

The Undercroft





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Contents

Babel Square

Description of a bazaar
and its peculiar clientele



A darkness and the kingdom
who coveted it

A Miscellany

Snippets and shreds
of items and people

The Officers' Rest

Description of a club which
entertained elven submariners

THE UNDERCROFT

We must Expire in hopes of Resurrection to Life Again

1 **An Editorial**

Daniel Sell

2 **Babel Square**

Sándor Gebei

11



Luke Gearing

20 **A Miscellany**

Greg Gorgonmilk

24 **The Officers' Rest**

Ezra Claverie

Illustrations

Matthew Adams - 22

Anxy P. - 15, 26, 31, 34

Jason Sholtis - 6, 9

Andrew Walter - Cover

Proofreading

Melissa Forbes

Daniel Martin

Anxy P.

Layout Editing & Design

Daniel Sell

Esteemed Consultants

Ezra Claverie

James Maliszewski

Justin Neal

Chris Turner

David





on this our tenth issue it is important to remember that this will not last forever there was a time when this publication did not exist and there will again be a time when it ceases we must prepare ourselves for the vagaries of chance consider that your child your grandchild or the person who takes it upon themselves to clear your loft finds this chances are that none of us are alive and this zine is long gone some of the work might be the only testament to a life and you're using it as lining in your cutlery drawer so take this moment to think of the people who sat and wrote these words maybe tapping at a keyboard or writing with a blue pen or a black pen in a pad or scrap of paper enter their lives for a moment and think of the variety of life they had the emotion and experience that caused them to be here at this moment now come back to the concrete picture their faces hands tap tap tapping at a real keyboard this keyboard is in a dump now or the dry storage of a loft like the loft where someone found this old zine they are all real things being used by real people that existed but don't any more just like you will be soon so consider that all these things are true and valuable consider this as a very blunt metaphor of life the zine that is in the beginning it was weak and defenceless ugly and noisy and then it grew it made its first friends it hung out it learned a lot of lessons from those abutments a coming of age then followed where its voice broke and it got in bed with people aside the undercroft is no slut it mates for life we will die side by side and have adjacent plots at this time it discovered who it was and likely always will be who that is is up for others to judge but the facts and shapes were in place and only slight adjustments were made though we should all prepare for the mid life crisis and the embarrassing dotage the current stage is an obnoxious twenty something year old who is full of hot wisdom still ready to fight and take risks undoubtedly this will be over before too long so be patient put up with the desperate cries for attention and the search for a mate and the fights with prettier boys and the flap flap flapping of its peacock tail but as was said this is temporary this will end we step into the unknown at every moment and anything can change the zine could be run over by a bus or you could be making this the last you see of this publication or its people or anything for that matter more important things things more dear to you ultimately this is all a distraction on the way to the end but isn't everything by that logic it is both as useless as watching the pigeons and as useful as saving lives and demolishing high rises and making babies and growing them up to be useful in turn it's all just wrinkles in the otherwise smooth and expeditious chute to the bottom so enjoy it take pride in the things you do because everything is pointless or incredibly valuable but most importantly both at the same time or rather neither and somewhere in between

Babel Square

by Sándor Gebei

The Babel Square is strong with magics, a place where the veil between the realms is thin.

Overall Features

Sights, Sounds, Smells

Vivid cavalcade of colours and shapes; cacophony of eloquent merchants, haggling customers, and dumbfounded travellers; a mixture of spices, especially tobacco, cinnamon, and lemon thyme.

Buildings

Two- and three-storey buildings of polished stone connected with arcades; vividly stained glass windows; a plentitude of oriels and balconies; merchant stands and tents of orange, purple, and green.

Activity

Morning: Strident cries announcing sales and fresh goods; sounds of working and crafting; assertive sales pitches.

Noon: Streets crowded with merchants and customers; cutpurses lurking in narrow alleys; the savour of various smoked meat and exotic fruits.

Night: The sensation of ever-present wonders; mysteriously lit, never-closing stalls selling exotic goods; the occasional guard patrol and burglary attempt.

