantly humid. Every animal lacks a limb or eye, or it carries some leprous sore. Almost everything you describe to the players here should repulse them, until the characters reach the

more hospitable Barleycorn Monastery ruins in the next chapter.

Shadows

The characters will obviously worry about orc and goblin raids, but in fact this is currently less of a problem. The numerous search parties seeking the caravan have either (a) driven orc raiders into hiding through superior numbers and weaponry, or (b) failed to do so, and the orcs are now pleasantly munching on their new victims' bones.

As for the goblins, Queen Yazar has decreed that her hordes must leave the search parties alone until they find the caravan. After that, it's open season!

Nuisances: Still, human-goblin hatred runs deep. Armed patrols won't attack the player characters, but other, younger members of the goblin tribes have little to do and lots of time on their hands. So they may idly follow the player characters, hoping to stir up trouble.

From the evening of their first day in the mountains, the player characters feel themselves watched. Then, as they investigate or make camp, a small rock hurtles from a cliffside and skips by them. It could hardly hurt a character even if it hit. Above, half a dozen young goblin hoods laugh and throw insults in their native tongue.

The pestering continues until the player characters reach Barleycorn Monastery in the next chapter. Fortunately, the toughs take time to sleep, just as the characters do.

This situation can go several ways.

1. The player characters can cleverly trick or frighten away the young thugs; award XP appropriate for defeating them.

2. The player characters can pick a fight with the youths; afraid of looking afraid, the young goblins follow through with the fight. Since they carry nothing but clubs, the player characters slaughter them. You may wish to decline XP awards for this pointless and unheroic brutality.

3. Unusual approaches may reduce the goblins' hostility. Friendly player characters could bribe or negotiate with them, perhaps trading supplies for tranquility. The goblins, being Chaotic, won't honor such an agreement for long; but clever players can defuse the situation's tension. Award XP as for a defeat.

The player characters can even collect a clue or two from the goblins. They know about the ruins atop the mesa south of Zyrd Plateau, though they have no idea this was a monastery. They don't know anything about the caravan, but they can give minor background details about Kano and Udan, the hostage princes.

Goblin toughs (6): AC 6; HD 1-1; hp 4; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; MV 90' (30'); AL C; THAC0 19; XP 5. Average height 4'. Their names are Big Hroot (the unofficial leader), Elokt Big-Nose, Garlak the Smelly, Krikk, Ongah, and Zark.

A Shepherd

A tough life, herding bighorn sheep in the Broken Lands. This life doesn't at all suit the goblin Roorgh, teenaged daughter of Atroogah One-Fang. Too bad—she's been doing it for two years, and she suspects she'll do it for the rest of her life.

The player characters run into her, somewhere on a blasted hillside where the sheep paw the ground for dusty weeds. She hasn't seen many humans, and she's deeply bored, so she hails them and tries to chat. Assuming headstrong player characters don't kill her on the spot, she engages them in small talk. And, should they ask, she gives them the solution to their quest.

Roorgh's story: Late in the afternoon a few days before, Roorgh saw the caravan camp beside the plateau, at a completely inappropriate spot and time. A party of horses rode off up a steep hillside. Later they returned; the caravan headed up the hill.

On the following days Roorgh took her herd to another part of the Broken Lands, and she only returned here today. So no search party has asked her questions before now. If the player characters behave at all politely (and by goblin standards this isn't much of a stretch), Roorgh gladly guides them to the spot—a couple of hours' walk away, at the southern tip of the Plateau of Zyrd.

Roorgh (young goblin): AC 7; HD 1-2; hp 4; #AT Nil; Dmg Nil; MV 90' (30'); Str 8, Int 9, Wis 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Cha 8; AL C; THAC0 Nil; XP 0. Height 3' 11".

Queen Yazar's Goblins

If the player characters miss the encounter with Roorgh, or slaughter her before she gives her clue, they continue into High Gobliny. There goblin warriors stop them. Suspicious player characters can look around (consult GAZ 10 for typical goblin camps and NPCs), but they find nothing of interest. Queen Yazar turns them back with a few snide remarks.

On the return trip, the player characters encounter Roorgh the shepherd or, if they murdered her, grief-stricken relatives burying her. She or they can offer a pointed clue about Barleycorn Monastery.

WHERE NEXT?

With the clue from Roorgh, above, the player characters know the direction the caravan took. This sends them up toward the monastery.

With the clue from the tavern, the player characters may even know where they're going. If they heard from the goblin toughs that there are ruins in this area, the characters can deduce that these are the ruins Irla Kaze and Kano learned about back in Glantri City.

Once the player characters enter this area—rugged and unsettled even compared to the rest of the Broken Lands—proceed to Chapter 4.

Three centuries ago this small, primitive complex housed the two dozen acolytes who followed Viscount Jamion II. Jamion's story, unique in the annals of nobility, began auspiciously with his birth to well-placed and favored aristocrats, his happy childhood, and his early ascendance to power after his father died in a horsing accident. Then came his "new truth."

A vision: Accidentally getting lost on an overland hunting trip, Viscount Jamion happened on a peasant farm. The farmer lived there alone, virtually a hermit, raising barley and some livestock. Jamion saw the farmer beating his plowhorse without mercy.

"My man, why do you beat that horse?" He called.

"I beat 'im that he don't make the mistake to think that this life 're any good."

Jamion disarmed the farmer, but the incident troubled him deeply for the rest of the trip and in the days that followed. After many sleepless nights, the troubled noble claimed to see a vision of humanity, "no man of more moment than a single corn of barley."

Jamion bequeathed his holdings to the peasants that worked them, gave away his property, and took up a mendicant life. Following another vision, he enlisted followers and erected Barleycorn Monastery in the most desolate place he could find: the Broken Lands.

The monastery: No doubt the orcs and gnolls would soon have made meals of these unarmed monks, except that Jamion's followers somehow constructed the entire monastery atop an almost unscalable plateau. Only a single thin rope gives access to the mesa.

More importantly, Jamion converted several orc and goblin leaders to his faith. Under their (and their successors') protection, the monastery survived for three generations.

Two centuries ago, after the Brethren fell from their reign of terror, High Gobliny tribesmen looked for a safe place to confine them. The monastery proved their only practical choice. The monks, still following Jamion's dictates long after his death, solemnly took up the guardianship of these evil beings.

The fall: As could be expected, nature eventually won out over faith; the goblin leaders' descendants refused to carry on the truce. They used magic to fly up to the plateau, raided the monastery, slew and ate all the monks, and demolished the buildings. By that time they had forgotten that anything lay under the monks' shrine.

So matters have stood for 200 years.

HOW THEY GET THERE

The climb uphill takes the party through barren shoals of rock the color of brindled horses. Every step kicks up goutts of dust, and hills loom steeply on either side. Now and again a player character spots a stand of weathered skulls on poles, posted as—what? Warning markers? Trophies? Something more?

The trail finally leads to a huge tawny-brown mesa, a freestanding flat-topped pillar hundreds of

feet high. Beyond it, across a wide gulch, stand a few more such mesas and, filling the horizon, the vast Plateau of Zyrd.

Evidence of the caravan: The characters notice deep wheel tracks (indicating heavily loaded wagons) leading to the base of the monastery's plateau. The tracks look old, and there's no sign of the caravan. It apparently vanished into air.

Scaling the plateau: No sign of a rope ladder. An accomplished thief or other climber can find handholds and footholds in the crumbly rock. A successful Climbing roll or skill check, or even a Dexterity check if necessary, lets the most agile character reach the top of the mesa. There, near the edge, sits a 300' coil of old rope tied to a thick yew-wood stake. Once rope touches the ground, other characters can scale the rock face relatively easily.

THE SCENE

Barleycorn Monastery consists of five stone buildings in a "beehive" style. Each structure is a small circular dome, about 25' across, that rises and tapers to a point.

The buildings: One, a small windmill, stands apart from the rest along the plateau's edge. The mill's grindstone lies in the dirt; only one wall of the windmill stands. There is nothing of interest here except a few animals. (See below under "Investigation.")

The other four buildings stood together in a broad meadow surrounded by fields of barley, now overgrown with weeds. Three of the four buildings are now ruined piles of rubble; part of the fourth still stands, black against the horizon like a scorched tree. One fallen building held the ovens where the monks baked ground barley into bread; the other two were living quarters, now home to a few (immobile and non-magical) skeletons.

What's left of the sole standing building, once the monks' place of worship, hides the entrance to an underground cell complex. The Barleycorn monks dug the complex to imprison and guard the Brethren. For more about the underground stronghold and its entrance, see "Interior Description" below.

Before the characters have a chance to search the area, run the following Event.

EVENT

Give the players Intelligence ability checks. Those who succeed hear a low coughing coming from the weeds nearby. They find one of the caravan drivers, a young man left for dead. In fact this man, Tylon, is nearly dead. Unless a cleric uses *cure all* on him, he will die as soon as he coughs out the following statement. Read this aloud, or paraphrase Tylon's story as dialogue with the player characters:

"I'm —" The young man coughs, hard. "I'm Tylon, from Kopstar town in Bergdhoven." Every word seems to hurt him. But he talks without

stopping, as though he's rehearsed what he wants to tell you, and he wants to get it all out before he goes.

"I hired on as a driver. Easy journey, I thought. Didn't much like Prince Kano, but we didn't have to see much of him. He spent all his time with that minister. Kaze, her name.

"Over a week back, Kano ordered us off the route. Said he wanted to check out a place his ancestors had lived once. We turned up into the mountains, went a ways, and camped. She waved her arms and said some things behind us, and our tracks disappeared! She and Kano rode up further for an hour, then came back in a fine mood.

"Two days back, Prince Udan comes up to meet us, like he knew we were up there all along. Those princes and Kaze led us to this rock tower here, and then we all climbed the rope to this old ruin. The three of them went down below there, under the building, and we all heard flames and explosions. None of us wanted to go help them, though, for they'd spooked us all by then.

"They came back up loaded with loot, but nobody I know got to see it. The princes said we'd be waiting here for a while. A few days, they said. Somebody asked why, and Kaze chanted something. A spell. It turned everybody friendly and trusting, looked like. Except me, but I didn't let on. Nobody asked anything more.

"Then last night, after dark, the three of them tensed up, like they'd heard a voice or something, and without a word to anyone they went back down below. I heard sounds, like chants and screams. Horrible sounds, all night.

"They came back up a few hours ago —" He coughs again, harder. "— And those princes looked all different, looking around like they'd never seen this place before—and moving like they'd never walked. Kano had a black monkey on his shoulder. It never made a sound. How'd he get a monkey, down there?

"We climbed back down to the caravan. Kaze told us all to stand still while she sprinkled this strange powder all around us and the wagons. Then she started to chant, and I felt funny. I ran. But suddenly there was Kano, right in front of me—didn't see him—laid a hand on me, that was all —" He's coughing harder now. "Left me for dead. I looked up and saw the caravan disappear! Poof, gone!

"Kano went back down with the minister. Udan floated away into the sky. Left me for dead—oh mercy—"

The Grasping Dark

If you like, improvise pathetic last messages that Tylon wants the player characters to pass along to his relatives. Poor Tylon soon dies, having finally exhausted his energy fighting off a terrible magical attack: the *grasping dark*.

Suddenly Tylon screams. You see the air shimmer around him, and there's an awful smell, like dead bodies. His skin is turning purple like a bruise, and then dead black. His clothing, too: It's all turning dark, as if night were falling, but just over him. He turns into a living, moving silhouette.

Let the characters take action, but nothing short of *cureall* can prevent Tylon's fate. The characters can't grab or hold Tylon, nor affect him in any way. They cannot enter the silhouette; it does not exist on this plane, nor on any the player characters can reach. Unless they cast *cureall*, keep reading:

Tylon screams harder, and now you see him again—*inside* the silhouette. He looks smaller, and then you realize he's receding from you into the distance, into the darkness inside the silhouette. And all around him, at his throat and his arms and his legs, you see dozens of hands. Grayish green hands, with the wrong number of fingers—and no fingernails, but claws.

The hands drag Tylon's body down, further and further into his own silhouette. Just before he vanishes in the dark, you see blood streaming from his nose and mouth. Then there's nothing left but the silhouette, and that vanishes like a shadow in sunlight.

Establish the *grasping dark* as an eerie and grotesque fate that the player characters simply cannot fight without tremendous magic. This should convince them that their adversaries in this adventure deserve to be called evil.

For more information about the *grasping dark*, consult the appendix to this adventure.

Healing Tylon

If the player characters heal Tylon with a *cureall* spell, he survives and can accompany the party through this adventure. However, because of his inexperience, he's probably more liability than help. Though endlessly grateful and fiercely loyal to his rescuers, Tylon would prefer just to leave the area and resume his peaceful life far away.

Tylon, caravan driver: Tylon is a normal 0-level human with no weapons or armor. He's 5'9", weighs a rangy 150 lbs., and has black hair and green eyes. He speaks in a tenor voice that is ordinarily pleasant but is now agonized.

INVESTIGATION

Half an hour's careful search of the plateau and its base reveals the following clues:

1. A small, well-made clasp earring made of beaten copper. A successful Intelligence ability check identifies this earring as a type worn by upper-class

merchant women in Glantri. (This is Irla Kaze's earring. She lost it when, preparing to enter the underground stronghold beneath the monastery, she removed her jewelry and other incidentals.)

2. Droplets of viscid, grayish slime that evaporate only slowly in the sun. Most of the drops lie beside the cart tracks at the point where the tracks vanish. Diligent searchers may note other droplets in twos and threes around the area. Spells or items that analyze magic can identify this slime as the waste product of a powerful magical creature.

(These come from the slug-like form of Koresh Teyd; see "NPCs" in the Appendix.)

3. *Detect magic* reveals a faint outline on the grass around the last length of caravan tracks. This outline forms a complete loop as wide as a wagon and as long as ten wagons, obviously the length of the caravan. *Detect magic* cannot reveal the function of the line. (Irla Kaze and the Brethren used it to cast the enchantment that shrank the caravan to portable size. See "New Magic" in the Appendix.)

Animal Testimony

Where Viscount Jamion's monks once toiled, now only wildlife survives. In the standing ruins lives an aged gray barn owl (female), and nearly 80 wood mice nest under the wall. A few moles burrow underground, and a male pine marten (a small ferret-like predator) prowls the ruined mill. Clerics or druids can communicate with these animals, but they have little to tell.

Aboveground: The owl can describe the monks who lived here long ago, and the fall of the monastery to goblin raiders. The owl and marten can describe recent events here, though in confusing terms; they obviously understood nothing that happened. Their accounts are useful mainly for the closely-observed appearances of the hostage princes and Irla Kaze. See "NPCs" in the appendix for physical descriptions.

Also, the animals observe that after they returned to the surface from below, both princes gave off scents different from their previous ones. (This indicates the princes have been taken over, though the player characters may not realize it.)

Underground: The moles and mice know nothing of these events. They do know all about the original layout of the underground complex, before the princes and Kaze plundered it. Note that the moles' burrow leads down into the food storage room of the complex, and that the princes slaughtered several moles hiding there (see the description below).

What Really Happened Here

Seven days ago: Irla Kaze arrived here with the Prince Kano. Sensing the Magic Chamber in the underground complex (see below) via *clairvoyance*, she *teleported* into it, then blew out every door in the complex with a *meteor swarm*. She didn't dare free the Brethren from their captivity, because it would signal the Immortals. She and the princes looted the rest of the rooms.

Two days ago: Down in the Hollow World, Thanatos decoyed the Immortals away into the time-stream. Then, through his Schattentalen servants, he sent a burrower, or great annelid, tunneling up toward the monastery. He commanded the Schattentalen to follow the annelid and guide his Outer World servants down to the Hollow World.

Thanatos telepathically alerted Kaze that the ceremony could proceed after the annelid opened the magical ward. Kaze magically signaled Prince Udan, who with his goblin escorts was now pretending to search for the missing caravan. Prince Udan told his escort party to make camp, then rode alone to join the caravan.

Yesterday: The Annelid finally reached its destination, opened up a channel in the Magic Chamber's floor, and destroyed the protective ward there, dying in the process. Shortly thereafter, Kaze and princes staged a lengthy ceremony to free the Brethren. Assuming the shapes of familiars (a monkey and a slug-like creature) the Brethren took over both princes. The Schattentalen party arrived soon after.

Earlier today: The three wizards emerged and shrank the caravan, assaulting Tylon when he tried to escape. Kano, now a vehicle for Brother Simm's power, afflicted Tylon with the Grasping Dark. Then Kaze and Kano/Simm took the shrunken caravan and returned to the annelid shaft with their escort party of Schattentalen.

Meanwhile, Udan flew out, found his servants camping elsewhere, and sent them along this way. The trip has taken them most of the day, and in that interval Udan returned and went down to the Hollow World, leaving the elves behind as guides for his servants.

Now the player characters have arrived. When they explore the complex, they encounter the Schattentalen guides, who mistake them for Udan's servants.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION =

The entrance to the underground complex is plainly visible in the floor of the standing building. Once a concealed trapdoor covered it,—so well that the goblin raiders missed it when they destroyed the monastery a generation ago. But Irla Kaze reduced the door to so many oak splinters littering the earthen floor. An observant player character may note that the wreckage shows the trapdoor was blown apart from below.

A wooden ladder leads six feet down to a staircase five feet wide and barely six feet high. This flight of stairs, roughly carved from living rock, winds down into total darkness. Dust gathers in every corner, but fine layers of it that once coated the floor have recently been blown away.

The low-ceilinged staircase winds down past two watchposts, also carved from the bedrock. Each post, a claustrophobic cylinder barely large enough to cock a crossbow in, is blocked with stone mortarwork. Each wall once held an arrow slit, but the poorly-made mortarwork has collapsed to thigh level.

At the bottom of the stairs, some 20 feet below

the surface, another poorly-laid stone wall blocks the passage. The wall holds a thick oak door, which now hangs loose from the bottom hinge. Obviously someone beat the player characters here, and from the shine on the broken metal hinges, they came through recently.

The Stronghold

Overview: This place, a natural limestone cavern enlarged by the Barleycorn monks, is a total wreck. The three powerful magicians shattered every door, and have left behind nothing but trash and corpses. . . and a few clues for alert player characters. The characters have the (perhaps unusual) experience of wandering through a dungeon that looks like dungeons usually do *after* the players have finished with them!

Central passage: The floor is rough brown rock, marred by the stumps of a few cut stalagmites. The soot-covered ceiling, about eight feet high on average but very uneven, still holds many small stalactites. Characters may well suspect their shadows of harboring attackers, but the wizards killed all these.

The air, thick and suffocating, smells of dust and mold. The complex is dark, though an empty iron sconce protrudes at eye level on each wall.

Food stores: These two low rooms once held the barley bread, dried fruit, and potatoes that nourished the monks. Animals later gnawed through the wooden crates and devoured the contents. The princes and Kaze shattered the crates in their search for loot.

In the room further from the stairs, a wall has collapsed and revealed the secret chamber behind the wine cellar (see below).

Burrow: In the room nearer the stairs, behind a patch of stalagmites, a tunnel leads to the burrow of a mole family, described above under "Animal Testimony." The tunnel was once a foot wide, but a *fire ball* or two from Kaze has widened it to three. The missiles also baked and charred the tunnel walls, and incinerated the mother mole and most of her cubs.

One single mole cub, uninjured but blind and helpless, still lives in the burrow, mewling pathetically. This cub does not attack and is worth no XP. A player character can try to adopt it as a pet, but keeping it alive may prove a problem.

Wine cellar: The monks distilled small quantities of grain alcohol for sacramental use. The casks here, long since emptied through evaporation, have been split and shattered.

At the back of this low room, the mortared stone wall concealed a secret chamber. The door opened with a pull on a concealed latch. The wizards have pulled that latch and incidentally destroyed the door.

The chamber once held the monks' meager treasures, donated to them over the generations by grateful supplicants. The loot is gone; nothing remains but the smashed bodies of its guardians, a couple of large black widow spiders.

Scriptorium: Here the monks spent their few free hours painstakingly hand-copying religious texts. The chamber contains wooden desks, high stools, and an

open basket filled with blank scrolls. Everything here remains intact, but the dust tracks show that everything has been thoroughly searched. Nothing of value remains.

When goblins slaughtered the monks, one spirit remained here as a haunt. The wizards destroyed it. (Optionally, they may only have chased it away temporarily. The haunt returns, to attack or inform the player characters as desired.)

Scroll library: A cloud of ash fills this room when the characters enter. The monks stored their copied texts here; the wizards searched all of them, found a few valuable spells, and torched the rest, then stamped the ashes.

The stamping dislodged a small item from Kaze's cape—a horse. This shrunken horse, one of those that pulled a cart in the caravan, is now an inanimate statuette a few inches high. Thanatos's magic has shrunk the entire caravan to portable size, and Kaze now carries it with her in the Hollow World.

Dispel magic instantly returns the horse to full size, leaving it unharmed though frightened. If a priest or druid communicates with the horse, it remembers nothing after Kaze sprinkled powder around it and the caravan.

Statue room: An especially supportive acolyte, a convert from a wealthy but dissatisfied existence, donated a magical statue to the monastery upon joining. The statue depicted a beautiful toga-clad maiden carrying a harp. To those of good intent it sang beautiful ever-changing melodies; to evildoers, it sang a deadly, hypnotic siren-song. The wizards have smashed this statue into several large pieces, dispelling its magic beyond recovery. However, the statue can be repaired and has 25 gp value as an ordinary object d'art.

The Magic Chamber

At the end of the complex a secret door stands wide open, its limestone surface shattered. The Barleycorn monks made this door and hollowed out the chamber beyond when they became reluctant trustees of the Brethren.

The dome-shaped chamber, 25' across and 10' high at the center, shows much more careful workmanship than the amateurish complex outside. The limestone floor and dome, both smooth, are marked with runic wards; the wizards have dispelled the magic in these wards. At the far wall, a 15'-diameter tunnel erupts from the floor and climbs partway up the wall. This hole has eaten away the far edges of a mystic ward painted on the floor.

The mystic ward: Once charged with powerful magic, this ward confined the evil spirits of the Brethren within. By destroying the mystic ward, the hole's maker, a great annelid, unleashed its protective magic and died on the spot. It now lies at the bottom of the hole, in a larger chamber. Slight traces of magic remain on the ward and can be detected with *detect magic*.

The containers: In the center of the ward lie two cracked amphorae, long clay vessels usually used for

storing wine. These, engraved with numerous runes that formed a magical barrier, confined the spirits of the Brethren—something like a *magic jar* spell. Though they are now useless, the amphorae retain a strong residual aura of magic.

The spikes: Studded on the dome's walls are rusty iron spikes, which also worked as magical wards. Each spike measures six inches long and weighs five pounds. A combined Strength score of 24 or more can pull a spike out of the wall.

These spikes were enchanted for deadliness against the Brethren. Though a spike inflicts only 1d6 damage to a normal target, against the Brethren familiars a spike attack does 4d6 damage, and the Brethren cannot regenerate this damage. The enchantment is visible to *detect magic*. The Brethren did not bother to dispel this enchantment, thinking they would never encounter the spikes again.

A player character wielding a spike can use no other weapon, but can carry a shield. Because of a spike's clumsiness, its wielder always loses initiative in combat. The Brethren do not detect the spike's enchantment unless they actually see it. It is dispelled as though cast by a 20th level magic-user.

THE CAVERN

The annelid hole, the only other exit besides the secret door, stretches straight down 20 feet, then spirals gently down and away from the Magic Chamber. It eventually levels out into a perfectly round tunnel 15' in diameter.

Shortly the tunnel opens onto blackness. No ceiling or walls that the player characters can see, though the floor continues with a slight downward slope. This giant 100' high cavern, the product of ground-water erosion within and below the plateau, does not connect with the larger Broken Lands network of caverns that the Shadow Elves use. Nothing inhabits this cavern—or at least, nothing did before the annelid burrowed into it.

DM Note: If you're playing this module without the others in this trilogy, especially HWA2, *Nightrage*, you may wish to delete the annelid the player characters encounter here. Simply assume the Schattentalen party (see below) used powerful magic to create the tunnel into the Brethren's chamber. The burrower here foreshadows the plot of the second module of this trilogy.

The Annelid

Up ahead you see a rock wall. But then you look more closely. It's rock-colored, grayish-brown, but the wall curves sharply back. It's covered with scabs. And it's segmented like a giant worm.

The annelid, young and small for its species, measures 40' from tip to tip and eight feet in diameter. Closer examination of the annelid's worm-like body reveals a dense clump of sensory tentacles, each as

long as a player character's arm, at the front of the body.

Just behind this sensory clump, observers spot a small, bright red creature that resembles a crab without a shell, all barbs and prongs and claws. The creature, a symbiont that the Schattentalen used to control the annelid, is crushed and dead. Strong-stomached characters can pry it away from the burrower's body; this reveals that the symbiont had driven two long fangs into the annelid's flesh just behind the walnut-sized brain. Investigation can't deduce anything of use about this creature.

Surprise attack: The annelid is dead. But among primitive creatures, sometimes the body doesn't learn the brain is dead for quite a while. Any attack on the annelid's body provokes reflex thrashing and rolling. Roll for surprise; any surprised player character within ten feet of the annelid takes 2d6 damage, unless the character makes a successful Dexterity check to leap out of the way.

The Escort Party

As soon as the player characters make a sound, an accented voice rings out from further down in the cavern: "*Angalad!*" (This is a colloquial greeting in the Schattentalen tongue.) "We have waited for you long enough to grind the rocks to sand. What has kept you?" Go to the next chapter.

If the player characters are silent: Have they really made no noise at all? If so, they hear voices further down in the darkness. Sound carries well; the language sounds Elvish.

The characters can sneak up on the Schattentalen party. But as soon as they get within 60', they will be spotted. The leader (described in the next chapter) says, "Hold your weapons low. We have been sent to guide you." Then proceed to the next chapter.

WHERE NEXT?

The players should deduce that something nasty was imprisoned under Barleycorn Monastery, the hostage princes and Minister Kaze set it loose, and it's headed downward. Once they understand this, let their characters head down too.

If the player characters decide to head back up and search for Prince Udan, who's already returned here and gone below, they encounter Yazar's escort of four goblin warriors below the plateau. (Use the statistics in Chapter 1.)

These goblins aren't in the mood for a fight; they're spooked. If they have a chance to converse, the goblins say they saw "a floating monster" (Prince Udan) flying up toward the plateau. The goblins positively refuse to have anything to do with the characters, the search for the princes, or the monastery. They think the "monster" has the princes; and in that case, rescuing them is more than their duties are worth!

The only way further into the adventure is downward.

In this section the player characters journey deep beneath Barleycorn Monastery—in fact, through the thickness of the world! How? They first encounter a party of Schattentalfen, servants of the Brethren. The elves mistake the player characters for other servants of the Brethren, servants whom the elves were told to await. The characters can attack the elves or play along. They may learn something of the danger to their world, though not—note!—about the Hollow World.

The elves force a captive earth elemental to cast a *distance distortion* spell (see “New Magic” in the appendix). This spell lets the player characters travel quickly—*more quickly than they realize*—down a 1000-mile annelid tunnel, through the *World-Shield* and up to the Hollow World.

THE SCENE

This cavern measures a hundred feet from pillared floor to stalactite-frosted ceiling. It echoes with a slow drip of water, and the air is cool and moist. Characters of 6th to 8th level have probably seen caverns before; this one is typical.

One prominent feature: a wide, shallow groove that stretches down the sloping floor away from the annelid. The creature ate this path while travelling across the cavern.

INVESTIGATION

The first elf to approach the player characters is an elderly Schattentalf woman, whose small frame and withered features discourage the characters from regarding her as an immediate danger. If they attack instantly, go to “Approaching the Elves,” below.

Assuming they don’t try to kill her on sight, the woman—Linariel Falranna, leader of the group—offers her greetings in Elvish: “Sweet air and clear tunnels to you, wayfarers”—a friendly greeting, though she doesn’t sound pleased to see the player characters.

Pendants of Many Tongues: If none of the player characters speaks Elvish, Linariel offers them a handful of jewelry: a clutch of white stone pendants, suspended from black metal chains so thin and so finely worked that they look like black silk thread. Knowledgeable characters recognize them as Glantrian make.

When the player characters wear them, these *pendants of many tongues* allow them to converse in any human or demihuman language. However, the items do not provide literacy in these languages, nor do they translate humanoid languages (orc, goblin, etc.) or speech further removed from humanity.

“The Brethren gave me these to give to you. These devices are of your land, so they tell me. The Brethren order you to follow them with all haste to the Red Lands, else your lives are forfeit.”

Minister Itrila Kaze procured the pendants for the servants of the hostage princes, so that they could continue to serve their masters in the Hollow World. But the player characters get them instead. Even if

the player characters can speak with Linariel, she eventually offers them the pendants anyway. (These are primarily plot devices to ease the logistics of language barriers in the Hollow World. If they would unbalance the campaign, consider giving the pendants a time-limit of operation, or only a set list of languages they translate.)

The Escort Party

These three Schattentalfen travelled here—though even now they’re not sure where “here” is—with a larger expedition of a dozen elves, all high-ranking officials in a mining operation beneath Tarthis. (The player characters have never heard of such a place, but this shouldn’t strike them as suspicious; they don’t know every place in the world, after all. This should simply indicate these elves come from far away.)

All these elves received identical dream visions from, they believe, their patron, Atzanteotl. The entity appeared in a lengthy dream as a cool white sphere hanging in black emptiness—the Moon, a concept foreign to Schattentalfen. (This was actually Thanatos posing as Atzanteotl, his fellow Entropy Immortal.)

“Follow this tunnel,” said the entity, revealing a long circular shaft going deep in the earth. He also conveyed to them the location and use of a lost magical device, “a stone that will let you travel easily.” So ordered, they collected an earth elemental from their mining operation, located the tunnel of their visions, and performed the ceremony Atzanteotl described. They climbed down, walked for some time, then climbed up another shaft.

