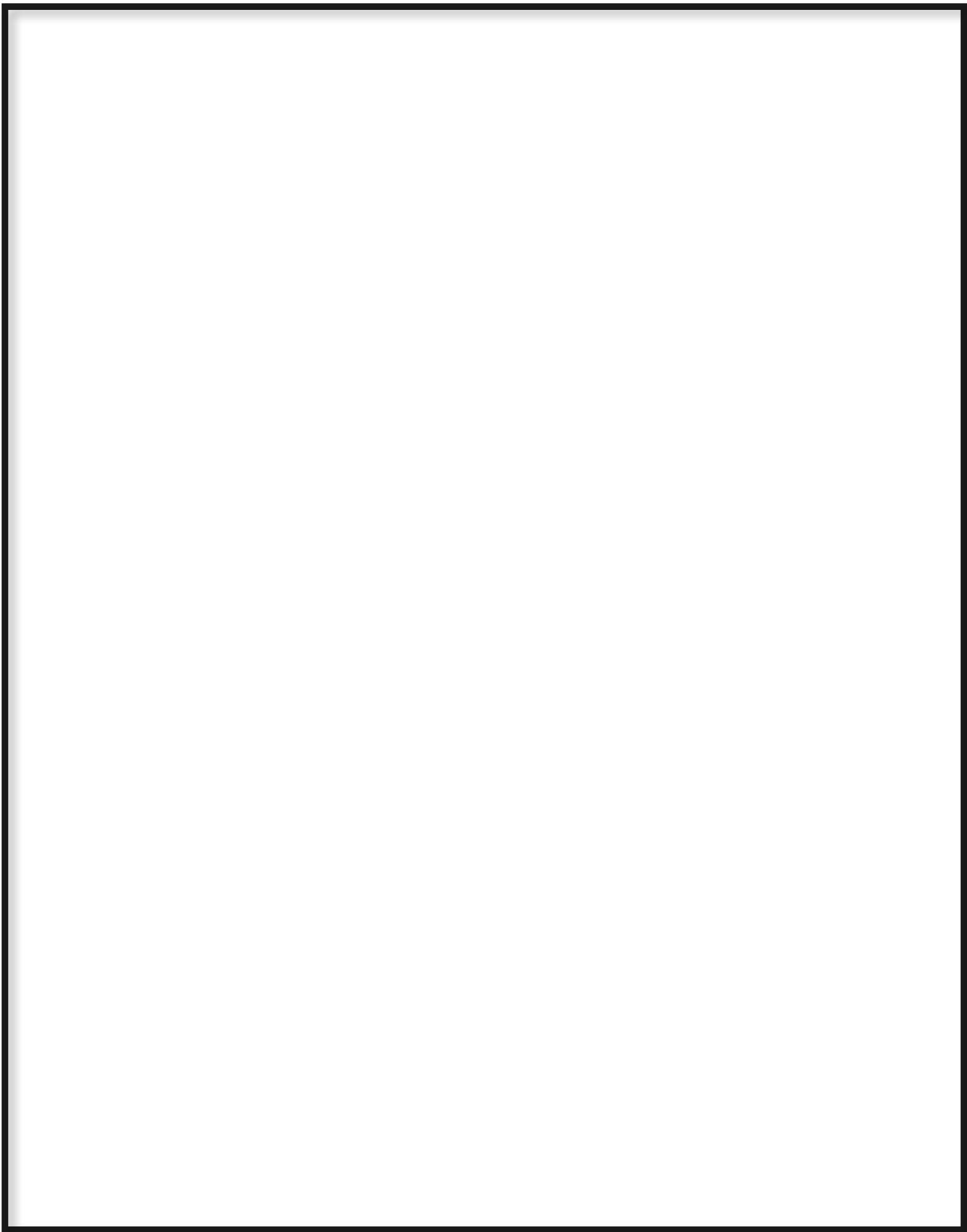




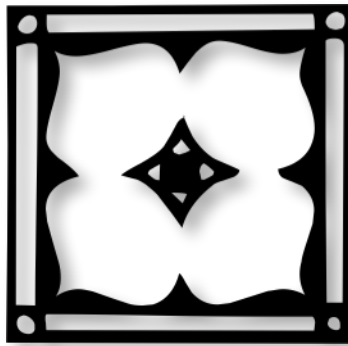
The DREAMS *of* RUIN

AN OLD-SCHOOL GAMING
SUPPLEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH
LABYRINTH LORD AND **MUTANT
FUTURE** BY **GOBLINOID GAMES**





The DREAMS *of* RUIN



Executed by GEOFFREY C. GRABOWSKI



as an agent of
TG VENTURES OPPORTUNITY VEHICLE I LLC

With the able assistance of
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and ZIGGY EDWARDS



*There came the voice of the gods singing the chaunt of the gods,
singing: "We are the gods; We are the little games of
MĀNA-YOOD-SUSHĀĪ that he hath played and hath
forgotten.*

*'MĀNA-YOOD-SUSHĀĪ hath made us, and We
made the Worlds and the Suns.*

*"And We play with the Worlds and the Sun and Life
and Death until **MĀNA** arise to rebuke us, saying:
"WHAT DO YE PLAYING WITH WORLDS
AND SUNS?"*

*"It is a very serious thing that there be Worlds and Suns,
and yet most withering is the laughter of
MĀNA-YOOD-SUSHĀĪ.*

*"And when he arises from resting at the Last, and laughs at
us for playing with Worlds and Suns, We will hastily put
them behind us, and there shall be Worlds no more."*

*~ Lord Dunsany, *The Gods of Pegana**





Dedicated to my life-long enemy and
companion, *fallopia japonica*.





MALEDICTION

OLD WOMAN CROW: The boy-child of Mankind threw a stone and killed my husband. It was my husband and the boy-child made him dead as easy as his hand made a stone fly.

WIND: Don't nobody care 'bout no dead crows.

OLD WOMAN CROW: I'll make you care, Wind, I'll hang a curse on you:

By the ant you tread on, by the robber you hang;

By the spider you swat, by the wolf you hunt;

By the bee you poison,

by the blood of your kindred man you shed;

I'll curse you, motherfucker, like nobody's ever been cursed before.

WIND: Don't nobody care 'bout no crow-curse, uttered dry-eyed over a husband's corpse not yet cold.

OLD WOMAN CROW: You'll care about my curse, Wind. I don't curse alone.

I called up the Old Man of the Woods. He curses with me.

OLD MAN OF THE WOODS: I do, I curse with her.

I curse the wind that nags
and cuts and burns.

He blows on every tree in the forest,
and fells each in turn.



THE GARDEN
OF MY ASSHOLE NATURE





OLD WOMAN CROW: I called up the Smartest Man in the World. He curses with me.

OLD MAN WIZARD: I do, I curse the wind with her.

Because why not?

Old Woman Crow paid me good money.

The wind has to know,

that when presented with gold,

there's no evil Mankind won't author.

OLD WOMAN CROW: I called up the Meanest Preacher who ever Worshipped the Devil. He curses with me.

OLD MAN RELIGION: I do, I curse with her.

I serve the master of every curse;

The father of every misfortune.

I'm always ready to join in any malediction.

OLD WOMAN CROW: How about them apples, Wind?

WIND: Don't nobody care about a bunch of magic-men in masks bawling into the night.

OLD WOMAN CROW: I'll teach you to care then, Wind.

I'll show you a garden and from year to year it'll grow.

It'll be the garden of my asshole nature,

The garden of my venom.

And with the turning of the seasons, so my curse will grow and grow

The crops of my garden

be more curses in turn.

WIND: I hear you talkin'.





OLD WOMAN CROW: Five cards I've got. Or seven.

Thirteen cards, or twenty-one?

How many whistles do you need to hear, Wind,
before you pay attention to Old Woman Crow?

Venom. A golden crown. Brimstone.

And then the ever-changing moon.

How many moons?

How many moons must I offer,
in my prayers unto the principle of ENTROPY,

To make the wish of my cursing true?

[There is the sound of THUNDER]

WIND: The wind don't care about magic-men

Don't care about no curses that they speak,

However venomous or awful.

But it seems to me

like somebody's gonna care about that one.

[WIND pauses]

WIND: I have to say, Old Woman Crow.

You have a strange way of bringing back your
man from the dead.

It seems to me, Old Man Religion over there

Could preach him back out of the Underworld
before his breakfast.





OLD WOMAN CROW: Fuck my dead husband too.

I'd put a curse on his dead head,
but he doesn't merit my wrath.

I always hated that worthless tosspot, but he
was mine to hate.

This is between me and the Wind.

Leave my husband out of it.

He justifies my curses,

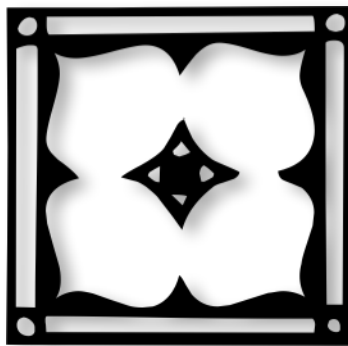
But I stand here on my own two feet.

WIND: History will never care about no crow-women,
no magic-men, no crow-curses or witch-woman's
trickery.

OLD WOMAN CROW: My curse will strive to teach the
Wind to care. Watch and you will learn.

[WIND removes his mask] DEATH: I ain't never gonna
care, Old Woman Crow.

OLD WOMAN CROW: I know. And so my curse will
never end. He was a husband of convenience, but I
give him an incomparable cenotaph.



The DREAMS *of* RUIN

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INTRODUCTION

The Dreams of Ruin are an interdimensional magical entity sometimes described as a dimensional disease or a powerful sorcerous weapon. They are a self-replicating supernatural phenomenon comprising these closely entangled elements:

- A pseudo-fungal infestation of the magical fabric of the world (the **body trees**)
- A sorcerously created companion-species (the **bakegumo**)
- A drone-like miracle created by asexual reproduction (the **puppets of ruin**)
- A harnessed race of naturally Neutral (evil) forest beings (the **murdersprites**)

The Dreams of Ruin initially enter a world as infinitesimal supernatural contaminants, self-replicating enchantments of the minutest possible extent. They take root in the cosmic substrate of the plane, and power their growth and spread by simultaneously leeching off of and accelerating the natural forces of entropy and chaos — negative energy — in their world. In this stage they are invisible even to most magical forms of divination, although specialized scrying can detect them.

After some time, the dreams sprout the body trees from the soil of the world. In appearance, this physical manifestation of the dreams takes the shape of a gloomy enchanted forest — a “Forest of Woe” — that grows up suddenly from the terrain, sometimes covering square miles in a single night.

Not true trees, the body trees of the Dreams of Ruin spring forth as part of the dreams’ process of existence. They are not the curse itself. In reality, they are more like a mushroom than like a tree — they are a fruiting body of the actual, magical entity that forms the curse.

No amount of chopping trees will make the dreams go away, and in fact, the more successful the efforts at harvesting them, the thicker the crop in the next “flush.” Against this cold reality have many heroes who lacked sufficient insight or foresight to discern the subtle nature of the trees, poured out their lives in vain.

The lesser fruit of the dreams, the puppets of ruin, engage in self-propitiatory behavior, catalyzing changes in their environment that make it more suitable to the expansion of the supernatural process that creates the trees. In this way, the puppets are not unlike encrypted *frankia* filaments or *rhizobium* nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

The greater fruit the body trees bear — great white flower-like spore pods — saturate the environment with the spores of the dreams and ensure that the entire world is contaminated.

Puppets aren’t the only menace that the forest fills up with. The trees offer a *blessing* to entities who are more Chaotic than Lawful, more evil than good, who find shelter beneath the boughs of the body trees.



Many supernatural beings of dark character find the environment of the forest to be conducive to their prosperous existence. Some such beings have developed a symbiotic or mutualistic relationship with the forest, and are drawn across the dimensional gulfs to colonize extents of the forest.

AN ENEMY FOR 12TH- TO 18TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

This book details an environment that can serve as a “second act” to a fantasy game that seems to end around the 8th to 12th levels with the initial threat vanquished. The material is designed to give characters a number of challenging enemies for several levels, possibly sending them on any number of quests into the Inner or Outer Planes, into exotic foreign locales, or anywhere else the Labyrinth Lord (LL) sees fit to dispatch them to.

Characters interacting with this material will probably be able to interact with it on an “even” basis around 16th level. It can be used for powerful out-of-level threats even as low as 7th or 8th level. By 18th level, continued involvement with this matter is going to be a bit parochial, but characters may seek to stamp the stuff out in their dimensional neighborhood or otherwise use it as a gateway into the dimensional manipulation game.

CONTEXTS OF INFECTION

INFESTATION OF THE LOWER PLANES

This material was originally conceived of as a nuisance form of invasive magical life that takes hold in the outer planes associated with evil ethics. The classic descriptions of those planes are a bit lacking in variety, so I created a new kind of terrain for them. I then realized it would be a terrible nightmare released on a mortal world, and that it was sure to make the trip hitchhiking aboard some planar traveler. You can use it in that fashion in your game as well, if you send the characters to an evil outer plane and they need a forbidding wasteland to hide out in. The overall bias of the encounter tables is toward the kind of entities that you might tend to find hanging

THIS IS HORRIFYING!

It is! It's cosmic horror-type material. People reading this book will probably find a bunch of creepy material that leaves them unsettled. If you're not ready to hang with ghoulish thrills and spine-tingling terror, it's probably not good material for you.

around the outer planes of evil, so this won't need to be changed.

INFESTATION OF DEMIPLANES

The abandoned fortress, demonic prison and deserted lich's tomb are staples of adventures in the ethereal plane. Yet at the same time, there are only so many golems and non-intelligent undead that might appear in a given campaign before the automated dungeon has lost its allure.

You can use the dreams to supplement the predictable encounters in deserted places. The bias toward encounters with creatures from the evil astral occurs because the infestation makes an easy target for *gates*. Infestations of the dreams are thus seen by evil entities such as demons, devils, hags and the like as ideal beachheads for conquest and exploration.

Demiplanes with negative energy-laden entities like vampires and liches on them are especially prone to developing infections of the dreams. Liches in particular often have their domains infected by the necessary presence of night hags and their wares. The unwitting lich thoroughly inoculates his dwelling entertaining night hags and handling the ingredients of immortality they peddle, and thereafter the very presence of the undead owner feeds the growth of the dreams. The dreams can be harnessed, of course, but their supernatural life cycle eats away at the reality of places they infest, and their growth typically severely compromises the host lair's value as an inaccessible extradimensional oubliette.

Infected but deserted demiplanes tend not to be “taken over” unless there are other dark things

lurking on them. It's common for the body trees to support only a few dormant puppets in the absence of independent and ongoing sources of negative energy. Characters may find a "dead" demiplane and have it stir to life in their presence (for the "haunted space station" effect). Other instances may produce a plane with just a few symptoms of infestation, but that is full of spores (for the "oh god we brought something back with us 7 years ago" effect).

INFESTATION OF PRIME MATERIAL PLANES

Obviously the easiest way for the dreams to be introduced to a campaign is for them to have taken root in the characters' home plane or perhaps a nearby plane they frequent.

Again, the high population of evil extra-planar creatures in the forest reflects its utility as a beachhead for invasion; you can easily tie it into whatever kind of extradimensional hijinks you expect at high level. Characters who live in a high-magic world or have powerful negative-energy wielding enemies on their planes will have to do battle, not only with their enemies, but also with aggressive infestations of the dreams, and a constant flow of opportunistic hags, demodands, daemons, devils and demons.

Don't bother worrying about how your campaign world isn't exactly right for the ailment or that it only happens to "dark" worlds. Lots of perfectly nice worlds get the Dreams of Ruin. In a world that isn't a hive of mega-magicians strewn with artifacts, they're potentially a civilization-ending apocalypse.

How to Use This Book

This book was originally composed in the general manner of an old-school gaming adventure, with the setting description in the front followed by the rules material. Reader feedback indicated this was not a good solution, so it has been organized with the rules material forward.

This may make the book a bit dense. Feel free to skip forward to the good parts after the big long list of magic item effect modifications in the haunted wood.

Rules Extensions

This chapter deals with the extensions and modifications that this book makes to the **Labyrinth Lord/Mutant Future** settings. Some of these relate directly to the Dreams of Ruin, while others are setting-neutral extensions of the rules.

This chapter also details the effects of the **miasma of ruin** on spells and magic items, which are extensive.

Running the Dreams

In this chapter you'll find practical advice on how to use this book and a guide for the general shape that use of this material is likely to take.

Components of the Dreams

This chapter details the body trees and their servants and offspring, the puppets of ruin, the bakegumo and the murdersprites.

Infection

This chapter details the disease process by which the dreams infect a world, and the patterns their spread takes once the pathogen is established.

Research and Laboratory

This chapter details the process by which a laboratory may be established to research the dreams and investigate the mysteries of their sinister unliving plague.

Basic Research and Further Prying

This chapter details the various secrets that can be uncovered when pursuing knowledge of the dreams. These are arranged by topic and tagged by which classes can uncover them.

Cures

This chapter details the more concrete advances that are made possible during research into the dreams. These advances are a combination of practices, spells and magical devices.

Encounters

This chapter outlines the sorts of encounters often had within the Forest of Woe. It contains both regular encounters and a number of special encounters. These special encounters are included both to serve as playable material, and also to illustrate the sorts of entities that exist in the forest. LLs who are uncertain how the forest should “feel” will probably find useful inspiration here.

THE MALEDICTION IS REALLY IMPORTANT

There is a poem — actually a script for a magic ritual — in the Malediction section at the beginning of this book. It is not a weird arty-book flourish, but a really important part of the story of the dreams. Anyone investigating the dreams is going to find this vision as part of their research. You, as the LL, want to read that poem.

In general, just get comfortable with the material and understand what is being addressed through the metaphor of a script for actors. Among other things, there are a number of speakers who might or might not be the same actual person in some or all cases. You will want to determine who each of them is in your interpretation of the material. This is discussed in some detail in the section, “The Origin of the Dreams,” on p. 111 of this book.

In short, know that the poem is an important clue in the puzzle of the dreams.

INSPIRATION

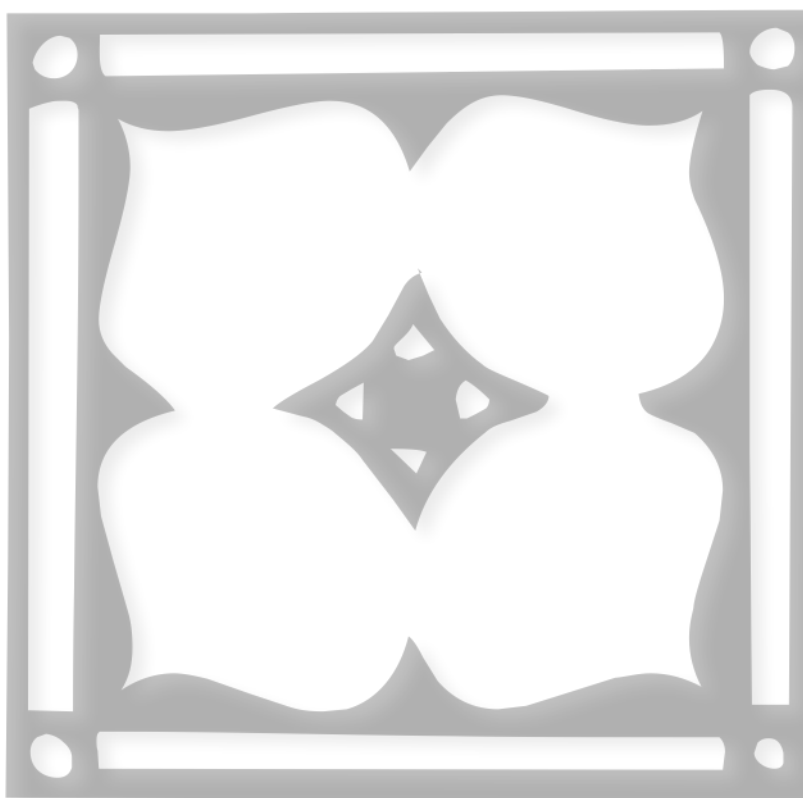
There’s no doubt that my observations on the relationship between Japanese knotweed colonies and urban decay profoundly shaped my thinking.

I am an avid gardener and student of soil life. My own sensibilities regarding the creepy world of things that live in your compost heap, and how plants and fungi behave, strongly colored this book.

The toxic jungle from *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* had a profound effect on me as a kid, and there are definitely some similarities here.

Other obvious inspirations: Roger Zelazny’s Amber novel *The Guns of Avalon*, the H.P. Lovecraft story “The Colour Out of Space”. Also Sean Stewart’s “Flood” books (*Galveston*, *Night Watch*, and *Resurrection Man*), in that they portrayed the magical apocalypse as a short-lived, transient disaster. This is a feeling I wanted to preserve in *The Dreams of Ruin*.

I had done most of the creative work related to the forest before seeing it, but the 2010 movie *Monsters* (directed by Gareth Edwards) is really great source material for running this.



RULES EXTENSIONS

These are general extensions of the rules of **Labyrinth Lord** and **Mutant Future** used in this material. It is published under the joint **Labyrinth Lord/Mutant Future** license.

This material generally assumes that the **Mutant Future** rules book is being used as the primary rules source. This was chosen because it is slightly more complex, with a classed poison system and a mental attack table. Where WIL is referred to, **Labyrinth Lord** characters use Wisdom. This and other conversion notes are included in the **Mutant Future** rulebook.

Where page numbers for reference to spells are given, they are from the **Advanced Edition Companion (AEC)**, as this is a complete compendium of the spells.

Mutant Future, **Labyrinth Lord** and the **AEC** are all available for free from Goblinoid Games. A copy of each of those rules texts should have been included with the archive you received if you purchased this book. It is thus assumed that the reader has all these rules available for reference. In general, the material assumes the reader is intimately familiar with old-school gaming concepts, settings and assumptions.

Scale

The scale used in *The Dreams of Ruin* is *not* the one established on p. 44 of **Labyrinth Lord** and p. 37 of the **Mutant Future** book.

A large-scale map hex is 24 miles from side to side, as established in those books.

However, small-scale map hexes are 8 miles from side to side.

Labyrinth Lord and related games suggest 6 or 10 miles per hex. These 4:1 and 2.4:1 measurement ratios don't produce readily scalable maps. I am using 8 because it fits a 7-hex cluster of 8-mile maps into each 24-mile hex.

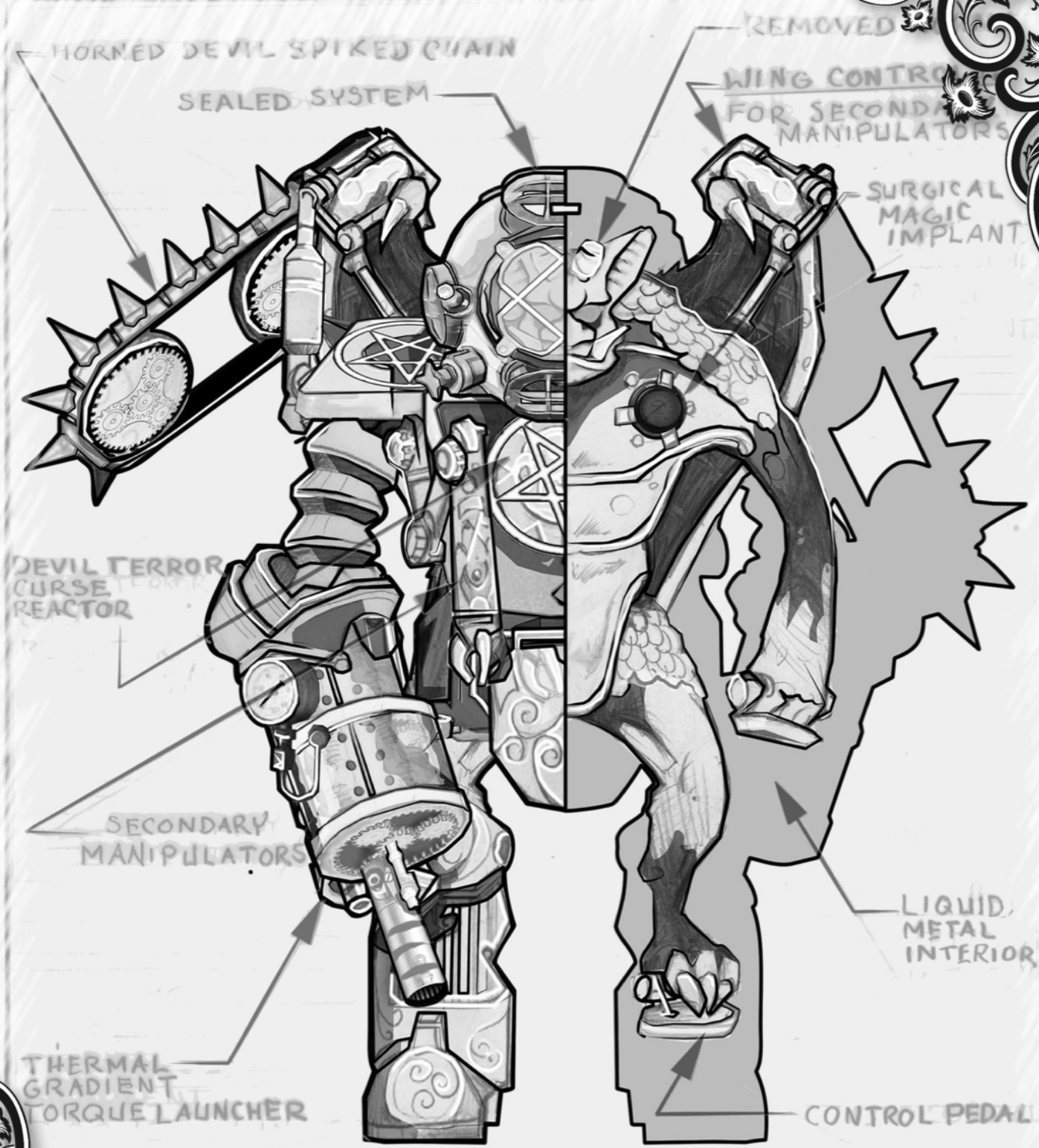
It is thus suggested that areas infested with the forest be dealt with in 8-mile hexes, and this material will use the 8-mile hex as the basic unit of measure. Where it refers to a "hex," assume it means a 8-mile hex unless specifically stated otherwise.

Larger 24-mile hexes will be referred to as "large hexes" or "24-mile hexes."

If you use a 5- or 6- or 10-mile scale per hex, don't worry; the effects of the dreams are figured in hexes and then translated to distance. You can either translate it into distance and apply those measurements to your own hex system, or apply the measurement directly in hexes and distort the *per annum* land speed of the dreams.

A BIT ABOUT THESE HEXAGONS

The area of a hexagon with an inradius (side-to-side measure) of 4 miles is 55.43 square miles, which is ~1.55 billion square feet, or 35,583 acres.



HORNED DEVIL BUSHI
BRONZE EXO-GOLEM



HEXES PER HEXAGON

The number of hexagons in a hex-of-hexes is produced by the following formula:

$$3(n^2)-(3n)+1$$

Where n =(the number of hexes across the meta-hex/2). A regular hex-of-hexes will always be an odd number of hexes wide. Divide it in half, and round the .5 result up to the next whole number.

So a meta-hex 7 hexes across would be 37 hexes in extent, as shown below:

1/2 of 7, rounded up, is 4, so $n=4$.

$$3(4^2)-3(4)+1$$

$$3(16)-3(4)+1$$

$$48-12+1$$

$$37$$

This may prove useful when estimating the area of various regions during the course of these adventures.

MOVEMENT IN THE FOREST OF WOE

To restate **Labyrinth Lord's** overland movement scale, creatures move 1 mile per day per 5' of per-round movement, so a character moving 120' per round moves 24 miles per day in clear terrain.

Wooded areas reduce this by -1/3. Jungle reduces movement speed by -1/2. Road travel increases it by +1/2.

In lieu of a specific rule, I will assume that road movement is generally treated as movement over clear terrain, not the terrain the road runs through, if the road is well-maintained and easily passable.

Characters who move at 120' can move 16 miles per day in *overgrown* areas (2 hexes per day), and 12 miles per day (1 1/2 8 mile hexes per day, or 3 hexes per 2 days) in the heart of the woods. Thus, it will take the characters 1 1/2 days to cross a large overgrown hex, and 2 days to cross a large heart of the woods hex.

Characters who move 90' can move 12 miles per day in overgrown areas, or 8 miles in the heart of the woods. Thus it will take them 2 days to cross a large overgrown hex, and 3 days to cross a large heart of the woods hex.

Roads through the forest are unlikely to be open. There is only a 30% chance that a road through an overgrown area will be passable enough to provide the road bonus. There are never roads through the heart of the woods that are not choked with mines and ambushes.

GENERAL RULES EXTENSIONS

The following are other extensions to the **Labyrinth Lord** system that serve to extend or clarify the rules on certain things like vehicles and magic points.

Deathlessness and Bane Effects

One capability many beings in the worlds of old-school gaming have is *regeneration*; hp of damage they suffer gradually dissipate over time without the use of external magic.

Sometimes this is a relatively innocuous power — many beings regenerate at the rate of hp per turn, and stay dead when slain.

Other regenerating creatures are considerably more vigorous. These beings often regenerate at the rate of 1 or more hp per round, and are difficult to kill permanently. These beings cannot generally be killed unless they are slain with some particularly noxious substance that forms their weakness.

As a general condition, the ability to regenerate even from negative hit points unless killed in some specific fashion is called *deathlessness*. Beings that have that form of superior regeneration are *deathless*. The best example of deathless regeneration in old-school gaming is, of course, the troll.

In the evil reaches of the astral, some deathless regenerators are nearly unkillable. Their weakness has never been discovered, or was destroyed long ago, or they are vulnerable to things that don't exist, or that exist only on a single world, or as a hypothetical possibility.

Local denizens have devised an answer to this challenge: the **Bane attack**. Whatever the regeneration effect, it cannot heal damage done by Bane sources. Natural healing and magical healing both work normally on Bane wounds, but no regeneration effect does. While some attacks that do Bane damage have additional effects that make the injury more difficult to heal, these are not the direct result of the Bane effect itself.

When deathless creatures are reduced below 0 hp through damage inflicted by a Bane attack, they are killed permanently. Bane attacks are fairly common among denizens of the evil astral and the planes thereof, because things that absolutely refuse to die are ubiquitous in that region.

Structural Hit Points

Structural hp (shp) are described in Labyrinth Lord (p. 58) and Mutant Future (p. 53). They are a form of hp possessed by large objects like ships. Each shp equals 5 hp. While the rules are not clear, by the interpretation I am applying, shp are inflicted only when an attack does a full increment of 5 hp. If an attack does 1-4 hp to an shp object, it does 0 shp. If it does 5-9 hp, it does 1 shp. If it does 10-14 hp, it does 2 shp, and so on. If an hp target takes shp damage, multiply the result by 5.

Damage Absorption

Some objects are very tough. This reduces all damage to the target by a set number of hp. This usually represents "hard" armor like that possessed by armored vehicles or golems. This will be in increments of 5 so it works properly in conjunction with shp (see above).

Some attacks may ignore certain amounts of damage absorption. This is to represent armor

piercing effects that are specially optimized to pierce armor, rather than do damage. This also always occurs in increments of 5 to play nicely with shp.

Vehicles

Vehicles with their own targeting systems are treated as monsters in combat, controlled by their operators, just as you would handle an elephant ordered to attack by its mahout, or a dragon sent into battle by its rider. Controlling the vehicle is assumed to require the operator's concentration (as if it were a spell), but the vehicle has its own AC, hp or shp, HD, attacks, etc.

Attacks against the vehicle's own independent mind may or may not be possible depending on its degree of sentience. Typical mechanical vehicles are not subject to direct mental attack.

If the vehicle's mind cannot be attacked, then attacks seeking to charm, hold or otherwise control it must be made against its operators, not the vehicle. This may or may not be possible, as they are likely to be out of sight in a protected position inside the vehicle.

It is explicit that being able to see the vehicle does not provide line of sight on the operator unless it is an open vehicle.

Miracle Counter Measures (MCM)

Characters in this material are in a very magically active environment — they are all flitting into and around areas full of the denizens of evil astral space. There are a lot of curses and similar negative effects flung around.

Also, the setting is heavily magi-tech, so there are magical weapons with conventional seeker heads, or hybrid weapons that have explosive payloads guided by curses. For the sake of sanity, I just lumped all you-vs.-magic, you-vs.-seeker contests into a single pile and called it "miracle / missile

combat.” MCM stands for “Miracle CounterMeasures.”

MCM is a way to represent generically how a wide variety of creatures have various saving throw bonuses versus spells depending on their own magical skills and assumed disposition of defensive resources. MCM is just a save against spells, pre-calculated after applying a modifier similar to the one you get for a high WIS in the AEC.

If you don't have an MCM modifier, and people use MCM attacks against you, you are at a -2 penalty on your saving throw versus spells. Or a +2 penalty, or however you want to express it. This is called being “MCM naive.” They make the curses really bad down in the evil astral. If you aren't prepared for it, they tend to stick.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE MCM NAIVE

Do you have a *ring of protection* on, giving you saving throw bonuses? Do you have a saving throw modifier calculated as per Wisdom Table I on p. 6 of the AEC? Are you a Dwarf or Halfling racial class in **Labyrinth Lord** using the racial save table? You are not MCM naive.

Are you a 0th-level human? Are you from a low-magic setting? Does your *ring of protection* not add to your saving throws? Then you are probably MCM naive, and will take a -2 penalty on top of your already-poor save.

It is at this point I suggest that you patch the rules if you are giving out Wisdom bonuses to save as per AEC p. 6, and recommend that characters get the best of their WIL and their *ring of protection* bonuses, not the sum of them.

When you would have someone with an MCM value make a saving throw versus spells, you use their MCM value as their saving throw. This includes spells that do not explicitly target MCM.

If someone shoots a conventional fire-and-forget weapon at a character with an MCM score, the target receives a +2 bonus to their MCM Saving Throw. Confounding strictly conventional, non-

magical seekers is relatively simple compared to blocking all the possible channels of attack that a sophisticated magical curse might pursue.

A number of different sorts of attacks are guided by these mechanics — it might not look like a spell. MCM effects are assumed to encompass all conventional self-guided seeker munitions, as these are curses homing on a very narrow spectrum of emissions.

ACTIVE COUNTERMEASURES

Characters may have “dazzle” effects they can activate to enhance their MCM for short periods of time. These take the form of prayer strip chaff, incense smoke grenades, magical “pops” that don't have physical components, and other transient effects. Characters can generally elect to activate countermeasures prior to making the save.

THIS IS SCARY AND CONFUSING!

No, seriously, it's just an adjusted saving throw versus spells. It assumes the character has some kind of mod because everybody does; it's high level **Labyrinth Lord** play, so you'd better have good saving throws.

If you want to ignore active countermeasures, just ignore them. The game will run just fine without the night hag throwing arcane blocking gestures that can divert your spells. But the base MCM value is just the character's saving throw versus spells with modifiers applied, calculated ahead of time so you don't have to figure it out again and again.

Magic Points And Powers

Some characters have magic points. They have powers that use magic points, which are generally equivalent to the kinds of spell-like powers you see from the magical entities in the material, such as the inherent powers of demons and devils. Creatures with magic point use their points to trigger their powers.

If you don't have enough magic points to pay for

it, you can't initiate an effect. Typically, characters get back 1 magic point per turn. More powerful or more magically adept beings might get back more.

The mechanical purpose of this as a gameplay modification is to cut down on effect spam. Characters generally have a variety of effects, but they don't use them once per round every round.

The justification is that these reaches of the evil astral are home to omnipresent magical vampirism.

If you use conventional per-day or at-will spell-like powers instead of magic points, and someone performs an effect on you that would drain magic points from you, you lose the ability to use all spell-like powers for a number of *turns* equal to the number of magic points you would have lost. The attacker gains the magic points the roll said they did. They can't drain magic from you again until the effect expires — small comfort.

Thus development of magic points is portrayed as a semi-beneficial adaptive change. You may have an effect or two left in you even after the magic drainer gets their first attack off. Obviously, magic points are not as good as crazy numbers of spell-like effects. This was on purpose to cut down on effect spam, but quantification also enables the in-game justification to be true. The quantification of magic into magic points enables an omnipresent level of magic vampirism, and makes magical potential control an essential part of combat.

ARE THERE SOME PEOPLE WHO DON'T USE MAGIC POINTS?

Yes; it is a cosmopolitan setting. There are creatures around that use spell-like powers exactly the way the devils do in AEC. They just have a vulnerability to creatures that drain magic points that is rust monster-level scary. These creatures are presumed to be fairly common in the area described by this material.

Divine Terror

Divine Terror (or Terror) attacks are a kind of magical "scare" attack that is part mental attack, part magic attack. A Divine Terror effect will always be specified as a WIL value, and a maximum damage. For example, an effect might be "WIL 15, max damage 5."

This means that the Terror effect attacks the target on the Mental Attack table as a WIL 15 assailant, and cannot do more than 5d6 damage. To resolve the Terror attack, compare the victim's WIL with the WIL of the Terror attack on the Mental Attack Table (**Mutant Future**, p. 55).

The attacker rolls. If the attack misses, there is no effect. If the attack hits by rolling exactly the target number, the Terror attack does 1d6 damage. If the attack roll exceeds the target number, the Divine Terror attack does 1d6 damage for each point by which the attack roll exceeds the target number. The number of d6s of damage cannot exceed the maximum damage of the Divine Terror attack causing the effect, usually in the range of 2-4, but it can be higher for very scary things.

There's some real force behind Divine Terror effects: there's an actual magical attack as well as an assault on your sanity. Things that are normally immune to fear, like undead and automatons, still take half damage from these effects (use the Save Effects column of the Radiation Class table on p. 51 of **Mutant Future**).

Divine Terror effects are dependent on novelty, and you get a cumulative +2 to your figured WIL, max 21, to resist these effects each time the same one is used on you in a 13-hour period.

This generally means the same effect by the same individual but it's up to the LL to examine this. Sometimes these effects are mechanically produced, and exposure to the same effect from multiple emitters should not be considered novel.

Mostly everything in the evil astral and the planes around that area has a bonus to WIL against Divine Terror effects. Most supernatural monsters have a +2, but truly inhuman monstrosities with no discernable fear or sanity have a +4.

Given that this is portrayed as an actual magical attack form that is commonly encountered, the mad, inhuman intellects of many great evils are a defensive adaptation.

Characters not from the evil astral and its neighboring ethical planes may have great difficulty with these attacks. LLs should consider passing out bonus items, or at least understanding that these attacks can scare even high-level characters to death in short order.

Major Prayers

Major Prayers are a form of powerful clerical magic. They represent mighty divine favor, somewhere between a normal clerical spell and a direct act of divinity. These portable miracles are granted to clerics who face great challenges, or who enjoy the utmost favor of their god.

Major Prayers require 7 hours of praying to gain. Characters can have only 1 Major Prayer memorized at a time.

A character must be able to cast spells of at least 5th level to be able to accept a Major Prayer.

A Major Prayer occupies *all* spell slots of the highest spell level that the character can memorize.

A Major Prayer must be granted by the characters' deity directly. This means the deity must have access to the plane, and they must be willing to attend to a cleric there for a brief time. Gods will not generally appear in the midst of their foes or rivals. Gods may not appear when otherwise engaged.

Gods never routinely grant these. Even if a cleric is being granted them again and again on an ongoing basis, the duration of their task will be finite, and the decision to provide access to the

Major Prayer will be the god's, not the cleric's. Most gods would prefer that the cleric be the guardian and champion of the god, and not the other way around, and avidly encourage clerics to overcome obstacles with ordinary resources.

DRUIDIC MAJOR PRAYERS

A druid must be of at least 9th level to gain a Druidic Major Prayer.

There are druidic gods, and they will — and must — attend on the druid in the same fashion that a conventional cleric's deity would in order to grant them the Major Prayer.

Druidic gods avoid the outer planes, although there may be some regions where they are welcome, depending on the campaign.

The power for the prayer may be drawn from a place of nature.

The power of that holy place may be depleted, and its essence possibly destroyed or diminished, by the power of the prayer. As the trusted agents of nature and the druidic gods, druids will not lose their power or incur divine wrath for destroying the holy places of their world in pursuit of their causes — so long as those goals are druidic. If a druid has access to a holy place that supports the casting of the Major Prayer they wish to memorize, they may memorize the Major Prayer and cast it as they wish. However, such a grove typically has but a single druid, and casting prayers with the power of the glade may require ritual combat with the controlling druid.

Certain places may only support the casting of certain prayers, or may support the casting of only a certain number of Major Prayers before they can no longer provide the power. Other places may provide the power on a time-unit basis. Frequently, effects that have charges merely have recharge times in the decades or centuries.

THE MIASMA OF RUIN

The Dreams of Ruin take the form of a great dark forest, and the trees project a radiance called the **miasma of ruin**. This is a very important effect to understand because much of any game involving the dreams will take place within this radiance. The miasma of ruin is a very powerful effect. It causes spoilage of potions, imposes excessive drain on charged items and spellcasters, and acts as a *blessing* to Chaotic and evil beings. However, its most important effect is called *psychic numbness*.

Psychic Numbness

Under the effects of *psychic numbness*, even when they are directly confronted with evidence of the dreams, individuals will avoid noticing or interacting with them. The growth of the trees of woe remains visible to individuals, but very difficult to actively perceive. The presence of the dreams is also concealed from the more complex social structures of beings that inhabit the regions it has infected.

Individuals under the effects of *psychic numbness* tend not to interact with the trees, even when they have sprouted through their living room or become part of a grotesque display in the courtyard of their apartment building. Other individuals will take some notice of the trees and avoid interacting with the spaces they occupy — or take advantage of the cover of the boughs if they are of ill intent — but afterwards their memories become foggy and indistinct. This is dealt with in more detail, below.

IF PEOPLE CAN'T SEE THEM, HOW DO THEY INTERACT WITH THEM?

Entities see the forest; they just don't want to do anything about it. It's a psychic lassitude, not *invisibility* via making you see straight through something.

People don't walk around bonking into the trees all the time. In fact, people are keenly aware at

some level that there are big clumps of trees erupting out of the ground and puppets dropping down out of them like poison fruit to murder and burn. They just can't bear to do anything organized about it.

Individuals will become personally aware of the trees after a period of time set by their hit dice or level:

<u>Level / Hit Dice</u>	<u>Time to React</u>
5 th / 4 or less HD	Takes 1d4 weeks to perceive the trees.
7 th / 8 or less HD	Takes 1d4 days to perceive the trees.
9 th / 8+1 or more HD	Can see the trees in 1d4 hours.

This means direct perception of a single clump or growth for that long. An individual who is at a high enough level to notice them may still fail to see them in even a heavily infested place. This is because most people don't spend 1-4 hours in a single place paying attention to some singular object such that they keep seeing the same trees long enough to burn through the magic's influence.

Low hit-dice creatures reach the critical point of perception over several months; they do not need to stare at a single clump of body trees for weeks on end.

In both cases, it may take several multiples of the rolled time for these characters to naturally notice the dreams.

Individuals who become able to see the puppets move away quickly, under virtually any pretext. They are aware that the area is full of Chaotic brigands; there's just no possible way to express that fact because the aura's effect prevents large-scale social organizations from acting against them.

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Dealing with organizations affected by the curse brings about the overpowering feeling you're too shy or scared to talk about matters of consequence with a person in authority. You're afraid they won't believe you or you'll get in trouble. If you wrestle with yourself until you can talk about it through many WIL rolls, members of the organization will reject the information — it'll be hidden or destroyed or deliberately ignored within a link or two along the transmission chain.

CAN I MAKE A SAVING THROW?

No, there's no saving throw; you just have to endure several months to several hours of perceptual burn-in until you can successfully see the trees.

Characters who have defensive effects active that block the power of the dreams will immediately see the trees, but they will have to "burn through" the perceptual blindness normally if they lose their protection.

Even after they can see the dreams, characters still cannot make or acknowledge any formal report that the problem exists, not in writing or verbally. They can act informally but they are unable to exercise any formal authority to deal with the problem. The human social organism remains blind to the puppets even after individuals awaken.

CAN MY ORGANIZATION MAKE A SAVING THROW TO RESPOND?

This is a question the Labyrinth Lord (LL) is going to have to answer for herself in each game. Are the societies in question naive to this kind of attack?

If the society has been repeatedly attacked by *charm* and *ESP* wielding threats in the past — doppelgangers, vampires, lycanthropes or similar horror — it is likely individuals will have knowledge and training in informal means of communication that allow them to react more effectively if the mechanism of society is suddenly

subverted. It will be up to the LL to determine who is able to respond and with what degree of effectiveness.

In general, don't let it devolve into a "saving throw" for a society. When you decide to put the evil puppet-fungus into your game, you as the LL are making a lot of decisions about how it's going to interact with the world.

What's going to determine the shape of the story is when the player characters come into contact with the forest in terms of the forest's life cycle, and how powerful they are compared to the challenges it presents. Don't leave a major element like which societies manage to respond effectively up to the dice. You are going to decide what the "save bonuses" are; don't use the dice to validate your decision. Decide in advance who will be resistant to the trees' effects and plan your story with a little bit of certainty.

Societies may have advanced magic or advanced technology that allows them to stage efforts to resist the puppets. Certainly high-powered player characters operating informally will be the heart of any player response, and they will be able to begin operations the instant they perceive the dreams.

WHAT BLOCKS THE EFFECT?

Amulet against possession is the weakest magic item that will routinely protect characters. How common these are depends on how common magic items in general are in a given setting, and how many sinister mind-controllers inhabit that setting.

The spell *mind bar* blocks *psychic numbness* completely.

Amulets versus ESP and crystal balls or *amulets of proof against detection and location* do not block the effects of *psychic numbness*.

If the effect is blocked, and then the defensive effect is subsequently lost, the *psychic numbness* takes effect immediately. The character will have

to burn through the effect of the trees naturally to see through their illusion without ongoing magical protection.

HOW FAR “UP” CAN PEOPLE NOTICE?

The magic of the dreams has to do with the ability of social entities like states and religions to receive the knowledge of the threat from their constituent organisms. Individuals “see” it very well.

Groups of up to several hundred people can organize to fight the puppets, but nothing that receives external resources or has a formal organizational structure. Efforts at resistance are always self-funded volunteer militias operating outside the state’s awareness — although the state also turns a blind eye to them. Nobody ever asks too many questions when you come to work with a bullet wound. They all know.

SO PEOPLE CAN TALK ABOUT IT?

People can talk about the puppets with their close friends and acquaintances. There are problems talking about them with people you don’t know very well but victims can bypass the curse through obvious indications of intent, signaling shared context of resistance, use of kennings, and other devious means.

The less formal the resistance, the more effective. Things fall apart once organizations with formal mechanisms of knowledge collection and transmission get involved. However, this is an observable fact. Once the necessity for informal means becomes apparent, resistance on a large scale becomes possible, if challenging, as you leave supplies out for the “good elves.” Unfortunately, this resistance almost always takes the character of fighting the puppets and attacking the trees of the forest, and that is a futile strategy at best. At worst, it spreads the dreams.

WHAT ABOUT CREATURES OUTSIDE THE FOREST?

Puppets and bakegumo slain outside the forest are somewhat occluded by the forest’s effects. They may be talked about, even reported on the news,

but there will be no meaningful action on the part of organized society to address the crisis.

Other entities are not covered by the numbness, and this is often an avenue for resistance to the dreams. The social organism may not be able to come to grips with the existence of the dreams and their direct offspring. However, the evidence that night hags are hiding in Certain Places and the need to go to Particular Areas allows forces equipped to operate in Those Conditions to enter the forest with the intention of managing the problem.

Other Effects of the Miasma

The miasma of ruin doesn’t just cause *psychic numbness*. It has a number of other powerful effects.

DRAIN MAGIC

The Dreams of Ruin are a sucking mesh of magical energy absorbers. Any effects that cost magic points performed within 100’ of the trees of woe cost 1 additional magic point.

If a spell is cast, the spellcaster must sacrifice another spell of any level that is lost uncast.

If the entities use spell-like magical powers that are per-round or uses-per-day, they will lose the ability to use their spell-like abilities for 1 turn immediately after using any spell-like power.

If charged magic items are used in the area, they also lose an additional charge per use.

One-use magic items like potions, dusts, scrolls and the like are drained and ruined as soon as they enter a 100’ radius of a body tree.

The forest doesn’t drain the magic of individuals who are subject to its *blessing*. The magic-draining effect of the trees is not cumulative — no matter how many stands of these trees grow within 100’, the penalty is still 1 magic point, or its equivalent, as established above.

LUCK-INFLUENCING AURA

The Dreams of Ruin have control of probability within their extents, and they use it to manage their environment. Any random events that happen within the miasma of ruin should have an adjustment of up to 10% (2 points on a d20) applied toward the most negative outcome. If the being is a servant of ruin, instead adjust the outcome up to 10% toward the more positive outcome. Pursuing the darlings of the forest through its extents is frustrating and exhausting, and fraught with costly accidents and organizational collapses.

BLACK BLESSING

Beings that aid the trees and bring about conditions favorable to their continued development receive the *blessing* of the forest. This *blessing* is as per the spell *bless*, giving a +1 damage, to-hit and morale bonus to servants of ruin. It is of continuous effect, and is broadcast to a range of 100' from every single one of the body trees.

This applies not just to puppets and bakegumo, but to mortal brigands and many other forms of supernatural life that prosper among the boughs. Any individual who is more Chaotic and evil than Lawful and good will be subject to the *blessing* of the dreams. Thus, Chaotic evil, Neutral evil and Chaotic Neutral characters — even Neutral evil (Lawful) and Chaotic Neutral (good) characters — will receive a *blessing* when within 100' of a body tree.

PROTECTION AGAINST CRYSTAL BALLS

The miasma of ruin is difficult to penetrate with arcane sensors. “Overgrown” areas are 30% penetrable to scrying, while the entirety of the “heart of the woods” is impenetrable to scrying due to the miasma of ruin.

The effects of *luck-influencing aura* often compound themselves in relation to scrying, aiding one party and thwarting another in these occasions. Scrying is thus often only reliable when it will lead pursuers into ambushes or on wild goose chases.

However, this is not plainly apparent and scrying-dependent organizations may make considerable investments in chasing their own tails into puppet ambushes on the edges of the forest.

RULES FOR MURDERSPRITES

These rules are designed to simulate the effects of the forest's most severe threat, which is large numbers of sprites exhibiting the *crank* behavior, or engaging in the final freak-out phase of the *spooky* behavior.

Murdersprites who are not roused to *crank* are a hazard but not a serious one.

Murdersprites require a saving throw versus death. Success brings escape from their stinging for a number of rounds equal to the number of points by which the character made the save. For example, if they required an 8 and rolled a 12, they would evade the sprites for that round plus 3 more rounds.

If (when) characters fail the save, they are stung 1d100 times by the murdersprites. Assume that a number of stings equal to (20 - the character's saving throw value) are required to make the character fail a poison save. Each failed save inflicts 1d6 additional poison damage.

Murdersprites are very ingenious when homicidal. Add the damage together for the purposes of overcoming damage absorption, to reflect their gremlin-like ability to damage armored vehicles.

SPELL EFFECTS IN THE MIASMA

Magic used within areas infected by the dreams is subject to the vampiric effect of the body trees. Whenever a spell is cast within 100' of a body tree clump, another spell of equal or greater level must be expended.

If the spell is a spell-like ability powered by magic points, then the character has to spend another magic point. If it is a spell-like ability that operates on a per-round or uses-per-day basis, then the character is magically paralyzed for a full turn after the use of the power, and cannot use any spell-like abilities for that time.

Magic within the forest is otherwise less severely twisted than seasoned dimensional travelers might expect. The dreams are a powerful magical influence, but not pervasive in the fashion of the Hells, for example. They infest a dimension, they don't totally define it.

Note, however, that these effects "stack" with the effects of any location where the forest is found. Thus, if it was found growing in a magician's demiplane, the area infested by the dreams would have both the native effects of the demiplane and the aura of the dreams.

OVERALL EFFECT CODES

[Scry] The spell uses scrying. Its effectiveness is impaired when being used on something near a body tree, or in proximity to a body tree.

[Env] The forest is not a natural environment and beings from it are not natural beings. Enchanted items that affect plants and animals do not function on most forest creatures, not even if used by acculturated druids. Spells that affect the denizens of the forest are possible but they must be specially researched.

[Spoil] The spell makes something that the forest immediately spoils or ruins.

[NoEvil] You cannot detect Chaos or evil within the miasma of ruin. You can detect Lawfulness and goodness.

[Beacon] Use of this spell in the cause of good and Law marks the character as an enemy of the forest. Make an immediate random encounter roll, with the encounter beginning 2d12 rounds hence.

[Weak] The dimensional barriers are weak in areas infested by the dreams and *gate* type effects are 10% more likely to work successfully. Dimensional adjacency is improved due to easy passage to the astral.

Characters can open *gates* into adjacent planes, even if planar access is normally strictly controlled. Ability of the planar authorities to detect the opening and closing of *gates* is subject to the usual limitations on scrying, outlined above.

REGAINING CLERIC SPELLS

The way the dreams consume the dimensional fabric means that in forest hexes that have had at least a FIRST BLOSSOM event take place in them, there is improved access for deities, even in areas that are forbidden to them.

If the Forest of Woe is growing in a plane adjacent to the astral or adjacent to the plane of the character's deity, then characters can gain spells of up to 5th level in the forest, if their deity would have the *blessing* of the forest.

After the forest has died out, followers of all deities can gain spells up to 5th level, if the place is adjacent to the astral, or to the deities' plane.

Characters who are priests of pure Chaos have access to their gods in the forest after its first flowering.

CLERIC SPELLS**LEVEL 1**

Create Water [Spoil]

Detect Evil [NoEvil]

Sanctuary [Beacon]

LEVEL 2

Augury [Scry]

Bless [Beacon]

Find Traps [Scry]

Holy Chant [Beacon]

Know Alignment [NoEvil]

Reveal Charm [Scry]

Snake Charm [Env]

Speak with Animal [Env]

LEVEL 3

Animal Growth [Env]

Animate Dead Skeletons made in the forest are 2 HD, and have a dim, evil intelligence. Zombies are faster, and roll for initiative normally.

Glyph of Warding [Scry]

Locate Object [Scry]

Prayer [Beacon]

Speak with Dead [Scry]

LEVEL 4

Create Food and Water [Spoil]

Detect Lie [Scry]

Divination [Scry]

Exorcise [Beacon]

Protection from Evil 10' Radius [Beacon]

Speak with Plants [Env]

Sticks to Snakes [Env]

LEVEL 5

Atonement [Beacon]

Commune [Scry]

Dispel Evil [Beacon]

True Seeing [Scry]

LEVEL 6

Find the Path [Scry]

Speak with Creatures [Env]

Word of Recall [Weak]

LEVEL 7

Control Weather [Env] Only if many hexes in extent.

Gate [Weak]

Holy Word [Beacon]

Restoration [Beacon]

Resurrection [Beacon]

DRUID SPELLS**LEVEL 1**

Animal Companion [Env]

Detect Magic [Scry]

Detect Snares and Pits [Scry]

Divine Weather [Scry]

Invisibility, Animal [Env]

Locate Creature [Scry] [Env]

Pass without Trace [Env]

Speak with Animals [Env]

LEVEL 2

Charm Person or Mammal [Env]

Create Water [Spoil]

Find Plant [Env]

LEVEL 3

Hold Animal [Env]

Plant Growth [Env]

Tree Shape [Env]

LEVEL 4

Hold Vegetation and Fungus [Env]

Passplant [Env]

Repel Vermin [Env]

Speak with Plants [Env]

Summon Animal I [Env]

Summon Sylvan Beings [Env]

LEVEL 5

Animal Growth [Env]

Anti-Plant Shell [Env]

Commune with Nature [Env]

Summon Animal II [Env]

Tree Stride [Env]

LEVEL 6

Anti-Animal Shell [Env]

Conjure Fire Elemental [Weak]

Control Weather [Env] Only if many hexes.

Repel Wood [Env]

Summon Animal III [Env]

Transport via Plants [Env]

Wall of Thorns

LEVEL 7

Control Weather (Greater) [Env] Only if many hexes.

ILLUSIONIST SPELLS

LEVEL 1

Detect Illusion [Scry]

Detect Invisibility [Scry]

LEVEL 2

Detect Magic [Scry]

LEVEL 5

Summon Shadow [Weak]

LEVEL 6

True Seeing [Scry]

LEVEL 7

Astral Spell [Weak]

MAGIC-USER SPELLS

LEVEL 1

Detect Magic [Scry]

Identify [Scry]

Protection from Evil [Beacon]

Summon Familiar [Weak] Very likely to get an evil helper like an imp, quasit, etc.

LEVEL 2

Detect Evil [Scry]

Detect Invisible [Scry]

ESP [Scry]

Locate Object [Scry]

LEVEL 3

Clairaudience [Scry]

Clairvoyance [Scry]

Protection from Evil 10' radius [Beacon]

LEVEL 4

Arcane Eye [Scry]

Plant Growth [Env]

LEVEL 5

Animate Dead See the cleric spell of the same name.

Contact Other Plane [Weak]

LEVEL 6

Arcane Window [Scry]

Legend Lore [Scry]

LEVEL 7

Charm Plants [Env]

LEVEL 9

Astral Projection [Weak]

Gate [Weak]

Time Stop [Beacon]

MAGIC ITEMS IN THE MIASMA

OVERALL EFFECT CODES

[Drained] Item is drained and ruined when it comes within the miasma of ruin.

[+Charge] The item uses an extra charge to activate in the miasma of ruin.

[Scry] The item uses scrying. Its effectiveness is impaired when used on something near a body tree or when in proximity to a body tree.

[Env] The forest is not a natural environment and beings from it are not natural beings. Enchanted items that affect plants and animals do not function on most forest creatures, not even if used by acculturated druids. Items that affect the denizens of the forest are possible, but they must be specially made.

[Gate] Characters can open *gates* into adjacent planes, even if planar access is normally strictly controlled. Ability of the planar authorities to detect the opening and closing of *gates* is subject to the usual limitations on scrying, outlined above.

Labyrinth Lord & AEC Items

POTIONS

All: **[Drained]** All potions not specially protected or specifically exempt are drained and ruined in the miasma of ruin; that is, when they come within 100' of a body tree.

RINGS

Animal Command **[Env]**

Command Plant **[Env]**

Invisibility Most denizens of the forest are not fooled by *invisibility*, as they see via a combination of *detect magic* and *infravision*.

SCROLLS

All: **[Drained]** All scrolls not specially protected or specifically exempt are rendered permanently useless and unreadable if they enter the miasma of ruin; that is, if they come within 100' of a body tree.

RODS, STAVES AND WANDS

All: **[+Charge]** All rods, staves and wand effects that use charges cost an extra charge in the miasma of ruin.

Wand of Detecting Enemies **[Scry]**

Wand of Detecting Metals **[Scry]**

Wands of Detecting Secret Doors **[Scry]**

Wand of Detecting Traps **[Scry]**

Wand of Light The ray of sunlight causes 6d6 damage (no save) to puppets, bakegumo, murdersprites and body trees — just as if they were truly undead.

Wand of Negation Necessary for arcane research into the dreams.

MISC. MAGIC

Amulet Against Possession Makes the wearer immune to the forest's *psychic numbness*.

Amulet Versus Crystal Balls and ESP Prevents the forest from marking you as an enemy and broadcasting your location to everyone who receives the *blessing* of the forest, but the forest's inhabitants can still spot you and track you and communicate with one another normally. You still won't see the forest without additional protection or perceptual burn-in.

Amulet of Inescapable Location **[Scry]** The forest interferes with location in the normal fashion, so it would be a good place for someone consigned to wear one to hide.

Amulet of Proof Against Detection and Location See *Amulet versus crystal balls and ESP*, above.

Arrow of Location **[Scry]**

Bag of Tricks Bags that are taken into a forest hex that is at FIRST BLOSSOM or later will be forever infected, and any trick animals pulled out will spread the spores of ruin.

Book of Chaotic Wisdom Books of Chaotic Wisdom are explicitly not drained by the miasma of ruin.

Book of Lawful Wisdom **[Drained]**

Chime of Opening **[+Charge]**

Crystal Ball [Scry]

Crystal Ball with Clairaudience [Scry]

Crystal Ball with ESP [Scry]

Dust of Appearance [Drained]

Dust of Disappearance [Drained]

Dust of Sneezing and Choking [Drained] This substance occurs naturally within the forest as a hazard. The sort that is found naturally in the forest is not drained by the miasma.

Feather Token [Drained]

Figures of Wondrous Power These items are not ruined by the miasma of ruin. They can be used normally, but no amount of time spent in the miasma of ruin after their use counts for the purposes of recharge.

Flask of Curses Can be recharged by opening it within a forest hex that is in BLOSSOM. The bottle will of course infect the hex where it is opened with the dreams, in addition to whatever other curse it emits.

Gem of Brightness [+Charge]

Gem of Seeing [+Charge]

Golem Manual [Drained]

Javelin of Lightning [Drained]

Helm of Brilliance [+Charge] The burning blue light damages creatures of the forest as if they were undead.

Manual of Bodily Health [Drained]

Manual of Quickness of Action [Drained]

Medallion of Thoughts [Scry]

Medallion of Thoughts (90') [Scry]

Mirror of Opposition [Scry] Reflections spawned within the forest will always be servants of ruin and receive the *blessing* of the forest, even if the creature reflected is already a servant of ruin.

Necklace of Adaptation Allows up to 7 days of safe survival, immunizing characters to most hazards of the forest. Recovers 1 day of capacity for every day outside the forest.

Ointment of Healing [Drained]

Pearl of Power [Drained]

Pearl of Wisdom [Drained]

Potion Jug Potions from the potion jug remain fresh and unspoiled in the forest.

Talisman of Pure Good Creatures that are servants of ruin always receive a saving throw in the miasma of ruin, and receive the +1 bonus from the *blessing* of the forest.

Tome of Clear Thought [Drained]

Tome of Knowledge [Drained] *Tomes of Chaotic knowledge* are not drained.

Tome of Leadership and Influence [Drained]

Tome of Martial Knowledge [Drained]

Tome of Stealth [Drained]

Tome of Understanding [Drained]

Well of Many Worlds [Gate]

SWORDS

Sword +1, +3 Versus Magical Monsters The creatures of the forest (puppets, bakegumo, murdersprites) are magical monsters.