Random Tables

Encounters

- 1 A poor wretch in rags rushes down the street, literally running into the characters. His sack contains a fist-sized cube of fine gold, stolen from Naxar the Inscrutable. The cube is capable of devouring souls as they leave the body to fuel powerful magics.
- 2 A band of knights in iridescent armour, wielding unlikely large weapons roam the streets. They were once members of an interdimensional group called the Knighthood of Cosmic Balance, but they have broken their pledges.
- 3 An old, blind hag begs for money. She is in fact a Seer, gifted (or rather cursed) with the ability of seeing the future. If helped, she shares a vision with the characters (possibly some information relevant to their current affairs, or some flat bonus to their next saving throw).
- 4 A hot air balloon lands in the middle of the street, carrying a young girl in blue, her pet dire wolf, and a middle-aged man in green.
- 5 Raja Sunita rides an elephant with gilded tusks, followed by his retinue of bodyguards, called the Nine Little Deaths. The Raja is looking for a suitable maid to marry.
- 6 A dozen or so newsboys literally fight for the attention of customers, their battlecries also functioning as sales pitches.

- 7 A stumpy man in colourful dumps introduces himself as Baxter the Accurate. His wares are lost things (be they items, memories, concepts, etc.). Ironically, he can never find his twin brother.
- 8 A marching band of mice arrive, playing the most well-known of the charming military tunes of the rodents.
- 9 A strong-willed cyclopic woman with purple hair wanders the streets. She gladly joins the party if offered the chance to see new lands where she might find her parents.
- 10 Two rival street magicians perform tricks on opposing sides of a street. Either of them would pay handsomely for someone to sabotage the other's performance in the most humiliating way.
- 11 Phantastos the Wizard has set up a tent and offers a huge diamond to the adventurous fellows who can take it from him. The diamond is in his tent, but when touched it transports the party to a dungeon in a pocket dimension of the wizard's creation.
- 12 Kantor the Charming, drinks alone since his true love was kidnapped by Amaranth the Briar Witch. He would be shocked to find out the two are lovers.

Rumours

- 1 Quil-Xon has been granted wealth and longevity by a djinni. He's still hanging onto his last wish, so the lamp must be kept in a secret compartment in his mansion.
- 2 One of the black steeds of the Murderous Maiden has escaped, and she would pay handsomely for its return. The merchant Kharvan has also expressed interest in buying such a fine specimen.
- 3 The Emerald Empress is a manifestation of death; if you look in her eyes, you die horribly.
- 4 A star has fallen from the sky just outside town, and rivalling merchants and magicians are hiring adventurers to recover it.
- 5 Lady Lavender organises poker nights once every new moon. The buy-in is an arm and a leg.
- 6 The dwarves of Shield Manor are sheltering a princess.
- 7 They say the Ferryman often has a midnight dinner in the Corner of the Emerald Empress.
- 8 There is a forgotten well that leads to the City of Night, a nightmarish realm ruled by Mayor Omega and his assassin-enforcers, the Lotus Sisters.



Strange Objects Found in the Bazaar

- 1 Liquid emotions.
- 2 An unusually colourful toad; grants visions if licked.
- 3 A small, rusty key; opens every door.
- 4 A necklace of shark teeth; pacifies sharks.
- 5 A slightly damaged coconut; allows one to enter the dreams of those whose heads have been struck by it.
- 6 Soap of otherworldly fragrance; made of nymphs.
- 7 A compass with gilded decorations; shows the directions toward true love.
- 8 A black balloon; capable of transporting one over mountains and seas if inflated by a person's last breath.
- 9 A handheld mirror; reflections show one's innermost thoughts.
- 10 An empty jar; contains an invisible poisonous snake.
- 11 A copper flute; its music is only heard by children.
- 12 A pair of tribal bone masks; swap the souls of their wearers then crumble to dust.
- 13 A dragon's egg; ready to hatch.
- 14 A pair of gloves with black onyx coating; its wearer is capable of touching incorporeal entities.
- 15 A lantern burning with fairy fire; keeps the goblinkind away but attracts insects.
- 16 A rug with vortical motifs; a portal to the River of Death.
- 17 A cylinder hat; little talking animals can be pulled out from it.
- 18 A pair of silver slippers; if their heels are clicked together, they teleport the wearer to their parents.
- 19 A hammer with a glistening silvery head; transforms every object it strikes into a nail of appropriate size.
- 20 A bronze horn; summons a dozen drunken nordic warriors.

Unconventional Methods of Payment

- 1 Happy memories extracted with a psychic leech attached to the temple.
- 2 Youth and vitality drained from the customer.
- 3 A lock of hair, from which a half-sized homunculus resembling the character is grown.
- 4 Forgoing future happiness.
- 5 Transfer of beauty and charm.
- 6 Removal of the customer's voice for a set period of time.

