



EMBER + ASH

SO YOU'VE BEEN  
**THROWN**  
DOWN A WELL



MADELEINE EMBER





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**EMBER + ASH**

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## SO YOU'VE BEEN THROWN DOWN A WELL

*You and your unlucky fellows have been, justifiably, thrown down the Well. You acknowledge your infraction and regret being caught, at the very least. Unbound, you have each been thrown. One after the other. Head(s) first. Down the well.*

This is an adventure for Troika! where your party will be thrown down a well, have to survive the unexpected dangers of the Down There, and eventually return to the surface.

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

There is a small crowd gathered around the well. Adults and children wear little party hats, cheer, eat sweets, hold balloons, and express their "sincere" wishes the party "enjoy the fall".

Behind the party, a member of the Judici Concepteculum reads out their names and crimes, sentencing each to The Well. During this process, another stranger is brought forward to join them. His name and crime are not spoken. He has a rat's nest of hair and is dressed in rags, but the group has no time for introduction as they are efficiently shoved and begin falling.



## THE WELL

While they fall, share this:

*The enormous and now abandoned Garigan Market Well is a major landmark near the town center of Old Troika. Several hundred years ago this marble-lined well ran dry and a new well was dug in what is now the beating heart of the city. Rather than fill this well, the populace entrusted the well to their judiciary electorate, who spoke of creating a facility for "redemptoritive and reformative purposes." As far as anyone knows, no one has survived the fall.*

Have each player share one thought their character fixates on as they fall... and continue falling for several minutes.





## JUSTIFIABLY THROWN DOWN A WELL?

Before beginning play, you will need to establish — *privately* — with each player what their character did and why they did it. The nature of the crime will be publicly stated at the beginning, but they should hold on to their “why” until that becomes relevant.

Here are a couple of tables that can help guide those choices — both *what* they did and *why* they did it. Take note of their answers: at a couple of different points in this adventure you’ll reference them. When these situations arise, ask the player to elaborate on the details.

## WHY DID THEY DO IT?

or or

- Financial gain
- To make someone jealous
- To inflate their self-worth
- To thumb their nose at authority
- Revenge
- Hubris

or or

- Extortion
- As a shortcut
- As proof of affection for someone
- Because they could/spite
- Envy
- They believe the law shouldn’t/doesn’t apply to them



## WHAT DID THEY DO?

or

- Stole a pie from a neighbor’s window.
- Insulted a squirrel from the Halcyon Panacorpiath Court of squirrel courtiers.
- Harassed a Stone Warden into a duel, forcing them to leave their post.
- Transit of a major skyway over the prescribed limit of speed while blindfolded.
- Swore before her Majesty, Frondella the Salubrious, and used a rude gesture.
- Unlawful possession of several native hallucinogenic mushrooms.

or

- Tampered with the Plant Observatory’s wild daisy population.
- Extorted the unique alchemical recipe for Contemplative Cotton Candy from the eminent alchemist and polymath, Rubigard Brecht the Good.
- Attempted to sell a “flying pig” that was merely a pig with glued-on feathers.
- Burned a sentient book on loan from the city library.
- Destroyed several bricks in the wall of the Troika Municipal Cemetery.
- Baked an enchanted pie upon which a nobleman choked and died.

or

- Minted unlawful coinage bearing a caricature of the King’s personage.
- Reproduced a regulated Type II spell tome without a permit from the Sorceror-General.
- Was found in possession of a protected monster species.
- Impersonated a member of the city guard, by means of disguise.
- Created an invisible wall within city limits without prior notification.
- Violated the curfew noise ordinance by way of explosives.



## THE WORM

At the base of the well is a large cavern with cool, humid, musty air. The fall ends surprisingly softly: cushioned by the marshmallowy coils of an enormous creature. It shivers, shaking the adventurers off. It is an enormous Barrow Worm, well over 40 feet in length, with six small, red eyes clouded with cataracts, teeth jutting from its slavering maw at odd angles, and a slick, translucent skin interspersed with noodle-like tentacles. Its sensory pits dilate and a warm rumble rolls out from it.

The man who fell with the party — Tim — immediately rushes to the ground and kneels next to the great worm.

If anyone attempts to harm the worm, it will spray a glue-like substance from its dorsal pores which impedes the characters' movement. Then, faster than expected, it will flee down the tunnel. Tim will become sullen, but he can be convinced to help if they agree to do penance: i.e., being blindfolded and eating several handfuls of dirt.

If the party engages The Worm in communication, they'll find The Worm listens when spoken to and responds with a variety of gargled, burbly noises. If magic allows a character to understand the worm, it is repeating back everything the characters say. If the party imitates the sounds The Worm is making, it will shiver and croon in joy. The Worm's dorsal pores will excrete a light-blue mist that smells like blueberries and causes mild facial palsy. If The Worm's mind is read, it thinks about being hungry and consuming soft loam, the warm dark around it, and the unusual taste of the air around the party.

## THE MADMAN, TIM THE TWICE-FALLEN

This scraggly-bearded, oddly pale man is entirely enthralled by the worm: gently touching it and bearing an expression of ecstasy. Though it must be pulled out of him, he will share any of this:

### THINGS HE KNOWS AND WILL SHARE:

- This is his second time down the well: he "likes falling."
- He is the only one who knows "the other way out." He can lead them to Up. "The only way out is Up" (*he points down; as far as he knows this is true*)
- You can't trust the Belowers; they don't love the worm enough. (*But he won't explain who "The Belowers" are, and this is an outright lie — Tim is really envious toward them*)
- The Shrimples taste delicious. The Worm decreed eons ago they are the best tasting residents of the Down Below.
- Most bodies create about 6 cups of mucus a day.
- The worms sing little songs to each other in the earth. He hums a tune ("Mary Has A Little Lamb") and says it's "like that except 5 octaves down".
- Worms are the best dancers, across all known spheres of existence. Every movement they make is a celebration of joy to exist and consume within the womb of the earth. (*If pressed to demonstrate, he does The Worm*)
- The Ogatcha Queen has a mighty fine crown — probably magical — and certainly worth enough to have any crime forgiven.