Sword +1 Locate Objects [Scry]

Sword +2 Holy Avenger [Beacon] Drawing the sword automatically marks the character as an enemy of the forest.

Sword +1 Wounding The sword's special effect does not work against bakegumo or body trees.

MISC. WEAPON

Trident +2, Warning [Scry]

ARMOR

None

Mutant Future Items

Not very many items from the **Mutant Future** settings are affected by the miasma of ruin, but advanced drugs are spoiled. Many advanced sensors are baffled by the dreams, just as arcane sensors are. Military vehicles and EMAs will have no better luck imaging the area under the forest canopy.

GIZMOS

Motion Detector [Scry]

Portable Detection Radar [Scry]

ADVANCED DRUGS AND CHEMICALS

All: [Drained]

MEDICAL DEVICES

Diagnostic Scanner [Scry]

Healing Pack [Drained]

RUNNING THE DREAMS

The Dreams of Ruin is a complex project designed to challenge upper-level characters. In this chapter we help orient you, the Labyrinth Lord (LL), to the challenges and opportunities that present themselves when you incorporate the dreams into your game.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DREAMS

How you have characters interact with the Dreams of Ruin is a critical matter for your campaign. What you're getting with this book is a scary set of encounter tables for a "bad" enchanted forest, and a story about how that enchanted forest works. What you make of that story and those encounter tables can vary pretty widely.

As a general rule, characters will have one of two kinds of relationships with the dreams:

1. The dreams may be a large and interesting complication to adventures in a given area. In this case, the dreams are likely to remain mostly a mysterious hazard-region with a dangerous encounter table.
2. Alternately, the characters will be forced to oppose the dreams' spread as all or much of the challenge of a high-level adventure. In this case, much of the game will involve discovering the life cycle and behavior of the forest.

Characters don't need to have the same relationship with the dreams throughout the whole

game. If you have the player characters encounter them as a very difficult setting for a quest at 7th to 9th level, their discovery that they have introduced the occult spores of the dreams into their world is a good way to generate content for the later game. They now have to do battle with an infestation they created, which is a great horror-overtone campaign challenge for characters with levels in the mid-teens.

PASSING CHALLENGE

The forest is something the characters have to go into or through. It's mostly an encounter table and some interesting base monsters with a novel description.

Don't sell this use of the material short; you're basically reading a short adventure/setting book just to run some adventure location's front yard. It's a pretty good front yard, and the material guarantees the players are going to think whatever lives at the center is a real chore to reach. The forest's nature is entangling, and characters are certain to encounter adventure passing through its extent.

In this, it is like the primeval forest of the Arthurian knights, offering a certainty of heroic deeds in its extents. Particularly if the characters have to return to the location frequently, you may wish to let it develop as a location for side adventures, or otherwise allow it to become the focus of some adventures, so the game doesn't hone in maniacally on a single goal or challenge.



CAMPAIGN FOCUS

As a villain, the dreams are something you can't defeat in a sword battle. The setting can challenge powerful player characters, because it strains their resources and their ability to perform the important quests and wield the powerful magics required to defeat the dreams. Pay a lot of attention to the life cycle of the dreams, because you're going to have players trying to interrupt it.

As the LL, you are the one who chooses how much of what sort of information the characters receive, and this will control the pacing of the game. This can be a very cut-and-dried campaign over in a few quests if you just feed the players the steps they have to take through the mechanism of a friendly god or prophecy. It can be a terrible and deadly nightmare if the players have to figure out they even have a problem and do all the magical research in conjunction with a handful of NPC peers. Depending on how sadistic you are, you may not stop them from destroying many hexes through fire or industrial-scale cutting, only to increase their problem dramatically in scale from spore transmission.

As a general rule, players are likely to do crazy, extreme things. If you hold out the prospect of chopping down multiple hexes of dreams, that is like telling them to do it. It's probably okay to do this in a game when everyone knows they are into a horror game, but that's a pretty evil turn to deal to players in a stereotypical heroic fantasy game about hacking manticores to death with broadswords and *lightning bolts*.

BACKGROUND ELEMENT

You don't add it to the game partway through; you've always intended for it to be part of the game, and it's worked into the setting. The Dreams of Ruin are a stereotypical "blighted zone" form of what might be termed "advanced terrain" — dangerous locations where hard encounters are the norm and even the weak monsters have many hit dice.

It might be the primeval Russian forest that the Chaotic witches and lycanthropes take shelter in, or it could be an aggressive black tide sweeping across another province every year. It could be something that emerged from a laboratory in the **Mutant Future**, was spread by a crashed alien spaceship, or was conjured up by a dark god in order to provide them with a secure stronghold.

Whatever the case, aggressive or quiescent, recent or ancient, the dreams are established as part of the setting when play begins.

The campaign may or may not concern itself with the larger challenges of a world that has an infestation of the Dreams of Ruin. As the LL, you might not want to tell that story, so it's just a weird dark forest that will one day get wiped out. Or, you just might not care at all if the events of the story touch on the area affected by the Dreams of Ruin in passing.

Keep in mind this may be a source of horror for the players, even if the characters are ignorant. Characters who are doing battle against a dark lord ensconced in a black forest of horrors may not understand why a magical firestorm consuming all the trees is a bad idea. In terms of burning the dark lord out of his stronghold, it might even make a great deal of sense. Yet the players know very well they have spread the dreams all over the region. Players will often cooperate readily in ghastly endings like this if you make it clear they won't participate in the consequences.

WHAT IT OFFERS

DIFFICULTY

The area offers a bunch of high hit-dice monsters as random encounters. The average schlub puppet is 3 HD but elite forces can get up to 7+ HD. Bakegumo are AC 4 and 5 HD, with an immobilizing 2d8 constriction. That's no joke. Many of the other beasts that can be encountered in the forest's extents are equally terrible.

The forest thus takes the role of the “land that time forgot” or the “other side of the mirror” or some other non-natural environment where the average encounter difficulty is challenging to mid- or high-level characters. In this case, rather than fighting dinosaurs, you fight a cavalcade of the game’s weird evil monsters, man-eating plants, and the dark versions of some sylvan monsters you’d otherwise never tangle with.

Also, you can have the bad guy’s fortress hidden deep within. It’s not necessary that the forest itself be the primary challenge. Once the characters penetrate the deadly jungle of evil surrounding their objective, they have to tackle the target. A hostile environment like the dreams explains why there’s not a town on top of the “dungeon,” and why nobody has ever come out with an army of laborers or soldiers to simply put a stop to things.

A Baba Yaga-type evil sylvan magic-user, or a powerful lich lord might spread the spores deliberately, and use the resulting dark forest as a moat or hedge around their stronghold, as a “poor man’s demiplane.” If the dreams will eventually consume the host world, so much the better for Chaotic worthies like night hags. If the forest becomes too dark for even a powerful lich or evil magic-user, they can always journey to a different plane.

NOVELTY

You don’t see things like this all the time.

As a location overlay, it’s like chocolate sauce or fire: a way to take something good and make it better. If the haunted corridors of an extradimensional fortress are hum-drum to players who have fought their way through a couple of isometric-viewpoint fantasy slashers, add some puppets, bakegumo, and body trees for weird atmosphere. “Whoa, it’s overgrown with extradimensional coral!” You don’t have to make dealing with it central to your game. You don’t even have to explain it; it’s not contagious if you don’t say it is. It’s just a new kind of lava field:

something the characters encounter that makes an adventuring locale exotic or interesting.

In particular, the dreams offer a high degree of engagement for the thief and fighter characters who are normally left behind in the narrative when the power and versatility of the magic-using classes asserts itself.

Spellcasters tend to look more and more like superheroes, not ruling elites, as they increase in level. They mostly live in custom pocket worlds or tony neighborhoods in planar destinations. No matter how far above their weight class a spellcaster punches, they need the economic and military might of nations to stand against the dreams. Nations are where fighters and thieves will be taking important roles in rulership and commerce.

Additionally, magical characters will be paralyzed by study and research demands, leaving other heroes with the critical responsibilities of diplomacy, security, and procuring critical items.

STEREOTYPICAL ELEMENTS OF THE RESPONSE

This section details the rough sequence of events that can be expected to take place as players become aware of the Dreams of Ruin and begin to structure a response. This isn’t a firm timeline, just a portrayal of the likely order of events as the players’ relationship with the dreams develops.

DISCOVERY

The players will discover the dreams. Given that you are the only source of new information in their world, and every hint is thus incredibly important, they will probably follow up on every hint you drop above and beyond any merit it possesses, because God told it to them.

Fundamentally, the confrontation with the dreams will begin when you introduce them to it.

Everything thereafter will happen in accelerated time as players attempt to demonstrate how they *already* rushed out a solution. Don't expect to show them the disease as a small thing and then have them come back later and see it's a bigger if you give them any indication at all it's some kind of future plot. Obviously if you have an especially dramaturgical game the players may willingly cooperate. In general, you will need to get player buy-in ahead of time if you expect them to encounter the dreams and shrug it off.

If you want them to struggle to keep the infection contained to 1 or a few hexes, then let them encounter the dreams at the beginning of the infection. If you want them to go adventuring in gigantic magic forests full of demons, don't count on them to fail long enough for a little infection to turn into a great big magical forest. Just put them down in a mature forest. The dreams are challenging but not impossible to treat when they are in 1 to 7 or so hexes.

FREAK OUT

They'll then stage an epic player character freak-out. Every power they have ever encountered will be invoked in an attempt to smother the problem.

If the colony of the dreams is small (1 hex, or possibly 7 hexes) and the player characters of more than moderate experience, they will almost certainly succeed in taking it "at a rush" although this may involve a trip to beg at the feet of their favorite divine and supernatural patrons.

If they are weak, or if they are careless and spread the ailment, or if they do not have extensive magical resources, then they may lose control of the situation. However, in general, characters will only fail to overcome the dreams if they are very weak (such that they never have a chance to overwhelm the problem) or if you set yourself to thwarting them.

If the initial colony is large (bigger than 7 hexes) and/or well-advanced toward FIRST BLOSSOM (they go hand-in-hand), the player characters will probably fail.

They will also probably pitch some sort of fit when they can't stomp it flat in one go. Be prepared for the potential of quite a tantrum. It is probably best to make large extents very large, and not just marginally too large to control, so that the players don't feel like they were misled into a battle with a foe they can't defeat.

MANHATTAN PROJECT

Once the players realize they cannot just overwhelm the problem, and assuming they have enough time to hope to meet the challenge of the dreams, then the next thing that the characters will have to do is mobilize the resources to attack the problem.

This is discussed extensively later in the book, and there are spreadsheets and Gantt charts attached to this document that illustrate the process from both the player and LL perspective. This will require a minimum of tens of millions of gp in investments.

Although it's said elsewhere, it's worth repeating here — don't make the game about the very non-adventurous process of managing the research project to untangle the dreams. That's something that players and the LL should handle in some other venue — email or shared documents or some similar flexible collaboration system that's designed to support distributed "Papers and Paychecks" type gameplay.

Instead, focus play on the important, dramatic parts where personalities are at play or exciting adventures are taking place. One way that classic fantasy gaming has traditionally dealt with increasing player level was with henchmen and hirelings. These alternative characters for players allow the attention of the people who "make up" the game to always be centered on the interesting things taking place, even if their higher-level or "regular" characters are hard at work doing research. If the players' high-level characters are busy, what are their servants up to?

VICTORY / DEFEAT

At some point, the characters will either defeat the dreams or be forced to admit — usually amidst the blowing pollen clouds of a massive BLOSSOM event — that they cannot hope to contain the dreams.

If the dreams are vanquished, then what will remain to be dealt with are the spoils of a no-doubt costly victory. Characters or their nations may be deeply in debt, in favors or mere financial obligations, to various sponsors and supporters. Many of the secrets of the dreams lead to deeper understanding of the arcane world and the processes that make it up. There is certainly the issue of how characters manage their own burgeoning stores of knowledge; however, the cat is unlikely to stay in the bag for long. Even the mere items the characters buy on the open market during their quest for lore will inform those rivals who envy them and seek to copy them, or seek to harness the dreams as a weapon.

If the dreams are not vanquished, then the characters are going to have a hell of a migration story to tell. The life cycle of the dreams is such that populations will probably not be able to wait them out in shielded bunkers, but short enough that populations driven ahead of the oncoming wave of terror can be moved around to the recently-vacated desolation at the “back” of the dreams. This will require massive logistical efforts. Obviously very few structures survive decades under the assault of the dreams, and the local ecology has a half-century to go wild. The matter will be one of fresh settlement and pioneer homesteading.

Not only are puppet elites and bakegumo a menace, so are other rivals seeking to claim the opportunity represented by vacant land. Characters may find that they have to contend with humanoids or competing civilizations for the territory once beneath the boughs. In addition, all will be complicated by the addition of numerous

Neutral (evil) and Chaotic (evil) planar entities, drawn by the body trees’ miasma.

Who Can Stage the Response?

If you want to stage a prompt and effective response to the dreams to an establish colony of the dreams, you’d better control multiple worlds, and they can’t be poor ones. When you have the resources of a number of worlds at your disposal, you can really change your response. Your average fantasy kingdom or party of upper-level adventurers will founder in vain on the dreams. This is a challenge for characters who are at some level of the power growth curve that will lead to divinity or ageless existence as a hero.

If the players don’t have that initially, then you — and they — need to figure out how they are going to get it. Don’t see it as an insurmountable challenge, see it as an upward glide-slope to show what genuine power looks like in the **Labyrinth Lord** world.

LOGISTICAL CONCERNS

This section deals with material the book covers that is a product of the very specific nature of the content.

BUILDING A RESEARCH FACILITY

LOGISTICAL BASE

In general, the players will probably develop the logistical center of their efforts against the dreams around the major magical metropolis in their game world. Normally you will have established this locale prior to contact with the Dreams of Ruin, as a matter of course.

Characters powerful enough to make a serious effort against the dreams will be well known in such a locale.

It could be that you choose to relocate the game, and say that a different city is sufficiently advanced. Declaring what city is advanced enough is a major decision in your game; this is

going to be where the player characters and their cronies go to and from when trading. If you move it to Fantasy China, it's a great way to transition the game into a new phase. On the other hand, make sure you prepare enough material to support the transition, or it will seem like they move into a blank space. Why are you leaving behind all the established elements? Maybe there is a good reason — you need to add more material and supporting characters, for example. But keep in mind that you saying the game goes somewhere is writing a check that your administrative resources of time and acumen may not be able to cash.

If you decide that the characters have to develop a new base, try to make it creative. If it could be the forges of evil elf clans as easily as a generic medieval kingdom, why not make it the elf clans? Make it somewhere engaging, with lots of high-level characters to give the player characters people to interact with who they don't just automatically dominate. The dreams are a challenge; the politics behind the quest to stop them are a story.

MULTIPLANAR MARKETPLACES AND ESTABLISHED SOLUTIONS

If the characters don't have a "run of the mill" magical metropolis nearby, they may be forced to do business with some renowned source of magical wonders. They might also go to one by default if the game is a world-trotting extravaganza and they've already visited the hub of all local realities or have the capacity to easily do so.

This might be the City of Brass, the fortress-prison of a god trapped on a Neutral plane, the magical item markets of the Hells, or some other location. Use of these remote sources entails a potential delay, and a mark-up. Multiplanar nexuses are expensive places to live and merchants who locate there expect to earn a premium.

In general, the Dreams of Ruin campaign is about problems obstructing the characters as they move

along the path of understanding and gathering answers, then attacking and reducing the dreams' foothold on their world.

There has to be some sort of challenge; that's what gives the game substance. Using a remote but famous magical market should therefore prove problematic. If the characters go to the City of Brass, perhaps rumors of their riches attract an army of efreet brigands. If they trade in the markets of the Hells, then they have the intrigues of the arch-devils to contend with.

It's also natural that if the characters go to a multiplanar nexus, they might inquire if there is a service already in existence to eradicate the Dreams of Ruin — or perhaps multiplanar threats in general — that will help them. How you answer them is something you should determine ahead of time; you are absolutely going to know the answer, so consider it going in.

Here are some things that are going to be true in almost every case:

- * Anybody who could save the character's world without sacrificing their own people would have the capacity to take control of it with equal ease. If you can wage a battle against an established colony of dreams, you can wage a war against the population the dreams are menacing, and are in a position to do so.

- * It's going to be very expensive to structure the response to the dreams, and so selling control of their world might be something the characters must do in order to save it. Who might be the new landlord, and whether the players can actually defeat the dreams without their would-be institutional captors, is left up to individual LLs.

- * It's almost certain that the solution won't be imported wholesale into the players' world. Some magical materials, rare items and expertise will come, but it's unlikely any contract service

or similar cash-for-goods arrangement is going to bring armies of workers with high-magic or high-tech tools to fight the dreams. The costs of keeping that kind of outfit together between jobs are just too high, as are job costs. How much gear do you want to carry away from a campaign against the dreams? Thus, all the investment is going to be worn down during or abandoned after the campaign. You're just not going to see sophisticated organizations bringing vast quantities of goods to the fight.

Characters are instead likely to have access to portable power. Logistics point to this power taking the form of imported technical experts, knowledge and high-value gear that travel easily between worlds. Thus, contract magicians, powerful or specialized magic items or automata, sages and groups of high-HD monsters are likely to travel between worlds.

* What sort of knowledge is available? This is a critical question because your provision of knowledge and tools to fight the dreams is you advancing the players further down the road to a solution.

If some knowledge is commonly available, then you should decide what it is, in terms of what results the players can get, and have those ideas integrated into your game. Don't get caught flat-footed having to make up what secrets or gear are available on the fly.

One thing that might be available is the general operating framework for investigating the dreams. This is the kind of lore that a powerful extra-dimensional project management consultant sage could provide, especially to characters from worlds that have not developed sophisticated administrative structures.

The characters going to the City of Brass to meet with a high-powered group of management accountants is a good way to introduce the framework of the book's approach to fighting the

dreams, without making them obligated to any gods (beyond the eye-popping fee schedule of McKraken, Boyle, Tanner and Hyde).

Another array of powers that might be available involves preservation for single-use items. Preservative potion flasks and personal protection against the dreams all go a long way to mitigating the player whine factor while still making a large-scale response difficult.

In general, you'll want to come up with a narrative for the interdimensional community's response to the dreams. Are the dreams just one of those things, an established evil nobody can do anything about? If they are new, why aren't notables in the trans-dimensional community rushing to study it or intervene? Are they? If they are rushing to intervene, this is itself a major component of the plot, as interested parties may have the ability to easily make offers that cannot be refused.

If you're going to involve a trans-dimensional community, you should make it strange and engaging and part of the game's charm. If you're gonna just bolt it on, don't bother adding it — just make the needed resources something the characters can secure domestically. It's a lot of work putting in an interesting and enjoyable dimensional nexus type environment. If you're going through all that trouble, make sure it ties deeply into the game. If it's just a vending machine, use a vending machine with fewer complicated moving parts.

CONTAMINATION AND MARKET ACCESS

Ask yourself, when the characters go somewhere: "Are the characters covered in the spores of the dreams, and does anybody around them know or care?"

If contaminated characters are detected, they may be quarantined and forced out of ready access to the market if they can't find an acceptable intermediary. On the other hand, this

may allow them to get access to the local supply of lore on the dreams.

If they infect a place, remember that the dreams grow quickly. They may destroy the market in only 4 or 5 years. There will certainly be political consequences.

INTERESTING POSSIBILITIES

It's possible, with a large number of races and a very long implied history, that various races have contacted the dreams before and evolved or developed responses to their influence. Simple approaches to a number of basic possibilities are outlines below. Obviously the individual LL will have good ideas that are better than anything this book could hope to encompass because they are well-adapted to the LL's own game.

Do You Want to...

Have the halflings see right through the illusion? Some races may be completely immune to *psychic numbness*. Halflings, dwarves or gnomes are good choices because of their excellent saves and resistance to illusions.

Make dwarves mind-controlled to make swords for the puppets and then forget they've done it? Some races may be subverted by the dreams according to ancient and long-forgotten designs. The best way to do this is probably to allow PCs a saving throw versus spells at a certain level, for example, above 4 or 8 HD (common cut-offs for deathspells). If you want to subvert actual played characters, always make sure to ask the player what they want to do before describing the totally not-that-thing that the character does. At least then the player, and character, get control over their own desires.

Lower-level members of the race are automatically subverted by whatever magical programming the dreams provoke in them. Typically, this will be some sort of arranged symbiosis. The race serves

the dreams, and they in turn protect them.

Keep in mind this effect may not be immediately apparent. It may only become active at the point of FIRST or SECOND BLOSSOM.

Say the ancient elves have seen this before and possess lore about the manner in which things will progress? Some races are going to know this matter in advance. Don't just give out the information you determine the races have "for free." The race will have libraries, lorekeepers, archives or other repositories of knowledge. This doesn't mean that you should charge the players gp or tokens of success or send them on quests, necessarily. Obviously, you can do so. However, you can also "charge" them engagement with your awesome setting and roleplaying with the NPCs, as they seek to cajole reluctant masters of mysteries to divulge their secret lore.

THE FOREST AS A NATURAL PHENOMENON

As a game or story element, adding the Dreams of Ruin as a natural phenomenon is not conventionally a good idea. It's a determination without a plot payoff. On the other hand, as a natural explanation for the cosmic realities created by old-school gaming, it makes a lot of sense.

Part of the aesthetics of old-school gaming is that, to some extent or another, the game "reality" is emergent from the mechanics of the rules. By the realities of the world portrayed in old-school gaming — yawning gulfs of infinite dimensions unreeling like a Zelazny drug trip — something like the Dreams of Ruin could easily arise as a natural form of life.

If you consult the classic books of planar lore, they indicate that some material planes can have *extremely* high levels of ambient magic. Grubb's cosmogony has prime material planes that can support magic of up to 11th level or higher.

Imagine the levels of magical energy that would be released in a reality like that during an event equivalent in scope to galaxies in collision, but of arcane character.

In this kind of environment, the gods are essentially just “magic spacemen.” They may have staked their various and respective claims out on the ethical astral, but they are just the largest fish in a pond not under their control. In this context, it’s natural that they might not have an answer for the dreams, other than paranoid decontamination of the place where you were standing when you appeared to beseech them for aid.

If your gods have more control over the nature and substance of the world than classic fantasy gaming pantheons, then the LL will have to decide more specific terms of the relationship between the gods and the dreams. Are they some unknown cancer of the world, or some god’s revenge? Once you have the whole world held in the gods’ hands, all great things become their design.

In terms of “if you are describing all these powerful enchantments that were used, how can there be any question that the dreams arose in the wild?” It was always my intention that the dreams could be entirely natural in origin. The deliberate curse narrative was included so that the dreams could be more easily integrated as a plot-related element in games.

Likewise, the malleable magical fabric generally ascribed to the planes associated with Chaotic Neutrality are suggestive of the kind of wild magical chaos that could give rise to these sorts of self-perpetuating patterns. Even if the dreams are of wild origin, magic-users will see familiar arcane principles embodied in the dreams, and may find them useful both to unravel the mystery of the dreams and to extend their own studies.

OMITTING PARTS OF THE FOREST

It’s possible that you will want to omit certain elements of the dreams.

The two things that are most likely to be omitted or reduced are the infectious nature of the dreams, and the powerful destructive effect the miasma of ruin has on most spellcasting and limited-use magic items.

Obviously the spellcasting and magic item limitations serve to slow the game down considerably. The destructive effect on single-use magical items is the thing that players will say makes the setting unplayable. You’ll need to determine whether this is really the case, ideally before the players revolt. Just keep in mind the miasma of ruin colors everything about the forest. Without special gear, the characters will have no potions, half as many spells, and will be very reluctant to use charged items due to the drain. They will hate this, and you may not realize just how serious a penalty this is until you inflict it.

Consider just giving the servants of ruin the regular *blessing*, and possibly only inflicting the more serious penalties in “heart of the woods” areas, or during BLOSSOM events, if at all. You don’t need to let the miasma of ruin drain all the fun out of your game if your player group won’t appreciate the keen dangers the environment offers. It doesn’t need to make its roll to destroy civilization; you’re in charge of saying it does that. It can do it with just *blessing* if you say it can.

The other thing that may be changed is the pathogenic effects of exposure to the dreams and the way they spread contagion in the characters’ wake. As written, it’s entirely possible that the characters will infect multiple worlds and their planet’s largest magical metropolis before they have the slightest idea what they are doing. That might make a great story, but the perils of infection and contamination may dominate the narrative in ways that the LL doesn’t want to deal with.

The dreams don't have to spread and age the way it says in this book. They can spread much more slowly, or not at all. If you just want the dark forest, it can have been there since the time before time. Or it can be spreading, but not exuding millions of magical particles each of which can start an infection by the dreams. Don't feel you can't use the material because you don't want to deal with the epidemic/radiation hazard feel of the material.

What you should keep in mind is that, as you strip the challenge out of the dreams and make them increasingly atmospheric, that is exactly what you are doing — stripping out the challenge and making them more atmospheric. If you are expecting them to challenge or delay 16th-level characters when they are neither contagious nor possessed of their magic-draining aura, you will probably be disappointed. If it just provides *blessing* and isn't contagious, the dreams is a challenge for characters of about 12th level.

USING THE MATERIAL WITH HIGHER-LEVEL CHARACTERS

The dreams aren't just a challenge to overcome. They are a tool or instrument, a functional block of reality that forms the terrain around which budding masters of the universe must contend. Young characters will be attempting primarily to defeat them, but more experienced heroes will see the dreams as more than a menace or a roadblock.

The following are a number of options that characters might pursue when they are interacting with the dreams at high level. Characters will probably start relating to the world in the ways indicated by these potentials at about the 15th level, but no particular level is assigned.

Dream Exterminators Characters may seek to vend their expertise attacking and controlling the dreams to other individuals and entities who are victimized by them.

Use of the Dreams as a Weapon Characters, or their rivals, may seek to utilize the dreams as a weapon.

The dreams can be used in a number of ways — they can seriously inconvenience powerful foes, or they can wipe all life off a recalcitrant planet.

Use as a Political Tool The need to treat the dreams can force nations and individuals to become the client of someone with the cure already in hand. Characters may make the classic “offer you can't refuse” or they may extend their political power as they relieve an incidental infection.

Use in Divine Politics Obviously the creation of the dreams is very likely to have involved one or more deities. However, even leaving out whatever story of its creation the LL settles on, the dreams are a fantastic tool in divine politics. What more effective tool than widespread sporing to drag an enemy's plans off-course or ruin some beloved paradise or utopian project? Characters may be destroying, preserving, documenting or sampling material at their deity's request. Obviously, any character with pretenses toward divine politics should be asking themselves many questions if the dreams are discovered near them.

MORTAL SPONSORS

If whoever did this was “mortal,” it was because they didn't want to ascend to true immortality for some technical reason. A mortal perpetrator would likely be classed as a quasi-deity, and would probably have no fear of aging and little fear of death.

If there were mortal sponsors, even if they were quasi-deities, it's likely there were 3 or 4 or more of them. They probably also had helpers, either their underlings, summoned supernatural servants, or magical creature allies. Just because the ritual was an intimate event doesn't mean that the magical workings surrounding it hadn't involved hundreds or thousands of helpers.

The people most likely to be able to indicate the creators of the item are supernatural slaves. What precautions have been taken to remove their memories is something that is up to the LL.

At an *absolute minimum*, it would require a *wish* to find them, and another *wish* to restore their memories.

The authors of the enchantment wore special masks as magical practitioners during the ceremony. Their identity cannot be discerned inside the masks, even by greater gods or artifact level effects. For the purposes of the ritual, their identity was their ritual office.

POSSIBLE DIVINE SPONSORS

I have declined to name possible sponsors for this project among the various deities. This is something appropriate for LLs. If you are using Ward's classic cosmogony, there are a fair number of deities who could probably do all the magical work solo. After Ward, the Powers grow more and more powerful in the hands of successive designers, until virtually any Power could be responsible.

Are you using later material involving planar travel and Concordant Opposition? It is certainly strongly congruent with the ethical faction of Chaotic neutrality's goals to design and spread the Dreams of Ruin, so any faction zealot of sufficient power could be guilty.

This says nothing of the chaos-toads of Chaotic neutrality, or momentary consciousnesses that might arise within the fabric of the neutral Chaotic expanse in the ethical astral.

As the selection of deities and cosmological assumptions for classic fantasy gaming is a fraught topic, I will let you go through the books and determine which of the possible parties sponsored the project. Some of the individuals in the Ward cosmogony most able to do the deed are ones you would not expect to be responsible, so this might be interesting in terms of deconstructing the role of certain major deities. However, it's perfectly valid to say it sprang forth from the nightmares of a chaos-toad overfiend, or a material-plane magic-user's experimental masterpiece.

WHICH INSPIRED WHICH?

Which powerful magic came first — that of items like the *Deck of Many Things*, or that of the Dreams of Ruin? When constructing the lore of your game, keep in mind that it could go either way.

For some of these powerful magical items or effects, aspects may have been copied *from* the effects of the Dreams of Ruin. Another possibility is that certain artifacts, relics, miracles and the like were undertaken as a by-blow of the miraculous tooling required to cause the Dreams of Ruin to begin their existence. In other words, a god could have got hold of a *Deck of Many Things* and used it to power the curse. Or the god may have instead invented/created the *Deck of Many Things* specifically for that purpose. It is also possible that the Dreams of Ruin are themselves a side effect of powerful magics used to create an artifact.

LABYRINTH LORD STRATEGIES

The material that follows suggests specific approaches to the LL. You are of course free to ignore these suggestions, but they are given in light of playtesting and reader response.

YOU ARE THEIR FACTS: DON'T LET THEM TRY TO ARM-WRESTLE CTHULHU

Unless it's in the initial hex, or has just spread beyond it, they're not going to overcome the disease. Don't railroad them, but let them see early the size of the research challenge before them and the powerful magical components they'll need to secure. There's nothing wrong with letting players make plans that are too ambitious or based on risky propositions that might not mature as planned.

Still, you are the players' sole conduit of contact with the second-order reality of the game. If you think the players have no idea what they're doing — rather than providing authentic portrayals of characters who have no idea of their own limits

— then you need to adjust their perceptions. You are their only sense of scope and scale apart from their own intuition.

Without running their efforts for them, you need to point out, to the limits of their INT, WIL and training, when their scope of ambition exceeds their realistic ability to mobilize resources. This is very much a challenge for older, politically-colored games that probably have strong secondary casts of henchmen and other characters.

CONCEALING THE PRODROME

Ask yourself if the players need to know about the prodromal phase (described on p. 79 of this book) at all. Maybe you adjust the periodic events without telling them. Maybe you put a negative spin on the events that do occur. Maybe they are all player characters, who the players assure you are working 18-hour days on 3 different projects, and nobody notices the ever-so-subtle slant of events toward a negative outcome.

If you tell players about the prodrome, you are asking for a story that is about the struggle to prevent the emergence of the forest. That happening will be seen as player character failure.

WHY ARE YOU DOING EACH THING?

Ask yourself why you're taking your game in the particular direction it's going. Keep asking yourself questions from the perspective of a reader actually telling the story to other human beings.

When you look at this material, your first impulse is going to be to take the framework of the effort against the dreams and make that your narrative framework. That'll work, but it might not make a very compelling game. Mostly you are crunching numbers, coordinating schedules and spending dizzying amounts of gold. That is a task for shared documents, email and chat.

Take that framework and build a story *around* that story. In fact, consider building a framework around the dreams and then omitting all the mechanical aspects of the battle against the forest of woe. Unless it's going to be very popular with

the players, you don't need to really go through all the rolls and gruesome details of the research effort. Unless the players are portraying the very high-level grandees coordinating the research, the mechanical details of the war against the dreams basically boils down to a hazardous environment and source of novel quests. If that's all it is, don't burden yourself with the fine detail resolution of the struggle.

Likewise, don't just let the encounter table dictate what happens. The encounter system is set up as much to document the suggested behavior of the setting as it is to provide a stream of encounters. Looking at it, you can see the kinds of monsters, hazards and opportunities that the characters will encounter in the forest.

This is a horrifying setting element. Use the life cycle of the dreams and the encounter table to make space for horrifying things to happen in your game. Consider little one-shot games as low-level characters to set the scene. Make it scary, because if you don't make it have atmosphere, it's just another dice-rolling and paper-shuffling exercise.

This is a setting element confronted by powerful adventurers. The story will not be about the story of the battle against the dreams, but instead, about the personal narratives and egos of the individuals making up the effort.

The horror elements and the personal narrative are the root of making *The Dreams of Ruin* a truly memorable experience. More generally, don't just let the game be defined by checking schedules and rolling for choke point element costs. The mechanics are there to support the storytelling with a factual, defined framework. Make sure every session or every adventure serves some kind of thematic or interesting purpose.

BE READY FOR INADEQUACY, ESPECIALLY YOURS

Most players get used to characters who are basically wish-fulfillment mechanisms. Player characters get more powerful, get influence, get better gear, until they either get too distinguished to be interesting, or actually apotheosize into a god or demigod. It's like Hollywood stardom or being a financial mogul without any of the drawbacks.

The dreams are a very magically powerful, logistically challenging foe — not an individual who can be assassinated with “scry and fry” decapitation tactics or an organization that can be hopelessly bamboozled by the antics of shapechanging assassins/brain-rapists.

You will probably not have adequate experience running this sort of thing. Player tactics and expectations will probably be out of step with the reality of the challenge.

First, give yourself time to prepare and deal with all the information you're getting. Consider loosening your session schedule. Have some filler material ready for when you're exhausted.

It could be that you can't let go of the time slot or you'll never get the players back, but consider putting someone else's short filler game into the rotation, or running a fun little gaiden with established side characters, or playing board games.

Especially if you are running a weekly game on top of even a modestly full “real life,” don't expect to be able to perform every week, particularly if you are following the advice below and keeping the paperwork out of game sessions. Give yourself the leeway you'll need to run a complex challenge, of a type you haven't run before, for players who are unlikely to be any more experienced than you are.

KEEP THE PAPERWORK OUT OF THE GAME SESSIONS

Nothing sends a game session straight to hell like a big long break to do paperwork. This is particularly the case because the dynamics of table play tend to channel things into the “Pandemic” model of failed group play — one person becomes a “party caller” type coordinator of abstractly managed player efforts, while everyone else sits around and reads web comics or offers disruptive comments or otherwise gets bored.

Keep the sessions for dramatic events and storytelling opportunities where people physically gather in one place. When everyone is face-to-face, make it a time for big events, major quests, important meetings, and battles.

Do most of the logistical communications, planning and research away from the gaming table. There are a wide variety of free resources in the modern world that allow small-group collaboration.

As a general rule, in social situations or bureaucracy, everyone is perfectly polite at the table. It's in questions of implementation that you see what real agendas are. Make sure you allow multiple lines of private communication so players whose characters have other interests can privately pursue their own strategies.

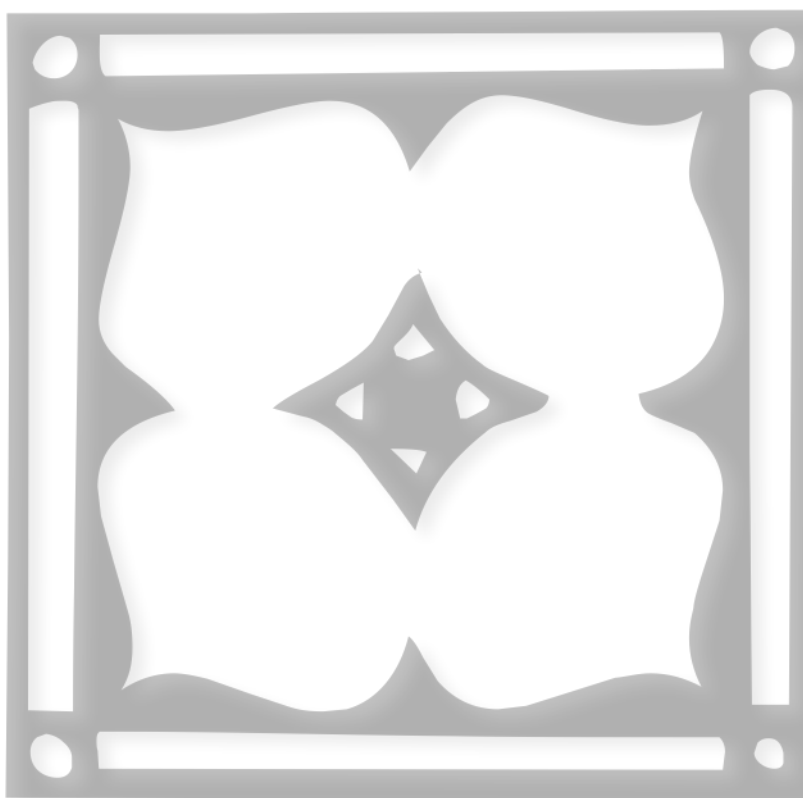
So isolate the paperwork to the group's bureaucrats, but at the same time, when you are away from the constraints of the tables, make sure you have multiple lines of communication with the players.

START A NEW GAME DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

One of the best ways to deal with the aftermath of the Dreams of Ruin is to see them through someone else's eyes. Characters who conclude their relationship with the dreams are likely to do so at the doorstep of very serious power, godhead, or ascent to the nebulous semi-divine status of cultural hero (variously a "quasi-deity," "hero" or "hero-deity"), probably of around 16th to 18th level.

Leaving them to a largely descriptive narrative henceforth is probably not a bad idea. Their agendas probably consist of things more talked about than acted out. Younger and less experienced characters can have perspectives rooted in the post-dreams era. They exist in a world where the dreams are a historical event or a tragic reality, not an all-encompassing struggle to maintain the status quo.

Don't be afraid to move the game forward. Historic events become part of history, and new heroes come to the fore. Use the massive effort of battling the dreams to draw a line under the adventures of one generation, and move the narrative forward to deal with champions who rose to prominence during the war against the dreams or afterwards.



COMPONENTS OF THE DREAMS

This chapter provides monster descriptions and statistics for the core physical components of the Dreams of Ruin: the body trees, the bakegumo, the puppets, and the murdersprites. These make up the heart of the forest organism/ecosystem. Though many other creatures frequent its groves, these are the ones encoded into the dreams themselves, rather than attracted by the dreams' various lures.

THE DREAMS THEMSELVES

In their first stages, the dreams appear as a local run of misfortune. They take root most readily in slums, shantytowns, prisons and asylums. In these locales, the inhabitants' despair does something akin to preparing the soil for them, but the dreams can thrive in most any location.

In places where the dreams have taken root, that which is bad can happen more often than it normally would, and such things often feed other ill developments more often than they ought to. At this stage, the dreams are spreading through the magical fabric of the area like the hyphae of a metaphysical fungal bloom, penetrating every part of the infected area's planar material. It is at this stage that it is best to remedy the infestation.

Certain combinations of occult activity and community development can eradicate the dreams before they bear their fruiting structures, the body trees and the puppets of ruin. If these are not undertaken promptly, it is much more difficult to stamp out the infection. Once the trees have

undergone a FIRST BLOSSOM event, it is of no use; the infection of the world is ineradicable until it has run its course.

THE BODY TREES

When the Dreams of Ruin have festered 4 years in the soil of misery, they put forth body trees. These tall, stately trees erupt from the very soil of the land where the dreams have taken hold. Straight and evil, like a grim, soot-covered ash, these trees are quite invisible to the humans around them. To the eyes of the observer, they are natural; they have always been there. They are beyond notice even when they choose to grow in the middle of the street or the front room of a house.

The body trees are suitable for suicide by hanging, for lynching and crucifixion, for the burial of sacrifices and secret murders at their roots, and for every other unwholesome thing that might perpetuate them. Where they grow, these things will occur, and the trees will conceal them, and grow taller and stronger.

Individuals who are Lawful or good and who walk beneath their boughs do so at peril; the trees are malevolent and have occult senses that allow them to discern enemies of the principles that strengthen and perpetuate the dreams.

After 13 years of their unpleasant self-cultivation, the trees bear greater fruit: the great white corpse-flowers, from which waft forth the pollen that spreads the Dreams of Ruin throughout the



world and into the astral and ethereal reaches beyond.

The trees flower every 13 years, and their life cycle is used to manage the stages of their lives by many of the forest's symbiotes and regular partners.

This text refers specifically to the tall black ash-like trees that spring forth in tightly crowded stands, or here and there alone, as body trees. However, the term "body trees" and "Forest of Woe" are often used interchangeably by individuals who are in contact with the holistic phenomenon. When the book refers to a "Forest of Woe" it implicitly includes dozens of other magical growths and allied organisms that all spread together and form the Dreams of Ruin.

LANDMINES

One of the primary fruits of the body trees is landmines. The trees grow a 3-lb. vapor-proof fiber/epoxy mine with a Semtex filler, from unfertilized buds. It is fired by crushable ampoule, and has an integrated anti-disturbance trigger kit that includes an arcane ward, a chemical trigger, and an anti-lifting arm driven by an ingenious one-time chemical pellet mechanism. They're virtually undetectable and nearly impossible to lift. Thieves attempting to *disarm trap* on one roll at -10%.

They do 1d6 shp to the person setting them off. They do 4d6 to individuals within 20'. Everyone struck can make a saving throw versus energy attacks to take half. The forest is in control of the landmines in its extent. It can delay their detonation, or detonate them when individuals are in the area of effect but not touching them.

Landmines are also seedpods thick with spores. Detonating even a single landmine in a hex infects it with the Dreams of Ruin.

Immature landmines can be used as demolitions charges. They are easily gathered from around the body trees, and have a shelf lifespan of centuries. Their only drawback is that they require thermal

or mechanical initiation. They do not have any metallic or electronic components. They have the same damage stats (1d6 shp) as the landmine.



BODY TREE

No. Enc.: 1d6 (1d100x100)
 Alignment: Neutral (evil)
 Movement: None
 Armor Class: 8
 Damage Absorption: 5
 MCM: 5
 Terror: N/A
 Hit Dice: 100 hp (20 HD)
 Attacks: 0
 THAC0: N/A
 Damage: None
 Magic Points: 0
 Miracle Points: 0
 Save: L16
 WIL: N/A
 Morale: 11
 Hoard Class: None

Description

This represents a 10' x 10' square thicket of tree boles, so dense as to be impassible but quite suited to provide hiding spots to the ill-intentioned. These thickets are the heart of the forest and produce most of the puppets.

Special Powers

Collective Will Notes The body trees share some form of awareness, through the mesh of occult hyphae that connect them and various other occult and physical cues. This highly evolved series of tropisms and signals cause the forest and its denizens to seem to “know” and react to events involving other body trees in the local infestation. Similarly, bakegumo and puppets will drop and maneuver toward disturbances elsewhere in the forest.

Although they seem to possess a dark intelligence, the trees of woe are not self-aware in any conventional sense. “The forest” is not an entity in any meaningful sense. It cannot be *stunned*, *scared*, *confused* or *charmed*, or slain by death spells. The tree clumps take half damage from Divine Terror as if they were an

automaton or undead, but the collective entity suffers no damage when the stands of body trees perish. The group mind cannot be directly read — it is not even discernable if there is a true consciousness. However, its mood can be sensed and manipulated to a certain degree.

The dreams themselves are vulnerable to certain special supernatural toxins, but conventional herbicides and other effects that target plants are useless against the trees — they are like no earthly form of plant. Indeed, they are not truly living organisms, but merely the magically-created fruiting body of a self-perpetuating curse.

Making magic spells that effect the dreams is possible — see the Cures chapter of this book — but normal **Labyrinth Lord** magic for affecting nature and plants will not affect the body trees by default.

Sinister Awareness Notes Beings that attract the animosity of the forest are marked for death beneath its canopy and can expect to receive the attentions of whatever denizens the forest can influence to attack them. Certainly puppets will drop and congregate to harass and murder such intruders, and the many other bizarre denizens of the forest may do so as well.

There can be no stealth for enemies of the forest while under the boughs of the body trees. Characters attempting to *sneak* are always considered to be attempting to evade from plain sight against the perception of the trees every round — it is possible to lose their attention for a short while, but never for long. The trees cannot *detect invisible*, but they do *know alignment* and *detect magic* within 300' of every body tree. Characters who wish to go unmarked beneath the forest's branches must have no discernible alignment and no discernible magic aura.

Drop Puppets Notes The first time a thicket takes damage during a combat, the thicket will drop 1d6 puppets at the end of the round. These puppets can appear in any unoccupied area on the thicket's



perimeter at the end of the round, and roll for initiative normally the next round.

Miasma of Ruin **Notes** The body trees are broadcast antennas for the miasma of ruin, which extends for 100' around the boles. This has many effects, which are detailed on p. 25 of the Rules Extensions chapter in this book.

PUPPETS OF RUIN

In the year after the body tree saplings emerge, they are sufficiently mature to bear new puppets. Wherever the body trees grow for long, the puppets of ruin can be found tending them.

These faceless footsoldiers resemble articulated wooden artist's models. They spring from the pollination of the body trees' buds by the spores of the dreams. They do not rise directly from the dead; however, the puppets are strengthened by the bones and blood of those who die among these gloomy orchards.

While they are at first few and furtive, as an orchard of the body trees thickens and bears more fruit the puppets begin to rove more openly. As caretakers of the orchards of ruin, the puppets are murderers. Alone, they are furtive killers; in groups, terrifying raiders. Where they prosper, all men save lurking murderers and desperadoes are driven out, and those places soon become the abode of puppets only.

The puppets are the allopathic exudate of the body trees, the drone offspring of the dreams and their own spores, smothering all things not of their regime and perpetuating their own supernatural biotope of ruin. The puppets are quite visible and terrifying for mortals to behold, though they are subject to the same social anesthetic as the trees. This effect prevents large-scale responses to their existence.

PUPPET ECOLOGY

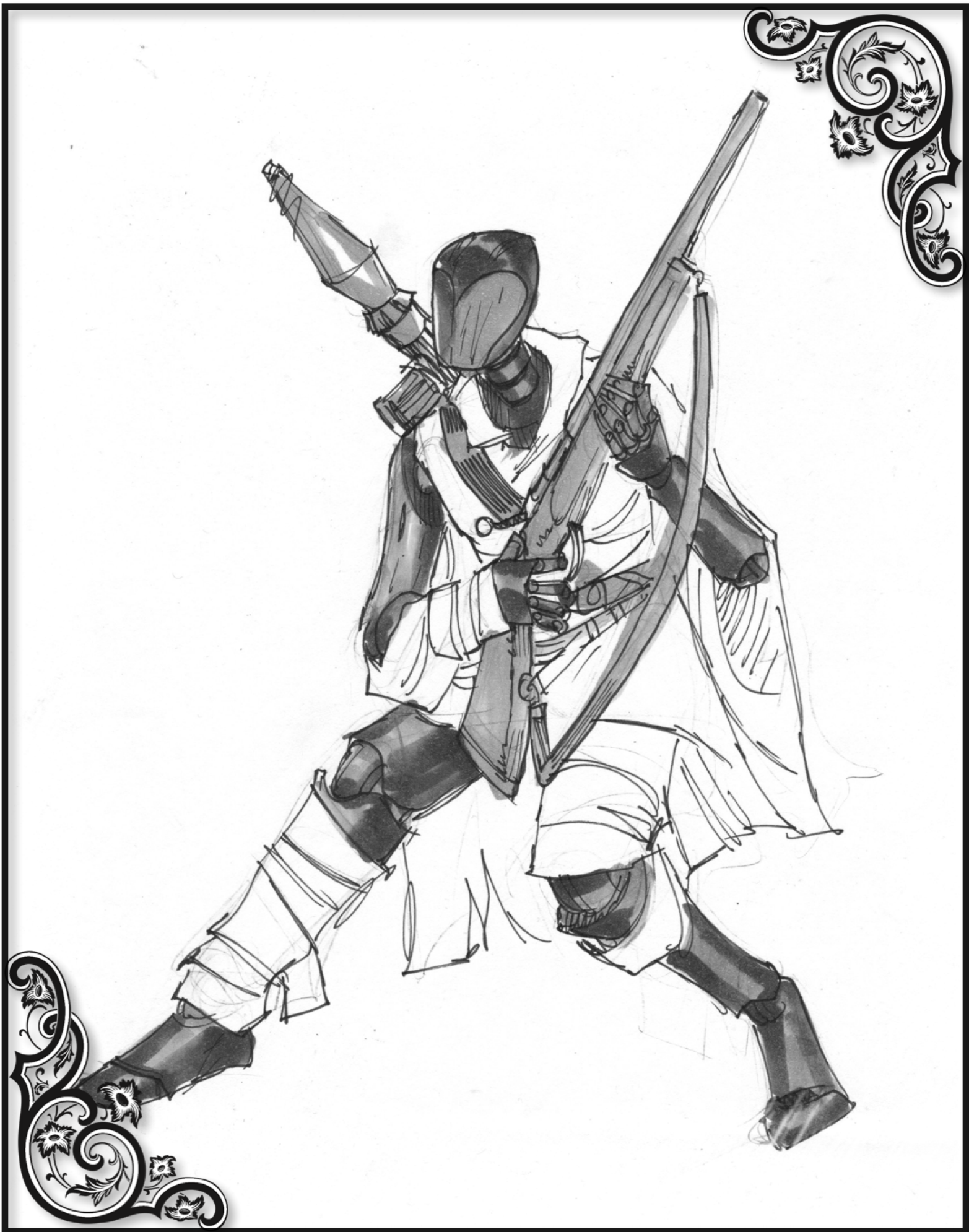
Puppets are short-lived creatures. They do not eat or mate. They instead hunt prey for the act of killing, pantomime Chaotic rituals in propitiation of the forest, and lie in a motionless slumber mode that consumes most of their hours. In response to intruders, they often perform something called "puppet theater," wherein they put on terrifying performances for the benefit of spectating characters.

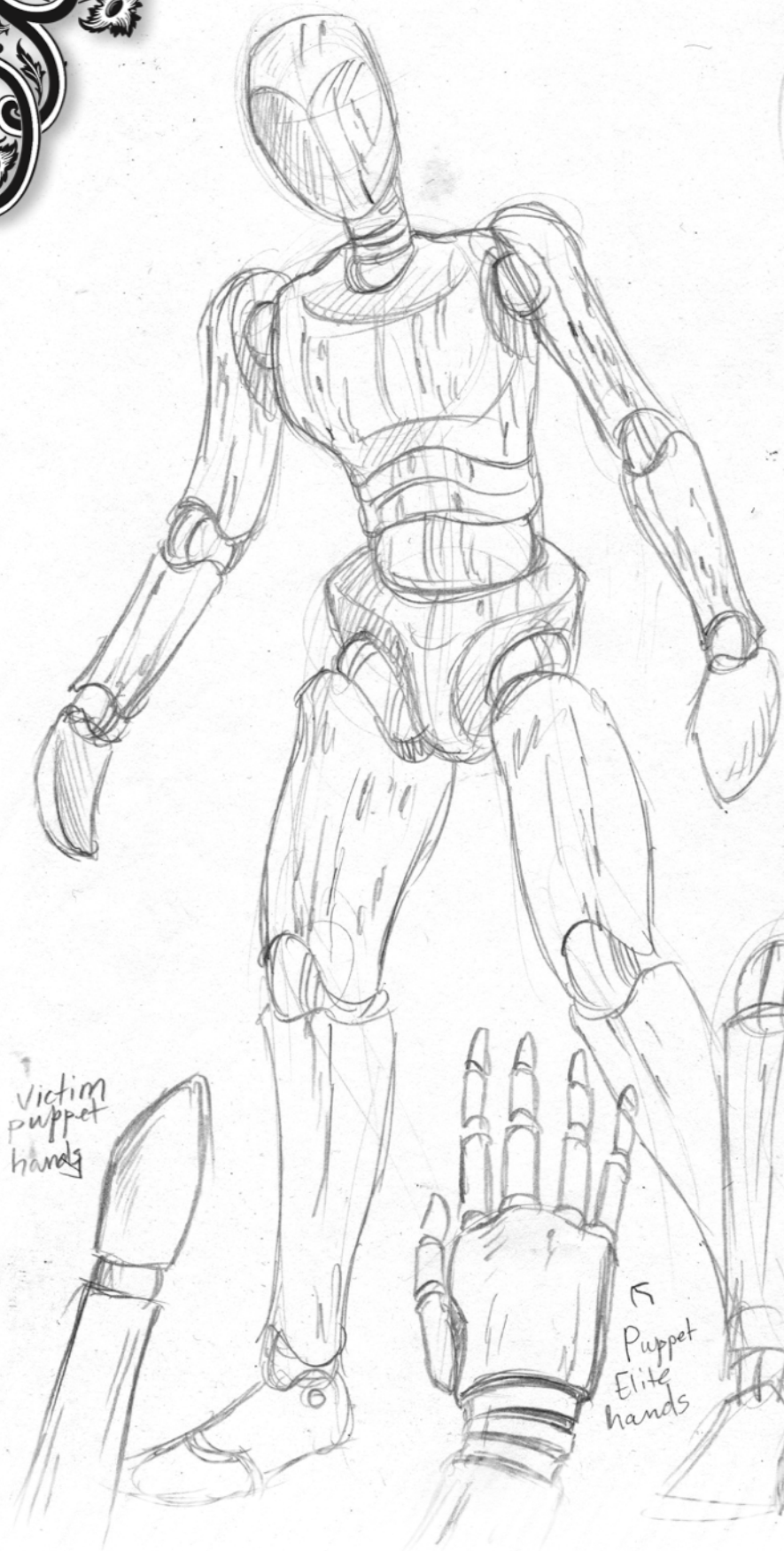
Puppets typically lurk in stands of body trees. Sometimes they lurk in the thickets at the base, sometimes they fasten themselves up in the trees. In both cases, the forest nourishes the puppet's sealed internal vitals. The puppets are inherently a short-lived chemical-magical energy battery made of meat and wood on a one-way trip to total discharge. Nevertheless, contact with the body trees allows normalization of function and limited recharge.

The puppets also regain 1d6 cartridges and 1d2-1 grenades during each week of this dormancy cycle. Elites gain proportionally greater reloads. Heavy weapons reloads are a seasonal matter. They appear frequently in the months after stress flushes, and leading up to BLOSSOM events.

They are powered by the dark radiance of the forest, and die if they spend more than a month away from the body trees. Even those that are not slain rarely serve for more than 2 years before they collapse. Elites last only a little longer, rarely more than 3 years.

The puppets deteriorate quickly when slain (within 30 days), and spread the spores of the Dreams of Ruin into the soil where their body rots.





Victim
puppet
hands



↳
Puppet
Elite
hands



PUPPETS OF RUIN

No. Enc.: 2d6 (4d10)

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 15 hp (3 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 14

Terror: 9

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 17 (16 with rifle, +1 within the forest)

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L4

WIL: 7

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

The puppets of ruin are the faceless fruit of the trees of woe. Fearsome, they are relative trifles against powerful characters, but sufficiently numerous and powerful to push out all types of evil humanoids who might offer effective resistance. The puppets' numbers are large and their tactics sharp. They are well-adapted to battles of feint and ambush fought in the forest. Puppets are endlessly patient snipers and able to survive in the forest environs without hardship.

These beings resemble artist's armatures or undecorated marionettes of the human form. They have no mouth or apparent sense. However, if they are killed and cut apart, there was clearly a human being's body covered by the hard wooden shell.

They are generally clad in protective and concealing garments. They lurk in groups seeking victims to ambush, and gather into bands and companies beneath the eaves of the trees to raid the territory around the Forest of Woe.

The puppets know best the rituals of propitiation that the trees require to flourish, and offer the boughs that

bore them blood and victims to make the trees strong. The puppets bear the spores of the forest abroad with them when they go out viking to prepare the ground for the forest's growth, and areas they pillage are always sown thick with the spores of the dreams.

Victim puppets: Many of the creatures inhabiting the forest are predators. The forest keeps them fed and interested by means of dropping immature, unarmed puppets for them to consume. These puppet victims are AC 8, HD 2, hp 5. They move 120' per round, and are genuinely alive and terrified. Puppet victims will die about 7 days after they are shed if they are not killed and eaten before then. They are instinctive hapless victims with a compulsion to wander into situations that will tend to lead them to their death. Puppet victims have a morale of 3.

Special Powers

Interloper The puppets of ruin are immune to mortal obscuroants, and "see" via a combination of *know alignment* and *detect magic*. They have a +2 to their effective WIL against Divine Terror due to their otherworldly origins. They are immune to all fear effects that do not generate Divine Terror. Sight of the puppets of ruin causes Sight of puppets of ruin causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Psychic Anesthetic The depredations of the puppets of ruin are instinctively covered up, ignored or papered over by those who encounter them. Individuals can see them briefly during their interactions, but afterwards, the memories become foggy and indistinct, in part due to the puppet's natural social anesthetic, and in part due to the body tree's miasma of ruin.

Weapons

Sabre Damage 1d8+2 **Notes** Counts as a +1 magical weapon for the purposes of creatures that can only be hit by such attacks.

Puppet Jezail **Damage** 1d8+4 **Range** 1000'/3000' **Shots** 5 **Basic Load** Loaded + 15 cartridges **Notes** +1 to-hit. These powerful bolt-action rifles require 1 action per cartridge to reload.

Puppet Grenade **Range** 35' **Damage** 4d6 **Basic Load** 1d3-1 **Notes** Concussion grenade — minimal fragmentation. The projectiles from these weapons explode in a 5' blast radius. If the victim is hit, they take full damage, but individuals who are in the blast radius can save versus energy attack for half damage.

Puppet RPG **Range** 300'/900' **Damage** 1d4+1 shp **Shots** 1 **Basic Load** Loaded + 2 **Notes** Ignores 10 points of the target's damage absorption. The projectiles from these weapons explode in a 5' blast radius. If the victim is hit, they take full damage, but individuals who are in the blast radius can save versus energy attack for half damage. Only about half the puppets have an RPG, but many carry 1 or 2 extra shots even if they do not have a launch tube themselves.

PUPPET ELITES

No. Enc.: 2d6 (2d10)

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 4

Hit Dice: 28 hp (5+ HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 12

Terror: 11

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 14 (13 with rifle, +1 within the forest)

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L7

WIL: 9

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

Puppet elites are the heavy troops of the forest. They typically drop interspersed with regular puppets, about 1 in 10 puppets is an elite.

Elites begin to appear in increasing numbers after SECOND BLOSSOM, rising from 1:10 at SECOND BLOSSOM to 1:3 in the year before the hex's THIRD BLOSSOM event. During THIRD BLOSSOM, the hexes in blossom drop 6d20 elites per hex in addition to their regular 6d20 BLOSSOM drop. Hexes then drop elites and regular puppets at a 1:1 mix as long as the body trees remain.

1 in 3 elites will be 6+ HD. 1 in 10 elites will be 7+ HD. Thus, for every 10 elites, there will be 6 5+ HD, 3 6+ HD, and 1 7+ HD. High-HD puppets tend to cluster together in elite formations. Only about 1 in 3 of the puppets has a support weapon, but almost all carry extra knee mortar or RR shots.

Special Powers

Interloper The puppets of ruin are immune to mortal obscuro, and "see" via a combination of *know alignment* and *detect magic*. They have a +2 to their effective WIL against Divine Terror due to their otherworldly origins. They are immune to all fear effects that do not generate Divine Terror. Sight of the puppets of ruin causes Sight of puppets of ruin causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Psychic Anesthetic The depredations of the puppets of ruin are instinctively covered up, ignored or papered over by those who encounter them. This has no effect on Initiates. Individuals can see them briefly during their interactions, but afterwards, the memories become foggy and indistinct, in part due to the puppet's natural social anesthetic.

Weapons

Puppet Repeating Rifles **Range** 700'/2100' **Damage** 1d6+4 **Ammo** 20 **Rate of Fire** Automatic **Basic Load** Loaded + 4 magazines Automatic **Notes** Supremely mechanically reliable. Generally inferior to the jezail except in rate of fire.

Sabre **Damage** 1d8+2 **Notes** Counts as a +1 magical weapon for the purposes of creatures that can only be hit by such attacks.

Puppet Knee Mortars **Range** 500'/2000' **Damage** 3d6*

Rate of Fire Rapid Fire **Ammo** 3 **Basic Load** Loaded

+ 2 magazines **Notes** The projectiles from these weapons explode in a 5' blast radius. If the victim is hit, they take full damage, but individuals who are in the blast radius can save versus energy attack for half damage.

Puppet Recoilless Rifle **Range** 1000'/5000' **Damage** 1d6+1

shp **Shots** 1 **Basic Load** Loaded + 2 **Notes** Ignores 10

points of the target's damage absorption. The projectiles from these weapons explode in a 10' blast radius. If the victim is hit, they take full damage, but individuals who are in the blast radius can save versus energy attack for half damage. The blast does not reduce damage absorption.

Puppet Grenade **Range** 300' **Damage** 4d6 **Basic Load**

1d4+1 **Notes** Concussion grenade — minimal fragmentation. The projectiles from these weapons explode in a 5' blast radius. If the victim is hit, they take full damage, but individuals who are in the blast radius can save versus energy attack for half damage.

Bakegumo

Bakegumo, or goblin-spiders, are another class of being invariably found making its residence in the Forest of Woe.

They seem to be much more independent of the forest than the puppets, and behave as a rather loosely-associated symbiote. However, they are known to spread via the same minute occult spores as the Dreams of Ruin, and so it is unknown if they were once independent beings that have been subsumed into the character of the forest, or if they remain independent and spread via some contagion so commingled with that of the Forest of Woe that it is presumed to be one of its components.

Bakegumo dwell not only within the forest, but beyond its edge as well. Bakegumo spread out beyond the edges of the Forest of Woe, making lairs in abandoned and lonely places, and devouring the occasional vagrant that comes across them. They haunt the places the puppets drive clear of civilization, and where the bakegumo have come to nest, civilized men will not return. The bakegumo are great friends to bandits, however. They often cooperate with and aid the servants of ruin, whether they are humans who shelter beneath the branches of the forest or the faceless armatures produced by the trees.

BAKEGUMO ECOLOGY

Bakegumo are powered by the same dark energies that drive the puppets. They have slightly longer lifespans than the puppets. When they are not active, the bakegumo hide themselves under the fallen leaves of the body trees and wait for stimulus to awaken them from their slumber. They are most naturally active at night, and especially on the nights of the full moon. It is at this time they hunt and shift ambush locations.

Bakegumo generally live 3-5 years, but this mortality is a product of their often-combative existence. Some specimens have been observed to live 20 years or more.