Landmarks and Interesting Places

Condominium of the Solemn Seers

Visitors are welcomed by hooded cultists, always whispering. They lead anyone wishing to ask a question of the Seers through cavernous corridors into a large hall deep underground, where a large pulsing monolith stands still. The answers seem to emanate from within the stone in the voice of a raucous choir. The extraplanar entity that resides in the monolith is a collector of secrets. Above all else, it wishes to escape its material prison.

Corner of the Emerald Empress

A lavishly decorated rooftop restaurant, exclusively attended by the rich and the powerful. Specialities include seafood tagine, millennia eggs, auroch haggis, cockatrice balut, and casu marzu with abyssal larvae. The titular Emerald Empress rarely walks among the customers, and even then she wears a green cloak, never revealing her identity.

Doctor Vairkil's Therapeutics Salon

Doctor Vairkil is a surgeon-psychiatrist of sorts. Using his deep understanding of the correlations between body and mind, he is able to cure any form of insanity (including the magically induced kind) at the cost of horribly altering the patient's body.



Gallery of the Moonstone Swan

Quil-Xon is one of the finest artists in the city; he lives with his many concubines and, despite being rumoured to be 100 years old, revels in the pleasures of the flesh. His gallery features small statuettes of masterfully crafted obsidian body parts, life-sized bronze statues of all sorts of people, and abstract surrealist pieces of stone and steel.

Kharvan's Marvellous Menagerie

Kharvan is a slick merchant interested in everything related to mounts: camels, horses, rhinos, gryphons – you name it.

Shield Manor


Seven dwarves, all born from the outgrowths on the Fire Titan's body, run this smithy, operating strange machineries that produce the finest of armaments. Their supplies of carbon (attained by charring draconic bones) are always running low.


Vulnara's Dreaming Ebony



The spiderwoman Vulnara has built her lair inside an abandoned old church, repurposing the place for finding one's true self instead of a higher power. Those who manage to escape her deadly web-labyrinth reach spiritual enlightenment; the less fortunate are half-devoured and made into obstacles for future customers.




by Luke Gearing

Step into  and feel the tangled splendour – it writhes in your hands like a snake of razor blades. It will dissolve you into threads as you plummet so far down, so deep, that you feel to be on top of things. It is warm, a nauseating embrace like a forceful womb enveloping you – and worse, it is something you chose, knowingly or not. The corrupting touch only comes to those who yearn for it, secretly or no. The more they learn the worse it gets, until they are rotted out, hollow Husks of what was before, black threads filling them, tangled like the web of a demented spider.


 resides at the bottom of the infinite Sea of Chaos wherein all worlds reside, floating bubbles of order battered by the tides of raw-demon material and mad, dead gods.

To those sensitive to taint, it manifests as inky-blackness spewing from the orifices, yet the host/petitioner seems unaffected. The blackness rapidly forms animals, people, buildings, empires – but all crumble in the blink of an eye. They are as seductive as the  of which they reflect the merest splinter. Those who would fight the host are struck down, the blackness taking solid form as maws, blades, spikes and the faces of loved ones, the Splinters of .


The Occulted Kingdom

As always, there was a once a kingdom, the name now consumed as the people were. The most arcane sages would know it as the Occulted Kingdom, and lesser scholars not at all. It lies still, somewhere, haunted by the gaunt, dead hosts of , taint clinging to what little flesh remains on their old, old bones. The buildings remain, crumbling yet barren of life, vegetable or animal – the corruption takes root only in the hearts of Men.


It began with those who had already supped from the powers outside, the despised sorcerers and hidden witches. It is good that the Empire burns such creatures in these fortunate times. Consumed, these few whispered in the ears of the bishops and priests, and the fate of the kingdom was sealed. All were consumed. Little flesh bears little mind, and the Husks carry out their most remembered tasks in life. The knights stand against an invasion. The queen, driven mad as her realm crumbled, lurks still in the palace, consumed as all the rest, still issuing insane decrees and staring transfixed by the pure-black paintings commissioned during the fall.


The wealth of the Occulted Kingdom remains untouched. None who have found it resisted succumbing, and the rest of the world is blissfully unaware. Woe betide all people should one who only travelled in life touch .


