



A dim and waning star 25 light years from Sol, Fomalhaut is orbited by six planets of variable sizes. Four of the six are dead slabs of rock and ice, and Fomalhaut-II is a world of eternal winter where only a fraction of the former population labours under the yoke of a technocratic dictatorship. Therefore, only Fomalhaut-I remains of the ambitious planet-engineering projects of the old Terrans, a medium-sized sphere where great engines sunken under the surface, once known as stabilisator cities, have created Mediterranean and sub-tropical environments in a thin and ever-shrinking belt around the equator.

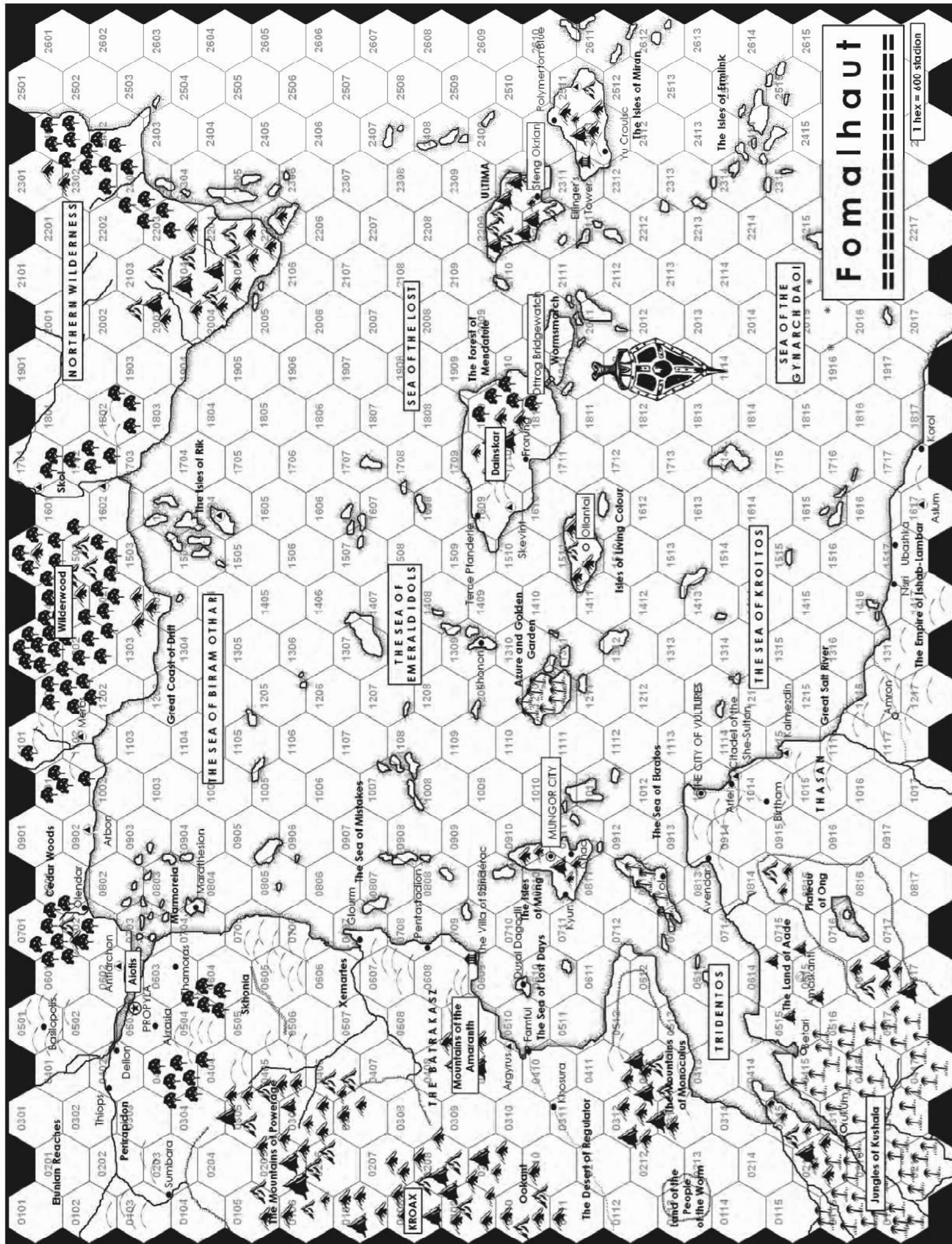
The colonisation of Fomalhaut occurred by executive order of Archon Solon some 4000 years in the past. The process of terraformation, which involved the will of the great powers of Earth and the resources of multiple worlds over a period of 300 years, separated climate zones, pushed back the boundless ice massifs and drained them into seas, creating an appropriate terrene environment, including the comfortable conventions of a 24-hour day and a 365-day year. After the environment came vast cities of iron towers, subterranean production facilities, communication arrays and numerous pleasure resorts – seaside villas, natural reserves for exotic flora and fauna, stratospheric cities and the like. Later interplanetary wars had almost completely demolished these structures, or altered them beyond recognition. Some of the stabilisator cities fell to weapons of immense power, others to the failure of automated systems after millennia of neglect. This has introduced curious climatic anomalies on the surface and the spread of ice wastes and arid deserts.

4000 years following the fall of technological civilisation have redrawn the face of the world. United culture was superseded by local multiplicity; comprehensive and accessible information by fragmentary knowledge and casual disinterest in the wider world. In absence of centralised administration emerged the carefully and sometimes maniacally guarded independence of city-states and petty states. The only universal is the Terran language, spoken in a number of disparate dialects, but recognised in all locales worthy of a civilised man's attention. In such a milieu, attempts at establishing larger, long-lasting empires have, without exception, resulted in complete failures.

- The empire of Mung was founded by island-dwelling savants adept at both magic and technology 3000 years ago. Mung's doctrines were based on helping the

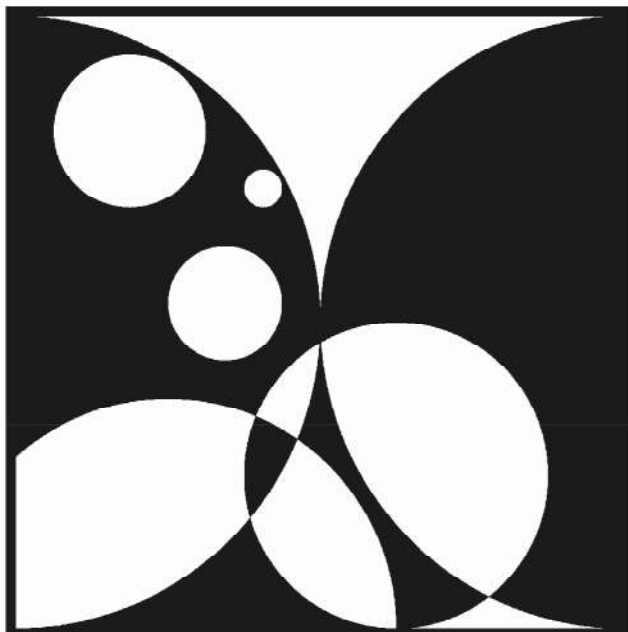
downtrodden, educating the poor and the universal spread of advanced civilisation. The grand experiment, which had shortly turned into nightmarish repression, was overthrown by the open rebellion of subject cities; although there was a time when the entire west coast of the Sea of Emerald Idols was under the government of advisors from Mungor City, the men of Mung were subsequently forced to retreat to their isle-fortress, where their harmful intrigues had henceforth little effect.

- Of similar antiquity was the empire of the Gynarch Daoi. This lush land spread over a chain of islands to the southeast, and was exclusively ruled by females until a cataclysm swept it off the planet 1800 years ago. The amazons of the present age are descendants of the empire's distant outposts.
- Propyla is an empire which had emerged along the abundant waters of the Aiotis; over 200 years, the powers of its overlords have waxed to encompass far lands and waned to the very walls of the ancient metropolis. Rivalry among the trade and military factions, along with several independent variables, have kept expansionist ambitions in check. After a recent series of weak overlords with brief tenures, supremacy has unexpectedly fallen into the hands of the Etunian nomad Radon Tharg, previously a low-ranking adherent of the military faction.
- The ill-fated empire of the demigod Alvan Vorodan had a brief and ignominious history, as it was broken by a coalition of jealous gods after a flowering and expansion of only 60 years. Since that time 1200 years gone, the once proud cities have fallen under the patient sands. In the Desert of Regulator, broken towers and shapeless piles of stone are still to be seen, but aside from jackals and accursed spirits, the land is desolate and forlorn. As for Alvan Vorodan, he was stripped of cognition by the gods and consigned to a deep stone pit. Those who approach now may hear the confused cry and braying of animals, laughter and guttural lamentation. Alvan Vorodan's empire is a dream that was and – as some claim – a promise that will be, but this is well understood to be common fancy, of no great interest.
- The most recent attempt to forge a large state is also the work of a demigod. Ishab-Lambar, an ambitious cleric, had become the head of a maniacally expanding empire 30 years ago when he slew his own patron, now only known as the Red God. Encompassing a good part of Thasan, and wastelands to its south, Ishab-Lambar's conquest is ruled by austerity and a warrior faith. Nevertheless, the violence and moralistic righteousness of the faith's representatives has aroused a distaste in many, and the solemn oath of the nomad hosts to take the City of Vultures has so far remained an empty promise.



Absent strong empires, the main spaces of civilisation are city-states, primarily on seacoasts, islands and along navigable rivers. The most populous lie in an area demarcated by the lands of Propyla, the three-pronged bay of the Tridentos and the sea-coasts of barren Thasan. As for the rest, the noted geographer Ninax remarks: "it is clear to anyone with the ability to reason that the northern regions are not suited for the formation of civilised states; among the wild and ignorant tribes of the pale barbarians, only a few fortified colonies can claim to represent the light of human progress. It may be conjectured on the basis of nameless ruins in jungles to the south that climates of extreme heat are not so adverse to development, as little material proof as there is of it. However, it is proposed by many that hostile natural factors had to be moderated through the methods of the ancients, now no longer clear. In any event, the absence of civilised life does not equal the absence of habitation: degenerate, primitive and ultimately unhappy tribes are basically found in almost all environments conceivable."

Ninax would be well surprised if he would only set aside his prejudices and venture from his comfortable residence: in truth, lone islands of civilisation are to be found even in the least hospitable climes, although it should be mentioned that they do not always prove to offer much in the way of hospitality. And even so, we have not yet mentioned enclaves which have miraculously preserved the knowledge or at least comforts of the Terrans: beneath ice massifs, in the depths of marine rifts, on floating cities and geostationary structures, man survives and possesses power unimaginable to the noted savant. Of course, encounters with the overmen are not always happy occasions: an existence of long isolation may have introduced caprices and odd phobias, but also heightened the basic human attitudes of suspicion and vindictiveness, from which none are exempt.



Gods and Demons: Due to its great distance, the gods of our world are generally unknown on Fomalhaut, or are of such weak power that their presence is all but unnoticed. In its later cycles, shortly before the planet's long decline and return into the ice from where it was lifted by the sages of older eras, several new or long-slumbering gods declared their powers and assumed the leadership of newfound followers. Some came from the deep chasms of the underworld; others from the dim reaches of space between the stars. Yet others were mortals who had acquired divine powers, and drunken with it, started testing the extent of their might. So it was in the last years before the coming of the glaciers.

On Fomalhaut, relations between gods and mortals differ from the conduct of other worlds. Indeed, very few consider them a reliable moral compass, and those who do are usually dangerous fanatics. Common men, and even most priests, assume a considerably more pragmatic, even cynical perspective; the basis of all dealings is common self-interest. On the other hand, approaching gods, even directly, is a less involved process: it may be accomplished with little trouble if the reasons are good and compensation attractive.

Bythos

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Symbol: grimacing, bearded human face

Weapons: tridents

Bythos is as insane as his followers. His appearance is unkempt and ragged, with disorderly robes and filthy beard. His cultists breathe in poisonous gasses and vapours to prophesise and divine. Among them are found clerics, magic-users and illusionists in equal measure.

Derceto, dark mother

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Symbol: night-black disc surrounded with swirling tentacular protrusions

Weapons: nets, crooked knives and swords

Derceto dwells in the lightless hollows of the Underworld, but also appears on the plane of Fomalhaut in person or through progeny when summoned forth. This occasion is not always a pleasant one, as Derceto has been known to devour her callers after her bizarre fertility rites. There are no female followers, and both goddess and cult are characterised by definite mysogynic tendencies.

Dornak, god of peace

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Symbol: olive branch

Weapons: two-handed flails

Dornak is a giant, 30 m man with tanned brown skin. He wears a leather tunic and employs a huge flail for combat. Dornak likes peace so much that he is prepared to mash a whole army into pulp to achieve it. His clerics are of the same temperament.

Ellinger

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Symbol: golden pentacle in a field of blue

Weapons: mage only

Ellinger rose among the gods through wizardly might and unrestrained powermongering. This is a habit he has kept, along with his super-mundane charisma and fondness for debauchery. Ellinger has no priesthood or church. His believers – more precisely, allies – are overambitious mages and illusionists desiring the bounty of his knowledge. This is something he has in abundance, and isn't opposed to sharing with someone who proves worthy of attention.

Fedafuce

Alignment: Neutral

Symbol: merchant's scales

Weapons: all priestly

Although the majority of religions are inherently inclined to simony, Fedafuce's clerics have perfected it into an art. In his temples, spells, divinations and divine powers are all available for the appropriate compensation, regardless of adherence to moral tenets or even the declaration of religious devotion. Prices somewhat exceed the usual level, but various instalment plans, loans and other financial constructions balance out the inconvenience. Fedafuce's temples are also involved in usury, money-changing, and all manner of speculative investments.

Glyuathk'th

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Symbol: light-blue garments

Weapons: of any type

Glyuathk'th is a giant, tentacled patch of light-blue fungus which predates humanity by millions of years. Its first worshippers found it in the underground fissure where it grows. To those who supply human sacrifices to Glyuathk'th, it grants hallucinatory visions of weird landscapes and forbidden magical treasures. Glyuathk'th doesn't care for conversion, and is unlikely to have clerical adherents.

Ishab-Lambar

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Symbol: cobra

Weapons: poisonous daggers

Ishab-Lambar was formerly an ambitious priest who gained power and immortality by disposing of his own god (now only known as the Red God). He is popular in Thasan and the barren lands to its east, spreading through wars of expansion; but significantly less known in the west. A desperate sect of the Red God still exists (although its members have no clerical magic of any sort), fighting with bitter devotion to bring about Ishab-Lambar's downfall.

Ishtar, goddess of love and war

Alignment: Neutral

Symbol: bow and arrow

Weapons: any type, especially bows and one-handed swords

Ishtar, like her religion, is both gentle and merciless, always possessing a hidden edge when the former and a strange gentleness and attractiveness when the latter. The number of her followers is countless (and include women especially), being much, much more powerful on Fomalhaut than she ever was on Earth. Priests are of either sex, but men may only advance to 5th level in its hierarchy.

Kang, the Thousand-Eyed, god of adventurers

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Symbol: circle, and several smaller circles within it

Weapons: of any type, but especially flails

Kang the Thousand-Eyed's cult excels above all in brazen greed and unrestrained powermongering. His doctrine is characterised by belligerence, but also the complete lack of principles, making it both widespread and popular. Kang is a 3m behemoth in chainmail armour. He uses a great flail and wears a horned helmet, from which several small, slimy, round eyes peer. He is irritable and often capricious.

Karttekeza

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Symbol: peacock

Weapons: swords with wavy blades

Karttekeza is a six metre tall giant. He has six heads and twelve hands, holding swords with wavy blades in all but two of them. He fights mercilessly against demons. His worshippers are fighter-priests dedicated to combat, and wear extravagant, rich garments (they especially prefer gem-studded weapons and clothing). Karttekeza is an idealist, caring little for material goods above what is needed, but enjoys music, poetry and female companions. His steed is a great peacock, intelligent but mute. Often, only the peacock appears before priests, which is nevertheless interpreted as a favourable sign. Karttekeza is a young god, having only gained power two hundred years ago. His religion is an informal network with few followers.

Mereskan

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Symbol: bat

Weapons: short swords

Mereskan, the intelligent giant bat-god, is well known for strange and often tiresome humour, as well as paternalistic tendencies. Followers feed him with their own blood; in exchange, Mereskan provides them with wise guidance and advice. The implements of the sacrifice are idols with pointed teeth, found in all his temples. Mereskan is followed by grave robbers and thieves, who are attracted by his nightly aspect.

Monks of Mung

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Symbol: golden sun in purple field

Weapon: of any type

Although Mung is no deity, but rather the state ideology of Mungor City, and adherents are not priests in the strictest

sense, it is nevertheless discussed under religions, since it possesses both of their typical distinguishing features, namely excess greed and an unhealthy desire for power; furthermore, it has adopted some religious trappings. Mung's diligent monks have taken root nigh everywhere, and are usually involved in plots to overthrow lawful authority. Where the faith has triumphed (as is the case in the city of Famful), all decisions are made in the name of puppet rulers by advisors straight from Mungor City. Therefore, resentment against monks is rather significant, although few risk their open expulsion due to Mung's magical, military and technological might.

Ozolba, zombie god

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Symbol: rotting head

Weapons: bludgeoning only

Ozolba is a huge decomposing corpse. He has minimal intellect, and only concerns himself with destruction and murder, which he relishes. Ozolba's secretive clergy often includes priests who are themselves zombified corpses. They may only progress to the fifth level. Zombies under the domain of Ozolba have a crude intelligence.

Shakkur, god of beggars

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Symbol: rag-wrapped hand

Weapons: crutches, knives, etc.

In physical appearance, Shakkur resembles an old, emaciated man with improbably large eyes and vampire teeth. He has no clerics, and only half-animalistic beggars, the most despicable class of mendicants care to call on him. He preaches cannibalism and murder, and his faithful servants can employ debilitating and dangerous curses.

Shodoggua

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Symbol: dark gray waves

Weapons: tridents

This bizarre monster-god reposes in forgotten basalt deeps, and his once-thronging temples have stayed abandoned since the horrific collective suicide of his faithful. Abandoned – but not always empty!

Snolog

Alignment: Neutral

Symbol: slug surrounded by golden halo

Weapons: priestly; all edged weapons, as well as the use of salt, are strictly restricted!

Snolog is a deity belonging to the class of gastropoda, a bulky, well-fed slug. His body is always surrounded by a golden aura; he can also shoot deadly beams from his eyes. Fat, shaved priests and wicked priestesses (also shaved where appropriate) are at his disposal, primarily demonstrating their faith in various orgies and other types of debauchery. Snolog's philosophy is enlightened hedonism, making him one of the less dangerous gods of Fomalhaut.

Targ

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Symbol: imperial eagle in inverted purple triangle

Weapons: unknown [metal lances and technological]

Targ is non-magical, and according to many he is no god but merely a very powerful mortal. This is a purely theoretical distinction, since Targ is very dangerous in either case! His body is a pudding-like deep purple mass with two glowing red eyes. He always appears encased in armour made of super-metal, with a glass helmet on his head. Targ travels overland in a floating metal fortress, leaving destruction and slavery wherever he goes. His exact goals or the nature and extent of followers (if any), are so far unknown.

Tsathoggus, frog-god

Alignment: Chaotic Evils

Symbol: frog

Weapons: of any type as long as it hurts

Tsathoggus is a rather malevolent god, and his worship isn't too attractive to most people. His devotees wear greenish robes and perform certain repulsive facial alterations to please their harsh master. Nevertheless, his shrines are found in almost all larger city states, and despite their bad reputation attract enough visitors to ensure their maintenance. As it is well known, several harmful materials and magical implements are available at the right price; and it must also be mentioned that the priests of Tsathoggus are not tight-fisted with those who perform certain secret, but hazardous undertakings at their behest!

Uthummaos

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Symbol: faintly glowing chasm in a dark field

Weapons: priestly and short swords

Uthummaos is the cold breath speaking from dark chasms, and his voice is vaporous and gloomy. His mystery-religion is made up of a web of rituals, superstition and obscure, seemingly self-contradictory commandments, which believers must carry out exactly as ordered. Priests of the religion are strict, joyless men who dress in sombre tones. They make human sacrifices in complete secrecy and according to precise guidelines.

Xoé, goddess of beauty

Alignment: Lawful Good

Symbol: light-gem

Weapons: golden dagger

All of Xoé's priestesses are radiantly beautiful, often taking their own lives if they feel they are threatened with its loss. They abstain from violence, are rarely attracted to travelling life, and may employ *charm* as a 2nd level spell. Although this isn't immediately apparent, Xoé's faith is rather insignificant and has declined greatly in recent centuries.

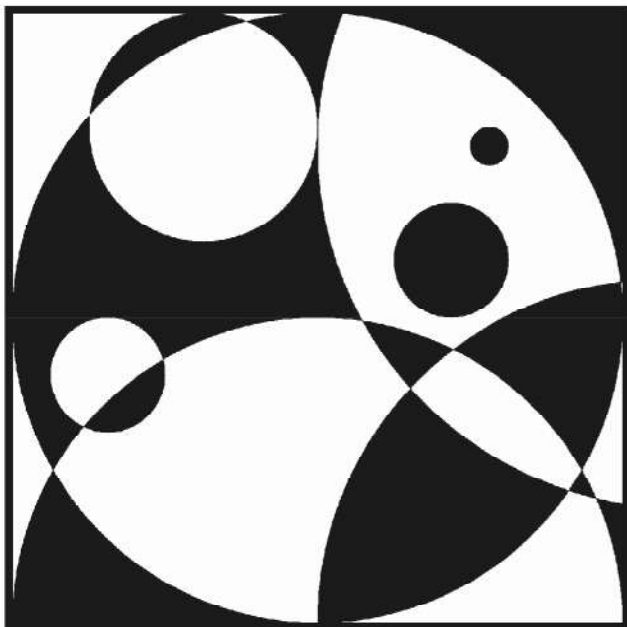
Yol

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Symbol: whirling pattern

Weapons: of any type

Yol is a vast protoplasmic mass made up of millions of large cells resembling frogs' eggs. The essence of Yol's teachings is the personal experiencing of divinity; that is, his followers always carry a smaller cell colony within themselves, thus spreading it all over the world! The religion is expansionistic, achieving its goals through the usual method of armed coercion.



The Regions of Fomalhaut:

The Batrakasz: The Batrakasz is largely trackless waste, a barren region spreading from its coastal city-states to KROAX, barrier mountains between the aegis of human settlement and the lifeless glass deserts. The only major river of the Batrakasz is languid Xemartes, but its environs are unpopulated: the ancient inhabitants, the half-man Talaiotes who renounce all civilisation, guard their rock eyries against all encroachment. They recognise but one god, strict and austere Tarsis – but the will of Tarsis is unknown even to the priests residing in the grey concrete city of Metagnor, although their studies and rites leave them wizened and impotent after a matter of a few years. The Talaiotes trust their customary weapons, deadly slings and short spears, attacking coastal cities with unmatched ferocity even if their raids promise certain failure.

The city-states of the Batrakasz are therefore mostly coastal. Foremost among them is prosperous **Pentastadion** (pop. 3200). Its oligarchs, the Syndic Lords, are known for greed and materialism: it is said that they would take the foam off the sea if it enriched their coffers. Beslandar, the Head Syndic is the greatest scoundrel of them all. It is said that there are no better sailors in the world than in Pentastadion: only the pirates plying the waters of the Tridentos come near, and then only on coastal waters.

Doom-laden **Glourm** (pop. 2500) is a place remarkably different. The inhabitants are driven by strange passions and eccentric motives; the narrow streets and small markets are thriving at night (for the life of this city-state is largely nocturnal), offering philtres bringing exclusive dreams and knowledge often better unlearned. Glourm is ruled by a triumvirate: the Lord Raputo, Lady Azamlarg and the elusive Lady Kantedoramis. The military is rag-tag and the walls are in a state of disrepair. A sinister prophecy, predicting that the doom of the city-state will be brought by an accursed sword sealed within a flying tower in a nearby canyon and guarded by all manner of monsters and enigmas, has instilled the populace with a sense of fatalism – but also pride and carelessness.

Pentastadion and Glourm are separated from the southern cities by wilderlands. The coasts are avoided by most travellers with even more zeal than the lands of the Talaiotes, for here stands the pyramidal villa of the venerable master mage Szindérac among gardens of amaranth and anthropophagous vegetation. Tradition suggests that Szindérac is older than the millennia and more powerful than some gods, having been the original mind behind the development of the memorisation system, tutor to Lankwiler the Great as well as other noted mages, and a famous figure of ancient history. In his cosmic boredom, he is rumoured to have gone capricious and cruel towards visitors. On some occasions he sends missives to the proud oligarchs and tyrants, who become pale and obey when his often unfathomable demands are made known.

So much for Szindérac. Of the southern cities, **Famful** (pop. 2800) is of little note. The young ruler, King Merances is follower and obedient slave to Mung, which rules life in this city-state. The ambitious experiment directed from Mungor City has initiated a thorough transformation in a town formerly ruled by tradesmen and landholding patricians. Due to the attraction of the generous welfare programmes, Famful has become a city of religious pilgrims, beggars, prostitutes, social parasites and dreamy idealists; every alley is teeming with the ragged but self-conscious children of Mung. Houses are dilapidated and crumbling, and it is not safe to venture the streets at night.

To a distance of three days from Famful stands **Khosura**, city of the four mysteries (pop. 3600). Khosura is sacred to the cults of Ishtar, Uthummaos and Derceto; a fourth mystery is concerned with matters outside religion and is less known. The master of Khosura has long been the priest-king Panthozar, who is also the supreme high priest of Uthummaos on the world of Fomalhaut (11th level EHP). The main product of the barren city-state is salt. Salty waters emerging from springs beneath Khosura have flooded the ancient lower city once populated by the less prosperous classes (the place is now interdicted, for the former inhabitants are restless under the deceiving calm),

but enriched the merchants: in addition to common salt, more valuable encrustations are collected and exported.

From Khosura, an ageless road of cracked concrete slabs travels eastwards into the Desert of Regulator and the faraway cities of the uttermost west. South of the road lie formerly fecund and prosperous lands: the empire of Alvan Vorodan, now dust and dreams. The northern desert is no better. In jagged towers of black metal brood sixth type demons and the metallic horrors that are in their service. Likewise, one could find the legendary land Ookant, fabled domain of the Ishtar-worshipping amazons; or, venturing west along a road ever less trodden, a pass ruled by the eccentric merchant and slaver, Dhazi Kathari – it is said, a man merciless to bandit and beggar, but munificent to honest travellers who pay his fees.

Seas east of the Batraksz (encompassing the Sea of Mistakes and the Sea of Lost Days) are relatively safe, although the same cannot be said of all islands, almost all small worlds in their own right. There are two cities of note. First is tiny **Dusal Dagodli** (pop. 1200), a pleasure resort for comfort-loving and overall mild-mannered gods (e.g. beautiful Xoé and not so beautiful Snolog). The idyllic, sedate and consequentially often unexciting environment is also home to prominent schools of philosophy; examples include the Greater Syncretistic Rabbinate, the Heterodox Theocrats, and Pragmatic Incrementalism, a school of thought that has become the favourite self-validating humbug of ruling circles all over Fomalhaut, and therefore exceedingly prosperous.

Mungor City (pop. 6000 for the entire island), as old as the terraforming projects, is a similarly static millieu. Bold skyscrapers in pastel hues, wide and clean boulevards, public parks and silently gliding or hovering conveyances suggest comfort and refinement. Mungor city and its bucolic surroundings are the ideals Mung strives for worldwide, worth a few sacrifices to achieve. Naturally, not even such a progressive society is exempt from internal disagreements and frictions: the optimal way of achieving the ideal is always under vigorous debate among Mung's archdeacons and lay ideologues. Mungor City, as a controlled experimental environment for creating the perfect society, may not be visited by outsiders under most circumstances, and has very, very advanced defense systems.

Propyla: Propyla has remained a prosperous and populous region in spite of barbarian incursions and endogenous strife. Great holdings along the Aiotis employ thousands of slaves to supply the cities and export markets with grain; a thick network of sentry towers, garrisons and patrols ensures their safety.

Propyla (pop. 20,000) is the largest city on Fomalhaut. It would take weeks just to see all of its markets, blackened houses, slums and by-ways; to genuinely know them, more

than a lifetime. With the exception of the district surrounding Overlord Radon Tharg's palace and a few boulevards, streets are narrow, dim and twisted, with dead ends, abandoned neighbourhoods, unexpected little courts and a few very nasty surprises. Propyla is a city of thieves, who form an ancient and extensive hierarchy from almsmen to thief-lords. Many say they are the true masters of the city; the thieves, haughty and proud though they are, are not convinced.

As for the cities around Propyla, **Delion** (pop. 2500), **Thiops** (pop. 1400) and **Thamoras** (pop. 2100) are market towns built around military outposts with no interesting character. **Akrasia** (pop. 1600) is otherwise, possessed of a gentle melancholy that many find charming. Its inhabitants like decorative gardens, orchards and the pleasant feeling of a gentle decline. The autumn mysteries attract a throng of pilgrims. During the festivities, youths and maidens raised for this specific purpose enter an enchanted gateway leading to a blissful land without trouble or toil, and are seen no more. The warrior sect in charge of guarding the gate are careful to warn off unlawful attempts at entry, but in spite of warnings, prowling beasts and vigilant guardsmen, there are always brave trespassers who are usually apprehended and summarily cut down before attaining their purpose.

At the mouth of the Aiotis, the archipelago Marmoreia is a sea-maze of a thousand islets, and is guarded by **Fortress Antiarchon** (pop. 800). Commander Eixennes, risen to his post from a slave chained to a galley's bench, is known as a merciless foe of the pirates lying in wait among the islands. His generous bounties have not been useless in bringing to justice some of the seaborne scum, although they have also created business opportunities for various groups, manifesting in an unexpectedly bountiful supply of captured pirates and a steady, if modest demand for their corpses.

Territories south of the Marmoreia are sparsely inhabited, if at all. The exception is the tiny island empire of **Marathesion** (pop. 1400), a favoured haunt of scheming Propyla exiles and the site of a well-stocked little market known for its most advantageous prices.

Skhonia is almost entirely empty by reason of Talaiote incursions and monster encounters. An attempt, financed by the overlords of Propyla, to construct a formidable line of defence in the form of a great wall turned out to be an embarrassing mistake. Built over multiple decades and at outrageous expenses, the line fell before the first serious attack and has remained in (admittedly impressive) ruins ever since. The sight of rocky foothills and the clinging mists that envelop them are unpleasant in any case; in polite company, Skhonia is a by-word for gauche banality, and therefore not to be mentioned.

If Skhonia is empty of human habitation, the unfriendly, lifeless peaks of the immense Mountains of Powerage are doubly so. Among the silent pinnacles may be found multiple sites of the ancient Terran civilisation, among them a great city, but they are avoided even by the half-men. One time, colonies were built by the upper reaches of the Perirapidon, including the fortress of Yennarg. They are uninhabited now, at least by the living. The men of **Sumbara** (pop. 1100), a small town not too distant from the mountains, are convinced that the man-eating frogs and other amphibious horrors of the Yennarg swamps are no products of natural evolution.

Lands south of the Aiotis may be divided into two parts. The grass-covered plains and occasional hills of the Etunian Reaches make up the eastern-southeastern border of Grand Ethunia (Etunia is a region of a similar size to Propyla, extending to impassable mountain ranges to the west and great glacier valleys – subman habitation – to the north). Etunians are horse-nomads known for a belligerent disposition and fractiousness, making impressive careers in the armies and robber bands of the civilised world. The Reaches are dotted with ruined forts, razed and rebuilt over a never-ending succession of bloody civil wars. There are countless skirmishes among the nomads, but also with the men of Propyla; in fact, the differences between the two sides have become so tenuous that an outsider would find it hard to tell which is which.

The wilderlands of Doros are ruined badlands; only the city of **Basilopolis** (pop. 1700) sustains a significant population. Basilopolis is an unfriendly, shabby-looking fortress city built atop an ancient Terran spaceport. Its philosopher-king, Virisanios, is an austere and strict person; dissidents, suspicious individuals and criminals are cast into a bottomless void that surrounds the walls. The small inner city is a closed world: without permit, entry and exit are both impossible.

The Sea of Biram Othar and the Northern Wilderness:

These sizable but sparsely populated regions deserve little attention. Civilisation is represented by a handful of fortified colonies (**Olendar** – pop. 900; **Arbon** – pop. 800; **Meros** – pop. 900), mostly known for their supply of wood, resin and sometimes other valuables. The defences are strong and people are in a state of constant readiness, for the Northmen are known to raid from the woods and the sea, while occasionally howling hordes of cave-dwelling submen descend from the northern glaciers, killing settlers and Northmen alike. The settlements of Northmen (big villages and timber forts) are mostly along the river Skol and on the Isles of Rik. These locales are barely known, and regions further east are a complete mystery.

Tridentos: This large three-pronged bay enjoys a poor reputation among Fomalhaut's seamen for the treacherous storms and the coastal pirates. The weather is one of

extremes; changes are unnaturally swift and there are gravitational anomalies at some locales.

Only the northeastern parts of Tridentos, close to the lands of Thasan, can be called civilised. The not too reassuringly named **Yol** (pop. 1200) is a small, sheltered port; despite the hearsay, there are no visible signs of the eponymous deity or his adherents. On the other hand, one can find a teeming slave market and a small arena.

Avendar (pop. 1500) has lost much of its former splendour. Bloody showdowns between the followers of Pragmatic Incrementalism and Optimised Progressive Objectivism have left considerable destruction in their wake. The conflict ended with the defeat and flight of the Objectivist faction, who subsequently established New Avendar on an isle in the eastern seas. Power is in the hands of the Universal Synod of Incrementators, an assembly where every taxpayer may vote with a weight proportional to his taxes. Votes are subject to purchase by the highest bidder, although they tend to go low for lack of competition. There are several smallish grottoes around Avendar; a place of ascetic loons, genuine prophets, charlatans and worse scoundrels in wait for hapless travellers.

The western coasts of Tridentos are barren wastes adjunct to the Desert of Regulator. The Mountains of Monoculus are so named for a roving war machine of truly impressive dimensions and destructive capacity; fortunately, the six-legged, one-eyed, spherical hulk has been seen but rarely as of the last decades. We can say little better about the Land of the People of the Worm. The wormlike representatives of this inhuman race originated on a distant star, and do not venture from their crater nor confer with men at all except to accept the customary annual tribute of 40 slaves from Khosura. In any case, they possess highly advanced technology.

The Jungles of Khusala – extending to a basin area surpassing the entire scope of Tridentos – is a place of dead temples, ruined cities, howls in the sweltering, humid heat and paranoid, reclusive civilisations human or otherwise. **Yukum** and **Betari** are the best known ruins, by virtue of their coastal location. Both are temporary harbours for pirates and sometimes places where the pirate lords hold conclave. Yukum is the larger of the two. It is said that an intelligent race lurks in the passageways underneath the ruined pile that was the palace, but the only proof is mysterious disappearances and the odd rediscovery of a corpse-husk tapped of all precious bodily fluids.

The land northeast of the jungles is grassy savannah, with a few lonesome stone fingers jutting from the flat plains. Once, this was a domain of amazons; now, only the ruined palace-city, Amaskanti, with its desolate halls and carved galleries remain as its memories. Beasts lair here. Legends of a beautiful woman in the company of great felines, the

Lady of the Lions, are well known, but it is hard to reconcile them with the historical facticity of the last queen of the amazons, now 700 years gone.

The Plateau of Ong is an isolated highland wedged between Thasan and Tridentos. Closed off in all directions, it is ruled by conniving, cruel monks who receive their instructions from a central island citadel. Foreigners may not expect anything good if they fall in the monks' clutches, and swift death is preferable to what awaits beyond the citadel gates.

Thasan: Thasan's terrain is a mixture of desolate wasteland and desolate desert, home to old and sinful cities – among them the City of Vultures, whose first name is forgotten to all, even to the ancient slaves who keep Mirvander Khan's library. Open and proud sins have aroused anger and contempt among the more orthodox nomads of the southern coast. These fighting men have gone to war under the banners of their new god, Ishab-Lambar, to conquer crumbling wall and gilt spire and push the faithless into the sea. There is open war in Thasan, although not an intensive one: distance and terrain conspire to keep the foes apart, so larger clashes are not common.

The centre of Thasan is the **City of the Vultures** (pop. 9000). This venerable metropolis shows signs of rot and decay. Even the rich palaces are crumbling, stuccoes fall and statues are as worn stumps. The streets, redolent with sweat musk, rot and filth are populated by an ill folk, evil of visage and wretched. In contrast, the people of the palaces are marked with calculating indolence and the world-weariness of inherited status. The dwellers worship a lot of demigods native and specific to the city; all are either unambiguously evil, or indifferent to human suffering. The city is ruled by a grand master of mirages and lies, Mirvander Khan. The khan is an evil man befitting his domain, and in his throne room, his safety is protected by a golden cage and trained tigers.

South of the city, within distance of a day's walk, broods **Arfel** (pop. 1700), holy site of pilgrimage to the accursed cadaver-god, Ozolba. The degenerate, bloodthirsty zombie cult is based in a rectangular temple devoid of ornamentation. The gates are ever open, and the veiled priests may take whom they will within the limits of the walls, or any others whom they can outside. To refuse is a sin above all sins, with punishment too horrific to adumbrate.

Next to Arfel rises a proud palace-fortress. The **Citadel of the She-Sultan** (pop. 700) was built by an ancient ruler of the City of Vultures, and has fallen into the hands of the god Karttekeza by lucky coincidence. The well-stocked fastness is not only the centre of the faith and an occasional resting place for the god, but a place of succour from Ozolba's power – therefore, its mere existence is sacrilege to the zombie-worshippers.

Kalmezdin (pop. 700) is a far less pleasant place as the last coastal fortress. Being posted here is considered exile by the garrison, as the place is dusty, hot and extremely boring. Even the slaves toiling away in the nearby copper mines are only required to work after sunfall. **Birham** (pop. 800) is a similarly unpleasant locale, regularly raided by the fanatical dervishes gathering in the Wasteland of the Apostates nearby. The viscous sap of the thorny bushes cultivated here are, nevertheless, valuable enough to pay for a garrison, slaves, overseers and accountants.

The shallow valley of the Great Salt River, bisecting Thasan, is uninhabited. Water and ground are heavy with bitter and useless salts, and the cliffs are known haunts for needlebeaks, intelligent and ruthless birds of prey sheathed by magic-reflecting auras of golden radiance. Not far to the southeast stood Amron; once prosperous, now home to demons and ghouls. From Amron, an ancient road leads to the seacoast, and underneath uncaring waters.

Ishab-Lambar's empire extends to the southern coast and the wastes beyond. The homes of the faith are **Nuri** (pop. 2100) and **Ubashka** (pop. 2400). Both are ruled by families, or more correctly, family patriarchs, all at least nominally faithful adherents of the new teachings: all dissenters have been exiled or thrown to the dogs. The latter is an unpleasant method of execution and public spectacle in Ubashka. Delinquents are lowered into a maze of empty cisterns whose vaulted ceilings have long ago collapsed, and must find their way from one end of the complex to the other, with only a short sword for defence against the multitudes of hunger-maddened dogs sent in their pursuit. There can be a maximum of one survivor; the grisly fete is a popular form of entertainment, the excitement heightened by bets and the plight of sightseers who accidentally fall through unstable bricks or slip on the uneven edges.

The last relevant city-state is **Korol** (pop. 1100), and it is the smallest of the three. It is populated by a poor and conservative folk, who were disposed towards neither the Red God nor Ishab-Lambar; their imagination is only concerned with building and decorating elaborate family cenotaphs. Only by threatening the destruction of these beehive-like structures could they be spurred to join the cause of the new faith, and then with no small reluctance.

The Seas of Fomalhaut: The three seas described below are the boundaries of the known world. Their cities are indistinct and often legendary for the peoples of the mainland. Island-dwelling civilisations are more isolated from great events, and therefore more prone to idiosyncrasies and arbitrary whims. There is a greater variety of the unexplained; weird, darkling enchantment and ancient technology.

The first region of note is the **Sea of the Gynarch Daoi**, an infinite and almost unbroken expanse of water to the east of Thasan. The empire of the amazons that lie here was swallowed without a trace by the waves, and only a few fuming cones remain to tell of the cataclysm. It is written by green-stained plates of brass in the library of Mirvander Khan that the amazons had gone to another world before the catastrophe would reach them. Whether this puzzling fragment is an euphemism or memory of an otherwise undocumented migration, may not be verified.

Second is the **Sea of Emerald Idols**; easily navigable and shallow, so named for the strikingly monumental stone idols emerging from it like so many towers. The curious mementos (more olivine than emerald) depict monstrous gods, writhing worms, snakes and unpromising, more abstract entities watching the waters without recognition or sentiment. The idols predate men. Solon's settlers found them frozen into ice wastes that had once been seas; old, worn but intact. Some were demolished in subsequent wars, and one was transported to the Grand Planetological Museum on Fomalhaut-II at great cost and effort. Therefore, we can now speak of speak standing idols, and the remains of another five.

The most important islands include first and foremost the Isle of **Khonon**, with a town by the same name (pop. 900) and a citadel called **Soteiras** (pop. 500). Cats are sacred animals in Khonon, and the otherwise jovial citizens will become a merciless lynch mob out for blood at a mere hint of doing one harm. Every feline is the precursor to a yet unborn person accurately identified by complex divinations, and it is believed that as the lot of the cat goes, so will the lot of the man. Obviously, guidebooks for the rearing and pampering of cats, accessories and savory foodstuffs are in great demand, and the most sought after catologists are celebrated as stars.

According to unsubstantiated legends, the Azure and Golden Garden, a lush island covered by tropical forests, is the private paradise of a notable but reclusive goddess who has no worshippers, nor desire for any. Among the low mountains, one may glimpse bold edges of pastel glass and other evidence of avant-garde architecture. Some propose the garden is an experiment to create the ideal living habitat, while others – as it is customary – suggest more sinister purposes. These are just guesses: polite but well armed guards patrolling on swift antigrav sleds warn away all who would approach the coasts.

The Isle of Crypts is a more sinister place. According to great geographers, beneath the rocky islet lay monsters of immense power in a state of stasis. The full list is not known, but names such as "The Beast of 1000 Eyes" or "Fiend of 9 Worlds" suggest little good, even on an individual basis.

Even further east are the Isles of Living Colour. These islands and the city of Ollantai suffered the detonations of highly destructive colour bombs. The deadly radiation has expunged all life and seared the bedrock with scintillating brilliance. The land is bizarre, a shift of kaleidoscopic images, and entirely dead.

The largest island in the Sea of Emerald Idols is Dainskar. There are two cities, Terce Pfanderle and Frorung. **Terce Pfanderle** (pop. 1600) is a pleasant port surrounded by rolling hills; its long, curving esplanade and the view of the terraced little town rising on the hills lend it a quaint charm. The inhabitants live by elaborate conventions; demands of decorum and proper comport are rigid to exaction. The benevolent tolerance and slight pity the citizens practice towards foreigners generates pathological hatred in some, while others are inspired to schemes of cunning. These types are in for an unpleasant surprise when the polite and helpful, even congenial demeanour turns into the "closing banquet", a method of execution carried out in the politest of manners but not at all pleasant to experience.

Society in **Frorung** (pop. 1500) is elaborately layered, and by vertical division. Places in the hierarchy for a person or polyad (for the people of this city organise themselves into these arbitrary units on the principles of free association instead of familial links) are determined by the height of the towers they presently occupy. From a distance, Frorung seems a forest of needle-shaped pinnacles; there is a constant bustle of construction projects underway, as well as of careful intrigue to sabotage them.

The **Sea of the Lost** is the last region to be discussed here. The Isle of Dainskare extends here, linked by a grandiose viaduct to Wormsmarsh, an island unworthy of visit or attention. It is unknown what the ancient Terrans sought to accomplish by connecting two unremarkable points of land in this manner, but whatever their reason, it was to their distant descendant's benefit. On the middle pillar, an exclusive tourist resort and casino named **Ottrog Bridgwatch** (pop. 300; ca. 2/3 staff) has been constructed, a magnet for the discerning and prosperous customer.

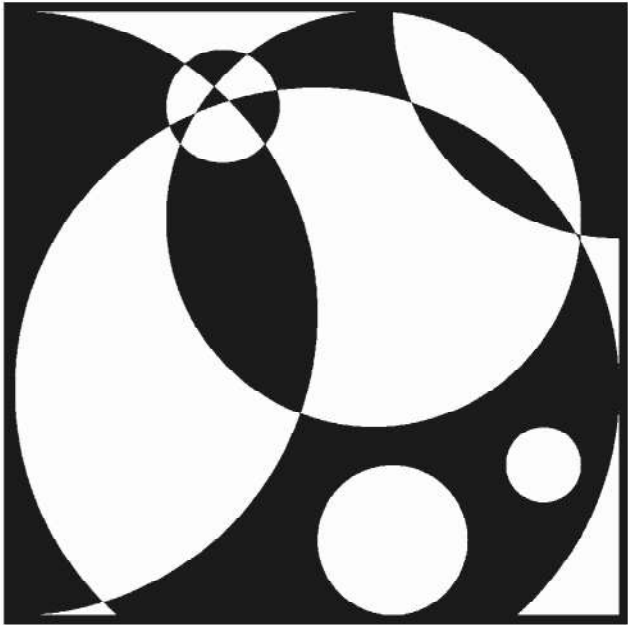
ULTIMA, the Floating Continent is the most impressive monument of Terran civilisation still in existence. The terraformers raised the middle portion of a large island from its place, and secured it 6000 metres above sea level with precision force beams. ULTIMA, if hypotheses are correct, is a perfectly organised technological utopia with an unbroken history of 4000 years and, by modern standards, prosperity beyond conceivable limits. However, all attempts at establishing contact with the inhabitants of the continent were met with perfectly executed annihilatory strikes; therefore, such efforts are no longer in vogue. In the jumbled and broken basin under the giant shadow of ULTIMA, small and mobile squads are in search of

leftover artifacts and oddments; an exercise profitable but outstandingly dangerous by virtue of electrodemons, hunter-killers in a nigh invulnerable brass casing that seek for interlopers. The profitability of salvage has resulted in the emergence of **Sfeng Okrian** (pop. 1300), a squalid shantytown below the “Gate”, the most convenient pass leading into the desolation. This lawless place is the primary node for exporting salvaged artifacts, as well as expeditions of treasure hunters caring to try their luck for easy money. Overseer Gosso Gorgner is the master of the city, and he upholds the only law – the acquisition of his lawful cut.

The Isles of Miran represent the eastern borders of Fomalhaut civilisation: further beyond are only open seas and nameless islands. The main island is unnaturally beautiful, with fragile flowers, mountain-scapes and lakes offering splendid views and the illusion of great distances. Miran’s protector is the god Ellinger, who maintains residence in this area.

Of the cities, **Polymerton Blue** (pop. 3100) is the larger. Polymertonites, who are fond of their eponymous colour, curious hats resembling snail shells, and the quiet joys of life, are determined although restrained hedonists. This world view does not always seem logical for foreigners, especially because of the restraint, but, fortunately, the aesthetic pleasures of consuming scented jellies served in glass tubes of variable diameter, or inhaling complex aromas, may be learned to a suitable degree with long practice if one is so disposed. Since the inhabitants of the city are stone rich, and have all manner of conveniences from hovering cars to swift and silent glideways at their disposal, they do not seek – although neither do they abhor – the company of strangers.

Yu Croulsc (pop. 2800) enjoys similar standards of living, and, although it does not offer port facilities, it may be comfortably reached from Polymerton Blue by an underground train at a cost of glass coins equivalent to 500 gp for a return ticket. The passions of Yu Croulsc are more abstract, and harder to interpret correctly than the motivations guiding the people of Polymerton. The philosophy of Yu postulates the projection of imaginary concepts on the canvas of reality as the supreme form of self-expression; although a shadowy ambience is usually the best result, the ego is satisfied and elevated by creating it. Therefore, the inhabitants live in simple, although not austere circumstances, and may seem more dour on first sight than they really are. This image, of course, is a bit of a vulgarisation. The considerable hidden complexities (such as Yu’s deeper interpretative levels, which offer counterparts of a darker and more violent nature to the less turbulent surface) render the picture more ambiguous, but the present work may not assume the burden of their correct and thorough exploration. Ω



The Fomalhaut Oracle

by Gabor Lux, excerpted from the role-playing game *Kard és Mágia* - in memoriam Bob Bledsaw

Settlements

%	environment (1d3)
01-04	base/fortress (20% hidden)
05-11	cultivated (25% active)
12-16	dangerous environment
17-22	dangerous fauna
23-27	dangerous flora
28-29	destroyed/dead
30-31	dimension transfer
32-33	enchanted
34-35	extra-natural phenomena
36-45	monsters
46-47	petrified
48-50	polluted/dangerous
51-55	provisions (25% dangerous)
56-70	reefs/cliffs/shoals
71-75	relics
76-90	ruins
91-95	structures
96-00	volcanism

%	inhabitants (50%, 1d2)
01-05	anthropophagi
06-10	castaway
11-30	civilisation
31-34	deserters
35-38	fishermen
39-43	garrison
44-49	hedonists (30% perverted)
50-55	hermit (30% insane, 30% exiled)

56-60	lost civilisation
61-66	mage/illusionist
67-70	mad scientist
71-75	megalomaniacal tyrant (50% in exile)
76-79	Merchants
80-82	Mysteries
83-88	pariahs (25% diseased)
89-95	Priest
96-98	prison colony
99-00	Therianthropes

%	civilisation type (1d3)
01-08	Agrarian
09-12	brigands/pirates
13-17	Craftsmen
18-22	cult/theocracy
23-26	Democratic
27-34	Dictatorial
35-38	Enlightened
39-43	Mercantile
44-49	Militaristic
50-53	Pariahs
54-58	Primitive
59-62	primordial/subhuman
63-72	slave-keeping
73-87	special characteristics
88-92	Subjugated
93-00	Utopia

%	Subjugated
01-05	Demon
06-15	God
16-20	Imaginary
21-30	Marauders
31-35	mental shackle
36-40	Monster
41-50	other civilisation
51-55	Parasites
56-60	Secret
61-70	social class
71-75	Symbolic
76-85	Traditions
86-00	Tyrant

%	special characteristics (1d2)
01-05	Ascetic
06-15	civil war/power struggle
16-25	Collapsed
26-35	Decadent
36-45	dogmatic/eccentric
46-50	enchantment/curse
51-55	Gynarchy
56-60	Hidden
44-49	Militaristic

66-70	illusion/dream
71-75	non-human/extra-planet
76-80	pacifistic
81-85	philosophic
86-90	quasi-human
91-95	under extinction
96-00	xenophobic

%	utopia*
01-10	absolutist
11-15	altruistic
16-20	anarchy
21-25	bucolic
26-30	communism
31-35	Eco-
36-40	eugenic
41-50	hedonistic
51-55	libertarianism/objectivism
56-60	modern
61-65	multiculturalism
66-70	mystical
71-75	philosophic
76-80	post-modern
81-90	religious
91-95	scientific/rational/reform-
96-00	social-darwinist

* 01-40 with drawbacks, 41-80 under collapse



Relics and Curios

%	relics and finds
01-05	Ash/coal/slag
06-11	bones
	<i>01-05 abnormal</i>
	<i>06-35 animal</i>
	<i>36-40 geometric</i>
	<i>41-70 human</i>
	<i>71-80 machine wrecks</i>
	<i>81-00 monster</i>
12-17	building/rubble
18-25	ceramics/shards
26-31	corpses/remains
32-35	high tech devices
36-37	living/active
38-43	magical
44-48	metal
49-54	misc. refuse/pollution
55-58	poisonous/infectious materials
59-66	provisions (50% usable, 25% dangerous)
	<i>01-25 common</i>
	<i>26-50 food/drink</i>
	<i>51-65 fuel</i>
	<i>66-85 raw materials</i>

	<i>86-00 tools</i>
67-72	Statues
73-80	Stones
81-86	Treasure
87-92	Vehicle
	<i>01-15 air</i>
	<i>16-55 aquatic</i>
	<i>56-95 land</i>
	<i>96-00 subterranean</i>
93-96	weapon/armour
97-00	writings/glyphs

%	mystical objects
01-05	Altar
06	Apparatus
07-08	bell/chime
09	Block
10-13	bones/skull
14-15	box/chest
16-18	Brazier
19	Cage
20-22	Candelabrum
23-25	candle/lantern
26-27	Carving
28-29	Clothing
30	Cylinder
31-32	depression/niche
33-35	Diagram
36-37	Drape
38-39	Furnace
40-41	Globe
42-44	glyph/ornament
45	Gong
46	grid/grille
47-50	idol/figurine
51-52	Incense
53	Mask
54-55	Mirror
56-57	Mosaic
58-61	mummies/remains
62-65	Mural
66	Net/network
67	Optical
68	Pedestal
69	plaque/disk
70	Pyramid
71-73	Relief
74	Screen
75	Sheet
76-79	Symbol
80-81	Tank
82	Tube
83-85	reservoir/dish
86-87	Vat

88	weights/scale
89-90	well/spring
91-92	weapons
93-94	anti-deluvian*
95-96	Bizarre*
97-98	composite*
99-00	high-tech*

* and reroll

Functions of magical structures, idols, etc.