To The Mazeway Caverns

Page 10





## CLIMBING THE WELL

The walls of the well are made of a mold-filmed white marble much too slick to climb. Hanging from ledges further up are a half-dozen long, algae covered ropes with frayed ends. If the ropes are pulled on, some will bear weight while others will give way immediately. Have the character test their luck. On a success, the rope holds, but can only support one person at a time. On a failure, the rope falls. Roll 1d6 to determine what object was anchoring that rope: the party can salvage the item as well as about 50 feet of rope.

- Large sword caked in rust
- Greataxe with a sizable chip out of the edge
- 7ft spear with three bright-red feathers tied to the end
- Boat anchor engraved with a floral motif
- Tricycle with chipping blue paint and missing its front wheel
- Metal staff with a large, falcon-claw shaped finial

With a successful test, the characters can ascend the ropes partway up the well and reach a small ledge and door. The door is unlocked and beyond is a narrow, winding hallway. Just inside the doorway is an anchored rope ladder that can be dropped to the well bottom, which allows any other characters to safely climb.

↓ Fall to Certain Doom  
(If The Worm isn't there  
to catch them)



Down the Hallway →

### Fungal Hunger (condition)

The afflicted will have fungal masses grow on their skin and obsessively desire to consume mushrooms.

Throughout the Down Below, mushrooms are common. There are bioluminescent mushrooms lighting the hallways, and mushrooms in many different colors, sizes, and flavors are everywhere. If a character is afflicted by this condition, point the mushrooms out often.

Over time, the hunger grows beyond mushrooms - first to those also afflicted by Fungal Hunger, then to anything even remotely edible.

The people in Up may be able to treat this.



## THE REMEMBEROOM

A sturdy wooden door is marked "to grow you must go through" with little mushrooms growing from the solid wood. The space beyond the door is dark until the entire party enters and closes the door behind them.

Once in, a spotlight will illuminate the party and a cheesy announcer voice greets them. This is **The Announcer** - a magical being operating in this space who knows every convict's infraction, can see everything that happens here, and is in fact the room itself. They have the personality and habits of a gameshow announcer.

Have each player roll a d6. Characters will face the challenge of this room in order from lowest to highest. The Announcer will announce the name of the first convict and their infraction. The lights go dark and shoddily made cardboard sets, painted silk backdrops, and props are put in place around the room. Actors with name-tags will enact the scene of that character's crime, that character expected to play their own part. The other convicts are ignored by the actors.

If the character chooses to make the same choice as they originally made, or if they attempt to harm

any of the actors, the room will go dark, a loud "booing" sound will fill the room, the actors will slip away through magical means, and the group will be attacked by **2 Shrimples** and **1 Sentinel Ogatcha** and that character is sprayed with spore-laden mist. The character must test their luck or contract **Fungal Hunger** - a disease known to the Belowers and other residents of the Down There.

If the character makes a different choice that would do no harm, they will be rewarded with confetti and a piece of golden jewelry shaped like a mushroom with paste gems saying "I improved!"

If the character makes the choice that proves strict adherence to law, they will be rewarded with confetti, a small leather pouch containing 2d6 gold coins; and a fancy, colored-paper hat.

Once everyone has been tested, if the majority have improved, a new door will appear on a far wall, marked by a large, glowing neon exit sign leading to the **Double-Buckle Bridge** (Page 8). The Announcer will congratulate them and thank everyone for their time.

### Shrimple (page 18)

Skill: 7 Stamina: 7 Initiative: 2

Armor: 2

Damage as Spear or Modest Beast

### Sentinel Ogatcha (page 20)

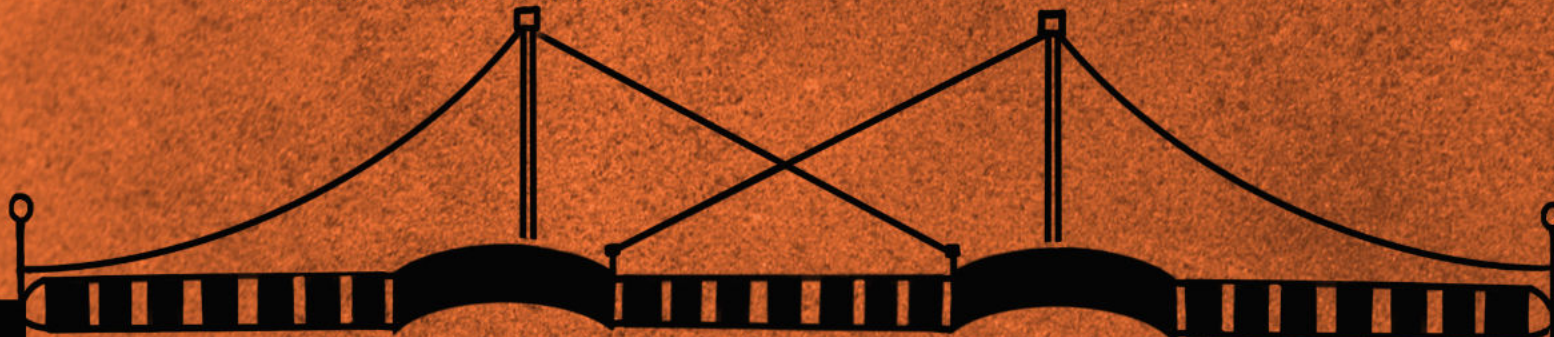
Skill: 7 Stamina: 7 Initiative: 2

Armor: 2

Damage as Spear or Modest Beast



## THE DOUBLE-BUCKLE BRIDGE



### CROSSING THE BRIDGE

The tunnel opens out, revealing a deep ravine with a wood-and-metal bridge crossing it. The bridge has two large metal buckles dividing the length of the bridge into thirds. The wooden boards are rotted through but the metal looks strong.

However the party chooses to cross the bridge, each character will have to test either skill or luck (depending on the narrative). A failure on this test leads to *Falling Through*.

### FALLING THROUGH

If a character falls through the rotten wooden boards of the bridge, characters immediately before and after them can make a test to catch the faller.

If the test is successful, the falling character is hauled back onto the bridge and can continue safely. A failure means that character has *Fallen Down*.