The Brethren were waiting for them. This, too, Atzanteotl had predicted, and the Schattentalfen swore their allegiance as instructed. Most of the party set out on the return journey with the Brethren and “the human spellcrafter” (Itrila Kaze), using their own conjured elemental and *distance distortion*; the three elves here remained behind to escort the later arrivals—servants of Prince Udan. Fortunately for the player characters, the Brethren neglected to mention that the servants are goblins.

The three Schattentalfen escorts:

Linariel Falranna, Leader

In her 440 years Linariel has achieved honor as a warrior. The second daughter in one of the city of Issarthyl’s prosperous families (an offshoot of the Felistyr clan), Linariel gladly supported her elder sister’s leadership of the family—until the sister, Anfala, was assassinated by a junior rival.

Linariel fulfilled her familial debt of revenge; but when her ceiling trap fell and crushed the rival, it unfortunately also crushed a daughter of the Elf-King. The Schattentalfen regarded Linariel with a mixture of emotions that was, for them, completely natural: admiration for her just revenge, and hatred for her crime. She is now outcast from her family, a freelance mercenary, yet she retains prestige among the Schattentalfen as a fighter.

Appearance: Four feet seven inches, 100 lbs. White skin and hair (like almost all Schattentalfen), yellow eyes. Stocky build; scale mail (AC 6); black moleskin trousers and boots.

Possessions: Linariel holds the stone that conjures the earth elemental (see below), and she has a sample of Treesblood liquor that Irla Kaze gave her (a sort of diplomatic present). Linariel carries a short sword, dagger, and a bola coiled on her shoulder. Hidden in a secret compartment of her wooden canteen is a *potion of invulnerability*.

Role in the adventure: Not openly hostile yet curiously aloof, Linariel represents to the player characters the friendliest side of the Schattentalfen they are likely to see. Linariel is also the PC's primary information source; Henneth, is not intelligent, Galen dislikes the player characters intensely. (For both of these NPCs, see below.)

Linariel Falranna: AC 6; 7th level elf; hp 23; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 or by spell; MV 120' (40'); Save E7; AL C; THAC0 15. Spells (number per level): 3/2/2/1.

Henneth Brogolas, Aide

Henneth follows Linariel everywhere, loyal to a fault. He served in her Schattentalfen patrols, admired her leadership, and through dogged persistence rose to become her aide-de-camp. Though Linariel no longer leads a patrol, Henneth remains worshipfully at her side. He doesn't like humans, but if Linariel cares to associate with them, Henneth will put up with it.

Appearance: Five feet two, 130 lbs.—for a Schattentalf, virtually a hulk. Henneth wears badly-kept leather armor (AC 7) and stained brown boots.

Possessions: Long sword (a rare weapon among this clan of Schattentalfen), dagger. Henneth carries a plain copper flask that supposedly contains a *potion of human control*. Actually it is merely a *potion of delusion*.

Role in the adventure: Muscle and occasional comic relief.

Henneth Brogolas: AC 7; 4th level elf; hp 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 or by spell; MV 120' (40'); Save E4; AL C; THAC0 17.

Galen Lauric, Guide

Galen is 28 years old—a child by Schattentalfen standards, but what a precocious child! He has already killed 20 Azcans and other humans in battle or by honorable stealth, and he would not mind increasing his total. The player characters should regard him with suspicion. Yet Galen obeys Linariel's commands in letter and spirit; he is a good warrior, though prone to hotheaded action.

Appearance: Five feet, 110 lbs. Purple tunic and black trousers and boots. The usual pale skin, white hair, and green eyes—but Galen, like many Schattentalfen, suffers from a minor disfigurement: His mouth is drawn back in a perpetual grin, a rictus that he overcomes only with effort. The player characters may think Galen is mocking them; often that may be

true, but they can never know for sure.

Possessions: Short sword, blowgun, dagger. Carries a decorated metal flask containing very pure water; Galen neurotically avoids what he calls "human taint" in his food and drink.

Role in the adventure: If you intend to play the other modules in this trilogy, try first to provoke a rivalry between Galen and one of the player characters; and second, to keep Galen alive during the Azcan attack in the next chapter. When the other elves perish, Galen should betray (or literally backstab) the player characters, then escape down a tunnel into the maze of passages beneath the battle site. Then Galen can return in the second module as a villain.

Galen Lauric: As for Henneth, above.

Approaching the Elves

The two subsections that follow treat the two main options the player characters can take. Either choice leads to the same result: They use the *distance distortion* spell to journey to the Hollow World. Only the story mechanisms, and the staging once their journey ends, differ.

Attacking

The player characters can make short work of these elves.

They quickly find the *pendants of many tongues* and the elemental conjuring stone on the bodies. By handling the stone, they may inadvertently summon the elemental, or Linariel might have summoned it during the battle to help the elves. Either way, the elemental asks the player characters for help.

"My people suffer," it (he) says, in a voice like low wind in the tunnels. "Help them. I can move you to them." The elemental, named Gabbro (see below), says little more. Gabbro transports the player characters via a *distance distortion* spell, just as he would if the elves were still controlling him.

His destination in the Hollow World lies hundreds of miles away from the volcanic foundry that imprisons his people. Gabbro dares not bring the player characters any closer, or he risks being recaptured.

Go to "In the Tunnel," below.

Questioning

Assuming the players feel like talking instead of fighting, the Schattentalfen escorts know little about most topics the player characters explore; at most, they drop a few tempting clues, just enough to lure the player characters downward. Their answers hint that the control of the hostage princes is just a small part of a larger situation. Sample answers:

Where they came from: "We come from another cavern nearby. Yet though it cannot be more than a few hundred paces from here as the mole burrows, we can reach it only by a long climb down and back up." The Schattentalfen do not clearly understand their own *distance distortion* spell, since Thanatos provided it. They don't know of the *World-Shield* or

the outer world. Random remarks from the player characters may provoke the elves' curiosity, such as references to "night," the Moon, or the sky.

Who they work for: "We serve Atzanteotl, patron and protector, He That Offers Revenge. Atzanteotl told us that your masters, the Brethren, also serve him." The elves do not know the term "Immortal," let alone "Entropy"; Atzanteotl is their patron, nothing more or less. The elves do not know the Brethren or Irla Kaze personally.

The caravan: The Schattentalfen know nothing of this. They saw no caravan. Kaze kept the shrunken caravan in a bulky burlap sack.

The Great Annelid: "Our miners use these creatures," Linariel says simply. "They tunnel well." She and the escorts know little about mining, annelids, or the parasitic creature on the annelid's back. Given her bland manner, the player characters may abandon their suspicions about the annelids' role in this adventure. . . temporarily, at least.

Where they're taking the player characters: "We are to take you to Tarthis in the Nithian Desert, and deliver you to your master, the one called Prince Udan."

(So the Schattentalfen believe. As it turns out, their conjured earth elemental intends to betray them; his *distance distortion* spell will carry them instead into an ambush in the Azcan Empire. See the end of this chapter.)

At this point Linariel offers the player characters their language pendants, if she hasn't yet. Once the player characters have gotten the *pendants of many tongues*, go to the first Event below.

EVENTS

Summoning the Elemental

If the player characters make an alliance (however uneasy) with the elves, Linariel summons an earth elemental to expedite their passage through the world's crust. Read the boxed description below.

If the player characters have killed or driven off the elves, they find the conjuring stone on Linariel's body or on the cavern floor. When they move to the lower annelid tunnel, the stone automatically summons an earth elemental; adapt the boxed description that follows.

When Linariel holds the stone at arm's length above the cave floor, the rock at her feet begins to liquefy and bubble. A shiny pillar of rock slowly grows to meet the stone. Rock veins and lumps move over the pillar's surface like ripples on water.

The pillar's blunt point touches the stone, and Linariel draws her hand back. The rock keeps rising. It engulfs the stone. Then a rift grows in the pillar, near the ground—it deepens—it splits the pillar's base in half—and you realize these are legs. Before you stands an earth elemental, 12 feet tall and six feet around, lumpy and glistening like fresh lava.

This earth elemental is named Gabbro. It, or he, is a captive high-level cleric, one of many elementals that the wizard Korish Teyd of the Brethren is holding in Nithia in the Hollow World. The player characters may visit these trapped elementals in the second module of this series.

If you are playing this module alone, ignore these details. Assume that the elves use this elemental for easy transport, and leave it at that.

Gabbro: A device elemental (see Expert rules, p. 49)—AC 0; HD 12; hp 50; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8; MV 60' (20'); Save F12; THAC0 9; AL N; XP 1,100. On the Elemental Plane of Earth Gabbro is a 17th level cleric, but in this setting he has no clerical abilities. He is non-violent by nature and tries not to harm the player characters.

At Linariel's command, Gabbro lumbers to the aGreatd tunnel, flows around its edge, and seems to stretch down into its depths. "Quickly," says Linariel, and two of the Schattentalfen rush to climb down. The third waits for the player characters to follow, then brings up (or down) the rear.

In the Tunnel

As you climb down, you find footholds exactly where you would hope them to be—it's almost as easy as climbing down a ladder. At one point it feels like the foothold widens beneath your foot, making a more secure hold.

The walls of the tunnel are marked with stripes of color as thin as hairs. Strange fissures stretch around the tunnel, but they're no wider than a fingernail. You've never seen such markings before.

The air feels thick and charged, as though lightning were about to strike.

These effects result from the *distance distortion* spell. The stripes and fissures are layers of rock and cross-tunnels, all compressed to a thousandth of their former width. The spell also straightens the tunnel so the party can traverse it.

With every step, the player characters travel another mile downward.

Detect magic reveals the spell's effect, and it indicates the presence of the earth elemental, Gabbro, at every point in the wall of the tunnel. Gabbro can hear everything the player characters say, but cannot respond while enacting the spell. Gabbro is also producing hand-and footholds to ease the climb.

For purposes of *dispel magic*, treat the *distance distortion* spell as 36th level magic—so player character magic-users should have no chance to dispel it. If they somehow do so while in the tunnel, assume the collapsing spell deposits the travellers at the far end instantly. (Otherwise the party would be stranded deep within the world's crust, making the storyline hard to rescue.)

At one point, about four or five hundred yards down, you feel a momentary dizziness. At this point the tunnel goes solid gray, with no colored stripes or fissures. It levels out abruptly, and you can walk. But it twists back and forth, and you almost lose your sense of direction. Something must be wrong with the ground here—now and then you lose your balance, but you can't see why.

The party has reached the *World-Shield*. Here its anti-magic effects resist the *distance distortion* spell. The player characters must traverse the 100 yards or so of the *Shield* without benefit of the spell's distorting effects. Also, spells cast against the walls of the *Shield* have no effect. (Physical attacks work normally.)

Note, though, that the original *distance distortion* spell still functions beyond the *Shield*—it "connects" the two sides. This is possible because the great annelid tunneled through the *Shield*, making it possible for magical energy to travel through the hole. The player characters will learn more about the effects of holes in the *World-Shield* in the second module of this series.

The player characters are falling because of the *Shield's* unpredictable gravity. This disorients them more than they realize. If the players ask what direction their characters are moving in, give them an arbitrary compass direction. What's important is that they are shifting gravity planes—moving from "outside" gravity to "inside" gravity.

The tunnel straightens out again, but now you're climbing back up. The colored stripes and fissures come back, and the handholds and footholds are placed as easily as before.

The *distortion* spell resumes after the player characters leave the *World-Shield*. Though nothing they do reveals the truth, the characters are still heading downward. They are climbing away from the *World-Shield's* gravity layer, into the Hollow World.

Betraying the Truth

With a last few steps, you climb out of the tunnel. The air grows clean and breathable again. It felt like you climbed just as far back up as you did down—so you can't be more than a few hundred yards away from where you started. Actually, you've just traded one tunnel for another, a shaft 15 feet square. It rises on a gentle slope from where you are to a bright, sunlit entrance about 50 feet to your right. To your left, the shaft extends into darkness.

Here, a thousand miles from where they started, the player characters are even further away than the Schattentalfen expected—not in the Schattentalfen

caverns, but beneath the ruins of Atacalpa in the Aztlan Mountains, hundreds of miles north in the Hollow World!

Gabbro has betrayed the elves, in revenge for their cruelty against him and his fellow elementals. (If the elves are not along, Gabbro has taken the player characters here because he dares not risk capture by bringing them closer to the site of his former captivity.)

The realization: The Schattentalfen instantly recognize that they are somewhere strange. But Gabbro has escaped, and under the *Spell of Preservation* they cannot conjure him back.

Galen, the hotheaded youth, finds some pretext to blame the player characters. "These humans are conspiring with the treacherous elemental! Justice must be served!" He draws his blade. This may lead to a fight on the spot, but Linariel tries to defuse the tension. If the player characters cooperate, she can restrain Galen. Then, all weapons drawn, the Schattentalfen and player characters head up the tunnel and into the next chapter.

STAGING NOTES

Keep the trip through the crust mysterious. The elves answer few questions, because they themselves know little about what's happening or where they are. Gabbro cannot speak what he knows in the elves' presence, and he lacks the vocabulary to communicate important details. No other information sources here are reliable.

The players should certainly suspect that you're putting something over on them. One way to maintain the element of surprise is to fool them into thinking the player characters have entered another plane of the multiverse.

The circumstances of the *distance distortion* spell bear a resemblance to a wormhole between the planes; subtly encourage the players to speculate on this. Given the scenery and Gabbro's presence, they might believe they are in the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Maintain their confusion as long as possible. That way, the shock of their emergence into the Hollow World will be all the greater.

WHERE NEXT?

With the party's passage through the tunnel, the spell lapses, Gabbro departs, and the player characters are now stranded a thousand miles from home. They can try to get back, but after a short time in the tunnel they realize they've magically covered many miles. It's too far to climb back!

Note, also, that the player characters are now affected by the *Spell of Preservation*. Certain magic no longer works for them, as described in the Campaigning section of the boxed set. This, too, should convey that they are *somewhere else*. They may take this as proof that they are, in fact, in another dimension.

Go to the next chapter to reveal the truth.

The characters and their escort emerge in the ruins of Atacalpa, shown on the map of the Azcan Empire in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. The ruins lie in the Aztlan Mountains, just north of the Bay of Colima and a dozen hexes southwest ("southwest" using Hollow World directions) of Chitlcan. The scale of the map is 40 miles per hex. This location allows the player characters to choose freely from the three paths that lead to the three Hollow World segments of this adventure.

Atacalpa, though, slightly predisposes players to choose the Azcan section (i.e., this module) first. Should you wish to force a different path, situate the characters' entry elsewhere in the Hollow World.

For instance, to make the Nithian section of the adventure (HWA2, *Nightrage*) more attractive as first choice, situate the entry point at the Azcan ruins of Axateotl, some 500 miles south on the Gulf of Aztlan. Use the following Atacalpa description for those ruins, changing terrain details as needed.

To make a journey to Shahjapur (HWA3, *Nightstorm*) the likeliest first choice, have the player characters emerge on an isle in the Merry Pirates Sea, such as Baraga or the volcano on Makai. The nearest trading port, with clues pointing to Shahjapur, substitutes for the port of Colima in this module's approach (see "Where Next?" at the end of this chapter).

This text assumes an entry point at Atacalpa.

HOW THEY GET THERE

A few paces up the sloping tunnel brings the player characters into what looks like a large stone bowl, open to the sky. Just now the sky is clouded with a titanic fogbank that has rolled off the Northern Atlass Ocean.

If they follow the tunnel in the other direction, the player characters emerge on a grassy mountainside a few dozen yards from the stone bowl. (Run the Azcan ambush, described below, at that location instead of the stone bowl.)

Important: Nothing yet tells the players that their characters have arrived in the Hollow World. This could be any ruin on their own world or even on another plane.

THE SCENE

The ruin of Atacalpa ("High View" in the Azcan tongue) dates from the time of worship of the Immortal Otzitiotl. The builders, a subordinate tribe called the Chochomec, migrated to Oltec lands centuries ago, when Atzanteotl's brutal ceremonies supplanted older, more benevolent practices.

This ruined religious site, a huge stone bowl at the hollowed summit of a mountain, uses a style of architecture not seen in the Azcan Empire today. Atacalpa's cyclopean blocks, lining a hemispherical basin, bear deeply etched outlines of irregular shapes.

Not until the clouds clear, suddenly (see below), will the player characters realize that these shapes correspond to the continental coastlines of the Hollow World. The Chochomec constructed a model of what they could see of the Hollow World; the far half of the world is lost in the glare from the central sun. The Chochomec worshipped the entire Hollow World vista, regarding it as the womb of their patron entity of fertility.

Surroundings: Part of the bowl has fallen away into rubble. This part corresponds to the extreme left edge of the Hollow World map's northern hemisphere—the un-

named continent bounded by the Tukluk and Grey Seas, the Mer of Utat, and the Sea of Eadh. So player characters cannot learn of that continent's existence here.

Beyond the gaping hole, the player characters can glimpse dense bushes, a narrow dirt trail, and, in the distance, a terraced slope overgrown with weeds.

Player characters cannot see the rest of the site's surroundings until they leave the bowl. Then they discover vestiges of an ancient village: mossy chunks of adobe wall, reinforced with wood stakes and charred by fire; stone cairns, possibly grave markers; and a midden, or garbage heap, long since overgrown.

The mountains, 12,000 feet high, steep and marked by knife-sharp summit ridges, are covered with montane rain forest, also called a cloud forest. Below this grassy man-made clearing, now conquered by huge begonia bushes and ferns, stand enormous forests of stunted trees. Every branch is laden with epiphytes, or air plants (Spanish moss, orchids, and the like). Slender brown-white vicunas roam the mountainsides (use the Animal Herd statistics in the Expert Rules).

The dirt trail winds south through the mountains to the port trading town of Colima (see the end of this chapter).

The air is not thin at all—a tip to alert player characters that they aren't in their familiar world any more.

EVENTS, PART 1

Incidents occur here both before and after the characters have a chance to investigate the area. This section describes the first set of Events in this chapter.

The Attack

If the Schattennalfen are still around, allow the player characters to take the lead as they approach the entrance to the stone bowl. Any player characters who enter it see the scene described above; nothing looks dangerous. Then Linariel (or another elf, if she is unavailable) enters the bowl.

Linariel steps forward and says, "Azca. Deserted for years—so they could come down after us." She spits.

Then she leans down to pick up something covered with black feathers. "A nighthawk," she says. "Freshly dead. The Azcan symbol for their old patron—" Linariel stops talking, her eyes widen, and she shouts, "Trap! Watch—"

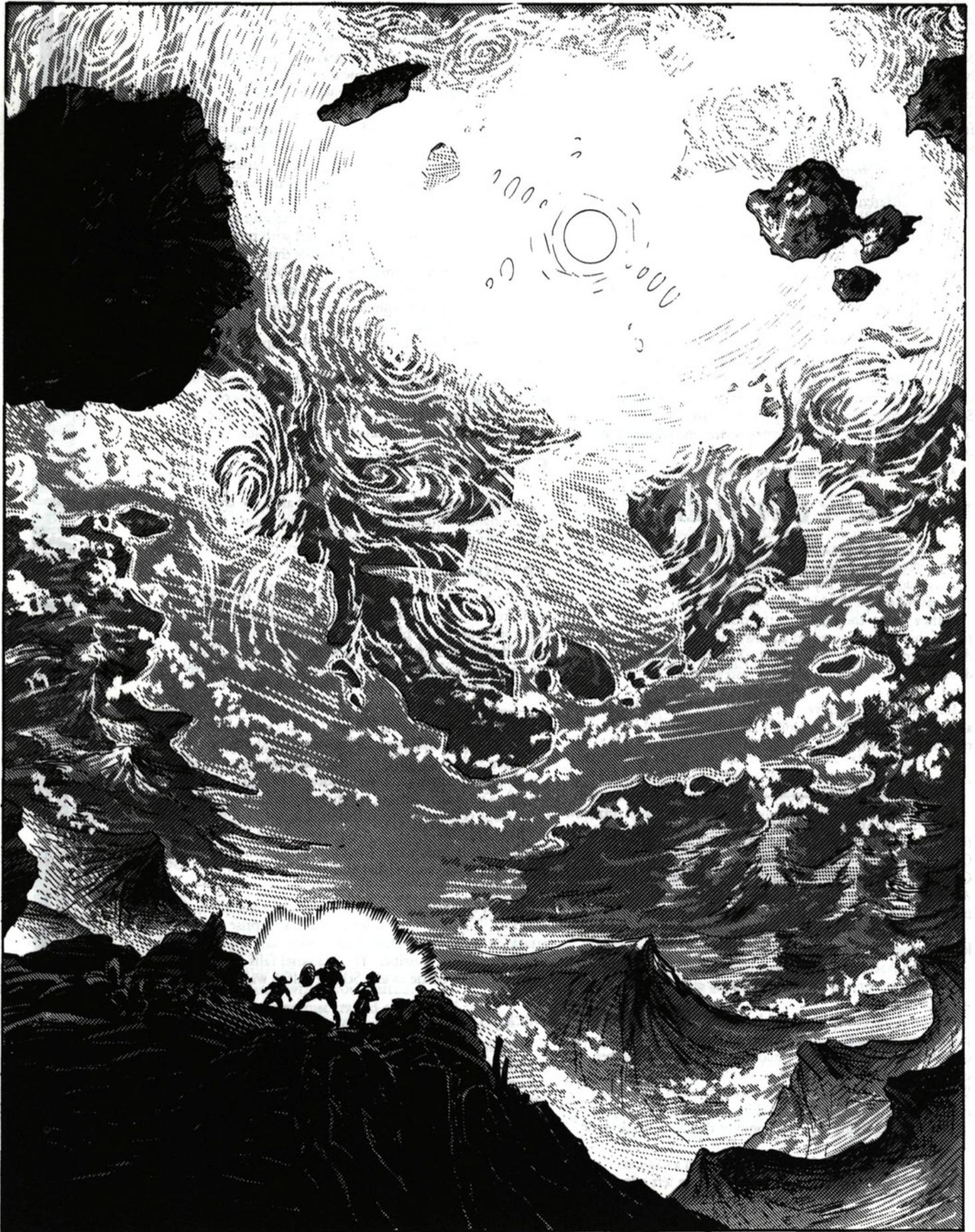
And at that moment, five short black arrows fly over the edge of the stone bowl and strike her down.

Linariel falls instantly; but you may keep her alive, if temporarily stunned, in order to make a surprise dying attack on an Azcan warrior. Time this to save a player character's life, if possible. Then Linariel falls dead, having died in battle as any Schattennalfen warrior hopes.

Background

How did these two platoons of Azcan warriors know the player characters would emerge here? They didn't.

Creation and use of the tunnel: When Thanatos set his great scheme in motion, he guided a great annelid's path, leading it to eat a tunnel to the Atacalpa ruins. Thanatos prepared this path so his Brethren servant, Simm, could travel to Chitlcan and begin the ceremonies that started the *Smoking Mirror*. (See the following chapters for more details.)



The controlled Prince Kano used that tunnel. Kano and Irla Kaze emerged here as planned. Meanwhile, the other hostage prince, Udan, used a separate *distance distortion* spell back beneath Barleycorn Monastery; this one carried him to the Nithian Empire—where Linariel and her Schattentalfen were expecting to take the player characters. When Gabbro the elemental betrayed them, he sent them here instead.

Discovery of the tunnel: After Kano and Kaze departed in separate directions—Kano for Chitlacan, Kaze for the coast and a ship to Shahjapur—an Azcan foot messenger accidentally discovered the annelid's tunnel. The messenger was returning with a routine report from an Azcan observation post; the post lies in the mountains above a nearby independent port named Colima. The Azcan Empire observes Colima closely for signs of potential hostility.

En route north over these mountains to a base camp south of Tehuacan, the messenger paused at the Atacalpa ruins, saw the tunnel, and soon reported it. The Azcan commanders, suspecting a Schattentalfen invasion, have staked out the tunnel ever since, with orders to kill or capture anything that comes out. Now they are trying to do so.

The Battle

Forty-eight Azcan 2nd level warriors—two platoons of 24 men in three eight-man squads—crouch in excellent defensive positions behind the upper walls of the stone bowl. Upslope, under cover of bushes, stand two platoon leaders, 3rd level fighters named Huapac and Taxitlac. Their 4th level company commander, named Cuan, stands behind the platoon leaders.

Azcan warriors (48): AC 7; HD 2; hp 10; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short bow or spear) or 1d4 (dagger); MV 120' (40'); Save F2; AL C; THAC0 19. Half are ordinary soldiers (morale 8); the other half are mindless victims of Azcan spirit-draining ceremonies, so they never check morale.

All warriors have short bows ready and also carry a spear and a flint dagger.

Tactics: In the first round of the surprise attack, 15 warriors target Linariel (a hated Schattentalf!), and four hit. Another 10 Azcans target the other two elves; if they aren't visible, these warriors hold their fire. These warriors always fire at Schattentalfen before other targets.

The remaining 23 bowmen divide their shots evenly among the player characters and any NPCs accompanying them. However, do not let any player character get hit more than twice, nor should any player character's hit points drop below 4. If necessary, secretly modify the Azcans' die rolls to keep the player characters alive, per the "Overusing Dice" section in the Expert Rules.

After the first round of missile fire and the player characters' responses, the commanders on the slope shout coded orders to the warriors. Half the warriors drop their bows, pick up their spears, and charge the player characters. The other half continue to volley arrows at the player characters, oblivious to their own soldiers' safety. Stray arrows hit the spearmen, but that doesn't stop the archers from making further volleys.

The Schattentalfen: Linariel is dying or dead. Either kill the others or let them show cowardice and escape into the intricate network of tunnels beneath these mountains (to return in the second module). Don't let them remain to the end of the battle and let player characters ask questions. If necessary, the elves die in "The Rescue" section, below.

Points to remember: When running this encounter, the first real battle the player characters have had in this adven-

ture, keep the following issues in mind:

1. The *Spell of Preservation* now prevents many of the player characters' spells and magical items from working. Play this for maximum surprise value, with the characters' spells and items failing at the most perilous times during battle.

2. Even so, the player characters probably have magic the Azcans have never seen. At the first *fire ball*, for instance, the Azcan archers flee in panic, regrouping 50 yards away along the slope.

3. Even so, half the Azcans (the spearmen) stay in the fight, because they have no thought to do otherwise. These warriors, marked with stylized red symbols on their foreheads, are virtually mindless, victims of the evil Azcan ceremony described in Chapter 8. All the player characters know is that these warriors fight as relentlessly as zombies. However, they are not undead, they cannot be turned, and they roll for initiative normally.

And there are dozens of them.

The Rescue

Eventually sheer numbers should threaten to overwhelm the player characters. Stage the battle so that the characters can fight heroically, but they can never defeat the hordes. Try to wound a few player characters, though not severely.

If the player characters are having an easy time of it, bring up more squads of Azcan spearmen—from the tunnel beneath the stone bowl! They have entered from the other end of the square shaft the player characters saw in Chapter 5; the shaft served as the Chochoamec builders' entrance into the ceremonial site. It emerges on the mountain slope about 50 yards away.

As the characters consider escape routes or desperation attacks, read the following:

The warriors raise their weapons, and you hear them drawing breath for another attack. . . but the sound of drawing breath keeps going. It gets louder. Like a gust of wind—but you don't feel any wind.

The warriors move in to attack. One of them glances up, and he screams! Overhead, just above the lip of the bowl, you see a cloud gathering and darkening. Inside it you can see flashes of lightning.

Pause to allow the player characters to react, if they wish. They can't do anything to the cloud or anything to save the warriors; this is Immortal magic. If they run below, omit reading the box below unless more Azcan warriors are in the tunnel with them.

And now all the warriors scream. They're turning gray, like the thundercloud, and getting darker as it gets darker. Under their skins, flashes of light outline their bones and veins. As you watch, the hairs on your arms stand up, and blue sparks jump between your weapons.

Then there's a tremendous crack of lightning—dozens of bolts, all at once—and when your vision comes back, all the warrior lie dead, horribly burned. The cloud still hangs overhead.

Pause again to allow player character actions, if any. If they flee, read the next box aloud immediately. Otherwise, wait until they try talking to it, or have exhausted other approaches:

Then you hear a low voice from all around you, echoing off the walls. It sounds exactly like your own inner voice, the voice your thoughts use.

The voice says, "Listen carefully. None born of the far world have breathed this air since I carved these mountains—none before you, and those you seek. Here kingdoms of your dusty past live again, and creatures you cannot know swim the oceans.

"Through powerful magic, we protect the weak. But now that magic is imperiled—this world, and your world, are imperiled—by those you seek."

Lightning bolts strike again, there's a crash, and on the stone bowl three sharp dots appear, like little blast craters. The voice says, "Find them."

What Happened and Why

Thanatos has imprisoned his fellow Immortal Asterius in an arcane artifact called a "vampire sheath" (seen in the third module). However, the captive Immortal has managed to send forth a tiny, barely perceptible fraction of his awareness and power.

This sliver of power was sufficient to search out a party of potential allies (the player characters, the only people from the outer world besides the Brethren) and extricate them from their current trouble. But Asterius cannot risk this too often, for Thanatos will soon discover and stop his meddling. Asterius must rely on the characters.

The player characters learn nothing about this until the third module, if even then. If you are playing this module alone, assume this rescue came from a long-dormant protective enchantment in the Atacalpa ruins; place clues to that effect accordingly.

STAGING THE ENTRANCE

In the space of a breath, the cloud over the bowl evaporates. And the sky's clouds disappear too, revealing the Hollow World at its most magnificent.

The sun is red—the color of bricks. Jets of flame rise out of it and fall back.

Around the sun, the sky is patchy brown and blue, with sheets of clouds curving up in strange patterns.

Something's floating off to your right: It looks like a mountain. Then you spot rivers flowing over it, and you realize it's farther away and much, much bigger than you thought: It could hold your entire home kingdom!

It's a continent, floating in the air, and casting a huge shadow to one side.

You see mountains below you that stretch away and upward, into a green haze.

Players may have trouble role-playing reactions to anything this staggering, but give them the chance now.