%	magical functions
01-05	barrier
06-10	comes to life
11-15	conjunction formula, god/demon
16-20	curse
21-25	gate
26-30	guardians
31-35	hiding place
36-40	illusion/dream
41-45	impart spec. abilities (20% permanent)
46-50	legend
51-55	minor harmless
56-60	mystical methods
61-70	oracle
	<i>01-10 benevolent</i>
	<i>11-20 false</i>
	<i>21-30 ignorant</i>
	<i>31-40 inaccurate (50% malignant)</i>
	<i>41-60 normal</i>
	<i>61-00 vague</i>
71-75	prison
76-80	proclamation/prophecy
81-90	spell effect
	<i>01-10 transformation</i>
	<i>11-30 curative</i>
	<i>31-55 dangerous</i>
	<i>56-80 enchantment/control</i>
	<i>81-90 immobilisation</i>
	<i>91-00 other benevolent</i>
91-95	spells (may be copied)
96-00	trap



Proclamations of the



Oracle: Fifty Adventures

1. The captain of a galley is looking for oar-slaves on a short note, and the extravagant prices he is offering has attracted the attention of multiple parties.
2. Rubbery-black, winged monstrosities are swarming from karst sinkholes in the nearby hills. The horrors prey on sheep, but have recently also attacked caravans.
3. Crumbling little towers in the sea cliffs house smugglers. This rag-tag company has recently organised, and is offering increasingly higher quality wares.
4. Returning to a previously visited city state, the characters notice subtle changes (e.g. in architecture or society). The citizens are unaware and in denial of this alteration.
5. Out of vanity, the local overlord orders every local and traveller to cut off their hair under pain of death.
6. A larger area suddenly experiences a cold spell which shows no signs of passing.
7. While reinforcing crumbling ramparts, workers unearth an old, battered metal door. The authorities have posted two guards to watch this entrance, and plan to explore it with a company of soldiers the next day.
8. The ornaments of a large silver vessel found in a treasure hoard outline a map.
9. Wererats kidnap from a tailor's shop and hold ceremonies before a gem-eyed idol in their subterranean lair.
10. Sea currents carry an immense iceberg near warmer shores; amidst the jagged ice, frost-covered battlements and walls are visible.
11. Due to an uprising or other such calamity, the food supply of a larger city state is in peril. Sensing the opportunity, mercantile interests, criminals and con men try to reap a profit, including an enterprising illusionist.
12. The characters periodically experience strange collective visions (hallucinations? dreams?). These signs manifest themselves in the gradual dissolution of reality and a shift towards surreal events and circumstances. The visions are thematically similar, but the same motifs are experienced in widely different contexts.
13. A person under veil of invisibility warns a character that he is being hunted; recommends absolute discretion.
14. In the last few months, it has become *de rigueur* to own one or more of the tiny black stone statues found under the sea, and the wealthy are competing to get their hands on them. The fad has led to the proliferation of fakes, and it is only a matter of time before someone turns to radical methods to obtain one of the rarer pieces.

15. The daughter of a silk merchant is carried to the court of the mummy-merchants, who profit from the dusts of the dead. As the court and the surrounding tenements are legally autonomous due to ancient statutes, the merchant hires the characters to get her daughter back (50% PROB: who, under a strange influence, is determined to stay).

16. The colossal corpse of a gigantic, unknown creature drifts high on the winds, followed by a multitude of birds of prey tearing the flesh of this enigmatic carrion.

17. The master of the city holds a grand fete to celebrate the acquisition of a rare prize, the corpse of a distant ancestor. The characters are invited to the grotesque display (and they'd best come, or else!), where the cadaver turns out to be intelligent and highly malevolent.

18. A sponsor of the characters, who has always paid them in full and never asked for anything openly evil, is proven beyond all doubt to be a powerful demon.

19. With darkling enchantment, a hypnotist forces unwitting victims to commit good deeds.

20. Adventurers leave for the western mountains in pursuit of great riches, but its survivors return to the civilised world as the prophets of a new faith.

21. A walled-up tower stands in the old city, half-forgotten... until now: in the last weeks, hundreds of birds have started to gather around, hurling themselves again and again against the brick-filled windows.

22. An eccentric potentate known for a large garden of exotic plants has not left his villa for a long time.

23. A forgotten exile returns to his homeland to exact his masterful plan of vengeance... in a changed world which is no longer about the injustices he suffered.

24. A stray dog runs across the characters, disappearing into the alleyways of the slum – and it is carrying a human hand with a fabulous gem ring!

25. Three brothers become involved in a feud over inheritance; the estate in question is the meagre wealth of their father, which is also burdened by heavy debts. The brothers are fanatical in pursuing their share.

26. In an exclusive auction, the subject of bidding is Panak, a slightly obscure, senile but definitely authentic demigod.

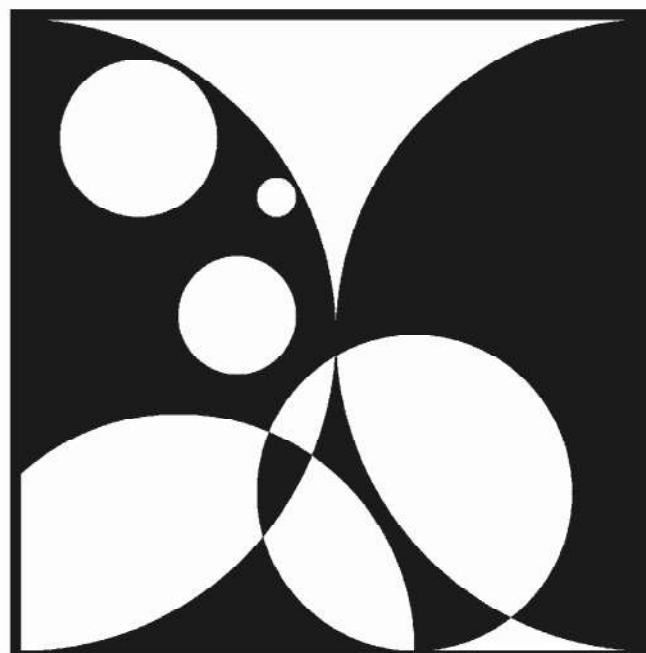
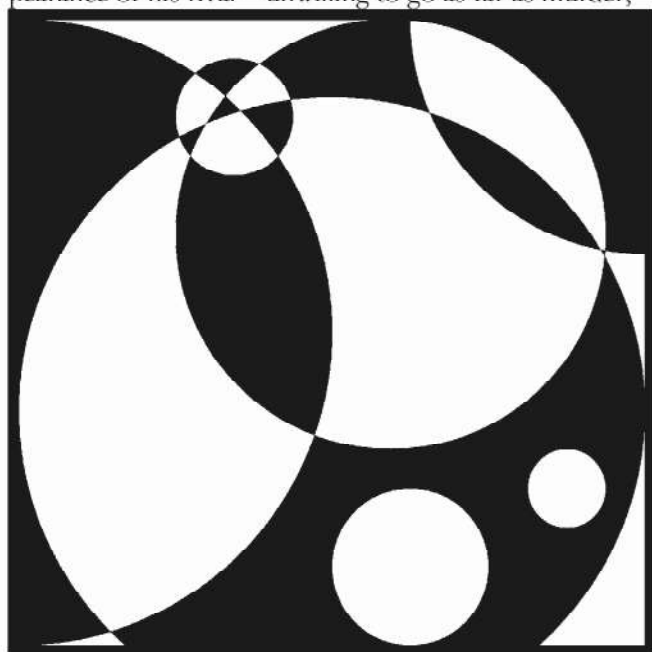
27. At the funeral of a notable, an assassin kills four in the mourning crowd, followed by a new victim every second day. The widow has chosen this peculiar way of making the city state remember his husband.

28. Wine of excellent vintage and high antiquity is recovered from a sunken galley. Those who taste the golden liquid experience identical dreams, walking the halls of an opulent palace populated by shadowy forms and uncertain concepts.

29. An enemy of the characters flees to a foreign dimension, carelessly (?) leaving open his means of escape.

30. An unknown party hides valuable stolen goods in the caravanserai room the characters are staying in, later falling afoul of forces who mercilessly extract his secret.

31. A pitiful little cult happens on a cache of laser weapons at an undisclosed location.
32. Two merchants in the healing balm business are fighting for market share and monopoly in the city. One is a spy of foreign interests; the other mixes addictive hallucinogenic drugs into his own brew.
33. Decades ago, the entire population of a secluded mountain village was walled into a stone tomb for nameless sins. In their place came new settlers, but recent news from the isolated region indicate a revival of olden superstitions.
34. Some days ago, a young thief openly pleaded to the faceless and reclusive clerics of the Sea Demon to hear him and let him find their hidden, desolate plaza. On the next morning, slaves found him before a tall stone spire with a broken back, obviously fallen from the looming battlements.
35. The characters are hired by a mysterious collector to recover certain items; however, their hirer desires to collect them instead, sending 3 invisible stalkers in pursuit.
36. Yesterday, sixteen men of divers station and rank happened to meet in the market, all in the same pale red garments – and the largest surprise at this peculiar development was their own.
37. An old, influential potentate would like to adopt one of the characters as his son (legally speaking, this may also apply to women).
38. A small fishing village is beset by giant crabs, which arrive with the morning mists and slay the inhabitants. Behind the horrid events is a wronged girl of newfound sorcerous powers.
39. A few weeks ago, an Amazon princess was escorted under heavy guard into a nearby stone fortress of the Talaiote half-men. When the stars are right, she will be sacrificed before the image of their stern god.
40. A jilted lover offers good money for the disappearance of his rival – unwilling to go as far as murder,

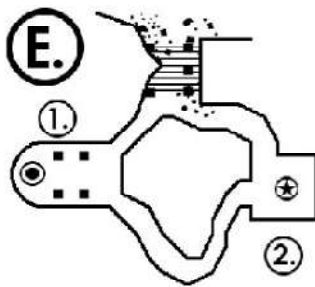
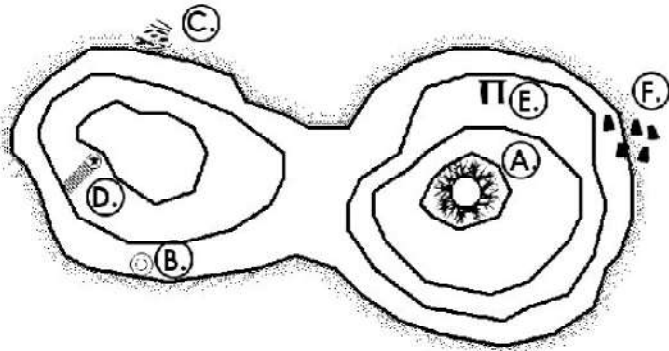


- but showing no concern for the wishes of his loved one.
41. A character in the party is followed by an increasing number of snakes which obey his commands. Unless kept absolutely secret, the character is sought out by pilgrims, supplicants, etc. as usual. After a few months, the powers vanish just as suddenly as they came.
 42. Armies of pariahs, numbering in the thousands, march against civilisation, destroying or assimilating all they encounter.
 43. A merchant extending the wine cellar under his villa discovers an underground passage leading to cyclopean vaults and pits full of bones. The remains show the distinguishing characteristics of both goat and man.
 44. Pilgrims have brought a mysterious idol into the city, which grants wishes to those who seek it out, granting happiness and tranquillity. However, wishes and desires *before* and *after* the visit are not always identical.
 45. A young woman, Sfindora of the Ruby Feathers, has pronounced a darkling prophecy; ever since, no man has dreamed in the city and its lands.
 46. In a quarry, the miners unearth the streets, statues and opulent villas of a lost city. As it turns out, the city is still inhabited.
 47. Sixty slaves escape from their master, carrying with them both of his children.
 48. A stranger, approaching the tyrant of a small city-state, asks for an extravagant boon: to assume command of the city. The tyrant, after pondering the request, acquiesces.
 49. After a planetary conjunction, the sea casts out a dozen corpses, all clad in old-fashioned finery. The trail leads to an abandoned island, reputed to be uninhabited for fifty years.
 50. The despot of the city is murdered before the characters' eyes by armed men from the future, who then flee through a time gate. There is still half a minute before the glowing portal closes. Ω

Isles on an Emerald Sea

An Adventure by Gabor Lux

Playtesters: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher and Gabor Izapy



THE ISLE OF BIRDS

The Isle of Birds

A bare realm of two great rock piles and surrounding shallows on the Sea of Emerald Idols: this is the Isle of Birds, where castaways have died in lament and curse. Some ran ashore on the reefs, which are treacherous and swarming with giant crabs; others were sent here by malefices or curses to perish so far from human help. Yet those who are courageous and cunning may win free – and even gain treasure and knowledge in the bargain.

The Isle of Birds is so named for a multitude of chattering seagulls who nest in the rocks and hunt in the sea; but also the great roc that makes its lair on top of the taller outcropping. There is a 1 in 3 chance each day that the roc returns from its distant hunt with a mewling lion, the limp body of some large sea creature, or in a very unlikely event, a small boat. Characters on the island must be constantly on the lookout for the roc's return, and when it is about, find a hiding place or move with extreme caution. On the other hand, the sandy shores are crawling with giant crabs; for every stretch travelled, there is a 1 in 3 chance of an encounter with 2d6 of them. Only an appropriate deterrence or a great slaughter will prevent this onslaught. The crabs are afraid of large creatures or their images. There is no potable water

whatsoever on the island.

Roc: HD 15; HP 64; AC 2[17]; Atk beak (3d8) or 2 talons (2d8).

Giant Crabs (2d6): HD 3; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 claws (1d6).

A. In a depression on top of the greater outcropping is the roc's nest of large branches and saplings, with a quantity of down and discarded feathers. Ascending to this place or getting down to the island requires careful climbing, for while there are rests, the cliffsides are steep and the stones crumble easily.

B. An impressive but badly bent domed brass cage, large enough for three or four men, lies half buried in the sand. A large hole has been bent in the bars, enough for a man-sized creature to crawl in or out. The cage was an expensive one, as the various decorative trims and copper ornaments suggest.

C. Driftwood – three long, straight logs and some miscellaneous debris have been caught among the rocks some way from the shore (beware the crabs!). On close examination, one will also see the corner of a sea chest, which, if retrieved, yields 700 gp worth of amber.

D. Steep ledges cut into the rock (these are in fact very narrow and steep stairs) lead up to a niche in the shadow of the lesser peak, where stoops an idol with grinning skull-face and insane eyes; human-shaped but alien. There are primordial inscriptions and an altar. The ideograms, if deciphered, read: "THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE SIGHT". A sacrifice and meditation performed before the altar bring the boon: the character must save vs. polymorphisation or gain 1d8 new eye-sockets in the skull at random points; each eye has a 75% chance to be dead and useless.

E. A massive ancient ruin broods here, halfway up the cliff, almost invisible under rock-slides and beyond crags. The ruins start with ramparts of knotted relief, one over the other... beyond, there are tall domed halls supported by spindly and improbable columns. This is old construction, evil in years. [very nice!]

E1. Hall of columns terminating in a well, filled almost to the brim with clean water. Nearby, in a corner, are discarded heavy and thick bones and an inhuman skull: these are the remains of a great ape still wearing iron cuff and the links of a chain on one hand. The ideogrammatic inscription on the well's rim reads, "FARNESSE".

Imprisoned by the well's magic is the spirit of Osori the Creeping One (the nearby bones were once his), half-human sorcerer. Osori can speak, and he lies, hoping to bargain or plead with the characters to release him from the curse by dispelling the well's magic. Oaths are nothing to Osori, his promises are void and the story of having been the victim of the clerics of Argon is made up. If freed, he attacks as a spectre and may not be turned. If he slays an opponent, he is freed and a new prisoner takes his place. In addition to holding Osori, the well can send items to a desired time in the past or the future if commanded (a fact known to the cursed spirit), but only here in his room.

Osori the Creeping One, Spectre: HD 7; HP 40; AC 1[18]; Atk (1d8+ level drain); Special: magic weapon required to hit.

E2. A rectangular, damp chamber whose only content is the crude statue of a goddess standing on a rectangular pedestal. The inscription, unlike the others, is modern: "THE SERVANT FEEDS THE GODDESS, THE GODDESS FEEDS THE SERVANTS". The statue is a lithonnite-mimic, a stone monster unfolding into a slimy-sticky monstrosity if it senses movement close by. The rubber-like gloop has servants, giant centipedes nesting in the walls and crevices.

If the lithonnite-mimic is slain, it becomes apparent that under the "statue", the pedestal has a small cavity with two gemstones (50 and 600 gp). Reaching into or manipulating the pedestal, one discovers that it is another stony horror, this time with a mean bite.

Lithonnite-Mimic #1: HD 7; HP 31; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 tentacles (2d8); Special: concealment, adhesives, body immune to blunt weapons but arms may be hacked away as 2 HD (16-16 Hp, AC 14), rendering the

creature defenceless. [Melan – there's not a description of the adhesives or the grappling tongue]

Giant Centipedes (16): HD 1; HP 8,6,4,2,2,6,7,2,1,3,4,7,6,6,7,7; AC 8[11]; Atk bite (1d4+poison); Special: +4 save vs. lethal poison

Lithonnite-Mimic #2: as above with HP 28, but also with bite attack for 3d4 plus grappling tongue.

F. Obelisks in the coastal sands are all inscribed with the old prayer, "O Arsinoi, defend us from the sea; from the sea's might, from the sea's cold, from the sea's breath, from the sea's retribution". Upon a sacrifice and prayer before the obelisks, there is a 10 to 40% probability depending on the elaborateness of pomp, ritual and oratory that Arsinoi will send a bubble of force from the waters. The bubble may be entered, is impervious to all attacks, and it will transport all within to the Isle of Arsinoi. However, there is also a 1 in 6 chance that the roc will return and attack the bubble – which is an absolute certainty if it is currently on the island.

The Isle of Arsinoi

The domain of the goddess is now quietly gone, the villas faded pink ruins, the halcyon glades possessed of gentle melancholy. In ponderous decay, parklands have turned into a wilderness, where the only common inhabitants are quail and packs of feral dogs (Reaction: 1d6: 1-2 hostile, 3-4 neutral, 5 frightened, 6 docile). Here and



there are old remains of human habitation, from decorative busts to bucolic retreats.

Feral Dogs (4d6): HD 1; AC 7[12]; Atk bite 1d6.

A. The green glint of a tall, seven-level glass tower makes the location of a cluster of villas most conspicuous. The buildings have been reduced to rubble and a few walls, overgrown with vivid flowers. The first three levels of the tower have collapsed on top of each other; ledges and rests provide the only means of ascension. On the 4th level is a rotunda overlooking the entire island and beyond. Above, on the 5th level, glimmering brass bubbles float, bursting into sensuous laughter if prodded. The 6th level holds the statue of Arsinoi; in her hands she holds a brass tablet engraved with a portent: "Beyond me to reach, and in hard prison seen, is Arsinoi's prize freed". The only way up is to climb out through the arched windows and up the tower's side. The 7th level is occupied only by a small pedestal. Resting on the flat surface are two round disks of green glass that still smell of a faint musk and show the faint imprint of a flower in between – but there is a minute crack in the glass, and what the disks may once have held is gone.

B. 18 wild dogs rest in the shades of a terraced garden ornamented with ceramics, and decorated with fat bowls of terracotta. This group of dogs is neutral, and one will lead the group to a small mausoleum if treated well.

The mausoleum of Dumteh Baggamr is in a pleasant grove with flowers, earth-filled vases and creeping plants. The polished brass portal is locked. Within the mausoleum lies a marble burial sarcophagus. Treasures include the gold death-mask of Dumteh Baggamr (500 gp), his bracers (2*100 gp), and his harp with golden strings (200 gp). If these riches are taken, the corpse pronounces a curse: "As you have robbed that which is dear to me, so I will rob that which is dear to you." The characters will thereafter find that their next attempt to depart the island fails at the last moment – boats are rendered useless or swept off from the shore, a raft loaded with equipment will sink, etc.

Wild Dogs (18): HD 1; HP 2,5,6,6,1,7,1,7,7,3,1,3,8,2,3,8,7,7; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d6).

C. 14 wild dogs. Terraces are cut into the gentle slope of a hill, forming an interconnected network of small gardens. The trees carry an especially alluring scent, which

is a sort of balm: in the central garden lie several perfectly preserved bodies in all their finery. There is at least 4000 gp in value here, but they are cursed to be an unbearable weight for the one who carries them. At sunrise or dusk, the spirits of the dead drift through the glade.

Wild Dogs (14): HD 1; HP 3,8,8,6,5,1,1,2,2,2,3,5,4,8; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d6).

D. The ruins of a small port city have been overgrown with vines and green vegetation. It is often hard to determine where the hill ends and where the rubble piles begin. Cupolas of sky blue and sumptuous gold have fallen or collapsed, and are now hollow shells. While walking the streets, there is a 1 in 3 chance of an attack by 1d4 killer vines. These vegetable horrors are ambulatory, and bear delicate flowers or 1d3 small fruits. 1 in 3 flowers emit a soporific vapour (save vs. poison or become drowsy and fall asleep in 1d3 rounds); 1 in 3 fruits are curative, healing 1d4 points of damage.

Killer Vines (1d4): HD 4; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 vine (1d6+entanglement; strangle 2d6 per round).

D1. Intact low building bears the plaque, "The store-rooms of Batrakheias"; chains bind the portal and faint shuffling noises are heard. Large wooden vats hold salty pickle and the flabby corpses of giant frogs. Batrakheias, his grotesque girth putrefying, shambles around, dragging heavy chains. Slain, the corpse liquescs, turning into a tide of 5d8 killer frogs. In an octagonal room, a soapstone crucible before the altar of Tsathoggus holds a healing balm (this may be rationed into doses of 1d8 healing each, 1d4+4 doses, but with a 20% chance on each application that the skin beneath will become a greenish color).

Batrakheias: HD 6; HP 33; AC 2[17] (chains!); Atk slam (1d10); Special: half damage from piercing weapons, slow moving.

Killer Frogs (5d8): HD 1; HP 8, 6, 4, 2, 7, 3, 1, 2, 8, 1,2, 7, 6, 3, 6, 1, 2, 6, 5, 6, 7, 6, 3, 4, 7, 6, 3, 2, 7, 2, 6, 3, 6, 1, 8, 7, 8, 6, 1, 3; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d6); Special: leap attack (+2).

D2. One of the market squares. Open door leads to steps down and an ancient wine cellar, with a passage eventually leading back up to a trapdoor – weighed down by

heavy stone block. Bare interior of a hexagonal tower with no other exit save arrow slits, and a half-broken mirror. In the mirror, the room is splendid and intact: a golden chest is visible on a small table behind the character, crossed scimitars on the wall, and a delicate beaker of wine by a carved wooden chair. These objects may be grasped and retrieved when the character sees them in the mirror. A casual approach works perfectly; a more nuanced one may end up with the experimenter on the other side of the mirror! The chest holds 1100 electrum and is itself worth 1000; one of the scimitars is +1, the other -1 (however, a character may only take one with the other, and it is randomly determined before each battle which one he draws). The wine is a potion of super-heroics.

D3. An open-air amphitheatre sees evening performances of a serpent demon and an ensemble of 45 skeletons and 4 shadows. The demon is seeking guest players for the lead roles of Daskurene and Memphidor, as well as extras for an experimental and highly improvisative play of its own creation, since "those dumb sacks of bones are useless in high artistry". The play is unusual and would be highly controversial with the literati, but no harm is done to the participants. Depending on performance, the reward may be a lavish gift from the serpent demon's hidden hoard, or an order to get off the stage! If the characters make an especially unpleasant faux-pas, they might even get attacked and killed. If they lack a boat, the demon may point them to one hidden in the harbour, a bronze construction with self-propelling oars that operates with a command word.

The treasure, hidden under the amphitheatre in one of the deus ex machina rooms (connected by a trapdoor to the stage), consists of 1500 electrum, 20 arrows +2, 22 arrows +1, a dagger of venom and a +3 longbow (with a golden string).

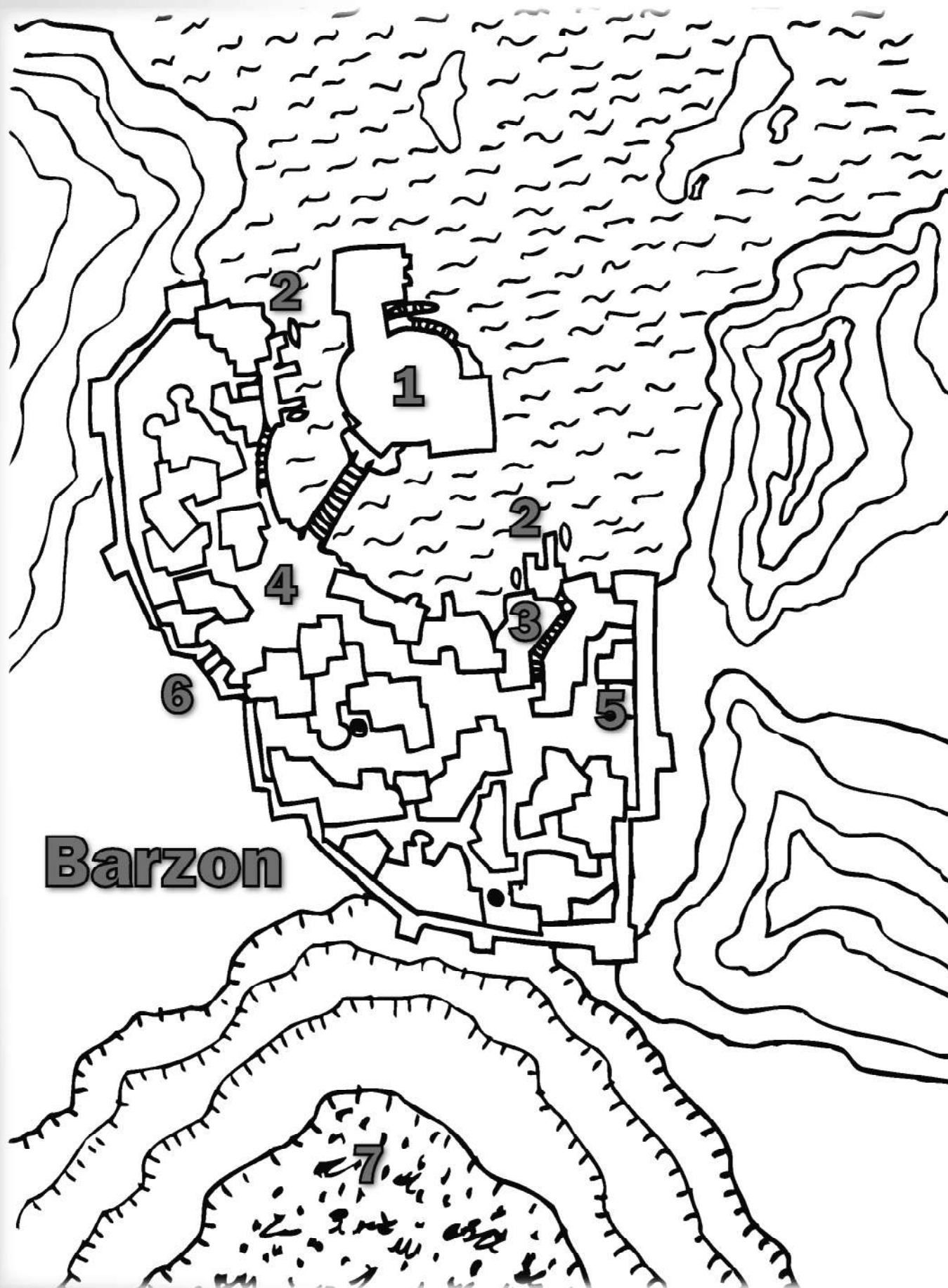
Serpent Demon: HD 8+3; HP 45; AC -3[22]; Atk bite (3d4+deadly poison, -3 saving throw); Special: immune to electricity and mind-affecting attacks, half damage from fire and acid, Magic resistance 65%, +1 to hit, charm person gaze, gate in type V demon (1/day, 25% probability). Spells: level 1 - lesser illusion x2, change self x2; level 2 - illusion, ventriloquism, invisibility, mirror image; level 3 - greater illusion, hallucinatory terrain, suggestion.

Skeletons (45): HD 1; HP 2, 1, 2, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 8, 7, 1, 2, 5, 5, 8, 8, 8, 3, 7, 6, 3, 8, 4, 5, 8, 7, 2, 7, 3, 8, 6, 4, 4, 8, 3, 5, 2, 3, 2, 4, 2, 1, 6, 4; AC 6[13]; Atk scimitar (1d6) or claw (1d6).

Shadows (4): HD 3+3; HP 14,14,21,14; AC 7[13]; Atk touch (1d6 Strength points); Special: +1 to hit.

D4. A stele in a forgotten courtyard - glimpsed from the street - bears the image of an ominous cowed figure, and an inscription: "There it is come, alone and wan, to the Isle of Green Reality, and stands forevermore, no more for men, nor indeed for fair Arsinoi". Around the stele, the walls are burned a sooty black. Prints of human forms are also there, in white contrast. Nothing else remains.





Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

by Gabor Lux

The Isle of Barzon

Power on the world of Fomalhaut takes many forms, from pragmatic appeals to human self interest to naked coercion. The worship of divine beings can manifest in either of these sterile extremes, as well as a dozen varieties between the two: there are as many specific arrangements as there are gods. Yet the power of gods (who, like all of us, should themselves be entitled to the right to act in accordance with their own welfare) more often than not serves the weal of their direct subordinates before their worshippers – or, it is said, the gods themselves. So it was on the Isle of Barzon, a small island ruled by an empire not much larger...

The mountainous terrain of Barzon, a geography of jagged mountains and deep valleys, rises proudly above sea level; against the crushing waves, the dark rocks look as if they were unvanquishable battlements. It is not possible to moor ships safely anywhere except a protected bay to the north, right below the towers of Skei (which means Glory-in-the-Sky), and a lesser, hidden channel to the south that runs to the small fortress Modax (which means Immense Shield). The waters are patrolled by the island's war galley, the Mesk (Imperious), under command of Denna Swaura, harsh commander of Barzon's soldiers. The galley intercepts all ships within its range. The valleys of the island are blooming with strange flowers that bring uneasy dreams (-2 to saving throw when trying to avoid sleep while proceeding through), and are also populated by an abundance of wild sheep. The Flying Gods hunt them according to their Purpose.

The city state Skei is haughty seat of this empire, massive brick and concrete structures interlinked by high bridges against the sky, colourless save for the yellow-black of woven curtains in the doors opening from the balconies, or the occasional house plant or flower one may see in a high window... there is an absence of activity on the streets, as life takes place within the network of interconnected towers, most the home to a large extended family. The total population of Skei is 600, of whom 90 are soldiers. Commander Denna Swaura, a plain, cold and efficient woman of green eyes and rust-coloured hair hinting at amazon descent, is their leader.

Playtesters: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago,
Laszlo Feher, and Gabor Izapy



Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

Soldiers (60): Fighter 1; AC 6[13] (ring mail, shield); Atk spear (1d8); HP 1(x8), 2(x9), 3(x9), 4(x9), 5(x6), 6(x5), 7(x3), 8(x4), 9(x4), 10(x3).

Trained Soldiers (30): Fighter 2; AC 5[14] (ring mail, shield, Dexterity); Atk spear 1d8 or short bow 1d6; HP 5(x1), 6(x2), 8(x3), 10(x5), 11(x3), 12(x2), 13(x4), 14(x2), 15(x4), 17(x2), 18(x1), 20(x1).

Denna Swaura: Fighter 4; AC 2[17] (chain shirt, large shield, Dexterity); Atk bastard sword 1d10; Str 14; Dex 13; Con 14; Int 12; Wis 13; Cha 10; HP 31.

The small tower-fortress of Modax on the southern periphery of the island is held by 30 additional soldiers, who are more loyal to Trademaster Svanth Dorl than the inhabitants of Skei, and also more skilled in combat.

Trained Soldiers (30): HP 8(x1), 9(x2), 11(x4), 12(x1), 13(x3), 14(x1), 15(x2), 16(x4), 17(x4), 18(x3), 19(x1), 20(x3), 23(x1).

Barzon is a civilisation of diligent craftsmen who fashion woven mats and vivid tapestries from the legs, wings and chitin shell of the Flying Gods, giant wasps lairing in an abandoned wing of Trademaster Svanth Dorl's majestic palace in the middle of the bay. The Flying Gods attack all outlanders who are not in the company of soldiers; they also carry away sinners who, by action, thought or recalcitrance blaspheme against their inscrutable Purpose. On the Festival of Ascendance, they descend upon spies and heretics who are chained to a large concrete bloc in the middle of Skei's central square. Occasionally, one flies above the green waste at the foot of Skei, and falls lifeless amidst the rubble. The citizens then carry it back to the city in reverence, and use its hallowed Shell to create various goods.

1. Skybreak Palace: The unfriendly, round fortress, although constructed much more recently than the concrete towers, already shows signs of decay. The entire northern wing is uninhabited and left to the giant wasps; the rest of the complex is likewise mostly empty, with vast dark hallways and cold gathering chambers. In addition to most soldiers and Denna Swaura, Trademaster Svanth Dorl also maintains his court at this location.

Clad in a voluminous fur cloak and holding a heavy metal staff, his ruddy face and squat stature are less prominent. Svanth Dorl possesses the Cube of Wasp Control, a technological device which allows him telepathic control over the Flying Gods. Presently, his major objective is to decimate Skei's elite on the upcoming Festival of Ascendance to further bolster his rule (the precise date will be T -1d4+1

days when the characters arrive). Svanth Dorl is fond of nothing more than yelling "Cut them into wasp food!"; he is also a tremendous xenophobe, although a company of dangerous heretics and spies abusing the island's hospitality may just come in handy in his present situation. Svanth Dorl shares his decorative although empty quarters with two wives, Ura and Issema. These sisters are dark-haired, dark-eyed, unsympathetic creatures whose mind has eroded due to the frequent consumption of scrape, a drug that turns users dull and impassive.

Giant Wasps (36): HD 4; AC 4[15]; Atk sting (2d4 + paralysis poison); HP 6(x1), 8(x2), 9(x1), 10(x1), 11(x2), 12(x1), 13(x3), 14(x2), 15(x3), 17(x2), 18(x2), 19(x2), 20(x2), 21(x1), 22(x1), 23(x2), 24(x2), 25(x2), 28(x2), 29(x1), 31(x1).

Trademaster Svanth Dorl: Thief 2; AC 7[12] (thick fur cloak, Dexterity); Atk staff (1d6+1) or throwing dagger (1d4 + poison (permanent paralysis)). Str 14; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 12; Wis 12; Cha 10; HP 12.

Deep beneath Skybreak Palace is a damp crypt-hall almost as wide as the central part of the fortress. Here lie the sarcophagi of Barzon's old kings: four of the seven have been broken, and are now filled with dark waters. The others:

a) **Auska:** mummy-woman in rotted lace; pointed teeth and foul smell. She has the abilities of both mummy and vampire. Treasure: 300 gp diadem, 500 gp gem box, *candle of invocation* (evil), *periapt of foul rotting*.

b) **Barzon III:** this corpse has shrivelled into a foul leathery blackness, which is in turn covered by a fine layer of yellow mould. Attacks as zombie, melee hits and many spells just stir up the mould cloud. Treasure consists of 60 gp silver necklace, 500 gp dragon tooth *dagger* +1, *oil of ESP*, *potion of cure disease*.

c) **Barzon IV:** all that remains is a dark glistening putrescence (black pudding).

Auska, Vampire-Mummy: HD 7; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 claws (1d6+4 + energy drain + mummy rot); Spec vampire and mummy abilities/vulnerabilities; HP 29.

Barzon III, Yellow Mould Zombie: HD 2; AC 8[12]; Atk grasp (1d8); Spec mould; HP 3.

Black Pudding: HD 10; AC 4[15]; Atk pudding 3d8; Spec corrosion, division, impervious to cold and electricity; HP 40

2. Harbour: Two mostly identical locations in the shadow of the city. Both are continuously guarded by a contingent

of soldiers; three with spears and missiles and one with an alarm horn. The boats here are used for fishing in the bay and generally aren't fit for the open seas; Ullkmaran owns the only one large enough for long-distance travel.

3. The house of Ullkmaran the Polyarch: The long and narrow building functions as both dwelling and warehouse. One floor is on the plateau, four more are cut into the cliffside – the lowest two damp and out of use, the third a warehouse, the fourth and top living quarters. There are entrances both above and below. Ullkmaran the Polyarch, purple-skinned and complacent, is a man of the Empire and a typical follower of Mung's doctrines. Through an agreement with the Trademaster, he is Barzon's intermediary in the wasp trade, exporting tapestries, mats and occasionally poison, and in turn importing miscellaneous products for use by the locals. Since he has no power base in the city, he maintains a well-defensible household of 12 guards and 8 slaves (6 of whom are nubile girls). Ullkmaran's primary interest lies in stability, and if given the opportunity, he will drug the characters, strip them of valuables and sell them to whomever is most convenient. In a warehouse cache, he has 600 sp, 600 gp and 10 doses of wasp poison. He carries a laser pistol on his person.



Ullkmaran the Polyarch: Thief 5; AC 9[11] (Dexterity); Atk shortsword 1d6+1 + poison (permanent paralysis) or laser 2d10+ [3 cartridges]; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 7.

Guards (12): Fighter 3; AC 5[14] (chain shirt, Dexterity); Atk battleaxe 1d8; HP 5(x1), 14(x1), 15(x1), 17(x2), 19(x1), 21(x2), 22(x2), 25(x2).

4. Central square: A dusty, unfriendly and windswept plaza. In the middle, there is a square platform around an antique concrete bloc. On the four sides of the bloc, heavy chains are affixed to iron rings. This place is used to condemn sinners to the hunger of the Flying Gods.

5. Guest house: This is a dilapidated one-story hovel against the city walls; no furnishings except the earth floor. Outlanders to Barzon are only allowed to sleep here, and as always while staying on the island, they are under escort and open surveillance by a detail of soldiers, ostensibly so that the Flying Gods don't attack them. Although unhelpful and uncommunicative, the soldiers will explain local customs and warn characters in advance of possible infractions.

6. Gates: The narrow gate of Skei is always guarded by 10 regular and 5 trained soldiers. The portcullis is down, and two ballistas point outside. Beyond the gate, a winding road leads to the island's blooming valleys and, ultimately, to the fortress of Modax.

7. Wasteland: This desolation is an expanse of shifting rubble in a deep crater. Traces of metal deposits in the debris lend the place a greenish hue. The wasps tend to avoid the periphery of the crater, since the metal and its vapours are deadly to them; however, a few dried-out husks may be present. On the bottom, there are bent metal wrecks half-covered by the stones. The purpose of these artifacts is a mystery; however, searching them yields 1d3 small, oblong metal boxes stamped with the letters ΔIA (DIA). They contain diambroid, a potent explosive (6d6 damage, but 1:6 chance an individual box is so fragile that it detonates on its own).

The Isle of Armul Urthag

Power can make gods of men: for what else is a great hero who can stand against an army? Yet power can also make gods of monsters, and there are few things more dangerous: for by magnifying the power, the ability to do evil without restraints is also increased. By this ability, the vampire lord Armul Urthag rules over men as men rule over wild beasts; emerging at night from his unvanquishable tower, he drinks their blood as it pleases him.

Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

The Isle of Armul Urthag is covered in lush vegetation: a thick jungle from shore to shore, teeming with animal and plant life. To its west, rugged hills emerge from among the trees to form a lifeless realm in this isle paradise. In the middle of the jungle, there is a village populated by a small tribe of hunter-gatherers; since they are timid and peaceful, the only sign that indicates their presence is the smoke rising above the trees. Many of the inhabitants are sickly and pale, as Armul comes often to quench his thirst. Formerly the masters of the land and a minor town (now only ruins), the men of the island have regressed into primitives and are gradually being hunted out by a force they are powerless to resist, and whose fearful worship only delays the inevitable.

The vampire's lair is an ancient tower in the hills, constructed of concrete in Fomalhaut's earlier cycles. Although the structure looks timeworn due to its age and the lichen that gives it a green-gray color, it is extremely resilient, and could withstand anything up to and including a nuclear blast. There are two entrances on the ground (**A.** and **C.**), and thick, amber-coloured windowpanes with a closed door on the level of the terrace (**F.**). A trapdoor hidden among the various antennae and satellite dishes of the communications array on the top (**H.**) allows access into Armul's personal retreat, but this is almost impossible to find from the outside.

If made aware of intruders within his tower, Armul sends a meta-droid to kill them if they are on a level these mechanical monstrosities can reach by elevator or the stairs; however, the latter are too narrow and steep between **C.** and **E.** for them to navigate. The vampire also relies on his natural abilities and laser pistol; if possible, he tries to enthrall a character to do his bidding and lure others to their doom. Outside the tower, Armul only hunts at night, but this he does in silence and with deadly determination.

A: At the base of the tower, there is a dark, low opening in the wall allowing access to a damp cellar of sorts. The place is filled with debris; near the entrance, green fronds and fleshy leaves grow between the cracks. The only way leads down through a dry well; iron rungs allow easy descent (although there is a 1:3 chance one of them comes out under heavy weight). The elevator shaft goes through this level;

although it is possible to see its place by the dent in the walls, there is no way in from here.

B: A round control room under the tower is the resting place of black iron machinery; blocky control panels, odd metal mirrors and a hundred glass eyes, which, like the machines, are currently lifeless. A main switch on the central panel restores power to the room (making it possible to call the elevator and open the metal doors that block its shaft). However, the switch needs to be pulled up and down to activate the equipment, and every time it is operated, there is a 1:6 chance one of the defensive systems high above activates, along with a force shield that envelopes the tower to form a 150 ft range barrier around its perimeter. The results are determined randomly; periodic saving throws may be applicable to resist their effects (1d6):

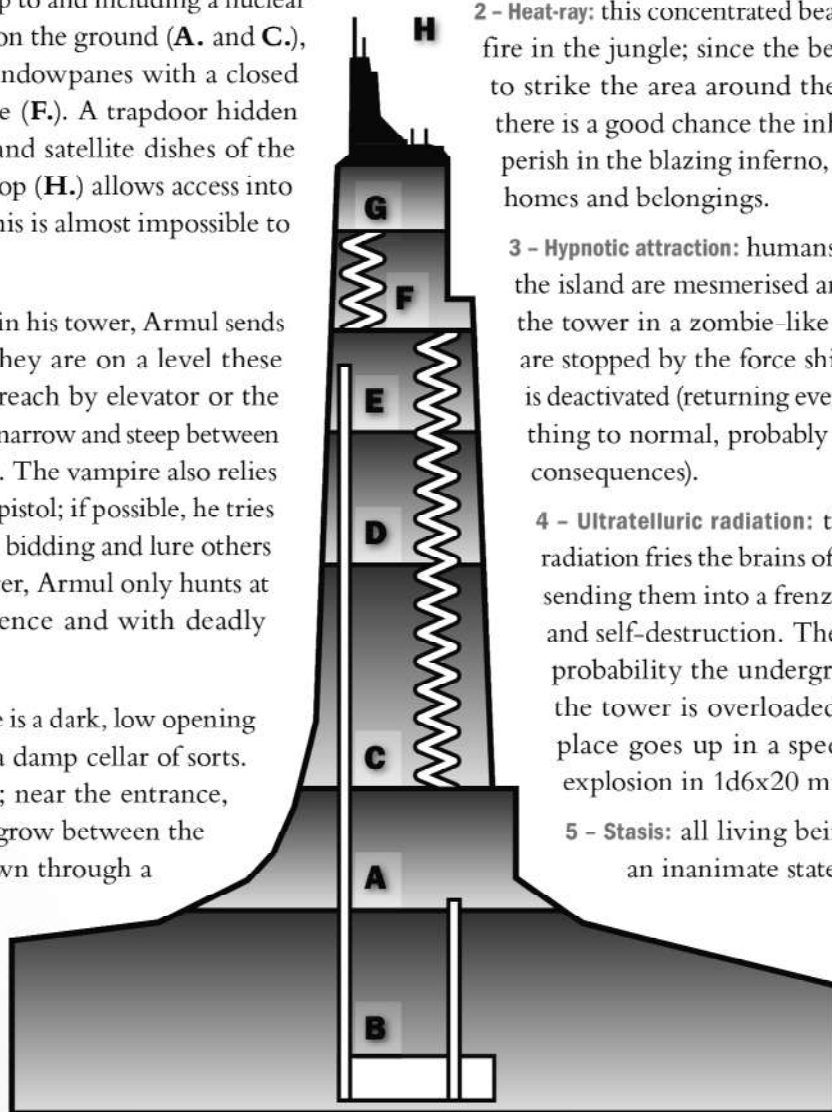
1 - Super-magnetic: ferrous metal objects on the island are pulled with irresistible force towards the surface of the force shield.

2 - Heat-ray: this concentrated beam causes a forest fire in the jungle; since the beam is calibrated to strike the area around the tribe's village, there is a good chance the inhabitants will all perish in the blazing inferno, or else lose their homes and belongings.

3 - Hypnotic attraction: humans and animals on the island are mesmerised and walk towards the tower in a zombie-like state, until they are stopped by the force shield or the beam is deactivated (returning everyone and everything to normal, probably with unpleasant consequences).

4 - Ultratelluric radiation: this horrendous radiation fries the brains of all on the island, sending them into a frenzy of murder, lust and self-destruction. There is also a 20% probability the underground reactor of the tower is overloaded and the entire place goes up in a spectacular atomic explosion in 1d6x20 minutes.

5 - Stasis: all living beings are put into an inanimate state.



Armul Urthag

6 – Electric shell: the force shield is endowed with potent electrical energy; anything coming in a 300' distance suffers a discharge identical to the effects of a 6th level *lightning bolt* spell.

Activating any of the defensive systems warns Armul of the characters' presence, and he takes immediate steps to deal with them.

C: Circular stairs clinging to the tower's exterior climb up to this point, an ancient blast door. A successful bend bars check or a *knockspell* may move it, but it does not budge to normal attempts. Inside, there is a concrete circular staircase going further up.

D: The level is storage space, mostly looted but a few large metal crates are still around. They contain boxes of MRE (synthetic rations; they have gone wrong over the millennia and are now just hardened lumps of crystallised salts and black-brown organic matter).

E: In the corridor before the doors of the elevator, two hunched, grotesque statues with rough bestial features guard the way. If approached, one hisses *"This iss not for the Massster's enemisssss!"* Unless one of the characters immediately counters with a denial (e.g. "We are not enemies, we are friends!"), they attack. The statues are dim and easily fooled. If slain, they utter one last croak: *"Masssterr... massterrr... you have found your foesss..."*

Living Statues (2): HD 4; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 limbs (1d8); Spec: +1 to hit, immune to cold, heat and mind-affecting; HP 18(x1), 30(x1).

F: This level – the entirety filled with a circular room – is bathed by amber light streaming through the windowpanes. This special glass is unbreakable, and filters the light in a way that renders it inoffensive to Armul. There is an unlocked door leading to a terrace above the jungle. A circular staircase climbs up to level **F**.

Around the room's perimeter, there are 22 large round metal tanks with thick glass doors. Each tank bears the stamped sign "KPIOSTAT" (KRIOSTAT). The interior is filled with a greenish liquid heavy with lichen and moss-like plant matter... indistinct human forms float inside. A console in the centre of the room opens all tanks; alternatively, the entry of a larger group into the room or the command of Armul also brings forth the inhabitants.

If the tanks open, stumbling zombies shuffle out, wheezing *"Armuuul... Armuuul... Massterrrr..."* These humans, stored for so many years in the failing cryogenic tanks, are now entirely under the control of Armul Urthag, their mind and personality gone. They attack without hesitation. They may not be turned or commanded.

Zombies (22): HD 2; AC 8[11]; Atk slam (1d8); Spec strike last, immune to turn/command; HP 2(x1), 4(x2), 5(x1), 6(x1), 7(x2), 8(x1), 9(x1), 10(x3), 11(x3), 13(x6), 14(x1).

G: The former command centre of the tower is now Armul Urthag's retreat. Two panes of amber glass are set into the walls; opposite them stands a functioning KRIOSTAT tank, which now serves as the vampire's coffin. Unless alerted, the thin, pale form of Armul, long white moustache and a strange black outfit (jumpsuit salvaged from the tower's stores), slumbers within. The chamber is protected by two meta-droids, tireless robotic sentinels encased in a yellow enamelled carapace. They immediately attack anyone who enters. Armul also awakes if he senses a commotion, preferring to use his laser pistol against opponents he deems dangerous.

Next to the tank, there is a locked weapon cabinet (normal chance to pick; Armul carries a key to it). It contains an extra laser pistol and 8 extra cartridges charged to full capacity. In a corner, a metal ladder leads up to a trapdoor and the roof.

Armul Urthag: HD 7; AC 2; Atk 2 claws (1d6+4+energy drain) or 2 laser pistol blasts (2d10+); Spec vampire abilities/vulnerabilities; HP 39.

Meta-Droids (2): HD 8[12]; AC 0; Atk fist (1d12) or 1 laser beam (3d10+); Spec laser 1/3 round, 5/day, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity; HP 32(x1), 33(x1).

H: The top of Armul Urthag's tower is a forest of satellite dishes, antennae, metal outcroppings and other remains of ancient machinery. Everything is timeworn but in a fundamentally good shape and very hard to damage. A trapdoor leads down to Armul's quarters, but it is so well hidden that it is almost impossible to find.

The Islands Miscellaneous

The Isle of Winds: This forested isle is continuously besieged by harsh winds. In the middle of the wind-torn forest, there is a stone menhir with ancient inscriptions. It is this magical structure that attracts the winds. Upon approaching the menhir, the winds coalesce into a hostile air elemental which lasts to a maximum of 5 rounds. If the menhir is broken, the winds stop and the seas within two hexes of the island will be forevermore calm. The inscriptions contain the spells *wind wall* and *summon elemental* (air only).

Air Elemental: HD 12; AC 2[17]; Atk strike (2d8); Spec whirlwind; HP 40.

Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

The Isle of Mertagras: Well-tended, lush forests with pleasant trails and flower-beds; a multitude of colourful birds. In the middle of the garden, a gazebo constructed of brass rods is the home of Mertagras, a wise fire crow. Mertagras, formerly a magic-user, is of chaotic good alignment, and prefers to live in this form. He may teach spells to characters who are worthy.

Mertagras, Fire Crow: M-U 7; AC 3[16]; Atk beak (1d3); Spec immune to fire, fireball 3/day; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 11; **Spells:** 1 - sleep, burning hands, unseen servant, charm person, magic missile, 2 - ESP, forget, Tahssa's laughter, 3 - suggestion, clairaudience, 4 - polymorph; HP 26

The Isle of Panodax: A hill-topped island ruled by Panodax, an insane gardener. The entire surface is covered by a green plantation, which is worked by two brigades of slaves, 30 persons of mixed sex per brigade. A further 30 are guards with ill-kept and primitive equipment. All inhabitants on the island, Panodax included, are addicted to the plantation's only product, a nefarious drug named "scrape". Scrape dulls the senses to pain and pleasure, and makes a life of misery bearable, although addiction is by no means pleasant and the plant has a foul chemical taste.

The slaves, guards and the gardener live in a small village of stone huts, including a warehouse. Panodax occasionally performs bloody sacrifices to "give strength" to his beloved plants, which he believes are the gifts of nymphs and naiads. One day, he hopes to finish his life in the same way. The drug is picked up by ships from Mungor City which visit occasionally, and necessary supplies are left in their stead. No other boats, rafts, or wood to construct the same are present on the island.

Guards (30): Fighter 1; AC 7[12] (leather, shield); Atk sharpened stick (1d6); HP 1(x1), 3(x4), 4(x3), 5(x3), 6(x3), 7(x1), 8(x4), 9(x3), 10(x9).

The Isle of Magrar Yemmaure: An unfriendly rock surrounded by shoals. A small colony of wild buffalo live off the abundant grass. In the middle of a field, a stone slab has been sunken into the earth with the following inscription:

"This island of stone is the domain of Magrar Yemmaure's kin as long as the sun burns and the sea roars."

Appendix

Meta-Droids

Armor Class: 0 [19]

Hit Dice: 8

Attacks: fist (1d12) or laser beam (3d10+)

Saving Throw: 5

Special: laser, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity
Move: 9
Challenge Level/XP: 10/1400

These mechanical sentinels are somewhat larger than humans, and are protected by riveted and yellow enamelled metal sheets. In addition to attacking with their fists, Meta-Droids can shoot a laser beam every third round, for a maximum of 5 per day. Meta-Droids are set to guard ancient ruins and military bases, and are found there as well as in certain domains of Fomalhaut's Underworld.

On laser weapons

Laser pistol: DMG 2d10+, long range, 30 shots max.
Laser rifle: DMG 3d10+, long range, 30 shots max (consumes stores at a 3/2 rate)
Tri-beam laser: 3 attacks, DMG 2d10+, long range, 50 shots max

Lasers are characterised by an infinite penetration capability but the need for precise aim. Therefore, armour, shields and even natural defensive ability is going to be useless against them (magic and Dexterity still apply), but a character who concentrates on moving unpredictably can avoid beams by making a successful saving throw. No other action can be taken during that round. This advantage only applies versus one opponent; if there are multiple attackers, the save is normal versus the first, at -4 versus the second and so forth.

If a "0" is rolled on any dice of damage, it is counted as 10 and an additional dice may be rolled. There is no theoretical upper limit to the damage that can be inflicted this way. An attack roll of natural '1' means that all remaining charges have been depleted in one burst.

Characters who attempt to employ lasers but are untrained in their use need to learn by practice. Until they can be considered proficient, the Referee applies a d6 roll to the attack to simulate inaccuracy. If the result is an even number, the attack is as rolled. If it is odd, it is subtracted from the attack roll. Since lasers are very simple to learn, proficiency is attained after winning three battles where the character successfully uses a laser.

Laser pistols have a maximum capacity of 30 shots. Those found in the field usually have 2d10+10. Recharging pistols is done with cartridges holding 15 shots. Laser rifles are heavier weapons with higher damage and corresponding power use. Tri-beam lasers are too heavy to transport, and are therefore mounted in key locations. ■



ISLES ON AN EMERALD SEA III

An Adventure by Gabor Lux

Playtesters: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher and Gabor Izapy

The Isle of Molonei

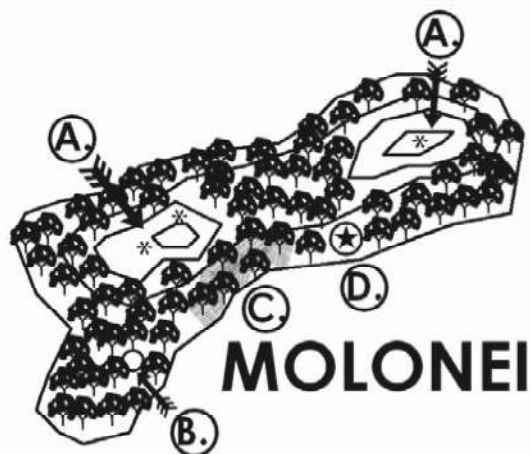
From afar, the Isle of Molonei resembles the spine of a fantastic creature — a row of mountain peaks towering over thick woodlands. Where now only the shadows of pterodactyls sweep, there stood fabulous Molonei, a utopian refuge of refined hedonists. Now the city is a tangle of fantastic ruins and the inhabitants have retreated under the mountains, leaving behind the open air for the security of their temple and the plenty of their munificent god. However, the refuge has

Editor's note: stats for monsters in this adventure are presented in the Swords & Wizardry format, and are thus easily usable without conversion in the Original, Basic, and Advanced (First Edition) editions of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game, as well as with OSRIC and Swords & Wizardry's Core and WhiteBox versions.

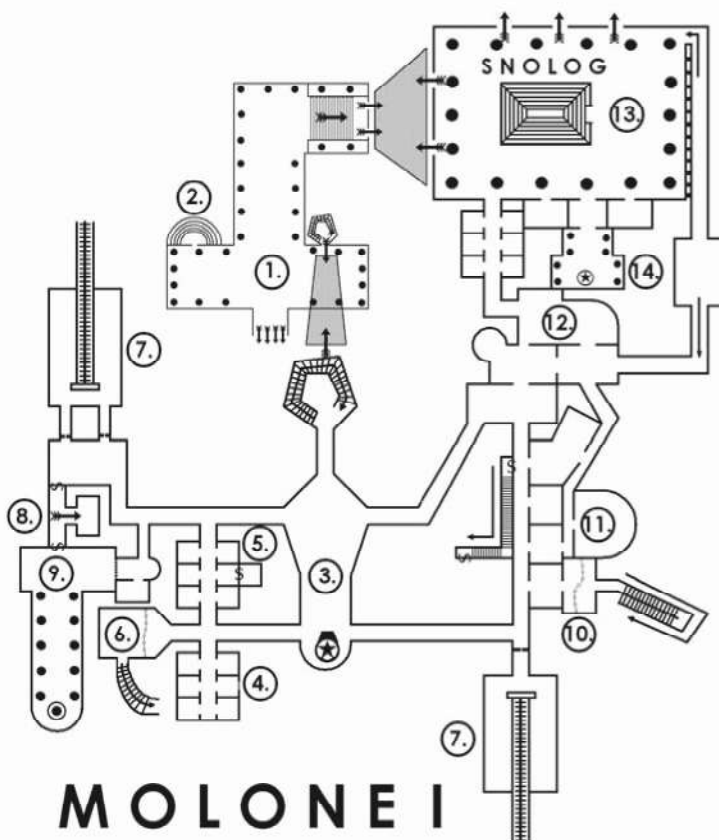
turned into a gilded cage: outside the confines of Molonei's subterranean plaza, amoeboid horrors prowl the corridors in pursuit of prey; outside, under the waning sun, the claw and beak of the pterodactyl are a danger no less real. Therefore, Molonei's people have grown fewer over the last generations, leaving behind even the strange customs that were a shadowy side to their easygoing nature: inviting and warm, their greeting is 'Come, come with us in beauty and abundance, while the sun burns and the gods give'.

Encounters on the island occur with a 1:3 probability; in the mountains, they will always be with 2d4 pterodactyls; in the woods, wildlife (apes, tapirs or colourful birds) or pterodactyls; and in the ruined city, either a group of hedonists or yet another group of pterosaurian horrors. There are a total of 24 pterodactyls, and they all lair in one of the three nests (A.) among the jagged peaks.

Pterodactyls (24): HD 3; HP 14, 12, 12, 22, 20, 10, 19, 6, 11, 13, 16, 12, 11, 18, 12, 12, 6, 13, 17, 13, 11, 17, 8, 10; AC 5[14]; Atk beak 1d6; Move 3 (Fly 15); Save 14; CL/XP 4/120; Special snatch and carry victim up into the air



A. These are pterodactyl nests; hard to approach via conventional means, the westernmost contains the armoured shell of a giant crab and a rusted helmet; the one in the centre,



6 fuzzy young playing with a large opal (300 gp); the one to the east, nothing.

B. A tremendous, dim sphere of glass half-sunk into the earth is the favourite sunning place of 8 giant lizards. Weird lizard skeletons are imprisoned within the glass by the dozens.

Giant Lizards (8): HD 3; HP 10, 16, 12, 16, 12, 16, 14, 16; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 bite (1d8); Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 3/60; Special None

C. Here are the remains of terraced agriculture now covered by dense vegetation.

D. The city of Moloneï is built into the side of the mountains, a sequence of bulbous shapes and eccentric geometry rising from the abandoned harbour to the foot of the cliffsides: here are the colonnaded terraces, steep stairways, hollow domes and empty palaces of an affluent civilisation. The city shows no signs of destruction, only abandonment: its marble and limestone ruins were given over to the lemures and the shrill cries of the simurgh.

There are no treasures among the ruins. If humans are encountered, they are either a larger group (3d4) who have ventured out to enjoy an ancient vintage, the sunset and the thrills of danger on the melancholy terraces, or a smaller company (1d3+1) seeking amorous pursuits. In either case, they are cautious at the sight of armed men, but welcoming if they see no sign of malice.



The entrance to the subterranean city opens from a columned hall at the base of a great towering building. There are no other entrances to the main complex, although alternate routes may lead to smaller, isolated labyrinths. Underground, random encounters are rolled semi-hourly unless stated otherwise. On the entrance and 1st level, they occur on a 1:3 chance, with either 3d4 hedonists (unarmed) or one of the grey oozes inhabiting the lower levels. On the 2nd level, they are with 1d3 grey oozes or a black pudding; the puddings will come periodically until they or the intruders are all killed. There are 13 oozes and 4 puddings in Moloneï.

Grey Oozes (13): HD 3+3; HP 12, 22, 21, 13, 9, 18, 10, 17, 25, 24, 17, 22, 12; AC 7[12]; Atk slime 2d6; Move 1; Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; Special corrosion, transparency, impervious to blunt weapons, fire and cold

Black Puddings (4): HD 10; HP 48, 45, 36, 58; AC 6[13]; Atk 1 attack (3d8); Move 6; Save 5; CL/XP 11/1700; Special Acidic surface, immune to cold, divides when hit with lightning

1. The giant entrance hall fills the entirety of the tower, with the grandeur of skyscrapers and railway stations. Beams of light fall on the debris below, and there is a layer of dust disturbed by the occasional trail leading north. The northern hall is dark, and eventually emerges at Snolog's Plaza.

2. A semicircular amphitheatre or auditorium in a side-building, now no longer in use.
3. Decorative hall with a succession of marble stelae depicting the bustle of a forum. To the south stands a statue of a bearded man in a toga, right hand raised in benediction; below the pedestal, there is a dry font. The statue and pedestal both show signs of decay, with porous and crumbling surfaces.
4. A series of bare chambers cleared of all valuables. To the south, one is a portal flanked by marble urns, bearing the inscription, "**SEE ANOTHER IN THE VARIETY OF THE IDENTICAL**", a phrase which activates the portal if uttered aloud. A character looking through the grey sheen sees himself slightly changed – clothing colour, complexion, eye hue and other small details may be different. Changes are towards the dramatic in characters of chaotic disposition and uniformity in the lawful; the chamber works its adjustment to bring outwards appearance in line with inner inclinations. Stepping through the portal brings 3d4 mirror images into being while the character disappears; the images attack at the character's normal melee effectiveness via touch. Once the images are slain, the character returns, clothing turned into a swirl of bewildering hues and imbued with +1 enchantment (as cloak). If left to their own, 1/3 of the images wander off, and when the character returns 1d6 x10 minutes later, he will be weaker by 1 HP for each image lost.

Mirror Images (3d4): HD 1; HP 8 each; AC 10[9]; Atk as character, touch (3d4); Move as character; Save 17; CL/XP 2/30; **Special** only susceptible to melee attacks

5. The treasure room beyond the secret door contains chests of brass ingots, 100 sp, 500 electrum, 15 platinum, a 300gp silver dagger with an opal grip, a 20gp soapstone figurine and a *chain shirt* +1.
6. A frescoed room: the procession of human figures has been reduced into porous blackness below waist height. A makeshift barrier has been erected against slimes: copper rods and spear hafts fashioned into a set of bars, further reinforced by heavy, corroded brass plates. This setup is effective vs. puddings, but not oozes.
7. Both of these locations are barred by heavy metal blast doors inscribed with the following phrases:

=ΤΕΡΜΙΝΕΧΥΣ=
=ΜΑΓΗΤΟΦΟΡΑ=
=ΟΚΕΑΗΟΣ=

(TERMINEXUS MAGNETOFORMA OKEANOS; south)

=ΤΕΡΜΙΝΕΧΥΣ=
=ΜΑΓΗΤΟΦΟΡΑ=
=ΣΤ ΓΑΜΜΑ=

(TERMINEXUS MAGNETOFORMA S.T. GAMMA; north).



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The doors are opened by an electronic panel with two blank „eyes“ – an application of electricity or sharp light activates the mechanism. Beyond the blast doors lie domed rooms, stops to a long-defunct monorail system. Further doors bar progress. The southern door fails to open for any reason as the tunnels beyond have caved in, but the other may be operated. Half an hour down the sloping tunnel, a sign is found (← **MOΛOHEI** ✱ **ΣΤΓ** →); further on, there is a great downward shaft with a massive cargo lift and a supply depot hanging over unknown depths.

8. This secret chamber contains a cache of abandoned ceremonial objects. There are six thick and voluminous robes of shaggy fur, supplemented by black leather masks with hanging tentacle-like appendages; similar buskins and gloves, as well as sets of glass eye-stones (one pair is polished ruby, worth 2000gp each). Furthermore, there are odd brass candelabums, a set of heavy braziers, scented oil, and a heavy, gnarled brass-alloy rod terminating in a cluster of six tentacular appendages. The vestments are used to protect against ****UUARAM**** the Hairy Mound, the monstrosity imprisoned on the flooded levels of the city, while the rod, which has no magical properties, may be used to control it.
9. A sinister basalt temple of thick cyclopean pillars and dark slabs depicting unwholesome abstraction. The entrance has been blocked with thickset brass bars that seem of more recent construction. Around the well to the south, the following inscription has been written: **“UUARAM THE HAIRY MOUND”**. The well leads to the semi-flooded 17. and the chained plug stone there.

Using the vestments, rod and braziers from 8. and performing a human sacrifice will break the chains below, and ****UUARAM**** will come forth to pay its conjurer obeisance. The rod may then be used to control the formless demigod or command it back to its watery demesne. If the methods are incorrect (e.g. one of the conjurers doesn't wear vestments, the eye-stones are not set in their place in the leather masks, or some other error is committed), ****UUARAM**** is eligible to a saving throw, and if successful, proceeds to devour the characters.



****UUARAM** the Hairy Mound: HD 13; HP 104; AC 3[16]; Atk mass 4d6 + hairs 3d4 + engulfment (may attack simultaneously in three different directions); Move 15; Save 3; CL/XP 16/3200; Special +2 to hit, 30% magic resistance, immune to mind-affecting spells and rays Editor's Note hit points in S&W WhiteBox will be 78**

****UUARAM**** is an amoeboid being of semi-divine power. Its great mottled bulk towers above men to a height of 15', although it can fit into lesser places and batter down most barriers. As it progresses, it emits an unpleasant, inarticulate mixture of wheezing, piping and bellowing. The mass of the demigod is studded with a thousand sharp but delicate hairs which are the strength of supple daggers.

Furthermore, it is sheathed in a golden halo, a sign of the magic resistance. The halo is also efficacious versus laser projectiles and rays of all sort. ****UUARAM**** may engulf those it hits, causing automatic damage and consuming them utterly once dead. Its intelligence is either negligible or extraordinarily unconventional.



10. A barrier identical to 6. has been set here.
11. A storeroom filled with heavy, lime-encrusted amphorae. 2/3 of the vessels contain a heady and fragrant vintage of great antiquity. Together, the haul is worth some 3,100 gp – although it is very bulky.
12. An advance outpost of Molonei, this place is manned at all times by eight men. The total combatant forces of the subterranean city number 30 fighters and 12 thieves. In times of great danger, all citizens retreat to Snolog's Plaza.

Fighters (30): Ftr 2; HP 7, 6, 10, 6, 10, 10, 9, 14, 13, 8, 7, 7, 10, 7, 10, 8, 13, 9, 11, 10, 6, 6, 10, 9, 5, 14, 11, 8, 6, 2; AC 5[14] (ring, shield); Atk spear 1d6; Move 9; Save 13; CL/XP 2/30

Thieves (12): Thf 3; HP 7, 12, 12, 16, 7, 8, 15, 13, 9, 12, 8, 10; AC 5[14] (Dexterity, leather, shield); Atk shortsword 1d6 or crossbow 1d4+1; Move 12; Save 12; CL/XP 2/30; Special thief abilities

13. Snolog's plaza is a great underground hall supported by mammoth columns, the higher reaches obscured in darkness

F1

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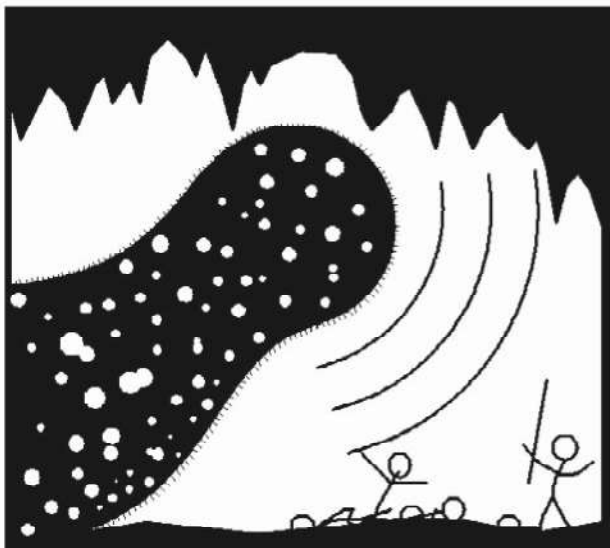
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despite the plentiful braziers. In the centre stands the columned temple of Snolog. The idol of the benevolent snail-god rests on a bloc of marble within. At its leisure, it may synthesise any amount of varied and wholesome (although salt-free) food for its followers, project two eye-beams per round (striking at the 9th level of ability and inflicting 6d8/6d8 damage on hits), or exude an area-effect *charm monster* spell, filling subjects with all-consuming lust.

The plaza also functions as an agora and general gathering place for Molonei's citizens, and there is always a mass of hedonists male and female, young and old, on hand. When encountering strangers, Molonei's citizens elicit a mixture of curiosity and perplexity that there is still a world outside their utopia: most would not think of setting foot on the surface, let alone off the island. They are content to drink, love, and, when grown tired of life, breathe in the divine vapours at **14.** and thus depart the mortal coil. Above all, they desire to see an end to the amoeboid monsters that have dragged off so many. This sentiment is not shared by a small sect of citizens who secretly venerate ****UUARAM****. This group consists of 6 fighters, 2 thieves and the "high priest", a fighter who also possesses a paralytic projector (save vs. immobilisation in cone-shaped area; also inflicts 3d4 points of non-lethal damage; 14 charges).

Beyond the plaza lie networks of domiciles, baths, meeting points and storerooms too numerous to enumerate: most are now abandoned and empty. The place of most interest is a disused library: the collection of engraved copper plates mostly involves satirical rhyme and bucolic hymns, but an hour of research turns up a plate that functions as a spellbook of illusionist spells (improved illusion, greater illusion, suggestion, phantasmal killer, Lankwiler's prismatic missile and dreamspell, or Referee's choice) as well as one bearing an ominous image:



- 14.** A sanctum draped with heavy curtains and swimming with a heavy, resinous odour. On a marble pedestal stands the statue of a naked woman. If someone stands before the

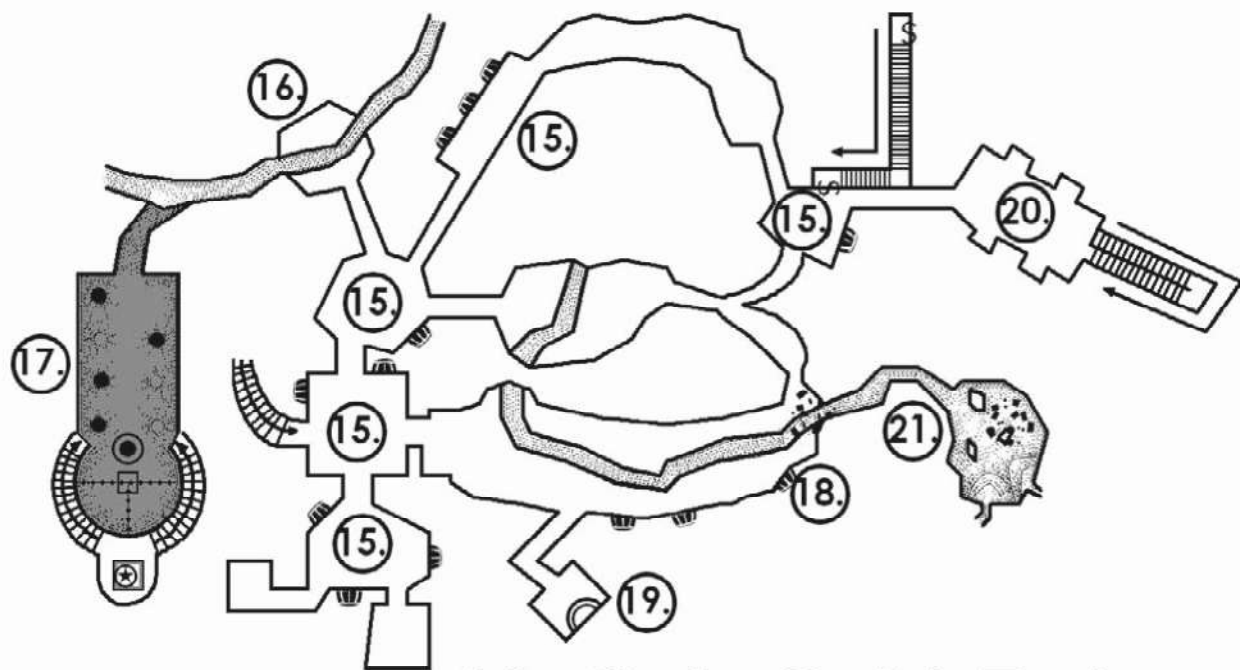
idol and bows or kneels, it breathes a cloud of sweet gas that brings joyful death (save at -4).

- 15.** The chambers of the lower level are irregular, humid and dank. Barred openings in the wall lead to black mouths too small for men to squeeze through. Within lurk the gelatinous horrors of Molonei. All rooms are identical except the one to the northeast, where the bas-relief of an armed fighting woman opens as a secret door to stairs leading up.
- 16.** An underground stream running through the level. To the west, it deepens to ultimately open above a submerged tunnel. This passage leads to **17.**
- 17.** This hall has been half submerged in dark and cold waters. As the characters swim by, stern warriors peer down on the intruders from bas-reliefs. In the centre, the water is only breast-deep. A round well above leads to the temple of ****UUARAM**** (**9.**), while three chains bind the stone plug blocking the entry to the dark spaces where the formless demigod is slumbering. It is a great difficulty to remove the plug; thereafter, it takes 1d3*20 minutes for ****UUARAM**** to emerge unless explicitly called via ritual. ****UUARAM**** can climb up the well to **9.**, and will then proceed through Molonei, killing all it comes across until contained or defeated.

The circular stairs lead to a platform above the water. Under the domed ceiling stands the statue of a woman, surrounded by a faint, rectangular force field. Letters in the floor read, "**DIASKARE SEES THAT WHICH IS, AND AIDS HE WHO ASKS.**" The statue is a false and inaccurate oracle, giving advice that leads to strife and dissent. If approached or otherwise molested, the "force field" tumbles forward, seeking to engulf its prey – revealed as a gelatinous cube!

Gelatinous Cube: HD 4; HP 19; AC 8[11]; Atk 1 (2d4) + paralysis; Move 6; Save 13; CL/XP 5/240; Special Paralysis 6 turns, transparent, immune to lightning and cold

- 18.** A long irregular cavern, bisected by a small stream emerging from behind a collapsed cavern wall. This gap is a favourite hangout of amoeboids (1d6): 1–4 grey ooze, 5–6 black pudding.
- 19.** Side-chamber containing a peculiar contraption: two stone wheels half-embedded into the wall, one smaller and set into the other. The surface of the wheels is notched irregularly with radial lines, and there is also an iron needle pointing above them. The wheels may be turned in synchronised or opposed direction, leading to periodic clicks. The device has no discernible purpose, but it is perfect to waste time while slimes sneak up on the interlopers.
- 20.** There are broken stumps of statues in the niches of this inordinately high hall, their surface porous and crumbling from decay.
- 21.** The spring chamber is a low grotto. It is wet, filled with knee-deep water, and also contains 180gp worth of crystals.



MOLONE I

The Islands Miscellaneous

The Isle of Kaikar: A wind-swept, barren expanse of land dissected by several deep fissures. All living vegetation is burned off by Kaikar, a mindless iron automaton.

Kaikar: HD 6; HP 25; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 slams 1d10; Move 6; Save 11; CL/XP 8/800; **Special** fiery breath once per 3 rounds for 6d6 HP (save for half damage), impervious to fire and mind-affecting spells

The Isle of Miralf: Long sand bank with a tall row of basalt organs in the middle. 15 ghouls have made camp among the ruins of a fishing village, and they light a beacon if they see a ship approach.

Ghoul: HD 2; HP 12, 11, 4, 11, 9, 6, 10, 10, 7, 8, 9, 12, 4, 2; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d4); Move 9; Save 16; CL/XP 3/60; **Special** Immunities, paralyzing touch

Editor's Note: If using Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox, these ghouls would be worth as many as 240xp each due to the multiple attacks and high hit points

The Isle of Umman Akthan: A dark basalt isle. Crude steps lead from the shore to the island plateau, where the ruins of a tomb-palace lie abandoned. At night, the shadow-form of Umman Akthan weeps over the sacking of his resting place, and pleads for help. If approached or talked to, he responds with a shrieking laugh, sending his "slave-women", 3d4 flying jellyfish against the characters. If Umman Akthan's curse is lifted, he reveals the location of his last treasure, a jade-gold amulet (600 gp).

Umman Akthan: HD 3+3; HP 19; AC 7[12]; Atk touch 1d4 + 1d6; Strength drain; Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; **Special** Strength drain, +1 to hit, incorporeal, hit only by magic weapons

Flying Jellyfish (3d4): HD 3; HP 16, 14, 14, 8, 17, 11, 11, 8, 20, 13, 16, 11; AC 8[11]; Atk 4 tentacles (1hp + poison for 3d6 damage); Move (Fly 12); Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; **Special** poison for 3d6 (saving throw for half damage)

The Isle of Iskander Khan: 30 fanatical nomad warriors, all grey and stooped with age, guard the stone tower of their comrade, Iskander Khan. The greatest khan to walk the lands of Fomalhaut has been sent here in his twilight years to avoid the shame of senility and decay. A witness of 230 years, the khan has his bejewelled +3 scimitar still (worth 4000 gp for the gems alone). His comrades have an additional 1100 gp worth of valuables among them in this island paradise.

Nomad Warriors (30): Ftr 3; HP 11, 15, 7, 12, 7, 10, 12, 3, 14, 10, 11, 4, 11, 13, 12, 9, 9, 8, 13, 4, 12, 12, 17, 7, 18, 18, 11, 13, 3, 13; AC 8[11] (Leather, Dexterity); Atk 2 longbow (1d6) or scimitar (1d6); Move 12; Save 12; CL/XP 3/60

The Isle of Askor: Shoals encircle this wooded island, the extinct cone of a former volcano. In the moss- and vegetation-covered crater, echoing with bird-cries, dark statues look inwards, most fallen and crumbling. On the bottom, there stand the vine-grown ruins of a rectangular basalt-temple.

Therein lies the colossus of Askor on its back: great head, maw full of crude conical teeth, short but muscular arms, over-emphasised genitalia, and stumpy legs broken off by the heel. Before the fallen idol, there is a sacrificial fire-pit full of ashes and soot; a heavy brass globe hangs from the ceiling

and letters are visible on the floor: **“NONE WILL LEAVE THE ISLAND, NOT WITHOUT HUMAN SACRIFICE BEFORE ASKOR”**.

If the temple is left without heeding the omen, the seven intact statues that remain in the crater animate to fulfil it themselves by slaying the blasphemers. These opponents, although ferocious, possess the same faulty weight distribution as Askor, and may be tripped with some ingenuity on the rockslide. If human sacrifice is performed before Askor's fallen colossus, the great body heaves with a tremendous roar, trying to stand with enormous effort. Those who remain on their feet by rolling a -4 saving throw (may be adjusted based on circumstances), may learn the spell *slave in stone* (Eldritch Weirdness) or employ it as a one-use spell if not a Magic-User of sufficient level. Within the brass globe, there is 1200 gp worth of crushed ruby dust.

Living Statues (7): HD 4; HP 12, 17, 13, 27, 17, 26, 23; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 strikes 1d8; Move 6; Save 13; CL/XP 5/240; Special immune to fire and cold, +1 to hit, unstable

The Isle of Women: Amazonian civilization of Ishtar-worshippers. The utopian interpretation of the mystery-faith has lead to dogmatic inflexibility in the face of real circumstances; consequently, the population of the only urban centre, Disium, is close to collapse. Nevertheless, even now, every man is exiled after the birth of his first child, while surplus population is expected to be acquired via raiding.

The city of Disium is a conglomeration of globular buildings covered in bronze sheets and white ceramics, patina-covered domes and long colonnades. The central building is the temple of Ishtar, also serving as an agora. Here, citizens (grown women) may pay obeisance to, and in exchange experience, the Five Immutabilities. The city is governed by Ishtar's Dreamers, who possess limited but potent illusionist powers. The dreamers can collectively employ the *dreamspell*, using this dangerous method to influence the reality governing the city; however, due to discord within their ranks, this has not taken place for two decades. Disium is surrounded by olive groves and fields of wheat. The surrounding isles are surrounded by jungles, where giant butterflies are common (encounters 1d6; 1 = 2d4 butterflies, 6=group of 15 amazons).

Ishtar's Dreamers: HD 4; AC 0[19] (chain shirt, shield, Amazon, collective psionic); Atk spear 1d6; Move 12; Save 11; CL/XP 6/400; Special dream, nightmare or phantasmal killer spell 1/day

Amazons: HD 3; AC 1[18] (chain shirt, shield, Amazon, collective psionic); Atk spear 1d6; Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 3/60

Giant Butterfly (2d4): HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk tongue 1d4 + poison (soporific); Move (Fly 12); Save 16; CL/XP 4/120; Special Soporific poison tongue, pollen

Pollen (1d4)

- 1 - irritation (save or -2 to rolls)
- 2 - narcolepsy (save or fall asleep)
- 3 - paralysis (save or held 2d4 t.)
- 4 - poison (save or 3d4 HP)

The Isle of Oymlienk the Hazar: The thick jungles of this paradisaal island are filled with noises and scents. Six king tigers hunt in this

magnificent land, and they all speak the tongues of men: so has Oymlienk the Hazar gained a strange, divided new life beyond death. His step-pyramidal tomb, constructed of black, rustproof iron, holds a heavy jade bowl worth 1000 gp, a *mace* +1 and the *ring of silence* (renders wearer completely silent, but also mute). The tigers aren't necessarily hostile, although they **will** eat grave robbers.

Tigers (6): HD 6; HP 29, 22, 36, 25, 21, 31; AC 5[14]; Atk 2 claws 1d6 and bite 1d10; Move 15; Save 11; CL/XP 7/600

The Isle of the Dead: Among the hills of this island lies a small settlement of ramshackle huts. The inhabitants of the small colony are infected with corpse-weed, a parasitic growth of grey filaments that first turns the skin grey, then slowly dries the body into a cadaverous husk sprouting patches of miniature seeds (corpse-weed can be cured via submersion in boiling water during the first week of infection, and spells afterwards). The villagers hate the healthy, and commit everything within their power to infect them; those of them who are too sick to move and work are thrown into a deep pit to starve.



The “demon” of the island-dwellers is Pangrolm the jackalwere, an object of hatred and fear. Immune to the sickness and conventional weapons, Pangrolm enjoys to torment villagers with his malevolent tricks, but is friendly to outsiders. He lives in a small tower, where he trades in rare objects. Treasures/wares include: 300 electrum, 500gp, opium, poisons, jade dagger 350gp, engraved stone egg 60gp, ancient purple drape 130 gp (laced with deadly poison), leaden mask 70gp, mummified, leathery paw with amber fingernails 350gp (relic of primordial serpent-man magic-user, extremely valuable/dangerous), copper idol of the bat-god 170gp, electrum bell 20gp, box of strange black material 90gp (bakelite), 6 matte ceramic prisms (25gp each).

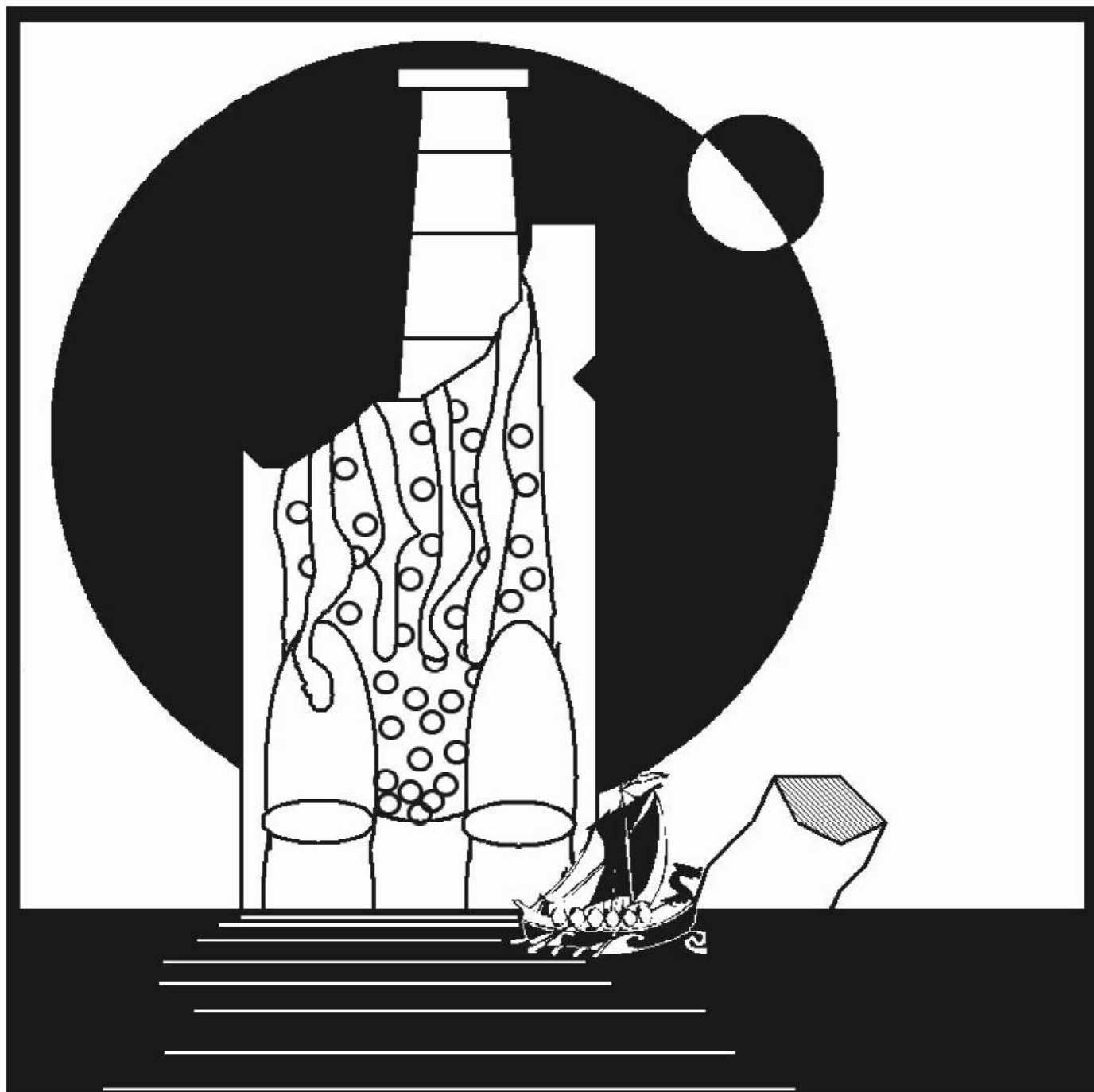
Pangrolm the jackalwere: HD 4; HP 19; AC 4[15]; Atk bite 2d4 or shortsword 1d6+poison; Move 15; Save 13; CL/XP 8/800; Special sleep gaze, silver or magic required to hit



ISLES ON AN EMERALD SEA IV

An Adventure by Gabor Lux

Playtesters: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher and Gabor Izapy



The Isle of Molonei

So it came that Dodekabyros the master mage, bored with the tedium of power and attendant immortality, turned his attention to a new, ambitious project. With his force-globe and destructive spells, he enslaved the stone age civilisation inhabiting the archipelago near his tower, then started to put his extravagant ideas into motion. With his synthesisers, he reconstructed the primitive race, and with the fertility-enhancer named fecundin, accelerated their life-cycle. Thereafter, he issued an edict to his dazed subjects: the total population of the four islands would hereafter be fixed at 240, no more and no less. The differences would have to be eliminated by war, or fireball bombardment from Dodekabyros' force-globe, soaring like an immortal, unsailable god over the multitudes.

Three centuries later, the war of the primitive wretches continues, and the population of the four islands (Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta) is in accordance with the edict due to incessant bloodshed and the cruel whims of Dodekabyros. However, not long ago, an error occurred in the plan when an unforeseen event transpired in Alpha's ecosystem. The balance of power in the archipelago quickly fell apart, and now a war of extermination, more cruel than any seen before, is brewing as Dodekabyros watches the developments from the top of his tower.



Cavemen (sample of 40): HD 2+2; HP 13, 8, 15, 6, 10, 11, 6, 10, 15, 13, 11, 10, 9, 10, 15, 6, 10, 10, 15, 12, 8, 12, 9, 8, 10, 7, 17, 6, 6, 18, 16, 11, 10, 13, 10, 15, 15, 8, 14, 14; AC 13; Atk club 1d6+1 or stone knife 1d4+1 or bola 1d6+1; SV 16.



A. Alpha: The incident had occurred on the northernmost island. The cavemen successfully cracked the brass casing of an ancient preserve capsule full of pollen and plant matter, unleashing a wave of zombification and the hyper-spread of parasitic plant life on the island, which has so far only been checked by the sea.

Every day spent on the island, as well as confrontation with the inhabitants, necessitates a saving throw to avoid pollen contamination. Without receiving a *cure disease* spell, contamination is fatal within 1d2+1 weeks and turns the subject into a debased, mindless vegetable horror. There are 15 "zombies", 10 zombie-plant hybrids and 10 killer vines prowling the island territory, with a 1:2 probability of a random encounter every hour. Not far from the abandoned village, the broken wreck of the enormous brass capsule (40' diameter) lies half buried in a hillside, a source of deadly peril but potentially also valuable rare metals.

Zombified Cavemen (15): HD 2; HP 6, 10, 6, 11, 11, 16, 10, 8, 12, 12, 15, 11, 12, 3, 8; AC 12; Atk slam 1d8; Spec immune to mind-affecting spells, not an undead; SV 16.

Hybrids (10): HD 3; HP 10, 11, 9, 13, 14, 12, 10, 20, 16, 16; AC 15; Atk slam 1d8 and vines 1d6+entanglement; Spec strangle 2d6/round, immune to mind-affecting, cold and electricity, ½ damage from fire, not an undead; SV 13.

Killer Vines (10): HD 4; HP 12, 22, 27, 26, 23, 10, 20, 19, 21, 22; AC 15; Atk vine 1d6+entanglement; strangle 2d6/round; SV 9.

B. Beta: This island had been inhabited by the strongest tribe, fulfilling a balancing role between Alpha and the two southern islands. With Alpha's fall and the arrival of murderous flora with wind-borne pollens, they have become hopelessly weakened, and their final destruction is only a matter of time. The population of the island is 40; their chieftain, Lorg Grome, a powerful mutant recognisable by his scaly yellow skin and unnaturally wide, teeth-filled mouth. The wilds are currently populated by 11 killer vines.

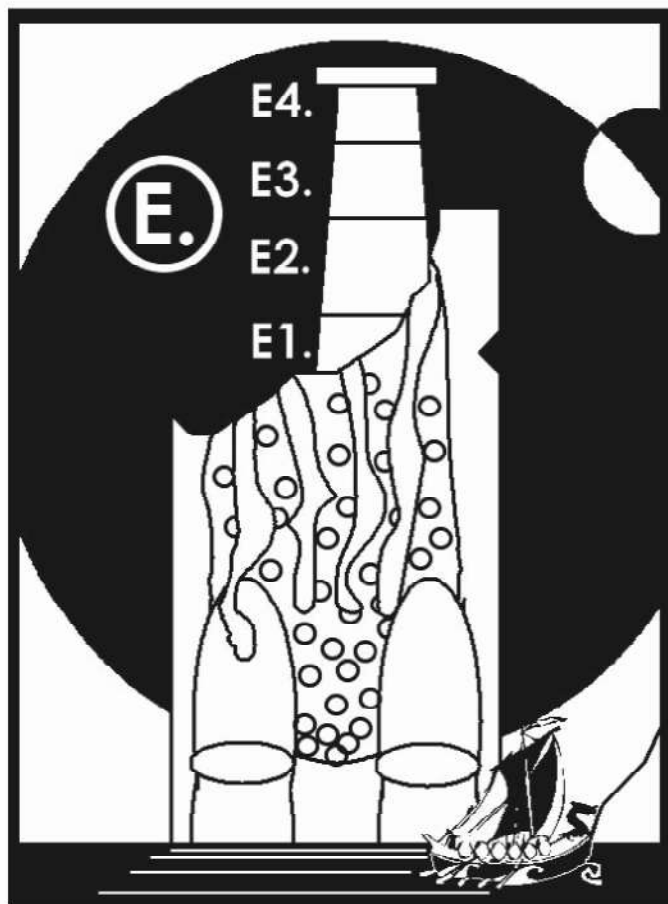
Lorg Grome: HD 4+2; HP 22; AC 14; Atk spear 1d6+1;
Special eyebeams 4/day, 3d6 Hp; SV 12.

Killer Vines (11): HP 18, 15, 20, 21, 19, 19, 12, 21, 27, 20, 15

C. Gamma: The island's population is 60, and their leader is Uumma, a repulsive matriarch (non-combatant, almost completely paralysed). Due to an old blood feud, they are at war with Beta and winning; Uumma and all her children are burning with the anticipation of the coming massacre.

D. Delta: The population of Delta is 100; due to its larger territory and rich fauna, it has always been one of the stronger isles, further enhanced by the unfolding war. Currently, they focus their efforts on Beta's destruction, and are neutral towards Gamma. Their leader, Bowosg the Tribe-Killer, is a man of his name, risen above his subjects via merciless violence.

On Delta's land, right in the centre of the primitive settlement, a second brass capsule awaits in half-buried state those who would examine its contents. Bowosg is already working on the matter.



E. Epsilon: Epsilon is the home of Dodekabyros. The windless, tapering tower of the master mage was built on the colossal wreckage of a primordial idol of olive green stone.

The idol, which depicts a disagreeable being of stumpy legs, puffed body and a myriad twisting cilia, dates from before human habitation. Dodekabyros' dwelling is significantly more recent, of a scant 500 years. Unless he is out on an errand, the force-globe can be seen resting on the flat top like a shimmering crystal ball. Since the tower is practically unassailable from the sea, there are no guardians or security measures beyond the magician's ill reputation and the nerve gas stored in the laboratory.

Dodekabyros is a short, hunchbacked man of stunted legs and barrel-shaped trunk. His yellowed, potato-like head is topped by thinning black hair and a stringy beard. His temperament is malevolent and perverted, with a hatred for all things good and wholesome, although with a taste for experiments. If unbidden visitors come to his tower, he chases them off (5:6) or destroys them without warning (1:6). He only receives visitors and students with very good reason; the easiest way to contact him is through his distant suppliers. In addition to his spells, Dodekabyros is familiar with a number of ancient technological processes, including the secrets of creating and moulding life.

Dodekabyros: Magic-User 9; AC -3 [22] (bracers AC 1 [18], ring +2, cloak +1, Dexterity); Atk staff 1d6-1; SV 7; Str 6, Dex 15, Con 6, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 7; wand of charm (20 charges), wand of fireballs (10 charges), potion of flying, potion of healing*2, potion of fire breath (5d4 Hp, 1d4 breathes), potion of cure disease, potion of appearance, scroll (strength, ray of enfeeblement, hold person, confusion).

Spells (in spellbook, memorised are underscored):

4/3/3/2/1; 1: charm person, detect magic, identify, light, magic missile*2, shield, sleep; 2: detect invisibility, ESP, flaming sphere, levitate, mirror image, strength; 3: dispel magic, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, suggestion, wind wall; 4: charm monster, dimension door, fear, minor globe of invulnerability; 5: contact other plane, hold monster, telekinesis.

E1. The lower entrance of the tower opens to a series of storerooms preserved food, wine, oil and similar supplies are found next to metal crates of milled minerals, metals, chemicals and other base materials. A large, empty crate conceals a trapdoor to a secret treasure room: 3000 sp, 2500 electrum, 500 gp and 300 gp worth of gems.

E2. Laboratory: cloning machines, synthesisers to create and alter life, a homogeniser (able to reduce a person into an even meat paste within a minute) and a few more contraptions. Four glittering chrome canisters contain argent, a nerve gas used for defensive purposes (save or become a zombie controlled by uttered commands + save after 2d3 hours or die as deposits of the silvery gas destroy the lungs from the inside).

E3. Nympharium: inhabited by mindless cloned beauties of identical appearance.

E4. Living quarters furnished with some taste. Projection screens to spy on proximate or distant lands (equivalent to *clairvoyance/clairaudience*; the device is too heavy and complicated to transport), a chest full of 1100 gp, and various furnishings. From the suite, a short flight of stairs leads up to the upper terrace, used by Dodekabyros as a combination of landing pad and observation deck. A metal ring standing on short legs is used to anchor and recharge the force-globe when it is present.



The force-globe of Dodekabyros (15000 gp): This transparent, spherical forcefield can transport up to six persons. Its total action range under normal circumstances is 2000 stadion (200 km), but it can be fuelled up to 3200 if necessary. Its speed is 1200 stadion (120 km) per day; a night's worth of hovering depletes its storage cells by 200 stadion. Characters within the force-globe benefit from the effects of *protection from normal missiles*, and with raised shields (200 std. charge), also *minor globe of invulnerability*. The force-globe does not impede outwards spellcasting or missile fire. It can be refuelled on top of the tower as well as by using standard energy cells/cartridges (1000 std.).

Debris of the Sea

1. Shallows: 7 giant crabs. Stone steps lead up to a cliff with the idol of a humanoid (crab's head and pincers), 200 gp pearl dust in copper bowl.

Giant Crabs (7): HD 3; HP 11, 16, 14, 19, 5, 22, 14; AC 18; Atk 2*claws 1d6; SV 14.

2. Colossal statues of lizards towering above the undersea kelp forest. The structures, their backs green with seaweed, are close to collapse.

3. Two enormous sea turtles watching a nestful of eggs on a sandbank, very aggressive.

Giant Sea Turtles (2): HD 10; HP 54, 32; AC 20; Atk bite 4d6; SV 5.

4. Drifting ship laden with a cargo of decomposing fish, olive oil and beeswax. All hands on board are dead, along with

two harpies nailed to the boards with sabres and knives. Half-dead captive manacled in the brig.

5. A trench on the bottom of the sea descending into unfathomable depths. Sunken towers on the two shores connected by a slim bridge.

6. Coastal cave, old bronze-covered galley manned by 20 mechanical men. The vessel is immobile and the machines are lifeless, encrusted with salt.

7. Large bronze bell resting on legs on the bottom of the sea. The inside air is good, seemingly inhabited by four lustful mermaids. The strange bordello is a death-trap and the mermaids are really sea hags masked by illusion. They command 8 sea zombies, and have 300 sp, 450 electrum, a *potion of levitation* and a *scroll (spectral force)*.

Sea Hags (4): HD 3; HP 15, 13, 8, 19; AC 13; Atk 2*claws 1d4+1; Spec death gaze, weakness; SV 14.

Sea Zombies (8): HD 4; HP 25, 11, 17, 21, 17, 23, 21, 17; AC as originally/13; Atk weapon or slam 1d8; Spec ½ damage from bludgeoning weapons; SV 13.

8. Bunches of corroded brass globes at various depths on undersea terraces; all are filled with water and inhabited by various marine creatures.

9. Small island with a distended garden, broken remains of old statuary. A lair of 4 amphisbaena holds 11 crystal eggs, 50 gp each.

Amphisbaena (4): HD 5; HP 32, 23, 16, 23; AC 14; Atk 2*bite 1d6+poison; SV 12.

10. Schools of fish swarm around a mostly submerged bronze colossus. The fish not only eat the seaweed on the body, but also polish it clean. Water fowl, less concerned with cleanliness, nest atop the skull-like head.

11. Tapering, three-sided stone pyramids, ancient mausolea rise from coastal cliffs. Most have been broken open and looted, even the dead stolen from their rest. At sunfall, the spirits of the departed are wont to return, gazing immobile on the dying sun.

12. Stone obelisks emerging from the thick kelp. They follow the path of an ancient road, now covered by the growth.

13. Bestial, primitive statues on a coral atoll, hemp ropes and heavy weights around their necks: the exiled gods of a nearby village, ritually bound and stoned each week by the angered residents decades after their downfall.

14. Old woman close to death in anchored boat, left here by her son, a fisherman. The crone begs for help and revenge; the son, an unfortunate of hideous appearance, holds her responsible for his joyless life.

15. 100 m diameter metal dome in the depths, dotted with circular glass windows emitting beams of light. The dome is an undersea garden with abundant air, but the thick vegetation hides 8 killer vines. In the centre, in a sealed control centre, skeletal remains of the original inhabitants lie overgrown with vines and stalks. One still grasps a platinum wafer (450 gp), the “key card” to deactivate the dome’s life support system. Three glass containers of defoliant, can be dispersed as an acidic mist with attached sprinklers (3d4 Hp, 10 doses each).

Killer Vines (8): HD 4; HP 16, 16, 23, 24, 14, 18, 17, 24; AC 15; Atk vine 1d6+entanglement; strangle 2d6/round; SV 9.