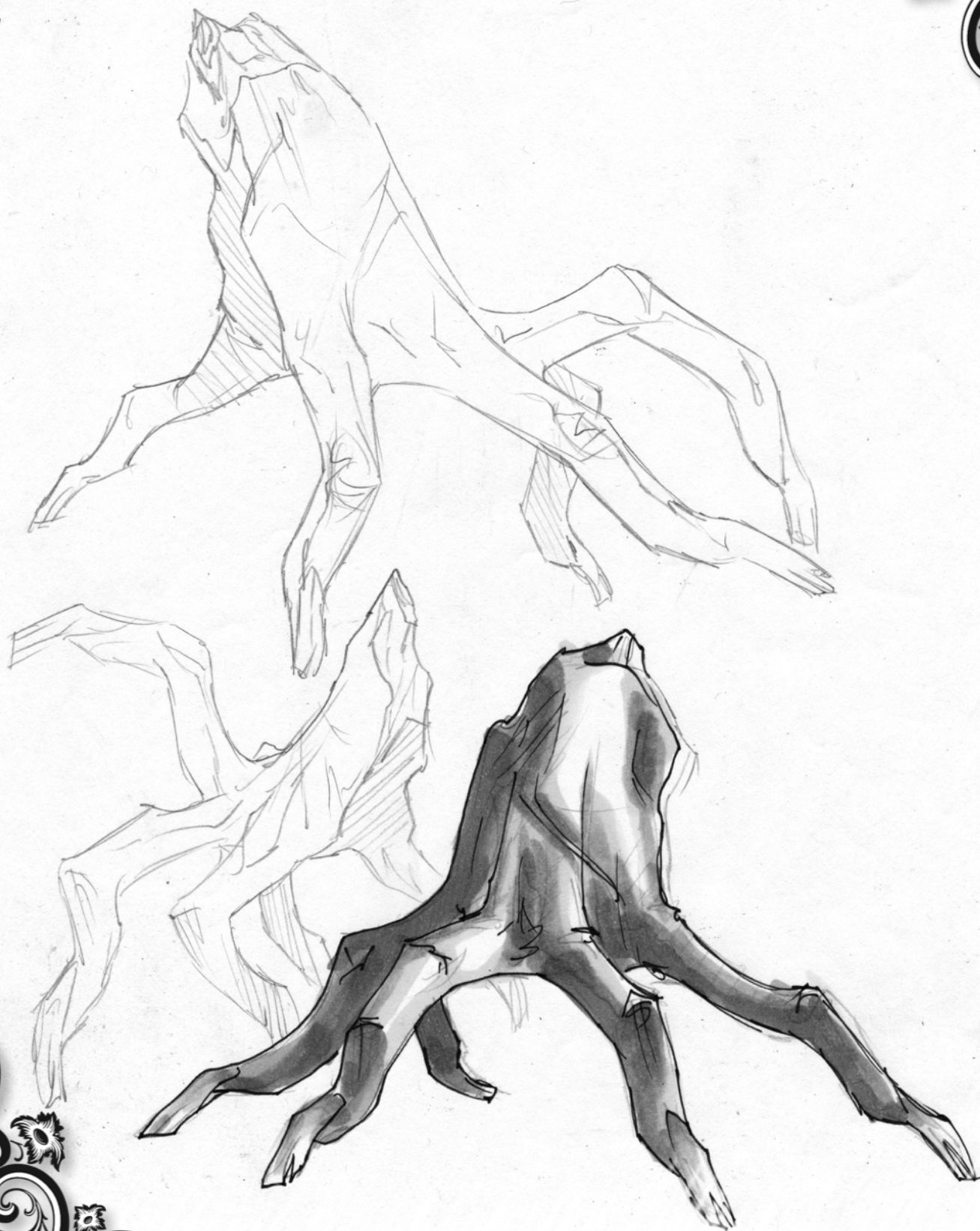
INCREASING BAKEGUMO REALITY

Bakegumo are ghostly at first, gaining more and more reality as they collectively claim victims. At first, bakegumo are 3 HD, 12 hp, AC 1, and cannot perform a whole-body grab or poke. They surprise on a 1-5.

After they claim 18 HD or levels of victims, they become 4 HD, 21 hp, AC 3, and they do subdual damage with their grab or poke. Victims will pass out unconscious and be smothered in their sleep. They surprise on a 1-4.

After the bakegumo have claimed 36 HD or levels' worth of lives, they assume their regular statistics depicted below. Note that this is not 1 bakegumo or 1 hex, but every bakegumo spawned by a hex related to the current infection. Bakegumo are a few wicked ghosts at first, but when they appear in the hundreds, they are unfortunately quite real.

Bakegumo do not stay immaterial for long. They will soon begin slaying wild game, perhaps small children, vagrants and the elderly with their Divine Terror. Or they will burn victims to death with their ghost-lights. It may be only a few days or weeks after their appearance that the goblin-spiders are fully material.



BAKEGUMO

No. Enc.: 1d3 (2d6)
 Alignment: Neutral (evil)
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Armor Class: 5
 Damage Absorption: 0
 MCM: 9
 Terror: 14
 Hit Dice: 30 hp (5 HD)
 Attacks: 1
 THAC0: 15
 Damage: Varies (by attack mode)
 Magic Points: 7
 Miracle Points: 0
 Save: L7
 WIL: 12
 Morale: 9
 Hoard Class: None

Description

The goblin-spiders appear to be large, gnarled beings that distinctly resemble rough-skinned human hands with thick, yellow nails. They have a blunt thorax-stump protruding from their rear where the wrist and arm would be, and tend to use the central "finger" as a sensory probe of some sort, although there are no apparent sense organs on the fingertip.

Bakegumo are quite bulky. A moderate-sized bakegumo weighs between 200 and 300 lbs., and large ones can reach 500 lbs. in weight. They scuttle from place to place and attack by occult means, and also by leaping onto their prey or jabbing at it with their thick-nailed "fingertips". The bakegumo are soul-eaters, and to be slain by one is especially dreaded, as they can consume the life-essence of their target.

Bakegumo are wicked and scheming, but they are ultimately creatures of the forest who share its destiny. They work side by side with the puppets of ruin, and will face death in defense of the Dreams of Ruin.

Bakegumo are versatile and inquisitive creatures, sometimes found in ones or twos on the edges of the

forest, at other times in small numbers at the side of the various puppets of woe, occasionally in small colonies of a half-dozen to a dozen nestled here and there in depths of the forest.

The role of the bakegumo is somewhat akin to the role of the druid in a sylvan environment: they actively manage the forest's ecological balance. They encourage the growth of the body trees through silent prayer, black magic ritual and geomantic practice. They see to the spread of the various related sub-species of the forest's various symbiotes throughout the wood's extents.

Special Abilities

Interloper The bakegumo are immune to mortal obscuroants, and "see" via a combination of *know alignment* and *detect magic*. Bakegumo have a +2 to their effective WIL against Divine Terror due to their otherworldly origins. They are immune to all fear effects that do not generate Divine Terror. Sight of the bakegumo causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Leaping Spider Bakegumo can jump up to 20' vertically or 30' horizontally.

Run on Any Surface The bakegumo have the eerie ability to cling to any surface as if it was horizontal ground. They can be pulled or pushed as if they were their normal weight, but their ability to move across a surface has nothing to do with its texture or orientation relative to vertical.

Soul-Eating Curse When the goblin-spider slays a being through its whole-body grab attack, it consumes the essential life within — leaving only the twisted and broken frame for scavengers. Beings below 5th level, or 4+1 HD, who are slain by a bakegumo have their life essences consumed utterly. Beings with HD of 4+1 or a greater, or a level of 5 or greater, still have their souls battened upon.

If a character is slain in the bakegumo's clutch, the victim must make a saving throw versus spells at a +2

penalty. If the bakegumo wins the occult contest, the victim suffers the loss of an experience level due to death.

Webs (1 magic point per 5' cube) **Range** Adjacent **Notes** The bakegumo spin durable webs of cartilaginous material from the bony protrusions of their stump-abdomens. This material can be left "dry" (it is perpetually slimy and slightly soft) or covered in a mucous-based glue of incredible toughness.

Wrestling one's way free of the glue takes 2d4 turns if the character has strength below 18, and 4 rounds if the character has strength of 18 or higher. The webs are not flammable and are difficult to cut; they bind normal weapons used to cut them. Enchanted weapons and high-tech items like vibro-swords and warp-field weaponry must do 24 points of damage to clear a 5' square filled with the webs. A bakegumo can fill a 5' square with webs in about a turn of spinning — although they often fill vast areas with webs, it takes them considerable time to do so.

Attacks

Ghost-Light Curse **Range** 3 miles **Damage** Curse **MCM Modifier** +0 **Cost** 1 magic point **Notes** The bakegumo can conjure up small motes of eerie, cold flame at will. These cannot wander farther away than 75' from the bakegumo's being, but the bakegumo can manipulate the ghost-light in strange and fascinating ways, causing them to flare brightly and flicker weirdly.

This is an MCM effect. If the curse strikes home, the target must make a saving throw versus spells. If the second save fails, the victim is compelled to seek out the origin of the mysterious lights bobbing around the goblin-spider. This effect lasts for 3 hours. It has no compulsive effect on Initiates but can affect cynosures. This compulsion does not require a full line of sight, merely an awareness on the bakegumo's part of the target's presence — it can be used to draw distantly-heard victims out into the night, for example. It usually requires direct physical interaction to stop an entranced victim but they will "snap out of it."

Ghost-Light Scorch **Range** 75' **Damage** 1d6+1 **Cost** 1 magic point **Notes** The flames of the goblin-spiders are not harmless merely because they are cold. By investing them with occult impetus, the bakegumo can cause the ghost fire to come into contact with solid objects. The result is terrible frostburns, which simultaneously freeze and melt their targets so intensely they can damage even metal.

The ghost-lanterns do damage that is both fire and ice; if the character does not possess both resistances, apply damage as normal. This is treated as a ranged attack by the bakegumo.

Poke **Damage** 1d6+2 **Notes** None

Terrifying Display **Range** 50' **Damage** Terror **WIL** 16 **Max Damage** 4d6 **Cost** 2 magic points **Notes** The bakegumo can rush at a foe, shaking itself in a terrifying fashion. The gesture is accompanied by strange vocalizations from no apparent source, whirling ghost-lights, and the silvery rattling of sistrums where none are present. This gesture is redolent with Divine Terror.

Whole-Body Grab **Damage** 2d8+2 **Notes** The goblin-spiders can wrap themselves around their target in the manner of a fist clenching around an object. This is quite an efficient method for strangling out life; it should be avoided at all costs.

If a character is hit by this attack, they must make a saving throw versus poison or death every round when it is their turn to act, or lose their action. The goblin-spider automatically hits every round thereafter but it must do damage or release the target. The goblin-spider's armor class worsens to 7 when it has a victim in its grasp.

Murdersprites

Murdersprites are one of the signs of a mature stand of body trees. Found almost exclusively in the heart of the woods, swarms of murdersprites rob, abuse, exploit and slay one another in wretched lives of degeneracy only a few hours or a few days in length. They lead their existences of murderous self-indulgence with kamikaze zeal, which feeds the dreams that spawn them and whip them into their self-destructive fever.

Murdersprites are extremely dangerous, as they can appear in the hundreds or thousands. Their countless tiny poison attacks can swiftly kill even the fiercest foe.

Murdersprites need not live long enough to reproduce. Although they can often be found smearing their tarry egg-discharge all over the bark of the body trees, this is not necessary for the propagation of their kind. They primarily inhabit the areas of dreams between SECOND BLOSSOM and THIRD BLOSSOM, their larval forms crawling over and burrowing through the body trees.

Murdersprite activity is known to be an important part of forming the puppet elites who drop during THIRD BLOSSOM.

Murdersprite production is a captive process of the dreams as a whole at this point in the life cycle of the dreams. However, unlike the bakegumo, they still can and do reproduce independently in the wild.

As with the puppets, murdersprite behavior allows the forest to perform what amounts to self-propitiatory prayer through the murdersprites' intermediary agency. It is for this reason, rather than as an air force of flying pests, that the forest creates and maintains a murdersprite population.

Still, they are also an air force of murderous, poisonous pests, and they make flying in or near the body trees an impossible proposition in areas

between SECOND BLOSSOM and THIRD BLOSSOM. Any operating mechanism will have to contend with constant suicide strikes by sprites carrying weapons provided by the forest, seeking to destroy the mechanisms.

In addition, their presence in the forest makes the inchoate anger of the dreams much more dangerous. After the SECOND BLOSSOM, the anger of the forest can conjure swarms of hundreds or thousands of these creatures displaying their *crank* behavior. Being able to deal with swarms of hundreds or thousands of murdersprites is an essential capability in order to enter the heart of the woods without being a servant of ruin or invisible to the forest.

HOW DOES THE FOREST GET THE ENERGY?

The forest gets the energy to spawn all these larval murdersprites, force-grow them and feed them crazy drugs by eating the fabric of the infected plane's reality. Murdersprites are one of the many ways the dreams metabolize the infected world's substance into negative prayer energy.

Killing huge numbers of them merely causes the dreams to drain more reality from a place, and thus burn out the dimensional fabric faster. This does bring the end of the dreams faster, but also artificially hastens the THIRD BLOSSOM event.

SPRITE BEHAVIORS

The forest has magical control over the murdersprites. Local magical influences and the effects of the various exudates the forest produces for the sprites' consumption produce different modes of behavior which can be interpreted as "moods" or "behaviors."

Rut The murdersprites are made to mate with one another. Every nearby surface will be smeared with egg-tar and murdersprites dead or dying of exhaustion will litter the area. Sprites in

rut almost never attack, even if stepped on or grabbed. *Rut* tends to take place in small locations rather than across large areas.

Crank The murdersprites are put into a mood for vicious, bloodthirsty hooliganism against larger targets. They are *hasted*, moving at 180'(60') flying and 30'(10') ground speed. They attack 2x per round each with their weapons.

Spooky The murdersprites are fed a diet of magical *fear* and hallucinogens. They are made to hide themselves locally, which they do with great effectiveness. Spotting one is like spotting a secret door. Once one is grabbed or stepped on, and it starts screaming and freaking out, or at some arbitrary point (e.g., 1d6 turns after characters enter the area), the murdersprites lose their cool *en masse* and charge. Experienced forest denizens know to connect the chilly, slightly scary emotional temperature of the area and the lack of visible murdersprites and flee the area before they become the fixation of the group freak-out.

Strut In *strut*, the murdersprites are encouraged to perform by the forest. This is a combination of natural interpretive dance with aspects of the *crank* and *rut* moods. This produces a rich aerial tapestry of lust, violence and covetous behavior. Murdersprites in *strut* take 1d6 hours to “come down” and enter a new mood if the strut is disrupted. Large areas of murdersprites in *strut* is a sign that the forest feels safe and secure.



MURDERSPRITE

No. Enc.: 1d4 (1d100)

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 15' (5')

Flying: 90' (30')

Armor Class: 5

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 18

Terror: 9

Hit Dice: 5 hp (1 HD)

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 19

Damage: 1* (poisoned weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L1

WIL: 7

Morale: 7

Hoard Class: None

Description

These vile creatures swarm around the heart of the forest during warm periods after the first SECOND BLOSSOM event. They seem to come from the flowers, but they are a wholly separate creature, many of which happen to spring from origin sites near SECOND BLOSSOM efflorescence. However, they can be found anywhere there are body trees between SECOND BLOSSOM to THIRD BLOSSOM.

Murdersprites hatch from giant white grubs that shrivel into twisted black chrysalises before splitting to reveal the sprite within. The chrysalises are held in storage on the body trees for weeks, and hatched at the forest's behest. Murdersprite populations can rise by a factor of 100 over a few turns in advanced colonies that have been antagonized.

The murdersprites are vicious creatures who pursue a twisted mockery of human interactions with one another: nothing but conspiracy, adultery, robbery, indulgence and murder. Murdersprite lifespans are short, normally only a few days, or at most weeks. They are dangerous, but most of their efforts are

typically focused on their own kind. The forest feeds them a diet of rich indulgences, and they live lives of fierce revelry, bloody murder, and squalid overindulgence as a result.

Interestingly, murdersprites raised on their own are Neutral (evil) beings with lifespans of up to 5 years. Specimens from the forest have an inbred compulsion to feed on the several forms of forest exudate designed specifically to excite them. However, they can live to a ripe old age (for an evil sprite) of 5 if they are never exposed to the forest's magical-chemical cocktails.

Special Abilities

Interloper Murdersprites are immune to mortal obscurants due to *infravision*, and have a +2 to their effective WIL against Divine Terror due to their drugged out derangement. They are immune to all fear effects that do not generate Divine Terror, except when they aren't. Sight of murdersprites causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Infravision **Notes** This vision reaches only to 15'.

Psychic Numbness **Notes** The murdersprites are subject to the same *psychic numbness* as the rest of the forest, although given where they appear in the forest's magical geography, and at what degree of development, it's somewhat unlikely anyone could miss them. If you do fail to see the murdersprites, they are likely to be the last thing you ever fail to see.

Weapons

Tiny Weapon **Damage** 1+ poison **Notes** Class 1 poison. Failed saving throw indicates 1d6 poison damage. Successful saving throw negates effect. The weapon must be recoated after every stab (takes 1 round). Rules for quickly resolving mass attacks by murdersprites are provided on p. 28 of the Rules Extensions chapter.

INFECTION

This chapter discusses the logistics of the dreams' infection. There are also spreadsheets attached to this document that help demonstrate how the infection progresses.

CONTAMINATION

The spores of the Dreams of Ruin are tiny, sticky, and self-reproducing. Any military or industrial operations — like city demolition or wholesale body tree logging — will contaminate every hex upstream and downstream in the supply chain and personnel flow.

The local depot towns, the places that individuals on leave go to after they work in the effort, the places that lumber from the forest is being stockpiled, and 3 hexes downwind from any major fires, will be infected automatically at the end of the first year of exposure.

Typically, contamination will be automatic along major routes of travel for up to 3 hexes away from the nearest infected hex if there is substantial traffic. Remember that infected hexes, and not just hexes with body trees in them, are contagious. All infected hexes will be full of the pollen of the Dreams of Ruin. Even troop movements adjacent to the forest will track contamination for 3 or more hexes down-road of the contaminated area.

The dreams also have a strong tendency to manifest in a disruptive fashion along administrative and logistical axes. Infections will form hundreds of miles away, in centers of administration and logistics, as they are contaminated during or after operations. Notables

directing efforts in person are virtually certain to contaminate their private residences and administrative centers.

Populations dispersed from infected hexes take the infection with them to the new hex where they settle, and may also spread it every hex along the way.

The dreams are especially dangerous and annoying for liches, vampires and other powerful negative energy beings. The dreams will infest their lair and undergo dense, accelerated growth due to the negative energy source. This is quite unfortunate for vampires trying to hide their coffins, for example. It can drive creatures with small living areas from their lairs as the physical material of the body trees crowds them out of their caves or tombs.

LIFE CYCLE

The progress of a generic colony of dreams, springing up in a single hex and not spreading by any means other than natural growth, is depicted in a two-page table to follow.

This table examines the critical threat production by the colony during a given year, all the way through to the colony's moment of greatest extent at 50 years.

If the infection takes place in an area with sufficient space for growth and negligible opposition, the Forest of Woe's maximum continuous expanse will be reached 50 years after the infection. At this point, the forest will be 26



hexes, or 156 miles, wide. This point of maximum contiguous extent — the forest's 50th year — takes place during the 6th SECOND BLOSSOM event, and the year before the 3rd THIRD BLOSSOM event.

Thereafter, the center dies out and the forest-wave is about 100 miles deep, moving forward at a rate of about 2 miles a year. When they form a running line, the Dreams of Ruin are normally about 12 hexes in depth, which is 50 years, or 96 miles, wide. Areas that are engulfed in body tree saplings this year will come out the “other side” of the infestation's forward progress in about 45 years.

THIRD BLOSSOM is associated with the onset of rapid senescence in body trees after 47 years of age; some arcane exudate or signal emitted by the BLOSSOMING seems to trigger the decay of boles older than 47 years.

The body trees die off between the 47th and 50th year, so the BLOSSOMING happens within a hex of the Forest of Woe's trailing edge, or even adjacent to it, if the body trees have died back quickly.

POST-INFECTION SYNDROME

Even after they have swept across the land and entered remission, the Dreams of Ruin remain in evidence in the world. The dreams will constantly produce body trees in areas of especially concentrated negative emotions. Flushes of body trees will be found anywhere there are significant outpourings of negative energy. These residual growths can reach FIRST BLOSSOM and then repeat it every 3-7 years for decades.

The former sites of the Forest of Woe are lonely and haunted, although lushly covered with plants and animals. Undead and evil extraplanar creatures continue to find it easy to exist there. In particular, creatures that live in the liminal spaces between the ethereal and the real — phase tigers, phase spiders, incorporeal undead and the like — are drawn to the area.

Events in post-dreams environments have a slight bias (-5%, or 1 point on a d20) toward negative outcomes, as the surviving wisps of dreams bleed entropy into the area and feed on its potential.

There is a greater than usual tendency for undead to form in these regions. In addition, puppets and bakegumo will come to haunt the kinds of areas that are already plagued with horrors like ghouls and wights, and it will tend to be a land of haunted and unfortunate places. The area will be attractive to outposts of devils and demons seeking to realize their ambitions in the Prime Material Plane. It will tend toward the kinds of seedy fantasy metropoli that are beset by wererat infestation.

On a plane-wide basis, a world that has endured the first major outbreak of the puppets is still infected. The reason it is not covered in dreams is that the dimensional fabric is too thoroughly digested to continue to play effective host to colonies at the ambient level of negative energy.

The DREAMS of RUIN

Year	Season	Hexes Infected	Bakegumo/ Year	Puppets/ Year	Puppet Elites/ Year	Murdersprite Hexes
1		1	0	0	0	0
2		1	4	0	0	0
3		1	2	0	0	0
4		1	2	0	0	0
5		7	2	0	0	0
6		7	26	20	2	0
7		7	21	10	1	0
8		7	21	30	3	0
9		19	21	10	1	0
10		19	81	149	17	0
11		19	57	69	8	0
12	FALLOW	19	57	208	23	0
13		37	57	119	13	0
14		37	147	446	50	0
15		37	111	188	21	0
16	FALLOW	37	111	564	63	0
17	FIRST BLOSSOM	61	111	485	54	0
18		61	231	921	102	0
19		61	183	366	41	0
20	FALLOW	61	183	1,099	122	0
21	FIRST BLOSSOM	91	183	960	107	0
22		91	333	1,574	175	0
23		91	273	604	67	0
24	FALLOW	91	273	1,812	201	0
25	FIRST BLOSSOM	127	273	1,495	166	0

The DREAMS of RUIN

Year	Season	Hexes Infected	Bakegumo/ Year	Puppets/ Year	Puppet Elites/ Year	Murdersprite Hexes
26		127	453	2,406	267	0
27		127	381	901	100	0
28	FALLOW	127	381	2,703	300	0
29	FIRST BLOSSOM	169	381	2,089	232	0
30	SECOND BLOSSOM	169	591	3,445	383	1
31		169	507	1,257	140	1
32	FALLOW	169	507	3,771	420	1
33	FIRST BLOSSOM	217	507	2,742	305	1
34	SECOND BLOSSOM	217	747	4,779	534	7
35		217	651	1,670	189	7
36	FALLOW	217	651	5,010	567	7
37	FIRST BLOSSOM	271	651	3,449	390	7
38	SECOND BLOSSOM	271	921	6,308	721	19
39		271	813	2,135	252	19
40	FALLOW	271	813	6,406	755	19
41	FIRST BLOSSOM	331	813	4,207	490	19
42	SECOND BLOSSOM	331	1,113	7,986	957	37
43	THIRD BLOSSOM	331	993	2,707	395	37
44	FALLOW	331	993	7,940	1,003	37
45	FIRST BLOSSOM	397	993	5,011	610	37
46	SECOND BLOSSOM	397	1,323	9,794	1,261	61
47	THIRD BLOSSOM	397	1,191	3,557	810	61
48	FALLOW	397	1,191	9,582	1,341	61
49	FIRST BLOSSOM	469	1,191	5,950	761	61
50	SECOND BLOSSOM	469	1,551	12,029	1,659	91

4-Year Cycle of Seasons

Once it is established, the forest has a 4-year repeating period of activity. The pattern is: **FALLOW**, **FIRST BLOSSOM**, **SECOND BLOSSOM**, **THIRD BLOSSOM**, **FALLOW**.

It's important to understand that while these different **BLOSSOM** events happen only once to a given hex, they are always happening here and there in an established colony of dreams. The self-organizing nature of the dreams means that large areas infected all at once will tend to progress through the disease together. This creates a seasonal cycle where activity pulses in waves from the front/edge to the rear/center of the infection.

Remote infections will advance at differing speeds based on the strength local sources of negative energy.

FALLOW is an even year. There is an eruption of body tree saplings on the edge of the Forest of Woe. All hexes with body trees up for 2 or more years drop puppets.

FIRST BLOSSOM is an odd year, and takes place 1 hex of saplings and 3 hexes of forest deep into the body trees. It is associated with the development of new infections in hexes on the edge of the forest, and the emergence of body tree saplings.

Hexes that enter **FIRST BLOSSOM** that have been infected for 17 years, and body trees have been visible for 13 years.

SECOND BLOSSOM is an even year, and every hex of the forest drops 3d20 puppets.

SECOND BLOSSOM is associated with first puppet drop from newly emerged saplings, and first appearance of bakegumo in newly infected hexes.

THIRD BLOSSOM is an odd year. The hexes in blossom drop puppets (6d20 elites per hex) but other hexes drop only 1d20 puppets each.

This takes place in areas that have been infected for 43 years, and is usually the final complete **BLOSSOMING**.

Puppet elites drop during the **THIRD BLOSSOM**. Their emphasis tends to be on defensive actions, as the forest is often under attack, and their position of the trailing edge closer to the heart of the forest makes it a constant target of attack by antagonists.

PATTERNS

Appearance of saplings in a hex mean the next hex is infected.

SECOND BLOSSOM also marks the first puppet drop of fresh saplings on the forest edge, and is the same year that bakegumo begin appearing in the freshly-infected hex beyond the forest edge. **SECOND BLOSSOM** and **FALLOW** are the most dangerous years for individuals outside the forest, because that is when puppet drop is at its highest.

There are 4 **FIRST BLOSSOM** events before the first **SECOND BLOSSOM** event.

There are 7 **FIRST BLOSSOM** events before the first **THIRD BLOSSOM** event.

There are 4 **SECOND BLOSSOM** events before the first **THIRD BLOSSOM** event.

ENCOUNTER LEVELS

Areas that have not yet experienced **FIRST BLOSSOM** or that are post-**THIRD BLOSSOM** are treated as "overgrown."

This is usually an area about 3 hexes wide on the leading edge of the forest, and 0-2 hexes wide at the trailing edge of the forest.

Areas between 17 and 43 years into their infection — that is, between **FIRST BLOSSOM** and **THIRD BLOSSOM** for that particular hex — are "dark heart of the forest." This is a zone 7 hexes wide, with the center hex in **SECOND BLOSSOM**.

CUTTING TREES

The body trees are not the forest; cutting the trees down does not generally make the problem go away or even meaningfully reduce it. Although they collect negative energy for the forest, and radiate the miasma of ruin, the body trees are not an essential part of the disease process.

If hexes are deforested over the course of the year, the dreams will spring back lushier than ever the next spring. They will not come back as saplings the next year, but will instead return at full size. This is because the curse that produces them has matured to full size, and the body trees are merely a symptom of that greater curse.

It is possible to make headway against the dreams by clear-cutting in combination with other treatments. These are outlined in the Cures chapter. Clear-cutting alone will never suffice.

STRESS FLUSH

A hex will generally drop 2d20 puppets whenever there is heavy combat in it or in an adjacent hex. Stress flushes happen only in the 7th year of infection or later.

Similarly, after clear-cutting operations, the forest in and adjacent to the hex of any clear-cutting activity also drops an additional 2d20 puppets in the next year. This is in addition to whatever the drop in the stressed hex would normally be that year.

THE DREAMS IN OTHER ENVIRONMENTS

The Dreams of Ruin are not sustaining themselves by means of conventional life processes. They can grow underground, underwater, and in profoundly hostile environments. They cross oceans by growing across the bottoms. They may be slowed or halted by mid-oceanic depths, but of course wind- and waterborne spores will soon cross that gap. Because the spores that are most likely to reach and take root in substantial numbers are those along the sea-shore, there is often an illusion the dreams are “growing up out of the ocean”

when in fact they took root on the edge of the sea and spread downward.

The dreams can also grow in airless space, or in foul air. They do not grow, but do not die, if taken into the magical spaces between realities.

Prodrome (First 4 Years After Infection)

A 4-year prodromal period occurs after infection with the dreams, before body trees appear. During this period, the dreams operate on a purely magical level, entrenching themselves in the occult material of the world, and propagating through the dimensional substrate. This invisible, immaterial, self-perpetuating magical contamination is the dreams themselves. All else — the body trees, the bakegumo, the puppets — are merely physical manifestations of the true ailment.

While there are no obvious symptoms during the first year or two, the dreams swiftly entrench themselves in the fabric of the world.

Areas that are infected but not yet symptomatic suffer bad luck in the affected hexes. Apply a negative modifier of $-/+10\%$ ($-/+2$ points on a d20) toward a negative outcome for all random events in this area.

The initial infection zone is typically an area about 1 hex (8 miles) wide. If there is significant traffic from the infected area — for example, the *gate* lies in a major urban area, or astride a heavily trafficked inter-dimensional tradeway, that traffic probably tracks the curse all along the highway for at least 3 hexes from the *gate*. See the Contamination section, following, for details. See the Components of the Dreams chapter to learn more about the technical details of the dreams' life cycle.

The dreams almost always crop up first in areas of negative influence like ghettos and haunted cemeteries. They will take root and appear in other locations, but their emergence may be delayed by a number of years. The activity of the dreams occurs where the social mechanism is at its thinnest and most exclusionary, helping to enhance the dreams' invisibility.

Bakegumo Emerge (2 Years Post-Infection)

Bakegumo appear late in the 2nd year after infection. They are the first visible sign of infection and appear only after the infection has completely saturated its initial hex. They are immaterial at first, but within a few weeks they have fed enough to lose their ghostlike quality.

The initial infected zone typically spawns 1d4+1 bakegumo in its first year of production, with 2 developing each year after the 2nd. It is possible the bakegumo will attract notice, but they will generally seek to hide themselves, propitiating the dreams with black prayers and animal sacrifice of wild beasts rather than with sentient blood.

If the bakegumo are detected, inhabitants of the infected area may expend considerable effort seeking to connect the appearance of the bakegumo with the eruption of the first body tree saplings during the 5th year of the infection (3 years later).

The bakegumo will definitely be found to have performed actions that helped propagate the body trees. But efforts to attack the forest by hunting bakegumo will not slow the spread of the infection.

The Disease Spreads (5 Years Post-Infection)

In the 5th year after infection, the dreams have infected adjacent uninfected hexes.

These now-infected adjacent hexes will likewise suffer 4 years of prodromal infection while the Dreams of Ruin take hold. The dreams will spread into hexes adjacent to the now-infected hexes starting in the 5th year of *their* infection, and so on.

The dreams have always spread into adjacent hexes before any body trees emerge.

Body Tree Saplings Emerge (5 Years Post-Infection)

Body tree saplings emerge in the initial hex 5 years after infection. The appearance of the first body tree shoots marks the end of the dreams' prodromal period. Body trees reach maturity the year after emergence. The saplings appear over 72 hours across the entire expanse of the infected hex. The trees swell and thicken over the course of the year. The first puppets are visibly forming in the fruiting clusters of the trees 4 months after the saplings emerge.

Body Trees Mature / First Puppets Appear (6 Years Post-Infection)

Puppets of ruin first appear the year after the body tree saplings emerge — that is, when the trees are fully grown.

The first flush of puppets in a given hex produces 2d20 puppets. On average, there will be about 22 puppets dropped in the hex.

Downbeat Year for Puppets (7 Years Post-Infection)

The next year, only 1d20 puppets will drop. This will produce 11 puppets, on average. This is the per-hex norm for low-production years. Notably, they are associated with the FIRST BLOSSOM and THIRD BLOSSOM phases of the forest's cycle.

Bakegumo Appear on the Frontiers (7 Years Post-Infection)

The first bakegumo also appear in the hexes adjacent to those infected during the winter of the 6th year after infection.

In an ideal infection, 6d4+9 bakegumo will emerge (average 24), with the 7-hex area producing about 21 bakegumo per year thereafter.

This is the last time that hexes produce 1d4+1 bakegumo. In subsequent years, the infected hexes will produce 1d6+1 bakegumo instead on their first year of production, and 3 per year of sustaining production to follow.

Second Puppet Drop (8 Years Post-Infection)

The initial hex drops 3d20 puppets (avg. 33). This is standard per-hex drop factor for a productive year. The SECOND BLOSSOM phase of the forest's life cycle is on a high-production year.

The Infection Spreads Outward Again (9 Years Post-Infection)

The infection also expands outward into a 3rd hex in the 9th year.

Body Trees Emerge in 2nd Hex (9 Years Post-Infection)

Body tree saplings emerge in the adjacent infected hexes 9 years after initial infection.

3rd Flush of Puppets / 2nd Hexes Drop First Flush of Puppets (10 Years Post-Infection)

The 2nd hexes drop their first flush of puppets 10 years after initial infection. 3rd puppet-fall drops 15d20 puppets across a 7-hex area — 3d20 in the central hex, and 2d20 in each of the 6 adjacent hexes.

This 3rd flush typically produces a drop of about 150 puppets.

Third Hexes Begin to Host Bakegumo (10 Years Post-Infection)

Bakegumo begin to appear in the 3rd-generation hexes during the late 10th year after infection. A total of 12d4+26 bakegumo appear across a 19-hex area.

This averages 56 bakegumo. Thereafter, 38 per year will emerge across the infection.

Periodic Flushes of Puppets (Every 2 Years)

While there is always some growth and puppet production, typically new shoots and new puppets emerge in large numbers every 2 years.

The trees' strategy is a biennial one to make them less predictable. They will shift production by up to 3 months per flush to produce their drops just before the warmest parts of every other local year.

The goal of the forest is to generate activity. The goal of the drops is to seek prey and provoke the kind of behavior that feeds the plants. The forest thus makes puppets in the summer because there are more things for them to interact with during warmer weather.

FIRST BLOSSOM Event: The Trees Flower (17 Years Post-Infection, 13 Years Post-Emergence)

The FIRST BLOSSOM takes place in what would normally be an “off” year; the year after the 6th flush of puppets, the 17th year after the infection. This is the 13th year of visible body tree growth; onlookers with an eye toward omens may be alert for negative developments.

In an undisturbed single-hex infection, the FIRST BLOSSOM event takes place in the central 6-mile wide hex of forest. At the point of FIRST BLOSSOM, the forest’s borders are 2 hexes of body tree overgrowth and 1 hex of body tree saplings deep.

Thus, the 6-mile wide FIRST BLOSSOM event has a buffer of body trees 12 miles deep, with another 6 miles of general awareness and lurking bakegumo outside that.

This FIRST BLOSSOM event produces a large drop of puppets — 6d20 per hex in FIRST BLOSSOM.

It is then followed by a 7th flush of puppets in the next year.

This will finish off most militia-type defenses.

FIRST BLOSSOM marks the climax of the stand’s initial growth activity. Even a few boles of the body trees going into flower are enough to thoroughly infect the plane.

A cone of hexes 6 hexes long and 6 hexes wide at its widest, extending downwind, is immediately infected.

Dreams of Ruin colonies will appear within a 1d12+1 years around all major sources of negative energy on the continent, and within a 2d20 years around all strong negative energy sources on the world.

The spores are at this point also leaking out through the distressed dimensional fabric of the world, and spread through its near ethereal, near astral, and adjacent parallel dimensions, then back into the material plane. Infection in this fashion is difficult to adjudicate and is left to Labyrinth Lord fiat.

FIRST BLOSSOM is intended to be a crucial point in the disease process that provides a deadline for characters to interrupt the progression of the curse. After FIRST BLOSSOM, it’s a world-ending fast/smart zombie apocalypse of a peculiar type, and character efforts will have to shift to survival.

Deteriorating Planar Conditions (Post-FIRST BLOSSOM Event)

The Dreams of Ruin are actually growing in the dimensional fabric of their world. Part of the effect of the flowering is to fully saturate the dimensional fabric around the colony with specimens of the dreams, which consume the substance of the dimension in combination with negative energy in order to fuel the ongoing curse that is their existence.

After this has taken place, the dimensional material is thereafter considerably weaker and tainted by negative planar energies.

It is 10% more likely that *gates* will open in any hex that has ever had a Dreams of Ruin colony go into flower on it.

In addition, the dreams call out to extradimensional beings more Chaotic and evil than Lawful and good, offering shelter. These beings have probably already begun to appear in small numbers, but the pollen released by the FIRST BLOSSOM is a beacon to evil extraplanar beings and symbiotic denizens of the forest. By the time SECOND BLOSSOM takes place, there will be a significant population of these creatures per hex.

2nd FIRST BLOSSOM Event (21 Years Post-Infection, 17 Years Post-Emergence)

In the 21st year of the infection, the hexes infected by the dreams' first outward radiation each experience their own FIRST BLOSSOM events. The hedge around these areas is 2 hexes of overgrowth and 1 hex of saplings deep during this BLOSSOM event.

SECOND BLOSSOM: The Trees Flower (30 Years Post-Infection, 26 Years Post-Emergence)

During and around the 2nd flowering, the population of forest-associated symbiotes and lower-planar opportunists and adventurers has a considerable tendency to grow.

The regular inhabitants of the forest are well-attuned to its cycles, and their own levels of aggression peak just before the climax of the flowering and then plateau through the entire year of the flowering.

Areas that are about to enter, are undergoing, or have just undergone SECOND BLOSSOM events are the most intensely active areas of the forest. They crawl with murdersprites and horrors.

THIRD BLOSSOM: The Trees Flower a Final Time (43 Years Post-Infection, 39 Years Post-Emergence)

The flowering of the dreams' 3rd flush is relatively thin, and the area is generally infested enough that most of the structures within it have fallen into ruin from the action of the elements, been looted beyond use, or have become so overgrown that they cannot be traversed by anything except puppets.

Rapid Decline (47 Years Post-Infection)

The trees fall into rapid decline after the next hex in the chain of infection enters its own THIRD BLOSSOM.

General Senescence (50 Years Post-Infection)

Most of the body trees have died and crumbled into a brittle black ash by the 50th year after the emergence of the first saplings, leaving only an uninhabited wasteland behind. Life spreads quickly back into the forest — indeed it was never banished — and a surge of ecological activity takes place as the areas disrupted by the dark influence of the forest are placed up for grabs by various disaster taxa.

RESEARCH AND LABORATORY

Learning more about the Dreams of Ruin is essential to any attempt to check their spread or survive their ravages. However, the secrets of the dreams are not easily unraveled, for the forces that created them also took the utmost care to safeguard their work against subversion or reverse engineering.

As a result, learning more about the Dreams of Ruin is a massive exercise. A well-heeled magician in a tower could spend decades puzzling out the secrets of the dreams, and emerge powerless to do much more than protect his personal domain against their spread.

Even a powerful magical civilization spanning many worlds or planes would be challenged by the need to unravel the riddle of the Dreams of Ruin.

This chapter details the technical requirements of a magical research establishment dedicated to unraveling the secrets of the dreams. These requirements are quite extensive, and the facility quite expensive.

HOW DO CHARACTERS HAVE THESE IDEAS?

This whole book proposes a complex, structured response to the Dreams of Ruin. Composing the structure of ideas in which the response takes place is itself a major plot point. The book does not deal directly with how the characters discover the structure of the Manhattan Project they are about to attempt to execute.

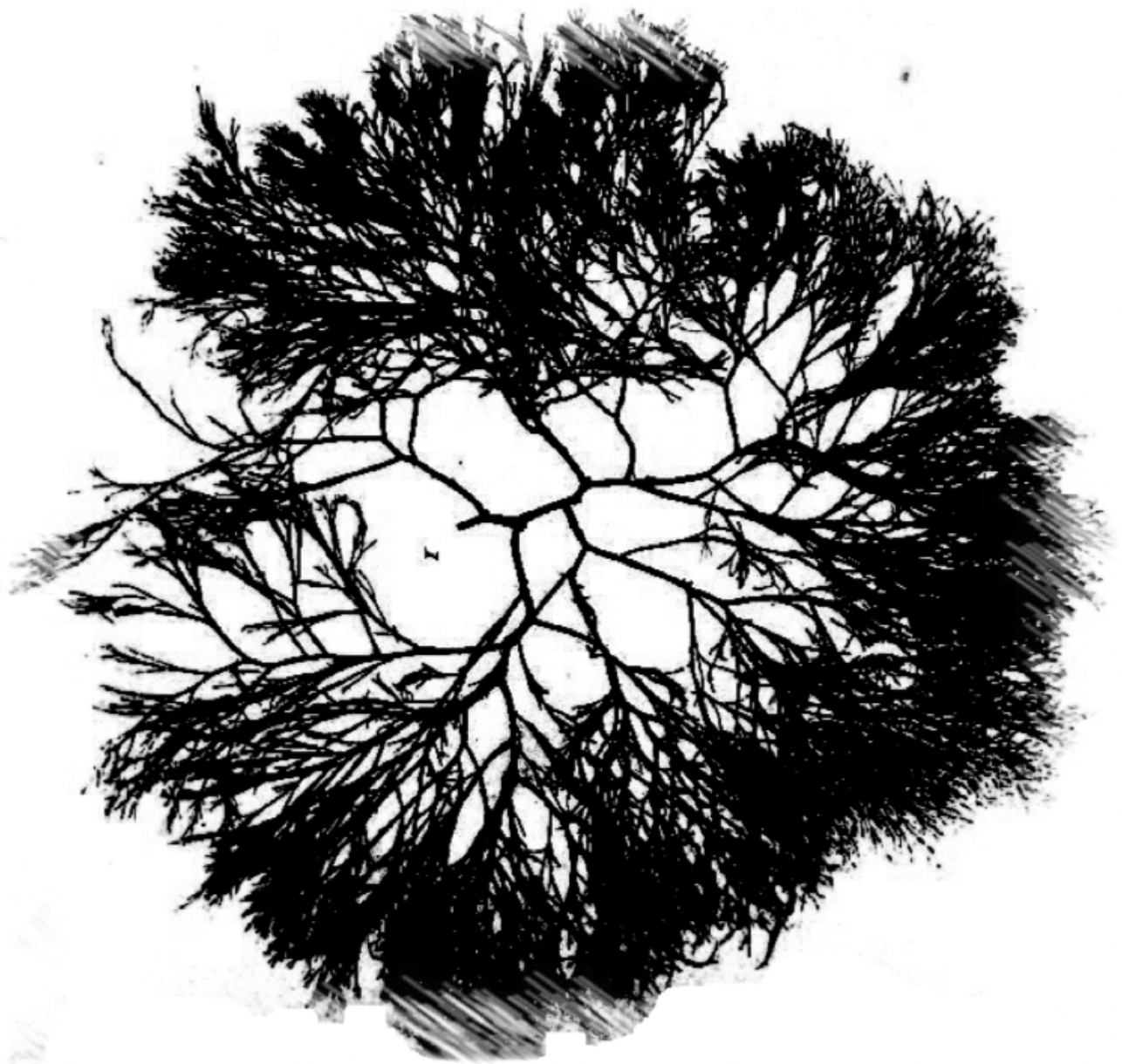
This discovery could come in the form of lore that details how to destroy the artifact-level curse that comprises the dreams. It could be vouchsafed to the characters by a sage or a divine patron. It could be discovered in a lost library, bought from the Hells, or it could be dreamed up by a character with extremely high INT and WIL by Labyrinth Lord (LL) fiat. That characters choose the pattern of response described by this text is a conceit of the document. It may be given to them “for free,” or learning it may be a barrier to beginning meaningful resistance to the dreams at all.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The character(s) directing the research choose whatever focus of attention they desire for the research period. Each team must have a functional arcane imager, and possibly other secrets, depending on what branch of knowledge into the dreams they choose to pursue. Research cannot be pursued without the appropriate gear. Characters will have to develop these devices as well, generally at considerable expense.

Characters who are directing study of the dreams know only how many lores, spells, techniques and subtopics are available in each topic they have conducted basic research for. When research in a topic is completed successfully, draw randomly one of the secrets associated with the topic and reveal it to the characters. They know, obviously, if it is a lore, technology or spell, and how many undiscovered secrets

ARCANE IMAGER 2A
STILL FRAME



BATCH 47, SHOT 3
USER LABEL: "HYPHAL MESH"
SKETCH QUALITY OUTPUT

remain. Not all secrets are created equal, so there is a considerable amount of discretion required in conducting research into the dreams.

“FURTHER PRYING”: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Knowledge about the dreams is divided into nuggets called **Further Pryings**. Characters get the information in chunks. It can include spells, information, clues, recipes for magical items, or related knowledge gained by studying the dreams that will aid the magicians in other, related magical research.

Each Further Prying has an origin, with prying of different origins having different types and degrees of insight. Characters must use the specified methods for research to gain the specified sorts of Further Prying. Real understanding of the dreams will absolutely need to be a multi-disciplinary effort.

When characters researching a topic receive a breakthrough, they will generally receive a Further Prying result, or possibly two. Roll them randomly, or otherwise randomly determine which ones the characters discover.

FIXED NUMBER OF STUDY PERIODS

There are a fixed number of study periods between infection by the dreams and **FIRST BLOSSOM**.

If it is discovered at infection, there are 13 study periods in a marginal laboratory, 52 periods in a normal laboratory, and 156 periods in an excellent laboratory. Time that passes between infection and detection will reduce the number of study periods available.

The Arcane Assumption

This text assumes that the characters are going to be primarily attacking the problem of the dreams from an arcane direction. While other approaches are detailed to some extent, the characters’ main avenue of attack is assumed to be research by magic-users and illusionists.

There are several reasons for this. Arcane magic is the more dynamic, rules-oriented magical system of the sources of power detailed in **Labyrinth Lord**. Arcane has the most powerful spells. Arcane stereotypically has the most practitioners who are sages and scholar-princes with access to massive scholastic resources.

This might not be true in your game. Your campaign might be full of magician-priests of Toth or immortal scholar-druids with powerful intuitive understanding of the world. To keep the text to a sane size, I focused on the most common use-case.

What if arcane magic isn’t the dominant scholarly magical form in your world, unlikely to lead any attack on the secret of the dreams? There’s no reason you couldn’t transfer most of the material of this chapter into druidic or clerical magic. If you’re doing this kind of thing, you’re probably writing a lot of stuff for your world already, and enjoying it — so good luck with that.

ARCANE STUDY OF THE DREAMS

Studying the dreams is a project of immense scope and complexity. The project’s finances and domiciling might be arranged in any number of ways. These matters are left to the LL and players to work out according to their setting. However, any attempt to attack the mystery of the Dreams of Ruin must necessarily have certain basic characteristics:

LABORATORY SUFFICIENCY

To attack the problem of the Dreams of Ruin, the characters need a laboratory (or other base of inquiry) built around the most-scarce resource of inquiry. In this section we have detailed a predefined one called the **arcane imager**.

That laboratory must have a degree of suitability to attacking the problem of the Dreams of Ruin.

Being able to attack the challenge of measuring the activities of the dreams is the defining characteristic of a functional lab, but other specialized devices and instruments of great specificity are required as well.

The ability of their particular fantasy world to support the characters' sudden fascination with research into microscopic-scale bundles of 9th level spells is not a certain thing. It's entirely possible that worlds without a significant population of magic-users above 14th level won't have any laboratories that can approach the degree of precision and magnification required. In most cases, there may be one or two such laboratories in a world.

LABORATORY COST

A lab costs a basic investment, plus a periodic upkeep for every research period. During periods when the lab is out of use, you'll obviously need to mothball and guard it, and it's subject to robbery, looting and invasion. The mothballing costs 10% of the operating costs per research period foregone, and the costs don't include whatever battle automata, fanatical humanoid death cult or secret society of lower-level wizards that the characters park on the site to keep an eye on things.

The lab also requires a facility of some size, which will also have costs associated with it. Not just the gear, but the research campus with housing close to work spaces, the administrative apparatus, and the marshaling yards and testing areas required. This normally costs an additional million gold pieces, and 10,000 gp per month upkeep.

Mostly labs will have a rural location, but it's not impossible that they will be on an urban campus: probably a school of magic, major worship complex or "forbidden city" type administrative campus the effort has co-opted. For example, characters who are god-kings and building monuments to themselves in hopes of engendering ascent to immortality might use their primary temple complex as the base of their effort.

Obviously, a project this large will need the consent of the local ruler to go forward undisrupted, and this may require diplomacy or subjugation.

LABORATORY QUALITY

Quality of the lab determines research period.

Marginal Lab A marginal lab offers a 1-year research period. A good example of a marginal lab would be the best private lab available on a moderately well-developed high-fantasy world. If you are some uber she-witch ruling a high-fantasy kingdom on the shores of the inner sea, with the whole kingdom's economy pointed right at your fancies — this is the caliber of lab you have. Excellent but isolated labs also fall into this category. No matter how good the wizard and the gear, being locked away on a demiplane with no access to the greater markets will cramp any magician's style.

A marginal lab costs 1,000,000 gp to establish, and costs 100,000 gp per research period to operate. It can operate in a small city-state, university or demi-plane.

Good Lab A good lab offers a quarterly research period. This would be the best private lab available on a really prominent multi-planetary or multi-planar nexus of trade. A Manhattan Project-type effort by an alliance of powerful magicians on an advanced high-fantasy world might be able to achieve this, but it will most likely require multiple planetary economies to match this level of effort, primarily in terms of rare magical materials required.

A good lab costs 100 million gp to establish, and 1 million gp per research period to operate. It requires a reservation about the size of a small province, in total, but the buildings will be only a substantial campus within that space. This area may be spatially distributed if transportation capacities are sufficiently advanced.

Good labs generally have rural locations for operational safety, and use a *gate* or teleportal to improve market access.

Fantastic Lab A fantastic lab offers a monthly research period. You don't have a fantastic lab. This is what a interplanetary demi-human government stretching over hundreds of well-developed planets, with extremely advanced magi-tech, would put together when it devoted its entire national infrastructure to the service of the project.

Other potential sponsors of a fantastic lab would be one of the greater gods, or a powerful arch-devil — a fantastic lab would be how the king of Hell's effort would be classed if he made a serious go at cracking the Dreams of Ruin's code.

A fantastic lab requires 1 trillion gp to establish, and costs 1 billion gp per research period to operate. It is about the size and scope of a small nation or large and affluent province; however, it may be highly distributed and spatially diffuse.

If you are still *flying* between locations rather than using *teleport*-type *gates* you set up as needed — or using raw *teleport* at will — you are probably not powerful enough to have a fantastic lab.

MARKET PROXIMITY

Attacking the Dreams of Ruin is not a project in which the characters will lock themselves in a laboratory over a weekend or a few weeks and come out with an answer. There will be month after month of research, and — at a minimum! — hundreds of thousands of gold pieces in expenses will be spent at the market as the researchers procure first one rarity, then another.

The laboratory must have a close relative location compared to a large inter-planetary or inter-planar grade source of magical goods. Even if or when there is an established laboratory of sufficient sophistication, the project will have to attach itself to some sort of industrial base that can provide fine enough instrumentation for these endeavors on an ongoing basis.

Which city is big enough depends on the LL's ruling. It has to have regular traffic from other planes with a distinctly mercantile bent. There don't have to be constant arteries of trade, but there have to be at least periodic bulk exchanges of magical goods and rarities to satisfy shortages. You are probably going to declare the big magical metropolis in your campaign setting meets these needs, although there might be quests involved in developing particular trade flows.

You could decide to designate another location remote from the regular venue of events as the source of research materials. There are a number of reasons to do this. The decisions involved are mostly narrative and covered in the Running the Dreams chapter.

Arcane Imager

Examination of the Dreams of Ruin requires magnification of subjects beyond that provided by glass lenses, or *detect magic* and *eyes of magnification*. The material to be inspected must be held in stasis and examined minutely. Then the stasis must be gradually released, and the behavior of the object of study carefully observed over incredibly minute periods of its subjective time.

A wide variety of arcane probes must be available, and the device must be controlled by thought alone, for no dial or switch could be precise enough to represent the infinitesimal analog adjustments necessary.

Arcane imagers are the process limiters of the investigation of the dreams. You can have one active team per arcane imager you provide, although there are some administrative limits based on quality. Even with unlimited imagers, excellent labs will max out at about 6 teams, good labs at 4, and marginal labs will have difficulties sponsoring more than 2 teams.

BASIC IMAGER REQUIREMENTS

These are the requirements to build a basic arcane imager.

GP Expenditure:

10,000,000 gp

Fabrication Time:

6+(20-lowest of lead character's level or INT) months to fabricate.

Requires:

Energy Source This might be a harness built to draw geomantic power from a ley line nexus, the harnessed fury of an extradimensional *gate*, or an unknowable occult dynamo from before time, but the process requires "a vast amount of magical power." If the LL doesn't have such a high-magic area detailed already, this is a great time to make one up. If there's no space for one in the world, that merely means the characters will have to move their experiments to the nearest convenient parallel dimension.

Energy sources are required by all the arcane imagers. Phasing between the different imagers can stretch the power supply thin. At a minimum, 1 is required for every 3 imagers and 1 per 2 is ideal.

Lenses of Magnification (6) These magical lenses are used in part of the imaging process. Usually it requires 3 pairs to make each imager.

Gem of Seeing These are the working materials for the imager. The imager can use as many as 12 charges during a day of operation, but usually uses 1d3. A steady supply of *gems of seeing* is a must to keep inquiry into the Dreams of Ruin moving forward. 60 charges worth a month are a minimum for smooth operation.

Crystal Ball with ESP One *crystal ball* is required per imager, where it forms the interface mechanism. Multiple *crystal balls* allow shared observation. 3 per imager is ideal.

Time Stop Ready access to *time stop* effects are required for imager functioning. This can be provided by 18th-level+ magic-user(s) or the characters may use a great deal of dust from the axle of the world or the hourglass of our lives. The constant need for *time stops* is probably the most serious ongoing demand of the process.

Characters may find their continuous temporal distortion attracts unwanted attention, either from temporal authorities, or from temporal entities drawn to the disturbance in order to feed.

Living Statue, Any One of these is typically harnessed into the device to provide rapid sketch illustrations or 3D sculptures of whatever the character is looking at through the imager. Multi-armed bone statues are the most favored for this role, and quality imagers may have ranks of scribes to capture multi-frame images.

Direct Magical Interface Requires Access to Certain Spells:

A "hack" can be created that allows the imagers to operate without use of *gems of seeing* or *crystal balls*. Instead, the following spells are required whenever a character is going to make an observation:

Arcane Eye (4th-level magic-user spell) This is a modified version of the spell designed to look through the device. It will need to be developed — a relatively trivial matter, but one that must nevertheless be attended to.

True Seeing (5th-level cleric spell) Cast on the character making the observation.

This isn't as onerous as it might seem, other than requiring a cleric to cast when observations are taking place. The character casting the *time stops* can also cast *arcane eye*. However, it makes operating the imager more burdensome and increases the possibility of a mishap because the timing is more human and less mechanical.

Imager Operation Requires the Following Actions:

Casting 2 *time stops* per day (18th-level magic-user) or providing 60 *time stops* per research period (from item). Like the *arcane eye*, the *time stop* is also a special version designed for casting on the imager, which can vary the intensity and degree of the *time stop* effect applied. Developing this additional spell is not so trivial as modifying *arcane eye*.

Casting 2 *true seeings* per day (10th-level cleric) or providing 60 *true seeings* per research period (3 new *gems of seeing* per month).

40 *wand of negation* uses per research period, or the casting of 40 *dispel magic*s per research period. *Dispel magic* is only suitable as a substitute for the *wand of negation* if it dispels to 20th level or higher, and it must also be specially modified for casting on the unit. Lower-level arcane magicians are able to participate but must use *dispel magic* to recharge the *wand of negation* rather than casting directly.

Items That Specifically Aid These Efforts

There are a number of items that are specifically useful in researching the Dreams of Ruin. Securing these resources can considerably improve characters' research potential, so they may serve as motivation for quests or other adventures. Particularly important is a specimen of the *Deck of Many Things*, which is instrumental in studying the true nature of the dreams. In addition to being useful to the enterprise, the *Deck of Many Things* also produces a multitude of plot events on its own. This recommends it as an addition to the game.

However, the LL should prepare for some of the results. When a soul is trapped elsewhere or the enmity of a prince of Hell results from a draw, you should already know what that means. Don't let a draw produce a broken game; you can already see

what the different draws from the deck can produce. Prepare interesting results for them.

Luckstone Luckstones modify the Breakthrough Result roll.

Necklace of Adaptation Necklaces of adaptation allow protected characters to halve all sources of random elemental damage encountered during the research.

Deck of Many Things Having the *Deck of Many Things* gives a good bonus — potentially too good — but also has some potentially terrible effects. The deck exists to tempt the bravado of the unwise, and impulsive draws are a reality of life around it.

DIVINE STUDY OF THE DREAMS

Further Prying (Arcane) gets the hard-won secrets of the dreams, from nature and from the concealing efforts of the dreams' original creators. In contrast, Further Prying (Divine) represents uncovering what is already known. The matter is known to some deity, or some servant of some deity, or recorded in some holy text.

The character's attempts to gain these secrets refer instead to the political maneuverings required to pry them loose from the individuals who possess them. Meeting these demands will typically require fulfilling a quest of some sort for the entity that possesses the secrets.

Not all worshippers of all gods are created equal as far as Further Prying (Divine) goes. Characters who worship or approach gods of knowledge, magic, secrets, life, health, medicine, the occult and the underworld are the ones best poised to know and understand the dynamics of the dreams. Note that this can put the character in some dangerous and/or morally ambiguous situations.

Characters who are devotees of other sorts of deities may have to approach allied deities with the appropriate portfolio, or confront the fact that they may better serve as a healer for the research effort.

DRUIDIC STUDY OF THE DREAMS

It requires a year of residence in the Forest of Woe to develop a druidic connection to the dreams. This generally requires magic items or external spell support to do, and entails risk to the druid in any case, as they must live in natural commune with the forest.

After that, developing additional understanding requires 1 year of residence in the Forest of Woe per acclimated druid of level 8+ in residence. Each druid/year spent in commune with the Forest of Woe produces a Further Prying result.

Any druid who knows a druidic prayer related to the forest can teach them to an oriented druid at the rate of 1 prayer per week, which must be spent in the forest.

Each year, roll a d20, with the druid succeeding by rolling equal to or under their level. A successful save indicates a year of residence without mishap. Mishap is a roleplaying encounter that must be played out, or another complication that must otherwise be endured. Then the character makes another save. Mishaps keep happening until the character saves successfully.

How much you advertise this rule is something you must determine yourself as a LL. You may have the druid make the roll first, and let them discern what the rules of the roll are from the results you report. Young druids will probably have a lot of adventures trying to live with the "grizzly bears" of the Forest of Woe.

However, if a large druid presence can be sustained (many replacements, generous use of *raise dead*) the secrets of the forest will quickly reveal themselves.

Research Breakthrough System

DETERMINE CRITICAL ITEM

To determine what item is needed to advance the process, roll on AEC tables as follows (1d10 to determine):

1-2 Random Feature (AEC, p. 148) + Random Characteristic (AEC, p. 149)

3-4 Random Container Contents (AEC, p. 149) + Random Characteristic (AEC, p. 149)

5-10 Alchemy or Magic-User Furnishings (AEC, p. 149) + Random Characteristic (AEC, p. 149)

Roll once per research period, and more often if so directed by a breakthrough result table roll.

DETERMINE ITEM PRICE

If it is available, the value of the item is 3d10 x 10,000 gp.

DETERMINE BREAKTHROUGH RESULT

When the stuck investigation satisfies its chokepoint need, it experiences a possible breakthrough. Roll 1d20, apply modifiers to the right, and consult the Breakthrough Table.

No research is predictable. On a 1-2, subtract an additional 1d10. On a 19-20, roll and add 1d10.

Breakthrough Table

10-: *Failure!* The research period is wasted.

11-20: *Success!* Gain one Further Prying (Arcane) in the category you were studying.

21-30: *Breakthrough Narrative!* Make a Breakthrough Narrative Subtable roll.

31+: *Diaster!* Roll on the Lab Disaster Subtable.

Roll Modifiers

Lead researcher is illusionist: +/-1d6

Luckstone: +/-1

Plethora of Luckstones (genuine profusion; one for every researcher and plenty hung around "just for luck"): +/-2

+/- Modifiers may be applied however the rolling character desires. All or only part of the bonus may be applied.

Cheap Imager: Using cast spells for *true seeing* and *arcane eye*: -1 (each)

Shoddy Imager: Using cast spell for *time stop* and *dispel magic*: +1d8 (each)

Advanced imager: +2

Deck of Many Things present for study: +1d6

Per roll after first in research term: +1d20

Per successful roll (cumulative): -5 *Reset by failure*

Paid 2x rolled value for premium goods: +1

Lead researcher is level 18+: +1

Lead researcher intelligence modifier: As regular bonus, i.e., 18 provides: +3

Per additional magician researcher, level 12+: +1

Per 2 additional magician researchers, level 6-11: +1

Lavishly provided with magically insignificant underlings and helpers: +1

The maximum number of researchers a team leader can direct is equal to the "retainers" value of their CHA. These researchers are retainers for the duration and characters who have established henchmen will have to choose between researchers and their regular cronies.

BREAKTHROUGH NARRATIVE SUBTABLE

3- *Personal Crisis*: Roll on the Personal Crisis subtable.

4-5 *Sorcerous Rivalries*: Magicians who are not associated with the program see the degree of power and prestige that the characters are concentrating in one location and feel their own mega-magical grandstanding is being granted insufficient spotlight. The characters may be of long acquaintance with their new rivals, or they may have never heard of them. Regardless, this rival is significant enough that they must be dealt with. They may have their own ideas about the dreams, they may covet the resources the character has gathered, or they may pursue the beef purely for the sake of bad-boy wizard credibility.

6 *Demonic Stalker*: A succubus / incubus haunts a random researcher. They will make themselves known with a *charm* attack.

If the characters have effective ethereal wardens, the succubus / incubus will haunt the edge of the characters' perimeter, observing and seeking lone individuals to pick off. It may attempt to bait pursuers into a battle with a gated-in balor and the balor's own nalfeshnee *gate*.