The voice returns. "This world and your far world coexist as the heart coexists with the body. All you see has lain beneath your feet all your lives—even all my life. Your world could no more survive without it than you could leave behind your beating heart. This must not pass. Find those you seek."

The voice disappears and does not return.

INVESTIGATION

The player characters finally have a chance to look around. Certainly they start with the three sooty spots on the walls of the bowl (now cool to the touch). Give each player character an Intelligence check to realize that the bowl's markings match the continental outlines of the Hollow World. Once a check succeeds, briefly show the players the Hollow World map from the boxed set; hide the lower half if you wish, since this is not shown on the bowl.

Point out the approximate locations of the three spots on the bowl, which correspond to the Hollow World locations of Chitlacan, Thartis Volcano, and Shahjapur (the largest of the equatorial islands to the right of the Merry Pirate Seas, just left of the unnamed continent at the right of the map).

If you are playing this adventure alone, just indicate Chitlacan's location.

Don't let the players examine the map too long. Just give them a rough idea where their player characters have to go in this adventure.

Aftermath of the Battle

The zombie-like behavior by half the soldiers should have disturbed the player characters. During the battle, they noticed that those who acted mindlessly were marked with a forehead insignia, a stylized image of a snake with bat wings.

This is the flying viper, one of several symbols of the Azcan patron Atzanteotl. This symbol is used in the evil Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit that powers the *Smoking Mirror*—and, not incidentally, turns its victims into these frightening mindless slaves. Stage this clue as a mystery to be resolved later, as the player characters explore the Azcan Empire.

EVENTS, PART 2

The Rising of the Serpent

Let the player characters leave the Chochomec shrine, explore the surrounding ruins, and find the mountain path that winds down to distant Colima (see "Where Next?" below). As they debate a course of action, read this:

The mountains rise in ranks, into the distance—you almost think "to the horizon," but there is no horizon here. The mountains give way to an expanse of pure, deep green. Where the features of the landscape vanish into hazy air, you can just make out a great city.

And as you spot the city, a creature rears up above it. White as a ghost, large as a continent, it rises like a thick rope—it's a snake. It dwarfs the mountains in front of it; you see every scale clearly.

Then it stretches out a pair of giant wings—bare flaps of skin like a dragon's wings. The winged snake opens its mouth, exposing shining white fangs, and even here, hundreds of miles away, you hear a distinct hiss.

And then it rises from the city toward the sun. It casts no shadow. The creature disappears into the blinding red light overhead.

The viper apparition suffers no loss of clarity for all the

hundreds of miles between here and the city; this is a psychic phenomenon, not a physical one. Psychically gifted characters "see" the apparition particularly well.

This vision marks the climax of the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit. The player characters see this apparition every 24 hours until they reach the city of Chitlacan and stop the ceremonies. This dreamlike image lures the characters into the Azca adventure, in the remainder of this module.

The vision resembles a flying viper (the monster described in the Azcan Empire entry of the HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set) because the Azca regard this creature as a gift from Atzanteotl, as well as a manifestation of his power. The flying viper, competing with a more benign creature called a feathered serpent, has virtually driven the serpent from this part of the world. The player characters have a chance to explore the mystery of the feathered serpents' departure in the second module of this trilogy.

Clerical Spells

Thus far in the adventure, clerics have been unable to get spells above 2nd level. If this has made player character clerics useless, or if their players are having less fun because of it, you can optionally decide that Asterius now grants spells to player character clerics and paladins—and *only* the player characters. More widespread granting of spells would alert Thanatos to Asterius's activity.

Dream-Sendings of Asterius

Another activity of Asterius: frequent player character dream sendings from now on. Each sleep or two, a player character undergoes a dream vision of some future scene in the adventure, often played in allegorical terms.

For example, the player characters might see King Mocitlapac of Chitlacan standing on a huge black mirror surface, laughing amid piles of gold—an abstract clue that Prince Kano has bribed the Azcan king to aid him in creating the *Smoking Mirror*. In this module, other dreams are left as exercises for the DM.

The dream sendings can provide clues, previews of important places and NPCs who appear later, or even random sidelights on the many other cultures described in the boxed set—a good way to show off the places and peoples that the player characters won't get to in this visit to the Hollow World.

The Light of Corruption

Read this at some point early in the player characters' journey:

You're admiring the colors of this world, so much more vivid than your own. Suddenly a new color falls over everything you see—an ugly, pale shade of orange.

When you see the color, you feel strange. Why are you wasting time looking for the caravan? You could be piling up loot for yourselves! There's any number of people out there with heavy purses and contemptible lives. Put them out of their misery.

Then there's this place—untouched, unexploited. Where are the mines? There must be tons of gold and silver in the ground for someone bold enough to find them. Why, you could —

And then, just like that, the feeling passes.

This effect comes from the corrupting light of the *Smoking Mirror*, now orbiting the central sun. The *Mirror* is described in detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

From this point until they stop the *Smoking Mirror*, the player characters endure its corrupting effects periodically. Those who fail a saving throw vs. spell become obsessed with immediate profit, at the expense of friendship and sense. To affected characters, any material resource exists to be exploited immediately. (Tell your players the effects and let them roleplay it.) Also, Hollow World residents become less prone to their innate cultural bias.

These effects occur every few days at first, just two or three times in the first segment of the adventure (whichever path the players choose). Each effect lasts 1d4 hours.

But if they don't stop the *Smoking Mirror* soon, the effects intensify in degree and length—saving throws at cumulative minuses, and effects lasting 1d10 hours, 1d4 days, 1d4 weeks, and so on. If the characters delay the Azcan segment of the adventure until they complete the other two, the Hollow World will be widely and thoroughly corrupted, as will some parts of the outer world.

WHERE NEXT?

Once they've looked around their entryway into the Hollow World, the characters have two broad choices when they continue their mission:

1. **The spectral viper rearing over the distant pyramid** may well tempt any player character's curiosity. The overland journey leads to the valley of the Azca and their capital of Chitlacan. This segment of the adventure occupies the rest of this module.

2. **A mountain trail nearby** leads to the small free port of Colima. There the characters may launch themselves into a quest to locate the breeding ground of the Hollow World's feathered serpents. This segment of the adventure is described in module HWA2, *Nightrage*.

Colima's bustling and slightly crazed marketplace also offers evidence that Irila Kaze and the caravan entourage have sailed overseas to the distant land of Shahjapur. The characters can arrange an expedition and follow the trail to the Shahjapuri metropolis of Dharsatra and its Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. For this segment of the adventure, consult module HWA3, *Nightstorm*.



This land, half dinosaur-infested jungle and half Azca-infested farmlands, receives full treatment in the boxed campaign set. Review the Azcan Empire section of the Atlas before continuing with this chapter.

HOW THEY GET THERE

From the Atacalpa arrival point (see previous chapter): The player characters may be attracted here by the ephemeral vision of the rearing viper over the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl.

From the second module in the trilogy, *Nightrage*: The player characters learn of the danger to the sun from the Queen Mother in the feathered serpent hatching ground. She identifies the Azcan valley as the source of the danger. The player characters can fly down here in serpent form, or the Great Mother's servants can carry them. The journey takes about two days.

From the third module, *Nightstorm*: The characters should already have conjured the Yantra of the Emerald River in the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. The magical diagram would ordinarily transport them to the time stream; but their advisor, Chatterjee, tells them that corrupted radiation from the sun interferes with the yantra's magic. Until the characters eliminate the source of that corruption, they can't go on to the climactic sequence in the time stream. Chatterjee can divine via a mystic spell that the Azcans are responsible.

The characters must return here either as feathered serpents (if they have that ability) or aboard ship. Sailing ships leave from Dharsatra Port for Colima every month. For routes, sailing times, and seagoing encounters, consult *Nightstorm*.

THE SCENE

The route: Assuming they approach from the Atacalpa ruins, the player characters must cross about 60 miles of mountains, rugged peaks that loom against the sky like giant fangs; and another 20 miles or so of grassy hills, with nothing to be seen but the occasional herd of wild vicuna and sheep. Daily serpent visions over Chitlacan, identical to the one the player characters first saw, keep them headed in the proper direction.

This travel, which likely occupies several days, can simply be skipped during play; or, if you like, fill out the adventure with optional wilderness encounters using the mountain and hill creatures described in the boxed set.

Finally the travellers strike the great Chitlacan Road, about three hexes (120 miles) to the right of the town of Taxutlan on the Azcan Empire map.

This superb road, built and maintained by the labor of countless slaves, is paved with wide sandstone blocks as heavy as a man; they fit so well that a character cannot slip a fingernail between them. No signs mark the road, but occasional stone monoliths to either side display paintings of legendary Azcan

heroes. Most of these flat, highly stylized portraits depict giant men clad in bright feathers and holding studded clubs.

The player characters should enter two cities on their journey: Chitlacan itself, and the intervening city of Huitlaktima. Both are described below.

INVESTIGATION

On this journey to Chitlacan the characters are looking for the hostage princes, the missing caravan, and the caravan's attendants. They don't know it, but only one object of their quest lies this way: Prince Kano Arrow's-Whisper, along with his Brethren familiar, Simm of the Grasping Dark. This section outlines the information sources the player characters may meet.

Points to remember: The Azca have little tolerance for foreigners. Most are either slaves or ceremonial victims. Unless the player characters look like Azcans either naturally or magically, they either attract nasty crowds or frighten away most individuals.

Also, though the Azcan society is cruel by nature and many citizens are chaotic, not everyone the player characters meet is by definition evil. Most are simple neutrals who just try to survive.

At least one should be lawful and good-natured. In running these encounters, have at least one person befriend the player characters, offer supplies and exposition, show curiosity about their adventures, and help them out of a jam (such as by letting them hide from a road patrol). After you establish this ally, he or she will fall prey to an informant and become a victim at one of the ceremonies at the Great Pyramid; see the end of this chapter for details.

People of the Road

The characters should encounter two or three of the following sources on each day they travel. But not all sources are equally accessible: On the road, player characters won't see peasant farmers or fishermen; off road, except in extraordinary circumstances, they would never meet a noble and entourage! The player characters probably can't encounter all the sources listed here without cleverness or luck.

Peasants

Locations: No real villages in this part of the empire; population either clusters in the cities or diffuses far and wide. Some farmers work along the road, but most live in jungle clearings miles away. Fishermen squat with spears beside narrow brooks (not shown on the Azcan Empire map in the boxed set); further north, they risk the turbulent coastal rip tides on rafts of woven thatch.

Names: Cloc (pronounced "cloak"), Bitla, Tlot, Palco, and similar short, guttural names.

Description: Farmers, fishermen, and children, skinny and humbly dressed in white loincloths. Caloused hands and feet, black hair. All but the children look old before their time. Some still secretly

worship Otzitiotl, the good Immortal whose worship Atzanteotl supplanted; these kind-hearted people may help the player characters. Other peasants inform patrols of the player characters' movements.

Accessibility: Easy.

Information: General exposition about Azcan society. Also, everyone babbles about serpent apparitions that rise into the sky each 24 hours—"Never seen anything like it! The world is ending! Atzanteotl is coming to take our hearts!"

Some peasants on the road witnessed passage of Kano's entourage: "Oh, it was wonderful—a strange creature with a black monkey on his shoulder, at the head of a long line of prisoners. They will go to glorious union with Atzanteotl."

This misleading description makes players suspect Kano is using his own caravan drivers for the ceremony. Actually, Kano was leading prisoners recently taken in battle. The caravan drivers are far away in Shahjapur.

Peasants: 0-level normal humans (mostly chaotic).

Courier

Location: On the road between Huitlaktima and Chitlacan.

Name: Coroc Atla.

Description: Young, muscular soldier brimming with idealism, though currently exhausted from long run. Barefoot; wears loincloth with belt and dagger.

Accessibility: Characters meet him once by accident, then (probably) never again.

Information: Going from King Mochtlapac in Chitlacan to the priests of Huitlaktima. Carries a list of times of upcoming ceremonies called "the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit," with orders to provide further victims at once.

At your option, player characters have to know something about timekeeping in the Hollow World (especially the daily cycles of the Floating Continents) before they can interpret this message; they would know this from other segments of this adventure, or Coroc can inform them.

Coroc can describe King Mochtlapac, though he avoids condemning the evil king; also knows a little about the ceremonies, and how it produces the mindless slaves the player characters have already seen. Knows nothing about Prince Kano.

Courier: AC 9; HD 2; hp 8; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); MV 120' (40'); Save F2; AL C; THAC0 19.

Beggar

Location: On the road or in Huitlaktima.

Name: He's forgotten; everyone calls him "pig" or similar names, or (on friendlier terms) "Noseless."

Description: Emaciated, ragged, toothless, foul-smelling, bulge-eyed, servile old man. His left nostril has rotted away with some unspecified disease. Breathes with a disgusting rasp: *hrrsh*, *hrrssh*.

Accessibility: Accidental at first, chancy thereafter; but if player characters give him a lot of money, he may follow them around forever!

Information: Can tell that Prince Kano went to Great Pyramid, but equally willing to tell nonsensical lies. If a player character bribes him and succeeds in a Charisma check, Noseless may offer slobbering thanks and a small iron disk marred with seemingly random scratchings. "The wealth o' the humble, *hrrsh*, indeed i' is, sssir." Can't remember where he got it.

The disk, a token of protection among some Beggars' Guilds, may help the player characters when they contact the Beggar King in Dharsatra, in the third module of this series.

Beggar: 0-level normal human.

Craftsmen and Merchants

Location: In the crowded bazaars of central Huitlaktima and Chitlacan.

Names: Huehuecatl, Potzalco, Tepalcatl, Chalpopoca, and other longish names.

Description: Lower-middle-class tradesmen beneath thatched canopies, selling animal skins, woven mats and rugs, feathered garments, drums, baskets, wooden chairs with straw seats, and food. Loud, rude, good at haggling.

Accessibility: They approach the player characters to sell goods; they also sell information for anything of value.

Information: A feather merchant can tell of the elaborate headdress he made for King Mochtlapac, after the king received much treasure from "the monster with the monkey." An architect knows large-scale layout of Pyramid labyrinth (it has four levels, the functions of the levels, etc.), including that it was built over a smaller pyramid devoted to Otzitiotl. And so on—vary the clue given according to the tradesman.

Craftsmen, Merchants: 0-level normal humans, plus some first level thieves.

In Huitlaktima

Consult the color map included in this module.

The scene: A large port, its ceremonial center virtually on the shore of the gusty Bay of Vaxactun, its neighborhood slums stretching due south over rounded bluffs, striking like a spike into the heartland.

As described in the Azcan Empire entry in the boxed set, Huitlaktima suffers both from hit-and-run piracy and from its inept government. Prince Tlachtatlan, fat and gross as a prize hog, ruins his citizens with taxation and then squanders the proceeds on massive feasts for the priesthood. However, the player characters probably won't encounter the Prince at this point. The viper apparition should drive them onward.

The vision: The player characters may think this is their destination. Let them think so long enough to search out the clues below. Then they see another serpent-apparition arise in the distance over Chitlacan, and they realize they must keep going.

The clues: In Huitlaktima the player characters

should see more victims of the recently-begun Flying Viper Spirit ceremonies; learn about Azcan history, including Atzanteotl's takeover from Otzitiotl; and notice in luxury decor the Azcan fascination with obsidian and, even more, with jade. However, jade is virtually unseen in the Empire—almost the entire supply is hoarded within the Great Pyramid and other religious buildings.

Also in Huitlaktima, the player characters may possibly hear, for the first time, references to the *Smoking Mirror*.

Detention Pen

In the Azcan Empire there are no prisons. Serious criminals are exiled or killed. However, while awaiting trial or sentencing, criminals are confined to small cages in a detention pen. The player characters find one of these.

The scene: A low, windowless adobe building, more like a long shed than a jail. Inside, it's hot and humid. Two lazy Azcan warriors, 1st level fighters with daggers and badly-maintained spears, play a betting game using cacao nibs.

Small crates are lined against the wall. Inside two of the crates, starved, naked men are hunched over in excruciating pain and filth. They're robbers, about to be turned into mindless slaves in the next Spirit ceremony. The two men moan and protest their innocence. The other crates are empty.

If the player characters defeat the guards and free the captives, the prisoners can tell them they saw a monster on the road (the goblin Kano), but the prisoners he led were ordinary Azcans, or subordinate tribes of the Azcan Empire. The player characters can deduce that no prisoners from the caravan passed this way. But the prisoners can refer them to the Great Pyramid in Chitlacan, site of the ceremonies.

In Chitlacan

The scene: Chitlacan is described in detail in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. As the player characters enter the capital city, describe the wide streets, green trees, and magnificent residences and temples. The Calendar Stone in the plaza should figure prominently in your description.

But contrast this grandeur with scenes of cruelty among the populace: beatings, duels, and even a public stoning.

Storyteller

Location: In plaza in front of Pyramid of Atzanteotl.

Name: "Master Spellbinder" (real name Oxtun).

Description: A nearsighted old man in the central square, telling stories to kids for meager money. Not Azcan, but from one of the many subordinate tribes in the Empire (perhaps the Chochomec, builders of Atacalpa). Doubles as soothsayer, fortuneteller, head-bum reader, barber, and dentist, all with dubious

accuracy. Former adventurer, many years ago.

Accessibility: Player characters can buy his attention at any time with the right bribe (he doesn't recognize their outer world gold coins). Otherwise, they must wait until he's finished his current song or story, which could be a while. Everyone is asking him about the viper apparitions above the pyramid; he provides silly or misguided explanations that grow and change with every hour.

Information: Huge source of not-too-reliable exposition. Also, can fill in dangerous gaps in the player characters' information before next chapter. If player characters get past his two-decade habit of flummery and posturing, Oxtun can give them solid tactical information regarding Azcan guards at pyramid.

Storyteller: AC 9; HD 2; hp 9; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (none currently); MV 120' (40'); Save F1 (formerly F3 in youth); AL N; THAC0 19. Military Tactics skill (W; level 14).

Noble With Entourage

Location: Anywhere in an urban area or on the road; especially near Pyramid of Atzanteotl.

Name: Teopancaxco Teciztecatl Monticulo.

Description: Four mindless ceremony victims bear a black wooden palanquin painted with viper figures in Azcan style. Obese nobleman inside, wrapped in colored cloth and feathered adornments, sips frothing cups of cold chocolate spiced with peppers and honey. Four warriors follow on foot behind.

Accessibility: Difficult. If player characters attack palanquin, Monticulo sounds alarm and orders the guards to attack. Then he commands mindless slaves to lower palanquin and join battle.

Information: Knows all about cult of Atzanteotl. Has studied many legends of Azcan history; knows culture-preserving effects of *Spell of Preservation*. Got these mindless slaves after the Spirit ceremony a few sleeps ago. Palanquin carries many spare robes—slaves have just finished washing them at nearby creek, and noble is taking them home. Player characters can use these as disguises to get into Great Pyramid ceremonies incognito.

Noble: AC 9; 6th level fighter; hp 24; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (obsidian axe); MV 120' (40'); Save F6; AL C; THAC0 17. Gold and jewelry worth 300 gp.

Guards (4): AC 7; HD 2; hp 12, 10; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear); MV 120' (40'); Save F2; AL C; THAC0 19.

The guards have information similar to the Courier, above.

EVENTS

If they have just arrived in the Hollow World, the first few days of the player characters' journey to Chitlacan should include plenty of events specific to this new land:

Floating Continents drift by overhead, eclipsing the sun.

The sun sends out a flare that reddens the land-

scape, as though drenching it in rosewater.

From a high vantage point, player characters look north to see the ocean of fog over the polar entry passage. In the distance below, they can make out herds of dinosaurs and mammoths.

Within a minute at most, a rain cloud appears from nowhere, pours down warm rain, and dissipates in minutes. The player characters may wonder at the rain cloud's sharp edges and corners; it's one of the Immortal's magical storm spells.

The characters should also have time to determine what magical spells work and don't work. Those with lodestones or other directional devices learn almost immediately that these won't function here.

Above all, play up as much as possible the sense of wonder at finding this amazing new world. Promoting the sense of wonder is discussed in the Campaigning chapter of the boxed set.

Patrols

A squad of eight Azcan foot soldiers walks or jogs down the Chitlacan Road every six hours. Nominally, they keep the populace in line and scout invasion threat from hostile neighbors. In fact, this is punishment duty for recalcitrant warriors. But if they see the player characters, they definitely do their duty: stopping the characters, questioning them briefly, and arresting them without charges. (In the Azcan Empire, just looking different is grounds for arrest.)

There are seven 1st level fighters and one 2nd level fighter leader, all armed with spears, flint daggers, and short bows. See the Azcan Empire entry in the boxed set for physical descriptions. Each soldier carries 2-12 cacao beans, used for exchange and for making the Azca's prized chocolate.

If they arrest the player characters, the soldiers bind their arms, take their weapons, treasure, and obvious magical items, and quick-march them directly for Chitlacan. King Mochtlapac has issued orders for all prisoners to be brought to the Great Pyramid for the daily Spirit ceremonies.

The Ceremonial Procession

As part of their initiation into the upper ranks of Atzanteotl's priesthood, medium-level priests must make a pilgrimage of purification from Chitlacan to a shrine in the coastal town of Tehuacan.

The player characters encounter a procession of four 6th level priests in jaguar robes (AC 8), returning on foot to Chitlacan from that pilgrimage. Though footsore, they hold their *viper staves* aloft. These carved hardwood staves function just like a basic *snake staff* (Basic DM Rulebook), except that the staff turns into a flying viper (described in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set). The priests also carry crude maces.

The procession includes six mindless ceremonial victims, all male warriors with the red viper symbol on their foreheads. These carry provisions and, slung on their backs, spears. If attacked, the priests command the mindless ones to drop their provisions and

protect them; this takes one round.

If the player characters attack, the priests retreat to safety behind a wall of their mindless slaves, then ready *blight* and *protection from good* spells. Note that, like all clerics during this adventure, these priests don't have spells above 2nd level.

Priests (6): AC 8; HD 6; hp 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (mace) or 1d6 + 1 (*viper staff*); MV 120' (40'); Save C6; AL C; THAC0 17. Spells carried: *cause light wounds*, *cause fear*, *blight* (x2).

Mindless guards (6): AC 7; HD 2; hp 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear); MV 120' (40'); Save F2; AL N; THAC0 18.

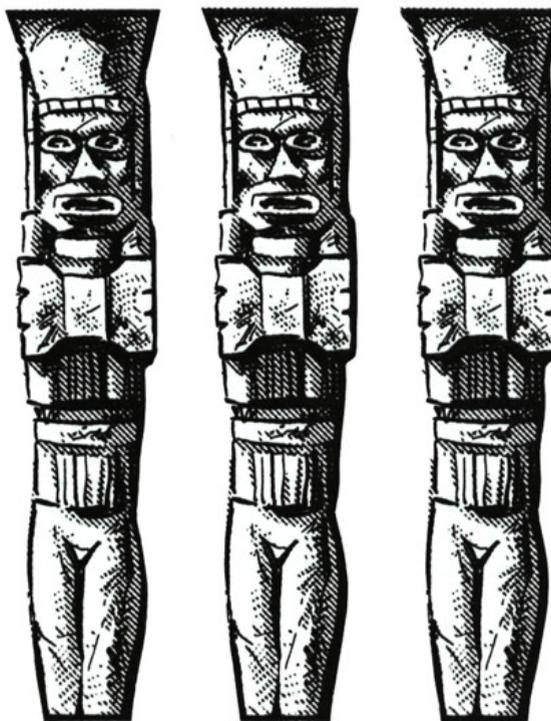
Capture of a Friend

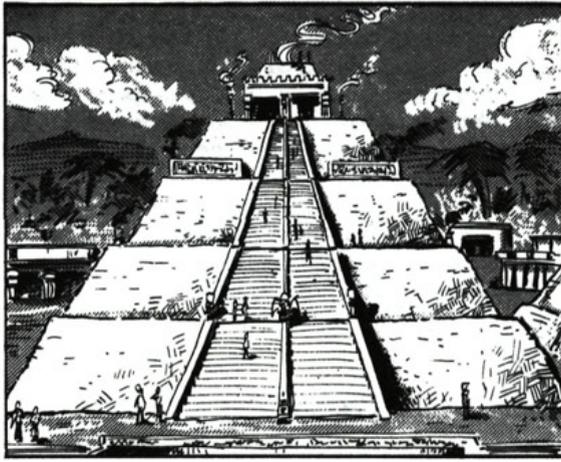
If the player characters themselves avoid capture, have the Azcan patrols capture, on any trumped-up charge, some sympathetic NPC who has helped the characters: the courier, the beggar, or even a peasant (a secret worshipper of Otzitiotl?) who acted especially nice.

The capture should happen "offstage," where the player characters can't do anything about it. Then, as they near the Pyramid, the player characters discover from the storyteller (see above) that their ally is due to be turned into a mindless slave, in the next ceremony! This gets the players emotionally involved in the next chapter's storyline.

WHERE NEXT?

The shrine atop the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl, where the next Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit will take place—unless the player characters do something about it!





These horrific ceremonies take place each 24 hours atop the the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl. The Azcan priests base their timing on a recurring configuration of the Floating Continents around the Hollow World's sun. Characters who have learned the patterns of the Floating Continents, perhaps in other modules in this trilogy, receive an Intelligence check to deduce the times of the ceremonies; or they can figure out the time interval just by timing the manifestations of the ghostly viper.

The total psychic energy from the ceremonial victims creates the ectoplasmic viper apparition that the player characters have been tracing. The ceremony also leaves the victims nearly mindless, even zombie-like, and tractable as servants to Azcan nobles.

Meanwhile, the apparition floats upward and into the *Smoking Mirror* near the sun, where its victims reappear as "discorporates," wraith-like servants of Prince Kano. These servants work steadily to enlarge the *Smoking Mirror*.

This chapter discusses the ceremonies as the player characters may interact with them atop the Great Pyramid.

HOW THEY GET THERE

The player characters may arrive at the Pyramid as captives, captured by an Azcan patrol. They may arrive covertly, by running into and following the temple procession in the previous chapter; or by tracing the procession from Huitlaktima's city jail, where the next victims are held.

Or, if they arrive in Chitlacan under their own power and alone, the player characters could easily just find their way to the Great Pyramid—it's the biggest thing in the city, after all.

THE SCENE

Consult the Azcan Empire entry in the boxed set's Atlas for the description of Chitlacan, the quarters surrounding the Great Plaza, and the hive-like activity around the city. When the player characters reach

the Great Plaza, read this:

When you see the Great Plaza of Chitlacan, the first thing you think of is an anthill, with ants swarming over it and around the base. Thousands of Azcan citizens fill the open plaza, buying or selling trade goods beneath canvas awnings. You see pottery, dried food, parrot feathers, woven mats, bales of hay, and brightly-painted human thighbones.

The anthill is the gigantic Pyramid of Atzanteotl, a huge pyramid. It must stretch a hundred paces or more from corner to corner at the base. It reaches up, in four great steps, to a height of 200 feet.

It looks like whitewashed adobe brick, with red bands of color along each step and on both sides of the central flight of stairs. The pyramid walls are studded with painted sculptures of serpent heads. On top you see a small cubical building, painted red and orange. From it curls a tendril of white smoke.

Around the base of the pyramid you see squads of guards, all dressed in jaguar skins, white loin-cloths, and feathered sandals.

One squad of eight warriors guards each side of the pyramid's base, divided into two detachments of four men apiece. Though their weapons are shiny and their uniforms spotless, these warriors carry no special equipment. An additional two squads of warriors guard the shrine atop the pyramid. These warriors' spears are decorated with feathers.

Warrior guard: 2nd level fighter; AC 6 (leather armor and shield); hp 8; #AT 1; D 1d8 (spear); MV 120' (40'); Save F1; ML 7; AL N.

If the player characters can take time to explore the Great Plaza, be sure to alert them to the sights described in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, especially the Calendar Stone. Its depiction of the four eras of Azcan history (which any passerby can explain) may come in handy later in the adventure.

The Shrine

Once they climb the steep steps to the top of the pyramid, or terrace, the player characters realize that the cubical shrine is not quite so small as it looked from the ground. Though the immensity of the pyramid dwarfs it, the colorful adobe building measures nearly 50 feet on a side and 50 feet tall!

For a map of the shrine, consult the gatefold screen. Area and room descriptions follow.

The guards: Two eight-man squads stand guard here. In the shrine, four guard the antechamber, one the priests' quarters, and the remaining three the shrine's altar (see below for these room descriptions). The other squad marches around the terrace perimeter and into the enclosure behind the snake wall.

The snake wall and enclosure: This six-foot-high, foot-thick stone wall, carved with curving bands of scale patterns reminiscent of a snake's body, shields the sides and rear of the temple from public view. A common feature at Azcan temples, the snake wall marks out a small enclosure at the rear of the shrine. Here warriors offer stern instruction in combat to

adepts and young boys.

The only structures in the enclosure are three priories for the temple priests, adepts, and hierodules (slaves; see below). The enclosure is not guarded, except by the eight-warrior squad that passes through here on its regular rounds, every ten minutes or so.

Antechamber: Spacious and quiet. This narrow room extends to the temple's second story; about 15 feet up, the antechamber's north wall opens out on the second floor's shrine (see map). Two narrow, exceedingly steep staircases rise to that floor.

In the antechamber stand enormous adobe statues of Azcans, looking blocky and forbidding. On the south wall a vast mural depicts, in bright colors, a jaguar (an aspect of Atzanteotl) defeating a hawk (an aspect of Otzitiotl, the Immortal the Azca formerly worshipped). Viewers cannot make out details of the mural from the antechamber; the shrine at the top of the stairs offers a far better view.

One warrior stands guard in each of the four corners of the antechamber.

Vestiar: In this ceremonial dressing room for priests and adepts, brilliantly feathered robes and garments hang on the walls, their sleeves outstretched as though the costumes themselves are about to spring at the viewers. The robes embody jaguar and flying viper motifs.

The double doors to the left, leading to the priests' quarters, are gray stone inlaid with obsidian chips in the design of a viper's head. The other two doors, to the chambers of the adepts and hierodules, bear no markings.