### FALLEN DOWN

If a character falls to what would surely be their death, let the players all know that this does not mean that player is done playing.

Then — privately — tell the player (who lost their character to a painful death of falling into a dark chasm) that their day isn't over. Offer them the backgrounds *Bug Pretending To Be* and *Worm Pretending To Be* and let them know they'll be able to rejoin soon as their new/old character

If 2 or more people fall through, the bridge will collapse. How does the party react to this catastrophic turn of events?



To Mazeway Caverns

Page 10



### THE OTHER SIDE (OF THE BRIDGE)

There is a small pool lit by several torches. 5 *Sentinel Ogatchas* are keeping a semi-permanent camp here. They are indifferent to the party.

If the party assaults the Ogatchas, they will defend themselves.

If the party ignores them, the Ogatchas will do the same, allowing the party to rest or drink.

If the party act to befriend them (which is a challenge because they don't have a spoken language: they communicate with each other telepathically and use a sign-language with other species), the Ogatcha will offer to lead them close to "Up" (which their sign language calls "angry worm place") or through "home" (Rattlemaw) to "bad light" (the surface).

*Sentinel Ogatcha* (page 20)

Skill: 7 Stamina: 7 Initiative: 2 Armor: 2  
Damage as Spear or Modest Beast



## MAZEWAY CAVERNS

To Rattlemaw (page 22)

To Up (page 12)

The Mazeway Caverns are very narrow, with many tight squeezes and dangerous pitfalls, and are partially flooded. Making it through them without a guide would be a difficult task.

If Tim is not with the party at this time, he will be waiting for them. If any players fell through the double-buckle bridge, they are here as well, having safely landed on the nearby Grove of Pillow Shrooms (this is a lie — there is no such place).

- If either Tim or the Ogatchas are leading the party, have each party member roll once on the Mazeway Encounter (Safely Guided) table.
- If the party are stumbling through on their own, have each roll once on the Mazeway Encounters (Certain Death) table.

If the party decides to flee an encounter, the previous roller rolls again and navigation continues as normal. After the last player has rolled and that encounter has been overcome, the party makes it through the Mazeway Caverns and has two paths moving forward: they can go into the Ogatcha region of Rattlemaw, or go through the city of Up.

### Mazeway Encounters (Safely Guided)

- A rainbow-lit (by fluorescent mushrooms) waterfall
- A cavern bored through an immense diamond
- A mushroom forest with flowering mushrooms and albino honeybees
- A gentle brook that flows with glittering golden water
- Cavern where stalagmites are all carved as Greek statuary
- 2d3 Fungal Frankenblooms

### Mazeway Encounters (Certain Death)

- You're completely lost — roll again [sadface]
- Narrow ledge overlooking incredibly sharp stalagmites
- Completely Flooded Passageway of Indeterminate Distance
- Collapsing rock bridge
- 2d3 Fungal Frankenblooms
- 2d6 Fungal Frankenblooms

## Fungal Frankenblooms

These are Ogatchas, Belowers, other fallers, and Shrimple that have contracted the *fungal hunger* and now spend their time eating the fungus that fills the caves. These mindless beings are in the final stage: their bodies are covered in fungal sprouts and they are driven to spread the fungal hunger by chewing on the unaffected.

If a Frankenbloom is caught on fire it will flail around attempting to put itself out and has a chance of lighting a nearby enemy on fire as well (4-6 on a 1d6). Being on fire will cause a Frankenbloom to flee: it will retreat to the shadows and anxiously gnaw on the mushroom covered walls.

**Skill:** 5 **Stamina:** 6 **Initiative:** 1 **Armor:** 1  
*Damage as a Modest Beast*

### Special

*A character bitten by a Fungal Frankenbloom must test their luck; on a failure, they contract Fungal Hunger (page 6).*

*A Fungal Frankenbloom takes double damage from fire.*





## THE TROUBLE GETTING INTO UP

The cavern entrance to Up is gated and watched by two incredibly bored guards who are not expecting anyone to come by.

**If Tim is with the party, getting into Up is an easy process.**

After a brief, private conversation with the guards, he will explain to the characters that they will want to wear the traditional Wormtide mantle to blend in, which he obtains from the guards. Then he leads them in, delivers them to Bindle & Yoke's home telling them that in order to use the path headed to the surface, the High Priest Rucrote will have to unlock it, but he'll be busy until after the Wormtide ceremony tomorrow. "But then," he says, "we'll get you on your way." (This is both true and untrue: Tim is hiding something)

**Without Tim, getting into Up is still an easy process.** The guards will let them know they will want to wear the Wormtide mantle to honor their local traditions, and that only the High Priest Rucrote would know about any paths to the surface, but that he will be busy until after the Wormtide ceremony tomorrow. In the meantime, they can stay at Bindle & Yoke's house. "They're a nice couple, Bindle and Yoke."

**If the party tries to get into a fight at the gates, use the**

Below Grunt stats on page 15. After, they would have to fight a whole city's worth of guards and then be unable to get help from anyone in Up. What a shame.

The traditional Wormtide mantle ties the upper arms firmly to the body. It does make reaching up just about impossible. Inside Up, though, most people are wearing it.

The cavern of Up is lit brightly by irregularly spaced multi-domed mushrooms in whites, blues, and greens. The structures are all packed earth, stacked on top of each other at strange angles, with near-vertical paths leading down to the primary byways. These streets are thronged by townsfolk who sing cheerful ceremonial songs while they work to decorate the streets for the coming Wormtide (as well as they can while wearing their traditional Wormtide garb which really limits arm movement.)

The characters are greeted warmly by a joyful populace celebrating The Worm, and referred to as "topsiders".

## A WORMTIDE'S EVE

Up doesn't have a hotel, so the characters are taken to a local home with room for them. Yoke, Bindle, and Merrifew welcome them and offer the traditional Wormtide's Eve meal. Similar to a lobster bake, they are served Shrimple. Merrifew refuses to eat and will angrily explain that Shrimple are people and a lot of the Belowers believe that the Shrimple should be given their ancestral territory back and The Worm should be killed, along with its wormlings. As might be expected, this display of treason & heresy is a source of conflict, though Bindle and Yoke both seem resigned to it.