7 *Chaotic Cult Activity* The character's efforts become the fixation of one or more Chaotic cults. These cults may seek to infiltrate and disrupt the project, launch raids or attacks on it, or undermine the political support required for such a vast undertaking.

8 *Additional Chokepoint Emerges* The characters must provide an additional random item to fulfill a chokepoint.

9-10 *Potential Management Brilliance* The researcher leading the project must make 2 out of 3 INT rolls. If they do, the effort receives 2 Further Prying (Arcane) results. If they fail, the effort produces no meaningful result for the study period.

11-12 *Command Judgment* The researcher leading the project must make 2 out of 3 WIL rolls. If they do, the effort receives 2 Further Prying (Arcane) results. If they fail, the effort produces no meaningful result for the study period.

14-15 *Personality Conflict* Opposed CHA rolls between two researchers. Randomly determine who is right; the conflict is purely political. If the character with the right answer wins, the research period produces a Further Prying (Arcane) result. If the character with the right answer fails, the research period is wasted. The next research period's roll is made at -10 as the project pursues bad ideas with vigor.

16-17 *Possible Disaster!* A random researcher must make a (d6) STR (1-2), DEX (3-4), or INT (5-6) check. If they succeed, they take (1d10)d6 damage, and can make a saving throw versus energy attacks for half damage.

If they fail, 1d10 random researchers take (1d10)d6 in damage from a random elemental type. A saving throw versus energy attacks reduces the effect to half damage. Roll the amount of damage separately for each researcher.

18+ *Fleeting Opportunity* Random researcher must make 2 out of 3 INT checks. This is an illusionist's game. If the team is led by an illusionist, make the roll at a -2 bonus. If the character doing the research is an illusionist, make the roll at -3.

If they succeed, gain 2 Further Prying (Arcane) results. If they fail, they gain only 1.

RELATIONSHIP: LABORATORY LOCATION AND DISASTER RISK

The effort of arcane research into the dreams will necessarily take place on a large reservation. That reservation will be guarded by an elite force of magical or high-tech combatants. This is a given, and the expense of the matter is left to the LL to evaluate; it could involve anything from warbands of 17th-level **Labyrinth Lord** characters, or dozens of WW2-era Soviet infantry divisions and mechanized corps.

If there is an excellent quality location, or an excellent garrison, then modify the lab disaster roll by -2. If there is both an excellent location and an excellent garrison, modify it by -3. This doesn't prevent the disasters from happening; it just helps lower the number of them that have devastating effects for the surrounding world.

Excellent Location

An excellent location is one that has several strongpoints linked by a variety of swift means of transport such as *gates*, *teleport*, and flying magic or machines. It is well-protected against scrying and when the technology is available, it is shielded by a numbness jammer or a prayer broadcaster. The staff has been subjected to, at an absolute minimum, forced burn-through via exposure to the dreams. Some form of protection from *psychic numbness* is essential for such a location to be obtained.

Excellent Garrison

An excellent garrison would be one that had the ability to *see invisible*, use *ESP*, has access to direct damage magic that has a reasonable chance of killing powerful foes, and is generally otherwise suitable for securing a site that may develop the enmity of powerful Chaotic beings and covetous arcane rivals.

RELATIONSHIP: MARKET ACCESS VS. ENVIRONMENTAL PERIL

Rural vs. Urban is a choice of + or - on the disaster table, where low values are personal tragedies and high ones are civic crises.

Being there +3 on the disaster roll, -5 on the item price roll.

Troublesome gate -2 on the disaster roll, -3 on the item price roll.

Freely traversable gate -3 on the disaster roll, -4 on the item price roll.

Within 2 days of major trade hub +1 on the disaster roll, -3 on the item price roll.

PERSONAL CRISIS SUBTABLE

Random researcher suffers:

1: *Pregnancy/Adoption*. A randomly determined researcher becomes pregnant, impregnates a regular sex partner, adopts a child or otherwise become embroiled in the challenges of caring for a dependent life form.

2-3: *Severe Illness*.

1-4 *Heart Attack* Too much stress. A random key researcher is either (1-7) incapacitated or (8-10) dead, and must drop out of the project for 1d6 research periods.

5-8: *Black Breath* Lose 1 level per month until dead, which puts the character beyond resurrection as their life force completely dissipates. Can be cured by *wish*, *limited wish*, *restoration* or death (not from black breath) followed by *resurrection*.

9-10: *Other Illness* Mummy rot, green slime erosion, magical radiance exposure. Massive research projects into dimensional-scale curses sure do present a lot of opportunities for hazard. A (1-7) randomly determined researcher, or (8-10) 1d6 randomly determined researchers, succumb to some such terrible fate. LL determines what.

4: *Family Crisis*. A partner, parent or child of a major researcher:

1-4 Leaves them.

5-6 Dies.

7-10 Falls severely ill.

5: *Intense Relationship*. Two random researchers develop a randomly determined intense relationship:

1-3 Love

4-6 Hatred

7-10 Suspicion/rivalry

6-7: *Addiction*. 1d6 major researchers become hooked on magical drugs or influences. Note this can potentially include things like succubus orgies, thrill-suicides and other such magically sophisticated vices.

8-10: *Gnawing Insanity*. A not-uncommon ailment of the characters. This does not indicate that 1 person is afflicted, but that a serious outbreak of it occurs.

LAB DISASTER SUBTABLE

1 is purely personal doom. 20 is purely civic doom. Top to bottom of the chart is not good vs. bad; it is inward- vs. outward-facing problems.

1 or lower: *You Touched the Demon Core!* Random researcher is dead, no saving throw. Returning them to life requires (1d10) *resurrection* (1-4) *wish* (5-8) or they may be lost without hope of return from perdition (9-10).

2: *Imager Mishap!* The imager is broken. It will take 1d100x10,000 gp to repair, and 1d4+1 critical items.

3: *The Imp of the Perverse!* A randomly determined individual is seized by a moment of bravado and draws 1d4 times from the *Deck of Many Things*, if it is available. If the deck is not present, then a *wish* or *limited wish* is used (1d10) frivolously (1-4), foolishly (5-8), or to great destructive effect in ill-advised wrath (9-10).

4: *Level Drain!* 1d4 random researchers are exposed to a burst of negative energy (1d10). Researchers lose 1 level (1-4), 2 levels (5-8) or 1d20 levels (9-10). Roll for each researcher to determine level loss.

5: *Energy Discharge!* 1d6 researchers are exposed to one of fire, cold, lightning, acid or poison. They take (1d10)d6 damage. Roll to determine damage individually. *Necklace of adaptation* causes the characters to take half, roll saving throw for 1/4.

6: *Death Spell!* 4d8 HD of researchers and their assistants with 8 HD or less are exposed to *death spell* radiation. Characters make a saving throw versus death to avoid effect. Those who fail are slain, but can be *raised* normally.

7: *Lab Fire!* Lab quality is degraded. Excellent labs become good labs. Good labs become marginal labs. Marginal labs become inoperative. Repairing the lab costs 50% of its initial observation.

8: *Prismatic Encapsulation!* The imager is encapsulated in a permanent *prismatic sphere*. This doesn't harm the imager, but it traps 1d4 researchers within the sphere. Trapped researchers must roll a saving throw versus death or come into contact with the unanticipated sphere. The only way to get into or out of the sphere is to break it color by color according to the usual method.

9-11: *Expensive Accident!* 1d4 critical components are broken and operations for the research period are brought to an end.

12-14: *Lab Contamination.* The hex in which the lab area exists is contaminated with the Dreams of Ruin. Bakegumo will begin to appear late in the 2nd year, and the miasma of ruin will appear when the first saplings come up in year 5.

15: *Mass Teleport!* The 1d100 individuals closest to the incident (determine randomly for very low numbers) are each teleported 1d100 miles in a direction determined by a 1d12:

1-8 Teleported in one of the 8 directions of the compass, starting with N and proceeding clockwise, so that NW is 8.

9-10 Plane shifted to a random area of the astral plane tainted with evil and negative plane energy.

11 Teleported up.

12 Teleported down.

16-17: *Random Damage*. 1d100 individuals nearest to the incident (determine victims randomly for very low numbers) take 1d100 damage of a random elemental type each.

18: *Prismatic Break!* 1d1000 individuals within 1d10 miles are struck by a *prismatic spray*, as per AEC, p. 53. Roll a d8 and apply the effects as normal.

19: *Gate! Gate* to the lower planes is opened. By default, this results in an incursion of demons, but the LL can roll on the Forest Special Encounters table, or initiate a specific encounter if they have established lower-planar enemies for the game or wish to use a particular enemy.

20 or higher: *Negative Energy Discharge Incident*. Are there 1d100x(1,000) people under 4+1 HD within 1d100 miles? Not anymore! The victims may be (1d10) dead (1-4), or transformed into ghouls (5-8) or wights (9-10). This may modify the laboratory's ability to obtain parts and/or cause political difficulties for the character.

RANDOM ELEMENTAL TYPE TABLE

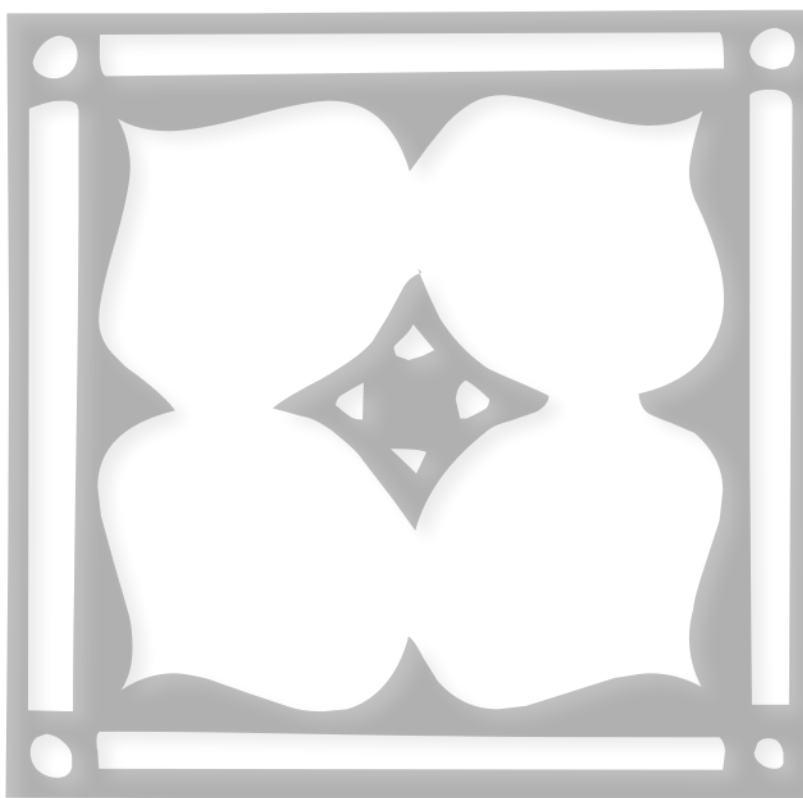
1-2 *Fire*

3-4 *Cold*

5-6 *Electricity*

7-8 *Acid*

9-10 *Poison*



RESEARCH FUNDAMENTALS

Good	Use	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Lab, Marginal	Basic	1,000,000	100,000/ research period
Lab, Good	Basic	100,000,000	1,000,000/ research period
Lab, Fantastic	Basic	1,000,000,000,000	1,000,000,000/ research period
Arcane Imager	Rqd. for Inquiry	10,000,000	60 Time Stop + 60 True Seeing/ research period
Project Reservation	Security	1,000,000	120,000/ year
Garrison	Security	Varies	Varies
Chokepoint Item	Key to Roll	30,000- 300,000	0



BASIC RESEARCH AND FURTHER PRYING

The following text describes each of the different elements of the Dreams of Ruin, and how they all work together to form the complete organism.

The following format is used for this chapter:

THE OBJECT IN QUESTION

A discussion of the object in question.

BASIC RESEARCH

This is the information always gained by the first Further Prying (Arcane), Further Prying (Divine) or Further Prying (Druidic) result regarding a topic; all prying reveals the same fundamental lore. Basic research on the dreams never requires special equipment beyond the arcane imager and the working laboratory. The major limitation is that specimens must be available for study. Most components of the dreams are in plentiful supply — even when the infestation is young. Only bakegumo are likely to present a challenge due to their cunning and their relatively small numbers. However, by the time a major research effort is mounted, they're likely to be far too numerous to evade capture.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

This section includes a discussion of what must be done in order to isolate and examine the object in question. Getting experimental control over the elements of the dreams is the core of gaining further complex knowledge related to their operation. Discovering each object's secrets offers a selection of lore and bonuses related to interaction with it.

GEAR REQUIRED

Discusses the tools and technologies required to examine the object in question. The text as a rule discusses only one option, or at most a small variety of options. Obviously there are other ways that instruments might control and measure the object or entity in question. In the interest of sanity, we detail only one. If you have a brilliant idea as Labyrinth Lord (LL), then use that instead or allow both as an array of answers. If you have no good ideas, use the one we provide.

SPELLS REQUIRED

These spells are required for the research of the object in question. They will be used either during the manufacture of the magic items that actually act as sensors, or as castings made during the course of inquiry. The spells listed are the minimum casting possible.

MANUFACTURING EXAMINATION EQUIPMENT

Acquiring this gear is not coterminous with the research efforts. Invention and fabrication of the magic items required for further inquiry into specific facets of the problem must take place in parallel with the primary research effort. Acquiring the gear can be easy if it is available on a cash-and-carry basis in a major magical market. It can also be a chance for the LL to introduce other quests and complications outside the linear arc of the research.



SPORES

The spores are one of the key elements of the dreams. They are the vector of its contagion. The spores are in many ways a compact life form of their own, capable of reproduction independent of the dreams. Understanding the spores goes a long way toward understanding the dreams' contagion.

BASIC RESEARCH

The actual "spores" have one of two phases they occupy, in a manner somewhat similar to a phase spider.

One is as an organic "seed" about the size of a granule of pollen or large bacillus, made of tightly coiled chemical compounds.

The other is as a mote of tightly coiled magical energy of like size. Visible to *detect magic* and powerful magnification, this is a self-perpetuating spell operating on principles strongly similar to those of conventional life — that is, encoding information and fabrication capacity. It skates and bobs along eddies of magical power.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

This terrifying, bio-magically active contagion must be held in isolation yet subjected to various magical influences and effects at will.

GEAR REQUIRED

The spores are generally kept in *temporal stasis* in a dimensional isolation bottle. The testing and observations equipment must have the magical ability to manipulate the material held within it.

It costs 2,500,000 gp to fabricate this magical isolation bubble. It must be powered by burning 100,000 gp of gems every research period it is in use. Other methods of powering it may be found, including use of magical spells to power arcane dynamos, tapping into powerful dimensional or geomantic energy flows, or whatever else the LL permits. However, arcane power consumption is significant and can serve as a limiter to the device if the LL desires.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Arcane eye, chain lightning, continual light, dispel magic, ESP, floating disc, maze, limited wish, magic aura, prismatic sphere, secret chest, telekinesis, permanency, imprisonment, spiritwrath, identify

ADDITIONAL LORE

Further Prying (Arcane): Each spore can undergo a limited form of reproduction with neighboring spores in the same phase, and produce offspring in the opposite phase. So, for example, if magical-phase spores are left in proximity, they will soon form physical pollen granules. Physical pollen granules, left alone, will in turn produce a swarm of magical motes. In this fashion, both magical and physical phase spores soon proliferate in areas where there are only a few of either type.

Further Prying (Arcane): Energy to perform this miraculous act is drawn from negative energy sources. The pollen will lie dormant, and eventually wither and die, under positive plane influences. However, negative energy plane sources cause the spores of the dreams to both activate and multiply. Its living phase is similar to the throgghrin in this regard. In its magic phase, it is similar to a shadow. Characters who wish to study that which is alive, yet dead, yet alive, will find their studies considerably advanced by their activities here. This is a good boost along the road to lichdom, or raising a kingdom of the dead, or even more esoteric things.

Further Prying (Arcane): The pollen can itself reproduce and engage in phase-transitions in new environments. This allows it to enter an environment through the astral plane, be tracked as physical pollen all over a world, and then enter the ethereal as an arcane mote, all before the first body trees have emerged.

Further Prying (Arcane): This effect is insanely complicated. It was done mostly with *limited wishes* and *time stops* and *temporal stasis* and *prismatic sphere* and *maze* and phenomenal levels of technical control, probably by some form of spellcasting automaton or spell-that-casts-other-spells. Characters who are interested in the

peculiar intensity of 8th- and 9th-level magic-user spells will have their understanding of the advanced theoretical underpinnings of magic considerably advanced by these studies.

THE BODY TREES

The body trees are a primarily-magical manifestation of the curse, and do not appear to perform most life functions under close examination. Their lush black leaves absorb negative energy and their graceful boles act as resonance generators for the miasma of ruin. The body trees do not have a system for distributing water and starch — arcane energy is what flows through their substance. The boles are a single uniform material through and through.

BASIC RESEARCH

Like regular trees, the body trees are masts to hold up energy-collecting filter membranes. However, these trees do not gather light energy and carbon dioxide, but negative energy emanations and the atmosphere of decay.

It is for this reason that they bear bountiful leaves while indoors, and have no tendency to seek the sun. The leaves and growth tend to turn toward sources of negative energy. After the Dreams of Ruin have first ravaged a world, locations of strong negative energy are marked by continued body tree growth even as the infestation dies in most places.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The almost-entirely-magical nature of the trees is not entirely evident at first examination. Attempts to unravel the body trees will also have a strongly life-sciences oriented component required to rule out normal life functions.

GEAR REQUIRED

The body tree works is a mobile laboratory that sets up around groves of the trees. Initial efforts are life-oriented, but the bulk of the effort is focused on technical magic after initial efforts show the body trees are unrelated to any known

form of life, and are more like a phantasmal monster than a real organism.

The body tree works costs 500,000 gp to put together. It costs 100,000 gp per research period, but it is prone to destruction by random terrors of the forest. LLs should apply a regular chance for them to be attacked or destroyed.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Enlarge, floating disc, identify, protection from evil, scribe, unseen servant, detect evil, detect invisible, ESP, locate object, rope trick, clairvoyance, tiny hut, arcane eye, hallucinatory terrain

ADDITIONAL LORE

Further Prying (Arcane): The body trees have a network of arcane runes worked into the material of their bodies for gathering and distributing negative energy. The various nodules, fruits, nests and weapons that grow from the tree are not growths; they're symbiotic organisms that attach to the tree through various energy distribution points on its surface, or the product of such organisms.

Further Prying (Arcane): The magic roots of the body trees seem to extend into the ethereal, but ethereal examination shows a mirror structure appearing to extend off into the material world. The trees have their roots in some other power, seemingly outside the scope of arcane theory.

Further Prying (Druidic): The boles are impregnated lightly with the spores of the dreams. Anywhere they are cut or dragged, they will infect. Whenever they are burned, the spores are carried aloft in the smoke. If they are cut and cast into water, the dreams will infect everywhere downstream of where the cuttings come to rest.

Further Prying (Druidic): The body trees do not appear to behave in a fashion similar to any known living tree. While they have "roots" that extend into the material around them to anchor their physical form, it is clear that their life force lies elsewhere.

BAKEGUMO

Bakegumo are the first inhabitants of the dreams to appear, the most magically-spiritually active, and have a unique life cycle. It stands to reason they are the most frequently captured and examined.

BASIC RESEARCH

These spiders are the caretakers and builders of the forest, as well as its native shamans and spiritualists. They propitiate it with meditative prayer, and spin webs that serve as conduits and induction meshes for negative material plane energies.

They spread the seedlings and young growths of the various hundreds of companion species from one place in the forest to the next.

They range out far before the eaves of the body trees, marking areas suitable to infestation by spreading the spores of the Dreams of Ruin.

The bakegumo feed off the broadcast radiance of the forest, and the energies their webs gather independently, and the life forces of individuals they catch and kill with their crushing grip. They are sexless, hunting for the love of killing, and propitiating the forest out of serene love for the context that gives them shape and purpose.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Understanding of the bakegumo requires samples held in isolation. The ghost-spiders must be vivisected (or dissected if a live specimen cannot be obtained, or if the experimenter is squeamish about live-subject dissection). As bakegumo are unable to communicate verbally, their minds must be probed. They must be subject to arcane and physical testing and examination, and their capabilities discerned. They must be observed in their natural habitat, or in a setting they believe to be their natural habitat.

GEAR REQUIRED

Magic-User Version: *Arcane Vivisector* (You can call it an arcane dissector if you're squeamish.)

Illusionist Version: *Illusory Life Simulator*

Both of these devices operate along roughly similar principles. In general, rather than capture large numbers of specimens, fairly small numbers are captured and then replicated so that individuals can form the control group of themselves in experiments.

It costs 1,500,000 gp to construct an arcane vivisector and 1,500,000 gp to construct an illusory life simulator. The vivisector requires the combustion of gems worth 100,000 gp per research period. The life simulator requires only 10,000 gp per research period.

SPELLS REQUIRED (MAGIC-USER)

Identify, imprisonment, clone, simulacrum, magic jar, trap the soul, spiritwrath, ESP, rope trick, feign death, dispel magic, clairaudience, clairvoyance, haste, tiny hut, tongues, suggestion, charm person, hallucinatory terrain, faithful bound, animate dead, feeblemind, secret chest, dweomer of rage, reincarnate, legend lore, charm monster, charm plants, grasping hand, permanency

SPELLS REQUIRED (ILLUSIONIST)

True seeing, conjure animals, greater phantasmal monsters, nondetection, prismatic spray, implant emotion, illusory stamina, confusion, major creation, maze, greater shadow evocation, veil, permanent spectral force, programmed spectral force

ADDITIONAL LORE

Further Prying (Arcane): While they are "living" beings with volition enough that you can't blow them up with anti-golem effects, the reality is, bakegumo are sorcerous constructs. There has never been a "real" bakegumo, and they don't behave very much like what we'd call life. They're the wind-up strangler-priests of the forest running on broadcast power.

Further Prying (Arcane): Bakegumo are formed over 24 hours in ethereal wombs that exist below the surface of the ethereal "soil." They are then birthed into the material world, where they seem to appear by bursting out of the soil. They start forming at sunset on one day, and the womb

splits and gives birth to them on sunset the next day.

Further Prying (Arcane): In creating the bakegumo, *crushing hand*, *unseen servant*, *animate dead* and *trap the soul* were cast by a powerful magic-user.

Advanced phantasmal monsters, *summon shadow* and multiple *limited wishes* were cast by the project-leading illusionist.

Further Prying (Arcane): An effect similar to *simulacrum* takes effect when the dreams give birth to the bakegumo, with the bakegumo gaining their shape from shadows and negative energy emanations. They take shape in ethereal cocoons over the course of a full day. They stir into existence on sunset of the first night.

Further Prying (Arcane): Careful analysis of the material of the bakegumo suggests an origin related to the throghrin and the phase spider. However, the origin of the living-undead material lies not in the throghrin but in the desert-dwelling werewight. The other component was definitely a phase spider.

Further Prying (Arcane): A 5th-level enchantment for the preservation and strengthening of corpses, which is commonly known among necromantic circles, was also used in the enchantment.

Further Prying (Divine): *Destruction* (reverse of *resurrection*) was cast by a powerful Chaotic cleric. The *destruction* was cast as an invocation of pure Chaos; no specific deity can be named as the origin of the prayers.

Further Prying (Druidic): Bakegumos' intelligence is very alien and non-verbal, but if they were rated in human terms, they would have a WIL of 14 and an INT of 12. When they hang upside down in their webs with all their feet together, that means they are engaged in meditative prayer.

PUPPETS

The puppets are the footsoldiers of the forest. It is natural that investigators would examine the puppets closely, so that operations to neutralize them can be undertaken more efficiently.

As the bakegumo are the forest's caretakers and mystics, so are the puppets its fanatical temple militia. They tear down institutions of civic governance, lines of logistics and communications, and military operational capacity. They fight a scorched-earth guerrilla campaign without political objective or need for civilian support. The forest is their dark mother, their quartermaster, their refuge and their fortress.

BASIC RESEARCH

The puppets are created when the dream spores fertilize certain receptive organs on the body trees. The precise origin of this process is indiscernible to conventional magical observation, but it causes resonant casting of the spell *simulacrum* by the body trees' "pistils."

Puppets are fierce fighters. They have an excellent intuitive understanding of stereotypical infantry engagements in the forest, and their places in them. However, they are not especially driven or strong-willed, and are easily swayed. Puppets will generally gravitate to accompany more strongly sentient entities, especially those who radiate a lot of negative energy power like strong sentient undead, demons, or Chaotic clerics.

Given their tendency to linger in slumber mode among the boles of the body trees, the puppets make good garrison troops, requiring only a few greater evils to move them to action in defense of the master's base. As raiders, they are excellent, but they seek only to destroy; however, they will defer to more strongly sentient raiders, allowing them to loot before they torch what remains.

If they are not raiding or lurking in ambush, the puppets are essentially worthless. They make poor menial laborers, having a decidedly Chaotic (evil) disposition. They are useless for any job that requires greater awareness than basic physical labor. The puppets of ruin kill and burn and smash.

Puppets also perform ritual prostrations and prayer positions, singly and en masse, according to an unknown schedule that seems to be related to the forest's moods and desires.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Remarks on examining the puppets are the same as examining the bakegumo, above.

GEAR REQUIRED

Requires an arcane vivisector or illusory life simulator, as detailed under "Bakegumo" above.

SPELLS REQUIRED

As per the LL's choice of technology — vivisector or illusory life simulator.

ADDITIONAL LORE

Further Prying (Arcane): The effect *simulacrum* is used to make the puppets. Their strong, simple motivations are an end-run around the weakness of the *simulacrum* spell.

Further Prying (Arcane): Dream spores cast the spell *simulacrum*, or are the conduits through which *simulacrum* is cast. The fertilized bole provides a ready attachment point and a source of the dark power used to shape the puppet. Normally the puppets form over several months, but it can also happen over several seconds under the influence of an influx of magical impulse or negative energy power.

Further Prying (Arcane): If there are no trees nearby, and puppets have been provoked, they will form near-instantly in ethereal wombs and phase into the real, bursting out of the ground. In this they are similar to bakegumo.

Further Prying (Divine): The puppet germination elements of the enchantment lie in part the same

areas influenced by divine magic like *bless*. The fertilization of the body tree with puppets may have something to do with the miasma of the forest.

Further Prying (Divine): The propitiatory prostrations of the puppets are standard Chaotic mudras from the cult of pure Chaos. They bend into the form due to instinct rather than intention, and are thus natural masters of their yoga of evil.

Further Prying (Druidic): The spell *barkskin* is the root of the protection enjoyed by the puppets. It's not its own kind of organism; it's more like a hacked human body wrapped in an intrusive, all-covering, controlling wooden outer shell.

Further Prying (Druidic): It is fairly certain a human-like consciousness is trapped in the dark inside the puppets. It's likely the "victim" type puppets engage this consciousness rather than the combat consciousness of the mature puppet soldier.

MURDERSPRITES

Murdersprites are one of the most profound of the forest's menaces. Swarms of murdersprites bar the air over the forest to fliers, and they, in their hundreds or thousands, can swarm and poison or sabotage virtually anything that moves. While puppets might be a nuisance up until SECOND BLOSSOM, after the arrival of murdersprites in large numbers, civilization or resistance to the dreams within an infested hex becomes essentially impossible for living organisms not using specialized protections.

BASIC RESEARCH

Murdersprites are a more clearly captive species of the forest than the puppets or the bakegumo. While both of those groups of entities appear to be a form of sorcerous construct created to be part of the forest process, it seems like the murdersprites may have been added wholesale with minor modification.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Remarks on examining the murdersprites are the same as examining the bakegumo, above.

GEAR REQUIRED

Requires an arcane vivisector or illusory life simulator as detailed in the Bakegumo section above.

SPELLS REQUIRED

As per the LL's choice of technology — vivisector or illusory life simulator.

ADDITIONAL LORE

Further Prying (Arcane): The wombs that give birth to the murdersprites appear to clone germ cells and vitiate them within the spawner, which gestates the eggs internally and disgorges live larvae.

Further Prying (Arcane): The drugs the forest secretes are both natural and magical, and include the effect of *confusion*.

Further Prying (Arcane): You can now synthesize drugs that induce behaviors similar to the sprite

moods *crank*, *strut*, *rut* and *spooky* in elves, half-elves and other sylvan creatures. Specific details are left up to the LL. They are extremely addictive and psychologically damaging, assuming the subject survives their first dose or is *raised*.

Further Prying (Druidic): Unlike the bakegumo and the puppets, the murdersprites can exist outside their relationship with the forest. Separated from its influence, they are still vicious Neutral (evil) forest denizens of dark woods. However, they demonstrate significant behavioral and mental health problems — even for an evil sprite — if they have ever tasted the various drug-mixtures provided for them by the spawners.

Further Prying (Druidic): The bee-like behavior often seen in murdersprites (i.e., they go out, do things, and then return back home) is not them returning supplies to base. It is them going back to a nearby spawner to fix up. They rarely spend more than 30 minutes active without fixing up, and most stay away from a spawner for no more than 10 minutes. Spawners aren't the only thing that the murdersprites fix up on. Many of the different organisms that live in symbiosis with the Forest of Woe entice or reward the murdersprites with various drugs, weapons and so forth.

Further Prying (Druidic): The spawners that grow on the boles of the trees after SECOND BLOSSOM event are separate organisms from the trees of ruin. They draw power from the boles but create the grubs entirely inside themselves with no input from the outside world.

Further Prying (Druidic): The spawners have been seen to eat murdersprite egg paste and it seems like there is probably some sort of germ cell examination, stockpiling or something going on in the spawner. However, if you birth a murdersprite spawner entirely in isolation, it will still birth larval murdersprite grubs.

Further Prying (Druidic): The spawners themselves are service constructs with stats of AC 4 HD 3 hp 18. They're the source of the drugs and such "food" as the sprites eat during their short lifetimes. Killing them really pisses off the local murdersprites, however, and they can even get past anti-forest *invisibility* intermittently as a result. In addition, there tend to be a large number of murdersprite spawn stations in any given area, so destroying 1 or 2 won't drive off the sprites.

Further Prying (Druidic): The spawners are organic beings who feed on the dark resonance of the forest between SECOND BLOSSOM and THIRD BLOSSOM. They grow quickly — usually reaching maturity within 48 hours. Still, however annoying it may be to enchant a monkey golem with a dagger who runs up and down the trees killing immature specimens, you could do it, and keep an area free of murdersprites. Clearing a 7-hex area will probably keep the 7th interior hex almost completely free of murdersprites.

THE MIASMA OF RUIN

The miasma of ruin is the dream's most powerful defensive ability. It blunts the ability of intruders to operate within the confines of the forest by sapping spell power and destroying expendables. This powerful aura is the fingerprint of the true evil might of the dreams, as it mimics the powers of the fiercest negative energy spirits.

It extends 100' from every bole of the trees, and provides the forest with an awareness equivalent to *know alignment* and *detect magic*. It provides a *blessing* to those who aid the forest's goals. This is the equivalent to the poison stings of a coral, in terms of the shelter it offers to entities that seek to dwell inside the larger community. Entities that are also servants of ruin are provided with a materially appreciable advantage under the eaves of the forest, and as a result, they flock to it and protect it and advance its goals, as the forest itself could not.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Study of the miasma requires at-will access to the effects of the dreams, and various samples of items that will be *blessed* or curdled. This can amount to a very substantial flow of potions, the use of intelligent magical items, and the like.

GEAR REQUIRED

The miasmal imager captures the arcane vibrations of the dreams, and amplifies them into a local effect with borders that can be predicted, determined and studied. Specimens and samples must be extended into the field, and the results studied. It is relatively inexpensive, considering the sorts of devices required to operate in the forest. It costs 500,000 gp to assemble this imaging device, and 100,000 gp worth of gems per research period to drive it.

However, the imager requires control over the intensity of the power of the dreams. This requires a spirit field resonator or a spirit field damper, detailed below, in addition to the

miasmal imager. In addition, the experiment must be executed either in a prodromal hex (with a resonator) or in the Forest of Woe's natural miasma (if using a damper). This can prove to be a challenge for research.

The resonator costs 100,000 gp to manufacture. They allow the creation of a minor version of the dreams' spirit field in a prodromal hex that is attached to a hex that has body trees in it. The resonance can be replaced with a much simpler damper that costs only 10,000 gp. However, it uses the cleric spell *dispel evil*, which rouses the ire of the forest, and requires the experiments to be conducted in the forest.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Divine Spells: *bless* (and possible *dispel evil*, see "Spirit Field Resonator" below).

Illusionist Spells: *major creation*, *maze*, *greater phantasmal monsters*, *shadow evocation*, *permanent spectral force*

Magic-User Spells: *distort distance*, *secret chest*, *faithful hound*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*, *ESP*, *guards and wards*, *legend lore*, *protection from evil 10' radius*, *detect evil*

In addition, there are other spells required for the spiritual resonators / dampers used to enhance or throttle the influence of the miasma of ruin.

SPELLS REQUIRED (RESONATOR)

Magic-user spells: *minor globe of invulnerability*, *magic jar*, *secret chest*, *contact other plane*

Illusionist spells: *major creation*, *maze*, *greater phantasmal monsters*, *shadow evocation*, *permanent spectral force*

SPELLS REQUIRED (DAMPER)

Illusionist spells: *nondetection*, *continual darkness*, *rope trick*, *greater invisibility*

Cleric spells: *dispel evil*

Further Prying (Arcane): Researchers know what the different components of the miasma's effects are, and that there are no other major components.

Further Prying (Arcane): Researchers come to understand the precise mechanism by which the dreams cause bad luck and other effects of the miasma. They are able to compose defense mechanisms that reduce the effects of the radiance of evil.

PSYCHIC NUMBNESS

Psychic numbness is an effect exuded by the dreams as part of their miasma of ruin.

The rules for *psychic numbness* are relatively complex and are found in the Rules Extensions chapter of this book. This section deals only with attempts to unravel the secrets of the effect. Much of the material to be discovered about them takes the form of various defenses — consult the results table for research into this subject and the Cures chapter for a good idea of the information to be gained.

BASIC RESEARCH

Psychic numbness is one of the primary offensive powers of the dreams. It paralyzes the host space's ability to react in a prompt and organized fashion to what might be a simple and simply-managed problem if it were caught early. The numbness can be overcome by exposure, but part of the effect of long-term exposure seems to be subtle philosophical alignment with the worldview of the dreams, so it is preferable if not economical to wear protective gear.

A middle road exists of implanted or compelled signaling behaviors that give predictable signs without formal communication, and "light-and-loose" types of informal organization that are too anhierarchal to suffer impairment by the miasma. However, this is more for deployment to protect civil infrastructure and large populations. The research teams will either have to wear protective gear or be "burned in" to the dreams.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The characters must induce *psychic numbness* in a limited area so that they can experiment with the boundary of the numbness effect. Then a large variety of creatures of known mental capacities must be exposed to various degrees of the field, and their reactions measured.

GEAR REQUIRED

Detection and understanding of *psychic numbness* comes via study and manipulation of phantasmal monster models created by illusionist magic. These creatures obey simplified social forms and communicate via a small number of strictly formalistic methods. This makes the creature itself the instrument — so their attitude, response and orientation (or lack of it) can be easily gauged by the color they change, the chirp they make, or other simple methods.

It also requires model body trees, which act as resonators, or a damper to control the input of miasmal flux if the experiments are done in the forest. These are the same ones used to study the miasma of ruin, and are detailed below. The same resonator or damper can be used for both projects, but not at the same time.

Creating this complicated dream theater costs 300,000 gp, plus the 1,000,000 gp cost of the resonator, or the 100,000 cost of the damper. It costs 100,000 gp per research period to operate, as many of the puppets and constructs have sophisticated material components.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Illusionist spells: *confusion*, *implant emotion*, *phantasmal killer*, *phantasmal monsters*, *programmed spectral force*, *shadow evocation*

Magic-user spells: *legend lore*, *guards and wards*, *control weather*

Further Prying (Arcane/Druiddic): The researchers now understand the rules by which the *psychic numbness* affects organizations. They can accurately predict if an organization will be able to respond effectively.

Further Prying (Arcane/Druiddic): The researchers now know which of the effects will provide protection from the *psychic numbness* (for example, *mind bar*) and which will not (for example, an *amulet of proof against detection and location*). They understand that defensive effects will leave the protected character fully affected by the numbness if they fail.

Further Prying (Arcane/Druiddic): Researchers now know how long the burn-through process will take, what the general effects are, and that higher-level or -HD creatures are more easily able to overcome it. They have burn-through strategies that they have developed that maximize the types of exposure that cause the trees to become visible, while minimizing the psychological damage they inflict.

Further Prying (Arcane/Druiddic): Locals come up with various stories for avoiding the place. They say that it's a bad neighborhood, or a desert, or a lake. Also, societies can fight quite the futile war against the puppets. There might be massive multi-generational jungle wars that somehow never rise to the level of a national concern. If everyone in your society collectively agrees not to talk about a problem, you can be fighting house-to-house infantry engagements in the streets with the puppets every night while the authorities stolidly refuse to notice. You're just leaving out cases of assault-rifle ammo on the front stoop "for the anonymous needy."

Further Prying (Arcane/Divine/Druiddic): Entities that are accepted by the forest have an easier time perceiving it. By the time bandits hiding in overgrown ruins have become Chaotic and begun offering sacrificial victims to the groves, they can perceive very well the puppets amidst their number and see they are walking in a dark tabernacle of evil. The ones who don't find this to be an awesome revelation generally don't survive long enough to notice it.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DREAMS

The Dreams of Ruin have had a specific scene or ritual planted at their base. This is a deliberately placed clue to intercept inquiries about the origin of the ritual. Discovering that vision, and understanding what takes place in it, is an important part of unlocking the mystery of the Dreams of Ruin. While it isn't particularly important to individuals who wish to weaponize the dreams, individuals who wish to unravel them and cure them will surely come upon the figurative enactment of the ritual scene of their creation.

BASIC RESEARCH

Discovering the Root of the Mystery Characters can discover the *Interlude* from the beginning of this book. This is probably one of the first things they will discover, as they will be *wishing* or *legend loreing* for details of the “nature of the problem” or the “origin of the dreams.”

This is the clue that comes forth when one asks for the best explanation, the true story, the clue closest in history to the tale. This is as close to the root of the mystery as can be discerned. It may be discovered as a script or ritual, or seen as a dream. It may be the vision resulting from a *contact other plane*.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The characters must induce the influence of the dreams in a limited area, so that they can experiment with the nature and intensity of these effects. Then a large variety of creatures of known mental capacities must be exposed to various degrees of the field, and their reactions measured.

GEAR REQUIRED

Detection and understanding the nature of the dream comes via study and manipulation of phantasmal monster models created by illusionist magic, and studied under carefully chosen scenarios. These creatures obey simplified social forms and communicate via small numbers of strictly formalistic methods. This makes the

creature an instrument, so their attitude, response and orientation, or lack of it, can be easily gauged by the color they change, the chirp they make, or other simple methods.

This is the same dream theater that is used to discern the nature of *psychic numbness*. It can be used for both tasks, but not at the same time. It requires 300,000 gp to manufacture, 100,000 gp per month in gems, and beautiful/terrible puppet components to operate.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Illusionist spells: *confusion*, *implant emotion*, *phantasmal killer*, *phantasmal monsters*, *programmed spectral force*, *shadow evocation*

Magic-user spells: *legend lore*, *guards and wards*, *control weather*

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE VISION REVEALED IN THE MALEDICTION?

It has been put in place — whether by previous individuals who encountered the dreams, or by the dreams' creators — to provide a simple description of the dreams. The reality of thing is that it may be allegorical, a strict narrative of a magical ritual or a symbolic representation of events.

IS IT TRUE?

Yes, but maybe not literally.

WHO WERE THOSE PEOPLE?

They are magical offices in a ritual. They exist only in the context of the ritual. Those people exist only to be in that place and say those things. They may have been many people at many times. They may have been one group, one time. They may have been one person who held all those offices, reading every role. It could just be an elaborate way of describing how magical vortices interacted.

DOES THE RITUAL WORK?

Yes, but only if you put it in the context of the massive magical undertaking that was unfolding right then. It was probably a very inauthentic moment.

The entities involved had probably been planning it for years. The details of that preparation are part of what is deliberately obscured by the solidity of this vision.

WHY WOULD THE DREAMS' CREATORS MAKE THIS NARRATIVE?

Because by creating a rich vision full of authentic clues, they can distract the eye of history away from certain other technical details of their deed.

SPEAKERS IN THE SPEECH

Further Prying (Arcane): Reveals Wind was almost certainly a *lesser death* that had just slain the speaker's ritual husband due to a manipulated *Deck of Many Things* draw result. Why Wind conforms to the ritual is unknown. When in doubt, "they probably *wished* it!" but there may be other solutions to the question.

Further Prying (Arcane): Reveals Old Woman Crow as a ritual leader. Her role requires a 20th-level illusionist.

Further Prying (Arcane): Reveals her husband as a sacrificial victim for sure.

Further Prying (Druidic/Arcane): Reveals that Old Man Forest is pretty obviously a maximum-level druid or someone with the powers of one. An important member of the ritual team.

Further Prying (Arcane): Reveals Old Man Wizard as some powerful magician who has been given at least a token payment. May be a cultural magical hero with an ambiguous magical purview. If characters are from a high-magic setting with a cosmopolitan planar landscape, then the morally bankrupt wizard-as-banker is likely a well-known archetype on its own.

Further Prying (Divine/Arcane): Reveals that Old Man Religion could be a supernatural being like a demon lord, a Chaotic priest or a dark god.

THE DREAMS THEMSELVES

The dreams themselves — the hyphal tangle of self-perpetuating curses and passive gathering antennae for negative material plane energy — are a difficult-to-detect and enigmatic threat. Yet only by analysis of them can real understanding of the fundamental function of the dreams take place. Characters who are seeking a genuine anodyne for the dreams will not find what they seek until they master these secrets.

BASIC RESEARCH

The dreams themselves draw energy from nearby negative energy sources to grow extensive tendril networks in the dimensional substrate of their host plane. The tendrils are receptive to negative energy power, and so the colony is subject to explosive growth. It uses its growing collector surface to power additional expansion.

The antennae extended by the spores form a dynamic mesh driven by all the spores in the networked area. If necessary, any one spore can manage the remaining network in the entire hex. It is for this reason that spores themselves reproduce. Spore reproduction takes about 10% of the early colony's energy. Almost all the rest is used for growing arcane filaments to gather negative material plane energy.

Thus, for almost a year after infection, the dreams' sole activity is to grow energy-receptive mesh from the spores to fuel later growth. The growth strategy is optimized for claiming areas; the dreams dash outwards with an aggressive but not suicidal strategy that leaves them with space throughout the network system for additional expansion. The network increases in complexity only after its ability to harness energy has grown enough that the development of a complex nodal structure in the formerly unmanaged, passively receptive mesh doesn't stunt down the growth curve unduly.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Requires samples of dimensional material to be extracted and held in isolation, and then dissected or observed with a high degree of cross-sectional detail. The samples taken and dissected must include the dimensional substrate in which the dreams. Therefore, dimensional samples must be cut and transported.

GEAR REQUIRED

This task requires a dimensional disassembly works.

The disassembly works pushes the bounds of the possible. It requires the intervention of a god, location in a world or custom demiplane that allows 10th- or higher level spells, or some other way to push the energy levels available under the general conventions of the LL's magic systems.

When a piece of infected planar fabric is taken into the works and its fabric is disassembled, the works perform "slice" sectioning. Then the works interpolate the data from the many slices. This is typically done in an environment of stasis or near-stasis. Once the sectioning is accomplished, then the stasis is relaxed, temporal activity resumes for a "framing" period, and then it is returned to stasis and re-imaged. Over time, this produces an *n*-dimensional model of the planar fabric. The

SUB-COMPONENT RESEARCH

The dreams themselves are a complicated and difficult topic to understand. They are a riddle made deliberately difficult to solve in order to delay would-be Pasteurs. Not coincidentally, these measures also make discerning the author of the curse far more difficult. Attacking the dreams themselves is the core of the challenge. Accordingly, their many secrets are divided into several subtopics that the researchers can attack. Learning what the available avenues of research are is part of the basic research for the dreams themselves. Note each avenue of research in turn has its own basic research that must be separately uncovered.

process allows examination of the dreams' growth and behavior within the dimensional medium.

This is without a doubt the most difficult and dangerous part of the process. Not only is everything going to be contaminated with the spores of the dreams and require constant treatment, the processes required are incredibly difficult to master. This is probably the part of the dreams that characters will overcome at the 18th to 20th level and beyond.

Characters will spend about 25 million gold pieces building their dimensional disassembly works. Mishaps in the disassembly works can be disastrous, resulting in the creation of *spheres of annihilation*, astral rifts, temporal entity incursion, and the release of vast quantities of arcane or negative energy. As a result, the works are very often dimensionally isolated, so that destruction there will not spill out into the broader world.

The arcane power required to fuel the disassembly works is vast. It will take a demigod in motion, or a massive global-scale arcane phenomenon, or a notable standing flux of inter-planar power to provide the energy required to drive this effort. The challenge of finding the power solution is definitely something the LL should emphasize.

It costs 1,000,000 gp per research period to operate a dimensional disassembly works.

SPELLS REQUIRED

Astral projection, duo-dimension, instant summons, secret chest, vanish, temporal stasis, wish, imprisonment, maze, magic jar, prismatic sphere, time stop, trap the soul, permanency, spiritwrath, legend lore

Fundamental Construction Information

Basic Research: It's unknown how long the Dreams of Ruin were prepared in advance of their final creation. Certainly unless the responsible individuals were deities of incredible power, they must have taken a very long time to perform the various researches and minor miracles that were eventually integrated into the complete Dreams of Ruin disease organism.

Illusionist spells are the heart of the Dreams of Ruin, and the illusionist casting of *limited wish* is the basis for the operation of the forest, along the lines of "I wish that these components were all joined into one great, self-perpetuating illusion in the form of magical life."

Further Prying (Arcane): The stuff they do with the properties of the dimensional material is advanced even for the kind of people who make their own demiplanes. Characters who wish to fabricate their own realities have their understanding of the art considerably advanced by these studies.

Further Prying (Arcane): The dreams themselves are intimately related to shadow monsters. Illusionists studying the structure of the dreams may find them an endless source of wisdom and inspiration. They are truly a grand illusion.

Further Prying (Arcane): It is certain that profound temporal distortions played an important role in the creation of the dreams. The various components were probably held in stasis until the moment of casting so that the very complex combination of spells could be woven together. Study of this process grants understanding of advanced concepts in complex, multiple-spell enchantments.

Further Prying (Arcane): The creation of the dreams was a multiple-step process. First, all the bits were brought into one place and one time, and incorporated into the spore. Then the first,

singular spore of the dreams was allowed to take root and reproduce of its own accord. The dreams are not an escaped garden or clockwork entity run amok — they are an emergent system from a process initially set in motion from the first spore.

Further Prying (Divine): The power of great artifacts of primordial divinity colors this magic profoundly. The miracles of the universe have been bent in the shaping of this magic. Not even the power of the gods themselves can easily turn this curse from its path. Clerics who are students of the architecture of the universe will have their knowledge considerably advanced by these studies.

Further Prying (Divine): The gods won't deal with this problem, because any method at their disposal costs permanent power. Local deities may protect a few hexes, and some deity who is closely aligned with the player may destroy a hex or two so the players can get their defensive belt in order. But the gods are unwilling or unable to pay the price to come down and blast it out of existence.

Obviously this is something that you are going to have to vary for each game depending on their deities, but you are going to have to limit divine influence somehow. Otherwise, you say there's a problem and then say the gods solve it. The general suggestion is that each hex is an independent instance of a powerful curse that the gods would have to spend permanent power to cure and protect.

Further Prying (Druidic): The druid who studies the creation of the spore gains vast understanding of the life process from the various effects generated by the arcane magic. This requires cooperative research with an arcane magician to achieve.

Examining the Creators

Basic Research: The lead designer was an extremely sophisticated illusionist. The designer was working with the direct assistance of an extremely powerful magic-user and druid, and the able aid of a Chaotic cleric.

Further Prying (Arcane): In level terms, the spore was made by a caster or casters with at least a 20th level of illusionist capacity, 20th level of magic-user capacity, 14th level of cleric capacity, and 14th level of druid capacity.

Further Prying (Divine): Some of these entities may very well have been the same being because some or all of them were probably gods, demigods, demon princes or powerful heroes on the doorstep of divinity.

Further Prying (Druidic): It's informative that the management of the forest and its interior communications is managed according to the druidic method, even though the forest as a whole is deliberately obscured to druidic methods of communication and perception. It doesn't necessarily indicate intention; it could simply point to the extreme efficiency of the druidic method. However, if it was executed, the druid was also a technical master of spellcasting informed as to the innermost architecture of the enchantment.

Further Prying (Druidic): If you look at how the environment behaves, it looks like the druid made place for himself at the table by providing necessary expertise.

Wishes

Basic Research: There's no question that someone *wished* a great deal to make the dreams come into existence. The spells *wish* and *limited wish* were both used extensively in the creation of the dreams.

Further Prying (Arcane): It's not certain if the spell *wish* was used independently of repeated invocation of The Moon, or if all uses of *wish* sprang from the *Deck of Many Things*.

Further Prying (Arcane): There may have been as many as several tens of thousands of *wishes* used.

Further Prying (Arcane): All the *limited wishes* in the spell were cast by the lead illusionist.

Further Prying (Arcane): Someone seeking to determine the casting dynamics of *wish* at the limits of its capacity will find their knowledge increased considerably by careful study of the creation of the dreams.

Further Prying (Arcane): Someone seeking to create an artifact or relic will find the knowledge embodied in the creation of the dreams to be an important and useful part of the knowledge required.

The Deck of Many Things

Basic Research 4 *Deck of Many Things* cards also appear to have been used:

Euryale Causes a curse only the gods or the Fates card can remove.

Throne Causes the individual to gain 18 CHA and a small keep.

Flames Causes *lower-planar enmity*, an effect that draws the ire of lower-planar beings.

The Moon Provides *wishes*.

Further Prying (Arcane): Of these, it seems like the Moon was used repeatedly. Since 4 cards is the maximum draw from the desk, someone cheated wishes out of the deck.

Further Prying (Divine): Regardless of the deity contacted, commune questions related to the deck and the dreams go without response. "Can you advise me in the matter of the relationship between the dreams and the *Deck of Many Things*?" is answered with "no."

Temporal Manipulation

Basic Research: The spells *time stop* and *temporal stasis* were both used, skillfully, in the creation of this effect. This is probably one of the easiest things to discern, and to intuit. This is how the seemingly insoluble challenges to timing were overcome in making the various components of the effect all exist in the right phase, at the right instant, for the initiating *limited wish* to join them together.

Further Prying (Arcane): The last *time stop* was set up to cover all the previous ones, including their funky temporal harmonics. This was quite deliberate and makes understanding the temporal sequencing of operation for the initial casting of the spell impossible. Someone is really patting themselves on the back for that one.

Further Prying (Arcane): It seems like it's possible hundreds of time-stop or stasis effects might make themselves apparent. This seems to suggest a likely origin in a magical-temporal vortex.

Fragmented, Self-Casting Spells

Most of the “spells” are abbreviated chunks of spells that operate in conjunction with other spell-chunks to create an unfolding array of arcane behaviors that approximate a spell casting itself from a scroll of arcane material.

They include all or part of these spells:

Further Prying (Arcane): Illusionist spells *confusion, implant emotion, massmorph, major creation, minor creation, limited wish, vision, conjure animals, advanced phantasmal monsters, greater shadow evocation, true seeing, hallucinatory terrain, fear, nondetection, suggestion, hypnotic pattern, mirror image, misdirection, blindness, detect magic, summon shadow, auditory illusion, phantasmal force*

Further Prying (Arcane): Magic-user spells *symbol (despair), mind blank, crushing hand, instant summons, simulacrum, clone, summon demon, reincarnate, legend lore, arcane window, guards and wards, distort distance, web, detect magic, locate object*

Further Prying (Divine): Cleric spells *animate dead, know alignment, bless, detect magic, speak with dead, speak with plants, insect plague, commune, animate objects, conjure animal, speak with creatures, unholy word, regenerate*

Further Prying (Druidic): Druid spells *detect snares and pits, divine weather, locate creature, pass without trace, barkskin, charm person or mammal, find plant, control winds, plant growth, tree shape, summon sylvan beings, commune with nature, transport via plants, control weather, control weather (greater), creeping doom*

Further Prying (Divine): Clerical spells were used in place of druid spells whenever there was equivalence. They could have been uncomfortable with giving the druid too much influence over the project. However, it could also have been done to mask as much of the magic used by the dreams as standard cleric casting as possible. It uses a lot of druidic concepts, and a druid was certainly

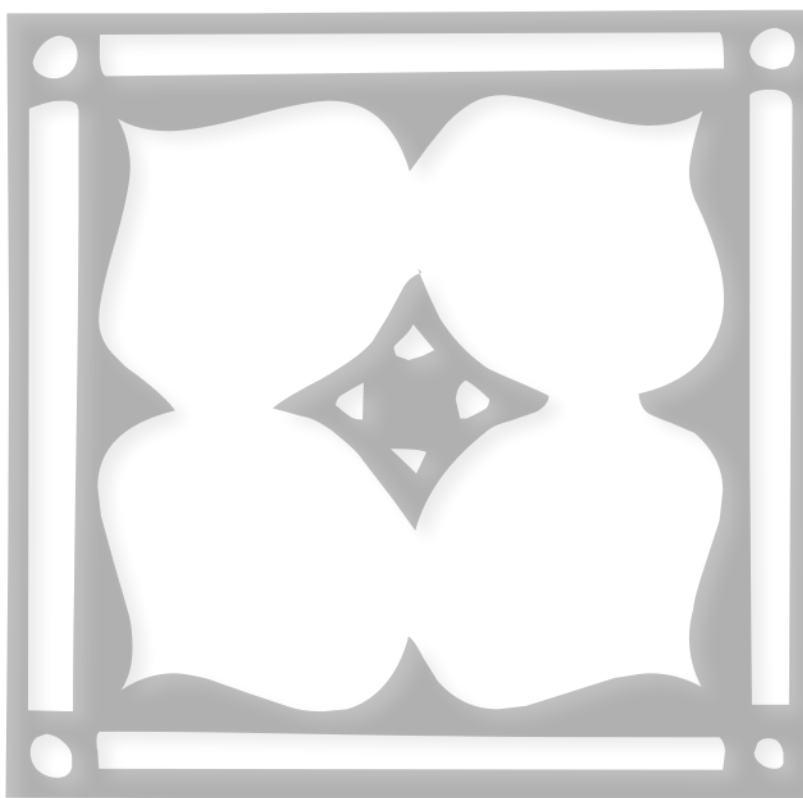
involved, but it is not a “druidic phenomenon.”

Further Prying (Divine): The clerical prayers used are all prayers to pure Chaos.

Further Prying (Druidic): *Barkskin* is part of the creation of the puppets.

Further Prying (Druidic): *Creeping doom* is surely part of the magical basis for murdersprite *crank* behavior.

Further Prying (Druidic): There are no known forest creatures that *transport via plants*. This might be an as-yet unutilized stub for expansion — something that no longer happens for some reason, just part of the magical architecture of the dreams. Or it could be there to provide support for the druidic magical base working successfully in relations to the dreams, once an interface was discovered.



SPECIALIZED RESEARCH GEAR

Good	Use	Initial	Periodic Cost
Arcane Vivisector	Puppets, Bakegumo, Murdersprites	1,500,000	100,000/ research period
Body Tree Works	Body Trees	500,000	100,000/ research period
Dimensional Isolation Bottle	Spores	2,500,000	100,000/ research period
Illusory Life Simulator	Puppets, Bakegumo, Murdersprites	1,500,000	10,000/ research period
Miniature Dream Theater	Historical Resonance Imaging / Spirit Field Examination	300,000	100,000/ research period
Miasmal Imager	Spirit Field Examination	500,000	100,000/ research period
Spirit Field Resonator	Spirit Field Examination	1,000,000	100,000/ research period
Spirit Field Damper	Spirit Field Examination	100,000	10,000/ research period
Dimensional Diassembly Works	The Dreams Themselves	25,000,000	1,000,000/ research period



CURES

What follows is a chapter of various spells, magic items and other treatments for the dreams. Some of them are purely tactical, and focus on utilizing the dreams as weapons or evading their attention for a short time. Others are larger-scope, attacking the dreams on the scale of 8-mile hexes. All are gathered here for easy reference and comparison.

MAGIC ITEM AND SPELL RESEARCH

Learning of a magic item or spell through research into the dreams doesn't provide you with the magic item. You must separately have someone create the item you have just invented. Likewise, spells that are conceptualized must actually be invented by a magic-user. The price of items will generally be quoted in the item description, but provision for their obtainment must be made outside the context of the research project.

PATH TO THE CURE

The arcane path to understanding and controlling the dreams is one whose timeframe is slave to the luck of the draw for solutions. It is also hostage to the judgment of the project managers in choosing the appropriate directions for research.

However, certain basic timelines can be established.

It will take 8 research periods to perform all the basic research into dream-related topics.

At minimum, research probably needs to uncover secrets of the body trees, spores, the miasma of ruin and *psychic numbness*. This consists of 30 secrets. If half the results are likely to yield an actionable handful of secrets, it will take about 15

research periods, generally, for efforts against the dreams to bear fruit in this regard.

Thus, it will take *roughly* 23 research team/periods of work to cover much of the essential material, short of research into the dreams themselves.

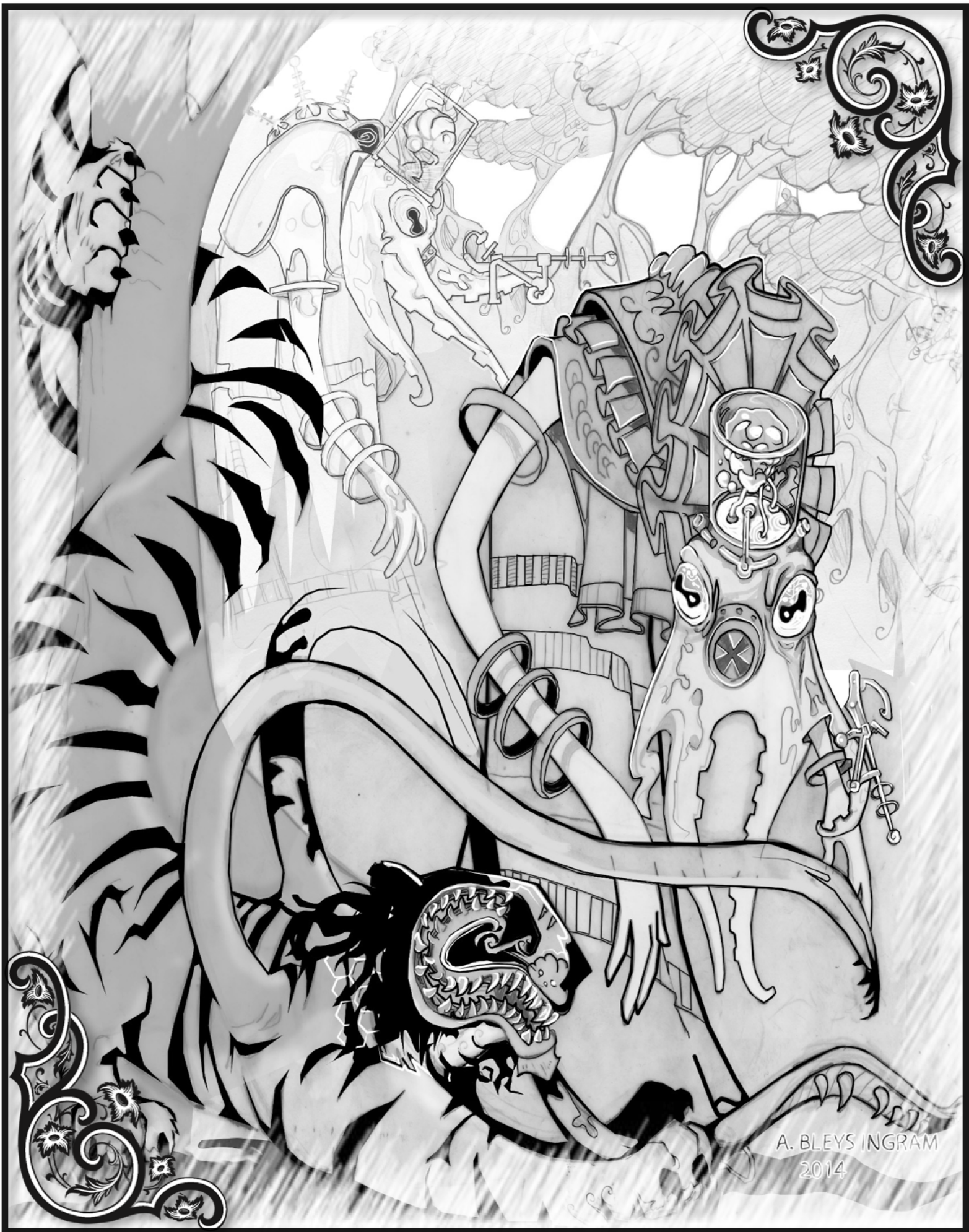
After this point, player characters should be able to detect and, to a limited extent, control the spread of the dreams in local areas. They'll also probably have a bunch of magic that makes the dreams into your slaves or swats down the individual servants of the forest.

It will take 7 basic research periods to perform all the basic research into the dreams themselves. Everything beyond basic research requires a dimensional disassembly works. This is a major capital sticking point and may delay efforts.

There are 24 secrets in the **origins, basic construction and creators** section. On average, it will pay out in about 12 secrets.

Most of the secrets are in basic construction, and mastering those 10 secrets will generally give the players access to the means to control the dreams.

In general, it will be about 19 periods of research with the dimensional disassembly works, peering into the dreams themselves, before the characters uncover the core secrets of the dreams. This will allow them to eradicate the dreams in locales, if the infestation is small or the researchers are exceedingly mighty.



A. BLEYS INGRAM
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THE NEED FOR PROMPT TREATMENT

Prompt treatment of the dreams is essential. Here's why:

If you start after the year ring 3 is colonized (year 9), the order you draw the secret and solutions in makes you about 50/50 on being able to do anything about it. If you get the solutions late, you might not be able to meet the challenge of the problem.

Also in year 9, you start having 19 hexes to treat. By the time you are certain to have all the solutions in year 15 or so of the infection, you have 37 hexes to treat.