Artefacts of the Occulted Kingdom

Court-Black: As the kingdom collapsed, the nobles tried hiding from the corruption. They set weavers to spin black silken garb, the very threads impregnated with . This plan did not succeed, and they were consumed like all the rest. These garments shift organically in plain view, but grant the wearer +1

in Stealth. They gain 1 corruption per day. *Value: 2000sp.*

Introspective Mirror: Early into the ending of things, many wonders were crafted with the knowledge of . These fine silver mirrors unshackle the mind of any who witness their own reflection, freeing them of any mind-altering magical effects. Those with any corruption, however, gain d8 corruption as they inspect the blackness swirling about their mouth and eyes. *Value 2500sp.*

Scholar-Knight Blades: The elite scholar-knights of the kingdom realised too late that their own studies fuelled the apocalypse the realm had ushered in. All score of them impaled themselves on these reinforced bone blades, built to hold corruption at bay. They function as normal longswords, and do not break like normal bone weapons. One who carries such a blade loses one corruption a day. However, drawing the blade from the bosom of a Scholar-Knight causes the body to burst into a Shard of , as all of the corruption held at bay rushes back into our world. *Value: 1000sp.*


Queen's Black Paintings: The beloved paintings of the Occulted Queen. Each reflects a different facet of , and all are identical. For every four hours spent in deep consideration of one of these paintings, the viewer gains d10-1 corruption, and the free usage of a random spell with level equal to corruption gained. *Value: 5000sp each.*

Notable Husks


Occulted Queen

HD 18 (Incredible corruption, bone deals triple damage)

AC 16 (Magical wards)

Attacks – 6 Splinters of , plus can cast any spell 6th level or below, randomly determined and targets selected intelligently from there.

Treasure:

Royal Jewels – 10,000sp for the set. Worn on a crown entirely invisible behind the many tendrils of .


Spouse-Soul Ring – 8000sp – Contains the soul of the Prince, who lies entirely uncorrupted. If given a body, he is an eighth level fighter determined to restore the kingdom. This quest is doomed.

Taking these items is impossible. In the Gallery, wherein the Occulted Queen views her twelve Black Paintings, stand twelve Royal Knight Husks (base as 4th level fighter). The Gallery itself is buried deep within the castle, defended by yet more Knight Husks (base as 2nd level fighter).

Occulted Apostle

HD 8 (6th level Cleric/Magic User – bone causes double damage)

AC 15 (Vestments, wards)

Attacks – 3 Splinters of , Staff of Restful Slumber (d8+3, doubled versus undead) value 5500sp, spells as appropriate to class.





Tainted Spells

These are the modified incantations penned by the scholar knights before they realised what they had done. Memorising any of these causes Xd6 corruption, wherein X is equal to spell level.


These spells are more powerful than conventional spells – but, of course, there is a cost.

First Level

Evocation of a Splinter – Range Self – Duration 2d6 Rounds.


The caster gains a temporary Splinter of , which attacks as normal. Casting this spell causes an additional 1d6 corruption as  takes hold.

Blade of  - Range Touch – Duration 2d6.


The caster beckons the barest worm of , which infests a weapon (unless it is of bone). For the duration of this spell, the weapon is at +1d4 hit and deals +1d4 damage. Both the wielder and the caster gain 1d4 corruption.


Second Level


Black Threads – Range 55ft – Duration instant.

2d4 thin streams of  are invited to our world, and they seek targets – they will preferentially seek enemies of the caster, but threads cannot share targets. Each hits automatically, causing 1d8 + 2 damage, and the same amount of corruption. The caster gains Xd4 corruption, where x is the number of Threads evoked.

Making a Husk

Take a normal human and give them the following – +2HD. Husks do not die when they should,  clinging on until it must relinquish.

Dead. Husks are dead, but not undead –  keeps them moving long after they should have rotted into nothing.

+2 Attacks from Splinters of . Splinters attack with no bonus, but ignore armour not constructed of bone. They deal d6 + 1 damage.

Weapons of bone deal double damage against Husks. In all situations, bone weapons break on a 3 or less on a d20. The refugees who live outside the Occulted Kingdom wield only these weapons, or else old arms sheathed in the bones of giants.

They revel every night.


Husks will only deviate from their remembered behaviour to defend themselves, dragging d12 of the nearest fellow Husks into the fray. Soldiers will guard the realms, farmers till dead fields, and sages pass on knowledge long forgotten.


Typical Knights of the Occulted Kingdom wore Plate, and wielded...

d4	Armed with...
1	A shield and sword
2	A shield and mace
3	A poleaxe
4	A halberd

The heraldry on the shields depicts a hollow triangle crowned.

Corruption in Characters

Any **player** expressing curiosity in having their character embrace  has sealed their fate. This is the unconscious yearning spoken of before. They gain 1d8 Corruption. It is up to you whether this is recorded publicly or not.