**Yoke**

- Avoids Conflict
- Cries at the drop of a hat
- Smells Like Cabbage



**Bindle**

- Limps
- Tries not to upset Yoke
- Values Tradition



**Merrifew**

- Stocky build
- Hair in buns
- Silent and sullen

After dinner, the characters are given free reign. They might:

- Join Bindle & Yoke for a night of pitch-dark prayer
- Enjoy the sights of Up
- Shop! (And they might be able to trade their labor – assisting in Wormtide decorating – in exchange for basic, general goods).
- Help Belowers in decorating Up for the Wormtide ceremony
- Observe Merrifew sneaking out to prepare for the Shrimple Invasion (page 14)

Unfortunately, no one knows anything useful about the path to the surface. They will only repeat that the party will need to speak with Rucrote after the Wormtide celebration.



## THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE SHRIMPLE

The party can end up at this meeting in 3 ways:

- If they strongly support Merrifew at dinner, she will invite them because they are, obviously, allies.
- If they follow Merrifew as she sneaks out or if they see her around town and follow her.
- If they just blunder into it and you want them to be here.

Once Merrifew becomes aware of the party, she will explain that this meeting could be dangerous and they can always turn back and pretend this never happened (but you know that won't dissuade the adventurous treasure-seekers of Troika) or flee the city tonight, while there is still peace.

A portion — though not all — of the seditionists are meeting in the basement of a fungarium (a building used to grow edible and delicious mushrooms). They have assembled a collection of weapons and are handing them out in preparation for the next day.

The seditionists are led by a steely-eyed, powerfully built woman named Griddle, who is:

- missing her left arm (it was fed to wormlings at a prior festival)
- bereaved: her wife, Bette, was sacrificed to The Worm when they were both younger.

Merrifew is placed in charge of freeing the black-iron grate which bars the city water supply from infiltration via the flooded caverns. Once removed, the shrimple have massed their forces for a last, massive invasion where they hope to enter through the gate to decimate the wormling population and possibly even kill The Worm — fighting or killing anyone that stands in their way.

Griddle promises that, if the party helps, the Shrimple can help them return to the surface. She will offer each of them a weapon of their choice (from the **Melee Weapons** table in the *Troika!* Book) and asks them to help Merrifew.

The party can discuss their plans after returning home, with Bindle, Yoke, and Merrifew being none the wiser.

## THE WORMTIDE CEREMONY BEGINS!

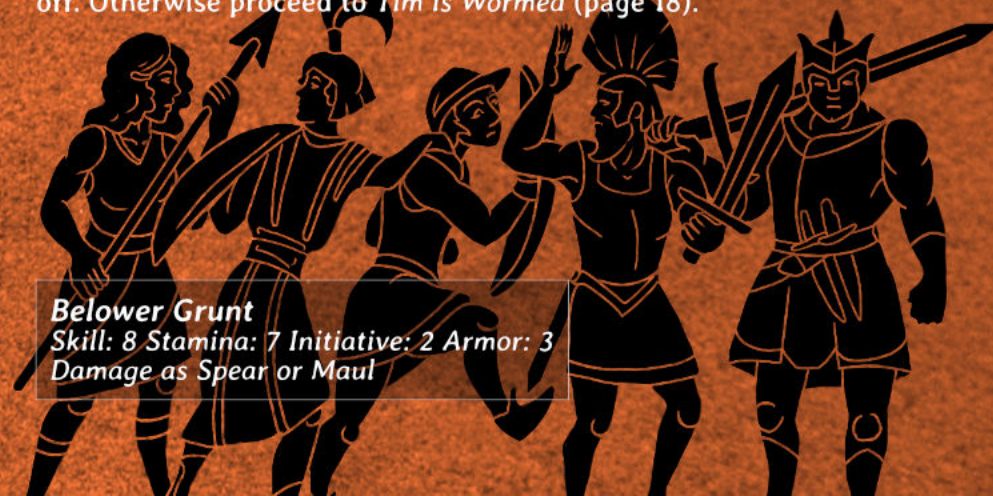
In the morning, the streets are full of Belowers streaming to the town center, all wearing their Wormtide best. Yoke and Bindle are assisting each other in dressing in their tight-fitting garments. Merrifew slips out a little early, as she has her secret work to do, and an allied party might go with her to the ceremony.

As the party enter Up's center, they will see again The Worm, its glistening skin glowing in the light, its little tentacles waving rhythmically. It lies draped across an obsidian altar, **surrounded by heaps of brilliant and glorious gems of every kind**, of crystals in strange formation, of skulls and bright white bones.

The priests of The Worm (both armless and legless) wear constricting ceremonial clothing, and are lined up in their carts, singing together. They are wheeled about by their acolytes (dressed in long white robes). The High Priest Rucrote is carried to a plinth. He spends an uncomfortably long time squirming to get his head and chin over the edge.

Rucrote welcomes those gathered, then especially welcomes the unexpected Topsider guests. He explains that topsiders receive unique nutrients from their surface crops and solar radiation and they will make an extraordinary treat and offering to The Worm on this, the glorious Wormtide.