On the other hand, if you start immediately at the moment of infection you'll get it before it has a chance to spread into ring 3. The maximum amount of time required with just one imager is a bit over 8 years, ring 3 is colonized in year 9, and so you'll only have to treat 7 hexes.

Remember, this is just a spreadsheet study of a single instance of abstractly modeled infection. The dreams are an infectious, invasive life form. They are constantly emitting spores that cling to birds and blow on the wind. They will "gallop" and "bolt" in areas with a high density of negative energy flux. Puppets will smuggle immature mines into urban areas and detonate them in suicide attacks — a "dirty bomb" of spores. Researchers and laborers will track the spores to their lodging and marshaling-yards.

Part of the reason that prompt treatment is important is the difficulty of keeping a larger infection under control for any length of time.

From the path outlines, you can see that it's hardly impossible to promptly unravel the secrets of the dreams. However, the costs of *treatment* will become astronomical as the dreams encompass an increasingly large area of space.

PATH TO WEAPONIZATION

The path to the weaponization of the dreams is longer than the path to combat them.

At the simplest level, this is not true. While arguably, the path to the cure might be as simple as automated augurers and the incantation of brilliance, the path to weaponizing the dreams is far simpler. Spores from a single mine can bomb a ghetto into dark ruin in a few short years.

However, adept command of the forest — using it as a tool — requires considerable buy-in. This is intentional; the forest is designed to create a context that rewards deep involvement and large investments. In this way, creatures that have complex relationships with it have every incentive to keep developing them. This includes dark druids and Chaotic heroes who seek to use the dreams as a stronghold and source of power.

On the other hand, the capital investments are considerably lower. A magician who seeks to master the forest need merely discover a dark grimoire, while one who seeks to battle it must have millions of gold pieces' worth of tools and weapons to do so. Thus the dreams offer entangling potential. They are inexpensive to invest in, but all the powers snare the would-be adept into a life in and around the forest.

GENERIC TREATMENT ADVICE

Funnel population migrations along established routes with sequential barriers to the spores at multiple hex-sides along the designated evacuation route.

Be ready to spot-treat outbreaks in your national and regional administrative and logistics apparatus. The nature of the dreams is to follow administrative and logistical lines of communication.

Beware of magicians who master the secrets of using the dreams as a weapon and a fortress. One powerful Chaos cultist teleporting around and flinging spore bombs can take the dreams from being a nuisance to being an insuperable harm.

Keep in mind that the puppets use bombs, hand grenades and RPG shots, all saturated with the spores. Their body tissues contain spores that are released when the puppet dies. Keeping control of puppets raiding outside the borders of the forest is essential.

Human-leveled characters aren't the only problem. Entities like hags and demons also have every reason to spread the forest. They may be the vector for the initial infection, or they may be a nuisance that vexes the planet later on in the disease's progress. They are especially problematic after FIRST BLOSSOM, but they can appear as early as the first puppet drop.

DETECTION

The struggle to discern the dreams at all is one of the major hurdles in structuring a confrontation with them. Not only must their true nature be understood, but their tiny spores must be discerned as well. This section details the spells and magical effects that can be developed to explore the dreams.

WHAT CAN DETECT THE DREAMS BEFORE THEY GERMINATE?

No detection method covered in these rules can detect a single inactive spore of the dreams.

However, detection methods can detect sprouting, or spore reproduction.

Detection Spells

AUGURY

Level: Cleric 2

It requires 3 castings of 2nd-level cleric spell *augury* spread over 3 hours in the center of a hex, using special divining instruments, to discern if the dreams are active in a hex. These spells can be spread over as long as 3 days.

Depending on the wisdom of the cleric in question, they may be able to *augur* up to 3 hexes per working day. A method of flight or teleportation will probably be required to keep travel times from limiting the number of *auguries* per day.

This use of *augury* is discovered in the course of researching the spores of the dreams.

LEVEL TO AUGER X HEXES PER DAY

WIL	1	2	3
12 or less	6 th	15 th	N/A
13	6 th	15 th	N/A
14	6 th	15 th	N/A
15	4 th	12 th	19 th
16	3 rd	9 th	17 th
17	3 rd	9 th	17 th
18	3 rd	9 th	17 th
19	3 rd	9 th	17 th

Magic Items

AUTOMATED AUGURER

Origin: Divine

Augury can be performed by an automated praying device in a hex and burning an offering of 1,000 gp. It takes about 1 hour to perform the 3 *auguries* required to observe the presence of the dreams.

A flying device that carried the augurer, and had automated controls, or carefully rotated staffing, could operate for about 10 surveys — about 12 hours — without a recharge of incense and precious gems. With careful planning of relief crews and fuel for the augurer, a flying carpet could operate 24 hours a day, and augur 20 hexes per day, at a cost of 20,000 gp in *augury* offerings, plus the incidental expenses of operating the relay of fliers or whatever other contrivance shuttles the augurer from site to site.

The automated augurer is discovered by research into the spores of the dreams. It costs 100,000 gp to manufacture.

Spells Required: *Augury*, *glyph of warding*, *divination*, *detect evil*, *detect magic*

PHANTASMAL FILTERS

Origin: Arcane (illusionist)

These are the gold standard in wide-area detection, although they are somewhat lacking in detail.

In method of operation, a phantasmal copy of the dimensional material is fabricated by a powerful illusionist, and then the material is checked for the influence of the dreams. Although it requires figuring out the nature of the dreams' influence on the dimensional substrate, the ability to continually re-initiate the simulated volume and monitor pace and direction of contamination allows ongoing detection.

A small unit costs 500,000 gp to fabricate, and 1,000 gp per week to operate. It provides coverage of a single 24-mile overland hex. It indicates only that the 24-mile hex has been contaminated, and gives a vector

to the strongest, nearest source within its detection radius. This is usually good enough when detecting single-site contamination but wide-area contamination will overwhelm the detector and produce a meaningless vector reading.

A large unit costs 1,500,000 gp and costs 5,000 gp per week to operate. It provides coverage of a 7-hex cluster of 24-mile overland hexes. It provides indication of which 8-mile subhex is contaminated, for up to 3 contacts. After that, it indicates only the 3 strongest, nearest contamination sites.

Every group of 6 small units, or 3 large units, requires an illusionist of at least 9th level to tend it full time. They will need flying gear, teleportal time, or whatever the project uses to accelerate the movement of technical assets.

The phantasmal filters are discovered during research into the body trees.

Spells Required: *Veil*, *vision*, *advanced phantasmal monsters*, *permanent spectral force*

AMULET OF PROOF AGAINST PSYCHIC NUMBNESS

Origin: Arcane (magic-user or illusionist)

A modified design of the *amulet of proof against detection and location*, the *amulet of proof against psychic numbness* provides complete protection against the *psychic numbness* of the dreams for the wearer. As always, exposure to the dreams while under the effects of anti-*psychic numbness* enchantments don't add to the characters' cumulative exposure time to the dreams.

Also, as per normal, this doesn't make social organizations any more able to manage the problem of the dreams, although individuals within those organizations, acting informally, certainly might.

The *amulet of proof against psychic numbness* is discovered as an offshoot of research into *psychic numbness*. It costs 20,000 gp to construct.

Spells Required: *ESP*, *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *mind bar*

Note: The inclusion of *mind bar* makes this a much more powerful selection of spells than those normally required for an *amulet of proof against detection and location*. The amulet is discovered during reasearch into the *psychic numbness* of the dreams.

NUMBNESS JAMMER

Origin: Arcane (illusionist)

Another powerful illusionist item, the numbness jammer provides active countermeasures against the dreams.

This device costs 250,000 gp. It requires 1,000 gp of sacrificed gems per 24 hours, and covers an area equal in size to an 8-mile overland hex.

Being exposed to the dreams when their *psychic numbness* is blocked does not add to the characters' burn-through time to penetrate the dreams.

Organizations operating inside the numbness jammer can take formal action concerning the dreams, but the mission will founder if it ever extends outside the numbness jammer's effect area.

This is a great technology for using massive military force to pry open operating areas so magical resources can be deployed.

The numbness jammer is discovered during research into *psychic numbness*.

Spells Required: *Mass suggestion, veil, greater shadow evocation, phantasmal killer, implant emotion*

PLANAR WATCHER

Origin: Divine

This powerful monitoring technology is a product of powerful divine magic, including the willing self-sacrifice of a powerful good supernatural being, which is entombed in a stasis chamber and used as the planar monitor.

This technology tells if the dreams are active in the plane. This detects even prodromal dreams or a few reproducing spores. It can provide location within a 3-hex cluster of 24-mile overland hexes, and can track

about 5 major infections with some precision before it is overwhelmed.

While many upper-planar beings are fanatical enough to gladly take the job, it's still not easy to interview for, and finding a suitable subject who will make a quality monitoring instrument requires either an epic quest or the direct intervention of a deity. In addition, there is a massive undertaking to build the monitoring station-tomb where the captive angelic entity will abide.

This costs at least 1 million gp, and offerings per month amount to 10,000 gp. In addition, an investment of 100,000 gp is required every year for maintenance of the facility, and there must be a magic-user of 16th level or higher available to examine the mechanisms.

Techniques needed to manufacture a planar watcher are discovered during research into the nature of the dreams' creator.

This item is discovered during research into the creators of the dreams. Spells Required: *Temporal stasis, imprisonment, ESP, contact other plane, spiritwrath, trap the soul, feeblemind, mind blank*

PROMPT TREATMENT

This section discusses tactical solutions to address the infestation of a single hex or a few hexes. Applied promptly, they can reduce an isolated colony of the dreams if they are successfully applied before the dreams have undergone FIRST BLOSSOM.

Most of the remedies are written so that a scope of action of a few hexes is possible (if challenging), but operating in many hexes at once, again and again, is an effort for multi-planetary or multi-planar powers.

If they are not used to cure an isolated infestation, prompt treatments can also be used for local tactical advantage in struggles against the dreams. Cleaning up infestations in designated clean zones or opening up disease-

free logistical beachheads for operations are both excellent uses of these solutions that will not directly end an infestation.

SITUATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

Obviously the dreams may spread from adjacent dimensions if they went into FIRST BLOSSOM in a nearby plane and contaminated the near ethereal or near astral space. Likewise, repeated exposure to the initial vector might keep bringing about reinfection. For example, if night hags keep visiting your world and tracking the spores in from the planes of evil, then the infections will not stop until the night hags stop.

Thus efforts toward prompt treatment of the dreams may be in vain. In these cases, characters will be forced to choose a long-term management option.

Use of the Fates Card

In order to destroy any 1 hex of the dreams, you can use the Fates card from the *Deck of Many Things* to break the magic. Fates counteracts the effects of the Euryale card that forms the foundation of the dreams on 1 hex — the holding granted to the curse by the Throne card. Note, however, that each hex of the dreams is a standalone entity. After the curse spreads into multiple hexes, each hex will require the Fates (or an equivalent effort from the gods) to unwind.

The curse cannot otherwise be undermined, even by *wish*: only things that transcend the power of *wish* like the *Deck of Many Things* or the raw power of the gods can undo this magic.

Hexes that have been protected by the Fates card are immune to the dreams forevermore.

Divine Intervention

Against the Dreams of Ruin, the gods contend in vain. They can shield and cleanse small areas at little expense, but cleaning whole hexes and protecting large areas from transfer of spores

requires a commitment of their permanent power, and is thus — from the divine perspective — uneconomical in the extreme.

This text tends to favor the idea that the gods are super-characters active in interdimensional politics. If your gods are more like the Powers of later fantasy gaming — actual “gods” who control the context of their reality — then you will have to explain why they don’t intervene more readily.

Obviously, the reason not to just have the gods magically solve a problem is that it reduces the narrative to a short arc indeed. You tell the players about it, they tell it back to you while you pretend to be their patron god, and you tell them the problem is resolved.

In-setting, there are issues of scope and the inability of the gods of classic fantasy gaming to reshape the cosmos they exist in. However, in the context of “magic space-man” type gods, there are a couple of god types who are worth dealing with. These deity types have free or regenerating energy that could, at least in theory, be used to battle the dreams.

SOLAR AND LIFE ENERGY GODS

Gods of positive energy or solar radiation might also be able to scorch the dreams out of existence without sacrificing their vital selves. This raw exposure to positive life energy will prove devastating to the hex. It will be similar in effect to a *prismatic bombardment*, doing at least 100 points of damage to everything in the 8-mile hex.

How many hexes this can be done to is purely something the LL must determine. The aphorism that the gods contend in vain against the dreams is practical in its coinage. The reason is that, as entities that are essentially extensions of the LL, if the LL says the gods can solve the problem, then they can, and do, and the adventure is over. Thus, it must be outside an easy solution by beseechment of divine patrons, parents or overlords.

How many hexes can be scorched per year, or per day, or whatever, is up to the LL to determine. It should be as few as possible, thrusting the challenge back into the players' laps, but it is certainly reasonable that divinities will provide for the defense or emergency cleansing of select hexes.

Keep in mind that this solution is actually curing the disease, burning it out of the inter-dimensional interstices where the curse lurks. *Many* gods could shatter whole 8-mile hexes, but this will merely cause stress flushes the next year as the trees regrow. Whether the gods have the insight to see immediately — rather than after the stress flush — that direct attacks on the trees will be unrewarding, depends on the INT and WIL of the god in question, and their degree of arcane insight.

Divine Weapons

There are several remedies the gods make available for use by their followers that may be useful against the dreams. These notably all require large offerings, or enchantments performed by the celebrants, to activate. While the remedies are provided by the gods and perhaps even to some extent enabled by them, the worshippers pay the costs associated with the removal of the dreams. It is possible that a god might protect a locale for a powerful cleric or paladin who was too poor to afford the protections, the cost to the cleric or paladin in services rendered would far exceed the cost of the sacrifice.

Even gaining access to these miracles is sometimes costly. Gods may require a sacrifice or quest on the part of their followers in order to grant access to these miracles.

GREATER HOLY WORD

This must be stored in a plenum that is sufficient in strength to contain the utterance; it can be undone.

Sometimes artifacts are used, such as the *horn of the*

golden deed below. In other cases, the cleric is used. *Greater holy word* can only be memorized by clerics who can cast 7th-level spells. That means clerics of 15th level or higher.

The *greater holy word* can only be uttered by a greater deity, who is also of 15th or higher level as a cleric. The deity speaks it into the cleric's ear, and it displaces all other 7th-level spells until it is re-uttered by the cleric. The god may come to visit the character, but more often the cleric must seek an audience with the god on the god's home plane.

The cleric loses a level when they utter the *greater holy word*. This cannot be regained by *atonement* or *restoration* or any other effect. Deities do not generally send a stream of these effects to their followers.

The *greater holy word* will slay any single hex of the Dreams of Ruin before FIRST BLOSSOM, including prodromal dreams. It also has the same effect as a *holy word* on every other being in the 8-mile overland hex.

The reverse of this spell has no effect, at least not against the dreams. Not even the foulest and most shocking of the loathsome *greater unholy words* of the planes of evil can make an impression on the dreams themselves, although they may shatter the body trees and the bodies of many of the beings that live within the Forest of Woe. This will cause a stress flush the next year.

Greater holy word, and vessels for carrying it, is purely an appurtenance of the divine. They are made available by a given characters' godly patron or manipulator at their divine discretion.

HORN OF THE GOLDEN DEED

This horn is an artifact that is used by greater deities to convey their *greater holy words* to the lands of mortals.

It can also be winded as a *horn of blasting* (does 1d20 temporary hp to the user when winded) or

as a *bronze horn of Valhalla* (summons 2d4 4th-level berserkers, costs 1 permanent hit point per einherjar summoned).

Characters who hold the horn are struck with the monomaniacal need to wind it in the designated location as quickly as possible. This may not be visible in the behavior of a cleric who is desperately ferrying the horn back to their home to defend it from the dreams. However, if a greater devil stole the horn, they would soon be pursuing the quest with similar intensity.

The character who winds the horn is struck dead, no saving throw, upon releasing the *greater holy word*, although they can be *raised* normally. The secret of manufacturing the horn is kept by the gods, and one may be provided to characters, or they may have to quest for it.

PRAYER BROADCASTS

These broadcast units emit *holy chant* and *sanctuary* spells. They are discovered when researching the origins of the dreams. As with the evil version of *greater holy word*, the evil versions of these effects have no influence over the Dreams of Ruin.

The *prayer broadcast* units may emit other, custom prayers as well. This depends on the scope of the deity's interest in granting specialty prayers and the schemes of the political leadership of church and state.

This system is most effective on fortresses, cavern-redoubts of survivors, protected temple-cities and the like. The network has to actually cover the areas that it covers, and so the holy chant emitters to cover large areas of countryside are many for comparatively little reward.

The particular problem with this is the constant magical energy it radiates. First, it can have effects on the environment, causing health problems and abnormalities in offspring in the influenced area.

Perhaps more importantly, it can draw the attention of powerful supernatural opposition.

Given that areas surrounded by the dreams are teeming (compared to uninfected environments) with Chaotic (evil) entities, the constant bombardment of warding and control magic is sure to draw a response.

The power of carefully selected enchantments may be enough to hold the dreams at bay, but the powerful supernatural beings like rakshasa and demons that the forest hosts may not be so easily deterred. *Prayer broadcasts* have to be a component of a larger scheme if they are not merely a futile gesture.

Effects

The following effects apply when a *prayer broadcast* system is erected:

- * The miasma of ruin is excluded from the area. There are no positive bonuses (unlike the normal effects of *holy chant*) but the *blessing* of the dreams is excluded, potions do not spoil, individuals don't suffer particularly bad luck, etc.
- * Puppets, bakegumo and murdersprites are plainly visible. They must make a saving throw versus spells to enter the protected area, but can fire freely into the space with ranged weapons, and have no restrictions placed on their aggression if they do penetrate the perimeter.
- * Organizations within the protected zone can operate against the dreams, but their influence will not extend beyond protected areas and personnel in direct communication.
- * Spores will not take root, but may enter the area. They will die after a time — usually a few months — from the prayers. Sequestered spores like those in landmines are immune to the effect of the broadcast until their containment is breached, so late-detonating mines will surely re-contaminate areas burned clear by *prayer broadcast* units if there was any degree of puppet activity on it.

Note the possibility that the *prayer broadcasts* may lapse for a moment when the protected area

would otherwise be engulfed in the miasma of ruin. If that happens, the rebound effect will engender a most profound stress response from the surrounding forest.

Requirements

Prayer broadcasts do not work well on a scale even as large as a single overland hex. They are a constant projection of magical power that requires a continual source of power. They can protect an extent like a walled city, even a large one, but the concentration of protected material must be high enough that the investment is economical.

Assume that these broadcast units cost 1 million gp per overland hex, and consume 111,000 gp per year in operational expenses. However, they can be installed in smaller areas than 8-mile overland hexes with proportionally lower costs of installation and maintenance.

The basic prayer dynamo for a given hex costs 250,000 gp and burns 3,000 gp per month of gems in fuel. The central emitter has a lifespan of 3 years, and will need to be regularly replaced.

Broadcast units cost the remaining 750,000 gp. This is enough to cover an 8-mile hex with saturation coverage. Divide the area of a whole hex with the area to be protected to come up with a proportional cost for the repeater network. The emitters have a 10-year lifespan and cost 75,000 gp per year to maintain.

The LL can make it more or less expensive to operate the emitters based on the inherent badness of the hex. Hexes with very high badness levels will need more emitters. Just measure this in comparison with normal hex costs, e.g. double, half, etc.

In general, 1 emitter is required per contiguous area. If you are shielding multiple administrative centers or military bases within an 8-mile hex, each will probably need its own prayer dynamo.

It's possible to operate shared dynamo systems,

but the transmission mechanism will by definition be outside the protection of the field. This makes it susceptible to the effects of the miasma of ruin, with the bad luck and forgotten maintenance obligation potential that entails.

HOLY WATER IRRIGATION

The dreams can be controlled by the application of a great deal of holy water. At 1 vial per square foot, this will require 1,550,000,000 vials per hex. That is, 1.55 billion (milliards).

Vials are 1 fl. oz. Thus, 12,109,375 gallons of holy water plus wastage are needed to treat a hex. Distributing this across an 8-mile overland hex in the course of 1 or 2 days is a challenge that player characters will have to rise to. Flying automata, perhaps?

To achieve this quantity as an annual rate, the following production values must be obtained:

33,176 gallons/day

1,382 gallons/hour

A *decanter of endless water* emits 1,800 gallons an hour on "fountain" (5 gallons a round) and 10,800 gallons an hour on "geyser" (30 gallons a round). 1 hex/year of production can proceed comfortably from a "fountain" of endless holy water, and about 7 hex/years per year of "geyser" of endless holy water.

Controlling the dreams requires 1 treatment per month in perpetuity. This will keep the dreams in their prodromal phase.

Cure of a hex requires 3 treatments in the first month, monthly treatments for a year after that, and then twice-yearly treatments for 5 years after that, for a total of 25 hexes' worth of treatment to cure each 8-mile overland hex.

If the dreams have already established themselves in an area, and the body trees have appeared, then it will take a heavy treatment. The hex must be doused with 10 treatment volumes over the first and third month of the

treatment, and then twice-monthly treatments for 6 months, monthly treatments for 6 months, and twice-yearly for 5 years. The total number of hex/treatments required for this degree of reparative therapy is 48.

After FIRST BLOSSOM it's virtually impossible to cure a hex. The disease may instead be left to "burn itself out." If control is required, the hex can be doused with 10 treatment volumes in the first and third months, and then put on monthly treatments in order to keep the dreams under control. But the dreams will not die out until the body trees have been kept back for 13 years. This requires 156 hex/treatments of holy water, including 29 in the first 12 months of treatment.

Holy water irrigation is discovered during research into the fundamental construction of the dreams.

DIVINE SELF-SACRIFICE

Sacrificed-and-reborn deities like Osiris, Baldur and many other corn gods have the potential to die-and-be-reborn, an act that allows them to bring life and rebirth to an area, as in spring or after rains. Mother deities like Guan Yin often

command the waters of mercy, which can serve a similar function.

Typically these deities spread their blood or flesh over the land to fertilize it.

We have gone with a fluid model, as there were more real-world parallels in bulk fluids handling. This way, we avoid theoretical discussion of what size a mincing machine would need to be to make enough god-paste to cover a county. If the deity is to be divided finely, engaging in miraculous multiplication so the flesh can cover all the land, then the LL will have develop the models for that.

Obviously the god will be out of action while this is taking place, and they may well be destroyed or diminished vastly afterwards. Also, if the substance has other advantages — curing disease, satisfying hunger, enriching farmland or the like — there may be rivals for its possession.

Finally, keep in mind that hooking or unhooking Baldur to the extraction device may prove politically or economically disastrous. To the degree that this god embodies rather than represents fertility and rebirth, there may be

HOLY WATER FLOW RATES

Equivalent Flow Rate Of Holy Water / Divine Ichor Source	Gallons per Minute Flow	Hex Treatments Per Day	Hex Treatments Per Year	Cure Hexes/Year Prodromal	Cure Hexes/Year Post-Emergence
Decanter of Endless Holy Water (geyser)	180	.02	7	.28	.15
10 Decanters of Endless Holy Water (geyser)	1,800	.2	75	3	1.56
100 Decanters of Endless Holy Water (geyser)	18,000	2	750	30	15.6
Trans-Alaska Pipeline	62,000	7.4	2,704	108	56
Trans-Alaska Pipeline (10x)	620,000	74	27,041	1,082	563
California Aqueduct	5,800,000	697	254,550	10,182	5,303
California Aqueduct (10x)	58,000,000	6,973	2,545,502	101,820	53,031

catastrophic results from the injury to the deity, or from the side effects of so much life and healing power pouring into the world. Total crop failures or uncontrollable growth of plants and animals may occur across a world as a result.

Discovery of divine self-sacrifice as a strategy is a result of prying into the relationship between the dreams and the *Deck of Many Things*.

Amount of Divine Ichor

We have set 4 scenarios for flow of redeeming ichor from sacrificed-and-reborn deities. They are: the same as a decanter of endless water on geyser (180 gallons per minute), the same as 10 decanters of endless water on geyser (1,800 gpm), the same as the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (62,000 gpm), and the same as the California Aqueduct (5.8 million gpm). A model has been provided showing the yield in gallons per time unit, hex treatments per time unit, and specific hex treatments per time unit, at various levels of flow and holy water strength equivalencies.

Deities with flow rates beyond the scale of the California Aqueduct seem to be outside the old-school gaming paradigm and are not modeled. Those with flow rates below that of a single decanter of endless water will be strategic munitions sources, or useful in a tactical context, but not in the strategic struggle against the dreams.

It is entirely appropriate for these deities to provide their yield on a diminishing and/or periodic basis, offering a rich yield at the time of their rebirth but tapering off in the season of their death.

The logistical arrangements that will be involved in this matter must necessarily devolve onto the players, the LL and the specific setting of the game. Flow rates equivalent to the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline or the California Aqueduct will require similarly cyclopean engineering efforts to manage the output. Building these, especially in haste, may prove challenging, and would provide the meat of

quite the Arthur C. Clarke-style Heroic Engineering Challenge, Fantasy Edition. These complex matters are specialized to the individual world and are left to the individual LL to develop.

Illusionist Effects

Because the dreams are an illusionist's creation, the magic of the class has some of the strongest effects on the dreams. However, the treatments tend to be expensive and incomplete. While they are excellent components of a strategy, one cannot be built around them. They also come relatively late in the research effort, when most of the secrets of the dreams' construction have been discovered, and their roots in illusionist magic well-exposed.

EXPEDITED SENESCENCE

Level: Illusionist 6

Duration: 1 year

Range: 1 hex

This ritual takes a full night, from sundown to sunrise. At dawn, the area is struck with a dark and terrible pallor. It appears to be in all ways of evil cast and dark character. Every shadow seems to hide a murderer; every tree appears as a being trapped in writhing agony. Individuals must make a saving throw versus spells to spend each night in the hex willingly. Individuals of 4 HD and below may have to roll as often as every round.

This spell is an expensive ritual. The ritual costs 100,000 gp to enact and it cannot be paid in advance. The illusionist must come by on the day it lapses every year and renew it, or else it will reveal placid meadows and un-haunted thickets. It is mostly deployed in landscaping for the sorts of wizards who want to live in thousand-acre graveyards without the logistical challenge, implementation costs or resale value damage of digging thousands of acres of graves.

For technical reasons, this display thoroughly

outcompetes the spores of the dreams. It will prevent a hex from becoming infected while the haunting illusion takes place. In addition, it will kill infestations in their first or second year of prodromal growth.

Learning to use the illusion in this fashion is a secret uncovered by researching the relationship of the dreams and the *wib* spells used to create them.

ILLUSORY DISRUPTORS

Breaking an illusory disruptor — an octagonal crystal mirror engraved with arcane runes — releases a devastating attack against all illusions in a single overland hex. All illusions are broken, including ongoing continual illusions, programmed illusions that have not yet activated, and semi-illusions like shadow monsters.

This magic item — if it is made in certain ways that cause its effects to apply to the dreams — kills all bakegumo in the hex and shatters the dreams' extant mesh network. All body trees are struck dead. Puppets will drop all at once as a defense of the forest, and their numbers may be considerable (4d20). Also, there will be a massive drop of victim puppets, and there may be other entities whose ecological function is disrupted.

This breaks the network effect for only 1 year. The network will re-organize and the antenna fragments will rejoin. Trees will emerge again — and respond with a stress-drop of 2d20 puppets (in addition to the yearly drop, just as if they had been cut).

However, there are no fragments from the disrupted body trees, and as ways to cut entire hexes free of the dreams, the use of illusory disruptors is unexcelled. If this is used in conjunction with holy water therapy, it can reduce even heavy infestations down to the level where they can be treated with 48 hex/treatments of holy water.

The crystal mirrors cost 250,000 gp each. Although the illusory disruptor is “just” an item for ending illusions, not all versions will perform

their function in the proper fashion. Items of this type that are found randomly are assumed to have a base 1% chance of functioning against the dreams in this fashion, but disruptors that are certain can be manufactured at the normal cost, once the secrets required are unearthed. Use of *true seeing* and knowledge can discern if the platters are of the appropriate configuration.

Discovery of the utility of illusory disruptors in fighting the dreams is a product of research into the dreams' nature as self-casting spell fragments.

SUMMONING THE ASTRAL APHIDS

Level: Illusionist 6

Duration: Permanent

Range: 1 hex

This is an illustration of a strong illusionist counterattack against the dreams.

The astral aphids enchantment conjures up shadow monsters that prey on the forest. Part phantasmal monster, part phantasmal killer of the dreams' alien consciousness, these sucking, egg-laying parasites are dreadful banes of the dreams.

Not even the aphids can stop the trees in first flush, but they are absolute terrors once the dreams have collapsed. In conjunction with other treatment regimes, they can force a post-initial-flush world into full remission.

Every hex of aphids conjured will double in population every month. It doesn't do very much when the trees are BLOSSOMING, but the aphids are vicious and will devastate small outgrowths of the trees. They significantly help limit the damage done to a dimension after the initial flash-growth of the trees.

Summoning these aphids is a costly challenge. At least 100,000 gp in offerings must be made each time the spell is cast. This spell is discovered during inquiry into the use of fragmented, self-casting spells to create the dreams.

Magic-User Effects

The stereotypical magician's use of power to combat the dreams is impressive, but challenged by its own sheer might. While arcane power lends itself to the challenge of eradicating the dreams, once the proper approach is discovered, it doesn't lend itself very well to preserving life in the locale after the effect takes place.

INCANTATION OF BRILLIANCE

Level: Magic-User 9

Duration: Instant

Range: 1 hex

Subjects the hex to *prismatic bombardment*. Everyone in the hex is struck by 1d4+1 beams of prismatic energy.

The prismatic bombardment instantly bakes the hex into a lifeless bone-dry wasteland. This effect kills prodromal dreams, or sprouted dreams if applied after the initial first- and third-month holy water treatments. The hex is not in any way protected against reinfection.

The cost of this spell is high on a per-hex basis — 1,000,000 gp worth of gems. Generally, enchantments to vastly increase spell range are used, and the effect is targeted via *crystal ball* or other far-seeing technology.

Discovery of the *incantation of brilliance* is part of research into the fundamental construction of the dreams. However, discovering the spell itself is a considerably greater challenge, as it involves several million gp worth of experimental gem expenditures, and a rather extensive region that can be dotted with incompletely destroyed hexes during test castings.

DUST OF GLACIAL YEARNING

Magical salts and dusts with strong negative material associations can be distributed in the hex in order to counteract the dreams. The first problem with this is that the various material components are required in quantities far outside the small quantities normally produced.

Substances normally made by the pinch are required by the ton.

The issues of industrializing these magical processes are left up to the LL. This is a very effective method left with an indeterminate price tag. If the preparation is cheap, then it can be used on a large scale. However, it may be expensive or irreparably scarce and without substitute. The price might be as low as 10,000 gp per hex/treatment, or as high as 1 million gp per hex/treatment.

In addition, the effect of the salt is extremely energy reductive. It "freezes out" the fungi by overloading them with negative plane energy through the operation of a super-freezing dust, similar to the effects of a *freezing sphere* spell.

As a result, the hex is covered with ice for a prolonged period of time. While the ice cap is in place, the hexes cannot be infected with the dreams. However, while the ice cap is in place, it is also covered in a glacial tomb.

Single pinches of the dust create the effect of the spell *ice storm*, and it is in this form that the dust is most commonly encountered. The application of the dust to an entire hex is equivalent to an *ice storm* in how it affects the hex's surface area. The dust drives the entire hex into a deep-winter state for 1 year.

This requires 1,233,094 pinches per 8-mile overland hex. If every pinch was 1,000 gp, it would cost 1.23B (billiards) gp per hex/treatment. If it is 1 gp per pinch in quantity, then each hex/treatment will cost 1.23MM gp. The amount of powder distributed, at .5 oz. per pinch, will total 38,534 lbs. per hex, or about 29 tons.

If the remedy is applied at a global scale, it typically only takes 10-20 years of yearly reapplication until an "iceball" effect is well-established and the world will stay covered in ice

naturally. Otherwise additional magical effects will be required to keep the temperature in place, either yearly reapplication of the dust, or some other sort of temperature or magical effect prolongation enchantment of considerable scope.

Obviously, if you freeze the whole world solid, powerful magical effects will similarly be required to pull it back out of its frozen state.

If you keep an area in a negative energy-driven ice age for a century or more, the dreams and all the spores will die off — so this is an effective treatment, if a bit hard on the environment. Various bio-arks and golem stewards may prove useful in reviving a devastated world.

This effect might seem little different than allowing the dreams to have their way with the world. Once it is encased in an icy tomb for a century, and then thaws out, it will at least not be preyed upon by night hags and demodands and subject to constant re-infestation.

The dust of glacial yearning is discovered in the process of researching the use of wishes during the creation of the dreams. However, actually inventing the magic and creating enough dust to affect multiple hexes is challenging.

Normally, this requires mining the ice that forms in the elemental plane of water in areas close to the negative material plane. However, it is possible large natural deposits might be found in the prime material, or an artifact capable of milling out tons of dust might be created. The scope of this considerable challenge is up to the LL to decide.

Murdersprite Management

The Dreams of Ruin are a decay ecology. They do not establish a “natural balance” — the fact that no creature save unnatural horrors could thrive beneath the canopy of the body trees is not a problem. Murdersprites are one of the pre-eminent perils of the forest. They are individually horrifying and terrifying. In large numbers, they are a constant, sentient swarm of homicidal wasps hopped up on speedballs and mescaline. Without magic, creatures who are not *blessed* by the forest are unlikely to survive long in the heart of the woods. This section details the magic required to survive in the forest when the sprites are at their most active.

All of these spells are revealed as part of research into the murdersprites.

SPRITE-ECSTATIC GLOBE

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3

Duration: 1 round per level

Range: 60 yards

This spell induces sensations of profound euphoria in murdersprites. It causes all murdersprites within 60 yards to fall, helpless, to the ground. The effect continues to radiate from the caster, providing a 60-yard radius globe free of murdersprite activity. But the caster cannot move while casting the spell.

Murdersprites will have entered the protected area again, or recovered from their ecstatic stupor, within 3 rounds of the spell having dissipated.

This spell is discovered via sprite research.

SPRITE MOOD CONTROL

Level: Illusionist 4, Druid 6

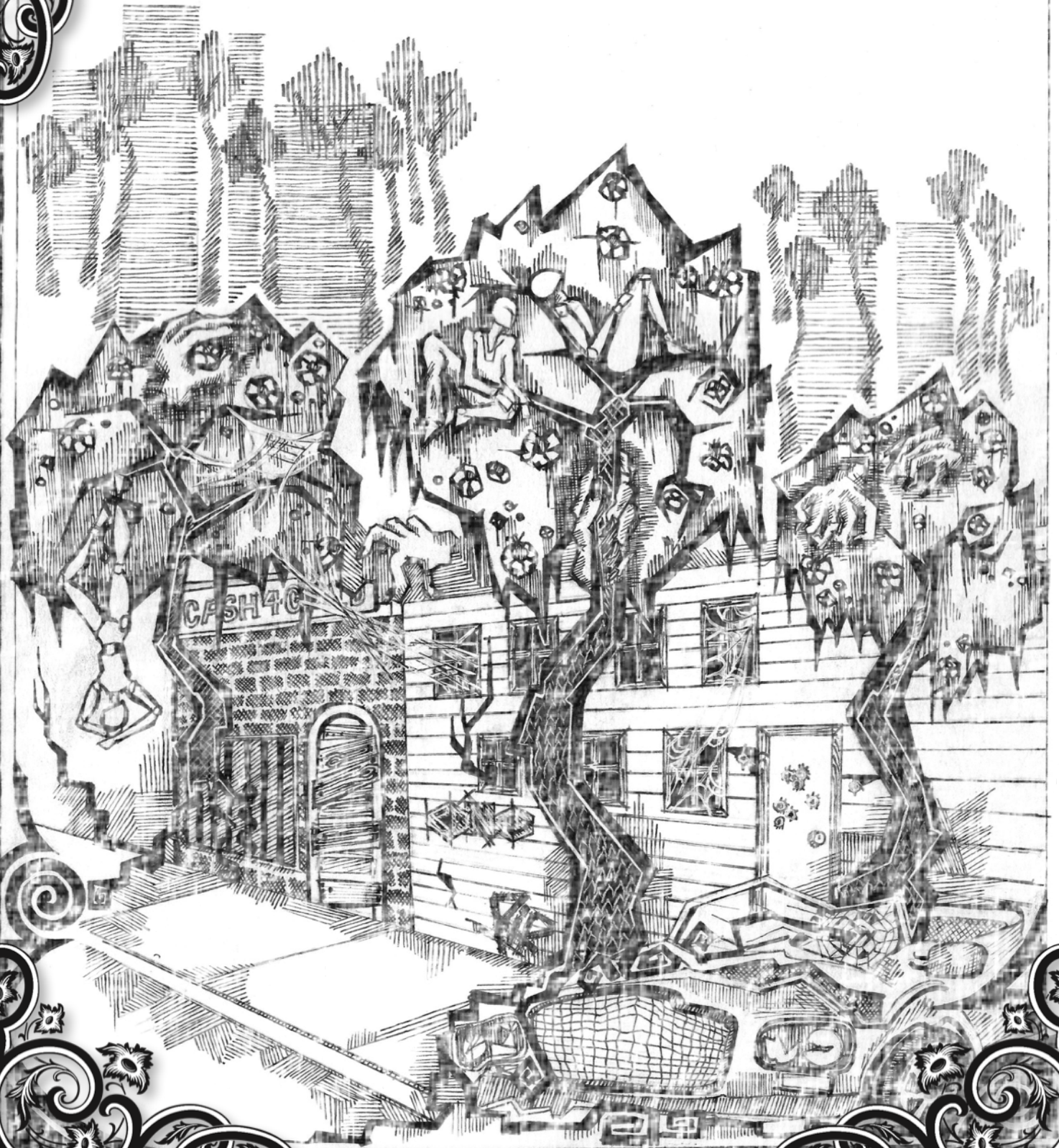
Duration: 1 hour per level

Range: 1 hex

The character chooses the behavior of the sprites in the hex.

If the murdersprites are currently in *strut*, it will take

First Blossom



them 1d6 turns to transition into the new behavior. Other transitions are immediate.

This is normally used to either put the sprites into *strut* or *rut*, so they are less dangerous, or to put them into *spooky* or *crank* so they attack enemies in the hex. Of course, this implies you have some way of avoiding murdersprite attack. Merely being *blessed* by the Forest of Woe while your opponents are enemies of the dreams will not necessarily protect you from a hex full of angry murdersprites in *crank*.

Characters do not have to remain in the hex after they set its mood, and departing swiftly is often advisable.

Murdersprites become less susceptible to suicidal commands over time if the spells are used repeatedly to denude the forest of sprites. However, if the spell is used selectively and occasionally, the sprites are always ready to be of service.

This spell is discovered via sprite research.

MARK OF SPRITE ENMITY

Level: Illusionist 3, Druid 5

Duration: 1 turn per level

Range: 30'

This spell places the *mark of sprite enmity* on 1 target. When a character has the mark applied to them, sprites exhibiting *crank* behavior are as likely to attack that character as any other enemy of the forest (extremely). In addition, sprites are likely to enter *crank* and attack the target.

In the first turn after the spell takes effect, the target will be attacked by about 1d10-5 sprites per round (minimum 0). In the 2nd turn, they will be attacked by 1d10 sprites per round. In the 3rd turn and all turns thereafter, they will be attacked by 1d100 sprites per round.

Targets receive a saving throw versus spells to avoid the effect of this spell. This spell is discovered via sprite research.

SPRITE REPULSION

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 4

Duration: 1 hour per level

Range: Self or 1 target

The character can make herself effectively invisible to the murdersprites. So long as they do nothing to irritate the sprites, they will not be attacked, even if the sprites enter their *crank* or *spooky* moods. This spell is discovered via sprite research.

Prompt Treatment Spells

These are generic spells used in the prevention and treatment of infection by the Dreams of Ruin. They are likely to be developed by magicians of many classes. Spell levels are listed for each class that can develop the spell.

DREAM BARRIER

Level: Illusionist 5, Cleric 5, Druid 5, Magic-User 6

Duration: 1 year

Range: Caster's hex

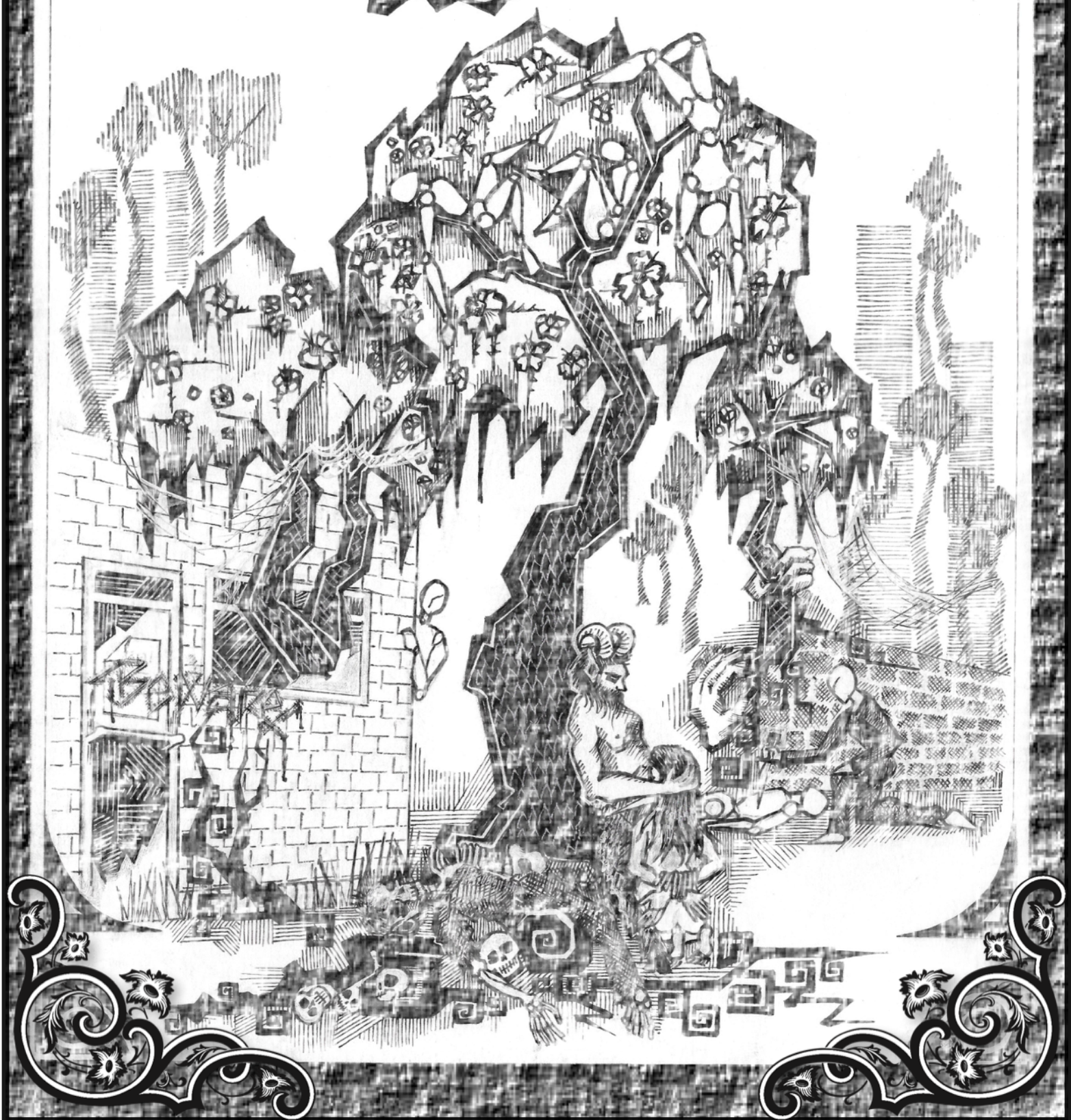
Prevents any dream spores from crossing any of the hex's hex-sides. They are swept off by geomantic forces at the hex-side edge. Dream spores cannot germinate in the hex. After 3 years, all dream spores in the hex die. This spell has no effect on hexes already infected.

A caster can protect only as many hexes as they have caster levels.

Dream barrier requires 10,000 gp of material components to cast.

Dream barrier is learned as part of arcane spore research, but other sources may provide access to the magic before research has progressed to that point. Note that access to the power by other means doesn't imply arcane comprehension.

Second Blossom



DREAM CLEANSE

Level: Cleric 4, Magic-User 5

Duration: 1 day

Range: 1 individual per level

This spell causes 1 individual per level to shed all Dreams of Ruin spores. Magical repulsion akin to *antipathy* causes the victim to remain free of them for 24 hours thereafter. Large animals count as 2 individuals. Wagons count as 3. Dogs and cats count as 1 each. Costs 1 gp per subject-equivalent for decontamination supplies.

Dream cleanse is learned as part of arcane spore research, but may also be awarded to clerics by their gods.

NATURAL DREAM RESISTANCE

Level: Druid 6, Cleric 5

Duration: 1 year

Range: Caster's hex

After a hex has already been infected, this spell stunts the growth of the dreams in a hex. There is no puppet drop that year. No bakegumo or murdersprites are produced. Other supernatural beings may enter the hex normally, and will be no more or less disposed to take up residence there than normal for the creature and conditions.

The infection is not cured; it merely doesn't progress for that year. It will extend the lifespan of the disease in the hex by a year, postpone BLOSSOM events, and so forth. A caster can protect only as many hexes as they have caster levels. This defense requires ritual components worth 10,000gp per year, per hex protected.

Natural dream resistance is discovered by research into the body trees, and can also be awarded to clerics by their gods. It costs 10,000 gp per year per hex protected.

Magic Items

These are either magical items that are created from the dreams, or those which are created for use in managing the dreams. They are rarely found outside of areas where the dreams are prevalent. This means that while civilians whose dimensions are invaded are often ignorant of defenses against the dreams, the extradimensional bandits and raiders who often take shelter within the dreams are well-prepared with magical gear.

There are many magic items that have been created for purposes of fighting the dreams on a prompt basis. The ones listed here are only those that are universal or notably successful and in need of special description.

For example, there have been any number of automata constructed to fight the dreams, effectively or otherwise. The statistics in the **Labyrinth Lord**, **AEC** and **Mutant Future** books should suffice to help provide statistics for these enemies.

What you let the characters discover, produce or invent is up to you. The material here divides them by classes so they can be discussed clearly. There's no need for you to describe them to the players in a similar fashion, at least not until they get a Further Prying (arcane) result related to them.

ABOUT CLASSES OF DRAIN-PROTECTION ITEMS

Keep in mind these don't have to show up in your game as the "Class III Amulet of Drain Blocking."

As they are designed specifically to ward off the effects of the forest, the miasma of the forest does not apply a +Charge effect to these items.

Learning how to manufacture drain resistance items is a product of learning about the use of the *Deck of Many Things* in relation to the dreams.

Third Blossom



Without understanding the Euryale card and its influence, defending against the dreams' miasma is fruitless. This spell is discovered during research into the relationship of the dreams to the *Deck of Many Things*.

Caster's Ring of Drain Protection These rings are worn by users of clerical and arcane magic to aid in spellcasting in the miasma of ruin. Each one has charges — usually 20 to start — that are consumed whenever the wearer casts spells. These charges are also stolen when the character undergoes attacks that drain magic points.

Class I: Disposable

These rings resist spellcasting drains for 20 castings, and then crumble to dust.

Class II: Rechargeable

These rings resist spellcasting drain for 20 castings. They can be recharged by casting spells of any level on them to restore 1 casting per spell cast to recharge the ring. However, the ring can absorb only 1 recharge casting per day, so several rings will have to be used in rotation if the caster expects to cast spells very often.

Class III: Self-recharging

These rings resist spellcasting drain for 20 castings. They recharge 1 casting per day they are outside the miasma of ruin; so again, there is a flow rate limitation even if the character has a number of such rings.

Class IV: Permanent

These powerful rings render the character immune to spell-draining effects while they are in the forest. Remember that if you give even one of these to the party, it will be traded back and forth between the powerful spellcasters, and come to rest on the most critical magician's finger. As far as maintaining the peril of the dreams, better to give them a box of 20 rings, with 20 charges each, than a single permanent ring.

Drain protection is also available as an amulet, and an as coating on armor.

Other Items

OIL OF PRESERVED ENCHANTMENT

If this oil is spread on a scroll, wand or potion flask, the consumable within will be shielded from the magic-draining effect of the forest. The oil is found in vials containing 1d6+1 doses. Oil of preserved enchantment is discovered while researching the miasma of ruin.

DUST OF DISAPPEARANCE (TO THE FOREST)

This is found in blow-guns or pouches, each containing 1 dose. 2d20 doses will typically be found. Each dose lasts for 12 hours, or until the character casts spells, attacks, or otherwise circumvents the spell. *Dust of disappearance (to the forest)* becomes available to manufacture as a result of inquiries into the relationship between the forest and *wishes*. The effects of this dust are as per the spell *invisibility to dreams*. This dust is discovered during reaserch into the use of wishes in the creation of the dreams.

HELMET OR LENSES OF DREAM-SEEING

While wearing this helmet, or holding these lenses in their eyes, the character is immune to the *psychic numbness* of the Dreams of Ruin. Time spent protected does not count as time toward burn-in. The ability of characters to perceive the dreams is not the same as the ability of their social order to structure a response.

These items are discovered for production during research into the miasma of ruin.

INSULATED POTION CONTAINERS

Based on the *jug of potions*, these self-filling flasks create a fresh potion within up to once a day. As with the *jug of potions*, the potions must be drunk directly; they cannot be poured out.

The most common sorts of insulated potion containers contain 1d4 doses of *extra-healing* per day. They cost about 25,000 gp per daily dose to

manufacture. Insulated potion containers are discovered during research on the miasma of ruin.

KING-OF-THE-FOREST AMULET

The *King-of-the-Forest amulet* provides all the best protections. Not only does it protect the caster during spellcasting, it also provides *mind bar* — not just against the forest, but generally.

Each day of *mind bar*: 2 charges

Each casting: 1 charge, as above

King-of-the-Forest amulets are classed as Class I-IV, as the *caster's ring of drain protection*, above; some are charge-driven, some permanent.

Type IV *King-of-the-Forest amulets* are the gold standard in protection and are what someone who was planning to make their life in the Dreams of Ruin would make for themselves to give themselves safety and security within the forest without constraining them to act in a Chaotic and evil fashion.

King-of-the-Forest amulets are discovered during exploration of the relationship between the dreams and the *Deck of Many Things*. They cost about 250,000 gp each to manufacture.

MARY'S CLEVER CROW

This bird figurine turns into a mechanical flying bird that is invisible to the forest. The bird is AC 7, hp 9, HD 9. It flies at 360', and is invisible to the dreams.

It can map 144 miles of forest-edge in a single day. Launched before dawn, it returns late in the night and scratches out a beautiful aerial map of where it has flown. The clever crow can map the edge of the forest precisely; however, it can only map visible trees, not prodromal hexes.

After flying for 1 day, the figurine must rest for 1 week before it can be flown again.

This is a very complex item, but affordable in the scale of the fight against the dreams; it normally costs about 50,000 gp to create one. Designs for the crow are discovered as part of research into the origin of the dreams.

SWORD +1, +3 VS. SERVANTS OF RUIN

This sword is a normal +1 sword that provides a +3 bonus against all direct spawn of the forest (body trees, puppets, bakegumo and murdersprites). In addition, it provides the same +3 bonus against any character who is *blessed* by the body trees' miasma of ruin. The +3 bonus to direct spawn of the forest applies under all conditions, but the bonus against entities that are *blessed* by the forest only applies while they are receiving the *blessing*. There will be no special bonus against them outside the miasma of ruin.

This sword also provides a warning when the character is within 30' of the miasma of ruin, so as to protect their potions and other consumables from spoilage.

The secrets of forging these powerful weapons can be discovered through investigations of any of the forest's combatant elements — the bakegumo, the puppets and the murdersprites. However, the weapons are expensive, usually starting at 35,000 gp per specimen, so they tend to be limited to high-level special forces operators only.

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

As the material is written, once the dreams have experienced a FIRST BLOSSOM event on the plane where they are located, the plane is doomed. No matter what you do to protect a hex, it'll soon be re-infected by spores if it's at all susceptible. Likewise, if a world is dimensionally adjacent to an infected plane, it is going to constantly become infected with the dreams due to planar contact, regardless of what the victims do.

Thus, in many cases, the challenge is not to eradicate the dreams, but to construct an existence that is able to endure in proximity to them. In other cases, the struggle against the dreams will be so prolonged that it will define life for a generation or more.

In these cases, the primary challenge is raw survival until the initial wave of the onset has washed across the infected world, or been checked in hard-fought battle. Of the massive refugee crises, the millions killed by the forests, the devastated ecologies, or the influx of lower planar evils, we will say nothing more.

However, existence after the dreams are established and their initial flush is extinguished remains a challenge. The dreams do not go extinct after their initial outbreak falters. Dark places will often host ongoing growth, where the dreams provide cover for dark influences and exert their own destructive power.

Even after they have died back from their initial flush, the dreams will often cover significant extents — entire overland hexes in perpetual infestation are not uncommon. Dreams past their initial flush rarely progress past FIRST BLOSSOM and the resulting dark forest is rather sparsely populated (it may have no heart of the woods extents, or only limited ones). However, the dreams can persist this way as long as their source of negative energy remains, and they will continue to generate spores routinely and through sporadic BLOSSOM events.

The evil planes are in many places thickly infested, and have been for millennia.

CASTINGS PER DAY OF QUEST/GEAS

Quest/Geas Castings per Day	Cleric Level	Magic-User Level
1	9 th	11 th
2	10 th	12 th
3	12 th	14 th
4	15 th	16 th
5	18 th	20 th

Behavioral and Geomantic Controls

One obvious response to the dreams is to undertake various forms of environmental modulation. By means of deliberately engineered, magically enforced systems of organization, efforts against the dreams can be structured despite the *psychic numbness* and other effects of the miasma. A number of such strategies are explored below.

FORCED EXPOSURE

The easiest way to make a society that is responsive to the presence of the dreams is to force exposure on children or youths until they have “burned through” the protective *psychic numbness*.

This is often the only method of immunizing that populace that is possible, either logistically or politically. It often causes serious psychic wounds due to young exposure to the dreams. Characters who are exposed to the dreams as youths and who don’t receive *atonement* afterwards may develop PTSD, anti-social and self-destructive behaviors, and other residual effects of youthful exposure to the miasma of ruin.

This still doesn’t render the society able to respond, but it does mean that characters who see the dreams can immediately contact members of local resistance clubs and talk about their problems rather than ignore the problem for potentially months or years. This sort of informal behavior often involves indirect signaling to denote distress and facilitate a large-scale informal response.

Requirements

This strategy for co-existence with the dreams is “free” in that it does not require the direct investment of magical power or great wealth.

This defense tends to lead to unhealthy societies defined by their relationship with the dreams,

and these societies often provide the same desperadoes that the survivor communities so loathe.

Characters can start treating their troops and populations with forced exposure as soon as they do the basic research on *psychic numbness*.

TOTAL CONTROL SOCIETY

In this version of anti-dreams organization, all or most of the population are *charmed* or subjected to regular *suggestion* and/or *command* spells. They are strictly constrained to perform according to an ethical system that is designed to short circuit the growth of the dreams. There are often notification or behavior protocols mandated in this programming to allow informal propagation of information related to the dreams.

Requirements

This effect is easy because it's a low-level magic-user spell. People might drink a potion, or have scrolls read at them, or be treated by automated enchantments. The *charm* is not *necessarily* especially constraining; it can just involve involuntary behavior when exposed to the Dreams of Ruin so the dreams can be promptly spotted and flushed out. However, it will more typically involve behavior that is known to be inimical to the dreams. Characters may be smiling pawns in the hands of ruthless oligarchs or disgustingly pro-social goody two-shoes under strict magical compulsion.

Anyone who doesn't like living in the peaceable kingdom can expect to meet a lot of high-level characters using *ESP* and various forms of unethical persuasion.

The effects are as follows. First, any degree of *total control society* implementation will allow the characters to receive informal notification when any inhabited hex sprouts saplings, drops puppets, goes into BLOSSOM, or otherwise experiences a major change.

Second, the treated population can continue to exhibit limited economy potential in the face of the

dreams. Normally, shortly after the first trees of woe emerge, emigration begins from the hex. Most areas are deserted within a few years of the first puppet drops.

With a *total control society*, it is possible to continue limited economic activity almost until FIRST BLOSSOM. The dreams don't always take root in frontier regions and wildernesses. Often the colonies are found in major cities and industrial heartlands. The economic wherewithal to sponsor any sort of response at all may hinge on maintaining control of a deteriorating location.

A *total control society* is defined by the maximum INT and WIL an individual from the society can demonstrate within the bounds of their programming. Individuals or groups with values below those listed on the chart are more properly called "bio-robots;" these populations generally cannot safely exist outside of controlled environments. They are not suitable for environments contaminated by the dreams.

Constraining local inhabitants to low INT and WIL stunts the dreams, but also cripples productivity in the hexes where the population has received *total control society* treatments.

Requirements

The *total control society* requires the expendable or permanent gear to cast *charm* on the population on an ongoing basis. There will be at a minimum thousands, and at a continental scope millions of treatments required. *Total control society* is discovered through research on *psychic numbness*.

Treatments will cost 1,000 gp per head for the first thousand individuals, 100 gp per head for the first million individuals, and 10 gp per head thereafter. Individuals must be treated by 5 years of age. Policing the system and renewing implanted behaviors amounts to 10% of the implementation cost of the system on the population, per annum. If support payments are not made, the system will decline by 5% per

annum. Arrears are erased on a per-year basis, so if the system is 4 years in arrears — 20% less efficient — then paying 1 year's worth of payments would make the system 15% less efficient.

Also, the characters must field a plan clever enough to actually meet the challenge of the Dreams of Ruin, and not just create a bunch of *charm*-bound weirdoes performing odd prostrations until the puppets sword them. This requires many thinkers (2d12 must be recruited) of a minimum INT 14, WIL 14, led by at least one INT and WIL 17+ mastermind of 12th level or higher. They must spend 1d4+1 research periods studying the research results and devising a plan. The result will take 1 year to implement primarily, and 2 additional years of uncertain operation afterwards.

This treatment requires access to abundant resources for enchantment. This is probably as challenging a strategy as gearing up for holy water injection.

IMPLANTED IMPERATIVES

In this response to the dreams, the inhabitants are universally *quested* or *geased*. This is similar to the use of *charm* and *suggestion*, with the only major difference being that the magic is much more powerful. Of particular interest is the curse which strikes those who violate the *quest*, and the way it can be tailored by careful casting and spell-research to be an unmistakable mark on individuals who have succumbed to *psychic numbness* in the course of failing to perform their jobs, without harming them or requiring them to communicate in any way.

Requirements

This is a much more powerful answer. It is unlikely to be enacted by expendable magical items. While the solution may have many shapes, they will probably either use one or a few powerful magic items, or a rather large cabal of medium-high level characters able to support the

many castings of *quest* or *geas* required. *Implanted imperatives* are discovered through research into *psychic numbness*.

This choice dictates the ascendancy of this temple to the rule of the world. The people who dole out the *quests* or *geasa* will be setting the agenda forevermore.

Obviously, this effect requires the ability to impose the effect on the population to be controlled. This involves a large number of castings of relatively high-level spells.

The effect of *implanted imperatives* applied to the totality of a society is that the social fabric is able to react to the Dreams of Ruin as if it was there. The entire society has been exposed to a tailored *quest* that enforces combat against the dreams.

The *quest* may contain other material gathered under the process of raising sufficient institutional and elite support for the project. This is so potentially setting-specific that the LL will have to deal with the political and social repercussions of any unrelated material incorporated into the *quests*.

In general, treat this as separate and separable from the technical material required to implement the encoded strategy of resistance against the dreams. Any game involving this strategy is going to turn on the politics of the *quests* and of the institution that manages the initiation.

The intellectual component of the *quest* strategy is similar to that of a *total control society*. 2d12 thinkers, of a minimum INT 14, WIL 14, led by at least one INT and WIL 18 or 19 mastermind of 12th level or higher.

However, the complexity of the response is higher. They must spend 1d6+2 research periods studying the research results and devising a plan for the application of the *quests*.

There are few capital goods other than *quest/geas* engines involved in this scheme. A *quest* engine

capable of treating 100 individuals per day in perpetuity is about 1 million gp. It may require the burning of gems to operate, or it may tap some other source of arcane power. It is, however, casting 100 5th- or 6th-level spells per day.

The timeframe to implementation is set primarily by the ratio of the number of *quest* and *geas* generators versus the number of individuals who need to receive treatment.

MASSIVE GEOMANCY

The landscape can be shaped against the Dreams of Ruin by the application of geomancy on a massive scale. Whole 8-mile overland hexes, possibly thousands of them, are reshaped and possibly repopulated with more auspicious plants and animals. These techniques are discovered during research into the spores of the dreams.

This costs a minimum of 1 million gp per 8-mile overland hex, and more likely approaches 10 million per hex. If hundreds of hexes will be reshaped, costs as low as 1 million may be achieved.

Requirements

This requires massive effort. Magical building tools like the *lyre of building*, *mattock of the titans* and so forth are a must, as are gigantic work forces. Prior implementation of *total control society* may prove helpful, but LLs shouldn't hesitate to impose high wastage rates on corvée labor if players insist on building city-sized earthworks with legions of grannies and children as workers.

In addition, the characters must have the geomantic knowledge to understand the crisis, or must purchase that knowledge. This is an extremely rare, difficult and precise task. The LL should determine at what trouble and expense such a sage of geomancy will be obtained.

Such a sage will command far more than the normal fee. Characters can expect to pay 150,000 gp per research period for the sage's services, and from 100,000 gp (for a single-hex survey) to

TOTAL CONTROL SOCIETY IS PROBLEMATIC!

It sure is! It's also something you're going to have to deal with once you have uncorked the genie bottle of using mass mind control to fight the dreams, and there's no denying it. Mind control is really easy in old-school gaming. Just mind-controlling everyone to be super-good and super-Lawful is a rational response to the dreams, once you realize what drives them.

When that technology is mass-manufactured and deployed on an industrial scale, coming to grips with the results is going to be a problem that post-dreams societies have to deal with, the same way that post-Manhattan Project societies have to deal with the legacy of atomic waste; it's an unintended second-order consequence of the development of countermeasures to the dreams.