16. Royal purple kelp patch floating on the surface, its juices like clouds of red ink. This patch is harvested by the inhabitants of a nearby fishing village, who consider it their inalienable property.

This article contains no Open Game Content other than spell names, magic item names, and terminology derived from game rules.

Section 15: Isles on an Emerald Sea IV., Gabor Lux, Copyright 2011

RANDOM PERKS AND FLAWS

by Stefan Poag

Who doesn't love random Lists for your fantasy role playing game? Flaws are traits that your character may have that are negative (or liabilities). Perks are traits that are positive. At character creation, you can roll 1d20 (I'm considering making this step optional, i.e.: you can always opt not to roll at all and just skip this step).

Roll the dice to take your chances on the flaws/perks tables:

Roll 1d20:

1-10 No flaws or perks; 11-14 Roll on Flaws list; 15-18 Roll on Perks list; 19-20 Roll **once** on Flaws and **once** on Perks

List of Flaws

- 1. Albino:** Character has white skin and hair, red eyes and is sensitive to bright light. In dim light they will see normally, but in bright light, albinos will suffer a -2 to their attacks, a -4 to ranged attacks and a -2 to all other actions requiring hand/eye coordination. In bright sun, unless protective clothes, hats, sunscreen, etc., are worn, the albino will suffer 1 point damage from extreme sunburn per hour.
- 2. Asshole:** Has a -2 CHA. In social situations must make a Wisdom check or is likely to do or say something really inappropriate.
- 3. Astigmatism:** Blurry vision. Character is unable to discern details at any distance and cannot read small print. If

character is a thief, all close-up work (like finding and removing traps) is at -2. In addition, ranged attacks are at -2.

- 4. Bad sense of smell:** This might seem like an advantage when tromping through musty dungeons filled with rotting corpses, but the player with a bad sense of smell might fail to notice that the food he is eating is spoiled, poisoned gas is seeping into the room, a stinky goblin is sneaking up from behind, etc.
- 5. Body Odor:** Really stinky. Gives effective -2 CHA. Frequent bathing can mitigate this (at DM's discretion).
- 6. Bonehead:** Some people are just stubborn boneheads. In negotiations must make a Wisdom check in order to negotiate successfully. Example: Innkeeper tells a bonehead that beds are 6 silver a night. The bonehead must roll a successful Wisdom check or will insist on paying only 3 silver a night despite the fact that this might force him to end up sleeping out in the stables when the disgusted innkeeper refuses to rent the bonehead a bed at any price. Being a bonehead is sometimes advantageous: you get a +2 save against charm spells.
- 7. Brooke Effect (anti-animal magnetism):** Animals just seem to dislike some people. Whenever interacting with animals and a reaction roll is required, roll twice and apply the worst result.

The Tomb-Complex of Ymmu M'Kursa

by Gabor Lux

playtested by Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher, Matyas Hartyandi, and Gabor Izapy

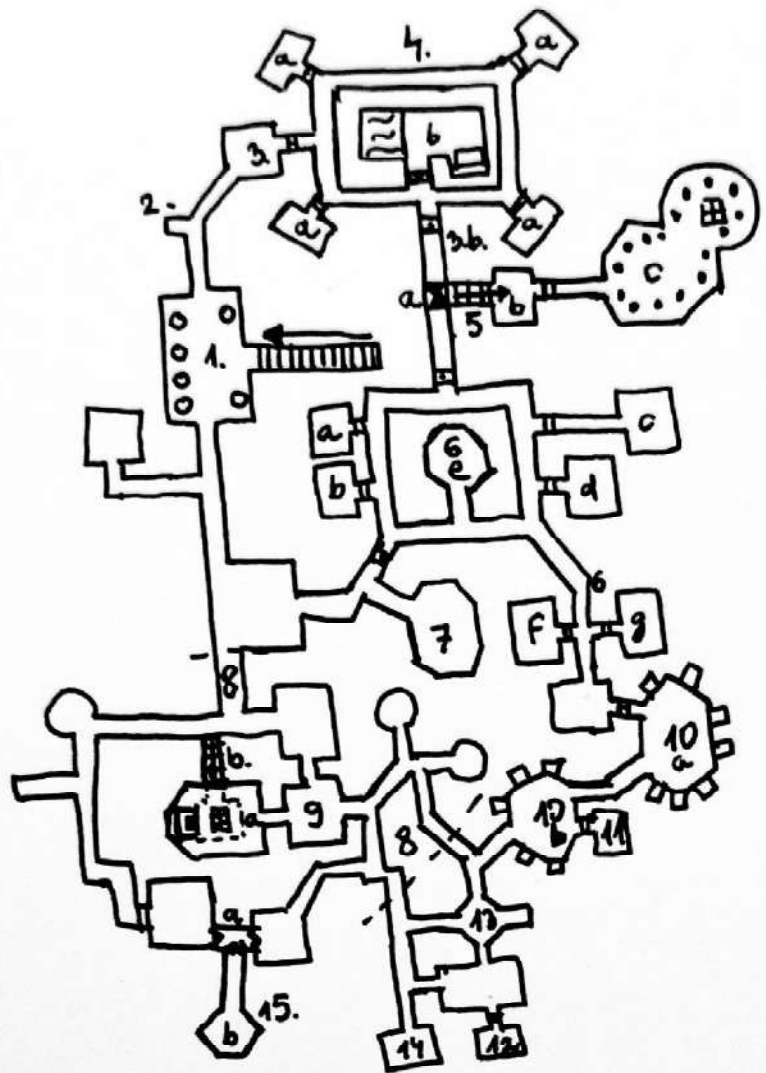
The tomb-complex of Ymmu M'Kursa is located in the lowermost reaches of the undercity of Khosura, a decadent city-state in the deserts of Fomalhaut. This is just one of the multiple burial vaults below Khosura's dusty streets and empty palaces, but its isolation from other areas of the undercity has mostly spared it from the attention of grave robbers... at least so far. In addition to fixed encounters, characters adventuring in the tomb-complex may encounter random monsters (1:6 probability). Roll for an encounter every second turn while the party is moving, or when a noisy altercation develops. Isolated rooms are safe as long as doors are secured and there is little noise; however, if the PCs are careless, 1d2+1 groups of monsters will team up for a coordinated siege.

1. Shadows (1d6)
- 2-3. Skeletons (3d10)
4. Wraith (1d3)
5. Ghouls (2d6)
6. Wights (1d6)
7. Mummy (1)
- 8-9. Zombie (2d8)
- 10-11. Two groups
12. Named undead in tomb-complex leading other monsters (Referee's choice)

1. A vaulted anteroom smelling of dried mold and funereal dusts. Stone plaque, "THE TOMB OF CRYPTS", sunk into the floor (underneath the slab there is a pit full of human bones that claw, grab and bite at investigating characters; six attacks (rank 2) per round for 1-6 damage and try to drag down PC, no treasure). Six decapitated statues of men in togas. If a skull, severed head, etc. is placed on a stump, the statue speaks: "We are the men of Konoth, and such is our thanks", casting a spell at his rescuer: save vs. wands or an invisible sword decapitates the PC.

2. Small vaulted recess, faded orange and blue stucco. Large reddish reed baskets, and a wall inscription, "KONTI MEKARRI". The baskets contain endless coils of yellowed and old linen strips (mummy wrappings). If the coils are disturbed, they spring into action as an animated object, +4 on first attack. Mummy Wrappings: WD 4, DC 9; Atk strangulation 2d6/round and incapacitation unless save vs. petrification is made.

3. Locked black-iron door flanked by two braziers burning with an unnatural yellow flame. The door is



reinforced with interlocking bands of polished brass; these form intricate geometric patterns which spell out "YMMU" in the middle. A poison needle trap is hidden in the lock. b) is identical except there are no braziers.

4. The tomb-complex proper; humid and cool air with a hint of incense. There are four side crypts and a central tomb; each of their doors sealed with a nonmagical leaden seal impressed with the symbol of Ishtar. If but one seal is broken, Ymmu and his 48 guardians attack en masse, but otherwise remain in their resting places

a) Four sealed side crypts, each inhabited by 12 rotting, mummified cadavers whose heads have been replaced with ass's skulls. They exude the reek of the grave intermixed with moldy spices, and attack while braying infernally. Zombie-skeletons of Ymmu (48): WD 2; DC 8; 1d8 damage from claws; turned as zombies.

b) Beyond a tarnished bronze portal lies the tomb of Ymmu. The western half of his chamber is occupied by a shallow pool fed from a copper wall basin (the waters are curative, 1d8 points per day). As the rising mists of the pool mingle with the vapours of a heavy copper censer (fed with scented oils and the hair of dead men), they form 1d6 incorporeal phantoms which attack along with Ymmu; dissipate upon a hit but reform again next round. Ymmu looks similar to his guardians, but wears a moldy-grey burial shroud and his claws are sheathed in golden hellfire. *Ymmu M'Kursa*: WD 8; DC 0; attack with claws does 1d12+disease+special; only hurt by magic weapons, +2 to saves but -2 vs. fire and +1 damage against him per die; if Ymmu rolls a natural 20 on an attack, opponent must roll a save vs. petrification or be turned to stone and a save vs. paralysis or be held (until released); turned as vampire. *Phantoms* (1d6): WD 3 (but only 1 wound each); DC 9; damage 2d4; reform next round up to a maximum of 6; holy water poured into the pool, dispel magic or bless on water or censer breaks enchantment.

Ymmu's burial shroud and misshapen paw are magical. A heavy golden urn (500 gp) by his sarcophagus holds scented human hair, and a golden mirror (400 gp) hanging on the wall hypnotizes characters to attack their comrades (save vs. spell, one time only).

The burial shroud of Ymmu M'Kursa: this yellowed burial shroud is cursed as the wearer doesn't heal naturally and in fact loses 2 hit points after each night of rest; otherwise functions as cloak +2.

Ymmu's paw: this desiccated, misshapen extremity is a cursed +1 weapon which may be wielded by affixing it in place of the character's own severed hand. It inflicts 1d6+1 points of damage; 1d8+1 if used in conjunction with the burial shroud. On a natural 20, it causes petrification and magical paralysis unless a separate save is made against both effects. The wielder of Ymmu's paw doesn't heal naturally.

5. a) The tomb of Ramm. No visible entrance except fresco door on the stuccoed east wall, inscription "RAMM: ENTRY FORWARDS, MESSAGE BACKWARDS". Under the layer of stucco, the outlines of a stone portal are revealed, along with secret panel – impressing it opens 40' pit underfoot. To the west, a smaller panel activates iron skewers hidden in the gaps of the wall (4d8 damage). The way beyond is through a stone plug on the bottom of the pit, which reveals a set of descending stairs.

b) Polished brass door, ram's head in a hexagram, inscription spelling out "RAMM". Faint resonation of muffled gongs.

c) Fantastically opulent crypt of brass-inlaid green serpentine, slender pillars and a gilded dome with a painting of the night sky. Brass gongs continually beaten by invisible hands, and a faint light from ever-burning lamps hanging from long chains... In the innermost sanctum, a large, intricate brass cage made of interlocking puzzle parts (may be carefully disassembled by a rogue as a lock at -20%, 2500 gp value but takes two expeditions to transport above ground) holds an opalesque glass coffer (1800 gp)... Within the coffer, swirling, shimmering mist is in fact the vampire lord Ramm, who is dressed in a robe of scintillant colour he uses against characters once he exits this grave – which he can do through small holes in the glass. Ramm wears a regal purple cloak and robes embroidered in gold with a ram's head, golden slippers and bracers of the same (600 gp). He attacks unless appeased with appropriate gifts or sacrificial victims (even so, there is a 25% probability of a surprise attack). Ramm is utterly inhuman in outlook after his mind has wandered among the stars for untold times, and may not be meaningfully communicated with. WD 8, DC 1, vampire with magic robe of scintillant colours. Ramm's glass coffin holds 2000 gp in gold bars and four potions (roll 4d3):

1. Acid bomb: when bottle's seal is broken, dull green vapours escape in 20' radius cloud; damage 2d4 per round (10 rounds duration).

2. Yellow essence: a heavy gas with the properties of a liquid extracted from the stuff of other worlds. Extremely volatile; this substance quickly heats up without flames, enough to melt metal and burn any organic matter (1d6*10 damage if swallowed or applied topically).

3. Green essence: origins as above; catalyst which turns bodies of water into glass from the surface down – depending on volume, may be enough for a thin crust (e.g. on a small lake; collapses under own weight) or entire glassification (a well or underground pool).

6. A tomb–complex choked with dust and dry mold, grey walls and remains of old cobwebs. All separate crypts are labelled with stone plaques as follows.

a) "THE TOMB OF VORDAK THE DRAGON KNIGHT": dusty black velvet on walls, heavy silver chalices and candelabums (400 gp value total). Skeletal form of Vordak sits on throne in heavy black plate mail +1 and kite shield (green dragon in black field), clutching a decorative longsword... animates when intruders approach. Vordak the Dragon Knight: WD 8; DC -2; 2 attacks with sword, strength/damage bonus as ogre, turned as spectre.



b) "THE TOMB OF TAUNUS WHO IS THREE": an unusually wide and bulky sarcophagus; looted and no treasure.

c) "THE TOMB OF BERISTO THE GODLESS": den of multi-coloured drapes, curtains and rugs (all dusty, no value); wight in tattered colourful garments attacks in frenzy. Faintly magical cloth strips are remains of shredded cloak +1. Beristo the Godless: WD 4; DC 5; drains energy; silver or magic to hit, turned as mummy.

d) "THE TOMB OF OTOGOSTER, DISCIPLE OF YOL": putrid blackness on walls and ceiling; casket sealed with three protective runes (warding glyphs) which may only be safely bypassed by a priest of a good deity (rank 5+). The body in the casket is black and grossly bloated under rotten black clothes; a putrid sack filled with grotesque lumps deposits its load if attacked with cutting weapons. Otogoster is instilled with the divine presence of the protoplasmic god Yol; a colony of slimy, weakly phosphorescent cells resembling frog eggs. Otogoster attacks as zombie if closely examined, grasping character by the neck (+4 on first attack). Otogoster, Disciple of Yol: WD 2 (3 wp); DC 8; dam. 1d8 plus strangulation (see room 2).

e) "THE TOMB OF MINIONS": octagonal common grave – narrow ledge overlooking pit of dry bones.

Barely audible laments from underneath bones – Vilstin the Moneylender (3rd level rogue), sent here by the curse of a magic-user and unable to escape on his own. A greasy fellow of enormous girth and whiskers, complains constantly of lost fortunes, but promises rescuing party a palace in return for safe passage to the surface... an empty, ruined structure currently inhabited by the magic-user and close to collapse.

f) "THE TOMB OF KERETH RAUTA": Wraith in billowing robe continuously recites from a black grimoire, reflects all spells and blows directed at self. If interrupted (successful priestly turning vs. spectre or some other method), he drops the volume and flees shrieking through the wall. Anyone touching the book must save vs. spells or be compelled to take it up and continue the wraith's recitation in his place, withering into a wight in 1d4 hours and a wraith in 1d6 days unless released by remove curse or dispel evil spell. Otherwise, the book contains spells concerning conjuration and necromancy (Referee's choice). Kereth Rauta: WD 5; DC 3; magic weapons to hit, attack drains energy and does 1d6.

g) "THE TOMB OF GWYLNIN, DAUGHTER OF GWYLNIN": Heavy iron sarcophagus is decorated with scenes from the life of the warrior-maiden Gwynlin. Inside, no body is found.

7. An abandoned embalming room, with slabs for the preparation of bodies, three badly corroded copper chests holding embalming salts (100 gp value each), shelf of vials (embalming fluid, cause nausea on ingestion, one is deadly poison).

8. Catacomb of undistinguished dead: passages and domed circular rooms are filled with stiff, embalmed and enshrouded bodies propped against the walls in various stages of decay. Some exhibit curious deformations – elongated canines, small horns or other bone irregularities. No treasure, but double probability of random encounters, with additional separate checks if bodies are disturbed.

9. a) Chambers constructed of massive stone blocks, millennia-old. Inscription before entrance reads, “FANAURE”. Metal grille in floor above sacrificial ash-pit. Fanaure, a primitive stone idol sitting on a throne, is a debased and bloodthirsty demi-god with the intelligence and manners of a mentally retarded child. It demands sacrifices and worship in its roaring voice, shaking the earth by pounding on the walls, ground and ceiling like a loosed element of nature. Fanaure is extremely petulant and self-absorbed; he believes that sacrifices are “his due”, and unless someone arouses his temper and makes the mistake of entering his room (which he cannot leave due to his bulk), he is too lazy even to slay a sacrificial being on his own. He has no powers save his semi-divinity. Fanaure: WD 12 (96 wp); DC 0; stone fist 3d10; +2 magic weapons to hit, immunities as stone golem.

b) Stairs lead down to a pit of ashes and blackened bones, victims burned to appease the great Fanaure. A 200 gp bracelet is found under a deep layer of ash, but characters searching will contract a wasting disease.

10. a) Low-ceilinged grey chamber, all but two of the arched exits have been walled over – these lead to small recesses where mummified cadavers are manacled to the wall. All wear large (1' diameter) bronzes disk around the neck with the inscription, “I AM THE SERVANT OF KUTH”.

b) As above, but one of the walls appears new upon careful examination. Behind there is no body but a heavy coffer: 2000 sp and 400 gp, vial of black glass with poison. To the east, corroded iron door bears polished brass letters spelling “KUTH, MERCHANT OF TOIL” – no visible opening mechanism but easy to break down (roll random encounter).

11. Small burial chamber, three upright stone sarcophagi and innumerable clay pots containing stale oil, wax, tar, spices or other substances. Within two sarcophagi are Kuth's concubines (zombies in faded but still colourful garments), and in the third is Kuth

the slave merchant. Preserved with wax treatment, appearance is remarkably lifelike; otherwise behaves as mummy. 800 gp in a boxful of gems (low individual value). Zombies (2): WD 2; DC 8; claws 1d8.

Kuth: WD 5+3; DC 2; 1d12 plus disease; saves -2 against fire and takes +1 damage per die.

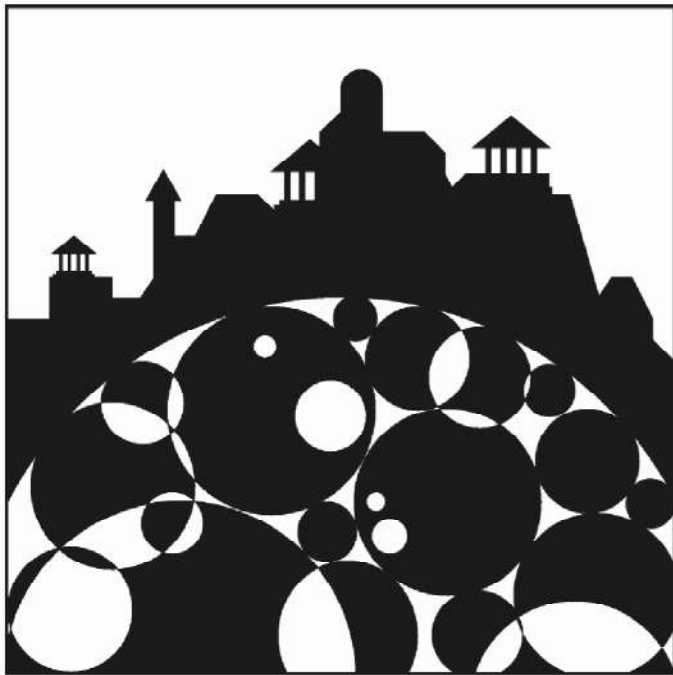
12. Black iron door with inscription, “THE TOMB OF YLIASTER, ACCURSED SORCERER”. Within tomb, 2' glass prism – gazing into depths draws Yliaster's faded form back from the underworld. If prism is smashed, Yliaster is immediately returned to his damnation, but places a triple curse on PC with last breath. If left intact, images within the prism grant illusionist spells (Referee's choice). Yliaster, shadow guardian: WD 7; DC 2; attack drains 1d6 Str and paralyzes; magic weapons to hit, lifesteal once per day (save vs. death magic or drop unconscious at 0 hp and roll constitution shock to survive), silence 3/day, turned as spectre.

13. Round opening in the floor sealed by snugly fitting stone plug; writing on rim, “THE TOMB OF WINDS”. Trapped air elemental escapes through dungeon passages if the plug is removed, may kill wandering monster groups or smash down barriers.

14. Idol of lamb constructed from greenish stone, gemstone eyes removed. Glyphs on the base form a charm monster spell (may be copied into spellbook or traced on a piece of parchment). However, unless some sacrifice is made in exchange, the idol casts the same spell on the offending character... turning him into a complete ‘flower power’ pacifist until rescued from this horrid fate.

15. a) Dusty passage; colony of yellow mold has completely infiltrated crumpled over skeleton propped against southern secret door... coughs up the yellow spores if investigated.

b) Form of perfectly preserved raven-haired woman in standing rectangular slab of transparent material (high-grade plastic, treat as glass-steel): red and black clothing, short blade and holstered laser pistol (30 charges) in belt. The slab is completely impervious to all forms of harm save magical energy (e.g. magic missiles) and disintegration. Either method frees Lady Sky, 9th level lawful and good amazon from stratospheric city... grateful for rescue to sensible limits, but uninterested in romance. Clothing made of synthetic textiles is a nonmagical DC 2 base defense, short blade is laser sword (as scimitar, 2d6 damage while charged, 15 charges). There are 8 replacement cartridges for the sword.



Black Blood

adventure by Gabor Lux

playtested by Gabor Acs (Hawk the Etunian, Archer 3), Kalman Farago (Diaschecht, Sailor 3), Laszlo Feher (Licar del'Avellos, Mage 3), Gabor Izapy (Lageus the Minstrel, Thief 3), Tamas Szabo (Kher'tar, Mage 3). Special thanks to C.L. Moore for some themes found in this module and to C.A. Smith for a few nasty surprises.

Introduction: On the coast of the Sea of Mistakes lies the city of Pentastadion, a nest of merchant lords and old aristocracy. In some, wealth and power inspire a philosophy of moderation and restraint; in others (and these are the more numerous) only an unquenchable thirst to acquire yet more. Such a man was the sorcerer Galoster, who once tried to conjure the powers deep beneath the earth for his benefit. His attempt was unsuccessful, and the magician was soon forgotten.

Seventy-five years later, a stranger named Toromes came to the city. He was particularly drawn to a certain old villa, now the estate of a young aristocrat named Severius who had purchased it following a long period of abandonment. After a few visits, Severius had changed: debauchery gave way to seclusion and sudden outbursts of anger, an aimless existence of odd obsession. This was six months past. Tonight Severius was struck down, and – as the priestly augurs foretold – strangers carried ill omen to the city.

The Omen: The characters arrive at Pentastadion by ship (the Referee may substitute other means of travel as appropriate). The *Wanneksber* carries glass prisms, expensive oils and wine; the PCs are the only passengers apart from captain Tal Metron and his crew. As the sailors

prepare for landing, Tal Metron is weighing his chances with the tax collectors: it is well known that Pentastadion's ruling oligarchy, the Syndic Lords would take the foam off the sea if it enriched their coffers. As the worn limestone walls and marble colonnades rise above the horizon, dusk falls on the city and it is dark by the time of arrival.

Yet Pentastadion is lifeless and silent; there are no passers-by in the streets and doors are locked. Even the port is still, except for a detail of guardsmen who hail the ship. As their leader, the gruff Strategos Grontez explains, the three gods of Pentastadion had simultaneously made the same pronouncement to their clerics: this night, strangers will bring ruin to the city and destruction to those who let them within their houses. Therefore, he is to prevent anyone from disembarking. However, Tal Metron, unwilling to spend the night on the high seas, argues that anchoring a ship should not technically count as going ashore; a pouch of coins changes hands and the matter is settled.

Now in safety, it is the captain's turn to decide that there must be something to the omens and that the presence of strangers on the *Wanneksber* would invite the same calamity on his head as on the city-dwellers: he orders the party to get off the ship and deal with the situation as they can. This is where the characters get caught: they must negotiate a deal with the guards or land in Pentastadion by other means, since both Tal Metron and the superstitious crew are afraid of fulfilling the prophecy, and they are willing to use force if pressed. The Strategos and his men seem firm, but they are susceptible to a generous bribe and either pleading or a good excuse – at the Referee's discretion, defeating or evading the guards may also work, as there are no reinforcements in the vicinity.

Tal Metron: Sailor 4; DC 7 (leather and shield); Atk scimitar 1d6+1 (Str 16) or throwing dagger 1d4+1; hp 14.

Sailors (8): Sailor 2; DC 7 (leather/shield); Atk scimitar 1d6 or throwing dagger 1d4; hp 13, 14, 8, 9, 13, 14, 13, 5.

Strategos Grontez: Warrior 3; DC 4 (breastplate and shield); Atk shortsword 1d6+3 (Str 18/20); hp 20.

Soldiers (12): War 2; DC 5 (scale/shield); Atk shortsword 1d6, 3 slings 1d4+1; hp 11, 5, 14, 9, 15, 14, 15, 18, 10, 11, 8, 14.

Soon after leaving the harbour, the characters are attacked by a strange assailant: a young girl dressed in plain, green-trimmed white tunic and holding a bloody dagger. She fights as if possessed (double normal attacks) and doesn't seem to be conscious of her actions. This is Dalé the serving maid, currently in a state of shock and hysteria. Fortunately, a single hit returns her to her senses, and once calmed she reveals a dark and chaotic tale.

Dalé's master, the nobleman Severius, is dead, killed by her own hands but not her own will. All was at the bidding of

Toromes, the dark stranger, an evil influence who somehow mastered Severius with tales of riches and power. Toromes had arrived half a year previous, and soon the two were obsessively seeking dark lore, often spending days on end in the subterranean vaults beneath the ancient villa. As the pair grew more fey and the guards more suspicious, some of the servants left the estate; a rift grew between the two men as well, and their arguments became ever more common and threatening. On multiple occasions Severius almost decided to get rid of his guest – but instead, this day brought tragedy to the house.

Owing to a strange sense of foreboding, Dalé eavesdropped on Toromes talking to himself in one of his manic fits, and to her horror, he was speaking of finally having no more need for the weak and dim-witted Severius, nor anyone else in the house. In horror, she tried to flee and warn someone, but she betrayed her location stepping on a glass totem. Afterward, she only recalls the sorcerer's piercing gaze and a dim, uncertain nightmare: when she regained her consciousness, she was standing in the villa's columned hall with a bloodied dagger in her hands and the body of Severius on his throne, dead from a dozen stab wounds. Then there are only images of flight: wide-open gates, deserted streets down the hill, and finally the alleyways and the characters. In the villa, something immense and horrid is afoot...

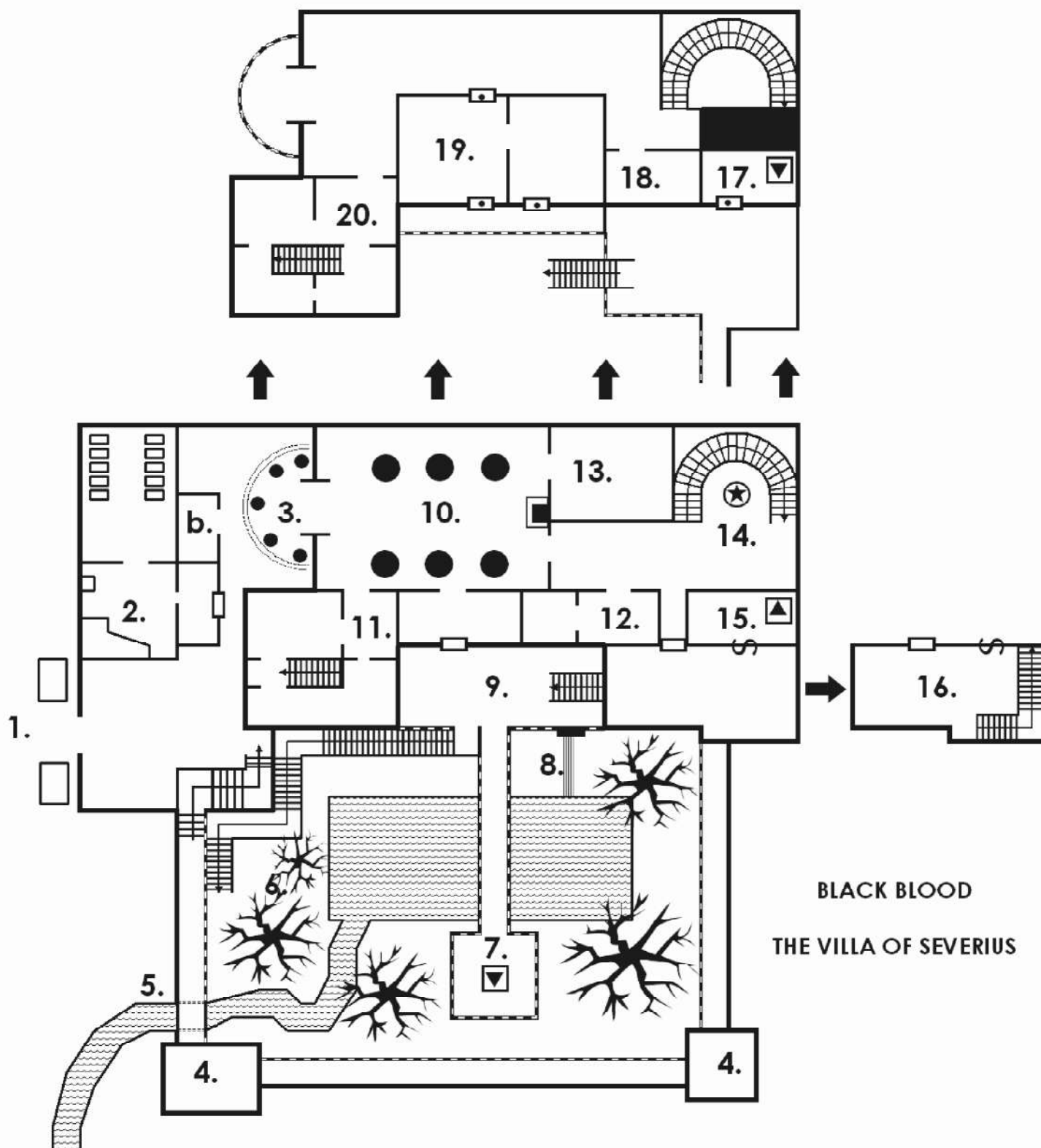


Dalé: Amazon 5; DC 13; Atk dagger 1d4+2; Str 18, Int 10, Wis 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Cha 16, hp 25.

Piecing the story together, the characters may easily arrive at the conclusion that, thanks to Dalé, they have happened on a particularly sinister plan, with the villa of Severius as key. The terror-stricken maid, who feels an inexplicable fascination with the place even after all that has taken place, is willing to guide them; in fact, she follows secretly even if refused – citing her fear of the dark city when found out. It only becomes apparent later on that her memories of events and places are incomplete: they are mere generalities, and on questioning, they reveal odd gaps, errors and obvious contradictions. No method of interrogation helps: if pressed hard, she becomes uneasy and her hysteria resurfaces, but the accurate facts do not.

The Black Blood: In reality, the reasons for Dalé's confusion go beyond the death of Severius or hypnotism, and rest on a fundamental lie: *although she refuses to acknowledge it even to herself, she is not human*, but an artificial being created by Toromes in bottomless recesses deep beneath the city, given shape and fragmentary memories from the corpse of a serving girl. The long experiments of Toromes – who is one and the same as ancient Galoster – have tapped into the **black blood of the earth**, the raw material of protoplasmic life; and invoking ancient symmetries he has created first misshapen monsters, then monsters in human shape, and finally a being of feeling and intellect: someone who believes herself to be another, invested with superior fighting ability and unquestioning obedience. While Dalé's memories tell her she has been a servant at a noble household until today, even these stolen recollections are weeks out of date: the real maid had carried on with her tasks after falling under hypnotism, just as Dalé was practicing ever more accurate cuts and stabs with a dagger in formless pits devoid of light. At last, Toromes chose today to send his creations against the unwitting inhabitants of the villa, and, having wrought terrible carnage, he once again retreated to the underworld to bring his final plan to fruition. However, something went wrong: under the terrible strain, Toromes' magical control over Dalé's mind loosened, prompting her to blind flight – right into the hands of the characters.

The Villa of Severius: The villa stands on a hill in the wealthy districts of Pentastadion, a two-level structure with a flat roof rising above a lower garden demarcated by high walls. The nearby houses are dark and silent – no citizens venture out this night! There are two entrances, both plainly visible: the yawning main gate (1.) and an arched outflow leading into the garden (5.). There are no signs of guards, nor are there any on either the grounds or inside.



Unless the module indicates otherwise, locked doors are of the standard difficulty to open or pick. At some locations, Dalé's possible reactions are described – these are guidelines left to the Referee's discretion, who should keep in mind that the girl has recently undergone great shocks and is still bewildered and confused. Dalé is a formidable combatant for a serving maid, but does not enter melee except as a last resort.

1. Gate: Two dark and empty guard shacks. The one thing of interest is a fetid black smear on the floor in one of the shacks, discovered only upon careful investigation.

2. Servants' quarters: A separate one-level building, currently unoccupied. Furniture consists of simple cots and other items typical of such places; there is also a small kitchen and a tool shed (b.).

3. Colonnade: Semi-circular space under a balcony. The thick columns cast long, dancing shadows across the courtyard due to the light from inside. There are thick terracotta bowls on both levels, and green vines of sufficient strength to hold the weight of a climbing man.

4. Guard towers: These are rectangular, 30' tall towers around the garden walls. Rooms inside are cluttered with a mixture of old junk and firewood; any of them would make a good hiding place.

5. Outflow: This arched entrance is where the stream emerges from the dark and still garden. The water is cold but only ankle-deep, and the bars blocking entry are so rusty that they may be easily snapped (open door check), or nimble characters may attempt to squeeze through... Not too far beyond the bars, a corpse lies face down in the dark stream, wearing a white tunic with a green trim. The man was slain with multiple knife stabs from behind. Dalé does not recognise the body, and only knows that it is wearing the dress of the servants.

6. Bushes: A tangle of thorny shrubs. A black shape within turns out to be another body; he is wearing rough linen tunic and breeches and a leather apron. Dalé doesn't recognise this one either.

7. Interior tower: In the middle of the garden stands a square tower of equal height to the outer walls, connected to the northern terrace by an arched bridge. The lower entrance was walled up long ago, but there is an iron trap-door on the flat roof (stuck, bend bars to open). Within the tower, a series of wooden ladders and rests descends to the lowest level (38). At the second rest, the way is blocked by a heap of junk. Moving the heavy crates would be long, hard work, but knocking them down is extremely noisy (and may destroy the way down, 1/3 chance), and going around is dangerous: the outermost plank is prone to break and send the character plummeting, 2d6 damage if he can grab onto the next rest, 8d6 otherwise. Searching through the junk, one may find a small, locked metal chest (too rusty to pick, but easy to strike the lock off). The chest contains a small jade idol on a dusty red velvet cushion; the indistinct kneeling form is worth 1500 gp, but it is also heavy and bulky enough that the character who decides to take it may not carry other equipment and will move about more slowly. Around the neck of the idol hangs a *silver cross*, holding 11 charges of priestly turning at the user's experience level (no class restriction).

8. Second outflow: A cascade of water emerges into the pool from a circular opening. The rusted grating is child's play to remove, and the pipe is large enough to crawl inside (on the other hand, there is no avoiding the cold water). This route leads beneath the villa, under the cellar well (21) and finally to the lower vaults (34). Note that there is a greysih ooze at both locations.

9. Terrace: A pleasant overlook above the garden. Next to the balustrade are two shortwords, stools, dice and a few bronze coins. There is no sign of guards. Terracotta bowls are filled with vividly coloured flowers and thorny plants on both the upper and lower terrace. It is possible to climb higher, to the balcony south of Severius' quarters.

10. Hall of columns: A marble and onyx reception hall of white walls and fat columns, illuminated by the queerly dancing light of a large globe placed in an intricate brass receptacle. The globe is worth 500 gp, bears a *continual light* spell, but it is too heavy to carry around casually. Before the throne, the tiles are dotted with stains of blood; the ghastly, slumped corpse of Severius sits lifeless on a throne facing the entrance, punctured severely in multiple locations. His hand bears a signet ring with a precious stone (250 gp) and clutches a round brass object. This is the lid of a decorative scroll case that has rolled into the shadows and may only be found if the room is searched. An old scrap of parchment bears the following message: *"...in all to a measure of seven amphorae. Then did he raise the villa, which was often praised for its elegance and the splendid view from its balcony. But Galoster left his dwelling not, and paid no heed to those who..."*

11. Room complex: A row of dark chambers, now dusty and out of use. There is old furniture, tarnished brass candelabra and square wooden boards. One of them turns out to be an oil painting if it is dusted off, revealing the face of a man of olive complexion and thick oily beard, wearing a stern gaze and black brocade. He bears the small black mark of a crescent moon below an eye, and wears a strange metal medallion around his neck (characters versed in theology will recognise it for the holy symbol of the dark and austere god Uthummaos). The painting is signed with the character Γ (gamma) in its corner. Dalé will immediately recognise the face on the old painting as that of Toromes the black stranger: the likeness is impeccable!



12. Bath: A few steps descend into a bathing chamber tiled with onyx, yellow salamandrite and black marble. The pool is filled with clean, silvery water; on a low round table rest eight colourful glass vials (bathing salts, ointments and scents worth 25 gp each for the glass and 10 gp each for their contents).

13. Armory: This place has obviously been out of use for a long time: a portcullis that could seal it is jammed in an open position, and the empty racks are dusty and cobwebbed. A long wooden case contains a well-oiled set of chainmail and a fine shortsword.

14. Stairs: This semi-circular stairway leads up to the second floor. In its shadow stands a rectangular slab of stone bearing a bizarre statue of some horrid being: a segmented barrel-like body with eight small beadlike protrusions (eyes?), thick trunk for legs and a mass of thin stalks emerging above the torso. The pedestal may be moved (a

careful observer can note faint grooves on the floor), revealing a shaft descending to the upper reaches of room 32.

15. Toromes's chamber: The only entry to this cramped but comfortable den is through the trapdoor from above; a pivoting secret door behind a mirror on the wall reveals a one-way exit. A narrow window provides a view of the harbour; before it stands a contraption consisting of a wooden frame and a notched lead bar rising at a 45° angle. A blackened iron bowl hanging from the ceiling contains charcoal and black metallic dust. There are two fine wooden boxes resting in a wall niche; one holds a set of small bronze weights, while the other contains five vials resting on a velvet cushion, all labelled:



healing (x2)



fire bomb (as 5 die fireball)



clairvoyance (there is a 50% probability that one sees a vast, empty black cavern instead of the intended target; the cave is devoid of light, various shades of black form a visible image... the cavern is filled by a placid black lake)



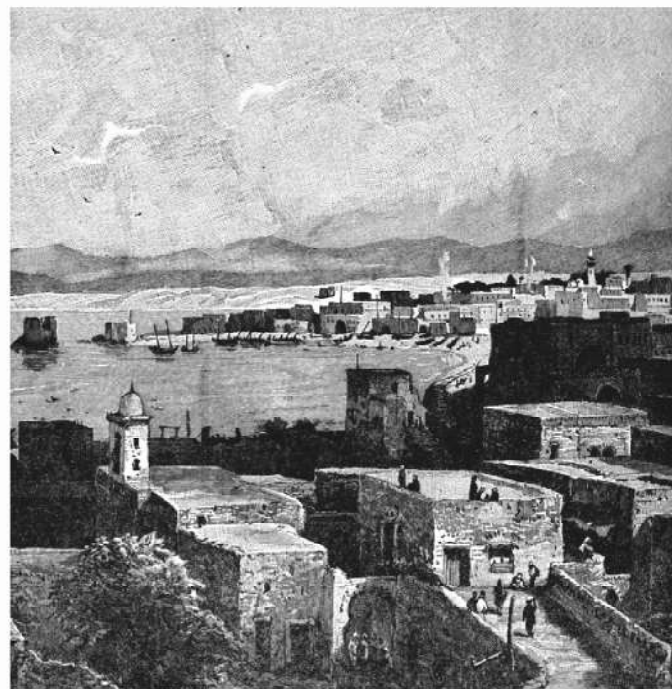
mind reading

Under the cushion, a 5" diameter metal amulet may be found in the shape shown at 11. This object contains the powers of Toromes, and if destroyed (almost impossible by normal means), the sorcerer will lose all of his powers. There is also a small cabinet holding scrolls in brass cases:

- astrological calculations (x3);
- compendium of weird segmented insects and ill-looking plants with indecipherable, spidery script;
- magical, labelled (*dimension portal*, *spell recollection enhancer*, *flame charm*);
- blank (if subjected to *detect sorcery* or *read magical writings*, the following spells appear: *lesser globe of spell invulnerability*, *summon monster II*, *dispel magic* x2);
- genealogies of Pentastadion families (x2, neither Toromes/Galoster nor Severius are mentioned).

16. Guard room: A low-ceilinged chamber below the upper terrace, with an old wooden table and three-legged stools. There is a steady dripping sound: drops of blood from a corpse hanging from the iron chandelier, stabbed multiple times. (Dale: "I know this one!" ... But on second glance, she knows him not. "No...") There is a secret door to the north, but it may not be opened from this side.

17. Tool shed: Securely locked room with various gardening implements: sacks, shears, rakes, etc. Next to the wall are crates of cloth; it is visible in the dust that one has been moved recently, revealing a trapdoor to 15.



18. Altar nook: This is a simple, untended house altar to Dummuz, a minor deity of fresh grain. There is old, mouldy bread in a reed basket before the idol. If the characters clean up a bit and pay their respects, Dummuz turns the loaves afresh: three for 1d3 points of healing and a hour-long *blessing* spell each.

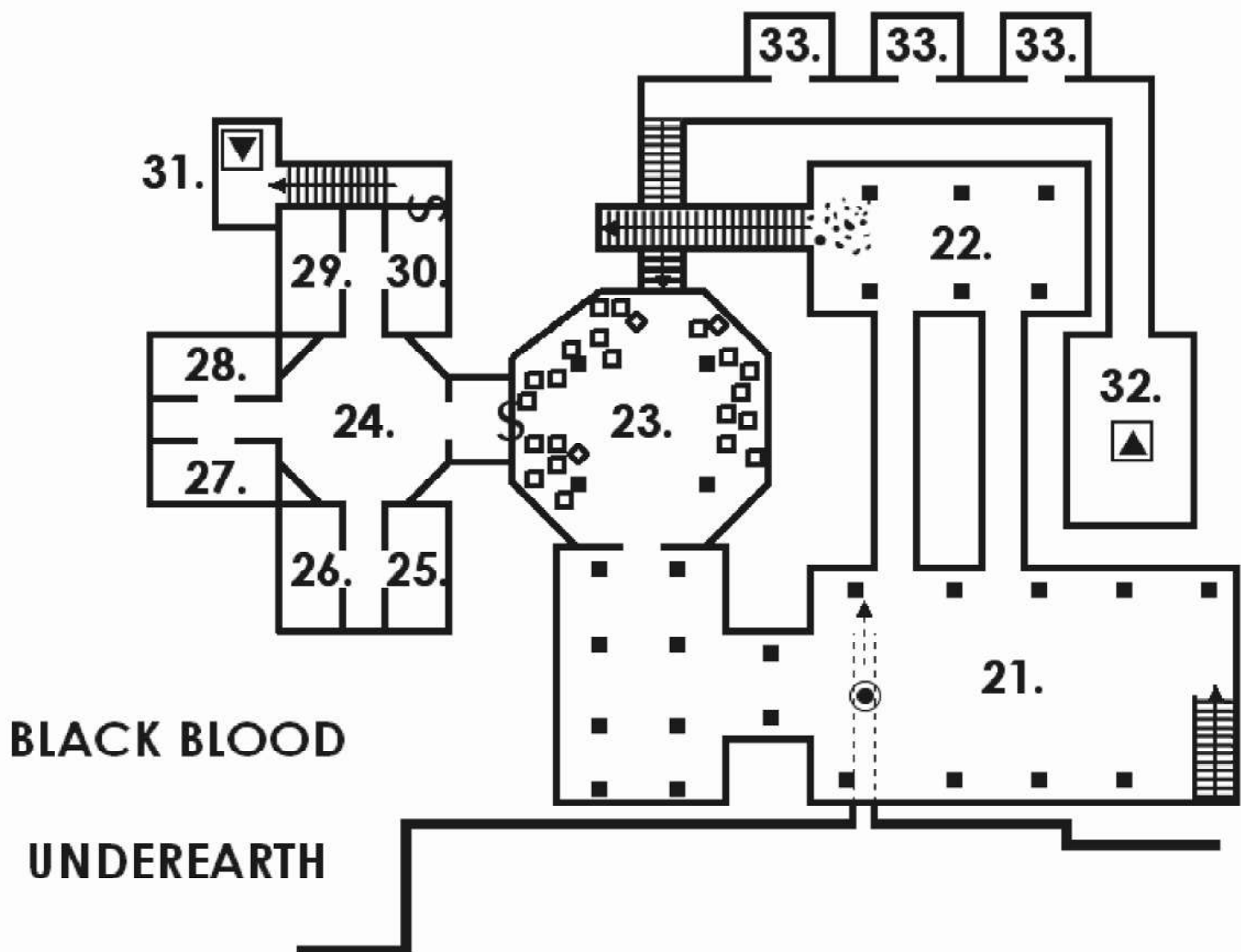
19. Severius's quarters: Two rooms, locked from both directions; formerly in better shape. The western room contains a reading lectern and an X-shaped chair with no back-rest, as well as ink, quill, small scales, and a four-legged bowl. A silver statuette worth 170 gp stands on a pedestal: a bull-headed man in beggar's clothes. Next to the lectern is a trunk of old scrolls of no value. The room to the east is a sleeping chamber with a canopied bed. The walls hold a collection of mundane weapons – one is a gold-bladed ceremonial gladius worth 900 gp, but this only becomes apparent unsheathed. Next to the bed is a copper jar filled with opium pastilles worth 200 gp.

20. Upper room complex: An entire wing of guest rooms. Although in fair upkeep, it is clear they haven't been used in a long while.



Underearth

21. Cellar: Vaulted limestone cellar with blackened walls. Mounds of amphorae are piled against them, holding resinous wine, golden and sweet. Next to the stairs, there are signs of a past struggle – broken sword hilts, overturned amphorae, chairs and some kind of black stain on the stones that's only barely noticeable by torchlight.



Dalé has a bad feeling about the place, and tries to keep herself and the party away from the west exit. A well is plugged with a round stone disk; if removed, there seems to be a soft opal glow in the shaft. The source is a jade hand (300 gp) with *permanent light* that has been engulfed by a greyish ooze (HD 3+3; hp 18; DC 8; Atk slime 2d8; corrosion, immune to spells, heat, cold.)

22. Opening: This section of the cellars is out of regular use, and it is veiled in heavy grey cobwebs. Wooden casks with honey-sweet nectar are found here. Barrels have been removed from before the western wall, and there is now a narrow, irregular gap revealing steep stairs down... Characters listening may hear shuffling steps and idiotic murmurs from the patrolling ape-men below.

23. Abattoir: Characters stepping into this octagonal storage are greeted by a horrid scene. Amidst piles of crates and under the gaze of two statues of beautiful robed women lie a tangle of bloody, mangled bodies, the victims of a great massacre. The remains of five to seven men and women are here strewn about. The bodies show dreadful tear wounds and the marks of strong claws, but also

something else – the precise marks of dagger thrusts. If she enters the room, Dalé suffers a massive shock, only able to shrink back and whimper, repeating words such as “No... no... it is untrue...not this...” She is also terrified to death, and if the bodies are disturbed, overwhelmed by sheer hysteria. She pleads to go elsewhere, anywhere – and where? Naturally through the secret door to the west. (She must be cornered to get this piece of information.)

24. The weaver in the vault: Ancient vaulted chambers leprous with saltpetre and mould. In addition to these antique encrustations, the walls are covered with fine grey filaments. Right beyond the entrance is a torn piece of bloodstained white cloth– the trail leads to the centre of the chamber where it is no longer seen. The room complex is the home of the weaver in the vault, which coalesces out of thin air if the characters enter more than three side-vaults or make loud noises. This Otusian nightmare resembles a bloated sea-green spider glowing with a honey light, stalking on nimble feet like the tapping of fingers and the breath of wind. **The weaver in the vault:** HD 4+4; hp 22; DC 6; Atk bite 1d6+poison (certain death in 2d6x10 minutes).

25–26. Crypts: White webs almost fill these burial chambers, phosphorescent in lantern-light. They cover the sarcophagi entirely, as well as the seven linen-wrapped bodies interred about them. Frescoes are visible, red in room 25 and blue in 26. If the webs or resting places are bothered, corpses animate in both crypts. The sarcophagi contain various minor baubles totalling 100 gp. A carved jade vial in the shape of a skull (120 gp) holds 4 doses of *Yag Ammun's terrible dust* (airborne poison, save or take 3d6 hp damage, repeat next round). **Zombies (7):** HD 2; hp 14,12,10,8,6, 5,3; DC 8; Atk slam 1d8; strike last.

27–28. Crypts: As above, but there are also statues depicting cowed figures. Room 27 is pale green while 28 is an otherworldly indigo, depicting foreign landscapes. 40 gp worth of grave goods. **Zombies (5):** hp 10,10,10,7,3.

29. Crypt: Brown frescoes showing a procession of rotting cadavers. **Zombies (5):** hp 13,11,9,5,4.

30. Disturbed crypt: Shreds of cobwebs and three dismembered zombies. The bloodstained secret door is easily located. Walls here are black, the frescoes showing human sacrifice performed on the living by withered corpses, while their companions peer from judges' (?) pews.

31. The last crypt: This deep place of burial is simple and cold. There is no body in the sarcophagus, only a metal hatch and iron rungs down to 42 (right behind the shadow gate). Slumped in the corner of the crypt is the slender body of a young woman in a green-trimmed white tunic, dead from terrible stab wounds. The face – what remains intact – could pass for Dalé's twin sister. After this encounter, her hysteria is gone and replaced with determined resignation to see it all to the end – whatever it takes.

32. The dome of stars: A tall domed chamber painted pitch black, under room 14 and accessible from the secret shaft above or the stairs below. The blackness is punctuated by "stars", dots glowing with a faint luminescence. This is a relatively weak enchantment; however, some of the stars are slowly moving along spiral trajectories – seven magical gems worth 40 gp each. From close up, the light is hypnotic if observed for more than two rounds: save vs. spell or draw weapon and attack self every round until the spell is broken (a new save may be rolled each round). The flying gemstones may be captured, but this will be no easy task, and once removed they lose their magic.

33. The three gods of Pentastadion: In dusty recesses are three large idols; man-shaped but with no face or features. Inscriptions, in order:

FUTILITY
IGNORANCE
INDIFFERENCE

Underearth II

34. Font: The ultimate source of the stream flowing into the garden pool (8): the water emerges from the carved head of a bat-like horror, lacking a mouth but having three holes where its jaw would be. There is a smell of cold wetness, and this environment has attracted a greyish ooze which attacks the first unwary character, joined in 1d3 rounds by its companion from 21. If there is a noisy altercation, the ape-men may be likewise attracted. **Greyish Ooze:** HD 3+3; hp 17; DC 8; Atk slime 2d8; corrosion, immune to spells, heat and cold.



35. Fresco room: The walls here are painted black, but the different tones are mixed with such mastery that they form a distinct image: the swirling blackness forced back by a robe-clad man holding up a round metal object (the design is the same as in 11).