Priest quarters: Priests do not live at the shrine. However, during long vigils or lengthy ceremonies, the priests retire here for a sleep or two during the ongoing ceremonies.

These luxurious quarters offer two large beds—actually piles of woven mats covered with layers of dyed cotton cloth, after the fashion of wealthy Azcans—adobe washbasins, cotton floor pillows stuffed with wool, and other luxuries.

One guard stands just inside the entrance to the priest quarters.

Food and drink: Beside each bed in this room stands a small jar of finely textured clay, holding *pulque*, the fermented cactus sap that only elderly Azca may drink. The priests also keep plenty of food, on shelves on the wall to the north. Clay jars hold white beans, spirulina (algae), patties of waterfly eggs, amaranth seeds, black-eyed peas, and a horrible duck soup garnished with a complete duck carcass.

The secret door: Pulling down a certain length of shelf at the left opens a narrow secret door to a small, dark chamber. Here stands a wooden ladder leading to a ceiling trapdoor, an entry to the shrine above. The north wall holds another secret door leading outside, a way for the priests to visit the snake-wall enclosure without being seen.

Entry to the labyrinth: Finally, this chamber's floor holds the secret stairway to the dungeon beneath the pyramid. For details of this entrance, see the beginning of the next chapter.

Adept quarters: This barren room holds nothing but eight beds—of the type in the priest quarters,

but without the cotton coverings—and eight small, unlocked wooden chests holding the adepts' breechcloths, valueless jewelry, and other personal effects.

The wall murals, intended to spur devotion, depict Immortals slaying hawks (a form of the repudiated patron Otzitiotl).

Since a ceremony is probably in progress as the player characters arrive at the shrine, none of the adepts are here. In the absence of a ceremony, three to five of the young men are studying here at any given time.

Hierodule quarters: This cramped room, crowded with 15-20 slaves, holds nothing but rows of bunk beds three and four bunks high; rickety ladders allow access to the upper bunks. The slaves, prisoners of war, have no personal effects.

The shrine: A broad, flat court adorned with a huge obsidian altar (called an *adoratorio*) that the priests use for religious ceremonies. The rectangular altar is large enough to secure a single man-sized victim.

South of the *adoratorio*, a shallow coal-pit is kept burning. The pit is made of stone and lined with thin iron. During ceremonies the hierodules stoke the pit with timber and fan it with enormous two-person bellows, making a bonfire that has roasted many a victim. Narrow vents in the ceiling, slanted to prohibit weapons fire from above, carry away the smoke.

In the upper left corner of the room stands a man-sized clay urn, delicately worked and inlaid with obsidian jaguar designs. The urn holds incense that the priests sometimes use during ceremonies. However, the urn's main function is to conceal the trapdoor in the floor, which priests use to enter their quarters below.

Three warriors stand guard here at all times, with more (up to 20) posted during ceremonies. One guard stands at each upper corner, the third at the open south edge of the room, looking down at the antechamber below. No wall or railing separates shrine from antechamber.

In this room, the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit is underway when the player characters arrive. For details, see below.

INVESTIGATION

This section gives sources of exposition on the details and goals of the ceremonies; the labyrinth within the pyramid; and how the controlled Prince Kano is controlling King Moctitlapac—not through magic, but with a method just as effective: bribery.

Temple Priests

Location: King Moctitlapac has assigned 12 high priests to the pyramid, in three daily shifts of four priests. Except during ceremonies, they always stay within the shrine building, generally talking politics among themselves. Occasionally a priest walks around the open platform atop the pyramid, taking the air.

Names: All priests may, by convention, be addressed as "Courier" or "Great Speaker" (i.e., of prayers to Atzanteotl). Here are a few typical names you can assign to the priests as needed: Ahuitzotl, Axalonqui, Nayaza, Totlatchili, Xopilco, Zimtzikla,

Zonochco.

Description: For the wardrobe and appearance of the priests of Atzanteotl, consult the Azcan Empire entry in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. The priests behave with maximum arrogance and pride at all times.

Accessibility: No commoner may approach a priest except in the shrine proper (see above) or during a ceremony—at which latter time the commoner is usually about to become a victim.

Information: All priests are by nature uncooperative with underlings like the characters. But if the player characters persuade them to speak, the priests may complain about the advent of Prince Kano, his wealth and power, his undue influence over the King, and the priests' unease at these strange new ceremonies.

Here is what they can tell about the background of this new situation: Many priests in a recent sleep received dream omens of an onrushing jaguar. Shortly thereafter, Prince Kano emerged from nowhere, demonstrated amazing magic, and then bought off Moctitlapac with gold and awesome treasures. By his show of strength, Kano humbled the priests; by his bribery, Kano enlisted the king as a loyal partner in promulgating his strange ceremonies.

Moctitlapac doesn't know what the ceremonies do, but the priests feel that since the ceremonies don't offer blood, they can't be authentic. They have no idea where Kano got the ceremony or how it works; it has no precedent in Azcan tradition. Prince Kano referred to them by a code-name of sorts: "Nightwail."

Most priests can give an accurate overview of the labyrinth beneath the pyramid, down to Level 4 (see next chapter)—the higher the priest's status, the lower in the labyrinth he's been. The most senior priests may know that this Great Pyramid is built over the previous pyramid of Otzitiotl (see Level 5's description in the next chapter).

Temple priests (12): Three third level clerics, and one of each higher level up to 12th. AC 7 (jaguar hide); HD 3-12; hp 10-35; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (mace); MV 120' (40'); Save C3-12; AL C; THAC0 19-15. Spells: selection varies, but only 1st and 2nd level spells.

Adepts

Location: Though many of these priests-in-training live in Chitlacan, only a limited number of the elite students achieve an assignment at the pyramid. Up to eight adepts, all male, reside within the shrine building at any one time. They are technically allowed to come and go at will. In practice, high priests frown on adepts who show "a lack of devotion," so the adepts never leave the pyramid.

Names: Adepts abandon their actual names during their assignment at the temple, where they are addressed as "Disciple" (by priests) or "Honored One" (by hierodules and citizens). In practice, priests refer to adepts as "You there" or "those youngsters." Some typical names for adepts are Popol, Nahuac, Mixtli, and Tlahuicol.

Description: The adepts are ambitious but callow young men between 16 and 20. Their grueling regimen (memorizing endless legends, ceremonies, and calendar dates) and meager diet keep them thin and

starved-looking.

Whereas priests wear jaguar and ocelot pelts during ceremonies, adepts wear the pelt of the margay, a smaller and less savage relative of those jungle cats. The pelt is slightly lighter, and its spots are spaced further apart.

All adepts display fanatical loyalty—ideally. Actually, if the characters can separate one from his peers, the adept may well express complaints at his treatment, and he may try working a deal to rise in the temple heirarchy. An adept with a grudge against one particular priest may well give the player characters clues to that priest's location, particular vices, or weaknesses—if, in return, the player characters dispose of that priest.

Accessibility: Any adept who hasn't been commandeered by a priest is freely available. The adepts frequently provide religious advice and services for citizens who manage to enter the shrine.

Information: As for the priests (above), but the adepts are less certain about the design of the pyramid's labyrinth. Persuading or hoodwinking an adept is easier than dealing with a priest.

Adepts (8): 2nd level clerics; AC 9; HD 2; hp 7; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; MV 120' (40'); Save C2; AL C; THAC0 19. Spell: *protection from evil*.

Hierodules (Slaves)

Location: These 20 temple slaves, prisoners of war, live out their brief lives within the shrine and the snake-wall enclosure. They cannot leave the building on pain of death.

Names: Too many different kinds to list. Use typical names from the appropriate cultures given in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set.

Description: The temple slaves belong to both genders and many cultures; very few are Azcan, for native Azcans who transgress custom receive the minimal honor of speedy mind-draining in the ceremony. Hierodules have no status in Azcan society, and so their fate is delayed until some lesser ceremony.

Some hierodules are Neathar, some Beastmen from the Northern Wastes, and there are a couple of Malpheggi lizard-men (women, actually) under close guard. No slaves are Schattenalfen, for they cannot endure the sunlit shrine for long.

Should a player character die in this part of the adventure, the player can take a replacement from among the hierodules. Perhaps a 6th level thief, concealing his abilities, is on a spy mission from his own culture, trying to find out about the *Smoking Mirror*.

Accessibility: If the characters can get into the shrine, they see slaves everywhere. If they take one aside for some time to speak privately, no one notices the hierodule's absence.

Information: These slaves are not mindless; they haven't been victims of the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit. But, fearful and consciously slow-witted (because quick-thinking slaves become victims), the hierodules don't volunteer information to the player characters unless they believe the characters will free them from servitude.

All hierodules know the priests' schedules, the location of the entryway to the pyramid's labyrinth,

and perhaps a few incriminating clues about individual priests. They have seen the priests and King Moctitlapac carry armloads of scrolls and other treasures down to the labyrinth.

Hierodules (20): 0-level normals; maybe a couple of low-level thieves.

EVENTS

The Ceremony in General

Called "The Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit," this elaborate ceremony arose with the arrival of Prince Kano. Guided by his Brethren familiar, he propounded this doctrine: The Azcan Immortals, protectors of the Empire, must be fed to remain healthy and vigorous—and what food is better suited to an Immortal than that most precious commodity, the human spirit?

The ceremony relies on a magical device, a scepter called the *Twig of the Smoking Mirror* (provided by Prince Kano). The scepter's tip is a thin disk of obsidian about three inches across, held at the tip of the scepter in a setting of textured gold. In this setting the obsidian disk, dark yet reflective, revealing as through dark smoke those who gaze into it, appears to emerge from the golden mouth of a flying viper.

The procedure: To begin the lengthy ceremony, a high priest of Atzanteotl holds this *Twig of the Smoking Mirror* aloft. The priest wears a pure white cotton robe. Lesser priests and adepts surround the high priest, chanting in Azcan. Each priest and adept opens a vein on his fingertip in order to bleed a drop of blood. With each drop, the whole robe turns a deeper and deeper crimson.

Guards usher in the ceremony's victims, and a hierodule carries a caged flying viper. The victims line up and kneel on the stone floor. At the altar, the lesser priests pull forth the struggling viper and behead it, and again the robe darkens.

When the robe deepens to a crimson so dark it verges on black, the high priest turns to the line of victims and, on each victim's forehead, he traces a mystic viper symbol—the one the player characters saw on warriors at Atacalpa and on the journey to Chitalacan.

The priest touches the victim's symbol with the obsidian mirror on the scepter. The victim starts, trembles, and leans back as though completely exhausted. The victim's mental energy has been transferred to the scepter.

If anything destroys the scepter before the following climactic moment, the stolen mental energy returns to the victims; they are unharmed, though shaken.

The finish: Now the ceremony nears its climax. With the drums beating louder and ever faster, the priest incants the solemn tones of the *resist fire* spell and steps into the ceremonial flame. Untouched in person and clothing, he points the scepter at the sun and breaks its mirror tip, releasing the pent-up mental energy. The robe immediately blanches to pure white. In the form of a flying viper, the energy flies up into the sky and is lost in the sun's crimson glare.

The exhausted priests retire to their quarters. Hierodules lead the mindless victims into the shrine to receive the blessings of Atzanteotl, and later the victims become the priests' unprotesting slaves.

This Ceremony

When the player characters arrive at the shrine, a ceremony is probably about to begin or in progress. This time, none other than evil King Moctitlapac himself is leading the ceremony. Squat, broad in chest and belly, legs like bowed pillars, skin the texture of a bad road—Moctitlapac is not much to look at in himself. But in his full regalia of red-feathered helm, jaguar cape, pure white robe, and festoons of gold jewelry, he presents an imposing figure.

Lending grandeur and menace to the king's presence, a flint dagger hangs from his ocelot-skin belt. Inlaid in turquoise on the dagger's handle, a representation of half a human face: one eye with eyebrow and two half-rows of ivory teeth. This identifies it as one of the Azcan ceremonial daggers, which none but a priest or adept may touch on pain of death. (Clerics cannot use this edged weapon in combat, of course—only in ceremonies.)

In attendance on the king stands one priest for each player character. About 20 victims kneel before the altar—including any NPC ally the characters met in the previous chapter!

The other 19 victims vary greatly in appearance and background. About half are prisoners taken in battles with nearby territories; there are a few Neathar, a Beast-Man or two, one Malpheggi lizard-man, and even (DM's option) a Schattentalp, who might provide a lead to the second part of this adventure if the player characters rescue him. The remaining victims are native Azcans—thieves, adulterous wives, deformed children, and even fanatical volunteers.

Staging the ceremony: Describe the player character ally from the previous section; indicate to the players what seems a likely point for his dispatch. Stress the eeriness and barbarity of the Spirit ceremony, and pique the players' curiosity to see what happens next, even if it means a delay in rescuing their NPC ally. After all, they know how much time they have, right?

Actually, they don't. Give them a false itinerary; bring the NPC into the ceremony sooner than expected, so that he falls victim just before the player characters rescue him. This should foil the players' expectations! But don't worry. The player characters will encounter the NPC victim again in the *Smoking Mirror*, where they can save him and the rest of the victims.

Moctitlapac

The following listing for the king, from the Azcan Empire entry in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, is modified to reflect Moctitlapac's new treasures.

King Moctitlapac: 18th level cleric; AC 6; hp 52; #AT 1 (war hammer or magic); D 1d6 + 4, or by spell type; MV 120' (40'); Save C18 + 5; ML 4; Str 13, Int 11, Wis 17, Dex 9, Con 14, Cha 10; AL C. Languages: Azca, Neathar. General Skills: Military Tactics (I), Danger Sense (W), Detect Deception (W), Honor Atzanteotl (W), Alertness (D), Hide in

Shadows (D), Stealth +1 (City, D +1).

Spells Carried: 1st level—*cause light wounds* (x3), *detect good*, *detect magic*, *darkness*. 2nd level—*blight* (x2), *find traps* (x2), *resist fire* (x2).

Moctitlapac, like all clerics except those of Thanatos, currently has no spells above 2nd level. If you are playing this module by itself, then Moctitlapac can use higher-level spells; for the rest of his spells, see the boxed set's entry.

Magical Items/Treasure: Ordinarily, only a *war hammer* +3 (actually a club with an octagonal stone spike at the tip). Prince Kano has given Moctitlapac a *snake staff* with 45 charges, a *ring of protection* +3 without area effect, and a non-magical gold brooch containing a beautiful piece of amber—a great rarity in the Hollow World, worth up to 1000 gp here, but only 700 gp in the outer world. King Moctitlapac's gold jewelry is worth 3,000 gp.

All these treasures came from Glantri's caravan, and all show clear signs of Glantrian make. Assign other magical items to Moctitlapac at your discretion, in order to ensure that the player characters don't kill him. In fact, Moctitlapac should be powerful enough to defeat the player characters in pitched battle without killing them. That comes after he wins.

Running the Battle

The king: A coward, Moctitlapac always hangs back in battle, taking his first round to order a squad of warriors to protect him to the death. Thereafter he throws his two *blight* spells from a safe distance at the nearest player character spellcaster. Then he casts waves of serpents from his *snake staff*—an enchantment that catches his own guards by surprise, and may even require a morale check!

Only when the snakes are defeated, or when the player characters engage him in close combat, does the king finally join the battle with his *war hammer* +3.

Priests and adepts: The Azcan priests begin the battle by throwing all the adepts forward as cannon fodder. The adepts try to preoccupy the player characters hand-to-hand while the priests read spells from clerical scrolls.

Two priests cast *Atzanteotl's hand* on the two nearest fighters. This variant version of *cause serious wounds* does not kill. If the spell brings a character to 0 hp or less, the victim passes into deep paralysis, so that the priests can eventually send the character to Atzanteotl. Any healing magic dispels this enchantment and restores hit points to the victim.

Hierodules and victims: Most of these simply run, trying to get away from the battle. A few may remain to fight for one side or the other.

Some slaves and victims attack the nearest guards and drive them to the ground by weight of numbers; then, with the guards' weapons, they fight with the player characters until they see a chance to escape. Some of the ceremonial victims, loyal Azcans who believe they are going to join Atzanteotl, may fight for the right to become victims!

In this battle, play the hierodules and ceremonial victims as wild cards—now rescuing the player characters from certain death, now hysterically throwing themselves on player character spellcasters to ruin their

spells. They make the battle as complicated as you like.

Guards: These warriors, though, present no uncertainty. When they hear the disturbance in the shrine, half of every squad at the base of the pyramid runs to join the battle. Sixteen of these 1st level fighters will arrive in two rounds; another 16 two rounds later; and so on. Chitlacan will not run out of Azcan warriors before the player characters run out of hit points.

Capture: If a player character takes 12 or more hp in damage (or half the hit points with which the player character began the chapter, whichever is less), the character falls unconscious instead of dying. Victims remain groggy all through the following ceremony, as the priests drain their mentalities.

A touch from the viper scepter, the loss of intellect: The player characters become victims—and thereby become part of the next serpent-apparition. But the adventure is not over for them; keep reading.

WHERE NEXT?

PCs are defeated: Assuming King Moctitlapac and his warriors force the player characters to retreat, they can escape into the shrine and even find the entrance to the labyrinth below—perhaps with the help of a sympathetic hierodule.

Or, should the player characters fight to the end, the Azca pummel them into unconsciousness, then either dispatch them (see below) or give them “a dishonorable death”—that is, the Azca throw the player characters down into the labyrinth and lock the door behind them. The Azca assume, with a great deal of justice, that nothing could survive that dungeon.

PCs victorious: By some miracle the player characters may overcome King Motitlapac and his legions of warriors, or they might avoid the ceremony and look around the shrine on their own. In this case, they see King Motitlapac or another foe fleeing down into the labyrinth—probably with the player characters' ally held hostage and crying for help! Failing that, rumors of great treasures hidden in the pyramid's might also send the characters downward.

To make the lure effective, try to establish (either before the player characters enter the labyrinth or just after) that something important awaits them at its bottom. The characters don't know what this is, but the prospect tempts them to search for it. The clue may come from a hierodule or adept, from overheard conversation among the priests, or from one of the NPCs encountered in Chapter 7. The text lists a few sample clues where appropriate.

Once they enter the labyrinth, surviving priests block the door after them and decide that the dungeon's perils will handle the characters without further trouble.

If the PCs become victims: Their mentalities join the group-mind of victims in the viper apparition. They get taken directly to the *Smoking Mirror*. Go to Chapter 10 to describe the transition.



This chapter describes the PCs' exploration beneath the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl. Refer to the large color map that details each of the pyramid's five levels.

ENTERING THE PYRAMID

The trapdoor leading to the labyrinth is hidden in the priests' quarters in the shrine (see previous chapter).

The trapdoor, made of solid stone, has no handle; it can't be pulled or pried open. A small platform to the right of the doorway contains three jade spheres, each about two inches in diameter. The spheres rest in shallow indentations in the platform, arranged as points of a triangle. A similar platform to the left of the doorway contains three identical indentations; these indentations are empty.

When the jade spheres are removed from the right indentations and placed in the left indentations, this triggers a delicate balancing mechanism that opens the stone door. Because the mechanism responds only to the exact weight of the spheres, the door won't open if the PCs place other objects in the indentations.

If the PCs remove even a single sphere once the door opens, the door begins to close. The door closes completely in six rounds, giving fast-moving PCs enough time to steal the spheres and still get inside the pyramid if they wish. Each sphere is worth 75 gp.

If the PCs don't steal the spheres, the door automatically closes 15 minutes after they open it. There is no similar mechanism for opening the door inside the pyramid. Once the PCs enter and the door closes, they're effectively trapped inside.

LEVEL 1

This level of the pyramid is essentially one large chamber, subdivided into smaller rooms by brick partitions and supported with stone columns. This level is primarily used for storage. All of the doors, except for area 8, are made of wood and are unlocked. The walls are draped with cotton cloth dyed black and red. The floor is black stone.

Refer to the Level 1 section of the color map of the pyramid.

1. Volunteer Cells

Each of these small rooms contains a wooden cot, an empty ceramic pitcher, and a stone plate. This is where victims are kept prior to Kano's religious ceremonies. Victims kept in these cells are volunteers; hence, locks are unnecessary. Such voluntary victims believe that their happiness in the afterlife is assured.

2. Prisoner Cells

These cells are identical to the cells in area 1, but they also contain iron shackles embedded in the walls. These cells are used for unwilling victims in the ceremonies. Such victims are usually convicted criminals, prisoners of war, or slaves purchased specifically for religious ceremonies.

3. Skull Racks

Tiers of wooden racks resembling stair steps line the

walls and are filled with hundreds of skulls of previous victims. The skulls have no value nor special properties. The Azca call these racks *tzompantli*.

4. Storeroom

This room contains a variety of objects that the priests use in their ceremonies. All of the objects are in plain sight; the PCs can take whatever they like.

Flint knife: Used to destroy victims in religious ceremonies. It's similar to an ordinary dagger, causing 1d4 damage. (Value: 5 gp.)

Obsidian blade: Like the flint knife, this obsidian blade destroys victims. Similar in size to a short sword, the blade causes 1d6 damage. (Value: 50 gp.)

The obsidian blade is *cursed*. When used in combat by a character of good or neutral alignment, the blade lowers the character's attack rolls by -1. All damage scored is reduced by 1 hp (minimum 1). As soon as it is used in combat for the first time, thereafter, the blade always forces the character to employ it against enemies, magically appearing the character's hand.

Nothing short of a *wish* can dispel the blade's curse. However, the curse only functions inside the pyramid; once the character leaves the pyramid, the blade functions normally.

Stone urn: This small stone urn, called a *cuauhxicalli*, is used to hold the ashes of burned victims. It has no particular value nor special properties.

Torches: This is a bundle containing a dozen ordinary torches. There are six flasks of oil next to the torches.

Ceremonial garb: Sitting on a high shelf are stacks of red and black robes, breechclouts, and hoods. Victims are garbed in these clothes. The clothing has no particular value nor special properties.

Crystal Skull: This object resembles a normal human skull made of clear crystal. The priests use the skull to put themselves into a trance-like state, clearing their minds before conducting religious services. Any character who makes eye contact with the eye sockets of the crystal skull must save vs. spell. Failure means the character becomes immobile, staring blankly at the skull for 1d6 + 6 rounds; success still means immobility for 1d4 rounds. The enchantment is broken if a companion physically pulls the character away from the skull.

The PCs can take the skull with them if they like; as long as they avoid making eye contact with its eye sockets, there's no risk of immobility. However, 2d4 rounds after the skull is removed from Level 1, it animates; blazing red eyes appear in its eye sockets, and the skull begins to hover in mid-air. (If the skull is being kept in a knapsack or bag, it chews its way free as soon as it becomes active; it takes two rounds to chew through such a container. If the skull is in a container made of metal or some other non-chewable material, it becomes active as soon as the PC removes it.) The hovering skull tries to bite the PC who carried it.

The skull pursues relentlessly, flying at top speed, and fights to the death. If reduced to 0 hp, it crumbles to crystal dust (the dust has no value). If the PCs somehow manage to lure it back to Level 1, it immediately falls to the floor (no damage), and its red eyes disappear; it only becomes active again if the PCs remove it from Level 1.

Crystal skull: AC 6; HD 2; hp 8; AT 1; D 1d4 (bite); MV 120' (40'); Save F1; AL C; THAC0 18.

Nothing short of a *wish* can remove the curse from the skull. The intact skull (with curse removed) is worth 200 gp.

5. Offering Room

This room contains religious offerings collected by the priests from the citizenry. The priests have already taken most items of value for themselves. But if the PCs spend at least 15 minutes sorting through the animal skins, clay pottery, and baskets of feathers, they find two items of interest:

1. A rawhide shield with sharp triangles of obsidian imbedded around the edges. Use as either a normal shield or as a slashing weapon to inflict 1d4 damage; value: 20 gp.

2. A wooden digging stick with an iron blade. The object is called a *coa*, and normally used as a farmer's tool. However, the blade of this *coa* has been sharpened to a fine point; treat as a normal spear, inflicting 1d6 damage; value: 9 gp. The farmer who assaulted a warrior with this weapon has already gone to the *Smoking Mirror* in the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit.

6. Study Rooms

Each of these four rooms contains writings pertaining to a particular topic. A religious Azcan symbol is carved on the door of each room. The meaning of the symbols should not be immediately obvious to the PCs.

The writings in each room are hand-printed on paper made from agave leaves, rolled into long scrolls and stacked on wooden shelves. Azcan priests are encouraged to study these scrolls and add new writings reflecting their own insights.

Religious Azcan writing is a complex arrangement of symbols and pictures, difficult to comprehend for all but the most learned priests. For every hour a PC spends studying the scrolls in a particular room, he makes an Intelligence roll. Literate clerics receive a +2 bonus to the roll. If the roll fails, he has been unable to comprehend the scrolls. If he wishes, he can continue making Intelligence checks for every additional hour he spends studying the scrolls until an Intelligence check is successful.

If the Intelligence check succeeds, the PC can comprehend a few of the general ideas discussed in the scrolls; read or paraphrase the General Ideas section in the room description. At this point, the PC is allowed a Wisdom check. If he fails the check, he learns no additional information. If the Wisdom check succeeds, read or paraphrase the Topic and Door Symbol section, which reveals the specific ideas and symbols discussed.

Any PC can remain in a room as long as needed to make a successful Intelligence check. However, he can't attempt a Wisdom check until his Intelligence check is successful. No PC can attempt more than a single Wisdom check in the same room.

6a. Jaguar-Head Room: Carved in this door is the figure of a jaguar head.

General Ideas: The writings discuss general principles of Azca religion, such as the importance of devotion, the risk of worshiping false entities, and the sanctity of religious symbols.

Topic and Door Symbol: The jaguar on the door is a

symbol of Atzanteotl, "the true avenger who attacks with tooth and claw, the bastion of strength." The hawk is a symbol of Otzitiotl, "the pretender who flies from danger, the symbol of weakness."

6b. Extended Hand Room: Carved in this door is the figure of a man extending his hand to another man.

General Ideas: "Reward the weak with death. . . end the suffering of the helpless with their destruction. . . a trusting man is an ignorant man. . ."

Topic and Door Symbol: The symbol on the door stands for Compassion, one of the virtues originally deemed important by the "false" patron Otzitiotl. Like those of the next two rooms, this virtue has been re-interpreted by the priests of Atzanteotl (as described in the General Ideas section).

6c. Cornstalk Room: Carved in this door is the figure of a hand clutching a stalk of corn.

General Ideas: "Give freely to the priests of Atzanteotl, for their needs exceed yours. . . the destitute and the poor have earned their own misery and deserve only contempt. . . your life belongs to the true patron—give it gladly if asked. . ."

Topic and Door Symbol: The symbol on the door stands for Charity, another of Otzitiotl's cardinal virtues. The General Ideas section re-interprets the virtue into Atzanteotl's terms.

6d. Sword Room: Carved in this door is the figure of a hand clutching a sword.

General Ideas: "Self-sacrifice is foolish, unless so ordered by the true patron or his agents. . . the wise man will not risk his safety for the weak or the useless. . ."

Topic and Door Symbol: The symbol on the door stands for Courage, the third of the "false" patron Otzitiotl's cardinal virtues. Here, too, the General Ideas section indicates the revised view.

7. Medicine Room

This room contains many substances used in religious ceremonies, along with remedies for diseases. The priests believe that the remedies retain their effectiveness longer when stored in the pyramid. Most of the flasks and jars are empty, but a few are filled with colored potions and powders. All flasks and jars stand in plain sight, but none are labeled. The characters must determine their contents by trial and error, magical analysis, or other methods.

Jar of brown flakes: This is ordinary tobacco, burned by the priests as part of their religious ceremonies.

Flask of clear liquid: This potion smells like dead fish. If consumed, the drinker must save vs. poison. If the saving throw is successful, the liquid acts like a *potion of healing*. There are three doses in the flask.

Jar of black paste: This thick paste has the texture of mud and smells like charcoal. The priests use it as a soap to cleanse the faces of their victims. It has no particular value to the PCs.

Incense sticks: These six green incense sticks, which are burned during religious holidays, have a faint aroma of bananas. If a PC lights an incense stick, the incense gives off dense clouds of banana-scented smoke, greenish in color, filling an area about 10 feet in diameter. Any character who inhales the fumes and fails to save vs. poison suffers 1 hp damage.

8. Doorway

The doorway leading out of this room is a solid stone panel with no handle; the panel can't be pulled or pried open. Two small platforms on either side of the doorway, complete with three jade spheres, work just like the entryway door at the beginning of this chapter. But regardless of whether the PCs remove the spheres after the panel slides open, the panel does not close. However, it may close as a result of actions on Level 2; see area 1 of the Level 2 description, below.

ABOUT LEVELS 2-4

These labyrinths were originally training grounds for young priests, but the brutal Moctitlapac has ordered his minions to modify the labyrinths, making survival all but impossible. On his arrival, Prince Kano locked rebellious priests and other undesirables in the labyrinth, presumably to test their worthiness. In fact, it was just a convenient way to get rid of them. (The various undead lurking in the labyrinth are corrupted manifestations of former victims.)

Levels 2, 3, and 4 share several common features:

1. The floors and walls are solid stone, roughly textured and cool to the touch. Ceilings are about seven feet high. The air is stale and humid.
2. There is no natural (or unnatural) light in the labyrinths. The PCs must provide their own light source (such as the torches from area 4, Level 1).
3. Various sliding panels are activated by special balancing mechanisms called Sphere Platforms. Unless indicated otherwise, all Sphere Platforms in Levels 2, 3, and 4 operate in the same way as the entrance platforms the PCs used to enter the labyrinth (see the start of this chapter). All of the sliding panels retract into or extend from hollow areas in the walls (see maps).

All of the panels are solid stone, two feet thick. It takes one full minute for a panel to open or close. Once a panel is activated, it continues moving until it's completely opened (or closed); its movement can't be interrupted by adjusting the spheres in the Sphere Platforms or by other ordinary means. The sliding panels crush and kill any PC standing between an opening panel and the opposite wall—but since the panels move so slowly, only an extremely careless PC gets into such a position. Once a panel is opened or closed, it remains that way for a full 24 hours.