1,000,000 gp (for a regional survey). The survey will take 2+1d2 research periods. Validating and correcting the results will take another similar sage 2 additional research periods.

Geomancy is something that is known or unknown in the world at the LL's determination in detailing the setting. The secrets required to effectively restrain the dreams are radical, and are probably considered novel in even the most advanced regimes of geomantic practice. However, as geomancy is only of marginal use to repeal the dreams, it is a great "gimmie" to hand the players if they are geomantic masters or powerful wizards, to reflect the advantage they have paid for. It is a good advantage but not an unstoppable one.

The secrets required to using massive geomancy is discovered with basic research into the construction of the dreams.

Geomantic Fortress

Dream barriers and *natural dream resistance* last 3 years per casting. Number of individuals affected

by *dream cleanse* is multiplied by 10 in the hex, and spores swept off them are destroyed rather than merely dispersed. *Natural dream resistance* will prevent spores from being able to take root in the hex, as well as halting their growth, although they will accumulate.

Puppets and bakegumo must make a saving throw versus spells to enter a hex protected by a geomantic fortress. Murdersprites will not enter it at all unless carried, and will die if kept in one for more than a few hours.

Passive Dream Protection

Passive dream protection is a system of geomantic adjustment, often put in place at the same time as adjustments to fertility, magical potential good fortune or whatever else is desired are set into place.

Passive dream protection shares costs with the other geomantic improvements on the hex. This text deals *only* with *passive dream protection*. Other effects that can be applied geomantically are up to the LL to determine. If the concept of geomancy is alien to the world where it is introduced, there are several suggestions for effects at the beginning of this section. These will be additional enhancements that are discovered due to the availability of *passive dream protection*.

Passive dream protection provides social and magical harmony in the hex. It encourages serendipity, fortitude and good fortune. This adds to the productivity of characters who are subject to *total control society* treatments, especially those with very high degrees of constraint on their latitude of action who are thus dependent on good luck. As overall degree of maximum WIL and INT rises, the ability to manufacture one's own luck overwhelms *passive dream protection's* love of the idiot.

Passive dream protection is generally added to very economically important hexes. It reduces the cost of *prayer broadcasts* by 2/3 (24,000 gp per year) but doesn't lower the price of operating numbness

jammers.

SOCIAL TREATMENT SYNERGIES

Total Control Society: Simple Servants

Total control society is important because it lets economic activity continue in areas that are affected by the dreams. They allow society to continue outside the bastions established by *numbness jamming* and *prayer broadcasts*. This is important in any endeavor that doesn't carry the full weight of the resistance to the dreams.

It's easy to protect a few critical points with jammers; just unless absolutely everything is centralized, there will be lines of communication and critical nodes in the supply chain that are vulnerable to the dreams.

You can allow — even encourage — the population to migrate out of areas that are economically non-essential, but you are going to need to hold the population to the land if the dreams are taking root in important resource-bearing regions. The nature of the dreams is to take root along the logistical axes of attacks against them, and also in areas of widespread hardship, so they will frequently clog industrial lines of communication and follow refugee flows to areas of economic activity. These secondary critical areas can be more economically defended with *total control society* and forced burn-through, while elite forces and installations central to the attack on the dreams receive more complex and effective treatments.

Implanted Imperatives: The Policy Engine of Society

Implanted imperatives allow society to have a more flexible set of behaviors and choices than, "Always do the right thing and make the good choice. Never run away from your farm no matter how scary things get or the evil plants will eat the world. Wear a red shirt every day for a week after you have seen a tree of woe." That sort of direct control is useful, but can't carry the administrative burden of aligning society's resources into a unified strategy against the

dreams.

Discovery of the *implanted imperatives* technology means that the resistance to the dreams has come to understand *psychic numbness*. They have mastered this knowledge to a degree that allows them to use powerful compulsive magics to fix the agenda of notable figures into a behavior pattern that opposes the dreams without engaging in any social interchange. This pattern allows great freedom of *action*, just no freedom of *enterprise*.

As for how it is determined to work, the research is being conducted in proximity to the dreams. These subjects can be easily tested, for individuals who are willing to take tests of administrative capacity while subjected to extremely easy-to-fulfill quests.

Implanted imperatives systems are generally centrally managed. The complex strategies they

seek to pursue will require reference guides and planning documents far beyond the memory of most *geased* individuals, however prominent. It will require repositories of planning data and circulation of doctrinal guides. The secret society or religious order that provides the quests is also likely to manage their content, although this might not always be the case, and administration may be split to dilute power.

Needless to say, control of the *quest* system allows a social agenda beyond fighting the dreams. Adopting this system of resistance is adopting a massive new social institution, with dramatic implications outside the scope of this document. This is up to the LL and players to determine.

Prayer Broadcast: Complex System Protection
Prayer broadcast is a cost-efficient system that

% STUNTING OF DREAMS AND %AGE NORMAL HUMAN PRODUCTIVITY, IN HEXES TREATED WITH TOTAL CONTROL SOCIETY AND WITH HYBRIDS OF TOTAL CONTROL SOCIETY AND IMPLANTED IMPERATIVES.
(INCLUDES MODIFIERS FOR PASSIVE DREAM PROTECTION)

Max INT/ WIL	% Dreams Stunted	% Dreams Stunted With Passive Dream Prot.	Max % Normal Productivity, Total Control Society	Max % Normal Productivity, Total Control + Some Quests	Max % Normal Productivity, Total Control + Many Quests	Passive Dream Prot. Productivity Mod.
12	40%	50%	20%	40%	60%	+20%
13	35%	45%	30%	50%	70%	+20%
14	30%	40%	40%	60%	80%	+20%
15	25%	35%	50%	70%	90%	+15%
16	20%	30%	60%	80%	100%	+10%
17	15%	25%	70%	90%	110%	+0%
18	10%	20%	80%	100%	120%	+0%

provides protection to complex administrative, magical and industrial tasks, where high population densities offset the high fixed costs of the area protection.

Prayer broadcast is a very good defensive effect, but it can't operate alone. Outside the borders of the effect, any plans put into place within will disintegrate. In addition, any lapse in the protection will cause the collapse of the defensive field and the organization that the field is defending. If the behavior required to restart the shield is at all complex, it will never happen under the influence of the miasma of ruin.

Thus, systems of behavior constraints, direct and indirect, must be applied to at least some members of society. However, the provision of areas protected by other means allows not just economical response, but also the preservation of dynamic thinking and socially-influenced behavior choices among at least some members of society.

Geomancy: Costly Return Multiplier and Restraint on the Dreams

Geomancy decreases the cost of *prayer broadcasts* for an area. This large up-front investment can steeply reduce the cost of operating defensive screens, but it requires taking the entire hex in hand and reshaping it — and possibly a few near it — with specific geomantic petroglyphs.

This can be very expensive and is rarely feasible within the context of normal defenses against the dreams. However, geomancy is worth the cost for critical bastion areas where an abundance of powerful magic is available to combat the dreams, and when there are other geomantic systems that can have dream-protection added to them.

A shared cost component for *passive dream protection* is included in the treatment's price. This is the cost imposed by defensive geomantic measures that would be shared by all enhancements it was worked into a larger system of geomantic enhancement of a hex.

In terms of discount for shared effort, it probably

shares about 40% of costs with other projects to improve the social and agricultural disposition of the hex. Discount all efforts so that shared costs are only paid once.

Druidic Effects

With sufficient time, druids can prepare materials which will engender extremely rapid, magically active sylvan growth on an area. They distribute these materials in advance of the dreams. They then use the resultant explosion of magical fauna to form a "back fire" against the expanding Dreams of Ruin, as part of a druidically-directed campaign of ritual nature magic.

A properly tended colony of powerful sylvan creatures led by multiple druids with a pre-planned strategy can slow and eventually halt and kill the dreams.

Questions related to this strategy are answered below:

Can You Master the Lore?

To devise this strategy, the druid must have unlocked 5 prayers relating to the secrets of the forest, including at least one of the prayers *invisibility to dreams*, *quell forest*, *safe passage* or *blossom storm*. They may then unlock "druidic planting strategies" in place of a prayer.

They must also subsequently unlock *regeneration of the source*. This Druidic Major Prayer will be unlocked as the next prayer the druid uncovers after they master the secrets of druidic planting.

Is the Ambient Magic Level High Enough for This?

This is a strategy that relies on powerful magical preparations. The dreams can prosper in low-magic settings because they liberate energy by decomposing the dimensional fabric. Characters who are in low-magic settings (ones where, for example, high-level spells don't work and there are few magical beings) may not be able to

deploy this strategy.

Are Your Logistical Resources Equal to the Task?

Even characters in fairly high-magic settings may not have access to the wherewithal necessary to plant out the extent required.

This strategy is talking about spreading millions of dryad and treant seeds, and the seeds, spores and eggs of thousands of other sylvan beings, in a belt 100 or more miles wide and hundreds or thousands of miles in length.

Even a minimal exercise required to ring-fence a single 8-mile hex — allowing for a 2-hex expansion before the druidic barrier can be in place — that is 5 hexes deep (40 miles) will be a volume of 150 hexes.

Why: A hex with a side length of 8 (5 hexes of barrier around 3 hexes of disease, 169 hexes), minus a hex with a side length of 3 (3 hexes of disease 19 hexes), in volume. $(169) - (19) = 150$.

This is probably the bare minimum size installation of this sort that will work (60% chance). Every additional hex in barrier depth adds 5% to the chance of success. A barrier depth of 15 hexes is required to have a 100% certainty of blocking the progress of the dreams.

Such an installation around an infection of any size will require a continental-scale scope of planning and the resources of multiple worlds.

It must be staffed by a cabal of high-level druids willing to put aside their status anxieties in order to engage in continuous high-level ritual magic and guerrilla war for decades.

These logistical challenges may or may not render the project impossible.

At 10 gp per pound net cost, seed costs are 100 gp per acre, or 3.5 million gp per hex. If seed costs go down as low as 1 gp per pound — and they might in bulk — that will reduce seeding costs to 350,000 gp per hex. 10 gp per pound is a good all-in figure for the seeds' delivery to an elf-remote

location. If there is a massive sylvan habitat struggling for its soul immediately adjacent to the operating area, then use the 1 gp per pound figure, at least for the propagules derived from local sources.

It will take about 1 hex of sylvan growth, actively managed, 1 year to produce 1 hex's worth of seeds. So in order to harvest hundreds of hexes, there will need to be hundreds of hexes of elf-wood to gather the propagules from. This may require syndication of the effort among many elven communities. This will require considerable political and logistical commitment, and such an avalanche of reproductive effort will not be easily checked once started.

Are You Organized Enough for This?

This is a massive undertaking. An 8-mile overland hex is 35,583 acres. With a seeding density of 10 lbs. per acre, that's 355,830 lbs., or 178 tons of seeds and other importable propagules per hex.

The above-mentioned 150-hex minimum ring-fence around a single infection site will require 26,700 tons of seed. At 36 lbs. per cubic foot, that's 1,483,334 cubic feet of seeds. If you hauled the seed on 200-ton capacity caravels, it would take 134 of those to seed the ring. It would take 524 50' standard boxcars loaded to 50 tons to haul it.

Even if you can get tens of thousands of tons of mixed treantseed together for your "One-Straw Revolution" against the dreams, can you broadcast it over hundreds of thousands of acres before it sprouts or rots? There will need to be huge staging-grounds and warehouses, and vast armies of planters. For best effect when casting the Druidic Major Prayer *regeneration of the source* (see below), it's good to work them to death, and bury them in shallow graves where they fall to fertilize the regrowth. Other disposal mechanisms for dead and injured planters are

acceptable, but mass-sacrifice of the laborers is one of the methods by which the *regeneration of the source* blood-debt is typically met.

Can You Take the Heat?

This is not just magically challenging, but politically challenging as well. Not only are there the magnificently complicated sylvan politics that will need to be negotiated, it's planting a magical sylvan forest that's going to swallow small nations. There are any number of stakeholders — from the local inhabitants to the gods themselves — who might react to this with total war. This is a project that must either be undertaken from a position of supremacy, or without notification or consent of the planted-upon parties.

Can You Do the Druidic Magic (Major Prayer) Required?

The magic involved in tending and maintaining the effort involves several Major Prayers, one of which, *regeneration of the source*, involves massive blood sacrifice. Major Prayers are detailed in the Rules Extensions chapter of this book. What matters is that the druids must be committed to a long-term strategy of containment, and must have the requisite druid levels.

REGENERATION OF THE SOURCE

Level: Major Prayer

Duration: 56 days

Range: 100' x 100' area per HD sacrificed.

This spell causes 1 year of woodland growth in a single day, for 56 days (2 lunar cycles). This is a Major Prayer, and in addition to the magic, it also requires a massive blood sacrifice. Characters must be able to cast druid spells of at least 6th level to memorize this spell. It requires deep meditation, a full week spent in forest repose while preparing for the terrible work that must be done.

The spell will consume at least 1 HD of victim per 100x100' area affected (10,000 sf); it requires approximately 155,000 HD of sacrificial victims to cast flash growth on a single 8-mile overland hex. These

can be sentient creatures or living animals, but they must be animals, monsters, demi-humans, humanoids, humans or the like — fungi and plants won't work.

GOING THE OTHER WAY

Another option open, at least to those druids powerful enough to dwell within the Forest of Woe and master its mysteries, is to “go native” and simply live amongst the Dreams of Ruin. With protection from the miasma in place, and a repertoire of spells that allow safety and power within the forest, druids, like illusionists, may find it a highly useful fortress.

Obviously, this is at some level the forest's intention. It is an ecosystem eager to proffer blandishments to encourage entanglement. Druids who spend a great deal of effort integrating with the forest are less likely to “go home” afterwards.

Obviously, characters trying to stop the dreams from overwhelming a nation or world are unlikely to just give up and go native. However, the LL should be acutely aware that an ongoing infestation may have high-level druids living within it, in symbiosis with the forest. These might be individuals who have joined it, or a dark pseudo-druidic cult that has integrated itself with a particular infestation or strain of the dreams.

An example of a druifc greater prayer the enforces a harmonious coexistence between dreams and individuals is *mutalistic harmony*, on p. 153 of this chapter.

Biological Controls

Biological controls tend to the esoteric. As the dreams are not a conventional organism, there are few parasites or predators able to feed on them. However, there are solutions. By magical manipulation or by obtaining beasts so foul they can feed on literally anything, the dreams can be

kept in check by biological means.

NON-GENERATIVE SPORES

One remediation measure is to release altered spores, which will engage in spore-spore reproduction, but which will not take root, and which pass this trait on to their offspring. Without the payload of the dreams' second form to carry, they multiply quickly. This technique is effective but advanced, and is learned during research into the use of temporal manipulation in the dreams.

The technique is somewhat similar to releasing sterile breeding insects, but involves trying to split the dreams along their dimorphic life cycle, and discourage them from setting root.

This will neither stop a new infection nor totally eradicate an extant one. What it can do, however, is reduce the number and severity of outbreaks in a world that has already been ravaged by the dreams.

Without the support of large areas of gathering mesh, the non-generative spores' spore-spore reproduction is doomed as a strategy against fresh infections. During a BLOSSOM event, the trees can put out enough spores to form a dusty patina on every surface, and they can do it for almost a year.

However, after dreams have made their initial rich flush across the world, and BLOSSOM events have tapered off, the spores compete well with residual contamination.

Requirements

This is one of the most challenging of the long-term responses to the dreams, in that it requires precise understanding and manipulation of the spores. The characters must have researched the temporal manipulation component of the dreams themselves to discover it.

Fabricating the spores is a massive undertaking with a major overhead. The facility to produce them will cost at least 1,000,000 gp to establish. In addition, it will require a considerable magical infrastructure to support it that costs 10 times that

amount in loans and guaranties to guide and support. It will cost 250,000 gp per month to operate.

Product of a spore-mill can tamp down a ravaged world's ongoing outbreaks of the dreams within a century. Within a few decades, lower outbreak instances will be noticeable all across the world, and whoever is milling and distributing the modified spores can essentially remove any chance of outbreaks in territory they directly control and can thickly spread with spores.

Note this does nothing to the increased permeability of the dimensional fabric, although without the lure of the dreams, evil planar beings are not nearly so prone to taking up residence.

OTHER BENIGN INFESTATIONS OF THE DIMENSIONAL FABRIC

One answer to the ravages of the dreams is to cultivate infestations of similar denizens of the dimensional substrate, which are less annoying than the dreams, and which can favorably compete against them. At least in theory, particularly when they have gone past their first flush of growth, other organisms that compete for the same ecological space should be something characters can create or discover. Much of what makes the dreams so dangerous is their ability to establish a supernatural monoculture over their environment so easily.

Requirements

Only one such disease is detailed in this text. *summoning the astral aphids*, an illusionist spell on page 132, is an example of an extremely effective form of such a countermeasure.

Typically, one would have to be made up by the LL and discovered by the players. This may involve massive investments in supernatural engineering, or excursions to the far-flung corners of the multiverse.

In addition, it would have to actually have effects that were not worse than the dreams. Using counter-colonies of sylvan life as an example,

these oppositional life forms may not be any more desirable than the dreams.

This strategy is a definite possibility for resistance against the dreams, but involves so many complexities and so many campaign-related choices that we don't detail it here, having already discussed use of sylvan natural barriers.

STENCH KINE

Stench kine can graze down the body trees, but will not eradicate them. It takes a lot of stench kine per hex to make this happen (several hundred, at least, with active herding). Their toxic manure is itself a terrible menace, poisoning the watershed of anywhere they graze. However, they will keep the dreams short enough they do not produce flowers or puppets, if the stench kow population is sufficiently high.

Requirements

Stench kine must be procured from the planes of evil, and established. This may require the manufacture of hellish byres, the supplementation of their diet with flesh, the provision of devilish cowherds, and other touches sufficient to make them comfortable in a non-infernal environment. This will be no less than 10,000 gp per hex. Stench kine can be had for as little as 10 gp / head for a starveling herd, but normally 100 gp or more per head. It will take several hundred kine per hex to keep the body trees cropped down. They can also be rustled from hell by the daring, but the princes of the Inferno do not take kindly to cattle thieves.

Lacking infernal levels of stock wastage, the kine will quickly become invasive themselves. Their meat is rank and inedible to non-devils, and the beasts are as aggressive as most terrestrial carnivores. A stench kow will cheerfully eat meat if smaller and weaker animals are available. In addition, the abovementioned toxic runoff makes it impossible for crops other than stench kow fodder to be grown in any hex where they are

domiciled. Finally, in any hexes where settlements coexist with stench kow byres, the chance of epidemic disease is significantly increased.

The use of stench kine as a management tool is revealed as part of study into the secrets of the body trees.

Dream-Harnessing Spells

A character who had access to all of these spells would be formidable indeed, if she became a hermit who sequestered herself deep within a fortress. Illusionists who are servants of ruin and have access to a book of these spells are dangerous individuals. However, most characters will have to research the spells themselves, or discover them a few at a time in specialized grimoires. The LL should remember that these spells aren't just lying around the world.

Note that none of these spells do anything to actually get rid of the *problem* of the forest. The forest is extremely willing to engage in mutualism. It will play host to Chaotic and evil forces gladly. It responds readily to magic inducements to spread. But there is no easy magical remedy to the forest's growth.

From an illusionist's perspective, these spells are most often discovered by burn-outs or renegades from more formal processes of inquiry. Obviously some number of illusionists will be drawn to the dreams and will discover their secrets, but that is of all the illusionists in all the worlds. The reality is that the kinds of illusionists who learn the secrets of the dreams are usually the project lead on the investigation team discovering ways to instrumentalize the dreams.

Illusionists who are "going rogue" can learn 1 Dream-Harnessing Spell for each Further Prying (Illusionist) or Further Prying (Druid) that the research group uncovers.

They can also copy the magical effects from druids as normal spell research if they are exposed to the prayers and their effects, and know at least some of the secrets of the dreams themselves (have undertaken at least “basic research” on the dreams themselves and the spores).

Major Prayers

Major Prayers are detailed in the Rules Extensions chapter of this book. The following is a Druidic Major Prayer that generates an imperative that forces the forest into a symbiotic relationship with a human community.

MUTUALISTIC HARMONY

Level: Major Prayer

Duration: 1 year

Range: Caster’s hex

This spell enslaves the forest’s natural denizens in a hex as its protectors and defenders. They help the local denizens in ways seen and unseen, aiding in labor, defending the hex, and helping direct the growth of the forest away from the areas needed for human settlement.

This subverts the forest as a whole in its relationship with the hex, and it will generally steer the more loathsome or dangerous extraplanar creatures away from the settlement, or attack them as enemies of the forest if they endanger it.

A caster can protect only up to 3 hexes with this spell, which must be contiguous, and which they must live in more than half the time. The danegeld to keep the forest locked in symbiosis is 100,000 gp per hex per annum.

The character must be able to cast at least 6th-level spells to receive this prayer.

Requirements

This is another sophisticated spell, one that requires significant understanding of the dreams. Characters must have uncovered at least 7 spells related to living in harmonious coexistence in the forest (see “Dream-Harnessing Spells” above) in order to receive this prayer.

Bakegumo

CALL BAKEGUMO

Level: Illusionist 3, Cleric 4, Magic-User 5

Duration: 1 task

Range: 0

This is as the 6th-level magic-user spell *invisible stalker* (Labyrinth Lord, p. 33) except that a bakegumo is summoned. This spell can only be cast in a hex that is past its 2nd year of infection. The bakegumo is summoned from the soil, taking shape in an ethereal cocoon at accelerated speed over the 1-hour ritual.

The bakegumo has the regular degree of substance for bakegumo of that forest. This spell is discovered through reasearch into the bakegumo.

DISPEL BAKEGUMO

Level: Illusionist 4, Magic-User 5

Duration: Instant

Range: 30’

Bakegumo, among the forest’s inhabitants, are particularly sorcerous. They are mostly made of snow and magic. This makes them vulnerable to disruption. Through use of this spell, the character may instantly destroy 1 bakegumo that they can sense within range, per 5 levels, rounded up. Thus, 1 at levels 1-5, 2 at levels 6-10, and so on.

This spell is discovered through reasearch into the bakegumo.

Body Trees

BLOSSOM STORM

Level: Illusionist 4, Druid 6

Duration: 1 turn

Range: 1 hex

This spell only works in a hex that is already experiencing a BLOSSOM event during that year. This spell can only be cast once per day per hex as it strains the resources of even a hex in BLOSSOM.

The character causes 2d20 puppets to drop. They drop around nearby body tree clumps. Roll normally.

After puppets have been allocated to every body tree clump within 300', then have the rest of the puppets burst forth from the ground within 30' of the caster.

In addition, they may designate 3 targets for murdersprite attack, if the targets are visible to the forest and not receiving its blessing. The murdersprites will not attack individuals who are *blessed* by the forest. The character must pay 1d6 hp to trigger the blossom storm. This spell is discovered during research into the body trees.

CONTAMINATE HEX

Level: Illusionist 4, Druid 5

Duration: Instant

Range: Caster's hex

This spell only works in a hex adjacent to an already-infected hex. It causes the caster's hex to become infected with the Dreams of Ruin. This spell takes 5 hours to cast, and must be cast near the geomantic center of the hex. It leaves a perceptible magical signature after the caster activates it. This spell is discovered through inquiry into the body trees.

DETECT FOREST CREATURES

Level: Illusionist 4, Druid 5

Duration: 1 turn per level

Range: Caster

The character can automatically know the location of forest creatures within a short distance. The nature of the forest itself legislates against direct detection, but the character can know the location of all puppets, bakegumo, murdersprites and body trees within 60'. This does not precisely allow *ESP* of their alien minds, but the general mood of the forest will be read as well, and the characters can tell if the puppets or bakegumo are murderous or docile.

This spell is discovered researching the origins of the dreams.

DISCERN FOREST CREATURES

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3, Cleric 5, Magic-User 6

Duration: 1 turn per level

Range: Caster

The character can't be surprised by puppets or bakegumo for the duration of the spell.

This limited *ESP* doesn't provide the ability to see the puppets or bakegumo, but it does allow the character to know when they are nearby (within 100') and active or becoming active. In this way it ably protects the character from ambush. Even faraway snipers will tingle the character's forest senses. Forest creatures wishing to snipe the character from afar cannot do so from surprise.

In addition, the character has a general sense of the forest's mood, and the mood of the murdersprites in an area.

This spell is discovered during research into the creatures of the forest.

HARVEST MINES

Level: Illusionist 3, Druid 5

Duration: 1 turn

Range: 1 clump of body trees

Harvesting the mines can be difficult to those not *blessed* by the forest, requiring a roll based on DEX and INT, and with the possibility of a dangerous fumble in every mine harvested. Through the use of this spell, the character can harvest mines safely and easily.

The character harvests 1 mine per 3 levels, rounded up. So 1 mine at level 1-3, 2 and 4-6 and so on.

This spell can be used only in hexes at least 1 year past their FIRST BLOSSOM — that is, in the 6th and later years of a hex's infection. This spell is discovered researching the origins of the dreams.

INVISIBILITY TO DREAMS

Level: Illusionist 3, Druid 4

Duration: See below

Range: Self

The character has invisibility to all denizens of the forest until they attack them or otherwise cause the effect to end as normal. This is as per the magic-user spell *invisibility* on p. 67 of AEC. However, this “invisibility” is to the *detect magic* and *know alignment* senses of the dreams themselves, the bakegumo, and their puppet minions. It also clouds the senses of the murdersprites.

Note that this only applies to the forest proper — puppets, body trees, bakegumo and murdersprites. Other creatures inhabiting the forest can sense the characters and react to the character normally. However, as long as the character does not attack the forest, the invisibility will persist in relation to forest inhabitants. Characters can fight to defend themselves, or even attack prey, while the forest’s inhabitants ignore them.

A few errant shots against body trees may be ignored, but area of effect attacks or heavy weapons fire that strike body tree clumps will end the invisibility immediately. This spell is discovered researching the origins of the dreams.

QUELL FOREST

Level: Illusionist 4, Druid 5

Duration: Instant

Range: 1 hex

Causes the forest to forget its anger at characters in a given hex. If the characters have the *blessing* of the forest, hostilities cease as of the instant the spell is cast. Forest creatures will defend themselves but only if they must. This spell is discovered during research into the miasma of ruin.

Even if characters are not *blessed* by the forest, roll their encounter reaction table results with the -4 bonus. This may result in hostilities ceasing.

In addition, any murdersprite targets in the hex lose their target status. After 1d10 turns, the murdersprites in the hex will go into *strut*, meaning it will take time for them to recover and regain combatant status even if the *strut* is disrupted by violence.

The forest will remain at peace until subject to serious attack, or for 1 hour per level of the caster.

SAFE PASSAGE

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3, Magic-User 4

Duration: 1 day per level

Range: 1 individual

Deactivates all landmines in all forest hexes for an individual for the duration of the spell. In addition, the character will never be endangered by a hazard-type encounter in the forest.

Characters without safe passage-type effects who are *invisible* to the forest may still encounter danger during hazard-type encounters or step on a landmine. This spell is discovered during research into the miasma of ruin.

WALL OF BODY TREES

Level: Druid 2, Illusionist 3

Duration: Instant

Range: 100'

The character can call up the instant growth of body trees. Characters can summon 1 10' clump per level.

Characters who are caught in a 10' square that is full of expanding body tree can make a saving throw to get pushed in a direction of their choice. If they fail their saving roll, they are pushed in the more disadvantageous direction, typically being hedged away from the caster.

The body tree clumps will drop puppets if attacked, as when characters try to hack their way through the trees. Characters caught in the middle of circular arrangements may have quite a bit of battling against puppets to do before they escape.

This spell only works when cast in hexes contaminated with the Dreams of Ruin where at least body tree saplings have emerged (that is, during the 5th or later years of infection). This spell is discovered through inquiry into the secrets of the body trees.

Puppets

CALL PUPPETS

Level: Illusionist 3, Druid 4

Duration: 1 turn

Range: 300'

The character can call 1d20 puppets to the area. They drop around nearby body tree clumps. Roll normally. After puppets have been allocated to every body tree clump in 300', then have the rest of the puppets burst forth from the ground within 30' of the caster.

This spell can only be cast in hexes of the Dreams of Ruin that have had at least 1 flush of puppets.

The puppets obey the character for a turn, and then go about their regular business. If the character is a strong personality and is receiving the *blessing* of the forest, that business may be following their new master. Roll a Monster Reaction Table (*Labyrinth Lord*, p. 52) result at a -4 bonus.

This spell is discovered via research into the puppets.

CALL VICTIMS

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3

Duration: 1 turn

Range: 300'

This spell can only be used in a forest hex that has given at least 1 flush of puppets (that is, in the 7th year of infection or later).

It calls up 2d10 victim puppets. These victim puppets serve the character for 1 turn, and then wander off in their hapless fashion to die.

This spell is discovered via research into the puppets.

PUPPET INVISIBILITY

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3

Duration: 1 hour per level

Range: Self or 1 target

As per the spell *invisibility*, but the character is immune to the arcane and alignment senses of the puppets. The character is still visible to the arcane senses of the forest as a whole, so the invisibility is of limited use inside the forest. In those contexts, the spellcaster should use *invisibility to dreams* instead.

However, outside of the forest, when fighting raiding puppets, the power can be of extreme tactical use.

This spell is discovered via research into the puppets.

SMITE PUPPET

Level: Illusionist 2, Druid 3

Duration: Instant

Range: 100' radius

Instantly slays 1 puppet per 2 levels, rounded up, no saving throw. Thus, 1 at 1st and 2nd level, 2 at 3rd and 4th level, and so on. The caster chooses victims among any puppets they can perceive in range. This includes puppet elites, but all regular puppets must be slain first.

This spell is discovered via research into the puppets.

Lower-Planar Creatures

HAG BEACON

Level: Illusionist 4, Cleric 5

Duration: 1 night

Range: 0

This spell has a 30% chance per night practiced of summoning a night hag, typically mounted on a Chaotic (evil) nightmare. Add 5% chance of success for each successive night the ritual is practiced without success.

The character must offer up 50 gp of liquor and raw meat each night they perform the ritual. If the hag does not appear, the sacrifice must be discarded. If

the hag appears, she will consume the victuals. The hag will do business on somewhat favorable terms with the character in light of the repast. The hag may have the matters it bargains for in its *bag of holding*. If it does not, it will depart swiftly and return within a few days with the items to complete the deal.

Hags stick together, and a given character is surely not the first being in all the planes of evil to think to do something terrible to a hag. Ripping off hags is a terrible idea, but people do it successfully all the time.

This spell is discovered during research into the creators of the dreams.

SURVEILLANCE AND DEFENSE

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Automated Augerer	100,000/ unit	1,000/ hex
Numbness Jammer	250,000/ unit	365,000/ year
Phantasmal Filter	500,000/ unit	52,000/ year
Phantasmal Filter (Large)	1,500,000/ unit	260,000/ year
Planar Watcher	1,000,000/ unit	220,000/ year
Prayer Broadcasters	250,000/ unit	36,000/ year
Prayer Repeaters	750,000/ hex	75,000/ year



TREATMENTS

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Dust of Glacial Yearning	10,000- 1,000,000/ hex	0
Expedited Senescence	100,000/ casting	100,000/ year
Illusory Disruption	250,000/ hex	0
Incantation of Brilliance	1,000,000/ hex	0
Non-Generative Spores	11,000,000/ continent	2,750,000/ year
Stench Kow Herd	30,000/ hex-herd	0
Stench Kow Grazing Capital	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year
Summoning the Astral Aphids	100,000/ hex	0
Total Control Society (1-1,000)	1,000/ treatment	100/ treatment/year
Total Control Society (1,001-1,000,000)	100/ treatment	10/ treatment/year
Total Control Society (1,000,001+)	10/ treatment	1/ treatment/year
Implanted Imperatives (per individual)	1,000/ treatment	100/ treatment/year
Quest/Geas Engine	1,000,000	500/implanted imperative treatment



GEOMANCY AND PROTECTIVE SPELLS

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Geomancy (#Hexes below 100)	10,000,000/ hex	0
Geomancy (#Hexes above 100)	1,000,000/ hex	0
Geomantic Survey (Hex)	100,000/ hex	150,000/ research period
Geomantic Survey (Region)	1,000,000/ region	150,000/ research period
Dream Barrier	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year
Dream Cleanse	1/ individual	0
Mutualistic Harmony	100,000/ hex	100,000/ hex/year
Natural Dream Resistance	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year



PERSONAL SCALE MAGIC ITEMS

Good	Cost
Anti-Miasmal Amulet (IV)	20,000
Anti-Miasmal Coating (IV)	25,000
Drain Protection (I)	250/ charge
Drain Protection (II)	7,500
Drain Protection (III)	7,500
Drain Protection (IV)	20,000
Dust of Disappearance	200/ dose
Helmet/Lenses of Dream-Seeing	5,000
Insulated Potion Containers	25,000/ dose
King-of-the-Forest (I)	2,500/ charge
King-of-the-Forest (II)	75,000
King-of-the-Forest (III)	50,000
King-of-the-Forest (IV)	250,000
Mary's Clever Crow	50,000
Oil of Preserved Enchantment	500/ dose
Sword +1, +3 vs. Servants of Ruin	35,000



ENCOUNTERS

Encounters in the Forest of Woe are a matter of certainty. The all-pervasive black magic of the location makes it inevitable that characters will find foes — or allies — beneath the canopy of the body trees.

However, not every walk into the forest ends in a massive drop of puppets and brigade-scale infantry exercises. That is a stress reaction to large-scale violence and mechanized incursions. Just like “natural” forests have lots of entities in them existing in close proximity without engaging in melee combat, the Forest of Woe can also contain a lot of combat power per 8-mile hex without every bit of it appearing to bother the characters.

If the characters are not in armored vehicles, it’s quite possible they can travel into the forest and have an experience more like a terrifying dark fairy tale than like a single giant continuous battle.

It is important when traveling in the forest to keep it in this dream-state. The nature of the forest is to entice the traveler in, terrifying them with horrifying displays before claiming their life. Even if you are Lawful (evil) you can exist in symbiosis with it if you just treat it the right way. If you compose a borderlands narrative for it about how the rules don’t apply to you here in this disordered landscape, you will assuredly receive the *blessing* of the forest. You may require *atonement* for what happens.

ENCOUNTER FREQUENCY

For each 8-mile overland hex entered, and each night spent in the forest, roll an encounter. If a whole day is spent in a single 8-mile overland hex, roll for encounter at noon of that day.

If the characters are not *blessed* by the forest, then every encounter period, add +3 to the encounter roll until there is a combat. At that point the encounter roll is reset to its base values and again begins increasing by 3 each subsequent encounter period.

Forest Relationship Modifiers to Encounter Roll

Blessed by forest: -10

Has made a sacrifice to the forest in the past 13 days -5

Non-antagonistic: +0

Antagonistic: +6

Per previous encounter without combat by non-*blessed* party (cumulative): +3

ENCOUNTER DISTANCE

Encounter distances are modified in the Forest of Woe by the general density of the body trees, which occlude sight lines. The modified distances are as follows:

Modified Encounter Distances

Overgrown, Open 3d6x10 yards

Overgrown, Dense 2d6x10 yards

Heart of the Woods 1d6x10 yards



A. BLEYS INGRAM

2014

ENCOUNTERS IN THE BORDERLANDS

If you are traveling on the edges of the forest, or just beyond them, then roll 1d10 to determine if you should use the local encounter table or the Haunted Borderlands table. The degree of taint determines the proportional chances of different encounter types. If the roll is equal to or below the indicated Corruption Factor, roll on the Haunted Borderlands table. If it is above the value, roll on the regular encounter table for the region.

Corruption Table

Circumstance $\geq$ *Corruption Factor (CF)*

Within the 24-mile hex beyond most far-flung border hex CF 1

Forest before first bakegumo CF 3

Forest until first flush of puppets drops (6th year) CF 4-5

Huge extent of fresh growth that is too vast in expanse to be promptly inhabited CF 6+

THE FOREST OF WOE IS NOT A NATURAL FOREST

The habitat created by the dreams resembles normal sylvan habitats, but is distinctly different. Conventional woodland survival skills are of highly limited utility within the extents of the forest. Characters who are not normally surprised in “woodland environments” or some specific terrain type will not have this advantage in the Forest of Woe, unless that is their favored terrain type.

CREATURES FOUND WITHIN THE FOREST

The Dreams of Ruin often play host to a complex supernatural ecology. Like a coral reef, they create an environment that favors types of life that live in symbiosis with them. Many beings have developed that often or exclusively shelter within the confines of the Forest of Woe.

Other beings partner opportunistically with the dreams. Many of the creatures in the **Mutant Future** and **Labyrinth Lord** Monster sections make excellent inhabitants of the Forest of Woe with no alteration other than a change of scene.

Creatures marked with an asterisk are servants of ruin, and beneficiaries of the body trees’ *blessing*.

MUTANT FUTURE CREATURES

Ant Horror

Black Pudding

Boar, Hideous

Brain Lasher*

Brain Plants*

Burrow Tuber (increase damage to 1d6 and the infestation is fatal after 1d6+1 days)

Carcass Scavenger

Death Bird

Eye, Insectoid*

Feeder*

Fly, Giant Carnivorous

Fungal Grove

Gamma Wyrms*

Gray Ooze

Green Slime

Hemofowl

Humanoid Mass

Jellyfish Plants

Kamata

Leech Rabbit

Man Beast

Mansquito

Medusoid

Men, Brigand

Meerkat

Mummy Vine

Morningstar Plant

Narcolep

Night Globe

Night Goat*

Piranha Butterfly

Pod Plant

Porcine Devourer* (These creatures are quite intelligent, and found only in very established growths.)

Puffball, Giant Killer

Pumpkin Man*

Quill Cat*

Rat, Giant

Rot Dog*

Screech Bush

Scuirinoids

Skin Stealer*

Skinner Tree

Stalker Plant

Vampire Star

Ventrilovine

Vile Stalker*

Vomit Fly

Zunicorn*

LABYRINTH LORD CREATURES

Bee, Giant Killer

Beetle, Giant Spitting

Demon Boar*

Dryad*

Ghoul*

Hell Hound* (The varieties found in the forest typically breathe poison, as per *green dragon breath*.)

Owl Bear

Phase Tiger*

Rot Grub

Shrieker

Stirge

Throghrin*

Treant*

Troll*

Wight*

Wyvern

AEC CREATURES

Ape, Man-Eating*

Bulette

Demon, Babau*

Demon, Nalfeshnee*

Demon, Glabrezu*

Demon, Vrock*

Devil, Barbed

Devil, Erinyes

Ear Seeker

Eye of Terror*

Fungi, Violet

Gas Spore

Ghast*

Lamia*

Night Hag*

Ogre Mage*

Rakshasa*

Roper*

Satyr

Slithering Tracker

Spider, Phase*

Shambling Mound

Strangle Weed

Tick, Giant

Wasp, Giant

Will-O-Wisp*

Encounter Tables

OVERGROWN HEX ENCOUNTERS (TRAVEL)

-8 or lower Dark Gift The forest gives the character(s) a token of its appreciation.

5 to -7 A Pleasant Journey for a Wood so Dark

Characters travel in seemingly-natural surroundings during the period in question.

6-8 Borderlands Narrative Characters see signs of the dreams' negative effects. There are discarded belongings, burned-out vehicles and displaced persons throughout the border of the forest.

9-10 Hazard The edges of the forest teem with peril. The characters discover some of it. Roll on the Hazards subtable.

11-15 Ruined Civilization Burned-out houses and ruined commercial structures show the scope of the forest's impact. Characters come upon an especially intact, or especially destroyed, building or neighborhood, reminding them that the enchanted forest they are walking through sprang up through what used to be a civilization just a few years ago.

14-15 Terrors of the Haunted Lands Characters come upon skeletons and rotting corpses of crucified or hung sacrificial victims to the trees, festooned with crows. Various tableaux of death show that the horrors of the forest are an ongoing process.

16-18 Spookshow The forest is an actual haunted place, not merely one with a visibly magical ecology. The power of the curse manifests in displays as convincing but immaterial as *phantasmal force* (1-7), or as painfully real as *advanced shadow monsters* (8-9, 8 is basic *shadow monsters*) or a *phantasmal killer* (10).

19-20 Puppet Theater The travelers witness 2d10 puppets putting on a display. The puppets will disperse after the show, and will generally not attack spectators unless they are interfered with. However, individuals who draw too close (20' or closer) are in some danger.

The puppet theater may be accompanied by spookshow effects (70%). They may be propitiating the powers of darkness (1-6), or they may be enacting a tableau (7-10). Puppet theater displays tend to happen where they will be seen, but the organizing entity has no discernable sentience and so they do happen for their own sake throughout the forest. It's just that the forest likes you to watch.

21-24 Puppet Ambush 4d10 Puppets attack the characters. There is usually no warning beforehand — the puppets often drop or awaken from sleep within a few minutes of the attack.

25-29 Haunted Borderlands Table Roll for encounter.

30+ Appropriate Overgrown Table Roll for encounter.

OVERGROWN HEX ENCOUNTERS (CAMPING)

4 or lower A Night in the Woods Although the forest is never quiet at night, the characters are not awakened by repeated bone-chilling nightmares or stalked by childhood terrors.

5-10 Spookshow The forest is an actual haunted place, not merely one with a magical ecology. The power of the curse manifests in displays as convincing but immaterial as *phantasmal force*, or as painfully real as *advanced shadow monsters*. Do not tell scary campfire stories.

12-16 Greater Spookshow At night the intensity of the spookshows increases. There are more *phantasmal force* displays, and more reality to the phantom monsters. Tableaux more similar to those produced by puppet theater appear. They include wild nightmares and non-fatal *phantasmal killer*-like night terrors. These effects disrupt the sleep of 1 character per 4 in the group, round up. Roll randomly to determine who is sleepless.

17-20 Bakegumo Haunting Bakegumo draw close to the characters and attempt to use the *ghost-light* curse to draw out victims, but will not attack directly. They will make 1d3 attacks on characters in the campsite.

21-24 Puppet Haunting Puppets lurk near the characters. They make no secret of their presence, but avoid directly exposing themselves. The 2d10 puppets will make 1d4 sniper shots, and attempt to bait characters out into the forest if they are able.

25-28 Puppet Attack The characters are attacked by 4d10 puppets. They attack in a silent rush, surprising on a 1-3.

27-29 Appropriate Overgrown Encounter Haunting One of the encounters from the appropriate Overgrowth table is nearby and aware of the characters. It may begin actively pursuing them for later attack as a result of the encounter, it may attack them in passing and move on, or it may merely observe them for a time.

30+ Appropriate Overgrown Table Encounter Attack One of the encounters from the appropriate table attacks the characters.

HEART OF THE WOODS HEX (TRAVEL)

-4 or lower Dark Gift The forest gives the character(s) a token of its appreciation.

3 To -3 A Pleasant Journey for a Wood so Dark The characters travel in seemingly-natural surroundings during the period in question.

4-6 Ruined Civilization Burned-out houses and ruined commercial structures show the scope of the forest's wrath. Characters come upon an especially intact, or especially destroyed, building or neighborhood, reminding them that the enchanted forest they are walking through sprang up through what used to be a civilization just a few years ago.

7-10 Terrors of the Haunted Lands Characters come upon skeletons and rotting corpses of crucified or hung sacrificial victims to the trees, festooned with crows. Various tableaux of death show that the horrors of the forest are an ongoing process.

10-12 Hazard The edges of the forest teem with peril. Characters discover some of it. Roll on the Hazards subtable.

13-14 Sprite Display A particularly impressive display of sprite behavior occurs. This may be (1-5) *strut*, (6-8) *rut*, or (9-10) *crank*. *Strut* and *rut* on large scales are harmless if annoying and perhaps shocking. However, *crank* on a large scale tends to lead directly to swarm attacks.

15-16 Puppet Pageantry Deep in the forest, there are large numbers of puppets, and these are sometimes used to stage massive versions of puppet theater, using up to 7d20 puppets. The victims of these displays of bloody pageantry are coordinated by the forest to keep down the number of victim puppets, and "use up" large numbers of puppets that are near the end of their service life to the forest.

17-19 Encounter Haunting One of the encounters from the Heart of the Woods table is nearby and aware of the characters. It may begin actively pursuing them for later attack as a result of the encounter, it may attack them in passing and move on, or it may merely observe them for a time.

20+ Encounter An encounter from the Heart of the Woods encounter table attacks the characters.

HEART OF THE WOODS HEX (CAMPING)

Below 1 A Night in the Woods Although the forest is never quiet at night, the characters are not awakened by repeated bone-chilling nightmares or stalked by childhood terrors.

1-5 Spookshow The forest is an actual haunted place, not merely one with a magical ecology. The power of the curse manifests in displays as convincing but immaterial as *phantasmal force*, or as real as *advanced shadow monsters*. Do not tell scary campfire stories.

6-10 Greater Spookshow At night the intensity of the spookshows increases. There are more *phantasmal force* displays, and more reality to the phantom monsters. Tableaux more similar to those produced by puppet theater appear. They include wild nightmares and non-fatal *phantasmal killer*-like night terrors. These effects disrupt the sleep of 1 character per 4 in the group, round up. Roll randomly to determine who is sleepless.

10-15 Bakegumo Haunting Bakegumo draw close to the characters and attempt to use the *ghost-light* curse to draw out victims, but will not attack directly. They will make 1d3 attacks on characters in the campsite.

16-17 Bakegumo Attack 1d3 bakegumo attack the characters' campsite directly. They will attempt to pick off and kill guards, and carry their bodies off to feed to the body trees. They will not attack or wake sleeping characters; they will simply kill the guards and carry them away.

18 Puppet Haunting Puppets lurk near the characters. They make no secret of their presence, but avoid directly exposing themselves. The 2d10 puppets will make 1d4 sniper shots, and attempt to bait characters out into the forest if they are able.

19 Puppet Attack The characters are attacked by 4d10 puppets. They attack in a silent rush, surprising on a 1-3.

20-23 Encounter Haunting One of the encounters from the Heart of the Woods table is nearby and aware of the characters. It may begin actively pursuing them for later attack as a result of the encounter, it may attack them in passing and move on, or it may merely observe them for a time.

24+ Encounter Attack An encounter from the Heart of the Woods encounter table attacks the characters.

HAUNTED BORDERLANDS

1-2 Chaotic Brigands*

Brigand (1d4x10) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 7, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d6 (weapon) SV F1 ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 87

3 Bakegumo*

Bakegumo (1d3) [AL N(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 2d4 SV F4, ML 9]

4 Puppet raiders*

Puppets of Ruin (4d10) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 6, HD 3, #AT 1, DG 1d6+4 or 1d4+1 shp SV F4, ML 9]

5 Ghoul*

Ghouls (2d8) [AL C(E) MV 90'(30') AC 6, HD 2, #AT 3 DG 1d3/1d3/1d3 + paralysis SV F2 ML 9] Turn as 3 HD. **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 76

6 Mansquito*

Mansquito (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40') Glide 150(50'), AC 6, HD 9, #AT 1, DG Weapon or 1d4 or 1d6 SV F9, ML 11] **Mutant Future**, p. 82

7 Scurinoid

Scurinoids (3d6) [AL L(E) MV 150'(50') AC 7, HD 5, #AT 2 DG 1d6/1d8 SV L7 ML 5] **Mutant Future**, p. 94

8 Wight*

Wights (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 90'(30') AC 5, HD 3, #AT 1 DG Drain life SV F3 ML 12] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 102

9 Night Goat*

Night Goat (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 6, HD 5, #AT 1, DG Varies, poison, plane shift, SV L2 ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 86

10 Skin Stealer*

Skin Stealer (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 6, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 1d4+poison or weapon SV F5 ML 7] **Mutant Future**, p. 95

11 Man Beast*

Man Beasts (2d8) [AL C(E) MV 180'(60') AC 6, HD 7, #AT 3, DG 1d6/1d6/1d4 SV L4 ML 10] **Mutant Future**, p. 82

12 Unicorn*

Unicorn (1d10) [AL C(E) MV 240'(80') AC 2, HD 6, #AT 3, DG 1d8/1d8/1d8+poison SV F8 ML 8]

Mutant Future, p. 104

13 Phase Tiger*

Phase Tiger (1d4) [AL N(E) MV 150'(50') AC 4, HD 6, #AT 2, DG 2d4/2d4 SV F6 ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 91

14 Troll*

Troll (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 4, HD 6+3, #AT 3 DG 1d6/1d6/1d10 SV F6 ML 10] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 100

15 Wyvern

Wyvern (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30') Fly 240'(80'), AC 3, HD 7, #AT 2, DG 2d8/2d8, poison SV F4 ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 103

16 Lamia*

Lamia (1) [AL C(E) MV 240'(80') AC 3, HD 9, #AT 1, DG 1d6 (weapon) SV F9 ML 9] **AEC**, p. 129

17 Will-O-Wisp*

Will-O-Wisp (1d3) [AL C(E) MV 180'(60') AC -8, HD 9, #AT 1, DG 2d8 SV F9 ML 7] **AEC**, p. 140

18 Night Hag*

Night Hag (1) [AL N(E), MV 90' (30'), AC 9, HD 8, #AT 1, DG 2d6 SV F8, ML 8] **AEC**, p. 132

Nightmare (1) [AL C(E), MV 150' (50') Fly

360' (120'), AC -4, HD 6+6, #AT 3, DG 2d4/1d6+4/1d6+4 SV F6, ML 10] **AEC**, p. 132

19 Demon Boar*

Demon Boar (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120' (40') Boar 180' (60'), AC 9/3, HD 9, #AT 1 or weapon, DG 2d6 SV F9, ML 10] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 69

20 Demon, Succubus*

Demon, Succubus (1) [AL C(E), MV 120' (40') Fly 180' (60'), AC 0, HD 6, #AT 2 DG 1d3/1d3 SV F6, ML 7] **AEC**, p. 114

OVERGROWN, DENSE

1 Skin Stealer*

Skin Stealer (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 6, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 1d4+poison or weapon SV L5 ML 7]

Mutant Future, p. 95

2 Pod Plant*

Pod Plant (1d4) [AL N(E) MV 15'(5') AC 9, HD 4, #AT 6 or 1, DG 1d6 or 2d6 SV L3 ML 5] **Mutant**

Future, p. 88

3 Stirges

Stirges (3d12) [AL N MV 30'(10') Fly 180'(60') AC 7, HD 1, #AT 1 DG 1d3 SV F2 ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 98

4 Rot Grub

Rot Grub (5d4) [AL N MV 10'(2') AC 9, HD 1hp, #AT Special DG Special SV L0 ML NA] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 93

5 Troll*

Troll (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 4, HD 6+3, #AT 3 DG 1d6/1d6/1d10 SV F6 ML 10] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 100

6 Pumpkin Man*

Pumpkin Man (2d6) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 6, HD 7, #AT 3 or weapon DG 1d6/1d6/1d8 or weapon SV L4 ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 90

7 Gargoyle*

Gargoyle (2d4) [AL C(E) MV 150'(50') AC 5, HD 4, #AT 4 DG 1d3/1d3/1d6/1d4 SV F8 ML 11]

Labyrinth Lord, p. 76

8 Scurinoids

Scurinoids (3d6) [AL L(E) MV 150'(50') AC 7, HD 5, #AT 2 DG 1d6/1d8 SV L7 ML 5] **Mutant Future**, p. 94

9 Ghoul*

Ghoul (2d8) [AL C(E) MV 90'(30') AC 6, HD 2, #AT 3 DG 1d3/1d3/1d3 + paralysis SV F2 ML 9] Turn as 3 HD. **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 76

10 Chaotic Brigand*

Brigand (1d4x10) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 7, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d6 (weapon) SV F1 ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 87

11 Victim Puppet being chased by (roll encounter again).

Puppet, Victim (2d10) [AL N MV 120'(40') AC 8, HD 2, #AT 0, DG NA SV F2 ML 4]

12 Throghrin*

Throghrin (1d10) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 6, HD 3, #AT 2 or 1, DG 1d3/1d3 or weapon SV F3 ML 10] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 98

13 Hell Hound*

Hell Hounds (2d4) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 4, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 1d6 or 5d6 SV F5 ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 81

14 Skin Stealer*

Skin Stealer (1d8) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 6, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 1d4+poison or weapon SV L5 ML 7] **Mutant Future**, p. 95

15 Manticore*

Manticore (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40') Fly 180'(60'), AC 4, HD 6+1, #AT 3, DG 1d4/1d4/2d4, SV F6, ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 86

16 Bakegumo / Murdersprites (pre/post-FIRST BLOSSOM)*

Bakegumo (1d3) [AL N(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 2d4 SV F4, ML 9]

Murdersprites (1d100) [AL C(E), MV 15'(5') Fly 90'(30'), AC 5, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1 SV F1, ML 7]

17-18 Roll on Heart of the Woods subtable

19 Hazard

20 Special Encounter

Applies to badlands, foothills, urban canyons, areas already densely overgrown with natural forest or jungle.

In urban areas, applies only to areas with 10,000 or more individuals. Below that size, use Overgrown, Open. Also doesn't apply after the area burns flat, so generally doesn't apply to early cities for long. However, cities that are primarily made of concrete or stone or metal, or that are protected by powerful magical fire-suppression, might survive for fairly long periods under inhabitation by the dreams.

OVERGROWN, OPEN

1 Treant

Treant (1d8) [AL L(E), MV 60'(20'), AC 2, HD 8, #AT 2, DG 2d6/2d6 SV F8, ML 6] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 99

2 Kamata*

Kamata (3d6) [AL C(E), MV 180'(60'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 3, DG 1d8/1d8/1d6 SV L3, ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 78

3 Wyvern

Wyvern (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30') Fly 240'(80'), AC 3, HD 7, #AT 2, DG 2d8/2d8, poison SV F4 ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 103

4 Night Goat*

Night Goat (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 6, HD 5, #AT 1, DG Varies, poison, plane shift, SV L2 ML 8] **Mutant Future**, p. 86

5 Satyr*

Satyr (2d4) [AL N(E), MV 180'(60'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 2d4 or weapon SV F5 ML 7] **AEC**, p. 135

6 Phase Tiger*

Phase Tiger (1d4) [AL N(E) MV 150'(50') AC 4, HD 6, #AT 2, DG 2d4/2d4 SV F6 ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 91

7 Lamia*

Lamia (1) [AL C(E) MV 240'(80') AC 3, HD 9, #AT 1, DG 1d6 (weapon) SV F9 ML 9] **AEC**, p. 129

8 Fly, Giant Carnivorous

Fly, Giant Carnivorous (2d6) [AL N(E) MV 90'(30') Fly 180'(60') AC 6, HD 2, #AT 1, DG 1d8 SV L1 ML 8] **Mutant Future**, p. 72

9 Meerkat

Meerkats (2d10) [AL N(E) MV 150'(50') AC 9, HD 2, #AT 2, DG 1d4-1/1d6-2, or radiation SV L2 ML 4] **Mutant Future**, p. 84

10 Wasp, Giant

Wasp, Giant (1d20+20) [AL N MV 60'(20') Fly 210' (70') AC 4, HD 4, #AT 2, DG 2d4/1d4 SV F4 ML 10] **AEC**, p. 140

11 Chaotic Brigand*

Brigand (1d4x10) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 7, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d6 (weapon) SV F1 ML 8]

Labyrinth Lord, p. 87

12 Man Beast*

Man Beast (2d8) [AL C(E) MV 180'(60') AC 6, HD 7, #AT 3, DG 1d6/1d6/1d4 SV L4 ML 10] **Mutant Future**, p. 82

13 Leech Rabbits

Leech Rabbits (3d8) [AL N(E) MV 150'(50') AC 7, HD 2, #AT 1, DG 1d4+1d6 ongoing SV L2 ML 8] **Mutant Future**, p. 80

14 Hell Hound*

Hell Hounds (2d4) [AL C(E) MV 120'(40') AC 4, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 1d6 or 5d6 SV F5 ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 81

15 Vampire Stars*

Vampire Stars (3d10) [AL C(E) MV 20'(7') AC 8, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d6 SV L1 ML 12] **Mutant Future**, p. 100

16 1d4 Spores

Spores (1d4) [AL N MV 120'(40') AC 7, HD 8, #AT 1, DG 1d6 SV L5 ML 8] **Mutant Future**, p. 98

17-18 Roll on the *Heart of the Woods* encounter table

19 Hazard

20 Special Encounter

Overgrowth on open terrain. Tends to feature more fast-moving creatures, and more soaring hunters.

HEART OF THE WOODS

1 Bulette

Bulette (1d2) [AL N, MV 150'(50'), AC -2(6), HD 9, #AT 3, DG 4d12/2d6/3d6 SV F9, ML 9] **AEC**, p. 107

2 Dragon, Green*

Dragon, Green (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30') Fly 240'(80'), AC 1, HD 8, #AT 3, DG 1d6/1d6/3d8 SV F8, ML 9] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 70

3 Dragon, Black*

Dragon, Black (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30') Fly 240'(80'), AC 2, HD 7, #AT 3, DG 1d4+1/1d4+1/2d10 SV F7, ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 70

4 Demon, Nalfeshnee*

Demon, Nalfeshnee (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30') Fly 120(40'), AC -1, HD 11, #AT 3, DG 1d4/1d4/2d4 SV F11, ML 10] **AEC**, p. 112

5 Demon, Vrock*

Demon, Vrock (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40') Fly 180' (60'), AC 0, HD 8, #AT 5, DG 1d4/1d4/1d8/1d8/1d6 SV F8, ML 11] **AEC**, p. 114

6 Demon, Glabrezu*

Glabrezu (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 90'(30'), AC -4, HD 10, #AT 5, DG 2d6/2d6/1d3/1d3/1d4+1 SV F10, ML 9] **AEC**, p. 110

7 Kamata*

Kamata (3d6) [AL C(E), MV 180'(60'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 3, DG 1d8/1d8/1d6 SV L3, ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 78

8 Puppet Colony*

Puppets of Ruin (5d20) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 6, HD 3, #AT 1, DG 1d6+4 or 1d4+1 shp SV F4, ML 9]

9 Bakegumo Fortress*

Bakegumo (2d6) [AL N(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 2d4 SV F4, ML 9]

10 Piranha Butterfly

Piranha Butterfly (2d6x10) [AL N, MV 30'(10'), AC 9, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d4 SV L1, ML 12] **Mutant Future**, p. 88

11 Violet Fungi

Violet Fungi (1d4) [AL N, MV 10'(3'), AC 7, HD 3, #AT 1-4, DG Save or die in 1 round SV F3, ML 8] **AEC**, p.126

12 Efreeti*

Efreeti (1) [AL C(E), MV 90' (30') Fly: 240' (80'), AC 3, HD 10, #AT 1, DG 2d8 SV F15, ML 12] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 73

13 Spider, Phase

Spider, Phase (1d4) [AL N, MV 60'(20') Web 150'(50'), AC 7, HD 5+5, #AT 1, DG 1d6+poison SV F5, ML 8] **AEC**, p. 137

14 Ghast*

Ghast (1d6) [AL C(E), MV 150'(50'), AC 4, HD 4, #AT 3, DG 1d4/1d4/1d8 SV F4, ML 9] **AEC**, p. 127

15 Mansquito*

Mansquito (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 120'(40') Glide 150(50'), AC 6, HD 9, #AT 1, DG Weapon or 1d4 or 1d6 SV L4, ML 8] **Mutant Future**, p. 82

16 Ogre Mage

Ogre Mage (1d6) [AL L(E), MV 90' (30') Fly 150' (50'), AC 4, HD 5+2, #AT 1, DG 1d12 SV M5, ML 9] **AEC**, p. 132

17 Night Hag on Nightmare*

Night Hag (1) [AL N(E), MV 90' (30'), AC 9, HD 8, #AT 1, DG 2d6 SV F8, ML 8] **AEC**, p. 132

Nightmare (1) [AL C(E), MV 150' (50') Fly

360' (120'), AC -4, HD 6+6, #AT 3, DG 2d4/1d6+4/1d6+4 SV F6, ML 10] **AEC**, p. 132

18 Brain Lasher*

Brain Lashers (1d3) [AL C(E), MV 120' (40'), AC 5, HD 9, #AT 1, DG Special SV L9, ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 63

19 Special Encounter

20 Hazard

DARK GIFT TABLE

- 1 Handcuff key
- 2 Lighter
- 3 Flashlight
- 4 Huge knife (1d6 damage)
- 5 Swiss Army knife
- 6 Whiskey (large bottle)
- 7 Marijuana / Hashish (30 grams)
- 8 Cocaine (Eight ball)
- 9 Loaded handgun
- 10 Loaded rifle
- 11 Gallon of gasoline
- 12 Tinned rations
- 13 Puppet anorak
- 14 Bivvy sack
- 15 New Shoes / Hat
- 16 New / Dry Clothes
- 17 Finger scale
- 18 Music player *Contains some sort of music suitable for playing beneath the boughs of the forest. Self-powered, the player will emit musical prayers to the forest for several hours to several days.*
- 19 Rope or duct tape
- 20 Canteen or water bottle

The forest will always give the gifts first of mobility, second of violence, third of euphoria, and fourth of security. Characters will receive drugs before they receive an anorak. If unsure, roll — but if there is something on this list the character really needs, that is what to give them.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTER TABLE

- 1 Brain Lasher slavers*
- 2 Rakshasa sight-seeing party
- 3 Daemon-Bird elite forces team
- 4 Fugitive bushi
- 5 Demon boar yokels*
- 6 Demon pack*
- 7-8 Night hag traffickers*

Hazards

The following are hazards — largely static encounters — in the Forest of Woe. Typically, rather than checking for encounter distances, the appropriate way to determine the nature of characters' interactions with these perils is a surprise check. Characters have their regular chance of surprise, while the number of faces on the surprise die should be determined by the circumstances.

Many of the monsters in these encounters have little or no mobility. Keep in mind that "little" does not mean "none." Many of the plants have the ability to make fairly good time, for a shrub. Mobile plants will often seek to ambush victims on unfavorable terrain, where their superior animal mobility is of less use.

PLANT MONSTERS / HAZARDS LL

1 Black Pudding Black puddings are common terrors of the Forest of Woe. They especially lurk around storm drains, culverts, swamps — any shady area.

They come out at night to hunt, and their slow speed matters little when they surprise their sleeping prey on a 1-5.