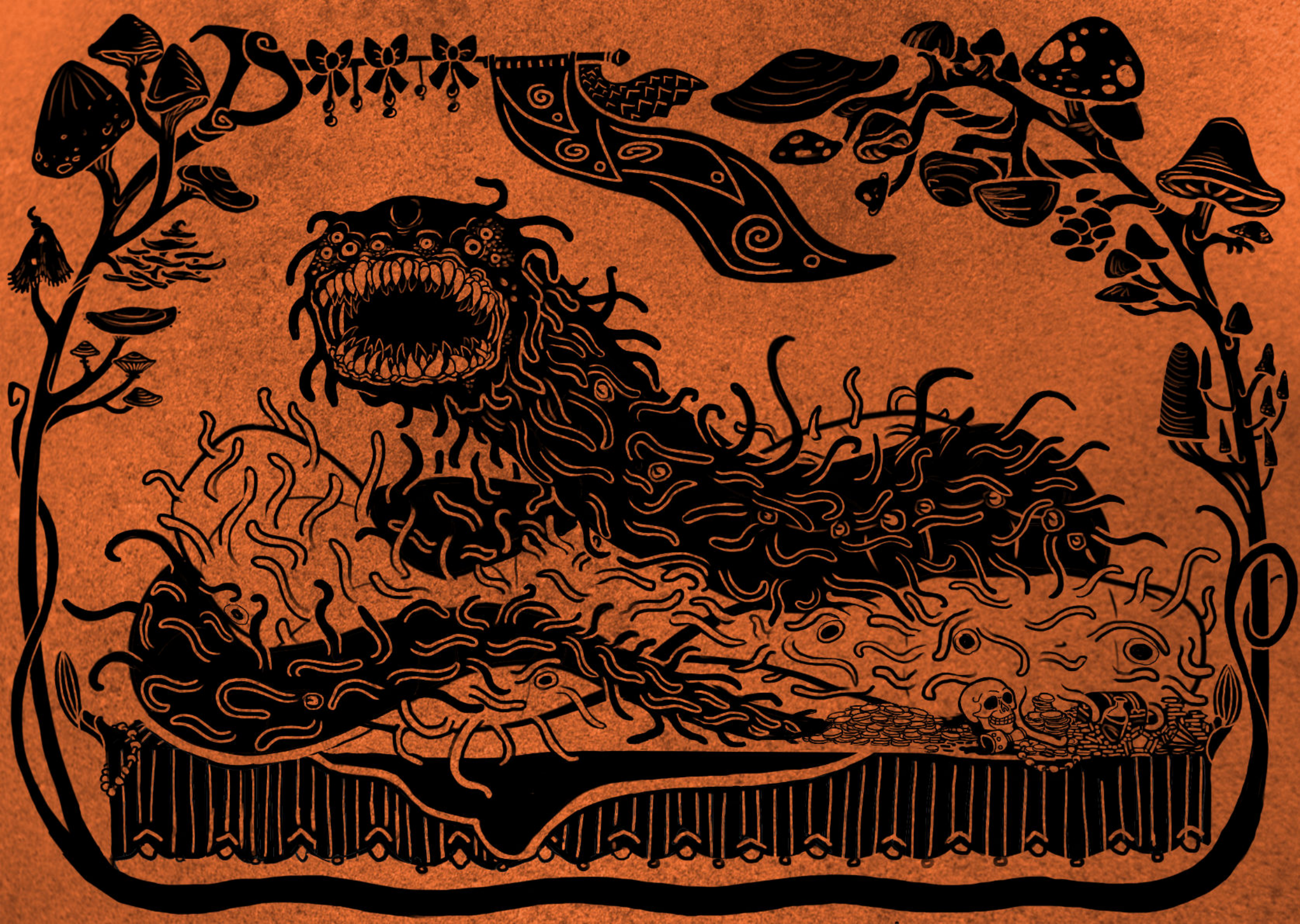
5 heavily armed Belower Grunts will emerge from the crowd behind the party and attempt to push them into the open space before the altar. If the party resists, more guards will come until the party is gathered up. If the party chooses instead to rush the altar, the Worm roars, the Wormlings detach, and the *Shrimple Invasion* (page 19) kicks off. Otherwise proceed to *Tim is Wormed* (page 18).



**Belower Grunt**

Skill: 8 Stamina: 7 Initiative: 2 Armor: 3  
Damage as Spear or Maul









## TIM IS WORMED!

**The Worming Wand** can remove arms 2 at a time or legs 2 at a time, by simply tapping it twice against the person being wormed. This process is permanent, bloodless, and painless.

**Glow Worm Robes** are made from luminous glow worm silk and constantly emit low light. Direct flame shrinks but does not melt the fabric, instead burning it slowly. Unusually strong — and extremely rare — it imparts the protection of modest armor.

**Belower Grunt**  
Skill: 8 Stamina: 7  
Initiative: 2 Armor: 3  
Damage as Spear or Maul

If Tim led the party to the city, he will loudly claim responsibility for bringing the party. Rucrote will exclaim, "Brother Tim, you shall be made Worm for your gift! The Worm rewards all and forgives everything!"

Tim smiles and dances in place, filled with glee. He praises The Worm. A person wound in pink-glowing silk comes forward and taps a strangely gnarled stick against Tim's back. His arms fall off like ripe pears from a tree, bloodlessly and painlessly.

Tim continues to praise the Worm ecstatically. An acolyte positions themselves to bearhug Tim as the stick is again tapped on him and his legs fall off. A different acolyte gathers the limbs and places them in a woven basket. The crowd cheers and Tim is placed beside the priests on the altar. Then the Shrimple Invasion happens.

(Tim is not at all sorry for turning on the party. It's an honor to be fed to the little ones.)

**Wormling**  
Skill: 5 Stamina: 4  
Initiative: 1 Armor: 0  
Damage as Small Beast

**Shrimple Invader**  
Skill: 9 Stamina: 5  
Initiative: 2 Armor: 2  
Damage as Knife or Small Beast

## THE SHRIMPLE INVASION

The Worm's little waving tentacles droop and then drop off, becoming wormlings. There are hundreds, each about 2-3 feet long. They move in a sort of wave and will attempt to devour the party. 2d6 ferocious Wormlings, and 2 worm priests will assist (they wriggle and attempt to bite the characters).

If one character falls, the other wormlings will leave their targets and gang up on the fallen. The crowd will cheer and say "The Worm will bear them home!" That character is dragged off to be devoured and the remaining characters can indeed learn the path above from Rucrote.

While this is happening, the Shrimple invade. The Shrimple are shrimp the size of lobsters, with large, expressive eyes and highly variable shell colors, usually red with some blue and purple. They are climbing up people's legs and stabbing them with tiny swords and slicing with their scissoring pincers. Belowers of the Shrimple Cause wear a distinctive shrimp headband and aren't wearing wormdress.