36. Hall of the grand mechanics: A bizarre scene: hanging in midair in the high hall, interlocked metal circles turn with ponderous deliberation without any visible means of support. The otherworldly, faintly iridescent metal shapes form an intricate network, and may not be moved by physical force. In the side-chamber marked a, there are three 4' tall black step pyramids made of thick sheets of the same metal. The pyramids emit a low hum; touched with a metal object, the character feels a surge of power while the humming grows weaker. In two rounds, the object drains all latent energy and the wondrous structures in the air come crashing down, making a terrible noise and drawing all monsters on the level to this location. The object imbued by the power of the pyramids seems to vibrate with the strain of absorbed power; touched to others, it hums and resonates. This energy has several potential uses, subject to the players' creativity and the Referee's adjudication. For example, if the object is a weapon, the charge can be expended in the next battle for double damage on all hits, etc. A few possibilities specific to this module are given later.

37. Torormes's quarters: This room complex is the underground workshop of the dark sorcerer.

a. A large silver-traced magic circle spans almost the entire width of the chamber. The stone floor within the circle is worn, crunching underfoot if walked on. It is as if the pockmarked surface has been subjected to potent acids.

b. Thick glass tanks here contain black, slightly fizzy water. The liquid is poison; if a tank is unstopped, the noxious gas escapes (1d2+1 rounds, save vs. poison or take 2d6 hp/rd). The mixture is otherwise too weak to be of use.

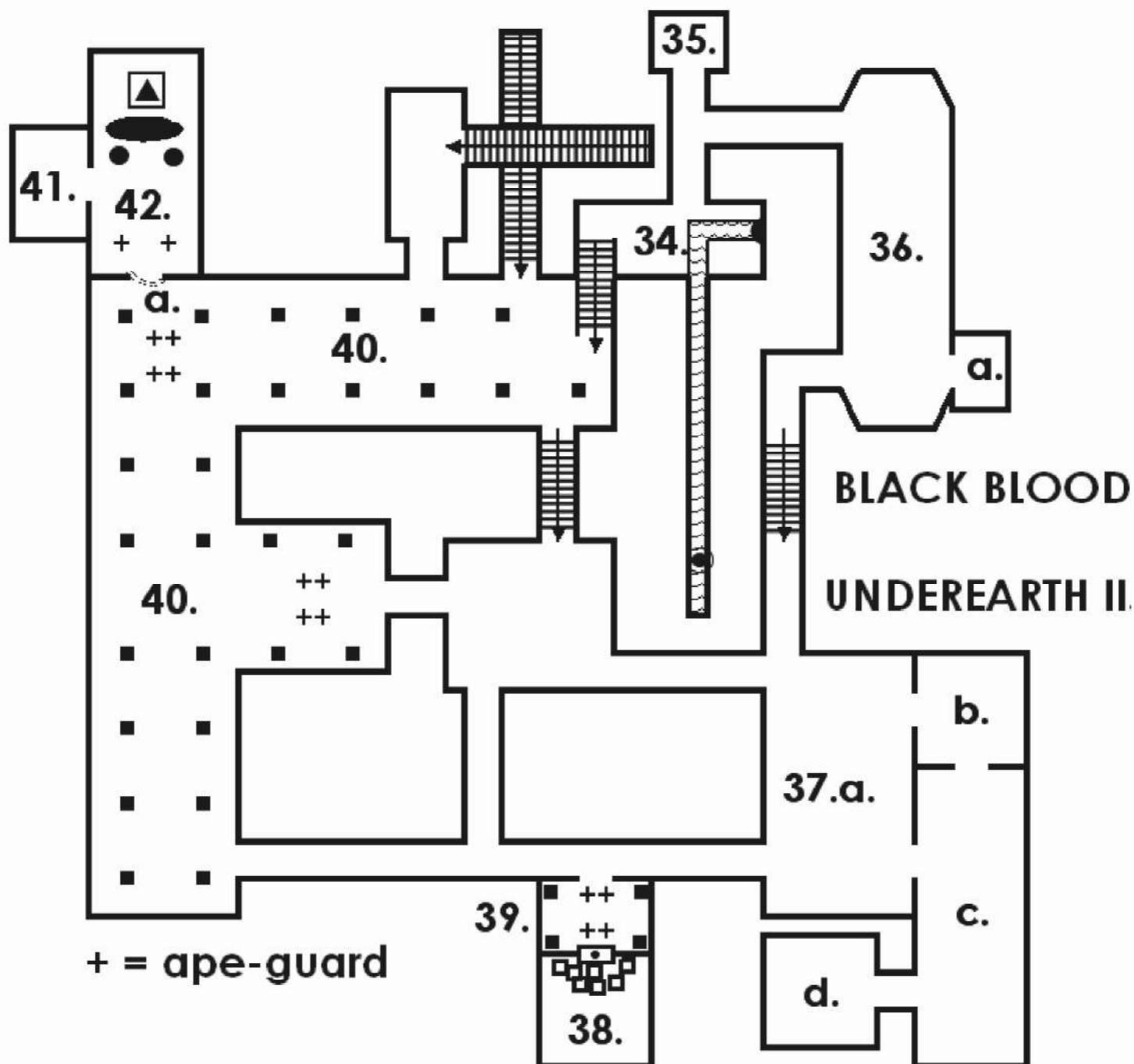
c. Den of cushions and rugs – four rather bulky carpets on the wall are worth 200(x2) and 100(x2) gp. Scented oil

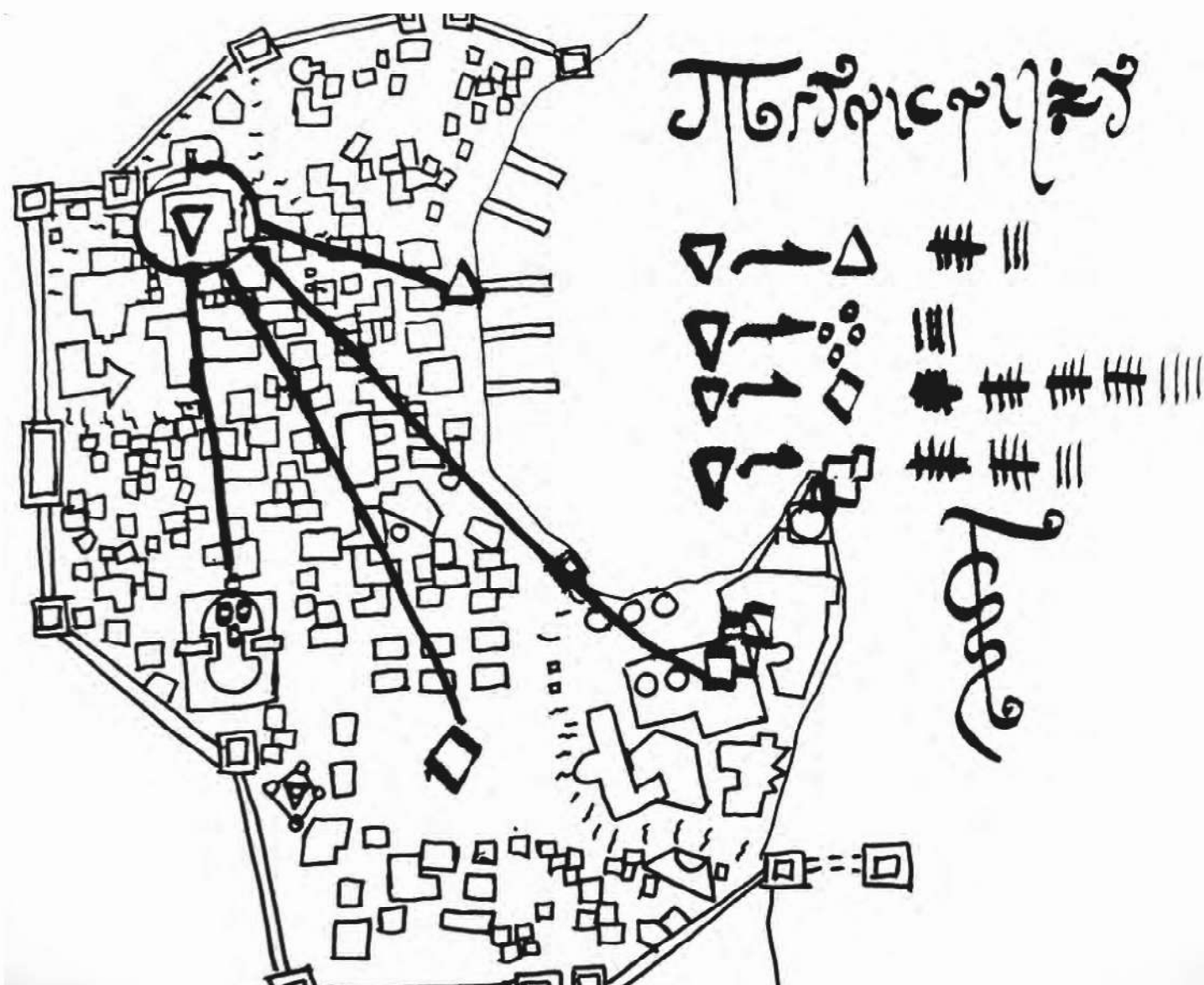
healing (x2)



Levitation

d. Small chamber behind a heavy black curtain. A thick crystal slab has been sunk into the floor, approximately 5' tall and thick enough that a man might just reach around it. A small object is suspended in the centre of the smoky crystal: a tuning fork made from an exotic and colourful alloy. Music or resonant sounds awaken the fork and send its hum through the slab; if done with sufficient skill, the slab splits through the middle and shatters into myriad





fragments, the fork falling down with a final, clear clink. Alternatively, a weapon charged in **36** may work, but in this case, the crystal explodes for 3d4 points of damage, sending jagged shards into flesh and through armour. Characters standing further from the crystal may roll for half damage; there is a 25% probability the weapon used for the purpose is also shattered. Lacking other creative methods, the crystal is entire impervious to harm.

38. Under the tower: An abandoned storage area below the garden tower (7). Crates and trunks are piled here, containing bundles of mouldy herbs, spices and ingots of brass and bronze. Everything is old, of shoddy quality and worthless. There is a rusted door behind the crates.

39. Antechamber: A small columned chamber decorated with white marble. Here stand guardians: atavistic man-apes bearing heavy tridents in their gnarled hands. These beasts are creations of Toromes, made from the black blood of the earth in a mockery of humankind. The ape-men possess crude features and a guttural "speech" devoid

of reason and meaning. If slain, they destabilise in 10–15 minutes, collapsing first into black sludge, then an indistinct dark smear on the ground. **Man-apes (4):** LVL 3; hp 16,16,15,9; DC 8; Atk trident 1d8.

40. Hall of columns: A veritable forest of slender rectangular columns support the clammy black ceiling. The vast space is illuminated by chaotically dancing lights: on bonfires among the columns, human meat is being roasted; chewed-up bones litter the ground while brutish ape-men gobble up half-bloody charred pieces. In the series of chambers there are eight ape-men: they continuously walk to and fro, muttering inarticulately or gazing at the jumping shadows with obsessive half-animal eyes. Like the others, they are magical creations, and once killed they soon destabilise into a heap of dark sludge and then dissolve altogether. **Ape-men (8):** LVL 3; hp 20,17,16,15,14,11,10,5; DC 8; Atk trident 1d8.

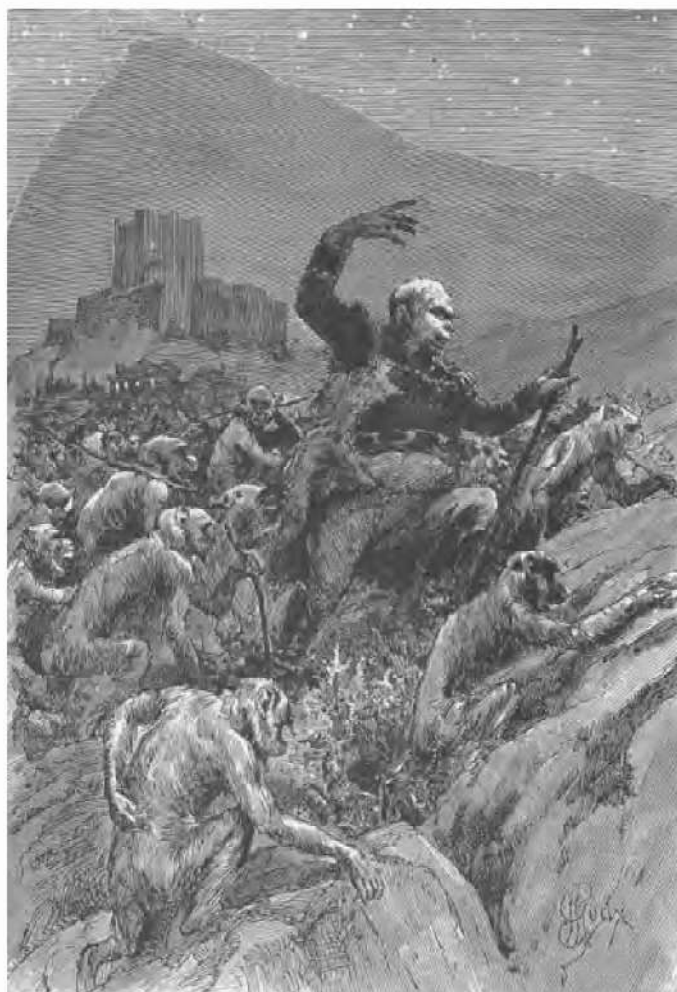
a. A curtain of lights: the arched entrance is intersected by a curtain of vibrating, swirling colours. If someone looks within, he falls under a hypnotic force unless he makes a

save vs. spells. If failed, another save must be made: if this is also failed, the character attacks everyone he sees in blind ferocity, and only a solid blow will return him to his senses. If the save succeeds, he merely stands mesmerised until dragged away from the curtain. The curtain is impassable by normal means. The tuning fork found in Toromes's quarters (37d) brings it down in a shower of shards: it is as if a rainbow-coloured ice floe split in its middle and fell into itself. *Dispel magic* also works, as may other methods if the Referee judges them appropriate.

41. Storage: A storeroom packed with dusty old mystical paraphernalia – braziers, iron bowls, two gongs, heavy and dusty drapes, worm-gnawed leather drums and other accoutrement. Nothing of value is present.

42. The gate: The long chamber is crisscrossed by beams of shadows which no light illuminates. To the north, there is a great circular gate swirling with inky darkness; before the gate, weird flames dance in two crude stone bowls. Toromes, the dark sorcerer stands before the portal to the Underworld. If he sees the characters approach, he flees through the gate and leaves the fight to his two ape-man guards. These freshly created monstrosities are still very unstable: if the characters surprise Toromes, he fails in his concentration and the ape-men immediately disincorporate.

Ape-men (2): LVL 3; hp 22,15; DC 8; Atk trident 1d8.



Beyond the gate of shadows – Black Blood: The gate opens onto a vast black cavern somewhere deep beneath the earth. The walls are black, as is the crumbling gravel under the characters' feet and the placid lake of dark protoplasm surrounding the gravel-island. Though in total darkness, the otherworldly radiance of the pitchy lake reveals black in different shades, allowing a weird form of vision. Not far from this side of the gate on the lake's edge stands Toromes, conjuring a massive dark shape from the depths. Unless the characters have tarried too long before passing the gate, he loses his concentration and the torso collapses back into the dark element (otherwise, action has to be swift and decisive: the monster, if stable, has the powers of a rock giant). The ambitious sorcerer, who has used up all his powers to open the gate, cannot use any spells due to mental exertion, but he has almost complete control over the mass, the black blood of the earth. In this place, he is invulnerable to weapons and magic; moreover, the sheath of dark emptiness that surrounds him, the will of the god Uthummaos, prevents others from approaching him within 10'. If he wishes, he can create a hundred myrmidons or fantastic horrors of the imagination from the protoplasm, or living and feeling humans who would not know they were the creations of another's will. Being aware of this edge, Toromes tries to bide his time and waste the characters' while his mind quickly forges a larger force from the lake which he can use to assault and overwhelm the characters from all directions – the grotesque horde may take any shape, although its members will be even more formless than usual.

If Dalé is alive, the sorcerer tries to extort the party with her life – threatening that he can snuff her out or send her against the characters with a single command (however, if he tries to do so, the scheme fails: the shocks have disrupted the link between creator and creature). Whether the tactic is successful or not, he tries to gain more valuable minutes or moments with maniacal rants verging on hysteria and tears – showing all signs of a sick personality close to nervous collapse or a manic outburst. A possible arc:

- The black blood... the source of all life, a protoplasm without mind or purpose... containing the secrets of creation... black depths in the heart of the earth...
- What powers lie within this material – he who had it in his hands could create monsters... men...create *you*... create *GODS*!
- So why doesn't Dalé remember the time she arrived in Severius's service? Why doesn't she truly know the villa? But surely, she will remember the dagger, the dagger and those she killed with it, one after the other! Such a perfect work, invested with false memories stolen from a worthless serving maid. And what more could be done with all this knowledge!
- Let us take Pentastadion and the Syndic Lords – or perhaps Glourm; the other cities? Why wouldn't someone who can become a tyrant, become a demi-god, a god? *THE MASTER OF AN ENTIRE WORLD?*

If the characters have been so far unable to stop the sorcerer or cluelessly fell for his words, they have failed: Toromes loses his self-control, and in triumphant hysteria, he sends the horde created from the black blood against them. If PCs manage to flee from the cavern and escape the myriad hunters to emerge alive from the villa, they may praise the gods: however, the final day of Pentastadion as it is now known has arrived.

Possible solutions: Multiple plans may stop Toromes. The key mostly lies in crushing the sorcerer's ego and self-confidence, or goading him into full hysteria in the hope he commits a fatal error. A few methods are listed here, but others may work at the Referee's discretion.

- If the characters found Toromes's amulet (15), they may use it as a bargaining chip or even corner their opponent with it. This metal medallion is the source of his power, and if it is destroyed (most easily accomplished by hurling it into the lake), he is left weak and infirm. Although there are few direct hints towards this in the module (most notably the fresco at 35), the amulet gives command over the black blood: while holding it, the character may bring the protoplasm under his command and use it for his own purposes (although the *long-term* consequences of this open interesting new dilemmas)...
- Dalé is the sorcerer's Achilles heel. Toromes sees the girl as a trifle, a discarded tool; therefore, if the characters prove that she has an individual will and personality, or that she has grown beyond the role originally chosen for her, skilful and insolent reasoning can drive him into a blind rage, with unintended consequences.
- Ringing the tuning fork (37d) disrupts Toromes' concentration and annoys him visibly, especially if it was used to gain entry into the room of the gate. He tries to use monsters drawn in haste from the protoplasm to destroy the character possessing it, but if he is prevented from this for at least four rounds, he loses his grasp over the immense powers he has controlled.

If Toromes loses control over the black blood, it turns against him when he would send it against the characters. The dark, viscous mass overwhelms the power-mad sorcerer and devours him instantly. Then the dark lake rises, washing over the island of rubble and sweeping it into its unfathomable depths (see **epilogue**). If the characters are able to hold Toromes in check without driving him into a maniacal frenzy, he looks for a way of escape like a cornered animal; finally, using the *ring of spirits* in his possession, he orders the powers of the earth to bring him in safety to the lands of Nisir; with this, he disappears from before the eyes of the characters (although surely not *forever*...). The black blood, agitated as above, is let loose (see **epilogue**), although in this situation, the characters should have an easier time fleeing it. Finally, if the characters cannot think of a suitable idea before their time runs out, Toromes sends the black blood against the party, and that will be the end of them (see **another epilogue**).

Toromes: Mage 9; hp 29; DC 2 (*bracers*, Dexterity); Atk *dagger* +1 1d4+1; Lawful Evil; Str 12, Int 17, Wis 7, Dex 17, Con 12, Cha 17; *ring of spirits* (in FO! #2, calls spirits for consultation & transport); no spells currently memorised.

Epilogue: With Toromes' demise or flight, there is nothing to keep the disturbed protoplasm at bay, and like dough it rises to cover its surroundings. Fortunately, it is fairly sluggish: if the characters do not hesitate, carry too much, or waste time, they should be able to flee it. A portion of the mass crashes through the shadow-gate into the upper world before it destroys the portal, pursuing the source of its disturbance with mindless determination. The powers of the mass are equivalent to ten ebony puddings. Pursuit lasts until the characters reach the surface: here, the night is nearing its end, and if the characters are not engulfed by the protoplasm the rising disk of Fomalhaut bathes the world in its dark brilliance, and the monster of the depths dissolves into wisps of thick smoke, a faint presence, and finally nothingness. **Black Blood:** HD 10x 10; hp 400; DC 6; Atk pudding 3d8; corrosion, division, impervious to cold and electricity.

There remains a final question: what happens to Dalé? In her present state, the sorcery-created girl will never make it alive from the grotto, never mind Severius's accursed villa. Therefore, unless one of the players mentions helping her, she should be presumed lost in the calamity, to be seen no more. If she is rescued, there may be several fates in store for her: at this point, she is dependent on others, and her precise personality and motivations will be created through her interactions with the world. This responsibility, however, lies outside the scope of this module.

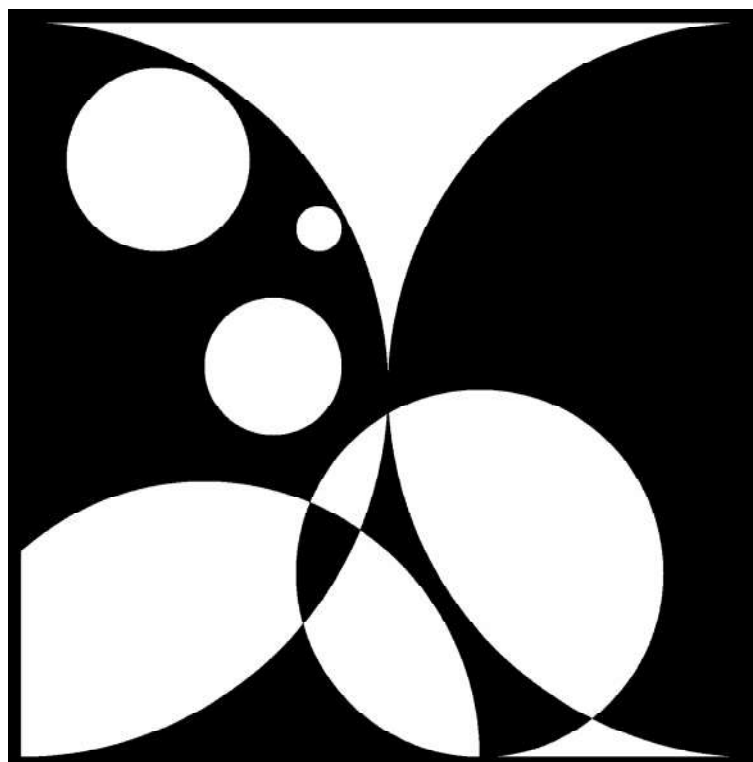
Alternate epilogue: Let us assume Toromes is unstoppable and succeeds his plans: not an impossible development. In this case, a final dusk falls on the Syndic Lords and Pentastadion as it is known today, and a new chapter opens in the history of the city and most likely the entire coast. One might conclude the adventure by beginning it anew: the characters, travelling on a fast ship, are nearing the mainland. The sailors prepare to disembark, while the captain wonders about his chances with the tax collectors. Slowly, dusk falls as the walls of the city rise above the horizon: the city where Toromes's word is law. Ω



Towards Fomalhaut

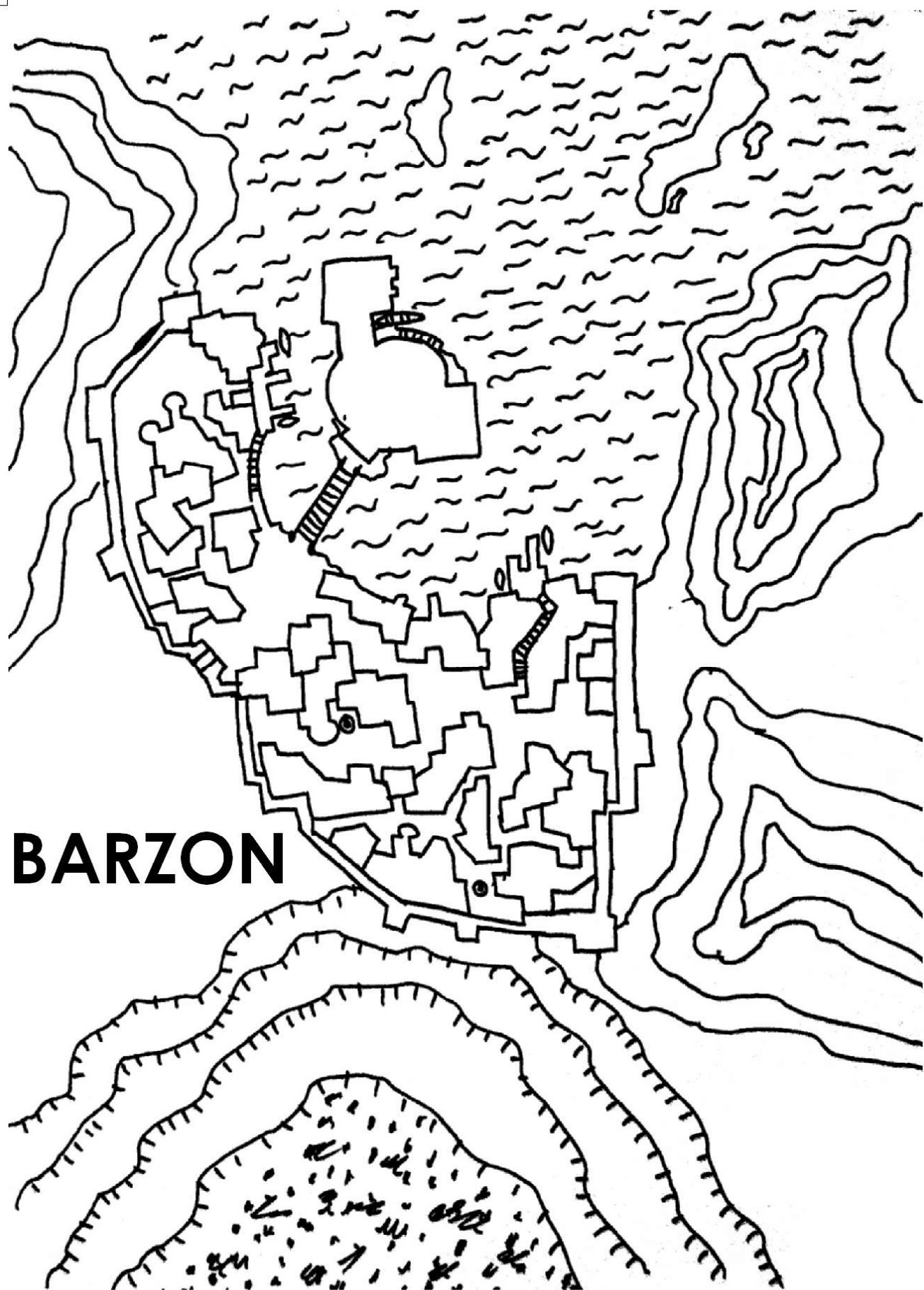
The Isle of Barzon, The Tower of Birds, Pentastadion

by Gabor Lux



Adventure scenarios for low- to mid-level characters

E.M.D.T. 16.–E



Towards Fomalhaut

by Gabor Lux

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Playtesters II: Akos Barta (Zorlan, Odbuj's Son, Archer 3), Laszlo Simonits (Tio Blackbird, Fighter 3), Gyorgy Gergovatz (Hagdor Ordur, Cleric 3) and Marcell Pap (Habbar al'Hadr, Thief 3); 2nd party: Kalman Farago (Harmonos, Champion of Karttekeza, Archer 2/Illusionist 2), Gabor Izapy (Beristo Akelis, Cleric 4 of Mereskan, God of Bats) and Tamas Szabo (Kher'tar, Magic-User 5)
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Dedicated to Leigh Brackett and Jack Vance, whose stories of strangeness and adventure have inspired me over numerous campaigns and adventures

The Isle of Barzon was originally published in **Knockspell #2**. See <http://www.swordsandwizardry.com/> for all issues. The Tower of Birds and Pentastadion were originally published in **Fight On! #2** and **#5**, respectively. See <http://fightonmagazine.com/> for all issues.
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I. The Isle of Barzon

Background

Power on the world of Fomalhaut takes many forms, from pragmatic appeals to human self interest to naked coercion. The worship of divine beings can manifest in either of these sterile extremes, as well as a dozen varieties between the two: there are as many specific arrangements as there are gods. Yet the power of gods (who, like all of us, should themselves be entitled to the right to act in accordance with their own welfare) more often than not serves the weal of their direct subordinates before their worshippers – or, it is said, the gods themselves. So it was on the Isle of Barzon, a small island ruled by an empire not much larger...

The mountainous terrain of Barzon, a geography of jagged mountains and deep valleys, rises proudly above sea level; against the crushing waves, the dark rocks look as if they were unvanquishable battlements. It is not possible to moor ships safely anywhere except a protected bay to the north, right below the towers of Skei (which means Glory-in-the-Sky), and a lesser, hidden channel to the south that runs to the small fortress Modax (which means Immense Shield). The waters are patrolled by the island's war galley, the Mesk (Imperious), under command of Denna Swaura, harsh commander of Barzon's soldiers. The galley intercepts all ships within its range. The valleys of the island are blooming with strange flowers that bring uneasy dreams (-2 to saving throw when trying to avoid sleep while proceeding through), and are also populated by an

abundance of wild sheep. The Flying Gods hunt them according to their Purpose.

The city state Skei is haughty seat of this empire, massive brick and concrete structures interlinked by high bridges against the sky, colourless save for the yellow-black of woven curtains in the doors opening from the balconies, or the occasional house plant or flower one may see in a high window... there is an absence of activity on the streets, as life takes place within the network of interconnected towers, most the home to a large extended family. The total population of Skei is 600, of whom 90 are soldiers. Commander Denna Swaura, a plain, cold and efficient woman of green eyes and rust-coloured hair hinting at amazon descent, is their leader.

Regular Soldiers (60): Fighter 1; AC 15 (ring mail, large shield); Atk +1 spear 1d8+2; +2/+0/+0.

Hp	1	5	4
	3	10	3
	7	2	7
	8	3	8
	2	6	4
	9	1	2
	6	1	3
	6	8	5
	7	1	1
	4	5	8
	2	10	4
	3	4	3
	8	2	9
	3	4	9
	6	4	5

1	9	5
3	6	10
1	2	5
3	1	5
2	4	4

Trained Soldiers (30): Fighter 2+1; AC 16 (ring mail, large shield, Dex); Atk +3 spear 1d8+3 or +3 shortbow 1d6; +4/+1/+1.

Hp	15	10	10
	12	17	8
	8	15	15
	16	6	14
	11	18	5
	10	10	15
	12	17	6
	20	14	10
	11	13	13
	11	13	13

Denna Swaura: Fighter 4; AC 17 (chain shirt, large shield, Dex); Atk +6 bastard sword 1d10+4; +5/+2/+2; 15/13/14/12/13/10; LN.

Hp 31

The small tower-fortress of Modax on the southern periphery of the island is held by 30 additional soldiers, who are more loyal to Trademaster Svanth Dorl than the inhabitants of Skei, and also more skilled in combat.

The Soliders of Modax (30): Fighter 2+2; AC 17 (ring mail, large shield, Dex); Atk +4 spear 1d8+4 or +4 shortbow 1d6; +5/+2/+2.

Hp	16	11	11
	17	14	18
	23	9	13
	17	13	11
	16	17	22
	17	15	18
	16	16	13
	11	20	12
	21	9	8
	18	15	19

Barzon is a civilisation of diligent craftsmen who fashion woven mats and vivid tapestries from the legs, wings and chitin shell of the Flying Gods, giant wasps lairing in an abandoned wing of Trademaster Svanth Dorl's majestic palace in the middle of the bay. The Flying Gods attack all outlanders who are not in the company of soldiers; they also carry away sinners who, by action, thought or recalcitrance blaspheme against their inscrutable Purpose. On the Festival of Ascendance, they descend upon spies and heretics who are chained to a large concrete bloc in the middle of Skei's central square. Occasionally, one flies above the green waste at the foot of Skei, and falls lifeless amidst the rubble. The citizens then carry it back to the city in reverence, and use its hallowed Shell to create various goods.



Skei

1. Skybreak Palace: The unfriendly, round fortress, although constructed much more recently than the concrete towers, already shows signs of decay. The entire northern wing is uninhabited and left to the giant wasps; the rest of the complex is likewise mostly empty, with vast dark hallways and cold gathering chambers. In addition to most soldiers and Denna Swaura, Trademaster Svanth Dorl also maintains his court at this location.

Clad in a voluminous fur cloak and holding a heavy metal staff, his ruddy face and squat stature are less prominent. Svanth Dorl possesses the Cube of Wasp Control, a technological device which allows him telepathic control over the Flying Gods. Presently, his major objective is to decimate Skei's elite on the upcoming Festival of Ascendance to further bolster his rule (the precise date will be T -1d4+1 days when the characters arrive). Svanth Dorl is fond of nothing more than yelling "Cut them into wasp food!"; he is also a tremendous xenophobe, although a company of dangerous heretics and spies abusing the island's hospitality may just come in handy in his present situation. Svanth Dorl shares his decorative although empty quarters with two wives, Ura and Issema. These sisters are dark-haired, dark-eyed, unsympathetic creatures whose mind has eroded due to the frequent consumption of scrape, a drug that turns users dull and impassive.

Giant Wasps (36): HD 5; AC 15; Atk +5 sting 2d4 + poison (Average, paralysis); +4/+1/+1; N.

Hp	15	26	12
	21	21	25
	16	32	27
	30	16	25
	17	15	30
	31	29	29
	16	19	28
	26	28	13
	11	22	24
	31	20	20
	32	22	
	25		
	19		
	30		
	26		

Trademaster Svanth Dorl: Thief 2+2; Init +6; AC 14 (Dex, thick fur cloak); Atk +3 staff 1d6+3 or +3 dagger 1d4+2 + poison (Average Fortitude, paralysis); +2/+5/+2; CE; *potion of invisibility**2.

Hp 13

Deep beneath Skybreak Palace is a damp crypt-hall almost as wide as the central part of the fortress. Here lie the sarcophagi of Barzon's old kings: four of the seven have been broken, and are now filled with dark waters. The others:

a) Auska: mummy-woman in rotted lace; pointed teeth and foul smell. She has the abilities of both mummy and vampire. Treasure: 300 gp diadem, 500 gp gem box, *candle of invocation* (evil), *periapt of foul rotting*.

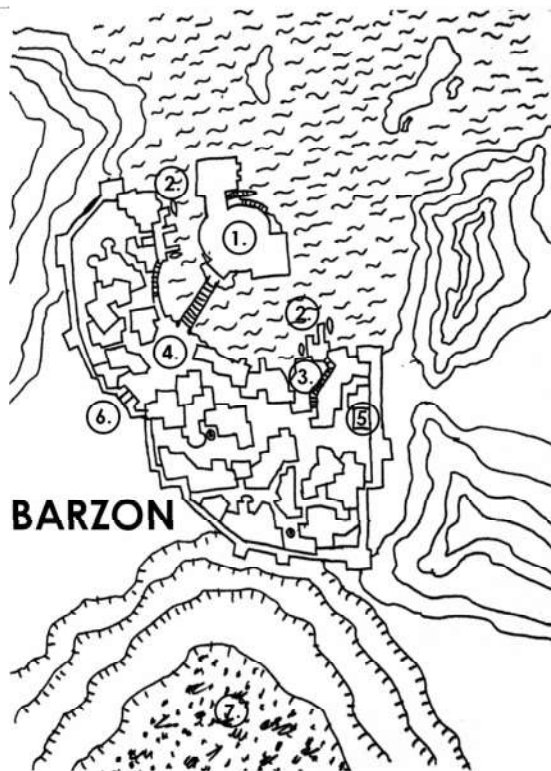
b) Barzon III: this corpse has shrivelled into a foul leathery blackness, which is in turn covered by a fine layer of yellow mould. Attacks as zombie, melee hits and many spells just stir up the mould cloud. Treasure consists of 60 gp silver necklace, 500 gp dragon tooth dagger +1, oil of ESP, potion of cure disease.

c) Barzon IV: all that remains is a dark glistening putrescence (black pudding).

Auska, Mummy-Vampire: HD 7+2***; AC 18; Atk +9 claws 1d6+6 + 2d4 Con + rot (Average Fortitude, 1d6 Str, Con, Cha/week) or +9 bite 1d6+6 + 2d4 Con; Spec damage reduction 10/+2, immune to cold and mind-affecting, fire vulnerability (-2 save, +1 damage/dice), dominate (Hard Will, only used for feeding); +7/+4/+7; CE.
Hp 43

Barzon III, zombie: HD 2+1; AC 12; Atk +3 strangle 1d8+1 + mould; Spec always acts last, immune to cold and mind-affecting, Yellow Mould (15 Hp, Average Fortitude, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); +4/+0/+1; N.
Hp 5

Barzon IV, black pudding: HD 10; AC 13; Atk +10 pudding 4d6; Spec corrosion, impervious to cold and electricity, sharp weapons divide; +7/+3/+3; N.
Hp 40



2. Harbour: Two mostly identical locations in the shadow of the city. Both are continuously guarded by a contingent of soldiers; three with spears and missiles and one with an alarm horn. The boats here are used for fishing in the bay and generally aren't fit for the open seas; Ullkmaran owns the only one large enough for long-distance travel.

3. The house of Ullkmaran the Polyarch: The long and narrow building functions as both dwelling and warehouse. One floor is on the plateau, four more are cut into the cliffside – the lowest two damp and out of use, the third a warehouse, the fourth and top living quarters. There are entrances both above and below. Ullkmaran the Polyarch, purple-skinned and complacent, is a man of the Empire and a typical follower of Mung's doctrines. Through an agreement with the Trademaster, he is Barzon's intermediary in the wasp trade, exporting tapestries, mats and occasionally poison, and in turn importing miscellaneous products for use by the locals. Since he has no power base in the city, he maintains a well-defensible household of 12 guards and 8 slaves (6 of whom are nubile girls barely come of age). Ullkmaran's primary interest lies in stability, and if given the opportunity, he will drug the characters, strip them of valuables and sell them to whomever is most convenient. In a warehouse cache, he has 600 sp, 600 gp and 10 doses of wasp poison. He carries a laser pistol on his person.

Ullkmaran the Polyarch: Thief 5; Init +7; AC 15 (leather, Dex); Atk +3 shortsword 1d6 + [3d6 sneak attack] + poison (Average Fortitude, paralysis) or +6 throwing dagger 1d4 + [snk] + poison or +6 laser pistol 2d10+ (10s rerolled and added, ignores shields and armour, 3 spare cartridges of 15 shots each); +3/+7/+1; 11/18/15/14/9/7; NE.
Hp 26

Bodyguards (12): Fighter 3; AC 16 (chain shirt, large shield); Atk +3 battleaxe 1d8; +3/+1/+1.
Hp 22 14 19
22 17 5
21 25
15 21
17 25

4. Central square: A dusty, unfriendly and wind-swept plaza. In the middle, there is a square platform around an antique concrete bloc. On the four sides of the bloc, heavy chains are affixed to iron rings. This place is used to condemn sinners to the hunger of the Flying Gods.

5. Guest house: This is a dilapidated one-story hovel against the city walls; no furnishings except the earth floor. Outlanders to Barzon are only allowed to sleep here, and as always while staying on the island, they are under escort and open surveillance by a detail of soldiers, ostensibly so that the Flying Gods don't attack them. Although unhelpful and uncommunicative, the soldiers will explain local customs and warn characters in advance of possible infractions.

6. Gates: The narrow gate of Skei is always guarded by 10 regular and 5 trained soldiers. The portcullis is down, and two ballistas point outside. Beyond the gate, a winding road leads to the island's blooming valleys and, ultimately, to the fortress of Modax.

7. Wasteland: This desolation is an expanse of shifting rubble in a deep crater. Traces of metal

deposits in the debris lend the place a greenish hue. The wasps tend to avoid the periphery of the crater, since the metal and its vapours are deadly to them; however, a few dried-out husks may be present. On the bottom, there are bent metal wrecks half-covered by the stones. The purpose of these arti-

facts is a mystery; however, searching them yields 1d3 small, oblong metal boxes stamped with the letters ΔIA (DIA). They contain diambroid, a potent explosive (6d6 damage, but 1:6 chance an individual box is so fragile that it detonates on its own if handled).

II. The Tower of Birds

Background

Deep in the Desert of Regulator and half a day's march from the ancient road of great stone blocks that crosses it, stands the Tower of Birds, a bare stone finger overlooking broken lands. Whether it is a structure manmade or natural, the degraded surfaces do not tell: intermingled with rough cliffside are polished walls and buttresses, peering windows and a great cleft that cuts through the crown, high above the wide base.

The Tower of Birds is not sought by most travellers. Only those who are maddened by thirst will leave the regular road and, choosing a lesser path of jumbled and half-buried concrete, strike for the lifeless hills to follow the circling birds that ever fly in one direction. Theirs is often an unpleasant fate, because while there is water here, it is not easily given.

Near the immense tower (which itself stands on a low ridge), a small, narrowly twisting valley conceals wetlands alive with all kinds of birds. The birds do not fear strangers, contentedly swimming in the small pools, hunting fish in the reedy shallows, or sitting on large nests. The reason for this peacefulness becomes evident at nightfall, when denizens of the tower, atavistic and misshapen bird-men come out to slay those who disturb their lands. Do not subtract them from those encountered later. If, however, the characters use magical flight to enter the tower from above, they will be noticed and attacked by all inside.

Bird-Monsters (6): HD 2+1; AC 13; Atk 2*+3 claws 1d6+1 and +3 beak 1d4+1; +3/+3/+1; CE.

Hp	12	5
	8	
	15	
	5	
	11	

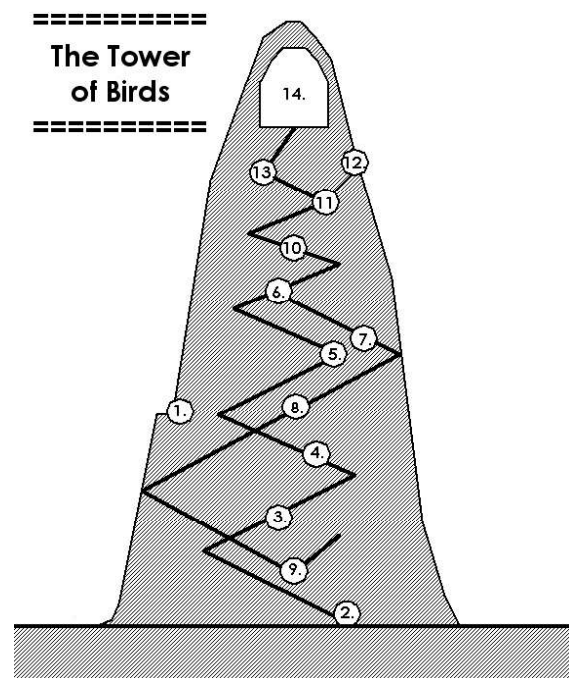
The Tower

The Tower of Birds is largely built around two great spiral stairs going in the opposite direction. From area 2 on, entries in the tower are designated with directions (position relative to the tower's Z axis), whether the room opens outwards or inwards and the degree of rotation up and down until the next location. For example, room 2. is to the northeast,

and to reach room 3., the stairs make an almost full revolution.

1. About 1/3 up the tower, there is a triangular outcropping to the southwest, and behind an artificial balustrade, an arched dark doorway is visible. There is no access to this place from inside, so the only way in is to climb the rocks (Average, 4d6 damage if unsuccessful).

The doorway leads to a dark chamber, where a stone throne looks towards the sunlight, flanked by ancient, corroded iron braziers. To the right, in a wall niche, there is a painted wooden chest reinforced with iron bands. The chest is locked, but so fragile it can be easily shattered. It contains four leather scrolls bound with red string – so fragile they disintegrate on touch. There is, however, a bundle of five slender ivory sticks carved with runes in one of the scrolls. The runes, if deciphered (Hard Read Signs), unveil instructions for an alchemical salt mixture which generates strong heat when touched to wet copper or brass – usable, for example, for "writing" on metal. This recipe may be worth approximately 500 gp if sold.



2. [NE, +7/8] The entrance to the tower is to the northeast, half buried in rubble and dust. It is flanked by two things which might have been stat-

ues, but are so worn that it is impossible to determine what they depicted. A short passage leads to a hexagonal, arched chamber with rubble-strewn floor. A rambling circular stairway leads upwards in a clockwise direction. It is wide enough for three men and not particularly steep. Occasional niches in the wall contain old clay lamps, dusty and useless.

3. [N outwards, +3/8, -7/8] A small, empty room. The floors are dusty and worn; little windows peer outside.

4. [SE outwards, +7/8, -3/8] Identical to 3., but an archway leads to the east into an inner room, where old clay pots are piled on one another. The contents of the pots are an old, dried out tarry mass that crumbles on touch. Tiny bones may be found inside if thoroughly examined.

5. [E inwards, +5/8, -7/8] Polished stone blocks forming a low and narrow arched passage, lead into a 15' diameter octagonal chamber. The chamber's walls and floor are tiled with black and yellow ceramics; the high ceiling is cross-vaulted. In each corner, a beautifully carved black stone statue of a falcon stands on a low pedestal. In the middle, the octagonal rim of a deep well opens – cold wet smell from below. An iron grille covers the opening.

6. [NW outwards, +5/8, -5/8] A short passage, which leads to *another staircase* winding down in a counter-clockwise direction. This staircase is closer to the outer walls, so it takes longer to make a full turn. Instead of wall niches, there are occasional windows peering outside. All of these are very small, and impossible to fit through. -1/2 to 7.

7. [NE, +1/2, -3/8] A brief rest in the descent of the stairs; three tall niches inwards with human-sized black statues of sitting falcons. The workmanship is impeccable (imagine a replica of the Maltese Falcon).

Opposite the niches are arched windows which allow an agile character (Average Escape Artist check) to pass through (this needs to be rerolled when returning). The windows open on a narrow ledge, which soon terminates abruptly. Above the ledge starts the cleft in the tower side, which reaches through the galleries of 11 to the broken domed chamber at the top (14). Although the cleft is too steep to climb even by a professional, at its bottom, there is a glint of metal from between two great stone blocks wedged together (Hard Spot, but a character who is looking around consciously will automatically notice it). This proves to be a 300 gp golden cup if someone retrieves it – braving the crumbling edge, the perilous precipice and the treacherous rock slide.

8. [S inwards, -1, +3/8] Room complex.

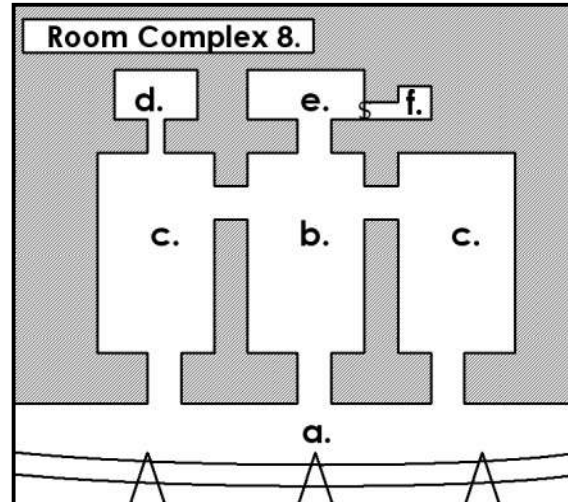
a) Three arched entrances. Intricate brass portcullises halfway down... all stuck and impossible to move without a Hard Strength check.

b) Mosaics in the floor and on the walls. Dry rectangular basin with blue and yellow tiles, bird motifs.

c) Empty rooms. The one to the east has deep, regular horizontal and vertical grooves in the walls – wide enough for a thin blade.

d) Fallen human body crumpled in the corner; dry flesh on protruding bones. Tattered green cloak riddled with holes and tears, round metal helmet, curved blade, shortbow and three daggers. Two unstoppered and empty metal flasks lying by the corpse. Pouch of 34 gp on belt.

e) Half-buried room; the northern and western wall has collapsed. In the southeast corner, a crawlway opens behind a secret door (one of the stone blocks pivots outwards). In the crawlway, a bundle of oil-



skin holds a crowbar, hammer and chisel.

f) Minuscule (7'x7") room. Roughly fitting stones with wide gaps in between, some narrower, others wider. Two apparent features: a block from the north wall has been removed and the handle-ring of a snugly fitting brass chest is visible; on the floor, a round stone plug is secured with two crossing iron bands bearing locks (2*Average Open Locks).

Pulling on the heavy (fake) chest activates a trap operated by hidden counterweights. Iron skewers from the walls; 2d4+1 per character (Atk +6, 1d8+1 damage each). With a successful Reflex save, a character can avoid half of the skewers, -2 per each extra character in the room.

The stone plug, in fact the top of a stone column, is another trap: if the locks are opened and the iron bands removed, massive counterweights propel the column upwards and smash it against the ceiling: 6d8 damage, Reflex save to avoid (penalties as above).

A hollow niche within the column reveals the real treasure: a gold and silver box (440 gp) with a red velvet bundle. The bundle holds 5 platinum disks worth 200 gp each, a curved *dagger* +1 (red leather grip, sun symbol on pommel), a *ring of protection* +1 (blue metal ring with wavy red script) and *bracers of defense* AC 15. Symbols engraved on the inside of the steel bracers spell out the *gaseous form* spell, which may be used as a spellbook.

9. [S inwards, +1] The stairway ends in a black hall: smoothly polished rocks rise in delicate arches, yellow and black tiles, smell of cold water. Beyond the hall, there is a short (30'), very steep stairway up to an altar holding a heavy gold decanter. The stairway is flanked with 4-4 niches on both sides, and in each niche, there is a large idol of a black bird with red gemstone eyes (20 gp each, 16 gems total). The decanter is worth 800 gp, and holds cold, clear water.

If it is removed from the altar, a trap becomes active. The black idols shoot red beams from their eyes when someone walks between, inflicting 2d8 points each. A Reflex save may be attempted against each beam, or some item may be used to protect characters from them (however, even thick wooden items will be destroyed on the first hit, and metal is subject to a *heat metal* effect – the heat is enormous). Destroying an idol also deactivates the associated beam.

10. [S outwards, +5/8, -5/8] An intricate brass portcullis bars the entrance to a three-room complex. It lifts easily. Small windows outside. In the innermost room, there are torn remains of silk cushions and two long wooden crates. One is empty, the other has a scimitar with a pommel forming a moustached head (35 gp value).

11. [NE outwards, +5/8, -5/8] This room is a long gallery in one side of the deep cleft that cuts through the top of the tower. At the end, a smashed statue of an ibis stands in a small alcove. Through the large windows, two black openings on the other side of the cleft are visible, somewhat above the present level (12.). The climb is treacherous, with few footholds and crumbling rocks (Average Climb in both directions). A character who doesn't secure his way with ropes and spikes may plummet to the bottom of the cleft (6d6 damage), area 7.

12. This place is only accessible from 11. A dark gallery with no other exits except the two windows is a nest of several different birds; guano, nesting material and eggs obscure an old skeleton. It still wears a beautiful helmet with a golden pegasus device (130 gp) and a sword of so fine workmanship that it has a nonmagical +1 damage bonus (340 gp).

13. [W, +3/8, -5/8] Further progress is barred by a brass portcullis. It is stuck, but can be lifted with some work and afterwards closed by pulling hard

(Average Strength for each). Immediately after the portcullis, a large recess in the wall is visible outwards. A skeleton crouches inside. The recess is closed by thick brass bars set into the rock and impossible to remove.