Black Pudding (1) [AL N, MV 60'(20'), AC 6, HD 10, #AT 1, DG 3d8, SV F5, ML 12] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 65

2 Dryad The dryads of the body trees are all that one might expect from such intensely short-lived creatures of woe. Dryads of ruin come in both genders. Like the trees they are bound to, they go into their FIRST BLOSSOM at 13, into their SECOND BLOSSOM at 26, and into their THIRD BLOSSOM at 39. They are universally dead before age 50. To be their *charmed* companion is ruinously strenuous, and few *charmed* victims survive more than a few months.

Dryads will attempt to pick off lone characters. They know well that they are not able to deal with multiple enemies. However, if characters are stealthy or invisible, the dryad may see only one. If they have

very high CHA, the dryad may not be able to resist. The dryad is intimately connected to the forest. If the dryad is harassed, her distress will draw 2 encounters (roll) within 1d12 rounds.

Dryad (1d6) [AL N(E), MV 120'(40'), AC 5, HD 2, #AT Charm, DG 0, SV F4, ML 6] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 72

3 Green Slime Green slime doesn't always grow on overhanging objects in the Forest of Woe. It can be found in the offering spaces of body tree clumps and filling the machinery compartments of abandoned vehicles. When it does grow overhead, it especially favors the spaces between roofs and drop ceiling tiles. It will fall on warm individuals through drop ceilings. This gives a saving throw versus poison or death to escape the threat, but only if the character is not surprised.

Green Slime (1) [AL N, MV 3'(1'), AC NA, HD 2, #AT 1, DG Acid, SV F1, ML 12] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 80

4 Spider, Giant (Black Widow) The huge and magical bakegumo aren't the only spiders in the forest. These giant black widows are not especially interested in human-size prey, but will strike victims who blunder into the spider's web.

Spider, Giant (Black Widow) (1d3) [AL N, MV 60'(20') Web 120' (40'), AC 6, HD 3, #AT 1, DG 2d6, poison, SV F2, ML 8] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 97

5 Yellow Mold / Dust of Sneezing and Choking 1d4 patches of yellow mold dot an area. This threat often coats fairly large areas. Like the dreams themselves, it seems to have a multi-planar existence of some sort. It appears, persists for an uncertain amount of time — days or years — and then vanishes just as quickly as it came into existence.

Yellow Mold (1d4) [AL N, MV 0, AC Always hit, HD 2, #AT Spores, DG 1d6,special, SV F2, ML NA] **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 103

PLANT MONSTERS / HAZARDS AEC

6 Fungi, Violet They move too slowly to be perceived as the all-devouring monsters that they are, but the violet fungi in the Forest of Woe are vicious pack-hunting predators. They are sluggish by animal standards, but they are always clustered in two groups, moving down a path, so as to catch their victim from two directions. They are found in close terrain, and will aggressively attack animal prey, attempting to cut it off in such a fashion as to negate its mobility advantage.

Violet Fungi (1d4) [AL N, MV 10'(3'), AC 7, HD 3, #AT 1-4, DG Save versus poison or die in 1 round SV F3, ML 8] AEC, p.126

7 Roper Possibly related to the violet fungi, and sometimes (60%) found with 1d4 of those creatures. The roper likes to drag prey into these smaller terrors.

Ropers (1d3) [AL C(E), MV 30'(10'), AC 0, HD 10-12, #AT 1, DG 5d4+weakness, SV F10-12, ML 8] AEC, p. 135

8 Slithering Tracker These horrors will follow targets until they bed down, and then attack them. Run this as the horror that it is — they don't attack; they just dissolve you in the night.

Slithering Tracker (1) [AL N, MV 120' (40'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 0, DG None, SV F5, ML 10] AEC, 136

9 Tick, Giant Nests of these horrors sometimes lurk in the undergrowth around the forest. They surprise on a 1-3.

Tick, Giant (3d4) [AL N, MV 30'(10'), AC 3, HD 3, #AT 1, DG 1d4, SV F3, ML 8] AEC, p. 138

10 Trapper The earth of the forest itself has been known to attack. Like killer plants, the trapper tends to lurk in places where mobility is constricted. It is common on narrow stairways and alleys and in other narrow passages where the target is forced to walk into the beast's jaws.

Trapper (1) [AL N, MV 30' (10'), AC 3, HD 12, #AT 4, DG 1d6 SV F12, ML 10] AEC, p. 139

AEC EFFECTS

11 The Call of the Wendigo The howl of the man-eating-man echoes through the forest. The effects are as a *chime of cannibalism* on everyone within the hex. Every character must make a saving throw versus spells. If they fail, they attack the nearest human, demi-human or humanoid with intent to kill and eat them. They may make another saving throw every 2nd round — so the 3rd round, 5th round, 7th round, and so on.

MUTANT FUTURE HAZARDS

12 Bee, Giant Killer (hive) The characters may (60%) come into contact with the 5d6 bees of the hive, or (40%) with 1d6 bees out foraging. The bees are very aggressive in defense of their hive, and feed meat to their young.

Bee, Giant Killer (1d6/5d6) [AL N, MV 150'(50'), AC 7, HD 1d4hp, #AT 1, DG 1d3 SV L1, ML 9] **Mutant Future**, p. 62

13 Burrow Tuber The burrow tubers contracted in the Forest of Woe will never clear up on their own. Characters will have to use *remove curse* or *heal* to escape the gastric infestation.

Burrow Tuber (2d6) [AL NA, MV 10', AC NA, HD 1, #AT 1, DG Special, SV L1, ML NA] **Mutant Future**, p. 64

14 Fungal Grove These psychic fungi are not unlike miniature versions of the Dreams of Ruin. If characters have to undertake operations to extract a trapped, snoring friend, roll to see what sort of (random encounter) is camping the edge of the grove's effect radius for easy prey.

Fungal Grove (1) [AL None, MV 0', AC NA, HD NA, #AT NA, DG Special, SV NA, ML NA] **Mutant Future**, p. 72-73

15 Screech Bush The characters encounter 1d4 screech bushes. Roll, as a (random encounter) is encountered as a result. That encounter cannot be surprised, although the players can.

Screech Bush (1d4) [AL N, MV 0', AC 9, HD 2, #AT 1, DG 2d6, SV L2, ML NA] **Mutant Future**, p. 93

16 Skinner Tree These creatures tend to lurk in pairs or more along a path, so they can cut off their prey's escape. Like most predatory plants, they tend to lurk in close terrain or along constricted paths.

Skinner Tree (1d4) [AL C(E), MV 60'(20'), AC 4, HD 15, #AT 1, DG 2d8, SV L5, ML 10] **Mutant Future**, p. 95

17 Wailer Wailers appear in a variety of forms in the forest. Their most common disguise is the twitching victim puppet, a lure entirely internal to the forest. In this encounter, the characters witness a (random encounter) stalk a wounded victim puppet, only to find that the victim puppet is a wailer lure. This may or may not be a battle the players wish to enter into.

Wailer (1) [AL N, MV NA, AC 5, HD 6, #AT 1, DG Special, SV L4, ML 12] **Mutant Future**, p. 101

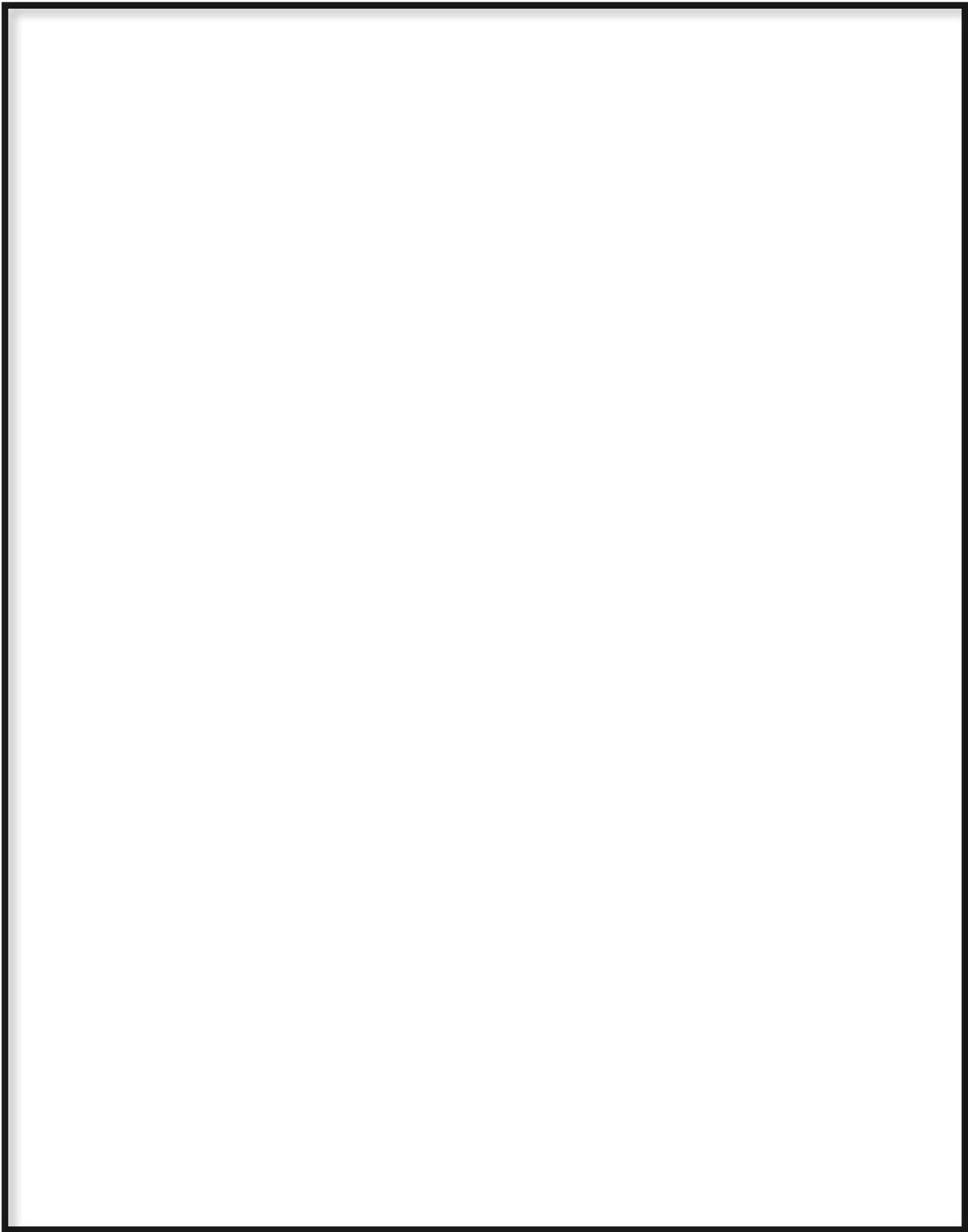
MATERIAL FROM THIS BOOK

18-19 Landmines Landmines surprise on a 1-3. Roll for surprise. If surprised, the character is struck by the landmine, doing 1d6 shp (5-30 hp). If they are not surprised, the target escapes the effects of the mine. Individuals who are with the victim may be struck as well. The mine will also claim 1d3 additional individuals in its blast radius, regardless of whether the original target is struck. Determine randomly which individuals are struck incidentally. Individuals who are struck by the side effect from a mine take 4d6 damage, and can make a saving throw versus dragon breath for half.

20 Bakegumo snare There are 1d3 bakegumo lurking in a complex of webs. As the characters work their way along the edge of the obstacle, seeking a way around it, the bakegumo may ambush isolated individuals, pick off characters with *ghost-light*, or otherwise seek an engagement on their own terms, using their fortress to provide interior lines.

If the characters start a noisy engagement with or siege of the bakegumo, roll for another encounter for the area to determine what is drawn to the site of the conflict.

Bakegumo (1d3) [AL N(E), MV 120' (40'), AC 5, HD 5, #AT 1, DG 2d8, SV F7, ML 9]



SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

Brain Lasher Slaving Party

Brain lashers are riding in the forest, out on a slaving run. They approach individuals in a friendly fashion, evaluating whether they are suitable victims. Brain lashers are quite daring. They will take on even tough-looking groups, especially if the party has fewer members than the brain lasher party.

They will use their *circlets of domination* to force their victims wait for them at a designated mustering point. The brain lashers will order victims of their charms to lie down motionless, and attack to kill anyone who made their MCM saves against the first onslaught of charms.

The zunicorns and any phase tigers present will divide the remains of any slain enemies, after the masters extract any desirable brains through their hollow fingernails. The brain lashers prefer live victims, but they may still discover choice memories as they digest the victim's brains in their forearm-sacks.

SCENARIO PROFILE

1d6+1 brain lashers (**Mutant Future**, p. 63). All ride zunicorns (**Mutant Future**, p. 104).

It is quite likely (70%) they have 1d4 phase tigers (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 91) present as hunting beasts.

All members of the hunting party are in constant psionic communication with one another through the enhanced facilities of their implants and armor. This communication is silent and effective to a range of 600'.

If present, the phase tigers will flush out prey and chase, but not attack. The masters do not value damaged prey. However, if they are themselves attacked, they will attack to kill.

BRAIN LASHER SLAVER

No. Enc.: 1d6+1

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 2 vs. melee, 0 vs. ranged

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 8

Terror: 21

Hit Dice: 54 hp (9 HD)

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 12

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 12

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L9

WIL: 17

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

Heavily enhanced with arcane implants and powerful magic items, the brain lasher slaver operates as a multi-dimensional reaver. Brain lashers enter a world, subdue a few weak victims, and flee back into the astral before any response can be mustered. They can repeat this several times a day, adding up to quite a body count if allowed to operate unimpeded. A few victims are consumed; the rest are sold to various factors who might have an interest in them as servants, raw materials, or what have you.

Special Abilities

Interloper The brain lasher slaver is a hardened denizen of the deep astral. It is +4 to its WIL when determining its resistance against Divine Terror attacks. Sight of brain lashers causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Thermal Vision The brain lasher is far more comfortable in darkness than in light. It has thermal vision to a 90' range and is at a -2 for all to hit and saving throw rolls in bright sunlight. Brain lashers are blind in visual

light wavelengths, and see through a combination of thermal and psychic impressions.

Circlet of Domination These circlets, permanently implanted into the craniums of the brain lasher slavers, are no small part of why they are so feared. A circlet not only translates their powers into a magic point format, it also significantly enhances their already-formidable capabilities. Along with effect alterations that are part of its Mental Attacks description, below, the circlet also provides continuous *ESP* (as per the 2nd-level magic-user spell, **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 31). It also enhances the brain lasher's prowess in psychic combat as well, adding +2 to the brain lasher's WIL for the purposes of offensive mental attacks.

Life Support Implanted gear also provides life support to the brain lasher, in this and several other environments. The brain lasher has resistance to fire, cold, electricity, poison and acid. The brain lasher takes half damage from these sources, but only non-magical varieties. The life support gear also makes the brain lasher immune to radiation.

Protective Belt and Bangles Brain lashers wear a protective belt, anklets and wristlets that provide an enhanced version of the 1st-level magic-user spell *shield* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 39). They are AC 2 against melee attacks, and AC 0 against ranged attacks.

Armor Charms The brain lasher's protective gear has room for 3 charms. The following charms are attached.

* *Non-detection Notes* As per an *amulet versus crystal balls and ESP* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116).

However, it does not provide any protection from *ESP*, so that the brain lasher can be in psychic contact with the zunicorns and the phase tigers.

* *Elemental Protection: Fire Notes* As per a *ring of fire resistance* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 113).

* *Shielding Notes* Provides 101 points of magic missile defense as per a *brooch of shielding* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 117).

Attacks

Mental Attacks The brain lasher is a master psionic whose power is considerably enhanced by the implantation of a *circlet of domination* (see above). They have the following powers. These all take place in the magic/mutation phase of the round. Brain lashers regain 6 magic points per turn.

* *Charm person or mammal* (1 magic point) **Range** 120' **Damage** Charm **Notes** Mental attack made at WIL 19. As per the 2nd-level druid spell, AEC, p. 41.

* *Charm monster* (3 magic points) **Range** 80' **Damage** Charm **Notes** Mental attack made at WIL 19. As per the 4th-level magic-user spell, AEC, p. 57.

* *Mind thrust* (2 magic points) **Range** 150' **Damage** 3d6 **Notes** Mental attack made at WIL 19.

* *Ancestral form* (4+ magic points) **Range** 100' **Damage** Level Drain **Notes** Mental attack. If the mental attack is successful, the target forgets 1 level. In a round subsequent to one when the brain lasher succeeds in using this power, the brain lasher may continue the mental attack by continuing to spend magic points and making magic attack rolls. This does not require any special concentration on the part of the brain lasher, only the expenditure of power and the successful roll; the brain lasher can make other attacks, move normally, and so forth. However, the brain lasher cannot use other mental attacks while the effect is taking place. If they continue to beat the victim in mental attacks, the victim continues to forget levels at the rate of 1 per round. The 2nd round of the effect costs 2 magic points. The 3rd and subsequent rounds cost 1 magic point.

When the target loses their last level or hit die, they are a docile slave of the brain lasher. The character can remember lost levels through the effects of a remove curse cast by a cleric of 9th level or greater ability.

* *Possession* (3 magic points) **Range** 50' **Damage** Possession **Notes** Mental attack made at WIL 19. See the power description on p. 31 of **Mutant Future** for full details.

* *Plane shift* (5+ magic points) **Notes** Costs 5 points for the character to transit their own *gate*, +1 per additional sentient being that accompanies the character. Companions must be sentient. Everyone must go through the *gate* at the same time. It takes approximately a turn of concentration for a brain lasher to activate *plane shift*.

Magic missile submachine guns **Range** 150'

Damage 1d6+1 **Ammo** 20 **Basic Load** Loaded + 3 magazines **Trigger Type** Rapid Fire **Notes** Does not miss, do not roll to hit. Blocked by a *brooch of shielding* and other effects that thwart *magic missile*.

Sword +3, Frost Brand **Damage** 2d4+3, 2d4+6 against fire-using targets **Notes** +3 to hit. Quenches flame and glows when below freezing, as per the weapon description on **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 120. The brain lashers will use their *frost brand swords*, rather than sucking out brains with their finger-talons, if forced into melee.

Vampiric talons **Damage** 1d6 + brain removal **Notes** After first hit, can elect to do damage normally without a roll to hit each round. The victim may not move, but may attack normally. The target's brain is extracted in 1d4 rounds and stored in the brain lasher's forearms for digestion. As these rules imply, on a "1," it removes the target's brain immediately, killing them instantly, no saving throw. Victims with no living brain to remove merely take 1d6 damage from the talons.

Web net launchers **Range** 60' **Damage** Web **Trigger Type** Normal **Shots** 1 **Basic Load** Loaded + 3 shots **Notes** Mounted below the barrel of the *magic missile submachine gun*. Requires a full round to reload. Webs a 10' square area for 48 turns. Characters in the area when the web expands may make a saving throw versus poison or death to escape its extents.

ZUNICORN MOUNT

No. Enc.: 1 per brain lasher
 Alignment: Chaotic (evil)
 Movement: 240' (80')
 Armor Class: 2 vs. melee, 0 vs. ranged
 Damage Absorption: 0
 MCM: 10
 Terror: 17
 Hit Dice: 40 hp (6 HD)
 Attacks: 3
 THAC0: 14
 Damage: 1d8/1d8/1d8+poison
 Magic Points: 6
 Miracle Points: 0
 Save: L8
 WIL: 13
 Morale: 8
 Hoard Class: None

Description

These swift and vicious beasts are favored as steeds by many of those who ride to war in the evil astral. Far excelling any warhorse in terms of combative temperament, zunicorns eat raw meat and yearn for death in battle.

These zunicorns have been modified by means of arcane implants to enhance their damage reflection capacities and improve their survivability in hostile environments.

This sort of magical tampering with organic creatures is common in the darker reaches of astral space, and is primarily limited by the relatively short lifespans of the adulterated creatures. As a result, most such implants are generally optimized for easy removal and re-implantation when the host's too-short mortal existence comes to an end.

Special Abilities

Interloper The zunicorn is a war beast of the brain lashers. It is +4 to its WIL when determining its resistance against Divine Terror attacks. Sight of the

zunicorn causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Airwalking Notes Brain lasher slavers prefer to ride undetected. Their zunicorn steeds are shod with *horseshoes of a zephyr* (AEC, p. 98).

Life Support Notes Implanted gear provides life support to the zunicorn, in this and several other environments. As a result of these treatments, the zunicorn has resistance to fire, cold, electricity, poison and acid. It takes half damage from these sources, but only non-magical varieties. It is immune to radiation.

Protective Caparison Notes The zunicorns wear a protective barding made of silk and bangles. This enchanted armor provides an enhanced version of the 1st-level magic-user spell *shield* (Labyrinth Lord, p. 39). They are AC 2 against melee attacks, and AC 0 against ranged attacks.

Armor Charms The zunicorn's protective gear has room for 3 charms. The following charms are attached.

* *Non-detection Notes* As per an *amulet versus crystal balls and ESP* (Labyrinth Lord, p. 116).

However, it does not provide any protection from *ESP*, so that the zunicorn can be in psychic contact with the brain lashers and the phase tigers.

* *Elemental Protection: Fire Notes* As per a *ring of fire resistance* (Labyrinth Lord, p. 113).

* *Shielding Notes* Provides 101 points of *magic missile* defense as per a *Brooch of Shielding* (Labyrinth Lord, p. 117).

Damage Reflection Notes The zunicorns have the mutation *damage turning* (Mutant Future, p. 28-29). They have implanted gear that makes them able to use their *damage turning* power at will, while moving, for a cost of 1 magic point. When activated in this fashion, it has a fixed effect of 5d6 hp, which applies only against a single instance of a single damage source.

The zunicorn can still activate its *damage turning* field for free, as normal, but not moving and using total concentration to invoke the effect. However, this will not work if the zunicorn is at 0 magic points, and so it must be careful to avoid spending its final magic point.

Attacks

Natural Attack Pattern **Damage** 1d6/1d6/1d6+poison

Notes Hoof/hoof/horn. The horn is coated with intensity 7 poison (does 7d6 damage, saving throw versus poison or death for half).

PHASE TIGER HUNTING BEAST

No. Enc.: 1d4

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Armor Class: 2 vs. melee, 0 vs. ranged

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 11

Terror: 17

Hit Dice: 32 hp (6 HD)

Attacks: 2

THAC0: 14

Damage: 2d4/2d4

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L6

WIL: 13

Morale: 8

Hoard Class: None

Description

Bred in captivity in evil planar spaces, raised as hunting beasts and magically-surgically modified into combat units, these creatures have never known anything but cruelty, pain and confinement. They seek to share their suffering with the world. Phase tigers enjoy playing with their prey, causing their victims to panic and herd themselves toward their deaths. If the phase tiger's target attacks them, they will immediately attack to kill. Like the slavers they serve, phase tigers are not interested in prolonged fights to subdue victims. Those who run and scream are chased and toyed with. Those who resist are slain.

Special Abilities

Interloper The phase tiger is a poly-dimensional horror trained to hunt and sold to the brain lashers. It is +4 to its WIL when determining its resistance against Divine Terror attacks. Sight of the phase tiger causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Shielding Bangles Notes The protective gear of phase tigers is light compared to that carried by the slavers

and the zunicorns, but their protective gear synergizes with their natural phase-shifting powers. As a result, tigers are AC 0 vs. melee, AC 2 vs. ranged, a level of final protection comparable to the slavers and zunicorns.

Armor Charms The phase tigers' armor has room for 2 charms.

* *Non-detection Notes* As per an *amulet versus crystal balls and ESP* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116).

However, it does not provide any protection from *ESP*, so that the phase tiger can be in psychic contact with the brain lashers and the zunicorns.

* *Lesser Shielding Notes* Provides 34 points of *magic missile* defense as per a *brooch of shielding* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 117).

Vicious Strike Talismans Notes The phase tiger's attacks strike as +2 enchanted attacks. They do not enjoy any actual bonus to hit.

Life Support Implanted gear provides life support to the phase tiger, in this and several other environments. The phase tiger has resistance to fire, cold, electricity, poison and acid; it takes half damage from these sources, but only non-magical varieties. It is immune to radiation.

Attacks

Natural Attack Patterns **Damage** 2d4/2d4 **Notes** Slashing razor tentacles.

Demon Boar Yokels

Demon boars are hunting on foot. These Chaotic horrors have been settled in the area for some time and consider it their home territory. They may be out prowling for porcine mates and challengers, or they may be out hunting any number of other types of prey. Whatever the theoretical specific focus, the reality is, they are out prowling their turf looking for trouble. The only prey they will not hunt is the puppets of ruin, as the puppets never trouble them. The demon boars assuredly receive the *blessing* of the forest.

The demon boars have plenty of slaves back at the tumbledown pit of filth where they make their abode, and don't need any additional thralls today. As a result, they probably won't use their *charm* ability during the encounter. As it is effectively a save-or-die attack, the demon boars are likely to hurl *charm* effects in all directions if their backs are against a wall, but they aren't looking to enthrall anyone else to do chores for them at this time.

SCENARIO PROFILE

The characters encounter 1d4+1 demon boars hunting on foot. They are within a few miles of their lair. The demon boar party is of mixed gender. Determine which gender each is by some 50/50 determination, such as coin-flipping or even-odd dice rolling.

They may (30%) be hunting (roll 1d10) (1-4) giant boars (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 66), (5-7) hideous boars (**Mutant Future**, p. 63), or (8-10) porcine devourers (**Mutant Future**, p. 89). They seek to capture sexually compatible giant swine for pleasure and breeding, and to kill or drive rivals from their territory. If they are in pursuit of giant swine, the demon boars will be especially irritable, as it is a direct territorial challenge, or a chance for a mate, at stake. Apply a +2 penalty to the Monster Reaction Table roll in such cases.

Otherwise (70%) the demon boars will be hunting (roll 1d10) (1-5) scuirinoids, (6-7) men,

(8-9) ghouls, or even (10) bakegumo. If there are a large number of demon boars, the Labyrinth Lord (LL) should consider modifying this roll upwards by +2, or just declaring the demon boars are hunting ghouls or bakegumo.

Regardless of their chosen prey, the demon boars will probably (70%) be hunting with their dogs. In this case, they will have 2d4 5 HD abyssal curs with them. If this is the case, the demon boar hunting will never surprise, as the abyssal curs are noisy beasts. However, they can also only be surprised on a 1 in 6 due to the keen noses of their dogs.

If they are not with their hounds (30%), the demon boars will be hunting by stealth in the diabolical swine equivalent of *elven cloak* and *elven boots*. If clad thusly, they will surprise on a 1-4 on a 1d6 surprise test even if actively stalking. If the demon boars are lying in ambush and waiting for enemies to walk into their trap — as at the beginning of this encounter — then they are assured of surprise, even if the characters are under the effects of *see invisible*.

The demon boars will immediately take stock of anyone they encounter. Their hounds are hunted on chains, and will be let loose only when the demon boars determine they want to engage in combat.

Roll 2d6 for encounter reaction as per normal; see **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 52. They will attack the characters on a 9-12, and contact them to parlay on a 2-8. They are unlikely to be genuinely "Friendly" with anyone, given that they are denizens of the evil planes, but they may express warmth and kinship toward other characters they perceive as Chaotic (evil). See "Apparently Chaotic Characters" below for details.

Weak or Obviously Lawful Characters

Characters who look like snooping authority figures, or lost sheep who are pure "good eating," receive a +4 negative modifier on the reaction roll.

Powerful or Extremely Belligerent Characters

If the characters are extremely mighty, or obviously belligerent and capable of an equal fight with the lycanthropes, then their reaction depends on their disposition.

Roll the encounter reaction at a -4 bonus. If the result is 5 or below, the demon swine will attempt to evade the encounter. On a 6-12 they will stand their ground.

If the demon boars choose to evade, they'll flee into the brush, running in separate directions. As soon as they are safely out of sight and able to shapechange, they'll shift into hog shape and attempt to evade pursuit in beast form. The abyssal curs know the countryside as well as the demon-boars do, and need no instructions to evade.

See the section "The Demon Boars: Pursuing and Pursuit" below for details of evasion attempts.

Apparently Chaotic Characters

If the demon boars suspect the characters may be Chaotic and worth ingratiating themselves to, roll at a -2 bonus on the reaction chart. Encounter results of "Friendly" actually mean as much in this case, with the demon boars approaching and extending friendly advances.

Managing Encounter Reaction

If the demon boars take the characters as enemies or prey, they will attack. Resolve the combat encounter as normal. If the battle goes against them, they will retreat in separate directions and go to ground miles away, as mentioned in "The Demon Boars: Pursuing and Pursuit" below.

In the case of a neutral or ostensibly friendly reaction, the demon boars will break cover (if hidden), introduce themselves as hunters, and invite the characters to participate in the hunt.

If asked what they are hunting, they will give a description of a night goat, but have no specific name for it. They will call it "a creature" and seem

to lay ominous hints of rural Lawful zealotry, saying that naming creatures of Chaos implies worship. However, if the individual speaks the Chaotic alignment tongue, this is a clear recognition sign. "Chaos keeps The Code; it doesn't name its own."

They will give this or one similar open recognition of their Chaotic character during the encounter, and otherwise make no mention of it, although they may perform many Chaotic acts. They will treat Chaotic creatures in a friendly fashion, never becoming perturbed at any non-destructive action, but they are not given to open professions of their faith.

They are also lifelong lycanthropes. They are not protected from *ESP* but they are keenly aware of the ease with which their minds can be read. They do not think about how they are diabolical were-swine unless they are specifically doing demon boar activities. They likewise don't go around constantly turning their love for Chaos around in their mind. They live primarily in the moment and though their thoughts and simple and brutish; they do not directly portray service to Chaotic evil.

While it's natural to assume they are Chaotic monsters, they will never admit they are demon boars or lycanthropes. Even if they are caught calmly talking to a marilith or lich, or approached by one, they will openly affirm their allegiance to Chaos at most once.

The demon boars will similarly exploit whatever ambiguity their status as shapechangers affords them, along with the fact that their high HD makes them easily the better of any mortal man in a fight, to bully victims with the threat of violence. Even if they are dwelling in an area that the forest long ago made uninhabitable to humans, they will never admit they are more than merely human hillbillies clinging to the land, while openly advertising their willingness to murder anyone who offends them.

HUNTING WITH THE DEMON BOARS

Once the party sets off for the hunt, the demon boars will pursue their actual prey, as determined during the initial generation of the encounter. If asked why they are suddenly hunting ghouls, scuirinoids or bakegumo when they were previously stalking a multi-eyed goat, they will explain they were trying to blow the characters off with a regular cock-and-bull story they use all the time.

If the demon boars had been hunting men, this is more a feud than a hunting expedition for the table, and the targets are a clan of Chaotic brigands of the direst sort.

If the characters participate in the hunting expedition, run it as a combat scene or adventure narrative, with the characters fighting at the side of the lycanthropic swine. The demon boars will refrain from overtly Chaotic acts, but will participate avidly if the characters initiate a bloodbath.

The demon boars will look to the characters to determine what is to be done with any juvenile proceeds of the hunt. If they are forced to determine the matter, they will simply abandon the entities to the forest. To the demon boars, this is an act of honor and a sacrifice to the Forest of Woe, but they will not make this explicit.

After the hunt, they will invite characters to come back to their home to bind any wounds and celebrate their victory. They intimate that they can offer moonshine, ganja, a chance for sex, or whatever other vice it takes to get the characters motivated to return.

If the characters decline to participate in the hunt, then the demon boars will instead call off the foray in order to invite the characters to come home to supper with them.

Characters who refuse all attempts to offer hospitality will be allowed to escape, but may be tracked and attacked later depending on the

humor of the demon boars and the speed and stamina of the characters. The boars are not interested in pursuing prey outside of a few miles of their home, and fast-moving characters will rapidly out-distance their interest. Weak-seeming characters who camp nearby are in for trouble.

See the section “The Demon Boars: Pursuing and Pursuit” below for details on hunting or evading the demon boars.

THE DEMON BOAR STEADING

The boars maintain a substantial, and spectacularly filthy, farmstead. There are 1d4 additional demon boars back at the steading. For *each* demon boar, there are also 1d4 demon swine offspring, 1d4 captive swine, 1d4 abyssal curs, and 1d4+1 thralls at the steading.

If the inhabitants of the steading hear the sounds of an extensive battle, they will not go rushing out to join it, but will prepare both for battle and evacuation. They will be alert for enemies and prone to attacking first and thinking second, but also quickly gathering up their few possessions in case they need to flee.

Young demon swine are born lycanthropes and are taught to be Chaotic devotees from a young age. No non-lycanthrope offspring survive infancy. Young demon boars are 3-7 HD, and averaging 5 HD. The young demon boars typically go armed with both handguns and melee weapons, and will participate avidly as combatants in any engagements to defend the farmstead. The captive swine are kept in pens too confining to permit them to turn around, as they are quite large and would reshape the landscape with their instincts.

Characters who go with the demon boars to visit their steading will be introduced to the thralls and shown the captive swine, and their reactions carefully observed. If the characters appear to react as a fellow Chaotic being would, or if the characters are very obviously supernatural evils, then the demon boars will use the visit as an

attempt to ingratiate themselves, either seeking to become clients or patrons of the characters, depending on the perceived power gradient.

If the characters appear shocked or horrified by the wretched condition of the demon boars' pitiful slaves, or otherwise portray an un-Chaotic reaction, then the demon boars will regard their guests as the subject of the feast rather than as guests.

In this, they will rely on their bullying tactics. The demon boars will — at most! — sigh, “Well, I suppose I should have known we’d be eating you, rather than eating with you.” After that, nothing will be concealed, although nothing will be made explicit. The devil-swine will avoid a general melee while preparing to kill and eat the character(s).

The demon boar will gather up their slaughtering tools, and lead the character right up to the chopping block where they will be slain, just as if they were livestock. If the characters at some point attempt to attack or forcibly intervene, the demon boar will attempt to murder them right in front of the screaming *charmed* thralls, who will nevertheless obey their masters' prior explicit orders and attack the characters as well.

If the characters escape, the demon boars will let them run, and then chase them down, rather than using their *charm* ability to pick off fleeing fugitives. From the demon boar perspective, *charm* takes all the fun out of the hunt. See “The Demon Boars: Pursuing and Pursuit” below for a mechanical treatment of the various scenarios.

There may be quite a battle at the steading if there are a significant number of demon boars. Although captive swine will not fight, demon boar offspring and *charmed* thralls will. With 1d4 additional demon boars, and every boar having a retinue of adolescents, abyssal curs and thralls, a fight is likely to bring upwards of 20 combatants to the field.

THE DEMON BOARS: PURSUING AND PURSUIT

In Retreat

If the demon boars bolt from what seems to be a potentially dangerous encounter, they will not go far before they enter boar form — a mile at most.

If they bolted from a potentially dangerous encounter, they will move a half-day's travel, going to ground somewhere between 15 and 18 miles from the encounter, and then waiting about 12 hours before emerging. If they have surprise, they can escape automatically. If they did not, then even if characters can outpace them, they are likely to have a 90% chance to evade the party while hiding alone (see the Wilderness Retreat table, **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 52).

They will meet again back at their steading, arriving one by one between 18 and 24 hours after they bolt.

At that point, they may gather up hounds and pursue, or this may end the player characters' interaction with the demon boars for this encounter — depending on the impression the boars got as they fled. If, in retrospect, it seems like they bolted by mistake, the demon boars may come chasing after the characters. See “In Pursuit” below for suggestions.

If it seems like they escaped a beating at the hands of a pack of angry pit fiends, they'll count their blessings and *charm* and re-*charm* their thralls.

If they flee from a losing battle, the demon boars will flee far, moving a forced march in boar form, which is 49 miles. They will begin seeking a place to go to ground about 30-45 miles into their flight. They will have to rest for a day after the march but this still means the boars will have gone to ground in individual hides within a 60-90 mile diameter ring. The demon boars will likewise return to their steading after this encounter, but given the delays involved, they

will probably not arrive home until 3-4 days after the battle.

Demon boars who take a severe beating may evacuate their camp depending on the circumstances. In general, the more likely it seems there will be follow-up attacks, the more likely the demon boars are to vacate the area. If the demon boars evacuate their camp, they will take a forced march in boar form. They will send their captive swine and thralls in a different direction with orders to march until they perish, as a diversion.

In Pursuit

The demon boars are deadly hunters. They wear their *elven cloaks* and *elven boots*, and track as rangers. They surprise on a 1-4 even on the attack.

The boars will pursue as humans for a full day, meaning they will dog the character's footsteps for 24 miles over about 8 hours. The demon boars move as fast as an unencumbered human, and so they will catch characters of normal human speed who are in any way encumbered within this one day of pursuit.

Have the characters roll on the Wilderness Retreat table on p. 52 of **Labyrinth Lord**. Apply a bonus or penalty to the character's roll equal to the difference between their per-turn movement and the boars', favoring the faster party. If the characters are marked as enemies of the forest, their evasion roll will be at -20%.

If the demon boars are pursuing enemies after a clash at the stading, they will bring up to 3 abyssal curs each with them. The demon boars will also use *charm* freely if they are pursuing the characters after a battle at the stading where their thralls took heavy casualties.

Handling Rangers and the Wilderness Retreat Table

The rules for these two similar things use incompatible mechanics. What follows is a suggested procedure for reconciling rangers tracking someone immediately after they break off

an engagement with the existing "Chases in the Wilderness" rules:

First roll the evading party's Wilderness Retreat table roll.

If this evasion succeeds, then let the rangers roll to detect the party.

If the rangers pursue after the escaping party has gotten clean away, then roll the ranger tracking percentage only. The Wilderness Retreat table is for retreats directly out of melee combat or other close proximity.

The ranger tracking roll is thus the last word in tracking; if the ranger succeeds, then they track the character. If the ranger fails, there is no second roll.

HOARD

If the demon boars are overcome and their lair ransacked, it can be discerned their poverty is no pretense.

In terms of cash, the porcine lycanthropes have only a meager cache of 1,000 sp hidden in a few large clay pots behind the lead hog's bed-stead. The richest among the slaves have mere pennies to their names.

However, their weapons and magical personal effects have considerable value. In addition, they have 3 kegs of fine beer worth 10 gp each, and an actual agricultural bale of seedy, low-quality marijuana buds. While there are inroads the size of a man's head torn into it, the bale could still hardly fail to fetch less than 20 gp, even given its poor quality.

DEMON BOAR YOKEL

No. Enc.: 1d4+1

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Boar: 180 (60')

Armor Class: 5 (3 as boar)

Hit Dice: 54 hp (9 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 11

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 12 (14 with rifle, +1 within the forest)

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L9

WIL: 9

Morale: 11

Hoard Class: None

Description

These beasts have settled in the area for the last year, and established a very fine wallow for themselves. They are the big frog in the small pond of the local supernatural pecking order, and they are eager to maintain that position.

The demon boars appear to be 35-55 years of age, but they are actually only between 3 and 7 years of age. Demon boars grow to maturity at the end of their 3rd year of life. These demon boars are exceptionally well-armed but poverty-stricken, which is not uncommon. Powerful in combat and able to *charm* many enemies, demon boars are limited by their vices, which are many, and their nature, which is indolent, violent, suspicious, manipulative and cruel.

These demon boars wear a mix of armor including chain corslets, studded leather and bits of plate. The overall effect is to provide AC 5 in human form.

Special Abilities

Evil Eye Charm **MCM Modifier -2 Damage Charm**

Notes As per the spell *charm person or mammal*, AEC, p. 41. However, the "mammal" component only works

on swine of various sorts (LL's determination what is eligible). Can be used once per round, up to 3 times a day.

Demonic Lycanthropy The creature is a product of Chaotic (evil) magic and has been instructed in Chaotic philosophy from birth. Add +2 versus Divine Terror attacks and a -2 bonus to its MCM. *Demon boars are harmed only by silver or magic weapons.*

Wilderness Wise The demon boar tracks as a ranger (AEC, p. 19).

Detect Law **Range** 1 mile **Notes** The character can detect Lawful beings by scent and occult means. They receive their ranger tracking roll against Lawful beings automatically, as soon as the entities come within 1 mile.

Scarab of Protection **Notes** These defensive talismans are quite effective at warding off curses. They protect the demon boar from 7 failed saving throws against death type effects or curses, including all MCM attacks.

Random Other Minor Item (roll once per demon boar)

1) *Dust of Appearance* **Notes** Covers a 10' x 10' area. Negates *invisibility*, phase, *mirror image*, displacement and similar image-distortion effects. Clings to its targets for 2d10 turns.

2) *Gem of Brightness* **Notes** Can cast light or cause powerful blinding effects requiring a saving throw versus spells to avoid blindness for 1d4 rounds. It has 14 charges. This item is described on p. 96 of the AEC.

3) *Scroll of Ward against Magic* **Notes** Wards off all spells and spell-like effects from devices or monsters for 1d4 turns (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 114). The ward has a 10' radius, is centered on the reader, and moves as they do.

4) *Ring of Spell Storing* (2 spells) **Notes** Similar to the one listed in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 113. However, this one is disposable and crumbles after

the spells within it are expended. It contains the 3rd-level cleric spell *remove curse* and the 2nd-level cleric spell *silence 15' radius*.

5) *Potion of Flying Notes* Allows *flying* at 120' (as per the spell in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 111) for 1d6+6 turns.

6) *Potion of Invulnerability Notes* -2 to saving throws and AC for 1d6+6 turns.

Attacks

Demon boars will have either the assault rifle or the shotgun, not both.

Demon Boar Assault Rifle **Range** 200' / 600' **Damage**

1d12+6 **Ammo** 20 **Basic Load** Loaded + 3

magazines **Trigger Type** Rapid Fire **Notes** Inaccurate. -2 to hit. Counts as a +1 magic weapon.

Demon Boar Shotgun **Range** 40'/90' **Damage** 4d6/2d6

Ammo 5 **Basic Load** Loaded + 20 shots **Trigger Type**

Automatic **Notes** +2 to hit at short range. Can reload up to 2 shots per round. Does *not* count as a magic weapon.

Demon Boar Hunting Knife **Damage** 2d6+3 **Notes** Vorpal on a natural 20, but not against targets that require silver, magic or Bane weapons to damage. Does *not* attack as a magical weapon.

Demon Boar Tusks **Damage** 2d6 **Notes** Attacks as a +1 magic weapon. Only available in boar form.

ABYSSAL CUR

No. Enc.: 1d4 per demon boar

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 4

Hit Dice: 25 hp (5 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 14

Terror: 9

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 17 (16 with rifle, +1 within the forest)

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L5

WIL: 7

Morale: 10

Hoard Class: None

Description

These vile beasts are a Chaotic (evil) equivalent to the infernal hell hound. These beasts have short green-black fur. Their mouths foam with toxic slime.

Terribly destructive to the world around them, abyssal curs are the hunting hounds and guard dogs of the demon boars. Every tree, every post, every object in the steading shows signs of their chewing, scratching, urine or defecation. These creatures are not normally found so far toward the power of Law, and mark the demon boars as Chaotic outsiders to the region to those familiar with the local fauna.

Roll 1d10 to determine what attack an abyssal hound uses on a given round. On a 1-7 it will bite, and on an 8-10 it will use its poison breath.

Special Abilities

Demonic The abyssal curs are actual denizens of the abyss. They are +4 to their WIL when determining their resistance against Divine Terror attacks. Sight of the abyssal cur causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty. They take half damage from all elemental sources (fire, cold, lightning, poison, acid).

Hunting Dog Notes Doesn't count as a member of the party for the purposes of Wilderness Retreat table rolls.

Poison Immunity Notes Abyssal curs take no damage from poisons, nor can they suffer non-damage poison effects.

Partial Detect Invisibility Notes 75% chance of success. Range 60'.

Attacks

Bite Damage 1d6

Breath Damage Class 5 poison **Notes** Affects only the single individual the cur is attacking. Does 5d6 damage via caustic poison, as per *green dragon breath*. Make a saving throw versus breath attack for half damage.

DEMON BOAR YOKEL (SUB-ADULT)

No. Enc.: 1d4 per demon boar

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Boar: 180' (60')

Armor Class: 7 (4 as boar)

Hit Dice: 25 hp (5 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 14

Terror: 9

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 15 (+1 within the forest)

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L5

WIL: 7

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

These demon boars are younger than 3 years old and have not yet developed their *charm* or *detect law* powers. They appear to be obese children and youths between 12 and 25 years of age. They are armed with handguns and a variety of clubs and knives. They lurk about the demon swine farmstead, regarding visitors silently from around corners and behind trees. If there is combat, they will spill forth to fight beside their parents.

Sub-adult demon boars are not as skilled at evading *ESP* regarding their lycanthropy or Chaotic nature. Any prolonged mental examination will quickly reveal them to be what they are — wicked creatures intent on causing the most havoc while enjoying themselves the most.

Special Abilities

Demonic Lycanthropy The creature is a product of Chaotic (evil) magic and has been instructed in Chaotic philosophy from birth. Add +2 versus Divine Terror attacks and a -2 bonus to its MCM. *Demon boars are harmed only by silver or magic weapons.*

Wilderness Wise The demon boar tracks as a ranger (AEC, p. 19).

Attacks

Demon Boar Handgun **Range** 30'/120' **Damage** 1d12+2 **Shots** 6 **Trigger** Normal **Basic Load** Loaded + 6 shots **Notes** Inaccurate. -1 to hit. Requires 1 round to reload 3 shots.

Hand axe **Damage** 1d6 **Notes** Can be thrown to range 10'/20'/30' at +1/+0/-1 to hit.

Dagger **Damage** 1d6 **Notes** Actually a short sword.

DEMON BOAR THRALL

No. Enc.: 1d4+1 per demon boar

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 9

Hit Dice: 9 hp (2 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 18

Terror: 9

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 17

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L2

WIL: 9

Morale: 11

Hoard Class: None

Description

Some wretch captured by the enslaving magics of the demon boars. The thrall cannot have been here long; few live as captives of demon boars for more than 2 years. Still, they are forever marked by their experience. The thralls have free command of their tongues, but little volition over their actions, as the demon boars enjoy hearing them sob, beg, or try to convince themselves that none of this is happening while their *charmed* forms perform as the diabolical lycanthropes demand.

The most terrifying manifestation of this is that the thralls will often speak freely in combat. They will scream in incoherent fear, or beg characters not to kill them, to save them somehow, at the same time they attempt to savagely murder the characters.

Don't worry about which demon boars have which thralls under their *charm* — they have all been *charmed* repeatedly by all of the demon boars. They are often *charmed* several times a day. It may take several months for the effects of the *charm* to dissolve after the demon boar dies, at least in the case of long-term thralls.

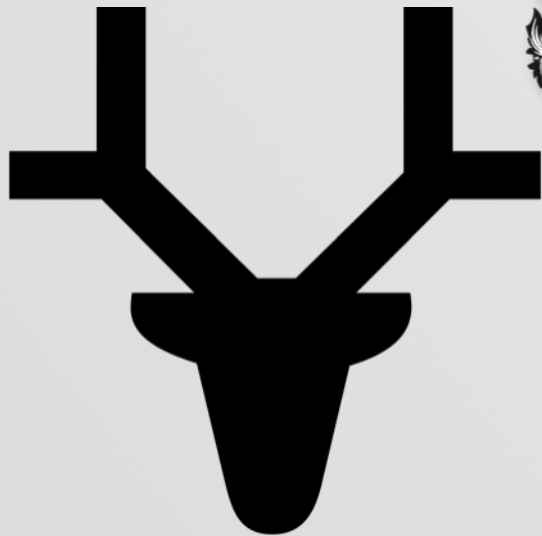
To simulate this, after all the adult demon boars are dead, thrall combat morale drops by 1 each round from 12. When it drops below 2, or when they fail a morale check, the *charm* breaks, or at least the effect falls below the level that compels them to fight against the now-deceased Chaos-fiend's enemies. Former thralls will be haunted by the psychological consequences and magical after-effects of their service to their demonic masters for the rest of their lives, or until exposed to powerful healing effects. The 5th-level cleric spell *atonement* "removes the burden of unwilling evil acts or misdeeds from the subject" (AEC, p. 31) and is probably appropriate for this. The 6th-level cleric spell *heal* will also remove these effects, as will a *wish* or *limited wish*.

Special Abilities

Attacks

Club **Damage** 1d6 **Notes** None

Daggers **Damage** 1d4 **Notes** Can be thrown to range.



Rakshasa Sight-Seeing Party

A tom is out showing his queens picaresque sights of morbidity and decay to please them and soothe their sharp tempers. They are also intent on making bloody sport as they travel, to the delight of their ogre mage body guards.

The rakshasa think themselves beyond the Law, and given the character of the space, they may well be correct. They consider the Chaotic (evil) forest's enmity to be an opportunity for a little sport hunting, and have their dander up looking for puppets, bakegumo or other forest creatures to tangle with.

SCENARIO PROFILE

The characters encounter a rakshasa party (1 male + 1d3 females) riding nightmares with 2d4 domesticated kamata at their side. They are chatting and admiring the scenery, and could not surprise anyone. However, the group is alert, especially the kamata. They are surprised only on a 1 on 1d6.

They are escorted by 1d6+1 ogre mages with guns and armor.

The ogre mages are lurking nearby, *invisible*, so as not to disturb their masters' sight-seeing. However, they are impatient for battle. They may hasten to the attack if the situation appears tense, or they interpret someone's actions as attempting to ambush or surprise their employers.

The ogre mages must fly from place to place to keep up with the rakshasa's nightmares on foot. But the rakshasa are not interested in swift travel, and are enjoying a leisurely wander through the countryside. If the rakshasa have their nightmares take wing, the ogre magi will *polymorph* into griffons to keep pace with them.

The rakshasa are not especially formidable in combat, but as they can use both cleric and magic-user spells, and thus cleric and magic-user items. They have formidable personal magical arsenals and will not hesitate to use them. In addition, the

foremost queen among the females is a rather impressive magician.

Note that the rakshasa are intelligent and powerful supernatural evils. They may be prone to pride and rash valor, but they also have good judgment about not biting off more than they can chew when choosing fights. This might not be the case around holy men, however.

Encounter Reaction

The rakshasa are eager for a fight, and believe they have come to a place where the rules don't apply so they can have one. Apply a general +2 modifier to their Monster Reaction table roll.

Note that the reaction to this encounter will probably be rolled while the characters are engaged in combat with the kamata. The dogs are bloodthirsty fiends intelligent enough to know they have been turned loose to cause terror. They will set upon and kill or torment characters as soon as they encounter them. They will move toward the characters at maximum speed, and attack them in combat as soon as it's possible.

In the conditions prevailing in the Forest of Woe, assume this direct plunge into combat means they can engage the characters in melee combat during any surprise round. The rakshasa will probably arrive and take in the view a round or two later, then decide what to do next.

Obviously Weak Characters

The rakshasa are wicked and powerful. They will gladly set upon and tear apart any individual or party they think it might be amusing to slay. Against very weak characters, they will let the kamata do their business, watching and bantering among themselves as their victim is torn apart by the human-headed lizard-dogs. Apply an addition +2 modifier to the Monster Reaction table roll if the characters appear to be weak and/or amusing to slay.

Good Clerics and Paladins

These rakshasa are terribly intolerant of good religions, and will seek to engage good holy men

directly, although probably only after they let the kamata tear at them a while. If there are clerics, paladins or other holy individuals present, the rakshasa roll their encounter reaction at an additional +4 penalty.

Calling Off the Dogs

The kamata are Chaotic (evil) while the rakshasa are Lawful (evil), and so the lizard-hounds generally desire to cause havoc after the rakshasa choose to call them off.

When the rakshasa call the kamata off a target, or otherwise give them an order, make a morale check. Each sequential round that the kamata is disobedient, make a morale check at a cumulative -2 penalty. If they fail their morale roll, they will comply with orders without being shocked.

If the rakshasa tire of their antics and shock them, they will comply after they recover. If you are not sure how long the rakshasa will tolerate disobedience, roll a 1d4 to determine how many rounds. After the first time their patience runs out, they generally shock after 1 round.

Attacks with Junior Wives Present

If there are 2 or 3 female rakshasa present for the encounter, Haider Khan will have his junior wives/concubines lead any attack.

If junior wives Clawsome and Frenchette are present, they rather bored — and the power couple knows it. Haider Khan is taken with his wife Giselle, and also desperate to ingratiate himself with her to enjoy continued magical tutelage. Giselle enjoys the flattery, her increasing monopolization of Haider's attention, and the opportunity to review her own arcane knowledge. She doesn't want to take the time out of Haider's admiration or her own studies required to properly discipline nightmare-fiend junior wives, and is too inexperienced to have selected ones that share her interests.

As a result, neither Haider nor Giselle pays the slightest attention to the concubines, other than to make them perform petty tasks. Despite their

aspirational self-images, Haider and Giselle aren't far enough above Frenchette and Clawsome in rakshasa social status that they can ignore the social consequences of a neglectful marriage to their junior partners.

As a result, the senior rakshasa want to let their juniors have their fun, and Haider's junior wives will gleefully tear apart any prey they are presented. As long as the rakshasa feel they are in control of the encounter, Frenchette and Clawsome will do all the hurting while Haider and Giselle applaud.

Deploying the Ogre Mages

If their chosen victims start to get the upper hand over the rakshasa (for example, slaying Frenchette and/or Clawsome or easily vanquishing several of the kamata) the rakshasa will have the ogre mages open fire upon them. This will also be their response if a holy-man victim doesn't perish after a few rounds of attacks — the heavy weapons of the ogre mages will be brought into play.

Keep in mind this unsporting behavior on the part of the rakshasas may seem like unsporting behavior on the part of the LL to the players.

Evasion

If the characters continue to stand up, even under the fire of the ogre mages and the rakshasa's wands, the rakshasa will depart interdimensionally on their nightmares behind the cover of illusions. If possible, Haider and Giselle will make sure Clawsome and Frenchette are aware of their departure, and cover the younger rakshasas' escape if doing so would not be suicidal.

The ogre mages and the kamata will receive no such treatment.

If the rakshasa use their nightmares to flee the plane, then the ogre magi will *polymorph* into sable pegasi and flee in various directions. They have tokens provided as a condition of their employment that allow them passage home so they have no fear of stranding.

HAIDER KHAN, RAKSHASA LORD

No. Enc.: 1

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Armor Class: -5

Hit Dice: 52 hp (9+ HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 9

Terror: 19

Attacks: 2

THAC0: 11

Damage: *Sword +1 of Wounding* (1d8+3)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 3

Save: F9

WIL: 15

Morale: 10

Hoard Class: None

Description

A boldly wicked spirit of noble bearing, Haider Khan is not much as incarnate nightmares go. He is comparable to weak greater devils and higher-order demons, perhaps equal in might to a glabrezu or barbed devil. But what Haider Khan has, which neither of those supernatural evils does, is the sense of pride and extreme entitlement that distinguishes his race.

Though he is less than a century old, Haider Khan has distinguished himself in battle and been named a champion of his race. Already, he begins to weave his webs of political influence across the evil extents of the planes of Order.

Given to malignant appetites and unrelenting ambition, Haider Khan has formed an alliance with another young rakshasa, Giselle, who is sorcerously gifted. If she fulfills her ambitions, she will doubtless destroy Haider Khan in the process of her ascent. Haider Khan has of course foreseen this, and hopes to manage the situation such that the outcome is otherwise.

Haider Khan is a bravo, heady with the extreme physical durability of his people. He will plunge into

battle without fear, and withdraw only when the engagement is in danger, not merely his health.

Special Abilities

Interloper He is both a fearless warrior and an incarnate nightmare. Haider Khan has a +4 bonus to his WIL for the purpose of resisting Divine Terror attacks. Rakshasa are never shocked, only offended, and never make morale rolls for shock or horror. Seeing a rakshasa in its true form will cause 0th level characters to make morale checks due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Budding Black Magician Haider Khan's magical ability has prospered under his wife's tutelage. He memorizes spells as a 2nd-level cleric and a 5th-level wizard. He casts both cleric and magic-user spells as a 7th-level spellcaster.

Cleric Level 2 Spells Available 4

Magic-User Level 5 Magic-User Spells

Available 2/2/1

Cleric Spells Memorized:

1st Level: *Command, create water, cure light wounds, sanctuary*

Magic-User Spells Memorized

1st Level: *Jarring hand, jump*

2nd Level: *Detect invisible, web*

3rd Level: *Protection from Normal Missiles*

Doppelganger Notes Rakshasa may alter their appearance at will to be anyone within 1' of their true height (6'). They can alter their apparent weight, gender and equipment. This is an illusion and not reality. *True seeing* and *immunity to illusions* provide defense.

ESP Notes Rakshasa can read the surface thoughts of those within 60' of them if they are not protected against *ESP*, similar to the *medallion of thoughts* (*Labyrinth Lord*, p. 119). This is a constant ability and does not require concentration.

Lack of Bless Vulnerability Arrows and crossbow bolts subject to the spell or effects of *bless* have no particular effect on rakshasas as described in *AEC*, p. 134.

Magic Resistance Rakshasa are spiritually mighty, and are immune to all spells and spell-like effects below 9th level. They can choose to allow themselves to be voluntarily affected by this magic. This protection does not extend to non-spell-like magical abilities.

Magic Items

Circlet of Nondetection Rakshasas are immune to many forms of detection and mind-reading due to their blanket immunity to spells below 9th level. However, any denizen of the evil planes has good reason to fear natural magical powers and other non-spell effects. The rakshasa accordingly wear diadems that provide *protection versus crystal balls* and *ESP*, as per the amulet in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116.

Scarab of Divine Fortune (4 charges) **Notes** -2 to MCM saves. In addition, Haider Khan can spend a charge to automatically make a save rather than re-roll it. It also protects against death effects, similarly to a *scarab of protection*. This also costs a charge. When the scarab's charges are used up, its MCM bonus permanently drops to -1.

Sword of Wounding **Notes** See **Attacks**, below.

Wand of Paralyzation **Notes** See **Attacks**, below.

Lack of Bless Vulnerability Arrows and crossbow bolts subject to the spell or effects of *bless* have no particular effect on rakshasas as described in **AEC**, p. 134).

Magic Resistance Rakshasa are spiritually mighty, and are immune to all spells and spell-like effects below 9th level. They can choose to allow themselves to be voluntarily affected by this magic. This protection does not extend to magical abilities.

Weapon Resistance It requires a +2 or better weapon to hit Haider. He takes half damage from those physical attacks that can damage him.

Attacks

Sword +1 of Wounding **Damage** 1d8+4 **Notes** +1 to hit as **AEC**, p. 103. Bane weapon. Wounds cannot be healed by magic less than a *wish*; only natural healing can cure them. In addition, for every successful attack, the target character bleeds 1 hp per round for 10 rounds thereafter. Haider will only rely on his *sword +1 of*

wounding if his enemies are obviously able to ignore the effects of his paralysis wand.

Wand of Paralyzation (19 charges) **Range** Cone 60' long, 30' wide at end **Notes** As per **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116. The duration of this effect — 6 turns — means that being affected by it is certain death or worse at the hands of the rakshasas. While he'll try to catch several characters per round if he can, Haider Khan will discharge the wand every round until it's used up when he's in combat with enemies he considers a serious threat. He'll target magicians first, but he'll take whoever he can get.

GISELLE, RAKSHASA SENIOR QUEEN

No. Enc.: 1

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Armor Class: -4

Hit Dice: 48 hp (8 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 6

Terror: 20

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 12

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 4

Save: M12

WIL: 16

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

Evil, ambitious, and brilliant, Giselle is a prestige match for Haider Khan. She has two heads, marking the emergence of non-unitary consciousness: one of the markers of true divinity. Though she appears to be but a minor evil spirit, Giselle sits on the doorstep of godhood. She will never let anyone around her forget it.

Giselle sees her multi-headed nature as a mark of her privilege, her destiny to rise over the generally drab lot of female rakshasas. Her drive to master magic, and bud new heads, is limitless. She is very young for her kind, and her capacity for mastery has not yet been tested.

Currently, she and Haider stalk the Forest of Woe looking for something to set upon, but in truth, she already seeks powerful magic. She desires to unravel the mysteries of the cosmos, and already entertains designs upon godhood.

Whenever she's done casting spells, she'll wade into combat with the *rod of striking* to take advantage of her *subsidiary* head's *bless* effect.

Special Abilities

Interloper The darkest magic, her soul swims in it. Giselle has a +4 bonus to her WIL for the purpose of Divine Terror attacks. Rakshasa are never shocked, only offended, and never make morale rolls for shock or horror. Seeing a rakshasa in its true form will cause 0th level characters to make morale checks due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Accomplished Black Magician The queen is most formidable. She uses magic as a 4th-level cleric and an 8th-level wizard. She casts both cleric and magic-user spells as a 12th-level spellcaster.

Cleric Level 4 Caster Level 12 Spells

Available 5/4

Magic-User Level 8 Caster Level 12 Magic-

User Spells Available 3/3/2/2

Cleric Spells Memorized

1st Level: *Command, cure light wounds, create water, light, sanctuary*

2nd Level: *Hold person, holy chant, silence 15' radius x 2*

Magic-User Spells Memorized

1st Level: *Allure, sleep, ventriloquism*

2nd Level: *Rope trick, stinking cloud, web*

3rd Level: *Dispel magic, fire ball*

4th Level: *Lesser move earth, remove curse*

Doppelganger Notes Rakshasa may alter their appearance at will to be anyone within 1' of their true height (6'). They can alter their apparent weight, gender and equipment. This is an illusion and not reality. *True seeing* and *immunity to illusions* provide defense.

ESP Notes Rakshasa can read the surface thoughts of those within 60' of them if they are not protected against *ESP*, similar to the *medallion of thoughts* in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 119. This is a constant ability and does not require concentration.

Lack of Bless Vulnerability Arrows and crossbow bolts subject to the spell or effects of *bless* have no particular effect on rakshasas as described in **AEC**, p. 134.

Magic Resistance Rakshasa are spiritually mighty, and are immune to all spells and spell-like effects below 9th level. They can choose to allow themselves to be voluntarily affected by this magic. This protection does not extend to non-spell-like magical abilities.

Magic Items

Circlet of Nondetection Rakshasas are immune to many forms of detection and mind-reading due to their blanket immunity to spells below 9th level. However, any denizen of the evil planes has good reason to fear natural magical powers and other non-spell effects. The rakshasa accordingly wear diadems that provide *protection versus crystal balls* and *ESP*, as per the amulet in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116.

Periapt of False Resurrections (5 charges) **Notes** Allows the wearer to raise up to 7 corpses as ghouls under the creator's command. Turns to ash when final charge expended, cannot be recharged. Can raise 1 ghoul per round; ghoul is ready to act on the round after it is raised. Giselle is unlikely to waste an action on it in intense combat. However, if the battle is going in the rakshasas' favor and they're tormenting their victims, she is sure to use this effect for comedic value.