### If the characters Aid the Belowers

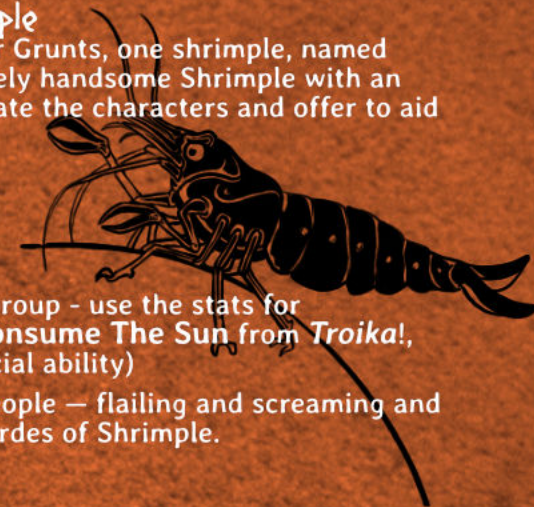
Give the party maybe four fights against 2d6 Shrimple through the streets of Up. The player whose character was devoured can play a Belower Grunt. After, Rucrote will hail them as heroes and provide their route to the surface, if they wish to take it. Otherwise, he is happy for them to stay, join the guards, and one day earn a Worming of their own.

### If the characters Aid the Shrimple

After two fights against 2d3 Belower Grunts, one shrimple, named Henri — a large, deep red, impressively handsome Shrimple with an outrageous French accent — will locate the characters and offer to aid them. He can help them:

- Kill Tim (that bastard)
- Steal a Whole Bunch of Gems
- Get back to the surface
- Kill the Worm (for the ambitious group - use the stats for Loathsome Wurm That Will Consume The Sun from Troika!, But remove the tusks and the special ability)

During this, the streets are full of people — flailing and screaming and often on fire — being attacked by hordes of Shrimple.







### Sentinel Ogatcha

These Sentinel Ogatchas are standing-up, beetle-like hexapods around 4 feet tall and built pretty burly. They have shiny, black, faceted eyes, vicious horns, and vestigial, silver wings not even capable of gliding. They typically carry hook-tipped spears in their hairy, four-fingered hands.

Sentinel Ogatchas are the most likely Ogatchas to be encountered outside the hive, or at the borders of the hive. They are polite, but firm, and will happily lead the party to the Glowspit path, but would prefer they not enter Rattlemaw Hive.

### Ogatcha Worker

Smaller than the Sentinel Ogatchas, the Worker Ogatchas are around 3 feet tall. They don't have horns or wings but their matte-black carapaces have textured, hexagonal designs.

Workers can be found throughout the Rattlemaw Hive and don't have any particular response to visitors. They lack a sense of self (or importance) to such an extent that the hive would barely notice if a few were killed.

#### *Sentinel Ogatcha*

*Skill: 7 Stamina: 7 Initiative: 2 Armor: 2  
Damage as Spear or Modest Beast*

### Ogatcha Nurse

Most of the Ogatcha Nurses are found shuttling eggs from the Queen's chamber to the hatching rooms deeper in the hive. Larger than the Sentinels, the Nurses have small hooks on their back and front to harmlessly carry the Ogatcha eggs and larvae.

They also have a long proboscis to aid in feeding hatched larvae as well as injured adults from their food-engorged gasters (communal stomachs common in the ant kingdom).

### Royal Consorts

These Ogatcha have overly large wings and diminutive bodies. They exist to fertilize eggs and fan the queen in her chamber and — more broadly — to keep air circulating the entire hive. You'll mostly see them flitting in the air or hanging onto the high walls of the hive.

### Ogatcha Queen

The Ogatcha Queen is a partially translucent, iridescent Ogatcha with long, slender limbs. Her massive and distended abdomen is in a constant state of laying 4' long, white eggs.

Capable of speaking, the queen represents all Rattlemaw Ogatcha and uses the royal "we". (It is also the actual "we" as Ogatchas have a hive identity.)

Unconcerned with Above concepts like wealth, the queen is willing to part with her crown (taken from the Witch Prince of the Wanderlands) if the party will pledge to take the princess and help her start a new hive.

### Ogatcha Princess

The princess is a partially translucent, iridescent Ogatcha with radiant wings and long, slender limbs. She has the elongated abdomen of a Queen, but is not yet swelled with eggs; she will not lay until she is safe in a new Down There and builds her hive.

She sees nothing wrong with establishing herself Above and destroying the existing, non-hived peoples to create new territory for her Hive. She experiences neither pleasure nor fear at the thought of retaliation.



## RATTLEMAW HIVE

The Ogatchas:

- Have a hive mind and communicate among themselves via telepathy
- Use pidgin sign language to speak with Belowers and Shrimple
- Know the way to “bad light” (the surface) via the Glowspit Path
- Would prefer the party not enter Rattlemaw
- Signify positive feelings by laying back their antennae and vibrating their wings against their shells.

The Ogatchas also:

- Aren’t particularly guarding entrances to the hive
- See one or two deaths as a nuisance

The approach to the hive is a massive construction with several diamond-shaped openings serving as windows and doors, filled with the sound of clicking legs and distant buzzing. Aside from the entrance to Rattlemaw Hive, the Glowspit Path is also accessible.

If the party is:

- Accompanied by any Ogatcha from the Double-Buckle Bridge
- Persuasive to the first Ogatcha they meet
- Very stealthy

They can reach the Queen’s chamber where she will offer a trade: help the Ogatcha Princess set up a new hive and the party can have her fancy crown.

If things go poorly (or violently), the party will be escorted from the hive by an overwhelming number of Ogatcha Sentinels who will, thereafter, guard the entrance quite heavily.

## GLOWSPIT PATH

The Glowspit Path, just beyond Rattlemaw Hive, is a winding, upward tunnel lined with brightly bioluminescent plants of many different colors. Both the cocoons and “webs” of glow worms line the walls, sticky liquid beading along the fine threads. The silk creates a challenging terrain, as it tangles and readily adheres to any fabric.

If the characters have any guides with them, this is as far as the guides will go. Their home is here, in the Down Below.

If the silk is cut by the adventurers it will reattach stronger and stronger until it cannot be cut by any means. It is also not flammable. The worms that weave this silk are thinner than their more common cousins and react strongly to vibrations (e.g. footfalls, cutting their threads, speech), seeking to bind up anything they perceive.