The casting of spells and the taking of lives increase corruption by 1d6. The sealing of portals, the banishing of spirits and life-affirming partying (i.e. carousing) all reduce it by 1d4. Travelling between dimensions exposes you to , increasing corruption by 2d12. Exploring further into the mysteries of your corruption, whether arcane research or introspection cause it to grow by d12. Corruption can never fall below 1 – once tainted you will never be clean of its presence.

Shard of



HD 10





AC 14

6 ATTACKS – Splinter of  / x4 damage from bone source

An ever shifting mass of the blackness, a Splinter writ large and ambulatory. It will rage and rampage, using the essential personhood of the evoker as fuel. They will attack any the evoker bids them to, but if there are no enemies to attack it will turn on the uncorrupted allies of the evoker, and then the corrupted allies, and then the evoker themselves.

Effects of Corruption.

All effects are cumulative. Dropping below a threshold undoes that effect.

Value	Effect
1	You can now perceive the corruption in others.
10	Weapons of bone deal double damage against you. You are petrified of bone.
20	Gain one free HD – your level remains the same for all other purposes.
30	You no longer recognize your name, and nor do you understand the concept of having your own. Dropping below this threshold allows you to take on a new name.
40	By gaining 2d20 corruption, you can evoke a Shard of  for rounds equal to rolled corruption.
50	You lose the ability to perceive corruption. You now have one Splinter of  . You do not control it.
60	Halve all XP gained from this point forwards as your personhood slips away.
70	Gain a second Splinter of  .
80	Gain a second free HD. You can no longer gain experience.
100+	You are entirely hollowed out, a vessel of  , just another Husk. Give your character sheet to the GM. They will now do what they did most in life, endlessly. Know that this was your fault alone.

A Miscellany

by Greg Gorgonmilk

Dead Fairy in a Lamp

A necromantic item of no small value to the searcher. It appears to be a bit of bones and broken insect wings rattling inside a rosy glass tube capped with two iron seals. Each is crusted with magical scripts of exceptional intricacy. When the lamp is rattled and a word is spoken, it bathes a 20' radius with intense, red-gold flecked luminosity. All invisible objects and creatures are instantly revealed in this glow. Objects of stone -- including masonry and monuments and raw cave walls -- become transparent -- allowing a clear view through them to the very edge of the lamp's 20' radius zone of efficacy. This transparency works equally well from both perspectives (inside and outside of the lamp's field). The luminosity will last 1 turn for every (temporary) hit point invested by its bearer. Knocking on dead or living wood in the lamp's vicinity (earshot) will snuff it's light for 2d12 turns.

Tetrograt

A minuscule, stationary golem peculiar to certain cultures and time periods. It resembles a small bronze statuette approximately three feet tall. The form is that of a classical anthropomorphic godlet of hermaphroditic quality. The deity's face is covered with sumptuously lipped mouths that flow around its head like leisurely ducks on the surface of a pond. They sometimes whisper incoherently, or come forth with names of people and places in a non sequitur flow of babble. Each mouth is independent of the others -- expressing and spouting nonsense of its own -- until an untruth is spoken before it, at which time all mouths will chorus the words "It is a lie."

Tetrograts are typically royal heirlooms with origins in the distant past. No specific details can be readily ascertained about their fabrication -- all prescient facts having been worn away by the passage of time. There is mention of a distant empire, an underground temple -- little more. In certain epochs, the Tetrograt is a common feature in the courts of Emperors, Kings, Queens and Archmages. Its absence usually denotes times of courtly corruption and sinister intrigues.

The Cloak of Beards

A magical vestment, composed of the chin-reeds of no less than twenty ancient kings. According to legend, the work of an elf-shadow called Woe-Tidings-Bringer, who according to legend collected the beards to fabricate the cloak over a fortnight, leaving many royal personages flustered and shame-faced and cursing the old night-prowler's name when they found an iridescent pile of spent cocoons at the foots of their beds (long-held to be tokens of the Woe-Tidings-Bringer's presence).

The cloak is a patchwork of irregular beards -- some like rust-coloured torrents of curls, others white and thin as worm's silk, still others black like coal and smelling vaguely of fermented spirits. Perhaps seven feet in length, especially bushy around the collar. The lining is mouse-velvet, storm cloud grey.

The cloak invests the wearer with a regal bearing, elevating his/her CHA score to 18. Those who fail to save against the cloak's radiant enchantment (30') are convinced that the wearer is a king of the noblest variety. In awe of their august presence, they will obey the wearer's commands as if they were imperial edicts.