Subsidiary Self Giselle's second head is entirely dedicated to black magic. It only takes actions during the magic phase of the round. If there are no spells for it to cast that round, it recites blasphemous mantras instead. Giselle's primary self can take her regular set of actions, including casting its own spells.

Both heads cast from the same selection of memorized spells; the effect is just to double Giselle's casting rate. The mantras that Giselle's head chants in rounds when it is not casting spells have the effect of a *bless* spell on her, granting her +1 to hit and damage, and +1 to morale. This lasts until the head stops chanting to cast spells.

Weapon Resistance It requires a +1 or better weapon to hit Giselle. She takes half damage from those physical attacks that can damage her.

Attacks

Rod of Striking (10 charges) **Damage** 1d6+3 **Notes** Strikes as a +3 magic weapon. Uses 1 charge and does 2d6+3 damage to golems and infernal machines. It does 1d6 shp to machines. This effect ignores damage absorption and always does at least 1 shp. Does 3d6+3 to creatures of the evil planes on a natural 20. As per the item in **AEC**, p. 89. She bought this *rod of striking* especially for this trip, and she doesn't care if she takes it home with any charges in it.

Wand of Fear (18 charges) **Range** Cone 60' long, 30' wide at end **Notes** Requires *save* versus *wands*. Causes target to flee at 3x normal MV for 30 rounds. See **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116. Giselle doesn't want to ruin the encounter by sending all enemies racing away for their lives; however, if there are one or two especially tough enemies, or if the fight is going against the rakshasas, then she will begin using her *wand of fear*.

CLAWSOME AND FRENCHETTE, RAKSHASA JUNIOR QUEEN(S)

No. Enc.: 0-2

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Armor Class: -4

Hit Dice: 40 hp (7+ HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 14

Terror: 19

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 12

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 2

Save: L4

WIL: 15

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Black Magic Initiate

Description

Giselle has been bugging Haider Khan to take secondary partners to increase their status as a couple. Depending on the number of rakshasa rolled in this encounter, Clawsome and/or Frenchette may have recently been added to the household as a result of Giselle's ambitions.

As their names imply, these rakshasas are of somewhat common origin, as Haider Khan cannot afford to marry better. When the time comes, he plans to trade up Frenchette and Clawsome for more useful mates — but who will actually betray, use and discard whom remains to be seen. It is unlikely that everyone in this group will survive long enough for any single member to complete his or her plans as they currently stand. Although they haven't mastered magic yet, they haven't wasted their time in the underworld.

Clawsome and Frenchette are claw dancers, which is a rakshasa class combining performer, agility combatant and illusionist, enhanced by the rakshasa's powerful magical nature.

The two junior wives are friends with their nightmares, and happier fighting on foot than mounted. They will dismount before combat and attack on foot, with their steeds fighting at their sides. They know there's a good chance targets will be *magic missile* resistant; however, if the rakshasa decide to attack the characters, Frenchette and Clawsome will make a few exploratory shots while the characters fight the kamata, to see if the bolts get through. If they do, they'll still seek to melee, but will rest secure in the knowledge they can torment the characters at a distance if the fight turns against the young wives.

Special Abilities

Interloper Although petty among their kind, Clawsome and Frenchette are still incarnate spirits of nightmares and darkness. They have a +4 bonus to their WIL for the purposes of determining their resistance to Divine Terror attacks. Rakshasa are never shocked, only offended, and never make morale rolls for shock or horror. Seeing a rakshasa in its true form will cause 0th level characters to make morale checks due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Claw Dancers **Notes** They are HD+ creatures. They are +1 to hit and +2 to all damage. In addition, they have certain powers related to their mastery of the claw dancing art.

Rakshasa Sneak **Notes** The rakshasa can turn *invisible* once per turn, as per the 2nd-level magic-user spell in AEC, p. 67.

Rakshasa Reflex Sideslip **Notes** You cannot attack a claw dancer in melee combat unless you have initiative on them. Only use this if you are rolling individual initiatives.

Rakshasa Leap **Notes** Once per turn, the rakshasa may cast *jump* as per the magic-user spell in AEC, p. 68.

Rakshasa Fleetness **Notes** The character can *dimension door* (AEC, p. 60), once per turn.

Weapon Resistance Notes It requires a +1 or better weapon to hit Clawsome or Frenchette. Both take half damage from those physical attacks that can damage her.

Doppelganger Notes Rakshasa may alter their appearance at will to be anyone within 1' of their true height (6'). They can alter their apparent weight, gender and equipment. This is an illusion and not reality. *True seeing* and *immunity to illusions* provide defense.

ESP Notes Rakshasa can read the surface thoughts of those within 60' of them if they are not protected against *ESP*, similar to the *medallion of thoughts* in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 119. This is a constant ability and does not require concentration.

Lack of Bless Vulnerability Arrows and crossbow bolts subject to the spell or effects of *bless* have no particular effect on rakshasas as described in **AEC**, p. 134.

Magic Resistance Rakshasa are spiritually mighty, and are immune to all spells and spell-like effects below 9th level. They can choose to allow themselves to be voluntarily affected by this magic. This protection does not extend to non-spell-like magical abilities.

Magic Items

Circlet of Nondetection Rakshasas are immune to many forms of detection and mind-reading due to their blanket immunity to spells below 9th level. However, any denizen of the evil planes has good reason to fear natural magical powers, and so the rakshasa have provided for their protection versus *ESP* and *crystal ball* items, as per the *amulet versus crystal balls* and *ESP* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116).

Wand of Magic Missiles (11 charges each) **Notes** See **Attacks**, below.

Occult Dabblers Haider Khan's concubines are hardly formidable sorceresses, but even the most artless among the rakshasa tribe master magic easily. They use magic as 1st-level clerics and 3rd-level wizards. They cast both cleric and magic-user spells as a 4th-level

spellcaster.

Cleric Level 1 Caster Level 4 Spells Available 3

Magic-User Level 3 Caster Level 4 Magic-User Spells Available 2/1

Cleric Spells Memorized:

1st Level: Command, Detect Evil, Sanctuary

Magic-User Spells Memorized

1st Level: Dancing Lights, Sleep

2nd Level: Scare

Attacks

Claw/Claw/Bite Damage 1d3+2/1d3+2/1d4+3 **Notes** +1 to hit. Strike as a +1 magic weapon.

Wand of Magic Missiles (14 charges) **Range** 150'

Damage 1d6+1 **Trigger** Automatic **Notes** As per the 1st-level magic-user spell (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 34). As the Trigger value implies and the description of the item on p. 116 of **Labyrinth Lord** states, the wand can discharge twice per round.

OGRE MAGE VETERAN RETAINERS

No. Enc.: 2d6 (4d10)

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 90' (30')

Flight: 150' (50')

Armor Class: 2

Hit Dice: 36 hp (6+ HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 15

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 13

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 9

Miracle Points: 1

Save: M6

WIL: 13

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

These elite troops are the personal bodyguards of the rakshasa. They are typically not raised from the rakshasa's own territories but are mercenaries brought on to provide personal protection to the rakshasas.

If they need speed, they will *polymorph* themselves into pegasi of infernal aspect and flee at 480' (160').

Special Abilities

Magical Creature These creatures are considerably more magically adept than your normal ogre, and they have been adapted for magic-point environments. They have 9 magic points, and regain 2 magic points per turn. They have a -2 bonus to MCM saves, and enjoy a +2 bonus to their WIL against Divine Terror effects. The never make morale checks for shock or horror.

Armor-Assisted Flight Notes The ogre mage can sustain up to 12 turns of continuous flight. They can fly at 150'. They must rest for half as long as they flew, so after flying a full 2 hours, it would take 1 hour to fully regenerate their flight capacity. However, regeneration is continuous, so if they had fully exhausted their flight capacity, and rested for 1 round, they would be able to fly for 2 rounds.

Deathless Notes Regenerates 1 hp per round. This ogre's Bane is holy water, which causes 3d6 damage per vial.

Gaseous Form (3 magic points for first 3 turns, 2 per 3 turns thereafter) Notes As per the potion of the same name (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 111). However, the duration is determined by the character's supply of magic points. The ogre mage does not regain magic points while in gaseous form.

Invisibility (1 magic point) Notes As the 2nd-level magic-user spell of the same name in **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 32.

Magic Drain Hardening Notes The characters ignore the first 4 points of any given magic point drain.

Magic Items

Mercenary Defense Brooch Notes 34 points of magic missile defense, as per a *brooch of shielding*, and 4 defenses against a death attack or failed MCM roll, as per the *scarab of protection*. The entire scarab fails when either defense is exhausted. The item is "dumb" and the character cannot choose not to apply the defenses.

Non-detection Helm Notes Provides protection against *ESP* and *crystal balls*.

Polymorph Self (2 magic points) Notes As the 4th-level magic-user spell *polymorph self*. The ogre mage never forgets its natural shape, and cannot assume a shape smaller than 4' tall, or larger than 12' tall.

Attacks

Lesser Death Spell (2 magic points) **Range** 240' **Notes** Automatically kills 2d8 HD of creatures with 4+1 HD or less within 240'. Calculate monsters with less than 1 HD as having 1 HD, and monsters with a HD+ as their flat HD. Creatures with the fewest HD are affected first. Defended against as a "death" effect, for example by *scarab of protection*.

Enslaving Charm (5 magic points) **Range** 60' **Damage** Charm **Notes** As the 1st-level magic-user spell *charm person*.

Cone of Cold (4 magic points) **Range** 60'. **Damage** 8d6 **Notes** Miracle / missile attack. Effect is a cone 60' long and 30' wide at furthest end. Discharged from the ogre mage's third eye. Saving throw reduces damage by half.

Thunder Rifle **Range** 600'/1200' **Damage** 2d8+4 **Shots** 20 **Trigger** Automatic **Basic Load** Loaded + 6 magazines **Notes** +2 to hit. Counts as +2 magic weapon.

Thunder Rifle Lightning Projector **Range** 60' **Damage** 6d6 **Shots** 10 **Trigger** Normal **Basic Load** Loaded **Notes** Miracle / missile attack. Half damage if save. 60' long, 5' wide beam extends from the front of the under-rifle projector. Lightning projector cannot be reloaded in the field.

Thunder Rifle Bayonet-Axe **Damage** 1d12+4 **Notes** +1 to hit. +1 magic weapon.

NIGHTMARE

No. Enc.: 1 per rakshasa

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Fly: 360' (120')

Armor Class: -4

Hit Dice: 36 hp (6+6 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 12

Attacks: 3

THAC0: 13

Damage: 1d6+4/1d6+4/2d4 (hoof/hoof/bite)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F8

WIL: 8

Morale: 8

Hoard Class: None

Description

These lampblack steeds of the underworld are the preferred mount of those who flit from place to place among the evil planes, and who dart between the evil underworlds and the material. Those ridden by the rakshasa are fine specimens, intelligent and fierce. Nightmares are horse-shaped monsters, not horses with fiery hooves. They thirst for battle and seek to glut their hunger on the flesh of the slain. They will eagerly participate in battle. Clawsome and Frenchette practice fighting alongside their steeds, and will dismount to add their own combat power to that of their horses. Haider Khan and Giselle will stay mounted, and tend to treat their horse as a living flying carpet, maneuvering around to cast spells or engage in melee.

Special Abilities

Interloper Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never rolls morale for shock or horror. Sight of the nightmare causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Plane Shift Notes The nightmares may *plane shift* between their current plane and the astral. The effect can carry as many as 8 individuals (AEC, p. 36-37). Extra individuals must touch the nightmare's flanks. The nightmare can *always* choose who *plane shifts* with it. If they are angry at their riders, they will carry them to some obscure location in the evil planes and dump them there, departing into the astral.

Attacks

Hoof/Hoof/Bite Damage 1d6+4/1d6+4/2d4 **Notes** Strikes as +1 magic weapon. These nightmares are trained to fight, and will always snort on a target in the first round (see below), then attack it until the snort wears off.

Choking Snort Damage See Notes **Notes** Although this appears to be a ranged or breath weapon, it is only effective against a single target in melee combat. The target takes -2 to attack and damage rolls for 1d4+2 rounds.

KAMATA HUNTING BEAST

No. Enc.: 2d4

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 180' (60')

Armor Class: 5

Hit Dice: 30 hp (5 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 14

Terror: 11

Attacks: 3

THAC0: 15

Damage: 1d6/1d6/1d8 (claw/claw/bite)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L3

WIL: 7

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

These human-headed lizard dogs are from **Mutant Future**, p. 78. They represent some commonplace domesticated horror from the evil planes. They are fairly intelligent, and extremely evil. They wish to torture and torment victims. They will forebear from killing if they can watch a victim crawl, as they delight in the struggles of their prey. They generally open any combat with a round of electrical zaps, then go over to their claws and fangs. Although the electrical jolt is more certain, these terrible beasts prefer to rend and tear living flesh over blasting it.

Special Abilities

Interloper Notes +2 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never rolls morale for shock or horror. Sight of the kamata causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Compelling Collar Notes The collar causes the kamata agony whenever the rakshasa commands. They are *stunned* and unable to act until the rakshasa relents. All four rakshasa wear a ring that can activate any kamata's collar.

Hunting Hound Notes The kamata can track like a ranger (AEC, p. 19).

Energy Retaining Cell Structure Damage 3d6 **Notes** No roll to hit, no saving throw. Damage is lightning.

Attacks

Claw/Claw/Bite Damage 1d6/1d6/1d8 **Notes** None

Night Hag Traffickers

1d4 night hags on nightmares. The hags always have 2d12 quasits *polymorphed* into wolves accompanying them as security.

Found with 2d6 satyrs. There are usually (75% chance) also 1d4 lamias present.

SCENARIO PROFILE

The hags and satyrs are generally either having a party (40%), or traveling, with the hags mounted and the satyrs afoot, to the site of one (60%).

Encounter Reaction

The reaction most depends on if the characters encounter the satyrs on their way to their party, or during their revel.

Characters who encounter them while they are partying will first be subject to the effects of their pipes, which will be pitched to *charm*.

Characters who encounter them on their way to their party are likely to be run down and captured if possible, or killed if they resist. However, the satyrs are interested in fun, not a fair fight. They will probably not pursue battle with equal or more powerful enemies.

Note that satyrs are not impaired by intoxication the way normal creatures are; they just get weirder and more erratic. They will be high on strut (see below), and the LL only knows what else.

The night hags assuredly do not get high on their own supply, and will be at most moderately intoxicated. They are doing business peddling their wares to the satyrs and lamias on a dose-by-dose basis.

Characters who succumb to the satyrs' pipes or are captured by the revelers after a chase will be made the "life of the party." They will be fed 2 of the drugs from the **Drugs of the Evil Planes** section below at random, and many other less-

awful intoxicating substances besides. If there are lamia present, the lamia will drain them to docile 3 WIL nitwits. Assuming they are not devoured by a hungry lamia, the victim(s) will then be abandoned, hopelessly elfshot, at the site of the revel when the party breaks up.

Lawful Creatures

Night hags attack Lawful creatures on sight if the odds seem favorable (AEC, p. 132). The satyrs aren't exactly friends of Law, either. Apply a -4 penalty to Encounter Reaction table rolls against obviously Lawful creatures or other spoilsports who might be here to ruin the fun.

During the Revel

Characters have a good chance of just walking away safely when the satyrs are engaged in their festivities. The revel could surprise no one, and the revelers are surprised on a 1-3 on 1d6. The main danger to characters is drawing within the 60' range of the pipes and being *charmed*.

Characters who are seen by the revelers have a -2 bonus on their Encounter Reaction table roll if they just quietly slip away.

Likely Fellow Revelers

The satyrs are here to have a party. They will be receptive to creatures who look like they will party with the satyrs in their fashion. Add a +2 bonus to the group's Encounter Reaction table roll if first glance suggests that the characters would make good partiers at a fiendish sylvan revel. The night hags have *know alignment* — and no hesitation about using it — so ruses may not persist for very long.

DRUGS OF THE EVIL PLANES

As they may be of use during the aftermath of this or other encounters, a number of drugs used in the evil planes are detailed here. These are far from the only drugs available in the locale.

All of the “regular” drugs from the LL’s campaign setting, and any others she wishes to introduce, are bought and sold to the large and varied drug-using population of the evil underworld. The ones detailed here are the really awful drugs manufactured by evil supernatural beings, for evil supernatural beings.

In addition, hags who spend any amount of time in the forest almost certainly deal in strut, rut, crank and spooky. These are drugs refined from sources found in the depths of the forest. They replicate the effects of the murdersprite mood-drugs of the same names, but affect any sylvan creature who ingests them. The effects carried over include the permanent negative mood modification and lifelong withdrawal pangs if the sylvan creature ever uses the drugs.

1 *Cherry* **Notes** +20 hp. Will be phantom hp if real hp are all healed. -1 permanent hp per use. Requires *heal*, *limited wish* or *wish* to recover.

2 *Devil Dust* **Notes** Effects are as per the 6th-level magic-user spell *aweomer of rage*, but with no requirement for a potion of heroism to use it. The character suffers a -6 penalty to all Monster Reaction table rolls while under the drug’s effects.

3 *Fatal Mirror* **Notes** The character has *true seeing* (as the 5th-level cleric spell) and enjoys the use of a *crystal ball* with *ESP*, and also *detect magic*, *detect evil*, *detect good* (as the 1st-level cleric spells) and *divine weather* (as the 1st-level druid spell) for the potion’s duration. The user dies at the end of the effect.

4 *Black Kiss* **Notes** The character enjoys the effects of a *potion of superheroism*. When it wears off, the character loses a level. Extremely addictive: after the first use, the character must thereafter make a WIS roll whenever confronted with the drug to avoid use.

5 *Crisis Spores* **Notes** Hallucinate wildly for d100 days. Permanent reduction of WIL by -1d4 per use.

6 *Abyssal Crystals* **Notes** *Haste* (as the 3rd-level magic-user spell) for 2d6 days. Ages you 10+1d20 years.

Drug Notes

Yes, these drugs are horrible, much like you’d expect from drugs bought from Neutral (evil) supernatural beings best known for their role peddling evil magic to liches. Note, however, that they are used by a diverse clientele. Some entities use drugs because they’re immune to the effects. Ghosts, for example, love the sensation of black kiss, but it doesn’t level-drain them as they are sentient undead. Similarly, demons frequently ingest abyssal crystals because they are ageless and have no fear of the drug’s aging effects. Likewise, those with access to sufficient healing magic can safely use even drugs like fatal mirror that lead inexorably to death.

NIGHT HAGS

No. Enc.: 1d4

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 90' (30')

Armor Class: 3

Hit Dice: 52 hp (8 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 18

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 12

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 4

Save: F8

WIL: 14

Morale: 8

Hoard Class: None

Description

The hag(s) are drug dealers here to peddle their wares. Their method is to make a party happen, and then sell to the party crowd. They have a crowd of eager party-goers in the fiendish satyrs (and possibly lamias) and they can look forward to an enjoyable night fleecing the crowd of its wealth, and enjoying the attentions of a satyr or two if they are so inclined.

The night hags have *satchels of holding* (bags of holding of half normal dimensions and capacity, weighing no more than 30 lbs.) full of various intoxicants and "party favors" like blankets, continual light stones and various other accoutrements designed to create a festive atmosphere. These are designed to function without disruption in or across any dimensional barrier, and will not turn inside out on the astral plane. The night hags are not interested in dying. If things go south at the party, they will flee skyward on their nightmares and watch from above, departing into the astral if anything particularly frightening or incomprehensible takes place. They do this every day, and parties frequently go bad. Note that they are wearing ballistic nylon armors. Picking up (most of)

the quasits, and getting out of a bad situation and into the astral with their money and their drugs, is something the hags have a great deal of experience with.

The hag can *sleep* individuals of up to 12 HD or 12th level with no saving throw. Individuals who are causing problems will be sedated for 4d4 turns. This is a dreaded "party time-out" because the hags won't compensate you for the drugs that wear off while you're unconscious.

Threatening their clients or their quasit employees will not move them; they will just give up their wares and their wealth and move along. They can count on the sisterhood of hags to stake them again, and they will remember. They will let themselves be robbed, endure humiliation, and so forth, in order to retaliate later.

Note that the hags have spell-like abilities and not magic points. They are thus invulnerable to magical paralysis from magic point drains. They do, however, have limited protection against magic point drain in their *advanced scarab of protection*, below.

Special Abilities

Interloper Notes The night hag is a denizen of the outermost darkness who spends eternity flitting from one shadow to another, carrying rumors and seeking power and treasure. Night hags have a +4 to their WIL for the purposes of withstanding Divine Terror attacks. Sight of a night hag causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +2 penalty.

Etherealness Notes Night hags can turn ethereal at will, although this does not mean much in the evil planes.

Ring of Protection +2 Notes already figured into AC and MCM.

Scarab of Protection Notes Protects against 5 failed saving throws. Also blocks magic point drains, draining 1 charge per attempt blocked.

Spell-Like Abilities

(1/round) *Detect good, know alignment, polymorph self, sleep* (Creatures of up to 12 HD roll 2d8 to determine HD affected as normal, minimum 1 target.)

(3/day) *Magic missile* (one missile for 2d8), *ray of enfeeblement*

Attacks

Claws **Damage** 2d6 **Notes** None

LAMIAS

No. Enc.: 1d4
 Alignment: Chaotic (evil)
 Movement: 240' (80')
 Armor Class: 3
 Hit Dice: 54 hp (9 HD)
 Damage Absorption: 0
 MCM: 10
 Terror: 18
 Attacks: 1
 THAC0: 12
 Damage: Varies (by weapon)
 Magic Points: 0
 Miracle Points: 0
 Save: F9
 WIL: 13
 Morale: 9
 Hoard Class: None

Description

These haunters of the wasteland have found an amusing way to fill their evening. They let the satyrs do all the work, enjoying the attentions of their fellow half-beasts and letting the goat-men chop the wood and hunt the venison. The night hags enjoy having lamias present, as they are near-cousins to hags in many respects. Hutless hags like the night hag use relationships they develop with friendly entities like lamias to shelter during periods of crisis or inclement dimensional weather. In return, the lamias enjoy access to the exotic wares the hags deal in at extremely favorable prices.

Special Abilities

Hunter of Wild Places **Notes** +2 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never makes morale rolls due to shock or horror. Sight of a lamia causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Psychic Vampire **Notes** Drains 1 point of WIL per touch. Reach WIL 3, become a docile slave of the lamia.

Spell-Like Abilities

(1/day) *Charm person, mirror image, phantasmal force* (may speak and move up to half speed but may not attack), *suggestion*

Attacks

Claws **Damage** 1d6 **Notes** causes 1 maximum 1 WIL in addition to damage.

Thryses Carbine **Damage** 2d8 **Range** 300'/1200'

Trigger Type Automatic **Ammo** 12 **Basic Load**

Loaded + 4 magazines **Notes** None.

Thryses Carbine Jab **Damage** 1d6 **Notes** Does not drain WIL.

FIENDISH SATYRS

No. Enc.: 2d4

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 180' (60')

Armor Class: 5

Hit Dice: 25 hp (5 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 13

Terror: 8

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 15

Damage: Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F5

WIL: 6

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

Half goat, half man, these embodiments of man's Dionysian lusts are found not just in the material plane, but on other planes as well. These satyrs are influenced by the area of their origin, and are distinctly Neutral (evil) in character rather than the pure Neutrality typical of sylvan entities.

Special Abilities

Sylvan Horror **Notes** +2 to WIL to withstand Divine Terror attacks.

Alert **Notes** Surprised only on 1 in 6. This changes during the revel, and they are surprised on a 1-3 on a 1d6 while in their cups.

Forest Ghost 90% chance of *invisibility* in rural settings.

Satyr Pipes **Notes** 60' radius of effect. Can play to produce 1 of 3 effects. This is an MCM attack. If characters resist once successfully, they never need to roll to resist a given satyr's pipes again.

Charm **Notes** As the 1st-level magic-user spell *charm person* (**Labyrinth Lord**, p. 28). Affects all those hearing the pipes, but only lasts for 24 hours after their exposure.

Sleep **Notes** As the 1st-level magic-user spell of the same name.

Fear **Notes** As the 2nd-level magic-user spell *scare* (**AEC**, p. 75).

Attacks

Horn Butt **Damage** 2d4 **Notes** None

Thryses Jezail Shot **Damage** 2d10+2 **Range** 600'/2400' **Trigger Type** Standard **Ammo** 7 **Basic Load** Loaded + 14. **Notes** Does 1d6+3 in melee with 5' reach. 25% chance each is enchanted to +2.

Thryses Jezail Bayonet **Damage** 1d6+3 **Notes** 5' reach. All thryses jezails have enchanted bayonets. All are +1 to hit and attack as +1 magic weapons in hand-to-hand combat (already figured into damage).

QUASIT (AS WOLF)

No. Enc.: 2d12

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 180' (60')

Armor Class: 7

Hit Dice: 13 hp (3 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 13

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 18

Damage: 1d6 (bite)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F3

WIL: 11

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

These tiny demons assume the shape of wolves for mobility and sensory capability. It is unlikely they will shapechange into any other form besides their natural shape. For statistics of the quasits in their natural form, and more details about them, see AEC, p. 113-114.

Special Abilities

Demon Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never makes morale rolls from shock or horror. Half damage from all five elemental sources (fire, cold, lightning, acid, poison). Sight of a quasit in its natural form causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Deathless Notes Quasits regenerate 1 hp/round. Their Bane is iron (not steel!).

Magically Resistant Notes Quasits save versus magical effects as F7.

Not Familiars Notes None of the quasits are familiars.

Spell-Like Abilities

(1/round) *Detect good, detect magic, invisibility, polymorph self*

(1/day) *Induce fear* (As 2nd-level magic-user spell *scare* but with a 30' radius of effect)

Attacks

Wolf Bite Damage 1d6 **Notes** Does not contain DEX-drain poison; that requires the quasit to be in its natural shape.

NIGHTMARE

No. Enc.: 1 per rakshasa

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 150' (50')

Fly: 360' (120')

Armor Class: -4

Hit Dice: 36 hp (6+6 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 12

Attacks: 3

THAC0: 13

Damage: 1d6+4/1d6+4/2d4 (hoof/hoof/bite)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F8

WIL: 8

Morale: 8

Hoard Class: None

Description

These steeds of the underworld are the preferred mount of those who travel the evil planes, and who journey between the evil underworlds and the material planes. Nightmares ridden by the night hags are not exceptional specimens, but not ill-treated either. Note that nightmares are horse-shaped monsters, not horses with fiery hooves. They thirst for battle and seek sate to their hunger on the flesh of the slain. They will eagerly participate in battle. The night hags will not generally engage, however. They will seek to evade combat, letting the lamia and satyrs fight and supporting them with their powerful *sleep* magic. As a result, their nightmares are unlikely to do much fighting, as they will either be acting as raged support or fleeing the scene.

Special Abilities

Interloper Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Sight of the nightmare causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Plane Shift Notes The nightmares may *plane shift* between their current plane and the astral. The effect can carry as many as 8 individuals, as per AEC, p. 36-37. Extra individuals must touch the nightmare's flanks. The nightmare can *always* choose who *plane shifts* with it. If they are angry at their riders, they will carry them to some obscure location in the evil planes and dump them there, departing into the astral.

Attacks

Hoof/Hoof/Bite Damage 1d6+4/1d6+4/2d4 **Notes**

Strikes as +1 magic weapon. The nightmares that the hags ride rarely get to engage in combat, and so will tend to use their hoof/hoof/bite in preference to their snort (see below).

Choking Snort Damage See Notes **Notes** Although this appears to be a ranged or breath weapon, it is only effective against a single target in melee combat. The target takes -2 to attack and damage rolls for 1d4+2 rounds.

Fugitive Bushi

1d4+1 horned devil combat pilots, with 3d8 barbed devils.

These petty devils are noble in name only. The horned devils are deserters from some infernal military adventure or fugitives from a frontier hell. This band of looters in uniform seeks some victim to rob or some greater evil to attach themselves to.

The horned devils are in bronze golem combat suits. These suits are full of molten bronze, as stated in their Description section. As devils are immune to all natural and magical fire, the burning metal forms a critical part of the devil's interface with the suit, as well as a fit of unearthly discomfort to the infernal occupant.

SCENARIO PROFILE

These devils are desperate, and will seize whatever they can from whoever they come upon. The horned devils are very formidable in their infernal war machines. These molten bronze-cored automata are a threat to an arch-devil, and these desperadoes would rob one for his jewelry if they caught him alone in the forest.

They may be lurking in ambush in a likely spot for robbery victims to pass (60%) or they may be fighting for their lives against the wrath of the forest (40%).

If the devils are waiting in casual ambush, they surprise on a 1-3 on a 1d6. The devils have a (very reasonable) terror of attracting the wrath of the truly powerful inhabitants of the forest, and so are attempting to keep bloodshed to a minimum. They will demand the characters stand and deliver rather than opening first, and seek to rob the characters of everything of value, but not kill them. Anyone who seeks to resist will be smothered in gauss rifle beads.

If the devils are fighting for their lives against the forest, some combination of the devils' nature as armed fighters for Lawful (evil) and their

behavior have combined to draw the wrath of the forest. They are engaged in skirmish combat with 1d100 puppets of ruin and 2d10 bakegumo, and/or whatever other weird forest enemies the LL wishes to have them fight.

Weaker Characters

There are quite a few of these devils, and they have very powerful combat machines. The devils intend to rob anyone they meet who doesn't seem capable of overcoming them in combat. Add a +6 penalty to their reaction to characters who seem weaker than them, but they will attempt to rob first, and fight only if the characters resist.

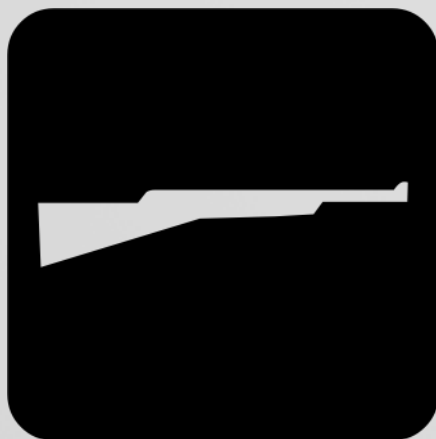
Stronger Characters

If the characters are obviously stronger than the devils, then the devils will seek to avoid or break contact. This is not cowardice — they have no reason to fight. Add a -4 bonus to their reaction, but any indications of friendship or neutrality are replaced with escape and evasion, respectively.

If possible, they will use *teleport without error* to slip into the astral.

FIGHTING AGAINST PUPPETS

If the devils are fighting against the puppets of ruin, it's unlikely the characters will encounter them in a clearing having a melee brawl against all 1d100 puppets and their 2d10 bakegumo supporters. They will be engaged in a protracted guerrilla action of sniping and counter-sniping, tiny ambushes and assaults where the comparative weakness of the puppets is less of a drawback. On the other hand, the barbed devils cannot be surprised, and so they do pretty well for themselves. Still, the forest's endless drop of puppets will overwhelm them and force them into the astral soon.



HORNED DEVIL

No. Enc.: 1d4+1

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 90' (30')

Fly: 180' (60')

Armor Class: -5

Hit Dice: 32 hp (5+5 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 12

Terror: 15

Attacks: 4 or 1

THAC0: 14

Damage: Varies (by attack or weapon)

Magic Points: 6

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F5

WIL: 13

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

These lizard-like horrors are the landless knights of demonic nobility. The exact reasons for the horned devils being on the run are not specific to this encounter. They could have declined to go on a suicide mission, they could have been caught embezzling, or they could have just decided to start careers as freebooters.

What is definitely true is that they are not particularly successful, at least not yet. The barbed devils continue to obey their commands, especially given the power of their combat suits. However, it is clear the day of a mutiny among their troops is not far off if the horned devils cannot bring fortune to their followers.

The horned devils are somewhat self-conscious about their lack of combat power. They will always try to fight inside their suits. If they can't use their suits, they will always attempt to lead with *charm person*, as this is their most dangerous combat spell. If they cannot use *charm person* on the target, or the target resists, they'll use their pistols to engage as gauss weapons impose a

+2 AC penalty on targets. Only in desperation will they try to stun enemies with the spiked chain.

Special Abilities

Devil Notes +2 to the character's WIL for the purposes of resisting Divine Terror attacks. Devils take no damage from fire of any sort, even enchanted, and half damage from cold and poison attacks. Sight of a horned devil probably causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty. Note that the devil's inherent powers for their race have already been worked into the character's spell-like abilities list.

Gate Notes These devils aren't *gating* in anyone. They are in deep disgrace and would probably face immediate arrest if other devils became aware of their location.

Inefficient Magic-Point Conversion Notes The horned devils have had surgical implants placed into their bodies that replace their spell-like powers with magic-point driven powers. They have 6 magic points and gain back 1 per turn. This would be a good conversion, but the number of magic points they can store and their rate of recharge are too low — they should have at least 10 magic points instead of the 6 they currently possess, and get back at least 2 a turn. Whether the conversion can be reversed or improved is up to the LL. If the characters somehow befriend these devils, this is their primary concern — they (correctly) feel they were maimed by the demodand who performed the procedure.

Spell-Like Powers

(1 magic point) *Charm person*, *detect magic*, *ESP*, *fear aura* (5' radius), *know alignment*, *phantasmal force*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, *suggestion*, *teleport without error*

(4 magic points) *Wall of fire*

Telepathy Notes Allows the devil to communicate in all languages.

Attacks

Claw/Claw/Bite/Tail Damage 1d4/1d4/1d4+1/1d3

Notes Tail does a wound that bleeds at the rate of 1 hp per turn unless bound, and can only be healed by magical means.

Gauss Machine Pistol **Range** 150'/300' **Damage** 2d6

Trigger Automatic **Ammo** 12 **Basic Load** Loaded + 1 magazine **Notes** +2 reduction in target AC.

Spiked Chain **Damage** 2d6 **Notes** Attacks the character with the *horned devil spiked chain curse* on a hit.

Horned Devil Spiked Chain Curse **Damage** Curse **Notes**

Miracle / missile attack. Characters struck by the armor must make an MCM roll or be *stunned* and unable to move or attack for a number of rounds equal to the number of hit points the attack did.

BRONZE GOLEM

No. Enc.: 1 per horned devil

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: 240' (80')

Armor Class: 0

Hit Dice: 28 shp (20 HD)

Damage Absorption: 10

MCM: 4

Terror: 15

Attacks: 1

THAC0: 6

Damage: 1d4 shp or 3d10 (railgun or spiked chain)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F10

WIL: 13

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

The statistics provided above reflect a bronze golem worn by a horned devil. To see the statistics of the golem when there is no devil inside, see the golem's description on p. 79 of **Labyrinth Lord**. However, note these golems have no self-will. Without a pilot, they can obey very simple instructions, but cannot undertake self-designated tasks, have no judgment, etc.

These suits are made in the shape of horned demons, and wield weapons similar to the horned devils' spiked chains. However, they also mount a powerful kinetic projectile launcher on their arm. Powered by the mechanical strain harvested from the thermal gradient between the inside and outside of the armor, these fast-firing KE weapons are a bit underpowered for the strength of the suit.

This suit is presented to represent the kind of powerful war machine the material presumes devils field in their military campaigns in the evil planes.

Special Abilities

Automaton Notes The golem-suit is an automaton — it has no self-awareness or consciousness, unlike a regular golem. It protects itself from theft and engages

certain priority targets regardless of whether or not it is manned, but in a manner less intelligent even than an animated skeleton. It takes half damage from Divine Terror attacks.

If the suit is "slain" while the horned devil is inside, the golem freezes in place, and the horned devil inside is trapped within the form-fitting statute until its peers can extricate it. The horned devil may be coup de graced with a +1 or better magic weapon when it is trapped in this fashion.

The suits are tailored for horned devils, who have a unique 9' tall ape-lizard-like shape. Other characters are unlikely to fit the suit's peculiar contours.

Characters who can fit inside the suit but are not immune to magical fire will take 1d100 hp per round from full-body immersion in molten bronze.

Liquid Metal Interior Notes Even touching the exterior skin of the suit does 1d10 hp damage. Any weapon that penetrates the skin causes 2d6 hp of damage to the attack from thermal exposure. Needless to say, it is impossible to conceal from thermal imaging unless it is operating in a hellish environment where its extreme temperature is the norm.

Sealed Systems Notes Immune to poison, even those types that cause direct damage. Immune to all forms of fire, even magical fire. Can operate indefinitely without air or submerged in water, although it has difficulty underwater as the clouds of steam that surround it restrict vision (10') and make movement difficult (30' per round). Obviously, the suit sinks like a stone in water.

Attacks

Thermal Gradient Torque Launcher Range 600'/1800'

Damage 1d4 shp **Trigger** Rapid Fire **Ammo** 1d12 shots per suit **Basic Load** 24 shots **Notes** Ignores 5 points of damage absorption.

Golem Spike Chain Damage 3d10 **Notes** Causes an attack with the *horned devil spike chain curse*, just as if the target were attacked by the horned devil outside the golem. It will not have this effect if it is attacking alone, or with a character who is not a horned devil piloting it.

BARBED DEVIL

No. Enc.: 3d8

Alignment: Lawful (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 0

Hit Dice: 48 hp (8 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 14

Attacks: 3

THAC0: 12

Damage: Varies (by attack)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F8

WIL: 12

Morale: 10

Hoard Class: None

Description

These horned fiends are still following their officers. There's probably a good reason for their continued loyalty — they might also have been expected to die on the suicide mission, or they could expect to get rich quick off the plunder of freebooting. Things currently aren't going well for them, but they are Lawful and evil in equal measure, and they know it will take time for any plan to mature. Still, if some fortune and glory doesn't make it to their side before their horned devil leaders get their suits of powered armor shot out from under them, the barbed devils are likely to depart and seek their fortune elsewhere individually or in small groups.

Special Abilities

Devil Notes +2 to the character's WIL for the purposes of resisting Divine Terror attacks. Devils take no damage from fire of any sort, even enchanted, and half damage from cold and poison attacks. Sight of a barbed devil probably causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty. Note that the devil's inherent powers for their

race have already been worked into the character's spell-like abilities list.

Gate Notes These devils aren't *gating* in anyone. They are in deep disgrace and would probably face immediate arrest if other devils became aware of their location.

Preternatural Alertness Notes Cannot be surprised.

Spell-Like Powers

(1/round) *Charm person, hold person, know alignment, phantasmal force, produce flame, pyrotechnics, suggestion, teleport without error*

Telepathy Notes Allows the devil to communicate in all languages.

Attacks

Gauss Auto Rifle Range 300'/600' **Damage** 3d6

Trigger Automatic **Ammo** 3d12 shots **Basic Load** 50

Notes The gauss rifles the barbed devils carry have only backpack-sized power packs. +2 reduction in target AC.

Claw/claw/tail Damage 2d4/2d4/3d4 **Notes** Saving throw versus spells on attack or be subject to the *barbed devil terror curse* (see below).

Barbed Devil Terror Curse MCM Modifier +0 **Damage** Curse **Notes** Miracle / Missile attack. Only activated when a claw or tail strike hits. Can only be activated against a given target once per round. Causes target to flee at 3x normal MV for 30 rounds, as per the *wand of fear*, **Labyrinth Lord**, p. 116.

Demon Pack

1d3 nalfeshnee, 1d4+2 glabrezu and 1d6+4 vrocks.

A group of demons that has come together under one or more charismatic nalfeshnee. They are remote from their home plane, so their souls are protected and their rebirth is assured. They seek a bloody and warlike Chaotic martyrdom, so that they can leap forth from the Abyss and do it again. They shelter beneath the boughs of the Forest of Woe, which *blesses* them and shelters them as its true kin.

This party is quite a pack of troublemakers. The herd of Chaotic zealots is quite far into the Lawful (evil) astral, and as a result, they're probably either itching for a fight (60%) or on the run from one (40%). Their location beneath the *blessing* of the forest boughs gives them cover to lick their wounds or plans their next attack.

The nalfeshnee(s) do the thinking, with the glabrezu as thick-browed henchmen. The vrocks do as they are told when bullied into it, and otherwise sulk about resentful but desperate for approval and thirsty for blood.

None of these demons have modifications to make them into magic point-using entities. If they lose their ability to use magical powers, they will just tear their opponents apart with their talons. None of the demons carry weapons or use tools, nor do they have treasure or equipment of any sort.

SCENARIO PROFILE

If the demons are alone, the characters will probably (80%) encounter 1d2 of the vrocks at first. The bird-demons will hasten to torment characters they encounter, rather than report them to the leaders of the pack. The stronger members of the pack will more likely be drawn by the commotion, or by their constant surveillance of the miscreant vrocks.

The vrocks are demons, and prone to biting off more than they can chew. They will go howling back to the nalfeshnee and glabrezu when they do.

Just because these creatures are Chaotic (evil) doesn't mean they're stupid. The nalfeshnee are quite brilliant, the glabrezu are as bright as the average magic-user, and even the "dull-witted" vrock are more intelligent than the human average.

The demons emerge from a context of constant, savage combat. They cooperate excellently in battle, and each is aware that there is no entity save the demons with them is likely to help or show mercy to a Chaotic (evil) monstrosity on a rampage. They know what they're here to do, and they know who they're here to do it with.

Encounter Reaction

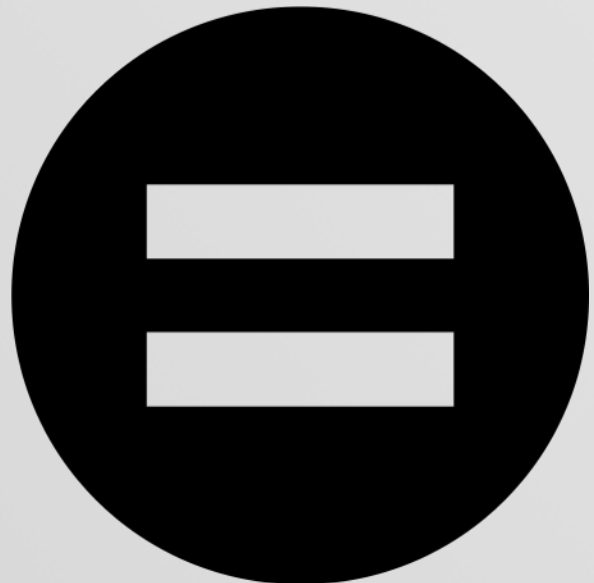
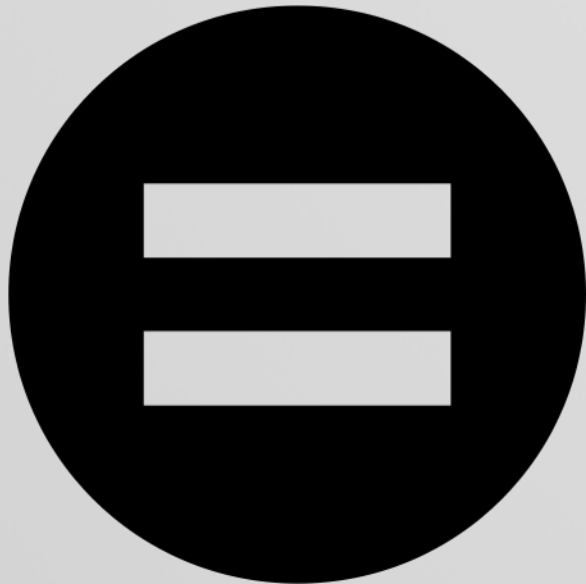
This is an actual pack of demons, with little in the way of formal organization or complex agenda. Their plan is to find somewhere to trash, or someone to thrash. They are very powerful and will especially tend to attack people they think of as self-important little shits like devils and rakshasa.

Generally, the glabrezu will attack melee battlers while the vrocks charge magicians and ranged attackers. Meanwhile, the nalfeshnee hang back and use *dispel magic* liberally.

The demons are away from their home planes and accordingly, they are arrogant and warlike. They know they have nothing to lose — they already regard their mission as a "suicide" run.

Obvious Servant of Law

These demons are at a +6 encounter reaction penalty toward any obviously Lawful characters.



NALFESHNEE

No. Enc.: 2d6 (4d10)

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 90' (30')

Flying: 120' (40')

Armor Class: -1

Hit Dice: 77 hp (11 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 16

Attacks: 3

THAC0: 12

Damage: 1d4/1d4/2d4

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F11

WIL: 14

Morale: 10

Hoard Class: None

Description

These bear-apes are leading the band of demons on its merry rampage. They are fierce and brilliant. Under other circumstances, they might *polymorph* themselves into innocuous shapes and have great fun spreading Chaos subtly. However, they have a flock of vrock and a few glabrezu along for the ride, so things are going to be anything but subtle.

Special Abilities

Demon Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never makes morale rolls from shock or horror. Half damage from all five elemental sources (fire, cold, lightning, acid, poison). Sight of a demon causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Blessing of the Forest Notes The demons are under the *blessing* and protection of the forest. They are at +1 to hit, damage and morale.

Conventional Weapon Immunity Notes Require +1 or better weapons to hit.

Spell-Like Powers

(1/round) *Darkness* 10' radius, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *fear* (as wand), *illusion* (as wand), *levitate*, *polymorph self*, *project image*, *read languages*, *symbol* (despair and fear), *telekinesis* (500 lbs.), *teleport without error*

Gate Notes 65% probability for the *gate* to open.

Summons vrock (1-4), glabrezu (5-7) or nalfeshnee (8-10).

Attacks

Claw/claw/bite **Damage** 1d4/1d4/2d4 **Notes** None.

GLABREZU

No. Enc.: 1d4+2

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 90' (30')

Armor Class: -4

Hit Dice: 70 hp (10 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 10

Terror: 14

Attacks: 5

THAC0: 11

Damage: 2d6/2d6/1d3/1d3/1d4+1 (pincers/claws/bite)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F10

WIL: 12

Morale: 9

Hoard Class: None

Description

The glabrezu are ultimately here to hurt things. They are the middle management of the demon pack. They aren't like the nalfeshnee, who could play different parts over generations to set nations against one another and just happen to be tearing shit up in the here and now. They're smart enough to function intelligently, but they're still primarily denizens of the present moment. They boss around the vrock while the nalfeshnee use their big brains to figure out what comes next.

Special Abilities

Demon Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never makes morale rolls from shock or horror. Half damage from all five elemental sources (fire, cold, lightning, acid, poison). Sight of a demon causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty.

Blessing of the Forest Notes The demons are under the *blessing* and protection of the forest. They are at +1 to hit, damage and morale.

Spell-Like Powers

(1/round) *Darkness 10' radius, fear* (as wand), *levitate, polymorph self, pyrotechnics, telekinesis* (400 lbs.), *teleport without error*

Gate Notes 35% chance that the gate opens. Will summon a vrock (1-6) or glabrezu (7-10).

Attacks

Pincer/pincer/claw/claw/bite **Damage**

2d6/2d6/1d3/1d3/1d4+1 **Notes** None

VROCK

No. Enc.: 1d6+4

Alignment: Chaotic (evil)

Movement: 120' (40')

Fly: 180' (60')

Armor Class: 0

Hit Dice: 50 hp (8 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 12

Terror: 13

Attacks: 5

THAC0: 14

Damage: 1d4/1d4/1d8/1d8/1d6 (front claws/rear claws/beak)

Magic Points: 0

Miracle Points: 0

Save: F8

WIL: 11

Morale: 11

Hoard Class: None

Description

Though more intelligent than the average human, these bird-demons are the dimmest bulbs in this demon pack. Mere footsoldiers of the abyss, the vrock are nevertheless belligerent whirlwinds of death in combat. They are desperate for respect from the higher-status demons in the pack, and resentful they aren't permitted to just lay waste to the countryside. Note that the vlocks *detect invisible* and are all over the area around the demon pack. Characters approaching invisibly will have to practice some other form of stealth as well.

For all that the vrock are eager to start fights and torture enemies, this is accomplishing exactly what the pack intends. There's not a situation where the nalfeshnee are going to wish that the vrock hadn't attacked someone because they had wanted to be their friend. The vrock are the skirmishers of the demon pack, and their aggressive harassment of all life around them indicates the shape of the resistance the pack faces.

Special Abilities

Demon Notes +4 to WIL to resist Divine Terror attacks. Never makes morale rolls from shock or horror. Half damage from all five elemental sources (fire, cold, lightning, acid, poison). Sight of a demon causes 0th level characters to make a morale check due to shock and horror at a +1 penalty. Oy.

Blessing of the Forest Notes The demons are under the *blessing* and protection of the forest. They are at +1 to hit, damage and morale.

Spell-Like Powers

(1/round) *Darkness* 10' radius, *detect invisibility*, *telekinesis* (200 lbs.), *teleport without error*

Gate Notes 10% chance the gate opens. Summons another vrock.

Attacks

Front claw/front claw/rear claw/rear claw/beak **Damage** 1d4/1d4/1d8/1d8/1d6 **Notes** None

Daemon-Bird Elite Forces Team

2d6+2 daemon-bird elite troops. Though flightless, daemon-birds yearn for the skies. They accordingly excel as mobility troops, and are frequently seen in *jump*- and flight-oriented combat deployments.

Their hands are large and clumsy. Daemon-birds cannot operate normal human weapons, or hope to perform an act as complex as placing bullets into a magazine. However, they are quite intelligent. If the gear is designed for their large, cumbersome hands, they are quite adept at the use of weapons.

This is a mercenary formation that might be working for night hags, neutral daemons, demodands or other evil creatures. They may be carrying out a raid, searching an area for evidence, conducting a patrol-to-contact, or using the forest as a bolthole between operations. They are excellent troops.

The daemon-birds are equipped as an assassination or ambush team, probably against a hard target. This might mean they are operating as such, but it also reflects the realities of operations in the forest. They don't draw the organized response from the forest creatures that a more Lawful group might engender, but they don't operate with the *blessing* of the forest, either. As a result, their weapons have to be geared toward dealing with bakegumo and other large threats.

These are mobility troops. They will not engage in prolonged engagements with characters. They will dash in, attack, and then dash away, using every bit of their mobility. They have extensive magical and technological orientation guides in their mobility armor, which aid them in flocking behavior. As a result of this, and their own natural instincts and inclinations, the daemon-bird elite forces are the consummate teamwork-oriented fighting force, with each one covering the other's back and assisting their fellows to the utmost.

SCENARIO PROFILE

The daemon-birds may be encountered in motion (70%), when lying in ambush (20%) or when searching an area for a target (10%).

Encounter Reaction

The daemon-birds' reaction is determined most significantly by the circumstances under which the player characters encounter them. This isn't really the kind of encounter where the LL generally needs to roll on the Monster Reaction table. Check the bullet points below before you roll on the table to check for reaction to see if you will need to roll at all.

In Motion

When in motion, these troops will either engage the characters if they're the mission target, or just ignore them and rely on their mobility gear to keep them out of trouble. Chances are, they'll pass around the character's party in a loose formation as they bound forward, only in sight for a round or two. Don't roll for encounter reaction when the daemon-birds are in motion; they'll evade combat unless the characters engage them.

In Ambush

When in ambush, they surprise on a 1-3 on a 1d6, and unless the characters are their target, their reaction will be to remain hidden and allow the characters to pass.

Searching an Area

When searching an area for a target, they have a +2 bonus to their interaction rolls with characters they encounter. They are looking for something specific. Unless entities they encounter come into direct conflict with them or try to stop them in their mission, they're willing to ignore, or with more positive results, even offer bribes or limited help if it gets the characters out of their hair.

DAEMON-BIRDS

No. Enc.: 2d6 (4d10)

Alignment: Neutral (evil)

Movement: 180' (60')

Leap: 180' (60' up/back)

Armor Class: 1

Hit Dice: 49 hp (7+7 HD)

Damage Absorption: 0

MCM: 9

Terror: 14

Attacks: 2 or 1

THAC0: 12

Damage: 1d6/1d6 or Varies (by weapon)

Magic Points: 8

Miracle Points: 0

Save: L8

WIL: 12

Morale: 10

Hoard Class: None

Description

Heavily augmented and equipped for battle, these elite troops are striker infantry, capable of penetrating thick defenses by infiltration and mobility. They are currently on the move through the Forest of Woe, seeking out some target at the behest of a distant employer.

1 in 4 daemon-birds carries a tank-buster in lieu of a blunderbuss (minimum 1 tank-buster per group), but all the daemon-birds carry 1 reload for the tank-buster. If they take a shot at a target large enough to merit the use of the tank-buster, they will not stick around to reload their weapons, but will bound off and return several turns later for another hop-by attack.

Special Abilities

Daemon Notes +2 WIL for the purposes of resisting Divine Terror attacks. *Infravision* to 90'.

Arcane Protection Notes Their armor suit is designed with low-observables components. -3 MCM.

Magic Points Notes These entities are adapted to a magic-point environment. They have 8 magic points and regenerate 2 magic points per turn.

Mobility Assistance (1 magic point to double leaping distance for a round) **Notes** A combination of impacted and wearable minor enchantments involving the combination of the spells *feather fall*, *levitation* and *jump*. The daemon-birds can leap 180' forward and 60' backwards or straight up. However, they cannot fly. They must end the round on a solid surface or they will *feather fall* to the ground. By spending a magic point, the birds can double their leaping distance for the round.

Audio Illusion Pack (1 magic point per turn) **Range** 120' **Notes** As per the 2nd-level magic-user spell *auditory illusion*, cast at the 6th level of mastery. It can produce the equivalent of 16 voices.

In addition to the power's obvious use to divert and mislead, each daemon-bird can focus its attention on a single target. See the *daemon-bird disorientation curse* below.

Attacks

Daemon-Bird Disorientation Curse (1 magic point) **Range** 120' **MCM Modifier** +0 **Damage** Curse **Notes** Created through the *audio illusion pack*, above. That target is at -2 to attack, damage and morale until the demon bird is slain, moves out of range, focuses the effect elsewhere or otherwise breaks the continuous barrage of disorienting auditory stimulus. This effect does not work on deaf targets or targets otherwise immune to sonic attacks.

Daemon-Bird Weakness Curse (2 magic points) **Range** 240' **MCM Modifier** -2 **Damage** Curse **Notes** If the target fails their MCM roll, their strength drops to 3. All attack and damage rolls are rolled with a -3 penalty. This curse lasts 8 rounds or until dispelled by *remove curse*.

Hunting Bird Blunderbuss **Range** 120'/240' **Damage** 5d6/3d6 **Ammo** 2 **Basic Load** Loaded + 12 shots **Notes** +2 to hit. Attacks as a +1 magic weapon. Reloading takes a full round per shot; the daemon-bird will often plunge into battle with its claws to finish badly wounded foes rather than take a second shot.

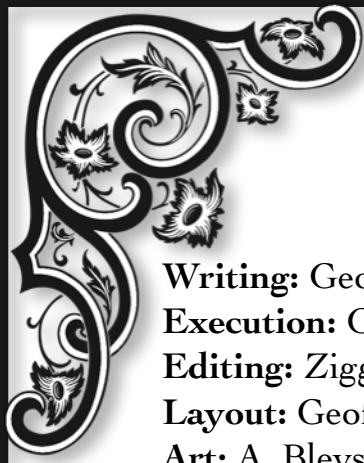


Hunting Bird Tank Buster **Range** 2,500' **MCM Modifier**

-2 Damage 1d8+1 shp **Ammo** 1 **Basic Load** Loaded +1

reload **Notes** Miracle / missile attack. 20' blast radius.

Does 1d6+1 shp to targets in the blast. Targets in the blast area, including the target if they are missed by the initial attack, can roll saving throw versus energy attack to take half damage. The target of the initial attack does not get a save for half damage if they are struck.



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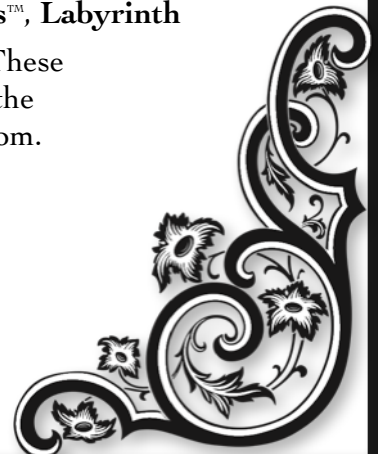
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AFTERWORD



I hope this product is enjoyed by many people! One of the best things about the terms under which I publish this book is that I can want everyone to read and enjoy it and not have that directly connected to my wallet. So if you find yourself here, having just read this book, thanks for your time! I hope it helps, or helped, you run a fun and memorable Labyrinth Lord game.

As a game designer, your work is inherently social. Even more than words on a page, without players to interpret it, a game is nothing. I hope this book amused and engaged. If it did, then you and I made some art together, and that's cool.

If I can say one thing — I hope people understand the terms under which I published this book are reversible. I have talked more about it elsewhere but I want to mention it here. I initiated this transaction, but fans can approach a rights owner and offer a cash payment — possibly raised through crowdsourcing means — for liberation of the work.

It's good that we pay the dreamer who imagines for us, but I also think it's appropriate that we give these images over to the collective imagination to make and remake. What we all dream together, we should all own together. I hope this vehicle opens a gateway to the commons for more than just the Dreams of Ruin.

Maferfun Elegua. The work is completed here.



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Sprite Mood Control 134-135

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Illusionist,

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4th Level,

Blossom Storm 153-154

Contaminate Hex 154

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Hag Beacon 156

Quell Forest 155

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Dream Barrier 136

6th Level,

Expedited Senescence 131-132

Summoning the Astral Aphids 132

Magic User,

4th Level,

Safe Passage 155

5th Level,

Call Bakegumo 153

Dispel Bakegumo 153

Dream Cleanse 138

6th Level,

Dream Barrier 136

9th Level,

Incantation of Brilliance 133

RESEARCH FUNDAMENTALS

Good	Use	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Lab, Marginal	Basic	1,000,000	100,000/ research period
Lab, Good	Basic	100,000,000	1,000,000/ research period
Lab, Fantastic	Basic	1,000,000,000,000	1,000,000,000/ research period
Arcane Imager	Rqd. for Inquiry	10,000,000	60 Time Stop + 60 True Seeing/ research period
Project Reservation	Security	1,000,000	120,000/ year
Garrison	Security	Varies	Varies
Chokepoint Item	Key to Roll	30,000- 300,000	0



SPECIALIZED RESEARCH GEAR

Good	Use	Initial	Periodic Cost
Arcane Vivisector	Puppets, Bakegumo, Murdersprites	1,500,000	100,000/ research period
Body Tree Works	Body Trees	500,000	100,000/ research period
Dimensional Isolation Bottle	Spores	2,500,000	100,000/ research period
Illusory Life Simulator	Puppets, Bakegumo, Murdersprites	1,500,000	10,000/ research period
Miniature Dream Theater	Historical Resonance Imaging / Spirit Field Examination	300,000	100,000/ research period
Miasmal Imager	Spirit Field Examination	500,000	100,000/ research period
Spirit Field Resonator	Spirit Field Examination	1,000,000	100,000/ research period
Spirit Field Damper	Spirit Field Examination	100,000	10,000/ research period
Dimensional Diassembly Works	The Dreams Themselves	25,000,000	1,000,000/ research period



SURVEILLANCE AND DEFENSE

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Automated Augerer	100,000/ unit	1,000/ hex
Numbness Jammer	250,000/ unit	365,000/ year
Phantasmal Filter	500,000/ unit	52,000/ year
Phantasmal Filter (Large)	1,500,000/ unit	260,000/ year
Planar Watcher	1,000,000/ unit	220,000/ year
Prayer Broadcasters	250,000/ unit	36,000/ year
Prayer Repeaters	750,000/ hex	75,000/ year



TREATMENTS

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Dust of Glacial Yearning	10,000- 1,000,000/ hex	0
Expedited Senesence	100,000/ casting	100,000/ year
Illusory Disruption	250,000/ hex	0
Incantation of Brilliance	1,000,000/ hex	0
Non-Generative Spores	11,000,000/ continent	2,750,000/ year
Stench Kow Herd	30,000/ hex-herd	0
Stench Kow Grazing Capital	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year
Summoning the Astral Aphids	100,000/ hex	0
Total Control Society (1-1,000)	1,000/ treatment	100/ treatment/year
Total Control Society (1,001-1,000,000)	100/ treatment	10/ treatment/year
Total Control Society (1,000,001+)	10/ treatment	1/ treatment/year
Implanted Imperatives (per individual)	1,000/ treatment	100/ treatment/year
Quest/Geas Engine	1,000,000	500/implanted imperative treatment

GEOMANCY AND PROTECTIVE SPELLS

Good	Initial Cost	Periodic Cost
Geomancy (#Hexes below 100)	10,000,000/ hex	0
Geomancy (#Hexes above 100)	1,000,000/ hex	0
Geomantic Survey (Hex)	100,000/ hex	150,000/ research period
Geomantic Survey (Region)	1,000,000/ region	150,000/ research period
Dream Barrier	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year
Dream Cleanse	1/ individual	0
Mutualistic Harmony	100,000/ hex	100,000/ hex/year
Natural Dream Resistance	10,000/ hex	10,000/ hex/year



PERSONAL SCALE MAGIC ITEMS

Good	Cost
Anti-Miasmal Amulet (IV)	20,000
Anti-Miasmal Coating (IV)	25,000
Drain Protection (I)	250/ charge
Drain Protection (II)	7,500
Drain Protection (III)	7,500
Drain Protection (IV)	20,000
Dust of Disappearance	200/ dose
Helmet/Lenses of Dream-Seeing	5,000
Insulated Potion Containers	25,000/ dose
King-of-the-Forest (I)	2,500/ charge
King-of-the-Forest (II)	75,000
King-of-the-Forest (III)	50,000
King-of-the-Forest (IV)	250,000
Mary's Clever Crow	50,000
Oil of Preserved Enchantment	500/ dose
Sword +1, +3 vs. Servants of Ruin	35,000



PERSONAL SCALE MAGIC ITEMS

Good	Cost
Anti-Miasmal Amulet (IV)	20,000
Anti-Miasmal Coating (IV)	25,000
Drain Protection (I)	250/ charge
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Drain Protection (IV)	20,000
Dust of Disappearance	200/ dose
Helmet/Lenses of Dream-Seeing	5,000
Insulated Potion Containers	25,000/ dose
King-of-the-Forest (I)	2,500/ charge
King-of-the-Forest (II)	75,000
King-of-the-Forest (III)	50,000
King-of-the-Forest (IV)	250,000
Mary's Clever Crow	50,000
Oil of Preserved Enchantment	500/ dose
Sword +1, +3 vs. Servants of Ruin	35,000



BOOK-CURSE

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MAY 15, 2015

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