14. [CENTRE, -3/8] The stairs emerge into a vast broken dome (~35' high). Natural light peers inside from the north-eastern crack, where the ceiling has collapsed and revealed the sky... In the walls, there are rows of arched niches, some with stones and debris, some with enormous nests. In the middle stand protruding stone blocks of variable height – also holding birds' nests. To the north, there is an odd, enormous idol: a black bird, polished smooth, brooding over a black altar where a great ruby casts red light – a light which provides no illumination.

The guardians of the tower are here, waiting to fall through the crack and slay the intruders: accursed bird-monsters, leathery and debased, with a malignant hatred burning in their eyes. They are humanoid, but stooped; they walk with a swift shambling motion, and attack until they or their opponents are slain. If the characters retreat, the monsters try to catch them from both sides – some take wing to enter the tower through the gallery at 11. and assault PCs from below.

Bird-Monsters (13): HD 2+1; AC 13; Atk 2*+3 claws 1d6+1 and +3 beak 1d4+1; +3/+3/+1; CE.

Hp	15	11	5
	10	7	12
	13	13	13
	8	13	
	11	11	

The only treasure in the dome is the gemstone. It is very valuable – worth at least 2400 gp – and magical, as the reddish-black radiance makes apparent. A type I. (vulture) demon is imprisoned within the ruby, and it may be called to serve the bearer of the stone if the proper command word is known (this should be the subject of another adventure). However, unless the ruby is securely stored (e.g. in a lead box), the demon also tries to master the character. When near civilisation, it compels him to commit murder and evil deeds while asleep. The character is unaware of these activities (except tiredness), but others may not be – probably leading to a curious murder mystery where, piecing together the clues, the investigator discovers that the culprit is... himself.



III. Pentastadion

On the coasts west of the Sea of Mistakes stands the port city of Pentastadion (pop. 3200), a hub of commerce and reputedly the home of Fomalhaut's best seamen. Although its history stretches back a thousand years, the present city was re-established 300 years ago on the ruins of a former settlement, presumed to have been demolished by the talaioite barbarians. Now the size and power of the city far surpasses that old predecessor, although the talaioites remain a threat which necessitates the upkeep of a land army in addition to the swift war galleys. The surrounding lands are known for their abundance, and a number of fortified estates have sprung up to protect the rural communities during raids.

The rulers of the city, widely known for their boundless avarice, are a group named the Syndic Lords. This oligarchy of the rich and powerful, of which there are currently ten, consists of:

Head Syndic Beslandar (Fighter 5), a man devious and alert. He has a hand in every power struggle, playing off the others against each other in a complex game of favours and threats. Rumoured to keep a hidden lover in the Syndic's Palace under three locks; the mysterious female is in actuality a veiled and perfumed she-gnoll, for whom he has a perverted fondness.

Syndic Koresh Gant, the High Priest of Kang the Thousand-Eyed (Cleric 7), whose mean disposition has angered many, but whose zeal has carried him high in Kang's hierarchy. Koresh Gant's bearded, dark visage suggests origins in the far south; he always wears gilded plate mail and carries a great flail; also, he delights in lion-fights under the temple.

Syndic Diakallis the Anome (Thief 7), now long since retired from public affairs, she nevertheless holds her position due to an effective spy network.

Syndic Dorias (Thief 3), a magnate. Often away on shorter expeditions, his indecisiveness is as well known as his hypochondria.

Syndic Thalasnar, Metrarch of Tsathoggus (Cleric 6), so titled for holding a City Church, he is an exemplar of his faith with enormous girth, an ominously wide smile and a jovial temperament.

Syndic Eschmer, Archdeacon of Mung (Thief 4), the representative of Mungor City in Pentastadion. He is, sometimes derisively, best known for his devotion to the welfare of the poor. Eschmer, as it is prescribed for an archdeacon of the doctrine, is always willing to discuss his humanitarian mission, omitting his orders to eventually forge the squalid masses into an effective weapon against the other Syndics.

Syndic Achenobarbus, Sea Lord (Fighter 4), who, having gathered great riches in marine trade, has turned his gaze on the Head Syndic's throne. An aesthete with connections in Glourm, Achenobarbus

delights in elaborate tones produced by musical instruments purchased from ex-temporary sources. Those without the appropriate aesthetic inclination may suffer a horrible death when subjected to their sound.

Syndic Malzarm the Grone (Thief 3), usually present at meetings only when it is pertinent to his shipping interests; human head of wererat-cult based in the slums.

Syndic Mir Thosga (Illusionist 3): the aloofness of Mir Thosga has resulted in a gross overestimation of his magical aptitude, which he is content to leave that way – taking neither guests nor apprentices. Nevertheless, he has trained wild apes to guard his wealth and occasionally slay rivals; eight of these monsters are at his command, and they are all dangerous, man-eating beasts.

Syndic Balaenos (Cleric 4), currently the local bursator of Fedafuce after his predecessor's unexpected deposition. The Pentastadion branch of Fedafuce's church has been hard hit by a double theft, and the ambitious young cleric is tasked with rebuilding its reputation by any means necessary. Balaenos is a firm supporter of Beslandar, since the Head Syndic has made substantial deposits after the thefts to help maintain public confidence.

Locales

1. Harbour: This long strip is bustling day and night; a number of open-air shops sell wine, food and various narcotics, while merchants from the city or other lands sell their wares. The four great warehouses rent space for both storage and more exclusive retail space.

2. The Caravanserai of Orastes: The building of the caravanserai rises above the merchants' quarter; although at a time shunned because of a series of disappearances, it has regained its good reputation after the events abruptly ceased (although they still occur in the slums with some frequency). Now there is a courtyard for caravans to saddle down, a bordello in a side wing and a number of rooms to suit every money pouch. Orastes maintains his guarded quarters on the top level. Thog the Strangler, a retired old thief lives below the caravanserai, the only one to know of a series of secret rooms.

3. Dog market: Xamander, a mean and thuggish type maintains an open-air dog market here; basically an area demarcated by strong wooden poles to keep the ugly mutts in. While the dogs are for the most part worth nothing, some may be useful for their sheer ferocity. Xamander keeps them in this temper with regular beatings with his whip and occasionally heavy staves. Pelts, fat and meat are also sold.

4. Abandoned garden: the walled and overgrown garden hides a mausoleum to Kantarol Oroe, a woman who had once taken the lives of several young girls and some lovers after wasting her inherited wealth on this place; stoned to death when discovered, her form and that of the victims still haunt here. However, the undead and the blood rose are only encountered in the evening, when the garden becomes a wholly different world and a death-trap to the incautious.

5. Villas: This area rests on top of a steep hill. Since the cliffs and the guards posted at the only way up keep the place well isolated from the rabble, this is where Pentastadion's aristocracy maintains its villas. A legend talks of statues walking on the deepest nights (and of a secret entrance which is only revealed when a certain statue leaves its niche), but while there are indeed several decorative marble images here, they are steadfastly inanimate.

6. Slums: In a depressed area where the earth had sunk by almost the height of a house, there is a tangle of cottages and small houses in the shadow of the hill. A wererat gang operates from here; there is also a small slave market with a low, mostly sub-standard selection.

7. The temple of Mung: The large domed structure is surrounded by a stone wall. Built over the last three decades, its size is meant to overshadow the fact that, jealous of newcomers, the other faiths prevented Mung from establishing a mission near the citadel, and only hefty bribes made it possible to erect it next to the slum areas. The temple is known for its charities to the needy, as well as occasional tasks deemed too sensitive for the men of Mung, and therefore delegated to more flexible and expendable outsiders.

8. Training grounds: These grounds are surrounded by military barracks, and are used for drills, mock combat, occasional parades as well as public executions. The way up to the citadel is watched by a contingent of guards. Strollers are stopped and questioned after nightfall.

9. The temple of Tsathoggus: The plain, windowless building extends from the side of the hill. A columned hall admits supplicants to the presence of the priests, who are overseen by the Metrarch, Thalasnar. Thalasnar's underling always labour to brew foul concoctions, which are sold at a temple for a tidy profit; the Metrarch himself is always in search of capable assassins for various lucrative missions.

10. Towers: These three round towers are empty and not currently in use. Some claim they predate Pentastadion's existence.

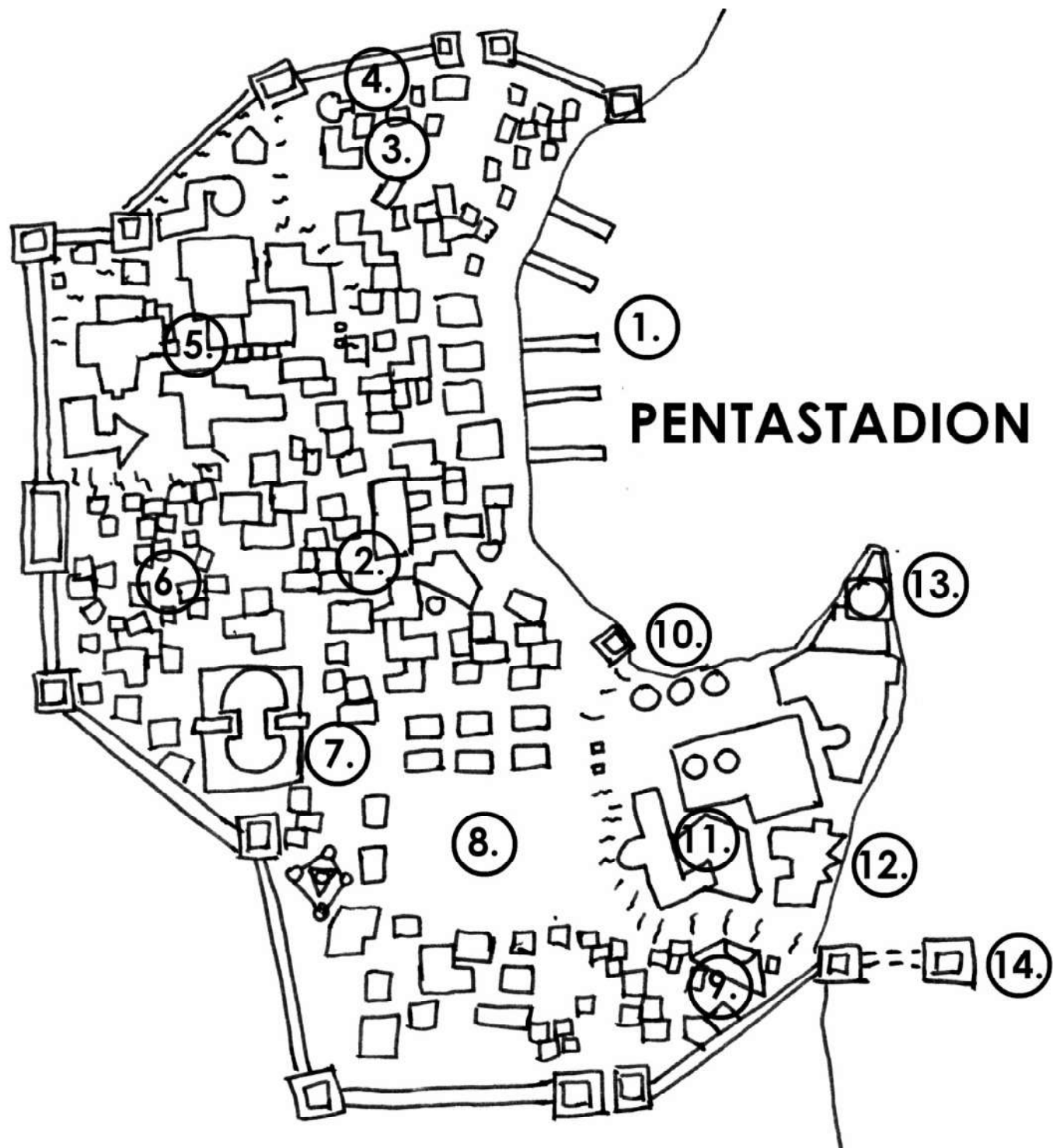
11. The temple of Fedafuce: The most prestigious position near the citadel is held by this double structure – a sleek columned temple on a lower base used for more ordinary activities. Outside mercantile interests, Fedafuce's clerics oversee a range of financial functions; the most popular is perhaps the sale of certificates in the form of silk strips which may be easily carried in clothes or perhaps a turban without detection. The certificates are redeemable at any of the god's temples and of course many other locations; available in values of 20, 50 and 100 gp at a surcharge of 10%, they are absolutely secure from duplication or counterfeiting.

12. The temple of Kang the Thousand-Eyed: To the upper city, the temple presents a thick colonnade; to the sea, a series of triangular terraces rising above each other. The massive idol, in plate mail and horned helmet, stands above the altar with its flail raised; from inside glitter the facets of an enormous unpolished crystal, "The Brain of Kang". The crystal (which is not a real brain *per se*) is literally beyond value, and it is also holy in the eyes of the clergy, who are well-armed and alert, as well as fanatical devotees (typically 2nd level Fighters), of whom 10-40 are usually in attendance. Below the temple are the lion pits, where those who have sinned against the severe deity – knowingly or not – are tried in their abilities; some have become free men or won divine favour, but many more have fallen on the uncaring sands. Koresh Gant is the current high priest.

13. Syndic's Palace: This impregnable fortress stands proudly on a high cliff. The outer sections hold the meeting halls of the Syndic Lords and various offices of public administration, while the inner citadel is Beslandar's private quarters (although he also maintains a dwelling elsewhere in the city). Somewhat to the left of the gates, there is a discrete little niche out of sight where anyone may make an anonymous report to listening ears. If the resulting investigation finds the report to be correct, an award will be granted to the informant on his return.

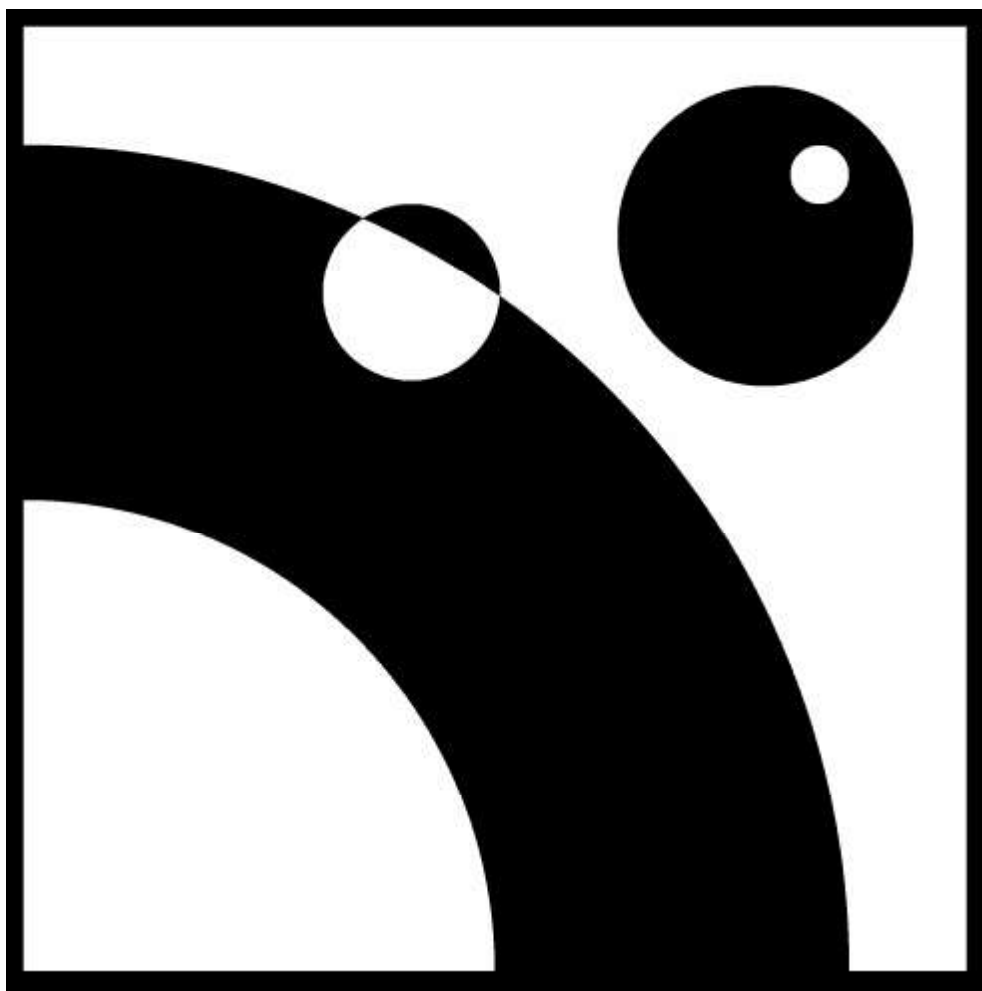
14. Sea bastion: This watchpost was originally linked to the city walls; it is now only approachable by boat. The lower levels are flooded, and are rumoured to hold secrets the authorities want to keep under wraps.





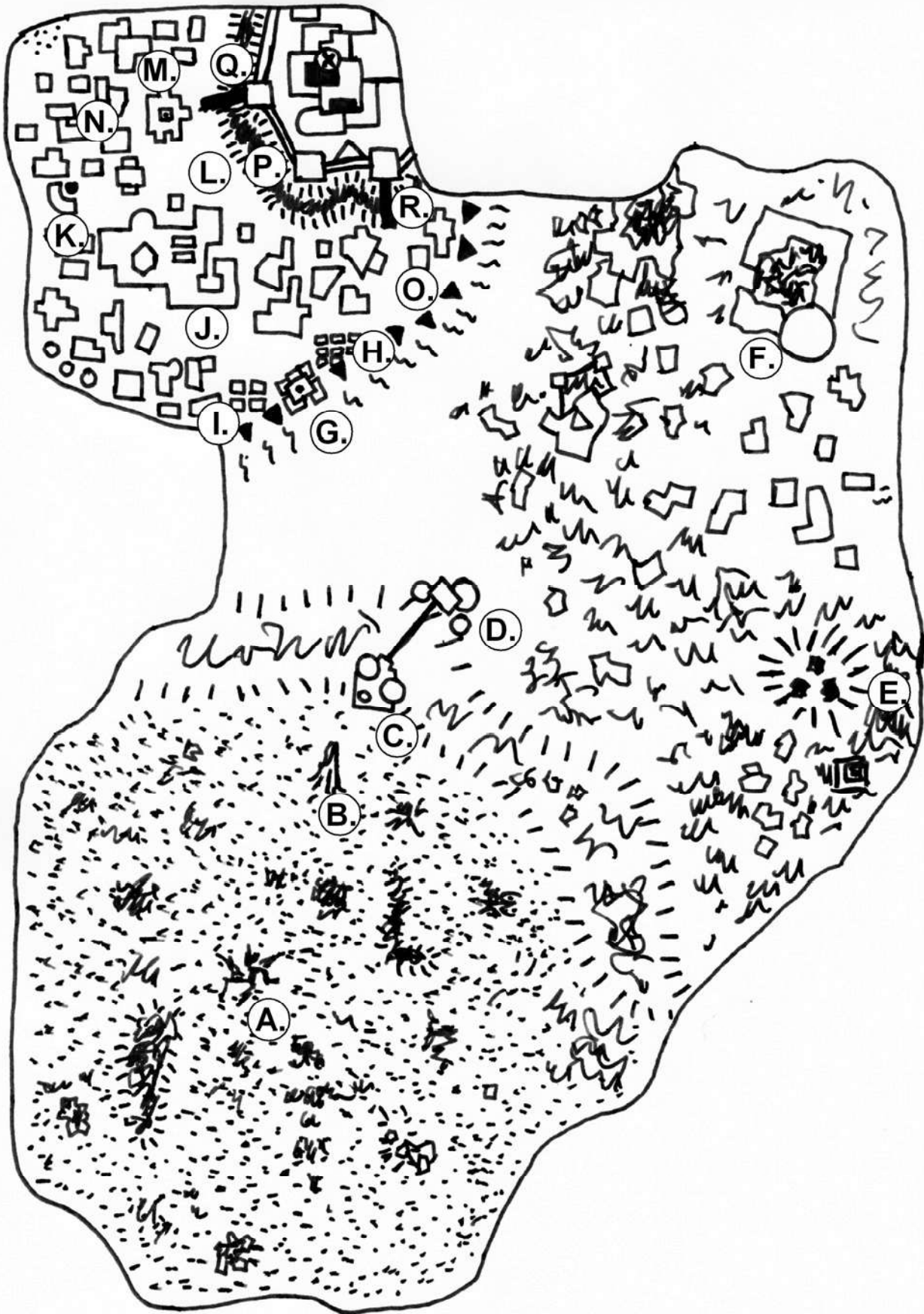
Systema Tartarobasis

by Gabor Lux



Fomalhaut

**A Castles & Crusades adventure module
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Systema Tartarobasis

by
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based on an original concept by
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Introduction

Systema Tartarobasis is the name of a slowly failing computer system located in a ruined city deep beneath the surface of Fomalhaut. The city, named METAREGIO by its inhabitants, takes up in turn about a fifth of the world Exillion, a vast cavern lit by an artificial sun of the same name. Systema Tartarobasis and METAREGIO were created by scientists and philosophers as a terraforming tool and a temporary living environment until the terraforming process would be completed, respectively. There were at least 30 such cities, beneath glacial plains and frozen oceans, linked by underground transport routes and an array of geosynchronous satellites serving as a coordinating mechanism for the mostly autonomous central computers. The effort to colonise Fomalhaut, brought into being by executive order of archon Solon, took the resources of several worlds and the united will of multiple great powers of Earth. 8000 years after its initiation, there is but fleeting memory of these events, and the great Stabilisator Cities lie in ruin and abandonment, inhabited by ghosts of the past or peoples of strange customs while the lands above have sunk into barbarism and an age of squabbling city states. The intentional destruction of some cities in a cataclysmic war and the failing of others after millennia of neglect, has resulted in strange anomalies on the surface and the gradual reversal of their regulatory effects on the planet's climate. METAREGIO belongs to the group of cities which were targeted by weapons of immense destructive power. Here, however, the destruction was incomplete as a makeshift force barrier reduced the impact of the blast that reduced the rest of Exillion into a jumbled wasteland of shifting rubble and glass debris. Systema Tartarobasis and one of its associated Autonomous Production

Systems were spared from annihilation, although the communication relays linking it to the overworld and other Stabilisator Cities were not, nor were any of the outgoing underground transport routes. Currently, Exillion's only means of communication with Outside is the URANOMETAFORA, a teleportation device next to the central hub of Systema Tartarobasis, in a heavily fortified district now named ARKHOCENTRON.

Unfortunately, the masters of Exillion, who call themselves Wandsmen, are not interested in communication beyond the satisfaction of their need of Outside goods, in exchange of which they pay with the only valuable their world can provide: precisely cut glass slabs and prisms made from glass debris and pressed into shape by the Autonomous Production System (usually referred to as the Autocreator). All except a small number of high-ranking Wandsmen and their elite associates are completely in the dark about this arrangement, or in fact the very existence of a world beyond the confines of the cavern that contains Exillion. Instead, the working population of METAREGIO labours under the belief that theirs is the only possible lot; and that unending service to Systema Tartarobasis, whose worship as God is the spiritual foundation of their society, is the only way to attain salvation and to be protected from cold, darkness, hunger and the demons of Outside. Exillion's society is in consequence extremely stratified, made up of a mass of workers; the Wandsmen who operate as priest-bureaucrats and oversee their activities as agents of divine will; as well as the Bosses, a police force nominally in existence to combat demon incursions and protect METAREGIO, but in reality serving as an interior mechanism of control and repression. However, the seeds of corruption have long ago sprouted in the city, resulting in the emergence of Apostates, or those who are said to be rebels against Systema's plan. This opposition encompasses all forms of disobedience, including criminal activities such as bribery, prostitution, smuggling of extra or Outside goods, but also questioning the authority of the Wandsmen and the Bosses or denying the divinity of Systema Tartarobasis. Denouncement of either form is ever-present; meanwhile, the former has been moulded into a control mechanism to channel and release popular dissent, and therefore implicitly tolerated, while the latter is treated much more severely. Demonstrations of power, sermon-rallies and public executions followed by an orgiastic conclusion are commonplace.



Notes on adventure

Transported underground by sinister forces and lacking any resources but a few pieces of their equipment, the characters have only one objective: escape from the world of Exillion with their skin intact. To this end, they must first find a way out of an abandoned underground facility below Exillion. Thereafter, they must get into the city of METAREGIO and eventually to ARKHOCENTRON where the URANOMETAFORA, their only means of escape if located. Meanwhile, they must find sustenance and information, not to mention avoid capture or annihilation by those who will think them demons of Outside. Careful

negotiation, coercion where appropriate and being as discrete as possible are key to success and survival. Once the Wandsmen learn of the presence of strangers in their world, which is an inevitability, they will use all means at their disposal to stop them from reaching their objective. Mobilisation will be slow initially but rapidly gain momentum if things come down to open confrontation. Mass hysteria will also spread among the lower classes as the news travel; this will at first be kept under control through sermons and rallies, but if these measures prove ineffective, a state of high alert will come into effect while vigilante groups start to scour the

city in search of demonic intruders. A few possibilities for entanglement are mentioned in detail later.

Being an almost completely open-ended scenario, Systema Tartarobasis is very flexible where character power is concerned. It is suitable for a party of low- to lower-mid (3rd to 5th) level characters, two characters of the same or slightly higher capabilities, or even only one PC, as long as nobody has access to excessive innate powers. Generally, while larger parties are more effective when physical conflict is inevitable, smaller ones have a much easier time melting into large crowds and avoiding attention. In theory, it is possible to successfully end the scenario without resorting to anything other than negotiation and evasion. This also has a high relevance because the PCs will have very little of their usual equipment to rely on (see **Dynamics**). Since subterfuge plays such an essential part, characters with a highly distinctive appearance, especially if it cannot be hidden, are at a great disadvantage. A Referee whose party includes multiple types of the sort should seriously reconsider running this module.

Systema Tartarobasis was designed for the **Castles&Crusades** ruleset. With small conversion, it is also suitable for use with other fantasy role-playing games, including but not limited to **OSRIC**, **Stormbringer**, **ODD**, possibly **EPT** and others, as long as the existence of the Stabilisator Cities can be justified in the Referee's milieu. Likewise, adaptation to planetary romance/sword&planet systems is possible, even if the module does lose some of its surprise in this case. Finally, it has to be noted that the scenario's open-ended nature precludes a thorough description of all areas and possibilities that may be encountered in Exillion. The Referee must familiarise

himself with the material and ideas provided herein, and be prepared to improvise additional content when the need arises. It may be useful to print extra copies of the illustrations, the alphabet and the player map of Exillion contained in the module and distribute as handouts when appropriate.

Notes on language

While Greek was the universal language in Fomalhaut's prehistory, its use has undergone a great deal of change under the span of 8000 years; therefore, it has several differences from its original form. All phrases in the text reflect this evolution and should in no way be considered erroneous in spelling or grammar.

The second matter is of pronunciation. Names used in the scenario, such as Santiscauld, Mendarfloux, Messenauxe, etc., may appear to be derived from French. This notion is incorrect. All names and terms are transliterated exactly as they should be pronounced.

The third matter is of alphabet. A copy of the standard Greek alphabet is included in the back of the module. Unlike language, the alphabet used in Exillion is identical to Greek, as it was preserved exactly on the few documents and inscriptions found among its ruins. It will be unfamiliar to outsiders unless they know ancient languages or have the ability to Read Languages (a 20% rating or equivalent makes it possible to read anything the PC may come across; otherwise, a roll may be attempted with a +40% probability). Note that the alphabet doubles as a number system. Numbers are expressed as sums of individual letters. Hence, the numerical value of ΣΛΕ (sigma-lambda-epsilon) would be 200+30+5 or 235, while ΜΧΦ (mu-kshi-phi) would be equivalent to 40+600+500 or 1140.



Society

Exillion's society, whose total population is approximately 2600, is rigidly separated into three classes, but it is important to make some further distinctions. Thus, the groups that need to be discussed are the Wandsmen, the Bosses, workers, children and old people, and finally the Apostates. Stratification is complete and there is no inter-class mobility whatsoever once someone's status is determined. There is, however, constant movement within the hierarchies as people are demoted or elevated, based in theory on competition and merit but in practice also on intrigue, corruption and the pure whim of superiors. This is called rotation, and affects everyone with the exception of the top 20 Wandsmen and the top 15 Bosses (basically, those who have gained insight into the truth about Systema Tartarobasis and Outside; these groups are never officially rotated, although power struggles do result in executions and disappearances). The highest status Apostates, who are in hiding, are obviously also an exception. The rotation rate is 15-15% among workers and 5-5% among Bosses and Wandsmen, meaning that 5 or 15% of their total population will gain a lower assignment and another 5 or 15% a higher one. For workers, the lowest status possible is being sent to a Punishment Brigade, while the highest is to work in METAREGIO and hope for retirement. For Bosses and Wandsmen, serving in the outposts of EXTERIKO (the destroyed wasteland surrounding METAREGIO) is the least pleasant outcome, managing Work Brigades marginally better while being posted in ARKHOCENTRON with full nympharium privileges can be the highest form of distinction. In addition to such materialistic concerns, there is always the spiritual benefit of being in accordance with the will of Systema Tartarobasis and attaining salvation. Of course, gaining goods and privileges beyond one's station is ever desirable even when worldly risk and spiritual contamination are considered. This motivation has been instrumental in driving corruption and a thriving black market; small-scale smuggling of glass debris (referred to as skimming) provides its unofficial currency.

The Wandsmen

There are a total of 200 Wandsmen, 60 in ARKHOCENTRON, 60 in METAREGIO, 30 in EXTERIKO and 10 new initiates in continuous rotation to learn all they need to know about their tasks. Of ARKHOCENTRON's Wandsmen, 20 elders and 20 co-opted brethren are the de facto decisionmakers in Exillion, although they always make their pronouncements in the name of God, Systema Tartarobasis. Although there are as many Wandsmen in METAREGIO as there are in ARKHOCENTRON, 40 work as Autocreator technicians and are in effect removed from city life. When moving about METAREGIO, Wandsmen are almost always accompanied by a detail of two to four Bosses. The Wandsmen of EXTERIKO are divided between the upper outpost (20 men) and the lower outpost (10 men). 5-5 are responsible for the correct operation of the cable transport and the rest for managing and directing the Work Brigades.

All of the Wandsmen wear a stamped metal wafer or dog tag on a chain around their neck, bearing three letters (numbers). The purpose of the tags is primarily identification, but also the control of certain devices such as the cable transport station, the generators responsible for the force fields of PERIFERIA and even the URANOMETAFORA. Tags of different ranks may be appropriate for different devices.

The clothing of Wandsmen is black felt (in stark contrast with all others who wear a synthetic material named synna), with a component of red depending on rank: a simple stripe on the cloaks of initiates, stripes on the cuffs and collar for regulars, etc. Elders wear collars, skullcaps and more elaborate cuffs as a sign of rank. High Wandsman Encellon is clothed in red from head to toe; his second, Second Wandsman Feluxis is distinguished by a black skullcap. They also carry short, light plastic rods as a sign of their station.

Wandsmen are a lot more eloquent than their subordinates, and when they aren't preaching, they treat everyone else with disgust, boredom and contempt. On the average, they are sanctimonious, officious and complacent, fond of berating workers for the slightest error or just on principle. In turn, Wandsmen from the higher echelons are inquisitive and extremely shrewd; skilled backstabbers and masters of ideology and pontification. Being a small and close-knit group, Wandsmen know each other enough to recognise any impersonation unless care is taken not to show one's face too closely. All Bosses posted in METAREGIO and ARKHOCENTRON share this knowledge; some of those who have served too long in EXTERIKO may be fooled by clever PCs (20% probability).

Bosses

The armed forces of Exillion number 400 men; 80 posted in ARKHOCENTRON, 250 in METAREGIO and 70 in EXTERIKO. Their leader is Grand Boss Pinchenden. As with Wandsmen, the elite of the Bosses are found in ARKHOCENTRON; 15 under the personal command of High Wandsman Encellon and Second Wandsman Feluxis, the other 65 manning the walls, gates and posted in the underground facilities. In an emergency, some of these can be dispatched into METAREGIO. Those who are assigned to METAREGIO live in their central headquarters or in barracks near the checkpoint of PERIFERIA (constantly manned by 40 men at full readiness). They patrol in groups of three to four, which is increased to eight to ten in case of emergency. Bosses in EXTERIKO oversee the major installations (the two cable transport stations, 20 men in each), patrol the wasteland between Work Brigades and watch for normbreakers, skimmers or (in theory) the Ashmen and other demons.

Like most others in Exillion, the clothing of Bosses is made of synna (from „synthetic manna”), a byproduct of the Autocreator's manufacturing process. This substance (essentially reprocessed slag), which resembles bars of greyish green soap stamped

with the ΣYNNA sign, is used for food, an alcoholic drink when fermented, or clothing when vulcanised, stretched and rolled. Synna-based clothing looks and smells like cheap plastic bags. The kind Bosses wear is a black shade, although still distinctly greenish. Their appearance is also accented by their insignia, an encircled lightning bolt. Elites in ARKHOCENTRON wear black felt with a golden trim, including the lightning sign. Grand Boss Pinchenden's symbol is made of pure gold.

The lesser Bosses are armed with an assortment of crude shortswords and spears (essentially sharpened metal skewers), sometimes metal javelins. Elites, as well as those posted at key locations, have better shortswords and Divine Light (laser pistols) at their disposal. Fixed weaponry, always mounted in key locations, includes tri-beam lasers and flamethrowers. Additionally, the SCORPITRON, a metallic juggernaut of destruction may be activated to protect ARKHOCENTRON.

Bosses are thuggish: brutal, stupid and even more corrupt than their Wandsmen superiors. They are differentiated from the workers by their insignia and weaponry, and from criminals by their higher level of organisation and a sense of legitimacy imparted by the Wandsmen. Since Bosses are none too bright, it is reasonably easy to manipulate, fool or impersonate them. Also, aside from the Apostates, they are the group whose members are the easiest to bribe.

Workers

There are approximately 1600 adult workers in Exillion, all of whom work in EXTERIKO or METAREGIO. It is very rare for one of them to even set foot in ARKHOCENTRON, and completely unknown to actually live there. Workers are organised into 32 Work Brigades of 50–60 people whose exact composition is in a constant flux due to rotation and ad hoc reassignments. This is by design so that no group cohesion will emerge; competition for upwards mobility, exceeding norms and beating other brigades fosters some temporary solidarity, but no long-lasting loyalty is established. There are two

exceptions, as discussed below.

The main task of Work Brigades is to mine EXTERIKO's wasteland for glass debris and transport it to METAREGIO for processing by the Autocreator's Autonomous Production System. 16 to 20 brigades, or 800 to 1200 men are out in the field every day; 7 to 11 are resting (that is, undertaking lighter labour in the city) while the five Punishment Brigades, who are also sent to EXTERIKO's most inhospitable parts, are only given reprieve for one day out of two five-day cycles. In theory, a Wandsman oversees every group in operation to ensure maximum efficiency. In practice, since there are regularly only 20 free Wandsmen in Exteriko, certain more trustworthy brigades are left to their own devices. On the other hand, there is also an incentive to personally direct an efficient group, since delivering high glass yields is the straight road to upwards rotation.

The standard operating procedure of a Work Brigade is as follows: at dawn (that is, when Exillion's light starts to intensify), the brigade assembles before its designated communal barrack and proceeds through the checkpoint on PERIFERIA to EXTERIKO. Along the way, they bring four to five mine cars, one of which serves as a supply wagon and carries the brigade's food (synna slabs), water (in large round earthenware bottles and synna wineskins) and a narrow selection of other supplies (sacks, three or four spare sets of work clothes for replacement, one to two coils of rope, crowbars, tarpaulins and metal levers). Every worker brings his or her own tools; collection sacks made of synna are provided on-site. Since mining in Exteriko takes place in the depression of Lower Basin instead of the low-yield and hazardous Dead Zone, workers and mine cars alike board the cable transport. Once in Lower Basin, they bring the cars to their designated mine sites and spend the day excavating rubble for chunks of glass debris. Depending on terrain and yield, operations may be dispersed or concentrated. The discovery of underground cavities is always followed by investigation by a Wandsman and possibly Bosses if available nearby, as these places may hide Ashmen or other demons. In all cases, such places are resealed after a ritual exorcism in

the name of Systema without exploration. A one-hour lunch and rest period is allowed around noon. When dusk approaches, workers return to METAREGIO the same way they came. Hiding a few select chunks of glass, or skimming (sometimes used as „quota skimming”), is common and implicitly tolerated; nevertheless, it is not without risk since searches happen on reasons of suspicion, but also on no specific reason at all. Normbreaking; performance under projected indicators, is looked upon much more unfavourably, and is grounds for downwards rotation. Thus, „normbreaker” is also a common epithet, usually used by authorities to reference anyone below their station.

Five of the Work Brigades are Punishment Brigades. Punishment Brigades are assigned hard labour: locations with a low yield, distant from the cable transport station, dangerous working conditions, etc. They are subject to stricter searches, and may not leave their designated tent camp just inside PERIFERIA without permission. They have their own internal hierarchy: common criminals (serving time for murder, smuggling, rape and similar offences) are on the top, featherweights (skimming, normbreaking or just not liked by someone important) in the middle and people sentenced for Apostasy (discovered buying Outside goods/services, insubordination to Wandsmen or Bosses, ideological crimes) right on the bottom; the latter rarely last long. #6, #9, #17, #25 and #29 are the numbers for Punishment Brigades.

Brigade Nine (also known as „Niners” or „little bosses”) occupies a peculiar position of privilege: a cohesive bunch of hardened thugs theoretically on the lowest rung of Exillion's society; their role in organised crime and co-operation with the Wandsmen nevertheless guarantees a higher position. Niners work very little, mercilessly exploit and snitch on other groups and are occasionally used to disperse other unruly brigades. As a reward, they are occasionally thrown an unfortunate woman or two, who don't last long either.

On the opposite end of the scale is Brigade Number One. They are deployed in METAREGIO, undertake lighter and more

sophisticated labour and have occasional nympharium access. This coveted status, with the possibility of retirement in ARKHOCENTRON, makes them subject to boundless envy and intrigue; the members of the brigade have in consequence been the most pious members of society with a strong sense of pride and mutual solidarity.

So much for the Work Brigades. Workers wear worn synna garments. Since black shades are restricted to Bosses, these come in two colours: greenish grey and greenish brown. Depending on the caprices of the production process, rare batches come out without the greenish element; the average woman is prepared to go quite far in pursuit of one. Wearing these is still like dressing in plastic bags, and just as vulnerable to tears as the others.

The quarters of workers are large communal buildings in METAREGIO. These are typically concrete blocks' with broken windows, mattresses and a few personal effects. Workers have low standards, aren't very class conscious and completely lack any fighting spirit, even though quite a lot are rather cynical about authorities. Indoctrination and superstitious sentiment makes them prone to hysteria if they suspect the PCs to be demons from Outside; although unable to pose a direct physical threat, they may inform superiors or form dangerous mobs.

It has to be noted that all women in Exillion belong to the worker class, and except for the childbearing period when they remain in METAREGIO, they must collect glass like everyone else. The doxies of the Wandsmen in the nympharium are an exception, who are selected for greater beauty and have no work outside their usual tasks, but aren't permitted to leave ARKHOCENTRON. Another nympharium operated by Apostates exists in METAREGIO. Since nympharium privileges are among the highest boons one may gain from Systema Tartarobasis, using the services of this establishment is counted among the highest forms of Apostasy and it is punishable by public execution. Nympharium privileges are first and foremost for Wandsmen, followed in precedence by Bosses, eminent workers and the most exemplary youths upon reaching adulthood. The latter two groups are

brought into ARKHOCENTRON in a drunken state and led to believe they are granted their boon by the direct order of Systema.

Children and old people

In consideration for their inability to undertake hard physical labour, children and old people do their useful work inside METAREGIO, while distinguished Heroes of Work who have been exemplary in exceeding quotas may be selected to retire to ARKHOCENTRON and forevermore only do the lightest of labours. What is more, the chosen are permitted to physically come before Systema Tartarobasis and partake of His plentiful rewards if they grow tired of toils (more correctly, they are disposed of in the Radiation Pits below ARKHOCENTRON).

Exillion doesn't know the institution of family. Instead, children who have stopped breastfeeding are separated from their mothers and brought up in communal groups where they learn the values of hard work, belief in Systema Tartarobasis and everything else a proper and proud citizen of Exillion needs to know. Their tasks include small repairs, making textile from blocks of synna and other light activities.

Apostates

Apostates, although lumped under one label by Wandsman propaganda (being considered allies to the demons of Outside or demons themselves – the distinction is rather nebulous), can be separated into two different groups who have little in common except for being a target of official sanctions.

The first group is made up of the criminal element, those who have committed the lesser crime of Disobedience. Most of them belong to one organisation lead by a man named Santiscauld. Santiscauld, whose role will be discussed in more detail later, is the personal agent of Second Wandsman Feluxis who knows as much about the surface world as any of the senior Wandsmen; moreover, he has a direct hand in the smuggling activities which bring Outside (or „divine“) products,

mostly foodstuffs and clothing, to the black market of METAREGIO.

The black market is well known to all inhabitants, and clandestinely visited by all three social classes (Wandsmen and Bosses are given preferential prices and treatment to keep them on the Apostates' good side). A nympharium is also available for customers who can afford its services; being an unpleasant cellar stinking of sweat and other odours where unfortunate captives receive their guests in appalling conditions.

The second group of Apostates are dissenters who are in fact opposed to the social order for ideological reasons, and therefore guilty of the greater crime of Doubt. Accordingly, belonging to any such group is high Apostasy; whenever opposition cells are squashed, their members invariably face rotation to a Punishment Brigade, torture and/or public execution. Executions are huge events resembling sermons or rallies, their hysteria predictably ending in free-for-all orgies.

While dissenters are the strongest in their rejection of whatever Systema Tartarobasis stands for (even though most don't debate His existence), they are entirely inconsequential. These types, whose actions tend to involve agitation, random murder of authority figures and constantly snitching on other, rival Apostate groups, are basically losers who come convenient when the Wandsmen need to fill their execution quota. Currently, there are two opposition groups of note in METAREGIO, respectively lead by men named Targammaux and Orimaxxald who probably hate each other more than they do the Wandsmen.

Dealing with criminals can be hazardous for the characters: they can go far with their assistance, but Santiscauld's alliance with Feluxis makes this method's outcomes completely unpredictable. On the other side of the coin, dissenters are completely useless, but they can – and inevitably will – do major damage if trusted.



Exillion

UNDEREARTH

This is an abandoned and empty facility below the wasteland of EXTERIKO and Lower Basin. Its purpose is indeterminate. Only the areas the PCs are likely to pass through are outlined here. If play goes beyond these boundaries, the Referee should make it up as he goes. In this case, the duration of light sources should be emphasised and new routes leading to the surface provided. Technological infrastructure encountered should be described with precision, but without any hints regarding their purpose; the aim of this section is to create a feeling of incomprehension, isolation and being lost. There should be no useful items here, except probably a temporary light source if the party

becomes lost – probably a coiled rod with faintly glowing light that lasts about as long as the party needs to get close to the surface.

1. The characters arrive in total darkness, and are scattered about the chamber, facing random directions. It is cold, damp, and a *silence* spell is in effect for 6 rounds. Until light is made, characters must find their way by touch, and the Referee must keep careful track of where they are going (a separate map is provided for this among the illustrations). Keep in mind that the PCs will be missing most of their equipment as described under **Dynamics**. Note carefully if a PC takes out an item; this will be one of the few that they

have managed to keep. If someone falls in the shaft to the south, he is caught among the crossed pipes and will only suffer 1d6 damage.

The chamber is large, probably 80'X60'. Its walls are made of smooth, grey stone with a rough texture (concrete). The 30' ceiling is supported by thick, rusting iron girders. The following are found once the characters can see:

a) Two heavy blast doors set in a trapezoidal opening. They are made of rusty iron and weigh several tons each. They are impossible to move.

b) A 20' hexagonal tank. It is possible to climb up on a rusted ladder (the rungs will collapse under a heavy weight, but will still be climbable). Inside, the tank is empty, but there is a grate and a crawlway underneath. Its sides are lined with corroded metal panels; it leads to one of the funnel-like passages at 5.

c) Three 5'X10'X10' metal cabinets. They are heavily corroded, and have sliding levers that are ruined if someone handles them. The machinery under their metal casing is a mess of rust and bits that fall apart if the cabinets are opened.

d) A larger, 30'X10'X20' machine. It is harder to take apart and has more integrity inside. Its surface is full of dials, levers, knobs and indicators that are all defunct.

e) A bottomless shaft descending into the depths of the earth. It is randomly crossed by rusty pipes. Descending into the shaft is without risk, although the pipes start to crack under heavy weight. 30' down, there is a service tunnel going north.

2. This trapezoidal service tunnel has a low (6') ceiling. All walls, ceiling and floor are corroded iron panels reinforced with metal ribs; occasionally, there are also half-open, stuck sliding doors which are hard to squeeze through, as well as several pipes that can be problematic to circumnavigate. A groove runs in the middle of the floor. As the party approaches the cross-intersection, they hear irregular grinding sounds from the north.

3. The crawlway from the hexagonal tank to a larger funnel-like passage.

4. The tunnel is blocked here by several sturdy metal pipes. No further progress is possible.

5. A huge, approximately 60' diameter circular shaft with concrete walls. The western service tunnel emerges onto a metal walkway running along the edge. The hemispherical, metal-covered top of the shaft is 40' above. Three funnels feed into the shaft, being 15' above the walkway. It is possible to climb up into them, but it soon becomes impossible to progress any further as the incline becomes steeper. In the northern fork, there is a metal door set into the side of the funnel which opens without trouble.

Downwards, the shaft descends at least 300'. Even with a *light* spell, the only thing that is revealed is more walkways and openings. The silence is broken by the echoing sounds of heavy machinery passing underneath (an automated cargo train heading for parts unknown; the Referee should describe or imitate its sounds, but shouldn't reveal what it is exactly).

6. A series of small interconnected rooms with a 10' ceiling. The walls are all full of control panels, indicators and other machines, too decayed to be useful. Brass coils stand in wall niches; these are electrical and produce weak sparks and crackling sounds (also, 1d4 damage if handled). They are surrounded by an eldritch yellowish blue glow that gives off little light. Smaller blast doors to the east do not budge to any human force.

7. A hemispherical room, approximately 50' diameter and 25' high. The floor is covered in black gravel, slag that has fallen through a grate in the ceiling. There is also a bent metal ladder climbing up to the grate, which may be pushed aside to reveal a shaft climbing further upwards. Ladder climbs are punctuated by wall niches where wide openings are covered by heavy, welded metal grates. The sound of rolling machinery can be heard from the south. The ladders emerge into the furnace room at 13.

8. A 20'X20'X15' pyramidal room with metal walls and ventilation grilles. There is a

bottomless rectangular shaft going down. This is the source of the grinding noise that was audible before: two heavy metal wheels are turning 20' below the room. They are not completely circular, and a gap is revealed between periodically. It looks very hard to squeeze through them, and if anyone is foolish enough to try, he will be crushed.

9. A very narrow spiral staircase in a rectangular shaft climbing up and down. The steps, which are made of grooved metal plates, are set into a central column on round axles. They hold well, but some have become loose and rotate when stepped on. In fact, the stairs end 40' down, all steps below that point having been removed from their place with only the occasional one remaining in place.

A rusted iron plate has been set into the central column. The following characters are pressed into it: ΣT-H. If the sign is deciphered, draw attention to its ancient nature, and also to the fact that the characters may equally represent letters and numerals. If someone is fluent in ancient languages as per **Notes on language**, just give out a copy of the alphabet in the back of the module.

10. The spiral stairs emerge into a 20' diameter hemispherical room. The walls are concrete; faded horizontal colour lines are painted onto it and lead into the domed corridor and the room complex to the northeast, each disappearing through various door openings (like a kind of trail) but eventually leading nowhere special. A crawlway behind a metal grate goes west.

11. A hexagonal room with corroded metal walls reinforced by metal ribs. There is a weird contraption set into the floor: a short cylinder with bent copper „claws” emerging. There are brass coils in the middle of the claws. All is silent and there is no other exit.

12. The domed tunnel progresses through a large room complex, continuing into the gigantic bay at 16. The rooms are small, rectangular and form a chaotic but fairly easy to navigate maze. Most rooms are empty but for a few huge metal crates. The crates are incredibly sturdy, the tops are bolted down

and there are only useless machine parts inside.

13. This room is separated from the north-western room complex by a heavy door whose hinges are so thoroughly rusted that they take a great effort of strength to push open. Inside, the walls are rusty iron and black from soot around the top. The ceiling is 50' above the floor. There is a huge metal implement in the middle – some sort of dome standing on four massive legs, with pipes and vents leading off into various directions. As evident from the slag in its central depression and the metal grate leading to a shaft underneath, it once functioned as a furnace or similar device.

14. A concrete-walled cable shaft with metal rungs climbing 60' upwards into the upper room complex.

15. More rooms with even more metal crates and discarded metal girders, as well as exits to the great bay.

16. A vast hall or factory bay whose entirety is lost in darkness even if the PCs have strong light available. Its dimensions exceed 200'X200'; the ceiling is 80' from the ground floor and 20' from the upper ledge. It is a network of massive girders, pipes, support beams, cranes and other indeterminate industrial equipment. The following features are notable:

a) The ground floor of the bay, accessible from the passage to the southwest. There are four gigantic (50' diameter, 50' tall) metal tanks like the one in the starting room, but they cannot be climbed without proper equipment. There is also a wide groove with strange tracks running around the bay, used by a now defunct cogwheel train. Rungs climb up to the ledge at c).

b) Two trapezoidal blast doors to the northwest. Both are at least 30' tall, weigh several tons, and will not move to any force less divine intercession. They are marked, respectively, ΣT-H-B and ΣT-H-BB.

c) A ledge 60' above the main bay floor. Six hexagonal tanks with heavy lids stand on its edge. They are corroded and empty, but

pushing the lids aside produces a lot of noise. Each has a metal plate with a glyph; in order: A, B, Γ, Δ, E, F, which is either alpha–beta–gamma–delta–epsilon–digamma or 1–2–3–4–5–6.

d) The exit from the factory bay is a 20' trapezoidal blast door which is ajar, enough for a person to slide through.

17. A 20' wide and tall passage with a semicircular vault, curving gently upwards. Crawlways with metal panelling break off at various angles. They form a dense and chaotic network with exits to further sections.

18. A long, 120'X20' hall. The ceiling is trapeze with metal girders serving as crossbeams. This part must have once been above ground, since there are openings above with jagged glass in them. All of it is buried under a layer of rocks now. The floor is littered with debris and shattered glass crunching underfoot. Passages to the north and south are blocked by either heavy blast doors or collapsed rocks. There are two exits, both through 10' passages to the east.

19. Spiral stairs like those found at 9. Here, destructive forces have shifted the rocks so that the whole thing is tilted 30° and the steps are hazardous to tread. The shaft leads downwards to unknown depths.

20. These rooms are half collapsed. There are multiple blockages where PCs must climb or push rocks aside to progress. The air is dry and warmer than elsewhere, and there is a definite although faint draft coming from the direction of 21.

21. Another of the half-collapsed rooms; its dimensions are 20'X40' and all exits are choked with debris. As the PCs enter, they start hearing sounds of excavation from above and even see beams of light filtering in. These sounds come from Work Brigade Number Five, whose members are working in a deep crater and who will create an opening in approximately five minutes unless interrupted. Calls for help or the emergence of PCs will immediately result in an outbreak of panic. The workers in the crater scatter to the

four winds, crying about the demons of Outside and calling out for help to Systema Tartarobasis. A few brave souls immediately send a dispatch to the Wandsman Insellanox while four others stand their ground with tools in hand to smite the demons... but reconsider and bolt as soon as they spot one of them.