The Quintessential

A figure of ancient history who lorded over a people called the Sessions. He has come to represent the horror of the Age of



Archmages, when wizard-despots seized control of the world's governments and divided all the lands into a dozen autocratic states, wherein one man or woman (or other) with the magical might of a godling ruled over all else with absolute conviction and esoteric force.

In the vanished lands of the ancient Sessians, the Quintessential established himself in the role of Eidolon. Men and women, ensnared by his will, obeyed the Quintessential's commandments and edicts with mindless enthusiasm, allowing themselves to be altered by his transformative syllables and weird caresses.

Eventually all the people came to resemble their Eidolon in his obsessive pursuit of total homogeny of the mental and organic landscapes. Even the women finally developed functional male genitalia, exhibited without shame or concern.

Perversely, this ever-closer resemblance became an irk to the Quintessential, who fancied himself uniquely gifted in every area of physical beauty and cerebral competency. In essence, his warped sense of perfectionism had crossed the irresistible force of his own vanity. Consequently the wizard began a ruthless pogrom -- killing his subjects one by one, to enjoy the experience of their life's snuffage like a vintner enjoys the end-product of his efforts.

But even the Quintessential can grow weary.

Ultimately he called all the remaining Sessians to gather before him in the Avenue of Perfect Silence and said the nine words that erase what is. In the next moment -- or perhaps several moments previous -- they were nothing.

Presently it is recognized that even the memory of the Sessians has dwindled into a state of continuous erosion with total disappearance likely. With time even this account.

The Officers' Rest

by Ezra Claverie

In the mangrove swamps of the West Island, beyond the Line of Demarcation, lie the ruins of the Elven navy's Western Shipyard and Submarine Pens. The latter shelter in a sprawling cavern, its mouth some hundred meters high in its center and thrice as wide. The bands of Forest People who know this region may warn strangers not to enter, unless they wish those strangers ill.

On either side, the cavern ceiling curves down to quays of masonry. Between the quays and the cavern walls crumble scores of buildings, large and small. The embankment and quays at the back of the cavern have collapsed into the water, dividing the North from the South Embankments. (The latter, known in the language of the Forest People as the Cairns of the Mucus Fiends, now houses a colony of Decoherence Wights (q.v. Undercroft #7), which shamle forth by night.)

Where the cavern ceiling lowers toward the floor, one of the more intact buildings on the North Embankment houses the Officers' Rest, a club that once entertained commissioned gentlemen. The half of the building that housed storerooms, kitchen, and a second-story ballroom has collapsed into rubble, but the entrance to the club proper looms open. Beside it stands a dust-cloaked statue of Oceania, the Elven navy's contrived "Mistress of the Seas," still extending her hand for the next officer to kiss. None has kissed that hand in fourteen centuries.

The Amoebastomal Ciliator

This orphan of Elven warmongery has grown throughout the cracks of the cavern's ceiling and walls, as well as many of the ruins. It shares traits with slime molds, xenophyophores, and both percolozoid and testate amoebae, but it exceeds all these in complexity and size, weighing some eleven tons. Its plasmodia and rizomorphs have wound through many hectares of the cave; unable to venture into the sunlight, it feeds by extending fine cilia, like strands of spiderweb, from the ceiling and walls of the cavern.

Visitors to the North Embankment will notice that the cavern lacks the bustling troglodene life one usually encounters in the mouth of a tropical cave. The husks of insects, lizards, and other small animals litter the floor. Keen-eyed observers will spot a glint like spider silk on both the ceiling and the ruins beneath; from the ceiling dangle the remains of birds trapped in what look like spiderwebs. Persons with strong light sources will see that these weblike structures dangle most thickly from gaps in the rock, in which glistens something like wet stone or crystal—the slimy body of the Ciliator.

Anyone moving thirty meters or further into the cavern must Save vs. Breath Weapon: failure of this Save means that the person has blundered into cilia and now has the Ciliator's venom working in his or her blood (so the Referee should keep track of who failed). Moreover, the Ciliator has now tasted prey and will prepare to feed. Repeat this round of Saving Throws characters every quarter hour of exploration, until someone fails.

Once someone fails the Save, the Ciliator will begin to produce more cilia, and explorers will run into more and more strands of "spiderweb." After another quarter hour, call for Saving Throws versus Poison; to anyone carrying a torch (or similar open flame)



grant a +4, since the flame destroys many cilia.