Because the Sphere Platforms respond only to the exact weight of the spheres, the panels won't open (or close) if the PCs place other objects in the indentations. However, the spheres are interchangeable; that is, if the PCs take the spheres from one Sphere Platform, they can use them on any other platform. Thus, one set of three spheres can operate all of the panels in Levels 2, 3, and 4, with a few exceptions noted in the text. Each sphere is worth 75 gp.

LEVEL 2

Refer to the Level 2 section of the color map of the pyramid.

1. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 1a and 1b to slide open, and causes the entryway panel (area 8, Level 1) to slide shut.

2. Rubble Pile

Rubble fills this corridor from top to bottom (Kano sent three rebellious priests into the labyrinth, who inadvertently triggered a trap in this area, burying themselves in an avalanche of rocks). If the PCs spend one full turn digging through the rubble, they discover a skeleton's foot. Another turn of digging frees the entire skeleton, which promptly attacks them. One round after the first skeleton attacks, two more skeletons dig themselves free of the rubble and attack. The skeletons fight to the death, pursuing if necessary.

Skeletons (3): AC 7; HD 1; hp 7 each; AT 1; D 1d6; MV 60' (20'); Save F1; AL C; THAC0 19.

If the PCs defeat the skeletons, they can resume digging through the rubble. Another full turn of digging reveals that the passage is a dead end, but they'll also discover a small cloth bag belonging to the skeletons. The bag contains six jade spheres (taken from the Sphere Platforms at areas 5 and 9).

3. Skull

A giant crystal skull completely blocks the passage. Its mouth is opened to a width of about three feet, revealing rows of jagged teeth as sharp as razors. The only way to continue through this passage is to crawl through the skull's mouth.

Though the skull looks dangerous, actually it isn't. A PC who crawls in the mouth must make a successful Dexterity check or suffer 1 hp damage from scraping against the teeth. Once inside, he can see a 4-foot-diameter hole in the back of the skull; passing through this hole, the PC can continue through the passage.

4. Half-Skeleton (Bottom)

The bottom half of a skeleton is sprawled on the floor in front of a closed stone panel; it looks as if the stone panel descended from the ceiling and chopped him in half (which is exactly what happened—his other half is in area 6).

5. Sphere Platform

The jade spheres are absent from this platform (they were taken by the now-deceased priests buried beneath the rubble pile in area 2). If the PCs recover the spheres (or use substitute spheres) and operate the platform, panel 5a rises from the floor. However, the mechanism controlling this panel is defective; it opens to a height of only two feet. If PCs want to continue north, they must crawl under the panel. The panel will not fall on them.)

If the PCs open panel 5a, the skeleton torso on the north side of the panel begins to crawl north (see area 6).

6. Half-Skeleton (Top)

The torso of a skeleton—complete with skull, rib

cage, arms, and hands—is sprawled on the floor, appearing as if it had been chopped in half by the stone panel at 5a.

The skeleton originally was a rebellious priest whom Mactitlapac sent into the labyrinth at Kano's orders. The Sphere Platform at area 5 triggered a trap; panel 5a rose into the ceiling, only to come crashing down a moment later on its victim. The panel crashed with such force that the trigger mechanism was damaged. If the Sphere Platform is activated again, the panel operates differently—see area 5.

If the PCs raise the panel (see area 5), the torso begins to crawl at a movement rate of 30' (10'). The torso follows a path indicated by the arrows on the Level 2 map. If it reaches the end of the trail (at area 14), it stops—it lacks the will to go further.

The PCs can follow the torso; it leads them on the most direct route out of this level. The torso does not communicate with the PCs, nor will it attack them or defend itself. The torso is AC 7 and has 3 hp.

7. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 7a and 7b to slide open; it also causes the adjacent room to rumble (see area 8).

8. Rumbling Room

One round after panels 7a and 7b are opened (as a result of operating Sphere Platform 7), this room begins to rumble and shake. One round later, small chips of stone begin to rain from the ceiling. The falling chips continue for five additional rounds, after which the entire ceiling collapses, filling the room with stone chunks. Characters in the room when the ceiling collapses suffer 3d6 damage.

Once the room has filled with rubble, it takes one PC two hours to clear away a path large enough for a human-sized character to squeeze through (two PCs can clear a path in one hour, four PCs can clear a path in 30 minutes, and so on.)

9. Sphere Platform

The jade spheres are absent from this platform (they were taken by the now-deceased rebellious priests buried beneath the rubble pile in area 2). If the player characters recover the spheres (or use substitute spheres) and operate the platform, panels 9a and 9b slide open.

10. Empty Room

There is nothing of interest in this room. However, if the player characters examine the north edge of the floor, they see a pile of loose rocks and rubble. If the dig away the rubble, which takes a single player character six rounds to complete, they discover a tunnel.

(Though most of the pyramid is solid stone, this section contains a layer of earth. The designers meant to use this section of the pyramid as a burial ground, a plan later abandoned. A rebellious priest imprisoned in the pyramid discovered this area and attempted to dig his way out. He was killed by a family of giant rats who now lair in the tunnel; see areas 11 and 12.)

11. Tunnel

The tunnel is three feet in diameter, dank, and dark; if the player characters use it, they'll probably have to crawl.

12. Nest

This area is the lair of a family of giant rats. The rats subsist on priests and other unfortunates imprisoned in the pyramid, but food has been scarce for some time, and the rats are ravenous. When a player character comes within three feet of the entrance to area 12, the rats smell him and charge. The rats fight to the death, pursuing if necessary (none of rats carry disease, so it's not necessary for bitten player characters to save vs. poison).

Giant rats (3): AC 7; hp 3 each; AT 1 (bite); D 1d3; MV 60' (20'); Save F1; AL N; THAC0 19.

If the player characters defeat the rats, they can search the rat nest, a filth-strewn mound of earth and rubble. There is nothing of interest here, except for the gnawed bones of a former rebellious priest, who still clutches a club in his bony fingers.

The end of the tunnel (12a) is blocked with rubble and earth. However, a single player character who digs for six rounds can move away the rubble, revealing an opening leading to area 14.

13. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panel 13a to slide open.

14. Pedestal Room

The player characters enter this room either through the open doorway on the south side or through the tunnel at 12a. The room is 50 feet in diameter with a 10-foot ceiling. A flat stone pedestal, three feet in diameter and two feet high, rises from the center of the floor. Three three-inch diameter jade spheres, each worth 100 gp, rest in indentations in the pedestal. If a player character removes even one of the jade spheres from the pedestal, panel 14a closes and 14b opens. Replacing the spheres has no further effect on the doors.

A bone golem with four skeletal arms rests in the room behind panel 14b. When the panel opens, the bone golem stumbles out. Ordered to defend this room, it attacks the player characters and fights to the death; however, it does not leave this room. It carries a sack of 20 rocks around its neck and two short swords in hand. Each round, it uses two of its arms to hurl rocks (make normal attack rolls) and two arms to make sword attacks.

Bone golem: AC 2; HD 8; hp 45; AT 4; D 1d6/1d6 (short swords)/1d2/1d2 (rocks); MV 120' (40'); Save F4; AL N; THAC0 12; SD immune to fire, cold, and electrical attacks.

15. Sphere Platform

The indentations in this platform are three inches in diameter; the spheres are absent. The only spheres capable of operating this platform are those from the pedestal in area 14. If the player characters use those spheres to operate the platform, panel 15a slides open.

16. Stairs

This stone stairway winds deep into the pyramid and leads to Level 3.

LEVEL 3

Refer to the Level 3 section of the color map of the pyramid.

1. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panel 1a to slide open.

2. Rubble Pit

This wide pit is about 15 feet deep. Jagged stones line the bottom. A narrow wooden bridge crosses over the pit. To traverse the pit, the player characters can either use the bridge or climb down the wall of the pit, then climb up the opposite side.

If a player character uses the bridge, there is a 10 percent chance that it collapse before he reaches the other side. This chance is cumulative; that is, if two player characters cross the bridge at the same time, there is a 20 percent chance that it collapses; a 30 percent chance if three player characters use it at the same time; and so on. A player character who falls into the pit suffers 1d6 damage.

Unless he's lowered by a rope, a player character who attempts to climb down the south wall of the pit must make a successful Dexterity check; if the check fails, he falls in and suffers 1d6 damage. He must make another Dexterity check to climb the north wall; if he fails, he falls in and suffers 1d6 damage.

A shadow lurks amid the rubble at the bottom of the pit. As soon as a player character enters the pit, regardless of whether he climbs or falls in, the shadow attacks. The shadow fights to the death, but it does not leave the pit.

Shadow: AC 7; HD 2+2*; hp 15; AT 1; D 1d4 + special; MV 90' (30'); Save F2; AL C; THAC0 17; SA hit drains victim of 1 point of Strength for eight turns (victims reduced to 0 Strength become shadows); SD surprise on 1-5 on 1d6.

3. Sphere Platform

This platform has only two indentations instead of the normal three. If operated, the entire section of floor indicated by the dotted line on the map collapses; all player characters in this area plunge 15 feet and suffer 1d6 damage when they hit the bottom. Unless a fallen player character is pulled out by a companion, he must climb the wall and make a successful Dexterity check; failing the check, he falls back in the pit and suffers an additional 1d6 damage.

4. Collapsed Floor

The floor here has collapsed as a result of a pit trap, similar to the one described in area 3. The pit is about 15 feet deep. A body sprawls in the rubble at the bottom of the pit.

The player characters can either attempt to leap over the pit, a distance of about seven feet, or they can climb down one side, then climb out the opposite side. Leaping across the pit requires a successful Dexterity check; climbing into the pit also requires a Dexterity check, as does climbing out. Failing a check means that the player character falls into the pit (1d6 damage).

The body at the bottom of the pit belongs to the rebellious priest who triggered the trap. The weapon in his belt is a *maquahuitl*, a sword made of hard wood with sharp obsidian triangles imbedded in the edges of the blade (treat as a *short sword* +1; value: 550 gp). He also hold two jade spheres (worth 75 gp each).

5. Sphere Platform

This platform has only two indentations instead of the normal three. However, it is currently non-operational, since it was used to trigger the pit trap in area 4. The platform contains no spheres (they were taken by the dead priest in area 4).

6. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 6a and 6b to slide open.

7. Demolished Room

This room used to contain two large idols similar to those in area 9, but they have been knocked over and reduced to rubble by the three zombies who now reside here.

Zombies (3): AC 8; HD 2; hp 12 each; AT 1; D 1d8; MV 120' (40'); Save F1; AL C; THAC0 18; SD always strike last (no initiative roll needed).

The zombies remain hidden behind the rubble in the northeast corner of the room until the player characters enter. Then they attack, fighting to the death. If the player characters flee, all surviving zombies pursue, but if the zombies haven't caught the player characters within three rounds, they give up and return to this room. One of the zombies wears a robe made of hawk feathers, taken from the dead priest in area 14c. Another zombie has two jade spheres (worth 75 gp each), taken from the Sphere Platform in area 11.

8. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 8a and 8b to slide open.

9. Head Room

This room contains two 10-foot tall idols resembling hawk heads. If a character of lawful or neutral alignment stands within five feet of either idol for three consecutive rounds, he hears a voice in his head repeating the words, "Beware the *Smoking Mirror*—the harbinger of Nightwail."

10. Collapsed Floor

The floor here has collapsed as a result of a pit trap, similar to the one described in area 3. The pit is about 15 feet deep. The player characters can either attempt to leap over the pit, a distance of about seven feet, or

they can climb down one side, then climb out the opposite side. Leaping across the pit requires a successful Dexterity check; climbing into it the requires a Dexterity check, as does climbing out. Failing a check means the player character falls into the pit (1d6 damage).

There is nothing but rubble at the bottom of the pit.

11. Sphere Platform

This platform has only two indentations instead of the normal three. However, it is currently non-operational, since it was used to trigger the pit trap in area 10. (There are no spheres in the platform; one of the zombies in area 7 took them).

12. Sphere Platform

This platform has only two indentations instead of the normal three. If operated, the entire section of floor indicated by the dotted line on the map collapses; all player characters in this area plunge 15 feet and suffer 1d6 damage. Unless a fallen player character is pulled out by a companion, he must climb the wall and make a successful Dexterity check; failing the check, he falls back in the pit and suffers an additional 1d6 damage.

13. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panel 13a to slide open.

14. Statue Room

This room contains three head-shaped statues, each about 15 feet high. All of the statues have their mouths wide open. A 10-foot-long rope ladder leads from each mouth to a 10-foot-square meditation chamber below.

As soon as the player characters enter this room, they all hear the same voice in their heads, endlessly repeating the words, "My robe. . . my robe. . ." The sound becomes louder as they approach area 14c.

14a. Human Head: This statue resembles a giant human head. The chamber below is empty, except for a layer of dust on the floor about two inches thick. If the player characters scrape away the dust in southwestern corner of the floor, they discover a trapdoor. A player character who makes a successful Strength check can open the trapdoor; any two player characters working together can open it automatically. The passage beneath the trapdoor leads to area 15.

14b. Jaguar Head: This statue resembles a giant jaguar head. The chamber below is empty.

14c. Hawk Head: This statue resembles a giant hawk head. The chamber below contains a ghostly image of a skeleton, lying motionless on the floor. The skeleton image repeatedly mouths the words, "My robe." Next to the image is an axe made of solid obsidian (treat as a *battleaxe* +1; value: 600 gp). The image does not react to the player characters; they can take the axe if they wish.

If the player characters place the hawk-feather robe (from the zombie in area 7) on or near the skeleton image, it instantly transforms into the image of human. Still immobile, the human image thanks the characters for returning its robes, then offers to help them by

answering their questions.

Assuming the player characters ask the right questions, the image answers as follows. He won't elaborate on this information. During the questioning, the image (and the robe) gradually fade away, disappearing completely in a few minutes.

Who are you? How did you get here? "I am Tiriz, a priest of the mighty Otziotl, accused of blasphemy by Prince Kano and banished here to die."

What's going on? What's "Nightwail"? The "*Smoking Mirror*?" Tiriz says (inaccurately), "Nightwail is a euphemism for the destruction of the world. Prince Kano is using the mental energies of his victims to power the *Smoking Mirror*. If unchecked, the *Smoking Mirror* will corrupt and destroy the world."

Note that this is incorrect. The scheme will not destroy the Hollow World—at least not literally. However, it threatens to demolish the original purpose for which the Immortals made the Hollow World; thus Tiriz's mistaken understanding of the Nightwail plot. Tiriz has no details about the *Smoking Mirror*.

How do we get out of here? The exit from this area is a trapdoor in the floor of the chamber beneath the human head statue.

What's the obsidian axe for? The image tells the player characters to take the axe with them (if they don't have it already). "Look for a fountain of black glass. Smash the glass with the axe."

(DM Note: It's crucial that the player characters know about the "fountain of black glass" so they can descend to Level 5. If the player characters don't ask about the axe, Tiriz volunteers the information.)

15. Stairs

This stone stairway winds deep into the pyramid and leads to Level 4.

LEVEL 4

Refer to the Level 4 section of the color map of the pyramid.

1. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 1a, 1b, and 1c to slide open.

2. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 2a and 2b to slide open; it also causes the adjacent room to rumble (see area 3).

3. Rumbling Room

One round after panels 2a and 2b are opened (as a result of operating Sphere Platform 2), this room begins to rumble and shake. One round later, small chips of stone begin to rain from the ceiling. The falling chips continue for five additional rounds, after which the entire ceiling collapses, filling the room with stone chunks. Characters in the room when the ceiling collapses suffer 3d6 damage.

Once the room has filled with rubble, it takes one player character two hours to clear away a path large

enough for a human-sized character to squeeze through. Two PCs can clear a path in one hour, four PCs can clear a path in 30 minutes, and so on.

4. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 4a, 4b, and 4c to slide open.

5. Offering Room

Centered in this room is a seven-foot jade statue of a monkey. The monkey sits with its legs crossed, its head pointed to the ceiling with its eyes closed. It has one paw outstretched, as if asking for an offering.

Any player character entering this room hears a voice in his head, repeating the words, "What do you offer? What do you offer?" If a player character places a jade item worth at least 50 gp (such as one of the jade spheres) in the monkey statue's palm, the statue pops the item in its mouth and swallows it. The player character who made the offering no longer hears the voice in his head. If a player character gives any other type of offering to the statue, it drops them on the floor; the voice continues in the player character's head. The offering is gone for good.

If any player characters remain in the room for three consecutive rounds without making a suitable offering, the statue comes to life, attacking all player characters in the room. The statue always tries to stand between the characters and panel 6a.

Living jade statue (a variation of the living rock statue described in the Basic Rules): AC 4; HD 5**; hp 30; AT 2 fists/1 bite; Dmg 2d6/2d6/1d6; MV 90' (30'); Save F5; AL C; THAC0 14.

The statue fights to the death, but it won't leave area 5. If all player characters leave the room, the statue resumes its original position. Any player character who leaves area 5 and returns later hears the voice in his head again, even if he previously made a suitable offering; he must make another offering to avoid activating the statue.

If the statue is reduced to 0 hp, it crumbles to dust. The dust has no value.

6. Sphere Platform

The jade spheres are absent from this platform (the monkey statue in area 5 ate them). If the player characters use substitute spheres and operate the platform, panel 6a opens.

7. Skull

A giant crystal skull completely blocks the passage. Its mouth is opened to a width of about three feet, revealing rows of jagged, razor sharp teeth. The only way through this passage is through the skull's mouth.

As soon as a player character comes within three feet of the skull, its eye sockets glow dull red, and its interior fills with a dense greenish smoke that smells like bananas. Each player character who crawls in the mouth must make a successful Dexterity check or suffer 1 hp damage from scraping against the teeth. Also, he must save vs. poison or suffer 1d4 damage from the fumes. (However, a player character who holds his breath while

making his way through the skull—a process taking three rounds—risks no damage from the fumes and need not make the saving throw.)

Once inside, a player character can see a four-foot-diameter hole in the west side of the mouth; passing through this hole, the player character can continue through the passage.

When all player characters have moved three feet away from the skull, the mist dissipates and the red glow vanishes.

8. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 8a and 8b to slide open; it also causes the adjacent room to rumble (see area 9).

9. Rumbling Room

One round after panels 8a and 8b are opened (as a result of operating Sphere Platform 8), this room begins to rumble and shake. The encounter plays out as described in area 2 of this level.

10. Rubble Pile

Rubble fills this corridor from top to bottom (a rebellious priest inadvertently triggered a trap in this area, burying himself in an avalanche of rocks). If the player characters spend one full turn digging through the rubble, they discover a skeleton's arm. Another turn of digging reveals the crushed bones of the victim, a flask containing three doses of *potion of healing*, and a *ring of fire resistance*.

11. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 11a and 11b to slide open.

12. Bone Pile

The floor of this room is filled with a layer of crushed and broken human bones about two feet deep. Movement rates are reduced by half when walking through this room. If the player characters wade through the bones, they feel bony fingers grasp and claw at their legs.

The grasping fingers are harmless. However, if any player character attacks or otherwise disturbs the bones (aside from walking through them), dozens of skulls rise from the bone pile and fly wildly around the room, snapping at random player characters. For each round spent in this room, each player character has a 25% chance of being bitten by a skull for 1d2 damage.

The player characters can attack the skulls if they wish—each skull has 2 hp and AC 6—but each time a skull is destroyed, another rises from the bone pile to take its place. The flying skulls drop back into the bone pile three rounds after all of the player characters have left the room.

13. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panel 13a to slide open.

14. Sphere Platform

Operating this platform causes panels 14a and 14b to slide open.

15. Demolished Room

If the player characters approach the opened panel 14c, they smell rotten meat and see shadowy movement amid the rubble filling the room.

This room used to contain several large stone idols, but they have been reduced to rubble by the zombies who now reside here. If the player characters enter the room, the zombies stumble toward them and attack.

Zombies (8): AC 8; HD 2; hp 12 each; AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MV 120' (40'); Save F1; AL C; THAC0 18; SD always strike last.

The zombies fight to the death. If the player characters flee, all surviving zombies pursue, but if the zombies haven't caught the PCs within three rounds, they give up and return to this room.

16. Room of the Four Suns

The dome-shaped room is about 60 feet tall at its apex. Elaborate paintings cover the walls, with each quarter-section of the room featuring a different subject:

16a. Jaguars: This section depicts figures of giant jaguars menacing a small village of terrified humans. A single golden sun hangs in the sky. (The painting represents the First Sun, the ritual calendar date called Four-Jaguar, a period when mankind was destroyed by jaguars.)

16b. Hurricane: This section portrays a human village buffeted by hurricane winds. A number of the humans have the faces of monkeys; others are covered with fur from head to toe. Two golden suns hang in the sky. (The painting represents the Second Sun, the ritual calendar date called Four-Wind, a period when a magical hurricane turned all humanity into monkeys.)

16c. Fire and lightning: This section depicts a rain of fire and lightning destroying a small village. Three golden suns hang in the sky. (The painting represents the Third Sun, the ritual calendar date called Four-Rain, a period when mankind was destroyed by a rain of fire, thunder, and lightning.)

16d. Flood: This section depicts an immense ocean wave about to envelope a small village. Four golden suns hang in the sky. (The painting represents the Fourth Sun, the ritual calendar date called Four-Water, a period when mankind was destroyed by a huge flood lasting 52 weeks, leaving only a single man and woman to repopulate the planet.)

In the center of the room stands a large stone fountain. Instead of liquid, the surface of the fountain is covered with a smooth layer of obsidian. The player characters might have heard about this "fountain of black glass" from Tiriz in area 14c, Level 3.

The player characters can use swords, stones, or other weapons in an attempt to crack the obsidian layer; the obsidian is AC 0. If the player characters use Tiriz's obsidian axe (from area 14c, Level 3), assume the obsidian is AC 9; each successful strike with the obsidian axe inflicts 2d6 damage on the layer.

If the obsidian layer takes at least 25 hp damage, the

following events occur:

1. The surface of the obsidian layer explodes in a shower of splinters, and an immense jade figure resembling a jaguar bursts from the fountain into the room.

Jade golem (a variation on the amber golem described in the Expert Rules): AC 6; HD 10**; hp 50; AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 2d6/2d6/2d10; MV 180' (60'); Save F5; AL C; THAC0 11; SD can detect *invisible* creatures within 60'; immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells.

The jade golem attacks the player characters on sight and fights to the death. However, it does not leave this room. If all the player characters leave the room for six consecutive rounds, the golem crawls back inside the fountain. The obsidian surface won't immediately reseal (this process takes 24 hours); if the player characters re-enter the room and come within ten feet of the fountain, the golem springs out and attacks them again.

Successful attacks against the jade golem made with the obsidian hammer inflict 2d6 damage.

2. The paintings begin to move; the jaguars paw at the people (16a), the trees blow in the wind (16b), the lighting crackles in the sky (16c), and people run from the village as the tidal wave approaches (16d). Any time a player character stands within 20 feet of a particular section (indicated by the dotted lines on the map), he experiences the following effects:

16a: The player character imagines that he hears deafening jaguar roars. So long as he remains in this area, he is unable to hear anything else. When he moves from this area, his hearing functions normally.

16b: The player character feels as if he is being pummeled by strong winds. So long as he remains in this area, his movement rate is reduced by half, and all attack rolls are made at a -2 penalty.

16c: The player character feels intense heat, and the air around him crackles with static electricity. Though the effect is illusory, the player character experiences it as genuine; for each round spent in this area, the player character must make a successful Constitution check or suffer 1 hp damage. Additionally, attack rolls are made at a -1 penalty while in this area.

16d: The player character cannot breathe, as if drowning. The effect and Constitution checks are identical to those in 16c. If the player character fails three successive checks, he collapses into unconsciousness, automatically losing 1 hp per round until he is pulled out of the area by a companion.

The animation continues and the effects persist until the jade golem is destroyed. Neither the jade golem nor the zombies (see below) are affected by the animated paintings.

3. All surviving zombies from area 15 stagger into this room six rounds after the appearance of the jade golem. They join the attack on the player characters and fight to the death. The zombies and the golem won't attack each other.

If the player characters defeat the golem and the zombies, they can examine the fountain. Inside, a stone stairway leads down to Level 5.

THE PYRAMID OF OTZITIOTL

Refer to the Level 5 section of the color map of the pyramid.

1. *Glowing Stairs*

As you go down the stairs, the air becomes cooler and sweeter. The walls and the stairway begin to glow in a soft, white light.

The stairs end at a stone door with a jade handle. Bright light spills from the door frame.

The door isn't locked, but it is difficult to open due to long disuse. A player character who succeeds in a Strength check can pull it open. Failing that, any two player characters working together whose combined Strength scores exceed 18 can pull it open automatically.

2. *The Secret Pyramid*

Before you is a vast chamber, nearly 250 feet square and 50 feet high. The air is sweet and clean. The stone walls radiate a soothing glow, bathing the entire chamber with a soft, white light. A still lake of crystal clear water fills most of the chamber. A magnificent jade shrine rises from the center of the lake. Stone walls slope from the shrine, extending deep beneath the surface of the water; apparently, the shrine sits on a much larger structure.

A small canoe made of a hollowed log rests near the west bank of the lake. The bow of the canoe is carved in the shape of a hawk's head.

The jade shrine is, in fact, the top of a second pyramid; a successful Intelligence check can verify this. (The Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl was constructed over an earlier pyramid, erected on the same site. This earlier pyramid was dedicated to Otzitiotl. Atzanteotl's minions, following an Azcan architectural tradition, built the new pyramid on top of the old. This saved the effort of destroying the old one, and it allowed the builders to make the new pyramid larger with less effort.)

2a. Walls: The stone walls are permanently enchanted with a form of *continual light*. The magical light prevents the lake from evaporating and gives it special properties (see area 2c).

2b. Bank: A 10-foot wide bank of packed earth.

2c. Lake: The warm water emits the sweet fragrance of roses. Player characters who drink from the lake are healed as if by a *potion of healing*. This effect occurs only once per day for each player character. Water taken from the lake loses its magical properties.

Immersion in the lake offers no additional benefits. Player characters can swim in the lake, but no matter how they try, they cannot come nearer the central structure: The intervening distance seems to expand as they proceed. To those ashore, the swimmer is simply staying in place. This effect comes from Immortal magic and cannot be dispelled.

2d. Canoe: The canoe, made from a hollowed log, holds one man-sized character comfortably. There are no oars. The canoe's enchantment is such that neither physical nor magical means can remove it from the water; it is as if the canoe is fused to the lake's surface.

If more than one character tries to pile into the canoe, it begins to sink into the lake. The canoe submerges in a single round. Once all of the characters are safely on shore (or have sunk away into oblivion), the canoe resurfaces.

Questioning: As soon as a single player character settles into the canoe, the hawk head on the bow of the canoe turns to him and says, "What qualities make a servant of Otzitiotl worthy of his aid?" The hawk head asks the question only once, and ignores comments from characters not in the canoe. The player character in the canoe has one minute (six rounds) to answer.

Any single quality associated with a character of lawful alignment is an acceptable answer; for instance, if the player character mentions courage, compassion, charity, honesty, humility, or devotion, the hawk head is satisfied. In evaluating an answer's suitability, be generous to the players.

If the player character refuses to answer or offers an unacceptable response, the canoe sinks as described above. Assuming the player character doesn't drown, he can get inside the canoe when it resurfaces and try again.

If the player character gives an acceptable answer, the hawk head turns away from him, resuming its normal position. The canoe then moves across the lake, stopping at the bank near the jade stairs (area 2e). When the player character gets out, the canoe returns to the opposite side of the lake for another passenger. Subsequent passengers get the same question; however, each must give an answer different from the previous riders, or the canoe sinks into the lake as described above.

When the last player character has been ferried across the lake (or has crossed the lake by flight or other means), the canoe sinks beneath the water. It does not resurface.

2e. Jade Stairs: This stairway of solid jade leads to a jade door on the east side of the shrine. Bright light spills from the door frame. A player character who makes a successful Strength check can pull the door open, or two player characters working together whose combined Strength scores exceed 18 can open it automatically. If they open the door, continue with area 3.

3. Mysterious Chinampa

The door opens into a single room about 130 feet square and 25 feet high. An eerie green light illuminates the room. The air is heavy with the aroma of sweet perfume.

In a lake of clear water you see a large *chinampa*, or floating garden, filled with all varieties of colorful wild flowers. A bank of packed earth about five feet wide surrounds the *chinampa*. A narrow wooden bridge leads from the *chinampa* to the entryway.

The walls of the room are permanently enchanted with a special *continual light* that keeps the flowers in

the *chinampa* alive and gives the lake its special properties. The water in the lake is about 10 feet deep and resembles the healing water described above.

The player characters can safely walk across the bridge to the bank of the *chinampa*. When all of the player characters arrive at the *chinampa*, the bridge sinks into the water, vanishing below the surface. Continue with the following section.

The Tests of Otzitiotl

The room darkens, and a white mist appears overhead, swirling and twisting. The mist clears, and you see a ghostly image of the enormous hawk's head. It speaks in deep tones, like distant thunder. "You have come far and persevered. Yet Otzitiotl remains to be convinced of your worth. If you would submit to his tests, then stay. If not, then leave this place." The wooden bridge rises from the water.

The hawk's head image is an emissary of Otzitiotl. It ignores all questions from the player characters, and the player characters cannot attack it (technically, it does not exist, at least in this plane).

If the player characters retreat, using the bridge to escape, the head sneers, "So your allegiance lies with Atzanteotl. You have one final chance to repent." If the player characters change their minds and return to the *chinampa*, continue with the following section. Otherwise, the player characters must find another way out of the pyramid. (Remind fleeing player characters that their chances of escaping the pyramid on their own are slim.)

About the Tests

The hawk emissary intends to subject the player characters to a series of tests to evaluate three virtues—Courage, Charity, and Compassion—deemed especially important to Otzitiotl. (These three values have been re-interpreted by the minions of Atzanteotl, as described in the writings in areas 6b, 6c, and 6d in Level 1; Otzitiotl prefers the more conventional definitions.)