On the other hand, if the characters stay silent, they can easily eavesdrop on the labourers. After calls such as „Heave-ho! Heave-ho!“, „Move faster, normbreakers! We are behind quota and the Wandsmen will send us to rotation! I don't want to be sent to Brigade Seventeen for sabotage, do you?“ and „Move these to the transport, I expect higher yields on the bottom.“, the ceiling is broken through in a small avalanche of debris. This causes a moment of silence; thereafter, someone who acts as a foreman sends for Insellanox and warns anyone of disturbing the cavity, mentioning the demons of Outside. Nevertheless, lighter work is soon resumed around the edges despite some protestation about the demons and whether working on demon-infested ground can be considered Apostasy.

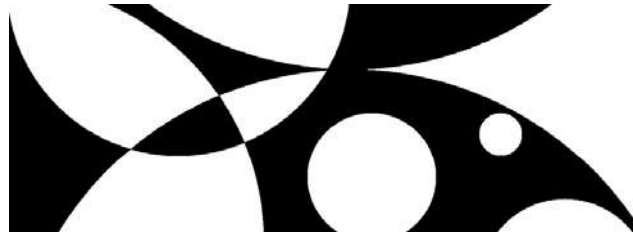
Once called for, Insellanox arrives in perhaps 10 minutes. He is a heavy-set man; less used to physical exertion than the miners and sweating in his black uniform. He proceeds to deliver a sermon centred around demons, Systema Tartarobasis (always returning to the Wandsmen as executors of God's will) and work quotas. The Referee may use this speech as an opportunity to pass on some more information on Exillion and its enlightened ideology (mentioning elements of the basic work process may be a good idea here). The more pompous and sanctimonious the speech, the better. This finished, he forbids workers from further investigation (E.g. „Having considered and weighed the hallowed doctrines of GOD, Systema Tartarobasis, I hereby declare this Opening anathema and interdicted. As it is written, it is the demons of Outside who lair within such darkness, being a Peril to our spiritual integrity and bringers of cold, hunger, darkness and other consequences of Apostasy. Let it not be bothered until the executors of GOD's will cleanse its depths and forevermore bury it back as prescribed by High Wandsman

Encellon, GOD's chosen second in this world. May Systema Tartarobasis deliver us from what lies Outside.")

With the exorcism finished, Insellanox and the workers depart; the former to call a patrol of bosses (6 men) and the latter to resume work elsewhere. One guard is posted, nominally to watch the opening (Insellanox

hopes that if there are indeed demons, they will be satisfied with this offering). The guard, Sennex, soon loses interest and starts to look for glassy chunks of debris in the crater's side. From here on, the PCs are free to explore this strange new world as they desire.

THUS CONCLUDE THE DESCRIPTIONS TO THE DEEPS BENEATH EXILLION



EXTERIKO

EXTERIKO (literally „Outside“) encompasses the blasted wastelands surrounding METAREGIO and ARKHOCENTRON. It is an inhospitable place of dust, debris heaps and merciless heat. EXTERIKO can be divided into two general areas. In Lower Basin, a deep depression to the south and southwest, the destruction was so thorough that no building was left standing and the very ground shifted. Everything is choked with reddish yellow rocks and rough dust. Buried here and there are bits of construction that remain recognisable as building parts. There are also chunks of debris which have been melted into glass by the powers of the explosion. This is the resource the workers spend their days searching for. In turn, Dead Zone, 600' above the level of Lower Basin, has retained the form of a ruined city; less and less dilapidated as one goes further from the explosion's epicentre. Unlike cities on the surface of Fomalhaut, this one shows signs of having been carefully planned, not to mention being grandiose in size and construction. There are tumbled buildings that once reached 10 to 30 stories; vast domes, broken and collapsed communication arrays, etc. Since Dead Zone has a very low yield rate and there are still demons lurking inside some buildings, it is

left alone.

The following aspects of the unforgiving environment are notable:

- The sun, also named Exillion, is an unmoving white sphere in the sky. One can observe a subtle pattern of darker hexagonal spots on its glowing surface, even more prominent during sunset. These spots are artifacts projected by failing coolant rods in Exillion's reactor core. Since there is no celestial movement, dawn and dusk are marked simply by intensifying or dimming light. The sky is dirty white with light grey spots: the reflective surface in the upper reaches of the cavern has suffered from tarnish and no longer works as it once did. Sky and cavern walls meet midway in the air, so there is a degree of crossfading going on.
- No plant or animal life exists in EXTERIKO (or, for that matter, elsewhere in EXILLION). The sole exception to this are the Ashmen, who are found in Dead Zone and don't emerge during the day.
- There is little movement of air, as the artificial winds in Exillion are very weak. It is, however, enough to stir up the dust in Lower Basin.

- There are few landmarks save Triangle Point (B.). The entire terrain is uneven, with craters, piles of debris, shallow ravines and hidden crevasses. It is very easy to move through relatively undetected and perfect for setting up ambushes. Boss patrols (6 to 8 men with spears, short swords and metal javelins) will not see them coming at first, but if a state of alert is declared, they will be doubled and be much more careful.
- During the day, Work Brigades and Boss patrols are encountered in Lower Basin while Dead Zone is empty of life. During the night, Lower Basin is completely abandoned but there is a 1:3 probability of Ashmen encounters in Dead Zone. Once there is an encounter, the probability goes up to 1:2 and is rechecked every hour until morning to simulate convergence.

Note that there are going to be between 16 and 20 Work Brigades on the field in Lower Basin, and four of the five Punishment Brigades will also have been deployed. These groups are scattered all over the Lower Basin area, and they are generally separated by at least half an hour of walking distance. Punishment Brigades occupy positions closer to the cavern walls, while the rest concentrate as one gets near Triangle Point and the cable transport station. They pay no attention to anyone dressed in synna or clothing which is indistinguishable from it. Bosses and especially Wandsmen are not so careless, and will investigate if there is an opportunity. Unless alert has been raised, however, characters who are dressed as locals will just receive a bit of abuse, be questioned regarding the Work Brigade they were assigned to and sent on their way with a stern warning about normbreaking. Stealing supplies or behaving suspiciously in plain sight will be punished and there is going to be a higher risk of discovery.

A. This site is where the characters emerge from the underground facility. If there was no time for Work Brigade Five to take their mine cars with them, they will be here along with a supply wagon. All around, there is nothing but a featureless expanse stretching to impossibly high cavern walls and sheer cliffs.

The silver metal domes of the lower cable transport station will be visible through a veil of ochre dust.

B. Triangle Point, a steep 100' cliff stands in the wasteland, being the only distinct landmark in Lower Basin. It may not be climbed, but the ravines around its base make it a perfect hiding place. There are always at least two Work Brigades in the general area during the day, as its proximity to the cable transport makes it a choice excavation site. These brigades are always accompanied by Wandsmen, and Bosses from the transport station are also in close proximity (20 min to ½ hour). Close to sunset, several brigades converge on Triangle Point as they are returning to METAREGIO.

C.-D. The two cable transport stations are clusters of rectangular buildings topped by tarnished aluminium domes, still glinting in the sunlight. They are connected by two pairs of cables mounted on a series of metal support pillars, allowing simultaneous upwards and downwards transport with an approximately 20 minute travel time. Mine cars are affixed to a suspension frame of four thick steel cables, while gondolas are used for the needs of personal transportation.

The transport procedure is as follows: loaded cars enter through a large bay entrance, and are hoisted onto their support frames by station technicians. Meanwhile, workers stand in queue before stairs leading to a smaller door, passing in double file before a Wandsman. The wait is long and those who come late have to wait even longer, as the transport is slow, experiences frequent delays and breakdowns, and the queues line up fast. Thus, the presence of the Wandsmen and the Boss contingent is primarily to prevent fights from breaking out. There are no checks and searches at this location, although there is a lot of verbal abuse, both by Wandsmen and other workers. Once the wait is over, personnel are squeezed into gondolas in groups of 30, leaving hardly enough place to shift. Thus, the ride is tense, with scuffles and back-and-forth insults, but also relaxation and anticipation. At the upper station, each Work Brigade reassembles and proceeds to the

checkpoint on PERIFERIA with its mine cars. Note that Wandsmen who otherwise watch Brigades stay in Lower Basin until all others are gone and never ride during the same time as workers.

The lower cable transport station is manned by 5+5 Wandsmen, 20 Bosses and 10 worker-technicians (like their companions in the Autocreator, these are outside normal hierarchies and do not mix with other workers whom they consider their inferiors), while there are 15+5 Wandsmen, 20 Bosses and 10 technicians in the upper station on the edges of Dead Zone. These groups are in bitter rivalry for advantageous rotation, and cross each other whenever possible to make the other side look bad. The commander of the lower station is Wandsman Sigsigammax, while the commander of the upper station is Wandsman Ustinsylis. Both have been in their current position for years despite countless petitions for reassignment, and consequently greatly detest their lot and support staff. Both hope to discover some dirt on the other. This attitude has rubbed off on all others at the stations as well.

Garrisons at both stations are generously stocked with provisions and weapons. The standard issue is spears, shortswords and five javelins per man. Sigsigammax and Ustinsylis are armed with lasers with three spare cartridges each. A tri-beam laser is mounted on the upper station, and it is set so it can fire volleys at the vulnerable cable transport without effort. If a last ditch defence is needed for whatever reason, the cables can be blasted off the support columns, sending anyone in transit to their doom and effectively isolating Lower Basin from the rest of Exillion until repairs are completed (this takes several weeks). If things come this far, there may still be a way into Dead Zone through the network of underground facilities, but once the PCs emerge, things will rapidly become PAINFUL, as High Wandsman Encellon will stop at nothing to annihilate them. Scaling the cliffs is generally impossible for all but the most skilled climbers.

E. This is the location of Exillion's destroyed communication array: a huge ruined pile of debris from which a cluster of half-toppled

metal poles thrust skywards. The array is non-functional, having been bombed along with the rest of EXTERIKO thousands of years previous. The immense antennae are visible from a great distance; Wandsman propaganda refers to it as a seat of demons. Such tales aren't entirely free of truth, for this is a place of high Ashman activity. Another legend, yet also a fabrication of the Wandsmen, tells of a cache of the highest grade glass buried under these ruins. Such riches will not be found if entry is gained, but Ashmen certainly will, as many careless souls have found to their detriment.

F. This is a vast building with a huge half-intact dome, and three half-tumbled wings surrounding a rubble-strewn courtyard. Guarding this installation (a former command centre) is a SCORPITRON, a living weapon equipped with a high-powered laser cannon. The SCORPITRON fires at everything it gets a visual on. Unlike its companion in ARKHOCENTRON, this one is linked to a mid-range fixed power supply allowing unlimited shots. There is nothing else of note here.

G. PERIFERIA, METAREGIO's primary line of defence is a force barrier that has only one entry point, through a heavily fortified checkpoint close to the upper cable transport station. It operates at greatly reduced efficiency, yet it is still potent enough to repel human intruders. From afar, PERIFERIA appears as a row of tall corner-apex pyramids made of black metal. Each pyramid has a triangular base and a sort of stooped "beak" on the top. Looking between the pyramids, there is a very faint opalescent shimmering. Anyone approaching within 10 m of the barrier experiences a weak tingling sensation, hairs standing, goosebumps, etc. Getting closer than 5 m results in an invisible electric bolt striking for 5d6 damage (save vs. petrification or there is also paralysis for 2d4 minutes). Anyone passing through, or flying less than 5 m over the barrier will be struck dead. Only a great explosive force would be able to blast a pyramid from its place, resulting in the entire line's instant deactivation. Finding such devices and getting

them close enough to the barrier to have the desired effect will be demanding.

5 Wandsmen and 40 Bosses are posted on PERIFERIA at full readiness at all times; since there are Boss barracks in short distance, another 50 men may be called into service at any time. All of these forces are concentrated on and around the checkpoint. The checkpoint itself is a combination of three defensive elements:

a) First, there are two great portals which allow passage into the city, but which are closed off by light blue curtains of electricity as a means of protection against demons from Outside. The gentle light inside these bronze frames is harmless, but induces such excruciating pain that a save versus energy drain must be made to prevent crying out; this save will be more difficult if the individual carries. There is a large courtyard between the two gates with no cover available.

b) Second, there is a meandering open-air passage flanked by thick concrete walls that also leads through PERIFERIA. This passage is vulnerable to attacks from above, the walls to the side, behind and from the defensive installations.

c) Finally, there are tall defensive buildings which in fact form the majority of the checkpoint complex. Two tri-beam lasers are mounted at critical points, allowing wide-arc fire, and there is also a tripod-mounted flamethrower aimed at the pass-through. This device is behind a protective screen. Moreover, the defensive installations are interconnected inside, with multiple exits on the walls and to the courtyard, offering excellent mobility to their defenders.

PERIFERIA's forces are commanded by Wandsman Messenaxe, a trusted follower of High Wandsman Encellon with a direct signalling system to ARKHOCENTRON and Grand Boss Pinchenden. Bosses posted on the walls carry holstered laser pistols.

The procedure of passage through PERIFERIA is as follows: the arrival of Work Brigades when Exillion's light is fading is signalled to ARKHOCENTRON. Once a confirmation is received, the checkpoint is ready to receive incoming cargo and persons. It is important to note that no passage is granted at any other time unless

ARKHOCENTRON confirms it first, and that such an almost-unprecedented irregularity will turn a lot of heads from important people. PERIFERIA uses a parallel process to filter incoming traffic. All mine cars loaded with cargo are placed on iron tracks and dragged through the electric gates by a pulley-and-chains mechanism. The cars are lined up inside METAREGIO and taken to their final destination, the Autocreator, once the brigade they are assigned to has passed border control. Meanwhile, workers slowly pass through the twisting open air passage under the watchful gaze of Bosses standing on the walls, as well as Wandsmen who direct the Bosses and deliver a constant stream of propaganda preaching about the doctrines of Systema Tartarobasis and the implements of His divine will, the Wandsmen. Norms, quotas, the dictates of Encellon, and (especially) Exillion's deliverance myth; namely, the concept that once all glass is mined and brought into METAREGIO, the inhabitants of the city will stand before Systema Tartarobasis and partake of his Plentiful Benevolence, are mentioned with great frequency. The kindness of Wandsmen shines less brightly upon skimmers and normbreakers. People deemed suspicious are taken to the sides and searched by the Bosses; those found skimming are immediately lead away for rotation and beatings (and woe to the unfortunate woman who falls in the Bosses' hands!). Since skimming is widespread enough to be practiced by the majority of citizens, this is more a random means of terror than a systematic form of punishment. Also, the Wandsmen, who certainly enjoy exercising their power, like to call out and berate people for no specific reason at all (e.g. *"YOU! Yes, you in the sixth row! What is the number of your brigade? Which sector are you bound to? ... Speak up when you are talked to! Yes, and so what? Move faster! ... imbecile. I am surrounded by imbeciles."*).

Once the border has been crossed without a serious incident, the characters may start thinking about what they are going to do in the city of METAREGIO: in arm's reach of their final goal, yet still maddeningly far from

attaining it. (Note: it is likely that the characters will be dead tired by now, especially if they had to do fighting or other hard labour. Take this into account now and later on.)

THUS CONCLUDE THE PARTY'S TRAVAILS IN THE LAND THAT IS NAMED EXTERIKO



METAREGIO

A ruined barracks city of concrete and iron, METAREGIO is a shadow of its former self. Abandoned blocks are intermingled with run-down living complexes that show signs of having been several stories high in the past, but where only the remaining lowest floors are populated now. Narrow alleys are choked with hills of debris, although others, as well as all main roads, have been cleared, and some of the material incorporated into new construction. Warped and corroded metal sheets, stones that sometimes have glazed surfaces as a reminder to the extreme heat they had been subjected to, and other remains of a once mighty industrial civilisation are apparent. The top of intact buildings is a black mess of metal antennae, grids, poles and other inscrutable instruments of no current function. Everything shows signs of extreme age and neglect, and there are no living things outside humans.

METAREGIO is dominated by the immense complex of the Autocreator. The Autocreator has no entrances from the city except for the glass intake chutes, and therefore it remains its own closed-off world, perpetually operational with a steady hum of machinery. Towering above METAREGIO are the steep concrete walls of ARKHOCENTRON, the seat of the Wandsmen and their God, Systema Tartarobasis. It is an ominous presence above a ruined landscape, the elite of the Bosses standing on its parapets by the day and searchlights scouring the surrounding

desolation by night. Two bridges approach the iron gates, constantly lit and always in sight of observing eyes. ANOTERA, the mountain ARKHOCENTRON is situated on, is separated from the city by a wide bottomless chasm.

METAREGIO shows little signs of life when most Work Brigades are at work Outside. Except for Bosses posted at checkpoints and those who are transporting various supplies or spending their day off doing light work (an excuse for relaxation and non-sanctioned normbreaking), the streets are empty of traffic. Various areas around the city show increased activity: quarrying, repairs, heating and rolling synna for use as textiles, down to entirely meaningless tasks to keep workers occupied (carrying debris from one pile to another, dismantling an old communications array on top of a towering building and taking it to a warehouse where it is promptly forgotten, clearing a new building for use as a new communal barracks that will never be filled, etc.). In the evening, there is a bustle of activity with people going their various ways or walking around at random, but this period rarely lasts more than two or three hours, as the dimming of Exillion's lights signals the approach of curfew and the rest period. At night, the streets are dark and the only form of illumination that supplements the sun's weak night-time radiance is giant street lamps creating concentrated pools of intense light. These devices, which project light in three

directions roughly forming a circle, are mounted on tall metal poles and are frequently selected as sites for Boss checkpoints. They are, however, inadequate for illuminating anything but their immediate area; therefore, it is possible to move about unseen through most of METAREGIO in this period.

Rallies are an exception to this rule. These huge events, which take place on an empty area below ARKHOCENTRON's main gate, are held in the evening and last well into the night. They are attended by the majority of adult citizens, as the long sermons and speeches by the top Wandsmen, including High Wandsman Encellon and Second Wandsman Feluxis through the loudspeakers, are accompanied by the distribution of synna blocks carefully selected from less polluted batches, as well as a synna-derived alcoholic drink, and are followed by spontaneous orgies among the citizenry. Rallies are wild affairs with frequent fistfights, but there are always enough Bosses at the ready both at positions around the masses and on the roof of their headquarters, to efficiently quell any riot that may result. For serious situations, the tri-beam lasers and flamethrowers on the HQ building may be used to disperse the crowd. Nevertheless, rallies are an opportunity for releasing pressure, and a gathering point for those who desire to engage in illicit activities from exchanging glass for smuggled goods to the gatherings of Apostates. Rallies are organised without any obvious pattern, but the appearance of demons in EXTERIKO, news on whom are certain to spread, prompts the Wandsmen to stage a grandiose event to mold fear into a tool against the invaders and to strengthen their own public support. The implications of this rally, and further concerns, are elaborated under **Dynamics**.

Patrols in METAREGIO consist of 4 to 6 men, or double the number if the alert has been raised. They carry standard equipment.

H. This tent camp next to PERIFERIA is reserved for the five Punishment Brigades. The tents are synna on a metal framework, and have no furnishings whatsoever except uncomfortable mattresses laid on the ground. Each is home to a full brigade. Workers who

are placed on a Punishment Brigade have their freedom of movement severely curtailed in METAREGIO, but they are under no special surveillance outside a few token Bosses watching over their camp at night, as there is nowhere to escape to, and being discovered missing is met with brutal punishment. In effect, the camp is run by Brigade Nine, thugs closely associated with the Apostates, whose enforcement of order includes mandatory cuts from brigade quotas and other favours forced from the rest of the prisoners. Those who fail to comply are ratted out, beaten or even murdered in an out of the way location.

I. Also close to the checkpoint on PERIFERIA, an orderly group of barracks is used by 80 of METAREGIO's 250 Bosses. The barracks are equipped with bare-bones personal comfort marginally better than workers': bunks and a few tables to sit around. There are no extra supplies or weapons. There are usually 30 to 40 Bosses present.

J. The blocks of the Autonomous Production System, which are surrounded by dilapidated residential districts, are an endless conglomerate of industrial architecture. Despite the ramshackle appearance, the Autocreator is in good condition and it could operate at almost full functionality. The input of the system is a mixture of glass debris and other materials as prescribed by the Wandsmen. All materials are entered via large funnels on the southern side of the complex. These wide mawlike openings are above ground so glass from mine cars has to be carted up on metal wheelbarrows while Wandsmen watch and keep tally of brigade results. Inside, a conveyor system separates chunks of various size and purity via moving bolters, while a combination of melting and pressing shapes them into glass blocks of various prismatic shapes. Synna is a byproduct of this manufacturing process, being made of reprocessed slag and additives. Finished products are loaded into crates and placed on further conveyors that take them through the chasm around the base of ANOTERA and into the depths of

ARKHOCENTRON. 40 Wandsmen and 20 special workers are the overseers of the Autocreator. There are no Bosses and the Wandsmen are mostly unarmed, although if there is a serious emergency, eight Meta-Droids can be released into the facility. This is only done as a last resort, for the Meta-Droids have no friend-or-foe recognition system and attack indiscriminately. Until then, 15 sets of Divine Light can be retrieved and distributed among defenders.

Entering the Autocreator undetected is difficult. The funnels are situated on a large open plaza in open view of at least two checkpoints and close to the barracks near PERIFERIA. There is no cover to speak of, and light clearly outlines the scaffolds at night. The best chance is actually during the confusion when cargo is delivered; creating or taking advantage of a diversion could draw attention away from characters. The challenge then is to proceed along the conveyors and eventually find the loading bays and ride across the chasm into ARKHOCENTRON without being discovered on the way by the Wandsmen and their flunkies. Describing the facility in detail is outside the scope of this module.

K. An isolated building in a silent section of METAREGIO is used as a place of healing. It consists of a colonnade forming a quarter-circle, and an inner chamber with a font of curative waters. The water is able to heal 3d4 points of damage, but only once per day per person. Naturally, a Wandsman is tasked with distribution, and four Bosses patrol the perimeter at night with a larger group (10) at a checkpoint nearby. The Wandsman, and one of the Bosses, have the key to the locked iron door which leads inside. The water rapidly loses its benign properties if taken from the font.

L. This is the large gathering ground for rallies and executions. Even at other times, there are always people – including Wandsmen – around, plus the place is in clear sight of Boss headquarters.

M. The headquarters of the Bosses is a blocky concrete monstrosity sitting in an empty space

devoid of other construction. The rectangular outcroppings of the windowless structure rise to imposing battlements. There are a total of five battle stations outside (one right on the top), each with two tri-beam lasers mounted on metal tripods. The highest battle station, hovering a full 120' above ground, also has a battery of six heat-seeking missiles. There are, moreover, great searchlights for seeking out intruders and alarms to signal ARKHOCENTRON if there is an attack on the building. The corridors, which are cold, grey and empty, are lit with flickering electric spotlights.

170 Bosses, mostly equipped with their usual spears, shortswords and javelins, but having access to a locked store of 30 lasers, are quartered in the building, of whom usually 80 to 100 are out on patrol. Grand Boss Pinchenden has his office on the first floor. No Wandsmen are present; important prisoner are taken to ARKHOCENTRON for interrogation.

M1. Entry lobby supported by thick rectangular columns. Gates to the outside, smaller metal doors to passages and chambers.

M2. Barracks; these are crowded with bunk beds and simple furniture.

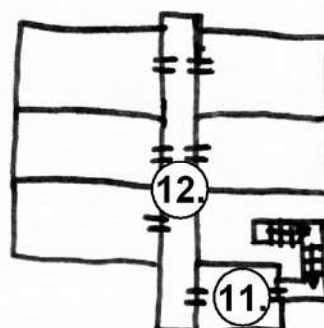
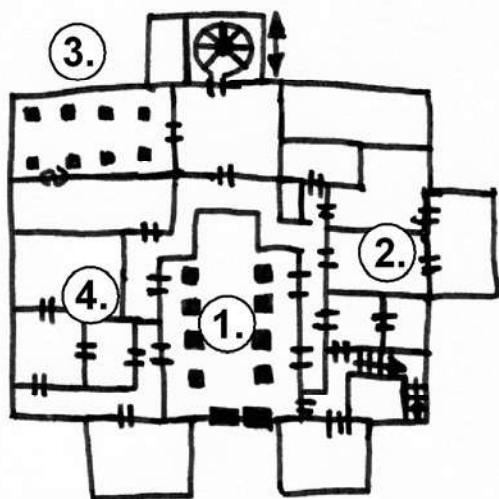
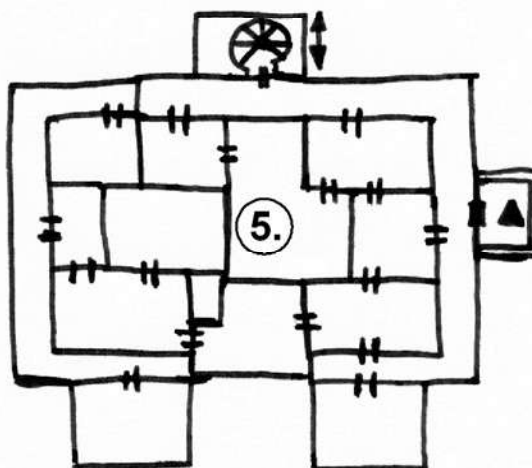
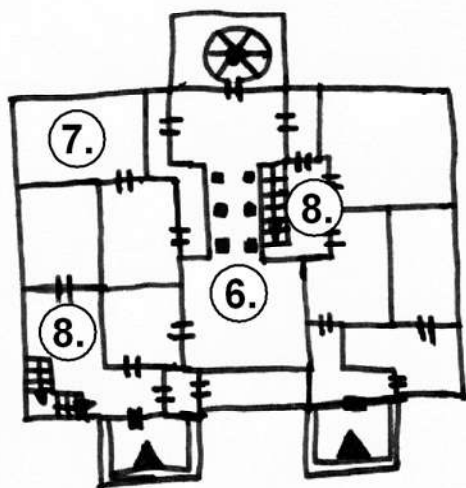
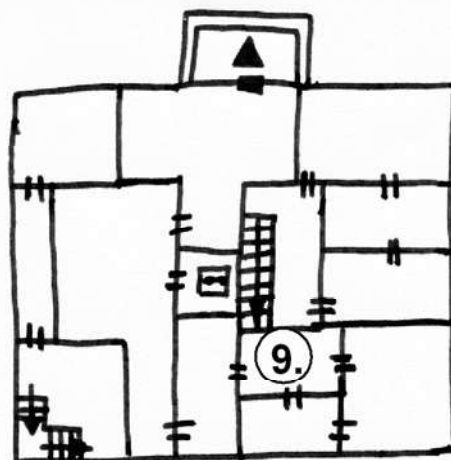
M3. Pinchenden's office is located in a columned hall. He has a desk, a black banner with the lightning in the circle, and two personal bodyguards. A secret door leads to his spartan sleeping chamber to the south. Pinchenden carries a laser pistol on his body at all times.

M4. These are more barracks.

M5. The entire floor is reserved for storage space. There is enough food and drink to outlast a siege, in addition to other equipment and weapon racks.

M6. Another columned hall, heavily guarded at all times.

M7. The laser pistols are kept in this locked chamber. 30 pistols charged at various levels



are available, placed in sealed metal containers. There are also equipment parts, tripods and even a few batches of explosives (75% ineffective due to advanced age). Getting in the chamber requires Pinchenden's dog tag to avoid triggering an alarm.

M8. These rooms have stairwells that ascend to the floor above. Each set is guarded from above by two elite Bosses equipped with lasers.

M9. This level is abandoned. Dust covers everything. It is also separated into two sections with no interconnection. Access to the roof is via a 40' ladder in the central chamber.

M10. The roof of the HQ, studded with the usual comm equipment. Four Bosses man the tri-beam laser, missile battery and searchlight station.

M11. The entrance to the underground holding cells, constantly guarded by four. It is also used for beatings, as evident from the heavy steel pipes by the wall.

M12. The cells under the building were converted from giant storage rooms with a semicircular domed vault. Every cell is closed by a heavy sliding blast door that may not be opened from inside. There are only eight prisoners, all arrested Apostates awaiting the next execution. The facility is way below storage capacity; if needed, as many as 500 could be brought in.

N. This nondescript building in close proximity of Boss HQ is used as a warehouse by Santiscauld's Apostates. There are all sorts of illegal goods here: synna blocks, synna textiles, alcohol, mining equipment, worker and Boss garments (even ten well-hidden Wandsman uniforms!), a small store of Outside items, weapons, etc. Basically, everything that could be found in Exillion except lasers and other advanced gear is available. The place is guarded day and night. Nobody is allowed inside unless on Santiscauld's direct orders.

O. A ramshackle building on the outskirts of METAREGIO, this is the main hub of the Apostates' black market. Here, glass debris may be exchanged for extra luxuries: synna, alcohol, and even food which comes directly from divine dispensation (or more correctly, through the URANOMETAFORA). Nympharium services are also found herein, a highly illegal thing. The seedy dive is frequented by workers, but Bosses can also be seen downing a cup or two (at reduced rates, of course). Wandsmen come rarely, and then only in plain clothes.

The market is run by Santiscauld, the Don of this operation, and a confidant of Second Wandsman Feluxis. Santiscauld is the corpulent type, constantly escorted by two tough-boys who are expert legbreakers. His office is underground. There are also sentries posted at other entrances, and some key locations (+). On the other hand, the guard is neither strong nor very attentive. Additionally, the thick iron doors block sound so infiltration and even an assault can work if it is done fast and relatively silently. Walls are bare concrete, and lights are electrical.

O1. The bar section demonstrates that even in such an unusual place, certain constants of fantasy apply. The bar consists of a low ceilinged room below street level. There are cross-legged tables and stools (all made of metal, of course), and a long counter where drinks are served. In the evening (the place opens after sunset and closes around midnight), there are up to 16 guests, usually at least two or three Bosses among them. They drink alcohol, consume synna, but it is also possible to spot that some of them are eating Outside food – roast chicken legs, eggs and fruits! There is constant conversation, and although groups keep to themselves, they are freer with their tongues than elsewhere.

The barman, Roxin, is a bald guy with a moustache. He stands behind the counter, usually preoccupied with cleaning mugs (ugly aluminium cups) with a filthy rag. If presented with good proof that the PCs may be interesting, he whispers that they should wait until the place is empty, and is willing to take them before Santiscauld. The exit from the bar – like other doors in the building – is

an iron blast door which closes with two “arms”. This one may only be opened from the other side.

02. These are sleeping chambers for goons. There are four in each room. They have bunks and simple personal items, including some very minor Outside trinkets.

03. Three large sleeping chambers for the prostitutes working in the nympharium. These unfortunate women have been brought here by kidnapping and extortion (often from Punishment Brigades), and are kept against their will. There are a total of 18, six to each room. They have a few personal effects, but certainly don’t like their lot, even if mining is not pleasant work either. All of the rooms open from the outside only.

04. More sleeping rooms for toughs upstairs. Their inhabitants are mostly away at the warehouse, so there are only six present in all. The middle room has a large opening outside, where the wall collapsed around a window. A watcher is posted here, as this is where goods are brought in.

05.–06. Nympharium rooms, empty during the night. Mattresses, synna tapestries and a peculiar smell, a mixture of sweat and other, sweetish odours. 06. is an entire suite, reserved for special guests and occasions.

07. Santiscauld’s underground office is a comfortably furnished and soundproof room. The Don sits behind a steel writing desk, where he also has a bottle of white wine and a bowl of sugared fruits. His boys are constantly by his side. Santiscauld is hard to negotiate with: he knows that he holds many cards in his hand while the characters hold very few: after all, he can order them captured, Outside items offered as bribes taken, etc. Only extraordinarily interesting things or outstanding but tangible offers capture his attention – basically, a reason not to sell them to a higher bidder in ARKHOCENTRON. One such possibility is magic items, but only once their powers have been demonstrated in his arena. The subject is going to be a wretch taken from a holding

cell, and Santiscauld will watch the proceedings from the safety of his observation gallery.

If things go wrong, he threatens PCs with his laser pistol, but surrenders to obvious superior force if called on the bluff. Remember that Santiscauld knows all about the URANOMETAFORA, and that the PCs desperately need to reach it. He uses this knowledge as a bargaining chip even if he is “losing”, reminding them that nothing will be gained if he is dead. On the other hand, he is careful to withhold key information, including the facts that he has learned how to operate the device, or that his association with Second Wandsman Feluxis doesn’t stop at smuggling. He later suggests that the party retrieve the Wandsman uniforms from his warehouse – only once they are near Boss HQ, he walks away, remarking that making a scene here would be a foolish idea...

There are two exits from Santiscauld’s room. The one to the south leads to a sleeping chamber and a secret escape route, and the other to a gallery overlooking the large chamber.

08. A large chamber, roughly equal in size to a basketball court, and with an equally high ceiling. An observation gallery overlooks the place, separated by iron girders. The chamber is used to stage gladiator fights, usually against victims who have little chance.

09. These are used as holding cells for people who had crossed the Apostates or refused to pay extortion. There are six unfortunate wretches, including one former Apostate who knows of Santiscauld’s dealings with Feluxis, and a Boss who is familiar with the layout of ARKHOCENTRON.

P. The bottom of the chasm at the base of ANOTERA is lost in darkness. Conveyor belts carrying sealed crates from the deep storages of the Autocreator run across the gulf at odd angles and heights. The closest one is approximately 30’ below the edge. All belts are located in the segment between the northern and central bastion. Even at night, it is not easy to descend without detection, although doing so during a rally may be

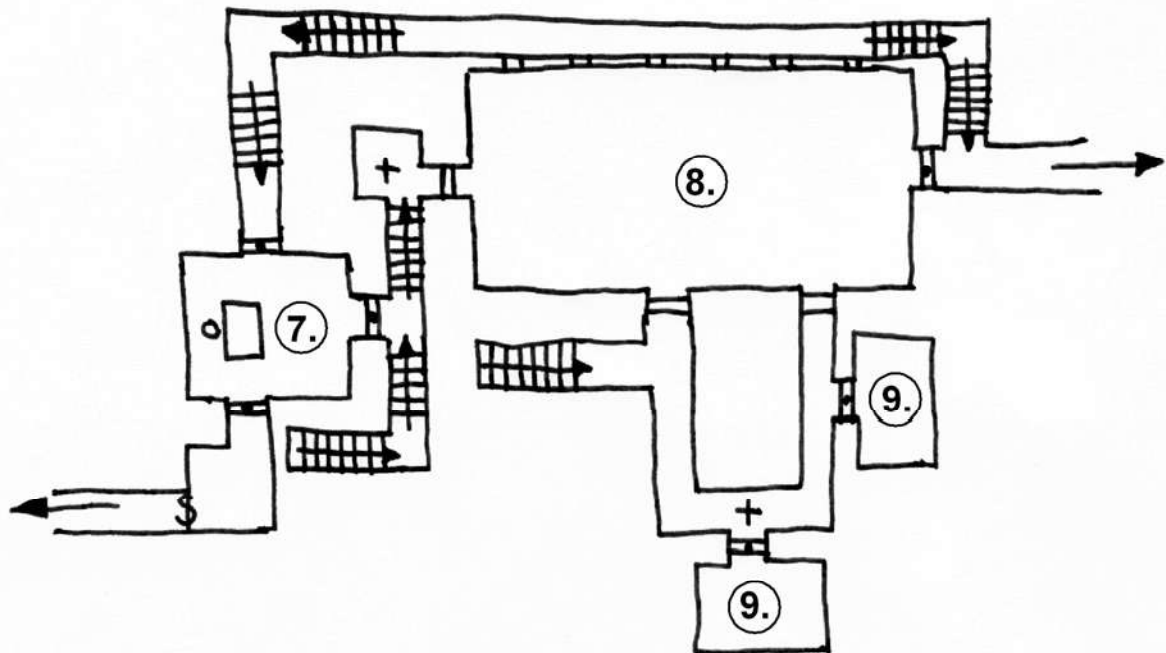
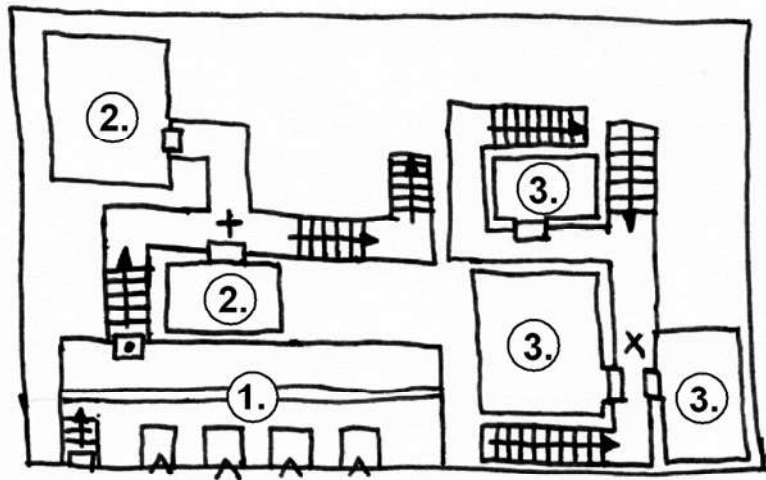
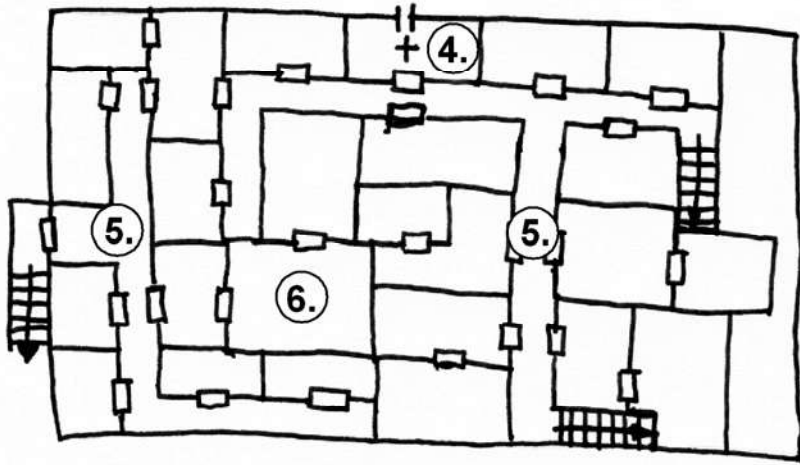
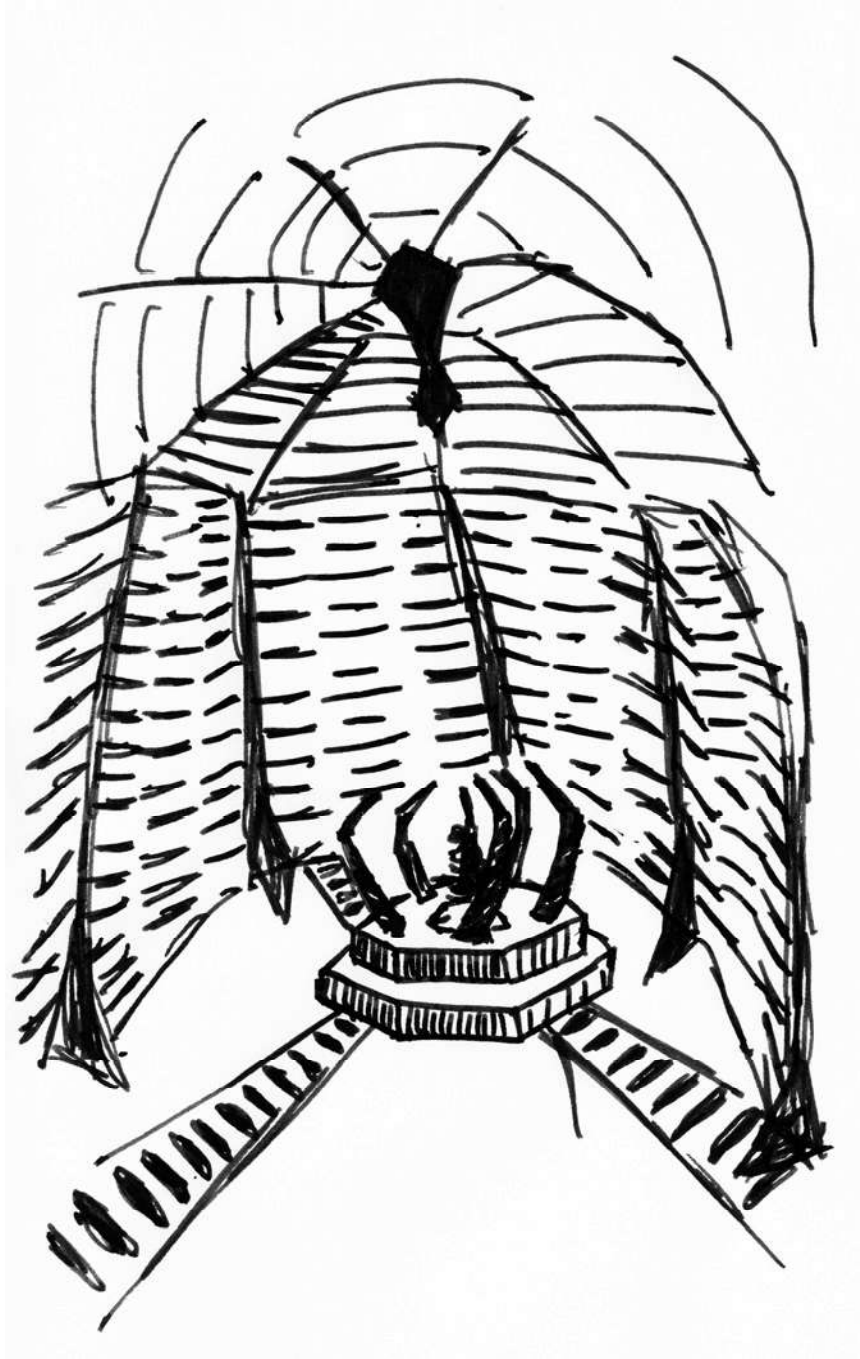
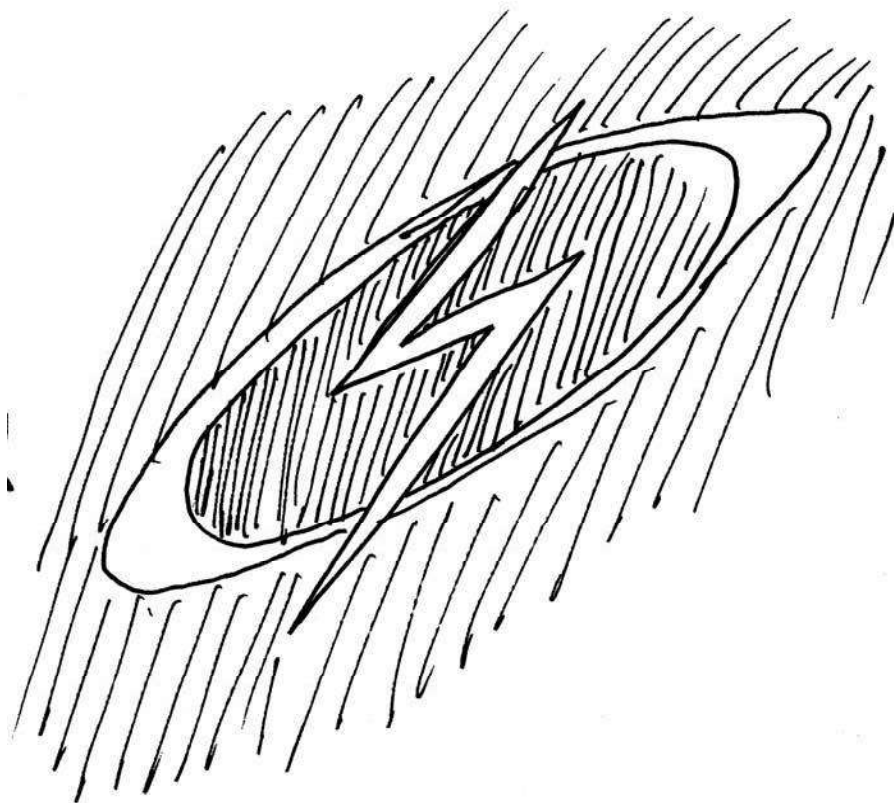


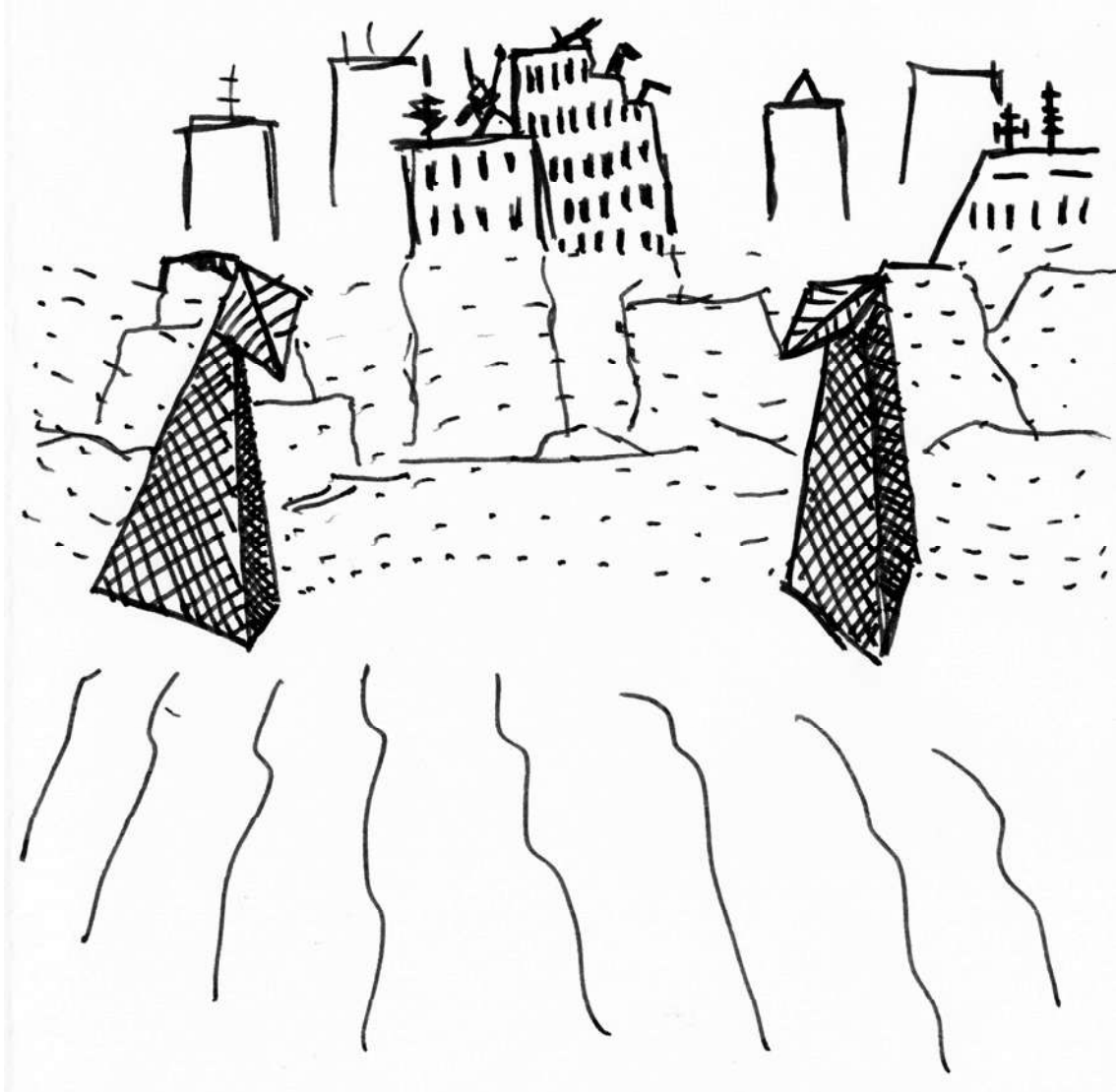
Illustration Booklet

1. Machinery (UNDEREARTH 11.)
2. Block of synna
3. The device of the Bosses
4. Ruined comm array (EXTERIKO E.)
5. PERIFERIA (EXTERIKO G.)
6. Checkpoint on PERIFERIA (EXTERIKO G.)
7. Pole-mounted spotlight in METAREGIO
8. The URANOMETAFORA
9. URANOMETAFORA controls
10. Systema Tartarobasis

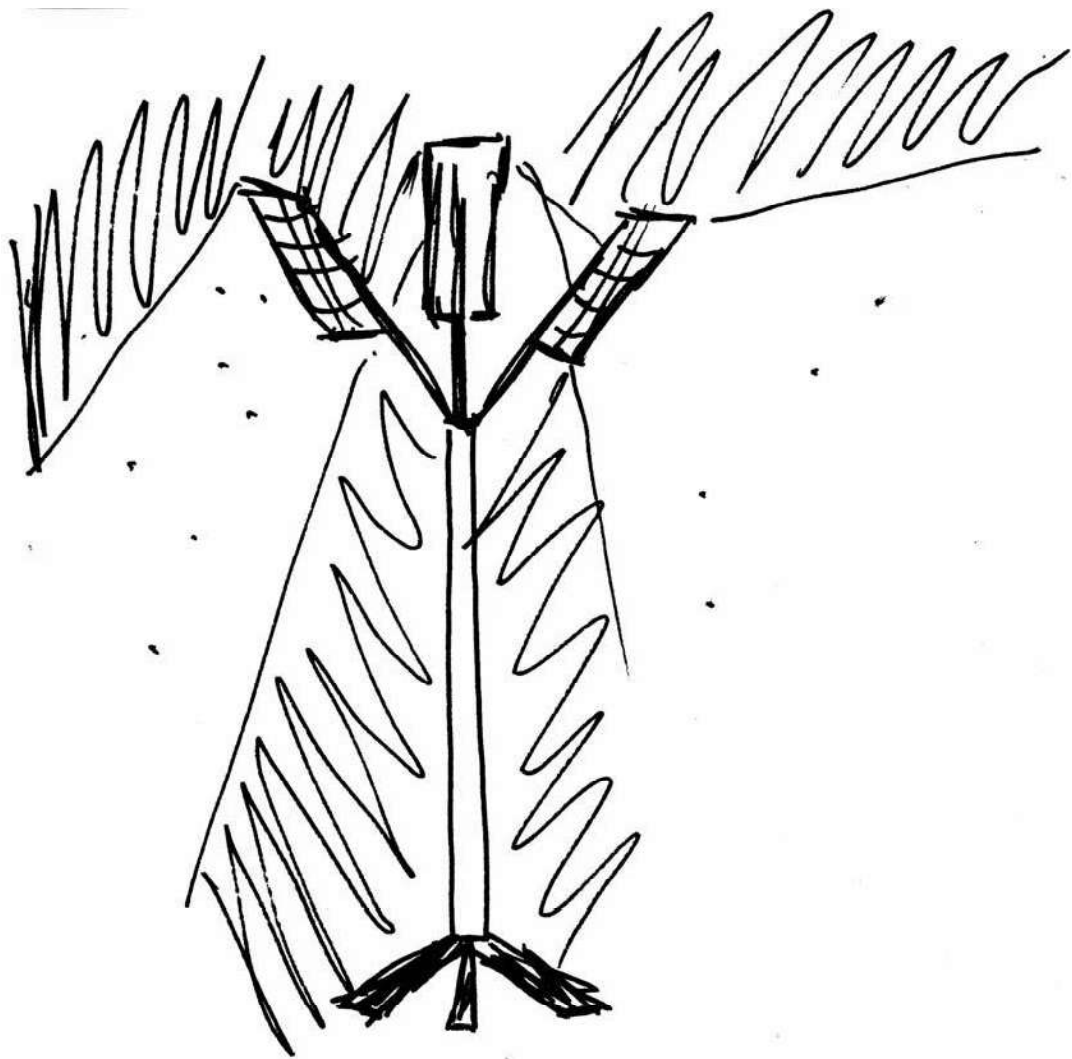


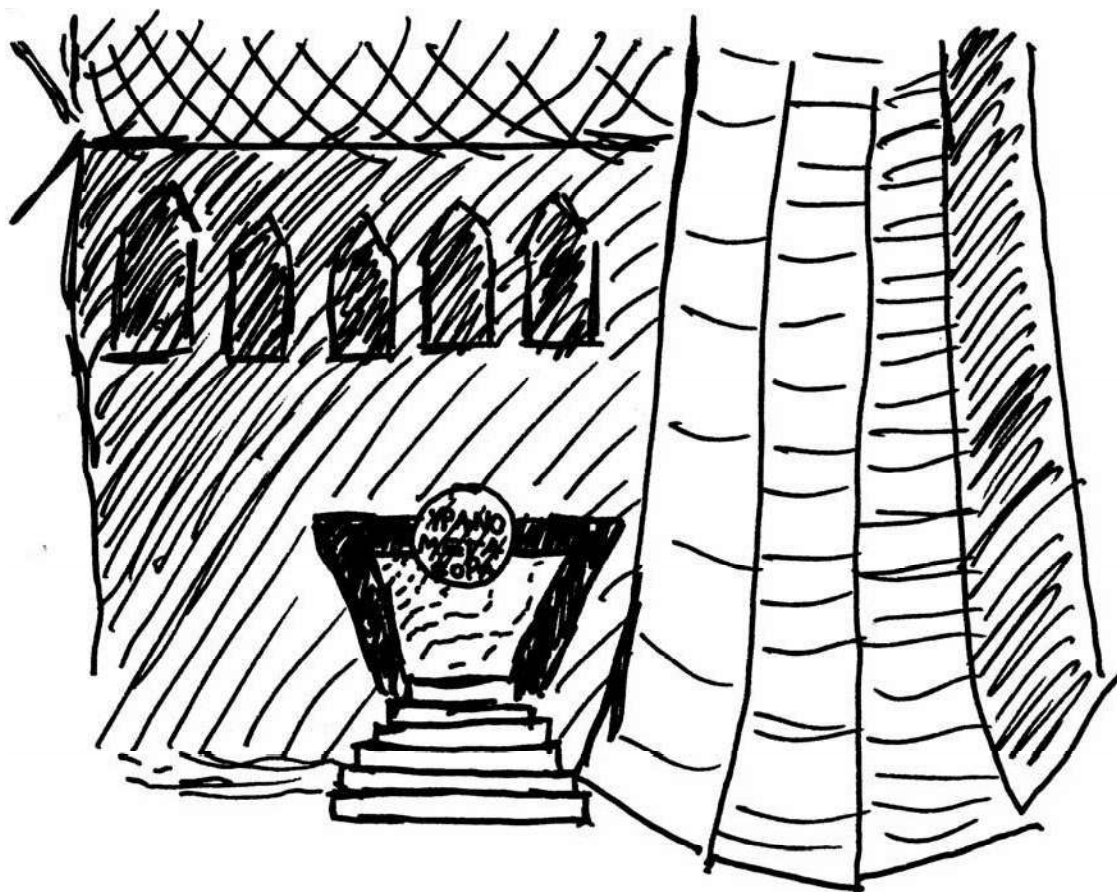














This Ends the Illustration Booklet

achieved, as the crowds stay away from the chasm for fear of an accident.