Anyone who fails this Save feels relaxed, languid, as if arriving home after a long journey. If nobody prompts them to do otherwise, persons who have failed this Save will stand still, even sit or lie down, forgetting whatever they were doing a moment ago, enjoying their newfound peace.

If anyone spends thirty minutes or longer in one place within the cavern—and this includes working to clear a blocked passage and so on—then the Ciliator will organize itself to ingest large prey. It does this by assembling and imbricating millions of tests (calcerous shells) from its vast body, then using them to form armored pseudopodia. This ad-hoc skin resembles that of a shark and smells faintly of chalk.

For each human-sized item of potential prey, the Ciliator will form d4 Hit Dice worth of 2-Hit-Die pseudopodia, equally divided into two kinds: ciliogenitors and stomas (round toward ciliogenitors). The Ciliator will extrude these from gaps in the walls, ceiling, or ruins. It can generate up to thirty pseudopodia at once time.

Pseudopod

Attack Bonus +3

AC 15

Hit Dice 2

Hit Points 9

Damage: paralysis (see below) or d8 blow

Ciliogenitor

This pseudopod will snake toward a target, then open to vent a thick “spray” of cilia against one human-sized target. Save vs. Breath Weapon or suffer a numbing paralysis (no bonus for carrying flame).

A numbed victim can cry for help or crawl away, but no more strenuous or complex action is possible for the next d10 minutes.

Stoma

This trunklike pseudopod will first endeavor to protect ciliogenitors, lashing at any creature that threatens them.

If a ciliogenitor succeeds in numbing prey, then a stoma pseudopod will open a toothless aperture and begin to swallow that prey. This takes d4+1 rounds with a numbed but conscious victim, d4 with an unconscious victim. The stoma will then seal and must be cut open by causing the stoma six points of damage from a sharp instrument.

The victim will begin to lose d6 Hit Points per round as the stoma opens pores in its calcerous skin and sends in fine cilia to drain the victim’s fluids. (At the Referee’s discretion, a victim with a knife ready to hand when the stoma closes may attempt to cut his or her way out.)

After 2d4 hours, the stoma will open and disgorge the husk.

Pseudopodia lose no Hit Points to attacks by bludgeoning weapons and only one Hit Point to attacks by piercing weapons. Normal fires cost only one Hit Point per die, as the calcerous skin insulates the plasmodium well. Slashing weapons cause full normal damage.

Pseudopodia hurt by weapons “bleed” stringy, black plasmodium. Its odor evokes peat mixed with the trimethylamine compounds of decomposing fish.

The Ciliator can regenerate one destroyed pseudopod worth of mass per day. Devouring a human-sized meal allows it to regenerate two.

Anyone who recovers from the numbing of a ciliogenitor will experience no ill effects for d4 hours. However, after that incubation period, a virus transmitted by the Ciliator will afflict the victim, causing a runny nose, bronchitis, and sputum containing fine white specks. Despite these symptoms, the virus cannot pass from human to human.

This sickness lasts 4d6 days, and causes a temporary loss of 2d4 Constitution. If this penalty reduces the victim below a score of three, he or she becomes helpless with Ciliogenitor Pneumonia. A victim reduced to zero Constitution dies.

Player characters and players may fear that the Ciliator has infected the explorer with some fatal or monstrous condition. Do nothing to dispel this fear; instead, stoke it. (Call for misleading Saving Throws, ask who carries whose rations, inspect character sheets, or the like.)

The Officers' Rest

Outside the door to the Officers' Rest stands a marble statue of Oceania. The sculptor depicted the Mistress of the Seas as a life-sized but improbably buxom Elven nymph, dressed in a décolleté gown and crowned in a tiara of seashells; she sits on a sedan chair carried by four Turtle Folk (not to scale) in leg-irons, who face outward from beneath its corners. Oceania holds in one hand a large astrolabe while presenting her other hand as if to be kissed.

If anyone approaches within three paces, dust will cascade from the statue as it wakens into animation. The rigid stone reshapes itself twenty-four times per second, such that its movements appear uncannily precise. To anyone approaching within two paces of the door, Oceania will present her hand to that person as if to be kissed. Her bearers will look about, eyelids of marble blinking over marble eyes.

If any person not wearing the Ring of Commission of an officer of the Principal Navy tries to kiss Oceania's hand, she will contemptuously slap the upstart, costing d4 Hit Points. If a person not wearing a Ring of Commission tries to enter the Mariners' Rest, Oceania will present her palm in refusal as her bearers will manoeuvre such that the statue blocks the door.¹

Anyone persisting in the attempt to enter will suffer her wrath.