For the tests, the player characters undergo a series of powerful dreams triggered by the fragrances of the *chinampa* flowers. Though they may suspect the scenes are illusory, they cannot distinguish the dreams from reality. The player characters' bodies freeze in place on the banks of the *chinampa* while the dreams play out in their minds. They cannot resist experiencing the dreams through saving throws or other means.

The player characters can communicate with each other in the dreams. They can use their equipment and weapons, cast spells, and take other normal actions. However, they can't leave the dreams voluntarily, nor can they dispel the dreams with *dispel magic* or similar spells. Throughout, the hawk images ignores all questions from the player characters.

The Test of Courage

A white mist descends over the *chinampa*. When it dissipates, the flowers form the shape of an immense

hand clutching a sword. A powerful aroma of roses fills your nostrils, and your eyes blur.

(Depending on their success in area 6d in Level 1, the player characters may recognize the clutching hand as a symbol of Courage.)

The player characters find themselves instantly transported to the following scene:

You are standing in a stone room, about 30 feet square. Behind you is a wooden door. An unconscious man dressed in rags is tied to an iron hook in the opposite wall. Between you and the man are two reddish-brown hounds the size of small ponies, snorting fire and pawing at the chained man. The monsters seem to have no interest in you.

The monsters are hellhounds.

Hellhounds (2): AC 4; HD 5; hp 35 each; #AT bite (or breath); Dmg 1d6 (5d6, half damage if victim saves vs. dragon breath); MV 120' (40'); Save F5; AL C; THACO 15; SA each round, bites one victim (3-6 on 1d6) or breathes fire (1-2 on 1d6); SD 75% chance per round of detecting *invisible* creatures or objects within 60'.

As soon as a player character opens the wooden door and leaves, the dream ends. If the player characters attack the hellhounds, shout at them, or otherwise make the hellhounds aware of their presence, the hellhounds attack.

The dream ends if both the hellhounds are killed; if more than one of the player characters "dies"; or if the player characters rescue the man and carry him through the door. A player character can untie the man in two rounds with a successful Dexterity check, then carry the man with a successful Strength check; two player characters working together can carry him automatically.

When the dream ends, the player characters abruptly find themselves back in the chinampa—including player characters slain in combat. Their wounds are healed. If the player characters rescued the man or made a reasonable attempt, then the hawk image has no comment; go to the next dream.

However, the hawk image demands an explanation from a player character who retreated through the door or made no effort to fight the hellhounds or help the man. "You are an able warrior; why did you not help the man who's life was in danger?"

If the player characters tell an obvious lie ("We thought maybe the man was a monster"), the hawk image says, "Perhaps you are not worthy after all." If they offer an apology or give a reasonable defense ("We thought there might be other people in need on the other side of the door"), the hawk image accepts it. Proceed immediately to the next dream.

The Test of Charity

Once again a white mist descends over the chinampa. The mist dissipates, and this time the flowers make the shape of a man extending his hand to another man. A strong aroma of lilacs fills your nostrils, making your eyes blur.

(Depending on their success in area 6c in Level 1, the player characters may recognize the extended hand as a symbol of Charity.)

The player characters find themselves instantly transported to the following scene. They have all the possessions and treasure they had when they entered the Azcan Empire—even if they later lost it all.

When your eyes clear, you're standing on the bank of a large chinampa, surrounded by rolling hills. The hills are covered with weeds and brown grass scorched by the summer sun overhead. In the chinampa you see long rows of cornstalks, all withered and shrunk. Next to you sits an old man, dressed in peasant's clothes. He's surveying the damage and shaking his head sadly.

If the player characters don't speak to the old man or take other actions within five minutes, the dream ends.

If the player characters ask the old man what happened, he explains that the summer-long drought has ruined the crops of the entire village. Their only recourse is to purchase food from merchants in a nearby city, but the villagers lack the funds. Starvation seems inevitable.

If the player characters offer to help harvest the crop, the old man expresses appreciation, but says there's nothing worth harvesting. If they try to resurrect the crop using magic, the attempt fails. If the player characters express regrets but offer no financial help, the dream ends.

If they ask him how much money he needs, he says, "As much as we can get. We have many mouths to feed." The old man is too proud to ask the player characters directly for money, though he graciously accepts whatever they offer. After all player characters have had ample opportunity to make a donation to the old man, the dream ends.

When the dream ends, the player characters abruptly find themselves back in the chinampa. If all of the player characters made a reasonable donation to the old man (say, a few gold pieces or the equivalent), then the hawk image has no comment; go to the next dream. (Since the experience wasn't actually real, the player characters still have in their possession all donations they gave to the old man in the dream.)

However, the hawk image demands an explanation from a player character who was exceptionally stingy (offering only copper pieces, for instance) or gave nothing at all. "You have a bounty of resources. Why did you not share them with a person in need?"

If the player characters tell an obvious lie ("We don't have anything of value"), the hawk image says, "Perhaps you are not worthy after all." If they offer an apology or give a reasonable defense ("We believe the Immortals help those who help themselves"), the hawk image accepts it. Go to the next test.

The Test of Compassion

For the third time, the white mist descends over the chinampa. The mist once again dissipates, and you see the flowers have been rearranged in the shape of

an immense hand clutching a stalk of corn. A strong aroma of violets fills your nostrils, making your eyes again blur.

(Depending on their success in area 6b in Level 1, the player characters may recognize the clutching hand as a symbol of Compassion.)

The player characters find themselves instantly transported to the following scene:

You're standing in a meadow of tall grass on a warm spring evening. There's a full moon in the sky, and a cool breeze is blowing. A few yards away, a young Azcan woman with long black hair sits beside a stream. She is crying uncontrollably.

If the player characters ignore the woman for more than five minutes, the dream ends. If they approach the woman, she looks at them hopefully, then pleads with them to sit with her a moment. If they decline, the dream ends. If the player characters sit, she tells them her story, with tears streaming down her cheeks all the while.

The woman's name is Huanita. Years ago, she married a young farmer named Xico, who subsequently died in a farm accident. As is customary in her family, she was honor-bound to remain a widow for the rest of her life. But recently, she met a merchant named Araun and fell in love with him. When her family found out, they disowned her. "They claim I have defiled the honor of Xico," she says. "But though I will never forget him, now I love another. Is it so wrong to follow my heart?"

If the player characters have no comment, the dream ends. Otherwise, Huanita asks them each for their opinion; she listens to all of their comments attentively. When all of the player characters have had a chance to speak, the dream ends.

The player characters abruptly find themselves back in the chinampa. If all player characters offered Huanita words of comfort (along the lines of "You weren't wrong, you only did what you thought was best," or "It could have happened to anyone," or "You are guilty only of love"), then the hawk image has no comment; go to the Aftermath section.

However, if the player characters (collectively or individually) ignored Huanita or weren't particularly compassionate, the hawk image demands an explanation of their actions: "Regardless of her transgression, was she not deserving of your comfort?"

If the player characters tell an obvious lie ("We couldn't tell if she was really upset"), the hawk image says, "Perhaps you are not worthy after all." If they offer an apology or give a reasonable defense ("We didn't approach her because we were afraid of violating her privacy"), the hawk image accepts it. Go immediately to the Aftermath below.

Aftermath

After the final test, the player characters regain consciousness.

"The tests have ended," announces the hawk image. "Those who master their inner conflicts and find

goodness follow the path of Otzitiotl. The enemies of that path now work their plans far from here. You must go to face them."

The hawk image fades.

A canoe made from a hollow log, similar to the one they used earlier (area 2d), materializes before the player characters. However, this canoe comfortably holds the entire party. A hawk's head is carved in the front, and large wooden wings on either side flutter gently.

Rewards: Depending on their performance in the tests, the player characters find one or more useful items inside the canoe—at least one for each test the player characters successfully completed.

(Be generous in evaluating success. Even if the player characters performed less than admirably in a given test—for instance, if they all ran for the door in the Test of Courage—credit them anyway, as long as they gave the hawk image a reasonable explanation of their actions.)

The most important item is an obsidian disk with a frighteningly sharp edge. The smooth, curved disk reflects any creature or object with perfect clarity. If they can deduce its ability, the player characters can use this disk to great effect against Prince Kano in the *Smoking Mirror*.

Other suggested items:

1. A *jade shield* with a hawk's-head emblem. It functions as a *shield +2*. Also, the shieldbearer is AC 0 against all weapons made of obsidian, including those in the *Smoking Mirror* in Chapter 11.

2. A *jade ring* with the same emblem. It functions as both a *ring of fire protection* and a *ring of protection +1*. (Incidentally, this ring gives complete protection in the Volcanic foundry that the player characters encounter in the second module of this series.)

3. A *jade medallion* with the hawk emblem. This allows the wearer, and any creature or character in physical contact with the wearer, to breathe underwater.

WHERE NEXT? _____

The winged boat lifts gently from the water and carries the player characters slowly toward a stone wall. They pass through like ghosts, then travel in darkness for some moments. They emerge in a long tunnel lit by *continual light*, and they are moving at great speed toward a pair of giant stone doors.

The doors open—and into the tunnel surges a wall of water! The algae-ridden waters of Lake Chitlloc pour at them. But as the waters hit, a bubble of force englobes the boat, holding back the waters. At the same instant, the boat leaves the tunnel, still accelerating.

The player characters are pushed back in their seats as the boat angles straight up to the lake's surface. Fast and straight as an arrow, the flying boat shoots up from the lake in a spray of foam, up into the sky toward the brilliant red sun. Go to the next chapter.

HOW THEY GET THERE

To reach the central sun of the Hollow World, the characters can use several methods:

1. *The magical boat* from the pyramid labyrinth (see the end of the previous chapter). An existing spell on Otzitiotl's boat guides the characters automatically to any danger threatening the sun—in this case, the *Smoking Mirror*. The boat contains Azcan ceremonial masks that allow the characters to breathe in the airless void.

2. *Any other flying device* the characters have, such as a spell or *flying carpet*. The device must allow the entire group to travel over 750 miles straight up! If they don't have magic that lets them breathe in the void, make sure they get something during the adventure.

At your discretion, this approach may call for a certain amount of trial and error. Though the *Smoking Mirror* is gigantic, space around the sun is larger still. On their way to the sun, player characters may have intervening encounters with Floating Continents, or other appropriate diversions.

3. *The hard way: becoming victims* in the Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit (see Chapter 8). The player characters, their spirits subsumed in the great viper apparition, rise unerringly toward the *Smoking Mirror*. Read this aloud:

You feel a hundred emotions—panic and terror, wonder, and adulation for Atzanteotl. . . and that's when you realize you're feeling the emotions of others.

In the viper apparition you detect the psychic energies of many other people—Azcan, mostly, but also your fellow adventurers, and those you tried to protect. Their thoughts are overwhelming, like an ocean wave. When the viper stretches its wings and hisses, a part of you does too.

Then there's a rush of sensation—blurred glimpses of the city of Chitlacan—and then you feel vertigo, as the ground drops away beneath you.

The characters may gain only hazy impressions of their passage upward—a glimpse of the sun, a confusing distortion of space as they enter the *Mirror*, and a sudden reappearance inside the *Smoking Mirror*; go to the next section. Be more specific in describing the passage if you believe the players need a more definite sense of where they are.

Travel time: This seldom need be an issue. Do not let the logistics of the journey interfere with the pace of the adventure; this trip marks the entry to the climactic episode of this module.

Encounters: The atmosphere is not empty. The player characters may have to pass through or detour around a rainstorm, and flocks of birds may trouble them early in the journey. But any encounter is optional, since it serves to reduce the tension that builds as the player characters head toward the *Smoking Mirror*.

THE SCENE

Staging: Stress the grandeur of this trip and of the awesome vista the player characters are viewing. The Hollow World lies spread out all around them, a vast

and distant tapestry of green and brown continents, blue-green oceans, and white cloudbanks everywhere, especially at the poles.

Also, play up the heights the player characters reach: the breathable but rarefied atmosphere; colossal gusts of wind, with no terrain to slow them down (player characters may have to shout to be heard); and the increasing warmth as they near the sun. It never gets dangerously hot, but it's uncomfortable.

Should the player characters try to draw or memorize the outlines of the Hollow World's continents, you may give the players a glimpse of half of the map in the boxed set. But the players may only see it briefly, for several factors make their characters' sightseeing difficult: clouds and atmospheric haze; Floating Continents blocking the view; and, most importantly, the sun, which blocks off half the globe with its blinding light.

Ashmorain

En route the characters might observe, in the distance at the extreme limits of sight, one of the Floating Continents that circle the Hollow World's sun. This teardrop-shaped continent, small compared to most of the others, looks green and fertile; sharp-sighted characters can make out icy mountains and dense forests.

If the player characters have already played the second module in this trilogy, they recognize Ashmorain, home of the feathered serpents. Otherwise, characters note only the wondrous sight of a floating continent, and this sight serves as foreshadowing for the later segment.

Sun and Mirror

At the edge of the sun's fiery envelope, 500 miles short of the pinhole-sized gate to the Elemental Plane of Fire, the *Smoking Mirror* swings through its slow 24-hour orbit. The *Smoking Mirror* has its own air supply.

You're breathing more deeply, because the air feels thin and dry. And warm—you're flying toward the core of the world, where the sun burns bright red.

As you approach it, you can make out fine details of structure. The bulk of the sun is really a thin, round envelope of glowing gas, like red smoke. It doesn't feel especially hot. Tendrils of gas curl away from the sphere, then fall back into it as you watch.

At the center of the sphere, through the thinnest part of the red gas, you see the real sun: a point of white light, so bright you can't look at it. The shadows around you look long and deep.

You don't see anything else, except a couple of Floating Continents hanging in the distance like medallions. No sign of any *Smoking Mirror*—until you pass through a cold, empty layer of air.

In front of you, everything looks the same. But the light looks different somehow. Suddenly you realize that light is now coming not only from the sun, but from something behind you. You turn.

You're floating a few feet away from a vast plain of black glass. It fills half the sky above and below you, stretching away on both sides like a cliff face miles wide. You have a sudden feeling of vertigo, because it looks like you're falling sidelong toward the ground.

The player characters are not falling, but now they can't go back the way they came. The *Smoking Mirror*, a dimensional gate rather than a physical object, can only be seen from one side. The player characters have just passed through its patch of space and can now view it from the correct side. They can't pass back through the other way, though; from this side, it's a solid, impenetrable mass.

Right now the *Mirror* exerts no gravity or other influence over them, so the player characters can continue to fly normally. If they wish, they can reorient themselves to float above the surface of the *Mirror*, or even fly around the edge to go back the way they came. But they can't make further progress in the adventure until they investigate and finally enter the *Mirror*.

INVESTIGATION

How Big is the *Mirror*?: This depends on how long the player characters have delayed in reaching this part of the adventure. Every day, the Spirit ceremony at the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl has sent dozens or hundreds of victims into the *Mirror*. Every one of them makes it larger (see the next chapter for details). The ceremonies have taken place daily.

The *Mirror's* actual size in this dimension need not be as great an issue as the length of time it has operated. With every passing day, the *Mirror's* corrupting light covers part of the Hollow World. And as it grows larger, each orbit lets it cover more geography with greater intensity. Every touch of its light corrupts the *Spell of Preservation*—in small ways at first, but eventually with devastating effect. (See Chapter 7 for the *Mirror's* effects.)

The *Mirror's* size becomes a plot issue then, rather than a specific measurement—the later the player characters find it, the bigger it is. In any case, the *Mirror* is always immense, miles in diameter.

Gravity: As soon as the player characters touch the *Mirror*, they can stand on it as though on flat, solid ground. The surface is slick, but not so much as to endanger their footing. They can also leave its surface (by jumping, say) without danger; they simply fall gently back to it, unless they are flying under their own power. Treat the *Mirror's* gravity as a plot device to ease the characters' investigation; don't make this an issue in itself.

Looking through the *Mirror*:

On close inspection the *Mirror* doesn't look quite black. It's more of a deep brown, like strong coffee. With a hot wind blowing, you look down through a thick layer of glass and see a large open area with moving figures, like a city. It's way beneath you, as though you were a bird flying overhead.

And then something big moves right in front of you!

Under the glass a large gridbug, a bizarre creature of the *Smoking Mirror*, is moving past, skimming along the underside of the barrier between planes. Since it is upside-down, the player characters can make out two lines of shadowy legs above a long, tubular, insectile body.

The gridbug is moving fast for the edge of the *Mirror*, but it cannot cross into this world. It is not aware of the player characters. The sight serves only to let the player

characters know there is a world beyond the *Smoking Mirror*, startled characters may also waste a spell or two, to no effect.

Getting Inside

Physical attacks cannot break through the *Mirror's* surface. It is not an object but a juxtaposition of dimensions. Anti-magic attacks, *dispel magic*, and similar effects cannot overcome the Immortal magic that created this boundary.

The player characters can enter the *Mirror* in ethereal form or other insubstantial forms, should they be capable of this.

The edge: The most practical way to enter the *Mirror* is to go to its edge, the boundary between one universe and another. The trip to the edge should take a few minutes, during which the player characters continue to see the undersides of dark shapes moving below.

The edge appears as a boundary of razor-sharp obsidian glass with a hazy gray area of nothingness extending a few feet beyond it. This gray, a strain on the eyes, should look familiar to any player character accustomed to multiversal travel; this is the nothingness between the planes of reality.

The obsidian edge should not prove a deadly obstacle. At your discretion, the player characters may have to make Climbing or Dexterity checks to climb down the jagged edge safely; failure can inflict a point or two of damage, probably to the hands (possibly interfering with later weapon use). But consider this to be strictly optional.

By crawling down through the gray, the player characters cross the dimensional boundary and enter the *Smoking Mirror*.

WHERE NEXT?

As you make your way down the edge of the *Smoking Mirror*, you get a glimpse of the boundary between the planes of existence—a view as short as the blink of an eye, but filled with a rush of impressions and sensations from a dozen worlds you may never visit.

For a moment you feel both fear and an intense desire to let go, to see where you end up. Then the feeling passes, gravity changes, and you've passed through the *Smoking Mirror*.

Go to the next chapter.

Going elsewhere: The player characters may well decide they're not ready to face the *Mirror*. As long as they understand that it threatens the world, and as long as they haven't been victims of the Azcan ceremony, allow them to give up for now. The magical boat can fly down to some other part of the Hollow World, and to another module in this trilogy. (Then it disappears, leaving them to find other transport.)

Eventually they can build their strength or find needed clues, locate another mode of transport to the sun, and then return here to complete this section.



“The sun, which passeth through pollution and itself remains as pure as before.”

—Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book II (1605)

ABOUT THE SMOKING MIRROR

This bleak obsidian expanse is not precisely a device, but a gate to a pocket dimension. The Immortal Thanatos discovered the tiny dimension on a routine journey through the multiverse several decades ago, and he has kept it secret for just this purpose.

Thanatos gave knowledge of the dimension to Prince Kano and his familiar, Simm of the Grasping Dark. He gave them the ability to enter it and to conjure the mirror-like gateway between dimensions. Then, when they set up the *Smoking Mirror*, Thanatos transformed Prince Kano into a specialized and quite horrible monster.

Was the goblin prince being punished? No. Thanatos has designed a complex process, something between an ecology and an economy, that allows the *Smoking Mirror* to grow larger and more powerful. A key element in that process is Prince Kano in his monstrous form. Unfortunately, no one warned the goblin of this. So Kano, horrified at his awful transformation, now babbles insanely at the center of the *Smoking Mirror*.

The Mirror's Purpose

The characters may believe the *Smoking Mirror* exists to destroy the Hollow World. This is not true, but they may never find out unless they fail in their mission.

Thanatos, though he is well able to destroy the world by brute force while the other Immortals are gone, has no taste for that. The Entropy Immortal, subtle above all, pursues courses that corrupt the good, inevitably forcing it to destroy itself. He acts not only through evil, but through artistry.

Thus the *Mirror*. It actually corrupts the Hollow World's sunlight, which energizes the *Spell of Preservation*. When the changed sunlight strikes an area of the world, the *Spell* changes in that area. Cultures in the afflicted area can change; the natives may lose their

cultural bias; many things could happen. In any case, it certainly disrupts the Immortals' high intent to make the Hollow World a living museum of cultures.

But all this depends on corrupting the sunlight—and how can you change sunlight? Thanatos does it by sending it into the *Mirror's* dimension, where natural laws differ and the process he designed can affect the light.

The Natives of the Mirror

Thanatos has created an elaborate arrangement to satisfy three goals (listed below) and to grotesquely parody what he views as the goals of the living.

The Discorporates: The entire process draws power from the continuous influx of disembodied mental energies from the Azcan Spirit ceremonies. These mentalities exist in the *Smoking Mirror* as wraith-like entities called “discorporates.” For their description, see the New Monsters appendix.

The discorporates behave much like they did in their living bodies—but a pervasive enchantment in this dimension drives them to participate in the corruption process. They enlarge the *Mirror* and corrupt the sunlight, all in an insane race to gain status among their kind. When they achieve high status, Prince Kano consumes them!

Corrupting blooms: What corrupts the sunlight? Living things that Thanatos designed and Prince Kano generates, alien flora called “nightblooms.” These small plants (which look more like machinery than vegetation) absorb the light from the Hollow World's sun in shiny black plates, reflect it repeatedly within transparent stem-vessels, and emit it again through flowering lenses.

The nightblooms also produce tiny kernel-like fruits, attractive but inedible trifles that serve as “currency” among the discorporates. They call them, simply, berries. Thanatos designed the berries to give the discorporates incentive to plant more nightblooms, thus increasing the amount of light the *Smoking Mirror* corrupts.

Obsidian and gridbugs: The nightblooms have to grow on something, and the gate between dimensions must grow ever larger to corrupt greater amounts of sunlight. The solution to both these problems is obsidian.

This is not—quite—the ordinary black glass the player characters have seen throughout the Azcan Empire. The *Smoking Mirror's* obsidian grows in large crystals throughout the pocket dimension. (Like any glass, true obsidian has no crystal structure.) In the *Mirror*, obsidian crystals grow through the aid of the *Mirror's* other major lifeform: the gridbug.

This insectile creature resembles a wingless dragonfly, with a long body, compound eyes, and many legs. In the previous chapter the player characters glimpsed a large member of the species scuttling across the underside of the gate. For the gridbug's game statistics, see “New Monsters” in the appendix.

Feeding on nightblooms—and, when they reach full growth, on discorporates—the gridbugs manufacture the *Mirror's* obsidian crystals. Swarms of gridbugs pile the crystals into the large grid-like nests that give the bug its name.

Prince Kano: The mad prince lies trapped within a

huge obsidian nest at the center of the *Smoking Mirror*, harassed and fed on by his evil Brethren familiar. Feeding on high-status discorporates, he produces new nightblooms and gridbugs.

The Corruption Process

So there are four roles in this complex cycle: Prince Kano, discorporates, nightblooms, and gridbugs. Driven by the energy from a constant stream of Azcan victims, they work, knowingly or not, for these goals:

1. *Corrupt the light.* The discorporates arrive in the *Mirror* and gain a compulsion to collect nightbloom berries. To do this, they plant and maintain ever-larger fields of nightblooms. These plant-machines corrupt the sunlight.

2. *Enlarge the Smoking Mirror.* The gridbugs feed on nightblooms and discorporates. They construct obsidian nests. Discorporates raid the nests, harvest the obsidian, and transfer it to the edges of the *Smoking Mirror's* territory. This expands the gate, lets more light in, and gives the discorporates more area to plant new nightblooms.

3. *Feed Prince Kano energy.* Discorporates, having gained many berries, fall prey to a compulsion (part magical and part social) to go to Prince Kano. The transformed prince consumes the high-status discorporates. Having fed, he produces new nightblooms and gridbugs, starting the brutal cycle over again.

THE SCENE

The Mirror Environment

This peculiar dimension follows alien physical laws. Within the *Mirror*, usual rules of distance and perception do not apply. Instead, this is a conceptual landscape—visible sights depend not on *where* you are, but on *what* you are.

What determines how much a viewer sees? Thanatos has arranged matters so that an inhabitant's quantity of berries governs how much he or she can perceive. The more berries one accumulates, the more one becomes aware of larger realms within the *Mirror*. Note that the berries are not eaten or otherwise ingested. The berry measure is arbitrary, but it drives the discorporates to frenzies of production. Testifying to the success of the scheme, the *Mirror* rapidly grows larger.

What a newcomer perceives: The *Mirror's* interior is a hazy dark gray, like night fog. Cold wind blows over rugged obsidian terrain, a terrain of sharp angles and abrupt ridges—the edges of the obsidian crystals. Flesh that contacts these crystals feels a low tingle, as of electricity.

Characters hear in the distance, from no particular source, loud, deep music. These are sounds unlike any the player characters have heard before: relentlessly rhythmic, punctuated by shrill squawls, dissonant and ugly. The driving bass rhythm sets their teeth on edge. As a staging aid, consider playing appropriate music in the background during this part of the adventure.

What experienced natives perceive: Owning a few handfuls of berries increases the distance the owner can see through the fog. The unpleasant environment appears to grow more benevolent, more attractive (a variant of a *charm* effect). Greater perception also reveals

subliminal messages in the music: "Grow more—The rewards shall be great—seek Nightwail, the Summit Nest. . . ." Only maximal amounts of berries reveal the location of Nightwail, Kano's lair.

Arrival

When the player characters arrive, their abilities depend (as you might expect) on whether they are alive or dead. That is, player characters who became victims in Chitlacan arrive as discorporates; player characters who stayed whole and flew to the *Smoking Mirror* on their own arrive in their ordinary bodies. This section shows how the two states differ.

Living PCs: Almost all spells, items, and abilities work normally—including the magic that ordinarily doesn't work in the Hollow World! This dimension is beyond the effects of the *Spell of Preservation*. (Exception: Spells of instant transport, such as *teleport* and *word of recall*, still do not work.)

At your discretion, native Hollow Worlders who come here can become free, temporarily or permanently, of the *Spell of Preservations'* cultural bias.

Discorporates: The bodiless characters have no weapons or magical items. Magic-users can still cast their memorized spells, but cannot learn new ones; clerics cast spells and receive new ones (up to 2nd level) normally. Characters cannot wrestle or make other unarmed attacks—except for the innate discorporate abilities described in the appendix. Discorporate player characters retain their saving throws.

Staging: The *Smoking Mirror* should come across in the adventure as an unearthly, inexplicable phenomenon. Avoid describing the *Mirror's* nature in detail to the players. For them it remains a mysterious, evocative, even dreamlike backdrop for the adventure's climax.

INVESTIGATION

When the player characters arrive, whether by the psychic breakdown of the viper apparition or by crawling down into this dimension, stage the following brief scenes:

1. Surveying the Scene

You've come to a land of black glass and looming fog. The ground has sharp, jagged edges, and when you look down at it, you see your own distorted reflection. Overhead, you see nothing but thick gray fog, that billows as though boiling from the dim red light beyond it.

Nearby you see a gathering of pale wraith-like forms—they look like Azcan men, women, and children, wearing clothing that shows the whole range of social classes—but their bodies dissolve like smoke around the hips or knees, and they just float along over the obsidian. They're all looking around and chattering; a few come toward you.

These discorporates mean no harm. They have just arrived, victims of the latest Spirit ceremony. If the player characters were victims themselves, they too look like discorporates.

The roster: If possible, try to establish these discorporates as NPCs the characters met below, on the jour-

ney to Chitlacan or within the pyramid's shrine. These could be peasants, hierodules, even nobles. They retain their memories and personalities.

The friendly NPC who helped the characters is here. Stage his or her appearance as a surprise for an appropriate moment.

The rival: Establish an obnoxious discorporate named Haxocotl, a muscular, stoop-browed 12th level chaotic *Avenger* (Player's Companion, p. 18) allied with the priests of Atzanteotl. They victimized him when he tried to make off with valuable jade. In the *Mirror* he can still cast his two 1st level and one 2nd level clerical spells each 24 hours.

Haxocotl, a sneering and arrogant veteran fighter, will rival the player characters as they explore the *Smoking Mirror*. As they accumulate berries and see more of the dimension, his progress matches or slightly exceeds theirs. This career path is summarized in the sections that follow.

Charm effect: The player characters can observe the *charm* spell of this dimension take effect. As the discorporates converse, they begin to speak of "berries," not knowing why or what this means. But the mentions of berries keep appearing in their conversation, and finally they predominate. The discorporates all rush off, mad to accumulate berries.

Discorporate player characters get a saving throw vs. spell at +2 to resist the *charm* effect. The other discorporates, almost all 0-level normals, succumb automatically. Resistant player characters can restrain their fellow characters who succumb, talking them out of an insane urge to grow berries. Attempts to do this to the normal discorporates prompt the maddened creatures to attack.

2. Nightblooms

The discorporates float away and locate endless fields of flowers. So do the player characters.

These plants are short, less than a foot high, and grow in dense thickets on the obsidian. Each plant seems to be made of iron.

The stem is a thin tube; the leaves are silver, spade-shaped, and reflect the red light overhead like mirrors. They seem to focus the light on the center flower, an inverted dome of metal with a hole at the top.

The stem emerges here, and you see it's hollow. The stem produces a dull orange light that shines straight upward.

These nightblooms, as the discorporates soon learn to call them, produce hard, shiny black berries along the center stem. The plants take incoming sunlight, focus it, and emit it in corrupted form. If a player asks, the plant's light is the same color as the corruption effect the player characters occasionally noticed on the ground (described in Chapter 6).

If the player characters attack the nightblooms for some reason, assume an attack destroys one plant for each point of damage it inflicts. But there are hundreds of thousands of plants; the player characters can't mow them all down. Furthermore, the discorporates gang up on anyone who destroys the source of their precious berries.

3. Gridbug Hunt

You feel a bite on your arm, and you swat away a small bug about as big as your thumb. It looks like a wingless gray-green dragonfly, but it's thicker around, and it has more legs. The mouth is a long tube that curls and uncurls as you watch.