Bound characters can be gently teased from cocoons and the thin glowworms can be easily killed one by one.

If they are quiet and careful, the party will emerge from a remarkably small tunnel entrance into a gently falling rain. It slowly washes the glowing silk from their skin. In the distance they can see Troika: her glittering towers, the mist clinging to her crumbling Eastern walls.

Where they go from here is up to the characters. They may have an Ogatcha princess to find a home for. They may have an exquisite crown to sell. They may want to return to the dark simplicity of the Down Below, but that will be another adventure.







## BUG PRETENDING TO BE...

You are not seen as a true Ogatcha; your form is a drastic deviation, some sort of physiological aberration: a long, thin centipede-like body with a beetle's head. The Ogatchas never welcomed you into their communal consciousness, so you have been eking out a life, wandering the Down Below, looking for a place where you will be accepted and appreciated for who and what you are.

You found the crumpled corpse of a topsider and took the chance - crawling in through their mouth and animating their limbs from your home along the spinal column. Your mouth is clamped around their brainstem. You cannot access the memories, thoughts, or feelings of your host. It is now an extension of your body, and you feel at home within it. You deeply desire to reach the surface, but not as much as you would like to, at last, have a friend.

If utilizing this background outside of the adventure *So You've Been Thrown Down A Well*, choose a character background from existing *Troika!* literature. The background character must have an organic brain and spinal column. Gain their body and their possessions, but not their memories.

### Advanced Skills

- 2 Deception
- 3 Flexibility
- 2 Stubbornness

### Special

You can release your current host body and crawl

within another. The chosen/host creature must already be dead when you infest it. Host bodies are reanimated and need food, water, sleep, and other bodily necessities in order to continue to function.

*Want to kill an unhosted Bug Pretending To Be?*

#### **Bug (not) Pretending To Be...**

*Skill: 6, Stamina 10, Initiative 2, Armor 2  
Damage as a modest beast*

*Mien: 1. curious, 2. Exhausted, 3. stir-crazy, 4. Playful, 5. Suspicious, 6. cowardly*

## WORM PRETENDING TO BE...

You were once like the other wormlings: the children of The Worm, a monstrous beast of a thousand teeth and eyes which squirms through the Down Below. It would be your task to consume whatever you could, to grow, and to someday become a great beast yourself. But your path is different - you desire to see the Above and its fabled stars, to wriggle in a world of air and sky.

You found the crumpled corpse of a topsider and took the chance - crawling in through their mouth and animating their limbs from where you curl at their brainstem. You retain your host's memories, but know they are not your own. You will do anything to get to the surface.

If utilizing this background outside of the adventure *So You've Been Thrown Down A Well*, choose a character background from existing *Troika!* literature. The background character must have an organic brain and spinal column. Gain their body, their possessions, their advanced skills, and any specials noted.





STONE BOUND

When you were younger and stronger, you learned a secret which you have bound to a stone. You carry it now, and it is so heavy. To relieve yourself of this burden would be the end of the world. Literally. It is your weight, and yours alone, to bear.

Possessions

- Your stone, the size of a clenched fist
- A damning secret
- Longsword
- A small bag containing (10) small, white pebbles
- An unnerving, unhinged laugh

Advanced Skills

- 2 Strength
- 3 Puzzles
- 2 Determination
- 1 Spell - Random

Special

You must keep your stone in one or another hand at all times. Perhaps it has been fit to the pommel of a sword, or perhaps it is bound to the hand with a tight cord. However managed, if the stone is released your mental facilities rapidly deteriorate, and when separated for more than an hour, the stone will speak its secret and unwind the fabric binding reality: a truly catastrophic and irreparable event.

Once per day, you can touch your stone to one creature (including yourself) and they will regain 1d6 stamina



BATTIGAN OF THE SPIRAL WHEEL

Your legs and feet were replaced with struts and wheels at a very early age. The need for speed is strong among the Battigan peoples: engine exhaust chokes the air of your tiny homeworld. Physiological needs hinder performance. Planned obsolescence makes body parts diminishingly useful. Only new will do. You have left those gear-strewn hypertracks in search of deeper psychological fulfillment, but the hunger for speed is always with you.

Possessions

- Several tools for maintenance of your gear matrices and hydraulics
- A small metal toolbox containing screws and the above tools
- A letter from your mother, carefully folded
- A spancut: an oversized metal wrench & plasma cutter multitool that can produce a 1 foot long flame.

Advanced Skills

- 4 Drag Racing
- 3 Mechanical Puzzling
- 2 Metallurgy
- 3 Calculating The Odds

Your **spancut** deals damage as a club when turned off, or a knife when turned on. When it is turned on, deal damage as a knife and increase your damage roll by 1. It can cut through up to 2 inches of metal, light any flammable surface on fire, and provide torch-like light.





## CRUCIX MAESTRUM

The Maestrum is a dirigible fortress, among the fastest to cut across the manifold plains. Her damned, depraved, gluttonous, and greedy men and women raised you as a **silent** repository for their personal sins and secrets. You acted as both confessoriat (taker of confessions) and crucix (self-flagellant to atone for these misdeeds). You know the things hidden in people's hearts and — worse still — in your own dark dreaming.



### Possessions

- Tattered gray robe
- 5' length of knotted cord
- Cat-o-nine-tails (does damage as knife(2) with 5' reach)

### Advanced Skills

- 3 Listening
- 2 Masochism
- 2 Flat Affect
- 1 Spell - Random



## GORGONSHI

You come from a culture of philosophers whose debates became bloody battles. You and your kind were bred as brawlers for these cage matches; bred to be lithe, powerful, and lethal. The writhing mass of snakes that make up your hair are fangless, but can hold and manipulate objects. You fight your own battles now.