Q.-R. Two gate towers leading into ARKHOCENTRON. Both towers are linked to METAREGIO via metal bridges, and both are closed by great iron gates. It is impossible to approach the gate unseen without turning invisible. Workers may not visit ARKHOCENTRON under all but the rarest circumstances (almost certainly unavailable for the PCs). Bosses who have a very important report to make may be let in, and Wandsmen are theoretically free to come and go (practically, they are also known enough to the Bosses to be recognisable under most circumstances). In any event, entering through

the front gate leads to a thorough questioning by an inquisitive and high-ranking Wandsman who can unerringly recognise impersonators. This doesn't apply to people who are escorted by a high-ranking Wandsman such as Encellon (as unlikely as this is), Feluxis or elders like Brother Cudgel: it is their discretion and their accountability.

Having gained entry into the ancient fastness of the Wandsmen, the characters are now closer to freedom than ever. Yet their hardest task is still to be finished: find a way to the URANOMETAFORA's controls in a place crawling with their enemies, activate the teleportation device and return to their own world unharmed.

THUS CONCLUDE THE ADVENTURES IN THE RUINED CITY OF METAREGIO



ARKHOCENTRON, haughty seat of the Wandsmen and God, Systema Tartarobasis, towers above the city of METAREGIO with its parapets, bastions and chaotic building complexes. Even so, this is only part of the whole, for many more stores, factory bays and machine depots exist under ANOTERA, unknown even to the Wandsmen themselves. As the central hub of a Stabilisator City from Fomalhaut's prehistory, the technology is so sophisticated that much of it is beyond human understanding. Systema Tartarobasis is one such enigma, being made God by the fact of worship, yet not divine in the traditional sense even if none in Exillion could live without it. Then there is the URANOMETAFORA: an enchanted gate into a supposed heavenly world, this primordial technological artifact is a means of commercial exchange, but perhaps it is also a door to salvation to the player characters. Irregardless of the philosophical implications the place invites,

ARKHOCENTRON is going to be a place of denouement.

It is not possible to describe in exact detail every passage, lecture hall, chapel and hidden nook in this module. Instead, what is presented is a summary of the notable areas and their accessibility. Familiarity with the personalities who may influence play is paramount to run this part of the scenario. Likewise, what happens in ARKHOCENTRON; indeed, what possibilities are *left* by the time the characters reach it, is greatly dependent of what had happened previously. If more than four days have been spent in the city or events have escalated beyond control, only a suicidal last-ditch effort may be available. Contrariwise, an earlier time or sufficient discretion provides a lot of manoeuvring ground; indeed, there is a possibility that the characters will be with a friendly (although rather greedy) escort, and attain the final destination

inviolate. The state of alert and the mobilisation of inimical forces is as follows:

- **Level Zero:** The characters have been very carefully avoiding confrontation. Even if their presence is known, they have caused little damage (under five casualties or disappearances) and no news have travelled to Encellon about their intent to use the URANOMETAFORA. This is the optimal scenario: guards are at a low alert and will not be suspicious. Life goes on in ARKHOCENTRON as usual, and if the proper precautions have been taken and appropriate disguise donned, the characters can move about without drawing undue attention. Finding a Wandsman who has access to Systema Tartarobasis and who can be coerced or bribed into activating the URANOMETAFORA may be easily accomplished. Of course, being where they are not supposed to be, or doing things they are not supposed to do is still not advisable, and running into Encellon or Feluxis is bad news.
- **Level One:** The characters have been cautious, but there have been disturbances that have drawn attention: casualties or disappearances numbering between five and fifteen, intentions known to Encellon, causing smaller calamities, etc. In this scenario, guards have been told to watch for suspicious intruders. Unless they can employ extraordinary guile, bluffing no longer works and movement within ARKHOCENTRON must be clandestine. Key locations marked on the map (+) are guarded at normal level (2 guards at each point). However, investigation will be concentrated in METAREGIO and characters who remain out of sight can avoid a violent conclusion.
- **Level Two:** The characters have done major bloodshed, killed/alerted important personalities (this means Pinchenden, Santiscauld or any Wandsman in charge of a major installation) or drawn widespread

public attention to their activities. In this scenario, Encellon takes special precautions. All normal guard posts are manned as usual, but a search party is also assembled to patrol ARKHOCENTRON's outer courtyards. The SCORPITRON is activated and placed inside the northern gate. If the intruders are identified, Encellon immediately gathers all elite Bosses and moves to intercept them at the courtyard of the URANOMETAFORA. Depending on player swiftness, his appearance may take place before or after the activation of the gate. Meanwhile, Feluxis awaits the PCs in the activation chamber to take them prisoner as proof of Encellon's inefficiency. If they have been encountered, he will be with Santiscauld or Pinchenden (in this order); otherwise, the companion is an unidentified elite Boss. In this case, no Wandsman will help the characters unless threatened with bodily harm, as they know the consequences of aiding demons from Outside.

- **Level Three:** Major confrontation has occurred between characters and Exillion forces, important people have been killed and the activities of the PCs have become a public spectacle. Alternately, characters arrive after the noon of day four. In this scenario, all odds are stacked against the intruders. Encellon places ARKHOCENTRON on high alert. All hands are called into service, entrances and points of interest watched by a triple guard (6 men) and laser weapons distributed among all Wandsmen. Encellon personally leads his best into battle, moving around the inner areas of ARKHOCENTRON with orders to shoot on sight. A very minor hope exists in that the High Wandsman also suspects treachery, and his attention may be briefly drawn away if this fear is exploited. Even so, massive luck, ability or their combination is going to be needed to live through this

entanglement.

- Day six arrives. Alert in this case goes back to level two, but the PCs only have one hour after sunrise to stop Encellon from destroying the URANOMETAFORA, and thirty minutes of *game time* after his intention to do so has been broadcast.

Running ARKHOCENTRON, the Referee must keep things fluid and be prepared to think fast and improvise. Keep in mind that even at full alert, the complex isn't airtight: there are just too few people to guard every entrance and passage.

There are six known levels below ARKHOCENTRON.

A. (ALPHA) This is just below the main building complex. It is lightly guarded with a few checkpoints. The layout is gridlike, with domed rooms in intersections and rooms branching off the main passages. The primary purpose is manufacturing activity; the materials being manufactured are various industrial additives mixed in giant fermenting vats. They exhibit pudding type characteristics, but are not in fact harmless unless something is intentionally thrown into them: in this case, they have a formidable pull and need a hard Strength check to break free. There are stairs up to 8., 7. and 12., the last through a jail area. Access down is through stairs to B. and ladders to Γ.

B. (BETA) A lesser intermediate level. It is full of machines which are responsible for regulating the Autocreator's activities. Access up and down is through stairs, but there is also a shaft that goes through Γ. to Δ. and an elevator to an underground passage which connects to the Autocreator. Guard activity is low but present (the elevator is always guarded).

Γ. (GAMMA) Much of the level is meandering tunnels and storerooms full of heavy machine parts. No guard is set. Stairs descend at various points to the bay of Δ., and also to Φ. There are also stairs up to B. and ladders to A.

Δ. (DELTA) Almost the entire expanse of the level is one immense distribution bay for the conveyor belts incoming from the Autocreator. Distribution is usually supervised by two junior Wandsmen standing on a ledge. They are unarmed. If level three alert is declared, Bosses with lasers are placed here to shoot interlopers.

E. (EPSILON) Deep storage for several types of high-tech equipment, including lasers, but also scientific tools, unused terraforming devices, navigation instruments and much more. Everything is sealed behind blast doors and often kept at low temperatures. Nobody really comes here. Access is only available from below.

Φ. (PHI) There is only one way to descend to this level, through a winding staircase from Γ. A spiral staircase leads up to E. Most of the level's area is a hazardous environment where the Radiation Pits are located. Consignation to this oubliette is certain death. Nobody comes here unless commanded to. There are possibly even more levels below Φ., but they are unknown, not to mention irrelevant to the scenario.

1.-2. Two gate towers and a bastion in between. All of them are three stories tall. The gates are guarded by two men; the middle level is usually empty (but with firing ports in case of an emergency and an immobile flamethrower aimed at the bridges). A tri-beam laser is mounted on the roof; there are usually two guards – one to man the tri-beam and another to watch the trapdoor down. There is a pole-mounted lamp on each tower.

3. The battlements are wide enough for three to progress abreast. There is adequate cover on both sides.

4. The outer courtyard is a flat expanse offering little cover unless characters stay in the dark and close to the walls. At a level two or three alert, the SCORPITRON will have been placed on the southern corner of the main complex (14.) where it can instantly fire at anyone in a 270° arc. Traffic on the courtyard is low but constant during the day,

and very low during the night.

5. This triangular hall of columns is the building of the nymphaeum. Everything is covered in beautiful white marble, imported from Outside at outrageous costs. There is a circular pool, comfortable seats to lounge on, golden wine, and pretty young things to take one's mind off the days' troubles. None of the latter are to be seen if there is any hint of danger. The hall is a perfect place for ambush.

6. The servants' wing, a somewhat simple concrete building with two floors. There aren't too many workers living in ARKHOCENTRON, and they are all harmless old people. These Heroes of Work are usually too pious to offer help and too cowardly to be a threat.

7. Storage space for all kinds of mundane supplies, one story. This is where one of the exits from level A. emerge. There are normally only two or three Bosses to the entire place, four at level two alert and six at level three. Exits open to the outer courtyard at two points, as well as the servants' wing (13.).

8. The novices' wing is a compact three-story building. It is flanked from the east and the north by long colonnades with numerous doors leading into cells and communal chambers. It is cold, impersonal and very bare. There are few novices, mostly youths between fourteen and twenty years of age. Hence, much of the place is completely empty. The novices' wing is unguarded, but except for the iron portal at the westernmost terminus of the colonnade and a passage to the temple, there are no useful connections. Novices know little but doctrine and small practical tasks. Their attitude is usually of naive devotion. They have no possessions outside their habits and scientific textbooks.

9. The temple of Systema Tartarobasis is a three stories high hall that shows signs of extreme age, probably used as a lecture hall in the distant past. Pews are simple and uncomfortable with large writing surfaces. The podium is equipped with loudspeakers.

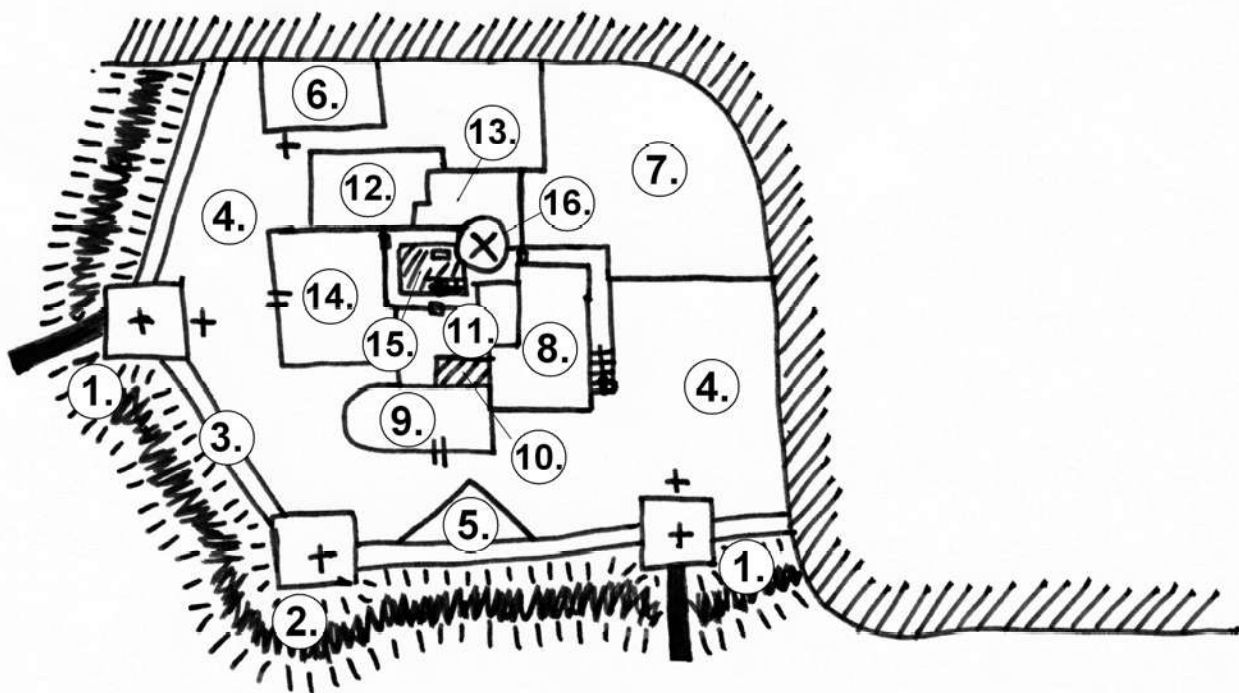
There is no representation of God in the temple, or anything that could be interpreted as decorative. There are no guards or passersby either.

10. The southern courtyard connects three major areas: the novices' wing, the temple and Central Core. Since the surrounding buildings are at least three stories tall, it is always a bit dark. A colonnade runs around the ground and first floor. There are no Bosses in normal circumstances, but very frequent traffic. At level two alert, there are two men on the ground floor. At level three, there are two on both floors.

11. Central Core is the highest block of ARKHOCENTRON except Systema's tower, with a full four stories. Only the elder Wandsmen and the 15 elite Bosses are allowed into its halls without special permission. There are secret libraries, sitting rooms, comfortable sleeping chambers, discussion chambers and more – equipped with everything divine providence can provide. Here, too, are the audience chambers of Encellon and Feluxis. The characters won't encounter many people here, but there is a good chance they will be armed and extremely dangerous. Central Core has a flight of stairs down to level A. just outside the iron portal leading to the courtyard of the URANOMETAFORA, and connections to all surrounding areas except storage and the southern servants' wing.

12. The entire wing is reserved for ARKHOCENTRON's Bosses. It is two stories, and consists of spartan cells with bunks and tables, plus a few rooms reserved for practice and other activities. There is a connection to level A., where ARKHOCENTRON's jail is located, and exits to the outer courtyard, the main building and the southern servants' wing. Obviously, there are a lot of Bosses here, less if they have been dispatched elsewhere.

13. The southern servants' wing, just like the other at 6. Exits to 12., 7. and the outer courtyard, no guard activity.



14. This large three-story building is reserved for the Wandsmen. They have individual rooms for relaxation and study, and kitchens, lecture halls and so on for communal activities. It is a somewhat busy place, but with enough undisturbed nooks to hide from prying eyes. Furnishings include a few Outside items, but nothing as opulent as in Central Core.

15. The courtyard of the URANOMETAFORA is accessible from three directions: blast doors from the colonnade of the novices' wing, the main Wandsman building and Central Core. All of the doors open with dog tags belonging to one of the high-ranking Wandsmen (or Santiscauld). No conventional force can bring them down, although explosives or a battery of at least 30 laser shots may work at the Referee's discretion. The doors can be locked from the inside.

The courtyard is surrounded on three sides by a colonnade running on level one, from where stairs descend to the courtyard proper. The fourth side is taken by a wall and the tower of Systema. The courtyard is always pleasantly shady, if a bit bare. Standing against the northern wall is the URANOMETAFORA, the doorway to freedom, or perhaps Heaven itself... It is a corroded old bronze frame with

brass steps leading upwards, and a plaque which bears its name in archaic characters. When the PCs arrive, the portal is deactivated. There is also something else: a half-hidden steel door in the corner of the tower, and short stairs beyond descending before the presence of God.

16. Soaring above ARKHOCENTRON and the rest of Exillion, the tower of God, Systema Tartarobasis, is a sleek yet massive structure. Below ground lies the hall of Systema. It is a giant, domed chamber where every surface is inlaid with hexagonal steel plates that glint when light falls on them. It is cold here – probably below freezing point – and there is little light to orient oneself. In the middle of the chamber, thick hexagonal pillars rise from the floor, metallic surfaces shining in crystalline symmetry. Behind, in endless rows of right, letters bearing the Divine Name run across long displays. Silence is perfect, and noise echoes. This is obviously sacred ground.

Across the entrance, behind Systema's pillars, another mystery presents itself. A pedestal, or probably an altar, made of dull metal with a steel frame holding a round mirror of black crystal. There is a mass of levers, dials and buttons, all without an apparent purpose. This curious device is the key to the

URANOMETAFORA, but only if one is familiar with its secrets. A senior Wandsman, or Santiscauld (who has spied on Second Wandsman Feluxis and learned the means of bringing it to life) could use it to open the gateway to Outside. If such help is unavailable, there is still a small chance a character can figure it out by himself: the probability of success is 2% per point of Intelligence, and an attempt takes ten minutes. Nobody may try more than once.

Trying to harm the Systema hub is an

extremely bad idea. Even so much as a single shot fired at the columns or the displays activates the guardians, six Meta-Droids in closed wall niches. These yellow monstrosities proceed to kill anyone their movement sensors detect. Of course, actually succeeding at bringing down Systema (a feat requiring explosives or highly destructive magic; lasers simply bounce off the polished surfaces without doing too much damage) is going to result in the overloading of Exillion's reactor core and total destruction.



Conclusion

Once the URANOMETAFORA has been activated, the door to freedom is open: Outside awaits behind the shimmering blue curtain... Yet there may be one more obstacle. If it became known that the characters are in ARKHOCENTRON (the alarm has been triggered, bodies discovered or opponents allowed to escape), there is going to be a welcoming committee: fifteen black-clad elite Bosses, commanded in person by God's appointed second, High Wandsman Encellon. Encellon orders the Bosses to take up positions around the colonnade, pistols at the ready, while he himself stays close enough to a column to duck at a sign of danger.

Characters who are trapped with no exit have some hard choices to make.

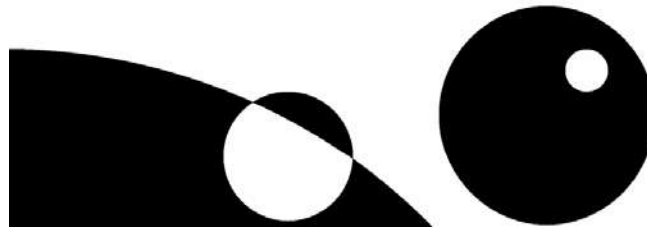
- It is possible to make a run for the URANOMETAFORA and reach it in one round – if the character survives a volley of laser beams. Everyone running through the courtyard takes a minimum of four shots (six if he is alone, four if shots are divided among characters; characters shielded by their companions only take one or two). As described in the Appendix, it is possible to dodge shots with a save versus wands, but there is a -4 penalty

against the second shot, -8 against the third, etc.

- Guards are behind cover and gain +4 to their AC. They are also positioned at distances so they can't all be taken out with a fireball or similar spell.
- Encellon, who has no weapon himself, can pretend to negotiate, but immediately orders fire on the Apostates if an opportunity presents itself, including hostages. He doesn't budge to threats regarding Systema's destruction – in fact, he counters by remarking that this is an impossibility, and even if the PCs were to be successful, they would be destroyed along with the tower, ARKHOCENTRON and the entire world. Likewise, bribery is completely ineffective. Only with some very clever idea, or somehow taking the High Wandsman their prisoner (e.g. an *invisible* PC could sneak up behind him), may the situation be resolved without a fight. Last but not least, note that Encellon has nothing but contempt for the PCs or their world, and is prepared to die rather than leave his own behind.

Stepping through the URANOMETAFORA, the characters can finally leave behind this place of confinement. With a flash of light, the concrete walls of ARKHOCENTRON melt, giving way to different skies. The party is presently standing atop a low ridge below the stars of Fomalhaut. In all directions, the lifeless sands of untrod deserts stretch towards a darkened horizon.

THUS ENDS THE ADVENTURE IN THE RUINED WORLD OF EXILLION



Dynamics

Systema Tartarobasis is a scenario where players may attempt to achieve their objective (finding a way out of Exillion) in several different ways. Although the module offers some suggestions here and in the main text, none of them should be taken as holy writ. Instead, the Referee should present consequences and opportunities which emerge logically from the actions of the characters, even if this results in a departure from what is given here.

In Systema Tartarobasis, the players face an interesting dilemma. They are transported to an unknown and hostile world where they cannot rely on their usual resources (see **Initial conditions**), and where they are being hunted by local denizens. To get out, they need to find information and supplies; but also, they have to avoid drawing too much attention to themselves. These objectives hold an inherent contradiction. The strategic challenge, escaping from Exillion, needs as much secrecy as possible. But to know what they are supposed to do, and get closer to their eventual goal, the PCs need to overcome tactical obstacles which often carry the risk that their activities will draw the attention of the Wandsmen who then muster their forces to contain and annihilate the threat. The problem, therefore, is escalation: the more entangled the PCs get with the environment, the more they will understand the puzzle before them, but their opponents will also

mobilise and eventually take countermeasures. It is possible for PCs to successfully complete every tactical problem they come across but eventually push themselves into a corner. A standard scenario of escalation is provided below.

Even if their task looks monumental and their foes invincible, Exillion's forces are hindered by weaknesses inevitably shared by totalitarian regimes: inefficiency, bureaucracy and a high level of corruption. Although the power in the hands of the Wandsmen is theoretically absolute, their underlings are often inadequate for their tasks, or simply too slow in their response. If the PCs exploit this fault, they can always stay one step ahead of their pursuers. Contacting various groups active in METAREGIO may also be beneficial – although not without its hazards. Finally, a note of caution: the aim of the scenario is not the merciless extermination of characters, although random harassment by Wandsmen and Bosses, being sent to do senseless labour (even better, sending different PCs to different work sites under an armed escort), sudden checks and questionings should be frequently used to maintain an atmosphere of paranoia. And in tight situations, combat or escape remains a possibility. Of course, if the players fail to exercise elementary caution, let loose the dogs and enjoy the spectacle.

Initial conditions

When they arrive in the abandoned underground facility beneath Lower Basin and regain their senses, the characters make an unpleasant discovery: most of their equipment is gone, and only a few items remain. Available items are selected by the players according to the following guidelines:

- Every player may choose three items from his or her previous inventory. A group of identical items (quiver of arrows, pouch of spell components, bag of coins, three healing potions) counts as one pick. No shields or suits of armour may be selected. (Also note that large or hard to conceal items such as two handed swords and greataxes are nigh impossible to smuggle past checkpoints – emphasize this when the PCs approach one of these places!)
- Active cursed items are mandatory to pick first. However, a PC who relies on special equipment (spellbook, holy symbol, lockpicks, etc., but not weapons) to function in his class can select them in addition to the three normally allowed. “Quest items” – items of moderate size but great importance – also fall into this category.
- When the characters arrive, note carefully if a PC takes out an item before their situation is revealed; this will count as one pick (with the above addenda).

Later on, the following problems also become apparent:

- It is impossible to regain spells above 1st level regardless of their type. Higher-level spells and magic items that reproduce their effects can still be *used*, however.
- No deities or similar forces may be contacted. This means spells such as *commune*, *augury* and *divination* produce no answers, it is impossible to call summoned monsters and there is no chance of divine intervention.

Standard progression of events

Day one is set to the date when the characters enter METAREGIO. Unless serious damage has been done (such as storming a cable transport station, systematically murdering members of a Work Brigade, eliminating more than one boss patrol, etc.), the city will be at normal operations. If the former is the case, however, events immediately proceed to day two.

On **day two**, most of the day goes on as normal. By evening, news spread that demons have been spotted in Exillion and they may already be inside the city. The Wandsmen organise a huge rally below the walls of ARKHOCENTRON. The main speaker is High Wandsman Encellon. Encellon confirms the rumours and calls for the capture of the intruders as well as any Apostates who would help them. A long speech is delivered on Apostasy versus following Systema Tartarobasis and those He had personally appointed to lead the citizens of Exillion. Any element of Wandsman propaganda which has not been heard by the participants yet should be incorporated into this sermon, and the Referee should also return to previously mentioned issues to reinforce them. Encellon is followed by Second Wandsman Feluxis. Feluxis, being a very poor public speaker, causes a general loss of interest; upon sensing this, Encellon returns to the pulpit. The speeches proceed for two or three hours. During the same time, synna and alcohol is distributed among the masses. The end of the speeches signals the beginning of a free-for-all orgy. At the same time, the characters can observe small groups breaking off from the crowd and sneaking away in separate directions. These people are Apostates. One group, Santiscauld’s criminals, proceeds to the nympharium; while the others, who are dissenters following Targammaux, hurry to be on time for a secret meeting about the current questions of overthrowing The Man. Following either group may lead to further encounters.

On **day three**, martial law and high alert are declared over the city loudspeakers. Workers aren’t sent out into EXTERIKO and general panic starts to break out. Mass hysteria results

in the formation of vigilante groups who will try to look for demons in various abandoned buildings. These searches are random and therefore not very efficient. Meanwhile, the Wandsmen and Bosses prepare to flush out the Apostates Targammaux and Orimaxxald. In this task, they receive help from Santiscauld and even Brigade Nine. By afternoon, everyone concerned is going to be under arrest and extra scaffolding is being constructed on ARKHOCENTRON's battlements in preparation for the evening's executions. If the characters are not on track yet, this is when they are approached by Kavisgante and made an offer to meet Brother Cudgel in exchange for their valuable equipment (*"Greetings, Apostates... You are in a bit of a predicament, aren't you?"*). At the same time, Santiscauld, who starts to become afraid of possible consequences, mobilises his men to bring in the characters one way or another. Spies and snitches prowl the streets of METAREGIO to find the intruders. Feluxis, smelling an opportunity, starts to discuss Encellon's replacement with a few of the disaffected Wandsmen. In the evening, there is a massive rally, greater than the previous. The crowd is in a frenzy as Encellon thunders about the Apostates who *"now imperil the very Foundations upon which our enlightened Civilisation rests, bringing with them cold, hunger and darkness, and all consequences thereof"*. The tone is extremely threatening and preempts ominous things to come; it is promised that *"our bonds to GOD, Systema Tartarobasis, will prevail over those who would lurk in shadows and seek to undo the work that had been done in the Divine name"*. Feluxis is nowhere to be seen.

On **day four**, Encellon orders a raid on Santiscauld's Apostates, forever bringing down the crime syndicate. Feluxis and his

supporters are placed under arrest and scheduled for execution. The holding cells below the HQ of the Bosses are filled up with all manner of dissenters and suspicious personalities. The terror of the Wandsmen triggers a small-scale uprising by the remaining Apostates, but this is immediately suppressed and its leaders summarily executed or brought to ARKHOCENTRON for interrogation.

By **day five**, total control over the city will have been reestablished. The streets are empty as nobody is allowed to leave his or her designated place. Wandsmen and Bosses systematically scour the neighbourhoods for signs of the demons. All entrances to ARKHOCENTRON are placed under constant surveillance and the Autocreator's operations are put on hold indefinitely until high alert is cancelled. At this point, reaching the URANOMETAFORA is an almost complete impossibility.

If the outsiders haven't been apprehended by **day six**, Encellon orders the destruction of the URANOMETAFORA and forevermore seals off Exillion from the world of Outside. This decision is announced as a global broadcast over the ARKHOCENTRON loudspeakers, and is audible all over the city. Systema Tartarobasis sustains accidental damage in the process and as a result, the reactor core of Exillion suffers a meltdown. The last snippet coming from Encellon is a confused half-sentence, muttered accidentally into a speaker left operational: *"Yes? What do you mean, the system isn't responding properly? I have told you you need to..."* Then there is only static as all electrical devices are rendered useless and the expanding sphere of light engulfs METAREGIO. By the time the city's final sunset approaches, there are no living beings in all the land.



APPENDIX

Glossary

ANOTERA, a steep mountain above METAREGIO, site of the fortress ARKHOCENTRON. The term is rarely used.

APOSTASY, the act or intention of defying Systema Tartarobasis or the Wandsmen.

APOSTATES, those who have committed apostasy by the lesser crime of Disobedience or the greater crime of Doubt. Wandsmen propaganda often uses the term interchangeably with 'demons', and therefore the two have become synonymous for many.

ARKHOCENTRON, a concrete fortress above the ruined city of METAREGIO, seat to the Wandsmen and their machine god.

ASHMEN, a race of demons that lurks in the Dead Zone and sometimes underground vaults. They are not intelligent, have no culture or means of reproduction and recoil from light. Ashmen have been hunted to near extinction by Exillion's forces.

AUTOCREATOR, Exillion's remaining Autonomous Production System. A series of vast industrial blocks in METAREGIO.

BIG CATCH, THE, legends about a fabulous wealth of glass below Dead Zone's broken communication relays. A lie of the Wandsmen.

BOSSES, THE, the armed forces of the Wandsmen. Brutal thugs characterised by low integrity and intellect.

CABLE TRANSPORT, the only transport route between Lower Basin and Dead Zone. There are two stations, both operated by the Wandsmen.

DEAD ZONE, the higher and northern tract of EXTERIKO. It is characterised by more intact buildings but lower glass yields. Ashmen are said to lurk in its ruins.

DEMONS, those who come from Outside; a source of spiritual corruption that can lead to Apostasy; therefore, a danger to Exillion.

DIVINE LIGHT, laser pistols.

EXILLION, an artificial sun illuminating a world of the same name, created by scientists of an age long passed. Used as a synonym of 'the World' by its inhabitants.

EXTERIKO, the part of Exillion Outside PERIFERIA. A place of abandonment devastated by a long-forgotten conflict.

GLASS, or GLASS DEBRIS, is the input of the Autocreator. It is mined in EXTERIKO and transported to METAREGIO by the Work Brigades.

LOWER BASIN, the lower parts of EXTERIKO, located south of Dead Zone and approached by a cable transport line. The main site where glass is mined.

META-DROIDS, robotic defenders of key installations.

METAREGIO, the half-ruined remains of Stabilisator City VIII. It is a shadow of its former might, both in physical integrity and population.

NINERS, a Punishment Brigade composed of the criminal element; an occasional tool of the Wandsmen as a sort of “workers’ guard”.

NORMBREAKING, sabotage by laziness or intentional neglect; sanctioned.

NYMPHARIUM, a place of relaxation whose divine boons are restricted to the most faithful, and whose heretical duplication by the Apostates is adequate proof of their transgressions.

OUTSIDE, that which is not of the World (Exillion). A place of cold, darkness and hunger. This term is as much metaphysical as real, as it represents something Outside the safety of METAREGIO, but also Outside the will of Systema Tartarobasis. Believed to be the source of demons.

PERIFERIA, a wall of force that protects METAREGIO from the demons of Outside. It is crossed by a single checkpoint.

PUNISHMENT BRIGADE, a unit for forced labour. Those assigned to Punishment Brigades must do harder labour with less reprieve and restricted movement.

ROTATION, the means of intra-class mobility in Exillion; theoretically based on one’s merits.

SALVATION, the belief that once all glass in Exillion has been mined, all inhabitants will personally stand before Systema Tartarobasis and partake of His Plentiful Benevolence. Another lie of the Wandsmen.

SCORPITRON, an engine of destruction employed as a mechanical guardian.

SKIMMING, or QUOTA SKIMMING, the act of smuggling chunks of glass debris across PERIFERIA to exchange for illicit goods; sanctioned.

STABILISATOR CITIES, immense underground metropolises created to facilitate Fomalhaut’s terraforming process and used as temporary shelters. Most of these have been destroyed by acts of war or millennia of neglect.

SYNNA, short for synthetic manna; a multi-purpose industrial material manufactured by the Autocreator and used for food, drink and clothing by Exillion’s inhabitants. Synna comes in soap-shaped blocks and has a similar texture. The taste is mildly unpleasant but it provides good nourishment. Synna-based clothing looks and smells like cheap plastic bags.

SYSTEMA TARTAROBASIS, a computer system responsible for running Stabilisator City VIII., worshipped as God by the Wandsmen and the people they rule over. In Wandsman propaganda, service to Systema Tartarobasis is the only guarantee of Salvation.

TRIANGLE POINT, a stone outcropping in Lower Basin, used for orientation.

URANOMETAFORA, a gateway before the divine presence of Systema.

WANDSMEN, THE, the masters of Exillion, these priest-bureaucrats rule their subjects in the name of Systema Tartarobasis but according to their own desires. They are served by a body of guardians, the Bosses.

WORK BRIGADE, a division of workers, numbering between 50 and 60 on an ad hoc basis of assignment. There are 32 brigades, 5 of which are for punishment.

WORKERS, the general population of Exillion who are sent out into EXTERIKO's wasteland to mine glass for the Wandsmen.

Personalities of note

Wandsmen

HIGH WANDSMAN ENCELLON, the de facto ruler in Exillion, second in rank to God Himself. Encellon is in his late 60s, with greying hair and goatee, lean of stature and shrewd of mind. He wears all red as a sign of his station. Encellon has risen to his position through decades of scheming, and has the intelligence and caution to keep it. While Encellon is a master of demagogy, he is himself an inflexible ideologue who may underestimate his opposition. Even so, he is very cautious to avoid direct confrontation unless backed up with a superior force in an advantageous position.

Encellon, male human Ftr5: HD 5d10; hp 17; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +5 (unarmed); AL LN; SV Int, Wis, Cha; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 17; dog tag "AAA" allowing access to anywhere in Exillion, wand.

SECOND WANDSMAN FELUXIS, Encellon's aide. Feluxis, who is around 40, has spent more than a decade in the shadow of his mentor, but being a poor public speaker has hindered his ambitions to succeed him. Consequently, his desperation has led to entertaining thoughts of treachery, in which the demons from Outside could become valuable pawns and his alliance with Santiscauld a means of their delivery. Once carried into ARKHOCENTRON, he plans to have the demons freed, but recapture or kill them as a demonstration of his abilities. Like Encellon, Feluxis suffers from an inflated sense of importance. He is lean, looking like a younger version of the High Wandsman.

Feluxis, male human Ftr4: HD 4d10; hp 24; Spd 30; AC 12; Atk +6 laser pistol 2d10; AL LE; SV Dex, Int, Cha; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 7; dog tag "AAB" allowing access anywhere but Encellon's quarters, laser pistol, spare cartridge, wand.

BROTHER CUDGEL, or WANDSMAN STINAXAS, one of ARKHOCENTRON's elder Wandsmen and the Master of Novices. A jovial and grossly fat old man, he enjoys his nympharium privileges much more than his work. Brother Cudgel has so much dirt on other Wandsmen that he is all but untouchable. He uses this position to have agents in the city – the most important being Kavisgante – just to satisfy his curiosity. He is willing to aid the PCs' escape if an attractive bribe is offered... including certain services from high Cha characters. If he believes there is going to be danger, no contact takes place. In ARKHOCENTRON, he is found in the nympharium (40%), the novices' wing (20%) or Central Core (20%).

Stinaxas, male human Ftr3: HD 3d10+3; hp 17; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +4 (unarmed); AL CN (with epicurean tendencies); SV Int, Con, Wis; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 12; dog tag "EAY", laser pistol (unloaded), wand.

MENDARFLOUX, a light-framed artist who serves as Encellon's chief inquisitor. Falling into his hands is bad news, as he will demonstrate to the player characters on another captive.

Mendarfloux, male human Thf4: HD 4d6; hp 13; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +1 dagger 1d4; SA back attack (+4 to hit, 2x damage), hide, listen, move silently; AL NE; SV Dex, Int, Cha; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 13; dog tag "XEF", various tools, wand.

WANDSMAN MESSENAUXE, in control of PERIFERIA. A fanatical devotee of Encellon's.

Messenauxe, male human Ftr3: HD 5d10+5; hp 22; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +4 laser pistol 2d10; AL LN; SV Int, Con, Cha; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11; dog tag "ΦΟΘ", laser pistol, two cartridges, wand.

WANDSMAN SIGSIGAMMAX, in control of the lower cable transport station, and very unhappy with his lot. Bitter enemy of Ustinsylis

Sigsigammax, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+2; hp 18; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +3 laser pistol 2d10; AL N; SV Str, Con, Wis; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; dog tag "ΣΝΦ", laser pistol, three cartridges, wand.

WANDSMAN USTINSYLIS, in control of the upper cable transport station, a bitter enemy of Sigsigammax and not much happier.

Ustinsylis, male human Ftr3: HD 3d10+6; hp 18; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +3 laser pistol 2d10; AL LN; SV Con, Int, Wis; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 14; dog tag "TKΓ", laser pistol, three cartridges, wand.

WANDSMAN INSELLANOX, the Wandsman who is called to investigate the opening Work Brigade Five has made in Lower Basin. Heavy-set, balding with short cropped hair. Although not very talented, Insellanox is surprisingly stubborn and resilient when placed in a stressful situation. If left alive, he requests to be allowed to join the hunt for the demons.

Insellanox, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+2; hp 15; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +2 (unarmed); AL N; SV Str, Con, Cha; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; dog tag "ΙΕΝ", wand.

MISCELLANEOUS WANDSMEN

Novices and initiates, male human Ftr1: HD 1d10; hp 5 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +1 (unarmed); AL variable; SV variable; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11; no equipment.

Wandsmen, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10; hp 11 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +2 (unarmed) or +2 laser pistol 2d10; AL variable; SV variable; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; dog tag, wand.

Wandsmen, male human Ftr3: HD 3d10; hp 16 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +3 (unarmed) or +3 laser pistol 2d10; AL variable; SV variable; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; dog tag, wand.

Wandsmen, male human Ftr4: HD 4d10; hp 22 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +4 (unarmed) or +4 laser pistol 2d10; AL variable; SV variable; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; dog tag, wand.

Bosses

GRAND BOSS PINCHENDEN, a square-jawed film noir type, except with a laser. Armed and extremely dangerous, he keeps on coming until shot a few times.

Pinchenden, male human Ftr5: HD 5d10+10; hp 36; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +7 longsword 1d8+2 or +7 laser pistol 2d10+1; SA weapon spec (lasers) AL LN; SV Str, Con, Cha; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 15; laser pistol, 2 cartridges, shortsword, uniform with lightning symbol made of gold (600 gp).

MISCELLANEOUS BOSSES

Boss, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+2; hp 14 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +3 shortsword 1d6+1 or +3 spear 1d8+1 or +3 javelin 1d6+1; AL variable; SV variable (usually Str, Dex, Con); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10; shortsword, spear or javelins (5), black uniform.

Boss, male human Ftr3: HD 3d10+3; hp 20 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +4 shortsword 1d6+1 or +4 spear 1d8+1 or +4 javelin 1d6+1 or (if in ARKHOCENTRON) +3 laser pistol 2d10 or +3 tri-beam laser [3 attacks, 2d10 dmg]; AL variable; SV variable (usually Str, Dex, Con); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10; shortsword, spear or javelins (5), black uniform.

Boss Elites (15 in all), male human Ftr4: HD 4d10+4; hp 26 avg; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +5 shortsword 1d6+2 or +6 laser pistol 2d10; weapon spec (lasers); AL LN; SV Str, Dex, Cha; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; decorative shortsword, laser pistol, black felt uniform with golden trims.

Workers

Worker, male human Ftr1: HD 1d10+1; hp 6 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +2 pickaxe 1d6+1 or other tools; AL variable; SV variable (usually Str, Dex, Con); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; tools, synna clothing (poor), 20% 1d6 glass.

Toughs, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+2; hp 12 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +3 pickaxe 1d6+1 or other tools; AL variable; SV variable (usually Str, Dex, Con); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; tools, synna clothing (poor), 20% 1d6 glass.

Apostates

SANTISCAULD, the Don of the criminals who operate the black market, and a close ally of Second Wandsman Feluxis. Morbidly obese yet surprisingly agile. Santiscauld is constantly in control, even when he seems to be on the losing side. His knowledge of Outside – indeed, directing the smuggling operations – and extraordinary intellect make him a dangerous opponent and a useful if unreliable ally. Otherwise, he behaves like a mob boss does.

Santiscauld, male human Ftr4: HD 4d10+4; hp 20; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +5 laser pistol 2d10+1 or other tools; AL NE; SV Int, Wis, Cha; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 17; laser pistol, two cartridges.

TARGAMMAUX, leader of an Apostate faction. A lean, bearded revolutionary with lofty but impractical ideals; basically, a loser who brings ruin on his allies. Only his suggestive personality has made him what he is today. Targammaux detests Orimaxxald more than he does the Wandsmen.

Targammaux, male human Ftr1: HD 1d10; hp 10; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +1 (unarmed); AL N; SV Int, Wis; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 14; ragged synna clothing.

ORIMAXXALD, leader of another bunch of sorry losers, erstwhile student of Targammaux and his sworn foe. Orimaxxald is a short-statured pragmatist (doing anything in his interests without thinking twice), whose failures have made him extremely frustrated, and prepared to organise an uprising against the Wandsmen at any moment.

Orimaxxald, male human Ftr3: HD 3d10+3; hp 14; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +1 (unarmed); AL N; SV Int, Wis; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 7, Cha 16; synna clothing.

KAVISGANTE, Brother Cudgel's agent. He may approach the characters on day three and offer to help them escape. The price is everything the PCs have on them except clothes (and if they are Outside clothes, even that). If they are *really* pitiful in their begging, magic-users may keep their spellbooks, and clerics their holy symbols (if very simple looking *only*). Thereafter, he arranges an evening meeting with the good brother in METAREGIO, from where they can be taken to ARKHOCENTRON. Kavisgante possesses a very odd sense of humour, enjoying to torment and frustrate the characters. He is no fool, however. All meetings with him are going to be in a crowd (gathering, public spectacle, work site or common lunch) where he can't be easily attacked or blackmailed. Being Brother Cudgel's confidant, Kavisgante knows a lot about the situation in Exillion, but refuses to tell the characters – and if pressed or begged, he lies.

Kavisgante, male human Asn4: HD 4d6; hp 13; Spd 30; AC 13; Atk +1 dagger 1d4; SA case target, climb, death attack, disguise, hide, listen, move silently, sneak attack (+2 to hit, +4 damage); AL CN; SV Dex, Int, Cha; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 17; dagger.

MISCELLANEOUS APOSTATES

Thugs, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+2; hp 12 avg; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk +3 shortsword 1d6+1 or +3 metal club 1d6+1; AL variable; SV variable (usually Str, Dex, Con); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; shortsword or steel club, 50% 2d4 glass.

Santiscauld's boys, male human Ftr2: HD 2d10+4; hp 16, 16; Spd 30; AC 11; Atk +4 longsword 1d8+2; AL LE; SV Str, Dex, Con; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 8; longsword, 2d4 glass each, some Outside items (woman's stockings, decorative knife, silver amulet 5 gp, etc.). These guys are evil and mean it.

More names used in Exillion

Ommesten
Giniscault
Xennaudor
Cauxennis
Gellestys
Samsroule
Quipellouse
Nuepsallis

Arxaude
Linnax
Peldaran
Oxallande
Bellestis
Lassaume
Betaxan
Roxentes

New opponents and items

Ashmen

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 3d6

SIZE: M

HD: 3 (13 avg)

MOVE: 30

AC: 13

ATTACKS: +3 claws 1d8

SPECIAL: light vulnerability

SAVES: P

INT: Inferior

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: sorry remains of a bygone era

XP: 20 + 3/hp

Ashmen are the only nonhuman inhabitants of Exillion. They lurk in the ruins of Dead Zone and deep underground. Sharp light repels them, but as long as there are intruders, they skulk around and hope to find an opening or call more of their kind. The body and limbs of Ashmen resemble burnt wooden logs. They have no intelligence, society, or means of reproduction. They are considered demons, and have been hunted near extinction.

Meta-Droids

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1d6

SIZE: M

HD: 8+16

MOVE: 30

AC: 20

ATTACKS: +8 fist 1d12+2 or +8 laser beam 3d10

SPECIAL: laser, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity

SAVES: P, M

INT: Robotic

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: robot guardian

XP: 1050 + 8/hp

These mechanical sentinels are somewhat larger than humans, and are protected by riveted and yellow enamelled metal sheets. In addition to attacking with their fists, Meta-Droids can shoot a laser beam every third round, for a maximum of 5 per day. Meta-Droids are set to guard ancient ruins and military bases, and are found there as well as in certain domains of Fomalhaut's Underworld.

SCORPITRON

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1, and that's going to be enough

SIZE: H

HD: 8+24 (88 hp)

MOVE: 50

AC: 20

ATTACKS: 2*+11 claws 1d10+3 and +8 laser beam 4d10

SPECIAL: laser, laser diffraction, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity

SAVES: P, M

INT: Robotic
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TYPE: a freaking war machine
XP: 2100

An autonomous battle platform resembling a huge armour-plated scorpion. The SCORPITRON can shoot a laser beam every other round for a maximum of 10 per day. This beam can blast through thinner brick walls and hurl a human target 10' backwards. Lasers and other rays harmlessly bounce off the reflective carapace. Mechanical legs provide excellent mobility on smooth and sloped surfaces. The SCORPITRON's only weakness is its bulk, which makes it hard to progress through or turn around in narrow spaces. Two of these living weapons are found in Exillion, one in Dead Zone and another in ARKHOCENTRON. On the surface of Fomalhaut, they are sometimes encountered in the molten glass deserts and ruined cities.

High tech weapons

Laser pistol: DMG 2d10+, long range, 30 shots max.

Laser rifle: DMG 3d10+, long range, 30 shots max (consumes stores at a 3/2 rate)

Tri-beam laser: 3 attacks, DMG 2d10+, long range, 50 shots max

Flamethrower: area-based attack (20'x60'), short range, 6d6 damage, 6 shots max

Laser weapons are characterised by an infinite penetration capability but the need for precise aim. Therefore, armour, shields and even natural defensive ability is going to be useless against them (magic and Dexterity still apply), but a character who concentrates on moving unpredictably can avoid beams by making a save versus wands (Dexterity). No other action can be taken during that round. This advantage only applies versus one opponent; if there are multiple attackers, the save is normal versus the first, at -4 versus the second and so forth.

If a "0" is rolled on any dice of damage, it is counted as 10 and an additional dice may be rolled. There is no theoretical upper limit to the damage that can be inflicted this way.

Characters who attempt to employ lasers but are untrained in their use need to learn by practice. Until they can be considered proficient, the Referee applies a d6 roll to the attack to simulate inaccuracy. If the result is an even number, the attack is as rolled. If it is odd, it is subtracted from the attack roll. Since lasers are very simple to learn, proficiency is attained after winning three battles where the character successfully uses a laser.

Laser pistols have a maximum capacity of 30 shots. Those found in the field usually have 2d10+10. Since the specimens found in Exillion are all very old, an attack roll of natural '1' means that all remaining charges have been depleted in one burst. Recharging pistols is done with cartridges holding 15 shots. Cartridges are only found in ARKHOCENTRON caches, or on NPCs where noted. No laser rifles were stored in Stabilisator City VIII., but they may be found elsewhere on Fomalhaut. Tri-beam lasers are too heavy to transport, and are therefore mounted in key locations.

Flamethrowers attack in a cloud-shaped area. A save versus breath weapons (Dexterity) may be attempted for half damage. Flamers are also immobile with a relatively short range. They are almost always behind protective screens, since heat (including laser beams) sends them up in flames as a *fireball* (3d6 damage and 10' radius per remaining shot) unless they make a saving throw.



Alphabet

	Letter	Numerical value		Letter	Numerical value
A α	Alfa (a)	1	Ξ ξ	Xi (x)	60
B β	Beta (b)	2	Ο ο	Omicron (o)	70
Γ γ	Gamma (g)	3	Π π	Pi (p)	80
Δ δ	Delta (d)	4	Ϟ ϟ	Quoppa (q)	90
Ε ε	Epsilon (e)	5	Ρ ϱ	Rho (r)	100
Ϝ ϝ	Digamma (w)	6	Σ σ	Sigma (s)	200
Ζ ζ	Zeta (dz)	7	Τ τ	Tau (t)	300
Η η	Eta (é)	8	Υ υ	Upsilon (y)	400
Θ θ	Theta (th)	9	Φ φ	Phi (ph)	500
Ι ι	Iota (i)	10	Χ χ	Chi (ch)	600
Κ κ	Kappa (k)	20	Ψ ψ	Psi (ps)	700
Λ λ	Lambda (l)	30	Ω ω	Omega (ó)	800
Μ μ	Mu (m)	40	Ϻ ϻ	Sampi / Disigma (-)	900
Ν ν	Nu (n)	50			

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