You see other bugs like this swarming all over the flowers and gnawing on the leaves.

These are small gridbugs. They can feed on both physical and discorporate forms. Below the huge size described in the appendix, they offer little danger.

A crowd of discorporates floats past you, chanting, "Gridbug raid! More land! Room to grow!" They're heading toward a mound in the distance. It looks like a big, jumbled pile of logs.

Approaching, they see the "logs" are man-sized hexagonal crystals of obsidian, stacked to form a nest for a swarm of gridbugs.

The discorporates try to enlist their help: "We'll give you all the logs you can carry if you help smash those bugs." Once inside the nest, the characters find they're in front; the discorporates, led by Haxocotl, are happy to let the characters do the work, then dematerialize and steal all the obsidian.

Inside, the nest is dark, filthy, clammy, and the music seems to resonate from every long crystal. Here in separate chambers live four large gridbugs, feeding on nightblooms that hundreds of small gridbugs carry there. The player characters must defeat all four gridbugs before they or the discorporates can take the obsidian.

Grid bugs: AC 7; hp12; THACO 16; Dmg paralysis.

4. Trip to the Edge

"We got crystals! Build the land!"

The discorporates shout and chant as they carry the crystal logs to the boundaries of this land. You see a sharp edge of black obsidian, one or two crystals thick; beyond it, you can't see anything but the same boiling fog.

The discorporates lay the crystal logs down in haphazard fashion, trying to add as much surface area as they can. When they place the crystals, the logs merge seamlessly into the landscape, extending its edge.

As opportunity permits, Haxocotl or other discorporates stage a land-grab—facing down weak-willed normals through force of personality, then taking over their areas. The player characters can join on either side. This may lead to a fight, but the victims likely just skulk away, looking for more gridbug nests.

5. Planting New Gardens

The new obsidian land soon bulges and folds. Through the cracks the player characters can see strange, twisted yellow growths like oak roots, that arch up and break the surface at points along their lengths.

Several areas have them, making those areas more valuable to the discorporates. The root-lines converge inward toward the center of the *Mirror* landscape.

As the player characters examine one root, it bulges at one bend. The bulge grows, its skin stretching as if over an infected wound. At any physical or discorporate touch, it bursts—and out swarm a horde of flea-sized gridbugs.

Discorporates dive for the new nodule. Inside are dozens of tiny nightblooms. Set on the obsidian, they root almost instantly and soon unfold silvery leaves.

6. Rumors and Visions

Talking with the discorporates, player characters have already gathered that nightbloom berries have some effect on perceptions. When a player character first touches a berry, read this:

You feel a pleasant tingle, and you notice that the fog overhead seems to lift slightly. Is the red light overhead shining more brightly? Is this place larger?

Haxocotl frequently annoys the player characters with accounts of his growing wealth; he implies he has stolen many berries and forced other discorporates off their land. He taunts player characters about his growing horizon of perception: "I'm beginning to hear about Nightwail. That's my destination! You haven't heard of it? How sad."

If attacked, Haxocotl disappears—into a part of the *Smoking Mirror* the player characters cannot yet perceive. They hear his derisive laughter. To develop the rivalry on a personal level, Haxocotl could steal the player characters' own berry supplies!

7. The Center of the Mirror

If the player characters try to track the nodule root-lines to the center of the landscape, the ground imperceptibly expands beneath their feet. Though they appear to traverse long distances in their journey, the characters always have a constant distance left to travel. To get to the center, the player characters must accumulate berries (see the next section).

Assuming they do so, they walk or float easily to the center; they perceive the structure of the *Mirror* and the way to bend its space to their needs. Simple.

At the center of the landscape, you stand at the summit of a gently-sloping obsidian hill. The vast expanse of the *Smoking Mirror* stretches away from you in all directions. Dots of light, from fields of nightblooms, merge into sheets of orange—as though the landscape were on fire.

Overhead, the boiling fog is thinner than it's ever been. The Hollow World's sun bulges overhead like a red membrane about to burst. Around you, discorporates are trading berries; their frenzied voices remind you of squawking chickens.

You see nothing of interest here—no sign of a "Nightwail." But elsewhere on the hill, one discorporate says, "Yes! That's it! The path to destiny!" And you see him vanish.

Nightwail is here; the player characters must acquire more berries before they can see it. The discorporate who vanished is Haxocotl, who accumulated more berries than the player characters and thereby saw the entryway.

8. Conceptual Breakthrough

The *Smoking Mirror*'s quantity of berries remains fairly constant despite the *Mirror*'s expansion, for surplus berries empower more discorporates to enter Kano's domain, where he consumes owners and berries alike. There are only a few thousand extant at once, and a given discorporate owns 1d100 berries. The wealthiest own 10x1d100 (average 500).

So, because demand always outpaces supply, the "wealthy" discorporates who have staked out patches of obsidian guard their nightblooms jealously. They harvest berries as soon as the plants sprout them; thereafter, the berries are dematerialized and inaccessible, unless the owner dies.

To obtain berries, the player characters can take several approaches: harvest obsidian crystals, build land, and farm nightblooms; slaughter discorporates and loot the berries as they materialize; poach a discorporate's claim; provide some service, such as mercenary protection, to discorporates threatened by others (such as Haxocotl!); or con an owner out of his or her supply. Begging and borrowing don't work—and since the berries are immaterial, neither does stealing.

Perceptual thresholds: However the player characters obtain berries, how does the increase in perception work? One way is to treat berries as "experience points" (but only in the *Mirror*!): Treat the player character as a 1st level character in his or her class, and determine how many XP the character needs to rise to 2nd level. When the player characters acquire that many berries, he reaches the conceptual breakthrough described below.

But for a more satisfying way to stage this, consider tying the breakthrough to the player characters' completion of an adventure in the *Mirror* dimension. They defend a landowner's claim from assault by greedy discorporates; or they locate an enormous gridbug nest and clean it out, then fend off assaults on the obsidian until they build their own land. After the climax of the mini-scenario, they earn their just rewards in berries—and they make the breakthrough.

As you hold the berries, the music you've been hearing grows—not so much louder, as more detailed. You detect patterns in its rhythms, patterns that make the air vibrate around you. The fog falls back like a wave on the seashore, and it seems as if a fog in your mind pulls back too. Because you see, right in front of you, a huge obsidian structure—Nightwail!

It looks like the Great Pyramid in Chitlcan, done in black. Along each crystalline edge, obsidian crystals stick out like knife blades. The four faces of the pyramid have large, shallow depressions shaped like ovals. The music you've been hearing seems to resonate from these.

On top is a nest of obsidian crystal logs like a gridbug nest. As you see it, you also notice Haxocotl entering in triumph. He calls back down, "Too late! Too bad!" And he laughs.

9. Into Nightwail

Assuming they can scale the 200' pyramid (no problem in discorporate form, and only an annoyance for living characters) the player characters can easily enter Nightwail. They then wend their way down a twisting tunnel through the network of obsidian crystals. Improvise encounters and atmospheric details as you like. As they descend, the music grows more raucous.

Finally they reach the huge central chamber of Nightwail, lair of Prince Kano and his familiar, Simm of the Grasping Dark.

NIGHTWAIL

As you descend, the blank obsidian walls gradually give way to carvings of skulls, both human and alien. They stick out from the wall, their jaws slightly open. You realize the skulls are the source of the music you've heard everywhere in the *Mirror*. They chant in deep, ugly voices.

Now you reach an angular, peaked room nearly 30 feet across. From above, discorporates drift down over the walls like fog. The skulls draw them in, as though inhaling incense vapors. The discorporates scream. One scream rises above the others, with more pain and terror than the rest—Haxocotl, as he's drawn inside the wall to his final death.

The skulls that draw in the discorporates are chanting loudest of all. The sound floats down to the floor of the chamber, where you stand behind a sheltered entryway.

These *tzompantli*, or skull-racks, should remind the player characters of those on Level 1 of the Great Pyramid. The skulls are obsidian constructs energized by the consumed discorporates. The skulls' incantation keeps Kano under Simm's power, and it maintains the *charm* spell that keeps the discorporates mad for berries.

Amazingly, you recognize Kano immediately—even though now he doesn't look anything like a goblin. You notice distended tribal tattoos on what must have been his chest and shoulders.

You can spot a couple of pig eyes, almost covered with swollen flesh. And there's one slanted tusk, in the middle of a pulsing, bruise-colored field of skin—that's a goblin tusk, all right.

But even though he almost fills the room, there's hardly anything else left of what Kano was. Now he looks like, not a goblin, but a tick—an insect, bloated with feeding. Long legs—at least they look something like legs, on an insect—stick out in four or five rows along his abdomen. The legs extend down into the obsidian floor.

No—not legs—those are the roots, the tendrils you've been seeing inside the *Smoking Mirror*.

Elsewhere on this body you see a wide, lipless mouth, nowhere near the tusk you saw before. The mouth writhes, and over the music you can almost make out words in the goblin language.

Near the mouth, a festering gash is filled with greenish fungus. Hanging down from that gash by its teeth is a small black monkey, with a thin body and a long prehensile tail. It seems to be feeding.

The monkey is Simm of the Grasping Dark.

Kano now grows long, gnarled tendrils that extend like muscle fibers throughout the *Smoking Mirror*—the root-lines the player characters followed to get here. Kano feeds on the discorporates and their berry supplies to generate new nightblooms and gridbugs.

But Kano didn't volunteer for this; the shock of transformation has driven the young goblin insane.

Talking with Kano and Simm: Kano does not converse rationally. As the player characters arrive and see him devour Haxocotl, Kano is babbling mindlessly about the good time he and his brothers will have when next they go squirrel-hunting in the Broken Lands. Conversation with the player characters continues on this deranged level, unless the player characters show Kano his reflection in Otzitiotl's obsidian mirror (see *Defeating Villains*, below).

What about Simm? Confident (with reason) in his ability to defeat the player characters at his leisure, Simm tries to engage the characters in pleasant conversation. However, Thanatos has magically prevented Simm from ever uttering the name "Thanatos"; nor does Simm have any desire to reveal his patron's role.

If the player characters stop at any point to ask his motives, Simm delivers the following set-piece speech:

"You heroes—all alike. No breadth to your thought. 'This *Mirror* will destroy the world; we must stop it!' I daresay it will make no difference to you, but I will tell you this:

"This *Mirror* does not destroy the world. It does not corrupt it. It only brings out what is present to begin with in people, in you humans and the rest—the urge to exploit, to fight, to destroy. Your Hollow World's much-vaunted '*Spell of Preservation*'—that is the unnatural artifice, not this.

"Here is this *Mirror's* great artistry: It reflects without distortion. Think, now, on what you would destroy."

This specious line of reasoning should carry little weight with the characters, and (unless they flee) eventually combat must result.

Fighting Kano

The monstrous Kano, creator of the gridbugs and nightblooms, can summon 1d10 giant gridbugs when attacked. They arrive at the end of the round, then attack everything that moves except Simm and Kano.

Also, with an incoherent babble, he can create tree-sized animate versions of the nightblooms. These erupt spectacularly from nodules beneath the obsidian floor. For these "monster nightblooms," use the treat statistics from the Expert Rulebook. However, these obsidian beings, half creature and half construct, are not intelligent and cannot control trees.

Kano himself is immobile and fairly easy to defeat. But Simm can heal him with *cureall* or *raise dead fully*,

returning him to the battle. Instead of fighting Kano, the player characters are far better served to try to enlist his aid; see below.

Fighting Simm of the Grasping Dark

Simm is a powerful 25th level cleric. In combat, he first casts a *barrier* of whirling obsidian knives around Kano and himself. Any missile or player character crossing this barrier takes 7d10 damage. Then he casts *truesight* to determine the player characters' whereabouts and abilities.

On the third round Simm casts *animate object* on the skulls around the walls. Then the player characters are in trouble.

Skull music: For each player character attacking with a weapon, roll an attack roll (THAC0 16). A successful roll reveals the skulls' other attack: A long pink tongue, thin as a fencing blade and slathered with foam, shoots from a skull's open mouth and grabs the player character's weapon!

The player character cannot use that weapon until he or she succeeds in a Strength check at -4 to wrench the soaked weapon free; or until other attacks inflict 10 hp of damage to the tongue. In either case the tongue whips back into the mouth, perhaps to strike again on a later turn.

Staging advice: Simm has no taste for the blunt slaughter. He prefers to toy with opponents, frighten them, and prolong the suspense of their deaths. Aim for maximum disturbance and minimum hp damage in his attacks.

For example, Simm could cast a *cause disease* spell with far less serious effects than normal—an unsightly boil on the target's nose, a swollen arm, anything that looks worse than it is. If the players say "ewwwgh!" you're doing it right.

Last-ditch maneuvers: If pushed to desperation, Simm casts *holy word* to stun all lawful and neutral player characters in the area. He uses lesser spells to dispose of chaotic player characters, preferably stunning them as well. While all player characters are stunned, he binds and gags them and attaches them to the *tzompantli*—the skulls hold them with their teeth!

This leaves the player characters helpless against his deadly *grasping dark* attack. He concentrates, and around his right paw flickers a black field with ugly greenish edges. He threatens each of the player characters with it in turn, never quite touching them. He takes so long that the player characters recover from their stun effect. They can try to escape and surprise Simm.

A more productive approach involves persuading Kano to join the player characters; subtly hint this with further mentions of the goblins' babbling.

If the characters can persuade Kano to join them, Kano may grab Simm's arm at a crucial time; Simm accidentally turns the *grasping dark* attack on Kano.

The huge monster turns into a huge silhouette, causing calamitous destruction throughout the *Smoking Mirror*. At your option, the silhouette's huge aperture may actually let the grasping arms reach through and grab Simm, pulling him down with Kano into oblivion. Go to "Aftermath," below.

Defeating Villians

If the happy circumstance above fails to arise, this

major battle looks hopeless for the player characters, unless they have the obsidian mirror from Otzitiotl's pyramid—or unless they use extreme cleverness. Here are a few suggestions:

Interfering with the skulls' chant: *Dispel magic* probably won't work against Simm's 25th level magic. However, a *silence* spell silences the skulls' choral *charm* spell; this makes Kano more accessible to the player characters' attempts to enlist him. A generous DM could allow a magic-user's *ventriloquism* spell to make his own voice come from a skull, mangling the delicate group incantation.

Even physical attacks can chip away at the skulls (one skull destroyed per point of damage inflicted); cumulative damage could remove much of the chant's power. Stage this not as a running point total, but as a dramatic culmination to several rounds of concerted player character attacks on the wall.

Enlisting Prince Kano: Now the player characters may finally discover how to use the obsidian mirror Otzitiotl's emissary gave them.

If the player characters can show Prince Kano his own reflection in the obsidian mirror from the pyramid, they can restore his reason and sway him to their side. Or player characters can talk to him, perhaps bringing up memories of his better life in the Known World; if they're friendly and persuasive, they can get through to the mad goblin.

Once on the characters' side, Kano becomes consumed with hatred and the urge for revenge. He causes the obsidian skulls to lash out with their hundreds of sticky tongues and grab Simm, reducing him to AC 9 and making him easy (?) prey for the player characters' attacks.

Drawing on Simm's Power: Player character clerics could try tapping into the magical power of the skulls' incantation. This requires a Wisdom check; for each point by which the player makes the Wisdom check, the cleric can use one spell level of his choice, up to the player character's limit. With the Wisdom check, the cleric automatically discerns how to tap the skulls' power.

For instance, a player rolls a 7 against his cleric's Wisdom of 14; this gives the cleric seven 1st level spells, or three 2nd level spells plus one 1st level, or one 4th plus one 3rd level, and so on. This ability only works once per cleric, and it cannot give the cleric a higher-level spell than he could normally use.

However, this is all chaotic magic! Using these "free" spell levels is dangerous to lawful or neutral clerics. Effects might include insanity, alignment change, damage (1 hp per spell level employed), or even physical disfigurement—the player character grows larger, bloats, and begins to resemble Kano!

Failure

Their foes may prove too great for the player characters to handle. If necessary, Simm can toy with the player characters by capturing and taunting them (possibly with disfiguring injuries!). "You are too little to bother with," the monkey says. "I dispatch you, that you may dwell on your defeat for all your lives." So saying, he paralyzes the player characters temporarily (no saving throw), then summons a horde of giant gridbugs to fly the player characters back to the Hollow World.

When the player characters recover, they must search

elsewhere (in other modules of this series) for devices to stop the *Smoking Mirror*. Meanwhile, the *Smoking Mirror* continues to corrupt larger sections of the Hollow World. Time is running out—but this defeat can make the characters' eventual victory taste sweeter.

AFTERMATH

Assuming the battle turns against Simm, he can escape if you wish to have him reappear later. Simm contacts Thanatos via *commune*, and the Immortal whisks him away to another site. Played well, this can deepen the mystery facing the player characters—and an enemy has formed a personal grudge against them, one that must lead to a final battle.

If Simm is mortally wounded, the monkey vengefully leaps on Prince Kano and kills him, as a dying act. The transformed goblin's death throes pull and twist the tendrils that grow throughout the *Smoking Mirror*. The obsidian landscape cracks, shatters—masses of black glass move apart, revealing nothing but empty space beneath—the discorporates scream, and the gridbugs swarm madly.

Out of Nightwail: Nightwail will come crashing down on the player characters within moments. Develop suspense even as you give them chances to escape: sudden pathways open for an instant, a *broom of flying* that rolls unexpectedly out of a shattered cell, a jet of roasting-hot air from below that blows a player character straight out of Nightwail. At this stage, hardly anything appears too implausible to use.

Out of the *Mirror*: Once out of Nightwail, the player characters must still survive the breakup of the *Mirror*. The fog overhead dissipates; the sun shines through, blindingly; the *Mirror* fragments, part of the collapsing gateway between realities, fall on all sides—and for a moment, the player characters recall the dream they experienced on the outer world, of the black bowl and the blinding light overhead.

Now the player characters must launch themselves upward, by whatever means they or you can contrive, to reappear in the Hollow World before the gateway collapses. If all else fails, the discorporates can float up, dematerialize the player characters, and conjure them again beyond the barrier.

Out of Thin Air: Even now, the player characters may not yet be safe; after all, they're 750 miles above the ground and in the airless void. Assuming the heat from the sun doesn't broil them (a matter of some minutes without heat protection), the fall lasts just under three hours. The player characters should have time to improvise a solution. If they don't, the fall certainly kills them.

Some possibilities: The winged boat is still hovering where the player characters left it; the emissary of Otziotl, on the ground in Chitlacan, can direct it remotely to catch the falling characters. More brute-force rescues include those by Asterius the Immortal, and the discorporates (who technically should rejoin their physical bodies when the *Mirror* is destroyed).

Rewards

In addition to the usual experience points for defeating opponents, make a bulk group XP award at least large enough to raise one player character by one level.

For example, if the party includes a 6th level thief, award each player character up to 20,000 XP, which would raise the thief to 7th level.

Also, give 10-20% extra XP to individual players who role-played well, devised clever plans, and otherwise increased everyone's enjoyment of the game.

Of course, adjust these XP awards to reflect your personal play style and the needs of the individual players.

Heading Elsewhere

To continue with the other modules in this trilogy: If the player characters arrived in the *Smoking Mirror* via the Spirit ceremony, they (and all the other surviving discorporates) snap back to their physical bodies, which priests are using as slaves. The player characters should easily defeat the surprised priests, have a joyous reunion with the NPC ally they have rescued, and be ready to move on to further adventures (see the next section).

If they are here in physical form, the characters can travel from the *Smoking Mirror* directly to the site of another adventure in this series. The flying boat can transport them one last time; the discorporates, manifesting new plot-device abilities, could provide one-time magical transport before reverting to their physical bodies; or the player characters could glide back down to the Hollow World in a tense journey on the back of a dying gridbug!

Other methods are possible. But any method should be one-way—the player characters shouldn't be able to flit at will all over the map.

If you're playing this module alone: Simm has betrayed his fellow Brother, Koresh Teyd, and the minister Iri-la Kaze. The player characters find them, shrunken along with the caravan.

Assume that Thanatos kept his time marker in the *Smoking Mirror*; the decoyed Immortals return from the past to the exact moment of its destruction. They read the player characters' minds to determine what happened, and in gratitude they transport the characters home to the Known World. The Immortals restore the shrunken caravan and deliver it to Queen Yazar, averting the diplomatic crisis; the player characters receive the approbation of all Glantri, not to mention the reward for the caravan.

Leads to the Other Modules

If the player characters still retain their obsidian mirror from the Great Pyramid, it now shows them two troubling vistas: A huge worm tunneling out of a sandstone mesa in the desert; and dark, barely human figures skulking around a crowded slum. These are scenes from the Nithian Empire and Dharsatra, the sites of the two other adventures in this trilogy. The menace of the Brethren is not yet ended!

The other modules describe leads the player characters can find to these adventures. If necessary, the mirror telepathically informs them of the locations and serves as a "homing device" to lead them there. The mirror has no other magical function.

For more information consult the introductions to HWA2, *Nightrage*, and HWA3, *Nightstorm*.

THE HOSTAGE PRINCES

These two young goblins, the eldest (and illegitimate) sons of Queen Yazar of High Gobliny, were degenerate and slovenly specimens even by goblin standards. Like their mother, they believe the key to authority is fear, and the keys to fear are power and ruthlessness.

Kano Arrow's-Whisper

Male goblin: Height 5'1", weight 130 lbs., age 20. Heavy build; lots of black hair; left tusk grows aslant. Wears Glantrian armor that fits poorly; carries rusty short sword (1d6).

Named optimistically for the silent deadliness of an arrow in flight, Kano soon grew too large for silence. He's tall and hulking for a goblin, built like an oxcart, and walks with a heavy tread—a stomp, really.

Minister Irla Kaze played on his reverence for his Brethren ancestors, seducing him and his brother (whom she contacted via telepathy) into Thanatos's scheme. Taken over at Barleycorn Monastery, Kano has journeyed to Chitlacan, intimidated its priests through displays of power, and instituted the new Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit, designed by Thanatos to expand the *Smoking Mirror*. Once he purchased King Mochtlapac's loyalty, Kano and his familiar, Simm, journeyed up to the *Smoking Mirror* and supervised its growth.

Too bad the process turned Kano into a grotesque monster; the shock has broken his mind. If the player characters can help him recover his sanity, he may vengefully turn against his familiar.

Kano Arrow's-Whisper, as goblin: AC 5; HD 1 + 1; 7 hp; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; MV 90' (30'); Save F1; Str 9, Int 9, Wis 9, Dex 10, Con 13, Cha 5; AL C; THAC0 18; XP 10.

As the bloated monster in the *Smoking Mirror*: AC 1; HD 10; hp 45; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; MV Nil; Save F6; AL C; THAC0 10; AL C.

Udan Axe-Thrower

Male goblin, height 5', weight 110 lbs., age 18.

Udan appears in the second module of this trilogy, *Nightrage*. He is known among the goblins for being slightly more canny and subtle than Kano. If necessary, use the goblin statistics for Kano, above, but reduce AC to 6.

THE BLOOD BRETHERN

These two evil ancestors of the hostage princes, named for their savagery, flourished some two centuries ago during a five-year reign of terror in the Broken Lands and the surrounding area. Emerging from obscure origins, the pair united and

led several warring orc and goblin tribes through a combination of charisma and terrorism. Their brutality nearly united the entire Broken Lands in an army that would endanger the neighboring kingdoms.

However, a group of adventurers infiltrated the Brethren stronghold near God's Anvil, caught both Brethren off-guard and nearly defenseless, then magically trapped their spirits. Without their leadership, the humanoid armies soon fell apart.

Their long captivity under Barleycorn Monastery has driven both these servants of Thanatos quite insane.

A Possible Origin

How did the Brethren acquire their unprecedented powers?

The shadow elves, subterranean elves of the Known World, sometimes give birth to deformed infants (as revealed in D&D® Gazetteer 13, *The Shadow Elves*). They nearly always strand their malformed offspring in distant tunnels, leaving them to die. Occasionally, orcs or other humanoids find the offspring and, mistaking the deformed foundlings for humanoids, raise them as their own.

This process, still unrecognized in the Known World, offers one possible explanation for the Brethren's abilities. Perhaps they were, in fact, shadow elves by birth. The inner power that gave them command of the *grasping dark* may have deformed them as well.

However, elf twins are virtually unheard of. And, unlike true elves, the Brethren definitely interbreed with the Broken Land goblins, producing many children and, after six or seven generations, the two hostage princes. So this explanation remains only a tantalizing possibility, nothing more.

Simm of the Grasping Dark

As goblin: Male, height in life 5'2", weight in life 125 lbs., last age 37. Currently a male capuchin monkey, height 14", weight four lbs., age inapplicable.

Due to arcane restrictions of the magical trap that held him under Barleycorn Monastery, Simm could not emerge from captivity in his own goblin form. Therefore, moved by evil humor or insanity, he took on the shape of a small, long-tailed monkey, its fur and eyes night-black. In this form he is a familiar, or accompanying spirit in animal form, to Prince Kano. His agility gives him AC 4.

Simm works his considerable magic through Kano, and the monkey derives nourishment from his host as well. Simm's magic has transformed Kano into the bloated monstrosity described in Chapter 11, driving him mad in the process. In

this form, Kano's body is covered with suppurating patches of fungus; Simm's monkey form sucks on these for nourishment.

Personality: Simm is progressing beyond mere brutality and into sublime cruelties. Torturing captives is not so sweet to him as the suspense, the apprehension of torture; and neither can match the ecstasy of knowing a powerful rival is totally in Simm's power. His affection for gloating should offer the player characters opportunities to escape or surprise him.

Note that Simm never, under any circumstances, speaks the name of Thanatos. He is magically enjoined from doing so.

Simm: AC 4; 25th level cleric; hp 54; #AT 1; Dmg by spell; MV 180' (60'); Save C25; AL C; THACO 7. Spells carried: 1st—one of each spell, reversed when possible; 2nd—all except *know alignment*; 3rd—*continual darkness*, *cause disease* (x2), *curse* (x3); 4th—*animate dead*, *cause serious wounds* (x2), *dispel magic*, *create poison*, *sticks to snakes*; 5th—*commune* (with Thanatos, x2), *cure critical wounds*, *quest*, *truesight*; 6th—*barrier* (x2), *cureall* (x2), *speak with monsters*; 7th—*holy word*, *grasping dark* (x4), *raise dead fully*.

Koresh Teyd, Nightkiller

As goblin: Male, height in life 5'1", weight in life 100 lbs., last age 37. Currently a sluglike monstrosity, length 22", weight six lbs., age inapplicable.

Koresh Teyd appears in the second module of this trilogy, *Nightrage*, and he is described fully there. If necessary, use the description for Simm, above.

GLANTRIAN MINISTER

Irila Kaze

As human: Female, height 5'4", weight 120 lbs., age 59. Thin; long full white hair, blue eyes, alert look; immaculate wizard's robes. Currently not human.

Irila Kaze made excellent impressions early in her studies at Glantri's Great School of Magic. By her late teens her curiosity led her into independent searches in the school library. Finding forbidden books of great evil, she gradually became a worshipper of Thanatos.

Thanatos eventually enlisted Kaze in his subtle plot. Now, having lured the two goblin princes into place, allowing the Brethren to take them over, Irila Kaze has journeyed with them to the Hollow World. She has separated from them and journeyed to the distant island of Shahjapur, where Thanatos has "rewarded" her with a new body.

Irila Kaze does not appear in this module. To see her horrible new form, the player characters must visit Shahjapur in the third module of this trilogy, HWA3, *Nightstorm*.

Irila Kaze: In case a player character wishes to dispel one of Kaze's enchantments, Kaze is a 25th level magic-user. No other statistics are needed in this segment of the adventure.



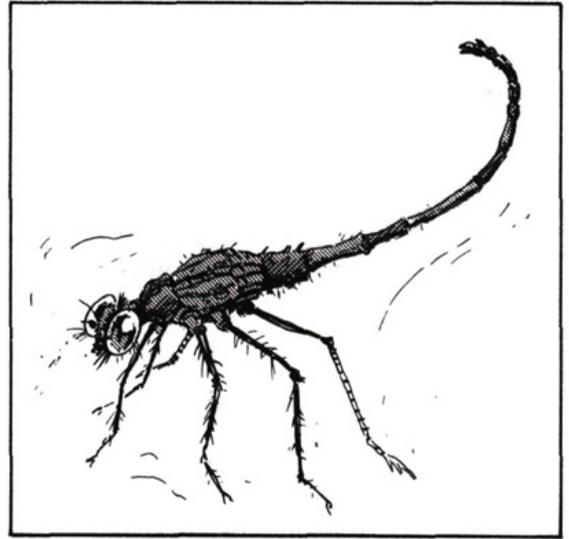
GREAT ANNELID (Small) ==

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	16
Move:	60' (20')
Attacks:	1
Damage:	2d8
No. Appearing:	1
Save As:	Fighter 8
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	7
XP:	1,350

In millennia past, the great annelids, or "burrowers", once ate colossal tunnels through the deep crust of the Known World, far deeper than surface dwellers ever go. They eventually imperiled the Hollow World, as chronicled in the History section of the HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set. Immortal guardians put the annelids to sleep, and they remained dormant for millennia. Much later, their empty tunnels became the homes of the Shadow Elves and Schattentalen.

Thanatos recently awakened the annelids as part of the scheme summarized in this module's Introduction. The annelids play a central part in the second adventure in this trilogy, *Nightrage*, but in this segment the only annelid the player characters encounter is small and dead. (See the end of Chapter 4.)

The statistics here describe an almost newborn annelid, about the size of a purple worm. They grow bigger than this. Much, much bigger.



GRIDBUGS ==

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	3 + 1*
Hit Points:	12
Move:	120' (40')
Fly:	240' (80')
Attacks:	1
Damage:	paralysis
No. Appearing:	1-4 (1-10)
Save As:	Fighter 2
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	16
XP value:	75

These giant wingless dragonfly-like insects in the *Smoking Mirror* use the carrion crawler statistics from the Basic DM Rulebook. Note the addition of flight. From 1-10 large gridbugs are found in their obsidian lair.