### Possessions

- Battle harness
- A well-cared-for oboe

### Advanced Skills

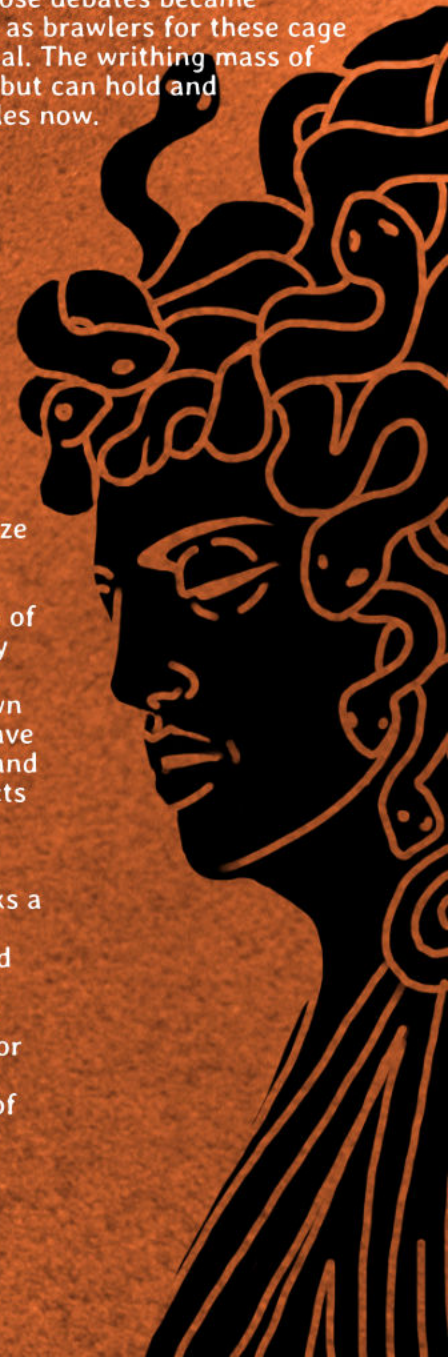
- 3 Fist Fighting
- 2 Wrestling
- 2 Charm
- 1 Spell - Amity
- 1 Spell - Stone Gaze

### Special

Your hair is made up of 3d6 snakes that obey your will as an extension of your own body. They do not have fangs, but can hold and constrict small objects with weak strength.

### Stone Gaze (3)

The Gorgonshi speaks a harsh word (in any known language) and whoever next meets their eyes must Test their Luck (or Skill for Enemies) or suffer paralytic stiffening of all limbs for 1d6 minutes.







- A small, fresh bouquet of daffodils.
- A paper airplane, the tip a bit bent.
- A tube of lipstick, neon yellow, fluoresces as a dim light source if applied.
- The front ½ of a porcelain basset hound figurine.
- A broken umbrella, sentient and scuttles away if handled.
- A pair of purple ear-muffs that blocks all sound for the wearer.



- A ring with a large, heart-shaped pink stone flanked by seed pearls. Causes a small burst of pink paper confetti when put on.
- A book: *Living Well, Or Well-Enough* by an obscure guru of self-actualization.
- A heavily rusted, large lock (size of a briefcase) attached to a small (size of a matchbox) box. The box, if unlocked and opened, contains a slim, iridescent feather that smells faintly of strawberries; and a note, which only reads "for you."
- 2d6 lawn flamingos.
- A 12' red ribbon. Cannot be cut by any magical or unmagical means, but also refuses to be tied in knots. If not displayed (in hair, as a scarf or belt, as garland, etc) it grows sullen and occupies more space than

necessary, squeaking frequently for attention.

- One very disappointed looking frog. Can survive a fall from any height, but cannot jump; it just waddles around awkwardly.



- Several sheets of heavily-perfumed paper on which a series of florid and unreadably bad sonnets in rhyming couplets has been written to a girl named Anna-May.
- A very moldy — but still recognizable — 3 tiered birthday cake. The 3d6 candles have been burned once before and are too damp to light. Anyone who eats it gets one year older.
- A postcard: one side with the picture of a pickle on the back of an elephant; the other side saying "Wish I weren't here!"
- A paper bag containing a watermelon -sized quantity of double-ended cotton swabs (specifically 1200).
- A book on mushrooms. It contains detailed entries for every species growing in the Down Below, and many others beside. The author clearly believes mushrooms are evil and plan to conquer the world.
- A "handful of yella crayons," partially melted.



- A hobby horse, with a yellow yarn mane and "Buckeye"

scrawled on the stick in black marker.

- A roughly ovoid, silver-dollar sized device. There is a small screen which displays simplified depictions of a small animal. Three buttons are below this screen, each with a different function (to "play" with the animal, to "feed" the animal, to "punish" the animal). The animal grows in size over time if cared for. It makes distressed beeping noises if not tended to within a 4 hour span of time. The batteries are not accessible; it cannot be turned off.
- A penny whistle which sounds terrible no matter how well it's played.
- One long, blue, cotton sock with a little cat face woven into the ribbing. Sock fits a larger-than normal foot.
- 3 heavily-saturated, muck-covered pillows embroidered with glittery silver thread.
- A child's doll with a sweet, painted face and sleepy eyes. This doll moves around when its owner is asleep. It likes to collect little stones and put them in people's pockets.



- A leather pouch, inside which is a single large, unbroken ostrich egg. This egg contains a ready-to-hatch baby ostrich.
- A metal bucket with a sizable hole in the bottom.
- A full set of teeth belonging to some kind of large, carnivorous

beast, strung on a gold chain. Each tooth is palm-sized and very sharp.

- An iron mallet with copper faces, the shaft is unusually long (5').
- A thimble-sized drinking stein crafted in excruciating and loving detail.
- A frilly white-lace cravat with just a little bit of blood on it.



- 17 thumb tacks gathered in a small pile, labeled with a wooden sign that says "warning: thumb tacks".
- A highly-localized and relatively heavy 1'x1' cloud. Solid matter can pass through it and it reforms. Floats about 4 feet off the ground.
- A metal soup can, labeled "scorpions" with a cartoon scorpion giving a "thumbs up". If opened, does indeed contain 4d6 dime-sized scorpions which will immediately swarm out.
- A 6", whippy ash wand with a pewter handle. If waved, it will produce an effect on The OOPS! Table.
- A wicked-looking dagger literally dripping with green, skin-numbing ichor. The dagger is entirely blunt but it sure looks the part.
- A large cut of beef chuck wrapped in butcher paper and tied with simple white, cotton string.