Statue of Oceania

HD 6 (600kg)

AC: 12 (but see below)

Hit Points: 20

Attack bonus: +7

¹ The author leaves to the Referee's discretion the whereabouts and availability of Rings of Commission. Some may lie elsewhere in the ruins, where their owners fell.



Oceania attacks in two stages.

Stage one: Oceania will grapple with her right hand, causing no damage. If this attack hits, and the victim fails to break the grapple by Oceania's next initiative turn, then Oceania will move on to stage two.

Stage two: Oceania will bash the victim with her astrolabe, automatically costing d12 Hit Points (no hit roll necessary). She will bludgeon one victim to death before selecting another.

Meanwhile, anyone stepping into melee range to attack Oceania may also encounter the snapping jaws of one or more of her bearers, which also use the +7 Attack Bonus. On a successful hit, their bite costs d6 Hit Points and requires a Saving Throw versus Breath Weapon; failure means that the victim will suffer a limp for d6 weeks. (The Referee shall decide what cumulative disability multiple such hits cause.)

Weapons of ordinary wood or stone do not affect the statue's Hit Points, nor do metal piercing weapons.

Metal slashing weapons cost it only one Hit Point, but on a miss by five or more, the stone blunts the metal by d3 damage (until repaired by a smith).

Only bludgeoning weapons made of metal or enchanted to harm supernatural beings cause full damage.

Digging through the rubble of the collapsed part of the building takes d6+1 labour hours and attracts the attention of the Ciliator. Visitors with metal tools (chisels, prybars, and so on) could go through an intact wall in twice that time.

In [the] Club

The main hall of the Officers' Rest once had a panelled ceiling and a fine wood parquet floor, but these and its wooden furniture have crumbled. The remains of many bottles line the back wall amid rotted shelves; the alabaster bar lies broken in three pieces. In the debris lie glassware, dishes, billiard balls, and lead shuffleboard quoits.

Eight labour-hours spent searching this debris will reveal the following.

- 2d4 x 100 Coins worth of silver cutlery, black with tarnish
- cocktail-mixing paraphernalia, which includes seventeen bar spoons, eleven jiggers, and six cocktail shakers (both two- and three-piece, ranging from plain steel to silver to silver with gold filigree), worth a total of 3d6 x 500 Coins
- 3d100 brass tokens embossed with the seal of the Principal Amusement Company, worth half a Coin apiece to a collector

The plainest of the two-piece cocktail shakers has supernatural properties. Anyone handling both halves without prior knowledge of these properties will automatically nick a thumb on a fine, sharp spur of metal on the lip of its upper half. Anyone who bloodies the spur and then uses the shaker to mix a drink for one person (whose name the mixer knows) can thereby impart to that drink a Suggestion (per the spell).

The mixer may taste the drink without experiencing its effects, but if anyone else besides the intended target tastes it, then the unintended taster will drink to excess the next time he or she has the opportunity to drink alcohol freely (not necessarily the same occasion as the unlucky tasting). Roll d12 for the results of this binge.



- 1 has ordinary hangover
- 2 has worst hangover of life
- 3 makes enemy
- 4 starts brawl
- 5 gets conned out of available cash
- 6 gets conned out of available cash and into equivalent debt
- 7 falls in love with acquaintance (per Charm Person spell),
probably unreciprocated
- 8 beds acquaintance
- 9 beds stranger
- 10 beds several strangers
- 11 gets regrettable tattoo
- 12 signs up for long sea voyage

On three of the interior walls of the club (four, if we separately count each wall flanking the entrance) appear crumbling frescoes that depict sunset views of the Metropolis of the Principality of the Elves, as if seen through mullioned windows. Below each mosaic runs a narrow mantel, slightly higher than a chair rail, on which lies a lumpy coating of dust. This dust covers many of the brass tokens that the barkeep once sold to homesick officers.

In the centre of each mantel rises a candle-sconce; placing a lit candle in one of these sconces activates its mural. As long as the candle burns, to any person wearing a Ring of Commission the mural now appears indistinguishable from a real window opening on that view of the Metropolis. Anyone who then places a token on the mantel will also be able to hear the scene for the next hour as if the window were real.

At the Referee's discretion, the murals may depict real-time, bygone, or idealized views of the city, and player characters may cast spells related to perception or communication through these supernatural windows.