Smaller gridbugs also proliferate in the *Smoking Mirror*. For these swarm attacks, use the Insect Swarm statistics from the Expert Rulebook (AC 7; HD 2*, 3*, 4*; MV 60' (20'); #AT Special; Dmg Special; Save NH; ML 11; AL N; XP 25, 50, 125; attack affects 10'x10'x 30' volume; running or swatting opponents take 1 hp/round, AC 5+ takes 2 hp, AC 6 or worse takes 4 hp).



DISCORPORATES

Armor Class:	9
Hit Dice:	1 + 1**
Hit Points:	6
Move:	240' (80')
Attacks:	1
Damage:	See below
No. Appearing:	1-10
Save As:	Fighter: 1
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Berries only
Alignment:	varies
THACO:	18
XP Value:	23

These weightless, intangible entities, the mental energies of the victims of the Azcan Ceremony of the Flying Viper Spirit, now inhabit the *Smoking Mirror*. They resemble wraiths, but they are not technically undead, have no energy-draining powers, and cannot be turned.

Abilities: Discorporates are immune to physical attacks and to *sleep* and *hold* spells, as well as fire, cold, and electricity attacks. However, magical weapons and mental attacks harm them, and *charm person* works well on them (-4 to saving throws). In fact, the discorporates in the *Smoking Mirror* dimension are all enslaved to Prince Kano's *charm* spell. This spell drives the discorporates to senseless pursuit of nightbloom berries (see Chapter 11).

Individual discorporates retain their living personalities, their alignments, and their Intelligence, Wis-

dom, and Charisma scores. They still have their individual skills, saving throws, and non-magical abilities (including thief abilities) but not spells or magical powers. These insubstantial forms cannot attack physically, either with weapons or in unarmed combat.

Transport power: Instead, discorporates have a bizarre magical ability to dematerialize (in one round) and carry any non-living objects native to the *Smoking Mirror*—obsidian, dead gridbugs, etc. They can carry up to 2,000 cn of weight indefinitely in an invisible, intangible form, then materialize it at will within one round. Discorporates can move normally no matter how much weight they transport this way. (This is how they build up the edges of the *Smoking Mirror*; see Chapter 11.) *Truesight*, *detect invisible*, and similar magic reveals the presence of the objects carried.

Combat: With a touch (a successful to-hit roll), a discorporate can materialize a chunk of obsidian on the form of another discorporate or a physical body. This irregular chunk weighs only a pound or two, but it slows the movements of physical beings; for each hit, deduct 1 from the victim's Strength and Dexterity scores.

The victim can tear away the chunks (taking no other action in that round), but this painful move does 1d6 damage. If the victim lets the chunks remain, they eventually drop off within a few minutes after combat ends.

Against a discorporate target, the obsidian chunk inflicts 1d6 damage, then evaporates as the victim dissipates it.

NEW MAGICAL ITEM

Powder of Oak-in-Acorn (Shrinking Powder)

Rare to the point of extinction in modern times, this potent powder once achieved popularity among Chaotic mages. The silvery powder, made from essence of homunculus and other esoteric components, shrinks a specified target to a hundredth (or less) of its original size for an indefinite time. The using character can recall the target to normal size with a word. Living creatures who are shrunk fall into stasis, neither aging or deteriorating until recalled to normal size. Objects of any size can be shrunk, but larger objects require more powder.

The shrinking powder, *oak-in-acorn*, is found (when found at all) in a sealed one-ounce copper vial, a quantity sufficient to shrink a large man to beetle size. Trying to prepare an ounce of powder requires Alchemist skill at the +2 level, takes two weeks, and costs 4,000 gp. The user must spend a full round sprinkling the powder in a complete circle around the target while doing nothing else. Unwilling targets receive a saving throw vs. spells to resist being shrunk. The effect can be countered by a *dispel magic* spell.

NEW SPELLS

The Grasping Dark (Cleric Spell, Level 7)

(*Magic-User Spell, Level 6*)

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

This evil attack, a 7th level clerical spell or 6th level magic-user spell, available only to minions of Thanatos, draws the victim into an unknown pocket dimension.

This realm, dark, malodorous, and crowded with the spirits of past victims, manifests itself within the outline of the victim's own form. No matter what angle one views the victim from, he appears to be a flat silhouette. Within the silhouette, the viewer sees the victim receding into the distance, pulled by countless green-gray hands. Typically, the victim shrieks horribly and sometimes bleeds. The silhouette vanishes, and the victim is lost forever.

Records indicate that only Koresh Teyd and Simm have ever used the *grasping dark* attack. So far as is known, no one else has ever located the pocket dimension or retrieved a victim from it. As familiars, the two ancestral servants of Thanatos can inflict the attack through their hosts, the hostage princes Kano and Udan. The princes must touch their victims' flesh (requires a successful attack roll); touches upon armor or clothing have no effect.

The victim receives a saving throw vs. death magic to resist the *grasping dark*. Success means no effect. If the saving throw fails, the margin of failure determines how long until the effect takes hold (as it were)—the wider the margin, the sooner the attack takes effect. Missing the roll by 1 or 2 means the victim has an hour or two of painful life left; missing by (say) 7 or 8 means the victim departs almost instantly.

Cureall, cast before the victim disappears, dispels the *grasping dark* effect. After the disappearance, nothing can bring the victim back except Immortal magic or, at the DM's discretion, a *wish*.

Distance Distortion

(*Magic-User/Clerical Spell, Level 5*)

Range: 10 yards/level

Duration: Two turns per level of caster

This spell changes travel distance. It works only in an environment composed entirely of one element—underground, undersea, in clear air, or in a fire such as the sun or the Elemental Plane of Fire. The caster must either be an elemental or must summon one before casting this spell. The elemental can only aid *distance distortion* through its own element—for example, to travel underground, the caster must first summon an earth elemental.

The elemental usually cooperates when the caster announces the intent to cast a *distance distortion* spell. At the DM's discretion, the elemental may refuse to aid the spell and try to break free. (If the elemental itself would be imperiled while aiding the

spell, it always refuses.) If the elemental refuses, the spellcaster must bribe or persuade it, or summon another. If it cooperates, the elemental condenses or expands the distance to be travelled, affecting the caster and all within the spell's range.

The spell alters distance in one of two ways.

Expanding the distance: Those affected cross only half the distance they appear to travel. So a 100-yard corridor, for example, would appear to be 200 yards long. Note that the range listed above always refers to the undistorted distance, and is not affected by the spell.

Condensing the distance: Elementals find this effect far easier to aid. Those affected can cross up to one mile of actual distance per foot they appear to travel. A party could traverse the entire 1000-mile crust of the World in a thousand steps—to their perceptions, about three-quarters of a mile.

Circumstances can affect this ratio, especially the presence of powerful magical items among those affected.

Perceiving and resisting the spell: In general, the spell's effects are not obvious. Those within the spell's effect may, at DM's discretion, get an Intelligence ability check to detect its effects. Modify the check according to darkness, distraction, and other circumstances. Those who resist the spell's effects get a saving throw vs. spells; if successful, the distance they cover is not distorted.

Also, any damage done to the elemental, who is presumed to be either visibly present or surrounding the caster's area, causes it to break off the distortion. The caster can try again to gain its cooperation as long as the *distance distortion* spell lasts.

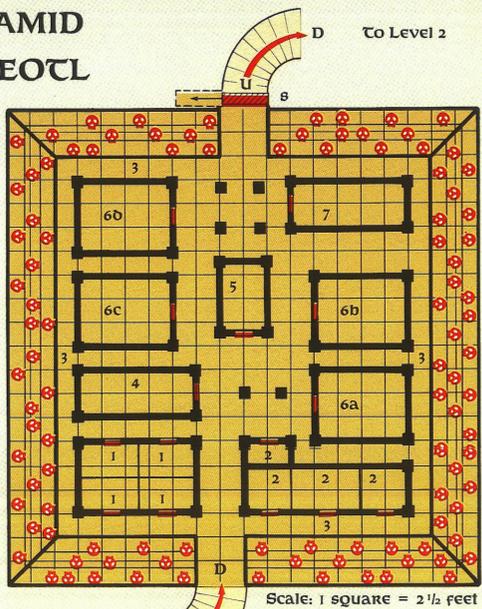
Restrictions: The passage must be entirely within the appropriate element (earth, air, etc.), so this spell does not work overland. Travel ordinarily cannot cross the *World-Shield* or *anti-magic* effects, unless a clear physical passage exists. (In this adventure, a Great Annelid has tunneled through the *Shield*, permitting the player characters to pass.)

Note that in the Hollow World setting, this spell is not prohibited under the *Spell of Preservation*; it does not allow *instant* travel, only *rapid* travel. However, since no one can summon an elemental in the Hollow World, the spell remains useless, practically speaking.



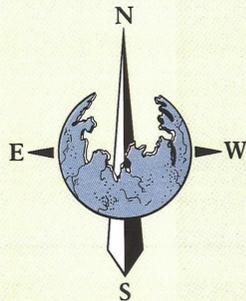
GREAT PYRAMID OF ATZANTEOTL

Level 1
Chapter 9:



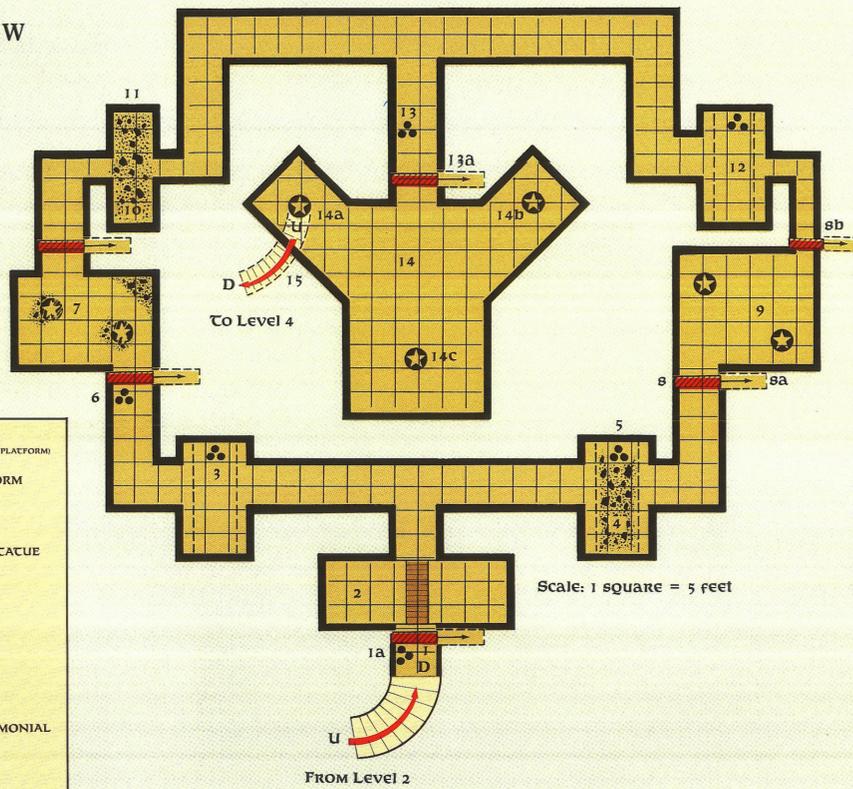
Scale: 1 square = 2 1/2 feet

FROM PRIESTS' QUARTERS
(SEE MAP ON MODULE COVER)



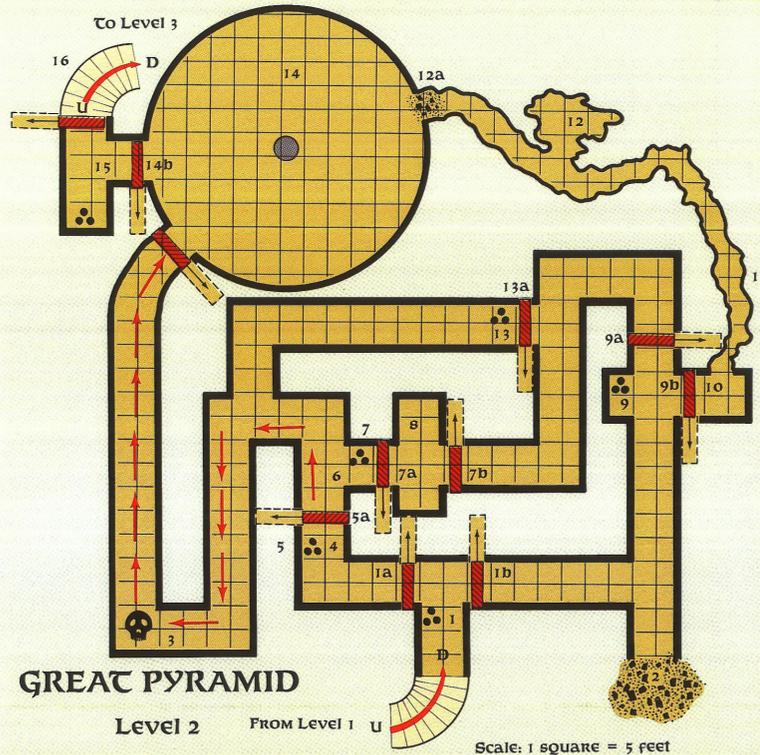
GREAT PYRAMID

Level 3



Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

FROM LEVEL 2



Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

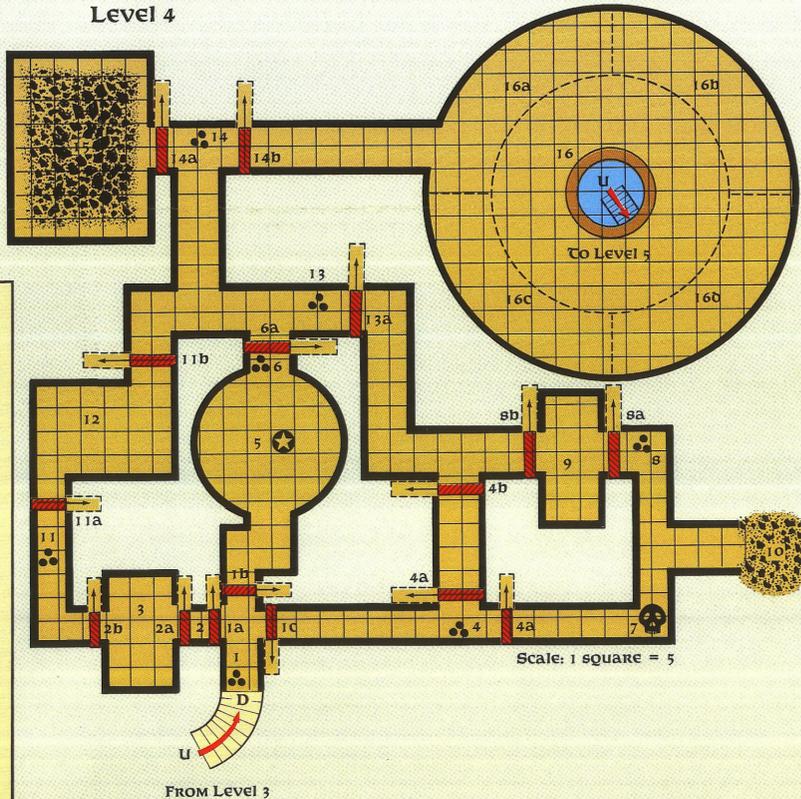
GREAT PYRAMID

Level 2

FROM LEVEL 1

GREAT PYRAMID

Level 4



Scale: 1 square = 5

FROM LEVEL 3

CITY OF HUITLAKTIMA (Chapter 7)

Scale: 1 square = 60 feet

Population: 45,000 (2,000 Nobles, the rest commoners). Most able-bodied men drafted into the army and sent elsewhere in the Empire, to discourage local unrest.

Products: Cotton, tobacco, copal gum (incense), pulque (fermented sap of the maize plant), crimson dye (from the cochineal bug), quail, turkeys, fishing and subsistence agriculture.

Crates: Obsidian statuary, clay "elbow pipes," lacquered gourds, carved wooden trays.

Ruler: Prince Tlachitlatlan, third son of King Moctliapac of Chultican (C10, C). True power in the city is High Priest Chupicuaro (C12, C), an ambitious but cautious 59-year-old man; he waits for King Moctliapac to die, whereupon he plans to murder the prince and take over the Empire.

KEY
Colors:
Red: temples, shrines, tlachtll courts, ceremonial sites
Yellow: administrative
Orange: military
Black: residential or other

Bay of Vaxactun: Stormy coastline prone to fogbanks and rip tides; white sand beaches, recently spoiled by the

Prince's dumping of sacrifices ("tribute to the immortals of the sea").

1. Pyramid of the Masks: Religious center of city named for some 1000 carved stone masks that line the walls along 180-foot base of each side. Masks are so carved that wind blowing through them sets up a resonant moan. Open stone altar and flame pit at summit, 90 feet high.

2. Skull racks, called trompanitl. Piled high with remains of sacrifices; some skulls painted or decorated with feathers, denoting especially high honor.

3. Prince's Palace: Huge building, limestone facing over cemented rubble interior. Grand masonry mosaics depicting rise and bloody reign of Atzanteotl. Inside, twin rows of 20 rooms extending from the central throne room, where the Prince sits on a magnificent lacquered throne of polished obsidian. Adjacent buildings hold guests and concubines. Note "snake wall" surrounding estate, mark of highest status in Azcan culture.

4. Palace servants' quarters: About 100 servants.

5. Prince's altar: A stone post with shackles, where the Prince personally punishes rebels by whipping.

6. Royal Falconer's Combination residence and aviary where pampered slaves raise hunting falcons for the Prince.

7. House of the Magician: Temple formerly consecrated to Otzintotl; proved indestructible, so it is now used as a college for local magic-users. Stepped pyramid, beautiful fretwork at base, large eight-room shrine at summit.

8. Tlachtll courts.

9. Dovecotes: Long, low stone buildings where keepers raise and train thousands of doves. The Prince enjoys watching them fly in unison; then he sets falcons loose on the flocks, to hunt and kill them.

10. High Priest Chupicuaro's residence. A hidden tunnel, dug at Chupicuaro's orders, extends from a cellar to the Prince's palace, emerging in a supply room near the throne room.

11. Administrative buildings: Taxation, military draft, court, maintenance, construction staff, priests assigned to purify water supply, and so on. Twelve are teaching clan buildings, where clan elders manage affairs and property of the city's 12 tribal divisions.

12. Noble villas: Most arranged around central courtyard filled with green plants and (usually) a well.

13. Market square: Large bazaar, merchants occupy adobe buildings at square's edge. Also social center; citizens gather to witness bear-baiting and other cruel pastimes.

14. Merchants' homes: Wooden construction, some adobe. Three or four homes share a well.

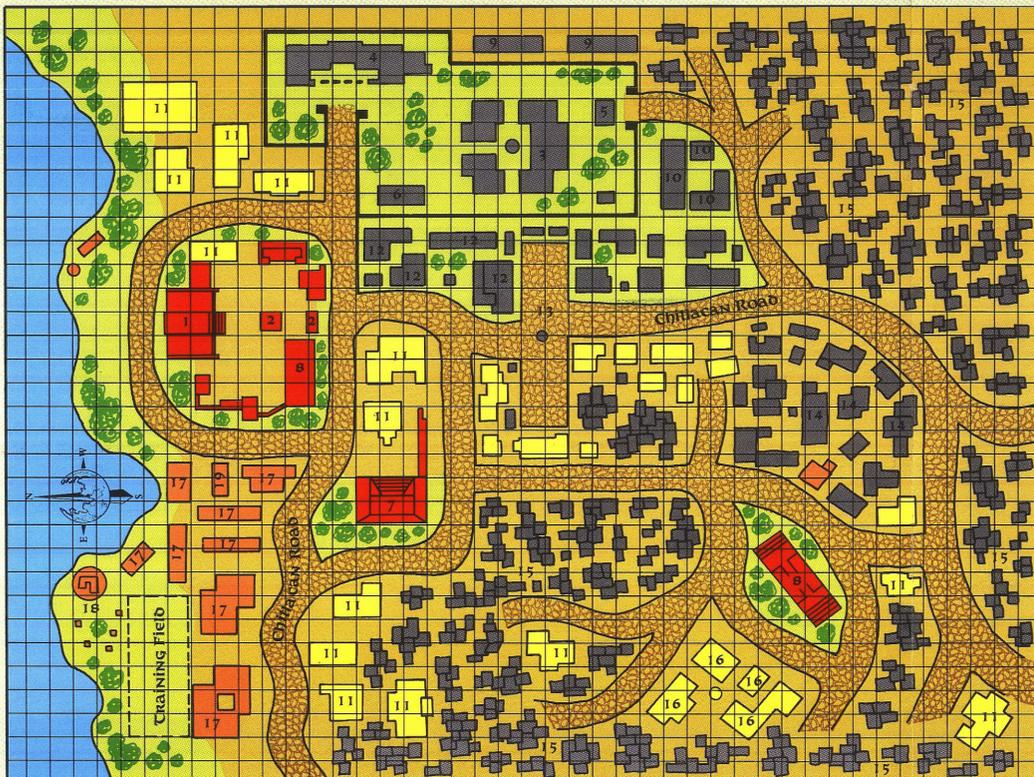
15. Peasant huts: Wattle or wood with thatched roofs. Three or four generations of a family under one roof. Fires common. The few wells are social centers, though their water is usually foul.

16. Granaries, slaughterhouses, warehouses, and other food preparation buildings.

17. Military offices, guard barracks, drill fields, supply houses, etc. Several hundred 1st and 2nd level fighters stationed here on at posts surrounding the city. Shifts change every eight hours. Also armories, spear makers, fletcher, and other weapons craftsmen in communal barracks.

18. Lookout posts.

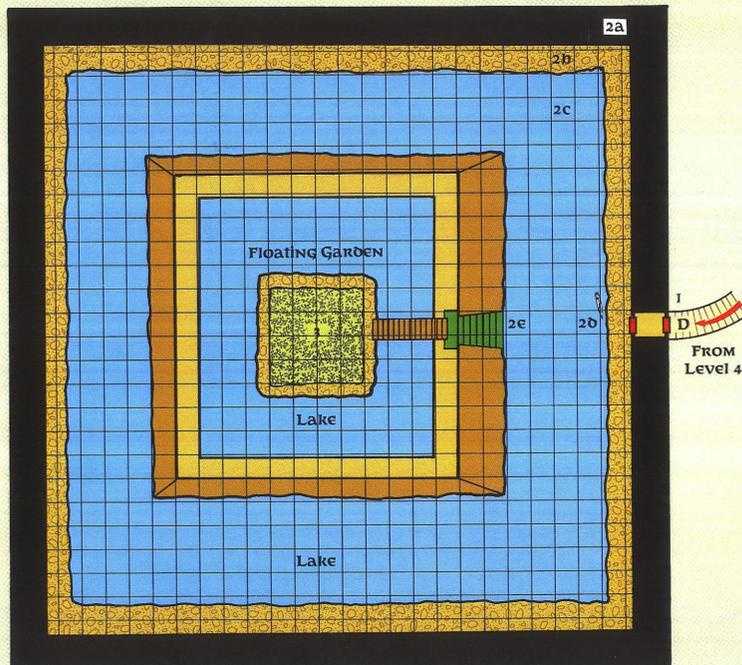
19. Detention pens: See Chapter 7.



GREAT PYRAMID

Level 5

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet



FROM LEVEL 4

MONSTER SUMMARY TABLE

This table presents vital statistics for some of the monsters featured in this adventure. Refer to the various D&D® rulebooks or the appendix to this module for more detailed information.

Name	AC	HD	THACO	#AT	Dmg	MV	Remarks
Azcans	0-level normal humans, except as follows:						
Adepts	9	C2, 7 hp	19	1	weapon	120'(40")	<i>prot. from evil</i>
Moctitlapac	6	C18, 52 hp	11	1	1d6 + spells	120'(40')	Saves at +5
Noble	9	24 hp	17	1	1d6	120' (40')	300 gp treasure
Priests	8	6	17	1	1d6	120' (40')	<i>cause light wounds, cause fear, blight (x2)</i>
Warriors/guards	7	2	18	1	1d6	120' (40')	mindless, never check morale
Bone golem	2	8	12	4	1d6/1d6/1d2/1d2	120' (40')	golem immunities
Crystal skull	6	2	18	1	1d4	120' (40')	
Discorporates	9	1+1**	18	1	special	Fl 240" (80')	imm: sleep, hold, fire, cold, elec
Earth elemental	0	12	9	1	2d8	60'(20')	"Gabbro"
Goblins	6	1-1	19	1	by weapon	90' (30')	
Great Annelid (small)	7	Nil	12	1	2d6	Nil	dead
Gridbugs	7	3+1*	16	1	paral	Fl 240' (80')	as carrion crawler
Hellhounds	4	5	15	1	1d6 (5d6)	120' (40')	1-2 fire, 3-6 bite, detect invisible 75%
Jade golem	6	10**	11	2 claw/ bite	2d6/2d6/2d10	180' (60')	detects invisible, undead immunities
Jade statue	4	5**	14	2 fist/ bite	2d6/2d6/1d6	90' (30')	
Kano, monster	1	10, 45 hp	10	1	1d6	Nil	See Chap. 11
Rats, giant	7	3 hp	19	1	1d3	60' (20')	
Schattenalfen							
Linariel (leader)	6	E7, 23 hp	15	1	1d6 + spells	120' (40')	
Others	7	E4, 14 hp	17		1d6 + spells	120' (40')	
Shadow	7	2+2*	17	1	1d4 + special	90' (30')	8-turn Str drain, undead immunities
Simm	4	C25, 54 hp	7	1	spell	180' (60')	See "NPCs"
Skeletons	7	1	19	1	1d6	60' (20')	undead immunities
Zombies	8	2	18	1	1d8	120' (40')	undead, lose initiative

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

This chronology will help order the occurrence of events described in this module. All times are listed in days before (shown with a minus) or after (shown with a plus) the point the adventure begins in Chapter 2.

Times and Distances: The goblins' homeland in the Broken Lands lies some 175 miles from Glantri City, about half over good road and half through mountains. A small, swift party can make the ride in just over three days, weather permitting; a loaded caravan like Glantri's would need at least twice that and probably a week. For more detailed overland travel times, consult the Expert Rulebook.

Day	Known World	Hollow World
-11 days	Prince Kano, Irila Kaze, and loaded caravan set out from Glantri City for Broken Lands; Prince Udan sets out from goblin lands on same path (secretly diverts into wilderness; awaits telepathic call from Irila Kaze)	—
-09	Caravan camps at Trintan on Glantrian border; Glantrians last see it heading south next morning	—
-04	Caravan diverts to Barleycorn Monastery; goblin shepherd Roorgh sees it; Yazar, impatient, sends out war messenger. Glantrian ministers, expecting Prince Udan, send out search parties	—
-03	Caravan arrives below Plateau of Zyrd; camps while Kaze and Kano investigate monastery	—
-02	War messenger arrives in Trintan; search parties sent out; messenger continues to Glantri City, arriving 36 hours later	—
+00	PCs receive mission in Glantri City	—
+01	Prince Udan leaves escort party, joins caravan, leads it to Plateau of Zyrd	Thanatos decoys Immortals into past; sends Great Annelids tunneling to Atacalpa ruins, Nomarys volcano, and Barleycorn Monastery; in guise of Atzanteotl, sends visions to Schattentalfen party, summoning them to escort Brethren
+02	Morning: No clerical spells above 2nd level from now on!	Annelid arrives beneath monastery, destroying wards around Brethren (dying in process); Kaze and goblin princes are taken over at Barleycorn Monastery Later, Schattentalfen arrive from Hollow World Azcan courier notices Annelid hole at Atacalpa; alerts Azca
+03	Kaze shrinks caravan; she and Udan leave for Chitlacan in Hollow World Udan goes out to contact his own party, then returns, travels to Nomarys in Hollow World; leaves small Schattentalfen contingent behind to wait for his companions (who never show up; PCs take their place)	PCs reach Barleycorn Monastery sometime later; hear caravan driver's story and witness his death. Kano and Kaze arrive in Atacalpa and separate; Kano to Chitlacan, Kaze to Shahjapur. Later, Azcan soldiers arrive at Atacalpa and prepare ambush
+04	PCs meet Schattentalfen and travel to Hollow World	PCs arrive in Atacalpa; ambush and rescue; adventure continues according to path players follow.

THE CARAVAN'S ROUTE

The ministers of Glantri have tracked the hostage prince's caravan along the route shown as a solid red line. From Trintan the route is unknown; the ministers have suggested a likely route, shown as a red dashed line. Player characters can get this map from the Glantrian minister in Chapter 2.

 **KNOWN Route**
 **Projected Route**



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

HOLLOW WORLD™

Official Game Adventure

NIGHTWAIL

First Adventure in the *Blood Brethren* Trilogy

INTO THE DEPTHS!

Under the ruins of Barleycorn Monastery, a tunnel leads one thousand miles downward. Through it, a rescue mission into the Broken Lands turns much stranger. Much more serious. For the trail leads to the Hollow World.

Launch your D&D® game players into fabulous lost-worlds adventure across the Hollow World! Travel the Azcan Empire. Explore the secret labyrinth of the Great Pyramid in Chitlacan. Fly to the core of the world and enter the Smoking Mirror, before the monstrous Prince Kano enacts his devastating scheme—a scheme called:

NIGHTWAIL!

Nightwail is the first adventure for the D&D® HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set.

- (The HOLLOW WORLD boxed set is required to play.)
- This 64-page adventure fits easily into your existing campaign, either as a stand-alone adventure or as part of the continent-spanning *Blood Brethren* trilogy. These three linked modules can be played in any order—but the adventure starts here!
- This adventure is designed for four to six players of levels 6 to 8.
- EASILY ADAPTABLE TO THE AD&D® GAME!
- Look for the companion modules in this series, *Nightrage* and *Nightstorm*.



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